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FILMS

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NATIONAL
DE PARIS

james bort
FACTORY

LIFE OF AN ÉTOILE

DOROTHÉE GILBERT
Ballet dancer at the Paris Opera

BY JAMES BORT



SYNOPSIS

Dorothée Gilbert has danced for 25 years at the Paris Opera and is now entering her final season. Her body is beginning to fail her, yet her art has never been greater. This final year takes us inside the world's most legendary ballets, through the iconic roles she has embodied and into the most private corners of a life shaped entirely by dance.

Life of an Étoile is the portrait of a woman giving all she has left and asking, for the first time, who she is without the dance.

AUTHOR'S NOTE - DIRECTOR

AN INTIMATE STORY MEETS A COLLECTIVE HISTORY

Twelve years ago, Dorothée and I met on the set of an advertising campaign. I was the director; she was the face of the campaign. It was love at first sight. Since then, we've had a daughter, Lily, and we've never been apart. Together, we've created books and films, launched BalletMasterclass.fr, made the short film *Rise of a Star*, and photographed Dorothée in the world's greatest theatres.

So, when the announcement came that this would be her final year on stage, this film became an obvious choice. And more than just a natural choice: a necessity. For twelve years I have watched Dorothée dance, trying to capture what makes her such a unique artist.

For twelve years I have witnessed that strength, that precision, that radiance. But that year, I knew I had to film differently. To go further. To preserve what usually fades away.

At the Opera, I have seen Étoiles leave. The moment of farewell is always deeply moving. But this time, she is not just another artist: she is the woman I love. And what I want to convey is much more than a final farewell. It is the profound questions that this moment raises: what does it mean to be an Étoile? And what remains when that status fades? What becomes of us when our time is up, after we have given so much of ourselves?

With this film, I want to follow Dorothée over a long period of time. A period of transition, almost of gestation. Twelve months to look back on a life of dance, and to accompany the emergence of a new life. A metamorphosis that is both physical and intimate. This year will therefore be particularly intense, filled with joy and sadness, memories and hopes for the future. But above all, and I can already see it, it will be marked by a body worn down by so many years of high-performance.

This writing process, though intended to reflect reality, has already begun. I am crafting it with Basile Belkhiri, the editor, through a constant dialogue fuelled by the first images we are exploring together, seeking the right breathing space and the right rhythm. At the same time, Audrey Ismaël is composing an intimate and contemporary musical score, to match the dialogue.

This collaboration creates a dynamic where the images, the rhythm and the music are already in harmony, such as the opening movements of a choreography.

I have been filming Dorothée for over twelve years. Out of instinct, out of a need to keep a record. Today, these images take on a whole new meaning. They become the raw material of my film, like the moving memory of an extraordinary journey.

Snapshots of rehearsals, moments of doubt and joy, glimpses of life abroad or at home, stage recordings, moments captured behind the scenes... These personal archives chronicle the evolution of a woman, a mother and an artist. They reveal the patient development of an Étoile, year after year.

Woven into the heart of the narrative, these images will create a dialogue between the present and the past, between momentum and legacy. They are not there merely to illustrate, but to bring the entire story to life, giving it its human depth.

With *Life of an Étoile*, I want to create a cinematic work for the public. My aim is to offer a fascinating experience that touches everyone, whether or not they are dance enthusiasts.

***Life of an Étoile* will therefore be much more than a farewell: it will be a cinematic film, both intimate and universal, inviting the viewer to feel, to understand and to take away with them a part of this fleeting grace... and of this extraordinary destiny.**





THE PARIS OPERA

THE MAIN SET

It is at the heart of the Paris Opera, that Dorothee's life unfolds. For over twenty-five years, she has been walking its corridors, studios and backstage areas, a privileged witness to a world where art, discipline and human passions intertwine. The Opera is a theatre of lives – sometimes funny, sometimes intense, sometimes cruel – where the dreams, sacrifices and emotions of those who bring it to life are told.

A true immersion in a legendary setting, the documentary will take us, through Dorothee's eyes, into a place where imagination and fantasy often surpass reality.

THE PERFORMANCES



January 2025	●	Mayerling, Garnier Opera
March 2025	●	Oneguine, Garnier Opera
April 2025	●	The Sleeping Beauty, Bastille Opera
July/August 2025	●	Filming of The Phantom of the Opera
September 2025	●	Giselle, Garnier Opera
December 2025	●	Anima Animus, Garnier Opera
January 2026	●	Gala - Excerpt from Le Parc and Le Lac, Cannes Gala - Excerpt from Oneguine, Lac des Cygnes Acte II, Lyon Gala - Japan - Tristan Isolde
May 2026	●	La Dame aux camelias, Garnier Opera
June/July 2026	●	La Bayadère, Bastille Opera
October 2026	●	Manon, Garnier Opera, the farewell

SOUNDTRACK

The documentary's soundtrack will serve as an emotional thread, blending tradition and modernity.

It will alternate between classical music pieces—featured during rehearsals and on stage—and original electronic and organic compositions.

This contrast will offer a unique auditory experience, where the timeless elegance of ballet meets contemporary boldness.

Far from being confined to the classical, this approach reflects the spirit of the film: an Étoile who transcends genres and places her art within a vibrant and accessible modernity.

The viewer will feel an irresistible urge to get up and dance with Dorothée.

PLAYLIST



DOROTHÉE GILBERT

ÉTOILE AT THE PARIS OPERA

1995: Joined the Paris National Opera Ballet School.
2000: Joined the Corps de Ballet.
2002: Promoted to ‘Coryphée’.
2003: Promoted to ‘Sujet’ – Awarded the AROP Dance Prize.
2004: Awarded the Cercle Carpeaux Prize.
2005: Promoted to ‘Première danseuse’.
2006: Received the Leonide Massine Prize (Positano, Italy) and the Ballet 2000 Prize (Cannes).
2022: Received the Prize for Best Choreographic Performer from the Professional Union of Theatre, Music and Dance Critics.

Dorothée Gilbert was named Étoile on 19 November 2007 following a performance of *The Nutcracker* (Rudolf Nureyev), in which she danced the role of Clara for the first time.
As part of the Company’s official tours, Dorothée Gilbert has performed notably in Australia (Brisbane), the United States (San Francisco, Los Angeles), Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Brasília), China (Beijing, Shanghai), Russia (Moscow, Novosibirsk), in Japan (Tokyo), in Spain (Madrid) and in the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi).

Dorothée Gilbert is a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters.

[Instagram](#)



PRESS AND MEDIA

Dorothée Gilbert is a regular guest on major TV and radio programmes. She is frequently interviewed by the national press, women’s magazines and specialist publications. She also collaborates with numerous brands on video and photographic content.

BELOW ARE INTERVIEWS WITH DOROTHÉE GILBERT:

[Discipline to reach the pinnacle - Emission Do It yourself - Génération do It Yourself](#)
[Dorothée Gilbert, the rising star - Emission Totemic - France Inter](#)
[Dorothée Gilbert in the limelight - Emission Boomerang - France Inter](#)
[Dorothée Gilbert, Étoile of the Opera - c à vous](#)

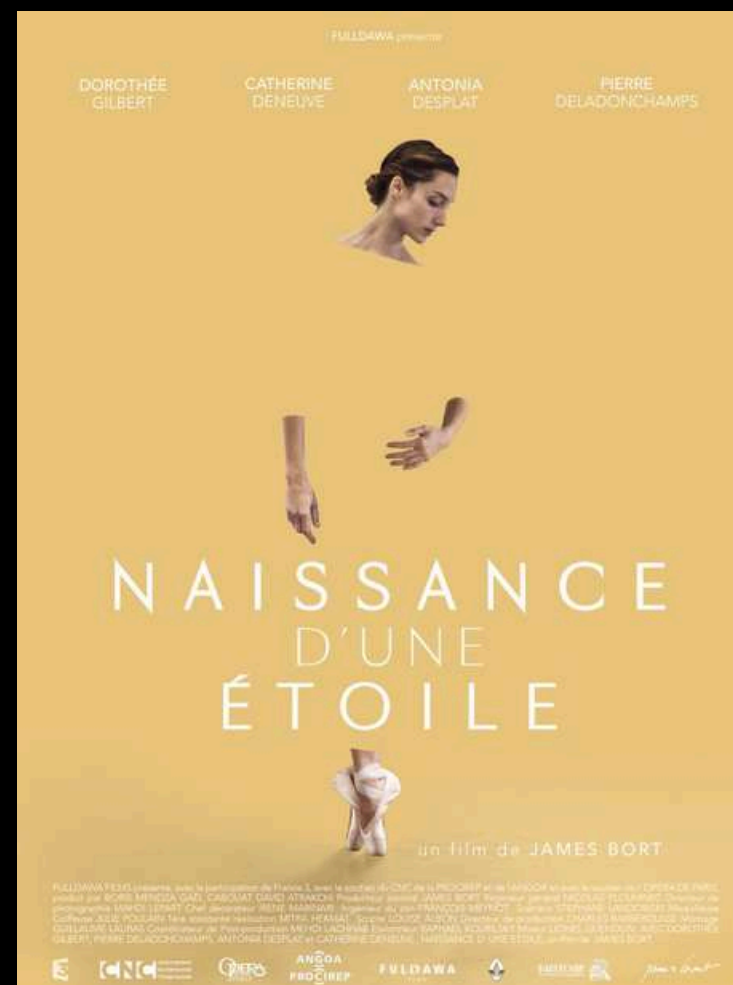
JAMES BORT

James Bort is a French creative director and filmmaker. Starting out as a photographer, he quickly made a name for himself and worked with the prestigious luxury brands, such as Dior, Cartier, Chanel, Hermès on photo campaigns and films.

