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AGAINST  
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A FILM BY MAURIZIUS STAERKLE DRUX

# THE ART OF SILENCE

Presskit English

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

With his gestures and facial expressions alone, the mime Marcel Marceau captured audiences around the globe for decades. But the tragic background behind his work has remained hidden for a long time. *THE ART OF SILENCE* sheds new light on his life and unique art form, which his family and companions keep alive to this day.

Swiss filmmaker Maurizius Staerkle Druх (*CONCRETE LOVE – THE BÖHM FAMILY*) grew up with a deaf father. With *THE ART OF SILENCE* he reflects on parts of his own life story and on the turbulent life of the world-famous mime.

## SYNOPSIS

Marcel Marceau is undoubtedly the world's most famous mime. Audiences know and love him as «Bip», the tragicomic clown in the striped shirt, his face covered in white make-up, the battered silk hat and the red flower. He mesmerised people around the globe. But the tragic background of his work remained hidden for a long time. His Jewish father was killed in Auschwitz. Marceau joined the French Resistance and smuggled together with his cousin Georges Loigner Jewish children across the border to safety, into Switzerland. With gestures and mimes, he taught the children to communicate in silence in dangerous situations. Silence was their tool for survival, which after the war, Marceau transformed into a unique art form and achieved world fame with it. He toured the world for over 40 years, almost up until the day he died.

*THE ART OF SILENCE* is the first feature-length documentary about Marcel Marceau and his work, which inspired and accompanied several generations of artists - and lives on to this day. Anne Sicco, Marceau's wife, directed the mime school, among other things, and continues Marceau's legacy. Grandson Louis Chevalier is forging his own path as a dancer, inspired by the work of his mother Camille Marceau and her sister Aurélia.

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Rob Mermin went to Marceau's school, he became a world-renowned clown. Since his Parkinson's diagnosis, he has been using mime to communicate perspectives beyond the disease. Christoph Staerkle is the director's father and has been deaf since birth. He has found his own form of expression through mime.

In his third documentary, Swiss filmmaker Maurizius Staerkle Druх combines exclusive archive material from Marceau's multifaceted life with a contemporary look at the art of silence.

# PROTAGONISTS

## The Marceau Family

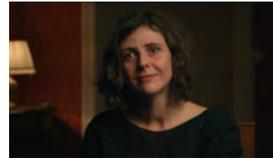
Marcel Marceau was married twice before he met Anne Sicco in 1975. For many years, she was the director of the experimental class at the «École Internationale de Mimodrame de Paris Marcel Marceau». Today she leads «La Scène d'Anglars» and the company «L'Oeil du silence». Camille and Aurélia Marceau are her daughters. As children, they travelled the world with Marceau. They now live near Toulouse and work as actresses and filmmakers, among other things. Louis Chevalier is Camille Marceau's son and Marcel's grandson. He studied dance in Toulouse and Istres. Anne Sicco's production «Fractacles» about Marceau's legacy, sees the three generations united for the first time on stage.



**Anne Sicco**



**Camille Marceau**



**Aurélia Marceau**



**Louis Chevalier**



**Rob Mermin** was a student of Marceau and in 1987 he founded the Circus Smirkus in Greensboro Vermont, USA. He has received several awards worldwide for his work as a clown. Following his Parkinson's diagnosis, he set up the «Pantomime Parkinson's Project», which researches training methods for specific motor skills, inspired by the techniques used in mime and circus, to help alleviate the symptoms of the disease.



**Daniel & Georges Loinger.** (\*1910, d. 2018) was Marcel Marceau's cousin and a member of the French resistance. He smuggled over 300 Jewish children – his son Daniel being one of them – into Switzerland during the war. For this he received the German Federal Cross of Merit in 2016.



**Christoph Staerkle** has been deaf since birth. He trained as a mime in Paris and today tours Europe with various stage plays. He is the filmmaker's father and has influenced Maurizius view of pantomime since he was a child.

# SCRIPT, DIRECTOR, SOUND MAURIZIUS STAERKLE DRUX

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Maurizius Staerkle Drux was born in Cologne in 1988 and grew up in Zurich. In 2012 he graduated in film directing at the ZHdK, specialising in sound design. His debut film *THE BÖHM FAMILY – CONCRETE LOVE* was shown in over 30 countries and won multiple awards. Since 2017, he has been imparting his passion for film and sound, as a lecturer at the Zurich University of the Arts.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2022 THE ART OF SILENCE (feature documentary)
- 2014 THE BÖHM FAMILY – CONCRETE LOVE (feature documentary)
- 2013 WENN DER VORHANG FÄLLT (experimental film)
- 2012 BETWEEN THE ISLANDS (feature documentary)
- 2011 MIT LIED UND LEID (documentary)

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I grew up with a deaf father. From an early age, my visual attention was greatly nurtured, because my life sometimes resembled a silent movie. I myself am not deaf, I can hear, and at an early age, I started creating music. Even as an adult, I am still trying to figure out what images best express my wishes, my fears and my queries, so that a deaf person can understand them. Perhaps for these very reasons, I chose filmmaking, a synthesis of image and sound.

