

Official Selection - Clermont Ferrand International  
Short Film Festival

# *Fly*



## PRESSKIT

I N T E R N A T I O N A L   S A L E S

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**N E W   Z E A L A N D   F I L M**

## **Production Notes**

Writer/Choreographer: Shona McCullagh  
Concept: Shona McCullagh  
Director: Shona McCullagh  
Producer: Margaret Slater  
Production Company: Slater Films

5 mins      35mm      Colour      1:1.85      Dolby Digital

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## **Log line**

A deaf boy is ready to soar - through the language of movement his father struggles to set him free.

## **Synopsis**

A father struggles between his instinct to protect, the desire to see his creation take flight, and the need to set his deaf boy free.

Loosely based on the ancient story of Daedalus and Icarus, the boy who flew too close to the sun, the film describes through the language of movement, the final moments before separation.

## **Festivals and Awards**

Her most recent film fly has won 1st Prize and People's Choice at the Reeldance Awards in Sydney and was awarded 2nd Prize at the Festival der Nationen in Austria. fly was in the Official Selection at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival in France and has also screened at several international Festivals including Dance On Screen UK and Dance on Camera Festival, New York.

## **Director's Notes**

As a choreographer, the medium of camera has always held a fascination for me, especially where the laws of gravity could be played with. The Greek myth of Daedalus, who created wings made of wax and feathers for his son Icarus, seemed the perfect vehicle to explore this idea.

The film concentrates on the scene prior to the inaugural flight of Icarus. The son in this treatment is deaf and is desperate to escape his gravity-bound world. The sign language used becomes the choreography but is coherent although exaggerated and extended into the whole of the boy's body in places. His eager, comic energy already lifts him off the earth and he is frustrated by his father's nervousness.

His father Daedalus is a brilliant inventor, who is torn between his desire to see his invention mastered and his fear for his son's safety. He tries to impress upon Icarus the importance of "flying the middle way"; not too high so as to be near to the sun, and not too low to be drawn into the waters below.

Those who are familiar with the myth will know this flight ends in tragedy as the wings melt when the boy flies too close to the sun.

The myth itself reflects on the need to balance, with control of the mind, the danger of following the path of desire, enthusiasm and emotion. The film, I think, describes the process of a parent letting go of their child.

## **Casting**

In casting the film, I wanted the father to have a big, bear-like stance and represent all that is grounded. I wanted his frame to engulf the small boy's and his weight to utterly contrast the airy quality of his son. I deliberately chose a non-dancer to fit this physique. John Callen rose to the challenge of learning quite complex and detailed movement in a very short time. John's performance, in terms of the depth of the relationship between father and child, was a huge asset to the film.

I had wanted, and indeed auditioned, several deaf children for the role of Icarus. However, because of time constraints in both rehearsal and shooting I realised that my knowledge of sign language was too poor to be able to communicate quickly. I wanted to extend the language of the hands also so I felt I needed to work with a trained dancer in this role. Richard is an extremely versatile dancer and actor, and his gymnastic ability was also a real bonus for us on shoot days.

## **Score/Sound**

The score by David Long, and sound effects by Tom Miskin, play a vital role in contemporising the aesthetic of the work. David's score supports the characters' journey through the film by using a combination of strings and a theramin (an electronic instrument).

## **DOP**

Working with a DOP who was familiar with nuances of movement was vital to the project. Aaron Morton, who I had worked with at Pacific Renaissance Pictures, is a very skilled camera operator, therefore we could achieve most of the shots we had planned with the usual short film shooting ratio!

The use of choreography designed for the camera enhanced the sensations of flight and suspended movement. The contemporary choreography is really an exploration of the pathway between grounded and suspended movement played very simply with presenting “impossible” movement through the use of the camera, while telling a story that seems to reach people.

## **The Director: Shona McCullagh**

Shona is one of New Zealand's outstanding choreographers and dance filmmakers.

As a choreographer, Shona has created works for Limbs, Douglas Wright Dance Company and The Royal New Zealand Ballet.

In 1993, Shona formed her own company The Human Garden, which performed regularly throughout New Zealand and in Chile in 1997. In 1998 Shona was commissioned by the International Festival of the Arts to create a full length work Quick. This work focused on the integration of film with live performance.

