BETA CINEMA
PRESENTS

FILMFEST MÜNCHEN
Audience Award 2026

AGNES & AMIR

A FILM BY
HELENA HUFNAGEL

STARRING
KATHARINA THALBACH
BARDO BÖHLEFELD

SCREENPLAY
MALTE WELDING

A PRODUCTION OF
NORDPOLARIS

PRESSBOOK

WORLD SALES
Beta Cinema // beta@betacinema.com // Phone: +49 | 89 | 673469 – 828
www.betacinema.com

MAIN CAST & CREW

Cast

Agnes	Katharina Thalbach
Amir	Bardo Böhlefeld
Charlotte	Ulrike Kriener
Phillip	Noah Saavedra
Sören Sörensen	Ronald Zehrfeld
Dr. Kohler	Rainer Bock
Ghazaleh	Sara Fazilat

Crew

Directed by	Helena Hufnagel
Screenplay	Malte Welding
Based on a Screenplay by	Paul M. Feldmann
Producers	Fabian Halbig
	Florian Kamhuber
Director Of Photography	Aline László
Editor	Frank Müller
Production Design	Susanne Hopf,
	Debora Reischmann
Costume Design	Laura Fries
	Carolin Schreck
Make-Up Design	Emilia Grund
	Jan Kempkens-Odemski
Music By	Martin Kohlstedt
Casting	Franziska Aigner
Produced by	Nordpolaris

German distributor	X Verleih/Warner Bros. Germany
World Sales	Beta Cinema

TECHNICAL DATA

108 min, German, Screen Ratio: 2,39:1 cinemascope, Sound: 5.1

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Based on a true story: After escaping Iran and starting over in Berlin, Amir finds unexpected refuge with Agnes, a 101-year-old Berliner who's "too young" for a retirement home – and definitely too young for dying. When living alone becomes difficult, Amir moves in with her, and together they turn everyday obstacles into a defiant, joyous dance through life.

Inspired by a remarkable true story, this tender feel-good comedy celebrates an unlikely friendship. Set in the vibrant city of Berlin it stars acclaimed actress Katharina Thalbach (Officier des Arts et Lettres) in irresistible form and confirms Bardo Böhlefeld as an exciting new voice in German cinema.

LONG SYNOPSIS

In the heart of old Berlin, a park in the summer. From a window in her old apartment building—where she has lived for 63 years—Agnes (KATHARINA THALBACH) watches the comings and goings through binoculars. She focuses her attention on one park bench in particular: HER bench. The one where she used to sit all the time, back when it was still easier for her to leave her apartment. Today, that's a problem. Agnes is 101 years old. She still lives at home. Alone. And growing lonelier by the day. Because there's no one there but her—the old woman who wouldn't feel so old at all if her body didn't contradict her. She can still do almost everything—just not as quickly as she used to.

She still maintains the habits she's grown to love. In the bathroom in the morning, Agnes brushes her hair, then puts a jaunty barrette in it. Almost like a young girl. After that, she sits there. And waits. For something to happen. For the doorbell to ring. Meal delivery on wheels, for example. Already a highlight twice a day, at lunchtime and in the evening. The young man is very friendly. But he's gone again in a flash. Agnes regrets that. She'd love to exchange a few words with him. So Agnes has to watch TV again, preferably shows about royalty

Amir (BARDO BÖHLEFELD)—70 years younger than Agnes—came from Iran four months ago to attend a conference in Berlin and stayed, applying for asylum: as a gay man, his life is always in danger in his home country. If his sexual orientation becomes known, he faces execution. Together with his lawyer, Sörensen (RONALD ZEHRFELD), he submits the final documents to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. He is praised for his good German: Amir learned the language while studying sports medicine in Tehran. Now it's time to wait again. The bureaucratic wheels turn slowly. The lawyer advises Amir to look for a job in the meantime.

Easier said than done. Amir's situation worsens after he leaves the refugee shelter. But he no longer wants to have to listen to the derogatory remarks of his roommates, among whom word has spread that he is gay. And he certainly won't find a job there either. In Amir's situation, Berlin feels even bigger. He spends his first night in the subway. He

knows this can't go on forever. In the morning, exhausted, he lies down on a park bench—to rest for a moment, to sleep briefly.

He's being watched by Agnes, who, as always, is keeping an eye on her park bench from a distance. And she's so outraged by what she sees that she even makes the effort to leave her apartment and point out to the young man that this won't do: Feet up on the park bench? HER park bench? Unthinkable! A plaque proves it: "For Agnes—forever—Georg 1992" it reads. Amir immediately senses how important this matter is to the old woman and apologizes. He admits to her that he'd also like to have his own bench with a plaque like that. They strike up a conversation. Amir feels that Agnes reminds him of his grandmother in Iran, whom he loved very much. Before he sets off, he asks Agnes if she has any advice for life. "Have lots of luck and little bad luck," she says.

