



INVISIBLES

A film by Jean-Louis Petit With Audrey LAMY, Corinne MASIERO, Noémie LVOVSKY, Déborah LUKUMUENA, Sarah SUCO, Pablo PAULY
 VISA : 146 154 / Running time : 102 minutes / IMAGE :
 SCOPE / SOUND : 5.1 RELEASE: JANUARY 9TH 2019

SYNOPSIS

After a municipal decision, a shelter for homeless women, 'l'Envol', is about to close. With only three months to re-integrate the women they care for, the social workers do everything they can: pulling-strings, bending the truth, and even outright lies... From now on, everything goes!

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LOUIS-JULIEN PETIT

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

THE GENESIS OF THE FILM

In August 2014, Claire Lajeunie (who directed a documentary on homeless women "INVISIBLE WOMEN, SURVIVING IN THE STREET", for France 5) gave me the book (SUR LA ROUTE DES INVISIBLES) she had written to complete her film. It retraces her encounters, surprises, interrogations, and her relationship with these women.

The book surprised me: it was miles away from the factual, sociological, and serious tone that I expected from the subject. Quite the opposite: I found myself immersed in a very human story, with all the ingredients of a tragi-comedy. The women in this book were incredibly complex, touching, and often funny, despite their dramatic journeys. I finished the book in two hours, and came out of it simultaneously upset and euphoric, so much so that I spoke to my producer, Liza Benguigui, who immediately acquired the book rights.

We were deeply convinced that these portraits of women, both fragile and combative, would make a fantastic subject for a feature film. Among them, we find women such as Catherine, fifty-something, who sleeps anywhere, and Julie, a twenty-five-year-old, who's in complete denial of her situation. For me, these women were already movie characters, full of contradictions and just as endearing as they're exasperating.

THE RESEARCH

Like I did with DISCOUNT and CAROLE MATTHIEU, I knew that I needed to plunge into this universe to understand and capture it as accurately as possible. For more than a year, I met homeless women in various shelters across France, and at the same time, I got to meet the social workers (mainly women) and to familiarize myself with their profession.

I quickly realized that I wanted to focus on two categories of women which are both "invisible" in our society (social workers and women in need of a shelter) and on their daily interactions.

THE SCRIPT

I found myself engrossed in this environment with the desire to show the totality of its harshness and violence. For this reason, my first draft of the script was akin to a social chronicle. The subject had taken hold of me, leading me to question my convictions and principles as a citizen, yet I failed to maintain a certain distance with the essence of the subject.

My producer and I quickly understood that merely transposing this reality onto film would bring nothing new to the work Claire Lajeunie had already accomplished. I wondered how I could contribute to her attempt at finally making these "invisible" women...visible.

In October 2016, with no regrets, I finally tossed this first draft and started from scratch. I've always been interested in modern resistance fighters, so I imagined the story of a group of social workers that would fight together for the reintegration of the women they care for. I wanted to start the story where Claire's documentary ends, when (the real) Catherine finally gets a room in a social hotel. LES INVISIBLES begins as she leaves this accommodation to return to L'Envol.

Unlike the first draft, in which the story was essentially set on the street, this second draft takes place in a shelter. This allowed us to explore the social workers' daily life, to give these women a roof, and to follow them on a daily basis, while taking the time to really know them.

THE TONE

I realized comedy would be the best tone to tell these women's stories, in the tradition of British social comedies such as THE FULL MONTY (Peter Cattaneo), PRIDE (Matthew Warchus), and MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE (Stephen Frears.)

I wanted to make a luminous film, full of hope and focused on a tight group, their cohesion and mutual support in the face of adversity. If only out of respect for those women, whose humor is often self-deprecating and who reject any form of self-pity, I wanted to plunge the viewer in a world of severe precariousness. But I wanted to explore it through funny and moving situations. I had to develop these characters in all their complexities, without pessimism or compassion, and remain truthful to the actual women I met.

LES INVISIBLES uses humor as a shield. It's a film about fighters, a tragi-comic epic in which the fight matters more than the quasi-utopian ideal they're trying to achieve. The weapons in their arsenal may not always be legal, and their success lies in their common goal, in their joint adventure.

MY "INVISIBLE" WOMEN: THE PRECARIOUS

Women make up 40% of the homeless population in France. We may not realize it because they tend to hide, so as to protect themselves from the violence of the street. They camouflage and become virtually invisible. A few months before the shoot, we launched a major casting operation. I wanted to cast non-professional actresses for the homeless parts. We had set ourselves to find about fifty women who had experienced life on the street; former homeless women now "stabilized" or living in foster homes.

We "auditioned" more than 150 women. Each had an hour to face the camera and talk about her life, without holding anything back. So that I could best identify their personalities and observe how they behaved (alone and in groups), we then organized workshops to "test" these aspiring actresses and decide which ones to put forward.

I asked each participant to pick an alias, choosing the name of a woman they admired. On set, we never really knew their actual names. For the duration of the two-month shoot, they were known as Edith (Piaf), Brigitte (Macron), Lady Di, Simone (Veil), Marie-Josée (Nat), Mimie (Mathy), etc... Given the opportunity to hide behind a different personality, they forgot the camera filming them and found the courage to be absolutely truthful.

There were only two professional actresses in the "homeless cast": Sarah Suco (Julie) and Marie-Christine Orry (Catherine), whose characters took on the traits of women featured in the documentary and in the book.

OTHER "INVISIBLE" WOMEN: SOCIAL WORKERS

There are other "invisible" women in our society: those who get zero assistance helping others. We don't speak much about them, we hardly ever see or hear them, and yet, like Sisyphus with his rock, and despite a legislation of sometimes staggering rigidity, they take care of these women, day after day, with the unshakable certitude that their reintegration is possible.

Whether they're volunteers or not, these social workers perform a difficult task. This work is both necessary and exemplary, but also thankless, given by the fact that they rarely even get an acknowledgement from the women they successfully reintegrate. In the film, when the shelter is faced with an uncertain future, our characters go above and beyond their duty, reinventing their profession outside of the system in a struggle that seems right to them.

THE CAST

In each of my films, I always choose my actors carefully. In a true representation of our society, I wanted an eclectic, intergenerational, and multi-ethnic cast.

Audrey's an idealist who operates without a filter and without ever distancing herself from the situation. She'll do anything to help and sometimes will even forget herself. For this part, I needed a very sincere actress who could bring us from laughter to tears. **Audrey Lamy** has all those qualities and right away, she made this character hers. I took her to a shelter in Grenoble, and in less than 15 minutes, she merged with the team of social workers. She was already at l'Envol.

This is my 3rd collaboration with **Corinne Masiero**. She's particularly sensitive to the fight against precariousness and exclusion. She's been working on an insertion project for a long time; an "eco-citizen" insertion structure. In the film, she plays Manu, the director of l'Envol, a strong woman exhausted by the system and its failures. The impending shutdown of the shelter hangs above her head like a sword of Damocles. On a daily basis, she's responsible for making decisions at l'Envol. As long as possible, she'll try to keep a distance with the women they care for: she knows the danger that comes with a lack of boundaries.

Noémie Lvovsky plays Hélène, a volunteer at the shelter; an awkward, wounded character who asks the wrong questions but who is always forgiven, thanks to her incredible humanity. I met many women like Hélène in the shelters I visited; wonderful women who by helping others, may also be helping and saving themselves. It's this very ambiguity that makes them so touching.

Deborah Lukumuena completes this trio of actresses. Her debut role in DIVINES earned her the César award (French "Oscar") for Best Supporting Actress. I told her that I was going to write a character for her: Angélique, a formerly homeless teenager, full of paradoxes and awesome punchlines, who finds herself at a crossroads. She's exactly the Angélique I envisioned when I wrote this character.

As for **Sarah Suco**, with her interpretation of Julie, she embraced and succeeded in a difficult challenge: transcending her character to make her truer than life. For this, she accomplished a tremendous amount of work: she lost a lot of weight, she panhandled to experience the shame and the violence you feel when passersby look away... It was all more difficult as Julie is an isolated individual, full of paradoxes and contradictions, and who evolves on the fringe of the group. She fails at seizing the help presented to her.

When I met **Adolpha Van Meerhaeghe**, I was shocked by her resemblance to the character of Chantal, as I had imagined it. Their journeys were similar in every possible way. Chantal is a strong, positive, dignified character. She symbolizes the very success of Audrey's system.

In this women's movie, I wanted the male characters to be compassionate. Once more, **Pablo Pauly** (the lead in *PATIENTS*, a success at the French box office) plays a kind-hearted character. But his interpretation of Dimitri (a caring, thoughtful brother) is even more touching than I had envisioned. I'm happy that **Fatsah Bouyahmed** and **Antoine Reinartz** joined the cast. Fatsah is really a comedy specialist to whom *THE COW* owes much of its success, and Antoine played the President of Act' Up-Paris with so much talent in *BPM*, a part that earned him the Cesar for Best supporting Actor. And of course, I'm grateful for the rest of the cast as well: **Brigitte Sy**, **Quentin Faure**, **Marie-Christine Orry**...

THE LOCATIONS

When I started looking for shelters, the first one that answered was in northern France, and the manager told me they were going to shut down. I saw this as a sign. For me, this area is also an inexhaustible source of extras, among the best: they're incredibly natural, they do not act, they just "are", and their sincerity is overwhelming. Since *DISCOUNT* and *CAROLE MATTHIEU*, I kept in touch with some of them, and especially Marianne Garcia, who impressed me so much in *DISCOUNT*, that I cast her again in *LES INVISIBLES*. She plays Lady Di.

THE SHOOT

For everything to go as smoothly as possible and for our "invisible women" to feel comfortable with the crew and in front of the camera, we decided to shoot the story linearly. At the end of the first day, some of them quit, some did not come at all (it was too far, too complicated, too long...). At least a third of them abandoned ship; only the bravest remained.

The crew and the professional actors adapted, and even withdrew themselves, so these women could really integrate the film and let go. I had imposed that, whatever happens, the camera would be there to serve the non-professional actors. We started with simple scenes and, depending on these women's reactions, I decided which of the non-professionals would play a more important part in the story.

AFTER THE FILM...

With modesty, I feel that the film has allowed each of these women to move forward. At the end of the shoot, they had changed: they had been part of a team, they realized they were indispensable, they were paid, they were able to open up, they were looked at, they were loved...and it all played a part in transforming them.

THE FINALITY OF THE FILM

I wanted to pay tribute to women who society has erased, and to those who are with them on a daily basis. I wanted to show that, despite the setbacks they've encountered on their journey, they had a life before the street; a job, skills...and they've lost nothing of their personality, their dignity, their desires and their dreams.

Mainly, I wanted to open the reintegration debate. Many initiatives already exist: "Ressourceries" which hire people with integration difficulties to transform objects and give them a second life. There is also "Le Filon", which promotes the talents of homeless women and helps them regain their place in society. Or "Les GEIQ", a collective that focuses on the potential of people with difficulties, people who are unable to find jobs, by organizing integration and qualification courses.

PROJECTS

For the moment, I'm focusing on the release of the film. A long tour of previews is scheduled to meet and debate with the audience. It's essential for me to devote myself to this. As for my next film, it's already maturing...

AUDREY LAMY

INTERVIEW

Why did you want to make this movie?

First of all, the subject is fascinating. It deals with a social reality we refuse to see: the existence not only of the homeless, but also of the social workers who help them. They're insufficiently valued by our society. Then the tone really appealed to me: striking in its truthfulness, but also fun and humorous. When I was done reading the script, I was so overwhelmed, that within ten minutes, I called Louis-Julien and agreed to play the part.

You are considered a "comedy actress". Were you surprised that Louis-Julien Petit offered you the part of a social worker?

Above all, I was touched. It was a beautiful mark of confidence from Louis-Julien, and it came right after I had left SCENES DE MENAGE and MAD MOM: I wanted to move toward more dramatic roles. I was all the more excited as this meant I would need to explore a new working method.

Were you prepared to be Audrey? If yes, how?

