

# AWCH CURRENTS

Women's  
Rights  
Are  
Human  
Rights

CELEBRATING  
AN ACTIVE SPRING

EXCLUSIVE  
RED CARPET EVENT

FEATURING  
LOVELY BLANKENESE

THE AMERICAN WOMENS CLUB OF HAMBURG, e.V.

July-September 2022 Vol. 38, No. III  
[www.awchamburg.org](http://www.awchamburg.org)

# Editorial



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

*Dear Currents Readers,*

Some of us in this club are expats, some are immigrants, and some simply have strong ties to the United States. This is reason enough to keep an eye on American politics, but it's not the only reason. American political events and policies still reverberate around the world, for better or worse. Recently, as far as a woman's right to bodily autonomy and a controlling hand in her own destiny are concerned, the changes are for the worse. We refer primarily (but not exclusively) to the recent Supreme Court's striking down of *Roe v. Wade*.

It is worth mentioning here that, yes, we in the AWCH try to maintain political neutrality for the sake of inclusiveness. However, under the umbrella of FAWCO, we are firm supporters of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with Goal 5—Gender Equality being especially close to our hearts.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) administers SDG 5, and has “repeatedly stressed that denying access to safe and legal abortion is a severe restriction on women's ability to exercise their reproductive freedom, and that forcing women to carry a pregnancy to full term involves mental and physical suffering amounting to gender-based violence against women and, in certain circumstances, to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, in violation of the CEDAW Convention.”

**TARGET**

**5-6**



**UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS**

**US abortion debate: Rights experts urge lawmakers to adhere to women's convention**

*“The UN women's rights committee said that the US is one of only seven countries throughout the world that is not party to the international convention that protects women's human rights, including their right to sexual and reproductive health.”*

**To read full story:**  
[news.un.org/en/story/  
2022/07/1121862](https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1121862)

Wherever you stand on this deeply divided issue, knowing which way the political wind is blowing on women's rights is very much our concern. So is Germany going the way of the US or not? The answer is no, but...

And what about when one does choose have a baby? Our own Joana M.-O. has braved more than one German take on it, and she has

definite opinions about the better way to go. And while the development of a vaccine that prevents one of the leading woman-killing cancers in the world should have been a slam-dunk, you'll learn how one man had to fight tooth and nail to bring it to the world.

We couldn't make this issue a general resource of health info, but good resources are out there. First of all, our member-compiled *Hamburg in Your Pocket* has a great section entitled “Having Babies in Germany.” Digital copies can be downloaded at [payhip.com/b/m1yi](https://payhip.com/b/m1yi).

General health sites in English, such as [we-inform.de/portal/en/health](https://we-inform.de/portal/en/health) are Googlable, and Facebook groups can offer a lot—we personally have found both “Hamburg Mother's Meeting” and “Girl Gone International Hamburg” useful for recommendations (and warnings!). And don't forget our club members.

The more we bring personal health experiences into the light, the less they are stigmatized. Women's health issues have long been marginalized, and the consequences go beyond reproductive health. (Case in point: would you know if you were having a heart attack? The symptoms may be gendered. See [www.nytimes.com/2022/05/09/well/live/heart-disease-symptoms-women.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/09/well/live/heart-disease-symptoms-women.html))

*Be well, everyone!*  
*Mason Jane & Stephanie*

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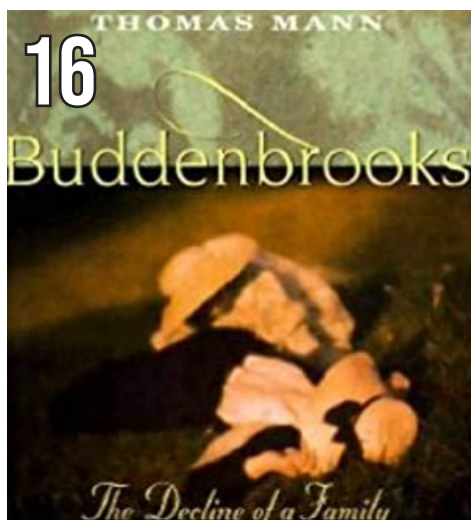
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AMERICAN  
★  
WOMEN'S  
CLUB OF  
HAMBURG



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# President's Message

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*“And all at once, summer collapsed into fall.”*

—Oscar Wilde

After a quiet summer, at least for those who remained in Hamburg, one can already hear the engines revving up as we get ready for autumn and the associated activities. Summer is a time for visiting family and friends, tanking up some sun, and just taking life a bit easier. For me, the start of summer is always the Fourth of July celebration—and what a fun time we had this year at the Auswanderermuseum in Ballinstadt. As we jointly celebrated the end of our Spring Challenge, which virtually ended in Hawaii, we donned colorful attire accented with flower leis and enjoyed a traditional hamburger buffet.

The summer brought an exciting new group to the club: Through The Lens photography group. What a great combination: exploring highlights of Hamburg and learning photographic tips. Thank you, Jess and Jordan, for getting this going! We will certainly miss Jess as she sets off on her next adventure, this time in Oxford. Always a great source of ideas, positivity, and creativity—we wish you all the best (and are happy that you are keeping your membership). S'n'B, which continued their meet-ups throughout the summer, is now also in need of a new coordinator. It may take two to replace Jess, but we remain confident that someone will step up.

Many of our activities continued throughout the summer, and we are so thankful for our many group leaders and Hamburger Helpers who organize these events. Our philanthropic activities slowed down over the summer break—but late August brought a



**AWCH board members hosted several social hours over the summer. This was mine, with a fun group at The Botanic District in Eppendorf.**

(Photo courtesy of Carol H.)

burst of activity: Tracy organized a sewing bee for our From the Heart Pillow Project; Shelly brought groups together to prepare school bags, sort clothes, and set up a Help Store for Hanseatic Help; and a large group of our members with their families and friends joined us for the annual Laufend Gegen Gewalt charity run to support the autonomous women's shelters in Hamburg.

As we sense the return of autumn, we start making plans for our traditional fall events—Halloween and Thanksgiving. We welcome ideas and support as we make plans. I would like to take this opportunity to remind you all that this is your club ... get connected, get involved!

To an exciting and active fall.

Best,  
Carol Harbers  
president@awchamburg.org

# A Sustainable Joint Effort

The AWCH team makes a difference with Hanseatic Help



Meredith, Regina, Leonie, Stella, Michaela, and Mary Francis helped fill dozens of backpacks with supplies in August. (Photos by Shelly S.)

With the Ukrainian crisis, new streams of refugees are coming into Germany. Most of them are women with children who are desperately trying to create a normal environment after fleeing a war zone. It has taken Hanseatic Help some time to restructure their efforts to fill the current need, but, as usual, they have brilliantly come up with a system that is highly efficient and where everyone can help. There are plenty of opportunities to sort and box up donated clothing, as well as to donate needed items, which are posted and updated each week on their website.

During the summer, Jennifer L., Holly T., Carol B., and I put in a few hours here and a few hours there at the warehouse. Brenda B. and Carol H. helped set up one of their new Help Stores in the Hamburger Meile.

Our latest efforts focused on school and education. Before the first day of school, a team of six AWCH members, Michaela A., Mary Frances L., Meredith G., Regina L., Leonie H., Stella K., and I spent several hours filling backpacks with school supplies donated from several organizations to be given to children in

need. Money from a FAWCO 2021 Development Grant awarded to Hanseatic Help for a Learning Center was also used to help buy still more school supplies.

Interested in donating some time or items to Hanseatic Help? Please look either on their website or contact me at [hansetichelp@awchamburg.org](mailto:hansetichelp@awchamburg.org). Thanks to all who have participated! (Shelly S.)



# Big AWCH Turnout at Charity Run

Good friends, good fun, good cause at annual Laufend Gegen Gewalt



There were about 30 people (and one dog!) who participated as part of the AWCH team.  
(Photo by Frank Schaefer)

The Laufend Gegen Gewalt charity run is sponsored each year by the Hamburg Autonomous Women's Shelters. This August's event was a big success, as the venue returned to its pre-pandemic format with a run around the Alster.

AWCH stands behind initiatives to end violence against women and children and has supported this fundraiser since 2019.

It was a perfect Sunday morning for all of us to run, walk, or ride a bike for a good cause. Over 30 people represented AWCH in the event, helping to raise money and bring awareness to Hamburg's do-

mestic violence shelters.

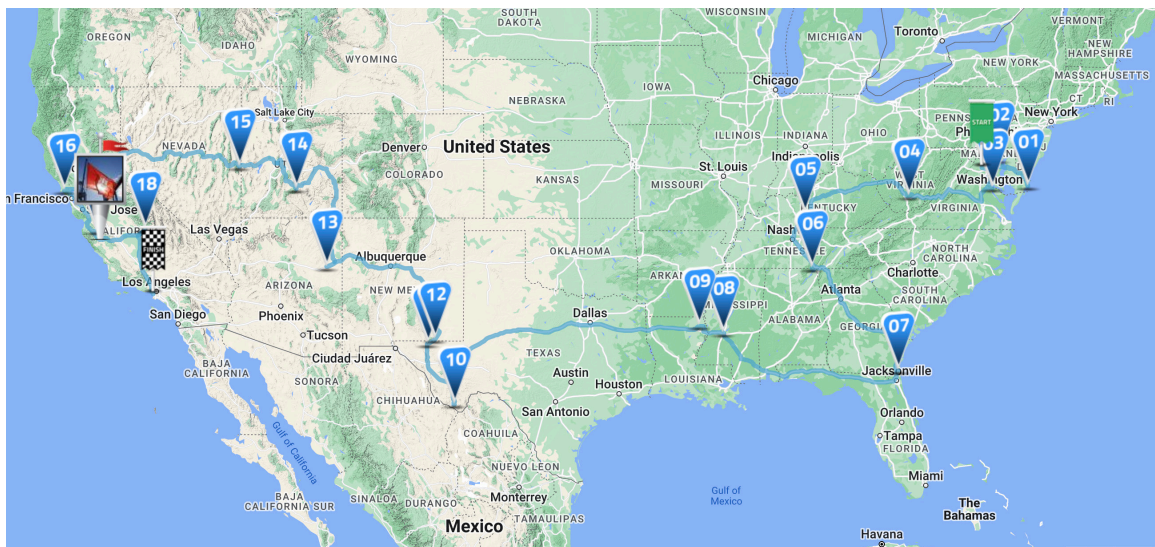
The Hamburg Autonomous Women's Shelters runs safehouses for women and their children who are escaping violence at home. Hamburg has six safehouses hidden throughout the city.

