

 **PRAGDA** | SPANISH FILM CLUB

# DISCUSSION GUIDE



## LA SINGLA

A film by Paloma Zapata

SPAIN, GERMANY / 2023 / 95 MIN  
Spanish with English subtitles

## BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Paloma Zapata at <https://pragda.com/film/la-singla/?sfc=1>

### INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *La Singla*.

When Antonia Singla graced the stage, she did so without hearing the music. Born deaf to a Romani family in the suburbs of Barcelona, La Singla—as she would affectionately come to be called—rose to international acclaim by the age of 17. Quite literally moving to the beat of her own drum, La Singla's pistol-like percussions were nothing short of revolutionary, gripping the world of flamenco with a dynamism never before experienced. But at the height of her fame, La Singla disappeared from the dance stage, leaving a scattered archival legacy of the world's best *bailaora* behind.

Paloma Zapata's hybrid film stunningly weaves the past and present together, expertly layering archival footage with passionate music and sound. One question drives her forward—to find *La Singla* herself and finally hear, in the dancer's own words, the heartbreaking story of her life.

From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film?  
From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.

- Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images available at <https://pragda.com/film/la-singla/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



## AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

### NARRATIVE

- > How does the film introduce the figure of La Singla, as well as Elena? How does this set up the way the film uses Elena to tell the story of La Singla?
- > What are the first details we learn about La Singla? How does this set up the mystery of her story? How would you describe the relationship between Elena and La Singla as it unfolds in the film?
- > Why do you think director Paloma Zapata chose to use Elena to explore the story of La Singla? What impact does her presence have on the narrative?
- > How do Elena's feelings about La Singla motivate her to find out more? What is her goal as she sets out, and why is it important to her?
- > What information does Colita provide to Elena in their meeting? What part of the mystery is uncovered in this encounter? What new questions need answering?
- > What do the materials that Elena receives from Banegas reveal about La Singla's cultural and artistic relevance in Spain when she was still active as a dancer?
- > What insight can you gain to the cultural context of La Singla's time? What did you learn about the Somorrostro? How do you think this impacted La Singla's upbringing?
- > How does the footage of La Singla in Germany further contribute to the exploration of her artistic significance? The emphasis on archival footage and photographs decreases once Elena gets to Barcelona. How does her investigation shape your experience of the story?
- > Antonia does not go into detail about certain parts of her difficult past. Are there aspects of La Singla's story that are left unexplained or ambiguous? Why do you think the director chose to leave these gaps, and how does that affect your experience as a viewer?
- > How does the conclusion of the story make you feel? Is it a satisfying ending to La Singla/Antonia's story? Why or why not?



### CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- > How do you feel about the cinematography of the scenes with Elena in present-day? Does it feel like a documentary?
- > How does the film choose to incorporate the archival materials of La Singla? Do you like how the editing presents the photographs and the footage? What decisions is Zapata making in the editing room when putting these scenes and sequences together?
- > How does Zapata shoot the scenes with Elena? Is she merely documenting interactions? Do they feel more naturalistic or more staged in the context of a documentary? Or is it somewhere in between?
- > How are the film's parallel threads of La Singla's story and Elena's journey combined in the film? How does the editing contribute into this? What about the voiceover narration? Do you feel it could have been done differently?
- > How does the set design in the present-day scenes inform your understanding of the narrative? Analyze the scenes' *mise-en-scène*.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> "Mise-en-scène" is a French term referring to the deliberate arrangement of everything that makes up the frame of shot. This includes everything from the lighting to the props used in order to carefully convey mood and meaning.

## CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES *continued*

- > What other cinematic techniques and artistic choices are made for Elena's scenes to match the tone and mood of the archival material? Or to contrast it?
- > Does Zapata use artificial light or natural light for most of the scenes? Why do you think she made that choice for a documentary?
- > How does the film use silence to convey meaning? How is this especially relevant to La Singla's story?
- > Both in terms of explaining La Singla's story, as well as to serve the tone of the film itself, what role does music play in the film?
- > The film is the investigation of a mystery. How does the editing rhythm affect your experience of that story? Is the pace slow, fast, or uneven, and what might be the purpose behind that choice?

## THEMES

- > What do you think is the central theme of *La Singla*? Do you think there is one right answer?
- > Paloma Zapata, the director, wrote: *"This film seeks to rescue Antonia Singla from obscurity. A trailblazer unjustly erased from history despite her profound contributions to flamenco, Roma culture, and the deaf community, she was a true pioneer in a culture that traditionally reserved its highest accolades for men."* Based on her statement, what themes do you think Zapata was exploring through this film?
- > How does the film discuss the idea of memory? Why are some things in history remembered and others forgotten?  
What messages does the film communicate to the audience about Antonia Singla? What is your takeaway from her personal story?
- > At its core, the film is about a dancer. How does *La Singla* explore the idea of artistic expression? How does this tie into Antonia as an artist and her personal journey?
- > How does Zapata explore the concept of exploitation? How does this relate to Antonia's upbringing and socioeconomic background?
- > How would you describe the tone of the film? How does it contribute to Antonia's story but also the investigative nature of the film as well?
- > How does the film address Antonia's past trauma? What kind of power does the film give back to Antonia by giving her the opportunity to only discuss the parts of her life she wishes to?
- > Analyze the film's title, *La Singla*. What is the significance of this, given the final scene in the film? Why do you think the director made that choice?
- > What does the film reveal about the path of an artist, particularly when that path seems to be shaped for them rather than by them?



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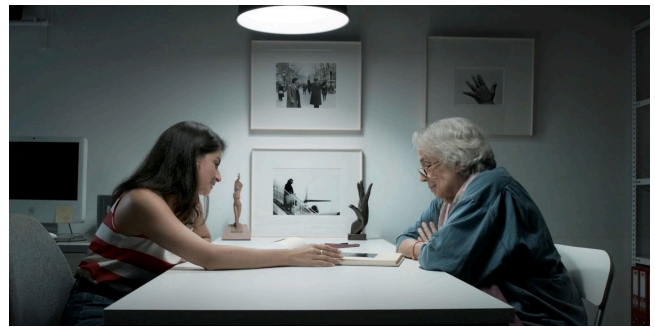




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