

EUROPACORP PRESENTS

Nora Arnezeder Gérard Lanvin

ANGELIQUE

based on Anne and Serge Golon's novel

MARQUISE DES ANGES

A FILM BY
ARIEL ZEITOUN

IN THEATERS DECEMBER 18
RUNNING TIME: 113 minutes

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SYNOPSIS

The incredible destiny of the beautiful-yet-rebellious Angelique, whose love for Joffrey de Peyrac gives her the strength to fight injustice and submission in a century plagued by power struggles, inequality and oppression...

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Interview with ANNE GOLON

What was your reaction when Ariel Zeïtoun expressed his desire to adapt “Angelique” to the screen?

I knew him by reputation. I knew he was well respected in the industry. I had also seen some of his feature films and loved the choices that he made. He’s a producer and a director who doesn’t go for what’s easy. I sensed that he loved my books and had a vision of the film he wanted to make. I immediately felt I could trust him.

What were your discussions like?

Ariel came to Versailles to see me. He pulled up on a motorcycle. There were often long silences between us. He’s very secretive. In any case, he’s not very talkative in those kinds of situations, when an author tries to ascertain a director’s intention, his sincerity. A director has his own ideas to defend. You have to find a way to see eye-to-eye on whether or not to go forward with the project. You always think to yourself, “I hope he/she understands me!” Yet, you’re well aware that only time will tell. When it comes down to it, adapting a piece of writing for the screen is a very mysterious process.

You’ve never hidden the fact that you didn’t like the adaptations that Bernard Borderie did of your work in the sixties. Did you feel like you got burned?

Burned, no. But I was cautious. In general, the film industry is very suspicious of authors. That’s a shame but it’s true. So, at first, you’re sort of on guard. That said, it is true that Bernard Borderie and I — or rather his screenwriters and I — weren’t in agreement. I can

still hear Daniel Boulanger saying, "Angelique's just a little slut who wants to get it on with every man she sees." When he said that, I got up and walked out of the room. There was a genuine rift between us and I immediately knew the film wouldn't be faithful to the books. I obviously didn't attend the premiere. I wasn't even invited. But I was subsequently somewhat satisfied to see that Bernard Borderie had changed his point of view. In the end, Michèle Mercier is quite innocent. The audiences were happy and still have fond memories of the film. In a certain sense, even though I didn't approve, "Angelique has lived on."

The "Angelique" books have sold more than 150 million copies worldwide...

That is, indeed, what they say. And in reality, it's probably an underestimation. But that doesn't mean I got rich. For years, I was the victim of unscrupulous publishers. When I demanded to see the books, they acted like I was crazy. It was only after twelve long years of litigation that I was able to get the rights back. But not the money they owed me. Something told me that Ariel's project wouldn't betray me and that, before I turned 100 — I'm 91 now — I'd be able to see a film version of "Angelique" that finally lived up to my expectations. And that's just what happened! Thanks to this film, I feel like life is beginning anew.

Ariel Zeïtoun changed Joffrey de Peyrac's age. In your book, he's in his forties. He's made him almost sixty. Did you discuss that with him?

This age business makes me laugh! I didn't give it a single thought. I see a man in his prime, winning a duel, succeeding in his love life... I see an actor playing the role remarkably well. To me, he's a really young guy, given all that he's able to do... It's his voice! It's his laugh! I think to myself, "That's Peyrac! That's my Joffrey de Peyrac!" That makes me happy.

What was your impression of Nora Arnezeder, who plays Angelique?

I was equally pleased. Those two actors are a kind of miracle, which is why I say Ariel Zeïtoun is the king of casting. Nora Arnezeder has Angelique's dynamism. She has her youth, her courage. She seems to be straight out of the 17th century, yet simultaneously has my heroine's contemporary side.

A contemporaneity that the books emphasize quite emphatically, in fact.

Yes, at the time, my aim was to create the portrait of a 17th century woman, within the context of an historical novel, as well as a portrait of a woman of our own times. That

was valid in the fifties, when I wrote it. And curiously it still is. Angelique had to confront the problems of her century and those of ours. Remember that, in those days, literature had little interest in women. If there was a hero, he was male.

So did “Angelique” come to life in reaction to the misogyny of the times?

I hadn't realized that. I had already written a few books and a few screenplays (under the pen name of Joëlle Danterne). Then I read “Gone with the Wind” and was fascinated by its heroine and its way of recounting the Civil War. I had the impression that the mid-17th century hadn't been very thoroughly explored; it seemed boring even. So I decided to delve into it by way of posing modern questions. In episode after episode, I never let go of that benchmark — I simultaneously followed my own times.

In France, “Angelique” has often been credited to both you and your husband, Serge Golon. What was his role in the writing of those books?

He did all the documentation. It was a huge amount of work, which was indispensable to understand how people lived in those days. He was unemployed at the time and helped me enormously by introducing me to that world. But if his name was credited in the French edition [*the first “Angelique” book was released one year earlier in Germany, credited to Anne Golon only*], it was only because our agency and publisher insisted upon it, claiming that a man's name would be taken “more seriously.” It seems no one would have believed that a woman could write all that by herself.

In a sense, one might say that Ariel Zeïtoun's Angelique is your mouthpiece — she takes her destiny in hand. She's no longer Bernard Borderie's sex object.

