Alternately funny, despairing, tender, and absurd, Maren Ade’s semi-autobiographical *Toni Erdmann* (2016) centers on an alienated adult daughter and her lonely father. Desperate to connect with high-flyer Ines (Sandra Hüller), her shambolic divorced father (Peter Simonischek) transforms himself—using a fright wig and novelty teeth—from Winfried into life coach Toni Erdmann. Infiltrating her workplace and jeopardizing her reputation, Winfried/Toni insists on breaking through her corporate veneer. Amidst the crowd of gleaming teeth and shiny hair deemed crucial to multinational success, paternal alter ego Toni embodies vulnerability, imperfection, and decay. A sensation at Cannes, Ade’s third feature makes a virtue of ambiguity, establishing the writer-director as both darkly funny and vitally serious.

Ade was born in 1976 in Karlsruhe in southwestern Germany and began making Hi-8 Camcorder films as a teenager. At HFF (University of Television and Film) in Munich, she studied directing—with Doris Dörrie as one of her professors—and film production. In 2001, Ade and classmate Janine Jackowski co-founded the production company Komplizen Film, which has gone on to win the 2015 DEFA (German Film Academy) prize for outstanding contribution to German film.

Ade’s writing and directing debut, *Der Wald vor lauter Bäumen* (*The Forest for the Trees*, 2003), won the Sundance Special Jury Prize. Her follow-up, *Alle Anderen* (*Everyone Else*, 2009), won the Berlinale Silver Bear and elevated Ade into the small group of internationally known German filmmakers. When she was interviewed with Dörrie about the status of women directors a few years later, Ade recalled how the Berlinale jury president Tilda Swinton commandeered a photo call, limiting it to “only the women, only the women” prize winners. Swinton did this, Ade said, “Like a small but crucial part of business. That kind of relaxed solidarity is important.”

Ade is often grouped with the so-called Berlin School of filmmakers, which includes such figures as Valeska Grisebach, Henner Winckler, and Benjamin Heisentberg. A loose designation that embraces very different styles of filmmaking, Berlin School cinema focuses on personal stories whose social and political parameters are clear, though not necessarily stated. Kirsten Niehuus, managing director of film funding at Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, notes that it is an external rather than internal designation: “It is not a programmatic label as such. It emerged in the 1990s in particular with discussions about the films of Christian Petzold, Thomas Arslan, Angela Schanalec, or later Maren Ade, and...”
it meant everything new and different from the romantic comedies that had dominated German filmmaking until then."

Despite the twenty-six years since reunification and especially recently with an enormous influx of refugees, getting a fix on German identity remains elusive. Willingly relocating themselves on vacation (Everyone Else) or for work (The Forest for the Trees, Toni Erdmann), Ade’s characters do not overtly engage with this dilemma, but their personal insecurities reflect a general instability. Questions of nationality and identity find cinematic expression in Ade’s style of geographic indeterminacy in both Everyone Else and Toni Erdmann, where foreign settings contribute to her characters’ anxiety.

In Ade’s films, both situation and location emerge without establishing shots or exposition. This strategy puts the audience on a slightly uncertain footing while simultaneously accords the characters an unusual dignity. The Forest for the Trees, for example, begins with a young couple apparently moving into an apartment in a new town; only in the next scene is it revealed that the young man is her former partner and about to drive away, off to her hometown with her parents, leaving her to cope with a new job all alone. Even the apartment, more outpost than refuge, seems to be against her, especially when her efforts at resolving a neighbor’s love life go wrong. Even her own furniture seems hostile. Ade’s nonlinear narratives work through rather than on her characters. Their struggles are small, quotidian, and familiar.

Apart from occasional rewrites during production, Ade sticks closely to her scripts. She refers to certain “marker” scenes that she notices during the shoot and which become moments of transition. Despite plenty of rehearsal, the action feels natural, even improvised, the camera less chronicler than cavedropper. In Everyone Else, a young German couple’s apparently idyllic Sardinian villa turns out to belong to his parents. He speaks Italian, knows the island, and has a home-turf advantage, not least when he admits that his smugly competitive frenemy with his biddable wife will soon invade this romantic getaway. In each film, dislocation precedes discord. Lacking the reassurance of a fixed place, her female protagonists look for security in control.

