



# BABYSITTER





AMERIQUE FILM & PHASE 4 PRODUCTIONS  
present

with **NADIA TERESZKIEWICZ** **MONIA CHOKRI** **PATRICK HIVON** **STEVE LAPLANTE**

# BABYSITTER

a film by **MONIA CHOKRI**

written by **CATHERINE LÉGER**

Canada, France - 2022 - 88 min

INTERNATIONAL SALES

**BAC FILMS x WILD BUNCH INTERNATIONAL**

65, rue de Dunkerque - 75009 Paris, France  
P. : + 33 1 43 13 21 15  
sales@wbinter.eu

INTERNATIONAL PRESS

**ORGANIC PUBLICITY**

Kara MacLean  
P. : 1 310 254 4934  
kara.maclean@organic-publicity.com



## SYNOPSIS

Middle-aged Cédric is suspended from work after drunkenly kissing a female reporter on live TV. Stuck at home with his girlfriend, Nadine and their crying baby, Cédric teams up with his brother, Jean-Michel, to co-author a book apologizing for their past misogyny. Enter Amy: a mysterious and provocative young babysitter who, like a Mary Poppins of the libido, forces the trio to confront their sexual anxieties while turning their lives upside down.



# MONIA CHOKRI

## Interview

**What inspired you to bring Catherine Léger’s play to the screen?**

I’m a huge fan of Catherine’s work, both as a screenwriter and a playwright. We felt like getting to know each other and I was aware she was looking for a writing partner to bring her projects to the screen. One week before meeting her, I went to see her play, *Babysitter*. I found it so funny. Catherine’s sense of humor is scathing – she spares no one, but she always has a sharp eye. When I left the theater, it became obvious – I had to bring this play to the big screen, and I even felt an urgency to do it. I told Catherine that the first project I wanted to develop with her was *Babysitter*. She was thrilled. What I like about her play – and about her writing in general – is the fact that the characters say things to each other that they don’t mean. It’s this Chekhovian contradiction I like. In real life, you seldom speak your mind – you tend to tone down what’s actually on your mind. To me, that’s material I can use – it creates layers and layers that make the characters richer

and more fleshed-out. But then again, nothing’s black-and-white with Catherine. No one’s just good or bad. In *Babysitter*, the characters all struggle with their own anxieties, neuroses, and obsessions. It’s close to real life, and even though I gave the film a fable feel, the characters are relatable.

**How much did you change the original material?**

I hardly altered anything about Catherine’s play. However, I took the liberty of bringing moments of levity into the script that didn’t appear in the original material, including the final sequence with the young roller-skating girls about to do babysitting for neighboring families. I was able to create a more dreamlike world with these visual interludes. The play was written several years ago, so I had to update some situations. Originally, the character of Cédric didn’t attend an MMA fight but a soccer game, and after the game, Cédric came across a lady reporter doing a live coverage, stood right behind her and yelled, “*Fuck her right in the pussy!*”

In the US, there was a time when that kind of attitude was cool. Lots of guys would do that. I thought this attitude was extremely hostile, including that comment which was definitely an invitation to rape. I thought it didn’t do justice to the progress we’ve made for the last few years – in Quebec at least. That’s how I came up with the idea of the stolen kiss. A stolen kiss creates the same kind of shock wave these days. We updated Cédric’s attitude so that it could dovetail with what we’re experiencing today and how we respond to it. When Cédric kisses the reporter, he doesn’t mean any harm. But he’s so subconsciously convinced that he’s entitled to do that that he doesn’t understand what’s wrong with his attitude or why it causes such an uproar. Cédric is neither a rapist, nor an abuser, but he unwittingly makes questionable choices and decisions. That’s what I think makes his journey interesting as he wakes up to the world around him throughout the film. His perception and understanding of things change over time.

**Cédric is a comedy character. Do you think comedy is an empowering genre?**

I think humor can help you beautifully to drive comments across. I don’t say “messages” because *Babysitter* is not a political film per se. Let me stress that it’s not a satire. When you touch on such specific social issues, you tend to blame the director for not taking a clear stance or to blame him or her for things he or she has nothing to do with. A filmmaker is an artist. He or she comes up with a vision, with comments, but is not supposed to give answers. Otherwise, I’d be writing nonfiction!

**What do you think the Nadine-Cédric couple stands for?**

I’d say it’s a “neutral” couple. Neither of them has a really strong statement about the world. They have to put up with a heteronormative, cisgender, white-dominated, gentrified, straightforward world. They live in a bland, conventional environment.





Everything's neat and tidy and so there's no room for thinking or introspection. This is the ideal model where life should be perfect, and yet Nadine and Cédric's life isn't. The young babysitter's arrival shakes up their perceptions and challenges their lifestyle. I wanted to make a film about deep-seated desire. #MeToo is an excuse to deal with just this – our education versus what we truly feel in our guts. I feel like we're not deconstructed in our desire, in our intimacy, although, paradoxically enough, we try to be so in our social life.

**You've given a true, actual voice to babysitter Amy, while this is a character that tends to be reified or sexualized by most films and shows.**

Indeed. This is a character that usually goes unrecognized in our societies. It's often a frowned upon job, although it's a big responsibility to look after children when you're a 13-year-old girl or even a 25-year-old young woman. It's a job that calls for constant vigilance – it's extremely challenging and difficult. In my film, Amy's character is always defined by other people's perspective. Cédric and Nadine first regard her as a somewhat silly, young blonde. For Cédric, she's almost invisible. He finds her insignificant. She certainly takes care of her baby, but he doesn't see her as a thinking human

being. She's reduced to an object by those looking at her. I wanted to look at her differently, to make Amy a subject, an active character, that makes other characters face their own contradictions. I meant to give this character this particular power.

**And then, she builds a special relationship with Nadine. The chemistry between both women suddenly appears magic.**

Amy never disrupts the Nadine-Cédric couple. What I wanted instead was for Amy to mesmerize characters that spend time with her. Beautiful women are often said to be hypnotic or bewitching, as if it were magic or witchcraft. When a beautiful woman enters a room, she's not aware of her power – it's our gaze on her that gives her this power, via a transfer effect. Hypnosis is also about diving into her unconscious, her fears, her memories, her sorrows, her joys, and I thought it was interesting to include this in the film so that the characters could look themselves in the mirror and face their deep-seated desires. When you explore the latter, you realize that the intimate revolution regarding the relationships between males and females hasn't happened yet.

**The film begins with a bunch of boys attending an MMA fight. They shout, they drink, they're flirtatious, they check out girls. The editing is tight and restless. It's all shot in close ups. Why did you choose to open the film like this?**

I shot the film in the middle of the pandemic, and in Quebec, shooting conditions at the time were very challenging. We had very strict protocols and rules to comply with – everybody wore face masks and safety goggles, and we all observed social distancing rules, which is no small feat when you're directing actors and you want it to feel like they're really close. That's why the film begins with big close ups. I had to portray the energy of the fight, the energy of the characters, the atmosphere of the crowd, no matter how few extras we had. Anyway, it was a hassle, and we had very little time to do the scenes, to boot. So, I had to adjust the filming process to what we were experiencing and in the end the restrictions became a creative asset. I'm very happy about this opening sequence that includes close-ups and shots of female breasts or buttocks, because it's all put right under the audience's nose. We've been bombarded with these images so much that they had to be huge.

**The look of the film is very vintage – it reminds that of American movies of the 70s. We're reminded of films by Cassavetes, Carpenter or Friedkin...**

Absolutely. Some of my main inspirations include Harry Kümel's *Daughters of Darkness* and Robert Altman's *3 Women*. I really felt like working on the tale element and the eerie and tried to embrace tropes and conventions that are usually not as much accepted in film as on stage. For instance, you have no idea whatsoever where Amy's from. I had fun playing with these mysteries, and the fable dimension made it possible to have quirky elements that disrupt reality. I really wanted Amy to show up at Nadine and Cédric's place dressed as a maid. If I'd decided to keep a realistic tone throughout the film, you wouldn't have bought into it and you wouldn't have embraced some of the film's concepts so much. I feel like paying tribute to a specific genre that, precisely, has long developed a peculiar perspective on women – I'm thinking of horror films. I enjoy horror films but they challenge me a lot on my own ethics. Horror movies of the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s have always portrayed women in the same fashion – they're almost always the source of evil and terror. They're creatures, witches, women with terrifying powers. In Argento's *Suspiria*, young women are extremely





eroticized and at the same time their power – which is a sexual power – becomes a threat. I found it incredibly interesting to use the tropes of the genre to twist them. Babysitter is a comedy using horror movies’ tropes – that’s how I imagined the film and the horror comes from the female characters because they’re powerful. It’s a female power that scares people. And then, besides horror movies, I also have fun with some filters reminding erotic productions like *Emmanuelle* and its “Vaselined” lenses...

**The sets look extremely familiar, including Nadine and Cédric’s house in the suburbs, the pediatrician’s office that looks like Anne Gedess’s photography studio or the diner where Cédric and his brother meet up to start writing...**

The house in the suburbs embodies the nightmare of bourgeois standardization, the diner is an iconic place of American culture. I wanted to call to mind *Pleasantville*’s slick, plastic dimension. As far as the pediatric clinic goes, it was built from the ground up by my production designer who was inspired by pictures of American pediatrician offices whose sense of interior decoration was actually really tacky.

**Just like your previous feature, you shot *Babysitter* on film. What does it mean to you?**

*A Brother’s Love* was shot in 16 mm. We did this one in 35 mm just because I like the texture of the image. I admit that you can do beautiful things digitally, but for me there’s nothing like the grain of film – and it means something that directors like Paul Thomas Anderson or Xavier Dolan shoot on film. It’s a matter of perspective and taste. Our cinematographer Josée Deshaies has a long experience of shooting on film – and because there were lots of night scenes in the film, we also wanted to move on to 35 mm so that the equipment could be easier to move around. I was also fortunate to work with producers that support my vision.

**How did the shoot go? How did you experience it in relation to your first feature? You not only had to put up with the pandemic, but you also got to play Nadine.**

We shot the film in mid-August of 2020 as we were getting out of lockdown. We were just experimenting with things and shooting conditions, as I said earlier on, were very restrictive. Health protocols were extremely

strict. Obviously, all this was very stressful as there were also babies on set. You can’t just throw a baby into an actor’s arms and say, “Action!” You need to spend time with the baby, get him to know you. And then again, he’s quiet when he’s supposed to cry – or he sleeps when he must be awake... Anyway, as opposed to *A Brother’s Love*, it was a tougher experience but, all in all, we put up with the situation and we tried to jump through hoops so that it never shows in the film. The upside, I think, is that we ended up with a film almost entirely confined to Nadine and Cédric’s house – and, as in Lanthimos’ *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, the characters never get really close to each other. With the tale element, I could explore something more rigid about the characters, something less immediate. As for acting in the film myself, I didn’t think I’d do it originally. I make films, I’m a director because I feel like directing, not because I feel like acting. Catherine and the producer both wrote me to say they thought I should play Nadine, and because I didn’t write the script, I got won over. But when I shoot a film – I mean, when I direct myself –, I don’t much enjoy acting because I don’t have an outside perspective on my performance, so I get fed up after four takes, although I love working with actors and looking for things with them. I’d send the dailies to my

Paris-based editor, and she was the one asking me to be more generous with myself. In the end, the challenge was interesting, but I don’t think I’ll play such major parts in my films in the future. Maybe I’ll just do cameos.

**You play alongside Patrick Hivon, the wonderful actor who portrayed Karim in *A Brother’s Love*. He infuses the character of Cédric with his natural warmth. Is this one of the reasons why you picked him for the role? Because of the softness and innocence he gives off?**

Absolutely. Patrick is one of my favorite actors – he’s special, he moves me. He makes each and every character he takes on exciting. He’s an actor that has instinct and, I think, a rare emotional intelligence. He’s always on point, both in comedy and in drama, and as you said, his natural warmth makes him highly relatable. You want to embark on his character’s journey and quest – and you root for him. It was key in the film since Cédric is still an abuser... I had to find out where to draw the line, and I needed my character to still be relatable, without making excuses for him. This was the character’s challenge.



**Nadia Tereszkievich portrays Amy, the babysitter. What inspired you to work with this young French actress?**

Monia Chokri: To be completely honest, Nadia totally fascinated me when I met her, just like her character fascinates others in the film. In the play, the babysitter is a foreigner, and I found it gave an interesting feel to the character, as well as it made sense with the film's themes. So I looked for French actresses to play Amy. I visited talent agencies online and I came across Nadia's picture – I looked into her track record and I found out she'd done a commercial with Catherine Deneuve where she dances like a cat. Then I saw *Only the Animals* and I thought she was once again very talented. For my casting sessions, I always use the same method – I send the script to the actors and actresses, I meet them first in a café to talk about things, and then I set up a read-through facing the camera, along with the casting director. It's a pretty long process. But when I met Nadia, it also felt like an obvious choice. We talked for hours. I found her funny and possessed. We bonded very quickly. When I saw her later during the audition, I found my first impression was right. Nadia is not only an outstanding

actress, but she's a generous, profound, humble human being. She's a hard worker, she's very collaborative, she's curious and open-minded. She's of Finnish and Polish descent, which gives her a special kind of beauty. Amy actually speaks Finnish in the film – it's a language that has no root in common with ours, you can't make anything of it, you don't have any reference, and I thought it matched perfectly Nadia's fanciful, otherworldly dimension.

**You've worked with a majority of female crew members. Was it consciously intended on your part?**

My decisions are not informed by gender issues, but by the skill set each of these women has. I decided to work with Josée Deshaies, production designer Colombe Raby or 1st Assistant Director Noémie Sirois because I think they're the best at what they do. What I care for is how talented are the people I work with.







## MONIA CHOKRI

Director & Actress

Since graduating from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique in 2005 Monia Chokri has appeared in more than a dozen plays on the stage. On television, she was seen in ***Les rescapés*** and ***Nouvelle adresse***. Revealed on the big screen by Xavier Dolan's ***Heartbeats*** she also starred recently in Robin Aubert's ***Les Affamés***.

Her first feature as a director, ***A Brother's Love*** won the Un Certain Regard jury's Coup de Coeur at the Cannes Film Festival in 2019. ***Babysitter*** is her second feature, with a screenplay by Catherine Léger. She appears in the film alongside Nadia Tereszkiewicz and Patrick Hivon.





# MONIA CHOKRI

## Filmography

### AS A DIRECTOR

2019 **A Brother's Love** Un Certain Regard, Coup de Cœur du Jury

### AS AN ACTRESS

2017 **Before we explode** by Rémi St Michel  
2017 **Emma Peeters** by Nicole Palo  
2017 **We are Gold** by Éric Morin  
2017 **Poor Georges!** by Emma Mauvin  
2016 **Ravenous** de Robin Aubert  
2015 **Heal the living** by Katell Quillévéré  
2015 **A Taste of Ink** by Morgan Simon  
2014 **Endorphine** by André Turpin  
2012 **Gare du Nord** by Claire Simon  
2011 **Laurence Anyways** by Xavier Dolan  
2009 **Heartbeats** by Xavier Dolan  
2009 **Hier, aujourd'hui, hier** by Xavier Beauchesne Rondeau  
2007 **Frédérique au centre** by Anne Émond  
2009 **Days of Darkness** by Denys Arcand



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In my humble opinion, ***Babysitter*** lays the groundwork for the issues that define pretty much anything that triggers our humanity's second major wave of feminism. That of the fundamental shift in the intimate lives between men and women. It is no longer simply a matter of men and women earning equal salaries; now it's the case of bending the rules of desire and creating a new model in which women will not solely be objectified to exist in a social society.

Having been inspired by films such as ***The killing of a sacred deer*** by Yorgos Lanthimos, ***Daughters of Darkness*** by Harry Kümel or ***3 Women*** by Robert Altman, I wanted to present a space between real life and a form of magical realism for the characters.

When I saw the play ***Babysitter*** by Catherine Léger in a theatre, it was an unforgettable experience. Catherine's timely play dealt so aptly with the muted, grumbling anger and frustration that would, a few years later, be

referred to as the #metoo movement. I felt that Catherine was light years ahead of her time. She illustrated the general anxiety that men and women experience today and as they redefine their respective roles, both socially and privately.

I immediately could imagine the film's adaptation. A film that is very funny - and highly disturbing at the same time. This inspired me. I immediately said to Catherine that this film needed to be made as soon as possible and, low and behold, ***Babysitter*** the film was born. Catherine offered to work with me as the director and I readily accepted.

My interest in the project also stems from a feeling that the themes in the story reflect my own concerns and, by extension, those of my generation. Catherine and I are around the same age. I immediately felt a deep sense of closeness to her words, as if they were my own. Catherine presents questions about women's

power and social positioning, including the role of being a mother, the contradictions of desire, sexuality, and the issue of private and social success.

The social world has historically been defined from a male perspective. The feminist struggle, which began in the 1940s, has certainly allowed western women to forge a slight degree of autonomy over different aspects of their lives, in particular the right to an abortion, access to employment, and recognition of their adult status, but real inequities in both the social and private spheres are still felt.

I hope that the film promotes social reflection of one's gender role, and encourages audiences to look at our era in a new light, while providing a chance to laugh.



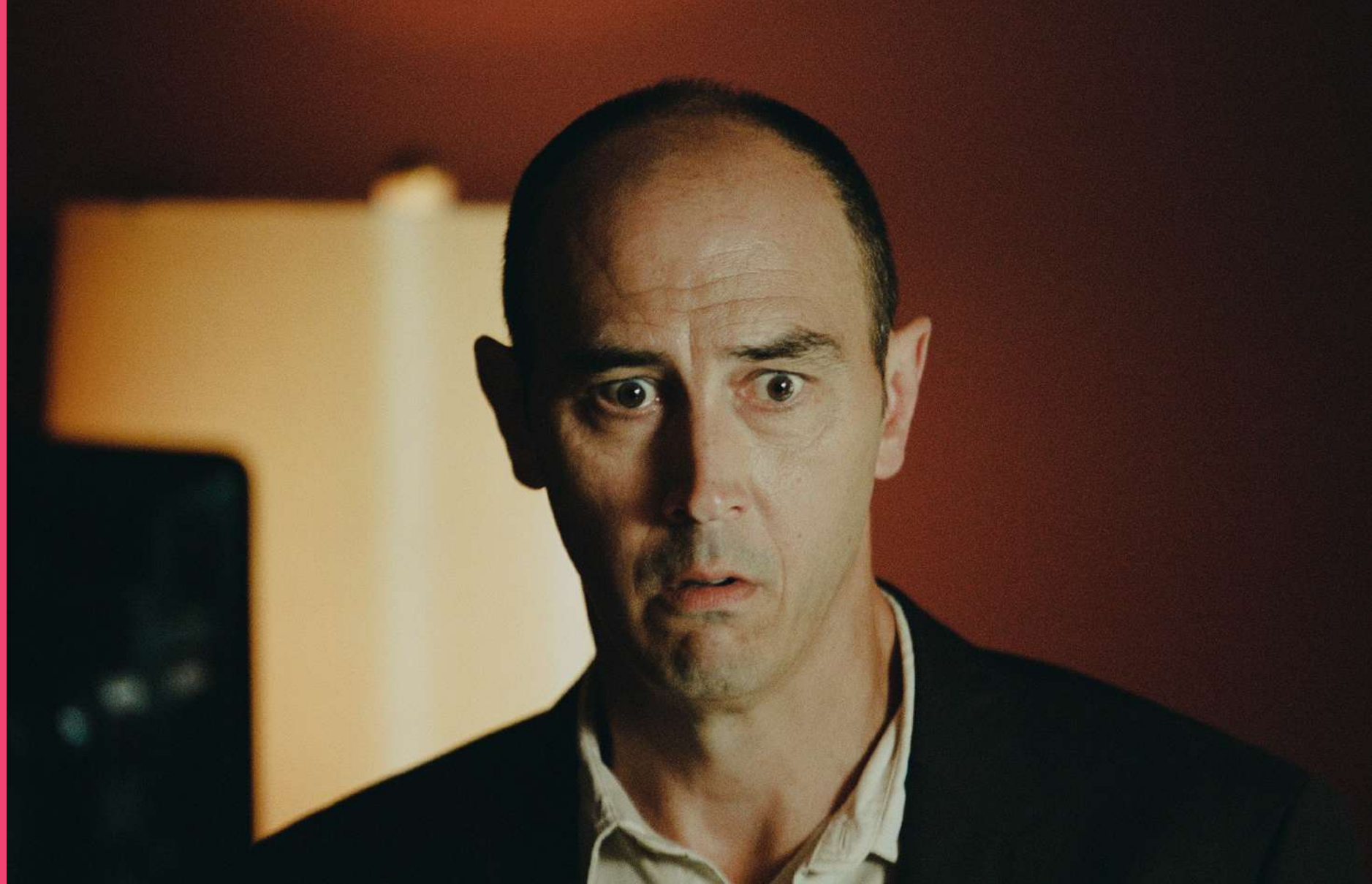
# CATHERINE LÉGER

Playwright / Screenwriter

Catherine Léger writes for film, television and theatre. Her script for ***Slut In A Good Way*** (*Charlotte a du fun*) earned her the award for best original screenplay at the Canadian Screen Awards 2019. The film, directed by Sophie Lorain and produced by Amérique Films, was screened at several festivals, including Tribeca, Tokyo and Angoulême. She also co-wrote the script for ***Little Queen*** (*La Petite Reine*) 2014, directed by Alexis Durand Brault.

