



The Main Feature

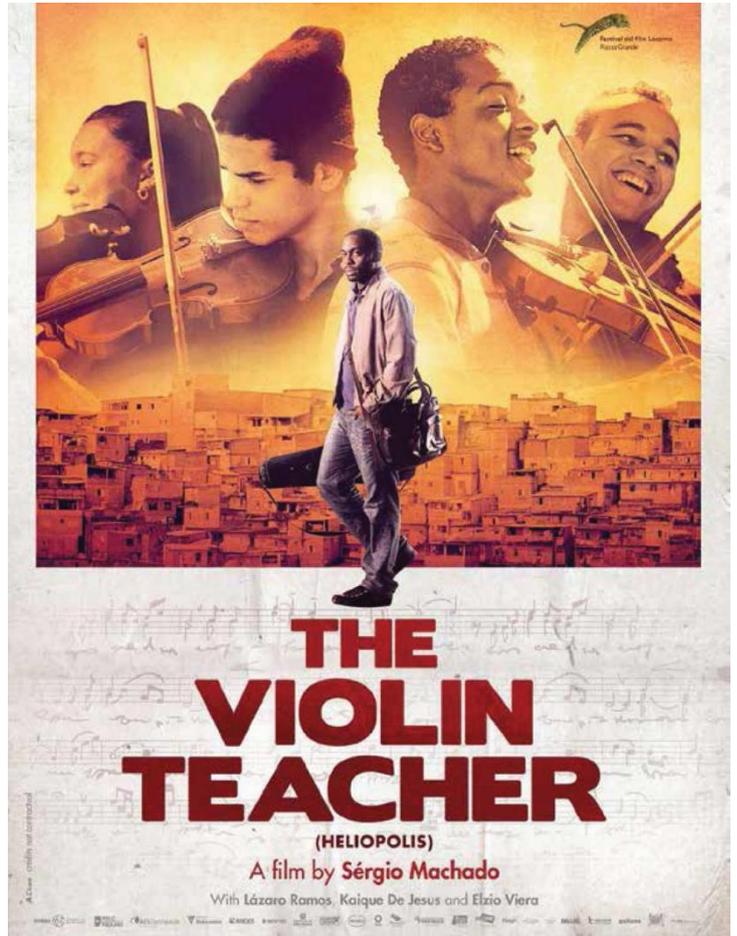
Season 39 - Issue 6

screening 22.11.18

Director Sergio Machado
Cinematography Marcel Durst

Cast
Lázaro Ramos Laerte
Kaique de Jesus Samuel
Elzio Viera VR
Sandra Corveloni Alzira
Fernanda de Freitas Bruna

Tales of inspirational teachers have been a cinematic staple across the dramatic spectrum from the sentimentality of *Goodbye Mr Chips* to the rap on the knuckles of *Whiplash*. *The Violin Teacher* treads a well-worn path but does so with enough polish and sincerity to make its redemptive tale hard to resist. The story of a talented violin player reluctantly employed as a teacher in one of Brazil's biggest slums is a slow-burning charmer fuelled by an attractive performance from lead actor Lazaro Ramos and a rich soundtrack that ranges from rap to Paganini.



Inspired by the true story of the Baccarelli Institute and the play *Acorda Brasil* by Antonio Ermirio de Moraes, *The Violin Teacher* finds its focus in Laerte (Ramos), a child prodigy of immense promise that he has not entirely fulfilled. After failing an important audition for the OSESP (Symphonic Orchestra of São Paulo), Laerte is struggling to pay his bills and maintain confidence in his ability.

He reluctantly accepts an offer to teach children in Heliopolis, one of the biggest slums in Latin America. Inevitably, he is shocked by a group of unruly, ill-disciplined teenagers who cannot even read music and fall far short of his standards when it comes to discipline and commitment. There is, of course, raw potential in some of the students, especially the gifted Samuel, and we suspect that the clash of cultures between teacher and pupils will enrich both of them all.

The Violin Teacher is very much a film of contrasts as Laerte exchanges the world of concert halls and privilege for a territory rife with crime and poverty. His daily journey to the school crosses the two worlds of Sao Paulo that rarely meet and cinematographer Marcelo Durst captures some sleekly attractive images of the city. Laerte's first classes take place outdoors in a basketball court



and the children's commitment to the music is compromised by family demands, the lure of local gangs and a range of problems from teenage pregnancy to drugs.

There is no sugar coating the social issues or the way death lurks in every shadow of the favelas but the film's underlying message is a positive one. It champions the power of music and culture to change individual lives. Laerte is initially dubbed "Obama Jr" by his pupils and does nothing to disguise his quick judgement of them but he becomes a warmer, more sympathetic

character as the teenagers reawaken his humanity.

It's Lazaro Ramos' lovely performance that lends a necessary crackle of human fragility to what could otherwise be pleasantly predictable hokum. Resisting the option to play Laerte simply as a stoic genius or savior, the actor folds a streak of self-regarding insecurity into his most triumphant breakthroughs as a teacher, tacitly expressing the fear that success in this new arena may be pulling him further from a dream deferred. Not every decision of the heart here feels entirely pre-programmed. Ramos gets spirited support from a young ensemble of co-stars, though a few more keenly drawn female characters wouldn't have gone amiss.



