

LE CERCLE NOIR for **SILENZIO** © Photos: Séverine Brigeot



FESTIVAL DE CANNES

OFFICIAL SELECTION

UN CERTAIN REGARD

actresses



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Synopsis

Marcelline is an actress, haunted by her role of Natalia Petrovna, heroine of Turgenev's "A Month In The Country", which she is rehearsing with great difficulty. Marcelline tries to wash away her anxieties in a swimming pool with the help of a Glenn Miller tune. But it doesn't work. Nothing can stop time marching on, cruelly reminding her that she's forty and still without child. Ever astonished by a world to which - it seems to her - she has never found the key, Marcelline nonetheless seeks endlessly to communicate with all those around her...

But what can truly help her understand what she is doing on earth? The Virgin Mary with whom she is already negotiating? Her father's ghost, sitting magnificent on his lovely couch? Her mother, with her crazy perspective and love of boat trips. Or, much more simply, a kiss, one evening, from the youngest of the young leads?



Interview with
Valeria Bruni Tedeschi

What is ACTRESSES about? And who?

A middle-aged woman who feels, all of a sudden, that she's woken up. As if she'd been asleep all her life, living in a dream, removed from reality. She's an actress. Acting is her job. She's lived on stage, loved on stage, suffered on stage, desired on stage. In her life, she is alone. Childless. Why is her life like this? Deep down, she doesn't know. The death of her father? Or of her first love? Her mother's overbearing presence? Time has passed and she's never had time. But time for what? To have time. My film could really be called "Life is a Dream".

What triggered you to write the story of an actress, and those around her?

A conversation with the director and actress, my good friend Noémie Lvovsky. I told her about a very important episode in my professional life: the moment when, playing the role of Nathalia Petrovna in Turgenev's "A Month In The Country", I was replaced by the director's assistant. For Noémie, as for me, it seemed obvious that this could be an interesting dramatic basis for a script: someone taking the place of another person.

What did you want to show by filming the destinies of these characters?

I wanted to show people living. We have lives and we have dreams. We take a path and then we want to go back, we believe we've made a mistake, gone down the wrong path. Or taken a wrong turn. We hope our lives will go off the rails. This isn't the rest of our lives, this path can't be it. What have we made of our life? Did we have the choice?

When you say you were replaced, do you mean you left, or you were forced to leave?

I was fired, but I think deep down I wanted to leave, I didn't want to continue with it, exactly like Marcelline. One part of her wants to carry on with her work, doing what she's always done, and at the same time, another really puts the brakes on this momentum. It's a true interior split, and this split is Marcelline's story.

How did you come up with the idea of combining the professional and intimate "splits" in the life of your heroine?

I had written two scenes: a visit to the gynaecologist where I'm told that time's running out for me to have a child, and a scene in which I tell a stranger the story of the play for which I'm rehearsing. One day, just to see, I combined the two scenes. It happened like a sort of shock. Marcelline's intimate inner life revealed itself, exactly, precisely. The other elements of the film began

to grow clear, to fall into place: thus the character of Nathalie, the director's assistant, absolutely had to be a married woman with children... The story built like a game of mirrors, the writing came very naturally. The most delicate part was refining the web of echoes between the Turgenev play and what surrounds it.

Why Turgenev?

Purely logically because it was something I'd already played, and which had been the object of that very painful episode in my professional life to which I've already referred. At one stage, we thought about using another play, something overtly comic. In the end, "A Month in the Country" revealed itself as the perfect choice, for many reasons. Firstly it allowed me the opportunity to be reconciled with this classic of Russian theatre and with its magnificent protagonist, Nathalia Petrovna. That was important for me. I felt as if I'd narrowly missed her earlier on. I wanted to revisit her, to work on her again, to love her anew. Another reason is that Turgenev's writing imparts to the script,

in the 'theatrical' scenes, a magnificent musicality. Finally, there was a last step linked to the play, Noémie's wonderful and truly Pirandellian suggestion, which turned the script on its head: to make Nathalia Petrovna appear to Marcelline in flesh and blood.

