

LES FILMS PELLÉAS

PRESENTS



FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
2024 OFFICIAL SELECTION  
COMPETITION

# MARCELLO MIO

A FILM BY CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

2024 – FRANCE – COMEDY – FRENCH – 121'

**mk2**  
FILMS

## SYNOPSIS

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This is the story of a woman named Chiara.

She is an actress, the daughter of Marcello Mastroianni and Catherine Deneuve. During a summer that sees her reality fall into disarray, Chiara decides to live as her father.

She dresses like him. She speaks like him. She breathes like him. Chiara's impersonation is so convincing that people around her begin to believe. They call her "Marcello."

# INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

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## **Do you remember the first time you saw Marcello Mastroianni in a film?**

In Rennes, when I was a student, as part of a Fellini retrospective. Probably in *Eight and a Half*, or *La Dolce Vita*. I tend to mix the two. But I didn't go because of Mastroianni. At the time, my cinephilia didn't involve admiration, or even adulation of actors and actresses, with posters on my bedroom walls, etc. It was more to do with authors, in the great French critic tradition, in particular that of *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*. So yes, Mastroianni, irresistible man, great actor, mythical figure of the cinema of the 60's and 70's, but it was Fellini - of whom Mastroianni is evidently the double - who interested me most in these two films. This changed when I myself became a filmmaker. But even for my first feature film, *17 Times Cecile Cassard*, I hadn't thought of the question of actors at all. It was Béatrice Dalle who revolutionised all of that, like a formidable godmother. During *Cecile Cassard's* first scene, after the famous "action", well, Béatrice didn't move, didn't utter a word. I walked up to her, slightly taken aback, she simply said, "I'll do what you want me to do." Thanks to her, I understood that my desire for making films would go through a desire for actors, and my desire to direct them. I can't write into the void, meaning without having in mind actors and actresses, their gestures, faces, voices, their bodies.

## **So your view of Marcello Mastroianni changed?**

I understood why he was so huge and intense, not only in Fellini's films. Mastroianni is one of those actors who never claims to know what he's playing. Therefore, with him, volatile and ephemeral, all the incarnations, the eventualities and changes of identity are possible.

## **From this point of view, *Marcello Mio* is not only a tribute to Marcello Mastroianni but to actresses and actors in general?**

The initial idea was to tell the story of the daily lives of actors when they are not working on a film. This "downtime" does occupy 95% of their life. But an actor doesn't stop being one when he is not on a film set. It is a peculiar relationship with the world. Allowing themselves to be filmed is not without consequences for them once the camera is no longer looking at them. I wanted to portray my favourite actress in France, Chiara Mastroianni, during the ordinary moments of relative passivity when she isn't filming, her daily life, in a familiar pace. Moreover, Chiara is a singular actress because no one can help thinking that her private life and her cinema life blend into one other. Because her parents, as everyone knows, are two world famous actors.

## **So it's a family affair?**

Yes, but caught up in a very particular story, since the familial treasure and her memory are a kind of common good, a public treasure for many, built and imagined by all the films we have seen with Catherine Deneuve, Marcello Mastroianni and Chiara. But *Marcello Mio* is not a biopic with all the attendant dangers of indiscretion or obscenity.

I reconstructed this family story from a fictional point of view, through echoes and analogy, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. The first time Catherine Deneuve read the script, she who is the best guardian of her private life, told me she was surprised by certain details, true but little known. "How did you know that? Did Chiara tell you?". In fact not at all,

I knew it because I had dreamed about it. All the questions I asked Chiara were pragmatic, beyond any psychology: Did you have a dog? What was its name? What kind of music did you listen to with your mum? Where did you go on holiday? Etc...

**From the very first shots of the film, the people, some of whom are very famous, become the characters?**

Quite simply if I may say so, by the power of the fictional setting and the imaginations it ignites. And this from one of the first scenes, where I had fun pastiching one of the most famous shots of world cinema history: Anita Ekeberg bathing in the Treviso fountain in Rome in *La Dolce Vita*. I wanted to wash out the icon, lovingly scratch the monument, graffiti it with benevolent humour, adding my love tag.

**So Chiara Mastroianni plays Chiara Mastroianni, Catherine Deneuve plays Catherine Deneuve, and so on, from Melvil Poupaud to Benjamin Biolay?**

Yes, but they're actually acting! That is to say they succeed this tour de force, to my eyes prodigious, to be there while being elsewhere, in those moments consubstantial with their profession when they are absent from everything, loves, friends, to join this literally magical and parallel world of cinema where what is false becomes real, and where real leads to false.

**Which ties in with the main subject matter of the film...**

It is indeed the story of someone who dreams of being someone else. It turns out that this is Chiara's dream of being Marcello, who is also her dream father. For a long time she has been reduced to her filiation, with all the violence, and sometimes malevolence, this entails. Daughter of, son of....It is a somewhat mortifying reduction that we've all experienced to a greater or lesser extent, famous parents or not. Marcello Mio honours and does justice to Chiara. She is certainly and completely Chiara, a Chiara who no longer automatically rhymes with Papa Mastroianni or Maman Deneuve.

**Catherine Deneuve, tell us about her...**

This is my second film with Catherine, after *Beloved* in 2011. But I felt from the beginning of shooting this film, that it was like a first film as a whole. She is fully committed, more of a seeker than you'd think, not at all jaded or weary, always in the moment of what she is playing, very real and practical. She had a lot of fun playing herself, and it shows. Even though I was worried that she would refuse, given the subject matter. I can still hear her saying: "Yes, okay, but we're not going to make a big deal out of it either..." 100 % Deneuve! She embodies one of the film's resolutions when she sings an original tune composed by Alex Beaupain. A pure moment of cinema, which wanders between sorrow and doubt. All is said, but in song. Catherine Deneuve is like the chorus of Marcello Mio.

**In this circle of the family's friends several figures appear foreign: Fabrice Luchini, Nicole Garcia, Hugh Skinner...**

I'd prefer to say they are strange bodies that disrupt the geometry of the family. Fabrice Luchini was not yet part of my personal pantheon. To me he is Rohmer's man, the genius friend of *Full Moon in Paris*. And that's when, in his own role as well, more playful and ludion than ever, he exacerbates his creativity and so to speak let it run amok. He is an actor-musician

who practises his score every day, even if it means throwing it in the bin the day of filming and improvise. The same goes with Nicole Garcia who is obviously appropriate when I film her in the exercise of her profession as a director. But being also an actress, Nicole develops a self-deprecating sense of humour that makes her extremely likeable, particularly when she has to show authority. As for Hugh Skinner who I had spotted in Anglo-Saxon series, notably *Fleabag*, he is the only one who doesn't play his own role but that of Colin, a British soldier stationed in Paris. A foreigner he is, because of his language, his uniform, but also because of his body, as if grafted onto the main body of the film. A successful heart transplant, since he is Chiara's ideal and impossible love. A ghost of love, perhaps a fantasy, nocturnal and a night owl.

### **As usual in your films the other side of the world is dark?**

How do we live with death, absences, ghosts, our loved ones, the memories of our childhood that, good or bad, are not necessarily true? The "family romance", more or less imaginary. Of course my film is about all of this, a leopard can't change its spots! But Marcello Mio is neither morbid nor funereal. It's not a memorial, a tombstone, or a nostalgic chromo. Solemnity frightens me. I see the film more as a huge spiritualists' séance, where the table spins faster and faster, making you go crazy. Marcello, is that you? Yes, but like a loony spirit, rather than a poltergeist, encouraging the giggles. From one day to the next, Chiara decides to pretend to be her father, even starts dressing like him, black suit, hat, short hair, thin moustache. But beware, this is not cross-dressing, she's not clowning around. The illusion doesn't have to be perfect, even if unsettling. It is also the story of an actress who wonders if a career as a male actor is possible. We meet a beautiful woman, Chiara, who gradually reveals herself to be a handsome young man, like a Proust silhouette, more Marcel than Marcello. It is a playful shaggy-dog story that juggles with identities. Trouble with the genre, to say the least!

### **In fact the more the story progresses, the more it reaches the tone of an Italian comedy?**

Especially since this is the real main film's subject: how do you turn your life into a comedy? The trip to Rome and the stay in the seaside resort on the Riviera stimulated me much and inspired the actors a joyful desire to have fun. Notably during a scene in a TV reality show, a genre where Italian TV excels. The show is called *Da noi...a ruota libera* (Freewheeling...with us) and of course everything is tricks, false pretences, lies, staging, starting with a minefield of unintentional jokes, for the most part hilarious. The *mise en abyme* effect will be even more powerful for the Italian viewers because the show's presenter is played by the fabulous Francesca Fialdini, a star of RAI television who is not without humour.

Italy is also the moment when the film branches off, takes side roads, without getting lost. Alternative routes where we cross paths with chance, mystery. Fictions within fiction. For me, a film is a living organism and therefore mutant, where the actors drive the scenes and not the opposite.

### **Why did you want a bathing scene with most of the actors? An almost childish way to take the plunge? Let's go! everybody gets in, and what's more, with clothes on, and basta così?**

It is a rejuvenating experience and a rebirth. For the characters, for the actors, for the people, for the story. A bath in which I also dive in with delight. Marcello Mio is a fantasy, a film with juvenile maturity.

## ABOUT CHRISTOPHE HONORÉ

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Christophe Honoré was born in Brittany and moved to Paris in 1994 where his first novel *Tout contre Léon* was published. He wrote about thirty children's books, published by L'École des Loisirs, won the Baobab Prize at the Montreuil Book Fair in 2011 for *La Règle du Cache-Cache*, published by Actes Sud Junior, in collaboration with illustrator Gwen Le Gac.

He has also written novels published by Editions de l'Olivier, including *L'infamille* (1997), *La Douceur* (1999), *Scarborough* (2002) and *Le Livre pour enfants* (2005). *Ton Père* (2018) was published by Editions du Mercure de France. He co-wrote several screenplays, with Jean-Pierre Limosin (*Novo*, 2003), Gaël Morel (*Three Dancing Slaves*, 2004, *After Him*, 2007), Diastème (*Sunny Spells*, 2008), Mickaël Buch (*Let my People Go*, 2011), Louis Garrel (*Two Friends* 2014).

He made his directorial debut in 2002, with *Seventeen Times Cécile Cassard*, followed by *Ma Mère* (2004), *Dans Paris* (2006) *Love Songs* (2007) in competition at Cannes Film Festival. He adapted *The Princess of Cleves* for *The Beautiful Person* (2008), followed by *Making plans for Lena* (2009), *Man at Bath* (2010) *Beloved* (2011) *Metamorphoses* (2014) *Sophie's Misfortunes* (2016) *Sorry Angel* (2018) in Competition at Cannes Film Festival and winner of Prix Louis Delluc. Chiara Mastroianni won Un Certain Regard Best Actress award for *On a Magical Night* in 2019. In 2020 he directed *Guermantes* with the Comédie-Française troupe and released *Winter Boy* in 2022.

For the stage, he has directed his own plays: *Les Débutantes* (1998) *Beautiful Guys* (2004)

*Dyonisos Impuissant* (Avignon Festival 2005) *Nouveau Roman* (Avignon Festival 2012) *Fin de l'Histoire* (2015), and adapted *Angelo, Tyrant of Padua* by Victor Hugo (Avignon Festival 2009). In the fall of 2018 he created *Les Idoles*, which won the Critics' Award. In 2020 he directed *Le Côté de Guermantes* by Proust for the Comédie Française. In 2021 he created a new play at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, *Le Ciel de Nantes*, which won the Critics' Award for Best Play.

In October 2013, he directed his first opera, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* by Francis Poulenc, for the Lyon Opéra. Then, *Péléas et Mélisande* by Debussy (Lyon 2014), *Cosy Fan Tutte* by Mozart, which premiered at Aix-en-Provence Festival in 2016, and *Don Carlos* by Verdi (Lyon 2018). Then *Tosca* which premiered at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in July 2019. In 2022 he created *Les Troyens* for the Munich Opera.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2022**      **Winter Boy** San Sebastián Film Festival
- 2021**      **Germantes**
- 2019**      **On a Magical Night** Cannes Film Festival - Un Certain Regard
- 2018**      **Sorry Angel** Cannes Film Festival - Official Competition
- 2016**      **Sophie's Misfortunes**
- 2024**      **Métamorphoses** Venice Film Festival - Giornate degli Autori
- 2011**      **Beloved** Cannes Film Festival – Out of Competition
- 2010**      **Man at Bath** Locarno Film Festival
- 2009**      **Making Plans for Lena**
- 2008**      **The Beautiful Person** San Sebastián Film Festival
- 2007**      **Love Songs** Cannes Film Festival - Official Competition
- 2006**      **Dans Paris** Cannes Film Festival – Director's Fortnight
- 2004**      **Ma Mère** Toronto Film Festival
- 2002**      **Seventeen Times Cécile Cassard**  
Un Certain Regard Award – Cannes Film Festival

## CAST

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Chiara Chiara Mastroianni

Catherine Catherine Deneuve

Fabrice Fabrice Luchini

Nicole Nicole Garcia

Benjamin Benjamin Biolay

Melvil Melvil Poupaud

Colin Hugh Skinner

And with the participation of Stefania Sandrelli



# CREW

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Written and directed by	Christophe Honoré
Producer	Philippe Marti
Associated Producer	David Thion
Coproducer	Angelo Barbagallo, Andrea Occhipinti and Stefano Massenzi
Image	Rémy Chevrin – AFC
Sound	Guillaume Le Braz
Sets	Jérémy Streliski
Costumes	Pascaline Chavanne
Director's 1st Assistant	Julie Gouet
Continuity	Léolo Victor-Pujebet
Production Director	Clotilde Martin
Production Manager	Laurent Weitmann
Editing	Chantal Hymans
Sound Editing	Valérie de Loof et Victor Fleurant
Mixing	Thomas Gauder
Original Song	Alex Beaupain
Production	Les Films Pelléas
A Franco-Italian Production	Bibi Film, Lucky Red, France 2 Cinéma, Super 8 production LDRP II, TSF
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In partnership with	Cofinova 20, Indefilms 12, La Banque Postale Image 17, Entourage Sofica 2, Palatine Etoile 21
With the participation of	La Région Lazio Avviso pubblico Attrazione produzioni cinematografiche (PR FESR Lazio 2021-2027) – Projet cofinancé par l'Union Européenne
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