

Film examines grief in child's eyes

By JEFF RANDALL
Film Critic

When most people think of child actors, images of Gary Coleman and Ricky Schroeder come to mind.

But in Europe, there's a new face that could help change people's impressions about child actors worldwide. Her name is Victoire Thivisol, and she is the star and title character in "Ponette," a new film by French director Jacques Doillon.

At the age of four, Thivisol not only carried this film, but also managed to capture a Best Actress Award at the 1996 Venice Film Festival.

"Ponette" is the story of a young girl (Thivisol) who is forced to deal with loss and death for the first time when her mother (Marie Trintignant) dies in a car accident. Ponette is left with a broken arm, a confused father and a multitude of opinions about how she should deal with her suddenly changed life.

Her father (Xavier Beauvois), a

devout atheist, is consumed with anger at his deceased wife for her carelessness. While attempting to resolve this anger, he leaves Ponette with her aunt and cousins. Ponette's aunt (Claire Nebout) is a devout Catholic who tells Ponette the story of Christ's resurrection, and leaves the young girl with the impression that her mother will also come back to life. And Ponette's young cousins put forth their own ideas about death and what happens afterward — ideas that are often more terrifying than reassuring.

In the midst of these conflicting philosophies, Ponette is left to her own ideas about where her mother truly is; and when she begins seeing visions of her mother at night, she decides that her mother is actually still with her. This belief upsets just about everyone Ponette is close to, including her father and aunt. About the only person who sympathizes is her youngest cousin (Matiaz Bureau), who tries his best to reassure Ponette, even if he can't quite understand.

With "Ponette," director Doillon

The Facts

Title: "Ponette"
Stars: Victoire Thivisol, Matiaz Bureau, Delphine Schiltz
Director: Jacques Doillon
Rating: NR
Grade: B+
Five Words: New child star carries film.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARROW RELEASING
VICTOIRE THIVISOL stars in "Ponette," the story of a young girl forced to deal with the aftermath of her mother's death.

as his age would dictate.

This film's only weakness lies in its long-winded and slow-paced delivery, which drags out an admittedly complex subject a bit too long to hold interest throughout the story. These excesses, however, prove to be little more than a speed bump in an otherwise outstanding work by Doillon.

Many directors have tried to make films that show the world through a child's eyes; Doillon has not only succeeded at this task, he has excelled.

"Ponette," which is in French and is subtitled, opened Thursday at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater and continues through Sunday, and Oct. 2-4. Screenings are at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays; 1 p.m., 3 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturdays; and 3 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$6 for the general public, \$5 for students and \$4 for children, seniors and members of the Friends of the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.

Film furrows 'Acres' of heartache

By GERRY BELTZ
Film Critic

If you are thinking about going to see "A Thousand Acres," consider these safety tips:

First, bring hankies. Plenty of hankies. The crying factor of this film is way up there, compounded by the number of modern social issues it touches on in a mere 100 minutes.

Also, if you are a male and attending this film, you'll hate yourself and everyone like you by the time it is over — every male in this flick is either an abuser (child, alcohol, you name it), a lawyer or a jerk in general.

Finally, if you tend to get emotionally involved or connected with films and the characters therein, have a nice comedy waiting for you after seeing "A Thousand Acres."

Iowa farmer Larry Cook (Jason Robards) is as "my-way-or-the-highway" as they come, and despite his age, he runs the family with a heavy patriarchal iron fist. Still, eldest daughter Ginny (Jessica Lange) loves him despite his faults, and sees the good in everything. Middle daughter Rose (Michelle Pfeiffer) is showing signs of intolerance, but also shows glimmers of joy because of her response to treatments for second-generation cancer.

Youngest daughter Caroline (Jennifer Jason Leigh) has moved off the farm and become a successful lawyer, virtually shutting out the rest of her family, although she visits occasionally.

One day, Larry announces he is splitting up the land between the three daughters in an effort to keep the government from laying a heavy tax on it. However, when Caroline expresses an uncertainty, Larry takes this as an insult and splits the land 50-



PHOTO COURTESY OF BUENA VISTA PICTURES
JESSICA LANGE (left), Michelle Pfeiffer and Jennifer Jason Leigh star as three sisters whose father offers to divide the family's 100-year-old farm among them in "A Thousand Acres."

50 between Ginny and Rose.

From here, everything gradually dissolves, revealing long-hidden secrets and surprising alliances, whether they be between the sisters, their spouses or even the father himself, who accuses the daughters of using, and then ignoring him.

In a Shakespearean nutshell, it's "King Lear" with Iowa license plates.

Pfeiffer and Lange both give incredible performances. Lange draws the audience into her world, and manages to keep it there even as her life melts around her, and the walls of reality come crashing down.

Pfeiffer is great as well, refusing to be typecast in "romantic" roles after her work in "Up Close and Personal" and "One Fine Day." She once again shows the Oscar-worthiness she has shown in the past. Pfeiffer takes Rose and turns her into a woman who feeds off of anger the same way cancer threatens to eat away her life.

The Facts

Title: "A Thousand Acres"
Stars: Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jason Robards, Jennifer Jason Leigh
Director: Jocelyn Moorhouse
Rating: R (subject matter, language)
Grade: A-
Five Words: Land division separates sisters, family.

Director Jocelyn Moorhouse ("How To Make An American Quilt") draws incredible performances from all of the performers, even Leigh, whose character at first appears to be the quiet and insecure little sister, but eventually evolves into something ... different.

Overall, a very fine film, but not one to be taken lightly, so have a quiet drink after watching it, before going back to face the real world.

Heck, have two drinks. A pitcher is worth "A Thousand Acres."

Art display encapsulates family diversity

By JULIE ABRAHAMSON
Staff Reporter

Picture the perfect family: a mother, father and two children. Does this sound ideal? While the scenario may be perceived as normal, it doesn't necessarily fit the modern family mold.

A free art display — sponsored by University Program Council — explores the notion today through Oct. 12 in the north lobby of Nebraska Union.

"Love Makes a Family: Living in Lesbian and Gay Families," features interview transcripts combined with photographs of families with gay and lesbian members.

The display visually confronts homophobia and emphasizes diversity within families, purporting that picture-perfect families surpass appearance and focus by providing love, care, support and acceptance.

Knowing gay and lesbian people helps educate others about the gay civil rights movement, said Pat Tetreault, advisor of Someone You Know, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student organization working to establish the humanity of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

"The more people find they know people who are gay or lesbian, the more likely they are to be for gay and lesbian rights," Tetreault said. "They realize that gays and lesbians are people, too."

Among the photographic display's subjects is a girl happily sitting outside with her two mothers.

During an interview accompanying the photograph, one of the mothers likened her situation to white-water rafting.

"You keep learning to negotiate the rough parts," the woman was quoted as saying. "By being who we are, by being open and positive about it, we change a little bit of the world."

Her daughter, Liza, a second-grader, agreed, saying, "A family is a bunch of people, or not so many, who love each other."

The exhibit will be displayed 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.

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