# CHORUS

A FILM BY FRANÇOIS DELISLE A couple, separated for 10 years, are forced to come together to identify the remains of their young son declared missing. As they struggle to heal the wounds of the past and bury them with their child, they find a way to be parents and lovers one last time.

## C H O R U S

## A FILM WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED By François Delisle

<u>WITH</u> SÉBASTIEN RICARD FANNY MALLETTE GENEVIÈVE BUJOLD PIERRE CURZI SUUNS

RUNNING TIME 96 MINUTES

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PRESS IN BERLIN CLAUDIA TOMASSINI & ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL FILM PUBLICITY SAARBRÜCKER STR. 24 | HAUS B | 2. 0G 10405 BERLIN T +49 30 44 34 06 06 C +49 173 205 5794 F +49 30 47 37 77 33 CLAUDIATOMASSINI.COM OFFICE@CLAUDIATOMASSINI.COM

PRESS IN MONTREAL IXION COMMUNICATIONS JUDITH DUBEAU AND HENRY WELSH 190A, AV. DE L'ÉPÉE Montréal, Québec, H2V 3T2, Canada T +1 514 495 8176 JUDITH.DUBEAU@IXIONCOMMUNICATIONS.COM Hugo was eight when he went missing. When searches turn up nothing, his parents, Christophe and Irène split apart under the excruciating pressure of waiting. He moves to Mexico. She goes back to her career as an alto in an early music choir.

They live in their separate solitudes, haunted by Hugo's disappearance, until one day they get the news that human remains have been found. Everything indicates they are those of their son Hugo.

During their forced reunion in Montreal, they both handle the death of their child in their own way. Amid the guilt of losing a loved one, they haltingly move toward affirmation of life, acceptance of death and even the possibility of reconciliation.

*Chorus* is a love story that emerges from mourning and leads to two survivors clinging to each other as if to heal the deepest cut of all.

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*CHORUS* IS A PROJECT YOU'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT FOR A LONG TIME, RIGHT?

Yes, it's a project that took a while to come to fruition: I started it before *Twice a Woman*, which I completed in 2010. I then directed *The Meteor* before going back to it. Paradoxically, the result is quite close to the first script I wrote, even though the project went through a rollercoaster ride of different phases over the years. At the beginning, I wanted to write something other than a traditional synopsis, so the first script was fairly poetic. In retrospect, you could even see it as a blueprint for the tone of *The Meteor*. Narratively, however, everything was there. I later decided to work with a co-screenwriter, but our collaboration was a bust. So it took time for the wounds to heal and for me to be ready to consider re-writing the material.

IT REMINDS ME OF THE FINAL LINE FROM BRESSON'S *Pickpocket*: "What a long road I had to travel to get to you."

*PICKPOCKET:* Yes. It wasn't until Catherine Martin's *A Journey*, which I produced, that I went back to writing *Chorus*. I also think my experience with *The Meteor* seeped into the project.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE A REAL PROPENSITY FOR DRAMATICALLY LOADED SUBJECTS AND EXTREME SITUATIONS LIKE CONJUGAL VIOLENCE, KILLING, KIDNAPPING AND CHILD MURDER. WHAT DRAWS YOUR FILMMAKING AND YOUR IMAGINATION INTO SUCH DARK PLACES?

CALLY LOADED TOLENCE, KILLING, FILMMAKING AND Just taking on subjects like that necessarily creates some pretty strong tension. As a result, the issues become clear. At that point my work consists in finding nuance and subtlety, which suits me better than having to add another layer so it works dramatically. In other words, what defines these situations is that they pull the narrative thread tight; I can build around it more freely since I know that I'll get eventually to the other end of the thread. But that's all technical details. In general, I'd say that these issues help me deal with life head-on: difficult, violent subjects lead us away from entertainment. I don't want to make films for entertainment because I see that as a kind of offensive nihilism, a way of giving up in the face of our destiny and the challenges posed by our humanity. I want to grapple with reality; I want to face up to it. I feel that's a sign of vitality: dealing with death is a good way of dealing with life.

I often tell actors, "You don't need to overplay it; it's already loaded enough." These are subjects that allow for, and even demand, a certain economy. I'm very interested in the repercussions these situations have on the bodies of those who live through them. It's probably less obvious in *Chorus*, but for example in *You*, the main concern was observing the movement of bodies clashing against each other in situations of extreme emotion.