The gravely handsome Ramos captures a sense of the weariness and exasperation that have come to define Laerte's moods and also is very much someone who comes alive when asked to pick up his violin and play. The solid, matter-of-fact conviction he brings to the performance is very much in keeping with the spirit of a film that carefully sidesteps the easy option of overt melodrama and tearjerking sentimentality in favour of honest emotion and well-crafted, quietly engaging storytelling.



We thank Colyer Reppoint for printing these notes free of charge

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Music education 'thrown to the wolves' in the UK

BBC website 6 November 2018

Musician John Thirkell has called on the government to support music lessons for children.

"Music education has been thrown to the wolves in the UK," said the trumpet player, who has worked with George Michael, Tina Turner and Bruno Mars.

His comments coincide with research published by the Musicians' Union (MU) suggesting poorer children are priced out of learning musical instruments. Children in low income households were half as likely to take music lessons.

The report suggests only 19% of children from families earning less than £28,000 learned a musical instrument, compared with 40% of those in high-earning households. This is despite similar levels of interest from both groups of children.

The report also suggests higher-earning parents were twice as likely to want their children to learn an instrument.

Children from poorer backgrounds who did learn an instrument were found to be half as likely to receive private lessons, with almost double the number saying they were self-taught, compared to their more affluent peers in households earning more than £48,000.

In response, a Department for Education spokesperson said: "The department has invested £300m in music hubs between 2016-2020, to give every child the chance to learn an instrument without any cost to them or their families.

"Just last month, analysis showed that through music hubs over 700,000 children learnt to play instruments in class together last year."

The department also pointed out that music education is compulsory up to the age of 14 in the national curriculum.

Thirkell said: "I could not have started this journey without free music lessons in school. My parents worked hard to put food on our table, so there is no way that my parents could have afforded to help with my tuition.

"When you teach a child to play an instrument, you are teaching them a whole range of critical life skills which you learn along the way. It requires dedication, organisation and persistence; it is mathematical; you learn how to fit into a group. There is so much more than meets the eye."

The MU is calling on the government to address the disparity between access to musical tuition.

Horace Trubridge, general secretary at the MU, said: "With certain children priced out of learning musical instruments, we may well only be hearing the songs and sounds of the affluent in years to come.

"Those from poorer backgrounds will, unfairly, be increasingly under-represented within the industry."

The MU says since the removal of arts subjects from the EBacc, together with increased Ofsted focus on STEM subjects, music has been "downgraded" as a subject.

"This has led to a reduced respect for music from some local authorities and schools and therefore a disincentive to provide decent music opportunities," the union said in a statement.

Thirkell added: "The amount of revenue that the music industry generates in the UK is huge. If the government is too blind to support the ambitions of young children, they shouldn't overlook the huge opportunity for investment behind keeping music on the school syllabus."

UK Music last week reported a record year for British music revenues in 2017 - with the music industry contributing £4.5bn to the UK economy last year.

Comments and reactions to:

Guildford in the Great War:

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	~	~	~	~	~	1	1	7	4	1	2	
No of reaction slips received =	16								Average Score = 7.56			

A fascinating insight into the local impact of the war
Well worth seeing – amazing photography from so long ago
Interesting, but needed heavy editing, too long
Brings the Great War down to a more manageable scale
Very interesting film about the Great War. Lest we forget

Enjoyed
Well done Circle 8
Poignant and affecting
Very competent, moving account
Excellent – deserves a wider showing

The Levelling

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	~	1	2	2	1	11	5	9	3	1	~	
No of reaction slips received =	35								Average Score = 5.6			

Very timely portrayal of the struggle of farmers – with one a week committing suicide
Well acted but depressing – I'll never drink milk again
Unusual background of farming
Very relevant to today and strangely engaging
Harrowing but powerful – enjoy isn't the right word
More "God's own West Country" than Ambridge
Atmospheric, effective, depressing film
Wonderfully evocative photography and an excellent central performance
A good portrayal of how hard it is in farming on the Somerset Levels
Too deliberately mysterious in most of its plot. Characters were slightly unreal for farming community.
But nice to see the Somerset Levels again! Well filmed but not well scripted.
Couldn't really be a good judge – so depressing after the "War" one

Why make this film?
Well acted – a grim tale!
Very grim - pointless
Again I didn't understand
A thoroughly unpleasant film
A fitting antidote to Countryfile!
Very distracting soundtrack to complex plot
What a sad film
A strange haunting film

Comments on the evening

2 very moving and interesting films

Oh dear, what a night!

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	Darkest Hour	8.08
2 nd	Guildford in the War	7.56
3 rd	L'homme du train	6.71
4 th	Bar Bahar (In Between)	6.26
5 th	The Levelling	5.6
6 th	Phantom Thread	5.16

Next on 13 December:

"as great as the ensemble is, the script is even better, easily making "The Death of Stalin" the best and funniest film of 2018 thus far"

"An incredibly funny film about a not-very-funny historical event."

"Steve Buscemi, Simon Russell Beale, Michael Palin, Jeffrey Tambor and Jason Isaacs create a formidable and selfless comedic quintet, while Iannucci's unyielding script and direction constantly stirs, twists and builds without ever overwhelming."

"A dark, hilarious tour de force."

