

OFFICIAL SELECTION - SWITZERLAND - 2018 ACADEMY AWARDS®  
BEST FOREIGN-LANGUAGE FILM

WINNER AUDIENCE AWARD BEST FEATURE  
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL 2017

# THE DIVINE ORDER

A FILM BY PETRA VOLPE



TRUSTNORDISK PRESENTS A ZODIAC PICTURES PRODUCTION IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH SCHWEIZER RADIO UND FERNSEHEN SRF, SRG SSR AND TELECLUB "THE DIVINE ORDER" MARIE LEUENBERGER, MAX SIMONSCHEK, RACHEL BRAUNSCHWEIG, SYBILLE BRUNNER, MARTA ZOFFOLI, BETTINA STUCKY. CASTING: RUTH HIRSCHFELD, CORINNA GLAUS. MAKE-UP: JEAN COTTER. COSTUME DESIGNER: LINDA HARPER. PRODUCTION DESIGNER: SU ERDT. SOUND MIXER: PATRICK STORCK. MUSIC COMPOSER: ANNETTE FOCKS. EDITOR: HANSJÖRG WEISSBRICH. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: JUDITH KAUFMANN. EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION MANAGER: SARAH BOSSARD. LINE PRODUCER: CLAUDE WITZ. PRODUCED BY: RETO SCHAEERLI, LUKAS HOBI. WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY: PETRA VOLPE.

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# The Divine Order

**A film by Petra Volpe**

Winner of the Audience Award for Best Narrative Film at the Tribeca Film Festival, *The Divine Order* is set in Switzerland in 1971 where, despite the worldwide social upheavals of the previous decade, women were still denied the right to vote. When unassuming and dutiful housewife Nora (Marie Leuenberger, winner of a Best Actress award at Tribeca) is forbidden by her husband to take a part-time job, her frustration leads to her becoming the poster child of her town's suffragette movement. Her newfound celebrity brings humiliation, threats, and the potential end to her marriage, but, refusing to back down, she convinces the women in her village to go on strike, and makes a few startling discoveries about her own liberation. Uplifting and crowd-pleasing, this charming, captivating film is a time-capsule that could not be more timely.

## **AWARDS**

(a selection)

Traverse City Film Festival 2017  
Audience Award Best Fiction Film  
Founders Award Best Foreign Fiction Film

Tribeca Film Festival 2017, New York  
Audience Award – Best Feature Film  
Best Actress in an International Narrative Feature Film  
Nora Ephron Prize

Swiss Film Award 2017

## EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

1971: Nora Ruckstuhl is a young housewife and mother living with her husband HANS and their two sons Luki and Max in a small, tranquil Swiss village. Here in the countryside little is felt of the great social upheavals brought about by the 1968 movement. Nora's life is also unaffected by it; she is a quiet person, liked by everyone and never one to step out of line - until the day she starts to publicly and fiercely fight for women's suffrage, which Swiss men are to vote on, on February 7, 1971.

Nora's resistance and her need to become active for the equality of women begins when her husband at first resists and then refuses to give her permission to go back to work. The added fact that her teenage niece, Hanna, has been sent away to reform school and then a women's prison because she did not conform to the small town conventions of the village, also spurs her on. Nora realizes that it is not enough to be in favor of the vote silently, but that women need to demand it, loud and clear.

When Nora, supported by the widow and former owner of the restaurant "Bären" Vroni, starts publically campaigning for women's right to vote and organizes an informational event on the topic, she starts a fight with Mrs. Dr. Charlotte Wipf, head of the "Anti-Politicization of Women Action Committee" and her husband's boss.

Nora, meanwhile, continually finds more allies: Graziella, a divorced Italian who took over the restaurant and opened a pizzeria, and her sister-in-law, Therese, join them. Together they prepare the event and travel to Zurich to a women's march for the right to vote. In Zurich, they also participate in a women's workshop to engage with their most intimate body parts. Nora realizes that, in addition to not being able to speak her mind as a woman in her very traditional home and village, her marital sex life is not nearly what it could be.

The greatest conflict takes place in Nora's family when Hans returns home from reserves training only to burst into Nora's event, where half the village has gathered. There stands his wife at the lectern, promoting women's right to vote, while the audience heckles her and hardly lets her speak. The event is a disaster and back at home they argue; Nora is filled with doubts about her initiative, but also about their relationship.

