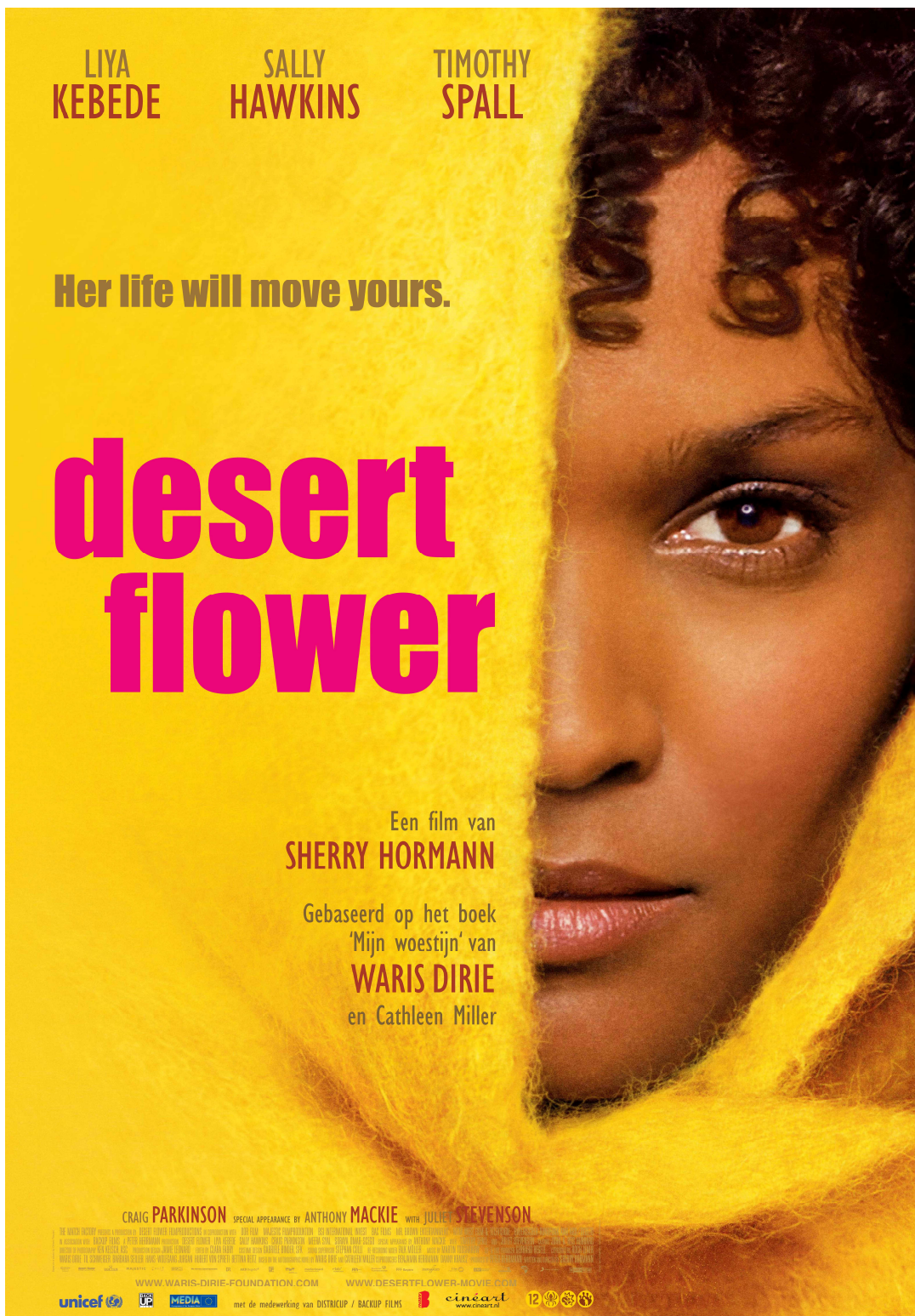


Persmap



LIYA
KEBEDE

SALLY
HAWKINS

TIMOTHY
SPALL

Her life will move yours.

**desert
flower**

Een film van
SHERRY HORMANN

Gebaseerd op het boek
'Mijn woestijn' van
WARIS DIRIE
en Cathleen Miller

CRAIG PARKINSON SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY ANTHONY MACKIE WITH JULIE STEVENSON

THE DESERT FLOWER: A FILM BY SHERRY HORMANN. CAST: LIYA KEBEDE, SALLY HAWKINS, TIMOTHY SPALL, JULIE STEVENSON, ANTHONY MACKIE, CRAIG PARKINSON. MUSIC BY JAMES NEWTON HOWARD. COSTUME DESIGNER: JANE BURNETT. EDITOR: JANE BURNETT. PRODUCTION DESIGNER: JANE BURNETT. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: JANE BURNETT, JANE BURNETT. PRODUCED BY JANE BURNETT. WRITTEN BY JANE BURNETT. DIRECTED BY SHERRY HORMANN. DISTRIBUUT: CINÉART. WWW.DESERTFLOWERMOVIE.COM

WWW.WARISDIRIEFOUNDATION.COM WWW.DESERTFLOWERMOVIE.COM

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Desert Flower

Een film van Sherry Hormann

Engeland / Duitsland / Frankrijk · 2009 · drama · 35mm · color · 124' · Dolby Digital · 1.1:85

DESERT FLOWER vertelt het waargebeurde verhaal van een arm nomadenmeisjes uit Somalië dat een wereldberoemd model wordt. Een heroïsche verhaal van een sterke vrouw die op een bijzondere wijze de strijd aangaat tegen vrouwenbesnijdenis.

Waris Dirie, geboren als woestijnnomade in Somalië, vlucht op haar twaalfde als ze hoort dat haar vader haar wil uithuwelijken. Na een barre tocht door de woestijn komt ze terecht in Londen. Uit angst terug te moeten keren naar Somalië gaat ze haar eigen weg. Ze leert lezen en schrijven, woont illegaal en werkt als schoonmaakster bij een fastfoodketen.

Dan wordt ze ontdekt als model en gaat een internationale carrière tegemoet.

Maar op het hoogste punt van haar carrière, besluit ze tijdens een interview te spreken over de meest traumatische gebeurtenis uit haar leven: de meisjesbesnijdenis die ze heeft moeten doorstaan toen ze vijf jaar was. Waris Dirie beëindigt haar modellenleven en zet zich volledig in voor de strijd tegen vrouwenbesnijdenis en het taboe dat hierop geldt. Door Kofi Annan wordt ze aangesteld tot speciaal VN ambassadeur om dit fenomeen en de strijd ertegen wereldwijd bekend te maken.

Naar het boek *Mijn Woestijn* van Waris Dirie en Cathleen Miller– Uitgeverij Arena

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I had a lot of dreams as a child but never did I imagine that I would one day see my life on the big screen. Returning to the desert brought back all my memories with such an intensity and force that the experience overwhelmed me. Especially the Somali children in the film, Soraya who played me as a child, the small angel Saffa who had to play so much suffering in the film, and the young Idris who played my brother so wonderfully and authentically. The first time I met producer Peter Herrmann years ago, he got on my last nerve. Yet today I have to say, he really gave it his all. The whole film turned out to be so beautiful and the most beautiful thing about it is the pictures of the African landscape. And Sherry Hormann, our director, displayed incredible courage daring to embark on such a complex journey. I thought we would probably clash with each other at some point during the shooting but my intuition told me to trust her and just let her do her job. And she couldn't have done it better. Liya, my sister, we have so much in common. You have become a part of me and your work is a great achievement. The first time I watched the finished film, it was not easy for me to see my life portrayed on the big screen. When I left the cinema, I was deeply stirred, but I knew this film carries an important message that will be shared by all people: to respect human dignity.

