



presents

THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE

A film by İlker Çatak

with Leonie Benesch, Michael Klammer, Rafael Stachowiak, Eva Löbau and many others.

PRESS KIT

FESTIVAL PREMIERE February 28, 2023 @ Berlinale/Panorama
THEATRICAL RELEASE GERMANY May 4, 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CAST & CREW	3
SHORT CONTENT & PRESS RELEASE	4
CONTENTS	Error! Bookmark not defined.
PRODUCTION NOTES	7
Continuation of a successful creative partnership.....	7
A society under the burning glass	7
Real cineastes	8
A credible cast	8
Classes begin	9
A commentary on our present	10
A CONVERSATION WITH ILKER ÇATAK	10
A CONVERSATION WITH LEONIE BENESCH	10
BEFORE THE CAMERA	18
Leonie Benesch (Carla Nowak)	22
Leonard Stettinisch (Oskar)	22
Eva Löbau (Friederike Kuhn)	22
Michael Klammer (Thomas Liebenwerda)	23
Rafael Stachowiak (Milosz Dudek)	23
BEHIND THE CAMERA	24
Ilker Çatak (Director & Screenplay)	24
Johannes Duncker (Screenplay)	24
Ingo Fliess (Production)	25
Judith Kaufmann (Camera).....	25
Zazie Knepper (production design)	26
Christian Röhrs (costume design)	26
Marvin Miller (film music)	27

CAST & STAFF

Carla Nowak	LEONIE BENESCH
Thomas Liebenwerda	MICHAEL KLAMMER
Milosz Dudek	RAFAEL STACHOWIAK
Dr. Bettina Böhm	ANNE-KATHRIN GUMMICH
Friederike Kuhn	EVA LÖBAU
Lore Semnik	KATHRIIN WEHLISCH
Vanessa König	SARAH BAUERETT
Oskar	LEO STETTINISCH
Lukas	OSCAR ZICKUR
Jenny	ANTONIA KÜPPER
Hatice	ELSA KRIEGER
Tom	VINCENT STACHOWIAK
Ali	CAN RODENBOSTEL
Lieun	PADMÉ HAMDEMIR
Luise	LISA MARIE TRENSE

Directed by	İLKER ÇATAK
Screenplay	İLKER ÇATAK, JOHANNES DUNCKER
Producer	INGO FLIESS
Director of Photography	JUDITH KAUFMANN
Production Designer	ZAZIE KNEPPER
Costume Designer	CHRISTIAN RÖHRS
Make-up	BARBARA KREUZER, KARSTEN DREWS
Editor	GESA JÄGER
Casting	SIMONE BÄR (+), ALEXANDRA MONTAG
Casting children	PATRICK DREIKAUSS
Composer	MARVIN MILLER
Original Sound	TORSTEN TÖBBEN
Sound Design	KIRSTEN KUNHARDT
Line Producer	MARKUS MAYR
Production Management	LUZIE LOHMEYER

TECHNICAL DATA

Germany 2022
Running time: 94 min.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Carla Nowak (LEONIE BENESCH), a dedicated sports and math teacher, starts her first job at a high school. She stands out among the new staff because of her idealism. When a series of thefts occur at the school and one of her students is suspected, she decides to get to the bottom of the matter on her own. Carla tries to mediate between outraged parents, opinionated colleagues and aggressive students, but is relentlessly confronted with the structures of the school system. The more desperately she tries to do everything right, the more the young teacher threatens to break.

PRESS RELEASE

With *THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE*, award-winning director İlker Çatak (*I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE*) succeeds in creating an electrifying work about the microcosm of school as a mirror of our society. Leonie Benesch (*THE SWARM, THE WHITE RIBBON*) creates a dense atmosphere through her captivating portrayal of a young educator who gets more and more caught between the fronts, which captivates from the very beginning. Through her story, the film critically questions our current debate culture and thus sparks a fundamental discussion around truth and justice. Other strong roles are played by Eva Löbau and Michael Klammer, among others. Cinematographer Judith Kaufmann (*CORSAGE*) was responsible for the haunting visual design.



Leonie Benesch

SYNOPSIS

Carla Nowak (LEONIE BENESCH) is a young, dedicated teacher. She is new to the school, teaching seventh grade. The students like their teacher. She responds to the growing children, takes them seriously, in their problems and worries. Everything would be fine. If it weren't for this unpleasant situation: Someone is stealing from the class. Money. The teachers feel compelled to intervene. So Carla Nowak and the support teachers Thomas Liebenwerda (MICHAEL KLAMMER) and Milosz Dudek (RAFAEL STACHOWIAK) meet with the two class representatives, Jenny (ANTONIA KÜPPER) and Lucas (OSCAR ZICKUR), to find a solution to the situation. Jenny categorically says she doesn't know anything; Lucas, however, gets carried away nodding at a name as Mr. Liebenwerda goes through the class list in front of him. Carla Nowak is seething inside: she finds her colleagues' approach outrageous.

It is she who has to step in front of the class again, who has to teach. Which, in her opinion, is only really possible when there is mutual trust and respect. Everything is still fine in this structure. In class the day after the meeting, Oskar (LEO STETTINISCH) proves to be a clever student: he is the only one who can solve a tricky mathematical problem and also prove his assertion. To the teacher's surprise, the lesson is interrupted by the principal Dr. Bettina Böhm (ANNE-KATHRIN GUMMICH) and her colleagues Liebenwerda and Dudek. The girls are asked to leave the classroom. The boys are told to put their wallets on the table, and the teachers want to take a look at their contents. Those who have nothing to hide need have no worries. Carla Nowak is horrified. The children are irritated. In the wallet of the student Ali Yilmaz (CAN RODENBOSTEL) there is a conspicuous amount of money.

Ali's parents are called. They explain that they had given their son the money because he wanted to buy a video game as a present after school. Both adults are irritated by the procedure, defend themselves against the arbitrary prejudgement, and react indignantly. Dr. Böhm defends the action with the zero-tolerance policy that prevails at the school. In the teachers' lounge, Carla Nowak voices her displeasure, while Mr. Liebenwerda defends the action: Stealing has been going on at the school for too long. The air was thick and the staff took a stand.

There is a rumbling inside the young woman. She now takes a closer look everywhere, for example at her colleague, who takes a few coins from the piggy bank with the coffee money. In the teachers' lounge, the subject of Ali comes up again, but this time because the boy's performance at school leaves much to be desired, and his transfer is in jeopardy. The theft comes up again. Carla Nowak refuses to discuss it, doesn't want a student she believes to be suspected. And she has an idea. With serious consequences, as it turns out.