Are you particularly fond of the Russians?

The tragi-comic musicality of Turgenev, Chekhov, of the Russian repertoire in general, is what I prefer in the theatre, both to act in and to watch, and is also more generally the vision of life that most appeals to me. To perform several scenes from "A Month In The Country" in my film was a license for me to engage in a certain sentimentality.

How did you approach the dialogues faced with Turgenev's lines?

The dialogues were essential: as a theatre actress, that's my background. When imagining a film, I begin with the text, the word, psychological and



emotional situations between characters. For me, the text is the base, while I am very aware that in the end the dialogue isn't what's essential. What's essential is the feelings between people. And even more than that, the people themselves. I film people. When all's said and done, for me, a movie is a pretext for filming people - human beings. I try to look at the people behind the characters, to capture moments of humans living.

You exploit your narcissism...

I don't know about that. All I can say is that when Noémie and I were writing the script, we explored every avenue. And on the subject of narcissism, there was a very powerful imperative, unlike in my first film: that there shouldn't be only one central character, that it shouldn't be only Marcelline's story, but also the portrait of many other characters, Nathalia in particular. While we were shooting, I tried not to be ashamed to film myself in real close ups. In the edit, on the other hand, the question: "What shots do we choose to convey this?" became important.

Did you consider not appearing in your film?

Not this one. At one time I considered playing Nathalie, I even 'tested' for the part, but I think that it was rather to delve a little more into my own story.

Could you define the humour in ACTRESSES?

It's always somewhat tragi-comic. It's like giggling at a funeral, you're ashamed but at the same time, it's so liberating! I don't know how to explain the reasons for this sort of laughter, perhaps a part of us is rebelling, expressing a need to be incorrect. One has to laugh otherwise life is too harrowing, the serious matters of pain and death predominate so that even joy, happiness and love, which also contribute to the anguish, are not enough any more. It's a survival instinct.

Forbidden laughter is also fundamental to my work as an actress. The first time I giggled on stage, I integrated it into the lines instinctively, it was vital not to stop, as it was my character that giggled, not me. It became the basis of my pleasure as an actress. It even happened in front of Patrice

Chéreau's camera in HÔTEL DE FRANCE, and was not cut out. This outburst of laughter provoked a truth. For me, it's become a way of entering a film: it's a good sign.

Why is your character named Marcelline?

At the beginning, she was Valentine, but I found that too serious. Taking herself too seriously was one of my character's potential stumbling blocks. And to remind myself that there always had to be an element of mockery in her attitude, that this character is at bottom a little clown, I called her Marcelline, a clear link to Marcello Mastroianni, the actor whose name is, for me, synonymous with self-mockery.

How did you decide on Marcelline's appearance?

She couldn't be too fashionable, but on the other hand she needed a real femininity, an elegance that reveals itself as all the more futile given that she

is single. I found it painful to see her wearing these delicate under-garments that are no use to her. It was vital that she be uselessly feminine.

And the other characters?

We wanted them to be beautiful. Éric, the young lead played by Louis Garrel, wears dark shades, which make him especially seductive. At first, his apparel could make one think, at the start, that he is playing a role, the role of a dark, tormented, shadowy actor, in which he delights. In the end, on the contrary, the character reveals himself to be much deeper, more tender and alone than the apparent affectation of his clothing might suggest. The young actor falls in love with the actress. It's like a cliché. She doesn't believe it. His desire is not taken seriously. It's humiliating. Painful and humiliating for him. The actor prevents the man from living. The role prevents the man from living. There really is a great solitude within this character, a buried pain, as well as a child-like and magical imagination. They weren't in the script at all. Louis Garrel brought them. Similarly, Mathieu truly enriched his character.



In what way?

Mathieu Amalric plays a theatre director, someone very passionate and yet, at times a bit stupid. It was a hard combination to pin down. He is alone as he faces the actors. Awkward. Obstinate. Narcissistic. A director also needs to be loved by his actors. This one doesn't feel loved. He moves forward in his production like a blind man. He feels stupid. He dreams of being a great director. He knows that he isn't. Behaves as if he is. Tells himself what he can do to be able to continue. Invents a more or less credible self in order to bear himself.

