

SHÉ (SNAKE) - February 2024



An A Minor Film  
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## 1) Logline and Synopsis

### **Logline**

When pressures mount on a tightly wound violinist in a London youth orchestra, her internal monsters take external form.

### **SYNOPSIS**

Fei, a 16 year old British-Chinese girl, is the top violinist in an elite London youth orchestra. When another Chinese violinist arrives to challenge her place in the orchestra, Fei's anxieties and internalized racism grow to take monstrous physical form. They whisper to her, urging her to be the best, no matter the cost.

## **2) ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

Renee Zhan is a Chinese-American director and animator from Houston, Texas. Renee graduated with an BA from Harvard University and an MA in Directing Animation from the National Film and Television School. In her films Renee is primarily interested in exploring topics of female identity, nature, and sexuality - all things beautiful, ugly, and squishy. She is an alumnus of the Sarabande Foundation, BAFTA crew x BFI Network and Berlinale Talents and her short films have screened and won awards at festivals internationally including Annecy, Locarno, TIFF, SXSW, an Annie Award nomination, BAFTA LA shortlist, and the Jury Prize for Animated Short at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival.

### **FILMOGRAPHY**

Soft Animals (2021)

O Black Hole! (2020)

Reneepoptosis (2018)

Hold Me (Ca Caw Ca Caw) 2016

### 3) Credits

Fei ---	Xiaonan Wang
Mei ---	Alina Lew
Mr Grimsby ---	Simon Paisley Day
Xiaoyan Nainai Dawei --	Elizabeth Chan Grace Fan Leslie Ching
Writer and Director ---	Renee Zhan
Producer ---	Jesse Romain
Cinematographer ---	Adam Singodia
Composer ---	Harry Brokensha
Editor ----	Armiliah Aripin
Sound Designer ---	Ed Trousseau
Production Designer ---	Qingling Zhang
Executive Producers	Claudia Yusef, Venetia Hawkes, Jon Wardle
VFX Supervisor	Szymon Wyrzykowski
Casting Director	Isabella Odoffin
Costume Designer	Gabrielle Edmunds
Production Manager	Sam Zohdi
Production Coordinator	Jen Smith
First Assistant Director	Alex Mill
Third Assistant Director	Lea Rosa Holtfreter
Art Department	
Set Decorator	Antigone Kots
Bone Instruments	Robert Hazeldine Art Assistants Rhea Moore, Habib Najib, Valeriia Kunina, Robert Streader
Sound Recordist	Harry King
Boom Operator	Emily Compton
Foley Artist	Ross Wilkes-Houghton
Camera and Electrical Department	
Camera Operator	Laura Aguilera
First Assistant Camera	Oliver Pearson
Gaffer	Marina Lewin
	Sparks Alessandra Bellini, Santiago Toranzo Gento, Marcus Kartal, Tom Thain
	Benjamin Chaudé-Woodman
	Dan Huntley and Jack Robson
DIT	
Grips	

Hair and Make Up Designer  
Hair and Make Up Artist  
Hair and Make Up Assistant

Julia Strange  
Dara Hannon  
Jess Darke, David Hauret

Costume Assistant

Amber Morris

Casting Assistant

TBC

Script Supervisor

Eliza Safjan

Production Assistants

Adam Green and Manuel Barrera

Driver

Adrian Gordon

Still Photographer

Luke Ross

Runner

Milo Gray

Second Unit  
First Assistant Director  
Cinematographer  
First Assistant Camera  
Second Assistant Camera  
Gaffer  
Spark

Irene Maffei  
Martyna Jakimowska  
Niels Halle  
Rory Thomas  
Jakub Paczos  
Gabriele Mango

Animation Production by  
Executive Producer  
Head of Production  
Director  
Producer  
Animation DP  
Animation  
Puppet Rigging  
Puppet Maintenance  
Puppet Maintenance  
Puppet build  
Lead Set Build and Model Maker  
Set Builder and Model Maker  
Production Assistant  
Storyboard Artist

Blinkink  
Bart Yates  
Alex Halley  
Renee Zhan  
Thijme Grol  
Martyna Jakimowska  
David McShane, Honor Price, Mai Vu, Renee Zhan  
Robin Jackson  
Ellen Beaufoy  
Mara Frampton  
Helen Ferguson  
Olga Lloyd  
Olivier Arnell Argles  
Henry Kent  
Mysie Pereira

Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra  
Conductor

Robert Hodge

Orchestra for Shoot Beatrice Best, Luke Borrel, Mattias Brinker, Alex Clayton, Raya Grudeva, Gabriella Kohler, Jasmine Moher, Alice Nunn Tiffany Rodas, Marina Shevlin, Angus Scott, Jennifer Swallow, Toby Swallow, Goulwenna Vigneron, Daniel Woodliffe, Libi Winterstein, Paloma Wright

Orchestra for recording Beatrice Best, Luke Borrel, Alex Clayton, Abigail Dawes, Madeleine Dawes, Adamant Edindon, Raya Grudeva, Jasmine Moher, Alice Nunn, Tiffany Rodas, Sarah Rudd, Marina Shevlin, Angus Scott, Jennifer Swallow, Toby Swallow, Goulwenna Vigneron, Libi Winterstein, Daniel Woodliffe, Roni Xie,

School Pupils Annabel Harb, Lydia Whitehead, Corrina Herriot, Ciaránn Mckenna, Imogen Kelly, Patricia Castro, Izzy Clarke, Emily O'Sullivan, Grace Towning, Josh Williams-Ward, Frankie Oldham, Lucy Buncombe, Grace Riedy, Jocelyn Dunn.

Audience Members Jeff Turner, Sue Jones, Jessica Matthews, Rosemarie Burton, Sam Lambert, Phillip Hockley, Katerina Timotheou, Eddie Webb, Winnie, S Nova, Moria Loh, Sarah Phillis

Music Consultant	Ruth Chen
Pipa	Cheng Yu
Erhu	Xiao Wang
Violin	Sherry Shen
Sound Engineers (Air Edel)	Nick Taylor and Olly Thompson
Picture Post Production	Digital Orchard
Conforming Colourist Mastering	Aaliya Khan Jo Barker Atalay Ulusoy
Post Producer	Noémie TJ Phillipson
Lead VFX Artist Visual Effects Composer Rig Removal	Lee Watson Szymon Wyrzykowski, Drigend Singh, Gavin Chin Rotoout, Steve Lawson
Stunt Coordinator	Dan 'DJ' Johnson
Fei Body Double	Grace Chim
Violin Teacher	Harvey Brown
Dialect Coach	Hazel Holder
Business Affairs	Aliya Young
Insurance	Tysers
Chaperones	Juliet Barclay and Sandra Gough
For Digital Orchard	

Group Director  
Managing Director  
Head of Marketing

Callum Just  
Sam Margaritis  
Andrew Forrest  
Accounting                      Seakhy Lay

For BBC Film  
Director of BBC Film  
Development Executive  
Development Executive  
Development Executive  
Legal and Business Affairs Manager  
Production Manager  
Legal and Finance Assistant

Eva Yates  
Sammy Wong  
Dionne Farrell  
Anuradha Henriques  
Helen Giles  
Brett Webb  
Ruth Sanders

For the National Film and Television School  
Bridge to Industry Coordinator  
Head of PR & Communications  
Digital Content Coordinator  
Director of Marketing & External Relations

Stephanie Webster  
Mirinda Dawkins  
Katie Elson  
Ijeoma Akigwe

Special Thanks  
Julian Hardwick, Steve Griffin, Sarah Phillis

Thanks  
Melissa Beasley, Myf Hopkins, Julia Yu, Andrew Kim, Zhiying Wang, Jie Zhan, Ben Rivers, Athina Tsangari, Lewis Taylor, Chi Thai, Ruth Chan

Focus24, Greenkit, Digital Orchard

Cards –

An A Minor Production

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In collaboration with Blinkink (with logo)

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BBC and NFTS LOGOS

New Europe Film Sales

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#### 4) Production Notes

SHÉ (SNAKE) was selected to the BBC Film/NFTS Bridges to Industry Film in July 2020. Renee and Jesse applied with a treatment while Renee was also developing the feature film. We then set about developing the short. Along with exploring the story we looked into different ways of creating the creatures. Although Renee's background is animation with stop motion they also explored puppets. The budget was very tight but with the support of Blink we were able to proceed down our preferred route of stop motion animation. We were greenlit for production in summer 2022. There were various elements of production which were fundamental to the film and would take time to source - a location for an orchestra performance, an orchestra to perform, a lead who could play the violin.