- Waris Dirie



CAST

Waris Dirie	Liya Kebede
Marilyn	Sally Hawkins
Donaldson	Timothy Spall
Lucinda	Juliet Stevenson
Neil	Craig Parkinson
Harold	Anthony Mackie
Pushpa	Meera Syal
Young Waris	Soraya Omar-Scego

CREW

Written and directed by	Sherry Hormann
Producer	Peter Herrmann
Co-Producers	Benjamin Herrmann Danny Krausz
Based on the autobiographic novel by Waris Dirie	
Co-Producers	Roch Lener Waris Dirie Til Schweiger Barbara Seiller Hans-Wolfgang Jurgan Hubert von Spreti Bettina Reitz
Co- / Line Producer	Gerhard Hegele
Casting	John & Ros Hubbard
Director of Photography	Ken Kelsch Editor Clara Fabry
Production Design	Jamie Leonard
Costume Design	Gabriele Binder
Sound Supervisor	Stephan Colli
Re-recording Mixer	Falk Möller
Music by	Martin Todsharow

Desert Flower is a production of Desert Flower Filmproductions in Co-Production with Dor Film (Austria), Majestic Filmproduktion (Germany), BSI International Invest (Germany), Bac Films (France), Mr. Brown Entertainment (Germany), MTM west film & television (Germany), Bayerischer Rundfunk and ARD / Degeto (Germany), in association with Backup Films (France) With support from Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, Filmförderungsanstalt, Deutscher Filmförderfonds, FilmFernsehFonds Bayern, Eurimages, Österreichisches Filminstitut, ORF (Film / ernsehabonnement) and Filmfonds Wien.

THE STORY

Like in a fairy tale, Somalian-born Waris Dirie became one of the world's most sought-after top models. Born into a family of goat-herding nomads, Waris' fascinating path would take her from the Northeast African deserts to the world's most prestigious fashion runways and magazines. At 13, Waris fled forced marriage and crossed days of desert alone before reaching the Somali capital Mogadishu. Relatives soon shipped her off to London to work as a servant in the Somali embassy, where she spent the rest of her adolescent years in illiteracy. When faced with the threat of returning to war-torn Somalia, Waris finds herself homeless and illegal. Spunky shopgirl Marilyn takes Waris in and becomes a trusted friend. While working in a fast food restaurant, Waris is discovered by star photographer Terry Donaldson, and ambitious agent Lucinda guides her transformation into a working model. But behind the glamorous facade of Waris' new life lies a deeply heart-stirring fate. Despite her success, Waris remains burdened by a violent childhood secret. At the height of her career, Waris reveals to the world that she was a victim of female genital mutilation. Her story unleashes a wave of sympathy and controversy, and Waris decides to dedicate her life to fighting this barbaric tradition.

Her story touched the hearts of millions: Waris Dirie's book *DESERT FLOWER*, which recounts her incredible journey from an African nomad girl to an international top model, became a worldwide bestseller with more than 11 million sold copies. This is the inspiring story of an extraordinary, proud and brave woman. Successful director and scriptwriter Sherry Hormann (*FATHER'S DAY*) and producer and Oscar winner Peter Herrmann (*NOWHERE IN AFRICA*) have adapted Dirie's autobiography for the screen: a modern fairy tale between dazzling glamour and archaic rituals, full of vitality, emotional depth and enormous compassion... and at the same time a gripping plea against the terrible and inhuman tradition of female genital mutilation.

Top model and actress Liya Kebede excels in the main role alongside an ensemble of first-class character actors including Silver Bear and Golden Globe winner Sally Hawkins (*HAPPY-GO-LUCKY*), Timothy Spall (*HARRY POTTER, SECRETS AND LIES*), Craig Parkinson (*CONTROL*), Juliet Stevenson (*BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM*), Anthony Mackie (*8 MILE*) and Meera Syal (*SCOOP*).



SYNOPSIS

When at the age of 13, young Waris (SORAYA OMAR-SCEGO) finds out that her father has decided to marry her off as the fourth wife to a considerably older man, the young girl realizes that she has no choice but to flee. In the middle of the night, she bids farewell to her younger brother whom she dearly loves, named "old man" because of his white hair, and steals away from the desert camp of her nomadic family. Without any provisions and wearing only simple sandals on her feet, she makes her way through the Somali rocky desert in the hopes that she will find her way to the capital Mogadishu where her mother's family lives. Completely exhausted, with ragged clothes and sores on her feet, the young girl manages to overcome all the dangers of the desert and finally finds her aunt and grandmother in the chaotic bustle of the Somali capital. To protect the 13-year-old, her relatives manage to find her a job as a maidservant with distant relatives in the Somali embassy in London. There, she lives for several years completely cut off from the outside world, as if in a jail.

When civil war breaks out in Somalia and the Somali embassy is closed down, Waris (LIYA KEBEDE), now a young woman, finds herself faced with the threat of deportation and so decides to escape again, and hides in the big city. She meets the lively and clever sales assistant Marilyn (Silver Bear Winner SALLY HAWKINS), who shares a room with her in the boarding house of the feisty owner Pushpa (MEERA SYAL). Marilyn becomes her most trusted friend, and as the friendship between the two deepens, Waris reveals her secret to Marilyn: she was circumcised at the age of five and then sown up. This is a common and cruel tradition in her home, which according to belief is meant to guarantee the purity of the women. The husband must be the first to "open" his wife. With Marilyn's help, Waris decides to have an operation that would put an end to her pain and suffering.

One day, whilst working as a cleaning woman in a fast-food restaurant, Waris attracts the attention of the famous fashion photographer Terry Donaldson (TIMOTHY SPALL) and after some initial hesitation, agrees to let him take pictures of her. From that moment on, it's as if a fairy tale becomes true: Donaldson opens the doors of the fashion world to her and introduces her to the agent Lucinda (JULIET STEVENSON), who smells a lucrative model potential in Waris. But then it quickly comes out that Waris is living illegally in England because she didn't apply for a residence permit after the embassy had closed down. So she can keep working as a model and be able to travel, she gets herself false identity papers with the help of Pushpa. The plan however fails with her first flight to the fashion capital Paris. At the airport, she's arrested and taken into custody pending deportation. Lucinda pays the bail money to free Waris but demands that she "works back" her debt.

Desperate because of her illegal status, Waris accepts the offer of the boarding house caretaker Neil (CRAIG PARKINSON) to marry, but she quickly realizes that this was not such a good idea: Neil's motives were in no way as altruistic as he had led Waris to believe. He had fallen in love with her from the moment he first laid eyes on her, a love that Waris could not return despite all her gratitude. She is dreaming of another man, the New Yorker Harold (ANTHONY MACKIE), whom she had met at a disco with Marilyn. Since meeting him, she can't get him out of her head.

The situation with Neil constantly threatens to escalate, worsened by the early morning control visits of the immigration office. Finally, the worst is overcome and Waris manages to get the residency permit she had so longed for. Now, she can also work as a model abroad and start paying back her debts to Lucinda. From then on, everything starts to change at a fast pace: Waris becomes well-known as an international model, the designers all want to get their hands on her,

the jet set and the press love this girl from a nomadic family that has managed to make her way from the dry deserts of Somalia to the most famous catwalks in the world. The BBC travels with Waris to Somalia in search of her roots and she becomes one of the top-paid models in the world. When Waris goes to New York for work, she gathers up the courage to look up Harold, whose address she has been carrying with her like a treasure since the day they met in London. But when she finds him, he is not alone. He's living with a woman. Waris doesn't realize that the woman is only his roommate. Sad and deeply disappointed, Waris wanders aimlessly through the streets of New York reproaching herself for her silly ideas. How could she have led herself to believe that a woman with her story could possibly think of having a normal happy ending? Waris realizes that she can no longer escape the wounds of her past nor could she ignore her fate. During an interview with the magazine Marie Claire, Waris refuses to repeat her Cinderella story, which she has recounted hundreds of times, and instead chooses to tell the story of the day that changed her life forever: the day of her circumcision in the Somali desert at the tender age of five. The world is shocked and deeply moved, expressing great sympathy with Waris. A taboo becomes an open issue discussed worldwide, and Waris is one day invited by the UN in New York to speak against and call for the banning of this archaic and barbaric ritual still being practiced in many countries around the world and affecting 6000 young girls every day... Waris is not alone. Marilyn is with her. And in the last moment, Harold also slips through the door. Now he knows who this mysterious beauty is that has managed to get away from him twice. And this day too is about to change Waris Dirie's life. Forever.



