



# BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

5 – 16 October 2016

in partnership with



## EUROPEAN PREMIERE OF A UNITED KINGDOM TO OPEN THE 60TH BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL



Rosamund Pike as Ruth Williams and David Oyelowo as Seretse Khama in A UNITED KINGDOM, Pathé

***Embargoed until 12:00 GMT, Tuesday 21 June, 2016***

**LONDON – Tuesday 21 June, 2016:** The 60th BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express® is delighted to announce that this year's Opening Night gala will be Amma Asante's A UNITED KINGDOM, the true story of Seretse Khama, King of Bechuanaland (modern Botswana), and Ruth Williams, the London office worker he married in 1947 in the face of fierce opposition from their families and the British and South African governments.

The film will receive its European premiere on Wednesday 5 October at the Odeon Leicester Square, attended by cast and filmmakers with Asante, David Oyelowo and Rosamund Pike expected on the red carpet. There will be a live cinecast from the London event and simultaneous screenings taking place at cinemas across the UK.

**A UNITED KINGDOM** is directed by Asante (*Belle*) from a screenplay by Guy Hibbert (*Eye in the Sky*), based on the book *Colour Bar* by Susan Williams. The cast is led by David Oyelowo (*Selma*) as Seretse Khama with Rosamund Pike (*Gone Girl*) playing his future wife Ruth Williams. Other cast includes Jack Davenport (*Pirates of the Caribbean*), Terry Pheto (*Mandela*), Tom Felton (*Harry Potter*), Arnold Oceng (*Adulthood*), Jack Lowden (*'71*) and Laura Carmichael (*Downton Abbey*).

**Clare Stewart, BFI London Film Festival Director**, says: "Amma Asante's *A UNITED KINGDOM* is testament to a defiant and enduring love story that also reveals a complex, painful chapter in British history. We are proud to be opening the 60th BFI London Film Festival with a film of such contemporary relevance, one that celebrates the triumph of love and intelligence over intolerance and oppression, and that confirms Asante as a distinctive and important British filmmaker."

**Director Amma Asante** comments: "It's a great privilege that *A UNITED KINGDOM* has been selected as the Opening Night Film of the BFI London Film Festival. The Festival means a lot to me personally, having showcased my very first film, *A Way of Life*, here and been honoured with the UK Film Talent Award. I'm a proud Londoner and in *A UNITED KINGDOM* we've been able to film in some of the most beautiful parts of the city as well as in the wonderful landscapes of Botswana."

The film is produced by Rick McCallum (*Star Wars*), David Oyelowo, Justin Moore-Lewy, Brunson Green (*The Help*) and Charlie Mason. The film is executive produced by Pathé's Cameron McCracken, BBC Films' Christine Langan, the BFI's Ben Roberts, Ingenious Media's Eleanor Clark Windo and Guy Hibbert.

The film is a Pathé, BBC Films, BFI, Ingenious presentation with the participation of Canal + and Cine + of a Yoruba Saxon/Harbinger Pictures/Perfect Weekend/ Film United Production of a film by Amma Asante. Pathé will distribute the film in the UK and France and will handle sales throughout the rest of the world.

The 60th BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express® takes place from Wednesday 5 October-Sunday 16 October 2016. The full Festival programme will be announced on Thursday 1 September 2016.

- Ends-

#### **PRESS CONTACTS**

##### **For further information about the 60th BFI London Film Festival**

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##### **For further information about the UK release of A UNITED KINGDOM**

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### **Film Assets**

Images are available on [www.image.net](http://www.image.net)

Twitter @AUnitedKingdom  
Facebook facebook.com/aunitedkingdomfilm

### **For Opening Night media enquiries**

PREMIER - Matty O'Riordan, Senior Media Manager  
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### **Festival Information & Ticket Booking**

BFI Members' priority booking opens 10.00am, 8 September - join at [www.bfi.org.uk/join](http://www.bfi.org.uk/join)

Public booking opens 10.00am, 15 September

Telephone Bookings: 020 7928 3232 between 10:00 – 20:30

Online: [www.bfi.org.uk/lff](http://www.bfi.org.uk/lff)

In person: BFI Southbank Office: 11:00 – 20:30

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger.

### **The BFI London Film Festival**

BFI London Film Festival is Britain's leading film event and one of the world's best film festivals. It introduces the finest new British and international films to an expanding London and UK-wide audience and attracts significant international film

industry participation. LFF is a compelling combination of red carpet glamour, friendly audiences and vibrant exchange. LFF provides an essential profiling opportunity for films seeking global success; promotes the careers of British and international filmmakers through its industry and awards programmes and positions London as the world's leading creative city.

### **BFI London Film Festival 2015**

The 2015 BFI London Film Festival opened with the European premiere of Sarah Gavron's agenda-setting *Suffragette*. The film kicked off a festival focusing on and celebrating strong women, including a keynote address from campaigner Geena Davis as part of the Global Symposium on Gender in Media, hosted by the LFF in collaboration with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media and Women in Film and Television (WFTV). The festival closed with the European Premiere of Danny Boyle's *Steve Jobs*, and saw 164,000 attendances across 568 screenings in 16 London venues and Opening and Closing night cinecasts to 45 venues across the UK.

The festival welcomed leading lights from across the international film industry in 2015, Acting talent supporting films at the Festival included: Carey Mulligan, Meryl Streep, Michael Fassbender, Kate Winslet, Johnny Depp, Benedict Cumberbatch, Saoirse Ronan, Emory Cohen, Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara, Tom Hiddleston, Sienna Miller, Elizabeth Moss, Mohammed Assaf, Maggie Smith, Alex Jennings, Alan Bennett, Rachel Weisz, Colin Farrell, Ben Foster, Chris O'Dowd, Brie Larson, Agyness Deyn, Peter Mullan, Bryan Cranston, Helen Mirren, John Goodman, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Michael Caine and Harvey Keitel.

Directors presenting their work included Lenny Abrahamson, Hany Abu-Assad, Sean Baker, Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya, Danny Boyle, Esther May Campbell, Scott Cooper, John Crowley, Jonás Cuarón, Terence Davies, Stephen Frears, Cary Fukunaga, Sarah Gavron, Luca Guadagnino, Davis Guggenheim, Lucile Hadžihalilović, Todd Haynes, Nicholas Hytner, Yorgos Lanthimos, Guy Maddin, Deepa Mehta, László Nemes, Jerzy Skolimowski, Simon Stone, Ondi Timoner, Johnnie To, Athina Rachel Tsangari, James Vanderbilt, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Ben Wheatley and S. Craig Zahler.

### **Clare Stewart biography**

Clare Stewart's 20 year programming career has encompassed leadership roles as Festival Director, Sydney Film Festival (2006-2011) and the inaugural Head of Film Programs at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne (2002-2006) as well as various roles at the Australian Film Institute (1996-2001), including Exhibition Manager, and programmer and Committee Member of the Melbourne Cinémathèque (1995-2002). She has been BFI Head of Festivals and BFI London Film Festival Director since October 2011.

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