

# EFA Young Audience Award 2020

Detailed information on the nominated films:

**ROCCA CHANGES THE WORLD**

***ROCCA VERÄNDERT DIE WELT***



## Foreword

This year it is particularly difficult to guess the winner from the three films nominated for the EFA Young Audience Award in advance. The films are of equal quality. As different as they may be in form and content, there are many similarities to be discovered.

All three feature films are debut films by young filmmakers. At least as far as the composition of the characters is concerned, they are based on successful literary models. They deal with the difficulties of growing up, including conflict and longing, as well as struggling with one's parents. The family, no matter its composition, is always a central focus of the stories. Animals play an important secondary role. Two of the films feature dinosaurs, but there are also a giant turtle and a squirrel. Arianna, Tess and Rocca are strong, confident girls, even if two of the three films are told from a boys' perspective. Above all, however, the films are always about very "special" children and young people and stand for the distinctiveness and uniqueness of each individual. And what is perhaps even more important is that they open up new perspectives and unusual views of our world and an optimistic vision of the future.

Everyone sees a film differently, and personal experience also plays a role. This affects all people, regardless of age, including professionals. Some may be unsure what to look out for when making an assessment, others may have already made a decision and even feel patronised by "educational" guidelines. The following guidelines do not claim to name all important aspects of a film in detail. They are only intended as a suggestion. You can, but you don't have to use them, and you certainly don't have to work through them systematically. The main thing is to find your own favourite and to be able to explain to others why you have made this particular choice.

Enjoy the films!



## **ROCCA CHANGES THE WORLD**

### **ROCCA VERÄNDERT DIE WELT**

Germany 2019, 97 min.

**Director:** Katja Benrath

**Performers:** Luna Marie Maxeiner, Caspar Fischer-Ortmann, Luise Richter, Leo Knitžka, Barbara Sukowa, Fahri Yardim, Mina Tander and others

**Recommended** from 8 years of age

**Genre:** Modern fairy tale, children's film, family film

#### **Content**

Eleven-year-old Rocca, whose real name is Ria Othilie Clementine Caesar Alva, grew up with her father at the Baikonur spaceport in Kazakhstan after her mother died during her birth. Her father is an astronaut. Since he is working on the International Space Station ISS for a few months, Rocca moves to her grandmother Dodo in Hamburg and attends school for the first time in her life. With her special knowledge and skills, she amazes her entire environment and helps mobbing victims and homeless people in the city.

#### **About the production and the director**

Between 1945 and 1948, the Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren (1907-2002) published three stories about red-haired Pippi Longstocking, which helped her acquire world fame. The 1969 film adaptation of Olle Hellbom, which was actually a television production, is still internationally considered one of the timeless children's film classics. In her debut feature film, German actress and director Katja Benrath takes up the basic idea of the story and translates it into today's modern world.

#### **Topics**

Family, friendship, courage and self-confidence, school, bullying, homelessness, social media

#### **Triggers**

None!

## Questions about the film

What impression does the combination of fairy tale elements and social criticism (cyberbullying, homelessness...) leave you with? Do you find it successful?

In case you know the books by Astrid Lindgren or one of the film adaptations of "Pippi Longstocking": Did you compare this film to them, and was this helpful or rather detrimental?

Twice, the schoolyard becomes the venue for a game proposed by Rocca, in which first only her schoolmates, and later on adults participate as well. What significance do you attach to this game?

Music plays a special role in this film. How did you feel about it, and to what extent did it influence your overall impression of the film?

What did you take from the film personally, or for your everyday life?

## FILM-ANALYSIS:

### *Main topics*

#### **The strange world of adults**

Almost like a girl from another star, eleven-year-old Rocca lands in a plane controlled by her. Superior to most adults in technical, social and communicative terms, she begins to change the world and starts to do so in her immediate environment. Having grown up in isolation in a distant spaceport, she perceives everyday life in Hamburg and the world of adults through the eyes of an outsider. Although many things seem strange and disconcerting to her, she always remains friendly and open-minded. She defuses conflicts with disarming openness and great wit, for example during the funny encounter with the school principal or her care for an injured squirrel, whom she names after the former boxing world champion Klitschko.

Without verbally attacking or insulting others, she brings up things she finds unacceptable directly and respectfully, even if others consider them to be perfectly normal, self-evident or simply the law. This affects all areas of life, from her unapproachable grandmother to the strict rules of everyday school life, from the exclusion of a classmate to reservations about homeless people. In the same way, she defends her wish to be allowed to live alone to the youth welfare office and a law enforcement officer after her grandmother has to go to hospital and nobody can "care" for Rocca anymore. This makes her neither a lawbreaker nor an unruly rebel. She thus makes her environment and the audience reflect on the deeper meaning and purpose of our actions. She holds a mirror up to others with a smile on her face.

#### **Socially marginalised groups**

Rocca knows no prejudices and reservations, but has a strong sense of justice. Therefore she has no fear of the homeless living under a bridge, and especially not of Casper, who was thrown off course by the loss of his family and ended up on the streets. Rocca manages to bring out the best in people - the headmaster, the class teacher, Mrs. Hartholz from the Youth Welfare Office, Lila's and John's parents, and in the end, even her own grandmother.



She also brings on a change of mindset in her class. Max is one of the first to support her unconditionally, although he shows little respect at first. He helps her to use an Internet video to draw public attention to the fate of the homeless in the city, of whom there are about 3,000 in Hamburg alone. Lila and John, who admire Rocca, first have to be convinced that not all of the adults' rules make sense. It's only logical that if you are not at home at all, you cannot do your homework. Even Amelie, who used social media to spread lies and insults about her classmate Zoe, reaches out to Rocca for reconciliation in the end.

## **Sky's the limit!**

The first names of Rocca remind us of an alphabetical spelling method. From the old-fashioned sounding names Ria Othilie Clementine Caesar Alva results the contemporary, fashionable sounding abbreviation Rocca. This girl actually succeeds in combining the old with the new, dissolving contradictions and melting opposites into a harmonious unity. Feelings of powerlessness can be balanced out by fantasies of omnipotence. And even the analogue world of old family photos hanging from strings is just as naturally present with her as the visual contact with her father on the International Space Station ISS via smartphone. In this way, the film directly links a fairy tale world with the world of modern technology.



Even fears are alleviated in this way. Of course, Rocca is worried about her father when there is an incident in the space station. But she also knows that it's not much use being afraid if you can't change a situation. There is only one person who Rocca gets nowhere with in her efforts to attract attention, because her grandmother blames her for the death of her mother, who died at Rocca's birth. If the sky is really the limit, there must be a happy ending here, too.

## ***Filmic realisation (film language)***

### **"Circle" movements**

Of course Rocca has abilities that a child her age does not normally have. However, she does not convince others of her qualities and good intentions with these abilities, but through a socio-pedagogical game that does not require any "supernatural" abilities and is implemented very clearly. Rocca is at the centre of this "circle" game, but not completely separated from the others. There are numerous points of contact and commonalities, and others enter the circle individually or together, depending on the question. This creates feelings of openness, trust and togetherness, a symbolic image for a community of people despite different interests, experiences and acknowledged mistakes. The high-angle shot underlines this universal significance. The world can be changed – or, at least, the view of certain things can be changed.



### **Connections to reality**

The images of the extremely shaky plane landing at the beginning of the film or the special effects shots of the squirrel and from the ISS are cinematically spectacular. Neither the old villa of Rocca's noble grandmother nor the parental home of Max, who lives in a modern villa with a built-in swimming pool, allow us to draw conclusions about the social reality of young people in Germany. This does not apply to Rocca anyway. And yet, the everyday life of Rocca and her new friends can be easily compared with that of other children of the same age: problems with adults, for example, the topic of friendship, social structures at school in which one group often calls the shots while others are hardly noticed or even feel excluded, and of course super fun leisure activities. Especially during such scenes, Rocca is allowed to be completely natural, spontaneous and flexible. Sometimes she is just a passenger on a luggage rack, sometimes she is a boat driver, but she always has a clear view of the essentials.



### **The musical framework**

In this film, Annette Focks' lively and very optimistic music and the numerous interspersed lyrics directly reference the plot. There are pauses for reflection. Songs comment on the events and boil them down to their verbal essence. They illustrate Rocca's moods and feelings, for example when she looks at cell phone pictures of herself and her father and the music expresses her concern for him. The title song "Wer mich nicht kennt", interpreted by Jonathan Express, was an attempt to find an equal counterpart to the song from the 1969 Pippi Longstocking film adaptation, which became a catchy tune at the time.

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE FILMS BEFORE THE VOTE

The following questionnaire is intended as a guideline and a reminder in case you are unsure by which criteria to judge a film, and which aspects should be considered. However, it is entirely up to you whether you want to use this questionnaire or proceed in a completely different way in order to make a decision for the film of your choice. The main thing is that you can justify your decision and stand by it.

*What do you think are the most important themes of the film?*

*What surprised you most about the film (characters, scenes, actions ...)?*

*Does the film succeed in breaking with common stereotypes and prejudices? Which ones in particular?*

*Does the film tell a universal story that could also take place elsewhere?  
Or is it a story that is inseparably linked to a specific country or region?*

*How realistic and authentic do the main characters of the film seem to you?  
In other words: do you believe what they say, think, feel and do?*

*How are the adults (not only the parents) represented in the film? Can they be role models, especially with regard to their behaviour towards their children?*

*Did you like the (special) humour of the film?*

*Was the film exciting, or were many of the events predictable for you?*

*What role did the landscape (nature or urban environment) play in the film?*

*Which scene of the film touched you most?*

*Were there also scenes that you found were less well done, that were inappropriate or illogical?*

*What stood out to you most about the filmic realisation (e.g. camera work, colour palette, lighting, music, special effects...)?*

*For which target and age group is the film best suited?*

*Why should this particular film receive the EFA Young Audience Award?*

*Further comments:*

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