



# Trains of Life

*A film by André Melançon  
Produced by Nathalie Barton*



## PRESS KIT

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460, rue Ste-Catherine ouest, bureau 927 Montréal (Québec) Canada H3B 1A7  
Téléphone : (514) 284-0441 Télécopieur : (514) 284-0772 info@informationfilms.com www.informationfilms.com

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*Québec, Canada, 2013, HD, colour, stereo, 52 min.*

<b>Researched, written and directed by</b>	André Melançon
<b>Photography</b>	Nathalie Moliavko-Visotzky
<b>Sound</b>	Olivier Léger
<b>Research with the collaboration of</b>	Kees Vanderheyden
<b>Edited by</b>	France Pilon
<b>Music</b>	Catherine Gadouas
<b>Sound design and editing</b>	Benoît Dame
<b>Voice recording and mix</b>	Patrick Rioux
<b>Produced by</b>	Nathalie Barton

*Produced by **InformAction***

*With the financial participation of*

Canada Media Fund

Gouvernement du Québec  
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SODEC  
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*and with the collaboration of*

Radio Canada

*and*

RDI

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## Very short synopsis

As a boy, Kees Vanderheyden experienced the trauma of the German occupation of Holland in World War II. 60 years later, in Quebec, where he lives, he begins a search for the little girl from the country of the enemy who stayed with his family after the war. During his quest he discovers an extraordinary postwar initiative of the Red Cross which brought together tens of thousands of traumatized children in the name of peace. Today he visits schools across Quebec to share this story and begin a conversation about peace with the young people of today.

## Short synopsis

Kees Vanderheyden was 15 when, 3 years after World War II and the brutal German occupation of Holland, his mother took in a skinny little girl from Austria. Traudi Berndl came to their home near Amsterdam as part of an inspiring project organized by visionary individuals in the Red Cross: 180 000 traumatized children travelled by train from Germany, Austria and Hungary to stay with families in Western Europe. 60 years later, Kees, who emigrated to Quebec with his family in his teens, begins a search for the girl who had so memorably marked his youth. It takes him 5 years to find Traudi. **TRAINS OF LIFE** tells their story, against the backdrop of the extraordinary initiative that brought thousands of children together in the name of peace.

## Full-length Synopsis

Kees Vanderheyden was 15 when, 3 years after World War II and the brutal German occupation of Holland, his mother took into their home near Amsterdam a skinny, hungry little girl from Austria. Traudi Berndl had arrived as part of a vast, inspiring project organized by visionary individuals in the Red Cross: over 5 years, 180 000 traumatized and undernourished children travelled by train from Germany, Austria and Hungary to stay with modest families in Western Europe, to recover their health and share a first symbolic step toward reconciliation.

60 years later, Kees, who had emigrated to Quebec with his family in his late teens, starts a search for the girl who had so memorably marked his youth. It takes him 5 years to find Traudi, now an old lady living in Vienna, and to begin a correspondence with her. ***TRAINS OF LIFE*** tells their story, against the backdrop of the extraordinary initiative that brought thousands of children together in the name of peace. Today Kees visits dozens of primary and secondary schools to tell the young people of today about his experience of war as a boy: in his story they discover what war means to the daily life of children and begin, with Kees, a conversation about the importance of peace.

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## Kees Vanderheyden

Kees Vanderheyden was born in 1932 at Tilburg, Holland. His family decided to emigrate to Canada in 1954, when he was a teenager, because of the part played by Canadians in liberating their country in 1944. Today most of them live in Toronto, while Kees has settled in Quebec.

He became a teacher then worked as a journalist and became head of development and research at Radio Québec (educational television) from 1970 to 1995. He was also a board member of the Alliance for Children and Television for 10 years and drew up the Charter for Children and Television which was adopted by the Alliance and some 75 television networks in the world. Since 1995 he has run the Centre de la nature at the Mont St Hilaire. His life focuses on nature, children, writing and living in the Richelieu valley.

In 1994 he published **War and peace in my Backyard** (Boréal Junior), an account of his childhood in Amsterdam under the German occupation and of the liberation of Holland by the Canadians. A second book followed in 2001, **Children at War**, also published by Boréal, recounting the World War II childhood memories from several European countries. In 2004, he wrote the story of his search for the girl who had come from Austria into his family, in post war Amsterdam, whom he had finally found and begun a correspondence with (**The Fresh Smell of Soap**, Éditions de la paix). These books were followed by visits to many primary and secondary schools in Quebec, to talk about children's experience of war, a project that has enabled him to meet more than 70 000 children.

