Interview with Liudmila Danilenko:

Roberts: What’s your name?

Danilenko: My name is Liudmila.

Roberts: Last name and patronymic, please?

Danilenko: Liudmila Vasilievna Danilenko.

Roberts: And where were you born?

Danilenko: I was born in Volgograd province. And in 1982…and from 1982 on I’ve been living in St. Petersburg.

Roberts: Do you remember the first time you went to the movies?

Danilenko: It was a long time ago. Maybe when I was five.

Roberts: Do you remember the movie you went to see?

Danilenko: It was a fairy tale.

Roberts: Could you please explain the movie?

Danilenko: The impression from watching the movie or its plot?

Roberts: About the experiences.

Danilenko: About the experiences. The sensation…it was a long time ago, it really was. The first big screen at the movies for me was something unusual. Some sort of fairy tale film. It was a version for kids, that all of life is a fairy tale, oh so beautiful. Those were the first impressions.

Roberts: Who did you go with?

Danilenko: **With my mom**.

Roberts: How did you like the movie theater?

Danilenko: Well I haven’t been in a modern movie theater, because in connection with work, with **my** profession, there just isn’t time to go. But my first impression…what a huge building with big seats, something very enjoyable, something new, it wasn’t quite a *house*. We didn’t have a TV set then, we didn’t know what that was. But of course it was very, very enjoyable.

Roberts: When did you start going to the movies by yourself?

Danilenko: It was…well, I didn’t go alone, only sometime around sixteen, when I was sixteen years old. Surely only then. And even so we went together to the movie theater. With school. Or there was a showing for us at school, we had a not too big movie room. They showed them to us there or we went in a group to the movie theater.

Roberts: Did you like going to the movies?

Danilenko: I liked it, of course I liked it.

Roberts: How often did you go to the movies?

Danilenko: Not very often. Maybe once a month or once every two months. Because it was such an expensive treat…

Roberts: How did your habit of going to the movies change when you grew up?

Danilenko: It changed profoundly. When I was a kid, and when I, well, became a teenager and then already a full-grown adult…Earlier cinema was more accessible to the people, it was accessible for the people. It was just more full of life, not like today. Now these films like blockbusters, everything is very strange and a bit incomprehensible.

Roberts: What were your favorite genres in childhood?

Danilenko: As a child, I think it was fairy tales and those educational programs. *In the World of Animals*, we had a show like that, and many, many people watched it. Documentaries.

Roberts: Do you have a favorite movie?

Danilenko: Our classics. But not just one, I think there are very many, the films of Gaidai, *The Diamond Arm*…and others.

Roberts: Explain the movies, please.

Danilenko: They’re comedies. The became classics. Or *Ivan Vasilievich Changes his Profession*. You too surely know it. They’re really interesting and really lively.

Roberts: Did you have favorite actors and actresses?

Danilenko: Yes, of course. They were and still remain, although they’re not still alive. Well…Eugene Leonov.

Roberts: Why were they your favorite actors?

Danilenko: I don’t know why…watching them at the movies, you, maybe how you experienced the role that they were playing together with them. And it was very interesting, how they acted.

Roberts: Do you remember any movie or outing concretely?

Danilenko: Could you repeat the question?

Roberts: Do you remember any movie or outing concretely?

Danilenko: Outing to the movie theater? That was a long time ago. Well, I don’t know. Many different films, and the classics, and war movies. I really liked them as a kid. We also had *The Elusive Avengers*, it was a revolutionary film. There young boys played the roles. A young girl and young boys. I really liked that.

Roberts: Why?

Danilenko: I don’t know. Maybe they had such adventurous topics, perhaps because we were about the same age.

Roberts: Do you remember a screening on television, a movie on television?

Danilenko: Well…the first movie, no…Yes. The first movie, probably, I don’t know, but I remember I saw the ballet *Swan Lake* on TV. But that was uncommon. It was really, really beautiful. I liked the music in the show. And I really liked the girls, who were acting. I was really little then. The first time I saw it. There were in really pretty dresses, in tutus…they were all white, so unusual. It was that, probably, that left such a strong impression on me. I really, really liked ballet.

Roberts: Do you remember when you saw it?

Danilenko: It was probably 1959.

Roberts: How did you spend your free time, apart from going to the movies?

Danilenko: Well, we had a lot. I lived in, how can one say this…such a little village, like in the countryside. We had so many chores around the house, so much work. We helped **our** parents. We had a lot of animals. We took care of them, fed them. We read books. There, we had vacation in the summertime. After school we were off for three months. Well and they absolutely gave us a big assignment in school, in order for us to ready many books over the summer. Well whatever, I really like to read.

Roberts: Who did you usually go to the movies with?

Danilenko: **Well, when I was little, with my mom or with my older sister or my brother.** And then I would go with my **friends**.

Roberts: Were there more men or women at the movie theater?

Danilenko: No, it was really equal.

Roberts: Did people often go to the movies with their families or with their friends/**girlfriends**?

Danilenko: I don’t know. How to say…it was generally different, maybe you went one tie with your friends, then another time with family. Parents with their kids.

Roberts: Were there lines at the movie theater?

Danilenko: Yes, there were lines.

Roberts: Do you remember waiting in line?

