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# YELLOW LETTERS

EEN FILM VAN İLKER ÇATAK

*cinéart*



PERSMAP



NA  
**DAS LEHRERZIMMER**

**ÖZGÜ NAMAL    TANSU BİÇER**

# **YELLOW LETTERS**

EEN FILM VAN **İLKER ÇATAK**

Drama, Thriller - 2025 - Duitsland - 128 minuten  
Bioscooprelease: 08-10-2026

Meer informatie: [Cineart.nl/films/yellow-letters](https://Cineart.nl/films/yellow-letters)  
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# Synopsis

YELLOW LETTERS is een inventief en actueel drama van regisseur Ilker Çatak (DAS LEHRERZIMMER). Hoewel de film zich afspeelt in Turkije, vormen Berlijn (als Ankara) en Hamburg (als Istanboel) het decor van onmacht, corruptie en staatsdwang.

Het huwelijk van de gevierde actrice Derya (Özgü Namal) en regisseur en docent Aziz (Tansu Biçer) staat onder druk nadat ze hun baan verliezen door willekeur van de staat. Ze verhuizen naar Istanbul om bij de ouders van Aziz te wonen. Zij en hun 13-jarige dochter moeten hun leven opnieuw vormgeven. Derya krijgt een aantrekkelijk aanbod, Aziz vindt een baantje. Maar is er nog plaats voor hun principes en een vrije mening?

YELLOW LETTERS won de Gouden Beer op het Filmfestival van Berlijn. Door Duitsland als acteur in te zetten, laat Çatak zien dat (zelf)censuur en staatscontrole niet stoppen bij de grens. 'A film that's both a gripping marital drama and a rallying cry against artist censorship' – IndieWire





**Director: Ilker Çatak**

## **ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

Ilker Çatak was born in Berlin in 1984 and grew up in Istanbul. He studied directing in Berlin and Hamburg. His graduation short SADAKAT – TREUE (2014) won numerous awards, including the Student Academy Award® (Gold) for Best International Short Film. His feature debut ONCE UPON A TIME IN INDIAN COUNTRY (Es war einmal Indianerland) was released in 2017. Two years later, he directed I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE (Es gilt das gesprochene Wort, 2019), produced by Ingo Fliess, which premiered at the Munich Film Festival, won multiple awards, and received the German Film Award (Lola) in Bronze for Best Film. In 2021, Çatak adapted Finn-Ole Heinrich's novel RÄUBERHÄNDE for the screen. He has also worked extensively in television, including the Tatort episode Borowski und der gute Mensch. His film THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE (Das Lehrerzimmer) premiered at the Berlinale in 2023, received numerous international awards, and was nominated for the Academy Award® for Best International Feature Film in 2024.



# A CONVERSATION WITH ILKER ÇATAK

## “LOCALITY OFTEN HAS A UNIVERSAL QUALITY”

### How did the idea for YELLOW LETTERS come about?

The idea came to me in 2019, when I was in Istanbul for an earlier film. People in the industry told me about the dismissal letters they'd received and some of the absurd reasons listed. In one case, someone had smoked in a theater dressing room, so disciplinary proceedings were initiated. Between 2016 and 2019, around 2,000 artists were suspended and taken to court because they'd signed a peace petition. These were sweeping purges in academia and culture. They began after the government reacted to the petition and intensified after the attempted coup in the summer of 2016. Professional bans were imposed, court proceedings were delayed, people were forced into a waiting position and worn down simply by waiting. For me, it was crucial not to just denounce “the state,” but to look at everything through the perspective of a marriage that's initially intact. How do you deal with a regime that prevents you from doing your work the way you believe it should be done, and from expressing your opinions the way you want to express them? How do you live with a system that condemns you to a kind of civil death excluding you from social life, leaving you physically alive but legally, socially, and professionally erased? I wanted to tell a story about these questions in the context of family dynamics, because I believe it concerns all of us. And I think these questions will only become more urgent in the coming years, whether we live in Turkey, the EU, or the U.S.

### How did the script develop from there?

In 2021, Ayda, my wife and I started researching together. We read a lot about the purges, but we also immersed ourselves in literature. There's a book, *The Turkishness Contract* by Barış Ünlü, that describes the mechanisms, the “performances” people are expected to deliver in order to get ahead in society. You're expected to be a patriot, but also a believer. It shows very clearly how this pressure to perform already emerged during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the Turkish Republic, and how that division of society gradually narrowed the corridor of what citizens could publicly say and be.

I found this fascinating in connection with the stories of artists who, after being dismissed, were suddenly forced to play a different game, not on stage, but in public life. Performing conformity: going to the mosque, integrating into the community, joining the breaking of the fast, deleting your social-media posts... You can see a striking version of this in the U.S. right now, where tech companies line up behind Donald Trump and flip their agenda 180 degrees. These are performances, a spectacle we're also seeing in Germany. In a world driven by money and political power, it can feel almost romantic, even naïve, to talk about ideals instead of simply being opportunistic. You're practically ridiculed for asking what's become of human rights, perhaps the greatest achievement of the last century, when suddenly they're being dismantled. Those were the thoughts Ayda and I carried into the writing.

