

PRINCES PRODUCTION

presents

a film by TONY GATLIF

liberté

KORKORO (Freedom)

starring

MARC LAVOINE MARIE-JOSÉE CROZE

JAMES THIÉRRÉE

and introducing RUFUS and CARLO BRANDT

Running time: 111 min.

Original script TONY GATLIF

Music DELPHINE MANTOULET & TONY GATLIF

Production PRINCES PRODUCTION, FRANCE 3 CINÉMA, RHÔNE ALPES CINÉMA

www.libertelefilm.com

International Sales



INTERNATIONAL

1 Quai du Point du Jour - « Immeuble Central Park » - 92 130 Issy-les-Moulineaux - France

Tel: (33 1) 41 41 21 68 / Fax: (33 1) 41 41 21 33 - sales@tf1.fr - www.tf1international.com

Synopsis

“I wanted to break out
of that vision forged from fear
and hate that led gypsies and bohemians
straight to the gas chambers, to show
them as the free, nomadic
people they are.”

Tony Gatlif

Theodore, veterinarian and mayor of a village in Occupied France during WWII, has taken in nine-year old **Petit Claude**, whose parents have been missing since the beginning of the war. Schoolteacher **Mademoiselle Lundi** is a dedicated humanist with strong democratic values. When she meets a band of gypsies who have set up camp nearby to work the local grape harvest, she has Theodore help her enroll the gypsy children in school.

Petit Claude develops a friendship with **Taloche**, a big kid-at-heart, thirty-year-old Bohemian who carries a pet monkey on his shoulder everywhere he goes. Identity checks imposed by the Vichy regime become more and more frequent, and the nomadic gypsies can no longer come and go as they please. Theodore gives them a parcel of land so that they have a legal residence.

While the gypsy children attend Mademoiselle Lundi's classes, Petit Claude becomes more and more fascinated by the Bohemian way of life – a world of freedom where children are king. But their days of carefree joy are numbered: pressure by the Vichy police and the Gestapo intensifies and danger is a constant menace. As they have done for centuries, the gypsies will once again have to pack up and move on...

Interview with Tony Gatlif

How did you come up with the idea of LIBERTÉ (KORKORO - FREEDOM)?

I'd wanted to do a film about the Roma holocaust ever since I started making movies. But the subject frightened me. I often met Roma who said, "Make us a film about the deportation of the Roma."

In early 2007, I participated in an international conference of Roma in Strasbourg and young Roma Representatives of the European Community asked me to do the same. They told me how much they suffered from the lack of recognition, from others' ignorance of their people's history.

I didn't see how I could do this film. Me, a filmmaker who loves the camera to roam freely, how could I respect the strict rules of a period piece? And I backed off in fear of failure, really.

Then one day I learned **Jacques Chirac** was going to reunite "the Justes" at the Pantheon to pay tribute to them. I thought, we're finally going to find out if there were "Justes" who saved gypsies. Unfortunately, they didn't show up. I started to look for them.

I finally found an anecdote in a book by Jacques Sigot, just a few lines long:

"The fate of a man named **Tolloche** was particularly tragic. Held at the internment camp in Montreuil-Bellay, he managed to obtain his freedom with the help of a notary by buying a small house a few miles outside town. Incapable of living indoors, he set out on the road again to return to his homeland in Belgium. He was arrested in the north and disappeared in Poland with other unfortunates like himself.

It was the fate of **Tolloche**, who risked everything to preserve his liberty, that made me determined to do this film. And then there's the notary, a "Juste" who also took risks in the attempt to save him...

Did you consider doing a documentary?

Of course, but I didn't have enough material to make a documentary. The people are dead. There are very little archives. We know of no living "Juste" who saved Roma. And that last aspect is fundamental to me: to understand why a man or a woman decides one day to save Bohemian lives. That's the lesson of Humanity that I wanted to make into a film. I don't want to condemn anyone, not even the French police who were part of the round-ups. I just want to show what was, without exaggerating or humiliating anyone. History speaks for itself. Because of that, everything I show had to be historically truthful.

So did you do a lot of preliminary historical research?

Yes, with the help of historians. My idea was to recreate what happened with the greatest possible historical accuracy. The problem is that there isn't much documentation about the Roma holocaust. No films, of course, and very few books. Just a few chapters here and there in books about gypsy history.

How do you explain this “black hole”? It's rare that such a major event gets so little attention. No one contests its historical existence...

During World War II, the Roma were imprisoned and slaughtered and every country agreed to it, with the notable exception of Bulgaria, which despite being fascist refused to hand its gypsies over to the Nazis. Even today, very few people know about this part of history and very few try to understand the problems of the ten million people in Europe who seem to float about in extreme poverty.