WARIS DIRIE – ABOUT HER LIFE, HER SUCCESS, HER FOUNDATION

Waris Dirie was born in 1965 in the region of Gallacai in the Somali desert near the border to Ethiopia as the daughter of a nomadic family. At the age of 5, she suffered the inhumane procedure of genital mutilation. This terrible crime towards women is practiced worldwide by both Muslims and Christians. According to estimations by the UN, around 6000 girls fall victim to this unbearable cruelty every day. At the age of 13, Waris escaped a forced marriage to a man old enough to be her grandfather. After her adventurous escape, she ends up working as a maidservant in London and then later at a McDonalds. At the age of 18, she was discovered by the star photographer Terence Donovan and started working as a model, achieving international fame. She moved from London to New York and became one of the first 'super models'. She became the first African model to get an exclusive contract with the cosmetics company Revlon and made it on the cover of all the top magazines. Waris Dirie played a role on the side of Timothy Dalton in JAMES BOND – THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS and the BBC shot a documentary film about her titled "A Nomad in New York" for the series "The Day That Changed My Life".

When the US star journalist Barbara Walters for NBC and Laura Ziv for the magazine Marie Claire interview her, Waris decides to tell them about the cruel and horrible ritual of female genital mutilation, recounting her own story and experience. This unleashed a worldwide wave of sympathy and protest. UN General Secretary Kofi Anan appointed her UN Special Ambassador. Female genital mutilation is practiced mainly in Africa, Arab countries and in Asia, but is still often practiced by immigrant families in Europe, the USA, Canada and Australia. In her quest to bring attention to her mission and cause, Waris travels around the world for the UN, takes part in conferences, meets presidents, Nobel Prize winners and film stars and gives hundreds of interviews. In 1997, her biography "Desert Flower" was published in New York and became an international bestseller (in Germany it was on the Top Ten Spiegel Booklist for 120 weeks in a row). The book was published in more than 50 licensed editions and jumped to first place in the bestseller lists in several countries. To date, 11 million copies have been sold worldwide.

20 years after her escape, she decided to visit her family in Somalia. An adventurous project as Somalia had been suffering from civil war for the past 12 years and was plagued by famine. She describes this journey in her second book "Desert Dawn", which also became an international bestseller. In 2002, she set up the Waris Dirie Foundation with headquarters based in Austria. The foundation initiates worldwide campaigns to raise public awareness against female genital mutilation and provides support to existing campaigns as well as to victims of FGM. Through the email address waris@utanet.at, the foundation also offers a help-service for activists, supporters, those affected and the media. To date, more than 30,000 people have used this service worldwide. In her third book "Desert Children", published in 2005, Waris Dirie recounts the day she broke her silence. She tells of her encounters with victims and offenders, of her intensive research, and of setbacks and success. With this book, Waris Dirie started a worldwide campaign against FGM (Female Genital Mutilation). She met several European top politicians and spoke to MPs and delegates in parliaments as well as at the European Union. In 2006, the European Union set the fight against female genital mutilation on its agenda for the first time in its history. In February 2005, Waris Dirie met 25 ministers from member states at a conference to discuss measures to be taken against FGM. After that conference, laws were tightened in several countries and prevention measures were initiated. In 2007, Waris Dirie started a campaign against FGM with Scotland Yard and the BBC in Great Britain. "People must understand", says Waris, "that female genital mutilation has nothing to do with tradition, culture or religion. It is a cynical

form of child abuse. All the countries worldwide must take serious and consistent measures against all of those who commit this crime.” In 2007, Waris Dirie’s latest book “Letter to my Mother” was published. She says, “This is my most personal book. There are wounds that don’t heal. My longing to meet my mother and to forgive her was great but I had to realize that love and suffering are chained to one another. Though working on this book was a painful experience, it was also a vitally important one...!”

Waris Dirie’s books made female genital mutilation a worldwide issue. Due to massive pressure from the international community, 14 African states including Kenya, Ghana, Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic, Benin and Togo have banned female genital mutilation by law since 2007. There are 150 million women worldwide (UNICEF 2006) traumatized due to FGM. Many of them suffered and are still suffering from genital mutilation performed on them by their relatives and irresponsible doctors, in Europe and the USA as well. In many countries, the governments did not intervene despite knowing of the practice and its consequences. For millions of women and young girls around the world, Waris Dirie has become a symbol of hope and justice. She gave them a face, a fate and a name.

Waris Dirie has won many prizes and awards for her work and books, including the World Women’s Award from former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev (2004), Glamour magazine’s Woman of the Year Award (2000), the German government’s Africa Award (1999) as well as the Corine Award of the umbrella association of the German bookselling trade for best nonfiction book (2002). In 2007, President Nicolas Sarkozy appointed her Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur and the World Demographic Association awarded her the Prix des Générations in 2007.

In 2008, Waris Dirie was the first woman to receive the Martin Buber Gold Medal from the Martin Buber Foundation. In January 2009, Waris Dirie became a founding member of the new PPR Foundation for Women’s Dignity and Rights, which she set up together with French business tycoon François Henri Pinault and his wife Salma Hayek in Paris.

The first charity projects to be financed in Pakistan, India, Congo, Benin, Nigeria, Spain and France have already been approved.

Waris Dirie is an Austrian citizen and a mother of two boys. Waris Dirie is also a co-producer of the film DESERT FLOWER.

MORE INFORMATIONS ABOUT FGM:

Waris Dirie Foundation: www.waris-dirie-foundation.com

World Health Organisation : www.who.int/reproductive-health/fgm

UNICEF www.unicef.org

International Centre for Reproductive Health www.icrh.org

FGM network www.fgmnetwork.org

Forward UK www.forwarduk.org.uk

Rainbo www.rainbo.org

CAMS – Commission pour l’Abolition des Mutilations Sexuelles www.cams-fgm.org

Amnesty USA www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women

SHERRY HORMANN ON DESERT FLOWER

It all began with a small white plastic bag. Peter Hermann, whom I've only said hello to a couple of times, passed it over the table to me. "Call me and tell me if you can find three reasons to make a film out of this." It was a book. "Desert Flower?" I didn't know the book. "Millions of others do", was his simple answer.

The book instantly captivated me. This was an incredible life journey. Never had I seen so many opposites existing next to each other personified in a single human being such as in Waris Dirie's story: Desert nomad child – top model in New York – illiterate cleaning woman at McDonald's – political speaker at the UN. Were the story not true, I would have thought I was reading a modern version of Cinderella. Most of all though, "Desert Flower" is a call against the injustice suffered by women through female genital mutilation without making blind accusations, a deep wound hidden behind the facade of beauty and glamour.

"So, who are you to film my story?", Waris Dirie said to us at the start of our first meeting, and hours later as she was getting into the taxi she said, "When do we start? Now?" Later I came to realize that everyone had their own reasons. During the casting for the role of Waris in London, a 40-year old woman from Mali entered the room. I looked at her in disbelief but then, in a friendly tone, the woman began to speak out what I could not bring myself to say, "I am not your Waris, I know, and I'm much too old and I can't act either. I work in a factory in Glasgow but I took the day off today and took the train here to tell you how important this film is for Africa." I was overwhelmed, almost ashamed that I hadn't wanted to make a film about an important issue. She took my hand, kissed it and laughed saying, "Don't be afraid." On my first research trip to Kenya, I met three fully veiled Somali women, who all went by the same name, Amina, and had fled the civil war. They taught me everything about FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) and spoke to me about their own childhood that seemed identical with what Waris' had experienced. Then suddenly one of them said, "There is this American, his name is Obama, he wants to be your next president. He is our people." Somewhere, we all belong together.