Yes. She's much more interesting, much more faithful to the original. From our very first meeting, I sensed that Ariel didn't have a misogynist bone in his body. And that pleased me.

What did you think of the other actors — Simon Abkarian, who plays the attorney Desgrez, or Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays Nicolas/Calembredaine?

Even though Jean Rochefort was outstanding in Borderie's film, I thought Simon Abkarian's performance was closer to the character in my book. As for Nicolas, it's essential that you notice him. It's a difficult and important role; it justifies the fact that Angelique finds the strength to survive and to keep fighting, despite everything she's been through.

The Court of Miracles, over which Nicolas reigns, also has a very contemporary resonance. Ariel Zeïtoun doesn't disguise references to today's *Indignados* movement or the homeless.

And in that, once again, his concerns dovetail with mine, as an author. Another dimension that I like enormously in the film is the importance he attaches to religion, through Peyrac's profession of faith. That's an element of "Angelique" that was blacklisted when the book was released because it was extremely subversive at the time. And, to tell the truth, it still is. What does Peyrac say? That we're all free to have our own faith, outside of an organized system. And Ariel held onto that dialogue. That's very important to me.

What does it feel like to see your written work on the screen?

I wasn't as worked up as Ariel. He was scared to death at the very thought of how I'd react. I've found the spirit of my book again — its historical accuracy, its atmosphere, its darkness and harshness, its heroine. When I see Nora Arnezeder in her gold dress, curtsying to the King, I'm bowled over. She's magnificent; she's a marvel!

Do you feel like you've been vindicated?

Yes. Now I can die because I've seen my two heroes come to life. I've seen that they belong to both the 17th century and to this century. Just as I've always imagined them.

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Interview with ARIEL ZEÏTOUN

Why did you want to readapt Anne and Serge Golon's novel "Angelique, Marquise des Anges" almost sixty years after the release of Bernard Borderie's film?

The desire came to me in waves. I've always felt close to the Court of Miracles, which was sort of the theater of my youth. From the time I was 15 till I was 20, I worked the night shift in "The Belly of Paris," in the Les Halles neighborhood (where one of the largest Courts of Miracles had flourished). The people you met there, the ambiance had a huge effect on me. And the proximity I had to that environment at a very young age obviously made me sympathize with the world that Anne Golon and her husband described. But obviously there were other influences that pushed me toward this adventure. Making a film is both light-hearted and profound, and the things that lead you to a particular

subject matter are always lodged deep within you. We're all the result of a "history." Mine (that of my parents, which was the inspiration for "Le Nombriil du Monde") has the same point of departure as Angelique's. Like her, my mother was purchased and forced to marry my father against her will. And, like her, she started off by refusing that union. No, my encounter with "Angelique" really wasn't a coincidence.

How did Anne Golon react when you told her about your desire?

First, I had to move heaven and earth to find her. In the early 2000s, Anne had been in a continual battle with Hachette for years, trying to reclaim the rights to her books. She practically lived in hiding, in dread of litigation. I eventually found her in Switzerland. Anne was very suspicious at first. She doubted the sincerity of my intentions. It took me some time to convince her.

Precisely why did you want to present another interpretation of the book?

First of all, I can't hide the fact that the real driving force for me was the delight I took in making a spectacular costume picture, in an historical period that I love, replete with action, emotion, duels, poison and betrayals. Also the pleasure of stumbling upon the scent of my childhood — from "Capitan" to "Cartouche" — and delving into that wonderful alchemy of history and romance. But also simply because I had a different perspective than the previous films, which I applaud, by the way. The point of departure is Angelique's reason for turning Peyrac down. A woman obviously doesn't need a reason to say no to a man she hasn't chosen and to whom she has even been sold, despite the fact that marriages of convenience, or business, were common among the nobility. Angelique's refusal is supposed to be based on Peyrac's physical unattractiveness, which Anne Golon emphasizes in her book. She writes that he's "unbearable to look at." But I found that hard to believe when I saw Hossein. He's young, he's handsome, he barely limps and his only disability is a scar that looks like an ectoplasm at first, but then fades over the course of the film.

Your vision is certainly much more nuanced.

In my adaptation, Angelique first refuses the marriage because she has other plans — she wants to find her brother, who'd disappeared years earlier. And Peyrac's physical failings, which are very real in my film, obviously don't help matters. Gérard Lanvin and I went all out with that. His scars don't fade, they're stand out against his skin. He's had them since childhood, as a result of incidents that also made him lame. But that's only one element and certainly not the only reason for Angelique's refusal.

Yes. In fact, not only did you give Angelique a life plan, but you also made Peyrac a man who is truly scarred and much older than he is in Anne Golon's book.

That's a liberty I took. It seemed impossible to me that a man who had traveled the world several times, had led so many battles, and had invented so many things could be so young. It took me a while to realize that, to me, Peyrac is Odysseus returning to Ithaca — another one of my childhood favorites! So, with Gérard, another element was introduced that would influence Angelique's position — that age difference. And thanks to that, I started to believe Angelique's stubborn refusal. But I didn't make this film in reaction to anything. I made it for the pleasures that I've already described, and because it allowed me to address the difference between a man like Peyrac and those who have never suffered. It also allowed me to talk about love, the birth of love. How seduction, intelligence can transform your perception of another person.

The film develops a deeply humanistic dimension and takes on some of the elements of the book that went relatively unnoticed when it was first released.