Last year, 486 women and 494 children found protection in a shelter in Hamburg. The shelters offer individual advice, support, and perspective development for a new life in a safe environment.

I am sure that many of us are looking forward to participating next year. Thank you all for your continuous support! (Shelly S.)



Venita enjoying the beautiful September day.  
(Photo by Shelly S.)



Our virtual tour route included 18 national parks.

# AWCH Fitness Challenge: Every Mile Counts!

63 team members encouraged each other along a fun virtual tour of US national parks

After the success of our 2021 Summer Challenge, AWCH members with their friends and family members embarked on a second challenge from May 1 to June 30 of this year.

In a virtual competition across the United States, 63 participants toured 18 national parks, monuments, and seashores. Working in three teams, together they covered the 6,176.8-mile journey by running, walking, rowing, cycling, swimming, high-intensity interval training, and just counting steps. By far the most popular sport was cycling, making up roughly 30 percent of the traveled miles. A friendly battle to the end, all three teams crossed the finish line.

As each team member passed a milestone, they were treated to a photo and a description of the national site. The US historic monuments commemorated places or events from the colonial days through to the civil rights movements. The national parks—ranging from the rarely visited Big Bend National Park to the highly popular Sequoia National Park—reflected the spectacular and varied beauty of the US.

Our sea-to-shining-sea mission also included the Assateague Island National Seashore on the east coast and Point Reyes National Seashore on the west. The final

leg of the journey brought us to LA International Airport, where we got on a virtual plane to Hawaii—just in time to celebrate the Fourth of July! Thank you to all who made the journey possible and cheered us on.

Of special note, 45 AWCH members covered a total of 11,264 miles, a median of circa 200 miles per member. Way to go! (Carol H.)



The winners of the Spring Challenge won pineapple trophies for their accomplishments, in keeping with the Hawaiian theme!

(Photo by Jordan W.)



# Summer in the City

AWCH members  
had fun while  
the sun was shining

Summer was an ideal time for the Harbor Explorers—water and sun coupled with exciting new discoveries. (Thank you, Ann!)

The Book Club delved into Thomas Mann and the Buddenbrooks ... and is now preparing a trip to Lübeck to see the city with different eyes. (Thank you, Carol!)

Members continued their luck with mahjong—always a special evening of laughter and good food. (Thank you, Monika, Leonie, and Stella!)

August also saw the return of the Women's Choir, as well as the Opera Club's first meeting for our autumn project, *Turandot* by Puccini (Thank you, Nancy and Elizabeth!).

We continued our Social Hours: exploring a cocktail bar in Eppendorf and a Lithuanian Night with our member Misele, who introduced us to the food and customs of her homeland. Thank you, Misele!



Top: **Opera Club**

Middle: **Lithuanian Night**

Bottom: **Harbor Explorers**



# Coconut bowling? Pineapple trophies? Lei handicrafts?

Not your usual Fourth of July fan-fare—but what great fun! Inspired by our Spring Challenge, which ended at LAX with a flight to Hawaii, our Fourth of July team created a wonderful atmosphere for celebrating US Independence Day. Fifty-two members, families, and friends attended the event held at the Emigration Museum in Ballin-stadt. The hamburger buffet (what else?) was topped by scrumptious desserts brought by our members.



Our annual quiz (for adults and children) once again highlighted some of the holes in our memories (or education) ... but luckily there were many young people who knew the facts (influence of *Hamilton*?). Crafts, games, and a rally rounded out the great afternoon.

A big thank-you to the unbeatable team that put the event together: Hannah B., Adelina G. (and Zoe), Carol H., Nanci S., Diana S.; and to Jordan W. and Adrienne B. for another great quiz!

We were reminded that the day marks not the occasion of gaining independence but the signing of an agreement, an inspiring document that not just proclaims a break with Britain and its king, but also defines a concept on which this new independent country should be based: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” It took eight years to gain independence from Britain...but we are still striving to achieve the goals set out in this important document for everyone.



Hannah B.,  
Stephanie M.A.,  
Adelina G., Francis  
L., Carol B., and  
Thelma F.

**Tropical fruits made fun prizes!** (Photos by Jordan W.)



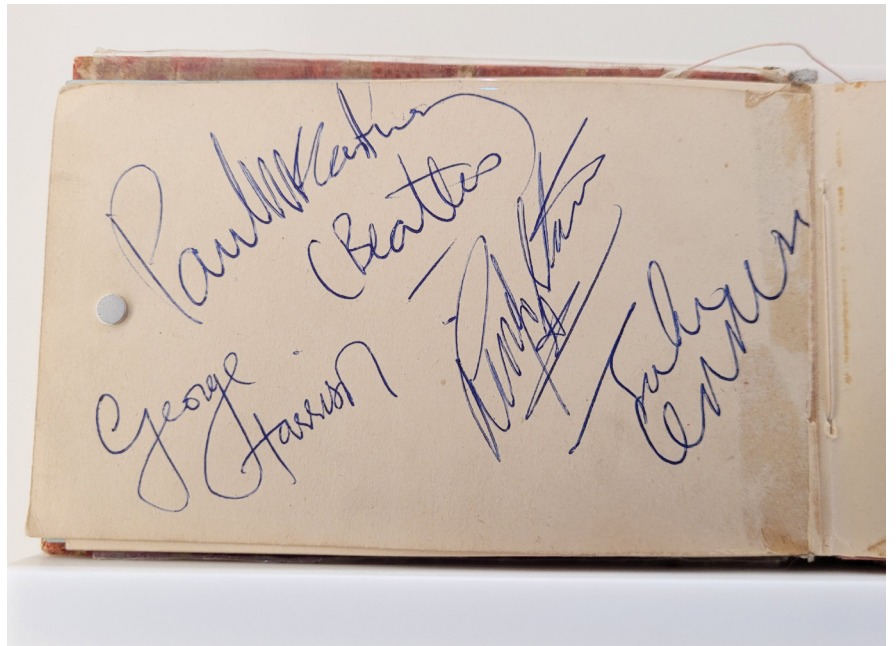
# *Montblanc Haus*

In Altona, the renowned fountain pen company  
has created an immersive love letter to the art of writing

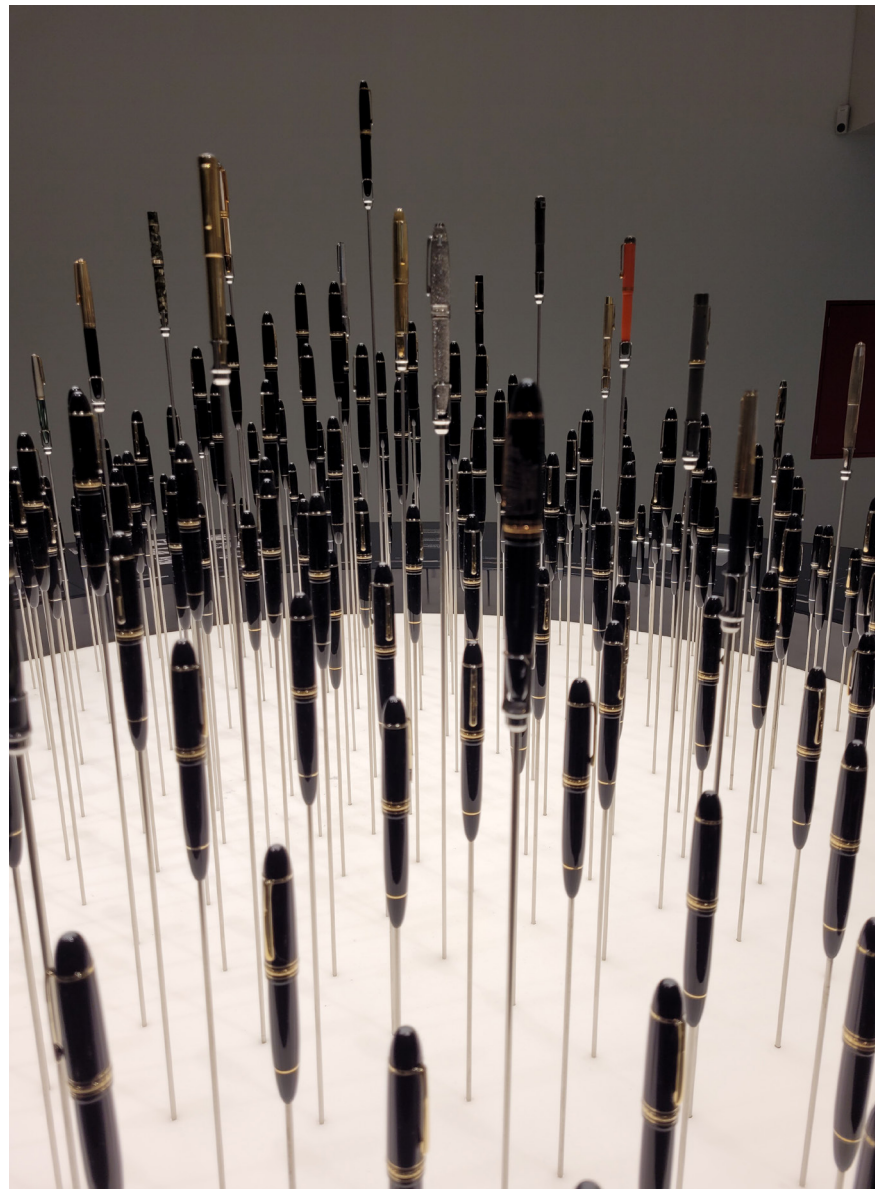


#### THE BEATLES

When you are famous, you can turn a piece of paper into a highly valued collector's item just by writing your name on it. This autograph card carries even four famous names: John, Paul, George, and Ringo. And, as if you needed any more clues, it adds "The Beatles".



*Our recent tour  
impressed with fancy  
writing instruments,  
famous autographs,  
and a beautiful  
new building.*



Photos by Jess M.

