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EEN FILM VAN ANDRÉA BESCOND & ÉRIC MÉTAYER



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SYNOPSIS

LES CHATOUILLES is de debuutfilm van regisseurs Andréa Bescond en Éric Métayer. Het is de verfilming van het gelijknamige bekroonde toneelstuk geïnspireerd op het leven van Bescond, waarin ze terugblijkt op een traumatische gebeurtenis in haar jeugd. Met Karin Viard (LA FAMILLE BELIER, CHANSON DOUCE), Pierre Deladonchamps (L'INCONNU DU LAC, PLAIRE AIMER ET COURIR VITE) en Andréa Bescond in de hoofdrollen.

De 8-jarige Odette houdt van tekenen en dansen is haar grote passie. Haar onschuld wordt aangetast door Gilbert (Pierre Deladonchamps), een familievriend. Hij overspoelt Odette met cadeaus, haalt haar op van school en overtuigt haar om een "kietelspelletje" te spelen. Als volwassene danst Odette haar woede weg. Ze kijkt met haar therapeute terug op het verleden, verbreekt de stilte en omarmt het leven.

LES CHATOUILLES ging in première op het Cannes Filmfestival in de sectie Un Certain Regard.



INTERVIEW: ANDRÉA BESCOND AND ERIC METAYER

When, and why, did you choose to make your journey and such a special painful experience, a spectacle?

Andréa: I had already told Eric, in a disjointed way, about the sexual abuse I was a victim of in my childhood. And the more I talked about it, I started to recall the funny and unexpected encounters I had made that had brought me back to the light. As Eric listened to me, he understood how talking about it helped me feel good and how my testimony could help others who had experienced the same sexual violence. When I was pregnant with my second child and wondering about what to do in the daytime I started writing. Eric encouraged me. Based on my story we started doing improvisation, I wrote the dialogues and Eric staged it. In 2014, we presented the show to the Avignon Festival for the first time. And we've played it over 400 times.

Eric: In the beginning we wanted to write the screenplay as if it were Andrea's testimony. Finally we realized that it was a text that spoke to everyone, even if it wasn't our initial intention. On the other hand when we wrote the movie we were fully aware that this phenomena touched a large range of people.

Andrea: Thanks to our spectacle we were struck to see how sexual violence on children had become a plague of our time. We started receiving hundreds, then thousands of testimonies from people who entrusted us with their secret.

Several of them sent me private messages: "You give me courage, nobody knows my secret, I am a parent today, I don't want to hurt my family and I hope that one day I will be brave enough to talk about it...."

Was the writing and staging of the show cathartic?

Andrea: It filled a gap of extreme loneliness. I always thought I was such a troubled girl and I was convinced that what happened was my fault. Between addictions, drugs, alcohol, lack of love and self-esteem, toxic sexual relationships and no tomorrow, I gradually dehumanized myself. Because we are so anesthetized by this trauma that we constantly need adrenalin.

How was the transition from stage form to cinematographic form born?

Eric: After receiving several "standing ovations" with the show, we started dreaming about filmmaking. We were delirious, fantasizing on Karin Viard as the mother! It was like kids dreaming. And then a number of completely crazy coincidences led to another. François Kraus came to Avignon, discovered the show and asked us to make a movie. The most delirious thing was that he had asked friends what to see in Avignon and he questioned – without knowing it - Andrea's agent and mine! Of course both advised him to go see "Little Tickles". (Laughs)

Andrea : Francois and his partner Denis Pineau- Valencienne have showed incredible boldness. They told us "You never wrote a scenario – doesn't matter – if you need we will propose a consultant to help. You've never directed a movie! We love first films! Anyways, no one can play the part of Odette besides you, Andrea and we will surround you with top liners". They completely trusted us, and let us take our time. They even gave us the possibility to create a model before the shooting. We gathered almost all the film crew, especially Pierre Aim, who like all the head of departments, was highly invested, attentive, devoid of ego.

Tell me about the adaptation. What major changes did you want to bring?

Andrea: We wanted to detach ourselves from the construction of the spectacle, adopt different angles and develop in particular the "collateral damages"; the way a family breaks up or even the share of responsibility and guilt of each one. It is above all an ensemble film.

Eric: Several characters in the film didn't exist in the show.

The father, for example, is a counterpoint for the mother. We also wanted to talk about a couple who has trouble building their relationship because a person victim of this kind of violence considers that she doesn't 'have access to this kind of love. It was thus a question of evoking the entourage gravitating around Odette.

