

From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs Basil E Frankweiler

(aka: "The Hideaways")

US : 1973 : dir. Fielder Cook : Cinema 5 / Westfall

: 105 min

prod: Charles G Mortimer Jr : scr: Blanche Hanalis : dir.ph.: Victor J Kemper

[Sally Prager](#) [d]; [Johnny Doran](#) [d]; [Mike Hammett](#); [Bruce Conover](#)

Ingrid Bergman; George Rose; Richard Mulligan; Georgann Johnson; Madeline Kahn

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 ∄ M ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2541c	4.5	13	1	2,160	3 7 7 7 7	No	Jun 2002



The Moving Picture Boy attributes the above still of Doran to this film, but he's actually several years younger in the photo than he was in the film (11) by my own reckoning. At any rate, he's nowhere near as innocent as he looks!

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
2001 review:

"Fanciful tale of New Jersey kids Prager and Doran who hide out in N.Y.C's Metropolitan Museum, creating a dream world and befriending recluse Bergman, seen too briefly. Best for children. Blanche Hanalis adapted E.H. Konigsburg's novel. Released as **"THE HIDEAWAYS"**. Remade in 1995 for TV with Lauren Bacall. **1/2 "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review - muddled translation of the above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Two children hide out in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and befriend a rich woman. An unusual idea makes ho-hum entertainment for well-brought-up children."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"The sole-billed star is Ingrid Bergman but her admirers are hereby warned that she does not come on for the first hour (and when she does she is wearing a white fright wig), which is of unbearable cuteness, as two young children (Sally Prager, Johnny Doran) run away from home and hide in New York's Metropolitan Museum, where they become intrigued by one particular artefact. Bergman is its donor; George Rose is her butler, and Madeline Kahn lives things up in her cameo as a teacher."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

"Two suburban youngsters run away to live in New York's Metropolitan Museum for a week. Disappointing. ** "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Considering the incipient cuteness of the subject - kids running away to hide in the Metropolitan Museum of Art - Fielder Cook kept the yarn under fairly strict control in 1973. Ingrid Bergman clearly enjoyed herself as stern but relenting old lady they go and see; camp George Rose even more as her butler. 3"

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"A low-key fable about two bored American kids and their encounters with an eccentric recluse - a bizarre role for Ingrid Bergman in one of her last films, playing a woman about 15 years older than herself. Highly suitable for children, although the younger ones will find it has too little action and too many stretches of tedium. ** "

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Two bored suburban kids spend a week hiding out in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Interested in one of the statues, the duo tracks down its donor, an eccentric rich woman (Ingrid Bergman) who lives in a mansion in New Jersey. Fanciful tale won't appeal to all children, but it has a legion of admirers. *** "

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "A Pictorial History of the Talkies", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "Variety Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times reviews:

"Drama starring Ingrid Bergman. Two runaways in New York become obsessed with proving that a marble statue of an angel in the Metropolitan Museum of Art was sculpted by Michaelangelo, and seek out the statue's donor, a rich old recluse by the name of Mrs Basil E Frankweiler. ** "

"Originally shown under the cumbersome title **"FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MRS BASIL E. FRANKWEILER"**, this was heavily touted as the comeback, after three years, of Ingrid Bergman. Sadly, it's a flimsy tale and Bergman doesn't appear until halfway through. ** "

"This was heavily touted as the comeback of Ingrid Bergman, but her fans shouldn't hold their breath. Mostly it's a flimsy tale about two children who have the run of New York's Metropolitan Museum and wonder if a Michelangelo sculpture is a fake. Bergman

plays a white-haired eccentric who may have a clue to the sculpture's origin. ** "

"Children's fantasy. ** "

"Runaway youngsters hide in New York museum. ** "

"Two kids hide in a museum."

"Drama with Ingrid Bergman. A little girl runs away to New York with her younger brother."

What's On TV review:

"In one of Ingrid Bergman's most obscure films, she plays a rich recluse who's also a benefactor of New York's Metropolitan Museum. Most of the plot, however, is taken up by two kids, nicely played by Sally Prager and Johnny Doran, who hide in the museum and create their own world before eventually getting to meet her. 33 "

"Children's adventure. Two young runaways befriend a recluse. Starring Ingrid Bergman."

"Drama. Two youngsters run away from home to look for adventure in New York, and become obsessed with the statue of an angel."

Sunday Times note:

"A brother and sister look for adventure in New York."

TV Times [?] note:

"Children's adventure starring Ingrid Bergman. ** "

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Doran:

"The strawberry-blond John Allen Doran had, in childhood, a button of a nose and a round sucking mouth. Angry green eyes, however, proclaimed that he was nobody's pushover. He began acting when he was three, made dozens of commercials, and experienced two New York stage flops - one of them a musical based on "A Member of the Wedding". (He also played John Henry in the straight stage version.)

In his 1973 film with the interminable title ("THE HIDEAWAYS", its re-release name, was a great improvement) he made a fine fist of surviving overnight incarceration in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and was quite unintimidated by Ingrid Bergman in a white wig.

Three years later, for Disney, he and a delightful black buddy of his own age (Billy Attmore) allied themselves with a Southern Belle and a quack doctor (Joan Hackett and Peter Ustinov) in the search for his late father's treasure. He had a good part in the TV series "Salty".

Most of his later work was for TV. He took the Rooney part in a remake of "CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS" - opposite the exquisitely hateful Jonathan Kahn - and played Jackie Cooper in a Judy Garland biopic called "RAINBOW". He also appeared in the series "The Fantastic Journey" and "Mulligan's Stew", and later films included "SUPERSTITION" (82)."

