



Universal Pictures International
presents

in collaboration with
UFA Cinema

a
Wolf Bauer and Nico Hofmann Production

for
UFA Cinema

THE PHYSICIAN

in coproduction with
Degeto Film and Beta Cinema

in collaboration with
CinePostproduction, PIXOMONDO and Cine Mobil

Based on the novel by
Noah Gordon

Featuring
**Tom Payne, Stellan Skarsgård, Olivier Martinez, Emma Rigby, Elyas M'Barek,
Fahri Yardim, Makram J. Khoury, Michael Marcus and Ben Kingsley**

Funded by
**Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, Medienboard Berlin-
Brandenburg, FFA – Filmförderungsanstalt, DFFF - Deutscher Filmförderfonds**

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CAST

Rob Cole	TOM PAYNE
Barber	STELLAN SKARSGÅRD
Shah Ala ad-Daula	OLIVER MARTINEZ
Rebecca	EMMA RIGBY
Karim	ELYAS M'BAREK
Davout Hossein	FAHRI YARDIM
Imam	MAKRAM J. KHOURY
Mirdin	MICHAEL MARCUS MORGAN
and	
Ibn Sina	BEN KINGSLEY

CREW

Director	PHILIPP STÖLZL
Cinematography	HAGEN BOGDANSKI
Screenplay	JAN BERGER
Producers	WOLF BAUER NICO HOFMANN
Executive Producer	SEBASTIAN WERNINGER
Co-Producer	CHRISTINE STROBL, ARD Degeto JAN MOJTO, DIRK SCHÜRHOFF, Beta Cinema
Commissioning Editor	ROMAN KLINK, ARD Degeto
Associate Producers	LISE GORDON, CHRISTOPH MÜLLER
Creative Producer	ULRICH SCHWARZ
Line Producer	SASCHA SCHWILL
Production Director	HENRY REHOREK
Set Design	UDO KRAMER
Editing	SVEN BUDELMANN
Costumes	THOMAS OLÁH
Make-Up	HEIKE MERKER
Sound	MAX THOMAS MEINDL
Music	INGO LUDWIG FRENZEL
Visual Effects Supervisor	DENIS BEHNKE
Casting	LEO DAVIS, EMRAH ERTEM, NINA HAUN

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Running time: 150 minutes
Sound mix: Dolby Digital 5.1
Cinemascope: 2.35:1

LOGLINE

A breathtaking adventure set in 11th-century England and Persia in the tradition of great international bestselling European films such as *THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS*, *THE NAME OF THE ROSE* and *PERFUME: THE STORY OF A MURDERER*.

Based on Noah Gordon's best-selling novel sold over 21 million times worldwide.

Visual effects by Academy Award winning Pixomondo ("Hugo", "Independence Day", "Snow White & the Huntsman").

PRESS NOTES

Directed by Philipp Stoelzl ("North Face," "Young Goethe in Love"), *THE PHYSICIAN*, set in medieval England and Persia, was shot in Morocco and Germany for 60 days between June and October 2012. Young English actor **Tom Payne** (HBO's "Luck," "Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day," "Waterloo Road") plays the lead role of Physician Rob Cole, Emma Rigby ("Hollyoaks," "Prisoners' Wives") portrays the Physician's great love and lead female role. Academy Award-winner **Ben Kingsley** ("Gandhi," "Schindler's List," "Hugo", "Iron Man 3") stars as Ibn Sina, the "doctor of all doctors." **Stellan Skarsgård** ("Pirates of the Caribbean 2," "Marvel's The Avengers," "Good Will Hunting," "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo") takes the role of the Barber, Rob's first mentor, and **Olivier Martinez** ("Taking Lives," "Unfaithful," "S.W.A.T.") plays Shah Ala ad-Daula.

Scriptwriter Jan Berger ("We Are the Night," "The Door") adapted the hit novel; cinematography was in the hands of Hagen Bogdanski ("The Lives of Others", Madonna's "W.E."), who is one of Germany's most acclaimed cinematographers. The visual effects were created by Academy Award-winning Pixomondo.

In the early Middle Ages, the art of healing from Grecian-Roman times was for the most part forgotten in Europe. There were no doctors and no hospitals, just barber-surgeons with very little knowledge of medicine. During this period, pioneers of healing were teaching and practicing in the 10th and 11th centuries in Persia – especially the legendary physician, scientist, and philosopher Ibn Sina. In order to study under this "physician of all physicians" young Rob Cole sets out on the journey to faraway Isfahan: Over and over again, he risks everything to pursue his ideals and his love, and to become a physician and healer.

THE PHYSICIAN – a thrilling, adventurous epic between Orient and Occident, a passionate love story, an exciting homage to humanity's striving for knowledge, and a timeless appeal for tolerance and freedom.

THE PHYSICIAN is a production of UFA Cinema in coproduction with ARD Degeto and Beta Cinema. Producers are Wolf Bauer and Nico Hofmann, executive producer Sebastian Werninger,

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producer Ulrich Schwarz, story editing at ARD Degeto headed by Bettina Reitz and Roman Klink. The film is supported by Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Filmförderungsanstalt and Deutscher Filmförderfonds.

ABOUT THE BESTSELLER

Noah Gordon's historical novel "The Physician" was first published in 1986 by Simon & Schuster and is the first volume of a trilogy which depicts the progress of medicine through the fictional adventures of Rob Cole, his family and his successors. The sequels are "Shaman" and "Matters of Choice."

THE PHYSICIAN is considered as one of the precursors and most significant examples of the genre of the historical novel. This novel, Gordon's most successful, was selected as one of the Top Ten of the most popular books of all time by Spanish booksellers at the Madrid Book Fair in 1999. The humanistic power of its exciting confrontation between East and West is unbroken to this day.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

THE PHYSICIAN tells the story of Rob Cole, a boy who is left a penniless orphan in an 11th-century English mining town when his mother dies of a mysterious illness. Vowing to become a physician and vanquish Death itself, he travels to Isfahan in Persia to study medicine under the great Ibn Sina. Through countless ordeals and challenges, and making many sacrifices along the way, he struggles on unwaveringly. His unflagging quest for knowledge leads to the blossoming of friendship and true love.

LONG SYNOPSIS

England in the 11th century. Many children work in mines or in fields, only a few people have enough to eat, and if there is anything resembling medicine at all then it's administered by traveling healers or barber-surgeons, who also have to reckon with being persecuted by the Church as blasphemers for their treatments. These are dark times in which little Robert Cole and his two siblings grow up. When one evening his mother bends over from stomach pain and he touches her to soothe her, Rob experiences for the first time his special gift. It's as if time would slow down, and although he doesn't know what this means he senses his mother's life is endangered. He tries to get the barber-surgeon (Stellan Skarsgård) he had seen in the village several hours before to come and help his mother but it's too late: The priest administers the last rites to his mother who dies in great pain from the incurable "side sickness." In this fateful night Rob's long odyssey searching for a cure for the illness that took his mother away from him begins. Whereas his younger siblings are taken in by another family, Rob is on his own, but he manages to soften the barber-surgeon's heart and to let him join him as an assistant and young apprentice.

A few years later Rob (Tom Payne) is a young man and the two have become an experienced duo, traveling across the country and offering not only salves, stories, and parlor tricks but also other services such as cupping, bloodletting, and pulling teeth.

After the barber-surgeon is brutally attacked by two angry monks and can be pulled out of his covered wagon just in time and rescued, Rob takes over his job. And even after he has soon learned everything, he senses that there has to be more to be able to help people – perhaps even a possible

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way to cure the "side sickness," which killed his mother. When he sees a Jewish doctor perform an eye operation on the barber-surgeon, who in the meantime had almost gone blind, and restores the barber-surgeon's eyesight, Rob makes a decision. He wants to go where one can learn how to perform such operations, and he learns that in order to do this he must travel to Isfahan in Persia, where one of the wisest and most capable physicians of all times teaches. The biggest challenge in this is not just that the journey to Isfahan takes over a year, but that as a Christian the journey could be over sooner for him, because the Islamic kingdom refuses entry to every Christian; apart from believers in the Koran, only Jews are tolerated. However, Rob doesn't let this deter him. He dreams of becoming a hakim like Ibn Sina, of being able to cure leprosy or typhus – and perhaps even the "side sickness."

After he says farewell to the barber-surgeon his long and difficult journey starts in Dover, and after months of hardships on the seas, he joins a Jewish caravan heading to Isfahan. In order to avoid accidentally being discovered as a Christian he circumcises himself and calls himself Jesse ben Benjamin. Then the last and most perilous stage of the journey begins through the desert, during which Rob meets beautiful Rebecca (Emma Rigby), who is traveling with the caravan. After they rescue a small girl in a village that had been attacked by Seljuqs, she and Rob become friends. She is also on her way to Isfahan – but then the caravan encounters a deadly sandstorm.