The two spend the upcoming, rainy night alone again—Amir first inside, then outside a small bar, where he watches clips on his cell phone of himself and his great love in Iran (Reza: BENJAMIN RADJAIPOUR), while Agnes, confused and distraught, stays in her apartment. When she is woken up by her family doctor, Dr. Kohler (RAINER BOCK), and two police officers, she doesn't realize that she had left her stove on overnight. It's pure luck that nothing happened. The doctor, who has known and liked Agnes for many years, explains to her that he has no choice but to issue a certificate of necessity for a nursing home: she simply can no longer live alone in her apartment. The risk is too great. Agnes categorically refuses. "It smells like death and diapers in the nursing home," she confides to her goldfish once she's alone again.

In her distress, she calls Charlotte (ULRIKE KRIENER), the last of her acquaintances who is still alive. The last time Agnes had reached out to her was ten years ago. The much younger Charlotte is worried about Agnes and suggests that she take in a roommate—a senior living arrangement, for example. "Room for rent in exchange for company!" At first, Agnes isn't thrilled with the idea: strangers in her bathroom? But well, why not—she might as well give it a try

It's pure coincidence that Amir stops to rest on Agnes's bench again and notices the line of people in front of the building's entrance, waiting to apply for the advertised room in the shared apartment. Agnes is horrified by the crowd of complete strangers. When Amir enters the apartment, she quickly decides that he should be her roommate. They quickly come to an agreement and start addressing each other informally. Agnes and Amir—the 101-year-old woman and Amir, the Iranian man 70 years her junior—are now roommates. And neither of them is so lonely anymore. Agnes shows Amir her domain—the room where he'll be staying. He notices a photo on the wall: black and white, decades old. It shows a young Agnes dancing with a man: "I almost became the Berlin champion back then," she says. As she leaves the room, Amir cheers inwardly: finally, some luck.

Life goes on. During a video call, a friend in Iran (Reza's sister: SARA FAZILAT) tells him about his partner's funeral. It breaks his heart. And yet the joy of finally being able to settle in Berlin outweighs the sadness. It takes a little while for the unfamiliar living arrangement to fall into place. It's a completely new situation for both of them. And yet it

works. It's bumpy at first, but then it gets better and better. Amir finds a job as a bike delivery person for a delivery service; in the evenings, he cooks for Agnes. It tastes unusual, Agnes thinks, but still better than the bland meals-on-wheels. It's edible. "Can't complain." She cancels the meals-on-wheels service. And she literally blossoms. Their living arrangement slowly turns into friendship.

With Amir in the apartment, Agnes even dares to dream again: What if she became the oldest winner of a dance competition? The current record is held by a 97-year-old. Amir supports Agnes; they dance a tango. Outside, she rides her electric mobility scooter with Amir by her side to the dance café: The competition takes place in two months. Together they explore the city, visiting Café Kranzler, where Agnes used to go with her husband—even though it's changed a lot. What used to be a "Stulle" is now a "sandwich." At a gym, Agnes wants to get back in shape. Her personal trainer is Philip (NOAH SAAVEDRA), and you can tell right away that there's chemistry between him and Amir. Later, they drive to the Wannsee, and Agnes explains to Amir that she's long since realized he's gay—otherwise, he would have flirted with her! Amir confesses to her that he's worried the authorities might not believe him and reject his asylum application, especially since he's already had to appeal once before.

Meanwhile, Amir and Philip do indeed end up together—partly because Agnes gives them a little nudge. Agnes is secretly delighted. The two are also making progress in their dance lessons. While visiting the grave of her second husband, Georg, she tells Amir about her life, and also that all her friends have long since passed away. "My grandma always said," Amir replies, "that you're not really dead as long as people are still telling stories about you."

Agnes and Amir want to throw a party with the other residents of their apartment building, just to get to know each other. The big surprise is that it's Agnes's 102nd birthday. To great fanfare, they announce that they'll be competing in the dance competition. After the guests have left, Amir shows his roommate an old film of her dancing with her first husband, Ferdinand—he'd discovered the old film reel in the bookcase and had it digitized with Philip's help. Agnes is overjoyed. The next morning, however, she isn't feeling well, and Amir isn't there—he spent the night at Philip's. She collapses and has to be taken to the hospital. Suddenly, everything hangs in the balance: the future of the shared apartment, the dance competition, her health… And the decision on whether Amir's asylum application will be granted is also drawing ever closer.

THE DIRECTOR

Helena Hufnagel

Helena Hufnagel studied at the HFF Munich. Her directorial debut, the award-winning documentary *Erntefaktor Null*, screened at over 50 international festivals worldwide, including as the opening film of the DOK.Fest Munich Forum in 2012. It was also nominated for the 2012 German Short Film Award. In 2014, she adapted Stephen King's romantic short story WILLA for the screen. The short film was screened at over 45 international festivals, including the "Oscar-qualifying" 2016 Palm Springs Film Festival. In 2017, she made her feature film debut with *Pretty Far From Ok*. For this, she was awarded the

VGF Emerging Producer Award at the Bavarian Film Awards and received additional awards for her directing. Her TATORT episode "Die harte Kern" (Detectives: Nora Tschirner & Christian Ulmen) aired in 2019 to outstanding ratings. Her second feature film, *Commitment Phobia* (produced by Warner Bros. & Pantaleon Films), celebrated its world premiere in 2021 as part of the "Neues Deutsches Kino" section at the Munich Film Festival and was among the 12 most successful German theatrical releases of 2021.