To unmask the real thief, she leaves her jacket and wallet hanging unattended on the chair in the teachers' lounge, but also leaves her laptop open and the camera switched on. When she returns later, money is indeed missing. And indeed, the camera has recorded something. However, you can't see the perpetrator's face, but you can see a striking light-colored blouse with a dot and star pattern. It is exactly the kind of blouse worn by Mrs. Kuhn (EVA LÖBAU) from the secretary's office and no one else in the school - the mother of her bright favorite student Oskar, of all people. She hesitates briefly, then Carla Nowak takes the initiative and approaches Mrs. Kuhn about the theft she has recorded. The reaction is completely different

than expected: Mrs. Kuhn shows neither remorse nor guilt, but categorically denies being a thief.

The young teacher is so shocked by what she sees as an outrageous reaction that she shows the video to the principal. But even during the discussion with Dr. Böhm, Ms. Kuhn stubbornly sticks to her version of things: she is not to be seen on the video clip, and the accusations are an impertinence. Further attempts by Carla Nowak to mediate fail: Ms. Kuhn storms out of the school with her son in tow. The situation escalates. It is too late to give in, and things take their course. But this also puts Carla Nowak in the crosshairs: Her secret recordings from the teachers' lounge violate personal rights. And what about Oskar, she asks herself helplessly.

The next day, she takes extra time for the boy after class, praising him for his academic performance. The boy is reluctant, finally wanting to know why his mother had been crying the day before. In fact, Mrs. Kuhn did not show up at school, and she does not take calls from the school administration. She didn't do it, the boy says. The teachers are left baffled. What should happen next?

The seventh-grade parent-teacher conference begins harmoniously, but gets out of hand when parents remark that they have heard from their children about an interrogation in which individual students were coerced into revealing information about their classmates. When Mrs. Kuhn finally joins in and seeks confrontation with Carla Nowak, accusing her of spying on and denouncing her colleagues, the situation visibly slips away from the teacher.

The case is spreading. Carla Nowak feels increasingly torn between outraged parents, opinionated colleagues and belligerent students. She desperately searches for a way out of the messy situation. But no matter what she does to mediate, to build bridges, the fronts continue to harden. And then there is Oskar, who in his growing desperation begins to lose control and lash out erratically. Only Clara Nowak is not ready to give up on her student against the resistance of her college. She makes one last attempt to get through to the boy....

PRODUCTION NOTES

Continuation of a successful creative partnership

With THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE, filmmaker İlker Çatak presents his fourth feature film and the second he is making with producer Ingo Fliess of Munich-based if... Productions. The creative partnership began with 2019's highly acclaimed I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE, which had its world premiere at the Munich Film Festival, where it received the New German Cinema Award for both the screenplay and Oğulcan Arman Uslu's acting performance. Invitations and awards at other festivals followed, and finally, as a highlight, it entered the race for the German Film Award 2020 with five nominations. I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE won the bronze Lola in the category of best feature film. After this good and successful experience, both Çatak and Fliess wanted to embark on a new adventure together.

In his productions, Ingo Fliess is concerned with the creative talents being able to create something special, not retreating to a scheme and simply serving conventions. This requires time on the one hand, and a great deal of freedom of thought on the other. As a producer, he tries to create the framework to ensure these parameters, the most important foundation being agreement on the project. "You have to be able to look each other in the eye and say: Yes, this is the project we want to tackle together, that we are convinced of," says Fliess. He discussed several potential follow-up projects with İlker Çatak. They agreed on THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE because the material strikes a nerve and is very much in tune with today's times.

A society under the burning glass

The script THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE was written within a few months, "which is unusual," as the producer admits. İlker Çatak collaborated on the story with his school friend and longtime creative partner Johannes Duncker. Even the first joint draft of the script was "very strong" in the eyes of the producer. Some ideas, such as frisking the students, were based on incidents that had actually taken place at Çatak and Duncker's former school. The early commitment of ZDF and Arte, whom Ingo Fliess describes as by now very familiar partners and who were already on board for Çatak's I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE, provided a tailwind for the script development. "We presented them with three projects to choose from. They liked all of them and went along with our decision to tackle THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE first. When you sense that others are also burning for a new material that has a strong concept, is very contemporary, shows us a society through a burning glass, and when you have the chance to get quick financing on your feet, that drives you tremendously," Fliess says.

However, this aspect is not in the foreground for the producer: he is concerned with relevance, with content. With Çatak's gift for characters, differentiation, ambivalence, and accuracy in description, THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE illuminates an ever-topical subject, our educational apparatus. "We feel that school as we ourselves experienced it - and I am another 20 years older than İlker - has not changed categorically compared to today. The same principle of knowledge transfer, of hierarchies prevails. That's such an unbearable idea that we urgently need to talk about it," says Ingo Fliess. Not in the sense of a theme film that pillories the school, but in the sense of a film that describes the hardships and constraints

that teachers also face. Because they can't pick the curriculum, because they can't do away with grading, because they can't define class sizes, because there are transfer reports, because there are grade levels at all, because there are subjects, as Fliess says. "Who came up with this? We've been questioning this system for 50 years, but nothing gets done," the producer says. This sobering observation lies at the heart of THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE, which is set in a school but is definitely seen by the producer as a reflection of our society, exposing "stagnation and mildew." "The school is like a society trapped in itself, where no action is taken, only a lot of dust is always raised by a lot of talk, to end up with a very unsatisfactory result. Like in our film: everyone is damaged, the boy has to get out of school, even though he may be the moral victor."

Real cineastes

İlker Çatak is described by Fliess as an artist who is full of productive doubt in developing material and sometimes in directing. "He's not one who claims to know where the ball is in his court. But once he finds a way, he grabs it and pulls it off," Fliess said. Ego played no role in the writing process with Johannes Duncker "For İlker and Johannes, the focus was always on the questions: is this right? Is this good enough? What are not well-trodden paths? What are paths that no one has walked before? That actually has to be the ambition, in all productions. That's a goal all three of us share." As a human quality, he attests to Çatak's great curiosity and adventurousness: "İlker loves people, he recognizes them, never judges them. He perceives everything with great interest." This attitude carries through to the set. "İlker's gaze is incorruptible. At the same time, he accepts offers gratefully. Which doesn't mean he's a pawn of various interests. He knows that he can't make a film on his own, but that everything has to go through him, he has to understand everything in order to work with it." The producer sees the great strength of the filmmaker in the alertness to small gestures, the edges that could be considered unnecessary, but that make up the actual, where the doubt becomes great in a face, where the hesitation is. "İlker is extremely musical, he has a very good sense of rhythm and always knows when it's too much, when it's enough. He is also sometimes impatient, but that's good! His high tempo creates energy and positive tension. But at the same time, these qualities combine with great humility in him, which makes him so pleasant to work with."

A credible cast

When it comes to casting a film, the credo for producer Ingo Fliess is credibility. It is the be-all and end-all, standing above everything and on every film that bears his company's stamp. For the casting of the adult roles in THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE, Fliess and Çatak once again worked with the renowned casting director Simone Bär (who shockingly died in early 2023 after a long illness – we will never get over this...) after I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE. For the lead role of teacher Carla Nowak, she suggested six actresses, one of whom was Leonie Benesch, who has already filmed with Michael Haneke (THE WHITE RIBBON), was most recently present in "Babylon Berlin" and also gained international experience in series such as "Spy City," "The Crown" or, most recently, "In 80 Tagen um die Welt" and the event "The Swarm," which will hit TV big in 2023. "Leonie was a total stroke of luck. She's brilliant technically and with her craft. I think THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE was the right film for her at the right time. She's not that easy to get, and who knows if she'll even play in Germany after 'The Swarm'.

I'm firmly convinced that the audience will see Leonie with completely different eyes after our film."

The roles of the rest of the ensemble also had to be filled with first-class actors. "By first-class, I don't mean famous," explains Fliess, qualifyingly. Casting was done entirely by content, by what complemented each other well, what created productive friction. "Our ensemble is not unknown, but it's not 'star-driven' either. That would have been wrong. We were always concerned with believable characters."

This should also be ensured for the children's roles. It was important to the filmmaker and producer to put together a class that also felt like a class, rather than just casting a few children for speaking roles and the rest as camera fodder with extras. The process turned out to be correspondingly elaborate; it was a matter of finding 23 children for Carla Nowak's 7th grade class in a lavish casting process, without determining in advance exactly who would be the lead and who would be more of a supporting role. Each child was to take on a responsibility in the sense of the class community. The production received support here from experienced children's casting director Patrick Dreikauss, with the lead role among the students, Oskar, being a tip from Michael Klammer. "Michael showed us a photo one day of his son Leonard, who was just the right age. We had him play a scene on video and were all gobsmacked. So we gave the role of Oskar to Leo Stettinisch," says Ingo Fliess, who reveals that another of the young actors is related to one of the adult actors: Vincent Stachowiak, who plays Tom, is the son of Rafael Stachowiak.

The duo of Çatak and cinematographer Judith Kaufmann later used a method during filming in which the children never felt they had to play at the touch of a button. Much happened out of the flow, in a setting where little intervention was necessary, and lighting and sound were fixed. This created the desired verisimilitude and naturalness. "With kids, you're only allowed to shoot five hours a day. We didn't want to risk any loss of time through too many new set-ups, but rather create framework conditions for fast filming in an environment where the children feel comfortable," says the producer.

Classes begin

THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE was classically financed as a co-production with public broadcasters, in this case ZDF and Arte in the person of commissioning editors Alexandra Staib and Barbara Häbe. In addition to the reference funding from I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE Ingo Fliess was able to rely on funding support from DFFF, BKM and MOIN. "In Hamburg, where we shot everything, İlker is traditionally welcomed with open arms," says the producer. Alamode Films stepped in as the German distributor on basis of the screenplay.

Although THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE was shot in Hamburg, it is not a visible Hamburg film. The story is not located. It could be set anywhere in Germany. It was important to İlker Çatak to remain as transferable as possible.

The filming location was the building and the entire grounds of a former theater academy in Hebebrandstraße in Hamburg-Winterhude. Finding a real school had proved difficult for logistical reasons. "What we liked about the theater academy was the progressive architecture from the 1960s. But since then, time has also stood still in school architecture,"

says the producer. Most importantly, the team was able to design and redesign the building on Hebebrandstrasse as they saw fit. The titular teachers' lounge was completely built into a large empty hall by production designer Zazie Knepper.

The large stairwell and the long hallways were also attractive for the shots in Hebebrandstrasse. The color chord of the film was set by the architecture of the theater academy. The triad of the brown of the teak handrails, the black/anthracite of the terrazzo floors and the blue of the doors was very dominant and was reinforced in the scene and costume design. The gymnasium in the film, which belongs to the Albert Schweitzer Gymnasium, shows a typical color scheme with red brick walls and a blue training floor.

The transferability of setting and scenery was also taken up in Christian Röhrs' costume design. İlker Çatak did not want to tell the present under any circumstances. "Crazy enough, our film almost seems like that anyway, because a lot of people are walking around in the '80s look again today," says Ingo Fliess. Röhrs, who is a big vintage collector with his own trove, met with Çatak on the idea of dressing the actors in a late hippie look with an '80s touch. The absence of brands underscores the timelessness, and electronic devices are also largely absent. "The visual concept underlines the image of school. We show a school from the day before yesterday in today, because the school of today is from the day before yesterday," the producer sums it up.

A commentary on our present

Ingo Fliess hopes that THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE will find broad appeal. "The experience of school is omnipresent in all our lives. We were all students or are still teachers and have different views of schools." School is a formative time for everyone; you find out who you are, how you act, how you resolve conflicts. "At the same time, isn't it tempting to go to a movie called THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE, because most of us have never been in a teachers' lounge and often wondered what goes on there?" But İlker Çatak's new film work doesn't just offer a glimpse into the teachers' lounge. "Basically, THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE is a film about our agitated society. No one tackles the root of the problem, everyone just talks about what should be done. It is an apt commentary on our present."

A CONVERSATION WITH İLKER ÇATAK

"The process of a self-written film is always a journey into the unknown".

How do you remember your school days?

My memories are mostly beautiful. I was always very good at school. I went to high school in Germany until the seventh grade, then moved to Istanbul with my parents. My school years there were formative, which has to do with growing up, the adolescent years. I was confronted with a completely different school system. We wore uniforms, learned to tie a tie, but also felt like we were in a kind of cocoon as students at the German school. The city was wild. It was an exciting time to graduate from high school as a teenager in Istanbul at the turn of the millennium.

To what extent did your own school experiences shape your new film? Was there a specific event that could be described as the starting point for the project?

There were two boys in our class who, during their free periods, went to classes that were in physical education. And then they stole from the jackets and pockets of these students. This went on for quite a while. We all knew about it, but we didn't say anything because nobody wanted to be a tattletale. I remember very clearly when one day - we were sitting in physics class - three teachers came in and said, "All girls out, all boys wallets on the table!" The memory of that incident came up when Johannes and I were on one of our vacations together. At the time, I told how my parents' cleaning lady had been caught stealing. Johannes then told me about his sister, who works as a math teacher. There was an incident at her school where thefts were committed in the teachers' lounge. This conversation took us back to our school days, and we thought: This could be an exciting story.

