# IAURICE ANNAS









#### **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

In the 90s, I lived with my mother in suburban Montreal. At school, I was a child star, privileged to miss classes to act in a commercial or a film every once and while. From the perspective of my peers, I was in show business. The truth was that my relationship to cinema was superficial: besides the Disney classics, my initiation to the seventh art was limited to efficient and soulless Hollywood blockbusters, dubbed into French, which my father would take me to see (often to appreciate the dubbing, which was how he made his living). My mother was never pleased about these excursions, suspicious of the influence these films had on me. Later, I would come to believe she might have blamed them for my adolescent violence and indiscipline.

In spite of all that, it was my mother who took me to my cinematic baptism. In december of 1997, I was 9 years old, and my mother brought me to the, regrettably now defunct, theater Le Parisien. Throughout the course of that evening, I felt as though I was experiencing all the "firsts" that life has to offer in hyperspeed: I fell in love with a man, a woman, costumes, design, images... I felt the shivers that accompany a genuinely great story, ambitious, told with respect for the rules of art, intelligent, epic and sensational.

This cinematic shock cannot be overstated, and I knew that I needed in that moment to learn English as fast as possible, so that I too could act in American movies. It was also at this point in my life that I started dressing up in my mother's clothes more often, more seriously, and without her ever preventing me. I spent more and more time my imagination, eschewing a real world in which I found myself disliked by other kids my own age, collecting false friends due to my notoriety and creating an isolating shell of arrogance. This cinematic shock was, I realized only recently, a revelation: not only did I know that I wanted to be an actor and a director, but, like this amazing film I had just seen, I wanted my projects, my dreams, to be limitless, and I wanted the unsinkable love I had witnessed on screen to one day be mine.

Fifteen years later, I watch Laurence Anyways, and I see my childhood still secretely at play. To be clear, I do not wish to become woman, and my film is an homage to the ultimate love story: ambitious, impossible, the love we want to be sensational, boundless, the love that we don't dare hope for, the love that only cinema, books and art provide.

Laurence Anyways is an homage to the time in my life, before I became a director, when I had to become a man.

- XAVIER DOLAN

# MELVIL POUPAUD

Melvil Poupaud made his career debut in 1983, at the age of ten, in City of Pirates by Raoul Rufz. This debut performance marked the beginnings of what would become a long running collaboration with the Portuguese filmmaker, for whom Poupaud went on to perform in nine other films among which are Treasure Island, The Insomniae on the Bridge (1985), Dans un miroir (1983), Fado majeur et mineur (1995), Three Lives and Only One Death (1993), Cânéalogies d'un crime (1997), Marcel Prousits Time Regained (1999), Love Torn in a Dream (2000) and Mysteries of Lisbon (2010).

In 1989, he starred as Thomas in The 15 Year Old Girlby Jacques Doillon, for which he received a Gesar nomination for Best Breakthrough Performance. In 1992, his big breakthrough came with his performance in The Lover by Jean-Jacques Annaud. In 1993, he starred in Normal People are Nothing Exceptional by Laurence Ferreira Barbosa, for which he was once again nominated for a Gesar for Best Breakthrough Performance. In 1996, he landed a role in Eric Rohmer's ensemble film A Summer's Tale. This was followed by a part in Graham Guit's Shooting Stars (1997) and Les Kidnappeurs (1998), Benoît Jacquot's Marianne (1997) and François Ozon's Time to Leave (2005), in which he portrays a nareissistic photographer struck by cancer. In 2010 he was reunited with Ozon on the set of Hideaway.

In 2003, Poupaud made his American debut as he joined the cast of James Ivory's The Divorce, alongside Kate Hudson and Naomi Watts. In 2006, he directed himself in Melville. In 2008, he made appearances in Arnaud Desplechin's A Christmas Tale, the Wachowski brothers' Speed Racer, Pascal Thomas' Crime is Our Business as well as in Sean Ellis' The Broken.

