

Based on the novel "WALD" by DORIS KNECHT

# WOODLAND

a film by ELISABETH SCHARANG






BRIGITTE **HOBMEIER** GERTI **DRASSL**  
BOGDAN **DUMITRACHE** JOHANNES **KRISCH**

Director of Photography JÖRG **WIDMER** Editor ALARICH **LENZ**  
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Sound Mix MANUEL **GRANDPIERRE** Sounddesign VERONIKA **HLAWATSCH**  
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Makeup Artist SAM **DOPONA** VERENA **EICHTINGER** Casting LISA **OLAH**  
Production Manager ANDREAS **KISPERT**  
Line Producer ULRIKE **LAESSER**  
Written and Directed by ELISABETH **SCHARANG**  
Producer MICHAEL **KATZ** VEIT **HEIDUSCHKA**  
A production of **WEGA FILM**  
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**Marian leaves the city behind and retreats to the old house she inherited from her grandmother. The nearest village is ten kilometers away, there's no electricity and no hot water.  
Sometimes submitting to a catastrophe is the only way to begin afresh.**



# SYNOPSIS



After the explosion it all seems very quiet.

Marian (BRIGITTE **HOBMEIER**) packs a few things, leaves her husband (BOGDAN **DUMITRACHE**) behind in the city and retreats to the old house she inherited from her grandmother. The nearest village is ten kilometers away, there's no electricity, and she has no food, no car and not much money. And her presence here is disturbing, prompting unrest in the village. What does she want here?

Marian's childhood friend Gerti (GERTI **DRASSL**) lives near the old house; she runs a small farm and takes care of her elderly parents. Gerti and Marian used to be best friends, forming a trio with Franz (JOHANNES **KRISCH**); they roamed through the woods for days. Marian's return revives old conflicts as well as forgotten dreams between the three of them.

Sometimes submitting to a catastrophe is the only way to begin afresh. Inspired by the bestseller **WALD** (FOREST) by Doris Knecht, director and screenwriter ELISABETH **SCHARANG** ("Jack") tells a powerful story that develops quietly, a tale of dependencies, fear of losing control and the feeling of freedom. But Scharang knows that everything can work out if two women sit down side by side, open a can of beer and share a cigarette.

ELISABETH **SCHARANG**:

*"Marian has no option other than to act this way. I think that if the place where you feel safe – your home, the city you live in – ceases to be a safe space, it's the worst thing that can happen to you. It's very difficult to cope with that. I also knew that something inconceivable had happened, but nothing had happened to me personally; I wasn't hurt. It was only the next day, when I tried to talk about it, that I was forced to realize I couldn't stop crying. I had no control over myself anymore. Only then did it become clear that something had happened to me."*



**How did the plot of the film reveal itself to you? Were there any detours?**

Detours are a beautiful thing – I'm interested in conditions, and to make it possible to grasp them, the plot and the story have to change and adapt. I go in search of what touches me – and I don't know that beforehand. In the beginning there was the novel, WALD (FOREST) about this woman who is catapulted out of her everyday life and thrown back on her own resources. It's a kind of Robinson Crusoe story with a woman at its center. How do you make this plausible when the story is set not on a desert island, but in the Waldviertel (the forest region of north-east Austria)? I struggled with this question for quite a time.

**How did you find the old house?**

Actually, we spent a year looking for it, with no luck! Then I remembered a farm we had rented a few years ago for a New Year's Eve party with friends; the forest around it had made a particularly big impression. So I got in the car and set

off. At one point we took a wrong turn... and at the end of a dead end stood this house. I knew immediately it was the right house. It was waiting for us. A year and a half earlier, the woman who had lived there all her life had died. Her daughter, and especially the granddaughter who was now taking care of the house, had left everything as it was, because they loved the grandmother very much – and this woman ultimately became the grandmother of my main character. The family were very happy to have their grandmother and the house immortalized in our film. It was all very consistent.

**How did you shoot in the house?**

It was easy to light it from outside. Sometimes the only interior light in a scene was from a flashlight. It was tight, of course, but I like that. A shortage of space always means the technology has to be reduced, which is usually an advantage for me as a director. Technology has a voracious element; there's always something bigger and

better. Our cinematographer, Jörg Widmer, is a great aesthete on the one hand, but on the other hand we have developed a very trusting relationship over the last years and three movies we did together: beauty in film isn't a beautiful image, it's about the inner beauty of the character. And to show that, you don't need perfect lighting – you need the perfect lighting for that scene. Which often isn't the same thing at all. That's where the house helped a lot, also with its real patina and atmosphere.


