



# Amour

**Director:** Michael Haneke  
**Country:** France  
**Date:** 2012

**A review by Tim Robey for *The Daily Telegraph*:**

Amour, which won Michael Haneke his second Palme d'Or in a row and rightly so, may be the most enclosed film this master of discomfort has ever made, on the surface an almost anti-cinematic one. It's about extreme old age, the gradual failing of a human body, and the responsibility suggested by its title — a film about what love costs as much as what it brings.

Almost the whole thing unfolds inside the forbiddingly classy Paris apartment of Georges (Jean-Louis Trintignant) and Anne (Emmanuelle Riva), a pair of long-married music teachers in their eighties, who have settled into a civilised retirement of occasional concert-going.



The trappings of their spacious home, with its earth-tone décor, wood-panelled drawing room and imposing hallway, reflect a lifetime of shared good taste, but in some ways they are also traps. As the measured story unfolds, the place begins to feel like a mausoleum already, hushed yet full of echoes, and somehow complicit in the crisis they face.

Early on, Anne suffers a stroke at the kitchen table, going blank and unresponsive for long minutes while her husband looks on in bafflement. This episode leaves her paralysed down the right side of her body, and the gradual deterioration of her faculties over the ensuing weeks and months is harrowing to behold.

There's no doubt that Haneke brings us a resolutely tough experience here, unsurprisingly free of the icky homilies or contrived silver linings we expect even from respectable art-house drama about the end of life. After *The White Ribbon*, he's fully into what might be called his Bergman phase, with all the uncompromising severity that implies.

Still, Haneke's lesser films can have a finger-wagging quality and this does not: it modulates from tonal disquiet to a profound and moving calm — towards silence, in fact. There's not a note of music except what's being played, either on the couple's piano, or over the stereo, or in one case both, as Georges listens to a Schubert Impromptu in what appears at first, impossibly, to be a recital by his wife.

The acting from these two legends of French cinema is quite superb. Trintignant's handful of scenes with Isabelle Huppert, who plays their distraught daughter, are hardened little wrestling matches over what's best for Anne, who lies locked in a bedroom he won't even allow Huppert to enter. It's his most nuanced performance since Kieslowski's *Red* (1994).

And Riva is nothing short of astonishing. The 85-year-old manages the technical demands of her role with devastating skill, creating and then uncreating a remarkable woman whose inner protest at each new theft of her remaining dignity never disappears.

From: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/9680745/Amour-review.html>