



**European Children's
Film Association**

Association Européenne du Cinéma
pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse

interviews

Binti

Fight Girl

Tangerine Tree

Monkey

KIDS Regio Forum

Journal

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Bringing different colours to the screen

“Children’s film is not an island,” Nicola Jones (Golden Sparrow) stated in an interview (see page 16). Obsessed by our own box office numbers, European funding applications and ECFA jury invitations, we should not forget that the world of children’s film is part of a bigger film industry and part of a society who’s trends and tendencies we can’t (and don’t want to) escape from.

That is why great importance should be given to the upcoming KIDS Regio Forum, where current policies in children’s film and media will be discussed and where the sector will join forces, searching for ways to implement societal tendencies like co-creation and lifelong learning in our work. Find the interview with two leading ladies behind this exclusive networking event in this ECFA Journal.

We’re happy to meet these tendencies also on the level of film content – we’ve never seen so many children’s films about (gender) identity, we’ve never welcomed so many female heroines and we’ve never seen so much diversity on screen as we’re seeing nowadays. This is reflected in the first ECFA

Award nominations of the year, in films like BINTI, FIGHT GIRL and I USED TO LIKE THE SEA.

This diversity is also reflected in the pages of this Journal, exposing you to the widest spectrum of what children & youth film can offer, through not only interviews with EFA Award winner FIGHT GIRL and ECFA and recent EFA Award nominees, but also with one of Europe’s most qualified children’s documentary producers. You can read about a wonderful Albanese treasure in archive films (the work of Xhanfise Keko) or about unique participative projects. *“As a festival programmer, it was never as easy as today to bring different colours to the screen,”* was another statement from Nicola Jones.

Another interesting event to look forward to is the ECFA Conference at the Schlingel Festival (7 & 8 October) where new and upcoming ways for film distribution and the role that festivals can play in the perception of children’s films will be discussed. We’re hoping to meet you all there!

—
Gert Hermans

Frederike Migom about BINTI

"A sheet of paper that says you don't exist."

"There is no place to call home," says Binti, the main character in Frederike Migom's feature film debut. Binti and her father have no place to feel at home. Certainly not in the squat, from which they have to flee for the police, and not in Belgium, where they have been living for years without a residence permit. Even though on her YouTube vlog Binti has plenty of followers, officially - on paper - she doesn't even exist.

Binti's vlogs are fun intermezzos, offering the audience some extra room to breathe in a dynamic film, an explosion of energy and colours. Just like the title character, who, together with her father, seeks shelter in the house of Elias, a somewhat introverted boy of her age. From then on, a plan ripens in Binti's head: if she can link her father to Elias' mother, all their problems would be solved at once.

The film starts in a squat right in the city centre. An unknown, parallel world for most of us.

Frederike Migom: I'd prefer to call it 'a communal house'. Many squats nowadays are well-organised. Like the one where we filmed, where a non-profit organisation was offering housing facilities to those who can't afford a proper roof over their heads in an overcrowded and expensive city. Unfortunately, the building now has been claimed back by the owners, who are planning to fill it with offices or apartments.

Some people live there in constant fear.

Migom: Not only sans papiers do live there, not everyone was there illegally. In reality, police raids only seldom take place. Nevertheless inhabitants are constantly moving from one place to another because they cannot find a permanent home.

When Elias asks Binti's father Jovial why he left Congo, he replies: „Sometimes you can only go away.“ Sounds rather indifferent, doesn't it?



Director Frederike Migom © Faye Wolfs

Migom: I deliberately didn't want to specify his answer. I assume that everyone who is willing to endure those horrors, will have a good reason for it. I don't want the audience to compare „he has the right to flee and he doesn't.“ I have no answer as to why so many people are fleeing, but I do know that there are plenty of reasons for people to pursue a better life elsewhere.

After their escape, Binti and Jovial end up in a completely different world with Elias and his mother Christine. She is a fashion designer, surrounded by colours and clothes.

Migom: The squat was a cosy and colourful place too, which was my deliberate choice. Houses are usually not the most rewarding film locations. But the overload of colours and attributes was fun. We even play around with those colours: Binti and Christine are always colourful. Elias and Jovial are more khaki or green... They refer to nature, while Binti and Christine have a more urban appeal.

Elias' „Save the Okapi“ club is a hopeless one-man battle to fight. Why okapis?

Migom: There is so much to tell about those animals. Their existence is



threatened by rebels, poachers, climatological and political factors. The story about how okapis came to Belgium, which is the central breeding ground for all okapis in captivity, refers to our colonial history and to Jovial's fate. These mysterious animals only live in the Ituri rainforest. Congo is therefore not only a distant and dangerous country, but also a beautiful place full of nature, culture, music... and okapis.

One of the movie's assets are Binti's vlog posts. They are super fun and look totally credible.

Migom: I watched a lot on YouTube and studied different styles, on which our own vlogs are based. We recorded them with an iPhone, directly on the spot. That was great fun.

Despite the serious theme, these vlogs contribute to the feel good tone of the film.

Migom: The film focuses primarily on people: who are they, what do they do? People with no official documents are often cheerful, warm personalities. And of course there is the music. I wanted a soundtrack that was 100% 2018, to which Congolese elements were added. Everything had to merge into one, exactly what Le Motel does, in one of his songs he uses samples of singing pygmies, who live in the Ituri rainforest, just like the okapis. As if it was destined to be! That was the sound pattern that I was looking for with BINTI.

The incredibly lively face of Bebel

Tshiani (Binti) and her boundless energy determine the rhythm of the film. How did you direct such a bulb of energy?

Migom: Bebel is like a bright ray of sunshine and therefore perfect for this role. She acts very intuitively, while Mo Bakker (Elias) plays more thoughtfully. Keeping Bebel's energy level under control was a challenge. Days were heavy, the young actors got tired, but then we went outside to shout and roar together, and that is how the energy came back.

Something is going on between those two actors. They totally shine on the screen.

Migom: I can't play the typical strict director. It always had to be as much fun as possible for the kids. I wanted us to enjoy ourselves and work together on something beautiful. If the atmosphere on the set sometimes became a bit tense, I dared to ask them to go the extra mile. If I needed them for the full 100%, they were there, especially for me. That was so nice! I think they felt a close involvement with our joint project. Bebel is very young and had - unlike Mo - no experience at all. But we always were able to drag each other through our most

difficult moments.

Also in real life Bebel and Baloji are father and daughter.

Migom: That was such a wonderful gift. We casted around 60 girls for the role and Bebel was the best. With the children I rehearsed for a few days: trying out scenes, capturing an atmosphere... Each director has his own method, but I find rehearsing very useful. I have a background in theatre and I like to do my improvising beforehand, so that you are well prepared when arriving on the set. With our budget, there was little room for improvisation.

All your characters are strong human beings.

Migom: I like strong characters, as long as they are not too perfect. Binti is the heroine, but she is also a girl of flesh and blood with her weak sides. Yet, in this film it is the kids who come up with solutions, while the parents keep muddling through.

BINTI was shot during a terribly hot summer. Did you suffer from the heat?

Migom: I wanted a summery, sunny film, but the gods took my prayer a



bit too literally. It was superhot, with a lot of sweating going on. We filmed scenes with 50 people in a small plane without air conditioning. The make-up artists worked overtime dabbing the sweat. There were dance scenes for which the children had to jump around in costumes at 35 °. To do 20 takes under such circumstances, you have to be brave. The production team went to buy ice creams for the extras.

How realistic is the procedure you describe in those closing scenes, that has to do with arrest, deportation...?

Migom: I did a lot of research because I absolutely wanted it to be correct. There is no standard procedure; there are too many legal administrative details and exceptions. The procedure as I show it is quite extreme, but perfectly possible. Everything that happens in the film has already happened in reality. Despite the cheerful, romantic tone, we did not want to undermine the seriousness of the case. In the course of this project many people have asked me to re-think that ending. They thought it didn't sound credible. But I was 100% convinced and didn't give in. Now I'm proud of that.



Binti makes an impressive final statement: „I do exist“, she says explicitly.

Migom: She addresses the audience directly through her vlog channel. Anyone can „be someone“ on YouTube. Even though there is a sheet of paper that says: you do not exist, or at least not in this country. There, Binti claims her place in our society, and she has the right to claim it.

