



GIRL

DIR. ADURA ONASHILE

SYNOPSIS

Eleven-year-old Ama and her mother, Grace, take solace in the gentle but isolated world they obsessively create. But Ama's thirst for life and her need to grow and develop, challenges the rules of their insular world and gradually forces Grace to reckon with a past she struggles to forget.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Girl is inspired in part by my relationship with my mother. I grew up in Bermondsey in London, a sometimes hostile and unfriendly environment for an immigrant mother and daughter. This meant that our little one bedroom flat was a sanctuary and my relationship with my mother a solace. As an adult, I have always been fascinated by how that relationship shaped the way I saw the world I grew up in. What it gave me, but also the ways it may have made me less equipped for relationships outside of it.

Ama and Grace have an intense poetry to their connection borne out of a claustrophobia and obsession with each other, in turn borne out of an understandable fear of the world brought on by Grace's past trauma.

It is this essence that I want to explore. That beautiful intimacy that is possible from a deep connection between a mother and her daughter. That intimacy that flourishes in spite of trauma and fear and doubt.

Although the film is rooted in Ama's coming of age, a transformation takes place in both Ama and Grace. Charting their respective journeys in a way that feels unique, authentic and beautiful is my ultimate aim with this film.

This requires a careful piecing together of many elements, from the unique presence that the actors playing Grace and Ama have to have, to the ways we have to build a rapport between them that allows us to understand that these are two people that have spent almost every waking hour together for the entirety of Ama's life.

I am excited to develop performances that are complex and that stem from the idea that there can be more than one truth to any situation. I'm always fascinated to explore characters that cannot easily be seen in black and white or right and wrong terms, allowing for uncomfortable truths to sit side by side. These sorts of characters and performances are also more engaging for audiences and exciting for actors to play.



To that end, as well as exploring this within the writing, my knowledge and experience of working as an actor and as a director in theatre allows me to enable nuanced and three dimensional performances. I'd like to achieve this through an intensive rehearsal period before shooting begins, that allows both actors to spend time together, play together, dance together and with the help of a choreographer find the subtle and sublime ways that their physicality with each other can elevate this.

There is an atmosphere to the film that I would like to develop inspired by the work of Bradford Young, Khalil Joseph, and the photography of Yasuyochi Chiba. There is a visual richness they all bring to their subjects and surroundings that allow for a depth of emotion and tone. This is achieved through deep contrasting colours and the Black skin tone feeling almost three dimensional. This lends a visual poetry that speaks to the feelings, histories and longings of their subjects and yet they manage to do this in a way that doesn't feel laborious or heavy handed.

The world we create for Grace and Ama should feel full of depth, pregnant with possibility and longing, sensual and visceral.

Like in the films, *Dheepan*, *Mogul Mowgli* and *Atlantiques*, the tension and pressure and drama within the film doesn't come solely from plot, but from the characters and how they inhabit and see the world. In *Dheepan*, three strangers pretend to be a family in order to flee a war. To maintain this facade, they are forced to reckon with issues of intimacy, a past they would rather forget and a future that feels daunting. Their distinct personalities are forced to find a closeness that comes from the rituals they enact as a family – eating, sleeping, protecting each other. These rituals slowly come to define who they are, on a personal and familial level.





The aural world of the film should create a rich subtext to the action on screen. This will allow the audience to stay with Ama and Grace's point of view and their preoccupation with each other juxtaposed with the world outside, which Ama longs for and Grace wishes to hide from. The sound can act as a way of not only isolating these separate worlds of the public and private but also create a sense that the outside world is encroaching on Grace and Ama's inner world.

Finally this film is a homage to that unseen Black girl and woman, newly arrived in any city you can imagine in the UK, silent, lost and alienated and perhaps the last people we expect to see at the centre of a dramatic narrative. *Girl* is ultimately a celebration of the transition from being unseen to seen, of being brave and of growing into your place in the world.

A close-up portrait of Adura Onashile, a Black woman with short, dark, curly hair. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a bright green turtleneck sweater. The background is a plain, light grey color.

