

Janus Films Presents

THE TIN DRUM: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT



NEW DCP RESTORATION!

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Director: Volker Schlöndorff
Country: West Germany
Year: 1979/2010
Run time: 163 minutes
Color / 1.66 / Dolby 5.1

JANUS FILMS
Sarah Finklea
Ph: 212-756-8715
finklea@janusfilms.com

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SYNOPSIS

Danzig, Germany, 1924. Oskar Matzerath is born with an intellect beyond his infancy. As he witnesses the hypocrisy of adulthood and the irresponsibility of society, Oskar rejects both, and, at his third birthday, refuses to grow older. Caught in a state of perpetual childhood, Oskar lashes out at all he surveys with piercing screams and frantic poundings on his tin drum, while the unheeding, chaotic world marches onward to the madness and folly of World War II. Honored with the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Volker Schlöndorff's *The Tin Drum* has now been restored to match its director's original vision, with twenty minutes of footage unseen since the film was cut at the behest of its distributor in 1979. The result is a visionary adaptation of Günter Grass's acclaimed novel, an unforgettable fantasia of surreal imagery, striking eroticism, and unflinching satire.

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QUESTIONS TO VOLKER SCHLÖNDORFF

Why the director's cut now?

The rough cut of the movie, which we showed Günter Grass, ran 2 hours and 45 minutes. It left out a number of scenes we had shot but not printed. Meanwhile, our distribution agreement with United Artists forced us to cut the film down to 2 hours and 15 minutes, which was the maximum running time possible for theatres to book two evening screenings. Therefore, we resolved to polish the existing cut and never even looked at all the other material, much less take the time to edit it.

When the movie turned out to be a big success in the shorter version, we – of course – did not want to diminish the honors bestowed at Cannes and at the Oscars by letting the world know we thought the film was incomplete. Billy Wilder quite rightly reminded me at the time: “If it ain't broke, don't fix it!”

Last summer, I was asked whether the lab storing the negatives of the unused footage should renew our space rental agreement or dispose of the material. The question instantly piqued my interest in seeing how the material we left out could work nowadays; and I went to work right away to find out. First of all, we discovered images of impressive quality: virgin-like negatives, which had never been touched by a single hand since the reel had been taken out of the camera 30 years earlier. I turned to my working script, where I had made notes and comments on every single set up and shot. That document helped shape my pre-selection and sorting out of the raw material.

We were able to use Maurice Jarre's original recordings and only some voices had to be overdubbed by the actors, as those tapes had deteriorated. It was difficult for the 42-year old David Bennent to replicate his 12-year old voice, but digital processing provided a solution.

Which scenes are new?

For over 30 years, Mario Adorf rightfully complained that the cuts had damaged his role in the film. As he writes in his most recent book, *Mazerath*, who was at first absolutely enthusiastic about the Nazis – declaring “we are experiencing historical hours, you can't be a bystander, you have to participate!” – suddenly rebelled when euthanasia orders classified Oskar as an unworthy living human being. He even managed to resist and prevent Oskar's being taken away. Actually, the surge of his resistance was of prime importance for rounding out his character.

I also vividly remembered the “Rasputin” scene we shot, in which Oskar imagines orgies at the court of Saint Petersburg. Screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière played the part of the bully Rasputin surrounded by naked playmates. It was

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hilariously funny for those of us on set. So 31 years later, Carrière gets to reappear as a young man. Moreover, David Bennent is unbelievable in that scene, when he launches into a long monologue directly into the camera about Goethe and elective affinities, without once batting an eye.

Finally, and probably most importantly, we were able to re-cut the whole scene with Fajngold, who was the Treblinka survivor. It accurately portrays the historical background of the displacement of the Germans in Danzig.

To give today's audience a better understanding of the period, I used old newsreels as "time markers." The movie is not only about the little big Oskar, it is about contemporary history too. In line with the book, the film is an epic.

I am really glad that I finally had the chance to rework the movie and to complement it. Of course, I had to polish up some minor flaws for the Director's Cut, but, in the end, we did not want a totally different movie; we wanted to produce the real one – the complete one – the one we shot back then. It will be exciting to see which of the two versions will become definitive in the long run.

