



Mr. Bernstein

A short film

12:17

#mrbernstein

aspect ratio 2.40

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/167052376>

Directed by Francine Zuckerman

Synopsis

Debbie Filler's father Schaja is a Polish Jewish baker who loves music. As a girl Debbie was raised on the story of Schaja survival of the Nazi death camps, and a remarkable event that changed how he viewed the world—seeing Leonard Bernstein perform *Rhapsody in Blue* at a Displaced person's Camp after the war. The concert was a profound turning point for Schaja, a springboard from a deeply painful past into a hope-filled future. So when Bernstein arrives in town years later with the New York Philharmonic, Debbie—now a young woman—shows up to a rehearsal with the hope of

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meeting Bernstein and maybe even telling him the story. What happens next in the empty town hall is a performance she will never forget.

Logline

English: After Debbie hears about her father's life-changing musical experience in a refugee camp, she tracks down the famous conductor years later, with unexpected consequences.

French: Debbie sais depuis l'enfance qu'un événement musical a bouleversé la vie de son père alors qu'il était dans un camps de réfugiés. Longtemps après, elle retrouve le chef d'orchestre qui présidait à cet événement provoquant une suite inattendue à cette histoire.

Spanish: Años después de haber descubierto el pasado musical que cambió la vida de su padre en un campo de refugiados, Debbie consigue encontrar al director de orquesta en un encuentro de consecuencias inesperadas.

Director's notes

This short film is close to my heart. It's about the Holocaust, music and how music can change a person's life in such a profound way. My father arrived in Canada from Poland on September 1st 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland. I feel so incredibly fortunate that my father fled Europe just in time and came to the new country to start a new life. Debbie's father didn't escape and was not so fortunate. He endured years of hardship and horror in Auschwitz and then in the displaced person's camp in Landsberg. However, he made a huge impact on Debbie and he made a huge impact on me. He found hope in the face of the most horrific event of our time and was inspired by a man who inspired so many, the late, great maestro Leonard Bernstein. We dedicate this film to both Schaja Filler and Leonard Bernstein.

Production Notes

A True Story

This is based on the true story by New Zealand writer/performer/comedienne Deb Filler.

Filler who has always incorporated poignancy with humour. It's powerfully intense and the laughs come just at the right moment. It's about being grateful for life. Filler, originally from New Zealand, and her Polish Jewish father, who survived Auschwitz, had a bakery in Auckland. Her father had seen Bernstein perform when he was a refugee in Landsberg Displaced Persons' Camp in 1946. It was a pivotal time in his life, just after he'd been liberated from concentration camp, lost all of his family except his brother during the genocide and before he felt he had any real future. There was no harmonic heartbeat in her father's life then, understandably.

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Credits

Based on a true story

Starring: Daniel Kash
Rebecca Liddiard
Alon Nashman
Kira Gelineau

Director: Francine Zuckerman

Writers: Deb Filler & Guy Hamling

Producers: Jessica Adams

Executive Producers: Deb Filler and Francine Zuckerman

Director of Photography: Andre Pienaar CSC, SASC

Editor: Michelle Szemberg

Production Designer: Cailin Bator

Casting: Jenny Lewis and Sarah Kay

Script editor: Carol Hay

Associate Producer: David Levene

First Assistant Director: Gavin Lee

Costume Designer: Robyn MacDonald

Hair and Make Up: Tara Brawley

Script Supervisor: Ryan Kakubek

Sound Recordist: Neil McIntyre

Dailies by: Technicolor Toronto

Digital Intermediate: Deluxe Toronto

Colorist: Ryan Ruskay

Audio Post Production: Tattersall Sound and Picture

Sound Editor: Martin Gwynn Jones

Re-recording mixer: Graham Rogers

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Music Consultant: Michael Olsen

“Symphony No. 6 ‘Pastoral’ Op 68: Allegro ma non troppo”

Composed by Ludwig van Beethoven
Performed by Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Licensed courtesy of Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

