



Elephantiasis

a burden of elephants

Adapted by Danielle Wood from her own short story

Starring Katrina Milosevic

Director Sophie Hyde

Duration: 11:20 minutes

For interviews and further information contact

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For images visit www.elephantiasis.com.au



Synopsis

Elephantiasis *a burden of elephants*

one liner:

Meredith has a “burden of elephants” but she can’t bring herself to tell her friends and family she doesn’t like them.

one paragraph:

Meredith has Elephantiasis. That is, a burden of elephants. For years her neighbours, friends, family and students have been offering up stuffed, marble, magnetised elephants, even elephant shaped waffle makers, tea cups and pens. But you see, Meredith doesn’t even like elephants. She could have mentioned this, of course, but she knows that this imagined fondness of hers for elephants is proof of her jolliness, a huge joke against herself, and she knows that a jolly fat woman without jolliness is left with only one adjective.

When a marriage proposal from the one person she hoped would understand her goes horribly wrong, Meredith is forced to confront her Elephantiasis. Can she break free from her social politeness and let her friends know who she really is?



Interview with writer, Danielle Wood.

Elephantiasis started off as a drunken anecdote told about a fat bridesmaid who collected elephants, a pissed bride, and an embarrassing speech. Writer Danielle Wood doesn't remember the exact details but she remembers thinking there was a story it somewhere when she was first told the anecdote.

The short story first appeared as part of the collection, *Rosie Little's Cautionary Tales for Girls*, Danielle's second publication after her 2002 Vogel-winning debut novel *The Alphabet of Light and Dark*. In Wood's own words, it is "a book which begins with a riff on the word fellatio, contains important information about such arcane topics as pubic hairstyling and the correct use of a cake fork, and enables women and men to justify buying as many pairs of expensive shoes as they can wholeheartedly love at one time."

All the stories are narrated by the character of Rosie Little, who still appears in the film as narrator. When thinking about possible challenges of adapting her own story for the screen, it was the narration, which had unified the collection of stories, that Wood thought would be the first thing to go:

'I expected to have to remove that element of narration and find more visual ways to tell the story,' Wood says. 'Voice-overs, I'd been told, were so five minutes ago. Clearly, I'm a dag, a) because I didn't know that, and b) because I love a good voice-over.' But Sophie Hyde (Director & Producer) and Rebecca Summerton (the producer who later had to leave the project because of other work) were very keen to keep the original character of the story and for Wood to write a script with the voice-over. 'This actually made the adaptation really easy,' Wood says.

When Sophie Hyde had shown an interest in adapting her story, Wood flew from Hobart, where she lectures in English and creative writing at the University of Tasmania, to Adelaide to work with Sophie and Rebecca. 'For three days, we talked, and planned, and ate and drank,' Wood remembers, 'and in the evenings, I'd write.' They produced three drafts in three days and Wood went on to complete a couple more drafts back in Tasmania. 'The collaborative nature of the process was really exciting.'

There's no denying when reading the original story the impression of being told a fairy tale. When asked about this, Danielle reveals her love of fairy tales and their adaptability. 'The same narratives can be made to work for children and adults, functioning at different levels at the same time,' says Wood. 'When I was writing *Rosie Little*, I wanted to use the fairytale concept to write about the numerous ways that it's possible to fuck up on the path from childhood to adulthood.' It is easy to imagine that now as a mother of three young children (including a set of twins) this idea is just as relevant to Wood as when she first wrote *Elephantiasis*, which she describes as being 'the story of an overweight girl who accidentally becomes known for collecting elephants but,' as Wood is eager to continue, 'is really about the danger of allowing other people to define you.'

The hope for the film is the same hope she had for the story: 'As you read along, you laugh, and snigger, right up until the very end when the story smacks you in the face and asks you what, or who, you're really laughing at.'

What do you laugh at?

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Interview with director/producer, Sophie Hyde.

Everyone connects to stories differently. Just like one person's thoughtful gift could be another person's burden. Sophie Hyde, director and producer of *Elephantiasis*, only connected to the original story by Tasmanian writer Danielle Wood when thinking about the story afterwards rather than during the reading of it. 'I think that's pretty special – something that makes you think further than the story,' Hyde says. 'I kept on thinking how interesting it was - how sad that Meredith couldn't express who she was, the tragedy of everyone wanting to express their feelings for her, but being unable, or unwilling, to really think about who she was.'

