

MY FATHER, THE PRINCE

a daughter's perspective

A Lukas Sturm & Lila Schwarzenberg Film

A
Sabotage Films & neulandfilm
Production

Documentary
Running Time: 79 min. / Color / HD
Language: German with English subtitles

Produced by
GERNOT SCHAFFLER
THOMAS BRUNNER

Executive Producers
PETER MORGAN
KAROL MARTESKO-FENSTER

Music
WALTER WERZOWA

Edited by
MONIKA WILLI
THOMAS VONDRAK

Written & directed by
LUKAS STURM
LILA SCHWARZENBERG

Director's Statement

My father was almost 80 when we started this project. His health was fragile. The idea to make a film about him came from a simple desire - to fill the many gaps that resulted from his frequent absence and my youthful disinterest in his life. I was simply afraid of losing my father without ever really knowing the man, politician, and prince admired by so many. Our relationship, despite mutual love and efforts, has always remained quite distant and somewhere I hoped to get closer to him through a common project. I had never stood in front of the camera before and had not planned to come to the fore in any way - quite the opposite! I intended to make a film about my father, documenting his thoughts, his incredible knowledge, his life on the political stage of Europe, and of course his memories of a childhood in a long lost world. But the longer I went on this journey with my father, accompanied him and interviewed him, the more it also became a film about me, about us, the attempt to understand my father in all his complexity and to be understood by him. As fascinating as the film's locations, characters and historical backgrounds are, I hope that it resonates at its core, as an intimate and very emotional document about a daughter and her father, their common strengths and weaknesses, failures and dreams, their strangeness and closeness in dealing with each other.

Lila Schwarzenberg July 2021

When Lila Schwarzenberg asked me if I was interested in making a film with her about her father, I was immediately excited. I knew him mostly from the media and from Lila's stories and wanted to learn more about him. I had directed several "Dialogue Films" including *Scheitern, Scheitern, Besser Scheitern - Gerd Voss in conversation with Harald Schmidt* and *Die Porzellangassenbuben - Eric Pleskov and Ari Rath*.

We filmed Karl Schwarzenberg for almost five years and recorded conversations between him and his daughter. The story that developed out of this is much more than a dialogue between father and daughter. We have captured the longing of a daughter, her desire to be close to her father, to understand him and to overcome her distance. This is what deeply touched people who saw what we were filming along the way. It is the openness with which Lila talks about her life and her courage that it takes to confront the seemingly overpowering father. And these are the moments when the unsaid and unasked for becomes tangible. When father and daughter felt unobserved or when Lila reflected on her frustrations and fears in dealing with her father at the end of a long day of shooting. This struggle for recognition, closeness and familiarity. This is the unique thing about this film and at the same time the element that makes it a film for all daughters and all fathers.

Lukas Sturm

Synopsis

"You're not there to be happy," says the father to his daughter at the end of a documentary film that tells the unusual story of Lila Schwarzenberg and her father Karl. Over a period of five years, daughter and father meet again and again to talk at the places that shaped both of their lives. In Prague and at Orlik Castle in southern Bohemia, but also in Vienna and in Murau in Styria. Over the years, the conversations explore all corners of their shared history. Of a father as a contemporary witness of the 20th century, whose childhood was marked by dispossession and flight, and who later became one of the most remarkable politicians in Europe after the Second World War. A statesman, aristocrat and revolutionary in equal measure. His daughter's story begins as that of a girl growing up in a family tradition dominated by hereditary princes and men. One who resists etiquette and aristocratic predicates, later slips into drug addiction - then gets clean and builds a life in London, leaving the shadows of the past behind. During the course of filming, Lila Schwarzenberg also repeatedly confronts her co-director Lukas Sturm's questions about her own history. The film shows how Lila repeatedly tries to overcome the distance to her seemingly overpowering father. The result is a highly intimate portrait of two people who are both familiar and strangers to each other. Against the backdrop of a turbulent family history marked by strokes of fate, both make a sincere effort to find a way to each other. My Father, the Prince tells the story of many daughters, sons, fathers and mothers and their mutual, often doomed desire for recognition, appreciation and closeness.