–
Gert Hermans

Director Johan Timmers about EFA Award winner FIGHT GIRL

The smell of sweat and bruises

While her parents are caught up in a divorce, the introverted Bo moves with her mother to an Amsterdam suburb. A girl next door introduces her to a kickboxing club and Bo turns out to be a natural talent. But Bo must learn to control herself, because you should only fight when you're in the ring.

For FIGHT GIRL, it seems like director Johan Timmers knew exactly how he wanted to tell this story. With a lot of passion and inspiration, but also with a lot of anger. FIGHT GIRL shows anger in all forms and variations, among young people and adults, because everyone is angry in their own way.

Johan Timmers: Bo's anger should not repel the audience. That is why several softer moments, such as the sweet scenes with her brother, show us how vulnerable she is. The film starts with the image of Bo talking to her stick insects... This girl is still a child!

By the way, how did those stick in-

sects end up in the story?

Timmers: We had ordered them long in advance. They needed time to grow, otherwise you wouldn't even notice them on the screen. They are just a minor element of the story, but I like them better than yet another dog or cat.

In that way we get a better understanding of Bo's anger.

Timmers: The scene in which we see Bo in the ridge of the gym hall is a key moment. When we hear her 'monologue interieur', we come closer to her, we sympathise and we understand why she is angry. When she is practicing kickboxing and she doesn't get the hang of it immediately, that makes her furious - *"I must succeed!"*. When kickboxing, that inner struggle must be in balance, otherwise you get smacked in the head. The better she can control her anger, the better her boxing is.

You don't spur the audience to hit each other's faces, but in the film



that is what they do all the time.

Timmers: Bo's story is very simple: a girl suffers from her parents' divorce and fights her way through it. That's all. If she wins the competition, she has conquered herself and she masters the situation. She has grown up to become strong and autonomous. Kickboxing is such a beautiful sport!

Is it really?

Timmers: I started kickboxing myself now and it is a very difficult and technical sport. In this film, 14-year-old girls are fighting at top level. Noa Farin (in the role of Joy) is unbelieva-

ble, she would knock us both out in the blink of an eye. Main actress Aiko Beemsterboer trained three times a week for four months. The immense power of kickboxing radiates throughout the entire film and adds an extra dimension. It is a youth film, but the tone is tough, raw and energetic.

There is a lot of bruises involved

Timmers: No, it all looks spectacular, but the boxers are well protected. Competitions are fought with head-caps on, but then you couldn't recognise the characters, so we dropped those. Aiko had a bruise here and



there, but every fight was strictly choreographed by a coach, punch by punch and kick by kick. And all credits to our editor Philippe Ravoet, who contributed substantially to this film, especially to the final fight, that he entirely puzzled together.

The atmosphere in the boxing club feels authentic. You can almost smell the odour of sweat.

Timmers: We built that set from scratch in an old factory. Kickboxing sometimes has an aggressive connotation, but I wanted a location that was clear and bright. Despite that smell of sweat, it is a magical place where it is nice to box. Of course all details in colour and lighting were decided in advance.

The scenes in and outside the box-

ing club seem to take place in two different worlds.

Timmers: You can depict suburban life in a gloomy way, as Ken Loach does so well. But I didn't want cliché images of poor, gray flats. We opted for stylised places, such as the geometric high-risers and the intimidating courtroom. Outside the boxing school it is always cold and dark, inside it is warm. There we shot with a handheld camera, moving closer to the characters.

The parents usually stay out of sight.

Timmers: I chose to maintain Bo's perspective. That's why I literally kept the parents at a distance. This is not their story. You realise Bo is the most mature character, while her parents fight out their childish arguments in the background. Quarrelling in front of

your children is totally unacceptable. The only adult who manages to play a meaningful role in the children's lives is the trainer.

What about the language? Is that stylised too or is it real street talk?

Timmers: The actresses have adjusted the dialogues to their own liking. But scriptwriter Barbara Jurgens has two teenage daughters, she knows the jargon of youth in and out.

You make a statement by choosing female protagonists in a boxing film. In the ring boys and girls are on an equal terms.

Timmers: We rehearsed the boxing scenes with a lot of extras, members of various boxing clubs, and I immediately noticed how physically they acted with each other. They already came

to hug me after the first rehearsal. I wanted to hold on to the feeling that everyone was very easy with his body and with each other. In reality, boys and girls rarely fight each other, but I enjoyed showing how some girls just knock down the boys. This is a film about girl power.

Thanks to actress Aiko Beemsterboer.

Timmers: She is a phenomenal talent. We had 25 shooting days and Aiko is in just about every shot. She is a fantastic fun and smart girl. She came up with suggestions and we discussed everything together... It was a very true and special collaboration.

—
Gert Hermans



199 LITTLE HEROES – ZOZOLOI FROM MONGOLIA

"I'm a shy Tuvan girl, I cannot speak well, I don't speak much." Nevertheless Zoooloi, a 12-year-old Mongolian girl, gives us an insight into her exceptional life in the Altai Mountains and her long way to school. Her parents are living a nomadic life at 3,400 meters above sea-level – it's like entering another century: no electricity or running water. As Zoooloi has no brother, she is the one to undertake all demanding, and sometimes dangerous, tasks in the household and on the animal farm.

Zoooloi herself does not want to become a shepherd. Her dream is to become a teacher. That's why she goes to school, studies hard and only goes back to the settlement for the holidays. The neighbour's car enables her, her sister and up to 13 other children to travel the 120 km distance to school. After a six-to-seven hour journey they arrive in Tsengel, where

Zoooloi stays with her grandmother.

Although the sisters like the nomadic life in the mountains with their parents, they enjoy the advantages of living in a village with many other kids, their friends, electricity and internet.

A wide and barren countryside, no paved roads, no houses, only a small settlement of yurts. The film gives an impression of the nomads' harsh and demanding life and the way they're dependent upon the nature that surrounds them, the climate and the animals. Zoooloi is quite aware of these coherences. She reflects about the climate change that makes it harder to survive: *"In winter it snows a lot and in summer the sun burns intensely. Then there is a drought in summer and no feed in winter. If things continue like this, our animals will die and there will be no nomads anymore."*

The film is part of the worldwide film series 199 LITTLE HEROES, a project under the patronage of Germany's UNESCO-Commission. The project



compiles documentaries portraying children in each country of the world on their way to school. Sigrid Klausmann-Sittler and her husband Walter Sittler launched the first season in 2014, producing 23 short films, filmed on five different continents. The full-length movie NOT WITHOUT US has been created out of 16 short episodes (ZOZOLOI FROM MONGOLIA was one of them) and has enjoyed tremendous success at film festivals around the world. Until now, it is still a 'work-in-progress' with a large community of "hero friends" and an interactive internet platform (www.199kleinehelden.org).

In 2018 the film 199 LITTLE HEROES - ZOZOLOI FROM MONGOLIA was

programmed in the ECFA Doc competition at the doxs! festival in Duisburg, Germany.

Director: Sigrid Klausmann-Sittler; Producers: Walter Sittler, Gerhard Schmidt; Cinematographer: Thorsten B. Harms; Production & Distribution: Gemini Film & Library, Schneeganz Productions. Germany, 13', 2018.

The Doxspot column is published with the help of the doxs! festival for children & youth documentaries (Duisburg, Germany), www.do-xs.de.



Youth documentary producers Tangerine Tree

Nienke Korthof & Willem Baptist: “A substantial part of the production budget was spent on fines”



BIKELIFE

Nienke Korthof and Willem Baptist are the driving force behind Dutch production company Tangerine Tree, experts in the field of youth documentaries. This year they stood at the Berlinale with their short #BULLYING STORY and with BIKELIFE a new high-light was added to their catalogue. On the occasion of receiving the ECFA Doc Award 2019 in Berlin for LENNO & THE ANGELFISH, Baptist, on stage, described their company as “hardcore children’s documentary producer”.

Willem Baptist: We are up to our ears in youth documentaries. Since the launch of Tangerine Tree, we’ve made 14 of them, and all of them “have balls”. We treat youth documentaries with as much love and regards as films for adults, but we also set the same standards. We do not make films for children, we make cinema for a different target group, and coincidentally that turns out to be children. Our most important question is: Is this a strong and honest film? Does it touch

me? On our website is a quote: “*Pain is temporary, film is forever*”. A filmmaker must dare to suffer and seek for discomfort. And of course we ask ourselves which ethical limits we should respect.

LENNO seems like the perfect example of all the elements you just summed up.

