BETA CINEMA

presents

a production of



THE ROME EIGHT

directed by
Hannu Salonen
starring
Oliver Masucci, Felix Kammerer, Svenja Jung, Leonard Kunz,
Axel Milberg, Heino Ferch, Katrin Röver,
Stephanie Amarell, Nick Romeo Reimann, and many more

World Sales

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CAST

Karl Adam	Oliver Masucci

<u>"The Rome Eight":</u>

Hans Lenk	Felix Kammerer
Manfred Rulffs	Leonard Kunz
Moritz von Groddeck	Nick Romeo Reimann
Willi Padge (Coxswain)	Vito Wiesner
Walter Schröder	Leon Kleinschmidt
Klaus Bittner	Jakob Schmölzer
Stark Kendler	Till Neumann
Frank Kendler	Oscar Krause
Karl-Heinz Hopp	Moritz Wolff

Ulla Jahn	Svenja Jung
Ursula Adam	Katrin Röver
Rose	Stephanie Amarell
Erich Buddenhauser	Heino Ferch
Dr. Walter Wülfing	Axel Milberg

Crew

Director	Hannu Salonen
Screenplay	Domenik Pockberger
	Stephan Falk
Producer	Ivo-Alexander Beck
Co-Producers	Rainer Kleinschmidt, Bozidar Cvetanovic, Carlo Theis,
	Volker Zobelt, Benjamin Herrmann, René Frotscher
Producer	Florian Bartholomäi
Casting	Patrick Dreikauss
Director of Photography	Felix Cramer
Production Design	Katarzyna Sikora
Costume Design	Michaela Hořejší
Makeup	Gabriela Přibišová
Editing	Antonia Fenn
Music	Karim Sebastian Elias

SYNOPSIS

Ratzeburg, late 1950s. A small town on the border with East Germany – and the last place anyone would expect a sports revolution to take place.

Here, Karl Adam teaches math, physics, and PE, encountering a fatherless generation of young men – outsiders and loners who don't know what to do with their anger. But Adam senses something in these men that no one else does. He puts them in an eight-man rowing boat and gives them more than just an outlet for their anger – he gives them a sense of purpose.

Adam's unconventional methods quickly lead to initial successes, but officials in the elitist German rowing world ridicule and sabotage him. One of the rowers, Hans Lenk, is also struggling against a border that is becoming increasingly insurmountable. His great love, Ulla, lives just a few kilometers away, on the other side of Lake Ratzeburg. In East Germany.

As the Cold War casts its shadow over the country, Adam's team struggles not only with physical exhaustion but also with questions of guilt, ideological divides, and a past that cannot simply be shaken off. But with unwavering determination and visionary methods, Adam molds the underdogs into something greater than the sum of its parts. And finally, at the Olympic Games, a team that no one believed in takes the starting line – ready to make history…

PRESS INFORMATION

THE ROME EIGHT tells a moving story of courage, solidarity, and the fight against limits – and how a group of underdogs caused a sporting sensation at the 1960 Olympic Games. A thrilling underdog drama and a masterpiece of narrative cinema.

THE ROME EIGHT was produced by Ivo-Alexander Beck and Ninety-Minute Film in co-production with StoryPort Pictures, Adams Acht KG, Sunday Filmproduktion, and Majestic Filmproduktion. **THE ROME EIGHT** received funding from MOIN Filmförderung, Filmförderungsanstalt, DFFF, and the Slovak Audiovisual Fund.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE BY HANNU SALONEN

Right away, THE ROME EIGHT fascinated me as a multidimensional narrative. It combines a gripping sports story, an emotional underdog drama, and a depiction of a country in transition. The film is set at a time when Germany is moving forward after the Nazi dictatorship, without having truly shed its past. West Germany is looking towards the future and the division between West and East is intensifying, yet the old ways of thinking linger beneath the surface. Against this tense backdrop, a story unfolds of a team that is breaking new ground, not only in sports but also on a human level.

For me, Karl Adam stands at the center of this revolution. He is a contradictory figure, shaped by his time, yet at the same time driven by his innovative ideas. Out of individuals, outsiders, and dominant personalities, he forges a community that learns to rise above themselves. What I find particularly fascinating is that Karl Adam brings something to the team that was anything but common for his time: a democratic principle. He demands not blind obedience, but responsibility, active participation, and trust. It is precisely this that fundamentally transforms the team. For me, this is one of the most modern and inspiring aspects of this story. That is precisely why it was important to me not to portray the film's few female characters as mere bystanders in a male-dominated world. The women do not merely follow these men – they are often decisively ahead of them in their understanding of life, in their clarity, and in their inner maturity.

