



CHRISTOPH KAISER BEATE KRIST SARAH PALARCZYK

A BENJAMIN MARTINS FILM

THE SHADOW HOUR

JOCHEN KLEPPERS FINAL DAY

media luna new films presents a HERBSTHUND FILME production with CHRISTOPH KAISER BEATE KRIST SARAH PALARCZYK DIRK WAANDERS
 KLAUS RODEWALD AND BORIS BECKER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MALTE PAPANFUSS COSTUME DESIGNER JÖRG HEINZMANN EDITOR DOMINIK LANGE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MAX SCHÜLLER
 PRODUCED BY FLORIANA MADDALENA MAIELLO & BENJAMIN MARTINS WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY BENJAMIN MARTINS



THE SHADOW HOUR

Screenplay & Direction
Benjamin Martins

Producers
Floriana Maddalena Maiello & Benjamin Martins

Based on Jochen Klepper's diary entries

With
Christoph Kaiser
Beate Krist
Sarah Palarczyk
Dirk Waanders
Klaus Rodewald
Boris Becker

PRESS BOOK

As of June 23, 2021

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CAST

Jochen Klepper
Johanna Klepper
Renate Stein
Adolf Eichmann
Hans Karbe
Der Schatten

Christoph Kaiser
Beate Krist
Sarah Palarczyk
Dirk Waanders
Klaus Rodewald
Boris Becker

CREW

Screenplay & Direction
Producers
Cinematography & Editing
Gaffer
Sound Engineer
Costume Design
Set Design
Composer
Sound Design & Mix
Visual Effects

Benjamin Martins
Floriana Maddalena Maiello & Benjamin Martins
Malte Papenfuss
Jörg Heinzmann
Dominik Lange
Eleni Chava & Tess Ungan
Johanna Schließer
Max Schuller
Marc Lehnert & Michael Bötticher
Meike Deutscher, Alina Axt, Maxi Fröhlich,
Benjamin Brandt & Johannes Engelhardt

TECHNICAL DATA

Running time 78 minutes
Aspect ratio 1:1
Sound mic D-Cinema 48kHz 5.1
Country of production Germany
Year of production 2021
Original Language German
Subtitles English
Awards: **First Steps Award**
Festivals: **Munich International Film Festival 2021**
(Section: New German Cinema)

SYNOPSIS

During the time of the Nazi Regime, Christian writer, journalist and poet Jochen Klepper lived in Berlin with his Jewish wife Johanna and stepdaughter Renate.

On December 10, 1942, Johanna and Renate's applications to emigrate from the former German Reich were rejected, and their deportation grew imminent. Adolf Eichmann gave Klepper the Goebbels' Ultimatum: choose between his job or his marriage. Klepper's silent decision, also echoed by thousands of other intermarried Germans during the 1940's, remains largely untold until now.

Based on Jochen Klepper's comprehensive diary and focusing on the Klepper family's last hours spent together, THE SHADOW HOUR intertwines dialogue with Klepper's various diary entries.

THE SHADOW HOUR was shot in 1:1 (square) film format to allow viewers to experience the oppression and restriction the Kleppers' endured from National Socialists.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

About Jochen Klepper

Based on a true story

Jochen Klepper (1903-1942) was one of the most important Christian writers of the 20th century, his work still influential in German Christian literature, Protestant music, and Catholic church services. Klepper moved to Berlin together with his wife Johanna shortly after studying theology. During his time in Berlin, he wrote several works and later became known as a pioneer for radio programming.

Klepper kept a detailed diary for nearly a decade until his time as a soldier began in December 1940. In October 1941, he was dismissed as "ineligible for military service" because of his marriage with Johanna Klepper, née Stein, a Jew. Klepper resumed work on his diaries while his family sought to emigrate and chronicled the oppression and suffering of European Jews during World War II. Their application was rejected by Adolf Eichmann. Klepper's eldest stepdaughter Brigitte managed to leave for England in time; his wife Johanna and his youngest stepdaughter's deportation however was imminent and couples in mixed marriages were forced to divorce.

Klepper wrote this final journal entry December 10, 1942.

In the afternoon the negotiation at the Security Service.
We are dying now - oh, that too stands by God.
We are going to death together tonight.
Over the last few hours stands the image of
the blessing Christ who wrestles for us.
Our life ends in the sight of it.

