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TARANTULA, ARTEMIS PRODUCTIONS, VOO & BE TV, SHELTER PROD WITH
THE PARTICIPATION OF FONDS NATIONAL DE SOUTIEN À LA PRODUCTION
AUDIOVISUELLE DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG IN ASSOCIATION WITH
TAXSHELTER.BE & ING WITH THE SUPPORT OF TAX SHELTER DU
GOUVERNEMENT FÉDÉRAL DE BELGIQUE, CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET
DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE, RÉGION OCCITANIE, CINECAP 2, ARTE / COFINOVA AND
L'ANGOA WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF DOC & FILM INTERNATIONAL AND
SOPHIE DULAC DISTRIBUTION

PRESENT

TWO OF US

A film by Filippo Meneghetti

95 minutes, 2.39, France

Official Selection

2019 Toronto International Film Festival – World Premiere
2020 Palm Springs International Film Festival – U.S. Premiere
2020 New Directors/New Films
2020 OutFest
2020 Frameline
2020 NewFest

FINAL PRESS NOTES

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SYNOPSIS

Two retired women, Nina (Barbara Sukowa) and Madeleine (Martine Chevallier), have been secretly in love for decades. Everybody, including Madeleine's family, thinks they are simply neighbors, sharing the top floor of their building. They come and go between their two apartments, enjoying the affection and pleasures of daily life together, until an unforeseen event turns their relationship upside down and leads Madeleine's daughter to gradually unravel the truth about them.

Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR

The film is centered on a couple of women in their seventies who are secretly in love. How did you get the idea to tell this story?

The inspiration for the complexity of my protagonists' life choices and their inability to completely own them, with regard to their families, came from various people I have known, whose trajectories made a deep impression on me. For so long, I wanted to write a film about them, but I wasn't sure of the best angle to approach it.

Then, one day, when I was about to ring a friend's doorbell, I heard voices coming from the top floor. I went upstairs to take a look. The front doors of the two apartments up there were open, and the voices were those of two women talking to each other from their respective apartments. I lingered for a few minutes, unseen and in silence. It really was very intriguing. Later, my friend told me that the two women were widows in their seventies, who warded off loneliness by constantly keeping their doors open and making the landing between them part of an enlarged apartment that covered the whole top floor. That triggered something in my head, and I could picture my story. My protagonists would live together in that way, hiding their romantic involvement by appearing to the world to be mere neighbors. Lots of images sprang to mind as the arrangement, which was metaphorical while also simple and routine, took shape in my brain. The project was born.

The surprising thing is that much later, when I was working on the script with my co-writer, I heard about a couple who lived almost exactly like Nina and Madeleine to conceal their relationship from their families. Life imitating art, I suppose.

So the architectural aspect was at the core of the film?

Yes, before we even started writing. The two interconnecting apartments would be the protagonists' living space and, at the same time, a symbolic place that reflects and expresses their dealings with the outside world. In Madeleine's apartment, every detail, every object tells the story of her family. Its coziness constantly reminds us of the burden weighing on her shoulders - the bonds around her, the chains holding her. Nina's apartment is more mysterious. We only see it later in the movie, just as the character gradually reveals herself. As for the landing, it is the pivotal space between the two apartments. The two front doors, which are always open initially, start to shut, turning this porous space into a kind of border. Those images - open doors, closed doors - seemed a simple and effective metaphor for Nina's exclusion by Madeleine's family. And it allowed me to play with genre a little. From the start, I wanted to shoot this love story as if it were a thriller: an eye looking through a peephole, an intruder in the night... The idea was to borrow from the codes of suspense, while reinterpreting them so they sit coherently with the universe of the film.

How did you develop the characters with your actresses?