On paper, the character wasn't very satisfying, but Mathieu has such an intelligent look that, whatever he says, he always remains intelligent. We don't really know whether this character is a bit grotesque or truly profound, we swing between the two, and all at once he becomes funny, complex. And human.

And Noémie Lvovsky?

For me the choice of Noémie was completely natural. She plays a character she dreamed up and wrote with me, and despite all our attempts with other

actresses and many hesitations, together we returned to our original choice: Noémie was Nathalie. This encounter was exhilarating for me, because its power and truth pushed me to look for my own power and truth.

We also returned to our original choice for the theatre. We wanted the Théâtre des Amandiers, in Nanterre, the place where I made my debut, but we ended up there by a very tortuous route. We began by looking for Italian-style theatres, I felt bored. Next we saw a lot of modern theatres, in the suburbs, theoretically much more interesting but aesthetically rather ugly. Nonetheless it struck us as interesting that Marcelline should go to the suburbs to act. Right, realistic and unexpected. And interesting visually. It allowed us to set up a real game with their travel, the bus, the metro, the taxi, the routes these characters are compelled to take. It could only push Marcelline's destiny.

The Théâtre des Amandiers gave you all that?

And more. Filming there was a homecoming for me. I practically lived there for two years. It was the physical and spatial base of my theatrical training. The

period when I was acting under the direction of Patrice Chéreau and Pierre Romans was completely fundamental to my professional and personal lives. And when I went back for the film, I was impressed by the beauty of the place, and by the colour, which struck me right away as extremely cinematographic. The film also allowed me to work with some of my old Nanterre colleagues, like Laurent Grévill, Bernard Nissille, Olivier Rabourdin and Franck Demules. It was truly important to link these actors to the 'newcomers' like Louis, Laetitia, Mathieu, or Noémie.

Why did you choose Valeria Golino, an Italian, to play the intensely Russian Natalia Petrovna?

I know Valeria well; she's a friend. She's beautiful, very feminine. For me she's a real woman, and a rather untraditional choice, even a little against type. Valeria plays a little lightly, a little more 'latin', she moves away from the gravity of the "Russian soul", and it's this surprising Nathalia who astonishes Marcelline.

You also cast your own mother again...

The first time, filming my mother had been a kind of mystery. And it went very well, she showed a real talent, she was easy to direct. On this second film, it was much less a case of unknown territory, I already knew her capacity for concentration, the intelligence of her performance, her beauty in front of the camera, her imagination. Nonetheless, she succeeded in amazing me again.

Your character nonetheless retains very Italian traits, like going regularly to church.

I think it's a natural reflex for me; it's in my culture. In Italy, you go to church when you have a problem, to ask for help. What's different from IT'S EASIER FOR A CAMEL... is that Marcelline prays only to the Virgin Mary, clearly because she is a symbol of maternity. And she's a gentle mother, while Marcelline's is not. But paradoxically, Marcelline follows her mother's advice in going to pray to Mary. She's obedient, she's retained, as her mother points out, a sort of grown up child aspect, she's a nice little girl who wants to rebel. That's

why during the last stage of writing the script we added the scene between Marcelline and her mother in bed. We needed both a dénouement between these two characters and a rebellion from Marcelline.

Can you talk a little about how you directed the film?

What was most important was that the camera movements captured what was happening between the characters. If for example my character is running, fleeing the theatre, if she feels like an insect trying to flee from the light, then it seems natural to film her in a wide shot, tiny in the middle of the frame, to convey her mental and emotional state. And if two characters feel very close, unconsciously in love, a close up of them or a shot that moves gently from one to the other strikes me as ideal. Like a sort of dance between one person and another. As for the light, I wanted to make a 'winter film'. The light is harsher on the characters' faces. These are faces that cannot lie about their emotions, and what complicates things even further is that they are performing a play that takes place in summer. Lastly, winter is a season when bodies curl in on themselves, cold, closed off,

while Marcelline experiences a moment in life when, in order to pull through she must open herself. This contrast struck me as extremely painful for her.