Baptist: Director Shamira Raphaëla deliberately strived for that rawness and did not want to sugarcoat the situation. In this film we have explored the limits of what could and could not be done. Boundaries can be pushed both on a cinematographic and ethical levels. How to deal with a child in a precarious situation? What are our responsibilities? For the rest of his life this child must live with a documentary for which he himself is not responsible.

All your protagonists are kids that are exceptional, but in an unexceptional way. Children you should look for, as they don’t advertise themselves.

Nienke Korthof: These are not the kind of children that stand out.

Baptist: We are based in Rotterdam, a straightforward working-class city. We sometimes stir things up and love to be a bit defiant. When I started making youth documentaries, I had nothing to do with children, and you don’t even have to. If a submitted project starts like “*I myself am a mother of four...*” we immediately lose interest. We’re not looking for mothers. Our starting point is never patronising or pathetic.

How do you recognise a good story?

Baptist: That has to do with urgency and with a director’s vision. You can analyse a good story academically: is there enough conflict, redemption, surprise? But our question for the director is: Why do you want to make this film? Is there a connection with your own childhood? Do you want to prove or tell something through this child? A few years ago we produced SKATEKEET. Director Edward Cook migrated from Iceland via the US to the Netherlands and found a home in the



#BULLYINGSTORY

skaters subculture. With that experience in his backpack, he made a film about a girl who doubts whether she belongs with the boys or with the girls and finds a safe haven among those skaters. Edward, who knew this world through and through, was perfectly placed to make this film, as he could dig beyond the superficial level.

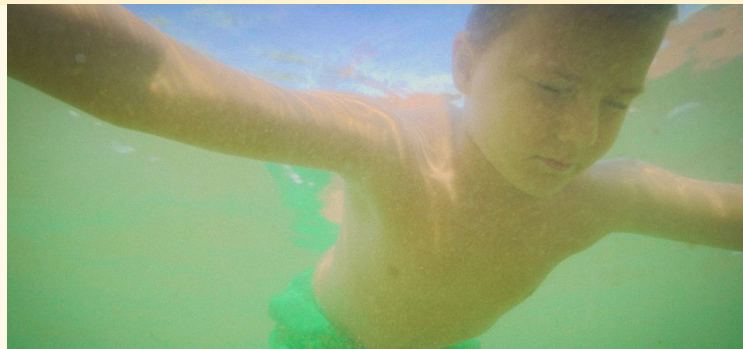
The same goes for LENNO & THE ANGELFISH.

Baptist: Shamira knows that tough world, families on the edge of a criminal lifestyle. That is why she can be more than just a 'peeping Tom'. People living under such conditions develop a special sense, a radar for who is sincere or not. They immediately recognise a bourgeois filmmaker from Amsterdam, to whom they would

never expose themselves. But if you speak their language and understand their world, they will open up much more easily.

There is a credo for fiction film directors: the trauma's from your own childhood will not necessarily provide a good story. But for a documentary maker it helps to be familiar with the subject.

Baptist: We are not after directors making films for therapeutic reasons. But your own background sometimes allows you a certain focus, an angle. As a child I was a scaredy-cat. Later, I started looking for stories about children who are not anxious, who are in control of their fears. That is how I came across this boy who wanted to become a motocross champion. Al-



LENNO & THE ANGELFISH

though both his parents were very ill, he was trying to defuse death. Thanks to my own experience, I'M NEVER AFRAID got a certain sincerity.

BIKELIFE is another diamond in the rough. The film tells about Jose's dream to ride with a gang of stunt cyclers, sweeping across the city on pimped bicycles. Jose doesn't master all the stunts, but keeps on practicing. Though, growing up turns out to be a lot more difficult than cycling and both come with a few bumps and bruises.

Baptist: Director René van Zundert wanted to make a film about a child that already had some contact with the law, and who is now at a junction in his life: do I follow the path towards crime or do I choose another direc-

tion? Jose had some conflicts with the police and is now facing this crucial choice.

Korthof: You are only legally punishable from the age of 14. Isn't it typical for a boy like Jose that he got arrested on the night of his 14th birthday? *"For riding a bike, that wasn't fair"* he explains. René got to know the bike-life scene through him. These days, every major city has such a scene.

What exactly is bikelife?

Baptist: Groups of youngsters riding out on very peculiar bicycles. The police regard them as a kind of motorcycle gangs. They are not, although there's often a few boys with a criminal background riding with them. It looks great on camera: dark-skinned boys wearing golden necklaces hav-

ing illegal ride-outs through the city. They do their stunt-riding in the middle of the road, which easily attracts police attention.

How difficult was it to capture that bikelife scene on film?

Korthof: René only brought along a cameraman, to keep the crew as small as possible. That way they could meet with the gang every day without a perfect shooting plan. They had to be flexible, because always something was going on with those boys – setting appointments was not something they agreed on easily. So we were freewheeling. The biggest problem was: those guys go terribly fast! And you can't follow them with a car. We bought two scooters, but then they went everywhere where scooters were not allowed. A substantial part of the production budget was spent on fines.

Now what's next?

Baptist: It is not the best moment to tell you, but... we are planning to decrease our efforts in youth film production. We must be more selective. Youth documentaries are often made by young directors. We need to invest a lot of extra energy in their projects, and the financial reward is limited. That balance just isn't fair.

Korthof: But since we took this decision, we already launched five new titles, so...

Are you maybe a bit saturated?

Baptist: About 50% of our projects comes from the Kids & Docs workshops and the Human Rights TV series, and I got a bit bored with the format. In the Netherlands the formula has become very fixed; give me three random words and I can on the spot come up with a film plan. When I did the Kids & Docs workshop in 2009, we felt like we were going to change the world with our films. That urge now seems to have disappeared, it all got institutionalised. Of course we are spoiled: so many good documentaries have been produced in the Netherlands. Now there is a new batch of films that are very well made, all fitting nicely in the same box to meet the broadcasters' expectations. When we propose a plan that looks a bit different, we see how broadcasters are immediately trying to mold it nicely: we need more conflict, more recognisable elements etc.

Which are exactly the kind of expectations you're trying to avoid.

Korthof: We also produce sweet and tender films, but there is a need for



LITTLE FIRE

something fresh. We're counting on an audience that wants something different than yet another film about *"a girl dreaming about having her own riding horse"*. Nevertheless LITTLE FIRE for example is a very moving film about a moving subject: an autistic boy getting a biker buddy.

Baptist: But even in that film we encouraged the director not to show only the sweet sides. He also shows how the protagonist Noël clumsily stumbles into a creek. For such a short documentary, the director goes on the road together with a child for about six days.

But first you have a feature young audience documentary in the making!

Korthof: Doc Junior is a new trajectory supported by the Dutch Film Fund,

in which two feature documentaries will be developed. Shamira Raphaëla is going to develop one with us, about a flat in Rotterdam. Soon we'll know whether the project will receive further funding.

You work together as a couple. How do you manage?

Korthof: We are used to it. Running a household is more challenging than producing a film! People often suppose we're spending all our days together, while in reality we hardly see each other. But together we know exactly what we do want and what we don't want to do.

–
Gert Hermans

More info: www.tangerinetree.nl

Arild Tryggestad and Tiril Marie Høistad Berger about LOS BANDO

“If needed, I can scream very loud”

A lot has happened since LOS BANDO got exclusive attention in the September edition of the ECFA Journal. After a triumphant march that lasted an entire summer and autumn, now the film was nominated for the prestigious EFA Award. On the occasion of the JEF Festival, a remarkable LOS BANDO delegation was welcomed in Antwerp. Arild Tryggestad is screenwriter and editor, but most attention went to actress Tiril Marie Høistad Berger. In the role of little cellist Thilda, she was one of last year's most intriguing film characters. Together they talk about their love for road movies, cellos and good rock music.

When the audience comes out of the screening they might feel the urge to do two things: steal a car to start cruising the country, or buy a guitar and start playing.

Which option would you recommend?

Arild Tryggestad: I'd probably suggest you to 'play guitar' and see if that works out. If not, you can still steal a car.

These options were already included in the film's original dilemma: making a band movie or a road movie. You wanted to do a road movie.

Tryggestad: Me and Christian had an 'idea meeting' about making another fresh, nice young audience film. Christian as a young guy played in a band that also participated in this band contest "Norwegian championship of rock" and I always loved road movies. Mixing both together, we ended up with a band on a trip to the far North.

