

andolfi presents

QUINZAINE
DES CINÉASTES
Sélection officielle du Festival de Cannes
CANNES

A Prince

a film by Pierre Creton



andolfi presents

A Prince

A film by Pierre Creton

16.9 - Digital 5.1 - 82 min - France

Sales
Andolfi
9 - 11 rue des Cascades
75020 Paris (France)
production@andolfi.fr

Press
annie.maurette@gmail.com
T. +33 6 60 97 30 36

Synopsis

Pierre-Joseph goes to an apprenticeship college to train as a gardener. There he meets a series of characters - Françoise Brown, the principal, Alberto, his botany teacher, and Adrien, his employer - who will prove decisive in his apprenticeship story and in unleashing his sexuality. Forty years later Kutta appears, Françoise Brown's adoptive child whom he has heard so much about but never met. But Kutta, who is now the owner of a strange château, seems to be looking for more than just a gardener.







Biography

Pierre Creton, born in 1966 in Seine-Maritime, is an artist and filmmaker. He was a student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Le Havre.

In 1991, after graduating, he became a farm worker, taking on a range of jobs from beekeeping to herding cattle, which led him to make films about the master/slave dynamic and the relationship between humans and animals.

He lives and works in Normandy in the Pays de Caux region which he never tires of capturing and filming.

He has made around twenty films, all shown at FIDMarseille and at numerous other international film festivals.

Since 2020 he has been working as a freelance gardener for Maison Lambert.

Filmography (selection):

- *House of Love* / 2021 / 21'

- *A Beautiful Summer* / 2019 / 80'

- *Go, Toto!* / 2017 / 92'

Prix du film singulier francophone du Syndicat de la critique du cinéma Français

Prix institut Français de la critique en ligne - FIDMarseille

- *Maniquerville* / 2009 / 84'

- *The Shepherd's Hour* / 2008 / 39'

Interview with Pierre Creton:

Was the format of a multiple-voice narration there from the start?

With *Go, Toto!* (2017) I started exploring the idea that everyone tells themselves stories. The voice we use to tell these stories, sometimes our own story, is not the same as our physical voice. I wanted to delve deeper into this idea for *A Prince*. Initially, the film opened with Françoise Brown narrating a different situation: she was in her car looking for Kutta who had disappeared. *A Prince* now begins at the beginning.

How did you go about writing the screenplay with your co-writers Vincent Barré, Mathilde Girard and Cyril Neyrat ?

I had already worked with Vincent and Mathilde to co-write *Go, Toto!, A Beautiful Summer* (2018), and another film which never got made. This was the first time I had done this form of writing with Cyril but we had worked together on other forms of writing: I had given him previous screenplays to read and he had given me some of his texts about the cinema to read. For *A Prince*, from the writing to the editing, from start to finish, everything was done in the spirit of friendship, trust and a common goal. To start with, everyone wrote the voice of one character, except Cyril who contributed to all of them and coordinated the whole thing. Then I started writing scenes.

Did the voices play a formative role in the editing?

When I started editing the images with Félix Rehm, we pre-selected the voices for the monologues so that we had them in our minds and in our ears. More pragmatically, by pre-selecting the recording for each monologue, we could more easily create a dialogue with the images. Félix played a part in fine-tuning the writing of the voices, sometimes just moving one word or one sentence.





“The story really began when Kutta arrived” are the first words of A Prince. When did you decide that Kutta would not be a narrator and his story would be told by the others?

We decided that from the outset. Kutta is the main character in the film but his existence is uncertain. He remains absent for a long time. It was a risky strategy, which might explain the fact that we didn't receive any support from the institutions. In that respect, whereas the biographical narratives in *Go, Toto!* tend towards the fictional, with *A Prince* the whole approach was more clearly fictional. I could even say that *A Prince* is my first work of fiction.

Pierre-Joseph evolves in a world of predominantly homosexual desires and yet it is two women who are the repositories of his story from beginning to end: Françoise Brown is the first narrator and Catherine Dubreuil is Pierre-Joseph's last confidante. Was that deliberate?

