

# **HAPPY AS LAZZARO**

**Italy (2018)** 125 minutes

**Director: Alice Rohrwacher**

**Cast:** Adriano Tardiolo (Lazzaro)  
Luca Chikovani (Young Tancredi)  
Nicoletta Braschi (Marchesa Alfonsina De Luna)



**Screening 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at Swindon Arts Centre**

## **Synopsis**

On an estate called Inviolata, isolated since 1977, 54 farmhands work on a tobacco farm in a share-cropping arrangement, where they are constantly in debt and thus unpaid. The farm is run in a feudal manner by the notorious Marchioness Alfonsina De Luna, the 'Queen of Cigarettes'. Lazzaro, an innocent young man, is a worker on the farm, helping the farmhands with their endless work...

## **Reviews**



This is the tale of a meeting between Lazzaro, a young peasant so good that he is often mistaken for being simple-minded, and Tancredi, a young nobleman cursed by his imagination.

Life in their isolated pastoral village Inviolata is dominated by the terrible Marchesa Alfonsina de Luna, the 'Queen of Cigarettes'.

A loyal bond is sealed when Tancredi asks Lazzaro to help him orchestrate his own kidnapping. This strange, improbable alliance is a revelation for Lazzaro - a friendship so precious that it will travel in time and transport Lazzaro in search of Tancredi. In the big city for the first time, Lazzaro is like a fragment of the past lost in the modern world. A tale (or fable?) of social commentary set in rural Italy with touches of anti-capitalism and class division, where share-croppers live, without knowing their semi-slavery state because of lack of knowledge. Lazzaro the protagonist, is an innocent character who is happy to make others happy, in the pureness of his heart.

*Various*

*Notes.*

Nothing much makes sense in *Happy as Lazzaro*, until a stunning mid-film pivot that shakes time and space and snaps it all together, its world emerging from the disturbance as senseless again — but in a completely different, all too recognisable way.

The third and most richly strange feature yet from Italian writer-director Alice Rohrwacher, this beautifully rendered movie sees her pushing her recurring fascination with fables to its most literal (and literate) degree. Earthy folkloric storytelling, time-travelling, magical realism and fact-inspired social drama are fused in its tale of a rural innocent defying life's certainties to bear witness to two separate eras of social and economic exploitation. The result is a slow but bewitching burn that rewards viewers' patience with humour and uncanny grace, sealing Rohrwacher's status.

*Guy Lodge, Variety.*

## Film Facts

- The film was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival where Alice Rohrwacher won the award for Best Screenplay.
- She made her directorial debut with *Heavenly Body* (2011) and has since directed notable films such as *The Wonders* (2014).

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