

"AANGRIJPENDE FILM DIE NOG LANG BIJBLIJFT"

- JURY TEDDY AWARD BERLINALE

"STERK GEACTEERD"

- VARIETY



KATER

EEN FILM VAN KLAUS HÄNDL



Filmdistributie: Arti Film VOF

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Synopsis

De dertigers Andreas en Stefan leiden een harmonisch leven: ze wonen samen in een geweldig huis met tuin aan de rand van Wenen en hebben beiden een leuke baan bij het radiosymfonieorkest, Stefan als hoornist, Andreas als manager. Met een groep collega's vormen ze een hechte vriendengroep. En dan is er nog Mozes, de kater die niet meer weg te denken is uit hun leven.

Maar dan maakt een impulsieve daad van Stefan, die hijzelf niet kan verklaren, alles kapot. Andreas vraagt zich af of hij degene met wie hij zijn huis en leven deelt eigenlijk wel kent en of hij met hem door wil gaan, terwijl Stefan van spijt en berouw niet weet waar hij het moet zoeken. 'Kater' won op het festival van Berlijn de Teddy Award: de prijs voor de beste LGBT-film.

Korte synopsis

De dertigers Andreas en Stefan leiden een harmonisch leven: ze wonen samen in een geweldig huis met tuin aan de rand van Wenen en hebben beiden een leuke baan bij het radiosymfonieorkest, Stefan als hoornist, Andreas als manager. En dan is er nog hun kater Mozes, die niet meer weg te denken is uit hun leven. Maar dan maakt een impulsieve daad van Stefan, die hij zelf niet kan verklaren, een eind aan al dit geluk. Andreas vraagt zich af of hij degene met wie hij zijn leven deelt eigenlijk wel goed kent. Wil hij wel doorgaan met Stefan?

Tagline

Een impulsieve daad maakt abrupt een eind aan het paradijselijke leven van Andreas en Stefan..

Achtergrond

'Kater' won op het festival van Berlijn de Teddy Award: de prijs voor de beste LGBT-film. Op zeldzaam natuurlijke wijze toont de film hoe twee mannen hun dagelijkse leven leiden, tot ze als het ware uit hun paradijs worden verdreven. Hoofdrolspelers Philipp Hochmair ("Das Experiment") en Lukas Turtur beide geboren theateracteurs durven zich voor de kijker helemaal bloot te geven, niet alleen in letterlijke zin.

Commentaar van de jury Berlinale 2016:

Featuring a standout performance by a cat, KATER uses its furry star to expose the violence lurking under the surface of a seemingly idyllic life. Surprisingly not a lesbian film, the story portrays a genuine and sensitive love between men rarely depicted on screen. Writer/director Händl Klaus and his team bring together masterful editing, beautiful cinematography, and great performances from the human cast to create an atmosphere of suspense. The result is a gripping, puzzling, and thought-provoking film that will stick with you long after you leave the cinema....



DIRECTORS STATEMENT

MOSES

You did not aspire to such a bond. But then, a stray cat comes your way, and it just happens. Suddenly, you communicate with a sensitive, wilful creature, whose nature is "alien" to you, who certainly experiences the world differently than you do, with needs mostly unknown to you, who speaks to you primarily through its behaviour – it is always touching, thrilling, often challenging too. How and what does an animal feel, dream, expect, think... fear, scent, know, remember, guess? After caressing its soft and comforting fur, a strange look appears on the animal's face.

The sense of the unexplainable that appeared between Andreas and Stefan – Stefan's action, which is unfathomable to himself – will not simply dissipate. In such a case, psychotherapists talk of *impulse control disorder* – but where do impulses come from?

A blind spot, remnants of an unspeakable unpredictability lurk inside of me, an exiguous black hole without morals, without conscience, without sympathy, without mercy – the possibility of a brutality that can break loose under certain circumstances. And still our lives also depend upon decisions. Then one moment leads to reconciliation, and a *bad tree* is cut down for firewood

DIRECTOR & SCRIPT WRITER KLAUS HÄNDL:



Händl Klaus was born in 1969 in the Tyrol, Austria. He was part of the ensemble at Schauspielhaus Wien and played smaller parts in films by Christian Berger, Urs Egger, Michael Haneke, Jessica Hausner, Dagmar Knöpfel and others. Since 1994 he publishes prose, radio plays and plays of which Sebastian Nübling's staging of *(WILDE)Mann mit traurigen Augen* and *Dunkel lockende Welt* were invited to the Berlin Theatertreffen. Furthermore, he also is writing opera librettos for Beat Furrer, Georg Friedrich Haas, Arnulf Herrmann, Heinz Holliger, Klaus Lang and Hector

Parra. In 2008, Händl's feature film debut *MÄRZ/ MARCH* won the Silver Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival.

LUKUS TURTUR (Stefan)

Lukas Turtur, born 1984 in Munich, studied acting at the Otto Falckenberg School from 2005 to 2008. In 2006, while still a student, he was awarded the O.E. Hasse Prize and acted in the Munich Kammerspiele Workshop, featuring among other productions in Stefan Otteni's version of *Der Wolf ist tot*, which won the Ensemble Prize at the Bavarian Theater Festival and the 2007 Salzburg Drama School Festival. In 2007 and 2008 he could be seen as a guest at the Deutsche Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, the Munich Kammerspiele and the Zurich Schauspielhaus. From 2009 to 2011 he was first a guest and then an ensemble member at the Stadttheater Bern, and here his roles included Friedrich Wetter, Graf vom Strahl in Erich Sidler's production of *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*, while again working with Stefan Otteni (in *Gruppe Junger Hund* based on texts by Händl Klaus, among other pieces). Lukas Turtur has featured in numerous film

and television productions including the feature films by Marcus H. Rosen müller *Beste Zeit, Beste Gegend* and *Räuber Kneißl*, and the feature film *Tannöd* directed by Bettina Oberli. In 2010 he took the lead- ing role in the Swiss short film *Was ich kann* (directed by Aron Nick). From 2011 until 2016 Lukas Turtur was a member of the en- semble at the Residenztheater in Munich.

PHILIP HOCHMAIR (Andreas)

Philipp Hochmair, born 1973 in Vienna, studied acting at the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna, among others, taught by Klaus Maria Brandauer, and at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique in Paris. Engagements at the Schauspielhaus Hamburg, Staatstheater Hannover, Volks- bühne Berlin and Zurich Schauspielhaus. 2003 – 2009 company member of the Vienna Burgtheater (admitted in the Gallery of Honor). Since 2009 member of the ensemble of the Thalia Theatre in Hamburg. Starring in numerous movies and television films, including *Die Manns – Ein Jahrhundertroman* (director Heinrich Breloer), *Winterreise* (Hans Steinbichler), *Day and Night* (Sabine Derflinger), *The Fatherless* (Marie Kreutzer) and *The Shine of the Day* (Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel), *Die Auslöschung* (Nicholas Leytner) and *Männertreu* (Hermine Hunt- geburth). Hochmair regularly tours with his solo projects *Goethe's Werther!*, *Jedermann Performance* (together with his band *Elektro- hand Gottes*), as well as *The Trial* and *The Man Who Disappeared* by Franz Kafka.

INTERVIEW MET DE REGISSEUR (KARIN SCHIEFER, AFC)

The film opens with a series of paintings from the 1930s, which are today in the ORF Funkhaus in Vienna. What was the appeal of these pictures as the opening sequence for TOMCAT? Were the density contained in the momentary image of a painting and the contemplation that can be associated with it in some ways programmatic for the narrative and visual language of this film?

These wall paintings are in the orchestra rehearsal room there, which is an important place for the main characters. When we first went to view the location it was as though we had been invited into their world, because unexpectedly we discovered several scenes from the screenplay there, a series of small, idyllic views: the ballgame, the dance, two innocent, naked boys at a lake with a sailing boat, and even a group of deer... As well as that, these paintings in earthy colors are associated with our main location, a beautiful house in Hernals that was designed by an American architect of that period. So we used four sections from the paintings as a kind of overture, interwoven with pieces of music that are important later in the film for carrying the action, when the orchestra is rehearsing Ravel and Schubert, or when Stephan listens to Bach in a desperate mood and Andreas listens to the Intimate Letters by Janáček.

When we look for thematic links with your first full-length feature film, MARCH, as well as the sensations of loss and mourning there is also something unexplained and inexplicable in TOMCAT, a huge question mark, an unsolved puzzle beneath the surface. Does that get to the heart of the subjects that pre occupy you?



Yes, I think I just have to keep on pounding away at that. Because I can't explain our existence – and I don't have the comfort of a religion. But this being together, which you can't actually escape from, whether you want to or not... that's basically all we have, only, for example, when Stefan asks about the grave. Not knowing the place where you can grieve – which makes everything a possible place for grieving, the whole house – that's the worst punishment possible for him. That is why the dead fawn in the forest was so important, which he covers with a branch as if finding some consolation there.

The tomcat, Moses, is a channel of communication between these two men: they're both devoted to it with the same intensity. I believe you yourself are very close to a tomcat. Could you say something about the bond that can arise with an animal? What strength and what significance it can have.

The point is that you never know with complete certainty where you are – how that other being really feels; after all, it can't articulate itself in my language, even though it's skilled at imitation and employing sound patterns, so it can "speak" in a complaining or demanding way. I have to develop a different way of being attentive, I'm constantly in the process of interpreting the situation – but there's a huge opportunity for misunderstanding, and a whole host of things are accepted because of our mutual relationship, although in fact it's more "alien" than I would like. Nevertheless, there is a bond of trust between us: this tomcat seeks me out, and I'm clearly the being he most closely relates to.

Stefan and Andreas are united by music but also by the natural world, the garden, food. They appear to be anchored to the world by basic elements?

Yes that's right, fundamental things. The things you reach for, that link you to life in the sense of being alive but also signify life themselves and provide comfort in the state of having been thrown into the world. Music above all. Because it's the language of things that cannot be spoken, it can approach these things most closely, and for Andreas and Stefan it's also literally work: a life with music is hard. It's also associated with nakedness. Physical proximity as well – and with Andreas and Stefan sex is only ever initiated after contact with the "outside world", which apparently functions as a catalyst: after having lasagna with friends from the orchestra, after the summer party, after the concert... And literature is important, the wide variety of voices in the bookshelf.

While we were filming we often deliberately placed books out of the shot, under the bed. It seemed to me that would have some sort of effect; for example, *Der nackte Soldat* by Belmen O, or Jacques Derrida's animal book *L'animal que donc je suis*. And Angelika Reitzer's novel *Unteruns* established a link back to *MARCH*; that was also a tribute to Angelika. In a longer version there's also a poem by Lorca, about a cry that cracks the wind like a viola bow, and the two of them also share an interest in Spanish, in the richness of a foreign language.

The relationship between the two men is contrasted with the orchestra, as a powerful collective force. And whether it's the cat or the orchestra, it seems that the internal component of the relationship between two people can't exist and be maintained without an external component. What role do you assign the orchestra?



It's a special place with rules of its own, which is familiar to me from writing libretti; I have several musicians among my close friends. I'm fascinated by how hard this work is – and it carries on at home; they all practice for several hours even in their "spare time", because there is so much pressure to play as well as possible. It's also interesting as a community with so many fine distinctions between the individuals, sub-groups and networks, and sometimes it feels like a group of people subjected to the same fate. Apart from that, the orchestra can also provide a supportive environment; when the adrenaline level rises before the concert, and outside on the football pitch, there's an atmosphere of affection that not only comforts Stefan but really strengthens him.

When he experiences this support I think it genuinely changes his image of himself: it gives him something, belief in himself, and it comes from this group. Although nobody would even mention it. We were so lucky with the weather: we were praying for rain, and it rained! There we were, standing in the Schutzhaus in the light of dawn, with the cold bowling alley as a dressing room, and then we went out into the clearing... We were incredibly lucky with the RSO, the Radio Symphony Orchestra. I was really worried about the huge machinery of the orchestra, but from the very start everybody was open, trusting and accommodating. And working with the individual musicians who played the friends of the main characters was wonderful. They were musical in every sense of the word.

In the first section the film takes the time to depict the main characters at home, in a safe atmosphere, with intimacy and sexuality slowly mounting. It does this in a long series of relaxed shots leading to a dance of love where bodies, music, movement and painting merge into a whole. What issues are you together with the director of photography Gerald Kerkletz addressing here in terms of the total composition?

We wanted to "breathe" with the three of them, the two people and the cat, wanted them to have as much space as possible for themselves but at the same time also be close. Gerald, who was at all the rehearsals with the actors from the very beginning and was also at my side whenever it came to dramaturgic issues – showed me some rehearsal footage in 2.39:1 Cinemascope. It's a format I'd never thought of, because I didn't associate it with closeness, which Gerald created in any case. It also gave us the opportunity to be close to the people in all the group scenes with their friends, without the need for a number of shots with different focal length, and to see the people and the cat together. In the first part we were consciously placing slightly exaggerated emphasis on everyday life so that the catastrophe would really break through when you weren't expecting it because you had become familiar with the everyday situation. And we wanted a sort of mature closeness to be present in everyday life, also as a result of the nakedness that is possible in the first part, before the two of them are expelled from Paradise. That was a big question: how should we depict that nakedness? We certainly didn't want to exhibit it: we wanted it just to be there. So first we looked for well-crafted examples from films we liked – as well as bad examples – and we showed them to the actors, who would have to trust us, to see where that journey could end up. The important thing was this gift from Gerald, his sensitivity and instinctive certainty that make him not just a cameraman but a director of photography.



In the second part you find an incredibly intense language of mourning, to capture the pain at the loss of someone beloved and the question of guilt which, in the final analysis, remains one of the great mysteries of this film. To what extent was working with the two leading actors – Lukas Turtur and Philipp Hochmair – also part of this creative process?