# Is Abortion Legal in Germany?

BY JOANA M.-O.

If you follow feminist news in Germany, you may have seen a lot of articles in June 2022 about Paragraph 219a of the Strafgesetzbuch (German criminal code) being struck down. This was a definite win for reproductive and women's rights, but what was the law about?

Paragraph 219a said that doctors could not advertise abortion services. The consequence was that the law criminalized doctors for providing information. For example, one doctor was accused of breaking the law for having a link on their website to an informational website on women's health published by the German government. Doctor Kristina Hänel included the words "abortion services" on her website and became one of the doctors targeted by a man who had made a point of searching through the internet for doctors to report to the police. Dr. Hänel became the face for the fight to change this law, as it was her case that went all the way to the German Supreme Court. The court sided with Dr. Hänel, and soon the Bundestag voted to take the law off the books. Dr. Hänel's book (in German) is highly recommended for anyone who wants to know more about her decades-long

activism: *Das Politische ist persönlich. Tagebuch einer Abtreibungsärztin.*

Perhaps you are wondering if abortion is legal in Germany. Technically, no. According to Paragraph 218, which is still on the books, abortion is illegal in Germany. In practice, however, safe, legal abortion services are still provided in the first trimester after women meet certain criteria, such as having undergone a consultation. This information and much more can be found on pro-

familia's English-language website [www.profamilia.de/en/topics/abortion](http://www.profamilia.de/en/topics/abortion)

It is not ideal for women to feel they are doing something illegal when making choices about their own bodies. Pro-choice activists in Germany have set their eyes on getting Paragraph 218 off the books and have joined forces as the Bündnis für sexuelle Selbstbestimmung. Their website is in German. [www.sexuelle-selbstbestimmung.de](http://www.sexuelle-selbstbestimmung.de)

## Health as a Human Right

The FAWCO website includes an informative health section: [www.fawco.org/global-issues/health](http://www.fawco.org/global-issues/health).

The Beijing Platform was adopted by the UN in 1995 and defines health as complete well-being, not just the absence of illness or infirmity. <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/health>

The UN explains the connection between women's human rights and sexual and reproductive health: [www.ohchr.org/en/node/3447/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights](http://www.ohchr.org/en/node/3447/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights).

# A Better Birth

BY JOANA M.-O.

American TV shows and movies raise the expectation that your personal OB-GYN will be present when you give birth. This is not the case in Germany. If you choose to give birth in a hospital, you will most likely be surrounded by doctors and nurses (*Hebamme*) who are complete strangers. The longer your birth takes, the more new people you may have to adjust to while you are in a vulnerable state. If you want to have the security of a hospital setting and a professional you know and trust, working with a *Beleghebamme* is a great option. A *Beleghebamme* is a professional midwife who has a working relationship with a certain hospital or clinic and will personally attend you during your birth.

My first birth experience in Hamburg was not the greatest and ended in an emergency c-section. When I got pregnant the second time, I immediately called the Fundus Hebammen to sign up. (Call the *Beleghebamme* as soon as you can. They book up quickly!) The Fundus Hebammen is a small group of midwives that works together with the Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE). You are not assigned to one midwife in particular but rather get to know the entire team during your regular check-ups. You alternate these check-ups between your OB-GYN and the



(Photo by Volodymyr Hryshchenko/Unsplash)

*Beleghebamme*. I did actually have to change OB-GYNs during this pregnancy because my then-doctor did not approve of working with a *Beleghebamme*. Was *he* going to be there during my birth? No! Did I appreciate him speaking disparagingly of nurse midwives? Definitely not! It was an easy choice to leave, and I found a new (female) OB-GYN I am much happier with.

I had both of my children at the UKE, but my two birth experiences were like night and day. I felt so much better the second time having a trusted person by my side. The birth was difficult, but in the end,

I had a successful VBAC, a healthy baby, and a rather amazing feeling of empowerment.

Please note that the costs for a *Beleghebamme* are wholly or mainly out-of-pocket. My German husband grumbled about the costs beforehand, but having also been at both births, even he says it was worth every Euro.

*You can find more information in German here:*

[www.geburt-in-hamburg.del/geburt-in-hamburg-2/hebammen/beleghebammen/](http://www.geburt-in-hamburg.del/geburt-in-hamburg-2/hebammen/beleghebammen/)

# How One Scientist's Persistence Can Save Millions of Women's Lives

BY CAROL H.

I first met Harald zur Hausen in the early 1980s when he gave a seminar at a unique and special meeting in the Lüneburger Heide. I had moved to Hamburg to join a research team studying “tumor virology”—a new, burgeoning field in cancer research, in which “gene technology” was being used to determine how viruses might induce cancer. “Might,” I say, because, at the time, we knew only that viruses could induce cancers in mice and birds, but there was no evidence for their involvement in human cancers.

Professor zur Hausen is a self-assured and poised figure, who demands attention and respect. Nevertheless, his thesis of a connection between viruses and human cancer was met with great skepticism and even derided by other physicians. After pursuing the idea for more than 20 years, zur Hausen presented the first evidence toward proving his thesis at the meeting in the Heide; he had isolated sequences of human papillomavirus (HPV) from HeLa cells, a widely used cell line derived from a woman in Georgia who had died from an aggressive cervical cancer. HPV is a large group of viruses that are widely prevalent and sexually transmitted. To prove causality took more



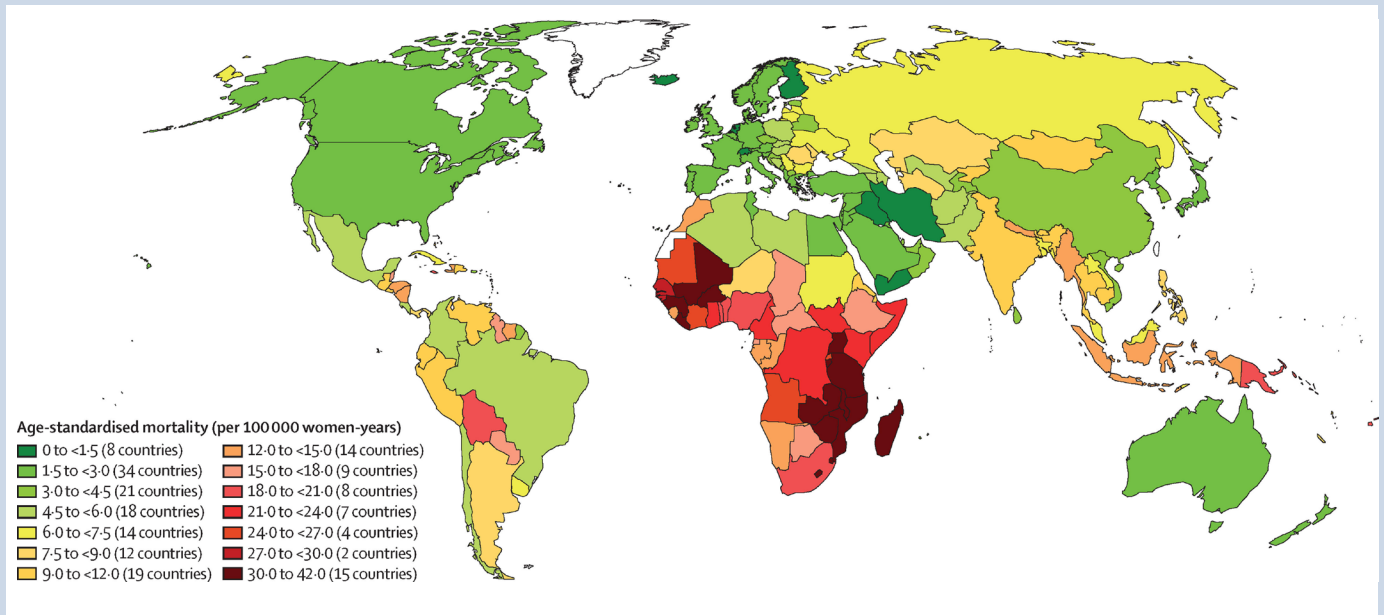
**Harald zur Hausen receiving his Nobel Prize at the Stockholm Concert Hall, December 2008.**

(Courtesy of The Nobel Foundation / Hans Mehlin)

determination. “Ich galt als exzentrisch (I was viewed as eccentric),” he stated as he accepted the Nobel Prize for Medicine (2008), more than 30 years later.

Even when the connection between papillomaviruses and cervical cancer was validated by many others, pharmaceutical companies remained skeptical—and his unremitting efforts to get German companies interested in developing a vaccine against the virus failed. Luckily, others took up the battle, and two vaccines were approved in 2006. But Harald zur Hausen was still disappointed. Firstly, the vaccines were not being pushed as preventive measures against the HPV virus but rather as cervical cancer vaccines. Delaying the vaccine until after an HPV infection has already set in likely means it’s already too late! (His research had shown that it takes 15 to 30 years for the cancer to develop after the initial high-risk infection.) This problem was resolved when the vaccine was finally recommended for girls before they become sexually active.

The second problem is a familiar one. Regulatory agencies did not consider the importance of vaccinating boys of the same age group. It takes two to tango (and spread



### Estimates of incidence and mortality of cervical cancer in 2018: A worldwide analysis

Arbyn et al., *The Lancet Global Health*, Elsevier, (Feb. 2020), CC BY-SA 4.0  
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the virus)! Not until 2018 were vaccinations recommended for both sexes.

It has been a long time in the making, but now there is real hope for the elimination of at least one form of cancer. But this is an important cancer, as it claims the lives of more than 340,000 women yearly, predominantly in underdeveloped countries. No wonder the WHO established in 2020 the goal of eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem. If their goals are met, a cumulative total of 62 million lives will be saved by 2120. It is now accepted that close to 15% of all human cancers have a viral cause—making them good targets for vaccine development. Science is slow and requires persistence and determination, but it is totally worth it.

### Resources

For a brief overview of human papillomaviruses (HPV), the recent success of HPV vaccines, and the remaining challenge of bringing the vaccine to where it is needed, see the FAWCO Health Articles by our own Christine Riney (2019-2022 FAWCO Health Team Co-Chair) and Tharien van Eck, AWC Antwerp. Follow their links—they are quite informative.