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NOTES BY GÜNTER GRASS

Sine 1959, when *The Tin Drum* was first published, every two years I received an offer for a film adaptation. What was suggested was always insufficient, only concerned with certain aspects of the book and only corresponding to a limited vision of the work. Then came Seitz and Schlöndorff.

In Schlöndorff I found a true *interlocutor*, someone who provoked me with his questions, who delved into the heart of the subject and who, during our dialogue, forced me to reconsider a book from which I had become detached. Thanks to Schlöndorff's provocative questions, I was able to collaborate on the dialogue for the film.

I saw straight away that he had understood the epic dimensions of the book. I also felt that he would be forceful enough to reshape the material, not to follow the book slavishly, and to replace the ways of literature with those of cinema.

It occurred to us immediately that we could not reconstruct the totality of scenes and episodes in the novel. Certain chapters had to be forgotten, even if we suffered. Schlöndorff gave me the different versions of his screenplay and I gave him my point of view. A few changes were made, and then in the last stage, I collaborated intensively on the dialogue, particularly when Schlöndorff needed additional dialogue for a scene.

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NOTES BY JEAN-CLAUDE CARRIÈRE

This is the story of Oskar: an uncommon childhood, the world about him, the wonders and dangers of the city, the rise of Nazism. He witnesses the attack on the Polish post office. It was there the first shots of the Second World War were fired.

The war is seen as never before: dramas and madness, Oskar's rebellions his fun and his loves – until he is forced to leave for the West in 1945. The West, where “everything is better.”

It is, first of all, a realistic film, deeply rooted in the Danzig lower middle-class, with its pettiness, its fears and, at times with a certain grandeur.

It is also a fantastic, barbarous film, in which shafts of black light suddenly pierce the suburban streets, the small shops, the monotony, and the daily round. The second, ever present dimension, explosive, haunting, rises as prosaic reality from the ground.

And it is the story of Oskar, the incredible drummer who beats out his anger, who shouts his existence and who has decided to remain small among “the giants.”

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VOLKER SCHLÖNDORFF – Extracts from my Diary of *The Tin Drum*

In 1977 I went on two long journeys. One to the West, to California, to Hollywood. The other to the East, through Moscow to Central Asia, Tashkent. In Hollywood, I had discussions about projects that were offered to me following the success of *Katharina Blum*, projects for so-called “international” films. Margarethe Von Trotta, Martje and Werner Herzog and I had seen our films with the eyes of Uzbeks. After this pendular swinging between East and West, I was more determined than ever to stay in my own environment, despite the possibilities elsewhere, despite the difficulties here. Since *Törless*, I have deliberately and wittingly made German films.

About the time I had clarified my geographical and historical point of view, Franz Seitz brought me *The Tin Drum*.

In the fifties, when Grass was writing the book in Paris, I was preparing my French “Baccalauréat,” and although living a few houses away, I was so involved in France that I had not read the novel.

April 23, 1977

Today read *The Tin Drum* for the first time, and try to imagine the film that could be made from it. It could become a very German fresco; the history of the world seen from and lived on the bottom rung: enormous, spectacular paintings grouped together by the tiny Oskar.

It had been said that he is a creation of the 20th century. To me he portrays two typically contemporary qualities: rejection and protest.

He rejects the world to the point of not growing up. Zero growth.

He protests so loudly that his voice shatters glass.

Seen in this light, he is even closer to us now than fifteen years ago, when the book came out.

I feel that the possibility of working on *The Tin Drum* is a challenge that would be impossible not to take up. Therefore, I accept it without having the slightest idea of how to set about it. I suppose it will go on for several years. Despite that, I don't hesitate to allow myself to be carried away.

June 30, 1977

Franz Seitz and I visit Günter Grass for the first time. He has cooked lentils with bacon for us. We immediately start work. *The Tin Drum* is contrary to a Bildungsroman; everything and everyone develops around Oskar, except him.

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Oskar portrays the thirst for revenge of the lower middle-class, his anarchistic dreams of grandeur. Günter Grass explains the significance of objects, which sometimes provide the decision for action, as in the "Nouveau Roman": the drum, the lock, the card game (Skat), the necklace, the party badge.

Despite a lively conversation, we remain strangers. I am terrified by the dimensions of the job, and terrified by the author. Most of the things in the book that one sees as the result of imagination are for him experienced reality.

Oskar cannot be literature put on the screen. Not only does Grass protest against the idea that one cannot write a novel, but the stories surge in him as experiences that must be communicated. From where would this inner energy spring in the film?

