

PAULO BRANCO presents

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SSIFF

OFFICIAL SELECTION - COMPETITION
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIÁN
2018

OFFICIAL SELECTION
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TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2018

LOU
DE LAÂGE

STANISLAS
MERHAR

NIELS
SCHNEIDER

JENNA
THIAM

FLEUR FITOUSSI
DAVID CARACOL
VASCO VARELA DA SILVA
TIAGO VARELA DA SILVA

THE BLACK BOOK

A film by
VALERIA SARMIENTO

Screenplay by
CARLOS SABOGA

Freely based on the novel
«Livro Negro de Padre Dinis» by
CAMILO CASTELO BRANCO

Original music JORGE ARRIAGADA
Cinematography ACÁCIO DE ALMEIDA
Sound CARLOS MOTA and MIGUEL MARTINS
Film editing LUCA ALVERDI
Art direction ISABEL BRANCO
Assistant directors
PAULO MIL HOMENS and ANTÓNIO PINHÃO BOTELHO
Executive producer ANA PINHÃO MOURA
Co-producer CARLOS BEDRAN
With special participation by
GRÉGOIRE LEPRINCE-RINGUET
And a friendly participation by
VICTORIA GUERRA, JOANA RIBEIRO
and CATARINA WALLENSTEIN
Produced by PAULO BRANCO
A co-production LEOPARDO FILMES
and ALFAMA FILMS PRODUCTION
In association with
CB PARTNERS and APM PRODUÇÕES
And participation of CINÉ+ and RTP
With the support of PROCIREP
CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DE LISBOA
and LISBOA FILM COMMISSION

UNIVISUAL
CINÉ+ RTP PROCIREP LISBOA FILM COMMISSION

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SYNOPSIS

The story of the adventures, in the twilight of the eighteenth century, of a singular couple formed by a little orphan with mysterious origins and his young Italian nurse of a similarly uncertain birth.

They lead us in their wake, from Rome to Venice, London to Paris. Always followed in the shadows, for obscure reasons, by a Calabrian and a troubling cardinal, they make us explore the dark intrigues of the Vatican, the pangs of a fatal passion, a gruesome duel, a banter at the court of Versailles and the convulsions of the French Revolution.

A JOURNEY THROUGH EUROPE AND HISTORY

Interview with Valeria Sarmiento

What is the origin of the project?

Originally, I was supposed to make another film with Paulo Branco called *The Ice Track* (from Roberto Bolaño's novel), but we could not find funding because the rights of the novel became more and more expensive; then, in one of Raoul's (Ruiz) closets, I found a script written by Carlos Saboga that he was supposed to direct after *Mysteries of Lisbon*. At the time, the script was not very long. Much later, Carlos reworked it and I brought it to Paulo, and told him that since *The Ice Track* was still pending, we could do *The Black Book*. Paulo agreed right away because he loves Camilo Castelo Branco, the author of the novel, and he also loved the *Mysteries of Lisbon*. It seemed like a nice continuation, to make a second film about another novel by the Portuguese writer.

Is it a prequel to the *Mysteries*?

O *Livro Negro de Padre Dinis* (the original title of the novel) is a story that, in a way, precedes *The Mysteries of Lisbon* where, using flashbacks, we witness the birth of a child. In *The Black Book*, we hear about the childhood of a boy named Sebastian, as well as the very important story of the woman who raises him. Raoul was interested, as he used to say to Carlos, by the character of the Cardinal. But I was more interested in the character of the nurse. I found references, elements that are very clear to us in Latin America. I thought about these stories of initiation in some bourgeois families, where it is sometimes the young housekeeper who awakens feelings of desire, and which can sometimes lead to terrible stories, because in a certain way it is the employees of the house who introduce the adolescents to sexuality. So I decided to focus on the character of the woman rather than the cardinal.

How much did you work on the scenario?

I followed the initial script of Carlos Saboga, even though I slightly reduced the importance of the cardinal's character. We had even thought of integrating a part of the *Mysteries of Lisbon* inside the film, but we would have had to shoot again, because we did not have the same photography, or the same framing or rhythm, and of course not the same actors. So I decided to skip this sequence, something that Carlos may not forgive me for...