[www.fawco.org/global-issues/health/health-articles/4740-the-power-of-science-a-look-at-human-papillomavirus-vaccines](http://www.fawco.org/global-issues/health/health-articles/4740-the-power-of-science-a-look-at-human-papillomavirus-vaccines)

[www.fawco.org/global-issues/health/health-articles/4483-cervical-cancer-elimination](http://www.fawco.org/global-issues/health/health-articles/4483-cervical-cancer-elimination)

# THE CLUBS WITHIN OUR CLUB

## BOOK CLUB



*The Book Club met virtually in June and August to discuss author Thomas Mann. The members went on a day trip together to Lübeck, the hometown of Mann and the setting of his novel Buddenbrooks.*

## Our Recent Discussions

### *Buddenbrooks: The Decline of a Family*

By Thomas Mann, 1901

Translated by John E. Woods

*Buddenbrooks—The Decline of a Family* by Thomas Mann was first published in 1901 when Mann was only 25. It has become a classic of German literature, and it laid the foundation for his literary fame. Mann is celebrated as one of Germany's most notable writers and was awarded

the 1929 Nobel Prize for Literature. The award presentation speech focused on his first epic novel, *Buddenbrooks*, and its importance as the first German book written in the tradition of realistic novels in grand style.

*Buddenbrooks* chronicles four generations of a wealthy bourgeois merchant family in Lübeck. It is highly autobiographical, and the Buddenbrooks portrayed can all be traced back to members of Mann's family. In fact, most of the novel's characters had a prototype in

*Continued on Page 19*



# Our Reviews

The novel *Buddenbrooks* leads us through a four-generation story of a family, well-established in Lübeck; it could be an autobiography of Thomas Mann's family, because of the many similarities. His style is calm, rich in descriptions, so that we can get to know all the traditions in Germany at that time.

—Tanés H.

*Buddenbrooks* was a thoroughly satisfying read. Like a ship on a rolling sea, this masterpiece swept me along, at times tossed me around, immersed me completely, and left me wishing for more.

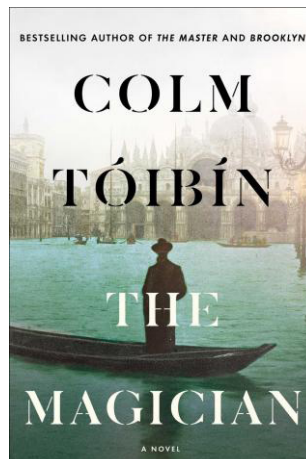
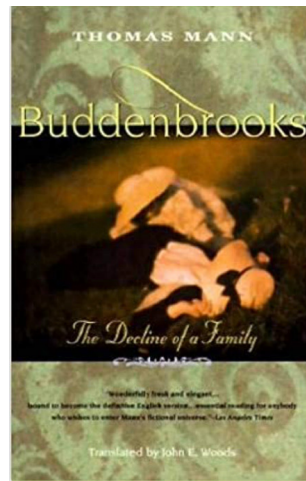
—Paola B.

*Buddenbrooks* details how each family member's big life decisions on marriage, career, and education were influenced by expectation, obligation, and tradition. The dire consequences of those decisions set in motion a sobering family story.

—WangDi S.

They are very different books about the life of the same man but from absolutely different angles; a great decision to read them one after the other.

—Tanés H.



*The Magician* was a great approach to Thomas Mann's life. Toibin opened a door which was always there, but no one has had the courage to open it and show us the real Thomas Mann. He was a distant father and a workaholic. The eldest children, Klaus and Katia, were (rebellious) and independent, knowing the power of wealth which they used with all sorts of liberties in society. Katia, the wife, was a very intelligent woman who comprehended his homosexual desires. A great way of treating the life of a well-known writer.

—Tanés H.

Reading *The Magician* and *Buddenbrooks* in succession gave us a fabulous chance to explore and discuss the world of Thomas Mann—separately, both books were great reads, but even more relevant when read together.

—Sara N.

My first personal encounter with Thomas Mann and his works—embarrassing after living here for so long. *The Magician* was a great introduction to the man and *Buddenbrooks* showed his genius. Fantastic!

—Carol H.

## *The Magician* By Colm Toibín, 2021

*The Magician* is a fictionalized biography of Thomas Mann (1875–1955). It draws from Thomas Mann's diaries, published posthumously starting in 1975; writings of the Mann family; and some of the many biographies of Mann. The diaries revealed Mann's sexual interest in men, which was long suspected but not public, and led to a reappraisal of Mann—less driven

by protocol and vanity, more human. Toibin further humanizes Mann and gives a compelling portrayal of Mann based on fact and fiction.

The novel opens in 1891 in Lübeck. Mann is 16 years old and a member of a well-to-do merchant family that loses its wealth and influence. Mann is forced to apprentice in business but doesn't give up on his artistic desires. At age 25, he published his widely acclaimed novel *Buddenbrooks: Decline of a Family*,

Continued on Page 19

# Discovering German Literature in Translation

BY MICHAELA A.

This month, two books from opposite ends of the Deutsche Welle list of “100 German Must-Reads”: *Buddenbrooks* by Thomas Mann (translated by John E. Woods) for 1901; and *The End of Loneliness* by Benedict Wells (translated by Charlotte Collins), released in 2016.

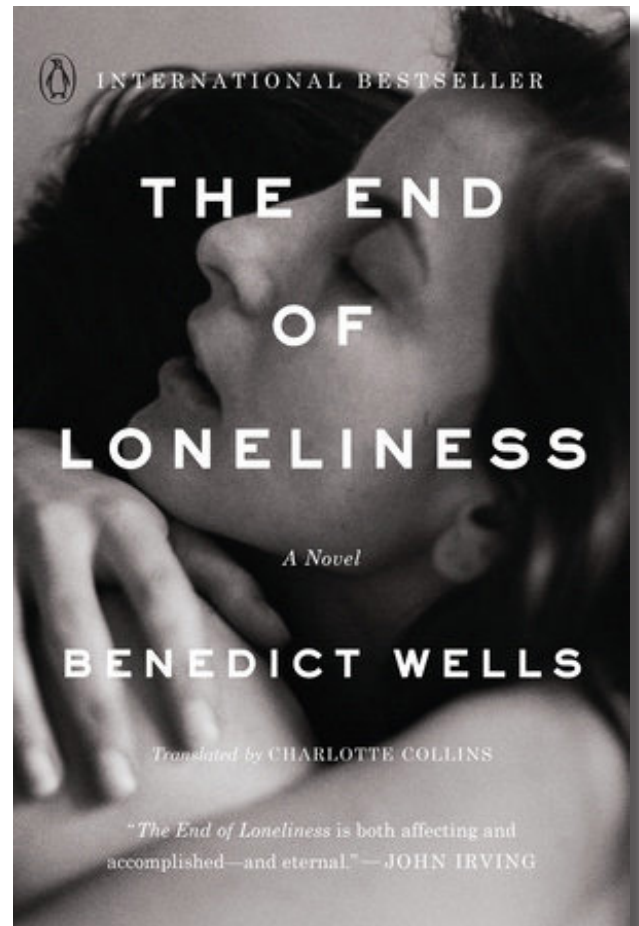
*Buddenbrooks* is a large book, and it sat by my bed for weeks, waiting for summer holidays. When I finally dug into it, I found a fascinating family saga, tracing generations of the fictional Buddenbrooks family and their family grain business. Sharing many elements with Mann’s own family story, it’s a look into a typical North German upper-class family through the 1800s, and our AWCH Book Club members all found this fascinating and also perhaps reflective of some of the old Hamburg business families.

Mann writes with an exceptional sensitivity for his age—just 25 when it was published. I especially found the push and pull of family obligations (prestige of the family business versus an individual, artistic life), and how all the characters were affected by this pressure, remarkably well done. It obviously came from Mann’s deep understanding and experience of this struggle in his early life.

*The End of Loneliness* is also a family drama, though through a much smaller lens and with more of a gentle, emotional weaving of memories and time periods.

It’s the story of three children whose lives are shattered by a tragic accident—and how their lives unfold after the one moment that changes everything. Their relationships with each other fluctuate over the years as they embark on very different paths, and their relationships with love, with loving and being loved, and with life and death, are examined by this talented author.

The story is told in first person by the main character, the youngest of the siblings, Jules, and we trace his time at boarding school, his falling in love, his work life, and his attempts to be a writer. The author, Wells, shares some of his perso-



nal story with his characters—most notably his many years at boarding school. *The End of Loneliness* won the European Prize for Literature in 2016 and remained on the German bestseller list for more than 80 weeks. Charlotte Collins has translated it into English beautifully, and I also thoroughly enjoyed the audiobook narration by Luke Thompson.

Reading these two books side by side led me to reflect on the privilege of choice we have as individuals today, not so shackled by the heavy societal and class expectations of earlier times (though I’m sure there is still plenty of it, just in another form). But also, in the other extreme, how many of us (especially us expats!) can drift from our families or our “village” of support, and how isolation and loneliness can come with its own heaviness, too.

## Buddenbrooks

*Continued from Page 16*

Lübeck—much to the disconcertment and shock of many Lübeck citizens at the time, and the streets and houses of Lübeck as well as the nearby seashore and countryside are all realistically described and recognizable.

Mann had initially planned to write a novella about the fourth-generation only child, Hanno, who was modeled on Mann minus his three siblings, but transformed it to include the eldest sons of the three previous generations, covering the years 1835–1877. The family decline is charted from generation to generation with the changes in business fortune, moral principles, psychological characteristics, philosophical views, and musical sensibility. Very memorable family members and characters are portrayed and developed

in unforgettable detail, as is the life of the Lübeck bourgeoisie. Humor and irony give lightness to the grave themes of death and decline, as well as the conflict between the artistic and bourgeois natures.

*Buddenbrooks* is a masterpiece, carefully constructed and beautifully written. It still has relevance more than 120 years after its publication. It is a meaningful read for us living in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, just forty miles south of the Hanseatic City of Lübeck. It gives insight into German culture and the bourgeois life behind the ubiquitous classical facades found in Hamburg. In comparison to many contemporary novels, it is a quiet, slow read that takes one back in time. (Carol S.)

## The Magician

*Continued from Page 17*

which laid the foundation for his lifelong literary fame and for his celebration as one of Germany's most important writers.