Andrea: The last thing we wanted to do was make a film for the prosecution. We each have our own way of dealing with things. Even the mother, when she says to her daughter " You don't know what I've been through" is a victim. She took refuge in denial and built herself an armor. And rather than holding her daughter in her arms and asking for her forgiveness, she turns away: she probably suffers from an unknown trauma. It was also important to talk about a resilient victim, Odette, and a non-resilient victim, Miguié, while the spectacle focused almost exclusively on Odette. The film takes a broader point of views since it also tells how the characters around her take in, or not, her pain and of their own pain too.

How did you articulate the dramatic constructions between the different temporalities jumping from one to another?

Eric: It already existed in the show. Even for the film we worked the screenplay in a theatrical way: we never asked ourselves the question, in the first draft anyway, if we were in a cinematographic form. It was already obvious in the show.

Andrea: It was a tribute to the puzzle of the traumatic memory. From that present time with the therapist, Odette remembers things but in a chaotic way and that's way we have different temporal strata and that's why she sometimes finds herself facing herself facing the void.

Eric: One of the changes in the film that wasn't in the show is that the therapist represents the subjective of the audience as we tell the story. We walk the spectator back in time and even play with these narratives codes since, in certain scenes, like the one in the Chalet, the therapist feels uncomfortable and Odette is comforting her.

Andrea: We are in introspection and we mix the fantasy of freedom of speech with a very raw, very realistic memory. These are strata where Odette takes refuge in drugs or dance and these are moments when you live outside yourself.

When we see the film we have the feeling that the repeated rapes on Odette is covered up by her environment, her family, by the fear of the adults to face the truth.

Andrea: Absolutely. It's about the power of an adult on a child, whether it's the influence of the abuser or of the family. We have noticed that children never talk about what they have gone through by fear of hurting others. And deep down inside them, fear of the adult, the fear of disobeying. Be a good kid and stay on track. But those secrets are dead bodies hidden in a closet. And when they are revealed, many families react disgusted and says: "what you are saying is dirty". However, nowadays people are not ashamed and I even remember a theater director who confided to me that he was a victim. We must help children today to express themselves.

Eric: We must talk with children and incite them to talk. When a criminal pedophile is faced with a child who says: "why are you putting your hand there? It can make him stop.

Andrea: Adults have a responsibility to children and they need to convince themselves of this. A secret is the best ally for a criminal pedophile. And a criminal pedophile uses it evidently.



Do you think that Odette's passion for dance is salutary?

Andréa: Dance is her means of expression and her survival instinct. From an artistic point of view, dance allowed us to keep a certain reserve and express the pain and the anger in another way. Of course there are moments of anger that are verbalized and played but there is also the choreographed anger.

Eric: We didn't want to make a clinical movie such as those that exist on this topic and stage a frightening life with the burden of sadness. We wanted to keep a form of poetry and humor with a breath of fresh air. And the dance brought that. Including by mainstreaming musicals, we'd get out of the painful moments and breathe!

Despite the trauma of the protagonist, the film is deeply solar.

Andrea: If we didn't want to tell a purely tragic story it's because that's not all it is.

You may have been raped, lost your humanity, fallen, climbed the slope and fallen even lower but there is no life that is purely dark and dramatic. There are also moments of healing and breathing. We wanted to put this dimension into images and show how Odette clings to the light until it calms down. From this traumatic experience and traumatic amnesia, we had to draw moments of life. It was important to give hope to victims by showing them that they can get out of it, and that you have weapons inside you. You have to walk your head held high and tell yourself that you are not responsible: the adult abuser is responsible.

Eric: The film changed as the writing went on. At the beginning we had more of documentary approach like Depardon. But as the development of the script progressed, under the influence of our personalities, the project evolved into a solar tale, with a real desire to get out of it for the protagonist.

Andrea: Even the light we have chosen, like the color calibration and music, are elements that pull us towards light. We wanted to approach this story from a life perspective.

Odette's relationship to her mother is the heart of the film and of her pain.

Andrea: The character of the mother is in denial. It's the case of 90% of criminal pedophiles victim's families. People don't want to talk about it. And so the raped child becomes a troubled adult, a depressive adult, a dependent adult and it's no one else's fault besides the victim itself. Either families react by saying "Come on! It's not so bad" or "That never happened and my daughter or my son is a liar." The mother chooses to say that Odette invented this story to hurt her.

Eric: If the mother is in denial, the father is blind too. For example the scene by the pool when his friend warns him, he doesn't want to see it. For him, it's so unbelievable, improbable, he says to himself "That can't happen to my kid".

Andrea: We wanted to stage all those small signals sent by a child. Like when for example she refuses to go to the mountain for the weekend with her parents' friend, Miquié. As far as the parents are concerned they love their child. They walk her threw her projects and show consideration. But the truth be told, the mother doesn't know how to love; she loves her but she's doing it wrong. That's why we didn't write a character for the prosecution; that's what most families face in this kind of drama. We don't know what this mother experienced but she didn't have an easy construction and next to what her daughter experienced, it seems to her that her pain is much harder.