With *THE ART OF SILENCE*, I reflect a part of my own life story. In doing so, I go beyond what is hidden behind Bip's, alias Marceau's white mask. The idea is to depict his work from within a contemporary perspective. Where does his artistic legacy stand and how are his descendants dealing with it? During the making of this film, I spent time with the Marceau family, but also with friends and companions who have carried on Marceau's art form in their own way. In the process, I realized one thing they have in common: they all draw their art from silence. And the strength to use it to change their lives.

Maurizius Staerkle Drux



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## INTERVIEW WITH MAURIZIUS STAERKLE DRUX

***Where did the inspiration for this film come from? Where did the idea come from and how did you develop it?***

I knew Marceau from the stories my deaf father always told me. As an adult, I then came to realise that Marceau's mime acts are more than «funny gags» that make any child laugh. I have discovered that Marceau's numbers are strongly tied to his biography and that they often reflect moments of his life.

Our ability to express ourselves without words and to communicate through body language is a basic need that is deeply anchored inside us. Despite the global diversity of languages, we still rely on one universal language to express our deepest feelings: the non-verbal language. We all snap our fingers, frown, pull up our noses, shake or nod our heads. Because to a certain extent, we are all mimes and can communicate across cultural barriers.

***How has the project changed over the course of its development?***

Starting with Marceau's biography, during my research I met many of his companions in life and art. It quickly became clear to me, that I was particularly interested in those people, who in the face of life's existential questions, try to master them in an artistic way. I came across Rob Mermin, for example, who has been per-

forming as a mime artist his whole life and has now been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease - of all things! He takes advantage and shares his mime skills with other sufferers, in an effort to outsmart the advancing disease.

***Your father, Christoph Staerkle, is a protagonist in the film. How did that come about?***

For him, mime has an existential quality, because as a deaf person, in mime he found a unique way of expressing himself. Mime enables him to convey his perception of the world without sound. With him, I lived in a certain silence, unlike my mother, for whom sound and music were always present. Marcel Marceau's story gave me the opportunity to reflect part of my own situation in a film. Although my father only appears briefly in the film, he is in a way the link between me and the world of Marcel Marceau.

***What was it like working with the camerographer Raphael Beinder, who already worked with you on your last film "The Böhm family – Concrete Love"?***

A cameraman for me, is so much more than "a man with a camera". Especially in documentary filmmaking, where the shooting process can be extensive and take place over a large period of time.

Raphael also put his heart and soul into this project, getting to know the different protagonists with me, conceiving image ideas and forms to tell our story. I value his experience, which he brings not only from documentary but also from fictional projects. He has a great understanding of lighting, which is essential to capturing pantomime on film, for example. Throughout filming, it was usually just the two of us, as I took on the role of sound recordist too. It is always a pleasure to share the creative process of filmmaking with Raphael, who has become much more than just a «cameraman» for me.

***The editing process took over 8 months. What were the biggest challenges in dealing with the wealth of material and the different formats?***

In the editing process, the living protagonists meet the deceased Marceau, who comes back to life on the big screen. To have all the narratives run parallel to one another and for them to come together to create a self-contained film, was without doubt the greatest, but also the most beautiful challenge that we took on with joint forces.

First and foremost, I cannot go without mentioning Tania Stöcklin, who acquired all the archive footage with me. But the regular meetings with the producers Aline Schmid and Carl-Ludwig Rettinger also helped the filmic narrative to mature. Since I already

began to design the film's sound during the editing process, from the very start, I was interested in how sounds can become the key to a narrative and develop a psychoacoustic effect. The actual cinematic experience takes place in our heads. That fascinates me.

***What was it like, collaborating with the Marceau Family?***

A decade after his death, Marceau's family was ready and willing to talk publicly about his life on and especially off stage. That was an important prerequisite for my film, because I wanted it to go beyond a classic portrait of an artist. At first, my intention was not to include the Marceau family to the extent I have. But during my recurring visits, their passion and dedication with which they deal with and carry on their family history, impressed me greatly.

***What was the most remarkable experience during the process of making the film?***

It was at the very beginning of the project, when an older lady in New York told me about how pantomime had saved her life. That statement made me curious. Unfortunately, I never saw that woman again. But it wasn't long after that that I met Georges Loinger in Paris, at the age of 105. He told me about how, during the Second World War, him and Marceau smuggled Jewish children across the border into Switzerland.

