

Le Studio d'Imagination
presents:

10:59

A Feature Film

Based on the novel by Roger Faindt

The Characters

The characters:

Henry GUNTHER

◆ Henry, Nicholas, GUNTHER (Born June 5, 1895 in Baltimore, USA) is a 23-year-old boy with a round face and blonde spiky hair. He's brave, deeply humanist, in conflict with his origins, in quest of identity.

From a family of German immigrants, he lives at the 3011 on Eastern Avenue, an eastern neighborhood of Baltimore where the great majority of the population is German.

He's strongly absorbed by his German ancestors' culture, as well as ten million Americans, born in Germany or of German descent. That's one tenth of the population of the USA, for which Germany is still the « Vaterland ».

They bear German names, speak and understand the German, have relatives and friends that had stayed in Germany.

After the declaration of war of the USA to Germany in April 1917, the mistake of the grand-father took on a national dimension. The Gunther family and their neighbors are victim of xenophobia. A deleterious atmosphere that doesn't give Henry the desire to enlist himself.

German newspapers, including the Deutscher Correspondent of Baltimore, don't disappear despite the entry of the United-States in the world conflict. They keep their subscribers and their readers.

As a majority, these newspapers are pro-German.

Employee at the national bank of Baltimore, Henry Gunther is mobilized for war on September 9, 1917 in the famous regiment known as "Baltimore one".

He is affected to the 313th Infantry Regiment of the 79th division of the American army, created on August 5, 1917 in the Maryland. The training is given by French officers who train the American soldiers to the techniques of the new war that takes place in Europe.

Henry belongs to the A Company. Ernest Powell, his closest buddy, is troop sergeant inside the Company.

The staff sergeants were traditionally unpopular. Their duty was to dress their comrades and it was frequent, in these days, that the uniforms were too big or too small.

The 79th Division sails for France between July the 8th and July the 10th. Troops land in Brest between July the 15th and July the 21st.

The American army is equipped with English and French material.

Henry Gunther writes a letter to a friend who stayed in the US and tells him that it's best for him not to join the army: the military conditions are very poor.

A censor of the army transfers the letter to his major. Henry Gunther is demoted to the rank of private on August.16, 1918 and served under the commandment of his friends Ernest Powell. Henry feels this sanction like an humiliation.

On September the 26th, for their first day on the front, the men of the A company stay in the trenches.

A runner from the 313 R.I arrives at the headquarters of Sergeant Powell. He asks for a liaison officer to operate between the headquarters of the regiment and the brigade.

Before Powell has even the time to ask for a volunteer, Henry Gunther offers his service.

He is send to the secondment to this mission for a week. He comes back with an injured arm. Despite this wound that could have allowed him to retire from the front, Henry decides to stay with his comrades.

Powell perceives in his friend his will to redeem himself.

Nicholas GUNTHER

Henry's father. A 49-year-old tall strong man with ash-colored white hair. Born in Alsace (German territory since the treaty of Frankfurt on May.10, 1871) in 1871. Joiner and cabinetmaker like his father.

He is a silent man, denies his origins and suffers from them. He also can be violent in the grip of alcohol.

♦ **Back-story:** Nicholas Gunther asks for the American nationality when he came of age, despite the opposition of his parents.

Marked by the sufferings and the misery due to his difficulties of integration, Nicholas wants to make a complete break with Germany and France.

As fate would have it, he marries Réjane Fechter, a young woman of German and French descent, that lives in Baltimore, in his neighborhood.

Henry is born from this union in 1895.

Ground for disagreement with Réjane, Nicholas refuses to educate Henry in the German tradition. During a violent fight (Nicholas is drunk on this day), he hits Réjane, who leaves the house to take shelter at his sister's for a few days.

Nicholas takes advantage of her absence to move and to kidnap Henry (he's 4) without leaving an address.

Unemployed, Nicholas eventually comes back to work in the family woodwork.

After his comeback, he refuses to teach his son the profession of joiner and cabinetmaker. He'd rather direct him to work in a bank, a much lucrative career.

But Henry doesn't love his job. Henry's interest for the German language and culture is a painful reminder of the immigration.

Réjane FECHTER

Henry's mother. Of Alsatian descent by his mother and German descent by his father. From a modest but educated family.

Strongly immersed in the German culture. Réjane speaks German, American, and French.

She appears in the movie at age 24. She's a pale-faced pretty young girl, with brown clear hair and blue eyes.

Engaging, sweet-tempered.

◆ **Back-story** : After having searching her son in vain for more than a year, Réjane decides to go to Germany. Kaspar Hartmann, a family friend in vacation in the US, comes with her. Without news of her son, Réjane won't come back in the United States. She will start all over again with Kaspar Hartmann, a much older man than her. Eugen Hartmann, Henry's half-brother, will be born from their union in 1899.

The Other Characters:

Otto GUNTHER

◆ Henry's grand-father. (80 in the movie) Joiner and cabinetmaker, born in 1838 in Rastatt, on the edge of the Rhine, in the grand duchy of the Bade, speaks German, Alsatian, but also French.

He marries an Alsatian girl and sets up in Basse Alsace, a French territory. The 1870 war ruins the family business.

Discouraged, torn between his origins and his love for France, he decides to emigrate with his family in America.

