

## Cássio P. Santos about VALENTINA

### “She’s just a girl trying to fully live her life”

Tonight Valentina wants to party until she drops, as tomorrow she’ll be leaving the city. Maybe moving to the countryside will help her escape from the obstacles she is facing everywhere as a transgender teen in Brazil. In her new town, she builds a loyal network around her, only trusting her mother and two dear friends. But when information about her gender identity is leaking, trouble might start all over again. Unless Valentina can firmly look her haters in the eye.

**The impression Valentina makes in the first minutes of the film is crucial: “I am a girl, I am young and I am enjoying my life.”**

Cássio P. dos Santos: VALENTINA is indeed a celebration of life, but also shows the challenges that trans people are facing in Brazil. The film makes clear that society should change and learn how to accept diversity.

**Those opening scenes make it easy to identify with her.**

Dos Santos: First and foremost, we wanted to create a character that felt

real and appealed to young audiences. Valentina is surrounded by a loving mother and a few good friends whom she can trust. People identify with her because she’s just a girl trying to fully live her life. Thiessa Woinbackks wonderful performance surely helps to achieve this instant identification.

**The situation of trans people these days is a topical issue in plenty of books and films.**

Dos Santos: Art can create wonderful new worlds, but it can also reflect what is real and urgent in our society. In the quest for rights for trans people, it is vitally important to gain more visibility. In Brazil nowadays more trans characters appear in films, soaps and in the media in general. But we should grab the opportunity to do much more, also for trans actors and actresses. We all know how visibility creates more awareness, offers possibilities to shine a light on the challenges this community is facing and dismantles prejudice.

**The obstacles that Valentina has to**



**overcome are everywhere. Luckily her mother is extremely supportive.**

Dos Santos: These obstacles still exist, both on a social and an administrative level, when Valentina has to deal with bureaucracy. Her mother’s role is crucial. From the beginning we wanted to create a character that was supported by a mother who gives her the strength to fight for her rights.

**Fathers on the other hand are seldom around.**

Dos Santos: In Brazil, it’s very common to see single mothers taking care of their children alone. Many fathers refuse to take responsibility for their children and just vanish. Brazil is a male dominated country and since Valentina is a woman, many of her

challenges are related to how society treats her gender. Not only because she is trans, but because she is a woman. VALENTINA is a proof of the strength of women fighting for their rights.

**In one impressive scene, Valentina poses what is the most essential question of the film: “What is it that bothers you about my freedom?”**

Dos Santos: It doesn’t make sense why society treats people differently because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Valentina asks this question not only to confront her nemesis, but also to make the audience reflect. The film doesn’t give you an answer, but we want you to hear the question.

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Gert Hermans