James often worked with dancers. In 2015, he collaborated with French choreographer and dancer Benjamin Milledpied for a project commissioned by the Paris Opera. He took portraits of all the Étoiles for the book ÉTOILES and an exhibition of the same name at the Bastille Opera.

He directed the short drama film *RISE OF A STAR* (2017), starring Dorothée Gilbert and Catherine Deneuve. The film was selected for the Tribeca Film Festival and shortlisted for the 2018 Oscars in the Best Live Action Short Film category.

LIFE OF AN ÉTOILE is his first long feature documentary.



Film - *Rise of a Star*

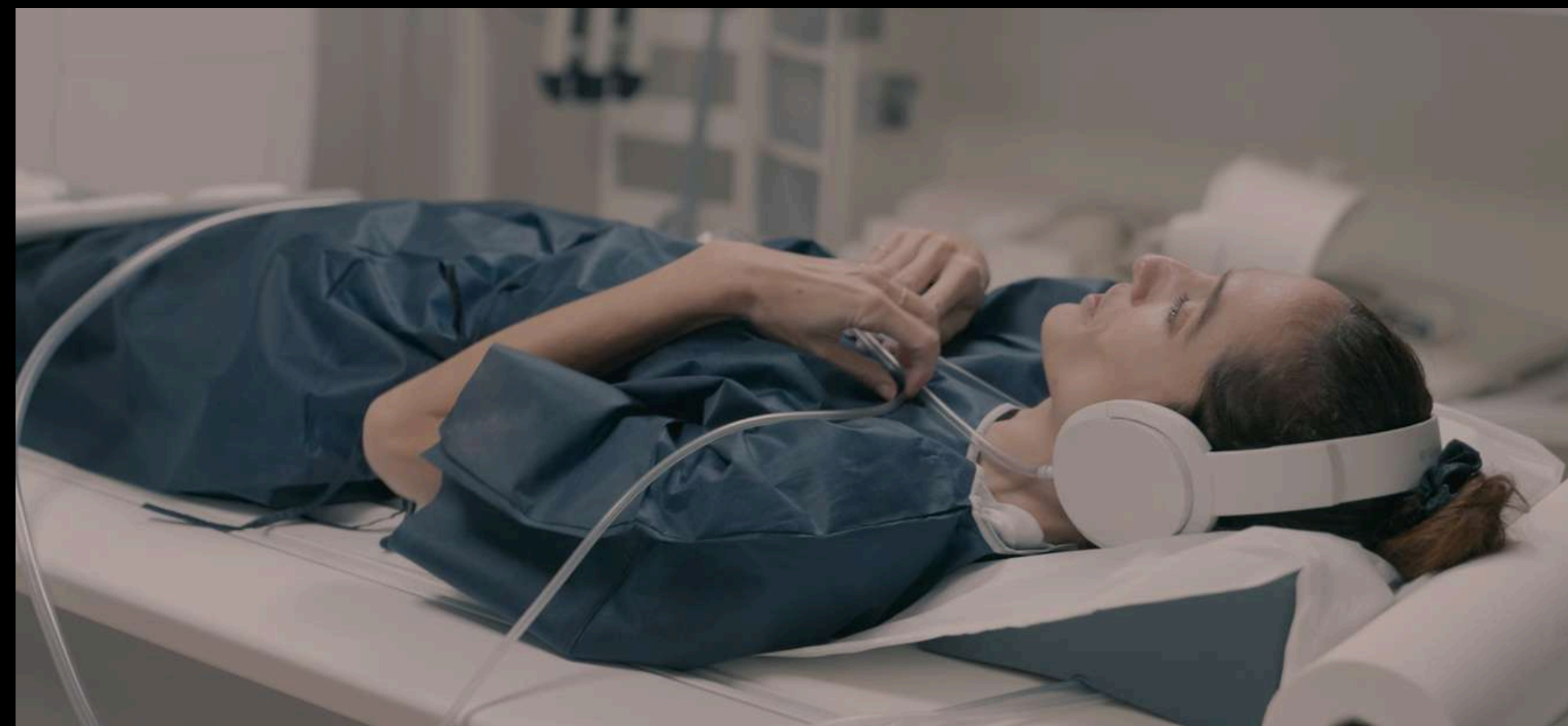






MOODBOARD







CREDITS

LIFE OF AN ÉTOILE

A FILM DIRECTED BY JAMES BORT
WITH DOROTHÉE GILBERT

Production company.....	FullDawa Films	IMDb
Co-producer.....	Opéra de Paris, James Bort Factory	IMDb
Choreographer.....	Marion Motin	IMDb
Composer.....	Audrey Ismael	IMDb
Editor.....	Basil Belkhiri	IMDb
Filming locations.....	France, Italy, Japan, South Africa, USA	

CONTACT

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