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The Troubled Troubadour

Abstract

This is a film review of *The Troubled Troubadour* (2018), directed by Forest Ian Etsler and Sébastien Simon.

Author Notes

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The Troubled Troubadour (2018), dir. Forest Ian Etsler and Sébastien Simon

The Troubled Troubadour is a gentle but powerful story of a ukulele playing troubadour's journey toward death. The troubadour seems to be riding in a boat (maybe on the River Styx?) poled by his companion. In reality, however, the boat is on wheels riding on a railroad track. On his journey the troubadour meets masked children who think he is the God of the Mountain and take him to meet a princess. The princess is unable to speak, but as the troubadour plays for her, she finds her voice. As he leaves the princess, she whispers that she knows he is not the Mountain God. He replies that she is correct. He is the God of Music. The moral is that music gives voice to many who are otherwise without voice.

Eventually, the troubadour comes to a tunnel. His companion tells him "ready or not" the time has come. But his companion also tells the troubadour that he will be okay. The troubadour stalls, but when his companion disappears he is left alone with nothing but the tunnel ahead of him. As the troubadour goes through the tunnel, he meets the most important people in his life—the people he must reckon with now that he approaches death. The first person he meets is his pregnant daughter who tells the troubadour that she forgives him. He then meets a group of fellow

musicians who express their appreciation for his music. The next person the troubadour meets is his father, who still berates him for becoming a musician. The troubadour gives his father the finger, indicating that he can be a good person, even if his father is unhappy. Finally, he meets his mother, who seems ill. The only thing she tells the troubadour is that he will be okay. This suggests that the role of the mother is always to care for and encourage her children.

Finally the troubadour meets himself, as he sees his reflection in a bowl of water. As he leaves the tunnel, he meets a man (a St. Peter figure?) who asks the troubadour to sign a scroll and then makes a tape of the troubadour's music. When the troubadour is done, the man asks: "Is that all?" The troubadour replies: "That's the best I'll ever do." This suggests that one has value even if one does not achieve perfection. The man then says: "It's time to say farewell." The two men then walk down the railroad tracks toward the big city.

The movie asks its audience: "Who will you meet in the tunnel? Who are the most important people in your life? And, how do you deal with them?" All else is but a footnote.