## When did you decide to shoot the film in Germany instead of Turkey?

I wrote the first draft of the script alone, but I had doubts. I felt that a Turkish director should make this film, someone like Emin Alper, for example, who signed the peace petition and was put on trial. Because I live in Germany and was spared this injustice, I sometimes felt like a tourist in my own history.

I talked about that with my Turkish producer, Enis Köstepen, a very enlightened, progressive thinker who also works in Istanbul as a human-rights activist with various NGOs. He then had the idea of sending the film into exile, too: shooting it in Germany. We wouldn't be recreating Turkey. Instead, we'd look for places in Germany, where there's a huge diaspora anyway, where "Turkey" can take place.

Then reality caught up with the film. Trump escalated his campaign against universities, and the Israel- Palestine debate showed how quickly, even here, artists and academics have to watch what they say. Suddenly, YELLOW LETTERS was no longer a story that only happens "over there." And suddenly it made perfect sense to stage this role-play: shoot the film here and agree on the premise that we're in Turkey.

## How did the financing come together?

Ingo Fliess and I initially planned YELLOW LETTERS as a low-budget project. Then THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE had worldwide success. Naturally, more and more people became interested in what we'd do next. We weren't sure a film entirely in Turkish would meet broad interest. But for the first time, one of our joint projects was funded by both the BKM and the FFA. In Cannes, the film was sold to several countries in 2024 based on the script alone. And that showed us that we really can dare to do more. We can become more local, think more locally, because locality often carries a universality that we underestimate.





**So, it was clear you wanted to make the film with a Turkish cast, in Turkish?**

Pretty quickly, yes. Maybe it was a bit defiant, in the sense of: why not? Cinema is always a window to the world. I love languages, German as well as Turkish. So why not make a film entirely in Turkish? The actors' courage to take part in such a project touched me deeply, and my sense of responsibility toward them grew even stronger. We have around 70 speaking roles, some actors came from Turkey, others from Germany, France, Austria, and Switzerland. I found it especially meaningful to give Turkish actors living in Europe a stage: the opportunity to perform in their native language and build a bridge between two countries.

**Behind the camera, you worked with the same team as on THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE.**

Of course. I've already made four films with Director of Photography Judith Kaufmann, and I've also worked repeatedly with Production Designer Zazie Knepper. After the Oscars®, it was clear we wanted to continue in this constellation, even though the shooting language was a major challenge. The actors spoke Turkish and a little English with Judith, and when needed, we brought in an interpreter. At first, that barrier was difficult, but over time it settled.

**What was your focus in terms of staging and visual design?**

Martin Scorsese once said, "Cinema is a matter of what's in the frame and what's out," and that was essential for this film. Judith and I knew we could only frame what "Turkey," or rather a feeling of Turkey, creates. So we looked for fragments and perspectives that carry that feeling, like the ferry in Hamburg, which is almost indistinguishable from a ferry in Istanbul. At the same time, we deliberately allowed German lettering to appear in the frame here and there, creating a productive sense of irritation. We also talked in advance about Brechtian theater, about involving the audience. In a way, we're inviting viewers into a contract. The rules of the game are Berlin is Ankara and Hamburg is Istanbul. As filmmakers, you make offers that, in the best case, the audience accepts and learns how to read. And then you hope they'll be moved and carried away by the rest of the story.

**What effect do you hope the film will have?**

I hope it sparks reflection about how we, as societies that have enjoyed freedom of expression and artistic freedom in liberal democracies, would behave if that suddenly ended. As individuals, as parents, as citizens. I want people to ask themselves what they would do in Derya and Aziz's situation, and, in doing so, to look beyond their own horizons, recognize the problem as a global phenomenon, and reflect on it.

## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT BY INGO FLIESS

The personal is political. That idea lay at the heart of this film from the very beginning. Ilker Çatak developed the story together with his wife and co-writer Ayda Meryem Çatak as an unflinching exploration of the values couples negotiate every day, values whose priorities can shift dramatically when survival is at stake. It's often only in moments of crisis that we truly learn who we're dealing with.

At the center of *YELLOW LETTERS* is the fictional couple Derya and Aziz: a small, seemingly happy family suddenly thrust into an arena where fundamental questions of honesty, decency, pragmatism, and moral responsibility are renegotiated. Caught between them is their adolescent daughter, torn between her father's uncompromising ethical stance and her mother's very real instinct to secure the family's survival.

It was our Turkish co-producer and co-writer Enis Köstepen who proposed relocating the story to Germany, reimagining Ankara in Berlin and Istanbul in Hamburg. The idea electrified us. Our Turkish family now inhabited a kind of no-man's land, or perhaps everyone's land. As early as the Berlinale Co-Production Market in 2022, where we first presented the project, it became clear how strongly this story resonated beyond its original context.

According to the V-Dem Institute in Gothenburg, there are now fewer democracies worldwide than autocracies, with over 70 percent of the global population living under authoritarian systems. Against this backdrop, the question of responsibility, our responsibility as filmmakers, becomes unavoidable. *YELLOW LETTERS* isn't an indictment of a specific state, nor does it seek to assign blame. Instead, it invites empathy: for what it means to be treated unjustly, to experience powerlessness, and to feel one's freedoms gradually erode.





