

the book thief

Based on the beloved bestselling novel, *THE BOOK THIEF* tells the inspiring story of a spirited and courageous young girl named Liesel, who transforms the lives of everyone around her when she is sent to live with a foster family in World War II Germany.

For Liesel, the power of words and of imagination becomes a means of escape – and even joy – from the tumultuous events enveloping her and everyone she knows and loves. She is *THE BOOK THIEF*'s heart and soul.

Indeed, it is heart and soul – as well as triumph and perseverance—that drive the film, which is rich in themes and characters that will resonate for every generation. A moving and poignant portrait of the resiliency of the human spirit, this life-affirming tale contrasts innocence (as embodied by Liesel) with the pervasive tyranny that marked the times and her homeland.

BEGINNINGS

The story and its characters sprang from the imagination of author Markus Zusak whose novel *The Book Thief* was published in his native Australia in 2005 and throughout the rest of the world in 2006. The book has sold eight million copies worldwide, held a place on *The New York Times* best-seller list for almost seven years and has been translated into over 30 languages. Additionally, it has won over a dozen literary awards, held the number-one position at Amazon.com, and appeared on numerous best-of-the-year lists.

Zusak's book and director Brian Percival's (*Downton Abbey*) film adaptation tell the story of Liesel (Sophie Nélisse), who is sent to live with foster parents, the kind-

hearted Hans Hubermann (Geoffrey Rush) and his prickly wife Rosa (Emily Watson). Reeling from the tragic death of her younger brother only days before and timid around the new “parents” she’s just met, Liesel struggles to fit in – at home and at school, where her classmates taunt her as “dummkopf” due to her inability to read.

With the single-minded obsession of a budding scholar, Liesel is determined to change that. And she gets help. Her empathetic “Papa,” Hans works day and night with Liesel as she pores over her first tome, *The Gravedigger’s Handbook*, which she walked off with following her brother’s funeral – an impulsive act of thievery that will have profound consequences for the young heroine.

Liesel’s love for reading and her growing appreciation for her new family are heightened when she befriends a new guest in the Hubermann’s home – a Jewish refugee named Max (Ben Schnetzer), who shares her passion for books and encourages Liesel to expand her powers of observation, even as he hides from the Nazis in a dark and dank basement. Equally transformative is her burgeoning friendship with a young neighbor, Rudy (Nico Liersch), who teases Liesel about her book thievery even as he finds himself falling in love with her.

These friendships, along with her exponentially growing love of books provide both an escape and a pathway to shaping Liesel’s destiny. She comes to appreciate not only the power of words, but a power *beyond* words.

Author Markus Zusak says he was inspired to write the book by stories told to him by his parents when he was a young boy in Australia. “It was like a piece of Europe came into our kitchen when my mom and dad told tales about growing up in Germany and Austria, the bombings of Munich, and about the prisoners the Nazis marched through the streets,” says the author. “I didn’t realize it at the time but those stories led me to want to become a writer.

“It was a time of extreme danger and evil and I was inspired by the acts of kindness during these very dark times,” Zusak continues. “That’s what **THE BOOK THIEF** is about: finding beauty in even the ugliest of circumstances. One of the central themes of the story is that Hitler is destroying people with his words, and Liesel is stealing back the words, and she’s writing her own story with them.”

The novel's scope and its triumphant young heroine drew the attention of producers Karen Rosenfelt and Ken Blancato, who since its publication have worked to bring it the big screen. "I couldn't put the book down," says Rosenfelt. "It was so life affirming. I was struck by how Markus brought Liesel to life, and by her fortitude, strength, abilities and hunger to read and understand the power of words."

During the rise of the Nazi Party, freedom of expression was severely curtailed. Books were being burned. "The German people were being told what to feel, what to think, and what to read," says Rosenfelt. "In spite of these seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Liesel, by learning to read, is empowered to be creative, think on her own, and not parrot the ideas of others."

A big step forward in the film's development was the hiring of screenwriter Michael Petroni (*The Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader*) to adapt Zusak's 580-page tome. When he was approached to write the screenplay, Petroni was already, he says, "a great fan of the novel."

"Markus Zusak has a prodigious talent," Petroni continues. "He has written a book that will be remembered as a classic. So, in adapting it to the screen, I first had to overcome my intimidation. The greatest challenge was choosing what to eliminate. It is a virtual treasure trove of wonderfully touching scenes, which is what drew me to the material in the first place."

There were several other challenges to be met. Petroni adds: "The book is written out of chronological order, with the narrator often intriguing the reader with tidbits of information that later play back into the story. My first job was to unravel it chronologically and then restructure scenes to have the most dramatic impact for a movie. This meant having to sometimes alter the chronology of the book; I doubt people will notice but these kinds of changes are always tricky to accomplish. I'm honored that Markus trusted me with his book."

Petroni says what resonated most with him, apart from the story's inventiveness, was that *THE BOOK THIEF* is a testament to endurance. "It speaks to the strength of spirit in the human condition which every individual can relate to and be inspired by. And of course, it is about the power of words. What writer can resist that?"

As Petroni continued to fine-tune the screenplay, the search for a director began. “Based on Brian Percival’s extraordinary work in British television and his passion for this project, we were very eager to meet with him,” says Elizabeth Gabler, president of Fox 2000 Pictures. “Brian came to the meeting with a book he had created, consisting of imagery that depicted his vision for the film, and we were elated to have found the perfect director.”

Zusak had the opportunity to meet with Percival early in the process, and immediately sparked to the filmmaker. “After our meeting, as we said our goodbyes, Brian pulled me a bit closer and said: ‘I’m not going to let you down,’” remembers the author. “And I loved the integrity of that moment and how genuine Brian was.”

With *Downton Abbey*’s global success, Percival was a much sought after director. “At one point there were five scripts a day coming in and it was impossible to read them all,” he says, “so I would read the first 30 pages of each script and I’d know if it was a project of interest.” Percival says he was just a few pages into *The Book Thief* when he knew he had to make the film. “I was so moved by the novel. It is such a positive, uplifting story, and I loved that the central character was a young lady who, though she has nothing and seemingly no future when we meet her, could not only survive but thrive.”

