

Country Living

Ulrike von Radichevich left the world of European theatre to set up RIKE- DESIGN in Castlemaine

- SARAH HUDSON - *The Weekly Times* - June 04, 2014 12:00AM



Stage right: Ulrike studied set and costume design at the famous Mozarteum.
Source: News Corp Australia

CASTLEMAINE lucked it the day Ulrike von Radichevich came to town. Not that her vast artistic pedigree is easy to spot walking from Mostyn St into her Rike Design shop. As beautiful as her clothes and accessories are, most customers wouldn't be aware that Ulrike grew up in Austria's Salzburg, studied set and costume design at the famous Mozarteum, and went on to wow theatres around Europe, working on hundreds of dramas, musicals from *Singing in the Rain* to *Jesus Christ Superstar*, to more lofty operas, such as *Madame Butterfly*.

MORE: Rike Design, Castlemaine, rike-design.com or ph: (03) 5470 6014

"Sometimes, yes, it does feel a little small here compared to the theatre," Ulrike says in her strong German accent.

"But then I'll go and work overseas or take part in a big event or festival or get a crazy idea. I'm happy to work in both sides, fashion and on stage."

What brought her from the vast stage of Europe to the small community of Castlemaine was, like most similar stories, love — although in Ulrike’s case it was a German chap, Jens, who she met while travelling in Australia.

“Sometimes you have to go around the world to find the right partner. My best friend here is also from Vienna,” she laughs.

Ulrike grew up in Salzburg, which she describes as a “wonderland, a fantasy”, with “culture in all directions”.

Weirdly enough she initially did a degree in engineering, working on cars and textile machines, before boredom set in and she decided to extend the skill and her love of painting into set design, which quickly extended to costume design.

When Ulrike graduated she freelanced around the great stages of Europe — Italy, Germany, Switzerland, eventually basing herself for 14 years in Switzerland, where she taught fashion. About 12 years ago — based somewhat on a whim from a T-shirt she saw that read “No we don’t have kangaroos in Austria” — she booked a ticket Down Under for a holiday.

“I came here and fell in love with the countryside. For me, optic is very, very strong and the light here is absolutely incredible. The trees are magic. Compared to Austria it’s like walking onto another planet.”

Then she met Jens, a light designer with a theatre group, and the duo and their son Ernie, 11, moved to Castlemaine eight years ago.

While Ulrike’s skills are still in demand in Europe — she works there about two months every year — it was at the suggestion of friends that she started her fashion shop.

“I initially thought ‘It’s not me, I don’t know how to do it’.”

Now Rike Design offers her own one-off creations and others she sources, with some of the garments — including handbags, hats, gloves — even inspired and created as extensions of her European theatre work. Ulrike also offers fashion design, illustration and wearable art courses for beginners to advanced students throughout the year.

While Ulrike wishes the arts in Australia received the same resources and attention as sport, she says this country — particularly central Victoria — is now her second home.

“I feel very at home in Castlemaine. We have a good mix of people here, a melting pot of people from farms, Melbourne, artists, from the very earthy to the very artistic.

“I feel privileged to be here and be accepted by the people.”