



photo © Stefan Klüter

INVENTING A CHARACTER

A portrait of actress Aylin Tezel

Aylin Tezel has **just** returned from a month in London, where she undertook **specialist** voice coaching and successfully acquired local **representation**: "I spent a month in Spitalfields," she explains, "**working** with Julia Wilson Dickson. I wanted to get rid of my **German** accent but hung out with too many Irish and almost **picked** up theirs!"

She tells how **she** first auditioned for acting school in Hamburg but "**heard people** apply all over and then I thought, if Hamburg wanted me **immediately** I should also apply elsewhere too," which is how **she** ended up at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Art in **Berlin**. And as an adoptive Berliner, this is where she feels "**freest** and most independent. There are loads of creative **people** here with energy. Other cities have a very clear face, **Berlin** is one that is put together out of a million tiny pieces, each one **different**." She is right, you know.

Aylin Tezel is "a **foodie**! I love food! My favorite food is desert!" But she does **admit** that "I force my way through the green stuff first!" Arriving **from** a workout at a local fitness club, she likes "to be fit. I've been **dancing** since I was six and am used to using my body. So I **can** allow myself to eat what I want. Eating is the greatest!"

Tezel credits her **acting** and dancing teachers who "taught me not only **movement** but about life and being creative, having my own ideas and **bringing** them into reality. Otherwise most of the stuff I learned **at school** was for tests and then forgotten, unfortunately. There **was** no feeling of being involved. What made me the person I **am** today is what I learned outside. We spend so much time **at school** and I understand the importance of academic **subjects**, but I think, later, when people start to specialize, they **still** have the time to bring themselves to where they need to be."

Young people need to learn to be strong is Tezel's message: "Only then, when you have a feeling for yourself and talent, something that needs to come out, do you have a good way to start your life, otherwise you have no idea who you are. It's why so many of my generation start studying something, try something else, try another thing. I was just lucky, I found a teacher who motivated me in this creative field and became an actress." She also credits her family for "always teaching us to trust in ourselves and be brave and independent."

Although an actress, a profession that demands the ability to project a different persona, Tezel emphasizes the importance of inner values, especially in today's world where the internet, Facebook, Twitter and selfies dominate. "I come from a time when you could touch books!" she says. "More energy goes into creating images of what you want or how you want to be perceived, than on inner strength. I see a lot of teenagers who have perfected their exterior, who copy idols, who look to media personalities but don't have much inside themselves."

Moving on to films, she cites 12 YEARS A SLAVE as an example of "how to combine great looks, a great cast and technical ability with depth: you come out having been touched and also learning something. People," she goes on, "learn from **other people** about how the world works. Everyone needs inspiring people in their lives. Not everyone has this kind of luck." Again, she stresses the importance of having a school system that values the arts: "Writing, inventing, having and fighting for your own ideas is essential. You find things in the arts you don't find elsewhere."

She is currently starring in COMING IN, the latest film by Marco Kreuzpaintner, in which she plays a hairdresser. To prepare for the role she "worked as one for a week. I wasn't let loose on real

people, though! But I was allowed to wash people's hair and got people to call me by my character's name, Heidi." For a role in the TATORT series, she worked at a police station for a week.

For BREAKING HORIZONS, in which her character has a still-born, she visited a couple who had experienced just that. This leaves residue, of course: "You can never let go of a character completely because you have spent time thinking about things, feeling, brain and body have a memory," she explains. "You can always go back into a character, but it is important to clear the space for the next one." At the same time, on set, on break, "I am not the character. Some of it rubs off, of course. I'm always aware of people around me. I was playing a suicidal girl one time, dealing with a certain energy, so I was happier to have lunch in a silent spot, but I wasn't jumping off the roof! In BREAKING HORIZONS I was happy to have a laugh at lunchtime, then go back to the character. I was happy to not be her when I got back home."