DIRECTOR


ADURA
ONASHILE

Adura Onashile is an award-winning Glasgow based artist. She has just finished playing Medea in the National Theatre of Scotland and Edinburgh International Festival 2022 acclaimed production. She has directed two productions, *HeLa* and *Expensive Shit* for The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, winning a Fringe First, Edinburgh Guide Best Scottish Contribution to Drama and TOTAL and Amnesty nominations. Both shows toured nationally and internationally supported by the British Council. She has directed productions with The Unicorn Theatre, The Place, Contact Theatre, Fuel Theatre, and The National Theatre of Scotland. In 2020, she wrote and directed her screen debut, *Expensive Shit*, a BAFTA Scotland nominated short produced by Barry Crerar which premiered at BFI London Film Festival 2020. Her debut film *Girl* premieres in Sundance at World Dramatic Competition.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

Girl, 2023, feature

Expensive Shit, 2020, short



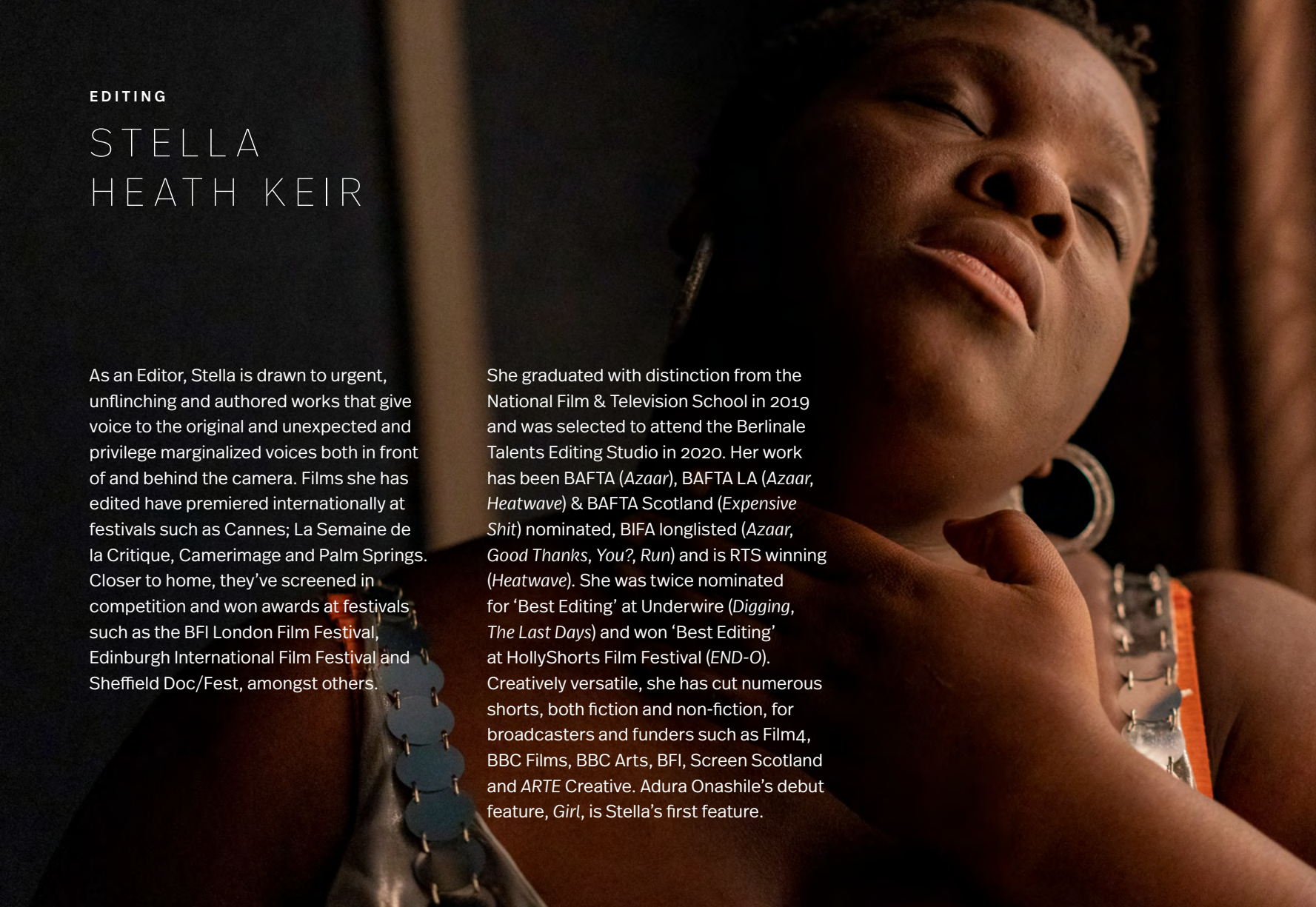
CINEMATOGRAPHY

TASHA BACK

Before becoming a DOP Tasha worked as an assistant in the camera department on feature films and high-end drama for over 10 years, from Steve McQueen's *Hunger*, to blockbuster *World War Z*.