Is it a series?

It is, indeed, a serie in which historical characters appear. Unlike Raoul, this was the first time I had worked on this period. After reading the novel and the script, I learned a lot about that time. An era linked to the presence of libertines, like the Marquis. I read a book that taught me a lot about it, *The Last Libertines* by Benedetta Craver.

You practically never work with actors with whom you or Ruiz have worked before...

I was in Chile and Paulo sent me the names of five actresses selected for the role of Laura and I watched extracts of the films in which they had played. I discovered Lou de Laâge in *Les Innocentes*, and by reviewing excerpts, it convinced me that she had to play the role. She has something frail, fragile that attracted me. She seems fragile but with an inner fire. For the rest of the characters, it depended a bit on Paulo Branco, for both practical and economic reasons. It was the first time I worked with them.

You film her with a generosity and sensuality that is new.

One of the things I discover with age is that I can look at young people with a lot of tenderness. I saw the couple she was forming on the screen with Niels Schneider, and I thought they were very beautiful examples of human nature!

The image and texture of this film is surprising...

I had done the *Lines of Wellington* with chief operator André Szankowski, and we were supposed to work together again, but he was not available.

So I came back to my old friend and collaborator Acacio de Almeida, with whom we worked a lot, and it went very well, again. He is for me a director of photography so malleable, kind. He will soon be 80 years old ... I wanted the film not to be too realistic. And for that, we looked at the possibility of removing a color ... I discovered that after the Second World War, the Spaniards, not having the means to equip themselves in Technicolor, had invented a similar technique. They made several impressive films with this technique... with an astonishing result, where the greens turned to blues. In a subtle way, on our side, we used a filter to try to have the effect of these films. But the costume sets already had, say, one less color. Thus, we reached an impression of unreality, which is what I wanted in the film. One does not always realize how much the image, the colors, determine the vision that we can have of a film. Especially in this case of reverie, another time as fantasized. I wanted the viewer to enter the atmosphere of a tale. This seems to me more true to the script, since the main character is a legendary character. In any case, who is destined to become one?

We were looking for this effect, a kind of... fake in the color. It's very sweet, you can see it little by little. That's why we worked all the sets and costumes upstream, removing a color which is blue. It therefore



became complicated, for instance regarding the soldiers' uniforms. But if we succeeded, it is thanks to the talent and the work of the teams of Isabel Branco, who makes both the costumes and the sets. I have already worked with her three times. She is a great artist because she knows how to work with few means. Thanks to her, each era had its own coherence. Imagine, we could not use blue, and yet, we did well!

The film extends from before the Revolution, say 1770 to the second campaign of Italy, in about 1800. We had a map, a kind of giant frieze in which we noted the times of the script, with historical clues. We organized the eras, and then Isabel adapted the costumes and sets. I think that thanks to her also we reach the dreamlike feeling that is characteristic of this fantastic saga.

And how is the shooting of a film going on at different times and in different places?

We filmed for six weeks, which is short for a costume film. We mainly shot in Portugal, around Lisbon, Sintra... Portugal is the only place where we can still find palaces available. This may be the last time, since now to shoot vintage films we are starting to pay a lot of money. The story takes place all over Europe, but everything has been shot in the same place. There are certain details that evoke different places. For Rome, for example, we have put a little sound of bells, or the well-known sound of the "cobblestones of Paris": it is a fiction, and we ask the spectator to believe it.

And you, often the editor, you entrust the editing to someone else.

When I make fiction films, I never take care of editing. Here it was Luca Alberdi, an Italian editor working in Portugal. I asked to work

with him for the *Lines of Wellington*. What is interesting is that they are two films with a very different style. Here we needed to go fast, to have this series move at a frantic pace, whereas in the *Lines* we had to settle in the tempo, follow long and complex shots-sequence, since we wanted to see how the war settles in the life of the characters. The *Black Book* was designed as a series, it follows the rhythm, and you have to constantly revive the action.

I think there has to be a vertigo induced by the narrative, which does not let go of you for a second. The duration of the film must preserve this suspense, this very sustained rhythm

Like the number of ellipses, for example?

