

Biographical notes for jury duties at the Sundance Festival, 2007

I was born in Munich, June 1, 1935. Dark times. I was raised by my beloved mother, Susanne Adlon, in a village above Lake Starnberg. The country life among the cattle farms was exciting, and still forms the core of what I am trying to express as a filmmaker. My father was a famous opera singer. Music is in my blood, and is very important for my work. I studied art, literature, acting, and singing, worked as a stage actor, and as a narrator in radio. I married Eleonore, a classical dancer. She later co-wrote many, and produced all, of our films. She is the love of my life. We have two children, Saskia and Felix, and seven grandchildren.

At 35, I did my first short documentary for Bavarian television, followed by about 150 more, about art, country life, and the human condition. My first docudrama, about the Swiss poet Robert Walser, won the prestigious Adolf-Grimme award. The Marcel Proust film, *Céleste* (1981), my feature film debut, got international attention. For our film *Zuckerbaby* (New York Film Festival, 1985) I discovered Marianne Sägebrecth, but the real breakthrough was two years later with *Bagdad Café*, starring Marianne, CCH Pounder, and Jack Palance. Reviews, box office, and awards rained on us. The whole world embraced Marianne and her coffee thermos from Rosenheim. k.d.lang played her one and only film lead in *Salmonberries* in 1991, and it won the Grand prix des Amériques in Montreal. A lucky number is our film about my great-grandfather's Berlin hotel, *The Glamorous World of the Adlon Hotel*, in which Felix plays he lead. It became a cult film in Germany. In 1996, I discovered the new possibilities of digital camerawork for filmmakers, "camera stylo". I made 22 short films without words, about unknown works by Johann Strauss, Jr.; a love letter to my home town of Munich, *Mein München*; and entered Ground Zero with my friend, the sculptor Fritz Koenig, just 5 weeks after the attacks of 9/11. His monumental bronze, *The Sphere*, lay at the center of the tragic landscape, damaged but not destroyed.

Our next project will be a film about Gustav Mahler's meeting with Sigmund Freud. Felix and I have just finished the script. Throughout our defeats and our successes, we were always independent filmmakers: we write, direct, produce, and own our stuff.

Postscript:

The above was written in 2007. MAHLER ON THE COUCH, made in 2009 as a German-language movie, got rave reviews and played movie theaters all over the world.

--Percy Adlon

Pacific Palisades, Easter 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic.