Cámara Carnal Films present
(The Violin)

Mexico / 2006 / 98 minutes / B&W / 35mm / 1:1:85 / Dolby Digital SR

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Don Plutarco, his son Genaro and his grandson Lucio live a double life: musicians and humble farmers, they also support the campesina peasant guerilla movement’s armed efforts against the oppressive government. When the military seizes the village, the rebels flee to the sierra hills, forced to leave behind their stock of ammunition. While the guerillas organize a counter-attack, old Plutarco executes his own plan. He plays up his appearance as a harmless violin player, and makes it back into the military-occupied village to recuperate the ammunition hidden his corn field. His violin playing charms the army captain, who orders Plutarco to come back daily. Plutarco has music, but needs ammunition. The Captain wants to stifle the rebellion, but he loves music. Arms and music play cat-and-mouse and result in painful betrayal.
What inspired you to write the screenplay of *THE VIOLIN*?

I’ve always wanted to write a screenplay about an ignored reality in Mexico, what Luis Buñuel in 1950 called *LOS OLVIDADOS*. Still today, those stifled voices must turn to the military in hopes of being heard. In addition to reading a lot of documentation on guerrillas and Latin American conflicts, the work of the great violinist Carlos Prieto and the incredible adventures of his violin affected me immensely. The strength of this musician who went to the enemy camp every day to play his confiscated violin remained etched in my memory. It made me understand all the literature in which music and war enter into a dangerous game.

To establish the guerrillas, you punctuate the stifled voices, refund voices thanks to the music. What specific work did you do on the sound?

We tried to record the maximum of natural ambient sound. Then I manipulated the sound design toward a progressive weakening so as to highlight a very delicate crescendo from silence to music. I wanted the viewer to confront the weight of the silence in the guerrilla forest, the piercing cries of birds in the woods, the deepness of nocturnal life. The viewer listens to the heavy silence alongside the oppressed. And he or she hears the heavy threat of arms on the military side.

Does the score borrow from the sounds of traditional Mexican music?

My experience working in radio allowed me to discover the richness of traditional Mexican music. I chose to give a substantial place in the film to traditional music. The refrain we hear throughout the film, and which the boy Lucio picks up at the end, was taken from a classic song from the Guerrero region. Most of the music in the film – the cantina, the guerrilla camp, the corn field and the last scene – were written by Cuauhtemoc de Tavira, the godson of Don Ángel (who plays Don Plutarco).

The dialogues seem to echo a similar work on the music…

I love writing dialogue and above all reworking them so that they become very close to everyday reality. I wanted to remain faithful to the Mexican oral tradition: verbal economy, rural spoken language and idiomatic expressions. Don Plutarco is an emblematic character. His discourse constantly uses pieces of songs, proverbs, expletives, sayings. The song and the tale he teaches to his young grandson Lucio are examples of traditional oral Mexican.
How did you choose your actors? Are they all played by professional actors?

One day I received some music from the Tavira family. They are singers from the Guerrero region. I decided to make the trip to visit them at their home in Iguala. There, I met the oldest and the great master of them all, the violinist Don Ángel, who would eventually become Don Plutarco. At 70 plus, this man overflows with a never-before-seen energy. Not only had I met one of the subjects in my documentary on traditional music, Terra Caliente... se mueven los que la mueven, I also met the leading actor of my eventual first feature. I owe a lot to Don Ángel for encouraging me to take on non-professional actors to give my first feature the documentary quality which I wanted.

Did you have to direct the actors in a particular way to give the film its documentary feel?

I directed the actors with an obsession for simplicity in the dialogues: general public and economical. Some of the actors have theater backgrounds like me, so it wasn't difficult to train them in the world of simple phrasing and silence. The others were non-professionals who volunteered: their spontaneity and enthusiasm created a unique atmosphere on the shoot. Their knowledge of the locations gave their attitudes and speaking a crucial realism to the film. For example, we looked for weeks to find a young boy to play Don Plutarco's grandson. This little boy with no acting experience showed up, but he was so lively with courage and exceptional self-assurance and a remarkable silent presence.

Does the film make reference to any precise historical context?

Through its deliberate realism, the film does make reference to those guerilla conflicts which frequented the Mexican political scene of the 20th Century. The history which the film sends us back to is still present in the memory of the country: the peasant revolt of Guerrero in the 1970s, this repressed voice which erupted in defense of the rights of the peasant Indian communities, surprising both the reigning power and public opinion. This revolt recalls also that of the Chiapas populations, directed by the deputy commander Marco, leader of the revolutionary group EZLN (Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion National).

Do the situations in THE VIOLIN have anything in common with contemporary political events?

