



81st Venice International Film Festival – in Competition

CINEDORA and RAI CINEMA

present

VERMIGLIO

A film by

Maura Delpero

A

Cinedora with Rai Cinema

production

in co-production with

Charades Productions and Versus Production

Italian distribution

Lucky Red

International distribution

Charades

Italy/France/Belgium, 2024, color, DCP, 119'

International Press US Press

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NON-CONTRACTUAL CREDITS

Cast

Tommaso Ragno Caesar

Giuseppe De Domenico Peter

Roberta Rovelli Adele

debuting

Martina Scrinzi Lucia

Orietta Notari Aunt Cesira

Carlotta Gamba Virginia

Santiago Fondevila Sancet Attilio

And, in their first screen appearance

Rachele Potrich Ada

Anna Thaler Flavia

Patrick Gardner Dino

Enrico Panizza Pietrin

Luis Thaler Tarcisio

Simone Bendetti Tarcisio

and with

Sara Serraiocco

Crew

Director
Screenwriter
Photography
Editor
Production designer
Art directors
Costume designer
Make-up
Hair
Live sound
Sound Editing
Mix
Original and additional music
Casting
Acting coach
Assistant director
General organizer
Production Manager

A production by
in co-production with
Produced by

Co-produced by

Produced with the support of
with the support of
with the contribution of
with the support of
in collaboration with
with the support of

with the support of
with the help of
in association with
in co-production with
with
and with
associated producers
Italian distribution
International distribution

Maura Delpero
Maura Delpero
Mikhail Krichman
Luca Mattei
Pirra
Vito Giuseppe Zito, Marina Pozanco
Andrea Cavalletto
Federique Foglia
Tiziana Argiolas
Dana Farzanehpour
Hervé Guyader
Emmanuel De Boissieu
Matteo Franceschini
Stefania Rodà, Maurilio Mangano
Alessia Barela
Giuseppe Tedeschi
Daniele Spinozzi
Cinzia Grossi, Emiliano Totteri

Cinedora with Rai Cinema
Charades Productions and Versus Production
Francesca Andreoli, Leonardo Guerra Seràgnoli,
Maura Delpero, Santiago Fondevila Sancet
Carole Baraton, Pauline Boucheny Pinon, Jacques-Henry Bronckart,
Tatiana Kozar

MiC - Directorate General for Cinema and Audiovisual
Eurimages
Italy-France Co-production Fund
Autonomous Province of Bolzano-South Tyrol, Italian Culture
Trentino Film Commission
IDM Film Commission Südtirol, Support for World Cinema,
National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image,
French Institute, Ile-de-France Region
Tax Shelter of the Belgian Federal Government, Inver Tax Shelter
Film and Audiovisual Centre of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation
Voo, Orange Belgium, Be tv and Proximus
RTBF
Paname, SG Image 2022, O'Brother Distribution
Anonymous Content
David Levine and Nick Shumaker
Lucky Red
Charades

Synopsis

1944. In Vermiglio, a mountain village high up in the Italian Alps, war looms as a distant but constant threat. The arrival of Pietro, a deserted soldier, disrupts the dynamics of the local teacher's family, changing them forever. During the four seasons marking the end of World War II, Pietro and Lucia, the eldest daughter of the teacher, are instantly drawn to each other leading to an unexpected fate. As the world emerges from tragedy, the family will face its own.

Director's Note

My father left us on a hot summer afternoon. Before closing them forever, he looked at us with big and amazed eyes of a child. I had already heard that when you are old you go back to being a child, but I didn't know that those two ages could merge into a single face. In the following months he came to visit me in a dream. He had returned to his childhood home, in Vermiglio. He was six years old and had the legs of a Capricorn. He smiled at me toothlessly, he carried this film under his arm: four seasons in the life of his big family. A story of children and adults, between deaths and births, disappointments and rebirths, of their holding tight in the bends of life, of their path from collectivity to becoming individuals. A story of the high altitudes with their walls of snow. Of the smell of wood and hot milk on freezing mornings. With war distant and yet always present, experienced by those who remained outside the big machine: the mothers who watched the world from a kitchen, with the newborns who died because the blankets were too short, the women who feared themselves widows, the peasants who waited for children who never returned, the teachers and priests who replaced the fathers. A war story without bombs, or great battles. In the iron logic of the mountain that every day reminds man how small he is. Vermiglio is a landscape of the soul, a "Family Lexicon" that lives inside me, on the threshold of the unconscious, an act of love for my father, his family and their small town. Crossing a personal period, it wants to pay homage to a collective memory.

