

The interview after Ilka Schönbein's show Ricdin Ricdon

with Pauline Drünert (actress), Anja Schimanski (director's assistant) and Alexndra Lupidi (composer)

Thank you for coming here, especially not long after the end of your show. Before seeing it, we couldn't really figure out, what does its name mean. Can you tell us what was it derived from?

A.L.: *Ricdin Ricdon* is one of the French versions of the name from the Grimms' fairy tale. In German *Rumpelstilzchen*.

We were amazed by the atmosphere, you've managed to create on the stage. Gloomy and unsettling, yet fascinating – perfect for the retelling of Grimm brothers' tale about Rumpelstiltskin. Anja, as the director's assistant, can you unveil the mystery and tell us something about the creative process around the show?

A.S.: Maybe we can all answer. There are two sentences, that were most important for Ilka. "Something alive is dearer to me than all the treasures in the world" and the other one "That is art which pleases me well". So, for her it was like, when you do a show, then everybody wants you to do another one and another one. And isn't it energy-draining? She was in that process, and these two sentences were the ones, she took into consideration while making the show. After that, it is searching, searching, putting everything into the rubbish bin, researching, searching, getting a new puppet, getting another new puppet. I don't know, how many puppets we had. Making a bigger puppet, smaller puppet. With Ilka it's a lot of trying, retrying, starting again. That's something very special.

Was there any especially exciting or rewarding moment during the rehearsal process?

A.S.: Making of the masks and the first rehearsal. Because they (P.D and A.L) haven't worked together, we as a group haven't worked together. Getting to know each other, seeing Pauline's creativity, where she's going, what she's trying. Lots of laughing. I remember that at the beginning. That was a long time ago, six years.

P.D.: I remember the moment, when Ilka called me. I had an accident, my tire exploded on the highway. I had no money, caput. And Ilka called and asked me: *Do you want to do a play with me?* That was a great moment.

How would you describe the music used in *Ricdin Ricdon*?

A.L.: Well, at first, we needed to see the puppets. Then, with the puppets, Pauline and Ilka's imagination, the music was born. And then, the style of the music. It needed viola, because you can make many effects on it.

In the play, the music complimented the plot well. What was the composing process? Was it based on improvisations or did you have a specific vision in mind?

A.L.: It was a lot of improvisation. In this piece I use 3 or 4 accords, and I improvise on them.

Considering the complexity of the play, I wonder, how long did take to put it all together?

P.D. : Well, it usually is a long process. It takes one to two years.

A.S.: In this case it was quite short. Normally it takes longer, on this piece we worked just a couple months. Nine or eight months. And we weren't meeting every day. It was more like a week of

working, a month of a break, another meeting. So, it took approximately 6 weeks during those nine months.

It is very surprising. Taking into account, that you are portraying various characters, and playing and singing live, it must be exhausting, since you two are the only actresses on stage.

A.L.: At the beginning it was exhausting, of course. But the more you play, the more flexible you become, and you gain more trust in yourself and in your partner.

P.D.: It was the same for me. Well, in the beginning I thought I needed at least one more hand. It was very stressing to organize all of this stuff, because of how little space I have and how many things there are to arrange. We talked about it earlier. Because now I feel like I have more time for every movement. And when I'm not stressed about this, I just go with the order. One thing leads another one. I don't have to think about it and I just go with the flow.

I remember yesterday, when we talked with Anja, you said that every performance feels a bit different, and that you always expect some kind of a surprise. So I wonder, was there anything special about this one?

A.S.: Well, Pauline injured her knee, it is hard to work with, so we had to change some scenes. Normally the scenes of being pregnant and giving birth happen on the platform, but today she stood on the scene, so we had to adapt to that, but we had already known about it yesterday. We had technical run through yesterday, so Pauline and I had to adapt to it. I think I was very concentrated on lack of understanding from the audience, but I was amazed, that the children were quiet. You could see they were captivated.

You take part in various festivals, but do you often have to deal with language barrier?

A.S.: Well, we have played this piece once in Poland. But apart from that, we perform in German and French, so usually the audience does speak the language we are performing in.

P.D. : Yes, and our audience is mainly adults. This is the first time we performed for such a big group of children. Even though the play is based on a fairy tale, we don't concentrate on one specific group of spectators. For me it is important, that the performance is good for both adults and children. Then you can see it through the eyes of both children and adults, and you can find different meanings in it.

So, how do you like it here in Toruń? Is there any place you wish you could visit, if you had more time?

P.D.: I wish I could spend more time in Toruń, because I arrived yesterday in the afternoon and then we had rehearsals. So I would love to come back and see everything, because I don't know anything about Toruń, and that's a pity, because it is such a beautiful town.

We cannot forget about the director – Ilka Schönbein – for how long have you been working with her?

A.L.: Well, me and Anya, we started working with Ilka in 1999. Last century. Our first show together was *The Old Lady and the Beast*.

P.D.: Not me though. *Ricdin Ricdon* is my first time with Ilka.

Ilka's style is very unusual. But does her way of approaching the puppetry still shock the audience?

A.L.: Well, the word shock is a bit strong, but the atmosphere after her first show *Winter Journey* was quite dense. It was also the first time, that I had seen Ilka's work and I was totally destroyed after the show.

P.D.: This was also the first show of Ilka, that I saw as a spectator. After the performance there was a little gathering, where everybody could get a little champagne. And there was a woman, she came up to Ilka with a glass, looked into her eyes and just poured the champagne on the floor and left. I saw this and I thought to myself: "Okay, I would like to work with this woman".

Ricdin Ricdon is a play inspired by a classical Grimm brothers' tale *Rumpelstiltskin*. The idea of „spinning gold out of straw“ is the main focus of the story, it can be treated as a metaphor of an artist's creative process. According to Ilka Schönbein, every creator resembles the miller's daughter from the tale, who can't escape the room full of straw until she transforms it into gold.

The director of the show, Ilka Schönbein, is a German puppeteer, who travels with her group between festivals from all around Europe (specifically Germany and France). She studied eurhythmic dance in Paris, learning the Rudolf Steiner technique for connecting the spirit and the body. As a solo player, Ilka uses and transforms her whole body to give breath to a character using puppets or a mask. Her art is profoundly influenced by memories of Shoah.