



The Divine Order

Director: Petra Volpe

Country: Switzerland

Date: 2017

A review by Cath Clarke for *The Guardian*:

The year is 1970, and the suffragettes of Switzerland are marching for the vote. Hang on a minute, 1970? Yep. Swiss women only gained the vote in 1971 (and until 1985 a man could prevent his wife from working). With this good-humoured comedy-drama, writer-director Petra Volpe gives us the fictional story of a housewife who finds her voice during the Swiss referendum. Cleverly, her focus here is on small, ordinary lives, women who will never be remembered in the history books but who risk everything because something inside can't, won't allow them to remain silent – though she overeggs the feelgood factor a little.



Never mind 1971, it might as well be 1951 in the small village where housewife Nora (Marie Leuenberger) lives with her husband, two sons and miserable git father-in-law. There is not a miniskirt in sight here; the women still dress like the Queen, in headscarves and scratchy woollen tights. “I don't need to be liberated,” Nora says at the start of the movie. But then her husband, Hans (Maximilian Simonischek), refuses to let her go back to work: “I won't have my sons eating tinned ravioli.” At the same time, her teenage niece is branded a slut and sent to a young offender institution. Enough is enough: Nora teams up with a cigar-smoking elderly widow to campaign for a yes vote in the village. Her chief opponent is the

local anti-women's rights organiser – a slightly obviously written, handbag-wielding, Mary Whitehouse-style battleaxe.



I do wish the comedy here was an inch or two less broad – especially when Nora and her gang travel to Zurich for a protest and find themselves at a dippy, hippy, love-your-vagina workshop. But still, there is something moving, and timely too, in the story of an inspirational wave of feminists threatening the status quo, fearlessly braving ridicule, mockery and the backlash against them.

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