More than anything, *YELLOW LETTERS* is a film about marriage as a “seemingly objective reality,” to borrow a term from sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, a fragile anchor in a storm that rages all around it. İlker Çatak begins from a place he knows intimately, family, Turkey, the dynamics of a marriage under pressure, but expands the story into something universal. As with our previous collaboration, *THE TEACHERS’ LOUNGE*, which many critics read as a metaphor for Western democracies and their growing fault lines, this film uses a specific setting to reflect broader societal developments.

The creative process behind *YELLOW LETTERS* was intense and deeply collaborative: from script development with our Turkish partners at Liman Film, to shooting with a multilingual team across two German cities standing in for Turkey, to a long and rigorous editing process led by Gesa Jäger in close exchange with our French coproducers at Haut et Court and our German-French partners at ZDF, ARTE, and Alamode. Perhaps this spirit of dialogue is felt in the film itself. It was always our goal to open doors, to allow space for reflection, discussion, and free expression.



## **DOP JUDITH KAUFMANN ON HER COLLABORATION WITH ILKER ÇATAK AND WHAT MAKES YELLOW LETTERS SPECIAL**

YELLOW LETTERS is already my fourth collaboration with director Ilker, and each of these films was special in its own way. Our collaboration was congenial from the start and has deepened over the course of the four films we have made together. We've developed the kind of collaboration I could only wish for. We always start with detailed discussions about the script: about the story, the constellations, the core of the narrative, about attitude, and Ilker's view of the characters. We watch films together, draw inspiration from music, and seek a new, unique perspective for each project. These discussions take place long before we talk about the camera or the visual design. That's what's special about the collaboration, this joint exploration and constant questioning. And it's not just about the visuals, but also about rhythm, staging, acting, casting, and editing. We're always searching together; that's the beauty of it.

But with YELLOW LETTERS, there was something else that was completely new for all of us. Although the film is set in Turkey, we shot in two German cities that represent Turkey: Berlin embodies Ankara, Hamburg embodies Istanbul. The idea was to find a more abstract form on a visual level and thus tell a universal story: about how people under pressure question their values and have to redefine their moral boundaries. That was precisely where the challenge lay. We tell the story exclusively with Turkish actors, in their language and «their homeland», and yet we're never really there. This play with the question «Where are we?» became a central part of the project. Is the location even important? Or are we telling a story that could happen anywhere in the world? It was important to us to approach this «location transformation» consciously and playfully, without attempting to artificially imitate Turkey, for example through street signs or license plates. We wanted to avoid Orientalism to create not a touristic, sentimental view of Turkey, but a clear, formal attitude.

To this end, we created a kind of rule book that defined our creative approach. Another big challenge for me was the language, the dialogues are exclusively in Turkish. The film has around 70 speaking roles, a huge ensemble, as this small family travels through different social, cultural, and political milieus. Much of my work is based on intuition. But when you don't understand the language, the dialogues and also the nuances of the director's instructions, you always feel like you're missing something essential.

At first, I worked with simultaneous translation apps, but that resulted in permanent uncertainty as to whether what was being translated was really what was meant. In the end, I had to learn to trust my intuition, to focus more on body language, on nuances, on the invisible. It was an exciting, enriching process.



# THREE QUESTIONS FOR PRODUCTION DESIGNER ZAZIE KNEPPER

**What's special about your collaboration with Ilker Çatak?**

It's a relationship built on mutual trust that has grown over time. YELLOW LETTERS is my fourth collaboration with Ilker. We know each other well, like each other, and share a similar political outlook, that creates a strong bond. This closeness opens up space for creative exchange without ego. Ideas are developed together, questioned, discarded, and rethought, always in search of the most visually compelling and conceptually coherent image. This willingness to search and discover together is truly wonderful.

There are three of us at the core of this process: Judith Kaufmann, with whom I also share a long-standing friendship, is indispensable. An exciting and emotionally resonant production design emerges only through the interplay of direction and cinematography. Filmmaking is teamwork and we're a great team.

**What was the greatest challenge for you on this project?**

On the one hand, we wanted to stay very close to the characters and to events as they unfold in Turkey. On the other hand, we wanted to create a sense of transferability that extends far beyond national borders. We wanted to show that what happens to the characters in the film is not tied to a single country or a specific place.

That's why I deliberately did not want to create a "Reconstruction," but instead consciously embraced the tension between the credibility of individual locations and the irritation created by the clear fact that we're filming in Germany. The production design should not distract the audience, but it should still create a subtle field of tension and that tension is where part of the film's meaning resides.

