



# THE SILENT ONES

## YOUNG DUTCH

**director**  
**Ricky**  
**Rijneke is**

**currently hard at work on her first feature film ,The Silent Ones (De Stillen), which was one of four projects selected by The Netherlands Film Fund and the Mondriaan Foundation for their Imagination (De Verbeelding) film scheme.**

Rijneke had already achieved international recognition for her award winning short film *Wing: The Fish That Talked Back* when she decided to send in a 12 page scenario for a feature film to the Imagination competition, which had been advertised in the local papers and on the internet.

The Imagination competition came about back in 2007 because the Netherlands Film Fund had been given extra money by the government to fund something special. "We decided it would be a good idea to fund a scheme that would try and find directors with artistic visions and experience who could make 60-80 minute feature films utilizing their talents," explains Ger Bouma, head of film projects at the Netherlands Film Fund. "It was a

relatively low budget scheme which provided 300,000 euros per project."

The story that Rijneke originally sent in to the competition revolved around the lives of two boys living in a remote village whose world is transformed by the arrival of a young girl who awakens in them sexual desires, but also jealousy, competition, intimacy and hate. The script was viewed, along with 50 others of varying length and quality, by a special advisory committee, consisting of five experienced film experts, headed by Rotterdam Film Festival director Rutger Wolfson.

Of the four that were eventually chosen, Sonja Wyss' visually stunning and haunting drama *Winter's Silence* about a widowed mother and her religious daughters all yearning for love and intimacy has already premiered at The Berlin Film Festival and picked up sound design awards at The Netherlands Film Festival. While Martijn Smits' *It's Already Summer* about a father who loses his job and struggles to look after his kids, has been filming in the bleak, Belgian industrial town Seraing. Rijneke's *The Silent Ones* meanwhile has

evolved from its original form and now focuses on the lives of two young women, as opposed to two young boys. One of the women, named Csilla, is working on a ship determined to lead a better life in Western Europe, while the other, Fran, lives in a small remote village in southern Holland also dreaming of a better existence.

"Yes, the story has changed," says Ricky Rijneke with a laugh. "Originally it was a concept with two boys, but I couldn't find the right actors for the roles and so changed it to two girls instead, whose lives will interconnect as the story develops."

Rijneke is using the script as a guide, but prefers to piece the film together as she goes along, putting together the different fragments until she has produced the final mosaic. "There is very little writing, but a lot of thinking," says Rijneke quoting the famous architect John Lautner.

Rijneke has spent the last few weeks on a ship in Rotterdam shooting the scenes involving the character Csilla, who is being played by Orsi Toth, a promising young Hungarian actress voted one of European Film Promotion's Shooting Stars at this year's Berlin Film Festival.



Director Ricky Rijnke (left) on set

"I had seen and loved her films (which include renowned Hungarian director Kornel Mundruczo's award winning titles *Delta* and *Pleasant Days*) and thought she would be perfect for the role as she can say a lot without saying anything, so I approached her at The Locarno Film Festival to play the part and after watching my short film, she fortunately said yes."

The role of Fran is being played by the unknown Flemish actress Sylvia Cornelissen, Hungarian actor Roland Raba will also star in the film.

For Rijnke, the atmosphere of her films is absolutely vital. "Of course you need a story, but framing, colour and light are crucial to set the mood and strike the right visual power," she says, citing

leading artistic directors such as Carlos Reygadas (*Silent Light*), Cristian Muniu (*4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days*) and Andrei Zvyagintsev (*The Return*) as inspirations in this regard.

Supporting her in the visual aspects of *The Silent Ones* is renowned director of photography Jean-Paul de Zaeytijd, who's worked on Bouli Lanners' *Eldorado*, Micha Wald's *Voleurs de Chevaux* and Stefan Liberski's *Bunker Paradise*, among others. "His style is very poetic, which I thought would suit my film," says Rijnke.

Rijnke honed her own film making skills at the Utrecht School of Arts where she learnt about directing, editing, scenario writing, making video clips and art direction in her Master of Arts in European Media.

This set her in good stead for her short film *Wing: The Fish That Talked Back*, which she wrote, directed, produced and edited shortly after graduating. A mixture of reality and fantasy, the film tells the story of a six year old Chinese girl living with her family in the Netherlands who is obsessed with marine life and learning about her ancestral homeland. It has already been shown at more than 40 festivals, including Cannes and Locarno, and picked up small awards along the way.

*The Silent Ones* is a further step up the film ladder for Rijnke, with a total budget of 500,000 euros, of which 300,000 euros came from the Imagination scheme and 85,000 euros from the Rotterdam Media Fund. Rijnke and the film's producers Rotterdam Films are currently negotiating with other potential co-producers to find the rest of the money.

"There are companies interested from Belgium, France and Hungary," says Rijnke. "Plus, we will be going to The Berlin Film Festival to see if we can get some funds from there as well."

*The Silent Ones'* producers Rotterdam Films hope the film will be ready later this year. But in the meantime "We are still promoting *Wing: The Fish That Talked Back*, there are people always asking for it," says Dirk Rijnke, head of Rotterdam Films. •