Maura Delpero

An interview with Maura Delpero

One of the striking things about VERMIGLIO is the dense, atmospheric recreation of an almost pre-modern life in the middle of the 20th century. How did you research the look and feel of the isolated village? Did you rely on personal or family recollections?

Maura Delpero: The way I have always worked is to stay for a long time in the places I will talk about. I immerse myself personally through the five senses. It is a creative moment that ensures that the film grows from its unique soil and subsequently develops organically, if well-watered. Like a plant.

To write *Vermiglio* I spent a lot of time in the house where my grandmother gave birth to her many children, within those walls where my father and his siblings grew up. In this case there was also the need to travel through time. And for this reason, it helped me a lot to have a family photographic archive that was already in my memory and that I went back to look at with different, more attentive eyes.

The personal relationship with the place has been useful to me both directly and indirectly. On the one hand, for a sort of phylogenetic memory, conscious and unconscious, of the stories I heard as a child, of the memory of the smell of my grandmother's kitchen, of recognizing one's genes in the faces and movements of people and knowing how to distinguish what and who is been modified by time and who, fortunately for this film, still bears its traces.

To prepare for the casting, I spent a lot of time in bars: any of those men was my grandfather. In the churches, among those women, I recognized my grandmother. Certainly, being the granddaughter of the teacher of those times gave me great initial accessibility, trust and even affection. After all, in the town of Vermiglio everyone has the same four or five surnames, and Delpero is one of them.

Like your previous film MATERNAL, VERMIGLIO gravitates around its women. The relationships between mothers and daughters, the question of what it means to be a mother as well as an independent woman is central to your story. But unlike in MATERNAL, men play a far greater role in your new film. Why is that topic so important to you,?

MD: When making “realistic” films I am very careful to remain consistent with reality. In Maternal, as in the previous film Nadea and Sveta, which was a documentary, men were completely absent in the environment I was describing, so it would have been a stretch to include them. In the world I describe in Vermiglio they are partly absent because they are at war. Instead, I talked about those (children or adults) who did not leave or return. It is the universe and the story I tell that dictate their laws to me, I just take care of conveying them while respecting my moral or dramaturgical positions.

Beyond this internal congruence in the story, I have certainly, at least in recent years, felt a propensity to talk about women, for both personal and ideological reasons. On the one hand I felt it was interesting to put them at the center of the story, favoring their point of view, reversing a trend in classical cinema, on the other it was a focus that felt natural to me: I felt I knew how to talk about women in depth.

As for motherhood, I discovered in hindsight that it was a common thread within my work. It's a topic that I didn't decide to address. It was an internal need that I listened to, an issue that touched my head, belly and heart. Addressing it cinematically was an act that imposed itself.

It doesn't mean that I don't want or can't talk about men. On the contrary I really loved talking about Cesare, Pietro, Attilio, Dino or the children. Where there is humanity with its contradictions, there is my intellectual and human, and therefore cinematic, curiosity.

Another thread in your film is the conflict between tradition and modernity. Village life seems static and immutable, but even this remote valley cannot escape being tied into larger events and developments. This has been a theme explored by many great Italian directors. Can you tell us more about your artistic points of reference and influences?

MD: Vermiglio is about a community in which, in time and space, what is not physically close is created by the imagination, perhaps relying on a single reference. Thus, the father's atlas becomes a receptacle for the desires of all the sisters, like a window onto the world.

At the same time, the historical moment addressed in the film brings with it a "before" and an "after" of the war which becomes a watershed between two worlds.

The dramaturgical path chosen is that of an initial ensemble piece, in which the experiences of all the family members are intertwined, and which increasingly focuses on its protagonist as a stand-in for an entire community. In fact, it is Lucia who is entrusted with the pioneering path that opens the doors to a new society and carries on her shoulders the bigger movement underlying the film, that of the transition from conflict to reconstruction, from ancient to modern world, from country to city, from community to individualism. The story becomes metaphorical and at the same time stratified anthropologically, sociologically, politically: Lucia, becoming a metaphor for the post-war transition, through tragedy and necessity, becomes the protagonist of an overcoming and becomes a woman of a new era.

As for cinematic references, I never have any direct ones. Obviously they exist, but I recognize them in retrospect or I am asked to find some in the development phase. The truth is that I always start from listening to my inner

self, from what moves inside me in terms of feelings and needs. The artistic language is always partly the fruit of those who preceded us, of those who trained us and whom we loved. Ermanno Olmi is certainly one of the directors I respect most, in particular some of his films I carry in my heart. De Sica is also an author I love. In Haneke's *White Ribbon* I really appreciated the story of a small community.

