



INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

A SPARROW'S SONG

Producer · Tobias Eckerlin · Lead Technical Director · Vincent Maurer · Lead Character Artist · Elias Weber · Lead Animation · Lilli-Luisa Heckmann · Jiro Magracia · Lead Groom Artist · Rebecca Liebelt
Pre-Production Producer · Avina Graefe · Film Music · Dominique Girod · Sound Design · Marc Uhlherr · Vladyslava Kandyba · Concept Art · Valeska Bruns · Gregor Wittich · Esther Brechlin
Additional Concept · Robin Lemke · Michael Offner · Animation · Janina Brummer · Iris Burkhardt · Carine Chrast · Aaliyah Danner · Malte Fasold · Faruch Halmetov · Eileen Kammer · Isabelle Kramer
Lena Laudanski · Caroline Laville · Ben Marquardt · Astrid Novais · Kübra Ögüt · Felicitas Schmelz · Additional Animation · Minja Caesar · Leo Neumann · Jonas Opderbecke · Riyaaz Roy
Violette Talalaef · CG Artist · Fynn Aurich · Elisha Bednarsky · Nicolas Dalmer · Philipp Dörner · Jan Fülöp · Jonas Funk · Benjamin Gätzschmann · Lukas Kapp · Jan Klingner · Haiyang Liu
Marie-Lys Mathias · Konstantin Meidenbauer · Paul Merten · Carole Naegelen · Karolina Nathusius · Tanja Nuijten · Marc Reuter · Alina Schubel · Christiane 'Cas' Sommer · Hannes Sturm
Max Wolfmajer · Levin Wunder · Title & Credit Design · Luise John · Tobias Gallé

Written & Directed by
Tobias Eckerlin

A SPARROW'S SONG

PRESS KIT

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CONTACT INFO

Press	Theresa Seitz <u>+49 7141 969 82 864</u> <u>theresa.seitz@filmakademie.de</u>
Social Media	Amelie Kant <u>+49 7141 969 82 831</u> <u>amelie.kant@filmakademie.de</u>
Distribution	Sigrid Gairing <u>+49 7141 969 82 193</u> <u>sigrid.gairing@filmakademie.de</u>
Director	Tobias Eckerlin <u>+49 171 707 76 35</u> <u>mail@tobiaseckerlin.de</u> <u>www.tobiaseckerlin.com</u>

LINKS

Instagram	<u>@sparrows.song.film</u> <u>@tobiaseckerlin.visuals</u>
Facebook	<u>A Sparrow's Song</u>
Film	<u>Trailer</u> <u>Website</u> <u>IMDb</u> <u>LetterBoxd</u>
Institutions	<u>Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg</u> <u>Animationsinstitut</u>

“In the darkest hour,
even a fragile bond can spark hope.”

LOGLINE

Inspired by a true story, a widowed air raid warden in the midst of World War II struggles to overcome grief and rediscover joy in her life – until she finds a dying sparrow she hopes to save.

SYNOPSIS

Inspired by a true story, an elderly widow in the midst of World War II struggles to overcome grief and rediscover joy in her life. Day by day, she serves as an air raid warden in the crowded shelters, witnessing the suffering of children and others. One morning, she finds a dying sparrow and hopes to save its fragile life. As the sparrow gradually heals, a bond grows between them, and the bird begins to respond to her piano playing – a shared language that builds a bridge. During bombing raids, she carries the sparrow to the shelters, where she plays the piano, and the sparrow sings its song to comfort the children and offer hope to those around her. Through this newfound purpose and unexpected alliance, her life begins to change.





DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When I read the diary of Clare Kipps, I was deeply moved by this woman who, in the middle of one of history's darkest moments, takes care of something as small and seemingly insignificant as a dying sparrow. Through this simple act, she not only brought comfort to those around her but also found healing herself. To me, this story is not just about an altruistic act or the resilience it represents – it's about finding yourself by helping others.

Although these events took place over 80 years ago, the story is more relevant than ever. Looking back at history and learning from it for today and our future is important – not just on a global or political scale, but in our personal lives as well. We live in an increasingly individualistic world, one that offers countless opportunities but also leaves many feeling alone and overwhelmed. This is especially true in the uncertain times we face today.

In these times, I often wonder how there is space for personal tragedy in a global crisis. But with this story, I've come to believe that there is space for personal tragedy, just as there is space for sharing personal kindness – and that can make all the difference. In the end, *A Sparrow's Song* is about cohesion: being part of a society that shares values, holds together, and strives to make life better – or at least bearable – for all living beings within it.