**Did you change much about it?**

Nina Salak, my art director, adapted a lot in terms of colors and fabrics, in coordination with production design and costume design. And we created a little bit of space, so the people we needed on set could also be in the house. But basically, we kept a lot. The bed remained, the kitchen, the stove.

## SIX QUESTIONS TO DIRECTOR ELISABETH SCHARANG





A woman with long hair, wearing a green jacket, light-colored pants, and black boots, stands in a snowy landscape. She is holding a shovel and looking towards the right. She is positioned in the arched doorway of a stone building. The building has a rough, textured stone wall and a small window to the left. The ground is covered in snow, and there are bare trees and evergreens in the background under a pale sky.

**“Beauty in film isn’t a beautiful image”  
Director ELISABETH SCHARANG talks  
about the Robinson Crusoe story with  
a woman, about real and invented  
grandmothers, about a shoot that  
contained many seasons – and about  
loss of control.**



**The seasons and the changes in nature reflect the character's inner journey. How long did you shoot to show this variety of seasons?**

Three shooting blocks were planned because we knew that it was unrealistic for nature to change from the colorful abundance of autumn to the sparseness of frost and finally to the stillness of winter within six weeks. But it turned out differently. You can't control a film set like that, in the natural world – and I absolutely loved that. You can't control the weather. You can't keep the house under control. You have to work with it. To an enormous degree, it's a feeling of liberation when you say: it is what it is, and I'll take what comes. It's out of my hands, so I'll just focus on the next step. It takes away your fear. After all, that's the theme of the film. And that, in turn, I know well – this world we live in full of

optimization rules, where you're always trying to get everything under control... which often means standing in line. In the end the autumn came, the frost and one day in the morning the snow was there. All in just under six weeks of shooting.

**Nothing works without women in solidarity, right?**

At present I'm very interested in concepts of loyalty. In the masculine value system, loyalty means devotion to something above your dignity and above your own life: loyalty to a group entity, above all else. Without this loyalty, warfare wouldn't be possible. And that's why I find the word loyalty very difficult. Marian scandalizes everyone here because she refuses to recognize this concept of loyalty, along with the hierarchical thinking associated with it. Her mere presence turns everything upside down

in the village; she's a hugely disruptive factor who upsets everyone. I don't want loyalty on my film set. You don't have to live for the film and give yourself up for it. Such systems are mostly toxic. I like working with heads of departments, the artists are in their field, who surprise and inspire me with their perspective on the story that we make into a film together. The fine art of filmmaking always begins with choosing your team.









BRIGITTE **HOBMEIER** as Marian





BRIGITTE **HOBMEIER** was born in Munich in 1976, studied at the Folkwang University in Essen and achieved her first successes as an actress under Christian Stückl at the Munich Volkstheater. In 2004 Hobmeier received the Bavarian Art Prize and in 2007 the Faust Theatre Prize for Best Acting Performance. In addition to the theater, Hobmeier has increasingly taken on roles on television and in the cinema, such as in Sören Voigt's **IDENTITY KILLS**, for which she received several awards, and the film adaptation of Andrea Maria Schenkel's bestseller **TANNÖD**. On ZDF she was seen in the historical drama **THE MIDWIFE - LIFE AND**

**DEATH** in the title role, for which she received the Grimme Prize. She won the Bavarian Film Award for Best Actress for **END OF BEAUTY**, which also won her the Best Actress award at the World Film Festival in Montreal. Most recently, Brigitte Hobmeier appeared on camera in the series **SNOW** and she can currently be seen in the award-winning Sky mystery series **SOULS**.



**“I knew it would be a challenge with the cold, the forest, the loneliness, the old house. And it was very important to Elisabeth that Marian should be a runner. Cross country, over hill and dale, through the softest moss, where my feet sank down to my ankles.”**

**Hobmeier is particularly impressed by the house which served as a filming location. Meeting the family of the old woman who lived there was very touching. “I was allowed to take old sweaters from grandma’s well-stocked laundry basket that I also wore in the film. These are not costumes and film locations, these are objects that have a real story.”**





GERTI **DRASSL** as Gerti





**GERTI DRASSL** was born in Bolzano and completed her acting training at the renowned Max Reinhardt Seminar, where she graduated in 2002 with a diploma. Since then, she has been successful both on stage and on screen. She has played at the Theater in der Josefstadt and can be seen at the Volkstheater in Vienna. In April 2023, DIE REDAKTION has celebrated its premiere at the Volkstheater Wien under the direction of Calle Fuhr, with whom Gerti Drassl has already worked in HELDENPLATZ.