Moreover, Percival personally connected to the story. “I come from quite a poor background. We started out with very little, and the desire was always to try and achieve something, which, in my case, was to make films. Later when I went to art school I remember how people taught me to look, particularly through books, at the world in a different way and so consequently live life in a different way. I related to Liesel in these ways.”

Percival also embraced the idea that power of words can both destroy and heal, depending on how we use them. It’s a theme that runs through the story. “Liesel begins to understand words and their power, and she realizes that you can use words for good as well as for evil,” he explains. “This allows her to change her life and make choices that she would not have had before she picked up a book. That’s the key to her spirit.”

THE SEARCH FOR LIESEL

Although the filmmakers had discussed some casting ideas for the roles of Hans and Rosa, they decided to first focus on finding their Liesel. The casting process began in the UK, and soon spread across Europe, the United States and Australia. Says Rosenfelt: “Liesel is a difficult character to cast. We were looking for so many qualities: she had to be accessible, real, curious, spirited, innocent and intelligent.”

Percival continues: “We needed somebody who one moment you want to put your arms around and try to protect from the difficult world she’s living in, but at the same time you can expect a kick in the groin for doing it. A really ballsy kid but at the same time really vulnerable. We had to find somebody who could convey Liesel’s incredible spirit. It’s that spirit that makes her endure and even flourish.”

All in all it was a pretty tall order for a child actor, who, in addition, would have to be able to age on screen from 11 to 17.

The filmmakers saw almost a thousand candidates for the role. Zusak himself had a casting idea that proved impressively on target. He had attended a showing of a Canadian motion picture *Monsieur Lazhar*, which was nominated for an Academy Award® for foreign language film, and its young star won a Genie Award for Best Supporting Actress. That acclaimed actress was Sophie Nélisse, whose indelible performance earned her many new fans, including the author of *The Book Thief*.

“Sophie’s work in the film was amazing,” says Zusak, “and as I walked out the cinema I thought she’d be great as Liesel. That was the first and only time I’ve assumed the mantle of a casting director, and I contacted the filmmakers and said, ‘I’ve seen this girl...’ – but of course they had already planned to meet her!”

While Sophie had yet to formally do a screen test, Rosenfelt remembers that, “I think in our hearts we all knew she was Liesel as soon as we watched her tape.”

A potential obstacle to Sophie taking on the role presented itself via another of her passions. A gifted athlete as well as thespian, she had started doing gymnastics at age three. By age six she was training 16 hours a week, and at 12, she was putting in as much as 30 hours a week. Sophie had achieved national prominence and had her eye on the Rio Olympics, when she got the call from her agent to test for THE BOOK THIEF.

At first, Sophie was reluctant to pursue the role because her heart was set on competing in Rio, but when an injury threatened to shatter her Olympics dream she read the script, fell in love with the character, and was excited about meeting the filmmakers in Los Angeles.

Putting her boundless energy and focus into preparing for the screen test, Sophie says, “I screamed like crazy when my agent called to say I was going to play Liesel. I was so happy because I like the story so much. Even though it is set during wartime, the darkness is made bright by the nice things people do for each other. Liesel survives the challenges because of her will, and because she learns to read she has control over her life and how she thinks. The story makes you see things in a different way.”

Having spent so many years training in competitive gymnastics, Sophie immediately understood Liesel’s commitment and dedication to learning how to read: “Reading is Liesel’s life. When she’s with her books she manages to forget all the difficulties in her life. Reading allows Liesel’s imagination to blossom and helps her lead a better life.”

From the moment Sophie tested, she won the admiration of hearts of her new family of filmmakers. “I’ve never come across a child with that much raw talent, instinct and an awareness of everyone’s emotions around her. I find it amazing that a 13 year old can actually know that much,” says Percival. Adds Rosenfelt: “What I responded to in Sophie’s performance, and where Brian took her, is that it’s just so credible and real. When Sophie, as Liesel, cried on set, we all cried. It is a very powerful performance. Sophie works extremely hard at her craft and she really impressed us all.”

A NEW FAMILY

With Sophie Nélisse set to portray Liesel, the filmmakers moved quickly to lock in their long-discussed choices, Geoffrey Rush and Emily Watson, to portray Liesel’s new parents, Hans and Rosa Hubermann. Percival notes that from the start, the consummate actors were in sync with his vision for the film. “I wanted to play everything very naturally, and that’s a style with which Geoffrey and Emily are very comfortable. Their work really transcends acting. They *own* the characters, they *are* the

characters, and they all fit together beautifully. In working with Geoffrey and Emily, Sophie has probably had the best master class in the world because she absorbed the way they approach scenes and think about their roles, and you could see that rubbing off on her.”

From *The King’s Speech* to the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, the Oscar®-winning Rush has delivered a series of towering performances. With *THE BOOK THIEF*, he became Hans Hubermann. Rush credits the book and script with providing the initial critical path to Hans. “I think the book is one of the great classics of contemporary literature, and though I knew I wanted to play Hans after reading the script, the novel inevitably became a bible because it offers so much internal observation of the character, and his rhythm, pace and inspiration.” (Zusak notes that Rush “knew Hans so well, that at one point I thought he knew it better than I did – and that was a real thrill.”)

Rush credits Percival with providing critical context to the dark times in which these people endeavor to not only survive but maintain all that they cherish. “Brian is an extraordinarily sensitive man to events and issues in the screenplay that are disturbing and overwhelming. We’re looking at probably one of the worst chapters in history, not just in Germany but the whole nature of the Second World War, and he brings an extraordinary daily reality to what was going on.”

A house painter by trade, Hans’ constant companion is an old accordion that emits warm, wheezy chords of music. He appears to be an uncomplicated man, but is as complex as any Rush has essayed. “I think Hans’ greatest gift is that he has a very acute emotional intelligence,” which leads to an almost immediate and emotional rapport with Liesel, he explains. “Hans can read in Liesel that she’s been through very difficult times and he tries to find ways to draw her out, sometimes by playing the accordion which he loves.”