In Toni Erdmann, Ade uses dislocation to even greater effect. Just after his ancient dog Willi dies in his sleep, Winfried pays an impromptu visit to his go-getter daughter Ines, on the job in Bucharest. Trying to jolly her with his trademark novelty jokes, Winfried manages only to get in her way. By refusing to take him seriously, Ines tries to control him. Each imprisons the other in their role, filial and parental. Winfried realizes that Ines uses the confidence he once instilled in her to make harsh decisions in her new job. But his attempts to draw her out, asking at one point if she is even human, lead nowhere. Ade’s long takes—especially in the aftermath of a business cocktail party when a rattled Ines contemplates a gaffe in the silent company of her father, or a subsequent scene of their equally silent stiffness as they wait for her building’s reluctant elevator—offer an unusual combination of intimacy and awkwardness. Relying on the universality of such moments, Ade takes big chances on small, specific occasions in which the lack of dialogue adds to the characters’—and the viewers’—disquiet. In each of the earlier films, dislocation precedes discord, and the female protagonists are stranded without a solid territorial base.

About a third of the way into the film, Winfried bids his daughter farewell and appears to leave in a taxi to the airport, only to resurface, in his Toni Erdmann wig and buckteeth, at a bar where Ines is meeting her friends. (Ade has credited the late comedian Andy Kaufmann as his chief inspiration.) Toni, this invented character, parrots empty venture capitalist buzzwords, claiming he is a life coach for, among other clients, one-time Romanian tennis star Ion Țiriac. In his guise as Toni, Winfried is free to interact with Ines’s colleagues and to invade her life without any parental constraints. Ade shows Ines’s world through his eyes as a world flattened into markets, where everyone wants credit but no one takes responsibility. Through him, viewers glimpse the phenomenon of a society still in the process of catching up to its capitalist conversion. The multinational world appears at a floaty remove from the surrounding Bucharest realities, as in a brief cutaway that peers from the firm’s swanky terrace down to the residential shanty right next door. A new way of life is being slapped over the old. To Winfried, Romania is a place; to Ines, an opportunity.

In a sense, Toni becomes part of the unreality of Ines’s expat life. Precisely because he is an invention, he frees both Winfried and Ines to engage with this faux intermediary, to take out their frustrations through and upon Toni and thus, less directly, upon each other. The patently ridiculous construct of “Toni” shakes them out of their prior moribund complacency. And as Winfried hides behind his Toni persona, Ade’s film very gradually and subtly swaps perspective, shifting from his to Ines’s.

Two very different party scenes punctuate this change. At the first, at a private home with Romanian acquaintances whom Toni has picked up at a reception, Ines grudgingly agrees to Toni’s request to “thank” their hosts by performing a full-on Whitney Houston rendition of “Greatest Love of All.” Using a pop song this way is not new, but Ade stops the
clock for it: she has Ines sing every verse in the remarkably long song, daring her viewers (and the party guests themselves) to be amused, embarrassed, or sympathetic. The ambiguity of the performance—that is, its deeply passionate commitment to total schlock, the gutsiness of being sometimes ridiculous—underwrites Ines’s recognition of the power to be found in sporadically letting go.

In the second party, Ines is hosting her own birthday brunch as a “team builder” for her colleagues. Here Ade shows herself to be adept at directing physical comedy, as Ines struggles with an unmanageable dress and a broken zipper. Caught between outfits when the first guest arrives, she simply answers topless, then is suddenly inspired to change the party from clothed to naked. Some colleagues respond better than others, but Ines finds herself suddenly in command—even of her boss.

The gamble pays off best when Winfried unexpectedly arrives, disguised by a faceless, hairy Kukeri costume used in Bulgaria to ward off evil spirits. Huge and imposing, he moves silently through the flat, then disappears into the street below. Loosened up by now, Ines simply rolls with it. Covered by a short robe, Ines pursues this gentle creature to a local park, where he plays—in a moment reminiscent of James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931)—with a young girl before heading to a wide lawn. Ines runs to the monster, wailing “Papa!” and collapsing in his arms. She is both courageous and unguarded, setting the tone for the remainder of the film.

