

CATHERINE FROT



MELAN  
OMERTA

FATSAH  
BOUYAHMED

OLIVIA  
CÔTE

MARIE  
PETIOT

AND VINCENT  
DEDIENNE

# THE ROSE MAKER

A FILM BY PIERRE PINAUD

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STARRING  
CATHERINE FROT  
MELAN OMERTA  
FATSAH BOUYAHMED  
OLIVIA CÔTE  
MARIE PETIOT  
AND  
VINCENT DEDIENNE

2022 - FRANCE – 94 MINUTES – COMEDY/DRAMA  
IN FRENCH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

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## SYNOPSIS

Gifted and eccentric horticulturalist Eve Vernet (Catherine Frot) honors her father's legacy by continuing the family business, breeding exquisite roses that compete in showcases all over France. But her stubbornly artisanal approach struggles to compete with the mass market production from her corporate rivals. Facing imminent bankruptcy, Eve's trusted assistant Vera (Olivia Côte,) makes a last-ditch effort to turn things around by secretly hiring three new employees from a prison rehabilitation program. Fred (Melan Omerta,) Samir (Fatsah Bouyahmed,) and Nadège (Marie Petiot,) are misunderstood outcasts with fresh ideas, strong work ethics, and absolutely no gardening skills. After resisting the newcomers' presence, Eve warms up to their idiosyncrasies, and, banding together, the team comes up with a zany and risky plan to try and save the business







# INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE PINAUD

**This is the first time that a film has focused on the creation of roses. Where did the idea come from?**

From my love of flowers since I was a child. I was about eleven years old when my grandparents offered my brother and me a corner of their garden, giving us carte blanche to do whatever we wanted there. To have a piece of land of your own when you are a kid... what a wonderful gift! We immediately began to imagine and design our ideal garden, a garden like a kind of Eden. It had an entrance, a pathway, a bench for reading, dreaming, resting or contemplating the flowers, and, along the way, a host of little surprises in the composition and arrangement of the flowerbeds with, at the end, a large space to let light in. I believe that this garden was my first experience of scenography and staging. Even though I had probably had it within me since I was a child, my passion for flowers and gardens was born, consciously, at that time, and it has never left me. Since then, it has coexisted with my other passion, the one I developed for the cinema, also at a very early age. The coexistence between them is necessarily peaceful, since they are both fed by the same source: the search for aesthetics and staging.

**What was the trigger for 'assembling' them?**

One day, quite by chance, I learned that the creation of roses was a French speciality, just like haute cuisine and perfume. Of the forty or so rose designers still in existence today throughout the world, more than twenty are French, a large number of whom are based in the Lyon region. This intrigued me. I researched the subject: the different stages of the process, the competitions that the roses are entered into, the love and self-sacrifice that they require from those who create and "raise" them.

I discovered that the creation of these flowers is not a matter of chance, but is based on a very meticulous selection: the best "fathers" (stamens) and "mothers" (pistils) are taken, those with remarkable characteristics, in terms of color for example, or resistance to disease, or perfume, and they are "married" - hybridized - in the hope that their mating will give birth to varieties worthy of being presented in competitions.

As social themes have always touched and challenged me, I saw a striking parallel with our hyper-competitive modern societies, with their elitist tendencies, where in order to get into the best schools, and to obtain the best jobs, you have to pass competitive exams and often come from a good family...





From this similarity, I saw the basis on which I could build a film, and I started to imagine a script.

### How did you go about it?

I first continued to learn about roses, but this time on site. I went to see creators to immerse myself in their work. I visited small, excellent family-run firms, such as Maison Dorieux, whose artisanal production is of a high quality, but which suffers from competition from larger establishments, where roses are “manufactured” in an almost industrial way, not only here in France, but also abroad in countries such as China or Bulgaria where labor is cheaper. And then I tried to understand how the former managed to survive against the latter. I also attended competitions to measure the impact of a prize on the ‘career’ of a new variety. During all these wanderings, I tried to understand why roses aroused so much passion, a passion that was so often exclusive. And I realized that, to varying degrees, all the producers, creators and enthusiasts, without exception, were pursuing a dream of beauty: to one day find a flower even more magnificent, more deliciously fragrant than previous ones. I found, in this incessant, obstinate search, a crazy poetry, and it was necessary to find this in the film too.