More significantly, Hans quickly recognizes her desire to learn to read. He encourages this pursuit, which becomes a moving element of their deepening father-daughter relationship. He patiently reads with Liesel the book she had stolen at her brother’s funeral, *The Grave Digger’s Handbook*, and from there works with Liesel to

create a unique dictionary made up of columns of words and definitions painted on a basement wall.

Says Rush: “Hans responds to the glimmer of energy Liesel has buried inside her and helps bring it to the surface. She starts to love language and words for the hidden powers they have, instead of the poisonous oratory and rhetoric surrounding them. Liesel finds an escape – a spiritual retreat in the magic of language. Once you understand the potential of language you can understand the potential of ideas outside of your own experience. I hope *THE BOOK THIEF* will have a similar effect on an audience. To me, it’s about discovering the value of empathy.”

Rush and Sophie developed an instant rapport that, says Rush, fed into the dynamic between their on-screen characters. “The great pleasure of doing this has been working with Sophie, who’s such a playful actress,” he says. “She’s extraordinary to be around, and I loved that in between takes of very dramatic scenes she would be playful. But when it came to playing the emotional scenes, I was flabbergasted by how focused and how emotionally true she was.”

Hans’ wife, Rosa, is an equally rich, surprising and complex character that combines a harsh exterior with well-hidden inner warmth. Rosa regularly calls her husband, “*saukerl!*” – German for filthy pig. “In some ways, Rosa is caustic and seemingly unforgiving,” says Watson. “She’s harsh with Hans and Liesel, not the sort of person you’d expect to become a foster parent.”

Over time and with her growing love for Liesel, Rosa is revealed to be a caring mother to her and a loving, if impatient wife to Hans. Says Watson: “Rosa has an inner goodness that almost always has her doing the right thing.” Watson gave considerable thought to Rosa’s backstory, particularly her marriage. “I think Rosa was young and beautiful once, and probably more soft-spoken, but the times have changed her. She seems like she’s angry and disappointed about pretty much everything in her life including her husband, with whom she’s at best dismissive, at times. But their love for each other is still evident.”

Having previously worked with Rush in *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, Watson enjoyed their second collaboration: “Geoffrey’s onscreen outpouring of tenderness towards Liesel is so very lovely,” she notes.

For Percival, working with Watson seemed destined to happen, because her film debut in the acclaimed *Breaking the Waves* was so moving and powerful that it led him to realize he wanted to direct films. Watson was busy at home with her children when she received the script for *THE BOOK THIEF*. “I sat down to read it that night, and I wept through it,” she remembers. “It was the best script I’ve read in years.” She was at once drawn to the idea that reading opens up a world of instant riches: “It’s a love letter to the power of story and the transcendence of story and storytelling and how it saves lives. That’s an amazing thing.”

Another new member of the Hubermann household is Max, a Jewish refugee who arrives there, terribly ill and seeking shelter from the Nazis’ relentless pursuit. Hans, fulfilling a promise he had made years earlier to Max’s father, to whom Hans owed his life, takes in the young man.

Liesel’s fascination with her new housemate is heightened because they’re kindred spirits -- both are displaced and without their families – and they form a powerful bond. Their mutual love of books becomes as critical to their survival as food and shelter. Max teaches Liesel far more than just improving her reading skills; he teaches her how to use words, and thus gives her eyes to the world around her. From his new home in the Hubermann’s dark and sometimes freezing basement, Max opens up a new world for Liesel. She becomes his messenger to what’s happening in the world outside. Even her descriptions of everyday things, like the color of the sky and types of cloud formations, become poetic as Liesel learns from Max the descriptive power of language.

Ben Schnetzer, who portrays Max, was in his final year at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London when he was cast in the role and feels blessed to be part of what he calls “the type of project that makes you want to be an actor.” To portray the starving refugee, Schnetzer lost 37 pounds in seven weeks – and his first meal back home, following the shoot’s completion was a large cheese pizza and two sodas.

“Max becomes almost a mentor to Liesel and he finds redemption and strength in the opportunity to open up a world to her through literature and words,” Schnetzer continues. “Their symbiosis gets Max through each day and into the next.”

Another transformative figure in Liesel’s journey is her young neighbor and schoolmate Rudy Steiner. Liesel and Rudy become fast friends and do everything together, including stealing (“borrowing,” Liesel insists) books. In fact, it is Rudy who nicknames Liesel, “The Book Thief.”

While Liesel’s passion is books, Rudy dreams of being a champion racer. His idol is African-American Olympic hero Jesse Owens, who achieved international fame by winning four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Rudy even goes so far as to cover himself with black paint (which he stole from Hans’ work cart), in honor of his idol – a choice that’s none too popular with a town being consumed with the doctrine of Aryan supremacy.

Young German actor Nico Liersch describes Rudy as, “always happy, nice to everyone, and never sad,” and that description fits also the actor who plays him. Sophie and Nico became close friends during production – though Sophie would squeal with laughter through almost every take while shooting scenes where Rudy tries to kiss Liesel – much to the crew’s amusement.

THE ALL-SEEING NARRATOR

Another central character is unseen --THE BOOK THIEF’s omniscient narrator, Death, whose caustic musings about the human condition and his role in it are unpredictable, blunt, witty and unexpectedly relatable. Speaking with a calm and meted authority, Death’s observations are all the more revealing, given that the world of the 1930s and ‘40s Germany was tailor-made for him.

Zusak made Death his narrator because, the author notes, “it just made sense. Everyone says Death and War are like best friends, and so who better to be telling a story set during wartime than Death?”

Death rarely takes much of an interest in the lives he’s about to erase. Liesel is a notable exception. As Death tells us: “I make it a policy to avoid the living...well, except

sometimes I can't help myself...I get interested...Liesel Meminger caught me...and I cared.”

