

RECTANGLE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# **THE SALT OF TEARS**

A FILM BY  
**PHILIPPE GARREL**

ORIGINAL MUSIC  
JEAN-LOUIS AUBERT

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# **THE SALT OF TEARS**

A FILM BY PHILIPPE GARREL

WITH

*Logann*                      *Oulaya*                      *André*  
**ANTUOFERMO**              **AMAMRA**                      **WILMS**

*Louise*                      *Souheila*  
**CHEVILLOTTE**              **YACOUB**

2019 / FRANCE / BLACK AND WHITE / 1H40

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## ***SYNOPSIS***

A young man's first female conquests and the deep love he feels for his father.

The story of Luc, a young man from the provinces, who visits Paris to sit his arts and craft college entry exam. In the street he meets Djemila, with whom he enjoys a brief romance.

Returning to his father's house, he begins a relationship with his childhood friend Geneviève, while Djemila longs to see him again.

When Luc is accepted by the college he leaves once more for Paris, leaving Geneviève and the baby she is carrying behind him...





## INTERVIEW WITH PHILIPPE GARREL

**It seems that since *Jealousy* your cinema has entered a new cycle: an intimate focus on the couple and the family, black and white photography, a stripped back style, regular collaborations with writers Jean-Claude Carrière and Arlette Langmann, cinematographer Renato Berta, composer Jean-Louis Aubert... Do you conscientiously operate in cycles, or is it more intuitive?**

This idea of the cycle is a fair point. What these films have in common is the absence of megalomania in the direction and the means employed. I've realised that you're no better with budgets three times higher and all that that involves. It's possible to make a very good film with a small budget, as long as you're very practical and know how to make this type of film. This economic contingency has recaptured a style, a style I want to keep.

**Do you take these budgetary contingencies into account when writing your screenplays?**

The script of *The Salt of Tears*, co-written with Arlette Langmann and Jean-Claude Carrière, was very short but also very strong. I kept all my economic tricks, like film and black and white. For a finished movie of 1 hour and 40 minutes, I shot about 6 hours, because I do very few takes, I don't throw much away and I do my editing as I'm shooting. I also shoot in sequence, which allows me to correct my course during filming.

**Where did you find your lead, Logan Antuofermo?**

In the acting class I teach at the Conservatoire. That's where all my young actors come from. Louise (Chevillotte) was in *Lover For a Day*, but she was never my student. The others are from previous years. I've worked with them on short films, which are like filmed tests.

**In your class there are about thirty students. How do you pick who will be in the final cast of your film?**

According to how they interact with each other: if there's clearly a strong chemistry between two young people, I let it guide me. Each role must have the right chemistry with the others. It's like fitting together pieces of a puzzle: Logan had to work well with the three girls – Oulaya Amamra, Louise Chevillotte and Suheila Yacoub.

**Had you seen Oulaya in *Divines* or *Farewell to the Night*?**

I didn't know who she was when I started working with her. The rest of the class loved her, and perhaps she was already known. Logan was in the same class. I had them play a pick-up scene at a bus stop, like the one at the beginning of the film, inspired by similar scenes from *Eustache* or *Pialat*. I thought it worked really well between the two of them: the chemistry was good.

**And does this give your films a certain youth, a freshness?**

There was great harmony on the set of *The Salt of Tears* between the young cast and the old timers on the crew – not forgetting André Wilms, the veteran in the cast. There was beautiful emulation between this exceptional actor and those who were appearing in a film for the first time, or starting their career. These actors are very young, but they have enormous energy. It is just as stimulating for me to work with young actors in their twenties as with experienced actors.

**Luc (Logan Antuofermo) has love affairs with three successive women. Could this be interpreted as the first being a “sentimental woman”, the second, a “sexual woman” and the third a “dominant woman”?**

Yes, this is more or less how it was written. I wanted three tableaux of women very different from one another. It is a study of love while he lives his life as he is following his apprenticeship and his relationship with his father.

**When Luc leaves the first woman, Djemila (Oulaya Amamra) he tells her “I won’t forget you”. Does he love them one after the other or all three at the same time, with a love that will survive their break-ups?**

There is a Don Juan aspect to Luc. I showed the film to a female doctor friend of mine who said: “You’re not kind to men”. I like to show the little cowardices we all have within us. Here, as it was a man – me – who wrote it, this critical view of man is also directed against myself.

