

THE VOICE OF LOVE

VRIJ GEÏNSPIREERD OP HET LEVEN VAN CÉLINE DION

EEN FILM VAN VALÉRIE LEMERCIER



Drama - 2020 - Canada - 123 minuten

Releasedatum: 26 november 2020

Meer over de film: [Cineart.nl/films/thevoiceoflove](https://www.cineart.nl/films/thevoiceoflove)

Persmaterialen: [Cineart.nl/pers/thevoiceoflove](https://www.cineart.nl/pers/thevoiceoflove)

Distributie:

Cinéart Nederland
Herengracht 328-III
1016 CE Amsterdam
T: +31 20 530 88 48

Contact:

Julia van Berlo
T: +31 20 5308840
M: +31 6 83785238
julia@cineart.nl

SYNOPSIS

THE VOICE OF LOVE is een speelfilm vrij geïnspireerd op het leven van Céline Dion: regisseur en actrice Valérie Lemerrier maakte een ode aan het leven en de liefde van de Canadese superster. De film laat met humor en warmte zien hoe het meisje uit Quebec, via het Eurovisie Songfestival, Titanic, Las Vegas en die ene grote liefde, uitgroeit tot de één van de grootste sterren ter wereld.

Aline is het veertiende kind in het gezin Dieu. Als haar ouders ontdekken dat de jonge Aline een gouden stem heeft, zet de hele familie zich in om haar talent aan de wereld te laten horen. Maar hoe komt een eenvoudig plattelandsmeisje uit Franstalig Canada verder? Een afspraak met producent Guy-Claude blijkt wat ze beiden nodig hebben. Samen kunnen ze met moed, geduld en liefde de wereld aan. Van lokale TV shows tot mega hits en van onzekere jonge vrouw tot stijlicoon.

Lemerrier brengt de zangeres op indrukwekkende wijze tot leven. Dompel je twee uur onder in de legendarische muziek en een inspirerend bestaan.



VALÉRIE LEMERCIER

Writer, director

FILMOGRAPHY (as director)

2020 THE VOICE OF LOVE
2017 MARIE-FRANCINE
2013 THE ULTIMATE ACCESSORY
2005 PALAIS ROYAL!
1999 LE DERRIÈRE
1997 QUADRILLE



INTERVIEW WITH VALÉRIE LEMERCIER

FIRST OF ALL, WHAT WAS THE SOURCE OF YOUR FASCINATION WITH CÉLINE DION?

I still haven't figured it out. I often listened to her songs, especially the ones composed by Jean-Jacques Goldman. I didn't know much about her life or the rest of her repertoire. And in December 2016, when I saw her, like millions of other people, take her first steps without René, I very much identified with her. I was moved by her courage. Her solitude. When MARIE-FRANCINE came out I said on the radio that she was going to be my next subject. I wasn't really being serious, but that very evening Emmanuelle Duplay (our production designer) was listening and told me that she absolutely wanted to work on it. I remember exactly how it was her enthusiasm that encouraged me to go on to something else and seriously consider doing it. Above and beyond her talent, Céline's honesty fascinates me: she reads an open book, as she herself puts it. She treats audiences like family. When I saw her in concert at Bercy, I was able to gauge the fervor around her, and how nice her fans are. I felt right at home.

IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL CLOSE TO HER?

Although to a lesser extent of course - I have spent a large part of my life on stage, in theaters, tents, dressing rooms ... I've known long tours, meals swallowed in front of a mirror, the need to fill a room, having your voice every night and a body that will not let you down. I have felt an audience's warmth, and the solitude that comes after the show. I was born into a family of farmers. Each of my grandmothers had nine children. There were 150 of us at my grandparents' table on New Year's Day. My father made us review their names before leaving home. Like the Dion family, each of us had to climb on a chair to recite something, sing or play an instrument... I wish I could like her convert problems into something positive. She opens herself up, she speaks about herself and her life, she shares all her joy and sadness with the audience. I was never able to do that.

DID YOU DO A LOT OF RESEARCH?

I watched, read, listened day and night for months to a lot of things about her and her husband, and eventually about her family, and especially the trio that became my new friends. I wanted to communicate her family's strength, the grounding that always helped her keep her feet on the ground. I also fell in love with Québec, with the Québécois, and their love of singing. My childhood was accompanied by Félix Leclerc, and thanks to Céline I discovered many other gems that you will hear in the film. Besides, at the end of our recording of her family's songfests, the Québécois singers/actors remained in the studio. They stayed together and sang. Not one, but five, ten songs... or tunes as they say. Although we avoid the term in our film, so that the French understand it too. I tried to avoid clichés, I wanted the film to talk about Québec without any maple syrup, or typical swear words like *câlce* or *tabernacle*...

