

## Eileen Hofer

Director, *Horizons*

**What was your inspiration for this documentary on Cuban ballet legend Alicia Alonso, the mentor in her 90s who lost her vision during her 20s?**

A friend of mine told me about this amazing dancer who became blind and despite this handicap she decided to struggle and to get on stage and to learn how to handle her art, her work. For me it was a human message in the sense that whenever you have a problem we usually say, "I can't do it anymore." But the message is you have to struggle and you can go beyond the horizons.

**How did you get access to the three generations of dancers in the film?**

When I met Alonso in Cuba I also met the prima ballerina. She's 35 years old and we followed her and we brought her to her physiotherapist. He asks her, "Do you remember the first time you showed up? I asked you, 'What is your aim? Where do you want to go? To the beginning of the beach? Or more near the sea?' And you said, 'Beyond the horizons to infinity.'" So the prima ballerina had no limits. She was ready for anything.

**What was it about ballet that you felt would make such a powerful metaphor about freedom under dictatorship?**

I was interested in this woman and that's why it became ballet but it could have been football or anything. Once I was there I realized there was a big metaphor between the way she is still, at 94, taking care of her castle, which is ballet, and the image of the Castros – the two brothers who are still dealing with their island. They're tired, exhausted and at the end of a dream that never came true.

**And you met the legendary singer Omara Portuondo, learned she also studied ballet, and are putting her in a new short you're developing...Any other adventures?**

We were followed by a spy. The press person they gave us had two assistants and every time we tried to shoot something, someone would show up in 10 seconds and say, 'No, no, no, no...'



**What else is on your list of things to do while here?**

I'm taking a trip to Marienbad because I had a dream to visit it and I was sad because I forgot my book by Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, as it's set [in a Czech spa town like] Karlovy Vary and I read it when I was 15 but I really wanted to read it again here. And I saw the *Arabian Nights* trilogy by Miguel Gomes. Next we take *Horizons* to Locarno.

*Horizons screens today at 2pm (Drahomíra). It does not feature Omara Portuondo as suggested by an earlier Festival Daily article.* (WT) ■

## NOTICE

Today's screening of *The Falling*, originally scheduled for the Thermal Congress Hall at 4pm has been **moved** to the KV Theater at 9:30pm. Today there will be an **added screening** in 3D of *Love* by Gaspar Noé (midnight, Čas Cinema). ■