DUBOC TEATRO & FILMES PRESENTS

RHYTHM 40°

FEATURE FILM

Directed by Alex Levy-Heller

Created and written by Branca Duboc Pedrinha



Illustrative image

Presentation



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“Rhythm 40º” tells the sensual and turbulent love story of Carol, a dance teacher, and Guel, a renowned samba de gafieira dancer. A mysterious and troubled man, he also owns the Francis dance school. It all unfolds during Rio’s biggest gafieira festival, the famous “Rhythm 40º”.

- Drama, suspense, romance and comedy
- 100-minute feature film
- Target audience: youth and adults; classes A, B and C
- Diversity on screen
- Present day

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When hired to represent a dance school in the Rhythm 40º tournament, Carol falls in love with Guel, her new boss and gafieira partner: a mysterious man haunted by a dark past.

LOGLINE

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Writer’s Vision



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The story follows two paths: the events ahead and the investigation into Guel’s past. He is haunted by a childhood trauma he barely remembers, yet its emotional scars prevent him from moving forward with Carol.
Alongside Guel and Carol’s romance, the film highlights the Rhythm 40º dance tournament, Carol’s young students (including a girl with dwarfism and a boy with a prosthetic leg) who also compete, and Francis, a trans woman who is Guel’s business partner and the brains behind the dance school.

Clues to Guel’s mysterious past emerge between rehearsals and stages of the dance tournament, which takes center stage from the midpoint onward. To spice up the competition, dance rivals Gegê and Inês are introduced; the latter is Guel’s former partner and is still interested in him.
Audiences will be captivated by the dance performances and share Carol’s surprise at each revelation until the end of the film, when Guel remembers his entire past.





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Tone

Rhythm 40º explores realistic, dramatic situations with a light touch. Set in the present day, the film is designed to entertain while addressing socially relevant issues with the depth needed to engage its audience.

- Light
- Fun
- Romantic
- Positive
- Moving
- Sensitive
- Dramatic
- Transformative

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Themes Explored in the Film

The film presents relevant, universal themes. It addresses transphobia and racism with sensitivity and an original, positive approach, as well as dwarfism and physical disabilities (a prosthetic leg) in children.

Themes

- Gafieira and funk carioca (Rio’s cultural heritage)
- Hip hop, charme and Black music
- The world of dance (adults and children)
- Male prostitution
- Transphobia and racism
- Dwarfism and physical disabilities in children (prosthetic leg)
- Sexual abuse, emotional avoidance, coping and lasting effects
- Love, friendship, unity and overcoming adversity

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Synopsis

“Rhythm 40º” tells the story of Carol, 45, a samba de gafieira dancer and single mother. When she is hired by a dance school, she falls in love with its owner and her new partner, the famous Guel Ferreira, a man whose emotional trauma prevents him from leading a “normal” life.

Amid beautiful gafieira choreography and thrilling dance competitions throughout Rio’s “Rhythm 40º” tournament, Carol uncovers the secrets of the mysterious man who is a tormented dancer by day and a bold, seductive male escort by night.

The more Carol gets to know him, the more she realizes that Guel is trapped by a dark, fragmented past. In love, she embarks on a surprising investigation to uncover the truth. Will Guel be able to face his nightmares and finally find happiness?

CHARACTERS

- Characters of different ethnicities, genders, ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- A trans woman is one of the lead characters.
- Teenage characters with dwarfism and physical disabilities (a prosthetic leg).
- The story plays with different personality types, creating surprising situations, reversals and twists that keep audiences entertained.

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Miguel Ferreira (Guel)

Guel, 44, is white, tall and strong, with short brown hair, brown eyes and a close-cropped beard. Elegant, kind, sexy, controlled, reserved and enigmatic, he is sometimes fragile and sometimes strong and protective. By day, he is a troubled dance school owner and gafieira dancer; by night, a bold, seductive male escort.