By the final scenes, in which Ines returns to Germany for her grandmother’s funeral, what began as Winfried’s film has almost completely become Ines’s. In the early scenes of *Toni Erdmann*, Ines largely reacts to her father and/or Toni rather than initiating actions as before. Ade’s technique of shifting the center of the film from Winfried through Toni to Ines allows the film itself to embody a notion of personal liberty. Unlike the tireless, tightly coiled overachiever seen at the beginning, Ines can now afford to be undefended and even to comfort her father.

Without exposition, without explanation, *Toni Erdmann* draws to an open-ended conclusion. Despite Winfried’s obvious disapproval, Ines does not alter her career path. Ade’s unusual feminism emphasizes vulnerability as much as strength, equality more than simply parity. Ines’s awakening only works if Winfried can deal with her without artifice. Goofy and irreverent, Toni frees Winfried and Ines to find each other outside of their assigned parts as father and daughter, on terms simultaneously ambiguous and firmly committed.

Ade was in the United States for the *Toni Erdmann* screening at the New York Film Festival, where this interview was conducted.
MEGAN RATNER: Toni Erdmann drew from your own life, in particular your relationship with your father. Can you talk about how your travels in Romania shape the story?

MAREN ADE: I had this father-daughter story in mind for a long time and I knew Winfried would visit Ines. I knew there were lots of Western consultants working in Romania and that many Romanians speak German, so I traveled there very early in the filmmaking process. On my first trip, I visited the nightclubs. I met people who worked there and got to know the business world. In the end the script was really written around every location there— even the oil company.

RATNER: Aside from finding the locations, you researched the corporate ex-pat world extensively. Is the research merely background, or did you incorporate it directly into the script?

ADE: The early stage was always a process of doing research, writing, doing research. It’s very nice to have research involved in your script work because then you’re not so . . . (placing her hands around her eyes as if blinkered). That was very helpful.

RATNER: Aside from finding the locations, you researched the corporate ex-pat world extensively. Is the research merely background, or did you incorporate it directly into the script?

ADE: I was an ex-pat [there], so that is the point of view I had. The character is a mix of several women I met—and of me, in a way. I had to find a project for Ines that worked for the film. I liked the consultant job the best. There’s this strong aspect of performance involved. You are paid to judge situations and you have to pretend that you know everything. And also hiring a consultant is often an outsourcing of responsibility and that’s something that I found maybe typical for our whole generation. It’s not really clear anymore who’s responsible because everything got so complicated. So everybody can say: I’m not responsible.

RATNER: You had the actors shadow actual multinational workers in their offices. They seemed completely at ease in that environment. But the scenes at the oil field also felt genuine.

ADE: It’s not so easy to shoot on oil fields because mostly they say: are you crazy? But one of the women I met had a similar project to what I gave Ines, and the oil company she worked with let us shoot there. That was really good.

RATNER: The actors in your films often come from the theater, and that’s true here as well. Both Peter Simonischek and Sandra Hüller are well known to German-speaking audiences, but not so familiar in the United States.

ADE: Peter is a big deal and not used to playing such a submissive part—he’s mostly cast in very active parts. Well, he’s active as Toni, but he does not usually play such a low-status guy. I do often draw from theater—Germany produces a lot of plays—but somehow I always end up with some very radical theater actors. Theater actors are used to a long rehearsing process, to taking responsibility.

RATNER: Clearly, all the actors you work with are comfortable with long takes. You often linger on a scene long enough to make me feel I am intruding, as if I were witnessing an unguarded, even un-acted moment.

ADE: I believe very much that at a certain point in the shoot, the film reality has to become more real than the surrounding reality in the shooting day. And for this the easiest way to reach this is to let the camera roll longer. When you do long takes—six or seven minutes—you need that film reality. The naked party almost felt like we were doing a play. The apartment became like a stage, and Ines very much takes the lead.

RATNER: You also use a lot of silence. There are awkward wordless moments when the characters seem stymied or to be silencing themselves. Do you
leave room for them in the script or do they just happen?

