



Presents

# CHERRY BLOSSOMS

A Film by Doris Dörrie

Starring  
Elmar Wepper  
Hannelore Elsner  
Aya Irizuki

**Winner - Best Film Award - Seattle International Film Festival 2008**  
**Winner - Official Selection, Berlin International Film Festival 2008**

(124 mins, Germany/France, 2008)

Distribution



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## SYNOPSIS

Partially shot in Japan, **CHERRY BLOSSOMS** is the tender and profoundly moving story of Trudi (Hannelore Elsner) and Rudi (Elmar Wepper, Best Actor winner at the German Film Awards, the equivalent of the Academy Award), a long-married couple who travel to Berlin from the countryside to visit their children and grandchildren only to realize that they are emotionally distant and unavailable. When Trudi unexpectedly dies, a grief-stricken Rudi vows to honor her unfulfilled desires by embarking on a life-changing journey to Japan, a place Trudi often dreamed of but never visited. A trip to Tokyo in the midst of the cherry blossom festival sparks an unlikely friendship with a young Butoh dancer who helps connect Rudi with his wife's lifelong love for the dance. Culminating with a pilgrimage to the iconic fog-shrouded Mount Fuji, **CHERRY BLOSSOMS** is a poignant celebration of beauty, new beginnings and the ultimate metaphor for the impermanence of life.

One of Germany's foremost filmmakers (*Men, Me and Him, Am I Beautiful?, Enlightenment Guaranteed, Naked*), multiple award-winning director Doris Dörrie's latest film is an emotionally intense and profoundly moving story of marital love.

## DIRECTOR STATEMENT

With this story I tried to investigate serious questions about love and loss in a hopefully lighthearted way: does impermanence teach us to see things the way they really are? Is it possible to enjoy the present moment in the face of death? What makes us blossom? What makes us wither? How can we water our seeds of joy? We tried to apply these questions not only to the story but also to our way of shooting. We tried to discover beauty in each moment and let it pervade the story. For all of us, this blend of reality and fiction was strangely exhilarating. It was as if the line between waking and dreaming had been blurred and it wasn't quite clear where we were, but at all times we felt much closer to the essence - and I think this shows in the film. --- Doris Dörrie

## CAST

Rudi	Elmar Wepper
Trudi	Hannelore Elsner
Franzi	Nadja Uhl
Karl	Maximilian Brückner
Yu	Aya Irizuki
Karolin	Birgit Minichmayr
Klaus	Felix Eitner
Emma	Floriane Daniel
Celine	Celine Tannenberger
Robert	Robert Döhlert
Butoh-Dancer	Tadashi Endo

## CREW

Writer-Director	Doris Dörrie
Producers:	Molly von Fürstenberg Harald Kügler
Director of Photography:	Hanno Lentz
Costumes:	Sabine Greuning
Editors:	Inez Regnier Frank Müller
Music:	Claus Bantzer
Associate Producers:	Patrick Zorer Ruth Stadler
Casting:	Nessie Nesslauer

## WHY JAPAN? NOTES BY DORIS DÖRRIE

Why do I keep coming back to Japan? This is already my third film, after *Enlightenment Guaranteed* and *The Fisherman and His Wife* that I've shot, at least partially, in Japan. It's been more than 20 years since I first came to Japan. Back then, my first film, *Straight Through the Heart*, had been invited to the Tokyo Film Festival, and with it I stumbled into this country as one stumbles into a dream. My first evening in Tokyo, after an almost 24-hour trip, I staggered down the streets in a daze: the air was tropically humid, the Chinese lanterns on top of the cabs were lit up brightly and a stream of people, dressed in dark attire, seemed to swim past me like an enormous school of fish. I didn't dare to dive in and join them, although I longed to do so, even though I did not know where the journey was leading. I sat in the movie theatres but what I really wanted to do was to explore this foreign country. And so, I asked someone to make a sign for me with the Japanese characters for *Tokyo* written on it. With my new sign, I headed for the train station called Shibuya and took the next train to Kamakura.

After a short train ride I walked through temples and bamboo forests. I was completely overwhelmed. I was certain I had found paradise. I kept walking and walking. I couldn't read or speak a single word; oddly that made me rather cheerful. I felt invisible though I stood out like a sore thumb, being blond and tall, and wearing a bright yellow rain coat. It wasn't until 1994, almost 10 years later, that I returned to Japan accompanied by my little daughter.