WHAT WAS IT LIKE WRITING THE SCREENPLAY?

I began to write it after a year of reading and research. At first, I called her Céline. Sixty pages later, Brigitte Buc, with whom I had already written *PALAIS ROYAL!* joined the project and convinced me to change the first names. That unblocked everything. Thanks to "Aline", we let ourselves embroider reality, invent details like the engagement ring in a scoop of ice cream, or the old shoes her mother lends her for her first audition, which explains the thousands of pairs of shoes she later had in her closet...

I let myself be guided by my instinct and the cover of a 33 rpm of Céline's I kept near the computer. I often asked her if she agreed. I dreamed about it at night. Thérèse reread the screenplay and hollered at me because the hour of a show wasn't right! René on the other hand always looked pleased in my dreams.

WHY WERE THINGS SIMPLER WITH ALINE?

Because there aren't two Céline Dions! She is alive and well and more famous than ever. Besides, when some of the technicians mistakenly called me Céline, I blushed. I had to construct this story as exactly as I could, but while keeping some distance from her. A few respectful feet away... For the shoot in Québec, I was willing to shoot anywhere other than Charlemagne, her native village. At one moment it became possible to shoot in the couple's own home which had been sold. But I preferred to avoid trespassing on her own life. We just borrowed two chairs that had belonged to her, and on which I hardly ever dared to sit!

WHY DID YOU FOCUS ON ALINE AND JEAN CLAUDE'S LOVE LIFE?

It's at the heart of Céline's story. With René, they found each other. She arrived in his life just as he was about to abandon his career as a producer. He revealed her and she saved him. He mortgaged his house to pay for her first record. I would wish any artist a partner like him. They say that it's better for a couple not to work in the same field, but any singer would love to have a "René" at her side. People made fun of them and their age difference, of the *in vitro* fertilizations they needed to have children... some people thought he forced her to work. But he had great visions for her and she was very ambitious. What artist, and what woman in general has spent her whole life with one man? I like mismatched couples, star-crossed lovers who carry the day in the end. I'm actually very romantic, and the only thing that interests me are love stories. Even though for a long time I never thought that I was destined to film one.

MEANING?

It was never a subject for me. Not in my stand-up routines, and not in my films. I never thought that I was put on earth to tell love stories. When I was little, people never said I was pretty, so I chose to be funny instead: making people laugh has become my identity. Love affairs, sweet nothings were all Greek to me. I finally began to get it much later... And my transformation began with *MARIE-FRANCINE*.

THE VOICE OF LOVE, YOUR SIXTH FILM, IS NOT THE COMEDY SOME PEOPLE WERE EXPECTING FROM YOU?

I don't know what people were expecting. They probably thought I was going to make fun of her. Something which would never cross my mind. You have to take the film at face value. I don't do tongue in cheek. I never feel obliged to crack jokes, neither in my movies nor in my life. The comedy – because there actually is some – is situation comedy: the discrepancy between the unwanted little girl sleeping in a drawer and her life as a world-class star but in never

stoops to parody. It's a fabulous destiny, an almost unique fairy tale. It's a princess movie without a princess. But with pretty dresses, glitter, hair flying in the wind and high decibels. It's a movie about a royal athlete...It fulfills my love of disguise, decorum and excess. She, the "real" Céline, is a bit of a clown. She is the first to parody herself. I've even heard that she coaches people who want to imitate her. The movie may actually be more serious than she herself is.

HOW DO YOU EMBODY CÉLINE DION?

By not trying to imitate her. Besides, I never tried to go for a very pronounced accent. During the shoot, I sometimes let myself go a little too far, and so later I dubbed myself under the guidance of Geneviève Boivin (one of Aline's sisters). The concert sequences were shot in France, at the Palais des Congrès, the Palais des Sport or in theaters in the Paris suburbs : I would have never dared sing in Québec in front of Québécois extras with my rotten accent! With all the time we spent on preparation, I had little time to rehearse the role, so I improvised a lot. I learnt to lip sync songs the day before, a little hit or miss. Luckily the crew helped me a lot. They realized that I had to be completely concentrated during the sung sequences. Our schedule was so busy, with weekends spent on recce, costume fittings... luckily I could sleep every day during our lunch break. Those naps saved my life. But for the first time in my life, I couldn't wait for the shoot to begin so that I could play her.