ADE: Sometimes it happens because it’s a nice moment. Other times, during the shoot I feel “this could be interesting” so I don’t stop. I do this from time to time. For example, when Ines and Winfried are sitting next to each other after the drinks with the boss in the beginning. This was something that wasn’t in the script. They just sat there while I let it run because the actors had to go on. They know the only rule is that they cannot leave a scene until I end it by saying “thank you.” They just have to stick it out.

RATNER: They seem almost adrift in that scene, more comfortable with the formality of a business drink than when they’re alone. Sometimes inanimate objects seemed like minor characters, such as the very pokey elevator in Ines’s building.

ADE: Yes, when Ines and Winfried wait in her hall for the elevator. The waiting was written in the script, but not nearly so long. It just happened because getting the elevator there on time was so complicated. It’s like shooting with an animal; that elevator did what it wanted. And the delay created a very good moment. I used that, timing the elevator very late. And the actors were complaining: “It’s so long!”

RATNER: In addition to a lot of rehearsal, do you like to stage the action well in advance of shooting, in order to be able to see the actors move around the space?

ADE: I stage the scene. This is something that I try to do before the actual shoot. It just takes too much time to do it on shooting day, because sometimes on a shooting day everyone just wants to get the scene done. I always arrange the actors first, then the camera follows ... the cameraman and I have an idea where things should happen but not exactly how. We leave things open for the actors. I really think this helps everyone be more creative.

RATNER: In all three of your films, you show an unusual sensitivity to awkwardness. You specialize in moments most people recognize from their own lives, but that are not usually shown onscreen. Your willingness to leave awkwardness unresolved is unusual.

ADE: I think the awkwardness is something that is a result, something that happens at the end. I don’t go into the shoot
and say let’s make people feel this or that. I work a lot with change of status, with hierarchies. Say you come into a room and there are three or four people: it’s immediately clear hierarchies are involved and people organize themselves into those hierarchies. And that’s a strong topic for all three films—everybody is struggling with that. And I think this creates that awkwardness.

**RATNER:** Yes, the characters in your films struggle with being in or out of power—and control.

**ADE:** This happens in the writing. Or because of what interests me in the scene the most. With every scene you see who’s the most interesting character in that scene. And sometimes it was the assistant and not Ines.

**RATNER:** Despite your interest in hierarchies, there is a sense that you give equal time for even the smallest parts. Though **Toni Erdmann** centers on the father and daughter, for instance, the film is really an ensemble piece.

**ADE:** I always said to them that I see it as an ensemble film. Although the main roles are so dominant, I always try to treat the side characters equally well. I meet with every actor and talk over the roles to find an intention for each character. They are not just there to support the leads. Every character should have their own life, even if it just happens in the actor’s brain.

**RATNER:** Actually, the film is really intergenerational: Winfried’s mother bookends the film. Even though she does not die until later, she gently haunts the film. She and Winfried need very few words and even the ones they exchange smack of years of disagreement, though it is clear they tolerate each other.

**ADE:** That was really important. Winfried belongs to the postwar generation, who wanted to make sure that the Third Reich did not happen again. Things were clear. Winfried had a strong opinion. I saw this opinion as the birth of his humor, his way of provoking. His mother is used to him and had a definite opinion. I saw this opinion as the birth of his personality.

**RATNER:** Christian Petzold has pointed out that a similar fight happened in German movies, with filmmakers like Wim Wenders and Rainer Werner Fassbinder rebelling against **Opas Kino** (what became known as the “Grandpa’s Cinema”), but that contemporary filmmakers do not have such direct targets. And yet, Winfried personifies a specifically German strain of the now-disappearing 1968 generation that stressed sexual freedom and especially anti-authoritarianism, not least in child rearing.

**ADE:** No. Usually, I thought, let’s make people feel this or that. I decided on the spot because it was what the Romanians are facing. Everything was sold and everyone tried to get a piece of the pie. These multinational companies and franchise shops diminish their national identity. I often heard about this problem because the talented people don’t want to stay.