Eric: She says to Odette in essence, "Surely, you've experienced difficult things but you were able to grow happy while I've never been able to get over it."

Andrea: When a victim has the courage to speak, others may have a tough time coping with it because maybe they didn't have that courage.

Odette invents herself another family with Manu, Lenny and her other friends from dance.

Andrea: We create a family when we feel abandoned. **Eric:** Whether the family is real or not, Nouréïev is also part of the family. For me, family is beyond blood bond. I have lots of friends that I consider as my sisters or brothers. We can create a family differently and we evoke that in the film. Odette is drawn by Lenny's inner light who is her lifesaver and who holds her hand. He is the only male interventionist character who brings extraordinary support to Odette.

At what point of the project did the question of actors come along?

Andrea: Karin Viard was obvious because she's a phenomenal actress and we have a real physical resemblance. She has a broad acting range, able to go from anger to sweetness in two seconds. It was a dream to have the sequence face to face with her sitting on the steps in front of the police station and admire her professionalism.

Eric: She knows how to bring humor into small things like in the restaurant scene.

Andrea: For the father, we wanted someone earthling, anchored to the ground and sweet. This man is fighting to exist, to provide for his family. He just tries to smooth things out a little because he wants to live in peace and serenity.

Eric: We wanted a father who despite his physical strength could not solve the problem. We witness that when Odette fantasizes on her father kicking the shit out of Miquié. Clovis Cornillac has that combination of strength and sweetness that we were searching for.

Andrea: Odette's parents work all the time: they are completely invested in their work and on providing for their family, having a nice home and paying for their daughter's dance class. Sometimes we're too tired or too sucked into our daily problems to see what is really going on in our own home.

Eric: We wanted to talk about a middle class family so that everyone can relate to it.

Andrea: For Miquié, we were happy to engage Pierre Deladonchamps because we wanted someone different from the image of a pedophile. Miquié is successful on a professional and social level, he is married to a beautiful wife and has two beautiful children. He is radiant and intelligent so his obsession doesn't come from social misery, emotional or sexual. We wanted a perfect gender. Even Odette's mother could feel attracted to him. He could be a womanizer.

You've planted Odette at different ages, from adolescence to adulthood, without it ever being disturbing.

Andrea: We don't give any indication on the precise age of the characters, whether it's Odette or Manu and we didn't try to disguise the actors. As far as I'm concerned it was obvious that I would play the character from adolescence to adulthood because we knew we would film Odette dancing. We could have called upon a confirmed actress but it would have been complicated because my dance is a true identity that corresponds to the character.

In terms of staging how did you divide the roles?

Andrea: We worked a lot upstream with our four hands.

Eric: For each scene, we made a storyboard and thought about the camera movements that we passed on to our first assistant. For the scenes with the therapist we filmed a static shot, for the memories we shot with a handheld camera, with deliberate awkwardness and for the dance sequences and the black box we used a Steadicam.

How did you work with the actors?

Andrea: There again, we shared the work: I especially focused on Pierre Deladonchamps and Eric on Karin Viard.

Eric: The advantage of co-directing is that we could play good cop, bad cop. That way, we could insist on certain points and point out things to actors by saying things differently... and to avoid conflict.

Andrea: We talked a lot with the actors before the shooting, we organized readings and took a distance from the script to consider the psychology of each character. We knew exactly what we wanted for the "color" of each character.

Eric: There was also a part of improvisation. We knew what we wanted camera wise but that didn't stop us from drifting away.

Andrea: The script was completely written but we encouraged the actors to "corrupt" the script and feel free as they acted out the situations. For example when Odette tells her parents what happened to her the whole scene wasn't written. We wanted to create "accidents" and the actors appreciated our trust. So we often filmed sequence shots, two or three minutes, and we would say to Pierre Aim, our D.O.P., that the actors were immersed in a theatrical context: we let them play the scene from the beginning to the end, without interruption so that they could evolve in the situation and let them express their emotion.

Eric: We elaborated our plan after the location scouting.

Andrea: And if the location we chose had any risk of causing a problem, we would change the location. We scouted locations during the shooting asking ourselves the question of the harmony of the location for the situation, each night, for the next day scenes. That way we were always ready.

Eric: Just like in "Toto the hero" where we could see that the image was fake. We wanted childhood magic. Sometimes Odette's memories were printed in her fantasies: we wanted to keep the awkwardness and accept that we could see how it was done. We wanted to assume the childish, funny, poetic side of those fantastical scenes.

