



PIERRE NINEY      PAULA BEER

**F R A N T Z**

A FILM BY  
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## Synopsis

In a small German town after World War I, Anna mourns daily at the grave of her fiancé Frantz, killed in battle in France. One day a young Frenchman, Adrien, also lays flowers at the grave. His presence so soon after the German defeat ignites passions.



## Note to journalists

Please refrain from revealing Adrien's secret to the audience.

# Interview with François Ozon

## What made you want to make FRANTZ?

In a period obsessed with truth and transparency, I've been wanting to do a film about lies. As a student and admirer of Eric Rohmer, I've always found lies to be exciting fodder for storytelling and filmmaking.

So I was mulling it over when a friend told me about a play written by Maurice Rostand right after World War I.

I investigated further and learned that the play had been adapted for the cinema in 1931 by Ernst Lubitsch under the title BROKEN LULLABY. My first reaction was to scrap the idea. How could I top Lubitsch?!

## What made you change your mind?

Seeing Lubitsch's film reassured me. It's similar to the play and takes the point of view of the young Frenchman, whereas I wanted to take the point of view of the young woman who, like the audience, doesn't know why this Frenchman is mourning at her fiancé's grave. In the play and the film, we know his secret from the beginning, after a long confession scene with a priest. I was more interested in the lie than the guilt.

Lubitsch's film is beautiful and well worth seeing through the prism of the pacifist, idealistic context of the post-war era. I included several of his scenes. It's his least well-known film, his only drama, and it bombed at the box office. His direction is admirable and highly inventive as always. But it's the film of an American director of German descent who didn't know a second world war was looming on the horizon. He made an optimistic film of reconciliation. The First World War was such a bloodbath that many politicians and artists in France and Germany spoke out loudly for pacifism. "Never again!" My approach, as a Frenchman who did not experience either of those two wars, was obviously going to be different.



[You added a whole second part to the original story.](#)

In the play and the Lubitsch film, the lie is never revealed to the parents and the Frenchman is accepted into the family. He takes the place of the dead son, plays violin for them, and the ending is a happy one.

In my film, Adrien also tries to become part of the family but at a certain point, his lie and his guilt weigh too heavily on him and he tells Anna everything. In contrast to the Lubitsch film, Anna can only accept his lie after a long personal journey, which I explore in this second part and which begins with Adrien leaving and Anna falling into a depression.

[Unusually for a melodrama, Adrien does not fall in love with Anna. Or if he does, he's unable to face up to it.](#)

Anna and Adrien share the loss of Frantz, but can they share feelings of love? Anna thinks so at first, but when she learns the truth it suddenly seems impossible. She gradually starts to believe in it again, but then she's confronted with another reality in France. The beautiful thing about Anna is her blindness. She knows what Adrien has done, but what hurts her most is her repressed desire for him, so ultimately she goes to find him, wanting to believe in their love despite everything. Adrien's desire, on the other hand, is never clear to him. I wanted to play with classic melodramatic themes like guilt and forgiveness, then veer into a desynchronization of feelings.

[As he invents a friendship with Frantz, Adrien seems to be grappling with some kind of desire for him.](#)

As Anna says to Adrien's mother, "I'm not the one tormenting your son. It's Frantz." Frantz the German soldier, but also Frantz his alter ego, someone who could have been his friend or perhaps even his lover.

["Don't be afraid to make us happy," says Frantz's mother to Adrien, encouraging him to play the violin for them.](#)

Frantz's parents want so badly to open their arms to Adrien, to believe in the fictional Franco-German friendship and the possibility that Adrien could replace their dead son, that they subconsciously accept the lie. It all starts with a misunderstanding. Adrien surrenders to it, and it turns out to be a way for him to get to know Frantz. The lie makes them all feel better. It's a lie that heals. This happens a lot

with grief - you take much needed comfort and pleasure in talking about the person in idealized terms. For Adrien, giving Frantz's loved ones this pleasure is also a way for him to temporarily assuage his guilt.

