

# Persmap



openingsfilm Cinekid 2012

# Ernest & Celestine

Een film van Stéphane Aubier, Vincent Patar en Benjamin Renner  
*naar de avonturen van Brammert en Tissie*

De vriendschap tussen een klein muisje dat geen tandarts wilde worden en een grote beer die geen notaris wilde worden. Ernest, een dikke hongerige beer, zoekt in de vuilnisbakken naar iets te eten. De kleine muis die hij wil opeten, smeekt hem: "Als je me niet opeet, geef ik je wat je het liefste wil in de hele wereld!"

En zo zal Celestine, terwijl ze haar eigen leven probeert te redden, dat van Ernest helemaal ondersteboven halen. Uit deze ongelukkige omstandigheden groeit een vriendschap die in de muizenwereld (de bovenwereld) en de wereld van de beren (de onderwereld) fel bevochten wordt, maar tevergeefs: Ernest en Celestine overwinnen alle vooroordelen.



Speelduur: 80 min. – Land: Frankrijk – Jaar: 2012 – Genre: animatie  
Releasedatum: 12 december 2012  
Distributie: Cinéart

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## Crew

Directors	Benjamin Renner, Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier
Producers	Didier Brunner, Philippe Kauffmann, Vincent Tavier, Stéphane Roelants and Henri Magalon
Screenplay and dialogue	Daniel Pennac
Based on the books by	Gabrielle Vincent; Ernest et Célestine, published by EDITIONS CASTERMAN
Executive producers	Ivan Rouveure
Production manager	Thibaut Ruby
Graphic character adaptation	Seï Riondet
Casting and voice direction	Jean-Marc Pannetier
With the voices of	Lambert Wilson and Pauline Brunner
Music	Vincent Courtois
Lyrics	Thomas Fersen
Production designers	Zaza et Zyk
Director of animation	Patrick Imbert
First assistant directors	Bénédicte Galup and Lionel Kerjean
Editor	Fabienne Alvarez-Giro
Storyboard supervisor	Etienne Willem
Background artist	Pascal Gérard
Colorization and textures	Digital Graphics Studio
Compositing	Blue Spirit Studio
Editing	Sylicone
Digital and photochemistry lab	B-MAC
Executive music production	22D Music – Emmanuel Delétang
Recording studio	Piste Rouge
Sound effects and sound editing	Dame Blanche
Mixing studio	Studio L'Equipe
Communication	Jean-Paul Commin

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## Stemmencast

Ivan Pecnik (BE)	Ernest
Lizemijn Libgott (NL)	Celestine
Karin Jacobs (BE)	De Grijze
Jos Dom (BE)	Georges
Manon Ros (NL)	Lucienne
Vicky Florus (BE)	Leon

Overige stemmen:

Fred Meijer  
Olaf Wijnants  
Govert Deploige  
Door van Boeckel  
Leo Richardson  
Aagje Dom  
Anke Helsen  
Liesbeth De Wolf  
Finn Poncin  
Jan Van Hecke  
Lieke Ros  
Reindert van der Naalt  
David Cantens  
Tim de Cooker

## Gabrielle Vincent - The creator of the Ernest and Celestine books

Gabrielle Vincent was born Monique Martin in Brussels on 9 September 1929. She studied drawing and painting at the Brussels School of Fine Arts, graduating in 1951 with flying colors. She explored black and white illustration and had her first show in 1960. She then moved onto color with washes, pastels and oils. At each of her exhibitions, the critics admired the power, sober style and sensitivity of her art.

In the 1980s, Gabrielle Vincent created Ernest & Celestine, presenting children with her twin talents of drawing and storytelling. She used everyday stories to express human truths, tenderness, the joy of making others happy and living simply, allowing her heart to speak out whilst gently mocking convention. The books went on to be published around the world. Gabrielle Vincent also produced illustrated books like *Un Jour, un Chien, Le Desert* and *Au Palais*.



“The stories I draw are often things I have experienced or observed. I have the scenario in my head, and when I pick up a pencil and then an ink pen, everything comes to me very quickly. When I draw, it’s a little like being a sleepwalker, as if it weren’t really me drawing. This no doubt explains this way I have of being a spectator to myself, of not managing to take myself seriously. Almost always, the first sketch is the right one. I love spontaneity. But although I really like drawing for children, painting is my main occupation,” said Gabrielle Vincent.

The power, simplicity and sensitivity of her books earned Gabrielle Vincent an international reputation, which was underscored by many prizes for her work.

Gabrielle Vincent died on 24 September 2000.

