

1998 BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL COMPETITION

LES FILMS DU REQUIN
present

jeanne *et le garçon formidable*

A film by
Olivier DUCASTEL & Jacques MARTINEAU

Directed by
Olivier DUCASTEL

Screenplay, Dialogues, Songs
Jacques MARTINEAU

Starring
Virginie LEDOYEN
Mathieu DEMY
Jacques BONNAFFE
Valérie BONNETON
Frédéric GORNY
Denis PODALYDES

A
France 2 Cinéma / M6 Films / Studio Canal+ / Orsans Productions
co-production

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S Y N O P S I S

Jeanne, a beautiful young woman with a profusion of boyfriends, always seems to be in a hurry.

One day, she meets Olivier, HIV positive, who turns out to be the true love she's been searching for.

When Olivier learns he has little time to live, he vanishes, leaving a troubled Jeanne alone, desperately searching for some sign of him.

After a while, Jeanne learns that Olivier has died. But she resolves that life must go on.

INTERVIEW WITH THE TWO DIRECTORS

JACQUES MARTINEAU and OLIVIER DUCASTEL

“Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable” is the innocent story of a girl who loves a boy with Aids. Why is such a sad story told as an enchanting musical?

JACQUES: We wanted to make a film that was at once sad and joyful... a film about life's pleasures... which reveled in life's beauty and the horror of Aids... a film which murmurs insistently: life is worth living, so be careful with this precious gift.

Making a musical in 1998 might seem a bit passé even though Woody Allen, Alain Resnais and Robert Guédiguian successfully reintroduced this charming genre to the big screen recently. What's so unusual about “Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable” is the successful blend of the refreshing fanciful musical sequences and the gravity of the subject – Aids. Also, militating for this tragic cause adds to the story's uniqueness. Though the themes seem irreconcilable, they contribute the richness, singularity and modernity of the film.

JACQUES: From the outset, I wanted to make a musical, and the only story which captured my interest was this one. I brought the two concepts together and I never had a second thought about it.

OLIVIER: As you can imagine, I am a big fan... I'm wild about Jacques Demy's films. Though I appreciate American musicals, sometimes they bore me a little, perhaps because their primary goal is sheer entertainment. One can sing about tragedy in opera, why not in musicals?

How did you envisage Jeanne's character? She is sentimental, yet driven by an idealism and stubbornness?

JACQUES: First of all, she comes from a modest social background, and that was important for us. It was a way of saying “enough of these French films which only deal with the banal bourgeois values of money and idle concerns”. But around four years ago, things happily shifted in French cinema. Jeanne is not a marginal character, she is just a young woman from a working class background, as so many of us are. Furthermore, she's the type of girl that gives into her desires and impulses. She must satisfy them immediately. I think that's marvelous. Personally, I think we should all be like her. As I was writing the story, I wondered if people would think our representation of her character was misogynist?

She is a woman driven by her instincts, her sensibility and even her sexuality, while the man is more reasonable. For example, François' character sublimates his experience into political thought. But all these questions vanished when we saw Virginie portray the character.. She was capable of changing registers from one instant to the next and always acted the part with total sincerity. Jeanne is a contemporary girl. Working as a receptionist in a travel agency, her job ironically underlines the absence of genuine communication between her and those around her.

The encounter with Olivier, the first real love she experiences in her life, opens her to another dimension of living – giving, loss... and in this sense, her path is like an initiation.

JACQUES: An initiation to love and inevitably to the loss of love. In the past, Jeanne dumped her boyfriends without a second thought to the suffering she might have caused them. She is devastated in turn by Olivier's disappearance and death... literally brought to her knees... one never entirely overcomes mourning.

OLIVIER: Jacques Bonnaffé, who plays François, the gay rights activist working for Act-Up, has consciously chosen political commitment to the cause as a means of dealing with mourning. However, he is no better armed to deal with death than Jeanne.

JACQUES: Militating for gay rights with Act-Up is certainly an excellent way of dealing with the question of Aids, but that does not resolve everything. I didn't want to make a film about political activism. There are already some fine documentaries dealing with the subject.

The first dance number in the film vigorously spotlights immigrants who are sweeping the streets. They sing "So much devotion... so much suffering... and expulsion from France is how we're repaid!" From the outset, you serenely and playfully lay things on the line. As romantic as the story is, the film is anchored in the realities of society. And things aren't going so well in this area...

JACQUES: Since this was my first film, I had no complexes. Nothing deterred me from including all the ideas I felt strongly about, and in fact in that sequence I do show the harsh realities!

OLIVIER: Jeanne floats through that scene. She passes through the dance number without really taking in their complaints. It is the beginning of the film and we realize that Jeanne has no fears, no preconceived ideas and no prejudices. She sees no reason for commitment to a cause and criticism has no place in her world. That is perhaps her only fault.

In the beginning of the film, Jacques Bonnaffé sings a sorrowful lament in the vein of François Villon about the Bagatelle, a tragic story, and the survivors who resemble "100- year-old widows". Bonnaffé augurs Jeanne's future, but she can't hear it...

OLIVIER: She knows that the things he tells her and will tell her are things she doesn't want to hear. As an activist, he is sometimes a victim of the role he plays. He can act, but he cannot soften the pain of the loss and mourning.

"Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable" is a film about Aids and death, but morbid suffering is not dealt with! Olivier, who is seropositive and ill, yet he enjoys a very rich sex life with Jeanne. The dialogues evoke a desire to live life to the fullest, often crudely, but with humor; "this handsome boy, I thought he was scrawny..." Jeanne sings at one point. Was that important?

JACQUES: From this point of view, it is militant film. I wanted to show what happened to us, to our generation, in the bluntest way. And at the same time, take a stand against those who demand a return to a more conservative morality. I wanted to fight those who are using the Aids epidemic to frustrate our desires and use it as an excuse to return to old values and take away our hard won rights earned over years of struggle -- freer sexual expression. Just because Aids exists doesn't mean that we should forget about pleasure, as long as we take the necessary precautions.

OLIVIER: I think it's important that Jeanne's character doesn't wonder about things too much, that she has no preconceived ideas. When Olivier announces that he is seropositive, she innocently replies, "that's not serious, we used condoms." That might appear to be terrifying indifference, but it's charming, and most importantly, it's a loving response. When it comes right down to it, Aids changes nothing, but it changes everything.

Reviving the musical genre did not stop you from respecting the typical narrative formulas and techniques, notably the presence of secondary characters in the transitional scenes. And that's where you spoil us with pure moments of sheer madness and hilarious personalities: the chilly plumber, the bewitching librarian, the "that's enough" couple!