Later in Djibouti, I realized that DESERT FLOWER would become the first film to focus on Somali culture and its Islamic roots. We filmed nomads who had literally never seen a camera before. We got Ken Kelsch, whose cinematography in the Abel Ferrara films had left a strong impression on me very early on. And when we took the risk to get a real circumciser who was willing to allow herself to be filmed, that's when I finally understood that this film will become a personal journey for me, not least because of my own prejudices and prejudgments.

Amateurs and top actors collided with each other. In some scenes, I was forced to exchange some of the Somalis, such as Waris' father who had suddenly disappeared off the set. I found him praying. He simply didn't care that 80 people and a setting sun were waiting for him. We used the marketplace in Djibouti as the setting for Mogadishu. Hundreds of police had blocked the area for the shoot but then all of a sudden they all disappeared. Gone, just like that. Chaos broke out, members of the crew were being attacked with stones and everyone had their reasons. The police officers had gone to lunch. They had heard that a restaurant had been rented and there was a buffet, so they left because they wanted to be the first there.

In London, I sent Liya Kebede out on to the streets. We shot with a hidden camera. She integrated herself in the lives of the homeless and instantly experienced the usual treatment. Only two Somalis who lived in London and who by chance had come by offered their help, asking her whether she needed money or a place to stay.

I had the impression that because Waris' story seemed like such a fairy tale, the adaptation had to be even more honest and real.

Jamie Leonard, the British set designer built up the English settings in an empty German rubber plant. And when Sally Hawkins and the rest of this strong British cast began to give free reign to their acting talent amidst these movable walls, everyone forgot that we were in Cologne. We were right in the middle of London and we ourselves became travellers, journeying between Djibouti, England, Germany and the USA. It didn't matter which passport we carried, all of us together told the same one story, the story of Waris who had courageously taken her life into her own hands.

I thank Peter for this white plastic bag.



PRODUCER'S NOTE

It's not often that you get the opportunity as a producer to film a story of such scope and range. To ensure that we developed the film ourselves and that we didn't become a small partner without any influence in an American dominated international film, a large part of the film's financing had to come from Germany.

When you plan a film as a producer, you almost always have a role model which you use more or less for orientation. For DESERT FLOWER, it was far more difficult. In fact, we had three completely different films that had to be unified into one: Waris Dirie's story is not only a Cinderella story of a poor nomad girl in Somalia who becomes a top model appearing on all the famous catwalks around the world. It's also the story about the immigration of a young African girl to Europe as well as the heroic tale of a very brave woman. After Waris Dirie became prominent and successful, she dared to be the first to speak openly and publicly about the cruel tradition of female genital mutilation.

DESERT FLOWER is a deeply moving and dramatic life story that raises concern and aims to create change, and already as a book had touched the hearts of several million readers around the world.

THE BOOK RIGHTS

Waris Dirie's autobiography "Desert Flower" was published in Germany in 1999 and quickly became a bestseller. I read the book about six months later, but then thought it probably wouldn't be worth asking for the rights of the book as it had first appeared in the US and bestseller book rights are usually sold by the time a book appears on the German market. Elton John had acquired the rights and had planned to adapt the book to the screen with his production company Rocket Pictures.

However, Rocket Pictures and Waris Dirie had very differing ideas about how to film the book, and so in 2002 the book rights were up for grabs again. I'd heard about it by chance and a year later I met with Waris Dirie who at the time was living in London. This was not the kind of meeting where you click straight away and agree on everything. I realized that Waris was very cautious about giving away the film rights for "Desert Flower" again. It was understandable, as it requires a tremendous amount of trust to place your life story, one that is also very intimate, in a stranger's hands. We met several times over a nine-month period and we talked, planned, and developed ideas until finally in February 2004, the contract was signed.

THE FINANCING

Not easy to do, as the story, aside from having a large readership, had very little to do with Germany. At the same time, the film not only should but had to be produced not only for the German market but also for the international market. This meant shooting in English, which in turn largely excludes German actors.

The budget was calculated at around 11 million euros. In order to take advantage of the regular financing channels, a normal German film can't cost more than six to seven million euros. Through several partners from Germany, Austria, France and England, as well a large measure of trust from the film funding institutions, we were nevertheless able to finance this high budget without giving up overall control.

THE SCRIPT

I have wanted to make a film with Sherry Hormann for quite a long time now. I met her in the summer of 2004 and gave her a copy of "Desert Flower". Her first reaction was more of reluctance, "not another women's story", but then she read the book and our second meeting was very different. Sherry was able to clearly formulate what she found fascinating about the story. It quickly became clear that Sherry is not only the ideal scriptwriter but also director for this film. Her ability to deeply access the story and material was the perfect prerequisite for building a strong and trusting relationship to Waris Dirie.

During the preparation years, we both got to know Waris quite well. Like in our first meeting, it was not always harmonious. We say "She's a character" meaning that she's a vibrant interesting person that doesn't make it easy for her environment and the people around her. If you sacrifice a part of yourself over many years and reveal extremely intimate details about yourself to the public in order to fight female genital mutilation, then that leaves its mark on you. However, my respect for Waris Dirie, which from the start was always great, has only grown over the years. Adapting this book to the screen, in fact turning a life story into a script is one of the most difficult challenges in filmmaking. After long discussions and several versions, we finally decided to place Waris's time in London as the central focus, to keep her African story "smaller" and to shortly brush over New York. The script development took three years, a journey with several errors and winding passages. Sherry wrote several versions, far more than is officially stated on the cover page of the script.

THE CAST

A successful screen adaptation of a life story depends far more on the actor playing the protagonist than in any other kind of film. Our Waris was in the picture for practically every scene so our actress had to be someone who could carry the film.

We couldn't find a well-known actress who looked at least somewhat East African. So it became clear that it would have to be a lesser known actress, an amateur, rather a newcomer. We started an international casting with the London casting agents Ros and John Hubbard. Hundreds of young women in London, Paris, Kenya, South Africa, New York, and Los Angeles were tested in front of the camera. After six months, we became very nervous, because without a main actress...

One late evening, Sherry called me and simply said, "On the second DVD, number 4, that's the one." Independently of her, I had also stumbled on Liya Kebede while watching the casting tapes. The next day we received additional material and only then did we find out that Liya was a very well-known top model in the US, a star in the fashion world, and had already played small roles in Robert de Niro's *THE GOOD SHEPARD* and Andrew Niccol's *LORD OF WAR*. We invited her for a test shoot and the decision was actually quite set before we had watched the test shots on the large screen. Liya emanated an incredible radiance and had a strong presence in front of the camera.

With Liya at the center, we could finally cast the rest of the roles in Africa and Europe, an ensemble of great actors ranging from the impressive actors in Africa – almost all amateurs some of whom had never seen a camera in their entire life – to the top class and highly professional British cast. It's simply a pleasure watching Sally Hawkins, Craig Parkinson, Meera Syal, Timothy Spall and Juliet Stevenson performing on set. They worked so well together it was as if they had been cast as a group. In fact, however the decisive factor for each one of them was the personal talks with Sherry Hormann and of course Waris Dirie's famous story. Our actors really wanted to be a part of this film. An amusing side story was the casting for the role of Harold, because even though it was a small role it was not an easy task. Harold is our hero's love interest and had to be accepted by the audience. The American Anthony Mackie was perfect. This was confirmed to us on set: already on the first day of the shoot, the scene in the club, there was a striking difference in the way all the female members of the crew were behaving...

THE SHOOTING

Djibouti is a small state on the horn of Africa between Somalia and Ethiopia, which in the past had been part of Somalia and was therefore ideal for us. The city of Djibouti resembles Mogadishu before the war; there are several types of deserts a few driving hours from Djibouti Ville. Shooting began in Djibouti on 29 March 2008. It was the last possible date because starting in May the temperatures are so high that you practically can't shoot at all. The temperature rises to 45°C, on many days over 50°C in the shade. In March and April, it only goes up to 35°–40°C.

After a short break, we began shooting in London on 20 May, in Germany at the beginning of June and in New York at the end of July. The concept was to shoot all the outdoor scenes in London and New York at their original locations. Indoor scenes that were set in London and New York were shot in the studio in Germany or at redesigned locations in Cologne, Berlin and Munich. This not only sounds complicated, it is complicated to shoot in four countries on three continents and in Germany in three cities. So in effect, the film resembled a large puzzle.

A good example is the following sequence:

Waris and Marylin in the boarding house	<i>Studio Cologne</i>
Club Original location	Düsseldorf
Waris runs out of the club	London
Boarding house Studio	Cologne
Fast food Restaurant	London
Waris and Marylin in the park	Cologne
Marylin takes Waris to the hospital	Berlin
Waris goes for a walk and looks at shop windows	London
Waris with her mother in the hut	Djibouti

That's how it runs throughout the whole film. In addition, each country had its own shooting culture, its characteristics and traditions, and that caused confusion, led to mistakes, and cost us time. Before beginning the shooting, hardly anyone imagined that our complicated plan would actually work and yet the last day of our 52 days of shooting was on 21 July in New York, exactly according to the plan we had made in November the year before. This was an incredible achievement of the production department and most of all that of our production manager Gerhard Hegele.

PRODUCTION DESIGN & COSTUME DESIGN

The core element of the set designed by Jamie Leonhard was a studio built in an empty rubber factory in Cologne. Twelve motifs were built in the large hall. During construction, I realized how and why social housing in the sixties looked far different in England from that in Germany. It's not only due to a specific British taste when it comes to the choice of wallpaper, furniture or carpets. It starts much earlier with the difference in windows, which we had to have custom-made (this sort of thing is done in Poland today), not to mention door handles, bathroom fittings, different skirting boards and so on. Sherry Hormann had already worked with costume designer Gabriele Binder on several films. The problem was that even though the part of Waris's story that we're telling in the film was set in the nineties, we didn't want to make a "historical" film, as the issues of illegal immigration and female genital mutilation are still present today. In effect, nothing has changed so we decided to shoot as if it were a timeless story with the focus on the present. This had major consequences on the costume design because that's where time differences are most visible. It was interesting to see that a good costume does not necessarily have to be historically accurate as the audience interprets it from their present-day perspective and taste.

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Another reason for the film not looking German is Ken Kelsch, the cinematographer. Ken had shot almost all of Abel Ferrara's films including *BAD LIEUTENANT*, so when we met the first time I had a high level of respect for him. I especially liked the hand-held camera work in the films that Ken had worked on. However, Sherry and I had already decided during one of our research trips that especially in Africa we wanted to use a crane for specific shots. I felt that mixing these two different styles of camera doesn't quite work, so I was especially pleased when Sherry and Ken developed a concept to use both these styles in a contrasting way. So no Steady Cam because we're using a crane, but rather to respond dramaturgically according to the requirements of the situation. When you look at the scene of the marketplace in Mogadishu, the opening is a crane shot followed by a hand-held for the close shots, depicting the mob of people just as dynamically and as hard as the situation defines and transporting the heat and aggression of all these many people. Using a hovering Steady Cam for the close shots would have had a completely different effect.

DIRECTING

DESERT FLOWER is my first collaboration with Sherry Hormann. During the three-year period in which we worked together on the script development, we grew to know and appreciate each other. Even though the work on the script forms the foundation, it's all quite theoretical at that stage. The script describes who is in the scene, where it's set and what the actors say but everyone who had read the script developed different fantasies, ideas and visions. It is the director who makes a scene work, who determines how it unfolds and moves, if it has a soul, and whether it can draw the viewers into the film so much so that they forget where they are and everything that's bothering them.

Watching Sherry Hormann work with the actors was incredibly impressive. An example: During the blocking rehearsal for – Lucinda walks into boarding house – it quickly became clear that every actor had a different idea on how the scene was to be played out. Juliet Stevenson, Sally Hawkins, Liya Kebede, Craig Parkinson, Meera Syal – each one of them was on a different path. Sherry gives every actor a position, sets out the paths, and determines who says what and when. Directing craft basics, you would think, but after some time something then starts to happen: the actors begin to open up and blossom, and they start to feel good. A sense of security and confidence fills the air, ideas start to come up that make the good even better, and then all of a sudden the scene is a different one. Even though I know the scene very well from the script, I am surprised by the development it takes on set. It is pure pleasure to watch how the real film is created, that is, what it's really about and what in the end is going to move the audience. This is more than simply craft. This is skill and talent.

Liya Kebede said in an interview done during the shooting that she hopes the people who go and see the film come out feeling both sad and happy and each carrying within them the urge to make a change.

This is exactly what all of us who have worked on this film wish for.

Peter Herrmann



ABOUT THE CAST

LIYA KEBEDE (WARIS DIRIE)

International supermodel, actress, and philanthropist, Liya Kebede will next be seen in the title role in Sherry Hormann's *DESERT FLOWER*. Her past film credits include Andrew Niccol's *LORD OF WAR* starring Nicolas Cage and Bridget Moynahan (2006) and in Robert De Niro's *THE GOOD SHEPHERD* starring Matt Damon and Angelina Jolie (2007). Born and raised in Addis Abbaba, Kebede has been the covergirl for such illustrious fashion magazines as *Vogue* (American, Italian, German, Japanese and Spanish editions), *V*, *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Time's Style & Design* issue. In 2003, she was the first woman of color to become the "face" of Estée Lauder cosmetics. She has been highly visible in campaigns for Yves Saint Laurent, Dolce & Gabbana, Louis Vuitton, Tommy Hilfiger, Emanuel Ungaro, Tiffany & Co., Lanvin, Givenchy, H&M and GAP.

In February 2007, Kebede created *lemlem* (www.lemlem.com), a unique, handmade children and women's clothing line. All *lemlem* products are hand-woven in Ethiopia and are intended to help build the Ethiopian manufacturing industry, inspire economic independence, and preserve the art of weaving. The brand's inspiration arose during a trip with her husband to their native Ethiopia. While visit-ing thousands of traditional weavers who no longer had a market for their goods, Kebede felt a need to preserve their art form while simultaneously creating job opportunities. Meaning "to bloom" or "to flourish" in Amharic, *lemlem* is made from natural cotton and is rooted in tradition, but woven with a modern touch. It aims to add a sense of diversity to the children's market while fueling prosperity in another. As another facet of her commitment to African causes, Kebede recently founded The Liya Kebede Foundation (www.theliyakebedefoundation.org), whose mission is to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality and to improve the health and well-being of mothers and children around the world, with the main focus being Africa. Her commitment to the Foundation is also supported by her work as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations' World Health Organization. Kebede hopes that by heightening the awareness of these issues, international donors and local governments may be encouraged to increase their budgets on maternal and child health.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 *DESERT FLOWER* / Directed by Sherry Hormann

2007 *THE GOOD SHEPHERD* / Directed by Robert De Niro

2006 *LORD OF WAR* / Directed by Andrew Niccol

SALLY HAWKINS (MARILYN)

British independent star Sally Hawkins is so right for the role of Marilyn, she's so perfect in embodying a hyperactive yet sensitive young woman who succeeds in trumping the travails of day-to-day survival that it's difficult to imagine that she isn't like that in real life.

Sally Hawkins was fêted at the 2008 Berlinale and won the festival's Best Actress Silver Bear for her portrayal of naive, lovable and ever optimistic Poppy in Mike Leigh's *HAPPY-GO-LUCKY* and went to win the Best Actress in a Comedy, Golden Globe Award 2009. The actress, who attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, had her feature film debut in 2003 in Mike Leigh's *ALL OR NOTHING* and also acted in his drama *VERA DRAKE* (2005).