[Adrien is a complex character.](#)

Adrien is a tormented young man. He's lost. Lost in his desires, lost in his guilt, lost in his family. We know very little about him in the beginning. He's quite mysterious. As the film progresses, Anna is increasingly disappointed in him. The trauma of war has left him powerless. He lacks courage and is languishing in a neurosis he cannot escape. His obsession, or love, for Frantz has become toxic and he's wallowing in it.

[In a certain sense, Anna only truly begins to mourn for Frantz after Adrien leaves Germany. She places a framed picture of him on his grave and slips into a depression.](#)

Up until then, Anna was being strong for Frantz's parents. At one point Frantz's father says to her, "When we lost Frantz, you helped us survive. Now it's our turn." But Adrien's lie and his departure bring Anna's pain back to the surface, and this time, the abandonment feels more cruel. Perhaps in part because it's more erotic with Adrien.



Anna is not just working through her grief and toward forgiveness, she's also discovering and learning about love.

The script is designed like a Bildungsroman, a coming of age story. It takes us not into a world of dreams or escape but rather follows Anna's sentimental education and illustrates her disillusionment with reality, lies and desire in the manner of a rite of passage. Anna was supposed to be with Frantz. Theirs was a romantic, youthful love, perhaps even one of convenience, never consummated. The flame was doused, then suddenly, miraculously, along comes another Prince Charming. This time, it's more passionate. Adrien is not the right person either, but through him, Anna will delve into some of life's big themes (death, love, hatred, alterity).

The beginning of the film focuses on Anna. We watch her as she goes back and forth between Frantz's grave and her house.

I love to film people going from one place to another. It's a concrete way of suggesting a character's journey, and it places the film and its protagonists in a geographical setting. I needed to show that small German town, the itineraries between the house, the cemetery and the Gasthaus. Watching Anna going from place to place, we think about her and begin to understand her progression. In the beginning, Anna



is basically treading water, going around in circles in that little town. Then she embarks upon her big voyage, the one that takes her to France, and beyond appearances.

FRANTZ features many of your themes: grief (UNDER THE SAND), the ambiguous pleasure of storytelling, (IN THE HOUSE), the sentimental education of a young woman (YOUNG & BEAUTIFUL)... But you're also exploring many new things here.

Subconsciously, a lot of my obsessions no doubt crept into this film. But tackling them in a different language, with different actors, in places other than France, forces me to reinvent myself and hopefully gives those themes new power, a new dimension. There were a lot of exciting challenges in this film. I'd never filmed war before, a battle scene, a small German town, Paris in black and white, in German...

It was very important to me to tell this story from a German point of view, from the losing side, through the eyes of those who were humiliated by the Treaty of Versailles, so I could illustrate how Germany at that time was fertile ground for spreading nationalism.

We've seen evidence of your interest in Germany before, in WATER DROPS ON BURNING ROCKS, adapted from a Fassbinder play.

Germany is the first foreign country I went to as a child and I've retained a fascination for it, along with a persistent interest in its language, history and culture. For a long while I've been wanting to explore the fraternal bond these two European peoples share, the friendship between them. This film provided the perfect opportunity.

I speak German well enough to hold a conversation and direct my cast and crew. Beyond that, I trusted the actors, I asked them for help and advice with the dialogue. They were very cooperative.

How did you go about recreating the historical context?

Very differently than in ANGEL, where I sought to create the world of my young heroine's imagination, her dream world. For FRANTZ, there was no deliberate attempt at stylization. On the contrary, we had to anchor the decor in realism. The period is ideal for that, because there are so many photographs and films from the time. But I soon realized the

budget would not allow to me to attain the level of historical accuracy I was aiming for. When my production designer Michel Barthélémy and I were scouting locations we found many interesting possibilities, but they all required expensive interventions. Then one day, I got the idea of switching the photos we'd taken into black and white. Miraculously, all of our locations suddenly worked beautifully and, ironically, we also gained a greater level of realism and veracity, since all of our references from the period were in black and white. It was an artistic and budgetary choice that the producers had some difficulty accepting, but in the end I think the film really benefits from it.

#### What made you decide to inject color into certain scenes?

Working in black and white for the first time was an exciting challenge, but it was also heartbreaking, as my natural tendency is to emphasize color and technicolor. It was thus difficult for me to give up color in certain locations and scenes. Especially the scene in nature, where they walk to the lake, which is a reference to German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. So I decided to use color as a dramatic element in flashbacks and certain scenes of lying or happiness, to suggest life bleeding back into this gray period of mourning. As blood runs through veins, color irrigates the black and white of the film.

