

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:26	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. I wanna tell you about a new documentary. It’s called <i>Little Girl</i> . It’s set in France, in a small, suburban town. <i>Little Girl</i> centers around Sasha, who’s eight. When the movie opens, you see Sasha get ready for her day She’s just put on a sequin dress. She fusses with her hairband. She tries on a silly hat, takes off the silly hat, then goes out to play in the snow. In the next scene, it’s Sasha’s mother. She’s talking with a doctor. She tells him, in French, “Sasha is a little girl.” The doctor starts asking pointed questions. “How do you know?” He uses male pronouns for Sasha. Sasha’s mom walks the doctor through all of it. She’s polite, of course, but you can tell how exhausting this all is for her.
			In <i>Little Girl</i> , directed by my guest, Sébastien Lifshitz, that’s more or less the film’s conflict. It dominates the life of Sasha and her family. Everywhere Sasha goes—school, the pool, ballet class, the department store—explaining who she is, answering questions, fighting to clarify something that’s so simple. <i>Little Girl</i> shows, in very real and plain terms, what it’s like to be a transgender child. To be part of that child’s family. To raise and love that child. It’s a beautiful film. By the way, you might hear—as I talk to Sébastien—a little bit of emotion in my voice. That’s because one of my own children is transgender.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:02:05	Music	Transition	So, let’s get into it. My conversation with director Sébastien Lifshitz. Relaxed, jazzy piano. Music continues under the dialogue then fades out.
00:02:12	Jesse	Host	Well, Sébastien, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m so happy to have you on the show.
00:02:15	Sébastien Lifshitz	Guest	Hello.
00:02:17	Jesse	Host	Why did you want to make a film about a transgender child and their family?
00:02:24	Sébastien	Guest	Well, first of all, I would like to say that I’m French. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> As you can hear. And my English, you know, is not like fluent, but I will try to do my best.
00:02:35	Jesse	Host	It’s better than my French, Sébastien.
00:02:37	Sébastien	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Okay. So, the idea of the film came from a conversation that I had with Bambi—not the character of the Walt Disney movie, of course. Bambi was one of the first French transgender women, in France and she had an amazing life. And I did a film portrait about her, and I remember she was born in 1935. So, a long time ago, in Algeria. And I remember, during a conversation with her, I asked her when she realized that she was a woman—if there was a special moment, a specific moment, where it was like obvious for her that she was a woman. And she answered that, for her, she

didn't have a kind of revelation at a very specific moment. You know. She always felt, as a kid, that she was the other sex. You know? That she was a woman born as a boy. And so, I realized that—so, you could have this... this feeling, this certainty when you—when you are a kid. You know? And I didn't know that at that time. I thought, like a lot of people, that dysphoria—that trans identity could normally appear during puberty or with the beginning of your sexuality. And of course, it has nothing to do with this.

And so, I realized at that time—during that conversation—that you could be a very young kid and have this certainty of your identity that you are the other sex. And so, I thought that it could be a very great idea—you know, to make a film about that. Just to find a kid with this family and to make a portrait during a year of his life and to see how it goes, you know, with his family, with his brothers and sisters, with his friends at school. Everywhere. Because I remember when I started to do the film—to have this idea first—I didn't know any film that was a trans kid from that age, you know. A very young age.

00:05:00 Jesse Host

It's very sensitive to make a film about a child, a documentary film about a child. And it's very sensitive to make a documentary film about a family and the—you know, the intimacy of a family. And the fact that you were making a film about a child who was transgender, you know, amplifies that sensitivity. So, were you nervous about that at all? Or did you feel comfortable that you would be able to represent your subject in a sensitive way?