SO WHO DOES SING?

Not Céline... As a matter of fact, it is the incredible Victoria Sio who did all the covers. That was also a deliberate choice: to take a step back, to tell the story of Aline Dieu and not Céline Dion. The intelligence of Victoria's interpretations amazed me. Since I took liberties with the timelines of certain songs, having Aline sing them earlier in her career than Céline did, Victoria could remain closer to the emotional content of each sequence. In the film, *Pour que tu m'aimes encore* is not sung at the right period, but when it does occur, it resonates well with the narration. And for TITANIC we recorded a session with real strings, whereas many peoples know that a maquette was used for the film.

HOW DID YOU JUGGLE WITH FACT AND FICTION?

Let's just say that I made real events more "cinematographic": for example, Céline really did announce her pregnancy to René during a meal in the kitchen, but I thought it would be cuter to have Aline trace the letters "BB " in her mashed potatoes, because that kind of whimsy resembles Céline. I likewise slipped in some details that only Céline will understand. But I did invent her escape down the streets of Las Vegas. I asked myself all the time : "how can I invent as faithfully as possible?" On the other hand, for everything that has to do with Québec, we stuck as close to reality as we could. We found some props, like the drier, or the huge stove in Aline's parents' kitchen. The Québécois actors were very moved. They were rediscovering the exact atmosphere of their childhood.

SO YOUR CAST WAS 90% QUÉBÉCOIS?

Of course, to make the movie credible. I wasn't going to ask famous French actors to pretend they were born in Québec. It wasn't just a question of accent, it had more to do with a certain mindset. And I still can't get over the talent of our Québécois actors! And when I think that I chose almost all of them based on their photos, instinctively...I spent a long time looking at all the Québécois actors/singers/ TV hosts for Sylvain Marcel, who plays Guy-Claude. I finally found him on the internet under the heading "comics". He was amazingly sensitive in the film. When I met him and offered him the role, he thought I was kidding. It's funny but he's actually a tiny bit younger than I am. But the wigmakers, hairdressers and make up crew did the rest. To play Aline's mother Sylvette, I needed a great lady. When I met actress and professor Danielle Fichaud at a screen test in Montréal, I was bowled over within five seconds. What temperament! Jean-Bobin, Aline's big brother, was a small role at first, but when I saw what great things Antoine Vezina was able to do, I kept adding material for him. He can intensify anything – a telephone call, for example - at the drop of a hat. I was constantly amazed by their openness. And they were able to tone down their accents: I wanted them to remain intelligible without subtitles, unlike so many Québécois films. I am proud to have introduced them to French audiences! I just wanted all sixteen of us to look like a family, so I had copies of my nose made for several of my brothers and sisters, and for Aline's young parents at the beginning of the film. I haggled with the production like a carpet seller for those (expensive) noses. All right,

All right, I'll cut the scene where Aline flies offstage in Vegas wearing a harness, but I want two more noses!

DID YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULAR AMBITION IN TERMS OF DIRECTING?

I had a grandiose subject and so my direction had to be equal to it. Unlike me, who never reveals anything about my life, Céline has given everything, shared everything, and she is right. So the form of the film had to celebrate her generosity and elegance. I worked with the entire crew from MARIE-FRANCINE. They know me by heart now, they know that I can come up with ideas at the last minute and they're all right with that. It's true that this was the first time I felt so attached to the direction and many of the frames were already in the screenplay. I knew that I was going to open on the singer weeping in her big white bed wearing earphones: at first, the camera is on her face, and then we open on the Kleenex, her children sleeping with her. We purposely built Aline's childhood home on a soundstage to respect the sequence in which Aline escapes out the window wearing her outsized wedding dress. Some elements of the direction are simple as can be: when Aline goes to school, we used an oversized desk, a huge pencil case... Or for the autograph sequence when she is still a little girl: we made huge records. Everything was oversized to make me look little, even though I am actually 5 foot 7! The real "difficulty" was perhaps the time ellipses. The film begins in 1932 and goes on to 2016... Strangely enough, I watched Jean-Pierre Jeunet's AMELIE more closely than other biopics. Because I thought of my film as a fable.

EXACTLY: YOU PLAY ALINE STARTING AT THE AGE OF FIVE. THE SPECIAL EFFECTS ARE IMPRESSIVE.

For a long time we didn't think it would work. During our preparation, my director of photography said to me: "Listen, you should do this on stage, it would be so much simpler!" Because I wanted my entire body to appear on screen, even in the scene where five-year-old Aline sings at her sister's wedding. The special effects crew did a remarkable job. Instead of sending them separate sequences, as is often the case, we wanted to involve them from the very start and show them the entire film, so that they could adapt me according to the logic of the sequences and my successive ages. At the same time, I asked them to include me in their working sessions. As for my silhouette, I wore multiple girdles under my costumes, and little phony teenager breasts on my chest, ultra-compressed by very tight bandages. I also made my ears stick out and wore a set of dentures until I turned 18. For purposes of "resemblance", I used a pencil at home, even before our preparations began, to draw myself a lower hairline. By reducing my forehead as much as possible, I began to see some semblance of Céline appear.

YOU NEVER TRIED TO MEET HER?

I could have. People suggested it several times. She is very busy, closely surrounded by her entourage, I knew I would have seen her for five minutes before a show, or at a fashion show. What good would that be? She herself preferred not to read the screenplay. I went about my business all by myself. For her. I only hope that she will not feel betrayed. It was out of the question, for example, to shoot a scene of her returning from Vegas in a helicopter, because Céline once said on TV that she would never wake up her neighbors by landing in a helicopter. She drove two hours every night. So it was out of the question to do otherwise just for a flashy sequence.

MAY WE SAY THAT YOUR FILM IS TRULY UNIQUE?

But still, it's a classic biopic, with one big difference. She is still alive. I must admit that I was very nervous about the reactions of our Québécois coproducers. After all, for them I was merely a vague dentist's wife in THE VISITORS, and here I was, fiddling with Céline, their national monument! They entered the screening room with the greatest reluctance. But on the way out, some who had known René very well called to say that they recognized him, and that I truly understood their relationship and their complicity. Besides, when editing the film – I always edit a film in chronological order – it took me forever to edit the first two thirds because I knew we were headed for Guy-Claude's death and I was terrified. I went home very sad that day. That was it: he was gone.

HAVE YOU ALREADY SHOWED IT TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY?

To my three sisters, who especially liked the family scenes. And one detail that we tend to overlook in France: in Québec, some people say “une” avion. An airplane is feminine. In my little childhood village in Normandy it is too... Until then I was the only one to laugh, but I heard my sisters laugh, and for a long time too! So I hope they’ll laugh a little in Québec too...

AND ELSEWHERE?

I don’t know. But the film is Québécois, It’s a Canadian coproduction. We filmed in four countries: France, Canada, Spain and the United States. This was the first time I was responsible for such a big film, and strange to say: this may have been the easiest to shoot. Not in terms of scheduling. For the joy that reigned on set, and also because everyone was excited by the subject... Céline’s humor and life force inspired us all.



SYLVAIN MARCEL

GUY-CLAUDE

When my agent told me about Valérie's offer, I thought he was pulling my leg. If it was a joke, I didn't think it was very funny! But no: Valérie came to Montreal, it was really her! I had done a few searches on the internet: she was preparing a film about Céline. I felt reassured... and was impressed. After all, Céline and René were the most famous couple on the planet...

I asked Valérie how she had found me, and it was rather funny: she typed "comic actor" and my photo was the first to show up on internet. I came to Paris for some screen tests, and three days later, Valérie phoned to tell me that the role was mine. I can tell you we had some party back home.

In Québec, everything filmed about Céline and René is comical or pastiche. So when I read the screenplay, I didn't immediately understand what she was trying to get at. Her answer was exciting: a love story. So I understood what my role was in all that. At first, during rehearsals, I imitated René's deep, rough and husky voice. Valérie immediately asked me to use a clearer voice. I was supposed to be Guy-Claude, not René. So I kept his sluggish gestures and some of his other features - especially since the hair and makeup people did such an incredible job - but used it to play someone else: Guy-Claude, using my own voice. This is one of the greatest roles I've been offered in my entire career. I was under tremendous pressure, but there were two exotic months living like a Parisian. And it was an opportunity to play with Québécois actors I had only run into in Quebec. It took a Frenchwoman to bring us together... in Paris!

Valérie is a very warm-hearted woman. Thanks to our immediate complicity, we were able to recreate the close, loving relationship of the couple we were playing. But she's not an easy director with her actors! So finicky. Whenever we had a scene together and the camera was on me, she unwittingly mouthed my lines. It was distracting! It's only normal: she so much wanted the shot to work, for the emotion to be palpable. And her reputation was at stake, as actress and director of such an ambitious project. She's a fabulous actress, so funny and able to play any age. It was strange: during certain scenes, I couldn't look straight at her. I had to look down because she was supposed to be 12 and therefore shorter. I must say that I cannot wait to see the film and myself as Guy-Claude... I hope that French audiences will like it. And who knows, it would be marvelous to work again in France: with Valérie again, or for example with Alain Chabat. I'd love that too.

DANIELLE FICHAUD

SYLVETTE

Valérie found me through my agent and sent me four big scenes to prepare for an audition. I spent 60 hours preparing for that audition! I worked on the text right side up, upside down, I read everything I could about Madame Dion. I had a busy work week, with conferences to give and other obligations, and two days before the audition, the order of the big monologue in which I ask Guy-Claude to leave my daughter alone was changed: the words were the same but in a different order! I had to do all that work over again. But I love to work, to analyze a text...

I taught film acting for eight years in the Québec Film School, the equivalent of your Fémis, and I've had my own acting school - the equivalent of your Cours Florent - for thirty-one years. When Valérie and I met, it was love at first sight: we moved each other from the very start. I never felt so strongly about a director. Never. Instant friendship. I'm a very calm worker, and I always want to act. I think that Valérie needed a... solid Mom who didn't need to be constantly reassured. She must have felt that as of the very first audition. I was so well prepared that she was surprised that I had gone so far into the emotions. I like to show off my partners. To put them in the right place, and Valérie is so talented, that she takes up a lot of space! If I could use a tennis metaphor, I would say that she catches all the balls! And furthermore, because I am

not easily offended, I don't consider criticism rejection, but on the contrary a kind of challenge.

And Valérie likes that. She's a perfectionist. Good for her. There is nothing more annoying than a director with hazy ideas. We don't have much financing in Québec, and not much of an audience, so we're used to shooting fast, but efficiently. A good attitude is essential here, and an actor who acts badly, or who isn't serious, is looked upon very negatively. We can shoot forty-five pages of text in one day. You have to be professional!

Sylvain, who plays Guy-Claude, and I are old friends. We've already worked together a lot in Québec. At the beginning of the THE VOICE OF LOVE shoot, we couldn't get over it: twenty-five takes for one wide angle shot! Back home, four takes are the maximum. At first we thought that Valérie was unhappy with us, but then we understood that it was simply her perfectionism. For me, Sylvette is the queen of her village, with her fourteen children and her husband. I saw her as a businesswoman. And like the sun, with a capacity for unconditional love. I added a touch of my own rough character and humor, because Céline's real mother was a little more discreet. The screenplay is a marvel of intelligence. So I didn't hesitate for a second about this story told like an authentic fairy tale. I was literally charmed.

Valérie worked so hard! – On social media these days a lot of people criticize René, who is said to have exploited Céline. And are upset by their age difference. That annoys me! Valérie's film sets the record straight concerning their real love story. What emotion when we filmed with a reduced crew the intimate bathroom sequence in which Aline tells her mother that she will not give up Guy-Claude. I also love the one in which Valérie tells me that she wants to become a singer and I say "I have big plans for you". Valérie with the head of a little 10-year-old girl! I can't wait for audiences in general, but especially in Québec, to realize how unlike a parody this film is. It's a love story. It's strange: no man is a prophet in his own country... it took a Frenchwoman to make this particular film....

ANTOINE VÉZINA

JEAN-BOBIN

I can't wait to see this movie here in Québec. It's already the talk of the town! The level of curiosity is already so intense! But I am sure that people will succumb to the high quality of the project. I was convinced of that the very first time I met Valérie. She came to Québec for the casting but did not put me through any screen tests: we spoke a lot; and we established a complicity that continued later on set. I like mind-boggling ideas, and you can say that THE VOICE OF LOVE is just that. An unmitigated risk and totally sincere. Valérie inhabits Céline totally. She does the accent, and she has a unique take on the story. So much the better if I could be of help on this extremely personal project. Céline Dion is surely our national monument, but monuments are made to be highlighted in multiple ways, which allows us to appreciate them even more.