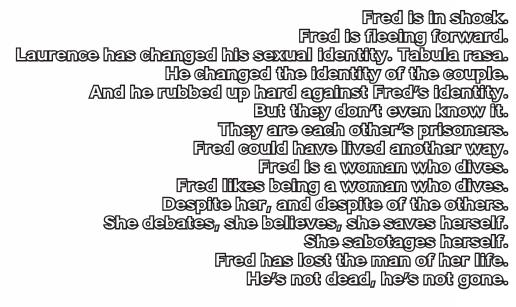
In 2009, Melvil Poupaud joined the cast of the hit comedy
Lucky Luke, directed by James Huth, where he took on the role
of Jesse James. In 2010, he starred in Gilles Marchand's
L'Autre Monde, as Louise Bourgoin's character's sadistic brother.

Melvil Poupaud and his brother Yarol Poupaud, guitarist in the French band Fédération française de funk (FFF), together make up the founding members of fusion band Mud. As such they have released two albums: Mud (1995) and Mud Pack (1997). In 2002, Melvil Poupaud released a solo album Un simple appareil. In 2011, a new group, Black minou, once again founded with his brother, saw the light of day. That same year, Melvil Poupaud's autobiographical novel, Quel est Mon noM, is published by Éditions Stock4. In March 2012, Black minou releases an EP.



understand quickly is that this is a man of courage. A hero. A super hero who disguises himself as a woman to better confront the world and its injustices. So that others will finally see him the way he sees himself. With the help of a couple of allies (Fred, the woman of his life, and literature) and finally able to live the way he wants to, Laurence chooses to fight: against the judgemental gaze of others, against institutions, prejudice and intolerance. Against nature itself. Laurence will take this fight all the way, all the way inside himself, to finally find where he fits in the world. Where he really fits. Where she chooses to fit. Because yes, Laurence is a courageous woman, who believes in freedom. Simply put, the freedom to exist.





Yet, she faces death: Fred and Laurence no longer exist.

Fred is lost, a lost woman looking for her identify.

- Suzanne Glément

# SUZANNE CLÉMENT

Suzanne Clément has made a name for herself in several critically acclaimed films, among which are Robert Lepage's *Le Confessionnal* (1995) and Manon Briand's *2 Seconds* (1998). In 2005, she starred in Luc Picard's *L'Audition*, for which she received a Juitra Award nomination for Best Actress as well as a Genie Award for Best Supporting Actress.

In 2007, she starred as a singer burdened by debt in Fernand Danscreau's La Brunante, alongside Monique Mercure. Her performance earned her another Jutra Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress. In 2009, she joined the cast of Philippe Falardeau's It's Not Me, I Swear, in which she portrays a mother in search of freedom. Her portrayal earned her a third Jutra Award nomination as well as the Vancouver Film Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actress.

In 2009 and 2010, she starred in Xavier Dolan's I Killed My Mother,
Julie Hivon's Tromper le silence and Mare-André Lavoie's
Yen aura pas de facile. Suzanne Clément is also known to TV audiences
for her performances in several French Canadian TV series such as
Jean Duceppe, Opération Tango, Grande Ourse, La Vie, la vie and Cover Girl.
Her performance as an intense talent agent in Les Hauts et les bas de
Sophie Paquin has earned her two consecutive Prix Gémeaux,
in 2007 and 2003.

On stage, she has performed in many classic plays and has several roles in productions of Chekhov plays to her name, among which Serge Denoncourt's freely adapted international production Je suis une mouette.



# JULIENNE ALIA Julienne had dreams, she had ambitions, liked to laugh, no doubt had some talent. But the years flowed by differently, and love has now been extinguished. Julienne has withdrawn from life. She has walked apart from events, from others, from herself. Her enormous sadness has burned tracks, her memory dull, her present absent. Nothing happens, nothing touches her. Only fighting with her husband seems to rouse her from this coma, even giving her a shock of violence, despite her general passiveness. Maybe Julienne has become her own ghost, but Laurence needs his mother, imperfect though she may be. Her son is becoming a woman? So what? Why not? She's seen it all before. Nothing surprises her, nothing shocks her. Julienne has surrendered to old age a long time ago... She hopes for nothing. And yet... - NATHALIE BAYE

#### **NATHALIE BAYE**

DA graduate of the Conservatoire de Paris, Nathalie Baye made her first appearances on the big screen in Robert Wise's Brief Encounters and was widely recognized for her performance as the continuity girl in François Truffaut's Day for Night.