**RATNER:** Part of what infuriates Winfried is the particular form of internationalism Ines and her colleagues practice. For the audience, it is hard not to see this global homogenization as an imposition rather than an improvement for the Romanians. Did people express that to you?

**ADE:** Yes, that Romania has become too international—that’s what the Romanians are facing. Everything was sold and everyone tried to get a piece of the pie. These multinational companies and franchise shops diminish their national identity. I often heard about this problem because the talented people don’t want to stay.

**RATNER:** You show Ines’s shift in a very interesting way. Her actions at first are more traditionally female: listening to, interpreting, making allowances, even pleasing her male colleagues. For example, when she agrees to accompany Henneberg’s wife shopping.

**ADE:** On the other side, I always saw her as free and self-determining. She has every possibility including not to go shopping with the wife. Sometimes it’s a movie about how women are treated, but the biggest thing for me is how she treats herself and how she goes along with those things. I was more interested in her becoming aware that the jokes about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. And then, after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. Or that after the eleventh time she hears about her assistant that she used to participate in are not so funny anymore. I decided on the spot because it’s exactly the view from that building. I thought, let’s just do this because I think it is interesting.
**Ratner:** It feels like Ines and her colleagues are cut off from the locals. It’s Toni who really interacts with the Romanians.

**Ade:** In my mind, Ines has a lot more interaction—she has been to those oil fields before and works with Romanians. I had in mind to show them interacting a lot with the Romanian team also but [in the end] I found it less important for the film. The moment when it’s a closed circle again, with only Germans and ex-pats among each other, was so much stronger. Anyway, a lot of businesspeople don’t meet locals, so I thought it more interesting to emphasize the ex-pat side. But I think Ines knows the country. She does this job because she’s interested in things, because she’s curious. I mean these are all values that maybe her father also gave her although she uses them in a complete different way or a way he didn’t intend.

**Ratner:** Winfried’s generation would naturally see it differently, if only because of the Iron Curtain.

**Ade:** For him, it’s something natural to meet the local people. Her position makes things more complicated because she’s not just a visitor, she works there. Her father’s encounter with the guy in the oil field [who is on the verge of losing his hut to the oil company], telling him not to lose his sense of humor, does not change the Romanian’s position in the least. And her father knows that.

**Ratner:** His views were also formed before the trade deals and globalization, though even his mother’s aide, Mrs. Rodica, is from Romania. As Ines points out, the links between his life and the Romanians’ are close and direct.

**Ade:** In terms of his values and how he behaves, I saw Winfried like an island that is slowly sinking or vanishing. In a way, we cannot be like him anymore.

**Ratner:** Two small scenes that echo each other particularly struck me: the death of the dog Willi and Winfried’s apparent departure from Bucharest. There is a way that Winfried slumps against the tree after Willi’s death, silent and defeated, that echoes when he is preparing to get in the taxi to the airport and leave. And the way Ines watches from her balcony is so poignant: she is able to let down her defenses and cry once her father cannot see her.

**Ade:** I always had in mind that this film in about saying good-bye and of course that includes death. That’s why the dog dies. When the grandmother dies in the end, Winfried is now the next generation to go, and then Ines will be alone.
RATNER: You also reference his mortality when he wears the massive Bulgarian Kukeri costume. First glimpsed at the Romanian party where Ines sings the Whitney Houston song, the Kukeri traditionally wards off evil spirits. It is clearly exhausting to wear: after his hotel concierge helps him remove the huge head, Winfried emerges clammy and panting. Can you talk a bit about what drew you to use this particular disguise?

ADE: I wanted to find something Winfried could disappear into. I would have used a costume from anywhere if it worked, though the Bulgarian connection made it a bit more credible. The Kukeri seemed almost like an image of him turned inside out. I liked that Winfried lies down while he’s in the Kukeri costume, so that you might make some connection to his own death.

RATNER: Yes, especially because wearing something that heavy with his heart trouble could be fatal.

ADE: Ines doesn’t think about that. This is so typical of parents and children. Children don’t think of how much effort is made for them. It just feels normal, you know, that someone is there doing these things. As his child, you don’t think about him being almost not alive anymore underneath the costume.

