



## PRODUCTION NOTES

kykNET Films Presents a Brittle Star Pictures production in association with the  
Department of Trade and Industry

a Matthys Boshoff film

## DIE VERHAAL VAN RACHELTJIE DE BEER

Directed by

MATTHYS BOSHOFF

Starring

STIAN BAM

ANTOINETTE LOUW

MARIUS WEYERS

SANDRA PRINSLOO

ZONIKA DE VRIES

SEPUTLA SEBOGODI

CHARLIE BOUGUENON

BEÁTE OPPERMAN

JOHANNES JORDAAN

MARLI DE JAGER

Executive Producers

JAN DU PLESSIS

KAREN MEIRING

Co-Executive Producers

KAY ANN WILLIAMS

NICOLA VAN NIEKERK

Associate Producers

ANNEKE VILLET

WICUS DU TOIT

Producer

Johan Kruger

Screenplay

BRETT MICHAEL INNES

MATTHYS BOSHOFF

Based on the novel *Die Verhaal van Racheltjie de Beer*

by Brett Michael Innes

Director of Photography

WILLIE NEL

**Country of Production: South Africa**

**Year of Production: 2019**

**Language/s: Afrikaans with English Subtitles**

**Classification: TBC**

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## SYNOPSIS

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Five years after their mother has passed away, the De Beer children – 12-year-old Racheltjie and 5-year-old Jamie – find themselves on the road to the gold fields of the Witwatersrand with their father Herman, who is hoping to start a new life there.

When their ox wagon is damaged, they take shelter on a farm in the mountainous region of the Eastern Free State, with the Lundt family – George, Jacoba and their daughter Sara. A cold front is on the way and George cautions Herman to remain at the farm until the snow has cleared before resuming their journey.

To repay the family for the food and shelter they provide, Herman helps George to repair a damaged stone kraal. The De Beers start to settle into life on the farm, and then Racheltjie remembers that Good Friday – the anniversary of her mother’s death – is just around the corner.

Good Friday arrives and later that evening Racheltjie, Jamie and Sara slip out of the house to go and commemorate the death of the siblings’ mother. Herman, who is very much against being reminded of the anniversary of Marie’s death, catches them out and, after losing his temper, decides that they will resume their journey as soon as possible.

The following morning, as Herman is readying to leave the farm, they realise that Jamie’s pet calf has gone missing. He leaves the children inside and sets off to continue repairing the wagon. The weather becomes worse and dark storm clouds gather. Herman realises he has no choice but to put his travel plans on hold.

He returns to the farmhouse just as Racheltjie discovers that Jamie has sneaked out of the house to go searching for his calf. The sun has set, and a search party is sent out to look for the boy while Racheltjie stays at home in case he returns.

As the first snowflakes fall, Racheltjie realises that Jamie has most probably gone to the anthill where they had found the little calf wandering earlier in the week. With no-one to tell and the storm becoming stronger by the minute, she takes a lantern and sets out into the bitter wind and snow to search for her little brother.

Racheltjie finds him at the anthill but the heavy snow and darkness make it impossible for the two children to try to find their way home. She has to make a choice: will they both lose their lives or can one of them survive? She makes a brave decision, one that will turn her into a heroine.

The next morning, Herman finds Racheltjie’s naked, frozen body at the entrance to the anthill. He pulls her lifeless form towards him and finds Jamie, dressed in her warm clothing and nestled inside the anthill. He survived the night and is safe and sound thanks to her ultimate sacrifice.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – MATTHYS BOSHOFF**

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The South African wilderness in the 1800s. Five years after the death of their mother Racheltjie, a girl on the cusp of adolescence, and her five-year-old brother Jamie are traveling with their father to start a new life on the goldfields of the Highveld. When Jamie goes missing in a freak blizzard, Racheltjie braves the storm to look for her little brother.

It is a great responsibility and honour to adapt the beloved folk tale of Racheltjie de Beer for the big screen. This story is cherished by many South Africans across different cultures and had a great impact on me as a child. The arresting image of a young girl lost in a snowstorm at night, with a defenceless child in her arms, who then makes the ultimate sacrifice out of love, captured my imagination, inspiring in me both fear and admiration. It is from this personal connection to the story that I set about making a film that ebbs and flows between ominous danger, courage and love.

There has been much debate about the veracity of the story of Racheltjie de Beer. Is it truth or fiction that Eugene Marais first penned in the early 1920s? As a narrative filmmaker, particularly concerned with the dramatic art form, I remain impartial in this debate, choosing to focus on the truth within the story, investigating what it teaches us about human nature, spirituality and family dynamics, loss, forgiveness, and new beginnings.

