



# —MILANO



Officially  
Selected for



A Film by Christina Vandekerckhove

PRESSKIT



120 MIN

BELGIUM

2024

2.39:1

DOLBY 5.1

DUTCH, FRENCH,  
FLEMISH SIGN LANGUAGE

**SCREENINGS IN ROME**

THU. OCT 17th, 11:00 AM @ GIULIO CESARE  
(Press)

FRI. OCT 18th, 11:00 AM @ AUDITORIUM  
CONCILIAZIONE

FRI. OCT 18th, 6:00 PM @ CINEMA ADRIANO

— MILANO

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# — SYNOPSIS

Alain raises his deaf son Milano alone and wants to give him a better life than he has, but despite the best intentions, his failure becomes apparent. Their father-son relationship comes under pressure when Milano wants to meet his biological mother.

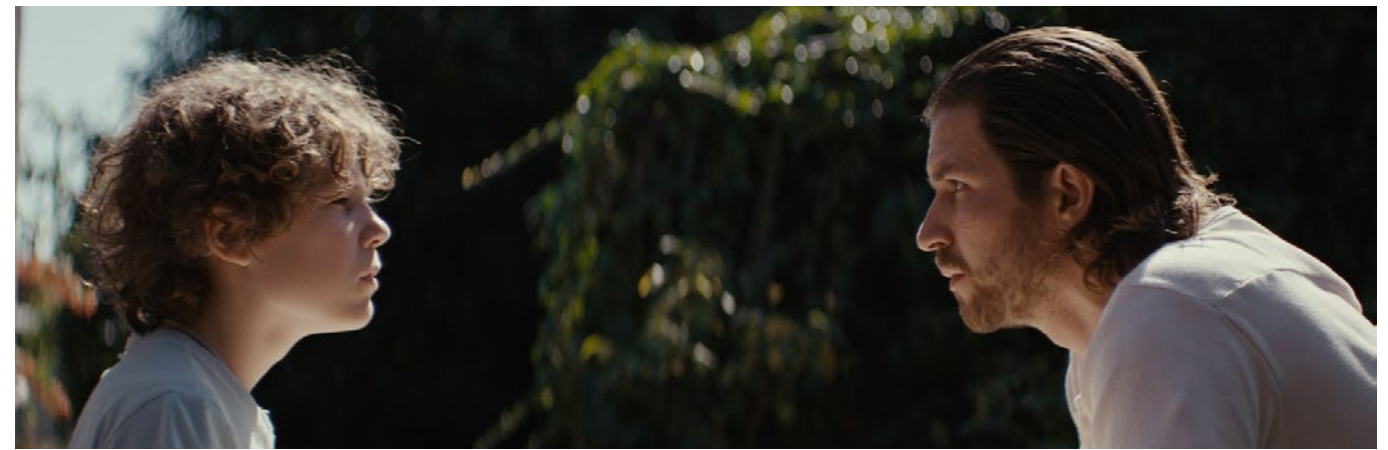




# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I met many parents whose children were placed with foster families while I was conducting research for a documentary. They only saw their children on weekends, or sometimes never again. I was deeply moved by the anger and sadness of those parents. When I began to delve into their backgrounds a little deeper, I also noticed many empty nesters. Often, these individuals themselves came from very difficult home situations with little love. And then you see that pattern repeating itself: these people have children and end up doing the same thing.

During that period, the idea for *Milano* was born, also because it was very clear to me that my next film would be a fiction feature. Still, I wanted to tell a story that unfolds differently. You feel the helplessness of Milano's father, Alain: he very much wants to be a good dad even though he may not have the right tools. Sometimes he manages to raise his son well; sometimes he does not. You understand that he himself grew up in unsafe conditions. Essentially, you are formed during the first three years of childhood so if that foundation is not



right, things become difficult. That is why, as a society, we have to take care of our children as well as those mothers and fathers who have not been given the necessary support. There are many Alains and many Milanos in our world. We must pay attention to them because they are also our future.

The idea of making Milano a deaf child came later when I watched a documentary and was particularly struck by an interview with a father who said that his son's deafness does not find a place in society. Everyone treats him as if he is an exception. But he is a boy like any other. This is true for Milano as well. The film is not about someone who is deaf but about someone who is simply different.

I spent a few days observing at a school for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. There, I noticed the children removing their cochlear implants (CI) during breaks. When I enquired why they did this, they explained that the CI is very challenging and exhausting because it delivers unfiltered sound directly to their brains. Therefore, they prefer to turn it off whenever possible.

Milano's refusal to speak stems from the fact that children from very unstable home environments seek control over something. This is his power. In every other aspect, Milano has

no choice. His father is never at home; there is very little in which that young child has had a say. So he decides not to talk because the world demands it of him, but because he doesn't want to.

