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Ingmar Bergman's 100th Anniversary Celebration in the Czech Republic

Ivona Solčániová

[events]

Project Bergman 100 emerged from the collaboration between several different Czech institutions having a common interest in the work of the principal Swedish director Ingmar Bergman – the Swedish Embassy, the 44th Summer Film School *Uherské Hradiště*, the Academy of Performing Arts, Scandinavian House, the Ingmar Bergman Foundation, Kolowrat Palace, the *Be2Can project* and other organizations engaged with Swedish culture. The project aimed to organize different events dedicated to honoring the professional work and life of Ingmar Bergman. It introduced Bergman as a theatre director, filmmaker, scriptwriter and a respected man who is still influencing artist all over the world.

The very first event took place at the beginning of February with the *SCANDI*¹ film festival. There were five movies presented in a special 'Bergman section', picked by *Be2Can*² dramaturges Aleš Stuchlý and Vít Schmarc. For the opening, *Persona* was chosen as the most sensitive and radical of Bergman's picture. The films were screened in Prague cinema *Světovzor*, *Persona* in 35 mm film copy. Except for *Persona*,

SCANDI introduced pictures such as *Autumn Sonata*, *Scenes from a Marriage*, *Fanny and Alexander*, and *The Silence*.

Even though Ingmar Bergman became synonymous with Swedish filmography, he was also a great theatre enthusiast. In multiple events, Scandinavian House showcased Bergman as a theatre and art director who had worked in several Swedish theaters. Lectures with a discussion 'Unknown Ingmar Bergman' and the showing of a documentary film *Trespassing Bergman* took place in both Brno and Prague.

The presentation of Bergman in Brno started with talks between the theatrologist David Drozd and the essayist Pavel Švanda. Drozd introduced different faces of the Swedish director concentrating mainly on his close relations to theatre whereas Švanda focused on Bergman's reception in the Czech environment. The lecture was followed by a short performance of Henrik Ibsen's *Nora* performed by Kateřina Jebavá and Ondřej Jiráček. The excerpt was a reconstruction of the final scene from Bergman's theatre production, which he directed in 1989. The event took place on 25th May at the central market hall of *Zelný trh*.

One week later the second lecture explained Ingmar Bergman's impact on the artistic world, namely in a documentary film *Trespassing Bergman* screened in the-

1 Film festival *SCANDI* is organized by Film Europe Media Company which repeatedly brings lessons on contemporary Scandinavian and Nordic films to Czech and Slovak cinemas.

2 *Be2Can* falls under the Film Europe Media Company. They focus on presenting award-winning films from the Berlinale, Venice and Cannes festivals to Czech cinemas.

foyer of the Scala cinema.³ The opening lecture of the Nordist Karolína Stehlíková introduced Bergman as an accomplished person, having been active not only in the movie industry and theatres but also in the television and radio.

'The Unknown Bergman' was presented on 6th and 7th June in Prague as a collaboration of Atlas cinema and *DISK* theatre. The screening of *The Trespassing Bergman* documentary was followed by a discussion with the Czech-Swedish director and journalist Hynek Pallas whose professional career had started in the *Ingmar* magazine. Pallas was also one of the collaborators on *Bergman's Video*⁴ documentary. During these two occasions, the Department of Dramatic Theatre of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague staged Bergman's screenplay *Cries and Whispers* directed by Norbert Závodský.

The 100th birthday anniversary of Ingmar Bergman had been celebrated at the 44th *Summer Film School in Uherské Hradiště*.⁵ The Scandinavian movies did not constitute a part of this film festival for the first

time. Nordic filmography was the main topic of last year's summer film school⁶ as well.

Fourteen feature films and three documentaries mapped Ingmar Bergman's work for cinema, TV, and theatre. The movies were selected by Mareet Koskinen, a pedagogue at the Department of Cinema Studies in Stockholm.

Koskinen was one of the most remarkable guests of the 44th *Summer Film School in Uherské Hradiště*. She introduced every film with a short talk about the presented piece. As a keeper of the archives of the director's heritage, Koskinen covered all important motives in Bergman's filmography and continued with her interpretation of the author's work.

Katinka Farago is usually described as Ingmar Bergman's 'right hand'. She worked with Bergman as a screenplay attendant, production manager, and producer for more than thirty years. Together with Mareet Koskinen, she was one of the two major guests of the festival with the closest relation to Ingmar Bergman.