To the great dismay of the organizers of this trip, I had insisted on staying in a small, traditional Japanese bed-and-breakfast type place, called *Minshukus*, which generally have shared bathing facilities. It was there that I discovered the Japanese bathing traditions and I became fascinated with the great care everyone took: making the beds in the *Minshuku*, the bathing, the cooking, peoples' demeanor, the way things are wrapped, the way business cards are handed to another person – there was always this distinct mindfulness and love for the smallest little details. There is even a name for this mindfulness: *Mono no aware*. There are many translations for *Mono no aware* but the ones that best capture the meaning, at least in my mind, are: to be delighted and wistfully touched; to be moved by things; and the *self* becoming one with the outside world. Maybe it's just a more pronounced awareness of the transient nature of things, resulting in a much more focused enjoyment of even the simplest things in life. I called my husband in Germany from a pink phone and told him how much I regretted not having him there with me, not having the entire family there together ...

After returning to Germany I watched Yasujiro Ozu's films again. When I had watched them in film school, I thought they were too slow. Now I believe that I was just too impatient and too young for his films. Now I can see the special love the Japanese have for all things and for their transient nature – *the mono no aware* – in his films. And by now, Ozu's favorite and lifelong subject had also become mine: the family. Over and over Ozu told stories about families, the same way Hokusai kept drawing Mount Fuji again and again. It's a continuing attempt to approach one and the same subject. After the death of my husband, who had also been the DP of my films, I was certain that I was no longer capable of making films. It was Werner Penzel, a friend of my late husband's, who convinced me to try again. He suggested that I go out every day with a small video camera and just *observe*, and, without planning or preparing, I ended up shooting the documentary *Augenblick*.

The structure of the piece emerged from being so close to the observed subject. What I was observing began to speak to me and to lead me. This type of process was very different from what I was used to, which was to go on location with a large team, a locked script and a planned out shot list in an attempt to create a reality in fiction, to recreate reality. The amateur video camera became my camouflage: I became a tourist and only had to hold still and watch instead of chasing images and forcing them into my own perception of them. To release control seemed more exciting and more *loving* to me now than to assert control. Proceeding in this manner seemed to be a better way of getting to the bottom of things – to find out how *life* really works. And so I tried to make a feature film applying this new approach. I invented the story of two brothers who travel to a Zen monastery in Japan and end up losing everything that made up their identity: family, money, and passports.

And so we went to *my* Japan with a script, purposely left unfinished, a small team of only five people, two small video cameras and two actors. We moved through the country the way I had done on my last two trips. The abbot of Sojiji, at the monastery in Notto, who had granted us the shooting permit, seemed a bit befuddled by our undertaking. But at the same time he was – as is required in Zen teaching – also very curious about our *beginners' mind*. He even admonished the young monks, who had burst into fits of laughter, watching our clumsy attempts at observing the rules of the monastery. I, in particular, had a tough time following the strict rules that had to be observed perfectly. Patiently, the abbot explained the purpose of these rules to me: Mindfully observing the rules allows the individual to return to the presence. The challenge is to go about whatever one is doing at any given moment with the utmost dedication, to discover the universe in even the most mundane activities; in other words, to discover the divine even in a dust cloth. This approach can be applied to filmmaking as well. Working this way was such a great experience that I never wanted to work any other way, but I had to because my next two screenplays were neither suitable for digital nor for guerilla style filmmaking. I shot the conventionally produced feature films *Naked* and *The Fisherman and His Wife* on 35 mm with large crews. Working this way made it impossible for me to engage in what was going on around me, which in turn made me impatient. I wanted to find a story that could be shot in the same way that *Enlightenment Guaranteed* was filmed. A story that I could convince producers had to be filmed using that particular approach. A defining inspiration for *Cherry Blossoms* was Ozu's *Tokyo Monogatari* (1953), which was a retelling of the American film *Make Way for Tomorrow* (1937) by Leo McCarey. A story from the West travels to the East – and from the East to the West. Inspired by the setup in Ozu's film, I picked up the thread and further developed the story of a widowed father, who travels from Germany to Japan, the world of Ozu, where he encounters YU, a young Butoh dancer, who takes an interest in him, even though they don't speak the same language.