How did you research today's school operations?

First, I went to my old high school in Berlin, where the principal, who even remembered me, welcomed me with open arms. Actually, I wanted to shoot there, but that didn't work out due to funding. This principal supported us in the development of the script just as much as Johannes' sister. All in all, we had intensive conversations with a good dozen people from various educational fields, with teachers, principals, school psychologists and sports teachers, who explained team-building measures to us, some of which can be seen in the film.

What has changed compared to your own school days?

What we experienced back then, of teachers just coming in and going through purses, would not exist today. This was confirmed to us in our research. However, such a procedure would be permitted if it were added that the action was voluntary. That's why the subordinate clause "The whole thing is voluntary, but if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear" is mentioned more often in our film. Of course, this is totally perfidious, because such a process does not take place at eye level between teachers and students. What has changed compared to my school days is, above all, the type of communication. Today there are WhatsApp groups, parents exchange information with each other. The lines of communication are much shorter. When a problem arises, it is addressed more quickly. I also have the feeling that parents today appear with a different self-confidence, especially those who send their children to "better" schools.

How did you develop the script with Johannes Duncker? How did the collaboration take shape?

Johannes and I had the basic idea, in which our producer Ingo Fliess encouraged us. Ingo sent us to a forest house three or four times for a week each time, so we had a concentrated environment. There we took lots of walks, had conversations, thought about how the film

should feel, what we wanted to tell, what social issues we wanted to address. After these retreats, we came home with a bag full of ideas and transferred them to our respective laptops - Johannes in Cologne, me in Berlin - into a shared document that evolved into the script.

What was your particular focus in developing the story? What was important to you, what were you concerned with?

It is about a system, about a reflection of our society. School is a good playing field because it shows our society as a microcosm, as a model: There is the head of state, ministers, a press organ, the people... But THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE negotiates many different topics. A central aspect for me is finding the truth, the search for truth, or how one comes to believe in the truth. The question of what one believes in is also posed. The boy wants to believe in his mother, she wants to believe in justice. Fake news, cancel culture or, for example, the need of every society for a scapegoat - these are further themes.

How did you go about developing the characters? How quickly was the character cosmos decided?

We knew that we had a class and a staff, a teacher as the main character, a secretary. So we wrote a handful of teachers and a handful of students into the script. When casting the class, I realized relatively quickly that every child in the classroom is important. I didn't want to divide the kids into those who had role names and those who were extras. We built the class as a collective, with the motto: We all pull together, everyone is equally important. We all play along. Even if some kids didn't have lines, everyone should have the opportunity to contribute. With regard to the adult roles, Johannes and I wrote characters that we felt like and for which our casting director Simone Bär (who passed away some days ago...) made great casting suggestions. That's how we formed our ensemble.

Leonie Benesch plays the leading role. Why was she the right one?

I remember that we had a photo wall with faces of actors in our forest house. The photo of Leonie Benesch was there from the beginning. Long before we had asked her. I always imagined the film with Leonie because I had appreciated her work for years. Even though we did another casting, it was clear to me very quickly: she is my Carla Nowak.

Who is Carla Nowak?

Carla Nowak is exactly what the audience gets from her in the film, what they see, what they interpret into her. We deliberately didn't show any private life. Neither do we show what car she drives, nor where she lives, nor whether she has a boyfriend. These things don't play a role. There were definitely discussions beforehand because there were people who wanted to know more about her. But I never wavered from my conviction. It doesn't matter at all whether Carla Nowak has a pet or colored walls in her apartment. A person's character

always reveals itself in difficult moments of decision. When the person is under stress, when they have to deal with problems. With this premise in mind, I put the character in Leonie's hands. I have rarely had to communicate with an actress on set as little as I did with Leonie. Her first offering was always so good that I hardly had to make any corrections.



Leonie Benesch, İlker Çatak

What was important to you in casting the other characters?

The ensemble is also very much thanks to Simone Bär. She always said to me that there were so many great actors and actresses and that we should make sure that no one stood out from the cast. I thought that was the right approach for this film, because I see it as a collective work. With the character of Thomas Liebenwerda, I thought it was exciting to cast a person of color. I talked to Michael Klammer about how absurd it actually is to then accuse someone like Liebenwerda of racism. But we live in absurd times and somehow the film was also an attempt to depict this confusion of our time. You just have to go to Twitter. Rafael Stachowiak came on board because I wanted an actor who spoke Polish. Like Michael Klammer, he is a very theater-savvy actor. The idea of Carla Nowak's Polish background came to me because I had an experience with a Turkish colleague who consistently answered me in German when I addressed her in Turkish. Something about that bugged me. I do understand when there are several people in the room and that's why you don't speak in a foreign language because you don't want to be rude. I put this situation in THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE with Carla Nowak and Milosz Dudek. It's about assimilation, about not wanting to be noticed, about being ashamed of one's own origins. Eva Löbau, who can be seen as the school secretary, is simply a phenomenon for me. She can be incredibly fragile and funny at the same time. I could watch her all day. But also Sarah Bauerett, Anne Kathrin Gummich and Kathrin Wehlisch. They're great colleagues. I'm very grateful for this great ensemble.

How did you manage to make the class, the everyday school life you captured seem so authentic?

On this shoot, I always took three quarters of an hour in the morning to talk to my ensemble and the children. About all kinds of things, about dreams, about fears, identity, shame... I wanted to take out the pressure that comes with a day of shooting. Meanwhile, my shooting team waited outside, and my DP Judith Kaufmann often got impatient because she wanted to take advantage of the daylight, which of course is only available to a limited extent during a shoot in November. But these conversations were important to me. I wanted to have a meeting with the actors to talk about topics that moved us. That helped a lot to build trust, to feel free on set. And in most cases it only took a few takes.

How did you find the children and how did you work with them? Also, how exactly did you explain to them what the film was about?

The task was to put together a 7th grade class. That is, we were looking for children between the ages of eleven and fourteen. This age group is characterized by the fact that there are children who are already very advanced, but there are also children who are very dreamy. It was important for me to see a lot of children in order to get an impression of this age group. Together with my children's casting director Patrick Dreikauss, we invited groups of four and five to play a casting scene. I gave the teacher, in front of whom they had to argue why they wanted to take part in a Fridays for Future demo, for example. After the given text, they were supposed to improvise. This separated the wheat from the chaff and you could see right away which of the kids was on their toes. These were two very intensive casting weeks,

during which the search for Oscar ran in parallel. When the group of about 23 children was completed, I had individual conversations with all of them. It was all about the team spirit, I told them, you are not children, you are colleagues here. I briefed them, but not on what overriding themes would be dealt with in THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE, but explained to them how to read a shooting schedule, what to look out for on the set. The idea of solidarity, the idea of family, was important to me. On set, there were the aforementioned morning conversations with me and also Leonie, which were followed by rehearsals and then the shoot.