Benjamin Martins, writer and director of *THE SHADOW HOUR*, spent several years studying the diary notes that were later published by Brunnen Verlag. *THE SHADOW HOUR* is rooted in Jochen Klepper's written words and Martins crafts the script to the style of the original documents. With sensitivity and honesty, Martins honors the lives of Klepper and his family in sharing this largely untold biography with Klepper's own words and thoughts.

The preparations

A journey through time

As filmmaker Benjamin Martins did not experience the horrors of World War II himself, it was important to him to thoroughly explore the screenplay of *THE SHADOW HOUR*. He hosted workshops with actors and invited an audience of contemporary witnesses and people of the post-war generation.

As part of his work on the film, Martins consulted with Klepper's grandchildren born of stepdaughter Brigitte, who succeeded in fleeing the Nazi regime. The grandchildren now live in England. Martins also contacted Klepper's godchild in Sweden who provided valuable context along with the grandchildren to aid in telling a painful part of their history.

"Some of these stories were so moving and some of the images so profoundly dark and gruesome that I will never be able to forget them. They remain inside of me like the dried ink in Jochen Klepper's diaries. Until the last day," remarked Martins.

The set

An apartment as a reflection of the times

The Klepper family's cramped and broken apartment in the film is a symbol of the time. In reality, the family lived in a large house in Berlin-Nikolassee. The living space of the Kleppers in the film is allegorically a reflection of both external distress and internal farewell.

The wooden door to the hallway only extends up to the knees. Underneath is a gap so small that an adult could only crawl through it. The family tries in vain to close the gap with a drawer. But no matter how hard the Kleppers try, they cannot bar the horrors of National Socialism which creeps through every available crack, reaching their home and finally, their lives.

During the course of the film, the furniture disappears piece by piece from the apartment, unnoticed by the viewer. All that remains at the conclusion is a gas oven with the image of the blessing Jesus Christ on the wall above it. Everything loved and acquired slowly fades in the final hours before death. At the conclusion of the film nothing is left save the family alone, yet together.

Both the walls and the ceiling gradually move in on the family in their final hours, giving the Kleppers less space and options as the room closes on them completely. To enable the effect of the shrinking apartment mirroring life for Jews under the National Socialist era, a studio was set up in an underground gymnasium. Steel construction weighing several tons was designed and later constructed for the apartment walls, ceiling and all the furnishings to compress and nest.

Vegetarian film production

Responsibility for animals and the environment

THE SHADOW HOUR is a purely vegetarian film production. This means that the entire catering was vegetarian and no products that animals had to die for were bought for equipment, props or costumes.

The rocky road of independent cinema

Bittersweet freedom

The foundation of THE SHADOW HOUR was laid 12 years prior to its release, when Benjamin Martins first learned about Jochen Klepper's fate in a church in Heidelberg. The minister mentioned Klepper in passing, but the story remained with Martins.

Without an application for screenplay funding or support of any sort, Martins plunged into the work. At times, he took on the tasks of an entire production crew for several months, working more than 18 hours a day on every day of the week. Approximately a year and a half before the start of the shooting, Floriana Maddalena Maiello joined Martins as co-producer. As the film makers did not enter into a partnership with any station or funding institution, they preserved their unlimited freedom to make creative decisions on the film.

While the creative freedom was beneficial in telling the story as they wished, the challenge to facilitate the film budget independently cost them working periods of to 36 hours, without rest breaks. With passion for telling Klepper's story (and a great deal of persuasion), Martins and Maiello succeeded in bringing together over 200 people together to bring Martin's vision from concept to screen.

Thoughts and imagination

Making an inner world come alive

Although THE SHADOW HOUR has themes of oppression and tragedy, Martins wanted the viewer to enjoy the film and view it without feeling traumatized. He achieves this by opening the door to Jochen Klepper's world of thought for the viewers via Klepper's work as a prolific creative writer. In THE SHADOW HOUR, Klepper's inner world of thought merges with outer reality. In Adolf Eichmann's office, for example, Klepper is faced with a group of puppets, all of whom resemble him and comment on his conversation with the SS Obersturmbannführer. Singing photographs, a radio with a life of its own and the "Shadow" (a character that is an outgrowth of Klepper's fears and doubts) take the audience into a world that otherwise remains hidden. These imaginative devices fit seamlessly with the real events of the story. Though interpretive and surprising, it seems natural to view when reflections in mirrors transform to other images or when freight wagons appear in the hallway in front of Klepper's apartment door.