Toibin's novel covers Mann's private, artistic, and family life before and during World War I; postwar Munich; exile beginning in 1933 in Switzerland, southern France, Princeton, and Pacific Palisades; and the 1950 return to Switzerland and Germany. This novel is carefully constructed, ambitious and intimate—in some ways almost a family saga. Toibin gives us great insight not only into Thomas Mann but also into his formidable wife, Katia, their six children, and his famous brother, Heinrich. He succeeds in shedding light on this complex and unconventional family in a simple

and direct way without being over-tailed. His takes on Mann's meetings with prominent people (e.g., Einstein, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, the Meyers of *The Washington Post*) are sprinkled with bon mots.

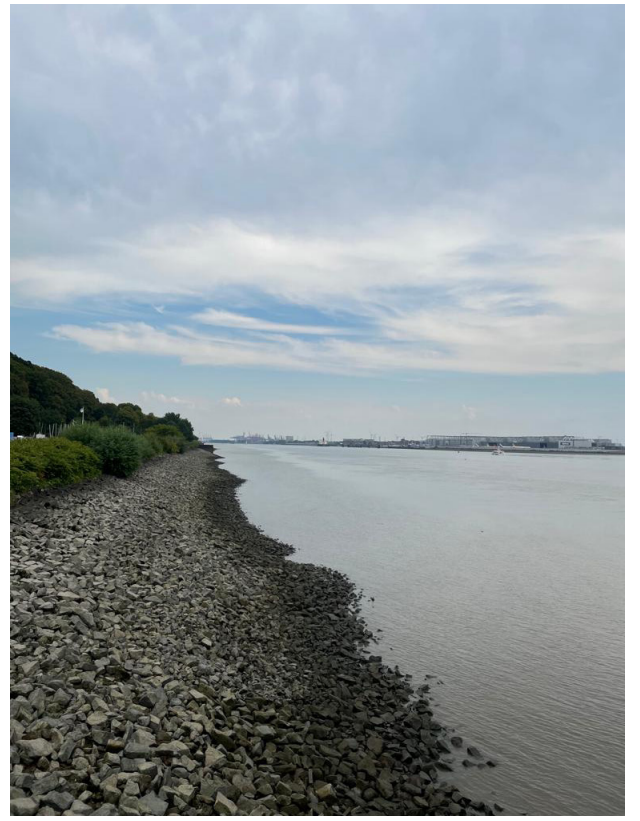
The novel ends when Mann returns to his native Lübeck, ravaged by war, and recalls a long-forgotten story about Johann Sebastian Bach and Buxtehude, organist and composer at the St. Marien Cathedral Lübeck.

It is a story about recognizing beauty and is legendary, but was it told to him and his siblings by his mother, as Toibin writes, or is this Toibin's imaginative take? He artfully weaves fact and fiction in this remarkable and beautifully written novel. (Carol S.)

# THROUGH THE LENS

In August, our photo group met for a walk through Blankenese's winding alleyways, cobblestone staircases, and old fishing villas down to the Elbe.





Photos by Jess M.

# IN HAMBURG

Cultural events throughout the city, including museums, film showings, live theater, and art exhibitions

## DEICHTORHALLEN Internationale Kunst und Fotografie

**THE NEW ABNORMAL**  
A Cooperation with the Odesa Photo Days at PHOXXI  
Twelve Ukrainian Photographers document everyday life during wartime  
Until November 6, 2022

**OUTDOOR EXHIBITION:  
ANASTASIA TAYLOR LIND**  
Mothers and Daughters  
Until October 31, 2022

**IN THE HEART OF ANOTHER COUNTRY**  
The Diasporic Imagination in the Sharjah Art Foundation Collection  
October 28, 2022–March 12, 2023

**ALIX MARIE—STYX**  
November 25, 2022–February 26, 2023

**PAUL MPAGI SEPUYA**  
Daylight Studio/Darkroom Studio  
November 25, 2022–February 26, 2023

**PRESSED SQUASHED SQUEEZED**  
Dieter Roth and Printmaking  
December 3, 2022–March 19, 2023



## MUSEUM FÜR KUNST UND GEWERBE

JAN HOTTMANN: LEAD TO GOLD  
October 21, 2022–December 11, 2022

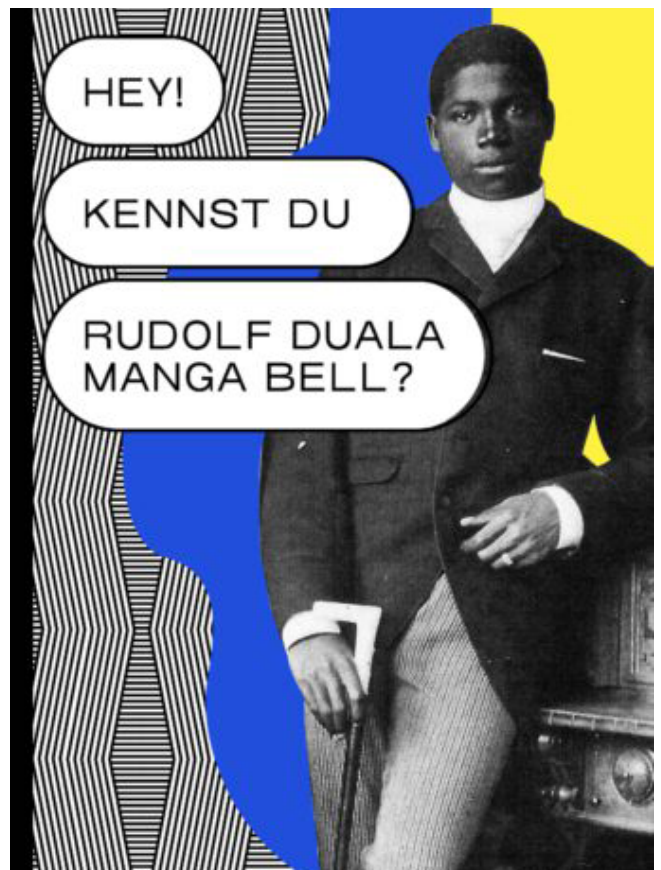
MINING PHOTOGRAPHY  
The Ecological Footprint  
of Image Production  
October 31, 2022

ASK ME IF I BELIEVE IN THE FUTURE  
Until October 23, 2022

AUDIO–GRAPHIC  
The Making of 16 Designs  
Until February 26, 2023

BE WITH THE REVOLUTION  
Street Art and Graphic Design  
in the Arab Protest Since 2011  
Until April 2, 2023

MADE IN CHINA!  
Porcelain  
Until August 20, 2023



## MARKK Museum am Rothenbaum Rothenbaumchaussee 64 20148 Hamburg

UNBINDING BODIES  
Lotus Shoes and Corsets  
Until February 26, 2023

ARCHIVE OF EXPERIENCES  
8th Triennial of Photography  
Until October 16, 2022

LIGHTNING SYMBOL AND SNAKE DANCE  
Aby Warburg and Pueblo Art  
Until January 8, 2023

BENIN  
Looted History  
Until December 21, 2022

HEY HAMBURG, DO YOU KNOW  
DUALA MANGA BELL?  
Until December 31, 2022

# The Dear Boy's Rags-to-Riches Tale Exceeds Expectations

BY MARINELL HAEGELIN

## *Great Expectations*

By Charles Dickens

Adapted by Paul Glaser

English Theatre of Hamburg

Director: Paul Glaser

Launching their forty-sixth season with the world premiere of a new adaptation of Charles Dickens' universally beloved, acclaimed 1861 novel is ingenious; utilizing pioneering technology to bring his favorite book to the English Theatre's stage supports Paul Glaser's vision. *Great Expectations* tells the socially sobering story of Victorian England's stringent class structure and the hopelessness, yet possibility, of rising above one's birthstation. The director personally thanks Hamburg's Kulturbehörde for supporting his vision by allowing the theater to purchase the projectors and hardware needed for this—and future—productions.

Mrs. Joe continually nags young Pip, reminding him that it's her and Joe Gargery, the village blacksmith, who provide home and hearth; her unsophisticated, generous-hearted husband is Pip's friend and defender, contrasting his sister's hot-tempered resentment. One portentous day, while visiting his parents' tombstones, Pip is accosted by escaped convict Abel Magwitch: fear dictates helping Magwitch. The self-important Uncle Pumblechook takes Pip to wealthy Miss Havisham's home. When Miss Havisham was jilted decades past while dressing for her wedding, both time and clocks stood still; still attired so, she startles timid Pip. Regular visits ensue to amuse her equally young



Left to right: Naomi O'Taylor as Estella, Theo Watt as Pip, Michelle Todd as Miss Havisham

(Photos courtesy of English Theatre of Hamburg)



Left to right: Michelle Todd as Mrs. Hubble, Dominic Charman as Mrs. Joe, Charles Cromwell as Herbert Pocket, Jonny Magnanti as Joe Gargery, and (under table) Theo Watt as Pip

ward, the cold-hearted Estella. It's at Satis House that Pip first feels the sting of lower-class status. Some years later, the London lawyer Jaggers appears; Pip has been

bequeathed a large fortune by an anonymous benefactor. The young man is to be London-educated in the ways of a gentleman, with Jagger's law clerk, Wemmick, handling Pip's monetary affairs. Matthew Pocket is to conduct Pip's tutorage, and he'll share housing with Pocket's son, Herbert. They become fast friends and live a carefree life. Years on and rather snobbish, Pip is shocked by his patron's sudden appearance; nevertheless, Pip navigates dangerous territory, helping his benefactor with Herbert's assistance. Eventually though, Pip's fortunes turn, and he then finds out who his true friends are, and about his better nature.

Glaser spent one week in London narrowing down the 1,200 applica-



tions, choosing six talented thespians. From adolescence to manhood, Theo Watt captures Pip's emotional/moral quandaries on Pip's odyssey of expectations. Evocatively colorful characters impacting Pip's choices are Jonny Magnanti, Charles Cromwell, Dominic Charman, and Naomi O'Taylor, each portraying two characters, while Michelle Todd performs three, including Miss Havisham. They brilliantly breathe life into Dickens' *dramatis personae*; Michelle performs in one shoe because Miss Havisham's sudden rejection had stopped everything, i.e., dressing, while Dominic had to get the hang of adding Mrs. Joe's bosom while swapping characters. It was somewhat crazy backstage with the lightning-fast costume and prop changes. Concurrently, Glaser worked incredibly hard on the music, soundtrack, and original mood-inducing songs bookending the production.