But she finds new courage when more and more village women dare to say out loud what they really think. Finally they decide to hold a women's strike, and Nora is overjoyed when many women in the village answer the call. This, however, stokes the hatred of their opponents, so much so that there is a violent escalation, ending the strike and causing Nora to lose her most loyal supporter.

Beaten, Nora returns home, but soon realizes she can't simply return to her old life. When she is invited to a job interview, she decides to follow her innermost desire, leaving Hans with a big decision: Does he concede to Nora or does he forbid her and thus lose her?

The Women's Right to Vote is passed on February 7, 1971 and Swiss women finally are given voting rights; but the women's fight for equality still continues today.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Petra Volpe was in preparations for her feature debut *Dreamland* and simultaneously writing the script to *Heidi*, when she began developing the idea for *The Divine Order* with producers Reto Schaerli and Lukas Hobi in September 2011.

The fact that Switzerland did not grant women the same political rights as men until February 1971 - as one of the last developed democracies in the world - is a well-known fact in Switzerland and beyond - and perhaps from today's perspective a curiosity.

To make a film about it was the starting point of the script development for *The Divine Order*. Producer Reto Schaerli: "Petra Volpe's challenge as a screenwriter for *The Divine Order* was to develop an independent story that didn't rest on the issue of women's suffrage. The historical circumstance is an exciting vessel, but it has to be filled with content."

Petra Volpe conducted extensive research for the script. She met and interviewed important exponents of the struggle for women's suffrage.

Trogen in the canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden served as the main backdrop for filming, and while it was primarily chosen as the location for visual reasons, the two districts of Appenzell were in fact the last to grant women voting rights on the regional level in 1989 and 1990 respectively.

## INTERVIEW WITH PETRA VOLPE

### ***The Divine Order* is the first feature film about Swiss women's suffrage and its late introduction in 1971. How did you approach the subject?**

The idea to make a film about Swiss women's suffrage initially opens a very wide field. That's why I first researched for a long time, to hear as many voices as possible and to examine the subject from a variety of perspectives. Only then did I develop the characters piece by piece. All are inspired by women that I met in the course of my research.

In the development of the script I especially wanted to capture the atmosphere of the time and not simply historical facts. I wanted to tell a story that depicts how unfree women were back then, how much they were treated like possessions and how great the opposition was, even in 1971, when the women demanded equal political rights.

### **Is the character Nora based on a real person?**

The idea for my protagonist Nora came from a green deposit slip in the women's suffrage opponents Gosteli archive. On it, a young housewife and mother in beautiful, careful handwriting wrote: She had never been politically involved, but this call by the opponents of the vote now made her so angry that she was even considering actively fighting for the voting right! That was the first spark for Nora, a woman who wakes up and evolves into a political person.

### **Why did you choose to shoot in Appenzell?**

The script reads: "1971 in Switzerland" - I always also imagined the film as viewed from abroad and I looked for a place that would work as a metaphor for the idea of Switzerland, and I thought Appenzell was perfect. The rolling hills with the beautiful farms, the mountain tops in the background - that is how one imagines Switzerland, and it is visually very appealing as well.

But it was also very important to me not to highlight Appenzell in particular - because one makes it too easy for oneself, whenever this issue arises, to point at this particular canton - de facto the WHOLE of Switzerland took too long in giving women the right to vote. Of course there were more progressive cantons - still, the political will was lacking until 1971 to make the issue a high priority. In an international comparison this is outrageous and hard to understand. In my opinion it has to do with the deep conservatism of our country that still becomes apparent on all kinds of issues. Considering Switzerland is a highly developed country, it to this day still struggles to keep up in terms of equality.

### **How did you develop the visual style of the film?**

Three years before filming I began regularly meeting with my costume designer Linda Harper, my make-up artist Jean Cotter, my production designer Su Erdt and my cinematographer Judith Kaufmann. They all did very thorough research. We not only have countless archives but also private photo albums - we knew that in order to revive this time period, it could not seem stylized, but must be as precise as possible. The colors, furniture and costumes contribute on a basic visual level to relating the limitations with which women,

but also men, lived. Both sexes are prisoners of their roles, and this is expressed in the furnishings, make-up and costume.