Tasha moved up to DPing in her own right via shooting B Camera and Splinter units for Yann Demange and Danny Boyle. Her lead DP credits include the BAFTA Cymru winning TV Drama, *Adulthood* for Channel 4, Turner Prize Award winner, *The Destructors*, for artist Imran Perretta and additional photography on the BAFTA Best Single Drama winner *Sitting In Limbo*, for director Stella Corradi. Tasha's work on the short film *Enjoy* won her the BSC Best Cinematography Short Film Award.

In the last year she has shot *Splinter / 2nd Units* on Apple TV's *Masters Of The Air* for Directors Cary Fukunaga and Tim Van Patten as well as the opening block of *Traces season 2* for the BBC for Director Chris Foggin.



EDITING

STELLA HEATH KEIR

As an Editor, Stella is drawn to urgent, unflinching and authored works that give voice to the original and unexpected and privilege marginalized voices both in front of and behind the camera. Films she has edited have premiered internationally at festivals such as Cannes; La Semaine de la Critique, Camerimage and Palm Springs. Closer to home, they've screened in competition and won awards at festivals such as the BFI London Film Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival and Sheffield Doc/Fest, amongst others.

She graduated with distinction from the National Film & Television School in 2019 and was selected to attend the Berlinale Talents Editing Studio in 2020. Her work has been BAFTA (*Azaar*), BAFTA LA (*Azaar*, *Heatwave*) & BAFTA Scotland (*Expensive Shit*) nominated, BIFA longlisted (*Azaar*, *Good Thanks, You?*, *Run*) and is RTS winning (*Heatwave*). She was twice nominated for 'Best Editing' at Underwire (*Digging*, *The Last Days*) and won 'Best Editing' at HollyShorts Film Festival (*END-O*). Creatively versatile, she has cut numerous shorts, both fiction and non-fiction, for broadcasters and funders such as Film4, BBC Films, BBC Arts, BFI, Screen Scotland and ARTE Creative. Adura Onashile's debut feature, *Girl*, is Stella's first feature.




MUSIC

RÉ OLUNUGA

Ré Olunuga is a Nigerian composer of multi-genre orchestral and experimental music that spans across Film & TV soundtracks, commercial recordings to ambitious art pieces.

Summer 2022 will see the release of his soundtrack for the Disney film *RISE*. The score is his interpretation of classic orchestral Disney film music with the inclusion of traditional African phraseology, rhythms and instruments. As well as *Rise*, Ré completed in Spring 2022 the intimate score to the BBC Film feature film *Girl*.

Despite now spending a large amount of his time between London and Los Angeles, Ré still considers Lagos as the geographical heart of all his endeavors. He is founder and artistic director of The Lagos Philharmonic and is currently working on the development of the first symphonic concert hall in the city



PRODUCTION DESIGN

SORAYA
GILANNI
VILJOEN

Soraya Gilanni Viljoen is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work encompasses short form, drama, illustration and graphic design. She initially gained experience in narrative by working on short films, before moving into features – these include Adura Onashile’s debut feature *Girl*, and Georgia Oakley’s period feature *Blue Jean*. Other notable projects include the 45 minute one-take film *The Way Out For Battersea Arts Centre* / BBC. Soraya was the Art Director of Tilted Axis Press, an award winning not-for-profit publishing company on a mission to shake up contemporary literature, from its inception in 2015 until 2021.



CAST

DEBORAH LUKUMUENA

Deborah Lukumuena began her career with *Divines* and her win of the Cesar of the Best supporting actress. After three years of training at the national Conservatoire of Paris, she's been noticed in several projects. Over four years, she played a theatre solo *Anguille Sous Roche*, a play that had its tour in France. She was also seen on small screen shows like *Belle Belle Belle* (dir. Anne Depetrini) *Narvalo* (dir. Matthieu Longatte) or *Call My Agent* (dir. Antoine Garceau)

She is expected in forthcoming films like *Robust* (dir. Constance Meyer / co-starring Gerard Depardieu – Opening film at the Critic's Week at Cannes film Festival 2021) *The Braves* (dir. Anais Volpé – Directors Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival 2021) but also *The Last Dance* (dir. Delphine Lehericéy) *Saint-Omer* (dir. Alice Diop)

CAST

LE'SHANTEY BONSU

Le'Shantey Bonsu is a British-Ghanaian Actor. She was born on the 11th February 2010 in Leeds. She is the oldest of 3 children. She started her acting career in 2020. Her credits include a commercial for Lego and also eBay. *Girl* is her feature debut.



