

BADOCK FILM - PANOCEANIC FILMS

present

ARIELLE DOMBASLE AURÉLIEN RECOING
MINA KAVANI LOUKA MELIAVA

THE GIRL AND THE BOY

(La Fille et le garçon)

A FILM BY
JEAN-MARIE BESSET

With JERÔME BARNOUIN, JEAN VARELA, AXEL HÉMERY, MARY-LOUISE BESSET, JEANNETTE SANCHEZ, LOUIS CROUX
Music LUC ROUGY · Screenplay JEAN-MARIE BESSET and RÉGIS DE MARTRIN-DONOS · Cinematography THÉO LOPEZ · Editing ARIANE BOUKERCHE
Sound MATHIEU ORBAN · First Assistant Director AUDREY LEJEUNE · Production Design PATRICK MONTAGNE · Costumes MARIE BELTRAMI
Production Manager LÉON DIANA · Badock Théâtre & Film · Executive Producer GILBERT DÉSVEAUX

DISTRIBUTION

PANOCEANIC FILMS
12, RUE RAYNOUARD, 75016 PARIS
PHONE: 01 53 92 29 27
panoceanik@aol.com

PRESS OFFICER

PIERRE CORDIER
PHONE: 06 60 20 82 77
pcpresse@live.fr

BACKGROUND

During the second Covid lockdown, with theatres closed once again, Jean-Marie Besset decided to make a film out of his play *La Fille et le garçon*, and to shoot it in his home town of Limoux and its surroundings (Toulouse, Carcassonne, Leucate, etc.). He assembled a prestigious cast, combining seasoned, well-known actors with two promising young performers.

His production manager put together a young crew of technicians fresh out of film school.

All of this in the service of a new and radical story that runs against prevailing fashions and never stops bringing opposites together: prostitution/love, old/young, sex/religion, bourgeois/precarious, French/migrants, those who have mastered language, social codes and culture against those who have not.

THE GIRL AND THE BOY

SYNOPSIS

Malina, a young Iranian immigrant, calls on Jean at his handsome city-centre flat. She wants to know why her boyfriend Denis, who is doing renovation work at Jean's place, lingers on after hours and even takes his shower in front of Paula, Jean's wife.

Step by step, Jean and Paula come to know Malina and Denis, sliding from prostitution to friendship, from unavowed desires to a more sincere affection, and from love, finally, to family — a family of a new kind, with a wish for a child.

Moving beyond ordeals and taboos, this quartet lays down, in great freedom both carnal and intellectual, the concrete foundations of a new amorous ideal.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This is in no way a sociological essay, but a singular, idiosyncratic, novelistic story — even if it declines, for our present time, forms of communal life that are unprecedented and of a new kind, since for reasons of morality and bioethics they would not have been possible before.

A few landmark films have laid the groundwork for these new paths: Pasolini's *Theorem*, Visconti's *Conversation Piece*, Ken Russell's *Women in Love*, John Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*, Coline Serreau's *Why Not!*, Bertrand Blier's *Ménage*, Albee and Nichols' *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* — to cite, in no particular order, a handful of works of the past fifty years, very diverse in their aesthetics, which have nourished my thinking.

I have already set these forms and these questions in motion in my work for the stage, principally in *La Fonction* (1990), *L'Âge de la femme de Marie Hasparren* (2000) and *Les Grecs* (2006).

Today I wished to continue that exploration in cinema.

I place myself in the continuity of a literary French cinema — that of Rohmer (*My Night at Maud's*) and of Duras (*India Song*) — a cinema that puts the present and the topical to the test through the stratification of past experience.

Arielle Dombasle's presence is part of that Rohmerian legacy (*Pauline at the Beach* forty years on, in a sense).

As for the casting of Mina Kavani — a modern Irene Papas, a young Iranian actress exiled in France who has become one of the figures of the protest against the Islamic Republic — or that of Louka Meliava, a Franco-Georgian, it asserts the elsewhere of Eastern civilisations among us, like an influx of fresh blood come to irrigate and renew our old European body.

