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Ressort: Special interest

Laurin ? A German Gothic Fairytale

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Robert Sigl's *Laurin* feels like it fell out of a parallel universe — with vision, style, and madness. *Laurin* is not a children's film, though a child stands at its center. Nor is it a horror film, though dread permeates every frame. It's a fever dream — poetic, strange, precise.

The story? A girl in a gloomy coastal town around 1900, surrounded by death, loss, and a whisper of the supernatural. But plot is secondary. Sigl doesn't tell stories linearly — he tells them visually, with a camera that glides through fog, shadows, and adolescent fears like a ghost. Every frame is a painting, every scene an echo of Bava, Argento, and Tarkovsky.

What makes *Laurin* so unsettling is its ambivalence: beauty and horror lie so close together that you're never sure whether to marvel or recoil. The music is hypnotic, the colors hallucinatory, the atmosphere so dense you could slice it with a knife.

That this film remains virtually unknown in Germany is no accident — it's a symptom. Sigl won the Bavarian Young Director's Award, but was never given the chance to create another work of this magnitude. *Laurin* remained a solitary gem, a monument to missed opportunities. As Rüdiger Suchsland put it: "With different funding policies, Robert Sigl could be a German David Lynch."

There are films that don't age — because they seem to come from another dimension. *Laurin* is one of them. Made in 1988, but timeless: a visual poem, a psychological nightmare, a gothic fairytale that refuses to fit into the boxes of German cinema. And that's precisely why it was ignored.

The plot is quickly told — a girl in a coastal town around 1900, surrounded by loss, sinister figures, and a hint of the supernatural. But *Laurin* isn't a plot-driven film. Sigl isn't interested in narrative conventions, but in atmosphere, in the uncanny within the everyday, in the shadows stretching between childhood and death.

Visually, *Laurin* is a revelation. The camera floats through misty alleys, Victorian interiors, dream sequences reminiscent of Tarkovsky. The color palette is rich, almost baroque, with a tendency toward over-aestheticization that German cinema usually dismisses as "too much." But here, it works — because it's part of the storytelling. Every frame is a painting, every cut a slice into the subconscious.

Jacques Zwart's score adds its own layer: hypnotic, melancholic, almost sacred. It deepens the mood without overpowering it. And the actors — especially Dóra Szinetár as *Laurin* — perform with a blend of

Redaktioneller Programmdienst: European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

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childlike innocence and existential depth rarely seen in German film.

But the real tragedy of Laurin isn't its content — it's its fate. Though Sigl received early acclaim, he vanished from the radar of German film funding. No further theatrical films, no career like Fatih Akin or Christian Petzold. Instead: TV productions, genre footnotes, a quiet disappearance.

Rüdiger Suchsland nailed it: "With different funding policies, Robert Sigl could be a German David Lynch." And indeed — Laurin has everything Lynch is known for: the interplay of dream and reality, obsessive imagery, psychosexual depth. Only Lynch had a system that let him thrive. Sigl had Germany.

What remains is a film that deserves to be seen now more than ever. Not as a curiosity, but as a warning. Laurin shows what could have been — and what was denied. It's a solitary gem, a phantom, proof that German cinema can be more than social drama and crime procedurals. If only it were allowed to be.

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**Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
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Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
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