## Bibliography

### The Ernest & Celestine series

- 2004 La naissance de Célestine
- 2001 Les questions de Célestine
- 2000 Ernest et Célestine ont des poux
- 1999 Un caprice de Célestine
  - La cabane
- 1998 Le labyrinthe
  - Une chanson
- 1995 Au jour le jour
  - Le sapin de Noël
- 1994 Cet été-là
  - La chute d’Ernest
  - Ernest et Célestine... et nous
- 1993 La tante d’Amérique
- 1992 Ernest est malade



La chambre de Joséphine  
Ernest et Célestine au cirque  
1988 Chez le photographe  
1986 Rataplan plan plan  
La grande peur  
Au muse  
1985 La tasse cassée  
1983 Ernest et Célestine ont perdu Siméon  
1982 Musiciens des rues  
Ernest et Célestine vont pique-niquer  
Noël chez Ernest et Célestine

### **Other books**

2008 Désordre au paradis  
2006 Le Violoniste  
2004 Nabil  
1999 Un jour un chien  
1996 La Montgolfière  
1995 J'ai une lettre pour vous  
Au bonheur des ours  
Je voudrais qu'on m'écoute  
Au bonheur des chats  
La Petite Marionnette  
1994 Dans la forêt  
Le Grand Arbre  
1989 Brel : 24 portraits



## **Ernest & Celestine: tales of encounters**

*By Didier Brunner, producer*

In the beginning, there were 20 beautiful little books illustrated by Gabrielle Vincent. These stories delighted my daughter Pauline when I read them to her each night before bed. The protagonists were a bear and a mouse, bound together by an unusual friendship. How was it that these two very different creatures from two completely separate worlds – a great lumbering bear and a dear little mouse – ever came to meet one another? And why are they so bound up in this unswerving friendship?

Each night, as we closed the book on this sweet, modest and Chaplinesque universe, we were intrigued by these questions. And it was in trying to answer them that the project to adapt Gabrielle Vincent's work for the screen gradually emerged.

I must point out that in her lifetime, Gabrielle Vincent was fiercely against her work being transposed to television, and by extension, to the cinema screen. But that was in 1998. Gabrielle Vincent died in 2000. Then in 2008, I heard that her publisher, Casterman, was selling the rights for a TV series. I quickly contacted them and suggested a film adaptation because only the artistic care brought through a feature-length film would be able to do justice to the quality of Gabrielle Vincent's drawings.

***But then I was faced with the question of who to get to write the screenplay.***

The day I heard the rights were available, I'd just finished reading Daniel Pennac's Cabot-Caboche and I was suddenly inspired to ask him to develop and write the screenplay. He later proved just how right this intuition had been, for some very touching reasons that he explains in an interview reproduced here.

***The next question was who to bring on board as director.***

Fate is a great provider and I happened upon the DVD of A MOUSE'S TALE, made by the young filmmaker Benjamin Renner for his graduation project at the La Poudrière school of animation. I contacted him, told him about the project, and sent him a few Ernest and Celestine books.

Benjamin soon sent me two little animated scenes that were simple, dynamic and magnificent. The drawing style, poses and gestures were a highly-skilled representation of the lively and sweet expressiveness of Gabrielle Vincent's own sketches.

The unlikely encounter between a talented, veteran novelist and an inexperienced yet subtly intuitive director suggested an exciting adventure, and one that would be punctuated with real surprises.

Aware of his inexperience and concerned about captaining the huge ship that is an animation studio with 40 technicians and artists on board, Benjamin wanted some support and help with the directing. He needed some mentoring co-directors.



I asked Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier (alias Pic Pic and André) if they'd be interested in working with him and helping him out with the mise-en-scène. They brought a "Belgian touch," their own touches of Wallonian humor and color to this transposition of the little world of poetry and emotion created by their compatriot Gabrielle Vincent.

I gave Benjamin a free hand to choose the designers, colorists, head animator, original music composer, voice cast and casting director. He intuitively knew how to surround himself with remarkably talented people who were perfectly suited to the project and in perfect symbiosis with the film's daring ambition: to celebrate the graphic brilliance of Gabrielle Vincent's illustrations.

I had dreamed about it sitting on the edge of my daughter Pauline's bed; the finance was there, I was on board as producer, and I was determined for the project to become an auteur film. And it did. The film you will see is signed by Daniel Pennac and Benjamin Renner – a seasoned writer and budding director – and their partnership is the success story of the cinematographic adventure that is ERNEST & CELESTINE!



## Interview with Benjamin Renner – Director

***How did this project begin for you? What in particular seduced you about the universe created by Gabrielle Vincent?***

Back in 2008 when Didier Brunner was putting together the project, he contacted my animation school, La Poudrière, explaining that he was looking for people to work on his film. The head of the school told him about me, and when I met Didier, he gave me some of Gabrielle Vincent's books, which I had never seen before. Initially, he asked me to work on the graphic development of the project. I accepted because that was exactly what I wanted to do when I left the school – to illustrate using very clean lines, minimalist yet accurate. I wanted to convey emotions and sentiments in just a few lines, and movement through subtle animation.