Her television credits include writing ***Les Invisibles*** (adaptation of the popular French series ***10%, Call My Agent***) (TVA, 2019) and her work on the series ***Marche à l'ombre*** (Super Écran, 2017). Catherine Léger has also written for the theatre, including ***Catfight***, ***American Car***, ***Opium\_37*** featured on the list of “Quebec treasures” in translation at Playwrights Canada Press, ***Princesses*** – Théâtre d’Aujourd’hui, 2011, ***I Lost My Husband*** (*J’ai perdu mon mari*) – Quai des arts, Carleton-sur-mer, 2014 and ***Free Girls*** (*Filles en liberté*) – Théâtre La Licorne, 2018. Her play ***Babysitter***, staged at Théâtre La Licorne in April 2017, was later presented in Ohio, Limoges and Munich. She also wrote the play’s film adaptation, now in pre-production with Monia Chokri slated to direct.

Catherine wrote the film adaptation of the novel ***Godess of the Fireflies*** (*La Déesse des mouches à feu*) by Geneviève Pettersen, directed by Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette. The feature film was officially selected for the 70th Berlin International Film Festival 2020.







# NADIA TERESZKIEWICZ

## Filmography

- 2019 **Only the animals** by Dominik Moll
- 2019 **Persona non grata** by Roschdy Zem
- 2018 **Fathers and Sons** by Félix Moati
- 2018 **Wild** by Dennis Berry
- 2017 **Jealous** by David & Stéphane Foenkinos
- 2015 **The Dancer** by Stéphanie di Giusto





## PATRICK HIVON

### Filmography

- 2019 **Thanks for everything** by Louise Archambault
- 2018 **Mont Foster** by Louis Godbout
- 2018 **Restless river** by Marie Hélène Cousineau
- 2018 **A Brother's Love** by Monia Chokri
- 2017 **We are Gold** by Éric Morin
- 2015 **A Kid** by Philippe Lioret
- 2015 **Ville Marie** by Guy Edoin

## CREW

Director  
Screenwriter  
Producers

Photography  
Editor  
Composer  
Costumes  
VFX  
Post Production  
Art Director

Monia Chokri  
Catherine Léger  
Martin Paul Hus  
Catherine Léger  
Pierre Marcel Blanchot  
Fabrice Lambot  
Josée Deshaies  
Pauline Gaillard  
Emile Sornin  
Guillaume Laflamme  
Marc Hall  
Antoine Rabaté  
Pascale Deschênes

## CAST

Cédric  
Nadine  
Amy  
Jean Michel  
Tessier  
Carlos  
Brigitte  
Christian  
Chantal Tremblay

Patrick Hivon  
Monia Chokri  
Nadia Tereszkievicz  
Steve Laplante  
Hubert Proulx  
Stéphane Moukarzel  
Nathalie Breuer  
Patrice Dubois  
Eve Duranceau



