

# FILM

## Interview

### HUNKY DÖRRIE

German director Doris Dörrie sings the praises of singleness in *Nobody Loves Me*



We love you, okay? German director Dörrie.

**M**ama, remember someday your body will be a corpse," German director Doris Dörrie's six-year-old daughter, Carla, told her recently. Death is not a taboo subject for Dörrie, 40, at home or in her feature films, which include the sharply observed 1985 satire *Men* and her latest macabre comedy, *Nobody Loves Me*.

In a scene from *Nobody*, Fanny Fink (Maria Schrader), a single, intelligent 29-year-old who has sworn off men, takes a workshop on the consciousness of dying and learns a less-than-catchy refrain: "Let us imagine how our corpse is bloated. It turns blue and stinks. Our bodies are seething with insects and worms. The blood is gone. All that remains is a pile of bones. The bones turn to dust."

The words (part of a meditation that Buddhist monks have chanted for 2,000 years) sound more like a witch's incantation. But with her sophisticated sense of humor and careful craftsmanship, Dörrie—a former film critic—manages to add charm to this scene, and many others in which death is confronted head-on. (See Review on next page.)

The director's ability to temper life's big issues—the plight of single women in *Nobody Loves Me* and infidelity in *Men*—with a sense of optimism has earned her recognition both at home and, to a lesser degree, here in the States.

Dörrie, who's in town promoting *Nobody Loves Me*, is certainly optimistic about New York. "Who doesn't love the city?" she asks from her modern suite at Morgans Hotel on

Madison Avenue, where her daughter plays quietly in the next room. ("You should check out the breakfast room downstairs," Dörrie comments. "It's a bunch of black jackets and sunglasses—like something out of a movie.") She, however, has fewer kind words to say about her homeland. "I have traveled a great deal and increasingly find myself struck by how unfriendly and inhibited German people are, and, most important, how underdeveloped their sense of compassion seems, compared to other Europeans and to Americans." Dörrie adds that it's much easier to make films in her country, but admits that she's in a privileged position—most of her previous films have turned a profit, so she no longer has to rely on government funding to get new projects off the ground.

"In Europe, we insist on our misery," she continues. "We dwell on it. It's a sense of decadence that can be very pretty in the movies. But in reality, it insists on things not being changed."

Dörrie captures both the highs and lows of German reality in her documentary works, which include *Love in Germany* (1990) and *What Can It Be?* (1993). "I'm sometimes accused of being too bizarre" she says. "When I make a documentary, I realize that my fiction is not as strange as reality. People are way more bizarre than my characters."

In addition to her film work, Dörrie has written seven collections of short stories, two of which (*Love, Pain and the Whole Damn Thing* and *What Do You Want From Me?*) have been published in English. The works draw from her life experiences, which have included studying theater at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, and both psychology and philosophy at the New School for Social Research here in NYC.

Although Dörrie has yet to pursue a degree in women's studies, she has strong opinions on being a woman in the film business. "Woman filmmaker" is a label she abhors, and one that goes against her natural inclination to break down barriers. "I make films about relationships," she says, "and about emotions. These include men, too."

For the last eight years, Dörrie has been married to Helge Weindler, the director of photography for all of the films she has directed since 1985. Young daughter Carla is now in on the action as well. During the filming of *Nobody Loves Me* last year, she was on the set the entire time.

Carla also accompanies Dörrie to New York several times a year—and she may appreciate the city even more than mom does. "Carla grew up in the country," Dörrie observes. "Yet she loves the cement playgrounds here, where there is only concrete, not a single leaf or flower." Maybe there's a movie in it for Dörrie: *The Asphalt Jungle-Gym*, perhaps?—Karen Kramer

*Nobody Loves Me* opens November 3 at Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza.