

LA PASSION D'AUGUSTINE



Original version: French (English subtitles)

Director: Léa Pool

Opening date (Quebec): 20 mars. 2015

Genre: Biopic, drama, comedy

Country of origin: Canada (Québec)

Length: 103 minutes

Recommended for 12 years and older

SYNOPSIS

Simone Beaulieu, better known as Mother Augustine, runs a convent school for girls in the 1960s. She has turned the little convent into a musical treasure where the students have won every prestigious music competition in the region. When her talented but rebellious niece joins the convent and the government threatens to shut down the school in favour of public education, her world is suddenly turned upside down. She and her fellow nuns are forced to confront the waves of modernity and Mother Augustine herself must search her soul for a new calling. Can she accept her past in order to move forward? Or will she perish with tradition?

www.tribute.ca/movies/the-passion-of-augustine/108586/

REVIEWS

(...) Pool doesn't resort to easy answers. She resists the easy temptation of pitting young against old. While that tension exists in the film, even driving the action at times, it is presented more as the natural outcome of a period of transition.

The nuns aren't caricatured as stuffy old maids, but rather as complex characters confronted with great change. For strict French teacher Soeur Lise (Diane Lavallée), change is unthinkable.

(...)

Pool pulls off a neat trick with *La passion d'Augustine*. What could have been a simple story of teenage revolt against the stuffy adult world turns into a nuanced tale of generational shift, personal transformation and the galvanizing power of music.

— T'cha Dunlevy

montrealgazette.com/entertainment/movies/movie-review-lea-pools-la-passion-daugustine-strikes-a-chord

...“The Passion of Augustine” never feels simplistic, or slow, its leisurely yet purposeful progress gracefully folding in numerous performances of classical piano works — as well as gorgeous vocal excerpts for girls’ and women’s choirs, performed by ensembles from original score composer/music director Francois Dompierre’s alma mater, Conservatoire de Musique de Montreal.

While the adult thespians represent a rock-solid cross-section of practiced Quebec stage and screen talent, the younger actors include several newcomers who are genuine musical talents, including pretty, accomplished pianist Menard.

No Catholic-school-is-hell horror story, “*The Passion of Augustine*” takes its visual cue from the simultaneous austerity and cheerful industry of the convent, its handsome look furthered by d.p.

Daniel Jobin’s frequent shots of the beautiful wintertime countryside. Other tech/design contributions are fine, naturally including the fine-tuned audio aspects.

— Dennis Harvey from *Variety*

variety.com/2015/film/reviews/the-passion-of-augustine-review-1201623845/

DETAILS

LANGUAGE

The film takes place in a convent where speaking French correctly is a must. Sister Lise compares the French language to a majestic church organ. So coarse language is banned except for one sentence. Alice asks Suzanne how long she had been in the convent to which she answers: 4 years. Alice then remarks *"you had to put up with this crap for 4 years"*.

Overall a French of high quality.

VIOLENCE

The film has no violence per se. One very brief scene shot in the dark (at the night club where Alice was) shows Mother Augustine slapping her niece. Very brief, more like a shadow.

NUDITY

Not applicable. A very quick look at an irreverent drawing representing an old nun with hanging breasts.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Very brief scenes of kissing on the mouth:

- When Alice flirts with Nico after having been in church
- When Alice is in a nightclub: a young couple is seen kissing as well as she was taken away from the arms of a young man.

Mother Augustine recalls her painful past when she was in love with her piano teacher. The shadow of a rubber tub suggests that she was pregnant and possibly had an abortion. Nothing is openly shown. It is suggested.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT/THE MESSAGES

◆ THE DEATH OF MARGOT, ALICE'S MOTHER

When Alice learns about the passing away of her mom, a distant shot shows her screaming with pain and despair.

◆ ALICE PUTS UP WITH RIGOROUS CONVENT LIFE

Sister Lise who teaches French, does not like Alice: she tends to badger her and accuse her unfairly of passing notes around.

Sister Lise is one of the reasons Alice runs away.

◆ MOTHER AUGUSTINE AND HER RIGOROUS PRACTICE TO REACH MUSICAL PERFECTION

Mother Augustine wants her niece to win the top medal in the provincial piano competition, so she demands that she works rigorously on her classical music. Alice is frustrated because she cannot do jazz improvisations as she likes.

◆ MOTHER AUGUSTINE RECALLS HER PAINFUL PAST

Alice Champagne's behaviour reminds Mother Augustine of her past when she fell in love with her piano teacher who fathered a baby she never had. The shadow of a thin rubber tube is briefly seen

suggesting that she had an abortion in a time when having a baby out of wed locks was the shame of a family. In the flashback young Mother Augustine cries and screams.

◆ THE TRANSITION BETWEEN OLD AND NEW

The nuns agonize over the change imposed by modern ways like having to replace their traditional habit with a more ordinary suit. The scene when they change is very moving as they step out of their habit like animals shed their skins.

The nuns also suffer from anticipating a change in their tasks, in their somewhat cosy life: they are seen playing cards, listening to the radio...

◆ “LA GÉNÉRALE”’S CRUELTY

Representing the oppressive convent administration, the head of the Sacré Coeur congregation is ruthless. She does not miss an opportunity to humiliate Mother Augustine who ends up leaving religious orders to open her own music school.

◆ THE NIGHTCLUB

When Mother Augustine finds Alice in the village nightclub, young people are shown dancing to shrill rock’n roll music; some are holding a bottle (implied beer or alcohol). Alice is in the arms of a young man while a young girl and a young man are kissing on the mouth. This very mild scene of so-called dissipation is meant to underline the unhealthy temptations young people are exposed to when there is no control.

PRIZES & AWARDS

Mill Valley Film Festival 2015

* Audience Favorite, Gold Award – 2015 World Cinema Indie

Festival du Film de l’Outaouais 2015

*Prix du Public

Newport Beach International Film Festival 2015

*Winner, Jury Award: Best Feature Film

*Winner, Jury Award: Best Actress – Céline Bonnier

*Winner, Jury Award: Best Supporting Actress – Lysandre Ménard

*Winner, Jury Award: Best Director – Léa Pool

*Winner, Jury Award: Best Screenplay – Marie Vien and Léa Pool

Festival du Film Francophone d’Angoulême 2015

*Audience Prize

PHOTOS OF THE FILM



Mother Augustine controls Alice's piano practice



The Saint-Ours convent nuns



Les sœurs du couvent de Saint Ours



<http://www.lylafilms.com/distribution/la-passion-daugustine/>
Mother Augustine played by Céline Bonnier



*Suzanne,
 Alice and
 Carole*