Even the smallest act of kindness can spark hope, bring good to those around you, and ultimately to oneself. *A Sparrow's Song* speaks on many layers, and I believe that the audience will be as touched and inspired by this elderly woman and the little sparrow as I was.

– Tobias Eckerlin





TOBIAS ECKERLIN ([IMDb](#))

Tobias Eckerlin, born in 1993 in Germany, is a Director and CGI-Artist striving to create emotional stories and visuals with great attention to detail, a moody atmosphere, and an organic, authentic feel. In 2025, he received the Gold Medal for Animation at the Student Academy Awards for his short film A Sparrow’s Song.

As a child, Tobias loved to draw, watch movies and experiment creatively. Later, in 2010, he discovered his passion for photography. Fascinated by the idea of capturing fleeting moments with light, it became his first artistic focus and eventually led him to film. In 2012, after graduating from high school, he began studying Communication Design at Mannheim University of Applied Sciences. The guiding design principle ‘form follows function’ had a lasting influence on his conceptual approach.

During his studies, he realized his first films, including The Elapsed Voice (2013) and Sehensucht (2016), a one-hour drama about a blinded photographer that combined live action and VFX. With this film, he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree and deepened his passion for cinematic storytelling. Inspired by video game cinematics, he began to embrace animation as a medium for his visions. During his Master's studies at Mannheim University of Applied Sciences, he focused on fully animated narrative forms and centered his Master's thesis on the analysis of Andrei Tarkovsky's film language in the context of modern cinematic aesthetics.

After completing his Master's degree in 2018, Eckerlin worked as lecturer of photography at DIPLOMA University and worked as a freelance CGI artist. His focus shifted completely to 3D animation and, although he tried his hand at various aspects, he found his passion in lighting. In 2021, he decided to continue his studies at the renowned Animationsinstitut of Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg to further specialize in directing. His first project there, Mnemonic (2022), which he co-directed, was a three-month IP development project. He subsequently contributed to the hybrid live-action/VFX short Cervus Rostratus – The Beaked Deer (2023), while simultaneously beginning the development of his graduation film, A Sparrow’s Song.

His film A Sparrow's Song (2025) is based on a true story – during World War II an elderly widow finds an unexpected connection with an injured sparrow and rediscovers hope through this bond. The film was realized in a three-year-period with a team of over 50 artists and premiered at SIGGRAPH Vancouver in 2025. It has already won several awards, including the Student Academy Award Gold Medal in the Animation category.

Eckerlin's path, from photography to film, VFX, and ultimately animation, defines his creative signature. His work is marked by a poetic visual sensibility and a fascination with light, shadow, and emotion. Balancing arthouse sensibility with cinematic accessibility, he continues to craft deeply atmospheric stories with a hopeful core.

FILMOGRAPHY

2013 – The Elapsed Voice	(07:05 Min. – Live Action)
2016 – Sehensucht	(56:57 Min. – Live Action)
2022 – Mnemonic	(02:40 Min. – Animation)
2023 – Cervus Rostratus – The Beaked Deer	(02:40 Min. – Live Action, VFX)
2025 – A Sparrow’s Song	(09:11 Min. – Animation)

**VINCENT MAURER – Lead Technical Director**

Born in 1999 in Bamberg (Germany), Vincent has been animating ever since he received his first camera as a child. After completing his high school education, he worked in post-production for films, series, and advertising in Nuremberg. Since 2019, he has been studying Technical Directing at Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg's Animationsinstitut. Vincent started working for leading, Canadian animation studios during his studies.

**ELIAS WEBER – Lead Character Artist**

Elias was born in Wangen in the Allgäu region (Germany) in 1998 and began studying Animation & Games at Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences in 2018, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 2022. During his studies, he focused on 3D art and Animation and completed an internship at the VFX company Trixter in Munich. In 2022 he started his VFX studies at the Animationsinstitut, which he successfully completed in 2025.

**LILLI-LUISA HECKMANN – Lead Animator**

Lilli has been working as animator at SERU Animation in Ludwigsburg since 2025. She developed her passion for animation while studying at Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg's Animationsinstitut, where she graduated in 2024 with a diploma in Character Animation. Before her animation degree, she studied Communication Design at Hochschule Mannheim and gained early experience creating animations for German broadcasters. She also attended the Lucerne Master Academy of Animation, learning from mentors from renowned studios including DreamWorks, Pixar, and Weta FX.

**JIRO MAGRACIA – Lead Animator**

Growing up in different countries – including Japan – Jiro was always deeply connected to Animation as an art form. He began running a Youtube channel, which acquired a major following and has motivated him to pursue a career in Animation. He decided to specialize in 3D Character Animation with his Diploma in Character Animation acquired at Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg's Animationsinstitut and subsequent studies at Animation Mentor. Observing interesting things in life and incorporating them in his animations to hopefully entertain others is Jiro's goal.

