

COURAGEOUS

THE

OFFICIAL SELECTION

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TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2024



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WITH **OPHELIA KOLB** A FILM BY **JASMIN GORDON**

WITH OPHELIA KOLB, JASMIN KALISZ SAURER, PAUL BESNIER, ARTHUR DEVAUX, CLAUDIA GROS, JABIL RAFI, LÖC POLI, MARIANA SYLLA, MICHEL VÖTT, ROGER BONJOUR, CHRISTIAN GREGORI, SABINE TIMOTED, JULIEN BLASOTTO, PATRICK MOLLET-MERCIER, BARBARA TOBOLA, MATHIS KÜNZLER, ALEXANDRA KARIMISARI, CHADY ABU-AMMEH, JUAN BLIBENY, PHILIPPE SCHULER. SCREENPLAY BY JULIEN BOUSSOUX. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND EDITOR AND WIDMER. SOUND JÜRG LEMPEL. PRODUCTION DESIGNER REKHA MUSALE, IVAN NICLASS. COSTUME DESIGNER LINDA HARPER. HAIR BY JAMES JEAN COTTER. EDITED BY JAN MÜLLETHALER. MUSIC BY MIRIAM SKAL. SOUND DESIGNER PASCAL SCHÄRLI. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JACQUES KIEFFER. COLOUR CORRECTION CHRISTOPH WALTHER. PRODUCED BY BRIGITTE HOFER, CORNELIA SETTLER & MAXIMILIAN. PRODUCTION CO-PRODUCED BY RTS / SRG SSR. WWW.MAXIMILIAN.CH

**LES COURAGEUX/
THE COURAGEOUS**

Switzerland, 2024, 80', ov french, subtitles english, german

A film by

Jasmin Gordon

Screenplay by

Julien Bouissoux

A Story by

Jasmin Gordon and Julien Bouissoux

Cast

Ophelia Kolb
Jasmine Kalisz Saurer
Paul Besnier
Arthur Devaux

Production

maximage GmbH
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A Co-production with

RTS Radio Télévision Suisse / SRG SSR
Françoise Mayor
Editors RTS, Carole Thévena, Celya Larré
National Coordination SRG SSR, Sven Wälti

Swiss Distribution

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Burggemeinde Bern

Developed in

the Torino Script Lab (TFL) 2021

Development Awards

European Work in Progress Pitch (EWIP) 2023 –
K13 Studios Award

Technical specifications

Scope 2.39 :1, 4k, 25 frames, sound 5.1, colour, 80 min.

Filming locations

Lower Valais (between Martigny and Lake Geneva)

Principal Photography

July/August 2023

Film Completion date

June 2024

World premiere

TIFF 2024, Discovery section



LOGLINE & SYNOPSIS

LOGLINE

In a society that doesn't give a damn about people like her, a rebellious mother of three risks everything to get a piece of paradise.

SYNOPSIS SHORT

In a small town on the edge of wild country, an eccentric and delinquent mother has had enough of the rules. Crushed by her mistakes and by a society that doesn't give a damn – or a second chance – to people like her, she'll do anything to prove to her children, and to herself, that she still is a good person.





JASMIN GORDON

DIRECTOR

Born in Los Angeles in 1978, Jasmin Gordon is a director of both Swiss and American origins. Before graduating from Stanford University's Documentary Film MA program in 2006, she studied Literature and Photography in the US and in France. Her short films have been broadcast on television (PBS Independent Lens, RTS) and have screened at festivals such as SXSW, Slamdance, Encounters Film Festival, Festival Européen du Film Court de Brest, REGARD Festival au Saguenay and AFI Docs. Her work has received multiple awards such as the Princess Grace Foundation Award, the Independent Television Service Grand Jury Prize and two International Documentary Association nominations. *Les Courageux/The Courageous*, her debut feature, was developed in the Torino Script Lab 2021 and won the K13 Studios Award at the European Work in Progress Pitch 2023 in Cologne.