Danilenko: What kind of movie? I remember I was studying in Volgograd, and I went with my friend. The film was called *The Woman Who Sings*. Our famous singer Alla Borisovna Pugacheva starred in that movie.

Roberts: Why did you like it?

Danilenko: Well, how. She became a famous singer and a new movie came out. We really like seeing and listening to her new songs and seeing her not like a singer, but like an actress.

Roberts: Did you know people who worked at the movie theater?

Danilenko: At the movie theater…probably not.

Roberts: How was the atmosphere in the movie theater?

Danilenko: What was it like in the movie hall? With how the kids behaved, who came to the movies? It depended on the film they were showing, they shouted, clapped. But when it was quiet, someone cried. What a topic there was in the movie, if it was sad. When it was funny, everyone laughed**.**

Roberts: Did you eat anything at the movie theater?

Danilenko: No. I think that wasn’t permitted. If a person came to watch a film, that meant that all his attention had to be turned to the screen, and he had to watch, and not snack. There was another place for that.

Roberts: But there was food service in the movie theater?

Danilenko: Yes.

Roberts: Other people ate?

Danilenko: Well, sometimes.

Roberts: What did they eat?

Danilenko: Well, something there. Pierogis, sandwiches. What they sold. Lemonade – like you have Coca Cola, Pepsi Cola, we have lemonade.

Roberts: And ice cream?

Danilenko: Well, we didn’t have ice cream. It was like that only in the city, they only seldom brought us ice cream in the store.

Roberts: Did you watch foreign movies?

Danilenko: Foreign ones? Yes I watched foreign movies. Well, and like today with our new movies, I don’t really like foreign movies. There’s a lot of…some sort of violence and murder there. Well, maybe it’s like that, I don’t know. I’m somehow closer to our movies. We’re brought up on patriotic movies, on fairy tales, something like that. Well, there are really good foreign movies, I’m not saying that it’s all just American, French cinema there, no. There are really good movies. I watch them with enjoyment.

Roberts: Do you remember any films you’ve seen?

Danilenko: Foreign ones? I can say *Spartacus*, yours, but I don’t remember the director or the actors. There’s *Alexander*, yours, and maybe there’s others, historical ones like this, of course, these very **effects-driven** movies.

Roberts: Do you like historical films?

Danilenko: Yes. They’re really good. *Gladiator*, although in these movies, of course, very many of their plots are also tragic. But the movies are very interesting.

Roberts: When did you see this movie?

Danilenko: Well…it was last year I saw it.

Roberts: And *Spartacus* also?

Danilenko: Yes.

Roberts: And what movies do you like most of all?

Danilenko: There’s also foreign comedies. I really like ones with Louis de Funes. French movies. Where Jean Marais plays. He’s already gone. One and the other, they died. Well Timothy Dalton is still making movies. Now I’ll say, I saw *Jane Eyre*. The film’s called *Jane Eyre*. Timothy Dalton plays in the movie. I really like it. Him too…like there’s a not too big story there.

Roberts: And do you like Timothy Dalton?

Danilenko: Yes.

Roberts: Do you have a favorite foreign actor?

Danilenko: Well…I don’t know. I like ones with Mickey Rourke. Rukenhauer? Did I get his name right? Also, well, I could name many, there are many good actors.

Roberts: Were there movies you weren’t allowed to go to?

Danilenko: Well, yes. With us it was forbidden, they wouldn’t let you go up until sixteen. The movie theater only until four o’clock. And there they showed only children’s films.

Roberts: Your parents didn’t let you go or the movie theater’s administration?

Danilenko: Well, the administration, and the school, but my parents too, how to say…they didn’t forbid it. At nine o’clock we had to come home if we were out.

Roberts: Yes. Did you try to go out, to a film you weren’t allowed to go to?

Danilenko: We tried, but they didn’t let us in.

Roberts: Do you remember any film that had problems coming to the screen?

Danilenko: Well, I don’t know, I can’t say that…Well, maybe the censor forbade some films.

Roberts: Excuse me?

Danilenko: It was like that before, there was a commission. They, when a film was ready, it was supposed to come to the big screen at the movie theater, they watched it and gave their decision, whether it was okay or not. Well I don’t know.

Roberts: Did your parents go to the movies?

Danilenko: They went, but very rarely, when there was time.

Roberts: What did they watch when they went?

Danilenko: Well, different kinds of movies that were our classics, and comedies, well foreign films, I can’t say their names now, because I was very little. Well, whatever was at the movie theater, they tried when they were able to go to the movie theater to see, and they were interested in finding out how another country lived.

Roberts: Do you still go to the movies?

Danilenko: I would like to, but only if there were time and the opportunity, of course. But now, when there is time, I watch movies on television.

Roberts: How and why did your experiences of movie theaters change?

Danilenko: Well, I haven’t been in a contemporary movie theater. Like I don’t know now…what there is and stereo movies, different screening halls. Before there was just a typical screening hall with chairs and a big screen. Of course, the first impression was atypical for us when we went to the movies, but it was very enjoyable. I can’t compare today, because I haven’t been in a new theater. You could ask the younger generation though.

Roberts: When was the last time when you went to the movies?

Danilenko: Oy, the last time, huh? Well, ten years ago.