This tension between truth and fiction provided the opportunity to bring a fresh look at Racheltjie's tale in a way that will appeal to loyal followers, younger contemporary audiences and to those who are not familiar with her story.

The cinematic approach grounds the film in the harsh realities of trekking with children through the magnificent, yet rugged, South African wilderness in the 1800s, what it was like to live on an isolated farm, and the horror of being lost in a snowstorm at night, without adequate clothing to keep warm. But the film also takes inspiration from the language of fables and myth in its colour palette, styling and music, as well as the mystical qualities ascribed to plants, animals, and the forces of nature. We have made the brewing storm a character, giving it personality, thereby blurring the lines between the physical and metaphysical, bringing truth and poetry together in a beautiful synergy that imbues the film with a timeless quality.

Over and above the themes of humans-versus-nature, sacrifice and love that mark this folk tale, the film adaptation examines the coming of age of a girl on the cusp of adolescence, growing up without a mother, caught between being a child herself yet having to be an adult to her little brother. Her own transition to womanhood takes place within the storm of a broken household where her father is incapable of making peace with his late wife's death.

My hope is that this adventure-drama will have audiences in awe of nature's beauty and power, show them the fortitude of a young girl facing mortal danger and tug at the heart strings. Hopefully it will leave them pondering their relationships with those whom they love most.

## **Q&A WITH DIRECTOR MATTHYS BSHOFF**

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### ***1. What do we know of the origins of the story of Racheltjie?***

There are two different theories about the origins of the story. One is that it is a true story that took place in 1843 at the back end of the Great Trek. There are diehard followers of this theory who will take you to where they believe Racheltjie is buried.

The other theory suggests that Eugene Marais' fictional story – written in the early 1920s – was inspired by a contemporary published account of Hazel Milner, a girl in America who saved two of her younger siblings from a blizzard by sacrificing her own life. Marais wrote the story of Racheltjie de Beer in post-war South Africa when Afrikaners needed heroes to inspire them.

As a film writer and director, I am less concerned with whether or not the story is true, but far more interested in the universal human truths found in Racheltjie's story. Like Piet Roodt, former professor in Afrikaans literature at the University of Pretoria, once told me: 'Met 'n storie lieg jy die waarheid' (In storytelling you make truth out of lies). What does the story reveal about us as human beings, our nature and culture?

### ***2. What makes Racheltjie such an enduring story? What are the themes explored?***

There are two forces working in tandem that grip the popular imagination: fear and love. Our own fear of death, the fear of being at the mercy of nature's harshest elements, fear of being lost, alone, stranded, helpless. The horror of being responsible for someone else's survival, against all these odds. And then the courage it takes to confront that fear with love, to give your life for someone you love and, ultimately, how death gives birth to life.

Besides the themes of sacrifice, courage and love that are evident in the tale, we set out to create a coming of age story about a young girl growing up, without a mother, and having to fulfil a motherly role for her brother, navigating the tensions between childhood and adulthood as she transitions into womanhood herself. All the characters in the story are transitioning and going through their own rite of passage. Even the landscape transitions from green summer, to brown, yellow and red autumn and, finally, to a white snow-covered wasteland.

The film starts with a wound. A young girl watches from afar as her father buries her deceased mother. The rest of the film essentially examines how this little family deals with this wound by trying to cover it up, ignore it, focus elsewhere. However, it continues to fester and forces each member of the family to confront it and go through the process of healing. We also explore how we relate to those who have passed on. How do we remember and honour them? How do we make peace with death and learn to let go? What are the consequences if we cannot let go?

### ***3. How have you approached the re-telling in order to make the story accessible to a modern audience?***

The first and broad approach is to tap into timeless universal themes that will make the story relatable to a more modern audience: family dynamics, loss, new beginnings, bitterness, adventure, survival and ultimately love.

More specifically, the portrayal of Racheltjie is our strongest hook for a millennial audience. Besides coming of age, which nearly anyone (especially young women) can relate to, her character is moulded in the image of modern women leaders who we can admire: she is a feminine, tough, headstrong and independent young woman with agency.

Even though we lean on the language of period pieces, the film takes on the visual language of fables and myths in its colour palette, music, wardrobe, styling, sound and the introduction of mystical elements within nature, plants, animals and the brewing storm. All of these give the film a timeless quality.

#### ***4. Who would the modern equivalents of Racheltjie be?***

This is a tricky question to answer, but I would say the many young girls around the world who grow up in single parent and child-led households; the young girls who play the role of a mother to their siblings; children who are caught between being children themselves yet having to be adults out of necessity. In South Africa alone there are thousands of young girls who take care of and raise their younger siblings. Like the depiction of Racheltjie in our film, their sacrifice isn't contained to a once-off courageous act, but is a lifestyle, a constant battle for survival, in the face of the storm of deprived socio-economic circumstances.