Percival wrestled with how to depict the character before and during production. A key idea came from the novel, as he explains: “One of the strongest lines from the book that stayed with me went was something like, ‘If you want to know what Death looks like, look in the mirror’ – although Markus put it far more eloquently than that! That seemed to me to be the point; Death is in all of us, there is no escape. However, the most overwhelming feeling after reading the novel is that Death is not necessarily something we should be frightened of. That's not to say we welcome it, but that it does not mean it has to be a terrible, horrific experience.”

A casting decision for the voice of Death proved elusive, even as principal photography was well underway. “We had many ideas but no one definitive,” says Percival. “We just knew Death had to be warm, witty, wry and have the welcoming but knowledgeable nature of someone we would trust and be drawn to.”

After a long search, Death was given a voice: Roger Allam, an English actor known primarily for his stage work. “Roger's warm, velvety soft voice was perfect,” Percival explains. I have always admired his work, so we tested with him and the response was very positive. I was delighted.”

Percival discussed the character with Allam but notes that their vision for the voice solidified “once I had shown Roger the (almost) finished film. He got what I was after immediately. All of the characteristics required became apparent just from the viewing.”

THE BOOK THIEF's supporting cast includes the noted German actors Barbara Auer as Ilsa, the mayor's wife, who encourages Liesel to read from her extensive home library; Rainer Bock as the Burgermeister (mayor), whose embrace of Nazism hides a dark secret; Oliver Stokowski as Rudy's father, Alex Steiner; Matthias Matschke as Wolfgang, a Nazi Party member and acquaintance of Hans'; and Heike Makatsch as Liesel's birth mother.

MAESTRO

A critical element in establishing and reinforcing THE BOOK THIEF's themes and characters is the score. Long before cameras started rolling, the filmmakers set their sights on a composer whose majestic achievements in film scoring are unparalleled: John Williams.

Throughout a career spanning six decades, Williams has become one of America's most accomplished and successful composers for film and for the concert stage, and he remains one of our nation's most distinguished and contributive musical voices.

He has composed the music and served as music director for more than 100 films, including all six *Star Wars* films, the first three *Harry Potter* films, *Superman*, *JFK*, *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Home Alone*. Williams' 40-year artistic partnership with director Steven Spielberg has included many of Hollywood's most acclaimed and successful films, including *Schindler's List*, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Jaws*, *Jurassic Park*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the *Indiana Jones* films, *Saving Private Ryan* and *Lincoln*.

Like so many film and music enthusiasts around the world, Percival was a huge admirer of Williams' work, and feels extraordinarily fortunate to have the iconic composer weave his magic through THE BOOK THIEF. "I was amazed and thrilled when John agreed to compose the score," he says. "I grew up watching Steven Spielberg's films scored by John. They had a big influence and attraction to me. I spent hours sitting in cinemas, enjoying the ride and loving every minute. The thought that I am now actually working with this great man is still quite beyond belief. He is a legend, a genius and a true gentleman. I am in awe."

For several years, Williams has chosen to compose film scores exclusively for Mr. Spielberg. THE BOOK THIEF is his first film score for another filmmaker since 2004's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. The legendary artist accepted the new assignment because, "I was captivated by *The Book Thief*. First, by the book itself, with its originality and imagination, and then by the film, done with such tenderness and simple humanity by director Brian Percival. When Mr. Percival invited me to compose

the music for his project, I was delighted at being offered the privilege of creating a score that might be worthy of the notions and ideas contained within this illuminating film.”

“John saw this film as a departure from some of the work he has done in the past, including the huge, fanfare scores for which he is best known,” adds Percival. “His score for *THE BOOK THIEF* is a very emotional one. I think that challenge appealed to him.”

Williams and Percival agreed that much of the film’s score would eschew big orchestrations, opting instead for music characterized by what Percival calls “a simple, honest beauty.”

“The images in the film reflect the innocence and humble nature of the story we are telling,” the director continues. “It would be wrong to create a grand score that would overshadow the simple lives of the ordinary people of Himmel Street, and John understood this. He has written a score that is beautiful and perfectly suited to this approach, and it moved me to tears.”

HIMMEL STREET

Shooting on *THE BOOK THIEF* began at Studio Babelsberg, in Berlin, Germany. There, the unit used sound stages, where production designer Simon Elliott (*The Iron Lady*) crafted the Hubermann’s House on the fictional Himmel Street. (“Himmel is the German word for “heaven” or “sky.”) When not on the stages, the production filmed on the studio backlot, where Elliott built the exterior of the house, one of several in the neighborhood. Elliott also revamped Babelsberg’s backlot into the story’s Munich Street.

Elliott credits Percival and the design team for inspiration, as well as Zakus’ vivid prose. “I’d read the book and absolutely loved it,” says Elliott. “I knew the potential for designs was going to be enormous. Markus writes very visually. He references colors all the time, and his writing has many descriptions that were very helpful.”

The filmmakers scouted the breadth of the country in search of Himmel Street. The importance of getting it right was central to Elliott’s vision. “It is such a popular book that everyone has their interpretation of how Himmel Street should look. Germany is a very progressive country and is developing very fast so many of the historic smaller

rural areas have been modernized. We found little bits of Himmel Street all over the place but we just didn't want to compromise. So we built it.”

Elliott explains that understanding the demographics of the characters living on the fictional street was key to creating an authentic space. “They're not wealthy, nor are they out-and-out poor; they are working people so the buildings are a little run down, and not at all grand.”

Elliott and his team spent ten weeks building a large hill at one end of Himmel Street during some of the coldest weather Berlin had seen in years. The control afforded by building the street from scratch allowed Elliott to create the shocking aftermath of a bombing raid, for which they added 1,000 tons of rubble.

Inside 33 Himmel Street, Elliott and director of photography Florian Ballhaus, ASC (*Red*, *The Devil Wears Prada*) created a warm and inviting space. “Historical films are so often drained of color, but there is so much color in the book I thought it was important to maintain that, in order to give the film depth and richness. There is great heart to *THE BOOK THIEF*. It's a very human story and although it takes place against the backdrop of a difficult period, it's about loving relationships. By giving a richness of color to the home and to the film overall, we reflect that warmth and the good that can come from a terrible situation.”