### **About Butoh**

What is Butoh? Just like in the case of Zen and *mono no aware*, it is difficult to capture Butoh with words. I didn't discover Butoh in Japan. I discovered Butoh one night on television. I watched Peter Sempel's documentary about the famous Butoh dancer Kazuo Ono on ARTE. Butoh developed in the 60's as sort of a blend of Japanese hippie culture and modern, German expressionist dance. Butoh is about portraying light and shadow, birth and death, the coming into being and the ceasing to exist. Joy becomes pain before becoming joy again. Watching Kazuo Ono was fascinating: Dressed in women's clothes, holding a flower in his hand, he danced in slow motion. That was pretty much all he did. It was neither a pantomime act, nor an attempt to play a woman,

but something altogether different, something that I had never seen before: it was the visual portrayal of the presence of the dead within each of us. I began searching for someone who taught Butoh in Germany and, through the Internet, found the world-renowned Japanese Butoh dancer, Tadashi Endo, who happened to live and teach in Göttingen. I signed up for one of his workshops and my first assignment from Tadashi was to clean the dance floor the way I had been taught to clean the floor at the monastery in Notto. The story of *Cherry Blossoms* also begins with Tadashi's teaching, asking to see the connection to our ancestors in all of our movements.

At some point he told me that the dead are dreaming of us, and these words have become a *through-line* for me. Because, if the dead dream of us, then maybe all signs of transience are just little postcards from the dead. The cherry blossom, for example, has a long tradition in Japanese culture as a symbol of transience – but I had never been to Japan during the cherry blossom season! And so, in March 2006, I set out on a quest to see the cherry blossoms and Mount Fuji, which the Japanese lovingly call Fuji-san or Mr. Fuji, in my mind. When I finally saw *Mr. Fuji*, I was speechless. *He* looked supernatural. I couldn't believe my eyes. *He* looked like a creation out of Photoshop. The summit was whiter than white, the sky above it was bluer than blue. At the bottom, I discovered a little bed-and-breakfast place, very much like the one I stayed at on my trip 10 years ago with my little daughter. Another location to film. I found a crematorium with a view on Mount Fuji. I made a mental note of the place, without knowing how I wanted to incorporate it into the story. What was very clear, though, was that the cherry blossoms had to be in the film. They had to be captured in their transience, but also as a contradiction and a challenge. Slowly, these natural phenomena, which are difficult to capture, accumulated: cherry blossoms, and a clear view on Mount Fuji and the Allgäu, where I had decided I wanted to start the story.

I wanted to incorporate the Allgäu (the Bavarian countryside), which has been my home for the last 18 years now, and which I love, especially in early May, when dandelions blossom in front of the snow-covered Alps. I also wanted part of the story to take place in Berlin and another part at the Baltic Sea: Berlin because it is the diametrical opposite of the Allgäu, and the Baltic Sea because of the incredible light above the water. The movement of the inner and the outer story was, by now, clear to me: we'd start in the Allgäu and head to Berlin, then to the Baltic Sea and back to the Allgäu, from where we'd go to Tokyo and end up, in the end, at Mount Fuji. I also knew very well that no producer in the world would accept this amount of imponderability in one film unless I'd come up with a way of shooting the film that would not only prepare and allow for all possibilities but would also permit them to influence the story. And I already had the magic formula: a small team and digital technology.

Since *Enlightenment Guaranteed* a lot has happened: we now have high-resolution HDTV technology that doesn't just come in compact, easily-portable units but that also fulfills even the highest demands in terms of focus and resolution. Molly von Fürstenberg, whom I have worked with on my first few films, and everyone at her company, Olga Film, was intrigued by the story. In Patrick Zorer and Ruth Stadler, I found two executive producers who very much enjoyed this free-spirited way of filmmaking and weren't scared off by diva-like cherry blossoms, mountains and dandelions. But you don't just need flexible producers with a high tolerance for pain for this type of filmmaking, you also need courageous actors who are willing to take risks. On a shoot like this the actors cannot be provided with what they are accustomed to, such as trailers, catering, countless assistants and lots of breaks. As a matter of fact, on

these types of productions, each day of shooting brings something unforeseen that seems to break the mold. Elmar Wepper to me is a miracle. He is a completely fearless and wholeheartedly devoted actor. He has a huge heart, is exceptionally talented, and totally unflappable. On the first day of shooting – just 48 hours after he arrived in Japan – he had to cram himself into crowded subways without even knowing where he was going or if he would ever be able to find his way back. Three days later Mount Fuji decided, unexpectedly, to reveal itself, although only briefly. The weather forecast predicted that this clear view wasn't going to last long, possibly no longer than a day. This meant that we had to take advantage of this small window of opportunity and shoot Elmar's scene, a difficult Butoh dance scene, as soon as possible. And so he and Hannelore Elsner, who had just flown in, had a very early call the next morning. At 4 am, Tadashi and I applied their make-up in the hallway of the hotel before they had to dance – in their nightgowns, in below freezing temperatures – under Mount Fuji. Watching that scene now, knowing the back-story, the tremendous professionalism of these two actors becomes apparent. They are always completely present and in the moment. And there it was again! That's exactly what the abbot from Sojiji had called for.

