

Les Violons du Bal

("Violins of the Ball")

France : 1973 : dir. Michel Drach : Port Royal / Planfilm

: 108 min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[David Drach](#)

Marie-José Nat; Jean-Louis Trintignant; Gabrielle Doucet; Michel Drach; Yves Afonso;
Guido Alberti; Christian Rist; Nathalie Roussel

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	KBytes	Ω □ ∄ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
3522a	1½	4	2	3	- - - -	No	Unseen



Source: NFT bulletin Feb/Mar 76

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Despite the commercial intentions of his producer, a director succeeds in making a film about his perilous but successful escape to Switzerland as a small Jewish boy during WW2, thanks to and along with his courageous mother. An autobiography, both as regards childhood experiences and the resistance the adult director meets, which does not really make an impression because Drach looks back with too much tenderness on his young alter-ego (played by his own son) and only idealises the mother (played by his wife), owing to which it lacks conviction. Despite the grim reality, his escape seems more like an adventurous fairy-tale. The demands of the "star system" meant that Trintignant took the role of the adult Drach before the cameras. *** "

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"The director appears as himself, trying to persuade a producer to make a film about his (Jewish) childhood, then metamorphoses into Jean-Louis Trintignant as we watch, intermittently, that movie. Drach's wife, Marie-Josie Nat, plays herself and also his mother, hiding from the Germans in 1940 and then trying to get her little boy over the Swiss border. Despite the trick form and, if you like, the subject-matter, this is an old-fashioned piece, in the best tradition of French cinema. ** "

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"More personal memories of France under the German Occupation in World War II: the director Michel Drach (charmingly played by his son David) was, however, no **Lucien Lacombe**, ready to accommodate the conqueror, but a wide-eyed Jewish boy who, despite a spell in hiding with the family of a canny, treacherous peasant, was blessed with a handsome, wealthy mother and survived the war with his trusting nature still intact.

"LES VIOLONS DU BAL" comprises episodes in Michel's escape to Switzerland, intercut with semi-humorous scenes of the still-trusting Drach (played as an adult by Trintignant) attempting to finance the film ("When are you shooting the sex scenes?" a fat, pin-headed producer enquires). Drach's earnest confusion about the sort of film he is making does not ultimately diminish these deeply-felt, nostalgic, and often affecting memories."



Source: Amazon.com

NFT monthly bulletin - Feb/Mar '76 - review:

"A film maker fulfils a twenty-year old dream: to make an autobiographically-based movie about his war-time childhood. He films the story and intercut with this project is his present, "everyday" life. Drach has made a stylish, clever film, interweaving dreams and memories of the past, with the "realistic" present. Black and white blends with colour photography. The story of nine-year old Michel is part of a re-creation of the difficulties of wartime France and what it meant to be a member of a Jewish family, whose father had gone off to war..."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Freud would have a field day with this - Drach filming his own rose-tinted memories, and casting his son as his childhood self and his wife as his mother. But so many films have travelled this same path it is difficult to raise any enthusiasm for yet another story about Jewish persecution and survival under the Nazis. "**AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS**" (87) and "**LE VIEIL HOMME ET L'ENFANT**" (66) are just two of the archive's French titles touching the same theme, though with very differing sensibilities. Of course, even "**THE SOUND OF MUSIC**" is ultimately a romanticised tale of refugees from German occupation, as is "**THE PIED PIPER**", so it is a fairly broad film category, and not an endless succession of "**SCHINDLER'S LIST**"s. A sense of déjà-vu is perhaps inevitable nonetheless. Nothing further is known of David Drach.

See subject index under **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TITLES, DISCRIMINATION / PREJUDICE, HOLLYWOOD** (but not exclusively) **NEPOTISM, REFUGEES / EVACUEES** and of course **WAR**.