#### Where did you shoot the German part of the film?

We were right in the middle of Germany, about 200 kilometers from Berlin, in Quedlinburg and Wernigerode for the small town and Görlitz, at the Polish border, for the cemetery. All are located in former GDR and have stayed pretty much as they were. They didn't suffer much damage and haven't been renovated like so many towns in West Germany.

#### How did you find Paula Beer?

I held auditions in Germany and met many young actresses. Paula had a mischievous spark and at the same time, possessed a certain melancholy. She was quite young, only 20, but her acting was very mature. She could embody both the innocence of a girl and the power of a woman. She has an impressive range and the ability to immediately bring a character to life. And she's incredibly photogenic.

#### And Pierre Niney?

I'd been struck by his vivacity and quirky charm in 18 YEARS OLD AND RISING and was impressed with his theatre work at La Comédie Française and his performance in the title role of YVES SAINT-LAURENT. Pierre is a great character actor with an extremely broad range. He's natural at comedy, he's got great comic timing. But he's just as comfortable playing dramatic, tortured roles, which was important for Adrien. He's also got something quite rare in actors his age: he's not afraid to show his feminine side, his vulnerability, his flaws, both in his voice and in the way he moves.

#### How did you choose the German parents?

I'd seen Ernst Stötzner, who plays the father, in a film by Hans-Christian Schmid. I love his face and the natural authority that emanates from his physique and his voice. With his white beard, he represents German authority, rigor and severity. Watching him in black and white, I sometimes got the impression I was watching an actor in a Dreyer film, or Max von Sydow in a Bergman film.

To compensate for the rectitude and rigidity of the father, I needed to find a very different actress to play the mother, someone who emanated maternal warmth, someone more human, more Latin. Marie Gruber was truly a revelation. I love her voice, her kindness, her spirit, her expressiveness. She reminds me of Giulietta Masina.

#### And Johann von Bülow in the role of Kreutz?

He's got the thankless role of the "bad guy" in the film. He represents the German petite bourgeoisie who feel humiliated and are becoming increasingly nationalistic in their hunger for revenge. At the same time, he's in love with Anna and suffers at being rejected. Johann was perfect. He has the necessary subtlety and ambiguity as an actor to portray all of this without lapsing into caricature.

#### And for Adrien's mother?

I wanted a strikingly beautiful woman to play this aristocrat who is a bit of a spider and a castrating mother. We sense she's nobody's fool. She's spun her web and is manipulating those around her. She wants at all costs to keep her son for herself and get him away from the "little German girl." Cyrielle

Clair did a beautiful job portraying both the natural, frosty elegance of the character and the incestuous love lurking beneath.

#### Adrien's fiancée Fanny is a bit of a suffragette.

Fanny is an ambiguous character. We don't know quite what to make of her. She may seem fragile and likeable, but she knows what she wants, and that's to hang on to her man. She's no shrinking violet. Her clothing and hairstyle are tomboyish and far more modern than Anna's. Anna feels like a country bumpkin in comparison, even more foreign, relegated to her image as "the little German girl." The film is like a house of mirrors. It juxtaposes Anna and Fanny, France and Germany, Frantz's house and Adrien's chateau, the patriotic anthems of the two countries, etc.

#### Tell us a little about Philippe Rombi's score.

There is a starkness at the beginning of the film, both dramatically and musically. The music is used sparingly, discreetly highlighting dramatic tensions. Gradually the mood grows more romantic to accompany the budding love story, Anna's hopes, and then her disillusionments. The music follows her journey, with occasional romantic swells in the spirit of composers from the period like Mahler and Debussy.

#### What about the given name Frantz, which also gives the film its title?

It came naturally, like an echo that sounds like France. In German the name is spelled without the "t" - a typical French mistake. The Germans were charmed and amused, so I decided not to correct it. I told myself that Frantz had added the "t" himself because he was such a big Francophile.

