

The existing *Härtefallregelung* (regulation for extreme cases) will remain in force as well.

### Komödie und Realien

So how does this movie weave the reality of life as a refugee in Germany into the fabric of a comedic film? Diallo the refugee from Nigeria (who was chosen by the Hartmanns from the local *Flüchtlingszentrum*) describes with vivid intensity during a visit to a local school how his family was eradicated by the Boko-Haram-butchers. Outside the refugee center we see a container sprayed with a swastika symbol, and the Villa Hartmann becomes the focus of protests by Pegida and Neo-Nazi protests. In the refugee center itself one of the refugees agitates as an ideologist for Islamic terrorism only to be arrested by the watchful Munich police.

Ironically, these realistic elements do not diminish but rather enhance the overall comedic atmosphere of this movie. When the mother Angelika Hartmann makes the decision to take in a refugee, she does it against the will of her husband Richard, adding to the existing strain of their marriage. With daughter Sophie being an aimless eternal student and son Philipp close to professional burn-out, the family spirals into turbulence and the ensuing twists and turns exacerbate the delightful confusion, setting the stage for a positive ending that debunks many prejudices and anti-immigrant sentiments. Foremost among them is Elyas M'Barek, who plays a colleague of Dr. Hartmann. He is the antithesis of an uneducated, violent Islamic refugee and is instrumental in helping Diallo adjust to German society and gain social traction through his jogging group. The fact that he ultimately wins the heart of Sophie Hartmann, the aimless daughter, refutes stereotypical perceptions of immigrants and reinforces the image of Germany as a tolerant multi-cultural society.

M'Barek expressed his hopes for Germany recently, combining his winning smile with a few *Sorgenfalten*: "*Die ganze Krise, in der sich die Bundesrepublik derzeit befindet, führt vielleicht dazu, dass wir hinterher ein bisschen mehr wissen, wer wir sind und wer wir sein wollen.*" Hopefully the outlook conveyed by the humor of this comedy, as well as the role model portrayed by M'Barek, will have a positive impact in Germany and perhaps *in der ganzen Welt*.



Elyas M'Barek

## THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

### *Friday Film Fest Series*



## Willkommen bei den Hartmanns

By Simon Verhoeven

March 16, 2018

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of PA

611 Spring Garden St.

215-627-2332

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# Willkommen bei den Hartmanns (2016)

**Director:** Simon Verhoeven  
**Screenplay:** Simon Verhoeven

**Production:** Quirin Berg, Max Wiedemann  
Simon + Michael Verhoeven

**Music:** Gary Go

**Camera:** Jo Heim

**Cut:** Stefan Essl, Dennis Bachter

**Length:** 116 Minutes

**Year:** 2016

**Cast:** Senta Berger as Angelika Hartmann  
Heiner Lauterbach as Dr. Richard Hartmann  
Florian David Fitz as Philipp Hartmann  
Palina Rojinski as Sofie Hartmann  
Eric Kabongo as Diallo Makabouri  
Elyas M'Barek as Dr. Tarek Berger

**Commentary:** Karl Moehlmann



## Personalien

This movie reveals an interesting nexus within the small world of German cinema, including the past and present as well as the personal and professional. Senta Berger, who plays the retired school teacher Angelika Hartmann, is married to Michael Verhoeven, the film director who became famous with his two movies "*Die Weiße Rose*" in 1982 and "*Das schreckliche Mädchen*" in 1990. Simon Verhoeven, the director of this comedy, is their oldest son.

Senta Berger's husband in this movie is Heiner Lauterbach, who starred in the very successful German comedy "*Männer*" in 1985 together with Uwe Ochsenknecht and Ulrike Kriener. Ochsenknecht was the plastic surgeon who pumped Botox into Lauterbach's face and Kriener played the wife of Lauterbach. She was the reason for their funny *Hahnenkampf* and was the liberal hippie friend of Angelika Hartmann. Both are in this movie as well. The German acting world is indeed a small one.

Then there is Elyas M'Barek, who has an Austrian mother and a father from Tunisia. He rose to German comedy fame when he played Zeki Müller in the highly successful 2013 and 2015 comedies "*Fack ju Göhste*" and "*Fack ju Göhste 2*". The fact that he plays a highly educated and accepted medical doctor who in his leisure time is an organizer of a refugee jogging group functions as an example of positive integration into the German

## Leitkultur.

Nor should we forget the *Flüchtling* Diallo in this movie. He is from Nigeria and fled the Boko-Haram terrorist group who butchered his family. He is played by the Belgian actor Eric Kabongo, whose limited German adds to the authenticity of the refugee situation in Germany. Admittedly, most German families do not have houses which look like the villa of the Hartmanns. But the Munich suburb where the Hartmanns live is just like Munich Harlaching where the Verhoevens lived and Simon Verhoeven grew up.

## Wir schaffen das

The German Federal Bureau of Statistics released the latest (August 2017) figures about people with a foreign background. It has reached a new record: 18.6 million people with a *Migrationshintergrund* now live in Germany, which is 22.5% of the population. Turkey is still the largest *Herkunftsland*, but the greatest increase came from countries in the Middle East, particularly Syria with 2.3 million people, a 51% increase in comparison to 2011. The reason for this increase is of course the high number of refugees that Germany accepted in 2015 and 2016, but especially at the end of August 2015 when a large number of Syrian refugees were stuck at the border to Hungary.

Chancellor Angela Merkel allowed the *Marsch der Hoffnung* to continue to Germany, accepting the desperate Syrians with her famous line *Wir schaffen das* on August 31, 2015. This memorable phrase set up intense discussions in Germany about the nature of their new *Willkommenskultur*. Would Germany be able to handle so many refugees at once with no end or *Obergrenze* in sight, or would this act of humanity lead to significant political repercussions?

The rise of the AfD-Party is one such repercussion. This party's anti-immigrant sentiments enabled its entry into 13 state parliaments since 2014 and into the Bundestag in the last election in September 2017 with 12.6% of the seats. The *Flüchtlingspolitik* also played a significant role in the negotiations between the CDU/CSU and the SPD to form a new *Große Koalition*.

While the more conservative CSU demanded a continuation of the prohibition against allowing family members to join refugees in Germany and to start repatriating Syrian refugees, the SPD insisted that the conflict in Syria is by no means over and that the *Familiennachzug* should be allowed according to international rules. In their final coalition agreement, both parties agreed to keep the ban in place until the end of July of this year and then allow 1000 *Familienangehörige* to enter the country every month.