You ended up directing the film. How did that transition come about? While I was working on the graphic development, the author Daniel Pennac had already made a lot of headway with the first version of the screenplay. I started to work in parallel on the storyboard for the pilot of the film. Later on, when I was asked to direct ERNEST AND CELESTINE, I was a little concerned because I'd

never imagined directing a feature film straight out of school, without gaining any cinematic experience beforehand. I was worried about the responsibilities I was going to have to shoulder. Despite being very confident and very clear in my mind about the artistic direction the project should take, the idea of managing the script, the narration, the mise-en-scène and directing the actors seemed fascinating but a little overwhelming. Many people were surprised at my reluctance but I was aware of the fact that directing meant I would be responsible for managing the budget, that I'd have to manage a team of 40 people and take decisions that would have good or bad consequences for the production.

***What inspired you to take that step?***

I asked Didier Brunner to bring on board some experienced co-directors so that I could learn from them and ask them for advice when necessary. Didier suggested Pic Pic and André – or Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier – who had just made the feature-length puppetoon, A TOWN CALLED PANIC, based on the series of the same name. I was a little confused because their special technique is different to that of animation, but in fact, we worked really well together. We immediately got started with the adaptation and the mise en- scène of the screenplay.

***Why do you think the Ernest and Celestine books, which one might think are exclusively reserved for children, have such an appeal for adults?***

When I read a book, I don't read it from the perspective of an adult or that of a child. I discover it for what it is, with no preconceptions. What is striking in the Ernest and Celestine books is the importance of tenderness between the characters, and the relationship with childhood that is so well represented in the drawings and situations. Ernest has something childlike about him, even though he is portrayed as adult.

In fact, the characters are very much like two children. Everything is remarkably well thought-out. They aren't classical stories but little snippets of life. When I met Gabrielle Vincent's nephew, he told me that all the Ernest and Celestine stories are events that she experienced or which they had experienced together. In the book Ernest et Celestine et la Cabane, the two characters build a cabin in the forest. And Gabrielle Vincent did exactly that with her four young nephews and nieces. She had a great deal of experience with children and when she took care of them, she would fully dedicate herself to them. You can sense it in her books, that feeling of being wrapped in a soft cocoon. It's a gentle universe in which one feels secure, where one understands that the friendship binding Ernest and Celestine could never be destroyed by anyone.

***Gabrielle Vincent's style of illustration – her watercolor backgrounds and light strokes that blur and disappear – must have been difficult to transpose into an animation in which there are normally very precise lines, curves and colored areas. Yet you managed it. How?***



After I met Didier Brunner, I bought all the books in the series and started working on two little animations. I showed them to Didier and he was really delighted. I had already made my mind up to draw very few details and go straight to the essence, with the idea of "animated sketches" in mind that would allow us to focus on the pleasure of drawing without going back over it lots of times. We pursued an idea of

free strokes; sketches with strong lines that didn't painstakingly seek to recreate the volumes. The enthusiastic response from Les Armateurs clearly demonstrated that we were going in the right direction. We wanted to tap into the feelings Gabrielle Vincent had experienced when she was drawing.



***Were you worried about changing the design of the characters? The series has a great deal of fans and, looking at the original drawings, it seems as if Gabrielle Vincent used felt tips or dry brushes to create Ernest's fur and Celestine's head. Those effects are impossible to recreate in the same way in an animation.***

For the pilot, we scrupulously respected the original design of Celestine because that was our aim. Later on, when we drew the storyboard for the film, my team pointed out that I'd gradually changed Celestine's profile. Her muzzle had gradually shrunk, without me realizing it. I had appropriated the character without meaning to. In thinking about it, I saw I was quite close to Daniel Pennac's position. He had chosen to not to use any of the stories from the albums, but to create a totally original story whilst still respecting Gabrielle Vincent's spirit. The world in which the action takes place is a little gloomy and cynical, opposite to the "cocoon" imagined by Gabrielle Vincent. That way, we see how Ernest and Celestine manage to change the order of things and create a new universe, that of the original work. That is how Daniel Pennac got into the project. We chose to adopt the same approach by not representing Ernest and Celestine exactly how they are in the books. Our characters are those in the film written by Daniel Pennac who end up in Gabrielle Vincent's world. And the film's conclusion follows this logic because the two characters then "invent" Gabrielle Vincent and the drawings of Ernest and Celestine's adventures. But we had to avoid imitation in order to adapt the original style to the big screen in a fitting manner.

***In the books, the characters' poses are remarkably accomplished. They are precise and touching, never slipping into cutesy cliché. Did you refer much to the different characters' positions in the books when tackling the animation of certain scenes?***

Yes. Many poses were directly inspired by those in the books. We also respected the very theatrical illustrative style of the books. There are never any high shots or low-angle shots, no close-ups or dramatic effects. Gabrielle Vincent focused everything on the characters and their poses. The dynamism of the mise-en-scène comes from the characters' actions, their animation, and through the set design. Many of the scenes pay homage to the books.