Most recently, she achieved her biggest success to date with *Silver And The Book Of Dreams* (produced by Constantin Film for Amazon Prime): The international film premiered at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, was nominated for the 2024 German Television Award and became one of the most successful German releases on Amazon Prime Video.

Selected Filmography:

2026 AGNES & AMIR

2023 SILVER AND THE BOOK OF DREAMS

2021 COMMITMENT PHOBIA

2017 PRETTY FAR FROM OKAY

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

by Helena Hufnagel

When does a stranger actually become one of your favorite people?

This question has been on my mind ever since I watched the documentary about Agnes and Amir with my grandmother a few years ago. She was 96, sitting next to me on the sofa, and said quietly, "I'd never dare to do something like that." At that moment, I knew I wanted to make this film. And while we were working on the story, something happened that I never would have expected: My grandma began to live out the very story we were telling. First, a Polish caregiver moved in with her. Later, my grandmother had to move into a nursing home, where she became friends with a twenty-year-old nurse. The two became very close friends. For me, that was the most beautiful proof that Agnes and Amir are no exception, because this openness exists in far more people than we realize.

"Favorite People—The Extraordinary Friendship of Agnes & Amir" tells the story of two people who are lonely in very different ways. Agnes is lonely because so many people she loved are no longer here. Amir is lonely because he had to leave everything he knew behind. To me, loneliness is one of the quietest crises of our time—everywhere and yet barely visible. That's why I wanted to tell our story in the summer of all times. We often associate loneliness with rain, gray days, and cold winters; I was interested in the opposite. What does loneliness feel like when the sun is shining? When people are laughing outside, eating ice cream together, or sitting together late into the night? It's precisely then that the feeling of not belonging can be especially painful. The warm light therefore creates a deliberate contrast to the characters' inner worlds. At the same time, I wanted the camera to get closer and closer to the moment when two lonely people slowly become close friends—to their glances, their shared laughter, their little arguments, and all the unassuming gestures in which friendship blossoms.

I was aware of the social climate in which this film was being made. People often talk about refugees as if they were a problem. And about older people, as if they were a burden. When a 101-year-old woman from Berlin and a young gay Iranian man become the most important people in each other's lives, that in itself is a statement in today's world. Perhaps it's my personal, quiet antidote to a time when we're drifting further and further apart from one another. Agnes and Amir would never have met through any algorithm in the world. No app would have matched them. Perhaps that's exactly why friendship interests me so much: it can't be calculated, because it always remains a free choice. No one has to be friends. Agnes and Amir find each other only because life is sometimes wiser than our filters.

We drew inspiration from true friendship for the film, but we invented our own fictional story. Over several years, we developed characters, rewrote scenes, discarded dialogue, and reassembled the film time and again. This gave rise to a way of working in which, for me, writing and directing were never separate. For the production, it was important to me

that this openness be reflected on set as well. The screenplay was our foundation, but I wanted to trust the moments that emerge spontaneously between the actors. That's why I improvised many scenes and reimagined situations right up until shortly before—or even during—shooting.

In Katharina Thalbach and Bardo Böhlefeld, we found two actors who gave this film far more than just their roles—they are the heart of the film. Katharina possesses this wonderful blend of sharpness and warmth. She manages to make Agnes at once headstrong, funny, and deeply moving, without ever losing her dignity. It is precisely this uncompromising dedication to the character that impresses me most about her. Bardo, on the other hand, exudes a rare calm. What impresses me most about him is this: even in the quietest moments, he continues to tell the story. You sense Amir's vulnerability, but never resignation. Although he has lost everything, he carries a quiet hope within him that permeates the entire film. Both had the courage to immerse themselves in the process, to rediscover scenes time and again, and to allow themselves to be vulnerable. For me, this gave rise to something that cannot be written: the feeling of watching two people truly encounter one another.

Together with our makeup artists Emilia Grund and Jan Kempkens-Odemski, we searched for Agnes for a long time. I was very afraid that the makeup would be visible instead of the character. During a makeup test, Katharina Thalbach's own hair peeked out from under the light-colored wig. She took a razor and shaved her head bald. At first, silence reigned in the room. Not because something had gone wrong, but because no one had expected her to actually do that. That's when I knew: There's no turning back now. This film is truly coming to life

When I asked my grandmother why she had lived to be so old, she always replied quite simply: "You must never stop taking an interest in the world." Perhaps strangers become our favorite people precisely when we have the courage to truly connect with one another.

AMIR FARAHANI

Statement

In my opinion, “Agnes and Amir” addresses themes that have long been the subject of intense political debate and are of particular importance to our society: refugees and integration, caregiving, the housing shortage, and loneliness in old age.

