



playtime

(spielzeit)

OFFICIAL SELECTION
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SUNDANCE
FILM FESTIVAL

playtime (spielzeit)

Running Time: 13 min 03 sec | Format: HD

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synopsis

synopsis A seamless journey of German youth and innocence on a Sunday afternoon.

long synopsis Inspired by Billy Wilder's *People On Sunday* (1930), *Playtime* is a seamless journey through the lives of German youth on a Sunday afternoon. Jan (Jan Müller) awaits his date with the sexy Matilda (Marylu Poolman). But when Matilda shows up with Andy (Markus Klauk), Jan realizes she has more in mind for their afternoon together. Not interested in this ménage à trois, Jan leaves Matilda and Andy to their own fun. But their rendezvous is quickly interrupted by a group of children at play. The boys poke fun at Andy's shortcomings, until he finally chases them away to a mysterious graveyard. There, one of the boys (Tim Lings) gets lost in his imagination as the sun sets on this ordinary Sunday experienced through extraordinary lives.





director's notes

director's notes *Playtime (Spielzeit)* is a series of impressions of the German city of Köln by a novice American.

I was the novice American.

Having never been to Europe, let alone Germany, I found it insane that I had been tasked with capturing the spirit of a pre-Nazi Germany silent film called *People On Sunday*. A film about youth on a Sunday afternoon in Berlin.

Upon viewing it for the first time in Köln, I found *People On Sunday* intoxicating. Full of innocence and life. It was a film that just happened.

It was simple. It was nothing. It was life.

So, I'll tell three stories.

I do not recall when exactly it happened but Richard Linklater's *SLACKER* became my answer to *People on Sunday*. I wanted to move seamlessly through these stories I saw for Köln. I didn't want to praise the city, it didn't need that, the film is about young people and the deceptively simple acts we will do. The story didn't need to be shot in the most beautiful or most important parts of the city. It didn't want to be perfect. It didn't need to be nice. Hell, it didn't even have to be German. It just had to be innocent. It had to be young. It had to be honest.

And the film couldn't give a damn.

—Lucas Mireles



A man and a woman are shown in a natural, outdoor setting. The man, in the background, is wearing a blue and white plaid shirt and looking off to the side with a slight smile. The woman, in the foreground, is wearing a bright yellow top and has her eyes closed, leaning her head against the man. The background consists of blurred green foliage and trees. The word "collaboration" is written in a white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

collaboration



collaboration

You're in a foreign country six thousand miles away. You don't speak the language. You've got 1,200 Euro to make a movie, and there's no script yet. You've never met your cast and crew, and have no idea where you're going to shoot.

Go.

Let's back up a little bit first. As graduate students in the UCLA Film School, we (Writer/Director Lucas Mireles and Producer Ryan Slattery) were selected to represent the university in a groundbreaking cooperation with the Internationale Filmschule Köln in Germany. We were tasked with studying and creating works to honor the German-American exile filmmakers of the 1930's, including Billy Wilder and Curt Siodmak, using the classic silent film *People on Sunday* (Menschen am Sonntag) as our inspiration.

The project, by its nature, was a master class in collaboration. Five filmmakers from UCLA and five filmmakers from IFS (four directors, four cinematographers, and two producers) created four short films in Cologne as part of the *People on Sunday* project.

Playtime (Spielzeit) is one of those films.

Upon arrival in Cologne, we were told the nature of the project, met our collaborators, and began the process of making a movie. Lucas was paired with German cinematographer Jens Nolte—an acclaimed artist with previous work in Festival de Cannes. Ryan, along with Christopher Becker from IFS, produced the film.

Collaboration is essentially about bringing a team together around a singular creative vision. That's hard enough when you've known your keys for years and all grew up speaking the same language. Needless to say, we knew that a



creative vision had to be established early, and that all of the keys had to be on board quickly to protect its integrity. We couldn't have imagined the level of support we found in our German counterparts. Lucas and Jens immediately created a rapport, and, transcending English and German, began speaking their own language—one of cinema, picture, and tone. Meanwhile, Ryan and Christopher worked together to facilitate this creative vision.

Each collaborator brought his unique talents to the process. Lucas, a former NCAA Division 1 shotputter, used his ability to connect with people on a personal level to help him direct in a foreign language. Having been an actor, writer, and director himself, Ryan knew the demands of each craft and produced through that shared understanding. Christopher, a seasoned producer with a very full Rolodex, worked his local connections to secure cast and locations. And Jens, who was once an exchange student in Alaska, understood not only the German experience we were trying to capture, but also the American lens through which we were viewing the city and people.

