Nik Powell: Good evening everybody and welcome to the David Lean annual BAFTA lecture 2014. My name is Nik Powell and I'm the chairman of the BAFTA Film Committee. I've actually just returned from the European Film Awards where in 2010 Lone Scherfig's film *An Education* won the major award, which was of course produced here by Finola Dwyer and Amanda Posey, who I hope are in the audience. It also won the Sundance audience award and of course received Oscar noms for Best Pic, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Actress for Carey Mulligan. *An Education* of course was not her first English-speaking movie, that was *Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself,* still one of my favourite titles I have to say, co-written with the great Anders Thomas Jensen, which won the jury prize for Best Direction in Cannes in 2006. Her breakthrough film which was I think her second feature was in Italian, well it wasn't in Italian, it was called *Italian for Beginners*, and it was of course one of a small group of Dogme 95 films, one of the very initial films of Dogme 95 that had such a strong influence over filmmaking around the world. In fact, just as an aside, we did actually acquire Lars von Trier's very first movie, *Element of Crime*, which when I showed it to the staff at Palace they came back to my office en masse, and I went, "what do you think, what do you think, it's kind of cool isn't it?" And they went: "Nick," and they looked at me and said, "if you were not our boss we would fire you." But, something was there. And of course *Italian for Beginners* was nominated for the audience award again at the European Film Award and won the Silver Bear and ecumenical prize at Berlin. That's why it's such a privilege for me personally to introduce a director this evening to speak to us who's directed both Danish speaking and English speaking, both Dogme films and Oscar-nominated films, from both original scripts and adaptations of best-selling books, and I hope she's going to talk to us about the amazing writers that she's worked with and the casts that she's been involved in. And hopefully you're going to tell us what Lars von Trier's really like. And I hope she's going to tell us, or at least me, a little bit about the iconic Danish film school through which the whole of the Danish new wave really grew, when it was run by Henning Camre, who also ran the British National Film and Television School but didn't have quite the same effect. So I hope anyway that I'm going to learn a lot from this evening. So I'd like to thank first of all Tony Reeves from the David Lean Foundation, without whom these lectures are just not possible. I'd like to thank the whole events team for putting together this – I was going to say weird, but – wonderful, this weird and wonderful set, and with that I want… Oh and there's going to be, after Lone's talked, there's going to be a Q&A, so only smokers will be allowed to leave, so please stay on when she's finished and Anna Smith, the film critic, will talk with Lone and also invite you to ask Lone questions. So with that I'd like to invite Lone Scherfig to deliver our annual BAFTA lecture. Thank you. [applause]

I got that wrong, there's a montage.

[clips package]

Lone Scherfig: There is snow on my desk. I'll explain later what this snowy, Russian looking set I'm in is about. It's adventurous and means a lot to me, also because either this or next year, I will get back to doing a film with large snowy, Girl with Tinderbox-y shots. It's also very Danish.

Hans Christian Anderson, our writer always talked about his writing fairy tales as an act of love, not a labour of love, but giving something to someone out of love. And I think generosity is what drives me. It's probably also appetite, selfishness, curiosity. But the big excuse to myself for doing what I do is that I'd like to give something to somebody, or share something with someone. Look, there are members of the

Riot Club here! And David Lean's films did that too, films that did not point at themselves or at the cinematic devices that he invented. The cinematic vocabulary came from the joy of expanding the language of showing something to someone, of finding cinematic devices that would enable him to - give. I reckon this, Varykino, was probably the most important thing he gave me. Varykino was *Doctor Zhivago*'s datja, a wooden summer house, a refuge where Russians get out of the dust and into the shade of endless birch forests. Boris Pasternak, the writer, had one. David Lean made a much more generous, lavish version of it that I'm going to show you now. Can we see the clip please?

[clip plays]

This kind of filmmaking is something I long to do, though on a smaller scale. I'm always afraid to be pretentious or pompous or immodest. Modesty is a way to disguise my selfish filmmaking project, that this is what I do rather than being an emergency nurse or a housewife or something else where the results are more immediate. When I went to film school I remember thinking that, as we had one TV channel in Denmark then, if something I had done was on television, Margaret Thatcher wouldn't be on television, so that was the way I felt I had the right to do that. I was, and still am, afraid to bore people and count up the minutes: if 1 million people had seen 60 minutes of boring television I had done, time I had stolen from people, it would be the equivalent of having killed so many.

Stinginess, the opposite, on film is almost as unforgivable as I think that character trait is in real life. I do like minimalism, and I can't remember a moment or scene where I'd gotten rid of things – a line, a pause, an irrelevant prop – and regretted it later. I really like simplicity, precision. Removing something last minute, right before the shoot, very often improves the shot. That works with props, sound, it works with acting, it works with… maybe not so much costume because the designers are very good here. But simplicity is better than grandeur on most films. *Ida* is the most prominent example of a film that I am so grateful someone decided to finally finance. It looks minimalist, but that film too, is generous. It poses complex questions, it poses the biggest questions there are. The material is deep and rich, and the film shares stunning, extravagant images; it's only the world it depicts that is Puritan, and the time it is set in that had to be Puritan. But the film itself, too, is an act of love. Like David Lean or Hitchcock, Pawlikowski trusts the audience. He even trusts to sometimes not give them the most important moments, or the most horrific moments. The moment where Ida's aunt goes into a room and sees something frightening; the secret of the story that we never get to know what it is, but have to make up in our own mind. David Lean does it here and there as well. There's another wonderful truly cinematic scene in *Doctor Zhivago*, which is absolutely my favourite David Lean film, where it really is a little film in the film, a lot of things untold: a small dress shop, a scene from the outside where the camera tracks from one window to the next and tells the story about Lara's mother's suicide attempt, her rape and her relation to Komarozsky. Beautiful, surprisingly experimental filmmaking. Pure cinema, telling something in a way that it couldn't have been communicated had it not been for film.