JACQUES: All the characters in the film enjoy life. However, we can divide them into two categories: There are those who emphatically seize life with both hands, whether it be on a political level, as François does, in love like Jeanne, or in a more self-destructive manner like Olivier who has a rough time, does drugs and gets sick... All of them suffer at one time or another. Then, there are the others who are little more reserved with regard to the all consuming passion. Jeanne's sister and her little brother, and the plumber all approach life differently. And this approach is no less valid. It seems to me that we are all torn between pleasure seeking or protecting ourselves from the risks it can afford.

OLIVIER: We really love the actors and adore the secondary characters. Preparing all the sub texts and secondary roles in the film, finding the right idea, like the cherry on top of the cake, letting them have a great time when we were filming, that really excited us a lot! I found all those digressive songs had useful rhythms, narratives and, what's more, they counterbalanced the sadness, and the melancholy of the film.

You talk of the affection you feel for the actors on screen in the way you gave them time to explore their characters with long takes. An absolute mutual trust obviously exists between you. For example, in the very intimate and sensual breakfast scene where Virginie Ledoyen and Mathieu Demy abandon themselves to pleasure.

OLIVIER: *It was a risky chance, a complicated scene to film because of the nudity.*

JACQUES: *And they had to arouse each other with the honey, and that day we only had one pair of sheets in the studio!!*

OLIVIER: *We wanted to maintain the continuity of the scene when we filmed it in order to emphasize the lovers' complicity and accentuate the fragility of their intimate moment together. A daily experience or an exceptional moment, it is meant to be a resume of what their life together would've been like if Olivier hadn't gotten sick. Naturally for all the obvious reasons, we needed to have a real trust between ourselves and the actors. The long sequences, which at first were motivated by our lack of experience, showed that we had confidence in the actors, that we gave them space and time. This suited Virginie perfectly. She is a mature actress, perfectly mastering her powerful technique. She understood her character completely and we wanted to show that as well.*

How do you work together on a practical level? Did handling the tasks at hand come about naturally?

JACQUES: *There was a lot of exchange between us, but it's absolutely clear that I am not a technician. I don't know anything about directing a team of technicians and I didn't want to get involved in that aspect. It's a skill and I realized that's Olivier's domain. I was present during the pre-shoot and worked on the music, but when it came time to film, Olivier was the one who said "action" and "cut"!*

OLIVIER: *I also participated with the script. I asked Jacques to make some modifications and we had to do some adaptations because it was written for the winter season and we finally shot it over the summer.*

Why the winter?

JACQUES: *For the very practical reason that the Act-Up rally takes place on December 1st and also families getting together for the Christmas holidays underlined the story's sadness.*

The characters are very obviously motivated by some quest and are compelled by some state of urgency. Was the film made under these circumstances, in this state of urgency?

JACQUES: *It's true that I wrote "Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable" on my own, very quickly, in a quasi-state of urgency. That was four years ago when I was rallying for Act-Up and I had been involved with the organization for several years. I had no intention of doing anything with the script,, since I am a literature teacher and had never worked in film before.. The cinema was like a magic nebulous, something very, very mysterious to me!*

Coming back to the division of roles, we enjoyed blurring our positions since we co-directed the film. But naturally each of us had his own preferences with regard to the collaboration.

Choosing Mathieu Demy, Jacques Demy's son, to play the role of Olivier touches upon a cultural icon and film heritage that precedes his character. Did you find that inhibiting at first?

OLIVIER: It's true that when we started casting for the film we kind of said to ourselves, "not Mathieu Demy and not Chiara Mastroianni!" However, Mathieu, who was very friendly with our producers and was aware of the project. One day he said, half jesting, "I'm ready to do some singing auditions whenever they want!" Soon after he said it would be stupid not to let him audition just because he's Jacques Demy's son. I always thought he acted really well in the teenage roles, especially "Kung-Fu Master" or the Antoine Desrosières films.

So we met him and he very nonchalantly explained to us that his father's name was not our problem, it was his problem and he decided that it wasn't a problem at all!

JACQUES: Mathieu felt that he was coming around full circle in playing a role in "Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable". He helped us realize a project which allowed us to show our love for Jacques Demy's films, and he drew upon his knowledge and experience of his father's musicals.

Mathieu sings his songs in the film, but Virginie doesn't. Why is that?

We chose the actors in the film based on their ability to act and sing, except Virginie. That's why they all sing, and she doesn't. The deciding factor in choosing Virginie for the role was our meeting with her. Her way of talking about the script and her understanding of the character sold us. It was quickly obvious that she fit the character perfectly. Virginie is not a singer and Jeanne's role required nine very varied songs. It was difficult! We decided to use a professional singer: Elise Caron. In the beginning, matching a voice that's not your own was somewhat unrealistic for Virginie. But after the first rehearsals and especially the first day of shooting, the pre-recorded voice miraculously became Jeanne's voice.

JACQUES: And come to think of it, it took me years to realize that it wasn't really Catherine Deneuve singing in "Umbrellas of Cherbourg". When it comes right down to it, it makes no difference at all.

Visually, the film is very stylized with colors exploding like fire, very precise intentions concerning the decor, object, colors like the very "Shanghai" flamboyant scene where Virginie contemplates her multiplied image in a splendid three-way mirror. She wears a vibrant red dress!

OLIVIER: *We were lucky to work with a set designer who banished the word “impossible” from his vocabulary once and for all! In a musical, each scene is conceived like a painting, and the set design is crucial. For example, at the beginning of the film, when we discover Virginie at work, we really played with transparency and the reflections in the windows.*

“Garçon Formidable” (“Perfect Guy /Wonderful Guy”) is a fabulous expression, a little old-fashioned, yet at the same time warm and likeable...

JACQUES: *I really like the expression wonderful for just that reason. But etymologically speaking, wonderful also means “something which inspires awe”. The most powerful encounters take place with people who inspire awe, who subjugate us and in some way, on some level, create a sense of wonder in us.*

OLIVIER: *When we were choosing a title, for reasons of sonority, I wanted the word wonderful in it. There are many aspects to the film and I thought it was nice to introduce the idea “wonderful” in the title. At one point we were going to call it “Olivier has Aids”!! (laughter) Strangely enough, that made the investors very jittery!*



INTERVIEW WITH VIRGINIE LEDOYEN

How would you describe Jeanne, the young girl who loves a perfect guy?

For me, Jeanne embodies movement and desire. She is very vivacious girl... a free-spirit, but there's nothing artificial and calculated about her. She is alert and lively, but not very cultivated. She is impetuous. She has a routine job, but doesn't complain about it. It's kind of rare to see girls like this portrayed in the cinema these days. She's not super intellectual, or ultra sweet... that's why I found her character interesting to play.

She is sensual and extremely sensitive and this aspect defines her love relationships. She has many lovers and she loves each one differently. She loves pleasure, but she is not a nymphomaniac, or a bitch. She's conscious of what she's doing and hurts no one. She's just a girl who likes to be in love and then she experiences her first emotionally overwhelming love story.

