



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA EDUCATION

THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE

SYNOPSIS

Madame Souza is an elderly Portuguese woman raising her young grandson, Champion. Souza notices that he is sad and lonely, hinted at due to the loss of his parents. She first tries to get him interested in the piano. When this fails, she buys him a puppy named Bruno to cheer him up. Although he is initially happy, he quickly becomes melancholy once again.

After discovering that Champion has a keen interest in road bicycle racing (it is implied that Champion's deceased parents were bicyclists), she buys him a tricycle. Years later, Champion becomes a professional cyclist with Souza as his coach.

Eventually, Champion enters the Tour de France but during the race, he and two other riders are kidnapped by two French mafia henchmen and brought by ship to the bustling metropolis of Belleville.

Souza and Bruno follow the men, but lose their trail soon after reaching the city. Lost and with no way to find Champion, Souza has a chance encounter with the renowned Belleville triplets, music hall singers from the 1930's, now elderly women turned improvisational musicians. The sisters take Souza to their home and over time she becomes a part of their group.

Meanwhile the mafia boss drugs the kidnapped cyclists and employs a mechanic to build a stationary cycling machine for the racers to race on — to create their own mini Tour de France for gambling.

At a fancy restaurant, the Triplets and Souza perform a jam session using a newspaper, refrigerator, vacuum and bicycle wheel as instruments. The mafia boss who kidnapped her grandson happens to be in the same restaurant and, with the help of Bruno, Souza realizes he is the one who is keeping Champion prisoner. She tails one of the Mafioso's minions the next day and discovers their scheme.

That night, several mob bosses and their henchmen arrive at the mafia hideout and place bets on the riders. One of the riders falls off his bicycle in exhaustion, at which point the bookmaker shoots him—offstage—as one would an injured horse. Madame Souza, Bruno and the triplets then infiltrate the hideout and sabotage the contraption, unbolting it from the ground and turning it into a pedal-powered vehicle on which they all escape. The mob henchmen pursue them, but are all thwarted amidst the wild chase. The film ends with the motley group riding on out of Belleville, and a flash forward to an elderly Champion reflecting on the adventure, as told to him by the then-deceased Souza.