**REBECCA LIEBELT – Lead Groom/Feathers Artist**

Rebecca grew up in Steinenbronn (Germany). From 2020 to 2024 she studied at Stuttgart Media University. During her studies she directed and co-created multiple fully animated short films and completed an internship at the animation studio Woodblock in Ludwigsburg. She's currently working as Groom Artist at Accenture Song in Stuttgart.





Tobias Eckerlin
Director / CG-Artist



Vincent Maurer
Lead Technical Director



Elias Weber
Lead Character Artist



Lilli-Luisa Heckmann
Lead-Animation



Jiro Magracia
Lead-Animation



Rebecca Liebelt
Lead Groom / Feathers



Avina Graefe
Pre-Prod. Producer



Michael Offner
Additional Concept



Elisha Benarsky
CG-Artist



Jonas Funk
CG-Artist



Jan Klingner
CG-Artist



Karolina Nathusius
CG-Artist



Tanja Nuijten
CG-Artist



Hannes Sturm
CG-Artist



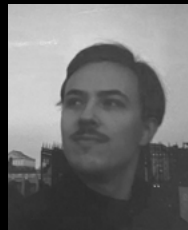
Christiane Sommer
CFX



Paul Merten
CFX



Konstantin Meidenbauer
CFX



Philipp Dörer
CFX



Nicolas Dalmer
CFX



Benjamin Gätzschmann
FX



Marc Reuter
CG-Artist



Faruch Halmetov
Animation



Eileen Kammer
Animation



Isabelle Kramer
Animation



Lena Laudanski
Animation



Carolina Laville
Animation



Ben Marquardt
Animation



Astrid Novais
Animation



Dominique Girod
Filmmusic



Marc Uhlherr
Sounddesign



Vladyslava Kandyba
Foley Artist



Valeska Bruns
Concept Art



Gregor Wittich
Concept Art



Esther Brechlin
Concept Art



Robin Lemke
Additional Concept



Jan Fülöp
CG Artist



Marie-Lys Mathias
CG-Artist



Alina Schubel
Character Groom



Carole Naegelen
Character Groom



Lukas Kapp
Rigging



Fynn Aurich
Prop Rigging



Levin Wunder
CFX



Max Wolfmajer
Compositing



Haiyan Liu
Lighting



Janina Brummer
Animation



Iris Burkhardt
Animation



Carine Chrast
Animation



Aaliyah Danner
Animation



Malte Fasold
Animation



Kübra Ögüt
Animation



Felicitas Schmelz
Animation



Minja Caesar
Animation



Leo Neumann
Animation



Jonas Opderbecke
Animation



Riyaz Roy
Animation



Violette Talalaeff
Animation



How did you come across the story in the first place and what fascinated you about it?

The starting point was an illustration of a dead bird, which I found very poetic and melancholic. Somehow, I always knew that I wanted to do something with it. While researching for my diploma project and looking into the symbolism of birds in art history, I came across the story and diary of Clare Kipps. I couldn't believe it was a true story. It's simply incredibly moving that this lady cared for something as seemingly insignificant as a sparrow during World War II and, in doing so, brought so much good to people. When I had such a strong emotional reaction to it, I knew I wanted to turn the story into something.

What was your creative vision behind this short film?

We had several production design decisions that served as guiding principles throughout the production. From the beginning, it was clear that we wanted to tell the story in a minimalistic and sensitive way, a style that not only fits the narrative but also reflects the personality of the widow as the main character.

The first image of hands gently lifting a lifeless sparrow, combined with research of historic portrait paintings, led to the idea of focusing on the hands and expressing emotion through their movement and gestures. Focussing on hands informed the decision that faces would rarely be shown, and that the characters would wear gas masks fitting both the setting and their emotional state.

Chiaroscuro lighting became another key concept for the film, not being afraid of pitch-black areas within the frame and using carefully placed light to emphasize what's important in the shot and what emotions should be felt.

Finally, the animation style aims for a balance between realism and economy. The shading is photorealistic, yet with a subtle degree of stylization in shapes and micro-level detail. This approach was inspired by the photography of that era, with its heavy grain, as well as classical paintings.

Why did you choose to put so much focus on the character's hands?