00:05:40 Sébastien Guest

I was not nervous, but I was questioning myself during the whole process. Like, for example the consciousness of Sasha—when I met her, she was seven years old—seven and a half?—and the shooting was like for a year. So, at the end she was eight and a half years old. And I was very curious to know if she was really aware of what's going on, you know, with the film and to be filmed. And then it's gonna be at the end of film that it's gonna expose her. And I remember that she was, in a way, very smart and very aware of what was going on. I'll give you an example. One day, I asked her—at the very beginning of the shooting—“Do you think it's possible that I can go to your room and film you there, playing with your toys?”

I knew that this room was really special, because she wasn't able to invite anybody in that room for many years, because it was full of girly toys and her clothes, and it was her kingdom as she named it. And so, after a few seconds, she said to me, “Yeah, okay. You can come.” So, we went there with the camera and when we were ready to film, she just sat on her bed making no movement. And so, I was a bit surprised, and I said to her, “Don't you want to play with your toys?”

And she looked at me and she said, “Well, no. You're here. And normally, I'm alone when I'm playing with my toys.”

And I said, “Yes, of course. I understand. But, you know, I'm supposed to make a film. So, don't you want to play just for the camera? Just for me? With your toys? And pretending that I'm not there?”

And she looked at me and she said, “Well, but you’re there. So, I can’t do it.” And so, I was a bit disappointed, you know, for like a few minutes. And then I realized that she was so smart because it was a way for her just to tell me: I’m not gonna act for you. I’m not gonna pretend that I’m doing something for the camera. If you have to film me, it has to be in the moment. You know? Because I’m doing something already. But not—I don’t want to be an actress or to fake, you know, the situation.

And so, for me, that answer of her was a kind of guarantee that she—never she would do something that she doesn’t want to do. And especially for the camera. And I remember also a second moment with her which was quite an amazing moment that showed—it is actually in the film at the very end. She’s playing on her bed, and she was waiting for us to prepare the camera for a second time. And she was putting her head upside down, playing like this, alone. And the light was so beautiful; it was—there was a lot of shadow and my cinematographer just kicked me and said, “Just look. This is beautiful. We should film immediately.” So, this is exactly what we did. And after maybe 30 seconds, Sasha realized that we were filming her and she could say something, you know. She could say, “Are you filming?” Or, “What are you doing, exactly?” But she didn’t say anything. She really understood what was going on and she just looked in front of the camera, right into the lens, and—just to say, “I know what you’re doing. I’m fine with it. You can film me.” You know. Without any words. And that was a second moment of her—for me, of her consciousness, you know, of what was going on. You know? With her and the camera and the act of filming. And so, that—for me—was very important.

00:09:53 Sébastien Guest

And then, to answer—to your question about the family: well, I remember that the family, as soon as we arrived with my crew—because the question is not only about me. It’s about the whole crew—we were four people. Me, my cinematographer, the sound engineer, and my assistant. And each member of the crew needs to be accepted, you know? And need to find a place where they feel nice and intimate, you know, with each member of the family. Because otherwise, it’s impossible to do a documentary. Especially this kind of documentary with this part of intimacy and all the daily life that you’re supposed to film. You know? Of each person—you know, of that family.

But I remember that very—I don’t know, it took us like maybe one day or two, even less, just to have a kind of trust, you know, with each other. And they have adopted us, you know, very, very quickly and we were like a part of the family.

00:11:04 Jesse Host
00:11:08 Sébastien Guest

How did you find Sasha and her parents?
I found Sasha on internet on a forum, because first I thought that it would be easier to go to see some association or to go to some schools, but then I realized that my idea was so stupid, because most of the time the parents who has a trans kid, they are a little bit lost and alone. They don’t know where to go and, you know, to who to ask some advice—especially in France, because there is no institution. There is nobody who can help you. So, most of the parents feel so lonely and sometimes a bit desperate, you know, with the situation. Because they don’t know how to answer to their kid or what to do, concretely.