"Angelique" speaks about the forces of good and evil; about the condition of women; about women who were sold yesterday and today, legally purchased; about the ephemeral illusion of power; about destinies crashing, about births and rebirths; about the predetermination of beings; about the incredible ability we have to adapt to the most unexpected of situations; about glory and misery; about underground communities; about those who have nothing and who dream about changing the world tomorrow... It's a magnificent story of hope and love, the dreamlike journey between fiction and life, traversing despair and a lust for life, so similar to the journey of so many, both yesterday and today. Angelique and Peyrac represent science confronting ignorance, the opposition of powers — that which is innate and that which is acquired. Angelique and Peyrac represent a life force that's unsinkable, intelligent and beautiful, as long as we look at it in the right way.

Did you consult with Anne Golon on the screenplay?

Her daughter, Nadine Golon, wrote the first treatment, which brought us into agreement on the film's structure. Once that structure was in place, Anne Golon gave Philippe Blasband and me carte blanche to delve into the story in our own way.

How did you work?

We were aware of the "inevitability" of betraying the books. Adaptations are always betrayals! From the moment we figured out how to organize the story, we stopped consulting it. Respecting, of course, the work's foundation, that whole mass of indispensable information. But we never betrayed the spirit of Anne Golon's books. And while we allowed ourselves some digressions, Anne's characters were strong enough to resist us. In the end, Angelique (as well as many of the other characters), is not exactly the same, yet not completely different.

There's a genuine political dimension in your version of the story. It's impossible not to think of the *Indignados* or Occupy Wall Street movements, for example, watching your scenes in the Court of Miracles.

Yes, those movements and all the outcasts of society, all those people who have nowhere to go and wind up in the same places as the beggars in the Court of Miracles. As I launched myself into this adventure, I knew the subject wasn't unrelated to today's problems. I wanted that association to happen naturally, without being too heavy-handed.

Another nod to our times is your emphasis on the religious fanaticism that Peyrac falls victim to.

Yes. Fanaticism, regardless of whatever religion it is, has unfortunately crossed the centuries. We can obviously draw a parallel with our experience, and applaud the authors for their foresight because that was all in the books. Still, I didn't want to make a film that was didactic. I just opened the door; it's up to each viewer to dig out whatever he chooses.

You've always seemed to have a penchant for period films. Your producing credits include "The Lady Banker," "The Elegant Criminal," "Chouans!" and "Jean Galmot, Adventurer."

Truffaut once said that cinema ceased to be poetic the moment we went from black-and-white to color because, by showing people's daily lives in color, the cinema no longer sparks our imaginations. I think period films provide the poetry that color deprives us of. They sort of offer us dreams. We see things on the screen that we can't see in our daily lives. And without the slightest premeditation on my part, it turns out that most of the films I've made have been period films. It's not that I'm uninterested in my own times, but I think they evoke different emotions.

How did you come to cast Nora Arnezeder in the role of Angelique?

A friend called me one day and said, "Ariel, I've found your Angelique. A fabulous actress in Christophe Barratier's 'Paris 36.' Go see that movie!" I went and I agreed with him, with one caveat — Nora was too young for the part. Except that we shot the film four years later. During that time, I kept auditioning other actresses but Nora always came back to me. She has talent and a natural nobility that brings so much to the film. Angelique may well have been raised as a boy and spent her childhood running through the woods, but she's not a savage. It was very important to me that the actress who played the role had that distinction. And I wanted to pay tribute to her. It was a crazy artistic and physical notion. She was there almost every day of the shoot. She never faltered and gave the best of what I expected of her.

G rard Lanvin is terrific as Peyrac. How did you come to think of him for the role?

G rard and I have known each other for a long time. One day I admitted to Annabelle Karoubi, his agent, that I'd love to have G rard in the film — at the time I envisioned him in the role of the lawyer, Fran ois Desgrez, which Simon Abkarian wound up doing. Some time later, Annabelle call me up, saying, "G rard's in my office. Let's get together." I ran right over to find a magnificent-looking G rard in a suit and tie, hair combed, shaved, and I drew a blank. I didn't dare tell him I was thinking of him for Desgrez. It was so obvious that that idea vanished. So I just handed him the script and said, "I won't say a word. Read it and we'll talk later." The next day, G rard called and said, "Are you thinking of me for Peyrac?" I said, "Obviously. Who else?" That's exactly how it happened. G rard brought Joffrey de Peyrac to life so naturally. He has his intelligence, his seductiveness, his refinement and his nobility. He's always in control. Ten days before we started shooting, we did make-up and costume tests. When I walked in to see Nora, looking ravishing in her gown, and G rard with his scars and limp, I was bowled over. They were just as I had imagined them. Suddenly, the studio disappeared, the actors disappeared, there were just these two spectacular characters, brimming over with charm and emotion.

Tell us about the other actors — Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays Calembredaine.

