

Big Screen

German Gems: New mini-festival features little films with a big impression, helps fill Berlin & Beyond calendar void

"Miss Stinnes" is about a woman who drives a car around the world beginning in 1927, complete with actual footage from the trip. "Vision" is about composer Hildgard von Bingen, among the first to write about female sexuality and the woman who helped pave the way for Europe's emergence out of medieval darkness.

Ingrid Eggers insists there's no hidden message in bringing two films about women who surmounted huge challenges as part of German Gems, her five-film, one-day mini-festival Sunday at the Castro Theatre — "These days, producers in Germany tend to be women, and more directors, too," she said — but she had to draw on some inspiration.

In November, Eggers was essentially removed from her post as the director of the popular Berlin & Beyond festival that graced the Castro for a week each January for the past 14 years. The Goethe-Institut San Francisco, which had presented the festival, merged the festival with Los Angeles' German Currents Film Festival to create a single West Coast event in October.

The move was controversial. As reported in *The Chronicle*, the longtime head of the festival's volunteers, Ninfa Dawson, and publicist Karen Larsen departed in protest.

"I had to retire from the Goethe-Institut (because she turned 65), but that didn't mean I had to pull out of Berlin & Beyond, because that became a nonprofit ... so it's a totally separate entity," Eggers said. "It (got) complicated, it got nasty and all that."

Eggers, who has lived in the Bay Area for 20 years, retreated to her



German Gems

Sandra Huller is Clarenore Stinnes in Erica von Moeller's "Miss Stinnes," screening as part of the German Gems mini-festival.

Sun. Castro Theatre, 429
Castro St., S.F. Also March 6,
Arena Theater, 214 Main St.,
Point Arena, Mendocino
County. (415) 695-0864.
www.germangems.com.

native Germany to figure out what to do, but the answer became obvious: She had to start another festival, one that might eventually replace the January time slot of Berlin & Beyond. For now, as a test, the event is one day in late February, and next weekend in Point Arena (Mendocino County), where Berlin & Beyond also showed.

"My usual goal is to show films that are hard to be seen here," Eggers said, "not ones with distribution."

The Castro event begins at noon with a tale of a young homeless couple, "Tender Parasites," which premiered at the Venice Film Festival. German Gems also includes two eclectic comedies, "Being Mr. Kotschie," about a man who encounters a midlife crisis as he turns 50, and "The Bone Man," about a PI investigating a restaurant with a suspicious meat not on the menu.

Berlin & Beyond started small as well, grew steadily and had many stars and big-name directors such as Wim Wenders. Eggers seems to almost revel in the small beginning of German Gems.

She sounded refreshed and rejuvenated as she said, "At this point, it's just me!"

— G. Allen Johnson,
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