It might come from the fact that the filmmakers whose work interests me the most these days are women: Angela Schanelec, Kelly Reichardt, Lucrecia Martel and Sophie Roger.

You chose different actors for the images and the voice-overs. What role did the monologues play in the shoot?

The whole crew had read the screenplay. I direct actors in a fairly minimal way. I'm very open to suggestions. The main thing was to be together, in the same place. I like the idea of an interpretation bridging the gap between the character we wrote and the person we filmed, between the *mise-en-scène* and the portrait.

What interested you about the idea of having two actors, Antoine Pirotte and yourself, sliding into Pierre-Joseph's skin?

Having two actors play Pierre-Joseph was written into the screenplay, as a way of transitioning from youth to adulthood. My meeting with Antoine, which seemed predestined to happen, rendered this idea tantalizingly possible. What became increasingly apparent at the editing stage was the twinship between Kutta and Pierre-Joseph. One line was decisive: at the start of the film

Françoise Brown says that Pierre-Joseph was the first child she adopted before Kutta. That line needed corresponding images for it to fully resonate.

You acted in some of your previous films too. How did you prepare for your role as the adult Pierre-Joseph?

I wasn't really in control of my acting. I should say that the part I played wasn't that difficult for me. Going to sleep alongside Adrien and Alberto and driving down a road on a lawnmower is how I spend my days. Being a role model for David Lynch comes second to that... The same goes for the rest: chopping down brambles, looking vacant in the Black Maria. The camera was always discreet enough to allow everyone the possibility, me included, to evolve on the spot.

For the images, with the exception of Françoise Lebrun and Evelyne Didi, you cast actors who don't strictly speaking have a career in acting. How did you choose your actors?

Most of the actors in my films are clients whose gardens I maintain, including Manon Schaap who plays Françoise Brown, or people I've known a long time, such as the hunters in the meal scene. They hadn't all read the script but they had seen my previous films. They are more like friends to me than neighbours. It might have seemed complicated at first to bring Antoine Pirotte into this close-knit group, but he already knew most of the actors. He came to visit us several times before the shoot.

You film two deaths in your film: Odile beside her compost heap and Moïse in a pool of sticky honey. Why show people literally dying on the job, especially while carrying out two of your own rural activities (editor's note: Pierre Creton works as a gardener and beekeeper)?

These two deaths are lived experiences. It's also the first time I've filmed death, which accentuates the fictional dimension for me. These losses help Pierre-Joseph transition into adulthood.





Several months before the shoot for A Prince, you gave Antoine Pirotte a crash course in gardening. How did working together nourish the film, particularly the attention given to horticultural skills?

Françoise Brown says at one point that you need a particular sensitivity to be interested in horticulture when you're young. Antoine's training is in filmmaking. He is currently studying camerawork at La Fémis. But gardening is not alien to him. He soon picked it up.

During his training, Antoine Pirotte worked with you on the upkeep of the Château d'Antville where Kutta lives. What other places in the region of Caux were particularly important to you in the geography of the film?

Vincent Barré and I built the Black Maria for the film while we were writing the screenplay. We inaugurated it as soon as the screenplay was finished.

Building the Black Maria, a temple of desire placed on the earth, resonates with the idea of being freed from presumed roots, like Françoise Brown adopting Kutta or Mark Brown recreating a primeval forest. Did you think of these elements together?

After we finished making *A Prince*, I realised that, after the young wild boar rescued by Madeleine in *Go, Tóto!* and Amed and Mohamed being taken in by Simon and Robert in *A Beautiful Summer*, this was the third time I had posed the question of adoption in one of my films! But it wasn't a conscious decision when we wrote it. The question of adoption allows you to go beyond the standard parental set-up. It lifts the lid on people's desires. Rather than a family, a desire to invent a community.

