Marie’s Story
A film by Jean-Pierre Améris

“Wonderfully intimate...touching and insightful!” -The Hollywood Reporter

“Carré...plays her determined character with moving obstinacy and grace.”
-Variety

France / 2014 / Drama / French with English Subtitles
94 min / 1.85:1 / Stereo and 5.1 Surround

Official Film Webpage

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FULL SYNOPSIS
At the turn of the 19th century, a humble artisan and his wife have a daughter, Marie, who is born deaf and blind and unable to communicate with the world around her. Desperate to find a connection to their daughter and avoid sending her to an asylum, the Heurtins send fourteen-year-old Marie to the Larnay Institute in central France, where an order of Catholic nuns manage a school for deaf girls. There, the idealistic Sister Marguerite sees in Marie a unique potential, and despite her Mother Superior’s skepticism, vows to bring the wild young thing out of the darkness into which she was born. Based on true events, Marie’s Story recounts the courageous journey of a young nun and the lives she would change forever, confronting failures and discouragement with joyous faith and love.

SHORT SYNOPSIS
At the turn of the 19th century, a humble artisan and his wife send Marie, their deaf and blind fourteen-year-old daughter, to the Larnay Institute in central France where an order of Catholic nuns manage a school for deaf girls. There, the idealistic Sister Marguerite sees in Marie a unique potential, and vows to bring the wild young thing out of the darkness. Based on true events, Marie’s Story recounts the courageous journey of a young nun and the lives she would change forever.

LOGLINE
Based on true events, Marie’s Story recounts the journey of a blind, deaf girl and the young nun who would change her life forever.

ASSETS
Official trailer:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HG-bDNEumw

Downloadable hi-res images:
FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER:
Variety Piazza Grande Award – Locarno Film Festival
Winner – Audience Favorite, World Cinema Silver – Mill Valley Film Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION:
Aspen Film Festival
Mill Valley Film Festival
Chicago International Film Festival
Cine-World Film Festival
Three Rivers Film Festival
St. Louis International Film Festival
Locarno Film Festival
AFI – EU Film Festival
Palm Springs International Film Festival
Portland International Film Festival
Sedona International Film Festival
Cleveland International Film Festival
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the second half of the 19th century, The Larnay Institute, a convent near Poitiers, France and directed by the Sisters of Wisdom, brought together a group of deaf-blind children to give them an education and teach them to communicate through sign language. Larnay gained worldwide renown after the publication of Louis Arnould’s *A Soul in Prison*, in which he graphically described the method pursued by Sister Marguerite for the education of Marie Heurtin, deafmute and blind by birth.

Marie Heurtin, often seen as the French Hellen Keller, arrived at Larnay in March 1895 at the age of 10. She was in an even worse state than the American girl: struggling and howling like a wild child, carried by her arms and feet, it was impossible to predict if she could learn anything and how, since she had neither sight, hearing nor power of speech.

After many months of struggle and hard work, Sister Marguerite finally made a first step in teaching her sign language by establishing a link between an object and a sign for Marie to designate it: a pocket knife which the girl showed a great affection for. The nun would take it away from her and demonstrate the sign for it in Marie’s own hands. Through these fingers flowed patience and faith, and soon Marie would understand the connection between object and sign for this first word.

Sister Marguerite worked with young Marie until she learned all the signs of the deaf-mute alphabet, as well as abstract concepts – young, old, life and death - thought to be incomprehensible to someone in her state. Marie Heurtin would go on learn Braille, use a typewriter, sew, knit, learn history, geography, how to tell time, and become a teacher and guide to other young women who entered the Larnay Institute, which still operates today. Her story is considered a miracle.

Additional Resources

A 1909 profile of Marie Heurtin and Sister Marguerite from The Sacred Heart Review: [http://newspapers.bc.edu/cgi-bin/bostonsh?a=d&d=BOSTONSH19090130-01.2.21](http://newspapers.bc.edu/cgi-bin/bostonsh?a=d&d=BOSTONSH19090130-01.2.21)

Additional photos of the Larnay Institute, Marie Heurtin and Sister Marguerite [http://marieheurtinetlesautres.eklablog.com/les-heurtin-gallery10746](http://marieheurtinetlesautres.eklablog.com/les-heurtin-gallery10746)
DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

This project began with my fascination for the story of Helen Keller. In my research, I came across the lesser known story of Marie Heurtin, and I immediately decided to visit the Larnay Institute in Poitiers, where she lived in the 19th century.

The Institute is no longer a religious establishment, yet remains a center for deaf-mute children. In light of the scientific progress of the last hundred years, I was surprised to find that the Institute was still in operation.

It is difficult for me to describe how I felt when I met these children who could only communicate by touch and who were eager to feel my hands and face as soon as I arrived. I felt quite powerless trying to communicate with them.

I also met these children’s parents who explained the challenges they faced. Exactly like Marie Huertin’s father over a century ago, some were told by doctors that their child was mentally challenged and would never be able to communicate. The parents despair ended when they were introduced to the instructors of the Larnay Institute who taught their children how to make contact with the world.

Marie Heurtin’s case, which depended on hard work and tenacity, far more than mysticism, is considered a miracle, and the techniques Sister Marguerite invented are used today. Ever since my visit, I have felt compelled to tell Marie’s Story.