What were your intentions for the music?

Andrea: We wanted an urban dimension with percussions and the binary rhythm of hip-hop. Our composer Clement Ducol brought this tribal percussion style. He is a trained percussionist, that's what we liked because we wanted to keep the purity of the music.

Eric: He created a genuine softness despite the percussions crossed with the cello and the voices. He brought a poetic and naturel dimension. The partition matched the pre-existing music.

Andrea: However the film is not a musical and we didn't want to highlight the emotion in a too heavily way. He composed several layers of music but his proposition was pretty pure. Then concerning the music in, since we jump from the 90s to 2015, we go through different registers from classic to hip-hop. It's Odette's trajectory.

Could this film be a vehicle for a change?

Andrea: We don't have the pretension to think that a film can make things happen. But an artistic tool such as cinema can touch a large range of people. We are a bit resigned on the political level. Marlène Schiappa struggles but she must face the powerful magistrates lobbyist who are satisfied with status quo. Given how they have extended the statute of limitations periods, they refer pedophile criminality cases to criminal court whereas a rape is a crime that should be judged in the Assise court. A lot of people protect themselves and their friends since the sexual liberation in the 1970s. We are thousands of victims who are talking about the toxicity of the sexual relations that have happening during our childhood. Today, if Odette took Migué's hand we would say she is consenting. We would argue about the fact that "she didn't say anything", she "didn't struggle" and that "she followed the adult". We must fight to show the magistrates that we are in vigilance and that we are thousands testifying about this toxicity. All the arguments about the consent of children under 13 years old are absolutely unbelievable. We know that some magistrates are aware that abused children are in a speechless state, but some magistrates are not. And this kind of sexual abuse creates psychological damages that are often irreparable.

Eric: A film like this can move the lines on a societal level because it can initiate discussion by talking with our children and allow them to name things.

Andréa: We hope we can contribute in breaking the taboo and reduce the aggressions. The abusers must feel in danger and the families need to react. We can't decently allow anymore a member of a family take act while everyone knows and says nothing. They must know that they don't have the right to look away. 154 000 children are raped each year in France. It's a terrible plague that is encouraged by the complicity of each person. We must rebel against the inaction of justice and we must talk about it among citizens and take action.



INTERVIEW: FRANÇOIS KRAUS AND DENIS PINEAU-VALENCIENNE

When did you first hear about the project?

François: In July 2015, I was wandering in the Avignon Festival as an enlightened tourist, a theater lover, and especially on the lookout for plays to adapt. One day, I was alone with my son, I landed in a small room with barely 80 people, without knowing what I was about to see. It seemed to me that we were about to see yet another “supposedly amazing” one man show. At the end of the show, my son and I were in tears, in a standing ovation, like almost all the other spectators. It was like an epiphany: I immediately thought this play needed to be adapted as a film. I was picturing a film on the subject with this liberated and logical narration that alternates flashbacks and therapy, this tone, all at once, overwhelming, raw, sincere and funny, and finally with this woman, Andréa Bescond who could be both the director and the actress. So I called her agent and I met with Eric Métayer and Andréa in Avignon. I directly told them that I was up for a movie project and I asked them to write the script, with the condition that Andréa played in it, and that they direct it together.

What touched you so much?

François: In fact, this sense of urgency came from my absolute love for this show, it was therefore a matter of total empathy with the subject and the treatment. Like you, I asked myself why I had been so moved. Above all, it is in my opinion because we all identify ourselves as children with our own past sufferings, whatever they are, and also as a relative, parent, big brother of a potential victim. Because the show alerts us and also tells us that pedophiles are not necessarily awful men with raincoats waiting with candies after school. The movie tells us: “the persecutors are among the relatives, in the families”.

After that, the play was programmed in Paris.

François: The amazing thing is, after watching the show with Denis – who urgently joined me in Avignon!

– the show premiered in Le Petit Montparnasse, and every night the public would end up in tears, in a standing ovation. After that, it was played at the Theatre Antoine and at Châtelet Theater. Every time, the spectators would vibrate with the same empathy. This kind of evidence does not happen very often and, as producers, we felt that the spectators were completely won over. Of course, cinema seemed like the logical continuity, even if we knew that the movie would take risk and would differentiate from the play.

You weren't afraid to entrust the direction and interpretation to Andréa and Eric?

François: Andréa doesn't come from the cinema and Eric comes from theater and improvisation, but taking this risk made sense. They were the only ones capable of bringing the film adaptation to a sincere and successful conclusion. They had to be fully involved. We wanted Andréa to play the lead character even if she is unknown as an actress. Moreover, there was also a risk because of the narration, and the fact that it is a first movie. Finally, in 2015, Little Ticks wasn't the success it became afterwards with the Molière of the best one-person show.