That black hole is intentional. The subject is not even mentioned in school books. Until recently, as a people they had no real representation, no one to defend them, except for a few gypsy writers, including **Matéo Maximoff**, and a few non-gypsy friends. This made it easier to despise them, easier to pass the repressive law of 1912 requiring anthropometric identification and the laws of Vichy which made nomadic life illegal and required that gypsies and Bohemians be locked up in concentration camps – forty of them all over France. That hate led to the Nazi extermination of half a million gypsies in Europe... In truth, gypsies have always been the black sheep of organized society.

How did you write LIBERTÉ (KORKORO - FREEDOM)?

I wrote the first draft of the script in a month. It freed me of the weight I'd been carrying around for so long. Everything became clear when I understood that I the only way to tell this story was through the characters of two “Justes” - Theodore, the village mayor and veterinarian, and Mademoiselle Lundi, the schoolteacher. Both were inspired by real people: Theodore by the notary who tried to save Taloché and his family, and Mademoiselle Lundi by the real story of schoolteacher **Yvette Lundy**, who worked in Gionges, La Marne. A resistant, she was arrested and deported. She helped me work on all the scenes relating to her character and school.

I also used a lot of my own personal history, and people who helped me in childhood and youth: my teacher, instructors and drama professor. I know Roma from all countries, I know what they're like. They haven't changed since 1940. I had no problem describing them. I recreated a gypsy family that travels across Europe and gets stuck in the war in France. I worked a year on it. The men let their hair and mustaches grow. All the actors went on a diet because there was nothing to eat back then. We built three trailers identical to ones from 1940. The nomad gypsies were nowhere to be found, we weren't going to look for them. One day we got to the end of a path in the back of the woods and they showed up like a breeze. You never know where they come from, you just know when they come. I described them this way for their first appearance in the script. Once I was done with this draft of the script, I realized I needed the gypsy soul.

Isn't easy to express what the gypsy soul is and make it understood. There is no word in their language that means Libert . Gypsies don't use this word because they're free. I needed to find a character who could represent the entire Roma community with his purity and naivete, his fantasy, freedom and extravagance. That character was Taloch . After that it took me nearly a year to complete the final script. Writing that way, I ended up getting closer to the reasons for the silence surrounding Samudaripen (the Roma genocide). Gypsies are afraid of ghosts. When they enter a cave, they run back out for fear of meeting ghosts. Taloch  is like that: he is afraid of the dead. What happened at the end of the war, when the gypsies understood that hundreds of thousands of them had been exterminated? They were afraid of those who were dead, afraid of waking them up, afraid they'd come back. Definitely afraid of talking about it. Today that's all over, but that fear existed well into the 1980's.

You were born in Algeria. Do you feel like this is your story?

Yes, absolutely. Algeria had been liberated earlier by the Americans but the laws of Vichy were in force there. The injustice done to the Roma people is revolting to me. The silence that engulfs it is horrible. I just want everyone to know about it – it's a necessity.

Did you leave the actors room to improvise?

No, except for Taloch . I asked the actors to learn the Romani language. So I had to write the dialogue for that and then leave it alone. Everything was written and translated.

What about casting ?

First, I went to Transylvania. Roma villages are like concentration camps, except they aren't surrounded by barbed wire. It's as if the only thing changed by time is their clothes. The nine people I found there came to France to shoot the film. Otherwise, for the rest of the gypsy family characters I found Albanian, Kosovar, Georgian and Serbian actors. They all had the accent of Traveling People. I found the grandmother in Oslo, she was of Russian origin.

James Thi r e, who plays the role of Taloch , isn't Roma...

That's true. For that role I wanted a musician, someone capable of playing music and climbing up trees and falling down as well. Without cheating... Impossible at first, to find that actor. And then one day I saw James at the Th  tre de la Ville in Paris. I'd never seen such a thing. I was impressed. He was the actor I'd dreamed of for the role. Since he's not Roma, he worked long and hard to become one. In six months he learned to speak Romani, play gypsy swing and above all, let himself be possessed by the free spirit of Taloch .

And the other French actors?

For the role of Theodore, I wanted an actor who looked like a typical Frenchman of that era. A voice and a face a little like **Pierre Fresnais**, **Maurice Ronet**, **Jacques Charrierou** or **Gérard Philippe**. **Marc Lavoine** has both.

I saw him regularly while I was writing the script to talk to him about his character and about history.

