



## SYNOPSIS

**V**ICTORIA, a little black girl aged 8 from a humble background, happens to spend the night with the bourgeois family of Thomas, one of her classmates. Years later, they see each other again and Marie is the fruit of their fleeting relationship. But Victoria decides not to tell Thomas and raises her child alone. When Marie turns seven, Victoria decides that her daughter must have a better future and again turns to this family that she lost sight of long ago.

## CAST

Victoria **GUSLAGIE MALANDA** • Fanny **NADIA MOUSSA** • Elena **CATHERINE MOUCHET** • Lionel **PASCAL GREGGORY** • Edouard **ALEXIS LORET** • Thomas **PIERRE ANDRAU** • Diouma **ELISE AKABA** Sam **TONY HARRISSON** • Victoria enfant **KEYLIA ACHIE BEGUIE** Fanny enfant **KEEMYAH OMOLONGO** • Marie **MAYLINA DIAGNE**



FRANCE / 2014 / 2.39 / 5.1 / DCP / 1H35

## CREW

Screenplay & Directed by **JEAN PAUL CIVEYRAC** • Produced by **PHILIPPE MARTIN** • Coproduced by **JACQUES-HENRI & OLIVIER BRONCKART** • D.O.P **DAVID CHAMBILLE** • Sound **FRANÇOIS MEREU, STÉPHANE THIÉBAUT** • Script clerk **MATHILDE PROFIT** Set design **BRIGITTE BRASSART** • Costumes **CLAIRE DUBIEN** • Make up/Hairdresser **PASCALE GUEGAN** • Editing **LOUISE NARBONI** Firts assistant director **MARIE DOLLER** • Production manager **HÉLÈNE BASTIDE** • A production **LES FILMS PELLÉAS** • In coproduction with **VERSUS PRODUCTION** • With the participation of **CANAL+, CINÉ + & CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE** • In association with **SOFICINÉMA 9** • With the support of **LA RÉGION PROVENCE-ALPES CÔTE D'AZUR & LA RÉGION BOURGOGNE**, in partnership with **CNC** • With the help of **CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL, FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES & VOO** • With the support of **TAX SHELTER DU GOUVERNEMENT FÉDÉRAL BELGE & INVER INVEST** • In coproduction with **BELGACOM** Distribution France & International sales **LES FILMS DU LOSANGE**

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LES FILMS PELLÉAS PRESENTS

# my friend VICTORIA

A FILM BY **JEAN PAUL CIVEYRAC**

Based on **DORIS LESSING's** novel  
"VICTORIA AND THE STAVENEYS"

**GUSLAGIE MALANDA** **NADIA MOUSSA** **CATHERINE MOUCHET** **PASCAL GREGGORY**  
**KEYLIA ACHIE BEGUIE** **ALEXIS LORET** **PIERRE ANDRAU** **ELISE AKABA** **TONY HARRISSON**





Photo © Les Films Pelléas

## A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JEAN PAUL CIVEYRAC AND JEAN DOUCHET ABOUT *MY FRIEND VICTORIA*



### / How did you get the idea for this film?

Philippe Martin, the producer, suggested that I read *Victoria and the Staveney*s by Doris Lessing. I found the subject very powerful and the story astounding in its discreetly virtuoso manner of conjuring up a great many ideas, actions and contradictions within simple situations. I also liked the possibility of a totally different approach to my previous film, entirely focused on two girls plunged into a violent and funereal atmosphere. *My Friend Victoria* could be gentler and more delicate, with a novel-like charm, and its subject allowed me to present a broader view of society, to create characters from different social classes, etc.

**/ The interesting thing about the novelistic aspect of the film is that Victoria does not seem involved in the world's conflicts. Because she knows that she is going to lose from the outset and is not sensitive to everything going on around her, it's as if, willingly or not, she does not let the outside world in.**

Yes. Moreover, she is so sure that she will lose that her only struggle will be to give her daughter Marie the

opportunity for a better life than hers - hoping that society will give her a warmer welcome and that she will also be better equipped to cope. A painful undertaking as Victoria knows that a successful outcome could drive a wedge between her and her daughter.

**/ In this story, everything is melodramatic and, at the same time, the film rejects that. The melodramatic aspect lies in the conflict between the individual and society. Yet Victoria's way of existing in the world distances her from this conflict. Similarly, it is not the sentimental aspect of melodrama that is worked on**



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here but solely the *internalized sensitivity* of a character.

Throughout the film, Victoria lives so much within the folds of her "internalized sensitivity", cut off from the world and herself, that she hardly seems anchored to the ground and almost floats through life. It seems to me that the film's political dimension is also expressed in this way, in this absence from the world and oneself that appears like an unformulated rejection. Hence, for example, the scenes of sleepwalking, or what Victoria's friend Fanny says about her in the voice-over: "*She herself probably did not really understand what drove her to act in such a way, etc.*"

**/ You shoot a great deal in close-up. Very few characters appear in full figure shots. And, when they do, they are above all in the sequence with the white family where, indeed, people are down to earth and at home.**

Yes, this family fits in better with the world than Victoria does. But what I'm mostly trying to achieve is to avoid making the close-ups too overwhelming and excessive, to avoid them becoming a form of emotional blackmail. Otherwise, I have the impression that we see less of the characters and the people filmed than the director's desire to hunt down and trap something in a facial expression, rather than let it occur freely. These close-ups attempt to bring out something of the mystery of an inner life, while allowing the audience's gaze to move freely, while allowing its sensitivity to interact with that of the characters - and also with mine.

**/ A white audience is confronted with the duplicity of a supposedly tolerant society: from the outset, Victoria cannot become integrated.**

The fact that she is from a Christian background shows that the problem is not religious - as some people try to make us believe every day - but rather the colour



Photo © Claire Nicol

of her skin, the fact that Victoria is black. However, I have not tried to make a "militant" film that violently forces the audience to confront a dramatic situation, but rather to invite them, through a story that I hope is moving, to have an intimate understanding of what is at stake between the characters. The film is of course not neutral, it has a point of view, but it does not impose any obligations on its audience. It is meant to describe a situation in which all the characters play their parts with more or less self-awareness, distance and freedom.

**/ We perceive a great deal of sensitivity in Victoria, yet at the same time she remains inaccessible. This makes the voice-over necessary to approach her and enter into the film...**

As soon as I decided to adapt the book, I felt it needed a voice-over. Both for the reasons you state and to lose nothing of Doris Lessing's subtlety, and also for the film's "musicality". I in fact tried to compose a kind of very gentle ballad, with many variations, and I believe that the voice-over mixed with the score, the ambient sound and the actors' voices contributes greatly to this. I know that, generally, a voice-over is seen as a way of distancing the story and the characters. In a way, this is true and the film accepts that: I would like the audience to feel free to experience *My Friend Victoria* as they wish, without feeling that their sensitivity and intelligence have been taken hostage. But I also believe that a voice-over can contribute to the film's "charm": it is the voice of the storyteller who captivates his audience. Curiously, these two contradictory functions do not seem incompatible to me. In any case, I hope that they aren't here: that is one of the film's aesthetic wagers. ■



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