

A Cinema Canada exclusive

Goodbye to all that

Ingmar Bergman's farewell to film

This is a very personal interview with Ingmar Bergman, cinema's Strindberg, who at 65 has definitely finished with film after a forty-year career and fifty pictures. Fanny and Alexander really is his last film. The master has returned to his roots, the theatre. Today, he's a quiet, happy and somewhat introverted bourgeois. His sixty-fifth birthday was celebrated at home, on Farö, the barren island between Russia and Sweden in the Baltic, where, as he says, he found himself. Gathered around him were his eight children and four grandchildren, assembled by the sixth Mrs. Bergman, Ingrid.

Bergman tends to see remarks he made in the past as being relative — remarks about religion, love, his search for God and his fear of death. He states he has made films only for himself. Films and life were always inseparable to Ingmar Bergman, who put everything he was into his pictures. Actors and especially actresses have spoken of his depressions, first his problems with God and then later, his preoccupation with problems between people. That he opened the eyes of the world to the small tragedies of interhuman relationships is of no importance to him, he says. Neither is his equally eye-opening manner of dealing with the rapid evolution of Christian ideology since the Second World War. "I don't care" is the recurring theme of his talk nowadays. Yet it was Bergman who painted the merciless portraits of people who don't communicate anymore in Cries and Whispers and Scenes from a Marriage.

He sees Persona as the cathartic film of his career, a journey beyond artistic marriages and bohemian relationships. The film portrays two spiritually related women, one of whom doesn't talk anymore. A tragic changing of the guards: Bibi Andersson, his girlfriend at that time, had to step aside for Liv Ullman, while Bergman was still married with the pianist Kaebi Laretei from Estland. He finally found his deliverance, and decided to leave the National Theatre in Stockholm and to divorce Kaebi. He wanted to settle down on the island of Farö with Liv Ullman, but his subsequent marriage in '71 with Ingrid (he would like to run a small French restaurant with her) only highlights even more starkly his flight into the bourgeoisie.

Now the bitter psychological analysis has ended. Bergman's last film looks back on all the findings and loosings of each other. With it he wants to make it clear that one can always start again — that everything is possible. Strange how this career of a magical director, well acquainted with demons and illusionists, lies firmly wedged between two 'cheerful' pictures: The Smile of a Summer's Night and Fanny and Alexander. (Distributed across Canada by Les Films René Malo, Fanny and Alexander is scheduled for national re-release in March.) Bergman has returned to his point of origin: a happy, contended child in a matriarchal family. Women have ruled his life. Doesn't his present wife Ingrid, confesses Bergman, show a remarkable likeness to his mother?

by Frénk van der Linden
and B.J. Bertina

"I have to warn you", Mrs. Bergman said as we made the final appointment for the interview. "Ingmar is always on time. Punctual. Don't be a minute late, otherwise he'll be gone. My husband is a Swiss watch."

Therefore, a quarter of an hour early, we entered the office of Cinematograph, Bergman's commercial pied à terre in Stockholm.

While we are waiting on the stairs in the stately yellow villa, we hear him whistle as he comes in. Slaps on the shoulders, hugs, roars of laughter, the rituals of a non-existent, but seemingly sudden, intimate, friendship. His wife Ingrid waits for us in the office. A friendly formal lady in a tailored suit, her grey hair in a chignon. Bergman is wearing a drab velvet corduroy suit and worn shoes.

She directs us, especially the hesitant director, to a room with two rows of seats and a screen. On the wall a portrait of Viktor Sjöström, the Swedish cinema pioneer and Bergman's inspirer.

Cinema Canada: You hate meeting strangers.

Ingmar Bergman: Yes, I like to feel secure, to talk and work with people whom I know through and through. When I have dinner in a restaurant I must survey every corner beforehand. I need to feel safe, to be safe. I hate improvising. I want things to turn out the way I planned them. Communicating with strangers is often unpleasant. Sometimes you have to spend two hours with a journalist you disliked at first sight. Those hours are an eternity for me. I don't do it anymore, I'm too old for it now. When I feel it's not going to work out, I usually say: 'I don't think we are on the same wave-length, let's stop. You go your way and I'll go mine, write whatever you want.' But sometimes I am curious, especially in the case of actors or directors. Then I overcome my fear. But who are you? What do you want from Ingmar Bergman?

