

A FILM BY LUC BONDY

THE FALSE SECRETS

LES FAUSSES CONFIDENCES



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SYNOPSIS

Dorante, a penniless young man, takes on the position of steward at the house of Araminte, an attractive widow whom he secretly loves. Dorante's former valet Dubois also works there and is planning a scheme to make Araminte fall in love with Dorante.

Based on his own critically acclaimed production of Marivaux's comedy, Luc Bondy takes the play and its characters behind the stage, through the corridors and rooms of the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris, creating a new space between theatre and cinema.

Director

Luc Bondy

Production

Idéale audience – Pierre-Olivier Bardet

ARTE France

Odéon - Théâtre de l'Europe

Maha Productions

Based on a theatrical play by: Marivaux

Screenplay: Luc Bondy

Director of Photography: Luciano Tovoli

Editors: Nicolas Barachin and Julie Pelat

Music: Bruno Coulais

Sound: François Waledisch and Christian Cartier

Cast

Isabelle Huppert - Aramante

Louis Garrel - Dorante

Bulle Ogier - Madame Argante

Yves Jacques - Dubois

Manon Combes - Marton

Bernard Verley - Monsieur Rémy

Jean -Pierre Malo - Le Compte Dorimont

Fred Ulysse - Arlequin

THE DIRECTOR - LUC BONDY

Born in 1948 in Zurich (Switzerland) Luc Bondy was a theatre and film director.

Trained in Paris at the theatrical school of Jacques Lecoq, he then worked as a director of Schaubühne Theater in Berlin and the producer of the Salzburg Festival - one of the most prominent festivals of music and drama in the world.

Between 1971 and 2005 he produced, wrote or directed over 40 plays and operas, including Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1990, Lehninger Palace) Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* (1993, Odeon Theater in Paris) and Marivaux's *Les Fausses Confidences* (2014) - which will later serve as an inspiration for his film.

He started directing films in 1974, working mainly in Germany and France. He is best known for *Das weite Land* (1987) which brought him two German Film Awards, and a French production *Ne fais pas ça!* (2004) with Philippe Djian and Natasha Régnier.

He also co-wrote the screenplay of *Pornography*, an adaptation of a novel by Polish author Witold Gombrowicz directed by Jan Jakub Kolski, which screened in competition at the Venice Film Festival in 2003.

As an actor he appeared in *Die Bleierne Zeit* (1981) by Margarethe von Trotta or *The Absence* by Peter Handke (1993).

Luc Bondy died in 2015 in Zurich. *The False Secrets* is his last film, inspired by his life-long theatrical experience.

MARIVAUX

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux (1688-1763) was a French novelist and one of the most important French playwrights of 18th century. His comedies, known for their innovative style, sophisticated and free at the same time, explore the theatrical aspects of romantic relationships and social games of appearances. His most important works are *Le Triomphe de l'amour*, *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* and *Les Fausses Confidences*. He is, after Molière and Racine, the third author the most often staged at the Comédie Française. The universal character of his works resulted also in numerous screen adaptations.

CAST

ISABELLE HUPPERT

Recently nominated for the Academy Award for her role in Paul Verhoeven's *Elle* (2016), which got her a Golden Globe, a Spirit Independent Award and a César, Isabelle Huppert is one of the most prominent and internationally acclaimed French actresses. Graduate of the National Conservatory of Dramatic Art of Paris, her international breakthrough came with *La Dentellière* (1977), for which she won a BAFTA award for Most Promising Newcomer to Leading Film Roles. Since then she has been working with such directors, as Michael Cimino, Maurice Pialat, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol and many others.

LOUIS GARREL

Awarded with the Cesar Award for Most Promising Actor for the film *Regular lovers* in 2005 and since then nominated twice for his supporting roles, he is an actor and a director. His role in Bernardo Bertolucci *The Dreamers* (2002) gained him international attention. He also starred in Bertrand Bonello's *Saint Laurent* (in competition in Cannes in 2014) and *Planetarium* by Rebecca Zlotowski. In 2008, Garrel wrote and directed a short film, *Mes copains* (*My buddies*).

'The False Secrets' ('Les Fausses Confidences'): Locarno Review

11:07 AM PDT 8/17/2016 by Boyd van Hoeij



Courtesy of Festival del Film Locarno

Isabelle Huppert, Louis Garrel and Bulle Ogier headline this adaptation of the Marivaux play that was shot by day while the actors performed the same play in the theater by night.

Though Marivaux is a familiar name for every theater lover in France — with many no doubt having had to outgrow their status as groaning high-school students first confronted with the complexities of the playwright's prose — he doesn't quite have the same reputation abroad as Moliere, who is often assigned the Shakespeare-of-France label instead. But in the Francophone world, he's a much admired writer, as evidenced by the continued popularity of his three most famous plays: *The Triumph of Love* (which became a 1997 Broadway musical and, even more incongruously, a 2001 film with Mira Sorvino); *Games of Love and Chance*

(which inspired the eponymous Abdellatif Kechiche film) and *Les fausses confidences*, which has earlier been adapted for the screen in 1984 and 2010 and which has now been filmed again by the late Swiss theater director Luc Bondy.