**How did you approach and realize this idea?**

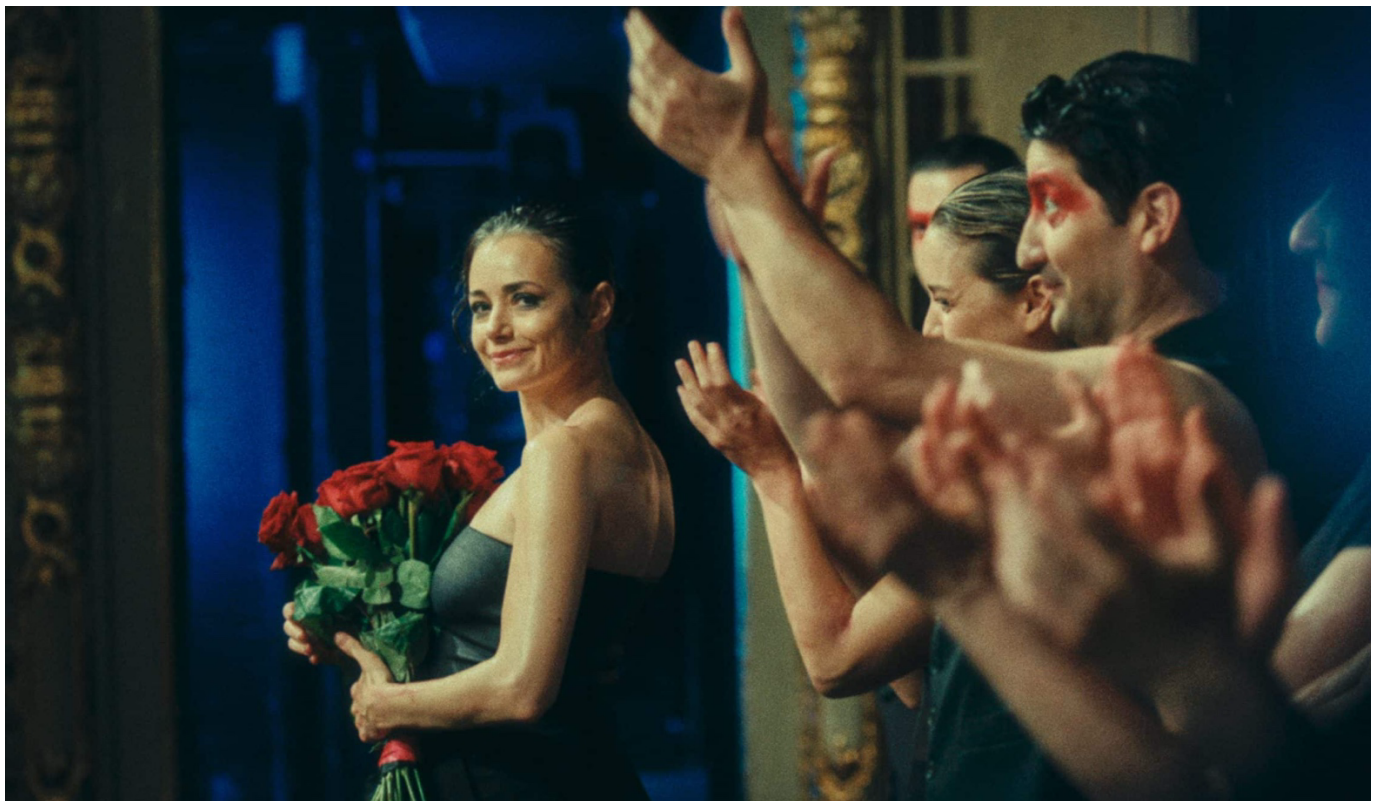
First, I conducted extensive research into what certain locations in Turkey look like: universities, courtrooms, state and private theaters, streets, shops, schools, and apartments across different social strata. It was a weekslong immersion, during which I distilled an essence from all these impressions, an essence that ultimately gave me the confidence to select the right filming locations. It was a very demanding process to search for the right places under these constraints, but through persistence we found, and invented, extraordinary worlds. For example, the university in Ankara was filmed in Berlin, in an unrenovated wing of the Botanical Institute. The building has a remarkable presence: It speaks of elegance, education, and history, while also possessing the seductive charm of a decaying Venetian palazzo.

The large theater scene at the beginning of the film was shot at the Berliner Ensemble. The history of the building mirrors our themes, as does the imperial eagle that Bertolt Brecht famously had crossed out with a red X when the Berliner Ensemble moved in. Or the memorial plaque in front of Hamburg's Higher Regional Court, commemorating the

victims of judicial injustice in 1933. We repeatedly wanted to create visual references that remind us of our own history, something that feels urgently necessary and disturbingly relevant today.

Despite all this ambivalence, it was equally important to draw the audience into the intimate world of our protagonists and to bring them close to the characters. I tried to strike a balance in which recognizable elements would not feel stereotypical. For example, we deliberately avoided oriental patterns or ornaments, such as in the family's apartment in Ankara, creating spaces that could just as plausibly be located in London, Paris, New York, or Berlin.

The project required a great deal of sensitivity and tact, especially for me as a production designer who did not grow up in Turkey, unlike Ilker Çatak, who's emotionally very close to the story. Our Turkish actors were, of course, also highly attentive to ensuring that we did not approach Turkey through a cliché lens. Through this collaboration with people who have lived the story themselves, something emotional and sensorial ultimately grew into the *mise-en-scène*. And that was always the goal: to make a place experientially tangible.





## IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA

### Özgü Namal - Derya

Özgü Namal was born in Istanbul and graduated from the Istanbul State Conservatory at Istanbul University in 2002, majoring in theater. She began her career on stage and soon became one of the most renowned and influential actresses in Turkish cinema and television.

She made her feature-film breakthrough with CHILDREN OF SECRET (Sır Çocukları, 2002), followed by notable roles in BÜYÜ (2004), ANLAT İSTANBUL / TELL ISTANBUL (2005), THE INTERNATIONAL (Beynelmilel, 2006), POLIS (2007), HAPPINESS / MUTLULUK (2007), and GÜNEŞİN OĞLU (2008). On television, she has appeared in acclaimed series such as Yeditepe İstanbul, Valley of the Wolves (Kurtlar Vadisi), Hanımın Çiftliği, Koyu Kırmızı, Merhamet, and Kızıl Goncalar.