National Socialism and the tasks of our society

More than just a film

Current global events exemplify the importance of a clear stance against right-wing extremism and right-wing populisms. Benjamin Martins, together with Herbsthund Filme, launched a local initiative dedicated to educating and communicating with teenagers. After its theatrical release, THE SHADOW HOUR will be made available to youth at schools, associations and church institutions. At joint events with the film makers, contemporary witnesses and young people, THE SHADOW HOUR will open the door for important conversations on social causes, the consequences of antisemitism, racism, right-wing extremist violence and xenophobia. Benjamin Martins comments: "During the preparations for the film, I had to face hostilities from people who no longer want to see the subject of the Holocaust dealt with. I believe however that the culture of remembrance in Germany must never be put on the side line. Not to punish ourselves for our past, but to use this example in order to ensure a good future. We get used to grievances and injustices too quickly. And usually we do not startle until we are affected by it ourselves. With THE SHADOW HOUR I wish to initiate a way of thinking that includes our environment. So that those whose voices cannot be heard in our noisy times are also noticed."

And where is God in this?

Hopeful unto death

At a time when people saw more dark than light, in the winter of our world, Jochen Klepper held firm in his belief in God. While Klepper clearly names the contradictions of biblical teaching in his diaries, he always spoke of the hope of a God who stands above the horrors of this world, in whom we find eternal life. When writing the script, the question of God and eternal life were of great importance for director and writer Benjamin Martins, similar thoughts having ruminated in him for many years. Why is God silent? Why does God allow suffering? Why must some die in such unfathomable circumstances? To this day, Jochen Klepper's texts are highly relevant precisely because he is one of us. Klepper struggles and doubts with us as THE SHADOW HOUR takes its audience on the journey as we all search for answers together.

THE SHADOW HOUR tells the story of an extraordinary writer during the time of National Socialism in Germany. But above all, the film tells the story of a human. A human who believes, hopes, doubts and fights both with himself and for those he loves.

INTERVIEWS



Christoph Kaiser (Jochen Klepper)

Actor Christoph Kaiser moved from Berlin to Heidelberg / Mannheim in 1997 where he received his training at the Mannheim Directing and Drama School. He later studied both the Stanislavski and Chekhov methods with Rainer Kleinstück and Feodor Stepanov from the Chekhov Studio Berlin. During his work for various public television series as well as RTL and SAT1, Christoph received his qualification as a theatre teacher to share his experiences as an actor with adolescents. Before he started working in film, his creative home was in theatre where he played in various theatres in Mannheim, Heidelberg, Schwetzingen and Karlsruhe in *Hamlet*, *An Enemy of the People* and *Goethe's Faust*, among others.

In *The Shadow Hour* you play the leading role of Jochen Klepper. How did you prepare for the film?

I visited all the places in Berlin where Klepper lived and worked. I also spent time in Klepper Park in Steglitz and at the Protestant cemetery Nikolassee where the Kleppers are buried side by side. I also studied his diary entries from 1932 to 1942 and worked intensively with Markus Baum's biography of Jochen Klepper. What was demanding for me was that it was about a real person, who I wanted to do justice to, but who I also did not want to try to copy. In addition, we rehearsed together as an ensemble for two weeks on site before filming began, which was also helpful for the preparation.

Did you find things in common with Jochen Klepper that helped you prepare for the role?

The challenges Jochen Klepper had to experience are incomparable to mine. Nevertheless, I, too, was faced with decisions in my life that remind me of the feelings described by Jochen Klepper in his diaries. For me it was never a question of suicide, but my father's early death, the separation from my family and a completely fresh start in my life triggered strong emotions in me, too. Self-doubt, fear of the future and concern for my children are experiences I can share with Jochen Klepper. This enabled me to draw from my own past and my emotional memory to work on my role.