Truffaut then cast her in The Green Room in 1978.

In 1981, she was awarded her first César, for Best Supporting Actress, for her performance in Jean-Luc Godard's Slow Motion. The award was followed by a series of memorable roles, among others in Daniel Vigne's Le Retour de Martin Guerre and Bob Swaim's La Balance. She then went on to sweep another two consecutive years' worth of César Awards; the Best Supporting Actress award in 1982, for Strange Affair, and the Best Actress award in 1983 for her turn as a prostitute in La Balance.

Nathalie Baye has always had an eye for auteurs and has subsequently performed in films such as Nicole Garcia's Un week-end sur deux, François Margolin's The Lie and Frédéric Fonteyne's A Pornographic Affair, for which she picked up the Best Actress award at the Venice Film Festival. In 1999 she was reunited with Tonie Marshall on the set of Venus Beauty Institute.

In the beginning of the 2000's, she starred in Xavier Beauvois' To Matthieu, which was followed by first-time collaborations with filmmakers such as Claude Chabrol (The Flower of Evil), Steven Spielberg (Catch Me If You Can) and Noémie Lvovsky (Feelings). Her second collaboration with director Xavier Beauvois, Le Petit Lieutenant, earned her a fourth César Award, for best actress. In 2010, she starred in Léa Fezar's comedy Together Is Too Much, alongside Pierre Arditi.

### STÉFANIE BELLAIR

Xavier offered me the role of Stefanie in 2009, two years before we made the film. I spent a long time dreaming about her, conjuring her in my mind.

Stefanie, first and foremost, represents that deep and unique bond we have with our family. They are the people who know us by heart, who define unconditional love. Stefanie is gregarious, tribal, protective and adores her sister Fred. She's a guard dog. Raised in a traditional family, she rebelled against this normaley. Like all outsiders - especially those blessed with a healthy sense of martyrdom - she recreated herself by rejecting everything that was expected of her and was thus, in turn, rejected by her mother. The daughter of bourgeois conservatives became a lesbian, a feminist, rejecting her upbringing further through vulgarity and nihilism. On paper, she should be Laurence's best friend. Paradoxically, she has a very hard time accepting this ultimate outsider into the intimacy of her family.

Like all of Xavier's characters, she expresses herself, and is best understood through her bracing sense of humour, and is, I believe, a welcome addition to the author's already brilliant, ribald canon.

— Monia Chokri

## **MONIA CHOKRI**

Monia Chokri, a graduate of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal, began her career on stage in L'Evangile selon Salomé (directed by Alexandre Marine), Ailleurs (Serge Mandeville) and Les mauvaises Herbes (Benoît Vermeulen). She went on to star in Le Songe de l'oncle (I gor Ovadis) and Le Diable en partage, directed by Fabrice Melquiot, two productions from the Du Bunker Theatre Company, of which she is a founding member. In 2009, she starred in Tentations (Martin Faucher), Chroniques (Emmanuel Schwartz, Alice Ronfard) and Je voudrais (pas) crever (Reynald Robinson). In 2011, she was east in Transmissions directed by Justin Laramée.

Monia Chokri's feature film career includes appearances in among others Denys Arcand's Days of Darkness and, as Marie the asocial and dry hipster, in Xavier Dolan's Heartbeats. She has also performed in two short films: Anne Émond's Frédérique au centre and Xavier R.-Beauchesne's Hier, demain, hier.

In 2011, she appeared in the TV series Les Rescapés and Mirador 2. In 2011, she performed in Olivier Guignard's Clémenceau, un géant and is currently scheduled to star in Claire Simon's Gare du Nord Remix, which will be going into production in 2012.





