

Miss Kiet's Children



Kiet Engels is the kind of teacher one wishes every schoolchild could have. She is strict but never harsh. She is loving but never soft. Her patience is endless.

Miss Kiet's pupils have only just arrived in Holland. Many are refugees. Everything is new and confusing. Some at first are quarrelsome and headstrong. But Miss Kiet's firm but loving hand brings calm and awakens interest. She not only teaches her pupils to read and write Dutch, but also helps them learn to solve problems together and respect one another. Slowly the children gain skills and confidence.

Haya is at first impetuous, yet fearful. Little by little, Miss Kiet helps her to find her friendly side. Leanne is quiet and lonely. But after a few months she is able to tell everyone, in Dutch, that she loves Branche. Jorj has trouble sleeping and is unruly. His little brother Maksim has terrible nightmares. Miss Kiet's tenacity helps Jorj discover that learning can be worthwhile and even fun.

By observation alone, without interviews or voice-over, the film focuses on four refugee children of different nationalities. Pursuing their perspective, the camera follows at close hand their struggles to learn a new language, their fights, their friendships and their first loves.

By the end of the documentary, an affectionate community has grown – the fruit of a teacher's patience and dedication. A film of many touching moments, some of them hilarious, *The Children of Miss Kiet* chronicles changes that are small yet at the same time immense.

PRESS VOICES MISS KIET'S CHILDREN

Miss Kiet's Children is a documentary jewel: subtle but powerful with a faultless feeling for what goes on in children's heads. A small monument for a teacher, but above all for her brave class.

De Volkskrant newspaper *****

Veteran duo Petra Lataster-Czisch and Peter Lataster deliver a master class in nonfiction filmmaking with *Miss Kiet's Children*, one of the year's truly outstanding European documentaries... Scenes feel just as long as they have to be, in a film which, without overt editorializing — the Latasters dispense with narration, captions and non-diegetic music — takes an unambiguously approving stance of Miss Kiet's gentle but firm methods. The result is a lovely, upbeat, even life-affirming film.

The Hollywood Reporter

Everything you heard about *Miss Kiet's Children* is true... Easily it's the best Dutch film of the Year.

Trouw newspaper

This entirely engrossing, tender and shrewdly observed documentary is the study of a special infant school class in the Netherlands, which is set aside for the children of migrants and refugees — largely from Syria.

They are taught by Miss Kiet. She is enormously patient, gentle, loving and yet keeps a firm eye on what is going on. The film-makers' camera rather imitates her quietly authoritative presence: recording in lucid close-up the children's regular school-day — they are utterly similar to any other Dutch child's and yet each has had an awful unspoken experience that was part of the reason for coming to this placid school... *Miss Kiet's Children* is a lovely film.

The Guardian ****

... *Miss Kiet's Children* is all about hope and what can be achieved by one good woman. Under her guidance, her wards take teeny, tiny steps — how many times do they repeat the word "Moon"? - but it's evident these are amounting to something; by the time they all express their love for Macedonian child Branche - in Dutch - and dance to Pharrell Williams' *Freedom* on stage there shouldn't be a dry eye in the house. The Latasters rarely put a foot wrong - from their static opening shot in the town of Hapert to the final frames of Miss Kiet in her classroom, this is a beautifully-judged piece.

ScreenDaily

CREDITS

A film by: Petra Lataster-Czisch & Peter Lataster

Producer: Peter Lataster

Executive producer: Marty de Jong

Editor: Mario Steenbergen

Camera: Peter Lataster

Sound: Gertjan Miedema

Sound design: Hugo Dijkstal

Commissioning editor: Jelle Peter de Ruiter

TV-station involved: KRO-NCRV

BIOGRAPHIES AND FILMOGRAPHY



Writer/director **Petra Lataster-Czisch** (1954, Dessau) and cameraman **Peter Lataster** (1955, Amsterdam) are directing films together since 1989. They have made several award winning feature documentaries, shorts and dance films. In 2001 they started their own production company, Lataster&Films.

In 2012 the IDFA festival honoured Petra and Peter with a retrospective and the Dutch Institute of Sound and Vision released a DVD box with their collected works.

A selection:

- 2016: ***Miss Kiet's Children***. 113'. World premiere IDFA 2016.
- 2014: ***The Need to Dance***. 58'
- 2013: ***Awake in a Bad Dream***. 114' Best Dutch Documentary Award IDFA 2013.
- 2011: ***Jerome Jerome***. 73'. Nomination Best Dutch Documentary IDFA 2011.
- 2010: ***Not Without You***. 85' World premiere IDFA 2010. Grand Prix, Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival 2011 and Prize of the student jury. Best portrait, Pärnu Documentary and Anthropological Film Festival. Nomination Magnolia Award Shanghai 2011. Golden Plaque East Sarajevo Documentary Film Festival 2011. Best Dutch Feature Documentary at National Netherlands Film Festival 2011.
- 2007: ***If We Knew***. 78'. World premiere IDFA 2007. Grand Prix EIDF Seoul 2008. Sound & Vision Award Netherlands 2008
- 2004: ***Birth-Day***. 37'. Crystal Czech Prague 2005, Creativity Award FIFA Montreal 2006, Best experimental dance film Győr 2006.
- 2003: ***Dreamland GDR***. 90'
- 2001: ***Fragile Happiness***. 90'

1999: **River of time.** 100'
1996: **Call it Sleep.** 60'
1994: **Tales of a River.** Best Dutch Feature Documentary at National Netherlands Film Festival 1994. 90'
1991: **The Enchantment.** 60'

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