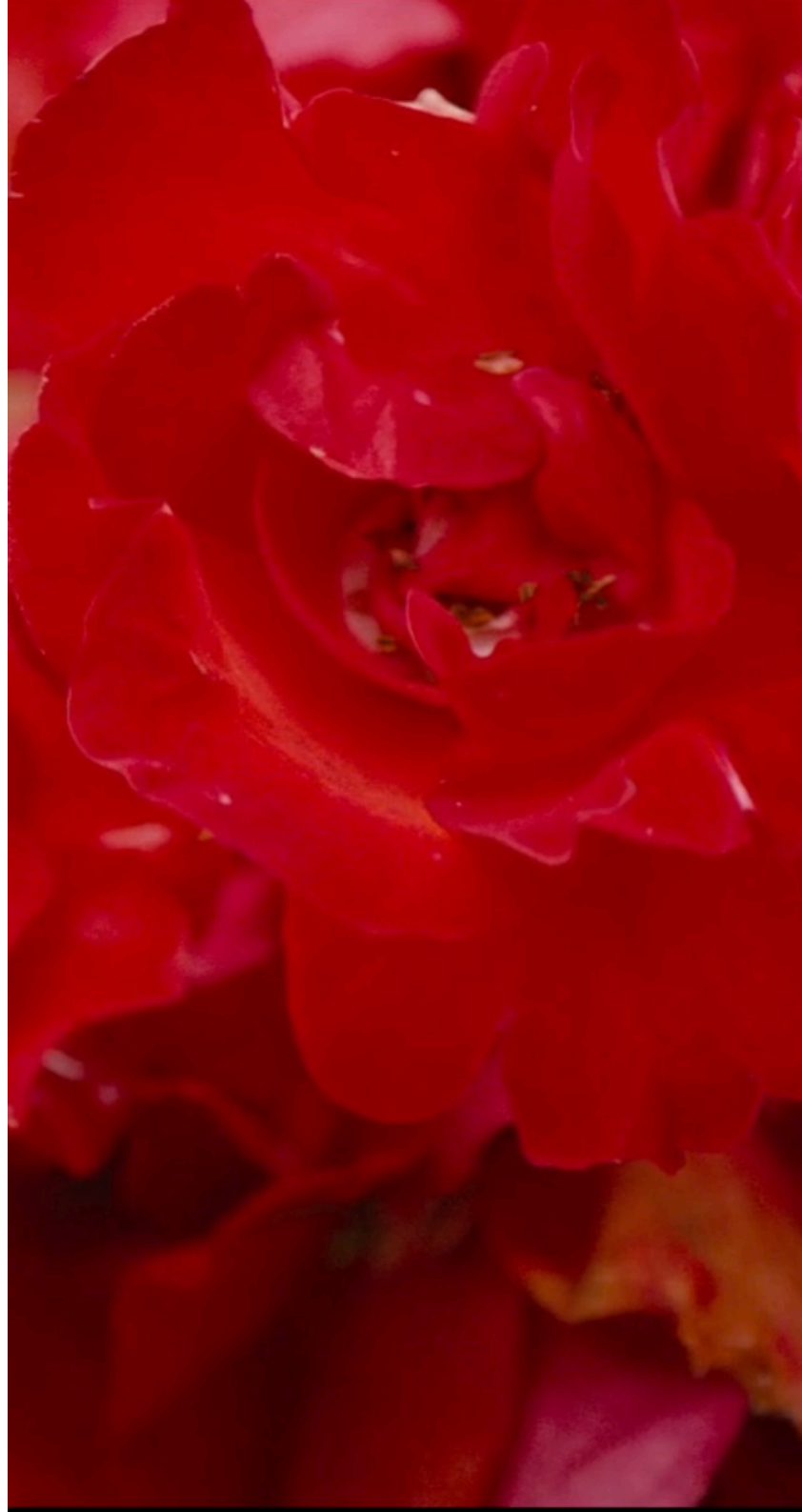
### Trying to convey the beauty of a flower through a film that aims to have a social dimension... your screenplay can't have been easy to put together...

That's true, but I took my time! I'm a slow worker and I do a lot of research. Before starting to write, I need to have an overall view of my subject. I want my fiction work to be inspired by reality, without cheating, because I use that to build my stories and to invent the characters who will relate them.