His presence was the result of a miracle, pure and simple, and it was my greatest gift during the film shoot. I consider Mathieu to be one of the three major actors of his generation and I dreamed of having him in the film. But that wasn't possible. In fact, I never managed to speak to him, or even reach him. When we started shooting, the magnificent Italian actor Ricardo Scamarcio had been cast in the role of

Nicolas/Calembredaine. But when he arrived on set, we no longer saw eye-to-eye. I would never have asked him to leave but he himself made that decision. And I did nothing to dissuade him. A little voice inside me said, "He's right." He was supposed to start shooting the following day and I found myself in an impossible situation. I had one day to replace him. At that moment, executive producer Emmanuel Jacquelin said, "Why not Mathieu Kassovitz?" I wanted to blurt out that it would be a waste of time but — I don't know why — I held back. Two hours later, he had Mathieu on the phone. He was in L.A. but agreed to do it in theory. And two or three days later, Mathieu joined us. If that's not a miracle, I don't know what is!

The credits also include Simon Abkarian, as the lawyer Desgrez, and Tomer Sisley, as the Marquis du Plessis-Bellière.

For Desgrez, I wanted a force of nature. Simon Abkarian has that strength. He's an actor who brings incredible energy and light to his work. And I loved Tomer Sisley's restraint, mystery and elegance. I've been a huge fan of his, right from the start. It was important to have Nora Arnezeder stand up to great actors like Gérard, Simon, Tomer and David Kross, who plays Louis XIV. And speaking of the king, I'd also like to say that that character — and the entire historical context around him — was important and exciting. The Fronde, Mazarin's death, Louis XIV's "takeover" all follow history like an adventure novel. And having such a talented actor was a stroke of luck and a great pleasure.

Cinematographer Peter Zeitlinger shot "Angelique." Up until now, he's only worked with one other filmmaker — Werner Herzog — for whom he's shot almost every film.

I don't like the false comfort of the habitual. I like meeting new people. I loved the way Peter and I confronted one another, right off the bat. I liked his personality, his insane biases, the risks he proposed. Peter is a mad genius. He brought a wonderful quality to the film by insisting that we light it with candles. The night scenes and interiors were all shot by candlelight. The only condition I imposed was insisting that we be able to shoot a maximum number of hours per day. And Peter understood that.

When you starting shooting, how did you approach the staging?

I wanted to concentrate on the actors, to attach myself to them, to bring out the best in them, but also to surprise them, and especially to never let the "staging" show. The camera had to be a character that accompanies them, without hindering them too much. But I also always wanted them to be unsure of what it was going do. And then I sought

out breaks in the rhythm, mixing static, posed shots with Steadicam moves. But I primarily wanted to make the actors as comfortable as possible. The film is, of course, cut up, but during the shoot, you didn't really feel that because I always shot with three cameras, one taking over for the other, in relay fashion, so that the performance would remain uninterrupted. Working that way, I shot continuous, one-take scenes... that were then cut up! That allowed the actors to play out scenes fluidly and gave enormous strength to their performances.

The love scene is fairly modest.

I simply wanted it to be sensual, so that the viewer would feel the budding carnality between Angelique and Peyrac, which cements their relationship. And that we also feel that it's just the beginning. It's not necessarily an erotic moment but one of profound love. It wasn't about being provocative in that way.

"Angelique" also has a memorable duel scene.

That necessitated two months of intensive training. That scene presented several challenges. First of all, Gérard Lanvin had never held a sword in his life. He had to learn all the rules of fencing. Even more problematic, Peyrac couldn't move his leg during the duel. How can he fence, if he limps? He's stuck in the middle. He can push his adversary back by outstretching his arm but he can't take ten steps forward or ten steps back. We worked with actor/fencing master/stunt choreographer Michel Carliez to design a sword fight around that handicap. The one time Peyrac moves, he catches his opponent off guard and stabs him in the back. The rest of the time, he stands facing him, an exposed target.

The film ends with a title card that reads, "End of Part One." When will we have Part Two?

Philippe Blasband and I have already written it and considered shooting it on the heels of the first film. I decided to wait. Part Two is very different from Part One. The sets aren't the same, lots of scenes take place in Versailles, the mood is different. The years have passed and the characters have changed. Now the Marquise des Anges, Angelique is a woman struggling to survive; she has very little to do with the young ingénue we see at the beginning. Shooting one right after the other would have risked making the characters less authentic. The entire cast and crew have agreed to let some time pass, while we stand at the ready.

The books have sold over 150 million copies worldwide. Has “Angelique” already been sold abroad?

The film has been sold in Korea, Canada, Germany, Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Benelux, Switzerland, etc. In Russia, people are crazy about this saga, to such a degree that 90 million fake publications — episodes that weren't written by Anne and Serge Golon — have also been marketed.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2013 ANGELIQUE
2007 THE LAST GANG
1993 LE NOMBRIL DU MONDE
1987 SAXO
1984 MEMORIES, MEMORIES

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Interview with NORA ARNEZEDER

Tell us about this new Angelique?

She's the woman of a thousand faces — a dream role for an actress! She's the rebel who refuses to get married; she's the lover; she's the mother; she's the fighter; she's a warrior who's prepared to kill. She's a woman ahead of her time, who believes in education and freedom, who's curious about everything and never gives up. She's the ideal woman. It seems to me that all women today will be able to see themselves in her love affair with Peyrac, and to dream, in turn, of love, loyalty, passion, freedom and a fighting spirit. She's a universal woman.

She traverses the 17th century with great panache. Do you feel close to her struggles?

She and I have the same thirst for freedom, the same need to express our ideas, probably the same love of travel. I grew up in a family in which we were all encouraged to express our convictions, and to respect one another's, of course. Angelique is no different. And that's why she manages to overcome the challenges that arise along the way. Throughout the film, she fights for the people she loves and for her freedom. Plus,

she's an extraordinarily contemporary heroine. Angelique's refusal to be married off, against her will, then to consummate a union that's been imposed upon her by force certainly recalls the struggle of African women today, and women all over the world, in general.