Film is not just about creating characters that the audience can identify with but more importantly to create a film that makes the audience feel understood; that you don't just see the film, but feel seen *by* it.

Italian for Beginners had that. It was the international breakthrough for me, and importantly also the film that got me to meet with Jenne Casarotto and Jodi Shields, which again gave me the possibility to come here and work. *Italian for Beginners* had

more impact than anything I've ever done; people felt the film was about them. I could show the film all over the world. Audiences no matter where, would, to my surprise, laugh at the same places; I didn't think they would have. At occasions like Q&As, small cinemas and schools, audience members would come up to me and tell me why that was *their* film. It might have had to do with the fact that the film did not have any score, except for dramatic structure, the closest I got to breaking the Dogme rules, the feelings were not controlled in any way.

But it also had the trust of the audience, the attempt to get to know them, the curiosity for fellow characters and my sharing the love for these characters not just because I liked the characters themselves but because I really like the actors who played those parts, and worked with them again and again as you just saw a glimpse of in the montage.

It's so bleak, that film. It's shot in a windy November suburb, three or four people die within the first 20 minutes, the humour is very, very understated, but still, whether I was in Motovoun, Croatia, or in Moscow, or in Madison, Wisconsin, people somehow felt it was theirs. It had a life that I had nothing to do with, but I felt that the gift I had given to someone, or the world I had wanted to show someone, was received, and the joy of giving was immense. I travelled so much with that film I don't know how many high heels I wore out. I got to see many, many places and worlds and got to know the audience a lot, got to know international film press a lot, but of course didn't work as much as I should have. That is a trap young directors fall into, travelling and talking rather than working. But I am enjoying this very much, and I'm very proud to stand here. But travelling, falling in love with different countries and places, having curiosity is the reason why you walk out the door in the morning and is one of the reasons why I love to work here. It's not that I get to know it, that I feel more at home here, it is that I feel there's more I haven't seen. I can see something, be fascinated by it and then want to share that fascination or share that questioning, or share the love for the actors or the writers. And I can hide behind the fact that this is different, that it's not about me, that it's not a portrait of my bleak suburban world, but something more glamorous and definitely more dramatic, because your society *is* more dramatic.

The most exotic, meaningful screening I went to of *Italian for Beginners* was overlooking the Himalayas. It was the celebration of the crowning of Bhutan, the present young king. It was yellow silk sofas that were put out in the cold, cold mountains, not unlike this set. You should just be happy you are not drinking tea with butter in it. And the film was presented on a screen that was set up and seen by local audiences to celebrate the crowning. There were a lot of events, but no official visits; Bhutan wants to be independent of most other governments, no kings or queens came to visit, but the country celebrates and prioritises education, it's incredibly poor but unusually happy, and with little children who you can have conversations with as they speak English because education is so important there.

So is education to me. Education is a theme which returns in most of the films I've done. There are a lot, also on television, of scenes where people learn something, very often from, teachers who are vain, take themselves too seriously, are ridiculed. So full of himself, full of opera, The Italian teacher in *Italian for Beginners* and of course primarily *An Education*, the film based on Lynn Barber's piece of memoir that Nick Hornby wrote. I didn't know the depth of that word 'education' when we shot that film about Lynn Barber's year when she turned 17 and got educated. But now, after a year's almost daily dinners with *The Riot Club*, I understand how education and access to it defines your society to a degree that's almost chilling. But I've also, during these years, sensed how

important a strong educational background - the type you can get here and nowhere else - how people who have that education and make decisions, of power in your film community, use it to ensure films of this calibre and to protect the British film tradition, new British films and to … from a big political idea of what your film should be, who they should portray, what tradition they should protect, which experiments they should make, down to the smallest script tweaks or things they said when they walked out that actually might be right, though no one should tell me how to do this, and I am impressed with particularly Tessa Ross and Christine Langan and how the role they have played in in my work over the past few years, their integrity, their wisdom and their style, politeness, support. And not just because they had Oxbridge educations, but because they're educated in a much wider sense of the world and they are respectful to the people who actually have their hands on the films.

My own education was free. It wasn't that I didn't go to school; I did for a very long time. I went to Sorbonne when I was Jenny Mellors's age. I studied in Paris just like she wanted to. I did smoke, I saw a lot of films, I did wear black like she said she wanted to, but there was no existentialism, just a *lot* of watching films. When we shot on our last shooting day of *An Education,* we shot in Paris; a small, New Wave-inspired scene, making a deed out of a necessity, shots of Jenny and David, as the characters are called, in Paris. It was a sunny May day, it was my birthday, and I took a prop bicycle and drove from one location to the next feeling that I have come a long way, that from being in the back row trying to understand what they said as a young aspiring film critic I was sort of hoping I might one day be directing something that was meant to be seen by somebody and even meeting Peter Sarsgaard who is a sensational actor of course, as well as Carey Mulligan is. A very happy, glorious moment.

And we were beginning to sense that that film had some of the qualities, too, that *Italian for Beginners* had, that people thought it was theirs; they thought it was about them, their youth, their education, even if they had never been to Paris or to University or in a maroon Bristol car.

I got to see the classics; then, you could not see films unless you went to the cinema, and if you wanted to see classics in Denmark they had to be either directed by David Lean or have Charlton Heston in the lead, or be a big double feature show, but little art house outside the cinemateque.

I was waiting to get old enough to apply to film school and beginning to find out that you could actually have that as a professional job, to make films and not just write about them. I went to university; this is the late 70s. Very politicised years. The films I really loved were guilty pleasures. We discussed why, seriously, and how we could abolish television and how we started the films of workers in Latin America. I made a big feminist essay about pornography and we were all *way* left wing. I took Russian lessons, I learned to write the Cyrillic alphabet, but I've forgotten everything now and can't even read the label on the ink bottle inside Zhivago's desk drawer. One student was different, and Nik Powell, I am indeed going to talk about Lars von Trier. I was surprised how much I felt like talking about Lars von Trier because I don't see him very often any more. But this was Lars Trier dressed in, (at that time he thought he was Jewish) but he would still dress in a Nazi-inspired outfit, where everyone else had long hair. And he made films that were *really* talented all handmade, mechanic, full of new ideas. Full of new words to add to the film language, all full of solutions that came out of the technical frustration that all we had was almost a kitchen table to make films on. He was also followed by an entourage that I wasn't part of. I wrote about neo-realism and those films, Italian films from

the 50s, and 40s, the films that were political and intimate at the same time, that were generous and grand, but simple, modest … they are still the films I feel more related to than any Scandinavian films. I love them like I love people almost. And I will always return to them, and now I'm getting so old that I can see and hear myself again and again, going back to that moment in film history. It could be because I got to know these films when I was the age Jenny Mellors is, where everything is more intense because you see it for the first time. Lars von Trier I met again in film school when I got in a year later, now without his entourage. His films got more and more spectacular. The school was very small then: we were six students in each generation, so only six students got in every second year. We got to know each other well and we got to love our school very, very much though the teachers were frustrated; they couldn't understand why the rest of us could not just be as original and inventive and eccentric as Lars. We all tried. We were helpless. It was hopelessly pretentious and we were all perfectionists. I did watercolour storyboards. I would scratch the tiniest little 's' on magnetic tape if it seemed one dB too loud. I would rewrite a script on my little typewriter every time I've changed one single line and of course the films, none of them were worth anything except maybe the last one I did. Many of us went back, later, we would sneak up to the attic and steal our own films and take them home and destruct them so no one ever got to see them. We were so vain, so ambitious and crying in the shower that we just could not get it right. The first year we couldn't use dialogue at all. No "ho ho ho, here comes the snow". We had to learn to tell stories in images alone, not to use a shot more than once, we would shoot black and white academy reversal film, not unlike *Ida* actually but of course never as sublime. And for someone like me who much later found a tone that is about nothing like that, it was devastating, it was too hard, but I still use that craft I learnt then all the time on every single work day.

I'd had that typewriter since I was 10. It was quite Socialist times. I grew up [under a] social democratic government and I grew up in a house that was really big. When I was a child there were still hundreds of mattresses in the basement that were mattresses that my father had bought in when the Hungarian refugees arrived in the 50s. We would jump around and build theatres with all those mattresses. We had young, starving ballerinas in the house because my mother was the headmistress, a little bit like Emma Thompson in *An Education,* the headmistress of the school of the Royal Danish Ballet, and so she would open up our house to students if they were unhappy or needed a nice home for a while. We had family members, people my parents wanted to take care of, but still it had to be unpretentious: never show off, never think you're better than anyone, never talk too much. Stay quiet. Stay away from the press. One hour of television per week, no candy except chocolate on occasion. They would give me a typewriter but it would be wrapped in my father's Maoistic suit that I detested. Some young Danish students at that time would wear suits like the people of the Chinese Republic of China's, quite hypocrite. And I hated it so much that he would wrap my very cool modern Danish font typewriter in that suit for fun, and just so I knew I was never going to be be spoilt. Things changes radically later and my family moved towards posh-ville. But I started writing. I made an alter ego, Else Claes Mogensen, who was a woman of the age I think I have now. A housewife, which I also occasionally am, who had a very troublesome life with many, happy endings. I would send the short stories to a magazine about people sharing their life stories, and when I got the paycheques I had to write back under the name of Else and ask if they would please change the name on the cheque to Lone Scherfig because Else really wanted to give the

money to that girl. I also was a writer later, or wrote a little bit, and I think that is how I got into film school. It certainly was not the hideous photographs of lobsters I took to attach to my application. I still write. I've written a few scripts. I've just written a script that Pernilla August is to direct where the producers, when I asked them I think three years ago, should I try to adjust the script to what may end up being your Swedish budget, the scene with a train much like Strelnikov in *Doctor Zhivago*. And it's the same period, I think the train scene is 1908 or something, passing through a Swedish snowy landscape. "Should I not try to cut it or write it inside the train?" "No no no, go ahead, give it scope, we can always cut it down later," which is what I've spent the last couple of weeks doing, adjusting the script to the budget. I do love writing; but I find it much too lonesome compared to filmmaking and I also find that especially in this country there are writers that are far better than I.