Norway's wild, breathtaking landscapes seem like a perfect location for a road movie.

Tryggestad: It's a long, narrow country with a lot of different landscapes. For some places it takes days to drive there. Pure road movie material! We drove from South to North - like the scripts says - filming the scenes with the actors. Starting from the Lillehammer woodlands, we passed the coast, the mountains, and then finally onto the snow in Tromsø. Then director Christian Lo and DoP Bjørn Bratberg drove all the way back, filming the



exterior shots during a three day trip. They made a 'road movie in reverse' from which we used the footage.

How would you define LOS BANDO as a road movie?

Tryggestad: People travelling from one place to another and it is not about the journey as such, but there has to be some personal development of the characters as well. They have their struggles that need to be solved 'on the way'. The challenge is: their problems are situated in their daily life at home, but still have to be sorted while being on the road.

Any classic road movies that in-

spired you for LOS BANDO?

Tryggestad: I do have some favourites. LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE profoundly inspired us in terms of structure. Just like LOS BANDO, this is a true ensemble movie. THELMA & LOUISE is simply fantastic. And I would consider SIDEWAYS a road movie as well, even if these two friends keep on driving in circles through California without ever reaching their final destination.

Tiril, you'll be remembered as 'the girl with the cello'.

Tiril Marie Høistad Berger: It's a cool instrument. I had an instructor teaching me how to hold the bow correctly and I had to practice eight times per

week. I learned to play some songs. But for the film I only had to make the right movements, they hired a professional to play the songs. It's my hand holding the cello, but the sound is hers.

How important is music to you?

Berger: Super important! I sing every single hour of every single day, and I love it.

Tryggestad: Rock music was a big inspiration for the movie. We have some cool Scandinavian bands on the soundtrack, even a couple of my personal favourites, and I was so happy they all agreed.

Other music had to be written especially for the film. Quite some pressure for the composer?

Tryggestad: Eirik Myhr wrote the score and the songs for the band, he made arrangements for the cover songs, and then had to make sure everything came together, sounding like one entity.

But the best musical scene comes from you, Tiril! Where did that roaring, grunting scream come from?

Berger: That's me. I have a very deep and strong voice. If needed, I can scream very loud.



Tiril Marie Hoistad Berger (LOS BANDO)

You created a perfect profile for every musician in the film. And I was so happy that just for once, the drummer wasn't an idiot.

Tryggestad: Thilda's character, I already had in mind for a short film: a little girl with a strong power, playing an instrument that is too big for her. For her age, Thilda's cello is totally oversized, which creates a funny visual effect. And we wanted an introverted character only coming to life behind his drum kit, kicking out all his frustration. That was Grim. Aksel is liv-

ing his own lies, driven by his irrationally great expectations. During the journey he should learn to grow up.

What is the specific role of this cynical character called 'The Hammer'?

Tryggestad: Meeting your idols is seldom a good idea, especially not if they're only a vague shadow of who they once used to be. The Hammer is the one who has experienced the music industry and the success the others are dreaming of, but ended up on the wrong side of it.

Thilda is a rather extreme character: dark and mysterious. What is going on in that pretty little head of yours?

Berger: Thilda's head is full of thoughts. She doesn't feel happy at home, because her parents are never there. They don't have a close relationship, which makes her unhappy. Thilda is a strong girl, she knows what she wants, but what she wants most is a family.

For the story friendship and music are equally important.

Tryggestad: Every character has issues that are too big to deal with by themselves. Only by supporting each other, they are able to face their own

problems.

Arild, you were also the editor of the film. How was it to cut your own story?

Tryggestad: Terrifying. The editor is supposed to be a 'neutral outsider', but I was far from neutral. It made me very nervous. I had to cut out several parts I really liked, that's what editing is all about. The most important thing was to maintain the feeling of being on the road.

Spoiler alert! Los Bando doesn't win the music contest in the end.

Tryggestad: Showing that "you can win by not being the winner" was an important element. Their real victory is about playing on that big stage and becoming friends.

Berger: Grim is a winner because he brought his parents together. Aksel is a winner because he gets 'a girl'. Martin is a winner when he convinces his father. And Thilda is a winner now that she has found friends. All of them are winners!

—

Gert Hermans

AFTERLIFE

Feature, The Netherlands, 2018

Director: Willem Bosch

Prod.: Pupkin Film

World Sales: Dutch Features

Phone: +31 6 42 40 69 22

sales@dutchfeatures.com

www.dutchfeatures.com

THE ARCTIC CAMELS

Feature, Norway, 2019

Director: Karl Emil Rikardsen

Prod.: Relation04 Media, Giraff Film, Toolbox Film

World Sales: Outlook Filmsales

Phone: +43 720 34 69 34

welcome@outlookfilms.com

www.outlookfilms.com

BINTI

Feature, Belgium, 2019

Director: Frederike Migom

Prod.: Bulletproof Cupid, Kwassa Films, Family Affair Films

World Sales: LevelK- Film & TV Distribution

Phone: +45 48 44 30 72

tine.klint@levelk.dk

www.levelk.dk

www.bintithefilm.com

CHECKERED NINJA

Animation, Denmark, 2018

Director: Anders Matthesen

Production: A Film Prod., Sudoku, Pop

Up Prod.

World Sales: LevelK – Film & TV Distribution

See address above

DAFNE



Feature, Italy, 2019

Director: Federico Bondi

Prod.: Vivo Film, RAI Cinema

World Sales: Rai Com

Phone: +39 06-33 17 82 44

sales@rai-com.com

www.raicom.rai.it

DOUBLE TROUBLE – THE MAGICAL MIRROR

Feature, Germany 2019

Directors: Marcus H. Rosenmüller

Prod.: Viafilm, MDR, KiKA/Leipzig

World Sales: ARRI Media Int.

Phone: +49 89 38 09 12 88

aexacoustos@arri.de

www.arrimedia.de/international

HACKER

Feature, Denmark, 2018

Director: Poul Berg

Production: Toolbox Film

World Sales: LevelK – Film & TV Distribution

See address above



HARAJUKU

Feature, Norway, 2018

Director: Eirik Svensson

Production: Maipo Film

World Sales: Charades Int. Sales

Phone: +33 629 87 45 04

sales@charades.eu

www.charades.eu

I USED TO LIKE THE SEA



Documentary, Belgium, 2018

Director: Idriss Gabel

Prod. & World Sales: Les Films de la Passerelle

Phone: +32 43 42 36 02

films@passerelle.be

www.passerelle.be

http://jenaimepluslamer.com

LOTTE AND THE LOST DRAGONS



Animation, Estonia, Latvia, 2019

Directors: Janno Poldma & Heiki Ernits

Prod.: Eesti Joonisfilm, Rija Films

World Sales: Rija Films

Phone: +371 67 36 26 56

info@rijafilms.lv

www.rijafilms.lv

METEORITES

Feature, France, 2018

Director: Romain Laguna

Prod.: Les Films du clan

World Sales: Indie Sales

Phone: +33 1 44 83 02 27

info@indiesales.eu

www.indiesales.eu

MY EXTRAORDINARY SUMMER WITH TESS

Feature, The Netherlands, 2019

Director: Steven Wouterlood

Prod.: Bind Film, VPRO, Ostlicht

World Sales: Picture Tree Int.

Phone: +49 30 42 08 24 80

pti@picturetree-international.com

www.picturetree-international.com

www.onegirlfilm.com



MY GRANDPA IS AN ALIEN



Feature Film, Croatia, 2019

Director: Dražen Žarković & Marina Andree Škop

Prod.: Studio Dim, Wady Films, Filmbin

World Sales: Studio Dim

Phone: +385 13 90 62 77

www.dim.hr

www.dim.hr/grandpa-alien

ONE GIRL

Documentary, UK, Italy, Romania, 2018

Director: Rosa Russo

Prod. & World Sales: Debra Prod.

