

GAUMONT PRESENTS  
A QUAD, MAIN JOURNEY ET CARMEL FILMS PRODUCTION

# Ballerina

FRENCH RELEASE DATE DECEMBER 14, 2016



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Runtime: 1 hour 25 minutes

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## SYNOPSIS

Félicie is a young orphan from Brittany who has only one passion: dance. With her best friend Victor, who wants to become a great inventor, they come up with a madcap scheme to escape their orphanage for Paris, the City of Lights, with its Eiffel Tower still under construction! Félicie has to fight like she has never fought before, she has to outdo herself and learn from her mistakes to make her craziest dream come true: becoming a prima ballerina at the Paris Opera...

# Félicie



## LOOK

With her copper colored braid and adorable turned-up nose, orphan Félicie is a cunning vixen who can sniff the promise of Paris even from far off Brittany. She looks like a twig draped in rags, but she'll swirl her patched skirt and kick her clodhopper heels at the first drop of a treble clef. She is skinny as a spindle, and on the road to glory.

## CHARACTER

Her almond-green eyes glimmer with longing for elsewhere. Cheeky, she defies authority at the orphanage. Reckless, she mocks the Statue of Liberty. Clever, she double-crosses bratty Camille and steals her identity. But starry mirages can be dangerous: the chickadee will have to hold on for dear life until she emerges as a swan.

## DREAM

Whenever three little notes of music tinkle from her ballerina music box, Félicie's heart trips the light fantastic. She repeatedly sends orphanage dishes and tiles flying. The institution is allergic to 'petits rats', and so Félicie flies the coop. Literally. In Paris, she refuses to play Phantomette of the Opera: she wants to be belle of the ball!

## MOMENT OF GLORY

The climax, of course! Like Alex, face-to-face with a cold-shouldered jury in Flashdance, Félicie affronts her nemesis – in this case, Camille the prodigy pain in the neck – in a showdown using arabesques and sidesteps. Tutus in a tizzy, and if looks could kill... Who will perform the mythic "grand jeté", the 'open sesame' to Beginner's Ballet at the Paris Opera?

## CULT LINE

To Merante's crucial question – Why do you dance? - Félicie hits the nail on the head: *"Because it's always been a part of my life. It was there with my mom when I was a baby... And it's here now thanks to Odette... It allows me to live, to be myself".* 🐣



# Victor



## LOOK

A cross between Remi in "Nobody's Boy" and Oliver Twist. Victor has a sweet orphan's face: cauliflower ears and little boy cowlicks. Irresistible, even if he's dressed like the ace of spades (think striped corduroy pants, ouch!) and his fingers are slathered with snot. He also wears a cockscomb fashioned out of a dishwashing glove. For fancy-dress parties only.

## CHARACTER

A Paris urchin, the real deal. A blowhard rebel who sounds like a born Parisian. Bingo: it is in the French capital that this Breton Gavroche will come of age. A braggart who invents himself a life larger than life, Victor becomes awkward when faced with the chopping block of feelings. A hint: he has a crush on a ballerina. Is it mutual?

## DREAM

To become the greatest inventor of all time. Gyro Gearloose Junior's claim to fame is the creation of mechanical wings for chickens. They don't work, they won't fly, dang it... Paris offers him the ideal lab for his experiments: as Gustave Eiffel's boy Friday, he makes the master's atelier implode. Young people today!... Finally THE crowning achievement: reeducating the Parisian pigeon to save Félicie.

## MOMENT OF GLORY

We can thank Victor for the film's ruthless chase scene. The Great Escape from the orphanage, in 2'30" flat: he sends Félicie flying, he slaloms between menhirs aboard a crazy cart, topples their pursuer's motorbike and hangs on to the Paris train with one little finger. Indiana Jones must be turning in his grave...

## CULT LINE

Victor, bowled over when his mentor Gustave Eiffel finally takes notice of him: *"My boss finally spoke to me. He said 'get off my foot you biological mutation'. That's good, right?"* 🍷



# Camille



## LOOK

Paris Hilton had an ancestor, Camille Le Haut: a hoity-toity blonde, with a wasp waist sculpted to let her shine, and a pink headband that scrunches her neurons. Spoiled by Régine's fortune, she is her miniature version: squeezed into the same greenish dress as her mother, she reeks of self-satisfaction and never sweats, bourgeoisie oblige.

## CHARACTER

A snotty pout is her lethal weapon of disdain. It's Félicie who bears the brunt: Camille doesn't hobnob with Orphan Annie's, she mortifies them. A whizz kid raised by Mama, she swears by technique and is a stranger to passion. Smiles are optional. She is the snob you love to hate!

## DREAM

Toe dancing across the Paris Opera stage, even if she has to break her rivals' ankles on the way. Winning at "France has Got Talent", going to the top of "The Dance Kids" or bust. Camille is wired to land the role of Clara in the Nutcracker. It remains to be seen whether it was a fairy or witch bent over her cradle with that as her wish...

## MOMENT OF GLORY

With a compendium of rotten tricks to make all the Nellie Olesons of the world green with envy, Camille pulls out all stops the first time she meets Félicie: with a passel of egocentric poses and insults ("Weasel", "Wiseneimer", "Wimp"), and the orphan's beloved music box flying out the window. Showgirls blackened by the Countess of Ségur.

## CULT LINE

Among other discourtesies unleashed on Félicie: *"You were spying, weren't you? You were admiring the most wonderful dancer you've ever seen. Isn't that so, little rat?"*

# Régine Le Haut



## LOOK

Cruella's craggy face, Cinderella's stepmother's frozen grin and the Coppola Dracula's fork-like crown: and that's the spitting image of what is hardly a poster girl for motherhood. Chic nouveau riche, Régine sweeps her bottle-green train over the smelly plebs. The purple lipstick against her pale foundation reeks of (bloody) revenge.

## CHARACTER

Scorpio ascendant dragon. She is THE villain of the story: possessive and dictatorial with Camille; vile with Odette, whom she slave-drives like a slattern; disgustingly hateful of an orphan's consummate pliés. With nothing to redeem her, you can give her up for lost.

## DREAM

When not occupying a place of honor in a literary salon, or heading the "Society for the Improvement of Women's Lot" (as far back as 1878), she prefers to exercise her tyranny on the help and tighten the reins on Camille. Régine lives life vicariously: not in front of a TV set, but from her box at the Opera, from where she can already picture her daughter's top billing.

## MOMENT OF GLORY

The looniest in the film, with its Tex Avery-style escape. Régine has lost the battle, but means to win the Third World War: Godzilla in skirts, she races Félicie to the top of the Statue of Liberty (made in France, after all) where she plans on proclaiming her own version of the truth. She ends up KO on the ropes. End of her mission: accomplished!

## CULT LINE

To her daughter Camille: *"Get that part. Do you hear me? I want vengeance. I will have it."*

# INTERVIEW

with the producers

**LAURENT ZEITOUN,  
YANN ZENOU,  
NICOLAS DUVAL-ADASSOVSKY**



## **What was the point of departure for the BALLERINA adventure?**

**Yann Zenou:** In 2010, Eric Warin and Eric Summer presented us with the pitch and the preliminary sketches for a project that was at the time entitled *La véritable histoire des petits rats de l'Opéra* ("The True Story of the Petit Rats at the Opera"). We immediately fell in love with that little girl who escaped from her orphanage to come to Paris and enroll at the Opera. We had the beginnings of a beautiful story, but everything else remained to be done.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** The result was three years of questioning, wondering about how to concretize a film equal to our expectations... A film that puts a spotlight on Paris, and during an era that we don't often see at the movies: Baron Haussmann's renovations were still underway, and the Eiffel Tower and Statue of Liberty were still being built.

**Yann Zenou:** ... And so we set off with flowers in our rifles, and with no experience whatsoever in the field of animation. We were lucky enough to have the support of people who believed in us.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** It was only in 2013 that the project took off again, this time with a new title: *Ballerina*. Everything had finally gelled to make the adventure come true. This experience was a veritable marathon for us, and the work that needed to be done was gigantic! That marked us. From then on *Ballerina* was our baby. We saw it being born, mature, and grow up. We were almost afraid to

lay siege to the movie theatres, even though we were persuaded that children, that families would adopt it as a part of their dreams.

## **Some producers prefer simply to speak of their 'film', rather than differentiate between animation and a live action film...**

**Laurent Zeitoun:** The main thing is to tell a great story about a hero with whom we can live and vibrate. At the beginning of the project, we did not raise any questions about the particularities of the world of animation.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** We've been asked why we didn't decide to film it as a live action movie. The answer is very simple: animation lets you reach a different, wider audience. The idea that a film will speak to the entire family, to parents and to children too, is very gratifying. We already realized that kids had loved some of our romantic comedies, such as *Eyjafjallajökull*. We wanted to speak to them more and more, and to adults who have remained children too... beginning with ourselves and our own kids!

**Yann Zenou:** For us, cinema means sublimating the real world to understand it better and accept it. Along with our imaginations, animation is the ideal way to express our dreams. I think that the first film we make in our heads as children is a cartoon that bridges the real world and our imaginations. A cartoon is what links childhood and the world of adults.

# LAURENT ZEITOUN, YANN ZENOU, NICOLAS DUVAL-ADASSOVSKY

Interview with the producers

## How did the creative process proceed?

**Laurent Zeitoun:** We wanted the result to be flamboyant, up to the animation standards of the American studios. We wanted Ballerina to be mass entertainment, we wanted it upbeat and full of life.

**Yann Zenou:** And the message is just the opposite of what the Mother Superior says at the orphanage: "Dreams never come true. They're only illusions... Life is ruthless". The basic

pitch nudged us toward high drama, but what guided us even more was our desire to tell children in a lighthearted way never to give up on your dreams. That little phrase accompanied us every day in our work as producers.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** Ultimately, the creative process proceeded naturally thanks to a team of great professionals who joined us on the film.

## How did the dance milieu become the perfect vector?

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** Laurent does classic dance, so there was no way out. (laughter)

**Laurent Zeitoun:** And I can prove it with a grand jeté that would land me directly in the hospital! Joking aside, involvement in classic dance is an endless combat, including a combat against your own self: it requires so much rigor, self-sacrifice, and suffering, that giving it up amounts to total defeat. The discipline remains a kind of Mount Everest in the world of sports and the arts. If you're not solidly attached to your dream, you'll give up...

**Yann Zenou :** ... And since no one ever achieves perfection, dancers never cease to tirelessly pursue their Holy Grail. Our choreographers brought us that perfection. Aurélie Dupont and Jérémie Bélingard played a capital role in bringing the experience of classic dance alive in the film.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** From a visual point of view, it is an extremely cinema-friendly discipline. Watching it is an incredible experience. Animating it for a film is tantamount to sublimating it. All the pirouettes that Félicie and the others perform are twice as much larger than life as compared to reality. Animation often requires some exaggeration of reality: that was for example the case of all the characters imagined by Eric Warin, who were then passed on to "character artists" in charge of refining, indeed exaggerating their features. Their eyes for example.



# LAURENT ZEITOUN, YANN ZENOU, NICOLAS DUVAL-ADASSOVSKY

Interview with the producers



## How did you manage to make the petits rats' pirouettes look both realistic and magical?

**Laurent Zeitoun:** We began by testing "motion capture", fitting out a dancer - in this case Aurélie Dupont - with sensors that transmit points of movement to a computer. Strange to say, the first results conveyed a feeling of inertia, even though they were a faithful reproduction of what the dancer was actually doing.

**Yann Zenou:** There was really nothing magical about motion capture!

**Laurent Zeitoun:** We quickly abandoned that option, and even more so since our points of reference were studio films in which motion capture was never used. We were looking for greater sophistication, greater dynamism regarding both dance and emotions. The "keyframe" technique, that is to say animation

by keyframes allowed us to meet that objective - thanks to Ted Ty, our animation director, who had worked for Disney and DreamWorks.

When you see Félicie and Camille dance onscreen, their movements are twice as quick and broad as in real life. That is how we were able to stick to the "larger than life" nature of the story and animation. The final duel in which the two rivals move from the stage to

the auditorium, and then to the grand staircase at the Opera is a perfect example.

Which "great studio films" did you have in mind?

**Yann Zenou:** Ballet has rarely been seen in cartoons, with the exception of some passages in Fantasia. We had in mind mainly films that deal with outdoing yourself, like Karaté Kid and Billy Elliot. Personally, I would also cite Rocky!

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** As for animated feature films, let's not forget Ratatouille, which had blown us all away, or Tangled, with its incredible inventiveness and humor.

**When you tackle animation, one of the pitfalls is to think that your craziest imaginings have become possible...**

**Yann Zenou:** You tend to think that anything goes, but your very real budget soon catches up with you! Animated feature films can cost up to 200 million dollars. We only had 30 million. To make our Ballerina dreams come true, we had to put on our thinking caps, ponder, explore, and invent quite a few artistic solutions.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** Making choices is the law of the film world. I don't think that any one of us three has any regrets. Budget constraints forced us to become creative in terms of design, costumes and narration.

**Yann Zenou:** We needed to reduce the size of certain decors, conflate scenes, which in the long run made them more effective. That improved the film's pace and dramatic intensity.

## What was involvement as a threesome like when developing the script?

**Yann Zenou:** The process took some time. The screenplay was finalized by Laurent and Carol Noble. We were able to look for finance on the basis of that scenario, and then we went on to the storyboard stage, during which some more questions arose regarding the screenplay. In animation, you don't waste any shooting time: you can't correct errors or fix weak spots during the edit!

Each stage of our story boarding was the object of weekly discussion among us. Once a sequence was validated, it was played using temporary voices. If we were not totally convinced, Laurent and Carol would then rework the scene.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** It was a particularly joyous work

# LAURENT ZEITOUN, YANN ZENOU, NICOLAS DUVAL-ADASSOVSKY

Interview with the producers

period and it lasted a year and a half. It was like editing the film before it was shot. We talked it over a lot before reaching common accord. So it's impossible to know who was responsible for what, even though Laurent was at the origin of the screenplay, character development and twists and turns in the plot.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** In short, I proposed and the other two disposed! With a basic theme that we all cared deeply about: an impassioned declaration of love for Paris. But none of it would have seen the light of day without the teams that worked with us.

## Why was it the heart of the project?

**Laurent Zeitoun:** To be honest, Yann wanted the story to take place in Charenton, because that's where he's from.

**Yann Zenou:** I argued for the Bois de Vincennes, but that wasn't close enough!

**Laurent Zeitoun:** When you were born in Paris, you sometimes forget that it's one of the most beautiful cities in the world. All you need to do is to stand somewhere for a few minutes, look around and realize that you're living in an open air museum that people still dream about. People talk about the City of Lights, the city of love, romance, the arts. Setting our story

in the Paris of Gustave Eiffel meant resurrecting the magic, history, and mythical aspects that have perhaps faded a bit. It's also internationally more glamorous than Charenton! When you stroll through the Paris of 1879, you can't help being overcome by the sumptuousness of its decors and the luxuriant details!

**Yann Zenou:** We waited a long time to discover that as a whole. It was the result of our art director Florent Masurel's vision. He literally lived in the Paris of the era: he spent six months on staggering archive research, both visual and graphic.

He didn't miss one photo. He examined paintings, engravings, literature. He dissected the social and political context, he studied every street, every profession. His guiding light was the transformations that were then going on in the capital thanks to Baron Haussmann, who had begun by widening squares and avenues.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** Paris was one huge construction site. It is touching to share that reality with the youngest members of the audience...

## ... With the Opera the star of the show.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** It had been built ten years earlier. Florent found all the original blueprints in the Opera archives. We called on independent architects to recreate the structure of the building, and then make a model of it. Everything in the film was worked up as a model: it was a Herculean task!

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** The technical crew at the Atelier



# LAURENT ZEITOUN, YANN ZENOU, NICOLAS DUVAL-ADASSOVSKY

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studio had the brilliant idea of creating a Paris kit by juxtaposing building facades that, aside from the astounding realism, facilitated production. Those were the kind of brainwaves that helped us to respect the budget, while maintaining visuals worthy of a blockbuster production.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** At first, we were more or less left to our own devices, which prompted us to open our own animation studio in Montreal...

**Yann Zenou :**... Laurence Vacher, who had a lot of experience in animation, left for Montreal, where she recruited a crew especially for our film. At the height of its activity, the studio employed close to 200 people.

## Is the studio meant to be permanent?

**Yann Zenou:** We hope so!

**Laurent Zeitoun:** Our passion for animation came alive in the course of *Ballerina*. We were bowled over by the amount of teamwork that was needed, the necessary sum of competences and experience...

**Yann Zenou:** ... And which corresponded to our own way of working.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** *Ballerina* is a group achievement in the literal sense of the term. Each one of us brought his or her ideas and know-how. At times we met on an everyday basis to discuss the story-board, animation and direction. Participating as producers in such an active way during the various creative stages was exhilarating.

Trust is crucial in such a long adventure, and complementary

competences are essential: for example, Guillaume Ivernel took care of artistic production by supervising the development of all the drawings, François-Xavier Aubague, our line producer, kept one eye on all the artistic issues and another on the budget...

## You also indulged in some scenes in which the action is as crazy as a Tex Avery cartoon, such as the escape from the orphanage, or the antics at the top of the Statue of Liberty...

**Laurent Zeitoun:** Yann, Nicolas and I found ourselves carried back to our childhoods. We plunged into our memories as audience members: which scenes thrilled us? Copying them was out of the question, but we wanted to reconnect with that kind of spontaneous emotion. Félicie and Victor's chase scene is right out of *Indiana Jones*. With the thrilling idea that the heroes are having fun as they hurt themselves, smirking all the while.

The final combat is in the same vein, a bit mad, and totally wild. If thanks to that scene, young children learn that the Statue of Liberty was built in France as a gift to America, we will be pleased as punch!

## What helped you to hang in there during all those years of production?

**Laurent Zeitoun:** The question is not whether there were moments of doubt, it's whether there were some moments during which we felt reassured!



**Yann Zenou:** Being a trio was crucial, because each of us could take turns relying on the energy of the other two.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** Getting through the pleasures as well as the ordeals together made the experience even more exhilarating. I don't feel like I've really suffered from the waiting, or the slowness of the process, but with hindsight, the constant accumulation of minor worries did require quite a lot of perseverance.

**Yann Zenou:** There was no real waiting, because the various creative stages succeeded one other, and so we never felt we were facing a creative vacuum. In the meantime, we also

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produced six "live action films". But for our next animated film, we'll try to take less time!

## Is there a sensibility, a French touch that differentiates *Ballerina* from American productions?

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** We were often told that any self-respecting animated film needs to have animals that talk, and heroes who break into song. We preferred to bank on

the realism of the story, the coherence between the characters and the course of their adventures.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** It's hard to distinguish influences. Nothing was premeditated, either in terms of remaining French, or of fitting into American patterns. The three of us racked our brains to tell a story that relies on a wide range of emotions. **Yann Zenou:** We never asked ourselves what the big studios would have done in our place. We made the film that we would like to see as members of the audience. The fact that all three of us are French probably did play a role, subconsciously!

## Which moments of the film left an impression on your minds?

**Laurent Zeitoun:** The greatest shock was to see, after all those years during which the characters were animated in shades of grey, the explosion of color once the textures were laid down and the lighting adjusted. Everything we had fought for over four years suddenly made sense.

**Yann Zenou:** I still feel a lot of emotion and excitement when I see Félicie's class scenes, and then those in which she rediscovers Odette. When you tell the story of a little girl who fights for her dreams, you focus on the universal theme of self-realization with all the disillusionment and aggressiveness it implies.

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** I love the positive energy that the film exudes. Félicie does not succeed by destroying the people around her: she has a personal path to follow. She

learns to know herself, to be in accord with her roots, with her heritage.

**Yann Zenou:** Félicie does not achieve her dream until the day she understands viscerally what makes her want to dance. Which gives meaning to the success that each of us wants to obtain: that is a value that has united us since we've known each other and that profoundly connects us to *Ballerina*.

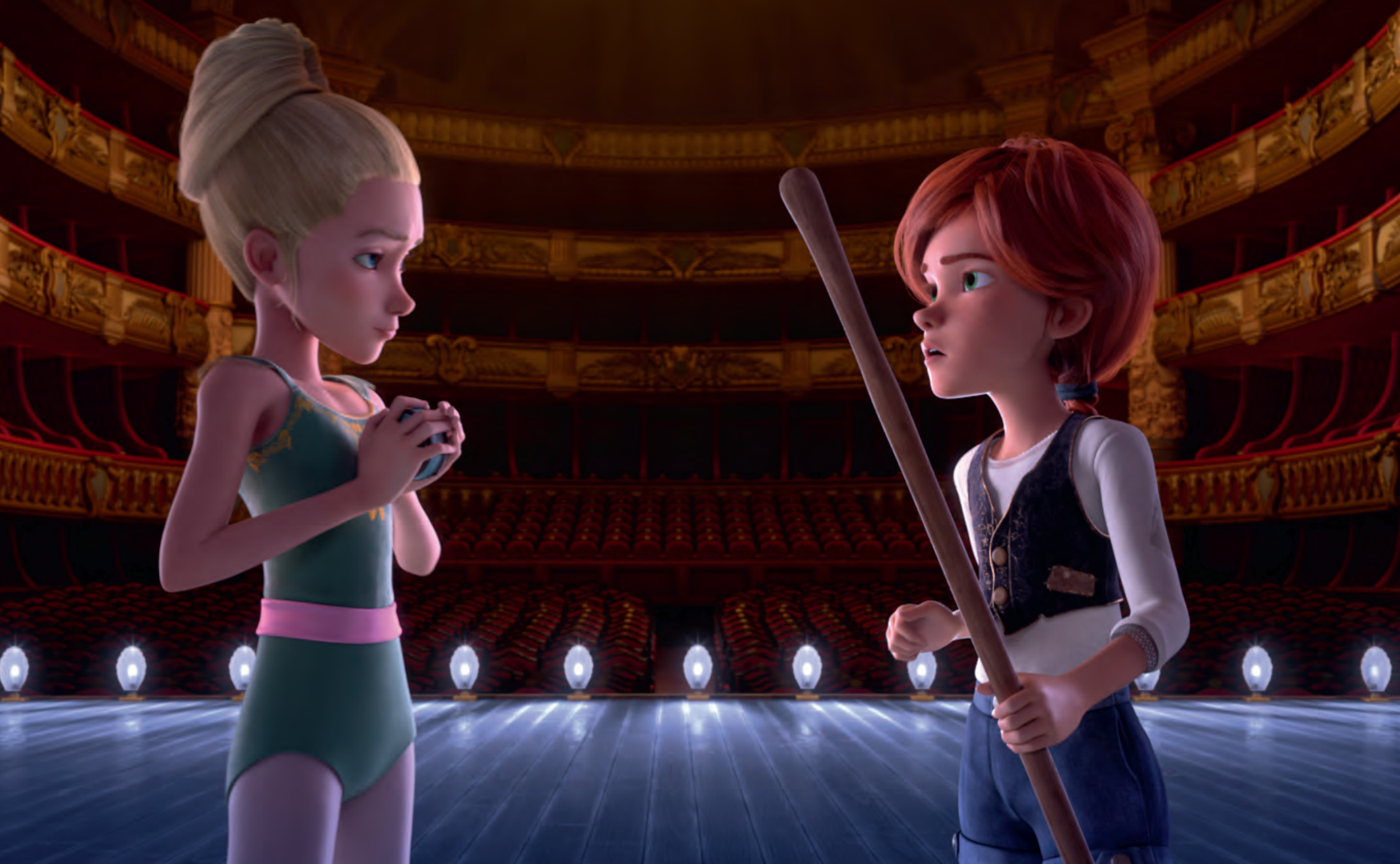
## Have all three of you discovered the meaning of what motivated you as producers?

**Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky:** From the start, I think that it was our choice of a beautiful story. What makes us happiest about *Ballerina* is having engaged the audience's emotions. Especially children's.

**Yann Zenou:** In that sense, when we see audience reactions in the theaters, all the ordeals we went through fade away. The film has been sold all over the world, which implies openness to different types of audiences and cultures.

**Laurent Zeitoun:** I'm always on the alert for an adventure, with all the personal and professional discoveries it generates. *Ballerina* and all the films we have been lucky enough to produce have one thing in common: characters that evolve, who have a compelling story, and whose fate we want to watch. But even more so, the opportunity of working with exceptional talents. 🐾





# FRANCOIS-XAVIER AUBAGUE

Line producer

- Experience in various positions: cameraman, editor, 2D / 3D graphic designer, VFX supervisor, director of advertising and institutional films, and then more particularly production manager and finally line producer.
- 2 years with Buf Compagnie : the ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES trilogy and THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF ADELE BLANC-SEC by Luc Besson ; 2046 and THE GRANDMASTER by Wong Kar-Wai, HOUBA! O ON THE TRAIL OF THE MARSUPIALMI by Alain Chabat ; SPEED RACER by Andy & Lana Wachowski ; THOR by Kenneth Branagh
- The production of two films for the attractions "Arthur 4D" and "Les Lapins Crétins" at the Futuroscope in Poitiers.

## What made you decide to get involved in this project that would involve several years of work?

Meeting the three producers was decisive. They were creative, audacious and passionate, and also very clear about what they expected: the quality they wanted for their first animated film and the means they had available to achieve it. Reading the screenplay finally convinced me.

With Studio 3D, the Atelier Animation and the team we created, we had the opportunity to do some great things. But it was an enormous challenge.

## What was your specific contribution to the development of the film?

The technical and artistic ambition of Ballerina was to achieve an aesthetic quality up to the standards of the American studios' best animated films ... with a budget 6 times inferior. That was the greatest challenge. I am happy today because I think that we accomplished that mission, even if it did cost us quite a few all-nighters.

## With the producers, we organized and broke down production of the film over three years: one year in France, and then two years in Canada. From the story-board to final delivery to our distributor, Gaumont, we programmed the various stages of development and the creation of the sound and images of Ballerina.

This film is the result of the work of each individual artist and technician involved in the project. Together with the various crews, we evaluated and decided on the best technical and artistic options, considering our expectations and the constraints of our production.

Over those three years, I kept an eye on the whole general process, a little like an orchestra conductor. I learned a lot during production and I had the opportunity to get to know some great artists.

## What touched you in the themes being treated, in the spiritual journeys of the characters in the film?

Dance touches me particularly. And that is something that I share with my family. Developing the art in animation was a particularly interesting challenge. It was marvelous being able to awaken a desire to dance with Ballerina. Exceeding oneself to make one's dreams come true is a universal theme. It could be even more compelling when treated in animation, where the characters and choreography become even more intense. The characters of Ballerina are very attractive. For some, their dreams already belong to the past, others want to impose their own, while still others may have already forgotten theirs. But each of them, with his or her determination, will weigh on Félicie's future. The Paris of the late nineteenth century was a particularly fascinating place and time: the city already possessed some of its most emblematic buildings and landmarks. 🐰



# FLORENT MASUREL

## Art Director

- A Master's Degree in Fine Arts (Université Bordeaux 3), College Cyclone Arts & Technologie (AEC) in Quebec.
- Experience in all the posts of the video game and film industries: animator, 3D modeler, texture artist, matte painter, concept artist, etc...
- Production Designer on a film in preparation.



### What made you decide to get involved in this project that would involve several years of work?

Passion, the possibility of working on a universe and doing very thorough research into it. It's rare in this industry to be able to explore a universe for such a long time. It can only be done in animation.

One of the other important particularities of my work on an animated film is to see that the designs are on a par with the story, which in *Ballerina* is powerful and packed with emotion. Working with a crew of more than 150 people at the height of production, and seeing that everyone is working in the same direction is an extraordinary experience. It's awesome to see so many different personalities, with different tastes, able to agree and work together.

### What was your specific contribution to the development of the film?

The artistic direction, which included creating the characters, sets, objects, ambiances and colors. We developed an authentic vision of Paris at the time, a tangible

Paris and not just a poetic evocation of it. Our main goal was to situate the characters in a credible environment, rich and palpable.

What a wonderful way to pay tribute to Paris, and most notably the Paris Opera, which is an architectural masterpiece! We began with daunting historical research to ascertain Parisians' lifestyles at the time, and to trace the transformation of the city's architecture thanks to the great Haussmann building projects. The real design work began with a synthesis of all those specificities of Paris in 1870, and trying to extract their essence.

### What touched you in the themes being treated, in the spiritual journeys of the characters in the film?

Their making their childhood dreams come true, the sense of adventure and exploration.

Friendship is also a theme that is very present in the film. Finally, the universe of dance and its stars, with all the rigor and magic it implies. 🎭



# TED TY

## Animation Director

- Graduate of Concordia University (Communications) & of CalArts (Department Character Animation)
- Internship at Disney Feature Animation
- 2D Animation Animator / Supervisor on Disney feature films: THE LION KING, POCAHONTAS, MULAN, JOHN HENRY, Lilo & STITCH, BROTHER BEAR.
- Animator on DreamWorks 3D feature films: SHARK TALE, MADAGASCAR, OVER THE HEDGE, FLUSHED AWAY, KUNG FU PANDA, MADAGASCAR 2, MONSTERS VS. ALIENS, SHREK 4, KUNG FU PANDA 2, PUSS IN BOOTS, RISE OF THE GUARDIANS, HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2, THE PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR.
- Teacher / Instructor at CalArts, iAnimate, YoungArts, CTN.

### What made you decide to get involved in this project that would involve several years of work?

First of all, the team at the Atelier and the three chief producers understood that an animated film is an adventure that requires reciprocal trust and respect.

I was glad to be able to offer them my prior experience with Disney and DreamWorks, and encourage them to work toward the highest possible degree of perfection.

Our collaboration with Aurélie Dupont and the manager of the Paris Opera for the choreography also allowed us to make our dance scenes accurate, coherent and emotionally strong.

### What was your specific contribution to the development of the film?

As animation director, I had multiple roles: achieving effective visual results, making sure that the characters' 'acting' looked authentic and appropriate to the feelings they were expressing; ensuring that all their movements and all their displacements

looked credible.

I had the pleasure of being surrounded by, and directing a marvelous team of young animators. I pushed them to outdo themselves and they achieved a very high level of work that I am especially proud of.

### What touched you in the themes being treated, in the spiritual journeys of the characters in the film?

I like the fact that the main characters in Ballerina are good but imperfect. Their flaws and doubts make them infinitely human and accessible to us all. Audiences will be able to identify with them. How can you not feel empathy and resist the desire to applaud a young woman like Félicie who struggles so hard to make her dream come true? 🐾





# INTERVIEW

## with the choreographers

**AURÉLIE DUPONT**  
**JÉRÉMIE BÉLINGARD**



### **What was the nature of your work on this film?**

**Aurélie Dupont:** Laurent Zeitoun contacted me to talk about the project and the years I spent at dance school. He asked me to do the choreography for the characters with Jérémie Bélingard, so that the team could later model the animation on my movements. The subject of *Ballerina* touched me, the experience would be unique, fun. And I thought of the pleasure my two children would have in seeing a film like this.

Jérémie and I chose the rhythmic and imagined the choreography down to the slightest detail, like the plate that Félicie flings through the orphanage kitchen, or the way she sweeps the stage, while doing pirouettes! I danced all the scenes, for all the characters. Félicie and Camille are the same age, but never express themselves in the same way: Félicie is instinctive, passionate; Camille is technical, cold, at times she even holds her breath.

**Jérémie Bélingard:** When I saw the entire team at work, I understood that the film was destined for mass audiences and could also touch little boys, thanks to common references like *Karate Kid*, and I wanted to be part of the adventure. Aurélie and I wondered about how to proceed, and the idea of using a camera to film the choreography was the clincher: taking inspiration from the scenes as written by Laurent and Carol, I imagined the dances, Aurélie learned them, we rehearsed, and then I filmed her in one of the Opera studios. I came up with the shooting angles, worked in the cutting room and on the edit...

We then viewed the scenes with Laurent, who suggested

some modifications before handing them on to the artists and animators in charge of breathing life into these moments of the film. The idea was to be as didactic and impressive as we could, because the production was not yet familiar with the subtleties of dance. I didn't want to insist on anything, I just wanted to create a dynamic: I took great pleasure in this part of the creative process.

### **How did animation allow for exalting the vision of the profession in *Ballerina*?**

**Aurélie Dupont:** Some movements are impossible in real life! For example, Félicie's extraordinary steps do not exist, and a pirouette ending on a split cannot be done by a boy. *Ballerina* is also about a dream, and the magic of transcending reality.

**Jérémie Bélingard:** The producers wanted *Ballerina* to always be marked by a blend of the real world and fairy tales. We jazzed up certain movements by accelerating them, or we filmed leaps in slow motion to prolong the impression of hanging in thin air. We also evoked science fiction films and the role of technology. It was exciting to push the boundaries of animation, guided by the idea that technology can inspire people to reinvent and transcend their art. With *Ballerina*, we moved on to the era of dance 2.0!

In the great scene of Félicie and Camille's confrontation, it is physically impossible to leap from one chair to the next, or to leap over the steps of the grand stairway. If it looks believable, it's because the story is realistic: Félicie is capable of taking risks because she has gumption. Camille is passionate in her

# AURÉLIE DUPONT & JÉRÉMIE BÉLINGARD

Interview with the choreographers



own way, she'll take up a challenge to the bitter end. I really love her: she's a feisty girl who perseveres, and who suffers a lot; she represents the many people who today feel alienated by their condition. Léonore Baulac worked with Aurélie and me to characterize Camille's technique, so different from Félicie's.

**Aurélié Dupont:** What Félicie experiences and lives through - even in fast forward - remains rooted in reality. We see her emerge from a group to impose her singularity. That's what I went through, in my own way: the big turning point for a ballerina is to step out of the collective, where you learn to imitate, to become a soloist, indeed a star. You need to feel ready. The first ballet that I danced in as a sujet - two levels lower than a star - was "Nutcracker", just like in the film. I never expected it to be so difficult: the shock was violent. I was happy with my performance, but I was assailed by doubts. It was at that very moment that I asked myself whether I had made the right decision. I finally figured that I still had a lot to learn and, working even harder, those doubts gradually disappeared.

The film also gives a lighter vision of teaching. In the minds of many people, our professors are harsh, inhuman, and they still use a cane, which is all fantasy! Ballerina is addressed with great tenderness to young audiences, as a lovely example of self-fulfillment thanks to an art.

**Did you have to struggle like Félicie to make your dream of becoming a ballerina come true?**

**Aurélié Dupont:** Day after day! I knew from the start that this

was where I was meant to be. I didn't intellectualize that, I felt it as strongly as Félicie. My mother helped me along with that desire to dance by asking a professional to evaluate me. No one thought of the Paris Opera until, after my first classes, the instructor encouraged me to participate in a competition... that would be taking place three months later.

**Jérémy Bélingard:** Félicie is a natural wonder and took advantage of a stroke of luck to impose herself. Anyone who has succeeded in life has one of those little lucky stars, like her little music box. As a little boy, and then as a teenager, I followed the classic dance school courses without ever feeling that it was a struggle, because I was truly made for this profession. It was when I became a professional that I needed to fight: I was a little pipsqueak next to guys who measured 6foot5 and had the ideal silhouette!

**Aurélié Dupont:** It was in dance school, where you are formed to become a member of the corps de ballet, that I struggled the most. With only three months of previous experience, which is tantamount to saying I didn't know a thing: I had a few notions- pas de bourrée, saut de chat... - but I hadn't imposed those exercises on my body. Girls who shared my apprenticeship had four years of dance to their credit: I worked night and day to catch up with them, mornings with all the other pupils, and weekends at private lessons.

**Jérémy Bélingard:** With my classmates, we were allowed to dance in one single great classic per year... as replacements! Dancers who had been there before us, such as Manuel Legris, were so exceptional that finding a place for ourselves was a

# AURÉLIE DUPONT & JÉRÉMIE BÉLINGARD

Interview with the choreographers

wager. I was a part of that generation of dancers that was able to make it because of contemporary creators like Pina Bausch and Roland Petit: being noticed by them was the only way to work your way up the labyrinthine hierarchy at the Opera. That constraint nourished our powers of conviction and singularity. Being obstructed finally saved us!

**Aurélie Dupont:** Everyone fights, even if the terrain is different. Those who do not fit with the “recommended” physical criteria

need to develop a strong personality that will allow them to distinguish themselves; on the contrary, others will work to develop their charisma, because as technically gifted as you may be, what you exude onstage is fundamental.

**Did you discover the Paris Opera for the first time with the same sense of wonderment as Félicie?**

**Jérémy Bélingard:** I remember the third part of the competition

that I had to pass to enter the school. It was a three-month internship at the Opera. I was sitting all alone, near the door, waiting for my class and Nureyev arrived. I greeted him, as is the tradition when you run into a danseur étoile. He stopped, looked at me, and returned the bow. I was 11.

**Aurélie Dupont:** When we had settled on the goal of entering the Dance School, my mother bought tickets to a performance at the Paris Opera. I was cruelly disappointed, because I expected to see children. No one had explained to me the sequences of a career. I remember a swarm of white tutus, the beauty of the building and the performance, but what dominated was incomprehension: I didn't see the connection with the competition I had to go through, since there was nothing but adults onstage!

In *Ballerina*, Félicie's dream comes true. In the real world - everyone will admit it from time to time - becoming a prima ballerina was a magnificent gift. But it is onstage that I felt that sense of accomplishment: I had reached what I esteemed to be my own perfection, physically and artistically. The timing in my life as a ballerina and as a woman was perfect! 🍷





# Rudolph



## LOOK

Prince Charming in the flesh, a man in tights: sleeker than Gene Kelly, blonder than Robert Redford in a sunflower patch, Tom Cruise's smile topped off by an accent from the steppes, Rudolph is a heart throb at the bar. Voted Monsieur Hottie 1879 by the tutu brigade.

## CHARACTER

Rudolph Dimitiev Stanislaw Artiem Rankovsky Shumsky the Third. And that's about it in a nutshell. Classy, cultivated, incandescent: who can resist this budding Noureyev who spins like a top, gambols and pirouettes? Félicie is thrown for a loop, and Victor is pathetically speechless. The cock fight looks lost in advance ... unless his proud emboîtés go before the tumble and fall. 'T would be a shame, but who can tell?

## DREAM

Rudolf is already the Dancing King. He can admire his glory and beauty reflected day by day in the waxed parquet at the Opera. All he needs is love: as prince he prances, as dandy he dances for Félicie's delight. Gold star: he flatters the grace of her arabesques. No star: he spends his days in tights. Thus spake Victor.

## MOMENT OF GLORY

The plan was almost perfect: to thrill Félicie, a romantic ascent of the Eiffel Tower still under construction, with fireworks to boot. In the end: a dud, because Victor beat him to it and then, utter disgrace, when he tries to box his rival using a technique based on a Cossack dance... K.O'd by braggadocio.

## CULT LINE

A grand moment of solitude when he declares to Félicie: *"This is a poem I composed in your honor. Look at the bird. It flies in the sky. No one can trap him. Pui Pui. Pui. Pui, pui, pui! Ka kaw! Ka kaw! Ka kaw! Do you like?"*

# Odette



## LOOK

A sad bun and layers of drab clothes. Odette haunts the corridors of the Opera brandishing vitrifying O'Cedar. She limps. The only thing lacking is to put out stale bread on her balcony. And still... there's that little whiff of Marie-Claude Pietragalla... The aristocratic way she holds her head, the somber gaze that has never lost its glow. The key to the mystery is but an entrechat away.

## CHARACTER

Careful, one woman may be lurking behind another! Odette may have withdrawn into Trappist silence, she removes her mask for flibbertigibbet Félicie. She has a heart that melts under her ironclad armor, she's a soft touch behind a cantankerous coat of varnish. She is benevolent, she takes in an orphan. She is maternal, she dispenses sense and sensibility. And the curriculum does not stop there...

## DREAM

Odette once burnt her wings trying to reach the heights. Before Félicie came along, all she longed for was her bed once she had cleaned up her Gorgon boss' mess. Today sounds the hour of sweet revenge: bread and water, Herculean training for litless Félicie, whom Odette promises to help fulfill herself. The dream, still relevant, has merely switched ballerinas.

## MOMENT OF GLORY

Odette's tutorial is irreproachable: working on basics, keeping your toes supple and hard, holding your pointes. Tiresome at first, Félicie's workouts become pure magic in a building's backyard. She has to jump to reach a bell attached to a branch, then land on her feet like a feather, grazing the surface of a puddle with her pointes. Time stands still when Odette looks at Félicie with bracing affection.

## CULT LINE

To Félicie: *"Feel your anger and your pain and your sorrow and your joy and put it all into your dance. Live the music. Feel it. Every note. Every sound, every harmony needs to have your body vibrating from the end of your hair to the tips of your toes."* What a pity that Odette hadn't coached Rocky. He would have blown away Apollo Creed before the end of the first round.

# Mathurin



## LOOK

Let Harry Potter loose in a chocolate factory and a week later you'll find a Mathurin. With his delectable porcelain baby face and oversized spectacles, toddlers would love to use him as a teddy bear. With a top hat hiding his bangs, and his hunched silhouette, he also resembles a notary public or an elected official from the boondocks. It's hard to put your finger on the boy...

## CHARACTER

Sugar is sweet, and this guy too. A loner, he lets down his hair with Victor whom he met during a night of Paris revelry. Big-hearted, he introduces him into the sacrosanct atelier of Monsieur Eiffel. A good friend, he becomes a willing third wheel once Félicie smiles. His only weakness, he pees his pants when up against monster-ess Régine. We understand.

## DREAM

Mathurin is a puzzle, a mystery, a sphinx. Is he also seething with desire to become an inventor? For the moment, his job is to slavishly sharpen his employer's pencils. Is he secretly mooning over a coquette? At this stage, a slam bang blow out is onomatopoeia, not an opportunity for a slow dance. And so?

## MOMENT OF GLORY

This apprentice excels in the art of pantomime. One of his big hits is a postmodern version of Cyrano de Bergerac, when Félicie erupts into the atelier to beg forgiveness. Victor sulks under the table and then betrays himself. Mathurin invents three hands for himself, two voices, and won't give up. The illusion is drop-dead awesome, Penn & Teller would be proud of Mathurin.

## CULT LINE

*"I don't know much about girls. Frankly they are a mystery to me. But I do know that this one [Félicie] is not coming."* Just what it takes to reassure Victor who is eagerly waiting for his lady love up on the Eiffel Tower.

# Mérante



## LOOK

Like any ballet master who respects himself, he has a snide eyebrow and a mean cane. Brylcreemed to the root, and with his shoes polished with royal jelly, he has opted for the raven black spring-fall collection. A bucket of ice water on ballerinas, who shiver at the slightest sign of a peeved goatee.

## CHARACTER

Louis Merante is a terror. His favorite sentence, at the end of each class: *"Leaving us today is..."*. A tottering balancé deserves capital punishment: *"You look as light as a mournful elephant"*. He has a point. It's just that we perceive a quivering lower lip whenever he catches sight of Odette's chignon.

## DREAM

What can a choreographer aspire to when he holds the world record, 1 87 fouettés (in other words, pirouettes,) in one solo? Uncover the new star of his Bar Academy. And since voting by text message is not yet in vogue, he will audition anyone anywhere, but arbitrarily, mercilessly eliminating one petit rat after the other, until he finds a pearl to fly in the *"Nutcracker"*.

## MOMENT OF GLORY

Merante is stern but fair. He proves it by snubbing the harridan Le Haut when Félicie runs into trouble: she did, of course, steal Camille's identity, but she remains in the running for the race to the ballet. There are ripples of fear and trembling in the crowds. Merante is inflexible. Classy. And then there is the appeal of the bun, we are told.

## CULT LINE

To one of his pupils who apparently will not be going on with the adventure: *"That was not merely bad, it was a catastrophe, wrapped in a disaster with a side order of bad."*



## CAST

Félicie.....	Elle Fanning
Victor.....	Dane DeHaan
Odette.....	Carly Rae Jepsen
Camille.....	Maddie Ziegler
Mérante, Postman.....	Terence Scammell
Rudolph, Mathurin.....	Tamir Kapelian
Regine.....	Julie Khaner
Director of Opera.....	Joe Sheridan
Dora, Rosita.....	Elena Dunkleman
Nora.....	Soshana Sperling
Greasy Guard, Janitor.....	Jamie Watson
Mother Superior.....	Bronwen Mantel



# CREW

**Directed by** ..... Eric Summer  
Eric Warin

**Based on an original idea by** ..... Eric Summer

**Original story by** ..... Eric Summer  
Laurent Zeitoun

**Screenplay** ..... Carol Noble  
Laurent Zeitoun  
Eric Summer

**Choreography** ..... Aurélie Dupont  
Jérémy Bélingard

**Director of photography** ..... Jericca Cleland

**Original music** ..... Klaus Badelt

**Musical Supervision** ..... Robyn Klein

**Art Director** ..... Florent Masurel

**Artistic producer** ..... Guillaume Ivernel

**Editor** ..... Yvann Thibaudeau

**Casting** ..... Bonnie Timmermann  
Lucie Robitaille  
Robyn Klein

**Animation studio** ..... L'Atelier Animation

**Director of Animation** ..... Ted Ty

**CG Supervisor** ..... Benoît Blouin

**Production Manager** ..... Laurence Vacher

**Produced by** ..... Laurent Zeitoun  
Yann Zenou  
Nicolas Duval-Adassovsky

**Produced by** ..... André Rouleau  
Valérie d'Auteuil

**Line Producer** ..... François-Xavier Aubague

**Produced by** ..... Quad  
Main Journey  
Caramel Films

**Coproduced by** ..... Gaumont  
M6 Films

**With the participation of** ..... Telefilm Canada  
Sodec  
Radio-Canada

**With the participation of** ..... Canal+  
Ciné+  
M6  
W9  
6TER





# Ballerina

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A vision with cinema

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