Evolution of *MY FATHER, THE PRINCE* - a daughter's perspective

In 2015, one of the producers, Gernot Schaffler attended a charity event Lila had organized in Vienna for the refugee crisis. She had invited her father to give a speech as he himself was a refugee many years back and has always been a fighter for human rights. At the end of her father's very moving speech, Gernot approached Lila and proposed to make a film about her father. Lila was doubtful at first and there were many reasons which made her hesitate. It felt too close too intimate and she knew that in order to make an interesting film you had to rock the boat. Furthermore, she never felt spending time with her father was easy, quite the opposite, and making a film together inevitably means spending a lot of time together. However, there were also many arguments for making a film about him, not at least the fact that she wanted to preserve his story for her own children, who know their grandfather far too little. They knew that time was not on their side and that they had to get started sooner rather than later. Lila suggested her friend and experienced documentary director, Lukas Sturm direct this project with her, and only when he said yes, the production finally got going. As Lila never stood in front of a camera before, Lucas suggested to do a trial interview to see whether her father and she would be able to communicate with each other in front of a motion picture camera. The interview was tricky as Karl Schwarzenberg clearly felt more comfortable giving answers he had given many times to journalists before and Lila was frequently not confident enough to guide the conversation in the direction she wanted the interview to go in. Nevertheless, when they watched the interview in the editing room, they were positively surprised by the intensity and emotionality of some of the footage and decided to commit to this project.

What followed was a 5 year journey, which took place in Prague, Orlik, Vienna and Murau. Besides the conversations between daughter and father, an interview of several hours was recorded by Lukas Sturm with Lila Schwarzenberg. This interview reflects Lila's personal story and complements the dialogues between father and daughter. We also accompanied Lila to the scenes of her childhood, and she recreates the life of her and her father with the help of private photos in a magnificent but empty room in the Palais in Vienna. Material from the family archive was available, as well as private film footage.

Karl Schwarzenberg

Karl Schwarzenberg, born in Prague in 1937, has an enigmatic biography that could hardly be more contradictory. Born as the heir into one of the oldest and wealthiest aristocratic families in Europe, he was forced to emigrate from former Czechoslovakia to Austria as a child, when under communist rule the family was expropriated and expelled. This was a defining life shaping moment for the child, Karl Schwarzenberg. Growing up in Austria, with the duty of being an heir removed, he dreamed of becoming a journalist. But life had other plans. His uncle and head of the Austrian Schwarzenberg family line did not have a male heir and so Karl Schwarzenberg was adopted in his twenties to become head of the family and to run the family estate in Austria and Germany. He fulfilled this privileged yet difficult role, but his heart belonged to politics, human rights and his country of birth. The Velvet Revolution in 1989 gave him the chance to return to his homeland and shape the destiny of his beloved country alongside Vaclav Havel and later as foreign secretary and chairman of the party TOP 09. Although visiting Austria often, the Czech Republic remained his home to this day.

1937	Born in Prague, Czech Republic on December 10
1984 – 1991	President of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights
1990 – 1992	Chancellor of President Vaclav Havel
2004 – 2010	Senator of the Parliament of the Czech Republic
2005 – 2007	Chairman of the Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security Committee of the Senate
2006 – 2007	Member - Permanent Delegation of the Parliament to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
2007 – 2009	Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
2009 – 2015	Chairman of the political party TOP 09
Since 2009	Member of the Parliament of the Czech Republic (Chamber of Deputies)
2010 – 2013	First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
2013 – 2017	Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of the Czech Republic

FILMMAKERS

Lukas Sturm & Lila Schwarzenberg - Directors

Lukas Sturm is a producer, director and author living in Vienna. For more than 20 years he has devoted himself with great passion to the art form of cinematic storytelling. He thinks and works across genres, always driven to combine quality content with gripping stories. Together with Lila Schwarzenberg and their production company, neulandfilm, he develops and produces numerous film and TV projects.

Lila Schwarzenberg studied film at NYU and anthropology and media at London University. She started her career in Vienna but lived in London for more than 15 years. She directed commercials and pop promos, has worked as a journalist, and gained extensive experience in the development and production of TV formats as a producer. She is the mother of five children and runs neulandfilm together with Lukas Sturm. For the production of *My Father*, *The Prince*, she found herself in front of the camera for the very first time.

Gernot Schaffler & Thomas Brunner – Producers

Sabotage Films was founded in Vienna in 1998 by Thomas Brunner and Gernot Schaffler. Sabotage's work ranges from television commercials, web specials, short films, music videos, feature films and documentaries to high-end art shows. The company has won multiple awards at advertising festivals from Cannes to New York.

Sabotage Films Long Form Films:

Havana Marking's SMASH & GRAB, Daniel McCabe's THIS IS CONGO, Phil Cox's THE BENGALI DETECTIVE & THE LOVE HOTEL and Danfung Dennis' Oscar-nominated Sundance winner HELL AND BACK AGAIN. Furthermore, Gernot Schaffler served as associate producer on Ron Howard's RUSH and Thomas Brunner and Gernot Schaffler are Producers on KLAMMER - Chasing the Line, Feature Film/Biopic 100 minutes.