At one point the film's title was DREAM OF THE NIGHT BEFORE?

I liked it because for me it spoke of the dream of escaping, going elsewhere, of going off the rails... the rails between which each of us can feel more or less trapped. For Marcelline, it was a flight from her work as an actress, a flight from fiction in search of what happens in reality, even if she risks losing everything. I thought it was a mysterious title for a film I wanted to be romantic, painful and funny. Will Marcelline escape from her life of illusion... of fiction?

And why in the end did you choose ACTRESSES?

Because I like the simplicity and strength of the word, the joys and sorrows it evokes. The waves it provokes in the imagination. It's both dazzling and hard at the same time, like the profession: hard and dazzling.



Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
selected filmography

Director/Writer/Actress

- 2007 ACTRESSES
2003 IT'S EASIER FOR A CAMEL...

Actress

- 2007 L'AMI DE FRED ASTAIRE by Noémie Lvovsky
A GOOD YEAR by Ridley Scott
2006 UN COUPLE PARFAIT by Nobuhiro Suwa
MUNICH by Steven Spielberg
2005 TIME TO LEAVE by François Ozon
MARISCOS BEACH by Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau
2004 5X2 by François Ozon
2003 HAPPINESS COSTS NOTHING by Mimmo Calopresti
2002 IF I WERE A RICH MAN by Michel Munz
ONCE UPON AN ANGEL by Vincent Perez
2001 THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS by Dominique Cabrera



Noémie Lvovsky selected filmography

Actress

2007	ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
2006	THE VERY BIG APARTMENT by Pascal Thomas
	MY WIFE IS AN ACTRESS by Éric Rochant
2005	BACKSTAGE by Emmanuelle Bercot
	ONE STAYS, THE OTHER LEAVES by Claude Berri
2004	KINGS AND QUEEN by Arnaud Desplechin
2003	FRANCE BOUTIQUE by Tonie Marshall
2002	IF I WERE A RICH MAN by Michel Munz
2001	MY WIFE IS AN ACTRESS by Yvan Attal

Director/Writer

2007	L'AMI DE FRED ASTAIRE
2003	FEELINGS
1999	I'M NOT AFRAID OF LIFE
1997	PETITES (TV)
1995	FORGET ME
1990	DIS-MOI OUI, DIS-MOI NON
	EMBRASSE-MOI

Writer

2007	ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
2003	IT'S EASIER FOR A CAMEL... by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
1997	CLUBBED TO DEATH (LOLA) by Yolande Zauberman
1996	THE PHANTOM HEART by Philippe Garrel
1992	THE SENTINEL by Arnaud Desplechin



Mathieu Amalric selected filmography

- 2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
UN SECRET by Claude Miller
THE HUMAN QUESTION by Nicolas Klotz
THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY by Julian Schnabel
MICHOU D'AUBER by Thomas Gilou
- 2006 THE VERY BIG APARTMENT by Pascal Thomas
FRAGMENTS SUR LA GRÂCE by Vincent Dieutre
THE SINGER by Xavier Giannoli
MARIE-ANTOINETTE by Sofia Coppola
MUNICH by Steven Spielberg
A CURTAIN RAISER by François Ozon (short feature)
- 2005 I SAW BEN BARKA GET KILLED by Serge Le Péron
THE MOUSTACHE by Emmanuel Carrère
COMME JAMES DEAN by Jonathan Zaccai (short feature)
- 2004 KINGS AND QUEEN by Arnaud Desplechin
LE PONT DES ARTS by Eugène Green
A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES by Gilles Bourdos
LES PARALLÈLES by Nicolas Saada (short feature)
- 2003 MY CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT by Denis Dercourt
UN HOMME, UN VRAI by Jean-Marie Larrieu
- 2002 SPECIAL DELIVERY! by Jeanne Labrune