I also exchanged a great deal with Fadette Drouard, the co-writer who joined me on the project, and with Philippe Le Guay who collaborated during writing.

For the screenplay of THE ROSE MAKER, I thought a lot about Ken Loach's THE ANGELS' SHARE, which, through the portrait of petty criminals in a region blighted by poverty, manages to show, among other things, the marvelous world of whiskey, and I imagined the character of a rose creator who, on the verge of bankruptcy and unable to pay real professionals, has to accept the help of three employees in social rehabilitation, three unfortunates who, like her, were not lucky enough to be born in the right place.

Since the 1980s, the horticultural field has been undergoing a crisis, especially in roses which have declined since their golden age. In a few years, the rose market has shrunk considerably, which has led to many bankruptcies, especially among small producers.





**Basically, THE ROSE MAKER is a David and Goliath story, with social and sentimental ramifications...**

In a way, yes. It begins with the story of a struggle, one that a stubborn craftswoman fights alone against industrialists and market laws, rejecting modern techniques that lower the standards of quality according to her.

It continues with this woman opening up to the world thanks to people she initially treats with condescension, because they know nothing about her field (horticulture). And, because the theme of legacy is very important to me, it ends with this woman reaching out to a young man who has gone off the tracks, allowing him a glimpse of a possible future. If a reference were needed, I would say that THE ROSE MAKER is constructed like a Russian doll (or like the different layers that make up a flower in bud).

**One of the pleasant surprises in your beautifully constructed screenplay is the unexpected "heist" organized by Eve on the premises of one of her competitors... This surprising sequence blends in perfectly with**

**the rest of your film...**

While the world of roses generates images of beauty in people's minds, it also has the disadvantage of often being associated with something conventional and static. To avoid this pitfall, the film had to keep moving, with minor "incidents". I imagined that Eve's obsessive quest for beauty could be similar to the quest for the Holy Grail, and that we could therefore introduce a little suspense. At the same time, I should point out that the world of plants has not escaped privatization or commodification: today, people "register" plant varieties and thus privatize them. I therefore invented the character of an industrial rose designer, played by Vincent Dedienne, who would unjustly keep, for his own exclusive use, rare and sublime varieties, thus flouting a tradition of sharing between creators. And I imagined that Eve would steal one from him, justifying this by saying that the recovery of an old rose that has fallen into the public domain is not a theft but an act of social justice!

**Where did you shoot the film?**

I wanted to shoot in the middle

of rose fields, in a country setting. However, because of the galloping urbanization of the Lyon region, where the majority of rose growers are located, most of them have been forced to divide up their farms and are now often surrounded by residential or commercial areas. The Maison Dorieux, a small family business, offered me the landscape I was dreaming of because it is located in Montagny, in the heart of the unspoiled Roanne hills. However, we had to rework the aesthetics of the buildings, recreate the greenhouses, and rethink the interiors according to the staging. This precise and delicate work delighted Philippe Chiffre, the production designer.

**Did you shoot at the right period, when the roses were in bloom?**

Not really! Roses bloom in May and are at their best until early July, but we shot in September and October, with all the stress that entailed. Fortunately, we had an exceptional year. Many roses were still in bloom in the fields, but not in sufficient numbers. We had planned ahead by ordering rose bushes that we had to replant and arrange in the greenhouses on the day of shooting. When you









buy flowers well before their blooming period, you pray to the heavens that they will bloom when you need them. For the art crew, this created a lot of stress on a logistical level, but we were very lucky in the end.

**We see the magnificence of the colors, we guess that of the fragrances... your film is a hymn to sensuality...**

Good. This is what we tried to get across with Guillaume Deffontaines, the director of photography. We were students together at the Ecole Louis Lumière and we have remained very close. Before shooting, we did a great deal of aesthetic research, taking inspiration from pictorial references. We also thought a lot about the lighting for the interiors and their decor. In particular, we wanted Eve's house to be overcrowded and cluttered, especially her office as a rose creator, we wanted audiences to feel that her quest for beauty and the influence of her father, who was also a rose creator, had taken up all the room and overshadowed her personality as a woman. Hence these choices of dark, rich colors and this clutter of photos, paintings, books, notebooks, furniture from the last century and the precious wooden boxes filled with glass vials full of perfume extracts...

