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NIELS SCHNEIDER  AGATHE BONITZER  MATHIEU AMALRIC  TATIANA VERSTRAETEN  ANDY GILLET

Once a upon a time in 2000...

Sleeping Beauty

A FAIRYTALE BY
ADO ARRIETTA

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF SERGE BOZON AND INGRID CAVEN
capricci
presents
a film by
ADO ARRIETTA
FRANCE – 2016 – 82’
COLOR – DCP – SOUND 5.1

In the kingdom of Letonia, the young prince Égon spends his nights playing the drums. During the day, he only has one thing on his mind: finding Sleeping Beauty in the kingdom of Kentz and breaking the spell over her. But his father, the king, doesn’t believe in fairy tales, and is completely opposed to Égon’s dream. It’s Maggie Jerkins, an archeologist from Unesco, who will provide Egon with the opportunity to follow his heart.

synopsis

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BIOGRAPHY

Born in Madrid to a privileged family, Ado Arrietta discovered film at seven years old, when he was given a « Cinematik » to project cartoons. As he began painting more and more around age thirteen, encouraged by his mother, who was herself a former piano prodigy, he discovered Jean Cocteau’s Testament of Orpheus and Sergei Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin.

In 1964, at twenty-two, Arrietta directed his first film short, The Crime of the Spinning Top. His friend Xavier Grandes, who would later figure in all his films, played the lead role. Imitation of the Angel, filmed two years later, drew inspiration from Rimbaud and Vigo, and sparked an exile: Ado and Xavier moved to Paris, where they lived in the Hôtel des Pyrénées in the neighborhood of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

In 1969, Marguerite Duras was stunned by The Criminal Toy, starring Florence Delay and Jean Marais. The casting hadn’t changed Arrietta’s method: the films were self-produced, shot scriptless, and edited during shooting. Another film began in Duras’ apartment, Castle Pointilly (1972), inspired by Sade and starring Dionys Mascota and a young woman from Café Flore, who had never before acted: Françoise Lebrun.

In the wake of May 1968, Arrietta became an important underground filmmaker. His fairy-tale universe was populated with new angels: his transvestite friends and “Gazolines” were the heroines of The Intrigues of Sylvia Couski (1974) and Tom-Tom (1976). The themes of Arrietta’s cinema began to take shape: how artists dream of becoming works of art themselves, the body as a new site of creation, and identity invented from scratch.

In 1978, Flames, starring Xavier Grandes, Pascal Greggory and Caroline Loeb, marked a turn-point: Ado was no longer a producer, Saint-Germain was no longer his territory, and the scripts were written, for the first time, several months in advance.

Today, Arrietta is little known in Spain or in France, despite being the discrete passion of a handful of fans scattered across the world. His name does not sufficiently come up next to those of his brothers in cinema: Eustache, Garrel, Rivette, Schroeter, Warhol, Anger, and Smith.

FILMOGRAPHY

2016 Sleeping Beauty
Feature film – 82 min – Color

2009 Dry Martini
Short – 10 min – Color

2006 Permanent Vacation
Short – 40 min – Color

2004 Eco and Narciso
Short – 19 minutes – Color

1990 Merlin
Short – 59 min – Color
Script written by Jean Cocteau

1989 Kiki
Short – 22 minutes – Color

1983 Frogs
Short – 37 minutes – Color

1978 Flames
Feature film – 88 minutes – Color

1976 Tom-Tom
Short – 59 min – Color

1974 The Intrigues of Sylvia Couski
Feature film – 71 min – Color

1972 Pointilly Castle
Short – 37 min – Black and White

1970 The Criminal Toy
Short – 37 min – Black and White

1964 Imitation of the Angel
Short – 20 min – Black and White

1964 The Crime of the Spinning Top
Short – 19 min – Black and White
This isn’t the first time you’ve adapted a fairy tale - you adapted Knights of the Round Table for Merlin, and here, Sleeping Beauty. What about fairy tales interests you?

Several years ago, I reread all of the brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault fairy tales. These are stories that I read as a child and which fascinated me. In the Knights of the Round Table, I was mostly interested in the demon Ginifer, who can change shape to resemble any of the other characters. Cocteau’s film was long – around three hours in length – but he only gave the demon a small role, whereas I wanted to make a whole film on the subject. That said, the tale that enchanted me the most in my youth was Sleeping Beauty. When I reread it, the magic reappeared.

You chose to title the film Sleeping Beauty instead of Beauty in the Sleeping Forest, as the tale is normally referred to in French. Why did you make the forest disappear?

Because I always imagined Sleeping Beauty’s castle in the middle of a jungle, and not in the middle of a forest. The title of the tale could be “Beauty in the Sleeping Jungle”. The idea of a jungle in the center of Létokia is more exotic than the idea of a forest. The contrast between the sounds of the jungle and the European countryside is poetic. Egon must penetrate the jungle’s soundscape, with all its specific noises and dangers, before arriving at Sleeping Beauty’s castle.

It seems that you’ve been working off of the Anglo-Saxon version of the tale…

Yes, it was the C.S. Evans version, written in 1920 and illustrated by Arthur Rackham, which made me want to make the film. This version is longer and more descriptive than those of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. The tale is written in such a way that it’s practically like reading a script. Arthur Rackham’s illustrations inspired me to explore this idea of a jungle and to play with temporality. I was completely stupefied by his elastic treatment of time. The only difference is, in my film, the prince is a modern man who was born in the 1980s. Egon’s obsession for Rosemonde is like the crushes young people have today.

This film also showcases your interest in fairies…

I’ve always believed in the existence of fairies. My films have always been a little like fairy tales. My first fairy appeared in The Intrigues of Sylvia Couski, which was the first time I filmed in color. My black and white films are more associated with angels. In Sleeping Beauty, there are six fairies. In Flames, there aren’t any but, at the end, Barbara says that “it’s like a fairy tale”. Barbara and the fireman fly off in a little airplane which gets lost in the clouds, a fairy-tale space. But I think that the origins of Sleeping Beauty can be found in Pointilly. The girl dreams for the entire film, and, at the end, the boy wakes her up. With this awakening, the enchantment disappears, as does his love. It’s exactly the opposite of Sleeping Beauty.

Egon plays drums. Here, we see your interest for percussion, which is also present in your other films. What does this sound represent for you?

This sound hasn’t left me since The Criminal Toy. I think that the tom-tom appears in the film King Solomon’s Mines, which completely enchanted me. Also in Bunuel’s The Golden Age and Cocteau’s Testament of Orpheus. Otherwise, percussion is the most ancestral of all types of music. It’s a magical rhythm that exists in all cultures. I think we hear tom-toms in almost all my films, even in Flames. Egon plays drums when he’s not thinking of Sleeping Beauty. Percussion is an escape from reality, his disobedience. This idea is in the script, and when I met Niels, I didn’t even know that he played drums.

You’ve always admired Cocteau. Did you rewatch Beauty and the Beast as you were preparing this film?

Yes! Cocteau, the surrealists, and poetry in general have always inspired me a lot. The influence of Beauty and the Beast was inevitable. I also give lots of importance to dreams, to the pleasure of sleeping… Early films in black and white are so much closer to dreams than color films. As for me, I almost always dream in black and white.

Was Brigadoon another influence for Sleeping Beauty?

Probably. I love this film and I’ve seen it multiple times. Here, we find a temporal distortion, like in Sleeping Beauty. Each night lasts one hundred years. The territory of Brigadoon exists in another time, like the kingdom of Sleeping Beauty. Yet a difference plays out at the end of the film: Sleeping Beauty rediscovers “terrestrial” time, whereas in Brigadoon, the lover, played by Gene Kelly, escapes to another temporality.

Duras said that the beauty of Pointilly can be found in how “the text says exactly the same thing as the image”, isn’t this also the case for Sleeping Beauty? The characters state what they will do and then they do it.

