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Paul Kircher Vincent Lacoste Juliette Binoche

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# WINTER BOY LE LYCÉEN

By Christophe Honoré

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# WINTER BOY LE LYCÉEN

By Christophe Honoré

Runtime : 122 mn

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Lucas is 17 when his teenage world is suddenly shattered. He views his life as a wild animal in need of taming. Between a brother settled in Paris and a mother with whom he now lives alone, Lucas will have to fight to rediscover hope and love.

# DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY



# DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Born in Brittany, Christophe Honoré moved to Paris in 1994 where he published his first novel *Tout contre Léo*. He wrote about thirty children's books, mainly published by L'Ecole des Loisirs, and he won the Baobab prize at the Salon du Livre de Montreuil in 2011 for *La règle d'or du cache-cache*, published by Actes Sud Junior, and written in collaboration with the illustrator Gwen Le Gac.

He has also written novels published by Editions de l'Olivier, including *L'infamille* (1997), *La Douceur* (1999), *Scarborough* (2002) and *Le livre pour enfants* (2005). *Ton Père* (2018) was published by Editions du Mercure in France.

He has collaborated on several screenplays for Jean-Pierre Limosin (*Novo*, 2003), Gaël Morel (*Le Clan*, 2004 ; *Après lui*, 2007), Diastème (*Le Bruit des gens autour*, 2008), Mickaël Buch (*Let my people go !* 2011), Louis Garrel (*Les Deux amis*, 2014). He started directing in 2002 with *Dix-sept fois Cécile Cassard*, then *Ma mère* (2004), *Dans Paris* (2006), and *Les Chansons d'amour* (2007) in competition at Cannes Film Festival. For *La Belle personne* (2008) he adapted *La princesse de Clèves*, next he did *Non ma fille, tu n'iras pas danser* (2009), *Homme au bain* (2010), *Les Biens aimés* (2011), *Métamorphoses* (2014), *Les Malheurs de Sophie* (2016), *Plaire, aimer et courir vite* (2018) which was in competition at Cannes Film Festival and won the Louis Delluc prize. Chiara Mastroianni won the interpretation prize at Un Certain Regard for *Chambre 212* in 2019. In 2020, he shot a film inside la Comédie Française: *Guermantes*.

In the theater, he staged his own plays: *Les débutantes* (1998), *Beautiful guys* (2004), *Dionysos Impuissant* (Festival d'Avignon, 2005), *Nouveau Roman* (Festival d'Avignon, 2012), *Fin de l'Histoire* (2015), and adapted *Angelo, Tyran de Padoue* by Victor Hugo (Festival d'Avignon, 2009).

In the fall of 2018, he created *Les Idoles* which was awarded with the Critic's Prize.

Then in 2020, he staged *Le Côté de Guermites* by Proust at La Comédie-Française. In 2021, he created for the Théâtre de l'Odéon an original play, *Le Ciel de Nantes*, which won the Critic's Prize for Best play.

In October 2013, he signed his first lyrical staging with *Dialogues des Carmélites* by Poulenc for the Lyon Opera House. Then *Pelléas et Mélisande* by Debussy (Lyon, 2014), *Così Fan Tutte* by Mozart created in 2016 for the Aix-en-Provence Festival and *Don Carlos* by Verdi (Lyon, 2018). Then *Tosca* which premiered at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in July 2019. He created *Les Troyens* by Berlioz in the Spring 2022 for the Munich Opera house.



# INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

## **When did you shoot the film?**

We started shooting at the end of last year. Last winter was a peculiar time for all of us – an election time, after many months of a pandemic that was still rampant, which severely hindered our work on set. It was also a time of utter vulnerability, what with the war was about to break out in Ukraine. And I feel that, in its own way, the film bears witness to this particular time, or at least it has left its mark on it. With its inner tensions, the film kindles a sense of collapse, only averted by the will to put on a brave face, to do our best not to give in to the urge to give up. Maybe this is what the film is all about – how to turn tragedy into a joyful form of sorrow. This is why I think that the film is first and foremost a love story, not a melodrama, but a film that hopes for love.