This rhythm requiring ellipses is desired by the structure of a series. It was already present in the original novel: everything is linked, we go from the French Revolution to the Empire and the Napoleonic wars.

Have you found some of your usual collaborators?

Yes. For example, for the music, we worked with the composer Jorge Arriagada, from the beginning of the editing. We sent him edited sequences and he proposed music, and then we could, thanks to that, resume the editing process.



In his collaborations with you, he is a true chameleon.

I know Jorge well, I edited a good part of Raoul's films with his compositions. Sometimes, as was the case for *Telenovela Errante*, he "lends" me some music.

The wandering Telenovela, an unfinished project of Ruiz, which you have just edited. And by the way, you have just finished a series for Chilean television. What is the transition to an 18th century adventure film set in Europe like ?

My project in Chile is also a period film. It is the year 1952, when women have for the first time the right to vote in Chile, after terrible moments of communist persecution. This is the historical background of the series, told in ten episodes: the story of two women trying to recover their father's store. I did not have to worry about moving from low budget films to another type of economy, since I work with different teams.

One thing is very clear in my work. On one side, there is fiction. I started as a fiction director with Corín Tellado, for example, by adapting sentimental stories. But when I make documentaries in Latin America, I make documentaries on very difficult themes. Like a kind of split personality. For the moment, before returning to shoot documentaries in Europe, I have to finish another unfinished project of Raoul, *El Tango delviudo*.

And that famous Black Book, then?

This is typical of a series, and this is what the Cardinal, played by Stanislas Mehrar, says. It is always better that the mystery remains...

VALERIA SARMIENTO

Born in Chile in 1948, Valeria Sarmiento studied Philosophy and Cinema before starting her career as a filmmaker. Exiled in Paris after the 1973 coup, she kept sending political messages to Latin American leaders through her films and documentaries. She is also the privileged collaborator of Raúl Ruiz, for whom she edited most of the films, and with whom she lived.

EL HOMBRE CUANDO ES HOMBRE (1981), filmed in Costa Rica, tackles Latin American machismo by its least harmful and most sympathetic sides (romanticism, sentimentality, courtesy), before progressively unveiling the worst aspects of everyday oppression. Popular songs and Mexican mariachis serve as commentary or counterpoint. Both in documentaries and in fiction, Valeria Sarmiento pays attention to dramaturgy and weighs her suggestions carefully. THE PLANET OF CHILDREN (1991), filmed in Cuba, plays on ambiguity to better describe an institution for children which is supposed to encourage professional vocations and leads them towards the end of the Castro era.

Fiction films confirm her attachment to popular culture and her willingness to play with conventions and stereotypes. OUR MARRIAGE (1984), her first feature film, is selected in many festivals and received the Young Director Award in San Sebastian. AMELIA LOPES O'NEILL (1991) was selected at the Berlin Film Festival in 1991 and received the Gan Foundation Award. Filmed in Chile, this film is part of the melodramatic universe of the bolero, and Valeria Sarmiento develops a look at the mentalities and behaviors that persist, beyond transgressions. In her next films, ELLE (1994) and ROSA LA CHINA (2002), she continues to reflect on the couple. The UNKNOWN OF STRASBOURG (1998), with a paradoxical aesthetic, will also stand out. In 2012, she takes over from Raúl Ruiz, who dies during the preparation of the film, and directs THE LINES OF WELLINGTON, a great historical fresco and choral film about the Napoleonic debacle in Portugal in 1810.

In 1988, she received an endowment from the Guggenheim Foundation.

In 2008, Stanford University organized a retrospective of her work.

In 2010, she shared with Raúl Ruiz the Art Critics Circle's Bicentennial Award for Cinema.