How did you prepare for the role?

It's a very intimate thing to recount how you work on a character. Sometimes it's inexplicable. Stage fright and doubts carry a lot of weight. They're what drive me. Ariel Zeïtoun and I spent a lot of time together. We met almost every day. He wanted me to know my dialogue by heart. A month before we started shooting, I had memorized not only my scenes, but the entire screenplay. Once we were on set, any dialogue stress had completely vanished. Basically, we approached the film as we would a play, with lots of reflection in advance.

Tell us about working with Gérard Lanvin, who plays Joffrey de Peyrac.

I first met him for an audition six months before filming. We ate sushi and did a reading together. The second time, I saw him during our costume tests. When I saw him in costume and made up, I was flabbergasted. He made a magnificent Peyrac. I like the idea of the age difference between us because it makes the story more interesting and less typical. It's wonderful to work with someone like Gérard Lanvin — he gives you so much. He's a generous actor with an incredibly stimulating kind of madness. He really supported me. So did Simon Abkarian and Mathieu Kassovitz. They're great actors who could only make me better.

What is Ariel Zeïtoun like as a director of actors?

He's someone who never gives up. When he wants something, he gets it. He can make you crazy doing it but you immediately forgive him because he himself gives so much, so he expects the same in return. Ariel loves surprises and being surprised. He likes accidents, moments of hesitation, and hates things that are set in stone or too thought-out. That's what I like most in a director. He's never afraid. But he can also "fly by the seat of his pants." More than once during production, he'd throw out his shot list or rewrite entire scenes during the night.

You previously did a period film — Christophe Barratier's "Paris 36," which took place during the Popular Front era. Now, with "Angelique," you've jumped back three centuries in time.

It was like taking an extraordinary journey back in time. The first few days of the shoot, you feel sort of disoriented — the language, the clothes, everything seems strange. Three weeks later, I didn't even notice my corset. I didn't feel it anymore. And the 17th century language had become so familiar to me that I was surprised to hear myself using it between takes.

What's your worst memory of the shoot?

When they told me I had to shoot underground, surrounded by rats. And when I had to jump into the Seine, also surrounded by rats. They were sewer rats, certainly trained, but still pretty vile. Basically, I felt like Angelique — as the story progressed, as the days passed, things got more and more difficult.

You funniest memory?

The love scene with Gérard Lanvin... but I won't tell you why!

What are your hopes for the film?

Other than the fact that, during the 50-day production period, I felt like I was taking a giant leap in the apprenticeship of my craft and had received an extraordinary gift, I'd like it to give people the desire to fight until all their dreams come true, so they'll no longer be afraid to fight for the things they hold dear.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2013 FISTON
A film by Pascal Bourdiaux
- 2013 ANGELIQUE
A film by Ariel Zeitoun
- 2011 CE QUE LE JOUR DOIT
A film of Alexandre ARCADY
- 2011 SAFE HOUSE
A film by Daniel Espinosa
- 2010 LA CROISIERE
A film by Pascale POUZADOUX
- 2008 PARIS 36
A film by Christophe BARRATIER
- 2007 LES DEUX MONDES
A film by Daniel Cohen

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Interview with GÉRARD LANVIN

What was it like working with Ariel Zeitoun again, 26 years after "Saxo"?

Ariel and I have always gotten along very well. After "Saxo," we wanted to work together again, but his subjects didn't jibe with what I was into at that particular moment. Then "Angelique" turned up and I connected with his desire for me to play Peyrac. I'm so grateful to him. This role is a wonderful gift for an actor. His confidence made me strong. I followed his lead.

Robert Hossein played the role before you. Was that a constraint? A seemingly impossible challenge?

No film is a seemingly impossible challenge to me. Either I like it or I don't. I feel capable or I don't. I've never felt competitive in my work. I'm only concerned with whether it resonates or it's fun. As for Robert Hossein — whom I know and like very much — several generations of women have succumbed to his charms, which made the whole thing rather mythic. So I obviously asked myself a lot of questions. Would I be believable? Could I create a plausible Peyrac? The book and Ariel's fidelity to the spirit of the book convinced me that I could. I was convinced because this Peyrac was older than Angelique. And in reality, at the time, with another 15 years, you could do more. A forty-year-old man was considered practically finished. I was also reassured by the dialogue, which was written without the least bit of sentimentality or gratuitousness. It was always right on the money. It speaks of a time without pity, where compromise, betrayal and all kinds of jealousies were commonplace. It presents a different Angelique — a rebellious, modern woman who is sure of herself. All of those things together made Peyrac a very strong role, one to be attempted. He always acts on instinct, he's brilliant, seduced by the entire nature of that young woman — by her independence and her beauty, of course. That made for a very particular lover to play, a role that could only be attempted in a story this romantic and memorable. In the end, I really liked the fact that this huge fresco was at the service of a woman.

This is the first time you've done a period film.

