

THE AUDITION

(Das Vorspiel)

A film by
INA WEISSE



99 min/France/Germany/French & German with English subtitles/Cert. TBC
World Premiere – Toronto International Film Festival 2019
Nina Hoss – Best Actress award – San Sebastian Film Festival 2019

Release 1st April 2022

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SYNOPSIS:

Alexander (Ilja Monti), a serious teenager, takes to the stage to begin his violin audition before a room of jurors at a prestigious Berlin music school. The vote is split, and he is criticised for lacking technique. His soon-to-be violin teacher, Anna Bronsky (Nina Hoss), stands up for him in a seemingly benevolent manner, insisting that she can train him. And so begins her obsessive quest to make the boy's vocation distinct and draw out of him the unique sound she believes he possessed in his audition. Alexander does not respond well to her increasingly strict and regimented approach. She orders him to practice four hours a day – “sometimes quantity creates intensity”, she tells him.

Anna's personal life has been steadily collapsing, which exacerbates her fixation. It is implied that her husband, Philippe (Simon Abkarian), an instrument maker, is aware that she is having an affair, and her gifted, 10-year-old musical son, Jonas (Serafin Mishiev) hates her. Philippe offers her guidance with Jonas and provides general support, but he is not sentimental. He is equally committed to his profession and makes clear that he does not have room in his life for “feelings”. She is invited to join a quintet by her colleague and lover, Christian (Jens Albinus), but as she's subject to nervous reactions, reluctant to perform in concert, and her eventual participation leads to an embarrassing experience.

Anna doubles down on Alexander.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set can be downloaded [here](#)



CAST

Anna Bronsky
Philippe
Christian
Alexander
Jonas

**NINA HOSS
SIMON ABKARIAN
JENS ALBINUS
ILJA MONTI
SERAFIN MISHIEV**

CREW

Director
Scriptwriter
Director of Photography
1st Assistant Director
Sound Mixer
Sound
Editor
Production Designer
Production Manager
Costumes
Casting

**INA WEISSE
DAPHNE CHARIZANI, INA WEISSE
JUDITH KAUFMANN
SANDRO SILVA
BRUNO TARRIER
GUILLAUME SCIAMA
HANSJORG WEISSBRICH
SUSANNE HOPF
SABINA BELCHER
PETRA KRAY
NINA HAUN (GERMANY)
YOUNA DE PERETTI (FRANCE)
PATRICK DREIKAUSS (GERMANY)
FELIX VAN BOEHM
PIERRE OLIVIER BARDET
JAN KRÜGER
JÖRG TRENTMANN**

Producer
Co-producers

Production
In co-production with
In association with

**LUPA FILM
IDÉALE AUDIENCE
PORT-AU-PRINCE, ZDF-ARTE
DFF, MBB, MDM, FFA
MINI-TRAITE/CNC, PANOPTIMO**

99 min/France/Germany/French & German with English subtitles/1:85/5.1

INA WEISSE

Born in Berlin, Ina Weisse studied drama at the renowned Otto Falkenberg school, and performed in various plays. After studying philosophy, she graduated from Hamburg Film Faculty. Her final project was awarded the First Steps Award in 2002. Her debut feature film, *Der Architekt*, premiered at the Berlinale and won the German Television Award for Best Actress and Best Screenplay at the Max-Ophüls Film Festival. As an actress, she appeared in movies such as *Das Ende einer Nacht* and won the German Television Award for Best Actress, the Günther Rohrbach Film Award and the Adolf Grimme Award. In 2016, she again won the German television Award for best actress for the films *Ich will dich* and *Ein grosser Aufbruch*.

1999 *Lunow* (Short)

2000 *On Sundays* (Short)

2001 *Klara* (Short)

2002 *Alles Anders* (Short)

2008 *The Architect*

2020 *The Audition*



ACTORS' SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHIES

NINA HOSS

- 2020 My Little Sister by Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond
- 2019 The Audition by Ina Weisse
- 2017 *Return To Montauk* by Volker Schlöndorff
- 2014-2017 *Homeland* (TV Series) created by H. Gordon & A. Gansa
- 2014 *Phoenix* by Christian Petzold
- 2014 *A Most Wanted Man* by Anton Corbijn
- 2013 *Gold* by Thomas Arslan
- 2012 *Barbara* by Christian Petzold
- 2007 *Yella* by Christian Petzold – Silver Bear for Best Actress (Berlinale)
- 2006 *The Elementary Particles* by Oskar Roehler
- 2003 *Wolfsburg* by Christian Petzold

SIMON ABKARIAN

- 2019 – The Audition by Ina Weisse
- 2019 – The Swallows of Kabul (voice) by Zabou Breitman & Eléa Gobbé-Mévellec
- 2017 – Djam by Tony Gatlif
- 2015 – Don't Tell Me The Boy Was Mad by Robert Guédiguian
- 2014 – The Cut by Faith Akin
- 2014 – Gett : The Trial of Viviane Amsalem by Ronit & Shlomi Elkabetz
- 2012 – Zero Dark Thirty by Kathryn Bigelow
- 2009 – Army of Crime by Robert Guédiguian
- 2007 – Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud
- 2006 – Casino Royale by Martin Campbell
- 2006 – Armenia by Robert Guediguian
- 2004 – Yes by Sally Potter
- 2002 – Ararat by Atom Egoyan