Denis: This risk-taking is part of the logic of several developments that we have been carried out, with the first films inspired by the personal experience of their author, such as May Allah Bless France! of Abd Al Malik or Maïwenn's Forgive Me. This new production belongs to this register of autofiction cinema that we like very much - with a very intimate expression that finds its strength in what it has of cathartic.

How did you artistically support this project?

François: In this kind of creative process, you have to guide the writing while at the same time letting the writers adapt and write. It is up to them to do the cutting work even if we helped from time to time with friendly consultations. We especially brought the finishing touch with the character of Lenny, played by Gregory Montel, which was a creation that wasn't in the spectacle.

Denis: We respected the back and forth narration between therapy and flashbacks. We wanted the film to be as atypical in the narration as in the play, in order to mix grace, poetry, humor and dance. Without avoiding the periods of hyper sexuality, drugs and loss, or the violence inherent to the subject. We wanted her journey to tell a story of resilience that nevertheless

goes through all kind of excesses. Odette is saved by the trial, love and the liberation of speech.

How did you proceed to federate your financial and artistic partners around this project?

François: We quickly realized that we had to surround Andréa with confirmed actors. What was great about this cast was that we just had to send the actors to the show to get their full support. All our actors went to see the play and naturally wanted to participate in the film.

Denis: As we had done with the actors, we asked our financial partners to see the play. At the end of the development, we sent the script, which overwhelmed our partners who had seen the show, as much as the few who didn't see it.

François: We realized that in France, while it is a subject we talk about a lot, there are very few films about it. The references are more Anglo-Saxon or Nordic. Like *Festen*, for example. However, this is a very strong subject that can concern everyone.

What did you think of the choices and biases of the adaptation?

Denis: The striking thing is the feeling of cousinhood with the original work. The new elements blend with the original elements in a natural development. We no longer distinguish between what comes from the show and what is specific to the script. Sometimes we went to see the show after reading the script and were surprised not to find elements of the script. There is a true fidelity and at the same time many new elements that only cinema could authorize.

Were you sure this project needed a co- direction?

Denis: That was one of the big bets. We had a tandem that worked together in a rare harmony. Andréa and Eric never disagreed with us and there was a surprising and reassuring respect for each other's words. We have never seen any signs of disagreement. Eric's place isn't easy because it's not his story. Knowing that, he was very skillful in putting himself at the service of the movie and in being the driving force behind the creative process on an equal footing with Andréa.

François: We tried to surround them as best as we could. We are well aware of the difficulties of a first film, since we produced quite a few: 14 out of 27. As producers, we searched for confirmed head of departments who had already worked with us.

Let's talk about the cast.

François: Karin Viard saw the play twice, and we were very proud of it. She was a very good ambassador for the project; she talks about it very well. And we know her well because we shot two movies with her, including a first movie «*Le Role de sa vie*», and later «*All about Actresses*» by Maïwenn. We were delighted to shoot a third movie with her.

As for Clovis Cornillac, we have already shot three movies with him and we wanted a physically solid actor to play a real «father». For the character of Migué, Éric and Andréa told us that they wanted a great actor and a «handsome guy»: we then thought of Pierre Deladonchamps. Again, they were sent to see the show before they read the script.

Denis: It was one thing to want someone like him and it was another for him to accept. We owe him one because not all actors are ready to project themselves in such a role.

Was it a difficult movie to edit?

François: The film has the support of France 2, Canal Plus, Orange Studio and UGC. On the other hand, we had neither the advance on receipts nor regional aid. The partners went fast on reasonable amounts.

Denis: It is such a bet concerning the directing part that everyone proceeded with caution. The two directors didn't even have short films on their resume.

What is your ambition with the release of the film

François: I'd like it to trigger some liberation in the speech of victims, testimonies inside families or in front of courts of Justice. At the end of the movie, we are moved and liberated with the character of Odette. Even if we share her suffering, in the end we've lived this liberation and reconstruction with her. We aspire to well-being and happiness with her. The tears of the spectators at the end of the film are the same as those of the spectators of the original show: they are tears of empathy, emotion and liberation that come from far away. That's the beauty of our job.

Have you tried to find her mitigating circumstances?

Of all the difficult characters I've played; this is by far the most complicated. Because it sends me back to my own maternal convictions and that I can't understand nor justify. But I never hold a moral judgement on the roles I play; I like characters that are strangers to me. So I didn't try to defend her or to make her likeable but simply make possible and obvious an attitude that seems inconceivable and indefensible. I intellectually understand her but not intimately. I can't understand why she can't hold her daughter in her arms and ask for her forgiveness.

