



# A BIGGER WORLD

*(Un monde plus grand)*



A film by

Fabienne Berthaud

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## SYNOPSIS

In order to get over the death of Paul, the love of her life, Corine leaves Paris for a few weeks in Mongolia. But her meeting with the shaman Oyun upends her plans, as Oyun proclaims that Corine has received a rare gift. Back in France, she cannot refuse what is now imposed on her: she must go back to Mongolia to begin her initiation... and discover a bigger world.

2019 – France / Belgium – 1:40 mins – 1,85 – 5.1



## INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR - **FABIENNE BERTHAUD**

### ***What is the origin of the film?***

A book, *Mon initiation chez les Chamanes* by Corine Sombrun, which was given to me by my producers. For the first time, I wasn't the one to choose the subject, the subject chose me.

### ***This is the first time you dealt with a book adaptation. Did you change the way you work?***

I had to strike a delicate balance between a certain freedom of adaptation, which allowed me to make a fictional film, and respecting Corine Sombrun's life. I didn't want to betray her; she was very involved during the making of the film. I consulted her on many occasions to ensure I had the right approach, so that she agreed with the way I was dealing with her story. It is a very personal process. And even though the film is loosely based on a true story, I didn't change the way I work, mixing fiction with documentary realism.

### ***The film was shot in Mongolia—how did you approach such an exploit?***

Shooting on the Mongolian steppe, an inaccessible region where there is no electricity, running water or Internet, requires quite the organization! It is a true adventure. You have to leave all your habits behind. We were living like the Mongolians, in a very ecological way, in a yurt camp organized by the team and we used wood stoves for heat. It was a true back to nature experience. By coming to shoot in Mongolia, the team had to accept its traditions, beliefs and customs. The Mongolian notion of time is very different than ours; when you ask a Mongolian if there is still a long way to go, they will answer: "Maybe, it's not far, don't worry, we always get there." The Mongolians prefer not to say anything than to make promises they can't keep. Most of all, I had to deal with the unexpected. Two weeks before the shoot, the Tsaatan people (reindeer herders) had to descend from the highlands to meet us.

We had to install their camp, the main set. They were supposed to come with a part of their family and some reindeer; the others would stay in the highlands. Three days before the shoot was set to start, they still hadn't arrived, and we had no way to reach them. Without them, there would be no film. We would have had to rethink everything, and then one morning, they arrived. The entire tribe came, with two hundred reindeer and forty newborns. It was magnificent. You have to know how to wait for the right moment and then everything gets done.







### ***Who are the Tsaatans? How did you meet them?***

Following Corine Sombrun's footsteps, I wanted to go north, to the border with Siberia, to meet a people who live in one of the most remote areas of Mongolia. Corine was initiated to shamanism by the Tsaatan. They are the reindeer people. They are nomadic, and their distinctive characteristic is that they live in yurts or gers. So the year before the shoot, I went location scouting with Corine, Naraa (who plays the interpreter) and my co-writer. At that time of year, they were in the mountains, two days on horseback from the last village accessible by car. A bit like an ethnologist, I shared their daily life, their habits and customs and took a lot of pictures. For each of my films, photography is intrinsically related to my creative process, my approach feeds on this documentary material. It helps me choose the characters and my sets, to harmonise the colours with

the colours of the costumes, etc.

During the shoot, every morning, the first thing the Tsaatans would do was to look through the book with the pictures I took during the scouting process, and they would laugh at seeing themselves. But they immediately understood the reason for the scene. They would place themselves spontaneously and the presence of the camera never made them uncomfortable.

### ***Do you always frame your shots?***

I have to. I have to look through the eye of the camera to feel the emotion of a scene. I have a very organic way of shooting. On a set, I talk to the actors during the takes, I move around. With Nathalie Durand, director of photography, my faithful partner with whom I shot my two previous films, we shot with two cameras like we always do. Before shooting a scene, we look at the famous picture book (pictures taken when we went location scouting) which replaces the classic storyboard. On the set, we no longer need to talk to each other to know where we should position ourselves in relation to the other. She is my camera sister.

***It seems obvious that Cécile de France would play the Corine Sombrun character. How did you choose her?***

Beyond her talent as an actress, Cécile has a wild side, she is instinctive, always seeking, curious, discovering, she is eager for new experiences. She is a person who is very anchored in life, very balanced and solid enough to risk experiencing new things without being thrown off balance. She wasn't afraid of the subject, she is a passionate person. As well, she was also able to live for several weeks in the middle of the steppe cut off from the world, without running water or an Internet connection. Not everyone can do that.



***And the other actors ?***

The only Mongolian actress in the film is Tserendarizav who plays the shaman Oyun. I made her audition in the back of a restaurant. She was worried about the idea of playing a shaman, which isn't a trivial thing for the Mongols. It is a responsibility. She had to ask permission from the spirits before accepting my offer and check if I was approaching the subject respectfully, that I wasn't going to say just anything. Naraa, the interpreter, is none other than the real interpreter who accompanied Corine Sombrun, 18 years ago. The role was obviously for her. Always present on the set, Naraa also translated the instructions that I gave to the characters in the film. She played her own role. A reality inside another reality.

