

Certified translation from the German language

New York, New York

Victor Natus – a young man who wants to be on the stage

Up until a few years ago, Victor Natus lived in Düsseldorf, went to school in Gerresheim – and now he calls New York his home. This is because he is convinced that only there will he be able to learn what he wants to learn and do: stand on the stage or in front of the camera and become another person. He's an actor. This is his passion. And this is what he would like to live from, and for.

He has already fulfilled the second part of this wish. Because, from 2017 until 2019, he was a student at The Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. Today, he has a part-time job at the school. In the district of Manhattan, not far from the powerful UN headquarters building overlooking the East River, there is an institute of education called "School of the Theatre". The institute was founded almost 100 years ago. Incidentally, by two women, Irene and Alice Lewisohn from Hamburg, in 1928.

When you walk through the building, you quickly see that clearly not a great deal has changed since then. The floorboards are run down, the rooms are small, narrow and crooked, the railing of the narrow staircase on the upper floors has been damaged by the hands of many hundreds of people who lived, sweated, sang and acted here. Not all of them experienced success – the world didn't know the vast majority of them, a few failed completely, many of them never reached the big stage. But others did, however: In a small room, directly behind the entrance and the tiny porter's office, there are two or three dozen old and more recent black and white photos of stars who studied at the Neighborhood Playhouse. Many are probably only known in the USA, but a few are world-famous. James Caan ("The Godfather") or Eli Wallach ("The Good, the Bad and the Ugly") and Diane Keaton ("The First Wives Club"), Jeff Goldblum ("Jurassic Park"). They were there, started at zero and then became world famous.

This is what each and every one of the students wants, although no one would say it like that. Victor Natus doesn't see himself as a winner yet; on the contrary, he is modest, for now. At present, the approx. 1.90m-tall, slim young man with shoulder-length blond curls dreams of getting small roles. And he has even been successful: A few days ago, one of numerous castings he has already gone to finally bore fruit. He was awarded the role! He will play an English emigrant in a feature film who was attracted to New York under false pretenses and then disappears without a trace. One of many thousands of people who are employed illegally and tarnish the American dream of the prosperous country like oil. Nameless, without rights. This is called trafficking and the government does a great deal to prevent it. For the role, Victor, a German from Trier living in the USA, must speak English with a Cockney accent. Can he do this? Yes, he can.

He learned this from Colleen Smith Wallnau, his language teacher. She taught him to slip into other roles also in terms of language. These teachers – they are like pilots in this sea of hope, hard work, ambition, sweat and passion. And somehow, they are viewed as unusual people, clear individualists, however above all, admired examples to their students. You can also feel from Victor the respect he has for these men and women.

The school, which seems rather narrow and small from the outside, can pack a punch: The small theatre on the ground floor with its stage, mixing desk and light technology and three or four dozen chairs serves as a rehearsal space, in a kind of gym on the top floor, the students learn everything they need to give a credible performance in wild scenes as well – while we are here, they are rolling onto thick mats and acting out combat sports in

pairs. After a short time, they are breathing heavily in t-shirts soaked in sweat. Victor: "When we slip into a role, we don't just play the person, we are them!" Whit Waterbury also helps them with this. The librarian sits in a small room on the top floor of the school. From top to bottom, left to right, the walls are lined with books, with no gaps. "All pieces which were once acted out on stage or filmed. Whit knows them all, he knows where every book is. Phenomenal" says Victor full of admiration. Mr. Waterbury nods – and doesn't look up from the screen of his iMac, which looks so anachronistic in this room, just like a flat-screen TV would look in the dining hall of Hogwarts, Harry Potter's school of magic. This atmosphere is enchanting.

These days, Victor is still involved in the school, but he is no longer a student. He was offered a job, he organizes files, answers the phone or sits in the porter's office. This means that he is still close to his teachers, and this special actor scene in which he would like to experience success. Soon, he will have to decide whether everything is enough for a O-1 – a year of officially approved work in his sector. The opportunities aren't bad. However, it will then become more difficult at the end of this year to clear the next hurdle: a permit to live in the USA for another three years as an actor and to be allowed to perform there.

He is hoping for this, as currently the only German in the school, and will continue to work towards it. A few days ago, he and a few of his actor friends were standing on the stage of a theatre in Brooklyn. The play that they performed over three nights was called "Dog sees God". It is about gay men, coming out and the brutal rules according to which they are sometimes harassed. Victor plays Beethoven (he is actually called Schroeder, but his nickname comes from this German composer because he loves Beethoven.) And: Beethoven is gay. His lover is called Charlie Brown. Do the names sound familiar? You're right: This comes from Peanuts, the legendary comic series of the 1970s. At that time, Lucy harbored a fierce crush for the boy at the piano: But he didn't react. Today we know why – he is into men. Into Charlie Brown to be more precise. But the story, which describes Peanuts as adults and without Snoopy (he died long ago), does not have a happy ending – Beethoven commits suicide, he cannot bear the pressure of his environment.

Positive press, it ended in tumultuous applause – the crew led by Victor were touched by their success and are now applying for an engagement with this play by Bert V. Royal on a state off-Broadway, meaning not far from those addresses where world careers have often begun.

And Düsseldorf? His mother lived there up until recently, and he visited her often. It is completely open whether he will go back to Germany in the future, even to Düsseldorf to one of the stages there – because as said above: the young man is just at the start of his career.

Authentication

I have examined the German original/photocopy/facsimile, and this is a true translation of the same into English.

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