Rob thinks he's the sole survivor, and after many days in the burning sun, and completely exhausted, he reaches the goal of his journey: Isfahan. And although the overseer of the madrassa, Davout (Fahri Yardim), turns him away at first and has him brutally beaten by his guards, a short time afterwards Rob can finally attend the first lecture by Ibn Sina. His biggest dream has really become true, and with his hard work and passion, he quickly becomes one of the most promising students at the madrassa. He becomes friends with two of his fellow students, the happy-go-lucky Karim (Elyas M'Barek), and the kind-hearted Mirdin (Michael Marcus), who also introduces Rob to his family and to the Jewish community in Isfahan. And so he gets to know the foreign world around him: He comprehends the difficult balance in Isfahan, which is rigorously and autocratically enforced by the shah (Olivier Martinez), yet guarantees the continuing existence of the madrassa and the Jewish community. Most of all, he finds out Rebecca didn't die in the sandstorm after all and in the meantime she's also in Isfahan. She's supposed to be married off to a wealthy older businessman. She cannot deny her strong feelings for Rob, however, not even on her wedding day.

Except for this sensational news, for Rob it's primarily a time of studying. He enjoys every minute he spends with Ibn Sina. And finally one night Rob reveals his special gift to him. When he's with a young prostitute, he clearly senses she doesn't have much longer to live, although at first glance she appears to be completely healthy. He takes her to Ibn Sina, and when she takes off her shoes they discover she has been stung by a scorpion. Rob's unique ability saved her life at the last minute. Ibn Sina encourages Rob that his gift is really a blessing and not a curse, and that as a physician one has to resign oneself to the fact one cannot save every patient.

When soon afterwards Ibn Sina is ordered to appear before the shah (Olivier Martinez), he takes Rob with him, and so for the first time he gets to know the powerful prince better, who is well aware of his power and doesn't really see a serious danger to his reign in either the Seljuqs or in the fundamentalist groups in Isfahan.

But both groups have been working together for a long time now, and the leader of the Seljuqs in particular is not afraid to conduct a malicious form of warfare. He sends someone infected with the plague to Isfahan and his perfidious plan succeeds: Within a very short time the deadly disease spreads, the royal court and also the husband of Rebecca, who is ill, flee and leave the city to its fate.

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Only Ibn Sina, his students, and several volunteers take up the fight against the plague. Most of the people who become infected soon die, including Rob's friend Karim. Only a few, such as Rebecca, whom Rob looks after with extreme devotion, survive the infection. Caught up in these exceptional circumstances for everyone trapped in Isfahan, they finally succumb to their love for one another.

The tide turns when Rob discovers an important detail in the case histories of those infected with the plague. He deduces from inflamed flea bites on the skin of the plague patients that fleas on rats could be transmitters of the Black Death, and that's precisely the decisive breakthrough. By using rat poison and burning dead rats they manage to stop the disease from spreading further and to rot out the plague in Isfahan. The residents of Isfahan who had fled the city come back and Ibn Sina and his students are celebrated as heroes. For a short time Rob even becomes a confidant to the shah, but then as the days go by the pressing problems also return. Muslim mullahs betray Isfahan to the Seljuqs with the intention of conquering the city in order to drive out or kill the Jews and profane blasphemers, such as Ibn Sina. Suspecting nothing of this, Rob sees the chance he has waited for since his mother died: to finally learn more about the "side sickness." An older patient, who due to his religious beliefs wanted his body after his death to be fed to scavenging animals, has died from the "side sickness," and although Rob is aware he's breaking every rule and risking his life he cannot let this once-in-a-lifetime chance pass by. He conducts a secret autopsy, makes drawings, documents every detail, and thus he actually discovers an indication that an infection of a small extension of the intestine has to be the cause of the "side sickness." At the same time, the dramatic love story between Rob and Rebecca comes to a head. Her husband finds out she's pregnant by another man, and that means she faces the death penalty by stoning. Rob can save her for the time being, but then Davout, the former overseer of the madrasa, catches him performing an autopsy and has Rob and Ibn Sina arrested. It's a hopeless situation. Rebecca, Ibn Sina, and Rob are about to be executed, unrest starts to flare up in Isfahan, and the Seljuqs have taken up position outside the city gates – but then Rob and Ibn Sina are ordered to appear before the shah, who is suffering from an acute case of "side sickness" and sees the two of them as his only chance to survive. Thanks to the autopsy, Rob knows what he has to look for during this risky operation, and he manages to remove the inflamed appendix. Saved but weakened, the shah keeps his part of the agreement: He orders Rebecca to be rescued and allows Rebecca and Rob the chance to escape while he rides into his last battle. Ibn Sina stays in his madrasa, shattered by the destruction of his life's work.

And so Rob returns to England – as a physician, a teacher, a father, and as the first in a new dynasty of physicians.

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRODUCERS WOLF BAUER AND NICO HOFMANN

When did you first have the idea to make a cinematic epic of Noah Gordon's best seller?

Wolf Bauer: Right after the publication in Germany in 1987. The novel was published in the U.S. in 1986. From the first week on, the novel's success was sensational. As enthusiastic readers of big, epic novels we immediately tried to purchase the film rights. We were, however, fourteen days too late. The rights had already been sold. Fortunately, after UFA Cinema was founded we received a second chance. The rights reverted to Noah Gordon in 2008, because for reasons we couldn't understand the producers never succeeded in filming "The Physician." We both spontaneously flew to Boston and met with Noah Gordon for a personal conversation – but he was rather skeptical concerning the filming of his book. Because over 20 years after it was published his monumental work had still not been filmed yet, he didn't seem to have much faith in film producers anymore. But after hour-long

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conversations with him and his daughter we succeeded in dispelling his doubts. We're grateful that in the end he trusted us and granted us the film rights.

It's almost inconceivable that "The Physician" hadn't been filmed before. In retrospect, did you find an explanation for this?

Nico Hofmann: Noah Gordon is a very intelligent and sensitive person, who has precise ideas about what he wants to see in a film version. I think many of the previous attempts failed because the producers only had the commercial demands in mind: in terms of the look and also the suggestions for the cast. And sometimes that looked more like a historical science fiction spectacle and didn't have anything to do with Gordon's ideas anymore. I think we could only make headway in our conversations with him because over the many hours we very precisely presented our philosophy and could convince him we were taking a European approach and only wanted to modify his book correspondingly. That's what convinced him in the end.

How did your vision look like?

Wolf Bauer: The first theme we were enthusiastic about was the heroic journey of the lead character in the novel, Rob Cole, from "darkness" to "light." His sheer unquenchable thirst for knowledge and insights - the fateful determination that propels the hero of the story and takes him on an adventure to completely foreign, unknown worlds in order to find answers to his questions. The medical skills, the historical traditions from antiquity, from the sophisticated Greek and Roman cultures, had been lost during the so-called "dark" Middle Ages in Europe, whereas they had been preserved in the Eastern Roman Empire in Byzantium, but also in Persia. Rob's passion to rediscover this knowledge was our starting point, and that was also the theme as an author for Noah Gordon, who wrote about the history of medicine as a journalist and who wanted to invite readers to take a thrilling journey through time with his character Rob Cole.

Nico Hofmann: We also noticed during the discussions with Gordon how precisely he had worked with the material. The book has many different layers. There's the philosophical level, there's a coming-of-age story about a young man who discovers the world for the first time, it has to do with tolerance between religions, with science and medicine, and with the investigation of the human organism. We worked out this complexity during our mutual walks with Gordon, and this was the foundation for working on the screenplay. You can certainly also reduce the material to plot points and make an action spectacle out of it, but we very consciously were willing to tackle this complexity. The fact that someone like Ben Kingsley immediately wanted to be in the film, who literally blossoms in his role as Ibn Sina, is proof of this. To dramatize such a comprehensive work as "The Physician" in a two-and-a-half hour version for the cinema was of course a long journey, and Noah Gordon took this journey with us. There was a consensual dialogue and I believe that both of us gave him the impression we're very open. And after all, Noah was very much involved in the project, from the first screenplay draft to the final cut. To me he's a deeply touching, philosophical person. Noah has an incredible charisma and he not only inspired this film with his book, he also inspired the film through the encounters with him.

Wolf Bauer: Another theme that was especially important to him in the book is the theme of religious tolerance. Gordon not only tells the tale of a journey to obtain knowledge, but also of a journey through religions. Rob Cole transforms himself from a Christian to a Jew, because this is the only way he can reach his goal of studying at the famous madrasa in Isfahan, and once he's there he immerses himself in Islamic culture. In addition, a deep friendship develops between him and his fellow students, the Jew Mirdin and the Persian Karim. The three friends become a strong trio, which plays a

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decisive role in the plague sequence and of course can also be seen as proof that friendship and understanding between religions is possible. Noah Gordon wanted to see these different layers in his book in the film adaptation, too.

Then what was next?

Wolf Bauer: The first step was – that was part of our agreement with him – that he and his daughter develop the first draft of the screenplay. We purposely asked for that, because we thought it was the right thing that he tried to do it himself at first. As the author of an epic, 850-page novel it was obviously difficult for him to condense the many facets of his characters and narrative threads down to the dramatic arc of two-and-a-half-hour cinematic adventure. Afterwards, we had his permission to take another path and we started looking for the right screenwriters. We worked with the English-American author David Scott on a total of 17 screenplay drafts in succession, but in the end, we weren't quite satisfied with them. Then we decided on Andrew Birkin, the screenwriter of "Perfume," and then after we selected Philipp Stölzl as the director we brought in a screenwriter we trusted, Jan Berger. Working together we then arrived at the final screenplay version you see on the screen.

Is there a thread that runs through it, which you can, in retrospect, recognize?