This up and coming star delights audiences no matter what the role and there have been many in her short but promising career, among them Matthew Vaughn's *LAYER CAKE* (2004) with Daniel Craig, Tom Shankland's *W Delta Z* (2007) as well as Woody Allen's *CASSANDRA'S DREAM* (2008) opposite Ewan McGregor and Colin Farrell. She appeared with Emma Thompson in Lone Scherfig's

AN EDUCATION (2009), which was written by Nick Hornby and screened at this year's Berlinale. In 2009, Sally Hawkins will be seen in Stephen Burke's HAPPY EVER AFTERS as well as in DESERT FLOWER. She is presently shooting Mark Romanek's drama NEVER LET ME GO with Keira Knightley and Charlotte Rampling and IT'S A WONDERFUL AFTERLIFE by Gurinder Chadha (BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM). This summer she will star in WE WANT SEX a feature to be directed by Nigel Cole.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2009 AN EDUCATION / Directed by Lone Scherfig
2008 HAPPY-GO-LUCKY / Directed by Mike Leigh
2008 CASSANDRA'S DREAM / Directed by Woody Allen
2005 VERA DRAKE / Directed by Mike Leigh
2004 LAYER CAKE / Directed by Matthew Vaughn



TIMOTHY SPALL (DONALDSON)

The British actor, born 1957 in Battersea, London, has often been cast by directors as a working class character, as in the popular TV series "Auf Wiedersehen, Pet" and several times by Mike Leigh e.g. in HOME, SWEET HOME and as a philosophizing taxi driver in ALL OR NOTHING (2002). Spall's particular talent lies in his ability to lend "simple" characters a deeper wisdom.

The celebrated theater actor, who was discovered in a competition and through that made it to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London and to the Royal Shakespeare Company, has played not only in independent films but was cast as the evil Peter Pettigrew in four of the Harry Potter screen adaptations. In Disney's Christmas fairy tale ENCHANTED (2007), he also played a crooked character as well as in Stephen Sondheim's musical SWEENEY TODD (2007, director: Tim Burton) alongside Johnny Depp.

This year, Spall will be seen in several cinema productions as in Julian Fellowe's FROM TIME TO TIME, in which, as in the Harry Potter films, he plays alongside Maggie Smith. Striking is his penchant for the haunting and scary, such as in David Keating's THE WAKE WOOD (2009) or Philip Ridley's HEARTLESS (2009).

Before becoming internationally famous for his role in the HARRY POTTER movies, Spall played several supporting roles in many well-known productions such as Clint Eastwood's WHITE HUNTER BLACK HEART (1990) and Bernardo Bertolucci's THE SHELTERING SKY (1990). He has also been cast for roles in Cameron Crowe's VANILLA SKY (2001), Edward Zwick's THE LAST SAMURAI (2003) and Kenneth Branagh's screen adaptation of Shakespeare's HAMLET (1995).

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2009 HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE / Directed by David Yates
2007 SWEENEY TODD / Directed by Tim Burton
2002 ALL OR NOTHING / Directed by Mike Leigh
2001 VANILLA SKY / Directed by Cameron Crowe
2000 VATEL / Directed by Roland Joffé

JULIET STEVENSON (LUCINDA)

The exceptionally talented British actress from Essex has made a name for herself not only through 50 cinema, TV and stage roles but also as a singer. After her studies at the famous Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, she made her debut in Greenaway's DROWNING BY NUMBERS (1988). Her role in TRULY, MADLY, DEEPLY (1990) by Anthony Minghella was followed by Harold Pinter's screen adaptation of Franz Kafka's THE TRIAL by David Hugh Jones. She was involved in the documentary PARIS WAS A WOMAN (1996), played in Douglas McGrath's EMMA (1996) alongside Gwyneth Paltrow in the title role and in Ventura Pon's FOOD OF LOVE (2001).

No matter how small a role she played, Juliet Stevenson's performances were always a gain for every film, including in the successful films BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM (2002) as well as NICHOLAS NICKELBY by Douglas McGrath (2002) and Mike Newell's box-office hit MONA LISA SMILE (2003) with Julia Roberts in the leading role. She played alongside Annette Bening in István Szabó's BEING JULIA (2004), with Colin Farrell and Christopher Lee in the mystery thriller TRIAGE (2009) by Danis Tanovic, and played in Ian Sharp's thriller STREETLIGHT (2009). In 1999, Juliet Stevenson was awarded the

Commander of the Order of the British Empire for her acting skills; in 1992, she received the Laurence Olivier Theatre Award for her role in "Death and the Maiden". She has won several film awards and has been nominated for the BAFTA many times.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 TRIAGE / Directed by Danis Tanovic
2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2005 BEING JULIA / Directed by István Szabó
2004 MONA LISA SMILE / Directed by Mike Newell
2002 BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM / Directed by Gurinder Chadha
1996 EMMA / Directed by Douglas McGrath

CRAIG PARKINSON (NEIL)

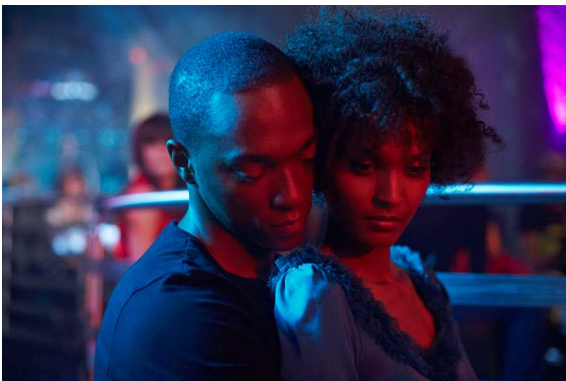
Craig has just finished filming *FOUR LIONS* (2009), directed by Chris Morris. Other work includes Samantha Morton's directorial debut *THE UNLOVED* (2009) and *VIRGIN TERRITORY* (2008) by David Leland. Parkinson attained widespread popularity with his appearances in numerous British series such as *OUTLAWS* (2004), *THE WORST WEEK OF MY LIFE* (2004), *BLACK BOOKS* (2004) and *NO ANGELS* (2004) and TV movies such as *MRS-IN-BETWEENY* (2008) and *GREEN* (2007).

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 *FOUR LIONS* / Directed by Chris Morris
2009 *THE UNLOVED* / Directed by Samantha Morton
2008 *DESERT FLOWER* / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2008 *THE OTHER MAN* / Directed by Richard Eyre
2007 *CONTROL* / Directed by Anton Corbijn

ANTHONY MACKIE (HAROLD)

It's obvious from Anthony Mackie's role in *DESERT FLOWER* that he is one of the most promising young actors in America. His range is astonishing. He was born in New Orleans in 1979, attended the North Carolina School of the Arts as well as the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts and graduated from the renowned Juilliard School of the Arts. Mackie then acted in both Broadway and Off-Broadway plays. He played a rapper opposite Eminem in his feature film debut, Curtis Hanson's *8 MILE* (2002). That performance caught the eye of Spike Lee who gave him the lead roles in both his 2004 tv movie *SUCKER FREE CITY* and his feature *SHE HATE ME* (2004). Mackie appeared in Ron Shelton's thriller *HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE* (2003) with Harrison Ford and Josh Hartnett, in Clint Eastwood's Oscar winning *MILLION DOLLAR BABY* (2005), with Ryan Gosling in *HALF NELSON* (2006) and with Samuel L. Jackson in the comedy *THE MAN* (2005). He played Nat Turner in *ASCENSION DAY* (2007) and, in 2009, rap legend Tupac Shakur in *NOTORIOUS B.I.G.*



Anthony Mackie plans on continuing his winning streak playing historic roles. He will be playing jazz musician Buddy Bolden in BOLDEN!. He will also be playing famous athlete and 1936 Olympic winner Jesse Owens, all in 2010. Anthony Mackie has been honored several times with Black Reel Awards and has also been nominated for Independent Spirit Awards.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2009 NOTORIOUS B.I.G. / Directed by George Tillman Jr.
2006 WE ARE MARSHALL / Directed by McG
2005 MILLION DOLLAR BABY / Directed by Clint Eastwood
2003 HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE / Directed by Ron Shelton
2002 8 MILE / Directed by Curtis Hanson

MEERA SYAI (PUSHPA PATEL)

Born into a Punjab family in Staffordshire in 1961, Meera Syal's family had just moved from New Dehli to England. She attended university in Manchester and studied English literature and drama. The year she graduated, she won the National Student Drama Award. The successful author then went on to make a name for herself as an actress. After a role in Stephen Frears' SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID (1987), she acted in numerous television productions such as KINSEY (1990), THE REAL MCCOY, SOLDIER, SOLDIER (1995), BEDTIME (2001), ALL ABOUT ME (2002), M.I.T. – MURDER INVESTIGATION TEAM (2005), THE KUMARS (2001-2006), THE AMAZING MRS. PRITCHARD (2006), JEKYLL (2007) and BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE (2008) for which Meera is about to shoot the second series for BBC2.