At a time of heated social discourse, you are entering a veritable minefield, making yourself vulnerable to attack. Are you expecting headwinds? Are you prepared for it?

I'm not worried about that because I stand behind the story. I don't know who I'm pissing off with that either. I also don't think that the film is an explicit criticism of the education system. Or that it explicitly criticizes the young people from the school newspaper. Or the parents. Everyone in the story is struggling for sovereignty and wants to be right. Once you turn on the TV and watch any talk show, you're basically looking at the exact same thing in green.

How did you come up with the idea of the Rubik's Cube?

Johannes and I talked about mathematics, algorithms and proofs and asked ourselves how we could visualize this abstract conceptuality. The Rubik's Cube offered itself because it also has something childlike about it.

In math class, children learn that a proof is the derivation of the correctness of a statement that is recognized as error-free. This is precisely where Carla Nowak fails in the story...

After all, it remains a blur. Is Mrs. Kuhn the thief? Who knows? It could be that she is innocent. A residual risk remains. As long as that's the case, you can't be sure of anything. Carla Nowak recognizes this, too, and from this arises the great dilemma.

The film has a highly effective last shot. How did you arrive at this final image? What is your interpretation?

The final image was an idea of Johannes. I see it as a commentary, as a plea for resistance, that one must not let a system get one down. What Oskar is doing is admirable, in an environment that is like David against Goliath. I wanted to grant him this exit. I was strongly influenced by Herman Melville's story "Bartleby" in the screenwriting process for THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE. It's the story of a refusal that ends with the death of the title character and the phrase "Oh Bartleby, oh humanity." It was intended more as a critique of consumerism at the time. The book didn't let me go for over 20 years. In the run-up to the shooting, I gave Leonie a copy. After reading it, she said to me that the story had really

depressed her. I had to laugh. To be honest, when I was working on THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE, I also didn't know exactly what message the film would have in the end. But it's also not about making a statement, it's about asking a question. That's the way I like to make cinema. The process of making a self-written film is always a journey into the unknown. If you know where the journey is going, it gets boring. With some films, you're more likely to know what feeling will be left behind. With THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE, I didn't know. It was a process of finding.

How would you describe your relationship with cinematographer Judith Kaufmann?

I could not have made this film without Judith. Judith has become such an important partner in terms of content. She enriches my view of the world, we talk about many topics, about our profession, about pressure, about gender roles. Judith always comes up with great ideas and images. Judith is such an experienced cinematographer, I consider myself lucky to have her by my side. The greatest luck you can have as a young filmmaker is to know such a great, competent person by your side. We have long since become good friends.

Is cinema in 2023 the right place for social debates?

Of course, cinema is a place we can use for social debates. But not compulsively. For me, cinema is also escapism and voyeurism. Cinema is campfire. I don't want to put cinema under an agenda. But of course I'm happy when there are films in the cinema that spark debate. Above all, there is hope for cinema again after the Corona pandemic. I went to see TRIANGLE OF SADNESS - the cinema was packed. The collective experience of laughing together, crying together - that's something very special. No streamer in the world will be able to produce that.

You stand out with a very engaging, empathetic and human cinema. Do you find it easy to tell the stories that are close to your heart?

Shooting is easy, staging is easy. But developing is comparable to birth pains. The script process requires so much discipline, consists of so much questioning oneself and one's ideas, writing out, rewriting, throwing away. Until it's good. If I said it was easy for me, I'd be lying. But it doesn't have to be easy either. Writing is part of cinema, just like staging, editing, evaluating. All that is cinema. That's why writing is part of the whole spectacle for me, the confrontation with material: What do I want to make, what do I want to tell, where do I want to go, what do I want with these films? None of these are easy questions, questions that often drive me to one desperation or another. But I can only do this job if I negotiate something that drives me, that has to do with me and my reality and our reality as a society. Every script and every film has to have something worth getting up early for. And this getting up is not always easy in the book phase. Because you have to convince so many people with the script, commissioning editors, juries, actors. You get naked with every script, give it to people and hope that they like it. These are processes that are fraught with fear. You don't learn dramaturgy overnight. It often takes years to free yourself from your socialization, to be able to think anew, to not write what you've seen a thousand times before. I just hope

that as I get older, this will come easier to me. The geniuses among us, I envy them. For me, it's hard work.



f. l. t. r.: *Sarah Bauerett, Leonie Benesch, Kathrin Wehlisch*

AN INTERVIEW WITH LEONIE BENESCH

"A special atmosphere of listening and togetherness".

When you think back to your childhood, what memories do you have of your teachers? Did you have a favorite teacher?

We moved around a lot in my childhood and youth. That means I went through many changes of school. However, I was only ever at Waldorf schools during my entire school years. For me, this form of school with its very idealistic approach and without grading was right and good, although today I have doubts about Waldorf schools. When I think of favorite teachers, Mr. Brückmann comes to mind. When I was 14, we moved from Bielefeld to Tübingen. Mr. Brückmann taught history and ethics at the Waldorf school there. He was great at stimulating conversation and facilitating conversations, taught in a very anti-authoritarian and loving way, and was very patient. On the other hand, I remember Riva Siedner, an older Jewish-French lady who taught French. She was known in our class as "The Dragon." Woe betide you if you didn't have the homework.... However, I never learned more than I did with this woman! When I think about teachers, I realize that I love authority when it is appropriate. When someone figuratively slaps me on the wrist, when the person knows what they are doing. It was the same in drama school. I totally understood the teachers inside who were rightfully yelling. I don't like authority only when it is inappropriate or unjust.

Now you play a dedicated, idealistic teacher yourself. Did your own memories of your school days help shape this character?

I had to think back to what worked in a noisy classroom, how to get kids to be quiet. That has a lot to do with attitude and patience. Ilker had also already researched a lot of things very precisely and recorded them in the script or told them in conversations. I was able to draw heavily on that. A basic rule with children is to take them seriously and pay attention to them. I tried to follow that in the role and in the play.

When you're in your early 30s, portraying an authority figure like a teacher might not be obvious for an actress. What were your first thoughts when you heard about the project? How did you see yourself in it? Were you surprised to be considered for the project?

I received the script with the request to make a tape with one scene. When I read it, I immediately noticed how great Ilker is with language, how incredibly well he observes. That I might be too young for the role, or rather the thought of whether one should only play teacher roles when one is older, never occurred to me. Rather, I was thrilled by the cleverly written script. Something like this doesn't come along every day. On the other hand, there are many young teachers in their late 20s/early 30s who are either completing their traineeship or just starting out in their profession - like Carla Nowak, starting their careers very idealistically and unspent, with a lot of desire to do things differently.