AND WHAT WAS THE SPARK BEHIND *Chorus*? Was it the idea of a child being kidnapped or was it something else?

The spark was the feeling of loss. I experienced that at one point in my life, and I realized that it can lead to a kind of fetishism: you save someone's phone messages and cling on to their voice, for example; you refuse to let go of that little fragment. That's how the idea arose of a couple who get back together through mourning a child. All that's from a very theoretical perspective, since I've never been through anything like that. To me, the focal point was the ending, when they're together on the staircase. Everything had to converge toward that. Afterwards, the writing, the shooting and the form got fleshed out, but the trajectory was already clear.

SO THE IDEA OF LOSS WAS THE ESSENCE OF YOUR APPROACH? To me, living means coming to grips with loss. Mourning is an essential part of existence, whether of a person, a thing, an ideal or a dream.

WE'RE ALL FAMILIAR WITH COUPLES WHO FLY APART AFTER THE DEATH OF A CHILD. IT'S BECOME ALMOST A CLICHÉ. THE ORIGINALITY OF YOUR APPROACH IS TO GO IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, TAKING A COUPLE WHO HAVE BROKEN UP AND BRINGING EACH HALF TOGETHER. Starting the story ten years after the child's death creates a distance from the initial shock. Right off the bat, the characters are shattered

and broken. Yet they'll have a chance to rebuild themselves by finishing a narrative that came to an abrupt end: the child's body was never found, there was no funeral, etc. So it's an interesting challenge to rebuild characters who are in pieces, imprisoned in their memories.

Putting ten years between the child's disappearance and the beginning of the film gives me access to characters who are no longer in crisis mode and, as a result, can put in words what they're going through and how they feel. It's a definite advantage when you want to go deeper into a subject.

THE FILM SEEMS BUILT AROUND THE IDEA OF INVERSE SYMMETRY: HE FLED TO MEXICO BUT HAS CONTACT WITH HIS FATHER, WHO'S COMFORTING AND WELL-GROUNDED, WHILE SHE STAYED HERE AND HAS CONTACT WITH HER MOTHER, WHO BUMS MONEY AND SEEMS LIKE AN OUTCAST.

WHAT ABOUT THE TITLE, CHORUS?

They experienced the same loss together, but their reactions are different, some would say opposite. I felt it was important to show that that came about due to different family back-

grounds and different upbringings. Their differences came together over the child. When the child was no longer there, only their differences remained.

This relationship of inverse symmetry probably comes from the way couples complete each other. We find something in someone else that we need, that we don't have. This can be seen even in parents.

Music and choir is mainly what keeps Fanny anchored to life and society. At first, the film was supposed to be called *Forget-Me-Not*, after the flower. But the graphic power of titles is important to me. And in that sense, *Chorus* was much better. Phonetically, it's also reminiscent of *cœur* (French for "heart"), of a pulsating motion that evokes the waves that are so important to the character of Sébastien. So the title links the two characters in several ways.

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE ON BLACK AND WHITE?At the beginning, but subconsciously. I mean<br/>that I didn't one day decide that it should be in black and white,<br/>but I saw the scenes as they are in the final film, which is pretty<br/>weird. Maybe I didn't want to admit to myself that I was going<br/>back to black and white. After writing the final version of the<br/>script, I chanced upon some images by the American photogra-<br/>pher Mark Steinmetz and thought that they matched the film's<br/>atmosphere. They're low-contrast images where the shades of<br/>grey override the blacks and whites. Since I did the photography<br/>on the film and also the colour correction, I had full control<br/>over these aspects of the production.

ISN'T IT HARD TO BE IN CONTACT WITH THE ACTORS WHEN YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF THE FILM'S PHOTOGRAPHY?

**LEN YOU'RE IN** Quite the opposite! There's a direct connection with the actors. A few years ago, I felt that lighting was too complicated, so I just did the framing, which

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caused some tension with the director of photography, who wasn't used to working like that. But now I've found a crew of gaffers and grips who have my back and whom I have a good rapport with, so I can do both. To me, it's something natural and so much faster.

I see right away when it isn't working. There's no filter between the actors and me, and the fact that I'm physically among them rather than looking down over them means that I don't need to tell them much; we communicate practically by instinct. While doing the framing I touch them; we have a kind of non-verbal language and I don't actually talk much.