I also looked at material from that time for the staging of the characters. People moved differently and spoke differently. They were all much more subdued and slower. I wanted to take that into account, but in a way that wouldn't appear too slow to today's audience. That was a big challenge, and we had to rehearse a lot to find a good balance.

### **What is the importance of the music?**

That time of change is reflected particularly in the music. The music was expression of rebellion and change, and I absolutely wanted songs of iconic significance to be used in the film. The score on the other hand should reflect Nora's big transformation, accompany her journey. Annette Focks and I looked for music that acknowledged the dimension of Nora's effort within her world and gave it weight.

### **Interestingly, her adversary is a woman. Why?**

As I already mentioned the characters were inspired by the research. I read a whole dissertation on the anti-suffragettes - the opponents of the right to vote in Switzerland. From today's perspective it is difficult to fathom just why countless women in 1971 fought so hard against the vote. They were often very educated women, academics, village queens, who had established themselves very well, and maybe just didn't want their cooks to have a say as well. When you look at interviews with them, you can see an almost pleasurable demeanor of submission.

It is a common mechanism for people who have no power - they just say: We don't need the power! Women speaking out against equality in eager obedience, more vehemently than most men is a phenomenon that we can still observe today. I thought a woman who sides with the opponent was more exciting, because it raises more questions. The antagonism of the men in the story is a given, it is reflected in the mentality of the time, and in the fact that whether women would finally get full citizens' rights was dependent entirely on the male voting citizens, due to our direct democracy.

### **How did you develop the other characters?**

All characters and their stories express in which way the women were disadvantaged in society and how injustice prevailed - it was not just about the vote. Hans can by law forbid Nora to work, Vroni is dependent on her daughter because her husband squandered all their money and money was a man's business. The marriage law made women greatly dependent on their husbands and in effect made them the property of their husbands - only in 1988 was it changed on the basis of the principle of the equality of woman and man! The women characters show the effects of these legal disadvantages and how they determined the lives and biographies of the women.

### **Many key positions during filming (director, writer, camera, equipment, costumes, etc.) were in women's hands. Was that your intention?**

To me my colleagues are people first and foremost, who I appreciate for their creativity and whose work I admire. They all stand out for the strength of their work and that they have a good sense of humor and a big heart. I have male colleagues who are more feminine than me or any other woman on set; then I have women on set who are really tough. The

biological sex doesn't play such a big part for me. Being a woman, being a man, these are roles you can play with, but are ultimately not that important on a fundamental human level. And yet I think it is important that women are supported. In my capacity as director I can help women get jobs, that they are given an opportunity. You just have to look at the statistics and it is evident that women remain at a disadvantage in the professional world, and that is no different in the film industry.

### **Why this story now? Is the time ripe for it?**

I recently saw a picture: An old woman holding a poster: "I can't believe I still have to protest this shit!" But we did not foresee a year ago, how extremely timely our film would be. With the rise of conservative and rightwing politics, the backlash for women and all marginalized people has of course started long before the election in America, but now it has become so painfully evident how much of our gained progress is in danger and how much more needs to be done to reach equality for all people.

To this day men as well as women are limited by their prescribed gender roles. There is a deeply rooted internalized sexism in our society. This is detrimental to our communities on economic, social, political levels and doesn't work in anyone's favor. The more equal a society is the better it does - that is a statistical fact.

You don't have to argue for equality emotionally - you must simply look at the figures, they are staggering in some countries. And Switzerland unfortunately doesn't perform very well. In a survey by *The Economist*—"The Glass Ceiling Index - The best and worst places to be a working woman"—Switzerland comes in fourth to last. The Council of States is 85% men. In my opinion, the equality of women should be at the very top of every political agenda—but it isn't.

But *The Divine Order* is also about democracy and civil courage, a very topical subject as well. Being able to vote is no matter of course, women fought hard for it, and it is a valuable prerogative that we should remember in these truly difficult times. I hope the film inspires people to do what Nora does, fight back, resist, raise their voices and make themselves heard.