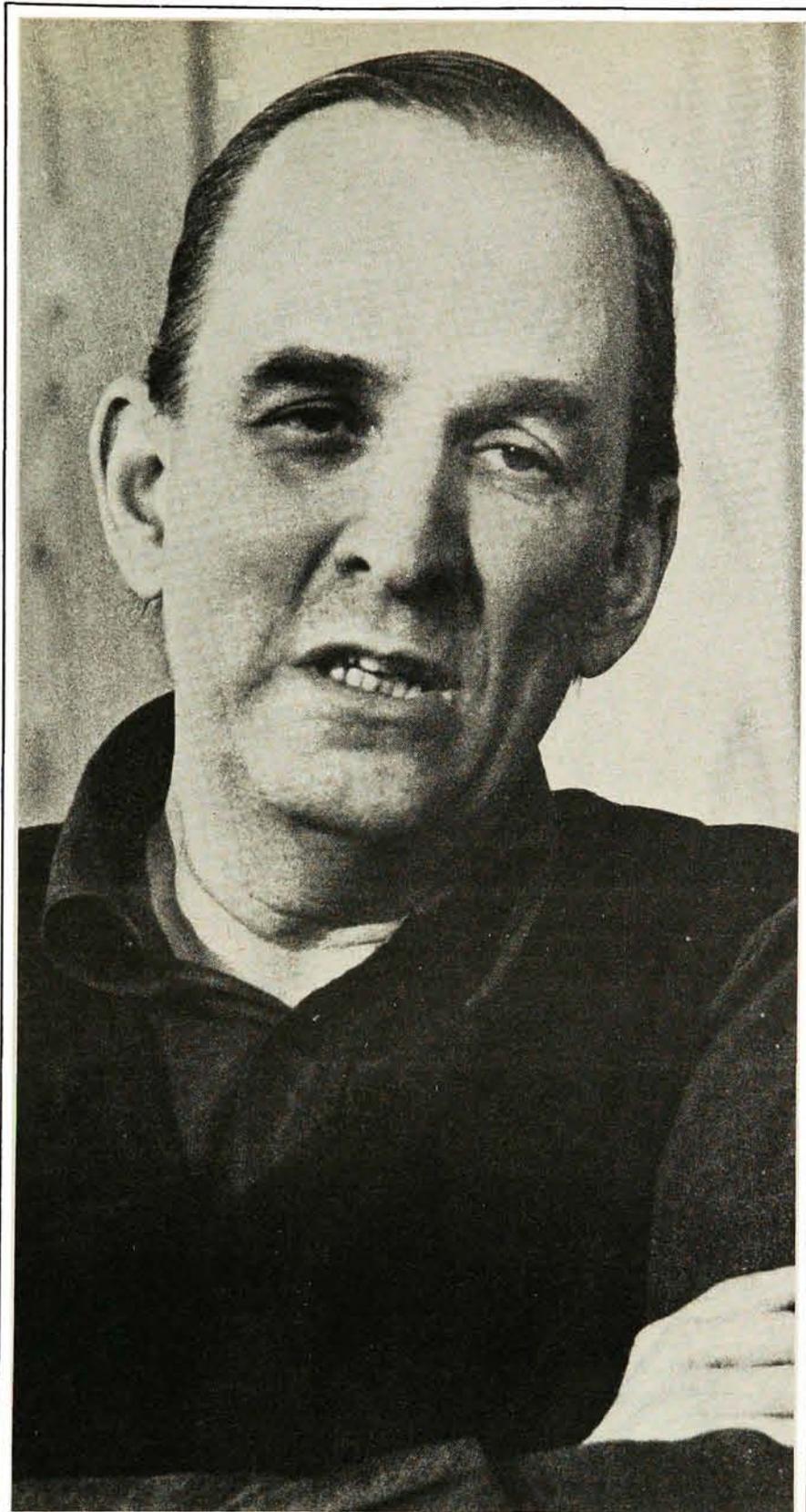
We explain. Bertina, 68, a movie critic, has followed Bergman professionally from the beginning. He is eager to learn his outlook on life and the cinema after a 40-year-career and 50 films. Van der Linden, 25, a reporter who knows Bergman only through his latest pictures, wonders what has made him the man he is in all those years.

Ingmar Bergman: Aha, another old man! How do you feel? Well? Listen: when you're old you have to whistle. When I'm in a bad mood I whistle to change it. When you've got problem: start laughing. Laugh, laugh, laugh and you will feel better. Try it sometime.

And then you, the representation of youth! Don't make it too difficult for me, will you?

Cinema Canada: Sorry, I have to. When as a little boy I was in bed at night and I heard my parents quarrel, I used to sneak down-stairs to peek through the glass-pane of the living-room-door. While watching your film *Scenes of a Marriage* I feel myself going back to the years of my own childhood.

Reporter Frénk van der Linden and critic B.J. Bertina are Europe-based journalists.



● "What do you want from Ingmar Bergman?"

Ingmar Bergman: Perfect. That's it. My film is your déjà-vu. Good for the film that it worked that way.

Cinema Canada: Did you want it to touch people in that way?

Ingmar Bergman: I don't care. (Laughing loudly) I really don't care. If someone told me her husband committed suicide after seeing my movie, I would say: Well, I don't care, it's not my business. I just create my picture, that's my statement, and then I let it go, I don't look at it again, it has become other people's affair. That's the way it is.

Cinema Canada: As a director you are more or less your own psychiatrist. Pieces of your own life emerge, problems you're been struggling with.

Ingmar Bergman: All artists are their own psychiatrists. I'm sure about that.

Cinema Canada: Is that why you say

'making a picture is suffering'? Because you are continuously confronted with yourself, because you try to come to terms with your problems whilst making a film?