Aylin Tezel in BREAKING HORIZONS
(photo © J. Sarmiento/ALIN Filmproduktion)

Listing her cinematic likes, Tezel goes for "big Hollywood films, Tim Burton especially. I would see anything with Brad Pitt and Meryl Streep. Whatever they are playing is worth the ticket price. I like German cinema: Andreas Dresen and Hans-Christian Schmid. One of my favorite films is BLUE VALENTINE with Ryan Gosling. I really like THE INTOUCHABLES. I like films that touch me, the genre is not that important. AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY really worked for me, Meryl Streep and Julia Roberts, Meryl Streep deserves an Oscar® – again!"

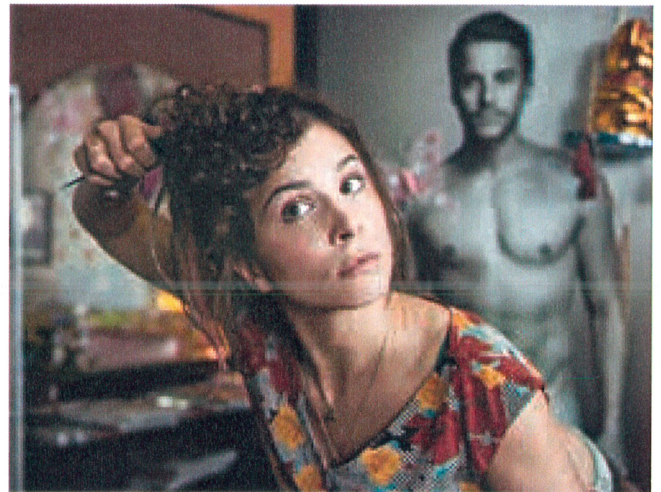
When getting a script Tezel needs to know, "Does it do anything for me? What is my reason to play it? I need to identify with it. Then, if I get the part, I would start collecting information in any way I can; I need to know background, family structure, strengths and weaknesses, what would this person think about the big themes in life, etc.?"

She "would love to be in an action film! I had a bit of a stunt in my last TATORT!" she says. "I would love the stunt training, the combat training! We don't do this in Germany, sadly!" At the same time she is "hopeful, because it's about the story, not the medium. We could define ourselves through our cinema, have a national look and feel. There are a lot of people coming in with a lot of energy." Coming off "a week that is crazy, I had three auditions, a comedy, a thriller and also a TV-two-parter," Tezel enjoys castings: "I'm always thinking, even if I am not right, it's nice to invent a character, even for an audition. It's fun. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."

And ... "I made a short!" TANZ MIT IHR – INHALE" is about a young dance student who is very lonely and has problems communicating, so she makes up her own world in which dance is her medium. It premiered at Hof and screened in Cork, San Francisco and Achtung Berlin as well. I just sold it to ARTE!"

Tezel describes the process as "very interesting. Producing was the hardest. I wanted to try, fail if need be. I didn't have a business plan or budget. It was a total learning process and changed my understanding for all those different departments that work on a film." Would she strike out in this new direction? "I would, probably," she replies, "but my first and biggest love is acting."

Simon Kingsley



Aylin Tezel in COMING IN (photo courtesy of Global Screen)

► Born in 1983 in Bünde, a very small city in North Rhine-Westphalia, AYLIN TEZEL went to school in nearby Bielefeld. She then started studying Dance before moving to acting school in Berlin, which she dropped eighteen months in "to go traveling and gain wider experience." She auditioned for acting schools in Holland and Belgium, was accepted for Theatrical Dance at Tilburg, in the Netherlands, but decided she needed more stimulation. Back in Bielefeld she finished her Dance studies and started teaching, inventing her own pieces as a choreographer. She also started to gain her first film roles: UNSCHULD (2007) and ALMANYA – WILKOMMEN IN DEUTSCHLAND (2009), which screened at the Berlinale. In 2011 came her first lead role: BREAKING HORIZONS (AM HIMMEL DER TAG, the first feature by Pola Beck), which won her the Best Actress Award in Toronto, the film itself taking the Best German Language Film in Zürich and Pola Beck winning the Hessischer Filmpreis.

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