Marie-Josée Croze seemed an obvious choice for Mademoiselle Lundi. She was made for the part. I saw her like a Hitchcock character, fragile, mysterious and strong. I also saw her regularly for nearly a year, to talk about the real Mademoiselle Lundi, whom she met, and about the subtlety and ambiguity of her character, a schoolteacher active in the Resistance.

Rufus is your typical Frenchman, everyone's uncle. He's France itself.

For the character of Pierre Pentecôte, a member of the militia, we worked with **Carlo Brandt** on keeping him from becoming a caricature of a villain. On the contrary, we gave him a pitiful look with his hat falling into his eyes and his brown suit closed with a safety pin because of all the weight he'd gained since the beginning of the war.

When we see the movie, we're struck by your determination to break stereotypes, even if the way you represent the Roma is very precise.

With **LIBERTÉ**, I tried to demystify certain clichés. For example, with the music there's that scene where we see them giving a concert for chickens! I had fun with this cliché, even if music in films and concerts helped gypsies to achieve love and acceptance.

I wanted to show them the way they are, horse dealers, blacksmiths and musicians, for example. And if they won't allow their children to go to school, it's from the fear that they'll lose their souls.

Educating Roma children is still a major problem today. In **LIBERTÉ**, the school is a central location. But if the children agree to go to school, it's on the condition that they get paid, since they consider it to be work. In the end, they decide to show up after all, but mostly it's to eat and to take advantage of Mademoiselle Lundi's cookie hand-out. Matter of fact, once they've swallowed their portion, they run away.

You talk about the necessity of educating Roma children, and yet your film in itself has immense educational value. Most viewers, particularly those in primary and middle school, will learn of the existence of those repressive laws that restrict the freedom of the Roma. In fact, didn't you want the film to be shown first and foremost in schools?

Absolutely. It's important that **LIBERTÉ** be seen and explained in school. I hope one day there will be no more school books depicting Bohemians as kidnappers. Schools have perpetuated racist imagery of the Roma for a long time.

LIBERTÉ is not only a tribute to “the Justes”, it also pays tribute to schoolteachers and to the institution of public education.

I have a huge amount of respect for people like Theodore and Mademoiselle Lundi. I love the kind of people who decide to “do something”, who can't make up their minds to do nothing. I deliberately made it a mayor who saves Roma lives. Mayors – with few exceptions - are traditionally black sheep for the Roma people. Conversely, the Roma are black sheep for mayors. We hear it all the time: when Roma come to a city, it's chaos and filth, etc..

All these commonplace clichés made me want to create the character of the mayor as a “Juste” of great humanity, who will go so far as to fight his own colleagues to protect the Roma from the villainous laws in force.

The man who most helped me when I was young was a schoolteacher who believed in the French Republic and social justice.

How did you direct the actors on this film?

No one had the script. I gave them their scenes the night before, so that they would know their lines the following day. I talked a lot with each one of them. The gypsies of Romania didn't know that the Holocaust existed. I told them about **Ceausescu** so that they would understand.

And with James Thiérrée ?

I often told him Roma stories that I knew, to help him get into character. I wanted Taloché to have antenna, to sense danger. Like birds that feel the storm coming. James is like that, he's animal. For example, for a dancing scene, I wrote him war musique, with people crying out in Romani: “Don't shoot!” and “Stop the murder.” When James showed up and I asked him to dance to the music, we got the impression he was making love to the earth, that he was in osmosis with it. An animal making love to the earth.

When he gets into the house, he decides to “liberate the water”, so he opens up all the faucets. Was the idea for that amazing scene yours?

I had the idea for that scene while we were shooting, to expose the stupidity of trying to blindly impose permanent settlement on the Roma without knowing them.

A Roma can't live between walls, for fear of the evil spirits that live in stones. Theodore's house contrasts with the house in ruins given to them to protect them, which becomes like a prison because it's “inhabited”.

When Taloché discovers that water – which for him is the water of rivers – is imprisoned in the faucets, he sets it free, and it's only natural for him to plunge into the stairwell. Director of photography **Julien Hirsch** and I had decided we would follow him no matter what he would do. We obviously hadn't planned on him plunging into the stairwell. He was the one who had the urge to do that all on his own.

And yet, you asked him to fall from the top of a tree without using a stunt double. Wasn't that a huge risk?

I had proposed a stunt double, which he obviously refused. I saw him climb to the top of that tree several times. He was checking it out, observing where he would catch on it, breaking down how he would fall. And I also saw that he was an extraordinary trapeze artist. He mastered everything. Only then did I say, "let's go for it."

Let's talk about that scene where Taloché is running on the train tracks and he falls and finds a watch with inscriptions in Hebrew on it. It's one of the fundamental scenes of the movie...

