Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 12th November
7:00pm at Wildwood

De la Comedie-Francaise

Cert 75 mins France 2026

Directors; Martin Darondeau, Bertrand Usclat
Stars; Pauline Clement, Laurent Stocker, Julian Frison

At the oldest active theatre company in the world there is one golden rule: the play is NEVER cancelled. Unfortunately for producer Nina (Pauline Clément), everything is unravelling just three hours before the premiere of her first production – an ambitious retelling of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Her lead actor is stuck on a train, tensions are exploding, passions flaring, equipment breaking down and egos are clashing. With panic setting in and the clock ticking Nina must hold things together at all costs. Will the show go on?



Comédie-Française, national theatre of France and the world's longest established national theatre. After the death of the playwright Molière (1673), his company of actors joined forces with a company playing at the Théâtre du Marais, the resulting company being known as the Théâtre Guénégaud. In 1680 the company that has survived as the Comédie-Française was founded when the Guénégaud company merged with that at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, to become the only professional French company then playing in Paris.

The French Revolution caused a division of loyalties within the company; and in 1791 one group, led by the great actor François-Joseph Talma, established separate headquarters at the present home of the Comédie-Française in what is now the Place de Théâtre-Français in the rue de Richelieu, while the more conservative group, under the leadership of René Molé, remained at the original site as the Théâtre de la Nation. The latter organization fell into disfavour with the public, and at least two of its productions provoked riots that resulted in the imprisonment for almost a year of the players involved. In 1803 the Comédie-Française was again reconstituted, this time under Napoleon's administration. A decree issued by him while in Moscow in 1812 established the rules under which the Comédie-Française was to function, primarily maintaining the classical repertoire of Corneille, Racine, and Molière.

The organization of the Comédie-Française is based on the original Confrérie de la Passion ("Confraternity of the Passion"), an association of Parisian burghers founded in 1402 for the purpose of presenting religious plays. Under this type of organization, which prevails to this day, each member holds a share of the profits within a democratically structured unit that allows for shared duties and responsibilities. Membership is granted on the basis of merit. After a year's trial period, during which time the actor makes his formal debut, the member becomes a *pensionnaire,* or probationary member, with a fixed salary. After an indefinite period of time, which may range from several weeks to several years, he may gain full membership as a *sociétaire,* replacing those members who have either died or retired. Retirement with pension is awarded after 20 years of service.

Throughout its long history, the Comédie-Française has exercised a lasting influence on the development of French theatre, arts, and letters. It has given the world some of the theatre's most illustrious actors: Adrienne Lecouvreur, Mlle Clairon, Henri-Louis Lekain, François-Joseph Talma, Mlle Rachel, Sarah Bernhardt, and Jean-Louis Barrault. Although it remains a theatre primarily rooted in past traditions, the Comédie-Française, after the appointment of Pierre Dux as its head in 1970, also began to introduce the work of new playwrights, directors, and stage designers.

Source Encyclopedia Britannica (not AI)