DO YOU DO A LOT OF HAND-HELD CAMERA WORK?

Quite a lot, although for this film I succumbed to the pleasures of the dolly camera. For once, I had a bigger budget! But yes, there's quite a bit of hand-held camera, even though you can't really tell in the final product. I'm someone who arrives on set extremely prepared. Almost maniacally so. The crew members usually appreciate that a lot, but it starts to hamper me a little. So the hand-held camera helps me free myself up.

HOW PREPARED ARE YOU EXACTLY? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

Everything's calculated. I have scale drawings of every location. I know where to put the rails, where they start and where they end. Everything is broken down, the angles are determined; I know everything in advance. Ideally, that should be a jumping-off point. In the case of *The Meteor*, I had a lot of freedom because there was no technical crew. I'd bought a camera and I'd go out and film with my son. I had time. For *Chorus*, I made sure to give myself that time and that freedom. In Mexico, for example, I arrived a week earlier than everyone else and took the opportunity to go out filming with the help of my driver: no actors and no pressure. That added a lot to the film.

AS YOUR OWN PRODUCER, YOUR OWN SCREENWRITER AND YOUR Own Camera Operator, you benefit hugely from recent technological advances that give you more freedom.

AND YOUR RECENT DOM. Absolutely—technological advances have a definite real-life impact on me. But all that happened gradually. I did the colour correction for *Chorus* myself because now you can get your hands on the same software used by post-production companies. When you

















have a shoestring budget, colour-correcting a feature film takes five days. For *Chorus* it took me 12 or 13 weeks. I'd make a mistake and start again, learning on the job. But in the end it paid off: I'm convinced there are remnants of that in the film. Digital images are very sharp. I had to soften them because the film couldn't support that degree of sharpness. I looked for a long time for a way of giving the image the texture I needed. It's hard to find that with a professional colour corrector. You get a good result, but not necessarily what you want because you can never afford to start again and try out various formulas; the colour corrector wants to move things along because every hour costs money. For *Chorus*, I had the luxury of time because I wasn't depending on anyone.

WHEN YOU'RE PERFORMING SEVERAL JOBS AT ONCE, HOW DO YOU WORK WITH YOUR TEAM? It's quite simple: over time, I've found people I have an affinity with. Their support is invaluable. And I also have to say that for *Chorus* I did something for the first time: every week during preparation, we went to see a film together on the big screen. I chose the films. It's hard to say what the actual impact of that was, but I feel like it was useful. We had the same references; we were in synch aesthetically.

sébastien RICARD WAS THE LEAD ACTOR IN CATHERINE MARTIN'S A JOURNEY, WHICH YOU PRODUCED. IS THAT WHEN YOU DISCOVERED HIM? Yes, in a way. I mostly knew him from the theatre, but seeing the rushes from Catherine's film, I noticed that he'd grown older, put on weight and bulked up. Sébastien is no extravert; he has an inwardness that really suits the character.

AND FANNY MALLETTE?

That happened in casting. Fanny is a real Stradivarius. In the auditions, I did the camera work myself to be closer to the actors, and right away I felt that we were communicating and something was happening.

— INTERVIEW BY Marcel Jean By featuring a fragmented couple forcibly brought together after ten years over the body of their son, I knew that we'd join them in exploring the realms of memory, remorse, suffering, hope and the struggle to live in the face of death.

For ten years, this man and woman wandered, aimless and disoriented. Forced to return to the scene of the massacre, they have to try to mourn, to heal the radically narcissistic wound caused by losing a child. For, truth be told, they are no longer parents; they are "nothing." The void has demolished their way of thinking, talking and feeling, everything that made up their subjective beings. The death of a child brings his parents face to face with their mortality. In an abstract sense, they need to accept their eventual deaths, and in real terms, they need to live their lives in the here and now.

With *Chorus*, despite the darkness we're delving into, I wanted to make sure death didn't damage the two characters' ability to live. Memories, nostalgia and moments of strangeness remain, but with the possibility or hope of being incorporated into a newly invigorated life, free of sentimentality. For that to happen, things had to be out in front and visible. We had to stare without flinching at what we usually turn away from. More than anything, I wanted *Chorus* to be a life experience, to go well beyond the filmmaker's craft. For here, let's not forget, we're just as much on the side of death as on the side of life. FILMOGRAPHY

2015 CHORUS 2013 THE METEOR 2010 TWICE A WOMAN 2007 YOU 2004 HAPPINESS IS A SAD SONG 1994 RUTH Between 1987 and 1990, François Delisle directed several experimental short films. Some of them were selected for various international festivals. In 1991, François Delisle came to critics' attention when he was named best new director of short and medium-length films at the Rendez-Vous du cinéma québécois for his medium-length film *Beebe-Plain*.