Barbara Sukowa and Martine Chevallier committed to the project at a very early stage, which allowed us to write the characters for them. I wanted Nina and Madeleine to be played by actresses who are comfortable with their age while exuding strength. I didn't want audiences to perceive them as victims, but as heroines fighting for their love. The film tells the story of a struggle, the story of a passion that is as obstinate as it is affectionate. But that struggle is also a way to explore issues that fascinate me. How does the gaze of others influence our acts? What inner conflict roils us when confronted with that kind of censorship? The obstacles that stand in their path sometimes lead Nina and Madeleine to extreme behavior. I didn't want us to feel sorry for them. Similarly, I didn't want Anne, Madeleine's daughter, to be seen as an oppressor. That's why Léa Drucker was perfect for the part. She gives the character vulnerability and forces the audience to feel empathy for her. Anne is an incredibly loving daughter who always looked up to her mother as a role model. She would do anything for her, but she is rattled when she finds out that Madeleine has been living a lie. That explains the harshness of her reaction. Each character has light and dark sides.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS & CAST

BARBARA SUKOWA – Nina

Barbara Sukowa is one of the most internationally well-known German actresses. She has received numerous awards for her work in film and on stage.

Sukowa started as a stage actress in major German theaters. Her roles included Marion in Büchner's *Danton's Death* and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other Shakespeare roles in Europe were Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Desdemona in *Othello*. Sukowa also performed in Ibsen's *The Master Builder*. The Marquise de Merteuil in Heiner Mueller's *Quartett* in Salzburg Festival. Amsterdam, Stockholm, Hamburg (2010). In the US, she has worked in productions of *The Cherry Orchard* and in Arthur Kopit's *Because He Can*.

Her break through in cinema came with her portrayal of Mieke in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980), which earned her the Best Young Actress Award in Germany. Her performance of the title role in Fassbinder's *Lola* earned her a German Film Awards (Gold) award. Her performance in Margarethe von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit (Marianne and Juliane)*, (1981) earned her a Best Actress Award at the Venice Film Festival. She received "Best Actress Award" honors at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival for her work in von Trotta's *Rosa Luxemburg*. In 2008 she received Best actress Award at the Montreal World Film Festival for her role in Ulla Wagner's *The Invention of Curried Sausage*. She is a three-time recipient of the prestigious Bavarian Film Award for her roles in the *Name of Innocence*, *Vision from the life of Hildegard von Bingen* and *Hannah Arendt*.

Sukowa has also developed a further career as a classical music narrator and singer. She has performed the speaker's role in Arnold Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, first with the Schoenberg Ensemble under Reinbert de Leeuw. Other performances have been with ensembles in Paris, London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Madrid, Rome, Tokyo, Salzburg, Los Angeles, and New York City with conductors Marc Albrecht, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and David Robertson. She has performed the Speaker's role in Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* with the Berlin Philharmonic and Claudio Abbado, and the Los Angeles Philharmonics under Esa-Pekka Salonen, and is the Speaker on the recording with Abbado and the Vienna Philharmonic. She narrated Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* both in concert and on the recording, as well as a recording of Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She has performed in Arthur Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher* and Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera*. She performed the speaking role in the US premiere of Michael Jarrell's *Cassandra* in March 2006 at Carnegie Hall the New York City with musicians from the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. At Carnegie Hall she sang the US premiere of "In The Wonderful Month of May" an adaptation of Schubert and Schumann Lieder by Reinbert DeLeeuw

and the Schoenberg Ensemble. The recording by Winter & Winter received an Echo Klassik, an Edison Award and a Grammy Nomination.

Sukowa is also the front singer of the Band the X-Patsys, which she founded with visual artists Jon Kessler and Robert Longo. Their recently released CD "Devouring Time" was named a "Best New Release" in Germany.

BARBARA SUKOWA FILMOGRAPHY

2021

DEUX / TWO OF US

by Filippo Meneghetti

2015

STEFAN ZWEIG, FAREWELL TO EUROPE

by Maria Schrader

2011

HANNAH ARENDT

by Margarethe von Trotta

Deutscher Filmpreis for Best Actress Bavarian Film Award for Best Actress

2001

THIRTEEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ONE THING

by Jill Sprecher

Florida Film Critics Award for Best Ensemble Cast

1997

IN THE NAME OF INNOCENCE

by Andreas Kleinert

Bayerischer Filmpreis for Best Actress

1993

M. BUTTERFLY

by David Cronenberg

1990

EUROPA

by Lars von Trier

1986

ROSA LUXEMBURG

by Margarethe von Trotta

Best Actress – Cannes Festival Deutscher Filmpreis for Best Actress

1981

MARIANNE AND JULIANE

by Margarethe von Trotta

Best Actress – Venice Festival

LOLA

by Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Deutscher Filmpreis for Best Actress