Phone: +44 17 53 78 54 50

www.webra.co.uk

REMI – NOBODY'S BOY

Feature, France, 2018

Director: Antoine Blossier

Production: Jerico, TF1 Films Prod.,

TF1 Studio

World Sales: TF1 Studio

Phone: +33 1 41 41 21 68

sales@tf1.fr

www.tf1international.com

ROCCA CHANGES THE WORLD

Feature, Germany, 2019

Director: Katja Benrath

Production: Relevant Film, Warner

Bros. Film Prod. Germany

World Sales: Beta Cinema

Phone: +49 89 67 34 69 80

beta@betacinema.com

www.betacinema.com

SUMMER WITH RANA

Feature, The Netherlands, 2018

Directors: Sanne Vogel

Prod.: JoCo Media, KRO-NCRV

World Sales: Dutch Features

Phone: +31 6 42 40 69 22

See address above



TAIKI

Feature, The Netherlands, 2018

Director: Mirjam de With

Prod.: Fiction Valley

World Sales: Dutch Features

Phone: +31 6 42406922

See address above

TWIN FLOWER



Feature, Italy, 2018

Director: Laura Luchetti

Prod.: Picture Show, Donkadillo Films,

RAI Cinema

World Sales: Fandango

+39 06 85 21 85

fandango@fandango.it

www.fandango.it

THE UNPROMISED LAND



Feature, Sweden, 2019

Director: Victor Lindgren

Prod. & World Sales: Bautafilm

+4670 744 44 72

info@bautafilm.se

www.bautafilm.se

VICIOUS

Feature, The Netherlands, 2019

Director: Dennis Bots

Prod.: Goldman Film, Phanta Film

World Sales: Phanta Vision

+31 20 6 26 02 55

info@phantavision.com

www.phantavision.com

More information on all these films you will find on our website:

www.ecfaweb.org/european-childrens-film-network/feature-films

Anne Schultka (KIDS Regio) & Nicola Jones (Golden Sparrow) about the 3rd KIDS Regio Forum

“Cultural success means that a film has an impact”



Anne Schultka

Nicola Jones

“A forum where the most important players will gather to discuss the state of affairs.” It sounds like Davos, but we’re talking Weimar in Thuringia. That’s where KIDS Regio on 26-28 June will invite around 90 key personalities from the world of European children’s film and media education for the 3rd KIDS Regio Forum. With this high-profile Think Tank, tracks will be laid down to follow towards the future. Anne Schultka (KIDS Regio) knows all about it. But at the same time we want to unravel the entire children’s film and media construction in the German state of Thuringia.

We asked Nicola Jones (Golden Sparrow) to help us climb up that big tree, to get a better overview on all the roots and branches.

Anne Schultka (KIDS Regio): At the 3rd KIDS Regio Forum in June we’ll be discussing the current state of affairs: What has happened since the first forum in 2009? What have we set in motion? How can we get updated about specific situations in every European country? We know what is going on in Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Poland but in many Eastern, Central and Southern European countries the right connections still have to be made. We don’t know enough about what is going on there yet.

Is that among the tasks of KIDS Regio?

Schultka: The most important task for KIDS Regio is to collect and share information and data, so that we can learn from each other. I’m sure that

there’s interesting and inspiring programmes going on that we don’t know about yet. That is a goal to achieve with the Forum, connecting people and developing a network. Although I prefer to use the word ‘community’. Because it’s not only about grabbing and using, but about giving and sharing, like what happens in the ECFA community.

Networking goes with grabbing, community goes with sharing?

Schultka: People should take this inspiration with them to their country, like KIDS Regio ambassadors, and make things happen right there on the spot. We need people who really want to engage with the topic, and we want to keep them on board for the next five years.

Can you feel how the situation in some specific European regions is changing?

Schultka: Actually, yes. Apparently a

kids  regio



lot of things seem to be happening in Greece and in the entire Balkan region these days. I was also very much impressed by the Centennial movement in the Baltic states (*read about it in the ECFA Journal 4/2018*). That project was very relevant for Baltic audiences, and helped children to get a better understanding of their own history. It was a great domestic achievement, but also effective on an international level.

Attending the Forum is “by invitation only”. Is it KIDS Regio making the selection?

Schultka: That authority is with the organising committee. Last summer we installed a co-creation team, in which we invited experts to join us: Margret Albers (ECFA President), Viola Gabrielli (former KIDS Regio project manager), Signe Zeilich-Jensen (Dutch Film Fund), Annette Brejner (Financing Forum for Kids Content), Maciej Jakubczyk (Financing Forum,



Warsaw), and Charlotte Appelgren (CineRegio). We took an experienced conference designer on board, who is preparing an interactive, dynamic conference concept, that will be revealed on the first day of the Forum.

How do you select your invited guests?

Schultka: We discuss people's profiles with the team. The key words to our work are: children's film, live action, original screenplay. But we also want to include experts from outside the children's film industry to enrich our discussion. When travelling and meeting people, we're on the lookout for new faces. It's a long process, and in

the end we have to narrow down the list.

In organising the Forum, KIDS Regio is backed up by several organisations. Golden Sparrow is like a labyrinth, a big tree with many different roots and branches.

Schultka: It is hard to explain to an outsider how these organisations fit together, because we're so strongly entwined with each other.

Can you sketch me a structure?

Nicola Jones: First of all there is the Förderverein Deutscher Kinderfilm, which is the German Children's Film Association. Their work is essential

for the situation of German children's cinema. Their most important projects are:

- Organising the *Besondere Kinderfilm* (Outstanding Films for Children) funding model.
- Running the Academy for Children's Media, which is a scholarship and script lab for authors.
- Running the 'Formats from Thuringia' development trajectory for TV-series.

Their expertise is in facilitating the development and production of stories and scripts for a young audience.

Then there is the Golden Sparrow Foundation.

Jones: The Foundation's main purpose is to organise the Golden Sparrow Festival. I am the director of the festival, but also the CEO of the Golden Sparrow Foundation. Furthermore we're responsible for organising the EFA Audience Award for Best Children's Film, of which the award ceremony is held in Erfurt. And we're hosting the Cinema School Week in November, for which my team prepares a special programme of panels, film talks, seminars etc.

And then there is KIDS Regio

Jones: Which is our international

branch, convincing the world about the importance of children's film through networking and lobbying activities.

Schultka: KIDS Regio is also connected to CineRegio (representing all European regional film funds), the MDM (Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung), and The State Chancellery of Thuringia, which are our biggest funders. Together with The Golden Sparrow and the German Children's Film Association, we are all – literally – at the same desk. We're separate organisations, but always working in close cooperation. We are ambassadors for each other's work, which is the foundation of our strength.

It is no coincidence that all this is happening in the state of Thuringia.

Schultka: Thuringia gave themselves a label: the Federal Children's Media and Film State! Their support is at the base of everything we do.

What do we need to know about the Golden Sparrow Festival?

Jones: It was founded in the days of GDR, 40 years ago, and from the early beginning the topic of children's film was taken very serious. The GDR government invested a crucial amount of money in the production and promo-

tion of children's films to be showcased in the festival. When reading the festival archive documents, you'd be surprised to see how serious children's film issues were already discussed. At the same time it was also a successful audience festival. In 1989, after the German unification process, nobody knew who should put the money on the table to continue the festival, as DEFA, the DDR film industry, disappeared more or less off the radar. Until the idea for the Golden Sparrow Foundation came up. Ever since, the focus on children's film became even stronger. In our jury we bring together children from all over Germany and from German speaking communities in our neighbouring countries.



Over the last years the profile of German children's cinema has drastically changed. After the success of Scandinavian and Dutch children's films, it feels like the attention

nowadays is shifting towards Germany.

Jones: Children's films have always done pretty well at the national market. There's about 25 German children's films per year to be released rather successfully. But many of them didn't travel. They did very well in terms of tickets sold, but not in terms of content and diversity, it was all based on books and brands and sequels and franchises. It was time for a change. That's why the Outstanding Films for Children fund became so important

Schultka: The initiative started six years ago, and you can't deny that original screenplays have been booming in Germany ever since. We started with live action films but nowadays animation and documentaries are included. This project opened the eyes of the German film industry and made them realise there is a real need for diverse children's content to keep European arthouse cinema alive.

Recent German titles seem to be much more visible on the international level, they're so much more "out there".

Jones: With all partners involved we are putting a stronger focus on children's films. They are much more visible in festivals nowadays, they're

gaining attention, they bring a different colour to the screen. These titles still struggle on the national market if you're only counting in numbers to define what is a success. But more important is what these films actually have achieved. *AT EYE LEVEL* and *MOUNTAIN MIRACLE* were "culturally the most successful films" in 2017 in terms of festival nominations and awards. Cultural success means that a film has an impact, it can be used in schools to learn about the world, it can be a mind-changing experience for the audience. Which is much harder to measure than counting tickets. From my position as a festival director, I want to show my audience a wide variety of formats, and this has become much more easy with the current market situation.

