

We shot "The Congress is Having a Good Time." Curd Jürgens was the great Tsar of Russia – I was the little Viennese girl, Anni. We were supposed to dance the opening waltz of the Congress of Vienna.

I had been wrapped in endless metres of tulle. Everything was tied up tightly with the hoop skirt underneath. The gown looked gorgeous – unfortunately, I couldn't get out of it once the whole day of shooting: for that I would have had to take off the ball gown, and that was too complicated. It became one of my most exhausting days at work.

There were other problems:

When Curd Jürgens (1.92 m) and I (1.64 m) started to waltz, it looked as if a giant had grabbed a midget. My eyes were somewhere around the level of Curd's belly button. That was hilarious.

So, in a huge hurry, catwalks were built in the ballroom on which I could move at the same height as Curd Jürgens, while he glided elegantly across the parquet in waltz rhythm. That worked as long as the camera was only pointed at our heads and upper bodies.

Written by Robert Menke

But a full shot with the tsar would have been the silliest dance scene ever.

Then Curd Jürgens came up with a glorious idea: "Why don't you sew a little bit onto the little girl at the bottom? I can take care of the rest at that point!"

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In fact, my gorgeous ball gown had three-quarters of a metre of tulle sewn onto it. Then Curd Jürgens took me in his arms. And then he carried me, free-floating, through the whole waltz. My feet never touched the ground. He smiled at me the whole time without a sign of effort in the course of this Olympic feat.

At the premiere in Vienna – my first big film premiere – I got a lovely dress: lilac, half-length, the sleeves decorated with petals and small pearls. The hair was pinned up like Grace Kelly's, my mother said.

A pearl necklace from Ulli's mother

At that time, she had the delusion that I could become a second Grace Kelly.

Until then, she had done everything to keep me from becoming a "star bird": "If I notice that you are developing immorally in any way, I'll give you a piece of my mind."

My friend Ulli's mother gave me a beautiful pearl necklace to celebrate. Once again, I looked like a sophisticated lady, not a teenager. I had no idea that pearls meant tears.

Film premieres were pompous events back then.

Since the "team" had scattered to the four winds after the end of filming, all the main characters of the gala had to

travel again. There were already flowers and flashbulbs at Vienna airport.

Then we went to one of the beautiful old palaces of Vienna. I was supposed to give the welcoming speech in front of all those celebrities.

The Mayor of Vienna received us and the Minister of Culture was there. The ceremony resembled a state reception.

Then we went to one of the big premiere cinemas. The film



Christian Doermer, made famous by the film "The Hooligans". He was regarded as the intellectual genius of young German film. In 1978, he disappeared from the public eye and has since been working in Nairobi on a film about Lettow-Vorbeck – the head of the colonial troops in German East Africa until 1917.

was shown. You could already sense that it wouldn't be a raging success. Whatever – finally the director, cameraman, script editor and all the main actors were called on stage in celebration.

I was – according to Bravo's "Otto competition" – the most popular actress of the year. On television there were two series of mine, "Fes-len in Lipizza" and "Forellenhof", which turned out to be "street sweepers": when they were broadcast, Germany's streets were empty. I was in the heyday of life. My relationship with Ulli was also still intact.

That's when I was quite brutally torn out of the world of beautiful appearances. The first gloomy omens became apparent.

I was supposed to appear in "The Cello" in Saarbrücken. It was spring, the forsythia were in bloom everywhere. But my hotel, right on the Saar, seemed a bit creepy to me. It was about two hundred years old, had a gloomy staircase, and looked cursed.

I was picked up by a bus for the first reading. My partner, Christian Doermer, was already on the bus. This was the genius boy of the new German film: very good-looking, who was considered difficult, enigmatic.

Biased, I introduced myself as "Anders." He just said, "Doermer." We didn't speak a word.

I was embarrassed by the situation. Suddenly, Christian Doermer said: "She smells like fir trees."

What? Me? Like fir trees? What's that about? I felt very strange.

Tomorrow read Siez

The affair with Christian Doermer almost drove Helga Anders mad.

The great love, Hans-Jürgen Bäumler. It started like a fairy tale. And ended with a bang.