When she first meets the "perfect guy", she is a bit non-chalant because she continues to see the office messenger boy on the side, but at the same time she has really fallen for Oliver. She realizes just how deeply she loves him when he's in the hospital. Jeanne reminds me of a child who needs to touch the fire to realize it's dangerous. Her insouciant character is rather poetic.

Her social background tells a lot about her character. She comes from a simple family, but not stupid. She doesn't come from a neurotic overbearing family, instead the relationships were healthy and the communication natural. She can't stand pretension of any kind whether it be sentimental or social climbing. So much so, that she breaks up with a guy who's over-ambitious and only concerned with landing a high-salaried job. I'm very different from Jeanne. I have some guilt feelings for example, but we are similar in the fact that we're not neurotic. In fact, it's great to play a character that isn't neurotic.

Jeanne is very coquettish in the way she dresses. She wears short skirts and tops which show her belly button. She wears bright colors and lots of jewelry... Did you enjoy incarnating her role on this level?

It's a very important point because her entire sense of being springs from the way she dresses... the rhythm, the way she acts with others. Clothes don't make the person, but there are many people who affirm their identity through their clothes and Jeanne is one of them. Juliette Chanaud, the costume designer, had the same intention.

Making a musical in which you had to dance the tango, do creative moves with a food tray and sing nine songs must have been very exciting and a little way out too.

I wasn't afraid of it, but in the beginning I wondered how we were going to a musical in 1997!

You dance with animated grace and your moves are so natural, but you don't sing Jeanne's songs. Did that require too much preparation?

More like not enough talent as a singer!! The songs were written by Jacques and Philippe Miller and then recorded long before the film was made. When I was chosen for the project, we didn't have enough time for intensive singing lessons and very frankly, I think that a mediocre performance would have been fatal. A perfectly limpid voice was needed and I'm not a singer! When it comes right down to it, I would have loved to sing because it enriches the acting and also these songs are like mini films in the film which develop the characters and the action. Mathieu is terrifically talented and had the chance to do both. But in the end, I don't regret not singing.

You worked closely with the singer who became Jeanne's voice to the point where you seemed to be giving her acting directions!

It was extraordinary and very disturbing at the same time because I explained to Elise my intentions. Her intonations in the scene with the song and her performance was extremely nuanced. It was great. I felt like I was doubling myself and at the same time constructing another more intimate layer of Jeanne's character.

"Jeanne and the perfect Guy" is a film which is pro life as the writer and director told us. There is a clear position against exclusion and the film broaches the subject of aids very honestly. Was this a motivating factor for you in deciding to make the film?

It's so different from so much we've seen and heard about aids. And it's much better not to show the suffering and commiseratio, the amorphous dread which surrounds the illness or to show the aids victims themselves... That's why I wanted to act in this movie, to play Jeanne who lives a tragedy in a musical! The crudeness of the dialogues... it follows the same vein! It's very playful and very touching to see in this film the urge to make love, eat, sing, dance and laugh, instead of crying over the disease!

I would think that one of the most difficult and delicate scenes to film was the breakfast scene which is key to showing the adorable and vulnerable nature of the couple?

The scene was complicated to realize, but it totally confirms the love story.

It's not the only long take in the film...

Yes, as far as this goes, Olivier said that using this directing tecactors feel at ease by allowing them necessary latitude to create and at the same time it made up for his lack of experience. The truth is that doing long takes, which are as discrete and fluid as his, and integrate so naturally into the story require enormous talent and an expertise which he possess!

You also possess a range of talents!

I'm very script oriented. I love that. I think it's really important to understand the director's approach, to understand where he's placing the camera, if there's an insert... it's all in keeping with the character, to understand what aspect the director wants to emphasize. Understanding the workings of technique is a way of figuring out what's important for them in the upcoming scenes.

Did you know Mathieu well before making this film?

We have been friends for a long time which was very practical when it came to acting together. We didn't feel embarrassed or awkward when it was time for the romance scenes. Everything brought out our complicity and not an uneasy tenseness.. I love his dreamy quality. I think it's... wonderful!

Searching for the name of your lover in the obituaries who has run off to die far from you must have had a devastating effect on Jeanne's character!

Jeanne meets a guy just after, and brings him home... she is never beaten by the illness. That's the wonderful theme of the film. Jeanne could have been disillusioned by the whole thing, but it's an eye-opening experience for her, and it grounds her...

"Jeanne and the Perfect Guy" is the first film written by a singer – literature teacher, and first film from a former student of the Institute for Advanced Film Studies...

And Pauline and Cyriac's first production and the chief cameraman's second film! The way this film came together was terrific. I really fell in love with the script and the atmosphere during the filming! Olivier and Jacques arrived on the set forty-five minutes early every morning, overjoyed to be working on the film. Production was an hour late? No problem! Wearing their straw hats, they serenely sang songs while they waited! They never shouted and really took pleasure in their work which echoes the film in their appreciation of life and seizing the day.

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The choreography in the film is not classical dance or routines we've seen in other musicals. It's drawn from gestures and movements in our daily lives. How did you work on this essential element?

