



presents

POST MORTEM

A Film by Pablo Larrain

2010 / Chile-Mexico-Germany / Color / 98 mins. / 2.66:1 / Dolby SRD / in Spanish w/English subtitles

A Kino Lorber Release
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i n c o r p o r a t e d

CAST

Mario
Alfredo Castro

Nancy
Antonia Zegers

Dr. Castillo
Jaime Vadell

Sandra
Amparo Noguera

Victor
Marcelo Alonso

Captain Montes
Marcial Tagle

CREW

Director
Pablo Larrain

Producer
Juan de Dios Larrain

Screenplay
Pablo Larrain, Mateo Iribarren

Screenplay Consultant - Eliseo Altunaga

Cinematography - Sergio Armstrong

Art Director - Polin Garbisu

Line Producer - Ruth Orellana

Film Editor - Andrea Chignoli

Sound Design - Miguel Hormazabal

Postproduction - Alejandro Atenas



SYNOPSIS

It is 1973 in Santiago during the eve of the Chilean military coup. Mario Cornejo works in a morgue typing out reports on autopsies performed by the coroners. He gets involved in a love affair with Nancy, a cabaret dancer whose father is a left wing socialist.

One morning, there is a violent military raid on Nancy's home. Nancy, her father and her younger brother go missing. Meanwhile, the morgue is seized by Captain Montes and the military during the coup and the bodies of the revolt's victims begin to pour in. Mario looks for Nancy among the corpses at the morgue, but later finds her hidden in the attic of her home. He helps her by bringing food and tells her he will look for her missing family members.

The corpses continue to flood into the morgue. Mario conducts his work stoically, unlike Sandra, the coroner's assistant, who bursts out in an emotional fit over the number of victims that the military is bringing in. After viewing the outburst, Mario decides to visit Nancy only to find her sleeping with Victor, a socialist friend of hers, in the hideaway. Stricken by heartbreak, Mario blocks the exit of the hideaway, leaving Nancy and Victor trapped inside.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This is the story of an apparently insignificant and charmless couple. It's Chile's story during the military coup. Mario's ideal of conquering the impossible love of a woman is also the ideal of a nation trying to conquer a noble but unattainable political model (Socialism). All this amid the bodies of those who died as a result of military ideals imposed with no care for their cost or consequences. Set in one of Chile's darkest and bloodiest periods, Post Mortem weaves together three cinematographic, aesthetic and ethical strands - the testimonial, the historical and the fictional - seeking its poetic rhythm in the confusion, absurdity and aftermath of a journey with no purpose.

DIRECTOR'S BIO

Pablo Larraín was born in 1976 in Santiago, Chile where he studied audiovisual communication at UNIACC University. He is a founding member of Fabula, a production company producing feature films, television and commercials. In 2005, he directed his first feature film "Fuga", which was released theatrically in Chile in March 2006.

In 2007 Pablo Larraín made his second feature film, "Tony Manero", written by Larraín together with Alfredo Castro and Mateo Iribarren. The film was shot during October 2007 and received its world premiere in May 2008 in the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes.

"Post Mortem" is his third feature film.

INTERVIEW WITH PABLO LARRAIN

Where does this story originate from?

Just as the idea for Tony Manero came from a photograph of a man sitting in front of a window, the idea for Post Mortem arose from a news story that I read. The article was about a man, Mario Cornejo, who along with some renowned doctors carried out the autopsy on former President Salvador Allende, on the day of the military coup. This little article in the newspaper inspired us to create this tale, based on the story of this anonymous man, about the oversights that separate official History from the true protagonists of a momentous event in the history of our country. What circumstances allowed this man, Mario Cornejo, to participate so actively in Chile's history without being noticed? That question triggered this story.

Why this historical context?

I grew up hearing tales about the military coup. Since I didn't live through it, this event has turned into a sealed box - an enigma which has captured my imagination and that of my whole generation. It disturbs me, it follows me, it interests me, it moves me. This is why, in my last two films, those eventful days have been the setting and context in which to develop intimate stories about very marginal individuals. It allows you to look very closely at the possibility of making analogies and imposing some absurdity between these very private stories and the recounting of the Great Story. I hope that something phantasmagorical and inscrutable remains, to illuminate the memory of the past. I'm looking for the essence of a context, reconstructing something in order to break it down later. It is the telling of an imagined scene, not an experienced one - unfocused, scattered with the bodies of strangers, people that I am trying to bring back again, through a blurred, undefined and ill-conceived image. Like a dream, that is remembered in fragments. Just fragments.

Why Allende's autopsy?

It isn't simply Salvador Allende's autopsy - it's Allende's autopsy and that of Mario Cornejo's bleak life. What I'm interested in is the tension between these two trajectories, which intersect to become 'The Stage' on which our history is enacted. Salvador Allende, and what he symbolizes, has always moved me. His persona has had to struggle with love and horror, with dreams and shame, ending up as a victim of a fascism which is still alive - sometimes hidden, sometimes exposed. The lives of Raul Peraltá (Tony Manero) and Mario Cornejo and Nancy move me with the same force. This is why, as a filmmaker of my generation, I feel the need to confront the past with the present.