***A major issue of the film was how to deal with the trances and visions. How to portray the invisible. What does the black world that the shamans talk about look like? How to portray your heroine's visions?***

I imagined an organic, monochrome, spectral and mysterious world. I sought inspiration from Artavazd Pelechian. A world of sensations rather than a world of representations. I wanted to work with texture, shadows, blurs, to distort real images. Sound also plays a crucial role in the film. The acoustic vibrations of the shamanic drums, the animals' breath, their hooves on the earth. I tried to make the spectator experience something physical, that they feel rather than see. I never tried to explain. Maybe that is what the invisible world is.

***Do you believe in spirits? In the dark world?***

I still don't know anything, but I decided to believe in it. When you are in Mongolia, it is difficult not to believe. Everyone believes in spirits, they are a very connected, spiritual people. The Mongolians do not do anything significant without asking the spirits and nature if they agree. As for us, we have been plundering nature for a long time without asking! There, you consult the shaman like we go to the doctor. During my first scouting trip, someone suggested to me to do a ceremony to see if the spirits agreed with my making the film. An old shaman brought us into the forest and, luckily, the answer was positive!

***This story is inspired by Corine Sombrun's life. Was she involved in the making of the film?***

Yes, she was involved at all stages in one way or another: as a consultant on the script, as a technical advisor on the scenes with trances, she doubles as Oyun the shaman during the ceremony and she is the Tseren spirit in the forest. We never see her but she is everywhere. Corine is the "spirit" of the film.

***The end of the film presents Corine Sombrun initiating the first scientific research into Mongolian shamanic trances.***

Since her training in Mongolia, Corine has written books about shamanism and worked with several researchers and psychiatrists to try to understand if going into trances is a forgotten ability of the brain. This research has made it possible to no longer consider this state as an exceptional "gift" reserved only for shamans, but rather a dormant cognitive potential that each one of us can develop. Several researchers are currently working with her to understand the mechanisms related to the state, as well as the potential therapeutic applications.





## About **FABIENNE BERTHAUD**

After directing two short films, in 2006 Fabienne Berthaud directed *Frankie*, her first feature with Diane Kruger, who was also taking her first steps as an actress. She then adapted her own book *Pieds nus sur les limaces* (*Lily Sometimes*) for the cinema. The film closed the Cannes Directors' Fortnight in 2010, where it won the CICAÉ Art Cinema award. In 2016, her third feature *Sky*, with Diane Kruger and Norman Reedus, was released.

In parallel with her work as a filmmaker, Fabienne Berthaud also wrote the novels *Un Jardin sur le ventre* (Prix Françoise Sagan 2011), *Mal partout* (Seuil, 2004), *Cafards* (Albin Michel, 1994) and the short *La Voyageuse* (in "La Malle", Gallimard-Vuitton 2013). She is in the process of writing her new novel *Entre tes jambes*.

## FILMOGRAPHY

2015 **SKY**

2010 **PIEDS NUS SUR LES LIMACES (LILY SOMETIMES)**

2006 **FRANKIE**





## About **CORINE SOMBRUN**

After the death of the love of her life, Corine Sombrun moved to London where she worked as a composer and reporter for the radio BBC World Service. One of her articles brought her to Mongolia in 2001, where the shaman Balgir told her that she had a “gift” and should follow the specific training reserved for shamans. Trained for many years in rituals and trance techniques, Corine has been collaborating since 2006 with researchers in order to understand the cerebral mechanisms related to trance states. This collaboration resulted in the first scientific study of Mongolian shamanic trances (Flor-Henry et al. 2017, Cogent Psychology).

In 2015, Corine established a research program into self-inducing trances. Tested on more than 500 volunteers, the program enabled 85% of them to experience a trance, demonstrating that it is not a gift reserved only for shamans, but a potential of any human brain. It is both a tool for the exploration of an underlying reality and a tool for cognitive development. New protocols with Steven Laureys at Liège University are being created to understand the mechanisms and the therapeutic applications related to this potential, now called “cognitive trance.”

In 2019, with Francis Taulelle, a magnetic resonance researcher at CNRS and the Louvain University, Corine contributed to the creation of the *TranceScience Research Institute*, an international network of researchers involved in neuroscientific studies of trances.

She has also published several books to discuss her experience, defend the planet and the culture of first peoples. Her latest book, in collaboration with the Amazonian Indian Chief Almir Surui, just won the *Independant Publisher Book Award for Environment/Ecology* in the United States.



## About **CECILE DE FRANCE**



Cécile de France was born in Namur. After studying drama in Paris she got her first part in Richard Berry's *L'Art (délicat) de la seduction* in 2001.

In 2002 the success of Cédric Klapisch's *Pot Luck*, for which she won a Cesar for best newcomer, confirmed her as the new rising star of French cinema. She went on to keep her role in the film's sequels (*Russian Dolls* and *Chinese Puzzle*). She won another Cesar as Best supporting actress for her part in *Russian Dolls* in 2005.

