

FRÈRES ZAK  
PRESENT

CLARA  
PONSOT

NICOLAS  
GIRAUD

HÉLÈNE  
VINCENT

DU NOAH  
BENZAQUEN

SOLEIL  
DANS MES  
YEUX

A FILM BY  
NICOLAS  
GIRAUD

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NICOLAS GIRAUD

France - 2017 - 86' - 1.85 - colour - Drama

**PRESSE**

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# SYNOPSIS

Irene is doing better. She has a project. To live with her son again. She takes advantage of the summer holidays to go and meet up with him at his grandmother's in La Rochelle. But she meets Yann...

# Interview with NICOLAS GIRAUD

*You were more and more sought after as an actor and yet, six years ago, you dropped everything to start writing and become a filmmaker. What was your motivation?*

I'm happy not to know the exact reasons. I try to follow my inner voice the best I can. To hear it. To answer it. Life is movement, our ability to be present in the moment. In the way we move, as you say. Writing and directing allow me to go deeper, more wholly into the act of creation.

*You speak in the same breath about writing and directing, almost as if the two words were one and the same... For you, are these two activities inseparable?*

For me, writing is the commencement of the gesture and directing is the finalisation, the achievement. I give everything that I am to this movement, which is why it was so clear that in my film I had to embody masculinity. This way of thinking isn't just coquetry on my part, nor a claim to be able to portray a demiurge. It's simply because the only way I know how to do things is by giving everything I have.





*You chose to give everything by adapting *L'Impureté d'Irène*, a novel by Philippe Mezescaze. What was it in this story that affected you so deeply?*

I think that some things get under our skin, in spite of us, it's beyond us. This was the case with Philippe Mezescaze's book. Philippe is one of the first people I met when I came to Paris. I remember having spoken to him without even having seen his face. We quickly found out that we both came from Charente-Maritime. He grew up at his grandmother's in La Rochelle. I studied there to become a dental technician. We became friends.

*L'Impureté d'Irène* is his second novel. It was published in 1987. It's the autobiographical story of something that happened to him during the summer of 1959. I appropriated it as if it had happened to me in a previous life. And I wanted to tell the story. It really touches me because, very subtly, it talks about attachment, what bonds one person to another, or on the contrary, distances him. In this story, without really pinpointing it, because the words are never said, it's a question of fear, courage, fearlessness, of restraint, of all the things that you need sometimes to be able to give yourself to someone, or on the contrary, leave him. I also want to shed light on how it is when relationships are reversed. Here, it's the child who observes the adult, who worries, the man who is womanly and the woman who is manly.



## « I DON'T BELIEVE THAT FAILURE EXISTS »

*Developing a film, and in particular a first film, from a story that is essentially based on sensations and inner impulses is like performing on the high wire without a net... Weren't you scared by this challenge?*

That wasn't really the question. I had to put the story into pictures. It had no dramatic motivation. It essentially related individual people's emotions. It was a slippery slope... It took me seven years to complete the film and along this lengthy route, I realised to what extent "things" are beyond us, to the point where, in a way, it's they that observe us. It seems to me that being an author, an actor, a director, being alive in fact, means knowing how to listen to what happens to us or what doesn't. Accepting the tempo. Everything is experience. I don't believe that failure exists.

*Your scenario is more like the visual prolongation of a work than its adaptation in the literary sense that we normally use that term for...*

That is exactly it. *DU SOLEIL DANS MES YEUX* is my visual, sensorial and emotional translation of *L'Impureté d'Irène*. I didn't even have to explain that to Philippe Mezescaze. He knew that I was going to bind his story to mine. Within me, everything is bound, Philippe, René Féret, David Oelhoffen with whom I wrote this scenario ...



*Would you be the same if the people you mentioned, and the others, hadn't been the same or hadn't been there?*

It's even more elementary than that. They are a part of who I am. They bring vitality to me. They represent what I believe in: loyalty, fidelity, enthusiasm, intelligence, the nerve to show who you are. They aren't my masters. I don't imitate them. I don't copy them. But, they sustain me, enlighten me, nurture me, and also, sometimes show me where they would do things in a different way.

Sometimes, our discussions have been heated but they were never tainted with contempt. They were healthy and productive and helped us progress.

*Your film stands out through its thrift with words. It's the complete opposite of a film by Woody Allen, for example...*

For that film in particular, yes. I wanted to make a tactile film, a film where the interactions between the characters are as visible as certain chemical reactions. It's not words that can show that, but images, gestures, bodies in movement. The inner dialogues are the ones I listen to most.

*DU SOLEIL DANS MES YEUX is essentially a film about transformation, transition. About "how you can go from one state to another"...*

It's true. The film tells the story of people who are isolated, running away from themselves, and who before our very eyes, re-enter the world. I really like these characters that solitude hasn't managed to completely smother.







*Your scenario is based on someone else's story. But it also seems to be deeply personal?*

If you're asking me whether this story has anything to do with things that have happened in my own life, the answer is no. And yet if you opened my veins, you'd see the similarities within. Each of those characters is inside me. Thanks to them, I can say who I am and how I love.

*You set your scenario in La Rochelle, the town where you spent a part of your teenage years. Was filming in familiar territory of way of reassuring yourself?*

Not at all. It just happens that the book is based there and I respected that geographical element. But I was happy to be back there and film there, to discover the town ...

*In your film, you prioritised the use of close-ups...*

Whilst we were filming, I was often asked why I wasn't using wide shots, or at least why there were very few. I wanted to show what state my characters were in, not where they were physically. I wanted people to be able to grasp their inner movements, their gut reactions to their encounters with others, the feelings of rejection, or on the contrary, attraction that could arise. I don't like half-heartedness, or predictability, or indifference. I like things to be eventful. I like commitment. I also like to look at skin, all skins because they tell the story, with no pretence, of how people are going through or have gone through their lives. I like to get up very close to skin with my camera. As if I was going to get inside it. I listen to the vibrations that come from living beings and I'm not afraid of physical contact. I'm even persuaded that in certain cases, taking a body in your arms can save it from inner collapse. This need to touch has nothing to do with modesty, which for me is solely relative to sentiment.



# « CLARA IS WILD, SENSUAL »

*The photographic look of your film is splendid. It's evident that you paid a lot of attention to it...*

With Romain Carcanade, the director of photography, I always imagined light as having an important place in this drama. I wanted light to shine through it. But the acoustics and music were just as important. For me, a film's image is its face, the acoustics are its body and the music is its soul.

*The sound track is entirely taken from Françoise Hardy's repertoire. Why this choice?*

I wanted to dare to use silence. The melody of things doesn't necessarily need help from external elements to carry us with it. I like the natural sounds you find in places, ports, bistros, the sound of a hand caressing another, the wind on the sea...

When you're not scared of saying and showing, you have no need, or at least you have very little need, of other notes than those that come

from the words and images. I entrusted my own 'very little' to Françoise Hardy. I've always loved her song *Des ronds dans l'eau*. It's a song that helps me and encourages me... For me, Françoise Hardy, who I don't know personally, embodies delicacy, intelligence, life force.

*Why did you choose Clara Ponsot to play your film's leading lady?*

I didn't want a well-known actress in this role. It was an almost political desire. In the French cinema industry, we tend to hire the same people all the time when there are so many great actors waiting to be discovered. Clara has a very changing beauty, like stormy weather. She's wild, sensual. Clara, she picks you up and hurls you to the ground. She has the strength of a torrent. I needed a girl of her calibre so that we could understand why Yann couldn't go back out to sea, why she pins him down and devours him. What's really great is that Clara went along with my way of doing things. She was probably afraid but she committed to it.



« CONTINUE  
WRITING  
THE FILM BY PLAYING  
A PART IN IT »



*And why H  l  ne Vincent in the role of her mother-in-law?*

I saw H  l  ne in *QUELQUES HEURES DE PRINTEMPS* by St  phane Briz  , and I was dumbstruck by the quality of her acting and the precision of her gestures, as well as by her humanity. I sent her the scenario. She said yes straight away. H  l  ne makes me think of something Cocteau said, which was: *"It seems to me that invisibility is the required provision of elegance. Elegance ceases to exist when it is noticed."*

*How did you choose   mile, who plays the little boy in the film?*

It was totally by chance. Arthur Benzaquen, the producer, had never mentioned to me his son who was the right age for the role. One evening, when we'd already started looking for the child to play the role, I went to their house. Just inside the house, at the front door, a little boy was waiting for me. It was Noah. He'd just had his bath and was wearing his blue pyjamas. We looked at each other and I knew immediately that he was my   mile. Today I can say that Noah healed my childhood wounds. On the film set, there was a sort of telepathy between us. He understood everything and in a way, explained everything to me also.

*Did you hesitate to play Yann's role yourself?*

I had a very set vision of who Yann was. I knew how I wanted him to behave, to listen, to look. Playing Yann was the finalisation, the achievement of my creative gesture. I was conscious of what was at risk, the responsibilities inherent to this choice, but I could see an essential advantage: that of being able to continue writing the film by playing a part in it. Being on both sides of the camera wasn't that difficult. Surely less than for the rest of the team. I'm the sort of director who's on the lookout for that electrifying moment, so I'm not very laid back. When I wasn't Yann, I had my camera on my shoulder. Yet again, we come back to gestures, movement. If intimacy hadn't been a focal part of my work, I wouldn't have made that decision.

*Some of the phrases in your scenario seem rather mysterious. For example, you write: "life is where you're frightened to be".*

It's funny because I almost took that phrase out. As a rule, I reduce the amount of verbal dialogue to the minimum, as I prefer a dialogue of gestures and the impressions they create... But I kept it in the end because I believe in its message. Fear can petrify us but also mobilise us, show us who we are, help us move ahead. And when we move ahead, we're alive.

*Your film doesn't fit into any of the established categories...*

I reiterate, for me, *Du Soleil Dans Mes Yeux* is an optimistic drama. Great personal dramas unfold but everything is bathed in light. I risked my neck making the film but I'm glad I did it, and that I did it the way it is and that I saw it through to the very end, staying true to myself.

*Do you have any upcoming projects?*

Yes, to continue, carry on, write and direct another film...

*Interview by Dominique Poncet*

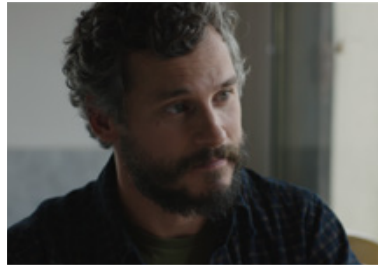


# THE CASTING



**CLARA PONSOT**  
Irène

Clara trained at the Conservatoire national supérieur d'art Dramatique and had her first screen debuts in *LA POSSIBILITÉ D'UNE ÎLE* by Michel Houellebecq. She then appeared in a number of films such as *LA GRANDE VIE*, by Emmanuel Salinger and *BUS PALLADIUM* by Christopher Thomson. But it was in 2012 that her really career took off with *LES INFIDÈLES* by Éric Lartigau, *BYE BYE BLONDIE* by Virginie Despentes and *COSIMO E NICOLE* by Francesco Amato. In 2013 she played in *DES GENS QUI S'EMBRASSENT* by Danièle Thompson and in 2014 *PEUR DE RIEN* by Danielle Arbid.



**NICOLAS GIRAUD**  
Yann

His big screen debut was in *LIBERTÉ-OLÉRON* by Bruno Podalydès. In 2004 he met David Oelhoffen with whom he worked on *SOUS LE BLEU*, *NOS RETROUVAILLES*, *LOIN DES HOMMES* and his new film *TERRITOIRES*. He worked with René Féret in *COMME UNE ÉTOILE DANS LA NUIT*, and with Patrice Leconte, Gianni Amélio, Luc Besson, Luca Guadagnino... He worked with René Féret again on his last film *ANTON TCHEKHOV 1890* and played in *LES GARDIENNES* by Xavier Beauvois. He is presently writing his next film.



**HÉLÈNE VINCENT**  
Nicole

She started her big screen career in 1969 in *LES CAMISARDS*, directed by René Allio. She then had a whole series of roles in feature films. In 2012 she was nominated at the Cesar awards for her role in Stéphane Brizé's *QUELQUES HEURES DE PRINTEMPS* (*A Few Hours of Spring*) where she played Vincent Lindon's mother. Two years later she played opposite Omar Sy in *SAMBA*. More recently she's been playing a first class role as an upper class lady in *LE SENS DE LA FÊTE*.



**DAVID OELHOFFEN**  
Co-author

In 2006, he directed his first full-length feature for the cinema, called *NOS RETROUVAILLES*, starring Jacques Gamblin and Nicolas Giraud, which was presented at the Semaine de la critique, Cannes 2007. In 2013, he directed *LOIN DES HOMMES* (freely adapted from a novel by Albert Camus called *The Guest*), which starred Viggo Mortensen and Réda Kateb. He also worked as a scriptwriter on a number of other projects and is presently shooting his film, *TERRITOIRES*, starring, amongst others, Matthias Schoenaerts and Réda Kateb.



## TECHNICAL LIST

Scenario	Nicolas Giraud & David Oelhoffen
Production	FRÈRES ZAK / Arthur Benzaquen
Director of Photography	Romain Carcanade
Editing	Papeliy Milanian
Music	François-Élie Roulin
Sound mixing	Hervé Guyader
Sound engineer	Gautier Isern

Adapted from the novel "*L'impureté d'Irène*"  
by Philippe Mezescaze, published by éditions Arléa

## LIST OF ARTISTS

Clara Ponsot	Irène
Nicolas Giraud	Yann
Hélène Vincent	Nicole
Noah Benzaquen	Emile
Patrick Descamps	Director maritime agency

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