



Service Entrance



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VENDOME PRODUCTION
presents

Service Entrance

LES FEMMES DU 6^E ETAGE

A film by **Philippe LE GUAY**

With

**Fabrice LUCHINI, Sandrine KIBERLAIN,
Natalia VERBEKE and Carmen MAURA**

**Lola DUENAS, Berta OJEA, Nuria SOLE,
Concha GALAN et Marie Armelle DEGUY, Audrey FLEUROT**

Running time : 1'46

FRENCH RELEASE
FEBRUARY, 16th, 2011

International Distribution

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Synopsis

Paris, 1960. Jean-Louis Joubert (Fabrice Luchini) lives a peaceful yet boring bourgeois existence with his wife (Sandrine Kiberlain), a perfect socialite, his children in a boarding school and his finance office. The family has their world turned upside down when exuberant Spanish maids move into their building's sixth floor, the servant's quarters.

Teresa, Carmen, Dolorès, Concepcìon (Carmen Maura) and her niece Maria (Natalia Verbeke) who just arrived from Burgos. Jean-Louis will unexpectedly bond with them, especially with Maria. She is young, pretty and full of joy.

In a word, Jean-Louis's life is about to change... a lot.

Interview with PHILIPPE LE GUAY scriptwriter and director

How did this project come about?

It all began with a childhood memory. My parents happened to have taken on a Spanish housemaid called Lourdes, and I spent the first few years of my life in her company. I ended up spending more time with her than with my own mother, to the extent that when I started speaking I got French and Spanish mixed up. When I started nursery school I spoke a kind of incomprehensible mumbo jumbo. I would say my prayers in Spanish. Even though I have no specific recollection of these early years, my mother has spoken to me about them and something of that time has remained with me. Then when travelling in Spain something went click when I met a woman who told me all about her life in Paris in the 60's. The idea for a film about this community of Spanish housemaids took hold of me.

I wrote an initial version of the screenplay with Jérôme Tonnerre: it was the story of a teenage boy whose parents neglected him and who found refuge and protection with the maids in his block of flats. But we didn't manage to make the film. Then I changed the point of view and imagined the father finding being introduced to the world up on the sixth floor.

A different, less nostalgic film came together, and Jérôme Tonnerre came along with me on it. What's more, he had a Spanish housemaid who'd been in France for forty years, and we asked her loads of questions...

As it turns out our film takes place in 1962, at the end of the Algerian war, in the France of Charles de Gaulle. It's not such a long time ago, but it's another era, a different world...

The cinema has a long tradition of servants and their employers.

Yes, and so does the theatre! You need only think of Molière or Marivaux... Later Renoir, Guitry and Lubitsch drew from this tradition. What's exciting about having servants in a story is you're dealing with codes: politeness, what can be said and what cannot. This is constantly creating performance issues and therefore directing issues.

Your film is not just a love story; first and foremost it's about entering another world.

The trap we had to avoid at all costs was the boss falling in love with his housemaid. That's why I insisted there had to be not just one, but several women. Jean-Louis Joubert

discovers a community, and another culture suddenly becomes part of his life. He gets disturbed and upset, and ultimately seduced...

The film introduces you to a world which is as yet undiscovered despite being close at hand. I like the idea that something foreign can be found on your doorstep. The slightest occurrence can take you out of your own world and reveal new ones to you; worlds that brush past each other without ever getting tangled up. It's the science fiction concept of the 'fourth dimension', but here it is handled without the fantasy aspect. In the film Jean-Louis sums it all up with the following sentence: "These women are living right over our heads, and we don't know the least thing about them."

How did you go about fleshing out your screenplay?

Jérôme Tonnerre and I met up with former housemaids living in the 16th arrondissement in Paris, or elsewhere, and also some of the ladies who employed them. I remember one of them who was terrified of this forbidding chaperone who used to boss her about in her own place! We also went to the Spanish Church in rue de la Pompe - where we shot a few scenes, for that matter. There is a key figure there, el Padre Chuecan: a priest who's been there since 1957, and is a walking reference book about that wave of immigration. He's a bald, 80-year-old giant of a man who took thousands of Spanish immigrants under his wing when they came looking for work through his church. The Church was a cultural and social rallying point. It was the first place these women went when they arrived in Paris, and that's where the job interviews happened.