Nico Hofmann: The decisive problematic point was to reduce such an extensive work down to the length of a feature film. We had a similar problem previously with Uwe Tellkamp's "The Tower," where we distilled 1,000 pages into two 90-minute television films. You have to make selections. You have to concentrate and find out which narrative elements you want to limit yourself to without harming the differentiation. That's the complex maneuver. You have to do without certain things, otherwise it becomes ambiguous. The long process was therefore a meaningful one, because we readjusted the entirety of the project with each new screenwriter. Not one step was in vain. It did take four years, but that was the time we needed to get the material to where we wanted it. It certainly was nerve-racking, but it was the correct and best way.

Wolf Bauer: Elimination and condensation of the novel's narrative depth without losing the essence of the work in the process was a genuine challenge, and I think we managed it by working together. You could definitely say that the novel "The Physician" would also be suitable for a 20-hour HBO series, but we decided to make a feature film.

Was it obvious this had to be an international project?

Wolf Bauer: Yes, from the very beginning. The book is ideal for this. "The Physician" is a best seller all over Europe, and for that reason we worked from the beginning to make an international film production. In English and with an appropriately high budget, in order to be able to guarantee attractive production values.

Nico Hofmann: The main aspect was definitely to have a European viewpoint. But along the way it was also important that the cast, sets, and narrative style give the film a radiance that can reach the entire world. These were several adjustable factors that were important to us. You could have done everything possible with the material, but the decisions we made speak for themselves: whether it was Tom Payne in the lead role, whom we discovered only at the very end of a long casting process in an HBO series by Michael Mann, whether it was Ben Kingsley as Ibn Sina or Stellan Skarsgård as the barber-surgeon, or Philipp Stölzl to handle the epic cinematic format, or the director of photography

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Hagen Bogdanski, who is working in Hollywood in the meantime. It's a courageous attempt and it says we can produce a world-class film in Germany.

An English or American director would have perhaps even increased the international appeal. But you purposely selected Philipp Stölzl.

Nico Hofmann: Searching for the best director was a long process while we continued at the same time to further develop the screenplay with the writers. With Philipp Stölzl – in combination with Hagen Bogdanski – what overlapped came the closest to what we as the producers had in mind. He's capable of telling a story in a very warm manner, he can stay close to the characters, he has a passion for epic material, and he can also penetrate complex structures, which in the long run is because he comes from theater and opera. He also has an extremely rhythmic feeling for dealing with the entire composition. And then what really convinced us was what he had done previously, whether it was the physical impact in "North Face" or the intellectual impact in "Young Goethe in Love." He directs with an incredible warmth and enjoyment at the same time. And indeed, we got what we had hoped we would get from him. We noticed that during the castings. The actors loved him and the film turned out the way we had envisioned it.

How difficult was it to find the right cast?

Wolf Bauer: The most difficult thing was certainly casting the lead role, in other words, the role of Rob Cole: a young actor who's not much older than his early twenties.

It was a long casting process, but in the end, it was quite clear we had found the right actor in Tom Payne. At the latest when we saw the film material from the screen test we knew there couldn't be anyone else in the role.

Nico Hofmann: The casting process was still one of the wildest casting processes I have ever experienced in my professional career. Both of us always relied on the acting qualities of Tom Payne. There were other more well-known names out there, who perhaps could have been "sold" better, but it was decisive to us that we find just the right and best actor for the part. We had very different names that the international distributors wanted, because at that point in time they could be sold better, but we very strictly decided to go for quality. To put your money on a "name" would not have been the right way to go here. And with Ben Kingsley and Stellan Skarsgård we had this huge essence of quality in the other decisive roles.

Where were the biggest difficulties with this major production, for example, with planning the shoot and with preproduction?

Wolf Bauer: Afterwards there really weren't any more difficulties. Basically, everything went according to plan after the important crew positions were filled, with Hagen Bogdanski behind the camera, Thomas Oláh as the costume designer, and Udo Kramer as the set designer. There weren't any more big hurdles to conquer.

Nico Hofmann: During the location search and planning the shoot, it was important that we could do this within the framework of the budget we had. I think Americans would have spent three times as much. Along with the right actors and the best director for the project, we needed an excellent costume department and an outstanding set and props department. We constructed the large studio sets in North Rhine-Westphalia, and you really don't notice it. They look unbelievably real. There was also the giant support from the effects factory Pixomondo, which last year received the Oscar for Scorsese's film "Hugo Cabret" (2011). In addition, we had exterior sets in Morocco, where a lot of the

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backgrounds and scenery had to be altered extensively. These three big shooting segments, in Cologne, in Morocco, and the CGI area, were mastered very well with a great team. It was a fantastic shoot! That also had to do with the fact that Phillip Stölzl created an unbelievable solidarity on the set.

How difficult was it to create the CGI effects?

Wolf Bauer: The expenditures are enormous. There had already been one or two films from Europe that had worked with such costs for effects and CGI. But as far as artificial sets and set extensions goes, "The Physician" is quite extraordinary.

Nico Hofmann: You bring another world to life. On different continents. Everything has to be right. We had advisors on the history of medicine before and after production. "The Physician" is a fictional historical adventure, but the fundamental things have to be correct, of course. Every detail is important. Whether it's the landscape and the buildings in Isfahan or the surgical tools. And the surgical tools were different in Isfahan than the ones in England or those used by Jewish doctors. When we stood on the sets sometimes we had the feeling we were in a history museum.

What does "The Physician" say about the present? Why is this genre so popular? What appeals to people to travel back to this time, and what is the fascination exactly?

Wolf Bauer: We saw in the Middle Ages an archaic epoch, where the images of human suffering are more extreme than in the present. Every emotional outbreak, every dramatic danger can of course be heightened even more in this historical environment. That's the reason why a premium series such as "Game of Thrones" is enjoying such a gigantic success.

Nico Hofmann: It's the desire for the archaic. In a certain way, "back-to-the-basics." The world is a harder place, it's more primal in these earlier times. And I feel it's all the more beautiful, the poetic manner in which Philipp Stölzl has our Rob Cole glide through these worlds. He lets the world act upon him, but the powers of nature are exploding all around him and everything becomes very elementary. Philipp Stölzl has succeeded in creating his own extremely beautiful form.

Wolf Bauer: You can't compare the dimension of the heroic deeds of Rob Cole with anything today! The young man, who came from an extremely impoverished background, discovers his inner calling, so to speak, and he travels through what was then an unknown world. When the map is unrolled by the Jewish physician, the extent of the global journey then becomes really clear. On the one side is England, and on the other side is Isfahan. He asks, "How long will I travel to get there?" "One year! And when you come to the border of the Moorish realm, you will be killed." That's a genuine, grand adventure. That, of course, appeals to audiences.

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INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPP STÖLZL

Were you familiar with the book, or to be more precise, had you already read the book before you received the offer to do the film?

Yes. Just about everybody read it in the 1980s. I remembered the book as an adventure yarn in the best sense of the word. This thick paperback book with tattered pages, which you kept reading for weeks on end.

What were your first thoughts when the offer landed on your desk?

I was immediately enthusiastic. I have to confess I have a weakness for historical films. I like to watch period films, which may be because I come from set and stage design. Films where an entire world has been created or recreated give me great pleasure. I had heard about the long history of the project, but I could well imagine I would provide a fresh voice for the project. The crux with filming this novel was the scope. The book has 850 pages and is divided into several long chapters, which in the end are almost books on their own. The part in England, the long journey, and of course Persia. You have a fundamental problem when you want to tell this story within the arc of a film. There wouldn't be any problem making a ten-part television series out of this, but the subjects the book offers – medicine, religion, the human body, philosophy – belong in the cinema in my opinion, no matter how tricky the adaptation was.

The scope was certainly also the reason why you had to wait so long for the film version. It was extremely complicated to find the right angle for the adaptation. What was decisive for me was that we had to condense even more in certain spots and we had to allow for a somewhat freer interpretation. The novel lives from its mind-bogglingly beautiful descriptions of the world where it takes place. How do Jews live in the Middle Ages, what is there in Persia, how does medicine function? In the book, you travel with Rob Cole through this world, but there are one or the other missing arcs for the characters and plot points you need for a feature film. Then I got Jan Berger, who I have known for a long time, on board as a writer and together we condensed the book even more and integrated new plot arcs, which interlock this huge story and create a large arc.

It was important that we allow ourselves the freedom to move away a little bit more in order to ultimately clearly encapsulate what the book is about. We dovetailed the sequences in the novel more strongly – for example, by working out Rob Cole's drive with the trauma he experiences when his mother dies from appendicitis, which at that time was still an unknown ailment, and thus fuels his curiosity, his passion. At the same time this dramatically introduces his gift for sensing death. Or the character of Jewish Rebecca, who in the book is a Christian, named Mary, and therefore fits into the plot in a natural way.

We simply made the attempt to tighten up the main themes. There is the collision of the religions that in the Middle Ages – but also nowadays, of course – is aligned with riot and violence. There is the search for knowledge and advances in medicine, and the resulting conflict with religious and moral interests. A central theme is cutting open a corpse, which was punishable by death in those days, but in today's world of medicine it is on par with the moon landing in the space program. And then there's the huge adventure of a man who follows his passion. A man who literally travels to the other end of the world in order to learn from the best teachers. In the final analysis I'm convinced that what you remember from this great book will also be in the film, and that we captured this feeling really well.