Louis Garrel filmography

- | | |
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| 2007 | ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
LOVE SONG by Christophe Honoré |
| 2006 | INSIDE PARIS by Christophe Honoré
A CURTAIN RAISER by François Ozon (short feature) |
| 2005 | REGULAR LOVERS by Philippe Garrel |
| 2004 | MY MOTHER by Christophe Honoré |
| 2003 | THE DREAMERS by Bernardo Bertolucci |
| 2001 | THIS IS MY BODY by Rodolphe Marconi |

Marisa Borini filmography

- 2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
2003 IT'S EASIER FOR A CAMEL... by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi

Valeria Golino filmography

- 2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
OUR CONTRY by Francesca Comencini
MY PLACE IN THE SUN by Éric de Montalier
2005 OLÉ ! by Florence Quentin
2004 36 QUAI DES ORFÈVRES by Olivier Marchal
SAN ANTONIO by Frédéric Auburtin
2003 RESPIRO by Emanuele Crialese
FRIDA by Julie Taymor
2001 HOTEL by Mike Figgis
2000 THINGS YOU CAN TELL JUST BY LOOKING AT HER by Rodrigo Garcia

Maurice Garrel filmography

- 2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
2006 CALL ME AGOSTINO by Christine Laurent
THE PASSENGER by Eric Caravaca
2005 REGULAR LOVERS by Philippe Garrel
2004 KINGS AND QUEEN by Arnaud Desplechin
2003 HIS BROTHER by Patrice Chéreau
RENCONTRE AVEC LE DRAGON d'Hélène Angel
MY CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT by Denis Dercourt
2001 WILD INNOCENCE by Philippe Garrel

Simona Marchini filmography

- 2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi

Bernard Nissille filmography

2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
2005 LA RAVISSEUSE by Antoine Santana

Olivier Rabourdin filmography

2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
2006 LES YEUX CLAIRS by Jérôme Bonnell
2004 KINGS AND QUEEN by Arnaud Desplechin
 MY MOTHER by Christophe Honoré

Lætitia Spigarelli filmography

2007 ACTRESSES by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
 THE HUMAN QUESTION by Nicolas Klotz
 PICK-UP by Manuel Schapira
2005 REGULAR LOVERS by Philippe Garrel
2004 CLEAN by Olivier Assayas

Cast

Valeria Bruni Tedeschi
Noémie Lvovsky
Mathieu Amalric
Louis Garrel
Marisa Borini
Valeria Golino
Maurice Garrel
Simona Marchini
Bernard Nissille
Olivier Rabourdin
Laetitia Spigarelli

Marcelline
Nathalie
Denis
Éric
Mother
Nathalia Petrovna
Father
Aunt
Jean-Paul
Marc
Juliette

Gilles Cohen
Marie Rivière
Franck Demules
Souz Chirazi
Anne Barry
Arthur Igual
Brian Mac Cormack
Éric Elmosnino
Robinson Stévenin
Laurent Gréville
Pascal Bongard

Jean-Luc, the stage manager
Wardrobe mistress
Barman
Gynaecologist
Woman in the street
Swimming instructor
English teacher
Raymond
Julien
Arthur
Priest

Crew

Directed by	Valeria Bruni Tedeschi	Assistant Director	Sébastien Matuchet
Screenplay	Valeria Bruni Tedeschi Noémie Lvovsky	Make-Up	Caroline Philipponnat
In collaboration with	Agnès De Sacy	Hair	Isabelle Legay
Director of photography	Jeanne Lapoirie	Production Manager	Sylvain Monod
Art Director	Emmanuelle Duplay	Stills Photographer	Séverine Brigeot
Wardrobe	Caroline De Vivaise	Produced by	Fidélité Films Olivier Delbosc Marc Missonnier
Editor	Anne Weil	In association with	Virtual Films Wild Bunch
Sound	François Waldedisch Fabien Adelin	With the participation of	Canal+ Centre National de la Cinématographie
Sound Editor	Jean-Christophe Winding		
Mix	Emmanuel Crozet		
Casting	Yann Coridian Marion Touitou		
Continuity	Bénédicte Darblay		