**Your father passed away when you were still a teenager. You already addressed his death in your novels and in your last play, “Le Ciel de Nantes”, but never as openly as in “Le Lycéen” (Winter Boy).**

My films have often dealt with disgrace, irreversibility, breaking points, but never would I have thought that one day I would make a film about the particular state in which I

had been in the months following my father’s passing. Since “Plaire, aimer et courir vite” (Sorry Angel), I have tried to approach each new project with scrupulous sincerity. Essentially, I think that people make films because deep down, they miss someone, or because they feel, either brutally or vaguely, a void that they try to fill with a film. Perhaps I was missing my father more keenly then.

## **How did that come about?**

Directors tend to think that they make a film as a reaction to the previous one, an opposite of sorts, and I certainly have experienced this rotation... But these past few years, I have often shot a film right after I had directed a play. In 2020 and 2021, I worked on Proust’s “The Guermantes Way” at la Comédie Française; then I created with my company an autobiographical play, “Le Ciel de Nantes”. Both creations shared motifs like the work on memory, the return of ghosts, or what may hinder artistic creation... And it seems to me that “Le Lycéen” (Winter Boy) was not born against but rather in line with that spirit.

**The emotions you unearth are often tragic, distressing. Was it a painful process to revive them?**

It was quite strenuous, because I know that these emotions caused a personal meltdown with ongoing repercussions. Nevertheless, I haven't tried to cast a remote or an appeased light, if I may say, on them. On the contrary, I did my best to be loyal to the teenager I was back then and to what he felt. I wanted to stay true to the emotions I had felt, without the soothing passing of time, but rather by using the writing and directing to find back their chaotic, overwhelming and unpredictable nature. When tragedy strikes and disrupts your daily life, there is no narrative, no story to unfold; only confusing feelings and the impression that nothing makes sense anymore and that you are being tossed about. This commitment to stay as close as possible to these emotions, as if I were reliving them in the present, actually allowed for the creation of a fictional character. To me, Lucas is now a fictional character in his own right. I see him more as a young man of today than as a memory of who I was. He is a combination of both my memories and my careful observations of today's world. With this film, I don't feel like I travelled back to the past; I rather projected a feeling from the past onto today's reality.

**Lucas' account is fragmented, sometimes even inconsistent.**

Yes, it was really important to me. Lucas tells his own story as it unfolds, without taking a step back. In fact, rather than talking about himself, Lucas is trying to make sense of things, he is thinking out loud. This is why I chose to film what could easily have been a voice-over. And I told Paul

never to look straight at the camera. He is not talking to the camera, as an aside. What we see is a train of thought, with its hesitations and contradictions, fumbling, unable to define itself as actual thought. And by filming this face, whose expressions reflect emotions that are yet to make up a story, it seemed to me that I could figure out and paint a more delicate portrait – that of a young man whose immaturity is never asserted but only glimpsed at, like a precious and touching reflection. Before the shooting, I reread Dostoyevsky's "The Adolescent", in which the narrative openly reflects the narrator's young age. It keeps contradicting itself. The character announces that he is about to talk about one thing and ends up talking about something else; he also only touches on moments that seem crucial to us, and digresses endlessly... I followed that path and tried to generate some instability. I didn't want adolescence to be a theme, a well-defined image, or a journey; instead, I wanted the film itself to become a kind of adolescent organic matter.

**You put yourself in the dead man's shoes, by playing your own father...**

I am really not an actor; I am not comfortable with it. Only this time, I am glad that I was able to overcome my discomfort and be part of the film. I pictured myself as a "reflection" of my father, I thought that he was still present somehow in my voice, my eyes, or in the way I move. I accepted to be the ghost of my father. This kind of metaphysics is typical of Brittany, my home region, and it might seem ridiculous to some, but I do think that





we are the ghosts of our dead, that we are hunting them, and not the other way around.

It was also important as far as Paul was concerned. In our actor-director relationship, I needed to take the father's place. So that he could take the son's place. Completely. We played scenes together during the first two days of the shooting; we didn't know each other very well, and we found ourselves in a car. Obviously, I barely knew what I was doing as an actor, and my incompetence forged a singular relationship between us. We became quite fond of each other, and this affection was an endless source of energy, joy and trust for us both. It became my way of directing Paul, so to speak - at the wheel, never leaving him alone, staying by his side and protecting him, while swerving and leaving the road if need be.