What about the use of audiovisual language?

I originally thought of using a hand-held camera that could capture the scenes as live testimonies. However, when the filming began, I decided to practically not move the camera and set it up as a "fly on the wall": almost inert, observing the facts cautiously, horizontally, as if the world extended itself beyond the confines of the frame only on either side, without heaven, without God nor Earth. The landscape look, with anamorphic lenses, is a panoramic view that hides a lot, and it is in the hidden zones that the true mystery lies.

Why did you work with the same team from Tony Manero?

A community has developed with what we are doing. Alfredo Castro, who has been my teacher and mentor, remains a reference for me. Someone who has the combination of strangeness, profundity and originality to turn Mario into an inaccessible individual - someone burdened with an unfathomable mystery. It is in this mystery that Antonia Zegers (Nancy) brings the strangeness which allows Mario to express his sick love through her. She establishes the connecting link which allows the spectator to get closer to Mario. Together - outside of the political context, the history, the catastrophe and to the collapse - they are, without realizing it, representing the tragedy of a country which ignores them and which they ignore.



AN INTERVIEW WITH ALFREDO CASTRO

What do you think that Mario sees in Nancy?

All day long, Mario sees nothing but bodies and of them, nothing but the wounds and scars that life has left behind: where once there was life, death has begun its work. In Nancy, and her prematurely-aged body, Mario sees an embodiment of the starving nation. Mario and Nancy are a couple of bodies extraneous to history, attempting to build a relationship in a historic time period.

Is the morgue a place for love?

There is only one lover in *Post Mortem*: Mario. In this imaginary love created by Mario, the lovers Mario and Nancy are specks of dust, bodies suspended in history, an accumulation of desires carried along by the wind and the tide. Mario and Nancy are marked by the bitterness of solitude and have lived in a constant state of limbo, so perhaps the morgue could be a repository or an outlet for this made-up love.

How do you think the political events affect Mario's behaviour?

I am interested in contrasting the characters' personal stories with their passage through the political and social events in which they are immersed. Mario changes and lets his pro-military ideological stance be known when he is informed that he is now part of the Chilean Army, receiving some esteem for the first time. This results in an ethical shift in his relationship with death, which formerly was merely protocol and professionalism.

As in *Tony Manero*, Mario is not directly influenced by history or by any particular ideology. I am intrigued by this uncertainty - by the impossibility of finding an explanation for his motivations.

I am fascinated by this apparent pointlessness and utter futility. Mario and Nancy's characters are solitary beings who construct reality from an insignificant and perhaps even vulgar longing, completely removed from the historical context, but which nevertheless carries with it an unexpected tragedy. The story of Mario's love for Nancy, the story of Nancy and Mario, is the story of a historical moment in this country: an intention, an attempt at revolution, a utopia of love which others decided to turn into a tragedy.

How would you describe the experience of making this film?

Just as it was with *Tony Manero*, working with Pablo Larrain once more turned out to be a very challenging and enjoyable experience. Pablo is extremely demanding of his actors with regards to the "truth" of the performance. But at the same time, in what I find to be a very intelligent way, he allows the actors to find out for themselves what this "truth" is and how to approach it. For me, the scope that Pablo allows in his work is very challenging. I'm interested in this area of uncertainty, of strangeness, even of pre-conceived error in which Pablo works; it allows things to happen, to come into being, and a state of constant creativity on set.



AN INTERVIEW WITH ANTONIA ZEGERS

Is Nancy a symbol of her times?

She could be seen as such, in the sense that just like socialism, her story is something that could have been but wasn't. It's the story of a tremendous failure. How do you view Nancy's relationship with politics, especially during those days? She is the daughter of a communist party activist and has been raised in a very strong political culture. But she looks to nightlife, feathers and other frivolous things to gain a sense of identity. Nancy cares much more about her blonde wig than about the workers' movement. To her, politics means an absent father, with his attention always set on someplace far away from her.

Is Nancy a person that is capable of love?

She is a woman without a floor beneath her feet, without a present, left without an identity after being fired from the cabaret where she was a dancer. She is adrift, incapable of seeing someone else as anything other than an instrument for survival. Her sole need is to survive her own collapse, which then becomes the collapse of an entire country.

What does Nancy's body represent to you?

The chronicle of an announced failure, the premonition of a fault, of a mistake...

How would you describe the experience of making this film?

It was a very powerful and beautiful experience. Pablo is a director who marvelously conducts our work to an unknown place. He is very demanding and detail-oriented. During the filming, he thinks, invents, changes, and because of this, one has to be very alert and flexible...therefore, all the difficult physical preparation I undertook to become this character turned out to be the only safety net I had, while throwing myself into the abyss of filming - an abyss where I had a profound encounter with Alfredo, and where we created these lost beings and their story.