In addition to choreography for live performance, Shona holds an intense interest in dance for screen. She has created work for Pacific Renaissance Pictures, numerous commercials, Lord of the Rings and an American feature film, Eye of the Storm.

Shona's first dance film, Hurtle, has screened at festivals throughout the world and was awarded the Paula Citron Award for Choreography for Camera at the Moving Pictures Festival in Toronto, First Prize for Experimental Film at the Anatolya Festival in Turkey and a Special Mention for Originality at the Tout Ecran Festival in Switzerland.

Shona's most recent film fly won 1st Prize and People's Choice at the Reeldance awards in Sydney and was awarded 2nd Prize at the Festival der Nationen in Austria. fly was in the Official Selection at the Clermont-Ferrand Festival in France and has also screened at several international Festivals including Dance On Screen UK and Dance on Camera Festival, New York.

Shona became a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2000 and in 2002 was named as one of five New Zealand Arts Foundation Arts Laureates.

Shona is currently working on a pilot for her third film, which focuses on harness and rig-assisted choreography for camera.

## **The Producer**

Margaret formed Slater Films in 1994, primarily working with overseas production companies producing television commercials in New Zealand but has continued to work in the development and production of short films.

In 1992 she was Line Producer for Gregor Nicholas' short film Avondale Dogs, which won prizes at Melbourne, Chicago and Montreal Film Festival. For director Armagan Ballantyne, Marg produced Whistle She Rolls, a short selected in competition at the Venice, British and New Zealand film festivals. Armagan's second film A Fine Weekend was produced in 1998. This short screened in many overseas festivals. Margaret also produced Light (directed by Kim Gunter).

Margaret's first experience in dance film production was with Shona and their production of Hurtle in 1997. Hurtle was screened in competition at Sundance and various other festivals around the world. Marg produced fly in 2001.

## **The Crew & Cast**

|                               |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Writer/Choreographer/Director | Shona McCullagh |
| Concept by                    | Shona McCullagh |
| Producer                      | Margaret Slater |
| Director of Photography       | Aaron Morton    |
| Editor                        | Ken Sparks      |
| Composer                      | David Long      |
| Production Designer           | Kim Jarrett     |
| Costume Design                | Bob Buck        |

### **FEATURING**

|               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| John Callen   | Father |
| Richard Cesan | Son    |

### **CREW**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| CONSULTANT/1ST AD         | Paul Grinder      |
| CONTINUITY:               | Dianne Bloomfield |
| PRODUCTION MANAGER :      | Nicki Carston     |
| PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:     | Carl Hills        |
| CHOREOGRAPHERS ASSISTANT: | Min Windle        |
| PRODUCTION RUNNER:        | Catriona Henshall |
| UNIT MANAGER:             | Lucy Meech        |
| FOCUS PULLER:             | Peter Cunningham  |
| CLAPPER LOADER:           | David Shope       |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>GAFFER:</b>              | <b>Jeremy Roelants</b>                 |
| <b>LIGHTING ASSISTANTS:</b> | <b>Greg Cook/Zane Greig</b>            |
| <b>GRIP:</b>                | <b>Miles Holley</b>                    |
| <b>GRIP ASSISTANTS:</b>     | <b>Brian Robertson, Johnny Swanson</b> |
| <b>SAFETY OFFICER:</b>      | <b>Damien Malloy</b>                   |
| <b>PRODUCTION DESIGNER:</b> | <b>Kim Jarrett</b>                     |
| <b>STORYBOARD ARTIST:</b>   | <b>Stu Howard</b>                      |
| <b>RIGGER:</b>              | <b>Scottie Anderson</b>                |
| <b>COSTUME DESIGNER:</b>    | <b>Bob Buck</b>                        |
| <b>MAKE-UP:</b>             | <b>Holly Wilson/Bridget May</b>        |
| <b>SOUND RECORDIST:</b>     | <b>Eugene Arts</b>                     |
| <b>CATERERS:</b>            | <b>Marvel Kitchen - Seru Mar</b>       |
| <b>STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER:</b> | <b>Michelle Gray</b>                   |
| <b>SIGNING INTERPRETER:</b> | <b>Liesel Thorn</b>                    |
| <b>CASTING:</b>             | <b>Human Garden</b>                    |
| <b>LOCATION SCOUT:</b>      | <b>Phil Aitken</b>                     |