We got extraordinary real-life details out of meeting these people. Every one of the anecdotes in the film was based on real events, like the story of Josephina, who believed she had got pregnant because she had taken a bath in her employer's bathtub...

Where did the material for the Joubert family come from?

I come from a middle-class family myself. My parents lived in Paris' 17th arrondissement, my own father was a stockbroker, and I was sent to a boarding school just like the Joubert boys. But we have nothing else in common; the film is in no way an autobiography!

As luck should have it, we did actually film on sets in an abandoned Inland Revenue building which is thirty yards from the school I went to as a child. We fitted it out as the Joubert flat, the service entrance and the small loft bedrooms. The walls up there were knocked down and replaced with decor sheets so the filming would be logistically possible, because you could hardly get a camera in there! But the bedroom space is totally authentic.

At what point did you think of Fabrice Luchini as the actor who should play the main character?

I often say I replaced the teenager from the initial project with Fabrice Luchini. Fabrice is known for his energy, the way he galvanizes a stage or TV set. He has this prodigious textual and verbal power, but he also has an amazing ability to step back. He loves writers motivated by resentment, and will quote despondent texts by people like Cioran or Thomas Bernhard, but deep inside he is not at all jaded. His facial expression is enough to convince you how strong his link to childhood is. That's the inspiration for the film: the way he looks at these women in such amazement.

As the filming progressed I realized more and more that Jean-Louis is a man who has never been loved. He says it casually when speaking about his mother: "My mother never loved anybody". And now these women on the sixth floor are gathering him in their arms, kissing him and looking after him. He is a child who has found protective women: surrogate mothers. For me the film isn't so much about criticizing the middle classes as discovering emotions. In this milieu and period people are frozen; there's something obscene about saying what you are feeling. There is an

incredible distance between a man and his wife and their children. Nobody kisses each other!

From day one Fabrice drew my attention to the fact that Jean-Louis Joubert was a hollowed-out character, who takes, but never gives. Which is something he's not used to doing in his roles, we're more used to see him giving of himself...

This is the third film you've made with Luchini...

We are nothing like each other, but strangely he's almost become my alter ego. Fabrice loves the disillusioned; writers given to despair, while I like those with zeal and tenacity. But he is so joyful when he reads out depressing texts that his own energy transfigures them.

Unlike what some people think about him, he is entirely without ego when he works. He is totally into his work, approachable and responsive. He's a true partner. There was something strange that happened with Fabrice. I gave him the screenplay in May 2009, and he called me a few days later to tell me we needed to talk. We met up a few times, had lunch, took taxis together, and each time we spoke about totally unconnected things like Molière or Flaubert...and never about the project. It turned into a kind of joke, and right up to the end I wasn't sure whether he'd actually read the screenplay. Directing actors must begin in those seemingly non-productive phases, I suppose.

I knew the decisive moment would be when he met the Spanish women. I think he basically hadn't been expecting it. He came into the office to find the six women sitting there looking at him. It was concentrated, raw Spanishness.. He sized the film up in an instant; saw how exceptional these women were, some of whom didn't speak a word of French. He was electrified and went right along with the whole thing.





Despite all his experience he is an instinctive actor who doesn't have things all mapped out before he starts. On set he allows the emotions and the atmosphere take a hold of him.

Opposite Luchini there is Suzanne, the wife, played by Sandrine Kiberlain.

Fabrice and Sandrine have already acted together twice, notably in *RIEN SUR ROBERT*, by Pascal Bonitzer, and there is great feeling of complicity between them. Sandrine has the whole breezy and superficial side typical of certain middle class women, but she also brings a kind of fragility and anxiety to the film. Suzanne comes from the provinces; she doesn't quite understand the codes, unlike her two girlfriends, who have got them completely mastered. Which means she feels a bit stranded, and things often destabilize her, which makes her touching. Sandrine brings all this together with total precision and considerable humanity. Working with Sandrine also means constantly fleshing out the screenplay, or even taking things in a totally different direction. For instance, the scene where the children come home from boarding school and Jean-Louis has gone to live

up on the sixth floor. In the first version, Suzanne had a sort of wounded pride. The idea came up that she should welcome her sons home with a bottle of white wine, and straight away she pushed her attitude of indifference to the limit...

How did you put your Spanish community together?

I wasn't interested in having a chorus; I wanted a gallery of very individualized portraits. First I imagined a republican character, who'd come to France after fleeing Franco's regime. At the other end of the scale I was looking for a super-devout zealot who goes to church every day and keeps arguing with the republican. Rising above the scrum and no doubt a mixture of the first two characters, is the one played by Carmen Maura, who calms things down and tempers the conflict. There is Teresa, who wants to find a French husband and Maria of course, Concepcion's niece, who comes to France looking for work, and who is to be at the hub of everything that happens.

How did you select the actresses?

First of all Carmen Maura, the great figurehead of Spanish cinema: I couldn't imagine the film without her in it. She is the first actress I saw. Even though the role isn't a big one compared to what she can get, she did want to play a Spanish woman in Paris, like so many women she had met in her youth. What's more she has a flat in Paris made up of several former housemaids' rooms. She was similar to her character in the way she connected with the other actresses; she was someone to look up to, a friendly authority figure.

While we were filming they all had their own dressing rooms, but they didn't spend any time in them, they got together and talked away at high speed in Spanish, just like their ancestors in the public squares in Passy...It was really lively and Fabrice was often involved. Carmen liked the idea of acting in Spanish and in French at the same time, sometimes in the same scene. I wanted to capture the musicality the Spanish language has. Them rabbiting away so fast in front of Fabrice who hasn't got a clue was a very funny sight!

What about the character of Maria, played by Natalia Verbeke?

What was needed was a young woman who was pretty, but not too much; for her to be endearing, a retiring beauty. Natalia Verbeke had all these qualities and she spoke a little French too. That was important for the link-up with Fabrice. She knew her lines so well that she came on a great deal, which meant she was able to communicate with everyone on set. Choosing the other maids meant regularly going back to Spain to see Rosa Estevez, who took care of the Spanish side of the casting. I took on more actresses from the theatre in order to avoid the cliché of using "Almodovarian" actresses. That's how I settled on Lola Dueñas, Nuria Sole, Berta Ojea, and Concha Galán. The last two didn't speak a word of French and learned their lines phonetically. They have this amazing temperament, embodying all the intensity, violence and volubility of Spanish women...

What are your memories from the film?

There's the scene with the party on the sixth floor; where Jean-Louis lets himself get drawn into the dance. You have

to realize Fabrice is an excellent dancer, but I wanted him to be embarrassed and awkward. It was tough for Fabrice to hold back and not dance well, then the maids encourage him little by little and he lets himself go without realizing what he is doing.

Something beyond words occurred: a tremor, an emotion in his eyes. The miracle of an actor opening up.

What did you learn from working on the project?

I've always liked actors, but I discovered the pleasure of working with a mixture of French and foreign actors. You have to change your habits and your viewpoint; it's really refreshing.

Then there's a European feeling to the story which affects me. Well before the EU became a political reality Europe built itself in the sixties. The Spanish were there alongside us, on the street corners and in the parks...It's part of our two countries' common history.

Just as the character of Jean-Louis discovers other people in the film, I feel the cinema was invented to show the learning process. We film beings in order to capture something of them, to make ourselves richer through contact with the other.

PHILIPPE LE GUAY started out as a scriptwriter (*AUGUST 15TH* by Nicole Garcia) before turning his own scripts into successes as a director (*THE COST OF LIVING*, *NIGHTSHIFT*).



Interview with FABRICE LUCHINI



How would you define the character you play?

At the beginning we find him absent, absorbed in his work. He only really begins to exist when Maria appears in his daily life - then it suddenly clicks. He doesn't fall in love with her, but with an entire group of people, a world he knows nothing about. The Spanish housemaids are the main characters in the story. What happens when, during the 60's,

a bourgeois stockbroker, has a "revelation" which causes him to move from absence to a sort of realization of what Spinoza calls immanence?

His wife just thinks it's all about sex, but it's not. Jean-Louis Joubert is fascinated by the sixth floor: its life and its energy; and he goes to live there after his wife kicks him out. An unconventional love story begins in the midst of these Spanish women. I'm no good at reading scripts

and can only judge their value once on set. This one is rich, and it manages to avoid clichés and evolve into its own entity.

Even though there are strong social aspects to the film, above all else it is about people.

How do you see this man's background?

He's not a radical Marxist type, and he's not sappy either. The message is not that middle-class people are monsters and that poor people are great. It goes beyond that. He's not

a pretentious man, and isn't uptight about many things - except his soft-boiled egg in the morning, which must be done to perfection. This detail is what causes his housemaid from Brittany to leave, and him to realize everything Maria can bring into his life. All this might seem incidental but a relationship and an entire world are explored through all these often very funny details.

How do you balance the different aspects of the character?

This man comes to life little by little through contact with these women. Which means I have to stop my exuberant nature from surfacing. At the end of the day, Philippe Le Guay needed me to do something absolutely awesome for an actor: be completely absorbed in contemplating the real. This was one of the greatest roles I could have been offered because as an actor I was being asked to watch - to be an observer of the real, and become permeated by it. This individual will open up, but it cannot be done via a cliché or a trick. The man must be steeped in the life of all these Spanish women. And it is true that there are a lot of them, that the whole floor up there has a very lively and comical side to it.

What relationship do you have with Spain?

I was a million miles away from the milieu which could afford cleaning ladies. I grew up in Barbès-Rochechouart, so I lived with other kinds of immigrants, who'd been there since the thirties. I don't know Spain well, even though I hung out in Formentera at the height of the hippy era. I don't speak a word of Spanish. But you don't need words with people like Carmen. You fall back on ways of looking, of being funny and affectionate.

The film goes beyond social stereotypes...

You could think the housemaids are being treated condescendingly, but Monsieur Joubert also has to face prejudice because when he goes to live on the sixth floor the Spanish women stereotype him because of his class. Little by little he unveils the humanity which overrides the clichés both sides are capable of forming, thereby discovering its limits and contradictions. He is a bit transversal.

Filiations exist too. Jean-Louis is a bit like Philippe Le Guay. Just as Antoine Doinel is François Truffaut. I have been Eric Rohmer's Jean-Pierre Léaud in the six films we made together. Whenever you make a film, you become the spokesperson for neurosis or empathy. This is a bald fact. The actor loses himself a little in this exchange, because I am a Philippe Le Guay who doesn't bring into play my exuberance, spontaneity or my ability to enjoy going mad. But that's my job. He utilizes what he has felt coming from me. He would doubtless talk about the idea of humaneness.

You are the only man in the midst of all these women...

The language barrier didn't ease communication with the Spanish actresses. Making this film brought me face to face with feelings of solitude and my self-indulgent little depression. Which I was perfectly happy with. I'd heard a lot about Carmen Maura and I enjoyed seeing her work, with her Hispanic seriousness. I was only really close to Sandrine Kiberlain. We had already played a couple in "Beaumarchais the Scoundrel", by Molinaro. I was happy to work with her again.

This is the third film you have made with Philippe Le Guay. How is he progressing?

I get the impression that he's really in charge on set, he's got the narrative under control. He's really come along since the first film; the rough edges have been smoothed. It's like he's more at ease with himself. His on-set presence is totally different from when he made l'Année Juliette, our first film together. He's more mature, more in command. I feel this film has more body - as if he'd made a Beaujolais Nouveau with l'Année Juliette, a nice little Côtes-du-Rhône with Le Coût de la Vie, and that now he's between a great Saint-Joseph and a Cheval-Blanc. This film is rich in aromas because what we've been shooting seems alive.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

2010	POTICHE by François Ozon
2008	PARIS by Cédric Klapisch
	THE GIRL FROM MONACO by Anne Fontaine
2007	MOLIÈRE by Laurent Tirard

What was it that made you want to take part in the project?

It's always a set of different things that encourage you to get involved. This time it was the writing; the script of course, but also having acted opposite Fabrice several times in the past, as he sheds a different light on the characters and the general mood of the film. Meeting Philippe Le Guay was also a decisive element. I liked his rich personality, the humour and depth of the subject, which is very contemporary.

Can you tell us a little about the character you play?

The story takes place in the sixties. The Joubert couple is locked in a life which is not necessarily right for them. Belonging to a middle class which is totally comfortable with its ritualised aspects is what energizes Suzanne. She's married to a man she really loves. She is also the mother of two boys who are away at boarding school. She's from the provinces and feels a bit left out and has hang-ups about her girlfriends, who she always feels are more Parisian and more elegant than she is. She still can't come to terms with the fact that she is part of this bourgeoisie.

Like a lot of women from different times she is convinced she's leading the right life for her. You get the feeling that if this dynamic, joyful mood she always keeps up were to be spoiled, it would really painful for her. All the contradictions and weaknesses which make up the character and human beings in general appealed to me. I wanted to act out this desire of hers to be enthusiastic and to make a success of this life she has locked herself into. Constantly chasing an ideal means she has lost sight of the most important things: what she is, and what she really wants. She comes to understand that this life has passed her by and that they might have lost their way.

What vision do you have of the world of the housemaid?

It's not a scene I'm familiar with. My family has Polish origins, which gives me a different point of view on the story. I'm always touched by the courage of these people who come to France and by their desire to integrate and succeed in a life which is better than the one they could have had in their own country. When you're not lucky enough to be born in the right place you need a lot of courage to abandon your reference points and start everything over in a different place. These women have that strength. I think Suzanne really becomes attached to Maria, and if it wasn't for the oppressive social straightjacket that defines them, they could have been friends.

How did you work with Philippe le Guay?

I'd seen his films but didn't know him. With this film Philippe seems to want to fulfil the desire to be deep and fanciful at the same time. He is really passionate about cinema. His film is right there in his mind, and the result is like he is: funny, surprising, subtle and elegant.

This isn't the first time you have been married to Fabrice Luchini. What have you come to know about him?

I adore working opposite Fabrice. He's out of the ordinary; an actor who is really unlike anyone else. He's improving with age, I think, for multiple reasons. Physically, he's sexier. He's more mature, even more generous. He has a unique place in French cinema. He's funny; he gets bums on seats at the cinema and the theatre because he has managed to establish his own persona. When you act alongside him, the pleasure comes from what you exchange. If things are to work out with him you have to understand his eccentricity and grasp how moving he can be, even in his desire to grab everyone's attention.

In this film, even though he often reacts to what Suzanne does, he is not just her comic foil. We both operate in the same register. Two clowns who don't live like clowns do. Both creating comical situations in his or her own way. In different scenes first one then the other will react to what her or his opposite number does. There is a real exchange between us. Perhaps that is why we get on well while acting and working.

How did you approach your character?

Although the period is not that far back in time, we were still in a costume film. Acting every day in clothes that are not your own provides you with data which helps you to build up the character. Your behaviour changes when you are wearing different high heels, formal dresses or if you have a different haircut. It influences the way you hold yourself, the way you walk, or sit down. This whole task of reconstruction puts you in a different environment, in the same way as the scenery.

I personally work hard on the rhythm of my characters, which I think I pick up instinctively. It's connected to the costumes and also to the attitudes they cause you to have.

How would you define Suzanne's rhythm?

She chases around trying to fill up the space and the silences so that nobody stops her to ask her the question which would bring her back to reality about herself. If she stopped it would doubtless give her the time to think and realize what she is going through.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

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| 2010 | A VIEW OF LOVE by Nicole Garcia
UNE FEMME D'AFFAIRES by Frédéric Schoendoerffer |
| 2009 | MADemoiselle CHAMBON by Stéphane Brizé
LITTLE NICHOLAS by Laurent Tirard |
| 2007 | MOLIERE by Laurent Tirard |

Interview with SANDRINE KIBERLAIN



Interview with NATALIA VERBEKE



What was your reaction when you read the script?

I was touched by the story as it deals with my compatriots in a novel and very humane way. I liked Maria straight away. She's a woman who has character but her youth and what she's been through have not yet given her the chance to express it. I immediately fathomed her. And she was a kind of character I'd never played before. I'm more used to playing very determined young women, whereas Maria is frail and sometimes naive.

It's also a character you can really see developing throughout the story. At the start, when she arrives in Paris she is shy and doesn't know much, but little by little she discovers things, she dares to act, she takes risks, she learns and also internally comes to terms with her own story. When faced with Monsieur Joubert, surrounded by her colleagues and near her aunt, who has got him to come upstairs, Maria slowly begins to become her own self.

What vision do you have of the period, which you didn't live through yourself?

The film takes place in France but during a very difficult time in Spanish history: the Franco regime. Lots of people came to France as refugees looking for work. That's not the subject of Philippe Le Guay's film, but he has really managed to communicate the motivations and mindset of those people through his characters. All those women turned up having left everything behind. They started from scratch, didn't know the language and often found themselves in harrowing solitude. They had to be brave. Maria and the other women's situations touch me.

In your opinion what did becoming a housemaid in France mean to them?

We all have friends and family who came to France to become maids. It was hard work, but they were also lucky. It was a chance to be able to provide for yourself and your family back home. I spoke a lot to other women. I asked around, and people today don't realize how many people found themselves in this situation.

When I discovered the authentic housemaid's rooms we filmed in I was overcome with emotion. I put myself in the place of these women who arrived with nothing, and were isolated and far from home. I understood their distress and their isolation, and I admire their courage.

How was working with Fabrice Luchini?

It's pleasant working with Fabrice. He is very professional on set and I learned a lot working with him. Besides which, he's a charming man with a great sense of humour. My desire to understand him even more was a motivation to improve my French. I love listening to him reciting your classics, Molière in

particular. He inspires you to investigate French culture, just as the film creates interest in ours.

Did you discuss the subject matter of the film with your Spanish colleagues?

The group was very close and we really did get on very well together. All of us were interested in the story told in Philippe's film. It speaks to us in historical and human terms. There is something deeply authentic in what he is saying. He manages to recreate a whole period through the use of small, realistic details which seem right.

The women who arrive here with no family end up managing to create one up on the sixth floor! It's a film we were happy to be making.

What does the film represent for you?

For me it's a universal film because it's about discovering the other, whether it be in terms of love or friendship. It also deals with the solitude, courage and suffering you feel when you're far away from your loved ones. They are themes that will move anyone. It's also a nice story. Monsieur Joubert decides to reach out to these women he lives near but he knows nothing about. Maria is his way in, but he falls in love with the whole context of these women. The film is about the paradoxes in life, and lots of it is very funny. These women who are on a lower rung of the social ladder actually live upstairs from the people they serve. When the two worlds collide it generates questions and provides food for thought. By using comedy with feeling and real social concerns the film leads us to consider who we are and what the limits of our social milieu are.

What are your memories of making your first film in France?

For me Philippe's film is like a declaration of love for Spain and for the women who came to live over here. He depicts them humanely and avoids simplistic clichés. We see them suffering and hoping. You can tell he feels tenderness and respect for each of his characters. I've been really lucky with my first experience here. And filming in Paris has allowed me to get to know the city and make me want to come back!

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

2006	GAL by Miguel Courtois
2005	THE METHOD by Marcelo Pineyro <i>Two Goya Awards</i>
2003	DOT THE I by Matthew Parkhill <i>Deauville Film Festival, Audience Award</i>



What was it that appealed to you in this project?

I wanted to work with female Spanish actors in Paris for the first time. I really liked the idea of playing a Spanish cleaning lady living up on the sixth floor. I love speaking French in real life and in films. This project also gave me the chance to mix French and Spanish just like a Spanish person living here would. Philippe Le Guay gave me his permission to, he even encouraged it. It was so exciting because I had to force myself to remain the same actress whereas in fact when you act in a language which is not your own you can tend to artificially alter your voice. I love this mixture of languages, though I might never be given the chance to use it again!

What did you think about the screenplay?

It's a real fairy tale, a sweet and very tender comedy with a love story which has a happy ending. I like films with a

happy ending! Obviously this very beautiful story is told from the point of view of a Frenchman, which is always interesting. It's a different angle, a different approach, which I understand perfectly. I always respect the director's point of view, because it's his film. Philippe and I spoke about it.

As a Spanish woman and international actress, how do you see this French point of view?

I know France and it's a country I love. I often stay in Paris, where I live in five maid's rooms with the walls knocked down to make one flat. When I discovered the real bedrooms where we did the shooting, obviously it was tough for me! I love Paris and France but the French are a little odd! You still see us in a slightly clichéd way. Paris is a city that can come across as aggressive, yet it's one of my favourites. I get the feeling everything is more relaxed back home. We have

Interview with CARMEN MAURA

a milder sense of humour, whereas yours is more profound. The way the French see the Spanish has come on a lot over the past twenty years. We're treated much better. There is more curiosity towards us. Despite this, deep down we're still seen as slightly under-developed southern people. I've learnt to live with that while trying to change it at the same time. I feel very much at ease because I'm a solitary person who doesn't need to be cuddled too often!

Can you tell us about the character you play?

Concepcion has lived in France for a very long time. She is obsessed with sending money back to Spain where her husband has stayed to build a house for them. Concepcion dreams of having a house like the French women she works for. When the story begins Concepcion is a bit like the surrogate mother of all the young women who live up on the sixth floor above the Jouberts. That's when her niece Maria arrives and the adventure begins...

On set you were a bit like Concepcion for the group of actresses...

Although I am shy I do like everyone to feel at ease on the set. For me a set is a bit like a church, it's sacred. Something magical happens there. So everyone needs to feel all right and that's what I try in all modesty to help create.

How did you and Philippe de Guay work together?

Philippe really thought his film through and has every last detail under control. He knows exactly what he wants and he shot the film with the actors he wanted. I think his film is like him. On a personal level he is very good, he looks after his actors. For instance Philippe saw to it that the focus puller, script supervisor and the sound mixer were Spanish, and that was very important for us. On a more intimate level, I will be forever grateful to him for having allowed me so much freedom, particularly as regards the speaking of Spanish. That was a surprise and a tremendous favour. Philippe loves the Spanish language and Spain, and he was constantly getting us to sing. Actually we sing so much - starting as early on as the picnic - that once I said to Philippe I didn't want to do any more singing in the film. The Spanish sing less than he appears to think they do!

How did things work out with Fabrice Luchini?

Fabrice is really one of a kind, he amuses me a lot. I admire the very strong audience relationship that he nurtures. I went to see him at the theatre at one o'clock in the afternoon and it was packed with a mixture of completely different people; young, old, poor and rich. Bringing together such diverse audiences is what I admire most in actors. He does a lot of talking. We tell each other a lot of stories - true or otherwise. Listening to him talk is a pleasure. The French language is so musical when he speaks. He's not just someone who passes by you in life and who you forget. I will remember him. It's not difficult working with him because he has great respect for other people. He even stood up for us in some scenes. I loved that. He's really great!

In France the "Spanish housemaid" is almost an iconic figure. You have an international vision - do you know of any country other than France that Spain has supplied so many housemaids with?