#### MUSIC

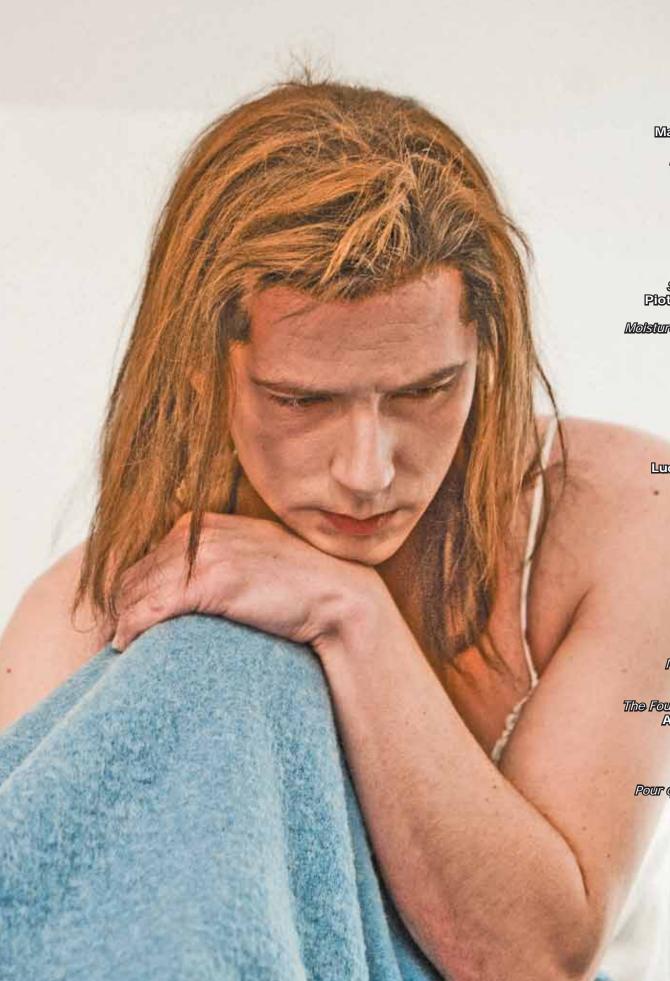
In a dreamy film like Laurence Anyways, music is the antithesis of an afterthought - it is one of the stars.

Sets, costumes, dialogue, hairstyles, props... Everything surrounding the actors is a weed to be pulled at a moment's notice if it interferes with the performances, honestly. The moment an actor convinces me, everything appears. And then disappears, if need be. But music isn't physical, it isn't there when you're filming, it obey's no one, feels no pressure to please. Music is also not an excuse for a filmmaker to show off his record collection. Besides providing some rhythmic help in the space-time continuum of a film that travels the better part of a decade, these songs accompany my characters through their lives, though they may not correspond to my personal tastes. These songs remind the characters of who they are, and who they have loved. They exhume what has been forgotten, they quell fears, they remind the characters of white lies, and abandoned ambitions. Music is their only constant among life's variables.

### And for us...

Music arrives with conditions and consequences, like a perfect stranger, or with an air of suspicious familiarity. It holds the power over us to use our private emotions to make public its agenda. It is the only element in cinema controlled by neither the director, the actors nor the cameramen, it haunts the story of the film all the way to the movie theatre, where each and every individual, bringing their own personal relationship to each song, contextualizes the music for themselves. There is something deeply satisfying about seeing a film made by a person you have never met, but with whom you suddenly feel bonded, through a shared intimacy with a song, over secrets, childhood dreams, moments spent walking down the street, listening to the same song on repeat, convincing yourself of your own value, moments spent trying to eatch a train, or burrying your mother, or crying over a summer filing.

It is said that music is the soul of a film for one clear reason: it is the ultimate exchange with the audience.



