

MK2 FILMS PRESENTS



Donostia Zinemaldia
Festival de San Sebastián
OFFICIAL SELECTION
OUT OF COMPETITION

IN-I IN MOTION

A FILM BY
JULIETTE BINOCHÉ

2025 – FRANCE – 2K – ENGLISH, FRENCH – 156'

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FILMS

SYNOPSIS

In 2007, French actress Juliette Binoche and British dancer-choreographer Akram Khan stepped away from their established careers to embark on a bold artistic experiment. Over six months, they co-created *In-I*, an intense, boundary-pushing performance they would go on to stage 100 times around the world.

Today, Juliette Binoche returns to that intimate journey. From the first spark of inspiration to the final applause, she retraces the emotional and creative arc of a singular collaboration. Drawing on dozens of hours of previously unseen footage, she reflects, as a filmmaker, on the nature of artistic creation, the vulnerability and exhilaration of taking risks, and the personal transformation they demand.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The performance *In-I* was created through improvisation, allowing us to explore the links between acting and movement. We began with no pre-established idea or subject that particularly mattered to us. Akram knew he would not be able to choreograph in his usual way, as I wanted to discover a movement that belonged to me. Likewise, I could not perform a pre-written script to dedicate myself to the art of acting. Our artistic capacities would have to adapt to each other.

If Akram took care of my body by relinquishing his own—knowing I could not match his speed, endurance, or breath—it also meant that, in terms of acting, I had to be patient with him, allowing him the time to find and reconnect with his internal bearings.

How could I, an actress, find the strength and courage without a dancer's body? How to reach a second wind after ten minutes of frantic movement? How to integrate physical memory when everything seemed so vague? How to commit to a performance that left me breathless, believing I could make it through to the end without collapsing or injuring my foot or knee? I had ideas in my mind, visions, sensations—but I didn't know how to bring them to life...

And how could a dancer like Akram expose himself emotionally in romantic scenes with a French actress, when his upbringing and faith forbade it? What would his Muslim community think? How could he place his trust in me—and in himself—to break through those blocks? How could Akram open his heart on stage and return to his hotel room with peace of mind?

On the surface, everything between Akram and me seemed to set us apart. Different skin colour, different religions, different artistic worlds, vastly different upbringings—he, from a close-knit family, and I, from a family of divorce. And of course, the dancer is known to work from the body first, while the actor begins from an inner life before expressing a sound.

Throughout this encounter, we experienced seduction, fear, surprise, questions and disappointment. The honeymoon phase disappeared quickly—Akram was wary of me, and I was wary of him. He sensed the danger of the "white supremacy" I might represent; I feared the "male supremacy" he embodied. Being an actress, did he think my creative potential was lesser than his? So many assumptions clashed between our two worlds. We were confronting our own limits, our inner walls. How would they come down? And for how long could we persevere? How many hours of sweat, improvisation, emotions—failed, shouted, silenced, spoken—did it take before we dared to step beyond our defences?

The wall that **Anish Kapoor** (set designer for *In-I*) created symbolized both what separated and what connected us. We each had walls to examine, to pass through, to transform.

Fortunately, we had help. The risk of becoming trapped within ourselves was very real. At times, I would retreat into silence, waiting for my partner to exhaust himself, too afraid to let everything explode. And he, at moments frustrated—perhaps fearing I might take up too much space through my notoriety, the texts I wrote, my ideas—tried to create the performance while avoiding me.

(...)

(...)

Two individuals were instrumental in our creative process: Susan Batson and Su-Man Hsu.

Susan, a renowned African American acting coach in international cinema, was someone I invited at the very beginning of our rehearsals. I hoped she could help us find common ground, and I wanted to support Akram's wish to experience acting as fully and swiftly as possible.