The very first images of A Prince are from your short film L'Arc d'iris, Memories of a Garden (2006) that you co-directed with Vincent Barré in the Himalayan uplands. Did you plan that at the writing stage?

Yes. The main elements of *A Prince* were decided at the writing stage. I planned to use those images again, but we decided at

the editing stage to use them even more extensively. I almost felt as if I had returned to India! It was a very unsettling feeling.

In this opening sequence, your compositions are astonishing. You play on the contrast between floral detail and fields stretching as far as the eye can see.

The flowers at the start were filmed in England opposite Derek Jarman's garden: another cabin! It's in Dungeness, a low-lying area with fishermen's huts and abandoned boats. We filmed sea campion, among other flowers. They grow in abundance on this site. All the flowers are special but we filmed whatever we came across at random. We were also guided by the light on them. Flowers are like the weather: I don't wait for good or bad weather, it's up to the crew to adapt. Marguerite Duras said any weather was preferable. That's my motto. The same goes for flowers.

How did you capture the autumn light when you were filming A Prince?

Since we were very poor, despite support from Arnaud Dommerc (my producer), Vincent Barré and Pierre Barray (my actor friends) filmed it all in one go over the course of three weeks. There was something special about the autumn light that year: after the summer drought and then a bit of rain, the leaves had been slow to turn yellow, much more so than usual. I had imagined a golden autumn for *A Prince* but the season was delayed and the leaves were still quite green.

How did you work with the original music composed by Jozef van Wissem?

I met Jozef van Wissem after a concert, in the same way as I met Les Limiñanas who composed the music for *A Beautiful Summer*. Jozef's concerts are intimist and nocturnal, often in religious settings: churches or temples. He had seen *Go, Toto!* which he had liked, surprised by the presence of Eyeless in Gaza, an underrated and forgotten band. Jozef sent me *Suites de pièces princières* before we started editing the film. For both these films I was lucky enough to have the music before the images so I could edit freely based on the score. I had suggested something between *courtly love and sadomasochism* to Josef, which is quite close to his world.

Has A Prince sparked a desire for more films?

Mark Brown, Vincent Barré, Antoine Pirotte and I have plans for a film which is a sort of spin-off from *A Prince*. For me, directing a film means above all deciding who with and how to go about it. Mark saw *L'Arc d'iris* when Vincent and I screened it 15 years ago in Varengeville at the Bois des Moutiers. That was the first time we met. He told us we should make the same film in Normandy. That's our idea: Mark will play the botanist who will guide us through the flora from the Seine's estuary to Sainte-Marguerite-sur-Mer. Antoine, who has been trained to use conventional cameras, will shoot it on 16mm film. A film about corollas and pistils, more walking and more flowers...

Words recorded by Claire Allouche on 1 May 2023 in Paris.



Cast and Crew

Director Pierre Creton

Script Pierre Creton *with the collaboration of* Mathilde Girard, Cyril Neyrat & Vincent Barré

Produced by Arnaud Dommerc (Andolfi)

Photography Antoine Pirotte, Léo Gil-Mena, Pierre Creton

Sound Joseph Squire

Editing Felix Rehm

Colorgrading Pierre Sudre

Sound design Jules Jasko

Re-recording Mix Mathieu Deniau

Music composed, arranged & performed by Jozef Van Wissem

With

Antoine Pirotte & Pierre Creton - Pierre-Joseph, *with the voice of* Grégory Gadebois.

Vincent Barré - Alberto, *with the voice of* Mathieu Amalric.

Manon Schaap - Françoise Brown *with the voice of* Françoise Lebrun.

Pierre Barray - Adrien

Chiman Dangi - Kutta

Evelyne Didi - Catherine Dubreuil

and the participation of Mark Brown

With the support of Fonds de dotation Vincent Barré, *the Writing grant of* Région Normandie *in partnership with* CNC *and in association with* Normandie Images & Accueil de Tournages Normandie, *the support of* Procirep Angoa *and the participation of* Centre National du Cinéma et de l'image animée