The basement set, where so much of the story's emotional moments unfold, presented formidable design challenges. “We knew the ceiling had to be low and that the walls would be covered in Liesel's handwriting and dictionary. To give the space some depth we put the staircase in the middle of the room, enabling the camera to move more freely. The presence of items such as stored vegetables, pickling jars, and Hans' paint cans, brushes and tools connects the space to the rest of the house.”

Midway through the shoot, the production relocated to Görlitz, the easternmost town in Germany, located on the Lusatian Neisse River in the Bundesland of Saxony. It was here that production captured one of the film's key set pieces, in which the German Student Association of Nazi Germany ceremonially burn books by authors whose writings were viewed as subversive or whose ideologies undermined the National Socialist administration.

The emotionally charged, large-scale sequence finds Liesel bearing witness to the destruction of thousands of books as the townspeople cheer. In the aftermath of this shocking display, Liesel, “the book thief,” rescues a single volume, its pages still smoking with heat.

Over three nights, with temperatures plummeting to minus-two degrees Fahrenheit, cast and crew, and 450 extras, wrapped in blankets when the cameras weren’t rolling, worked through the night to capture a dark time in global history with chilling authenticity.

The square was dressed with huge swathes of swastikas – unsettling emblems in today’s Germany. In fact strict laws in the country prohibit the display of Nazi paraphernalia in public places, so the filmmakers had to obtain special permission to dress the town square. The production also shot at Villa Herz, a 120-year-old historical house in Wannsee, which doubled for the Burgermeister’s Mansion, from which Liesel borrows books.

After production wrapped and Percival and his post-production teams began their critical work, Zusak was asked about his hopes for what audiences take away from the film based upon his book. Again, he says, it all comes down to the power of storytelling, be it in literature or film – and most importantly, the ability within all of us to persevere and even triumph in the face of the most formidable obstacles.

“I think people will find *THE BOOK THIEF* moving because the characters somehow find beauty and selflessness and do amazing things despite incredibly trying conditions.”

ABOUT THE CAST

GEOFFREY RUSH (Hans Hubermann), an acclaimed actor who started his career in Australian theatre, has appeared in over 70 theatrical productions and more than 20 feature films.

Rush was catapulted to fame with his starring role in director Scott Hicks' feature *Shine*, for which he won: an Academy Award for Best Actor, a Golden Globe®, SAG™,

BAFTA, Film Critics' Circle of Australia Award, Broadcast Film Critics, AFT and New York and Los Angeles Film Critics' Awards.

In addition, Rush won an Emmy®, a Golden Globe and a Screen Actors Guild Award® for his captivating performance as the title character in HBO Films' *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*.

He also earned an Academy Award nomination for his performance in Philip Kaufman's *Quills*, in addition to the Academy Award nomination and Golden Globe nomination for his role in *Shakespeare in Love*.

His recent film credits include Weinstein Company's *The King's Speech*, in which he starred as the speech therapist Lionel Logue and also served as executive producer. He won the BAFTA award for Best Supporting Actor and earned an Academy Award nomination, a Golden Globe nomination and a SAG nomination. The film won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

Rush was most recently seen in the *Eye of the Storm* for which he received a AACTA nomination for Best Actor and FFCA Awards.

His upcoming projects include Giuseppe Tornatore's *The Best Offer*.

His other film credits include *The Warrior's Way*, *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole*, *Munich*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, *Candy*, *Intolerable Cruelty*, *Finding Nemo*, *Ned Kelly*, *Lantana*, *Frida*, *The Tailor of Panama*, *House on Haunted Hill*, *Mystery Men*, *Les Miserables*, *A Little Bit of Soul*, *Children of the Revolution*, *On Our Selection*, *Twelfth Night*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, *Starstruck*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, which have collectively grossed more than \$2.7 billion worldwide.

Rush received a degree in English at the University of Queensland, then studied at the Jaques Lecoq School of Mime, Movement and Theater in Paris. Returning to Australia, he starred in the theatre production of *King Lear*. He also co-starred with Mel Gibson in *Waiting for Godot*.

In 2009 Rush won a Tony Award for Best Leading Actor in a Play for his acclaimed performance as the ailing king in Ionesco's comedy *Exit The King*.

Rush recently starred in the stage productions of *The Diary of a Madman*, at The Brooklyn Academy of Music, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, at Her Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, all of which received rave reviews.

He was a principle member of Jim Sharman's pioneering Lighthouse Ensemble in the early 1980s playing leading roles in many classics. His work on stage was honored with the Sydney Critics Circle Award for Most Outstanding Performance, the Variety Club Award for Best Actor and the 1990 Victorian Green Room Award for his performance in Neil Armfield's *The Diary of a Madman*. He also received Best Actor nominations from the Sydney Critics' Circle Awards for his starring roles in Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and David Mamet's *Oleanna*. In 1994 he received the prestigious Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award for his work in theatre.

In 2010 Rush founded the Australian Academy Cinema Television Arts Awards, considered the Australian Oscars, for which he currently serves as president. The voting is decided by members of the Australian Academy, making them the highest achievement in Australian screen society. In 2012, he was named Australian of The Year for his contribution to the arts, in addition to being part of the "Big 4," in Australia, the four living Oscar Winners. He was recently nominated for the 30th Annual Green Room Award.

Rush is an ambassador for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and UNICEF Australia, as well as patron of the Melbourne International Film Festival.

He lives in Melbourne with his wife, Jane, and their two children.

Over the last few decades, **EMILY WATSON** (Rosa Hubermann) has become one of the entertainment industry's most acclaimed actresses. She first caught the world's attention for her memorable performance as Bess in Lars Von Trier's *Breaking The Waves*, her first feature film. For her heartbreaking performance, she received Oscar and Golden Globe Award nominations and won the New York Film Critics Circle Award and the Felix Award for Best Actress, and the London Film Critics Circle Award for British Newcomer of the Year in 1997.