In 1994, *Ruth*, François Delisle's first feature film, was named best feature of the year and best screenplay at the Rendez-Vous du cinéma québécois. *Ruth* drew critical acclaim and was screened in Quebec, Canada and as far away as Germany, Belgium and France.

In 2002, François Delisle founded the company Films 53/12 to direct and produce his second feature; *Happiness is a Sad Song*. After winning the award for best feature at the Festival international du cinéma francophone en Acadie and named the best film of the year award from the Association québécoise des critiques de cinéma, *Happiness is a Sad Song* went on to international recognition when it toured the world to over twenty festivals and film events.

In 2007, François Delisle released his third feature film, *You*. In international competition at the Montreal World Film Festival, *You* was a shock for both audiences and critics. Fragile yet uncompromising, *You* has done the rounds nationally and internationally.

In 2010, after touring prestigious festivals around the world, *Twice a Woman*, his fourth film, opened on Quebec screens after being featured at the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma. A critical and audience favourite here and around the world, the film appeared simultaneously in theatres and through video on demand, a first in Canada. *Twice a Woman* earned two nominations for a Prix Jutra in 2011.

His fifth feature film, *The Meteor*, hit Quebec screens in March 2013 after its world premiere at the Sundance Festival and the 63<sup>rd</sup> Berlin Festival. The film was a hit with critics and audiences in Canada and around the world. *The Meteor* won the Association québécoise des critiques de cinéma (AQCC)'s Luc-Perreault/La Presse award for best film of the year and the ACIC-NFB – Les Percéides grand prize for best Canadian film.

### **BIOGRAPHY OF FANNY MALLETTE**

Fanny Mallette has been working nonstop since graduating from the National Theatre School in 1998. She has appeared in many plays including *Dom Juan*, directed by Martine Beaulne, and *Danser à Lughnasa*, directed by Ben Barnes. She portrayed Stéphanie in *Cheech ou* les hommes de Chrysler sont en ville, created for theatre by François Létourneau, and took on that same role in the film version of the play, which earned her a Jutra Award in 2007 for Best Supporting Actress. She returned to the stage more recently in *Oreille, tigre et bruit*, by Alexis Martin and in *Jeux Doubles*, by Jacinthe Potvin, presented at the Théâtre du Bic. Fanny has become a recognizable face, acting in more than 15 highly successful productions such as Scoop. Alys. Graffiti, Tag. Ces enfants d'ailleurs, Asbestos, Grande Ourse (for which performance she received the 2006 Gémeaux Award for Best Actress in a dramatic role) and Nos étés. She also has appeared in 19-2, 30 Vies and O', and she landed the lead role in Patrice Sauvé's series *Vertige*. Her latest part in the series *Mensonges*, earned her a Gémeaux Award for Best Actress in a comedy drama. Versatile to a fault, Fanny has embraced different characters and cinematic genres in a number of movies: Une jeune fille à la fenêtre, by Francis Leclerc, *La femme qui boit*, by Bernard Émond, Gaz bar Blues, by Louis Bélanger, Dans une galaxie près de chez vous, by Claude Desrosiers, *Les muses orphelines*, directed by Robert Favreau, Cheech, by Patrice Sauvé and Continental, un film sans fusil, by Stéphane Lafleur, for which she received a Genie Award nomination for her supporting role. In 2008, she was lauded for her work in Louis Choquette's La ligne brisée and collaborated again with Patrice Sauvé on Grande Ourse: le film. Fanny later stood out in Les 7 jours du Talion, by Podz, En terrain connu, by Stéphane Lafleur and Roche Papier Ciseaux, by Yann Lanouette-Turgeon, Arwad, by Samer Najari. And most recently in Chorus, by François Delisle.