I wanted to portray this struggle for community and peak performance as directly as possible. In this film, rowing is not merely a backdrop, but a physical experience. Viewers should almost feel the water, sweat, rhythm, exhaustion, and absolute concentration in their own bodies. That's why it was crucial for us to achieve the highest possible level of authenticity in terms of the sport. To prepare, our actors trained intensively for more than half a year before filming began, often five times a week. At the same time, we were able to recruit an exceptionally large group of real top rowers from all over Europe for the film.

On top of this we faced the particular challenge of filming on the water. We shot many scenes in a system that was, in the truest sense of the word, fluid: everything moves, everything floats, nothing stays in one place. Boats, camera, actors, water surface, light, wind, and weather are constantly changing. It's no coincidence that films set on water are among the most difficult to make. For me, it was crucial not only to overcome this instability through technology, but also to make it work cinematically, so that viewers could feel the dynamics, the uncertainty, and the energy of this element in every shot.

For me, THE ROME EIGHT therefore tells both stories: the difficult journey of a country struggling with its unresolved past – and the almost unbelievable achievement of a team that only learns to become great by working together.

Hannu Salonen

PRODUCER'S NOTE BY IVO-ALEXANDER BECK

It was clear to me from the very beginning: With THE ROME EIGHT, we're on the right track. Because we're telling a true and gripping story – the rise of the rowers from Ratzeburg and Kiel who won Olympic gold in Rome in 1960. But that's only part of what makes the story of THE ROME EIGHT so relevant and worth telling.

Germany is standing at a societal turning point today. City life and rural life are growing increasingly estranged. People have become dissatisfied and talk more about one another than with one another. Yet, solidarity is more necessary than ever – after all, we are literally in the same boat. That is why our film's central theme is "Learning Democracy." Our young protagonists come from different social and political backgrounds, initially encountering one another with prejudice, but eventually learning team spirit, tolerance, and responsibility. Rowing, in particular, highlights what is at stake in society: team building, trust, and the realization that we are only strong when we work together. An eight-man crew only works when everyone rows in unison. This image serves as a metaphor for our society. All in the same boat – this idea runs throughout our entire film.

During filming, we experienced firsthand just how important solidarity is. No one in Germany had ever filmed a rowing regatta on such a grand scale before. We wanted to give viewers the feeling that they were sitting in our boat right alongside us. We also had to rethink the composition of our eight. Turning eight actors into rowers wouldn't have worked, neither in terms of time nor athletic ability. So we decided on a mix of both: our actors learned from the rowers, and the rowers got a lesson in acting.

With the support of the German rowing community, the city of Ratzeburg, and dedicated private investors, we created a touching, relevant cinematic experience. THE ROME EIGHT is family cinema in the best sense of the word: emotional, historically grounded, and appealing to all generations. The film sheds light on a formative phase of postwar German history. At the same time, we witness a powerful social awakening, but also a growing divide between East and West.

I am convinced that THE ROME EIGHT is more than just a sports film. It is a film about community, responsibility, and the question of how we, as a society, want to coexist.

That is exactly why I believe: This story must be told. And the right place for it is the movie theater.

Ivo-Alexander Beck

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND – THE REAL PEOPLE OF RATZEBURG: ABOUT KARL ADAM, HANS LENK, MANFRED RULFFS, AND WILLI PADGE

KARL ADAM – THE REAL-LIFE COACH BEHIND "THE ROME EIGHT"

Karl Adam, born in 1912 in Vorhalle (now Hagen) and passed away in 1976 in Bad Salzuflen, is considered one of the most important rowing coaches of the postwar era. As co-founder of the Ratzeburg Rowing Club and later director of the Ratzeburg Rowing Academy (1964–1976), he shaped German rowing like few others. After suffering a serious war injury, Adam initially worked as a teacher (in mathematics, physics, and physical education) in Ratzeburg. It was there that the former boxer took up rowing. He took over coaching the rowing team at his school and developed new training methods, , revolutionizing the techniques of rowing. The Ratzeburg Rowing Club was founded in 1953. Under Adam's leadership, the German men's eight celebrated great successes, including Olympic gold in Rome (1960) and in Mexico City (1968). Ratzeburg became a mecca for international rowing.

Adam was not only a meticulous innovator and a scientific, methodical visionary – his nickname "Rowing Professor" speaks for itself – but also an influential mentor. He championed the vision of the "self-reliant athlete" and advocated for personal responsibility in sports. He was regarded as disciplined, focused, and at the same time inspiring.

