

An insert film production

In co-operation with
SRF Sternstunde Religion
and 3sat



Né à Belfond. Born hidden

A documentary film by Christa Miranda

57 Min. | Switzerland | 2024

www.insertfilm.ch

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LOGLINE

"La Kinderfabrik". That's what locals called the maternity and infant home for unmarried pregnant women in the Swiss Jura Mountains. Mothers like Agnes gave birth to their babies in this remote house. Children like Nicole and Urs were born here and put up for adoption.

SYNOPSIS

Agnes becomes pregnant at the age of 16. Because nobody is allowed to find out, she is shipped across Switzerland to the Jura. She is not allowed to see her baby after the birth and it is given up for adoption against her will.

Sometime later, Nicole is born in the same maternity home. She is placed in a foster family who later adopts her. As an adult, Nicole finds her biological mother and learns that her wealthy biological father has bought his freedom with a confidentiality agreement.

Urs, born in Belfond and adopted, also discovers his biological relatives and the circumstances of his birth at a mature age.

Agnes, Nicole and Urs are three people whose lives took a dramatic turn at "La Kinderfabrik". The 920 children who were born here between 1952 and 1978 will probably never know exactly what happened; many documents have since been destroyed. The Catholic community of sisters Seraphisches Liebeswerk Solothurn (SLS) ran the home. Why did the unmarried pregnant women come here? What was everyday life like? How did the children come to be adopted and what impact did the difficult start have on their future lives?

The documentary focuses on the now empty building of Belfond.

Agnes dives into the memories of a relentless youth full of violence and prohibitions, Nicole and Urs follow the traces of their birth and find clues as well as new questions.

An elderly midwife, neighbours, SLS nurses and other contemporary witnesses describe their view of the history of the birthplace for "fallen girls" in Belfond.

STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR

Giving birth is a decisive highlight in a woman's life - and a moment of great vulnerability. There is often a balance between fear and hope. I myself gave birth to my two children under sheltered circumstances, and since then I have worked on numerous films and discussion programmes at SRF about the beginning of life. In 2019, I wrote a historical master's thesis about a midwife at the Basel Mission in southern China.

My friend Monique grew up in Saignelégier. On a visit, we pass an enchantingly beautiful, completely remote place near the Doubs, and she calls:

«Voilà la Kinderfabrik!»

Is it about child labour? Are children being produced here? She enlightens me: This was "une maison pour des filles-mères", a maternity home for "girl-mothers". In her youth, people used words like that if they dared to talk about Belfond at all, Monique explains.

Why here of all places? Where did the young women come from? Who looked after them? Who adopted the children and how are they doing today? What forces created the social and familial pressure that led to such drastic decisions? What role did religion play?

Human and social dramas unfold in this idyllic landscape. A world in which pregnant women have to hide their birth and give their child up for adoption because they are not married or because the child's father disappears seems far away today. In order to find answers, a time gap of 40 to 70 years has to be overcome: an appealing challenge in terms of both content and film. This film turns Belfond into a lieu de mémoire.

CHRISTA MIRANDA - Writer and Director

Born in Basel in 1961. Professional dance training in Zurich. Worked for SRF for 30 years, the last 15 years on the programme "Sternstunde". She has realised several television films and reports. In 2021, she founded the company "Filmtext" and has been working as a freelance author and producer ever since. She also teaches at the CAS, Documentary Film at the University of Arts in Bern and is a member of the Swiss Film Directing and Screenwriting Association ARF.
www.filmtext.ch

PEDRO HALDEMANN - Producer

Born in 1952, studied at the Swiss Jazz School, Bern. Member of the Andreas Vollenweider and Friends ensemble from 1979 to 1987. From 1992 founder of the independent theatre group X-Rayted Production and author of various plays. Assistant director at the Stadttheater Biel-Solothurn. 1994 Werkjahrförderpreis for theater and film music of the canton of Solothurn. Member of the SFP (Swiss Film Producers Association). Producer and partner of Insertfilm AG since 2011.
www.insertfilm.ch

MIRJAM KRAKENBERGER - Editor

1982-85 editor at SRF. 1984-88 various feature film assistantships with Fee Liechti and Georg Janett. 1991-97 Lecturer at the ZHdK (Zurich University of the Arts), editing supervision for student film classes. 2000-12 Lecturer at the HSLU (Lucerne University of Art and Design), editing supervision Students, Video programme.

SANDRA STADLER - Composer

Composer and pianist. She studied piano and composition (Bachelor) and composition for film, theatre and media (Master) at the Zurich University of the Arts. In addition to film music, she composes concert music for various formations and works as a pianist, singer and songwriter.
www.sonderfilmmusic.com

INSERTFILM AG

An independent production company based in Solothurn, Switzerland. Its focus is on the production of content centred on global and local issues, as well as culture and art, with the aim of reaching an interested audience. Since 1992, Insertfilm AG has been producing feature films, documentaries and essays for cinema and television, both in Switzerland and in co-production with national and foreign partners.

www.insertfilm.ch

CREDITS

A documentary film by
Christa Miranda

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