Available adaptations didn't match Glaser's vision; early this year he began adapting *Great Expectations*, making slight deviations for theatrical purposes, e.g., Pip is 4-5-years older here than in the book. When the actors arrived, during rehearsals Glaser cut (three scenes), modified, adjusted. Relying on narration for providing important points, Glaser's choices were pragmatic, focusing on moving the story forward and creating emotional impact for audiences. The multi-

### Upcoming Productions

**GREAT EXPECTATIONS** runs through Oct. 29.

James Sherman's **ROMANCE IN D**, a romantic comedy, premieres Nov. 10 and runs through Jan. 7.

Evening and matinee performances. Tickets online ([eth-hamburg.de](http://eth-hamburg.de)) or at the theater (Lerchenfeld 14, telephone is 040-227 70 89).

award-winning Gordon Griffin's richly resonant narration harkens to the magical elements and heightened fairytale-like romance reminiscent of the Dickens era.

Midyear, while working out set designs for the small stage, it became clear that video projections provided lots of solutions: atmosphere, location anchors, time passage, stage depth, and widening the scope, e.g., the marsh scenes. Two years ago, Glaser met with a local studio to sate his curiosity about other dimensions and tools available for productions. As he explains, "The theater of tomorrow is starting today."

After installing the projectors/hardware, there was tight collaboration among Glaser; the theater's skilled Heiko Böttner, light designer and lighting/sound technician; video director Christian Striboll; and 3D artist Eric Lutz. Technical and artistic solutions were found on the fly while compromising and improvising, with everything coming together for the premiere performance.

Step onto the English Theatre's magic carpet and be whisked back to mid-nineteenth century Kent and London. Experience Dickens' imagery of hardships, cruelties sans class distinction, and the diametrically different lifestyles. Surely, you'll perceive the deeper colors, the characters' textured vividness, and discern the shadow of romanticism magically quivering.



## Triennial of Photography Did Not Dissapoint

Spontaneously checking out art exhibitions is worth it. Mary Frances L. and I took a last-minute trip to check out the Eighth Triennial of Photography 2022 exhibition in the Deichtorhallen, which ran from May until September 18. This year's theme was *Currency: Photography Beyond Capture* and was curated by Koyo Kouch, Rasha Salti, Gabriella Beckhurst Feijoo, and Oluremi C. Onabanjo.

As explained in the program, this

exhibition explored conceptual engagements with photography in the retinal age. It looks past this accelerated era of circulation and instrumentation and focuses on the images which work on recording the events as imprints of experiences as well as catching acts of seeing as well as being seen. It was a very provocative and experimental exhibition, with many surprises around each corner. The currency theme made me think of resources, inflation, global warming, and many

other ideas related to the word and its interpretations by the various international artists.

The Triennial of Photography takes place every third year and was originally founded by collector and photographer F.C. Gundlach in 1999. He is currently the director of the Deichtorhallen Art Center. There were approximately 70 exhibitions located in many galleries and museums in and out of Hamburg this year. (Shelly Schoeneshoefer)

# FILM CLUB

## A Girl's First Red Carpet Experience

BY ADELINA GONZALES

The red carpet was rolled out at the Cinemaxx Dammtor movie theater this August for the Hamburg premiere of *Mein Lotta-Leben 2—Alles Tschaka Mit Alpaca*, and one extremely excited young girl was there as a junior reporter (so deputized by her mom) to cover the story for the AWCH Film Group.

An avid fan of the popular German book series *Mein Lotta-Leben*, written by Alice Pantermüller and Daniela Kohl, and a child who watched the first 2019 film adaptation *Mein Lotta-Leben—Alles Bingo Mit Flamingo* at least five times, my daughter Zoe was definitely the person for the job. When our club's Kinocritics editor advertised the screening invite, I jumped at this opportunity to



Zoe was thrilled to meet some of her favorite actors.

### Mein Lotta-Leben 2

Read our film review on Page 30

attend our first red carpet together.

The experience did not disappoint! After picking up our press badges, we waited with several other camera crews for the stars to arrive. Before long, the simple theater we occasionally visit for new movie releases was transformed into an explosive cacophony of camera flashes and filled with preteens and young children (many with parents in tow) jostling for a better view of the very trendily

The *Lotte-Leben* cast and crew posed for pictures at the red-carpet premier of their newest film in Hamburg.

(Photos by Adelina Gonzales)



dressed movie stars. The cast, producers, and writers posed for a dizzying combination of photos on the red carpet and took the time to sign endless autographs. Zoe almost didn't recognize main character Lotta, as actress Meggy Hussong had grown out her hair and wore it in a casual yet elegant updo.

Zoe used her time to ask important questions, like what it was like to kiss someone on screen and what the most fun the actors had while playing their characters was. Laila Ziegler, who plays Berenike and engaged in quite a few smooches onscreen, said it wasn't so bad, just part of being an actor. Yola Streese, who plays Cheyenne, said she liked playing a role where she could also be very like herself.

Once the photos and red carpet interviews were completed, everyone took their popcorn and drinks into the theater for the first official Hamburg film showing. Kika reporter Jess Schöne, who moderated the event, welcomed the audience and played a message from director Martina Plura, who could not attend due to another project. Following the movie screening, all actors and production members present, even the llama (not alpaca) caretakers from Schleswig-Holstein, were brought on stage to answer questions from the audience. Zoe wondered how alike Laila and Berenike are in real life. The most-asked question though was whether there will be a third film. Producers were quick to point out that it depends very much on how well the movie does in theaters. They encouraged everyone to tell their friends and family about it. The film opened August 18 in theaters throughout Germany and the accompanying "Buch zum Film" hit stores in sync with the film release—in plenty of time for Christmas.



## Three Thousand Years of Longing

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Australia / USA 2022  
Opened Sept. 1, 2022

Directed by: George Miller  
Writing credits: George Miller, Augusta Gore  
Principal actors: Tilda Swinton, Idris Elba, Pia Thunderbold



© Leonine

*Three Thousand Years of Longing* is a romantic fantasy movie from Australian filmmaker George Miller (*Mad Max* franchise, *Babe* [1995], *Happy Feet* [2006], *The Witches of Eastwick* [1987]) based upon the short story *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, written by English novelist, poet, and Booker Prize winner A. S. Byatt. A djinn or genie is an invisible spirit or fictional magical creature believed to inhabit the earth and appear in the form of a human or an animal.

Alithea Binnie (Tilda Swinton), a dedicated British professor of narratology—the study of storytelling and narrative structure—is traveling to Istanbul for a

speaking engagement. Alone in a hotel room, she accidentally opens a glass bottle that she had chosen earlier during a tour of a bazaar. An enormous djinn (Idris Elba) suddenly occupies the entire room; he can also disappear instantly. The presence of the djinn comes as a curious but not uninteresting surprise to the academic, who is accustomed to a solitary life in the company of written words, which form stories on a page but never take physical form. This time, the genie is out of the bottle, and the djinn offers Alithea three wishes in exchange for his freedom. At first she refuses, as she knows all the stories about wishes gone wrong. As a

*Longing continued on Page 28*



© Film Kino Text

## Das Glücksrad

*Gûzen to sôzô*

*Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy*

★★★★

Japan 2021

Opened Sept. 1, 2022

121 minutes

Directed by: Ryûsuke Hamaguchi

Writing credits: Ryûsuke Hamaguchi

Principal actors: Kotone Furukawa, Ayumu Nakajima, Hyunri, Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Katsuki Mori, Shōma Kai, Fusako Urabe, Aoba Kawai

Director Ryûsuke Hamaguchi's film made a strong impression at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2021 by winning the Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize. It is a very interesting and complex romantic drama and an anthology consisting of three episodes of an unexpected love triangle. The first part, titled "Magic or Something Less Assuring," reveals a failed seduction. The second part is "Door Wide Open," and the final is "Once Again." The last two result in a misunderstanding and a wondering of where all this will lead, due to the choices and regrets that were made along the way.

Each episode consists of strange surrealistic moments that make the audience wonder if it is fiction or reality. The film has subtle nuances and at times feels like a romantic poem coming to life, but then something happens and the storyline flows in a completely different direction. Hamaguchi uses his poetic craft to capture moments in which the wheel of fortune may give or take, much like the wind causing air currents to flow by. (Shelly Schoeneshoefer)

### *Longing continued from Page 27*

skeptical researcher, she engages the creature in a very long conversation. However, determined to be finally released from his long imprisonment in order to ascend to a superior djinn existence, the spirit starts telling Althea about his various lives, his love story with the Queen of Sheba, and other tales of adventure and incarceration. Even-

tually, the professor makes a surprising wish, which will take them both happily into another experimental life.

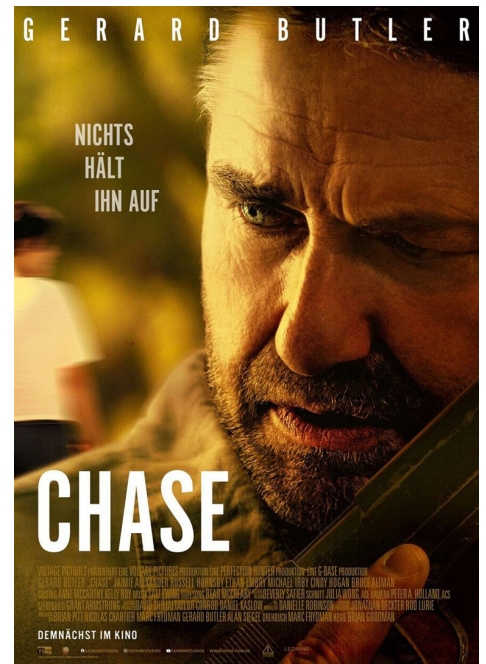
Director George Miller mixes contemporary life with magical and exotic images, including some erotic scenes, which really carry the spectator away. Unfortunately, the movie meanders at times, instilling some doubts as regards to

its ultimate purpose: is it an escape from everyday life, or a fantastic satire of everyday life supposed to wake us sleepy human beings up? Whatever! The willingness to invite the spectator's imagination to alternate between dream and reality is worth the overexploited themes and supernatural events and produces marvelous fantastic scenes. (Brigitte Bernard-Rau)

Will Spann (Gerard Butler) is driving his wife Lisa (Jaimie Alexander) from their home in Manchester, New Hampshire, to her parents. Shortly before their arrival, they stop at a filling station for gas. Lisa goes inside to the restroom. After a long wait, Will is concerned. Where is she? He questions Oscar (Michael Irby), the filling station attendant, and calls police detective Patterson (Russell Hornsby). The surveillance camera above the entrance gives a clue: Lisa exits the filling station, is approached by a stranger, and follows him around the corner and into his car. Will, frustrated because Patterson seems uninterested in seeking suspects since he considers Will to be involved, resolves to find Lisa on his own. He contacts Lisa's parents, Anna and Barry, and shows them the film. They recognize the stranger, a workman named Knuckles (Ethan Embry), who has done jobs for them in their house.

