



THE DAUGHTER

Written and Directed by Simon Stone

Starring Geoffrey Rush, Ewen Leslie, Paul Schneider, Miranda Otto, Anna
Torv with Odessa Young and Sam Neill

Official Selection, Toronto International Film Festival

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Short Synopsis:

A man returns to his hometown and unearths a long-buried family secret. As he tries to right the wrongs of the past, his actions threaten to shatter the lives of those he left behind years before.

Long Synopsis:

In the last days of a dying logging town Christian (Paul Schneider) returns to his family home for his father Henry's (Geoffrey Rush) wedding to the much younger Anna (Anna Torv). While home, Christian reconnects with his childhood friend Oliver (Ewen Leslie), who has stayed in town working at Henry's timber mill and is now out of a job. As Christian gets to know Oliver's wife Charlotte (Miranda Otto), daughter Hedvig (Odessa Young) and father Walter (Sam Neill), he discovers a secret that could tear Oliver's family apart. As he tries to right the wrongs of the past, his actions threaten to shatter the lives of those he left behind years before.

About the Production:

When critically acclaimed producers, Jan Chapman and Nicole O'Donohue, first saw Simon Stone's stage adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play, *The Wild Duck*, at the Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney's Surry Hills, they were immediately captivated. With its cinematic styling combined with a runtime of 90 minutes, they were convinced the play would translate beautifully to the big screen.

"There was incredible humanity in Simon's stage production of *The Wild Duck*," says Chapman. "I'm interested in making films that help you to understand what you're doing here as a human." O'Donohue is quick to agree, "Both Jan and I see a lot of theatre and we kept coming back to Simon's version of *The Wild Duck*; it always felt very filmic."

The play ran for six weeks at the Belvoir before travelling to The Malthouse in Melbourne, and then to international audiences in Amsterdam, Vienna, London, and the Ibsen Festival in Oslo.

When Chapman and O'Donohue approached the young director with the idea of adapting *The Wild Duck* into a feature film, Stone was enthusiastic. Development of the newly renamed screenplay, *The Daughter*, was underway. "I really had a perfect team of two producers who have brought their yin and yang talents to the project," says Stone. "I got to be the beneficiary of that extraordinary combination of qualities that those two people have had in looking after me, and supporting me, and challenging me, and nurturing me - but really being co-creators in the development of the script and being a sounding board for my ideas. We sat in their Paddington office plotting the film for hours."

Although *The Daughter* is Simon Stone's film-directing debut, the producers were convinced that he was the perfect choice, and set about finding the required funds. Roadshow quickly came on board as Australian distributor and Mongrel International as international sales agent. Screen Australia, Screen NSW and private investors Kazstar and The Gingerbread Man joined forces to provide the investment; Pre-production commenced just weeks after receiving finance confirmation. With the production moving so fast, Stone's passion and focus on great storytelling enabled him to adapt to every challenge.

With a keen understanding of the unique demands of the film medium, Stone was determined to write entirely original dialogue. "There is a very porous boundary when you compare what can work in the medium of film versus what would work in the theatre," says Stone. "Anyone who's watched the play and then watches the film will embrace that this is a totally different experience, in a totally different world, with a series of totally different characters."

Respecting Stone's strong vision and extensive experience with the material, headline actors quickly jumped at the chance to join the cast, with Oscar winner Geoffrey Rush taking on the role of Henry Neilson. "Simon has a tremendous gift and inspiring level of engagement," says Rush. "With the screenplay he's alarmingly film literate. He knows

the syntax of film language. His work with Andrew Commis, the cinematographer, has been very symbiotic and it's not like Simon's a stage director recording a performance. He's actually putting the expression of that into a cinematic language ... He also knows how expressionistic the lens and the framing of the lens can be to add to the dynamic of the performance that's being captured."

