

Alain Sarde and Robert Benmussa present

VENUS IN FUR

A Roman Polanski film

Emmanuelle Seigner

Mathieu Amalric

Running time: 1:35

Written by David Ives and Roman Polanski
Based on Venus in Fur a play by David Ives

A France/Polish / RP Productions / Monolith Films Co-production

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SYNOPSIS

Alone in a Parisian theatre after a day of auditioning actresses for the play he is preparing to direct, Thomas is complaining over the phone about the low standard of the auditionees. Not one has the poise to play the leading role. He is getting ready to leave when Vanda appears: an unbridled and brazen whirlwind of energy.

Vanda embodies everything Thomas hates. She is crude, idiotic, and will stop at nothing to get the part. But when Thomas finds himself backed into a corner and lets her try her luck, he is amazed to see Vanda transformed. Not only has she found the right props and costumes, but she understands the character (whose name she shares) intimately, and knows all her lines by heart. The "audition" lengthens and intensifies, and Thomas's attraction starts to develop into an obsession...

INTERVIEW WITH ROMAN POLANSKI / DIRECTOR, CO-WRITER AND PRODUCER

How did you come across David Ives' play, inspired by Sacher-Masoch's novel?

It was thanks to my agent, Jeff Berg. Last year at Cannes, which I was visiting for the screening of the restored version of *Tess*, he handed me the script for *Venus in Fur* and said: "It's your cup of tea." As I didn't have much going on, I went up to my room and started to read the play and... I thought: "Yes, it is my cup of tea!" The text was so funny I found myself laughing out loud all by myself, which is pretty rare. The irony of the piece, which sometimes comes close to sarcasm, was irresistible. I also liked the feminist element. I immediately wanted to turn it into a film. First, because there was a great part for Emmanuelle, and we had been talking about working together again for a long time. And there's also a great part for a male actor. I immediately imagined it set in an empty theatre, probably because I am from a theatre background. A theatre creates another dimension, a certain atmosphere...

After *Carnage*, by Yasmina Reza, this is your second adaptation of play in a row. It is also your first film in French in a while...

I didn't ask myself those types of questions, it was the subject which inspired me. And another thing: there are only two characters. Since my first film (*Knife in the Water* – 1962) in which there were only three, I've been saying to myself: "One day, I will make a film which only has two characters!" It's a real challenge, but it's a challenge which inspires me, which presents an obstacle...otherwise I get bored. The challenge was to stay in a single location with only two characters without ever boring the spectators, without it looking like theatre filmed for television. It was an interesting challenge to take on. Especially now, when going to a cinema means being blown away by the picture and sound. Making it through the trailers is the hardest part. There are always two or three which pack in all the violence from an entire film: a dozen explosions, a dozen flipped cars, and always the same sound between shots, as if that's all they had in their sound library...

Can you talk about your adaptation work with David Ives?

First we made cuts to the dialogue and changed certain scenes. Our aim was really to make it into a film. In the play, everything happens in an audition room; it's fairly flat. However, in France, in particular in the private theatre, where there is no repertory company, actor's auditions are often held on a stage. So my first thought was to transpose the action to a theatre. Being in a theatre changes everything, right from the start. Being able to move between the stage and the auditorium, not to mention backstage, opened up a whole lot of new possibilities.

Our work was very detailed in that respect even though, when we were shooting, I changed some situations and improvised some movements...

Are you familiar with the world of Sacher-Masoch?

No, not at all.

Is it a world which appeals to you?

Not at all. I find it kind of funny. A friend showed me some Japanese sado-masochistic pornographic films. Crazy! To the point of being a little scary. I had no idea that so many people could be into

these sorts of things. I feel like there are parallels with Punks and Goths: there is something affected about it, or at least, something of following a trend. I think some people do it to be part of a group, to be like other Punks or Goths, rather than for the pleasure of piercing their cheeks or wearing uncomfortable clothes.

There is something in sado-masochism which is not dissimilar to theatre: you become a director in your own fantasies, you play a part, you get somebody else to play a part... That theatricality is something the film plays with, that play within a play: a place where domination and submission, theatre and real life, characters, reality and fantasy, all meet, switch places and blur boundaries...

In the film, the actress says: "Naked on stage? No problem. I'll do that for you for free. As for sado-masochism, I'm familiar with it, I work in theatre."

Do you think relationships between directors and actors are sado-masochistic?

Sure, it must happen, but it's something the film sends up. That line is one of the ones written by David Ives which really had me laughing and made me want to adapt his play. It was fun and exciting to find a different register for each situation, a different language, a different game, especially for the character played by Emmanuelle. Mathieu Amalric's character certainly goes through fewer states, but the differences tend to be more subtle...

Which character do you feel closest to?

Neither of them. Although... my job makes me closer to the director character, of course, but not this one. I hope I would never make that kind of mistake. Adapting Sacher-Masoch myself and directing it... I don't think I would have been trapped by a woman like that either. I love it when he says: "I'm going to use Alban Berg's Lyric Suite for the transitions", and she says "that's a brilliant idea." and he's surprised and asks whether she knows it, and she says "no". I really like those kinds of moments.

Which of Emmanuelle Seigner's strengths make her particularly well-suited to playing this part?

Her physicality, the image she projects, and her ability to switch from one emotion to another... I thought the regular character, the actress, would be very easy for her to play, but I realized during shooting that it was the other one - the character from the Masoch book, Vanda von Dunajev – which came to her more easily in the end even though she didn't have any real trouble with either of them. She switched between them as if it was completely natural, and could change between voices, accents, attitudes and physicality – almost between different bodies – with the greatest of ease.

What about for Mathieu Amalric?

Well, he's a great actor, and he's also a director, so he understands a lot of things and situations. He is gifted, intelligent and the right age. Everything that was needed to make the part a success. Few actors could have done what he did, and with as much subtlety...

What is really striking in this film is how much he looks like you. He brings to mind your character in THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS and THE TENANT... Was that deliberate?

It is possible that he decided to go in that direction, but it was not my decision. I didn't even notice it at first. Even though, the first time we met (through Steven Spielberg who introduced me to him

when they were shooting MUNICH) Mathieu told me that he had often been told how much he looked like me.

What is also startling is the extent to which this film, which came to you spontaneously, brings to mind certain other films of yours, from THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS to BITTER MOON and THE TENANT, not only because of the claustrophobic situation, but also the mood and the themes...

That wasn't something I noticed either. In a film like this which is simple, not too expensive, and completely under the director's control, you don't have certain constraints, you have complete freedom. So it's no surprise that the "old ghosts" or "old demons" come back to haunt you... To be honest, I never thought about any of that. I simply liked the text, and I made the film exactly as I saw it. It was a wonderful adventure for everyone on set, a really enjoyable production.

We were very lucky. Every time we wanted something which was difficult to obtain, it came to us! Everything seemed to conspire to make the film work. Finding a theatre where we could build a set big enough for our purposes was already a major stroke of luck... The first place I thought of when I read the script was the Théâtre Hébertot – not the recently refurbished one, but the slightly run down one, where I staged Doubt (in 2006)... We looked for a theatre then, finally, we thought of the old Théâtre Récamier, which has been closed for a long time, and is just an empty concrete space, but with a sloped seating area and the remains of a stage. Jean Rabasse, our designer, rebuilt absolutely everything. The stage, the seats, the backstage... Once the set was finished, we were in a proper theatre! After five weeks of rehearsals, we were able to shoot the film chronologically. It was a rare opportunity and it would have been a shame to have missed out on it.

The staging is both very rigorous and extremely fluid...

You pick up a few things over the years!

How many cameras did you use for shooting?

Just one. For me, and especially for this film, there is only one "best angle". There might be others, a few good ones, but only one which is the best. I film from my perspective, following what I would want to see with the camera. However, I always use the actors to block scenes - I prefer that things come from them rather than me. You can't get hung up on some directorial idea and then try to paste it onto the actors. It would be like having a really well cut suit tailored, and then trying to force some guy to squeeze into it! And at one point in the story, it is the actress who chooses her place on stage. Something similar happens when I am shooting. I start by rehearsing with the actors and then ask myself how to film them. The camera tells the story of what I saw. That's why I only use one camera. Not to mention that with this type of subject, the second camera would be likely to end up in the first one's frame!

You are working with Pawel Edelman once again. What do you look for in a director of photography?

They have to understand exactly what I want to see. With Pawel, we hardly need to speak; he understands how I want to make the film very quickly. The same goes for Alexandre (Desplat, the composer). Both of them have become close friends and exceptional colleagues who understand and anticipate my ideas as well as developing them.

There is a lot of music in VENUS IN FUR which contrasts with the situations, adding fantasy, humour, irony, and a lightness of touch...

The only thing I told Alexandre was that I wanted a lot of music... He read the screenplay and made some suggestions, which were exactly in the spirit of what I wanted. And that was it. Simple. The same happened with Pawel. At the start of the film all I wanted was the atmosphere of a dilapidated theatre, filmed fairly realistically, and from there moves progressively towards fantasy and imagination...

After the backstage phone call scene we realize the film has passed a tipping point. The light is different. Emanuelle Seigner's character is not the same. It even seems as though we might have entered a dream...

I like to develop that ambiguity gradually. Even when we were adapting it, with David Ives, we wanted to increase that feeling of moving away from reality, without the spectator ever realizing at what point the feeling set in. And we continued in the same spirit when shooting. Lines like: "It's Venus who comes to take his head", which we play very literally, are there to unsettle the spectator.

The final dance is a sort of climax to this progression, this ambiguity...

The idea came to me fairly late. I knew what mood I was looking for, but I was having trouble imagining how to communicate it, how to create the sensation I was looking for. And then the idea of this dance, inspired by Greek dances of old - like the music - came to me.

Even the cactus in the set has echoes of a Greek column!

Yes... Everything started with a musical version of STAGECOACH!

With David, we were looking for a show that was as far from Sacher-Masoch as possible. It had to be a show that would have been a flop and left the theatre free for our Thomas Novachek. And we needed a totem to which we could tie Thomas. We sent a few ideas back and forth which made us laugh. One day, I thought of a sort of Western, and that's where the idea of a musical adaptation of John Ford's film came from. For the scene in question, my first thought was this totem. Jean (Rabasse) who designed a set inspired by Monument Valley, suggested several of these to me, as well as cactuses. I was really taken with his cactuses - it was a very fun idea.

You read Venus in Fur at Cannes last year and you've come back exactly one year later for the competition, it's rare for things to happen so quickly...

Yes, it's crazy. There are films like that where everything just works... The actors and technicians were exceptional and it is largely thanks to them that I was able to make this film so quickly. But we worked hard! And then worked hard during editing!

If you could only keep one image from this adventure of VENUS IN FUR, what would it be?

The audition scene, of course.

ROMAN POLANSKI - BIOGRAPHY

Born in Paris to Polish parents on 18 August 1933, Roman Polanski grew up in Poland. In 1941, his father was deported to the Mauthausen labour camp in Austria, and his mother to Auschwitz. She never came back. Roman Polanski was taken in by a series of Polish families.

He found his father after the war and made his first steps as an actor at the age of 14 in the popular Wesola Gromadka radio show. As a teenager, he appeared in the film *THREE STORIES* and played various small parts in several Polish films including *A GIRL HAS SPOKEN*, *THE INNOCENT CHARMERS* and *SAMSON* by Andrzej Wajda.

In 1955, he was accepted on to the Lodz National Film School directing programme. He was still a student when he made his first short films, including *TWO MEN AND A WARDROBE* in 1958 and *WHEN ANGELS FALL* in 1959, which received awards at various festivals. He was then hired as assistant director to the French director Jean-Marie Drot, who was filming a series of documentaries about Polish culture. From 1959 to 1961, he worked in Paris and directed and acted in another short film, *THE FAT AND THE THIN* before returning to Poland and shooting another short film in 1962, *THE MAMMALS*. In 1962, he also directed his first feature, *KNIFE IN THE WATER*, which won the Critics Award at the Venice Film Festival and was shortlisted for the Oscar for best foreign film. *REPULSION* was his first film in English, in which he directed Catherine Deneuve, in 1965. It won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. *CUL-DE-SAC*, his next film, won him the Golden Bear. Polanski then directed and played the lead in *THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*, before directing his first American film, *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, one of his biggest commercial hits. In 1972, he returned to Europe to shoot his adaptation of *MACBETH*.

In the same year, he produced *WEEKEND OF A CHAMPION* by Frank Simon, a documentary about Jacky Stewart, the racing driver. The following year, he directed Marcello Mastroianni in *WHAT?*

In 1974, he returned to Hollywood and made *CHINATOWN*, which won a Golden Globe and received 11 Oscar nominations. In 1976, he shot *THE TENANT* in Europe with Isabelle Adjani and Shelley Winters. *TESS*, three years later, won three Oscars and two Cesars (Best Director and Best Film). In 1984, he wrote his autobiography, *Roman by Polanski*, which became a bestseller in several countries.

In 1986, he directed *PIRATES*, an adventure comedy with Walter Matthau. His next, film, *FRANTIC*, a thriller with Harrison Ford, also starred Emmanuelle Seigner, who would then appear in *BITTER MOON* with Hugh Grant and Peter Coyote and *THE NINTH GATE* with Johnny Depp and Lena Olin. In 1994, he directed *DEATH AND THE MAIDEN*, based on the play by Ariel Dorfman, with Sigourney Weaver and Sir Ben Kingsley. He was also elected to the Académie de Beaux-Arts.

In 2002, he made *THE PIANIST*, based on the memoirs of the pianist Wladislaw Szpilman. The film was hailed around the world and won a slew of awards, including three Oscars, the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and seven Cesars.

In 2005, Polanski made *OLIVER TWIST*, adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens, with Sir Ben Kingsley playing Fagin.

In 2009, he made *THE GHOST WRITER*, based on the novel by Robert Harris, with Ewan McGregor, Pierce Brosnan, Kim Cattrall and Olivia Williams, which won Best Director at the 2010 Berlin Film

Festival. The same year, he made *CARNAGE*, based on the play by Yasmina Reza with Kate Winslet, Christoph Waltz, Jodie Foster and John C. Reilly.

For the stage, Roman Polanski has directed *Lulu*, the opera by Alban Berg, at the Spoleto Festival, Verdi's *Rigoletto* at the Munich Opera and *Les Contes d'Hoffman* by Offenbach at the Opera Bastille. In 1981, he directed and performed in *Amadeus* by Peter Schaffer, first in Warsaw, then in Paris. In 1988, he played the lead in Stephen Berkoff's adaptation of Kafka's classic, *The Metamorphosis*. He directed the musical *Tanz der Vampire* in 1996 in Vienna, with music by Joim Steinman and a book by Michael Kunze, based on *THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*. Since then he has directed *Master Class* by Terrence McNally and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* in Paris.

As an actor, he has worked with other directors on several occasions. In particular, he has starred opposite Gérard Depardieu in Giuseppe Tornatore's *A PURE FORMALITY* and in *ZEMSTA*, directed by Andrzej Wajda.

INTERVIEW WITH EMMANUELLE SEIGNER - VANDA

How did Roman Polanski speak to you about *VENUS IN FUR* for the first time?

When Roman read David Ives' text for the the first time in Cannes, I could see he had a real soft spot for it. We had been talking about making a film together for a long time and were having trouble finding a subject. Also, he wanted to make a comedy with me, and a comedy with a great female lead, a comedy with class, is difficult to find. For my part, I was unsure about doing something which was based on a play. And then I read the text, and especially his adaptation, and I loved it. Precisely because it wasn't a play. It was witty, funny, more burlesque than simply comic, and it had huge potential.

And you weren't just playing one Vanda, but several: the actress passing the audition, the woman written by Sacher-Masoch, the one imagined by the director, and the one who embodies Venus... And the boundaries between these characters aren't so clear-cut. Sometimes they overlap...

That is exactly what made it so exciting.

Was it difficult to strike the right note for all of these different moods?

The hardest part was... learning the text in such a short amount of time. Because I was also appearing in *The Homecoming* by Pinter at the Odeon theatre. We made the film in quite a rush, which was also one of the things which appealed to me about the project. I was dreaming of working on an intimate film with Roman, or at least one with echoes of the films from his youth, including the conditions in which they were shot. It is incredible how much *VENUS...* has in common with his early films. I couldn't stop thinking about it during the shoot: there was the period dress from *TESS*, the knife from *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, the make-up like in *CUL-DE-SAC*, him dressing like a woman, like *THE TENANT...* There were so many wonderful little echoes.

Of *BITTER MOON* too...

Yes, but not so much, *BITTER MOON* was very literal, whereas this is more tongue in cheek...

Do you think Polanski deliberately had fun referencing his work, or was it something less conscious?

I am not sure that he was truly conscious of it, but I am sure it is the reason he warmed so much to the script.

It is quite "Polanskian". That is why he was so eager to invest in this project and why he did it so quickly: he gave me the English text in August, he wrote the adaptation in October, we shot it in December and exactly one year after he discovered it the film is being screened at Cannes! So to return to your earlier question, the most difficult part for me was learning the text. A real mountain of lines! Because you also have to learn it to be able to act it without thinking. Then I worked with my coach, Frédéric Faye, to find the characters in me, to avoid just making them up. Then I just let myself be carried by the situations and went with the flow. Shooting the film chronologically made it easier. As the film progresses, the boundaries between the characters blur. At the start, I play something of a vamp, and end up in the skin of a Goddess. When Thomas comes backstage, Vanda has changed: she has done her hair differently, the lighting has changed. That is more or less the moment when she starts becoming a Goddess.

Which of these women are you closest to?

There is something of myself in all of them. I most enjoyed playing the vamp character. It's something I like to have fun playing when I'm with my friends, but never to that extent. When we were filming, it was something I could really throw myself into. It was a lot of fun. In fact, once I had learnt the text, it was all fun. I was even surprised with how easy it was to pass from one to the other, like moving from the Pinter play to Roman's film. It was also an opportunity for me to discover that your limits extend far beyond what you might think. In a way, acting in a play at the same time as shooting a film was a good way of preparing for the part of Vanda...

Six years after THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY, you are working with Mathieu Amalric again. What is it like to work with him?

Ideal! He is brilliant, lovely, and has none of the flaws which often come with actors of his standing. I already felt that way on THE DIVING BELL... but I only had five scenes with him, whereas here we aren't apart for a second. Working with Mathieu is incredibly enjoyable and inspiring. He is perfect for the part. What is a little unsettling is that he looks a bit like Roman...

More than a bit...

True! For THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY, Julian Schnabel, who thought that Mathieu looked like Roman, cast our son to play the young version of Mathieu's character. It seems that Mathieu has had fun taking that resemblance even further.

Does the world of Sacher-Masoch appeal to you?

No, it's something I feel very distant from. I didn't even try to read his book. However, on the first day of shooting, Mathieu gave me the confessions of the real Vanda, the one who inspired Sacher-Masoch. I read it during the shoot. I wouldn't say it helped me, but I found it very inspiring. In fact, and this is what I found really fun, the film pokes fun at this world. Or takes a highly ironic look at it, in any case. Vanda, the actress I play, thinks that the play is deeply misogynistic and not very good.

She is horrible to Thomas, the director. That is why some men might find the film upsetting because, even though it is made by a man, it is a deeply feminist work.

Would you say there is something sado-masochistic about the relationship between director and actor?

Absolutely! I have always said that. As much as I enjoy acting, I have a real problem with the passive element involved in being an actor. Being submissive and dependent on the will of someone else has always been difficult for me, although a little less so now, as I make music and I find freedom in that. Roman has always been aware of this duality in me, and this was an opportunity to play it. I don't know if I would ever dare to do what Vanda does, or whether I would be as pushy as her, but I do understand that rebellious edge, the determination not to be used. All that exists somewhere within me. Some directors are very tough, too eager to lord their power over us. But it is something very personal to me. There are actors who do not have a problem with it.

Roman Polanski has already directed you in the theatre in 2003. At the start of the film there is a nod to your work together when the actress talks about the success of Hedda Gabler...

It isn't a nod, it's in the original text - a happy coincidence.

How would you describe him as a director?

Of course, he is a great director, I won't deny it! (Laughs) And I feel especially confident with him... He knows me very well. But it is quite difficult to work with him because, like all the great directors, he does not go in for improvisation.

He avoids that sort of approximation, which takes something away from the actors. He is very demanding, and very precise. Including in his directions: "Lift your head, turn your upper body, look over there..." It's hard to stay fresh and natural, to not get stale, in those conditions, but that's exactly the challenge which is so exciting, inspiring and, when you manage to do it, satisfying. That's why you need a lot of experience, and why I had to work on the part by myself, and work with other directors, and develop as an actor, to be able to work well with him.

Was there a scene that you were particularly nervous about?

No, like I said, the only thing I was really worried about was the text. Not least because Roman is very particular about it, and rightly so. You need to know the text like a prayer to be free to play it. Luckily I had Annette Hirsch (Luc Bondy's assistant) to help me, and she was always making me recite those 93 pages. At the Odeon, on tour, an hour before appearing in *The Homecoming*, everywhere and all the time... It was an enormous help.

There is a certain jubilation in the final scene. Not only in its meaning, as if you were wreaking vengeance on behalf of all the actors who get turned down at auditions, but in its execution too...

Ah yes, that was the scene I was dreading most. Not least because I haven't danced in a very long time. And then, dancing naked under a fur coat is a little... risqué! (laughs) Luckily, it was dimly and beautifully lit. I worked with Redha, with whom I'd worked on *BITTER MOON* (1992). Luckily, when we started rehearsing, I realized that that the work I had done twenty years ago was still there in a way. But we didn't have much time and we only rehearsed four or five times, at lunch time. It was very intense but really very stimulating.

If you could only keep one image from this adventure, what would it be?

Everything! It was really a magical experience. It was Christmas, it was snowing, and we were locked in this theatre twelve hours a day. We were working like crazy, but it was brilliant. I felt like we were a real gang making a film, almost a first film, or at least a young film... I loved that feeling.

EMMANUELLE SEIGNER - BIOGRAPHY

Born into a family of actors (her grandfather, Louis, was a "doyen" of the Comedie Francaise and her aunt, Françoise, was a "sociétaire"), Emmanuelle Seigner started as a model at the age of 14, and made her screen debut in a Christopher Frank film, L'ANNEE DES MEDUSES, followed by Jean Godard's DETECTIVE and Pierre Granier Deferre's COURS PRIVE. In 1988, Roman Polanski gave her her first major part, starring opposite Harrison Ford in FRANTIC. He directed her again, four years later, in BITTER MOON. She and Polanski are married and have two children together. They worked together again on THE NINTH GATE in 1999, and in the theatre in 2003, on Henrik Ibsen's Hedda Gabler. VENUS IN FUR is the fifth time they have worked together. Since the very start, she has led an eclectic career, exploring a wide variety of characters and styles, including on stage (in 2012, for example, she performed in and toured with The Homecoming by Harold Pinter, directed by Luc Bondy). She has worked with a wide range of directors, from Mario Monicelli to Francois Ozon, and including Claude Miller, Michel Deville, Nicole Garcia, Yvan Attal, Emmanuelle Bercot, Olivier Dahan, Danièle Thompson, Julian Schnabel, Dario Argento, Yasmina Reza, Jerzy Skolimowski, Stéphane Brizé, Jean-Pierre Améris... In parallel, she has also been working in music for a number of years. After performing the songs in BACKSTAGE, a film by Emmanuelle Bercot in which she played the lead, she recorded several albums and gave several concerts.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2013 LA VENUS A LA FOURRURE by Roman Polanski
2012 DANS LA MAISON by François Ozon
L'HOMME QUI RIT by Jean-Pierre Améris
QUELQUES HEURES DE PRINTEMPS by Stéphane Brizé
2010 CHICAS by Yasmina Reza
2009 LE CODE A CHANGE by Danièle Thompson
2007 THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY by Julian Schnabel
LA MOME by Olivier Dahan
2005 BACKSTAGE by Emmanuelle Bercot
2004 ILS SE MARIERENT ET EURENT BEAUCOUP D'ENFANTS by Yvan Attal
1999 THE NINTH GATE by Roman Polanski
1998 PLACE VENDOME by Nicole Garcia
1994 LE SOURIRE by Claude Miller
1992 BITTER MOON by Roman Polanski
1988 FRANTIC by Roman Polanski
1986 COURS PRIVE by Pierre Granier-Deferre
1985 DETECTIVE by Jean-Luc Godard
1984 L'ANNEE DES MEDUSES by Christopher Frank

INTERVIEW WITH MATHIEU AMALRIC - THOMAS

You are an actor, a director, a cinephile... Was working with Roman Polanski a dream for you?

A dream? Much more! He was one of the people who inspired me to go into film in the first place.

Why?

Because I could sense the craft in his films, that manual, instinctive side of film in which the unconscious is at work, the obvious way he loves everything about film, all the technical tasks it encompasses. He is a real master, you have to see him on set: he is a brilliant props maker, a brilliant make-up artist, etc. And a brilliant actor in the sense that, for me, acting is a manual task. To feel he was that passionate about all those tasks which go into making a shot, it made me want to try my hand at all of that...

Were you surprised he called you?

Yes, not least because it all happened so quickly. I was thinking about projects of my own, and his proposal took me completely by surprise. Luckily, I had just been in Desplechin's film (Jimmy P...) which had given my memory a bit of a workout, so I was able to learn the text relatively quickly. Because he wanted to start shooting very quickly, we didn't have that rehearsal time which is so important to him – you mustn't forget that he comes from a theatre background. Sometimes, on set, we didn't shoot anything, we just ran the text. Once we had learnt the text, we just needed to try to understand what Roman had in mind. It wasn't very hard. As I know all his films by heart, we hardly needed to speak at all. There was a natural understanding between us, organic even. Not least because VENUS includes a number of "Polanskian" obsessions: claustrophobic situations, domination – who is dominating whom? Who is manipulating whom? – cross-dressing, fat and thin, humour, a certain type of eroticism...

It's striking how the film, adapted from the play by David Ives, itself inspired by Sacher Masoch, seems to echo Polanski's work...

All the way down to the details of the costumes! Putting on that green velvet jacket, I felt like I was in THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS – it was the same green! Emmanuelle wears a dress which is straight out of TESS... Of course, the ending brings THE TENANT to mind... There are many things like that which bring his work to mind, but he never mentioned them...

Did you not discuss your physical resemblance to him, which is also very striking?

No, never! But as soon as he asked the hair stylist to give me that look, I understood! The only time he referred to it was casually, when we were shopping for costumes. He was joking around and said to the sales person: "I'm looking for a jacket for my son." He didn't need to say anything else. That's how he expresses what he's thinking, but also his kindness and warmth – because he is nothing if not a warm person. And you just feel like he's taking care of you. It's very touching...

And did you enjoy playing around with the fact that you look like him?

I had to make sure I didn't think about it... At the same time, as I had often been told that I look like him, there was something which made sense about the experience. As if it had something to do with fate. And my grandmother was born in Poland, she is a Polish Jew. There is something that Richter, the great pianist said, which I like very much and seems relevant to the situation. He said: "You must not choose your pianos. It is fate." There you go!