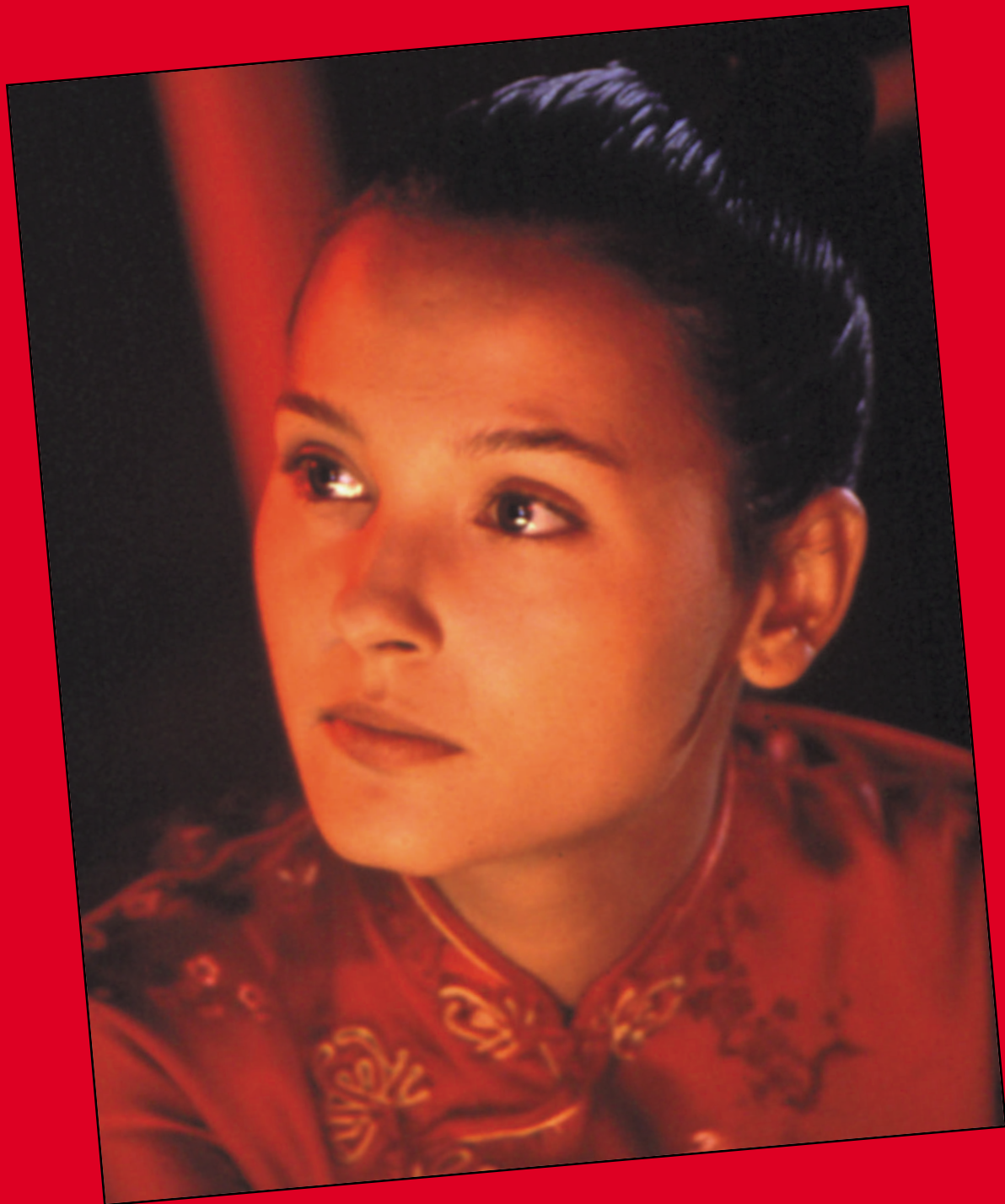
We never tried to be Barichnykov. We're not dancers. The plan was, as you said, to draw our movements from trivial daily activities. To take a sushi chopsticks, for example, and do a little number. It meant getting your body to move rather than just dancing. They weren't Broadway numbers. We had to find how we felt most at ease in our bodies and come up with moves that always remained anchored in every day experience.

I loved dancing. Especially with the long takes, even though I nearly twisted my knee and broke a tooth on several occasions. But the most intense scene was the first day of filming. The decor was a little zany in the cafeteria. We had trays with food glued to them. Valéria Bonneton and I were singing, our trays on top of our heads, and the dancers were singing all around us. Suddenly, I felt like I was part of the film, of the story, of this odd world. I was extremely happy and at the same time realized that this experience wouldn't last forever. "Jeanne and the Wonderful Guy" became part of me!

What is a "perfect guy /wonderful guy"?

For me, as well as for Jeanne, it's a guy you just simply love. It's strange and maybe a little stupid to say, but I think this film has a very fairytale-like quality. It illustrates the mundane as it tells a horrible story, but there is the perfection of it all, that odd sadness, mixed with whimsy which makes it so perfect.





JE N'AIMERAI PLUS QUE TOI

JEANNE :
Tu sais, j'ai eu beaucoup d'amants,
Beaucoup de garçons dans ma vie,
Tant de fois je me suis éprise,
Toujours j'aimais passionnément.

*Je poursuivais un idéal,
De cœur en cœur de lit en lit,
Toujours je me sentais ravie,
J'aimais encore, c'était fatal.*

*Je les aimais,
J'aimais les prendre dans mes bras.
Je les aimais,
Mais j'les aimais pas comme toi.*

*Mais j'ai toujours été déçue :
Ces hommes n'étaient pas pour moi,
et dans l'étreinte de leur bras,
Je me sentais parfois perdue.*

*Et d'idéal en idéal,
De nuits d'amour en matins tristes,
Je rencontrais des égoïstes,
Je trouvais des hommes banals.*

*Pourtant j'aimais,
J'aimais la douceur de leurs corps,
Toujours j'aimais,
J'espérais encore et encore.*

*Et puis t'es entré dans ma vie,
Un beau matin dans ce métro,
Il a suffi de quelques mots,
Pour que mon cœur te soit soumis.*

*Ton étreinte m'a chavirée,
Mon corps a reconnu ton corps,
Cette fois je sais que mon sort
Est lié à ta destinée.*

*Tu m'as aimée,
Et tu m'as prise entre tes bras.
Je t'ai aimé
Je n'peux plus me passer de toi.*

*Je t'ai trouvé,
Et je veux vivre entre tes bras.
Je t'ai aimé,
Et je n'aimerai plus que toi.*

LE GARÇON FORMIDABLE

JEANNE :
J'ai rencontré un garçon formidable
Quand je l'ai vu juste en face de moi,
J'ai senti ce frisson agréable
Qui te dit que l'amour te tend les bras.

SOPHIE :
Et ce garçon, tu l'as rencontré où ?

JEANNE :
Dans le métro, n'est-ce pas incroyable ?
Je suis tombée le cul sur ses genoux ;
J'avais l'air con, j'me sentais pitoyable
Mais ce n'était pas déplaisant du tout.

JEANNE :
Ses premiers mots ont été detestables
Grossiers, vulgaires, dignes de mon mépris,
Et puis j'ai vu ses yeux invraisemblables
Et j'ai senti mon cœur tout ramolli !

JEANNE :
Il m'a souri, il m'a dit des mots tendres,
Je n'ai pas su résister à sa voix.
A ses regards, je me suis laissé prendre,
J'ai senti le désir monter en moi...

SOPHIE :
Donc, ce garçon ?

JEANNE :
Je l'ai trouvé baisable
Mêm' mieux que ça, je n'vais pas te mentir :
Ce beau garçon, je l'ai trouvé aimable,
Un de ceux pour qui mon cœur doit souffrir.

SOPHIE :
Jeanne, encore un ! tu es infatigable.

JEANNE :
Mais c'est l'amour, moi je ne choisis pas.

SOPHIE :
T'as tant d'amants, que c'est incalculable...



JEANNE :
Non, pour le moment je n'en ai que trois !
Mais ce garçon, il a des yeux si tendres,
Quand il sourit, je ne m'appartient plus ;
A son désir, il faut que je me rende,
Je n'sais pas comment sans lui j'ai vécu.