Tell me about your relationship with Andrea as an acting partner and director.

There is something about her that I love infinitely because she is an extremely upright person without being rigid. I think we had a mutual feeling, we recognized each other without precisely knowing why. It's really intimate and has nothing to do with a speech/words/. It's like a common denominator. She has a way of being in existence in which I find myself. And without a doubt, something I could possibly take credit for: she's doesn't like minauderie and ease. I'm more in the seduction because I'm an actress but it's basically like some kind a rough stone, even if she is less brutal than me, she made it herself. We took some support and grew like weeds. And I think we recognize each other on that.

How do they share roles with Eric?

I knew Eric because we worked together in the beginning of my career. He was already very funny at the time and he has no kind of deviousness, no kind of ready-to-think. I think with Andrea, they meet around their wounds and they are doing each other a lot of good. They emit an extraordinary humanity. Andrea viscerally knew exactly what she wanted and Eric helped to decrypt certain situations that sometimes appeared more complex.

It's the first time you work with Clovis Cornillac.

Yes, we only ran into each other. He's a lovely man always at the service of the film. He's peaceful and has no ego. He is only in work and kindness. He is an extremely pleasant partner.

What did you think of the final film?

I was caught up by the film and I particularly loved the dance scenes. Andrea's expression is above all her body. And I feel that it exists in a remarkable way in the film: I've never felt that much emotion by seeing people dance. We can sense that all the dancers have experienced violent and serious things like Andrea in order to dance like that. It's absolutely overwhelming.



INTERVIEW: CLOVIS CORNILLAC

How did you discover the spectacle of "Les Chatouilles/ Little Tickles"?

The first person who talked to me about it was my wife, Lilou, who was overwhelmed and encouraged me to see it. Unfortunately, for lack of time, I didn't go, thinking that it was a great show among others that I missed. And then, almost a year later, Francois Kraus, the producer, with whom I've already shot three films, called me to ask me to go see the show "Little Tickles".

It was the second time I heard of it.

As I gave him the same answer as to Lilou, he insisted by explaining to me that the writers of the play were going to write a film and that Andrea Bescond would like me to play the father. There were two performances left at the Chatelet Theater and I managed to attend. Lilou was delighted. And like all the spectators of "Little Tickles", I experienced a very special moment. A true theatrical moment.

And then you met Andrea and Eric?

Yes, I met them in their dressing rooms, first to congratulate them with sincerity. Andrea told me how moved she was that I had come and that it would be a dream for her if I played the father in the film. I was very touched but I explained to her that I wanted to devote myself more and more to directing and that I had very little free time for acting.

She said she would organize herself according to my availability.

That's exactly what happened since we shot when I was editing "Belle and Sebastian" and so it became possible for me. In any case, I realized that I couldn't say no to that project; there was a sort of obvious appeal, everything made sense and seemed coherent. There was no reason to question it.

What did you think of the script?

I was a little apprehensive because I was wondering if we could make a film of such a show. Can we write a screenplay from a single staged show with such incredible accuracy, comedy and strength? Wasn't there a risk of losing what was fascinating in the show? And I was pleasantly surprised: there were very developed characters and I found situations that I had felt in the play. So I thought to myself that between the images, the unstructured editing, the humor, and the emotion, there was an ambition at the height of what I had seen in the show.

The father you embody seems passive next to his wife.

The least we can say is that he's not the one wearing the panties in the couple.

He's more of a submissive man than a tyrant. He's also touching because you can sense he's a good guy. But I don't have the feeling he's a coward; he just isn't strong willed enough to face a woman like the one that Karin Viard embodies.

We've all known couples like this where one of the two partners is a little extinct because he doesn't want conflict. And yet they stay together.

What struck me the most is that there is never a moment of affection in this couple; there is not a scene where they are in each other's arms. It says something about their relationship and their "arrangement" as a couple.

Does he ever have any doubts?

I always played it like that; like a blind guy. That is what frightens me because we realize that such a tragedy can happen under our own roof. When I spoke with Andrea, I understood that this was what it was all about. He never perceived what happened. Hence the scene in the pool where he is necessarily annoyed by the one who tries to alert him: he doesn't freak out for his daughter because he doesn't want to overprotect her by putting her under a cover and that any sexual attraction for a child is totally inconceivable to him.

Do you think he's in some kind of compromise with his wife to have peace?

He is in a form of abandonment; he doesn't want to complicate his life.

His restaurant is a lot of work and he can see that his wife is never satisfied with what she has. She yells at him, but she accommodates their situation. As for him, he is one of those men capable of living unhappily as a couple as long as they are in a couple. So there's like a tacit agreement between them.

His wife is in extreme denial.