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You already are familiar with combining big cinematic entertainment and historical themes from your other films, "North Face" and "Young Goethe in Love!" Are both of these aspects equally important to you?

Yes. That's my strength. I like to watch, for example, films by Ridley Scott, because I very much enjoy big themes packed in big entertainment. I also really like to watch ambitious, exotic art house films, but personally I see cinema as a wide-ranging entertainment medium. It's great when you can reach a lot of people with a film and the film functions like a Trojan horse, which you use to slip in the important things you want to say. I like it when cinema keeps this balance. The set-up doesn't matter in the long run. If, for example, you look at the Batman films by Christopher Nolan then you see very suspenseful subjects like fear or anarchy being discussed with the force of an American blockbuster.

In which tradition do you view your "Physician"?

Sure, we also had "Lawrence of Arabia" – an unsurpassable masterpiece – in mind with "The Physician." This film from the early 1960s is also fascinating because they were working with a huge, epic paintbrush, but you also discover in the figure of Lawrence many fine, gentle, but also hard brushstrokes. Nowadays there is hardly this approach in cinema anymore.

Historical credibility and yet at the same time a modern feeling are also part of big cinematic films that take place in past times.

Yes, especially with stories in a historical environment it is decisive, for example, that you find the right language that doesn't seem out of place "back then," but it also has to work today. In this genre, the delicate adjustments in this balance play an enormously important role. It has to look good and still be believable, and how different this can seem is showcased in Scott's "Gladiator" and Wolfgang Petersen's "Troy." With Russell Crowe it functions with the little skirts, it doesn't with Brad Pitt. Both films are done well, but the impact is completely different. With our film "Goethe!" we tried very hard to capture this late-18th century world and at the same time make sure the wigs and knickerbockers never seem laughable. With "The Physician" we were faced with the challenge that everyone's wearing these togas and we had to consider the differences that would make it clearer who belongs to the shah and who is a Jew. There were similar considerations and analyses in very many areas, and taken all together it determines how well it functions.

What makes the history genre so strong and appealing?

There is certainly a type of escapism behind it. There's the yearning to escape today's reality and to journey to another world. When that's done in such a fantastic way, like we did it, then that has a huge appeal. I think a foreign, past world opens up a perspective on the characters, because the immediate connections to one's own world have been cut off to begin with. You travel to another world and by doing so can leave your own world behind you up to a certain degree. That applies in particular to books like "The Physician," and that's exactly of course what you want to accomplish with such a film, too.

... and still say something about today.

In its core, the film has to do with a world where the conditions in Europe are more or less barbaric, whereas in the Orient a sophisticated culture is alive and well. This is an inversion to our perception today. Many people here and today feel that the Arabian world still has one foot in the Middle Ages. We forget how much of our culture was born in the Orient. I think it's a nice and important

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correlation that the film reminds us of this. The other thing is, of course, that this story very clearly shows how religious fanaticism in every religion leads to suffering and violence, and how it stands in the way of advancement and communication. This subject couldn't be more topical, and the events in Egypt are reflected perfectly in an almost frightening way in this film.

In addition, I think the character of Rob Cole is very modern – here's a young man who doesn't always have to take the "straight" and "moral" path in his search for knowledge. Basically, he crosses every border and in doing so also poses the question in his heroic story of whether the end justifies the means. There are very many important themes and motifs worthy of being discussed in a film on the big screen.

INTERVIEW WITH TOM PAYNE

On shooting in the desert...

The desert is a very famous movie location on its own; anytime you go out there you feel as if you are on some kind of set, because the only way you have ever seen the desert is in movies or in books with beautiful photographs. It makes the job a lot easier. I was joking with Emile - in the film he plays Tuveh - about it: It's very difficult to not be playing these scenes in all of the costumes and on the dunes and not feel like you're making a movie and find that really exciting.

Along the backdrops of the dunes- going for miles and miles - it's really exciting to be putting that on film and to be in that film and in that environment. It immediately puts you in a place.

It can be difficult because there is sand everywhere but at the end of the day it is great fun because you feel as if you are part of something bigger.

On his way to work in the morning...

I get driven from our hotel at the edge of the dunes to our stone base camp which is just outside the dunes. There I have my makeup hair and costume done and then we take either a four by four or a dune buggy out into the dunes. The other day I said: God, some people pay money to do this and we've got to do it as our job, that's quite a thrilling thing really. Some people travel half the globe to come here and we just get out there and even get paid for these experiences.

On what he liked about the script...

I liked the sense of adventure and I thought it was very brave. It is an adventure story that is not afraid to go big and just has this epic tone.

Rob, my character travels from England to Persia in the 11th century, which is a huge trip at that time. I like my character. Rob has this ambition and sense of always wanting to know more and never accepting no as an answer. And the script is so clever – there are always several things going on at the same time.

My job as an actor is to grab you from the beginning and take you through the journey with me. And hopefully that's what we have done. I believe it is an exciting journey and I want the audience to enjoy the story.

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On the story...

It is quite complex and contains a lot of big themes. But at the core it is about a young man's quest for knowledge and never being satisfied. This drive takes him on his adventure. He takes everyone and everything as it comes, without judgment. He is very likeable and innocent; I believe the audience will be able to connect with him.

On Rob Cole...

Rob is an orphan from a young age. You see him losing his parents in being taken in care by the barber. They develop this father-son-relationship. But I think not really having a home is what doesn't hold him back from going on this journey. He has great affection for the barber but he wants to learn more. When the barber admits his limitations to Rob, he decides that he needs go, otherwise he can't progress. It's a very hard moment in the film, when he leaves the barber. But it is necessary for his personal growth and aim of helping everyone. Along his journey he meets other people and pick up new knowledge and experiences which help him along his way.

On Stellan Skarsgård...

In fact he is really funny being the barber. He brings his own qualities to the barber. He can be much larger than life and he does very much take life as it comes. These are qualities the barber certainly has. He travels from town to town, does his job the best way he can and has fun along way. At first he is reluctant to take on Rob, later they develop this really lovely father-son relationship. Stellan and I got on really well. It is interesting as everyone has his own character and you get to know both the real and movie character in every person.

We had great fun, particularly at the first scene; the textures, smells with the forest, cart and older costume, it was so all-consuming it didn't feel like work at all.

On the job there was hardly a day without 15 extras, animals and fabulous sets and props – from the forests of England and Germany to the deserts of Morocco. I feel I have done the journey with my character and I hope it will show in the film.

On working as a medical „doctor“ in the middleages...

The film clearly shows that medicine was at two totally different stages in England and Persia. Persia was far more advanced with instruments and the way they thought about things.

In England things are treated at face value, as for example in all the operations Stellan and I do in the film, but Persia is this mystical land. It is introduced by the Jewish camp in the film where the barber has an operation Rob has never seen before. When he sees this and is told about Persia his curiosity leads him to his journey. And it will also lead the audience's curiosity to the other side of the world. It is wonderful to go back in time and see how differently things were in the east and the west.

On the surgery scenes...

They were amazing and so realistic! The leg looked super realistic; it had a bone in it, they pumped blood through it and I sawed through it. It felt and looked so real that it's just wonderful and lots of fun. On the last day Stellan and I did a bunch of things that were not in the script.

In a way back then it was kind of funny because it was so brutal. Nowadays the doctor pats you on the head and says everything is going to be ok, back then it was: ok, chop it off and then get the next one in.

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On operating on Quasim's body...

That was also amazing. The extra-effects guys on the job did stuff that hasn't been done in Germany before. They made a full body cast of the actor who plays Quasim and then filled it with all the organs. I was very attentive about it first, because it was so realistic. It all felt so real because it looked so real. Those sequences really, really pay because it was very difficult. I was always curious just how Philipp was going to portray that on screen because it couldn't be very off putting. Certainly on set it was quite off putting and lots of the crew didn't want to watch. But the film actually really portrays the beauty of the human body. I think it really works.

On Mirdin and Karim...

I would say Rob is quite lucky bumping into these two friends whom he meets in Ibn Sinas class for the first time. One is a Muslim and one is a Jew but is never spoken about because it doesn't matter. They have fun – it just one of the young guy relationships. Similar to me, Michael and Elyas having a great time together with the actors. It about hanging out and having fun. The other things don't matter. Only when other people say that they matter, they do begin to matter.

On Sir Ben Kingsley...

Great! Ben has a certain, aura that he brings to the set. He brings along this helpful tone when playing this revered character who is this very special man. In the caravan Rob says to Rebecca that he will study with the greatest healer in the entire world. When he arrives he can't actually believe where he is. Ben is the perfect cast for this respected man with a long career. Every single person that joined us has just completely fitted in their role. When he starts to connect with me the Shah calms down. I want to learn and he wants to know more. He is held back by religious constrictions which don't affect Rob. Therefore Rob can take that one step further which Ibn Sina can't. But even after Rob has done it he doesn't justice him for doing it, he understands, which is really nice. And by the end of the Film they have a really lovely connection which Rob then carries on.

On Rob and Rebecca...