***In this project, as well as in your previous one, the focus is on families and their legacies. What do you have planned for future projects?***

I am currently in preparations for my new film *BRAVE NEW SWITZERLAND*, which deals with genetic modifications in humans and which I'm realising in collaboration with Benny Jaberg (winner of the German Camera Award 2020). In parallel to that, I am writing my first fiction feature film, set entirely in the deaf world. The project won the Treatment Award at the Zurich Film Festival. Alongside this, I value the creative co-work with other filmmakers, whose films I create the sound design for.



## BEAUVOIR FILMS

produces author-driven documentary and fiction features for festival and theatrical releases as well as TV. We work with directors who have a distinct visual and narrative approach and strive to push the boundaries of storytelling in compelling and creative ways. The film *WALDEN* by Daniel Zimmermann receives the Special Jury Prize 2018 at the Karlovy Vary Festival and is presented at Sundance 2019. *Closing Time* by Nicole Vögele wins the Leopard Jury Prize at the Locarno Festival 2018. The feature film *THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER* by Ramon & Silvan Zürcher won two prizes at the Berlinale 2021 and was running for the European Film Award 2021. *SIRIRI - THE CARDINAL & THE IMAM* by Manuel von Stürler (*WINTER NOMADE*) was shown in cinemas in 2021. *THE ART OF SILENCE* about Marcel Marceau by Maurizius Staerkle Drux will be released in 2022. Anna Luif's new feature film and the documentary *ECHTE SCHWEIZER* By Luka Popadic are in post-production.



After graduating from the University of Freiburg, Aline Schmid studied scriptwriting in Stuttgart. With Intermezzo Films (Geneva), she has produced several creative documentaries and fiction features, such as *SONITA* (Sundance / IDFA), *BROKEN LAND* (Locarno / Rotterdam), *CANTOS* (Dok.Munich / Mostra Sao Paulo) and *HORIZONTES* (Karlovy Vary). She participated in the programs Emerging Producer (Jihlava 2013) and Producer on the Move (Cannes 2015). She founds Beauvoir Films in 2016 in Geneva.



Adrian Blaser comes to study to Lausanne in 1992. He works for many film productions (e.g. *CORN IN PARLIAMENT* and *CLEVELAND VS WALL-STREET* by Jean-Stéphane Bron, *HOME* by Ursula Meier). In 2008, he produces at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade and becomes 2011 executive producer of Bande à part Films in Lausanne (*THE BLOCHER EXPERIENCE*, *THE BRIDGES OF SARAJEVO*, *MOKA*, *THE PARIS OPERA* etc.). He joins Aline Schmid at Beauvoir in 2017. Both producers are members of the European Film Academy EFA.

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**LICHTBLICK FILM (COPRODUCER)** based in Cologne, was established in 1986 as an independent film production company and has been active ever since in the domestic and international market as a producer of high-end documentary films and series as well as feature films for cinema and television.

In the documentary genre we have helped realized films including Mika Kaurismäki's award-winning *TIGRERO* (with Samuel Fuller and Jim Jarmusch), which was honored with the Fipresci Prize at the Berlinale; *OUT OF TIBET* by Solveig Klassen, which won the Bavarian Documentary Film Award and was nominated for the Joris Ivens Award in Amsterdam; *MASSAKER* by Monika Borgmann, Lokman Slim and Hermann Theißen, winner of the Berlinale's Fipresci Prize and the Jury Award at Visions du Réel in Nyon.



Carl-Ludwig Rettinger holds a degree in media studies (film and theatre studies) and was an editor at ZDF for independent feature films and documentaries. In 1991 he became a partner and managing director of the film production company LICHTBLICK FILM, based in Cologne.

[www.lichtblick-film.com](http://www.lichtblick-film.com)

**THE ART OF  
SILENCE**

With Louis Chevalier, Daniel Loinger, Georges Loinger, Aurélia Marceau, Camille Marceau, Rob Mermin, Anne Sicco, Christoph Staerkle  
A film by Maurizius Staerkle Drux / Cinematography Raphael Beinder / Editing Tania Stöcklin / Produced by Aline Schmid, Adrian Blaser,  
Carl-Ludwig Rettinger / with music by Nils Frahm and Julian Sartorius / Original sound & sound design Maurizius Staerkle Drux, Mélia Roger  
Mixing Denis Séchaud / Color grading Fabian Kimoto / With the support of the Federal Office of Culture (FOC), Cinéforum & Loterie Romande,  
Zürcher Filmstiftung, Kulturfonds Suissimage, Aargauer Kuratorium, Media Desk Suisse, UBS Kulturstiftung, Swiss Films, Film- und Medienstiftung NRW,  
Deutscher Filmförderfonds DFFF / A production of BEAUVOIR Films in co-production with LICHTBLICK Film, ENSEMBLE Film, SRF SRG SSR, ZDF, ARTE

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**THE ART OF  
SILENCE**

81 Minutes

DCP 1:1.85

25 fps

colour

Digital 5.1 Mix

Switzerland / Germany

2022