A young woman with long, straight brown hair is shown in profile, looking out of a window. She is wearing a blue lace-trimmed top and has a colorful beaded bracelet on her left wrist. Her arms are resting on a grey metal railing. The background shows a cityscape with buildings and greenery under a blue sky with light clouds.

CAST

LIANA TURNER

Liana Turner is 12 years old and lives at home with her brother and German Shepherd. Liana loves to sing, dance and perform and has attended UK Theatre School since the age of 4. Liana also attends circus school and is highly skilled in acrobalance and aerial hoop! Liana has most recently performed as Anne Frank in the Edinburgh tour of *Fantastically Great Women Who Changed The World* and played the role of Mustardseed in Scottish Opera's *Midsummers Night's Dream*. Liana has also been a supporting actor in *Outlander*.

CAST

DANNY SAPANI

Danny Sapani is an accomplished and versatile actor whose work spans film, television, and theatre. Danny has most recently appeared on our screens in the much anticipated science fiction television series, *Halo*, directed by the wonderful Otto Bathurst based on the phenomenon that was the *Halo* video game. As well as the hugely successful *Killing Eve*, starring opposite Sandra O and in psycho-thriller *Motherfatherhood* written by Emmy winner Tom Rob Smith alongside Richard Gere.

Other recent work in television includes his role as 'William North' in *Harlots*, which concluded its third series in 2019, as well as his appearance in *The Crown*, created by Peter Morgan, with Claire Foy and Matt Smith. Danny is currently filming *The Diplomat* alongside Sophie Rundle for World Productions.



PRODUCER

BARRY CRERAR

Production company barry crerar was set up in 2016 by producing duo Rosie Crerar and Ciara Barry, with the support of a BFI Vision Award. Based in Glasgow, the company was founded with a commitment to produce underseen stories that inspire and provoke, prioritizing female and under-represented voices both in front and behind the camera.

barry crerar has a strong track record of identifying and nurturing new and emerging filmmakers and is currently developing a slate of authored stories in both drama and documentary.

Recent productions include *Girl* (Adura Onashile/ BFI/ BBC Film/ Creative Scotland); *Nobody Has To Know* (Bouli Lanners / Versus Productions/ Playtime/ Creative Scotland); and BAFTA nominated films: *Run* (Scott Graham/ BFI/ BBC Film/ Creative Scotland) and *Expensive Shit* (Adura Onashile/ BBC Film/ Scottish Film Talent Network). In 2022 they have been identified as Screen International Rising Stars. In 2020 Ciara and Rosie were longlisted for BIFA Breakthrough Producer, for their work on *Run*.

Together Rosie and Ciara have over 25 years production experience including producing feature length dramas, award-winning short films and high-end TV commercials. From 2014–2016, Rosie was Development & Production Executive at Creative Scotland, EP credits include *Daphne* dir Peter Mackie Burns. Prior to this Rosie was Programme Manager at BFI London Film Festival, Festival Manager at Flickerfest International Short Film Festival and Co-Director of Glasgow Short Film Festival. From 2013–2016 Ciara was commercials producer at Mallinson Television Productions and previously, project manager of *Engage*, the *Media* funded inter-film school exchange programme run by Screen Academy Scotland and Development & Production Executive at DigiCult, the new talent development initiative funded by UK Film Council 2009–2012.

WORLD PREMIERE

Sundance World Dramatic Competition
2023

FILM INFORMATION

Original Title: Girl
English Title: Girl
Genre: Drama
Country: UK
Language: English
Year: 2023
Duration: 87 min
Picture: Color
Aspect Ratio: 2:39
Sound: 5.1
Available Format: DCP

CAST

Déborah Lukumuena
Danny Sapani
Le'shantey Bonsu
Liana Turner

CREW

Director: Adura Onashile
Screenplay: Adura Onashile
Cinematography: Tasha Back
Editing: Stella Heath Keir
Production Design: Soraya Gilanni Viljoen
Costume Design: Kirsty Halliday
Sound Design: William Aikman
Music: Ré Olunuga
Production Company: barry crerar
Producers: Rosie Crerar and Ciara Barry
With The Support Of: The British Film Institute,
BBC Film, Creative Scotland

AWARDS

Girl participated in 2022 BFI London Film Festival's
Works in Progress showcase, iFeatures programme
(supported by Creative England, BFI and BBC Film).
barry crerar are BFI Vision Awardees.

PRODUCER'S CONTACT

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