The mentor role depicted in the screenplay – as a surrogate father – largely corresponds to reality. Eyewitnesses consistently report on the strong bond between Adam and his athletes. For many of his protégés, such as Hans Lenk and Manfred Rulffs, he was not only a coach, but a father figure. Conflicts with officials of the rowing association at the time are portrayed in an exaggerated manner in the film, but are based on true events: The established rowing clubs viewed the nonconformist group from Ratzeburg as an affront. The famous sign at a Berlin rowing club reading "No Dogs or Women Allowed" is a symbol of the elitist structures of that time.

A complex chapter in Karl Adam's biography concerns his role during the Nazi era. Adam was a member of both the SA (from 1933/34) and the NSDAP (from 1940) and served as a teacher at a National Political Educational Institution (Napola) in Bensberg. These memberships are documented by multiple sources and were never denied by him. In later years, he spoke openly about them with his athletes.

After World War II, Adam, like many men of his generation, had to undergo a denazification to be allowed to return to teaching. In the decades that followed, his past was rarely discussed in public. It was not until a recent study by the Lower Saxony Institute for Sports History, commissioned by the German Rowing Association (DRV), that his activities during the Nazi era were examined in greater detail. As a result of this reassessment, the DRV decided in 2025 to discontinue the Karl Adam Prize, noting that the name of an award must also serve as a moral example. This decision is not without controversy, but it also demonstrates how nuanced and sensitive the examination of personalities from that era must remain to this day.

Gold Medals:

1958 Gold medal in the coxless four, European Championships in Poznań
1959 Gold medal in the eight, European Championships in Macon

1960 Gold medal in the eight, Olympic Games in Rome
1962 Gold medal in the eight, World Championships in Lucerne
1963 Gold medal in the eight, European Championships in Copenhagen
1963 Gold medal in the coxless four, European Championships in Copenhagen
1964 Gold medal in the eight, European Championships in Amsterdam
1965 Gold medal in the eight, European Championships in Duisburg
1966 Gold medal in the eight, World Championships in Bled
1967 Gold medal in the eight, European Championships in Vichy
1968 Gold medal in the eight, Olympic Games in Mexico City

HANS LENK – THE THINKING BOWMAN

Hans Lenk, born in Berlin in 1935 and died in Karlsruhe in 2024, was an extraordinary figure, both as an athlete and later as an internationally recognized philosopher. Raised in Ratzeburg, he developed a passion for rowing at an early age thanks to his teacher and later coach, Karl Adam. As a member of the Ratzeburg Rowing Club, Lenk won multiple German championships and two European championships, and he capped off his athletic career in 1960 with a gold medal in the legendary German eight at the Rome Olympic Games. After retiring from competitive rowing, he remained in the sport as a coach and led the eight to the world championship in 1966.

Next to his athletic career, Hans Lenk emerged as one of the most prominent German intellectuals of his generation. He earned his doctorate with a dissertation on the ethical issues surrounding the Olympic Games, and later completed his habilitation in philosophy and sociology. From 1969 until his retirement, he taught as a professor at the University of Karlsruhe (now KIT). Lenk published over 150 books and more than 3,000 scholarly articles and was particularly committed to ethical issues in sports. His "Achievement Philosophy" and his concept of "Methodological (Scheme-)Interpretationism" made him one of the most significant figures in applied philosophy in Germany. He remained active in sports and continued to publish books and articles well into his old age.

In the film THE ROME EIGHT, Hans Lenk also plays the role of the bowman. He is the first to cross the finish line in 1960. The character bears distinct autobiographical traits, as Lenk was heavily involved in the screenplay's development during his lifetime. The love story with "Ulla," his girlfriend and later wife, is loosely based on real events: Ulrike, as she was called in real life, left the GDR in 1953 after being denied admission to a chemistry program and, as in the film, worked as a pharmacist. For dramatic effect, her story was partly fictionalized for the character of Ulla. Lenk accepted this creative license, even though he himself had never lived in the GDR.

His relationship with Karl Adam was marked by great personal depth. Lenk regarded him as a surrogate father, since his biological father had died in a military hospital near Prague in 1946. The rivalry with his rowing teammate Manfred Rulffs depicted in the screenplay is fictional, but alludes to real tensions between rowing clubs of that time, particularly between Ratzeburg and Kiel.

Hans Lenk serves as an important dramatic figure in the film: He embodies the tension between thought and action, reflects on blind discipline, and opens our eyes to a humanistic vision of sports. His character raises the question of what it means to be human in a meritocracy that prioritizes success above all else. With Hans Lenk, a character takes the screen who extends far beyond the athletic

ensemble. A rower with philosophical depth who took the race just as seriously as the thoughts that followed it.