The profound nature of the screenplay also attracted the attention of Sam Neill, an actor who is internationally recognised for his contribution to film and television. Says Neill, "Walter is a man who was Henry's best friend. They were business partners and he was terribly betrayed by Henry and took the blow and went to jail, so he's had a disappointment in his life and been disappointed in people. Nevertheless, I think he's the one person who has the most faith in human nature than anyone else. He's kind and thoughtful and a decent man. We should all aspire to be Walter."

Stone's acting background makes his ability to interact with the cast and inspire great performances seem almost effortless. Actor Ewen Leslie (Oliver Finch), one of Stone's favourite Australian actors - he also appeared in the stage adaptation of *The Wild Duck* - found the experience of working on the film to be extremely positive. "The one thing that I knew he'd be incredibly good at was working with actors and performance. I suppose the big thing that I've been really, really impressed by is how at home he is on a film set and directing a film." He adds that Miranda Otto (Charlotte Finch), with an impressive list of Australian and international screen credits "sort of leaned over and said, 'It's like he's directing his fourth film'".

Other cast members include award-winning actor and filmmaker, Paul Schneider (Christian Neilson), whom Rush describes as, "amazing, very playful, very experimental, very edgy", and Anna Torv (Anna), a graduate of NIDA whose credits include the US TV series *Fringe*, which she has received much acclaim for.

Odessa Young (Hedvig Finch) is an emerging Australian actress with a growing body of work. Just 16 years' old, her visceral performances on screen demonstrate a depth and complexity far beyond her age. Ewen Leslie was deeply impressed with her performance in the film. "It's a really huge role for her to play and I'm sure she'd probably feel some level of pressure but she certainly doesn't show it, she's a fantastic actor with great instincts."

Finding the right location was absolutely crucial to the project's success. The Tumut and Batlow region in Southern NSW - with its abandoned factories and inspiring logging forests - were perfect backdrops and contribute to a thoughtful and deeply moving aesthetic that is not just Australian but universal.

True to Ibsen's original play, *The Daughter* explores the hidden dimensions and contradictions of people's lives, epic personal struggles against a backdrop of the seemingly ordinary. According to Rush, "What you think you're watching suddenly keeps opening out into revealing, sad, interesting, troubled undercurrents in all of these people's lives ... Some pretty deep, dark secrets start to emerge."

Director's Statement by Simon Stone:

The Daughter is a memory-film without flashbacks. It takes place in a single fateful week, when the return of a man to his hometown triggers a series of revelations that had been dormant for years. The memories that resurface become the heartbeat of the piece, and time starts to implode for the characters as they try to make sense of what their past means. In the middle of this complex matrix of self-recrimination is a teenage girl just starting to learn what life might mean, full of all the joys and insecurities of self-discovery, she is truly vulnerable to the mess that the adults around her are making. It's a film about people trying to be good, loving and failing, falling prey to weakness, fighting to survive. It's about how the events of the past are inescapable and how the truth isn't for a single person to decide, it's for a community to share in all of its complications. And if we can't protect the weakest among us, what's it all been for?

Stage to Screen:

The Daughter has its roots in the Australian stage production of *The Wild Duck* by Henrik Ibsen. The programming of the play came into consideration and evolved whilst I was working with Belvoir under the artistic direction of Ralph Myers. The show was the first collaboration for us – as a new team. We were looking for a play quite late in the season and we needed a production, which utilized six actors - so a play with 36 characters wasn't the obvious choice. It also meant that 100 per cent of the ideas needed to be represented by these six people. It wasn't an adaptation as such it was a reinvention of the story for the modern world. I consumed and analyzed the original material and then stepped away and wrote a reinterpretation of the original story that, at its core, is about a family falling apart.

I've always felt audiences need a story that's going to engage them and that's going to make them feel like they recognize their own life and the lives of the people around them. They have the moment of recognition in a story that makes them feel less alone in their own lives and less peculiar and weird. That's the catharsis of the storytelling that I was trying to achieve with the play and now the film.

Developing the script for the film was much the same process as creating the stage play. It had to be filtered through consciousness as a set of original ideas and then liberated from the original context. The screenplay was a reimagining and as some of the leg-work had been done, the script development spanned just over one and a half years - a relatively quick path.