Beate Krist (Johanna Klepper)

Actress Beate Krist received her acting training at the Academy of Performing Arts in Ulm. Since then, she has been working as an actress and director. Her theatrical vita comprises roles such as Maria Stuart in "Maria Stuart" and Juliet from "Romeo and Juliet", as well as numerous experimental works and performances. Krist has played across Germany, from the local theatre in Landshut to the Hanau Fairytale Festival and the Franconian Festival—most recently she won the jury prize of the MADE.Festivals with the stage play *#dichterliebe*. She made her film debut with the film *Culpable*, which was nominated for the Max Ophüls Award. Her second film *Thanks Dead Cat*, in which she played the lead, was also Krist's first collaboration with director Benjamin Martins.

Why did you want to make this film? What significance does THE SHADOW HOUR have for you?

I had the privilege to read the script of THE SHADOW HOUR at a first reading rehearsal. From that moment on I knew I wanted to be a part of this film. It is particularly relevant because it reminds us of those victims of the Nazi regime who, in their helplessness, saw no other solution than taking their own lives. There were many who lost their lives this way and yet they were all alone. Moreover, THE SHADOW HOUR poses philosophical questions on life and death and the struggle for survival. Christian faith finds a clear answer on the subject of suicide, nevertheless, deeply religious people go down this path, too. This conflict moved me. What particularly impressed me about the Klepper family is their determination and unshakable faith, which made them stick together until the end.

What do you think of when you think back to working on the set of THE SHADOW HOUR?

I can think of so many individual and small moments: the moment when I first set foot in the set and immersed myself into this room, this other time, this very special atmosphere. The very special atmosphere of the underground hall, which was converted into a studio for the film. The old buildings we shot in. The many hours and conversations with my film husband and my film daughter, which have made us into a real family for this moment. This incredibly committed crew. Every single one (from sound engineer to set assistant), everyone involved without any exception, really wanted to tell this special story and worked with much heart, blood and tears far into the nights to ensure that the Klepper family's story is not forgotten.



Sarah Palarczyk (Renate Stein)

Sarah Palarczyk is an actress, singer and voiceover artist currently residing in Berlin. Influenced by musical and artistic matters from an early age, she began her career as an actress in theatre at age 15. She finished her acting studies at ADK in Ludwigsburg in 2020. Recent credits include the film *Promise at Dawn* (director: Éric Barbier) and *End-80* (director: Willi Kubica). In the latter, she lended her voice to the character Smart Chip, showing at the Max Ophüls Festival, the Hof Film Festival and the Bremen Film Festival. In her work as a film actress, she is particularly intrigued by broken characters and antiheroines. She has a weakness for good thrillers, art house and psychodrama.

With 20-year-old Renate Stein, you play the youngest character in the ensemble. Is the subject of National Socialism still relevant to your generation?

Of course I cannot speak for a whole generation. From my point of view, however, I can answer this question with a clear "yes". After all, National Socialism did not end together with the "Third Reich" - on the contrary. And to believe that this part of (German) history is over is, in my opinion, a dangerous fallacy. I perceive National Socialism as a definite danger that is still ingrained in society. Although, in my perception, many of my generation are left-winged, open-minded and politically aware and active, but as the recent past shows, the focus is often on those who scream the loudest rather than on the majority. Another aspect we cannot ignore is social media, since we (supported by algorithms) immerse ourselves together with like-minded people in our own bubbles that are tailored to our preferences. This applies to all generations. I believe the question today is not whether National Socialism is still relevant, but at what point we are with this problem. I feel the topic is more pressing, complex and dangerous than ever.

What did you learn from the Klepper family? What did you take with you?

In my work, I did not interpret the Klepper family's decision as one for the end, but rather for a self-determined way of moving on and breaking free. To me, standing against one's own biological survival instinct, sticking together unconditionally and not abandoning one another until the end, is evidence of immeasurable courage and love. Fortunately, I cannot sympathize with seeing suicide as the only way out and do not know if I would have been able to take this step, had I been in their shoes. Especially my commitment to keep history from repeating itself, fueled my dedication for this film project.