Lead actor Felix Kammerer on the historical context of THE ROME EIGHT:

"Of course, Germany in the 1960s was an incredibly young, new country, born out of utter catastrophe. At that time, you could sense a little bit of courage beginning to return, but there remained an overwhelming sense of shame, loss, and tragedy everywhere – in families, but also in the country itself. And then, to have those moments in sports – I think it was incredibly liberating for a country like that, because people realized there was still something to look to for guidance. In sports, pride is allowed – something that was otherwise frowned upon."

MANFRED "GAMMEL" RULFFS – THE POWERFUL STROKE ROWER

Manfred Rulffs, born in Kiel in 1935, is one of the defining figures of postwar German rowing. Following the early death of his father, the family moved to Plön. Rulffs was first introduced to rowing in school, by his physical education teacher Karl Adam. He eventually joined the newly founded Ratzeburg Rowing Club (RRC), which soon became the center of German elite rowing.

Rulffs was regarded as a versatile and exceptionally talented rower. Over the course of his active career, he won seven German championships in four different boat classes. He celebrated his greatest success as stroke rower of the German eight, which he led to a historic gold medal at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome. He became European champion twice and received the Silver Laurel Leaf – the highest honor in German sports – in 1958 and 1960 for his athletic achievements.

After the Olympic victory, Rulffs ended his active career and passed his first state examination for teaching in 1960. After several years in the teaching profession, he returned to the Ratzeburg Rowing Academy in 1965 as national coach, where he played a decisive role in shaping the development of German rowing for the next 16 years. In 1981, he ended his coaching career and returned once more to teaching before retiring in 1991. Manfred Rulffs passed away in 2007.

In the film's narrative, Rulffs is portrayed as an edgy, physically assertive counterpoint to the more intellectual Hans Lenk. The rivalry between the two characters, hinted at in the screenplay, is fictional; however, it reflects a dramatic tension fueled by their differing attitudes toward life, sports, and thought. Historically documented, however, is Rulffs' role as stroke in the "Gold Achter of Rome" – the man who sets the pace, maintains the stroke rate, and guides the boat with his physical presence.

WILLI PADGE – THE COXSWAIN

Willi Padge, born in 1943 in Mölln and died in 2023 in Stahle, was a prominent figure in German rowing. As a teenager, he joined the Ratzeburg Rowing Club and, under the guidance of Karl Adam, became one of the youngest Olympic champions in German sports history. At just 16 years old, he steered the legendary German eight to victory at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome – a historic triumph on Lake Albano over the Canadian team. Just one year earlier, he had won the eight event at the 1959 European Championships in Mâcon, setting a world record. The race went down in sports history as the "Miracle of Mâcon."

Willi Padge remained loyal to rowing even after his active career. He won numerous titles with the eight, including several German championships, and was voted "Team of the Year" multiple times along with his crew. For his achievements, he received the Silver Laurel Leaf in 1960, the highest sporting honor in the Federal Republic of Germany. Beyond sports, Padge was also committed to the common good. He pursued a military career and later served as a lieutenant colonel, including in Kosovo. Willi Padge passed away in 2023, shortly before his 80th birthday. He is remembered as an exceptional athlete and pioneer.

In the film's narrative, Willi Padge is introduced as a self-assured, cheeky, and fun-loving boy. In fact, he joined the Ratzeburg Rowing Club at the age of 14. In our story, Padge is not only the smallest on board, but also a counterpoint to Karl Adam's strictness.

THE REAL ROWERS IN THE FILM AND THEIR ROLES

Moritz Wolff

- German champion in various boat classes (eight times)
- European Junior Champion (U19) (twice)
- Silver medalist at the Junior World Championships (U19)
- World Championship runner-up (U23) (twice)
- Olympic qualifier
- 5th place at the Olympic Games

Oscar Krause

2022 German Junior Championships (U17) Bronze in the coxed quadruple sculls, Silver in the single sculls
2023 German Junior Championships (U19) Gold in the coxed quadruple sculls, bronze in the double sculls
2023 Junior World Championships in Paris: Gold in the coxed quadruple sculls
2024 German Junior Championships (U19) Gold in the quadruple sculls, silver in the double sculls
2024 Junior World Championships, St. Catharines: Gold in the quadruple sculls