The originality of Bondy's take on the material, somewhat awkwardly translated as *False Secrets* in English, is the fact that it was shot during an actual run of the play at Paris's iconic Odeon theater with the same high-voltage cast, including French icons Isabelle Huppert and Bulle Ogier as well as French cinema's disinterested dandy extraordinaire, Louis Garrel.

Working with the same text — but reportedly different costumes and hair — the dividing line between cinema and theater thus became very porous for the performers, who played the film version of the characters by day and the theater version of the same characters by night. That said, much of this experiment's metatextual fascination will be lost for those who haven't seen the stage version in 2014 (or its 2015 revival) to which it could be compared, with the feature as a stand-alone item finally more of a curiosity item than anything approaching a definitive take on the material.

Zurich-born Bondy, who died in 2015 before this movie was fully finished, ran the Odeon between 2012 and 2015. Part of the reason the director made this film — his first since 2004's *Ne fais pas ça!* and only his fourth overall — might have been to leave behind a more concrete memory of his time at the Odeon, with the theater's columned hall, grand staircase, exterior balcony overlooking the Place de l'Odeon and hypermodern backstage area all transformed into (clearly incongruous) places where the 1737 play unfolds.

Dorante (Garrel) is a tenebrous and financially ruined young man who has the good fortune to become the private secretary of the fair-haired Araminte (Huppert), a rich widow. The latter is destined by her imperious mother, Madame Argan (Ogier), to marry the Count Dorimont to avoid entering a protracted legal battle with the Count over a piece of land. But Dorante, in love with Araminte, tries to convince the object of his affection that she would be able to win a court case against the Count and thus wouldn't need to marry him just to resolve a legal dispute.

As the male lead but finally also a servant, Dorante functions as a go-between between the upstairs and downstairs parts of the household in the play. He heard about the post he'll occupy from one of the men running Araminte's house, Dubois (Yves Jacques), and Araminte's servant girl, Mademoiselle Marton (Manon Combes), is destined by Dorante's uncle to become his betrothed while he's in the household, though Dorante himself would much rather like to marry Araminte.

Misinterpretations and misunderstandings thwart the (potential) lovers and drive the seriocomic action, though all that finally transpires here isn't much more than a solid comedy of errors that's only elevated by Marivaux's language (deliciously twirled around the mouths of the entire cast). The cinematic language isn't very sophisticated either, with scenes either very brightly lit or taking place in penumbral spaces and cinematographer Luciano Tovoli often preferring rather neutral medium shots. The film's busy, occasionally even baroque score also more often feels intrusive than actually helpful.

That said, what makes *False Secrets* nonetheless interesting as a film are the small and unexpected touches that enliven the material — if you've got an overwhelming desire to see La Huppert in a gold lamé tracksuit on a treadmill, this is your movie — as well as a few things that cannot be done onstage, such as some flashbacks in black-and-white, or the decision to shoot several scenes in the Luxembourg Gardens, right behind the Odeon. There are also some small moments of physical comedy that betray how much of a detail-oriented director Bondy was; a literal throwaway moment in which Huppert casually tosses a bit of wrapping paper in Ogier's direction thus says something about the duo's difficult daughter-mother rapport while also scoring a huge laugh.

But the film as a whole never quite finds a way to marry the hybrid setting and contemporary props, such as Ogier's rock-star sunglasses, with the text's antiquated language and preoccupations with marriage and money. Working in and around the Odeon, the current version of which was built in a neoclassical style in the late 1810s, the setting sometimes feels almost like it could be from the time the action is set, though the view of cars outside, for example, then ruins this illusion, as do the modern clothes and shoes (for some reason, there are shoes on the floor in just about every room). Unfortunately, these dissonant contemporary elements don't seem to be part of a larger stylistic vision that would both feel coherent and be able to convincingly contrast with a

much older text, such as in Baz Luhrmann's intentionally jarring but ultimately convincing adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The play finally concludes, perhaps as could be expected, actually onstage, though Bondy at least has a couple of small surprises in store for the moments right after the play ends. It ain't over until it's over.

Venue: Locarno Film Festival

Production companies: Ideale Audience, Arte France, Odeon-Theatre de l'Europe, Maha Productions

Cast: Isabelle Huppert, Louis Garrel, Bulle Ogier, Yves Jacques, Manon Combes, Bernard Verley, Jean-Pierre Malo, Fred Ulysse

Director: Luc Bondy

Screenplay: Luc Bondy, Geoffrey Layton, based on the play by Marivaux

Producers: Pierre-Olivier Bardet

Director of photography: Luciano Tovoli

Production designer: Aurore Vullierme

Costume designer: Moidele Bickel

Music: Bruno Coulais

Sales: Doc & Film International

Not rated, 85 minutes