

Source: Filmecho

Film critic Andreas Wirwalski

Imagine

Original title Imagine | Production KMBO, Film and Music Entertainment; Poland/Portugal/France/United Kingdom 2012 | Distribution Neue Visionen | Running time 105 minute | Premiere 2 January 2014 | Directed and Screenplay by Andrzej Jakimowski | Director of Photography Adam Bajerski | Music by Tomasz Gąssowski | Featuring Edward Hogg, Alexandra Maria Lara, Melchior Derouet, Francis Frappat

The Polish director Andrzej Jakimowski appeals in his latest melodrama in timeless Lisbon for more attentiveness and sensuousness. Alexandra Maria Lara and Edward Hogg (Anonymous) play two blind people, both travelling along the bumpy road towards independence and a better quality of life.

In particular, while watching this film viewers should listen carefully, or even close their eyes from time to time. Definitely the first time the arrogant spatial orientation teacher Ian (Edward Hogg) steps foot in the Lisbon school located in an old monastery. Despite the fact that Ian can't see, he is captivated by the fluttering of birds' wings, human voices and the huge courtyard flooded with sunlight, as he determinedly tries to find the entrance to the school.

The doctor and also head teacher of the school (Francis Frappat) hires the controversial Englishman to teach the school's students how to move around in the everyday world. The students quickly notice that Ian gets around without a cane. He much prefers to use his trained hearing and developed imagination, which inspires his students and puts them in dangerous situations.

Ian neighbour is the shy Eva (Alexandra Maria Lara), who is at first uninterested in his bold behaviour; although his undiminished daring in crossing the boundaries of his own disability arouses in her greater and greater fascination with every passing day. The extremely introvert German woman and the inquisitive Serrano (Melchior Derouet) become Ian's acolytes, and begin to move further and further away from the school. The cuts and bruises which result from the lessons mean that the school's head teacher quickly puts a stop to them.

The way in which director Andrzej Jakimowski, whose name is known to film fans because of his 2007 comedy *Tricks*, lightens up the darkness of the blind people's world is most certainly very good cinema.

Adam Bajerski's camera literally breathes down the necks of the main characters (some of whom are genuinely blind actors) documenting their increasingly brave steps, at first from a frog's eye view, and a moment later from a bird's eye view to show how the small figures look adrift in the maze of streets. All the while it's characteristic that Ian keeps asking his students what they can really see. Also considering the fact that the only people who can really see are actually the audience, over the 105 minutes of the film an intensive tension develops, which unites the senses of sight and hearing and the brain; something which in everyday life does not happen too often.

The camera doesn't show too much: when Ian takes the mistrustful Serrano to a harbour at night and tells him about a ship moored nearby, the audience are only shown the mooring rope, which is most probably attached to the ship. The question of where reality finishes and where the world of imagination – including that of Ian – begins is left open by the director with good-naturedly. Only at the end does the power of the imagination take over as the audience see a huge cruise liner behind a

row of buildings, and a smile appears on Eva's "listening" face. That scene alone earned itself the Best Director's Award and the Audience's Award at the Warsaw Film Festival. *Imagine* is already considered by reviewers one of the most important films of 2014.