

Aniki Bobo is an April, 2024 LVCA dvd donation to the Ligonier Valley Library in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that dvd film:

14 of a possible 20 points = excellent film

Portugal 1942 color 71 minutes subtitled live action feature drama

Prodções António Lopes Ribeiro

Producers: Manoel Oliveira and António Ribeiro

Key: *indicates outstanding performance or technical achievement

(j) designates a juvenile performer

Points:

1 Direction: Manoel Oliveira

2 Editing: Vieira de Sousa and Manoel Oliveira

2 Cinematography: António Mendes*

2 Lighting

1 Screenplay: Manoel de Oliveira, inspired by a João Rodrigues de Freitas story titled "Meninos Millionários" ("Millionaire Children")

Dialogue: Manoel de Oliveira, Nascimento Fernandes, António Lopes Ribeiro, and Manuel Matos

1 Set Decoration: José Porto

1 Music: Jaime Silva Filho

Songs: Manuel de Azevedo and Alberto Serpa

Makeup: Antonio Vilar

2 Sound: Luis Sousa Santos*

0 Acting

2 Creativity

14 total points

Cast: Nascimento Fernandes (Shopkeeper), Vital dos Santos (Teacher), Antonio Palma (Shop Customer), Armando Pedro (Shop Employee), Horacio Silva (j) (Carlitos), António Santos (j) (Eduardo, the bully), Antonio Soares (j) (Pistarim), Feliciano David (j) (Pompeu, the scholar),

**Manuel Sousa (j) (Filofoto), António Melo Pereira (Batatinhas),
Rafael Mota (j) (Rafael), Americo Botelho (j) (Estrelas),
Fernanda Matos (j) (Terezinha), Manuel de Azevedo (Street Singer),
Augusto Crespo (j) (Kid near a door), António Freitas (Young Man in a Group),
Pinto Rodrigues (Policeman)**

Aniki Bobo is a 1942 black-and-white fiction feature directed by Manoel de Oliveira and filmed in his native city of Oporto, Portugal. It centers on jealousy, bullying, theft, childhood romance, and transgression of ethical commands.

The putative protagonist, Carlitos, is a poor guttersnipe trying vainly to wrest control of a community gang of pint-sized wannabe street toughs from Eduardo. This latter youth is bigger, stronger, and somewhat more flush in cash than his patchwork antagonist. He's also considerably superior in attractiveness to the opposite sex, represented here by a flirtatious Terezinha.

When Carlitos fails to impress that girl with his shyness and obvious interest in companionship, he makes the culpable error of trying to bribe her with a beloved shop window doll neither of them can afford to buy. In order to accomplish a chivalrous feat of generosity, the hapless suitor shoplifts the item from a store named something like "Shop of Temptations" in English translation.

So much for childhood innocence.

This being an Oliveira film, Carlitos undertakes to approach Terezinha with his furtive prize under cover of darkness by clambering noisily over rooftops. She accepts the cherished offering with no lingering qualms about how the adventurer happened to acquire it. Obviously, there's a junior gold digger present.

Thanks to this underhanded charity, Terezinha temporarily throws over former favorite Eduardo, supplying new reason for him to physically attack a romantic rival.

The situation is reversed, though, when these ragamuffins opt to observe a passing train from a cliffside overview while playing truant from school. Mainly out of misplaced bravado, Eduardo ventures too near the precipice's edge, tumbling down into the cut below and knocking himself unconscious. Since Carlitos was standing closest to him just before the accident, it appears to the other children Eduardo had been given a push from behind.

A spying shopkeeper, hot on the trail of stolen merchandise, witnesses the entire episode and knows Carlitos is innocent of attempted puericide.

But the rest of his gang, including fickle Terezinha, suspect otherwise and administer a Coventry treatment to their former pal, now considered a murderously vengeful traitor.

The shunned boy's conscience pricks him, creating an inescapable nightmare in which he's accused of being a coward. Intolerable!

So he decides to recover the swiped plaything and return it to the toy store where it belonged. Terezinha has been informed about the boy's criminal activity and apparently has no regret about losing her treasure.

The pointed moral of this homiletic screenplay is "thou shall not steal." But are aggressiveness, cupidity, and jealousy more socially acceptable?

To be fair to its director, his original print runtime for this film was one hundred two minutes. Portuguese government censorship reduced that to sixty-eight minutes, eliminating thirty-four minutes' worth of material. With over a half hour of content missing in surviving prints, it's difficult to assess what the picture might have been like if screened in its entirety.

It seems about three minutes of censored material nonetheless found their way into YouTube versions and that of the *rarefilmsandmore.com* dvd release.

What the movie does not appear to be is a social critique of early 1940s Portugal. Each character is mannered, dialogue is stilted, poses are modelled or struck rather than natural. There's little realism involved in the production except striking photographed settings, profusion of outdoor scenes radiantly shot using natural lighting, and painstakingly authentic sound recording.

Musical accompaniment is of minor interest and unremarkable execution.

Holding the film together for audiences is mostly streamlined editing, despite a few prolonged fadeouts, which may represent introductions to censored fragments of the original print.

Still involving to watch and crammed full of impressive cinematic framings, *Aniki Bobo* falls short of masterpiece status. It's more accurately categorized as an entertaining curio, suitable viewing for ages nine and up. Though be aware Eduardo's tumble down the railroad embankment and succeeding shots of his prone splayed body may be too dramatic for preteen viewers to handle emotionally.

