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Friday April 22nd, 2016: 7.30pm

The Lesson

(Bulgaria/Greece/Germany 2014. Cert 15)

dir: Kristina Groseva, Petar Valchanov

starring: Margita Gosheva

sponsor: Autostar 2000

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A taut account of an ordinary woman's swift transit into abject financial desperation, *The Lesson* is at once deadly serious in its examination of the origins and impact of poverty and almost playful in terms of the sheer level of nervous tension it seeks to evoke in its protagonist and audience. A clear stylistic model is the cinema of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, whose films also apply the tactics of the crime thriller to broadly social realistic portrayals of lives sent awry by ill-luck and poor judgement.

Initial scenes suggest that the lesson in question is going to be a junior allegory for adult mores along the lines of *The Winslow Boy*, as Nadezhda (Margita Gosheva), a strict teacher in a small Bulgarian town, attempts to establish which of her young pupils is guilty of petty theft. But the focus shifts swiftly to the financial situation of Nade herself which, thanks to a wasteful husband and delayed payments from employers, is increasingly dire. When repossession of the house she shares with her husband and daughter becomes an imminent threat, Nade begins a determined search for funds, a quest so beset by setbacks that she comes to resemble an arthouse version of a computer game character battling off foes in order to build up points.

The film is smart enough to emphasise however, that one of the enemies Nade must fight is herself: aided by Gosheva's tremendously detailed and intelligent performance, it gives us a woman whose proud and headstrong nature obstructs and assists her by turn. Nade exists moreover, in a society fraught with its own wobbles and inconsistencies, in which byzantine regulations and inflexible laws coexist with financial instability and institutional corruption. Her situation is rendered yet crueller by the context of a small town where everyone knows everyone: her shady employer is acquainted with her father, her loan shark is related to one of her pupils and dangerously well-acquainted with her own domestic set up, and everyone knows that her husband is a hopeless drunk. The film is expert at suddenly revealing an unexpected but key connection: the police officer hanging out in the loan shark's back room; the colleague who lets Nade know that their employer has gone bust by turning up miserable, exhausted and possibly drunk in her classroom. Work is rife with emotion, and emotional relationships are work. Nade's father has money, but so rotten is her relationship with him and the vulgar girlfriend he has taken up with since her mother's death that engagement with the vile loan shark seems an easier out than the diplomacy required to keep it in the family. A possible underlying reason for this sensible woman taking up with such a useless husband, meanwhile, is hinted at by the latter's passing semblance to Nade's father: did she replicate a dynamic she witnessed at home?

The process of throwing things in Nade's path - a miscommunicated amount of debt, a car breakdown, unexpected extra bank charges and uncooperative clerks - can feel a bit forced, as can the effort to keep her character ethically pure. If her climactic bank robbery can claim the authenticity of being drawn from a real Bulgarian news story, her



miraculous acquisition of a convincing replica gun at the right time is stretching things. Elsewhere, some character notes are hit too hard to harmonise effectively with Gosheva's subtle work in the lead. It's a cheap gag to make Galya, the girlfriend of Nade's father, such a sluttilly turned-out ditz ("This negative energy has blocked my chakras"), and the loan shark is scary enough without actually having a chainsaw sitting on the desk during one of Nade's visits.

On the other hand, these cartoonish flourishes do provide some levity amid the merciless screw turning. It's a terrific, cathartic surprise for the audience when Nade, deadpan as ever, strides into her father's hallway and defaces a framed portrait of the much-hated Galya with a black marker pen. Gosheva's performance creates its

Synopsis: Bulgaria, the present. English teacher and translator Nadezhda tries and fails to find out which of her pupils has been stealing from the others. Meanwhile, her own finances are dwindling. Her feckless husband has failed to make repayments on her house, and repossession is threatened within days. Nadezhda seeks to borrow from her father, from whom she is largely estranged, but allows residual rage against him and his younger girlfriend to derail the process. She goes to a frightening loan shark for the money and manages to pay off the bank - but when an employer on whose payment she has been depending goes bankrupt, it is impossible for her to pay the loan shark back on time. He blackmails her into giving his underachieving nephew a better grade; she gives the entire class top marks. Another approach to her father fails when she fights with him and his girlfriend. The loan shark suggests that she pay him off with sexual favours and prostitution. She goes to the police, but recognises the officer as a friend of the loan shark and flees. She prepares herself to comply with the loan shark's proposition but can't go through with it. Instead, she puts one of her stockings over her head and, armed with a toy gun confiscated from one of her pupils, robs the bank. She returns the full amount to the loan shark.

The next day, at school, Nadezhda hears a news report stating that the female perpetrator of a bank robbery is being sought. She catches one of her pupils in the act of going through his classmates' bags. She says nothing, and begins the class as normal.

