



RISE OF A STAR

directed by **JAMES BORT**

**DOROTHÉE
GILBERT**

**CATHERINE
DENEUVE**

**ANTONIA
DESPLAT**

**PIERRE
DELADONCHAMPS**

FULLDAWA FILMS PRESENTS

2018 OSCAR LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM (FINALIST)

RISE OF A STAR

A FILM BY JAMES BORT

WITH DOROTHÉE GILBERT, CATHERINE DENEUVE,
ANTONIA DESPLAT, PIERRE DELADONCHAMPS

2017 / FRANCE / 19 MIN

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SYNOPSIS

Emma is about to become Prima Ballerina, but something upsets her. A secret. A secret liable to undermine what she has spent her whole life working for.



James Bort's 'Rise of a Star' featuring Catherine Deneuve joins the Oscar race, as it has been selected for the Academy's Live Action Short Film Shortlist

Director **James Bort**, writer **Stéphane Landowski** and Producer **Boris Mendza's** beautiful film tackles the difficult subject of female empowerment. This wonderful tale features the iconic Oscar nominated actress **Catherine Deneuve**, **Antonia Desplat** (Victoria), **Pierre Deladonchamps** (Stranger by the Lake) and introduces **Dorothée Gilbert**. Rise of A Star has been selected by the Academy for the Live Action Oscar shortlist.

Emma is about to become Prima Ballerina, but something is upsetting her. She has a secret. A secret that could undermine the fulfillment of her lifelong dream.

The film stars legendary actress Catherine Deneuve and is the first short film that she has shot in 25 years. Rise of a Star is the screen debut for the award-winning Prima Ballerina/Paris Opéra principal dancer Dorothée Gilbert. The film also stars Antonia Desplat, who is known for her work in Victoria and Pierre Deladonchamps, winner of the Most Promising Actor award at the 39th César Awards.

Through their production company **FullDawa Films**, the Producers of Rise of A Star, Boris Mendza, Gael Cabouat & David Atrakchi have made an impressive slate of over 85 films, including My Old Lady with Kevin Kline & Maggie Smith, and Frank & Lola, starring Michael Shannon, which was selected at Sundance. With their eyes on the international market, FullDawa Films have expanded their operations to Los Angeles in collaboration with producer Jouri Smit. The beautiful cinematography of Rise of a Star was created by Mahdi Lepart. The Oscar nominations will be announced on Tuesday 23rd January, 2018.

CASTING

Dorothée Gilbert is a Multi-awarded Prima Ballerina at the French Opera of Paris, and the face of PIAGET. This film is her screen debut.

Catherine Deneuve hasn't shot a short film in 25 years. She was nominated for 1 Oscar, received another 35 wins & 21 nominations in major festivals. She won 2 Césars and was nominated for 12 Césars in France. She is one of the most prominent and iconic French actresses in the world.

Pierre Deladonchamps, is known for his role as Franck in drama-thriller film *Stranger by the Lake* (2013), for which he won the Most Promising Actor award at the 39th César Awards in 2014. He was nominated for the César for Best Actor for « A Kid » in 2016.

Antonia Desplat After a dancing school, Antonia decided to become an actress. This film is her screen debut.



INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Rise of a Star is your first film. How long have you wanted to direct ?

Since forever ! I went to Écoles des Beaux Arts de Paris, I am a fashion photographer, I directed commercials, but to make a film, to be a filmmaker, is a childhood dream. There is no profession more beautiful than to be a storyteller. Especially when given the chance, for your first film, to work with your own wife and with Catherine Deneuve, the very embodiment of French cinematic elegance. It is very intimidating to direct an actress who has worked with the greatest filmmakers. At the same time, it has forced me to outdo myself, to exceed my own expectations, to question my work. It was an exhilarating first experience, a revelation, it felt obvious. But what filled me most with emotion was to witness the birth of an actress, to see Dorothé, my wife, bare her soul on camera...

Was it hard to work with your wife?

I was a little afraid at first and, I believe, so was she. But it actually brought real strength to the project. We know each other so well that we barely need words to understand each other. The amount of time we save on set this way is insane. And of course I discovered how sacred time is on a shoot! Dorothé was unfailingly supportive. More so: she contributed to making the film better.

By giving notes to Stéphane, who wrote the script; and during rehearsals, when she was never one to content herself with what we were obtaining. It's the top-athlete in her: she aims for excellence, always. To her, you can always improve a performance. In a way, it's exhausting, but for me, a first-time director, it is extremely reassuring. We made the film hand in hand!

Rise of a Star is about a modern heroin. Why this desire to cast a woman as the leading role in your first film ?

It wasn't a desire, it was a necessity! Sadly, as recent news has shown us, despite the progressive discourse, there is a long way to achieve the equality everyone is talking about. Yet this movie is not an advocacy film. It is a human film. It is a woman's film, with women, a feminine film, following a heroin in her daily life. If it creates a conversation, the desire to move forward on these issues, then so much the better. What mattered to me was to tell the story of a woman who, in the name of old habits, is asked to relinquish an essential part of her being to continue existing as an artist. Deep down, the simple and universal story I am trying to tell with Rise of a Star is that of a woman who is fighting to choose her own life.

How does one move from photography toward film-making?

Good question... As a cinephile I had a good number of references, of models, of beacons to follow. Although I didn't go to film school, I believe I had some notions of visual grammar in me. Beyond that, it takes a little folly...and a lot of instinct! For what I lacked in terms of theoretical knowledge I made up by listening to what I wanted to say, before translating it into shots. The result is a very sensuous, very introspective movie. Working this way obviously creates a lot of excitement, fear and doubt. In a way, I connected, body and soul, with the work. I get now why directors talk about giving birth to a film. That's what it is!

Still, my experience as a photographer helped—particularly with framing the shots. I was well aware, from the beginning, that telling a story is much, much more demanding than taking a picture. To the two dimensions of photography you must add the third dimension of depth and space and most importantly, the dimension of emotion. To carry the narrative, to make the character and their destiny stand out and resonate, therein lies the challenge. It is an unremitting, deeply captivating task. I think I have a lot to learn still!

Why did you choose only one music?

Nothing is more cinematic to me than symphonic music. And the rhythm and power of Ravel's Boléro are unique. Besides, the Boléro has been made into a number of different ballets and its enchantment,—its almost hypnotic quality—, are a perfect fit for Rise of a Star. It is practically a character on its own.



INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHÉE GILBERT

You are a Principal Dancer at the Paris Opera Ballet. Rise of a Star is precisely about a dancer who is pregnant. Is it based on your experience?

It obviously is! Boris, the producer, James, the director and my husband, and Stéphane, the writer, drew inspiration from my life to write this short film. As a young mother I can say that reconciling this new life with my life as a dancer has clearly not been easy. But my resemblance with

the character ends here. Rise of a Star is a work of fiction. The idea was to make a feminine film that speaks to all women. Not a film on a ballet dancer. Dancing is the pretext to the true subject matter, which is a woman who has to fight not to sacrifice any part of her.

You come from the stage and Rise of a Star is your first experience in film. Is performing on camera different than performing on stage?

What is totally different, most of all, is the technique, how you use your voice. On stage, you act with your face. On camera, which is a much more intimate medium, you try to experience emotions in your whole body, to be truly in the

moment. In a way, acting on camera is much more physical than dancing on stage! So much strength and focus is needed to be able to look deep inside to find truth and emotion...

What else have you learned on this first shoot?

First of all, that it is very easy to respond with the right emotion when you're lucky enough to play opposite Catherine Deneuve. All I had to do was to listen. I didn't even need to look for the emotion, it came naturally. Her expression is so exactly right, so powerful, that you just surrender to it. I still can't believe I actually worked with such a legend. It is an absolute blessing...



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This is the story of Emma, a ballet dancer who dreams of becoming Prima Ballerina. Most of all, it's the story of a modern heroin. As the world begins to realize of the amount of progress yet to be made to achieve gender equality, Emma becomes the symbol of this daily struggle. She is done submitting to an archaic system that would have her choose between maternity and her career.

Vibrantly echoing a huge cultural moment, *Rise of a Star* talks about the place of women at the Paris Opera, and beyond that, in all of society.

Seeing through statements and subterfuges, against silences and things left unsaid, Emma wants to live and dance, to be a mother and a Principal Ballerina ; she will not sacrifice any part of her just because she is a woman. She will dance with passion and unrelenting lightness so women will no longer be stuck in the social choreography that has been imposed on them forever.

Women are at the heart of *Rise of a Star*, which offers beautiful female roles. Emma, the future Ballerina, is played by Dorotheé Gilbert, who is making her vibrant film debut. Playing the Director of the Opea, Catherine Deneuve creates a transgenerational bond between women a delivers a message of hope. Opposite this female duo, Pierre Deladonchamps embodies a masculine position, firmly set in old principles and self-righteousness.

A film of transmission and emancipation, and feminine film, a women's film, radiant an optimistic, *Rise of a Star*'s simple goal is to tell the story of an esceptional woman involved in a common struggle,—that of every woman.

THE SOUNDTRACK

Music plays a crucial role in *Rise of a Star*. The Boléro's spellbinding, crescendo melody underscores the increasing tension of the story and intensifies the heroin's torment and subsequent liberation.

The Boléro, composed in 1928 by Maurice Ravel, is still one of the most widely played music pieces in the world. It infuses the film with its unique color and force.

THE DIRECTOR

JAMES BORT

After graduating in fine arts from Paris' Beaux Arts school, he started his career as a photographer and director. He became one of the most influential fashion bloggers.

In 2015, he worked with Benjamin Millepied for Paris Opera, a collaboration that gave birth to the book «Etoiles» («Stars» - edited by Cherche-Midi) (<http://www.numero.com/fr/photographie/livre-exposition-photographie-james-bort-etoiles-opera-paris>) and an exhibit.

Since then, he has photographed the greatest dancers in the world and has been offered contracts with a large number of theaters (Paris Opera, Bolshoi, ABT, NYC Ballet, etc.)

He directed the short movie Rise of a Star with Dorothée Gilbert, Catherine Deneuve, Antonia Desplat and Pierre Deladonchamps. The film is shortlisted for the Oscars 2018 best live action short.

He is married to Prima Ballerina Dorothée Gilbert.



SCREENWRITER :
STEPHANE LANDOWSKI

Screenwriter and director Stéphane Landowski comes from a family well known for its love of the arts (his great grandfather, the sculptor Paul Landowski, created Rio de Janeiro's Christ statue and his father, the composer Marcel Landowski, championed the establishment of orchestras throughout France). A former student of the prestigious École Normale Supérieure, he has worked with music celebrities like Nekfeu and Mathias Malzieu.

Stéphane's screenplays have been awarded with numerous prizes, notably the Prix SACD-Beaumarchais.

CINEMATOGRAPHER :
MAHDI LEPART

Cinematographer, photographer and art director, Mahdi Lepart's know-how is the result of all the years he's spent creating his neat and elegant visual style. He's worked with luxury brands like Louis Vuitton and Longchamp, shot several fictional films and series and directed his own short film, «I'm a Sharpener ».

PRODUCER :
BORIS MENDZA

Boris Mendza embodies a new generation of producers. Passionate about moving pictures, he enjoys all narrative and visual forms. He strives to develop and produce sincere and original films. Boris currently produces shorts films, co-produced features films and documentaries.

Boris Graduated from La Sorbonne. He founded Fulldawa Films in 2007.



FULLDAWA FILMS

Founded in 2007 by —, the company has made 40 short films, shown and awarded in France and abroad. The company has also made a name by producing two anglophone features.

In 2014, in coproduction with BBC Films, Deux Chevaux Films and Protagonist, Fulldawa Films made *My Old Lady*, a feature directed by Israel Horovitz, shot entirely in Paris. It starred Oscar-nominated Maggie Smith, oscar-nominated Kristin Scott Thomas, Oscar winner Kevin Kline, and French actors Dominique Pinon and Noémie Lvovsky. The film was distributed by Zelig and was a commercial and critical success.

In 2015, Fulldawa Films produced, along with Parts & Labor, the feature *Frank & Lola*, directed by Matthew Ross, starring Imogen Poots, Michael Shannon and Emmanuelle Devos. The film opened the Sundance Film Festival and played at the Deauville Film Festival in 2016.

In 2017, the company produced the Talents Adami Cannes Collection with Dominique Besnehard. This was an opportunity to work with Oscar-nominated director Sylvain Chaumet, Stéphane de Groodt, Mathias Malzieu, Joann Sfar and Olivier Van Hoofstadt. Fulldawa also produced the first short film of Guillaume Sentou, who won the Molière Award (the French equivalent of a Tony) for best Male Newcomer ; as well as the experimental short film *Ultraviolet* by Marc Johnson, selected in competition at Sundance, and *Rise of a Star*.

In 2018, the company is producing the new Talents Adami Cannes collection featuring five directorial debuts, by up-and-coming francophone actors Charlotte Le Bon, Pierre Deladonchamps, Mélanie Thierry, Clémence Poésy and Sabrina Ouazani.

Choosing to expand, the company opened its Los Angeles office in 2016.

CREW

Director

James Bort

Screenwriter

Stéphane Landowski

Director of Photography

Mahdi Lepart

Producers

Boris Mendza, Gaël Cabouat, David Atrakchi

1st Assistant Director

Mitra Hekmat

Production Designer

Irene Marinari

Costume designer

Julie Poulain

Editor

Guillaume Luras

Sound Mixer

Lionel Guenoun

Production Manager

Charles Barberousse

Production company

FullDawa Films

Visual effects

Raphaël Kourilsky

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