Yes, but the advantage is that everyone already knows what this one is about. It remains to be seen if people will be curious and motivated enough to see "the true vision" of "Angelique," the one the author (Anne Golon) embraced after seeing our film. I admit, it's a tricky genre, but you'll see, when you see the film, that it still has a lovely topicality — in people's bearing and their relationships to power, money, love. Pleasure is one more form of power that can transform and change the times, the look, the language. You really feel like an actor, amidst all that. The overall transformation makes all the difference here.

How would you describe Peyrac?

He's a rebel, an adventurer, an innovative character, very into advancing things. His financial strength creates problems for him. It becomes an obstacle for the people at Court, who despise the King's admiration for him. As a result, they plot against him. They make him out to be a sorcerer, guilty of turning gold-bearing sand into gold, whereas he's simply a man enamored of progress, a sincere, honest soul. In the end, he's a victim of the political and social environment. He becomes a model, protective, loving husband. He's able to tame the woman he loves, to become her lover, then her husband and the father of her children. He's a valiant man.

Does the alchemy that takes place in their relationship seem contemporary to you?

The concepts of protectiveness and love have neither borders nor constraints in time. Such a perfect match allows you to imagine that kind of love. Many couples come together based on that model today. Women are stronger than we are. They understand that intelligence in a relationship is more important than simple physical attraction, or relating to prevailing values.

Peyrac has an incredibly subversive discourse on religion for the time.

He was a very early target of the religious wars. At just six months old, his face was scarred and he was thrown from a third floor window because he had the misfortune of being in the village of a Catholic wet-nurse, which was attacked by a neighboring Protestant village. This man was slashed, thrown out a window and killed by religious leaders who claim to be right about everything and are ready to destroy their neighbors if their opinions differ, even on an anecdotal chapter. What he experienced was not so far from the tensions that plague the world today. Peyrac is aware of the futility of those wars. He's very attentive to the attitude of the Church and forgives none of its

shortcomings. Scarred in the flesh, he's constructed a kind of armor, behind which he tirelessly battles against intolerance.

How do you construct a character like Joffrey de Peyrac?

You read, you analyze, you prepare yourself to know all the consequences and implications of his commitments. You learn all his lines by heart so you can "spit them out" as naturally as possible. Then you go out to fight, going back to fencing, the horse, the armor, finding the right costume, the limp, the scar. Then you talk to the people you have to place your trust in—the film crew. Then you meet your "colleagues," the other actors, who will infuse the "baby" with the same aspirations. And in terms of colleagues, I was well served. Thank you, Ariel.

How long did that physical transformation take?

Four hours every day.

There's an amazing duel in the film, in which — almost without moving — you manage to vanquish your adversary.

You have to imagine how Peyrac managed to overcome his disabilities. His leg has given out on him, so all his strength is in his chest, his shoulders, his arms. He can't attack, but he has no match when it comes to repelling. It would have been impossible — and ridiculous — to imagine a normal fight with a guy who limps. On the contrary, we had to use the character's handicap [to his advantage]. I really insisted upon a prosthesis that wouldn't force me to limp with a stiff leg, the way Robert Hossein did in the original film. I limped, certainly, but I could still bend my knee slightly. My fencing master, Michel Carliez, who also plays one of my attackers in the film, designed a very violent fencing choreography that resembles certain karate moves, with blows, elbow jabs, punches, and sword thrusts. That afforded the character a great deal of power, practically without moving. That cost us almost eight weeks of training, four hours a day.

Tell us about your costar, Nora Arnezeder.

I loved her modernity and her way of being, therefore, of thinking. This new Angelique couldn't function on a heightened sensuality the way Michèle Mercier did, with that provocative cleavage of hers that lingers in all our memories. Our Angelique is much more complex. She's a rebel, devoid of trickery. She's a truly heroic character. Yet, Nora is not only very attractive, but also intuitive and adventurous in life, and — the cherry on the cake — intelligent, to boot. Be it Mathieu Kassovitz, Simon Abkarian, Tomer Sisley,

the other actors, or myself — we were all so fascinated and thrilled to be working together. It was lots of hard work, friendship and good humor. It's crucial to feel comfortable with your partners. And I think casting Nora was a very good choice. The right choice. I thank Nora for her seriousness, her investment and her gazes, which allowed me to feel like I was a credible Peyrac. Nora has remained a friend, even though she's several years younger than I.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2013 ANGELIQUE by Ariel Zeïtoun
- 2012 AMITIÉS SINCÈRES
by Stephan Archinard & François Prévot Leygonie
- 2011 A GANG STORY by Olivier Marchal
- 2010 JO'S BOY by Philippe Guillard
- 2007 MESRINE: PUBLIC ENEMY #1 by Jean-François Richet
- 2003 SAN ANTONIO by Frédéric Auburtin
- 2000 THE TASTE OF OTHERS by Agnès Jaoui
(CESAR Award for Best Supporting Actor)
- 1995 MY MAN by Bertrand Blier
- 1994 THE FAVORITE SON by Nicole Garcia
(CESAR Award for Best Actor)
- 1988 MY BEST PALS by Jean-Marie Poiré
- 1987 SAXO by Ariel Zeitoun
- 1984 LES SPÉCIALISTES by Patrice Leconte
MARCHE À L'OMBRE by Michel Blanc
- 1982 THE PRIZE OF PERIL by Yves Boisset
- 1981 STRANGE AFFAIR by Pierre Granier-Deferre
(CESAR Nomination as Best Supporting Actor)
- 1981 CHOICE OF ARMS by Alain Corneau

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Interview with TOMER SISLEY

"Being cast in the role of Philippe du Plessis-Bellière, a marquis from a great family of 17th century French aristocrats, is a nice bonus for a kid who was not long ago described as 'average.'"

"Philippe du Plessis-Bellière is a warrior who's spent half his life on the battlefield. He's also a young man who's had a difficult childhood. That makes him a very tough character. Almost contemptuous towards others. But his harshness is primarily directed at himself. He loves Angelique desperately but refuses to admit to that love because that would force him to take a good, hard look at himself. To play him, all I had to do was remain aloof. We had to feel that nothing could get to this man, and only glimpse his fragility at very rare moments. On set, Ariel Zeitoun kept saying, 'Be harsher with Angelique.' He wanted me to go completely against my nature and that was very exciting to play."

"Angelique is one of the most complex female characters I've ever had to confront in a film. As the story unfolds, she gets tougher, yet manages to hold onto a great deal of femininity. From our very first scenes, I loved working with Nora Arnezeder. She's a very instinctive, almost raw, actress. There was a wonderful complicity between us, right from the start."

"Ariel Zeitoun gravitated toward a contemporary reading of 'Angelique.' There's nothing kitsch or Manichean in the film, just complex, modern, vibrant characters."

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2013 ANGELIQUE by Ariel Zeitoun
- 2013 KIDON by Emmanuel Naccache
- 2013 WE'RE THE MILLERS by Rawson Marshall Thurber
- 2011 SLEEPLESS NIGHT by Frédéric Jardin
- 2011 LARGO WINCH II by Jérôme Salle
- 2007 LARGO WINCH by Jérôme Salle
- 2006 THE NATIVITY STORY by Catherine Hardwicke
- 2005 YOU AND ME by Julie Lopes-Curval
- 2005 TRUANDS by Frédéric Schoendoerffer
- 2001 BEDWIN HACKER by Nadia El Fani
- 2000 ABSOLUMENT FABULEUX by Gabriel Aghion

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Interview with Simon Abkarian

How did you become involved in this project?

It's always exciting to work with someone who's clear about what he wants, yet modest in his way of expressing it. That's the feeling I had in working with Ariel. His taciturn nature never got in the way of his determination to achieve his goals. Everything we do is infused with the quality of the relationship that exists between two people. Ours was very clear, and reciprocal. And I think that shows in the film. I quickly saw that the process would be warm and artistically solid. That sidesteps the annoyance of vulgar nepotism. What I wanted was to be as close as possible to Ariel's vision, without ever depriving myself of trying this or that. Beyond that we never missed an opportunity to laugh every single day or, on the contrary, to leave room for intimate, solitary reflection.

What thoughts did "Angelique" evoke for you — both before working on it and afterwards?

Performing in "Angelique," the legendary Marquise des Anges, is like doing a James Bond movie, but with capes and swords and horses. Well, I didn't have a sword or a cape, and even less a horse. So there were no swashbuckling swordfights for me, or equestrian chase scenes either. That's frustrating, of course. Gérard and Tomer were the ones who got to have a blast, and they did a great job. I say that because living out the adventures of knights is a childhood dream. There's always a beautiful woman to save, treacherous traitors to unmask, highway bandits to fight. As soon as I got hold of the script, I read it from cover to cover. I knew Gérard and Nora would make an epic couple. There was, of course, the Robert Hossein-Michèle Mercier version... Would we match it? Surpass it? We didn't even ask!

Along with Ariel, we were never concerned about living under the weight of that film, which met the needs and esthetics of its own time. The work belongs to whoever has a strong cinematic vision. It responds to whoever can make its language resonate. And I think Ariel's adaptation is faithful to the spirit of the original, personal, significant work. I'm speaking of course of Anne and Serge Golon's books. Because it's, first and foremost, a well written script. The language is beautiful and the story extraordinary. It's a fresco that tells a great, bitter, universal love story. All we had to do was slip into the costumes,

which, by the way, are gorgeous. And let's not forget the film's sets. I know Ariel fought for those sets. And he was right. The decor is a central character in the film. And me? I play Desgrez, a lawyer who hangs out in the slums of Paris and falls in love, not with Angelique's body, but her courage. He's in awe of her strength. That's why he takes her side. In those troubled times, when rumor and intrigue contaminate the Courts and the people, this woman, true to herself, provokes Desgrez's admiration. No, it wasn't hard to play. It's hard when it's poorly written. But here, the situations, the dialogue supported the images and the acting. All I had to do was watch my fellow actors. And follow Ariel into his madness. That's all!

And afterwards?

Afterwards, we'll see. There are three more films to make. Of course, I want to make the sequel. First, because I'd like to know what happens to Angelique and the others! But mostly because I'm dying to see the crew and my dog, Sorbonne, again!

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Interview with MATHIEU KASSOVITZ

I'd never done a film on this period. A swashbuckler... It was fun to try. It's pretty rare to have the opportunity to do that kind of movie. And then, the role they offered me was Nicolas/Calembredaine, "leader" of the beggar pack. I said, "That's for me!" A beggar suits me just fine. Ariel's not very nice but he smells good (*laughing*). I respect him. He's a filmmaker, a man who lives and breathes cinema.

Ariel Zeitoun: "When Emmanuel Jacquelin, the film's Executive Producer, told me that Mathieu had agreed to play the role of Nicolas, I thought I couldn't have a greater gift. That guy's a true wonder!"

