

# The Guardians

Cert 15 France 2017 135 mins

## Crew

Director	Xavier Beauvois
Screenplay	Marie-Julie Maille Xavier Beauvois Frédérique Moreau
Cinematography	Caroline Champetier
Film Editing	Marie-Julie Maille
Original music	Michel Legrand

## Cast

Nathalie Baye	Hortense
Iris Bry	Francine
Laura Smet	Solange
Cyril Descours	Georges
Gilbert Bonneau	Henri
Olivier Rabourdin	Clovis
Nicolas Giraud	Constant



## Synopsis

France, 1915. On the Paridier farm the women grapple with the workload under the watchful eye and deft hand of Hortense, the family matriarch. Most of their menfolk, including two of Hortense's sons, are away at war.

Reluctantly Hortense brings in an outsider, the orphan Francine, to help with the chores.

With new tools, new skills, and strength from their independence, the women triumph over the land. But emotions are never far from the surface, especially when there is news from the Front.



## Booking Information

**Distributor:** Curzon Artificial Eye

**DVD bookings:**

via BFI Film Distribution  
020 7957 8938  
Bookings.films@bfi.org.uk  
www.bfi.org.uk/distribution

**Available:** now



## Reviews

The gender divide of this movie, and its whole point, are clearer in the original French title: "Les Gardiennes", the female guardians, the women who worked the land in France during the first world war. This richly compassionate, fiercely acted and beautifully shot period drama is about a second conflict, the battle of wills on the home front, as its characters struggle to maintain a family farm in the Deux-Sèvres region of western France.

A way of life, with its Hardyesque seasonal rhythms of sowing and reaping, is minutely, sumptuously depicted. But all the time in the background - in the letters home, in the muttered hints of the grim-faced men on leave and their shellshocked dreams - is the horror of war. Those seasonal rhythms come to include regular visits from officials with telegrams. ....The beauty and the pathos of the film are vivid in every frame....

*Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian, August 2018.*

....Newcomer Bry is a captivating presence, doing an impressive job of carrying much of the film and its emotional weight, and Smet broods powerfully as the tormented Solange, [but] this is unmistakably Baye's film. As the magnificent Hortense, she conveys the isolation of her position and her grief as a bereaved mother exquisitely, with a steady gaze and a trembling frame. And when the mood of the film turns, she turns with it - her role deepening to accommodate both Hortense's pragmatic inflexibility and her terrible regret.

As the priest says, at one gloomy Mass where the names of the latest war dead are declaimed to a congregation of stricken women, we should "take pity on those who weep". *The Guardians* is a rewarding and rich film, which offers a delicately considered and often troubling insight into the lives of those left behind by history: those who, in the priest's words, "still drain the bitter cup of life" while others march to their death.

*Pamela Hutchinson, Sight and Sound, August 2018*

## FILM FACTS...

- ☆ The film premiered in the Special Presentations section at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival.
- ☆ Director Xavier Beauvois is best known for his 2010 film *Of Gods And Men*
- ☆ Nathalie Baye (Hortense) and Laura Smet (Solange) are real-life mother and daughter. Laura Smet's father was Johnny Hallyday.
- ☆ The 1924 novel by Ernest Pérochon on which the film was based has never been translated into English. Pérochon was a teacher, Goncourt-winning author and first world war veteran who in 1940 refused to collaborate with the Vichy regime, had his books banned and finally died of a heart attack brought on by the stress of daily Gestapo harassment.