Although perhaps more difficult for the viewers to identify, I feel that other influences also fuel my work: photographic, pictorial, musical, and above all literary. I liked the idea that in the film you could "turn pages" by following the destinies of different characters from the same family, like in novels. Natalia Ginzburg, for example is an author who knows how to talk about everyday life, but hers is just one of the many names that come to mind. Honestly, I struggle to distinguish my influences because they operate on an unconscious level.

A laconic film like VERMIGLIO relies heavily on non-verbal expressiveness of its cast, in this case especially Martina Scrinzi as Lucia and Tommaso Ragno as her father. How did you find your actors?

MD: What I had in mind a film with more images than words, and so it was particularly important to find the right faces. Being a period film made this necessity even more pressing: they had to be ancient faces that bore the sign of those times. Perhaps saying "faces" is reductive, it is a set of features, movements, and everything impalpable and unspeakable that a human being expresses with their features. Martina does not move through the world like a city girl, not only because she actually lives in an isolated mountain village, but because she carries with her, in her physiognomy, an aura of anti-modernity, like an ancient painting that we struggle to date.

Although we also looked at many good actresses throughout Italy, we focused our search on non-professionals in the region and found Martina as a hidden gem.

With Tommaso, who is a well-known actor, I worked on his tone and his movements, not only because he is more of a city man, but also because Cesare's character was more complex and contradictory: a strange mix of villager and intellectual. A man who comes from the peasant world of which he is an integral part, but goes beyond it. He is patriarchal, but has touches of modernity. You can love him and hate him. Certainly, however, what Tommaso already brought with him were the colors and features of a certain northern area of Italy, and the possibility of a noble appearance, despite the roles of contemporary beautiful and damned hero that he played in his last movies.

Life in the mountain village is presented unsentimentally, not hiding its beauty, but also underlining its deprivation and occasional brutality. The one thing Lucia's schoolteacher father spends money on are the discs for his gramophone, even if he really cannot afford it. Would you say art offers an escape from the limitations of rural life?

MD: I really like situations in which everyone is partly right, because they never stop questioning us. In the record scene, Adele is profoundly right: the family's urgency is to feed their children and defend them from the diseases of war. But which parent wouldn't want their children to attend a lesson like Cesare's on Vivaldi? Who doesn't agree with introducing young people to the beauty of art that saves the world, especially in moments when the latter is devastated by the nihilism of war?

I was not moved by any idealizing sentimentality with respect to the past. I tried to represent a reality both in its beauty and in its crudeness. Both are present, I show them without expressing value judgements, I like that the viewer can consider them through their own personal gaze.

The relationship between the three sisters is very special. They seem to be so close, yet harbor secrets between them. One of them being the friendship between Virginia and the middle sister Ada. Can you talk a bit about that friendship?

MD: I am very interested in the relationship between the personal and the individual within a community. How much do we distinguish ourselves as individuals within relationships that define us as family ones? Who would Ada have been without a sister like Flavia? Her fate as a student would probably have been very different. The bed of secrets still remains an important dimension of the film. Everything was more unpronounceable, more punishable, especially what concerned the woman's freedom to live her own desires.

The friendship with Virginia is a relationship of fascination within roles of power and at the same time the story of two solitudes that meet. In fact, if on the surface what we can most notice is the attraction for those who are older and seem more beautiful to us, as well as becoming a woman without understanding exactly what is happening to us, perhaps the most interesting aspect is precisely this meeting on the margins: Ada, the sister who receives less attention, Virginia the orphan who suffers from a violent relationship with her mother. Virginia, like many rebels, is a character looking for love, a lonely girl, to whom that world with its patriarchal rules is irreducibly tight. Within this relationship between equals and unequals it is interesting that a movement occurs: in the final embrace the active- passive relationship is reversed, it is in fact shy Ada who decides to reach out.

Director's Bio

Maura Delpero was born in Bolzano. After studying literature in Bologna and Paris and cinema in Buenos Aires, with her first documentaries, *Signori professori* and *Nadea e Sveta*, both awarded at the Turin Film Festival, she explored the boundary between fiction and non-fiction. Her debut fiction feature film, *Maternal* was presented in Competition at the 72. Locarno Film Festival and earned her – among other awards – the Kering Women in Motion Young Talent Award at the 73. Cannes Film Festival.

Vermiglio, her second film, will have its world premiere in Competition at the 81. Venice International Film Festival.