

LES FILMS DU POISSON
ARTE FRANCE & BANDE A PART FILMS
PRESENTENT

L'HARMONIE

UN FILM DE BLAISE HARRISON

IMAGE ET RÉALISATION BLAISE HARRISON MONTAGE GWENOLA HEAULME MUSIQUE ORIGINALE RHYS CHATHAM PRISE DE SON PASCALE MONS
MONTAGE SON, CRÉATION SONORE ET MIXAGE OLIVIER TOUCHE ENREGISTREMENT ET MIXAGE MUSIQUE CYRIL HARRISON ÉTALONNAGE PATRICK LINDENMAIER

PRODUCTION ESTELLE FALON COPRODUCTION BAIER / BRON / MEIER / MERMOUD
EN COPRODUCTION AVEC LA RTS RADIO TELEVISION SUISSE AVEC LE SOUTIEN DE LA RÉGION FRANCHE-COMTÉ,
DE LA RÉGION ÎLE-DE-FRANCE, DU CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE, DE LA PROCIREP - ANGOA
AVEC LA PARTICIPATION DE GINEFORUM ET LE SOUTIEN DE LOTERIE ROMANDE



SYNOPSIS

A small town nestling in the middle of a snowy expanse. In a crowded hall, some musicians are warming up. Cacophony. The conductor calls for silence. On a river bank at dawn, an old man is fishing alone, alert. Nearby, a band of Indians are marching to music for the carnival. A young hunter stalks her prey on the edge of a forest, while in his bedroom, a teenager struggles with his tie to the deafening sound of symphonic heavy metal rock. Between community and moments of solitude, through a series of lively Friday evening rehearsals and the interminable republican ceremonies, L'HARMONIE takes us to the heart of this colorful community in search of harmony.



BLAISE HARRISON



A graduate of the Lausanne School of Art, Blaise Harrison has directed several short films, including *Bibeleskaes* (Visions du Réel Festival 2006), and several documentaries for the strand *Cut Up* on ARTE. His latest documentary, *Summer Growing Up*, was selected for the Directors' Fortnight sidebar in Cannes 2011.



INTERVIEW

How did you get the idea for the film and how did you meet the Pontarlier community band?

The idea for the film started with my wanting to film music, based on my own experience as a musician in a community band of this type when I was an adolescent. I played the baritone sax. I wasn't a very advanced player and I was more of a loner, not necessarily liking being part of a group, but despite all this I really enjoyed playing in the band. It was this feeling I wanted to convey in the film.

I did some scouting and met with two municipal bands. The Pontarlier community band was the third I met with and I chose it for various reasons. First of all, the bandleader was proposing a contemporary repertoire that was rather original and demanding for his musicians, in contrast to the typical repertoires of such bands. The high standards set by the bandleader was also of interest, especially because the scores he selected did not meet with the approval of all his musicians, but everyone played regardless!

The fact that the musicians were all relatively advanced players was also important because they had to have the capacity to play the original music that I was going to have composed for the film and for them. The wide range of personalities and the many young people involved in particular were also reasons why I chose the Pontarlier band. I wanted to avoid the tired cliché of the little village brass band.

And lastly, the geographic location and specific environment of Pontarlier suited me to a tee. Seen from the sky, this town, surrounded by mountains, is perfectly delimited and defined; the temperature can drop to -20°C in winter. It looks as if it were not in the world, sort of like an ancient village of Gaul, home of the mythical figure, Asterix, located in the Jura. One can feel the presence of nature very close by, which was of particular interest to me for the film.

How did the shooting go? Was it hard to film a group?

The film was shot over a ten-month period, divided into regular sessions of three or four days each month. The way to film a group of 70 persons is not obvious and many possibilities were available. The hardest part for me was to keep focused and not get sidetracked, but not closing any doors either, trying to remain attentive and open, because I was also looking for real spontaneity in the film. I had decided, for instance, when I wrote the film, to select several characters to follow in more depth.

So before I even met the band members, I asked them all to answer a questionnaire, to find out about each of them a bit; I asked them what they liked, what activities they were involved in, how they felt about their instrument... Most of those I chose to follow were selected on the basis of this questionnaire, before the shooting started. The desire to follow others arose during the shooting and even during the editing. My goal was to film them without trying to get too close, by maintaining a distance, like figures in films about whom we know very little but who have nonetheless made a definite impression on us. The moments spent alone with various band members bring interiority to the film, a more direct and intimate relationship to the music and to the sound recorded than moments spent with the group as a whole. It was important for me to establish a dialogue between these two approaches.

How did you go about editing the film?