Valérie's "Frenchness" was an advantage. First of all, I loved changing physiques to play Jean-Bobin: a face mask was made of Valérie and applied over my face. I probably looked a lot cuter! Actors always like that kind of transformation. It helps them to become someone else. As the shoot went on, Valérie seemed to appreciate my humble presence in the second role of her big brother, and so she decided to give me a little more screen presence than foreseen in the screenplay. She gave me a few more scenes and I was happy to be of use. She was following real life closely, because Céline's brother always accompanied her, even though he remained in the shadows. You could see that she was very busy, because she had many hats to wear, but she still found time to fool around between takes and gave me an address to find a good pain au chocolat in Paris. She was nice enough to never make us feel the pressure weighing on her.

As an actress, the minute she started acting, she acted 100%. I never imagined that I would one day play with her, and I must say it is much easier to play with a great actress. She's like a race car, you trust her, and you elevate yourself to her level. Here in Québec, everyone is nervous about her accent. Probably because of the trailer, which is too short to tell. But having

heard her throughout the shoot, I have no worries on that account: after a few minutes, audiences will be rooting for her.

For me, Jean-Bobin is a good, reassuring man. Willing to remain in the shadows to help his little sister, to keep her safe and happy. I hope that I was able to convey that discreet help, taking inspiration, by the way, from my own actor's status in Québec, where most of the time I play "supporting roles". Instead of hogging the limelight, I let it shine on someone else. And I like that. In my sequences with Danielle Fichaud, when we mail Aline's first demo cassette, or when I wait by the phone, Valérie let me improvise a few lines. The atmosphere she creates is so conducive to good acting, it becomes such a pleasure to act. And then just think: my Québécois colleagues and I found ourselves in the middle of a waking dream in Paris, surrounded by wonderful French professionals! In that scene with the telephone, I must confess that the phone was a wonderful partner! One of the best phones I ever had the good fortune to play with! Maybe because it was French...

LAURENT DAILLAND

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Valérie wanted to work with me on *THE ULTIMATE ACCESSORY* but I wasn't free. She nicely asked me again for *MARIE-FRANCINE*, which I did, and now for *THE VOICE OF LOVE*. Edouard Weil, the producer, wanted me to take part in the adventure. He gave me a lot of prior warning and so things all came together! I put a big red cross in my agenda to avoid disappointing the producer's trust! Because I won Valérie's trust on *MARIE-FRANCINE* on two fronts: director-DOP, and actress-DOP. One of the biggest responsibilities in our profession is lighting the star! Valérie goes to the movies to see every film that comes out and at first, I think she came looking for me because of the special care I take on lighting my actresses. She thought she looked good on screen in *MARIE-FRANCINE*, but the task in *THE VOICE OF LOVE* was even more daunting. She was playing an international star and playing her from early childhood to the age of fifty. I had to work in close collaboration with very competent special effects people. The film takes place over forty years, but Valérie refused anything showy: playing with grain effects to create "vintage images" or "in the style of...". We talked a lot about it. There was one thing she particularly wanted: the early scenes with her parents in super 8. But it didn't work out the way I wanted. Luckily, we had filmed everything with a normal camera too. We didn't fiddle with the grain later because she was right, the film is self-sufficient. We relied on normal images throughout the film, just using some slight nuances of contrast when color grading, as Aline's life progresses. When the images are overstated, they may have an effect, but they distract the viewer from the narrative as such.

To express the period, make up, costumes and set design are sufficient. "Vintage" lighting would have been a pleonasm! Valérie says it wonderfully: you don't put two noses on the same clown. Don't do the same thing we're telling. I also had to do some interior lighting within the film for the concert sequences: there I tried to respect the period as much as possible, because graphic styles in show business are markedly different according to the times. To do that, I had to find and repair old projectors. For the Las Vegas show, a literal apotheosis, our lighting was practically more elaborate than it was in reality, even though we didn't have the same wherewithal as Caesar's Palace! The tricky thing there is not to change the stage lighting so much that you give the impression of abandoning the film for a music video. I was lucky enough to find a fabulous collaborator, Romuald Beaufour, as the light designer for the shows. A priceless collaborator, especially for the final sequence when Aline surrenders herself nude in natural light to unleash emotion, along with the magnificent text by Charlebois. There is a lot of white in the sets, and especially in the inaugural scene that was very complicated to film. Luckily the marble was fake, so it was less shiny than real marble! But I had to be very discreet about lighting it... There is always the issue of bright light dazzling the audience. I have worked with the colorist Isabelle Julien, since... 1998, and we take the same approach to lighting.

