MADEMOISELLE DE JONCQUIERES
A film by Emmanuel Mouret
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STARRING
Cécile de France    Edouard Baer    Alice Isaaz
Natalia Dontcheva    Laure Calamy

Runtime: 110min – France – 2018 – Scope – Dolby 5.1

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FRENCH RELEASE: SEPT. 12, 2018 (PYRAMIDE DISTRIBUTION)
TRAILER LINK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dzw5Oybk9M

SCREENING SCHEDULE
TIFF PLATFORM
FRI. 7, 3:30 PM @ SCOTIABANK 14 (P&I)
SAT. 8, 5:30 PM @ WINTER GARDEN THEATRE (PUBLIC)
SUN. 9, 8:30 AM @ TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX 3 (PUBLIC)
TUE. 11, 9:45 AM @ SCOTIABANK 10 (P&I)
FRI. 14, 10:00 AM @ SCOTIABANK 7 (P&I)
SUN. 16, 9:15 AM @ TIFF BELL LIGHTBOX 3 (PUBLIC)
SYNOPSIS

1750. Louis XV reigns over the kingdom of France. The Marquis des Arcis, an assumed libertin, falls madly in love with Madame de La Pommeraye, an attractive widow withdrawn from the world... She resists him for years, and finally gives in to her secret desire. Yet the Marquis quickly tires of her and proposes after two short years to split remaining good friends...

Mad with sorrow, Madame de La Pommeraye seeks revenge on the Marquis and enlists the services of two prostitutes, Madame de Joncquières and her daughter, a young 20-year-old woman of rare beauty...
INTERVIEW WITH EMMANUEL MOURET

Mademoiselle de Joncquières is your 9th feature film and your first costume drama. When Frédéric Niedermayer, who has produced all my films, mentioned the idea of a costume drama, I immediately thought of a story told by the innkeeper in Jacques le Fataliste, Diderot’s novel, a story cut by numerous digressions and parentheses, like all the other moments in the book. A story often read, which had struck me and moved me, especially the ending.

The modernity of this story seemed striking to me, by which I mean that what is modern is what does not age and comes down through the ages. The desires, feelings, impulses, and conflicts that go through the characters and the questions raised by the story seem very contemporary to me. The moral questions of the 18th century are still at work today. During and after the Regency, society was more divided than ever before, like ours is, between profane love, a taste for pleasure, and a more sacred love. Libertines or not, those who lived through those times were as internally divided as we are today.

Robert Bresson already adapted this story by Diderot in Les dames du bois de Boulogne. He adapted this story to his time, 1945. The existence of this film by Bresson obviously intimidated me, but I realized that I was interested in other aspects of the story, notably the character of Madame de La Pommeraye, which I wanted to develop further. That is why I have dwelt not only on the premises of history, but also on its end and epilogue. Moreover, I wished to remain faithful to Diderot concerning the narrative treatment of Mademoiselle de Joncquières, of whom the Marquis is in love. Bresson puts it forward very early while Diderot does it towards the very end: she is for a long time a character in the background, a silhouette, who suddenly takes on a consistency and a depth that illuminates the whole story. I wanted to try to keep this original and emotionally strong “dramatic surprise”.

What interested you about immersing yourself in a period film?

Several things. First of all, the Marquis des Arcis and Madame de La Pommeraye possess this mixture of excess and delicate civility that makes this unique flavor and spiciness of the characters of that time! They can argue and reason so brilliantly (to prove or prove to themselves something and the opposite)! Even if we always talk a lot about ourselves or what we feel today, it is something that would seem less “natural” in contemporary characters than in 18th century characters.

Another reason is that a costume drama is a bit like a science fiction film. This distance from our reality can paradoxically bring us closer to our imagination and our inner world. This film is mainly addressed to our sentimental and moral reality much more than to our external reality.

Doesn’t the 18th century run through all your previous films?