Deep down, Guel is trapped by a dark past, haunted by a childhood trauma that has left him with only fragmented memories. Behind his eccentricities, evasions and rules against emotional involvement is a sensitive, kind human being who longs to love and be loved but cannot.

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Illustrative image

Carolina Araújo (Carol)

Carol, 45, is a Black woman with box braids and dark eyes, a samba de gafieira dancer and single mother. Beautiful and passionate about dance, she specializes in Black music, charme, hip hop and samba de gafieira.

Carol is a romantic, but the superficiality of modern relationships has made her shut herself off from love. She is very close to her mother, her grown daughter and her two childhood friends. Despite her simple, hectic life and financial difficulties, Carol is cheerful, generous and still somewhat naive.

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Illustrative image

Francis (Fran)

Francis, 40, is a white trans woman with long hair, elegant clothes and painted artificial nails. She is a dancer and Guel’s business partner at the dance school.

She runs the academy that bears her name, “Francis”. While Guel handles administrative and financial matters, Francis is the brains behind everything and the most astute of all the characters.

She and Guel grew up together and are like siblings. Francis would do anything to free Guel from his suffering and help him heal from his trauma.

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Illustrative image

George Smith (Gegê)

Gegê, 35, is an American dancer and owner of “Power Dance”, an international chain of dance schools that arrives in Brazil promising to win Rio’s samba de gafieira tournament, “Rhythm 40º”.

Behind the facade of a cold, ambitious businessman, and despite his barbs and provocations, Gegê is a good person with the best intentions and strong character.

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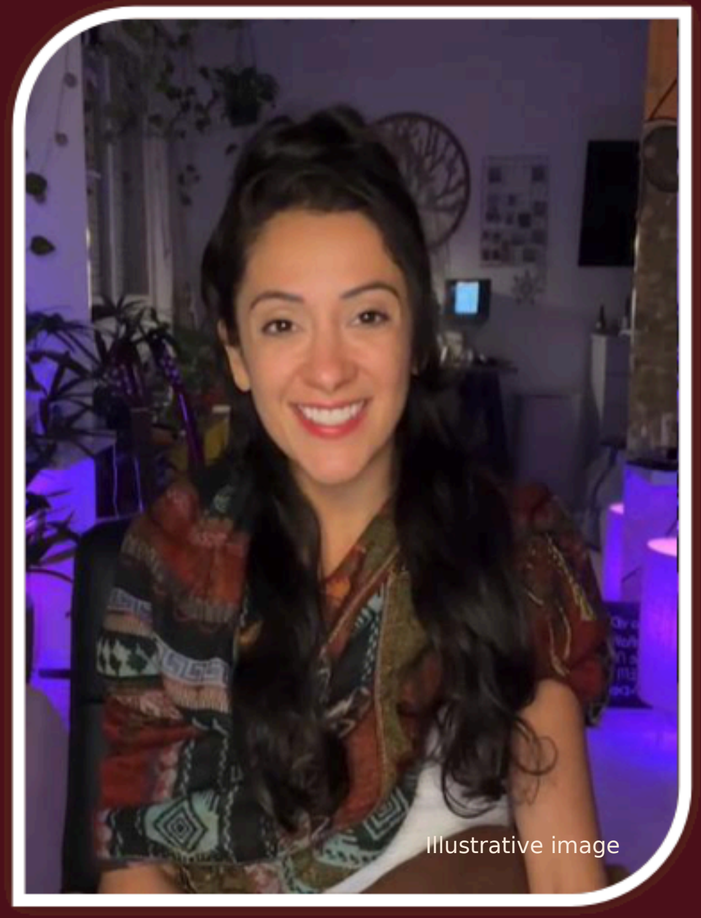

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Inês Sampaio

Inês, 24, is an Amazonian cabocla woman with long, straight black hair and a slender, shapely figure. Beautiful and an exceptionally skilled dancer, she is a phenomenon.

