

## SYNOPSIS

Yvonne Nguyen, a French-Vietnamese actress, dreams of a successful career in musicals, to the great displeasure of her mother, who would like her to pursue a more serious path. When she has no choice but to move back to her mother's, both women are strangers to each other. But in the intimacy of the Vietnamese family restaurant's kitchen, they grow closer. Meanwhile, Yvonne is still after her dreams and finally gets the chance to audition for a big show.



### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

For several years now, in my short films and shows, I've been working on themes linked to the Vietnamese diaspora in France, on the one hand because these are subjects that concern me personally, and on the other, because despite the importance of this community, there is absolutely no fiction on the subject. Today, I think it's necessary to make our voices heard, and to tell and share our stories. This film is about the quest for identity, the generation gap and the dialogue that is rekindled, but not through words, because we're in a Franco-Vietnamese family, and we don't tell each other things like that. Instead of saying "I love you" or "I'm proud of you" to her daughter, Mrs. Nguyen prefers to cook her favorite dishes. A bit like my mother. And me, a little like Yvonne, between family and external injunctions, between France and Vietnam, I searched for my place for a long time before finding it. Like her, when as a teenager my only wish was to blend in, I considered my origins to be a burden before realizing that they were a source of richness and that their singularity was a strength.

In the Nguyen Kitchen is a dramatic and culinary comedy, but it's also, of course, a musical. Why a musical? As a child, I was mesmerized by films like *Peau d'Ane* before discovering Hollywood musicals at the ciné club. Then, when I was in New York studying film, I discovered the full potential of the genre, both on stage and on screen. Finally, I went on to write articles for almost twenty years as a journalist on the musical.

When I was writing this film, it seemed obvious to me that it had to be a musical. It's a genre that allows us to go beyond the real, to magnify feelings, while using the incredible emotional power of music. In my opinion, this form is a perfect match for Yvonne's character and her outlook on life. For her, moments of song and dance are associated with strong, exhilarating and unique moments. They are windows onto the dreamy and the wonderful. And in these moments, we allow ourselves to believe that anything is possible and that the best is yet to come.

In this film, the musical numbers are either justified by the action, in a precise context (auditions, performances, etc.), or embodied in Yvonne's mental, fantasized space (as, for example, in the film *Chicago*, where the musical numbers are dream projections of Roxie, the main character). Occasionally, the two spaces converge, such as during Yvonne's first audition, which takes place in the real world before turning into a dream.

While the musical numbers are dynamic, the cooking scenes, just as important in this film, are suspended moments, imbued with magic and poetry. The mother's cooking also becomes music: the chirping of the Vietnamese language, the clinking of utensils, the simmering of water, the sizzling of hot oil: diegetic noises blend harmoniously with extra-diegetic music. The work on sound will therefore be crucial, creating a sensory universe while establishing a haunting, soothing rhythm. The images will be appetizing, in terms of color (the soft green of pandan leaves), texture (steam and smoke) and sensation (a hand sliding through grains of rice). If Yvonne expresses herself through musical comedy, Ma obviously communicates through her cooking.

Finally, I'd like to offer an insider's view of an environment I know well, and show characters we're not used to seeing on French screens, at least not in leading roles. 1% of leading roles in French cinema are of Asian origin, according to a recent survey by the Collectif 50/50, which looked at 115 French-initiated films released in 2019.

I want to highlight women, some over 60, others with curves, Asian men and women, black, mixed race, white, LGBT... But I'm certainly not doing it to fill diversity or parity quotas, or to try to increase the percentages - a single film wouldn't be enough anyway - but, simply, because this is the world I live in. It's an abundant, rich, plural world in which we live. I don't want uniformity. I want difference and singularity. That's the kind of cinema I want to make, and that's what I hope we'll make together.

Stéphane Ly-Cuong



## DIRECTOR



Director and scriptwriter

#### Cinema

DANS LA CUISINE DES NGUYEN - Director and Scriptwriter Long Feature Film - Respiro Productions

HIVER À SOKCHO – Scriptwriter - Lauréat Fondation GAN 2022 Long Feature Film adapted from Elisa Shua Dusapin's book - Offshore Productions

ALLÉE DES JASMINS - Director and scriptwriter Short Film (2018, 20') - Respiro Productions

FEUILLES DE PRINTEMPS - Director and scriptwriter Short Film (2015, 13') - Respiro Productions

PARADISCO - Director and scriptwriter Musical Short Film (2002, 18') - Athanor Studio

LA JEUNE FILLE ET LA TORTUE -Director and Scriptwriter Musical Short Film (2000, 13') - Le G.R.E.C.