We were proud to come from a country and spend our youth in a country that then was the country in the world that had the least difference between the richest and the poorest. The casting on the real "Borgen" is not quite as good as the one you may know. It didn't give us much to make films about, so the films were inspired by the favourite teachers, the big European auteurs. We would watch Kurosawa, Tarkovski, Wajda, Bunuel and Bergman. And we had phenomenal guest teachers. Jean Claude Carrière, Roman Polanski, Jan Troell, Walter Murch were people who would come to our school and teach us how to make films. And this is what our dyslexic cinematic language was inspired by. Very little about America, and also many of the really big auteurs were still working. When I was in film school you could still look forward to the next Fellini film coming out. Bergman was still working, Polanski, he is actually still working. And you could tell that maybe Martin Scorsese would have a lot of good films in front of him. The longer the tracking, the better the student. And there were so many things you could not do; the people in this room who work with me know, these idiosyncrasies are still with me. Never cut the feet of the characters, only Americans to do that. In Poland, even if you shoot a wide shot where you cut them off at the ankles it's called an Amerykanski and not something you would want to do. And never zoom: the film police will kill you. Never use the same shot more than once, which is very tricky when you do cross cutting: two people talking to one another and you want almost to see both of them at the same time, look at them whenever relevant, which is one of the finest tools in the cinematic toolbox. No, there must be other ways to communicate it. And it took years to shake it off, and I think it was because of that we felt so good about Dogme later. We did support and cherish faults, mistakes, errors.

A little later when I started teaching at the film school there was a much more US-oriented film history teacher, he even called himself the school's sheriff, who we adored, and he would start every season by showing the scene from *Singing in the Rain* where Debbie Reynolds, Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor sing "good morning, good morning". It's one long, complicated shot, singing, dancing, and finally turning the sofa over and they sit down on it and the song is over and then Debbie Reynolds adjusts her skirt. At that moment of her adjusting the skirt the teacher would go, "Look at it, this is where it becomes human, this is what you should go for, not the song, not the sofa, not the music, not the singing in the rain, but that little moment where she does that to her skirt." And that is what I like to do, and that is what I found and through Dogme. We did everything ourselves. There were no producer students, we edited. I loved the physical process of the editing. I can't it is any more and I'm not nearly as good as some of the people I work with who take it to a level I had no idea you could take to. But I

still love the sound of the splice, I find very those soothing. I was proud to be able to pick out without counting what 40 frames on 16 mm would be, because 40 frames on 16mm is the length according to David Lean that a close up reaction shot should have.

But in film school, some faults were classier than others, and anything imperfect we'd throw away. My love for imperfection, for things that are alfresco, for things that only happen once, could not really find a place. Because if it was the least bit out of control we would just throw it out. You'd rather deliver a film that had lots of moments with sign saying "scene missing" than a film that had flaws. It's a discipline that was good for us but I have a feeling that many directors who would work better with a less perfectionist mind-set were lost over those years, just like I have a feeling that many directors who have talent for that kind of thing (David Lean) do not get to make films now. You had to be able to see where the director was immediately when you came onto a set. The whole room had to be so centred around the magnetic director that no one was in doubt about who he was. We would hear stories about how in Sweden across the - there was no bridge then – Ingmar Bergman would shoot and the set would be so quiet you could hear the actors breathe. I did not thrive with it. And I feel that directing is an intimate process, almost embarrassing process; I'm almost too shy to direct and I really prefer to do it in a noisy room, when no one hears what's going on. But this solid background in analogue classic film craft is invaluable; it gets me through the days even if I don't really use it. That, and being able to force yourself to go to sleep after a day where what you've done is not your best, or anyone's best for that matter.

And that is what makes me dream of Varykino. Varykino is a better place for filmmakers, a place of trust, trust in each other, in the script, in the cast, and in the film process, and in the audience. A place where you think it is absolutely all right to spend five minutes saying let's go to Varykino and it actually takes almost five minutes before they open the drawer and you see that this is where Zhivago is going to write a novel by Boris Pasternak. Any director can jump straight at that table. Any director can, and you have to convince yourself "I don't need the frozen room. I don't need icicles hanging from the chandeliers. The table itself is a snow landscape; it's about the table, it's about the drawer, it's about the look in Zhivago's eyes, I'm fine without Varykino." But I dream about working in a place where I can get headspace, where I can get wider shots, a more patient audience, films that trust images more and don't rely on dialogue the way you have to if you work at the level I do.

I felt that the school, that it took years for me to develop my own voice as director because I came from something where this is what you learnt how to do, and what I actually can do is very different. And getting back to education, I feel that one of the most important things I can tell students is to find their voice as directors, to define what it is that they can do that no one else can, and to encourage them. That, and then trying to convince them that they must learn enough of the craft to enable artistry. There are just too few examples of the opposite process, that the art enables the craft. There are just too few *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*-s. Almost all of us, Lars von Trier, Kristian Levring, Susanne Bier, Per Fly, Ole Christian Madsen, Thomas Vinterberg, Nikolaj Arcel, Christoffer Boe and Dagur Kari, my generation of filmmakers, still feel attached to our school, and we all come back to teach occasionally. We feel obliged to represent a continuity and we think we have an understanding and a solidarity that is unique. But I have to say that having worked here, it is not like that. I came here and it turned out that yes, they were soul mates as well, yes the Danish film school had not invented all that, but I could work with

