

A Heart In Winter

Reviews on Amazon...

Sad, Beautiful Tale of Unrequited Love – May 25, 2000

By David Montgomery

The title translates as "a heart in winter." A cold heart, bereft of love. A heart incapable of any emotion at all. That describes Stephane (Daniel Auteuil), a solitary violin maker and repairman. A man with the soul of an artist, but none of the talent.

Stephane is partnered with Maxime (Andre Dussollier) in a thriving business. Maxime is everything that Stephane is not: gregarious, confident, extroverted. Together they form a successful team. Maxime brings in the clients and Stephane does the work. They both are quite happy.

One day Maxime introduces Stephane to his new love, Camille (Emmanuel Beart), a beautiful violinist. He is cold to her at first, but the music she makes gradually stirs something in him. She in turns responds to him. She can sense that he has the heart of a musician, but something is wrong. Something is keeping him from opening his heart to anyone else. That something is music. Stephane is surrounded constantly by beautiful music, but none of it emanates from him. We come to realize why Stephane, once a promising musician, gave up music. The sounds his fingers made could never equal the music he heard in his soul so he quit. Rather than risk the pain of further disappointment in life, he chose instead to feel nothing at all. If that meant forgoing love, it was a price that he had to pay.

Camille eventually confesses to Maxime that she is in love with his partner. Maxime is hurt, but what can he do? She goes to Stephane. We can see that he probably loves her as well, but still he refuses her. He will not allow her into his heart. She is hurt by this, but she has her music and Maxime and, perhaps, that is enough. She is too proud to play the woman scorned.

Emmanuelle Beart gives a truly wonderful performance as Camille. She is stunning to look at, of course, but as a gifted actress, she will not settle for just that. Her work is meticulously crafted, imbuing her role with dignity and grace. She studied for a year to learn to be a convincing violinist and she succeeds magnificently.

Daniel Auteuil is also excellent, playing the difficult part of a man who keeps his thoughts and emotions very much to himself. It is a subtle performance, filled with poignant suggestions and nuances. His carefully guarded expressions and manner prove that still waters do run deep.

As is typical of most of the finer French films, "Un Coeur en Hiver" is a very mature, adult film. Not in the sexual sense--there is nothing even remotely objectionable in it--but rather in terms of its thoughtfulness and sophistication. The relationships in this film, as in real life, demonstrate that love is never easy. There isn't always a happy ending, and just because a man and a woman should get together, that does not mean they will.

A Frozen Heart in a World of Violins – December 1, 2002

By Scott 68

This is a wonderful French movie with subtitles, easily one of the best movies I have ever seen, I enjoyed it immensely, so much that I had to buy it to watch again and again.

The movie is about two men who own a violin shop and they both fall in love with a beautiful soloist who becomes their client, her violin is a wonderful sounding Vulliamme with an incredible tone. There are wonderful performances of Ravel's trio and sonatas throughout the movie.

The movie makes a profound statement about violin making, musical interpretation, the awkwardness and inconvenience of true love, jealousy, death, inner feelings that are rarely spoken, how friendship can change over a woman, and how a man's heart has become frozen from a life of romantic solitude.

What I found most interesting about the plot is that we do not know if Camille and Stephen will eventually become lovers, he says he will attend her next recital in Paris and she drives away with Maxim looking at him with adoring eyes. Paris is like New York, you have to be big to play there so apparently by this time Camille has become popular. One thing we do know is that Stephen does have a life and says he is not worthless because of his abilities as a violin luthier. In the end, Stephen is left with his violins: woman or no woman we never know if he will be forever trapped in his frozen world...

Fans of "The Red Violin" will love this movie but I would recommend this to anyone who loves romance and violin performance, essential viewing and not to be missed.