In 2006, she received both the Afife Theatre Award and the Sadri Alışık Theatre and Film Award for her performance in Kiralık Oyun. In 2007, she won Best Actress at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival for HAPPINESS and at the Istanbul International Film Festival for THE INTERNATIONAL. She has also received international recognition at festivals in Pune, Funchal, and Oxford.

With YELLOW LETTERS, Özgü Namal returned to the screen under the direction of Oscar®-nominated filmmaker Ilker Çatak, continuing her lifelong commitment to acting with the same intensity and passion that marked her early career. Most recently, she portrayed Seniha in the series Kıskanmak, adapted from the novel by Nahid Sırrı Örik, earning particular praise for the psychological depth of her performance.



## Tansu Biçer – Aziz

Tansu Biçer was born in Ankara in 1978 and graduated from the State Conservatory of Anadolu University in 2001, where he studied theater. He began his professional career at Tiyatro Anadolu and moved to Istanbul in 2002, becoming one of the founding members of Semaver Kumpanya Theatre. Alongside his extensive stage work, Biçer has established himself as a prominent film and television actor. He won the Best Supporting Actor award at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival in 2012 for MOLD (Kuf, dir. Ali Aydın) and received the Best Actor award twice at the Adana Golden Boll Film Festival for FIVE CITIES (Beş Şehir, 2009) and SPIRIT OF DUST (Toz Ruhü, 2014).

He has appeared in acclaimed television series such as Şubat, Beş Kardeş, Ufak Tefek Cinayetler, and Çukur, as well as in streaming productions including Rise of Empires: Ottoman, Midnight at the Pera Palace, and Prens.

On the big screen, he has delivered powerful performances in films such as Tayfun Pirseliimoğlu's YOL KENARI (2017), Mahmut Fazıl Coşkun's YOZGAT BLUES (2013), Onur Ünlü's THE EXTREMELY TRAGIC STORY OF CELAL TAN AND HIS FAMILY (Celal Tan ve Ailesinin Aşırı Acıklı Hikayesi, 2011), THOU GILD'ST THE EVEN (Sen aydınlatırsın geceyi, 2013), and Nehir Tuna's YURT (2023). In 2020, Biçer co-founded Bahçe Galata Theatre in Istanbul. He has performed for seven seasons in Amadeus and in Nora 2, a contemporary adaptation of Ibsen's A Doll's House, which has been playing to sold-out audiences for several years. He also leads acting workshops and is a co-founder of Podbee Media, one of Turkey's leading podcast platforms. He currently appears in the television series Veliaht.



## **Leyla Smyrna Cabas – Ezgi**

Leyla Smyrna Cabas was born in Istanbul in 2010 and holds Turkish and Austrian citizenship. After attending the German international school İELEV, she's currently enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program at Şişli Terakki High School in Istanbul. Prior to YELLOW LETTERS, she appeared in the feature film FIDAN (2024), marking the directorial debut of Ayçıl Yeltan. At the age of thirteen, Leyla Smyrna Cabas delivered her first leading performance, drawing attention for her natural screen presence and emotional sensitivity.

## **İpek Bilgin - Güngör Hanım**

Born in Istanbul in 1956, İpek Bilgin is one of Turkey's most distinguished stage actresses. She was a longtime member of the Ankara State Theatre ensemble and has also worked extensively as a director, acting coach, and translator. Her translations of key acting texts by Eric Morris and Joan Hotchkis, including No Acting Please and Irreverent Acting, have played an important role in shaping contemporary actor training in Turkey. She's widely known to television audiences for her role as Meliha Uçar in the acclaimed series Ezel and has appeared in films such as THE BUTTERFLY'S DREAM (2013), RED ISTANBUL (2017), and AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW (2025). In 2000, she received the Turkish Theatre Award for Best Actress and continues to work actively on stage and screen.

## **Aydın Işık – Salih**

Aydın Işık was born in Hattingen in 1978 and raised in Istanbul. He has worked as an actor, director, and playwright since 2003 and has directed more than 15 theater productions. Since 2011, he has also been active as a cabaret performer throughout Germany. His solo program ehrlich gesagt... and the duo performance Nord-Süd-Gefühle have toured extensively, earning him several cabaret awards, including the Lower Saxony Cabaret Award "Laubenpieper" (2013), the Melsungen Cabaret Award (2015), and the Hessian Cabaret Award (2018).

Işık is also active in radio and is part of the presenting team for the Turkish-language program Cosmo Türkçe on WDR Cosmo. His radio play Cenaze / The Funeral was produced by WDR 5 in 2010. His short film VATER won Best Cast at the Alternative Film Festival Winter 2017 in Toronto and Best Short Film at the Niederrhein Short Film Festival in 2018. He regularly appears in supporting roles in German television productions.

