



IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

# Liv Ullmann in Conversation

*We're delighted that Liv Ullmann returns to BFI Southbank to talk about her extraordinary career in film and television as part of our season celebrating the much-admired actor-director. We'll gain valuable insights into her work with Ingmar Bergman and her subsequent role as a director herself, and we'll explore an extensive career that has seen her recognised as one of Europe's greatest actors and recently awarded an Honorary Oscar®. Hosted by Christina Newland, Lead Film Critic, The i newspaper.*

Liv Ullmann was born in Tokyo in 1938 and led an itinerant early life as her family followed her father's engineering work around the world. After his death in an accident when she was only six, Ullmann, her mother and her sister returned to Norway, settling in Trondheim.

Ullmann began her stage acting career in the 1950s. But it was encountering Ingmar Bergman, Sweden's prolific theatre-maker and burgeoning genius of film, that would position her for legendary status both as a star in her own right and as part of an extraordinarily rich creative partnership. Already acquainted with Ullmann's close friend Bibi Andersson, Bergman cast them together in *Persona* (1966), a seminal work that has lost none of its power to unsettle, provoke and inspire.

The ensuing romantic relationship brought a daughter – the journalist and author Linn Ullmann – while their artistic collaboration on films such as *The Passion of Anna* (1969), *Cries and Whispers* (1972), *Face to Face* (1976) and *Autumn Sonata* (1978) made movie history. Their friendship endured until his death, with Ullmann revisiting her *Scenes from a Marriage* character for Bergman's swansong film *Saraband* in 2003.

Ullmann also built a substantial career beyond Bergman, including an Oscar-nominated performance in Jan Troell's *The Emigrants* (1971). She made her first film as a director, *Sofie*, in 1992. She would go on to direct two Bergman scripts, *Private Confessions* (1996) and *Faithless* (2000), and a television version of August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (2014), starring Jessica Chastain.

She also continued to work in theatre as both actor and director, bringing a definitive embodiment of *Anna Christie* to the Broadway stage in 1977, and directing Cate Blanchett in the Sydney Theatre Company's hit 2009 production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Ullmann now lives in Key Largo, Florida. Interest in her work and in the extraordinary creative chemistry she shared with Bergman is high, with Bergman the subject of numerous documentary studies, *Scenes from a Marriage* recently remade by HBO with Chastain and Oscar Isaac, and Mia Hansen-Løve's *Bergman Island* (2021) probing the mythology of creative coupledness.

## Liv Ullmann on the mystery of performance

I always felt that being an actor was humble, or not real, or whatever – I was ashamed if people knew I was an actor. Then I directed my first movie, *Sofie* [1992]. There was a big close-up of [Karen-Lise Mynster as] Sofie. She was talking about being in love. And I was thinking to myself, 'Try not to think what

you would have done!’ And then I said, ‘Camera, go’ – and suddenly she was doing so much that I had never even thought of. Because actors are creative. And – this is the truth – it was the first time in my life that I was proud to be an actress. Because I saw that it didn’t come from make-believe, it came from feeling.

A film I did with Ingmar, *The Passion of Anna* (1969) – my character has lost her husband and boy in a traffic accident; she was driving the car. And Ingmar never goes into what you are thinking – the words are there, and the words are tremendously important to him, but he allows your fantasy and your inner life to be very much part of it also. I had a long monologue talking about the accident. He said, ‘You know, when she’s talking about the accident – she’s a murderer.’ And I said, ‘No!’ It was the first time I’d protested. I was like Ingrid Bergman – I said, ‘I can’t do that; I can’t be a murderer!’ He said, ‘Well, do it your way. But when you are describing the accident, just take a pause and think about what you’re going to say.’

The camera rolls, and I say, ‘I had this wonderful, wonderful marriage, and then this accident happened.’ And I took the pause. And I took another pause, and thought about what I was saying, and I started to say it: ‘...while we were driving, my husband was telling me that he wanted to leave me, and take my son with him, and I drove and drove, and I saw a lot of stones in front of me, and I drove right into the stones...’ Suddenly the stones were there. Suddenly, she was a murderer. With this genius little thing – ‘Think about what you’re saying’ – I did it like I had killed them on purpose, which I had never planned to do.

