ERICH KAESTNER -
THE OTHER FACE

A DOCUDRAMA BY GEBRUEDER BEETZ FILMPRODUKTION
52 MIN, HD – NDR/ARTE, GERMANY 2016

ERICH KAESTNER IS ONE OF GERMANY’S MOST FAMOUS AUTHORS. WITH “EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES” HE REVOLUTIONISED CHILDREN’S LITERATURE. A LOT OF HIS CHILDREN’S BOOKS LIKE “THE FLYING CLASSROOM”, “LOTTIE AND LISA” OR “ANNA LOUISE AND ANTON” ARE BESTSELLERS EVEN UP TO TODAY. IN OUR DOCUDRAMA WE SEE BEHIND THE CURTAIN OF THE POPULAR AUTHOR AND DISCOVER HOW MUCH FORTITUDE AND HUMAN WEAKNESS WERE FIGHTING IN HIM.

TV-PREMIERE ON ARTE:
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31ST, 2016 AT 4:50 PM
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As children we practically devoured “The Flying Classroom,” “Emil and the Detectives,” and “Lottie and Lisa” – with a flashlight under the covers. Today we ask ourselves: Who was this man, Erich Kästner, who always smiled at us from the photograph on the book-jacket? What kind of person resides behind the cheerful, witty, and at times aggressive façade? What is the deal with “his doppelganger” and the “other Erich” that he frequently talks and writes about?

At first appearance Erich Kästner seems to be a transparent person, easy to grasp: a clever sceptic, who’s every spoken and written word can be taken with a grain of salt. A lyrical chronologist, who never wants to stop believing “that people could become better, if you entreat them, insult them, and laugh at them often enough.” And an exceptionally gifted children’s author who absorbs and records children’s urban slang and haunts like no other. His clear language and sober humour has whisked children and youths off into the world of literature – from the 1920s up to today.

The film delves into the world of a man living and writing on a razor-edge for decades. It is a surprising sight: even as a child he prevents his depressive mother from committing suicide.

A military instructor mistreats the recruit Kästner during World War I so severely that he suffers a lasting heart damage. In 1920s Berlin the author Kästner experiences a decade unleashed with debauchery, street fighting, and economic miseries. As the Nazis burn his books and poems, he watches anonymously on the Berlin Opernplatz, clenched fists in his coat pockets. Yet Erich Kästner remains in Hitler’s new Germany, wants to be the eyewitness and write about it afterwards. It is a life on the brink.
While he serves the entertainment industry in the Third Reich, writing under a pseudonym and occasionally sitting at the same table with the devils, privately he writes drafts for his drawer. These are the alarmed personal interrogations of a man who feels that he is in the act of losing his integrity to the powers that be. “He was dead but lived on,” writes Kästner about his doppelganger in his “Blue Book”. He realises quickly that he will not emerge from the mud of history with a clean slate. This is the shadow he will be forced to survive with.

In post-war Germany Erich Kästner does not write the novel about National socialism. He cannot cope with it, the images from the concentration camps render him impotent and, at times, speechless. Instead he gathers material, newspaper cut-outs about doppelgangers. The consciousness that he hid himself in the Third Reich practically petrifis him. He resorts to alcohol and ensnarls himself in affairs with women.

In the 1960s he seems to realise that he may have remained in Nazi Germany, but did not write anything he should be ashamed about. He cannot get away from alcohol, but he rediscovers his words. He speaks out against rearmament, warning the people of the Federal Republic of Germany of the temptations of a totalitarian regime. The people listen to him, young and old. Instinctively his listeners recognise that this smiling man with his famous wink has gazed into the abyss at numerous times in his life. His readers sense it still today – the two sides and the historic faults in his biography, beneath the handy surface. This makes him one of the most interesting writers in the 20th century, and that is why still today children read his books under the covers in the light of a flashlight, and people cite his poems without knowing that the words are his.
AUTHOR & DIRECTOR

ANNETTE BAUMEISTER

BIOGRAPHY

After her A levels in 1992 Annette Baumeister studied Contemporary History, Economic and Social History and German Literary in Augsburg, Grenoble and Munich. During her studies she was working in French, American and German Archives. After working as an investigator for the ZDF end-of-year review “Hundert Jahre” she finished a practical TV-training at Story House Productions from 2000 to 2002. Since 2003 she works as a freelance author and director for national and international film productions. She loves humans and their history, has an unusual and fresh view on familiar topics and is enthusiastic about soccer and mountains. Together with her husband and her son she lives in Berlin and Los Angeles.

FILMOGRAPHY

2015  Sinatra - The Voice of America. ARTE
2015  Emmy Göring. Die First Lady der Nazis. MDR
2015  Too young to die. Bruce Lee. ARTE
2015  Der King und das Mädchen. Elvis & Priscilla. ARTE/ZDF
2014  Elsa Brändström. Der Engel von Sibirien. MDR
2014  Die Kinder des 20. Juli 1944. ZDF
2014  Too young to die. Natalie Wood - Die Macht der Prophezeiung. ARTE
CAST & CREW

CAST

ERICH KÄSTNER
LUISELOTTE ENDERLE
IDA KÄSTNER
EMIL KÄSTNER
CORNELIA BATTENBERG
ERICH OHSER

Matthias Bundschuh
Lisa Wagner
Henrietter Schmidt
Tomas Spencer
Clelia Sarto
Daniel Nerlich

FILM EDITING ASSISTANT
COSTUME DESIGN
COSTUME DESIGN
ASSISTANTS
MAKE UP ARTIST
2ND MAKE UP ARTIST
GAFFER
BEST BOY
COMPOSER
VFX/CGI
VOICE-OVER
MIXING & SOUND DESIGN
SET DESIGN

CREW

AUTHOR & DIRECTOR
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
DOP
2ND DOP
DOP ASSISTANT
SOUND EDITOR
FILM EDITOR

Annette Baumeister
Florian Schwombeck
Johannes Straub
Tom Bresinsky
Max Rainer
Hagen Waechter
Carsten Piefke

Malte Hadeler
Stefanie Jauß
Carlotta Richter
Gina Jauß
Melanie Krieg
Maitie Zilius
Niko Mölter
Hendrik Römer
Nils Kacirek
Stefan Matlik
Eike Wichmann
Marina Behnke
Sascha Prangen
Dennis Duis
Daniel Nowak
Sven Schmidt
CAST & CREW

EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION TEAM

CONSULTING  Prof. Dr. Sven Hanuschek
             Peter Beisler
IDEA        Grit Merten
ASSISTANT EDITOR  Juliane Pohl
PRODUCTION MANAGER  Melanie Clausen
                    Stefanie Nowak
                    Lilly Hartmann
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  Samuel Maasho
PRODUCER  Ira Beetz
           Onno Ehlers
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  Reinhardt Beetz
COMMISSIONING EDITOR  Ulrike Dotzer (NDR)
                    Monika Schäfer (NDR/ARTE)
                    Birgit Keller-Reddemann
                    (WDR)