The film shows us how two people with different backgrounds, different experiences, and different values—and who are at very different stages of life—can enrich each other’s lives and support one another. In doing so, it tells a different story than those voices that seek to pit people against one another and profit from social division. “Agnes & Amir” makes it clear that our differences do not have to be a weakness, but can become a shared strength. For I firmly believe that when people approach one another with openness, take responsibility for one another, and stand together, they can even overcome great difficulties as a team. And so, through kindness, solidarity, and genuine humanity, a stranger can sometimes even become one of your favorite people.”

When I saw “Agnes & Amir” for the first time in the theater, I was deeply moved. Every scene brought back memories of my time with Agnes—of our friendship, our daily lives, our conversations, and all the special moments we were able to share. I laughed, I cried, and sometimes both at the same time. Although I experienced our story firsthand, seeing it on the big screen was something completely different. I’m incredibly proud of this film and of the fact that the story of Agnes and me lives on in this way. If the film touches people and perhaps even inspires them to treat one another with a little more openness, humanity, and care, then that means a great deal to me.

About Amir Farahani

Amir Farahani was born in Iran, where he studied sports science (B.Sc.) and sports pathology (M.Sc.) before coming to Germany in 2020 to train as a certified nursing professional. Both his own experience of living with Agnes and his daily work with older adults showed him just how much of a burden loneliness can become in old age—and how much joy in life arises when generations support one another. These experiences combined to form his vision for the “Generations House”: Housing projects where people of different generations live together under one roof, support one another, and in doing so both prevent loneliness in old age and create affordable housing. More information about the project is available at amirundagnes.de.

Amir Farahani identifies as pansexual and lives and works in Berlin.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Beginning

In December 2021, ZDF's afternoon television program aired a short segment about 101-year-old Agnes Jeschke from Berlin and Amir Farahani, who is 73 years her junior and who, because of his homosexuality and had to live in constant fear for his life in his homeland of Iran, which is why he had fled to Germany. While searching for a place to call home, Amir came across Agnes, who was looking for company in her apartment to avoid being sent to a nursing home. An acquaintance had placed an ad: "We offer free housing in exchange for companionship." That was the beginning of an extraordinary shared living arrangement and a friendship no less extraordinary, which lasted until Agnes's death last year at the age of 103.

Among those who saw the segment when it aired on television was the young film producer Fabian Halbig, who, together with Florian Kamhuber, is one of the managing partners of their production company NORDPOLARIS (Munich). "I was sitting in front of the TV with my wife—I think I was wearing sweatpants—between Christmas and New Year's, on an early afternoon after Christmas, when you're really just supposed to unwind," he recalls. "That's exactly when I saw that segment and fell head over heels in love with it." Halbig immediately wrote to his business partner, Florian Kamhuber. "I was blown away; I knew right away that at the heart of this true story lay great material for a film—about friendship, about sticking together, about overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and about generations. Simply a story that cinema needs. "I wanted to meet the two of them right away," says the producer.

Just a few weeks later, he managed to get in touch with Agnes and Amir through a mutual friend. He met them for the first time during the 2022 Berlinale: "I spent an afternoon with them in Berlin-Mariendorf. And suddenly I was able to experience for myself what had moved me so much while watching TV: that natural rapport between the two of them. There was nothing contrived or sentimental about it. They just really liked each other."

Initially, Paul Feldmann was brought on board to write the first draft of the screenplay, while at the same time initial discussions were held regarding the film's financing. At that point, just over two months had passed since Halbig had seen the ZDF television feature about Agnes and Amir. "There was a good vibe around this project from the very beginning; things got off to a pretty quick start overall," the producer confirms. "And of course, we were also a bit lucky that we got started so quickly and had established contact." Because in May 2022, a half-hour documentary titled "Agnes and Amir—Living with a 101-Year-Old" aired on Arte, bringing the unusual living arrangement to the attention of audiences beyond Germany's borders.

Direction and Development

Director Helena Hufnagel joined the project as early as 2022 and was involved in the further development of the material from the very beginning. “For me, Helena was the greatest constant in this film,” says Fabian Halbig. “I always wanted to make the film with her; I never offered the project to any other director—only to her. Looking back—even though nearly four years passed between my first email to her and the film’s completion—I know all the more that it was the right decision.” Halbig and Hufnagel have known each other since their time at film school (HFF Munich).

When Helena Hufnagel heard about the project, she was in the middle of filming the adaptation of the young-adult bestseller “Silver and the Book of Dreams” for Prime Video.

After filming wrapped, Helena watched the documentary about Agnes and Amir together with her grandmother, who was 96 at the time. Her grandmother’s reaction became a key insight for the film. “My grandmother said right away, ‘I’d never dare to do something like that.’ And suddenly, I wasn’t just interested in how extraordinary this friendship was. I found the question even more fascinating: What would have to happen for us to let someone into our lives whom we would otherwise never normally meet or get involved with? I wanted to tell the story of an extraordinary encounter—and how it could actually happen to any of us.”