This is eight hours in the life of a man, beginning at 9:30 in the morning. There are five flashbacks which add details, such as Lisa's new independence, information from Lisa's parents, Will's profession, etc. *Chase* (original title: *Last Seen Alive*) is being presented as a "fast-paced thriller." It is successfully supported by Sam Ewing's equally suspenseful music, which keeps us on the edge of the seat. The "chase" is both physical and mental and, as it increases, we begin to predict the ending. But really, any ending would be fine, as is the one we see after 95 minutes. It's the action that's important, filmed in just a few locations around Savannah, Georgia.

Director Brian Goodman appreciated his small but excellent cast, saying, "You need actors who are really prepared to play. Not everyone is willing to improvise. Most want a script, and they want rehearsals." (Becky Tan)

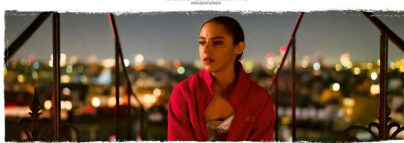


**Chase**  
*Last Seen Alive*

★★★

USA 2022  
Opened Sept. 15, 2022

Directed by: Brian Goodman  
Writing credits: Marc Frydman  
Principal actors: Gerard Butler, Jaimie Alexander, Russel Hornsby, Ethan Embry, Cindy Hogan



© StudioCanal Deutschland

**Das Leben ein Tanz**  
*Rise*

★★★½

France | Belgium 2022  
Opened Sept. 8, 2022  
118 minutes

Directed by: Cédric Klapisch  
Writing credits: Cédric Klapisch, Santiago Amigorena  
Principal actors: Marion Barbeau, Hofesh Shechter, Denis Podalydès, Muriel Robin, Pio Marmai, François Civil, Souheila Yacoub

Elise (Marion Barbeau), a ballerina on the rise for the Paris Opera Ballet, is performing before a full house when an accident sends her to the hospital and her ankle into a cast.

To dance is her passion, her life, and at 26, her career is just beginning. The doctor's diagnosis is not favorable or conclusive; her physiotherapist Yann (François Civil) patiently guides her in more ways than one. She is introduced to Hofesh (Hofesh Shechter); later Elise and friends see his contemporary dance troupe practicing. Her father (Denis Podalydès) and sisters Mélodie (Mathilde Warnier) and Aria

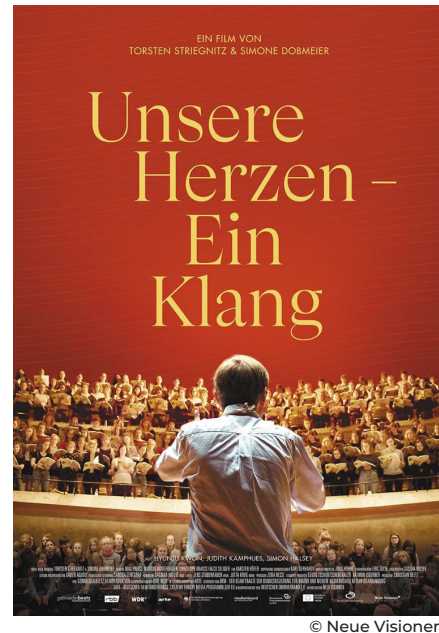
*Das Leben continued on Page 30*

*Das Leben* continued from Page 29

(Marilou Aussilloux) try to cheer Elise. When Loïc's (Pio Marmaï) food truck gets a contract at an artists' retreat, naturally Sabrina (Souheila Yacoub) goes, and they take her friend Elise to help out. The owner Josiane's (Muriel Robin) wit and wisdom seems to work wonders on Elise, markedly when Hofesh and troupe arrive. She feels a magnetic attraction toward one of the dancers (Mehdi Baki) and the innovatively charged dancing. On point, can she dare to take a risk?

Worth noting is that Hofesh—the Israeli dancer, choreographer, composer, and founder/artistic director of his eponymous company—is the real thing, as is Marion—Première Danseuse (principal female dancer) of the Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris, making her acting debut. Whether a dance aficionado or not, the impulse, energy, and exhilaration in the classical and contemporary dancing will undoubtedly lift your spirits. Cédric Klapisch directed and co-wrote the screenplay with Santiago Amigorena; principally a comedic director, Klapisch wisely chose to incorporate these professionals when switching to a romantic-cum-action-cum-adventure drama.

Filmed in Paris and Brittany, Alexis Kavyrchine's embracing cinematography captures the film's physicality and its inherent naturalness; Marie Cheminal's production design and Stephanie Laurent Delarue's art direction establish mood and atmosphere, buoyed by Thomas Bangalter and Hofesh Shechter's music. Editor Anne-Sophie Bion's long introduction edit, basically sans dialogue, is brilliant, but the film's fluidity is tied to the screenplay, i.e., the character development, and it oscillates accordingly. Nevertheless, its clumsiness is overlooked in lieu of *Das Leben ein Tanz's* dance scenes' ability to make audiences feel so alive. (Marinell Haegelin)



This extraordinary music documentary begins with two choirmasters, Judith Kamphues and Simon Halsey, preparing their choirs for upcoming concerts tours, as well as one student who desires to become a choirmaster.

This film is inspirational, as we witness the magic that happens when people sing together. Kamphues and Halsey show us how they work behind the scenes to achieve their successes and how much joy music brings to our souls. The dramatic effect that the pandemic has had on the music world is shown to the audience.

However, just as a flower blooms, we observe the passion for music that is in all of us and how these choirmasters show the way forward. *Unsere Herzen—Ein Klang* is a must-see for anyone, even if you feel like you can't sing. (Shelly Schoeneshoefer)

## Unsere Herzen—Ein Klang

\*\*\*\*\*

Germany 2022  
Opened Sept. 22, 2022  
113 minutes

Directed by: Torsten Striegnitz, Simone Dobmeier  
Writing credits: Simone Dobmeier, Torsten Striegnitz  
Documentary featuring Hyunju Kwon, Judith Kamphues, Simon Halsey



© Weltkino Filmverleih GmbH

## Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon

★★★½

USA 2021

Opening Oct. 6, 2022

106 minutes

Directed by: Ana Lily Amirpour

Writing credits: Ana Lily Amirpour

Principal actors: Jeon Jong-seo, Kate Hudson, Craig Robinson, Ed Skrein, Evan Whitten

In writer-director Ana Lily Amirpour's newest film, nothing is what it seems to be, yet much is open-ended to openminded interpretation. The British-born American filmmaker has courted vampires—her 2014 Persian-language debut film, *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*—and cannibals—*The Bad Batch*, 2016, "a post-apocalyptic cannibal love story"—so this film about a young Korean woman with special abilities is somewhat mild by comparison.

Set in sweaty, steamy Louisiana, Jeon Jong-seo portrays Mona Lisa Lee, a dangerous, deranged patient at a facility for the mentally ill who keeps stumbling into other people's lives on full-moon nights. Being kept in a padded cell in a straightjacket makes her seem unintimidating, until a hospital worker is caught off-guard; later, party-goers point her toward the neon-lit Big Easy, a city known for its excesses. Hungry is how she meets Ed Skrein's character, Fuzz, a dude as offbeat as he is strangely dressed; he trades a T-shirt for a kiss. Is that all he wants? Officer Harold, Craig Robinson's character, scares her off but their paths cross again. Meeting the hedonist Bonnie—Kate Hudson's great performance resonates onscreen—Mona Lisa learns a few things about life's pleasures on the outside. A survivor, Bonnie is a wily, crafty, and scheming pole-dancing mama to an 11-year-old. Evan Whitten plays Charlie, whose rancor toward Mona tests Bonnie's patience, particularly since she intends on keeping her golden goose around awhile. He and Mona's uneasiness wane as they begin connecting, so when the big glitch occurs the pair take off on a lunar adventure.

The cast convincingly portrays distinctive personalities whose uniqueness and honesty shine through mixed with good ol' commonplace characters. Amirpour's script is laced with wry humor and non-political correctitudes. Pawel Pogorzelski's cinematographic angles and perspective take into consideration that there is more to what is shown than we are aware of, just as Taylor Levy's editing has a sanguinely languid sharp quality. Brandon Tonner-Connolly's production design embodies southern style. Daniele Lupp's mesmeric music matches its environment's personality. The only thing missing is Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Bad Moon Rising." *Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon* is compelling and shows how big a heart can grow when set free. (Marinell Haegelin)

## Die Mucklas ... und wie sie zu Pettersson und Findus kamen

★★★★

Germany | Luxembourg 2019  
Opening October 20, 2022

Directed by: Ali Samadi Ahadi, Markus Dietrich  
Writing credits: Thomas Springer  
Principal actors: Uwe Ochsenknecht, Chris Tine Urspruch, Stefan Kurt, Marianne Sägebrecht, André Jung, with voice-over by Roxana Samadi, Marcel Mann, Ali Samadi Ahadi



© Wild Bunch Germany

The Mucklas are most comfortable living in disorderly chaos. Mr. Hansson's messy second-hand shop was a perfect home. Sadly, he passed away, and the new owner, Karl (Uwe Ochsenknecht), immediately began cleaning up the place. Not only is he orderly, but his profession as pest exterminator gives him an eye for small creatures. The Mucklas fear for their lives. Three Mucklas, Svunja, Tjoren, and Smartö, set off to find the impossible: a messy new home. The environment, controlled by human beings, reflects perfection, order, and cleanliness everywhere they go. During their search, we see the three Mucklas

pass a cave and go through the snow. There are mice playing chess and someone spinning the bottle. They successfully evade danger at all points.