#### ***5. Where did you choose to set and shoot the film and why?***

There are two sections to the film: the journey to the farm, and the De Beer family's time on the farm.

For the journey we wanted to depict a little family, a father with two children, trekking with a shoddy wagon through a harsh and unforgiving environment with the magnificent Drakensberg mountains as the backdrop, an epic landscape that shows how insignificant we really are. What are our chances against the powerful forces of nature? Some of the Drakensberg's most iconic peaks show the epic nature of their journey. However, we didn't romanticise the beauty of the mountains, but rather framed them in such a way as to express the madness, determination and incredible will and resilience it takes to journey through this treacherous landscape by ox wagon. One of our favourite locations, split rock, was found after weeks of scouting. Without giving away too much, this egg-shaped mammoth of a rock is split in half and the gap wide enough to walk through. It towers a good 30+ meters into the sky and is breathtaking in its magnificence.

We found the farm after driving thousands of kilometres of dirt road and shredding many tyres in the process. Most of the old houses we found were either completely destroyed by fire during the Boer War (South African War) of 1899 or damaged to such an extent that they were extensively renovated and no longer period-specific.

The Story of Racheltjie de Beer reads like a fable and we were looking for a homestead in a location that would express the harsh reality of living on a remote, isolated farm in the 1800s, but one that also possessed a poetic quality worthy of the story. The farm Tierhoek proved perfect. It is situated in a valley/gorge surrounded by mountains, with a farmhouse and outbuildings that were constructed in the 1870s. The stonework is immaculate and there were very few modern elements – no telephone lines or electricity. The house was never renovated and has an 'old soul' with lichen growing on the original walls and burn marks from the war still present. The authenticity of the house brought an honest yet dreamlike, tactile quality to the images that one could not create on a built set. The actors drew from this authenticity of the house as it literally transported them back in time.

## **6. The story called for extensive VFX. Discuss the scope of these**

We have over 220 visual effects shots in this film which, I think, is a first for a local film without major international participation. Visual effects include cleaning-up or painting out non-period specifics, but the real excitement lies where it adds elements to the image and story. From a leopard to zebras in the snow, a baboon, sky replacements with a brewing storm, augmenting the environment, adding more layers of mountains, covering the landscape with snow, to ‘amputating’ a man’s fingers.

We wanted to make the storm a character in the story and give it personality. Therefore, we didn’t simply replace clear skies with stock images of clouds, but instead we built our own cloud systems that we could manipulate and move as we wanted. This allowed us to give the storm personality – let it turn darker when we wanted it to, move faster, swirl, light up with lightning etc. One can almost ascribe emotions to the movement of the clouds.

Our approach was always to combine in-camera effects with visual effects. Large wind machines kicking up dust and debris, blowing ‘fake’ snow through the frame combined with visual effects dust, debris and snow. A paper-based product that looks like snow scattered in the foreground of wide landscape shots with visual effects covering the background in snow.

## **7. Tell us about your cinematic style choices**

To accommodate the epic emotional and visual nature of the story, we captured it in a cinematic style that is tailored for a big screen experience. The film has an intimate yet epic quality to it: from the sound design, to the production design, music, camera work and the emotional journey that the characters and audience go through. There is a dramatic transformation of the landscape from late summer to snow-covered winter. Themes of life and death, loss, courage, sacrifice, coming of age and love are covered; these are big experiences and emotions.

The story is set pre-electrification and, to stay true to the period, we wanted the lighting in the film to feel natural. This didn’t exclude the use of artificial lighting, but it is subtle and doesn’t distract from the candle-lit interiors of the period. For inspiration, we studied period films like ‘There will be Blood’ and looked at paintings by Turner, Vermeer and other Dutch Masters. Many of the frames in the film really look like paintings.

Technology has come a long way and the Sony Venice camera we used is extremely light-sensitive which allowed cinematographer Willie Nel to light many of the interiors largely with candles, oil lamps and firelight only. The lighting we used was strategically placed and shaped. We even took old film lights, removed the bulbs and placed candles inside them, allowing us to treat candles as film lights i.e. focus the light with lenses and flag it off, while it had all the natural characteristics of real flames. This created an authentic and intimate atmosphere in which the actors could work. Sandra Prinsloo commented that it didn’t feel as though she had stepped onto a film set, but had actually been transported back into a dream world. I believe this helped with performances from the actors because their breath would affect the candle and the flicker would be evident in the scene or on another actor’s face. It created a beautiful synergy between performance, emotion and the technical craft of filmmaking where one affects the other in a very organic way. In some of the scenes, specifically the storm scene, the actors had to light themselves with the lanterns they held. Again, the sensitivity of the camera allowed us to use real flames

that flickered in the wind as opposed to LED lights with pre-set flicker functions. It is a dramatic film and we went for a high contrast look that underscores the characters' journeys and state of mind.