And the mother of Sasha was in that situation for like three years or four when I met her. And so, that's why you have this—so, some parents have created a forum on internet just to exchange their experience and to give some advice. You know? To each other. And so, I put an announce there and—to say that I was looking for a family with a trans kid, because I wanted to do a documentary. And the first reactions were very aggressive, because I think these communities were very afraid that someone could do such a film and—with a kind of voyeur and spectacular, I don't know, desire—you know? To get something extraordinary or whatever. And so, it took me some time—you know—to explain exactly what were my intention and to reassure everybody that, you know, I didn't want to do anything that was extraordinary or—you know, like spectacular or whatever.

00:13:17 Jesse Host

My position was the opposite—you know, I really wanted to be into a family, into their intimacy, and to be as close as I can—you know, to what they—what they live every day.

I've been in those groups. Not the French ones, obviously. And the tone of the discourse is very different from any other online place I've been, because there is this extraordinary raw intimacy that is born of people who—as you said—in many cases don't have other support, sometimes don't have other people supporting them within their own families. And so, to find people who understand is a really big deal.

[Sébastien agrees.]

00:14:50 Sébastien Guest

There's also... the opposite of that, because there is very reasonable fear of people from the outside, because there are people who go into those groups and try and use the information that's shared against the members. It must have taken a lot of work to show yourself to be—I don't know if it translates to the French, but an honest broker. That you were there for the reasons that you said you were and that those reasons were reason enough to trust you.

I think it's—it was something very intuitive from me and from the family. It just—I don't know, I remember the first meeting with the mother of Sasha. She didn't want to introduce me first to everybody. She wanted to see me alone and I remember she was exactly like in the film: very emotional, very frontal and very true. And immediately, I liked her. You know? Because she was so sincere and probably she felt something—I mean, I cannot talk for her, you know. But probably she felt that she wasn't trust with me and I couldn't understand her. Because for like three or four years, she was so alone with absolutely no possibility to speak to anybody. And she was, in a way, a bit desperate with the whole situation, because all the things that she—that she has done with her kid was intuitive. But she wasn't sure if it was the right things to do, the right answers to give to Sasha.

And also, because of the school—the school was so problematic for her and with Sasha. So, at one point—you know, she wasn't sure with everything. And so, she was questioning herself like all the time. And for the first time when we met, she had someone in front

of her that was not judging her. And I was full of comprehension and empathy and probably because of that, you know, she said, “Okay. Maybe something is possible.” So, she said to me, “Okay, in two weeks, if you can come back, I will introduce you to the whole family and you will see if you could work, you know, all together.”

And I said to her, “You know, I will be delighted, of course, to meet everybody. But don’t be afraid. You know? There is no obligation from myself and from you. You know? Everything is open. And if you don’t want to go further, there is no problem.” And I remember the first day, when I arrived in that house, it was for a kind of tea party with cake. Sasha was very shy. She was hiding herself behind her mother like a little cat. You know? And she was really sweet, and I wasn’t pushy. You know? I was patient and little by little, after maybe one or two hours, she came and talked to me. And I don’t know, very easily she was—I think she felt secure and interested, too. I think. And my first impression with that family was the feeling of love. That was something really, really strong.

You know, normally when you arrive in a house full of kids, *[chuckles]* you can hear them shouting—you know, it’s full of frivolity and—you know, and it’s—sometimes you have a kind of tension. But in that family, I don’t know. Everything was kind of—everything was peaceful. And you could feel really—in the air, there was something that was between everybody, full of love and protection. And I’ve realized that probably because of the situation of Sasha, her brothers and sisters have learned how to protect her. Really, to build like a shield around her for years. They were so aware of the difficulties at school and even outside, that they had this attention all the time with her. And that was probably—I could feel that love. You know? Surrounding her all the time.

00:19:05	Jesse	Host	Even more with Sébastien Lifshitz after the break. Stay with us. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:19:12	Music	Transition	Thumpy music with light vocalizations.
00:19:17	Jesse	Promo	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My guest is Sébastien Lifshitz. He’s the director of the new documentary, <i>Little Girl</i> . It’s a profile of an eight-year-old transgender girl and her family living in France. Let’s get back into my conversation with Sébastien Lifshitz.