On the surface, *Elephantiasis* is a departure from Hyde's previous dramatic work. Her award-winning first short drama, *My Last Ten Hours With You*, is a melancholy piece, its tone shifts subtly to show the distance between two people trying to find a way to say goodbye. Her dance film triptych, *Necessary Games*, is an intense, complex exploration on people with disability and the desperate human need to make a connection. *Elephantiasis* is told with a visual language of strong colours, bold framing, and larger than life characters. But like the main character in *Elephantiasis*, the unfortunate Meredith, there's another the truth that lies below the surface.

'The story-book style is deceptively intimate,' Hyde says about the story. She believes the film is absolutely in line with the themes of her previous work. 'I am interested in how we connect - or don't [connect],' Hyde explains. 'I'm interested in how we present ourselves to the world, the performance of our lives. I'm interested in private lives and private thoughts and in how we treat each other, and the times when we get lazy about this.'

Elephantiasis, the story of a woman who has found herself in the horror of a life of being stuck in other people's idea of her, seems to have all these elements. The difference perhaps from previous work, as Hyde puts it, is 'the story isn't played out in scenes and interactions between people, it's spoken, it's told. It's a tale.'

Hyde did have some people challenge the tale she and Danielle Wood wanted to tell, but to her credit, and to the team that was assembled, she stuck to her guns, not willing to make easy choices about the story. Hyde elaborates: 'We had some suggestions that we make Meredith more empowered at the end but to me that just lets an audience off. It's easy to leave the cinema feeling okay with a happier ending. But to have to consider this as a cautionary tale that maybe makes you question how you present or how you treat those around you.'

How do you treat those around you?

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Interview with “Meredith”, Katrina Milosevic.

For a working actor, and Katrina Milosevic has been a working actor for quite some time now, a short film can be a strange beast. The working relationship you have with the filmmakers can be as short as the films themselves. Sometimes you may meet the day shooting begins, and sometimes the experience adds up to a matter of hours, and then it's over. What's clear is that it's important for the actor to feel a connection to the story or at least a strong desire to be part of the telling of the story.

So when approached with the possibility of playing “Meredith” in *Elephantiasis*, it was a simple decision for Milosevic, ‘I connected straight away. I could empathise with Meredith’s pain and frustrations and hopes and obstacles,’ she says. Milosevic did have some reservations about playing a character that appeared to be such a victim. However, her fears were put to rest when she met with the director and producer, Sophie Hyde: ‘I loved Sophie’s approach to the tone and aesthetic of the piece,’ Milosevic continues, ‘and I could see how much she had invested in Meredith.’

Despite the connection that Hyde and Milosevic made, their relationship began with an awkward misunderstanding, which Milosevic remembers being more embarrassing than funny. Hyde had been looking at casting the main role of “Meredith”, a fat girl who becomes known by her family and friends for collecting elephants, and had flown to Melbourne to talk to a few actors about the role. When Milosevic met Hyde she thought she had already been offered the role. ‘My agent had told me I was being offered the role so I proceeded to bandy my ideas around with commitment and confidence over coffee with Sophie,’ Milosevic says, ‘only to find out she had other actors to see for the same part.’ Hyde told Milosevic afterwards that her confidence, despite any resulting embarrassment, probably worked in Milosevic’s favour. ‘I don’t think I gave her much choice!’ Milosevic says in reply.

Milosevic had a ball on the set of *Elephantiasis*. ‘I had just come off a film that was particularly difficult and so it was a joy making the film in Adelaide. So comfortable and fun,’ Katrina remembers. If there were any challenges in the making of the film for Katrina it was only because of the nature of the story, she recalls. ‘Being hit by a stripper’s penis trunk whilst bawling my eyes out was a bit confronting.’

Have you ever been confronted by a stripper’s trunk?

Key biographies



Katrina Milosevich “Meredith”

Katrina is a graduate from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). Since graduating in 1997, Katrina has been working consistently in theatre, television and film.

Katrina recently played Rebecca in the feature film *I Love You Too*, written by Peter Helliard and starring Brendan Cowell.

Katrina had an ongoing role (Sophie Novak) in the TV series *Stingers*. Her work on the show earned her the recognition as an up and coming talent and nomination for the 2004 Best New Talent Logie Award. More recently she played Kelly Katsis in *Neighbours*. Katrina has also worked on the popular *City Homicide*, *Blue Heelers* and *The Games*. She also starred in the telemovie *Little Oberon* and the 2008 runner up at *Tropfest*, *Uncle Johnny*. Katrina has also featured in video clips for *The Whitlams*, *Dallas Crane* and *Wendy Matthews*.

Some of her theatre credits include; *Secret Bridesmaid's Business* for Kay and McLean Productions, *Fat Pig* written by Neil Labute for Sydney Theatre Co for which she was nominated for a Glug Award (2006), the world premiere of *Operator* written by David Williamson for the Ensemble Theatre, *Macbeth* for Sydney Theatre Co, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* both for Bell Shakespeare and *Alive* at Williamstown Pier for Griffin Theatre Company.