BIOGRAPHY OF GENEVIÈVE BUJOLD Geneviève Bujold is one of the world's most highly respected stars; she starred opposite Richard Burton in *Anne of a Thousand Days*, for which she won a Golden Globe and Oscar nomination for Best Actress. She won the Emmy for her starring performance in George Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan* on television, and is a three-time winner of the Canadian Film Award, Canada's equivalent of the Oscar, for *Isabel, Kamouraska*, and *The Act of the Heart*. She stars with Bruce Dern in the soon to be released *Northern Borders*.

### **BIOGRAPHY OF SÉBASTIEN RICARD**

**BIOGRAPHY OF PIERRE CURZI** 

Sébastien Ricard came out of the National Theatre School in 1998 and is contributing his talent to song writing (a founding member of the band Loco Locass) and acting. Well known to the public through his role of Émile Vandelac in the TV series *Tabou*, he was also seen in *Fortier* and *Les Hauts et les bas de Sophie Paquin*, and has a part in the series Nos Étés III. On stage, he superbly portrayed Armand Duval in La Dame aux Camélias (TNM) and played in many other productions such as Vivre (Usine C), Big Shoot (Salle Fred Barry and Usine C), Kamouraska (Théâtre Denise Pelletier), *Les manuscrits du déluge* (TNM), *Les oiseaux de proie* (Théâtre Jean Duceppe) and *Les Enfants d'Irène* (Théâtre Petit à Petit) and in 2015, *Richard III* (TNM). On the big screen, he incarnates Dédé Fortin, Les Colocs's lead singer in *Dédé, à travers les brumes* (Jean-Philippe Duval) and was namely part of *De ma fenêtre, sans maison* (Maryanne Zehir), *Histoire de famille* (Normand Canac-Marquis and Guy Fournier), Les invasions barbares (Denys Arcand) and 15 février 1839 (Pierre Falardeau), Gabrielle (Louise Archambault), Antoine et Marie (Jimmy Larouche) and most recently *Chorus* (François Delisle).

Pierre Curzi graduated from the National Theatre School in 1969. He then played in numerous popular Quebec movies such as *Maria Chapdelaine, Le Crime d'Ovide Plouffe, Le Déclin de l'empire américain, Les Invasions barbares, L'Âge des ténèbres, Littoral* and *Romeo et Juliette.* He was part of many television shows including *Nouvelle Adresse, Mensonges, Les Invincibles, Le Négociateur, Virginie, Marguerite Volant* and *Les Filles de Caleb.* He received nominations for four Genie Awards, three of them for his roles in *Maria Chapdelaine* (1983), *Lucien Brouillard* (1983) and *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* (1986) and one for Best Screenplay (with co-writer Yves Simoneau) for *Pouvoir intime*, in 1986. He was also president of the Union des artistes for eight years. The UDA is the main union group for cinema, theatre and television actors in Quebec.

<u>IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE</u>	SÉBASTIEN RICARD FANNY MALLETTE GENEVIÈVE BUJOLD PIERRE CURZI ANTOINE L'ÉCUYER LUC SENAY DIDIER LUCIEN SUUNS	CHRISTOPHE IRÈNE Mother Father Antonin Jean-Pierre Blake Hervé Laroche Rock Band
DIRECTOR, SCREENWRITER, CINEMATOGRAPHER, EDITOR	FRANÇOIS DELISLE	
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR	GENEVIÈVE LIZOTTE	
COSTUME DESIGNER	CAROLINE POIRIER	
CASTING	PIERRE PAGEAU	
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	ROBERT MARCEL LEPAGE	
MUSIC	HODIE PUER NASCITUR – HOMO MORTALIS FIRMITER, ANONYMOUS, FRANCE, 14TH CENTURY Le Ray au soleyl qui dret som kar meyne, johannes ciconia Mayra, la luz roja de san marcos Osculetur me, giovanni pierluigi da palestrina For C., sylvain chauveau Bambi, suuns 2020, suuns Music Won't Save You, suuns	
SOUND	FRANÇOIS GRENON Martyne Morin Simon Gervais Stéphane Bergeron	
PRODUCERS	FRANÇOIS DELISLE Maxime Bernard	
TECHNICAL INFORMATION	ORIGINAL TITLE ENGLISH TITLE Shooting format Projection format Run time Original version Subtitles Frame Country of production Year	CHORUS CHORUS 4K DCP 96 MINUTES FRENCH ENGLISH 2.35:1 CANADA 2015

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