Ingmar Bergman: I meant that in a much more vulgar way. Making pictures hurts because early every morning you have to go to the studio knowing that you will have to stay there for nine, ten hours. You know that you have to finish three minutes of the film the same day. And that for fifty, eighty, or a hundred days in a row. At the end of the working-day you're dead.

Obsession and passion

Ingmar Bergman: It's a neurotic job. It's an obsession, a passion. You suffer. It's unhealthy, bad for your body and bad for your soul. You have to endeavour to attain your best constantly. No other artist has to deal with so much stress. A

violinist has only his instrument to think of. Sometimes also the orchestra, but he is only responsible for himself. As a director I operate an extremely complicated machine and I am responsible for everything that happens in and with it. Actors, technicians, film crew. Usually we have good contact. Sometimes something is brewing, the tension rises and the ulcer bursts. What a struggle!

Cinema Canada: But a struggle with a 'therapeutic effect', as you call it. What was that effect in the case of your last film, *Fanny and Alexander*?

Ingmar Bergman: (Literally he shakes the question off.) Is it therapeutic to work on something in which you find pleasure from the moment you start to write? It was fun. A lot of people say it is a picture I made to come to terms with my childhood. Of course there are elements of my youth in it. *Alexander*, in a way, is me. But those are minor things. I don't have to heal any childhood-wounds - I haven't got any. It was fun. Fun! The statue in the first part of the picture, waving at *Alexander*, I remember that from when I was a little boy.

Cinema Canada: The fantasies of a child?

Ingmar Bergman: No. No. Not a fantasy. I really saw it. Children see those things. *Alexander* tells lies, he says his parents want to sell him to a travelling circus. At school I told my friends the same. Because I was crazy about the circus, I lied. I wanted to be important in the eyes of my little friends.

And the mad uncle who extinguished candles by farting... I had such an uncle. And his marriage was unhappy. The grandmother in *Fanny and Alexander* has many characteristics of my own grandmother, although my grandmother wasn't a theatre-woman. I had a very warm relationship with her, even when I was a little boy. My father was a clergyman and the doors of a clergyman's home are always open. It was a turbulent life: people came and went - stressy. At my grandmother's in Uppsala it was very quiet. I was alone with her, I loved her and she loved me. We spoke about life, the little boy of seven and that tender old woman. She treated me as if I were an adult. Sometimes I wouldn't understand what she said. It didn't matter, we made contact. She was patient, intelligent. A strong woman. I wanted to have her in the film.

And just like *Alexander* I was also deadly afraid of ghosts, demons. I saw them, they haunted me, I couldn't escape them.

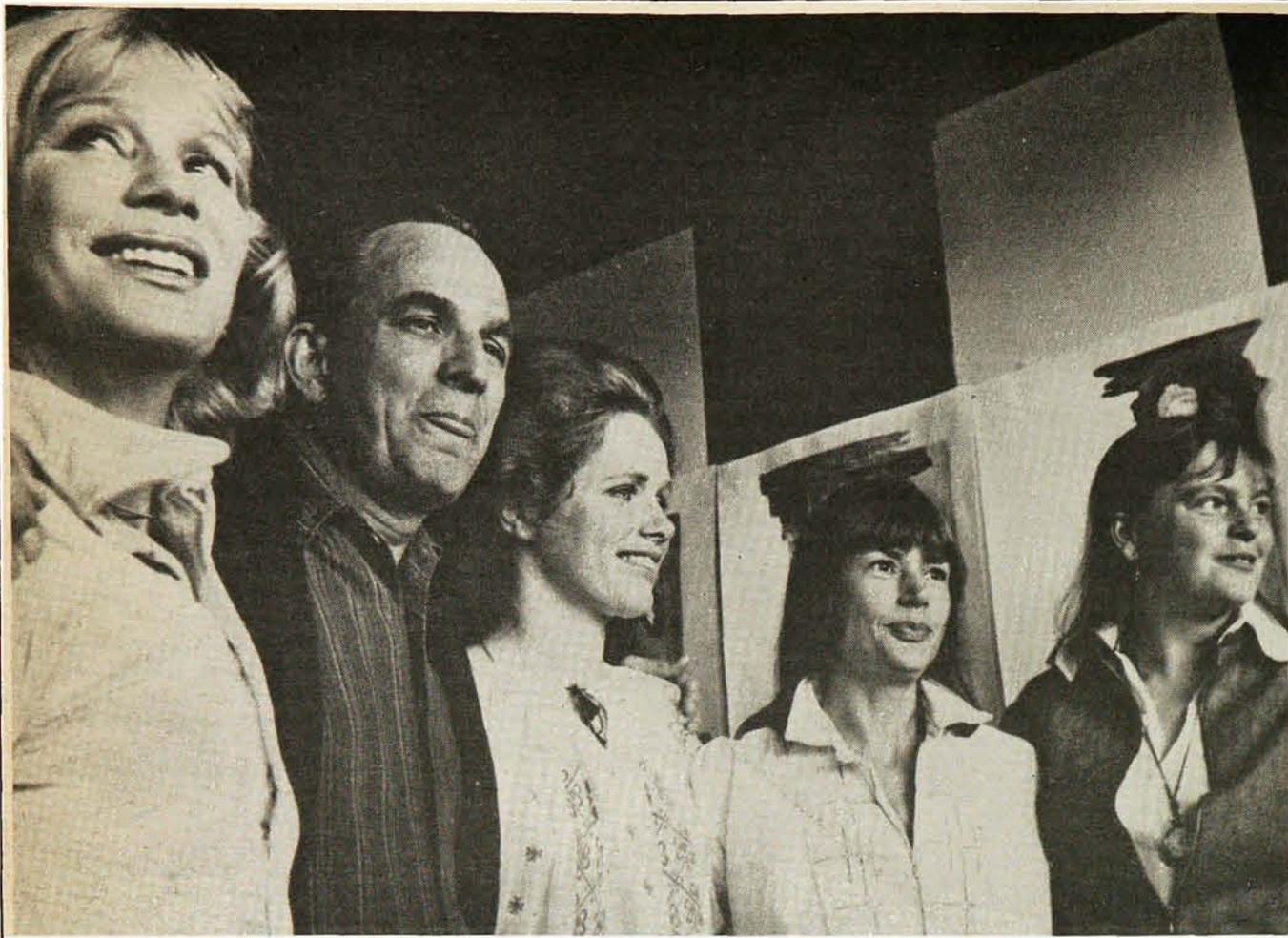
Cinema Canada: *Fanny and Alexander* is not a black picture. Did your friend Kiell Grede influence you by saying: "Why does a man who finds life so rich and pleasant make such serious, depressive movies?"

