

Scarlett Production presents

LA BELLE PERSONNE

a film by Christophe Honoré

(the beautiful person)



Synopsis LA BELLE PERSONNE

A contemporary adaptation of “La Princesse de Clèves”

“La Belle Personne” is inspired by the celebrated 17th Century roman “La Princesse de Clèves”, seen as the first modern novel in French literature. Christophe Honoré transposes the action from the court of Henry II to examine amorous pursuit in modern day Paris.

Sixteen-year-old Junie (Léa Seydoux) changes high school mid-year, following the death of her mother. She finds herself in the same class as her cousin Mathias, who introduces her to his friends. All the boys want to date Junie, and she chooses the quietest among them, Otto Clèves (Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet). But soon after, she encounters the great love of her life, Nemours, her Italian teacher (Louis Garrel). The passion that burns between them is, however, doomed. Junie refuses to give in to her feelings and persists in denying herself happiness, which in her eyes is merely illusory ...



Artistic list

Léa Seydoux : Junie

Louis Garrel : Nemours

Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet : Otto

Esteban Carjaval Alegria : Mathias

Simon Truxillo : Henri

Agathe Bonitzer : Marie

Director's note

Like «Dangerous Liaisons», «The Princess of Clèves» is a founder novel of French literature. Published in 1768, it was immediately successful and had the same scandalous impact. Since then many novelists and film directors have been inspired by its striking modernity. Christophe Honoré adapts this story in Paris nowadays.

Why we tackled this adaptation.

Already in her day, the character of the Princess of Clèves was exceptional, if not a genuine psychological enigma. The “gallantry” which makes us think of amorous intrigues and adulterous relations, is the complete opposite of what our young princess is all about.

In our day, telling the story of a virtuous passion is much more of a challenge. In an age where amorous feelings must obligatorily find their expression in “doing the deed”, renouncing instant gratification has become a form of perversion.

A teenage heroine.

Junie (our Princess of Clèves) is a young woman who doesn't want to give an inch of ground. She believes in the Ideal, together with the self-persecution that implies. **She invents a glorious life for herself, a pure fiction, or a “fiction of purity”.**

On first reading, one might think that there is some pleasure in all this. And on closer inspection there is, above all, an immense wish for freedom that borders on overwhelming desire: fulfilling oneself while considering solitude as an ally.

If our princess didn't suffer, she would be inhuman. **But she will go through – amidst the most terrible loneliness – the throes of a passion that will never be consummated** : the yearning of desire, expectation, jealousy, disappointment, denial, exaltation and self-hatred.

The choice of a contemporary reading.

Love is everything in life, love is impossible to live out. The spectacle of love runs through the ages, and in today's youth – which has once again become dandy and incredibly elegant – it is tempting to trace that which belongs to lightness and exchange of feelings, compared to that which pertains to Love with a capital L. He who is inclined to absorb himself in the loved one, he who aspires to the durable, excludes all infidelity and cannot imagine its end, not even in death.



Today, the idea that adolescence is a time of apprenticeship for the feelings is a commonplace. “Society”, students' parents, families, teachers and so on, often denigrate the dignity and power of a first love. And yet, once adult, we all admit the importance it had in our lives.

The “matrix” of the plot.

At the core, there is our young teenage girl, in love with a highly suitable boy of her own class, and secretly in love with another, forbidden, her Italian teacher. These three characters lead the dance. Junie waltzes from Jérémy, her very real “husband”, to Nemours, the impossible lover who becomes the source of all projections.

The language.

No parody. We have tried to find a language that rings true and is accurate, without artifice, to bring the dialogue from the novel without going down the path of modernization into a “youth language”.

Christophe Honoré and Gilles Taurand



Christophe Honoré

LOVE SONGS, Cannes 2007 - In Competition

with Ludivine Sagnier, Louis Garrel, Clotilde Hesme, Chiara Mastroianni

INSIDE PARIS, Cannes 2006 - Directors' Fortnight

with Romain Duris, Louis Garrel, Joana Preiss, Guy Marchand

Technical List

Screenplay: Christophe Honoré, Gilles Taurand

Photography: Laurent Bunet

Sound: Guillaume Lebraz

Editing: Chantal Hymans



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