



90 minutes / color / 1:1,85
English, German, & Hebrew with English Subtitles

"Blends healthy irony with bemused respect."
—Variety

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Synopsis 1

The father is responsible for the sins of the son up until his thirteenth birthday. Jewish boys come of age at 13; girls at 12 – an occasion for an initiation, a ceremony that marks a dividing line and transition in the life of an individual approaching adulthood. It demands a great amount of preparation and provides the opportunity for big celebrations with family and friends.

The film accompanies four 12-year-olds—Sharon, Tom, Moishy, and Sophie—as they prepare for their bar or bat mitzvot. Sophie has an elaborate celebration with friends and family. Tom, the son of an Israeli mother and an Austrian father, journeys to Jerusalem, where he lays and fastens the tefilin for the first time at the Wailing Wall. Moishy is ushered into adulthood according to the strict laws of Orthodox Judaism.

Sharon, the son of Georgian parents with Sephardic roots, has chosen “Zorro” as the theme of his bar mitzvah party, creating more stress for his mother and adding to his own stage fright. Not only does he have to don the mask of the mysterious stranger, but he must also take up cape and sword, jump off a horse, and engage in a fencing duel. And all this is being taped live because André, the cameraman in the movie and sought-after specialist when it comes to Jewish ceremonies, is present at most bar mitzvot. And he backs his videos with his name, making them prized mementos among the relatives.

From the beginning, excerpts from André’s videos and from conversations in his editing room are interspersed throughout Zorro’s Bar Mitzvah, forming an intermediate level which, juxtaposed with Ruth Beckermann’s documentary language, produces ironic effects and a view from both sides. Beckermann’s camera moves seemingly randomly and unnoticed, slipping in and out of the private spheres of the protagonists, showing their families and the ways they deal with religion as well as the way religion deals with its male and female members. It takes an ambivalent view of Jewish tradition and its interpretations, questioning the significance of initiation rites, in general, and pondering whether religion can serve as a contemporary medium for conducting these ceremonies, in particular. Moreover, it also reveals the differences in the status of the sexes within the Jewish religion. Zorro’s Bar Mitzvah is also a picture of the end of childhood, one that examines with amusement and perplexity this puzzling terrain of adolescence, portrays the diffuse sphere between two worlds, creates space for remembering one’s own childhood, and tells a charming tale of this symbolic opportunity for fostering the ties between the generations.

Synopsis 2

At the Wailing Wall or in the spotlight of a stage, wearing a Zorro costume or a designer dress, solemn or rollicking: crossing the threshold to the adult world can take place in very different ways.

This film accompanies four 12-year-olds—Sharon, Tom, Moishy, and Sophie—as they prepare for their bar or bat mitzvot. It takes a critical and ironic look at Jewish tradition and its interpretations, questions the significance of initiation rituals, and attempts to explore the diffuse terrain of adolescence.



RUTH BECKERMANN Biography/Filmography

Ruth Beckermann was born in Vienna, where she went to school and graduated at the University of Vienna. She spent some time in Tel Aviv and New York, worked in Zurich and lives today as a filmmaker and author in Austria and France.

ZORROS BAR MIZWA (Zorro's bar mitzva)

Austria 2006, DV/35mm, Color, 93 min.

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Camera: Nurith Aviv, Leena Koppe, André Wanne

Production: Ruth-Beckermann-Filmproduktion

Festivals: cinéma du réel Paris, Films des femmes Creteil

Homemad(e)

Austria 2001, DV/35mm, Color, 85 min.

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Camera: Nurith Aviv, Ruth Beckermann, Peter Roehsler

Production: Ruth-Beckermann-Filmproduktion

Festivals/Awards:

Internationales Forum des jungen Films Berlin, cinéma du réel Paris, Jerusalem etc.

Booz Allan & Hamilton Award for Best documentary film

EIN FLÜCHTIGER ZUG NACH DEM ORIENT

(A FLEETING PASSAGE TO THE ORIENT)

Austria 1999, s-16mm/35mm, 82 min.

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Camera: Nurith Aviv

Editor: Gertraud Luschützky

Production: Josef Aichholzer-Filmproduktion

Festivals: Internationales Forum des jungen Films Berlin, Viennale, München, Karlovy Vary, Vancouver

JENSEITS DES KRIEGES (EAST OF WAR)

Austria 1996, High8/35mm

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Camera: Peter Roehsler

Editor: Gertraud Luschützky

Production: Josef Aichholzer-Filmproduktion

Festivals/Awards: Int. Forum des jungen Films Berlin, Viennale, cinéma du réel Paris, Nyon, Duisburg

Wiener Filmpreis, Prix des bibliothèques France, Prix du jury - cinéma du réel

NACH JERUSALEM (TOWARDS JERUSALEM)

Austria 1991, 16 mm, color, 84 min.

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Camera: Nurith Aviv

Editor: Gertraud Luschützky

Production: filmladen

Festivals: Int. Forum des jungen Films Berlin, Montreal, Florenz etc.

DIE PAPIERENE BRÜCKE (PAPER BRIDGE)

Austria 1987, 16 mm, color, 91 min.

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Camera: Nurith Aviv

Editor: Gertraud Luschützky

Production: filmladen

Festivals/Awards: Int. Forum des jungen Films Berlin, Viennale, New York, Hamburg, Edinburg

Austrian Federal Award for film art (Österr. Staatspreis für Filmkunst), Documentary film Award Alpine

WIEN RETOUR (RETOUR TO VIENNA)

Austria 1984, 16 mm, bw & color, 91 min.

Director: Ruth Beckermann und Josef Aichholzer

Camera: Tamas Ujlaki

Production: filmladen

Credits

WITH	TOM SATTLER MOISHY ORTNER SHARON MAMISTVALOV SOPHIE LANDESMANN ANDRÉ WANNE
IMAGE	NURITH AVIV LEENA KOPPE ANDRÉ WANNE
SOUND	GÜNTHER TUPPINGER STEFAN HOLZER
EDITING	DIETER PICHLER THOMAS WOSCHITZ
DRAMATURGY	GERTRAUD LUSCHÜTZKY
PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT	MONIKA LENDL PETER ROEHSLER
WRITTEN, DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY	RUTH BECKERMANN

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