



The Whisperers

A film by David Bernet and Christian Beetz

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“The Whisperers” is a documentary on interpreters in the multilingual Europe. One of the most invisible professions in the hot spots of the globalised world:

They appear in the shadow of the mighty; you can spot them on newsreels because they stand much too close to the VIPs. A word in their ear. The interpreters. They have been around forever or, at least, ever since different languages and cultures have met.

The discretion that goes with their job makes interpreters very inconspicuous people. But behind the cloak of professional neutrality, one can discover a cast of fascinating characters who dedicate themselves to their craft with the utmost passion. Interpreters are highly intelligent and versatile individuals, capable of extreme concentration and knowledgeable in a wide variety of fields. Above all, they have the gift of gab. Language buffs who have dedicated their lives to helping people understand each other in the jumble of cultures throughout Europe and the world.

The film takes place in Strasbourg, Berlin, Geneva, The Hague, Brussels and Djibouti and focuses on six protagonists, each representing a different generation and different fields of the profession. It goes from a student of interpretation in Geneva up to the old lady Patricia Vander Elst, who had her first assignment at the Nuremberg Trials for Nazi war criminals.

Nuremberg is regarded as the starting point of simultaneous interpreting – a special technique that is performed by only 5,500 interpreters in the world.

The Whisperers shows some of the most remarkable representatives of this profession as they play their vital role in international development – helping diplomats and VIPs to bridge their cultural boundaries. Interpreters travel the world, speeding from one conference to another. We are taken to the centre of international communications in politics, business and justice, always guided by the charm, quick wit, and internationalism of the protagonists, whose world we explore with curiosity and excitement.