

**This text is a translation from a post on the website Nordic Women in Film.**

<http://www.nordicwomeninfilm.com/person/ulla-ryghe/>

## **ULLA RYGHE (Sweden)**

**Film editor, script supervisor and director. Born in Stockholm in 1924, deceased in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, in 2011. Edited nine Ingmar Bergman films during the 1960s. Produced Jane Campion's first film, *An Exercise in Discipline: Peel* (1982) at the Australian Film and Television School.**

Ulla Ryghe was an adventurous and enterprising woman who worked as a film editor and script supervisor in Sweden, Canada, Australia, Italy, France, Brunei, and Singapore. Her restless curiosity and passion for the magic of visual storytelling – which is largely born in the editing room – also made her engage with the teaching of new generations of editors in Stockholm, Sydney, and Bandar Seri Begawan, among other places. But she did not like being called “Bergman’s editor”.

During the war, Ulla Ryghe first planned to train as a farmer. She practiced on a farm in Skåne but soon realised that she was much more interested in art and culture. She started studying art history in Lund and landed an internship at Nationalmuseum, where Ragnar Josephson (the father of Erland Josephson) became her mentor. She continued with literature studies in Lund and joined a theatre group in Malmö, only to realise that she wanted to become an actress. She attended Therserus’ theatre school, aiming at being accepted at the Royal Dramatic Theatre. Having been rejected, she switched lanes once more and started working as a journalist at, among others, *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning*, where Torgny Segerstedt was chief editor at the time. She continued as a journalist at *Dagens Nyheter*, married her colleague Hans Werner, and went on to work at *Aftonbladet*. In the mid-1950s, when television invaded Swedish homes, she first approached SF (Svensk Filmindustri, a Swedish production company) which at that time also produced newsreels. Having been rejected, she approached Europa Film instead, where she was offered a temporary post as a negative editor. Without any particular experience, she soon became the film editor’s assistant. The idea was that her training as a journalist and editor would land her a job in the new medium of television. Headed by Kjellin, Ulla Ryghe quickly and methodically learned the trade and became increasingly fascinated with the practical-artistic work. Oscar Rosander, Bergman’s editor, was the “grand old man” of Swedish film editing, and as his assistant at SF, one of her first tasks was to mark a working copy of *Djävulens öga* (*The Devil’s Eye*). Her first encounter with Ingmar Bergman was a catastrophe, as the screening of the opening scene of the working copy revealed that Ulla’s marks on the celluloid covered parts of the shots. Bergman went into a fit and scolded her. In the heat of the moment, he passed a personal remark and Ulla shocked the whole team by answering back that she was more than willing to take legitimate criticism, but that he should keep the personal remarks to himself. After this clash peace was negotiated.

When film editor Oscar Rosander made some unsolicited changes to a version of *Såsom in en spegel* (*Through a Glass Darkly*) he was fired by Bergman, who hired Ulla Ryghe as his replacement. As Ulla Ryghe writes in her memoir *Travels in Wonderland*, her years with Ingmar Bergman taught her a lot about Bergman’s way of perceiving the filmed material. His

already significant experience granted him an unsentimental relationship to the material – the only thing that meant something was what the image itself communicated. He consistently celebrated the principle of “killing your darlings.” During the larger part of the 1960s, Ulla Ryghe worked as Bergman’s editor on films like *Nattvardsgästerna* (*Winter Light*), *Tystnaden* (*The Silence*) and *Persona*. *Skammen* (*Shame*) was her last Bergman film.

With the inauguration of the new film school in the early 1960s, Ulla Ryghe was made head of the editors’ training, in parallel with continued work as an editor at SF. By the late 1960s, Ulla Ryghe left Sweden to work abroad, with Montreal as her base and the National Film Board as her workplace. She also started making her own documentaries, got a house on Cyprus, and started teaching at a film school there as well. In 1969 she was employed by Cyprus’s newly-started TV company as an editor and directed her own documentaries – several about her own Cypriote town Bellpaís. After an (uncredited) interlude as editor and script supervisor on *Rambo* director George B. Cosmatos’ film *The Beloved*, she initiated a collaboration with Arne Boströms’s animation company in Genève. The Swiss *TV Suisse Romande* became a new employer during a year or so, before she returned to Montreal to work at Radio Québec. Through her collaboration with Ferdinand Dansereaus’ production company Immedia, she became interested in “community oriented cinema” and made three films with amateurs and young people, depicting their reality. She also tried to write a film script based on Canadian author André Major’s novel *L’épouvantail*, which, however, was never turned into a film.

During Jörn Donner’s time as the director of the Swedish Film Institute, he made Ulla Ryghe responsible for the Film Institute’s investment in international co-productions. Based in Paris, she was to monitor productions on location while scouting manuscripts for new potential co-productions. However, few of the projects were realised, in part due to the low international interest in including Swedish technicians in teams.

During the early 80s, Ryghe spent three years in Sydney, where she taught at the Australian Film and Television School. During this time she functioned as the executive producer of Jane Campion’s first film, *An Exercise in Discipline: Peel* – a collaboration that both parties described as challenging. She also worked as a script editor for the Australian Film Commission and taught at Auckland’s University in New Zealand. Her much-admired course in scriptwriting also brought her to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Singapore and Bandar Seri Begawan, the capital of Brunei in Boreno.

In 2006, Ulla Ryghe moved back to Canada, this last time to Vancouver, where she passed away in 2011.