#### At the end of the film, though Anna perpetuates the lie to protect Frantz's parents, she's through with pretense as she contemplates another form of lie - art - in Manet's *Le Suicidé*.

It was important to me to end on that painting. Art is also a lie; an attempt to make suffering bearable. But it's a noble lie, a virtual lie, a lie that can help us live.

Rostand's play mentions a Courbet painting of a boy with his head thrown back. I looked through Courbet's work, but everything I found was too romantic, not violent enough for my taste. Then, while researching paintings of the dead,

I ran across this obscure Manet painting called *Le Suicidé*. It's incredibly modern. After showing it in black and white, I reveal it in all its colors, notably the red of the blood staining the white shirt of the suicide victim. In color, the painting takes on its full force, reminding us of the tragedy between Frantz and Adrien and of the whole morbid post-war period, with its two million dead in France and three million dead in Germany, and its mutilated, psychologically traumatized survivors, tempted by suicide.

It was crucial to me that we should feel the weight of the period's history. Anna had to confront that painting, which evokes that history (even though in reality the painting was done in 1881 and illustrates a suicide of passion). It brings everything into focus.

#### "It makes me want to live," says Anna as she gazes at it.

I love the irony of that. Confronted with this painting of a suicide victim, Anna has finally reached the other side of the mirror, in spite of the war, the drama, the dead, the lies. She's grown up, surmounted adversity, taken a long journey and acquired a great deal of strength. Through Frantz and Adrien, she has grieved for a lost love and an imaginary love. Now maybe she can meet and love the right person.



## François Ozon Filmography

- 2016 FRANTZ
- 2014 THE NEW GIRLFRIEND
- 2013 YOUNG & BEAUTIFUL
- 2012 IN THE HOUSE
- 2010 POTICHE  
THE REFUGE
- 2008 RICKY
- 2007 ANGEL
- 2006 A CURTAIN RAISER (short)
- 2005 TIME TO LEAVE
- 2004 5X2
- 2003 SWIMMING POOL
- 2002 8 WOMEN
- 2001 UNDER THE SAND
- 2000 WATER DROPS ON BURNING  
ROCKS
- 1999 CRIMINAL LOVERS
- 1998 SITCOM
- 1997 SEE THE SEA



## Interview with Pierre Niney

### What was your reaction to the script for FRANTZ?

I got caught up in the story and all the lies that kept leading me down the wrong track. The script lies to us just as the characters in the film continuously lie to each other. I was all the more surprised because I wasn't expecting a story like this from François Ozon. I was fascinated by the idea that a lie can be redemptive or destructive. And I took an instant liking to my character Adrien, the impossible love story and the "classic" style of the film, in which the latent nationalism of the post-war period draws a real parallel with what's going on right now.

### Tell us about your first meeting with François Ozon.

It was very straightforward. We read through the screenplay. We were working together from the get-go. François has a very personal vision but he's also quite lucid about what works and what doesn't. I enjoyed that first reading. I sensed that despite its formal structure, the script was organic and could evolve according to our shared impressions and desires.

### And Paula Beer?

We met during a day of screen tests. There were a number of actresses. We were doing the lake scene in Germany and the aborted kiss at the end of the film. Paula really stood out. She had the grace and sincerity of her character. She's a great actress. Her work in the film is remarkable and stays with us long afterwards. She's so classy and down-to-earth, and very direct in her acting. Working with her was easy and inspiring.

### How did you approach your character?

I see Adrien as a sensitive young man who has been broken by the war. I had to convey the character's mystery through physical manifestations of his tortured, vulnerable state. It was a veritable tightrope walk to keep from revealing too



much in the first part of the film while always bearing in mind the enormous trauma he had experienced. Before and during the shoot, I spent a lot of time studying Egon Schiele's paintings. There's a pain in his portraits of young men that spoke to me of Adrien. The role was a challenge. I had to learn to play violin, speak German... and waltz! The violin was particularly hard. The three pieces I had to play were all quite difficult, and François insisted on filming both of my hands, the fingering and the bow at the same time. I worked extensively with a coach in order to achieve the final result.