July 1977

After a first draft in flashbacks, I try to recount Oskar's adventure chronologically. A selection of only a few typical scenes. Refusal to cram, limiting the interval in time which spans from birth to the end of the war. The after-the-war period could be a second film, with another actor, work for later on.

I stick to childhood, look for the Oskar in myself. My films are only any good when I can identify myself with the characters. Read a great deal about Danzig, the lower middle-class and the Nazis: newspapers, novels, documents.

August 1977

The size of the project leads not only to narrative problems, but also to those of production. We contact American distributors. I go to Paris. Several times I try to tell the story of *The Tin Drum* in production offices: "Tell me the story in three lines."

I do not possess what gives power to the book, Günter Grass's language. Despite chaotically translated notes, the power of the tale is communicated, the touching and contradictory of Oskar fascinates. I gain confidence in the possibility of making the film.

August 25, 1977

The decisive moment, last night at Jean-Claude Carrière's home. Since *Viva Maria*, thirteen years ago, we had not seen each other. I tell him of my difficulties and particularly what Bertrand Tavernier had said at lunchtime: a film with a midget in the main role is reduced to a problem of midgets.

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Jean-Claude reassures me, the key word is THE KID. We need a Jackie Coogan. With a child everyone can identify himself. It will not be a film about a midget, but a film about childhood.

August 28, 1977

I go to Normandy to meet Anatole Dauman, my co-producer for *Coup de Grace*. I know he doesn't like relying on scripts, preferring to listen to directors and to discuss their projects with them. For two long afternoons, I talk to him, with novel and notes in hand, scene by scene, about *The Tin Drum*. He only has a vague souvenir of the book. At first the idea of making such an important film without stars seems odd to him. But little by little the story excites him. When I get to the end of Oskar's adventures, it's decided, he will take part in the film as the French co-producer. To start with, he hires Jean-Claude Carrière with whom I'll write the script. So the kickoff took place in Honfleur...

Jean-Claude Carrière will collaborate from October, when he has finished with Buñuel. Saw a lot of films before leaving Paris. Nothing that could compare in any way with *The Tin Drum*.

September 20, 1977

Went with Franz Seitz to the Congress of small men at Goslar. Sixty or so midgets in the imperial castle. Oskar cannot be a midget, Oskar must be a child, otherwise the film becomes a film on the problem of midgets.

October 1, 1977

I've written a first chronological version, with almost no dialogue, no commentary. Jean-Claude Carrière has arrived in Munich. We are starting to write the script, scene by scene, following my outline.

October 20, 1977

There is something rough about *The Tin Drum*, like a wood engraving, often it's almost a Punch and Judy show. The equivalent in the cinema to the early Chaplins. Oskar is also *The Kid*. This continual revolt of the child against the grown-up world. Very ordinary events, like a boxing match, where people can shout and boo from the audience. The contrary to a "literary adaptation," it is often wild in the sense in which Glauber Rocha uses the world for South American films.

One cannot always get under Oskar's skin. As he speaks of himself sometimes in the first person then in the third person, creating the distance of a child, the narration must at times be completely subjective and at times show him fearing the outside world. As it is impossible in any case to recreate the whole book, I am

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concentrating more and more on a few important scenes, rather like numbers in a music hall revue.

November 15, 1977

The Hessische Rundfunk will be co-producer.

November 20, 1977

Paris/London. Production difficulties. We stop work on the script. Minimum cost of the film, as we plan it, is 6.7 million marks. It seems as impossible to finance a German film of this importance as it will be to recuperate the cost. Among the American distributors, United Artists shows an interest. Discussions in Paris and in London: can *The Tin Drum* be changed into an international film thanks to an international cast?

Perhaps Roman Polanski or Dustin Hoffman as Oskar. Isabelle Adjani and Keith Carradine as the parents? We soon agree: the star of the film is the subject. The more authentic our representation, the more exciting our film. So, no stars, no Anglo-American version. German and Polish actors, and a twelve-year old boy in the leading role. It is the only way to film *The Tin Drum*. I show photos of young David who is learning to play the drums at the Munich Opera.

December 1, 1977

This decision, taken unanimously by all those concerned, proves to be incompatible with all the commercial considerations. So, taking into account the risks, all the participants put a limit on their investment. Half the money is still missing.