***You have just explained how you tackled the mise-en-scène, but did you have any references in mind? Certain aspects like Ernest's big protective size next to the little Celestine, and the two worlds cohabiting, sometimes make one think of Miyazaki's MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO...***

I keep a close eye on what is going on in Japanese animation and Japanese cinema in general. All Miyazaki's films served as references: TOTORO and KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE, whose heroine is, like Celestine, a little lost in the middle of the city. I was also influenced by Takeshi Kitano's KIKUJIRO, which acted as a trigger to help me tackle the relationship between Ernest and Celestine. The

character Kitano plays in that film is a slightly childish adult who finds himself with a kid and no idea how to take care of him. I would also add that I am influenced by the animations of my childhood, Disney shorts as well as the films that René Goscinny produced himself, such as THE TWELVE TASKS OF ASTERIX and LA BALLADE DES DALTONS. I found the narrative freedom of these films very inspiring.



***What was it like working with Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier, the film's codirectors? Did you share the work?***

Yes. We agreed to work together on the storyboard and the shooting script, and I'd handle the film's graphic creation. We also agreed that Vincent and Stéphane would help out at the end with the sound effects, mixing and music. We worked together a lot on preparing the shooting script, and were completely in agreement on the intentions and humor that we wanted to put in the film. At that stage, we weren't yet considering the mise-en-scène; we were rewriting the film in drawings to identify those scenes that were too long or too short.

***Did you rework certain passages from the script with Daniel Pennac?***

Yes. We worked several times with Daniel on those passages that posed some small problems for us so he could suggest some narrative solutions. Sometimes it was necessary for us to make changes on our side. We realized that in certain cases, the transposition into drawings didn't result in the same rhythm Daniel had created when he read the script out loud to us at his home, like a storyteller. They were some amazing times. Daniel knows that certain modifications are inevitable during an adaptation and I am incredibly grateful to him for having handed his screenplay to me when I was fresh out of school. He trusted me and always supported me during any moments of doubt.

***Which were the most difficult scenes to make and why?***

Without a doubt, it was the one where Ernest and Celestine meet. In addition to it being a key scene in the film, we had a very simple problem: if Celestine stayed the same size as she is in the books, she would be too fat for Ernest to make a mouthful of her! We thought long and hard about it and we

couldn't come up with a single size that would work throughout the film so we decided to make her grow as the story progresses. She is small when she is still a mouse, and then she gradually grows to the size of a child when she acquires the status of a child with Ernest.

***How did Lambert Wilson find that voice which so brilliantly expresses Ernest's childlike nature, his indulgent side and slight grouchiness?***

In the start, we found it hard to imagine Ernest's voice because classic gruff bear voices didn't really work with the very dynamic nature of the character in the film. Lambert found the voice very naturally. He has an amazingly broad range as he proved in OF GODS AND MEN, the MATRIX franchise, and ERNEST AND CELESTINE. I was amazed how much he moved and mimed the gestures during the recording. He played the part to the full.

***Tell us about your collaboration with Vincent Courtois, who composed the music for the film.***

Vincent is a talented composer and a great cellist, who is well known for his musical experimentation, creating some very personal sounds. I found his profile fitted wonderfully with Ernest's, who is also a musician and also plays the violin and other instruments. I was looking for a very powerful musical personality that would stand up to the director's intentions.

***Tell us about the key people in your art department.***

In addition to Patrick Imbert, the head animator, there was Sei Riondet, an artist who did all the adaptations and graphic creation of the characters. Julien Bisaro was a huge help to me with the mise-en-scène, as were Marisa Musy and Zyk, a couple of production designers who, together, are known as Zazyk. They took care of all the sets. Marisa was the second person I met when I started

working on the film. I call myself a director and art director but around me, there was a whole team of artists who were able to turn my ideas into realities and to improve upon them. Marisa played a huge part in our decision to do the sets in watercolor because she was the one who presented me



with a perfect set that you felt contained things that hadn't been created on a computer.

***With hindsight, how do you view the film?***

I don't have enough hindsight because I've spent the last four years working on nothing but the film. But I sometimes manage to take a brief step back to look at the images as something not made by me and then I can see that our aim from the outset has been respected and the film really does lead the viewer into the sensibilities of childhood. One of the things I'm most happy about is that the film manages to pay homage to Gabrielle Vincent in the way I'd intended, and emphasizes drawing and the pleasure of drawing.