FILMOGRAPHY (A SELECTION)

2024 LES COURAGEUX/THE COURAGEOUS (First Feature)

World Premiere – TIFF 2024

Torinto Script Lab participant 2021

Rencontres de Co-production Francophone Participant 2021

MEDIA Project Development Recipient 2022

EWIP European Work in Progress Pitch Participant 2023 – Winner K13 Award

2018 EMPREINTES/FRAMEWORK (Short Narrative Film)

North American Premiere – SXSW International Shorts Competition
Winner Regional Film Prize, Bern, Switzerland
Best Female Director Salute Your Shorts Film Festival, Los Angeles
Festivals (a selection): SXSW, Festival Européen du Film Court de Brest,
REGARD Festival international du court métrage Saguenay,
Encounters Short Film & Animation Festival, Leeds International Film Festival,
Short Shorts Film Festival, Japan, etc.

2015 BONNE POIRE (Short Narrative Film)

Nomination Regional Film Prize, City and Canton of Bern, Switzerland

2006 MONSIEUR BORGES ET MOI (Short Documentary)

Princess Grace Foundation Award for Filmmaking
International Documentary Association Wolper Award Nomination
Festivals: Slamdance Film Festival, AFI Docs, etc.

2005 PARIS 1951 (Short Documentary)

Independent Television Service (ITVS) Shorts Grand Jury Prize
International Documentary Association Wolper Award Nomination
Television Premiere on PBS – Independent Lens
Festivals: Kyoto International Student Film Festival, Rencontres Henri Langlois,
FAIF Film Fest, Toronto Student Shorts, etc.





INTERVIEW

JASMIN GORDON

Can you tell me what is at the heart of THE COURAGEOUS for you?

FOR ME THE COURAGEOUS explores the fragility of individual freedom in the face of society and its conventions. It addresses the questions I ask myself daily: what is lost when we conform to the expectations of the norm? And just how far are we willing to go to uphold appearances? This story speaks of a family on the edge of convention through the perspective of a mother, Jule and her three singular children, Claire, Loic and Sami. It's a complex family portrait that hopes to rattle our perception of what a good mother and a loving family should look like.

The narrative style of your film is quite unusual. You leave lots of things unanswered and undefined for the viewer. Why did you choose to tell a story in this way?

Jule, our protagonist, lives in a web of lies in order to be accepted and appreciated by the world that surrounds her. She goes to great lengths to conceal her delinquent past from her children by attempting to be larger than life, a kind of super-heroine who has everything under control. I wanted the form of the film to capture this sense of mystery and uncertainty, the tension that surrounds Jule and her children's experience. I wanted to make what happens off camera – the unseen and unheard – nearly as important as what happens on camera, allowing the viewer's imagination free reign.

Nature has a very particular role in this film. Can you tell us a little about what it represents for you?

The natural world – wild, mysterious, exuberant, hypnotic – occupies a special place in THE COURAGEOUS. Nature surrounds the small valley town, it speaks to the characters who are willing to listen, mystifies them, makes them uneasy too. It is present in every scene in either a visible or subliminal way acting as a constant reminder that whatever the obstacles and impasses, the characters are intrinsically free and are encouraged to liberate themselves.

THE COURAGEOUS is quite an unconventional female portrait. Can you tell us a bit about the inspiration behind the character Jule?

When it comes to representing women on screen, I continue to be surprised by all the taboos and stigma (great and small) that still surround depictions of women – and most especially mothers. I have always been surrounded by very unusual and strong women and am frustrated that the stories we tell rarely include such personalities. This film is an effort to join others who are allowing different, more defiant and imperfect images of women to fill the screen. THE COURAGEOUS is a story about one of these truly complex women: she is both well intentioned and undeniably flawed, she is a rebel but also a constant and loving mother. She is a human being, unascertainable, imperfect, tender and fascinating. Despite her many mistakes, she does her very best to resist the enormous financial and moral pressures that surround her and tries to give her family a better life. I find this very courageous.

There seem to be a lot of political layers in the story that touch on being disadvantaged in a competitive society. Can you talk a bit about this?

In keeping with the main theme behind the story, my co-writer Julien Bouissoux and I really wanted to talk about the often rigid societal structures that persist across time and geography – that include or exclude individuals from being allowed to advance and live a decent life. I wanted to talk about the great struggle many people face around the world who barely make ends meet despite the fact that they work tirelessly every day. Jule is one of these people.

The character Loïc is on the autistic spectrum. Can you tell me something about this element in the film?

Defending neurodiversity and its positive impact on a neuronormative world is of great importance to me. I have several extraordinary people in my life who are “on the spectrum”. They inspire me to include subtle and authentic neurodiverse characters in my work in hopes of normalizing the idea of “the other.” I wanted Loïc to be seen as the child that he is, the individual and not as a simplified stereotype. I could have gone much deeper into this theme, but I think I need to save that for another film!

Can you tell us about the production of the film?

With only two months’ time between acquiring all the financing and the first day of our shoot, the production of THE COURAGEOUS was a passionate whirlwind of energy and emotions! Thanks to our fabulous producers and our incredibly talented and generous crew, we were able to move mountains and make the impossible possible even in the middle of a historic heat wave. It was a great joy to work with our young actors – to accompany them while they explored the psychology of their characters and expressed themselves on screen. And it was a true honor to work with our extraordinary Ophelia Kolb who brought such subtlety, fierceness and grace to the role of Jule. This film is a real labour of love on so many levels that it is hard to fully express my gratitude to all those involved.



CAST & CREW

CAST

Jule	Ophelia Kolb
Claire	Jasmine Kalisz Saurer
Loïc	Paul Besnier
Sami	Arthur Devaux
In other roles	Claudia Grob
	Nabil Rafi
	Loic Poli
	Mariama Sylla
	Michel Voïta
	Roger Bonjour
	Christian Gregori
	Sabine Timoteo
	Julien Blasutto
	Patricia Mollet-Mercier
	Barbara Tobola
	Mathis Künzler
	Alexandra Karamisaris
	Chady Abu-Nijmeh
	Juan Bilbeny
	Philippe Schuler

CREW

Director	Jasmin Gordon
Screenplay	Julien Bouissoux
Story by	Jasmin Gordon and Julien Bouissoux
Camera	Andi Widmer
Set Design	Rekha Musale, Ivan Niclass
Costume Design	Linda Harper
Hair and Make-up	Jean Cotter
Sound	Jürg Lempen
Music	Mirjam Skal
Editing	Jan Mühlethaler
Sound design	Pascal Schärli
Sound Mix	Jacques Kieffer
Colorist	Christoph Walter
Production Manager	Katinka Kocher
Producers	Brigitte Hofer, Cornelia Seitler



OPHELIA KOLB

JULE

Ophelia Kolb is a French actress born in Paris in 1982. The daughter of a Turkish theatre director and a German puppeteer, she spent her childhood between the dressing rooms and stages of theatres and opera houses between Istanbul and Paris. In 2007 she made her cinematic debut in the film *CEUX QUI RESTENT* by Anne Le Ny. She then went on to appear in films such as *GAINSBOURG (VIE HÉROÏQUE)* and *L'AUTRE DUMAS*. Ophelia became known to a wider audience in 2015 through her recurring role in the hit series *DIX POUR CENT (CALL MY AGENT!)*, which was later picked up by Netflix. In 2017, she was honored at the *Séries Mania* festival for her role in the series *ON VA S'AIMER UN PEU BEAUCOUP*. Since 2015, Ophelia Kolb has appeared in the recurring short comedy *LA PETITE HISTOIRE DE LA FRANCE* in the role of Ysabeau, the wife of François d'Arc, Joan of Arc's cousin. She also starred in several theatre productions over the years. In 2018, she performed in Charlotte Rondelez's production of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* by Tennessee Williams. For this role she received the Molière Award for Best Supporting Actress. In the same year, she played in the feature film *AMANDA* by Mikhaël Hers which premiered in Venice. In 2023, Ophelia played in no less than three french series: *TAPIE* (Netflix) which won the BAFTA award for best foreign series, the cult series *PAMELA ROSE* on Canal+ and the TF1 success entitled *PANDA* that has been renewed for a second season. Ophelia is a passionate workaholic and still prefers to be on stage or on a film set than anywhere else in the world.

FILMOGRAPHY (FEATURE FILMS)

2023 *TOI NON PLUS TU N'A RIEN VU* by Béatrice Pollet
2023 *PANDEMONIUM* by Quarxx
2022 *LE TORRENT* by Anne Le Ny
2022 *LES PASSAGERS DE LA NUIT* by Mikhaël Hers
2020 *LE LION* by Ludovic Colbeau-Justin
2019 *DOCTEUR* by Tristan Séguéla
2018 *AMANDA* by Mikhael Hers
2017 *MONSIEUR ET MADAME ADELMAN* by Nicolas Bedos
2016 *LA VACHE* by Mohamed Hamidi
2014 *JAMAIS LE PREMIER SOIR* by Mélissa Drigeard Zen
2013 *GARE DU NORD* by Claire Simon
2012 *ASSOCIÉS CONTRE LE CRIME* by Pascal Thomas
2010 *L'AUTRE DUMAS* by Safy Nebbou
2010 *GAINSBOURG (VIE HÉROÏQUE)* by Joann Sfar
2007 *CEUX QUI RESTENT* by Anne Le Ny





JASMINE KALISZ SAURER

CLAIRE

Born in 2012, from Vercorin, Switzerland

How was it for you to play the character Claire?

I really like to act. I like it because it's cool to feel like you're in someone else's skin in order to understand life. It's interesting to do this because your whole life you are just you, but when you play a part, it helps you get to know who you are. You understand more things about yourself and others.

What do you like and dislike about your character?

I think Claire is shy, strong and courageous. You can trust her. That's what I like about her. On the other hand, I think she's a little too secretive...if she were my friend, I would feel like she's hiding things from me.

I also really don't like her clothing! But that's not her fault. It's her mother who doesn't care and it's a part of the game to wear whatever costume you get when you're making a film!



PAUL BESNIER

LOÏC

Born in 2014, from Lausanne, Switzerland

What do you and your character have in common?

Loïc can take care of himself. He's mischievous, smart, kind and he can also be grumpy. Just like me!

What were your favorite moments during the shoot?

I loved being with my new friends on set. We played games and swam in the pool in the evening. I also really loved watching the scenes replay on the monitor.



ARTHUR DEVAUX

SAMI

Born in 2016, from Geneva, Switzerland

Tell me a little bit about your character Sami:

He's the youngest in the family and he was really afraid that he wouldn't be able to find his mother. But he also is the most courageous and a daredevil because he's ready to do anything to not lose his mom.

Did you like becoming another person for the film?

Yes, I really like changing into other people because it's fun to be someone else. I'd like to make another movie with the team and the kids with lots of adventures in it!

Would you be Sami's friend in real life?

Yes, because he's an adventurer and is afraid of nothing.



ANDI WIDMER

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Born in Switzerland 1977. His childhood pleasures include drawing, painting, cycling, whistling, daydreaming and observing the flight of outstanding gliders. Drawing and painting has been largely replaced by photography and he has made cinematography his profession. At the Vienna Film Academy he studied with Christian Berger, Thomas Benesch and Wolfgang Thaler and learned, among other things, that the craft is best learned behind the camera. That's why he shoots as much as he can. He has been the director of photography for several award-winning short films, such as ÜBER WASSER by Jela Hasler which celebrated its world premiere in the Critiques' Week at the Cannes Film Festival in 2021. He has himself been the recipient of cinematography awards for his work, such as BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY FOR STUDENT FILMS - Nomination, IMAGO Int'l Award Belgrade Serbia 2019, BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY Brightside Tavern Film Festival 2019 and BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY 17th Nickel Independent Film Festival Newfoundland Canada 2017.

MIRJAM SKAL

COMPOSER

Mirjam Skal is a film composer based in Zurich, Switzerland. She holds a master's diploma in film scoring from the Zurich University of the Arts and has been working as a freelance composer over the past few years. Her work includes music for many short films, advertisements, documentaries, and music for Swiss national television (SRF). In 2018 she won the "TAURUS Award" for best music in an animated film (THE MARKET OF LOST THINGS) at the Animatou International Film Festival in Geneva. Her most recent work can be heard on TV in the cult crime series TATORT, where she scored two feature-length episodes. In 2021 Mirjam was selected as a sound studio participant in the Berlinale Talents program which was a mind opening experience for her. In the same year Mirjam was chosen to be part of the AWFC Mentorship program under the guidance of the renowned composer Mychael Danna (LIFE OF PI). Following the mentorship, Mychael Danna invited Mirjam to compose additional music for the film WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING.

As a synaesthete, Mirjam's approach to composing is very intuitive. She is fascinated by combining live instruments with electronic soundscapes to create evocative textures. In 2020 she recorded and conducted her orchestral composition ANIMA with the Budapest Art Orchestra. She is also an experienced orchestrator and has been contributing to the music of bands such as ELUVEITIE and ILLUMISHADE.

JAN MÜHLETHALER

EDITOR

Born in 1982, Jan lives and works in the city of Bern, Switzerland. He started his career as a filmmaker in 1998 by creating videos about the skate and snowboard scene. He then went on to study media, art studies and sociology at the University of Basel. From 2006 – 2007 he worked as an editor & motion designer at the renowned agency Die Gestalten in Berlin. In 2008, Jan returned to Bern and began directing documentaries as well as short narrative films. In addition to his own work as a director, Jan Mühlethaler has made his mark in recent years on various nominated and award-winning short films, music videos and commercials in the area of editing/assembly. He has worked primarily for Swiss directors such as Luki Frieden, Jasmin Gordon, Gregor Frei, Roman Droux and Jan Buchholz. Jan Mühlethaler is also constantly active in independent artistic projects and teaches film narration and editing as a guest lecturer at the MAZ in Lucerne.

REKHA MUSALE & IVAN NICLASS

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Born in Geneva in 1962, Ivan Niclass is a Franco-Swiss film set designer. He studied at the École des Arts Décoratifs in Geneva before starting out as a set designer in French-speaking Switzerland in 1984. He has since worked with a number of renowned directors, including Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Ursula Meier, Germinal Roaux and Carmen Jaquier. In 2009, he was nominated for a César for best set design for the film Home by Ursula Meier.

Rekha Musale has been working as a set designer in the Swiss film industry over the past twenty years. She has often teamed up with Ivan Niclass on projects such as FOUDRE by Carmen Jaquier (TIFF, San Sebastian) as well as several films by the award-winning Swiss director Ursula Meier. She herself has worked as a production designer on films such as LAISSEZ-MOI de Maxime Rappaz (ACID Cannes), CURRY WESTERN de Kamal Musale or MON FRÈRE SE MARIE de Jean-Stéphane Bron.



MAXIMAGE PRODUCTION COMPANY

maximage is an independent production company based in Zurich. The company is managed by the producers Brigitte Hofer and Cornelia Seidler. They have been successfully producing documentaries and feature films for the international cinema and television market since 1997. Their collaboration with innovative, curious and visionary writers and directors has resulted in award-winning films, including WET SAND by Elene Naveriani, WHILE THE GREEN GRASS GROWS and GAMBLING, GODS AND LSD by Peter Mettler, ABOVE AND BELOW by Nicolas Steiner, KÖPEK by Esen Isik, HEIMATKLÄNGE by Stefan Schwietert.

FILMOGRAPHY (A SELECTION)

LES COURAGEUX

Writer: Julien Bouissoux, Director: Jasmin Gordon, feature film, 80 min, OV F
Coproduction: RTS, SRG / 2024
World Premiere TIFF 2024

AVANT, IL N'Y AVAIT RIEN

Writer and Director: Yvann Yagchi, cinema documentary, 71 min, OV F, ENG
Coproduction: SRF, RTS, SRG / 2024
Festivals: IFFR, VdR Nyon, CPH Dox, Korea, Signes of the Night Bangkok ao.

BERGFAHRT

Writer and Director: Dominique Margot, cinema documentary, 97 min, OV CH-D, D, F, I
Coproduction: SRF, 3sat / 2024
Festivals: Locarno, Dok Fest Munich, Trento, Tegernsee, Warsaw etc.

WHILE THE GREEN GRASS GROWS

Writer and Director: Peter Mettler, cinema documentary, DCP 166 min, OV ENG
Coproduction: SRF, SRG, Grimthorpe Film / 2023
Visions du Réel 2023: GRAND PRIX, DOK LEIPZIG 2023: GOLDENE TAUBE,
RIDM 2023: Grand Prize National
Festivals: VdR Nyon, Leipzig, RIDM, Porto, CPH DOX, IDFA, Warsaw etc.

WET SAND

Writers: Sandro and Elene Naveriani, Director: Elene Naveriani, feature film, 112 min, OV Georgian
Coproduction Takes Film (GEO), SRF, SRG SSR / 2021
Zürcher Filmpreis 2021: BEST FEATURE, Solothurn Film Festival 2022: PRIX DE SOLEURE,
QUARTZ Swiss Film Award 2022: NOMINATION BEST FEATURE
Festivals: Locarno, San Francisco, Viennale, Santiago, Sarajevo etc.

(IM)MORTELS

Writer and Director: Lila Ribi, cinema documentary, 88 min, OV French, German, English
Coproduction SRG SSR and Migros Kulturprozent / 2021
QUARTZ Swiss Film Award 2022: NOMINATION BESTE MONTAGE,
QUARTZ Swiss Film Award 2022: BESTER DOKUMENTARFILM,
Zürcher Filmpreis 2022: BESTE DOKUMENTARFILM-REGIE,
Solothurn Film Festival 2022: NOMINATION PRIX DE SOLEURE

ARCHITECTURE OF INFINITY

Writer and Director: Christoph Schaub, cinema documentary, DCP, 85 min, OV English, German
Coproduction with SRF / 2018 / Festivals: Locarno, Montréal FIFA, Docaviv, Warsaw, Munich etc.

BECOMING ANIMAL

Writer and Director: Peter Mettler, Emma Davie, cinema documentary, DCP 78 min, OV English
Coproduction with Scottish Documentary Institute (UK), SRF / 2018
Festivals: IDFA, RIDM, Porto, Göteborg, Duisburg etc.

KÖPEK

Writer and Director: Esen Isik, feature film, DCP, 94 min, OV Turkish / 2015
QUARTZ Swiss Film Award 2016: BEST FEATURE FILM

IMAGINE WAKING UP TOMORROW AND ALL MUSIC HAS DISAPPEARED

Writer and Director: Stefan Schwietert, cinema documentary, DCP, 85 min, OV English
Coproduction with Flying Moon (D), SRF, SRG / 2015
QUARTZ Swiss Film Award 2016: NOMINATION BEST DOCUMENTARY
Festivals: IDFA, CPH:DOX, Buenos Aires, Athen, Helsinki, RIDM, etc.

ABOVE AND BELOW

Writer and Director: Nicolas Steiner, DCP, cinema documentary, 120 min, OV English
Coproduction with Flying Moon (D), SRF, 3Sat / 2015
QUARTZ Swiss Film Award 2016: BEST DOCUMENTARY, LOLA German Film Award
Festivals: IFFR, Munich, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Milano etc.





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