She danced samba de gafieira at the Francis dance school, where Guel taught her the techniques. She became so skilled that they won the Rhythm 40º tournament several times as partners.

Inês fell in love with Guel. They had a fling that went nowhere, so she chose to leave the school and joined Power Dance, becoming Gegê’s partner. She still has feelings for Guel. Inês is a good person, loyal to her friends.

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Supporting Cast



Priscila (Pri), 13, white, with dwarfism and straight hair; in Carol’s class. Felipe’s partner.
Felipe, 10, white, blond, with a prosthetic leg; in Carol’s class. Pri’s partner.
Guilherme (Gui), 11, white, straight brown hair and brown eyes; in Carol’s class. Joy’s partner.
Joyce (Joy), 11, white, blond hair and brown eyes; in Carol’s class. Gui’s partner.
Bruna, 13, brown-skinned, plus-size, with curly hair; in Carol’s class. Jorge’s partner.
Jorge, 15, Black, very short hair, tall and slim; in Carol’s class. Bruna’s partner.
Bianca, 23, Black, black hair and dark eyes, Carol’s daughter; concerned for her mother and rooting for her to find love and happiness.
Mara, 75, Black, black hair and dark eyes, proud and modern; Carol’s protective, doting mother.
Renata, 46, white, blond hair and brown eyes; Carol’s most affectionate and supportive friend.
Cintia, 47, brown-skinned, brown hair and eyes; Carol’s cheekiest friend and a source of humor.
Toni, 52, Black, short hair; discreetly involved with Francis and host of Rhythm 40º. A decent, fair man and a good friend.
Jaime Arôxa, 60, Rhythm 40º tournament judge.
Déborah Colker, 60, Rhythm 40º tournament judge.
Carlinhos de Jesus, 60, Rhythm 40º tournament judge.
Illustrative image

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References

• Marnie – A man falls in love with a mysterious woman with compulsive behavior and investigates the source of her trauma to free her from pain. • Strictly Ballroom – A woman unexpectedly becomes a renowned dancer’s partner in a major ballroom competition. They fall in love. • Destemida (Fearless) – The protagonist pauses before answering, starts to speak but stops, and makes faces, building suspense before each answer. • Feel the Beat – A dancer returns to her hometown and coaches a group of children for a national dance festival. • Save the Last Dance – Romance and a blend of ballet and hip hop.



Locations (Interiors)

Dance school (studios, reception and terrace)
Carol’s apartment (bedroom, bathroom and living room)
Renata’s building (entrance lobby)
Renata’s apartment (living room and bedroom)
Black music dance club
Rhythm 40º tournament (hotel, stage, auditorium and dressing rooms)

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Locations (Exteriors)

Sugarloaf Mountain
Corcovado
Dance school terrace (view of the Lapa Arches)
Exterior of the beachfront hotel (ocean view) where the Rhythm 40º tournament will take place.



Illustrative image

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Social Relevance

The film explores issues affecting dancers, such as a lack of funding and support, as well as issues concerning trans women, Black women, dwarfism, physical disabilities, racism, psychological and physical violence, and emotional trauma. Acceptance of difference is fostered by celebrating and valuing the beauty of those who are belittled or socially excluded.


Illustrative images






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The film will inspire empathy and a strong connection with its target audience through carefully selected music and complex, technically demanding professional gafieira choreography, involving specialized dancers such as Anderson Mendes, Brenda Carvalho and Márcio Oliveira.



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Music

The music is mostly Brazilian, showcasing the best of Rio’s samba. Hip hop, charme and funk carioca enter only in the final stage.
Guel’s psychological suffering is accompanied by a deep, beautiful and sad melody with violin and piano. The romance between Guel and Carol and the Rhythm 40º tournament feature lively, sensual and intense music.