## **Interview with Daniel Pennac – Screenwriter**

***There are few writers as well-known as you who get involved in children's books. Can you tell us about the pleasure you draw from writing for younger readers?***

The pleasures are multiple. The first is telling a story in which adventure drives the narrative. In terms of rhythm, that's very enjoyable. The second is that it is a style of literature that is fairly coded: you might say that the best book for children is that which the parents steal, reading it before the child and getting something out of it for themselves. You have to try and find that, and it's a captivating task. The third pleasure is in the writing itself, where stylistically, you economize on complex phrases, which results in a choice of words that are immediately more precise. It's about the pure pleasure of language and sounds and that is very interesting. So you write a book for children as "seriously" as you would a book for adults.

***Sometimes, children's books tackle subjects with so much subtlety and sophistication that they are also moving for adult readers. Is that what drove you to write the screenplay for ERNEST & CELESTINE?***

Something very touching happened with ERNEST & CELESTINE. In the 1980s, I found a little book called Un Jour, Un Chien containing charcoal drawings by Gabrielle Vincent. I had just written Cabot-Caboche, which also told of the adventures of a lost dog. Locked up in the pound, he was adopted by a little girl who was so awful that he had to train her. Because I was so delighted by Un Jour, Un Chien I sent a copy of Cabot-Caboche to Gabrielle Vincent through her editor. She replied to me and we ended up being pen-friends for about 10 years. I sent her snatches of manuscripts and she sent me drawings and extracts from the Ernest and Celestine series. We did all this while never meeting or talking on the telephone. And then she died. Years later, Didier Brunner called me, introducing himself as the producer of THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE. He said, "I'm going to make you a strange offer. You almost certainly don't know Gabrielle Vincent, but she wrote the Ernest and Celestine series of books which are very sweet and angelic, and I've always dreamed about making a feature length animation based on them, but with a darker feel that is more your style." I told him that in fact I knew the characters well and that it would be great fun to bring them out of a darker environment and into the idyllic world of Gabrielle Vincent's drawings. It would be like the entry into



paradise of the human relationship. So that was my approach to writing the screenplay. Ernest and Celestine both emerge from a dark and terrible world to build themselves a haven of peace from which they are wrenched by the reality of their respective worlds that pursue and capture them again. At the conclusion of their adventures, each of their worlds ends up accepting that they can in fact live together.

### ***How did you imagine the story?***

I live in the Vercors when I'm not in Paris, in a house where some of the walls are hung with watercolors painted by Gabrielle Vincent. That is where I worked, trying to imagine two universes that are contradictory at heart, places one might dream of escaping and which are in opposition to each other. So there is a world down below; that of the mice, and a world up above; that of the bears. These two don't mix and each world has constructed social taboos regarding the other. These suspicions can be read between the lines of the books. In *La Naissance de Celestine*, we see Ernest going against traditional customs by spending time with a mouse. So I accentuated these antagonisms by creating two fairly harsh worlds. In the world of the mice, they are obsessed with their children growing up to become dentists because mice incisors aren't just their primary means of existence but also the tool to which they owe their civilization. Celestine finds herself caught up in a situation where she is being forced to become a dentist when all she wants to do is paint and draw. In reality, the little painter Celestine is in fact Gabrielle Vincent. Benjamin Renner, who made the film, made Celestine left-handed like Gabrielle was. I talked to her family after she had died and discovered that Gabrielle was slim and had a little mouse's face and plenty of character. When she drew Celestine, it was practically a self-portrait.

### ***Then you went on to develop the world of the bears...***

Yes. Although it is officially out of bounds, the world of the bears is essential to the mice because that's where they go to do their shopping. They bring back food, little buttons, threads and raw materials. They are obliged to go to the world up above but on condition that they don't mix with the bears. As for the bears, they refuse to have mice in their houses ("You let one in, you let 100 in!"), and they chase them away. So the antagonism is real. Ernest is a singer, musician and poet, and his family wants him to become a judge.

***In the film, there is a notion of fantasy in addition to the traditional universe of the books, with the world down below where the mice live, the stolen teeth of little bears like in the story of "The Little Mouse." But in the books, there are mainly city landscapes from Gabrielle Vincent's childhood...***

Gabrielle was Belgian and she had the imagination of someone who lives in a village, nourished by old memories. You see that in her drawings of furniture, her interiors with big chairs and slightly dilapidated chests of drawers. And it was like that in her house as I discovered when I went there. She lived in minimal comfort but the decoration was delightful. There were little curtains in the windows. That universe was easy to imagine because it was ours 50 years ago. But I still had to

imagine the world down below. And that was mainly down to the work of Marisa Musy, that marvelous young woman who designed the sets for the world down below. I had suggested we take inspiration from the huge holes of underground Paris. It is like a Swiss cheese of colossal proportions because there are former quarries down there with chambers 20-30 meters high. There's nothing but a thin layer on top, on which stand the buildings that are sinking down. To live there, you'd have to plan to dig down and construct huge concrete pillars so you could build new houses on something solid. So I imagined the world down below of the mice based on this Paris underground, integrating different architectural strata into it such as Roman ruins and vestiges of the Middle Ages. Marisa then took it off in the direction she wanted and because she has a wonderful imagination, she created something very beautiful.