You say that, because we are used to hearing the characters of that time questioning the amorous or moral customs and that’s what my characters often do in my previous films! What particularly touches me in this century is the laboratory element of ideas, utopias, and questioning.
All these dissimulations, corruptions, lies, betrayals, all this is done in the name of love. She is also a materialist who defends the idea of reason and moderation. And if the law (and moral law) condemns anyone who does evil in the name of love, fiction does not. Medea may kill, but she loves. It’s the same for the Marquise, she avenges herself diabolically, admirably even, cruelly, to satisfy her revenge. She is also an independent woman, of course, but she capable of crushing other women to satisfy her revenge. It’s really Diderot who is the feminist. He is able to think about oppression, to fight for freedom of everyone in mutual respect.

The film is also very feminine, with four female characters for one male character. Yes, it was something that was very stimulating for me, four very different portraits of women, each with their own character and history. Each has such a special destiny that there is little resemblance between them.

At the heart of all this is the portrait of a woman taking revenge. Revenge in cinema is interesting to film, because it makes us imagine. And it makes us imagine, because it is a time when the Marquise is a confidante, hides nothing. The Marquis, for whom the Marquise is a confidante, hides nothing. It is his, in a way. When you listen to him and see him, he is a marquis! This brings about reversals of value that make up the dynamics of his mind. He constantly questions morality, without ever freezing his mind. He is a moralist, not a moralizer. There is an irony that is never cruel or cynical, but rather, sharp and full of empathy.

The character of Madame de La Pommeraye’s friend does not exist in Diderot. Why did you invent it? The characters of the Marquis and the Marquise are so excessive that I needed a character who embodies an idea of reason and moderation. Without moderation, there is no immolation. She is also a character to whom I have become very attached. Her friendship with the Marquise is true, considerate, delicate... and little by little she sees her friend moving away like Laura Calamy that this character could have been the author or narrator of this story. I really appreciated the elegance and inventiveness of her performance.

How do you judge the characters in this story? This is the question that it is work throughout the film. It is not a story made to deliver a thought, but a story made to make us think. The characters do things that are as laudable as they are hateful. And again, relentlessly and, after careful consideration, to be wrong it is impossible to put them in a box, in a ready-made opinion. When

We think of Les Liaisons Dangereuses, contemporary to Jacques & Fataliste. The noble characters, the manipulation, the cruelty, the opposition between libertinage and devotion exist in both texts. The big difference is that there is no cynicism in Diderot, the characters are not disillusioned. However, Madame de Merteuil and Madame de La Pommeraye undeniably have things in common. Diderot, like Laclos, portrays women whose intelligence surpasses that of men and it is not a common feature in the literature of yesteryear. Moreover, they are both independent women, because they are noble and widows. It should not be forgotten that noble widows and rich courtesans are the first women who do not depend on the authority of a husband.

Madame de La Pommeraye has words that could be described as feminist. She says that her revenge will avenge all women. She uses these words, especially with her friend, to justify her machination. It’s something very new for the time. The idea of women’s emancipation taken to its extreme side. The ideological edifice of the old regime is cracking on all sides, and we know the important participation of women at that time in feeding this laboratory of new ideas. Like Madame d’Épinay, for example. But Madame de La Pommeraye is a much more independent woman. She is also an independent woman, of course, but she’s capable of crushing other women to satisfy her revenge. It’s really Diderot who is the feminist. He is able to think about oppression, to fight for freedom of everyone in mutual respect.

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are always active, trying to imagine what is going on in the characters’ minds, what is hidden behind their eyes. These sequence shots serve not to say too much, not to underline too much what the text evokes, but it is also one of the joys of film to see actors playing without them being cut off, as if we were witnessing their exchange for real. I find that exciting.

Landscapes are not so common in your cinema. Here they take on an importance, with the gardens and ponds...

One of the two favorite occupations of the nobility at that time was walking. The other is self-examination. They can go together.

Mademoiselle de Joncquières seems to step out of a portrait by Chardin or Fragonard. Her beauty is dazzling and we immediately understand that she is perfect bait... How did you think of Alice Isaaz? I immediately thought of her, I had discovered her in a film three or four years ago. I liked her not only for her beautiful cinegenic presence, but also for her strong temperament. She had to be self-effacing for three quarters of the film then, suddenly, her character appears and contrasts with what we have seen, that is to say, this girl is not just a docile puppet, but a person of flesh, ideas and strong, high aspirations.

She's a prostitute and perhaps the most virtuous character in the film?

It is the spirit of Diderot again: virtue is not where we expect it.