Ingmar Bergman: No, that didn't affect me at all. (He spreads his arms.) Not at all! I act the way I feel and Ingmar Bergman was a happy man in those days. I don't start writing with the idea this will be the tone of the picture - that's an extremely artificial way of working. I just write. I don't make a movie to show someone I'm a cheerful or a depressed person.

Television: less complicated

Cinema Canada: It's hard to believe this was your last film.

Ingmar Bergman: (Bergman bursts out laughing again, slaps his knees and



● The master, together with his leading ladies from *Cries and Whispers*: Ingrid Thulin, Liv Ullmann, Harriet Andersson and Kari Sydman

then whispers.) Yes... sure... it's over. For the fun of it I'll make some television stuff, but that's a lot easier. You have to produce the same quality, but the work takes less time... an old man, you understand... it's less complicated. And you don't spend your own money or the money of some financier. You're not responsible. If it takes a million? Two million? You don't care, because *nobody* cares.

Cinema Canada: Don't you think that television will eventually mean the death for the cinema? Before long, people will be able to watch television ten hours a day. Who will still want to go to the cinema?

Ingmar Bergman: The cinema will always exist. In the future people will still long to come together in a dark room with a magic screen. It's the experience that counts. Young people already turn away from television, they throw themselves at video instead. But in a few years' time that gimmick too will have disappeared. People want to come out of their caves again and again to snuggle up to one another.

But why is it so hard to believe I want to stop making pictures? Ingmar Bergman is not a liar.

Cinema Canada: You once said: "My work in the theatre is like the roots from which a tree, the movie, grows." You want to continue doing plays and working in the theatre, so inevitably trees will grow.

Ingmar Bergman: Maybe I won't be able to stop their growth. I won't force them into the ground, I'll leave them. I'll just leave them be. Don't forget the most beautiful moment of making a film is *before* you start shooting. I can experience that without having to shoot. You're a child, playing with his favourite toys. Things that become serious are no longer nice. The reason I'm finished with directing is because I can't go on

any longer. *Fanny and Alexander* took me a hundred and thirty days of shooting. I don't want to go back to that slavery.

It's not hard for me to say farewell to the cinema. It would be a catastrophe if I was forced to leave the theatre, I love it much more than the cinema. Ingmar Bergman's life would be over. My deepest wish is to direct an opera and I think that wish will be fulfilled. "Hoffmanns Erzählungen" (by Offenbach)... I long for that.

Maelstrom of forces

Cinema Canada: Have you learnt more about yourself after fifty pictures?

Ingmar Bergman: I hope so. But it isn't due to all of my films. It's because of *life*. You're twenty-five now, you'll find out. Won't he, Mr. Bertina? Haven't we changed so much in those forty years? I understand things much better than I used to. When you're twenty-five you think you can rule the world. You see through, everything, your ideas and opinions are perfect, you know exactly how the world is put together, you've got everything under control. You're the ruler of mankind. There's nothing wrong with you. You've got the body of a young God, your soul is unspoiled. But, in fact, you're still only eleven years old. When you're young, you're preoccupied with yourself – or the theatre. The rest is not interesting.

Cinema Canada: In *Fanny and Alexander* Emilie, the actress, says: "I don't care about reality, it's colourless and uninteresting; it hasn't got anything to do with me. Wars, and revolutions, poverty, epidemic diseases, injustice and volcanic eruptions don't mean anything to me so long as they don't interfere with the part I'm playing."