Whether the part is for TV or film, I never show up on set unprepared. I think about the role and sometimes, when I feel vulnerable, I go as far as to learn my lines, right down to the last comma. This was the case for Audrey. I worked for two months with a coach, but right before shooting the first scene, Louis-Julien told me he did not want to keep any of the dialogue. I couldn't believe it, especially since the dialogue was so well written! Nothing would change his mind. "It's all about sincerity", he said. I felt completely lost. Without lines, there's no more beacon, no more crutches, you basically go off the rails. You're naked!

Shortly before we started shooting, Louis-Julien took me to a shelter near Grenoble, so I could see how they really work. I was a little freaked out: would these women want to talk to me, to share a day with me? How would I feel, when I had no knowledge of their problems? Everything went really well. Our complicity was immediate. We went shopping with the volunteers, I helped with the cooking, and everyone sat down for dinner together...

In this moment of intense conviviality, I realized that these women were completely in tune with the film. Not only were they full of energy and a desire to pull through, they also had a great sense of humor and self-mockery. As for the social workers who care for them, represented by various characters in the film (and mainly by my character, Audrey), they're incredibly kind and always ready to listen. Sometimes, in their dedication, they go as far as forgetting their family life. I've learned so much from my character. I was thrown into reality, like in a documentary, that was completely crazy – and I'm not forgetting this experience any time soon (laughs).

On set, how was it to face women who had never acted before?

It was great! There was no difference between the professionals and the non-professionals. Acting-wise, these women (who to some extent "re-played" their lives) surprised us with their naturalism, their strength, their commitment, their patience, and their punctuality. Louis-Julien's instinct was good when he casted them. We, the "pros", had to work hard to get at their level.

Louis-Julien: how is he on set?

Louis-Julien goes against the current, he's like a resistant, one of a kind... He writes about the woes of the world: poverty, rejection, and injustice. No other director can find humor in the most hopeless situations.

On set, he's the same as in real life: feverish, generous, passionate, attentive, but all that tenfold! (Laughs). When necessary, he can also show remarkable patience. He knows just what he wants, but he's also capable of incredible adaptability. Louis-Julien is a phenomenon! When he's shooting, he works nonstop. Nobody knows how he manages. He sleeps two hours a night and yet he's always available. It's impossible not to give him everything, our absolute maximum.

In your opinion, what can LES INVISIBLES achieve?

I hope it will change attitudes. The film reminds us that desocialization can affect anyone and that you can pull out of it. If the film inspires discussions, debates, and awareness, that would be great.

Wherever LES INVISIBLES was previewed, it was met with enthusiasm, which delights me. It's full of laughter and tears, like a big roller coaster of emotions.

Has the film somehow changed you?

I don't know if it changed me, as I've always been sensitive to the problem of homeless women, but it definitely sharpened my view. I've always done little things for these women; less than Corinne, for example, who is very committed to their defense, but perhaps I will do more. After all, little brooks make great rivers... On a purely professional level, this film brought me a lot. Improvisation is a fantastic school!

What are your next projects?

I've worked a lot in recent years, so I decided to give myself a little vacation. I'm waiting for the release of LES INVISIBLES, then REBELLES, a comedy by Allan Mauduit with Cécile de France and Yolande Moreau. After that, we shall see...

CORINNE MASIERO

INTERVIEW

How did you find this project?

Louis-Julien and I have known each other for over ten years. I met him on a feature in which I acted and he was the assistant director. We immediately realized that we shared the same values as citizens. Professionally, we stuck together. I did DISCOUNT and CAROLE MATTHIEU with him, projects that touched me and that I defended because they matched what I was looking for, both in substance and in form.

One day, Louis-Julien called me: inspired by Claire Lajeunie's documentary, he wanted to make a film on homeless women. I watched the documentary and found the idea powerful.

In this film, homeless women (most likely without any prior film set experience) play themselves, alongside so-called "professional" actresses who play the other characters in the film. Before the shoot, what did you think of this casting idea?

