

wide
PRESENTS

Letters of a
Portuguese Nun
A film by Bruno François-Boucher

KAPFILMS PRESENTS SÉGOLENE POINT IN **LETTERS OF A PORTUGUESE NUN** WITH NICOLAS FERMAN MUSIC BY L'ACADEMIA DOS SINGULARES EDITED BY OLIVIER MAUFFROY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JEAN-PAUL SENGUÉDÉ EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ARNAUD KLEIN AND SÉBASTIEN THE LETTERS BY MARIANA ALCOFORADO SCREENPLAY BY BRUNO FRANÇOIS-BOUCHER DIRECTOR OF ARTS BRUNO FRANÇOIS-BOUCHER COSTUME DESIGNER ANNE BAUTIER

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EYE ON FILMS

SYNOPSIS

“An actress is getting ready to come on stage to impersonate Mariana Alcoferado, a young nun from the convent of Beja who wrote fiery letters to her french lover, an officer of Chamilly. The actress, now acting as Mariana, will take us into a timeless travel which exceeds the boundaries of her imagination...”





MARIANA ALCOFORADO

Mariana Alcoforado (1640-1723) is a portuguese religious nun from the Nossa Senhora da Conceição convent in Alentejo, Portugal. She is the author of the five portuguese letters sent to Noël de Chamilly, an officer who fought on Portuguese soil under the orders of Frederic de Schomberg during the Independance War. There is a debate around this attribution, these letters being published usually with Gabriel de Guilleragues as the author.

The love between Mariana and de Chantilly, whom she saw for the first time at the window of her convent while assisting to military manouvres, took place between 1667 and 1668. Mariana was part of the powerful Acolforado family, and, therefore, scared of the possible consequences, Chamilly left Portugal pleading the disease of a brother. He promised to come back and get her. It is during this vain expectation that she wrote these letters, telling the same repeated story: hope at first, followed by uncertainty and finally abandonment.



These heart wrenching writings fascinated the French nobility used to their conventions. They brought in this frivolous society the bitter taste of sin and pain, while the publication remained unknown. Marina became a writer for the convent, then was made Abbess and died of old age.

THE ENIGMA

For more than 3 centuries, the Portuguese letters are presented as a riddle. Who really wrote them? A woman? A man? Who was capable of expressing so frankly the wound of a woman seduced and abandoned in a convent by a French gentleman?

LETRES PORTUGAISES.



A PARIS,
Chez CLAUDE BARBIN, au
Palais, sur le second Perron
de la Sainte Chappelle.
M. DC. LXIX.
AVEC PRIVILEGE.

« There are still controversies around the origins and the authenticity of this one-way correspondence. I see it as authentic because no man (and certainly the coward Guilleragues) has been able to go that far into the description of feminine love madness » PHILIPPE SOLLERS

The publication of these fiery letters created a stir in all Europe. Dated from December 1667 to June 1668, these five letters, written by a portuguese nun to complain about her abandonment, constitute some of the rare historical documents of human experience that reveal a powerful passion that did not loose any of its strength during more than three centuries. Short, passionate and lyrical, the letters show the successive steps of faith, doubt and despair through which the narrator went through. Their sincerity and absolute tenderness, as well as the feelings of despair have provoked surprise and admiration of well-known people such as the marquise of Sévigné.

The letters also kept insipring many prestigious artists as Modigliani and Matisse. Many films were also drawn from these writings: *Marina Alcoforado* (1965) by Felipe Cazals, *Las cruels* (1979) by Vicente Aranda, *Cartas de amor a una monja portuguesa* (1977) by Jesús Franco, *Cartas de amor de una monja* (1978) by Jorge Grau, *Mariana Alcoforado* (1980) by Eduardo Geda, and *La Religieuse portugaise* (2009) by Eugène Green.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Following my research on the origins of the Portuguese Letters, I wanted to validate the possibility that Mariana Alcoforado was the author of these writings. Moreover, by seeing the paintings of the portuguese painter Josefa de Obidos, and especially Marie-Madeleine (1650), I discovered some similarities with the actress Ségolène Point, chosen to play the role of Mariana. Conceived as a painting, the movie itself tends to be an interpretation of the letters, shot on the same locations as where they have been written, while respecting closely the original writing of 1668. . It was shot on the same locations in the convent of Notre Dame de la Conception, in Beja, Portugal and near the famous « Janela de Mértola » (« Mértola window »), also called « Mariana's window », and from where the nun was supposed to have seen for the first time the french Officer.



Its dramatic intensity and its creation appeared to me as basis powerful enough to make a film capable of touching today's public. The emotion that arouses from the text and from the modern interpretation of Ségolène Point did not loose of its freshness. The identification process with the feelings of Mariana seem to operate the same magic even with the three centuries that separates us from the writings. It is also a tribute to the theatre and its comedians, who interpreted long before the letters before their cinematographic adaptation. The movie tends to be a gateway from the writing, to the stage, and to the screen. The drama, the play and the light are on a quest for the truth, to rehabilitate Mariana on one hand, and on the other hand, to show today's public one of the masterpieces of european literature. The movie is an experience that enables us to grasp a forgotten turmoil that has been lost in time.

BRUNO FRANÇOIS-BOUCHER

Graduated from the French school for the performing arts called the Conservatoire Libre du Cinéma Français, he first started as André Téchiné, Patrice Leconte, Alain Corneau and Luc Besson's assistant director. He then works as director on several short-films, awarded in numerous festivals, among which Coup de pompes, Jeu de vilains, Fils de personne and Grain de folie, presented in official selection in Teheran. Les lettres portugaises is his first feature film.



SÉGOLÈNE POINT



Formed at the Actor's Studio of Andréas Voutsinas, she started on the stage in R.W Fassbinder's (*Blood on a cat's neck*) and Bertol Brecht's (*Fear and misery of the third Reich*) plays, as well as in the 7 travels of Sinbad, Tennessee William's *Glass Menagery* or *Foxfire: Confessions of a Girl Gang* by J.C. Oates.

She played in a dozen of short films and TV features, directed by Claude Goretta and Patrick Jamain, before starring in 2010 in the main role in Jean Cocteau's *Bel Indifférent*, in the Montmartre Galabru theatre, the will reveal her talent. In 2011, she interprets during 8 months in Paris on stage Darius Milhaud's *Le journal d'une femme de chambre*, and performed greatly in the role of Celestine on the exhalirating script of Octave Mirbeau.

In 2012 she played the role of Mariana Alcoforado in the theatre of the Cité Universitaire, in an adpatation of Bruno François-Boucher.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

ORIGIN

France - 2013

LENGTH

75mn

PRODUCER

KapFilms

SCRIPTWRITER /DIRECTOR

Bruno FRANCOIS-BOUCHER

ORIGINAL TEXT

Mariana ALCOFORADO – Gabriel de Guilleragues

STARRING

Ségolène POINT (The actress/Mariana)

AND

Nicolas HERMAN (The officer from Chantilly)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jean-Paul SEAULIEU

EDITING

Olivier MAUFFROY

SOUND EDITING

Stéphane SOYE

SOUNDTRACK

Francisco RICARDO

PROCESS/ FORMAT

HD – 1/85

INTERNATIONAL SALES

WIDE

KANIBAL FILMS

DISTRIBUTION

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