My DP, Hanno Lentz, never tried to imitate analogue technology with the digital one we were using. Instead, he consciously played with its advantages and disadvantages. Plus, he clearly enjoyed the unexpected, while still accomplishing the aesthetic goals we had defined. So we stuck to the script and our visual ideas while allowing the stream of 'real' images to carry us away, to influence our story and to help tell it. For all of us, this blend of reality and fiction was strangely exhilarating. It was as if the line between waking and dreaming had been blurred and it wasn't quite clear where we were, but at all times we felt much closer to the essence – delighted and wistfully touched. Maybe that's what *mono no aware* is.

**MAYBE. THANK YOU EVERYONE. DOMO ARIGATO.**

## **ABOUT BUTOH DANCE | DANCE OF THE SENSES**

*"Butoh isn't a linear composition, it isn't a synthetic arrangement of bodily movement, but an exploration of the frightening depths of the body itself."*

*--Tatsumi Hijikata*

Rudi (Elmar Wepper) didn't get to truly know his wife Trudi (Hannelore Elsner) until after her death. Only then does he begin to understand her through the dance she loved so much: Butoh. Butoh is dance theatre that fluctuates from meditative gracefulness to the grotesque. It has little to do with traditional Japanese dance, even though some performance elements might falsely suggest so. Butoh does draw from different forms of dance and modes of expression such as Nū, Flamenco and Capoeira, but it is the dancer himself or herself who, with his or her imagination, creates the technique of the dance. Butoh is a contemporary form of expressionist dance with roots in post WWII Japan. Tatsumi Hijikata (1928–1986), a dancer and writer and a central figure of the Japanese avant-garde of the 60's and 70's, had studied modern and German expressionist dance but, in 1956, he turned his back on all conventional forms of dance in order to develop a new, contemporary Japanese dance which he called Ankoku Butoh – «dance of darkness». He stopped looking at the body of the dancer as an abstract instrument or a tool for aesthetic figuration, but rather as a tool to find and reveal deep, dark and impenetrable layers in the body that had once been imprinted there. The dancers reveal these unconscious traces with the help of techniques that switch off the

mind's conscious control over the body. The most internationally renowned Butoh performer is Kazuo Ono (1907), for whom Tadashi Endo danced in Tokyo in 2007 in honor of his 100th birthday.

## HANAMI | BLOSSOM WATCHING

Rudi (Elmar Wepper) travels to Tokyo to visit his son Karl during the cherry blossom season. The cherry blossom season marks the beginning of spring and is one of the key events of the Japanese calendar year. The blossoming of the trees is seen as a symbol for the blossoming of life and as a sign of strength, youth and beauty. The cherry blossom is one of the most significant symbols in Japanese culture associated not only with awakening, but also with the idea that life consists of various stages and that it is transient. The older a cherry tree, the more blossoms it bears. *Hanami* means, "to look at flowers/ blossoms" and refers to the blossoms of the Japanese Cherry, a particular type of cherry tree. It is customary in Japan to celebrate Hanami in parks as soon as the cherry trees are in full bloom. For about ten days, while the cherry trees are blossoming, friends, colleagues and families gather under the trees for a picnic, to celebrate in a sea of pink and white flower petals.

## ABOUT DORIS DÖRRIE | WRITER-DIRECTOR

One of Germany's foremost directors, Doris Dörrie has had, over two decades, a consistent output of award-winning, critical and box office hits since her first feature, the 1983 *Straight Through the Heart*, which was selected for the Venice and Tokyo International Film Festivals. One year later, she directed her breakthrough film, the comedy *Men*, a box office hit in Germany and abroad. Her other films include *Me and Him*, *Nobody Loves Me*, *Am I Beautiful?*, *Naked*, and *The Fisherman and His Wife*. In addition she has directed numerous documentaries - including the recent *How to Cook your Life* about American Zen Buddhist monk/chef ---), and directs opera productions such as *Così fan tutte* (Staatsoper Berlin 2001), *Turandot* (2003), *Rigoletto* (2004/2005 Münchner Staatsoper), *Madame Butterfly* (Münchner Staatstheater 2005), and *La Finta Giardiniera* (Salzburger Festspiele 2006).