Watson received her second Oscar and Golden Globe nominations, in addition to SAG and BAFTA nominations for Best Actress in 1999, for her riveting performance as Jackie in October Films' *Hilary and Jackie*, the poignant and tragic story of famed classical cellist Jacqueline du Pre, directed by Anand Tucker.

This past year, Watson starred in three exceptional films. The first, *Oranges & Sunshine*, was adapted from the memoir *Empty Cradles* and tells the true story of Margaret Humphreys, a social worker who uncovered one of the most significant social scandals in recent times. She was also seen as a mother of a son who leaves her behind when he goes off to war in Steven Spielberg's Golden Globe and Oscar nominated *War Horse*. On television, Watson starred in the Sundance Channel's original film, *Appropriate Adult*, which centers on the untold story of Janet Leach and her role in uncovering the crimes of murderous real-life couple Fred and Rosemary West. Her performance garnered rave reviews and Golden Globe and SAG nominations for Best Actress in a Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television.

Watson most recently starred in *Anna Karenina*, alongside Jude Law and Keira Knightley, and in *Some Girl(s)*, written by Neil LaBute. Her upcoming credits include *Little Boy*, a film that tells the story of a young American boy who works to bring his father back from World War II.

Her previous film credits include Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche*; the ensemble drama *Fireflies in the Garden*, opposite Julia Roberts and Willem Dafoe; *Miss Potter*, with Renee Zellweger and Ewan McGregor; *Wah-Wah*; *The Proposition*, with Guy Pearce, Liam Neeson, and John Hurt; *Crusade*; Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*; *Separate Lies*, with Tom Wilkinson and Rupert Everett; *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, for which she received a Golden Globe nomination for her performance as Anne Sellers; Paul Thomas Anderson's *Punch-Drunk Love*; *Red Dragon*, the prequel to *Silence of the Lambs*; Robert Altman's *Gosford Park*; Tim Robbin's *Cradle Will Rock*; as the title character in Alan Parker's adaptation of Frank McCourt's Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, *Angela's Ashes*; and Alan Rudolph's *Trixie*, in which she starred with Nick Nolte. She also starred with John Turturro in *The Luzhin Defense*, directed by Marleen

Gorris and based on the Nobokov novel; Jim Sheridan's *The Boxer*, with Daniel Day-Lewis; and *Metroland*, with Christian Bale, based on the Julian Barnes novel.

Watson's television credits include the Lifetime Television Movie *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*, in which she starred opposite Dermot Mulroney and Gretchen Mol. The film, based on the best-selling novel by Kim Edwards, follows a father as he separates his son from his twin sister at birth to prevent him and the mother from knowing she was born with Down syndrome. She also starred as Maggie Tulliver in the acclaimed BBC Masterpiece Theatre production of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*.

A veteran of the London stage, Watson's theatre credits include *Three Sisters*, *The Children's Hour*, at the Royal National Theatre, and *The Lady From The Sea*. In the fall of 2002, Watson starred at the Donmar Warehouse Theatre in two concurrent productions: *Uncle Vanya* (as Sonya) and *Twelfth Night* (as Viola), both directed by Academy Award-winning director Sam Mendes. These critically acclaimed productions also ran in a very limited engagement at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York City. She has also worked extensively with the Royal Shakespeare Company in such productions as *Jovial Crew*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Changeling*.

SOPHIE NÉLISSE (Liesel) is best known for her Genie Award-winning performance in *Monsieur Lazhar*. The film was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film of the Year in 2012, and Sophie won the Canadian Jutra Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance.

Sophie, who is bilingual, appeared in the film *Ésimésac*, and in the Quebec television comedy *Les Parents*.

Prior to deciding to devote her energies to an acting career, Sophie was a skilled gymnast, training for many years, and at the highest levels.

BEN SCHNETZER (Max) began acting at age 11, playing the Artful Dodger in a production of *Oliver!* He studied acting at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

Schnetzer made his film debut in the indie drama *Ben's Plan* in 2007. For television, he landed his first series-regular role in 2010 in the ABC mystery drama *Happy Town*, in which a deputy sheriff is confronted with the unsolved mystery of a half-dozen child kidnappings in a small town in Minnesota.

NICO LIERSCH (Rudy) began his acting career in TV commercials. Roles in German television followed and, in 2012, he made his feature film debut in *Kokowääh 2*, appearing with Til Schweiger, who also directed, and Schweiger's daughter Emma Tiger Schweiger. It was Germany's biggest movie that year at the box office.

Liersch lives with his parents and sister in Munich where he attends secondary school. He enjoys playing handball and tennis, and snowboarding. He loves music and is learning to play the drums.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

BRIAN PERCIVAL (Director) has been honored three times by the British Academy of Film & Television. He won his most recent BAFTA TV Award for his work on the multiple award-winning and much loved British television drama *Downton Abbey*, on which he collaborated with writer Julian Fellowes in creating the look and approach, and directed six episodes between 2010 and 2012, as well as the Christmas Special in 2011. Percival also won the 2011 Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Directing for a Miniseries, Movie or a Dramatic Special for *Downtown Abbey*, and in 2012 received another Primetime Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series.

In 2001, Percival's affecting debut short film, written by his wife Julie Rutterford, won the BAFTA Film Award for Best Short Film, as well several other prestigious international awards, including the Jury Prize at the Raindance Film Festival.

For television, Percival also directed *Pleasureland*, a Channel 4 feature-length television drama focusing on a group of teenagers in Liverpool who feel pressured to grow up; *North & South*, a BBC television drama serial, based on the 1855 Victorian novel *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell; *ShakespeaRe-Told – Much Ado About*

Nothing, one of four television adaptations of William Shakespeare's plays relocated to the present day; *The Ruby in the Smoke*, an adaptation of Philip Pullman's novel starring Billie Piper; and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, a television film adapted from the Charles Dickens novel.

Percival has also directed many award-winning commercials throughout Europe. He is currently developing *Nelson and Emma* with Julian Fellowes, a biopic about the great Admiral and his affair with Lady Hamilton, set to begin shooting in early 2014.