***The Salt of Tears* returns to one of your recurring subjects: the child. Luc refuses the child of his that Geneviève (Louise Chevillotte) is carrying, then later wants to see Djemila again, who has in the meantime become pregnant with someone else’s child.**

We test situations in rehearsals. We imagined for example that Djemila had a baby in her arms, but I realised that the timing was wrong. It was clear to me that she could only be pregnant, and that the scene would work even better that way. Every scene is like that, under consideration, before it finally takes shape. This is why the shooting phase is fundamental. Filming is far more gestural than people imagine, that’s why it reminds me of painting, the painter’s gestures. It’s also a lot more instinctive than people believe. Sometimes you make a shot, you don’t know why, but it works. When I shot this film I put myself in an “I don’t know what I’m doing” mind-set. And it worked; I succeeded in making a film that remains innocent at all times.

**The family, and especially the figure of the father, recurs throughout your filmography and is again central in *The Salt of Tears*. Do you project your father, or even yourself as a father, into the character played by André Wilms?**

While I was shooting I had two different angles for André Wilms. He’s tremendous, there’s never any psychodrama with him. He’s a true artist; he has that in common with my father. In the film I was portraying a son and his





father and I was moving in relation to the identification with the father and the son. In my cinema, these emotional bonds are built on a pre-conscious level. This process hasn't always been very clear to me, as if I was working on an unexplained latent memory, and that is what gives the scene colour.

**Isn't cinema that leaves room for the subconscious more beautiful, stronger, more mysterious than the kind where everything is mastered, from A to Z?**

Films that suggest thought are more beautiful. But I never know what effect it will have on people. Sometimes I feel a real anxiety: am I right to shoot in black and white, on film...? I take great pleasure in shooting in black and white, but sometimes when I watch contemporary films in black and white I see a retro attitude I don't like. But black and white cleans an actor of all the parts he or she has had in colour. And, ever since *Jealousy*, my method has called for black and white. I shoot in sequence, which entails moving from one set to another: colour would require prohibitively expensive and time-consuming work on the colour correction.

**Is cabinetmaking, Luc and his father's profession, a metaphor for your artisanal concept of cinema?**

Cabinetmaking is very pictorial, with the father's studio with all its chiaroscuro. I love to work with this and that's why I chose Renato Berta: he's one of the few who knows how to work with chiaroscuro. I didn't particularly have a metaphor for cinema in mind. The only parallel I see here is with my crew: they are all between 60 and 80, like my father. You remember the shot of Oulaya on the deserted station platform, when Luc hasn't shown up for their rendezvous: we had just learned about Agnès Varda's death. It was a very strong moment for the "old timers" on the crew.

**Don't you feel like a cabinetmaker, ceaselessly perfecting his gesture tirelessly, somewhere between craftsmanship and art?**

Yes, it's true, from this point of view it's the same. My films are handmade. I have always handled the celluloid and heavy film reels. This is exactly why I don't go digital.

**Let's talk about the title, *The Salt of Tears*. You have never hesitated to film tears, and it's often beautiful, very moving. On the other hand, Rivette used to say the more tears onscreen, the less in the audience...**

Rivette wasn't necessarily wrong... You could say you don't have to be moved to move, except that it's just not the case when you see André Wilms cry, he's shattering. It makes me think again about what we were saying about the cycle that started with *Jealousy*. I was saying that I had put a new, more economical, method in place, but in fact the fundamental reason for doing this was that my father died. Imagine: there wasn't one version of my screenplays that my father didn't read while he was alive. Subconsciously, we make films for 3, 4 people who really matter, and my father mattered a lot.



**And with whom do you now have this permanent dialogue?**

With my children, who are all actors – Louis, Estelle and Lena. What my kids do on stage or on screen totally amazes me; they do things of which I am incapable. And what I see of them replaces the discussions I had with my father. I show them my films, and I listen to what they say about them. Now that the continent of my parents no longer exists, it's good to have my children. If my films hold together solidly, it's also thanks to Arlette (Langmann) and to Jean-Claude (Carrière), the best screenwriters and dialogue writers in France. I started with Jean-Claude when he did *Every Man For Himself*. I thought how interesting it was that he wrote a sturdy script that Godard turned into a very modern film. I thought I could work with Carrière without distorting my style. On the other hand, he would help me structure my screenplays.

