



Safe Passage



Director: Diego Corsini
Country: Argentina
Date: 2015

A review by Polly Stevens for *The State of the Arts*:

In his *Pasaje de Vida*, director and writer Diego Corsini uses true events as the basis of his provocative journey through the lives, loves, and losses of political activists during what is now called Argentina's Dirty War (Guerra Sucia, 1974-83), but was in fact a sustained campaign of state terrorism. Drawing on genuine experiences of repressed trauma and collective memory of the dictatorship, and of the open wounds created by the forced disappearances perpetrated by the military regime, Corsini paints an emotive and personal depiction of loss.

The plot switches between two story lines: one in present day Spain following exiled ex-Montonero Miguel; another told through flashbacks to his past life in Argentina, aggravated by the onset of dementia. Miguel's son Mario, struggling with an emotional disconnect that he has long felt between himself and his father, sets out to uncover his father's past and discover the truth about the death of his mother, Gloria. Set in 70s Argentina, the plot follows a stormy love affair between the two young



activists, brought together by the Montonero movement and the choice they face between their ideological values and their future together. After a botched assassination attempt drives them into hiding, the birth of their son Mario ultimately leads them to abandon the cause in order to flee to Spain, only for Gloria to be snatched by the security forces on the eve of their escape.

Corsini tackles the themes of grief and loss and the way they can stifle relationships, presenting Miguel's struggle to reconcile his past as manifesting in an ability to connect with his son, who in turn himself has trouble maintaining relationships. Javier Godino gives a compelling performance as Mario as he struggles to come to terms with the truth about his parents' past and the mother he lost in his infancy. This, and the troubled attempts at reconciliation between his character and Ángel Solá's Miguel, are touching highlights of the film.

I was impressed by Corsini's restraint at choosing not to use a sensationalist reveal of Gloria's detention and ultimate fate. By leaving audiences without any answers as to her disappearance or presumed death, he pays homage to the trauma and uncertainty inflicted upon a generation of parents, friends, and partners who never found out what happened to their loved ones, let alone received their bodies in order to grieve properly.

The Argentine government's official figures give the number of desaparecidos (the 'disappeared') as 13,000, but the actual number is thought to be 30,000. *Pasaje de Vida* is thoughtfully written, beautifully shot, and impressively acted: a nuanced and powerful testament to the memory of the people who haunt Argentina to this day.

From: <http://www.thestateofthearts.co.uk/features/pasaje-de-vida-touching-tribute-argentinas-desaparacidos/>

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