## CAST

### Marie Leuenberger (Nora)



Marie Leuenberger trained at the Otto-Falckenberg-Schule in Munich. She has appeared on stage for renowned German theaters, such as the Residenztheater München, the Staatstheater Stuttgart and the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg. In addition to her roles in numerous films and television, she reads audiobooks and works on radio dramas. Her debut film was *Will You Marry Us?* for which she received the Best Actress at the World Film Festival in Montreal and the Swiss Quartz Film Award. She received the Swiss Television Award for Best Actress for "Kommissar Hunkeler - Die Augen des Ödipus". She was awarded the Best Actress in an International Narrative featurefilm at the 2017 Tribeca Film Festival for her role in "The Divine Order".

### Max Simonischek (Hans)



Max Simonischek (1982) graduated from the Mozarteum Salzburg. After first appearances at various theaters he became a permanent ensemble member at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. Further appearances at other major theaters including the Burgtheater (from 2016) followed. In film, Max Simonischek drew a lot of attention with the film "The Foster Boy". He then played leading roles in "Akte Grüninger", "Am Hang" and other film productions. He also regularly appears in television films.

### Rachel Braunschweig (Theresa)



Rachel Braunschweig received her acting diploma from the Zurich University of the Arts, was a permanent ensemble member in Hanover and Wilhelmshaven and a guest at Schauspielhaus Hamburg and toured India with Shakespeare's Henry V for the Goethe Institute. In Switzerland she appeared at the Theater St. Gallen, Lucerne Festival, Theaterhaus Gessnerallee and the Zurich Opera House, among others. Since 1995 she has appeared in film and television productions, and



regularly works as an announcer for the Swiss radio SRF, among others, in addition to realizing her own theater productions.

### **Sibylle Brunner (Vroni)**



Sibylle Brunner (1939) trained with Ellen Widmann in Zurich and Heinz Thiele in Munich. From 1995 onward she appeared on numerous stages, including the Komödie Basel, the Stadttheater Kiel, the Staatstheater Hannover and the Stadttheater Bern. She also appeared in numerous film and television productions. 2013 she made an impressive comeback to film with her leading role in "Rosie" by Marcel Gisler. She was honored with the Swiss Film Award as "Best Actress" for her role.

### **Marta Zoffoli (Graziella)**



The Italian actress Marta Zoffoli (1972) has stood in front of the camera from a young age. For instance she played in "Tre fratelli" by Francesco Rosi. She graduated from the *L'Accademia Nazionale di Danza* and the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* in Rome. Afterwards she acted in well-known Italian television series. Since the early 1990's she has played on various stages and increasingly on screen, including recently in Woody Allen's "To Rome with Love."

## FILMMAKERS

### Petra Volpe (Writer & Director)



Screenwriter and director Petra Volpe studied at the Film Academy Konrad Wolf in Potsdam Babelsberg. During her studies she wrote and directed several short films. Since completing her diploma in 2003 she has worked as an independent writer and director. Petra Volpe lives in Berlin and New York. Petra Volpe's debut film "Dreamland" was released in Swiss cinemas in the spring of 2014 after a successful festival tour and was nominated for four Swiss Film Awards.

### FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTION)

2016	The Divine Order	Writer, Director	Feature Film
2015	Heidi	Writer	Feature Film
2013	Dreamland	Writer, Director	Feature Film
2012	Lovely Louise	Writer	Feature Film
2011	Ne Pesce Ne Ucello	Writer, Director	Documentary Film
2009	Frühling im Herbst	Writer, Director	Television Film
2007	Kleine Fische	Writer, Director	Television Film
2006	Schönes Wochenende	Writer, Director	Television Film
2004	La Fidanzata	Writer, Director	Short Film
2003	Meier Marilyn	Writer	Television Film
2002	Schlorkbabies	Director	Short Film
2001	Crevetten	Writer, Director	Short Film
2000	Der Kuss	Writer, Director	Short Film