##### Locations

We were fortunate in finding Mountview School of Drama in Peckham which provided the performance space for the final scene, the rehearsal rooms and the corridor locations. We were unsure at this point whether the creature room would be a set build at The NFTS where location would be cheaper but travel for cast and crew would be expensive or conversion of a space at Mountview which would be more expensive to build but cheaper to travel crew and be more flexible. The production designer wanted to build a set at The NFTS but we chose Mountview due to pressures brought on by train strikes and heavy snow. This did end up being more expensive. Once we had school they used the website Next Door to source a local kitchen/house location.

##### The Orchestra

This involved contacting lots of local youth orchestras. It was important that the orchestra were more than extras and could play an instrument. We didn't have the budget to hire the students or even less so their instruments. Licensing meant it was best they were a collective. We also wanted to record their performance after filming (it was too expensive and timely on set) and it was important for the sound that they weren't 'professional musicians'. The other problem here is any teen in London who is part of an orchestra is likely to be very busy. We had to work around their availability and found an orchestra with an orchestra manager who was hugely amenable to our needs with a conductor who was willing to be involved also. The orchestra were needed for two days shooting and then a follow up day at Air Edel Studios to record their performance. They needed licensing and chaperons for all work they did.

##### The lead and the violin

Finding a lead actor who was Asian, a strong actor and could play the violin was difficult. We were fortunate to work with the casting director Isabella Odoffin who worked extremely hard in finding the best person for the role. Xiaonan was perfect for the part but as it happened she couldn't play the violin. She had a few lessons and they were a huge help. She also had elocution lessons to sound more like she was from Croydon. Whether these were of such help is another matter.

We shot for four days and it went well. Especially taking into account train strikes and weather issues.

After the live action shoot we shot 2 days of green screen faces of the lead. These would then be 'comped' on to the stop motion animated creatures.

Blink then produced the stop motion animated creature element over 10 weeks. Jesse was involved in overseeing design and reviewing shots while a producer he had tutored when he was at the NFTS produced the animation.

After the shoot we then needed to film the faces of the lead which would be comped on to the stop motion creatures. The hardest part of the shoot was then bringing together the live action, stop motion and green screen with no budget. A friend of Renee had agreed to supervise Vfx but he dropped out during

production. We then had a lot to do without the money to pay someone to look into it. Szymon came on to supervise but it was more work than he expected. Digital Orchard assisted with grade. The BBC gave us extra money to allow us to bring on a compositor and we reached out to other subcontractors to assist with rig removal and clean up.

We had three separate live music recording sessions after filming. One at Air Edel Studios with the youth orchestra, one at Air Edel with the Chinese instruments and a third at Blink with the solo violinist from the opening scene of the film.

Shortly before the film was finished we were accepted to the Toronto International Film Festival which was a great deadline to have and meant the film was completed in August 2023. At Tiff it won the Share Her Journey Award for Best Short by a Female Filmmaker.

5) Behind the Scenes Photos





6) Still Photos





## **7) Festivals and Awards**

Festivals and Awards (as at 1st February 2024)

Premiere - Toronto International Film Festival (Short Cuts) 9th September 2023 - where is won the Share Her Journey Award for the best short by a female filmmaker

Charlottetown Film Festival

Sundance Film Festival (Midnight Shorts)

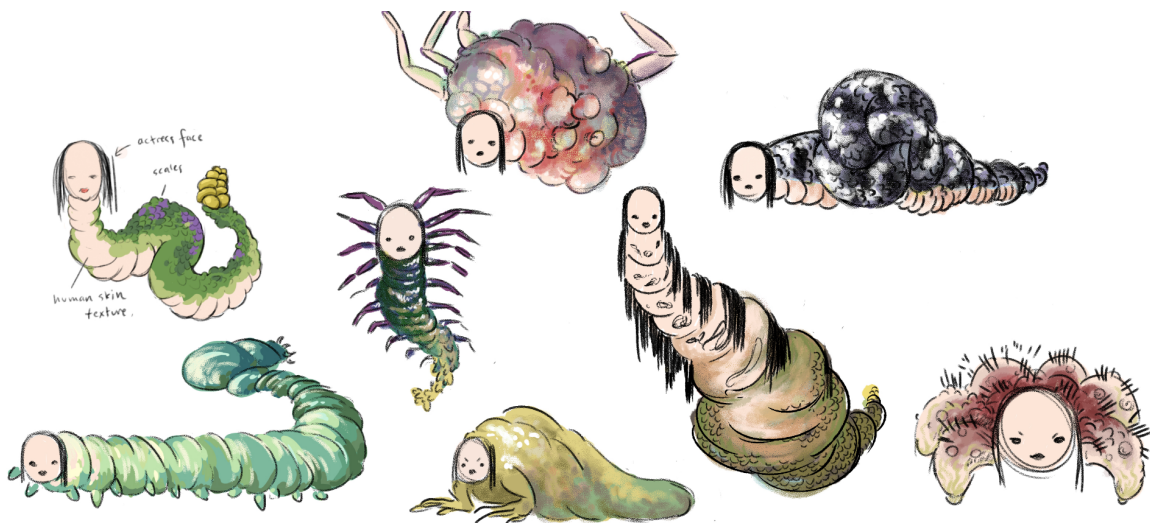
London Short Film Festival (Gothic Shorts)

