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Star File

At the recently concluded Kolkata Film Festival. Romain Maitra found an incredible actress in the diminutive Mira Gittner from Munich

F you happened to have seen her in Roland Reber's new film, The Dark Side of Our Inner Space, screened at the recently-concluded Kolkata Film Festival, the strange acrid edge of her acting talent could not have eluded you. You might have felt in retrospect the dark cry in her visage as though she had crunched her teeth on the worm in the apple of our desire. We saw her exposing the raw fibres of our psychological constitutions, to glare at the hidden contents of the forms that we are, almost with the intensity of a Klaus Kinsky face in Aguirre, the Wrath of God.

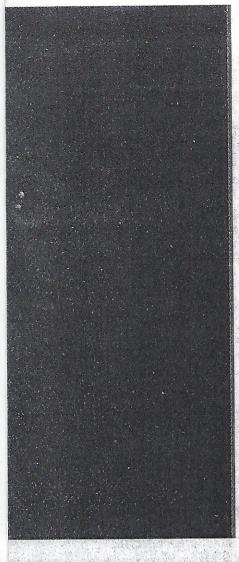
In The Dark Side... she plays Tanja who is one of the five young people to apply for a role-play that is supposed to take place in an abandoned military base. As the "Big Game" starts, they are slowly dragged into the insidious recesses of their "inner space" to consider the frontiers of the "reality" and the "game", and, in turn, we witnessed her, in her role of Tanja, churning inquisitions at us.

This incredible actress is the diminutive Mira Gittner from Munich. She was frequently marked at the film festival site with her dubiously unadorned appear-

ance, in plain jeans and T-shirt which, she said, "makes me feel comfortable". She had recently dyed her naturally-blond tresses stark black and donned it black worn-out cap with a stitched sketch of Wilber, the pig, which she had adopted in her home since it was six weeks old and which became the mascot of her wto international film production.

Gittner began acting at the age of 10, capturing a leading role for television. From that tender age she felt an irrepressible drive for acting which, as the years went by, resulted in her playing in numerous film and television productions. She also joined the acting school for theatre. However, although she is not a decorative talker, she does not mince words to drive home her points, "But if one does not have the talent, no amount of technique can touch the heart. As an actor, it is very important to reflect, to know a locabout oneself. One should know one's own psychological traits. How can I act as another person when I even do not know who I am? When I understand myself, I can understand the other better."

From acting in television, Gittrer had



various involvements in theatres in Germany such as the Bavarian State Opera in Munich as acting soloist in La Traviata in 1993 and '94, or with the World Theatre Project in 1994 or with the Theatre Institute in Munich in 1997 and '98. It was, however, in 1998 that she teamed up with German actor-turned-director Roland

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Reber and actress Marina Anna Eich and wtp international film production was formed. Since then, this team has proved not only inseparable for all the three has also but revealed, in the productions film i followed, other Gittner's active roles, apart from her acting

as editor, cinematographer and producer. In 2000, she acted in The Room, the first film of Reber's trilogy on "the search". In this film, screened at the Kolkata Film

Festival, we saw her as Sophie who shares with another man a house with a locked room. It dawned on us that the core of the film was not about the mysterious incidents in the house, but rather the hidden feelings of these two occupants."All houses have forbidden rooms," says the man, and Sophie adds, "Just like our souls." For her role in this film she bagged the Best Female Actor award at the Melbourne Underground International Film Festival in 2001. About her idea of acting, she further explained, "If I am impersonating a murderer, for example, I have to look inside myself, at my own aggressive instincts, and then slowly expand it. The actor is like an instrument, like a piano with many keys having different tones and he must know how to use the keys, whether of aggression or of compassion." The same year Gittner directed her first

short film of 13 minutes, Call it. Love, which, according to a reviewer in the USA, "dances on the edge of pathos and rage, (and) transports the viewer through an emotional labyrinth of May/December passion gone wrong". The film was awarded at the Panorama of Independent Filmmakers in Thessaloniki and at the Alternativa International Film Festival in Picciano. In Pentamagica (2002), the second film of Reber's trilogy which spares no aspect of the "magical sciences", she worked as one of the cinematographers and the editor. She also acted in the film as one of the five women who, at an esoteric summer workshop, all decide to work together on preparing a book about the world of magic, while each of them delves into one special area like shamanism, ritual magic, sexual magic, geomancy and so on. She got the Special Award for editing the film at the Panorama of Independent Filmmakers in Thessaloniki.

However, despite her multiple roles in the filmmaking process, it is acting that she enjoys most of all. "I want to get to know the dark sides in us humans because these dark places are alive. They are life." And among all her works, the one that would dwell memorably for a long time is her soul-searching act in The Dark Side of Our Inner Space as we see light falling on her piercing and timeless gaze while she utters, "Where does it start? Does the Big Game start with our birth - and we are not realising it ...? Nobody asked you if

you want to be born in the game which we call 'life'. Maybe the game was there before you. Maybe it will go on after death. Where is the beginning? Where is the end? And where - the winner?" And in the welter of violent acts that unfolds, she emerges out of the doors of the vicious military base, a little wiser from the Big Game, holding a burn-

ing torch and her suitcase.

The author is a film and performing arts