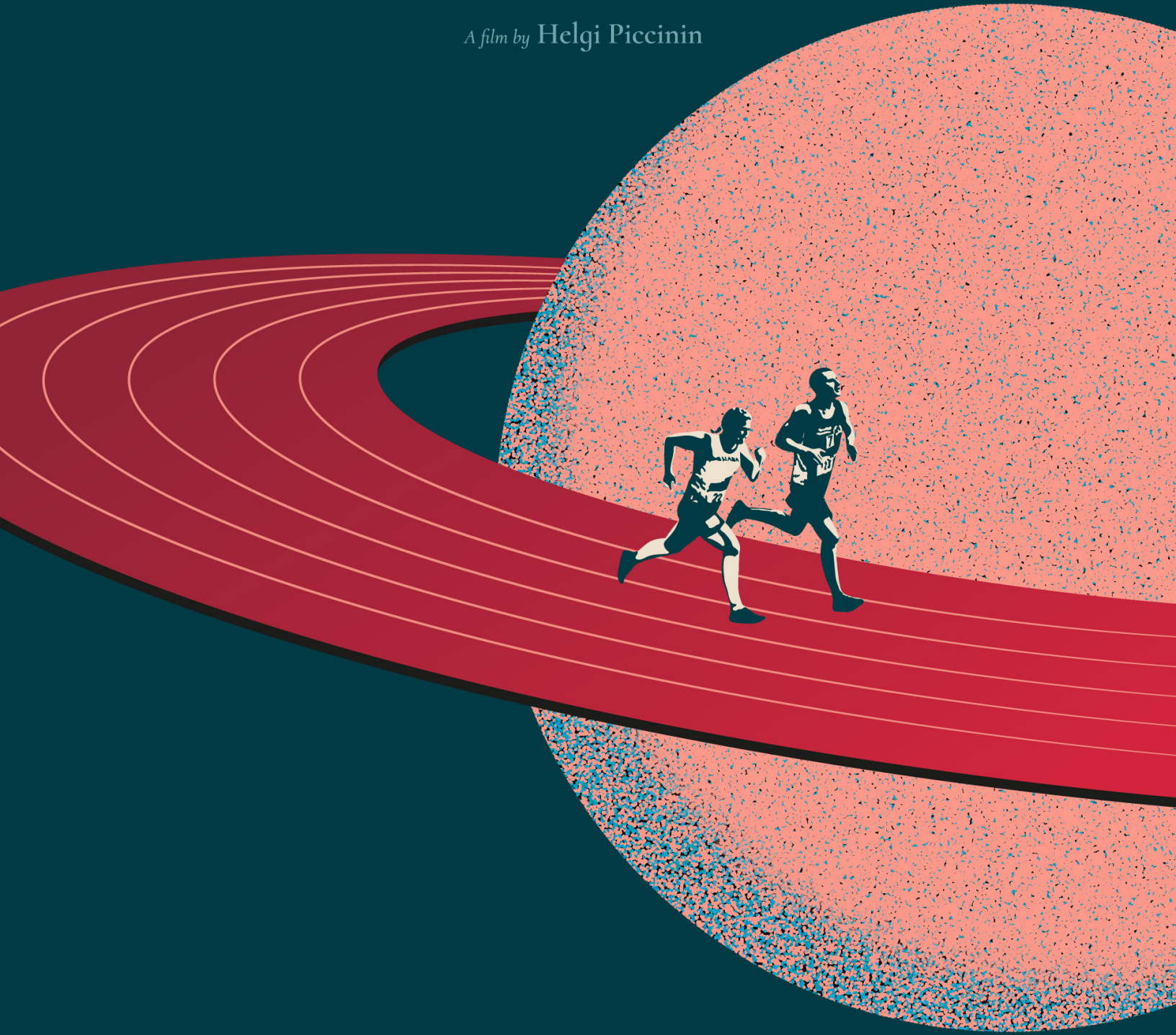




A film by Helgi Piccinin



# CHAMPIONS

*cinematography* Helgi Piccinin *sound recording* Philippe Miquel  
*editing* Juliette Guérin *sound design* Jérémy Jones and Benoit Dame  
*sound mix* Benoit Dame *music* Pierre-Luc Lecours *produced by*  
Philippe Miquel *written and directed by* Helgi Piccinin

Produced in association with  
unis tv #CBC



## SYNOPSIS

***Champions*** is a documentary in which the director follows the quests of his autistic brother Stéphane and his atypical friend Audrey. Born with an intellectual difference, Stéphane and Audrey want to prove to the world that they too can win medals. They found a passion in athletics competitions at the provincial and national levels and have now set their sights on the international stage. For three intense years marked by training and two championships, we follow them until the end of their ambitious dream, that of competing at the Special Olympics World Games in Dubai. Intertwining both the sport odyssey and the human portrait, this feel-good documentary offers an immersion into a fascinating world where athletes with an intellectual difference are at the forefront.



## THE TEAM

**Direction, Script and Cinematography:** Helgi Piccinin

**Editing:** Juliette Guérin

**Sound Design and Mix:** Benoît Dame

**Sound Editing:** Jérémie Jones

**Music:** Pierre-Luc Lecours

**Sound:** Philippe Miquel

**Producer:** Philippe Miquel

**Production:** Les Vues de l'Esprit

**Distribution:** Les Films du 3 Mars

## TECHNICAL SHEET

**Year:** 2020

**Duration:** 94 minutes

**Versions:** Original French and English version with English and French subtitles

**Country of production:** Canada

**Filming Locations:** Canada and United Arab Emirates



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I have dreamed of entering my little brother Stéphane's mind since the day my parents told me that he was autistic. He was 4 years old, and I, 15. Over the years, I would try to understand his behavior, which seemed to me both unique and mysterious. It was a difficult and sometimes frustrating task. The impression that a world separated us had finally taken hold and my efforts at true fraternal bonding began to gradually fade.