The echoes of his work, your physical likeness, all these things emphasize the idea of blurring the boundaries between reality and the imagination, an idea which already exists in the film.

Domination and submission, actors and characters, reality and fantasy are all reflected in each other...

Absolutely, but he never talks about that either. He will never say: "I wanted to say this." Never! He doesn't want to make didactic films, he knows that life is absurd, that none of it makes any sense, so let's not try to impose meaning on it... When I called him after reading the script, he only said one thing to me: "It's a good laugh, isn't it? We're going to have fun!" Roman is a very practical person. It's as if he only has one rule: ignore intellectual arguments and trust in film. All the analysis, what the pictures mean, the density, the psychoanalysis, that's up to the spectators, it's important to not worry about it, it will happen all by itself, as long as he inserts the right concrete elements into his shots. It's about the tempo, the script, having fun. And teamwork.

What do you mean?

Unlike what you might think, and even though he is diabolically precise and demanding, Roman is the opposite of a dictator on set. What he wants, what he expects, is to understand a team, as if they were part of his own mind. So he takes anything you give him, whoever is offering it. There is no hierarchy for him; I was astonished. He makes sure that all the elements for a take are in tune: the movement, the rhythms of the actors, the light, the sound, the set, the right props in the right places and, if everything is right, we move onto the next take. He likes for there to be a lot of depth in his takes, so everything is important: a little light at the back, the way a book is placed on a table, the parts of the set, and the rhythm. It can take the shape of minuscule details: the sofa needs to be pushed aside, but that makes a chair behind it fall over. And he knows that if you put a little bit of melted wax on its feet, it will slide rather than fall over. "Find me a candle! Find me a candle!" It's as simple as that. And the same goes for the actors' movements, with the rhythm, or where to put your hand, or how to pick up a prop... Once more, I can't find any other word than "organic" to describe working with him.

How would you describe the director you play in VENUS...

Someone extremely pretentious. Everything that Roman hates! Someone who sets himself up as a director by saying: "Well other directors haven't got a clue, so I might as well direct my text myself." But he has no experience of what actors are really like, let alone actresses. He is stuck in a bourgeois relationship with his wife, which is characteristic of his reticence to take risks.

You don't just play the director, but also the character in his play, the actor who will play him, the man who is overwhelmed by this woman... Was it difficult to find the subtle differences between all these levels?

With Roman and Emmanuelle, we took the time to go through the text a few times, to work on that. So that she and I could find those differences, without over-emphasizing them, so it didn't come across as "old school theatre"... Then we had the costumes, the props, different physicalities... Roman doesn't work with naturalism either. His films are probably closer to the pleasure of *commedia dell'arte*. There are masks: masks you put on and others you take off. It's as regimented and simple as that. Of course, he guides you, he is extremely careful, and at the beginning he needs to act too.

Are you familiar with the world of Sacher-Masoch?

I wasn't before, I discovered it and... it's surprising! I didn't know the original texts, so I read them. I also read Deleuze's writings about them. At the end of *VENUS IN FUR*, where Masoch talks about sado-masochistic relationships – if I can describe them like that, Masoch couldn't stand psychoanalysts labelling what he had written about – is fantastic. He says that so long as men and

women are not equal in society and in pay, there will always be relationships of domination and submission, which is surprising, especially for the time...

Would you say there is a sado-masochistic relationship between actors and directors?

Not at all. That's really not the way that Roman works. Quite the opposite.

Not specifically for Polanski, but in general?

No. Well, it depends on who you're talking about. It's not really something I recognize. I believe it's more a kind of an incredible complicity, a crazy complicity...

Which of Emmanuelle Seigner's strengths make her a particularly good fit for this character of Vanda, or rather, these characters she plays?

What she is, what she does, what she is able to do... There is something troubling about her, an eroticism which she projects, and an intuitive grasp of situations... She is an actress in the sense that she plays with that for the character, in a given situation, for her partner. We are in a clearly fictional frame, acting, and at the same time... you end up losing yourself! (laughs) It's very inspiring to play opposite her. There is something very technical, and yet very visceral about her! You never really find out who this Vanda is. You think she's one way, and all of a sudden, she becomes something else. Is she pretending or not? Emmanuelle is very good at doing that. You talked about echoes and reflections, well this actress who is my partner is the wife of the director filming her... It's as if I was watching a sculptor or a painter making a portrait of his wife. Watching that couple at work was fascinating. He would organize everything. Every crease in the dress, every touch of lipstick, every movement of the head... Maybe I was just his eyes within the take...

If you could only keep one image of this adventure, what would it be?

What comes to mind immediately is an image of Roman. Because we were shooting on a set which was as realistic as a real theatre, he was often in the auditorium, and he regularly needed to come up onstage to give us directions, to put us in our positions, or to see how he would do it. What struck me was that amazing energy, that speed, like a coiled spring... And of course, him coming up to us after takes, with that gleam in his eyes.

MATHIEU ALMARIC - BIOGRAPHY

Born on 25 October 1965, the son of two journalists, Mathieu Almaric spent part of his childhood in Washington and Moscow before returning to France to study. With a passion for film, he started making short films, and got himself hired on film sets as a props maker, lighting assistant, production assistant and... an actor. He appeared on screen for the first time in 1984, in Otar Iosseliani's LES FAVORIS DE LA LUNE. Three years later, he was offered an assistant directing post on Louis Malle's AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS – he had lost none of his desire to become a director. Since then, he has led a dual career as an actor and a director. In 1996, he received attention for his part in LE JOURNAL DU SEDUCTEUR and exploded onto the scene with COMMENT JE ME SUIS DISPUTE... (MA VIE SEXUELLE), directed by Arnaud Desplechin, which won him the Cesar for Best Newcomer. The following year, he made a first feature film, MANGE TA SOUPE, then two more, while continuing to work extensively as an actor. A relative regular in the French auteur film scene, he unexpectedly accepted the part Steven Spielberg offered him in MUNICH in 2005. He returned to work with Arnaud Desplechin (now a regulator collaborator) on ROIS ET REINE, for which he won the Cesar for Best Actor. His career then took a new turn. He split his time between big budget films such as A QUANTUM OF SOLACE, LES AVENTURES D'ADELE BLANC-SEC or COSMOPOLIS and the films of Bertrand Bonello, Alain Resnais, Noémie Lvovsky, and the Larrieu brothers. He won his second Cesar

for best actor for Julian Schnabel's THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY while in 2010, his fourth film, TOURNEE, won Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival. He is returning to Cannes this year as an actor in two films: VENUS IN FUR, his first film with Roman Polanski, and JIMMY P. (PSYCHOTHERAPIE D'UN INDIEN DES PLAINES), his fifth film with Arnaud Desplechin, in English this time, and filmed in the US.