Katrina was proudly the face of Ella Bache in 1999/2000.



Danielle Wood writer

Danielle Wood, born in Hobart in 1972, is the author of the Vogel Award-winning *The Alphabet of Light and Dark*, and *Rosie Little's Cautionary Tales for Girls*.

She has worked as a journalist with newspapers in Hobart and Perth, as a producer with ABC Radio in Perth and Broome, and as a media officer for Tasmania's Parks and Wildlife Service.

Danielle, twice named a Sydney Morning Herald Best Young Novelist of the Year, lectures in English and creative writing at the University of Tasmania. She has three children, including a set of twins, and lives in Hobart.

Key biographies



Sophie Hyde director, producer

Sophie Hyde is one of the founders and co-directors of Closer Productions. She makes provocative and intimate drama and documentary films, as well as working as a video artist for dance and text based performance. Her documentaries include *Bittersweet Freedom* (2009) for SBS, *Ok, Let's Talk About Me* (nominated for an ATOM award 2005), *Beyond Beliefs* (2007) (winner of IQ One World Award 2009) and *Risking It All: Initial D* (2007 part of a series for SBS). Her short film *My Last Ten Hours With You* continues to screen at festivals internationally and has won numerous awards including the *Sydney Mardi Gras Best Short Film* and the *Melbourne Queer Film Festival's Emerging Filmmaker Award* and audience choice award as well as Best Direction, Best Drama and Best Film awards at the *SA Short Screen Awards*. Sophie recently produced and directed *Necessary Games*, three short dance films with Restless Dance Theatre, that premiered at the *Adelaide Film Festival 2009* won Best Short Film at the 2009 SA Screen Awards, and Best Experimental at 2009 Melbourne Int'l Film Festival, ATOM Awards 2009, and Brooklyn Int'l Film Festival 2010, Best Work at ReelDance Awards 2010.

Sophie is currently:

in post-production as co-director and producer on *Life in Movement*.

in production as producer on *Shut Up Little Man!*

in development on the feature drama *52 Tuesdays*, which will begin shooting in 2011 for 52 weeks.



Bryan Mason producer, DOP, editor

Bryan Mason is one of the founders and co-directors of Closer Productions. Bryan began his career making skateboarding videos and has made four acclaimed skate films. He has won various awards for his short film, documentary and music video work, including a host of Gold awards from the Australian Cinematographers Society (SA/WA). Bryan produced, shot and edited Closer Production's project *Necessary Games*, a triptych of short dance films which has won awards including *Best Experimental Short Film* at the 2009 Melbourne International Film Festival and 2010 Brooklyn International Film Festival. Bryan shot and edited the short drama *My Last Ten Hours With You* which has won numerous awards and traveled the world on the festival circuit. Bryan has produced and directed two, one-hour documentaries for Channel 9 about trekking the Kokoda track and journeying to Mount Everest base camp. In 2009 he also edited the feature film, *My Tehran for Sale*.

Bryan is currently:

in post-production on *Life in Movement*, a documentary about the life and work of choreographer Tanja Liedtke, which he is shooting, editing, directing and producing.

in production, shooting and editing *Shut Up Little Man!*, a feature documentary about the strangest, most foul mouthed and influential audio-verite recording in popular culture history.

in development on the feature drama *52 Tuesdays*, which is also part of SAFC's *FilmLab*.

Other cast



Ptiika Owen-Shaw **Narrator (“Rosie”)**

Ptiika graduated from ACArts in 2004. Her theatre credits include *Woyzeck* directed by Peter Evans, *Ruby Bruise* directed by Daisy Brown, and *Conclusions on Ice* by Josh Tyler and Thali Korin for the Adelaide Fringe Festival in 2008. Ptiika has performed in many children’s shows for Splash Theatre company including *What Big Teeth you Have*, *Rocking the Pages*, *Little Wing and Twinkle Toes* and *The Kings New Suit*, and has featured in numerous commercials for television.

Ptiika will be embarking on an Australian tour performing in *Special Delivery* with Patch Theatre Company later in the year.



