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'The Teachers' Lounge' a fascinating drama behind closed doors

By Sophie Braccini



The International Film Showcase brings to Orinda a very personal and interesting movie set in today's Germany inside the confines of a school, a perfect metaphor of society as a whole, with its denunciations, injustices, racism, cruelty, and manipulation.. This wonderfully mastered drama is intense, featuring a remarkable set of actors, including the children's incredibly true-to-life performances. This movie is selected to represent Germany at the 2024 Oscars.

□ First, money is stolen from a classroom, then a second incident happens in the teachers' lounge, a place where students do not have access. In a school that has a reputation for excellence, the two events quickly create and intensify the tension between the teachers, the students, the parents, and the administration. At the center of the case, a young seventh-grade professor, Carla Nowak, tries to find the truth. She is idealistic, believing in justice and in teaching impartiality and objectivity to her students.

□ Her convictions, her values, and what she does to uncover the truth snowballs, putting her in a situation that becomes more and more untenable. There is the administration, for whom "Better to commit an injustice than to countenance disorder," as Goethe wrote in 1793; her colleagues who are more interested in protecting themselves; the parents easily getting outraged and overreacting; the students with a mix of vulnerabilities, cunning behavior, and beautiful solidarity.

□ As complex as society itself, the school is that system where no one is really bad, but where dynamics could lead to real human catastrophes.

□ This film is technically excellent and wonderfully mastered. It was co-written by its director, İlker Çatak. This is her fourth film. The rhythm is fast and the tension mounts rapidly and inexorably. The cast of actors led by Leonie Benesch, very believable as Carla, and including a large group of children playing in such a simple and realistic way that it adds to the magical effect of the film, completely capturing the audience's attention.

□ Nothing awful results in the end, so this movie is a family movie and could lead to very interesting discussions with children, especially between the ages of 9 to 14 years old.

□ "The Teachers Lounge" opens in Orinda for at least one week starting on Feb. 9. It is brought to Lamorinda by the local nonprofit, the International Film Showcase. Tickets at www.orindamovies.com/

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