

SZENE 2WEI, the Black Forest and a film team: on the filmic version of the KALA trilogy

A woman in a shimmering green dress, the almost white hair so wild that it can't possibly be real. Her back is strangely curved. In black heels, she sits surrounded by plants, stones and trees on the ground, ignoring the boundaries that are supposed to keep hikers and tourists on their way. Next to her is a young man in a silver jacket and red trousers. They both turn their backs to the waterfall in front of them. He holds a megaphone in his hand and presses it against her shoulder, moves around her, presses it onto her back, stomach, hips, one arm.

This picture was offered to tourists and walkers last Monday as they followed the path along the waterfalls of Allerheiligen, which leads from the parking lot up to the ruins of the monastery. Some of them stopped, intimidated by the film crew who were behind the fence to capture the scene. Others continued unimpressed, but then took a look back over their shoulder before disappearing around the next bend. The scene was too bizarre.

Bizarre or not, some of you who know the KALA triogie may already have recognized it: This is a scene from #ATME, performed by Anne-Hélène and Jörg.

For nine days, from the 8th to 16th July, some special locations in the Black Forest became a film set. In Lahr, on the Braunberg, in the ruins of the monastery Allerheiligen and at the nearby waterfalls we shot an art film about the KALA trilogy with a film team around director Benjamin Chimoy. An idea that goes back to our choreographer William:

"The thought behind it was: How can I continue with the trilogy or achieve a development here? The decision was made for a film. We have enough material, and I find the aesthetics of our pieces very interesting for an art film. [...] They're not just frontal, you can see them from different angles. That fits a film. And then I thought: 'A film about these pieces, I have to give it to someone who can play with the whole thing into a cinematic language'".

With Benjamin, William found exactly this "someone." A filmmaker who has already made dance films on the one hand and who has "his own signature" on the other, as William describes it.

The cooperation between the two is accordingly good. Right from the start, the ideas and demands fit together. So the question which scenes from the individual pieces should be shown in the film was quickly answered.

"Of the thousands of photos I gave Benjamin, he took exactly the ones I liked best. Of course I had my favorites, but I didn't tell him that. He chose them anyway."

For the dancers, filming is a whole new experience. They were often on stage, but a film set is new territory for most of them. I (Kristina) was on the set all day on Monday and talked to them.

"It's something different", Ricarda tells me. "You have to be careful that you stay clear in your face and don't look directly into the camera. You have to stay in the scene and in the action. And you also have to pay attention to what Benjamin says. When he says 'Go' or ..."

This is where Matthieu falls into the story. "Silence, please'. And then 'Please', when we should start. That's how he speaks."

When asked if they were very nervous before the shooting, Ricarda answers:

"Yes, a little bit already." Matthieu agrees and continues: "The moment I dance, I don't notice the camera anymore. Then I am in the here and now. But it's different than when you're in front of an audience. I notice that already, the difference. Otherwise we are on stage, now for example on the grass. We had to get used to it first."

Especially for Ricarda, who often moves out of her wheelchair and onto the floor to roll or crawl, the different locations in the nature are always a challenge: Stones and gradients are something completely different from the smooth floor of a stage. "But then we always found a possibility," she says.

I imagine it to be very exhausting. When asked about it, Ricarda confirms:

"Yes, sometimes you think: 'I don't want to go on. I can't do any more'. But then you say to yourself: 'Come, push yourself again'. And then it works".

Timo also noticed how well all the dancers hold out during the exhausting days of filming:

"It's a matter of discipline and perseverance. I'm so happy and proud that they all do it so well."

A little later I watch Matthieu, Fuuko and Anne-Hélène dance a scene together in one of the rooms of the monastery ruins. They have to repeat it a few times and each time it is shot from a different perspective. At the end only the feet shall be taken, while Matthieu drags Anne-Hélène, who is stiff like a life-size doll in his arms, a few meters through the room. But that's not easy. Sometimes Matthieu walks a little too fast, sometimes not far enough. At the next attempt the legs are not to be seen in the correct angle. Only after several attempts are the few seconds taken.

That answers to something Fuuko told me a few hours ago:

"Some scenes we dance again and again and again. For us it's also very unusual that sometimes we only have to go back a few seconds. In rehearsals you dance whole scenes, not just a few seconds."

Unusual and certainly not easy. But this repetition is important to show every scene from different perspectives. Fuuko is aware of this too:

"It's interesting to see what you can do in the live art and what you can do in the film. The focus is different. We have already danced the respective piece, the original is a stage version that we know. We don't change it either, it won't be another piece. Nevertheless it's different".

That describes what the filmmaker Benjamin explains to me:

"It's not about registering the dance as it is, but about creating something new and making a rhythm by changing the image and sound so that you constantly experience something new." And he continues: "I find this a beautiful mixture of languages: the physical choreographic language you experience on stage and the cinematic translation".

So the film will show the KALA trilogy, but in a very different way to what you see on stage. In this sense, it is a work of art in its own right. It's an art film that you can already look forward to.

How do you approach something like that, such a "cinematic translation"? I'm sure I'm not the only one asking this question. So it goes without saying that I asked Benjamin exactly that.

"I'm starting to think cinematically the moment I start the project. Even when I look at the dance pieces, when I talk to William, I start to think about it: 'What are these inputs? How can I translate them in such a way that the audience feels it too? The process is difficult to describe because it is not straightforward. A doesn't necessarily lead to B, but I experience A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and then I go over to B and say, 'That was more interesting to me.' But first I take everything that comes."

So the translation depends on the experience and is a process that is not easy to describe and that certainly changes with every project. It depends a lot on the filmmaker.

I Kristina find all of this incredibly interesting and wish I had a bit more knowledge of making a film. And now, what's the next step?

At the moment, the film is in the cutting process, this is also an exciting phase in where a lot is decided and experimented with.

We, the whole company, are really looking forward to the result.

And of course we will keep you up to date about everything here and on Facebook.