A train, train tracks, Germans. Everything begins with that sequence where we see three young Nazi soldiers washing up with well water. Aryans, filmed in the style of **Leni Riefenstahl**. Nothing violent, just the fact that they're Nazis. The tension mounts off screen.

Taloché understands something is going on, that a train on its way to a concentration camp has been through there. Taloché is afraid and goes into a trance, begins to run and falls, throwing himself on the ground by the tracks. While we were shooting, he was in a state I've never seen any other actor in before. He had gravel embedded in his face. He felt the danger and all of a sudden, he saw that watch. We're on the path of extermination. Of all exterminations. The extermination of the Jews and of the gypsies as well. Of all those who were martyred by the Nazis. That's what that watch and its Hebrew inscriptions means.

At one point in the film, a gypsy says: "We will be free when we have left here without anyone knowing where we are going..."

That's what liberty is. Never having to say what you're going to do or where you're going to go. With anthropometric identification, gypsies had to have ID papers with visas and get them stamped in a police station or city hall when they came to a village and when they left.

These papers were obligatory in France for all Roma until 1969. The quote criticizes that practice of systematic record-taking.

Do you think this film resonates with current times or is it just a historical recreation of the past?

Writing it, I wanted it to echo what's happening today. We're living through the same thing today, only there's no death in the end. There's no more political extermination, but from a psychological and political point of view nothing has really changed. In Italy under Berlusconi, the Roma are still subjected to discriminatory laws. Same thing in Romania and Hungary. Even in France the Roma are often parked in unhygienic places, from which they are driven away and expelled. French law only authorizes Traveling People to stay in one place for 24 hours. The number of authorizations they need to be able to stop somewhere is incredible, which by the way enables them to be constantly

tracked.

At the end of the film, Catherine Ringer sings a song that you wrote with Delphine Mantoulet. What does it say?

It's early morning and the Roma have just been taken away, never to return. The song says: "Good luck to you all, if anyone worries that we're gone, tell them we've been thrown from the light and the sky, we the lords of this vast universe."

Filmography Tony Gatlif

2009 **LIBERTÉ (KORKORO - FREEDOM)**

2006 **TRANSYLVANIA**

Cannes 2006: Official Selection, closing ceremonies

2004 **EXILES**

Cannes 2004: Best Director Award

2002 **SWING**

Berlin 2002: Official Selection

2000 **VENGO**

Official Selection 2000: Venice, Toronto, Ghent, London and Thessaloniki Film Festivals

César Award for Best Musical Score 2000

1998 **CHILDREN OF THE STORK**

1997 **THE CRAZY STRANGER**

Locarno 1997: Silver Leopard, Bronze Leopard Best Actress (Rona HARTNER),

Youth Award, Ecumenical Award, FICC Award; Montreal 1997: Grand Prix

Spécial des Amériques; Brussels 1998: Best Actress Award (Rona HARTNER);

Rotterdam 1998: People's Choice Award; Paris Film Festival 1998: People's

Choice Award, Martini Foundation Award

César Award for Best Musical Score 1998

1996 **I MUVRINI, POLYPHONIE CORSE** (Documentary, ARTE)

1995 **LUCUMI, LE RUMBERO DE CUBA** (Documentary, Canal+)

1994 **MONDO** (based on a story by LE CLEZIO)

1992-93 **LATCHO DROM**

Cannes 1993: Un Certain Regard Award; MIDEM 1994: Grand Prize, Prix de la

Mémoire France Libertés Danielle Mitterrand; Munich 1993: Ecumenical Award;

Rimini Cinéma 1993: Grand Prize

American Critics' Award for Best "Expérimental Film" 1996

1990 **GASPARD ET ROBINSON**

1988 **PLEURE PAS MY LOVE**

1985 **THE WAY OUT**

Florence French Film Festival: Grand Prize

1982 **CORRE GITANO** (Spanish production)

LES PRINCES

Munich Film Festival: Grand Prize; Taormina: Grand Prize; Valladolid: Epi d'Argent

1981 **CANTA GITANO** (short film)

