



**WOMAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA**

# Galentine's Day: The Parent Trap 25th Anniversary

In Nancy Meyers' fun remake of *The Parent Trap* (1961), identical twins Hallie and Annie, separated at birth after their parents' divorce, accidentally discover each other, some years later, at a summer camp. In her breakout role, Lindsey Lohan shines playing both transatlantic twins who decide to switch places in a ploy to reunite their parents. Bring a bestie and brush up on both your Lohan and Meyers knowledge for a pre-film pop quiz with prizes!

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*The Parent Trap's* feel-good fable of mistaken identity and childhood resourcefulness has served filmmakers well over the years. This remake of Disney's 1961 Hayley Mills vehicle of the same name has been preceded by Andy Tennant's looser update *It Takes Two*, with Kirstie Alley and Steve Guttenberg. The narrative appeal of the core story is clear, based as it is on the wish-fulfilment fantasy of reforming the broken nuclear family, of bringing one's estranged parents back into the fold through the discovery of a sibling (or *doppelgänger*) that one never knew one had.

While Tennant's film was relentlessly vulgar in both its comedy and its characterisations, *The Parent Trap* in the hands of first-time director Nancy Meyers (the producer-writer of *Private Benjamin*) recognises that charm needs a touch of class to make it shine. In this respect, Dennis Quaid and Natasha Richardson are astutely cast as the idealised couple, ensconced on opposite sides of the world in a Napa vineyard and Kensington town house respectively. Their environments are so luxurious, and they themselves are so full of love for their daughters, that from the outset the audience is left in no doubt that they belong together. (Elaine Hendrix's grasping Meredith is too much the brash *arriviste* to contend with Richardson's old-world sophistication.) The loyal retainers Martin and Chessy even embark on a modest romance of their own, a prelude to the renewed grand passion of their employers.

The narrative symmetry may lend a predictability to proceedings, but the formal classicism is part of this film's sense of fun, sustained by Lindsay Lohan's winning and skilful double performance as Annie and Hallie, achieved (as was Mills' turn) through an unobtrusive use of split-screen photography and visual effects. 'I should never have believed it possible ... that one can make up for lost happiness, like a lesson one has missed at school ... We owe every second to our two children,' claims the father at the end of Erich Kästner's 1949 source novel *Lottie and Lisa*. Lohan, like Mills before her, has charm enough to make such an unlikely sentiment palatable.

**Andy Richards, *Sight and Sound*, December 1998**

Writer-director Nancy Meyers was drawn to the idea of doing a re-make when she realised how much her own two daughters loved the original. ‘When each of my daughters hit the age of about seven, the video of Hayley Mills seemed to be playing in a continuous loop in our house. I frequently found myself being drawn into it. I’d watch it with them time and again. I loved seeing how the girls-in-control element enchanted my daughters.’

Finding a replacement for Hayley Mills was not expected to be easy and, according to Meyers, it wasn’t: ‘I was really nervous because we got to the point where we weren’t sure we were ever going to find somebody to fill Hayley’s shoes. We thought maybe we should cancel the movie, because if we didn’t have an actress who could really own the dual roles, it just wouldn’t work.’

The search for Hallie/Annie involved auditioning over 2,000 girls, of whom five eventually got a screen test. The winner, Lindsay Lohan, recalls: ‘I had to get choked up and cry a little bit, but I was nervous because there seemed to be fifty million people there watching, and I was working with a famous actress. However, everyone made me feel comfortable with it and it turned out to be really fun.’

Fun and fantasy were indeed key words within the production. ‘This is not the real world,’ comments Natasha Richardson. ‘This is about people with dream jobs who live in dream locations. Elizabeth is English, so I have a butler and I sit down for silver service tea every day. I have a Bentley and a chauffeur and I live in this extraordinary house near Harrods. Elizabeth is a designer of wedding gowns. I can’t think of anything more romantic than that.’

Production designer Dean Tavoularis had the task of creating this ‘world without problems’. He comments: ‘We agreed that there must always be flowers, and that the environment must be trouble-free, a fairy-tale sort of place. Nancy is very particular about every little item. All the detail is based on the premise of having everything look beautiful.’

With the cast and production design in place, shooting started in London in the summer of 1997, taking in Buckingham Palace, Berkeley Square, Piccadilly Circus, Abbey Road, Bond Street, the Tower of London, St Paul’s Cathedral and Trafalgar Square. Then, after some days at Shepperton studios filming the scenes that take place inside Elizabeth’s town house, the production moved to California to shoot, among other things, Camp Walden.