People who are considered different, and consequently marginalized, is a central theme in my films, such as Romantics Anonymous. What I find thrilling in Marie Heurtin’s story is the exceptional character of Sister Marguerite and her unshakeable conviction that she will succeed in releasing young Marie from her inner prison.

The bond created between Marie and Sister Marguerite is nothing less than a nun experiencing something which, by definition, she is not intended to experience: maternal love. This bond includes an inevitable separation which represents the final stage in young Marie’s learning process.

The film I had in mind was a luminous one. I wanted to film Marie’s hands touching animals, trees and faces, moving moments which turn out to be the invention of a language and the story of liberation, a rebirth.

- Jean-Pierre Améris
CREW BIOGRAPHIES

JEAN-PIERRE AMÉRIS, Director
JEAN-PIERRE AMÉRIS is an accomplished French filmmaker. A writer and director, he began making films in the early 1990s. Since then, many of his films have been featured at the distinguished Cannes Film Festival, including Poids léger in 2004’s Un Certain Regard category. Actress Isabelle Carré starred in Romantics Anonymous, a 2010 romantic comedy, and the two again collaborated on his latest drama, Marie’s Story.

FILMOGRAPHY

2014 Marie’s Story
2012 The Man Who Laughs
2010 Romantics Anonymous
2006 Call Me Elisabeth
2004 Lightweight
2001 C’est la vie
1999 Bad Company
1996 Les aveux de l’innocent
1993 The Marriage Boat
CAST BIOGRAPHIES

ISABELLE CARRÉ, Sister Marguerite
Isabelle Carré is a French actress, born of a designer and a sculptor. She was living alone by the age of 15 and spent the latter half of the eighties studying acting in some of Paris’ best drama schools. In the nineties she earned a trio of nominations for the César Award for Most Promising Actress before winning the award for Best Actress for her role in the Alzheimer drama Se souvenir des belles choses. She has since been nominated a further four times and has acted in films by some of France’s most acclaimed directors, such as Academy Award winner Diane Kurys (The Children of the Century), Anne Fontaine (Entre ses mains), Alain Resnais (Private Fears in Public Places) and François Ozon (Hideaway).

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY
2014 Marie’s Story
2010 Romantics Anonymous
2009 Hideaway
2008 Anna M.
2006 Private Fears in Public Places
2005 Entre ses mains
2003 Les sentiments
2002 He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not
2001 Se souvenir des belles choses
2001 Beautiful Memories
1999 Children of the Century
1997 La femme défendue
1995 Le hussard sur le toit
1992 Beau Fixe
ARIANA RIVOIRE, Marie Heurtin
Ariana Rivoire is a young resident of the National Institute for Deaf Youth of Chambéry, in France. When touring similar institutes looking to cast the lead role in Marie’s Story, director Jean-Pierre Améris spotted her during lunchtime, since she had forgotten to sign up for an audition. He chose her on the spot. She hopes Marie’s Story will help create a better understanding of the deaf and the deaf-mute.

FILMOGRAPHY
2014 Marie’s Story

BRIGITTE CATILLON, Mother Superior
A professional actress since the early seventies, Brigitte Catillon has split her talents between film and theatre. As one of France’s most renowned supporting players, she has appeared in a number of César-winning films, such as the classic comedy The Reader (1988, Michel Deville), the Academy Award-nominated The Taste of Others (2000, Agnès Jaoui), the thriller Tell No One (2006, Guillaume Canet) and Claude Sautet’s romantic drama Un coeur en hiver, for which she earned her only nomination. She has is also a two-time Molière nominee (the French Tony Awards) for her work in the plays Eva and Nono, in 2007 and 2011 respectively.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY
2009 Don’t Look Back
2006 Tell No One
2004 The Spectator
2002 A Housekeeper
2000 The Taste of Others
2000 The Enchanted Interlude
2000 Merci pour le chocolat
1999 À mort la mort !
1997 J’irai au paradis car l’enfer est ici
1991 Un coeur en hiver
1991 Louis, l’enfant roi
1988 The Reader
CREW

Director Jean-Pierre Améris
Screenwriter Jean-Pierre Améris
Producers Philippe Blasband
Dennis Carot
Sophie Revil
Director of Photography Virginie Saint-Martin
Pascal Metge
Emmanuel Sajot
Production Manager
Editor Anne Souriau
Casting Tatiana Vialle
Production Design Franck Schwarz
Art Direction Vincent Dizien
Makeup Emmanuelle Brechet
Alexandra Bredin
Costume & Wardrobe Daniele Colin-Linard

CAST

Sister Marguerite Isabelle Carré
Marie Huertin Ariana Rivoire
Mother Superior Brigitte Catillon
Sister Raphaelle Noemi Churlet
Mr. Huertin Gilles Treton
Ms. Huertin Laure Duthilleul

About Film Movement
Launched in 2002, Film Movement is a full-service North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films, based in New York City. Film Movement has released more than 250 feature films and shorts from 50 countries on six continents, including top prize winners from Sundance, Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Berlin, Tribeca and other prestigious festivals. Film Movement releases its films through numerous distribution channels, including thousands of art-house cinemas, universities and libraries; home video; television outlets; Cable Video on Demand (including its very own branded cable VOD platform—Film Festival on Demand—available in over 40 million US homes); In-flight Entertainment; and broadband outlets. For more information, please visit www.filmmovement.com.

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