**One scene from *The Salt of Tears* comes back to mind, the racial aggression outside the nightclub. As often in your films, it conveys a direct political meaning, head-on, but like an isolated spark in the film.**

When I was 12 I attended a “decorative arts” studio, and I also had a subscription to the Theatre National de Paris and used to see Jean Vilar, Brecht... Furthermore, my mother had signed me up to the MRAP NGO (Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples). All this shaped me. This scene is a scene made by a MRAP kid. For me, the 2017 elections were an anti-racist vote, and it was in this spirit that I shot the scene.

**Another element that seems new to me in your cinema since *Lover For a Day* is eroticism, more present than before. I'm thinking of the bath scene in *The Salt of Tears*, for example...**

After *In the Shadow of Women*, Arnaud Desplechin told me: “You can't just pan to the window when two lovers are embracing in bed anymore.” So I asked myself how I was going to do this and I thought of the female nudes in the Louvre: they have an erotic tension but these paintings also stand simply as figures of women.

**Do you pay attention to #MeToo, and has it influenced your filmmaking?**

When *In the Shadow of Women* came out, women who saw the film (both those close to me and those attending a congress of psychoanalysts) recognised it as being egalitarian. But the truth is that I didn't set out to make it any more feminist than my other films. Making a film is a very instinctive process, very gestural: you don't set out to make a feminist film, a “this” or a “that” film...

***The Salt of Tears* has as its central character a young seducer who makes women suffer. But it also glorifies them, accompanies their suffering with great empathy, reveals male cowardice and features a woman who makes the central character suffer in his turn. It's hard to say whether *The Salt of Tears* is more “on the side” of men side or of women. Do you agree that it is difficult to read certain works through a binary framework?**



Judging works of art from the moral behaviour of the characters is very problematic. It's the nature of art to transgress certain limits. Art is Art... I also think that one shouldn't revisit the works of yesterday with the morals of today, because customs evolve radically from one era to another. And then again, there are bastards who possess talent, that's how it is. Art is irrefutable, it is connected to all humanity, it marks the precarious human presence in the passage of life. I do not doubt for a second the validity of art and I believe deeply that art can never die: there will always be someone in a room who dreams of writing a novel, of painting a picture or playing an instrument...

**You have been working with DP Renato Berta since *In the Shadow of Women*. Have you found your ideal partner?**

Yes, we were truly working together on set. We were very ambitious with the nights, the interiors... I love working with people who are in the latter part of their careers, when they know everything about their craft. Berta is incredibly good. The great directors of photography are like great painters; they're very skilled with faces. And a great DP is always kind to the actors, that's very important. Everyone I worked with was like that: Raoul Coutard, William Lubtchansky, Willy Kurant, Renato... all of them!

**How do you meet Jean-Louis Aubert, who has written the scores of your films since *Jealousy*?**

Just before *J'entends plus la guitare* (1990), Aubert contacted me to shoot a video for him; I agreed in principle but I wasn't free at the time, as the film started shooting two days later. At the end of *Jealousy*, I remembered this, and the fact that Aubert seemed to appreciate my work. We showed the film to Jean-Louis, he liked it and accepted to write the music, for zero money. The way he plays on my images is super-sensitive – he truly understands my films.

Extract from an interview by Serge Kaganski,  
to appear in TRANSFUGE #137, March 2020

## LOGANN ANTUOFERMO

Logann Antuofermo studied at the Conservatoire de Versailles, then at École Claude Mathieu, before enrolling at the drama school CNSAD (Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique) in 2016. During his years of training he worked under the direction of Jean-Daniel Laval, Catherine Rétoré, Georges Werler, Gilles David, Nada Strancar, and Gérard Watkins, among others.

His staging of *L'Odyssée de Bric et de Broc* – his own adaptation from Homer – played at the Mois Molière festival in 2011, then at the Avignon Festival OFF in 2015, where it was selected as one of the ten finalists for the Coup de Cœur award. In 2012, he adapted and directed Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* at Fontenay le Fleury.

At École Claude Mathieu, he wrote and directed *Ellis Island*, the story of a man lost between a country he seeks to flee and another that has closed its doors to him. In January 2020, he acted at MC93 in *La terre se révolte*, directed by Sara Llorca.

## OULAYA AMAMRA

Oulaya Amamra was familiar with film shoots from a very early age, thanks to 1000 Visages, an organisation founded by her elder sister Houda Benyamina to allow children from deprived areas to discover the professional world of cinema. At the age of 12, she began drama lessons, a discipline she loved and which led her to the CNSAD in 2016.

Nonetheless it was thanks to cinema that Oulaya became known to the general public, when she took the lead role in Houda Benyamina's *Divines*, playing a young woman who, alongside her best friend, is prepared to do whatever it takes to change her destiny and succeed. This first film, which won the Camera d'Or at Cannes, also garnered Oulaya the César for Best Female Newcomer in 2016.

Alongside her studies at the Conservatoire, she continued her cinematic career, appearing with Isabelle Adjani and Karim Leklou in Romain Gavras' *The World is Yours* (Directors' Fortnight, Cannes FF 2018), and alongside Catherine Deneuve and Kacey Mottet Klein in André Téchiné's *Farewell to the Night* in 2019.

## LOUISE CHEVILLOTTE

Louise Chevillotte studied at the CNSAD in Paris between 2014 and 2017. Her cinema credits include *Lover for a Day* (SACD Award winner, Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 2017) and *The Salt of Tears*, both directed by Philippe Garrel, *Synonyms* by Nadav Lapid (Golden Berlin Bear, 2019) and Paul Verhoeven's *Benedetta*. On stage, she has worked with Frédéric Béliet-Gacia (*La Tragédie de Macbeth*), Patrick Pineau (Mohammed Rouabhi's *Jamais seul*), writer/director François Cervantès (Claire, Anton et eux, *Le Cabaret des Absents*) and Christian Schiaretti (first Paul Claudel's *L'Échange*, then the diptych *Hippolyte* by Robert Garnier and *Phaedra* by Jean Racine, in which she played *Phaedra* at TNP in 2019).



## SOUHEILA YACOUB

Born to a Flemish mother and a Tunisian father, Souheila Yacoub grew up in Geneva, becoming a professional gymnast at the age of 12. After representing Switzerland in a number of international competitions, she moved to Paris and enrolled in the Cours Florent drama school in 2012. A role in *Tous des Oiseaux* by Wajdi Mouawad led to widespread critical acclaim and Souheila's career was launched. Cinema followed quickly: she appeared in *Les Affamés* by Léa Frédeval, then in Gaspar Noé's *Climax*, which screened in Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 2018), and which earned her a place amongst the 'Revelations' at the 2019 Césars. For director Rebecca Zlotowski she appeared in the TV series *Savages*, broadcast on Canal Plus in autumn 2019.

Souheila's credits in 2020 include Philippe Garrel's *The Salt of Tears*, the TV series *Fertile Crescent*, an international co-production for Arte and Hulu, alongside Félix Moati and Mélanie Thierry, and Yassine Qnia's feature debut, *A Brighter Tomorrow*.