## **Aziz Çapkurt – Baran**

Aziz Çapkurt, born in 1981, began his acting career in Istanbul theater in 2002 and has appeared on screen since 2014. He received the Best Supporting Actor award at the Antalya International Film Festival in 2015 for SONG OF MY MOTHER (Annemin Şarkısı). After relocating to Munich in 2017, he became involved in numerous international film and television productions across Europe and the United States, working alongside actors such as Eva Green, Jason Clarke, Helen Mirren, Lars Eidinger, and others. Under the direction of Suzanne Andrews Correa, he played the lead role in the short film GREEN, which received, among other honors, the Short Film Jury Award at the Sundance



Film Festival in 2019. He later joined the cast of the Apple TV+ science-fiction series *Invasion*, directed by Emmy Award winner Jamie Payne and produced by Simon Kinberg (*The Martian*), followed by a role in the Disney+ series *Escape*.

Most recently, he appeared in the U.S. production *DIRTY ANGELS* (2024), directed by Martin Campbell (*Casino Royale*). Aziz Çapkurt has also appeared in numerous German-language productions, including Ayşe Polat's thriller *IN THE BLIND SPOT* (*Im Toten Winkel*, 2023), which received three German Film Awards, and Matthias Glasner's series *Informant: Fear Over the City* (*Informant: Angst über der Stadt*).

At the 2025 Munich Film Festival, he won the Fritz Gerlich Prize for his role in *BRIDES*, the feature-film directorial debut of British playwright Nadia Fall. His most recent projects include, alongside *YELLOW LETTERS*, Mehmet Akif Büyükkatalay's *HYSTERIA* (2025) and *PARADIS*, the new film by Norwegian director and screenwriter Maria Sødahl.

## BEHIND THE CAMERA

### Ayda Meryem Çatak - Writer

Ayda Meryem Çatak lived in Istanbul, where she studied fine arts with a focus on painting at Mimar Sinan University, graduating in 2005. In 2007, she moved to Berlin, where she has continued her artistic career with numerous solo exhibitions and by teaching painting courses since 2010. Since 2008, she has collaborated on several of Ilker Çatak's projects in various capacities. *YELLOW LETTERS* marks her debut as a screenwriter.

### Enis Köstepen - Writer, Co-Producer

Enis Köstepen studied international trade and sociology at Boğaziçi University and anthropology at The New School for Social Research. In 2001, he was part of the founding editorial team of *Altyazı Cinema Magazine*. In 2008, he began producing feature films at Bulut Film, a company he co-founded.

From 2013 to 2021, Köstepen worked as a project development and fundraising coordinator at Hafıza Merkezi, an Istanbul-based human rights organization. He co-founded the *Altyazı Cinema Association* in 2019.

His filmography includes *DARK CLOUD* (Bahtı Kara, 2009, dir. Theron Patterson), *BEYOND THE HILL* (Tepenin Ardı, 2012, dir. Emin Alper), *LIFELONG* (Hayatboyu, 2013, as coproducer, dir. Aslı Özge), *FRENZY* (Abluka, 2015, dir. Emin Alper), *A TALE OF THREE SISTERS* (Kız Kardeşler, 2019, as co-producer, dir. Emin Alper), *HOLD STILL* (Dargeçit, 2024, dir. Berke Baş), and *YELLOW LETTERS* (Sarı Zarflar, 2026, as co-producer and co-writer, dir. Ilker Çatak).

## Judith Kaufmann – Director of Photography

Judith Kaufmann is an internationally acclaimed cinematographer whose work spans intimate dramas, historical films and politically charged narratives. She trained at the National College of Optics and Photography (Berlin) and began her career as a camera assistant before moving into cinematography.

Judith Kaufmann has won the German Camera Award on three occasions: in 2003 for SHARDS OF GLASS (Scherbentanz), directed by Chris Kraus; in 2010 for WHEN WE LEAVE (Die Fremde), directed by Feo Aladağ; and in 2025 for HELDIN, directed by Petra Volpe. In 2006, she became the first female cinematographer to receive the Marburg Camera Award. This was followed in 2012 by the Honorary Award of the Board of Trustees of the German Camera Award, and in 2014 by the Gunter Rohrbach Award for her work on DREAMLAND (Traumland), directed by Petra Volpe.

Internationally, Kaufmann attracted significant attention for her cinematography on Marie Kreutzer's CORSAGE, which celebrated its world premiere in the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival in 2022 and earned her the Award for Best Cinematography at the Diagonale 2023.

With YELLOW LETTERS, Judith Kaufmann collaborated with İlker Çatak for the fourth time, following RÄUBERHÄNDE (2021), the Tatort episode Borowski and the Good Man, and THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE (2022). Her recent work also includes Andreas Dresen's historical drama IN LOVE, YOUR HILDE (2024), the Kafka adaptation THE GLORY OF LIFE (2024), which she also co-directed with Georg Maas, as she previously did on TWO LIVES (2012), as well as POISON - A LOVE STORY (2024), directed by Désirée Nosbusch. Most recently, she reunited with director Petra Volpe on the English-language prison drama FRANK & LOUIS and with Marie Kreutzer on the feature film GENTLE MONSTER.

Judith Kaufmann is a member of the Academy of Arts, the European Film Academy, the German Film Academy, and, since 2016, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In 2020, she became the first recipient of the three-month Michael Ballhaus Fellowship at the Villa Aurora in Los Angeles.

## **Zazie Knepper - Production Designer**

Born in Tübingen and now based in Hamburg, she discovered her passion for stage design at Theaterhaus Stuttgart. After training as a stage designer and working for many years at various theaters in Hamburg, Stuttgart, and Oldenburg, she transitioned to moving images in the mid-1990s. Her first feature film emerged from a collaboration with film students at the Hamburg Media School. Her fascination with cinema quickly made this field the central focus of her work.