SELECTIVE ACTOR FILMOGRAPHY

2014 THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL by Wes Anderson
2013 JIMMY P. (PSYCHOTHERAPIE D'UN INDIEN DES PLAINES) by Arnaud Desplechin
VENUS IN FUR by Roman Polanski
AMOUR CRIME PARFAIT by Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu
2012 LES LIGNES DE WELLINGTON by Raoul Ruiz and Valeria Sarmiento
CAMILLE REDOUBLE by Noémie Lvovsky
COSMOPOLIS by David Cronenberg
VOUS N'AVEZ ENCORE RIEN VU by Alain Resnais
2011 POULET AUX PRUNES by Marjane Satrapi
2010 TOURNEE by Mathieu Amalric
LES AVENTURES D'ADELE BLANC-SEC by Luc Besson
2009 LES HERBES FOLLES by Alain Resnais
LES DERNIERS JOURS DU MONDE by Arnaud et Jean-Marie Larrieu
2008 A QUANTUM OF SOLACE by Marc Forster
MESRINE by Jean-François Richet
DE LA GUERRE by Bertrand Bonello
UN CONTE DE NOEL by Arnaud Desplechin
2007 UN SECRET by Claude Miller
L'HISTOIRE DE RICHARD O. by Damien Odoul
THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY by de Julian Schnabel
ACTRICES by Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi
LA QUESTION HUMAINE by Nicolas Klotz
2006 LE GRAND APPARTEMENT by Pascal Thomas
2005 QUAND J'ETAIS CHANTEUR by Xavier Giannoli
MARIE ANTOINETTE by Sofia Coppola
MUNICH by Steven Spielberg
2004 ROIS ET REINE by Arnaud Desplechin
2003 UN HOMME, UN VRAI by Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu
2000 LA BRECHE DE ROLAND by Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu
1999 TROIS PONTS SUR LA RIVIERE by Jean-Claude Biette
1998 ALICE AND MARTIN by André Téchiné
FIN AOUT, DEBUT SEPTEMBER by Olivier Assayas
1996 LE JOURNAL DU SEDUCTEUR by Danièle Dubroux
COMMENT JE ME SUIS DISPUTE... (MA VIE SEXUELLE)
by Arnaud Desplechin
1985 LES FAVORIS DE LA LUNE by Otar Iosseliani

INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDRE DESPLAT - COMPOSER

VENUS IN FUR is the third time you have worked with Roman Polanski. How did you work with him on this dialogue-heavy film which also uses a lot of music?

As usual, I was lucky enough to be able to visit the set, even more than for CARNAGE. And the set was incredibly realistic. It's funny because I knew the Théâtre Récamier – I was there for rehearsals for "Papa doit manger", directed by André Engel for the Comédie Française. Yet when I came onto the set for VENUS..., everything was so beautiful, from the swing doors at the entrance to the stage and the gilding. I thought it hadn't changed. I had simply forgotten that it was an empty space! The most surprising thing with VENUS is that, unlike CARNAGE where we realized that music would be intrusive, from the very start Roman felt that the music should be at the heart of the film – a little as if the film was covered in a veil which would be lifted by the music. When he first spoke to me about it I wasn't sure, but he didn't take long to convince me. His instincts are infallible. And that is what led me to try to work music in at a number of places. And we saw that the music was lifting that veil which seemed to be covering much of the film. It was as if, all of a sudden the back wall was being pushed back to reveal another perspective, an infinite opening. Depending on the moments, we were able to develop a reverie into a possible past, and also emphasize the singularity of this flirtatious relationship between the two characters.

The music emphasizes the mood of the film, between irony and seriousness. Yet sometimes it suggests something else, almost in contrast with the rest, in particular in the early scenes, something impulsive...

True... The actress and director are playing a game of seduction, so the music must play that game as well... Everything develops from the opening music, which returns in the final dance. This piece announces all the music which follows. It is the same theme which we inexorably repeat and explore. Roman is like a lot of directors, if not from the Nouvelle Vague, then working at the time of the Nouvelle Vague who, with composers like Georges Delerue, Maurice Jarre and others, had a sense of dramaturgy: from the very start, the music would announce what the film would be. LA PEAU DOUCE is a wonderful example of that. While the opening scene is very ordinary, the music is highly dramatic, and really shows what the film will be.

It's the same here: that long opening shot under the rain which takes us into the theatre is underscored with a strange music which uses an odd time signature, 9/4. It is a Greek rhythm, which some connoisseurs might recognize. For this Greek-inspired music, I've used Greek instruments. Right from the start, I introduce a good dose of "Greekness", which also happens to be part of me, since I am half Greek.

And why this "Greekness" in this film in particular?

Well, Aphrodite makes an appearance at the end! (laughs) There are a lot of layers in Roman's films, and he encourages me to play with all of those layers. Like having fun with Russian dolls: there's one, then another inside, then another and another... It's very exciting. But of course, you need someone with Roman's talent and madness to let you – and this is true for everyone who works with him – have fun looking, digging deeper and deeper, panning for gold. It's really thanks to his instincts and energy that I got to where I did.

Did you find it easy to compose the opening music?

Roman projects such an incredible energy and determination that when I'm working with him things go very, very quickly. For THE GHOST WRITER, it went very quickly, and for CARNAGE too. There is an understanding between us which works really well. Unfortunately, it's not always the case for all directors, who aren't always as fast or as extravagant, but Roman loves music. He loves music in film, and so he loves music in his films. So for me, he is a wonderful person to work with. You feel

like anything is possible with him. You just have to listen to the music in his films, in particular, the early ones with Krzysztof Komeda, or *THE TENANT*, with Philippe Sarde, which are little gems, to realize what an inspiration he is. He provides composers with a space, a terra incognita, and simply says: "Go for it!"

Does he make decisions quickly?

Yes. For *THE GHOST WRITER*, for example, he listened to the music I was proposing once and immediately decided it would be the music for the opening credits. One shot, and it was done. The same thing happened with *VENUS*... When I sent him the opening piece, he just said to me: "That's the one."

Did he define the type of music he was looking for, the mood he wanted?

No, there was no real definition in musical terms... I think the archaic dance at the end was a catalyst. Being able to use a Greek rhythm, and the climax of the film which goes off in a completely unexpected direction gave me wings... Like Hermes!

How would you say your relationship has developed since *THE GHOST WRITER*?

For a start, we worked together again, and I'm really pleased about that. I admire him so much that the first time I saw him, five or six years ago, at a dinner party with some friends, I didn't dare speak to him. I had such admiration for his films that I didn't know how to approach him. Now we have a more straightforward relationship. When we're working, we're equals, we sit next to each other at the piano and we try things out. I suggest things, and he says what he thinks. We just have a good time, really. Play is an important part of our work together. I think what brings us together each time we start working together on a project is that we know we'll surprise one another. We are still fascinated by what music can bring to the dramaturgy of a film. The possibilities are endless...

Especially this film, which is a sort of infinite maze of mirrors...