***You seem to have taken inspiration from real people to come up with Ernest and Celestine's reactions and intentions. You mentioned Gabrielle Vincent's childhood memories regarding Celestine, but did you have someone else in mind for Ernest?***

I used to read stories to my daughter, who is now grown up, and because I love slippers and thick dressing gowns, I tended to have a somewhat "Ernestian" look about me. My daughter got double the pleasure out of the reading experience because she could follow Ernest's adventures and have a great big bear sitting beside her. As she listened to the adventures of this wonderful big bear, she identified him with her father. Didier Brunner's memories with his own daughter are similar – he was her Ernest.



***You also injected some danger and a little touch of cruelty into the first encounter between Ernest and Celestine. In the film, he wants to eat her, which is not the case in the book. Why?***

That's because we are in a crueler universe, one that predates their first real encounter. This decisive meeting happens later on, when Celestine has a nightmare in Ernest's cellar. Ernest consoles her and when a sobbing Celestine tells him how she was driven out of her home and they were going to force her to become a dentist, Ernest tells her, "They wanted me to be a judge, but we don't care – you are a painter and I'm a poet!" He tells her she doesn't have to live in the cellar anymore but can live in his house and that's where the real encounter takes place. Celestine paints, Ernest makes music and that's how we end up in Gabrielle Vincent's world. Everything that goes before is in that universe of dreadful antagonism in which Celestine believes in the Big Bad Bear and in which Ernest, an omnivore, might have been hungry enough to eat a little mouse. But the friendship born between our heroes makes a third universe appear – that of Gabrielle Vincent.

***Ernest and Celestine is your first feature-length animation screenplay. What did you learn about your profession as a storyteller during the experience?***

It was more about the relationship with animation that I learned things. Writing a script is a kind of alchemy where the author, especially if they are a novelist, must find the images to replace whole

paragraphs of a novel. I also didn't want to write subtleties that would be impossible to draw. And to do that, I invited Benjamin, the Belgian co-producers Pic Pic and André, and Marisa to my house to read them the screenplay. They sat around my dining table while I read them the story. I watched the Belgians constantly taking notes and barely looking at me. And when I went to see what they'd done, I saw that all their notes were drawings. I thought that was wonderful.

*What elements brought you the most satisfaction during your involvement with this film?*

Working with the team. I'm used to working alone and when you see that little army you have to bring together to make a film, it's a huge pleasure to meet and work with them. As a producer, Didier Brunner is very self-effacing. Very often, producers drive you nuts with their notes, their suggestions and their certitudes about what the audience will or won't like. Didier never did that and that is exceptional. And of course, the hero of the day is Benjamin Renner, who was 24 years old when he started on this project – he's 28 now – and who was this young man terrorized by the responsibility of making this film. It's beautiful to see a talent like his flourish. I found that enchanting!

## **Benjamin Renner – Director**

### *Biography*

After his baccalaureate, Benjamin Renner did a prep course for the competitive entrance exam for art school before entering Angoulême art school where he obtained his DNAP national art diploma in comic strips.

He then joined the La Poudrière animation school, where he made LE CORBEAU VOULANT IMITER L'AIGLE, LE PLUS GROS PRESIDENT DU MONDE (a film commissioned for the Canal J TV channel) and A MOUSE'S TALE, his graduation film.

### 2006

Made the short LE CORBEAU VOULANT IMITER L'AIGLE at La Poudrière

Made the short LE PLUS GROS PRESIDENT DU MONDE at La Poudrière

### 2007

Made the short A MOUSE'S TALE at La Poudrière which won the following prizes: Best Student Short Film and Public Prize at the Anima festival in Brussels; special mention from the animation jury at the International Documentary and Animation Festival in Leipzig; the Aleksander Tatarskiy Special Prize from the Krok International Animation Festival; and Cartoon d'Or at the Forum Cartoon.

Graphic development on the feature-length film OCCHO KOCHOI at Teamto

### 2008

Benjamin Renner began directing the feature-length animation ERNEST AND CELESTINE.



## Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier – Co Directors

### *Biography*

Graduates of the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Visuels de la Cambre in Brussels, Stéphane Aubier and Vincent Patar enjoy critical and public acclaim in the world of animation. Through just a few shorts, the crazy pig and horse from the PIC PIC ANDRE SHOOW became cult figures. Their trademark is a Belgian accent and a sense of humor bordering on the absurd. Over the years, Aubier and Patar have perfected their universe using different animation techniques such as cut out paper animation for LES BALTUS.

