

Tale: the little red riding hood of Fantasia

Film based on the little red riding hood to be screened at Fantasia film festival

BY MARWA SIAM ABDOU, THE GAZETTE AUGUST 3, 2012



Child actress, Alexandra Cohen, 15, and director Ragnar Keil, right, pose for a photo in the Hall Theatre in Montreal on August 1, 2012. The film Tale is based on Little Red Riding Hood and was selected to be screened at the Fantasia film festival.

Photograph by: Tijana Martin, The Gazette

MONTREAL - A 10-minute film shot in just four days in Côte St. Luc showcases the work of three young Montreal actors in a dark take on the classic children's fable Little Red Riding Hood.

"Tale," will screen at Montreal's annual Fantasia Film Festival on [Saturday](#).

The film depicts the outcome of child abuse through a confrontation between a daughter and her father.

"I believe that two things are important in films: confrontation and obstacles," explained Ragnar Keil, the Montreal-based director and producer.

Instead of the classic portrayal of the big bad wolf, Keil chose to depict the father as the predator.

"I wanted the film to show the realities of abuse by introducing characters who were familiar with one another and by showing that the perpetrators were conscious of what they were doing, but not

necessarily in control of it.”

Keil, who is a graduate of Concordia University’s film program, tried to develop this story almost a decade ago.

“I thought about it while I was a student and put it aside for a bit and when I became a father, for more than one reason at that time, I felt it was right to work on the story again.” Despite having specific images, ideas and locations in mind, Keil was happy to let the cast play a part in changing the direction of some elements of the film.

“I had visualized a different setting and some different characters, but as a filmmaker, at some point, you have to let your own ideas go.”

Fourteen-year-old Alexandra Cohen, who plays the role of the daughter and the victim, has mostly performed in musical theatre and comedy and had to research abuse in order to embody her character, Lili.

Keil says he knew that she was the right girl for the role almost immediately. Cohen was also the one who chose the location to shoot the film, in Nathan Shuster park in Côte St. Luc.

“I know the area and the community around it pretty well,” explained Cohen. “From the very beginning I felt like it was the right place to shoot the film.”

Keil’s original plan was to shoot the film in an urban setting, because he believes that abuse is not specific to rural areas or isolated locations.

“It happens inside homes, with next-door neighbours sometimes aware of it, I wanted it in a busy environment with side streets and alleyways,” he explained.

Another unique aspect of the film is Keil’s emphasis on visual elements and the elimination of a lot of dialogue.

The number of sentences spoken in the film can easily be counted.

“Silence says a lot of things,” he explains. “It’s eerie, it’s dark and keeping some explanations out enriches the meaning in the film.”

Kiel believes that he respected the seriousness of the topic of abuse by not over explaining and “rather by saying very little and hoping that the viewer looks for a solution.”

Keil hopes this film can trigger enough awareness about abuse and perhaps inspire people to tackle, discuss and resolve the issue. “As a filmmaker, the best compliment I can receive is when someone watches my film and says to me: ‘I was thinking about it when I went home.’ ”

Tale was made possible through various art grants: a provincial grant from the Conseil des Arts et des

Lettres du Québec; a post-production grant from the National Film Board; as well as a national grant from The Canadian Council for the Arts.

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