MICHAEL PETRONI (Screenplay) is a graduate of the American Film Institute. While studying there he wrote *Till Human Voices Wake Us*, for which he won the AFI Screenplay of the Year and the WGA/Scenario Magazine Award. Petroni went on to direct this as his first feature, which starred Guy Pearce and Helena Bonham Carter.

Michael wrote the supernatural horror/thriller *The Rite* for New Line Cinema, starring Anthony Hopkins; and *The Chronicles of Narnia: Voyage of the Dawn Treader* for Fox 2000 Pictures. Both films debuted at number-one at the U.S. box office. He also wrote *The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys*, starring Jodie Foster, Vincent D'Onofrio, Kieran Culkin and Emile Hirsch.

More recently, he worked on James Mangold's upcoming feature *Three Little Words*, starring Reese Witherspoon.

Michael's other work includes *A Course in Miracles*, which was turned into *Miracles*, a one-hour TV drama for ABC-TV; the sequel to *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, entitled *The Letter of Marque; Afterlife* for Fox 2000 Pictures; and *Prescience* for Sony Pictures, which was on Hollywood's 2005 Blacklist.

MARKUS ZUSAK (Novel) was born in Sydney in 1975 and is the author of five books, including the international bestseller, *The Book Thief*. His work has been translated into over forty languages, and has earned him both critical and readers' choice awards across Europe, Asia, North and South America, as well as in his native Australia.

His first book, *The Underdog*, was published in 1999, and was followed by *Fighting Ruben Wolfe* and *When Dogs Cry* (also published as *Getting the Girl*) in 2000

and 2001. All of these books were published internationally, and the latter two received various awards for Young Adult fiction in Australia.

The Messenger (also known as *I am the Messenger*), published in 2002, won the 2003 Australian Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award (Older Readers) and the 2003 New South Wales Premier's Literary Award (Ethel Turner Prize), as well as receiving a Printz Award in the USA. It also won various readers choice awards in Europe, including the Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis in Germany.

The Book Thief, first published in 2005, has amassed a number of awards, receives critical acclaim and continues to be a readers' favorite in many countries across the world. It has spent more than six years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and in 2012 was the only book to feature in World Book Night in both the USA and UK simultaneously. It has been among the top positions on bestseller lists in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia, and has stood at the number one spot at Amazon in both the USA and the UK since its release.

The Steppenwolf Theatre Company produced a stage adaptation of *The Book Thief*, which was featured as part of the Now is the Time/One Book, One Chicago events in the fall of 2012.

Zusak lives in Sydney, Australia, with his wife and two children.

KAREN ROSENFELT (Producer) is a producer based at 20th Century Fox. She most recently produced this summer's *Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters*.

Rosenfelt also served as executive producer on *Twilight* and producer on *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*, *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse*, *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 1*, and *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 2*.

Rosenfelt has also produced *The Big Year*, *Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief*, and *Marley and Me* for Fox. Her executive producer credits include the *Alvin and the Chipmunks* franchise, and *The Devil Wears Prada*. Rosenfelt also produced *Yogi Bear* for Warner Bros. Pictures.

For 16 years, Rosenfelt was a production executive at Paramount, where she oversaw live-action features such as *The First Wives Club*, *Indecent Proposal*, *Runaway*

Bride, Save The Last Dance, Coach Carter, and Mean Girls. She was instrumental in setting up Paramount's partnership with Nickelodeon Movies, overseeing film adaptations of the Nickelodeon television properties, *Rugrats* and *SpongeBob SquarePants* as well as *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, based on the bestselling children's books.

Rosenfelt began her career at ICM as an assistant to talent agent Sue Mengers. She went on to become a creative executive at Jerry Weintraub Productions and a senior vice president at MGM.

KEN BLANCATO (Producer) began his career in advertising in New York at J. Walter Thompson, and Young & Rubican in the late 1970s, creating national campaigns for Dr. Pepper, Kodak, Ford, Eastern Airlines, and K.F.C.

In 1980 he moved to Los Angeles and was hired by Columbia Pictures' CEO Frank Price to head up movie marketing and to create an in house ad agency. He created national and international campaigns for *Tootsie, Ghandi, Stripes, Stir Crazy, Tess, Das Boot, Annie, Karate Kid, St. Elmo's Fire, Absence of Malice, The Big Chill* and *Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip*.

In 1983 he founded Sunswept Entertainment and continued to do marketing for Columbia Pictures, Universal, and TriStar Pictures, as well as consult for producers and directors on various film projects such as *The Bear, Legal Eagles, Ghostbusters II*, and Lawrence Kasdan's *Silverado*.

In 1985 he wrote and directed the comedy *Stewardess School* for Columbia Pictures.

FLORIAN BALLHAUS, ASC (Director of Photography) most recently lensed David Frankel's *One Chance*, marking his fourth collaboration with the director following *Hope Springs, Marley & Me, and The Devil Wears Prada*.

His other recent feature film credits include Andrew Levitas' *Lullaby*, starring Amy Adams; Michael Hoffman's *Gambit*, starring Cameron Diaz and Colin Firth; Mark Waters' *Mr Popper's Penguins*, starring Jim Carrey; Mark Lawrence's *Did You Hear*

About The Morgans?, starring Hugh Grant and Sarah Jessica Parker; and Adam Brook's *Definitely, Maybe*; as well as four films with director Robert Schwentke: *Red*, starring Bruce Willis, *The Time Traveller's Wife*, based on the best-selling book by Audrey Niffenegger, *Flightplan*, starring Jodie Foster, and the German hit film *The Family Jewels (Eierdiebe)*.

Ballhaus served as director of photography on Alan Rudolph's *The Secret Lives of Dentists* and *Investigating Sex*. He also served as second unit cinematographer on *Gangs of New York*, *Men in Black II*, *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, and *What Planet Are You From?*

The son of Academy Award nominated cinematographer Michael Ballhaus, Ballhaus began his career as an assistant cameraman working his way up to camera operator. Select credits during that time include 1998's *Godzilla*, *Men in Black*, *Outbreak*, *The Age of Innocence*, *Dracula*, *GoodFellas*, *Working Girl*, *Broadcast News*, and *After Hours*, among others. Ballhaus also served as director of photography on the last season of the hit HBO series *Sex and the City*, and on numerous German movies.

