



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

The UK's largest rural film festival

31 Watling Street
Leintwardine
Shropshire
SY7 0LW

Telephone: 01547 540159
info@borderlinesfilmfestival.co.uk
www.borderlinesfilmfestival.co.uk

Séraphine (PG)

Director: Martin Provost

Starring: Yolande Moreau, Ulrich Tukur

France, 2009, 2 hours 6 minutes, subtitles

The winner of 7 French Academy Awards, including best film, best original screenplay, and best actress, *Séraphine* stars Yolande Moreau as painter Séraphine Louis, a plain, poor, uncultured, devoutly Catholic housekeeper who became known as a major artistic talent in the early 20th century.

Why did you choose to make a movie about the life of Séraphine?

What intrigued me the most when I became interested in Séraphine Louis was the fact that a mere housekeeper, at a time when social classes were kept so far apart, were so impenetrable, dared to disregard everything that was forbidden in order to do what she knew she was made to do: to paint. And the fact that she met Wilhelm Uhde, which may seem to many as a mere fateful encounter, though to me it seems more like a consequence of her own actions. If Séraphine had not upset the social codes of the time, she would never have met Uhde. Also, I dare to believe that the principles of fate are tied to the determination we have within ourselves to escape from our destiny, be it emotionally or socially inauspicious, so as to move toward a more human, more personal fate. To me, Séraphine made a success of her life. Even if the end of her life was more than difficult, she remains a revolutionary - a woman at a time when it wasn't good to be a woman; one who succeeded as an artist. Those like her are quite rare. And she paved the way. Right away, I had the feeling that if I were to make her live again on film, that she would speak to people, to the inner depths of each of us.

Did you need to adapt Séraphine to Yolande Moreau — or vice versa?

Before beginning the writing process, I had already thought of Yolande for the part. I went to meet with her. As it happens, both of us live in the same countryside where we shot the film, in Vexin, about an hour from Paris. I'd say we hit it off. She comes from a stage background and so do I. We understand one another. We wrote the role for her, hearing her voice in our heads.

What was it like working with Yolande Moreau?

For a year we got to know one another. I believe I did my best to guide her toward her own best, to something she already had within herself. And toward Séraphine as well. It's not easy to incarnate someone who was once alive. It's necessary to have decency and respect. I believe we shared the same vision for Séraphine. Yolande had to learn to sing, to paint; it was all a learning experience, something that made her very happy. And from the first day of shooting, we were in full accord. To me, the most important thing when directing an actor is to make the actor feel confident.

From an interview with Martin Provost by Andre Soares, www.altfg.com

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