

A PARIS EDUCATION

(Mes provinciales)

A film by
Jean Paul Civeyrac



136 min/France/French with English subtitles/2018/Cert 12A
Official Selection – Berlinale Panorama 2018
London Film Festival 2018

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SYNOPSIS:

Étienne Tinan (Andranic Manet), a young and serious cinephile, leaves behind Lyon and his girlfriend (Diane Rouxel) of six years to study at film school in Paris. There, he integrates into a bohemian student lifestyle. He is challenged and enthused by his new colleagues, Mathias (Corentin Fila) and Jean-Noël (Gonzague Van Bervesseles), with whom he shares artistic ideas and discusses the merits of Bach, Baudelaire and Marlen Khutsiev. Cinematic references guide their conversations and they are very aware that their tastes and approach to filmmaking dictate their status. However, it is against Mathias that Étienne compares himself the most and their relationship becomes emotionally complicated when Annabelle (Sophie Verbeeck), a political activist, meets Étienne. He must now find his own personality as both a filmmaker and in his emotional life.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set can be downloaded [here](#)



CAST

Etienne	ANDRANIC MANET
Lucie	DIANE ROUXEL
Jean-Noel	GONZAGUE VAN BERVESSELÈS
Mathias	CORENTIN FILA
Anabelle	SOPHIE VERBEECK
Valentina	JENNA THIAM
Barbara	VALENTINE CATZEFILIS
Héloïse	CHARLOTTE VAN BERVESSELÈS
Paul Rossi	NICHOLAS BOUCHAUD
William	LAURENT DELBECQUE
Solange	JEANNE RUFF

CREW

Director	JEAN PAUL CIVEYRAC
Screenwriter	JEAN PAUL CIVEYRAC
Assistant director	TIGRANE AVÉDIKIAN
Director of photography	PIERRE-HUBERT MARTIN
Sound	FRANÇOIS MÉREU
Editor	LOUISE NARBONI
Production Designer	BRIGITTE BRASSART
Costumes/Script Supervisor	CLAIRE DUBIEN
Casting	CONSTANCE DEMONTOY
Unit manager	FLORE CAMUS
Production Company	MOBY DICK FILMS
Coproducer	ARP SÉLECTION
Producers	FRÉDÉRIC NIEDERMAYER, MICHÈLE AND LAURENT PÉTIN

136 min/France/French with English subtitles/B&W/2018/2.39:1/Cert 12A



JEAN PAUL CIVEYRAC

Born in 1964, Jean Paul Civeyrac graduated in philosophy from the University of Lyon before studying film at La Fémis in Paris. *La vie selon Luc* (1991), the short feature he made there, was selected in competition at Cannes. In 1996, he shot his debut feature, *Neither Eve nor Adam* followed by *Les Solitaires*, *Fantômes* and *Man's Gentle Love*. *All The Fine Promises* won the Jean Vigo Prize in 2003. His other credits include *Through the Forest*, *Young Girls in Black*, which premiered in Directors' Fortnight at Cannes 2010, and *My Friend Victoria* in 2014.

Alongside his work as a filmmaker, Civeyrac has taught at La Fémis, Paris VIII University and Cours Florent drama school. In 2014, De l'incidence Editeur published *Écrit entre les jours*, a collection of texts devoted to cinema and music, and in 2017 P.O.L. published an essay on filmmaking, *Rose pourquoi*.

Selected filmography

- 2017 *A Paris Education*
- 2014 *My Friend Victoria*
- 2012 *Fairy Queen* (45 mins)
- 2010 *Young Girls in Black*
- 2005 *Through the Forest*
- 2003 *All the Fine Promises*
- 2002 *Man's Gentle Love*
- 2001 *Fantômes*
- 2000 *Les Solitaires*
- 1997 *Neither Eve Nor Adam*
- 1991 *La Vie Selon Luc* (15 mins)



INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

What made you want to make this film now?

This film is intimately linked to my encounter with Frédéric Niedermayer, my producer. We wanted to make a relatively inexpensive film that could be done rapidly... As for the screenplay, about a group of film students, it draws on various sources that suddenly crystallised. First of all, personal experience: having studied at La Fémis, then heading up the directing department there, and now teaching at Paris VIII University, I have spent thirty years in constant contact with film students. So that's a subject I know well. There are also the *Blow Up* shorts that I made for ARTE's website, which feature characters talking about cinema, such as *An Hour with Alice*, starring Adèle Haenel and Grégoire Leprince-Ringuet, based on Milos Forman's *Loves of a Blonde*. And discovering Marlen Khutsiev's *I am Twenty* (also known as *Ilyich's Gate*) was also decisive. That film, which blew me away, is the story of the friendship between three young men starting out in life. I saw it in June 2016. I started to write in July. With the story underpinned by a sentimental education, I wanted to talk about cinema, friendship, love and also politics, and to make a movie with the urgency of a first feature, even though it could not have become what it is, of course, without the experience of my previous movies.

Is the students' fervour for cinema an inextinguishable flame?

Yes, of course, but of all the students, only a minority truly possess it. At that age, many of them are trying to find themselves or flirting with the film business and, if they carve out a place in it, they don't direct. The fervour for cinema that features in *A Paris Education* is the one that drives anybody for whom making a film is an existential quest. They have to be worthy of the vision they have of their art form and themselves. Naturally, life takes care of teaching them exactly where they are at.

You were once a young man leaving the provinces for film school in Paris.

Yes, I grew up near Saint-Étienne, and arriving in Paris was a major upheaval. Seen from Firminy, Paris, where I knew no one, might as well have been Tokyo. It was a huge adventure! But at least half my classmates at La Fémis came from the provinces. In our little gang of four or five, it brought us closer together. We met up at the Cinémathèque, chatted with Parisian critics we had read and with filmmakers we liked. The world of cinema, previously experienced from the teenage solitude of our bedrooms, suddenly took shape. During all those years, someone like Jean-Claude Durant, for example, was hugely important to me. And more concretely, coming to Paris also meant resolving housing issues and money difficulties.

Fortunately, like many students at La Fémis, I had a scholarship. To some extent, filming Paris in black and white was an attempt to bestow on it a romantic aspect, to render that sense of adventure felt by every person from the provinces who discovers it. In other words, deep down to give it a quite singular beauty.

Another theme of the film is the passage from dream to reality.

Alone in the provinces, you feel gifted, invincible, but when you arrive in Paris, you measure up to others. It engenders a kind of rivalry that is not always healthy. You're often forced to contemplate what you're doing and what you can do, and what you thought you could do becomes a hazy dream. It's brutal, painful, and occasionally you fall into abominable holes. The scene where Étienne has to be dragged from bed because he doesn't want to shoot really happened to me. I was so sure that what I was doing was terrible that I refused to show my face. So, in the film, Étienne gradually takes measure of himself and others and comes to terms with his own limits.



The French title, *Mes Provinciales*, seems to operate on various levels.

On the one hand, it evokes the young women with whom Étienne has relationships – which made me think of Rimbaud's *Mes petites amoureuses*. On the other hand, of course, it refers to Pascal's *Les Provinciales* and particularly to what he said about imposture and the purity of intentions being in accordance with acts. Étienne gradually learns not to lie to himself and not to delude himself about his own abilities, be they artistic or romantic. For example, not to consider himself faithful when he isn't.

Is the film very autobiographical?

The film takes a very free approach to combining real-life experiences and pure fiction. While it's more autofiction than autobiography, I have to admit that it must be the first time I have had so little perspective on my characters because I know them so intimately. I was able to talk to each actor extensively and precisely about the character, text and subtext, and what references came into play. During pre-production, we had regular preparatory work sessions, like in the theatre. I tried to infuse in them some of that fervour for cinema, and they immersed themselves in their characters with such generosity and eagerness that it still impresses me today.

The actors are almost all unknowns.

Working with young actors is always a great pleasure. With every film, they give me the feeling that I'm at the beginning of something again. Devoid of an image, they are incredibly receptive and touchingly modest. In *A Paris Education*, there's a kind of echo between the actors and the film student protagonists. The students I rub shoulders with all year long at Paris VIII, who greatly influenced the script by infiltrating the autofiction of my own time as a student, have something in common with these budding actors: they are just starting to make films, they are unsure of their talent and worried about the future the world reserves for them socially as well as ecologically and politically. They at once display innocence and lucidity, which often leads them to engage very strongly. To have that embodied in the film by a new generation of French film actors helped, I believe, to establish credibility and thereby touch on very contemporary issues and emotions.

How did you set about casting the movie?

In auditions, I never use a scene from the script. Seeing it performed repeatedly wears it out so that, by the time you come to shoot, it is barely possible to breathe life into it. I prefer to write a separate scene featuring the film's protagonists. For *A Paris Education*, I wrote a dialogue about art and its importance in life because, in the movie, the discussions about cinema had to be perfectly credible. Some of the actors who auditioned were unable to look as if they knew what they were talking about. That enabled me to make an initial selection. Then I added a second part to the scene, where one of the characters confessed their love for another, which was intended to bring out how the actors in both roles could depict strong emotions. Only when we had chosen the actors who reached the greatest intensity did we allocate parts. So they found out which character they were going to play at the same time as me.



A Paris Education is a realistic film, which is not true of all your movies.

I have made films with internal realism and others with external realism, as Jean Renoir called it. While some portray an almost dreamlike fantasy world, others such as *A Paris Education* portray a very real world, even though I am far removed from naturalism, of course. In this film, there is a real-life context, a real-life city, with relationships between people that we can identify with. Bergman excelled in these two forms of realism: *Persona*, on the one hand, *Scenes from a Marriage* on the other. With *Fanny and Alexander*, he succeeded in combining both forms in the same film, and it's one of my go-to films.

What was your aesthetic approach?

I thought the film needed simple, sparing, transparent direction, so the camera is forgotten, self-effacing rather than intruding between audience and characters. It's the exact opposite of *A travers la forêt*, which is ten long takes with the camera as a character generating space and time. If the camera in *A Paris Education* is motionless or at most panning (except in the ultimate shots), and filming dialogue between people who are walking or sitting, it's precisely because I felt the point of the film lay in those characters, and therefore in those actors. Orson Welles recalled someone asking Chaplin, "Why is your framing never interesting?" And Chaplin replied, "Because what's interesting is me." That seems to me the perfect answer.



As so often in your films, Bach is omnipresent.

He's the only composer I can listen to every day without ever getting bored. It's a liking that I wanted Étienne to share because when I was a student, I forged my character with the help of radical artists – Godard, Straub/Huillet, Bresson, Pasolini, Genet, Emily Dickinson and, yes, Johann Sebastian Bach. Having solid points of reference seems to me a legitimate need when you're a student, but they wind up crushing all the rest. Over time, you learn to love many other things, without the contradictions that you might rather dogmatically presuppose – such as, in the film, the fairly romantic music, associated with love, which is by Giya Kancheli.

You filmed your characters with a great deal of indulgence.

Once more, it's the legacy of Renoir and his famous "We all have our reasons." I don't like movies that lead a whole swathe of mean, stupid or alienated characters to the slaughter, while the director leads the flattered and suddenly complicit audience members to believe that they are not like the people on screen. I try to shine a light on all the characters in my film, while leaving the audience to make up their own minds about them.

Additional No Film School Interview with the Director by Emily Buder

<https://nofilmschool.com/2018/09/paris-education>