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About DAVID KROSS

I wanted the role of Louis XIV to be played by an actor who was the same age as Louis XIV at the time of the film's story — just 20 years old... He's barely out of his teens, yet he's the King. With all the necessary authority, an obvious authority. A young man forged and shaped by the bitterness of the battles he's had to wage, for years already, to defend his crown. When I met David, that combination of youth and inner toughness was palpable in him. And he so dazzled me in the title role of "The Reader." That really impressed me. The most amazing thing is that, when he played his first scene, when he appeared on the plateau in his royal garb, everyone — from Gérard to each crew member, extra, actor — felt this incredible aura that he exuded, doing almost nothing at all. We were all under the spell of his royal authority. I remember Gérard saying, after their first scene together, "When he entered, I bowed without even thinking. I hadn't prepared that. I was in the presence of the King."

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Interview with PHILIPPE BLASBAND, Screenwriter

How did you become involved in this project?

I was in Avignon to present my play "Les Témoins." It was 38° C and I was drinking white wine on the terrace of the Théâtre des Doms, when my agent called to ask if I was interested to participating in the writing of "Angelique." I replied distractedly in two words — those same two words that I have the habit of using whenever my life is about to change diametrically, either my personal life or my professional life. I said, "Why not?"

Can you tell us about the film shoot?

Often screenwriters (myself included) complain that producers and directors try to monopolize the writing of the script, yet they only make a few minor changes. But on "Angelique," Ariel Zeïtoun was a real co-screenwriter. He probably wrote as much, if not more than I. Initially, he said he just wanted to produce the film but, right from the start, I suspected that he'd eventually direct it himself. "Angelique" is Ariel Zeïtoun.

What thoughts did “Angelique” evoke for you — both before working on it and afterwards?

Beforehand, I thought of “Angelique” as a ‘60s movie, a romantic, picaresque, popular story. As I read the novels, did research, wrote the script, I realized that it was that, but also the fate of an exceptional woman, a contemporary of Louis XIV, in an era in which the entire series of foundations of France and the nation-states that we know today were created— secularism, a central government, a national language, etc. She’s a fascinating character in a fascinating period.

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Interview with NATHANIEL MECHALY, Composer

How did you become involved in this project?

I’ve known Ariel ever since “The Last Gang.” Ariel had asked me to write the score. That was a wonderful experience for both of us, so he “naturally” came back to me for “Angelique.”

Can you tell us about the film shoot?

What’s great about working with Ariel is that he’s both producer and director on his films. So he’s perfectly aware of what we can or cannot do. And it’s really nice to only have to present your proposed score for a film to one person. Our artistic exchanges were endless and we were delighted to be working together again. Because having had that prior creative and human relationship brings with it a confidence that enables you to be more attuned to one another’s comments and to free yourself artistically.

What thoughts did “Angelique” evoke for you — both before working on it and afterwards?

“Angelique” is part of the heritage of French cinema and television! The romance, the adventure, the colorful characters... love! Ariel has given this version a more dynamic and suspenseful axis. He, in particular, painted a very modern portrait of a woman of that time, a more contemporary vision of a romantic film. And I hope that many young women and men today will identify with the Angelique-Peyrac couple!

CAST

Nora ARNEZEDER	Angelique
Gérard LANVIN	Joffrey de Peyrac
Tomer SISLEY	Philippe de Plessis-Bellière
David KROSS	the King
Simon ABKARIAN	Desgrez
Matthieu BOUJENAH	Marquis d'Andijos
Miguel HERZ-KESTRANEK	Marquis de Plessis-Bellière
Julian WEIGEND	Fouquet
Rainer FRIEB	Mazarin
Florence COSTE	Margot
Michel CARLIEZ	Germontaz
And Mathieu KASSOVITZ	in the role of Nicolas/Calembredaine

CREW

Screenplay	Nadia Golon Philippe Blasband Ariel Zeitoun
Original Music	Nathaniel Mechaly (Sony/ATV/EMI Publishing/Ajoz Films)
Executive Producers	Emmanuel Jacquelin Olivier Rausin Filip Hering Gerald Podgorny
Coproduction	AJOZ FILMS, EUROPACORP, FRANCE 3 CINEMA, CLIMAX FILMS, MONA FILM and WILMA FILM
Director of Photography	Peter Zeitlinger
Production Designer	Patrick Durand
Editors	Philippe Bourgueil Jennifer Augé
Costumes	Edith Vesperini Stephan Rollot

Sound

Thomas Berliner

Visual Effects

François Joseph Hors

Rodolphe Chabrier

Post Production

Julien Sigalas

Poster: SILENZIO - Concept: YDEO - Photos: Silvia Zeitlinger

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An ARIEL ZEITOUN film Screenplay by NADIA GOLON, PHILIPPE BLASBAND and ARIEL ZEITOUN
An AJOZ FILMS production Coproduced by AJOZ FILMS EUROPACORP FRANCE 3 CINEMA CLIMAX FILMS
MONA FILM WILMA FILM With the participation of CANAL + CINE + FRANCE TELEVISIONS PLUS IMAGE 4 HOICHE IMAGE
CINEMAGE 7 BNP PARIBAS FORTIS FILM FUNDS LA WALLONIE RTR ORF REGION BASSE AUTRICHE
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