MARTINE CHEVALLIER - Madeleine

Martine Chevallier, born in Gap (Hautes-Alpes), is a French actress. She was appointed a member of the Comédie-Française in 1988 and has been an honorary member since 2019. In 1968, Chevallier was hired at the Théâtre de la Ville, until the 1969-1970 season, then joined the troupe of the Comédie des Alpes, starring in the play *Late at Night* by Guillaume Kergourlay. Chevallier was trained in the Stanislavski theatrical method before joining the National Conservatory of Dramatic Art where she won first prize in 1974.

Chevallier was hired at the Comédie-Française as a resident on November 1st, 1986, and named the 478th associate in 1988. She made her debut at the Comédie-Française, playing the title role in *Esther* directed by Françoise Seigner. She performed under the direction of Georges Lavaudant, Jean-Louis Benoît, Philippe Adrien, Pierre Romans, Antoine Vitez, Yannis Kokkos, Youssef Chahine, and Jacques Rosner. In 1995, she played the title role in *Phèdre* de Racine directed by Anne Delbée. Piotr Fomenko entrusted Chevallier with the role of Gourmyjskaïa in *Forest*, a role she later reprised in the 2014 film adaptation *The Forest* directed by Arnaud Desplechin. She also starred in *Le Système Ribadier* by Feydeau directed by Zabou Breitman, and in *Poussière* by Lars Norén directed by the author.

Chevallier became a member emeritus of the French Comedy in 2019, where she starred as the title character in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* directed by Rodolphe Dana. In the cinema, Chevallier has starred in the films of Anne Fontaine, Roschdy Zem, Guillaume Canet, Julie Gavras, Benoît Jacquot, Arnaud Desplechin and Lucas Belvaux. Chevallier most recent role is as the lover of Barbara Sukowa and the mother of Léa Drucker in the film *Two of Us* directed by Filippo Meneghetti.

MARTINE CHEVALLIER FILMOGRAPHY

CINEMA

2021

DEUX / TWO OF US

by Filippo Meneghetti

CHANSON DOUCE

by Lucie Borleteau

2013

PAS SON GENRE / NOT MY TYPE

by Lucas Belvaux

2012

LES ADIEUX À LA REINE / FAREWELL MY QUEEN

by Benoît Jacquot

2006

NE LE DIS À PERSONNE / TELL NO ONE

by Guillaume Canet

JE VAIS BIEN, NE T'EN FAIS PAS / DON'T WORRY, I'M FINE

by Philippe Lioret

2005

ENTRE SES MAINS / IN HIS HANDS

by Anne Fontaine

1995

JEFFERSON IN PARIS

by James Ivory

THEATRE

2007

LE RETOUR AU DÉSERT

by B.M. Koltès directed by Muriel Mayette

Molière Award for Best Actress 2007

LÉA DRUCKER - Anne

Léa Drucker was born on January 23, 1972 in Caen. She is the niece of television presenter Michel Drucker and the daughter of her brother Jacques Drucker, professor of medicine in Washington. From the age of 15 she developed a passion for comedy and took theater lessons at the Rue Blanche school. She debuted on the boards in 1999 in *Le Misanthrope et Danny ou la grande bleue*, for which she was nominated for Molières in 2001. At the same time, she appeared in TV films and TV series. In the cinema, in 2001 she landed her first major role in John R. Pepper's *Butterflies*, which made her known to the general public. She quickly distinguished herself by her natural banter, her good humor and her ability to take on comic roles, as in *Lost girls*, *greasy hair* in 2002.

