

The Anarchist's Wife



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The Bernhard Wicki Film Award:

I have always tried not to sell theories and principles, but rather life, because I believe that is the only way to reach people, since they will recognize themselves in a portion of life.
Bernhard Wicki

"Bernhard Wicki Film Award –The Bridge - The German cinema award for peace stands for enlightenment and humanity. Its principles are based on the beliefs and legacy of Bernhard Wicki: the unrelenting struggle to defend the rights and dignity of human life, which are constantly under threat. Bernhard Wicki was distinguished by the United Nations for his efforts to promote peace and understanding between peoples. One of the leading German film directors of the second half of the 20th century, his anti-war movie *The Bridge* (1959/1960) met with great acclaim around the world with accolades including a Golden Globe and an Oscar nomination. The film did more than focus on the horrors and senselessness of war; it also spoke of how vulnerable people are to propaganda and false promises. In fact, Bernhard Wicki's entire cinematic oeuvre is disturbingly relevant to the problems that beset the world today.

After Bernhard Wicki's death on January 5, 2000, Elisabeth Wicki-Endriss set up the Bernhard Wicki Memorial Fund. Honorary members include Klaus Maria Brandauer, Ulrich Mühe, Armin Mueller-Stahl and Maximilian Schell. The multinational society we live in is riddled with all kinds of social exclusion. In view of this fact, the Memorial Fund aims to help give young people in particular a sense of direction in shaping their identities and in opposing violence and persecution of people with different spiritual, cultural or religious backgrounds through the medium of film. We communicate our purpose in an active and vital way by running youth film clubs and hosting "The Bridge Youth Film Days". Under the patronage of the Bavarian Minister of State, Erwin Huber, the Bernhard Wicki film prize "The Bridge" acknowledges creative work which builds bridges where others would seek to dig trenches."

Peace speech given at the awards by minister of state Bernd Neumann:

"Democracy, freedom and security are impossible unless we are at peace with ourselves and others. Peace and social responsibility are the guiding ideas behind the Bernhard Wicki Film Prize. Also known as *The Bridge – German Cinema Award for Peace*, it stands for the connections and understanding between people and nations.

The film the jury has chosen to honour this year could hardly be more personal. *The Anarchist's Wife* is based on the life of director Marie Noëlle's grandmother. It tells the story of a young married couple, Manuela and Justo, and their experiences during the Spanish Civil War and their subsequent exile in France. It shows that love can give people wings and, most importantly, strength. Impressive documentary-style scenes take us onto the battlefields and into the horrors of internment; the plot immerses us in the fate of the people who have to endure the war, only to be forced into exile when the fighting ends.

Losing one's homeland is a tragedy. It is a tragedy that befell countless people in Europe in the 20th century and continues to affect us to this day. Again and again, immigrants and refugees have given expression to their poignant experiences in art. The medium of film, in particular, can promote tolerance and build bridges in a variety of ways. By virtue of its inherent power to open windows to other worlds and cultures, film enables viewers to understand and identify with other perspectives and experiences. In doing so, good films can make people more aware and more tolerant of cultural differences.

Marie Noëlle and Peter Sehr, by writing, producing, directing and distributing this film, you have established a name for yourselves as great artists and made an important contribution to intercultural understanding. I would also like to thank you personally for your valuable contribution and commitment to European cinema. Films like *The Anarchist's Wife* play an important role in helping us better comprehend Europe's painful history and the wider issue of human destiny in this fantastically diverse world. Thank you to the jury for making such a wise choice."

Elisabeth Wicki Endriss:

"The award this year goes to Marie Noëlle and Peter Sehr for their movie *The Anarchist's Wife*. This German-Spanish-French co-production is a film about an important period in the history of Europe and its people. Through the memoirs of her daughter Paloma, we learn the story of Manuela, a young woman from a family of bourgeois intellectuals in Spain who experiences the horrors of the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent fascist dictatorship. She also lives through the Second World War, which destroyed the lives of millions – including the survivors. Manuela's husband, Justo, for example, started out fighting Franco's fascists in Spain. He then joined the French resistance against the Nazi occupiers before being incarcerated in Mauthausen, where he experienced the abuses of power and the daily inhumanity of life in a concentration camp. And Manuela herself loses her home and her sense of belonging – but ultimately not her hope. For this is also the story of the great love and passion of a woman who seeks refuge in a fantasy world for years, never ceasing to believe that one day she will find her husband again.

This is a film that clearly addresses the senselessness of war of any kind – be it a war between peoples, civil war or guerrilla war – and for whatever reason – religion, ideology or any kind of ism. And it encourages us to ask why, in this day and age, here in Europe, and particularly here in Germany, with our history of disaster and despair, there are still so many among us who allow themselves to be blinded by the lure of false prophets. This film stands as an admonishment to us all – it also offers the young people of Europe a chance to acknowledge their responsibility for the future of this planet and to get involved in political processes to secure peace and freedom.

Marie Noëlle tells the story of her grandmother with courage and sensitivity. She and co-director Peter Sehr have produced a highly artistic film with beautiful imagery and wonderfully engaging actors. Equally thrilling and moving, it presents a disturbing picture of the cruel reality of war – and is extraordinarily poetic at the same time. And that is something it has in common with the work of my late husband Bernhard Wicki."