



LOLA

A film by **LAURENT MICHELI**

CAST

Philippe **Benoît Magimel** • Lola **Mya Bollaers**

CREW

Written and directed by **Laurent Micheli** • Writing collaboration **Marion Doussot, Mariette Désert, Agnès Feuvre** • Cinematography **Olivier Boonjing** • Music **Raf Keunen** • Editing **Julie Naas** • Set Design **Catherine Cosme** • Costumes **Clément Vachelard** • Make up **Aurélie Cerveau** • Casting **Antoine Carrard, Karen Hottois, Michaël Bier** • Sound **Arnaud Calvar** • Re-recording mixer **Gilles Benardeau** • 1st Director's assistant **David Baldari** • Script Continuity **Aurélie Nolf** • Unit Manager • **Vincent Bredael** Production Manager **François Dubois** • Producers **Benoît Roland, Sébastien Haguenauer** • A **Wrong Men, 10:15! Productions** production • In coproduction with **Lunanime** and **BNP Paribas Fortis Film Finance, RTBF (Belgium Television), Proximus** • Produced with the support of **Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles** • With the participation of **Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, Fonds Audiovisuel de Flandre (VAF)** and **Eurimages, la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, Les Films du Losange** • In association with **Cofinova 15, Cineventure 4 • Spedidam** is a collecting and distribution company that manages the rights of performers in the registration, distribution and reuse of recorded performances • This film received the development support of **La Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine** • French Distribution and International Sales **Les Films du Losange**

Photos and press pack can be downloaded at <http://www.filmsdulosange.fr/international>

WRONG MEN & 10:15 ! PRODUCTION present



BENOÎT MAGIMEL

MYA BOLLAERS

LOLA

A film by
LAURENT MICHELI

BELGIUM, FRANCE • 2019 • COLOR • 87 MIN • 1.33 • 5.1

**INTERNATIONAL SALES
LES FILMS DU LOSANGE**

22, avenue Pierre 1^{er} de Serbie - 75116 Paris
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SYNOPSIS

Just when Lola, 18 years old and transgender, learns that she can finally have surgery, her mother, who is her only financial support, passes away. Abiding by her mother's last wishes, Lola and her father, who are permanently in conflict and have not seen each other for two years, undertake a journey all the way to the Belgian coast. They realize the outcome of the journey may not be the one they were both expecting...



INTERVIEW WITH LAURENT MICHELI

Where did the idea for the film come from, the clash between a father and his child?

Laurent Micheli : I think that often in cinema, the need to tell a story comes from a double impetus: one private and the other political. The private reason comes from a need to delve into my own adolescence, a period where the adult world seemed violent, archaic, and not really in tune with young people and their needs. On the whole, I was an angry teenager, struggling to find my place in the world, and I wanted to go back and explore that energy and anger, and draw a character from it. When I was young, I had a constant feeling of injustice that often drove me to go against any form of established order. That's the energy we find in the relationship between Lola and Philippe. And paradoxically, whereas my initial impulse was to do justice to Lola, the role of Philippe usurped that and forced me to reexamine my thoughts on paternity and masculinity, and home in on them to keep from slipping into cliché. The political reason was a need to create a main character from a minority and give them top billing, to offer them a platform and visibility. I've always been sensitive to LGBT issues, it's part of my daily

life, so naturally I wanted to talk about trans-identity. I did an enormous amount of research on the topic so what I wrote would be as true and accurate as possible. I felt it was time to use the power of cinema to shift the boundaries and advance people's thinking. With the goal of making a movie that would speak to everyone: a highly specific subject treated in a universal manner. The parent-child relationship was perfect for that.

Why was it important for a transgender actor to play the main role?

It was a political choice to show that face and that body on the screen. They've always been invisible in society. We're not used to seeing those bodies and we don't necessarily want to, because they're unfamiliar and can make us uncomfortable. It's time to give these people a platform, to make them heroes and offer them a spotlight. I know it's a vast, complex debate, and I have my contradictions. Can we only play what we are? Obviously not. But it so happens that we live in an era where minorities are reclaiming their stories, be they people of color or trans. It's the same type of question. All I



hope is that in 20 years, a trans woman will be able to play a cisgender role, and vice versa. It's just that we're not there yet.

How did Mya Bollaers win you over in the audition?

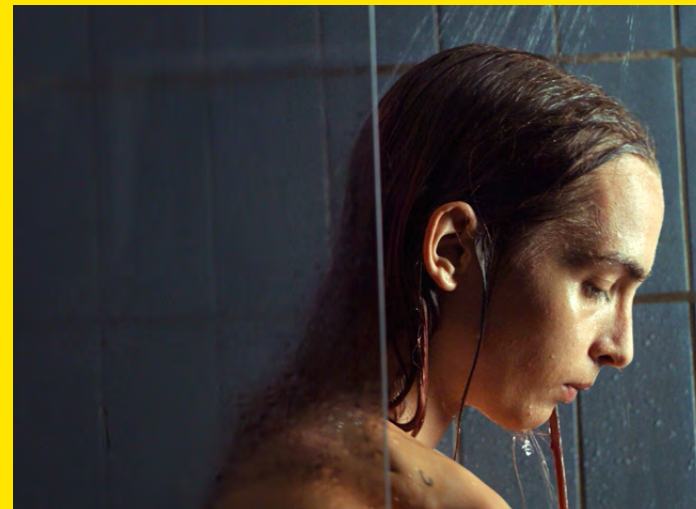
She had the capacity to deliver her story and emotions with no filter, like a diamond in the rough, waiting to be cut and polished. She went about it all rather chaotically. She had no acting technique, and to top it off she's dyslexic and dysgraphic. Her brain truly does function backwards. (laughs) It's a big mess, but a very animated one. She had a truthfulness that interested me, and that's what I wanted to capture.



Did Mya contribute anything to the script?

I used some little things. For instance, the scene where Lola doesn't want to dance. During the audition I asked the girls to dance and Mya didn't want to so she proposed something else instead. That intrigued me. I told her, "There's going to be a scene where you'll have to dance." (laughs) It creates life. And creates truth too, because she really doesn't like to dance. At times she struggles with her body. Sometimes transitioning can act like a second adolescence, whereas Mya just came out of that. I think it was a beautiful way to recount how someone can claim ownership of their femininity, surrounded by all those women. There's the physical transition, through hormone treatment eventually,





and then there's appropriating femininity, which is actually a social construction. It can take time, whether we're talking about a transgender woman or a cisgender one. Constructing one's own femininity or masculinity is a long journey.

Why did you choose Benoît Magimel for the role of the father?

Working with a star wasn't a goal in itself. My hope was to reach a broad audience to talk about a very specific topic. I wanted to open doors that needed opening rather than preach to the choir. With that in mind, it seemed important to work with a popular actor that people liked, who would appeal to a large audience and give the film a lot of visibility.

But obviously that wasn't the only plus; Benoît is a spectacular actor, a real virtuoso. Never in my life have I been so blown away by an actor's technique and talent. And I've seen a lot of actors, since I was one myself. I have to admit I was a little skeptical at first about working with a star, because they bring with them everything that represents. But Benoît is very open and curious, and the work was the same as with any actor who needs to be guided and directed. What interested me about him was his masculine, heterosexual side. He's played a number of characters who move in highly masculine, almost macho realms. But he also has a great deal of sensibility, he's a hypersensitive actor, and quite intense. That was compelling for the role of the father, and also



necessary to render the character's complexity.

He agreed to the part. That was already telling.

Absolutely. And I didn't even have to talk him into it. I assumed I'd have to twist his arm a bit, but the first time we met, he told me right from the start he wanted to do the film so we could relax and talk about whatever I wanted. It's great. Flattering too, and I hope it'll draw people into the theater.

What does the role of the father, Philippe, represent?

With Philippe, I show that acceptance is a journey. People need time. They need to be made to face their responsibilities, but without having the finger pointed at them. I want the public to empathize with this dad. He's not just some narrow-minded prick or fascist pig. It hasn't been easy for him either. He's a human being like anyone else, who wants to do right but does wrong. (laughs) He screws up, makes mistakes. But at least he tried, and we can see he's affected by everything he says. For me, the most important line in the movie is spoken by the woman who runs the hostess bar, when she tells him, "I don't think anyone would do that just to be shitty with their parents. No one does that." It's not against the father. He shouldn't take it personally. The film addresses all mothers and fathers, and makes them ask themselves how they would react if they had a transgender child. I'm surrounded by people involved in film and the arts, really open-minded people, yet each time they're faced with the question, they have to admit it wouldn't be as simple as they'd like.

There's a scene where the father talks about what he went through with his son: nightmares, panic attacks, self-harm, running away. Is this recurrent among trans people?

I wrote that scene because those are things I heard during my research, but they can be defused quite quickly. For the most part, children can live their transness quite simply if it's handled the right way. Yes, the child may experience those sorts of troubles, but they don't inevitably go down the road of self-harm. It really depends on the context. An association was created in Belgium in May 2018 called Transkids Belgique to offer support to transgender children and their parents. It's not an easy life course, but it bears repeating that in the majority of cases, a trans child who is supported by their family can experience their trans-identity smoothly. ■

BRUSSELS, AUGUST 2019



BENOÎT MAGIMEL

(Selective Filmography)

2018 - **An Easy Girl** by Rebecca Zlotowski • 2016 - **Memoir of War** by Emmanuel Finkiel • 2015 - **Standing Tall** by Emmanuelle Bercot (César Award 2016 for Best Supporting Actor) • 2012 - **My Way** de Florent Emilio-Siri (César Award 2013 for Best Supporting Actor) • 2010 - **Little White Lies** by Guillaume Canet • 2008 - **Inju: The Beast in the Shadow** by Barbet Schroeder • 2007 - **The Girl Cut In Two** by Claude Chabrol • 2006 - **Charlie Says** by Nicole Garcia • 2004 - **The Bridesmaid** by Claude Chabrol • 2003 - **Strange Gardens** by Jean Becker • 2002 - **The Nest** by Florent Emilio-Siri • 2000 - **To Matthieu** by Xavier Beauvois • **The Piano Teacher** by Michael Haneke (Best Actor Prize at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival) • 1998 - **A Minute of Silence** by Florent Emilio-Siri • 1996 - **Thieves** by André Téchiné • 1995 - **La Haine** by Mathieu Kassovitz • 1992 - **Sweetheart** by Michel Deville • 1989 - **Dad Has Gone, so Did Mum** by Christine Lipinska • 1988 - **Life Is A Long Quiet River** by Etienne Chatiliez

MYA BOLLAERS

LOLA by Laurent Micheli is her first part in a feature film.



LAURENT MICHELI

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Born in Brussels in 1982 and first trained at the INSAS in dramatic interpretation, Laurent Micheli worked as an actor for 10 years.

On stage, he worked in France and in Belgium, both in classical and contemporary texts. The desire to carry his own projects quickly pushed him to direct, especially with the Belgian collective Madame Véro (*Les Trublions*, 2008 and *Ouasmok*, 2010).

Then, he directed his first feature film, *Even Lovers Get The Blues*, released in 2017. His rich and diverse artistic experience provides a solid foundation for the making of his films. *Even Lovers Get The Blues* was selected in many international festivals and received many awards, and two nominations at the Magritte Awards 2018.

In addition, Laurent Micheli studied at the Writing Workshop of La Femis in Paris from which he graduated in 2016, and is also the winner of Émergence in 2018.

Lola is Laurent Micheli's second feature film. ■