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## Short bio

André Melançon was born in Rouyn, Quebec, in 1942. With his first films, in 1974, he devoted himself to stories revolving around children, both in fiction and in documentary. **Comme les six doigts de la main** won best Quebec feature film in 1978. **La guerre des tuques** (1984) won a great many awards and became a classic children's movie, followed by the equally successful **Bach et Bottine** in 1986.

His production has remained diversified, however, with the thriller **Rafales** then **Albertine en cinq temps**, as well as the series **Cher Olivier** of which he was also writer. He is also a much praised actor.

His documentary **Printemps fragiles** won best directing award at the Prix Gémeaux in 2006. With **Les trains de la vie** he returns to his passion for telling stories about children's experience of life.

## Filmography of André Melançon

- 1972      **DES ARMES ET LES HOMMES**  
Documentaire-fiction . 16 mm . 60 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : ONF
- 1973      "**LES OREILLES** " **MÈNE L'ENQUETE**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 25 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : ONF
- LES TACOTS**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 25 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : ONF
- 1974      **LE VIOLON DE GASTON**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 25 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : ONF

- 1976      **UN JEU DANGEREUX**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 20 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions Prisma
- 1977      **LES VRAIS PERDANTS**  
Documentaire . 16 mm . 100 minutes .  
Recherche et réalisation .  
Production : ONF
- 1977      **UNE JOB À PLEIN TEMPS**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 20 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions Prisma
- 1978      **COMME LES SIX DOIGTS DE LA MAIN**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 75 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions Prisma .
- OBSERVATIONS I, II ET III**  
Documentaire . 16 mm . Trois films de 20 minutes .  
Recherche et réalisation .  
Production : ONF
- 1979      **LA PAROLE AUX ENFANTS**  
Documentaires . Série de 43 films . 16 mm . 135 minutes .  
Recherche et réalisation .  
Production : Nanouk Film
- 1980      **L'ESPACE D'UN ÉTÉ**  
Documentaire . 16 mm . 115 minutes .  
Recherche et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions SDA
- PLANQUEZ-VOUS , LES LACASSE ARRIVENT !**  
Documentaire . 16 mm . 28 minutes .  
Réalisation et montage .  
Production : Les Productions SDA
- LA SÉANCE DE LA RUE DU COUVENT**  
Documentaire . 16 mm . 18 minutes .  
Réalisation et montage .  
Production : Les Productions SDA
- 1982      **ZIGZAGS**  
Fiction . 16 mm . Six films de 25 minutes .  
Scénario et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions Prisma

- 1984      **LA GUERRE DES TUQUES**  
Fiction . 35 mm . 90 minutes .  
Collaboration au scénario et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions La Fête
- 1985      **BACH ET BOTTINE**  
Fiction . 35 mm . 90 minutes .  
Collaboration au scénario et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions La Fête
- 1986      **LE LYS CASSÉ**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 60 minutes .  
Réalisation .  
Production : Nanouk Film
- 1988      **FIERRO ..... L'ÉTÉ DES SECRETS**  
Fiction . 35 mm . 90 minutes .  
Coscénarisation et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions La Fête
- 1990      **RAFALES**  
Fiction . 35 mm . 90 minutes .  
Coscénarisation et réalisation .  
Production : Aska Films
- 1990      **NÉNETTE**  
Fiction . 16 mm . 86 minutes .  
Réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions du Verseau
- 1994      **LE PRIX DES RÊVES**  
Documentaire-vidéo , 48 minutes .  
Dans la série *LES CHOIX D'UNE NATION* .  
Recherche et réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions Point de Mire
- 1995      **LE BOULARD**  
Dans la série française " L'INSTIT " .  
Fiction . 16 mm . 96 minutes .  
Réalisation .  
Production : Hamster Production et Aska Films
- 1997      **CHER OLIVIER**  
Série dramatique pour la télévision .  
Fiction . Quatre épisodes d'une heure .  
Scénarisation et réalisation .  
Production : Avanti Ciné-Vidéo et VidéoFilm