At the very end of the color grading we always work on "physiological continuity", which means watching out for nano-changes in one and the same shot as the camera moves. The lighting must not be exactly the same in wide angle shots and close up shots, even within the same sequence! In fact, lighting Valérie is not complicated. In any case, she never watches herself on the video monitor when we shoot. She would trust me with her life. As a good DOP, I prefer using the right shot, the best in terms of acting, even when it is not necessarily the one in which Valérie looks the prettiest.

CATHERINE LETERRIER

COSTUME DESIGN

I've known Valérie for a long time, ever since as a young actress she played snooty ladies of a certain age. Our first encounter dates back to Louis Malle's *MAY FOOLS* in 1990. Then *THE VISITORS*, most notably. So I started dressing her as an actress in other people's movies. The issue of age is funny though: as far back as *MAY FOOLS* she was playing a "lady" much older than she really was. And now today in her own film the character is more important than her age, since she plays Aline at 5, 12, and 40... Her talent for quick changes fascinates me.

I've worked with her as a director since *PALAIS ROYAL*! For *THE VOICE OF LOVE*, there was enormous work to do beforehand. For her as a start: she read absolutely everything ever written about Céline Dion. I think you could fill a truck with all her newspapers, magazines, and books! But that principle of extreme documentation was useful in moving away from reality. So I was not interested in having my own vision, but in getting into her brain. As a result: 150 costume changes, if only for her own character, since this is the story of a poor, not very pretty little girl, who becomes an international icon thanks to her voice and talent. But remember, we had to fit in with Valérie and her eccentricity, even though she also likes tradition. So we had to emphasize her extravagance and then eliminate it, skim the fat off to go for a pure and essential line. I know her well enough not be afraid of giving her ideas that she will reject! She is a perfectionist, and so am I. So that's convenient. It's crazy how she notices everything!

For the scene in which Aline ice skates as a little girl. I designed an anorak for Valérie with oversized snowflake motifs, and then the same anorak for the little girl who stood in for her, but with smaller, normal-sized motifs. In much the same way, the anorak had bigger and then smaller buttons, a bigger and then smaller zipper. Valérie even had her own ideas about the zipper: in plastic instead of metal! With her you always go to the heart of the matter, and you have to avoid the beaten path. For example, for the actors in the Québécois sequences, Valérie did not want anything checkered... too cliché! But when I did some research, I saw that Canadians do wear red and black checkered shirts and the costume crew in Canada was almost peeved that we had not remained faithful to tradition. For the 80s, Valérie wanted to conserve the fun spirit, but in her own style. She prefers red and bottle green to orange and brown: her personal color range. She was right: whatever the era, people dressed as they like, without necessarily adopting what you see in the fashion magazines. Although I must admit that in the 80s I myself wore the mythical fringed suede pants! The action, the logic of the film, and the psychology of the characters need to take precedence over fashion. And it's very simple, the heroine is Aline, not Céline Dion.

We had a wardrobe department with seamstresses directed by Didier Despin, just like in haute couture, with charming Maurice, a big Céline Dion fan in exclusive charge of pearls, and whose interns spent the entire day literally stringing pearls! There were dedicated undergarments and corsets for every dress, every outfit that Aline wears in the film, from childhood to adulthood. Her wedding dress and tiara, the bridesmaids' gowns all required a tremendous amount of work, but Valérie used them in homeopathic doses in the film. She was right there too: her wedding dress is primarily a director's prop, because it is too big to get through the door and she needs to exit by the window. The costume carries the action. And action takes precedence over aesthetics and fashion.

In fact, I am never able to talk with a filmmaker about the technical aspects of my job. Only with Valérie, who knows all the suppliers known only to costume specialists. She is a true costume professional. I worked with her like with... a colleague. A colleague as manically obsessive as I am!

EMMANUELLE DUPLAY

ART DIRECTOR

This is the second time I've worked with Valérie, starting with MARIE-FRANCINE. This project was certainly much crazier: the film takes place over several countries and fifty years, with Canada in the 60/70s, her gigs in France and in the States during her Las Vegas years. While in preparation, Valérie and I talked a lot about the "how" and the "where" to make sure the many sets looked right. 50% of the movie was filmed in a studio: Aline's childhood home, and all the hotel rooms; dressing rooms, the theater wings in Las Vegas and all the TV shows. It was in fact impossible to find real TV studios with period equipment: so we had to recreate Michel Drucker's TV show!!