She has appeared in numerous film, television and radio productions. In 2022, she was to be seen in two cinema and three TV films alone, including the

productions PERSONA NON GRATA and FULL HOUSE. In the cinema she was last seen in MÄRZENGRUND, DER TRAFIKANT and HOW I LEARNED TO BE A CHILD FOR MYSELF.

Gerti Drassl has received numerous nominations and awards: the Nestroy Prize for Best Young Actress, the Undine Award for Best Actress and the 2006 Romy Award for Shooting Star, as well as the German Acting Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role in 2013, and the Austrian Film Award for Best Female Supporting Role. In 2018 she was awarded the Vienna Actors' Ring. In 2023, FRANKY FIVE STAR she was awarded the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at the Max Ophüls Film Festival.

**“Elisabeth has really told a very beautiful, tragic family story. It is also a glimpse into a cosmos that is very wounded and has withdrawn – and become mentally ill as a result, I would say. But a cosmos that still breathes and still hopes and still wishes for something in life.”**







## DIRECTORS STATEMENT

When I started writing the screenplay for WOODLAND in 2016, the world was reeling from the aftermath of the financial crisis; and so was Marian Malin, the protagonist in the novel Wald by Doris Knecht, which my film is inspired by. Marian lost everything overnight because no one wanted to invest in her ideas and creativity anymore. Reading this novel had shaken me at a point that most freelancers and artists who don't have a fat legacy from their parents up their sleeves know: the fear that your system will collapse. That you no longer have clients, you can no longer pay for your apartment and you have nothing to fall back on but yourself. I wanted to make a film about that.

When we celebrated my husband's birthday on November 2, 2020 in a restaurant in downtown Vienna, the script for WOODLAND was almost finished. But

# ELISABETH SCHARANG

it's been on the shelf for months because my main character, Marian Malin, remained alien to me in ways I couldn't decipher.

On the evening of November 2nd we left the restaurant just after 8pm. We couldn't hear the shots that were fired just 500 meters from us. The urban canyons had swallowed them up. Three young women turned the corner and ran towards us. The scene was silent. I thought: They're running because they're late for a date. They were nicely dressed. Behind the three young women, the terrorist task force turned the corner and moved toward us, weapons at the ready. Black helmets without faces. Still no sound. A few seconds that are deeply engraved in my memory.

On that November 2nd we hid in the basement of a restaurant for four long hours, fearing for our lives. No one knew

how many assassins were roaming the city. In the end it was one. He had murdered four people on the street before he was shot dead by police just after 8 p.m. Just before we would have crossed his path.

The next morning my life seemed the same as before the attack. Until the inner shifting of my system became noticeable. I could watch myself from the outside as I lost control of my emotions. By the end of the next day I sat down and started writing. The script for WOODLAND was ready in four weeks.

How do you stage the story of a person who doesn't know what to do next? I followed Marian's hand movements. I followed her every step and was sometimes just as surprised as she was at which one she takes next. Marian doesn't follow a plan, she lives hour by hour at the beginning. Later it follows the

times of day and finally the seasons. This is how she survives the first few days. Time finally brings distance between her presence in the old house and in the forest and her life in the city. Like the seasons, she cannot control the healing process. That's how I felt when I was shooting: I never tried to work against the weather or the nature, I just went with what I found every day. In the six weeks of shooting we experienced everything together with Marian: autumn, frost, storm, fog and deep winter. I have asked my main character to do everything that I do not dare to do myself and in this film I have exposed her to my fears and desires to the fullest extent. In the end, after almost three months in this remote area, it was difficult for me to return to the city. I have well saved the freedom I felt in this forest.



A close-up, profile shot of a man wearing a dark green beanie and a dark jacket. He is looking towards the right of the frame. The background is blurred, showing other people in winter clothing.