Mona Willi - Editor

Monika Willi is an acclaimed and multi award-winning Austrian editor. She is mostly known for her work with director Michael Haneke, for whom she edited the award-winning films *The White Ribbon* and *Amour*. She won the Austrian Filmpreis on numerous occasions and was nominated for the German Filmpreis and the Cesar. Monika Willi is member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Thomas Vondrak - Editor

Thomas Vondrak is a Viennese based editor who has worked on multiple award winning projects for TV and Film with Lukas Sturm. Over the years they have formed a special relationship which is full of trust and respect which allows them to challenge each other creatively whenever necessary. Thomas started his career working for acclaimed Viennese pop promo directors Dolezal & Rossacher also known as the Torpedo Twins.

Walter Werzowa - Composer

Walter Werzowa is a musician, multiple award-winning composer and highly innovative music producer. He was born in Vienna but lived and worked in Los Angeles for more than 20 years. He has scored movies for Steven Spielberg, Wim Wenders, and wrote acclaimed documentary soundtracks *The Devil and Daniel Johnston*, *JT LeRoy*. Walter Werzowa returned to Vienna in 2020 with his family and is currently working on *Stardust Cowboy*.

Peter Morgan - Executive Producer

Peter Morgan is one of Britain's most influential writers and producers for stage, screen and film who has won a host of international awards including Golden Globe, British Independent Film and Evening Standard British Film Awards. The award-winning and Tony-nominated play *Frost/Nixon* received critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic before being adapted into a multi-Academy Award-nominated film of the same name. The film garnered five Oscar Award nominations, including Best Screenplay. Morgan's many other film credits include the award-winning *The Queen*, *The Last King of Scotland*, *The Damned United* and *Rush*. His extensive television credits include *The Lost Honour of Christopher Jeffries*, the critically acclaimed *The Deal* – the first part of Morgan's Tony Blair Trilogy (BAFTA Award for Best Drama) - *The Special Relationship* and *Longford*. Peter wrote the award-winning West End play, *The Audience*, starring Helen Mirren and most recently, *The Crown*, a multi award-winning drama series for Netflix.

Karol Martesko-Fenster - Executive Producer

Karol is Partner/COO of Abramorama and Chief Content Officer of Thought Engine Partners. He is a producer on Benji & Jono Bergmann's *Mau* and *Gelato*, Thomas Wirthensohn's *Sacrament* and *Homme Less* ('14 DOCNYC Grand Jury Award), Maura Axelrod's *Maurizio Cattelan – Be Right Back*, and an executive producer on Jessie Deeter's *Hoof Dreams*, Steven Rosenbaum and Pamela Yoder's *The Outsider*, Adam Schomer's series *The Road To Dharma – Riders of the Himalayas*, Daniel McCabe's *This Is Congo*, Leslie Iwerk's *Ella Brennan: Commanding The Table*, Amy Benson & Scott Squires' *Drawing The Tiger*, Phil Cox's *Love Hotel* and *The Bengali Detective* ('13 Grierson Documentary Award), Noel Dernes & Moritz Springer's *Journey To Jah* ('13 Zurich Film Festival Audience Award), Havana Marking's *Smash & Grab: The Story of the Pink Panthers*, and James Smith's *Floored*. He was the production executive on Emmett Malloy's *Big Easy Express* (2013 Grammy Award) and Harry Belafonte's *Sing Your Song* ('12 NAACP Image Award) and Executive Producer of Danfung Dennis's *Hell and Back Again* ('13 Grierson Documentary Award, 2012 Academy Award Best Documentary Nominee, and 2011 Sundance World Documentary Grand Jury and Cinematography Award Winner). Previously, Karol was the President of Film for Michael Cohl's S2BN Entertainment and Head of Film at Chris Blackwell's Palm Pictures. Karol has produced over 25 television and satellite broadcast music programs, multiple Webby Award-winning programs including wetheeconomy.com and focusforwardfilms.com, and he co-founded *FILMMAKER Magazine*, *RES Magazine*, and the media content enterprises [indiewire](http://indiewire.com), [cinelan](http://cinelan.com), and [conditionone](http://conditionone.com). (www.karol.com)

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Subtitles

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Translation

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For letting us use the track "Fallen Angel"

David Černý
For letting us use his iconic Karel punk picture

Schwarzenberg Family Archive
Dipl. Ing. Heike Kellner
Archivar A.D. Wolfgang Wieland

Vaclav Havel Library