

Press Release



Berlinale Camera Award to Willy Sommerfeld February 6, 2004

The Berlinale Camera is awarded to film personalities to whom the Berlin International Film Festival feels particularly indebted. By bestowing this honor, the Berlinale wants to express its gratitude and appreciation. The Berlinale Camera has been awarded since 1986. This year it will be donated for the first time by the jeweler Georg Hornemann from Düsseldorf. At the 54th Berlinale the pianist Willy Sommerfeld is to be honored with this award.

Willy Sommerfeld

Born in 1904, Willy Sommerfeld can look back on an 80-year-long music career. In the 1920s he studied music and while doing so began accompanying silent films on the violin and later the piano. Shortly before the advent of sound films, Sommerfeld became the musical director of the state theatre in Braunschweig. Following a performance in 1933, Sommerfeld refused to give the Nazi salute and was as a result fired. Subsequently he worked as a composer, conductor, musical director, he also wrote music for radio plays, documentaries and theatre. He also worked as an arranger and music therapist. In the 1970s, at an age when most others go into retirement, this universal musical genius began his second career as a silent film pianist performing in countless German cinemas.

On February 6 at 2:00 pm, in Cinema Arsenal, pianist Willy Sommerfeld will be awarded a Berlinale Camera. In tribute of this occasion Ulrich Gregor will hold a laudatory speech and excerpts from *Der Stummfilmpianist* by the prizewinning director Ilona Ziok as well as *The Lonely Villa* (D. W. Griffith) will be screened.

Press Office
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