**There are references to the past throughout your film, despite tackling contemporary problems, and that gives it a slightly old-fashioned, quirky feel...**

That is deliberate. Eve is marked by memories of her father and carries the legacy of his tutelage like a priceless treasure. I wanted us to sense this heritage, this fidelity even in her appearance, her way of dressing, her sometimes masculine, gentleman farmer look, her cowboy hat and her pipe. Eve is also someone who had a glorious past: she was a leading rose creator and she is obstinate about perpetuating what was for her a great era.

We tried to transcribe this visually, by choosing to shoot in the scope format, with lenses that give a little grain or flare, and by saturating certain images as well. We also wanted the vintage feel of the film to be perceptible to the ear.

**A word about the film's sound and music...**

For THE ROSE MAKER, there was a desire for sensuality and beauty and I wanted the film to arouse, directly or indirectly, all the audience's senses, including, of course, that of hearing. For the sound, for example, we made sure we could hear the clinking of bottles, the scratch of pen on paper... all these little sounds that bring us closer to Eve's character. For the film's score, I brought in Mathieu Lamboley and I really enjoyed our collaboration. He wrote a wonderful score, inspired both by



great French composers, such as Ravel, Satie and Debussy, and by more contemporary creators of repetitive music. For pre-existing music, I turned to American crooners whose charisma evoked this glorious past and the melancholic nostalgia that I wanted Eve to bask in. Hence, in particular, the voice of Dean Martin at the start of the film. Dean Martin is there to symbolize the eternal beauty of the voice. He belongs to yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He could be a singer that Eve's father listened to... Certain opera arias, certain poems have this same power, which, once again, is also that of roses. Some of them may be very contemporary, but they refer back to something ancient. This is why they have fascinated us since the dawn of time, and why they tell a story. There is also rap music for a more dynamic sequence with the rehabilitation program employees, and then, at the end, this song that I fell in love with and that Stéphanie Carreras and Philippe Pujo, the producers, introduced me to: "La Rose et L'Armure" by Antoine Elie. It illustrates the story of Eve and Fred perfectly and, despite being modern, is a throwback to the golden age of French song.

I feel that all these musical worlds contribute enormously to the film. They give it its tone of "vintage modernity", and too bad if that's a contradiction in terms.

### **Were any scenes particularly difficult to shoot?**

All those at the Bagatelle Park, because they required a lot of extras (about a hundred people!). I wanted to film there for the sake of realism. The park, which has existed since the 18th century, has hosted the world's most prestigious rose competition for 113 years. I wanted to begin shooting there, in the place that makes rose-lovers dream all over the world, to put the actors at the heart of the challenge and the beauty of the profession of rose creator. I did not shoot these scenes during the competition but, during location scouting, I shot some images - some of which are now in the film. Since the scenes show real jury members examining and scoring the roses, I showed them to the actors, who were inspired by the special atmosphere of the competition.

### **Let's talk about the cast. Why did you ask Catherine Frot to be your**

### **Eve?**

I wanted to make a very «French» film and I felt no actress other than Catherine could embody this specificity, with its finesse, elegance, sensuality, character, touch of cheekiness and also a lot of fantasy. I had seen Catherine in HAUTE CUISINE.

As a cook from Périgord put in charge of the personal meals of the French President, she was sensational, very "French" in fact, displaying all the common sense and nerve that her character required. Having admired her in other roles, I knew the richness of her range. Now, in terms of acting, Eve demanded a great deal. She needed to display the authority of a company director and, at the same time, reveal the fragility of a daughter in thrall to her father. Catherine made us feel all that, and even more, because she has another quality, rare among actresses: she is down-to-earth. She physically inhabits her roles and has incredible manual precision. When Madame Dorieux came to show her how to hybridize a flower, she was able to reproduce her gestures to perfection. However, this does not detract from her ability to transcend and bring poetry to her performances.





### How did you pick the three employees in the rehabilitation program?

As these were characters “in the making”, I wanted the youngest characters to be played by actors who had hardly or never been seen on the big screen.

I chose very different actors because they each represent an archetype of people in difficulty: either because it's too soon for them, or because it's too late, or because the way out was so complicated that they got stuck. I had seen Fatsah Bouyahmed in ONE MAN AND HIS COW and LES INVISIBLES, and with his smiling, naive sweetness, he seemed perfect for Samir, a down-on-his-luck long-term unemployed man over 50. He brings a lot of humanity and comedy to the part. Marie Petiot was ideal as Nadège, a young woman whose shyness prevents her from entering the working world. When Nadège speaks, she is so insecure that she forgets to articulate! This is a true character study because Marie is the exact opposite in real life, very outgoing, voluble, sociable, spontaneous...

