



#### Director's Note

It was in 2010, or perhaps 2011 already, I can't remember. But shortly after *I Killed My Mother*, I was at Anne Dorval's, sitting at her perennial kitchen island. It's become, over the years, the inescapable hangout where we so often end up to catch up, confide and confess, look at photos, read stuff or, most of the time, linger on silently. That's about where and when she mentioned an extraordinary play she had had the indescribable pleasure of doing in the early 2000's. "Never had I had the opportunity of saying and acting things written and thought in such way, in a vernacular so exhaustively particular" she told me. What's more, she was convinced I had the dire obligation of reading it. She'd even give me her own personal script, left as is, scribbled all over a decade earlier ; cues, stage positions and a raft of notes in the margin...

I took home the oversized document printed on legal paper. The read portended a certain... rigour. As a matter of fact, unlike Anne had promised, I didn't get much of a kick out of it. And to be honest, I felt, quite on the contrary, a disinterest for the material, and perhaps even an aversion for the language. Because of an intellectual blockage of some kind, I couldn't engage with the characters nor the story, and wasn't able to love the play my friend so deeply worshipped. I put *It's Only the End of the World* away, and Anne and I never really brought it up again.

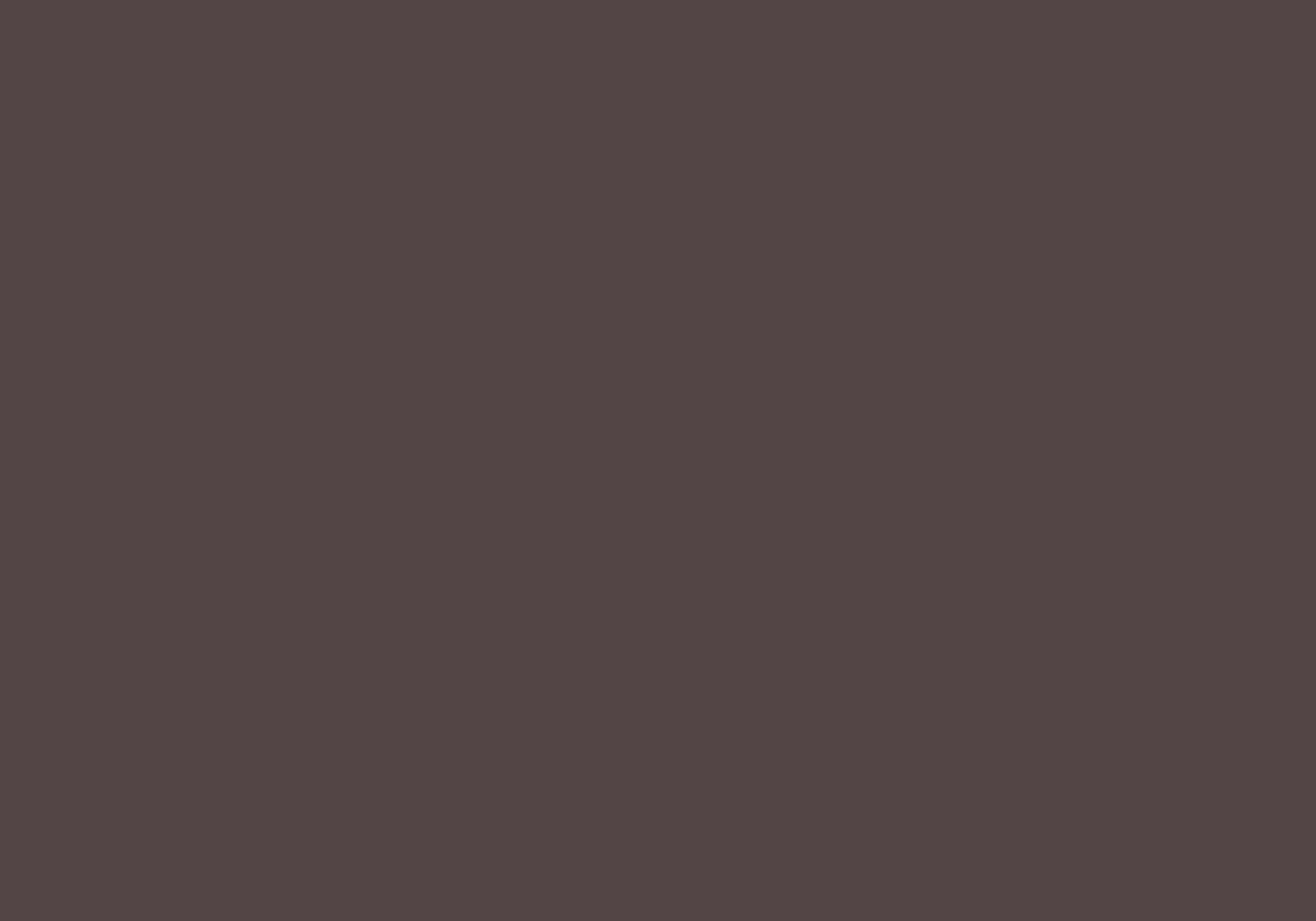
Four years later, right after *Mommy*, I caught myself thinking about the big document with the blue cover, stored in the living room's library - on the top shelf, naturally. It was so tall it largely peeked out from the stack of books it was flanked with, its head high, as though it knew it couldn't be enduringly ignored.

Early that summer, I reread - or read, really - *It's Only the End of the World*. Around page 6, I knew it was going to be my next film.

And my first as a man. I could finally understand the words, the emotions, the silences, the hesitations, the insecurity, the heartbreakingly-real flaws of Jean-Luc Lagarce's characters. In defense of the play, I should add I hadn't, when I think about, given it a serious shot, back at the time. In my defense, I should add that, had I given it my best, I don't think I would have understood it notwithstanding.