Acting to Directing:

I attended the Victorian College of the Arts and studied the acting degree there, but I always yearned to be a film director. Whilst my acting career progressed, I can now see it was something that I just kept doing because it gave me the money to start directing my own plays. Being an actor was also essential to understanding the directorial process. A

good director is a risk-taker, the more you allow actors to take risks the closer they become to being vulnerable rather than just thinking or pretending”

Being a first-time film director was not necessarily a fear I had because of my work in the theatre – I’ve been directing people who scare the shit out of me since the very beginning and it’s the experience I always have, like you’ve somehow smuggled yourself into a scenario, that you’ve crashed a party that you’re not supposed to be at.

We had a very tight shooting schedule, which left everyone in production under immense pressure. I had to be aware of it intellectually, but I had to ignore the catastrophic fear of becoming paralyzed by it. Jan & Nicole know my personality, and the worst possible thing for me is the pressure of everyone watching – for me to be able to make a free, creative decision about something. They both had a keen sense of choosing the right moment to engage and when to step back.”

You constantly get to just be challenged, be forced to rethink it, have to have a moment of invention, and then resolve it. Getting to do that on the same project over and over and over again is just miraculous. It’s remarkable. To constantly be taught by other people at so many different stages – to get as many people give their blood and sweat and invention to you over and over and over and over again as you try to get closer to a personal thing – that’s the paradox of it. By embracing all of the ideas and instincts of these hundreds of people who give you their genius, you get closer and closer and closer to knowing what you want personally. That paradox is so delightful.

Production and Casting Process:

I really wanted Jan & Nicole to be part of the creation of the project so they owned it completely and championed creative choices. We were all working our hardest with the same vision but when something wasn’t possible, I was accepting that it wasn’t possible because there was no way that it could ever be that they were trying to limit my creative vision, because they had created it with me.

I hadn’t actually worked with Geoffrey before but had known him for quite a long time. We have a lot of mutual friends, and we’ve worked with a lot of the same people. Geoffrey is so connected to the Australian theatre circle that I’m embroiled in that he’d seen a lot of my shows. Geoffrey’s keen interest in the script brought a lot of things together in an amazing way.

Ewen was in the play and I had been waiting for an opportunity to direct Ewen in a film. He’s one of my favorite actors in Australia and I thought he was perfect for the role of Oliver. It was great to have an old friend of mine – an old sparring partner – who’s been with me in so many of these unconventional journeys where he’s been this kind of inspiration to me as a performer while I’m busy getting things wrong and making things up.

Odessa was part of the workshop for the script, but she always felt the role was for a much younger girl, I think Odessa saw her as so much younger than herself because of her inner-city experience. Generally when casting kids or younger performers the character is the kid but Odessa was such a great actor that I went, maybe she can do what I do with older actors, which is to be a different person on screen to the person that she is in real life. She completely transformed and that was such a rewarding achievement.

Producers' Statements- Stage to Screen:

Both Jan and I see a lot of theatre and we kept coming back to Simon's version of *The Wild Duck*; it always felt very filmic. It's a real ensemble drama and audiences were so affected by the material. It touches people in different ways and creates debate and discussion. The idea for *The Daughter* happened in quite an organic way, Jan and I had both seen the potential for the play to translate on screen and we decided we'd like to produce it together. I'd initially approached Simon and he loved the idea of the two of us coming on board. Jan and I had an existing relationship, Jan was a mentor and executive producer on my first feature film, *Griff the Invisible*, so it was a wonderful opportunity to work with her again. We then started to develop the screenplay with Screen NSW; they've been really involved and very supportive from the beginning. -Nicole O'Donohue

There was incredible humanity in Simon's stage production of *The Wild Duck*. It was like you got an insight into how it feels being part of a family, being a friend, the terrible moments where you say things that you didn't really mean to say that can have repercussions that you never imagined. I think all of those were really identifiable things. -Jan Chapman

