

NELLY KAFSKY
PRESENTS

OSCAR LESAGE
PIA LEGRANGE
ZOE ADJANI

THE PIANIST'S CHOICE

DURING THE WAR, MUSIC REMAINS THE LAST HOPE

A FILM WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JACQUES OTMEZGUINE

CASTING BY DOMINIQUE HADJICHA
PRODUCTION DESIGNER LUDMILAV BANCHEV A.E.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PHILIPPE TORRETON - LAURENCE CÔTE - ANDRÉ MANOUKIAN - ANDRÉA FERRÉOL - MARIE TORRETON - NICOLAS VALUÉ
PRODUCED BY NICOLAS DUBOY - CO-PRODUCED BY CONSTANCE ALEXANDRE - GERARD MOULÉVÉYER AND CLEMENT TOULENT
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DENIS BERNALTY - AVELLE DEVILLARD HANSEN - CLAUDE DELATRE - MATTHIAS LEONE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS EDITH VESPERINI AND STEPHANE ROULLOT
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS KAT PHILIPS - ANNA ABRAMS CARLISSEN - PATRICK CRISTOLET - LAURENT DREYER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JEAN BAPTISTE NEYENS - ROMAN FIEDO - DAVID KISSAS AND SARAH ALCAJAY - ALEX O'TOOLE - AVEL DUMAS
PRODUCED BY NELLY KAFSKY
PRODUCED BY LA REGION HAUTE-NORMANDE - LE CNC - TVS MONDIE - LA SUEZIA AND OF L'ANGOLA
DISTRIBUTED BY OCEANO FILMS & VIDEO



SYNOPSIS

At the dawn of the Second World War,
François Touraine, a great piano virtuoso,
has no choice but to go and play in Germany
to save the woman he loves, his teacher.
Rachel is Jewish in an age that no longer allows it...



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



How many have sacrificed their lives for love? With *THE PIANIST'S CHOICE*, I chose to draw on my knowledge of music and history, but also to use my characters as a filter to explore questions that obsess me and to which I still have no answers. These characters, François, Annette and Rachel, all come from very different backgrounds, yet music will bind their destinies together forever. I would like the audience to feel as close to them as possible. They are not bound by any political law or religious power, for only their art is law. François will even go so far as to betray his convictions and his country by using his only weapon: the piano, and will play for the enemy in order to protect Rachel from deportation. The script spans three decades, surely the most painful of the 20th century, and the protagonists will go through pivotal periods in their personal lives (adolescence, coming of age, discovery of love, encounter with death, etc.)

and traumatic social events (the Great Depression, war, occupation, collaboration, liberation, stigmatisation, etc.). To personify this dark period in our history, we needed to find actors with multiple tones, capable of displaying the widest possible range of acting skills, experiencing moments of absolute happiness as well as devastating despair.

During the Second World War, music was profoundly affected by the German occupation and the circumstances of the time. Cultural life, particularly in France, was subject to a number of restrictions and censorship imposed by the German authorities, but despite this, some composers and musicians continued to create by playing or organising clandestine concerts.

The music of this period often reflects a mixture of resistance, a desire to preserve French culture, and the emotional complexity associated with war.

Jewish musicians during the Second World War faced extraordinary challenges due to the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazis and regimes allied with the Axis. Persecution affected the Jewish musical community in various ways, but many musicians continued to play a significant role despite the difficulties. Many Jewish musicians were forced to leave their home countries to escape persecution. Some were expelled from the Berlin State Opera orchestra.

In our film, the Nazi authorities ask François, our pianist, to replace one of them, which he agrees to do in order to save the woman he loves, Rachel. Others were deported to concentration camps, and many died before they even arrived. After the war, many Jewish musicians who had

survived helped rebuild musical life in Europe and around the world. Some played a key role in founding new institutions and passing on their musical heritage.

Returning to the fate of our two heroines, Rachel and Annette, they have little in common, very different backgrounds and embody two distinct types of romanticism. Rachel is reserved, while Annette is explosive with emotion. However, they are both independent women, a far cry from the then widespread model of the "housewife" model that was so prevalent at the time. They are driven by their passion, resilience, tenacity, determination and love. Rachel will fight to give birth to the pianist, then Annette will fight to bring him back to life.

They are modern women for their time, who take action and risks out of conviction. Rachel will join the Communist Party to bring music to the most disadvantaged.





until the injustice of war catches up with her and Annette has the audacity to lie to everyone in order to rehabilitate the man she loves, disregarding morality. For the role of the pianist, we worked with producer Nelly Kafsky to find a young actor who could be credible in the role of a musician and meet the acting challenges inherent in this ambiguous character. Playing this role requires the ability to highlight the ambivalence present in every human being, which is so intangible and difficult to grasp without resorting to caricature, and to elicit two almost antagonistic emotions in the audience: hatred and compassion.

