

making plans for lina

A FILM BY CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ





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why not productions presents

making plans for lena

(Non ma fille, tu n'iras pas danser)

A FILM BY CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

WITH

CHIARA MASTROIANNI

MARINA FOÏS

MARIE-CHRISTINE BARRAULT

JEAN-MARC BARR

LOUIS GARREL

FRED ULYSSE

JULIEN HONORE

MARCIAL DI FONZO BO

ALICE BUTAUD

tiff. toronto
international
film festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION 2009



DONOSTIA ZINEMALDIA
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIAN
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

France - 2009 - 105 min - Comedy Drama - 1:85 - Dolby SRD - French



Synopsis

Ever since she broke up with Nigel, Léna soldiers on through life as best she can with her two kids. She valiantly overcomes the obstacles put in her way. But she has yet to confront the worst of them: Her unstoppable family of do-gooders who have decided, by any means necessary, to make her happy.



Christophe Honoré and Geneviève Brisac in conversation

Christophe Honoré and Geneviève Brisac are both writers and she was his first publisher. For Christophe Honoré, he wanted a “female eye” for the screenplay of MAKING PLANS FOR LENA and invited Geneviève Brisac to collaborate with him.

Christophe HONORÉ: The birth of MAKING PLANS FOR LENA came about in three acts. Act one: meeting Chiara Mastroianni. She had played a supporting role in LOVE SONGS. I immediately sensed we were on the same wavelength in terms of acting. I had already had the same feeling when I first met Louis Garrel: it's like finding a sort of double, a spokesman. Immediately after LOVE SONGS, I said to Chiara, “We'll make another film together. I don't know what or when because I have to shoot THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON first.”

Act two: my desire to return to Brittany. This resulted in the idea of a film about family. I'm from Brittany and I moved to Paris fairly late, at the age of 25. Until now, I have above all, filmed Paris, the setting for the trilogy IN PARIS as the title indicates, LOVE SONGS and THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON.

But I think I see Paris as someone from the provinces does. My gaze is not one of familiarity but rather, discovery. The desire to return to Brittany allowed me to ask myself the following question: how has that part of France permeated and influenced my work? When it comes down to it, I see a lot of Brittany, even in the Parisian trilogy! Act three: Chiara, Brittany, family. And then what? This is where Geneviève (Brisac) stepped in. The main character of her novel “Week-end de chasse à la mere”, winner of the Prix Femina, seemed ideal for Chiara. She's a mother who has a very strong bond with her little boy. The book contains reality and magic too, along with Brittany... A lot of elements that spoke to me. And since Geneviève was free at the time...

Geneviève BRISAC: My parents had just had a serious car accident in which my mother died. I was in a state of absence. Christophe held a hand out to me. I feel that creation is the response to absence, just as work is the response to grief. Musset used to say that... And while it was difficult or even impossible to write for myself at that time, I could indeed write for Christophe and this film, transmitting, transforming and transmuting my grief into energy. By talking about family, that multi-faceted animal with its auto-immune diseases, those generations of women who do themselves good, who hurt themselves... I recall how Christophe presented the whole thing to me: “I'm going to make you an offer, you mustn't accept it. I'll steal everything from you, you won't find anything again.” And I replied, “I don't care, on the contrary, that stimulates me, I'm able to give.”

I liked the idea of this commitment, this story of transmission, of generations, of parents and children. For Christophe, it was the right moment: he himself had had a child... It was Hemingway who said, “When you write a short story, it's what you don't put in it that gives the short story all its power...”

Christophe HONORÉ: That's true. Until now, I have only proposed fantasized portraits of mothers like Béatrice Dalle in 17 TIMES CÉCILE CASSARD which was the result of my personal questioning about what my mother would have done if she had abandoned us. Isabelle Huppert's character in MY MOTHER is also a pure fantasy mother. Thus, Marie-Christine Barrault, the character in MAKING PLANS FOR LENA is, in a way, the first real mother in one of my films. Having a child helped me to confront the truth: that for the first time, I was dealing with a mother with whom I didn't have a child's relationship. Therefore, I observed my daughter's mother closely and realized that I myself could adopt an incredibly male chauvinist attitude and, much to my surprise, enter into this violence directed at women that consists in accusing them of being bad mothers. This seemed to me to

be a strong subject for a film, a contemporary film. For this reason, the film clearly needed a female gaze. With Geneviève and her background as a novelist, that gaze was within my reach.

In the middle of the film, there is a radical break with reality when we enter a fable through the character of Anton, Léna/Chiara's son who reads it and then relates it to his mother. Isn't this rather radical?

Christophe HONORÉ: I take full responsibility for that! On returning to Brittany, I recalled a legend that terrified me as a child and that seemed to be at the heart of the film's subject matter. The story of Katell Gollet, Katell the Lost, whose petrified image is engraved on roadside shrines. This woman descended into hell because she refused to be a mother and she ended up marrying a man who turned out to be the devil simply in defiance of her father. This idea, which may seem archaic or naïve, says a lot about the position of women in the imaginary world.

Geneviève BRISAC: Yes, I feel that after we see the fable, we see differently. We get back to the modern world, we get back to the film that relates the life of mothers and the permanence of an inescapable alternative: mother or whore, mother or lover, daughter or mother, sister or daughter... But, in fact, there is no “or”. Instead, there's a superimposition of roles that is difficult and even impossible to deal with, along with a recurrent question: how can you be this if you're that? The eternal choice...

Christophe HONORÉ: Geneviève and I are well aware of the shift to the fantastic through our work as writers. It's a matter of taking the real world and transforming it in a beautiful manner. In a film, though, that is a complex task! You are with the characters, in their reality and incarnation yet, at a given point, you hope to produce not just the portrait of a woman but also a portrait of the feminine world. To show that this violence done to women through the guilt that they are forced to bear originated long ago, in the tales and stories that children read, that it is a legacy handed down. The film tries to distil all that. I really admire films driven by a single force, Robert Bresson's for instance. But, one day, you realize that you're very different from the filmmakers you love and you have to live with that. I have come to realize that this notion of incompleteness, of working on heterogeneous forms, is what makes up my cinema. So I run the risk of breaking the bond, of interrupting the story, of allowing the form to take over from plausibility, of allowing the form to take over from the meaning. While I was working on Victor Hugo's “Angelo, tyran de Padoue” that I am directing for the Avignon Festival, I reread Cromwell's preface, I reread the romantics' manifesto. They were opposed to tragedy that is beauty for beauty's sake and art for art's sake. They supported a blend of the sublime and the grotesque, the uncompleted form, the return of reality to art. Perhaps I'm a romantic filmmaker after all! In my films, as soon as I'm on a main road, heading towards Poitiers say, I need to veer off, even if that means shocking the audience or even losing it at times.

How did you go about casting the film?

Christophe HONORÉ: The cast was built up around Chiara. It's quite something giving her the role of a mother. You cannot act as if you don't know anything, as if you don't know who her mother is. And, because of that, I think it would have been a bad idea to ask Catherine Deneuve – even though I adore her – to play Léna/Chiara's mother

in the film. I would have found that perverse and I wasn't at all aiming for perversity. In defining the personality of Annie, the mother of Léna, the first name that appeared obvious to me was that of Marie-Christine Barrault. I had a distant but powerful memory of her in MY NIGHT AT MAUD'S. I saw an angelic and fairly gentle face but also, as always with Rohmer, a genuine cruelty and voracity. We weren't going to turn Annie into a Folcoche (the abusive mother in Hervé Bazin's Viper in the Fist). That would have been atrocious. Above all, she had to be...

Geneviève BRISAC: A human being!

Christophe HONORÉ: Yes, and she had to still be sensual. Still caught up in life. And so I met Marie-Christine Barrault with Chiara. They had met before but didn't really know each other. We did a reading and I saw right away that there was a desire to work together. After that, we had to build up a family around them. I had wanted to work with Marina Foïs for a long time. She is in incredible shape and can play any part. I was sure that Chiara and she would get on very well. Indeed, they were just like sisters on the set. They have a fairly difficult relationship in the film and, to get this across, we had to detect a fraternal complicity between them, love basically. The cast was thus built up around the women. There's a fourth woman, Elise, Gulven's girlfriend. She would be played by Alice Butaud, because she is already in the three sections of the Parisian trilogy and because I like reuniting with the people in my “family”. To follow through on this idea, I also used my little brother, Julien. The couple that he forms with Elise brings in lightness, comedy and trust with the hypothesis of conjugality! The husbands of Léna and Frédérique, Jean-Marc Barr and Marcial Di Fonzo Bo are foreigners. Jean-Marc is American, Marcial is Argentinean. I like the idea, I like the accents, however slight. In spite of their official bonds, the two men are not really part of the family... As for Fred Ulysse, the father, he is above all a stage actor, like Marcial Di Fonzo Bo, something that gives them a slight distance in their performance that I like a lot. And then there's Louis Garrel. I hesitated for a long time before asking him to join the cast. Wouldn't it be seen as a form of complicity? This small part as a fleeting lover of Léna's who pops up, should I offer it to him?

Geneviève BRISAC: It was good to give Léna a slightly complex love life, even if it is only sketched out, rather than completely confine her to the divorce and her children. We thus allow the audience to see that her mischievousness and fantasy have not vanished completely.

Christophe HONORÉ: All the same, Louis just passes through! But Louis and I mutually baptized each other in cinema, we came to life together. On meeting him, I suddenly had a better understanding of the kinds of films I wanted to make. I admit that I would have found it hard, very hard indeed, to get used to the idea of him not being there. But I couldn't have made this film without Chiara. Her commitment as an actress was so strong that she almost intimidated me at one point. I could tell that, for her, it was important, that for once she had been given a screenplay in which she had plenty of space to exist. Chiara had already had some very beautiful roles but had not yet had the chance to carry a film, to give it its rhythm and energy. The first day of shooting was the scene at the station in Paris when Léna is unable to find her son and panics. Chiara kept running in every direction. She had asked the prop guy to weigh down her suitcase so that it would be really heavy. At the end of the day, her legs were covered with bruises and she was smiling, radiant. For me, Chiara Mastroianni was not only an essential actress; she was also an ideal partner. I hope the film will bring her what she put into it.



INTERVIEW WITH CHIARA MASTROIANNI

You have already made more than thirty films. Would you say that MAKING PLANS FOR LENA marks a new step?

Yes, of course. That's all to do with Christophe's faith in me, to the role that he gave me and to my character's place in the film. I have often played supporting roles, characters in the background, something that didn't bother me at all. I have always looked on myself as a craft worker. That is probably due to the fact that my beginnings weren't that spectacular. For a long time, I simply accompanied one or other of my parents to movie sets and I didn't realized until fairly late on that I was an actress... I won't even talk about my first film role. I was 8 at the time. It was in Fellini's THE CITY OF WOMEN, which starred my father. My scene never made the final cut. That taught me a very important lesson in humility that still comes in useful today!

André Téchine's MY FAVOURITE SEASON with Catherine Deneuve probably marks your true film début...

On André's set I was totally stressed out, I had stomach ache all the time, I wondered if it was normal. All these years later, it's more or less the same but you could say I'm less uptight. And MAKING PLANS FOR LENA indeed helps me advance towards adulthood, advance in the awareness of a woman's role, of a mother's role, perhaps even in the awareness of myself.

Thanks to Christophe, to his sense of observation, to his perception of people... I cannot say, that at the end of shooting LOVE SONGS I knew him better than at the start; he is very private, very discreet. But, shortly after, he said to me, "I want to make another film with you." He gave me a small notebook with pictures and collages that I kept as a sort of talisman; at the time, I didn't realize that it contained the groundwork for MAKING PLANS FOR LENA. In fact, it was a travel diary, the log of a future journey. At the time, I thought, "Yes, okay, don't hold your breath, girl, he's just being kind and polite." I guess I was just being superstitious. However, there was both a happy and ambiguous antecedent. I recently found a beautiful letter that Arnaud Desplechin wrote to me at the time of MY SEX LIFE... OR HOW I GOT INTO AN ARGUMENT ... He wrote, "I hope that we will work together again one day on a film in which you will have a larger part." Twelve years! I waited twelve years for A CHRISTMAS TALE. With this previous experience in mind, I told myself that I perhaps would no longer be an actress when Christophe got around to offering me something else! Especially as he told me that it wouldn't be right away as he had to shoot THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON first.

THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON is an adaptation of La Princesse de Clèves. Did you feel it was a coincidence that you had starred in another adaptation of a Madame de Lafayette novel?

That amused us. To celebrate this coincidence, I had a brief cameo in THE BEAUTIFUL PERSON. Christophe is a man of his word. He is loyal to his ideas too. So, after having attempted to define the subject, allowing me to accompany him a little, talking to me and recommending certain books to me, he offered me the part of Léna. There is something that truly moves me about him. It's that way he has of getting things across, of making the



inexplicable perceptible. For instance, in the film, a shot, a simple shot of Donatien, my little boy, alone, looking at the natural world around him. And the melancholy expressed by this look touches me personally without us ever having spoken about it. That’s how you recognize a filmmaker, the one who manages to guess, imagine and also use the very intimate feelings of an actor or an actress, someone he knows so little.

In the film, the way in which your face suddenly changes, the way you seem to regret what you have just said, does that belong to this realm of the “transmission of feelings”?

Yes, doesn’t that happen all the time in real life, that moment when you hear the words that you’ve just spoken as the brain realizes a second too late that they were not the thing to say? I’m very fond of Léna: she is a victim of the violence that women still suffer today. But she is also a victim of the violence that she inflicts upon herself, disarmed as she is by the difficulty of leading a life both as a mother and a woman, fighting against the temptation to become a little girl all over again. The film is a plea for Léna, even if it’s true that she is very annoying at times and cannot do anything about it! Everyone claims to want the best for her but do we ever really know what is right for someone? At the start of the film, Léna is tired, anxious, separated from her husband and her job but joyful all the same. She has a very strong relationship with her children and, already, “for her own good”, others are telling her that this relationship is not conventional and too intense.

The dialogue is precise, free and direct without any long speeches...

Yes, that fitted in with the idea of a film and a character on the move all the time. For starters, with two children and an absent father, you need to move a lot! But the idea of motion is also present in the situations and conversations. At a couple of points, I had to come to a stop because the scene required it. During the argument with my brother, Gulven, I’m sitting on the couch, uneasy at being immobile and motionless for once. This desire for movement and energy is even apparent in the costumes. I wanted outlines that moved. You see the legs. Even in winter, there’s nothing that makes the outline squat or that covers it... And then there’s all the possibility of visualizing the very intense relationship with my son in the way I steal his sweatshirt. No, it’s neither sad nor ridiculous; it simply shows, to my mind, a certain vulnerability on Léna’s behalf.

In performing with your two film children, Augustine and Donatien, did you draw on your relationship with your own son and daughter?

No doubt. But, at the same time, when acting, I think you need to be wary of relying too much on reality as it can soon become a hindrance. Turning your back on it is a matter of mental hygiene.

Were you bothered by the Breton tale in the middle of the film? Doesn’t it interrupt the story?

Oh, no, I love the tale! The way Christophe films it, it is as beautiful as a western. The violence that Katell imposes on her suitors by making them dance until their death, this violence that turns tragically against her, rises up from the past to the present, returning us to Léna. And I’m touched that Christophe Honoré should have gone so long without filming his home region but that when he goes back there, he really pulls out all the stops!

We’re familiar with Christophe Honoré’s loyalty to his actors. It took you a long time to enter the Desplechin “family”. Now, after two films, do you feel that you are part of the Honoré “family”?

This notion of “family” bothers me because it implies that you expect the director to put you in all his films. But a director’s desire for an actor is a fragile thing. One must not in any case seem to consider things as given, nor even expect to be desired again. I like the idea of a “family” in terms of proximity, complicity and fidelity but I do not want to think beyond that, so as not to push aside a possible desire and also so as not to be disappointed by a totally legitimate non-desire... All that to say that I would be very happy if... Christophe came up with a sequel to MAKING PLANS FOR LENA. Because I would like to know what happens to Léna afterwards. And, perhaps I’ll be part of it.

CHIARA MASTROIANNI

Selected Filmography

- 2009 Making Plans For Lena (Non ma fille, tu n’iras pas danser) by Christophe Honoré
- 2009 Pardon My French (Un chat un chat) by Sophie Fillières
- 2008 Crime Is Our Business (Le crime est notre affaire) by Pascal Thomas
- 2008 Bancs publics (Versailles Rive-Droite) by Bruno Podalydès
- 2008 The Beautiful Person (La Belle Personne) by Christophe Honoré
- 2008 A Christmas Tale (Un conte de Noël) by Arnaud Desplechin
- 2007 Towards Zero (L’Heure zero) by Pascal Thomas
- 2007 Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud (voice)
- 2007 Love Songs (Les Chansons d’amour) by Christophe Honoré
- 2005 Akoibon by Edouard Baer
- 2003 It’s Easier for a Camel (Il est plus facile pour un chameau) by Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi
- 2002 Carnage (Carnages) by Delphine Gleize
- 2001 Hotel by Mike Figgis
- 2000 Six-Pack by Alain Berbérian
- 1999 Libero Burro by Sergio Castellitto
- 1999 Time Regained (Le Temps retrouvé) by Raoul Ruiz
- 1999 The Letter (La Lettre) by Manoel de Oliveira
- 1998 For Sale (A vendre) by Laetitia Masson
- 1998 On a très peu d’amis by Sylvain Monod
- 1997 Nowhere by Gregg Araki
- 1996 Thieves (Les Voleurs) by André Téchiné
- 1996 My Sex Life (Comment je me suis disputé...) by Arnaud Desplechin
- 1996 Trois vies et une seule mort by Raoul Ruiz
- 1996 Diary of a Seducer (Le Journal du séducteur) by Danièle Dubroux
- 1995 Don’t Forget You’re Going To Die (N’oublie pas que tu vas mourir) by Xavier Beauvois
- 1994 Prêt-à-Porter by Robert Altman
- 1993 À la belle étoile by Antoine Desrosières
- 1993 My Favorite Season (Ma saison préférée) by André Téchiné

A man and a woman are shown in profile, facing each other. The man, on the left, has dark, wavy hair and a light beard. He is wearing a brown and white checkered jacket over a plaid shirt. The woman, on the right, has brown hair tied back in a bun. She is wearing a dark blue hoodie. They are both holding a white tray with several slices of cantaloupe and five clear glasses. The background is a dense green hedge, and a white wall is visible on the far left.

CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

Filmography

- 2009 Making Plans For Lena** (Non Ma Fille, Tu n'iras pas danser)
(San Sebastian - In Competition, Toronto)
- 2008 The Beautiful Person** (La Belle Personne)
(San Sebastian, In Competition, Nominated for César for Best Adapted Screenplay and Meilleur Espoir Féminin for Léa Seydoux)
- 2007 Love Songs** (Les Chansons d'amour)
(Cannes , In Competition, 4 César nominations 2008 César won for Best Musique)
- 2006 In Paris** (Dans Paris)
(Cannes – Directors Fortnight)
- 2004 My Mother** (Ma Mère)
(Toronto Film Festival, NY Film Festival)
- 2002 17 Times Cecile Cassard** (17 fois Cécile Cassard)
(Cannes – Un certain regard)

CAST

CHIARA MASTROIANNI
MARINA FOÏS
MARIE CHRISTINE BARRAULT
JEAN-MARC BARR
LOUIS GARREL
FRED ULYSSE
JULIEN HONORE
MARCIAL DI FONZO BO
ALICE BUTAUD
CAROLINE SILHOL
DONATIEN SUNER
LOU PASQUERAULT
JEAN-BAPTISTE FONCK

LÉNA
FREDERIQUE
ANNIE
NIGEL
SIMON
MICHEL
GULVEN
THIBAUT
ELISE
THE FLORIST
ANTON
AUGUSTINE
JOSÉ

CREW

DIRECTOR
SCREENPLAY

PHOTOGRAPHY
SOUND
SET DESIGN
CASTING
1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
COSTUMES
EDITING
SOUND EDITING
MIX
ORIGINAL MUSIC
ARRANGEMENTS

CHRISTOPHE HONORE
CHRISTOPHE HONORE
GENEVIEVE BRISAC
LAURENT BRUNET (A.F.C.)
GUILLAUME LE BRAZ
SAMUEL DESHORS
RICHARD ROUSSEAU
SYLVIE PEYRE
PIERRE CANITROT
CHANTAL HYMANS
VALERIE DE LOOF
THIERRY DELOR
ALEX BEAUPAIN
EMMANUEL D'ORLANDO

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