The Mucklas are small, animated animals with long ears and big eyes. They often appear in children's books written by Sven Nordqvist featuring old man Pettersson and his cat, Findus. Ali Samadi Ahadi has directed at least four films so far about Pettersson and Findus. This film concentrates on the Mucklas who do return to Pettersson and Findus at the end of the film, but first, they must solve the issue of living in an orderly world.

This means working together in friendship and trust, "always together, never alone." It's fun to watch real-life actors interact with animated figures.

Karl always has a toothpick in his mouth, which continuously rolls back and forth, almost an actor in its own right. It was delightful to see Chris Tine Urspruch, who has appeared in films by Ben Verbong based on the children's books *The Sams*, as well as the popular *Tatort* television series. This is a film for the whole family from age six and up, especially those who are familiar with the books or the previous films. (Becky Tan)

## Der Nachname

★★★★★

Germany 2022  
Opening October 20, 2022

Directed by: Sönke Wortmann  
Writing credits: Claudius Pläging, Alexandre de La Patelliere, Matthieu Delaporte  
Principal actors: Iris Berben, Christoph Maria Herbst, Florian David Fitz, Caroline Peters, Justus von Dohnányi, Janina Uhse

What begins as a simple gathering of three couples on the beach of Lanzarote on the Canary Islands soon turns into mass confusion and arguments. This is to be expected, considering that they are all related in some way. There is Dorothee (Iris Berben), 68 years old and the mother of Elizabeth (Caroline Peters), 47 years old and married to Stephan (Christoph Maria Herbst). Then there is Dorothee's son Thomas (Florian David Fitz) and his partner Anna (Janina Uhse). The sixth



Writer-director Blerta Basholli's screenplay, based on a true story, struggles under the weight of its many subplots and the lack of contextualization at the beginning; body bags and UN vehicles are meager clues. Simple black cards stating that it is seven years after Kosovo's 1998-1999 war when Serbian forces seized more than 200 healthy males from the war-ravaged villages of Krusha e Madhe/Velika Krusa would have added perspective. When *Hive* focuses on the interplay of Fahrije Hoti's personal relationships and the social interactions among peers is when we discover and understand the complexities of narrow-minded communities most.

Lacking institutional support, the village's numerous widows barely support their families. They want full-time work, yet without a car it is hard to find a job. Fahrije (Yllka Gashi) luckily has her missing—or massacred—husband's beehives, and his aging father Haxhi's (Çun Lajçi) help selling honey at the market; she works tirelessly. Village elders tolerate it. With Nazmije's (Kumrije Hoxha) help, they put a bold plan in motion; it is sound and nonthreatening to the male-controlled community, as it only involves cooking. Fahrije gets a

driver's license, and Nazmije lends her an old reliable auto. Fahrije's driving is what the ultraconservative patriarchs will not tolerate: they disrupt, they sabotage, just as the women shun her. Fahrije tenaciously, defiantly continues; her teenager, Zamira (Aurita Agushi), is deeply embarrassed, son Edon (Mal Noah Safqiu) is baffled, and Haxhi reminds her that her actions affect them all. Persistence pays off; Lume (Adriana Matoshi) and others trickle along. In life, nothing is set in stone.

Gashi's performance is forceful, and the supporting cast is compelling; many residents were extras from the village near where *Hive* was filmed, since Krusha e Madhe had to be rebuilt after the war. The bigotries, misogyny, and craven abdication of responsibility by, predominantly, men are societal ills prevalent worldwide. The moral courage women demonstrate is a lesson to all. Alex Bloom's documentary-style camerawork is effective; Félix Sandri and Enis Saraçi edit with music by Julien Painot.

Fahrije Hoti's agricultural cooperative, "Krusha," now supports fifty employees, and she purchases produce from neighboring farmers. In April, when she was awarded



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## Hive

Zgjoj

★★★½

Kosovo | Switzerland | Albania | North Macedonia 2021

Opened Sept. 8, 2022

84 minutes

Directed by: Blerta Basholli

Writing credits: Blerta Basholli

Principal actors: Yllka Gashi, Çun Lajçi, Aurita Agushi, Kumrije Hoxha

the annual European of the Year award by Tomas Szunyog, head of Kosovo's EU office, he cited Hoti as "the best example of how to turn a painful experience into courage and resilience." (Marinell Haegelin)

person is René (Justus von Dohnányi), whom Dorothee had adopted and raised along with her own two children. Six adults on the beach, who are suddenly forced to take sides when Dorothee announces that she and René have just married. She has taken on his name and is now Dorothee König. Her children, Elizabeth and Thomas, are appalled that their mother could have married their adopted brother, but, even worse, that she has rejected their name: Böttcher.

The translation of *Der Nachname* is, of course, "the last name." This is a sequel to Sönke Wortmann's film *Der Vorname* ("the first name"), which was based on the French play *Le Prénom* and showed to great success in 2018. The cast of the original film are back for our entertainment. Whereas *Der Vorname* concentrated on one topic, i.e., the name of a new baby, *Der Nachname* jumps between several

*Der Nachname* continued on Page 34



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## Mein Lotta-Leben 2 Alles Tschaka mit Alpaka

\*\*\*

Germany 2022  
Opened Aug. 18, 2022  
95 minutes

Directed by: Martina Plura  
Writing credits: Bettina Börgerding,  
Daniela Kohl, Alice Pantermüller  
Principal actors: Meggy Hussong,  
Yola Streese, Timothy Scannell, Levi  
Kazmaier, Oliver Mommsen



© Constantin Film

## Der Nachname

*continued from Page 33*

controversies, such as Elizabeth's possibly having had a secret affair, the arranging for a surrogate mother to provide a child for Dorothee and René, Stephan's true profession, the mortgage on the family's summer house, inheritances, and money. I definitely recommend seeing *Der Nachname*, which is much fun but has difficulty outperforming its predecessor. (Becky Tan)



departure from the books that added an unexpected element of suspense. I think these added story-lines (the film is based on books seven and eight from the series) will captivate a young audience, particularly those already invested in the series and eager for new adventures from the Wilde Kaninchen gang. (Adelina Gonzales)

The second film adaptation of the beloved *Mein Lotta Leben* children's book series, *Alles Tschaka mit Alpaka*, is a fun movie for the whole family to enjoy and sure to be a favorite of preteens throughout Germany. Lotta (Meggy Hussong) and her friends Cheyenne (Yola Streese) and Paul (Levi Kazmaier), the self-titled Wilde Kaninchen gang, are off on their first class trip to the German coast, but there's no way this will be a carefree week at the beach.

From the get-go, the trip seems doomed. Lotta's papa, Reiner Petermann (Oliver Mommsen), must come along as a last-minute chaperone. As if that isn't embarrassing enough, Remí (Timothy Scannell), a brand-new student joining the class from France, is head-over-heels in love with Lotta. Though she wants little to do with him, he follows her around in a lovesick trance everywhere she goes. Adding to the drama is the rumored ghost of a missing camper walking the halls at night (or perhaps those are just the alpacas/llamas) and the actual

disappearance of Cheyenne's little sister, Channell (Cara Vondey). All of this plays out against the backdrop of a class filled with young teens entrenched in their cliques—everything from the black-leather-clad rockers to the high-fashionista glam girls are represented—and their unneringly severe teacher, Frau Kackert (Sarah Hostettler), threatening to break up the class for good unless everyone achieves some real bonding.

I had the opportunity to watch this film with my 10-year-old daughter, a mega-Lotta fan and this movie's target audience. We both found the film quite funny at times—though usually for different reasons and to varying degrees. Most notable to me was how it dealt with the subject of puberty and hormones in a sweet and hilarious way that is equally accessible to preteens and their parents. My daughter found the spooky elements surrounding the missing student from years past and the current disappearance of Channell to be a wholly engrossing

## Wir Konnten genauso gut tot sein

We Might As Well Be Dead

\*\*\*

Germany | Romania 2022

Opened Sept. 29, 2022

93 minutes

Directed by Natalia Sinelnikova

Writing credits: Viktor Gallandi, Natalia Sinelnikova

Principal actors: Ioana Iacob, Pola Geiger, Jörg

Schüttauf, Siir Eloglu, Moritz Jahn, Susanne Wuest



Anna (Ioana Iacob) and her 16-year-old daughter, Iris (Pola Geiger), live in a huge apartment house isolated from the city and near a forest. It is surrounded by a golf course and playing fields, all protected by a tall fence. The residents have only each other with no contact to the rest of the insecure world. Anna is responsible for interviewing future occupants who wish to move in. Gerti (Jörg Schüttauf) is the janitor. The poet, Wolfram (Moritz Jan), lives in the basement and tries to sell his poems to people as they ride the elevator. Things change when Gerti's dog disappears. Fear quickly filters into all corners of the house as people suspect a murderer nearby. Anna sets off to find the dog. Iris locks herself in the bathroom, where she stays until the end of the film. She thinks she has mysterious powers which have led to the dog's absence. Frank Drescher, supported by his wife, Erika, organizes a committee to investigate Anna, whose leadership seems irresponsible. Also, Anna and Iris are immigrants, who strive to be accepted by the group.

Here we must seriously consider: where does fear lead? What is the role of community? The Phoebus Apartment House seems to be an actor in its own right: tall, with beautiful, frequently used, staircases. It shelters a group seeking privacy from the world, although there is little privacy inside, with TV screens showing the daily lives inside every apartment. There is very little background music, and when music does set in, it is often just two notes plunking back and forth. This German film showed at festivals, including the 2022 Berlinale, where it opened the section "Perspektive Deutsches Kino," and the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival, where it won best cinematography in an international narrative feature. It is the first full-length film by Natalia Sinelnikova and, as an arthouse film, works better in festivals than as entertainment, as it is repetitive, despite being just over 93 minutes. (Becky Tan)



#### CURRENTS MAGAZINE

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