That explains why Ingmar was always working with the same people. I don’t mean it was just us certain ones – if he’d been in LA or in Germany, other people would have done it – but he knew he needed that kind of actor. It comes from somewhere within. I saw today, there was a little girl in a bomb shelter, in the horrible war that’s going on, and she was singing – I’m sure you will see it. That was so real. I believe that in golden moments, that’s what an actor can do.

**Article and interview by Hannah McGill, *Sight and Sound*, May 2022**

LIV ULLMANN

Born in Tokyo, Japan

As actor

- 1957Fjols til fjells (Norway; d. Edith Carlmar) as hotel guest
- 1959Ung flukt (Norway; d. Edith Carlmar) as Gerd
- 1962Kort är sommaren (Sweden; d. Bjarne Henning-Jensen) as Eva Tonny (Norway; d. Nils R. Müller) as Kari
- 1965De kalte ham Skarven (Norway; d. Erik Folke Gustavson) as Ragna
- 1966Persona (Sweden; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Elisabet Vogler
- 1968Hour of the Wolf (Vargtimmen) (Sweden; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Alma Borg Shame (Skammen) (Sweden; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Eva Rosenberg
- 1969An-Magritt (Norway; d. Arne Skouen) as An-Magritt The Passion of Anna (En passion) (Sweden; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Anna Fromm
- 1970De la part des copains (L’uomo dalle due ombre/Cold Sweat) (France/Italy d. Terence Young) as Fabienne Martin The Night Visitor (USA; d. Laslo Benedek) as Esther Jenks
- 1971The Emigrants (Utvandrarna) (Sweden; d. Jan Troell) as Kristina Nilsson
- 1972New Land (Nybyggarna) (Sweden; d. Jan Troell) as Kristina Nilsson Pope Joan (UK; d. Michael Anderson) as Joan Lost Horizon (USA; d. Charles Jarrott) as Catherine Cries and Whispers (Viskningar och rop) (Sweden; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Maria/Maria’s mother
- 197340 Carats (USA; d. Milton Katselas) as Ann Stanley
- 1974Scenes from a Marriage (Scener ur ett äktenskap) (Sweden; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Marianne The Abdication (UK; d. Anthony Harvey) as Queen Christina
- 1974Zandy’s Bride (USA; d. Jan Troell) as Hannah Lund
- 1975Léonor (France/Spain/Italy; d. Juan Buñuel) as Léonor Face to Face (Ansikte mot ansikte) (Sweden; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Dr Jenny Isaksson
- 1977The Serpent’s Egg (Das Schlangenei) (West Germany/USA; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Manuela Rosenberg A Bridge Too Far (UK; d. Richard Attenborough) as Kate ter Horst
- 1978Autumn Sonata (Herbstsonate) (West Germany; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Eva
- 1979Players (USA; d. Anthony Harvey) as spectator [uncredited]
- 1980Richard’s Things (UK; d. Anthony Harvey) as Kate Morris
- 1983The Wild Duck (Australia; d. Henri Safran) as Gina La Diagonale du fou (Switzerland; d. Richard Dembo) as Marina Jacobo Timerman: Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number (USA; TV movie; d. Linda Yellen) as Risha Timerman

