



THE
**POLICE
OFFICER'S
WIFE**

A FILM BY
PHILIP GRÖNING


MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
la Biennale di Venezia 2013
Venezia 70 - Competition

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OFFICIAL SELECTION 2013



SYNOPSIS



A young couple lead a modest provincial existence with their small daughter. The husband is a policeman, a common middle-class civil servant. The wife stays at home and cares for their little girl, an alert and curious child, always looking up inquisitively at her mother. This beautiful, seemingly ordinary family live a frugal life of simple joys. It is also a life of increasing violence measured by the dark bruises of the police officer's wife.





**COMMENTS
FROM
WRITER/DIRECTOR
PHILIP GRÖNING**

In the arm wrestling scene, the husband and wife act almost like children. I thought it would be nice to see this playful degree between them. But it's also a scene about sensuality. After all, they are attracted to one another. This film is also about **bodies**. When I shot this scene, I wanted to explore this sensual quality. There is also the competitive nature. He lets her win and I like that.

The result is that they end up having sex.



The Police Officer's Wife is a film about the virtue of love, the virtue of curiosity, the virtue of joy. The young wife does what she can to save the child's soul, to keep it intact, to help it grow. **TO TEACH THE CHILD LOVE.** But as the violence between husband and wife escalates, this young woman sinks. The Police Officer's Wife is also about **the dark** within us.

Shift work, service in uniform, poor pay with hardly any prospect of improvement over the length of his career. This policeman husband beats his wife. He hits her. Out of pressure, out of hate, out of affection, because of the insane **HELPLESSNESS** of this life that has descended over him as if he weren't there. The **HELPLESSNESS** of wanting to be close to her; the **HELPLESSNESS** of the closeness between mother and child which he can't penetrate.

Nothing is more turbulent than the **HELPLESSNESS** of love.



The film is divided into *chapters* because we need the distance that chapters offer. The chapters have no names. Each chapter begins with a black screen with the words of the title: Begin Chapter 1. And ends with the words: End Chapter 1. Black. Fade in title: Begin Chapter 2.

A n d s o o n .



It's an endless and endlessly beautiful, job to protect the *SOUL* OF A CHILD and watching her develop. She plants the seed of love in her daughter and watches it grow. The seed of love, the soul of every human being. She does absolutely everything to prevent anything from happening to her child. She creates a place of warmth in which the soul of her daughter *can evolve.*



Singing. Teaching the little child to sing, again and again, constant singing which sometimes goes on for days. *Singing* is also laughing, breathing, forgetting the words, cheating, suddenly stopping, *singing* to the point of not being able to breathe, *singing* under the covers, singing at the supermarket check-out when the child suddenly remembers the song, and hopes the cashier might give her a treat.





The police officer's wife is creating a space in the world for her child's soul. The *creation of a soul*. A child's curiosity about the world around her is turned into pure pleasure. Trust battles and conquers horror. This small child learns that she is alive, another living being amongst many.



LOVED, LOVING, PRECIOUS.

Animals.

Naturally the child loves animals. And the mother shows her animals. Animals around town, because a zoo is too far away and too expensive for the wife of a policeman. Animals around town: bunnies, squirrels, birds, a badger's lair in the little park, *worms*. And the **FOX**. The legendary fox of picture books and songs. The stealthy, red and sly fox. Nocturnal.

In the courtyard garden, there were all these worms. So I added them to the animals that the mother wants to introduce to her daughter. The little girl pours water on the worm, thinking that she is helping the worm. But actually she is nearly drowning it. They come out of the ground because of the rain water. The child is nearly killing it though she thinks she is helping it. She learned this *desire to HELP* from her mother.





FATHER.

Love for her
That is the most difficult thing:
To teach, to allow the child to
love this man, this man who
hits the mother. Even this father.
Because it is important for the
child's soul; because people
are formed by their ability to
love. To guide her daughter's
trembling hand across the
cheek of the father in order
to wake him. To explain to a
child – who is afraid of
her pyjama pants “because they
have a bear on them who always
hits the other animals because he
is **stronger**” – that the **stronger**
one is not always bad. And the
stronger one doesn't always hit
the others.



There is **violence** in their home. Abrupt, absolutely helpless, brutal and
desperate. The policeman stands almost crushed between his roles. He resorts to violence
when everything becomes too much for him. He is not a particularly strong man, not an
aggressive man. But he is starved for love, **A MAN WHO HAS NOTHING.**

The Police Officer's Wife is a film about
tremendous neediness. It's a film about
tenderness, a need for *tenderness*. There
is a major *paradox* in violent relationships.
The more hurt, isolated, and ashamed the
police officer's wife feels, the more she yearns
for the tiniest gestures of *tenderness*, for
her husband's touch. A stroke of the hand in the
morning after the evening beating can prolong
the relationship for **y e a r s.**





The mother takes a bath with the child. Together they sing, while mother holds daughter on her tummy. And while she sings, she slides under the soft bubbles and the warm water, holds her nose briefly and then comes back up and continues singing. Their song. Then it is so still. Gently sliding into song and into **death.**



destruction grows within the policeman. It's a brutality he could never have imagined until it came. It's like a second being which possesses him and runs its violent course. A void expands between him and his world. In the end, he is left standing in pure white nothingness.