Time was everything. Of course I prepare down to the smallest detail, but something unexpected always develops from the encounter itself, the performance by the actors is exciting, and I go into search mode. Then I just keep calm for a while and lose myself a little, get into a state of less self-control – but in a protected sphere – just as the actors do. And you need time so as to stay patient. It was the first leading role that Lukas had played; I knew him from the stage, where he'd acted in a play I wrote, and there he had a sort of profound vulnerability which is what I was looking for in Stefan. In front of the camera he has the curious gift of tipping over into a transparently concentrated state – and on top of that, he's very musical and even plays the horn. Clearly it helped that he had played the clarinet since he was 15, but the lip position, the fingering, the stance, the breathing – that was all new territory. We had Christoph Walder as our coach, which was another stroke of luck. And I had been friends with Philipp for almost exactly the same length of time, since I saw him in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*, which was brilliant. We'd always wanted to do something together, and we'd been thinking of a play until suddenly *TOMCAT* came up. Philipp's instinct is incredible, and he can also be transparent in his acting. During the casting sessions the two of them were a thrilling couple from the very start, and they made me think: "I'd like to see these two working together more closely". I was really keen to discover how it would be. It was like a release, because the casting procedure was long and fairly complex, since the famous chemistry had to be just right.

What were the crucial criteria during the auditions for the leading actors?

Above all the speaking voice: I was looking for something gentle and warm, which is why I wrote the dialogue in Viennese dialect: I also felt Bavarian could be appropriate, and that's how it worked out, with Lukas Turtur from Munich. But unfortunately a stipulation like that severely restricts the potential field; I did try with great actors from Cologne and Berlin, but each time it sounded off the mark, out of tune, fundamentally wrong. And then the first question I had to ask was whether the actor could handle being naked. Actually I really underestimated this point, because an astonishing number of people are afraid of that – even actors, who surely work with their bodies as if they were instruments, which made me think it must be easier for them than it turned out in fact. But there was no way around it: Adam and Adam had to be naked in the Garden of Eden, and later the pain and alienation showed itself partly in the fact that this nakedness and intimacy was no longer possible.

The film is clearly characterized by its rhythm and the music. A rhythm that's not only dictated by ellipsis and omission but at other times by taking a great deal of time for certain moments. How did the film develop, in editing and with the music, into an entirety?

At some places in the script jump cuts had been specified, and with the four plates at the beginning and their music, which is cut drastically, you can hear that too. On the other hand there were islands, distinct in terms of resolution,



when the decision was made to use uncut "real time", for example at the turning points, and here the acting alone determines the rhythm of the film. And the sequences with Moses were quite an adventure in the editing room. We really had to take our time, trying something out, looking at it, losing track, getting back on track – all thanks to Joana's instinct. Then there was the separate world of the background sounds, which is crucial. We brought some touches of contamination to the house in Paradise and shifted it closer to the city with street noise that doesn't actually exist up there. But the most important sounds were in the house itself, the creaking of the old parquet floor. With the couple dancing in silence, this creaking is their accompaniment, their music.

There is clearly biblical symbolism in the snake that destroys the two people's innocent existence, and the tomcat as the "foundling" Moses in his basket. We're dealing with expulsion from Paradise, but there is also the implication that Moses is a possible rescuer or savior.

Although it is Moses himself who brings the snake into the house – and Stefan, of all people, who makes a home for it from stones! The really biblical aspect of Moses is his nakedness – he does have his fur, but that's his nature – and that corresponds to the people walking around the house naked in a state of innocence. But Moses has a mind of his own, and his own life.



C A S T

LUKAS TURTUR

PHILIPP HOCHMAIR

TONI

KATHI

THOMASSTIPSITS

MANUEL RUBEY

GERALD VOTAVA

GABRIELA HEGEDÜS

BRIGITTE POTOTSCHNIG

OSWALD KÖHLER

SIMON HATZL

RICHARD OBERMAYR

VITUS WIESER

MAGDALENA KRONSCHLÄGER

PHILEMON AIGNER

MONICA ANNA CAMMERLANDER

LEVI VEITH WINTER

OLIVER ROSSKOPF

BENEDIKT LEITNER

AILEEN DULLAGHAN

MARIA GRÜN

RAPHAEL HANDSCHUH

ANAÏS TAMISIER

JOHANNES KUBITSCHKEK

PETRA HARTL

VIOLAINE REGNIER

ANDERS NYQVIST

RUDOLF ILLAVSKY

SEBASTIAN LÖSCHBERGER

MILAN TURKOVIC

JOHANNES WILDNER

CORNELIUS MEISTER

UND DAS ORF RADIO SYMPHONIEORCHESTER WIEN



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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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