ELISABETH **SCHARANG** lives and works in Vienna as a director, screenwriter, journalist and radio presenter. She is self-taught in her profession and has been working as a freelance feature and documentary film director since 2001, mainly for cinema productions.

The cinema documentary OCTOPUS ALARM celebrated its world premiere at the 2005 Berlin Film Festival and is still one of the most relevant documentaries on the subject of intersexuality. MY DEAR REPUBLIC was successfully screened in competition in the documentary section in Karlovy Vary; it reopens a piece of Austrian contemporary history through the cinematic encounter with Nazi euthanasia survivor Friedrich Zawrel. After IN ANOTHER LIFETIME, in 2015 JACK

was the director's second feature film to celebrate its world premiere at the Locarno Film Festival on the Grande Piazza; it was shown shortly afterwards at the Toronto Film Festival. Filming for the feature film WALD, loosely based on Doris Knecht's bestseller, took place in autumn 2021. Elisabeth Scharang is currently working on a documentary film about structural violence against women and the reasons for femicides. For #HowToStopFemicides she is shooting in over ten countries, featuring activists and experts.

Elisabeth Scharang is active in film politics at FC-Gloria and in the collective dieRegisseur\*innen and supports women in the field of film directing and screenwriting as a mentor.





## JOHANNES KRISCH as Franz

**KRISCH** was born in Vienna in 1966 and since 1989 has been a member of the ensemble of the Vienna Burgtheater. He has worked with directors including Claus Peymann, Jürgen Flimm, Hans Neuenrock, Ruth Berghaus, Leander Haußmann, Karlheinz Hackl, Paulus Manker and Philip Tiedemann. Krisch has also featured at the Salzburg Festival.

In 2008, he played the lead role in Götz Spielmann's Oscar-nominated film drama *REVANCHE*. That same year he was nominated for the Nestroy Theatre Prize for Best Supporting Role for his performance in *FREE FALL*. In 2010 he

was featured in Elisabeth Scharang's *MAYBE IN ANOTHER LIFE* and in 2011 he played in Fernando Meirelles' *360* with Anthony Hopkins, Ben Foster, Rachel Weisz and Jude Law. 2015 Johannes Krisch played the leadingrole in *JACK* directed by Elisabeth Scharang; the film was presented at Locarno and Toronto Filmfestival. In 2018 Krisch takes part in *A HIDDEN LIFE* by Terrence Malick and in 2021 he took on the role of Karl Bockerer in the play *DER BOCKERER* directed by Stephan Müller at the Theater in der Josefstadt.







A man and a woman are seated at a table in a dimly lit room. The man, on the left, has a beard and is wearing a dark jacket over a white t-shirt. The woman, on the right, has long blonde hair and is wearing a green top. They are both looking towards a gift box on the table in front of them. The gift box is wrapped in yellow and white plaid paper and is partially covered by a clear plastic bag. The background shows a wall with a small framed picture and a wooden chair. The overall atmosphere is intimate and quiet.

BOGDAN **DUMITRACHE** as Georg

**BOGDAN DUMITRACHE** is a Romanian theatre, dubbing, film and television actor, best known to the general public for his roles on the big screen.

Dumitrache graduated from the Faculty of Theatre in the class of Professor Mircea Albulescu in 1999 and made his debut at the Constantin Nottara Theatre in 2000 with the play *Trilogia Belgrădeană*. In

2002, together with actor Dragoş Bucur, he founded the casting agency ExitFilms. In 2011 he is awarded as Best Actor at Filmfestival Locarno and played in Cain Netzer's film *Child Pose* which won the Golden Bear at Berlinale 2013. He was playing the leading role in *A Decent Man* by Hadrian Marcu in 2018.





