

**Premiering at the Los Angeles Film Festival  
a Feature Documentary about the only Ballet School for the Blind in the World**

# LOOKING AT THE STARS

**Directed and Edited by Alexandre Peralta**  
2015 Student Academy Award Winner

**With Cinematography by** Guan Xi and Alejandro Ernesto Martinez B.

**Executive Producers:** Mark J. Harris and Sabrina Chammas

**Featuring Original Music by Alexis and Sam**  
and  
**Pato Fu**

**Press Notes**

**Running Time: 89 minutes**

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**Looking at the Stars feature documentary hopes to inspire  
both sighted and visually impaired audiences alike**

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# LOOKING AT THE STARS

A film about what it means, in equal parts, to be a woman, a visually impaired person, and a dancer.

Directed by: Alexandre Peralta

Executive Produced by: Mark Harris  
Sabrina Chammas

Cinematography by: Guan Xi  
Alejandro Ernesto Martinez B.

Edited by: Alexandre Peralta

Written by: Alexandre Peralta  
Melissa Rebelo Kerezsi

Produced by: Alejandro Ernesto Martinez B.  
Alexandre Peralta  
Melissa Rebelo Kerezsi  
Corina Maritescu  
Chao Thao  
Thais Peralta

Original Score by: Alexis and Sam

Credit Song by: Pato Fu

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Instagram: @Lookingatthestarsmovie

Twitter: @BalletStarMovie

# LOOKING AT THE STARS

A group of blind dancers prove that anything is possible.

## Synopsis

**Looking at the Stars** is an intimate glimpse into the lives of the extraordinary ballerinas at the world's only ballet school for the blind—the Fernanda Bianchini Ballet Association for the Blind.

The stories of these dancers go beyond the challenge of learning to dance without a visual reference. Like many of us, these women want to be good professionals, partners, friends. They want to be relevant and self-sufficient. They work fiercely to become the best versions of themselves.

Geyza is the school's prima ballerina. She is an example of grace, strength and determination. She started studying ballet with Fernanda Bianchini after losing her sight, at the age of nine. During our film, Geyza arrives at a crossroads: like many women, she feels pulled in two directions, between her family and her career. About to get married, Geyza believes that in order to be a good wife she must dedicate herself to her family. But, she is also determined not to let married life be the end of her aspirations as a ballet dancer and instructor.

One of Geyza's students is Thalia, a shy teenager with big dreams for her future. Thalia attends a traditional middle school, where she has to deal with rejection from her peers and with her teachers' inability to accommodate her visual impairment. Thalia's journey is one of self-discovery and expanding horizons. Besides being a student at the Fernanda Bianchini Association, Thalia takes Braille and independent walking classes. At home, Thalia also writes novels and interacts with friends over the internet. Her greatest companion is her mother, Sandra.

Both Geyza and Thalia found a way to express themselves through ballet. And the Fernanda Bianchini Ballet Association for the Blind is a place where blind and visually impaired youth like them can find comfort and encouragement to exceed even their own expectations.

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## Press Release

**Looking At the Stars** is a touching documentary that follows two dancers from the world's first and only ballet academy for the blind located in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Geyza, the company's prima ballerina and an instructor at the school takes center stage in this film that was shot in Brazil over a period of three years. She is joined in this remarkable cast by her protégée, Thalia, a teenager with the dream of overcoming her disability and become the best version of herself.

"Three years ago we started this project as a profile of the school. Since then, it's turned into a coming of age exploration of two remarkable young women at pinnacle moments in their lives. Even more than that, it's become a coming of age for our own team as we've watched their courage and passion overcome all obstacles" says Director, Alexandre Peralta.

The team hopes to share the story of the Fernanda Bianchini Ballet and Arts Association for the Blind with audiences worldwide. The school, which supports mostly young women from low income families and communities in and around Sao Paulo, was started twenty years ago and has since then reached international stages, having closed the 2012 Summer Paralympics with the London Royal Ballet, and danced for Parsons Dance, Mikhail Baryshnikov, the Danish Royal Ballet, among others.

"We're very proud of what we've achieved so far, and touched by the number of people who have championed our work and that of the Association. We hope to our film can become accessible to the largest possible audience, which is why we're focused on building an immersive sound design and poetic audio descriptions" continues Peralta.

Looking at the Stars started as a short film that went on to win the Gold Medal at the Student Academy Awards (also known as the Student Oscars) in 2015. Since then, the filmmakers have received the HBO/National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP) Grant, which allowed them to continue filming for the feature-length version of the film.

Lastly, the filmmakers are excited to announce that Fernanda Bianchini (the creator of the Ballet School for the Blind) as well as Geyza Pereira - The School's Prima Ballerina and one of the main characters of the documentary, will travel from Sao Paulo to LA to join the documentary team during the Festival Premiere.