Born 1955 in Hanover, Ms. Dörrie studied Latin and ancient Greek in high school. After graduation she went to the United States where she studied drama, philosophy and psychology from 1973 to 1975. Upon returning to Germany she studied film at Munich's famed film school, the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film and started her career as a film critic for the prestigious newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

When not directing, Ms. Dörrie teaches screenwriting at her alma mater, Munich's HFF and is a successful author of short stories and novels. The weekly newspaper *DIE ZEIT* has called her "One of the best storytellers of contemporary German literature". Her first collection of short stories *Liebe, Schmerz, und das ganze verdammte Zeug* was published in 1986. She followed it with *Was wollen Sie von mir* (1988), *Der Mann meiner Träume* and *Für immer und ewig* (1991), *Samara* (1996) and, *Am I Beautiful?* (1998), a collection of 17 interconnected short stories on which her film of the same name is based. After receiving several awards for her short stories, she published her first novel, *Was machen wir jetzt?* and *Enlightenment Guaranteed*, in 2000. The film

*Naked* is based on her novel *Happy*. Her next novel, the 2002 *Das blaue Kleid*, was on the bestseller list of the weekly magazine SPIEGEL for several weeks and won her the prestigious *Deutsche Buchpreis*. She has also published seven children's books. Her latest novel is *Und was wird aus mir*, a story about career and love in the Hollywood dream factory.

#### **SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY**

**2007 HOW TO COOK YOUR LIFE**

**2005 DER FISCHER UND SEINE FRAU** (THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE)

**2002 NAKT** (NAKED)

**2000 ERLEUCHTUNG GARANTIERT** (ENLIGHTENMENT GUARANTEED)

**1998 BIN ICH SCHÖN?** (AM I BEAUTIFUL?)

**1994 KEINER LIEBT MICH** (NOBODY LOVES ME)

**1992 HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TÜRKE!** (HAPPY BIRTHDAY!)

**1989 GELD** (MONEY)

**1988 ICH UND ER** (ME AND HIM)

**1986 PARADIES** (PARADISE)

**1985 MÄNNER** (MEN)

**1984 IM INNEREN DES WALS** (INSIDE THE WHALE)

**1983 MITTEN INS HERZ** (STRAIGHT THROUGH THE HEART)

#### **SELECTED AWARDS**

**2005 Award Pro Meritis Scientiae et Litterarum** (together with Vicco von Bülow)

**2003 German Book Award** for DAS BLAUE KLEID (Novel)

**2003 German Film Award** (Silver) for NAKED

**2000 Bavarian Cross of Merit, Bavarian Film Award** for ENLIGHTENMENT GUARANTEED

**1999 DIVA-Award**

**1996 Germany's Federal Cross of Merit**

**1995 German Film Award** (Silver) for NOBODY LOVES ME

**1986 2 German Film Awards** Best Direction (silver) and Best Screenplay (gold) for MEN

#### **AN INTERVIEW WITH DORIS DÖRRIE**

When I conceived Rudi I had Peter Lorre in mind. The Peter Lorre from *M* – who wore a coat and a hat in that film. He was stocky and had a stone-like quality; a man with raised shoulders who, in actuality, is completely stiff. That's why Rudi wears a coat and a hat as well.

**Rudi is in an intense state of grieving for his wife Trudi, when he suddenly begins to wear her skirt and her necklace. What's happening to him?**

I suppose, grieving is a process of integration. First off there is this infinite pain, caused by the physical separation and the knowledge that one will never be able to encounter the other one again physically. But then it also becomes a successful, internal integration when one suddenly carries the other one inside one's self. That leads to an internal dialogue that continues over time. Rudi finds Trudi by starting this inner dialogue with her, a dialogue that is almost more intense than the one he used to have with her before she passed away. He rediscovers something that they once shared, that only

people who have lived together for a long time can have. But that dialogue has often been neglected because of the demands of daily routine, a sort of unavailability and laziness. The topic of transience is inexhaustible; none of us can come to terms with it. The only constant is the knowledge that nothing remains the way it is. It is human nature not to be able to come to terms with this, and it causes a lot of suffering. We want to capture the moments, which to me, has a lot to do with filmmaking, which is the creating of moments, which are no longer there and the attempt to capture them.

### **But *Cherry Blossoms* is also a film about love.**

Of course, it is a romance as well, but love is transient, too. One has to give love a chance to reveal itself in its greatest pain and strength. That's why the Japanese sit under the cherry blossoms, because they are tremendously beautiful when they are blooming. At the same time the pain over the fact that this period of blossoming is short-lived is tremendous as well. One has to catch the moment when they are actually blossoming, that's why they have people monitoring the trees. Because, if you miss that particular moment, that's it, for an entire year or possibly forever. In love, one has to keep at it, one has to give it the chance to blossom and, when it does, one has to actually be there to appreciate it. That's what it's all about; that each person, each plant, each animal is granted that moment when it can truly blossom and reveal itself. But what often happens to us, and to Rudi, is that we just keep suppressing it. We never allow our true self and our true beauty to reveal itself, to blossom like the cherry tree does.

### **What inspired you to make this film?**

A lot of different things: my own personal history, old Japanese films, Ozu of course, and his stories about families as well as my fascination with Japan and Butoh. The deciding factor, though, was that I wanted to shoot a feature film the same way I shot *Enlightenment Guaranteed*. I wanted to keep things loose and work with a small team. I wanted to be flexible. That's why I traveled to Japan last year scouting locations and then added the Allgäu (Bavarian countryside). I live there and I know my way around there. At the same time I got to know all about Butoh, took one of Tadashi Endo's workshops and tried to learn and understand that dance.

### **What is Butoh?**

Butoh was created during the Japanese hippie movement. Kazuo Ono attempted to blend German expressionist dance with Japanese forms of dance. To this day Butoh dancers are complete outsiders; even in Japan, only very few people who are into art and culture know about this form of dance. The masses don't know about Butoh. It has a lot to do with coming into being and with ceasing to be: to be born and to die. Impermanence is the core issue of Butoh and of the film as well.

### **Elmar Wepper and Hannelore Elsner play their parts without make-up...**

For a project like this you can only cast extremely brave actors. I first got to know Elmar Wepper on the *Fisherman* and witnessed firsthand what kind of a brave, open, free, and curious actor he was. I wrote this script for him, he helped define everything, but then I needed a woman equally strong, if not stronger than he – at least in the first part of the film. The entire film rests on the shoulders of Elmar, who is magnificent.

### **You shot with a light camera, in the middle of Tokyo, in the Allgäu, and you improvised.**

It's always a juggling act: to be exact, open and flexible at the same time. You need a lot of experience and at the same time you have to constantly practice mindfulness. It's

great fun, when you realize that fiction and reality have the same pulse. That's when wonderful things happen. For example: At the Baltic Sea we wanted the weather to be quite miserable to sort of match the emotional state of the mourners. We wanted gray skies, rough seas, we wanted the kind of weather that's typical for the Baltic Sea. But then, when we got there, we encountered bright, blue skies and there was a sort of summer/bathing feel in the air. There were naked people and bikinis everywhere. We responded to these unexpected conditions by sending the mourners, wearing their black clothes, down to the beach. And in the end, that was a much better choice. It's even more tragic when the weather and the mood don't match. That's just a small example, but we tried to incorporate whatever came our way.

## **ABOUT THE ACTORS**

### **ELMAR WEPER ABOUT RUDI**

"Rudi works as a civil servant in the Department of Waste Management. Married and living a regular life, he's suspicious of change. He's not a particularly happy person but believes he's been lucky in life. He insists that the best times are yet to come but he is unable to live in the moment. Fascinated with his wife, he compares her to a tiger; she has all the qualities that he doesn't have. As a young woman, she wanted to be a dancer and move to Japan, but once she married him, she gave up those dreams. They moved to a small town in the Bavarian countryside (the Schongau), where they started a family. Rudi is quite content with his life but after Trudi's unexpected death, he finds himself unable to cope and alone, as his children are not supportive. For the first time in his life, he feels guilty for not having fulfilled his wife's desires which is why he takes off for Japan to follow Trudi's dream."

### **ELMAR WEPER REFLECTS ON BUTOH DANCE**

This film was shot in the crowded streets of Tokyo. Did people stare at me? After all, I was wearing a skirt and a blue necklace, and at some point even danced Butoh under cherry blossoms. Doris had told me not to worry because, people in Tokyo are even more liberal than in New York. Plus, the main rule guiding people's behavior in Japan is to not get on anyone else's nerves and so, no one looked at me when I was wearing a knitted cardigan, a pearl necklace and a skirt. Not even when I was dancing. And Tadashi Endo, our Butoh instructor, was wonderful.

### **ABOUT ELMAR WEPER**

Beloved film and television German actor Elmar Wepper was born in 1944 in Augsburg and started appearing on stage and in radio plays as a teenager. He has been well known to German audiences since the 1970s with such successful television programs as *Polizeiinspektion 1*, *Zwei Münchner in Hamburg*, *Die Sturmflut*, various *Tatort* episodes (ARD), and several episodes of *Zwei Brüder* (ZDF). His numerous film appearances include *Lammbock* (Director: Christian Zübert) and *The Fisherman and His Wife*, his first collaboration with Doris Dörrie.

