

PERCY ADLON

Director, Writer, Producer

ELEONORE ADLON

Producer, Writer

Percy and Eleonore met at a stage production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She was 16 years old, he 23. She was a classical dancer, he an actor, having studied for four years at the Munich University. The Adlons became feature filmmakers after Percy spent years narrating more than 200 hours of literary radio programs and creating more than 150 documentaries. *THE GUARDIAN AND HIS POET* (1978), based on the life of writer Robert Walser, was their first full-length television film. Written and directed by Percy Adlon and produced by Eleonore, it won Germany's highest television award, the Adolf Grimme Prize in Gold. All of their subsequent films were written and directed by Percy and produced by Eleonore. Some of them were co-written by Eleonore or their son Felix.

*HERR KISCHOTT* (*MR. KISCHOTT*, 1979), the Adlons' second TV movie, is a Don Quixote of our days. It was followed by *CÉLESTE*, their first theatrically released film, which told the story of Marcel Proust's last years, as seen through the eyes of his housekeeper. *CÉLESTE* was screened in the German Series of the CANNES Film Festival in 1981, drawing international attention and critical acclaim. After that, the Adlons concentrated on feature films under the name of their own production company, pelemele FILM GmbH, Munich, which they had established in 1976. Two more historical dramas followed. *FÜNF LETZTE TAGE* (*FIVE LAST DAYS*, 1982) is about the friendship between Sophie Scholl, the White Rose activist executed by the Nazis in 1943, and her cellmate Else Gebel. *DIE SCHAUKEL* (*THE SWING*, 1983), was adapted from Annette Kolb's fictionalized memoir of her chaotic childhood in a middle-class Bavarian family on the eve of World War I.

Then, weary of period pieces, the Adlons entered a whole new genre with their contemporary comedy *ZUCKERBABY* (*SUGARBABY*, 1984), about a crazy affair between a female mortician and a young subway conductor. It premiered at the Berlinale and was invited on the spot to play at the New York Film Festival. David Denby called it, "An unabashed hymn to pleasure". With this film, the Adlons began a successful association with Marianne Sägebrecth, who subsequently starred opposite Jack Palance and C.C.H. Pounder in the

international hit BAGAD CAFE (1987). Around the globe, from Argentina to Korea, from Finland to South Africa, all fell in love with the Bavarian Hausfrau and her coffee thermos. Sägebrecht followed up this success with ROSALIE GOES SHOPPING (1989), a hilarious satire on American consumerism co-starring Brad Davis and Judge Reinhold. Percy Adlon's three films with Sägebrecht, which he refers to as his "Trilogy Sägebrechtienne," show an increasingly bold use of color and imagery. These works have been widely praised for their distinctly personal vision and technical excellence, and for mixing documentary and non-documentary techniques, as well as the Adlons' love and knowledge of the arts.

In 1990 Percy and Eleonore formed their American production company, Leora Films, Inc., in Santa Monica, California. With the new company, they made SALMONBERRIES, with singer k.d. lang in her first acting role as an Inuit coal miner in Kotzebue, Alaska. Opposite lang starred Rosel Zech, of Fassbinder fame, as a librarian and escapee from the former East Berlin. The movie won the Grand Prix des Amériques at the Montreal World Film Festival. Percy calls the couple's next feature "my most feminist film". YOUNGER & YOUNGER, 1993, is a darkly comedic send-up of the human male as peacock. Set in a public storage facility in Glendale, CA, it stars Donald Sutherland, Lolita Davidovich, Brendan Fraser, Julie Delpy, Linda Hunt, and Sally Kellerman.

Percy was drawn back to his roots, both of his life and of his film career, with THE GLAMOROUS WORLD OF THE ADLON HOTEL (1996), a docu-drama about his ancestors and their world-famous hotel at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. Felix Adlon stars as his own grand-uncle Louis Adlon, who married Marion Davies' sister Rose, called W.R. Hearst "papa", and landed as a war correspondent in his hometown of Berlin, shortly after the end of WWII.

