

LES FILMS PELLEAS PRÉSENT

ISABELLE HUPPERT

ROMAIN DURIS

JOSÉ GARCIA

Mrs Hyde



a film by

SERGE BOZON

mk2
films



Locarno Festival
Concorso internazionale

Mrs Hyde

a film by
SERGE BOZON

SYNOPSIS

Mrs. G  quil is a shy teacher despised by her colleagues and students. On a stormy night, while conducting an experiment in her lab, she is struck by lightning and faints. When she wakes up, she feels decidedly different... and the appearance of the dangerous Mrs. Hyde soon impacts on Mrs. G  quil's teaching methods.

2017 / FRANCE / COLOUR / 1.66 / 5.1 / 95' / FRENCH

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

THE MEANING OF THE FILM



This is a film about school or, more precisely, about the difficulty inherent in the transmission of learning. Indeed, Madame Géquil's tardy educational success will "burn her wings" (and the rest). Only by becoming another woman will she be able to pass something on to her students at last. Except that this other woman won't stop there! Her newfound authority is merely one stage in a headlong movement that is beyond Madame Géquil's control. In short, the transformation that has allowed her to realize herself finally as a teacher will turn out to be very dangerous. No metamorphosis is entirely harmless: who can say how far the internal changes that allow us to find success at last really go? I am not of course claiming that the murder of teenagers is the price to pay for educational success! Stevenson's story allows me to deal with school today, its difficulties and its hopes. Moreover, it allows me to tackle the

question referred to above ("who can say how far the internal changes that allow us to find success at last really go?") within the framework of a story that, I hope, is funny, unsettling and dynamic.

One important point about the high school scenes: most of the comical or apparently "wacky" scenes in the screenplay, like the two supervised educational projects or the minute of silence requested by the principal following the death of a student are strictly factual. Teachers working in the Paris suburbs related these anecdotes to me. Indeed, I devise the screenplay in close collaboration with teachers. They told me stories and I regularly attended classes. Finally, I also used my own experience, having taught three years in high schools in the Paris suburbs.

SERGE BOZON





INTERVIEW WITH SERGE BOZON

What kind of adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel is this film?

A very free one. All that remains is the idea of the transformation of a character obsessed with science. But this transformation does not result in a film of the fantasy genre. Like all the rest, the transformation serves the subject, mainly the issue of school and more precisely the teaching of science: how do you become a good teacher (of science)? If you're a bad teacher, it necessarily requires a transformation! And so that is where Stevenson steps in. The accident in the laboratory will be the catalyst for that metamorphosis. However, we never know how far a transformation goes. We cannot always control what changes us from the inside. Perhaps what has made her a good teacher will also provoke something else. Perhaps even what saved her (pedagogically) will destroy her (intimately).

How did you build up the character of Madame Géquil with Isabelle Huppert?

It was more her path than the character. I don't talk to the actors for hours. Things happen instinctively at the moment of shooting. I was just excited by the idea of getting her to play the opposite of her usual roles, namely a self-effacing, fearful and humiliated character who is

gradually going to blossom before toppling into something that goes beyond her.

Despite herself, Madame Géquil turns into the dangerous Madame Hyde. Is this the dark side of Madame Géquil or another person altogether? What are the consequences of Madame Hyde's apparition on Madame Géquil?

For me, Madame Géquil does not have a dark side. Madame Hyde is not the hidden demon within her, woken by the accident. We are a long way from the novel and any idea of «the return of the repressed». Madame Hyde is no more sexually obsessed, demonic or heathen... than Madame Géquil. Just like Madame Géquil, she is obsessed with one student, Malik, a bad student. Not just a bad student, but a handicapped one. He is a lame duck for the other students, just as she is a lame duck for the other teachers. So Madame Géquil takes care of him by day, at school, and Madame Hyde takes care of him by night, in the housing projects. After the night-time shadowing, a day-time change takes place: by turning the bad student into a good one during a private mathematics demonstration, the bad teacher is going to become a good teacher. Therefore, the two transformations go hand in hand. The story of Madame Géquil/Hyde is the

story of her relationship with Malik. And the other nights are the same. She seems to want to protect him. She does not attack deliberately. Even when she kills, she does it for him, to allow him to keep the «key to knowledge» that she has entrusted him with. Except at the end of the film, where the obsession begins to veer off into something else and makes her lose her footing: *«Let the burning quest for knowledge return to the flames that it arose from»* (Gustav Meyrink).

The film deals notably with the difficulty of teaching. What do you want to say about the transmission of knowledge through this film? Do you see teachers as heroes?

No, I don't see teachers as heroes. As in any other profession, you find all kinds in teaching. Like most people, I just think that it is important to learn and that it is very difficult to teach. Truffaut's *The Wild Child* tackled this difficulty head-on, but from the beginning: learning to speak, read and write. I also tackle it head-on, but much later. Malik can speak, read and write, he just has to learn to think, in other words to argue. He lacks logic. When is it possible to put a «therefore» between two sentences? That is what she is going to teach him.

From a more personal point of view, my greatest aesthetic emotions came on discovering proofs (in mathematics): they are irrefutable, crystal-clear and eternal. I hope the film suggests the inherent beauty in this knowledge that is, however, of the strictest and most abstract nature. From that angle, this is my most autobiographical film.

The film has a very strong visual and graphic aesthetic. What were your intentions where the photography was concerned (choice of film, aspect ratio, visual rendering of the special effects)?

I don't know how to say this in just a few words. I wanted a simple, economical and sensual form of direction. Let's start perhaps with the light.

That of *Tip Top* was simple and economical but not sensual - on the contrary, it was flashy and white. That of *La France* was neither economical nor simple, but pictorial and sumptuous. Here, we are between the two. It's the same with the shot breakdown: *Tip Top* was continually frontal and arid. Here, there are sinuous and discreetly complex camera movements, which (I hope) remain organic and so are not too showy.

Each time, the general decisions are the same: no digital camera, no handheld camera, no excessive shot breakdown... The goal is to find the integrity inherent in each shot. The difference lies in choices that are not general and that go hand in hand with the sets, costumes, etc. With everything that contributes to the diverse, formal and concrete matter of the shots. So it is difficult to talk about this without going into the details of directing.

In short, the 35mm stock and the work of the Director of Photography (Céline Bozon) bring a softness to the image, a richness to the colours, a flood of light to the classroom scenes, and a secret stylization to the night scenes that, along with the shot breakdown, head in the same direction. That of a form of helpless sincerity.

How did you choose your actors? The main role seems to have been written for Isabelle Huppert. We find Romain Duris in the role of a «visionary» and slightly comical high school principal and José Garcia plays more against type as a model househusband.

Yes, it was written for her. That goes without saying. With the years, Romain Duris has an increasing potential for stylization that excites me a great deal. He has a comic lightness that I feel has not been exploited yet. He is an effortless virtuoso who is not afraid of ridicule and knows how to find passionate sincerity in even the most outlandish situations.

José Garcia brings a deeply everyday humility and tenderness to his character of a devoted and increasingly concerned househusband. He gives, for instance, some very moving looks.





SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

SERGE BOZON

2017

MRS. HYDE

Locarno Official Selection

2012

TIP TOP

Cannes Directors' Fortnight
SACD Prize, Special Mention

2007

LA FRANCE

Cannes Directors' Fortnight
Prix Jean Vigo

2002

MODS

Short, Locarno Official Selection,
Cannes ACID Official Selection

1998

L'AMITIÉ

Cannes ACID Official Selection



CAST

MRS. GÉQUIL / MRS. HYDE

ISABELLE HUPPERT

THE HEAD TEACHER

ROMAIN DURIS

MR. GÉQUIL

JOSÉ GARCIA

MALIK

ADDA SENANI

THE INTERN

GUILLAUME VERDIER

THE NEIGHBOUR

PATRICIA BARZYK

THE INSPECTOR

PIERRE LÉON

MALIK'S FATHER

JAMEL BARBOUCHE



CREW

SCREENPLAY

AXELLE ROPERT AND SERGE BOZON

FREELY ADAPTED FROM

STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE
WRITTEN BY R. L. STEVENSON

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

CÉLINE BOZON – A.F.C.

SOUND ENGINEER AND MIXER

LAURENT GABIOT

EDITING

FRANÇOIS QUIQUERÉ

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

JULIE GOUET

ORIGINAL SCORE

BENJAMIN ESDRAFFO

SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

MATHILDE PROFIT

PRODUCTION MANAGER

NICOLAS LECLÈRE

COSTUMES DESIGNER

DELPHINE CAPOSSOLA

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

LAURIE COLSON

CASTING

STÉPHANE BATUT, MOHAMED BELHAMAR
EMMANUEL THOMAS

SOUND EDITOR

RENAUD GUILLAUMIN AND VALÈNE LEROY

PRODUCTION

DAVID THION AND PHILIPPE MARTIN

COPRODUCTION

JEAN-YVES ROUBIN AND CASSANDRE WARNAUTS

A FRENCH-BELGIAN COPRODUCTION

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