DIRECTOR - FICTION:

- 2018 *The Black Book* (film)
Toronto Film Festival, San Sebastian film Festival
- 2017 *Casa di Angeli* (TV series in 3 episodes)
- 2014 *Maria Graham: Diary of a Residence in Chile*
- 2013 *Maria Graham: Diary of a Residence in Chile* (TV series)
- 2012 *Les Lignes de Wellington* (TV series in 3 episodes for Arte)
San Sebastian Film Festival, FIPA 2012
- 2012 *Lines of Wellington* (film)
Venise Film Festival, Toronto, New York, Londres
- 2010 *Diario de Mi Residencia en Chile: María Graham* (TV series)

- 2008 *Secretos*
- 2002 *Rosa la Chine*
Venise Film Festival, Toronto, Huelva, Rotterdam
- 1998 *The Strasbourg Stranger*
Montréal Film Festival - World Film Festival
- 1995 *Elle*
San Sebastian Film Festival
- 1991 *Amelia López O'Neill*
Berlin (Official Competition), New York, Toronto, Montréal, Bruxelles, Cartagena, Taiwan, Le Caire, New Delhi, Rotterdam, Huelva
Prix de la critique à Huelva / Lauréate Fondation Gan 1989
- 1984 *Our Marriage*
San Sebastian Film Festival, New York (M.O.M.A.), Locarno, Toronto, Montréal, Bruxelles, Rio, Miami, Seville, Rotterdam, La Havane (Semaine du Cinéma français), Salso Maggiore, Barcelone, Colombia, Santiago du Chili, Mar del Plata
Prix Donostiarra au Festival de San Sebastian (Best young director)
- 1976 *La Femme au Foyer* (short)
Belfort Film Festival - Prix Voltaire
- 1972 *Los Minutereros* (short)
- 1972 *Poesía Popular: La Teoría Y La Práctica* (Short - co-directed with Raúl RUIZ)

DIRECTOR - DOCUMENTARIES:

- 2004 *To the Louvre with Miquel Barceló* (Production INA, France 5, Musée du Louvre)
- 1999 *My First French Cancan* (Production INA, France 3)
Festival Cinéma du réel, Paris
- 1998 *Carlos Fuentes: A Journey Through Time* (Production INA, France 3)
Festival International du film d'art pédagogique, Festival International de Famalicão (Portugal)
Cinema and History Award (UNESCO), Prix Documentarismo à Famalicão
- 1993 *El Derecho de Sonar* (UNESCO)
- 1992 *Latin Women Beat in California* (Production Cannel 4)
- 1992 *The Children's Planet* (Production ZDF / VS Productions)
Festival de Valladolid, Semana Internacional de Cine
- 1989 *90 Segondes, Une Œuvre* (Production Le Louvre, Les Film D'ici)
- 1987 *Music for Movies and Orchestra* (INA)
- 1982 *El Hombre Cuando es Hombre* (Production ZDF / VS Productions)
Festival Margaret Mead de New York
- 1979 *Le Mal du Pays* (short - produced by the United Nations, Geneva)
- 1979 *Gens de Nulle Part, Gens de Toutes Parts* (Centre de l'Audiovisuel de Bruxelles)
- 1972 *UN SUEÑO COMO DE COLORES* (Short - VS Productions)



LOU DE LAÂGE

Actress

Born in 1990 in Bordeaux, Lou de Laâge was discovered by the public in 2008. At the age of 18, she made her debut in an episode of "The little murders of Agatha Christie".

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY:

2011 : *18 years old and Rising* by Frédéric Louf

2011 : *Nino (the imaginary teen of Nino Ferrer)* by Thomas Bardinet

2013 : *Jappeloup* by Christian Duguay

2013 : *People who are kissing* by Danièle Thompson

2014 : *Breathe* by Mélanie Laurent

2015 : *The Tournament* by Élodie Namer

2015 : *The Wait* by Piero Messina

2016 : *The Innocents* by Anne Fontaine



STANISLAS MERHAR

Actor

Born in 1974, he studied for five years the piano at the prestigious École Normale de Musique de Paris. He then works gilding on wood. He is noticed during a wild casting organized by Anne Fontaine for the need of the film "Dry Cleaning".