December 15, 1977

We don't submit the script to the "Fund for Projects" today, as the budget for 1977 must be exhausted. We'll wait until next year.

January 1978

Angela Winkler will play Oskar's mother, Mario Adorf his father.

February 13, 1978

Spent three days with Jean-Claude Carrière at Günter Grass's home. He called our script "Protestant and Cartesian." It was lacking the irrational dimension of time, the nodal points where everything becomes confused and collapses in an illogical and tragicomic way. He wants more hard realism on the one hand, and on the other, more courage in the unreal. Imagination as a part of unreality –

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Oskar's reality. These few indications are enough to set us working on a new version. The basic work on our linear resume proves very useful. We are far removed from the novel, we have an autonomous narrative structure for the film, which we can now complete, destroy and bring to life.

Two journeys to Gdansk (Danzig) take us even further from literature, by bringing us closer to reality. We go to look for the decors of the novel, most of which exist. As everything is small and narrow, a glance is enough to take in this suburb between the railway station and the tram line. A church, a school, the beerhouse, a few shops...

For Oskar, this microcosm is the world. But to transfer this to images, it is not enough to film the neighborhood as it was (or still is): we must compose the images that the reader sees. A memorized Danzig, evoked by signs.

February 26, 1978

Journeys to Lubeck and to Copenhagen, possible locations for Danzig. In Yugoslavia, looking for locations in Zagreb for the crowd scenes and for the Polish post office.

March 1, 1978

In Geneva, saw Daniel Olbrychski in a theater. He will play Jan Bronski, the Pole, Oskar's second father.

The "Fund for Projects" puts off its decision about our project until its next session, if there is one, for the Fund is coming to an end. In any case, nothing new before the end of May.

The city of Berlin announces a credit plan for cinema. No one knows when it will come into effect; because the basic lines have not yet been set. We postpone the start of shooting from May to August.

April 1978

Telephone call from Warsaw: we can use the Gdansk locations as Danzig.

May 1, 1978

Casting finished, Ferréol and Aznavour now added. But no contracts can be signed, for lack of money.

May 14, 1978

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Another visit to Grass, almost a year after the first, this time with the finished script. It is now more "Catholic," and less rational, besides it is denser, nearly two and a half hours of film. We work once again on the dialogue, which amuses both of us. Without being a comedy, it is certainly very funny. No more distrust of the director, no more fear of the author. A year of work has brought up together. "Next time we'll start off with an original script," Grass says as we part.

June 2, 1978

Return to Gdansk and to Warsaw. This time with the Polish crew. We talk about *The Tin Drum* between Germans, Poles, and above all Kashoubes, because our assistant director Andrzej is Kashoube. They are very interested in the project. What has been a long buried past for us, is still very real to them. Our journey often is more like a diplomatic mission than the preparation of a film. A great deal of reality imposes itself, in particular in discussions with the Polish actors.

June 5, 1978

Warsaw: Franz Seitz calls me from Munich. Berlin has granted the money, we can sign a contract with Poland.

June 12, 1978

Today the "Fund for Projects" also grants the money. We can start. Tomorrow, recording music for the playbacks, next week costume and make-up rehearsals for all the actors, in 7 weeks, shooting starts!

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CAST

Oskar Matzerath
Agnes Matzerath
Maria Matzerath
Alfred Matzerath
Jan Bronski
Anna Koljaiczek
Anna Koljaiczek (young)
Greff
Löbsack
Lina Greff
Sigismund Markus
Rasputin

David Bennent
Angela Winkler
Katharina Thalbach
Mario Adorf
Daniel Olbrychski
Berta Drews
Tina Engel
Heinz Bennent
Ernst Jacobi
Andréa Ferréol
Charles Aznavour
Jean-Claude Carrière

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CREW

Director	Volker Schlöndorff
Screenplay	Jean-Claude Carrière Franz Seitz Volker Schlöndorff
Based on the novel by	Günter Grass
Producers	Günter Grass Franz Seitz Volker Schlöndorff Eberhard Junkersdorf Anatole Dauman
Production Supervisor	Eberhard Junkersdorf
Cinematography	Igor Luther
Set Direction	Bernd Lepel
Art Direction	Nicos Perakis
Editor	Suzanne Baron
Original Music	Maurice Jarre