people that have a similar education or had just learned making films on the floor and thought it was a problem that they did not have a formal education but actually it wasn't. And I find myself when I'm here and now and again just speaking Danish to people I work with very closely because I feel that they are my film family, even if officially they're not. The Danish Film Institute now encourages, or not encourages but supports that we shoot films out of Denmark in foreign languages because they think that spoken language is not always as important as cinema as a language, which is very nice and helpful. Directors, can be really helpful when it comes to watching each other's films at first or second cut; when it comes to reading each other's script at first or second draft, they are incredibly good at not just pointing out what the problem is but also from which element of the cinematic language you may find the solution. Is it a sound solution to the problem, is it an editing solution, is something that should be cast differently, written differently, they can do that. So can the best producers. Those are the producers who can come along to Varykino or they can even take directors there and they can show it to the audience.

When we worked on *An Education,* Nick Hornby pointed out how much easier it is to learn something that you already love, which is what we see Jenny doing in that film. She has no role models, her head mistress lacks nuance, her favourite teacher seems lonesome, her blonde friend does not have a fully furnished top floor and her mother is dazed with lack of education, and maybe mothers' little helpers. Jenny herself has to find her own voice, the Jenny within Jenny, to make it to Oxford. Her ideals, wearing black and smoking cigarettes and speaking French and all that, and thinking God is dead, is a detour of the way some of my film education was. I needed Dogme to find out how to make films. Like Donald Kaufman puts it in *Adaptation,* which every film student should see and always be reminded, "You are what you love, not what loves you." They also have to understand something Ken Loach told me, which is if you see a cliché coming your way – I'm not talking about this set now – research, and then you will come up with the authentic solution and then the clichés disappear. And also I make a point of never teaching without reminding the students that they must see *Lust, Caution*.

When I began shooting in the UK, I found a mind-set that is impressive. The work ethics here, are sky high. People are incredibly self-critical, thorough; they don't all have the self-esteem we for absolutely no reason have in Denmark, or *some* have some reason to. But also people who can correct spelling mistakes and move commas for ever are the same people who can roll back their chairs and get their feet up on the table and take a little trip to Varykino with you. There's strong conceptual understanding and understanding of what makes each film worth doing and why each film should have a language of its own. And you can dare, even with a quite helpless English language, to really go on long journeys with the people you work with here, and you can talk to them so much about where you want to go that you can later just let it go and then they'll come back and give you surprises. When I came into that the costume fitting room for *The Riot Club* I saw 10 costume boards on the walls. 10 different portraits of 10 men who came from the same background, did the same thing, had pretty much the same age, were almost wearing the same, but you could still immediately see who was who, because we had talked so much and because people here are so incredibly smart. People take their job to a level I did not know they could, and the moments in that film that I'm the most proud of are moments where the ideas did not necessarily come from me, but from giving other people space to do something sublime; to take the job to a level and take the film to a technical or artistic level I could

never have done on my own. So Varykino is not a place I want to go to alone.

You have the combination of doing films that are very big, where you get the biggest equipment out and you have the ability to take the experiences from the small, small kitchen sink film, the intimacy, the detail, the little cracks in the voices, the way you hold a dishwashing brush, and bring it into the biggest film. The irony, the humour, the attention to detail. And you also have the ability to take the experiences from the large format and bring it into a small scene in a kitchen or a bedroom or a car. That really is special, that people are able to cross over and know when the budget is big and they can get space, and when the budget is small so they need to work at a different level. You can judge a chef by the omelettes. We just don't all want omelette for dinner every day and we definitely don't want to cook it all the time.

Your humour isn't bad either. When the house next to Jenny Mellors' house was on fire when we shot *An Education*, we did not at that point know where Carey Mulligan was. Was she in the green room in that house? There were extras in the house, we didn't know how many people were in that house, and the fire brigade with cars that were bigger than any of the equipment cars on that film – and they had more lamps than we had for the film – arrived one by one. And people started cracking jokes. It was hilarious, and I think this ability to just – everyone survived, and the house survived, and all was fine – but there is a strength, which is a big theme in the next film I'm hopefully going to do here; the high, high moral standards, the strong values, the persistence, and the wit.

You think, or you may think, that you - unlike other European countries - don't have the advantage of a home market speaking a language that you don't share with the Americans. But in Europe – not that you are not Europe – we are not in doubt about which films are British and which are American. That is because of your traditions, your values, your tone, your film history that comes back with every generation, and your education. So, when you hear producers only talk about scope, or investors, scope and scale and breathing room on film, but something you must take a deep sigh and give the audience because of commercial reasons, your blood turns to ice. I do admire the films, films like *Amour,* that manage to enlarge a small world and make it cinematic and meant to be and could not have been bigger. Just think of the importance of the one shot on the bus in Paris where the loving couple in *Amour* are on their way home from a concert – it's the one shot that is outside that apartment – or the landscape paintings on the wall that do give breathing room, space, scope, time to think and take the claustrophobia away. You have to think of film as a place where you want to enter a different world every time you go to the cinema. You want to sit next to Jean-Paul Belmondo in an open car on the way to Paris, you want to celebrate Christmas with Fanny and Alexander, you want to go to Varykino. And refining kitchen table scenes – I've shot many, so many bits and I will continue to do so – but it gets harder, and artistic necessity is harder to find.