#### [What was it like acting in German?](#)

Acting in German was also a real challenge. Paula Beer helped me a lot. I was working on another film before *FRANTZ* began shooting, and when I had down time on that set, I'd listen on my iPod to recordings of my lines that she'd made for me. That was truly the best. She has a lovely soft voice and she's an excellent actress. It was so inspiring, and perfect for tackling a language that tends to have a bad reputation in terms of its sound and flow. Acting in German turned out to be a real pleasure. One of the scenes I most enjoyed doing is the one where Adrien tells the story of his imagined visit to the Louvre with Frantz. It creates a strong bond between the Frenchman and the German, which is also one of the subjects of the film.

#### ["Don't be afraid to make us happy," says Frantz's mother to Adrien, encouraging him to play violin for them. How would you analyze that statement?](#)

That's one of the reasons Adrien is lying to them. The Hoffmeister family and Anna have a clear need for love and life in this time of pain and grief. That's what pushes Adrien to concoct his friendship with his victim. He feels a need to give them that gift, to make them happy again. He lies to them to bring them back to life, even for just an instant. I found this salutary view of lying very compelling.

#### [Frantz is the source of Adrien's guilt but perhaps he has also awakened a homosexual desire in Adrien. How did you approach your character's ambiguity?](#)

I loved that ambiguity and tried to inject little details over the course of the film to get the audience wondering about the nature of Adrien's feelings for Frantz. He has experienced real trauma and grown to love Frantz. Is it brotherly love? Or

is it a mirror effect, because he could see his own anguish in Frantz's eyes? Or could it be passionate love? One of the film's great strengths is how, beneath its classical beauty, it keeps us guessing about Adrien. Right up to the end, with his mother and fiancée in France. What are their intentions? Is the mother's behavior with regard to her son malevolent?

#### [To get into the role, did you do any research on that generation of young men who were sacrificed on the battlefields of WW1?](#)

To more fully understand Adrien's trauma, I plunged back into what I knew had been a horrific war. Archives bear powerful witness to the physical and psychological damage done to both German and French soldiers in the Great War. Like Adrien, vast numbers of very young soldiers were hurtled into the war's terrifying violence. I was moved to learn that the absurdity and horror of that war occasionally became so clear to them that they would hold spontaneous ceasefires in the trenches. The film also poses the question: How can a nation send its pacifist sons to their deaths?

#### [Tell us about working with François Ozon.](#)

I love the way François works. He's so attentive to the actors. He works quickly to leave time for the acting, so we feel fortunate and work hard in return. I love the way he stays with us during the scenes. First of all, he frames his own shots - he's not sitting in a nearby tent gazing into a screen. He's got his eyes on us and murmurs gentle suggestions while the camera's rolling: "Close your eyes", "Look at her"... Sometimes it felt like rehearsing in the theatre, where everything's open and anything's possible.

#### [Adrien is a bit like a ghost. He wasn't killed in the war, but something inside him has died. Maybe his ability to love?](#)

I think he still has that ability. He says as much when he confesses to Anna in the cemetery. Getting a glimpse of Frantz's life and meeting his family and fiancée has made him love Frantz all the more. Anna too, indirectly and awkwardly, as evidenced by their first and last kiss at the train station at the end. He's attracted to her. He can see the potential for them to fall in love. But he's broken, he knows the wrong he has done and can never forget it. He feels love for her, but he won't let himself surrender to it. The fact that he's gone home to his mother and is going to marry his childhood friend is

perhaps a form of atonement, a punishment he inflicts on himself. I love how the film offers so many possibilities and raises so many questions about the true motivations of each character, even the secondary ones.

## Pierre Niney Filmography

- 2016 THE ODYSSEY by Jérôme Salle  
FRANTZ by François Ozon  
FIVE by Igor Gotesman
- 2015 INSIDE OUT by Pete Docter (voice)  
ALTAMIRA by Hugh Hudson
- 2014 A PERFECT MAN by Yann Gozlan  
YVES SAINT-LAURENT by Jalil Lespert
- 2013 IT BOY by David Moreau
- 2011 JUST LIKE BROTHERS by Hugo Gélin  
THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO  
by Robert Guédiguian  
18 YEARS OLD AND RISING  
by Frédéric Louf
- 2010 LA FONTE DES GLACES (short)  
by Stéphane Raymond  
by Julien Lacheray (short)  
ROMANTICS ANONYMOUS  
by Jean-Pierre Améris  
BLACK HEAVEN by Gilles Marchand
- 2009 BICI, LA MUSE ET LA MITRAILLETTE  
by Dominique Laroche  
ARMY OF CRIME by Robert Guédiguian
- 2008 LOL by Lisa Azuelos  
THE UNDERCOVER WAR by Nicolas Steil
- 2007 SCHOOL'S OUT by Frédéric Berthe



## Interview with Paula Beer

Tell us about your first meeting with François Ozon.