Koskinen met with Farago for a 'short' discussion after Bergman's *Persona* screening, which happens to be Koskinen's favourite movie. On the one hand, they spoke about Bergman as a strict and prac-

3 Jane Magnusson's and Hynek Pallas's documentary from 2013 captures private visits of world-renowned film directors and actors in Bergman's house on *Fårö* Island in the Baltic Sea. The documentary reflects on Bergman's rich career and looks upon the director's private life. Names as Alejandro G. Iñárritu, Claire Denis, John Landis or Michael Haneke go through Bergman's archives, explaining their passion for Bergman's work and the way Bergman inspired their own professional lives.

4 Short Swedish TV series in which world-famous filmmakers such as Woody Allen, Lars von Trier or Ang Lee explain their relationship to Ingmar Bergman.

5 The largest non-competitive film festival which is organized annually in Uherské Hradiště, Czech Republic. The education program consists of many thematic sections, panel discussions, lectures and master classes that are led by important film personalities, directors and other film professionals.

6 Except Bergman's movies, the organizers chose Scandinavian movies as the main part of the festival. The festival included movies reflecting actual political tensions in the Swedish society, silent films from 1911 to 1922 and the (most popular) Scandinavian crime movies. The hosts of 2017 festival were two Swedish directors, Jan Troell and Tarik Saleh. The organisers also invited Jan Holmberg, the historian of the Swedish cinematography and Daniel Bergman, a son of Ingmar Bergman with his pleasant memories on his own childhood. The 43rd film festival had prepared a ground for this year's section called 'Bergman: Retrospective'.

tical filmmaker with serious work attitude. On the other hand, they reminisced about a loving person with a specific sense of humor. The ladies mentioned their first meeting with Ingmar Bergman as follows: Bergman contacted Koskinen shortly after she finished her Ph.D. studies dealing with Bergman's movies.

'Hello! Ingmar Bergman on the phone!' (Koskinen did not believe it in that moment) '...no, it's really me!'⁷ continued Bergman.

After the talk, which lasted for two hours, they come to an agreement. At that time Bergman needed someone who can help him with his large archive materials. Maaret Koskinen became a keeper of Bergman's heritage and one of the co-founders of The Ingmar Bergman Foundation in Stockholm.

Farago's beginnings were not so easy. 'He was not exactly an easygoing man,' mentioned Farago. She started in a menial role of the script supervisor during her teenage years. The first encounter with Ingmar Bergman was in 1954: '... and I met him and I stared! And he stared! And it was thoroughly half a minute! For me it was long time. And then he started to laugh his famous laughter and said "It will be alright!" and it was alright, for thirty years.'⁸ Their first collaboration took place during the work on the movie *Dreams* in 1954.

One of the greatest moments from the interview were her memories of the making of the *Seventh Seal*, for Farago the most remarkable and beautiful movie. She described the final scene of the movie 'the final dance with death' as the greatest improvisation of Berg-

man's work. 'In Bergman's scripts is not a place for improvisation,' says Farago. 'But that evening, when actors left, the cameraman saw a big cloud (in Sweden everything depends on weather). The set crew costumed themselves and started dancing.'⁹

Farago also presented Bergman's great self-taught knowledge of music. 'During filming the *Magic Flute*, the music was on the set every day. Bergman was very responsible when choosing the film music.'¹⁰ Except for the movies, the music collection presents the most numerous part of the director's heritage.

The 44th film festival program was accompanied by a collection of posters for Bergman's movies. The exhibition took place in the Museum of Moravian Slovakia in Uherské Hradiště and was open for the public just for the summer season. Except for the posters by the Czechs and Slovaks, the works of designers from German and Poland were also displayed.

The Czechoslovak artist Milan Grygar used the motives of ticking hours for the Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* movie poster. The surrealist painter Josef Vyletal inspired by Salvador Dalí created the poster for *The Silence*. Action paintings by the Polish designers Jan Mlodozieniec and Andrej Pagowski were used as the posters for movies *The Serpent's Egg* and *Autumn Sonata*. Hans Hillmann's posters showed a distinctive style and visualization of movie content in case of *Wild Strawberries* and *Autumn Sonata*.¹¹ The final part of Bergman's centenary was

7 From the interview with Maaret Koskinen at the 44th Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště.

8 From the interview with Katinka Farago at the 44th Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště.

9 From the interview with Katinka Farago at the 44th Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště.

10 From the interview with Katinka Farago at the 44th Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště.

11 Posters from this collection were used as illustrations in this journal.

devoted to the theatre as an essential part of his life. The *Bergman's Theatre Festival Week*¹² from 15th to 19th October 2018 took place in the Kolowrat Palace in Prague and was open to the wide public. Most of the presented talks dealt with multiple topics connected to Bergman: his figure as a film and theatre director, author and essayist. A large part focused on Bergman's scripts and translations.