SIMON ELLIOTT (Production Designer) was nominated in 2006 for a Primetime Emmy and a BAFTA Award for his production design for the television miniseries *Bleak House*. In 2005, he was nominated for a BAFTA TV Award for his work on the miniseries *North & South*, the BBC adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel.

His feature film credits include *Brick Lane*, adapted from the Monica Ali novel; *Burke And Hare*, directed by John Landis; *Nanny McPhee's Big Bang*, starring Emma Thompson and Colin Firth; Phyllida Law's *The Iron Lady*, starring Meryl Streep; Neil Jordan's *Byzantium*; and Dan Mazer's *I Give It A Year*.

JOHN WILSON, A.C.E (Editor) is one of Britain's leading film editors, responsible for some of the most highly acclaimed British features of the last 25 years.

Following art school in Portsmouth, where he qualified as a graphic designer, Wilson began his film career at the Central Office of Information where, at 25, he became one of Britain's youngest film editors. Cutting his teeth on documentaries, it was

while at the COI that he met Peter Greenaway. Their long and fruitful collaboration saw Wilson editing all of Greenaway's prolific output of music documentaries and arts programs for television, as well as five feature films over the next eight years, beginning with *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1981) and culminating in the highly acclaimed *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989).

Wilson's career then broadened into a raft of critically acclaimed feature films and television dramas, including the massively successful *Billy Elliot* (2000) which earned 13 BAFTA and three Oscar nominations, including a BAFTA and an Eddie Award nomination for Best Film Editing from the American Cinema Editors Guild. Following this US nomination, Wilson was invited to join American Cinema Editors (ACE) and is one of the few British film editors to enjoy membership in this prestigious society.

In 2006, Wilson edited the film version of Alan Bennett's multi-award winning play *The History Boys*, directed by Nicholas Hytner. April 2009 saw the release of *Good*, a screen adaptation of C.P. Taylor's highly successful play, directed by Vicente Amorim and starring Viggo Mortensen as John Halder. Also in 2009, Wilson edited Julian Fellowes' ghost story *From Time To Time*.

His most recent editing credits include the award-winning BBC miniseries *The Hollow Crown*, and Julian Fellowes' *Downton Abbey*.

In a career spanning six decades, **JOHN WILLIAMS** (Composer) has become one of America's most accomplished and successful composers for film and for the concert stage, and he remains one of our nation's most distinguished and contributive musical voices.

He has composed the music and served as music director for more than 100 films, including all six *Star Wars* films, the first three *Harry Potter* films, *Superman*, *JFK*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Far and Away*, *The Accidental Tourist* and *Home Alone*.

Williams' 40-year artistic partnership with director Steven Spielberg has resulted in many of Hollywood's most acclaimed and successful films, including *Schindler's List*,

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial, Jaws, Jurassic Park, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, the Indiana Jones films, Munich, Saving Private Ryan, The Adventures of Tintin and War Horse.

His contributions to television music include scores for more than 200 television films for the groundbreaking, early anthology series *Alcoa Theatre, Kraft Mystery Theater, Chrysler Theatre* and *Playhouse 90*, as well as themes for *NBC Nightly News (The Mission)*, NBC's *Meet the Press* and the PBS arts showcase *Great Performances*. He also composed themes for the 1984, 1988 and 1996 Summer Olympic Games and the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. He has received five Academy Awards and 47 Oscar nominations, making him the Academy's most-nominated living person and the second-most nominated person in the history of the Oscars. He has received seven British Academy Awards (BAFTAs), 21 Grammys®, four Golden Globes, five Emmys and numerous gold and platinum records. In 2003, he received the Olympic Order (the IOC's highest honor) for his contributions to the Olympic movement. He received the prestigious Kennedy Center Honor in December of 2004, and he received the 2009 National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the U.S. government.

In January 1980, Williams was named 19th music director of the Boston Pops Orchestra, succeeding the legendary Arthur Fiedler. He currently holds the title of Boston Pops Laureate Conductor, which he assumed following his retirement in December 1993, after 14 highly successful seasons. He also holds the title of Artist-in-Residence at Tanglewood. Mr. Williams has composed numerous works for the concert stage, among them two symphonies, and concertos commissioned by several of the world's leading orchestras, including a cello concerto for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, a bassoon concerto for the New York Philharmonic, a trumpet concerto for the Cleveland Orchestra, and a horn concerto for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

In 2009, Williams composed and arranged *Air and Simple Gifts* especially for the inaugural ceremony of President Barack Obama, and in September 2009, the Boston Symphony premiered a new concerto for harp and orchestra entitled *On Willows and Birches*.

ANNA B. SHEPPARD (Costume Designer) has a long list of varied film credits which include Joe Johnston's *Captain America: The First Avenger*, Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds*, Peter Webber's *Hannibal Rising*, Michael Mann's *The Insider* and, most recently, Lee Tamahori's *The Devil's Double*.

Among her most recent projects is Robert Stromberg's *Maleficent*, starring Angelina Jolie, set for release in summer 2014.

In 1993 Sheppard earned Academy and BAFTA Award nominations for her work on Steven Spielberg's critically acclaimed masterpiece *Schindler's List*. Sheppard has worked on two features with director Roman Polanski: *Oliver Twist*, in 2005, and *The Pianist*, in 2002, for which she received her second Academy Award nomination, a César Award nomination and won Best Costume Design at the Polish Film Awards. Sheppard has also collaborated with the prominent Polish director and screenwriter Agnieszka Holland on the features *Washington Square* and *To Kill a Priest*.

Sheppard's television credits include the multi award-winning HBO series *Band of Brothers* and Jon Jones' remake of the cult series *The Prisoner*. Her other film credits include Rob Cohen's *DragonHeart*, David Dobkin's *Fred Claus* and *Shanghai Knights*, Frank Coraci's *Around the World in 80 Days* and Breck Eisner's *Sahara*.