The idea, as described, was based on this very first image of the old hands lifting the sparrow off the ground. I had also been reading about art history and that painters often tried to avoid depicting hands because they were so time-consuming to paint. I found that fascinating – hands are incredibly expressive and reveal so much about

emotion and character. From an animator's perspective, they are complex yet very interesting to bring to life. Our animators, especially Lilli-Luisa Heckmann and Jiro Magracia, did an outstanding job animating the hands with such sensitivity.

What challenges did you face during the production of this film?

The biggest challenge for me as a director was to initially convince people that the film could actually be realized. As it is a student film, there were limitations and requirements we had to adhere to – bearing this framework in mind, the project was quite ambitious. I also faced challenges in terms of content, because when you're dealing with such a serious subject, you want to do it justice. As a result, I had to spend a lot of time on research.



Tell us a bit about your team and how you worked together.

The core team consisted of six artists, but in total around 56 people contributed to the film. Depending on the department and the production stage, some were involved for just a few days, others for several months. Our peak in terms of team size was during the animation phase, when 22 animators worked on the project at the same time.

To stay organized, we used project and animation bibles, style guides, and tools like SyncSketch for feedback. Communication and reference sharing were key. We had lots of short meetings and a constant feedback exchange with our lead animators.

Who influenced and supported you during your journey of creating this film?

In this film, I brought together many things that have influenced, inspired, and shaped me throughout my life. You can hardly reduce that to the period of production itself. However, since the film was created as part of my studies at the Animationsinstitut of Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, I had many opportunities to engage in conversations throughout the process. These discussions took place both in directing

classes, where you regularly present the current state of your project and in the many pitching sessions I had to gradually build your team.

Andreay Hykade, our directing professor, recognized the potential of the story early on, and I had many deep conversations with him about the film. Around the same time, Jan Pinkava joined the Animationsinstitut and became a strong supporter of the project and I also had many conversations with him. Other mentors, for example Phil Hunt from Studio AKA or in the Editing Process Carolin Biesenbach and Elena Walf, were also helpful in the process. Their feedback helped shape the film.

That doesn't necessarily mean we always agreed on everything but that's exactly what makes the Animationsinstitut so special: you receive feedback and input from many different perspectives and mentors, always on equal footing. You have to learn to filter these insights and understand your own vision to know which feedback truly serves your story.

Those mentorships and conversations were extremely valuable, not only for this film but also in shaping how I think and work as a director.

How long did the whole process of creating this film take?

From the first concept in 2022 to the final version in 2025 about three years. The story development started in mid-2022, and production officially kicked off in early 2023.

What CG programs were used to create the film?

We pretty much used all the tools available, depending highly on the task and what the artists were comfortable using. Our main tools were Autodesk Maya, SideFX Houdini with the Godfeather Plugin, Foundry Katana and Nuke and Arnold Render. But we also worked with Zbrush, Substance Painter, Marvelous Designer and more. Many artists used Blender for the Asset creation. Davinci Resolve and PureRef were also very important in our process. To organize the team, we utilized Shotgrid / Flow and Syncsketch a lot as well as PureRef for detailed briefings and feedback sessions.

What does the film mean to you?

This film means a lot to me on a personal level. It feels like I've shared something meaningful and deeply human with the world, it's a story worth telling. It also reflects a part of how I see life and the values that drive me. Professionally, it's like a creative signature, a piece that represents who I am as a filmmaker.

Is there any 'bet you didn't know this'-fact from working on the film that you'd like to share with us?

An interesting fact concerning our sound design is that the sound of the sparrow isn't actually a natural sparrow-sound. Sparrows aren't true songbirds. To create the sparrow's 'voice', we mainly used the song of a linnet, mixed it with sparrow sounds, and slightly offset it from the music to make it feel more natural.

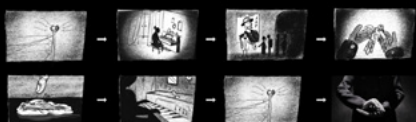
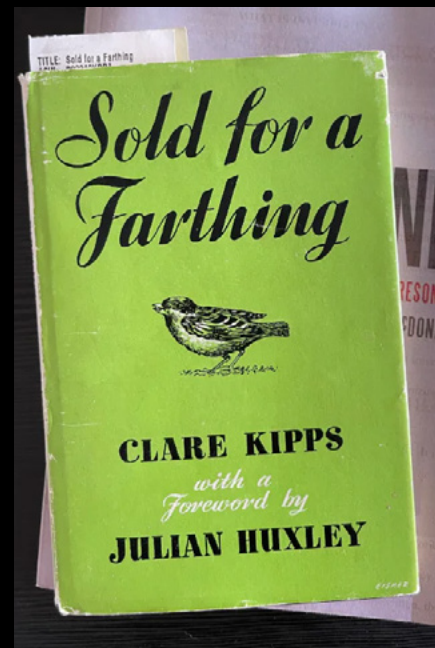


A SPARROW'S SONG: DEVELOPING THE STORY

The idea for A SPARROW'S SONG began with a single image: a dead bird, quietly poetic and haunting. For director Tobias Eckerlin, it captured a feeling he couldn't let go of. From this spark, he began weaving a story drawn from years of notes, sketches, and reflections. During his research, Tobias discovered the true story of Clare Kipps and her sparrow, Clarence. The sight of an elderly widow caring for something so small, during a world in war, moved him deeply.