I don't believe the "Spanish housemaid" is an iconic figure in any country outside France. Although there are lots of Spanish maids in Belgium. Back in the day the Spanish had a very bad life in their own country. Sometimes entire families ran away because of their political stance during the Spanish Civil War. I also think Spanish maids were thought highly of here because we have a very strong notion of cleanliness. The importance generally accorded to the bathroom in France is nothing like what happens in Spanish bathrooms. I noticed this when I was looking for a flat. Here you can sometimes even find pieds-a-terre with outdoor toilets. It's very strange.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

2009	TETRO by Francis Ford Coppola
2006	VOLVER by Pedro Almodovar <i>Goya Awards: Best Supporting Actress</i> <i>Cannes Film Festival: Best Actress</i>
2005	FREE ZONE by Amos Gitai
2003	LA COMUNIDAD by Alex de la Iglesia <i>Goya Awards: Best Actress</i>

Production

PHILIPPE ROUSSELET created **LES FILMS DE LA SUANE** in 1994 and **VENDOME PRODUCTION** in 2010. Produced to date are:

MARIE BAIE DES ANGES by Manuel Pradal
SERIAL LOVER by James Huth
FOLLE D'ELLE by Jérôme Cornuau
BARNIE ET SES PETITES CONTRARIÉTÉS by Bruno Chiche
BLANCHE by Bernie Bonvoisin
BALZAC ET LA PETITE TAILLEUSE CHINOISE by Dai Sijie
TRISTAN by Philippe Harel
PAPA by Maurice Barthélémy

LES PARRAINS de Frédéric Forestier
DU JOUR AU LENDEMAIN by Philippe Le Guay
LA CLEF by Guillaume Nicloux
LES INSOUMIS by Claude Michel Rome
LES FEMMES DU 6^{ÈME} ÉTAGE by Philippe Le Guay

Philippe Rousselet produced in 2006 **LORD OF WAR** by Andrew Niccol and created Vendome Pictures, a company based in Los Angeles and dedicated to international movies. His first two pictures are now ending porst-production: **SOURCE CODE** by Duncan Jones with Jake Gyllenhall and Vera Farmiga (US release: April, 5th 2011) and **LARRY CROWNE** by Tom Hanks with Julia Roberts and Tom Hanks (US release: July, 1st 2011).



Cast

Jean-Louis
 Suzanne
 Maria
 Concepcion
 Carmen
 Dolores
 Teresa
 Pilar
 Colette de Bergeret
 Nicole de Grandcourt
 Bettina de Brossolette
 Madame Triboulet
 Germaine
 Bertrand
 Olivier
 Gérard
 Valentine
 Plumber
 Monsieur Armand
 Piquer
 Goimard
 Blamond
 Fish merchant
 Priest
 Pelletier
 Fernando
 Miguel

FABRICE LUCHINI
 SANDRINE KIBERLAIN
 NATALIA VERBEKE
 CARMEN MAURA
 LOLA DUEÑAS
 BERTA OJEA
 NURIA SOLE
 CONCHA GALÁN
 MARIE ARMELLE DEGUY
 MURIEL SOLVAY
 AUDREY FLEUROT
 ANNIE MERCIER
 MICHÈLE GLEIZER
 CAMILLE GIGOT
 JEAN-CHARLES DEVAL
 PHILIPPE DUQUESNE
 CHRISTINE VÉZINET
 JEUPEU
 VINCENT NEMETH
 PHILIPPE DU JANERAND
 PATRICK BONNEL
 LAURENT CLARET
 THIERRY NENEZ
 JOSÉ ETCHELUS
 JEAN-CLAUDE JAY
 JOAN MASSOTKLEINER
 IVAN MARTIN SALAN

Crew

Written & directed by **JEAN-PHILIPPE LE GUAY**
 Co-written by **JÉRÔME TONERRE**
 Cinematography **JEAN-CLAUDE LARRIEU**
 Editor **MONICA COLEMAN**
 Set Design **PIERRE-FRANÇOIS LIMBOSCH**
 Costumes **CHRISTIAN GASC**
 Sound Design **LAURENT POIRIER**
 Coproducers **VENDOME PRODUCTION**
FRANCE 2 CINÉMA & SND
PHILIPPE ROUSSELET
ETIENNE COMAR

Vendome Production
 presents

A coproduction **VENDOME PRODUCTION /**
FRANCE 2 CINÉMA / SND/
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FRANCE TELEVISIONS /
 in association with **LA BANQUE POSTALE IMAGE 4 /**
COFINOVA 7/ UNI ETOILE 8
 International distribution **SND**

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Texts and interviews : Pascale & Gilles Legardinier