Is this something the industry realises as well?

Schultka: There is still a long way to go, but the sentence "*we're currently working on a children's film and afterwards we'll do a real film again*" is less and less to be heard these days.

Jones: The most important things missing are cultural awareness and recognition. A children's film will still not be nominated for the national Best Director award. Some directors are even still scared off by that label.



So yes, things are changing, but at the end of the day children's films are still not treated as equals. That will be one of the themes at the KIDS Regio Forum: How can we make sure that children's films get the importance they deserve? How can we make ourselves heard when screaming out loud that what we do is important?

—
Gert Hermans

Photos & graphic from 2nd KIDS Regio Forum, 2014

Tashi Gyeltshen about THE RED PHALLUS

“In the heart of my film is the loss of humanity”

One of the most interesting films at the Berlinale 2019 was the feature debut of Tashi Gyeltshen, a writer, journalist and self-taught filmmaker from Bhutan. His *THE RED PHALLUS* tells about the 16 year old Sangay, struggling her way through a male dominated, patriarchal world. Ever since her mother died, she's lived in a secluded village on the foot of the Himalayas alone with her father, Ap Atsara, who controls nearly her every move. As a sculptor, he is carving phalli in wood. These symbols of fertility – resembling fertility goddesses from other cultures – are used for ceremonies, decorating the houses in the wonderful Phobjikha Valley to ward off evil spirits.

Ap Atsara also plays the role of the clown in traditional festivities. Clowns in Buddhism can help people to attain enlightenment. But behind the mask there's always a human being with all its capability to commit even horrendous crimes like abuse and rape. Sangay's only friend is Passa, a lower class married man and father, who tries to force her into running off together to

the city. Then it comes to a brutal and bloody confrontation between the two important men in her life.

Your film is challenging the audience, by its subject but also by the patience it demands to watch the slow burning narrative and – marvellous! – calm wide shots.

Tashi Gyeltshen: The movie takes its time to establish a dramatic climax. I wrote the story four years ago, before the #MeToo debate even started. But ever since the film has been released, everybody connects it with the #MeToo movement, which is not the intention I had in mind.

Then what did you actually want to show?

Gyeltshen: In the heart of my film is the loss of humanity and, of course, shame. The phallus symbolises humanity's decadence, that we largely owe to a patriarchal society and a way of thinking that is destroying the world.

Right from the beginning there is a tense and gritty atmosphere, with

violence lurking under the images of the wonderful nature in your country.

Gyeltshen: When I visited those festivities called Tschechus and was blessed by the clowns with phalluses, I often asked myself why in our culture the power to bless one by virtue is given to a man behind a mask. Everyone in this world is wearing a mask as a way to hide the truth, we hide our flaws, fragilities and crimes. I wonder why we turned so bad, destroying ourselves? Although I don't want to judge my characters from my own moral perspective, I wonder where this need to kill and rape comes from. My film deals with questions I ask myself, and I most probably won't get an answer. Because once I get an answer, the question will no longer be out there, and I insist to keep on asking questions.



I found this impressive debut film very sad and depressing. Is there no hope?

Gyeltshen: Of course I am hopeful because in the moment when Sangay fulfils her destiny, the hope is already embedded. In Buddhism we believe in rebirth and I hope Sangay will have her next life in a more civilised world with more humanity and higher moral grounds.

Where did you find Tshering Euden, the outstanding young actress playing Sangay?

Gyeltshen: She is an amateur, like my other protagonists. They all live in Phobjikha Valley. But I am sure we will see her again on screen.

–
Uta Beth

Mirjam Marks & Julia Schellekens about ZARA AND THE MAGICAL FOOTBALL BOOTS

Zara wants to play football with the AZC team (Asylum Seekers Centre), but her brothers don't agree. Until her brother Angel appears, from whom Zara gets a special gift: a pair of magical football boots. Suddenly she can play like a pro. **ZARA AND THE MAGICAL FOOTBALL BOOTS** is a Dutch TV series in which children living in AZCs participate.

Mirjam Marks: Children living in AZCs can get bored a whole summer long. They have little money, no passport, they can go nowhere. Luckily there are organisations trying to cheer up those long summer months. As a filmmaker, I often do workshops with Foundation 'De Vrolijkheid', that has been organising cultural and creative programmes in AZCs for many years. And with Cinekid we organised pop-up film festivals on the spot.

In this TV-series AZC inhabitants are in front or behind the camera?

Julia Schellekens: They were the actors. Those kids who didn't want (or were not allowed for reasons of secu-

urity) to get in the picture, could work on props or short animated scenes. In the crew were mainly professionals, but some of them had a background as asylum seekers and in every AZC we found a lot of skilful helping hands. From the young actors, only main actress Liz Heijnemans and her close family do not live in an AZC – that would have been impossible in terms of organisation and permissions.

And you were the one keeping it all tied together?

Marks: Together with Julia and many fantastic colleagues. I came up with the idea, and won the trust of Dutch broadcaster VPRO and several well-known scriptwriters, directors, actors and crew members. They all said: *"We don't have time to do it but we will."*

The story in itself is not about asylum seekers.

Marks: Our first task for the screenwriter was to deliver a story that continued over six episodes in which as many kids as possible could participate every week. Plenty of mass

scenes included! For instance the same soccer team in every episode is played by different kids. The shirts are the same, but the kids wearing them aren't. Luckily the audience doesn't notice.

This was a logistical tour-de-force!

Schellekens: Six weeks in a row we worked in a different AZC. Shooting only two days is very little when working with inexperienced actors. We needed to find all locations within the AZCs, improvising with what we found on the spot.

The value of the project is also in the way you considered how to do it so dignified and respectful.

Marks: Besides 300 children, 160 volunteers and over 80 crew members participated. Most of them had never been to an AZC before. This had a huge impacts on all contributors. Schellekens: We've worked extremely hard, but got so much in return. At the premiere when those kids were looking at themselves on the big Cinekid screen, something kind of snapped



inside me.

Can this series be exported?

Marks: It has an adventurous story and good production value and a completely non-white cast. English and Arabic subtitles are available. And the idea is universal: women's football is on the rise nowadays, and in many countries football is the only platform for a natural form of integration.

–
Gert Hermans

All info: Pristine Film, Julia Schellekens, info@pristinefilm.com; www.pristinefilm.com.

FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS

A cinema full of children. All are watching the same film, but experiencing it differently. That experience was examined in 'Film - A Language Without Borders', a cross-European project organised by the Danish and the British Film Institute and Vision Kino (Germany), supported by the Creative Europe programme. "We want to find out how films are experienced by newcomers in our society, and how this experience is shared with other young people in a cinema or classroom," says Charlotte Giese (DFI). "At the same time European countries share a commitment for groups of migrants and refugees, coming here as a result of social, cultural, economic and political change."

Charlotte Giese: This project is about a series of films (8 new titles and 3 classics), a research report and study guides on "the use of film in a migration society". Films shown in schools can help refugees and migrants to orient themselves in our society. And they encourage other children to better understand – or even empathise

with – the position of the newcomers. Film can enable young people to share, discuss and exchange understandings of different societies and cultures.

Working with film

Giese: Film creates a "common third" and can be a resource for empowerment and tolerance. We ourselves learned how important film can be. One kid who came to the cinema for the first time, on that occasion took on a suit. After the screenings there sometimes were discussions in small groups (quality was more important than quantity) for a more detailed survey. All was done very informally, not to put any extra pressure upon them.

Results in a report

Giese: "Film can make a difference." That statement is often heard, but not so often evaluated, we take it for granted too easily. We need to validate our ideas, we need new solid arguments to convince teachers, managers, politicians... How to stimulate

children in new ways? How to address new and difficult topics? How to stimulate dialogue among children who speak different languages or have different backgrounds? In our research we have worked with interviews and observations of the young participants, and questionnaires for teachers. I wish we could do that more often, instead of counting the numbers of kids reached with a project.

The report on the project, as well as the full research report, will soon (June 2019) be accessible on the websites of the three partner organizations.

Films come with study guides

Giese: There are [study guides](#) with each individual film (for example FIGHTER, PADDINGTON, BILLY ELLIOT). These resources have been developed in German, Danish and English and might also be translated into other European languages. Those who'd prefer German study guides can find them [here](#). And there is a [general study](#) guide on 'Film in Mi-



gration Classrooms'. These resources have been developed in German, Danish and English and will be translated into other European languages for countries with high levels of immigration, such as Greek, Italian and French.