Right now, Mexico is in the midst of a presidential campaign. Elections are on July 6. Since the start of the campaign, alternative voices to democracy according to President Fox have been repressed. Those who have seen the film in Mexico are reminded immediately of recent events like the miners conflict and the military oppression in Atenco.
After studying theater at the National Institute of the Arts, he studied Communications at the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, as well as Dramatic Arts at the Hugo Argüelles workshop. In 1995, he began his studies in directing and cinematography at the University Center of Cinematography Studies.

CONEJO, his first short film, obtained a solid reputation while touring the international film festival circuit.

For some five years, he produced radio shows to help preserve and promote traditional Mexican music.

Since 1997, he has worked as a director or director of photography on several commercials, documentaries and short films.

In 2004, he made a documentary, TIERRA CALIENTE... SE MUEVEN LOS QUE LA MUEVEN, which was soon acclaimed in Mexico and the rest of the world.

THE VIOLIN, the short film, was selected by the Cannes Film Festival for the Cinéfondation.

In 2006, the feature length version of THE VIOLIN was selected by the Cannes Film Festival for Official Selection - Un Certain Regard.

THE VIOLIN is his first feature film.
DON ÁNGEL TAVIRA   Don Plutarco

Don Ángel Tavira was born in Corrallalso, Guerrero (Mexico) on July 3, 1924. He is the direct decendent of an important line of traditional musicians, beginning with his grandfather, Bartolo Tavira, at the end of the 19th Century.

He started playing the violin at age six and rapidly became an expert in the field. At 13, his life changed drastically because of an accident in which he lost his right hand. Despite this, he continued to do what he loves most: playing the violin.

During the course of his life, he has been a farmer, a musician, an elementary and high school teacher, among others. He has also dedicated a large part of his life to the training of several generations of musicians. At age 60, he went to the Conservatory of Music in Morelia to study score transcription in an effort to save traditional music. To continue his dream, Don Ángel was also musical director of the group Hermanos Tavira Band, one of the rare concerned with saving and maintaining original traditional music.

Don Ángel made his first experience with film with Francisco Vargas in the making of the documentary TIERRA CALIENTE… SE MUEVEN LOS QUE LA MUEVEN – the story of Don Ángel and his efforts to preserve the musical heritage of his community, Tierra Caliente, Guerrero.

DAGOBERTO GAMA   The Capitain

Born in 1959, Dagoberto Gama has acted in some 20 Mexican films since 1986. His credits include THE CRIME OF FATHER AMARO (Carlos Carrera, 2002) and AMORES PERROS (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000). He has also acted in over 20 theater productions.

GERARDO TARACENA   Genaro

Born in 1970. Since 1993, he has participated in both Mexican films and co-production. His credits include SIN DEJAR HUELLA (María Novaro, 2000), AMERICAN FAMILY (Gregory Nava, 2002) and MAN ON FIRE (Tony Scott, 2004). He has also acted in over 20 theater productions.

FERMÍN MARTÍNEZ   The Lieutenant

Born in 1962, Fermín Martínez began his career in American films like THE MEXICAN (Gore Verbinski, 2001) and FRIDA (Julie Taymor, 2002). He has also acted in 17 theater productions.
**Main Crew**

Written, Directed & Produced by
- Francisco VARGAS
- Martin BOEGE PARÉ

Image
- Luz María REYES

Production Manager
- Claudio « Pache » CONTRERAS

Production Manager
- Francisco VARGAS QUEVEDO, Ricardo GARRITAS

Editor
- Isabel MUÑOZ COTA

Sound Recording
- Cuauhtémoc TAVIRA, Armando ROSAS

Original Music
- Natalia BERISTAIN, Isabel CORTAZAR

Casting
- Rafael RAVELLO

Costumes
- Rubén MOLINA, Mario ZARAZUA

Make-up
- Matías BARBERIS, Enrique GREINER, Marco A. HENÁNDEZ

Sound Design
- CÁMARA CARNAL FILMS, S.A. de C.V.

Produced by
- FIDECINE-MÉXICO (Fondo de Inversión y Estímulos al Cine)
- Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica, A.C.

Co-produced by
- CINéMA en construction Toulouse (France)
- Donostia San Sebastián (Spain)

With support from
- Don Ángel TAVIRA
- Dagoberto GAMA
- Fermin MARTÍNEZ
- Gerardo TARACENA
- Mario GARIBALDI

**Main Cast**

- Don Plutarco
- The Captain
- The Lieutenant
- Genaro
- Lucio
- Don Ángel TAVIRA
- Dagoberto GAMA
- Fermin MARTÍNEZ
- Gerardo TARACENA
- Mario GARIBALDI