Her filmography now comprises more than 50 film and television productions, bringing her together with directors such as Dani Levy, Thomas Stuber, Matti Geschonneck, Markus Goller, Richard Huber, Natja Brunckhorst, and Hans-Christian Schmid. For her production design on the historical television project *Murder in Eberswalde* (*Mord in Eberswalde*), directed by Stephan Wagner, Zazie Knepper received the Grimme Award in 2014.

For several years now, she has been part of the creative team of director Ilker Çatak, with whom she has collaborated on *I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE* (2019), *THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE* (2022), and the Tatort episode *Borowski and the Good Man*.

## **Christian Röhrs - Costume Designer**

*YELLOW LETTERS* marks the fourth collaboration between Christian Röhrs and Ilker Çatak. Previously, Röhrs was responsible for costume design on Çatak's award-winning films *I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE* (2019), *STAMBUL GARDEN* (2021), and *THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE* (2022). He also shares a long-standing collaboration with producer Ingo Fliess. Their joint projects include *I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE* and *THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE*, as well as *A GIFT FROM THE GODS* (2014) and *WACKERSDORF* (2018), both directed by Oliver Haffner, along with *THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN HANDS* (2021), directed by Katharina Marie Schubert, and the television films *My Forgotten Life*, directed by Gernot Krääh, and *Rosenthal*, also directed by Oliver Haffner.

Christian Röhrs has worked in the film industry since 2004, after previously designing stage sets for various theaters. With his first feature-film project *LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG* (*Katze im Sack*, 2004), directed by Florian Schwarz, he began building an extensive costume and accessories archive. His further feature-film credits include *FOUR HANDS* (*Die Vierhändige*, 2017, dir. Oliver Kienle), *IN THE AISLES* (*In den Gängen*, 2018, dir. Thomas Stuber), *WE ARE NEXT OF KIN* (*Wir sind dann wohl die Angehörigen*, 2022, dir. Hans-Christian Schmid), *IVO* (2024, dir. Eva Trobisch), *22 LANES* (*22 Bahnen*, 2025, dir. Mia Maariel Meyer), and *ISLANDS* (2025, dir. Jan-Ole Gerster). For his costume work on Joachim Lang's biopic *CRANKO*, he received the German Film Award in 2025, shared with Juliane Maier.



## Marvin Miller – Composer

Composer Marvin Miller, born in Augsburg in 1988, is a long-time creative collaborator of Ilker Çatak. In 2014, he composed the music for Çatak's Oscar®-winning short and graduation film at the Hamburg Media School, SADAKAT - TREUE. This was followed by I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE (2019), the Tatort episode Borowski and the Good Man, and THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE (2022). Miller's additional feature-film credits include Michael "Bully" Herbig's BALLOON (2018), Dennis Gansel's JIM BUTTON AND LUKE THE ENGINE DRIVER (2018) and JIM BUTTON AND THE WILD 13 (2020), as well as THE BOANDLKRAMER AND ETERNAL LOVE (2021), directed by Joseph Vilsmaier, all in collaboration with composer Ralf Wengenmayr. He also composed the score for Katharina Marie Schubert's directorial debut THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN HANDS (2021), for THE BOOK WALKER (2024), directed by Ngo The Chau (together with Sebastian Fillenberg), and most recently for Mehmet Akif Buyukatalay's HYSTERIA (2025).