In the hands of Disney, or the Children's Film Foundation, you could stake your life there would be bumbling museum crooks to be reckoned with, slapstick fashion, by the final reel. This is a more sedate, almost bookish, affair in which Sally Prager's secret longing for distinction is answered by a sculpture of an angel. Is it *really* an undiscovered work by Michelangelo? Who cares? - most kids today would answer, even if they were familiar with the name at all.

The surprise casting of Ingrid Bergman only distracts adult viewers from the story's real focus, which is this admittedly abstruse quest of young Claudia Kincaid (Prager), abetted by her brother Jamie (Doran), for secret attribution of a museum exhibit. In the final reel then, the two children, missing from home for a week, present themselves at the door of the museum's reclusive benefactress. Bergman's performance is quite undistinguished (as was her Oscar-

winning cameo in "**MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS**", as a seemingly slow-witted Swedish nanny) but inevitably she steals the scene whenever she's on camera. Katharine Hepburn would have suited the part better, but would have created similar problems. The best I can say of the film is that it has lofty ambitions to interest children in "high culture", but inevitably misses its aim entirely.

Part of the problem is the insipid dialogue, rather clumsily delivered by Claudia (Prager) in the character-establishing scenes. Her parents take her for granted, her father disapproves of her flights of fancy (she has a Camelot fixation) and every day seems much the same. Jamie (Doran) is a cardboard cut-out kid brother – noisy, always eating – who's a bit of a card sharp. "You could say I'm honest about everything but cards" he later confesses to Bergman, "For some reason I'm helpless about cheating at cards." Another problem is that cheesy 1970s post-"**SHAFT**" score, which keeps trying to remind us during the museum scenes that this is all an *amazingly* thrilling adventure for the kiddies. It isn't, and the music can't persuade us otherwise.

So Claudia decides to run away from home after she finds a discarded railway ticket with one fare unclaimed. She recruits Jamie to come along, mostly because he's the guy with the money, and next school day they catch the first train to New York. Here Claudia reveals her Grand Scheme – to hide out at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which she visited once before and sees as the next best thing to a palace. This would seem a cue for Jamie to howl in protest (museums, for small boys, are only marginally more appealing than dentist's chairs) but he goes along gamely with her plan, just as he does a while later when "Claude" decides to prove to herself that a beautiful small statuette of an angel, lately acquired by the museum from one Mrs Basil E Frankweiler, is really a work by Michelangelo, as some experts surmise. Jamie's lack of resistance to such ineffably dull projects rings a false note, and will tip off young boys in the audience that there's something phoney about the whole enterprise.

Claude's plan goes smoothly into effect, and the two conceal themselves in the museum toilets at closing time, dine out on the free canapés handed round on the delicatessen floor of Macy's, sleep in the museum's state bedroom exhibits, and bathe in the ground floor fountain, where Jamie is delighted to find pennies and quarters underfoot – it's like being **paid** to take a bath. They evade the nightwatchmen and burglar alarms with ease. When a museum janitor is startled to see Jamie emerge from the "john" very early one morning he cries "Where did *you* come from?" "My mother says I came from heaven!" the boy replies sweetly (probably the best line in the film) and beats his retreat.

For readers of this archive – and not people who watch a children's film to ignore the children in it – the museum scenes are the liveliest moments, but the director lacks style or humour, and fails to convey anything of the mystique or curiosity of the place, even in the Egyptology department. So that when Jamie tells Claudia "Boy, hiding out in the museum wasn't such a bad idea after all!" we know that is the adults talking, whereas when a boy at the tail end of a school party grumbles "I wanna go home!" we know he's echoing the true sentiments of the under-twelves.

Nothing else is known of homely Sally Prager, but I seem to remember her face from TV's "**The Waltons**", "**Little House on the Prairie**" or something of the sort. She does her best to seem entranced by high culture, and passionate about the attribution of the sculpture, but in the final analysis this is an internal story, which would have read better than it plays on the screen. [Johnny Doran](#) was 11, his only other film of note being Disney's "**TREASURE OF MATECUMBE**" (76) but, characteristically of the studio, the two boys who set off alone on a treasure-seeking adventure soon find themselves taking a back seat to the adults they meet along the way. Resourcefulness in the young should be kept safely within controlled parameters, or so the folk at Disney believe.

Museums of Art do not feature very large in the cinema of childhood, for obvious reasons, but ageing recluses are another matter. In "**HOME ALONE**" and its first sequel, for example, Macaulay Culkin established his human credentials by befriending lonely old souls, and

producer John Hughes was merely tapping into a long-standing convention about children's power to redeem hermits and embittered people through their spontaneity and candour. I speak of a time when children could still fall into company with "strangers" of either sex without setting parental alarm bells ringing.

The only comparable title presently known to the archive would be "**VINCENT AND ME**", from Rock Demers' "**Tales For All**" Canadian series of children's films, in which a girl in love with the art of Van Gogh is wafted back in time to meet the artist in person and pour a little sunflower oil on his fraught life.

Two other children identified in the cast are Bruce Conover, as Claudia's toddler brother Kevin, and Mike Hammett as Brucey, Jamie's classmate and card-game dupe. Nothing else is known of either one.

See subject index under **ART / CREATIVITY, RUNAWAYS / STOWAWAYS** and **SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS**.