



— **KEEPING
MUM**
(MAMAN DÉCHIRE)

A film by Emilie Brisavoine



PRESSKIT



80 MIN

FRANCE

2023

1.85

DOLBY 5.1

FRENCH

SCREENINGS IN KARLOVY VARY

MON. 3rd, 7:00 PM @ Karlovy Vary Municipal Theatre (Official)

TUE. 4th, 3:00 PM @ Čas Cinema (Official)

WED. 5th, 1:00 PM @ Lazne III Cinema (Official)

THU. 6th, 2:00 PM @ Cinema B (Official)

— KEEPING MUM

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SYNOPSIS

Emilie attempts to understand the mystery of her universe: her mother Meaud. Magical grandmother, broken child, punk mother, spontaneous feminist, she fascinates as much as she disrupts.

How do you give your children the love that you were denied yourself?

How do you nurture your inner child when having gone through childhood trauma?

Jump into an intimate odyssey, an intergalactic journey into our own common psyche.



A CONVERSATION WITH EMILIE BRISAVOINE



After your film *Oh La La Pauline!* (Pauline s'arrache) in 2015, selected at ACID during the Cannes Film Festival, you are back with *Maman Déchire*, tell us, where did this idea come from?

After *Oh La La Pauline!* I spent 4 years writing a screenplay for a feature film. It was the story of a burned-out veterinarian who couldn't have children and had to make peace with her dead mother in order to move on. After 50 rewrites of the script and all the feedback I got from various distributors and funding committees, I had to face reality: I no longer had any desire for this project, I didn't even know what I wanted to tell nor how anymore.

I realized that writing a story on a Word file wasn't for me, it was too theoretical. I need to go through living matter to create. To film, to be physically and emotionally moved by what I capture. I need to let things happen and reveal themselves. I need to be surprised and jostled by reality.

So I decided to return to documentary and grab my camera to film my own mother, rather than write about a theoretical mother. I'd just had a baby and my mother was very present in my life at this time. Because of our history and her personality, my mother was really the most fascinating person in my life. She's a real movie character: charismatic, eccentric and funny. She knows how to stage herself in an innate way, and tell incredible stories with her unique cheekiness. Not having grown up with her, I thought this project would bring us closer together, that it would be something strong to share together. She's had a difficult life, and I wanted to shine a light on her in some way by giving her this film.

Can you tell us more about how you work, between writing and editing, archives and the present?

The writing of the film really took place during editing with my editor Karen Benainous. It was a long work in progress lasting 2 years, going back and forth between filming and editing. Over the course of successive re-shoots and edits, my view of my mother evolved, as did the nature of the film. From a portrait of my mother, it became an inner investigation into my relationship with her. The film is the result of this process of distancing and realization.

In the process, I found my childhood diaries, which brought to light everything I'd swept under the carpet about my past with my mother. Reading them brought up anger and pain that I'd never been able to express and that I'd been repressing. I found that this little girl expressing herself in writing was much more intelligent and authentic than the adult I had become. I decided to give her a central part in the film and to tell the story of how the past, when repressed, infuses the present.

And that's how the dialogue between the family's VHS archives of the past and the rushes of the present began to structure the narrative. I also used extracts from old broadcasts about the cosmos to set the scene for my inner world and visually materialize the emotions that were running through me. There are also extracts from YouTube videos, Skypes, iPhone videos, photos and text messages. I like to combine rushes of various kinds. This creates a multi-dimensional pattern that mirrors the way I see human consciousness, which constantly navigates between past and present, real and mental, conscious and unconscious.

Your brother Florian also plays an important part in the film, which makes sense since you both suffered from the same situation as children, and even now. Did he support you in this project right from the start?

Florian has always supported and trusted me. He understands the cathartic dimension of my artistic approach. Initially, I was only filming my mother, so I didn't think Florian would be part of the project. But then I started talking to him about what I was going through. We've always shared endless introspective conversations, which we both find fascinating. We're very close, even though we don't see each other much.

With Covid and the confinements happening, restaurants had to close and, for the first time in his life, Florian, who is a cook, no longer worked 15 hours a day. His long-buried childhood fears came to the surface. It was a very trying time for him. I decided to film him, too, in his inner tsunamis. In this project, we are each other's witnesses to our childhoods, which we certainly lived through side by side, but in different ways. Making this film enabled us to give meaning to what we had experienced, to transform it, and to put some awareness into it, so as not to pass on our traumas to our children.

Seeing a man who has the courage and sincerity to share his doubts, his frailties and even his tears often overwhelms viewers. I've noticed that men in particular identify with him. This kind of nakedness is very rare in this Instagram world, where you have to prove to the whole world that you're a flawless, brilliant person with a dream life. This totalitarianism of the good scares the hell out of me, given the psychic reality of most people. For me, the role of cinema is to show human nature in all its shades of light and shadow, and without all those filters.

