



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
CANNES 1984
GRAND PRIX SPÉCIAL DU JURY



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
CANNES CLASSICS
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE 2021

DIARY FOR MY CHILDREN

NAPLÓ GYERMEKEIMNEK

DIRECTED BY MÁRTA MÉSZÁROS

4K RESTORED VERSION

NFI

HUNGARY
FILM ARCHIVE

“Problematizing national identity with the concern of gender and sexuality, the re-reading of history through the lens of autobiographical experience that animates East European Cinema owes much to Mészáros's bold paradigms. Her texts serve no less significantly to instantiate autobiographical cinema as a site of artistic autonomy and genuine cultural voice, hence an East European variant of the contestatory function of 'women's cinema' for the West.”
(Catherine Portuges, *Hungarian Cinema of Márta Mészáros – Screen Memories*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indianapolis, USA, 1993. 127.)

Márta Mészáros occupies a unique position in Hungarian and world film history. The director, Kossuth and Prima Prize laureate, winner of awards at the Berlinale, Chicago, Cannes and many other international film festivals, is in herself a historical legend. Together with her contemporaries Agnes Varda, Larissa Shepitko and Vera Chytilova, she ranks as one of the most significant female authors in the world. She is the first Hungarian woman to be awarded a diploma in film directing, she has dedicated her movies to depicting the lives of women (their identity, deviance, female rebelliousness, erotic intimacy and Hungarian history of Stalinism), and her directorial debut attracted global attention.

Even as a young child she had struggled with being orphaned, with hunger and the vicissitudes of history. She was born in Budapest in 1931. Her father, the avant-garde sculptor László Mészáros, in fleeing fascism moved the family to Kirgizia, where on the outbreak of World War II he fell victim to Stalin's purges. Her mother also died. She was placed in a Soviet orphanage and only returned to Hungary after the war. Between 1954-56 she studied at the film academy in Moscow and until 1968 she made Romanian and Hungarian documentaries. These autobiographical motifs inspired the *Diary* series that garnered considerable international acclaim.



She has directed feature films since 1968. In fact, her very first full-length film, *The Girl*. In *Don't Cry, Pretty Girls*, *Riddance*, *Adoption*, *Nine Months*, and *The Two of Them* Márta Mészáros depicts – in a non-judgemental way and with puritanical unaffectedness – that process whereby something great and simple happens in the life and relations of her self-aware, seeking-rebellious female protagonists, forcing them to make decisions. These films were instant international hits. Márta Mészáros won a Golden Bear at the Berlinale (for *Adoption*, 1975) being awarded to a female director and also Hungarian director for the very first time in the history of the Berlinale. *Nine Months* took an OCIC prize at the Berlinale and a FIPRESCI prize at Cannes (1977), and this opened the way to international coproductions. These films of Mészáros differ from those of the 'Budapest School' that developed in parallel with her career in that she doesn't concentrate on the social background, showing only as much of the microclimate as is psychologically necessary.

The Heiresses made in a coproduction reveals a historical background behind remarkable love triangle relationships. Then came the *Diary* tetralogy, of which the first, *Diary for My Children*, won the Grand Prix Speciale du Jury at Cannes (1984).

The director with 30 feature films and numerous documentaries to her name also made a movie, *Unburied Man* (2004), about Imre Nagy, the leading figure of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Her latest film, *Aurora Borealis* (2017), which has been recognized with several international awards, looks back to the Soviet occupation of Vienna through an unusual mother-daughter fate.

“An independent woman – one who finds herself in a situation where she must make a decision on her own – is the central character in each of the pictures I have made so far.”

(Márta Mészáros, Hungarofilm Bulletin, 1976 No. 2.)



Diary for My Father and Mother – Jan Nowicki & Márta Mészáros © György Kalászi

DIARY FOR MY CHILDREN

NAPLÓ GYERMEKEIMNEK

The orphan Juli and her grandparents, the remnants of the former emigrant family, return home from the Soviet Union at the end of the 1940s. Her aunt, prison director Magda, attempts to bring up the resolutely stubborn teenager to have blind faith in communism. She does not succeed. Juli remembers the past as her sculptor father was arrested by the KGB and her mother died. The teenager unconsciously understands that people have started to be arrested even in Hungary and the system of Soviet terror is back in operation. Juli matures into an independent woman as she researches memories of her parents. In this, only Magda's brother, János, is any help. She sees her father in János. The director reveals the era in the refraction of this psychological, emotional triangle where even the smallest private motif is woven through by politics. By selecting this method of depiction, she undertook nothing less than showing how after 1947 the Soviet Union could 'export' the model of Stalinist authority to the countries of Eastern Europe using psychological, political manoeuvring.

"The analysis is fascinating and unprecedentedly revealing; but it is strength of personal memory that makes the film so overwhelming. ... An extraordinary panorama of socialist Europe's darkest days..."

(Gamden Plaza, *The Times*, 19.07.85.)

Directed by Márta Mészáros

Screenplay by Márta Mészáros

Director of photography Nyika Jancsó

Music by Zsolt Döme

Cast Zsuzsa Czinkóczi, Jan Nowicki,
Anna Polony, Mari Szemes, Pál Zolnay,
Ildikó Bánsági, Tamás Tóth, Éva Szabó

Edited by Éva Kárméntő

Sound by György Fék

Production designed by Éva Martin

Costume by Fanni Kemenes

Genre drama

Production Studio Budapest

Head of studio István Nemeskürty

Technical specs black and white, 109 min

Format 1.37:1, 4K restored graded super-vised
by Nyika Jancsó director of photography

1980-83

AWARDS

Cannes, 1984

Grand Prix Spécial du Jury

Budapest, 1984

Hungarian Film Week Grand Prize
Foreign Film Critics' Award

Chicago, 1984

Bronz Hugo Award

Munich, 1984

Protestant Jury Award

Budapest, 1985

Hungarian Film Critics' Award
for Best Directing

DIARY

for my children

(Napló' gyermekeimnek) by Márta Mészáros
Production: MAFILM - Budapest Studio
World sales: HUNGAROFILM, Budapest



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