Dance

The main focus is Rio’s samba de gafieira. The final choreography blends gafieira with funk carioca steps. This is introduced by Carol, the protagonist, who values her Afro-Brazilian heritage. Example of gafieira choreography:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFxwQ6ys_Qw

Alex Levy-Heller

Film and television director and producer with over 20 years of experience. BFA in Dramatic Arts, University of Nebraska, USA.

Worked for KYNE-TV, UPN, ESPN and CNN (USA).

Director



Filmography

Director:
Jovens Polacas (Fiction, 96 min, Brazil, 2020)
Christabel (Fiction, 112 min, Brazil, 2018)
O Relógio do Meu Avô (Documentary, 72 min, Brazil, 2013)
Macaco Tião – O Candidato do Povo (Doc., 72 min, Brazil, 2017)
Harmonizando com Cerveja (Variety series, Travel Box)

Producer:
DziCroquettes (Documentary, 110 min, Brazil, 2009)
O Relógio do Meu Avô (Documentary, 72 min, Brazil, 2013)
Macaco Tião – O Candidato do Povo (Doc., 72 min, Brazil, 2017)
Christabel (Fiction, 112 min, Brazil, 2018)
Jovens Polacas (Fiction, 96 min, Brazil, 2020)
Harmonizando com Cerveja (Variety series, Travel Box)

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Branca Duboc Pedrinha

Creator & Writer



Degree in Business Administration from UFF (2000) and Journalism from FACHA (1997).

International awards: USA (Minnesota) – Catalyst Storie Road International Finalists; Canada (Vancouver) – Bridge Fest 2021 Best Screenplay; England (London) – Quarter Finalist, LSC London International Screenwriting.

Chronological Portfolio

2020 – Between Lives (series, 12 episodes of 30 min)
2021 – Joanna (film); Love at 40 (government-incentivized project)
2022 – Happiness Is Loving (children's and YA); Rhythm 40º (film)
2023 – When I Saw You (film); Let Me (government-incentivized project)
2024 – Otters & Giant Otters (children's and YA); Maravilindas (film)
2025 – Let Me (theater); Rhythm 40º (musical)
2026 – Centaurs & Satyrs: The Minotaur's Enigma (children's and YA animation); Carioca Dance (children's and YA); Maravilindas (book release)
2027 – Happiness Is Loving (planned book release)

ANCINE – FSA – BRDE: In 2023, Happiness Is Loving was one of 65 projects selected from over 700 submissions to the New Filmmakers Cinema call.

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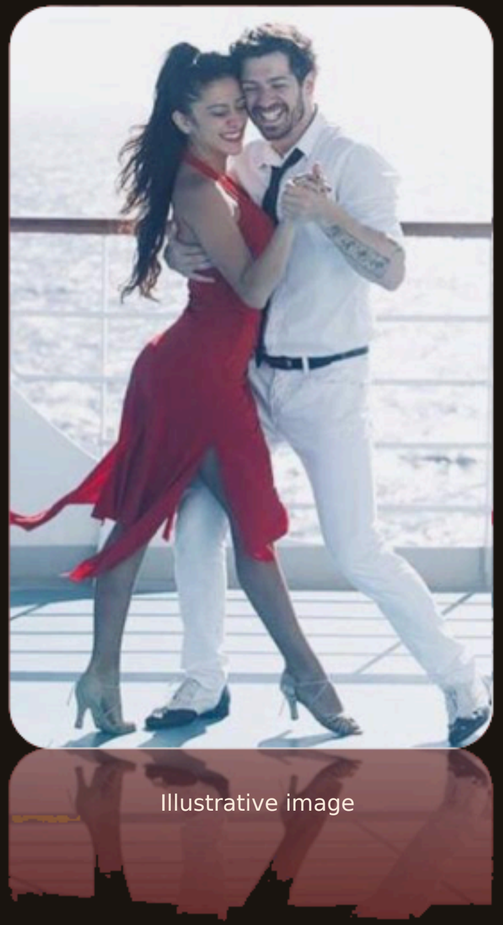
Rhythm 40º



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Thank you!

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