Rob meets Rebecca in the caravan on the way to Isfahan. He has never met someone like her. She reads books and wears clothes he has never seen before and is just very mysterious. This draws him towards her, but before they even get a chance to know each other they part. But they have a connection right from the beginning and see each other later again. They just seem to understand each other and want to know more about each other. It is a very honest relationship. It's a very simple love story. It doesn't have a huge amount of time to establish itself. The sequence when I rescue her and think she is dead is also the moment when I realize that I love her. The film isn't a love story but it's really nicely placed within the story to show another side of Rob's character and to just represent something which is pure in the film. They just love each other, why shouldn't that not work out.

On the message of the movie...

I think the main message is to never be satisfied and search for your own truth in every situation. This plays into my psychology as well. Rob is never satisfied and always wants to see for himself and gain a better understanding. He will never accept a statement that doesn't have something backing it up.

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That is why he has a problem with the church because you are just supposed to accept it. He accepts all religions but will not let them hold him back.

On working with Emma...

Great. Emma is louder in life. She is exactly the right age for her character and adds a lovely and youthful quality to it. It's just lovely to watch. She has just started her career. The way she attacks scenes is simply exuberant and really nice for her character. She works really hard as she has a lot of difficult scene, particularly with Bar Kappara. She is a young girl in a leading part and this is her first big film. She has showed a lot of finesse and really jumped in with all the boys, which isn't easy. She and her character have just left home. Emma has been thrust into a big movie abroad with lots of well-known actors and she has done it really well.

On Philipp Stözl...

Philipp and I work together all the time and he is just wonderful. He is very collaborative and always around. He is always open to suggestions for improving the film and wants to make it as good as possible. For me this has been a new experience as I've been here every day and had much greater responsibility for the end result. And I have absolutely felt every step of the way there. It's been a wonderful experience, have, really, really enjoyed working with Philipp. I'm very English in my sensibility so sometimes I can easily play jokes on him, which is quite funny, or make a comment which he takes to heart. We've had a good time.

On what the audience can expect from the movie...

I think people should expect an adventure movie and receive more. This kid goes on this great exiting adventure. Once you start watching the film you are immediately drawn into it and these huge things happen which hopefully by the end make you think about all of the issues that are involved in the film. Because you're just taken by the journey of this guy and you enjoy the journey, you enjoy watching the film. It is just really exiting.

I've been saying that the film should be played every Christmas because it is for the entire family.

It's a film on the epic scale and you just have to embrace it.

There are moments such as today when this other character comes up to me on this sand dune and says this line straight out of a movie because that's the movie we are making, this kind of really epic thing and you should not be scared to embrace and enjoy it. And I think the actors are enjoying it and I think the audience will enjoy that as well. And I hope they do. It is simply a great story.

Shoutout...

Hi. I'm Tom Payne. I play Robert Cole also known as Jesse Ben Benjamin in the Physician. I hope you enjoy the movie as much as we enjoyed making it.

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INTERVIEW WITH BEN KINGSLEY

On why he said yes to the role...

Well first of all it has to be possible. It has to fit into the schedule. And there are so many variables and imponderables in my career that I can't really get interested or attached to a role until I know "Right. It will happen at this particular time and it will fit into the schedule!" In fact I was doing four films at the same time. I'm now doing two. I just left one in the United States and then another one in the United States. Fortunately the producers on this movie made it possible for me to leave and come back and also to go on to my next picture. So immediately when I knew it was possible I allowed myself to attach myself to various aspects of the story and the character and one thing I read about Ibn Sina which I think illustrates his appetite for life: His curiosity, his intelligence, his knowledge of himself and his need to know what's outside of himself is summed up in a couple of things he said which I found in a biography of his.

Not a book, it was on the web. And he said "I'd rather live a short and broad life than a long and narrow one." And I just thought "Well, yeah. I'd like to tell that story. I'd like to pass that on. Over a thousand years later." It's quite a modern thought actually. Quite enlightened.

But then we think "Oh, isn't it strange how they thought we did all those things years ago." Of course they did. We haven't changed that much, we haven't evolved that much. And having been in 17 of Shakespeare's 27 plays, I have an affinity for the stories that basically are so pure in their intent, in their energy that they can be told over and over again in various different ways. I gather that there are only 7 original myths upon which and around which all our true stories are based. When I say true I mean stories that bear human examination. Loads of movies are garbage, they have no truth, they have no sensual mythology, and they have no message other than to sell popcorn and fizzy drinks. It is good to find another screenplay the only ones I do are the timeless ones. It's a film with curiosity – "the curiosity of the human soul" to say as my character always did and other characters in the film do. I need to know how that works. No matter how small it might make me, I need to know the bigger outside of me. And that kind of a character is very empowering. He's the opposite of a victim. He's, he has a heroic intelligence. Victims can, too. But unfortunately if the story is about a victim it sometimes can be almost disempowering for the actor to play a victim and it's a sacrifice that the actor makes. But it's empowering to play somebody like Ibn Sina. It stretches your imagination. As an actor you have to be as skillful as a human being. Even if it's between action and cut, for 15 seconds: "Puh, I made it for 15 seconds!"

And my love of Shakespeare told me that when you're on stage, as Hamlet for example, you have to be as brilliant and as intelligent and as charismatic as Hamlet was in his entire life. And you've got two hours to get it across to an audience. And in filmmaking you've got the time between between action and cut. A series of them which will be edited into... interestingly enough, about the same time: 2 hours. We seem to love drama that for some reason lasts two hours out of a 24 hours day. It's interesting that it's sort of set in a timeframe. So here we have two hours to say nothing has really changed. Not in a depressing way but there was curiosity then, it's got us to here, there's curiosity here, it will get us there. We have no conception of what there is. Neither did Ibn Sina have any comprehension of what our lives would be. But there is a connection; there is a connection in the curiosity. And the boy is curious. The young man is curious. He journeys to me and he enters a world that's based on, that thrives on curiosity. And then he's destroyed by a world that says "Don't think. Don't be curious".

On the story of THE PHYSICIAN...

It's starting point and I say this advisedly because in our modern culture we have, if you can call it that, almost pushed tragedy away. We want a "feel good" movie. Okay...but it will last here (points to his

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heart) for about two minutes. It'll have no resonance whatsoever in your subconscious, in the growth of your soul. So, storytelling is immensely important to the growth of the soul. Vital in my opinion – it's my life, it's my living. I have to say that the starting point of this film is the death of a child's mother. Now I have no desire as a filmmaker to edit that bit out. "Oh don't put that bit in...it's depressing", well that's very immature. And that'll get us nowhere. If you cut...if we edit out all the depressing bits then no Shakespeare play would ever be performed, no great piece of music would ever be performed, no great story would ever be told. And I truly believe that audiences feel a necessity to be moved. That's what they pay for. I don't believe that they feel a necessity to be anesthetized for two hours. So our film begins with the death of a child's mom. And that child...it's quite well balanced actually. If you suffer a loss like that as a child, it creates inside you a hole, an empty space. Let me call it a vacuum. And there's a law of physics that says nature upholds a vacuum – it will be filled. Definitely life will fill that little hole in that child, if you're blessed to follow your intuition. It certainly happened in my life: I have filled that little hole. And Tom's character has this vacuum aching hole inside him, called Mom. He fills it. He fills it by saying I am going to find out why my mom died. I am going to find a way to cure it. I am going to make this circle meet itself again. And unless you have the courage to be mature and sensible and sensitive in this world your move is going to be like this (makes gestures that show a part of a circle). You'll never get there. So people will leave the cinema thinking "Whoa that was great fun! Now what do we do!?" Rather than let us sit around inside for days, for months. You know, movies like Shutter Island that I've been in and most of the films, thank god, that I've been in sit inside people for years. 'Because I talked to them years later and said "I saw that film"'. That's what we're trying to do here. We're not being pumped with saying "Oh this is an important film with a message". No, we're trying to tell a really good story with a proper beginning, a proper middle and a proper end.

On the lives of physicians at that time...

I think we in Europe are very Eurocentric and egocentric in that we call a certain period of time The Dark Ages whereas just around the corner it was Golden. The inventions that came out of that world in those golden years are still used by us today. Mathematics, language, hieroglyphics, writing, music, guiding systems, astrology, navigational systems... something that's still used if your vessel is quite primitive and you don't have a computer, you use an astrolabe to measure this horizon, the stars and where you are. Astro Labe invented it. She was an arab woman in the tenth century I think. Astrolabe comes from Astro Labe. And a brilliant, questing, open, wonderful female mind and I am afraid in Europe we tend to think of the veil closed mind...genius. Flouring. And I am sure it was attacked through envy. The crusades were "Oh, why can't we have that?! I'm not going to let you have it cause I haven't got it." Bang (makes a beating motion). And a lot of it was burned and destroyed. But it was a great age. I only know this because about three years ago, two years ago was invited to front an exhibition called "a thousand inventions" and they were all from the Islamic world of what we call The Dark Ages were nothing much was happening in Europe and they called it The Golden Enlightened Age and I fronted this. Therefore I learned about Astro Labe and I learned so much about that Era. And it was rather nice to take that knowledge that inner knowledge into...(Loud noises) here they come...The mob has come to burn the library! What can we do?

On the relationship between Rob and Ibn Sina...

