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Miloš was like a confidant to me... An interview with Hana Brejchová on the film *Loves of a Blonde*

Hana Brejchová was born in Prague in 1946. When she was 17 years old, Miloš Forman cast her as the lead in *Loves of a Blonde*, his second feature film. The movie premiered worldwide in 1965 in the main competition of the Venice Film Festival. After the film's success, Brejchová was offered roles in two foreign productions. Even though she never wanted to study acting, she has appeared in more than 30 films, *Amadeus* among them. In her interview for the National Film Archive, Brejchová recalled her relationship with Forman, whose uncompromising method of directing and working with non-actors helped her portray the character of naïve Andula authentically.

The role of Andula in *Loves of a Blonde* (1965) was your first film experience.

What was the journey that led you to it?

It was not that complicated, because Miloš Forman was my brother-in-law and a great friend. I confided with him about my loves, my troubles, about everything since I was 11. He was something like a confidant to me. He never told me he was too busy. He always offered me coffee and treated me like a grown-up, which really left an impression. So, I always had a good cry and then left. I had no idea he had started writing some of the things down.

When I was 17, I was already in high school by then, and I stopped by his place once again. I brought blueberries, which Miloš loved. He poured cream on the blueberries

and was savouring them when he asked me if I would like to be in a film. And I confidently said: "Well, why not?" During the camera tests, there was only (Vladimír) Láďa Pucholt and me; it was the first time we saw each other. Láďa was always up to something; he was a bit of a rascal. We made a short shot. Miloš was telling me: "Look, it's about you saying it in your own words." A month and a half later, he called me to say that the movie would be made.

You had no training in acting. How did Miloš Forman prepare you for the shoot?

I didn't read the script; I didn't know a thing. Miloš didn't ask me to do anything, which was an advantage for me. He just briefly summarized what it was about. He never said a word about nude scenes. I'm telling you. He always guided me from one scene to another. He always said: "Hana, now we are going to shoot this, this and that, try to put it in your own words..." He explained the situation to me and there was never any trouble.

We shot the film primarily in Zruč, where I lived in a dormitory with the girls who worked in the factory. I thought that if I was to be one of them, I should live with them as well. I wanted to see how they lived; hear how they spoke. Miloš was delighted about it.

The only scene we shot in Prague was the last one, with the parents. Miloš needed tears, so he came to me and was kind of harsh. I kneeled on the floor of the processing plant, and he suddenly said: "I don't like you". I immediately dissolved into tears. No words were spoken, there was just me listening, and that's how *Loves of a Blonde* ends.

You mentioned the hotel room scene with your acting partner, Vladimír Pucholt...

When it was time for the nude scenes, Miloš took me aside and told me I would be shooting in a slip under dress. I just burst into tears. But Miloš kept saying: "Don't worry, we won't see a thing." So, I nodded, because I trusted him. I was in the factory, and suddenly I hear Miloš saying: "Hana dear, I would appreciate if you could take the slip dress off." So, I shot one scene in my bra and panties, then Miloš, all of the sudden, said strictly: "Hana, everything off". I started bawling and he didn't stop me. He said: "It's ok, let her cry." My breasts and crotch were not exposed; it was

more about the nudity. When we shot the scene, Miloš and Miroslav Ondříček were sat on a wardrobe, so they were looking down at us, me with Láďa lying on my lap. At one point, Láďa wanted to raise his head to look at me, but I realized that Miloš and Ondříček were on the wardrobe and I said: “No!” And Miloš left it there.

You told us that Miloš Forman wrote down some of your stories. Were you surprised when he later asked you to repeat your own experiences?

Yes, he said: “Do you remember how you told me about that boy who left you and wanted the ring back? Say it! Say it in your own words, say it as you feel it.” It’s the scene where the boy storms into the room and starts saying: “Give me the ring back!” And I scream hysterically at him: “You are awful, disgusting!” Or the scene with the huntsman, where I hang the tie. That was also from my own life.

When did you see *Loves of a Blonde* for the first time?

When Miloš called me to tell me that we were going to Venice, I still hadn’t seen the film! I had nothing to wear, either, so we went to the Barrandov studios together, and they lent me a suit and two evening dresses. Jaroslav Papoušek and Professor A. M. Brousil came to the festival with us. Miloš was extremely afraid of flying, so we travelled by train. I was amazed by Venice; I was amazed by the sea. I had never been anywhere. I kept crying because it was such an overwhelming experience. We stayed at the Lido, close to the cinema where the screenings took place. I had a beautiful suite with a bed for 10 people and golden taps in the bathroom. Simply amazing. And, of course, they gave me flowers everywhere, I had my arms full.