I thought it was great. It's a system I know well, I've used it a lot. I come from street theater, where we often call on people without prior acting experience and with whom we improvise a lot. The resulting performances sound right and really touch the audience. It can be the same in cinema, provided you have a good director of actors. To play the homeless characters, it only made sense to hire women who really knew the street. It also allowed us to avoid bullshit and to fall into clichés or exaggerations. On a set that groups beginners with experienced actors, the only thing that matters to me is that everyone is treated the same. There should be no difference between them. But with Louis-Julien, who always treats his crew with complete kindness and respect, I knew that I had nothing to worry about. As usual, he got it right. We had all met before the shoot, and we knew we would stick together.

What amazed you the most about these women?

Their resilience. Despite what they experienced (and we're not only talking economic hardship here), these women all came on the set with an incredible confidence in the team. In life, nothing impresses me more than the way people who've suffered the most manage to forget.

Returning to the actual film, when some of these women had to tell their story, we needed to pay attention to their limits. Louis-Julien's ability to listen was essential.

How did you manage to act with these women, non-professionals, without completely losing it?

I never thought that these women were different from me. They were not on one side and the "professional" actresses on the other. Even though we did not have the same experience, we were all in it together. We shared our wounds with each other. And there was a dramatic mirror effect. At one point or another, we all went through a moment when we thought we couldn't go on, because we were upset, overwhelmed. While I do not care about playing a scene naked if the part requires it, during the shoot, I burst into tears several times while filming scenes that brought me back to some very personal stuff... None of these "meltdowns" ever degenerated, thanks to Louis-Julien, who was so thorough in his prep, and thanks to his kindness.

Apart from your shared values as citizens, why do you like working with Louis-Julien so much?

He's very "human". He doesn't believe in a hierarchy between the people he teams up with. He chooses his crew, actors and technicians, meticulously, and therefore he's aware of their limits and their psychology. It's extremely pleasant. On set, he listens to everything: voices, gestures, rhythms and silences. He does not believe in a pyramidal system. We can make suggestions and although he knows what he wants, he'll welcome them and actually agrees to change his mind. It's quite rare in this business (laughs).

In LES INVISIBLES, we frequently go from tears to laughter...

Knowing nothing of these women's lives, we imagine that it's sheer bleakness. We are wrong. Their daily life can also be filled with fun. For people going through hard times, humor can be the most effective weapon, and also a powerful aid in their path to resiliency. This is their rallying point. And it's for this reason that Louis-Julien wanted LES INVISIBLES to be a comedy. After Claire Lajeunie's film, he couldn't make another documentary. He also wanted to stay clear from melodrama, so that no one could accuse him of exploiting misery in order to create emotion. The film takes on a thorny subject in today's society, so he didn't want to take a light, superficial, or romantic approach either. He decided on a comedy: it captures the

humor in these women's lives and puts everyone on an equal footing while eschewing condescendence.

What could be the impact of LES INVISIBLES?

Already, in concrete terms, women who participated in the film have been allowed to view life differently. They resocialized, recovered their self-confidence, and started lighting up. Adolpha Van Meerhaeghe (who plays Chantal) still works with me today. We do theater together and we're working on various projects. In a less quantifiable way, I also hope the film will make people realize that being homeless is not a fatality and that it can happen to anyone. And then, let's dream a little, maybe the film will put an end to the public authorities' inertia concerning homelessness...

How do you choose your movies?

I always base my decision on content. It's the idea that prevails. And then it's the form, how the film will be made. I discuss it with the director. I tell him about my flaws, and how I like to work. If we agree, I go for it.

Can you tell us about your current projects?

With Josée Dayan, I'm working on a TV series started ten years ago, adapted from novels by Fred Vargas and also starring Jean-Hugues Anglade. We're also continuing the MARLEAU series. After that, I start working on a film with Dominique Baron, the story of a nun working in Senegal: she smokes, she drinks, and she doesn't believe in God. I have another feature project with Cyril Mennegun. And then as soon as I can, I read the texts Adolpha wrote while in prison.

I'm also taking the time to work on my "life project" with Stéphanie Brayer and Dominique Manet. It will be an "eco-lieu" ("eco" as in "ecological", "lieu" is the French word for "place": basically a sort of rural center for agricultural, social, educational and cultural experiments.) There, we will teach people how to consume differently, how to live independently and stop filling the pockets of the many consortiums that impoverish the population and ruin the planet. You already find centers like this in France and everywhere in Europe. This one will be called "Pataclown."