Time has its way with things, and as (too) often, Anne was right of course.

Xavier Dolan, April 2nd 2016





### Synopsis

After 12 years of absence, a writer goes back to his hometown, planning on announcing his upcoming death to his family.

As resentment soon rewrites the course of the afternoon, fits and feuds unfold, fuelled by bitterness and fear, while all attempts of empathy are sabotaged by people's incapacity to listen, and love.



### Adapting Lagarce

When I started to openly tell my friends *It's Only the End of the World* was my next movie, the idea was welcomed with a bizarre mix of skepticism and well-intentioned apprehensiveness. By Anne, amongst others, or Serge Denoncourt and Pierre Bernard, who had both worked on the play when it was brought to Montreal in 2001.

Anne had urged me to read a text that was – I'm quoting her – tailor-made for me, but was suddenly questioning the feasibility of the project. "How will you preserve Lagarce's vernacular?" she asked me. "It's what makes the play truly relevant and unique. On the other hand, I don't think it's cinematic at all. But if you lose it, what's the point of adapting Lagarce?"

Indeed. But I did not want to lose it. On the contrary, the challenge was to keep it, and as entirely as could be. The themes cherished by Lagarce, the character's emotions, whether loud or silent, their imperfections, their loneliness, their sorrows, their feeling of inferiority... of course, all that hit so close to home – as it would for most people, I assumed. But that language, that vernacular... that was foreign land to me. It was so... new.

Filled with *gaucherie*, hesitations and grammar mistakes... Where most authors I knew would

instinctively cross out the reiterations and the unnecessary, Lagarce kept it, and embraced it. His characters, agitated and timorous, were swimming for their lives in a churning sea of words where every look, every breath gliding in between the lines became – or would become – moments of calm where the actors would suspend time.

I wanted Lagarce's words to be spoken like they had been thought. Without compromise. His legacy lies within that very wording, and through it, his work has marked our time. Watering it down would have been banalizing Lagarce. To be frank, that anyone can "feel the theatre" in a film couldn't matter less to me. Theatre should be felt in movies. Don't movies need it, anyway?









### Gabriel Yared, second round

Apparently, behind every great composer lies a cologne waiting to be snaffled. As will appear by this example...

Back when he scored *Tom at the Farm*, Gabriel Yared was working in Paris, while I, an ocean apart, was acting in a film and writing Mommy. The experience was pivotal, but entirely virtual : I never got to meet Gabriel in person throughout those six months of exchange. The adventure of *It's Only the End of the World* had to be – we both knew it – more physical.

A few months before we shot the movie, I sent Gabriel a track I liked as tonal reference for our new project. He sent me back a waltz that literally broke my heart. When I first heard it, I knew right away I'd use it for the final scene ; I could see it all : the befuddlement, the powerlessness of people unable to listen, who see nothing coming, and slump and crumble when the ground unexpectedly falls out from under their feet... I could hear the Mom say : “Well, we still get to kiss goodbye, don't we?”

Last December, I invited Gabriel to join me in LA, where I was putting the final touches on the movie. I needed to get out of Montreal, change air. Eleven days to deliver the film finished, with significantly lengthy sequences still missing – amongst which the end. Gabriel only came for

six days. Nana, my producer, found a lovely house where we set the editing “suite” in the kitchen, and put Gabriel and his assistant David at the back of the house, in the children's room (makes sense), with their keyboards, the pianos and all the shebang. I was shuttling back and forth to discover their daily output, delivering as well the newest scenes I had cut, ready to be dressed up.

We spent long hours chatting, getting excited and moved by all sort of things, screaming, running or stagnating, of course. We'd always eat the same Tagliatelle bolognese in a cute eatery near Paramount, take long walks in Larchmont and play Scrabble in the lounge. But we had actually rented the house of Robert Schwartzman, Rooney's lead singer (I'm Shakin') – but forever in my heart, Michael in *The Princess' Diaries*. Robert himself was, unbeknownst to us, clustered in his gardening workshop, in the back yard of the house he was lending us, working on his own film. He had transformed that sort of shack into a luxurious editing and music recording studio, while we had transformed his house into a second-rate post-production office.

Six days later, Gabriel was leaving with 45 minutes of music in his trunk. But history has shown that this wasn't the ultimate climax of our stay in Los Angeles.

Indeed, Robert and I hadn't been able to help but notice Gabriel's completely intoxicating perfume, and asked him what it was. Chanel's *Égoïste* – what else? Impatient to claim the odour as his, Robert impulsively ordered a 100 ml flask which arrived within a matter of hours, delivered in a white box impeccably ribboned with red silk. He snaffled Gabriel's cologne. And I, well... Late one evening, drunk with an old friend, snaffled *Égoïste* from Robert.

Gabriel knows nothing of this, of course.









Credits

LOUIS  
LA MÈRE  
SUZANNE  
ANTOINE  
CATHERINE

Gaspard Ulliel  
Nathalie Baye  
Léa Seydoux  
Vincent Cassel  
Marion Cotillard

Written & Directed by  
Cinematography  
Original Score  
Editing  
Production Design  
Sound Design & Mix  
Visual Effects  
Color grading

Xavier Dolan  
André Turpin  
Gabriel Yared  
Xavier Dolan  
Colombe Raby  
Sylvain Brassard  
ALCHEMY24  
Jérôme Cloutier

Produced by

Nancy Grant  
Xavier Dolan  
Sylvain Corbeil  
Nathanaël Karmitz  
Elisha Karmitz  
Michel Merkt

Executive Producer

Patrick Roy

Running time  
Aspect ratio  
Format  
Country

95 min.  
1:85  
35mm, color  
Canada/France

Photos

Shayne Laverdière



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