Ingmar Bergman: That's me, more or less. I could have said that when I was

younger. Boy, everything was so easy then. But later in life you find out how complicated it all really is. Some things you understand when you're thirty, others not until you're forty. Everything is more cruel than you think. Things have happened to me that I didn't want. Things against which one can't defend oneself.

Cinema Canada: Such as?

Ingmar Bergman: You'll find out. You'll be startled. Life is a maelstrom of forces you don't know anything about yet. Sometimes you can handle them, sometimes you lose and disappear in the whirlpool. But slowly... (A sigh) My God, it's too complicated, much too complicated. Just live, climb that mountain, on top the view is wider than you can ever imagine. You'll become more tolerant. As an insecure boy I was very intolerant. I was always right, that comes in handy when you're scared, I'm not bothered by that fight anymore and therefore I'm not a fighter. At my age you know what your identify is and you've got time to be more generous. You find peace, it is a quiet way of happiness. Lovely. Getting older isn't *always* pleasant, but you appreciate more things. Stravinsky once said to me: "I'm glad I've lived this long, now I finally love Brahms' "Liebeslieder Walzer". That's what I mean. Ten years ago I hated rock music. It drove me crazy. Now I like it. (Ironic smile) I like it, it's quite stimulating but I will not dance it. The voice of a new generation is always stimulating, you only have to learn to listen to it. And oh... it can be so touching!

Suicide

Cinema Canada: Have you any insight in why you had to make films?

Ingmar Bergman: I once said I started to make films to escape my personal life, which was a fiasco. I had

been married three times when I was thirty. I wanted to become a good director because as a human being I was a failure. In the studio and the theatre I could live happily. I still feel that way. But I don't know whether or not I succeeded in my escape. I really don't know. In any case I had the advantage of *being able* to escape in my work. It's a fantastic way to avoid your problems. Just to say: "Sorry, we have to postpone this argument, I have to shoot a scene first!" And when we had finished the picture I would make sure there was another theatre production that demanded my time. Mmmm... what a lovely way to flee from one's troubles. (Satisfied) No, that wasn't bad at all.

Cinema Canada: During your escape you did face your problems: you made films out of them.

Ingmar Bergman: Continuously. While working I did not avoid my problems. I treated them professionally and I kept them at a distance in that way. I didn't drown in them, no, I did something *with* them. I can turn very glum or solemn aspects of life into something very jolly. Or vice versa. People always think you make a comedy when you're in a good mood and a tragedy when you feel rotten. Nonsense. The only time in my life I was on the verge of committing suicide I made a comedy, *The Smile of a Summer's Night* (1956). That picture was made in the worst period of my life!

Cinema Canada: Why did you consider suicide?

Ingmar Bergman: (His grey-green eyes turn cold, almost distrustful) That is no subject for this interview.

Cinema Canada: There must have been a moment when you decided to face up to your problems. One can't escape from them all one's life.

Ingmar Bergman: You're right, that's impossible. (Violently) No, no, no.

Cinema Canada: So when did you end it?

Ingmar Bergman: I still know exactly: 1966. In that year I went to the house I had bought on the island Farö. In those days I was living with Liv Ullmann. She left for Norway and the United States for *The Immigrants*. She stayed away for two years, on location, and we barely saw each other. I was living on my own. Once in a while the wife of a neighbouring farmer came to clean-up and to prepare my supper. We ate together. But for twenty-one hours a day I was alone with Ingmar Bergman, for the first time in my life. At first it was terrible. But very slowly I started to appreciate it and I learned my lesson. You have to face your problems and yourself. Another important moment was two years before that. I suffered from a serious infection which caused a disturbance of my equilibrium. For months it seemed as if the world was turned upside down when I moved my head. I even found it difficult to speak. For three years I had been the manager of the National Theatre. I had reorganized everything. I was tired. So tired. I was very ill and didn't want to get better. It was then that I wrote *Persona* (Masks). That film saved my life. I started to write without hope. But I became spellbound. A picture about the world of thoughts of two women related to each other, one of them talking, the other silent: fascinating. In a way I had to get better to film and so I got better. Something like that. All I wanted was to

shoot with Bibi Andersson and Liv Ullmann as soon as possible, two women I knew very well and both excellent actresses.

Those days of deliverance! I realized I could leave the National Theatre if I wanted, that I could divorce my wife... When you don't avoid facing the mess you're in, you can always start again.

Manipulating people

Cinema Canada: *Didn't you direct films because of the power a director has, the power to manipulate and control people?*

Ingmar Bergman: That wasn't the reason I directed pictures, it was something that always turned up while doing it. The desire to manipulate people and reality, to distort, is a disease every director suffers from and *has* to suffer from if he is eager to make a good film.

Cinema Canada: *Do you still commit murder?*

Ingmar Bergman: What do you mean?

