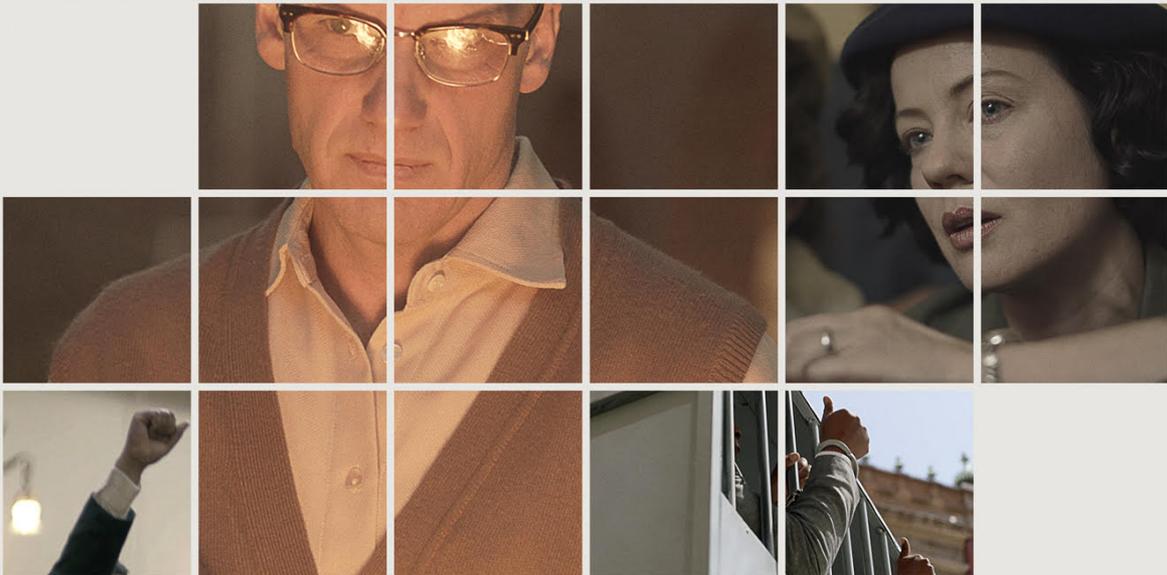


PETER PAUL MULLER ANTOINETTE LOUW SELLO MOTLOUNG

★★★★ "BEAUTIFUL, MOVING" "CAPTIVATING FROM BEGINNING TO END"



"WE HAVE TO PUT ON A SHOW OF DEFIANCE THAT INSPIRES OTHERS TO FIGHT ON."
- NELSON MANDELA



A FILM BY JEAN VAN DE VELDE

AN ACT OF DEFIANCE

DIE STORIE VAN BRAM FISCHER

A BROADBEAN FILMS & TV, AND SPEER FILMS PRODUCTION WITH BINA-YANA ON-SET PRODUCTIONS WORLD AT ART BROADBEAN MEDIA & JEAN VAN DE VELDE FILM ORGANIZATION. PETER PAUL MULLER ANTOINETTE LOUW SELLO MOTLOUNG DANIEL JANUS ANDRÉ KISSER
FELICE SPIELA WILHELM ESTERHUYSEN LÉNY REZTOVYANOVIC COSTUME DESIGNER GABRIELA SCHWARTZBERGER MAKE-UP ARTIST JULIEN ROBINSTEIN COSTUME ASSISTANT SHELLEY MENTELAS JERRY JONES COSTUME DESIGNER PETER WINDHART COSTUME DESIGNER SAMUEL VOS MAKEUP DESIGNER FLORENZ WITTEKOPF PRODUCTION DESIGNER ERINELLE GRANTER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY WALTER BOODALL
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROBERT KENTY KEITHA DEGENEN JEAN VAN DE VELDE PRODUCED BY THE STATE VISUAL RESOURCES BOARD AND JACQUELYNE VAN DER MERWE PRODUCED BY BROADBEAN MEDIA AND JEAN VAN DE VELDE PRODUCED BY BROADBEAN CLASSIC MEDIA AND WILHELM REZTOVYANOVIC WRITTEN BY JEAN VAN DE VELDE
DIRECTED BY JEAN VAN DE VELDE
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Cinema Management Group (CMG)

presents

a Richard Claus & Co. and Spier Films production

An Act of Defiance

Written & Directed By

JEAN VAN DE VELDE

Producers

RICHARD CLAUS

MICHAEL AURET

HUGH ROGERS

Co-Producer

PATRICIA VAN HEERDEN

Associate Producer

LWAZI MANZI

Director of Photography

MILES GOODALL

Editor

SANDER VOS

Production Designer

CHANTEL CARTER

Costume Designer

SULET MEINTJES

Make-up and Hair Designer

JULIA RUBINSTEIN

Casting Director

CHRISTA SCHAMBERGER

SYNOPSIS – SHORT

“I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if it need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.” - Nelson Mandela’s impassioned speech to the prosecutor of “The Rivonia Trial.”