SOPHIE :
Et pour la baise ?

JEANNE :
Amant insatiable,
Brûlant, violent, passionné tour à tour,
Il m'a fait jouir de façon incroyable,
Je veux mourir si c'est pas de l'amour.

JEANNE :
Notre désir était si indomptable
Qu'on a fait ça dans la ram' de métro.

SOPHIE :
Dans le métro ! Mais c'est épouvantable !

JEANNE :
Moi j'ai trouvé ça plutôt rigolo.

SOPHIE :
Jeanne, ce garçon m'a l'air bien redoutable !

JEANNE :
Non, pas du tout : quand il est dans mes bras,
Là, sur mon cœur, je le sens vulnérable,
Comm' s'il ne pouvait pas vivre sans moi.

SOPHIE :
A la santé du garçon formidable !

JEANNE :
Et à l'amour que j'ai déjà pour lui !



L'HOMME DE MES RÊVES

JEANNE :
Je ne sais pas qui c'est
Ni à quoi il ressemble.
C'est pas l'homme de mes rêves
Je ne l'ai jamais vu.
De sa voix j'ignore tout
Ses yeux sont incolores,
Son corps est un mystère
Ses mains n'ont pas de forme.

SOPHIE :
Il a dix doigts quand même !

JEANNE :
Il a une bite aussi !

JEANNE :
Lui !

SOPHIE :
Lui !

JEANNE :
C'est mon idéal
Mais je l'ignore encore.
Un jour il sera là.

SOPHIE :
Un jour il sera là.

JEANNE :
Je le reconnaitrai.

SOPHIE :
Tu le reconnaitras.

JEANNE :
Je ne sais pas à quoi
Je ne sais pas comment,
Mais mon cœur me dira :

SOPHIE :
Qu'est-ce qu'il te dira ?

JEANNE :
Tu l'as enfin trouvé !



INTERVIEW WITH MATHIEU DEMY

Mathieu Demy, what made you decide to become the "Perfect Guy"?

Musicals are very rare these days and this project thoroughly intrigued me. The script was simple, with a magnificent romance, going straight to the heart of things, like the story itself. Then my meeting with Jacques and Oliver was the deciding factor.

Olivier is a very secretive and determined guy who at one point in the story decides to slip out of sight and finally disappear because, "it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter anymore"... as he sings in a heartbreaking scene in the hospital. Do you understand his choice?

I can certainly understand that he wouldn't want to expose himself to prying eyes and takes refuge with his family in order to lick his wounds and spare his loved ones the suffering. Olivier's decision at this point is one of self-respect and generosity. It's very coherent with regard to the script. I remember going to see "Philadelphia" and feeling disturbed by the director's insistence on showing us the ravages of the disease and physical decomposition of Tom Hank's body. I think Olivier and Jacques' handling is more interesting.

Olivier and Jacques decided take advantage of long sequences to create an authenticity, accentuate the impression of the passing of time and I have the feeling that you were able to really benefit from their choice...

It was very enjoyable, and a veritable gift on their part! To act and maintain the continuity in the dance scenes, like the java was inestimable because our creative juices were not hindered. Instead, they were greatly enhanced.

In the very intimate scenes like the Sunday morning breakfast, I think the shot lasts three or four minutes with only one cut! It's true that the length of the take allowed us discover something new in our relationship... it was like an alchemy... We had to be erotic and that was even more stimulating with a long take.

We know very little about Oliver... We know what Jeanne says about him that he's "vulnerable, screwable, loveable, insatiable"...

(Blushing and laughing) I like his reserved nature. In the java scene we glean some things about his past. He is in a rage, that is cold and contained, but we don't know a lot about him. The only thing that counts for him is to live, to find a balance between the mortality that's dogging him and the love which fills him with so much passion. Olivier is a simple character confronted with basic life issues – love and death.

“Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable is Olivier’s directing debut and Jacques’. Was that reassuring?

(laughing) Frankly, they had every aspect of the film handled! I’ve never seen a more impressive pre-production on a film... such precision. It was very reassuring for everybody. When the film preparation is handled well, there is more freedom when it comes time for the shoot! All the little anxieties dealing with placement and movement were resolved. There was nothing left to do but act!

With respect to my character, we had to work on his physical appearance, because we know so little about him.

Olivier and Jacques wanted to deflate some clichés about Aids. That’s why my character is dynamic, not scrawny. He is physically robust.

They often made the task more difficult. Choosing a rave dance to declare that he’s seropositive is a good example of this. I tried to go along with that.

Olivier and Jacques told me how happy they were to make a musical with the name “Demy” on the credits...

I grew up with my father’s films. He showed them to us. We were treated to 16 mm projections of his works at home and we were thrilled! Musicals and fairy tales have several levels of meaning. It can enchant the child in us and the adult can really grasp the deeper meanings of the story. There’s often sadness in it. I love my father’s films and making “Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable” was reminiscent of the things I love. I feel like I acted in a film that was light and entertaining, yet dealt with a profoundly sad theme. There is a real similarity between my father’s films in the way he mingles enchantment and sadness.

What is a “wonderful guy /perfect guy “ ?

Young people today don’t really use this expression anymore, yet it’s charming. It is a reminder of the old days when things were more playful and innocent, very much like this film!

INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE MILLER

(The music composer)

Was writing the music for this film very restrictive?

I am a musician and I found Jacques, the writer, someone who was not afraid of music! He was a singer. He adores musicals and sees them all the time. He is open to every avenue of expression, even lyrics which is the case in the lovely lament of the messenger boy that Jeanne drops. Jacques' openness to the musical form made many things possible, even the ability to work on a musical about Aids and gay rights!

What's more, music has a therapeutic quality for me. It takes the edge off trying situations. So writing music for such difficult texts did not pose a problem for me. The marriage of theme and form was really very stimulating.

I'm happy that all the music was recorded in Paris and not abroad, which might have been more economical... I was lucky that it took place in Paris and I was able to choose my musicians. In fact, I needed a lot of musicians and a great diversity of them considering the variety of music. I had my friends from the conservatory work for me which made creating the music like a family experience and that showed up in the film.

How was filming for you?

It was really romantic! It was enchanting for me to go somewhere in Paris and suddenly hear my music being played outside in a public square over the summer!!

I was also a little afraid that it wasn't going to turn out to be synchronized, so I went to the studio to verify the actors' lipsinking.

Did you work closely with the actors to make certain their songs fit with their characters?

Naturally I wanted to know how they were going to interpret the songs and met with them before writing the arrangements. The personality of an actor can influence the song. For example, the speed of their delivery changed the tempo of my songs. There were five very pivotal songs in this film, that Jacques wrote first: The Java, Breakfast, the hospital song, Bonnafés lament and "I met a wonderful guy". Working closely with the actors for this one was important.