For the role of Milano, we wanted to find someone who could already use sign language, as it would be impossible for a child to both act and learn sign language simultaneously. Therefore, we primarily looked for children with deaf parents, but this yielded no results. We then held castings with children with cochlear implants who, like Milano, can hear. However, this too was unsuccessful. I was almost on the verge of cancelling the film because, without the right Milano, it wouldn't work. Then, at the very end, I met Basil [Wheatley], and it was love at first sight. He opened the door, and there I was, face to face with Milano.

Basil is deaf, like his parents. In the film, he wears cochlear implants but not in real life. Therefore, he had to learn everything by heart, as improvisation was not possible with him. He could not hear what was happening around him. Basil and I worked on the script for over a year until he understood the process and how each scene was constructed. Every Wednesday afternoon, he sat with me in an unsociable classroom. He gave an immense amount to become Milano.







# — BIOGRAPHY CHRISTINA VANDEKERCKHOVE

Christina Vandekerckhove graduated with highest distinction from the KASK School of Arts with the documentary 'Home video', which won the ViewPoint documentary award that year and got rave reviews in the press. For a long time Christina worked as a freelance director, mainly for television (a.o. Cobra, Monumentenstrijd, Wildcard Myanmar, Via Annemie) and theatre (Kopergietery: 'Alice' and 'Titus'). In 2015 she was commissioned by Canvas to make the film 'De Nada', a visual and musical road movie through elusive Spanish landscapes starring the friends Daan Stuyven (musician) and Peter De Bruyne (photographer). In 2016, as part of the TV series 'Writers in the Low Countries', she made a surrealist film portrait of the illustrator and writer Randall Casaer.

Over a period of three years, she developed and shot her first feature-length documentary 'Rabot', a mosaic film about the relocation of the residents of the Rabot towers in Ghent, which had to disappear from the cityscape. With 'Rabot' she won the audience award at Film Fest Ghent, the Scam Scenario prize at the Millennium Festival in Brussels, the Ensor for best documentary, the Social Film prize and a special mention at the Human Rights festival. The Belgian Journalists' Association also ranked 'Rabot' among the five best films released in 2018 and Christina was named Master Narrator of 2018 by the Foundation for Narrative Journalism. The film was shown at several foreign festivals in competition and it broke all records in Belgium: the first documentary to attract such a large audience.

In 2020 Christina completed her short fiction film 'Mia' starring Sofie Decler. The film was selected for the international short film competition at Film Fest Ghent and afterwards it started its festival trail, with selections for Short Film Festival Leuven, where 'Mia' won the Humo Award, for Aubagne Film Festival, Huesca International Film Festival, Vox Femina in Zagreb, Nice European Film Festival, Brussels Short Film Festival, where Sofie Decler won the Best Actress award, and Nice where 'Mia' received the award for Best Screenplay and where Sofie Decler was once again honored as Best Actress.

Christina worked for Eén, De Wereldvrede and Lecter Scripted Media on the 'Lockdown' series, where twelve directors were asked to make a short film. 'Stella' was the result and in the fall of 2020 the film was shown on Eén. She now finished her first fiction feature film 'Milano', which will premiere in Alice Nella Città and Film Fest Gent.



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# FILMOGRAPHY

## CHRISTINA VANDEKERCKHOVE

2020	<i>Mia</i> Short Film — Film Fest Gent
2017	<i>Rabot</i> Documentary — Audience Award Film Fest Gent



# CAST & CREW

Alain	Matteo SIMONI
Milano	Basil WHEATLEY
Renee	Alexia DEPICKER
Suzanne	Jo DESEURE
Amanda	Taeke NICOLAÏ
Jeffrey	Thibaud DOOMS
Director	Christina Vandekerckhove
Screenplay	Christina Vandekerckhove
Director of Photography	Frederic Van Zandycke
1st Assistant Director	Marcus Himbert
Production Design	Robbe Nuyttens
Script Supervisor	Sandrien Frantzen
Line Producer	Elke Van Den Daele
Line Producer 2nd shoot	Siel Van Daele
Casting	Anntourage, Stijn Geenen, Mcasting – Sebastien Moradiellos
Costume Design	Nathalie Leborgne
Hair & Makeup Design	Marly van de Wardt
Editing	Jan Van Der Weken



# CAST & CREW

Sound	Dirk Bombey
Sound 2nd shoot	Arne Winderickx
Sound Design/Mix	Jan Schermer
Original Music	Stijn Ylode De Gezelle
Color Grading	Tom Mulder
Post-production supervisor	Nora Berecoechea
DI & VFX Producer	Chris Van Osselaer
VFX Supervisor	Remco De Bont
Production	Lunanime
Producers	Jan De Clercq, Annemie Degryse
Coproducers	Jeroen Beker & Linda van der Herberg, Stephan L'hoest, Lotte Vermeir & wim Janssen
Country	Belgium
Benelux Distributor	Lumière Publishing
International Sales	Best Friend Forever



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