

How Pierre went from Munich to Rio and back !

From Munich to Rio de Janeiro and back: After performing the part of a doctor for 147 episodes, Pierre Kiwitt became a star of a Brazilian Telenovela.

A little more than a year ago in Munich: Pierre was jobbing as a waiter; acting alone wasn't enough to make a living. One evening he asks his Brazilian barkeeper colleague Marcello for advice. There's been an offer from producer TV Globo for Pierre to take up a leading role in a Brazilian Telenovela. And since Pierre doesn't really know what to think of it he asks his friend for guidance. Upon being asked by Marcello who will star in the movie Pierre answers "A lady named Malu Mader". "Are you sure?" inquires the excited barkeeper? After being reassured by Pierre that yes, this was truly the case, Marcello simply shakes his head and exclaims "Do you know what the means?"

Malu Mader is a big star in Brazil and is to Brazil what Romy Schneider was to Germany. Pierre spent an entire year shooting alongside Malu Mader in 147 episodes of "Eterna Magia".

Pierre Kiwitt (32) is a tall man with a face one might believe to have seen on TV. He's sitting outside a café, huddled into his jacket, describing his Brazilian adventure.

His mother is French and Pierre went to French school in Munich. At school he always enjoyed being part of the school theater ensemble. The school's ensemble even received a prize at a Versailles theater contest. However, upon graduation Pierre fulfilled his father's wish and studied banking and afterwards got a job in the industry. The idea and love of acting however always kept coming back. One day a customer mentioned to him "A tall man like you should be standing on a stage". The lady happened to be an agent and she left Pierre her business card.

As the years passed Pierre continuously questioned his banking career. Money, he thought to himself, can't be the only thing worth striving for. And that business card kept reminding Pierre of his true passion. So one day he decided that "now" was the time and made the phone call. The agent recalled their meeting and referred him to a professional acting teacher. Acting started taking up most of Pierre's free time. Soon he studied at the Cologne Acting Academy while still keeping his full time job so support himself. After work he read the works of Strasberg and Stanislawski and worked pro bono on a number of acting gigs to get experience.

As we sit in the Café as a police car shrieks by, sirens screaming. "We did that to" recounts Pierre, describing the stunt man course he took. Including leading into and off of moving cars.

In 2004 Pierre hands in his notice at the bank and decides to launch his acting career. He doesn't want to be blaming himself for the rest of his of not having at least tried.

And so Pierre gets supporting roles, builds his network and things move along well. One day someone recommends that he create a profile on the Spotlight actors' site. At the end of 2006 his agent gets an email from Brazil referring to his profile.

At first Pierre shrugs it off: "I don't even speak Portuguese"! No problem say the producers: you speak Spanish and that's similar to Portuguese. And so Pierre and Marcello the barkeeper work on a few practice scenes and Pierre sends the tapes to South America.

And eventually Brazil says "yes" to Pierre and Pierre says "yes" to Brazil. And so off he goes to Brazil, on March 2nd, 2007, selected from 140 candidates.

A German-speaking man picks him up at the airport. He becomes Pierre's coach, calendar, cell phone and translator in one. It's hot and Pierre moves into an apartment overlooking the Atlantic. The producers and

actors are excited about his arrival and things get going quickly. Pierre's days are long and he comes home late and exhausted.

The studio in Rio is the size of six football fields, about 100 feet tall and illuminated by spotlights. Making Telenovelas is a major industry there. Telenovelas have been a part of programming for decades. TV Globo has the six, the seven and the eight o'clock novella and is one of the biggest TV channels in the world. "TV sets are permanently running in every restaurant in the entire country" describes Pierre and adds that Eterna Magia was the six o'clock show. "We didn't have the best ratings" he remembers and smiles – that still means between 40 and 60 million views per show. And he tuned in to see Pierre Kiwitt aka Peter Gallagher in yet another installment of the show.

The story line is that pianist Eva Sullivan (Malu Mader) lives in Ireland while having an affair with Gallagher. All this happens shortly before World War II. After her father suffers a stroke she decides to return to Brazil where her love for old flame Conrado (the neighbor's son) rekindles. Conrado, however, is already engaged to Eva's sister and the wedding planned. Peter is invited to attend. During the ceremony Conrado changes his mind and the wedding is cancelled. "That's sort of the standard of how things are done in Telenovelas" explains Pierre. And then as the show evolves the producers change the story line to please the audience. And thus the charming Peter Gallagher turned into a mean and scheming villain. "Being the villain is great" says Pierre "everything focuses on what you do".

Pierre shoots on almost a daily basis and starts getting some press. With time, the producers provide him a bodyguard and Pierre is more and more frequently recognized in public. On a short scuba diving trip he causes quite a stir in the small seaside town. Some 50 people gather at the doorstep of the hut where he's sleeping. One lady even hands him a cup as a gift. The engraving says: 3rd place, women's surfing. "It's from my daughter. She wants you to have it". "I can't" answers Pierre, "your daughter must have worked hard to get this. "She has many of them and would like you to have his" the woman insists. Pierre's overwhelmed by the warmth. "These people have very little. But they have huge hearts". And Brazil is series-crazy! The news of Gallagher's death in the last episode of Eterna Magia is frontpage news in some papers.

And so what did he learn during that year? "Firstly, this year is what I risked it all for. Secondly, I learned Portuguese". His Portuguese kept improving and went from humble beginnings to leading long monologues in the show. "It seems like a dream when I look at the scenes with friends now" Pierre reminisces. And so his Munich buddies welcome back a star that is no star in Germany. A star during an exceptional year. A year he is reminded of by entries on his web site's guest book.

"I don't miss the celebrity" says Pierre. "I simply wish to act. This is not about status or fame". After the series there's another offer to play in a movie but it never materializes. Pierre is happy to return to Munich and his girlfriend.

And so Pierre starts anew as he always does at the end of a project. "I introduce myself to producers, send out tapes and go to castings".

Two weeks ago Pierre was taking a stroll through the park as he ran into his friend Marcello the barkeeper. Marcello had been following the show and was thrilled. Most of all however he was thrilled that their conversation was entirely in Portuguese.

So Pierre is probably the only person to have completed a language course on TV; in front of an audience.

An audience of more than 70 million people on some days!