Till Neumann

- German Championships: 2nd place, 4th place, 5th place
- German Sprint Championships: 1st place (twice)
- International Wedau Regatta: 1st place
- North German Championships: 1st place (twice)
- North German Indoor Championships: 2nd place (three times), 3rd place
- German Indoor Championships: 5th place
- State Championships: 1st place, 2nd place multiple times

Jakob Schmölzer

- Vienna State Champion (multiple times)
- Austrian National Champion
- Austrian National Runner-Up

2013 9th place in the Coupe de la Jeunesse in the heavyweight coxless four
2014 4th place at the European University Championships in the quadruple sculls

2017 Nominated for the World Championships in the lightweight quadruple sculls

Leon Kleinschmidt
2017 Participated in the A final in the single sculls at the German Youth Championships (2nd year in the B-Junior category)
2018 3rd place in the coxless pair at the German Youth Championships (1st year in the A-Juniors)
2019 Placed near the top of the rankings
prior to the German Youth Championships End of competitive rowing career

Nick Romeo Reimann on the real rowers among the actors:
"The professional rowers did an excellent job as actors. They always supported us, always gave us tips, and were incredibly kind and generous. I mean, these are people who rowed in the Olympics – they're world-class athletes."

IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

Oliver Masucci
as Karl Adam

Oliver Masucci is one of Germany's best-known actors and is firmly established in film, television, streaming platforms, and on the theater stage alike. Born in Stuttgart in 1968, he grew up in Bonn in a German-Italian family of restaurateurs – his mother is German, his father Italian. After graduating from high school, he completed his acting training at the Berlin University of the Arts.

Oliver Masucci became known to a wide audience in 2015 for his leading role as Adolf Hitler in the satire *Look Who's Back* (dir. David Wnendt) – a performance that earned him a nomination for the German Film Award. This was followed by memorable performances in feature films as *Never Look Away* (2018, dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck), which received two Oscar nominations; *Enfant Terrible* (2020, dir. Oskar Roehler), and *Chess Story* (2021, dir. Philipp Stölzl). For both films, he was awarded the Bavarian Film Prize and the German Film Prize. Younger moviegoers know him from *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (2019, dir. Caroline Link) and, not least, from the film adaptations of the *Woodwalkers* bestsellers (Part 1 – 2024, dir. Damian John Harper; Part 2 – 2026, dir. by Sven Unterwaldt Jr.).

Internationally, Masucci gained international attention in 2002 through the short film *The Red Jacket* by Florian Baxmeyer, which won an Oscar. He achieved worldwide fame through his role in the Netflix series *Dark* (2017–2020, dir. Baran bo Odar), in which he played a central character in the ensemble cast.

Oliver Masucci's other projects for TV and streaming include Season 3 of *The Girlfriend Experience* (2021), directed by Anja Marquardt and executive produced by Steven Soderbergh, and the film adaptation of the bestseller *The Swarm* (2023, dir. Barbara Eder, Philipp Stölzl, and Luke Watson). Most recently, he appeared in the miniseries *Herrhausen – The Banker and the Bomb* (2023–2024), as well as in the Israeli series *The German* (2025). Later this year, Oliver Masucci will appear in the BBC/CBS series *King and Conqueror* in the role of Baldwin of Flanders alongside Nicolai Coster-Waldau.

Oliver Masucci is a member of the German Film Academy and published his autobiography, *Träumertänzer: Ein Gastarbeitermärchen (Dreamer-Dancer: A Guest Worker's Fairy Tale)*, in 2023.

Lead actor Oliver Masucci on the 1960 rowing team:
"What's so moving about this story is that people who come from completely different parts of Germany and have very different historical backgrounds, come together to achieve a common goal and put everything else aside. Just to achieve that goal in that moment."

Felix Kammerer
as Hans Lenk

Felix Kammerer was born in Vienna in 1995 and grew up in a family of musicians. He gained his first stage experience with the Junges Ensemble Hörbiger before studying at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. While still a student, he appeared on stage at renowned Berlin theaters. He has been a member of the ensemble at the Burgtheater in Vienna since 2019. In 2022, he was awarded the Nestroy Theater Prize in the Best Young Actor category for his portrayal of Luke in the play *Moskitos* at the Akademietheater.

He made his international breakthrough in 2022 with his first film role as the lead actor in the film adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's world-famous novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022, dir. Edward Berger). For his impressive portrayal of the young soldier Paul Bäumer, he was awarded the German Film Award for Best Actor in 2023. That same year, he was named "Austrian of the Year" by Die Presse and ORF and was shortlisted for a BAFTA nomination.

