

**THE ERECTION OF  
TORIBIO BARDELLI**  
press book



A photograph showing the interior of a car with three people. On the left, a woman with long curly hair and sunglasses is laughing. In the center, a woman is smiling. On the right, a man with a beard is driving and laughing. The car's interior, including the rearview mirror and seats, is visible. The entire image has a blue color cast.

*“Hope springs eternal.”*



## **Synopsis**

Over the course of two nights, a widower confronted with his own looming mortality faces his estranged children, who are in search of their own identities after the loss of their mother.



## **Technical data**

nationality: Peru, Brazil

format: Color - 1.85:1 – DCP Flat

length: 82min

year of production: 2023

original language: Spanish

A man in a red robe stands in a living room, looking out a window with white curtains. The room is dimly lit, with a brick wall on the right and a television on a stand in the foreground. The text "DIRECTOR'S NOTE" is overlaid in white on the right side of the image.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As the writer and director of “The Erection of Toribio Bardelli”, I want to share some thoughts and insights into the essence of this film.

Our story revolves around the Bardelli family, a group of lost souls navigating the murky waters of existence. It is a tale of searching, yearning, and confronting the inherent uncertainties of life. Through the Bardelli family, we look at the elusive depths of our own emotions, the fragility of our aspirations, and the enduring, often inexplicable, drive that compels us to seek meaning in the face of loss and despair.

**Discovering Toribio Bardelli:** Our protagonist, Toribio Bardelli, is a man haunted by his own inadequacies. When we first meet him, we know very little about him, except for two intertwined facts: his desperate quest for sexual fulfillment and his struggle with impotence. Toribio's impotence is a mirror reflecting his unresolved grief over his unfaithful wife's recent death. It's a burden that he shares with his entire family, a group of disenchanted dreamers with no clear path forward.

**Sex and Disenchantment:** Toribio's fixation on sex is his way of asserting control in a world that no longer feels like his own. Toribio's pursuit of virility and sexual conquests can be seen as an attempt to fit into a traditional male archetype. He is haunted by the fact that his wife was unfaithful to him for years, a blow to his masculinity and self-worth. His inability to achieve an erection becomes a symbol of his emasculation, a stark contradiction to the traditional male model that demands sexual prowess and dominance. Despite Toribio's outward boasts and bravado, it becomes evident that he understands very little about the complexities of sex and relationships. His fixation on the physical act of sex as a means of validation and control blinds him to the emotional and psychological aspects of human connection. While the film can certainly be interpreted as a critique on traditional masculinity, it is essential to recognize that this is just one layer of a much larger and nuanced struggle with existence, where all the characters in “The Erection of Toribio Bardelli” grapple with a deeper sense of loss.

**The Bardelli Family:** The Bardelli family are helpless individuals with unfulfilled dreams and uncertain futures. Within this family, we have the youngest daughter, Luz, who stands out as the most perceptive and aware of their shared predicament. Yet, even her lucidity cannot shield her from the emotional turmoil in her own life. She finds herself in a passionate affair with the editor of the magazine where she works, a man who refuses to publish her articles despite her insistence and good work. This tumultuous relationship embodies the struggle to find validation and recognition in a world that often remains indifferent to one's aspirations. Another member of the Bardelli family is Sara, blind and unemployed, who grapples with both physical and emotional challenges. Her mourning takes on a unique form as she mourns the loss of her apartment and her beloved dog, whom she carries in a plastic bag, yearning to provide him with a dignified burial. The eldest son, Silvester, an alcoholic and actor who remains unrecognized in his field, roams the streets of Lima looking for the mother of the heart donor who saved his life. Each one of them, with their life half done, reluctantly seeking to make sense of it all.

The Bardelli family members are not fully realized individuals but rather unfinished and incomplete figures. Their lives intersect and collide with one another, creating a web of directionless paths that lead to an ending without a clear resolution. The film acknowledges its desire to plumb into the depths of these characters and their experiences, yet it also recognizes the inherent limitations of this endeavor. Even as we strive to understand them, we are reminded that some truths may forever remain elusive.

**Existential Mourning:** The characters of the Bardelli family wrestle with a profound and pervasive sense of mourning that extends far beyond the loss of their mother or wife. Their grief is not just for a specific person or event; it's a mourning for existence itself. This existential lament is a haunting realization that they feel they have lost everything, yet simultaneously, they never truly possessed anything.

The film invites us to ponder on the idea that existence itself may be a form of mourning. This is not a mourning with a clear origin or rational explanation but rather a state of being.

**Finding Humor Amidst Despair:** Making “The Erection of Toribio Bardelli” presented a unique challenge and an immense pleasure: finding the precise balance between humor and sadness. As Charlie Chaplin remarked, "Comedy is Life viewed from a distance; Tragedy, Life in a close-up." In this film, I tried to merge both lenses in one take. As crafting the tone of the film required a meticulous approach, we aimed to seamlessly blend humor with the profound sadness that follows the Bardelli family's journey.

Since I believe that moments of levity can coexist with moments of sorrow, the goal was not just to include humor for its own sake but to infuse it with meaning and significance. We sought to elevate the humor to a level where it could be as profound and valuable as any other emotion. Just as we can find beauty and value in the ordinary and even the absurd aspects of life, we wanted to explore how humor could provide insight into the human experience, even in the most unexpected moments.

The film seeks to offer a unique perspective on the genre, where joy and suffering coexist in a perpetual dance. “The Erection of Toribio Bardelli” is a blend of introspection, melancholy, and humor, inviting the audience to explore the grief of existence. In the midst of the Bardellis’ collective misery, inevitably, humor emerges as an unexpected yet essential principle. The humor that, like Toribio's erection, does not appear when it is wanted, but when it is needed.

Adrián Saba



## CREDITS

Toribio Bardelli - Gustavo Bueno

Sara Bardelli - Gisela Ponce de León

Silvestre Bardelli - Rodrigo Sánchez Patiño

Luz Bardelli - Michele Abascal

Celestine - Lucélia Santos

Writer: Adrián Saba

Director: Adrián Saba

Producer: Carolina Denegri

Co-producer: Ana Alice De Morais

Director of Photography: Christian Valera

Production Design: Blanca Martínez

Editor: Justin Beach, Maksim T. Kuzin

Sound: Pablo Rivas Leyva, Tiago Bello



PRESS CONTACTS:

Kathleen McInnis

[k.mcinnis@see-throughfilms.com](mailto:k.mcinnis@see-throughfilms.com)