

Lovable, joyous 'Swing' glistens among gems of Denver festival

◀ THE SWING

Directed and written by Percy Adlon. Starring Anja Jaenicke, Rolf Illig, Christine Kaufmann, Dorothea Moritz. *Recommended.*

This 1933 West German film by Percy Adlon is one of the real gems of the Denver festival.

The setting is Munich just before World War I. The Lautenschlag family is a rather disorderly crew, compared to their stiff bourgeois neighbors. Father, the Munich royal horticulturist, is a kind, unworldly man who can never quite remember where his money goes. Mother is a French singing teacher. Three delightful teenage girls and one lackadaisical boy complete the household.

The movie is seen through the eyes of 15-year-old Mathias, an enthusiastic truth-teller, art lover and tough cookie. A memory piece from the novel by Annette Kolb, it chronicles the mundane and funny crises the family muddles through with a great generosity of spirit. The film is difficult to synopsisize because incidents in their lives are less important in particular than in creating a full-bodied portrait of these lovable people.

The film is beautifully photographed and has been justifiably compared to Ingmar Bergman's "Fanny and Alexander," although it lacks most of that masterpiece's inherent darkness. That is not to say that "The Swing" is a syrupy exercise in nostalgia. But at its core is a kind of vital joy that makes it such a heartening moviegoing experience.

With one film Adlon assures his place among the foremost contemporary filmmakers.

— M.H.

The Swing

(Die Schaukel)

Director Percy Adlon
Script Percy Adlon based on the novel
"Die Schaukel" by Annette Kolb
Photography Jürgen Martin
Music Peer Raben

With Anja Jaenicke, Lena Stolze, Joachim Bernhard

West Germany 1984
35mm & 16mm/Colour/English subtitles
133 minutes/Certificate PG

Like his remarkable first film, CELESTE, Adlon's new film is taken from an autobiographical work by a woman writer, but THE SWING is far from the closed world of CELESTE. It is a social panorama on a large scale, showing the Munich childhood of the authoress Annette Kolb. She is represented by the sharp-tongued tomboy Mathias, who lives in chaotic yet genteel poverty with her two sisters, the mimic Gervaise and

the sensitive Hespera, her brother Otto, an impulsive dreamer, her mother, a French pianist reduced to giving lessons to tone-deaf Prussians, and her father, the Royal Bavarian gardener. These easy-going Catholic Franco-Bavarians are contrasted with their Protestant Prussian neighbours, the von Zwingers. The film is built up of small incidents: the visit to the theatre to see Eleanora Duse; the grand opening of the Botanic Exhibition; a climb across the Bavarian Alps; a "colts and fillies" ball where Mathias has a sudden vision of the dancers struck down by the impending World War; a visit to the von Zwingers' country home. The vitality and good-humour of Mathias' family carries all before it.

"How well everyone performs, how superlatively Jürgen Martin's camera prowls and glides and soars... memory pleurably rescues dozens of fragments. An absurd cauliflower served whole; Professor von Zwinger pompously, proudly and precisely using the new-fangled telephone; Herr Lautenschlag crunch, crunching over snow gazing at blackbirds in bare branches, onion domes, a lake, pensively *experiencing* his Munich; the hierarchical groupings at the opening of a Horticultural Exhibition he has designed: there is a fine, disorderly order of richness after all."

John Coleman *The New Statesman*



28TH LONDON FILM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME NOTES

THE SWING

(Die Schaukel)

Directors:	Percy Adlon
Executive Producers:	Dagmar Heyer
Producers:	Benigna von Keyserlingk
Production Managers:	Eleanore Adlon
Screenplay:	Percy Adlon
Based on <u>Die Schaukel</u> by:	Annette Kolb
Photography (colour):	Jürgen Martin
Editors:	Clara Fabry
Set Decorators:	Heidi Lüdi
Music:	Peer Raben
Costumes:	Regine Bätz
Make-up:	Evelyn Acktan, Paul Schmidt
Sound:	Rainer Wiehr

CAST:

Mathias Lautenschlag	Anja Jaenicke
Gervaise Lautenschlag	Lena Stolze
Otto Lautenschlag	Joachim Bernhard
Hespera Lautenschlag	Susanne Herlet
Mme Lautenschlag	Christine Kaufmann
Herr Lautenschlag	Rolf Illig
Grandmother	Jenny Thelen
Gartenmarie	Elisabeth Bertram
Lhombre	Ulrich Tukur
Prof. von Zwinger	Günter Strack
Mrs von Zwinger	Dorothea Moritz
Candida	Andrea Schober
Frau Erlendicht	Irm Hermann
Baroness James	Anja Buczowski
Flirtatious Girl	Marianne Sägebrect

With: Gustl Weishappel as Colonel von Ried-Recours

1983

West Germany

pelemele Film/Pro-ject Film/Roxy Film/
Bayerischer Rundfunk

Percy ADLON

was born in Ammerland/Starnbergersee, 1935. He read Literature, Theatre and Art History at Munich University. He began working as an actor in 1958, and in 1961 became the editor and presenter of a radio series on literature. He started directing for TV in 1970, and made numerous documentaries on arts subjects between 1973 and 1977. The latter included TOMI UNGERERS LANDELEBEN (Tomi Ungerer's Country Life), MANN UND FRAU IM GEHÄUSE (Man and Wife in Their Shell), PORTRÄTS DEUTSCHER AUSWANDERER (Portraits of German Emigrants), DER TÄNZER HEINZ BÖSL (The Dancer Heinz Bösl), DIE BILEK (Bilek), DER ECHTE LILION - PORTRÄT EINES SCHAUKELELBURSCHEN (The Real Liliom - Portrait of a Fairground Attendant), WITWEN - BEMERKUNGEN ZU EINEM VERDRÄNGTEN PROBLEM (Widows - Observations on a side-stepped Problem) and UNTERHALTUNG AM KOFFER - KARAJANS ORCHESTERDIENER (Conversations around a Trunk - Karajan's Valet). He and Eleanore Adlon formed their own company ('pelemele FILM') in 1977, and he directed his first TV feature in 1978. His first cinema feature followed in 1981.

Films:

- 1978: DER VORMUND UND SEIN DICHTER (The Guardian and his Poet) (TV film)
1979: HERR KISCHOFF (Herr Kischoff) (TV film)
1981: CELESTE
1982: FÜNF LETZTE TAGE (Five Last Days)
1983: DIE SCHAUKEL (The Swing)

Percy Adlon on THE SWING:

Your two first films, CELESTE and FIVE LAST DAYS, won a number of prizes in Germany and abroad. Both were films for a particular kind of audience. The budget for THE SWING is currently nearly 4 million DM. This time you must want and need to reach a wider audience.

I don't believe that you think about these things while you're filming. Perhaps when the film is finished you consider ways of attracting viewers. . . There were actually cinematic reasons why I made those two earlier films as chamber works, as well, of course, as financial ones. There are always a number of ideas growing within you at the same time and only a few of them come to be realised. I would never have had the opportunity of making THE SWING five years ago. I hadn't developed an identity as a feature film-maker, I would have neither trusted myself to do it nor expected other people to give me so much money. THE SWING was only possible after I had learned from the experiences of making CELESTE and FIVE LAST DAYS. My interest in Annette Kolb goes back a long way. It's all to do with myself (I come from Munich), with my home, with my feeling for life. And it has a lot to do with music. After working a couple of times with a string quartet, I wanted for once to stand in front of a whole orchestra.

THE SWING is also a political book.

THE SWING is an open story about human beings. Human beings who live their lives freely and to the full. . . Politics in the original sense means arranging for people to be able to live together. If you look at politics like that, this is a political film because it's about people's desire and need for freedom. . . But the book itself has nothing at all to do with politics. Annette Kolb was herself a rather disorganised person, she sees lines, movements, scenes in her family but doesn't try to use all this to prove a general theory.

- from an interview in Filmecho/Filmwoche 18 June 1983

Programme note compiled by Sheila Johnston

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