Henry's father is yet 2.

Otto will teach his grand-son how to speak German, but will hide it to his own son Nicholas, Henry's father. He is a man who will teach Henry how to work the wood, who will tell him with love and nostalgia about the distant « Vaterland », about its beauty.

Idealized words and pictures that will deeply mark the young boy.

The other characters.

American side.

Rennie WILTON

◆ 25-year-old man, from a breeder family originally from Virginia. His mother is from a French emigrant family. He 's not very educated, but he speaks English. Breeder in civilian life. Single. Drafted in 1917. Xenophobic, quarrelsome, boastful, and suspicious. A sardonic and provocative sense of humor.

Sometimes motivated by some perversity for the weakest people. A brave soldier who has a real hate for the enemies.

Sergeant Ernest POWELL

◆ 24-year-old man. From a modest environment from the suburbs of Baltimore. Well education, but not educated.

Metalworker in civilian life. Married, father of a child. Drafted in 1917 with the rank of sergeant. Brave and humanist. Friend of Henry Gunther.

Captain BARTON

◆ 38-year-old man. Married, father of a child. Administrative agent in civilian life. He is an inexperienced but brave officer, very particular for the rules.

Privates JOHN, MORGAN, CROWLEY, BRADLEY

◆ Very brave and nice soldiers, from a modest environment. Private Crowley speaks French. Soldiers n° 3 and n° 4 are Rennie Wilton's friends.

Privates MITCHEL, IRON, CANHAM, RODEN and COLLINS

◆ Very young soldiers. They step in at the end of the movie to fill the losses.

The other characters:

German side.

Eugen HARTMANN

◆ Henry Gunther's half-brother. 20-year-old man from a modest environment, well educated.

He speaks German, Alsatian and French. He loves France.

Clockmaker in civilian life. Drafted in 1917, two wounds. Brave, self-willed, humanist, empathetic, and open-handed. He's Réjane Fechter's son. His girlfriend's name is Lore.

Peter KRIEBEL

◆ A 17-year-old boy. Still a child in his head. Engaging but inexperienced. No girlfriend.

Fritz WECKMANN as known as Blind Eye

◆ 40-year-old man. He is a patriot (his father was killed during the 1870s war), hates France. Painter craftsman in civilian life. A son killed in Verdun. His wife died of grief. He is a determined and experienced warrior,

Voluntary drafted in 1914, wounded several times, an eye blinded by shrapnel.

He is a sweet and paternalistic man with the young recruits. He has a great sense of humor.

Hauptmann Ernst FRAHM

◆ 45-year-old man, married, father of two children. Officer of the reserve. Horse breeder in civilian life.

From a well-off environment, well educated. He is an experienced and brave officer, with a strong sense of duty.

Upright, fair, respectful with his men.

Soldier MANFRED

◆ 25-year-old boy. Single. Tow maker in civilian life. Comrade of Hans (the sniper in the movie)

A nice brave young man.

Sniper and artilleryman HANS

◆ 28-year-old. A girlfriend. Gamekeeper in civilian life. Comrade of Manfred. At the front line since 1916. Tired by the war. He's self-willed and brave.

The other characters:

French side.

Flavien MEUNIER

◆ 26-year-old man. From a well-off environment of storekeepers of Alsatian descent. Good education. Educated. Speaks French and German fluently. Bank employee in civilian life. Drafted in 1914.

He is a brave self-willed but impulsive soldier. Volunteer in the trench cleaner section since the death of his friend Pierre Guilloux. Tired and filled with hate at the end of the war. His girlfriend's name is Odette.

Pierre GUILLOUX

◆ 24-year-old boy. He is a modest and illiterate peasant from Franche-Comté. Engaging, nice and full of life. Recently married. Drafted in 1915. A brave soldier.

Louis LAMARQUE

◆ 17-year-old young boy. Garage mechanic. Drafted in 1918. He is randomly drawn to fight in the trench cleaner section in November 1918. Inexperienced and weak psychologically.

Captain MAINGUET

◆ 40-year-old man, married, father of three children. Officer of the reserve. Wine merchant in civilian life. From a well-off environment, well educated. An inexperienced but brave soldier.

Soldiers MARTIN, BRUYAND, Corporal with the red face, The hairy without eyebrow

◆ Boys between 20 and 30. Nice and brave, they are fellows who like wine and women.

The MAJOR

◆ 43-year-old, divorced, without children. Competent and efficient career doctor. He has an affair with a nurse of the same age as him.

MARIE

◆ Nurse at the sanitary bloc. A 22-year-old pretty young girl. Pale face covered with freckles, red hair, green eyes. She's a young sweet and engaging woman, devoted and compassionate with the wounded soldiers.
In love with Henry Gunther.

Lieutenant RAILLET

◆ 37-year-old married man. Well educated. He is an experienced and professional soldier. Strict, a great sense of duty, very brave.

Sergeant BERTIER

◆ 30-year old man, widower. Farmer in civilian life. Brave man, but mad for war. A real hate for the enemy.

Soldier VAN GOGH

◆ 24-year-old boy. Single. Farm worker in civilian life. 4 years at the front, two of them in the trench cleaner section. He is a brave man, an engaging comrade, but mad of war. Many injuries and scars. A pulled out ear (hence the nickname) by shrapnel.