For this, over 200 kids were kitted out by means of a unique scheme devised by costume designer Penny Rose. ‘We created our own camp based on the idea that if you send your child to camp, you get sent a clothing list and you pick what you want from it. In essence, that’s exactly what we did. We created a giant shop where we had everything in every size: four styles of shorts, two styles of T-shirts, sweatshirts in grey and green – crew neck, zipped and hooded. From this array the kids, depending on their individual personalities, took what they fancied.’

Summing up why she was willing, in her first job as feature director, to take on this huge cast as well as the film’s complicated two-Lindsays-on-screen-together shots, Meyers explains: ‘I love it because it’s a “girls who” story, about girls who find each other, girls who bring their parents back together, girls who travel, girls who discover new things about themselves, girls who are adventurous and brave.’

**By Terry Staples, from production notes**

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## THE PARENT TRAP

*Director:* Nancy Meyers  
*Production Companies:* Disney Enterprises, Inc., Walt Disney Pictures, Meyers/Shyer Company  
*Producer:* Charles Shyer  
*Co-producer:* Bruce A. Block  
*Screenplay:* David Swift, Nancy Meyers, Charles Shyer  
*Based on the book 'Das Doppelte Lottchen' by:* Erich Kästner  
*Director of Photography:* Dean Cundey  
*Editor:* Stephen A. Rotter  
*Production Designer:* Dean Tavoularis  
*Costume Designer:* Penny Rose  
*Wedding Gowns Design:* Vera Wang  
*Music/Orchestra Conductor:* Alan Silvestri  
*Music Editor:* Andrew Silver  
*Choreography:* Keith Young  
*Sound Supervisors:* Dennis Drummond, Patrick Drummond  
*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Freddie Hice

### Cast

Dennis Quaid (*Nick Parker*)  
Natasha Richardson (*Elizabeth James*)  
Lisa Ann Walter (*Chessy*)  
Elaine Hendrix (*Meredith Blake*)  
Simon Kunz (*Martin*)  
Ronnie Stevens (*grandfather*)  
Polly Holliday (*Marva Kulp Sr*)  
Lindsay Lohan (*Hallie Parker/Annie James*)  
Joanna Barnes (*Vicki*)  
Maggie Wheeler (*Marva Kulp Jr*)  
Erin Mackey (*Hallie/Annie acting double*)  
Hallie Meyers-Shyer (*Lindsay*)  
Maggie Emma Thomas (*Zoe*)

Courtney Woods (*Nicole*)  
Katerina Graham (*Jackie*)  
Michael Lohan (*lost boy at camp*)  
Rachel Sullivan, Katie Deshan, Brighton Hertford, Jennifer Lin, Amy Centner, Mia Tramz (*Navajo Bunk girls*)  
Christina Toral, Dana Ponder, Brianne Mercier (*cell phone girls*)  
Danielle Sherman, Natasha Melnick, Amanda Hampton (*girls at poker game*)  
Lisa Iverson (*bugler*)  
Lisa Cloud, Kellie Foster, Heidi Boren (*camp counsellors*)  
Marissa Leigh, Heather Wayrock (*fencing girls*)  
John Atterbury (*Gareth, The James' chauffeur*)  
Hamish McColl (*photographer*)  
Vendela K. Thommessen (*bridal gown model*)  
Alexander Cole (*Richard, Meredith's assistant*)  
J. Patrick McCormack (*Les Blake*)  
William Akey (*bellhop with flowers*)  
David Doty (*hotel bartender*)  
Roshanna Baron (*lady at pool*)  
Annie Meyers-Shyer (*towel girl*)  
Brian Fenwick (*desk clerk*)  
Jonneine Hellerstein (*ship photographer*)  
Regan Patno (*Dennis Quaid's dance double*)  
Melanie Gage (*Natasha Richardson's dance double*)  
Troy Christian, Denise Holland (*QE2 dancers*)  
Terry Kerr (*living statue*)  
Bruce Block (*tourist*)  
Bob (*Sammy the dog*)  
Vendela (*herself*)\*

USA 1998©  
127 mins

\* Uncredited

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Tue 21 Feb 18:20  
**Experimenta: Right of Way + Q&A with artists Dan Guthrie, Ufuoma Essi and Arjuna Neuman, hosted by Jonathan Ali**  
Thu 23 Feb 18:10

**Film Wallahs: Kekee Manzil: House of Art**  
Fri 24 Feb 20:40  
**Course: Filmmaking for Artists: Beginners Filmmaking Workshop**  
Sun 26 Feb 10:30-16:30  
**Relaxed Screening: Throne of Blood (Kumonosu-jō) + intro and discussion**  
Mon 27 Feb 18:15

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Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email [prognotes@bfi.org.uk](mailto:prognotes@bfi.org.uk)

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