True... Sometimes I work on films which, when I see them several times, during production, screenings, the premiere, I don't have the same sense of novelty as the first time I saw them. With *VENUS*, I was there during filming, I have seen it again and again, and every time I find something new, something different, I make discoveries. The film is a real whirlwind of energy, which is rare. Like I said, Roman thought right from the start that a lot of music would be needed, because he thought a veil would be lifted and the mysteries of the film and the story would be amplified. This amplification effect is obvious the first time that Emmanuelle becomes the character of Vanda, and Mathieu turns back to her: the music comes in and takes us into a fantasy world. And the music plays with the reflections you mentioned: it doesn't necessarily stop when they stop acting, and sometimes doesn't come in straight away when they start acting again. This subtlety means the film doesn't become didactic, but creates fluidity in the musical narrative, and thus plays a part in creating the confusion that sets into their relationship, and the film.

Does Roman Polanski take part creating the music at every stage, all the way to recording?

Of course, he loves it. We recorded in Paris and he came to the studio and gave more directions. And he's there for editing and mixing the music at the first screenings.

He never lets up. But, as a general rule, great film-makers never let up.

It's surprising, watching *VENUS*... the extent to which this film, which spontaneously came to him, seems to echo his work. Did that occur to you when you were working on it and did you take it into account?

Yes, of course it occurred to me, but I didn't take it into account, no, every film is different. All those echoes from previous films were obvious during the reading. And when you see how Mathieu plays the character, it only reinforces that impression. Not only is he physically similar to Roman, but he is reminiscent of Roman in his mannerisms, his way of walking in the scene where she puts make-up on him and he's wearing high heels... How can you not think of THE TENANT? He has found a world which is incredibly close to his own.

What struck you most when you were on set?

The way that he directs actors. His impeccable precision and his incredible energy, skipping around all over the place. His impressive concentration and his exacting standards for every movement, every detail, every source of lighting, every hand movement an actor makes... It's very impressive to watch Polanski at work, really.

If you could only keep one moment from the whole experience of VENUS IN FUR, what would it be?

I think it would be the moment when he heard the credits music, for the final dance. I had no idea what his reaction would be. And to see him so happy and so surprised, so excited by the music, which he thought hit just the right note, it was really inspiring. You're always looking for that; and getting it just right is so hard to achieve, and when you find it and Roman Polanski tells you you've done it, it's a magical moment.

ALEXANDRE DESPLAT - BIOGRAPHY

Born on 23 August 1961 to a French father and a Greek mother who met and married in the United States, Alexandre Desplat started his career in variety and television and is one of the most prolific and in-demand composers working today. He has composed the music for almost 150 films. While he has a special working relationship with Jacques Audiard, composing the music for all his films (all of which were nominated for Cesars and won the award twice for THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED and RUST AND BONE), he also works regularly for Florent Emilio Siri, Xavier Giannoli, Gilles Bourdos, Robert Guédiguian, Anne Fontaine, Francis Veber, Jérôme Salle, and Daniel Auteuil, amongst others. Over the past few years, he has become very popular with American and English directors, including Ben Affleck, Terrence Malick, Kathryn Bigelow, Wes Anderson, David Yates, Ang Lee, Tom Hooper, Stephen Frears, George Clooney, and David Fincher. He has been nominated for five Oscars and has won numerous awards: three Cesars, a Golden Globe (for THE PAINTED VEIL, directed by John Curran) a Bafta (for THE KING'S SPEECH), two European Film Awards (for THE GHOST WRITER and THE QUEEN) and a Silver Bear (for THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED). Since meeting Roman Polanski on THE GHOST WRITER, which also won him a Cesar, he hasn't left him, and composed the soundtracks for CARNAGE and VENUS IN FUR.

INTERVIEW WITH PAWEL EDELMAN - DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

VENUS IN FUR is the fifth time you have worked with Roman Polanski, after THE PIANIST, OLIVER TWIST, THE GHOST WRITER and CARNAGE, which all have very different visual styles. What was your greatest challenge on this film?

This was, without a doubt, the hardest film to make. It was another adaptation of a play, but the challenge was even greater than for CARNAGE: we were in a single location again, but with only two characters this time. And there's nothing harder for a director and a director of photography. How can you keep the viewer's interest for an hour and a half, simply following two people through a ten by ten metre space, and without the film looking like a play or a TV series? The most important

thing was lighting, and the changes in lighting define, outline and underline the space. They make it appear and disappear... and making sure the actors could move around easily, and feel comfortable in any position and any place.

How would you define the lighting that you created for VENUS...?

It's always difficult for me to describe the lighting I create in detail. What I knew was that we had to make the actors stand out from the space, and that there would be a lot of dark areas which viewers would have to fill with their own imagination. Of course, the big idea was for the audience to regularly forget that we were in a theatre. We needed to create an atmosphere, a climate which could almost enter the realm of symbolism. Theatres are concrete spaces, and sometimes we needed to transform it to make it an almost abstract space.

Did Roman Polanski present his aesthetic vision to you before filming?

We didn't really have much time to talk about it, because everything happened so quickly. Of course, we had one or two discussions before filming about what we were looking for. We even watched two or three films, such as Rob Marshall's CHICAGO, which is very different but also deals with theatrical representation, and fantasy and reality, to see if the questions we were asking ourselves had been solved, and how.

What was the most difficult scene to light?

Without a doubt, the final dance scene. We didn't have a very clear or specific idea of how to shoot it so we tested several types of lighting before deciding on the one we actually used. It is a beautiful scene. The dance is so strange, the music so beautiful, and Emmanuelle is so astonishing...

We know that Roman Polanski is very precise and demanding. What kind of room for manoeuvre do you have when working with him?

Now I know him well and know exactly what my position is during filming, what my place is. I feel completely free to create lighting – that is the area in which I have room for manoeuvre, and it is very wide. Everything else - the position of the camera, where the actors are within the frame, etc. - that's his job. What's important for me, when I accept a project, is to make pictures which are entirely at the service of the film, which tell its story..

What do you think is his greatest strength as a director?

What is fascinating about Roman is that he is not only a director, but also an actor, so it's very easy for him to translate what he wants into a language that the actors understand immediately. It's really astonishing to see him communicating with them so transparently. And it was a real pleasure to watch Emmanuelle and Mathieu performing together, almost like being part of a real audience. Another fascinating thing about Roman is his sense of composition, his feeling for images. It's very rare to find both qualities in a director. Whatever the film, Roman has an intrinsic understanding of what he needs, he has a very specific idea of the film he wants to make and the look he wants it to have.

Do you remember the first time you met him?

How could I forget? There was a phone call as I was preparing to go on holiday with my family, and he asked me if I wanted to make THE PIANIST with him. It was like lightning out of a clear sky, but much more pleasant! He was a mythical director to me. I could hardly believe he was calling me to work with him. It must have been Andrzej Wajda, with whom I have worked a lot, who

recommended me to him and gave him my phone number. Then we met in Berlin and we spoke, for almost the only time, about the visual style of THE PIANIST.