Most recently, he starred alongside Jude Law, Daniel Brühl, and Ana de Armas in a leading role in Ron Howard's *Eden* (2024), as well as in Guillermo del Toro's remake of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Felix Kammerer is a member of the European Film Academy and the German Film Academy. He lives with his family in Vienna.

Svenja Jung
as Ulla Jahn

After her first roles in short films and television productions, Svenja Jung first drew attention on the big screen in 2016 with the lead role in *Fucking Berlin* (2016). That same year, she delivered a compelling performance in the literary adaptation *Center of My World* (2016), for which she was nominated for the Neues Deutsches Kino Promotion Prize and the New Faces Award. She received the Bavarian Film Award for her performance in *A Story About Love* (2019).

This was followed by memorable appearances in productions such as the widely acclaimed series *Deutschland 89* (2020). In the dance drama *Fly* (2021), she took on the lead role and received widespread acclaim for her performance. She also impressively demonstrated her versatility in the limited series *The Palace* (2022), the hit Netflix series *The Empress* (2022), and the Disney+ production *Sam – A Saxon* (2023). In addition, Svenja Jung is increasingly making her mark on the international stage. She

has appeared, among other projects, in the British mystery film *Baghead* (2023) and the HBO production *Spy/Master* (2023).

In 2025, she appeared in several outstanding projects, including *A Man Of His Class* (2025), which won the German Television Award for Best Television Movie; the darkly humorous tragicomedy *Dying for Beginners* (2025); and the emotional Netflix drama *Fall for Me* (2025). Her most recent work also includes the Netflix series *Crooks* (2024).

Leonard Kunz
as Manfred Rulffs

Leonard Kunz, born in 1992 in Mannheim and raised in Freinsheim, comes from a family of artists. His mother is an actress and his father a double bassist. After graduating from high school, he studied acting at the Berlin University of the Arts and was cast in the international feature film *A Cure for Wellness* (2016, dir. Gore Verbinski) while still a student.

For his leading role in the short film *Jenny*, Kunz was awarded the Max Ophüls Prize for Best New Actor in 2017. He made his feature film debut in 2018 in *The Most Beautiful Couple* (dir. Sven Taddicken), which premiered at TIFF and for gained him an award as Best Actor at the Achtung Berlin Film Festival. This was followed by roles in films and TV series, including *A Hidden Life* (2019, dir. Terrence Malick), Netflix series *Tribes of Europa* (2021), feature film *Luise* (2023), and series *Das Boot* (2018–2023, dir. Andreas Prochaska and Dennis Gansel). In 2024, he starred in the TV movie *A Man Of His Class*, for which he received the German Television Award for Best Actor.

In 2025, his biggest project to date hit theaters: *The Tank* (dir. Dennis Gansel), an Amazon Prime production for which he was nominated for a German Film Award.

Lead actor Leonard Kunz on teamwork:
"It's never just about one person's performance. In the end, it's about teamwork – that a team gets along well, no matter where everyone comes from. There's a line from Rulffs in the film:
'I'm not rowing for Germany, I'm rowing for you, I'm rowing for us!' That's his driving force, and I share it."

BEHIND THE CAMERA

Hannu Salonen
Director

Hannu Salonen moved from Finland to Germany in 1993 to study at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (DFFB). His first feature and DFFB graduation film, *Downhill City*, was awarded Best European Debut Film at the Angers Film Festival (France) in 2000. This was followed by numerous prime-time films for German television, including the historical thrillers *The Midwife* (1+2) starring Josefine Preuß and *Shades of Guilt* starring Moritz Bleibtreu; the *Shades of Guilt* episode *Volksfest* received the New York Festivals Award (Silver World Medal, Miniseries) in 2016.

With the ten-part Nordic series *Arctic Circle*, Salonen produced his first streaming production in Lapland. This was followed by *Oktoberfest: Beer & Blood* (ARD/Netflix), which won the 2021 German Television Award for Best Miniseries. His most recent works include high-budget event productions such as *I am Scrooge* (RTL+) starring Friedrich Mücke – nominated for the Magnolia Award at the Shanghai TV Festival – as well as the thriller miniseries *Turmschatten* (Paramount+/Sky) starring Heiner Lauterbach, which premiered at the 2024 Munich Film Festival.

Following *The Rome Eight*, Leonine Studios will release the quirky, dark-humored Alpine crime thriller *Jennerwein* in theaters on November 5, 2026. The Disney+ event series *Vienna Game* is also scheduled for a worldwide release in November 2026.