At the screening, Miloš always wanted to sit in the back; he liked to have other people seated in front of him so that he could see their reaction. I was watching the film, and when I appeared naked on the screen, I was shocked! I was sinking into my chair. Afterward, actress Alida Valli came to see me. Naturally, I only spoke Czech, but Miloš translated for me: “Hana dear, she wants to thank you for the beautiful film.” She brought me a giant bouquet of crimson red roses. I completely lost it then. I started screaming, and I threw myself at Miloš, who was wearing a snow-white shirt; back then, we used eyeliner paint and I stained his shirt when I cried.

Did you travel to any other countries?

After Venice, I travelled with Miloš across Germany, to Munich, Cologne and Dortmund, I think. It was in 1966 or 1967, and Miloš already had his mind set on Paris and the US. So, director Elmar Klos, he won an Oscar for *The Shop on Main Street*, stepped in and I travelled with him. Together we toured the entire north: Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, etc.

I travelled this way for a long time, until I was 21. It was interesting to me because I got to see a big part of the world. And a lot of people. I met lots of great actors and famous architects... I started to be really appreciative of this opportunity. People who meant something introduced themselves to me. Or in Venice, when the award for acting was announced. Annie Girardot won, I placed third and my role model, Claudia Cardinale, was fourth! I was terribly proud!

After the film, you went back to grammar school. What were your plans?

It never crossed my mind to study acting. I had always wanted to be a paediatrician. I went to grammar school so that I could later study medicine. Láďa Pucholt actually studied medicine; it was kind of a paradox. Life worked in funny ways...

After the success of *Loves of a Blonde*, you were offered roles in two foreign productions. The first was a film by Jože Pogačnik, shot in Yugoslavia.

The director picked me after seeing *Loves of a Blonde* in Venice. The film *Grajski biki* portrayed a group of young guys in a re-education camp. The camp director had a niece, which was my role. So, there was me, a Czech; Danny, the tough boy, was from Belgrade (actor Milutin Mićović, Ed.) and the good boy was portrayed by Kole Angelovski from Macedonia. We all spoke different languages, but I didn't care, because I managed to communicate with them. But it led to some beautiful situations. Once, for instance, the production manager came and gave us instructions for the next day and I was supposed to translate! We were shooting in Ljubljana, but they paid for a month's stay in Dubrovnik before we started so that I could explore Yugoslavia.

Whether I was shooting or not, all my memories are great. For *Loves of a Blonde*, I was paid 160 Czechoslovak crowns a day, which would be around 5,000 for the entire film. On top of that, Miloš ensured that I was paid extra for the nude scenes. Five hundred

crowns. In Yugoslavia, it was about 70,000 crowns plus an enormous allowance that I didn't even spend.

The second project was a French production.

That was also a coincidence. We were filming a movie about students (*A Matter of Days...-Ed.*), it was a night shoot, 12 hours straight. My brother, he was a teenager then, wanted to come with me. So, I found him a job as an extra, and one night during the shoot he said: "Hana, look, there's Alain Delon!" And I replied: "What would Alain Delon be doing here at 3 a.m.?" I looked over and saw him with director Yves Ciampi. He introduced us, and I was offered to shoot three months in Paris and three months in Italy. The lead role in a film with Alain Delon. Once more, the conditions were excellent, but that time I had to decline because I was pregnant.

You worked again with Miloš Forman when he returned to Czechoslovakia to shoot *Amadeus*. Was the experience different?

Miloš always treated me very nicely. When he emigrated, we wrote to each other. I still keep his letters to this day. They were always written phonetically and by hand, never on a typewriter or computer. The letters are beautiful. When he then came back to Prague to shoot *Amadeus*, the production contacted me to let me know that Miloš wanted me to be there. It was a completely different production, with Americans; we used to go for lunch at the Savarin, so a whole new experience.

Even though you never wanted to study acting, you later appeared in several other roles. Is there another part you remember fondly?

The second film I acted in was *The Most Beautiful Age* (*Nejkrásnější věk*). I enjoyed it mainly because I already knew (Jaroslav) Jára Papoušek, so I didn't find it so strange. After that, I shot films with actors who were my friends. When the cast made a good team, I took the role as a way to bring back the old times, but I didn't want to focus on acting; my priority was family. But there was never a shoot that I didn't enjoy.