International cooperation

Giese: We needed this European context, sharing information with colleagues from Germany and the UK, where the situation with migrants and refugees is totally different from Denmark. We all have a long experience in film education, but not in this particular area.

What impressed you most?

Giese: That the project raised so many interesting discussions among children, sometimes about very complex issues that not everybody could agree about. But it brought up even more tolerance, empathy and understanding. That was the most impressive.

ZLIN FESTIVAL SHOWCASING UNIQUE TREASURE

Presenting the work of Albanian filmmaker Xhanfise Keko

In the late sixties and early seventies, East German, Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian directors started making children's films in an outspoken political context, subtly working within the system that at the same time they were questioning. Within the communist bloc, Enver Hoxha's Albania was an isolated, self-sustaining entity. Even there, behind the country's guarded frontiers, filmmakers were working on an oeuvre that was impactful for an entire generation. Specifically one artist made a series of young audience films that were as poetic as they were subversive.

Now Albanian filmmaker Thomas Logoreci, together with film critic Marc Cousins, found the momentum to present Xhanfise Keko's brilliant oeuvre to the world. The Zlin Festival also programmed two of Keko's films in the festival's new 'Discover & Explore' section: SPOILED MIMOSA and

TOMKA AND HIS FRIENDS.

While under the communist regime films were supposed to bring a glorious tribute to reality, Keko dares to break away from realism, into a field of dreams, tenderness and fantasy, in the disguise of genuine communist iconography. Keko made 29 films in total, she died in 2007. Now in Tirana, a street is named after the country's first female director, where kids play on the sidewalk, as so beautifully depicted in Cousins' cinematic essay HERE BE DRAGONS.

* * * * *

In late 1972, an annual song festival was performed at the Soviet designed Palace of Culture in the centre of the Albanian capital, Tirana. Believing change might soon be coming to Marxist Albania, many of the musicians performed Western jazz and



Xhanfise Keko

rock & roll. During the televised concert, women dressed in short skirts sang popular songs, like the ones you could hear on American or British radio. It seemed that many of the musicians had been listening to Italian and Yugoslavian radio stations, which was considered a criminal act under the communist regime.

A documentary film about the concert shows many people in the audience looking tense. After living under the harsh dictatorship of Enver Hoxha for nearly 30 years, Albanians had no idea what the future had in store. Shortly after, the Albanian leadership denounced some of those performers as 'enemies of the people'. In early 1973, communist authorities used the event

as a pretext to end a brief period of cultural change in Albania. Several people who took part in the concert were imprisoned or sent into internal exile.

The middle of the 1970's wasn't an easy time to be an artist or filmmaker in Albania. But one director was able to use the children's film genre to express her personal ideas about the pain and joy of being young. Though much of the country's film industry was (and still is) dominated by men, Xhanfise Keko (1928-2007) is now considered to be one of the top directors in the world, and perhaps Albania's most well-known director. Already at a very young age, Xhanfise was so eager and enthusiastic about

the movies that she decided to become a filmmaker. In the early 1950's, she left Albania for the Soviet Union, where she studied the craft of filmmaking. For the next 20 years, Keko worked in the New Albania Film Studio, sitting every day behind a huge editing machine, cutting images shot by news reporters. She married one of the leading documentary cameramen, Endri Keko.

In the early 1970's, she decided to stop editing other people's films and to start making her own. Fascinated by the innocent world of children, in 1973, when the era of cultural freedom was at its end, Xhanfise directed *MIMOZA LLASTICA* (SPOILED MIMOSA). As with all her films, Xhanfise spent many hours with her young actors, talking and listening. This unique method allowed her to gain their trust, thus being able to direct them into authentic performances once the camera began to roll.

Zhaklina Dhimojani was only seven years old when she starred in the title role, playing a sour child that doesn't want to share her toys with her friends in the apartment block. Until Mimosa is left to play all by herself. In one of the most touching scenes,



SPOILED MIMOSA

Mimosa feels so lonely that she starts talking to her dolls. Only in the end, she realises her mistake and makes up with the other kids. Mimosa is spoiled no longer.

The communist regime approved with the film's ending. Albanian leaders found it utterly important that their citizens belonged to a collective, not acting like individuals. Even though the film's message was embedded in the philosophy of the dictatorship, *SPOILED MIMOSA* still holds a special place in the hearts of Albanian audiences. Everyone who saw the film, remembers the child actors' authentic performances.

For the next ten years, Xhanfise Keko continued to make films with young people. As authorities believed these

films were only meant for children, they often didn't notice how Keko used camera and editing techniques that male Albanian directors couldn't master. Though critics today often point out the communist messages in films like *TOMKA AND HIS FRIENDS* (1977), Keko's work features some of the most iconic moments in Albanian cinema.

In 1979, her husband Endri Keko, got badly injured in a car accident. Until his death in 1989, Xhanfise's priorities shifted towards taking care of her partner. During these years, Keko made two of her most serious movies, *WHEN SHOOTING A FILM* (1981) and *TAULANT WANTS A SISTER* (1984).

After *SPOILED MIMOSA*, Xhanfise Keko made nine more fiction films with children. Unfortunately after the decline of the government-funded Kinostudio system, she never made another film again. This is one of the tragedies of Albanian cinema. If only she could have continued filming during the dramatic and chaotic 1990's, many young people might have found in her a friend and spokesperson who could reflect their problems onto the big screen.



TOMKA AND HIS FRIENDS

Xhanfise Keko spent her later years writing her memoirs, in a book entitled *THE DAYS OF MY LIFE*, in which she spurs a next generation of directors to make films for children. "We had one common goal in life: to raise a new generation, beautiful, educated and wise, to serve Albania's tomorrow. Cinema and children remain two of my greatest passions."

Thomas Logoreci co-wrote the feature length essay documentary about Albania, *HERE BE DRAGONS*, with filmmaker Mark Cousins. He was co-writer and co-director of *BOTA*, Albania's selection for the 2016 US Academy Awards and is currently writing a Young Person's Guide to Albanian Cinema.

Animation Film & Media Literacy in Education - FAME, Take 1



In spring 2018 different film pedagogical organisations in the Baltic and Nordic Region collaborated in a work group within the project “Media Literacy, Re-use and Heritage in Education”. The main goal was to share best practices that combine the teaching of audiovisual skills and the (re)use of film’s material, like a fragment of a chronicle or a self-made animation, which helps to explain some of the more difficult parts of a lesson. Ed-

ucators must be trained and encouraged to integrate the use of film literacy and media in the classrooms. This culminated in a two-day international conference “FAME, Take 1. Film & Media for Education” in January 2019, addressing 21st century skills such as collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

At the conference, supported by Nordplus (the Nordic Council of Ministers’

most important programme for lifelong learning), the major challenges and positive effects of why integrating media and visual literacy in education were discussed; including the use of animation brought by the Animated Learning Lab (ECFA member ALL, Denmark).

Develop intuition

Filmmaking can help students to deal with the internet and its challenges. Filmmaking empowers them to speak out, to be democratic and to develop critical and creative thinking (J. Zipes). Students claim ownership and responsibility of their own creations, they connect with their inner wisdom (intuition) and with others, they develop empathy and new perspectives. As Johannes Lõhmus (Estonian Film Institute) said : “I truly believe in the power that art has in making people more aware and empathetic towards each other and the world.” In this sense, film/animation is a mindfulness practice, that helps to develop intuition. “Life is filled with abstractions, and the only way we can make heads or tails of it is through intuition. Intui-

tion is seeing the solution... It is emotion and intellect going together,” as David Lynch says.

FAME, Take 1, the Conference

The conference was the result of a work group that studied the possibilities of media within education, the facilitation of tools, and training for teachers who could re-adapt the acquired knowledge and techniques in their regions. The two day workshops and talks took place at Tallinn University and the Estonian Film Museum on January 10-11 2019, gathering lecturers, researchers, film institutions, media experts and most importantly: teachers from public schools.

Claus N. Hjorth (Danish Film Institute) pointed out the following key points to reflect upon when trying to work with audiovisual content in classrooms:

- The relevance of making a selection of movies for educators, for instance in a digital library database.
- Need to discuss the length of films as well as other technical standards, to create a common frame-

work between schools.