She deliberately chose not to meet Agnes in person. “I actually thought about it for a long time. And at some point, I had the feeling: better not. I was worried that I’d feel too obligated to the real Agnes afterward. But we didn’t want to make a biopic. For the film, Agnes had to be allowed to become ‘our’ Agnes at some point,” says Helena Hufnagel. She continues: “We were always inspired by the essence of this real friendship, but for me, Agnes and Amir are ultimately fictional characters in the film. That’s why, at some point, we had to take the liberty of telling our own story.”

That’s how, for example, the dance competition came about—the one Agnes is determined to enter together with Amir and which plays a central role in the film. “Even though the two of them did dance together in real life,” Fabian Halbig smiles, “it was just in their apartment.” “Sometimes you invent something to get closer to an emotional truth,” says Hufnagel. “The dance competition didn’t happen exactly like that. But the feeling behind it—that two people not only help each other but also inspire each other to do something they might never have dared to do alone—was absolutely true for me.” Halbig adds with a smile: “And the world record attempt—well, if it were to take place just like in the movie—it would be, too!”

Over the course of the following year, Halbig, Hufnagel, and screenwriter Malte Welding worked intensively together to further develop the story. “When Fabian Halbig told me he wanted to make a movie out of the story of Agnes and Amir, I agreed before he had even finished speaking,” the author says, describing his enthusiasm for the project. “From then on, the collaboration with everyone involved was unusually close and very intense.”

“With Malte, we gained a writer whose keen eye for the characters enriched the material with new perspectives,” says Hufnagel. One of the most important decisions was the film’s tone. “I especially like humor when it arises from a sense of melancholy. When you laugh and perhaps only realize a moment later that there’s actually something sad underlying it.”

Another thought was important to Hufnagel: “What a gift it is to have a friendship with someone who is so much older or younger than yourself? I was interested in what two people can give each other, especially when 70 years of life experience separate them. At the same time, for me, *Agnes & Amir* is also a film about loneliness: Agnes and Amir are both socially isolated in very different ways. Neither of them needs the other to be saved. But through their friendship, both of their lives become richer.”

At the same time, the team held in-depth discussions with Amir Farahani, who continued to provide supportive guidance on the project’s development even after Agnes’s death in March 2024 (one year before filming began). Despite all the fictional liberties taken, the real friendship between the two always remained a key point of reference. Fabian Halbig: “Capturing that very unusual ‘spirit’ between Agnes and Amir on an emotional level was always our driving force. It had to feel genuine.”

The Cast

This made it all the more important to find the right lead actors. “Of course, Katharina Thalbach had been on our minds from day one—but she was actually too young!” At first, together with casting director Franziska Aigner, they cast a large number of actresses over 80 in German-speaking countries, as Fabian Halbig explains: “We wanted to get as close as possible to 100-year-old Agnes. That wasn’t always easy, because you could tell that the topic of ‘age’—and the idea of what one would be like at 100—was very close to everyone’s heart.” “When we sent the script to Katharina Thalbach, she got back to us the very next day and said, ‘I’d like to play this role. And I’d be happy to come in for an audition.’ She had already heard about the original story. We then cast her alongside the Amirs who were still in the running at the time.”

Even during the casting, that special chemistry between the two lead actors was palpable. For Helena Hufnagel, one question was particularly crucial: “Katharina and Bardo are both great actors—no one really needs to figure that out in a casting. But can these two people fall in love with each other? Not in a romantic sense—but as friends?” And then, during the casting, there really was that moment—the kind you can’t fabricate or plan. “I remember that at some point I stopped wondering whether the two of them would work together. I just wanted to keep watching them. That’s when I had the feeling for the first time: Agnes and Amir are sitting right in front of me.” “You just love Kathi and Bardo from the very first moment you see them acting together,” Halbig confirms. Looking back, he finds it particularly fascinating “that the real Amir had already identified Bardo as ‘the one’ right from the start, when I showed him the very first e-castings—long before we’d finally cast him.”

For the director, the casting marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of the material. She worked intensively on the characters together with the actors. Regarding Bardo Böhlefeld, Helena Hufnagel notes: “Amir was originally conceived as younger in the script. And then Bardo came to the audition, and I thought pretty quickly: Actually, this is much more interesting. A man in his early thirties who’s long since found his footing in life, who knows who he is, and yet has no one with whom he truly feels at home.” Katharina Thalbach also changed Hufnagel’s perspective on her character. “With Agnes, at some point it became important to me that we not constantly play up her age. She’s 101, but she doesn’t get up in the morning and think: ‘I’m a very old woman.’ Katharina has incredible energy and directness, and suddenly Agnes could be even more sassy, contradictory, and even more unreasonable than we’d originally imagined.”

