



Chilean Writer/director Sebastián Lelio (Gloria, The Sacred Family, The Year of the Tiger) created the Oscar winning

foreign film, *A Fantastic Woman*, in consultation with its transgender lead actress, Daniela Vega.

Together they discussed "what is a woman?" In the title of this film, we enter into the internal world of a transgender to explore that question: What is the fantasy about women that is most dominant? Is it the objectification, breaking down body parts in three numbers? Chest, waste, hips? Is that what creates the fantasy? Is it the mannerisms, the voice, the gesture, the grace? Or is it the facial features, the eyes, the nose, the cheekbones, the hair, the neck, the hands, finger and toe nails, and legs? Let's not forget the legs! Is it the Geisha-like skills of cooking, making tea, discussing literature, playing a musical instrument? - all to please a fantasy created for the pleasure of men by men? So what happens when a transgender replaces this stereotype with her own unique qualities, and challenges men and women to apply the same measure of respect and dignity to them, shattering molds that have shaped their fantasies for centuries?

"When I look at you, I don't know what I'm seeing. A chimera, that's what I'm seeing," says Sonia (Aline Küppenheim), the ex-wife of Orlando (Francisco Reyes) to his transgender lover Marina (Daniela Vega). Mythologically speaking a chimera is an animal or beast made up of many parts of other animals and is an omen for disaster. After a romantic evening Marina's lover, Orlando unexpectedly keels over from an aneurism, falls down the stairs and is rushed to the hospital where he dies. Because of the bruises to his body, Marina immediately becomes a suspect, and must undergo a humiliating physical exam. Orlando's family and son won't allow her to the funeral or to continue living in the place that was once called home. She is in one moment abandoned by her lover and called out of her protective home to face a world that hates her for who she is. Her only way of surviving is to wander into the depths of the music halls where she sings, counter tenor, and brings chills to the heart of everyone who can hear her beyond the mold of gender, hearing the voice of beauty singing fully self-expressed and very human.

When asked how it was playing the part of a transgender in a film about a transgender woman, Daniela Vega says she was "Making art out of dark." Director Lelio says he was making a classic film about a very unclassical subject. Breaking out of the form of social realism, he used surrealism to exaggerate the dreams and the reality of simply walking against the wind down the street, or dancing with a group of rockets, claiming the film demanded freedom of expression from its transgender lead. For Vega and Lelio making a film about the harsh realities of the subject matter, brought them together at the end of the day to celebrate a love that is free from gender roles.