Cinema Canada: *In your thoughts. You once explained that it was a relief to butcher an enemy now and then.*

Ingmar Bergman: I've got so many fantasies... (Half-closed eyes, a sinister look) I see myself killing someone... the blood on the wall... to see something die... What I'd really like to do and *could* do is... well... no, even killing a critic is too heavy a job. And I don't hate them that much anyway. But when I was as old as you are now, there were many people whom I really wanted to kill. Nowadays my fantasies are anonymous.

Cinema Canada: *Every person has a philosophy on life which changes with time. What is yours at this moment?*

Ingmar Bergman: (A defensive gesture) I have no such philosophy. None. As I see it, it is impossible and absurd to have one. (Roaring) Haw, haw, philosophy, what is it? What can you do with it? I'm not dogmatic at all, I've got one basic view: to have no basic views.

No system necessary

Cinema Canada: *You can't live just like that, can you?*

Ingmar Bergman: My boy, why ever not?

Cinema Canada: *Every day you make decisions. Something must form the foundation for those decisions, vague as it may be.*

Ingmar Bergman: Replace the word *philosophy* with *ethics*, then I'll answer your question. Your daily decisions are based upon your ethics, they haven't got anything to do with philosophy. Philosophy has to do with God and eternal life etcetera... (A tired expression) You can't face *that* every day. Some people need the security of such a system. I don't. My ethics are enough for me. It is a sort of discipline that can be described in six words: I want to be on time. Indeed, when I find that I'm going to be ten minutes late for an appointment, I send a telegram.

I want to keep my promises. When I wake up in the morning, at five o'clock, and I think: disgusting, an interview at half-past ten. Automatically my next thought is: I will go. When I enter the studio or theatre, I keep telling myself that my stomach, my headache or my mood must not matter: it's the job that counts. I and the actors have to use or



● Bergman directing Irma Urrilla as Pamina in *The Magic Flute*

time efficiently. When you're as chaotic inside as I am (a chaos that has always been in me), you have to be very careful and very punctual. Things must not be like *this* (Bergman moves a cup of coffee some millimeters), but like *this* (puts it back). I'm a perfectionist. Yes, yes. I know from experience that awful things can happen when I get caught in a fit of anger. That's very dangerous for me, and for other people.

Splash

His words make us think of the times he tore telephones off walls and threw chairs through studio-windows. "A Swede," he once explained, "is like a bottle of ketchup: nothing and nothing and then suddenly - splash."

Ingmar Bergman: That's what I mean. (Tensely) I must look out. When I feel it coming on, I have to turn off a switch inside me. To have that kind of discipline is a sort of ethics. I have to prevent using my weapon, a lethal weapon: I know people well, I can see through them, so when I explode I can say things as sharp as a razor-blade. Things that can ruin my relationship with someone completely, that can also ruin that person. When I was twenty-five, I wasn't careful. Now at least I know I've got to be and usually I am.

Cinema Canada: *According to you humiliation is the central issue in life: in education, in our social system. We are being humiliated and humiliate in turn.*

Ingmar Bergman: I am the master of humiliation. I know exactly how I can hurt other people, how I can tread down on people. So my ethic is a very practical one: don't do it.

Cinema Canada: *In this respect one of the crucial scenes is presumably the one in which Alexander's stepfather, a*

clergyman, beats the boy up because of a lie which isn't a real lie?

Ingmar Bergman: (He is silent and then says as if it's a confession) That scene - every detail, every moment - comes from my childhood. My father punished me in that way for my fantasies. You must understand - it was hard for me too - that grownups involved in such an act of humiliation were convinced that they were doing it out of love and probably hating every moment themselves. But they were so fearful of my bad behaviour that the thought uppermost in their minds was: *we must do this.*

Cinema Canada: *People you have worked with have the impression you sometimes (temporarily) become your own father, the man you hated so much. High-handed, not accepting any contradiction.*

Ingmar Bergman: Of course, yes I... I... (He closes his eyes).

Cinema Canada: *You can be harsh towards actors.*

Ingmar Bergman: No! It's not like that! I only behave that way when they ask for it. When you're ill and the doctor says: 'We have to take it out,' you don't ask him to be nice, you ask him to use clean instruments, to be objective, not to be afraid, but *to take it out*, God, and quickly. With actors it's the same: I see there's something wrong, and I have to cut it out. Of course cutting out a rotten spot hurts. But it *has* to be done.

The worst doctors I know are the people who make *Dallas*. *Dallas* is written badly, directed badly, acted badly and filmed badly. *Dallas* has no limits in its tastelessness, lack of talent and completely cynical way of handling people. (He sighs) All of it makes *Dallas* so incredibly fascinating.

Cinema Canada: *For many youngsters Dallas is one of their first con-*

frontations with the U.S. And likewise you have confronted people with Sweden.

Ingmar Bergman: I am fully aware of that responsibility, but (Laughs) I don't care, I don't care at all. It's a pity, but I can't help it. I think my films are very Swedish, even my *Zauberflöte* is very, very Swedish. It has something to do with the light, that typical Swedish light... I don't know.