This openness continued during filming as well. “Katharina and Bardo brought so much to the table, and I love it when you can react on set to whatever suddenly emerges.” That’s also how the film’s current opening scene came about—only during filming. Originally, Agnes wasn’t supposed to look out the window and spot Amir on a bench until much later in the film. Hufnagel adds: “While filming, I suddenly thought: Actually, I’d like to get to know Agnes exactly like this before she meets Amir. So we quickly tried out a scene where she looks out the window and comments on the people sitting on the bench below. I immediately got that ‘movie opening’ feeling. Often, it was the little things that we just ran with. A lice comb that Agnes places next to Amir suddenly sparked a phone call on set, in which his Iranian girlfriend asks, completely dumbfounded, ‘You have lice in Germany?’ I liked how the perspective suddenly shifts completely in that brief moment.”

Regarding the casting of Amir’s role, Fabian Halbig adds: “Bardo has an Iranian mother and a German father. At first, that wasn’t a fundamental deciding factor for us. In the end, the role had to go to the person who was simply the best actor for the part. Bardo brings exactly that open-hearted quality that makes you like him immediately when you see him. Still, we didn’t want to do anything ‘wrong,’ and it was always about engaging with Iran—even beyond the real Amir—out of respect for the culture, the people, and also Amir’s history as a refugee. We didn’t want to ignore that reality. The fact that history is, in some ways, even catching up with us makes us reflect on it even now.”

Makeup artists Emilia Grund and Jan Kempkens-Odemski played a special role in the transformation into Agnes. “If the makeup had just been ‘okay,’ the whole movie wouldn’t have worked,” explains the director. “The makeup was never supposed to become the main attraction. If, after ten minutes, you’re still thinking about how Katharina Thalbach lived to be 101 years old, then we would have done something wrong. I was really scared of that. At some point, you should only see Agnes.” That’s why numerous makeup tests were done early on: “What Emilia and Jan created is truly a work of art—and a lot of work. Every day, new, handcrafted prosthetics were used. Katharina had to sit in the makeup chair for almost three hours every day before we could start the first rehearsal.” From a production standpoint, that wasn’t exactly easy: “Kathi isn’t exactly the most patient person I know,” Halbig laughs, “and she asked me right away if

it couldn’t be done much faster. We always said: No, this has to turn out really well. Eventually, it became almost like a ritual.” Thalbach even had her head shaved bald for the role so that the hair and prosthetics could be applied optimally.

Together with cinematographer Aline László, Helena developed the visual design of the makeup. “Aline and I tested very carefully which shots, which lighting, and which close-ups the mask could handle. We never wanted to obscure or hide Katharina with the camera—on the contrary: we wanted to be able to get as close to her as we would to any other character.”

Hufnagel finally realized that the transformation had worked in a very unexpected way on one of the first days of shooting. During a set change, she was rehearsing with Katharina Thalbach on the street when an elderly gentleman with a walker walked by. “He must have been in his mid-to-late eighties” Kathi winked as he passed by, and she didn’t react at all. I think she’d forgotten for a moment what she looked like right then. Then he slowly pushed his walker past her and just said, ‘Come on, come on!’ I had to laugh so hard and said to Kathi, ‘Hey, I think he just tried to flirt with you.’ That’s when I knew: Okay, the makeup is working. By the way, the ‘Come on, come on!’ made it into the movie afterward.”

The same attention to detail went into casting the other roles: “Ulrike Kriener brings this great mix of dry humor, clarity, and warmth to Charlotte. But above all, I absolutely loved the dynamic between her and Katharina. The two of them improvised a lot together. That created something very lively between them: You can sense the old hurt, but also the long shared history that binds them together, whether they want to or not. And their growing closeness happens almost in passing, without any big talk or sentimentality,” says Helena Hufnagel.

Noah Saavedra was cast as Philip, Amir’s love interest. “Philip wasn’t meant to be just the romantic counterpart, but to bring out a different side of Amir—a lighter, more flirtatious, and perhaps even a bit more insecure side. That lightness was immediately there between Noah and Bardo.”

Ronald Zehrfeld was offered the role of Amir’s lawyer, Sören Sörensen. “With Sören, it was important that you immediately get the feeling: He knows what he’s doing. Ronald brings that competence and authority naturally, and we were incredibly happy when he accepted the role.” It was exactly the same with the other cast members, Halbig explains: “We’re truly honored that such great actors and actresses as Jannik Schömann, Sara Fazilat, Rainer Bock, Benjamin Radjaipour—and many more—were on board even for smaller roles. Everyone was eager to be part of this film, and the audience has a lot to discover.” And he points out another treat: “If you look very closely, you’ll even spot the Thalbach family spanning all generations.”

The Production

When scouting locations, it was, of course, important to find the right spots in Berlin. “I’m not from Berlin, after all, so I probably have a very specific perspective on the city myself,” says Helena Hufnagel. “To me, Agnes embodied that old Berlin, that Ku’damm glamour. That’s why we see her at the Kranzler Eck, at the Wannsee, or at the opera. I saw Amir much more in Kreuzberg. At first, I just wanted it to be clear that the two of them actually live in completely different Berlins. And as the film progresses, at some point it doesn’t matter at all.”