I think that Marguerite said that the image in Pointilly has the same signified as the text, even if they do not necessarily correspond. In Sleeping Beauty, the characters, instead of “saying”, “announce” what they will do and do it. The simplicity is quite beautiful, and that’s what I was looking for. For this, we had to be very precise with scene progression, beginning in the screen-writing phase. The prince arrives at the tower, climbs the stairs, finds a key, opens the door, meets an evil fairy who gives her a spindle, she pricks her finger… The classicism of the editing had to correspond perfectly with the dimension of the tale.

You’ve always taken a lot of care in editing your films, to the point of going back ceaselessly to your older films like Castle Pointilly, Les Intrigues de Sylvia Couski, and Flames. Sleeping Beauty is the first feature film where you edited directly in digital. What did this change for you?

I didn’t edit in an editing studio. I edited on the computer that my producer, Nathalie Trafford, lent me. I learned to use the program Adobe Premiere Pro, and I edited in total freedom for four months. I don’t see a big difference between this process and analog.

INTRODUCTION

ADO ARRIETTA

INTERVIEW WITH

This isn’t the first time you’ve adapted a fairy tale - you adapted Knights of the Round Table for Merlin, and here, Sleeping Beauty. What about fairy tales interests you?

Several years ago, I reread all of the brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault fairy tales. These are stories that I read as a child and which fascinated me. In the Knights of the Round Table, I was mostly interested in the demon Ginifer, who can change shape to resemble any of the other characters. Cocteau’s film was long – around three hours in length – but he only gave the demon a small role, whereas I wanted to make a whole film on the subject. That said, the tale that enchanted me the most in my youth was Sleeping Beauty. When I reread it, the magic reappeared.

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Serge Bozon says that the most important part of your mise-en-scène is how you direct actors. How did that go this time?

Divinely well. I always direct my actors in the same way: I correct their acting as if they were singing, I care for their image as if they were posing. I watch their movements as if they were dancing. And the camera’s framework is like a painting. On the set of Sleeping Beauty, I never addressed character psychology with my actors. In fact, we didn’t even need to talk about the characters because there was a certain magic in the team – we understood one another without having to speak, as if we functioned by telepathy. I had this feeling immediately when I saw their photos during casting, before I even met them. They were my characters.

How did you work on the soundtrack?

All the musical pieces in Sleeping Beauty were original works. Benjamin Esdraffo composed a twist and a conga with an orchestra, and a waltz and a blues piece with a piano. Ronan Martin composed other musical passages, notably the mysterious swing at the end. Olivier de Narnaud prepared the melody that Egon plays on the drums to. I still dream of making a musical in traditional Hollywood style.

How did you choose the castles?

I found the castles that I had imagined. The castle of Letonia is the castle of Bosch, which dates back to the 18th century: a castle that’s airy and without mystery. The castle of Kentz, which is the castle of Kergest, on the other hand, dates back to the Middle Ages, and has a romantic and enigmatic character. Brittany is the region of menhirs, the standing stones built by fairies. I don’t think it’s a coincidence that Brittany is the region that has contributed to the film’s funding.

Pointilly, Flames and Sleeping Beauty have similar structures: each revolve around a fetishized desire and a fantasy-like mise-en-scène.

Yes, completely. In Flames, the young girl fantasizes about the image of a fireman at her window who comes to save her. Here, the princess falls asleep and dreams of her Prince Charming. They also share the same characters of the jealous father and the tutor, not to mention the love triangle. The difference is that Sleeping Beauty isn’t perverse. It’s a calm, harmonious, and sensual film without being erotic, like Flames. Sleeping Beauty is sprinkled with discrete and platonic love: aside from Egon’s love for Sleeping Beauty, there are the unspoken feelings he has for the fairy Gwen-doline. And there is also the strange relationship between Gwen-doline and the mysterious young man played by Vladimir Consigny.

The fireman was the projection of Barbara’s fantasy in Flames. In Sleeping Beauty, who is the projection of the other? Which character do you identify with?

In Flames, I completely identified with Barbara’s character. I can say: “Barbara is me”. In Sleeping Beauty, I can’t say that Egon is my alter ego. There is a certain distance between us. I can observe his passion, but I don’t identify with it. I know it, and I believe his obsession with the idea of Sleeping Beauty, but he may also, in the film, be falling in love with the fairy Gwen-doline. I can better identify with Rosemunde. She dreams of Egon. She sees him in her sleep and she finds him, in front of her, when she awakes.