Aesthetically, what is at stake is the coexistence of the old (civilisation) and the new (sexual freedom), of the raw and the cultivated, of inanimate paintings and books and of desiring, vibrant bodies. Of the sober and the unbridled. Of the classical and the convulsive. Of the young and the old. Lessons drawn from art and philosophy in our lives today.

If the character of Jean (Aurélien Recoing) belongs to the eighteenth century, to Diderot, and argues for a sexuality that soothes, that of his wife Paula (Arielle Dombasle) leans towards the seventeenth century of Sweerts and Reni (or of Caravaggio, of course), more tormented, and seems to aspire to more tumultuous passions, to darker forces. The sequence in which Paula draws the curtains of her bedroom and opens her wardrobes to Malina is a nod to the light and shadow of Hitchcock's *Rebecca*.

A settled, cultivated routine disturbed by the irruption of a torrent of untamed youth: the quotation is from Visconti, in his penultimate film *Conversation Piece*.

I also, of course, tried to resolve the question of representing sexual acts: showing erotic tension and the fever of desire while remaining short of pornography, against which one can no longer compete. The lighting, highly contrasted in its chiaroscuro, plays a major part in the “monstration” (showing without showing) of bodies naked or more or less clothed in action (the choice of underwear and clothing being crucial).

Works by the old masters (pictorial, cinematographic, literary and religious references) punctuate and mark out the characters' trajectories, setting them in perspective.

Luc Rougy's score follows the sinuosities of the story, underlining its eroticism, its momentum, its tension, its violence — underlying or suddenly revealed.

PRODUCER'S NOTE

BADOCK FILM lays claim to a curiosity for exploring new forms of family, of parenthood, and of shared life as declined through gender and bisexuality.

After Jean-Marie Besset's film *Mister Paul*, which looked back at a pioneering generation at the forefront of Gay Lib, the company is putting forward this project: to stage and to translate the tried-and-tested patterns of an older French civilisation, and of a literary vision of the world, into new modes and onto the bodies of today.

French society should not take its inspiration from the USA in all things, when old European culture and French universalism also have essential and original contributions to make to the edifice under construction.

BIOGRAPHY

Jean-Marie Besset is a playwright, translator, adapter, stage director and producer.

He has written some thirty original plays and a great many stage adaptations.

For the cinema, he wrote the original screenplay of Ismail Merchant's *The Proprietor* (1996), starring Jeanne Moreau. He has also developed several screenplays from his own plays, including *Grande école*, directed by Robert Salis (2004), and *The Girl on the Train* by André Téchiné (2008). He wrote the French dialogue for Alain Resnais' *Life of Riley*, the French adaptation of Alan Ayckbourn's play (2014), which won a Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.

Since 2020, prompted by the lockdown that prevented him from working in the theatre, he has turned to directing, shooting two feature films in Limoux (the town of his childhood) from his own plays of the same names: *Mister Paul* (2022), released on DVD by Éditions L'Harmattan, and *La Fille et le garçon* (2023).

CAST

Arielle DOMBASLE	Paula
Aurélien RECOING	Jean
Louka MELIAVA	Denis
Mina KAVANI	Malina
Jérôme BARNOUIN	The caretaker
Axel HEMERY	The museum curator
Jean VARELA	The priest
Mary-Louise BESSET	Jean's mother
Jeannette SANCHEZ	Jean's godmother
Louis CROUX	Jean's godfather
Fabienne MANCIP	The caretaker's wife
Voice-over	
Philippe GIRARD	The presiding judge

CREW

Direction, screenplay and dialogue:	Jean-Marie BESSET
Based on the play:	<i>La Fille et le garçon</i> by Jean-Marie Besset
Screenplay collaboration:	Régis de MARTIN-DONOS
Screenplay contribution:	Jérôme PRIGENT de l'Oratoire
Music:	Luc ROUGY
Cinematography:	Théo LOPEZ
Sound:	Mathieu ORBAN
Production design:	Patrick MONTAGNE
Costumes:	Marie BELTRAMI
SFX make-up:	Lola HEQUILY
Special effects:	Guillaume CASTAGNÉ
Executive production:	Gilbert DESVEAUX
Production:	BADOCK FILM
Distribution:	PANOCEANIC FILMS
Format:	1:85 HD 4K