This was quite the non-traditional process. We didn't choose each other. It wouldn't have mattered if we got along or not; we were literally stuck with each other. But there was something special about this collaboration. It was truly a cultural exchange as much as a filmmaking process. The friendships we forged, the city and people we fell in love with, and the culture we embraced are all vibrant aspects of the film—both on screen and in its legacy.





production notes

production notes

We knew the film would be a hit when we found ourselves on the banks of the Rhine River surrounded on all sides by nude male sunbathers, working up the courage to ask them to be in our movie...

And when the pre-war tire factory that was our primary location was deemed contaminated and condemned by the government the day before shooting...

And when filming at a cemetery was interrupted by a state funeral.

But all of these hurdles are also things that made our experience in Germany so sweet. In remaining true to Billy Wilder's *People on Sunday* (1930), which was our inspiration, the process had to be organic by its nature. It had to possess the qualities of playtime itself—the ups and downs of average young people on a Sunday afternoon in Cologne.

Of course, that didn't stop us from trying to carefully plan. All of the collaborators participated in the development of the concept, after taking a full week to study and hear lectures about the German-American exile filmmakers, including Wilder. Lucas wrote the script in English, and then had it fully translated into German. This would seem to be a problem, as both the director and producer did not fluently speak German, but it strangely wasn't. Lucas purely concentrated on the emotion of the scene. Every word was spoken with a passion and meaning beyond language.

Our leads were Marylu Poolman, Markus Klauk, and Jan Müller, all recognizable faces in German film and television. The boys—Tim Lingsen, Malte Purschke, and Philipp Giez—spoke almost no English and met us for the first time on their first day of shooting. Not a single actor read for a part; there was no casting process. These were the actors we had access to on a moment's notice. But they give such rich performances and honor the spirit of the film so well, finding each and every one of them was nothing short of serendipity.





Post was filled with nightly Skype calls from six thousand miles away, working through the first and second edits. The footage literally traveled around the world, beginning on a sunny summer day in Cologne, Germany, finding its way to Los Angeles to be finished, and to Park City, Utah, for its world premiere at Sundance.

Playtime is why we make movies. Even through tragedy, we found meaning in the film's underlying principles. When Ryan's brother passed away suddenly during production, he had to return to the United States. But it was the film and its message of celebrating the simple things of life—the things his brother stood for—that brought Ryan back to Germany help finish what we all started.

The film can be summed up in one moment during production: After a long day of shooting, our three boys didn't want any recognition; they didn't want to see dailies or talk about how great they were. They wanted Burger King.

Playtime is about moments like this—their vibrancy in spite of their seeming unimportance. It is about life and love and all things ordinary. It is about seven weeks in Germany that we will never forget.



A close-up photograph of two young boys. The boy in the foreground has dark, shaggy hair and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a grey t-shirt. The boy behind him has light brown hair and is also looking towards the camera, slightly off-center. He is wearing a dark t-shirt. The background is a blurred green, suggesting foliage.

bios

lucas mireles (Writer/Director) is a native Texan and former shot putter for the University of Houston and the Mexican National Junior Olympic team. He received his BA and MA degrees from Houston in 2006 and 2010. His master's thesis, *Cartoon Network's Naughty Sister Station: Innovations of the Adult Swim Network in American Late Night Television Programming*, is a current snapshot of adult themes in American television animation. Lucas is currently enrolled in the MFA Film Directing program at UCLA. His first dramatic short, *Hijo de mi Madre (A Mother's Son)*, made its world premiere at the Slamdance 2011 film festival. Following this was his comedic short, *Love Analysis*, an official selection of SXSW 2011. Lucas wrote and directed *Playtime (Spielzeit)*, which will have its world premiere at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. Inspired by Billy Wilder and Curt Siodmacks classic silent film *People On Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag)*, *Playtime* was created as part of a two-month cultural collaboration initiative between UCLA and the Internationale Filmschule Köln. Currently, Lucas is in post-production on his second requisite film work entitled *Range Junkies*, a film that can simply be described as "a love story in a gun-range". He is also in preproduction on UCLA's first 3D live action film.

jens nolle (Director of Photography) received his Diploma in Cinematography from the University of Applied Sciences in Dortmund in 2008. Jens works regularly at WDR Cologne, Germany's largest broadcast station. As a cinematographer, Jens has spent years creating unique images for narrative as well as documentary film. His film *Absolution* screened at Festival de Cannes in 2008. Operating his own company in Cologne, Jens specializes in documentaries, commercials, branded entertainment, EPK's, and web series.