### AWARDS

- 2014 Dreamland: Four nominations for the Swiss Film Award (Ursina Lardi received Best Actress Award). German Camera Award: Judith Kaufmann (Camera) was nominated and Hansjörg Weissbrich received award for Best Editing. Günter Rohrbach Film Award: Best Film and Best Cinematography.
- 2010 Frühling im Herbst: Main Prize for Best German TV Film & Student Award of the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg, Television Film Festival Baden-Baden. Swissperform Award for the Best Female Performer (Therese Affolter).
- 2001 Crevetten: First Prize at the Short Film Festival Burgdorf. Jury Diploma for Best Student Film at the International Film Festival in Kiev. Action Light Award at the Locarno International Film Festival 2001.
- 2000 Der Kuss: Best Student Film at the Gay Film Festival Bratislava. Jury's Special Mention Award, European Competition, Festival Cinématographiques D'Automne Gardanne

### **Judith Kaufmann (Cinematographer)**



Judith Kaufmann was born in Stuttgart (D) in 1962. After training as a photographer she worked as a camera assistant for various productions. She has been working as a cinematographer since 1991 and has received numerous awards for her work. She is one of the most successful and most sought-after camera women in Germany.

### **Hansjörg Weissbrich (Editor)**



Hansjörg Weissbrich studied music, French and Theater, Film and Television Studies and has been working as a film editor since 1995. In addition to his close collaboration with Hans-Christian Schmid, he was also responsible for the editing of films by Oscar-winner Florian Gallenberger, Marco Kreuzpaintner, Bille August and Leander Haussmann.

For his work, Hansjörg has received numerous awards, most recently in 2014 he received the German Film Award for "Zwei Leben" and the German Camera Award for "Dreamland".

### **Annette Focks (Music)**



Annette Focks started music lessons as a young child of 5. She studied at the Conservatory Cologne and completed a degree in Composition for Film and Television at the University for Music and Performing Arts in Munich. Since the mid-1990's Annette Focks has composed the music for more than 100 films and has received various awards. In addition to her extensive work for film and television, Annette Focks writes concert works for orchestra and chamber music ensembles.

## **Reto Schaerli & Lukas Hobi (Producers)**

Lukas Hobi and Reto Schaerli head Zodiac Pictures, an independent production company with its headquarters in Zurich and Lucerne (Switzerland). Their production "Ready, Steady, Charlie!" (2003) became the most successful Swiss film in Swiss cinemas in decades. 2013 the company brought the sequel "Ready, Steady, Ommm!" to cinemas. Zodiac Pictures also produced films including "Breakout" (2006), "Tell" (2007), and "Bold Heroes" (2010), which received numerous awards. In 2013, Zodiac produced the anthology film "Dreamland" by "The Divine Order" director Petra Volpe.

Together with Jacob Claussen and Uli Putz, Lukas Hobi and Reto Schaerli in the same year produced "The Little Ghost", a live-action version of the classic children's book by Otfried Preussler. The film delighted more than a million moviegoers in Germany and was sold to 30 countries. Zodiac Pictures had great success with Alain Gsponer's film "Heidi" (2015), which was a huge box office success in Switzerland, and received three nominations for the Swiss Film Awards and won the German Film Award Lola for "Best Children's Film". Currently Manuel Flurin Hendry's adaptation of the famous "Papa Moll" comics as well as "The Little Witch" by Michael Schaerer, another Otfried Preussler adaptation in cooperation with Uli Putz and Jakob Claussen, are in production.

# The Divine Order

A film by Petra Volpe

## CAST

Nora	Marie Leuenberger
Hans	Max Simonischek
Theresa	Rachel Braunschweig
Vroni	Sibylle Brunner
Graziella	Marta Zoffoli
Magda	Bettina Stucky
Gottfried	Peter Freiburghaus
Mrs. Dr. Wipf	Therese Affolter
Hanna	Ella Rumpf
Werner	Nicholas Ofczarek
Indra	Sofia Helin

## CREW

Writer & Director	Petra Volpe
Producers	Reto Schaerli Lukas Hobi
Cinematographer	Judith Kaufmann
Editor	Hansjörg Weissbrich
Music	Annette Focks
Production Designer	Su Erdt
Costume	Linda Harper
Make-up	Jean Cotter
Sound	Patrick Storck
Head of Production	Claude Witz
Production Manager	Sarah Bossard
Casting	Ruth Hirschfeld Corinna Glaus

A Zodiac Films Production

Switzerland • 2017 • 97 minutes • Digital • 1:2.35 (Cinemascope) • Dolby Digital 5.1  
In Swiss-German with English subtitles

**A Zeitgeist Films Release  
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