Her quiet act of compassion became the heartbeat of the film, showing how small gestures can ripple far beyond themselves. At its core, the story asks: Will the widow overcome her grief and find herself again? Its central theme: Coming to terms with trauma and grief by helping others. Tobias developed

early visual sketches, turning them into 3D experiments to determine the film's tone and atmosphere. Throughout, a carefully kept project bible anchored the story to its original spark: the small, tender moments that make life and connection so fragile, yet profoundly meaningful.



BEATBOARD & ANIMATIC: FROM SKETCH TO SCREEN

The story's key moments first came to life on the beatboard, a visual map of the film's emotional journey created in Procreate. Each sketch captures a turning point, a gesture, a look – the beats that

carry the story forward. From there, Tobias and the team developed the animatic, editing it

in DaVinci Resolve with temporary music to feel the rhythm and pace of the film. Every scene was carefully plotted with a defining image, notes on motivation, and an emotional arc that guided the viewer through the story.

The animatic served as more than a structured timeline and basis for planning – it set the tone for creative decisions later in the process, helping to define all aspects from color scripts to final briefings. The beatboard and animatic were where the film started to breathe and move before it ever reached the screen.



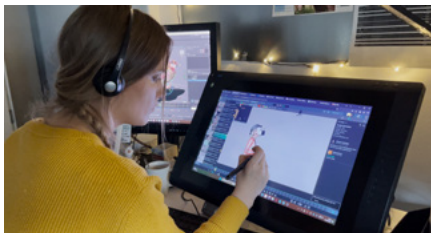
VISUAL DEVELOPMENT: FROM CONCEPT TO COLOR

From the very beginning, the visual world of A SPARROW'S SONG was shaped by careful research and artistic intention. Historical photographs guided the design of clothing, architecture, and everyday objects, grounding the film in authenticity while allowing space for poetic interpretation.

The widow's design reflects calm, warmth, and melancholy. She's a character whose gestures carry emotional weight. The two orphaned children mirror her past, subtly echoing her traits, while the sparrow embodies both fragility and hope. Its design evolved with the story, from near-death vulnerability to playful life, supporting the film's emotional arc.



Color scripts and style frames defined the film's tone, guiding lighting, mood, and emotional progression across every scene. These visual blueprints ensured that each moment, from the obdurate environment of the shelter to the expansive views of London, felt cohesive and alive. Every environment was crafted with care. The modular air raid shelter teems with period details: blankets, books, propaganda posters, and the subtle textures of everyday life. London's skyline reflects both devastation and resilience, with landmarks like St. Paul's Cathedral anchoring the story in history. Through sketches, 3D experiments, and iterative refinement, the team built a world that is historically grounded, emotionally expressive, and visually unforgettable. Making it a stage for the story's tender exploration of grief, care, and connection.



ANIMATION PROCESS: BRINGING CHARACTERS TO LIFE

Animation on A SPARROW'S SONG was led by Lilli-Luisa Heckmann and Jiro Magracia, guiding a team of twenty artists who brought the film's characters and emotions to life with precision. An animation bible defined the film's language of movement: restrained, intentional and grounded in realism. Every gesture was crafted to serve the story.

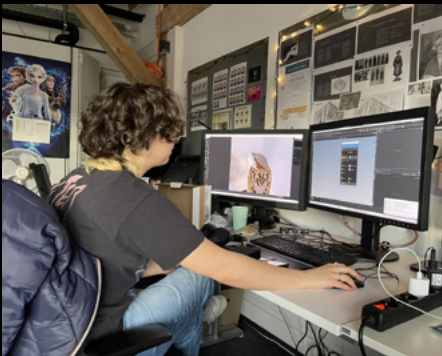
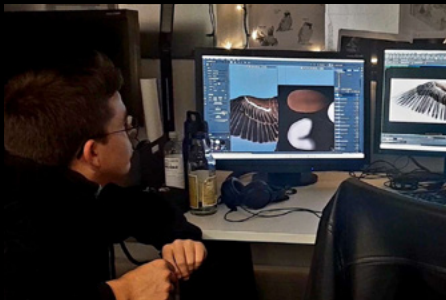
Because music plays such a central role, animating the piano sequences became a key challenge. To achieve believable performance, composer Dominique Girod recorded herself playing the score from multiple camera angles. Additional MIDI data was translated into a rough key animation through a custom Python tool, giving the team a foundation to build upon with nuance and authenticity.