Credits

Nadezhda	Margita Gosheva	Director	Kristina Groseva, Petar Valcharov
Mladen	Ivan Barnev	DoP	Krum Rodriguez
Nadezhda's father	Ivan Savov	Screenplay	Kristina Groseva, Petar Valcharov
Moneylender	Stefan Denolyubov	Editing	Petar Valcharov
Galya	Milena Ilieva	Sound	Dobromir Hristoskov
		Costume	Veselin Zografov
		Production design	Kristina Tomova
			Vanina Geleva

Bulgaria/Greece/Germany 2014. 111 mins

own drama by building up layers of self-protection and then showing them fall away. The sequence in which Nade just makes it to the bank only to be frustrated again and again might be overly managed in plot terms, but it allows the actress to present a masterclass in evoking the effects of intolerable strain on a closely controlled personality.

Programme news

We have received the following suggestions for films to be included in our 2016-17 season, which will be selected next week. Details of the final programme will be published on the notes for Rosewater, on April 29th.

52 Tuesdays (Australia 2015)	Mountains May Depart (China/France/Japan 2015)
Cemetery of Splendour (Thailand 2015)	Mustang (Turkey/France/Qatar/Germany 2015)
The Club (Chile 2015)	Our Little Sister (Japan 2015)
The Commune (Denmark 2016)	The Pearl Button (Chile 2015)
Couple in a Hole (UK/Bel/Fra 2015)	Rams (Iceland 2015)
Dheepan (France 2015)	Ran (Japan 1985) Sherpa (Australia/UK 2015)
Embrace of the Serpent (Colombia/Argentina/Venezuela 2015)	Remainder ((UK/Germany 2015)
Grandma (USA, 2015).	Sherpa (Australia/UK 2015)
Julieta (Spain 2016)	Son of Saul (Hungary 2015)
Little Men (USA/Greece 2016)	Tale of Tales (UK/France/Italy 2015)
Love and Friendship (USA 2016)	Tangerine (USA 2015)
The Lobster (UK 2015)	Taxi Tehran (Iran 2015)
Maggie's Plan (USA 2016)	Truman (Argentina/Spain 2015)
The Measure of a Man (France 2015)	Victoria (Germany 2015)
Men and Chicken (Denmark 2015)	A War (Denmark 2015)

On The Record

In keeping with the summer seasons of recent years, we have organised a short programme of 6 music documentaries between June 10th and June 22nd. Details of the films are below.

Muscle Shoals (USA 2013. 111 mins. Cert PG). showing on June 10 at The Venue (7.30pm)

A film that pays tribute to the prestigious recording studios in a small Alabama town, featuring the likes of Aretha Franklin and Percy Sledge.

The Possibilities are Endless (UK 2014. 83 mins. Cert 12a): showing on June 12 at The Collection (2pm)

Recovering from a stroke, Formner Orange Juice front man Edwyn Collins reflects on his childhood and the positive power of music.

Marley (UK/USA 2012. 142 mins. Cert 15): showing on June 15 at The EMMTEC (7pm)

In Kevin MacDonal's much-praised documentary, the music of the legendary Bob Marley is extensively showcased and the important themes of his life eloquently portrayed.

Mistaken for Strangers (USA 2014. 75 mins. Cert 15): showing on June 17 at The EMMTEC (7pm)

Tom Berninger chronicles his time spent on the road as a member of the tour crew for The National, the rock and roll band fronted by his brother, Matt.

20 Feet from Stardom (USA 2013. 89 mins. Cert 12): showing on June 19 at The Collection (2pm)

In this documentary, the spotlight is turned from the stars onto their talented but unheralded backing singers.

Orion: The Man who would be King (UK/USA. 2015. 86 mins. Cert 12a): showing on June 22 at The EMMTEC (7pm)

The bizarre story of Jimmy Ellis, aka Orion, a masked singer who impersonated Elvis in the years following the star's death

NB: The film will be introduced by the director Jeanie Finlay and will be followed by a Q & A.

Tickets for each film will be available on the door. They will also be on sale at our films on May 6th, May 13th and May 27th to members and anyone attending as a guest: cost - £4 (LFS members and all concessions), £5 (non members)

Our next screening - Friday April 29th, 7.30pm Rosewater (USA 2014. Cert 15)

In 2009, London-based journalist Maziar Bahari returns to Iran, his homeland, to report for the BBC and interview Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the prime opponent of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the incumbent president. Finding himself embroiled in the maelstrom of unrest that follows Ahmadinejad's re-election, Bahari is arrested by the Revolutionary Guard after sending his footage of the protests back to the BBC and is incarcerated for 118 days on a charge of treason, during which time he is interrogated by someone he comes to identify by the nickname Rosewater.

Jon (The Daily Show) Stewart moves behind the camera for this, his first feature as a director, which vividly recreates events leading up to Bahari's arrest and balances his plight with the wider ethical and political implications of the story. Gael Garcia Bernal stars in the lead role.