

PORTRAIT

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Noah Saavedra © Stefan Klüter

AN UNUSUAL CAREER

A PORTRAIT OF ACTOR NOAH SAAVEDRA

The path to success in acting doesn't always have to begin as a child actor or in a school theatre club. As Noah Saavedra's career shows, you can also stumble upon your vocation more by chance – and things can still take off quickly.

Actually, the Austrian – who grew up in Vienna although his mother is from Chile – wanted to become a kindergarten teacher or a carpenter. He wasn't really sure, as he recalls: "I kind of wanted to create art and be an artist. But actually, I didn't know exactly what that meant, or how to go about it." The decisive nudge came from an acquaintance: "She recommended that I go to the Junge Burg. That's a programme of workshops for young people at the Burgtheater, and she said it was something for the undecided, for people who hadn't yet found their way. Because you get a taste of several fields: carpentry in stage-set construction, writing in dramaturgy. Or indeed acting."

During that time at the Burg, a so-called "About Me" video was made, which fell into the hands of casting agent Eva Roth. "That was really lucky," says Saavedra in retrospect, because this coincidence had far-reaching consequences. He was not a suitable candidate at the first audition Roth arranged for him, but when she sent him to a second directly afterwards, without any preparation at all, it proved decisive. "I had no idea what to expect, first confusing the director with the lighting technician, and then taking off my shoes to combat my nervousness with more grounding," says the actor, born in 1991, with a laugh as he looks back on his first major film role in "Egon Schiele: Death and the Maiden".

"When I got the part, it turned into a year and a half of preparation, during which I first learned how to stand in front of the camera and how to approach a role. The director Dieter Berner was also an actor and teacher, and he had quite a few tools available that he passed on to me," Saavedra continues. "Suddenly, I was playing the title role in a film that premiered in 44 countries. I felt like I had skipped ten steps on my journey as an actor right at the start."

However, Saavedra didn't want to rest on his laurels after being catapulted from nothing into the film industry with "Egon Schiele", (which earned

him both the Austrian Romy Film Prize and a New Faces Award). In 2015, he left Vienna and began studying at the renowned Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. "I wanted to learn the classical craft to give myself a different foundation," he explains, and cites his colleague Nicholas Ofczarek as a role model because he acts in a lot of films but has always stayed in the theatre as well.

Saavedra, who has been a member of the ensemble at the Residenztheater in Munich since 2019, also intends to pursue a twin-track career for the time being. He has appeared regularly in front of the camera in recent years, for Xaver Böhm's "O Beautiful Night", which premiered at the Berlinale, as well as for leading roles in series such as "Bad Banks" and "Freud". In 2020 he also appeared in "And Tomorrow the Entire World" by Julia von Heinz, the German Oscar submission. Anti-fascist commune meets the glamorous high-end film world, is how the actor describes the moment of the world premiere in Venice: "The filming was low- to no-budget, and now we were standing there in our designer clothes on the red carpet. We had to laugh because it was such an unreal situation. And then at the screening Cate Blanchett sat next to us and gave us the thumbs up. It was like being in a fantasy world."

Saavedra has long since attracted international attention. Filming is now complete on a first leading English-language role in "Everything Will Change" by Martin Persiel, and two more films in English and a French production could well be added soon. He certainly wants to remain true to his resolution to work only on stories that touch him; ones that he himself would like to watch. In the future, he can imagine writing his own scripts and directing. "It definitely appeals to me, but I don't quite have the courage yet," he tells me in farewell. "It's not the time yet." But that doesn't mean that chance won't step in again.

Patrick Heidmann