From the beginning we were determined to take a step away from the monotonal look and colour palette associated with period pieces and to push our look and colour palette into the world of fables and mythology. I was looking for a central metaphor for the film and one day realised that the entire film is about healing. For healing to take place there must be a wound. I liken the film to an old wound or bruise that is healing. From that metaphor, production designer, Chantel Carter, and I derived a colour palette that consisted of tones of green, and touches of yellow and purple, like a bruise that is healing. The blue skies and blue wardrobe for Jamie suggest a hopeful future. This was then grounded by earthy browns, rust and aubergine colours that we saw in the veld and rocks on the farm. Our colourist (and editor) Warwick Allan and I also looked at paintings by Pierneef for inspiration. To our utter joy, he too made extensive use of greens, purples and rust colours. These colours in combination with visual affects also play into the language of fables and mythology which give the film a fable or dreamlike quality.

### **8. Tell us about casting the film and your choices**

As you can imagine, the film's success relies heavily on the two children playing Racheltjie and Jamie. We searched far and wide, auditioning hundreds of children for both roles.

Zonika de Vries as Racheltjie: From the outset we were clear that we did not want to cast 'cute little kids running on the prairie'. We were looking for a tough 12-to-13-year-old girl with an edge, someone who displays strength of character, leadership, independence, a strong mind and agency. She had to capture the tension of Racheltjie's journey: that of a child forced to take on the responsibility of an adult. Everything about Zonika captured the paradoxes found in the character of Racheltjie; she has the bearing of a confident, independent modern woman, she looks her age, but her eyes display the mind of an adult. She is modern and feminine, but tough as nails (she does downhill skateboarding, motocross and plays with knives) and displays incredible emotional intelligence and empathy. She is beautiful and tough, and her acting skills are on par with the some of the best adult actors. She can convey so much in a single look and her acting is rooted in honesty. At no stage did I feel as though I was watching someone pretending, it always felt as though I was looking at Racheltjie in flesh and bone.

Johannes Jordaan as Jamie: Finding a 5-year-old boy who can deliver two pages of dialogue in one go, while sounding honest and believable (neither staged nor rehearsed), is loveable, has a keen sense of adventure and is spontaneous was no mean feat. We wanted someone who audiences would fall in love with, at first sight. Johannes Jordaan captured all these qualities. Despite never having met me, he spontaneously ran up to me, hugged me and engaged me in conversation. That demonstrated an incredible amount of intelligence, a keen sense of adventure and curiosity. His blonde mop, blue eyes and angelic face are arresting, reminding me of Robert Redford in the body of a child. I knew that he would captivate audiences and sweep them along on his journey into the storm.

Stian Bam as Herman de Beer: Herman de Beer is a very difficult character to play. On the page he reads as a pretty one-dimensional 'angry dad'. Stian managed to bring flesh out the character, creating a wounded and tortured man with whom audiences could empathise, despite his tough shell. His words may be harsh, but his eyes communicate great depth, understanding and care for his daughter. Stian is also one of the few actors who can communicate volumes through their body language and posture. This allows for wide cinematic shots that reveal the scale of the landscape, without always having to revert to

closer shots to capture the emotion. His performance is nuanced, capturing a conflicted man who is incapable of dealing with his painful past and, therefore, cannot support his young daughter as she comes of age.

Antoinette Louw as Sara Lundt: We wanted to avoid romanticizing the period, but rather show the harsh realities of living on a remote/isolated farm in the rugged Eastern free State during the 1800s. Within this context, Sara Lundt is an educated, independent, woman who brings poise and style to the farm, despite her own struggle of being a single woman having to take care of her ailing mother. Antoinette Louw is a strong actress who has enormous poise and style with an edgy quality that perfectly captures the character. Beneath her soft veneer, lies a strong and fearless woman. Antoinette brings great warmth to the character of Sara, thereby creating a perfect role model and mentor to Racheltjie.

Marius Weyers as George Lundt: Marius breaks all the clichéd ideas and images that we have of an Afrikaner farmer of the time. He really took every idea that is commonly associated with Afrikaner farmers and subverted them into a three-dimensional character. His eyes speak of a lifetime of living at the mercy of nature's abundance of blessings and challenges. From the outset, he played the character and not the type. His embodiment of the character reminds me of the wise old characters we encounter in fables and myths. His performance is gentle but has immense presence, authority and gravitas.