Did you have an idea in your mind of what a family with a transgender child would look like? Not literally, with your eyes, but how that would work. What it would be like when you got there. Did you imagine something before you—?

00:19:55	Sébastien	Guest	No. When I start a film, I want to be ignorant in a way. I don’t want to expect anything. I tried to have an open mind and to—I don’t know, to see what the reality of everyday is gonna—what it’s gonna bring me. You know? I don’t want to, because the thing is, if you go there with a kind of pre-knowledge—you know?—you just—you just want to verify what you already know. And this I don’t want. You know? I prefer to discover and to live the moment and not to get something that I already know. So, I had absolutely no idea of what could be a family with a trans kid. Maybe the only intuition I had was a kind of family—because it could happen everywhere. You know? So, a kind of traditional family.
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			There was something, actually, that I didn't want. It's to get a family from a big town, you know. And for me, that was important—to be in a, you know, kind of modest family from—you know? From the working class. Was... you know, that everybody can relate to that family. They're not rich. They're not, you know, full of knowledge or whatever. You know, this kind of thing. It's a very banal family and this I really loved about it, you know. The family of Sasha, for me, can be the family of everybody.
00:21:34	Jesse	Host	One of the first scenes in the film is Sasha's mother talking to who I presume is maybe the family doctor about Sasha. And... for me, watching it was stomach churning.
00:21:57	Sébastien	Guest	What does that mean?
00:21:59	Jesse	Host	I felt sick. It was difficult for me to watch. And it wasn't because the family doctor was hateful or cruel or bigoted. It was because he seemed to be a family doctor. He was—you know, you don't generally become a family doctor if you're not a caring person. And he was misgendering Sasha, putting Sasha's mother through a kind of test, kind of examination. And it reminded me of all the times that I felt like the people in my life who were responsible for caring for my children were accepting my children conditionally—only on their own terms, not on my children's terms.
00:23:12	Sébastien	Guest	You know, that doctor—the family doctor was not a mean person. The thing is, for me, he represents the majority of people: what the people think about trans identity and with trans kids, you know. He's— <i>[sighs]</i> in a way, he wanted to be kind and supportive but his words, his questions, were horrible and create a kind of guilt for the mother. And—but the thing is, what you see there, exactly, this is the situation of the family and the mother. She has nobody to talk with. Because the only thing that she will listen is gonna be this kind of stereotypes and crap thing, you know, about, "Probably it has something to do with you, because maybe you had the desire to have a girl or—" You know? All these stupid presumptions. You know?
			And so—but that moment was really important, because it brings to the film the inclination of what the majority of the people think. You know? In this kind of situation. And even the mother of Sasha wasn't sure of everything. She's also questioning herself. You know? She's so fragile and especially at the beginning of the film, because she had nobody to talk with for so many years and that's the sad part of it. You know? This man is supposed to be kind. He is a kind person, a caring person. But his words are terrible.
00:25:08	Jesse	Host	<i>[Beat.]</i> That happens a lot.
00:25:10	Sébastien	Guest	Yeah. It hurts. It hurts all the time. And so, you have to find a path and it's so difficult. Sometimes, you're so tired because you have to convince all the time. You have to change the mentalities. You have to face the fears of the others. So, no, it's a struggle.
00:25:32	Jesse	Host	You have to check. I mean, not even convincing people, but just everyone you have to check ahead of time. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> You know? It's like your kid's going to summer camp? You gotta talk to the head of the summer camp. You gotta talk to the summer camp counselor. You have to talk to the other summer camp counselor. You have to find out if there's gonna be substitute summer camp counselors and where they're gonna come from and how they're gonna speak to your child. And that's in a world where everyone is on their team. You know? That's in a best-case scenario world.

