

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 20th November 2024 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

On an estate called Inviolata, isolated since 1977, 54 farm hands 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).

swindonfilm.org.uk