

JULIE GAYET RAPHAEL PERSONNAZ



after

UN FILM DE GÉRALDINE MAILLET

The Night Parade

AFTER

By Géraldine Maillet

Paris - One night. A woman and a man meet in a restaurant. She is beautiful. He falls for her. She is shy, he is bewitched. He talks, she is cautious. He tries, she avoids. She hesitates, he insists. An intense relationship starts then. During the night, masks fall off and the seduction game gives in to sincere feelings. Will this love last over a night?

France - 2012 – Romance - Running time : 83' - Ratio 1.85 - French language

Cast : Julie Gayet, Raphaël Personnaz, Brisa Roché, Bakari Sangaré

Producer : Bee Films, Marie de Lussigny

Screenplay : Géraldine Maillet

Cinematographer : Martin de Chabaneix

Editor : Julien Leloup

Sound : Jean-Luc Audy

Sound editing : Séverin Favriau

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AN INTERVIEW WITH GERALDINE MAILLET

Why did you choose the title *After*?

It's about a woman and a man who stay up all night; it's about an expression of desire, about a moment that one would like to make last just a little bit longer...

It was important to me, in fact, to leave an open ending so that each viewer could interpret it according to their own emotions and fantasies. I wanted to capture the mind-set of a woman or a man who asks themselves: should I or shouldn't I ? Will it heat up quickly then burn out and be a meaningless encounter? And what does it imply in the context of one's life? What will this "after" be? Doesn't wondering whether one is going to give in or not, mean it is already too late?

**Title in French*

We have never seen Julie Gayet in this light before...

She often plays cold and distant beauties. I wanted to work against this blond Hitchcockian image that she tends to relay - light years away from who Julie is in real life: someone who is sunny, sexy and modern. She also has a more fragile side to her, she's a bit of an edgy rocker type...

I wrote my two short films for her, *Un certain regard* (A certain look), then *Une dernière cigarette* (One last cigarette), and I was sure of one thing: Julie would be in my first feature film. In the end, I think Julie comes off in the film as she does in real life: sensitive, enthusiastic and generous....

You wrote the female lead for Julie Gayet. How did Raphaël Personnaz get involved with the project?

It became obvious to me during the screening of Bertrand Tavernier's *The Princess of Montpensier*, which I saw with Julie and my producer, Marie de Lussigny. Even though he was in full period costume and made up in the role of the Duke of Anjou, Raphaël brought such modernity to his character, it just seemed obvious that he was the ideal actor to play Guillaume. He had what I was looking for, something electric in his movement, as well as the tone of his voice.

Something "electric?"

Yes. He doesn't put on a façade. When he spoke to me about the character at the table reading, he functioned intuitively, and I really liked that.

You didn't hesitate to film silence...

I wanted to film this encounter realistically, as if we were experiencing it in real time, with evocative silences and hesitations. We aren't always dazzling when we want to appeal to someone. There can be a kind of awkwardness in the seduction process. He's struggling, while she is hoping he'll make a move. He tries to be funny, but isn't really successful at it; he speaks but he doesn't say the right things...I wasn't looking for an experienced guy on the make, but a clumsy, awkward seduction.

It's the encounter of two very different beings...

Julie is forty years old. She has made sure that her life is very mapped out, the image of happiness, while deep down, she is much more edgy than that, she has a rock and roll side to her. And then suddenly, something snaps and her true personality rises to the surface. However, does that mean she should do away with everything she has built?

I'm very fond of the saying, "there are always good reasons to be unhappy, and bad reasons to be happy," which is what is happening in her life. As for Guillaume, he's a thirty-something who is trying to find himself and believes that he will do so only in perpetual movement. He's in absolute chaos. I know a lot of people like that, who don't know what they want, say no, then yes, who live as if they were carefree, but it's fake, for they are actually very fragile, sentimental. Finally, this film is especially about the encounter of two solitary beings...

An encounter that never goes anywhere?

We live in a locked down, restrained era. It is reflected in the couple, as if fear had the upper hand on desire. And behind the question of acting on one's desire is this reigning ambivalence. What interested me, was what this man and this woman were going through on this particular night, without sleeping together. We feel their irrepressible desire but, at the same time, these two beings are locked down, held back by their lives, by the paths they've chosen.

We are given the impression that he doesn't hesitate to open up while she is more reserved...

She is on the defensive because she realizes that if she opens up she'll have no more boundaries. Julie has more to lose than Guillaume. For even if he opens up much more easily, there's less at stake for him. He is younger, he hasn't built anything yet. So he says everything that comes to mind, even if he says it too often incorrectly, or overdoes it, with an awkward and touching generosity. He doesn't have the right keys to this woman. So he tries all of them.

Like in the surprising sequence where Raphaël plays a sort of pathetic Roland-Garros tennis match?

Raphaël called me one day and suggested this scene. It was interesting because, even if at the beginning we believe it is Guillaume who is making the first move, it's really Julie who is taking the lead. There had to be a moment when this boy lets his mask fall, where he is verging on immodesty. Night is conducive to confiding in a stranger while we wouldn't even reveal half of what was said to friends we've known for twenty years! There had to be this almost pathetic moment, where the emotion is palpable.

Moreover Julie is speechless: in my mind she is very moved by this act. As if now that he has exposed himself to the point of being literally naked, she suddenly sees him differently. He is the one who allows himself to let go – something she has been incapable of doing thus far. Something else can be seen in her eyes: a look of admiration, of envy.

Did you allow the actors to improvise ?

I spoke at length with the actors before the shoot and I had great confidence in them. For the first takes, I gave them very specific instructions; afterwards I gave them greater freedom. My only rule was that they weren't to meet before we started shooting. I only wanted them to meet, to bring one another out of their shells, once they were in front of my camera, so as to capture their inner stirrings, the real emotion. I wanted us to truly witness their encounter.

Music is also an "actor" in the film...

The Night Parade (After) is an atmospheric, ambient film, and naturally music plays an important role as an intimate vehicle of people's feelings and emotions. The music was already a character itself in the screenplay. I'm a big fan of original soundtracks - they often stay with me longer than the films, like a reminder.

Your Paris isn't romantic. Why did you make this choice?

I wanted Paris to be strange, noisy, filled with sirens, a rumbling storm...

Paris in construction, changing, a megalopolis, where feelings of solitude are all the more acute. A phantom town, without pedestrians, as if Guillaume could just be a fantasy.

Was it challenging to shoot at night?

It's complicated, exhausting... But I believe at night it's more about being, less about posing...

And when you shoot at night with a skeleton crew for six weeks, that creates bonds and galvanizes everyone.

At 4 o'clock in the morning, you're more likely to sit down around a bowl of onion soup than watch the rushes.

I was surprised by the actor's confidence in me. They accepted everything, including early morning scenes after six weeks of shooting at night when they were completely overwhelmed by fatigue. Yet they are absolutely beautiful.

In your novel *What would Tarantino do?*, you bring up both what was wonderful, but also what was difficult about editing *The Night Parade(After)*. Now that the work is done and you can look back in hindsight, what do you think about this not-so-peaceful path taken?

It's like a twenty-five hour long-haul flight where more than anything you dread the length of the flight.

Once you've made it to your destination, you say to yourself that it wasn't as long and difficult as you imagined!

Yet, in fact, if a director isn't bolstered by their project, isn't entirely taken up by his or her film, there are a thousand reasons to give up.

As far as I'm concerned, several different things kept me going: sometimes the actors, sometimes my producer, sometimes my inner drive... All of these different energies came together and carried me through. And then, as I am used to the solitary writer's life, it was fascinating to start with a story written by my own hand, and to share this vision with other people, other professions that allow you to take it further.

Returning to the book, it was a log, I wrote down things as they happened, spontaneously.

In particular, I'm referring to moments when actors rejected my ideas. I would take it very badly, in the emotion of the moment instead of analyzing my feelings. The times that were long and hard helped all the same, for they made me grow, and above all allowed me to understand something essential - that I have only one wish, and that is to start again, now that I have a bit more experience.

QUESTIONS FOR THE ACTORS

JULIE GAYET

Your character has your first name...

Nothing is innocent when it comes to Geraldine... She offered me a very powerful role. I have the feeling that she was able to get me to bring up emotions that I had never revealed to the camera before. This film is the way she sees me, and at the same time, I was inspired by Geraldine. Now that the film has been completed, you can't help but wonder what came from whom...

The film was almost entirely shot at night. How did the shoot go for you?

Shooting at night lends to a certain atmosphere, a different kind of energy. Everything is more open: attitudes, the encounters are different. Night is a kind of enchanted parenthesis. In fact, we didn't even feel tired, except maybe when we alternated night and day at the end of the shoot. And then there was the fact that we made this film just with "family." Geraldine was always in the midst of the crew and the actors.

We can see that you were open to everything, even being filmed as close-up as possible.

Weren't you concerned about appearing "au naturel"?

I had already appeared in two short films for Geraldine. I knew how she saw me, in a kind, gentle light, and so I knew I could take risks with her. I had absolute confidence in the way she would film me, even in close-up. I didn't hesitate to let her have free rein.

RAPHAËL PERSONNAZ

What inspired you about Guillaume.

Guillaume is both a whimsical and fragile man. Such as the sequence when he acts out an imaginary final at Roland-Garros, where this anonymous tennis teacher reaches his dream for just a moment - what really comes through is his rage mixed with melancholy. When he opens up, there's no holding back! But when he wants to chase his neighbor away, he takes it out on his dog. He's the kind of guy who doesn't hesitate for a moment to make things uncomfortable, and that's what I liked about him.

Was this "borderline" character difficult to play?

When you are a young actor, you are often afraid to be made vulnerable, to deliver something too weak or on the contrary to do too much, to force things... But Geraldine brought me back to myself from the very first scenes. Even without knowing people personally, she knows how to guide them, to bring them to what is essential. I had never seen myself like that on screen before.

In the scene shot at the Flea Market, you play a trumpet solo. Was it difficult to learn how to play?

No. I was already playing the trumpet by age 15 - I dreamed of being a jazz musician. In particular, the role that music plays in the story, and what it says about Guillaume touched me. He is a "free jazz" type of person: you never know what to expect from him. He can't stand the techno music in the night club! Even if he marvels at Julie's grace as a dancer, seeing all those people moving mechanically on the dance floor, like in *Modern Times*, makes him very uneasy. Guillaume is the type of person who needs his freedom.

Geraldine Maillet

Geraldine Maillet is the author of ten novels.

In 1999 she decided to devote herself to writing with the book *Une rose pour Manhattan* (*A Rose for Manhattan*.) She followed this with the acclaimed books: *Acouphènes* (*Tinnitus*), *Presque top Model* (*Almost a Top Model*), and *Il ferait quoi Tarantino à ma place?* (*What would Tarantino do?*), translated into several languages. She took her first steps as a director by making two shorts: *Un certain regard* (*A certain look*) with Julie Gayet and Stéphane Freiss, then *Une dernière cigarette* (*One last cigarette*) with Julie Gayet, Audrey Marnay, Stéphane Freiss and François Bégaudeau. *The Night Parade* (*After*) is her first feature film.