SXSW (Narrative Shorts)

Go Short Festival

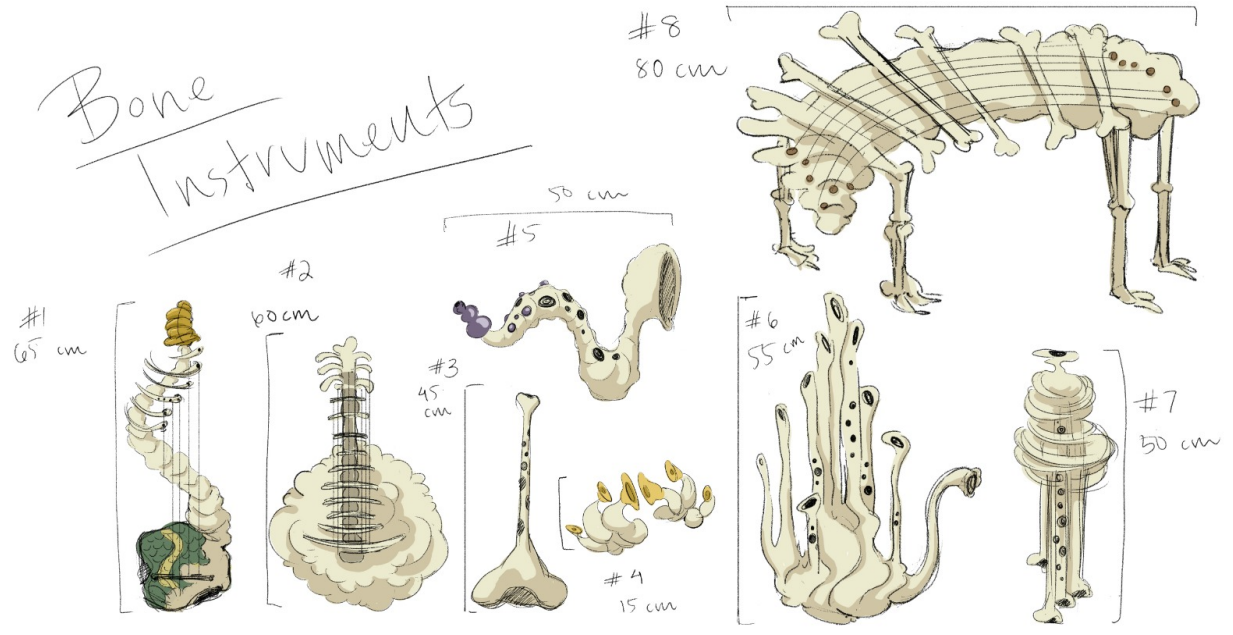
Florida Film Festival

8) Development Images





Creature design



Bone instrument specification



## 9) Spec Sheet

Length: 15 minutes 28 seconds

Shooting Format: Colour

Aspect Ratio: 1.44:1

Sound: 5.1

Language English, Mandarin Chinese.

Print Format: DCP

Genre: Fantasy, Horror

Country of Production: UK

Date of Production August 2023

Overall Production £45,000

Funding sources: BBC Film

Director/Writer: Renee Zhan

Producer: Jesse Romain

Cinematographer: Adam Singodia

Editor: Armiliah Aripin

Composer: Harry Brokensha

Sound Designer: Ed Trousseau

**CAST:** Xiaonan Wang, Alina Lew and Simon Paisley Day.