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## About the Team

**Alexandre Peralta (Director / Producer / Editor)** is a Student Academy Award-winning filmmaker. He grew up in São Paulo, Brazil, at the epicenter of millions of inspiring untold stories. He began exploring some of these stories in college, where he studied Advertising and Marketing at ESPM, but deepened his commitment to artistic expression during his time in the M.F.A. program at USC's School of Cinematic Arts. He has directed and edited short films, including editing the documentary "Canto de Familia," about a Mexican-American mariachi family, recently recognized by KCET as part of its Fine Cut Showcase. He sound designed and mixed the ABFF and NBC Shorts award winning film, "A Different Tree." Alexandre is proud and excited to direct "Looking at the Stars" as his first feature documentary.

**Alejandro Ernesto Martinez (Producer / Co-Cinematographer)** is a Cinematographer and Producer from Nicaragua. He earned his B.A in Philosophy from McGill University, a Master in International Law from Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and an M.F.A in Film and Television Production from USC. He grew up in Nicaragua, and believes that good stories can make the world a better place.

**Melissa Rebelo Kerezsi (Producer / Writer)** is a Brazilian filmmaker living in Los Angeles. She grew up in a São Paulo that was violent and opportunity scarce. But it was also where she met the extraordinarily strong, unpredictably happy, and undeniably resourceful people that continue to inspire her. Melissa worked as a physics teacher and textbook editor in Sao Paulo, then moved to the US, where she studied Liberal Arts at Columbia University, Post-Production at NYU, and is currently a film production student at USC. Melissa's goal is to empower voices that are dampened by inequality, and to contribute to the progression of a tolerant society in which diversity is celebrated and desired.

**Corina Maritescu (Producer)** was born in Bucharest, Romania, in the last year of the communist regime. Her childhood and youth were strung together with images of a country, people and communal conscience in transition, images at once surreal and realistic, dream-like and concrete. In her late teens, Corina immigrated to New York City, where she found fiction and non-fiction writing, sociological study and the shaping of her own queer, immigrant identity. It is from this background that Corina's storytelling has emerged, as well as her interest in characters, identities and interactions that inhabit a liminal space. Corina has an M.F.A in Film and Television Production from the University of Southern California.

**Chao Thao (Co-Producer)** is a Hmong-American filmmaker. As a believer that the medium of film is a powerful instrument for social change, Chao is passionate about sharing diverse stories that have been obscured by history. Her philosophy as a filmmaker is to bring forth these different perspectives. Chao received her MFA in Film and Television Production from the USC School of Cinematic Arts. She was a recipient of the prestigious 2012 Princess Grace Award, the USC Annenberg Graduate Fellowship and the Bud Greenspan Award for Documentary.

**Sabrina Chammas (Executive Producer)** is a Lebanese Canadian independent film producer and entrepreneur. After graduating from Northeastern University in 2010 with a B.A in Communications and a minor in Business Administration, she attended USC's School of Cinematic Arts where she obtained her MFA in Film Production and met Looking at the Stars director Alexandre Peralta. Sabrina had worked on numerous projects with Alexandre before joining the Looking at the Stars team in September 2013. Sabrina also worked along side director Jehane Noujaim on Oscar nominated and Emmy Award winning documentary film The Square, which further increased her knowledge and experience with documentary film producing and distribution. Sabrina currently lives in Vancouver, Canada where she has started her own business and continues working on documentary films.

**Guan Xi (Co-cinematographer)** is a native of Beijing China. She received her B.A. in Critical studies and her first M.F.A. in Documentary Film Production at Beijing Normal University. Before attending USC, she published a photography book, Illusion, which features photos taken in India, Cambodia, Nepal and China. She is a recipient of The Best Young Photographer award from The Pingyao International Photography Festival.

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## Credits

Featuring: Geyza Pereira  
Fernanda Bianchini Saad  
Thalia Macedo  
Sandra Macedo  
Cesar Albuquerque

Directed by: Alexandre Peralta

Executive Produced by: Mark Harris  
Sabrina Chammas

Cinematography by: Guan Xi  
Alejandro Ernesto Martinez B.

Edited by: Alexandre Peralta

Written by: Alexandre Peralta  
Melissa Rebelo Kerezsi

Produced by: Alejandro Ernesto Martinez B.  
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Melissa Rebelo Kerezsi  
Corina Maritescu  
Chao Thao  
Thais Peralta

Original Score by: Alexis and Sam

Credit Song by: Pato Fu

Supervising Sound Editing: Kim Patrick  
Veronica Li

Sound Editing: Qianbaihui Yang  
Débora Opolski

Additional Editing: Faroukh Virani

Consulting Editors: Kate Amend, ACE  
Josie Azzam

Additional Cinematography: Jean Paulo Lasmar  
Natália Antiqueira  
Tato Ghiurghi  
Alexandre Peralta

Additional Camera: Flávia Zündt  
Bruno Grandino  
Sabrina Chammas  
João Bertholini  
Charles Leisenring

Publicist: Alvar Carretero

Support: Auditório Ibirapuera  
Itaú Cultural  
Prefeitura de São Paulo  
SP Trans  
HBO / NALIP documentary award  
Skywalker Sound