#### **Theater**

PARIS BROADWAY SAIGON (2009-2020) - Artistic director Creation and artistic direction for Paris Broadway Saigon theatrical company

24 HEURES DE LA VIE D'UNE FEMME (2015) - Co-adaptor & co-songwriter Musical Show from Stefan Zweig. Théâtre La Bruyère (Paris) Created in Spain in 2017 (Madrid, Barcelona) and Russia (Moscow) in 2021

EDGES (2013) - Stage director Musical by Pasek & Paul (songwriters for La La Land, songwriters and composers for The Greatest Showman) Auguste Théâtre (Paris) staring Eddy de Pretto.

CABARET JAUNE CITRON (2011 - 2017) - Author, co-songwriter and stage director Musical Show

Vingtième Théâtre and Auguste Théâtre (Paris), tour.

LA VIE EST UNE COMÉDIE MUSICALE (2008) - Author and stage director Théâtre de l'Épée de Bois (Cartoucherie de Vincennes)

LES NOUVEAUX ROMANTIQUES (2005) - Author and stage director Musical Show Théâtre Essaion (Paris)

#### **Educational Background**

La Femis - Graduate from the Script Workshop under the direction of 'Eve Deboise Brooklyn College - Cinematographic studies. Paris VIII - Licence in audiovisual and cinematographic studies. Actors direction and acting - Zoltan Mayer, Eva Bossaer

## MOODBOARD / Inspirations

Mother-daughter relationships and intergenerational bonds



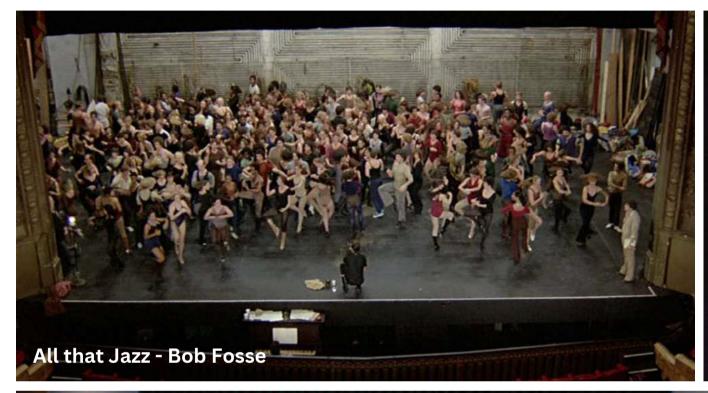






# MOODBOARD / Inspirations

The musical, backstage and dreams









## MOODBOARD / Inspirations

Cuisine, sensorial and unifying









### CAST



#### Clotilde Chevalier - Yvonne

Trained in musical comedy, Clotilde acts, sings and dances, but life's path has led her to the kitchens of gourmet restaurants, where she now expresses herself. She worked under the direction of Stéphane Ly-Cuong for the show *Cabaret Jaune Citron*. She has also appeared on stage in Eric Antoine's *Mysteric* and on screen in Etienne Chatiliez's *Agathe Cléry* (already a musical!).



### Anh Tran Nghia - Ma

A former cook (she ran a Vietnamese restaurant in Laon), Anh was spotted by director Caroline Guiela Nguyen, who gave her one of the lead roles in her play *Saigon* (nominated for a Molière). She proved to be both funny and deeply moving. She is currently touring France and abroad with the revival of *Saigon*, as well as *Fraternité*, Caroline Guiela Nguyen's new play.



### Gael Kamilindi - *Koko* of the Comédie Française

A rising star at the Comédie Française, Gaël played a formidable Léandre in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. More recently, he sang and danced, again on the stage of *Le Français*, in Music-hall and *Mais quelle comédie!* His film credits include Catherine Corsini's *Un amour impossible*.



### Thomas Jolly - Philippe

Thomas Jolly is a director and actor. His theatre productions have been staged on the most prestigious stages, including the Cour d'Honneur in Avignon, the Opéra Bastille and La Seine Musicale with the current revival hit of *Starmania*. He will direct the opening and closing ceremonies of Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

### MUSICAL AND CHOREGRAPHIC INTENTS

#### A variety of musical worlds blending together

Like the main character, the music will be a blend of different cultures and influences. Yvonne grew up listening to the musicals of the Hollywood Golden Age, and her mother's favorite Vietnamese music: melancholy ballads evoking memories of a faraway land and nostalgia for a lost Eden. Today, Yvonne works with her friend Koko, who brings a touch of disco to her creations and has its own joyful, festive identity. Although these musical worlds are quite distinct at the start of the film, they blend together as Yvonne comes to terms with the different facets of her identity.

### Dance numbers with history and experience

The choreography (created by Caroline Roëlands, a choreographer who has worked on both shows and films) will explore eclectic styles (Broadway-style modern jazz, disco, cha cha...) but always with the coherence of Yvonne's crossbreeding, her multiple tastes and influences.