She has appeared in an extremely wide array of films, going from the horror movie *Haute tension* by Alexandre Aja to *Around the world in 80 days* by Frank Coraci with Jackie Chan. She also worked with great French directors such as Danièle Thompson in *Quand j'étais chanteur* starring Gérard Depardieu and *Orchestra Seats* in 2006, as well as Claude Miller in *A Secret* in 2008, three films for which she earned Cesar nominations. In 2008 she also starred in *Mesrine, Killer Instinct* alongside Vincent Cassel. She then took her talents to the United States, appearing in *Hereafter* with Matt Damon under the direction of Clint Eastwood. Back in Europe she was cast for the main role in Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's *The Kid with a Bike* in 2011. The following years she was directed by Xavier Giannoli in *Superstar*, Denis Dercourt in *In Harmony*, Catherine Corsini in *Summer Time* and Etienne Comar in *Django*. She also joined the cast of the TV Series *The Young Pope* created and directed by Paolo Sorrentino.

In 2018 she starred in *Lady J* directed by Emmanuel Mouret for which she earned another Cesar nomination. In 2019 she partnered up with Yolande Moreau and Audrey Lamy in the comedy *Rebelles*. She is the main character of Fabienne Berthaud's latest film *A Bigger World*, which will be presented in Venice Days in August.

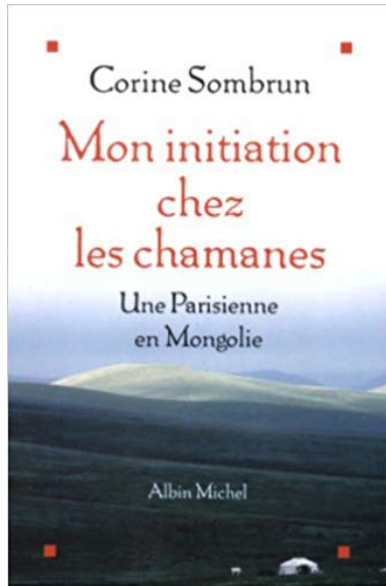
In 2020 she will be part of the cast of Wes Anderson's latest film *The French Dispatch*, Xavier Giannoli's *Comédie Humaine* with Xavier Dolan as well as the TV series *The New Pope* created and directed by Paolo Sorrentino.

## BEYOND THE FILM

**EXHIBITION OF PHOTOS** by Fabienne Berthaud

Dunkirk Centre d'Art Contemporain

Beginning October 19



## THE BOOK

**MON INITIATION CHEZ LES CHAMANES**

*Une parisienne en Mongolie*

by Corine Sombrun

224 pages

Initially published in 2004, the book will be re-released by Éditions Pocket on September 2019, enhanced with an afterword by Corine Sombrun who discusses, 18 years after her initial experience, the academic and scientific advances in the area of trances.

## VENICE BIENNALE ARTE 2019

**“ENDODROME”**

A virtual reality experience by the artist Dominique Gonzales-Foerster with the collaboration of Corine Sombrun

From May 11 to November 24, 2019

*ENDODROME* is a staged environment that can accommodate five people at a time. It combines an interactive virtual reality experience in a theatrical setting that mimics the trance experience. The title comes from the words “endon” which means “internal” and “dromos” which means entrance or passageway. With *Endodrome*, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster has created a virtual reality artwork which allows spectators to literally “travel inwards” to access alternative states of consciousness. She used her cognitive trance experiences induced by sound as inspiration. Corine Sombrun collaborated in the creation of this auditory environment.

## CAST

<b><i>Corine</i></b>	Cécile de France
<b><i>Naraa</i></b>	Narantsetseg Dash
<b><i>Oyun</i></b>	Tserendarizav Dashnyam
<b><i>Louise</i></b>	Ludivine Sagnier
<b><i>Marc</i></b>	Arieh Worthalter





## **CREW**

<b>Director</b>	Fabienne Berthaud
<b>Script, adaptation, dialogues</b>	Fabienne Berthaud, Claire Barré
<b>Script consultant</b>	Corine Sombrun
Based on <i>MON INITIATION CHEZ LES CHAMANES</i> by CORINE SOMBRUN published by © Éditions Albin Michel	
<b>Cinematography</b>	Nathalie Durand
<b>Editing</b>	Simon Jacquet
<b>Sound</b>	Fabrice Osinski, Paul Heymans, Thomas Gauder
<b>Original music</b>	Valentin Hadjadj
<b>Sets</b>	Eve Martin
<b>Costumes</b>	Mimi Lempicka
<b>Casting</b>	Richard Rousseau
<b>Production management</b>	Julie Flament
<b>1<sup>st</sup> assistant director</b>	Céline Bailbled
<b>Produced by</b>	Carole Scotta, Christine Palluel, Barbara Letellier
<b>Associate producers</b>	Caroline Benjo and Simon Arnal
<b>Coproduced by</b>	Geneviève Lemal

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