Dogme was very, very helpful. We shook off of our film school perfectionism. We found a language when we move towards the story and where we got rid of everything it excess. Each of the Dogme film directors have only made one film so it's a misunderstanding that for instance *Dancer in the Dark* or *Breaking the Waves* are Dogme films. We only did one each. Mine was the fifth, and I wasn't part of making those first ten rules. I might've changed them a little bit if I had asked, by really wanted to obey them; they were incredibly helpful. You got to know how coincidence will help, how the weather is there to help you and not to be your obstacle, how the smallest things, the

smallest obstacles, should not destroy a scene for you but that you have to turn them around and turn them into blessings and make them work for the scene. You get better at removing things because you could not bring in anything. There was no make up, the tears had to be real, no music, the emotion had to come from the scene, no added sound – everything had to be recorded on the spot – no weapons, no genre, and you also signed a piece of paper saying "I'm not going to be credited, I'm no longer an artist, I will no longer make aesthetic decisions." And it was such a relief. And some films have quite a visual statement and style, not just because they are handheld and look very bad, but also because randomising does give you something you wouldn't have had otherwise. The rules are the best I've been part of working on. I've been working on a couple of other different schemes and I am going to develop a new one now with some fellow directors to enable a group of first time or second time directors to try and make new films. I was involved in *Advance Party* that *Red Road* by Andrea Arnold was made from, and a couple of other systems, schemes that relieve the director of some of the control and responsibility, but also to give the directors space and try and find a way to make it bearable that the budgets are so low. Dogme still beats them, and it made us all understand who we were as directors. The films were very personal. *Celebration (Festen)* is a lot like Thomas Vinterberg himself getting up at very formal family events and saying something nobody wants to hear. He got the same reaction from distributors: "You cannot make a film about a victim of incest; have someone in the lead just standing there saying things that are horrifying. Do not go there." But no one controlled us, we only got a shooting day, no one read our drafts, we just got a budget and some shooting days, and the films became about who we were. Thomas Vinterberg was an polite young man who needed to do something controversial, come up and give a film that was like the speech no one wanted to hear, and it turned out of course to be incredibly successful. Lars von Trier, who had been so stylised, directed *The Idiots*, a film about people who stripped naked, pretend they're idiots, live in a commune, and he himself shot the film naked, and it's a very, very funny film that is about prejudice and about delivering yourself. *Italian for Beginners* was a film about solitude; a film about breaking your curb from an unhappy life to one that is much happier, and that is what happened to me because of that film.

Working with themes is something I've always done and always will do. The first film I did, *The Birthday Trip*, was about insecurity. It's a Danish Polish coproduction, the best budget I've ever had because the Polish economy was falling apart. The film was shot November '89 and only the focus puller felt that it was more relevant to go and see the wall being torn down than staying in Poland to rest during the shoot. That was Anthony Dod Mantle. But the economy then was of a kind where I could cast professional actors in the smallest, smallest part. We hardly had any extras. That was a film about insecurity, An Education about innocence, and Wilbur Wants To Kill Himself, my favourite, about death or rather, life. The *Riot* Club was a film about class. For me, each of the films have a theme that is the thing I keep coming back to whenever I need an answer to any question, basically. I remember telling everyone in the cast of that first film: "Don't tell anyone but this is a film about insecurity. Your character is very insecure," and that was a pretty good start for all of them. But what I learnt that day after I had gone in Szczecin in northern Poland to see *Doctor Zhivago* on stage – that was controversial then, the book had still only been out in the Soviet Union because it was published illegally by the CIA – so it was interesting for the local audience of a small provincial theatre that had 75 actors working full time,

or just sitting around waiting. In this new 1989 staging of *Doctor Zhivago*, Varykino had paper snow, the stove was an orange flickery lamp where the actors would go over to warm their hands and pretend it was very cold. I went out with all those actors the same evening and I got a huge amount of extra quality in that film out of having actors at that high level playing waiters, kitchen staff, drivers; lots of small, small parts where they added things, improvised a little, spiced moments, added psychology, gave things that I couldn't even understand because I couldn't talk to them without an interpreter, but now can see is something that I brought with me and will keep in my luggage. Dogme, and that understanding of what actors will give you if they get the space. My sister, who's a stage director, taught me to love actors: "You have no choice, you're going to work with them, so don't get irritated that they are so different from you. Like them, admire them because of what they do, their generosity, their fragility, and their having to use themselves as instruments." Working with actors is – can be – an extraordinary process. It can also be very hard. I'm a quite shy, private person, I don't talk to actors on the phone in middle of the night, I hate casting sessions because I feel I should act with them, I need to see we can communicate. But it's super embarrassing, and I feel so sorry for them, and I walk home, feel like I've sucked up all their nerves like a mental sponge. But it's worth it, and shooting *The Riot Club,* in particular, has been because of the cast a unique experience. And I can hardly think of any actor over the years I've worked with that I would not love to work with again and expand our landscape, and find out where are we now, what can we give each other now. I also love working with actors I don't know. I like to find the keys to each actors, which sometimes is to direct very little. I've just shot two episodes of an American TV series in the United States with a lot of incredibly good character actors I hadn't even cast. And it was like butterflies showing their wings. Everyone is shy, everyone has a lot at stake, but then they show you: "But I can also do *this*, I also have *that*." I knew we had to work so fast, so I was in a rush and not very sensitive: "No inappropriate pauses, no sighing. I do not like sighing, get rid of it" - I was quite unpopular because I had to work so fast. Some were falling off the chairs awe had d a major crisis when I told them that in England no one would ever bring their scripts onto the set. Of course that is a kind of a lie! But the work discipline here, where actors have such high standards where it's craft, and where you can find things outside of you and don't necessarily have to find everything within you, when you walk onto set and know your words well enough to be able to change things, sing, dance, improvise, listen to one another, keep your mind open for things that might turn up, when reality kicks in, or you get a Dogme moment, is a fantastic process, and I can't wait to shoot again. Though I'm just off that set quite exhausted because it was all, all about time. Lots of Varykino, lots of cars, lots of smiling; I feel directors should not be bitter, though we all are, if you collect a whole bunch of them and seat them in a kitchen at 4am. But it is a wonderful job. I remember when we shot *One Day,* I one day said to Nina Jacobson, the producer, "I love my job." I didn't realise in America that's an offence, it's a joke, it's ironic, because I meant it. I think it is an incredible privilege to use so much of the different things you love and things you sometimes have a talent for, and if you don't, you just can hook up with someone who has. It is the collaborative elements of filmmaking that I like the most, and if I sat down at Doctor Zhivago's desk, and were to dip that feather in the ink, self-irony would take over. I'd leave immediately, I'd find somewhere less lonesome, less pretentious, noisier, and a place full of obstacles.

