

----- NOTE TO THE EDITORS -----

Note for the editors not for publication:

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For more information about the film or interview opportunities with Maria Peters or Christanne, please contact:

Shooting Star Film Distribution

International Sales

+31 (0) 20 624 72 72

press@shootingstar.nl

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MARIA PETERS' MOTIVATION TO MAKE THIS FILM:

Motivation

For a long time, I want to make a film about the Dutch Antonia Brico, who was named Willy Wolters during her childhood. Born in 1902, she became the first woman in the world to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in the late 1920s. In 1974 Judy Collins and Jill Godmilow made a documentary about her. This documentary was nominated for an Oscar and because of it, the then old aged Antonia Brico came back in the American public eye, before she'd slide back into obscurity. Obscurity is, unfortunately, a fate that many female artists throughout the ages have seen (as can be read about in Germaine Greer's book *The Obstacle Race*). And it is perhaps this oblivion that stimulates me most to write and direct this story.

The remarkable life of Antonia Brico should be a source of inspiration. It is an extraordinary achievement that she managed to achieve her goal in those days, even though she had to lower herself into pleading and begging for concerts.

Did she manage to turn the fate of women in the conducting world? No.

Today, it seems as if there are no great female conductors in the world; they are totally missing in the top 20 of most famous conductors. Female artists must be content with a place in the margin. It's always been like that. And if we don't do anything about it ourselves, it will continue to be that way.

The life of Antonia Brico has made a great impression on me for several reasons. She was Dutch by birth and she practiced a beautiful, but elusive craft: that of conductor. In a way, it's just as elusive as the profession of film director. I was deeply touched by her passion for her profession, and her persistent struggle to achieve her goal as a (first) woman and to be accepted in that man's world. I contacted her full cousin Rex Brico (now 90 years old), who lives in Amsterdam and worked for many years as a journalist for Elsevier Magazine's culture section. He knew her well and knew everything about her life. He has put her life course on paper for me and I had many conversations with him about his cousin. Also, I already read a lot about orchestras and conductors.

About Antonia Brico

I limited myself to the part of her life in which Willy / Antonia takes the first step in becoming a conductor, up to and including the establishment of the Women's Orchestra. It is the part in which Antonia is a young adult woman and transforms from Willy Wolters (the name her foster parents gave her) into Antonia Brico (the name her biological mother gave her and which is on her birth certificate). The transformation from self-denial to self-recognition. From impossible to possible.

Love story

I've chosen to make the story universal in a certain sense, and therefore I decide the story should also be about love. I do this because I like it very much myself, but I also think about the possible target audience: everyone understands the pain of unrequited or unattainable love.

Theme

The theme that is central in this story is: does a woman have to work harder and stand out in order to achieve something? Robin tells Willy that you have to stand out if you want to achieve something in the music business. Throughout the rest of the story, we will see whether Antonia stands out enough to become a conductor, or if she poses such a threat to the status quo that it prevents her from being a conductor.