I was on vacation when the production company contacted me. Three days later, they sent me two scenes and the next day I did the audition. I didn't know the script and it was my first audition in French, so it was quite unnerving. But as soon as I was with François, everything went fine. We hit it off well. We worked on the two scenes together and he told me about the story, Anna, and the film he wanted to make.

Two weeks later, I was in Paris for an audition with Pierre Niney. And a few days after that, François called to tell me I'd be playing Anna.

What was your reaction to the script?

It's exciting to read a script when you know you'll be playing a particular character. I was extremely moved by the story and the important themes it touches upon - honesty, love, loss, lies, letting go, determination, the will to live - all subtly rendered, with a palpable feeling of vulnerability and yet a certain lightness seeping into the friendship between Anna and Adrien, adding to its complexity. Anna's personal growth is amazing. In the beginning she's a quiet person who, after the death of her fiancé, is kind of adrift. When she meets Adrien, she rediscovers the joie de vivre she'd felt before Frantz died and truly blooms, making the blow delivered when she learns the truth hurt all the more. Then, in the second part of the story, she goes on to develop remarkable strength. I was so happy to play this wonderful role.

How did you prepare to play a character who learns about love and becomes a woman?

Anna evolves a great deal in the story, so it was important for me to understand the different stages she's going through. How did the war change her life? What was she like before? What is Adrien's effect on her? What desires is he awakening?



It was critical for me to understand her relationships with those around her, the pain she'd felt since Frantz died and, in contrast, her desire to live and love again.

### One important stage for Anna begins when Adrien tells her the truth.

Yes, and it's an unimaginable shock for her. She decides to spare her in-laws that pain and carries the burden of the lie and the heavy responsibility that comes with it all on her own. It's a crucial moment that raises many questions. Why is she protecting Adrien?

### What was it like shooting in France?

It was wonderful. It's subtly different than on German shoots, it's hard to explain. It was such a great pleasure. The crew was fantastic!

As soon as we began to rehearse, I could tell acting in French was going to be a big challenge for me. I've experienced so little in that language, and my body doesn't react the same way to French words as it does to German words. I worked hard at achieving an emotional connection so I could be free with my acting, even while delivering written lines.

### How does François Ozon direct his actors?

I discovered a whole new method of working. François got me very involved early on, during the preparation stage. He would ask my opinion, how I felt about my character and the story. I think that was his way of showing me he trusted me, which made me feel freer as we went into the shoot. I didn't realize it right away, but I was actually quite unsettled by the amount of freedom he gave me. But we soon found a way to communicate and the work got easier and was very enjoyable.

### Did he have you watch any particular films?

He asked us to watch Haneke's *THE WHITE RIBBON* to get us into the harsh, strict context of the time, and Kazan's *SPLENDOR IN THE GRASS* because it's a very romantic story. The two young lovers are beautiful together. François no doubt hoped to capture something of their youthful fervor, feverish love, powerful desire and the rising tension as the outside world interferes. I think François sought to combine the visions of these two very different films in *FRANTZ*.

### What was it like working with the other actors?

It was wonderful working with Ernst Stötzner and Marie Gruber, two amazing actors who are also such sweet people. I felt like they were protecting me. Like parents! And it was fascinating to work with Pierre Niney, who can communicate so many things with just the slightest change of expression. Acting with such finesse is truly an art.

Pierre and I acted in tandem, as we did with each of the other actors. We formed a real team, each of us conjuring up real emotions to bring our characters to life. In that sense, I think *FRANTZ* is a very honest film. Just like Anna!