*If I Had a Heart* Fever Ray

Bette Dayls Eyes Klim Garnes

The Funeral Party
The Gure

*Tous les ais les S.O.S* Marie-Denise Pelletier

Montagues & Capulets Sengel Prokofley

> *Oxygëne* Diane Duiresne

*Symphony nº4 IV.*Johannes Brahms

**Solemn Overture 1812**Plotr Illitch Tchalkovsky

*Molsture (Headman Club Mix)* Headman

> 1990 Jean Leloup

> *Fade To Grey* Visage

*Symphony n°5 l.*Ludwig van Beethoven

The Chauffeur Duran Duran

**Enjoy The Silence**Depedhe Mode

*C'est Zéro* Julia Massa

**Quel est l'enfant** Mitsou

Ni trop tôt, ni trop tard Patrida Tulasne

The Four Seasons - Summer I Antonio Lucio Vivaldi

> *Tone well A* शक्ताकार्थ

**Pour que tu m'aimes encore** Caline Dion

> Already Come Strart A. Staples

**7ème Gnossienne** Érik Saite

Luce Dufault

Let's Co Out Tonight Craig Armstrong

Montreal is a cosmopolitan and sophisticated place. The feeling in the city, even as early as the "90s, seemed to me the perfect environnement for a man who wants to become a woman to begin his adventure.

The city's borrowed and broken architecture offers a landscape that is both orderly and baroque, its poor ghettos and insulated suburbs illustrate the diverse universes that abut each other in this film: the bourgeois, the marginalized, the burlesque. Montreal offers a diversity so bright, that it almost makes one believe in the possibility of peaceful cohabitation.

Even if Montreal, its singularities aside, seems like a typical East Coast city in North America, it is indeed a unique place: occasionally taciturn, but energized by a curious, naive, yet polyglot population, very Quebecois in their humility and inexperience, yet worldy in its thirst for life, and its ambition.

For me, all stories begin in Montreal. When I write, I like to know things by heart: the names of the streets, the shops and homes that line them, and the attitudes of the people who inhabit them.

Still a kid, aspiring to adulthood, Montreal is an inspiring place, full of hopeful people. A place where ideas, and ideals, don't have to be embarrassed, because their city has yet to shame them.

The perfect place for Laurence and his supernatural plan.

It seemed natural to me to set this movie in the decade that raised me. I feel that the final decade of the 20th century was the ideal birthing ground for a film about gender: in this era prejudices regarding homosexuality were easing, panie was giving way to understanding regarding the AIDS erisis, the Iron Curtain was coming down, and a shocked world was being offered freedom. Everything was allowed.

For Laurence Alia, it seems a logical time to survive and thrive as oneself. But his transsexualism, possibly the final and ultimate taboo, has him discovering a whole new world of glass ceilings.

Even today, a trans school teacher is a cause for concern from parents terrified of their children being exposed to anti-conformist ideas and lifestyles. Even the most sophisticated among us still take pleasure in being able to "spot" a transsexual on the street. The ghettos of identity are still hostile to the third sex.

If transsexuality represents the ultimate expression of difference, or otherness, then the 90s offer the perfect vantage - 12 years later - to see how far we have come, or how little. Laurence Anyways wishes to participate, even fleetingly, in this debate.

Melvil Poupaud and Suzanne Clément on set during the break-up scene in a Montreal café, winter 2011.



#### INTERVIEW

# 1. What was your inspiration for this film?

We were on our way back to Montreal, after the first two days of shooting I Killed My Mother in the country. I was riding in a car with some crew members, and Anne Dorval. We were gabbing about nothing and everything, when one of the wardrobe assistant started talking about an old lover. One night, her boyfriend had told her that he wanted to become a woman. I felt that this shock, though no doubt different for each couple that experiences it, was not unique to her alone. But through the tone of her voice, her emotions, her honesty as she spoke, I could imagine what it might be like to have a friend, a parent, a lover who, from one day to the next, defies the impossible, and thereby casts a horrible suspicion about every moment shared together. That night, I wrote thirty pages. I knew the title, and the ending. Though everything moved quickly, it was written slowly, between films, often at night, in the southern United States. In a lot

2. Like I Killed My Mother and Heartbeats, is this an autobiographical film?

of different states, come to think of it.