RATNER: But I can still feel the lump in my throat when she falls into his arms saying “Papa!”

ADE: I know. That works very well, considering how we made it. We were standing outside in a completely chaotic park. Peter is not in the Kukeri costume, but instead a good-looking stuntman with big shoulders. Sandra has to say papa and run to him. Usually, bystanders look into the camera, but fortunately the Kukeri was in front of the camera so everybody was looking at him. In person, the costume is very high and wide. After that scene, I walked with the Kukeri fifteen more minutes through the crazy crowdedness of Bucharest. We got very nice images, but the sequence was too long for the film.

RATNER: The costumes are so well thought out that the naked party works well because you show imperfect bodies, all the flaws those similar clothes can hide.

ADE: Yes, it’s important that things are not so perfect.

RATNER: As on the first two films, Heike Parplies was again your editor. You have spoken in the past about your preference for multiple takes and for shooting far more than you will need to give yourself plenty of choice. Does she see the film in progress or only after shooting?

ADE: Heike is super important for the film. She edited a little bit during the shooting, but I told her mostly to just watch because we have to do that together. There are so many variations in takes and so much footage, it’s too crazy. The good thing with Heike is that she has a very good brain. With so much footage we really need to watch it together to talk about it while it’s running so we can catch small moments—a throwaway gesture or something someone does with their mouth, say. And then we both know what we mean. It would take too much time to write it out so instead we watch it together. We spent about a year editing.

RATNER: At what point do you start to see the film emerge?

ADE: It depends. I have moments when I know, ah, okay, this is the film. And then you have shooting days when you are like (makes a worried face) I don’t know where this film is. Actually it’s more like collecting the climax moments that I realize after I shoot them are very important moments. This was very clear and so these were the markers I tried to build around.

RATNER: Does anything make you change the script once shooting has begun?

ADE: I write a lot during the shooting to make things shorter or more fitting. Just little changes not big ones, but it’s really helpful. What I found interesting, which was really strong during the shooting, was how Ines took over the film. This was something that I didn’t expect. I wanted that but I didn’t know if it would work. I was afraid because usually I had the feeling with Everyone Else that the character you start the film with is the one you stay with for the whole. So I was afraid Winfried would be the main character no matter what I did. But with Toni Erdmann he enters Ines’s world
and it becomes her story. This was something I really found interesting.

**Ratner:** And was “Greatest Love of All” always in the script?

**Ade:** I checked it recently, but it was always this song in the script, never anything else. I found Whitney Houston very right. And then I thought that it’s the song that suited the most because the lyrics are so emotional and then this aggressive way of singing.

**Ratner:** Ines pulls out all the stops—Sandra Hüller really committed to the performance.

**Ade:** Sandra played it in an incredible way that day. Because she really found there were a lot of things involved. She was really aggressive at the shoot. We had done it before and it was very boring. But she didn’t want to make it too dramatic because we agreed that Ines is still not at the point of release. It was a combination of dramaturgical reasons and Sandra’s refusal to sing as much as I wanted. And so it was a bit of a struggle between us. Then I showed her herself on film—which I usually avoid because I don’t think it’s a nice thing to do—and she said it’s completely boring. I said we couldn’t use it like that. And she said okay I will do it, Las Vegas style, but only one time. I was like okay, let’s shoot it now. And I was lucky that she did it like that.

**Ratner:** How did you set it up?

**Ade:** Peter cannot play piano—he doesn’t want to hear this—but I mean he was sitting there pretending. Ines had an earpiece in her ear. Someone was sitting on the other side of the room playing the piano but only to Ines’s ear and the people standing watching her didn’t hear the song, they just heard her singing. Sometimes as an actor you have to really go into a fantasy place in your head to survive a shooting situation. You just have to make a fool of yourself.

**Ratner:** It is one of your signatures that your characters frequently embarrass themselves. How important is making a complete fool of oneself?

**Ade:** It’s good to do that from time to time. I have no problem with it—and I can recommend it. Sometimes you do it deliberately, sometimes not. Either way things can only get better afterwards.

**Author’s Note**

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**Notes**