## Ingo Fliess – Producer

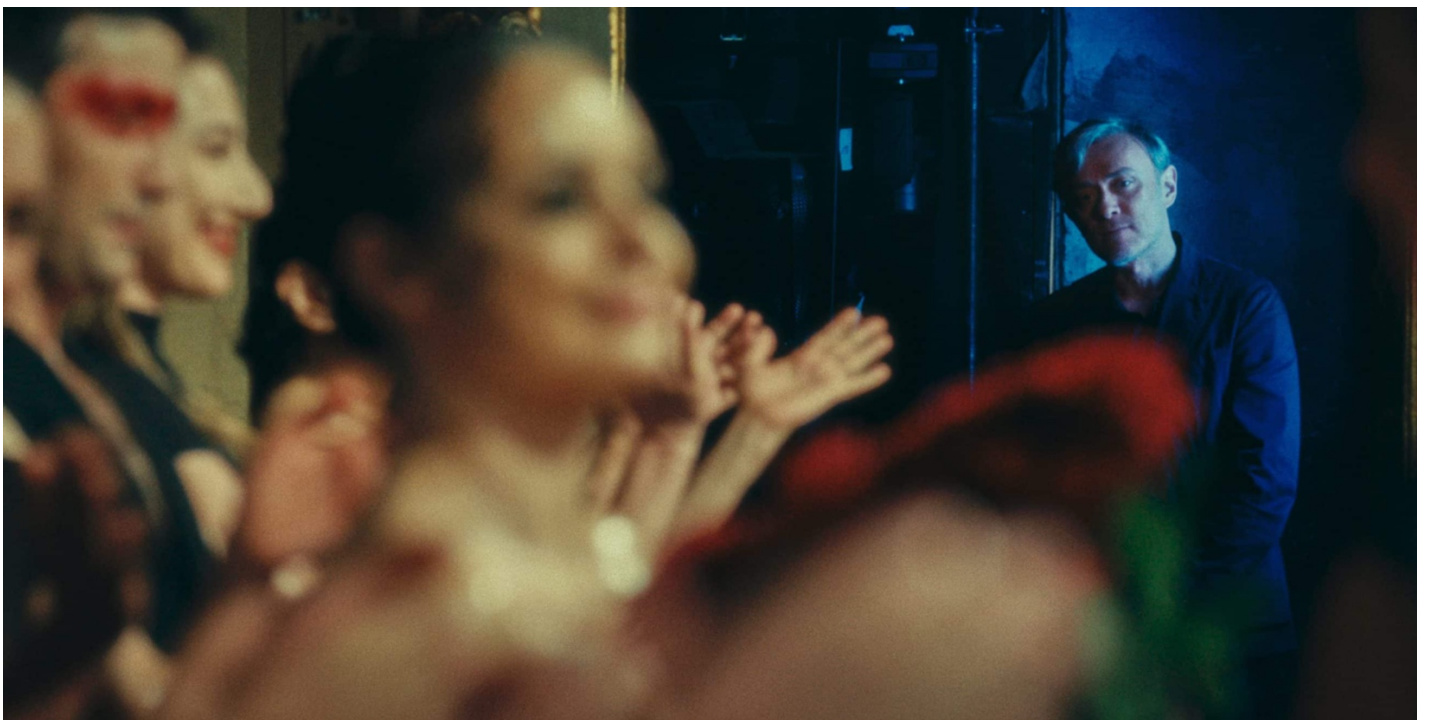
Ingo Fliess has headed Munich-based if... Productions Film GmbH since 2007. In 2024, his production THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE was nominated for the Academy Award® for Best International Feature Film. The film screened at major international festivals including the Berlinale, Telluride, and Toronto, and has been sold to more than 100 territories worldwide.

Fliess began his career in documentary filmmaking. His first major international success came with EL BULLI – COOKING IN PROGRESS (2011, dir. Gereon Wetzel), an intimate portrait of Ferran Adrià's molecular kitchen, which sold to over 40 countries and won numerous awards. SCHOOL OF PARENTS (Elternschule, 2018, dir. Jörg Adolph & Ralf Bucheler), also filmed in an observational style at a psychosomatic children's clinic, sparked nationwide debate in Germany and was among the films nominated for the German Film Award.

Among the best-known fiction films produced by if... Productions are WACKERSDORF (dir. Oliver Haffner, screenplay by Gernot Krääh), which won the German Film Award for Best Original Score in 2019; the atmospheric mystery drama WHERE THE FOREST STANDS STILL (Schweigend steht der Wald, dir. Saralisa Volm, screenplay by Wolfram Fleischhauer), which premiered at the Berlinale in 2022; and I WAS, I AM, I WILL BE (Es gilt das gesprochene Wort, dir. Ilker Çatak, screenplay co-written with Nils Mohl), which received the German Film Award (Bronze) in 2020.

Recent productions highlight the breadth of if... Productions' work: the television film ROSENTHAL (dir. Oliver Haffner, screenplay by Gernot Krääh) combines entertainment

with historical reflection; LEIBNIZ, which premiered at the Berlinale in 2025, marks a late work by legendary director Edgar Reitz; and Fliess continues his collaboration with İlker Çatak on YELLOW LETTERS, slated for theatrical release in 2026. In addition to his work as a producer, Ingo Fliess shapes the next generation of German filmmakers as a professor at the University of Television and Film Munich (HFF). He also serves on the board of PROG, advocating for Germany as a film-production hub, and is a member of both the German Film Academy and the European Film Academy.



## Cast

Derya  
Aziz  
Ezgi  
Güngör Hanım  
Salih  
Baran  
Fikret  
Kadriye  
Kübra  
Sema  
Ismail Karacablaş  
Cemre  
Rojda  
Gülin  
Zeynep

Özgü Namal  
Tansu Biçer  
Leyla Smyrna Cabas  
İpek Bilgin  
Aydın Işık  
Aziz Çapkurt  
Yusuf Akgün  
Uygar Tamer  
Jale Arikan  
Seda Türkmen  
Emre Bakar  
Elit İşcan  
Sultan Ulutaş Alopé  
Emine Meyrem  
İpek Seyalioğlu

## Crew

Director  
Writer  
Producer  
Co-Producers  
  
Director Of Photography  
Editor  
Production Designer  
Costume Designer  
Makeup Artist  
Gaffer  
Composer  
Re-Recording Mixer  
& Sound Supervisor  
Production Sound Mixer  
Casting Director  
Commissioning Editor

Ilker Çatak  
Ilker Çatak, Ayda Meryem Çatak, Enis Köstepen  
Ingo Fliess  
Carole Scotta, Caroline Benjo,  
Eliott Khayat, Nadir Öperli, Enis Köstepen  
Judith Kaufmann  
Gesa Jäger  
Zazie Knepper  
Christian Röhrs  
Nica Faas  
Timm Brückner  
Marvin Miller  
Ansgar Frerich  
  
Maarten Van De Voort  
Ceren Sena Akdeniz  
Alexandra Staib (ZDF), Barbara Häbe (ARTE),  
Martin Gerhard (ZDF/ARTE)