

Holocaust Survivor Drama *The Optimist* Opens in Theaters Nationwide Today

Stephen Lang and Elsie Fisher Star in Finn Taylor's Moving True Story of Resilience, Memory, and Healing

NASHVILLE, TN, UNITED STATES, March 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Optimist](https://www.theoptimistmovie.com/), an emotionally powerful independent drama inspired by the extraordinary life of Holocaust survivor Herbert Heller, opens in theaters nationwide today through Trafalgar Releasing. Directed by Finn Taylor and produced by Jeanine Thomas, the film stars Stephen Lang and Elsie Fisher.

The film tells the true story of Herbert Heller, who survived the concentration camps of Theresienstadt concentration camp and Auschwitz concentration camp before dedicating his life to educating thousands of students about the Holocaust and the power of resilience.

Tickets and additional information are available at: <https://www.theoptimistmovie.com>

The Optimist features a commanding performance from Lang, returning to the big screen following his appearance in *Avatar: Fire & Ash*. Lang stars opposite Fisher (*Eighth Grade*) in a sweeping, intergenerational story exploring trauma, memory, and the enduring human capacity for healing. Set against the striking landscapes of Northern California, the film follows Herbert Heller (Lang), a children's store owner who has carried the unspoken trauma of surviving Terezin and Auschwitz for more than sixty years. As illness forces him to confront the silence he has maintained—even from his own family—he forms an unlikely friendship with Abbey (Fisher), a troubled teenager struggling with her own emotional wounds.

Through their growing connection, Herbert finds the courage to share the truth of his past, opening a path toward empathy, forgiveness, and renewal. The film is based on the remarkable life of Herbert Curt Heller (1929–2021), who survived Terezin, Auschwitz, and a death march



The Optimist

before immigrating to San Francisco in 1946. After decades of silence, Heller became a beloved educator and speaker, sharing his testimony with thousands of students and community groups and earning the prestigious Jefferson Award.

The making of *The Optimist* was a more than decade-long journey for producer Jeanine Thomas, who first met Heller and began developing the project before his passing. Director Finn Taylor said: “Herbert was a true hero. When Jeanine first told me of his miraculous escape I was transfixed. But witnessing Herbert transform the lives of thousands of teenagers by sharing his story was an extraordinary example of how one person can impact the world. With the help of hundreds of collaborators across two continents, we set out to make a film that honors his legacy.”

Producer Jeanine Thomas added: “This film began as a deeply personal promise I made to Herbert—that the truth he carried for so long would not end with him. Bringing *The Optimist* to theaters nationwide today is both humbling and deeply meaningful. His story helped me find my own courage, and I hope it will do the same for audiences everywhere.” The ensemble cast also includes Luke David Blumm, Leah Pipes, Ben Geurens, Ursula Parker, Slavko Sobin, Stella Stocker, Oskar Hes, and Robin Weigert.

More information about the film can be found at:

<https://www.theoptimistmovie.com>

ABOUT TRAFALGAR RELEASING

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