Nominated for César Awards 1982

1978 **LA TERRE AU VENTRE** - *Readers' Choice Award, ELLE*

1975 **LA TÊTE EN RUINES**

Marc Lavoine – Théodore

- 2009 **LIBERTÉ (KORKORO - FREEDOM)** by Tony GATLIF
- 2008 **THE ONE I LOVE** by Elie CHOURAQUI
- 2007 **PERFECT MATCH** by Anne-Marie ETIENNE
- 2006 **FRENCHMEN 2** by Marc ESPOSITO
- 2004 **TOUTE LA BEAUTÉ DU MONDE** by Marc ESPOSITO
- 2002 **FRENCHMEN** by Marc ESPOSITO
- 2001 **THE GOOD THIEF** by Neil JORDAN
BLANCHE by Bernie BONVOISIN
- 1998 **LE DOUBLE DE MA MOITIÉ** by Yves AMOUREUX
- 1997 **MELODY FOR A HUSTLER** by Vincent RAVALEC
- 1995 **THE LIARS** by Elie CHOURAQUI
- 1993 **FIESTA** by Pierre BOUTRON
- 1992 **L'ENFER** by Claude CHABROL
- 1984 **FRANKENSTEIN** by Alain JESSUA

Animated film voices:

- 2008 **KUNG FU PANDA** by Mark OSBORNE, John STEVENSON
- 2006 **ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES** by Luc BESSON

Marie-Josée Croze - Mademoiselle Lundi

- 2009 **LIBERTÉ (KORKORO - FREEDOM)** by Tony GATLIF
- 2008 **HIDDEN DIARY** by Julie Lopes CURVAL
SOMEONE I LOVED by Zabou BREITMAN
- 2007 **LOVE ME NO MORE** by Jean BECKER
THE NEW PROTOCOL by Thomas VINCENT
- 2006 **THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY** by Julian
SCHNABEL
- 2005 **MUNICH** by Steven SPIELBERG
THE GIRL FROM THE CHARTREUSE by Jean-Pierre
DENIS
- JACQUOU LE CROQUANT** by Laurent BOUTONNAT
- 2005 **TELL NO ONE** by Guillaume CANET
- 2004 **THE STORY OF MY LIFE** by Laurent TIRARD
ORDO by Laurence FERREIRA BARBOSA
- 2003 **INVASION OF THE BARBARIANS** by Denys ARCAND
NOTHING by Vincenzo NATALI
- 2002 **ARARAT** by Atom Egoyan
- 2000 **WOLVES IN THE SNOW** by Michel WELTERLIN
MAELSTROM by Denis VILLENEUVE
- 1999 **HLA IDENTIQUE** by Thomas BRIAT

James Thierrée - Taloché

2009 **LIBERTÉ (KORKORO - FREEDOM)**

by Tony GATLIF

2006 **TWICE UPON A TIME**

by Antoine De CAUNES

2005 **BYE BYE BLACKBIRD**

by Robinson SAVARY

2004 **RIEN VOILÀ L'ORDRE**

by Jacques BARATIER

2003 **18 ANS APRÈS**

by Coline SERREAU

1996 **LA BELLE VERTE**

by Coline SERREAU

Cast

Theodore
Mademoiselle Lundi
Taloche
Petit Claude
Pierre Pentecôte
Fernand
Darko
Kako
Chavo
Zanko
Tina
Puri Dai
Tatane

MARC LAVOINE
MARIE-JOSÉE CROZE
JAMES THIERRÉE
MATHIAS LALIBERTÉ
CARLO BRANDT
RUFUS
ARBEN BAJRAKTARAJ
GEORGES BABLUANI
ILJIR SELIMOSKI
KEVYN DIANA
BOJANA PANIC
RAISA BIELENBERG
THOMAS BAUMGARTNER

Crew

Director	TONY GATLIF
Production Company	PRINCES PRODUCTION
Executive Producer	DELPHINE MANTOULET
Director of Photography	JULIEN HIRSCH
Editor	MONIQUE DARTONNE
Sound	PHILIPPE WELSH ADAM WOLNY DOMINIQUE GABORIEAU
Production Design	BRIGITTE BRASSART
Costumes	CATHERINE RIGAUT
Music	DELPHINE MANTOULET TONY GATLIF
Song "Les Bohémiens"	CATHERINE RINGER
Production Manager	CHRISTIAN PAUMIER
Shooting location	RÉGION RHÔNE-ALPES, FRANCE
Format	35 MM COLOR SCOPE
Running time	111 MIN. (1'51")

A coproduction **PRINCES PRODUCTION - FRANCE 3 CINÉMA - RHÔNE ALPES CINÉMA**

with the participation of **TPS STAR, FRANCE 3** and **CINÉCINEMA**
with the participation of **CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINÉMATOGRAPHIE**
with the support of **FONDS IMAGES DE LA DIVERSITÉ, LA RÉGION RHÔNE-ALPES**

with the support of **L'AGENCE NATIONALE POUR LA COHÉSION SOCIALE ET L'ÉGALITÉ DES CHANCES - L'ACSÉ, FONDS IMAGES DE LA DIVERSITÉ**

Original soundtrack available at **MERCURY, UNIVERSAL MUSIC FRANCE**