



## Inside Hana's Suitcase

Director: Larry Weinstein, Canada, 2008, 93 minutes

One day Fumiko Ishioka, the coordinator of the Tokyo Holocaust Education Centre, received a battered suitcase with the name Hana Brady and the word 'Waisenkind' (orphan) painted on the front. She had no idea that this suitcase would set her on a journey that would not only change her life, but also the lives of thousands of children around the world. With the help of her young students (called the Small Wings), Fumiko decided to discover all she could about a little girl named Hana.

Her quest to put a face to a name and an old suitcase took her to the Czech Republic, where Hana was born in 1931, in the small village of Nove Mesto. When the Nazis invaded, Hana's parents were imprisoned and she was sent to a concentration camp in the walled city of Theresienstadt. In secret art classes, held without the permission of the Nazi guards, children like Hana drew what they saw and what they remembered of life before the war. These images, of picnics, swaying trees, and people holding hands, prompted Fumiko to go even further. Her search eventually led to Auschwitz, where Hana's name was marked with a single check mark, meaning she had died at the camp. But just above Hana's name, another name was inscribed: George Brady, who had survived the war. Not only had he survived, he was alive, well, and living in Toronto, with a passel of children and grandchildren of his own. George was Hana's older brother.

Director Larry Weinstein's stunning new documentary brings Hana and George's remarkable story to life using dramatic recreations, family photographs, a gorgeously orchestrated soundtrack, and interviews with the people who knew and loved Hana.

Children in Japan and Toronto, who have been moved by Hana and George's experiences, narrate the film. *Inside Hana's Suitcase* is told with immense grace, but packs a serious emotional punch. Through the small window of one little girl's experience, the impact

of the Holocaust hits home. Hana's suitcase has become an enduring symbol of love and courage, and a potent reminder of the need to stand up to intolerance and hatred. Her story, standing in for the many children silenced and lost forever to history, is a poignant lesson from the past to the future. "Somehow the story was meant to be told," says George. We are the better for it.

### DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1956, Toronto director Weinstein formed Rhombus Media with Niv Fichman and Barbara Willis Sweete in 1979. He has worked throughout Europe, the US, Canada, and South America, with many of the world's major cultural broadcasters. His programs have been televised in over 35 countries. With more than a dozen award-winning films to his credit, he is one of the most sought-after directors of music and arts films. Feature films documenting the lives of twentieth century composers, such as Ravel, Weill, Arnold Schoenberg, Shostakovich, Manuel de Falla, and Joaquín Rodrigo, have received top awards and have been screened at major film festivals throughout the world. His films have earned numerous Gemini Awards celebrating the best in Canadian television production.

*Second screening: Monday, May 25, 1:00 pm, Pacific Cinémathèque. Filmmaker in attendance at both screenings. Classified for younger audiences. No membership required.*

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