Agnes’s apartment, as seen from the outside, is located near Viktoria-Luise-Park in Berlin-Schöneberg. For the interior shots, the production team searched for a long time to find a suitable location. A studio felt too artificial. It’s somewhat ironic that the location where most of the filming took place wasn’t actually in Berlin at all: In Munich’s Lehel district, the filmmakers found a house that was completely vacant at the time and seemed ideal for the interior shots. But the property management initially flatly refused to allow filming there due to upcoming renovation work. “When I saw the house, I immediately thought: Please, let’s shoot here. That’s exactly how I pictured Agnes’s apartment. It was truly my dream setting,” says Helena Hufnagel. “I kept trying, and every time I got turned down,” recalls Fabian Halbig. “We’d already started looking for an alternative, but I kept calling on the sly and didn’t give up. And sure enough: on the very last possible day, the woman who had been turning me down for weeks suddenly told me that she might be able to make it work after all. To this day, I don’t know why… just a lot of luck, a little bad luck,” he smiles. Over the next few weeks, set designer Debora Reischmann lovingly furnished and decorated the apartment with meticulous attention to detail.

Prior to that, the production had already wrapped up the Berlin portion of the shoot. “We really had endless luck with the weather,” reports Fabian Halbig. “We shot in June 2025 and had these three perfect summer weeks. That was a huge gift, because there really would have been hardly any fallback options—maybe two or three days of leeway, but then we would have had to take whatever came our way. We always wanted to create a rather positive, summery atmosphere.”

For Helena, however, the summer warmth wasn’t just a matter of the weather. “I wanted us to shoot this film with a lot of warmth—with plenty of laughter on set, with everyone feeling secure enough to try new things, and with us not forgetting, despite all the time pressure, what story we’re actually telling. Maybe I’m a little superstitious about this, but I believe a film retains something of how we treated each other while making it.”

The Theatrical Release

Looking back at the finished film, Fabian Halbig now says: *Agnes & Amir* is a radically positive film. So positive and life-affirming that we sometimes worried the film might end up being too fluffy. But whenever that happened—and that was a balancing act right up until the very end of the editing process—we trusted our gut. In our film, we take the characters seriously; we take the situation they’re in seriously; and we explore the

various themes and conflicts. But the perspective is positive. And I think that's exactly what we need in this day and age—a film that offers hope."

For Helena Hufnagel, this also reflects a very contemporary longing: "Agnes and Amir would never have met through any algorithm in the world. No app would have matched them, no statistics would have brought them together. And perhaps that's why *Agnes & Amir* is my personal, quiet antidote to a time when we're increasingly retreating into our own worlds. The remarkable thing about their friendship isn't that it works despite their differences, but perhaps precisely because of them. I hope the film inspires people to step outside their own bubble and be curious about people they might otherwise never have met. Because sometimes it's precisely someone we weren't looking for who makes our world bigger."

Halbig adds: "Toward the very end of her life, Agnes told Amir that the last three years had been among the best of her life. If you can say that at 102 or 103 years old, then that's truly the greatest gift! Curiosity is a daily choice. In my view, Agnes exemplified that. And to find a friend for life at that age, and to experience something new: that positivity was actually the guiding principle of the entire production." And that seems to have rubbed off: "Amir himself loves this film. When we showed him the film for the first time, he was among the loudest in the audience, both laughing and crying. That really moved me and, after more than four years of work, was a true 'full circle' moment."

For the upcoming theatrical release, the filmmakers hope that "precisely this feeling—that friendship seems to know no bounds and can happen to any of us in real life at any time—will resonate with the audience. And that we'll all walk out of the theater with at least one percent more confidence."

THE CAST

KATHARINA THALBACH

Is Agnes

Since the 2000s, she has remained one of the most distinctive figures in German cinema. Her successes include films such as *Sun Alley* and NVA (both directed by Leander Haußmann), *Head Full of Honey* (2014, directed by Til Schweiger), and *I'm Off Then* (2015, directed by Julia von Heinz).

She has also received numerous accolades for later works such as *I've Never Been to New York* (2019, directed by Philipp Stölzl) and *The School of Magical Animals* (2021).

In addition to her work as an actress, Katharina Thalbach has also enjoyed success as a director. Since the late 1980s, she has directed productions at various theaters and opera houses, including Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and, at the Comédie-Française in Paris, Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.

For her outstanding artistic achievements, she has been awarded the Order of Merit of the State of Berlin and the Federal Cross of Merit, honoring her extraordinary contribution to German culture and the arts, as well as one of France's highest cultural distinctions, the Order of Arts and Letters (Officier des Arts et des Lettres).

Even today, she remains a defining figure in film, television, and theater. Her recent appearances, including her final production of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, in which she herself portrays Hercule Poirot, as well as the RTL series Miss Merkel (2023) and other projects, demonstrate that her artistic creativity remains undiminished.

Her most recent works include Robert Thalheim's *Peace Missionaries 2* (and, as narrator, the documentary *Insects - Heroes in Hiding*

Selected Filmography:

2026 AGNES & AMIR

2025 SCHOOL OF MAGICAL ANIMALS 4

2019 I'VE NEVER BEEN TO NEW YORK

1999 SUN ALLEY

1982 SOPHIE'S CHOICE

1979 THE TIN DRUM

BARDO BÖHLEFELD

Is Amir

He also appears regularly on screen. His filmography includes the graduation film *Der Schrei* (2018) by Bünyamin Musullu and Pola Beck's *All Russians Love Birch Trees* (2022), for which he was nominated for Best Young Actor at the Förderpreis Neues Deutsches Kino.