You’ve often spoken of the beauty of soundless films, taking care to differentiate them from the genre of silent films. When Egon arrives at Letonia, is this a way of creating a “soundless cinema”?

Certain films don’t need sound. Genet’s Un chant d’amour is a soundless film. When we try to put music to it, it always fails. We could say that silence is the sound of the film. In all my films, there are important moments of silence. In Sleeping Beauty, when Egon arrives at the castle, he enters in silence. We only hear his footsteps. The film becomes soundless. But this soundlessness is everywhere. It’s a musical element of the mise-en-scène. Symphonies, rhapsodies, concerts, songs – all of these types of music are made with silences and sounds, and we can hear the silences as a breath.

The film ends with a dance scene. Egon and Rosemunde are in light clothing and seem, finally, to come back to life. It’s the awakening of bodies….

Yes, exactly. That’s a true love story, right? When the princess asks, “What’s this music?” and the prince responds, “this is the music of the 20th century, you were asleep,” she can’t control her urge to dance. The prince looks at her and she starts to dance as if she had known this music her entire life. She immediately adapts to the rhythm of the music. Here, we can believe that “they’ll live happily ever after and have lots of children,” like in a fairy tale. We can only hope so. Awakening is always a positive moment.

Several years ago, you mentioned the possibility of filming Sleeping Beauty in 3D…

When I was planning the film, I don’t know why, 3D seemed to be a feasible gimmick. Then, all the logistics of that type of filming made me a bit scared. Also, those glasses aren’t comfortable at all! Instead of 3D, Sleeping Beauty will be the first of my films where I use special effects. For example, magic wands light up and a crystal ball makes Kentz appear.

This is your 14th film. Given that you are pretty superstitious, do you think that will give you good luck?

I hope so. For example, I respect the number 13 highly. It can be either very good or very bad. It can signify rupture, death, or, on the other hand, reawakening. My 13th film was Dry Martini – a very short film (just in case!). While filming Sleeping Beauty, there weren’t any bad surprises. Unlike the film Merlin: we shot in a castle in which there were all sorts of poltergeists – doors slammed shut, eerie echoes abounded, and bats fluttered at the ceiling… (laughs).

Interview conducted in September 2016 thanks to Jean Narboni and André S. Labarthe.
He was discovered at the age of 17, acting in a successful Canadian TV show, 15/24. His first film role was in Yves-Christian Fournier’s drama Tout est parfait in 2007.
In 2009, he acted in Xavier Dolan’s first feature film, J’ai tué ma mère. The next year, he acted, again for Dolan, in Les Amours Imaginaires. His role won him the César for best actor. JulianBellamy, by Ado Arrietta, in which he plays the fairy captor. In 2013, he acted in Agnès Jaoui’s Le chat est un chat, directed by her mother, Sophie Fillières. His role as the seducer in Danielle Dubroux’s Trois vies et une seule mort in 1996.
She came back to film as an adolescent, playing in her father’s comedy, Petites Coupures, in 2003. She followed with two other films: the Larrieu brothers’ Un homme, un vrai and then Noémie Lvovsky’s Les sentiments. She then chose to enroll in the Conservatoire d’art dramatique and to study modern literature at the Sorbonne.
She worked with Christophe Honoré in La Belle Personne, where she acted with Louis Garrel, and then played alongside Chiara Mastroianni in Les sentiments. Her performance in the 2014 Molière awards.
In 2016, Niels Schneider played the character of Nathan in Vanja Alcantara’s Le Coeur régulier and Prince Egon in Ado Arrietta’s Sleeping Beauty. He also plays in Diamant Noir (Arthur Harari) and Polina (Angelin FrejKeywords), both of which are first films.