The role of Fred was more difficult to cast. We had to find an actor who could express, with equal spontaneity, both the harshness and violence of a petty thug and, at the same time, the sensitivity and pain of abandonment. It was quite a challenge. I first saw all the actors put forward by agents. And then one day, while still looking for my actor, I watched the short films selected

for the César awards and discovered Melan Omerta. He appeared in J'MANGE FROID, directed by Romain Laguna. It was his first - and only - role and he had incredible presence. I had him do a screen-test and he earned unanimous approval with his amazing accuracy. However, in everyday life, Melan isn't an actor but a rapper. I went to listen to him in concert and, when he comes on stage, he mesmerizes the whole crowd. He has tremendous charisma. He is, for me, a revelation. He is the one who composed the rap song in the film. I can't talk about the film's cast without mentioning Olivia Côte and Vincent Dedienne. I chose to cast Olivia against type because I felt that she would bring something unexpected and modern to this role of an introverted and dedicated secretary. She was able to blend in wonderfully with the character. As for Vincent, he played the “bad guy” with a great deal of nuance. He knew how to be insidious, fair and touching at the same time in a very subtle way. I really enjoyed working with all these actors.

### THE ROSE MAKER is dedicated to your mother...

There was a long period when, in order to devote myself exclusively to writing, I did not film. It so happened that my mother fell ill around that time and I took care of her until she passed. I told her about THE ROSE MAKER. She urged me to bring this project to fruition. So I dedicated it to her.





**What would you like the audience to feel on leaving your film?**

I would like to see people leave THE ROSE MAKER thinking that the quest for beauty can justify devoting our lives to it. If I had to pick a line as an epigraph for my film, it would be this one, by the Belgian rose creator Louis Lens: "Whoever devotes himself to the passion of beauty will never waste his life."





# INTERVIEW WITH CATHERINE FROT

## What attracted you to THE ROSE MAKER?

I was initially drawn to the character's personality and also her arc: that of a woman who was a glory in her profession, who is no longer a glory but who will nevertheless experience a rebirth by accepting the help of people who have also hit rock bottom. People who are in trouble, locked in their solitude but who, despite their differences, end up finding their salvation in solidarity. I was first touched by the social dimension and the humanity of THE ROSE MAKER. And then I realized that the roses were very important in the charm of this tale of helping hands, that they were even essential, that they gave it an indescribable poetry and a heady perfume. I must admit that I didn't pay much attention to these flowers before. The film introduced me to them. I feel like I've made an extraordinary journey into an unknown land. I no longer look at roses in the same way. I know what their beauty requires in terms of care and know-how and today they touch me and make me dream.

## Let's get back to Eve...

For an actress, Eve is an irresistible character, because she is so complex and will evolve so much. At the start of the film, she is proud, upstanding, courageous,

closed in on herself; a sort of uptight but bruised boss lady who only keeps going thanks to her "monomaniacal" passion for roses. She was a queen in her field, stronger competitors have taken her crown, and yet she continues to fight for the survival of her business with quite incredible panache. Eve is a bit like an oak. On the surface, she is as solid as a rock, and yet she is weakened by wounds she believes to be invisible: the death of her father, the decline of her business and... the anonymity into which she has fallen. The unexpected arrival of three people in search of identity and social integration is enough to make this stubborn woman give up, question herself, and let a feeling develop in her that, as a childless woman, she thought she would never be able to experience: that of passing something on. Playing someone who comes out of her shell and transforms herself is always exciting, all the more so if, as is the case here, she is driven by an exclusive and totally disinterested passion. In a certain way, Eve "takes after" roses. She lives only for the perpetuation of beauty, something completely useless, fleeting, obsolete and yet fundamental and primordial. Eve undergoes a sort of spiritual quest which borders on poetry and which also gives rise, at times, to a certain humor.