REFERENCES

PAINTING

The film cites and displays several seventeenth-century painters — the so-called classical age, which resonates strongly with our own, notably in the way it freely exalts virile beauty by depicting male nudes in lascivious, playful or reflective (and therefore non-heroic) scenes in the work of the little-known master Michael Sweerts (wrestling, bathing, portraits at table...), or outright S&M in the Guido Reni at the Musée des Augustins, over which the character of Paula lingers.

For my own part, I discovered Sweerts through the striking painting at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Strasbourg, which seemed to me the perfect illustration of my play *Le Banquet d'Auteuil*, and which showed that everything was already in nature, that one need only know how to observe, and that we never invent anything.

PAINTINGS BY MICHAEL SWEERTS (1618-1664)

Clothing the Naked — Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Wrestling Match — Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe

Men Bathing — Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg

Portrait of a Man with a Skull — collection of Dr and Mrs Alfred Bader, Milwaukee

Portrait of Joseph Deutz — Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Portrait of a Young Man — Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

Boy with a Turban — Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

PAINTING AT THE MUSÉE DES AUGUSTINS

Apollo Playing Marsyas (1620-25) by Guido Reni

LITERATURE

The recurring reference to Denis Diderot (through the mouth of Jean, the essayist character) asserts that the libertine philosopher of the eighteenth century is the great forerunner of the freedom of morals of our own early twenty-first century.

Diderot is a quiet transgressor: unlike Sade, he loves pleasure without going as far as coercion, torture or the rape of innocents, without resorting to force, to children or to blood. He argues for a reasoned practice of sex between consenting adults. He exempts himself from traditional Catholic morality, but without the violence and the frenzies of the sulphurous marquis.

It is in this that Diderot resembles us, and that he anticipates the *masturbatory society* we have become, thanks to the virtual and to free access to pornography via our smartphones. Such is the metaphorical meaning of the microscopic examination of d'Alembert's drop of semen, in which one might read "the whole history of the world".

ARIELLE DOMBASLE

Born in Connecticut to French parents, raised in Mexico. Singer, actress and film director.

FILMOGRAPHY (selected)

2023: *Alibi.com 2* by Philippe Lacheau — Greg's mother
2022: *Plan Cœur* (season 3) by Noémie Saglio
2021: *Le Grand Restaurant: Réouverture après travaux* by Romuald Boulanger
2020: *Trop jeune pour moi* by Jérémy Minui
2019: *Alien Crystal Palace* by Arielle Dombasle
2018: *Ma mère est folle* by Diane Kurys — Jess
2016: *The Geek Song* with Ametix
2014: *Valentin Valentin* by Pascal Thomas
2014: *Magnum* by Gaëtan Chataigner
2013: *Opium* by Arielle Dombasle
2012: *À votre bon cœur, mesdames* by Jean-Pierre Mocky
2011: *Calm at Sea* by Volker Schlöndorff
2010: *Ni reprise, ni échangée* by Josée Dayan
2010: *Roses à crédit* by Amos Gitai
2010: *El Baile de San Juan* by Francisco Athié
2008: *Sagan* by Diane Kurys
2006: *Nouvelle Chance* by Anne Fontaine
2006: *L'Homme de ta vie* by Laurence Katrian
2005: *Le Courage d'aimer* by Claude Lelouch
2004: *Albert est méchant* by Hervé Palud
2004: *Le Genre humain: Les Parisiens* by Claude Lelouch
2004: *Milady* by Josée Dayan
2004: *Sissi, l'impératrice rebelle* by Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe
2002: *Les Frangines* by Laurence Katrian
2002: *La Bataille d'Hernani* by Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe
2000: *Les faux-fuyants* by Pierre Boutron
1999: *Asterix and Obelix vs. Caesar* by Claude Zidi
1998: *Ivre mort pour la patrie* by Vincent Hachet
1997: *Day and Night* by Bernard-Henri Lévy
1997: *Desert of Fire (Deserto di fuoco)* by Enzo G. Castellari
1996: *Three Lives and Only One Death* by Raoul Ruiz
1995: *One Hundred and One Nights* by Agnès Varda
1995: *Rendezvous in Paris* by Éric Rohmer
1994: *Fado, Major and Minor* by Raoul Ruiz
1994: *Little Indian, Big City* by Hervé Palud
1993: *The Tree, the Mayor and the Mediatheque* by Éric Rohmer
1988: *Les Pyramides bleues* by Arielle Dombasle
1985: *La Nuit porte-jarretelles* by Virginie Thévenet
1983: *Pauline at the Beach* by Éric Rohmer
1982: *Le Beau Mariage* by Éric Rohmer
1981: *Une robe noire pour un tueur* by José Giovanni
1979: *Tess* by Roman Polanski
1978: *Perceval le Gallois* by Éric Rohmer