“Rhapsody in Blue”
Composed by George Gershwin, arrange by Grofe
Performed by Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Licensed courtesy of Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Made with the Generous support of the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario

Director Biography and Filmography

Francine Zuckerman

Zuckerman graduated from McGill University’s film program and joined the National Film Board to co-produce and direct her first documentary film, **Half the Kingdom**. **Half the Kingdom** a controversial film about women and Judaism, was invited to participate in over twenty international film festivals, broadcast in Canada on TVO, in the U.K. on Channel 4 and in Australia on SBS and supported by Telefilm Canada. It won several awards and was nominated for two Geminis: best documentary program and best direction of a documentary program.

Zuckerman produced and directed, **Exposure: environmental links to breast cancer**, a documentary which explores the connection between toxins in the environment and our physical health, hosted by singer/actor Olivia Newton-John. **Exposure** has been broadcast in Canada on CBC, TVO, WTN and Vision TV and won the best Health Documentary award at the New York Film and Video Festival.

She directed and co-produced with New Zealand producer Jonathan Dowling, the feature film, **Punch Me in the Stomach** starring Deb Filler. The film is based on Filler’s 36 character off – Broadway solo performance piece. It is a story of the triumph of one man, a Polish born concentration camp survivor, as told by his comedienne daughter, Deb. A co-production with New Zealand, **Punch Me in the Stomach**, was produced in association with CBC with funds from the OFDC and New Zealand on Air and broadcast on Bravo, CFCF, Vision TV, WTN and PBS. It had its world premiere at the London Film Festival and then toured film festivals internationally.

Zuckerman co-produced, directed and co-write a short drama, **Passengers**, about a road trip a father and daughter take through time. **Passengers**, was made in association with CBC, Showcase, WTN and Vision TV. **Passengers** had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival and then invited to festivals in Palm Springs, Sao Paulo, Berlin, Vancouver, Montreal, San Francisco, Los Angeles and London. **Passengers**, was chosen to screen in New York at the Independent Feature Project’s Sundance short film program.

Zuckerman co-produced a dramatic anthology TV series, **The Atwood Stories** with Shaftesbury Films and Original Pictures in association with the W Network. **The Atwood Stories** is based on the short stories of renowned Canadian writer, Margaret Atwood. She directed and co-wrote one

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film in the series, entitled, **The Sunrise** about a reclusive painter in her 40's tries to maintain tight control over every aspect of her life in order to keep at bay the dark forces which threaten to overcome her. Rebecca Jenkins, the lead in **The Sunrise** was nominated for a Gemini for best performance and the series was nominated for a Gemini for best dramatic series.

She teamed up again with Deb Filler with their short dramatic film, **Ladies and Gentlemen: Biddie Schitzerman**, for Bravo television. It had its world premiere in Canada at the Vancouver International Film Festival.

Francine Zuckerman and her company Z films inc. recently completed her latest film in Poland, **We Are Here** (Jestesmy Tu) for *documentary* Canada, which documents the revival of Jewish life in Poland seen through the eyes for five subjects and their families.

Zuckerman is a member of the Independent Film Project, New York; Directors Guild of Canada, has been a jury member for the Ontario Arts Council, Media Arts Program, jury member for The Canadian Academy of Film & Television and is one of the early members of Femmes du Cinema de la Télévision et la Vidéo a Montréal.

Other than completing this short film, **Mr. Bernstein**, about the famous musician Leonard Bernstein, Zuckerman is in development on a feature adaptation of **The Edible Woman** based on a novel by celebrated writer Margaret Atwood.

Half the Kingdom	documentary	1989
A Matter of Choice	documentary short	1993
Punch Me in the Stomach	feature performance	1996
Exposure	documentary	1997
Passengers	short drama	2000
The Sunrise	short drama (series)	2002
Making the Cut	documentary	2003
Urban Creatures	short performance	2003
Ladies and Gentlemen: Biddie Schitzerman	short drama	2010
We Are Here	feature documentary	2013
Mr. Bernstein	short drama	2015

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