The sparrow demanded its own language of motion. Subtle wing transitions, feather dynamics, and expressive head tilts turned a small creature into a living, emotional presence. Extensive observation of real sparrows informed every beat, balancing natural behavior with cinematic emotion.

Weekly reviews via SyncSketch kept the work cohesive, while a shared animation library ensured continuity across shots. Together, these elements created a unified rhythm and emotional flow – movement that feels less like animation and more like real, breathing characters.

You can find more impressions as well as the full article here:
[Making of A SPARROW'S SONG – The Rookies](#)





FACT SHEET

Title	A Sparrow's Song
Type	Linear Project (Film) – Animated Short Film
Genre	Drama, Historical Film, War Film
Techniques	3D computer
Software	SideFX Houdini, Godfeather Plugin for Houdini, Blender, Autodesk Maya, Autodesk Arnold, Foundry Nuke, Foundry Katana, Zbrush, Substance Painter, Marvelous Designer, RizomUV, Blackmagic Davinci Resolve, Puref, Affinity Suite
Completion date	15.02.2025
Color	Color
Aspect ratio	2.39:1, 4K DCI Scope, 4096x1716 2.39:1, 2K DCI Scope, 2048x858
Running time	09 minutes and 11 seconds
Language	English, without dialogue
FSK rating	Rated 6 and above
Keywords	Loneliness, Family, History, War, Crisis, Philosophy, Animals, Death/Grief, Trauma, National Socialism
Country of Production	Germany
Premiere	August 14, 2025, in Vancouver, Canada
Production company	Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg GmbH
Address	Akademiehof 10, 71638 Ludwigsburg
Website	www.filmakademie.de





FESTIVALS

A Sparrow's Song celebrated its world premiere in August 2025 at the Computer Animation Festival of SIGGRAPH 2025 in Vancouver. Since then, the film has been on its festival circuit and has already received several prizes and awards. Below is a selection of festivals:

BAFTA Student Awards 2025

Computer Animation Festival of SIGGRAPH 2025

Festival Internacional de Animacion 2025

Viborg Animation Festival 2025

Calgary International Film Festival 2025

Animasyros International Film Festival 2025

Student Academy Awards 2025

The Festival International Gbaka Animation (FIGA) 2025

Taichung International Animation Festival 2025

ReAnimania Int. Animation Film & Comics Art Festival of Yerevan 2025

Festival du Film d'Animation pour la Jeunesse – Bourg-en-Bresse 2025

Aniwow! Beijing International Student Animation Festival 2025

Kuandu International Animation Festival 2025

The International Student Film and Video Festival (ISFVF) 2025

Cinanima International Animated Film Festival of Espinho 2025

Animalcoi International Animation Festival of Alcoy 2025

Hayah International Short Film Festival of Panama 2025

International Filmschool Festival Tetouan 2025

Computer Animation Festival SIGGRAPH Asia 2025



AWARDS

Student Academy Awards 2025	Winner of the Gold Medal for Animation
BAFTA Student Awards 2025	Finalist
Calgary International Film Festival	Grand Jury Prize – Best Overall Short Film
Festival Internacional de Animacion	Grand Jury Prize & Best Student Short Film
Festival International Gbaka Animation	2nd Price GBAKA NATIONAL AWARDS
The Rookies 2025 – Film of the Year	Finalist



BAFTA

BAFTA STUDENT AWARDS
ANIMATION
FINALIST



INTERNATIONAL

[AMPAS Honors 2025 Student Academy Award Winners](#)

07.10.2025 – The Hollywood Reporter

[‘A Sparrow’s Song’ Wins Animation Gold at Student Academy Awards](#)

06.10.2025 – Animation Magazine

[A Sparrow’s Song Wins Gold at Student Academy Awards | Best Animated Short Oscar Next?](#)

06.10.2025 – Cartoon Contender

[2026 Oscar-Eligible Animated Short A Sparrow’s Song Director Tobias Eckerlin Interview](#)

05.11.2025 – Cartoon Contender

[Winners Announced for 2025 Student Academy Awards](#)

07.10.2025 – Animation World Network

[Trophies presented to winners at 52nd annual Student Academy Awards](#)