There's a very important message in your film: to forgive is to free yourself. Did you manage to free yourself and your brother?

Forgiveness is a complex issue that I tried to explore. We often think that by receiving forgiveness from the person who has offended us, we can free ourselves. Unfortunately, forgiveness doesn't always come. So the film asks the question "What do we do with the harm we've suffered?". The philosopher Simone Weil says that a wicked act is a transfer to another person of the degradation we carry within ourselves. So the solution is to deal with our own wounds. Stop denying them, and finally look at them, heal them, transform them. You have to take responsibility for repairing yourself. This can take different forms. Florian started working with a therapist. Since then, he's stopped having anxiety attacks.

On my side, I made a film, an artistic object of distancing and sharing. It was hard for me to realize that there would be no happy ending in this film. To accept the complexity of reality, its frustration, its irreparability. And to mourn the loss of my illusions. But in the end, I think it's the most liberating thing I've done in my life.

And what has also deeply freed me is to have been able to set up a production and directing system that gives me immense creative freedom. This has been possible thanks to the unfailing support of Nicolas Anthomé, my producer, with whom I was able to maintain a demanding and stimulating artistic dialogue.

The two scenes with music give us a chance to pause from the hatred, confrontations etc., and these scenes are really great! How did you make these choices?

I wouldn't say there's hatred in the film, but rather violence. It's a violence born from the powerlessness to reach out to others, from the love we seek in vain, the love we're not

always able to give or receive. Indeed, the film sometimes conveys painful emotions, but as in life, there's a whole range of intermediary and contradictory emotions, from joy and melancholy to humor and triviality. Nothing is ever black and white, and it was important to create situations and characters that existed in all their contradictions. For example, one of the musical scenes you mentioned is a video I made for Mother's Day to the song Maman la plus belle du monde. Despite the fact that I'm reconsidering my problematic past with my mother, I can't help but throw her a great Mother's Day to please her, in the hope of getting her assent and attention.

Music is very present in the film, and in particular many Debussy pieces, whose delicacy, lyricism, nostalgic and magical dimension were well suited to the exploration of the psyche.

Apart from these scenes, there's also some humor in your film. Do you think it was necessary?

Humor is essential. It's the least we can do when dealing with such deep, complex subjects. Humor allows us to distance ourselves and look at things that hurt or shame us with

kindness. It creates a bond and empathy with the viewer. It adds vitality, contrast and rhythm to the story. Generally speaking, humor helps us to free ourselves from despair and bounce back. With my editor Karen Benainous, we made sure that all three characters were treated equally with depth and humor. My mother's violence is counterbalanced by her humor. Florian's hypochondria is shown in an almost burlesque way, as are my cowardice in dealing with my mother and my wanderings in personal development.

What will be your next film about? After your sister and mother, perhaps your father?

No offense to my father, but I don't think he's as cinematic a character as my mother. I can't see him being filmed for a hundred hours, that's not his thing. And making films about your family, when you're filming something other than birthdays and Christmas trees, is pretty trying. For the past year, I've been filming an actress friend who's been asking herself a lot of questions about her profession. I don't know where this will lead us yet, but it will be wild for sure!

BIOGRAPHY

EMILIE BRISAVOINE



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After studying Applied Arts and working as a designer, Emilie Brisavoine drew pictures of the world, women and dogs. She then appeared in Justine Triet's first feature AGE OF PANIC (LA BATAILLE DE SOFERINO).

OH LALA PAULINE (PAULINE S'ARRACHE) is her first feature film, a documentary about her family presented at Cannes ACID. KEEPING MUM (MAMAN DECHIRE) is her second feature.

2015 *Oh La La Pauline! (Pauline s'Arrache)* Feature Film – selected in ACID at Cannes

CAST & CREW

Director	Emilie Brisavoine
Screenplay	Emilie Brisavoine
Director of Photography	Emilie Brisavoine, Tom Harari
Editing	Karen Benainous
Assistant editing	Coline Léauté
Sound	Emilie Brisavoine
Sound Edit	Manuel Vidal
Sound Mix	Simon Apostolou
Original Music	Benoît Daniel – © Edition La Fugitive
Color Grading	Gadiel Bendelac
Mixeur	Simon Apostolou
Voice-over director	Laura Thomassaint
Production	Bathysphere Productions
Producers	Nicolas Anthomé
Executive Producer	Léa Baggi
Country	France
International Sales	Best Friend Forever

CAST & CREW

Director	Emilie Brisavoine
Producer	Bathysphere – Nicolas Anthomé
Editor	Karen Benainous
Sound Editor	Manuel Vidal
Mixer	Simon Apostolou
Color Grading	Gadiel Bendelac
Executive Producer	Léa Baggi
Chief Financial Officer	Antoine Stehlé
Laboratory	Micro Climat, Laboratoires Harbor Studio
Sound Editing	Sono Sapiens
With the support of	La Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and the participation of the CNC
With the support of	Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée
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