David Heinrich **“Adrian”**

David is performer and composer from Adelaide. A graduate of Flinders Drama Centre he began his career as the host of ABC TV’s *Couch Potato*. His theatre credits include *The Smile Off Your Face* with Belgian Company Ontroerend Goed, Aaron Copeland’s *The Second Hurricane*, with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Robyn Archer’s *Boy Hamlet*, Patch Theatre Company’s *Mr McGee and the Biting Flea* and Windmill Theatre’s *Boom Bah!* during which he succeeded in playing an accordion. As a founding member of The Border Project, David was part of the ensemble to devise, perform in and compose music for *Please Go Hop!*, *Highway Rock n Roll Disaster* (Winner of the 2006 Heineken Spirit of the Fringe Award) and *Trouble on Planet Earth*, (Winner 2008 Adelaide Fringe Bank SA Support Act Award). David has composed music for Brisbane’s The Restaged Histories Project, designed and curated sound for *Whore* (Arts Radar, B sharp), performed in composed and sound designed for *Vs Macbeth* (Sydney Theatre Company) and will be composer and sound designer for *Quack* later this year (Griffin Theatre Co.) David has played with the Scared Weird Little Guys in their “Superband” and their *30 Minute Variety Hour* in the Adelaide Fringe and Melbourne Comedy Festival. His band *Lions At Your Door* ensure he maintains street cred as he gets older.

Credits

SCREENPLAY BY *Danielle Wood based on her short story Elephantiasis*

CINEMATOGRAPHY & EDITING BY Bryan Mason

COMPOSED BY Quentin Grant

PRODUCED BY Bryan Mason & Sophie Hyde

DIRECTED BY Sophie Hyde

FILMED ON LOCATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

MEREDITH Katrina Milosevic

NARRATOR (ROSIE) Ptiika Owen-Shaw

ADRIAN David Heinrich

JEAN Janet Jauncey

MEREDITH'S MOTHER Svetlana Elliot

PARTY GUEST 1 Matthew Cormack

PARTY GUEST 2 Sam McMahon

PARTY GUEST 3 Greg Marsh

PARTY GUEST 4 Emma Beech

GIRL AT ZOO Audrey Mason-Hyde

ELEGRAM BOYS Matthew Tyrie

..... Brendan Vink

PARTY GUESTS Maree Hamilton

..... Gary Harrison

..... Marcus Becker

..... Rochelle Cameron

GIFT GIVERS Matthew Bate

..... Raynor Pettge

..... Caroline Man

..... Christine James

..... Kelly Haines

..... Bettina Hamilton

..... Luke Atkinson

..... Scarlett Anthony

..... Catie Edwards

..... Shannon Cain

..... Bonnie Gibbs

..... Keri Tsintziniotis

..... Katarina Watkins

..... Aisha McKay

..... Finn Monteath

..... Tom Chalmers

..... Sascha Tarasenko

Credits cont...

SUPERVISING PRODUCER Vicki Sugars

DEVELOPMENT PRODUCER
..... Rebecca Summerton

LINE PRODUCER Bettina Hamilton

LINE PRODUCER Matthew Cormack

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ... Vicki Sugars

FOCUS PULLER Darcy Sullivan

CLAPPER LOADER Mike Lez

SOUND RECORDIST Mike Bakaloff

CONTINUITY Kelly Haines

KEY GRIP Mike Smith

GAFFER Storm Ashwood

ASSISTANT GRIP/ GAFFER Leigh Nemeth

PRODUCTION DESIGNER William Dim

SET DRESSERS & PROPS BUYERS
..... Charlotte Hamlyn
..... Aimee Knight
..... Jessie Mills

STAND-BY PROPS Obie O'Brien

COSTUME DESIGNER Anita Seiler

WARDROBE ASSISTANT
..... Lauren De Innocentis

HAIR/ MAKEUP Marion Lee

ASSITANT HAIR/ MAKEUP Renee Brice

CATERING Lee Skrabanich
..... Danica Moores

UNIT MANAGER Danny Bilan

RUNNERS Matt Pearson
..... Luke Atkinson

CASTING CONSULTANT Wizzy Evans

WORKSHOP ASSISTANT Daisy Brown

STILLS PHOTOGRAPHY Victoria Cocks

GRAPHIC DESIGN Dilfinch & Dilfinch

SOUND POST PRODUCTION Oasis Sound

SOUND DESIGN AND MIX Martyn Zub

SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR ... Duncan Campbell

SOUND STUDIO PRODUCER Sophie Roenfeldt

ONLINE FACILITY Oasis Post

ONLINE/ COLOURIST Marty Pepper

CAMERA EQUIPMENT
..... Kojo Group and Video Australasia

LENSES Picture Hire Australia

INSURANCE
..... Webster Hyde Heath, Richard Hyde

SAFC PROJECT OFFICER Quentin Kenihan

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Closer Productions

www.closerproductions.com.au

Shut Up Little Man!

www.shutuplittlemanfilm.com

The Mystery of Flying Kicks

www.flying-kicks.com