07.10.2025 – ABC 7 NY

[Film News in Brief](#)

06.10.2025 – Variety

[Student Academy Awards Presented To Young Filmmakers Representing Eight Countries](#)

06.10.2025 – Deadline

[2025 Student Academy Awards Winners Are Announced in New York City](#)

06.10.2025 – IndieWire

[Student Academy Awards placements confirmed](#)

07.10.2025 – British Cinematographer

[Making-of A Sparrow’s Song](#)

20.06.2025 – The Rookies

[Filmmaker Interview with Tobias Eckerlin](#)

04.11.2025 – The Oscar Project Podcast

NATIONAL

[Studenten-Oscars: Deutscher Regisseur holt Gold](#)

07.10.2025 – Die Welt

[Deutscher Regisseur gewinnt Studenten-Oscar](#)

07.10.2025 – Stern

[Deutscher gewinnt goldenen Studenten-Oscar](#)

07.10.2025 – tagesschau

[Deutscher Regisseur Tobias Eckerlin gewinnt Studentenosc](#)

07.10.2025 – DIE ZEIT (online)

[Deutscher Regisseur gewinnt goldenen Studenten-Oscar](#)

07.10.2025 – Spiegel Kultur (online)

[Studenten-Oscars: Absolvent der Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg holt Gold](#)

07.10.2025 – SWR

[Schwetzinger „Studenten-Oscar“ Tobias Eckerlin: Bin überwältigt](#)

05.09.2025 – Mannheimer Morgen

[Mit einem kleinen Spatz zum Studenten-Oscar](#)

27.09.2025 – Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung



[Lighting, LookDev, and Compositing a Student Academy Award winning film](#)

24.09.2025 – The Foundry



[Beitrag mit Interview zu A Sparrow's Song](#)

14.09.2025 – SWR Kultur (ARD Mediathek)

“This narrative transcends the need for language or dialogue, is visually striking, and emotionally fulfilling.”

23.09.2025 – Calgary International Film Festival (CIFF)

“It is a tale of hope in the midst of immense tragedy. As the team themselves puts it:
«Find yourself by helping others.»”

29.09.2025 – shortstickfilms – Robin Hellgren

“The juxtaposition of war and saving one life, even if that life is just a tiny singing bird, goes a long way.”

22.09.2025 – letterboxd – Isiah Williams

“Offering light to others can be the path to finding our own.”

25.10.2025 – letterboxd – Héctor Serrano



Diploma film A SPARROW'S SONG wins Student Academy Award 2025

For the eighth time, the most coveted international prize among film schools goes to Ludwigsburg
Ludwigsburg, August 28, 2025

The Student Academy Award in the Animation category goes to A SPARROW'S SONG – a diploma project by director and producer Tobias Eckerlin, which was created at the Animationsinstitut of Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg.

From over 3,000 submissions from 988 universities worldwide, 14 winners were selected for the 52nd Student Academy Awards.

This is a great honour for the team from Ludwigsburg: "We feel truly overwhelmed and are incredibly happy about the Student Oscar®," says Tobias Eckerlin. "This is one of the greatest accolades you could wish for!" Alongside Eckerlin, Vincent Maurer (Technical Director), Elias Weber (Lead Character Artist), Lilli-Luisa Heckmann und Jiro Magracia (Lead Animators), Rebecca Liebelt (Groom Artist), and many others contributed to the project. "Thank you to the Academy and the entire team behind A SPARROW'S SONG!"

A SPARROW'S SONG is a 3D animated film inspired by a true story. It deals with the story of an elderly widow who rediscovers her joy in life during World War II through an unexpected connection with an injured sparrow. Eckerlin's work is a moving homage to the human ability to find hope even during difficult times.

Arne Braun, State Secretary in the Ministry of Science, Research and Arts Baden-Württemberg: "What a celebration not only for the new Student Academy Award winner Tobias Eckerlin and the entire team at the Filmakademie, but even for the entire film-LÄND Baden-Württemberg. Time and again, numerous great films are produced at the Filmakademie. It is only right that they celebrate outstanding successes around the world, like they are today. We can all be very proud of this. Congratulations!"

Dr. Andreas Bareiss, Managing Director of Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, adds enthusiastically: "What a phenomenal success! Not only for Tobias and his team but also the entire Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg. This is the eighth Student Academy Award going to Ludwigsburg. This further strengthens our top position among the world's leading film schools – which is reflected not only, but also in the number of Academy Awards. I am absolutely delighted!"