Agathe Bonitzer comes from a film-oriented family. Her father, Pascal Bonitzer, is a film critic, and her mother, Sophie Fillières, is a director. Young Agathe made her first steps in cinema at the age of eight, in Raoul Ruiz’s Trois vies et une seule mort in 1996.
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French actor and director, born in Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1965. Mathieu Amalric made his start in the film industry as an assistant director and an assistant editor and studio manager. This led him to work with such directors as Danièle Dubroux, Romain Goupil and Jaces César Monteiro. Between 1992 and 1993, he acted in Otar Iosseliani’s Le Chasse au popillon, Arnaud Desplechin’s La Sentinel, and Romain Goupil’s Lettre pour I... That said, his acting career was truly distinguished by his role as the seducer in Danielle Dubroux’s Le Journal du séducteur in 1995. He was noticed in 1995 in Arnaud Desplechin’s Comment je me suis disputé... (ma vie sexuelle), for which he received the César for best new male hopeful. He continued acting for Desplechin, including in Rois et Reine, for which he obtained the César for best actor. At the same time, he acted in international films directed by Steven Spielberg, David Cronenberg and Wes Anderson. In 2010, he directed his first feature film, Tournée, which received first prize for direction at Cannes, and then La Chambre bleue, presented at Cannes under “Un Certain Regard” in 2014. The following year, he walked the red carpet of the 68th Cannes Film Festival alongside Arnaud Desplechin for Trois souvenirs de ma jeunesse, before starring in Jean-Paul Rappeneau’s Belles Familles, and finishing the year with La Vie très privée de Monsieur Sim.
In 2016, Mathieu Amalric stars in La Loi de la jungle by Antonin Peretjako alongside Vincent Macaigne, Vimala Pons, and Pascal Légitimus. He also acts in Sleeping Beauty by Ado Arrietta in the role of Gérard, Egon’s tutor.
THE KING OF LÉTONIA

Serge Bozon distinguished himself as a budding actor through his roles in Anne Buridan's La Croisade, Judith Cahen's La Révolution sexuelle n'a pas eu lieu, and Jean-Paul Civeyrac's Le Doux Amour des hommes. He migrated to the director's chair for his first feature film, L'Amitié, in 1988, and then with Mods in 2002. He directed his third film, La France, in 2007, starring Sylvie Testud and Pascal Greggory – this film was presented at the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes the same year. In 2013, the police comedy Tip Top, Bozon's fourth feature film, was selected for the Directors' Fortnight as well.

As an actor, he has worked with the Larrieu brothers (Les Derniers Jours du monde), Valérie Donzelli (Main dans la main), Jean-Charles Fitoussi (Les jours où je n'existe pas), Cédric Kahn (L'Ennui), Axelle Ropert (Tirez la langue, mademoiselle) and Ado Arrietta (Belle Dormant), for whom he plays the king of Létonia.

THE EVIL FAIRY

Spouse of German director R. W. Fassbinder. Fassbinder facilitated her entry into the film industry and directed her in numerous films. She also acted for Eustache, Werner Schroeter and Raoul Ruiz, amongst others. She was also Yves Saint-Laurent's muse and had a career as a singer.
CAST

Niels SCHNEIDER — the prince Egon of Létonia
Agathe BONITZER — Gwendoline / Maggie Jerkins
Mathieu AMALRIC — Gérard Illinski, the tutor
Tatiana VERSTRAETEN — The princess Rosemunde
Ingrid CAVEN — The evil fairy
Serge BOZON — The king of Létonia
Andy GILLET — The king of Kentz
Nathalie TRAFFORD — The queen of Kentz

CREW

Written and directed by — Ado ARRIETTA
Director of Photography — Thomas FAVEL
Sound — Mathieu DESCAMPS
Costumes — Justine PEARCE
Make-up — Fanny FALLOURD
Production Designer — Erwan LE FLOC’H
Film Editing — Ado ARRIETTA
Sound editing — Alexandre HECKER
Music — Benjamin ESDRAFFO, Ronan MARTIN
Re-recording mixer — Christophe VINGTRINIER

Production — Paraiso Productions,
Pomme Hurlante Films and Hellish Producciones
Executive producer — Nathalie TRAFFORD
French coproducer — Eva CHILLÓN