AURÉLIEN RECOING

Born in Paris. Stage and screen actor, theatre director, former member of the Comédie-Française company.

Prix Gérard-Philipe (1989); Lutin for Best Actor at the Lutins du court-métrage (2003); Best Actor award at the Caen festival (2002).

FILMOGRAPHY

2022: *Belle et Sébastien: Nouvelle Génération* by Pierre Coré

2019: *Adults in the Room* by Costa-Gavras

2014: *La Vie pure* by Jeremy Banster

2011: *Switch* by Frédéric Schoendoerffer

2011: *My Worst Nightmare* by Anne Fontaine

2009: *The Horde* by Yannick Dahan and Benjamin Rocher

2006: *Contre-enquête* by Franck Mancuso

2005: *Forgive Me* by Maïwenn

2005: *A Perfect Friend* by Francis Girod

2003: *Ruby & Quentin (Tais-toi!)* by Francis Veber

2001: *Time Out (L'Emploi du temps)* by Laurent Cantet

1999: *Fidelity* by Andrzej Żuławski

1996: *Passage à l'acte* by Francis Girod

1993: *Aux petits bonheurs* by Michel Deville

1992: *La Femme à abattre* by Guy Pinon

1991: *Louis, the Child King* by Roger Planchon

1990: *The Blue Note* by Andrzej Żuławski

1989: *Lacenaire* by Francis Girod

1988: *Emergency Kisses* by Philippe Garrel

MINA KAVANI

Franco-Iranian actress born in Tehran. She began acting on stage at sixteen and started a film career in Iran.

She has been living in exile in Paris for seven years.

She is best known for her role in *No Bears*, which won the Special Jury Prize at the 79th Venice International Film Festival (2022).

FILMOGRAPHY

2023: *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Eran Riklis
2022: *No Bears* by Jafar Panahi
2020: *La Sirène* by Sepideh Farsi
2020: *Les Hortensias en hiver* by Hélène Rastegar
2019: *Des gens bien* by Maxime Roy
2019: *Enquête sur un scandale d'État* by Thierry de Peretti
2017: *White Burka* by Gaël Metroz
2016: *Sous transe* by Camellia Montassere
2015: *La Princesse de Kagran* by Jérôme de Missolz
2014: *Mon père dit des conneries* by Shahriar Shandiz
2013: *Red Roses* by Sepideh Farsi
2012: *Argo* by Ben Affleck
2010: *Monsieur Joseph* by Ali Raffie

Voice work

2018: *The Breadwinner* by Nora Twomey

LOUKA MELIAVA

Born in Paris. Actor; began his career in 2014.

FILMOGRAPHY

2021: *Pourris Gâtés* by Nicolas Cuche
2016: *Eternity* by Tran Anh Hung
2015: *Camping 3* by Fabien Onteniente
2014: *Beauty and the Beast* by Christophe Gans
2014: *Breathe (Respire)* by Mélanie Laurent
2014: *Un moment d'égarement* by Jean-François Richet