

**BFI** **2019**  
**FLARE**  
**LONDON LGBTQ+ FILM FESTIVAL**



**BFI ANNOUNCES OPENING NIGHT FILM OF THE 33<sup>RD</sup> EDITION OF BFI FLARE**  
**UK Premiere of VITA & VIRGINIA**  
**21<sup>st</sup> March, 2019 at BFI Southbank**

**Berlin, Friday 8<sup>TH</sup> February 2019:** The BFI is thrilled to announce that the 33<sup>rd</sup> edition of BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival (21<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> March at BFI Southbank) will open with the UK premiere of Chanya Button's VITA & VIRGINIA at BFI Southbank.

VITA & VIRGINIA is the true story of the passionate relationship between literary trailblazer Virginia Woolf (Elizabeth Debicki), and the enigmatic aristocrat Vita Sackville-West (Gemma Arterton). The film tells the story of the birth of the novel their intoxicating encounters inspired; Woolf's bold experiment in art and androgyny, 'Orlando'.

When their paths cross, the magnetic Vita decides the beguiling, stubborn and gifted Virginia will be her next conquest, no matter the cost. The film is a celebration of their unconventional bond; a vivid exploration of gender, sexuality, creativity and passion. VITA & VIRGINIA is a love story, told in a contemporary style, about two women - two writers - who smashed through social barriers to find solace in their forbidden connection.

VITA & VIRGINIA is written (screenplay) by Chanya Button and adapted from Dame Eileen Atkins' play of the same name. With a supporting cast that includes Isabella Rossellini, Rupert Penry-Jones and Peter Ferdinando, VITA & VIRGINIA was shot in Dublin and produced by Evangelo Kioussis and Katie Holly. The film will open in the UK on 12 July 2019 through Thunderbird Releasing.

The Festival is also delighted to confirm that the Pureland Foundation will return as Main Supporter of BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival. The second in their three-year commitment to the Festival, this continues a significant philanthropic contribution from the Foundation, providing vital support for the Festival and bolstering its success.

**Chanya Button, Director and Screenwriter, VITA & VIRGINIA** says: "I'm beyond thrilled that VITA & VIRGINIA will be opening BFI Flare. Tricia Tuttle's support has been invaluable, and I'm so grateful that this film that celebrates love and creativity in all its forms will have a platform at such a vivid and forward thinking festival."

**Michael Blyth, BFI Flare's Senior Programmer** says: "With the exquisite VITA & VIRGINIA, director Chanya Button has crafted a rich and sensuous account of the relationship between two extraordinary women. Boasting superb performances by Gemma Arterton and Elizabeth Debicki in the title roles, Button's refreshingly feminist period piece offers a bold and contemporary exploration of sexual fluidity, gender and literature itself, and we can't wait to share it with BFI Flare audiences."

**Tricia Tuttle, Director, BFI Festivals** says: "We're delighted to have such a strong new British film opening BFI Flare – and from a wonderfully talented female filmmaker to boot! BFI Flare goes from strength to strength, which is the result of increased investment in LGBTQ+ filmmaking globally, and also a reflection of support from key partners. This is particularly true of our Main Supporter, The Pureland Foundation who share our belief that BFI Flare has a very real positive social and cultural benefit."

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## PRESS CONTACTS

**Mia Farrell, PR Manager, BFI Festivals**

[Mia.Farrell@bfi.org.uk](mailto:Mia.Farrell@bfi.org.uk) / Tel: 020 7957 8970 / 07774 332 926

**Judy Wells, Head of Press and PR, BFI**

[Judy.wells@bfi.org.uk](mailto:Judy.wells@bfi.org.uk) / Tel: 020 7957 8919 / 0798418501

**Victoria Millington, Press & PR Coordinator and Flare Accreditation, BFI**

[Victoria.millington@bfi.org.uk](mailto:Victoria.millington@bfi.org.uk) / Tel: 020 7957 4833

**Elizabeth Dunk, Junior Press Officer, BFI**

[Elizabeth.dunk@bfi.org.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.dunk@bfi.org.uk) / Tel: 020 7957 8986

Images available for press use: <https://we.tl/t-LnV0Q1dbAw>

Press notes: <https://we.tl/t-j9FDRhryUA>

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival** is the UK's longest running LGBTQ+ film event. It began in 1986 as Gay's Own Pictures. By its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition it was tagged the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and since then has grown to become the largest LGBTQ+ film event in the UK, and its most anticipated. The Festival changed its name to BFI Flare in 2014 to reflect the increasing diversity of

its films, filmmakers and audience. The festival is programmed by Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Zorian Clayton, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Artistic Director, Tricia Tuttle.

The full programme of BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival will include 52 feature films, an expanded industry programme, selected films on BFI Player VOD service, a series of special events and archive screenings. fiveFilms4freedom will see Flare offer five LGBT short films for free across the world and promoted through the British Council's global networks. The full programme will be available on 20<sup>th</sup> February. The festival runs 21<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> March [www.bfi.org.uk/Flare](http://www.bfi.org.uk/Flare)

### **The Pureland Foundation**

The Pureland Foundation supports institutions, charities and programmes that promote social, spiritual and emotional wellness, with an emphasis on art and music.

Pure Land in Buddhism refers to the realm of higher consciousness, peace and harmony. Although not based in any religion, the Foundation seeks to create and promote the interconnectedness and sense of "pure land" in our daily lives.

The Pureland Foundation was founded by Bruno Wang, a Chinese philanthropist, cultural patron and businessman. The Foundation reflects Mr. Wang's well-established interests in meditation, holistic wellbeing, art and music.

[www.purelandfoundation.com](http://www.purelandfoundation.com)

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and Industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.