## HANNELORE ELSNER ABOUT TRUDI

Trudi is free and caged up at the same time. She has decided to live the life that she lives in the beautiful Bavarian countryside called Allgäu. She had three children and completely devoted herself to this life, true to Butoh tradition. She might have missed certain things, but not more than other people. Doris Dörrie hones in on these stories about love and pain that unfold in every family, in every marriage, in every form of love. Repulsion and attraction. Family members can be rather mean and nasty to each other, while feeling an overwhelming love that binds them together. So only after someone's death do we sometimes realize what we've been missing out on. Trudi is both a very strong and gentle woman who has committed herself to Rudi with great pride. She very much reminds me of my own Bavarian grandmother, who was a farmer's wife all the way. She had a hard life and had to take care of my grandfather for a long time. She was strong and unassuming. Trudi is unassuming too, but also very generous.

### **You've had to learn Butoh for this part.**

It takes an entire lifetime to learn Butoh. Tadashi Endo or Kazuo Ono said that too: it takes a whole lifetime. It's something that makes you tick. You imagine a flower and become one with the flower. Just like little children, who think that when they play with little toy cars they are actually sitting in them. That's very much like Butoh. With Butoh you are inside and outside all at the same time.

### **There is a scene in the film in which you dance with Elmar Wepper at the bottom of Mount Fuji in the early morning hours. Did you prepare that scene for a long time?**

The night before the last scene we didn't sleep. We had to get up at 3 am. Tadashi Endo did Elmar's make-up, whose face had to be white, and then we went outside to dance at dawn in the freezing cold in front of Mount Fuji. We just did it. We didn't rehearse much. In the background, Mount Fuji looked beautiful, with its snow-covered summit. Otherwise the area around Mount Fuji is very *Americanized* and very touristy. But we were lucky, because as part of a film team you get to know a country much differently than you would as a tourist. Before we began shooting, Doris Dörrie had a Zen master perform a ceremony for us. That was very beautiful. It was a *good luck* ceremony for the shoot. Apparently, this ceremony is conducted before every large shoot in Japan.

### **In this film, you don't wear make-up, your hair is gray and your clothes aren't particularly exciting either.**

None of us wore any make-up. Doris wanted to get under our skin. I didn't even get a *little* make-up. Nothing. Doris sprayed on the gray hair herself. But Trudi never worried about aging. In her, you can see various phases and ages: childhood, youth – you can see her beauty, you can see everything ... because she is so naked.

## ABOUT HANNELORE ELSNER

Renowned German actress Hannelore Elsner has captivated audiences for decades while inspiring directors to create films for her including *My Last Film* by Oliver Hirschbiegel, *No Place To Go* by Oskar Roehler and *Go For Zucker!* by Dani Levy. Ms. Elsner is active off screen as well, supporting numerous causes and charitable organizations. She is a member of the Fritz Bauer Institut e.V., a study and documentation center of the history of the Holocaust; a trustee of the German AIDS-Stiftung; and the spokesperson for the Karuna e.V, a nonprofit organization supporting

disadvantaged children. Honored at numerous international film festivals, she has also been awarded every coveted German film and television award, including the Grimme-Preis, the German Film Awards, the Deutsche Kritikerpreis, the Bambi, the Telestar, the Goldene Kamera and the Bavarian Film Awards.

## SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

**2008 INSOMNI**, Director: Pascal Cané  
**2007 JAKOBS BRUDER**, Director: Daniel Walta  
**2007 VIVERE**, Director: Angelina Maccarone  
**2005 RAUCHZEICHEN**, Director: Rudolf Thome  
**2005 DU HAST GESAGT, DASS DU MICH LIEBST**, Director: Rudolf Thome  
**2004 GO FOR ZUCKER!**, Director: Dani Levy  
**2003 FRAU FÄHRT, MANN SCHLÄFT**, Director: Rudolf Thome  
**2002 ROT UND BLAU**, Director: Rudolf Thome  
**2002 MY LAST FILM**, Director: Oliver Hirschbiegel  
**2000 NO PLACE TO GO**, Director: Oskar Roehler  
**1999 DER SCHREI DES SCHMETTERLINGS**, Director: Frank Strecker  
**1978 DER SCHNEIDER VON ULM**, Director: Edgar Reitz

