

The Main Feature



Season 34 - Issue 10 (screening 13.2.14)



France 2011 Cert 12A 1 hr. 49 min UK release Friday 13th April 2012

Directors Stéphane and David Foenkinos
Producers André Logie, Xavier Rigault and Marc-Antoine Robert
Screenplay David Foenkinos (from his own novel)
Cinematography Rémy Chevrin
Music Émilie Simon

Cast

Audrey Tautou	Nathalie	François Damiens	Markus
Joséphine de Meaux	Sophie	Bruno Todeschini	Charles Delamain
Mélanie Bernier	Chloé	Pio Marmaï	François
Ariane Ascaride	Nathalie's mother	Christophe Malavoy	Nathalie's father
Monique Chaumette	Nathalie's grandmother		

It is rather limited to translate *la délicatesse*, the title of tonight's film, simply as 'delicacy'. My French dictionary refers to refinement, scrupulousness, fastidiousness and tactfulness as well as fragility and the awkwardness of certain situations. Interviewed by *Paris Match*, the female lead of the film, Audrey Tautou was asked what delicacy meant for her. "It's a quality which embraces several others: elegance, discretion, graciousness, and therefore intelligence. Modesty of feelings too, because in life I am myself very modest. And when watching films I like to work it out for myself, not to be told. The events that the heroine goes through are familiar to me, and I find it more moving to hide her suffering rather than to expose it. It's too easy to move to tears when in mourning."



Which gives a hint at the plot of the film, the first half-hour of which is traditional romantic comedy. In an archetypal Parisian café Nathalie (Audrey Tautou)

meets the love of her life François (Pio Marmaï). This highly likeable couple marry and seem so blissfully happy that the audience is strongly attracted to them. But then the comedy suddenly and shockingly turns to drama.



The remainder of the film traces Nathalie's subsequent life – her job with a Swedish company, her friends, whether she will continue living alone in the flat she shared with François, and how she deals with the men she encounters, especially her oleaginous boss Charles (Bruno Todeschini) and her quirky Swedish colleague Markus (François Damiens, who is not Swedish at all but a Belgian actor and comedian who presents a candid camera programme on television).

The story comes from the eighth novel written by David Foenkinos. The book itself, published whilst the film was being made, was a big success, selling more than 700,000 copies. David Foenkinos wrote the screenplay, and the film is the joint directorial debut of David and his brother Stéphane Foenkinos.

This is the fourth film in which we have seen Audrey Tautou at the club, the previous titles being *Amélie*, *Pot Luck*, and *Coco before Chanel*. She was born in 1976: her father was a dentist and her mother a teacher. She was named, she discovered on asking her parents later, after Audrey Hepburn. Her breakthrough came in 2001 when she starred in *Amélie*: some critics have noted that since its release, Tautou has had difficulty shaking off the innocent, naive and meddlesome girl from Montmartre. For



example, the American critic Anthony Lane wrote in his *New Yorker* review of her performance in the 2009 film *Coco Before Chanel*: "The problem for Audrey Tautou is that she is doomed to trail clouds of *Amélie* wherever she goes. Those inky round eyes and that pixie mug insure that hers are the features, poor thing, that social anthropologists will eternally reach for when asked to illustrate the term gamine. Or mignonne."

Why did Tautou choose this role? In the *Paris Match* interview, she said: "I don't want to make easy choices. There were other projects which on the face of it were a more obvious choice, even if the outcome was not certain, but I wanted to move out of the comfort zone which comes with working with an experienced director. It's interesting to be in at the start of something new."

Asked whether the film was a drama or a comedy, Stéphane Foenkinos said: "It's a romantic comedy, slightly shifted, where all the ingredients of life – like laughter and tears – are mixed. David and I like this indefinable aspect of the film with is neither a drama nor a comedy. It needs a talent like Audrey's to show all these nuances and subtleties. In the end, the film is at the same time both sad and funny." And that is what worried the film critic of *Le Monde*, who thought the film cannot make up its mind, and oscillates too violently between drama and comedy, though appreciating the performances from Tautou and Damiens along the way.

Maybe the French are doubtful about the value of feel-good films anyway. *Paris Match* asked Audrey Tautou whether the success of 'Untouchable' (the film we saw in January this year about a cultured and wealthy tetraplegic in a wheelchair and his unlikely helper from the suburbs) recognises peoples' weariness towards present-day cynicism. "Some people feel threatened by kindness, and equate complicated plots with depth. In fact, it is much harder to get audiences out of their own world and to show them nice things. 'Untouchable' was such a success because people went away happy. I remember that at the time *Amélie* was accused of being too full of good feeling, which is absurd because – like *Delicacy* – that does you good. It's not a fault.

Michael Hipkins

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The Musical Museum, 399 High Street Brentford TW8 0DU

Telephone: 020 8560 8108

www.musicalmuseum.co.uk

The museum is close to Kew Bridge on the north side of the Thames. It is easily accessible from the M4 and the North & South Circular roads. There is a car park, no charge.

Upcoming highlights:

Sunday 16th February at 15:00

FILM



Tales of Beatrix Potter

Dir. Reginald Mills, 1971 (U) 90mins

Mr Jeremy Fisher, Mrs Tiggy-winkle, Jemima Puddle-duck and many more come to life in this colourful and imaginative musical interpretation of Beatrix Potter's tales. Danced by members of the Royal Ballet it will delight adults and children alike this half-term.

Tickets: £6.50, Children (over 5) & concessions £5.00

Sunday 2nd March at 15:00

FILM



Jolson Sings Again

Dir. Henry Levin, 1949 (U) 96mins

In this follow-up to *The Jolson Story*, we pick up the singer's career just as he has returned to the stage after a premature retirement. But his wife has left him and the appeal of the spotlight is not what it used to be. Starring Larry Parks. Tickets: £6.50, concessions £5.00

Sunday 16th March at 15:00

FILM



For Me and My Gal

Dir. Busby Berkeley, 1942 (U) 104 mins

Two vaudeville performers fall in love, but find their relationship tested by the arrival of WWI. Starring Judy Garland, Gene Kelly and George Murphy, this Oscar-nominated film was originally billed as 'the greatest musical show ever to thrill your heart'.

Tickets: £6.50, concessions £5.00

Sunday 20th April at 15:00

FILM



Go West

Dir. Edward Buzzell, 1940 (U) 80 mins

The Marx Brothers come to the rescue in the Wild West when a young man, trying to settle an old family feud so he can marry the girl he loves, runs foul of crooks.

'Rip-Roaring With Laughs, Girls, Songs!' – the perfect tonic this Easter holiday. Tickets: £6.50, concessions £5.00

Sunday 27th April at 15:00

SILENT FILMS



An Afternoon of Silent Comedies

This fun programme, for young and old alike, offers an afternoon of classic silent comedies. Featuring Laurel and Hardy and their contemporaries, accompaniment by Donald MacKenzie on the Mighty Wurlitzer.

All Tickets £10.00