Sandra Prinsloo as Jacoba Lundt: We wanted an actress who could portray the reality of a woman suffering from dementia, without making it too heavy. Having played similar characters in theatre and done a lot of research, Sandra has a deep understanding of her character's condition, however, she imbues the role with a lovely lightness and timing that allows for tragic humour. Jacoba doesn't speak much and Sandra's ability to communicate with her eyes, body and hands brings the character to life. It often looks as though she is distant, or not present, but then, when least expected, Sandra sublimely gives us a moment of clarity, a glimpse into Jacoba's world.

Seputla Sebogodi as Lazarus: Again, not an easy role to play. Lazarus doesn't speak much, but like the character of 'Chief' in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, he is the silent observer and speaker of truth. Seputla is an accomplished actor who possesses enormous gravitas, his eyes reveal everything that his words don't, and this brings great depth and intensity to the character.

Charlie Bouguenon as Kingsley: Charlie carries the flare of an adventurous world traveller, a man always on the move, who is charming, funny and charismatic. The perfect opposite to Herman. Charlie's spot-on British accent as well as perfect Afrikaans, were essential to the role of Kingsley. The way in which he played a man hiding his true feelings secured him the role.

Beate Opperman as Marie de Beer: In screen time this is a small role, but still a crucial one for the story. Beate's ability to communicate deep care and love without words, made her the perfect actress for this role. Not to give too much away, but when we finally see her face, she defies everything that we think we know about the character of Marie de Beer, purely through her nuanced facial expressions.

Marli de Jager as little Racheltjie: Marli is a dynamic young actress with a bright future. She has an inherent understanding of acting and took initiative to make the character her own. Her ability to suppress overwhelming emotions is remarkable and her display of a sensitive, yet strong, soul really sets the scene for 12-year-old Racheltjie to emerge.

**9. Give us a brief description of the main players and how each drives the story.**

Please see the answers above on the cast as well. It gives a lot of insight into the characters.

**Rachel tjie de Beer:** The film is a coming of age story about a 12-year-old girl who, through circumstance, has to be a 'mother' to her 5-year-old brother. Rachel tjie's journey to womanhood concludes when she takes the brave choice to give her life to save her brother. This journey, coupled with her desire to remember and commemorate her deceased mother, despite her father's objections, drives the main plot of the film.

**Jamie de Beer:** After Marie's death, it becomes Rachel tjie's task to for her little brother, Jamie. Jamie is the only remaining link that Rachel tjie has with her late mother. This, together with her a great sense of love and responsibility, makes her risk everything to find and save Jamie when he goes missing in a blizzard. This sets up the climax of the story. Jamie was only a baby when their mother died. She left a gap in his life but, because he never knew her, Jamie neither misses her nor experiences the same pain and sadness that Rachel tjie and Herman endure. Jamie represents innocence in the story and symbolises hope and new beginnings.

**Herman de Beer:** The films central dilemma, and the theme of how we relate to those that have passed on, is set up in the opening scenes when Herman buries his wife, Marie, without ceremony, a blessing or even marking her grave. Herman's choice to leave their home and head for the goldfields is his way of erasing her memory and distancing himself from the pain of her death. It creates the tension in the story and his desire to avoid dealing with Marie's death or his pain, is what sets him and Rachel tjie on a collision course that will alter their family's fate for good.

**Sara Lundt:** Sara is a strong and independent woman who has suffered a broken heart. She is a mentor figure to Rachel tjie and her presence begins to soften Herman's heart, but when she helps Rachel tjie to commemorate Marie, Herman sees this as an act as a betrayal which sets the conflict in the story in another direction.

**George Lundt:** George has lived through the ups and downs of life, he understands new beginnings, gains and losses, joys and sadness. The tough life of a farmer, at the mercy of nature and her cycles and seasons, has matured him into a stable, consistent and dependable man of stature, integrity, and wisdom. He is as unmovable as the mountains that surround the farm. The way in which he takes care of his ill wife also plays beautifully into the themes of sacrifice within the story.

**Jacoba Lundt:** George's wife and Sara's mother. She suffers from advanced dementia that often renders her childlike. This proud elderly woman becoming more and more childlike, creates is a strong parallel and inverse character journey to that of Rachel tjie's. The effects of dementia, for instance, Jacoba forgetting her own daughter's name, serves as a catalyst for Rachel tjie to reveal how she cannot remember what her mother looked like. Sara's love for her mother is why she decided to stay on the farm, instead of making a life for herself in town.

**Lazarus:** Similar to the role of 'Chief' in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* Lazarus's character is that of the silent observer who becomes the speaker of truth. He is the proverbial wounded soldier coming back for another redemptive act. Leaning on traditions of stories where characters face a force stronger than themselves, be it nature, animals (sharks) or supernatural forces, Lazarus has faced this force or 'monster' before and lived to tell the tale, he carries the scars as a warning to the new characters. As a young boy

he too got lost in a snowstorm and it claimed the lives of his parents and left him scarred for life. Since he faced the monster (snow & cold) and survived to tell the story, Lazarus is a constant reminder of and warning about the magnitude of the pending threat (storm) and its possible consequences.