00:26:08 Sébastien Guest It never stops. I know. But the thing is, the decision of the family and Sasha to make the film was based on that. Because they thought that at one point, you need to decide to be visible and to confront people. This is the only way. When you look at the history of the gay community, things have started to change when people went into the streets, when they decided—you know—to talk and to say out loud who they were, really. You know? And for me, it's the same situation. You know? At one point, you need to be out, you know, and just to say with dignity and pride in who you are.

00:27:00 Jesse Host What was it like for you to be in that room with Sasha's mother and the doctor? And it's something that you're relatively new to, but you're all fitting in there with a—I don't know, a boom microphone and a *[chuckles]*—and a camera.

00:27:20 Sébastien Guest You mean with the doctor family?

[Jesse confirms.]

It was painful, because I could feel the pain and the... the difficulties of the mother—you know?—to explain and to answer her thoughts. You know? But I knew it was also a necessity. Sometimes, a documentary puts you in a cruel situation, because you know that you have to film some moments that are difficult. But it's a necessity for the film. I knew that I wasn't doing a kind of Walt Disney movie where everybody's kind and happy and fun. And there was a fight going on, you know, into the life of Sasha and the whole family. Not only with the doctor.

00:28:32 Jesse Host Actually, he was a kind of caring person, but the fight was with the school and this fight was with a class—with a dance lesson and with the others, in general. You know. That was really a big fight. When you first talked to Sasha and her family, before you started making the film, did you talk to them about why they might want to have their lives documented?

00:28:49 Sébastien Guest Well, they said exactly what I told you before: that they felt that—I think they were really fed up about the fight that was going on with the school for like one or two years. And at one point, I think the mother and Sasha said, "Okay. How can we change things?" You know? Because the reality of Sasha, as soon as she was at home, was peaceful. Was obvious. Was—there was no problem. So, she couldn't understand as soon as she was out of her house, that it was a kind of nightmare. You know. That she had to live with fear. And something was stolen from her. That moment of life, you know, when you are so young and with no defense. You know? And she couldn't be like the other kids—you know, and to be at ease and happy and to tell exactly what was her feelings. You know? With herself.

00:30:39 Jesse Host So, she had to live in a secret place and that, for her, was really painful. So, probably they felt that they need to break the bubble. You know? The family bubble and go into the fight. You know? That was enough. You know? Enough is enough. And probably that was the moment where they met me.

Yeah. There's a beautiful moment in the film where Sasha's mother and father are talking about meeting with the principle of Sasha's school, who has been... maybe not actively hostile to them but has been presenting as many barriers as he can to Sasha's gender

being affirmed in school. And there's just this moment where they've gone to see a gender specialist. They've had to travel to Paris to do it, to get a letter because he asked for a letter. And she's saying, "Well, I have the letter here and I'm looking forward to seeing him. And if he doesn't like it—" I don't remember exactly how it's translated, but [*chuckling*], she basically says he can stick it. You know? Like he can shove it.

And that really—that really hit me in the gut, because it is a choice that one has to make so many times, which is where is the point where someone—who is perhaps not evil but whose actions are having awful consequences—you just have to tell to go suck a lemon. [*Beat.*] I keep using [*laughing*] English language aphorisms. But it's such a moment in the film. And it must have been hard for you to watch all of the moments where Sasha's parents struggled with becoming comfortable telling people to go shove it. All the moments where they were sitting there with those doctors and, you know, that family doctor who... you know, probably looks at a lot of tonsils all day and does so in a kind and thoughtful way.

'Cause dealing with those in-between people is so hard. Like the horrible trauma in the dance class, which happens in the film—well, that's a bad guy, you know? That's easy. It's easy to tell a bad guy to go stick it, but it's a lot harder when somebody is getting you caught in their in-between.