Her feature films include BEAUTIFUL THING (1996), Woody Allen's SCOOP (2006) and ANITA AND ME (2002) – the story of her childhood which she wrote and co-produced. She wrote BHAJI ON THE BEACH in 1993 and her book "Bombay Dreams" was produced as a stage musical in London's West End and was nominated for the Laurence Olivier Theatre Award. It premiered on Broadway in 2004. In 2009, Meera Syal can not only be seen as the caring landlord Pushpa in DESERT FLOWER, but also in the comedies MAD SAD & BAD as Rashmi and will soon film Woody Allen's next project in the summer of 2009.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2009 MAD SAD & BAD / Directed by Avie Luthra
2006 SCOOP / Directed by Woody Allen
2002 ANITA AND ME / Directed by Metin Hüseyin
1998 GIRLS' NIGHT / Directed by Nick Hurran
1996 BEAUTIFUL THING / Directed by Hettie Macdonald

BEHIND THE CAMERA - SHERRY HORMANN (DIRECTOR & SCRIPTWRITER)

Born in Kingston, New York, this German American director won several awards with her directing debut *SILENT SHADOW* (1991), to which she also wrote the script, including the Bavarian Film Award and the Max-Ophüls Award. A graduate of the HFF (Academy of Television and Film Munich), she began her career as a set designer in Domink Graf's early works *TIGER, LÖWE, PANTHER* (1987), for which she also wrote the screenplay, and *SPIELER* (1989). As a director, Hormann displayed her talents for the first time in the popular comedy *FRAUEN SIND WAS WUNDERBARES* (1994) for which she also wrote the screenplay. Her breakthrough as a director came with her second cinema film *FATHER'S DAY* (1996). This relationship comedy pulled in more than 1.5 million viewers.

For television, Hormann directed several thrillers such as "Bella Block", "Meine Tochter ist keine Mörderin" (2001), three episodes of "Der Kriminalist" (2006) as well as the highly acclaimed two-part mini-series "Helen, Fred and Ted" (2006). This comedy about therapists with Friedrich von Thun, Andrea Sawatzki and Christian Berkel was nominated for among others the Bavarian Television Award.

With *DESERT FLOWER*, Hormann treads new ground in many ways and displays yet another dimension to her talent; the adaptation of Waris Dirie's story is both a modern fairy tale and a political plea. She draws the audience into the world of contradictions that make up Waris Dirie's world and story. The viewer sees both the poetic beauty of Africa as well as its brutal dark side; experiences with the young Somali woman the disturbing chaos of a metropolis like London as well as her uplifting success in the international fashion world. And with her, the viewer gathers the courage to fight against the cruel tradition that Waris had grown up in. Sherry Hormann has managed to create a film that takes the audience on a journey on many levels, a film that she has spectacularly staged on three continents with an entirely international team.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 *DESERT FLOWER* 2004 *GuyS AND BALLS*

1998 *WIDOWS* 1996 *FATHER'S DAY*

1994 *FRAUEN SIND WAS WUNDERBARES*

1991 *SILENT SHADOW*

PETER HERRMANN (PRODUCER)

After studying ethnology in Munich, Peter Herrmann has worked in several positions in the film industry since 1984 and has directed documentary films. In 1994, he co-founded MTM and has been the CEO of MTM west in Cologne since 1999, which he took over as a shareholder in 2004. As managing partner, Herman founded the Desert Flower Filmproductions GmbH in 2005 for the film adaptation of "Desert Flower".

His greatest success to date came as the producer of the Oscar winning film *NOWHERE IN AFRICA* (2001). The film won several other awards including the 2002 German Film Award in five categories and the Bavarian Film Award. Previously, Hermann had also produced Roland Suso Richter's *A HANDFUL OF GRASS* (2000), which won the "Cannes Junior 2001" in the children's film section at the Cannes Film Festival. As executive producer, his films include Jan Schütte's *FETTE WELT (FAT WORLD)* (1999) and Romuald Karmakar's *DER TOTMACHER (The DEATHMAKER)* (1995). His TV productions include Roland Suso Richter's "The Bubi Scholz Story" (1997) as well as several episodes of "Tatort" and "Polizeiuf 110".

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2002 OLGA'S SUMMER / Directed by Nina Grosse
2001 NOWHERE IN AFRICA / Directed by Caroline Link (Oscar® for Best Foreign Film)
2000 A HANDFUL OF GRASS / Directed by Roland Suso Richter
1999 FAT WORLD / Directed by Jan Schütte
1995 The DEATHMAKER / Directed by Romuald Karmakar

KEN KELSCH (CINEMATOGRAPHY)

Kelsch graduated from New York University. After serving in the Special Forces in Vietnam, he first started shooting commercials. His first assignment as a director of photography was an enormous success: Ken Kelsch shot BAD LIEUTENANT for Abel Ferrara in 1992. The two of them went on to work together on several films including DANGEROUS GAME (1993), THE ADDICTION (1994), THE FUNERAL (1996), which gained Kelsch a nomination for the Independent Spirit Award, THE BLACKOUT (1997), NEW ROSE HOTEL (1998) and 'R XMAS (2001). Kelsch's longtime friendship with the director also led to his appearance in the documentary "A Short Film About the Long Career of Abel Ferrara" (2004).

He recently not only shot Eric Red's horror-thriller 100 FEET (2008), but also appeared in the film as an actor, appearing also in NEW ROSE HOTEL (1998). Kelsch has worked as a director of photography in over 40 film productions. For Stanley Tucci he shot THE IMPOSTORS (1998), for Amos Kollek HAPPY END (2003) with Audrey Tautou, for director Abdullah Oguz ASMALI KONAK: HAYAT (2003), the screen adaptation of the successful Turkish TV series "Asmali Konak" and "Sicak" (2008).

For television, his work includes "Medium" (2006), "Private Lies" (2000) and "Rear Window" (1998).

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2008 100 FEET / Directed by Eric Red
2005 MISSING IN AMERICA / Directed by Gabrielle Savage Dockterman
2003 HAPPY END / Directed by Amos Kollek
2001 'R XMAS / Directed by Abel Ferrara
2000 THE IMPOSTORS / Directed by Stanley Tucci
1997 THE ADDICTION / Directed by Abel Ferrara
1996 THE FUNERAL / Directed by Abel Ferrara

JAMIE LEONARD (PRODUCTION DESIGN)

Jamie Leonard, renowned British production designer and art director, became famous in the 80s during the rise of New British Cinema with films such as David Hare's WETHERBY (1985) and Neil Jordan's MONA LISA (1986). On the international front, he designed the sets and architecture for the films LORENZO'S OIL (1993), BEAUMARCHAIS – THE SCOUNDREL (1996) and INCOGNITO (1997). Many famous actors have worked on the sets designed by Jamie Leonard, including Vanessa Redgrave, Sir Michael Caine, Bob Hoskins, Albert Finney, Alan Bates, Ian Holm, Johnny Lee Miller, Miranda Richardson, Willem Dafoe, Fabrice Luchini, Johnny Depp and Irène Jacob. Two of his films were awarded the Golden Bear at the International Film Festival Berlin: ASCENDANCY in 1983 and WETHERBY in 1985.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2009 BETTER THINGS / Directed by Duane Hopkins
1997 INCOGNITO / Directed by John Badham
1996 BEAUMARCHAIS THE SCOUNDREL / Directed by Edouard Molinaro
1993 LORENZO'S OIL / Directed by George Miller
1986 MONA LISA / Directed by Neil Jordan

CLARA FABRY (EDITING)

Clara Fabry-Gasser, born 1943 in Tegernsee, studied from 1961-1964 at the German Institute for Film and Television, the forerunner to the HFF Munich. During this time, she received her training at the Bavaria Studios in Geiselgasteig and was an editing assistant for 4 years. Since 1968, she has been working as an independent film editor. Clara Fabry has worked with directing legends such as Bernhard Wicki and Percy Adlon, with whom she worked for 15 years. She also worked with Nico Hofmann and is the film editor for several of Jo Baier's films. In 2004, she was nominated for the German Film Award for Baier's STAUFFENBERG. Before DESERT FLOWER, she worked together with Sherry Hormann on HELEN, FRED AND TED (2006), for which she received a nomination for the German Television Award in 2007.