She is locked into her own logic and is indeed in such denial that she will never accept to hear the truth. This is totally delusional. And what shocks me most about her is that she remains in denial after discovering the facts to save face. The most overwhelming thing about Andrea is her ability to resign herself that she will never convince her mother. She experienced absolute horror, and one of the closest people to her denied this reality. To ignore such violence, and to mourn the compassion of one's own mother, is terrible. It is in that that Andrea is wonderful; she is animated by an extraordinary life force.

Tell me about the shooting and acting direction of Andrea and Eric.

Very honestly, it was a very tender, very warm shooting with two people enthusiastic about making their film. I think that if I had played a score that did not correspond to what they wanted, they would have told me. But we were in sync and I didn't feel lost.

You discovered Karin Viard on a set.

We hit it back and forth. In terms of female and male images, we can easily play ordinary people, and since we have a popular image, it was fair to have chosen us for these roles. It's a shame we didn't work together earlier because we both work well.

As a director, I'd like to bring us together in the future.

How was your relationship with Cyrielle Mairesse who plays Odette?

She is full of sweetness. When working with children you have to establish a working relationship. I just try to reassure them so that at the moment of the take there is pleasure in acting. But I try not to be too "good a friend" off the set so we can stay in a professional relationship on the shooting. In my opinion, children are intelligent and they know how to distinguish between the moments when you are relaxing and the moment when you are at work.

Could this film be a vehicle for a change?

Beyond its Cannes selection, I think it's a popular film, in the best sense of the word. If "Little Tickers" meets the public, something strong can happen. Because what I like about this film is that it dares to bring up a delicate subject without being accusatory or moralizing and without misery. It can raise awareness, making it possible to realize that different prescription periods must be granted depending on the nature of the crime.



INTERVIEW: PIERRE DELADONCHAMPS

What interested you about the project?

When I discovered "Les Chatouilles" (Little Tickles) at the Châtelet Theater, I already knew that this subject would give birth to a necessary film. I found the DNA from the show in the script, its openness allowing each character to exist, given that in the show, Andrea plays them all. It was necessary to give an identity to the parents as well to Gilbert, his best friend, Manu, and his boyfriend Lenny. I found that the tour de force of the script, which was achieved in the film, was the flashbacks between Odette's childhood and adulthood: in several shots we are perpetually in childhood through the eyes of an adult. It's overwhelming.

Did the character of Miquié repulse you?

Yes and no. Being an actor is accepting to play roles for which you didn't necessarily have empathy. But Andrea and Eric came to get me because they wanted to give to Gilbert, the character, a human aspect and not a caricature of what you can fantasize on a typical, libidinous, perverted pedophile whose intentions can be guessed 20 km away. If we still think that again today, it's what keeps us from seeing what's going on around us; there's no typical profile. I understood their approach and had even more desire to make the film as ventured into a territory that I had never explored in other roles. So it was difficult but it was also a gift. Because I considered that I was also doing it for political purposes. This film is more than important it is necessary. From there, as an individual, and by extension as an actor, I was honored to be part of this project.

How can you appropriate such a predator?

It wasn't always easy but I tried to play it without distance. Telling myself that everything I was doing was perfectly normal. If I embodied Gilbert by judging him, I would have been a caricature. It's important not to judge your character, no matter what you think, and not to start intellectualizing things. I tried to do everything with my heart. Sometime when they would say: "Cut", I was embarrassed to have done what I had just done, even disgusted, but never during a take.

Did you try to imagine a past for him?

Probably in the second part of the film, where Gilbert is older and must face those he has made suffer. He had to become aware, before the court and what his victims sent to him, that his actions were serious. For me Gilbert always placed himself at the victim's age but he had no discernment that what HE wanted was not what SHE wanted. He didn't have the behavior that an adult is supposed to have towards a child, which means deciding for him what's good or bad. In my opinion, Gilbert was unable to assume this responsibility and he was in denial of morality.

Tell me about the scenes with Cyrielle Mairesse who portrays the role of Odette as a child.

All the sensitive scenes were made without Cyrielle, but with a stand-in for the countershots. But the scenes where she was present were tinged with a lot of innocence and spontaneity on her part: she's a very sweet kid and everything went well. She was aware of what the film was about and knew it was important to talk about it to prevent such phenomena from happening again. She also knew at her level that it was a form of political act. Her parents and a team of psychologists surrounded her enormously. Nothing was done in a casual way.

What was the hardest sequence to shoot?

The scene that struck me the most was the one in the chalet when Gilbert joins Odette in the middle of the night in front of his own children. It was very difficult to do as an individual. But the most strenuous as an actor was the trial, where I had to give to Gilbert the burden of years show how he was struggling with his conscience. He was obviously here as the defendant even if he felt like a victim of a phenomenon that has overtaken him – and that's what Andrea and Eric wanted. At that moment he was in a total lack of lucidity. In terms of acting work, this is what seemed to me to be the most challenging and important to embody, with a form of truth.