00:33:14 Sébastien Guest

Of course. I mean, well, this is society. You know? You have the bad guys. You have the ambivalent people that, on one hand, they will understand, or they could pretend to tolerate a part of it. But then, on the other hand, they will tell you this and that. And of course. I mean, this is human nature. You know? You have to face so different attitudes and beliefs and you have to deal with it all the day and every day. So—but you know, the most problematic was with the school, because this school is for kids. So, it's a very important place where you learn, where you have social relation with other kids, with other adults, which are kind of models for you.

So, could you imagine for Sasha how it was? You know, to be in that school, who was so hostile about her, about what she wanted to say. And for her, it was obvious—you know, that the school was not ready to accept and to understand and to create a dialogue with her about her dysphoria. You know? And that was, for me, the most shocking things. You know. Because I've tried, myself as a filmmaker, to create a dialogue with the school to be able to film there and to explain to them what trans identity is. I also propose that they could meet the pédopsychiatrist that could give them a kind of lesson to explain everything. Because all these people were so ignorant, you know? But pretending not to be, of course. And to know everything on everything.

And so, for me, that was the most outrageous, you know, thing about these people. Because these people are so important in the life of Sasha. These are the people that are educating her. Um, no that—educate her? Sorry. [*Chuckles.*] Sometimes my English is really a bit difficult. Yeah. So, that was—the main struggle was there, actually.

00:35:47	Jesse	Host	And what's that Latin? In loco parentis? Is that what it is? That is the parents in the absence of parents—that when your child is at school, those adults are the ones who are serving as their parents. And if they can't bring themselves to show up for the meeting <i>[chuckling]</i> to talk to the psychiatrist, how can you leave your children with them? It's a horrible decision to have to make.
00:36:18	Sébastien	Guest	But you know, the paper that the mother of Sasha got from the hospital was really important, because that paper was a way for her to... how do you say that in English? She could pursue them with that paper. Because that document officialized the situation of Sasha. So, it was very important, because it was for the first time that Sasha was considered as what she said. You know? So, then the school—because before that, the school could say to the mother, “Oh, this is—this is not a really serious wish of Sasha.” You know? In French, we say a caprice. You know, sometimes kids—you know, they ask for something and—
00:37:17	Jesse	Host	A phase, or—
00:37:19	Sébastien	Guest	Yeah, a phase, let's say. Yeah. But then with the paper, everything has changed. You know? It was a really important moment into the film.
00:37:31	Jesse	Host	We'll wrap up with Sébastien Lifshitz in just a minute. When we return, Sébastien tells us how <i>Little Girl</i> has impacted the people who see it and what they tell him. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:37:44	Music	Transition	Soothing piano.
00:37:46	Jesse	Host	This message is brought to you by NPR sponsor Airbnb. Millions of people earn extra income by hosting their extra space on Airbnb. Income that can help with home renovations, paying for vacations, or saving for retirement. Maybe you have questions about whether hosting might be right for you? You can now ask a super host and get free one-on-one help from Airbnb's most experienced hosts. Go to Airbnb.com/askasuperhost and start asking.
00:38:18	Promo	Clip	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Music: Upbeat, cheerful music. Dave Hill: Hi, it's me, Dave Hill—from before—here to tell you about my brand-new show on Maximum Fun, The Dave Hill Goodtime Hour, which combines my old Maximum Fun show—Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident—with my old radio show—The <i>[Censored]</i> Damn Hill Show—into one new futuristic program from the future. If you like delightful conversation with incredible guests, technical difficulties, and actual phone calls from real life listeners, you've just hit a street called Easy. I'm also joined by my incredible cohost, the boy criminal Chris Gersbeck. Say hi, Chris. Chris Gersbeck: Hey, Dave. It's really great to— Dave: <i>[Interrupting.]</i> That's enough, Chris. And New Jersey chicken rancher, Dez. Say hi, Dez. Dez: Hey, Dave! <i>[A chicken bawks.]</i>

Dave: The Dave Hill Goodtime Hour—brand-new episodes every Friday on Maximum Fun.