Working with Susan exceeded all expectations. Thanks to her, I came to understand that a way forward existed by beginning with a connection to the *sensation*—a familiar realm for actors, and something she recognised as a pivotal anchor in our shared creation. This *sensation* allowed me to discover movement from within. It freed me from the notion of *dancing*. I no longer needed to search externally to find movement. I could not catch up on the 35 years of dance I had not lived. And Akram could channel his movement through his own story—his sensations, his roots, his childhood. Thanks to this idea of “sensation”, he was able to move closer to the craft of acting, to his emotions, to feeling.

Su-Man Hsu (my trainer) was our rehearsal director, but above all, our compass. She knew when to sound the alarm when time was pressing, when improvisation had to transform into concrete scenes. I tended to want to improvise endlessly, always hoping to uncover something new, though I often repeated myself. In the documentary, Su-Man appears—often behind the camera—sometimes demonstrating a movement to me, other times encouraging us. Her presence was consistently joyful; she brought a lightness that did us good.

Watching the rehearsal footage again sixteen years later, I was struck by the intensity of the work, by the fire of our desire to push forward, not to be afraid—but also by the humour that shines through. The film gives insight into the structure of the performance, the essential and inescapable foundations of our worlds—so different—that required us to change, to adapt to one another's capacities. We were surprised to find that sometimes my desire for movement was stronger than Akram's, and his desire to act surpassed mine.

In the film, I want to show moments where Akram teaches me movement, rhythm, connection to the earth—and other moments where I help him deliver his lines, sustain the length of a monologue, and carry the intensity of an emotion through to the end. We had to ensure the balance of our exchange. I allowed myself to propose movements when they came to me—he welcomed my imagination.

The chronological structure feels most natural for this film, as we live through the evolution of the show. Gradually, links between the scenes emerge, Akram's ability to access the actor's inner world deepens, and my physical transformation—muscle, breath, speed—takes shape, despite the exhaustion.

As the date of the show approached, the tension of the final weeks allowed us to completely forget the camera. The performance became everything. Our faces grew more transparent, the dark circles deeper, stress mixed with excitement. As the performance loomed, my solo was still not ready. I was frustrated that Akram had not made enough time earlier to help me realise this dream. We tried to work on it at the last minute, but I couldn't absorb it—my memory was failing. Last-minute changes to the movement left me confused. Despite our efforts, my disappointment grew.

The ending was unconvincing. The costumes veered off into a completely absurd direction. The technical system that was supposed to pin us against the wall didn't work. The wall moving towards the audience didn't retract fast enough. Panic set in. How to keep your cool when everything crumbles beneath your feet after six months of rehearsal? How to focus on the essence of what must be?

(...)

(...)

IN-I IN MOTION aims to bring the audience into the heart of creation. It invites the artist within each viewer to sharpen their edge. To experience what we went through—without smoothing the conflicts, wiping away the sweat, or softening the faces. The balance lies in the exchanges, the laughter, the frustrations—the whole evolution from the final steps in the rehearsal room to the first steps on stage, where a new set of challenges arise.

As Akram and I gain in camaraderie and strength over these six months, a quiet solitude begins to appear—a fragility that reveals the absurdity of such relentless drive, and the struggle of a desire fighting to be born.

This longing to create with Akram forced me to adapt to his vision, his desires, his limits, his capacities. I had to stretch, invent, create within myself a tolerance I never knew I had. This co-creation became a face-to-face encounter in the *In-I*, made possible by the strength of this other artist, Akram.

Juliette Binoche

JULIETTE BINOCHÉ

BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

Juliette Binoche was born in Paris. She loves travelling like someone who might have come from the four corners of the earth. In her blood run Polish, Brazilian and Flemish platelets. As a child, she loved making things, crafting, tinkering even. She brought her hands together, believed in the happiness of living, in saving snails, in warming up cold dolls. And then, to play was to escape. Escape from the loneliness of boarding schools, from recurring nightmares, creating moments of joy in playgrounds, in the pitch-black night of dormitories. At the age of four, she preferred whispering games to sleep. Her fragmented family brought her closer to angels. High up in the sky, like Dumbo, she no doubt chose her father and mother, who bathed in the world of the arts. With them, she lived at the heart of creative love. Her father's theatrical tours awakened in her the desire for itinerant sharing.

As a teenager, her cheeks aflame, Juliette had a band of friends with whom she performed theatre in the countryside with her mother: Jean-Philippe, Francine, Florence and Isabelle. But life meant she had to leave behind the valleys of Loir-et-Cher, the fruit trees, and the long evenings under immense sunsets. The nostalgia of that countryside, with its nourishing quality, became a touchstone throughout her life. Moving to Paris, baccalauréat in hand, she began theatre classes with Jean-Pierre Martino at 17 and Véra Gregh at 18. They helped her break down her will, to make room for silence, for another kind of openness. Casting after casting, hoping to fulfil her dream of becoming an actress, she was chosen to play her first major role in *Rendez-vous* by André Téchiné — a provocative, solitary film. The Cannes Festival became the palace of her public consecration, where the spiral of her life took flight.

Her instinctive path through global creation has given Juliette Binoche a singular aura among filmmakers of a borderless constellation: Michael Haneke (Austria), David Cronenberg and Abel Ferrara (United States), Olivier Assayas, Leos Carax and Claire Denis (France), Amos Gitai (Israel), Naomi Kawase and Hirokazu Kore-eda (Japan), Krzysztof Kieślowski (Poland), Hou Hsiao-hsien (Taiwan), Trần Anh Hùng (Vietnam), Abbas Kiarostami (Iran)...

Crowned with the most prestigious awards (Academy Awards, BAFTA, César, Best Actress prizes at Cannes, Berlin and Venice...), Juliette Binoche does not, however, seek virtuosity. She prefers a mysterious link between her inner world and the desire to give of herself, perhaps encouraged, as Louis Malle noted after *Damage*, by “the love affair between her and the camera, a presence and an intensity

that are staggering.” The great range of her performances in Bruno Dumont’s films — from austerity (*Camille Claudel, 1915*) to burlesque (*Slack Bay*) — illustrates her taste for freedom and her courage in constantly questioning herself in the fire of her performances. She seemed destined for an uncompromising auteur cinema when Jean-Luc Godard spotted her in 1984 for *Hail Mary*, but Juliette Binoche was unafraid to venture elsewhere: *Godzilla* by Gareth Edwards or *Ghost in the Shell* by Rupert Sanders, which she says she chose as a wink to her children.

The success of Anthony Minghella’s nine-Oscar-winning *The English Patient*, along with Philip Kaufman’s *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and Lasse Hallström’s *Chocolat*, established Juliette Binoche as a truly international actress, recognised worldwide. Yet her need for renewal in her creations always drives her further towards freedom. Her shifts and turns make her elusive. She takes her destiny into her own hands in cinema as well as theatre (Andrei Konchalovsky, Ivo Van Hove, Wajdi Mouawad), devotes herself to music (*It’s Worth Living* with Alexandre Tharaud), to poetry as to painting (*Portraits In-Eyes*, published by Place des Victoires), to dance (*In-I* with Akram Khan) and, most recently, to directing her first documentary film *In-I In Motion* (2025).

CAST & CREW

CAST

Juliette Binoche Actress

Akram Kahn Dancer

CREW

A film by Juliette Binoche

Cinematography Marion Stalens

Production Sébastien de Fonseca

Music Philip Sheppard

Editing Sophie Brunet, Sophie Mandonnet

Sound Mix Éric Tisserand

Sound Editor Arnaud Rolland, Emmanuel Angrand

Colour-grading Yov Moor, Elie Akoka

Post Production Eugénie Deplus, Thomas Jaubert

Production MIAO PRODUCTIONS

In coproduction with YGGDRASIL
Ola Strøm

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Solène Léger

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