Well I think what has been my part in the film has hopefully been free of cliché. And obviously, I hope. I think it's possible that Rob Cole had: an image of this man in his head that he wanted to meet. What I wanted to do in the film is say "Now you've met me Rob, and I am nothing like what you've expected". That's what I really enjoyed playing in the film. Almost going against the obvious part of the story: being quite a tough teacher, being quite humorous, being strangely imaginative, poetic... And

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what I wanted to bring to the Rob Cole of the story was a surprise. Surprise after surprise after surprise – that’s what I wanted to bring rather than “Oh, then he meets this and then this happens and it’s nice and cozy and comfortable.” I think we’ve seen that before and I didn’t want to do that you know.

On Tom Payne...

He is very focused, he is very much in the zone and he is a very sympathetic player and he can access Rob Cole’s character’s emotions easily. And it’s a good working relationship and I think on the screen you will see that he meets a man who he realizes he has to meet all over again. That’s I think what’s interesting about the relationship.

On Philipp Stözl...

I can’t really describe what kind of a director he is until I’ve seen the film. Because my character is a little bit intellectually isolated I tended to stay a little bit in a bubble, holding onto this broad short life rather than a narrow and long life... I love that. And it’s been quite a private process for me, creating him. But I really need to see the film, I think that Philipp as a version of reality that is not naturalistic. He orchestrates in a rather operatic way. He organizes things in a rather theatrical way, he makes pictures. And then they move. And that’s quite interesting to be inside that picture and then move. But I’m dying to see it, I haven’t seen anything, I want to see something tonight – I think there’s a trailer and I am dying to see how his vision developed, one that is not very flexible for the right reasons. I mean he has to have his vision. Interesting to see how it translates and how he has brought that mood of all those years onto the screen. But it’s not an action story; it’s a very modern story.

On what the audience can expect from the film and what he wants them to receive...

Very difficult to answer. My job is to say: „Here is a story.” It’s as simple and as extraordinary as that. And whatever, you know there are 200 people in the cinema. It’s going to be 200 different stories. Hopefully if I remain pure to my character everyone will see him differently. If I get lazy then I present a stereotype and everyone will see it the same way. But if I am surprising and original and we all have to be on our toes now. Then every member of the audience will have a direct line. But it’ll be all coming in from a slightly different angle. So I really, there is no message. It’s beautifully free of a message. Here is a story.

ABOUT IBN SINA

Abu Ali Ibn Sina is better known in the Western world under his Latinized name Avicenna, and he’s considered to be one of the most important scientists and intellectuals of his time. He was primarily a philosopher and doctor, but he also worked in the fields of law, astronomy, mathematics, alchemy, and music theory. He reviewed the ancient knowledge of medicine, and his medical magnum opus was for many centuries one of the textbooks for physicians at European universities.

He was born in the year 980 in Qishlak Afshona, a village near Bukhara. By the time he was 18 he already had a reputation as a successful physician and he became the personal physician of the ruler of the Samanid Empire and received access to the royal library and its collection of rare works. When he was 21, Ibn Sina wrote the first book in his impressive complete works of more than likely 450 books. Approximately 250 have survived. Up to the present day, his most important work is

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considered to be "Al-Qanun fi'l-Tibb" ("The Canon of Medicine"), in which he compiled Greek, Roman, and Arabian knowledge of medicine and combined it with Islamic insights, creating a remarkable standard work.

Ibn Sina's "The Canon of Medicine" contains over a million words and is divided into five main volumes: "Definition and Scope of Medicine"; "Materia Medica," an alphabetical list of medications; "Special Pathology"; "Special Diseases Involving More Than One Member"; and "Formulary."

During the course of his moving and widely traveled life, he served at numerous royal courts and was for over a decade the personal physician and teacher of the ruler of Isfahan, before he passed away in Hamadan shortly after the year 1037 at the age of 57.

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION DESIGN

The journey of the "Physician" is a trip to a foreign world and to the past epochs of the Orient and the Occident. The sets for the film were constructed in Germany and Morocco, following a long preparation phase before the perfect design concept and right look were found. "Every director and every producer has different approaches," says production designer Kramer, "and everyone who works on a film brings his or her own concepts to the film. You have to find a common key with which everyone who's involved can then work with and walk through the same door. Everything else is still a lot of work and surprises may come along, but then you stick to a fundamental idea."

The exterior shots of the desert and Isfahan sequences were filmed in Morocco, and the corresponding interiors in the studio in Cologne. The scenes set in England and the interior shots involving the Jewish sequences were filmed in Thuringia – for example, in the ruins of a castle at Hanstein, and in and around Querfurt, where we built the sets for the Stratford Market in London, the synagogue, the Jewish camp in England, the tavern, the bathhouse, and the village where you meet little Rob Cole at the beginning of the story.

In the end, the sets had to be exceptionally detailed for filming in the high-definition HD format. Kramer remarks, "We thought it was very important to use as many historical components as possible and combine them perfectly with simulated surfaces. High-definition images in this quality don't forgive any of your mistakes, which was one of the biggest challenges of this project. We wanted basically to create an authentic fantasy world, fairy-tale like and at the same time historically exact – with an epic flair, but without an obvious studio look."

ABOUT THE COSTUMES

The 11th century in Europe and Persia. Villages and cities in dreary Medieval England, Isfahan in the glaring light of the desert, a journey through almost the entire world that was known at that time – populated by dozens of lead characters surrounding Rob Cole, and hundreds of residents in the locations and the Seljuq warriors in the background. Every actor, every extra in this mammoth UFA Cinema project had, of course, to have a costume in order to bring the large vision of "The Physician" to life and to transport the audience to this exciting world of the Middle Ages. This meant that in addition to the hundreds of costumes, which had to be designed and sewn, a complete set of "Physician" costumes for the most important parts had to be created.

"Independent of what we actually wanted to show in the film in terms of costumes and layers," explains costume designer Thomas Oláh, "we created an entire 'closet' for our heroes. There was everything in there and then they could take out and put on what they wanted to and what was appropriate for the respective scene. That means we also designed, for example, for Stellan Skarsgård as the barber-surgeon the underwear, and we oriented ourselves on the depictions from the Middle Ages. But of course many of the images from the 11th century that would have been useful for the 'Physician' costume department don't exist and most of the pictures from this time adhere to a different 'understanding' of images," says Oláh. "The depictions of people and therefore also the costumes and clothes are essentially more abstract than in the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. Unlike a film that takes place perhaps in the 15th century you can't start with images, you have to more or less recreate a look." That means on the other hand creativity was also required in regards to the realization. "With historical material the rule is: The further back in time it is, the more freedom you have with the design," says Oláh. "We have a rather precise image of the 19th century, you have a good idea of the 18th century, too, but the further you step back in time the vaguer the concept becomes of how people in society presented their bodies. If you go to the 11th century, you don't know very much about it anymore and the image you have of it is a mixture of historical facts

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and a good portion of fantasy. Clothes that have survived – if any at all – from this period belonged for the most part to nobility and that in turn doesn't help much in the portrayal of the clothes people wore every day. So you don't necessarily proceed by striving for historical preciseness, but rather you go for the right look on the cinema screen. It has to look right, and if for example the original material, the original cut, or the original color of the material doesn't come across correctly, then that doesn't help at all. What's decisive is that it's 'genuine' within the story you want to tell."

THE CAST

Tom Payne (Rob Cole)

The British actor was born in 1982 in Chelmsford, Essex. He grew up in Bath where he attended King Edward's School, and even at that early stage demonstrated his acting talent in drama class and various school plays. He then studied at the Central School of Speech and Drama, graduating in 2005. Between 2007 and 2008 he appeared in Seasons 2 and 3 of "Waterloo Road", playing Brett Aspinall. In 2007 the renowned trade magazine Screen International named him as one of its 'Stars of Tomorrow'. Payne's first film role was the Anglo-American romantic comedy "Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day" (2008). His other film and television work includes "Marple: They Do It with Mirrors" (2009) and the title role in the BBC 2 film "Best: His Mother's Son" (2009) about the legendary footballer George Best. In 2010 he joined a prestigious cast (Dustin Hoffman, Nick Nolte) for the pilot of the acclaimed HBO series "Luck" directed by Michael Mann. THE PHYSICIAN ("THE PHYSICIAN") is Tom Payne's first leading role in a cinematic production.

Stellan Skarsgård (Barber)

Born in 1951 in Gothenburg, the actor first became well known in his homeland in 1968 for his role in the Swedish series "Bombi Bitt and me". In 1972 he began working at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, where he spent 16 years learning his craft under directors such as Ingmar Bergman and Alf Sjöberg. The versatile character actor's breakthrough came in 1982 with the Swedish thriller "The Simple-Minded Murderer" ("Den enfaldige mördaren" - 1982), for which he won a Silver Bear for Best Actor at the Berlinale. In the following years he also received awards at festivals in Chicago, Rouen, St. Sebastian and Telluride - and alongside the top prizes of the Scandinavian film industry in 1998 he also won the award for Best European Achievement in World Cinema.

In addition to his more than 30 Swedish cinema productions, Skarsgård has appeared in modern classics like "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" (1988), "The Hunt for Red October" (1990) "Good Will Hunting" (1997) and the Norwegian film "Insomnia" (1997). He starred in Lars von Trier's films "Breaking the Waves" (1996), "Dancer in the Dark" (2000) and "Dogville" (2003) and most recently "Melancholia" (2011).