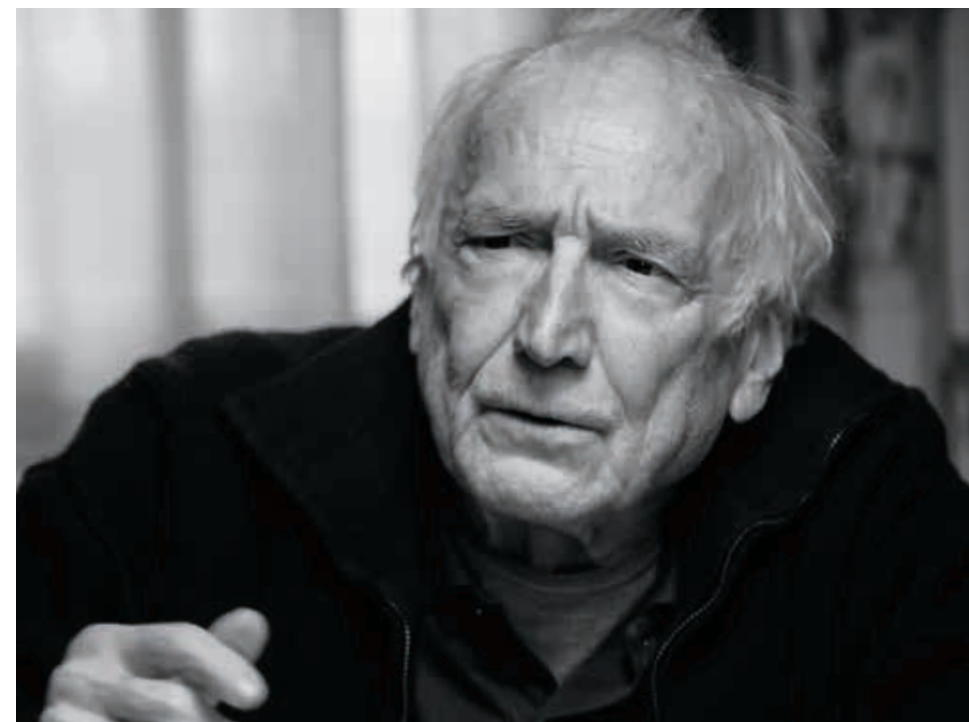
## ANDRE WILMS

French actor/director André Wilms was born 29 April 1947 in Strasbourg. He became an actor by chance, while working as a stage hand at the Grenier de Toulouse theatre, and was quickly employed as an extra. A decisive meeting in Paris with director Klaus Michael Grüber allowed him to fully enter the world of the theatre. Radical, incisive and self-taught, an actor favoured by Aki Kaurismäki (*Le Havre*, *Juha*, *The Leningrad Cowboys Meet Moses*, *La vie de bohème* - Prix Félix 1993), Wilms' flourishing career – particularly in the theatre – led to appearances in numerous films including Valéria Bruni Tedeschi's *A Castle in Italy*, François Ozon's *Ricky*, Claude Chabrol's *Hell* and Étienne Chatiliez's *Life is a Long Tranquil River*, in which he played a memorable Maurice Le Quesnoy.

From the early 1980s, he has directed both theatre and opera (*The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill), in France as well as in Germany (Munich, Frankfurt), working with many leading directors (Jean-Pierre Vincent, Heiner Goebbels, Matthias Langhoff and Heiner Müller...) His acting and his stage presence are noted as much for his deep and resonant voice as for the rebellious figure he embodies. Notable productions include Michaël Levinas' *La conférence des oiseaux* (Conference of the Birds), *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (Philosophy in the Bedroom) by the Marquis de Sade and Euripides' *The Bacchae*.

## PHILIPPE GARREL

Philippe Garrel was born 6 April 1948 and made numerous short films as an adolescent. In 1967 he made his feature debut with *Marie pour mémoire*. Three years later he directed legendary icon Nico in the cult film *La Cicatrice intérieure*. Garrel has directed more than twenty-five features, which have screened at all the leading international film festivals.



## CAST

Luc : Logann ANTUOFERMO

Djemila : Oulaya AMAMRA

Le père de Luc : André WILMS

Geneviève : Louise CHEVILLOTTE

Betsy : Souheila YACOUB

Paco : Martin MESNIER

Jean-René : Teddy CHAWA

Alice : Aline BELIBI

## CREW

A film by : Philippe GARREL

Screenplay : Jean-Claude CARRIÈRE, Arlette LANGMANN, Philippe GARREL

Original Music : Jean-Louis AUBERT

Producers : Edouard WEIL et Laurine PELASSY

Coproducers : Joëlle BERTOSSA and Flavia ZANON (Suisse)

DP : Renato BERTA

Camera Operator : Berto (AFCF)

Sound : Guillaume SCIAMA

Mix : Thierry DELOR

Editor : François GEDIGIER

Production Designer : Manu DE CHAUVIGNY

Costume Designer : Justine PEARCE

Production Manager : Serge CATOIRE

First Assistant Director : Paolo TROTTA

Assistant Directors : Laura TUILLIER et Laetitia DOM

Choreographer : Caroline MARCADÉ

Location Manager : Edouard SUEUR

Location Scout : Dimitri CHALAZONITIS

Advisor from the École Boulle : Christine AUDIN





A French/Swiss coproduction  
RECTANGLE PRODUCTIONS, CLOSE UP FILMS, ARTE FRANCE CINÉMA,  
RTS RADIO TÉLÉVISION SUISSE and SRG SSR

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