



Anne-Sophie Erichsen

## My Mother Is Irresistible

*My mother is irresistible.  
She is loud. My mother is loud.  
She speaks loudly.  
She laughs all the time.  
My mother laughs loudly.  
My mother has an irresistible laugh.  
My mother speaks to everybody.  
She talks a lot, all the time.  
My mother speaks on the telephone -  
at the dinner table (thanks to the  
mobile), on the toilet, on the phone.  
Loudly. Voice. Laughter.*

How can I describe my work on characters? It took me quite a few years to realise that all of my characters are versions of my mother or other family members. I do not ask them to come, but they do. We are a good family. We love each other. Honestly, we do. I know them - their movements, reactions, personal stuff. The way the feet move, the way the eyes move, their voices.

One of my most recent characters was not based on my family. After seeing the show, my mother asked me if I wasn't worried that my aunt would be offended. It was like seeing her, she said. Exactly her way of moving. My God, I thought. Honestly, I didn't know. I try to avoid making versions of my family, but it seems I cannot. They pop up.

And then again: aren't all characters a part of oneself, just

Anne-Sophie Erichsen  
Photo: Danny Twang

magnified? Did you know that we inherit gestures as well? Not only physical resemblance, but actual movements - the way I turn my neck. My brother does the same. My daughter walks like her grandmother (the other one).

I have to find the character in my body, always physically - the movements, the way of walking, the voice. When I find it, the character has its own psychology. He or she acts and reacts with his/her own logic. I can distance myself. I didn't say or do that, she did! It can take time - to find the character, I mean.

I created a very loud, laughing and nasty mother in a children's performance. She was really noisy, talking all the time, fun. She was called Sylvia. A friend of mine told me: "I went to see your sister the other day, when I heard a voice in the corridor. It was the voice of Sylvia from the performance. I thought, is Anne here now? Isn't she away on tour? Why is she joking in Sylvia's voice, here?" She went to see, and that was the first time she met my mother! We can't get away from our own story, can we?

I have created many versions of my mother; one of my aunt (of which I wasn't aware); one of my father (still to be developed); one of my stepfather (proud of that one, nobody would recognise him); one of my nanny; and some mixed. And I have done myself. Just myself, I think. Me acting myself, being there, not really being a character. There is a difference.

When I was asked to write this article, I knew I didn't want to write technically about the work. I have done that before, trying to describe what happens on the floor. The references are always very visible and concrete, but how to explain in words, without showing? What is hidden behind the character? Then a sentence entered my mind: "My mother is irresistible". It wouldn't go away. So I decided to listen to that sentence and just write what came.

ANNE-SOPHIE ERICHSEN (Norway) has been an actress and pedagogue at Grenland Friteater since 1983. She has been involved in the Magdalena Project since 1986, and organised together with Geddy Aniksdal A Room of One's Own, Magdalena 1989.