### Indeed, Anna is the only one who reaches a point where she embraces the truth and confronts her desires. When Adrien kisses her at the train station at the end, do you think he, too, is finally ready to accept the truth of their feelings for each other?

I really wonder whether Anna still desires him. I'm not sure. I think she's grown up too much for Adrien. He sparked her desire, she was moved by him, she fell in love and embarked on a long journey to find him again. In fact, her journey was so long she went past him! Of course when she finds Adrien's family she's happy to see him again, but something doesn't quite gel between them. Adrien is stuck in his situation, he's not strong enough to get out. And Anna has her life to live.

### What does Manet's painting *Le Suicidé* mean to you?

In this story, Adrien has killed a part of himself, and that painting evokes his symbolic suicide. I love Manet, and art from that period in general. *Le Suicidé* is provocative and heavy with meaning, but it also has the sensitivity of the Impressionists. I love that combination.

### "It makes me want to live," says Anna as she gazes at it.

That comment is wide open to interpretation. I think Anna is saying that even when someone or something has died, you can still be like the Phoenix and rise from the ashes. She'd done it herself when she was half-dead and then, thanks to Adrien, found the strength and the will to come back to life and make that trip to France. At the end of the film, Anna has learned so much. She's completely transformed. She's a new woman, ready to set out for new horizons.

## Paula Beer Filmography

- 2016 FRANTZ by François Ozon
- 2015 4 KINGS by Theresa von Eltz
- 2014 THE DARK VALLEY  
by Andreas Prochaska
- 2013 THE TASTE OF APPLE SEEDS  
by Vivian Naefe
- 2012 LUDWIG II by Marie Noelle and Peter Sehr
- 2010 POLL by Chris Kraus



## Interview with Ernst Stötzner

Did you know the films of François Ozon?

Yes, I'd seen 5X2, WATER DROPS ON BURNING ROCKS and SEE THE SEA and really liked them. I was very touched that he offered me the role. And I was moved by the screenplay. I felt like I was reading a Julien Green novel, like Adrienne Mesurat, about a woman whose powerful feelings of love are buried deep within her, she can't externalize them. The characters in FRANTZ also have strong feelings buried deep within, feelings they are unable to express because they've shut down.

Especially your character, at least at the beginning of the film.

Yes, it's impossible for that father to talk about the pain he feels at having lost his son. It's as though his own life has ended. And yet he must go on living. But how? You can never recover from the death of a child. Then, suddenly, with the arrival of Adrien and the possibility that he may one day be Anna's new love, the father feels hopeful again. Adrien's arrival opens up a whole new range of possibilities. Thanks to him, the family can begin to express what they're feeling and start living again.

How did you feel about François Ozon approaching the story from a German point of view?

I was touched by that, of course! It's a very interesting period, especially when seen through the eyes of an outsider, and in the way that François does it. FRANTZ is a film about the guilt of a generation. It's all the more critical that we examine that generation as the one that followed it - my parents generation - was that of Nazi Germany.

How did you approach your role?

I feel like I've been carrying this story inside me forever. When I was young, I read a lot of books about the First



and Second World Wars in an attempt to understand how my parents' generation could've gotten to that point. I was trying to figure out who I was, trying to understand how I would've reacted. So this role came very naturally to me. It's a part of who I am. I felt I knew how to play the character before I even began, like a melody you've always known that suddenly comes back to you. The film's subject matter is certainly daunting, but I had the perspective of my generation. I know it won't happen to me.

#### What was it like working with François Ozon?

It was the first time I'd worked with a French filmmaker. It was very unusual, especially as we were shooting on film, which has become quite rare. I hadn't acted in front of a 35mm camera in a long time. And François is always behind the camera, he frames his own shots. I don't remember ever seeing a director do that before!

#### What does that change?

It's more direct. Usually you're turning to another person - the cameraman - to see if it was good. The cameraman often makes more of an impression on you than the director. With François they were one and the same person. He was truly the film's eye!

#### How does he direct his actors?

François doesn't say much. He's a man of few words, the occasional yes or no. It's all about subtlety with him - the way you say a word, a slight change in your intonation. It may not seem important, but suddenly he'll suspend everything, open up new possibilities. It's very powerful. François plays with nuances in a way that lets you know when he's feeling what you're trying to express. That's really nice. When you're an actor, you're never sure whether what you're feeling inside is coming across. With François, you know!

#### At the beginning you embody the father figure, authority, rigor... then, slowly, your character becomes more human.

You think so? Good! My character is very withdrawn, that's his temperament. All those times you see him opening up, that was thanks to François. He coaxed it out with small details. I was happy like a kid in a candy store, making this film. Sometimes I worried I might be behaving quite unprofessionally!

#### And working with Paula Beer, Marie Gruber and Pierre Niney?

We felt close right away. Especially Paula, Marie and I. From the moment we met, Marie was my wife and Paula was my dead son's fiancée. I couldn't help feeling we were family. I identified with my role to such an extent that it felt different with Pierre. Pierre/Adrien was the foreigner, separate from us. So I never felt the same bond with him that I felt with "my family members!" Adrien and Frantz's father are like magnets. They're both attracted to and wary of each other. It's hard for an actor to separate life from the role. Beyond a certain point you can't control it anymore. Everything gets mixed up.



## Ernst Stötzner Filmography

- 2016 **FRANTZ** by François Ozon  
**BIENVENUE IN MEINEM NEUEN LEBEN**  
by Matthias Tiefenbacher  
**ALONE IN BERLIN** by Vincent Perez
- 2015 **BECKS LETZTER SOMMER** by Frieder Wittich
- 2013 **SILENT SUMMER** by Nana Nuel  
**MY SISTERS** by Lars Kraume
- 2012 **HOME FOR THE WEEKEND**  
by Hans-Christian Schmid
- 2011 **SUMMER WINDOW** by Hendrik Handloegten
- 2010 **THE COMING DAYS** by Lars Kraume
- 2009 **THIS IS LOVE** by Matthias Glasner
- 2006 **KLIMT** by Raoul Ruiz  
**EIN DICHTER IN DER FAMILIE** de Johannes Klaus
- 2004 **ZWISCHEN NACHT UND TAG** by Nicolai Rohde
- 2003 **DIE KLASSE VON '99** by Marco Petry
- 2000 **THE LONELINESS OF THE CROCODILES**  
by Jobst Oetzmann
- 1995 **UNDERGROUND** by Emir Kusturica
- 1992 **NEVER SLEEP AGAIN** by Pia Frankenberg
- 1989 **SPIDER'S WEB** by Bernhard Wicki
- 1983 **CLASS ENEMY** by Peter Stein



## Cast

ADRIEN **Pierre NINEY**

ANNA **Paula BEER**

HOFFMEISTER **Ernst STÖTZNER**

MAGDA **Marie GRUBER**

KREUTZ **Johann VON BÜLOW**

FRANTZ **Anton VON LUCKE**

ADRIEN'S MOTHER **Cyrielle CLAIR**

FANNY **Alice DE LENCQUESAING**



# Crew

Written and directed by **François Ozon**  
Loosely based on **"Broken Lullaby"**  
**de Ernst Lubitsch**  
In collaboration with **Philippe Piazzo**  
Produced by **Eric & Nicolas Altmayer**  
Co-produced by **Stefan Arndt & Uwe Schott**  
Director of Photography **Pascal Marti**  
Production Design **Michel Barthélémy**  
Costume Design **Pascaline Chavanne**  
Head Makeup Artist **Lili Rametta**  
Head Hairstylist **Franck-Pascal Alquinet**  
German Casting **Simone Bär**  
French Casting **Sarah Teper & Leïla Fournier**  
Extras and Bit Parts Casting **Anaïs Duran**  
Original Score **Philippe Rombi**  
Editor **Laure Gardette**  
Sound Engineer **Martin Boisseau**  
Sound Editor **Benoît Gargonne**  
Sound Mixer **Jean-Paul Hurier**  
Production Manager **Aude Cathelin**  
First Assistant **Mathieu Schiffman**  
Script Supervisor **Lydia Bigard**  
Stills photographer **Jean-Claude Moireau**



Painting "Le Suicidé" by Edouard Manet  
"Poem Chanson d'Automne" by Paul Verlaine