### **How and why did you choose Paul Kircher?**

Paul was chosen at the end of a very long casting process, which we started while I was still writing the script. We saw almost 300 young men.

I wasn't searching for a specific physical appearance, I only knew that the role was demanding, and that I needed an actor who could shoulder both serious scenes and more daily, light or gracious moments. It is complicated at that age - young actors are often more comfortable with depth and gravitas, and less with energy or joy. Paul is a wonderful actor. I don't know if cinema will measure up to all that he has to offer. His sensitivity is really poignant. And it was a true privilege for me to film

him at barely twenty years of age, while he still has boyish expressions every now and then.

### **It was the fourth time you worked with Vincent Lacoste.**

It is always a pleasure to work with actors again, and it is also fun to ask them to do something different. I offered Vincent a character less obviously likable, with sharper edges. Goodness is Vincent's most striking trait, but I wanted it to appear late in the film. I preferred the hostility, the harshness of the character to be predominant for a while.

Vincent, just like Chiara Mastroianni, makes me feel good. When I arrive on set in the morning, I am often in a bad mood, because I am scared, afraid to mess things up. But then I bump into Vincent, who tells me: "How are you, Chris, my man? And what little scene do we have today?" It's like an immediate vitamin shot. I am instantly reminded that I am not alone in this, that the actors are also on board, and that working with them, directing them is my favourite thing in the world.

### **However, you worked with Juliette Binoche for the first time.**

Yes, but I had been dreaming about it for a long time. I approached Juliette for a part in a previous project, but she declined. Actresses often think that if they say "no" once, then it's over. Sometimes, it is. But some rejections are understandable and make you all the more eager to try again. I am glad that Juliette said "yes" for the character of Isabelle. She brought a human touch and a depth that were essential to the

film. I was really impressed by the strength of her performance and by her passion for cinema, which was palpable every step of the way. Juliette, like Catherine Deneuve or Isabelle Huppert, is an actress that gives you hope again. She is so eager to make films that you start dreaming about making films for her. Juliette makes you believe in cinema. Working with her on set opens a whole new range of fiction possibilities. She is also a great accomplice, you can tell that she enjoys making films with a small bunch of people, secretly, like a conspiracy. There is a profound need in her to belong to some secret network, a united and hard-working gang toiling to give birth to a new film. This sense of togetherness on set is really joyful and precious.

I knew that the last movement in the film had to focus on the mother. I wanted her to get hold of the narrative, to take over from Lucas' voice so that, in a way, she became responsible for an ending that may not be fully happy, but is at least cheerful, sweet and warm. Juliette fully embraced this theoretical choice and was able to embody it with sensitivity and strength. Filming Juliette is like filming a vein pulsating with blood - life is ever so present.



# CAST

LUCAS RONIS  
PAUL KIRCHER

QUENTIN RONIS  
VINCENT LACOSTE

ISABELLE RONIS  
JULIETTE BINOCHÉ

LILIO  
ERWAN KEPOA FALÉ

OSCAR  
ADRIEN CASSE

LE PÈRE BENOÎT  
PASCAL CERVO

CLAUDE RONIS  
CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

SONIA  
ANNE KESSLER DE LA COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE

THIERRY  
ELLIOT JENICOT

# CREW

Script : **CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ**  
Production : **PHILIPPE MARTIN & DAVID THION**  
Music : **YOSHIHIRO HANNO**  
Image : **RÉMY CHEVRIN, AFC**  
Set Design : **JÉRÉMY STRELISKI**  
Costumes : **PASCALINE CHAVANNE**  
Editing : **CHANTAL HYMANS**  
Sound : **GUILLAUME LE BRAZ**  
Sound Editing : **VALÉRIE DE LOOF**  
Mixing : **THOMAS GAUDER**  
Casting : **LÉOLO VICTOR-PUJEBET**  
Assistant Director : **JULIE GOUET**  
Production Manager : **NICOLAS LECLERE**

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