In 2001, Clara Fabry founded the study program Montage / Editing at the Film Academy Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg for which she received a professorship in 2008.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2009 LIESL KARLSTADT UND KARL VALENTIN / Directed by Jo Baier
2006 HELEN, FRED AND TED / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2004 STAUFFENBERG / Directed by Jo Baier 2003 SCHWABENKINDER / Directed by Jo Baier
1998 DER LADEN / Directed by Jo Baier

GABRIELE BINDER (COSTUME DESIGN)

Gabriele Binder studied Design and Art History at the Berlin University of the Arts, then worked in the clothing industry and gathered experience in costume production in the dressmaker workshops of several opera and theater companies. Her first encounter with film production came as a production design assistant for Dominik Graf's DREI GEGEN DREI (1985) and as a costume design assistant in Wim Wender's FARAWAY, SO CLOSE! (1992). She has been working as a costume designer for film and TV since 1993, and has regularly worked with Sherry Hormann since FRAUEN SIND WAS WUNDERBARES (1994).

Gabriele Binder was nominated for the German Film Award in 2006 for her authentic costumes in Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's THE LIVES OF OTHERS (2006), which was awarded the Oscar

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2008 MÄRZMELODIE / Directed by Martin Walz Oscar® for Best Foreign Film.
2006 THE LIVES OF OTHERS / Directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck
2004 GUYS AND BALLS / Directed by Sherry Hormann
1999 ST. PAULI NACHT / Directed by Sönke Wortmann
1996 FATHER'S DAY / Directed by Sherry Hormann
1996 THE PASSION OF DARKLY NOON / Directed by Philipp Ridley

MARTIN TODSHAROW (Music)

has been part of the German elite film composers for over ten years. Born in Berlin, he studied piano and counterpoint / composition at the Academy of Music Hanns Eisler Berlin before he began working as a professional composer for film in 1997. Since then, the most “gifted” ‘enfant terrible of German film music’ (Filmdienst) has been responsible for the film music composition of over 50 cinema and TV productions.

His primarily minimalistic and experimental sounds that have the reputation of being mostly dark and mysterious have been experienced by audiences in films such as Oskar Roehler’s NO PLACE TO GO (2000), composing music for almost all of the director’s films, Sherry Hormann’s AGAINST ALL EVIDENCE (2002) as well as GUYS AND BALLS (2004). He has also worked on the films NOTHING BUT GHOSTS (Martin Gypkens, 2006), 1 1/2 KNIGHTS (Til Schweiger, 2008) and HILDE (Kai Wessel, 2009).

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann

2009 HILDE / Directed by Kai Wessel

2007 NOTHING BUT GHOSTS / Directed by Martin Gypkens

2004 GUYS AND BALLS / Directed by Sherry Hormann

2003 ANGST / Directed by Oskar Roehler

2000 NO PLACE TO GO / Directed by Oskar Roehler

BENJAMIN HERRMANN (CO-PRODUCER)

Benjamin Herrmann, born 1971, completed his directing studies at the Munich Film School, winning several short film awards in 1997 for his graduation film DER GROSSE LACHER, and then became Head of Production at the TV station ProSieben. There he produced more than 40 films for cinema and television including the critic’s and audience successes TODFEINDE by Oliver Hirschbiegel, Tomy Wigand’s FOOTBALL RULES OK and the two-time Grimme Award-winning THE PHANTOM by Dennis Gansel. As an executive producer, he was responsible for the most successful German film of all time, Michael Bully Herbig’s MANITOU’S SHOE.

In 2000, Benjamin Herrmann became Managing Director of Senator Film Produktion and Senator Film Verleih. He was responsible for the (co) production and / or distribution of several successful films such as Oliver Hirschbiegel’s THE EXPERIMENT, Peter Thorwarth’s IF IT DON’T FIT, USE A BIG HAMMER, Lasse Hallström’s CHOCOLAT, Christian Zübert’s LAMMBOCK, Sönke Wortmann’s THE MIRACLE OF BERN, and Anno Saul’s WHERE IS FRED?. His production of Christian Carion’s MERRY CHRISTMAS was nominated for an Oscar® for Best Foreign Film.

In 2006, together with David Groenewold, Benjamin Herrmann founded Majestic, a film production and distribution company. The first great success of the young company, Doris Dörrie’s CHERRY BLOSSOMS – HANAMI, became the most successful Arthouse film of 2008 attracting 1.1 million viewers. In addition, he produced and distributed Philipp Stölzl’s sensational mountain adventure NORTH FACE, which received two German Film Awards. As a producer of Florian Gallenberger’s award-winning JOHN RABE, Benjamin Herrmann received the German Film Award as well as the Bavarian Film Award for Best Film.

FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTED):

2009 DESERT FLOWER / Directed by Sherry Hormann
2009 JOHN RABE / Directed by Florian Gallenberger
2008 NORTH FACE / Directed by Philipp Stölzl
2005 MERRY CHRISTMAS / Directed by Christian Carion
2003 THE MIRACLE OF BERN / Directed by Sönke Wortmann
2002 IF IT DON'T FIT, USE A BIG HAMMER / Directed by Peter Thorwarth
2001 THE EXPERIMENT / Directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel

DANNY KRAUSZ (CO-PRODUCER)

Danny Krausz, born 1958 in Vienna, founded the production company Dor Film together with Milan Dor in Vienna in 1988. Krausz is responsible for over 50 feature films that he produced or co-produced, which were both commercially as well as artistically successful. Dor Film is also internationally very successful in television production.

Alongside the two most viewed Austrian films in the last 20 years, HINTERHOLZ 8 (1998) and POPPITZ (2002) both by Harald Sicheritz, his greatest successes also include INDIA (director: Paul Harather, 1994), as well as COME SWEET DEATH, SILENTIUM! and THE BONE MAN (director: Wolfgang Murnberger, 2000 / 2004 / 2009), Stefan Ruzowitzky's internationally successful alpine western THE INHERITORS (1998), André Heller and Othmar Schmiderer's documentary film BLIND SPOT. HITLER'S SECRETARY (2002), which caused quite a furor, and Philipp Stölzl's sensational NORTH FACE. Furthermore, Danny Krausz has coproduced several cinema successes such as Joseph Vilsmaier's SCHLAFES BRUDER (1995) and THE HARMONISTS (1997), István Szabó's SUNSHINE (1999) and Stefan Ruzowitzky's LILLY, THE WITCH (2009). Danny Krausz was nominated for an Oscar® for the Czech co-production ZELARY by Ondrej Trojan, and was involved in two other productions that were also nominated for an Oscar. In 2002, the film BLIND SPOT. HITLER'S SECRETARY received a nomination for the European Film Award for Best Documentary Film.

In 1998, Krausz founded Dor Film-West in Munich and in 2009 Dor Film Köln.

Danny Krausz has received several awards for his production work including the Producer Award of the Film Festival Saarbrücken (1996), the Romy for Best Producer in 1999, the Prize for Innovative Production at the Diagonale in Graz in both 2002 and 2009, and another Romy for Best TV Film 2007.

Danny Krausz lives with his wife and 7 children in Vienna.