ryan slattery (Producer) received his MFA in Film and Television Producing from UCLA, and his undergraduate degree from Harvard University. *Playtime (Spielzeit)* served as Ryan's production thesis while at UCLA, along with three other short films that were the product of the collaboration between UCLA and the Internationale Filmschule Köln. Ryan's previous projects include *At Ease*, which he also wrote and directed, about the toll of the U.S. military's discriminatory Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. Ryan's primary MFA thesis project, *Burden of Proof*, written by Academy Award-winning screenwriter Bobby Moresco (*Crash*), won both the audience and jury prizes at UCLA's Festival of New Creative Work. Also a television writer, Ryan's pilots have received accolades, including *Mason Dixon*, which was a finalist from UCLA for the Humanitas Prize. Growing up as an actor, Ryan amassed credits in film and television including Peter in the MGM film *Sleepover* and Turner in the Disney Channel series *The Jersey*. Ryan lives in Los Angeles with his partner Rudy.

christopher becker (Producer) is originally from Bonn, Germany, and currently lives in Köln, where *Playtime (Spielzeit)* was created. A producer, director, and writer, Christopher received his graduate degree from the Internationale Filmschule Köln. He is also a lecturer at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Christopher's previous projects include *Absolution*, which screened at the 2008 Festival de Cannes. His web series *Jabhook.TV* is one of the most popular in Germany, and attracts thousands of fans to their live events. Christopher is also a successful commercial producer and production manager, having worked on campaigns for Deutsche Bank, TNT, Deutsche Telekom, and Paypal.

marylu poolman (Matilda) is well known in Germany for her role as Anna Weigel in the RTL daily soap *Unter Uns*, and as Julia Winterberg in *Ahornallee*. She is also featured in *Pietshow*, which was nominated twice for the International Digital Emmy (2009 & 2010). Marylu is the granddaughter of the famed German actress of the same name, and daughter of actress Frauke Poolman. Marylu lives in Köln.

- markus klauk** (Andy) is a veteran actor in German television, film, radio, and theater. Best known for his recurring role as Thorsten Fischer in the daily soap *Rote Rosen*, Markus also has television credits including *Der Clown*, *Der kleine Mönch*, *Unter Uns*, and *SOKO Köln*, to name a few. In the cinema, Markus was featured in Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Das Experiment*. Originally trained as a paramedic, Markus later studied biology and theater, film, and television studies in Köln, as well as theater at Rose Bruford College in London. His voiceover work can be heard in audio books, video games, and commercials.
- jan c. müller** (Jan) has been featured on German television since he was a toddler, and has been part of the ensemble cast of the children's program *Wissen macht Ah!* for over ten years. He got his start in show business even before his first day of school; as a singer for the most popular German children's television show *Die Sendung mit der Maus*, for which he lent his voice until he reached the age of 12. These days, he spends most of his time behind the scenes as a writer for several comedy-shows, as an editor, as a voice-over artist for the show *EMP Rockinvasion*, and on stage as the singer for not one, but two rock-bands: *Cyrcus* and *Last One Dying*.



A photograph of three people walking away from the camera through a grassy field. On the left, a man in a maroon shirt and grey shorts carries a plastic bag and two beer bottles. In the middle, a man in a light blue checkered shirt and white pants walks with his hands in his pockets. On the right, a woman in a yellow tank top and denim shorts carries a white tote bag. The background shows a line of trees under a bright sky.

credits

written and directed by

Lucas Mireles

produced by

Ryan Slattery

Christopher Becker

Lucas Mireles

photographed by

Jens Nolte

edited by

Nicole Kortlüke

Daniel Rakete Siegel

Lucas Mireles

players

(In Order of Appearance)

Jan.....Jan C. Müller

Matilda.....Marylu Poolman

AndyMarkus Klauk

Cherub 1.....Tim Lingens

Cherub 2.....Malte Purschke

Cherub 3.....Philipp Giez

Smoking Man.....Paul Pieck

Trumpeter 1.....Ingo Baum

Trumpeter 2.....Alonso Zeller

unit production manager

Roshanak Khodabakhsh

crew

First Assistant Camera.....Jeanne Tyson

Leigh Underwood

Additional Photography.....Paul Pieck

Production Sound Mixers.....Claas Berger

Iliana Sosa

Nancy Mac Granaky-Quaye

Script Supervisor.....Vera Friderike Nolte

Audio Post Productions.....Anarchy Post

Re-Recording Mixer.....Tom Boykin

Foley Mixer.....Shaun Cunningham

Foley Artist.....Tara Blume

Sound Editorial.....Tom Boykin

German Dialogue Translation.....Vera Friderike Nolte

English Translation.....Jason B. Kohl

Still Photographer.....Paul Pieck

Colorist.....Raza Ahmed

Visual Effects Artist.....Sharon Burian

Production Assistant.....Aurelia Lang

special thanks

Babara Boyle

Dr. Gundolf S. Freyermuth

Jan Christopher Horak

Simone Stevens

Teri Schwartz





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