I feel very grateful to the audiences here, to the festivals here, people that protect the

British film industry's core values, its politics, its decisions but also individuals from the BFI, the BBC, Film Four, people who continue to make films that maintain your tradition of grandeur but also films about shame, about hunger, about people who are hit by raining stones, about people who won't Let Each Other Go, or people who Need to talk about Kevin. And I hope that BAFTA will continue to protect the British film industry and your film identity, and I'm thankful to the David Lean Foundation that I get to be here and I get to answer some questions.

[applause]

Anna Smith: Thank you very much Lone. That was wonderful. Thank you all for coming and joining us today. That was educational may I say, as well as entertaining and funny, like your films. A real treat. My name's Anna Smith and I'm here to do a quick Q&A with Lone and then I'll throw over to you guys and see who would like to ask some questions. I have lots of questions having seen that. You were talking about scores; do you feel that a score can still interfere with a film, are you very conscious of the music?

LS: No, no, when I hear some of the score here, I miss the films, I miss the composers, I am not qualified but - like a lot of directors - a closet producer, a closet composer, definitely a closet prop person. I love score if it's there for a reason. I do not like score that tries to control too much. And I don't like too much of it. But Rachel Portman's score for *One Day*, it was glorious.

AS: You were talking about British film, we have a lot to thank you for, because you've done some fantastic British films that we saw in the clips there. And something I was reminded of, there's always so much wit and humour. You talked a little about humour. Is that something you felt important in every work that you do?

LS: Not anymore, but the writers I like do have humour and a lot of it isn't mine, like a lot of those wonderful characters are not the actors for real, as someone told me today, they are the writers that are wonderful. Actors just get to do wonderful interpretations of it. I do like humour but primarily because I'm so afraid of being pretentious and humour is a way of putting a little sand and sugar on whatever you're saying. I find it hard to watch films that do not have any humour at all. I used to find it hard to watch films that did not have a love story somewhere. One of the reasons why I was so keen to do *The Riot Club* was it was a film where the main plot was not a love story. But humour is just a good crowbar to try and go deeper.

AS: What about *The Riot Club*? That's come out in some other countries, we've had it here, but is it about to hit Denmark?

LS: It did a week or two ago. "Are they really like that?"

AS: I was wondering what the reaction was.

LS: I was in Paris two weeks ago with two *Riot Club* members where you have a sensational audience, such smart questions, such well-prepared journalists, and also a lot of screaming teenagers. And I know that other *Riot Club* members have been in Italy where there are even more screaming. Laura Wade, the writer, is going to Stockholm, to the film festival. So I'm really curious to see what happens to the film in Russia and Japan, I hope it's gonna go there, because I hope the film is about much more than England, that my being a foreigner and looking at this club with foreign eyes has its shortcomings but that it also is a way to ensure people will understand it who do not know so much about your school system or class system.

AS: It translates that idea of privilege possibly being poisonous.

LS: Or any tribe. In a way it could have been 10 Hell's Angels, it could have been a

different tribe and had a different film with the same structure, and that raised some of the same issues, but of course not as attractive as the world that is depicted in the *Riot* film. And not as seductive. The seduction is a really important element of all filmmaking, particularly that film and *An Education*, which was also about seduction.

AS: You mentioned a little bit about what you're working on now. Can you tell us a little more?

LS: I'm going hopefully to do a film that Stephen Woolley and Amanda Posey are producing about an important moment in Europe film history where David Lean was also working: propaganda films, and the people who made those. It's incredibly inspiring that Stephen Woolley knows so much about that world, and has such love for film and if that film has a main theme it probably is cinema itself. And then I'm writing a film for myself, a film that has more European, Italian, roots in something that is probably social realism but we're trying to take it to a much more adventurous place with actually big images with lots of snow over New York City. It's called the *Backdoor to the Tea Room* and it has lots of elements and lots of winter and snow, so it's not gonna be this year.