- 1998      **CES ENFANTS D'AILLEURS - la suite**  
Série dramatique pour la télévision .  
Fiction . Huit épisodes d'une heure .  
Réalisation .  
Production : MATCH TV et NÉO FILMS
- 1999      **ALBERTINE, EN CINQ TEMPS**  
Adaptation de la pièce de Michel Tremblay .  
Durée : 95 minutes  
Co-réalisation avec Martine Beaulne .  
Production : Sogestalt
- 2000      **LE CIEL SUR LA TÊTE**  
Fiction . 35 mm . 110 minutes .  
Co-réalisation.  
Production : Les Productions Thalie
- 2001      **ASBESTOS**  
Série dramatique pour la télévision .  
Fiction . Six épisodes d'une heure .  
Réalisation .  
Production : Cirrus Productions Inc.
- 2004      **DANIEL et LES SUPERDOGS (version française)**  
Long métrage de fiction . 100 minutes  
Réalisation .  
Production : Les Productions La Fête Inc.
- 2005      **PRINTEMPS FRAGILES**  
Documentaire , 104 minutes .  
Réalisation .  
Production : Sherpas Films et l'ONF
- 2006      **L'ÂGE DE PASSION**  
Documentaire , 72 minutes .  
Coréalisation .  
Production : Sherpas Films et l'ONF
- 2007      **TRAVERSER LA PEUR**  
Docu-fiction de 25 minutes.  
Collectif.  
Production : Alt Production
- 2011      **LA CICATRICE**  
Docu-fiction de 30 minutes.  
Collectif.  
Scénario et réalisation.  
Production : Alt Production

2012

**LES TRAINS DE LA VIE**  
Documentaire, 52 minutes  
Scénario et réalisation  
Production : InformAction



InformAction is one of Canada's leading documentary production companies, specializing in point of view and creative documentaries directed by some of the best filmmakers in Canada. Founded in Montreal in 1971, InformAction produces single documentaries and mini-series on social issues, art and popular culture, international affairs and human rights for Canadian prime-time television and for theatrical release. Many have won awards and all are distributed internationally. InformAction has done several successful international coproductions with Europe, in particular with France.

Some of InformAction's signature titles: **Trains of Life** by André Melançon (2013), **Frameworks, Images of a Changing World** (feature documentary by Helen Doyle, 2013), **Planet Yoga** (feature documentary by Carlos Ferrand, 2011), **Unlikely Treasures** and **Small Wonders** both by Tally Abecassis, **Battle of Wills** by Anne Henderson (2009), **Seeking Refuge** by Karen Cho (*1st Award* – Toronto Human Rights DocFest 2010, Gemini-Award nominee for *Best Directing*), **A Dream for Kabul** by Philippe Baylaucq (*ReelAward for Outstanding Canadian Doc 2009*, Gemini-Award nominee for the *Donald Brittain Award for Best Social/Political Documentary*), coproduced with the National Film Board of Canada, **American Fugitive: The Truth about Hassan** by Jean-Daniel Lafond (prix Gémeaux nominee), **The Magic Touch** by Carlos Ferrand (3 *Gémeaux Awards* 2005, including *Best Cultural Documentary*), **East End Kids** (Prix Gémeaux and Prix Jutra nominee) and **The Moon and the Violin** (*Best Canadian documentary Hot Docs* 2003), both by Carole Laganière, **The Art of Time** by Philippe Baylaucq (Prix Gémeaux and Gemini Award nominee) and **The Messengers** by Helen Doyle (2003).

InformAction also supports emerging directors: **En attendant le printemps** by Marie-Geneviève Chabot (2013), **Roger Pelerin, là où l'on s'arrête en passant** (Prix Gémeaux nominee) and **Sans réserve** (*Best Mid-length Documentary Award 2008* by Québec Critics Association) by Patrick Pellegrino, **La Vie après la shop** by Vincent Audet-Nadeau and **The Genocide in Me**, by Araz Artinian (both nominated for *Best Social Documentary* at the Gémeaux Awards 2006).

Producers Ian Quenneville and Ian Oliveri joined the company 12 years ago and teamed up with senior producer and co-founder of the company, Nathalie Barton. Nathalie was documentary representative on the board of the Quebec Producers Association (APFTQ) from 1994 to 2002, served five years on the executive of Women in Film in Quebec (Femmes du cinéma, de la télévision et des nouveaux médias) and was Chair of the Observatoire du documentaire (The Documentary Network) from 2008 to 2011. Ian Quenneville is currently documentary representative on the board of APFTQ and Ian Oliveri is co-chair of Doc Québec (Documentary Organization of Canada).

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