



# TACHELES

## The Heart of the Matter

A film by  
Jana Matthes & Andrea Schramm



ORIGINAL TITLE	ENDLICH TACHELES
INTERNATIONAL TITLE	TACHELES - The Heart of the Matter
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE	German, Hebrew, English
SUBTITLES	English, German
GENRE	Feature documentary
TOPICS	Coming of age/ Holocaust/ Passing on traumas
FORMAT	HD - 16:9
LENGTH	104 min
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY	Jana Matthes & Andrea Schramm
PRODUCERS	Gunter Hanfgarn (HANFGARN & UFER) Jana Matthes & Andrea Schramm (SCHRAMM MATTHES FILM)
CINEMATOGRAPHERS	Lars Barthel Andrej Johannes Thieme
EDITOR	Julia Wiedwald
ORIGINAL SOUND	Timo Selengia Nic Nagel Yishai Ilan
COLLABORATION SCRIPT AND DIRECTION	Yaar Harell
DRAWINGS	Sarah Heitz Jonas Greulich
MUSIC BY	The Notwist Bernd Jesträm
DRAMAT. COUNSELING	Tamara Trampe
COLOR GRADING	Matthias Behrens
SOUNDDESIGN/MIXING	Kai Hoffmann
INTERNATIONAL SALES	Ruth Films
DISTRIBUTION	Real Fiction Filmverleih, Joachim Kühn
FUNDED BY	Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (BKM) Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany
CO-PRODUCERS	ZDF/3sat; WDR
WORLD PREMIERE	Munich International Documentary Festival 2020

Yaar is a young Jewish Berliner who dreams of becoming a game designer. He associates Judaism with nothing but victims who allowed themselves to be led to the slaughter. He accuses his father of suffering from the Holocaust although he never even experienced it firsthand.

Yaar rebels by developing a computer game: "Shoah. While God was asleep". He creates a 1940s Germany in which Jews can defend themselves and Nazis can act humanely. His father is shocked.

Yaar develops the game together with his two friends Sarah and Marcel. He decides to model one of the game's protagonists, a young Jewish girl, on his grandmother Rina. Her opponent is an SS officer, who is inspired by one of Marcel's actual ancestors. The three friends agree: the old assignment of victim and perpetrator roles prevent them from being able to do what they so desperately long for – to move on! The past should finally be left behind them. Together with his friends he visits Rina's birthplace, Krakow, and uncovers a terrible family secret. The game ceases to be a game.

The three realize that the past is strongly connected to them - the grandchildren of the victims and perpetrators. Thus begins a painful confrontation with their history, which will also change the relationship between Yaar and his father.

*TACHELES – The Heart of the Matter* - shows how the trauma of the survivors can even affect the third generation. The film asks the burning question from the perspective of a 21-old: What does the Holocaust have to do with me today?

# SYNOPSIS



# DIRECTOR'S

Yaar's grandfather Moshe was put in Dachau concentration camp in 1944, at the same time that Georg Schramm, grandfather of Andrea Schramm, was stationed there to reinforce the guard detail. These men stood on opposite sides of the fence, in the same place, at the same time – 71 years before we first met Yaar. We told each other our family stories and, as grandchildren of the generation of victims and perpetrators, we developed together the idea of *TACHELES – The Heart of the Matter*.

We soon noticed that Yaar was under a lot of pressure. The wounds that Yaar's grandparents bore as firsthand survivors throughout the rest of their lives continue to impact their children – Yaar's parents. For Yaar, the third generation, this seems to not be the case at first glance. His sense of the past is vague. He carries something on his shoulders, but unlike his father, he doesn't know what. His parents and grandparents never spoke about it much, so what is there for him to be traumatized by?

The grandparents' repression, the father's silence and the grandson's rebellion – all these are strategies to process the past, but no one can escape it. This is what fascinates us about this material: the fragility of a search for meaning, the coming-of-age story of a young man who does not yet know what it is that drives him and sometimes threatens to almost destroy him. He wants to find out and takes a provocative path by developing the computer game.

In Germany and many other countries of the world Jews cannot wear a kippa openly and people in synagogues fear for their lives again. We as the third generation have a responsibility – especially as the last survivors and witnesses of that time are dying. We believe it is time for new forms of remembrance that will reach those for whom the Holocaust is just a chapter in the history book.