Kingsley: an adventurous world traveller with an inability to commit. He feels the urge to always be on the move. He was engaged to Sara but broke it off. As soon as the De Beer family settle on the farm and Herman appears to let down his defences and starts to open up to Sara about his pain, Kingsley arrives and upsets the apple cart. His return forces Sara to re-evaluate her life and make important decisions that strengthen her character.

Marie de Beer: Marie's death sets the story in motion and is the catalyst for the central conflict between Herman trying to forget her and Racheltjie wanting to cling to her memory. Racheltjie receives haunting visitations from Marie in her dreams but cannot see her face.

The Storm: The storm in the film is presented as a character and is a metaphor for the deceased Marie. Like the memory of Marie that lingers in the story, the storm always lingers on the periphery, as if it is following the de Beer family on their journey. When Herman ruins Marie's memorial and reveals the truth of her death to the children, shattering Racheltjie's heart, the storm pulls in on the farm as if reacting to the dramatic events that unfolded. In a sense the storm is Marie. It is within the heart of the storm that Racheltjie's quest to remember her mom will be fulfilled.

### ***10. Describe the experience of shooting Racheltjie***

As filmmakers, the experience was epic. Producing a big film with a tiny budget, having to pull out all the tricks of the trade and hustle, was similar to Herman tackling this epic journey with his children and a shoddy wagon. It felt to me that, when making this film, we as filmmakers had to dig deep inside ourselves to find the courage to take on the challenges we faced, not unlike Racheltjie who braves this massive storm. Our child actors both had over 24 calls, night shoots in hostile environments, freezing nights while massive wind machines were hitting us with foam, dust and debris, not to mention handling animals too.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

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### **JOHAN KRUGER – Producer**

Johan has been actively involved in film and television production since he joined the SABC in 1984. His first position was assistant production accountant on the acclaimed series *Shaka Zulu*, filmed in KwaZulu-Natal.

Between 1984 and 2014 Johan worked in various capacities on a total of 67 local and international feature films, and approximately 48 television productions, among them *Diamonds* (Canada/UK/SA), *Holby City* (BBC), *Liefste Kayla* (kykNET)

His feature film credits include: *Winnie* with Jennifer Hudson and Terrence Howard, *Semi-Soet*, *The Perfect Wave* with Scott Eastwood and Cheryl Ladd, *Spud 2: The Madness Continues* and *Sink* a.k.a *Rachel Weeping*.

### **MATTHYS BOSHOFF – Director**

Matthys' journey into film directing includes stops in anthropology, biblical archaeology, business and economics, performing arts and scriptwriting. After film school, he worked in the art department on international feature films for four years, then completed a filmmaker's residency at the International Film and Television Workshops in America. He's adventured in diverse locations like Afghanistan, Patagonia and Uganda, and lived in Johannesburg's CBD. In these places, as in his work, he always takes an eye for beauty, an appetite for risk, a sense of discovery and an appreciation for humanity.

In 2010 Matthys co-founded AIR Films, an award-winning commercials production company. In 2016 he repurposed AIR Films to focus exclusively on feature film and series development while he continues to direct commercials campaigns through The Star Film Company.

His award-winning short film *Flesh of my Flesh* has screened in competition at numerous Oscar qualifying film festivals across the globe and had its European Premiere in the International Competition at the prestigious Clermont-Ferrand short film festival in 2018. *Flesh of my Flesh* has also been nominated for a SAFTA for best short film in 2018. Matthys is currently adapting *Flesh of my Flesh* into a feature film, developing an historical series with a team of writers.

### **BRETT MICHAEL INNES – Co-Writer**

Brett Michael Innes is a bestselling author and award-winning filmmaker based in Johannesburg, South Africa. He graduated from AFDA, the Oscar-winning South African film school, on a scholarship from the National Film & Video Foundation (NFVF) of South Africa.

After film school he spent three years working as a documentary filmmaker with various NGOs, a position that has seen him and his camera drive from South Africa to South Sudan twice and kayak through the Okavango Delta.

In 2012 he decided to focus his attention on film and literature and his debut novel, *The Story of Racheltjie de Beer*, became a South African bestseller. He went on to adapt it for screen with the director, Matthys Boshoff.

His writing and directing debut, *Sink*, has been heralded by local critics as a 'breakout film that sets a new standard for South African cinema' and saw him win the SAFTA for Best Film and Best Screenplay. He has just completed his second feature, an adaptation of the iconic novel *Fiel se Kind* which will be released nationwide in September 2019.