Domenik Pockberger
Screenplay

Domenik Pockberger, born in Austria in 1999, is a screenwriter with an international background. After studying film at Columbia College in Chicago and Loyola Marymount University, he worked in Los Angeles. During his studies, he began writing his own material and developed a knack for unusual narrative perspectives.

He made his feature film debut in 2016 as a co-writer on the screenplay for the 360° feature film Carrousel (dir. Gerda Leopold), which is loosely based on Arthur Schnitzler's La Ronde. That same year, the short film Eisenherz was produced based on his screenplay. Pockberger served as both writer and creative force behind the adventurous documentary Projekt Silva. He lives and works in Vienna.

Stephan Falk
Screenplay

Stephan Falk has been a screenwriter in German film and television for many years. He completed his studies in journalism, classical archaeology, and ancient history at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz with a master's thesis on the professional profile of screenwriters in Germany and has been working as a freelance writer since 1994.

Falk's distinctive style is evident in numerous successful formats, including crime and drama series such as *Tatort*, *Der Kriminalist*, and *Letzte Spur Berlin*. He has received numerous awards for his work – including the Adolf Grimme Prize and the German Television Crime Drama Award for *Tatort – Herzversagen*, the German Screenplay Award for *Sayonara Rüdesheim* (co-written with Anke Sevenich), and the ver.di Television Award for the screenplay of *Tatort – Kassensturz*. He has also received nominations for the German Television Prize (*14 Diaries of World War I* & *Tatort: Kassensturz*), among others.

Felix Cramer
Director of Photography

The feature film The Smile of the *Deep-Sea Fish* (2005; dir. Till Endemann) marked the beginning of Felix Cramer's career as a cinematographer for feature films. His body of work includes over 60 national and international film and television productions. He was honored with the 2003 Kodak Vision Award and with the 2021 Bavarian Television Award for the series *Oktoberfest: Beer & Blood* (2020, dir. Hannu Salonen), as well as nominated three times for the German Cinematography Award: 2022 (*Birth of a Champion: The Boris Becker Story*; dir. Hannu Salonen), 2010 (*13 Hours: Race against Time*) and 2014 (*Paradies 505. Ein Niederbayernkrimi*). *The Dark Side of the Moon* (2015), a film adaptation of Martin Suter's bestselling novel of the same name, was nominated for Best Cinematography at the 2016 Beijing International Film Festival.

Felix's most recent works include the hit British Disney+ series *Shardlake* (2024, dir. Justin Chadwick), the U.S. feature films Malicious (2024, dir. Michael Winnick) and *Blackwater Lane* (2024, dir. Jeff Celentano), as well as *Vienna Game* (2026, dir. Hannu Salonen), a lavishly produced six-part series about the Congress of Vienna, which will premiere worldwide on Disney+.

Katarzyna Sikora
Production Design

Katarzyna Sikora is a Polish production designer known for her precise visual style and versatility in international film and television productions. After studying film set design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, she began her career as an assistant set decorator and quickly established herself as an independent production designer.

Her early work includes the Polish feature films *Just Friendship* (2016) and *Serce nie sługa* (2018) by Filip Zylber, on which she served as art director and set designer. She gained international attention through her work on Agnieszka Holland's *Red Secrets* (2019). The film was honored at the Gdynia International Film Festival for its outstanding production design. In the realm of television series, Sikora served as production designer on the award-winning series *The King of Warsaw* (2020), based on the novel by Szczepan Twardoch. Other projects include the series *Westwall* (2021) as well as the feature films *Illusion* (2022) and *Strange Angels* (2024). In 2023, she collaborated with Jonathan Glazer on his multi-award-winning film *The Zone of Interest*. For her work on this film, she was nominated for a BAFTA Award and a Set Decorators Society of America (SDSA) Award.

Michaela Horáčková Hořejší, M.A.
Costume Design

Michaela Horáčková Hořejší is considered one of the best Czech costume and set designers of her generation. She completed her studies in scenography (under Prof. Ján Zavarský and Prof. Jana Preková) at the Faculty of Theater of the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno in 2003. She is also the creator of a number of artistic projects, including *Second Skin* (2004) and *Orlando – A Life in Reflections*, presented at the IMAGINA conference on multimedia art in Monte Carlo (2006).

Since 1998, she has worked as a costume designer on films including *Amundsen* (dir. Espen Sandberg), *Oktoberfest: Beer & Blood* (dir. Hannu Salonen), *Shadowplay* (dir. M. Marlind, B. Stein), *The White House on the Rhine* (dir. T. Schmidt), *Last Light* (dir. Dennie Gordon), *EXTRACTORS* (dir. R. Kasparovsky), and *Golden Swan*. She also provided costumes for TV Nova's in-house advertising campaigns (2006–2011), more than 150 theater productions in the Czech Republic, Austria, and Slovakia, and for numerous music videos and commercials.