Continuing filming and focusing on comedies, she appeared in 2005 alongside Guillaume Canet in *Narco*, Edouard Baer in *Virgil* de Mabrouk el Mechri with Jalil Lespert. She also appeared her in *Les Brigades du Tigre* by Jérôme Cornuau with Clovis Cornillac. She is also at ease in the dramatic register as in *Chaos*, by Coline Serreau, which earned her a César nomination in 2001. Since then, she has continued her career, alternating between short films and feature films. In 2008, she played Coluche's wife in Antoine de Caunes *Coluche's film, the story of a guy*. Léa Drucker has become, regardless of her last name, an essential actress in the theater as in the cinema.

LÉA DRUCKER FILMOGRAPHY

CINEMA

2019

LA SAINTE FAMILLE / THE HOLY FAMILY

by Louis-Do de Lencquesaing

DEUX / TWO OF US

by Filippo Meneghetti

2018

PLACE PUBLIQUE

by Agnès Jaoui

2017

JUSQU'À LA GARDE / CUSTODY

by Xavier Legrand

César Award for Best Actress 2019

Nomination for Best Actress – Globes de Cristal 2019

Nomination for Best Actress – Lumières 2019

2014

LA CHAMBRE BLEUE / THE BLUE ROOM

by Mathieu Amalric

2001

CHAOS

by Coline Serreau

1999

MES AMIS

by Michel Hazanavicius

TV SERIES

2015-2017

THE BUREAU

by Eric Rochant

DIRECTOR, SCREENWRITER – FILIPPO MENEGHETTI

Originally from Padova, Italy, Filippo's earliest work experience was on New York's indie film circuit. After film school and an Anthropology degree in Rome, he co-wrote the feature *Imago Mortis* (2009). He worked as a first assistant for several years before starting to direct his own short films, *Undici* (2011, codirected by Piero Tomaselli) and *L'intruso* (2012), which screened and garnered prizes at festivals in Italy and abroad. In 2018, Filippo moved to France where he made his next short, *The Beast*, which screened in competition at SXSW 2019 and can now be seen at international festivals. *Two Of Us* is Filippo's first feature.

SCREENWRITER – MALYSONE BOVORASMY

After graduating with an M.A. in literature, Malysone Bovorasmy started working as a film and TV journalist for various publications before moving into screenwriting. She took the TV series creative writing course at La Fémis in 2017 and is currently working on various projects for TV. For the cinema, after co-writing *Two Of Us* with director Filippo Meneghetti, she co-wrote *Eelam*, directed by Lawrence Valin, currently in development with Agat Films and winner of the Emergence 2019 award.

CREDITS

STARRING

NINA BARBARA SUKOWA
MADELEINE MARTINE CHEVALLIER DE LA COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE
ANNE LÉA DRUCKER
MURIEL MURIEL BENAZERAF
FRÉDÉRIC JÉRÔME VARANFRAIN

DIRECTED BY **FILIPPO MENEGHETTI**

SCREENPLAY **FILIPPO MENEGHETTI, MALYSONE BOVORASMY**

PRODUCED BY **PIERRE-EMMANUEL FLEURANTIN, LAURENT BAUJARD**

COPRODUCED BY **ELISE ANDRE, DONATO ROTUNNO, PATRICK QUINET,**
STEPHANE QUINET

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER **PHILIPPE LOGIE**

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DULAC DISTRIBUTION**

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CONSULTANT **FLORENCE VIGNON**

PRODUCTION MANAGER **VINCENT CANART**

1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR **BRICE MORIN**

PRODUCTION DESIGN **LAURIE COLSON**

CASTING **BRIGITTE MOIDON, VALÉRIE PANGRAZZI**

SOUND CÉLINE BODSON

COSTUMES MAGDALENA LABUZ

FILM EDITOR RONAN TRONCHOT

ORIGINAL SCORE MICHELE MENINI

FRENCH DISTRIBUTION SOPHIE DULAC DISTRIBUTION

INTERNATIONAL SALES DOC & FILM INTERNATIONAL

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS:

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: FRENCH

YEAR: 2019

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FORMAT: DCP 2K

ASPECT RATIO: 2.39:1

SOUND: 5.1