The topic which opened the theatre festival was Ingmar Bergman's contribution to literature. Zbyněk Černík presented his professional relationship to Bergman as a translator and focused on differences between Bergman's autobiographical and fictional texts and their specific language. He also introduced the obstacles to interpretations of Bergman's texts in foreign languages. Moreover, he recalled his unsuccessful encounter with Ingmar Bergman on *Fårö*. The biggest part of Černík's career is dedicated to translations of Bergman's scripts into the Czech language. The presentation ended with the launch of Černík's translations of four Bergman's stories published under the title *Hodina Vlků* (Hour of the Wolf).

As an honored guest, the festival welcomed Jan Holmberg, the director of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation¹³ in Stockholm. Jan Holmberg pointed out the rel-

evance of the phonetic qualities of Bergman's work. He compared the director to a poet with excellent writing skills. He then turned to issues of Bergman's translation into foreign languages and focused on how this transformation often loses the true meaning of Bergman's original texts.¹⁴

The theatrologist and representative of the Scandinavian House, Karolína Stehlíková, perceived Bergman primarily as a theatre person and explained his theatre experience. She demonstrated Bergman's directing style on two recordings from the productions directed by Ingmar Bergman: *Nora* by Henrik Ibsen and Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

The Department of Dramatic Arts at The Academy of Performing Arts in Prague in cooperation with Kolowrat Theatre introduced two performances based on Ingmar Bergman's film scripts. The first premiere of the festival took place on Monday 15th October; it was *Summer with Monica* directed by Aminata Keita. The second production of Bergman's script was *From the Life of the Marionettes* and had been directed by Štěpán Pácl.

The ten-hour long non-stop reading introduced theatre plays, stories, and memories written by Ingmar Bergman. The reading was covered by ČRo Vltava radio-station with a live broadcast of Bergman's *Saraband* directed by Štěpán Pácl. The festival finished with the previously mentioned screening of Jane Magnusson's and Hynek Pallas's documentary *Trespassing Bergman*.

12 Theatre festival taking place in Prague with topics examining Bergman's professional and private life. Kolowrat-Krakovský, the oldest of Bohemian noble families, was one of the supporters of *The Bergman's Theatre Festival*. They rented areas of Kolowrat Palace for lectures and a loft-theatre for two drama performances.

13 The foundation administers archive property of Ingmar Bergman and manages copyrights to all Bergman's works. Source: <http://www.ingmarbergman.se/en/ingmar-bergman-foundation>.

14 The whole lecture of Jan Holmberg is included in this journal.

Several smaller events accompanied *Project Bergman 100*. Prague Aero cinema was the first to introduce posters of Bergman's movies at the beginning of 2018.¹⁵ Regarding Bergman as a film director, the gardens of the Embassy of Sweden in Prague became an improvised cinema for three summer evenings. The screening of *Bergman's Smiles of a Summer Nights* was a personal choice of the Swedish ambassador in Prague Viktoria Li. The embassy also hosted open-air screenings of *The Summer with Monica*, *Wild Strawberries* and *The Virgin Spring*.

Ingmar Bergman, the filmmaker, won several awards, including the *Palme d'Or* prizes at the *Cannes Film Festival*. Nine of his films were nominated for the *Academy Award* for the best foreign film. To honor these movies, *Be2Can* in collaboration with Prague cinemas, introduced a selection of Bergman's nominated pieces. Their repertoire contained, for example, *Fanny and Alexander*, *Cries and Whispers*, *Wild Strawberries*, *Brink of Life* and *Through a Glass Darkly*.

Both Czech Radio and Czech Television joined the celebrations with

several screenings of the core of Bergman's work. The *Vltava* Radio introduced Bergman's professional and personal work with the collection of short stories for two actors, while the *ČT Art* television presented a dance documentary entitled *Ingmar Bergman through the Choreographer's Eye* directed by Fredrik Stattin.

The *Bergman 100* project resumed with the festival *Das Filmfest 2018* at the end of October with the screening of Margarethe von Trotta documentary *Searching for Ingmar Bergman*.

Bergman is still one of the most influential and accomplished filmmakers in the world which has been proved by many events in the Czech Republic. Bergman's 100th birthday anniversary brought together historians, performers, coworkers and other experts in the Scandinavian culture, who exchanged their knowledge and attitude to this filmmaker. Another significant benefit of this networking action was bringing Bergman's assets and message to the youth, students and the broader public so the cultural heritage of Ingmar Bergman can stay topical.

¹⁵ The posters were also presented during the 44th *Summer Film School Uherské Hradiště* and a selection is included in the appendix of this issue.