### **WILLIE NEL – Director of Photography**

As a youngster, Willie describes being himself as being 'more of a watcher than a talker'. It was a combination of this and his rebellious nature that led him to film school, realising that a conventional job would never suit him. He recognised that he had found his niche. The logistical aspects of filmmaking, and engineering magic in the unpredictable are part of his creative adventure. Willie has a strong instinct for storytelling. It is his guiding principle to use each and every frame to support the journey of the narrative with all the tools at his disposal. He is a chameleon; able to masterfully create the style needed by each story. Willie is constantly exploring the latest digital formats to ensure he keeps up with the rapid evolution of cinema tools and has an in-depth understanding of the complexities of this technology and post-intensive workflows. He sees the filmmaking process as his ultimate creative expression and loves to travel the world, making evocative films, shooting well-crafted commercials, collaborating on unique music videos, and doing so with good people who are passionate about creating great work.

In 2014 he won the SAFTA for best cinematography for a feature film, for *Sleepers Wake*. In 2017, he won the Silwerskermfees award for best cinematography for a feature film, for *Meerkat Maantuig*, and in 2019 he won the SAFTA for best cinematography for the same film.

## ABOUT THE CAST

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### ZONIKA DE VRIES - Racheltjie

Zonika is a grade 8 learner at Helpmekaar College. She was discovered by Jakkie Groenewald in 2013 when she was in grade 2 and made her television debut in the series *Pandjieswinkelstories*.

In 2014, Zonika took part in the South African Championships for Performing Arts and won the Jnr Overall Acting Trophy and the Triple Threat Award (Acting, Dancing and Modelling). She went on to the World Championships for Performing Arts in Los Angeles where she was approached by the very well-known Stein Entertainment. Because of her age and the distance from LA, she declined their offer. Zonika won 7 Overall Champion Winner Trophies in her age group 10 & U: Acting Classical, Acting Contemporary, Dance Hip-Hop, Dance Jazz, Dance Open and Modelling Swimwear.

Zonika was cast as Ellie Jnr in the movie *'n Man Soos My Pa*, directed by Sean Else and starring Sandra Prinsloo, Neels van Jaarsveld, Elma Postma, Greg Kriek, Albert & Viljé Maritz and Deon Lotz. Next she was cast as Ivanka in *70 x 7 (Sewentig Maal Sewe)*, in which she played opposite her brother Zander.

In 2016, Zonika walked off with the Jnr Overall Trophy in Acting at the SA Championships for Performing Arts. In the same year she was cast as Paula in *Dis koue kos, skat*, directed by Ettienne Fourie, and starring Anna-Mart van der Merwe, Elsabé Zietsmann, Riaan Visman, Deandré Reyners, Frank Opperman and Deon Lotz. 2017 saw her playing Juanita in the film *Kampterrein*. Zonika was a presenter on *Epic Hangout* (SABC2) during 2018.

### STIAN BAM

Stian Bam is one of South Africa's most talented actors and is a favourite of directors Marthinus Basson, Nicola Hanekom, Brink Scholtz, Juanita Swanepoel and Jaco Bouwer. His many theatre credits include Nicola Hanekom's *Lot en Babbel*, and Ingrid Winterbach's *Spyt* (directed by Brink Scholtz).

Bam played the lead in the kykNET series *Die Bolandmoorde*.

Hi feature film credits include: *Father's War*, *Uitvlucht*, *Modder en Bloed*, and *Die Laaste Tango*.

### SEPUTLA SEBOGODI

Born in Lady Selborne in 1962, Seputla started acting with Solly Mekingwe, Boikie Mohlamme and the godfather of black theatre Gibson Kente performing in *Now is The Time* which was banned in 1980 by the apartheid regime, *The Meeting* directed by John Kani, *Journey Without Words* directed by Ilse Van Hemert, *Mooi Street Moves* directed by Paul Slabolepsy, *Big Dada* directed by Brad Bailey before joining PACT in 1992.

Seputla has performed in several TV productions, including *Lehlasedi, Dawson, Bophelo ke semphego, Mponeng, Isidingo, Scandal, Generations, Zabalaza, Dipoloko, The Imposter 2, Diamond City, The docket, Rhythm city, Suburban Bliss* and *The Republic*.

Seputla's feature film credits include, *The Quarry, Max and Mona, The Long Run, Mr Bones and Drown, Beat the Drum* and *Hearts and Minds*.