Other than following the musical career of the band, I didn't have any pre-established idea for the film in terms of issues or dramatic composition. During the shooting, I preferred to leave things open, to work in an intuitive manner. The film was composed during the editing. Given the countless hours of rushes and the

complexity of the subject, we started editing at two-thirds of the way through the shooting, which allowed me to take a step back, to see what worked and what didn't and to more precisely define the filming that was to follow. Some things just fell into place, which I didn't necessarily realize during the shooting, like the importance of some of the band members (some came to the forefront while others lessened in importance). After having edited an initial incomplete version with the film editor, Gwénola Héaulme, we stopped and I left again to film at the beginning of winter, when the band started to work on the original music of the film. I absolutely wanted the film to end beneath the snow, and it was a long time coming that particular winter. It started falling, by the way, precisely three days before the end of the shooting, the date of which had been scheduled for weeks. It's hard to understand how long it took to complete the editing. The film is more like a musical composition or a poetical work than the work of conventional dramaturgy! We felt like we were composing a piece of music with images and sounds, recording emotions and, by the end of the film, that we were awakening a unique sensation in the viewer.

Sound plays a major role in the film. How did you handle it?

I wanted the attention to be clearly focused on listening, for the viewers to be guided by the soundtrack and the music. Everything in the film must be listened to and considered as being musical, whether it's the music itself, of course, or the human voice, or sounds emanating from the environment, from nature, etc. It had to be obvious for the viewer right from the start of the film that his/her attention had to be focused on listening, and not on conventional narrative issues.

The movement of the film is, before anything else, musical. We begin with the first dissonant, disorganized notes of the warm-up before the first rehearsal, and culminate with the minimal music of Rhys Chatham, which ends the film. The viewer goes from chaos to harmony, in a group situation. Each band member contributes to the end result with his or her respective uniqueness and differences, composing with the others of the band, which each player enriches individually to culminate in the interpretation of an original musical work that both transcends and magnifies them all.

The relationship to sound is also conveyed by the band members

themselves. I wanted the viewer to feel close to them without knowing much about them. Listening via their respective ears, taking the time to observe them as they themselves observe and listen allows us to enter into their interiority and to be in the world with them. For example, the huntress is a person who I immediately found interesting, first of all because a young woman of 20 who is both a huntress and musician, is rather unusual. She is always distant in the band, always observing and always a bit apart from the others, which gives her a rather mysterious allure. She always seems to be listening, watching. The first sequence with her when she is tracking in the woods orients the viewer's attention right from the start and tells us to listen up. It is at this moment that the music composed by Rhys is heard for the first time, a kind of enchanting and subliminal layer coming from nature, making ready to invade the musicians and the film.

How did the work go with Rhys Chatham, who composed the original music?

I met Rhys in May 2012, three months after starting shooting, when I was looking for a composer for the film. I wanted this music, very different from what the band was used to playing, to be the original soundtrack of the film without quite letting on who was interpreting it, right up to the end. I wanted the film to be colored with a kind of strangeness, for its movement to reach out towards an abstraction, an outline, for it to be transformed into a "trip" in some way. Rhys' music, a minimalist drone that comes into being in layers of sound, conveys this feeling by its trance-like hypnotism. I also knew that this experience was going to take the musicians where they were not necessarily used to going, because playing drone music requires enormous concentration, an outstanding capacity to listen and a great deal of precision. In contrast to appearances, this music is very difficult to play. Rhys also had experience in working with amateur musicians and with large ensembles. He contacted Patrick Erard, the bandleader, before the film to learn about the band's composition and the players' musical ability before composing an initial draft of the score, entirely for trumpet. Then he wrote the entire piece. He of course was present during the first rehearsals and then during the recording, and made small adjustments to the score working with Patrick. Meeting Rhys, I think, allowed the musicians to get a better grasp of the music, which had at first left them rather dubitative, but which they learned to appreciate and then finally

greatly enjoyed playing during its recording and then listening to it when they discovered the film!

Have the band members seen the film? Did they like it?

We organized a private projection in Pontarlier just before summer, before the film team even saw it, because it had just left the lab two days before! Their reaction, that of those the most concerned by the film, was therefore the first. Showing a documentary to its main protagonist is a very special moment. And this time, they were 70! Many giggles were heard, along with some unexpected reactions, and the first spontaneous feedback was very enthusiastic. But I think the end result surprised them quite a bit. Not because the film did not follow a highly conventional form (I had warned them ahead of time), but because as musicians, and having seen me film countless concerts and rehearsals, many thought they would see more sequences where we see them playing. Some also regretted a shot of the entire band, which would have allowed all those we don't see in the film to be seen at least once, and also to show the viewer how big the band is, which is atypical. Given their involvement in the project, their point of view is necessarily specific. But I felt that my approach had been understood, respected and appreciated, that this experience had, like me, marked and enriched them all.



CREW

Les Films du Poisson & Bande à part Films

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Angoa

with the participation of **Cinéforum** and the support of **Loterie Romande**

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Production : **Estelle Fialon (Les Films du Poisson)**

Coproduction : **Lionel Baier (Bande à Part Films)**

Associated Producteurs : **Yaël Fogiel and Laetitia Gonzalez (Les Films du Poisson)**

Jean-Stéphane Bron, Ursula Meier and Frédéric Mermoud (Bande à Part Films)

Editing : **Gwénola Héaulme**

Original Score : **Rhys Chatham**

Sound : **Pascale Mons**

Sound editing & mixing : **Olivier Touche**

Recording and mising of music : **Cyril Harrison**

Length : **60 minutes**

Country : **France**

Original Format : **HD**

Diffusion Format : **DCP**



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