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY:

1997 : *Dry Cleaning* by Anne Fontaine
1999 : *The Letter* by Manoel de Oliveira :
1999 : *Furia* by Alexandre Aja
2000 : *Franck Spadone* by Richard Bean
2000 : *The Captive* by Chantal Akerman
2000 : *Workers of the good lord* by Jean-Claude Brisseau
2001 : *Nobel* by Fabio Carpi
2001 : *I cavalieri che fecero l'impresa* by Pupi Avati
2002 : *Almost Peaceful* by Michel Deville
2002 : *Thank you Docteur Rey* by Andrew Litvack
2003 : *Adolphe* by Benoît Jacquot
2003 : *The Childhood of Catherine* by Anne Baudry
2005 : *The art of brooking up* by Michel Deville
2005 : *Code 68* by Jean-Henri Roger

2006 : *Like a Black cat at the bottom of a bag* by Stéphane Elmadjian

2006 : *Müetter* by Dominique Lienhard

2006 : *The Legacy* by Géla Babluani and Temur Babluani

2011 : *In town* by Valérie Mréjen et Bertrand Schefer

2011 : *The art of loving* by Emmanuel Mouret

2012 : *Almayer's folly* by Chantal Akerman

2014 : *Rosenn* by Yvan Le Moine

2015 : *The Shadow of women* by Philippe Garrel

2015 : *Left Foot Right Foot* by Germinal Roaux

2017 : *Madame* by Amanda Sthers



NIELS SCHNEIDER

Actor

Niels was born in 1987 in Paris. His mother was a model and his father an actor and movie director. Niels Schneider arrived in Quebec in 1996. He began nine years later in the profession, starting by dubbing movies and then working on his own on his acting. In parallel, he was taking courses of theatrical interpretation and drama.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY:

2007 : *The Taste of nothing* by Pascal Robitaille
2008 : *Everything is perfect* by Yves Christian Fournier
2009 : *I killed my mother* by Xavier Dolan
2009 : *Ready, set... party! 2* by Frédéric d'Amours
2010 : *Heartbeats* by Xavier Dolan
2011 : *Hurlements 8* by Joe Nimziki
2012 : *The atomic age* by Hélène Klotz
2013 : *You and the Nights* by Yann Gonzalez
2013 : *The mess* by Étienne Faure
2013 : *Opium* by Arielle Dombasle
2014 : *Gemma Boveri* by Anne Fontaine
2014 : *Quantum Love* by Lisa Azuelos

2014 : *La Voz en off* by Cristian Jimenez
2015 : *The Art Dealer* by François Margolin
2016 : *Kokoro* by Vanja d'Alcantara
2016 : *Dark Diamond* by Arthur Harari
2016 : *Polina* by Valérie Müller and Angelin Preljocaj
2016 : *Sleeping Beauty* by Adolfo Arieta
2017 : *Dalida* by Lisa Azuelos and Jean Sobieski
2018 : *One Nation, One king* by Pierre Schoeller
2018 : *An impossible love* by Catherine Corsini



JENNA THIAM

Actress

Jenna was born in 1990 in a family of artists. Very early, Jenna Thiam is passionate for the theater. After several short films, the young actress finds her first role on television in the first episode of the series *Clem*, in 2010.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY:

2013 : *Smart Ass* by Kim Chapiron

2014 : *We Love you, you bastard* by Claude Lelouch

2014 : *Next Year* by Vania Leturcq

2014 : *Wild Life* by Cédric Kahn

2015 : *Anton Tchekhov - 1890* by René Féret

2016 : *Daydreams* by Caroline Deruas

2017 : *A Paris education* by Jean-Paul Civeyrac

CAST

Lou De Laâge - Laura / Lelia

Stanislas Merhar - Cardinal Rufo / Young Rufo

Niels Schneider - The Marquis of Lusault

Jenna Thiam - Suzanne de Montfort

Fleur Fitoussi - Gervaise

David Caracol - António

François Debblock - Prince of Parma

Joana Ribeiro - Charlotte Corday

Gregoire Leprince-Ringuet - Bonaparte



CREW

A film by Valeria Sarmiento

Screenplay - Carlos Saboga

Original music - Jorge Arriagada

Cinematography - Acácio de Almeida

Sound - Carlos Mota, Miguel Martins

Film Editing - Luca Alverdi

Art Direction - Isabel Branco

Assistant Directors - Paulo Mil Homens, António Pinhão Botelho

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