The wife is eventually destroyed by the hopelessness of finding help for the violence committed by the man who should protect her. The policeman's wife is broken in a single movement. *She loses* her balance without ceremony, very simply. Basically **in one blow.**



THE OLD MAN

is a mystery, even to me. His role is purposefully vague. He could be the policeman's father. Some might interpret him as the policeman as an old man, now alone and looking back. What I am sure about is that this old man is like Tiresias. He can foresee all, but he can do nothing about it. The Old Man might even be already dead and looking down at what is happening. The classic *Greek Chorus* generally comments on the story. In this case, the Old Man is like a quiet chorus. He represents how society deals with domestic violence – passive,.....
.....s i l e n t .



**DIRECTOR
PHILIP
GRÖNING**

Born in 1959 in Düsseldorf, Philip Gröning started his own production company while he was still studying at the HFF Munich in 1986, and since then has been responsible on all his films for production, directing, screenplay, editing and for the major part of the cinematography.

Gröning first attracted attention in 1992 with his film *The Terrorists*, the TV broadcast of which the then German Chancellor Helmut Kohl unsuccessfully tried to prevent. The film won the Bronze Leopard in Locarno and ran at the Sundance International Film Festival. Gröning gained international recognition in 2000 for his film *Love, Money, Love*, which won the Leopard in Locarno for lead actress Sabine Timoteo. His greatest success both in Germany and internationally came in 2005 with *Into Great Silence*, a 162-minute artistic documentary film that was a surprise worldwide audience success and among others won the Special Jury Prize in Sundance, the European Film Award, the Bavarian Film Award and German film Critic's Association Award as well a nomination for a German Film Award.

Philip Gröning was Jury President for the section "Orrizonti" at the Venice Film Festival in 2006, as well as Member of the Jury at the Munich Filmfest in 2009. He is a member of the European Film Academy and the German Film Academy as well as the Bavarian Academy for the Fine Arts.

Selected Filmography

- 2013 *The Police Officer's Wife* (*Die Frau Des Polizisten*)
- 2005 *Into Great Silence* (*Die Grosse Stille*)
- 2000 *Love, Money, Love* (*L'amour, L'argent, L'amour*)
- 1993 *Opfer. Zeugen* – Segment In Neues Deutschland (Documentary)
- 1992 *The Terrorists* (*Die Terroristen!*)
- 1988 *Summer* (*Sommer*)





CAST



Alexandra Finder

Alexandra Finder was born in Berlin and danced ballet, folklore and jazz from the age of five to that of fifteen (one year of which was at the ballet school of the Leipzig Opera). Having completed her schooling, she studied at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Art from 2000 to 2004. After graduating, she was an ensemble member of the Hessische Staatstheater Wiesbaden from 2004 to 2008.

Alexandra Finder has been freelancing since 2008 and acted in Janusz Wisniewski's production *Noah's Ark – The new end of Europe* in Poznan. The play was a European coproduction with performances in Warsaw, Tel Aviv, Bologna and Graz. From 2009 to 2010 she was at the Deutsche Theater in Berlin. She has been living in Frankfurt since autumn 2012, where she is currently rehearsing at the Schauspiel Frankfurt.

Besides appearing on stage, she also played in Philip Gröning's cinema film *Die Frau des Polizisten*, Harald Bergmann's *Brinkmanns Zorn* (Grimme Award), the Azerbaijani cinema film *Three Girls, Tatort-* and other television and cinema productions. Capoeira (Afro Brazilian martial arts/dance) has been a fixture in her life since 2005.



David Zimmerschied

David Zimmerschied, born in Passau in '83 studied theatre in Munich and upon graduation, he joined the TK Zurich. After that he came back to Munich, where he still lives and made his screen debut with the leading role in Radu Gabrea's 2007 coming of age film *The Beheaded Rooster*. Since then, David has acted in many TV series and films, including *Generation War (Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter)*, 2013's big World War II mini-series. In addition to his work in film and theater, David still enjoys being up on stage once in a while.



Cast & Crew



CAST

Christine – *Alexandra Finder*
Uwe – *David Zimmerschied*
Clara – *Pia & Chiara Kleemann*
Alter Mann – *Horst Rehberg*
Kollegin – *Katharina Susewind*
Kalle – *Lars Rudolph*

CREW

Director – *Philip Gröning*
Writer – *Philip Gröning*
Co-Writer – *Carola Diekmann*
Producers – *Philip Gröning, Dr. Matthias Esche, Philipp Kreuzer, Werner Wirsing*
Commissioning Editors – *Bayerischer Rundfunk, Dr. Cornelia Ackers; ZDF/Arte, Anne Even*
Supervising Line Producer – *Gilbert Möhler*
Line Producers – *Martin Blankemeyer, Christine Günther*
Production Manager – *Christine Günther*
Cinematography – *Philip Gröning*
Sound – *Marc Parisotto, Uwe Dresch*
Production Design – *Petra Barchi,*

Petra Klimek, Adán Hernández S.
Art Director – *Federica Bologna*
Costume Designer – *Ute Paffendorf*
Make-Up – *Magdalena Ocker, Claudia Schaaf*
Casting Children – *Verena Ansguesser*
Casting – *Suse Marquardt Besetzungsbüro*
Editing – *Hannes Bruun, Philip Gröning*

A *Philip Gröning* Filmproduktion

In coproduction with – *Bavaria Pictures GmbH, Bavaria Film GmbH, 3L Filmproduktion GmbH & Co. KG, Bayerischer Rundfunk*

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Technical Info

Germany, 2013
Length – 172 min
Sound – 5.1
Aspect ratio – 1:2
Language – *german*



Philip Gröning
FILMPRODUKTION

BAVARIA PICTURES

BAVARIA FILM

3L

BR

ventura film

ZDF

arte

RSI
Radiotelevisione
svizzera

Film und Medien
Stiftung NRW

DEUTSCHER
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FFA



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