

WITHOUT A NET

Directed by Kelly J Richardson

INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE - RAINDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

September 30, 8pm

Apollo Cinema Piccadilly Circus
19 Lower Regent Street
SW1Y 4LR London



USA/Brazil, 2012 / 60 mins. / Color / Dolby SR / Portuguese with English subtitles



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WITHOUT A NET

LOGLINE

In the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, four young Brazilians trade the hazards of street life for circus.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Djeferson, Bárbara, Rayana and Platini live in a drug controlled slum of Rio de Janeiro. Their families are struggling, their homes are physically unstable, and everyone they know has dropped out of school.

When a big-top circus tent suddenly appears in a nearby parking lot, they decide to take a chance. They learn trapeze, acrobatics, juggling and contortion to audition for the end-of-year show, rehearse and prepare for the curtains to part on opening night. Along the way, WITHOUT A NET explores the connections between risk, desire, poverty and circus, and celebrates the perseverance and resilience of youth in the face of tremendous odds.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INSPIRING DOCUMENTARY **WITHOUT A NET**
CELEBRATES THE PERSEVERANCE AND RESILIENCE OF YOUTH
IN THE FACE OF TREMENDOUS ODDS

Kelly J Richardson's Poignant, Touching and Sometimes Humorous Debut Film
To Have Its International Premiere at Raindance Film Festival September 30 At 8pm

Recommended by the *LA WEEKLY* and the *VILLAGE VOICE*

***"A Rio neighborhood's unlikely big top is front and center in the effectively
straightforward "Without A Net."***

*Kelly J Richardson's debut film benefits from her considerable access to four young
acrobats, each finding new purpose in the circus and envisioning a life beyond
poverty...Richardson shapes her observations into intimate portraits...The discipline of
learning to tumble feeds a sense of possibility, while the spotlight embraces their
individuality. It's no wonder that the circus' janitor watches them with envy, wishing he'd
had such a chance before taking to crime at age 12..."*

-Sheri Linden, Los Angeles Times

For millions of people living in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, childhood is anything but stable. Schools are understaffed and chaotic. Streets are ruled by drug gangs. Opportunities for legitimate work are so limited—and the path into crime so alluring—that locals joke it is a miracle when a person lives to celebrate his thirtieth birthday.

WITHOUT A NET is the moving portrait of four young people striving forward despite their tough circumstances in poverty-stricken Praça Onze, in the heart of Rio de Janeiro. Their families are struggling, their homes are physically unstable and everyone they know has dropped out of school. These hardships have persisted in this area for generations, but today's youth have one unusual opportunity their predecessors did not: a circus tent appears in a nearby dilapidated parking lot and offers them an alternative choice.

Following a successful theatrical release in Los Angeles and New York as part of the 2012 International Documentary Association's (IDA) DocuWeeks™ Theatrical

Documentary Showcase, the film will have its International Premiere at London's Apollo Theater on September 30 at 8pm as part of Raindance Film Festival.

Richardson's debut film takes viewers along on a passionate, nuanced, intimate journey with four determined young characters who look at the options they see before them and choose to take their chances with the circus. *WITHOUT A NET* delights and entertains its audience while offering insight into the meaning of perseverance, resilience and courage.

Director Richardson spent several months as a performer in a Brazilian circus that offers free afternoon technique classes to children and teenagers living in poverty in the surrounding areas. The training project, part of a movement known as "social circus", supports the idea that through circus practice students can acquire skills, such as cooperation and goal setting, that can serve them in all areas of their lives. Social circus training projects are financially supported by public and private organizations both within Brazil and internationally.

"The concept of using circus training as a tool for social change interested me, but more importantly, I was captivated by the evocative stories I heard under the tent," states Richardson. "As the student-performers regaled me with breathtaking tales of running from the police, dodging bullets and jumping through innumerable hoops in their daily struggle for survival, I was drawn to the strong parallels between the way they faced their precarious lives and the way they performed the inherently risky circus stunts."

With the support of a Fulbright scholarship, Richardson was able to return to Brazil and live in Rio for one year, during which time she went to the performers' homes, met their families, held their infant relatives, practiced circus with them in the tent and had the opportunity to build relationships with them as fellow artists and friends.

WITHOUT A NET helps shed the stereotypes and social labeling that portray economically poor people as lazy or undeserving. The film presents multidimensional characters that are emotionally and psychologically rich and have strong interpersonal relationships. Also, undeniable is the filmmaker's and the performers' shared love of the art of circus.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I came to this project through a deep personal connection with performance art. In 2006, after years of physical training in gymnastics, dance and theater, I moved to Salvador, Brazil, where I began training and performing with a local circus. The circus I joined incorporated various components including a social project, which targeted children and teenagers, living in the nearby slums, which were deemed “at-risk” for getting involved with the drug trade and other crime.

The training project provided the participants with teachers, a space to practice and opportunities to perform. As our practice times regularly overlapped, I got to know the young performers and heard stories about their lives, rife with the typical dangers and excitement of inner city poverty. Their tales were of close calls with the police and drug gangs, memories of incarcerated or deceased siblings, the manifold challenges of getting enough food to eat, clothes to wear and a safe enough place to sleep at night while constantly maintaining the street-wise appearance of ease. They spent long afternoons under the hot tent, striving to maintain balance on the tightrope and the trapeze, and they laughed about the inadequacies of the school system, the elusive nature of perception and reality, their complex social networks and the seductive appeal of the drug trade. I laughed with them as we sweated through our push-ups side-by-side, and the first sparks of the project that would become WITHOUT A NET began to flicker.

This film is character-driven and the four main characters are courageous, determined individuals whose stories offer viewers a chance to simultaneously be inspired by the performers and to reflect on issues of structural inequality and pervasive poverty. Woven through the film is the theme of living with no back-up plan, both in the social and economic sense as well as in the physical sense, yet the characters refuse to be paralyzed by their seemingly insurmountable obstacles, rather they embrace reality and courageously face their struggles head on.

I was awarded a Fulbright scholarship for this film and was able to spend a year living in Rio, building trust with the performers and getting to know them intimately as fellow artists and friends. I took the Fulbright mission, “to increase mutual understanding between people of different cultures”, to heart, and throughout the process of making this film, I (in production), and then we (in post-production), dedicated ourselves to creating a respectful project featuring multidimensional people who are rarely seen by film audiences in the U.S. (or frankly anywhere, because the people in WITHOUT A NET come from a population that most outsiders try to avoid.)

Our hope is that this film will be seen as a passionate, intimate, thoughtful, nuanced, inspirational, fresh new work for the documentary genre.

– KELLY J RICHARDSON



WITHOUT A NET

CHARACTERS

Djeferson Mendes da Silva (21 years, student-performer)

Djeferson spent his childhood washing cars and selling candy in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. He never attended academic school because he was consistently too busy trying to take care of the eating and sleeping needs of himself, his mother and his thirty siblings. One morning he arrived in his regular parking lot to wash cars and was astonished to find that a circus tent had suddenly appeared over night. He approached the tent and was told he was welcome there and asked which act in circus interested him most. He looked up and chose the trapeze.

Bárbara Moura (17 years, student-performer)

Growing up with three older brothers, Bárbara learned early to be quick and tough. She lived close to the parking lot and spent her afternoons making trouble in the streets and picking fights with the other local kids. But when her oldest brother was incarcerated for a drug conviction, she decided she would rather take her chances with the circus project than on the streets. She joined and became an acrobat.

Rayana Dias da Motta (15 years, student-performer)

Rayana was born with abnormal flexibility. At age six, her elementary school teacher became concerned that her arms had to be broken to explain the way she rotated them, with fingers interlaced, back and forth over her head and down her back. Her mother took her to be examined by a doctor who told them that Rayana's extreme flexibility was a gift but could make her more susceptible to injuries. Her mother enrolled her in rhythmic gymnastics classes for several years until she lost her job and could no longer afford them. Then Rayana learned about the circus social project and discovered a passion for contortion.

Platini Queiroz (9 years, student-performer)

Platini grew up in Praça Onze and had a brother, Carlos, who was older by ten years. Platini idolized Carlos and loved when Carlos took him on the back of his motorcycle, driving fast through the streets, or out onto the rooftops to show him how to coat a kite string with glass shards and then fly the kite, making it dart through the sky, attacking other kites and cutting their strings. But Carlos was a known drug trafficker, and one morning, a rival gang stormed into their home and shot Carlos in the head. Reeling from the loss, Platini decided to focus his attention on circus practice, which he had recently begun, with his substitute brother-like role model, Coach Allan.

Allan Davi (22 years, student and coach)

As a young teenager, Allan practiced Capoeira (Brazilian martial arts) in the streets and plazas of Rio de Janeiro. Agile and talented, he frequently drew an audience of passers-by. Junior watched him in the plaza one day and then invited him to come see the new circus project. Allan began practicing acrobatics in the tent, joined the project, and soon began coaching the younger students as well.

Junior Perim (adult, circus director)

Junior grew up on the periphery of Rio de Janeiro. His first job was slaughtering chickens for a local butcher. There, he was struck by the social and economic inequalities he saw all around him and found inspiration in community action campaigns and socialist movements. His passion for creating social change evolved into the social circus project, which he saw as a way to help disadvantaged children and youth get a better chance in life. In 2004, he and his assistant Director, Vinicius, purchased a circus tent, hired some staff, and managed to get their tent erected in an abandoned parking lot all under the cover of night. In the morning, when the police came to shut it down, it was too late: the tent was standing, the stakes were firmly bolted, and excited children were swarming around it.