He also appeared in "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest" (2006) "Pirates of the Caribbean - At World's End" (2007), "Mamma Mia" (2008), "Angels & Demons" (2009) and "A Somewhat Gentle Man" ("En Ganske snill mann" - 2010). His other major film credits include Marius Holst's "King of Devil's Island" (2010), Kenneth Branagh's "Thor" (2011), David Fincher's "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" (2011), and Joss Whedon's "The Avengers" (2012).

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Olivier Martinez (Shah)

The French actor was born in Paris in 1966, and after numerous successes in the '90s in France went on to achieve international stardom. After training at the French Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique, Martinez made his mark in theatre, television, and finally the big screen. His film debut was a role in Jean-Jacques Beineix's "IP5: The Island of Pachyderms" (1992) alongside Yves Montand. In 1994 he won the César Award as "Most Promising Actor" for his performance in Bertrand Blier's drama "1, 2, 3, Sun" ("Un, deux, trois, soleil" - 1993) alongside Marcello Mastroianni. Martinez achieved international recognition shortly after this in Jean-Paul Rappeneau's "The Horseman on the Roof" ("Le Hussard sur le toit" - 1995) in which he played a dashing 19th-century Italian cavalry officer in love with a married woman (Juliette Binoche). His other films include Bertrand Blier's "My Man" ("Mon Homme" - 1996), Bigas Luna's "The Chambermaid on the Titanic" ("La femme de chambre du Titanic" - 1997) and Eric Barbier's "Toreros" (2000) with Claude Brasseur. He achieved worldwide recognition for his parts in Julian Schnabel's "Before Night Falls" (2000) opposite Johnny Depp and Javier Bardem, and as Diane Lane's lover in Adrian Lyne's "Unfaithful" (2002) with Richard Gere. His recent works include "SWAT" (2003), in which he starred opposite Samuel L. Jackson, Colin Farrell and Michelle Rodriguez; Robert Allan Ackerman's version of "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone" (2003) alongside Anne Bancroft and Helen Mirren; the thriller "Taking Lives" (2004) alongside Angelina Jolie, Ethan Hawke and Kiefer Sutherland; "Blood and Chocolate" (2007); and "Dark Tide" (2012).

Emma Rigby (Rebecca)

The young British actress was born in 1989 in St. Helen's, Merseyside. She started working at the age of 14 in the television series "Born and Bred". She is, perhaps, best known for her role in the popular British show "Hollyoaks" in which she appeared from 2005-2010. She was nominated for her performance several years running, and won the award for "Best Actress" in 2008 at the British Soap Awards. In July 2010, she made her West End debut and later that year shot the British horror film "Demons Never Die". In early 2012 she played a leading role in the BBC flagship drama "Prisoners Wives" to huge critical acclaim.

Elyas M'Barek (Karim)

Elyas M'Barek was born in Munich/Germany in 1982 and discovered his passion for acting in a school theater group. He gathered his first professional experiences in front of the camera in 2000 in Dennis Gansel's comedy hit "Girls on Top." In 2001 he was discovered for television, and given roles in the TV movie "Riekes Liebe" (2001), "Ich schenk dir einen Seitensprung" (2002) and the TV series "Verdammt verliebt" (2002). His role as "Cem Öztürk" in the ARD access-primetime series "Turkish for Beginners" (2005-2008), which was praised by critics and the public, helped him make his breakthrough (German Television Award and Adolf-Grimme Award for the acting ensemble). After further engagements in TV hits such as "Abschnitt 40" and "KDD," he played the Austrian assistant physician Dr. Maurice Knechtelsdorfer in the cult series "Doctor's Diary" (RTL, 2009-2011) with Diana Amft and Florian David Fitz. In the cinema, Elyas M'Barek starred in, among other productions, the festival hit "Wholetrain" (2006) by Florian Gaag, Dennis Gansel's "The Wave" (2008), Granz Henman's "Devil's Kickers" (2012) and the Bernd Eichinger production "Time you change" (2010), in which he embodied the controversial young rapper Bushido. 1.8 million movie-goers recently enjoyed Elyas' portrayal of Matthias Schweighöfer's best friend in his box-office hit "What a Man" (2011). It seems as if the movies can't

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get enough of him: he starred in a supporting role in the filming of the children's book classic "Famous Five" (2012), and played the lead role alongside Nora Tschirner in "Offroad" (2012, director: Elmar Fischer). He recently reprised Cem in the "Turkish for Beginners" film (2012) and starred alongside Jessica Schwarz, Anna Fischer and Max Riemelt in front of the camera for "Heiter bis wolkig".

Fahri Yardim (Davout Hossein)

The German-Turkish actor was born in 1980. He studied acting at the Hamburger Bühnenstudio der darstellenden Künste and began gathering his first acting experiences at theaters in Berlin and Hamburg immediately after completing his studies. Since then he has starred in many TV movies and series such as Antonia Bird's "The Hamburg Cell" (2004), the title role in "König von Kreuzberg" (2005), "Mogadischu" (2008) next to Thomas Kretschmann and Nadja Uhl, "Polizeiruf 110 – Falscher Vater" (2009) and the "Crime Scene" episode "Old school" in April 2010.

Among his movies are "Kebab Connection" (2004) directed by Anno Saul from a script by Fatih Akin, Anno Saul's "Where is Fred?" (2006), the Til Schweiger films "Rabbit without Ears" (2007), "1 ½ Knights – In Search of the Ravishing Princess Herzeliinde" (2008) and "Kokowääh," Özgür Yildirim's "Chiko" (2008), "66/67 – Fairplay is over" by Jan-Christoph Glaser and Carsten Ludwig (2009), Maximilian Erlenwein's "Gravity" (2009) as well as Simon Verhoeven's "Men in the City" (2009) and its sequel "Men in the City 2" (2011).

Ben Kingsley (Ibn Sina)

The British actor was born in Scarborough, Yorkshire in 1943. In 1967 he began his impressive professional acting career at the Royal Shakespeare Company where he played in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "Julius Caesar", "Othello" and "Hamlet". He also demonstrated his range as a stage actor in "The Country Wife", Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard", "A Betrothal" and Beckett's "Waiting for Godot". Kingsley made his film debut in 1973 with the thriller "Fear Is the Key". His major international breakthrough came in 1982 with "Gandhi" for which he won an Oscar®, two Golden Globes® and two BAFTA Awards, among others. Two years later, the Indian government awarded him the Padma Shri Order for his portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi.

This was followed by the films "Betrayal" (1983), "Turtle Diary" (1985), "Harem" (1985), "Pascali's Island" (1988) and "Without a Clue" (1988) with Michael Caine.

Among his outstanding films of the 1990s are "Bugsy" (1991), "Sneakers" (1992), "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (1993) and 'Dave'. He received particular acclaim for his prominent supporting role as Itzhak Stern in Steven Spielberg's Oscar®-winning film "Schindler's List" (1993).

Kingsley has continued to prove his outstanding talent in a variety of film roles over the past decade, including "Rules of Engagement" (2000), "What Planet Are You From?" (2000), "Lucky Number Slevin" (2006), John Dahl's "You Kill Me" (2007) and the historical drama "The Last Legion" (2007). His performances in "Sexy Beast" (2000) and in "House of Sand and Fog" (2003) led to nominations for the Academy Award.

Kingsley's films of recent years include Isabel Coixet's "Elegy" (2008) alongside Penelope Cruz, for which he was nominated for Best British Actor at the London Critics Circle Film Awards, and the thriller "Transsiberian" (2008) with Woody Harrelson. Kingsley most recently starred in "Shutter Island" (2010) with Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo and Michelle Williams, as well as in Martin Scorsese's "Hugo" (2011) with Asa Butterfield, Chloë Grace Moretz and Larry Charles, and "The Dictator" (2012) alongside Sacha Baron Cohen.

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Besides THE PHYSICIAN, his latest projects include Shane Black's "Iron Man 3" in which he plays Iron Man's nemesis Mandarin, and his role opposite Harrison Ford in Gavin Hood's "Ender's Game". Kingsley's roles range from the tough Vice-President of the United States in "Dave" (1993) to the villainous Fagin in Roman Polanski's "Oliver Twist" (2005). Ben Kingsley was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2001.

THE CREW

Philipp Stölzl (Director)

Philipp Stölzl was born in Munich/Germany in 1967, but has long since become a Berliner. The multitalented director's accomplishments range from feature films to commercials and from music videos to opera productions. He began his creative career as a set designer in a theater. In his late 20s he turned to directing and began to shoot music videos with great international resonance. He worked with such music greats as Mick Jagger, Dave Stewart, Madonna, Luciano Pavarotti, Garbage and Marius Müller-Westernhagen.

Stölzl was soon able to establish himself as a director for commercials and spots for BMW, Nokia, Sony and many other companies. For several years now he has been devoting himself to the stage again and, as director and stage designer, has produced classical operas at the Ruhrtriennale, the Salzburg Festival and the Deutsche Oper Berlin, among others. Stölzl's overriding passion lies in his work for the cinema. His highly noted debut film "BABY" (2002) was followed by the much-acclaimed mountain-climbing drama "NORTH FACE" (2008) with which won two German Film Awards, his romantic drama "YOUNG GOETHE IN LOVE" (2010) about the great German poet's turbulent years of apprenticeship and his first English language film, ERASED (2012), starring Aaron Eckhart and Olga Kurylenko.