The desire to tell his story came to me when he started to get passionate about running when he was a teenager. It was after one of their sports competitions that I would come to know, the Special Olympics organization. In addition to winning first place, Stéphane also revealed himself in a whole new light: a long-distance runner with natural talent. I, his brother who had always loved, encouraged, and defended him, had nevertheless underestimated him. Moved, I decided to follow him in stride. Once on the track, I entered into a fascinating universe in which he did not run alone. I met Audrey, an athlete from Quebec who quickly became my friend. Her strength of character and her outgoing nature complemented my brother's sweetness and timidity. Both had the ambition to become the fastest runners in the world. With them as champions, I decided to make this film.

The Olympian essence of this story allows me to explore the theme of intellectual difference from a surprising but positive angle. From autism to Down's syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder and fetal alcohol syndrome, the diversity of athletes gathered on the field at Special Olympics gives us a unique insight into the richness of the human spirit. This atypical marriage of personalities, through sports competition, is unique. I was both touched by the beauty of this diversity and at the same time, confronted with my own prejudices. It gave me the strength to reconnect with my brother and the drive to share the stories of other champions of his caliber.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Since 2005, Quebec independent filmmaker Helgi Piccinin has developed a unique and intimate approach to documentary cinema, showing a profound sensitivity to the poetry of the everyday and to the themes of identity and difference. He has created several short and medium-length films which have been widely distributed and

immerse his viewers in unusual or uncharted universes. Educated in Quebec and France, he gained rich field experiences, first travelling the world and then shooting films in Quebec, Canada, and the United States. Featuring his autistic brother, his first full-length documentary, **Champions**, reflects an even more personal approach.

## FILMOGRAPHY

**Belief Disbelief** (2016, 15min, documentary)

**Roof Runners** (*Coureurs des toits* - 2015, 40min, documentary)

**In Saint-Sauveur Neighborhood** (*Dans le coin du Saint-Sauveur* - 2012, 10min, documentary)

**Of Insects and Men** (*Des insectes et des hommes* - 2011, 10min, documentary)

**La Voz del padre** (2010, 9min, fiction)

**Peace Only** (*La paix seulement* - 2008, 7min, fiction)

**Hypocracy** (*Hypocratie* - 2005, 30min, documentary)

## PROTAGONISTS



**Stéphane Piccinin**, 25 years old,  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

This very timid man who stands tall at 1.85m, both naive and playful in his character, is my autistic younger brother.

Stéphane lives in Halifax with his parents, a dog and two cats. He is obsessed with running. In his neighbourhood, everyone knows him. He is the Forrest Gump from around the block seen running 6 km almost every day, from his small house to the gas station and back. Beyond the sport, his passions are old video games (Mario Brothers and Donkey Kong in particular), ping-pong, and basketball. When he runs, he is in complete control and appears to be the happiest boy in the world. His goal: the 800m and 1500m medals.



**Audrey Vincent**, 25 years old,  
Longueuil, Quebec, Canada

Audrey lives in Longueuil (south of Montreal) with her single mom and two fat cats. With a neurodevelopmental disorder she speaks loudly in a shrill voice, often saying whatever is on her mind, without filter or tact. But her colourful and genuine personality is also

what makes her so charming and once we learn how to deal with her, we discover a beautiful soul, and a tender naivety. When she is not running, she spends her time with horses. Endowed with an innate gift for these beautiful animals, she has been riding since childhood and works in the same stable where she "whispers to horses" five days a week. Her mother raised her alone with very modest means and fights to ensure that nothing gets in the way of her daughter's ambitions and dreams. Her goal: the 800m and 1500m medals.

## PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY



At 14, Philippe Miquel directed his first documentary about graffiti on Super 8 film. Since then, he's been involved in the production of more than a hundred documentaries as producer, director, research assistant, screenwriter, cameraman, sound recorder, or editor. He regularly works with L'inis and UQÀM as an instructor. He won the 2010 Louise-Spikler grant for excellence from L'inis.

Beside all that, Philippe has worked as a defence lawyer, a photo reporter, a crown attorney, a project manager, a writer, and a plain legal language consultant. Philippe has also closely collaborated with Raymonde Provencher on the production of the documentaries **Café Désirs**, about sexuality in Algeria, and **Déchirements**, about forced marriages in Quebec. He is currently directing the documentary **Portes tournantes**, about people with mental health issues who are stuck in the criminal justice system.

# STILLS





It is important to distinguish the different types of Games called "Olympic". At first, there are the traditional Olympics, the most high international sports competition which takes place every four years. At the end of these, the Paralympic Games take place. Same formula, but they imply however athletes with physical disabilities. Finally, there is a third sports movement, less known to the general public, poorly publicized and with a distinct philosophy. This is the Special Olympics. They bring together people in a situation of intellectual disability, aged from 8 to 88, in 170 countries. The big difference with the previous two Olympic organizations, is that the focus is on participation, surpassing oneself and encouragement, rather than pure sporting performance. Canada has close to 50,000 athletes involved in 18 official sports.

It is within the Canadian wing of this third institution that I integrate to follow athletes who play on teams in Nova Scotia and Quebec.

**"Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."**

**Special Olympics motto**

## CONTACTS

### DISTRIBUTION

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### FACEBOOK PAGE:

[facebook.com/gochampionsgo](https://facebook.com/gochampionsgo)

### INSTAGRAM:

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