NOÉMIE LVOVSKY

INTERVIEW

How did you join LES INVISIBLES?

Casting director David Bertrand (whom I met on Roschdy Zem's CHOCOLAT), called me. First, he spoke at length about Louis-Julien's work, beautifully, and with passion. When I decide to board a project, what is essential for me, before everything else (before considering the part I'm supposed to be playing or even the subject of the film) is its director.

I had never met Louis-Julien Petit, but I really liked DISCOUNT, and his "world"— his vision really interested me. I read his script and I liked it a lot. Then I met Louis-Julien and I fell under his spell. He's lively, radiant, and full of energy. We talked about the project at length, and then we did some readings and improv. I wondered what I could bring to the character, so he reassured me and gave me some suggestions. I was happy to become Hélène, the volunteer character at the shelter.

What about the subject?

It intrigued me and touched me, of course. It's not like I live with my eyes closed... Every day, I come across homeless women and naturally, their situation revolts me and worries me. But I did not make this film for militant purposes. If I campaigned, it would be for movies and directors. As I said earlier, I make movies for the joy of partaking in a director's worldview, and participating in a truthful fiction, and also for the pleasure of acting. Nor did I want to talk about the French Revolution, like a historian, after acting in Pierre Schoeller's ONE NATION, ONE KING. I was not meant to be a spokesperson.

That said, when you like a director, you appreciate his mind and the subject of his film. Yes, I like the subject of LES INVISIBLES. It's not every day that we spotlight the women our society keeps in the shadows: homeless women and social workers.

For this film, you were going to act alongside women with zero acting technique. Did that worry you?

Not at all. Acting with people devoid of experience is like playing with children. If they're not feeling it or they're uncomfortable, the result can be disastrous. But if you look after them, if they're loved, if they "feel it", then it's extraordinary. Because they're natural and they don't have experience, they reach a level of truth that inspires us, so-called "professionals", to surpass ourselves. It's a pleasure working with non-experienced actors. It's stimulating and it makes you progress.

Ahead of the shoot, Louis-Julien had taken the time to get to know each of his actresses, "pros" and beginners alike, giving them the same amount of attention without any status distinction. Thanks to this preparatory work, thanks to the Louis-Julien's thoughtful approach, his kindness and his generosity, everything went beautifully. Louis-Julien is a pretty mind-blowing filmmaker. He directs people according to who they are and what they expect from a director. On this film, it was a titanic job, since, not counting the technicians, there were often fifteen, twenty or thirty actresses on set. But he didn't seem overwhelmed. He addressed each of them in a different way and was kind with everyone, while always remaining fantastically composed. Even during very long takes (up to 40 minutes), he never left us in a jam. He would talk to us and guide us throughout the take.

Often, most of the time actually, the mechanics of the film brought us to improvise our lines. We had a script, with dialogue that would serve as a guide, but Louis-Julien would frequently dismiss it and ask us to improvise. I'm always a bit afraid of improvisation; I'm not good at this exercise. But Louis-Julien's fervent and generous, almost loving, approach carried me all along. It carried all of us, I think.

LES INVISIBLES regroups a lot of real-life experiences, often tough ones. Were some scenes more trying than others?

One, especially, the one that Louis-Julien refers to as the "art therapy" scene. H  l  ne, my character, gives small tags to precarious women and places them two by two, face to face. In these duets, one is supposed to address the other and talk to her openly, as if she were her brother, mother, husband, child or any other person of her choice. Louis-Julien filmed with two cameras, and in just one, long take. I think it lasted 40 minutes.

It was an overwhelming moment of truth. These women bared it all. To hear them confess and open up about their sufferings, their desires, their anger, their regrets, without filter, was poignant. The most heartbreaking moment in this long take came when a woman chose to talk to the little girl she had been and ask her forgiveness for what she had become. On the set, we were all overwhelmed by emotion. Some just snapped but I stayed focused, so I could keep going. I emerged from this take exhausted...and amazed.