Chris: Plus, the show's not even an hour. It's 90 minutes.

Dez: Take that, stupid rules.

Dave: We nailed it!

[Music ends in a drumroll.]

00:39:06 Music Transition
00:39:10 Jesse Host

Thumpy rock music.

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Sébastien Lifshitz, director of the new documentary, *Little Girl*. Let's get back into my conversation with Sébastien Lifshitz.

You hear so often people say, "When I was six years old, I thought I was a dog." And *[sighs a chuckle]* it's so insulting. It's so—it's the most sickening, just enraging thing to hear from someone: "When I was six, I thought I was a dog." As though children make these decisions about their lives—first of all, as though it is a decision and as though children make decisions about their lives the same way that they make decisions about what pretend games they play. It's not a question, it's just a thing that happens and it *[laughing]* makes me so mad! I'm sorry, Sébastien. I'm not used to doing—you know, it's an arts and culture interview show. I'm not used to doing things that are so—that are so close to me.

00:40:22 Sébastien Guest

Okay. But I see you are emotional with this—with the subject. I understand. But you know, I can tell you something about Sasha maybe that could be important for you. It's that during the filming, Sasha was obsessed with all the signs femininity. It was, for her—I mean, the colors, the type of toys, different types of plays. And you know? And after the film, when she has been accepted as a girl at school, her mother told me that she was less obsessed with all the signs and she was more into a kind of fluidity, that she was okay to wear blue colors or to play with boy games—you know, these kinds of things. She was more confident, you know? And she didn't have to... *[sighs]* to say, uh, so much the person she is.

And that, for me, was something very positive in a way, because Sasha was able, also, to accept—you know, to be—I mean to do something that a girl is not supposed to do and not to feel threatened, you know, by that. You know? And she could do whatever she wants. Now, she knows who she is, and she has been also considered as that person. So, that was a very beautiful conclusion, in a way.

00:42:03 Jesse Host

That happened with my daughter when she transitioned. She would only wear pink and purple. *[Laughs.]* And I don't—I don't really like pink and purple. I was like, "Can we wear some other stuff?" *[Chuckling.]* And you know, that faded with time, and I think you're absolutely right that, you know, a five-year-old or a six-year-old or a seven-year-old only has so many ways to tell the world who they are. They only have a certain understanding of how to express to everyone this thing that is so central to who they are. And when the stakes are no longer so high, when telling everyone their gender identity is no longer the single most important thing in the world to them—because people around them are supportive of their gender

identity, so it's not a big deal—it changes the [*chuckles*—it changes the equation very much.

00:43:02 Sébastien Guest Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

00:43:05 Jesse Host What did you not expect to see that you saw? What did you not think even was gonna enter the picture that surprised you?

00:43:16 Sébastien Guest There was something a bit magical about that shooting—there was some moment of grace, of synchronicity, that I was really amazed. You know? I remember I was in the garden and Sasha was playing there and then she took a kind of water full of soap and she's—she has tried to make some bubbles, you know, in the air. And then she wanted just to get these bubbles in the air and the moment was so poetic and so magical. And she had a kind of grace. She knew just to move her hands and to look at the bubbles in the air like that.

I don't know, these kind of little moments—you know?—of nothing, but for me these moments were everything. Because you could relate to her. You could be so close to her. Because I was obsessed to translate her inner life. You know? And this moment where—for me, was a way for her—I mean, to show who she was. You know? These kind of things. And also, I remember the first meeting with the pédopsychiatrist Sasha was so excited, but also she was scared—you know, to talk to that doctor, because she wanted so bad to be considered as a girl and she felt like this doctor had this power just to say, “You are this or you are that.” You know? And it was so scary for her.

