

Director's Statement

When we began to adapt Christine Nöstlingers autobiography FLY AWAY HOME to a film script we had no idea that an actual war in Syria would soon be so close and omnipresent. Nöstlinger was 9 years old when World War II ended and the movie shows her experience as a war child more than 70 years ago in Vienna during these last weeks of war and the beginning of a new peace. We wanted to focus on this very universal topic, children in war. The most memorable sentence from the many hours of conversation with the author, which we were fortunate to experience for the preparation of the film was: "The weeks in summer of 1945 when everything lay in ashes were the most exciting and maybe even the best weeks of my childhood." The ambivalence of war and a child's perception of what for adults was a catastrophe and the question what children see as adventure are important elements of this film. The angry, stubborn and smart Christl, portrayed by the fabulous Zita Gaier, will hopefully speak to many children as well as to the inner child of adults and move them.

Apart from the historical background of "Fly Away Home", Christine Nöstlinger has of course been one of the most important authors of childrens books in Austria for decades and she is a guiding figure for so many of us and also for me. The fact that she began writing her books at the age of around 40, working at her kitchen table in addition to balancing the demands of marriage, parenting and housekeeping has always given me perspective. As a woman with political attitude and as an artist she is a role model, someone who empowers. It is by no way a coincidence that in this film version of her childhood nearly all main departments of this period picture were staffed by women: Gabriele Kranzelbinder, one of Austria's few female producers, Katharina Wöppermann responsible for production design, Eva Testor behind the camera, Niki Mossböck responsible for editing, Sandra Bohle with whom I developed the script, Eva Jantschitsch as film music composer and myself as director. We all were aware of the statement we make with this film and with our team and we hope to set a clear example for women in the film industry.

Mirjam Unger 2016