Did you relate to your role of Carla Nowak?

I have a very sober approach to e-castings and tapes. If I'm interested in a role, I want to do a good job. But basically I make my recording, send it off and forget about it again. With THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE, the request came to me between two big shoots in the spring of 2021. I had just returned from shooting the series "Around the World in 80 Days" in South Africa, and had a month and a half in Berlin before moving on to the set of "The Swarm" in Italy. The script really appealed to me, I found the story exciting. But it wasn't that I saw something of Carla Nowak in me or that the character spoke to me. My thoughts were along the lines that it could be an interesting collaboration, that there was a clever mind behind the project and I wanted to find out what he had in mind.

You don't learn much about the background and private life of her character Carla Nowak, but you suspect, through many hints, that the character has an even bigger life than what you get to see of her on screen. Was it important for you to learn more about her?

I know as much about her as anyone else who knows the script. From it, we can read that Carla Nowak is in her late 20s/early 30s and started working at this school as a teacher a few months ago. And that she has Polish roots. Other than that, nothing is known. I didn't ask more about that either. For me, all the information I needed for this role was in the script. I'm a big proponent of text and body work. I tend not to approach roles by learning backgrounds, needing to know what the person eats for breakfast, or what happened to them in childhood. For me, it wouldn't have made a difference in the game whether Carla Nowak likes cats or dogs, prefers cereal to grain bread for breakfast. Maybe that's different from project to project. In THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE it was the case that there was a clear task in every scene. There's the character, there's the obstacle, and from that comes what the character wants. That was clearly given in every scene. I didn't have to build something extra to explain to myself why I was in this or that situation. That also characterizes a good script.

What do you like about the story? In your words: What is it about?

That's a hard one to answer. I think THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE is a commentary on our debate culture. We see with Carla Nowak a person who wants to do everything right, but fails again and again, for different reasons. This happens through an intentional or unintentional being misunderstood. İlker has captured something essential of our present.

There's an old truism that as a filmmaker you should avoid working with children and dogs. You had to juggle a whole class. What was the experience like? How did you approach the children?

All my friends laughed at me when I told them I was going to play a math and PE teacher and hang out with just kids for six weeks. I have to give İlker credit there, too. He put this class together and chose insanely well. They were such interesting, sweet kids. Of course, they were also loud at times and it wasn't always easy. But Judith Kaufmann, our DP, İlker and I

recently reaffirmed at a dinner together that we would never want to work any other way. What İlker has invested here in terms of time and special working methods is something I have never experienced before. Every day before we started shooting, we would gather in our classroom setting, the kids, İlker and I, to talk about all kinds of different, everyday things. It was insanely touching, beautiful, and sometimes frustrating. İlker created an atmosphere of listening and togetherness. It's true that after five hours of shooting with the kids, you're also exhausted because it's exhausting and loud. But that was okay because İlker put so much love and time into it and always created a great atmosphere. Judith, on the other hand, was often able to take documentary-style shots with her handheld camera during the morning talks, capturing so many natural reactions from the children, some of which even made it into the film. I find that incredibly beautiful.

What distinguishes İlker Çatak as a director?

İlker is smart, he listens well and at the same time knows exactly what he wants. He is open to suggestions, but if they don't correspond to what he had in mind or go in a direction he doesn't want to go, he also remains stubborn. It's an incredibly good mix. He also makes himself vulnerable to his actors, because it gets to him when someone doesn't agree with him. It's always a meeting at eye level.

As a mediator, Carla Nowak is always caught between two stools and her commitment is ground down between the various parties. Was it a particularly mentally demanding job? What did you find most challenging during filming?

I don't generally take things home from the set. Colleagues are very different in that respect. I actually found working on THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE incredibly liberating, because I was able to learn so much and also implement what was taught at the drama school. It was very much about working in the moment. At home, I never felt like I couldn't get rid of the stress. I wasn't mentally unwell, I was just a bit tired from the previous filming on "Around the World in 80 Days" and "The Swarm." That was the biggest challenge.

THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE is a film that asks urgent questions about living together in modern society, but refuses to provide simplistic answers. The last scene of the film is characteristic of this approach. What is your interpretation?

It's a clever ending. That's all I can say about it. I also don't know if the school secretary is the thief, I don't know who was right. Does it matter at the end of the day? I wonder if in the discussion about who is right, we don't lose sight of what we are doing with the discussion.

Are you proud of this work? What significance does it have in your work to date?

I am totally proud and happy about this work. If I could, I would immediately shoot again with İlker, Judith and Ingo. Ideally, I would shoot one small, fine arthouse film per year and one larger project that pays the rent and maintains my standing. Looking back over the last

few years, the two best projects were "Around the World in 80 Days" and THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE. They are not comparable at all. But they are the two projects I always want to have done. It has to do with the collaboration, the attitude of the people, the approach to telling stories together. The longer I do this, the more important those aspects are. It's all about how you shape your shooting time together. THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE was one of the most beautiful shooting experiences I've ever had.



Leonie Benesch

IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

Leonie Benesch (Carla Nowak)

Born in Hamburg in 1991, LEONIE BENESCH, who trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, is one of Germany's most sought-after young stars. Her breakthrough came with one of the leading roles in the Cannes Palme d'Or-winning feature film DAS WEISSE BAND (2009) by director Michael Haneke. For this she received the American Young Artist Award as well as the New Faces Award for Best Young Actress. In addition to her feature film engagements, Leonie Benesch is present on ARD and ZDF, in television films such as "Der Club der singenden Metzger" by Uli Edel and crime series such as "Soko Köln" or "Tatort".

Leonie Benesch became known to a large audience in 2017: She appeared in the first three seasons as Greta Overbeck in the ARD-Degeto-Sky co-production "Babylon Berlin." She received the German Acting Award for her role. In 2017, she starred in two episodes of the award-winning Netflix series "The Crown." Her more recent work includes the TV multi-part "Spy City," the Netflix mini-series "Time of Secrets" and the Holocaust drama PERSISCHSTUNDEN (2020) by Vadim Perelman, which premiered at the Berlinale, as well as the German-French-Italian series "Around the World in 80 Days" with David Tennant. Recently, Leonie Benesch was in front of the camera for the series blockbuster "Der Schwarm" based on Frank Schätzing's bestseller.

Leonard Stettinisch (Oskar)

LEONARD (Leo) JOHANN STETTINISCH, was born in Berlin and lives there with his parents. He is a student at the Gymnasium, plays saxophone and soccer, with his favorite club Borussia Pankow. Through his father, Michael Klammer, who is also an actor himself, he got to know İlker Çatak. He actually only applied as a child extra, not realizing that he would end up being chosen for the lead child role. THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE is his first film.