Cinema Canada: *Swedish society is known to be a society in which prosperity and unhappiness go hand in hand. Your movies illustrate that.*

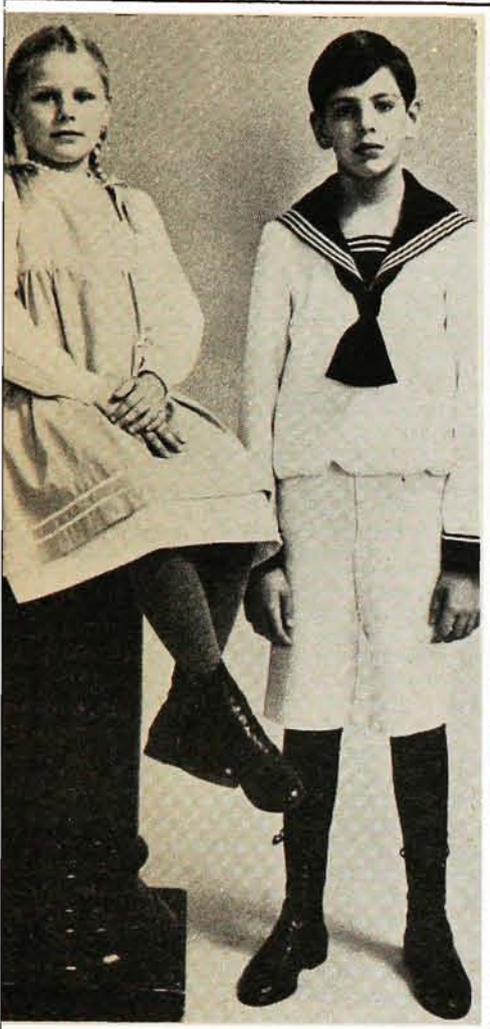
Ingmar Bergman: Our experiment hasn't worked. Today's truth is that the experiment of the welfare-state has failed. At the moment we are trying to find out what went wrong and in my opinion we are doing it in a fair way. We realize and admit that we are lost in a remnant. A remnant of an attempt that started with so many beautiful intentions... a remnant that is known for its many suicide attempts. That's true, but remarkably in Denmark, France and Italy many more people take their own lives.

Without shame

Cinema Canada: *Do you still believe in the social-democratic system?*

Ingmar Bergman: Of course! Of course. It was a brilliant experiment, which hasn't failed one hundred, but only forty percent. We have to find out the *why* of that forty percent and nobody, myself included, has the answer. We discuss, we argue between ourselves without listening to what the other has to say, without feelings of prestige but in the open and without shame - that's democracy.

Cinema Canada: *When you left Sweden in 1976 because of a conflict concerning taxes you wrote a farewell*



● Fanny & Alexander: "I lied"

it isn't really captivating to register how he behaves.

I don't understand why I have to make political pictures. One doesn't blame the painter Edvard Munch for making 'irresponsible apolitical' paintings. Has anyone ever condemned Béla Bartók because of apolitical compositions? Just like them I desire to fathom people's characters – an honourable hunger. Don't grudge me that satisfaction. I admire Costa-Gavras (*Missing*) and Margarethe von Trotta (*Die Bleierne Zeit/The years of lead*) who film people as well as politics. But it's not my cup of tea.

Cinema Canada: *Could it be that you are afraid of politics? You once burned your fingers. As a boy you spent a summer in Germany and were acquainted with a rising Nazism. The son of the family you stayed with was a member of the Hitlerjugend and he took you along to their meetings. You seemed to be rather impressed.*

Ingmar Bergman: I was sixteen (Fiercely) *Sixteen!* That whole family – people I loved – were members of the party. I was influenced very much. As a child I had never been confronted with politics, it was not part of my education. It wasn't so surprising that I was impressed and returned to Sweden rather 'begeistert' (enthusiastic). A few years after the outbreak of the war my eyes were opened... the Nazis... it was a long time ago. I don't think my present attitude has anything to do with it.

Demonstrations: encouraging

Cinema Canada: *Do you still believe the world is at the point of no return? In the past you once remarked: "Our political systems are compromised and have become useless. Our social pattern of behaviour is, inwards as much as outwards, a disaster. We don't want to change the way we're going, or we haven't the courage."*

Ingmar Bergman: Something has changed. The new generation has got something special... all those enormous demonstrations for peace... regardless of my generation and the politicians... very encouraging. But I don't know whether it will save the world. I was in Germany for eight years, and for eight years I saw the chasm between young people East and West. On both sides of the wall they're taught how to hate, to prevent any true contact. As long as we don't storm the blockades the tension will grow from day to day. I can't sleep at night thinking of that Korean Boeing. No communication, literally. No contact, just pushing the botton. Big danger, in a nutshell.

Cinema Canada: *In earlier days it used to be God who kept you awake at night.*

Ingmar Bergman: That's over. I stopped thinking about God twenty years ago. The *Persona* period played a crucial part in that. For years I had tormented myself with the question: is there a God? Then I got that ear-infection. They had to operate. For a few hours I was gone, neither alive nor dead. After that experience I couldn't be afraid of death. The things beyond this world – or is there nothing? – weren't important anymore.