JENS ALBINUS

- 2020 - My Little Sister by Stéphanie Chuat and Véronique Reymond
- 2018 – *Lifeboat* by Josefin Kirkeskov
- 2015 – *Rosita* by Frederikke Aspöck
- 2014 – *Silent Heart* by Bille August
- 2013 – *Nymphomaniac* Vol. 1 by Lars Von Trier
- 2010-2013 – *Borgen* (TV Series) created by Adam Price
- 2007 – *Daisy Diamond* by Simon Staho
- 2006 – *The Boss Of It All* by Lars Von Trier
- 2000 – *Dancer In The Dark* by Lars Von Trier
- 2000 – *The Bench* by Per Fly
- 1998 – *The Idiots* by Lars Von Trier

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Just like *The Architect*, your first feature, *The Audition*, is the product of your collaboration with Daphne Charizani. Did you do a lot of research to capture her world with such precision?

Daphne and I played cello and violin respectively for many years and were also members of an orchestra, so that world, and its often excruciating practice regime, was very familiar to us. We set out to describe that process – the work that goes into music. Later, when scouting high schools with a music programme, I met Ilja, who plays Anna's violin student. I spent a lot of time with him in his daily life prior to shooting.

Anna is a violin teacher and mother. Are her high standards and harsh judgment of her own child the core and source of the drama?

The source is her quest for the absolute and her inflexibility towards herself, on top of an inferiority complex. From an early age, she discerned in praise nothing but hidden criticism. We tried to capture one woman's inner turmoil and insecurity. When you call everything into question, when you set high standards for yourself while riddled with the fear of failure, you become vulnerable because you know that no one can free you of doubt. Anna's conviction that music always comes first—that it's a constant struggle, that nothing can ever be good enough—puts her under great pressure. The pressure increases after it doesn't work out for her with the quintet, when she demands even greater excellence from her student. For her, it is all about the boy, but in the end, it is about her too.



Considerable life experience is there between the lines: the film does not dissect the complexity of relationships. For example, you show Anna's affair almost in passing. How did you settle on that narrative approach?

She has an affair that only seems to be shown in passing. Most likely, her husband knows about it, but there is real closeness and warmth between them. I did not want to judge. Likewise, Anna's relationship with her father is only intimated. You sense pain there and you imagine perhaps that she did not have an easy childhood, that there was suffering caused by her father.

As a mother, does Anna reproduce the behaviour that she was confronted with as a child?

Yes and no. She fights it. She passes on to her son and her student the pressure that she feels. In that respect, she makes herself guilty. And she knows it.

Why doesn't Anna pick up on her son's suffering and jealousy?

She sees it and suppresses it despite her elevated sensitivity and ability to perceive nuances of tone. She imposes on her son the pressure to perform that she personally feels.



Her husband, the father of her child, is an extremely benevolent figure. Can you say a few words about him?

The father's affection for his son, unlike Anna's, is not bound by any conditions. He leaves his son free to choose. Likewise, with Anna, he sees her problems, but he does not intervene, because everybody must choose their own life. Compulsion and restrictions are not his style. He's there for her. And he sees the danger looming over the family. Simon Abkarian captured the different facets of the character magnificently.

How did you approach the character and her inner contradictions with Nina Hoss?

I've been looking forward to working with her every day. She played this ambivalent character with great empathy. She acquired these musically difficult pieces on the violin in an admirable way.

How did you work with the other actors? How much freedom do you grant yourself on set?

It took some time to find the right actors to play the lover and the husband. Of course, I knew Simon Abkarian and Jens Albinus from their films, but when I met Simon in Paris and Jens in Copenhagen, it was immediately obvious how wonderful it would be to work together. The freedom on set came from trust, from mutual understanding of how to get the scene where it needed to be.



Is the trust you enjoy partly due to being an actor yourself?

I don't think so. I know the tricks of the trade, of course—mechanisms you can fall back on in certain situations. And I also know how brave and committed you need to be to allow yourself to get into certain situations.

Would you describe it as a quest for veracity?

Obviously, you look for the nub, the crux of a scene. You reach for its essence. And that process continues in editing, with Hansjörg Weissbrich. We kept on boiling it down to a concentrate.



How did you choose the pieces that are played in the film?

The Bach Presto, which the student practices, and Bach's Chaconne are pieces that every violinist plays at some point. They were chosen at an early stage, unlike the concert that the school orchestra plays at the end of the film. I was looking for a piece where the mood would not be a commentary on the film's ending. The song that Simon Abkarian sings at the beginning, *Le Temps des Cerises*, was an anthem of the Paris Commune. There was also a German version by Wolf Biermann that I found very moving. The sudden hard cuts out of the musical pieces were decided very early on in the editing process and established the rhythm of the whole film.

The Audition is your second feature after The Architect. With producer Felix von Boehm and DP Judith Kaufmann, you also shot a documentary about the Neue Nationalgalerie.

Yes, Felix von Boehm was a close, trusted partner on both films. Judith Kaufmann has a precise, poetic eye that expresses itself in all her work. The same is true of Susanne Hopf, our production designer.

Would you say that the family and educational model described in the film has a certain German dimension? Does the film question today's Germany in relation to the German past?

Of course, a society is shaped by its history and develops a certain code of conduct. Each family reacts in its own specific way. However, the pressure exerted by early musical education, the drill that can also be observed in sport, is not an exclusively German phenomenon.

Would you say it's a female eye?

I don't know. I'd be more inclined to say empathetic.