

Gösta Courkamp, 6.5.1958 - 31.7.2023

We mourn the loss of our loyal and best friend of many years, professional colleague, company partner of inpetto filmproduktion, who departed from us much too early after a long illness. His death tears a gap in our private and professional life that we cannot close.

Hanne Kaisik / Uli Aumüller

inpetto filmproduktion

A short look back on (almost) 40 years of friendship (by Uli Aumüller)

The first time our paths crossed was at an installation, a multimedia exhibition called *Komm, Seppl, jauchze mal!* which we organized as a group of theater students in 1986 in Haidhausen, a district of Munich. The event was purported to have been planned by an ethnological museum in Nairobi or Kinshasa to study the characteristics and structures of the Bavarian ethnic group and their peculiarities from an African point of view, and the exhibition had now been invited for a guest appearance in Munich. This Montesquieu-like approach corresponded exactly to Gösta's sense of humor - being of Hanseatic origin, it suited him to study the ethnology of the deep south and its exotic details. He had previously been an actor at the *Theater an der Münchner Freiheit* (for which he had learnt to tap dance) and contributed the stage design, planning and realizing immersive landscapes with baroque onion domes and fertile moors for the exhibition. Even before it opened, the exhibition was a scandal in Munich, creating big headlines in the tabloid press. However, shortly before the event was due to start the reactor in Chernobyl exploded, and, unfortunately, hardly anyone was interested in Bavarian peculiarities.

This setback did not diminish our friendship - on the contrary: with great enthusiasm we both joined one of the theater groups that had performed at this festival, the Phren Ensemble. As experimental musical performers we took part in several productions - Gösta played bass tuba, I played flugelhorn. The Phren Ensemble became the subject of Gösta's master's thesis.

His commitment, his wealth of ideas and his sense of humor were inexhaustible. We could carry on discussions for nights on end - and still go to the lecture the next morning without sleep (because that was what we had resolved to do shortly before graduation - to have listened to at least one lecture in its entirety). His supply of jokes with which he could entertain friends for whole evenings was also inexhaustible, as was his supply of tastefully selected suits, some of them tailor-made - and whenever there was something to laugh about, he

laughed the loudest. Gösta was probably the best-dressed student at the Institute of Theater Studies, which attracted covetous glances from some female students. He was faithful to everyone he had taken into his heart, come what may. Gösta could always be relied on as a friend, as a business partner, and in many other respects.

After graduating, Gösta directed the theater festival *Starke Stücke* in Munich (together with Gerd Neuner), inviting productions from all over the world. Among many others, he enabled the first appearance of *La Fura dels Baus* in Germany, and thus opened the doors for their international career.

After this period in festival management, Gösta became permanent dramaturge and deputy artistic director at the *Landestheater* in Castrop-Rauxel. Here he established two additional new theater programs in addition to the normal schedule of the *Landesbühne* - one was experimental: he invited directors from the independent theater scene to use the actors and resources of the *Landesbühne* for experimental productions, installations or abstract performances. The national press soon took notice - in many articles it was observed that one would expect to see productions like these staged in Bochum or at the *Schaubühne* in Berlin, rather than in Castrop-Rauxel.

But his greatest success with the audience came with his second program: he wrote revues, one after another, mostly based on popular songs, sailor's songs, songs of the 1930s and 40s, Hollywood songs. In these revues, people were encouraged to laugh heartily and slap their thighs, even the most obvious punch lines were allowed. Gösta's tremendous theatrical talent came in handy here - he knew exactly what worked on stage and what didn't. As a result, these productions were always sold out and toured extremely successfully throughout the country (and flushed money back into the budget, which he immediately spent on contemporary theater productions).

Around 2001, we came up with the idea of transferring the concept of musical revues into the form of a serial musical. A far-fetched plot, a tacky love story, plenty of pop tunes and dance interludes - Bollywood goes Spandau. The concept was dubbed "Am Lindenufer" after the corner pub where we first developed it. The pub can still be found today on the banks of the river Havel in this district of Berlin. The script for the first episode had already been fully developed by Gösta and the plot for the first season of 6 episodes was sketched out. It was a pity that no producer could be found who wanted to put the idea into practice. We were probably 20 years ahead of our time. Or were we - in retrospect - not persistent enough?

In Castrop-Rauxel Gösta met the woman of his life - Heike, whom he married soon after. He raised Heike's sons as if they were his own. Heike was and remained his great love until the end of his life - not once in over 20 years have I heard Gösta talk about her in any other way than: "She is my greatest happiness - the best thing that could ever happen to me in my life!"

At the turn of the millennium, Gösta began working with Hanne Kaisik and myself at inpetto film production in Berlin, and also ran his own branch, inpetto film production west, in the Ruhr region. The theater dramaturge and author turned into a passionate music documentary filmmaker, which was only natural considering the sheer endless record collection he had amassed over the years. After a short training period (on the film "In Search of Sounds Never Heard Before", 2000), Gösta was an equal partner in our company, and we rotated the various functions from one production to the next, going from pushing the dolly on one film to being the director or production manager on the next, and then taking care of bookkeeping for the *Künstlersozialkasse*.

Films he directed or played an important part in featured the choreographer Toulia Limnaios, the composer and pianist Fazil Say, the violinist Daniel Hope, Perotinus Magnus, the Hilliard Ensemble, the cellist Sol Gabetta, Johann Sebastian Bach, the pianist Murray Perahia, Songs on a Summer Evening (featuring, among others, Reinhard Mey and Arlo Guthrie), violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, pianists Katja and Mireille Labèque, and most recently, at its opening, the Anneliese Brost Music Forum Ruhr in Bochum. The last film production by inpetto in which Gösta was involved was a portrait of the conductor and choir director Frieder Bernius - this time as a cameraman behind one of the four cameras during the recording of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. Despite his already advanced illness, he did not allow himself to be prevented from participating in the production.

Gösta's illness, his illnesses, came just when there would have been room, time and space in his life to enjoy a happy and peaceful retirement together with his beloved wife. We all wished it so much for him!

Oh Gösta, wherever you are now, may you be able to listen to the music you always dreamed of here on earth; wherever you are now, may you not have to bother with too many badly-dressed people - and wherever you are now, may you have just as much reason to laugh heartily in the way that was so distinctive and typical of you here on earth.

Uli Aumüller, Berlin / Zehlendorf 15.08.2023