How did you approach the character of Hélène?

I tried to bring this character to me. Except for isolated and solitary actions, I had never volunteered; at least, never by joining a group, a structure. Louis-Julien explained to me how it worked, he guided me. He really knows the universe he's filming; he's concrete and precise. I could tell he wanted Hélène's awkwardness to be amusing, entangled as she is in her good will and all her good feelings. The end result is a character that's a bit silly, offbeat and therefore funny, I hope.

One could say Hélène is in harmony with the tone of the film ...

I cannot speak for Louis-Julien but like I do, I think he believes that every human being (even the most helpless, the unhappiest) has a capacity for joy and self-mockery. Even in the worst times and situations, life should win. That's what we both want. Louis-Julien has an unshakable belief in humanity. He finds beauty in people, whoever they are. There's nothing like his eyes on you to help you regain pride and self-confidence. As filming went on, I saw these women, who once lived on the street, bloom before our very eyes. It was wonderful.

What amazed you the most?

The cohesion between so-called professional and so-called non-professional actresses. We girls formed a real, tight-knit troop. We did not have anything against men, of course. We worked under the gaze and protection of a wonderful man and his magnificent team. But there was a lightness, a very special cheerfulness in being together, among women. Our conversations, our solidarity, our bouts of modesty and sometimes, our total lack of shyness— all felt very special. We mothered each other, we developed a true camaraderie, without any distinction of situation, either social, professional, or financial. We knew, however, that we did not all have the same opportunities, and we did not have the same life. But what united us was this work, this time spent together in freezing sheds in the cold Tourcoing winter, as well as the crew's kindness and Louis-Julien's tender, loving gaze. I was really moved by the cohesion in our group. This kind of osmosis is rare. It was all thanks to Louis-Julien.

What did you discover about the world of precariousness?

Following a divorce, a death, or a job loss, you can very quickly end up in the street. Apart from standards of living, there's no difference between homeless women and others. Because they feel guilty and have a hard time processing this guilt, some people may think that precariousness is something you deserve. In reality, it's the result of a terrible and completely arbitrary inequality.

What impact could the film have?

I have no idea. I hope the movie will make people laugh as much as they cry, and as such, that it will be met with the same success as some British social comedies. Also, even if that wasn't my motivation for doing the film, I also hope that it will force mentalities to change a little.

What projects are you working on?

I'm immersed in the writing of a screenplay, which I cannot talk about yet. I'm also shooting Martin Provost's new film this summer, with Yolande Moreau and Juliette Binoche. It's temporary title is LA BONNE EPOUSE (The Good Wife).

DEBORAH LUKUMUENA

INTERVIEW

How did you come to join this adventure?

Louis-Julien called me after seeing me on a TV show, the day after I won my César for DIVINES. He told me about his project, LES INVISIBLES, and said he was thinking of me for a part. This was January 2017. He contacted me again in July to give me the script. I read it, and that's it, I wanted in!

What appealed to you in the project?

Its subject. It was one of the first times, if not the first, that the subject of homeless women was being tackled on the big screen. I was all the more touched and surprised that this initiative came from a man. The script was realistic, funny, tender, bitter, but never sappy, condescending or pessimistic. It dealt with serious matters and hardships, like the loss of housing or the struggle to find work, but in a tone that blended humor and mockery. It brought out the comedy that can be found in drama, just like in real life. This was powerful, interesting and unique.

LES INVISIBLES is a documentary-like fiction. Did this form also appeal to you?

Yes. I loved it. It was apparent in the script, it became obvious during the shoot. We shot with women who had actually experienced homelessness and as a result, even if we followed the rules of the narrative, even though everything was staged and acted, we were always hovering between fiction and reality. We find ourselves in a kind of cinema-verité, but without the kind of exhibitionism it often entails.

This way of shooting leaves a lot to improvisation...