Eva Löbau (Friederike Kuhn)

The theater and film actress EVA LÖBAU, trained at the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna, became known to a wide audience through the film DER WALD VOR LAUTER BÄUMEN (2003) by Maren Ade and in the meantime with television productions such as TATORT and the ZDF series FAMILIE BUNDSCHUH. She is associated with arthouse cinema through films such as HOTEL VERY WELCOME (2007) by Sonja Heiss and WORST CASE SCENARIO (2014) by Franz Müller. She has appeared in films by Detlev Buck, Hans-Christian Schmid, Max Färberböck, Oliver Haffner or Tom Lass and has also been cast in international productions such as INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS (2009) by Quentin Tarantino and UNKNOWN (2011) by Jaume Collet-Serra.

In the so-called independent theater scene she repeatedly worked with Andreas Ammer, Santiago Blaum, Angela Richter, Vanessa Stern and Patrick Wengenroth. Eva Löbau was a

founding member of the theater collective DIE BAIRISCHE GEISHA (2000 -2021). From 2018 to 2020 she was in the ensemble of the Münchner Kammerspiele. There she appeared in DREI SCHWESTERN, directed by Susanne Kennedy, MELANCHOLIA, directed by Felix Rothenhäusler and RÄUBERINNEN, directed by Leonie Böhm, among others.

For her role in the feature film EINSAMKEIT UND SEX UND MITLEID by Lars Montag and Helmut Krausser, she was nominated for the German Film Award in 2017. With the film REISE NACH JERUSALEM by Lucia Chiarla she was awarded Best Actress at the Achtung Berlin Festival - New Berlin Film Award in 2018.

Michael Klammer (Thomas Liebenwerda)

MICHAEL KLAMMER, born in South Tyrol, completed his acting training at the Schauspielhaus Salzburg after graduating from high school. Already during his studies he became a permanent ensemble member there. After an engagement at the Volkstheater in Vienna, he spent seven years as a permanent ensemble member at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. There he worked with Armin Petras and Antú Romero Nunes, among others, with whom he also realized guest works at the Burgtheater Vienna and the Schauspielhaus Stuttgart. Further collaborations were with Jan Bosse, Tilman Köhler and Felicitas Brucker as well as with Amelie Niermeyer as a guest at the Residenztheater in Munich. Since the 2021 season, he has been a guest at Theater Basel and can be seen in the productions "Metamorphoses", "What Happened to Daisy Duck" and soon in "A Midsummer Night's Dream".

Michael Klammer is also active in film: In the TNT comedy series "Arthur's Law" by director Christian Zübert, he appeared in front of the camera alongside Martina Gedeck, Jan Josef Liefers and Nora Tschirner. In the feature film LEIF IN CONCERT, VOL. 2 (2019) by Christian Klandt, he can be seen alongside Luise Heyer. In ENFANT TERRIBLE (2020) by Oskar Röhler about the life of Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Oliver Massucci), which was nominated for the official selection of the Cannes Film Festival, Klammer played the role of Fassbinder actor Günther Kaufmann alongside Katja Riemann, among others. In 2022, he was part of the cast of Aron Lehmann's comedy JAGDSAISON. He recently shot the TV film "Unbestechlich" under the direction of Christiane Balthasar.

Rafael Stachowiak (Milosz Dudek)

RAFAEL STACHOWIAK, born in 1981, studied acting at the Hochschule für Schauspielkunst "Ernst Busch" in Berlin. In 2006, in the third year of his training, he was engaged at the Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin. There he worked with directors Falk Richter, Luk Perceval, Thomas Ostermeier, Benedict Andrews and Constanza Macras. In 2007 he participated in Falk Richter's "Freischütz" production at the Salzburg Festival. From 2009/10 to 2020/21 Rafael Stachowiak was a permanent ensemble member of the Thalia Theater. As of the 2021/22 season, he will continue to be associated with the Thalia as a guest.

Rafael Stachowiak can also be seen time and again in film and television productions. On television, he could be seen in "Tatorten" or in renowned productions such as "Nackt unter Wölfen" and "Die Wannseekonferenz". In feature films, he starred under the direction of Christian Petzold in UNDINE (2019), shot GASMANN (2018) with Arne Körner and collaborated with Philipp Stölzl on DIE SCHACHNOVELLE (2020) and with Markus Goller on ONE FOR THE ROAD (2023).

BEHIND THE CAMERA

İlker Çatak (Director & Screenplay)

İLKER ÇATAK was born in Berlin in 1984 and, as the son of Turkish immigrants, moved to Istanbul at the age of twelve, where he completed his high school diploma together with co-writer Johannes Duncker at the German School there. İlker Çatak then returned to Germany and worked for four years on German and international cinema productions.

Starting in 2005, the filmmaker already attracted attention with his first short film works such as "Als Namibia eine Stadt war..." (directed in collaboration with Johannes Duncker), before earning his bachelor's degree in film and television directing in 2009. He then completed a master's degree in directing at the Hamburg Media School. During this time, he made the short films "Alte Schule" and "Wo wir sind", among others. With the latter, İlker Çatak won the short film competition of the Max Ophüls Festival in 2014 and received a nomination for the Student Academy Award. One year later, the talented director convinced the juries with his graduation film "Sadakat". İlker Çatak was not only awarded the Max Ophüls Prize and the First Steps Award for Best Short Film - he received the prestigious Student Oscar® in Gold for Best Foreign Short Film.

In 2017, Çatak made his first feature film, ES WAR EINMAL INDIANERLAND, the adaptation of the award-winning novel for young people by Nils Mohl. This was followed in 2019 by ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT, his second feature film work. Ingo Fliess was responsible for the production. The film premiered in 2019 at the Filmfest München and was awarded two prizes there, and in early 2020, already nominated several times for the German Film Award, won the Lola in Bronze in the category Best Film. In 2021, the filmmaker adapted Finn-Ole Heinrich's successful novel RÄUBERHÄNDE and directed his first "Tatort": For RÄUBERHÄNDE as well as for "Borowski und der gute Mensch," Çatak worked with award-winning cinematographer Judith Kaufmann.

Johannes Duncker (Screenplay)

JOHANNES DUNCKER and İlker Çatak are school friends and, under their label 24 Lies Per Second, develop material primarily for the cinema. Born in 1983 in Westphalia, Duncker spent ten years of his childhood and youth in Istanbul, where, like Çatak, he graduated from the German School. He went on to study theater, film and television studies, English and history in Cologne and Rome. He realized numerous internationally successful short films,

including "Short Trip" (2014) and "Soft Rains" (2021). He has also directed the KFFK/Short Film Festival Cologne since 2013.