## ABOUT NADJA UHL (FRANZI)

Born in 1972 in Stralsund, Nadja Uhl completed her formal training at the Leipziger Hochschule für Musik und Theater *Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy* and began her career at the Hans Otto Theater in Potsdam. She garnered international attention in Volker Schlöndorff's 2000 *The Legend of Rita* in which she played a worker in the former East Germany who quietly yet persistently revolts against the rigid GDR-system, a performance for which she received the Berlin International Film Festival's Silver Berlin Bear for Best Actress, and was nominated for Best Supporting Actress at the German Film Awards. She starred in Ben Sombogaart's *Twin Sisters*, which went on to be nominated for an Academy Award® in the Best Foreign Film category in 2002. In 2006, Ms. Uhl starred in *Die Sturmflut*, a two-part miniseries about the 1962 floods in Hamburg, an RTL production that became the most successful television program in German television. She received a nomination for Best Actress at the 2006 German Film Awards for her performance in Andreas Dresen's *Summer in Berlin* and most recently starred in Uli Edel's film *Baader-Meinhof Komplex*.

## ABOUT MAXIMILIAN BRÜCKNER (KARL)

One of Germany's rising young actors, Maximilian Brückner was named German Shooting Star of European Film in 2007. Born in 1979, he studied at the renowned Otto Falckenberg Schule in Munich and joined the Münchner Volkstheater after graduation. He has since appeared in numerous plays, films and TV programs and was nominated for the Adolf-Grimme-Preis *Spezial* as Best Newcomer for his performance in the 2005 film *Papa und Mama* (Director: Dieter Wedel) and the *Tatort* episode *Der Tod auf der Walz* (Director: Martin Enlen).

### ABOUT BIRGIT MINICHMAYR (KAROLIN)

Birgit Minichmayr was born in 1977 in the Austrian city of Linz. While studying acting at the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna she joined the ensemble of the Burgtheater and made her stage debut in Schnitzler's *Der Reigen* in 1999. She was awarded the coveted Nestroy Theaterpreis in 2000 as Best Newcomer for her performance in *Der Färber und sein Zwillingsbruder* at the Burgtheater in Vienna. Ms. Minichmayr was named one of the Shooting Stars at the 2001 Berlin International Film Festival. She received a second Nestroy Theaterpreis Award for her role as Medea in *Das goldene Vlies* in 2004. She starred as Jean-Baptiste Grenouille's mother in Tom Tykwer's 2006 *Perfume – The Story of a Murderer*, based on the bestselling novel of the same name by Patrick Süskind.

### ABOUT FELIX EITNER (KLAUS)

Felix Eitner, born in 1967 in Freiburg im Breisgau, was 14 when he appeared in the children's series *Schau ins Land*. He studied acting at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen, the Otto Falckenberg Schule in Munich and the École de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris. He appeared on stage in many renowned theatres in Munich, Konstanz, Zurich, Bern and Basel. He received the Max Ophüls Preis for Best Newcomer in 2005 for his performance in Friedemann Fromm's *Brüder auf Leben und Tod*. That same year he received the Audience Award at the Bambis for his performance in Xaver Schwarzenberger's film *Margarete Steiff*.

### ABOUT FLORIANE DANIEL (EMMA)

Floriane Daniel was born in 1971 in Berlin and trained at Hamburg's Bühnenstudio der darstellenden Künste. Several theatre and television productions later, she gave her breakthrough performance in Tom Tykwer's *Wintersleepers*, and has since appeared in numerous film and television productions.

## **AN INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCER MOLLY VON FÜRSTENBERG**

Doris and I had been talking about this subject for three or four years. Then Doris started to write and after the first draft it was clear that we wanted to do this together. When we submitted the finished script we received funding immediately. You could tell from the script that this was going to be a very special film.

**In most current films we see stories about young people who fall in love but we rarely see old people in love.**

And that was exactly the kind of love story that interested me: a man who doesn't discover who his wife really was until after her death and then decides to give her life some closure. Doris can tell these kinds of stories very well because she understands people so well.

**Had Elmar Wepper been the choice for Rudi from the outset?**

Yes! We loved Doris's idea to cast Elmar Wepper! We very much admire the authenticity of his performances. He plays the part with a tremendous amount of tenderness. It's also wonderful that Hannelore Elsner became so immersed in her character. She was so excited about the script that she committed instantaneously. And she had seen the same documentary about Kazuo Ono on ARTE that Doris had watched. It was magic.

**Thanks to High Definition, you didn't have to stand in the background urging everyone to hurry up.**

Yes, that was very pleasant. It was great to be shooting on HD, because we could capture a lot documentary style. Allgäu, Berlin, Japan – such contrasts are almost impossible to capture with a camera that bogs you down. We couldn't have done it any other way.