

**GALATÉE FILMS, OUTSIDE FILMS** and **STUDIOCANAL** present



**FRENCH RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 26 2018**

**GERMAN RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 31 2018**

*Run time: 1h 37*

**INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY CONTACTS**

Alexandre Bourg

[alexandre.bourg@studiocanal.com](mailto:alexandre.bourg@studiocanal.com)

Erin Wellings

[erin.wellings@studiocanal.com](mailto:erin.wellings@studiocanal.com)

**Tel: +44 (0)20 7534 2700**

## SYNOPSIS

Ten year old Mia has her life turned upside down when her family decides to leave London to manage a lion farm in Africa. When a beautiful white lion, Charlie, is born, Mia finds happiness once again and develops a special bond with the growing cub.

When Charlie reaches three, Mia's life is rocked once again as she uncovers an upsetting secret kept hidden by her father. Distraught by the thought that Charlie could be in harm, Mia decides to run away with him. The two friends set out on an incredible journey across the South African savanna in search of another land where Charlie can live out his life in freedom.



# GILLES DE MAISTRE INTERVIEW

*Director*

## **Where did the idea for the story come from?**

It goes back years. I shot a series about children around the world who have deep bonds with wild animals for a French television documentary. My research took me to South Africa, where I filmed a child whose parents had a lion-breeding farm. They bred lions for conservation purposes - or so they claimed. The end goal was to sell them on to zoos and wildlife parks, to celebrate the king of animals in all its glory, and sometimes even to rewild them. There was a 10-year-old boy there who was in love with the lions. Once we finished filming and I left the farm, I found out that the lions were being bred for hunting.

This movie is about an 11-year-old girl called Mia, whose parents breed lions and she develops a bond with a white lion cub. The parents are witnesses to this deep friendship and start worrying about what will happen when the cub grows up. So they decide to sell him to hunters. And when Mia realizes the truth, she decides to save the lion and help him escape the farm to a reserve where he might live out his days in peace. But the journey to get to this safe haven is complicated, to say the least...

It's a family movie rather than a documentary, although there was a real-life friendship that inspired the relationship between the young girl and the lion we witness in the movie. It draws on a completely new and unusual way of working. We met over 300 kids in South Africa to find just the right actor. And we came across this little girl, Daniah. The first time she came head to head with a lion cub, she didn't use her hands as we saw most of the children do, but her head. Our lion expert, Kevin Richardson, was convinced it needed to be her. Today, Dinah has grown up, and she's now 14. The lion is no longer a cub, but a 250-kilo giant, and yet the two are still friends. I think it's the first time anything like this has been attempted: telling the tale of a love story between a wild animal and apex predator, and a little girl, with no special effects.

## **How did you meet Kevin Richardson?**

Once I'd had the idea for "Mia and the White Lion", my next question was: how can I make this happen? I'd already worked on a documentary about Kevin Richardson, called "The Lion Whisperer". The man is just incredible, an international star who's worked with over 100 lions over the past 20 years, dissolving the boundaries between humankind and the animal kingdom to create authentic relationships between the two. When I spoke to him about "Mia and the White Lion", he said: *"This is going to be complicated, unless you're prepared to film the movie over three years, using a very young lion cub. You'll need to build a bond between the two and shoot the movie using the same lion throughout. But that's impossible, you won't have the time."*

And I replied: *“Let’s do it anyway!”*. Studiocanal and Galatée Films were excited and on board, and so that’s what we did!

**They say that directing children and animals is hard for a director. And you had to do both, at the same time...**

They also say that two negatives make a positive! But all joking aside, that saying is a little inaccurate. Regarding working with children, I met some truly exceptional kids on set: polite, sweet, smart, hard-working, brave... I was lucky.

And when it came to the animals, we developed a working method that’s completely different from how we tend to do things in the industry, approaching the lion as an actual actor rather than an animal we needed to tame. We built a relationship with the lion (Thor) from the moment he was born. Of course, the team kept more of a distance and by the end of the process needed to be in cages, but all the same, the lion became used to the cameras and mics. The younger actors worked with the lions on a daily basis.

It was more about creating an intimate relationship, fostering love, than training. And that gave our lion the confidence he needed to feel comfortable on set with our actors!

**Was this the first time anything like this had been attempted?**

Yes. It was about immersion and creating habit and routine. The lion spent time with our actor every day, wandering around the set even when we weren’t filming.

And he was a real character! Kevin Richardson had never seen a lion as talented as our Thor. It might have been down to the time it took us to make the film and the atmosphere we had on set, but when we had to redo some takes, he was able to recreate the exact same thing, like a real actor.

**So lions can act?**

Let’s just say he understood. And there were days when we didn’t do any filming because he wasn’t in the mood, so we just left him alone. We gave up and tried again the next day. And that meant there were some scenes we had to film over three or four days because it was so complicated, whereas for some others, all we needed was a quarter of an hour.

**It sounds like working this way was something of a gamble!**

It was a gamble, but a calculated one, because we had planned for every eventuality and we were extremely well prepared. We had two children working with us, in case one of the two got scared. Ryan, the boy who plays Daniah’s brother, was also her understudy, so he went through the exact same process in building a relationship with the lion. If Daniah had suddenly become scared in the third year, we would have reworked the screenplay and Ryan would have taken over, he would have gone on to save the lion at the end of the story.

We also had two lions. Three, actually. Thor was our leading lion. He played the role of Charlie from the age of four months. The real-life Charlie played himself and understudied, he played the lion aged two months, and Neige, a female, played Charlie as a newborn.

**Your lions grew up under the spotlight. At what point did they become dangerous?**

We filmed as we would film any other actor until they were a year and a half, and then we moved into the cages. And that was fine with me! Lions start becoming complicated to work with when they hit two, or two and a half. Like humans, lions get to that age and start behaving a bit like teenagers.

It was interesting to watch how the two children used two completely different methods to build their relationships with Thor. Daniah tried to mimic Kevin in a very physical approach, rolling around and roughhousing with the lion! Ryan had a more cautious, almost distant approach. He's a very gentle soul, so calm that Kevin and I almost wondered if he was scared. At the end, the team that had been helping Kevin with the lions from the very beginning had backed away from the task out of fear. And so when Daniah was shooting, Kevin would ask Ryan to come and help him handle the lion while he focused on filming. By the end there were only three people, two of them children, who could get close to the lion.

**What do you mean when you say "handle the lion"?**

Well, Daniah was used to handling the lion in real life, but when she was filming, she couldn't do that. She needed to become her character, so she couldn't look after the lion as she would normally, she was forced to interact with the lion in character, in ways she wasn't used to. In her everyday life, she was used to playing with the lion and reassuring him. On set, she had to pretend to be hurt, she had to scream or cry while he watched on. It was terrifying, but she did it. And that's where the real challenge lay: Having enough faith and confidence to relinquish control and act alongside this massive lion!

**So you had to give control over to Kevin...**

Yes. I filmed during the first two stages of filming, getting up close and personal with the lion, because we couldn't create the emotion of the relationship artificially. I wanted to continue that way, but because I couldn't film it myself any longer, I passed the camera over to Kevin. But I continued giving orders into his earpiece. I became the Kevin Whisperer!

**Such an unusual, unique process must create powerful relationships...**

The movie took three years to film in four stages, so it's weird. We would say our goodbyes, and then "*see you in a year!*". We were all there in South Africa, watching this lion and the children grow up. We became friends with the parents, we hung around in the bush with the elephants and giraffes... We just wanted to be able to re-live it all over again.

### **Your life insurance must have taken up most of your budget!**

Strangely enough, no. Circles is the only insurance provider to cover this type of filming, and they were totally sold on the security system we had in place. Our golden rule was that if Kevin was in the least bit hesitant, we would use special effects instead. And we had two children working with us, in case one of the two got scared. That was our Plan B. But if there was any doubt, we would turn to green screen. That was our Plan C.

### **Are you planning a sequel?**

We gave up on the idea. The problem was that as soon as Daniah stopped interacting with the lion, her role ended, because it's about building a relationship day after day. We couldn't risk having to start a new relationship from scratch. We considered the idea of having Daniah continue to work with Kevin in South Africa, but ultimately we decided it was too complicated for something purely hypothetical at that stage. It was heart-breaking for Daniah to have to leave the lion behind her, but she had to get back to her normal life as a normal girl, back to her home after three years spent living in the bush. She had given it her all. But she still visits him regularly.

### **You were originally a documentary-maker. Is fiction now where your heart lies?**

When I make a documentary, I set off alone with my camera and I meet people. It's a whole different experience, and that's where I get my ideas, the stories I use for fiction. Real life fuels my imagination. I like injecting real-life experiences into fictional stories, which is what I did with "Mia and the White Lion": what happens between Daniah and the lion is real, and we draw on that in the movie to extract emotion, the suspense that couldn't be achieved with special effects. People crave that authenticity.

# KEVIN RICHARDSON INTERVIEW

*Lion consultant*

## **How did you come to work on the project?**

I first met Gilles de Maistre in 2012. At the time, I was in the process of moving my sanctuary and he wanted to film me at work. As that wasn't possible, he asked me if I had any other ideas. We decided to develop a fictional story, a family drama that would speak to everyone, and that everyone would want to see for entertainment, not just to learn more about the underpinning message.

We then started thinking about how we would structure the movie, and decided it would be great to weave the idea of betrayal into the tale: the story of a father who betrays his own child with respect to her lion. But filming a relationship between a child and a lion was impossible. Unless we began working with the lion as a cub and managed to make it "adopt" the child as one of its own. Suddenly, the craziest ideas seemed to be turning into reality. One day Gilles called me from Paris and said: *"It's happening - we're making the movie!"*. From that point on, it was all a blur.

This type of fictional story is so much more complicated to create than a documentary, especially if you decide to stay as true as possible to the relationship between lion and child, as we did. The friendship needed to be real for audiences to emotionally invest in the movie and feel the full force of the betrayal. So it was crucial our little girl be able to build a bond with the lion from the youngest age. I considered using my own son in the movie, but he was too young. So we needed to find someone crazy enough to entrust us with their kid for a three-year period, someone who was open to the idea of having their child grow up alongside lions. And that was the real challenge: it wasn't about finding the right children, that part didn't worry me. It was about finding the right parents.

## **How did you coach Daniah and Ryan?**

It was really intense! Three years of work, with three full-immersion sessions every week, each session lasting two to three hours. Initially, I lived and breathed this project because I needed to lay down the ground work. I was then able to hand things over to a team who took care of running one or two of the thrice-weekly sessions. When the lion reached a certain stage, I had to work on the project full-time again, because there were crucial turning points that needed to be dealt with, and there were a few things I needed to teach the children about lions and how they needed to behave with them.

It was a challenge for me, too. I know how to behave with a lion, but this time, I needed to pass this knowledge on to the children while bearing in mind that they were only kids, that they didn't have the experience that we have as adults. I had to learn when to intervene and when to let them solve problems for themselves. It was about striking the right balance. Over the years, the children kind of became mini versions of me in their ways of working, although each had their own personality. And

lions can sense that. They're not stupid. Lions also sense what your intentions are, and there's no way of fooling them in that respect.

### **Tell us about your relationship with Gilles de Maistre...**

We hit it off straight away, from the moment he started working on his documentary about me, "The Lion Whisperer". We have the same way of seeing the world. This movie wouldn't have been possible without Gilles leading the way. He's incredibly adaptable and is a great listener.

### **How did you get on with working with the animals?**

From the very beginning, I warned Gilles that my number-one priority would always be their well-being. And so production schedules all centered around that. The animals were treated like cast members, possibly even better! I kept an eye on their welfare, but I really felt supported by the production teams, whether at STUDIOCANAL, Galatée Films or Outside Films. I've had other filming experiences where this wasn't the case, experiences in which animals are required to 'get the job done', and if they can't, tensions rise. We had up to three days to lock down some scenes. Generally, we only ever needed a day, but when things didn't work out, we took two or three days to get it right.

I told Gilles that because authenticity was the goal, the project could take a long time to complete. If we had wanted to wrap things up in 12 weeks, we would have needed lots of special effects. We wouldn't have been able to capture the intimacy between the girl and her lion. In "Mia and the White Lion", what you see on the screen is what truly existed: a lion and a little girl who forged an incredible bond.

### **Did you consider using different lions of different ages?**

That was one idea at the start: maybe we could teach Daniah to work with a cub, followed by a six-month-old lion, a one-year-old lion, and finally a three-year-old lion. I was against this idea, because the three-year-old lion would have been a stranger. If you want to make a movie about a close relationship between a girl and a lion, the relationship needs to truly exist.

Also, I wasn't happy with the idea of having lion cubs I would then have to rehome. It was understood that the lions to be used in the movie would remain our responsibility until the end of their days. These animals would become ours, and we would help them.

### **Over the three years of filming, did you ever feel fear or doubt?**

I have an adventurous streak and I like shaking things up. This project illustrates that, and quite a few people wondered if I'd gone too far. They shared their thoughts with Gilles and the families: "*How can you put these kids in this position?*". They didn't understand what we were doing and why. The only way you could possibly understand would have been to come to Africa, to see it for yourself and to be involved in the filming. There was so much emotion, so many connections and different personalities, that it felt like one huge family.



**Security and safety must have been difficult...**

I've been working with lions for the movie industry for nearly 20 years now, and some sets have been pure chaos. As soon as wild animals are on set or in the vicinity, I personally take care of debriefing on safety and security, I tell people where they can go, what they can do, and how to respond if there's any problem. The goal is to prevent any kind of incident from occurring, making sure that people are aware that just because the past seven days have been completely event-free, it doesn't mean you can let your guard down and wander around the lions as if they were lap dogs. You should never, ever forget that these are wild animals that should be respected as such.

**What was your biggest surprise?**

There were lots of surprises, and Thor the lion inspired many of them. I often joke with Gilles that Thor is the 'real' Nordic god reincarnated. He suits his name, that's for sure. But the children, Daniah and Ryan, were just as surprising. No matter what came their way, those kids were rock-solid. They listened. They understood and did what I told them to do. They persevered. I'm full of admiration for them. I know so many people who would have thrown in the towel at the slightest hint of difficulty. But these children said: *"Kevin, I want to continue"*.

# DANIAH DE VILLIERS INTERVIEW

*Mia*

## **How was this project unique?**

It's a story of love that's never been told before. And nobody had ever worked with lions the way we did.

## **Kevin Richardson, the lion expert, played a key role in this project.**

Yes. He set up his own wildlife sanctuary. He's incredible. He has a special relationship with these lions.

## **How did it feel to move to Johannesburg?**

I felt like I was jumping into the unknown, forcing my whole family to move to Johannesburg just for this project! But we all saw the potential in this unusual movie.

## **Why were you chosen to play Mia?**

We all went to see the lions and cubs, and Kevin was there observing us. It was the first time I had ever touched a lion, and Kevin must have seen something happen.

## **What was it like to work with Mélanie Laurent and Langley Kirkwood?**

Langley plays my dad, and he taught me to keep my head on my shoulders. And Mélanie is amazing, she's a fantastic actor and such a good person. Just watching her, I learned so much about how she gets under her character's skin. Both of them taught me a lot.

## **Was filming a movie with a lion difficult?**

When he was a baby, there were so many people around him that he'd get really distracted. And then as he grew older, everybody moved into cages, which made it easier! Thor is really smart, because he's been used to filming from a very young age, and that's how we prepared: by working with him since he was a baby.

## **What kind of director is Gilles de Maistre?**

He has such a big heart, and I love his style of filming: very natural, very raw, as if the situations were real.

## **What is the message behind the movie?**

Thor taught me just how magnificent lions are, how they're so much more than their reputation.

## **What does the future hold for your wonderful friendship with Thor?**

Kevin said I can come and visit him whenever I want, because it's really hard to just move on to something else. I don't know what I'll do next year, I'm trying to live in the present.

# MÈLANIE LAURENT INTERVIEW

*Alice*

## **What made you choose to work on this project?**

It all happened very quickly. I took in the screenplay. I imagined the lions, filming in South Africa, a unique experience. I loved the story and I thought it was extremely important.

## **What was it like to film a movie over three years?**

Amazing! Firstly, because the sessions were nice and short. And also because it was a very small, close-knit team that became like a second family to me. We had these magical reunions to look forward to every year. Gilles sent me videos throughout the year, but even so, it surprised me: I'd arrive and the house was different, the children had grown up, the lions had matured, and I was a year older too.

## **Tell us about your character**

I play the French mom who moves to South Africa for love, although she doesn't instinctively want to. The family moves from London to this rundown house, life is busy.

## **And how does Mia, your on-screen daughter, develop as a character?**

What's interesting is that we first meet her aged 11, she's still a child, but with a rebellious streak. She embarks on a friendship with this lion, a relationship that will change the course of her existence. She becomes a mother herself, in a way, and comes into her own through this deep bond and her yearning to protect the animal, irrespective of the danger it may cause her or her family. It's very moving.

## **Does Kevin Richardson really talk to the lions?**

It's more than that. Kevin is half lion, half man. He also goes river-swimming with hyenas. When he told us we could do something, we did it unthinkingly. And the whole movie hinged on that. Getting the actors involved, without using doubles. I remember one scene we shot last year. The lion was already an adult by this stage, he had a mane and he climbed onto the kitchen table as we were eating! You do the scene, although with a little trepidation!

## **But it sounds like filming this movie was a particularly pleasant experience?**

Yes, because it was such a small team of people, so everybody got stuck in. Sometimes, we didn't even know we were being filmed. We improvised a lot, we drew on our own fears, we filmed quickly, capturing the moments as they happened, because a lot depended on the animals themselves, and extraordinary things happened on a daily basis. I don't think we would have been able to get the same effects if we'd taken the time to film in a more traditional way. We had a director who was filming as we danced, and it was a dance that lasted a whole three years. A ballet with the lions.

**How did you find working with Gilles de Maistre?**

He had to manage both the lions and the children as well as the adults, but he never showed any signs of stress. He knew exactly what he wanted to capture and managed to extract some incredible moments. The whole process was a dream. When I'm old, I'll be able to say: *"I filmed with lions in South Africa for three years, I saw those lions grow up"*.

**What's your fondest memory of making the movie?**

We were in a car, driving over a small bridge. There were giraffes on one side of us and hippopotamuses on the other, and suddenly the bush started shaking. An elephant surged out of nowhere, followed by another 15, passing by right before our eyes. I couldn't stop crying. You feel so small in the face of so much beauty. It's important to take a step back from the filming to get back in touch with all your emotions, because it feeds back into your acting.

# LANGLEY KIRKWOOD INTERVIEW

John

## **What drew you to this project?**

It's an extraordinary project in the true sense of the world and in many different ways. The way we filmed with real wild animals is unusual. And the decision to film over such a long period of time is unusual, too. The movie starts as a family movie, the kind you'd want to show your kids. But halfway through, the stakes get higher, the story becomes more exciting. The pace is stepped up a gear, becoming something that extends well beyond a straightforward family drama.

## **Who is John, your character?**

John is someone attempting to seize a second chance. He does his best not to waste it, he wants to look after his family, but yet again he loses his way. He tries to manage his lion farm and eco-tourism business in an ethical way, but soon discovers that it's incredibly difficult, and finds himself forced to make difficult decisions. These shades of gray made me reflect on certain moments in my own life, when despite my best intentions, I made bad decisions. John is a proud man. He has a big ego and struggles to admit that ultimately, he is responsible for his daughter's situation.

## **How much of the story is reality?**

The movie blurs the lines between documentary and fiction. There's a powerful bond between Daniah and Thor, the lion that plays Charlie. She helped feed and raise him. They belong to the same tribe. They're like family.

Of course, the whole premise of the movie is to showcase this love between the girl and the lion. There may even be a little flicker of resentment in John, because the lion has managed to create this special bond with his daughter where he himself failed.

## **Tell us about the lion specialist, Kevin Richardson.**

I had vaguely heard of this guy they called the Lion Whisperer. My children are huge YouTube addicts, and they must have shown me a video, and I remember thinking: *"Wow. That's cool. It's crazy, but cool"*.

The truth is Kevin is anything but crazy. He's a really down-to-earth guy, very open and hardworking, he gives everything he does 100%. His work is a life-long commitment: he can't just jet off for a few months. His relationships with the animals is something he hones day in, day out. It's impressive to watch him "decode" the animals and how much he trusts them, his way of throwing himself into it. I've never seen anything like it.

## **What are your best on-set memories?**

In the first stage, when Thor was four or five months old, we had to shoot a scene in which Mélanie, the kids and I were all sat on a swing with Thor. He was on my lap and I had to feed him small pieces of meat. It was one of those moments where you really

have to pinch yourself, because there you are, with a lion on your lap, hand-feeding him. Let's just say it's not the kind of thing you get to experience every day!



## PRODUCTION FACTS

The film was shot over a period of **three years**, enough time to see the real evolution of Mia and the White lion.

A pride of **6 lions** grew up together during the production, including Thor, the lion cast as Charlie, as well as another male lion and 4 lionesses.

**Kevin Richardson**, a lion expert also known as the **Lion Whisperer**, oversaw the entire production process and all interactions between the lions and the children ensuring that both parties were safe and respected.

After production, the 6 lions will **remain together** and will be living on Kevin Richardson's reserve thanks to a fund created by the production team.

Only **three people** were allowed to interact with the lions, Daniah, Ryan, and Kevin Richardson to ensure a safe working environment for both actors and animals

# GILLES DE MAISTRE BIOGRAPHY

*Director*

**Gilles de Maistre** is a director with an unusual approach, as at ease with writing as he is directing. He straddles several different audiovisual genres and offers up his vision of the world in movie theaters and on television screens as a writer, director, producer, reporter and general globe-trotter.

With hundreds of documentaries, television movies and feature-length movies to his name, Gilles de Maistre is a multi-award-winning director: The Albert Londres Prize, International Emmy Awards, 7 d'or award, the Public Prize and Junior Prize at the Festival de Cannes and the special Jury Prize at the Festival de la Fiction de La Rochelle, as well as a dozen other international prizes and awards.

His ***"The First Cry"*** documentary on the subject of childbirth around the world was released in 2007 and was nominated for the César Award for Best Documentary Film.

The idea for this feature-length movie was sparked by his work on a documentary series on relationships between children and wild animals for France Télévision, ***"Les Petits Princes"***.

Meeting Kevin Richardson while filming his ***"The Lion Whisperer"*** documentary proved decisive, paving the way for the unprecedented ***"Mia and the White Lion"*** project.



# WILLIAM DAVIES BIOGRAPHY

Writer

*“Mia and the White Lion”* was adapted by William Davies based on an original story written by **Prune de Maistre**.

**William Davies** began his career as a London-based sports journalist before moving to Los Angeles with his first screenplay *“Twins”*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito and produced in 1987.

Since then, he’s contributed to a long, star-studded list of studio movies, including the Oscar-nominated *“How to Train Your Dragon”* and *“Puss in Boots”*, *“Flushed Away”*, which won the Annie Awards’ Best Writing in an Animated Feature Production, *“Johnny English”* and *“Johnny English Reborn”*.

He has also written pilot episodes for NBC and Fox, and his London-based production company Stormy Photos produced the BBC’s critically-acclaimed Red Cap series.

# MELANIE LAURENT BIOGRAPHY

*Alice Owen*

One of the biggest stars of her generation in both France and on the global stage. An actor, director and singer all rolled into one, her career trajectory has been eclectic to say the least. Her rise to fame began with **"The Bridge"** by Frédéric Auburtin and Gérard Depardieu, followed by **"Summer Things"** by Michel Blanc.

In 2006, Philippe Lioret chose her to play the leading role in his movie **"Don't Worry, I'm Fine"**, for which she won the César Award for Most Promising Actress, the Etoile d'Or for Best Female Newcomer and the Prix Lumières.

In 2009, she made her Hollywood début in Quentin Tarantino's **"Inglourious Basterds"**. In 2010, she was awarded the Gotham Award for Best Ensemble Performance along with Christopher Plummer and Ewan McGregor for her performance in **"Beginners"** by Mike Mills.

She met with worldwide success in **"Now You See Me"** by Louis Leterrier and starred in Denis Villeneuve's **"Enemy"**.

Her filmography also includes **"Ceci est mon corps"** by Rodolphe Marconi, **"The Beat That My Heart Skipped"** by Jacques Audiard, **"Days of Glory"** by Rachid Bouchareb, **"Paris"** by Cédric Klapisch, **"The Concert"** by Radu Mihaileanu, **"The Round Up"** by Rose Bosch and **"Eternity"** by Tran Anh Hung.

In 2011, she wrote, directed and acted in **"The Adopted"**. In 2014, she wrote and directed another drama, **"Breathe"**, and co-produced **"Tomorrow"** a year later, illustrating her commitment to protecting the environment.

In 2017, she starred alongside Guillaume Canet in **"My Son"** by Christian Carion and in 2018 she shared the limelight with Jean Dujardin in **"Return of the Hero"** by Laurent Tirard.

She also directed a drama, **"Plonger"**, released in 2017 and adapted from the eponymous novel by Christophe Ono-dit-Biot.

She has just finished directing her first movie in the States, **"Galveston"**, based on a screenplay by Nic Pizzolatto and starring Ben Foster and Elle Fanning, due to be released in French movie theaters on 10 October 2018.

# LANGLEY KIRKWOOD BIOGRAPHY

*John Owen*

Born in England, he grew up in his parents' home country, South Africa, during Apartheid. His passion for drama and the quality of his stage and screen acting have afforded him an array of awards and prizes.

He won the FNB Vita Prize for his performance as Kid in the play "***Shooting Billy the Kid***". His dazzling filmography includes international productions such as "***In My Country***" by John Boorman and "***Invictus***" by Clint Eastwood.

He has also featured in series such as "***Generation Kill***" (HBO, three Emmy Awards), "***Outcasts***" (BBC1), "***The Bible***" (Emmy-nominated), "***Black Sails***", "***Dominion***" and "***Banshee***" (HBO/Cinemax, Emmy-winning). He plays Walter Buckley, one of the central characters in the "***Warrior***" series inspired by an idea by Bruce Lee and produced by HBO and Cinemax. Alongside silver-screen performances in "***Dredd***" by Pete Travis in 2012 and "***Tiger House***" by Tom Daley in 2015, he takes to the stage when he has the time. He won one of South Africa's most prestigious theater awards, the Fleur du Cap Theatre Award, for his performance in "***Death of a Salesman***" by Arthur Miller. In 2018, he played Eddie in "***Fool for Love***", a play by Sam Shepard showcased at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg.

An ardent defender of environmental causes and a die-hard sports fan, he splits his time between Cape Town and Los Angeles.

# DANIAH DE VILLIERS BIOGRAPHY

*Mia Owen*

Daniah was born in 2003 in Cape Town, South Africa. Her love of acting emerged at a tender age. At just 10 years old, she began taking acting and singing classes, taking part in countless festivals and competitions and winning a regional drama prize.

In 2013, she was awarded the Junior Grand Champion award for acting at the World Championship of Performing Arts in Hollywood. Daniah is a young, passionate actor who began her career in 2014 in South African and international commercials, and has now amassed a hefty portfolio of on-camera experiences. From 2015 to 2018, she filmed the lead role in **"Mia and the White Lion"**, her first silver-screen experience.

In parallel, she has also had leading roles in South African television series (**"Nul is Nie Niks Nie"**, **"Vaselinetjie"**, **"DatingGameKiller"**, **"Meerkat Maantuig"**, **"Binnelanders"**).

# RYAN MACLENNAN BIOGRAPHY

*Mick Owen*

Ryan was born in 2003 in Johannesburg, South Africa. ***“Mia and the White Lion”*** was his first silver-screen experience. Ryan has played many different roles in school plays. His talent saw him awarded several prizes, including the Best Newcomer prize for his 2012 performance in *Rumpelstiltskin* and the Best Male Actor prize in 2014. He also featured in a commercial for international clothing brand WE Fashion. As well as his passion for acting, drama and delving into the minds of new characters, he loves nature and is a talented wildlife photographer. His love of animals meant he found it hard to say goodbye to the bush-based filming that gave him his first major silver-screen break.

# KEVIN RICHARDSON BIOGRAPHY

*Lion consultant*

Kevin Richardson is a world-renowned wildlife conservationist and filmmaker, recognized by his persona as the 'Lion Whisperer'. His mission is to highlight the status of Africa's most iconic predator, the lion, through his work in the media and alongside fellow campaigners, researchers and scientists.

# CREDITS

Directed by  
**Gilles de Maistre**

Starring  
**Daniah De Villiers**  
**Mélanie Laurent**  
**Langley Kirkwood**  
**Ryan Mac Lennan**

Based on an original idea by  
**Prune de Maistre** and **Gilles de Maistre**

Screenplay by  
**Prune de Maistre** and **William Davies**

Co-produced by  
**M6 FILMS - FILM AFRIKA - PANDORA FILM**

In collaboration with  
**CANAL+ - CINÉ + - M6 - W9 - Film-und Medienstiftung NRW**

In partnership with  
**Kevin Richardson**

## CAST

<b>Mia</b>	Daniah De Villiers
<b>Alice</b>	Mélanie Laurent
<b>John</b>	Langley Kirkwood
<b>Mick</b>	Ryan Mac Lennan
<b>Charlie</b>	Thor
<b>Kevin</b>	Lionel Newton
<b>Jodie</b>	Lillian Dube
<b>Dirk</b>	Brandon Auret



## CREW

Director	Gilles de Maistre
Based on an original idea by	Prune de Maistre and Gilles de Maistre
Screenplay by	Prune de Maistre and William Davies
Based on an original synopsis by	Prune de Maistre and Jean-Paul Husson
Produced by	Valentine Perrin Jacques Perrin Nicolas Elghozi Gilles de Maistre Stéphane Simon Catherine Camborde Meryl Schutte Valérie Legrain-Dousseau Rudi Van As Reinhard Brundig Jean-François Fontanel Louise Arhex Brendan Barnes Emmanuel Guionet Toinette Laquière Bonnie Lee Bouman
Co-produced by	
Assistant director	
Screenplay	
Director of photography & cameraman	
Sound engineer	
Children's acting coach	
Casting director for South Africa	
Studio managers	Ben Visser Salomon Atah
Lion handler	Kevin Richardson
Wardrobe manager	Fianca Barnard
Head make-up artists	Jane Blewett Mary-Sue Morris
Head set designer	Ruth Greaves
Head stage engineers	Jurie Geldenhuys Grant Rowe Vukani Cyril Khawula
Head electrician	Julien Rey
Head editor	Rainer Heesch
Sound editors	Corinna Fleig George Hapig Tobias Fleig
Sound effect artist	Armand Amar
Sound technician	
Original score by	

*Filmed on location - South Africa: "Welgedacht Reserve" located 25 miles outside Pretoria.*