**Eve is an artisan. While her work is based on taste and intuition, it also requires skill, meticulousness and precision. Playing her required learning quite a few things. Did this add to your desire to take the part?**

Oh yes! I love to give the illusion on screen that I have mastered skills that I don't have in everyday life. In fact, that is one of my great joys as an actress. For example, I still have wonderful memories of the cooking lessons I was given for HAUTE CUISINE or the piano virtuosity lessons I took for THE PAGE TURNER. For THE ROSE MAKER, I had to learn about hybridization. It is a skill that requires a lot of precision and I loved it. My teacher was Madame Dorieux, the owner of the rose garden in which we shot the film. I really like these periods of learning the trade that my characters practice. For me, they are like schools of life. Even if I forget them quickly afterwards, I retain the pleasure I had in learning the gestures of professions that would have remained completely foreign to me otherwise.

**Are costumes important for you?**

They are essential. They allow me to fully "inhabit" my character. With Pierre Pinaud and the costume designer, I spent a lot of time thinking about Eve's clothes. She is a modern company manager with a manual job but, at the same time, she cherishes the memory and the working methods of her father. We imagined her a little masculine, in clothes that are both modern and old-fashioned, practical but with an outdated elegance. I immediately thought of the floppy necktie, the hat and the pipe. The pipe, which she seems to smoke on the sly, out of nostalgia for her father, is also a tangible expression of her contradictions, since at one point she, whose job is to appreciate the fragrance of roses, asks her young employee to stop smoking so as "not to spoil his sense of smell". I love it when someone's contradictions are also revealed in the accessories of their daily life.

**You didn't know Pierre Pinaud. What kind of director is he?**

He is charming, really, touching, elegant, poetic and tactful at the same time. He is a man who lives

in and for beauty. He is a garden of flowers all by himself. His film is called THE ROSE MAKER, because for him, undeniably, the rose is at the center of his film, the rose, its history and its perpetuation which is symbolized here by the fight of a woman. It is also thanks to this approach that, beyond its social dimension, his film exudes such poetry, sensuality and emotion.

**A word about your partner, Melan Omerta, who plays Fred, and who was making his feature debut here...**

Melan was the best in the screen tests... and he has incredible presence. It's pretty crazy, he comes from a rap background, knew little or nothing about film, yet he immediately had a feel for the camera. Performing with him was both intense and simple. He gives off an incredible amount of emotion. He is a great discovery.

**We get the impression that THE ROSE MAKER is a film that has particularly touched you...**

That's true. It's a very beautiful, refined, very well written and constructed film. At the same time, it is very rich. It exposes the difficulties of a small family



business in the face of large corporations, it takes stock of a profession facing great difficulties, it portrays an endearing woman in her struggle to survive without renouncing her moral values, and in her stubbornness to maintain a floral tradition, and it shows that solidarity is a magnificent way to reinvent oneself. The fact that the link between all these facets is the passion for a flower that is the image of eternal beauty merely adds to its singularity!





## CAST

Eve	Catherine FROT
Fred	Melan OMERTA
Samir	Fatsah BOUYAHMED
Vera	Olivia CÔTE
Nadège	Marie PETIOT
And Lamarzelle	Vincent DEDIENNE

# CREW

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Director	Pierre PINAUD
Screenplay	Pierre PINAUD et Fadette DROUARD
In collaboration with	Philippe LEGUAY
Original music	Mathieu LAMBOLEY
Photography	Guillaume DEFFONTAINES
1st assistant director	Nicolas GUILLEMINOT
Script supervisor	Bérengère SAINT-BEZAR
Production design	Philippe CHIFFRE
Editing	Valérie DESEINE et Loïc LALLEMAND
Costumes	Elise BOUQUET et Reem KUZAYLI
Sound	Lucien BALIBAR Olivier WALCZAK Jean-Paul HURIER
Casting director	Pierre-Jacques BENICHO
Production manager	Jean-Louis BERGAMINI
Producers	Stéphanie CARRERAS et Philippe PUJO
Production companies	ESTRELLA PRODUCTIONS FRANCE 3 CINEMA AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES CINEMA
Line producer	David GIORDANO
Production manager	Thierry MUSCAT
Coproduced by	ESTRELLA PRODUCTIONS FRANCE 3 CINEMA AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES CINEMA
With the participation of	FRANCE TELEVISIONS, OCS, CINE+
In association with	CINEAXE, PALATINE ETOILE 17 SOFITVCINE 7
With the participation of	La Région AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES et du CNC
With the support of	LA PROCIREP et la SACEM
Distribution	DIAPHANA
International sales	CHARADES