- Treat filmmaking as a new language to facilitate alternative ways of communication, which demands acquisition of film literacy skills.
- Provide the proper training to filmmakers willing to be educators and vice-versa.
- Offer a platform to share movies from different regions, fostering cooperation between institutions.
- Question the boundary between film education and formal education, commercial productions versus educational.
- Further research is required regarding the (mis)use of apps and technology.

Workshops with topics such as animated sciences, privacy and surveillance, filmmaking and philosophy, camera and pedagogy, integration of virtual reality and documentary film covered these aspects.

Why Film Literacy and Animation in Schools

According to E. Semino, from an early age, "young children construct knowledge of their world through the stories they hear and participate with. They interpret and compre-

hend literary stories by constructing the "world" being described through text." The Animated Learning Lab, with support from The DFI, compared different studies and experiences within film pedagogical activities from all over Denmark.

The five main conclusions to strengthen the use of film literacy in schools:

- Strengthening the film's own professionalism and special language in elementary school.
- Using filmmaking as a learning tool to teach different subjects.
- Building the bridge between the school system and film professionals.
- Making the students create their own film productions.
- Strengthening teachers' competence development in the field of film literacy.

Other positive outcomes observed in European studies revealed a deeper learning experience and helping identity development and cognition. Stories act as a meaning forming and memory tool, a metaphorical language that improves judgment and creativity. A sense of connectedness increases along with democracy, cooperation, resilience, joy and higher

self-esteem.

We also highlight the main conclusions from the European Commission report, 2015.

- A limited use of films in schools, movies usually end up being complementary material to illustrate a part of the class more than studying the film itself.
- A need to improve the lack of tools to create films.
- Improve communication between schools and right holders to access audiovisual content and protect privacy data.
- Professional training courses for teachers are needed to instruct a good use of media/film literacy.
- Extra-curricular activities for film literacy are limited, requiring an effort in the teachers' engagement to research/apply for funding.
- The film industry needs to collaborate with educational institutions on agreements that enable the use of films and audiovisual content without legal constraints or unreasonable prices.

Education of the heart

Filmmaking, especially through animation, is nowadays the most at-

tractive vehicle to learn about and influence society. Big efforts and a stronger unity among institutions and educators are required to disseminate workshops and to assure their continuity.

"My wish is that, one day, formal education will pay attention to the education of the heart, teaching love, compassion, justice, forgiveness, mindfulness, tolerance and peace. This education is necessary, from kindergarten to secondary schools and universities. I mean social, emotional and ethical learning. We need a worldwide initiative for educating heart and mind in this modern age."

The 14th Dalai Lama, 2018.

—
Inma Carpe & Sia Søndergaard

From The Animation Workshop /Animated Learning Lab & Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain

Maria Blom and Frida Hallgren about MONKY

“Don’t keep your sadness all for yourself”

One day when scriptwriter Jonathan Sjöberg walked into a school, he saw a drawing on the wall showing a tree, a family, a monkey and a quote saying: “When I die, I want to become a monkey.” Back home he immediately wrote the first draft of a script.

When eleven-year-old Frank finds a monkey in the garden, he calls him ... Monky. Despite all the mischief and laughter, the animal re-awakes a silent sorrow that was not yet put to sleep: the lack of Frank’s deceased sister Saga. It doesn’t take long for Frank to realise that Monky did not accidentally end up in their garden.

Meeting Swedish director Maria Blom and actress Frida Hallgren (playing the role of Frank’s mother) at the JEF Festival, we want to figure out: What is it that animals do with people, bringing out these strong emotional reactions. What can animals achieve that expensive therapists can’t?

Maria Blom: Animals offer you their unconditional love. You can project all

possible thoughts and emotions upon them. They don’t argue, they just stare back at you. In my teenage years our dog was an attentive listener to all my tormented love stories.

Frida Hallgren: I had a bird that could say my name and nibble my ears. His name was John Lennon. Animals offer you the comfort of their company, and sometimes the tangible sensation of their soft fur.

But you didn’t chose a dog or a bird. How many times did you regret having picked a monkey?

Blom: The main objection against a monkey was always the budget. It turned out so expensive that first we putted the script ‘to sleep’. When picking it up again two years later, technical facilities had developed so much that suddenly it was possible to do it in CGI.

Was there, not even for one second, a real monkey on the set?

Blom: Never, except in this one scene in the zoo. That’s the only real monkey you’ll get to see. It made us very



cautious: if we show them a real monkey, maybe the audience will notice that ours is fake. But in the end the quality of our monkey was so good that it stood the test next to a living specimen.

Hallgren: Ours looked more real than the real one! Especially the fur was fascinating. Every single hair was modelled individually. You can see the wind blowing through it.

How exactly did you do those monkey scenes?

Hallgren: The monkey is completely done in CGI. We worked in different stages. First we had Nina, a mime actress playing all the monkey scenes on the set. Then there was a mon-

key-shaped puppet to illustrate all the action. “Now the monkey is going up there, and then jumping down...” Gibbons are extremely fast, we were never fast enough to keep up with its pace. And then we shot the scene just with the actors.

Blom: After every scene a machine made a 360° scan of the set, uploading all details into a computer that calculated all graphic variables from every possible angle. A very advanced technique. Then the scenes were once more recorded in a studio in motion capture, for the correct CGI insert.

What about those monkey sounds?

Blom: That was my seven-year-old daughter. We took her into the stu-

dio to make those funny sounds over and over again, collecting an archive of monkey sounds for different emotions: happy monkey, angry monkey, scared monkey... It took the sound designer two weeks to sort out every sound for the right moment. Poor guy!

MONKY tells about a mourning process, about a child standing in the shadow of his sister who's no longer there.

Blom: Our scriptwriter Jonathan lost a sister too as a child. In this script he recalled how he felt back then, when so many people had but one advice for him: "Life must go on."

Which in the film is translated as "let's have another cup of chocolate".

Blom: In Frank's presence, his parents try to act normal. Only when he's not around, they're falling apart. People don't know how to mourn, they just want things to be like before. While Frank is longing so much to talk about what happened.

Mourning is something you do together?

Hallgren: My advice is: share your grief with others. Often people prefer a certain isolation: "Leave me alone

with my memories, I want my sadness all for myself." But talking about it is important.

Blom: Compared to our contemporary society, other cultures have better ways to deal with death, speaking about it openly. When MONKY was released in Sweden, we received positive reactions from people who came to watch the film with the whole family after they themselves had lived a tragedy. But there were others who asked their money back, because "nobody told us this film would be about death!" In the cinemas often parents were anxious to confront their children with the theme, trying to protect them from the film's emotional impact, while children didn't have a problem with it.

You introduce Saga in the first 10 minutes of the film, and then you can never show her again. In those first minutes she had to make a lasting impression.

Blom: Therefore we needed the right actress. In our search for the right girl, we had one particularly important criteria: she needed to have blue-green eyes, like a monkey's eyes. All the girls in the casting had brown eyes. One morning when walking into my office, a little girl was playing in the hallway, her hair a bit messy. When she turned



her face towards me, I looked straight into a pair of blue-green eyes. I told her I was making a movie about a monkey, a boy and his sister. "Can I be that sister?" That's how Matilda Forss Lindström entered the project. With her special energy, she makes an immediate impression that lasts throughout the entire film.

The house where the film was shot looks like a remarkable location.

Blom: The place was unique. The owner wanted to renovate and sell it, he was waiting eagerly for the premiere. Meanwhile for a whole summer long, we didn't let him mow the lawn, as we didn't want the grass to look too clean. Our DoP was very precise about the length of the grass! We were literally brushing it to give it a wilder look.

Unfortunately the view is spoiled by some rather silly looking neighbours.

Blom: They can afford to look special as they own the place. Our costume designer bought a whole series of velour tracksuits in every possible colour. For every scene we picked for them the most appropriate colour.

You took a risk with the title... You must have known hundreds of people would come to tell you: do you know there is a spelling mistake?

Blom: That's exactly what happened. But it's Saga who picked that name. Monky is not an ape, it's a name.

—

Gert Hermans



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ECFA's goal is to support cinema for children and youth in its cultural, economical, aesthetic, social, political and educational aspects. Since 1988 ECFA brings together a wide range of European film professionals and associations, producers, directors, distributors. ECFA aims to set up a working structure in every European country for films for children and young people, a structure adapted to Europe's multicultural interests.

For more information and memberships (€ 250 per year):

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Databases on children's film festivals, sales agents, distributors and TV-programmers interested in European films for children.

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