How did you end up working on this film?

Thanks to the producer, Cyriak. I worked with him on a film short which wasn't a musical at all! Then one day I was casually asking him about his latest projects and he told me about a musical he was doing. That was it, I knew I had to work on it!!

Can you produce a musical today without making reference to Jacques Demy and his slightly quirky, marvelous and poignant universe? Can we put the heartache of love to music without thinking of Demy?

I like Jacques Demy's films, but I didn't want to do the same type of musical as Legrand. And I especially didn't want someone to say to me, "Oh, this is an homage to Demy, you've duplicated Michel Legrand!" Early on, I met Jacques who hadn't written the script yet, but had the text for the songs in hand. He then officially wrote the songs, assuring their place in film history. He was trained as a professional singer so it's normal that he started with the songs!

Demy operated in a very different manner. In "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg", he developed a distinct musical theme which was constantly repeated throughout the film. In "Jeanne et le Garçon Formidable", Jacques wanted a variety of musical styles which you might find on the radio. It seemed very contemporary to me. What's more, that versatility, that capacity to tackle many musical genres was dictated to me by the script itself. The rich variety of music is like a mosaic. For example, the java number, the cabaret, the oriental interlude in the dining hall, etc...

Jacques knew exactly what he wanted. I proposed some ideas to him, but he never made a mistake with his choice of styles.

Writing the music and the words based on a powerful script, the recording, performances, everything seemed possible to me. It all took place as if in a dream. My only concern, in the end, was the ability for audiences to tolerate a musical! With the juxtaposition of genres, the mix of bright and muted tones... I wondered if that would be tolerable to the viewers. Maybe they wanted a more cohesive film. But when it was complete, the diversity seemed to enrich the film.

F I L M O G R A P H I E S

VIRGINIE LEDOYEN

- 1997 **A SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER NEVER CRIES**
James Ivory
JEANNE ET LE GARÇON FORMIDABLE
Olivier Ducastel et Jacques Martineau
- 1996 **HEROINES**
Gérard Krawczyk
- 1995 **MAJONG**
Edward Yang
LA FILLE SEULE
Benoit Jacquot
LA CEREMONIE
Claude Chabrol
- 1994 **LA VIE DE MARIANNE** (TV Film)
Benoit Jacquot
- 1993 **L'EAU FROIDE**
Olivier Assayas
LA REGLE DE L'HOMME (TV Film)
Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe
LES MARMOTTES
Elie Chouraqui
- 1992 **MOUCHE**
Marcel Carne
- 1990 **LE VOLEUR D'ENFANTS**
Christian de Chalonge
MIMA
Philomène Esposito

MATHIEU DEMY

CINEMA

- JEANNE ET LE GARÇON FORMIDABLE** 1997
Olivier DUCASTEL
et Jacques MARTINEAU
LE NEW YORKER
Benoit GRAFFIN
- ARLETTE** 1996
Claude ZIDI
BANQUEROUTE
Antoine DESROSIERES
VIVE LE CINEMA (CM)
Didier ROUGET
- LES CENTS ET UNE NUITS** 1994
Agnès VARDA
- A LA BELLE ETOILE** 1993
Antoine DESROSIERES
- KUNG-FU MASTER** 1987
Agnès VARDA
- DOCUMENTEUR** 1981
Agnès VARDA
- L'UNE CHANTE, L'AUTRE PAS** 1976
Agnès VARDA

TELEVISION

- L'AFFAIRE DREYFUS** 1994
Yves BOISSET

JACQUES BONNAFFÉ

- 1997 **JEANNE ET LE GARCON FORMIDABLE**
Olivier Ducastel & Jacques Martineau
- 1996 **CAPITAINE AU LONG COURS**
Bianca Conti Rossini
- RIEN QUE DES GRANDES PERSONNES**
Jean-Marc Brondola
- C'EST POUR LA BONNE CAUSE**
Jacques Fansten
- LUCIE AUBRAC**
Claude Berri
- 1994 **LES FRERES GRAVET**
René Feret
- 1993 **COUPLES ET AMANTS**
John Lvolf
- 1992 **IDENTIKIT**
Ab Van Ieperen
- ROULEZ JEUNESSE**
Jacques Fansten
- FAUT-IL AIMER MATHILDE**
Edwin Baily
- 1990 **LES ENFANTS DU VENT**
Krystoph Rogulski
- LA FRACTURE DU MYOCARDE**
Jacques Fansten
- ARTHUR RIMBAUD, UNE BIOGRAPHIE**
Richard Dindo
- 1988 **LA CASE DU BLANC**
Philippe Venault
- LA CAMPAGNE DE CICERON**
Jacques Davila
- BAPTEME**
René Feret
- 1986 **RESIDENCE SURVEILLEE**
Frédéric Compain
- LA FEMME SECRETE**
Sébastien Grall
- LES MONTAGNES DE LA LUNE**
Paolo Rocha
- 1985 **LA TENTATION D'ISABELLE**
Jacques Doillon
- 1984 **LE MEILLEUR DE LA VIE**
Renaud Victor
- BLANCHE ET MARIE**
Jacques Renard
- ESCALIER C**
Jean-Claude Tacchela
- ELLE A PASSE TANT D'HEURE**
SOUS LES SUNLIGHTS
Philippe Garrel
- 1983 **PRENOM CARMEN**
Jean-Luc Godard
- BALLADES**
Catherine Corsini
- PARIS VU PAR, VINGT ANS APRES**
Philippe Venault
- 1979 **ANTHRACITE**
Edouard Niermans

OLIVIER DUCASTEL : Director-

FILMOGRAPHY

Director :

Jeanne et le garçon formidable, musical,
35mm, color, 1997
La côte d'albâtre, short, 16 mm,
black and white, 1984
Sur le pont des Arts,
short documentary, 1987
Le goût de plaire, musical, 35mm, color
(with Anna Alvaro, Jacques Bonnaffé,
Christiane Millet)
Many festivals (Lille, Angers, Tel-Aviv,
Oberhausen) and Tour de France 1989
of short films.