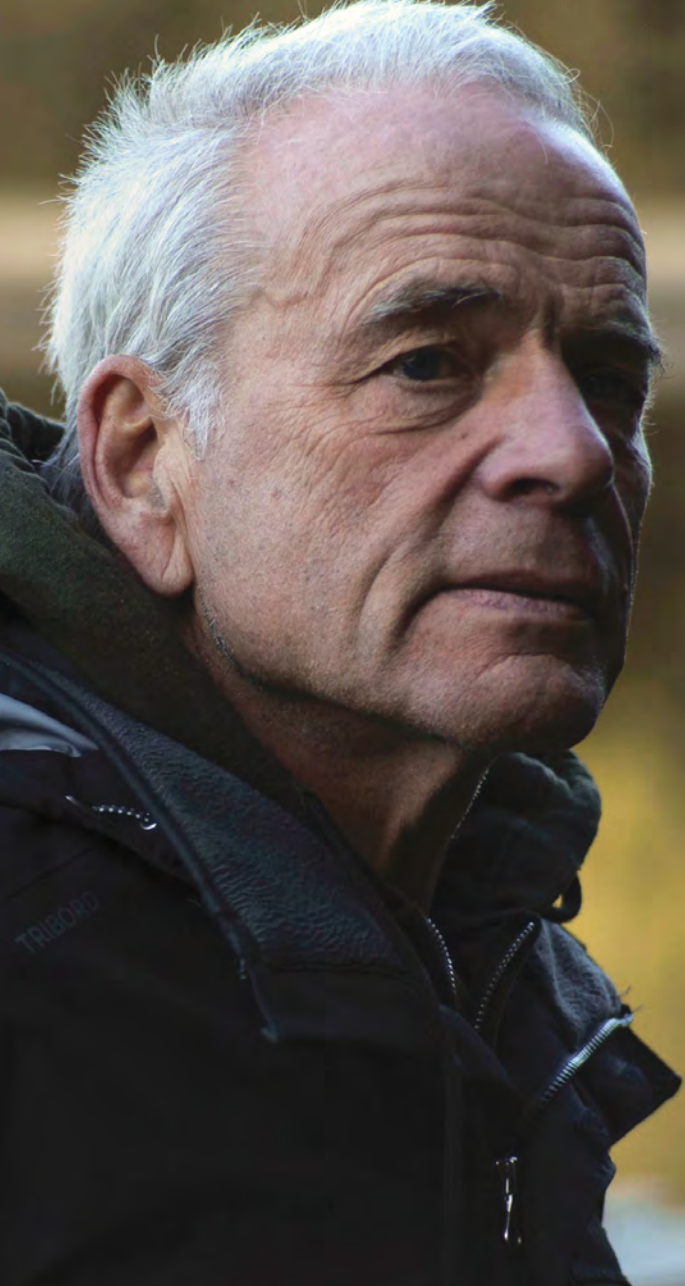
## JÖRG WIDMER (Cinematography)

JÖRG WIDMER was born and raised in Tübingen, Germany. After working for six years as an assistant photographer in the fields of fashion and automobile photography, he began his film career with an internship at a broadcaster. There he discovered the Steadicam and had the opportunity to research its use in full. His skills and working relationships with directors such as Wim Wenders, Michelangelo Antonioni, Steven Spielberg, Wolfgang Becker and Tom Tykwer soon made him one of the most famous


Steadicam operators in the world. He became the A or B operator on films such as ELISA (directed by Jean Becker), LES ANGES GUARDIENS (directed by Jean-Marie Poiré) and AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS (directed by Anthony Waller), while also working as a cinematographer, mainly for cinema and television films. One of his many productions as DoP, BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB directed by Wim Wenders, proved to be a huge success and was even nominated for an Oscar. Jörg has also enjoyed working as

a 2nd Unit DoP on films such as BABEL (directed by Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu), TREE OF LIFE (directed by Terrence Malick) and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (directed by Christophe Gans). After a few more films together in various functions, Terrence Malick hired him as DoP for his film A HIDDEN LIFE; the film premiere was in the competition at Cannes Filmfestival 2019. WOODLAND is the third collaboration between Jörg Widmer and Elisabeth Scharang.

**“The special fact that there was no electricity in the house in Elisabeth’s story was a task for the camera and lighting department, that could not be solved with a lot of technology. We ended up using an old, converted flashlight as the only light source in the picture at night and we created artificial moonlight from the outside.”**







**"I think I am the same as an artist and as a person. Music is my way of communication, and I see the art, the music as a whole thing, with no borders, divisions, or even genres."**

# HANIA RANI (Music)

HANIA **RANI** is an award-winning pianist, composer and singer. Her debut album *Esja*, a beguiling collection of solo piano pieces, was released by Gondwana Records in 2019 to international acclaim and earned Rani four prestigious Fryderyk Awards, including Best Debut Album, Best Alternative Album and Best New Arrangement. In recognition, the Polish music industry received its own Grammys. Hania Rani studied piano at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. In 2015 she recorded the album *Biała Flaga* with cellist Dobrawa Czocher, which is a neoclassical interpretation of pieces by the Polish rock band Republika. In 2017 she founded the duo *Teżkno* with singer Joanna Longić, with whom she released the album *Mi* in 2018. In 2019, Hania Rani's solo album *Esja* was released on the British experimental label Gondwana Records. Hania Rani has attracted worldwide attention with her videos, which have been viewed millions of times on

YouTube, such as a recording in the S2 studio of Polish Radio in 2021 and a concert in the courtyard of the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris in 2022. Her 2023 album *On Giacometti* is dedicated to Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti. She recorded it for YouTube in the studio of the eminent sculptor in Stampa. 2023 she composed the soundtrack for the mini series *The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart* starring Sigourney Weaver. Hania Rani lives in Warsaw and Berlin.



# DORIS KNECHT

DORIS **KNECHT** is a writer and columnist living in Vienna and the Waldviertel in Lower Austria.

Born in Vorarlberg, from 1988 she worked for the city newspaper Falter; from 1994 to 1998 she was deputy editor-in-chief.

She worked part-time for the NZZ and as a commentator for Die Presse.

1998-2000 cultural editor for the magazine Profil.

2000-2002 editor for the Tagesanzeiger magazine in Zurich.

Since 2002 she has produced as a freelance journalist a weekly, uninterrupted column, which began in the Tagesanzeiger and soon moved to the Falter.

In 2011, her first novel "Gruber geht" was nominated for the German Book Prize and filmed in 2015 by Marie Kreutzer for the cinema. "Besser" was awarded the Literature Prize of the Ravensburger Foundation. 2017 "Everything about relationships" was nominated for the Austrian Book Prize. Her current book "Eine vollständige Liste aller Dinge, die ich vergessen habe" had been at the top of the bestseller lists in Austria for weeks after its release.

The film is inspired by the authors novel **"WALD"**

**"I processed my fears in this novel: the fear of a separation and an impending job loss - and it was the economic crisis. I thought it was great that Elisabeth was able to distance herself from my fears, work with her fears and trauma and tell a new story with her character. The film turned out so well because it didn't stick to my book. Because two different people can never tell the same story."**





# WEGA **FILM** PRODUCTION

WEGA **FILM** is an Austrian film production company. Founded in Vienna in 1980 by Veit Heiduschka, the company has been responsible for a number of successful feature and documentary film productions. The first major success came in 1985 with MÜLLER'S OFFICE directed by Niki List, which achieved the highest number of admissions for an Austrian film since the 1950s. In the 1980s Veit Heiduschka also began working with director Michael Haneke, the long list

of joint productions includes films such as Benny's Video, Funny Games, The Pianiste, Amour, The White Ribbon. Among the directors of the approximately 40 feature films produced up to 2019 are Andreas Gruber, Michael Kreihsl, Wolfgang Glück, Paulus Manker, Michael Verhoeven, Xaver Schwarzenberger, Barna Kabay, Andreas Prochaska, Jack Gold, Jean-Michel Ribes, Arash T. Riahi, Josef Hader and many others. In the field of television feature films the company has created

productions with directors including as Michael Haneke, Peter Patzak, Johannes Fabrick, Gernot Friedel and Michael Cencig. Documentary film productions include work by Elisabeth Scharang, Manfred Corinne, Pierre Colibeuf, Ulrich Seidl and Elisabeth T. Spira.



# MICHAEL **KATZ** & VEIT **HEIDUSCHKA** (Producers)

MICHAEL **KATZ** is an Austrian film producer who has been working in Wega Film since 1986. He has produced films for cinema as well as made-for-television movies and television series. He has worked with Michael Haneke on most of his films, including Amour. He was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture for Amour along with Margaret Menegoz, Stefan Arndt and Veit Heiduschka in 2013. In 2009 and 2012 he won the European Film Award. In 2010 and 2013 he won the ROMY Award for Best Producer.

VEIT **HEIDUSCHKA** (born 20 May 1938) is an Austrian film producer. In 1980 he founded Wega Film of which he is still the managing director today. He was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture for Amour along with Margaret Ménégöz, Stefan Arndt and Michael Katz in 2013. He is also president of Austrian Films (AF) and managing director of VAM, the Austrian Copyright Agency for audiovisual media. In 2009 and 2012 he won the European Film Award.









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