Dr. Jan Pinkava, Director of the Animationsinstitut, is equally proud of his graduates' success: "Congratulations to Tobi and the A SPARROW'S SONG team! To receive an Academy Award is a great honour and I am delighted for the team, the

Animationsinstitut and the entire Filmakademie. Great to see such recognition for our talented students, and for the quality of our school. Good luck in New York!"

The Student Academy Award, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, is considered the film industry's most important award for student projects. The Student Academy Awards are presented in four categories: Alternative/Experimental, Animation, Documentary and Narrative. The three best films in each category receive a gold, silver or bronze award.

Tobias Eckerlin, along with other Student Academy Awards winners, will participate in a programme in New York that includes museum visits, a dinner with Academy members and a wide variety of coaching opportunities and will last several days. The programme will culminate in the awards ceremony on Monday, October 6, at the New York Film Festival. There, the team will find out whether they will receive the so-called "Student Oscar®" in gold, silver or bronze.

In addition, all Student Academy Award-winning films are eligible for the regular Oscars®.

A SPARROW'S SONG wins Gold Student Academy Award

Tobias Eckerlin and his team received the award on Monday October 6th during the New York Film Festival Ludwigsburg, October 7, 2025

The diploma film A SPARROW'S SONG by Tobias Eckerlin, produced at Animationsinstitut of the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg was officially awarded a Gold Student Academy Award yesterday evening. The short film is one of only 12 award recipients, from more than 3,000 entries for the 52nd Student Academy Awards.

This prize is not only a special honour for the team, but also makes the film officially eligible for consideration for the 98th Oscars in 2026 – a significant milestone for Animationsinstitut as well, although not the first time!

Tobias Eckerlin, director and producer, describes the ceremony as a unique experience and adds, on behalf of the entire team: "We are very grateful and incredibly happy about the recognition, the great time we had in New York, and the contacts we made there. A big thank you to the Academy, German Films, and the Animationsinstitut for their support! Now we are eagerly looking forward to next year's Oscar ceremony."

Dr. Jan Pinkava, Director of the Animationsinstitut, adds "We are thrilled at the success of A Sparrow's Song, and delighted that the creativity and talent of the students of Animationsinstitut has once again been recognized with this Gold Student Academy Award. Congratulations!"

A SPARROW'S SONG is a 3D animated short film based on a true story. It tells the story of an elderly widow during World War II, who unexpectedly draws new hope through her connection with an injured sparrow. Together, they spread this newfound hope and thus manage to offer some comfort to others in these difficult times.

In the day leading up to the awards ceremony, Tobias took part in a special Academy programme in New York – including panels with industry experts, media trainings and an exclusive dinner with high ranking representatives of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Accompanied by his core team – Lilli-Luisa Heckmann, Jiro Magracia, Vincent Maurer, Rebecca Liebelt and Elias Weber – he accepted the Gold Student Academy Award yesterday evening on behalf of all 56 students and graduates who contributed to this project.

This marks already the eighth Student Academy Award for the Filmakademie and the second for Animationsinstitut – further proof of the outstanding quality of education at Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg and the international visibility of its diploma projects.







Since its foundation in 1991, Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg has successfully established itself as one of the leading international film schools. To date, 7 Student Oscars® for FABW productions emphasise our high-quality standards.

Here, theory and practice merge, and creativity meets international perspectives – all embedded in a family atmosphere. Our wide range of study programmes covers almost every area of film and media production. We attach particular importance to communicating with our students on an equal footing.



The Animationsinstitut at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg is one of the world's leading educational institutions for Animation, VFX, Technical Directing, Animation/Effects Producing, and Interactive Media. The program uniquely combines artistic excellence and technological innovation, expressed in both filmic and interactive formats. The Research and Development department conducts projects with national and international partners, focusing on technical innovations for film and media productions. Studies are practice-oriented and project-based, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration across all Filmakademie departments and early professional networking. International guest lecturers teach at the institute, whose student projects win major awards such as the Student Oscars, VES Awards, and the German Computer Game Award. Many alumni work in leading studios or found start-ups. The institute also co-develops the programme for the FMX conference.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Press Theresa Seitz
 +49 7141 969 82 864
 theresa.seitz@filmakademie.de

Social Media Amelie Kant
 +49 7141 969 82 831
 amelie.kant@filmakademie.de

Distribution Sigrid Gairing
 +49 7141 969 82 193
 sigrid.gairing@filmakademie.de

Director Tobias Eckerlin
 +49 171 707 76 35
 mail@tobiaseckerlin.de
 www.tobiaseckerlin.com

LINKS

[A SPARROW'S SONG website](#)

[A SPARROW'S SONG microsite on animationsinstitut.de](#)

