

CANNES - Alice Rohrwacher's The Wonders Gets the Grand Prix

Natasha Lardera (May 25, 2014)



The 67th Cannes Film Festival has come to an end and among the winners we find an Italian director: Alice Rohrwacher won the Grand Prix prize, the second most prestigious award, for her film *The Wonders* (*Le Meraviglie*). The film has been labeled as a gentle and textured coming-of-age story “inspired by the director’s own childhood in the countryside between Umbria, Lazio and Tuscany.” (The Telegraph)

The 67th Cannes Film Festival has come to an end and among the winners we find an Italian director: Alice Rohrwacher won the Grand Prix prize, the second most prestigious award, for her film *The Wonders* (*Le Meraviglie*). She is the first Italian female director to ever win such a prestigious award at the festival, before her, Jane Campion, the judge who awarded Rohrwacher her prize, was the only woman to have ever taken home a Palme D’Or, for her film *The Piano*. Jane Campion served as president of the jury, which also included Willem Dafoe, Carole Bouquet, Gael Garcia Bernal, Jeon Do-yeon, Jia Zhangke, Leila Hatami and Nicolas Winding Refn. The festival's top honor, the Palme D’or, went to *Winter’s Sleep*, directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, while other winners include Timothy Spall, Best Actor for his role in *Mr. Turner*; Julianne Moore, Best Actress for her role in *Maps to the Stars*; and Bennett Miller, Best Director for *Foxcatcher*.



This was not the first time Rohrwacher was at Cannes, her first feature film, 2011's "Corpo Celeste," was screened during the Director's Fortnight, received the Cannes' Città di Roma prize for emerging cinema from Latin countries.

Rohrwacher was handed the award by Italian film legend Sophia Loren, who was visibly proud of the young Tuscan/German director. After a standing ovation, Rohrwacher was able to say "I thank everybody. I thank the jury because your work has made me fall in love with this business and has taken me here. Living this adventure has been painful, just like rheumatism, but I hope it's a omen of good luck for the future, for us all." The director also took her time to thank her family and her sister Alba, a shining star of Italian cinema who also participated in *The Wonders*.

The film has been balled as a gentle and textured coming-of-age story "inspired by the director's own childhood in the countryside between Umbria, Lazio and Tuscany." (The Telegraph).

The story "follows a part-German, part-Italian family in the west of the latter country. Stern, stubborn but loving father Wolfgang (Sam Louwyck) makes his living off the land as people in the area have for generations, with the family business mostly revolving around honey, but a change in health and safety laws starts to threaten their future. He also longs for a son, living with his wife (Alba Rohrwacher), sister-in-law (Sabine Timoteo) and four daughters, the oldest of which, Gelsomina (Maria Alexandra Lungu), is already dreaming of escape, or at least something bigger. Something bigger soon arrives, as the children stumble across the filming of a TV competition show that judges local produce, and is hosted by the glamorous Milly Catena (Monica Bellucci). Almost simultaneously, in a bid to raise some extra cash, Wolfgang takes in Martin, a troubled, near-mute German boy (Luis Huilca Logrono) who's been threatened with juvenile detention if he doesn't fall into line." (Indiwire). Therefore the film addresses a few different topics: growing up and all it entails, from dealing with responsibility to first love, and witnessing the imminent end of a way of life that's too attached to the past (families are struggling to get by and tourists are taking over).

Rohrwacher denies that the film is autobiographical. "It seems autobiographical because it is set in a familiar territory for me, but in reality, it isn't," she said in an interview in Italian with CineBlog. "The story is completely made up, however it's clear whatever stories we tell are always seen through our own perception." Rohrwacher was indeed born in Fiesole, Tuscany, to an Italian mother and a German father. The latter is a beekeeper and beekeeping is also a prominent theme in the film.

This has been a great victory that gives yet another incentive to all Italian filmmakers to continue doing what they are doing and that despite the lukewarm reception of the Italian press has conquered the international scene.

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