Jan Berger (Screenplay)

Jan Berger was born in Berlin in 1970. He studied philosophy and German literature, and began to write scripts for film and television after his graduation in 1997. Among his screenplays are "Sumo Bruno" (1999), "Boo, Zino & the Snurks" (2004), "FC Venus" (2005), "In another League" (2005) and "Kebab Connection" (2006). Jan Berger's script for the mystery thriller "The Door," based on the novel "Damalstür" by Akif Pirinci, was filmed in 2009 with Mads Mikkelsen, Jessica Schwarz and Heike Makatsch. His latest filmed screenplay is Dennis Gansel's vampire drama "We Are The Night" with Karoline Herfurth and Nina Hoss, which he wrote in collaboration with Gansel. Berger is currently working on the screenplay for Anno Saul's movie version of the TV classic "Robbi, Tobbi und das Fliewatüüt" after a children's book by Boy Lornsen.

Hagen Bogdanski (Cinematography)

Hagen Bogdanski was born in Berlin on 24 April 1965. After studying at the Berliner Hochschule für Fotografie, he worked for several years as a camera assistant for Xaver Schwarzenberger, Jürgen Jürges, Gernot Roll and other distinguished cinematographers. Since his debut in Kai Wessel's "The Trace of the Red Barrels" (1996), he has stood behind the camera of many movie and TV productions, shooting, for example, Oskar Roehler's films "Gierig" (1999), "No Place to go" (2000) and "Angst" (2003). In 2006 Hagen Bogdanski was awarded the German Film Award for his camera work and visual design of Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's directorial debut and Oscar-winning film "The

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Lives Of Others” After several television projects, including episodes of the crime series “Crime Scene” and “Der Kriminalist,” Hagen Bogdanski took on his first international project in 2008, the British-German historical film “The Young Victoria” with Emily Blunt in the title role. He then created the visual design for Leander Haussmann’s satire “Dinosaurier” (2009) and for Kai Wessel’s film biography of Hildegard Knef “Hilde” (2009), for which he was nominated for another German Film Award. His most recent projects were Jodie Foster’s “The Beaver” (2011) with Mel Gibson, Leander Haussmann’s “Hotel Lux” (2011) with Michael “Bully” Herbig in the lead role, and Madonna’s “W.E.” (2012).

Noah Gordon (Novelist)

No other novelist has packed so many important historical milestones of medicine in such exciting, fictitious stories than Noah Gordon. Foremost among them are “The Physician” and “Shaman,” the first two volumes of his Physician trilogy revolving around Rob Cole and his successors. They have thrilled many millions of readers around the world and made medical pioneering feats accessible to them in a vividly portrayed historical environment. This was made possible in part by the fact that Gordon initially studied medicine after World War II, before he discovered his love of writing and switched to journalism. In 1950 he obtained his Master’s degree in English and Creative Writing at Boston University.

Gordon was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1926 and lives in Boston, where he began his career in the 1950s as a professional author at the Boston Herald. After publishing some short stories, he made his breakthrough with his very first novel, “The Rabbi.” Among his further important publications are “The Death Committee,” “The Bodega,” “The Last Jew” and “The Jerusalem Diamond.” “The Physician” was released in America in the mid 1980s and brought Gordon his biggest success up to then. Especially in Europe and in the German-language countries the book became a genre-defining megaseller and historical-novel classic that is still extremely beloved to this day and absolutely timeless. It was chosen as one of the Top Ten most popular books of all time in 1999 by Spanish booksellers.

Wolf Bauer (Producer and CEO of UFA Cinema, Chairman of the Management Board UFA)

Born in Stuttgart in 1950, Bauer studied communications and art history in Munich and Berlin (graduating with a Master of Arts, summa cum laude). In 1976 he began working first as a writer of political magazine reports for the ZDF program “Kennzeichen D.” In 1980 Bauer came to UFA Film- und Fernsehproduktion as story editor and producer, and has been producer and chairman of the managing board of the UFA Film & TV Produktion since 1991. Since the foundation of FremantleMedia in 2000, he is also on the Operating Board of the internationally active production group. FremantleMedia is the international production arm of the RTL Group, to which the UFA also belongs.

Under his direction, UFA developed into a high-performance production group which has continually built up its market leadership in Germany as a film and television production company in the past years.

Since 1980 Wolf Bauer has produced more than 80 TV movies, including “Der Snob” (ZDF, 1983, director: Wolfgang Staudte), “Das Haus am Watt” (ZDF, 1989, director: Sigi Rothemund),

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“Catherine the Great” (1994, ZDF, director: Marvin Chomsky) with Catherine Zeta-Jones in the title role, “Terror in the Mall” (1997, director: Norberto Barba) and episodes of successful series such as “Ein unvergessliches Wochenende in...” and the film adaptations of stories by Rosamunde Pilcher. Wolf Bauer also produced eight feature films, including “Der Schnüffler” (1982), “Didi – Der Doppelgänger” (1983), “Didi und die Rache der Enterbten” (1984), “Der Experte” (1988).

Moreover, as producer, Wolf Bauer was also responsible for the launch of more than 20 series. Among them are weekly series for public broadcasters such as “Detektivbüro Roth” (1983, WDR), “Der Untermieter” (1983/84, ZDF), “Berliner Weisse mit Schuss” (1984, ZDF) and “Der Millionenerbe” (1989, ZDF), both with Günter Pfizmann, as well as one of the first sitcoms on German television, “Die lieben Verwandten” (1989, WDR) and the first genuine weekly “Hinter Gittern – Der Frauenknast” (1997, RTL). Daily series such as “Gute Zeiten – Schlechte Zeiten” (since 1992, RTL), “Unter uns” (since 1994, RTL), “Verbotene Liebe” (since 1994, ARD) and the telenovelas “Bianca – Wege zum Glück” (2004, ZDF) and “Verliebt in Berlin” (2005, Sat.1) were also created under his direction.

Besides **THE PHYSICIAN**, his productions at UFA Cinema also include the current programs “Devil’s Kickers” (2010), “Hanni & Nanni” (2010), “Pigeons on the Roof” (2011) and “Jungle Child” (2011).

Nico Hofmann (Producer and CEO of UFA Cinema, Chairman of the Management Board of UFA FICTION)

Nico Hofmann was born in Heidelberg on 4 December 1959 as the son of two journalists. As producer and director, his name stands for films that relate exceptional stories at a very high level of craftsmanship. After a two-year stint as a trainee at a newspaper, he studied at the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film in Munich. His cinema debut “Land der Väter, Land der Söhne” obtained the Bavarian Film Award in 1989, among other honors.

In 1998 he ended his career as director in order to found the production company teamWorx Television & Film GmbH. The firm soon developed into one of the most important players in the German film industry. Event productions such as “The Tunnel,” “March of Millions,” “Operation Valkyrie” and “Mogadishu” raised teamWorx to the level of a European market leader in the field of event television. “Home Video,” the first film on the topic of cyber mobbing among youths, won the most awards for a TV movie in 2011. Among the company’s other ratings hits are the adaptation of Uwe Tellkamp’s “The Tower.” The lavish three-part event miniseries “Generation War” was produced with a budget of 14 million euros and triggered a Europe-wide discussion among all generations.

Nico Hofmann has received multiple honors for his achievements as producer and director. For his distinctive merits in the field of TV movies, he obtained the Hans Abich Award in 2006, and for his achievements as producer of “Dresden,” “Storm Tide!” and “The Airlift,” he was honored with the Bavarian Television Award. In 2007 he obtained the Schiller Award of the city of Mannheim as well as the Romy as “Best Producer.” Moreover, Hofmann was honored with the Medal of Merit of the State of Baden-Württemberg in 2009.

Nico Hofmann has been committed to fostering upcoming talents in the film branch for many years now. Since 1995 he has been teaching “Staged Film” as Professor at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg. He set up the young talents’ award First Steps with Bernd Eichinger in 2000.

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Since 2013, Nico Hofmann has been the chairman of the management board of UFA FICTION, which has been uniting all previous fiction activities of UFA Fernsehproduktion, Phoenix Film and teamWorx since August 2013. For UFA Cinema Hofmann was responsible as CEO and producer for the film adaptations of "Hanni & Nanni 1+2," "Jungle Child," "Devil's Kicker," "Die Relativitätstheorie der Liebe" as well as the GDR drama "Shores of Hope" by Oscar®-winner Toke C. Hebbeln. Hofmann's most recent UFA Cinema theatrical productions are, next to "Hanni & Nanni 3," "Jesus loves me" by and with Florian David Fitz, the star-studded literary film adaptation "The Weekend," "Der fast perfekte Mann" and "The Physician."

BETA CINEMA – WORLD SALES

Beta Cinema has established itself as a "boutique-operation" for independent feature films with strong theatrical potential. Beta Cinema's philosophy is to keep its selective acquisition policy of 10 to 12 titles per year in order to fully develop the theatrical potential of each title according to its individual character.

Beta Cinema's portfolio includes outstanding productions like Berlin 2013 Golden Bear–winning CHILD'S POSE, Academy Award 2011-nominated IN DARKNESS, Cannes 2008 Jury Prize-winning and Academy Award-nominated IL DIVO, Academy Award 2007-winning THE COUNTERFEITERS, Academy Award 2007 nominated MONGOL, Academy Award 2006-winning THE LIVES OF OTHERS and the Academy Award 2004-nominated DOWNFALL.

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