

## Document Citation

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**Fanny Och Alexander**  
 (Fanny And Alexander)  
 (SWEDISH-FRENCH-W.  
 GERMAN-COLOR)

Stockholm, Dec. 1.

An AB Cinematograph with The Swedish Film Institute, Swedish TV One, Gaumont, France, and Persona Film and Tobis Filmkunst (West Germany) production. AB Sandrews (domestic). Swedish Film Institute (Lena Enquist) foreign release. Written and directed by Ingmar Bergman. Executive producer, Jorn Donner. Production manager, Katinka Farago with Eva Ivarsson. Brita Werkmaester. Camera (Eastmancolor), Sven Nykvist; editor, Sylvia Ingemarsson; production design, Anna Asp; costumes, Marik Vos; music, Daniel Bell with quotes from Benjamin Britten's Concerto For Cello Opus 72, 80, 87, Robert Schumann's Piano Quintet In F Major; business administration, Ingrid Bergman, Lars-Owe Carlberg, Fredrik von Rosen; laboratory, Film Teknik (Nils Melander). Reviewed at AB Sandrews screening room, Stockholm, Nov. 29, 1982. Running time, 188 MINS.

The Ekdahl residence:

Widow grandmother

Helena Ekdahl ..... Gunn Wallgren

Her son,

Prof. Carl Ekdahl ..... Boerje Ahlstedt

Lydia Ekdahl,

his wife ..... Christina Schollin

Helena's son Oscar,

actor ..... Allan Edwall

Oscar's wife Emilie ..... Ewa Froeling

Their daughter

Fanny, 8 ..... Pernilla Allwin

Their son

Alexander, 10 ..... Bertil Guve

Helena's son

Carl-Gustav ..... Jarl Kulle

His wife Alma ..... Mona Malm

His mistress,

Helena's maid Maj ..... Pernilla Wallgren

The Uppsala Theatre:

Hanna Schwarz ..... Anna Bergman

Filip Landahl ..... Gunnar Bjornstrand

The Bishop's Residence:

Bishop Edvard Vergerus ..... Jan Malmsjoe

His mother Blenda ..... Marianne Aminoff

His sister

Henrietta ..... Kerstin Tidelius

Justina,

kitchen-maid ..... Harriet Andersson

Jacobi's House:

Isak Jacobi ..... Erland Josephson

Ismael ..... Stina Ekblad

Aron ..... Mats Bergman

Now in his early 60s, Ingmar Bergman has returned to filmmaking in his own country as a mellowed man of humor and wisdom, but not without sharp insights into the whys and wherefores of the guilt, angst, religious scruples and whatever twisted emotions that he poured into most of his earlier work. Thus, his "Fanny and Alexander" emerges as a sumptuously produced period piece that is also a rich tapestry of childhood memoirs and moods, fears and fancy, employing all the manners and means of the best of cinematic theatrical from high and low comedy to darkest tragedy with detours into the gothic, the ghostly and the gruesome.

"Fanny and Alexander" just simply has everything to make it the Bergman feature film that could be remembered longest and most fondly by general audiences when other, more anguished works, are forgotten by all but the initiated. And in due time after the world-wide theatrical release, a five-hour tv version, divided into four parts of uneven length, will surely thrill even larger audiences. This time around, Bergman cleanses his soul — and those of his public — not with a whip but with the gentlest of strokes and also with the lusty guffaws he occasions.

The well-to-do Ekdahl family in the university city of Uppsala has come together in the widow/grandmother Helena's house to celebrate Christmas of 1907. The festivities include the servants who are also seated at the dinner table, but otherwise know where they belong without appearing cowed. Helena (Gunn Wallgren) is a strong-willed but generous woman. She does worry, however, about her theatre manager-actor son Oscar (Allan Edwall) who works too hard and is a pretty bad actor, but a good husband for Emilie (Ewa Froeling) and father for their two young chil-

dren Fanny and Alexander. She is even more worried about her son Carl, a professor continuously broke and often drunk, while she quite accepts that her third son Gustav Adolf (Jarl Kulle), the restaurateur, is a happy hedonist who has taken her own maid as his regular mistress (Carl Gustav's wife accepts it, too, as long as she herself is not neglected).

In general, this Christmas Eve is a happy one, and late at night Helena reminisces with an old family friend, the Jewish antique dealer Isak Jacob (Erland Josephson), who is also her sometime lover. The maid, having put Fanny and Alexander lovingly, very lovingly, to bed, beds down with Gustav Adolf. These are people of strength even in their weaknesses.

The shadows begin to take over, when the actor dies and when widow Emilie presently marries the Uppsala bishop Edvard Vergerus (there is one by that name in many Bergman films, but they are quite different characters), who demands that not only Emilie but also her children leave all their clothes and toys and jewelry behind when they become part of the bishop's strict and puritanical household. Soon, the bishop (Jan Malmsjoe) reveals himself to be a sadistic tyrant under his benign surface of smiles and gentle ways. Emilie finds out but does not really revolt until, in the middle of pregnancy, she finds out that Alexander has been cruelly whipped with little Fanny as an onlooker.

Alexander is a great inventor of stories that have quite a lot of relevance to things the bishops wants to keep hidden (even to himself). The children are imprisoned in an attic, but smuggled to freedom by old Isak, who has a bit of magic power, too. Soon after, the bishop burns to death in his bed. Again, magic has played a part since young Alexander has been induced by Isak's son Ismael (played by a woman, Stina Ekblad) to try his powers of telepathy.

There is much magic throughout this outwardly realistic film, but it is employed so as to appear quite matter-of-factly. The dead father returns repeatedly to have talks with his mother and with Alexander. At one point, a statue comes briefly to life. Isak's other son Aron (Mats Bergman) has a way of

bringing a set of marionettes even more strikingly to life, while an invisible God keeps opening a door to talk about His Great Love. Soon, however, Emilie and her children are back in the old Ekdahl residence where there is a party held for two newborn babies (Emilie's and Maj's, the latter by Carl Gustav, who does the happy speech-making). Various subplots are tied up nicely and at the end, the widow retires to read aloud from Stringberg the lines, "anything can happen, anything is possible and likely. Time and space do not exist. On a flimsy ground of reality, imagination spins out and weaves new patterns."

"Fanny and Alexander" poses no deeper problems, but is by no means a shallowly romantic family saga. It combines elegance with wit and extravagance with intimacy. Its moments of shock are surprisingly subdued (the burning to death of the bishop has a dream-like quality), and its obvious nostalgia is tempered with the softest irony and the saltiness of home-truths. The playing throughout reflects the mood of a real-life film family reunion that Bergman's homecoming to Sweden has been. The two children perform with quiet authority, totally devoid of any cuteness or lapses into obvious acting. All adult roles are played with a

blend of gusto and professionalism. Kulle's portrait of the happy hedonist is a grand display of comic timing and dramatic awareness of comedy's pitfalls. As Emilie, Ewa Froeling will surely join the list of great Bergman actresses of emotional glow and rather off-beat beauty (her eyes tends to stare and her lips are over-size). Still, veteran Gunn Wallgren outshines everybody else by appearing as the embodiment of female sexuality surviving stylishly and in radiation of a deeper beauty where old age has otherwise clearly announced its coming.

Bergman scholars will find much to argue about, probe and analyze in "Fanny and Alexander," while most others will just submit to its quite obvious pleasures in reviving a paradise — and part of a hell — lost.—Kell.

Dale Smith is heading up Dallas branch of Jensen Farley Pictures.