In 2002, the DVD of PIC PIC ANDRE ET LEURS AMIS offered a compilation of the duo's short films. Louise Attaque and Dyonisos use them to make their music videos. In parallel, they have woken up the plastic models of our childhood to create the animated characters for their ongoing village tales. It took only one short film, PANIQUE DANS LA CUISINE, for Cowboy, Indian and Horse to become the heroes of a hit series broadcast on Canal Plus. A TOWN CALLED PANIC garnered very high audiences and its DVD release was a huge hit. In 2009, A TOWN CALLED PANIC became a feature length film, whose sense of irony, absurdity and imagination was met with huge public and critical acclaim. The film screened in Cannes as part of the official selection, out of competition. Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier have just finished co-directing Benjamin Renner's first feature, ERNEST AND CELESTINE, which has been selected for Directors' Fortnight at Cannes.

Frenchman Daniel Pennac was born on 1 December 1944, during a trip to Casablanca, into a family of literature- and travel-loving civil servants. His childhood was joyful and full of travel to places such as Africa, Asia and elsewhere in Europe.

Pennac studied humanities in Nice and Aix and taught the subject from 1969 to 1995 in Soissons and in Paris, often teaching very difficult students. From 1979 to 1981, he followed his partner to Brazil and became a connoisseur of hammocks as others become connoisseurs of cigars.

His first novels were farcical stories and books for children. Pennac then turned his pen to a new genre and in 1985, his book, The Scapegoat, the first in the Benjamin Malaussène saga was published as part of "La Série Noire", a collection of thrillers and noir literature published by Gallimard.

With it, Pennac defined his own style of rhythmic, slick and mischievous prose and the Malaussène series was continued with The Fairy Gunmother; Write to Kill, winner of the Inter prize in 1990; Monsieur Malaussène; and Passion Fruit. In 1992 he wrote an essay on reading, Reads like a Novel, in which he defined the reader's rights. In 1997, another novel, Messieurs les Enfants, or a fairytale for everyone's inner child, was followed by a movie adaptation by Pierre Boutron. Merci was published in October 2004 by Gallimard and then in 2006, Daniel Pennac published Nemo par Pennac, a work in which he presented the career of the illustrator Nemo, who for several years had been decorating the walls of his Belleville neighborhood. ERNEST AND CELESTINE is his first original screenplay for an animated movie.

## The Producers

LES ARMATEURS - Didier Brunner

Didier Brunner started out as a director in the mid-1980s before moving into production, creating the Trans Europe Film company with whom he produced several works including DES CHATS, a series adapted from the work by artist Steinlein; TELETOON, a magazine format on animation; and then in 1991, TALES OF THE NIGHT by Michel Ocelot.

In 1994, he founded Les Armateurs. The company enjoyed some early success in 1997, thanks to the short film THE OLD LADY AND THE PIGEONS by Sylvain Chomet, and then produced the hit film by Michel Ocelot, KIRIKOU AND THE SORCERESS, which was released in 1998. Then came PRINCES AND PRINCESSES by Michel Ocelot (2000), THE BOY WHO WANTED TO BE A BEAR by Jannik Hastrup (2002), THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE by Sylvain Chomet (2003, Festival de Cannes, official selection, out of competition), T'CHOUPI (2004), L'INVENTAIRE FANTOME (2004), KIRIKOU AND THE WILD BEASTS (2005) directed by Michel Ocelot and Bénédicte Galup, VOS PAPIERS! (2006), THE SECRET OF KILLS (2008, nominated for the 2010 Oscars), KILL ME PLEASE (2009) and THE STORYTELLING SHOW (2010).

Didier Brunner is currently producing KIRIKOU AND THE MEN AND THE WOMEN by Michel Ocelot.

MELUSINE - Stephan Roelants, co-Producer

Mélusine Productions was created in 1998 in Luxembourg by Stéphan

Roelants, and since then has been involved in producing films, documentaries and TV series with a preference for high-quality European projects, mainly involving animation. The company has been particularly active for the past few years in feature-length productions with very varied projects including A TOWN CALLED PANIC, LE JOUR DES CORNEILLES and TANTE HILDA with Folimage. It is currently in production with a range of titles including EXTRAORDINARY TALES by Raul Garcia and THE SONG OF THE SEA by Tomm Moore.



LA PARTI PRODUCTION - Vincent Tavier & Philippe Kauffmann

LA PARTI is a Belgian production company directed by Vincent Tavier, who produced MAN BITES DOG, and Philippe Kauffmann, who comes from a live show background. The celebrated animation series A TOWN CALLED PANIC by Stéphane Aubier and Vincent Patar cemented the company's trademark of modern cinema with an offbeat sense of humor and an uncompromising approach. They went on to produce AALTRA by Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern, CALVAIRE by Fabrice du Welz, KOMMA by Martine Doyen and HAND OF THE HEADLESS MAN by Guillaume Malandrin (also associate and producer at La Parti). More recent productions include KILL ME PLEASE by Olias Barco and LE GRAND'TOUR by Jérôme Le Maire and Vincent Solheid. Animation still remains at the core of La Parti's work. In addition to supporting French productions such as PEUR(S) DU NOIR and ZARAFÀ, in 2009, La Parti produced the feature-length version of A TOWN CALLED PANIC that screened at Cannes (official selection, out of competition) before coming onboard with ERNEST AND CELESTINE.