- 1983Jenny (Norway/West Germany; TV mini-series; d. Per Bronken) as Jenny Winge
- 1984The Bay Boy (Canada/France; d. Daniel Petrie) as Mrs Campbell
- 1985Speriamo che sia femmina (Italy/France; d. Mario Monicelli) as Elena Leonardo
- 1987Gaby – A True Story (USA; d. Luis Mandoki) as Sari Brimmer Farewell Moscow (Mosca Addio) (Italy; d. Mario Monicelli) as Ida Nudel Gli Indifferenti (Italy; TV movie; d. Mario Monicelli) as Maria Grazia
- 1988The Girlfriend (Die Freundin) (Germany/Argentina; d. Jeanine Meerapfel) as Maria
- 1990The Rose Garden (Der Rosengarten) (Germany/USA; d. Fons Rademakers) as Gabriele Schlüter-Freund Mindwalk (Austria/Switzerland; d. Bernt Capra) as Sonia Hoffman
- 1991The Ox (Oxen) (Sweden/Denmark; d. Sven Nykvist) as Maria The Long Shadow (USA/Hungary/Italy; d. Vilmos Zsigmond) as Katherine
- 1993Dreamplay (Drömspel) (Norway/Sweden; d. Unni Straume) as ticket seller
- 1994Zorn (Sweden; d. Gunnar Hellström) as Emma Zorn
- 2003Saraband (Sweden/Denmark/Norway/Italy/Finland; d. Ingmar Bergman) as Marianne
- 2012Two Lives (Zwei leben) (Germany/Norway; d. Georg Maas) as Åse

As director

- 1982episode ‘Parting’ in Love (Canada) + scr
- 1992Sofie (Norway/Sweden/Denmark) + co-scr
- 1995Kristin Lavransdatter (Sweden/Norway/Germany) + scr ‘New Lumière Film’ in Lumière et Compagnie (France/Spain/Sweden; various directors)
- 1997Private Confessions (Enskilda samtal) (Sweden)
- 2000Faithless (Trolösa) (Sweden/Norway/Italy/Finland/Germany)
- 2014Miss Julie (Norway/UK/Ireland/France/Canada/USA) + scr

Films about Liv Ullmann

- 1973‘Liv Ullmann’ episode of Cinema (UK; d. Pauline Shaw)
- 1977segment of Seven Portraits (USA; d. Edvard Lieber) A Look at Liv (USA; d. Richard Kaplan)
- 1998Liv Ullmann: Scenes from a Life (Norway; d. Edvard Hambro)

LIV ULLMANN: FACE TO FACE

Cries and Whispers (Viskningar och rop) From Fri 1 Apr

Persona Fri 8 Apr 20:40 (+ intro by Liv Ullmann); Sun 17 Apr 18:40; Mon 25 Apr 20:50

Autumn Sonata (Höstsonaten)

Sat 9 Apr 12:10 (+ Q&A with Liv Ullmann); Mon 18 Apr 18:20; Tue 26 Apr 18:10 (+ extended intro by Melanie Iredale, Director, Birds’ Eye View)

Faithless (Trolösa) Sat 9 Apr 18:15 (+ extended intro by Liv Ullmann); Sat 23 Apr 16:40 (+ intro by Nellie Alston, freelance programmer and member of T A P E Collective); Wed 27 Apr 20:00

Scenes from a Marriage (Scener ur ett äktenskap)

Sun 10 Apr 17:40; Sat 30 Apr 17:15

An-Magritt Tue 12 Apr 20:40; Wed 20 Apr 18:20

Shame (Skammen) Wed 13 Apr 18:10; Wed 27 Apr 18:00

The Passion of Anna (En passion) Thu 14 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer at Large); Sat 23 Apr 14:20

The Emigrants (Utvandrarna) Sat 16 Apr 14:10 (+ intro by Sarah Lutton, season programmer); Sun 24 Apr 13:45

The New Land (Nybyggarna) Sat 16 Apr 18:50; Sat 30 Apr 12:40

Face to Face (Ansikte mot ansikte) + intro by Sarah Lutton, season programmer Sun 17 Apr 14:15

Saraband Tue 19 Apr 18:20; Sat 30 Apr 20:50

The Wayward Girl (Ung flukt)

Thu 21 Apr 18:20 (+ intro by Anna Smith, film critic and broadcaster)

Miss Julie Sun 24 Apr 17:50; Fri 29 Apr 20:20 (+ intro by Elaine Wong, short film programmer, BFI London Film Festival)

In cultural partnership with



Faithless will be released on BFI Blu-ray on 11 April and is available to pre-order from the BFI Shop: <https://shop.bfi.org.uk/faithless-blu-ray.html>

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