In 1997, the Adlons produced EAT YOUR HEART OUT, Felix Adlon's debut film, a comedy about a young chef and his sweetheart. The movie stars Pamela Segall-Adlon, Christian Oliver, Laura San Giacomo, and Linda Hunt. Meanwhile, Percy had become fascinated with using a semi-professional camera like a writer's tool. Together with Eleonore, he used this method to film documentaries about draftsman TOMI UNGERER in Ireland; DIE STRAUSSKISTE (The Strauss-Box), a 22-part series of shorts in which unknown masterworks of Johann Strauss take the place of dialogue; and a full-length feature in 2000, HAWAIIAN GARDENS, a love triangle/internet gangster caper shot in a strip mall in Silverlake, on the east side of Los Angeles, and in a dark Bavarian forest.

Finally, Percy joined his longtime friend, sculptor FRITZ KOENIG, for a visit to Ground Zero in October 2001, where he filmed the resurrection of Koenig's monumental sculpture *The Sphere* from the rubble of the Twin Towers, at the foot of which it had stood for decades.

After six years of using the camera lens as his own eyes, even the most avid filmmaker needs a break. Percy's came in the form of directing Donizetti's opera *Elisir d'Amore* at the State Opera "Unter den Linden", Berlin. It premiered in 2003 and was only forced off the annual program by the pandemic of 2020. Other returns to the stage experiences of their youth included BAGDAD CAFÉ THE MUSICAL, with script by the Adlons and music by Bob Telson, just as had been for the film. It opened in 2005 in Barcelona, and toured France in the 2006-2007 season, with highlights at the MOGADOR Theatre in Paris, and the MAISON DE LA DANSE in Lyon.

In 2009, Percy and Felix wrote and co-directed MAHLER ON THE COUCH, about Gustav Mahler's last symphony, his young wife Alma's first affair, and Sigmund Freud's interrupted vacation. David Ansen invited the movie to show on opening night of the then-new Los Angeles Film Festival. MAHLER won top honors at the Sofia International Film Festival and opened the New York Jewish Film Festival, after which it had an extended run at N.Y.C.'s Lincoln Center. Percy and Eleonore Adlon have won numerous AWARDS, including top honors in Rio de Janeiro for BAGDAD CAFÉ, in Montreal the Grand Prix des Amériques for SALMONBERRIES, two Césars (National Film Awards of France), the Ernst-Lubitch-Award, the Swedish Guldbagge Award, the Prix Humanum of Belgium, and the Amanda Award for best foreign film at the Norwegian International Film Festival. Bob Telson's song *Calling You*, from BAGDAD CAFÉ, was nominated for an Academy Award. Other prizes include: for FIVE LAST DAYS at the International Film Festival of Venice; for CÉLESTE at Chicago and Valladolid; for YOUNGER & YOUNGER in Brussels and Tokyo; for ROSALIE GOES SHOPPING at Viareggio; a lifetime-achievement award for Percy and Eleonore Adlon at Kairo; and multiple Bavarian and German Federal Film Awards. The Adlons' work has been the subject of retrospectives at UCLA; in Cambridge, UK; Paris, France; San Diego, CA; Tokyo; and a program of over 70 films at the FILMMUSEUM MUNICH. Percy Adlon has received the Cross of Merit of Germany, the Order of Merit from his home state of Bavaria, and is a voting member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Directors' Branch. In 1989, after their success with BAGDAD CAFÉ, the Adlons fell in love with Los Angeles and decided to live there. They built a house in Pacific Palisades, close

to the Topanga Canyon state park. They lived there through the 1992 riots, the 1994 Northridge earthquake, not to mention years of Los Angeles' famed seasons: Drought, Fires, Floods, and Mudslides. But nothing can diminish their admiration for the city, with its many faces, colors, languages, expressions, and rhythms.

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