As Aline's career progresses, her hotel rooms become increasingly chic and spacious, until the Eurovision appearance where we wanted something very flowery. Since the hotel sequences are very brief and often needed no more than a half-day's shoot, we did them one after the other: a studio was the most efficient solution, and the most stylized, as we mixed and matched colors and styles in line with Aline's universe. Everything had to be done ... with Valérie in mind! Whenever she plays Aline as a little girl, we supersized her props: her schoolbag, notebook, and even the mikes when she first begins to sing. The chair she sits on when she first meets Guy-Claude was designed very large to make Valérie look tiny. Authentic Méliès special effects! --- Valérie was adamant. Certain scenes at the Las Vegas villa were also filmed on set, like the twins' room and the special shoe closet which did not really hold thirteen thousand pairs of shoes as historic exactitude would have it: we cheated a little with mirrors. The big white bedroom (with the super king-size bed) in the opening sequence is exactly as described in the screenplay. Valérie had some very precise ideas that I had to decipher and materialize. Then we matched the interior colors with a real villa we found in Spain.

All the houses in the film required some fascinating work: the back of the same little Canadian house served as the facade of the miserable cabin of her father's poverty-stricken childhood, and ... the front served as the porch and tiny living room of her mother's childhood home, where Aline's parents meet and play music together. One single location and a lot of creativity to cut corners! The Dieu family home where Aline grew up was created and filmed on a soundstage in France: the façade with the small door was thought out and calculated on purpose so that Aline would have to leave by the window in her wedding dress. We built a very low ceiling to create a cramped effect, a lot like a doll house, but she wanted some of the walls to be movable for purposes of her direction. We did a lot of research in the Montreal area into modest housing styles in the 70s. We brought over entire containers full of furniture and objects found in flea markets in Canada, like the typical oven with drawers. We reproduced a linoleum floor that Valérie liked during our recce over there. She came with us on all our recce trips. In fact, it's very simple, Valérie is... always there! It's awesome: everything interests her, everything concerns her, down to the slightest detail. With her, you always know what you're aiming for.

CAST

Aline VALÉRIE LEMERCIER
Guy-Claude SYLVAIN MARCEL
Sylvette DANIELLE FICHAUD
Anglomard ROC LAFORTUNE
Jean-Bobin ANTOINE VÉZINA
Jeannette PASCALE DESROCHERS
Fred JEAN-NOËL BROUTÉ

Aline's singing voice VICTORIA SIO

CREW

A film by VALÉRIE LEMERCIER

Screenplay and dialogues VALÉRIE LEMERCIER, BRIGITTE BUC

Produced by ÉDOUARD WEIL, ALICE GIRARD, SIDONIE DUMAS

Associate Producer LAURENT ZEITOUN

Coproduced by ANDRÉ ROULEAU, VALÉRIE D'AUTEUIL,
PATRICK VANDENBOSCH

Executive producer Belgium BELGA LINE PRODUCERS

Director of photography LAURENT DAILLAND AFC

Editor JEAN-FRANÇOIS ELIE

Art Director EMMANUELLE DUPLAY ADC

Costume design CATHERINE LETERRIER

Costume supervisor CAMILLE JANBON

Choreographer ÉRIC MARTIN

Makeup MARIE LASTENNET, SARAH MESCOFF

Hair RÉMY PILOT, SILVINE PICARD, SANDRINE MASSON

Wig design and creation CHRISTINA OHLUNG-LAGO, PASCAL FERRERO

First Assistant Director EURIC ALLAIRE

Casting NATHALIE BOUTRIE, MARIE-SYLVIE
CAILLIEREZ

Continuity DIANE BRASSEUR

Technical counselor CHRISTOPHE VASSORT

Sound OLIVIER MAUVEZIN, ARNAUD ROLLAND,
DANIEL SOBRINO, ÉDOUARD MORIN

Musical Supervision PASCAL MAYER

Recording supervisor Aline's songs RÉMY GALICHET, LAURENT MARIMBERT

Special Effects Supervisor SÉBASTIEN RAME (MIKROS)

Production Manager MÉDÉRIC BOURLAT

Post-Production Manager EUGÉNIE DEPLUS

A coproduction RECTANGLE PRODUCTIONS, GAUMONT,
TF1 FILMS PRODUCTION, DE L'HUILE,
CAMEL FILMS, BELGA PRODUCTIONS

With the participation of ENTOURAGE PICTURES

With the participation of CANAL+ & CINÉ+

With the participation of TF1, TMC, ET TFX

Produced with the participation of TÉLÉFILM CANADA