# PROTAGONIS



## YAAR

*What I associate with Judaism? Actually, only suffering and death. For me, this heritage is like a black, heavy coat that someone else has hung on my shoulders.*

Yaar is an imaginative 21-year-old who dreams of making the new Star Wars film one day. The fact that he was born in Israel as the son of a Jewish family was of no importance to him for a long time. He feels that he is a Berliner, even though he was sometimes called a "Judensau" (Jewish pig) at school.

His father is his role model. However, the older Yaar gets, the more he realizes that his father is suffering. He doesn't understand why, only that it has something to do with the family history. For fear of being consumed by the subject, Yaar rejects everything Jewish and rebels against his father.

Then one day out on the street he is threatened with a knife - because he is a Jew. Yaar decides to go on the offensive and face his Jewish heritage. Through the process of developing the computer game While God was asleep he becomes actively engaged in his own history.

## ILEI, the father

*As a five-year-old out on the street, I asked neighbours where their parents were born. And I thought to myself: Auschwitz, Majdanek. These are places where people were born. This is the world.*

Ilei is a sensitive and extremely charismatic man. As a child, his Mother Rina yelled at him: The Gestapo are at the door, hide! Her panic attacks accompanied him through his childhood and still haunt him today, along with images of a horror he never experienced himself. In order to protect his sons, he removed them from the family history and Judaism. He went to Germany with his family, where Yaar grew up far away from his grandparents and their memories. Ilei is drawn into Yaar's journey to his roots and finally faces his lifelong trauma in Krakow.



## RINA, the grandmother

*We defeated the Germans. By rebuilding our lives and raising families. We never gave up.*

Rina was born in 1933 in Krakow. Her father owned a carpentry shop. The family was sent to Plaszow concentration camp where the parents succeeded in hiding their children before they finally managed to smuggle them out of the camp. The children lived for a few years with a Polish family until a neighbour betrayed them. Rina escaped, but five-year-old Roman was murdered by the Gestapo. Together with Moshe, Yaar's grandfather, Rina started a new life in Israel. Outwardly they tried to function, but they could not offer Ilei and his siblings a carefree childhood. The feeling of guilt for not having protected her brother accompanies Rina throughout her life.



## JASMIN, the mother

*They can call me a Jew, say all sorts of things to me, I don't dwell on it, it doesn't concern me. I know, if there was to be another Shoah now, I would be a victim but that doesn't change my attitude towards it in my life. It's simply not part of me.*

Jasmin is the complete opposite to serious, ponderous Ilei. Yaar can laugh with her and talk about other topics than the Holocaust. Most of Jasmin's family survived the Nazi period because they managed to make it onto one of the last ships to Palestine. She enjoyed a largely carefree childhood in post-war Israel and became a painter. Jasmin lives with a new partner today who, like her, rejects a constant preoccupation with the Holocaust.



## MARCEL, Yaar's friend

*It's over. And constantly harping on about it is no help to anybody. If you and I have all this stuff in our heads then we can never really be friends.*

Marcel is a fellow student of Yaar's and has dealt intensively with his own family history. The fact that one of his ancestors was an officer in the SS was hushed up for decades. Together with Yaar, Marcel wants to make the motives and constraints of this man visible in a computer game.



# DIRECTORS/



## **JANA MATTHES & ANDREA SCHRAMM - DIRECTORS/PRODUCERS**

Jana Matthes and Andrea Schramm work as directors and producers for arte, 3sat, ARD and ZDF. After having studied journalism in Leipzig and directing in Potsdam-Babelsberg they founded SCHRAMM MATTHES FILM. They portray complex political and social developments in radically personal stories. Many of their films have been screened on international festivals and won prizes, such as the 'DEUTSCHER FERNSEHPREIS' ('German Television Award') and the Discovery Channel Award.



## **GUNTER HANFGARN - PRODUCER**

Gunter Hanfgarn has been producing documentary and feature films since 1991, including numerous international and award-winning co-productions and debuts. As producer of Susanna Salonen's feature film PATONG GIRL he received the Grimme Prize in the category fiction and was nominated for the German Film Prize with NO LAND'S SONG by Ayat Najafi. His co-productions CARNE DE PERRO and PELO MALO received top prizes at the San Sebastian Film Festival. His production WIE HOLOCAUST INS FERNSEHEN KAM has been awarded the Grimme Prize for 2020. Gunter Hanfgarn is a member of the German and European Film Academy.

# CONTACT

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SCHRAMM MATTHES FILM

**REALFICTION**



WDR<sup>1</sup>



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sharqi FENSTER  
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