On television, he has appeared in, among other projects, the Grimme Prize-winning series *Angemessen Angry* (RTL+) by Elsa van Damke and *Das Vergessen* (ARD/ORF) by Daniel Geronimo Prochaska and Johanna Moder.

He recently appeared in front of the camera for the filming of Caren Wuhrer's debut feature film *Großmutter* and Adolfo Kolmerer's Nele Neuhaus crime series *Monster* (Disney+).

Selected Filmography:

2026 AGNES & AMIR

2022 ALL RUSSIANS LOVE BIRCH TREES

2015 JESUS CRIES

THE CREW

SCREENPLAY

by Malte Welding

Malte Welding worked as a novelist, essayist, and columnist after completing his law studies. In 2015, he wrote his first screenplay, *Text for You* (directed by Karoline Herfurth).

His recent feature film credits include *A Million Minutes* (2024, directed by Christopher Doll; screenplay co-written with Monika Fässler and Tim Hebborn) and *It's Just A Phase, Honey* (2021; screenplay co-written with director Florian Gallenberger).

For Netflix, he co-wrote *The Heartbreak Agency* (2024) together with Antonia Rothe-Liermann.

STATEMENT BY MALTE WELDING

Screenplay

I've been making up stories since I was ten years old, and I've been making up stories for a living for 18 years—but I could never have come up with this story: A 101-year-old woman takes in a young man who had to flee Iran—and in the end, they become true friends.

When Fabian Halbig told me he wanted to make a film based on the story of Agnes and Amir, I agreed before he had even finished speaking. The next day—I checked this specifically—I wrote down this sentence: "You only have to meet one person, and your whole life changes"—the archetypal formula of love. That was the film. I knew immediately how I wanted to structure the screenplay. All the pressure was to come from the outside; it was important to me that the two of them not artificially fall out at the end of the second act, but rather that the danger—just as in the real story—lie in the threat of deportation. From then on, the collaboration with everyone involved was unusually close and very intense.

It was important to all of us to tell this story on a grand scale, for the cinema, because we wanted as many people as possible to hear this story. That's why we didn't make a social drama, but rather a love story—a funny, touching story that can be so political precisely because it deals with politics only very marginally.

FABIAN HALBIG

production and idea

During their time at film school, the company produced more than 20 fiction and documentary short and feature films that screened at numerous international festivals and received commercial releases. These include the tragicomedy *Dinky Sinky*, the 90-minute one-shot thriller *Limbo* (directed by Tim Dünschede), for which they received Germany's most highly endowed emerging producer award (VGF Prize), and the documentary *Sorry Comrade* (*Sorry Genosse*), which premiered at the Berlinale 2022.

Fabian Halbig subsequently worked at Koryphäen Film in both production and distribution, including on *It's for Your Own Good* (*Es ist zu deinem Besten*) and *The Most Beautiful Couple* (*Das schönste Paar*). He simultaneously expanded NORDPOLARIS into a pop-up film distributor focusing on alternative content. Projects have included the music documentary *Forever Young* (*Immer noch jung*), numerous live cinema broadcasts of the Salzburg Festival, and the nationwide cinema premiere event of LOL: Last One Laughing in September 2021.

Since autumn 2021, the two producers have once again jointly run NORDPOLARIS under the umbrella of Beta Film. Their recent projects include the ZDF romantic drama *Christmas on Mount Olympus* (*Weihnachten im Olymp*), the feature films *Agnes & Amir* and *Girls in Uniform* (*Mädchen in Uniform*), as well as the RTL+ comedy series *Highter & Wolkig*.

STATEMENT MUSIC

by Martin Kohlstedt

When I first saw it, the story of Agnes and Amir struck me as a fairy tale: warm, improbable, and yet deeply true. The fact that it deals with deeper conflicts and is built on very serious themes is what makes the film—and the (true) story behind it—so special.

While working on the sound, a musical space quickly took shape. For the film's realm of longing lies close to what I, too, seek in my own music: connections, freedom, and hope in the world between fantasy and reality. It was precisely this deeply human friction that became the driving force behind the composition, and it was a wonderful challenge to explore the themes in detail with Helena and Fabian, across the many moons.

The music is meant to create spaces of connection—in the special friendship, the almost romantic tension between Agnes and Amir, and with all viewers—without glossing over the harshness of their lived reality. Beauty does not arise from unbroken harmony, but from its contrasts: from melancholy and hope, from the empty spaces, from the interplay of light and shadow.

The compositions are being released as an original score to coincide with the film's premiere, and I would personally be delighted if they help carry the incredible story of

these two out into the world. For me, these pieces have long since become more than just a film score. Agnes and Amir have become companions on my journey.