## Vincent Courtois, Composer of the original music

### *Biography*

From classical to jazz, poetry to improvisation...

Vincent Courtois was born in Paris on 21 March 1968. A classical cellist since the age of six, Vincent Courtois won first prize for cello and chamber music at the Conservatoire d'Aubervilliers in Erwan Fauré's class. He then studied with Roland Pidoux and Frédéric Lodéon, obtaining the diplôme supérieur d'exécution from the Ecole Normale in Paris.

In parallel with his classical studies, he discovered jazz and improvisation with Jean-Charles Capon and Dominique Pifarély. He played his first concerts with the Christian Escoudé Octet before joining Didier Levallet's Swing String System, and playing with great names like Martial Solal, Michel Petrucciani, Tony Williams and Dave Holland. He also joined Gérard Marais' Quartet Opera and has accompanied Les Rita Mitsouko on their Acoustique tour. In parallel, an encounter with Louis Sclavis allowed him to work on music for film and theater.

He created his own musical formations for which he plays and composes (three trios and a quintet) and he is part of several excellent jazz ensembles, including that of Pierre Favre, the Yves Robert Trio and Louis Sclavis' Napoli's Walls Quartet, with whom he records albums and performs in concerts the world over. In 2011, he founded La Compagnie de l'Imprévu to ensure the success of his different projects.

For the last decade, Vincent Courtois has been exploring another facet of the musical genre and has been composing more and more original scores.

In 2010, Vincent Courtois was made a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

### DISCOGRAPHY

- 2011 AMARCO (Emouvance) Trio Claude Tchamitchian and Guillaume Roy  
LIVE IN BERLIN (Le triton) Vincent Courtois Quartet
- 2010 L'IMPRÉVU (Rethink Art, Label Labuissonne) Solo
- 2009 ASAP (CamJazz) Ellery Eskelin, Sylvie Courvoisier
- 2008 L'HOMME AVION (Chief Inspector) Zé Jam, Francis Lebras, Maxime Delpierre, Olivier Sens, Guillaume Dommartin, Adrien Amey, Regis Huby)
- 2006 WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY SILENCE? (Le Triton) Marc Baron, Francois Merville, Jeanne Added
- 2004 LES CONTES DE ROSE MANIVELLE (Le Triton) Zé Jam, Francis Lebras, Guillaume Dommartin, Olivier Sens, Louis Sclavis
- 2003 TRIO ROUGE (Intuition) Lucilla Galeazi, Michel Godard
- 2002 THE FITTING ROOM (Enja Records) Marc Ducret, Dominique Pifarély
- 1993 TURKISH BLEND (Al Sur Media 7) Gilles Andrieux, Julien Lourau, Bojan Z, Nicolas Krassik, Kakoli, Benoit Dunoyer, Youval Micenmacher
- 2000 TRANSLUCIDE (Enja Records) Noel Akchoté, Yves Robert, Michel Godard
- 1994 PENDULUM QUARTET (Label Acousti) Julien Lourau, Benoit Dunoyer, Daniel Garcia Bruno
- 1991 PLEINE LUNE (Nocturne Productions) Pierre Christophe, Benoit Dunoyer, Serge Gacon, Dominique Pifarély, Julien Lourau, Xavier Desandre
- 1990 CELLO NEWS (Nocturne Productions) Pierre Christophe, Benoit Dunoyer, Serge Gacon

### SOUNDTRACKS

Feature-length movies

2012 ERNEST AND CELESTINE by Benjamin Renner, Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier  
2007 IT HAD TO BE YOU by Marc Gibaja  
2006 L'ÉCLAIREUR by Djibril Glissant

#### Shorts

2011 DEEP INSIDE by Marc Gibaja  
2010 LE TEMPS DE LA BALLE by Hervé Jakubowicz  
2002 TOUT AURA LIEU SUR by Gilles Perru  
2001 CONFESSIONS DANS UN BAIN by Marc Gibaja  
1997 LA VIE D'HERBERT C BERLINER by Marc Gibaja

#### Music for TV

2006-2007 LA MINUTE BLONDE Canal+ with Frédérique Bel

#### Documentaries

2012 LES SUFFRAGETTES by Michèle Dominici  
2001 VISA POUR L'OUBLI by Hervé Jakubowicz  
1998 EMPREINTES Arte  
1998 LOUIS STETTNER by Christophe Debuisne