## **ANTOINETTE LOUW**

Antoinette Louw received her drama degree cum laude from the University of the Free. After travelling overseas, she made a name for herself as 'Inge' on *7de Laan*. She then returned to her first love, theatre. She has shared the stage with names like Sandra Prinsloo, Deon Lotz, Erica Wessels and Zane Meas. In 2014 she was awarded the SAFTA for Best Actress in a Feature Film for her role in Deon Meyer's *Die Laaste Tango*, the highest accolade for film acting in South Africa and the first for an Afrikaans speaking South African. In 2016 she landed her first lead in an international film, *An Act of Defiance*, based on Bram Fischer's life. For this performance she received the Best Actress Award at the Cape Town International Film Market & Festival, also a first for a South African actress. In 2017/2018 she was seen as the female lead in the acclaimed SABC2 drama *Swartwater* opposite Louw Venter. For this role she received the ATKV-woordveertjie Award for Best Actress (2018).

## **MARIUS WEYERS**

One of South Africa's most celebrated actors, Marius Weyers joined the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT) in 1964, as an assistant stage manager. His first lead for PACT was in the play *Ampie*, but the role that set his career alight was his definitive interpretation of "Jakes" in Francois Swart's production of the celebrated box-office success, *Siener in die Suburbs* in 1971.

He was to have an 11-year association with PACT, during which time he performed in an average of six theatre productions a year. He also performed in independent theatre with Barney Simon and others (notably at the Market Theatre, while gradually also working on a film and television career. He returned to PACT for a brief spell as Artistic Director for PACT Drama (1983-1986), and thereafter returned to work freelance, and for a number of years in the 1990s he divided his time between Hollywood and South Africa.

He has appeared in numerous television series and feature films, including *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980), *Saturday Night at the Palace* (1987), *The Power of One* (1992), *Paljas* (1998), *Stander* (2003) and *Blood Diamond* (2006).

## **SANDRA PRINSLOO**

Even though Sandra's acting career was focused on theatre, she has starred in eight movies and many television series and productions. Amongst her movie roles is the female lead in *Tigers don't Cry* opposite Anthony Quinn and, of course, the memorable *The Gods must be Crazy*, which had tremendous international success.

Her broader involvement in the South African film industry was acknowledged by the Blue Fountain Club of Soweto which granted her an award for her contribution to the black film industry in southern Africa.

Her television roles range from the well-loved “soapies” like *Egoli*, to classic plays like Chekov’s *The Seagull*. For her role in Jean Cocteau’s *The Human Voice*, Sandra received a Television Award for Best Performance. The television production of Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* was screened in most European countries.

In 1992 Sandra decided to diversify her television career. She started covering international film festivals, doing interviews for television with international celebrities including Tom Selleck, John Malkovich, Brian de Palma, Ridley Scott, Helena Bonham Carter and Liv Ullman. At present Sandra has her own TV chat show on Kyknet, interviewing prominent South Africans.

### **BEÁTE OPPERMAN**

Beáte Opperman has been involved in the performing arts since her school years at Linden Hoërskool. She was awarded the most creative learner in speech & drama for four consecutive years along with numerous diploma and gold medal performances in the annual Roodepoort and Randburg Eistedfods. She was also awarded for best group improvisation nationally.

She went on to study a BA Drama at the University of Pretoria where she was seen in numerous productions including the female lead for the TUKS production, *Read(H)er Theory* performed at the Grahamstown Festival in 2006.

She was cast as Rykie in the highly praised Paul Eilers film *Roepman* and she went on to play Martha McLachlan in Eilers’ *Verraaiers*. She also played a part in *Free State* directed by Sallas de Jager. In 2016 she played Sonja, the female lead in the comedy feature *Jonathan* also directed by Sallas de Jager. TV credits include *The Docket*, *Egoli*, *Donkerland*, the voice of one of the main characters in the SABC 3 animation *Systraat* as well as the female lead Yolandie Bester in the Kyknet dramedie *Buurtwag*. She co-presented on the travel show *Sleep TV* and *Kampkos* which ran for four seasons.

### **JOHANNES JORDAAN**

Johannes Jordaan (6) makes his feature film debut in *Die Verhaal van Racheltjie de Beer*.

This grade R learner is an extrovert who spreads joy wherever and whenever he comes into contact with others. No stranger to appearing before the camera, he has already featured in three international ad campaigns and as an extra in an international film.

**END CREDITS**

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**CAST**

Herman de Beer

Sara Lundt

George Lundt

Jacoba Lundt

Racheltjie de Beer

Lazarus

Kingsley

Marie de Beer

Jamie de Beer

Klein Racheltjie de Beer

Stian Bam

Antoinette Louw

Marius Weyers

Sandra Prinsloo

Zonika de Vries

Seputla Sebogodi

Charlie Bouguenon

Beáte Opperman

Johannes Jordaan

Marli de Jager