Antonia Fenn
Editor

Antonia Fenn studied film editing at the Konrad Wolf Film University in Babelsberg and has been working for many years as an editor on feature films, documentaries, and high-quality television series. Her work combines narrative precision with a keen sense of rhythm and emotional intensity.

Her most influential works include, among others, the film *Small Change* (1999), which won a Student Academy Award and was nominated for an Oscar; the miniseries *Bible Code* and *The Sea Wolf* (2008), and the feature film *The Education* (2011).

In addition, there is the multi-award-winning feature-length documentary *Parchim International* (2015) and the international documentary epic *The World Beyond Silence* (2020). Other outstanding productions from recent years include *The Rome Eight* (2025; dir. Hannu Salonen). In the realm of television series, she was also responsible for editing highly acclaimed productions such as *The Second Wave* (2023).

Antonia Fenn has received multiple awards and nominations for her editing, including for the German Camera Award, the German Television Award, and the Femina Film Award. She co-directed the documentary *Der Sommerclub* with Manuel Fenn; both received the Grimme Prize for it in 2014.

Karim Sebastian Elias
Music

Karim Sebastian Elias is a multi-award-winning German film composer who has composed the music for over 100 feature films and television films, documentaries, and more than 400 episodes of TV

series. After studying at the Folkwang University of the Arts, he quickly established himself as a versatile composer for national and international productions.

He gained international attention with the score for *Of Fathers and Sons* (2018), which was nominated for an Oscar after winning the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. In 2025, *Cutting Through Rocks* (2025) also won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance and was nominated for an Oscar in 2026. His other notable film works include *Rhythm Is It!* (2004), *The Last Execution* (2021), and *Faruk* (2024), which won the FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlinale.

Elias also regularly works on successful TV series, including *Ku'damm 63*, *Rivals Forever*, and *The Second Wave* (2024), for which he developed the soundtrack using international recordings. Since 2013, he has been a professor of "Composition and Arrangement for Media" at the Konrad Wolf Film University Babelsberg and served on the board of the German Film Academy for 10 years.

Paula Stellar
Song for the Film

Paula Stellar is a 23-year-old indie-pop artist from Berlin who is gaining increasing attention in the German and international markets with her internationally influenced sound and clear, catchy melodies. With singles like *Room 109* (#81 on Airplay) and *Pretty Pretty Lies* (#46 on Airplay), she has established herself on the radio, while *Lucky Girl* gained international recognition with a spot on New Music Friday US. With *Lovesick* (2026), she is consistently continuing this path and underscoring her development into a distinctive pop voice on the German market.

In addition to her musical work, Paula Stellar is increasingly active in the film industry. She contributed the official song to the French feature film *C'est quoi l'amour?,* which was screened at the Breminale – an international open-air cultural festival in Bremen – among other venues, and her music was featured in the film. In *The Rome Eight* (2026), she appears in a scene as a singer performing her own song and provides the film's musical finale with "Girl my Age."

Listen to the closing song here
"Girl my Age" by Paula Stellar

Ninety-Minute Film

Since 2009, Ninety-Minute Film, under the direction of Ivo-Alexander Beck, has been developing and producing sophisticated fictional content for German broadcasters.

The Berlin-based independent production company is known for its high level of reliability, creative autonomy, and a distinctive creative voice. Their motto “Small but mighty” embodies the philosophy of developing excellent content within lean structures. They achieve this in collaboration with a network of highly qualified writers, directors, and filmmakers who regularly work together in varying configurations.

Their diverse portfolio includes, among others, the hit series *The Second Wave* (ZDF), the thriller series *Ein Fall für Dr. Abel* (Sat.1), the multi-award-winning drama *Für meine Tochter* (ZDF), and the socially relevant drama *Die Ungehorsame* (Sat.1), which won the 3sat Viewers’ Choice Award. Comedies such as *Alles auf Anfang*, *Call me Helen*, and the crime series *Hannah Mangold & Lucy Palm* – which was honored with the Bavarian Television Award, among other accolades – also demonstrate the company’s versatility – ranging from suspense and emotion to humor and social relevance.

With the feature film *The Rome Eight*, directed by Hannu Salonen, the company is expanding its portfolio beyond television and producing its first film for the big screen. The production marks an important step forward and underscores the company’s potential to create narratively powerful and visually compelling content in the cinema sector as well.