



Swim for the River

Filmmaker Biography



TOM WEIDLINGER *writer, director, and producer*

Tom Weidlinger is an independent filmmaker who has been writing, directing and producing documentary films for 30 years. Seventeen of his films have received national broadcasts on public television. Many have won prestigious festival and industry awards, and are in educational distribution.

Weidlinger's work deals with a wide range of subjects, from the emotional development of boys in the United States to humanitarian aid in the Congo. The themes of social justice and human relations run through his films.

Heart of the Congo, (2004) tells the story of aid workers helping refugees in a region devastated by civil war, amid threats of violence, corruption, and a legacy of colonial dependency.

In *A Dream in Hanoi* (2002) Vietnamese and American actors endure the strains of cross-cultural misunderstandings to mount a production of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Nights Dream." In *The Heart of the Congo* (2004) Weidlinger explores the dilemma of humanitarian aid workers trying to help civil war refugees without creating a lasting dependency. In *Boys Will Be Men*, (2001) Weidlinger examines the culture of bullying and toughness that many boys are inducted into at an early age and suggests some effective alternatives for emotional growth.

Weidlinger is also the creator and executive producer of *MAKING PEACE*, a four-hour PBS series about grassroots activists who are healing conditions that create violence. In 1995 The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation funded a nationwide outreach effort to promote the use of *MAKING PEACE* in schools, churches, community centers, violence prevention organizations and public health agencies.

Between 1990 and 1993 Weidlinger produced *After the Velvet Revolution*, a four-year television history project that chronicled the lives of a range of Czechs and Slovaks as they adapted to life in a new democracy after the fall of Communism.

During 1989–1990, he represented WGBH as senior producer of a French/American co-production (in association with the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*) *DE GAULLE AND FRANCE*. Weidlinger also wrote and directed one of the three programs in this series, focusing on the French-Algerian war.

In 1987, he formed Moira Productions, an independent production company, for the purpose of developing and producing programs for public television. Moira's first production was *The Great San Francisco Earthquake*, which was selected to premiere the celebrated PBS anthology series *THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE*. Moira's second film, for the second season of the series, was *The Great War, 1918*.



In 1984–1985, Weidlinger was senior producer (and director and writer of four programs) of the award-winning *WEST OF THE IMAGINATION*, a six-part PBS series about the history and mythology of the American West as portrayed by artists and photographers.

Weidlinger graduated from the Center for Advanced Film Studies of the American Film Institute in 1977. He was awarded a William Benton Fellowship in Broadcast Journalism at the University of Chicago in 1993. He has received writing fellowships and residencies at the Ragdale Foundation, the Ossabaw Island Foundation, and the McDowell Colony. He has written two feature film screenplays and been commissioned to write and develop numerous proposals and teleplays for public television.