Of course, and that frightened me. We still had a crutch to rely on: the script, which was solid and very well written. Louis-Julien also spent a lot of time casting the women who were going to play the homeless characters at the shelter. He auditioned a lot and only the bravest remained. Given the emotional charge of the subject, everything went rather well. For the

most part, that is thanks to Louis-Julien, who laughs and cries alongside his actors, and who is in complete osmosis with his environment. On set, he's like a conductor. He has his score (the script) and as the scenes unfold, he decides to bring forward (or not) certain "instruments", but it's always for the sake of realism. With him, nothing is rigged or forced.

What did you think of his decision to cast formerly homeless women?

This idea matches his visceral need for realism. That said, it did seem a bit risky. When asked to revisit their often-painful past, I was afraid that these women would have a hard time during the takes.

But Louis-Julien never made a difference between the inexperienced actresses and the so-called professionals. We were all treated with the equal respect, equal rehearsal time, and equal rights to redo a take. It really helped us bond and trust one another.

Is it destabilizing to work with people with no prior acting experience?

Before the shoot, I was nervous. I was afraid the film would turn into some kind of lab experiment. But this feeling didn't last long. From the outset, these women surprised me with their openness and their sense of dialogue. I was stunned by their bravery. We, professional actresses, can shelter behind a character. On the other hand, they had to present themselves to the camera as they really are, with no filter, no acting technique. Their sense of humor and self-deprecation were their only shield. In addition, these women (who had the guts to put their past in service of a fiction) were inventive, warm, and generous. They basically let us into their universe.

What was the hardest for you on the shoot?

Hardest for me was not letting myself be overwhelmed by emotion. I'm impulsive, and I take things very seriously. To see this through, I had to make a great effort to maintain a certain distance with the subject and avoid any preconceived idea. Even though Louis-Julien took me to a shelter in Grenoble, I decided against doing any personal research on female homelessness. Retrospectively, I think this was a good idea. Acting in the energy of the moment allows you to react to everything with great sincerity.

What did you get from this film, on a personal level?

It made me grow. Before I even shot it, merely hearing Louis-Julien talk about his screenplay expanded my vision. Right after I left our meeting, my eyes caught at least eight or nine homeless people, whom I would probably not have paid any attention to before.

High-school philosophy lessons flooded back to me: how much our own humanity depends on being looked at and on the others' look upon us. I realized that for a homeless person, apart from the lack of comfort, the hardest to bear is their "invisibility".

Do you think LES INVISIBLES will change mentalities?

As a believer in the therapeutic virtues of art, I hope so. After watching the film, many audience members tell us that it destroyed any prejudice they had. It's a fantastic and comforting thought. In addition to opening minds, I would love for the film to have concrete consequences. For instance, in the first place, stopping the urban multiplication of anti-mendicity measures.

Tell me about your current projects...

I'm continuing my studies at the Conservatoire de Paris; I'm in my second year. Also, on January 10th, a day after the film's release, I start acting in a play, ANGUILE SOUS ROCHE, at the TGP (Gérard Philippe Theatre) in Saint-Denis. It's a monologue inspired by Ali Zamir's novel, and adapted and directed by Guillaume Barbot. Cinema-wise, I'm also preparing a few projects.

CAST

AUDREY LAMY...	Audrey
CORINNE MASIERO...	Manu
NOÉMIE LVOVSKY...	Hélène
DÉBORAH LUKUMUENA...	Angélique
SARAH SUCO...	Julie
PABLO PAULY...	Dimitri
BRIGITTE SY...	Béatrice
QUENTIN FAURE...	Laurent
With the participation of FATSAH BOUYAHMED...	Esteban

CREW

Adapted from Claire Lajeunie's book "SUR LA ROUTE DES INVISIBLES, FEMMES DANS LA RUE"

Directed by...	LOUIS-JULIEN PETIT
Written by...	LOUIS-JULIEN PETIT
With the participation of...	MARION DOUSSOT, CLAIRE LAJEUNIE
Cinematography:	DAVID CHAMBILLE
Editing...	ANTOINE VAREILLE, NATHAN DELANNOY
Sound...	JULIEN BLASCO, SYLVIANNA BOUGET, BRUNO MERCÈRE
Original score...	LAURENT PEREZ DEL MAR
Production Company...	ELEMIAH
Distributed by...	APOLLO FILMS