After some very convincing and promising auditions, we chose Oscar Lesage. This formidable young Franco-British actor and musician has a bright future ahead of him. He possesses extraordinary talent, the result of his passion for acting, which he has cultivated since a very young age. His innate presence and humanity won me over. Rachel is played by Pia Lagrange, an exceptional theatre actress who has succeeded in conveying the strangeness of this character, her fragility, her strength and her contradictions. As for the young and sparkling Zoé Adjani, she brings a

touch of fantasy and rebellion, typical of her age and her time. From my first meeting with her, I immediately noticed the similarity between her temperament and that of Annette.

I made *THE PIANIST'S CHOICE* for several deeply personal and artistic reasons. First and foremost, this film represents an opportunity to pay tribute to human resilience, particularly during a period as dark as the Second World War. Through the characters of François, Rachel and Annette, I wanted to explore how music could serve as a refuge and inspiration, even in the most desperate moments. By highlighting their complex stories and difficult choices, I wanted to offer an authentic representation of people facing extraordinary challenges, while prompting reflection on the importance of remembering our collective history. Ultimately, this film is much more than just a story to be told; it is an immersive and enriching cinematic experience, capable of inspiring, moving and hopefully educating long after the final credits roll.

Jacques Otmezguine

JACQUES OTMEZGUINE

DIRECTOR



Born into a family that knows no boundaries, Jacques Otmezguine discovered this country where cinema is loved, regardless of its origin, and never wanted to leave.

It was only natural that, at a very young age, he learned the craft of filmmaking. He started out as a photojournalist, but soon traded his cameras for a film camera and a pen. He began as an assistant director and made his mark by directing short films, which led him to advertising and corporate films. At the same time, he wrote his own screenplays. His first novel, a crime thriller, became his first feature film in 1986. *Prunelles blues* launched his career as a director and writer. He has only one motto: "I don't make films for cinema or television, I make films!"

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

2010: *La maison des Rocheville*

2008: *Le sanglot des anges*

2007: *La promeneuse d'oiseaux*, based on the work of Didier Decoin

2005: *Trois couples en quête d'orage*
based on the work of Lionel Duroy

2003: *Silk and Ashes*

2003: *A Model Employee*

2002: *A Summer in Love*

1999: *Julien the Apprentice*

1998: *Such Fragile Happiness*

1998: *A Cat in the Throat*

1997: *She's My Daughter's Age*

1997: *Sounds of Love*

1995: *Esther's Dream*

1994: *Elissa Rhaïs*

1986: *Prunelle Blues*

PRODUCTION NOTE



When I was little, in Istanbul, my Russian-Bulgarian mother used music to put me to sleep. She taught me the piano at a very early age and we always lived in a musical atmosphere. When she arrived in France (I was 5 years old), she played the piano in Parisian bars to earn a living. She received her naturalisation papers very late in life, even though she spoke nine languages fluently, was already addressing "crowds" on the status of women, and was a professor of literature in Turkey. **THE PIANIST'S CHOICE** carries a strong musical message and features extraordinary female characters, and it is undoubtedly for these reasons that I decided to produce this film.

Jacques Otmezguine wanted his film to take place before, during and after the Second World War, as each of these three periods is different. The three protagonists of the script he imagined

embody the atmosphere of these three eras, which was both toxic and full of uncertainty. In addition, music, which is central to the story, becomes the reason for survival for our three main characters.

A catalyst for feelings, it will also be at the heart of the film, with, among other things, an original soundtrack composed by Dimitri Naïditch, a Franco-Ukrainian pianist whose family continues to suffer from the effects of war. Today, many people continue to create and express themselves at the risk of their lives, using their art to bear witness to the madness of the world. They keep hope and humanity alive in times of great turmoil. This film tackles universal and terribly topical subjects, as our director of photography, Lubomir Bakchev, likes to say. Among them are injustice, immigration, the upheaval of the human condition by the artist in

troubled times... We also evoke resistance, resilience, passion and love, creativity without which artists cannot live, beyond religion and hatred of others...

Jacques Otmezguine has worked with many actors at the dawn of their careers, favouring talent and artistry over fleeting fame... such as Vincent Lindon, to whom he offered his first leading male role (*Prunelle blues*), Gaspard Ulliel in *Julien l'apprenti*, Guillaume de Tonquedec, Pascale Arbillot... and Lisa Martino (*Le rêve d'Esther*). Jacques Otmezguine's filmography demonstrates his ability to transport viewers to this period in our history and gives them a clear vision of his direction. The final cast we have chosen for *THE PIANIST'S CHOICE* includes French-English actor Oscar Lesage, who plays the role of pianist François Touraine. Accompanying him is the mysterious Pia Lagrange in the role of Rachel. To complete the trio, we called on the surprising and sparkling Zoé Adjani, who will help us catch our breath as the story unfolds, but above all, ensure that we don't forget anything. The passion, rebelliousness and

We hope that the passion of our protagonists will resonate with the younger generation, who are very interested in similar causes.

The film was shot in the Hauts-de-France region because I have filmed abroad a few times for budgetary reasons and I don't remember being as happy as when we were in France. The Region provided us with financial and logistical support. Of course, as independent producers, we have suffered from the two years of COVID, which have led to a major shift in audience habits. Even though we know how to manage our budgets and remain steadfastly persistent, we still need a minimum amount of resources. Unique and sometimes magical, our ideas may contribute tomorrow to perpetuating the beauty of France and reminding people of its history, which is sometimes overlooked. We sincerely hope that *THE PIANIST'S CHOICE* will be one of the great films that have emerged thanks to the cultural and musical diversity of France that is the envy of the world.

Nelly Kafsky





OSCAR LESAGE

IS FRANÇOIS TOURAINE



Since 2021, he has lent his voice to Michel Ocelot's animated film *Le pharaon, le sauvage et la princesse* (The Pharaoh, the Savage and the Princess), starred in an adaptation of *Dangerous Liaisons*, and then in Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi's *Les amandiers* (The Almond Trees). He has also appeared in the series *Marie-Antoinette* (Canal+, seasons 1 and 2), *Bardot* (France 2), and Scott Frank's *Monsieur Spade*.

In 2013, at the age of 17, Oscar Lesage joined the Cours Florent drama school, then the Classe Libre.

He worked with directors and actors such as Jean-Pierre Garnier, Philippe Calvario and Sébastien Pouderoux. In 2016, he took part in the creation of *Les Damnés*, directed by Ivo Van Hove with La Comédie Française. In 2018, he joined the École du Nord under the direction of Christophe Rauck. During the workshop "Autour d'Alfred de Musset" led by Frédéric Fisbach, he played Spark in *Fantasio* and Octave in *Les Caprices de Marianne*.

He was directed by Cécile Garcia Fogel in various roles in Shakespeare's works, and by Alain Françon in Edward Bond's *Pièces de guerre* and Peter Handke's *Toujours la Tempête*.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY:

Cinema

2024: *The Substance* by Coralie Fargeat

2024: *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Matthieu Delaporte and Alexandre de la Patellière

2022: *The Almond Trees* by Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi

2022: *Annie Colère* by Blandine Lenoir

2020: *The Room* by Christian Volckman

Television

2024: *Monsieur Spade* by Scott Frank

2023: *Bardot* by Danièle and Christopher Thompson / France 2

2022: *Marie Antoinette* by Pete Travis and Geoffrey Enthoven / Canal

2022: *Dangerous Liaisons* by Rachel Suissa / Netflix

2016: *Versailles* / Canal

PIA LAGRANGE

IS RACHEL



Her artistic commitment continues at the CDN in Poitiers, where she performs in Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, directed by Pénélope Biessy. These diverse experiences attest to her passion for drama and her ability to immerse herself in a variety of theatrical worlds. At the same time, she has worked with directors Zabou Breitman, Alexandre Pidoux, the Les Parasites collective, Ysé Sorel and Alois Sandner Diaz, among others.

In 2013, Pia joined the Classe Libre at Cours Florent before moving on to the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique in 2014. Under the guidance of eminent teachers such as Jean-Pierre Garnier, Nada Strancar, Didier Sandre, Sandy Oувrier, and Sylvie Deguy, she immersed herself in the subtleties of dramatic art. During her studies, she had the opportunity to meet authors Lancelot Hamelin and Dorothée Zumstein, collaborating with them to bring their works to life. One of them wrote a play for her, while the other gave her his words to bring to life on stage. Her talent shone on the stage of the Festival d'Avignon, where she took part in the show *Impromptu 1663* directed by Clément Hervieu-Léger. She also made her debut in *Juliette le commencement* by Grégoire Aubin and Marceau Deschamps-Segura.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

Cinema

2017: *La créature* by Yusuke Akamatsu

2017: *L'amant d'un jour* by Philippe Garrel

2015: *Zoo* by Matteo Carrega Bertolini

Theatre

2022: *The Stars* by Simon Falguières

2022: *The Ash Nest* by Simon Falguières

2022: *Princess Anne*

2017: *Now* by Milena Csergo **2021:** *The Cabaret of the Absent* by François Cervantes

2013: *Drums of the Night* by Mathilde Charbonneaux

ZOÉ ADJANI

EST ANNETTE



Zoé Adjani-Vallat, born in 1999, emerged on the artistic scene at the age of 16 in Jérôme Enrico's film *Cerise*, in which she played a rebellious 14-year-old girl forced to live in Ukraine with an unknown father.

Zoé then studied literature before attending the Conservatoire.

She won over critics in 2021 in Kamir Ainouz's film *Cigare au miel*, in which she plays the role of Selma. Zoé continues to diversify her projects, appearing in Valeria Bruni-Tedeschi's *Les amandiers*.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

2023: *Filles du feu (Daughters of Fire)* by Magaly Richard-Serrano

2021: *Honey Cigar* by Kamir Ainouz

2020: *Bula* by Boris Baum

2015: *Cherry* by Jérôme Enrico

FILM MUSIC

DIMITRI NAÏDITCH



on the series *Le sanglot des anges*. And THE PIANIST'S CHOICE was an opportunity to realise his desire to work with him. Dimitri Naïditch composed some beautiful original music and we are delighted that he also performed several pieces from our film with the talented Polina De Carlo and the young pianist Paul Lecocq.

We have been following Dimitri Naïditch with great interest for years. Composer and co-performer in the film THE PIANIST'S CHOICE, he blends jazz and classical music like no other.

His *Bach Up* project in 2019, in which he revisited Bach's works, was a resounding success. We also remember his work with Claude Lelouch, notably on *Un plus une* and *Chacun sa vie*, where his piano improvisations added a unique depth to the atmosphere of the films. His collaborations are always rich and surprising, and audiences are always eager to attend his concerts.

Jacques Otmezguine, the director, first heard him play the piano in Didier Lockwood's show *Le jazz et la diva*, with Caroline Casadesus as the singer. Then he discovered him

SELECTION FROM THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

Frédéric Chopin

Fantaisie - Impromptu No. 4 Op. 66 in C sharp minor

Nocturne in E flat major, Op. 9 No. 2

Larghetto, 2nd movement of Concerto No. 2 Waltz in D flat major, Op. 64 No. 1 Prelude in B minor, Op. 28 No. 6


Ballade No. 4 in F minor, Op. 52 Polonaise Fantaisie, Op. 61

Others

Minuet in G major, BWV Anhang 114, from the book by Anna Magdalena Bach, Christian Petzold

Waltz Op. 39 No. 15, Johannes Brahms Largo, 2nd movement of Piano Concerto No. 1 in C major, Op. 15, Ludwig Van Beethoven Obermann's Valley, Years of Pilgrimage I, S. 160: No. 6, Franz Liszt



A woman with dark hair, seen from the side, is looking down at a piano keyboard. In the background, an open book of sheet music is visible on a stand. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a contemplative atmosphere.

ARTISTIC LIST

Oscar Lesage	François Touraine
Pia Lagrange	Rachel
Zoé Adjani	Annette
Marie Torretton	Thérèse
Philippe Torretton	Mr.Touraine
Laurence Côte	Mrs.Touraine
André Manoukian	Paul Paray
Andréa Ferréol	Mome
Nathan Desnyder	Karajan
Nicolas Vaude	lawyer
LucBéraud	informer

CREDITS

Screenplay & Direction	Jacques Otmezguine
Original Music	Dimitri Naïditch
Cinematography	Lubomir Bakchev A.F.C.
Production Manager	Nicolas Duroy
Editing	Constance Alexandre
Casting	G�rard Moulevrier Cl�ment Quentin
Set Design	Denis Renault
First Assistant Director	Axelle Revilliod-Hansen
Script Supervisor	Claire Del�tre
Sound	Mathias Leone
Costumes	Edith Vesperini St�phane Rollot
Hair	Kay Phillips
Make-up	Anna Arribas-Ravaloson
Sound Editing	Patrice Grisolet
Mixing	Laurent Dreyer
Post-Production Manager	Jean-Baptiste Neyrac
Production Management	Ronan Hego
Photographers	David Koskas Sarah Alcalay
Chief Electrician	Alex O'Toole
Chief Machinist	Axel Dumasy
With the support of	PICTANOVO THE HAUTS-DE-FRANCE REGION THE CNC
In partnership with	TV5 MONDE
With the participation of	SACEM
With the support of	ANGOA
Produced	Nelly Kafsky
by A Production of	MAZEL PRODUCTIONS





Mazel
PRODUCTIONS

PICTA
NOVO

CNC

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MONDE

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Ensemble, faisons
vivre la musique

ANGOA

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FILMS

