

„Using this new technique is divine“

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An interview by Edda Goernert

Today I meet the actress Silvia de Leonardis, who was born in Munich and who is well-known from the TV series Die Rosenheim-Cops, SOKO 5113, Tatort und München 7 to talk with her about acting and her current shortfilm.

What does distinguish a good actor or actress for you?

For me, I would say if he or she can dive into the situation that deep, that body, soul and mind imagine the situation as a true event, so that the instinct comes alive and they can act “out of themselves”.

Who is your favorite actor/actress?

Meryl Streep. Because in every single of her movies you can stop the DVD in every second and you can see and feel exactly, what she is thinking and feeling.

Did you already wanted to be an actress, when you were a little girl?

Yes, ever since I can remember. But I had a very authoritarian Dad from Southitaly and I didn't want to confront him with

my desire (laughing).

Do you think, that all people need acting training to be a good actor/actress?

Yes, I think so. I don't really believe that some hollywoodstars are kind of a "nature talent" and that they never had a single lesson. Maybe he or she weren't attend an acting school – but everyone is having private coachings.

Is a great actor/actress great in every role or does even the best actor/actress have limits in acting?

I had to bite the bullet that you cannot play every role. As a young actress, I thought of course, that I could act every role. But the truth is: In some roles, you are shiny– and in some, you just don't.

Therefore there are some roles that you are ashamed of?

"Being ashamed" is not the right term. In fact, I was crossing with myself, when I couldn't do something the way I wanted it to be, when my body was blocked or when the technique was not working or elaborated enough. And then I went home and I improved it till it worked out. Of course, the next role was waiting with the next challenge (laughing). With age, I found a good way to look at my work as a development process. Today, it's totally normal for me to look at my older work and to say "You did your best at that time".

Which role was your favorite one till today?

Actually I have two. The one is Mrs. Edeltraud Gerber in "Die Rosenheim Cops" (Episode "Auf den Hund gekommen") and Mrs. Kowalska in "München 7 – Bombenhochzeit".

What did characterize those roles?

First I really didn't like them. When I saw me as Mrs. Kowalska for the first time, I was shocked und thinking "Silvia! What did you do there?!" That was also the time, when I was changing my acting technique to Meisner, and I was still fighting with the new technique. Anyway, I found the woman terrible. The way she was talking, how "foolish" she was (laughing)... I really needed some time till I was able to see "Hey, you did a good job – this woman has nothing to do with you". It was the same, even if not that extreme, with Mrs. Gerber. I was just thinking "What a silly, new-rich chick!"

Would a role in a soap like „Berlin – Tag und Nacht“ tempt you?

No. This soap is mainly created with amateur actors and actresses and has nothing to do with what I understand as acting and "Live truthfully under the given imaginary circumstances". If an amateur actor would say to me "I love you" in a totally unemotional and untrue way, I wouldn't be able to sink into his arms and to whisper "I love you too". Everything in me would stop me from doing that. Everyone would see that and would be thinking "Is that woman crazy?!" And I don't want that. I want the spectator to plunge into another world.

What role out of a Hollywood Movie would you have loved to act?

Hmmm that's difficult – thousands! (laughing) „Room“ the role of Joy, Brie Larson acted phenomenal. I also love the role of Iris Simpkins in „The Holiday“, Kate Winslet acted magnificent. And what figure appeals to me incredibly is the role of Lady of „Orpheus descending“.

And why?

The part of Joy is physically and mentally incredibly exhausting. I would love to go to my limits and further. The part of Iris has so much depth and heart in it, it would warm up my heart to play it. And the role of Lady is very complex and multilayered.

In your latest shortfilm „Kaufkrank“ you play the part of a violent mother, who has a buying disease. How was that for you?

The buying disease was the fewest work.. There are techniques, that actors use in Los Angeles – for example to go shopping in your favorite shops without money – that help you to internalize shopping frenzy and the feelings that are related. My biggest problem was „beating“ the child. We started the rehearsals and I realized my stomach started to cramp up and I was blocked everytime when we came to the point where I should have released my unbridled fury to be able to punch the child. I started and then I only marked the scene „...let's do it when we're ready“ and we did more or less a cold round. No one noticed that, but I always saw the innocent, big, curious and trusting eyes of my young and amazing, 8 years old acting colleague Cecilia Schmidt... In my distress I called my acting coach Alex Taylor with whom I was working this role and asked for help. For him it was a cinch to show me a way how I can dive in. And so I played it. The crew on set was affected most of the time, when we shooted the awful and violent mother/child scenes. And Cecilia was the only one who was lying on

the floor laughing most of the time...

Why did you assume the part of Brigitte Schulte in Kaufkrank?

Because the meaning and liability of art is to call attention to grievances. I personally reject violence completely – above all against children. I do not say I wouldn't defend myself, if somebody attacked me. I would sure defend myself with all my strength – but even that, because I reject violence. To play this role, I had to understand, what brings a woman in such a distress that her only exit is beating a child. That was challenging me a lot but I love challenges. For me it was very important not to show Brigitte only as an evil mother – I wanted to create a human being, who is weak and therefore wields power.

What roles or experiences are you missing in your life as an actress?

Ooooooh (laughing) I still wanna gain so many experiences. I feel like just being born as an actress. Using this new technique is divine. And in February 2016 I was finally in Los Angeles, for the first time in my life – and, into the bargain, at the best acting school and I really was worried – no terrified! to find out that I'm simply not good enough. But the opposite happened: I got beautiful compliments, felt home und strong. When I came back to Germany I have internalized the sentence „There is nothing you can get out of acting – you've got to give!“ and that made me ready, powerful and free.

Silvia de Leonardis passed classical acting school in Munich, Constance and Zurich. Among others, she played at the municipal theatre in Constance and in the Theater an der Grenze in Kreuzlingen/Swiss. During her theatre time she participated in a workshop for film acting (camera acting workshop) of the film and stunt production company Action Concept, in which she was able to get a small part in the TV series Der Clown. From then on, appearances in several episodes of Tatort followed, as well as a small part in Die Manns and Küstenwache, until she was discovered for comical roles. She especially succeeded in the presentation of resolute drama queens, and therefore got parts in the motion picture Großglocknerliebe, as well as in the comedy Die Rosenheim-Cops. From 1999 until 2006 de Leonardis also worked as a film coach on Set with the actor Bobby Brederlow, who was born with Down's syndrome, along with other actors. Both of them were a successful team for five years in many productions. In 2005 she worked for the telenovela Lotta in Love as a film coach for Janin Reinhardt. Since 1999 de Leonardis also works as a private acting coach and teaches in her own small private acting classes. de Leonardis started to work with Alex Cole Taylor, who in 2015 was certified for the 5th time as best acting school and acting teacher of Los Angeles and who is the successor of the Sanford Meisner school. Since 2015, they frequently offer acting workshops in Munich. De Leonardis lives in Munich, is married and has a daughter.

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