Her mother, played by Natalia Dontcheva, is a striking character. She is perhaps the character who has gone through the most difficulties. She has no moral or amorous ambition, one might think she is disillusioned and opportunistic, but she is nothing of the sort, her daughter is more important to her than everything else. She will do anything to make her safe. Of these four portraits of women, she is the only mother.

Why this title?

First, because the text did not have a title, one had to be found. Then, because I wanted, from the beginning of the film, to give great importance to this character (Mademoiselle de Joncquières) who may seem secondary for a long time. It's a way to prepare the ending, without revealing it. The character is portrayed intaglio, mysteriously enough to feed our projections, like those of the Marquis. I think that the more unfathomable this young woman remains to him, the more one understands his irrational attraction, and the more poignant and disturbing the final twist can be.

The Age of Enlightenment is obsessed with the power of reason. As far as affairs of heart and desire are concerned, everything is complicated. Here, the characters seem trapped in their own desires. But has anything changed since then? To what law should reason in love be subjected? And do we really love when we’re reasonable? It seems that the questions are perhaps more important than the answers. And it is perhaps on our troubles that the Enlightenment has cast the most clarity.

Interview by René Marx, June 1, 2018
A few excerpts...

Between Madame de La Pommeraye and the Marquis des Arcis

• I do tire of repeating myself and having to drive this obsession from your mind.
• My heart, Marquise.
• But who knows where the heart hides? Yours is so filled with wit that one cannot be sure.
• I only believe in friendship. Love, when coupled with flesh, grows as fragile as flesh itself, and is easily bruised.
• Love is an insult for those who have none.

Between Madame de La Pommeraye and her friend

• Why would the Marquis grow attached to this girl when he attaches to no-one?
• Because the Marquis cannot resist what resists him. And if at one time I inspired lofty sentiments in him, they were in proportion to my resistance.
• Have you never observed that love grows when the object of our desires escapes us?
• For my part, I believe language is correct to put «happiness» just a pin’s drop away from «hapless».
• Madame, you are wrong: happiness that doesn’t last is called pleasure.
• If no just souls attempt to improve men, how can we hope for a better society!
EMMANUEL MOURET’S FILMS

2018  MADEMOISELLE DE JONQUIERES
2015  CAPRICE
Cabourg festival - Swann d’or for best film
2013  LOVERS
Locarno festival - official competition
2011  THE ART OF LOVE
Locarno festival - official competition, Piazza Grande
2009  FAIS-MOI PLAISIR!
2007  SHALL WE KISS
Venice festival - Gaonate Degli Autori
2006  CHANGEMENT D’ADRESSE
Cannes festival - Directors’ Fortnight
2003  VÉNUS & FLEUR
Cannes festival - Directors’ Fortnight
2000  LAISSONS LUCIE FAIRE
1994-1998  PROMÈNE-TOI DONC TOUT NU! (medium-length film)
CARESSE (short film)
IL N’Y A PAS DE MAL (short film)
MONTRE-MOI (short film)
CAST

Madame de La Pommeraye .................. Cécile de France
Marquis des Arcis ............................ Édouard Baer
Mademoiselle de Joncquières .......... Alice Isaaz
Madame de Joncquières ............... Natalia Dontcheva
Madame de La Pommeraye's friend .... Laure Calamy

CREW

Director ............................................. Emmanuel Mouret
Screenplay and adaptation ................. Emmanuel Mouret
freely inspired by a story by Denis Diderot
Production ........................................ Frédéric Niedermayer
Assistant director .............................. Juliette Maillard
Casting ............................................ Constance Demontoy
Production manager ......................... Éric Chabot
Photography .................................... Laurent Desmet
Sound ............................................... Frédéric Niedermayer
-costume ........................................ Mélissa Petitjean
Hair ................................................. Jeanne Milon
Set design ........................................ David Faivre
Editing ............................................. Martial Salomon

Executive producer ............................ Moby Dick Films
Co-produced with ............................... Arte France Cinéma & Reborn Production
With the support of ......................... Région Île-de-France & Région des Pays de la Loire
in partnership with the CNC
With the support of ............................. Procirep
With the participation of ....................... Centre National du Cinéma et de l’image animée
Distribution France ........................... Pyramide
International sales ............................. Indie Sales