Image editor:

Vacances à l'hôtel,
Odile Devautour (1987)
Matin de mariage, Gérard Jumel (1988)
Voleur d'images, B. Victor-Pujebet (1991)
Comédie d'un soir, Marianne Basler (1991)
Le scooter à pédales, J.-L. Tribes (1991)
Eux cinq, Frédéric Videau (1993)
L'homme libre,
documentary of Annette Dutertre (1992)
Nous les enfants du XXIème siècle,
documentary of Vitali Kanevski (1993)

Sound editor :

Outremer, Brigitte Roüan (1989)
Alexandrie encore et toujours,
Youssef Chahine (1990)
Transit, René Allio (1990)
Faut-il aimer Mathilde?,
Edwin Baily (1993)
Lettre pour L..., Romain Goupil (1993)
L'émigré, Youssef Chahine (1994)
Fais ce que voudras,
Documentary of Marco Ferreri (1994)
Adultère, mode d'emploi,
Christine Pascale (1995)
Le maître des éléphants,
P. Grandperret (1995)
La Flûte enchantée, Mozart

Maître de conférence
in University of Paris X-Nanterre

JACQUES MARTINEAU: Director

FILMOGRAPHY

Scriptwriter:

Jeanne et le garçon formidable, musical
the Gan Foundation
prize-winner for cinema, 1997
Public reading at
the Angers Festival of Jan, 1997

Restons groupés, screenwriter on
the project of long feature film
of Jean-Paul Salomé (now in production)

Viens soleil, long feature film in development

Director

1997 *Jeanne et le garçon formidable*

First assistant producer

La Chauve-souris, Strauss

Lyric artist

1987-1990 National Conservatory
of Boulogne-Billancourt

performances: *Armide*, Lully
La Chauve-souris, Strauss

Education

1984 Ecole Normale Supérieure de la rue d'Ulm
1985 Licences of literature and sociology
1986 Maîtrise of French literature,
University of Paris X
1987 Agregation of Modern literature
1994 Doctorate of French literature,
University of Paris X

Numerous publications

(notably a preface for Balzac's
La Peau de chagrin at Livre de Poche).

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"Jeanne et le garçon formidable" is not an easy story. A film about mourning and loss, it explores lives shattered by an unforeseen disease. A far cry from romanticism, we wanted to show the true nature of the illness. Despite the gravity of the subject, "Jeanne et le garçon formidable" is not a sad film. The end is somber, but the overall tone is joyful, without being flip-pant. The film isn't an opportunity to indulge in pain and suffering. It wasn't our intention to make light of the seriousness of the ravages of illness by adding a humorous spin to the story. We attempted to show the unfairness of lives cut short and the illness' disastrous effects upon an entire generation.

The idea of a musical comedy came to us naturally. The genre was easily built around a simple concept -- a period of searching, meeting, falling in love and loss. Some of their paths cross several times without really coming together (Jeanne lives through the ordeal that François has already experienced). The three central characters never really manage to renew the ties that bind them. In the end, we are alone when we face death, whether it be our own or someone we love. There's nothing more to be learned from Aids. There's no need for this disease to remind us of life's brevity.

Jeanne, the central character, is a symbol of the life force within us all. She has faith in an ideal and the strength of love. But this life force goes through a denial, the subliminal refusal to see Olivier's illness for what it is. She draws Olivier into her way of thinking. He begins to make plans for his future. But the moment she leaves his side, the harsh truth comes crashing in and his impending death is a reality. He doesn't lie to Jeanne, he genuinely forgets and is happy to forget. François becomes a sort of link between them. His knowledge of Aids is based on personal experience (the death of a lover) and his commitment to the cause.

At times François tries to present a convincing political argument to his friends. At other times he listens and gives advice, but finds it difficult to create a connection.

The music tunefully illustrates the characters and their transformations without excessive wordy discourse. It appears in the film in many forms. Sometimes the music is transitional, background to street or bar scenes, other times it takes a more classical turn, coming from nowhere, but always supporting and developing the story line. It expresses what we cannot always express. Philippe Miller's work is very much in keeping with this theme. When Olivier parties, the music is joyful and nostalgic which at the same time underscores his rage, despair and zest for life. From this perspective, we thought it wise not to use voice-overs for the actor's songs. The actors themselves sing the songs which provides greater expressive range. It also ensures greater diversity: alternating song and spoken lines, spoken song and up-beat reading of lines.

In showing life's buoyancy and vitality, we could better underline the tragedy of Aids. This energy could only be conveyed through a musical, through its lively song and dance routines which carry movement and life within them.

LES FILMS DU REQUIN

FILMOGRAPHY

Cinema

Drancy avenir, Arnaud des Pallières
(with Claude Amiot, Thierry Bosc et Hans Zychler)

Jeanne et le garçon formidable, Jacques Martineau & Olivier Ducastel
(with Virginie Ledoyen, Mathieu Demy, Jacques Bonnaffé, etc...)
now shooting

Le New-Yorker, Benoît Graffin
(with Mathieu Demy)
post-production

La Deuda, (the debt), Nicolas Buenaventura Vidal & Manuel José Alvarez
(released in Colombia on August 14th, 1997)

Lisa et le pilote d'avion, Philippe Barassat
Le café de la plage, Benoit Graffin
developing

Shorts

Léo et les bas, Pierre Linhart

La nuit des héros, Philippe Pareno

Ayrton la Bête, Remy Burkel

Faim d'aimer, Orazio Massaro

La Bête, Marie Joxe (animation)

La croisade d'Anne Buridan, Judith Cahen (released in Nov 1995)

Tout va mal, Marco Nicoletti

Autoreverse, Mathias Pulleu-Benguigui

Allées et venues, Marie Donnio

Le vide dedans moi, Lola Doillon et Cyriac Auriol

Les fourmis rouges, Pierre Erwan Guillaume

Seul(s) au monde, Jean-Christophe Soulageon

La fourche, Guillaume Deffontaines

Les soirs bleus d'été, Djibril Glissant

Folle de ce mec, Philippe Barassat
completed

Si seulement..., Jeanne Balibar

Boscowitz, Benoît Graffin

C A S T

JEANNE Virginie LEDOYEN
OLIVIER Mathieu DEMY
FRANÇOIS Jacques BONNAFFE
SOPHIE Valérie BONNETON
JEAN-BAPTISTE Frédéric GORNY

The messenger
The plumber
Jacques
Julien
Rémi
Jeanne's mother
Jeanne's father
Friend Olivier
Jérôme
The bookseller
The nurse
The BDE lady
The night nurse
The BDE guy
Edouard
Nathalie
Hélène
Richard
Self maid
Cinema cashier
Act Up militant

LAURENT ARCARO
MICHEL RASKINE
DAMIEN DODANE
DENIS PODALYDES
DAVID SARACINO
NELLY BORGEAUD
RENE MORARD
JEAN-MARC ROULEAU
SYLVAIN PRUNENEC
EMMANUELLE GOIZE
MARIEF GUITTIER
JUDITH GUTTIER
CHRISTIANE MILLET
CEDRIC BRENNER
NICOLAS SEGUY
JOHANNA MENUTEAU
AXELLE LAFFONT
GREGORY SAUVION
MY LINH BUI
JULIETTE CHANAUD
PHILIPPE MANGEOT

And so on...