The fact that you are both Polish must have helped you understand one another?

Yes, but not in a superficial way like you might think... Roman speaks seven languages now, he has lived everywhere, he is at home everywhere except, perhaps, the United States. He is, first and foremost, a citizen of the world. But it's true that we have the same roots, we have read the same books, we remember the same songs, we have breathed the same air... It is something much deeper, something which comes from within.

If you could only keep one image from the whole experience of VENUS IN FUR, what would it be?

I don't know. For me, a film is always an organic whole. Maybe it would be the image of Roman directing Emmanuelle with breathtaking precision, down to the smallest gesture.

PAWEL EDELMAN - BIOGRAPHY

Born in Lodz, in Poland, Pawel Edelman gained an international reputation as a cinematographer with films such as KROLL by Wladyslaw Pasikowski, KRONIKI DOMOWE by Leszek Wosiewicz, PAN TADEUSZ, WHEN NAPOLEON CROSSED THE NIEMEN by Andrzej Wajda, L'AUBE À L'ENVERS by Sophie Marceau, LOVE STORIES and BIG ANIMAL by Jerzy Stuhr, and EDGES OF THE LORD by Yurek Bogayevicz. He was nominated for an Oscar, a Bafta and an American Society of Cinematographers award for THE PIANIST. He won the Cesar for best Cinematography, a European Film Award, and an Eagle Award in the same category. His recent films include ZEMSTA by Andrzej Wajda, RAY by Taylor Hackford, ALL THE KING'S MEN by Steven Zaillian, THE LIFE BEFORE HER EYES by Vadim Perelman and OLIVER TWIST, THE GHOST WRITER, and CARNAGE by Roman Polanski.

DAVID IVES – PLAYWRIGHT

David Ives comes from a Polish-American family, was born in Chicago and now lives in New York. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, he started as a writer at Spy Magazine, before working for the New York Times Magazine and the New Yorker, for which he regularly wrote humorous columns. From the end of the 80s to the mid 90s, his short, one act comedies (collected in All in the Timing) brought him attention. These are a series of quick-witted playlets which deal with language and existential and sentimental questions. In 1993, his All in the Timing collection became a major hit – over 600 performances Off Broadway – and became a favourite for theatre students and amateur groups. Just as witty, inventive and funny, his plays (collected in Polish Joke and Other Plays) as well as his free adaptations of Feydeau (La Puce à l'oreille), Corneille (Le menteur), Molière (Le Misanthrope), Jean-François Regnard (Le Légataire universel), Yasmina Reza (Une pièce espagnole), proved just as popular with audiences and critics alike, and won a number of prizes. David Ives also writes librettos for opera, and musical adaptations (including the American version of THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS). In 2010, drawing inspiration from Sacher-Masoch's novel, he wrote Venus in Fur, a play for two actors which was produced off Broadway before being successfully revived on Broadway. He worked with Roman Polanski to adapt his play into a film. He has just finished adapting a 1738 French comedy, La Métromanie by Alexis Piron, and is currently working on a musical with Stephen Sondheim.

ROBERT BENMUSSA – PRODUCER

With over 30 years' experience as a producer, Robert Benmussa produced his first film in 1978: Jack Briley's LA GRANDE MENACE. He was already an executive producer on Roman Polanski's BITTER

MOON, before producing THE PIANIST, OLIVER TWIST and THE GHOST WRITER. Throughout his prolific career, he has been the producer or executive producer on over twenty feature films. Robert Benmussa works regularly with Elie Chouraqui and is credited on PAROLES ET MUSIQUES, LES MARMOTTES, LES MENTEURS and MAN ON FIRE. He was executive producer on L'UNION SACRE, POUR SACHA and LE GRAND PARDON 2, and producer on DIS-MOI OUI and ENTRE CHIENS ET LOUPS for Alexandre Arcady. He has also worked with Diane Kurys as executive producer on C'EST LA VIE, APRES L'AMOUR, A LA FOLIE, LES ENFANTS DU SIECLE and L'ANNIVERSAIRE. He was also the executive producer on Sergio Leone's ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA, Tony Gatlif's GASPARD ET ROBINSON, Jeannot Szwarc's LA VENGEANCE D'UNE BLONDE and a producer on Alexandre Aja's FURIA and HAUTE TENSION.

ALAIN SARDE - PRODUCER

Alain Sarde is a major French producer, who started his career in 1977 as co-producer on André Téchiné's BAROCCO. He has worked with some of the biggest names in film, and has over 200 production credits to his name, including THE TENANT, BITTER MOON, THE PIANIST, OLIVER TWIST and THE GHOST WRITER by Roman Polanski. He has produced Emir Kusturica's LA VIE EST UN MIRACLE, Mike Leigh's VERA DRAKE, and Patrice Leconte's CONFIDENCES TROP INTIMES. His main films also include THE PIANO TEACHER by Michael Haneke, MULHOLLAND DRIVE and A TRUE STORY by David Lynch, LA BUCHE by Danièle Thompson, CA COMMENCE AUJOURD'HUI, CAPITAINE CONAN, L. 627, UN DIMANCHE A LA CAMPAGE by Bertrand Tavernier, BAROCCO, LES VOLEURS, LES ROSEAUX SAUVAGES, and MA SAISON PREFEREE by André Téchiné, UNE HISTOIRE SIMPLE and NELLY ET M. ARNAUD by Claude Sautet, MON HOMME, LES ACTEURS and BUFFET FROID by Bertrand Blier, LA CRISE by Colin Serreau, LE FILS PREFERE by Nicole Garcia, HELAS POUR MOI, NOUVELLE VAGUE and SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE) by Jean-Luc Godard, LE PETIT CRIMINEL and PONETTE by Jacques Doillon, and LE CHOIX DES ARMES by Alain Corneau.

VENUS IN FUR

With

Emmanuelle Seigner - Vanda

Mathieu Amalric - Thomas

Director	Roman Polanski
Producers	Robert Benmussa and Alain Sarde
Screenplay	David Ives and Roman Polanski
Based on the play by David Ives	Venus in Fur
Translation	Abel Gerschenfeld
Associate producers	Mariusz Lukomski and Wojtek Palys
Music	Alexandre Desplat
Photography	Pawel Edelman
Sound	Lucien Balibar
Editing	Margot Meynier
Production Design	Hervé de Luze
Costumes	Jean Rabasse
Make-up	Dinah Collin
Hair	Didier Lavergne
Production Manager	Sarra 'Na
First Assistant Director	Frédéric Blum
Cameraman	Hubert Engammare
Script Supervisors	Jeremi Prokopowicz
Special Effects	Sylvette Baudrot
Stills Photographer	Anna Zenowicz
	Frédéric Moreau
	Guy Ferrandis

And the Almighty struck him...

And delivered him into the hands of a Woman...