Benjamin Martins (Screenplay & Direction)

Director Benjamin Martins began his creative work as an actor in theatre, film and television. After his training in acting in Cologne and Berlin, his first engagement led him to Paris where he performed as Cinderella's Prince Charming for Disney's Enchanted Candleabration. He then took on the role of mentally handicapped Aaron Zuckmeyer in KIKA's television series Schloss Einstein for two seasons. This was followed by engagements in television, including Die Anrheiner, Dahoam is Dahoam and Heiter bis Tödlich. When working at the theatre, Benjamin played the role of Ferdinand von Walther in Schiller's Intrigue and Love at the Franconian Festival and at the Die Komödie theatre in Frankfurt. In 2013, he started working behind the camera, making his directorial debut with the short film Ameisenpakt. Since then, Martins' films have received several national and international awards and have been screened at major film festivals in Berlin,

New York and Los Angeles as well as other locations. He founded the production company Herbsthund Filme with his dog Müsli.

Why did you want to make this film? What significance does THE SHADOW HOUR have for you?

Around 1940, there were between 20 and 30 suicides of Jewish families every day in Berlin alone. We do not see the names of these people on any plaque at the former concentration camps because they never got there. Using the Klepper family as an example, I want to bring attention to the many people whose names quietly got lost. I was very moved by Jochen Klepper's attachment to God and his unwavering hope to be reunited after death. The private loss of loved ones and animals triggers a tremendous fear in me that this rather sobering life could be the only there is. With Jochen Klepper's texts and diary entries, I could search for an answer together with him.

And did you find this answer?

I found the encouragement to trust in God even if it is sometimes difficult for me to have faith. God seems to be different from what I imagine. Fortunately, God is not tied to my imagination or other people's explanations and I look forward to hopefully seeing him one day.

You are often accompanied by your dog Müsli. What is that about?

Müsli is the co-founder of the Herbsthund Filme film production. I mostly do the directing while Müsli is the face of Herbsthund Filme. I am happy every time I can accompany Müsli to film events. The attentive viewer will also have noticed that Müsli can be seen in all of our feature film productions.

You basically mounted THE SHADOW HOUR as a one-man show. How did you do that?

That is not quite true. It is true that I set up the framework for this film and took on many other tasks besides screenwriting, direction and production. Every job is a part of the whole and I love soaking up my films with every pore of my body. And that also includes cleaning the toilets on set or building and testing a rain machine. Even if this commitment takes a lot of strength, I could not help it. I would always feel like I am missing out on my own film. In addition, I am quite the perfectionist and find it difficult not to have my finger in every pie. Yet it is also important to hand off tasks and to realize that you are just not good at everything. A total work of art can only be created when every team member has the opportunity to develop in their area. When film makers want too much control over the team, they mutilate the creative process, in my opinion. Our team for THE SHADOW HOUR was incredibly dedicated and talented and almost everyone gave far more for this important story than one can imagine. I believe that this shared solidarity with the project is visible in the film





Malte Papenfuss (Cinematography & Editing)

Malte Papenfuss is a cinematographer and editor based in Münster. His creative work began in 2015 at Mannheim University of Applied Sciences where he studied communication design, specializing in moving images. His semester abroad in Bangalore, India, was followed by an internship at Gallion Film in Mannheim as well as international exhibitions in photography. Since 2017, he has been focusing particularly on documentary work. *THE SHADOW HOUR* was Malte's first time working as a camera man for a feature film production.

The film was shot in a 1:1 format. What implications did this have for your work on the camera?

Shooting *THE SHADOW HOUR* in a 1:1 format was, of course, a special challenge. I had to throw some old habits overboard and think my way into the format. The "Rule of Thirds" and other classical settings have a completely different effect in a square format. It was therefore about figuring out what does and does not work for *THE SHADOW HOUR*. My experiences in analog photography came in quite handy. At the time of preproduction, I shot a lot of films in the 6x6 medium format (square format) and could draw on this experience on the set of *THE SHADOW HOUR*. This way, the format eventually did not feel strange anymore and felt quite familiar to me.

What do you think of when you think back to working on the set of *THE SHADOW HOUR*?

Work on the set of *THE SHADOW HOUR* was very special. We shot the entire film within a fairly short time, which was compensated by an intensive rehearsal time and long days of shooting. This approach and the fact that we were basically isolated on set and had barely any contact to the outer world, contributed to us developing into a great team. The size of the team, too, played a role in everyone getting to know each other well and harmonizing perfectly. A special highlight for me was the final day of shooting. For a final scene at sunrise, I, together with main actor Christoph Kaiser and director Benjamin Martins, climbed up the stunning Tegel mountain near Schwangau with an alpine guide over night.

THE SHADOW HOUR

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