C R E W

Directors	OLIVIER DUCASTEL JACQUES MARTINEAU
Producers	CYRIAC AURIOL PAULINE DUHAULT
Line producer	ERIC ZAOUALI
Unit production manager	NICOLAS CONTI
Scriptgirl	ISABELLE LE GRIX
Casting	ANTOINETTE BOULAT
Director of photography	MATHIEU POIROT-DELPECH
Sound engineer	JEAN-JACQUES FERRAN
Set decorator	LOUIS SOUBRIER
Prop man	NICOLAS CHIK
Costume director	JULIETTE CHANAUD
Make up	JOEL LAVAU
Film editor	SABINE MAMOU
Sound editor	WALDIR XAVIER
Mixing	JEAN-PIERRE LAFORCE
Composer	PHILIPPE MILLER
Choreographer	SYLVIE GIRON
Co-production	LES FILMS DU REQUIN FRANCE 2 CINÉMA, M6 FILMS, STUDIO CANAL +, ORSANS PRODUCTIONS
Distribution In france	PYRAMIDE
World Sales	LE STUDIO CANAL +

1h38 - 35mm - scope - couleur - dolby SRD - 1997

MUSIC

CHANSON DES EMPLOYÉS DU NETTOYAGE

(Martineau / Miller)

Chants

Amy Bamba
Mohammed Damraoui
Jean-François Deleray
Pierre Sitson-Sitchet

Batterie

Christof Dejean

Basse

Bernard Paganotti

Guitare - Luth

Jean-Marc Benaïs

Accordéon

Bertrand Lemarchand

Programmations

Michaël Dune

Avec l'aimable autorisation des
éditions *Ésperance*
pour l'utilisation d'un extrait de
Karba Lalla (Mohammed Damraoui)

LA VALSE ARGENTINE

(Juan José Mossalini Jr.)

Bandonéon

Juan José Mossalini Jr.

Contrebasse

Mauricio Angarita

Piano

Oswaldo Calo

Violon

Sebastien Couranjou

LA VIE RÉSERVE DES SURPRISES

(Martineau / Miller - Martineau)

Chant

Jacques Bonnaffé

Accordéon

Bertrand Lemarchand

LA VIE À CRÉDIT

(Martineau / Miller)

Chant

Valérie Bonneton

Denis Podalydes

Batterie

Christof Dejean

Basse

Bernard Paganotti

Guitare

Jean-Marc Benaïs

Piano

Didier Goret

Trombone

Jean-François Quéllec

Programmations

Michaël Dune

LA VIE AU RÉGIMENT

(Martineau / Miller)

Chant

David Sarracino

Elise Caron

Guitare

Jean-Marc Benaïs

LE GARÇON FORMIDABLE

(Martineau / Miller - Martineau)

Chant

Elise Caron

Valérie Bonneton

Batterie

Christof Dejean

Accordéon

Bertrand Lemarchand

Trompette

Dominique Colin

Piccolo

Isabelle Luberne

Tuba

Lilian Métayer

Trombone

Jean-François Quéllec

Saxophones

Jean-Marc Portal

Luc Tupin

Hélicon

Pierre-Michel Jault

Percussion

Sébastien Quésada

Programmations

Michaël Dune

LA JAVA DU SÉROPO

(Martineau / Miller - Martineau)

Chant

Mathieu Demy

Virginie Ledoyen

Accordéon

Franck Angelis

Bugle

Dominique Colin

Batterie

Christof Dejean

Contrebasse

Mauricio Angarita

Guitare

Jeff Pourquié

ARIA DU COURSIER

(Martineau / Miller)

Chant

Laurent Arcaro

Cors

Ensemble de Cors d'Île de France

Direction : Patrice Petitdidier

UN DIMANCHE AU LIT

(Martineau / Miller - Martineau)

Chant

Elise Caron

Mathieu Demy

Flûte

Sylvie Pascal

Hautbois d'amour

Antoine Lazennec

Basson

Bruno Derrien

Cor

Patrice Petitdidier

Alto

Didier Matarin

Harpe

Cécile Audebert

Ase

Mauricio Angarita

LE TANGO DU MALAISE

(Martineau / Miller - Martineau)

Chant

Elise Caron

Batterie

Christof Dejean

Basse

Bernard Paganotti

Guitare

Jean-Marc Benaïs

Bandonéon

Juan José Mossalini Jr.

Contrebasse

Mauricio Angarita

Piano

Oswaldo Calo

Violon

Sebastien Couranjou

Programmations

Michaël Dune

L'HOMME DE MES RÊVES

(Martineau / Miller)

Chant

Elise Caron

Sylvain Prunec

Basse

Bernard Paganotti

Guitare

Jean-Marc Benaïs

Piano

Didier Goret

Percussions

Orlando Poleo

Programmations

Michaël Dune

TSING-TAO

(Miller)

Chant

Elise Caron

Valérie Bonneton

Programmations

Michaël Dune

LA VENDEUSE DE BOUQUINS

(Martineau / Miller - Martineau)

Chant

Emmanuelle Goizé

Mathieu Demy

Piano

Didier Goret

Guitare

Jean-Marc Benaïs

Batterie

Christof Dejean

Basse

Bernard Paganotti

Cuivres

Jean-François Quéllec

Michel Feugère

Marc Vorchin

Percussions

Denis Benarrosh

JE N'AIMERAI PLUS QUE TOI

(Martineau / Miller - Martineau)

Chant

Elise Caron

Piano

Philippe Miller

Violons

Robert Arribaud

David Braccini

François Costa

Frédéric Dessus

Anna-Maria Deveselu

Frédéric Eymard

Catherine Grimault

Hélène Lenglard

Isabelle Marie

Didier Matarin

Violoncelles

Sabine Balasse

Anne-Lise Branquet

Cécile Girard

Direction

Philippe Nahon

PLOMBIER, QUEL BEAU MÉTIER

(Martineau / Miller)

Chant

Michel Raskine

Batterie

Christof Dejean

Basse

Bernard Paganotti

Guitare

Jean-Marc Benaïs

Piano

Didier Goret

Trompette

Éric Giausserand

Saxophone ténor

Bruno Ribéra

Trombone

Bernard Camoin

ÇA N'A PLUS D'IMPORTANCE

(Martineau / Miller)

Chant

Elise Caron

Mathieu Demy

Piano

Philippe Miller

Cors

Ensemble de Cors d'Île de France

Direction : Patrice Petitdidier

Violons

Robert Arribaud

David Braccini

François Costa

Frédéric Dessus

Anna-Maria Deveselu

Frédéric Eymard

Catherine Grimault

Hélène Lenglard

Isabelle Marie

Didier Matarin

Violoncelles

Sabine Balasse

Anne-Lise Branquet

Cécile Girard

Contrebasse

Éric Lancelot

Direction

Philippe Nahon