AS: I'm curious, when did you first see *Doctor Zhivago*? It's obviously had a great effect on you.

LS: I was eight.

AS: It's often the films we see when we're very young that really stay with us.

LS: When you have to put your mum's makeup on and walk on your toes through in order to get into the cinema.

AS: I love that image, thank you.

LS: But I do see it regularly. I really genuinely love that film, it was a treat to show it to my daughter for the first time she saw it.

AS: What did she think of it?

LS: She prefers films that do not take place before she was born.

AS: It's a bit tricky then!

[questions from the audience]

Q: I was really interested to hear how you were formed and what influence film school experience had, I got the impression it was a bit like the exterminating angels. In how far these small numbers and having to get on with people not having a great choice of lots of other students may have had an influence, in terms of how you work with people?

LS: I think especially a person like Lars von Trier again, I was thinking about him so much, why has he had that influence because I really don't know him that well, but he's the best, the most constructive, respectful, helpful critic I've ever had. And he liked what I did. He and I were both attached to a commercial project at one point and I remember hardly knowing him, though we'd been to school and university and grown up very close to each other in something that's a little bit like *Dogville*. "Give me detail and I'll make this a good project, I can tell this story through detail", and he walked away thinking, "she is such an idiot, it's not about detail, it's about overall thinking, it's about idea," and obviously we were both right. But now, he goes in the opposite direction. *Nymphomaniac* is full of diversions, while he was not talking to press for years he started reading all the classics and found out that the classic literature writers did diversions as a discipline. And he started doing that, whereas I want to do something that is simpler and wider and bigger and where I don't need to disguise things. So at the moment we're going in opposite directions.

Someone as nerdy as him would come to film school and I'm sure many in this room have experienced the same: you come in and you sit the first day, and you think, "I'm never going to like these people." And then it turns out they're the same, they also would sneak into see *The Searchers* at the age of 10; they were there, they understand, and that is a big relief when you get into film school to find someone who has the same frustrations. But of course after a while it's hard not to compete, and you are so different, so individual that it sometimes is hard to help one another too. One of the reasons why the film milieu in Denmark is not very competitive is that we realised that we cannot do the same thing. That what I would get out of a script is quite different to what Susanne Bier would get out of it. So the competition is not really there to the degree that it sometimes is in other countries.

Q: I was wondering in regards to *The Riot Club* how you found the adaptation process from the play, in terms of turning that into *The Riot Club*.

LS: Laura Wade adapted it, it was her construction, her way of doing the seduction. The play has singing, so whenever you have seen The Riot Club behave very badly, they stop and start singing, and you fall for them all over again. And you needed a device to make that same seduction mechanism, or not make them off-putting but you feel in good company with at least part of the time. And her three act construction in the film was a way to get around that. It was also a way to spread it out. But I think the work within the room that the dining room explodes, it doesn't get any bigger it gets smaller, it gets slow motion sometimes with 24 frames sound to 48 frames images, the editing gets faster and faster. It's very much down to the D.o.P. and the editor first of all, the fact that you go into the room and you develop scope within the room rather than think you just get scope by adding more locations. So I think it's a good combination. And a great challenge.

Q: You've now made most of your films outside of Denmark. Are you conscious when you're making films that you have an outsider's perspective and that you think about things from that point of view?

LS: No, it's four here, it's three in Denmark and one in Poland. I don't really know what it would be not to have that, but I do find that when I shoot in Denmark, there is a little less attraction, I know it too well, it is small. And at the moment, and actually for a long time, I haven't had any Danish projects. Well you as a photographer know how much easier it is to take pictures when you photograph something you haven't seen before, except of course your children. And how everyone knows when you travel how you start looking at people and buildings and tasting the food again, its easier than shooting the world that I live in, and just like I'm often asked whether it makes a difference that I'm a female director rather than a male, I don't have a proper answer because I don't know what it would be like.

AS: Interesting you should bring it up because you are the first woman to give the David Lean Lecture.

[applause]

Q: I think I'm right in saying about 100 years ago Danish cinema pre-Hollywood was the most important in the world and that Copenhagen was the centre of the world film industry. Does that legacy affect modern Danish filmmakers at all, do they feel odd about that?

LS: We have the world's oldest working stage still in Copenhagen. I've shot a scene there once in daylight, you can draw curtains but of course you did shoot in daylight when you shot the silent films and a lot was shot before they started talking and horrible accent wasn't a problem. But the industry moved to

where there was more sunshine, in that orange plantation called Hollywood in California. We did have very prominent female directors at that time and they kept coming, there was one or two every generation, so it's not as unusual to have that job there as it in many other countries. We don't really see those films anymore, some do, and like here people devote their lives to preserving them. But they are also exciting, they are about tigers and lions and cowboys. And when Haneke received the Sonning award, the big culture award, he talked about he as child coming from Vienna to Denmark to get fed, which was quite normal during the years of his childhood, he would go into a cinema we had at our main train station called the Whole Wide World, where there were documentaries and silent films running 24 hours and he'd fall in love with films there. So that was a great gift that he would stand in Copenhagen saying "this is the space where I saw those films about tigers and lions and anthropology and decided that that is what I wanted to do with my life." Thank God he did that, he's so smart. There are much too few intellectual film directors.

AS: Well you've certainly entertained us today, you are a fantastic director, thank you Lone and thank you all for coming.