The confrontation with her sister is terrible. That was the moment I hated that man the most. Her sister puts raw, violent words on the fact that he stole everything from her and soiled her; because of him she never had a relationship. It is the opposite of Odette's journey, which has succeeded in turning to the light and has become the spokesperson for past victims and those that can be avoided in the future.

Gilbert is one of Odette's father's closest friends.

The character embodied by Clovis is blinded by the fact that Gilbert has succeeded: he looks good, he has money, he's nice, he is cheating on the world. As a result, this father who saw his friend coming in every morning for coffee at his restaurant and who he totally trusted, he feels betrayed. Andrea and Eric told me that in the vast majority cases, the pedophile is in the victim's immediate entourage. Most of the time, it's an uncle, a father or a friend of the family. This explains why, sometimes, we are blinded because we never imagine that we can be so humanly close to someone who acts in the shadows in such a monstrous way. Generally, human beings never imagine the worst in his immediate environment; he's always trying to keep crime, sex crimes, disease, as far away from him as possible. That's what makes it possible to miss out on serious things that happen right under our noses.

Then the victims are forgotten.

The worst indeed is when the entourage knows but they consider that we shouldn't talk about it to avoid upheaval; we no longer think what is best for the victim to rebuild herself, but what's best for the family to avoid creating an earthquake. I believe that what ever is happening around, we must always act for the victim first. The rest, you have to deal with it. We must never underestimate the trauma of a victim and the importance of being able to share, verbalize, grasp it and act on it. I think the victim is relieving herself of a burden not keeping it inside her.

How do Andrea and Eric work with their actors?

It was the first time I was working with two co-directors. It was well balanced: I found keys from both of them in different fields. Obviously for all the scenes with Odette I looked spontaneously to Andrea who knew how Gilbert had to be portrayed and behave. However, I'd consult Eric about Gilbert's relationship with the other characters. They both impressed me; it was a first film and I saw them very concentrated and inventive. They breathed an atmosphere on set that removed us from any caricature. We didn't have to be in a form of gravity because we were dealing with a serious subject. That was the pitfall to avoid and they did it brilliantly.



CAST

Odette ANDRÉA BESCOND
Mado Le Nadant KARIN VIARD
Fabrice Le Nadan CLOVIS CORNILLAC
Gilbert Miguié PIERRE DELADONCHAMPS
Lenny GRÉGORY MONTEL
The shrink CAROLE FRANCK
Manu GRINGE
With the participation of ARIANE ASCARIDE in the role of Mme Maloc
Odette as a child CYRILLE MAIRESSE
Lola LÉONIE SIMAGA

CREW

Adapted from the play LES CHATOUILLES (OU LA DANSE DE LA COLÈRE) by ANDRÉA BESCOND and ERIC METAYER
Directors ANDRÉA BESCOND and ERIC METAYER
Writers ANDRÉA BESCOND and ERIC METAYER
Production company LES FILMS DU KIOSQUE
Executive Producers FRANÇOIS KRAUS and DENIS PINEAU-VALENCIENNE
Cinematography by PIERRE AÏM (AFC)
Sound Department THOMAS LASCAR
MARGOT TESTEMALE
THOMAS DESJONQUERES
THOMAS GAUDER
Editing by VALÉRIE DESEINE
Set Decoration ERIC BARBOZA
Costume Design ISABELLE PANNETIER
Casting by EMMANUELLE PREVOST
Assistant Director FLORIAN KUHN
Unit Production Manager MARIANNE GERMAIN
Film score CLÉMENT DUCOL
Scripte Supervisor DIANE BRASSEUR
Logistics LOGAN LELIEVRE (AFR)
Music Supervisor MY MELODY
REBECCA DELANNET and ASTRID GOMEZ
MONTROYA
Co-production with FRANCE 2 CINEMA
ORANGE STUDIO
UMEDIA
CANAL+
In association with FRANCE TELEVISIONS
OCS
CINEMAGE 12
COFIMAGE 29
A PLUS IMAGE 8
INDEFILMS 6
UFUND
In partnership with the CNC
With the support of SOFICINÉMA 13 DEVELOPPEMENT, MANON PRODUCTION 7, CINEMAGE 11 DEVELOPPEMENT, CINEVENTURE DEVELOPPEMENT 2, A PLUS IMAGE DEVELOPPEMENT 6, COFIMAGE DEVELOPPEMENT 6, CN5 PRODUCTIONS, ANGOA