That's why you know that moment was so intense for the mother and for her. You know? That—my presence or the presence of the camera didn't count for anything. You know? She was really—she put her eyes into the eyes of the doctor, at that time. And she was lucky, you know, to meet that doctor, actually. Because Dr. Bargiacchi, was a very comprehensive and wonderful doctor. You know? Not at all pushy or—she was really—she was very full of empathy, which is not common, you know, for a pédopsychiatrist. They're not all like that.

[Jesse agrees.]

00:43:56 Jesse Host And so, it was a very important moment for her. It was moving to me to see that psychiatrist accept Sasha so comfortably on Sasha's terms. There was no telling. There was listening.

00:46:20 Sébastien Guest Mm-hm. Because the idea is to create a connection. This is a moment of discussion and, as you say, of listening. And the first meeting is so important, because this is the base—you know?—of what the relation is gonna be. You know?

00:46:41 Jesse Host And you're right that a pediatric psychiatrist is not always the listener that you wish they would be. [*Chuckles.*] I'm not gonna name any names, Sébastien, but that's not always how it goes.

00:46:55 Sébastien Guest Of course. I mean, when you look at the history of what happened to so many transgender people, person, you know—they have been fighting with the psychiatrist world for so many years and—yeah. Of course, you know? They—in French, we say that le passif is huge. Like the history is difficult.

00:47:31 Jesse Host Right. There's a lot of baggage, we would probably—

00:47:33 Sébastien Guest There's a lot of baggage, exactly. *[Chuckles.]* That's the words I was looking for.

00:47:38 Jesse Host Yeah, I mean, I think if you're transgender—whether you're a child or an adult—you're used to having mental health be used as a weapon against you.

00:47:47 Sébastien Guest Of course, and they have a so strong power on you. And this is impossible in a way—that they have the power to tell you who you are and to help you to become physically, also, who you are. And it's a huge power, actually.

00:48:07 Jesse Host What do people talk to you about when they talk to you after a screening? What do they ask you? What do they tell you?

00:48:17 Sébastien Guest To be honest, the thing is, after the screening people are so moved. So, it's a bit difficult for them to talk immediately. And I was really surprised that the film in France could interest so many people. When the film was broadcast, more than three and a half million people have watched it. And that was—I mean, that's a big number, you know, for France and especially for a documentary film. So, I was really, really surprised. I was not expecting this at all. And I understood, probably, that the film was about a lot of things. Not only trans identity. It was also—the film was also questioning what is femininity, what is masculinity, what is—what are the models and the pressure that we feel since we're kids with this model of ignotification and are we really free to be who we are? Do we conform ourself all the time to those models that society has given us? Like every day, on films, on—with stories, with—at school. Everywhere.

[Music fades in.]

00:49:46 Jesse Host And probably the new generation wants to question that, you know? Well, Sébastien, it's a beautiful film. I'm very grateful for it and I'm very grateful to have you on the show. Thank you so much.

00:49:54 Sébastien Guest Thank you.

00:49:55 Music Transition Thoughtful piano.

00:49:59 Jesse Host Sébastien Lifshitz. His movie, *Little Girl*, will be released digitally on November 16th. It's really beautiful. If there's a gender nonconforming child in your life, my family has received caring and invaluable guidance from the folks at Gender Spectrum. They provide resources and training around gender in kids—not just for families, but also teachers and doctors and mental health workers and other professionals. They're online at GenderSpectrum.org.

[Music fades out.]

00:50:30 Music Transition Cheerful, relaxed music.

00:50:33 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. In my neighborhood, many houses have dragon fruit plants trellised across their front yards. And they are these extraordinary, long, cactus-y things. And they grow the incredible, almost science fiction, fantasy-ish dragon fruits on them. And those dragon fruits are starting to turn red and come ripe. And I'm hoping I can scam a few from a neighbor. Maybe they want some of the grapefruits that grow in my backyard.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer is Jesus Ambrosio.

Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is called "Huddle Formation". It's recorded by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it with us.

You can also keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews in all those places. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:51:47 Promo Promo

Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]