Yes and no. No, because I'm not a transsexual. Let's put that to rest. And yes, completely, because all my films to date - and I can't really imagine it being different in the future - are autobiographical, or at the very least, deeply personal. I can't help but follow and trust my own instincts with my films. Truthfully, I don't believe there can be real fiction in cinema. There are contrivances, but a director can't help but put a bit of himself in his movies. I happen to put a lot of myself, for good or ill. If it sounds egocentric or narcissistic, I don't care. I refuse to bore people by talking about things I know nothing about, things I haven't mastered. I am neither lazy nor unambitious, but for the moment, I'd rather stick with what I know: the comfort of self-knowledge, the harshness of the judgements of others, which

we fight against, alone, without friends or allies. People who've seen my movies can take for granted they know me personally. If I started to make films at all, it was largely to give myself work as an actor, to ensure that no one would forget me. But then, when I started to direct I realized that the same fear would prevail in this job as well. It's in that sense that all of my films are autobiographical to a certain degree, because who among us is foolish enough to turn down the opportunity of leaving some an impression on this life? We offer up our individual memories at the altar of the collective memory, so that we won't be forgotten, consequently abandoning ourselves to a real life that continues, unaffected. And film after film, we remember less and less and we turn in on ourselves. And soon enough, our movies only talk about cinema.

3. For your third film, you have chosen to surround yourself with more experienced artists, particularly in terms of production design and cinematography. Was it the elevated budget of the film - Laurence Anyways cost 8 times more than I Killed My Mother - that pushed you towards these veterans?

Not at all. I'm simply excited by the idea of working with talented people - be they actors, or technicians, artists, camera operators - and their humilities or egos don't interest me so much as their instincts, taste and know-how. From one film to another, you build a team. Some stay, some leave. I've been wanting to work with Yves Bélanger, the cinematographer, for a long time. He's an artist and a crazy person. He's loquacious, passionate and cultivated - we found each other. Anne Pritchard, the production designer is so creative and so refined. She's worked with Louis Malle, de Palma. I will never let her go. And François Barbeau, who designed 8 of the costumes in the film, is a master that I have everything to learn from. It would be stupid to be intimidated by people who have so much experience to offer and share. Together, we can make a film better, transform it, make it expand and contract, down to the last detail. I don't get along as well with people my own age, frankly. It seems to be an unintended constant in my life. And I'd be afraid to disrespect a cinematographer who was 25 or even 30. With Belanger, Pritchard and Barbeau, the intelligence and experience is so obvious that you're forced to listen, take it in, and shut the fuck up.



#### **CREW**

Runtime: 2h39 min.

Format / Aspect ratio: 35mm - Color 1,33:1

Sound Mix: Dolby Digital Country: Canada/France Year of production: 2011

Release date (Quebec): May 18<sup>th</sup> 2012 Release date (France): July 18<sup>th</sup> 2012

Written & Directed by ▷ Xavier Dolan

Produced by 

Lyse Lafontaine

Line Producer ▷ Carole Mondello

Co-Producers ➤ Nathanaël Karmitz, Charles Gillibert

#### Cast ∇

Melvil Poupaud ▶ Laurence Alia

Suzanne Clément ▷ Fred Belair

Nathalie Baye ▷ Julienne Alia

Monia Chokri ▷ Stéfanie Belair

Susie Almgren ▷ La journaliste

Yves Jacques ► Michel Lafortune

Sophie Faucher ▷ Andrée Belair

Magalie Lépine-Blondeau ▶ Charlotte

David Savard ▷ Albert

Catherine Bégin ➤ Mamy Rose

EMMANUEL SCHWARTZ ▶ Baby Rose

Jacques Lavallée ▷ Dada Rose

PÉRETTE SOUPLEX ▷ Tatie Rose

Patricia Tulasne > Shookie Rose

Director of Photography 

✓ Yves Bélanger, c.s.c.

Original score ▷ NOIA

Production Designer ▶ ANNE PRITCHARD

Costumes ▷ Xavier Dolan

Original Costumes ▷ François Barbeau

Editor ▷ Xavier Dolan

Sound Recordist ▶ François Grenon

Sound Designer ▷ Sylvain Brassard

Sound Mixer ▷ OLIVIER GOINARD

Photographers ▷ Shayne Laverdière, Clara Palardy





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