It’s 1963 and apartheid is rampant in South Africa. When ten men are arrested on a farm in Rivonia for conspiring to commit sabotage and violent acts against the repressive South African government, tenacious lawyer Bram Fisher steps up to the challenge as lead counsel.

He soon finds that political leader Nelson Mandela is also on trial. Mandela urges his fellow defendants to plead not guilty and to shine a light on the systemic oppression of those classified as “non-white” under Apartheid. As the outcome of the trial looks bleak, Mandela gives his famous “I’m Prepared to Die” speech, in which he posits that the ANC’s resistance is justified given the repressive South African state. But will Mandela’s impassioned speech save these men’s lives?

SYNOPSIS – LONG

On a winter's day in July 1963, the police raid a farm in the village of Rivonia. Nine black and white leaders of the banned ANC and "Umkhonto We Sizwe" (Spear of the Nation) are arrested. A tenth member who had been arrested earlier is added to the group of nine – Nelson Mandela.

More than anything the apartheid regime wants to sentence the captured freedom fighters to death: not only as a warning to their fellow anti-apartheid activists but also to get rid of some of their most notorious enemies and the leadership of the ANC and thus to decapitate the freedom movement.

When the wives and families of the suspects try to find a lawyer to defend the accused, the potential candidates are afraid or unwilling to accept the mandate.

Initially, Bram Fischer, the widely respected Dean of the Bar Association, counsel for major mining magnates and scion of a prominent Boer Family, hesitates too.

But Bram's hesitation is for other reasons: he has a secret that only his wife and a few other people know. He should have been the eleventh accused but, as luck would have it, he was not present at the farm in Rivonia, when the others were arrested.

Bram decides to take on the defence. During the trial he not only has to unravel the manipulated evidence presented by the prosecutor and expose the fact that witnesses were bribed and tortured, but he must also protect himself from detection by the very witnesses he needed to cross examine.

During the trial, he sees more and more reasons to move away from his principles of non-violence; he becomes prepared to support violent acts of sabotage and the armed uprising of the people. The death penalty for the accused could be the spark igniting the powder keg.

Parallel to the trial Bram is trying to organise the resistance and prepares for the ANC to lead it. But as the trial progresses, the secret police uncover Bram's double role and the State Attorney is forced by the Minister of Justice, Balthazar Vorster, to play this card. Bram is faced with a moral dilemma: does he defend his clients or look after his own welfare and safety?

Putting his own life and that of his wife and children in jeopardy, Bram becomes the man who succeeds in preventing the prosecution of sending Nelson Mandela and the other accused to the gallows.

'Life! It's life!' is what the free world is shouting when the verdict of life imprisonment is proclaimed.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

'My Sarie Marais is so ver van my hart. Maar 'k hoop om haar weer te sien. O bring my t'rug na die ou Transvaal. Daar waar my Sarie woon.'

'My Sarie Marais is so far from my heart. But I hope to see her again. Oh bring my t'rug to the old Transvaal. Where my Sarie lives.'

Ahmed Kathrada, one of ten 'terrorists' imprisoned with Nelson Mandela and sentenced to life, sang to me in fluent Afrikaans in an almost empty restaurant on a Saturday afternoon in Johannesburg shortly before his passing.

As one of the two Rivonia trialists then still alive, I had visited him in early June to hear as much detail and background as possible about that historical process in 1963/64, about his fellow trialists and about Bram Fischer, the lawyer who led the team and had to save them from the death penalty.

What did you do in the last days and evenings in your cell before Judge de Wet's sentence, I asked? "I sang songs, children's songs. In Dutch. The language of my youth. It is such a beautiful language."

The language of his oppressors. The language of apartheid. The Dutch language. It was one of the many impressive encounters I've had since I started writing, rewriting and preparing 'An Act of Defiance' more than three years ago.

At 34, Kathrada was the youngest of the convicts, and he told me what Denis Goldberg and co-lawyer of Bram Fischer, George Bizos, had already told me. From the moment the arrested prisoners first saw each other and the previously arrested Mandela, they decided three things in a few minutes: "we take responsibility for what we have done, we accept every punishment, including the death penalty, and we are not going to appeal. Let us be defiant!"

In 1963/1964, I was 7 years old and growing up in another part of Africa, the Belgian Congo. We thought very little of apartheid. It was unknown to us. In the Congo there were no signs for "whites only." Amongst us, black people were allowed to swim in the same swimming pool.

After my films 'Silent Army' and 'The Price Of Sugar', I was given a script, for which producer Richard Claus, had acquired the rights. The script was based on a book written by a member of the defence legal team, lawyer, Joel Joffe, titled The State Versus Nelson Mandela. I was immediately interested in the defence of Nelson Mandela and the trialists.

It was a new genre for me, a courtroom drama, and it would be a unique look at a process that could have ignited a civil war and the violent overthrow of an oppressive regime as had happened in many other African countries, such as the Congo.

Although it was interesting, the book and the original script were confined to the courtroom sometimes the narrative became bogged down by technical legal terms. To learn more, I read countless books and many well-documented internet sites on South African history.

One character came to the forefront every time: Bram Fischer, the leader of the legal team, Dean of the Order of Lawyers, 'Crown Prince' of a renowned Afrikaans family with a father and grandparents who had held high-level government posts in what was then called the Orange Free State. Bram was a gifted rugby player who played against New Zealand's All Blacks – a big deal in South Africa.

Bram Fischer was a successful lawyer specialising in mining and land affairs, living in a large house, with three growing children, happily married to a strong and smart woman and secretly, president of the banned South African Communist Party (SACP), and closely involved in the ANC and in many underground activities aimed at overthrowing the white apartheid government and creating a society in which black and white people would be equals. He was leading a double life.

With that in mind, I rewrote the script and had many meetings with Ahmed Kathrada, George Bizos, the still-living daughters of Bram Fischer Ruth and Ilse Fischer, the Bernstein children, and many others. I heard details and observations about the man, his family, the process, life in South Africa in those dark days, the Secret Police – details, and observations of which only some ended up in the film. In all honesty, all 'trialists' and their lawyers deserve their own movie. Their degree of enthusiasm, fear, daring, surrender, sacrifice, courage, and idealism was unprecedented.

Not to mention the cast extra I met before the shoot for the waterboarding scene set in 1963 (the South African police had just learned this method from the French police in Algeria during a work visit). I was looking for an old, fragile man. I explained to him the scene, what I expected of him and said something awkward like "Do you not mind doing such a thing?" He looked at me and smiled. He told me that in the 1970s he had been locked in the feared Victor Verster prison for seven years because of his political activities. That's what he was used to. "Seven years long and not one day was I not beaten or kicked. I entered the prison with a mouthful of strong teeth. They were all beaten out." He smiled again. Apart from two, I thought, when I saw two remaining stumps in his mouth. He explained that most of his friends had fled, but he always had the belief that "we would win." "And it's my country. I'm not leaving. I belong here." His name is Moses Raphalanyana and he too should star in a movie.

Whenever possible, I tried to stay close to the authenticity of the subject, in language, in casting, in locations. We were able to shoot in Pretoria's courtroom where the process actually took place 50 years ago, and in the cells where the prisoners were detained during the trial.

We were the first filmmakers to cast a South African actor to play Nelson Mandela in a feature film. Bram's Mercedes, the batons, the copier, the documents, the maps, everything about the apartheid era was brought back to life in all the details of the art direction.

Production Notes

AN ACT OF DEFIANCE

A big challenge in that quest for authenticity was for the only Dutch actor in the movie Peter Paul Muller to learn to speak Afrikaans and Afrikaans-English. I've shot two All Stars movies and a series with Peter Paul. His comedy timing is well-known to me. But I used to see him on the stage often enough to know that there is also a beautiful serene seriousness in him.

From day one, he was at the top of my list, and when we were certain about the funding, I asked him at the beginning of last year whether he wanted to play the role of Bram Fischer with only one condition – that he learnt to speak the language. He accepted and worked with three dialogue coaches: first in the Netherlands, and later he came to Johannesburg and practiced for weeks endlessly, and then daily during the shooting of the film.

At the start of the shoot, I made a speech for the crew. We all stand on the shoulders of these heroes who came before us and who gave their hearts, their souls, their salvation and, in many cases, their lives for our freedom and equality. I am happy I was able to make the film 'An Act of Defiance'.

BIOS – CAST

Peter Paul Muller – Bram Fischer

Peter Paul Muller is a Dutch actor who graduated in 1991 from drama school in Maastricht. In his first years as an actor, he appeared in several television series and films. One of his first major roles was in Jean van de Velde 's film 'All Stars' (1997), a movie about football, love and drama which proved to be successful enough to devote a series to it, with virtually the same cast as the film. Muller starred in all three seasons (1999-2001). In addition to guest roles in series such as 'Baantjer', for which he played in three episodes, 'Grijpstra & De Gier' and 'Keyzer & De Boer Advocaten', Muller also featured in the films 'De Passievruucht' (2003), 'De Dominee' (2004), and 'Alles is Liefde' (2007). From 2005 he played singer Martin Morero in the comic drama series 'Gooische Vrouwen' on RTL 4, the fifth and final season of which was broadcast in 2009. As Morero he sang the song Real Love, which was in the Dutch Top 40 for three weeks. In season four, Morero sang the "self-written song" De Ware at his wedding and the third song She appeared in 'Gooische Vrouwen'. In 2011, Muller won the Golden Calf for the best supporting actor in the film 'Gooische Vrouwen'. In 2017, he won the Golden Calf for Best Actor for his role in 'An Act of Defiance'.

Antoinette Louw – Molly Fischer

Raised in Potchefstroom, Vanderbijlpark and Bloemfontein, Antoinette attended school in the United States of America where her father did research and teaching at various universities. She studied drama at the University of the Free State (UOFS) and receives her degree cum laude in 1996. In her third year she tried her hand as producer and director of the play 'The Woman Who Cooked her Husband', a black comedy by the British playwright Debbie Issit. The production was invited to perform in London at the Courtyard Theatre. She returned to South Africa after a few months in London and studied film acting at the South African School of Film and Dramatic Arts (AFDA) under the direction of award-winning playwright, Deon Opperman. There she landed the lead in the M-Net short film, 'Skidmarks'. She was awarded both the AFDA and M-Net Awards for Best Film Actress for her role as Stacey, a second rate beauty queen. After AFDA she took a break from entertainment and lived overseas. Shortly after her return to Johannesburg, she landed a role in '7de Laan'. However, after two years on the soap, she returned to the stage, playing 'Anna' in 'Dis ek, Anna', the stage adaptation of the popular Afrikaans book with the same title. In 2012, crime writer Deon Meyer offered her the lead in his movie 'Die Laaste Tango'. She went on to win a SAFTA Award for her portrayal as the cancer stricken photographer, Ella Winter. Many other film and TV roles followed. For her portrayal as Molly Fischer, she bagged the coveted Best Actress award at the Cape Town International Film and Market Festival 2017. In 2018, she received an ATKV-mediaveertjie Best Actress Award for her performance in the drama series 'Swartwater'.

Izel Bezuidenhout – Ilse Fischer

Izel Bezuidenhout is best known for her roles in 'Agent 2000: Die Laksman' (2014), 'Dis ek, Anna' (2015), and 'Bram Fischer' (2017).

Leroux van Diemen – Paul Fischer

Leroux van Diemen is best known for his roles in 'Suurlemoen!' (2014), 'Dis ek, Anna' (2015), and 'Bram Fischer' (2017).

Morne Visser – Officer Dirker

Morne Visser has been working in film, television and theatre for over 20 years. He is known to take on challenging and often controversial roles. He won The Best Actor Award in a Lead Role at the Silwerskermfees 2015 for his role in 'Dis ek, Anna'. He appeared in 'The Forgiven' (2017), a post-apartheid story of redemption and forgiveness by twice Academy Award nominated director, Roland Joffe.

Sello Motloug – Nelson Mandela

Sello has appeared in 'The Good Woman of Sharkville' (1996 and on the UK tour in 1997), Mandla Langa's musical 'Milestones' (1999), 'Habitual' (2000), 'The Necklace' (as Joseph, 2004), 'Cold Stone Jug' (2004), and 'Cadre' (Market Theatre 2013). He appeared as Sam in a production of 'Master Harold and the Boys' during the Young Directors Festival at the Market Theatre in 1998.

He has appeared in a number of television shows, including 'Isidingo', 'Madam and Eve', 'Soul City', 'Scoop Schoombie', 'Generations', 'Justice for All', 'Orlando', 'Secret in my Bosom', 'Milestone', 'Tarzan', 'Nna Sajene Kokobela', 'Khululeka', 'The Lab', 'Jozi-H', 'Jacob's Cross', 'Wild at Heart', 'Interrogation Room', 'The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency' and '90 Plein Street'. He is the third South African actor to play the role of Nelson Mandela in a movie after Atandwa Kani and Tumisho Masha.

BIOS – CREW

Jean van de Velde – Director

Born in 1957 in Bukavu (in the former Belgian Congo), Jean van de Velde grew up in the tropics, went to secondary school in the Netherlands and graduated from school in 1974 in Utrecht, after which he studied at the Dutch Film Academy in Amsterdam.

In 1985, Jean founded his own company and wrote and directed a large number of successful features for several producers including the award-winning ‘Leak’ and ‘All Stars’, the feature film and TV series (winner of the International Emmy Award 2000) both being remade in many countries, among them the UK, Spain, Italy, Germany and Belgium. Jean has been on the board of several film organisations, including the Dutch Film Fund and the Dutch Film Festival. From July 2000 to January 2003 he worked as Intendant for the Dutch Film Fund and in this capacity, he was responsible for developing and guiding over 20 commercial features. Currently he is chairman of the Dutch Screenwriters Guild. In 2004, he was honoured at the Dutch Film Festival as ‘Guest of the Year’ with a retrospective.

Richard Claus & Co.

Richard Claus has produced such films as Anthony Waller’s “Mute Witness” and “An American Werewolf in Paris”, the family films “The Little Vampire” and “The Thief Lord”, and more recently the dramas “Black Butterflies” and “The Price of Sugar”.

Spier Films

Spier Films is an Award-winning finance and production company with offices in Cape Town and London which began in 2005 with the Golden Bear winning “U-Carmen eKhayelitsha”. Since then the company has gone on to have films in Cannes “The Salvation” (2014) and Sundance “Young Ones” (2014) and “Son of Man” (2006) as well Berlin “Layla Fourie” (2013) Jury Special Mention. Its films have also won Best Feature Film twice at the South African Film and Television Awards for “Of Good Report” (2014) and “Black Butterflies” (2011). The company has just wrapped production on the UK/German/South African co-production of “3 Way Junction” starring Tom Sturridge, Tommy Flanagan and Stacey Martin.

Cinema Management Group

CMG is a full service international sales company specialising in renowned commercial films, headed by veteran sales and distribution executive, Edward Noeltner. Since its launch in 2003, CMG has added over 100 titles to its line-up that includes quality feature films of all genres, 3-D animated features grossing over \$80 million at the box-office worldwide, as well as award winning feature length documentaries and series. Recent acquisitions include ‘Ainbo – Spirit Of The Amazon’, An Act of Defiance, Loving Vincent, The Little Vampire 3D, Ping Pong Rabbit 3D, Mission Kathmandu, New Life and Seal Team 3D. CMG’s past films include TIFF selection born to dance; Berlin Selection Reaching For The Moon; TIFF selection Still Mine; SXSW Audience, Jury and Emerging Women Award winner Eden; Academy Award nominated Gasland; Sundance Special Jury Prize winner Chris Rock’s Good Hair; and Annecy Selection Adventures In Zambezia 3D.

END CREDITS

Bram Fischer PETER PAUL MULLER
Molly Fischer ANTOINETTE LOUW
Ilse Fischer IZEL BEZUIDENHOUT
Paul Fischer LEROUX VAN DIEMEN
Officer Dirker MORNÉ VISSER
Lieutenant Swanepoel WILLIE ESTERHUIZEN
Percy Yutar JOSE DOMINGOS
George Bizos DANIEL JANKS
Joel Joffe CONRAD KEMP
Rusty Bernstein GREG VILJOEN
Hilda Bernstein SYLVAIN STRIKE
Nelson Mandela SELLO MOTLOUNG
Walter Sisulu JOSIAS MOLEELE
Denis Goldberg JOHN HENRY OPPERMAN
Govan Mbeki GETMORE SITHOLE
Ahmed Kathrada ASHISH G'
Joseph Mashifane THAPELO SEBOGODI
Raymond Mhlaba MOMELEZI NTSHIBA
Bob Hepple HANNES BRÜMMER
Judge De Wet DAN ROBBERTSE
Bruno Mtolo FEZILE MPELA

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Co-Producer
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