Ademir “Ziquinho” (adult, circus maintenance)

Ziquinho had a tumultuous upbringing. He fell prey to the drug trade at age twelve, then rose in the ranks to become a feared drug lord in Rio de Janeiro for several years before being caught and sent to spend over a decade in prison. When he was finally released, he struggled to find legitimate work. Junior offered him a janitorial job at the circus project and, deeply grateful, he embraced the opportunity.



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CREW

Director / Producer / Director of Photography / Co-Editor – Kelly J Richardson

Kelly J Richardson is the founder and executive director of Live Wired Productions, based in San Francisco, California. Her passions in performance art and social justice are expressed through her film work. She has directed and produced several short student films and *Without A Net* is her feature-directing debut. She has received numerous grants and awards from government agencies and private foundations, including a Fulbright scholarship for the production of *Without A Net*. She holds a B.A. from U.C. Berkeley.

Co-Editor – Quinn Costello

Quinn Costello is a freelance post-production supervisor who has worked on a wide variety of documentaries with an emphasis on social activism, environmentalism and issues pertaining to indigenous communities around the world. His work has been seen on PBS, The Sundance Channel and The Learning Channel. Post-production supervisor credits include American Masters – *Sam Cooke: Crossing Over*. Editing credits include *Mustang – Journey of Transformation*, *Global Focus: The New Environmentalists* and the upcoming series *Standing On Sacred Ground*.

Consulting Producer – John Antonelli

John Antonelli, in association with The Mill Valley Film Group, has been producing award-winning documentary films for 25 years. Recently, he directed and produced *Sam Cooke: Crossing Over* for American Masters and produced the Emmy-award winning six-part series, *Global Focus: The New Environmentalists*, narrated by Robert Redford. Antonelli's *Jack Kerouac: King of the Beats* is being reformatted in HD and redistributed by Kultur Films International. The film premiered at Sundance 25 years ago.

Composer – B. Quincy Griffin

Berkeley native B. Quincy Griffin has scored over a dozen feature films including Oscar nominated *Daughter from Danang* and Sundance Film Festival winner *My Flesh and Blood*, as well as Oscar nominated short, *The Barber of Birmingham*. His music has recently been placed in the Benjamin Bratt film *La Mission* and the ESPN documentary *The Two Escobars*. In addition, he recently produced the first ever Hip Hop songs for the television show *Dora the Explorer*. Quincy also founded and produced the Latin Hip-Hop band “O- Maya” and produces for Rapper Deuce Eclipse and Soul singer Luqman Frank. A sampling of Quincy’s work can be viewed and heard at www.quincygriffin.com

Audio Post-Production – James LeBrecht, Berkeley Sound Artists

James LeBrecht is an award-winning sound designer for film, games and exhibitions. He is the founder and lead sound designer of Berkeley Sound Artists, and his credits include the Academy Award™ winning film, *The Blood of Yingzhou District*, *Daughter from Danang*, *We were here*, *The Devil and Daniel Johnston* and *The Barber of Birmingham*. Game credits include work for Electronic Arts, Sony Computer Entertainment of America and Midway Studios-Austin, and he has also designed and produced sound effects and music for over 100 professional theatrical productions. A complete listing of his films and awards can be found at <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0495898/>

Sound Design – Mark Berger

Mark Berger is an Adjunct Professor of Film Studies at UC Berkeley, and a supervising rerecording sound mixer and sound editor who has won four Academy Awards™ for some of the most innovative uses of sound in film (*Apocalypse Now*, *The Right Stuff*, *Amadeus*, *The English Patient*). He is the only person in the history of the Academy who has been nominated four times, and won four times. He has been responsible for the sound of more than 165 feature films, among them in addition to the above, *Godfather II*, *Blue Velvet*, *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest*, *Mr. Wonderful*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, *Rushmore*, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, *Serial Mom*, *Pecker*, and *Capote*. His craft is about subtlety, not the sheer power of loud soundtracks. A complete listing of his films and awards is available at <http://us.imdb.com/name/nm0074281>

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CREDITS

Director	Kelly J Richardson
Producer	Kelly J Richardson
Consulting producer	John Antonelli
Director of Photography	Kelly J Richardson
Editors	Quinn Costello, Kelly J Richardson
Music	B. Quincy Griffin
Sound Designer	Mark Berger
Audio Post Production	James LeBrecht, Berkeley Sound Artists
Translation Consultants	Alex D. da Silva, Rachel Richardson
Color Correction and Digital Intermediate	Gary Coates, Colorflow
Graphic design	Matthew Baldwin
Artwork and design	Dan Chapman
Website design	Lauren Selman
Additional Editor	Todd Miró
Additional Cinematography	Alex Schittine, Alçimar Henrique, Rayana Dias da Motta, Sueli Guimareães
Creative Consultants	John Antonelli, Joel ben Izzy, Jessica Abbe, Abby Ginzberg, Alex D. da Silva
Production	Live Wired Productions
Featuring	Djeferson Mendes da Silva, Bárbara Moura, Rayana Dias da Motta, Platini Queiroz
Audio Mix	Skywalker Sound