Cinema Canada: *So like Nietzsche you now say: God is dead?*

Ingmar Bergman: I don't know. Maybe he hasn't ever existed. I don't know and I don't care.

Pornography

Cinema Canada: *"Variety" says you're going to make a trilogy with Fellini and Mike Nichols about sexual fantasies, called Erotica. Porno?*

Ingmar Bergman: "Variety" is wrong. Fellini, Kurosawa and I had a plan to make three movies about love, and that's something different. Love, from an Italian, Japanese and Swedish point of view, but absolutely no pornography. Not that I detest porno, I love it! But I don't enjoy making it.

Cinema Canada: *In your pictures women appear to be strong and wise people. Men are egocentric, intolerant, stupid and quite capable of leaving their lovers for their work or art.*

Ingmar Bergman: Again, I think that's because of my childhood. Not only my grandmother, but my mother was a loving and strong personality too. Talented, beautiful. They ruled their families. This is my only explanation. All that rubbish about inner differences between men and women... there is no difference. Differences are created by society, they're external. Often one of those external differences is that a woman dominates the relationship and plays chief.

Cinema Canada: *Your films have opened many eyes to feminism. This liberation has developed. What is the next step for women?*

Ingmar Bergman: They will have to find out very quickly where feminism went wrong! And if they want to build a new society – I most certainly hope that's what they want – they will have to start showing that they're thinking about how to include men. (Bitterly) I'm curious.

Women should think

Cinema Canada: *Before you married Ingrid you had had five wives. They all had a profession: dancer, choreographer, journalist, pianist and actress. Your present wife doesn't have a job...*

Ingmar Bergman: She takes care of my business. Her job is to be my secretary.

Cinema Canada: *... and suddenly the relation lasts longer than all previous ones. You've been together for twelve years.*

Ingmar Bergman: She writes my letters, takes phonecalls, she organises my life. That's very, very good.

Cinema Canada: *A lot of women won't thank you for that remark.*

Ingmar Bergman: Haw, women should start thinking. (Laconically) Why we have problems is that at a certain time all women wanted a job. That's why Women's Lib failed. They have to change their pose, find another way. They shouldn't be so aggressive, although it's easy to understand. They have been treated badly, especially in the nineteenth century.

Cinema Canada: *Feminists will say you're a reactionary who asks women to serve their husbands the way your wife serves you.*

Ingmar Bergman: So what? My wife enjoys it and gets her salary.

Cinema Canada: *What did she do before you got married?*

Ingmar Bergman: She was married and brought up four children. The rest I don't know.

Cinema Canada: *Now we begin to understand a remark you once made: "All women impress me. I'd like to kill a couple of them." As long as they keep quiet all is well.*

Ingmar Bergman: Did I say that?

Cinema Canada: *That's why some people call you an "Icebergman."*

Ingmar Bergman: Well, sometimes you get very tired during an interview and you just say things. Simply because you know the reporter doesn't want the truth, but something special, and you know exactly what he wants. My apologies for the explanation – that's the way it is.

Art: insignificant

Cinema Canada: *When Bergman received the Dutch Erasmus prize in 1965 he declared art to be "insignificant in our days." He explained that art doesn't have the power and the possibility to influence the development of our lives. "Literature, painting, music, the cinema and drama beget themselves. New mutations, new combinations arise and are set aside, the movement – seen from the outside – seems to possess a restless vitality, the artists seem to strive, furiously and in a grandiose way, to project, for themselves and for a continuously less interested audience, the images of a world that doesn't care about their preferences and thoughts. In some isolated areas the artists are being punished and art is looked upon as something dangerous, worth only to be checked and directed. In general, however, art is unrestrained, shameless, irresponsible and – as I've mentioned before – the movement is fierce, almost feverish. It is like a serpent's skin filled with ants. The serpent has been dead for a long time, it has decayed and is stripped of its venom, but its skin still moves, full of chaotic life."*

Cinema Canada: *As a factor of modernisation, as a reforming power – you don't believe in art. Thus already in 1965 you wondered if there was any reason to continue your activities. And now we must conclude you've remained an ant in a serpent's skin. Why do you want to be an ant?*

Ingmar Bergman: (An empty look) Because I love being an ant. I have always loved it. I'll continue, not because of you, not because of others, I do it for myself. I do it because it is the only way of living that I know, how dead the skin through which I crawl may be. I don't know who watched my films, I don't know who needed them, I only know I did.

Cinema Canada: *It is simple for you, now.*

Ingmar Bergman: You have to be sixty-five to see it so clearly.

Cinema Canada: *Jörn Donner, producer of Fanny and Alexander, said: "Bergman has been trying to fight the bohemianism in himself by leading a well-ordered life. He is very much the bourgeois today." You'd like to see yourself and Ingrid as the proprietors of...*

Ingmar Bergman: A small French restaurant, yes. What Donner symbolizes is quite right. To own a restaurant is a good way to live together, to work, to share things with people. Contact. You see... pff... of course, I've always been an anarchic bourgeois, a strange animal.