Ingo Fliess (Production)

After studying art history (M.A. 1991) in Bamberg and Berlin, INGO FLIESS worked as a script agent, editor and managing director at Verlag der Autoren (1994- 2006) in Frankfurt am Main until 2006. In 2007 he founded his independent production company if... Productions. The company profile includes nationally and internationally successful documentaries such as ELTERN SCHULE (2018), TACKLING LIFE (2018), MY WAY TO OLYMPIA (2013), EL BULLI - COOKING IN PROGRESS (2011) or HOW TO MAKE A BOOK WITH STEIDL (2010) as well as feature films such as Oliver Haffner's multiple award-winning works WACKERSDORF (2018) and EIN GESCHENK DER GÖTTER (2014).

He has already collaborated with İlker Çatak on the highly acclaimed ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT (2019), which had its world premiere at the Munich Film Festival, where it won two awards and received a bronze Lola at the German Film Awards ceremony in early 2020. The Munich producer most recently realized DAS MÄDCHEN MIT DEN GOLDEN HÄNDEN (2021) by Katharina Marie Schubert, who was responsible for the screenplay and direction, NEUE GESCHICHTEN VOM FRANZ (2022) directed by Johannes Schmid and SCHWEIGEND STEHT DER WALD directed by Saralisa Volm. The film premiered at the 2022 Berlinale. The documentary VOGELPERSPEKTIVEN by Jörg Adolph, also produced by Fliess, will be released in February 2023. Ingo is a professor for film production at University of film and television in Munich, is a member of the German and European Film Academies and member of the board of German Producers Association.

Judith Kaufmann (Camera)

JUDITH KAUFMANN started her career as a cinematographer in the early 1990s and has since been responsible for the image design in numerous award-winning cinema, mini-series, television film and documentary productions. She is now one of the most renowned cinematographers in Europe. She is working with İlker Çatak on THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE for the third time after RÄUBERHÄNDE (2021) and "Tatort: Borowski und der gute Mensch".

Judith Kaufmann has won the German Camera Award twice, in 2003 in the category "Feature Film" for SCHERBENTANZ (2002) and in 2010 in the category "Feature Film" for DIE FREMDE (2009). She was awarded the Bavarian Film Prize for her visual language in Züli Aladag's boxing drama ELEFANTENHERZ (2002), and in 2006 she received the Marburg Camera Prize for her work. A number of important feature films bear her creative signature. In addition to the above, these include the documentary NICO ICON (1995), VERGISS AMERIKA (2000) by Vanessa Jopp, Lars Büchel's ERBSEN AUF HALB 6 (2004), FREMDE HAUT (2005) by Angelina Maccarone, for which Judith Kaufmann collaborated on the screenplay, and VIER MINUTEN (2007) by Chris Kraus.

Her more recent work includes THE DIVINE ORDER (2017) by Petra Volpe, Caroline Link's best-selling film adaptation DER JUNGE MUSS AN DIE FRISCHE LUFT (2018), which won her the Austrian Film Award "Romy" for Best Cinematography, WANDA, MEIN WUNDER (2020) by Bettina Oberli and CORSAGE (2022) by Marie Kreutzer, which was entered into the Oscar race for Austria. She is currently shooting the historical drama IN LIEBE, EURE HILDE, directed by Andreas Dresen.

Zazie Knepper (production design)

ZAZIE KNEPPER was responsible for the set design of İlker Çatak's I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE (2019) and "Tatort - Borowski und der gute Mensch". She trained as a stage designer and subsequently designed stage spaces at various theaters in Hamburg, Stuttgart and Oldenburg. After ten years of theater work, Zazie Knepper switched to film in the mid-90s. A collaboration with film students at the Hamburg Media School resulted in her first feature film. Her enthusiasm for the world of the moving image quickly made this field of work her creative focus. In the meantime, her filmography has grown to more than 50 film and television productions, which brought her together with directors and image designers such as Matti Geschonneck, Richard Huber, Stephan Wagner, Markus Goller, Dani Levy, Judith Kaufmann and Martin Langer.

She received a Grimme Award in 2014 for her production design of the historical TV project Mord in Eberswalde. Her most recent cinema works are ALLES IN BESTER ORDNUNG (2021) by Natja Brunckhorst and WIR SIND DANN WOHL DIE ANGEHÖRIGEN (2022) by Hans-Christian Schmid.

Christian Röhrs (costume design)

CHRISTIAN RÖHRS and İlker Çatak are working together for the third time on DAS LEHRERZIMMER. Previously, the two worked together on the film adaptation of the hit novel RÄUBERHÄNDE (2021) and the award-winning ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT (2019). Producer Ingo Fliess has also known Röhrs for several years; in addition to the Fliess-produced ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT, he supported, among others, if...Productions productions such as EIN GESCHENK DER GÖTTER (2014) and WACKERSDORF (2018) - both by Oliver Haffner -, the TV film "Mein vergessenes Leben" as well as DAS MÄDCHEN MIT DEN GOLDENEN HÄNDEN (2021) by Katharina Marie Schubert, for which Röhrs was responsible for the costumes of the 90s.

Röhrs has been working in the film industry since 2004, having previously designed stage spaces at various theaters. With his first film project, KATZE IM SACK (2004) by Florian Schwarz, he started to build up a clothing and accessories fundus: a collection of found objects from the 80s, 90s and 00s and the best of today, as well as workwear, shoes, jewelry and accessories.

Parallel to his work as a costume designer, Christian Röhrs works as a textile artist and has a dyeing and patination workshop. Other works as a costume designer include Thomas

Stuber's IN DEN GÄNGEN (2018) and DIE VIERHÄNDIGE (2017) by Oliver Kienle, as well as in the TV field "Wolfsjagd" by Jakob Ziemnicki and "Ivo" by Eva Trobisch.

Marvin Miller (Film score)

Film composer MARVIN MILLER is a long-time creative partner of İlker Çatak and already contributed the music of Çatak's graduation film "Sadakat". This was followed by I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE (2019), "Tatort - Borowski und der gute Mensch" and now THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE. Miller's filmography in cinema includes Michael Bully Herbig's BALLON (2018), JIM KNOPF UND LUKAS DER LOKOMOTIVFÜHRER (2018), JIM KNOPF UND DIE WILDE 13 (2020) by Dennis Gansel and DER BOANDLKRAMER UND DIE EWIGE LIEBE (2021) - Miller co-wrote the scores for all four projects with Ralf Wengenmayr - as well as Katharina Marie Schubert's debut feature THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN (2021), which was produced by Ingo Fliess.