On Casting:

The casting process was a very rewarding one. Ewen Leslie, who plays Oliver, had been in the original stage production. He and Simon have worked together quite a lot in the theatre and have a great personal and working relationship. Then we had expression of interest from Geoffrey quite early on. He'd seen the play and had heard that we were working on the film, so he was an incredible asset to us. He read the script and really loved it and has been a real enthusiast for the project and the material." -Nicole O'Donohue

We collaborated and work-shopped the script to refine it. Many of the actors we used for the read through are part of the film and it was great to have their input early on. The story is multigenerational. Odessa represents youth and then you've got Sam Neill and Geoffrey Rush playing much older characters, and the middle ground of Ewen and Paul and Miranda. Whilst the characters are drawn from the original material by Ibsen it's really Simon's take on it. He's got a true understanding of how people relate to each other and how people really behave, and it's exciting to see how he brought this to creating the characters as well as casting them. -Jan Chapman

I think it really is a true ensemble where every single person is important. Paul Schneider is the only non- Australian in the cast. We really wanted his character to feel like someone who'd been away for a long time and was coming back to the town he'd grown up in. I think having Paul literally come from New York to be in the film really helped that aspect of the story. -Jan Chapman

On the Locations:

The landscape is a real character in our film so finding the location was such an exciting part of the filmmaking process. Simon had a strong visual sense of what he wanted when it came to the overall aesthetic for the film. The town and its surrounds had to feel universal not essentially just Australian. -Nicole O'Donohue

We went on a location recce down south and spent five days scouting. When we arrived in the Tumut and Batlow region the car slowed down and Simon actually tried to get out of the moving car and the location manager had to pull over because Simon had seen these factories – the abandoned factories that so much of the film is shot in and around – and the amazing logging forests and it was exactly the backdrop he had imagined when writing the film. One of the houses we used – the Finch house – where Hedvig, Oliver, Charlotte and Walter live was an original wooden cottage that was actually built by a Scandinavian settler there in the early 1900s. He was one of the first to start logging in that area. With the Norwegian history of the original Ibsen play, it gave you goose bumps to find this house that was just sitting there empty - it was like a set that we just got to walk onto and then our designer embellished it. -Nicole O'Donohue

Cinematographer's Statement by Andrew Commis:

What excited me most about Simon's vision for the film was his strong belief that the way we used the camera and our cinema language needed to match the power of the performances. One didn't favour the other. They needed to play off each other and be equally compelling and effective as storytelling.

Along with designer Steven Jones-Evans we talked in detail about the visual tone and the sensibility of the world. We wanted to make the town and it's characters palpable. To visually feel the sense of community, the struggle, the isolation and the beauty. The location provided a unique departure from a more traditional Australian landscape, providing us with something more akin to Ibsen's Scandinavia or even the American mid-west. Here there's a crispness in the air, the light is softer, the tones cooler, the palette naturally muted.

We also worked to create a visual dynamic that matches the energy of the narrative, searching for frames that were bold and had a rhythm that would help become the films' own. Camera movement was almost entirely designed for travel with one character as they pass information to another. The frame is otherwise still to observe and study the character with that new information.

The widescreen anamorphic ratio helped create scale and depth but just as importantly, allows us to enhance compositions between a character and their environment. Whether that be a landscape or another person, an emotional intensity or even distance is created.

The process of shooting the film was very alive to how each character develops and navigates the emotional complexities that unfold. Bringing that to the screen was a challenge as cinematographer I absolutely relished.

About the Cast:

GEOFFREY RUSH – ‘Henry Neilson’

Geoffrey is among only 22 people internationally who have been awarded the Triple Crown of Acting – an Oscar, an Emmy and a Tony. He has received four Oscar nominations (*The King’s Speech* 2011, *Quills* 2001, *Shakespeare In Love* 1999 and *Shine* for which he won Best Actor in 1997).

In 2005 his portrayal of the title role in HBO’s *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers* earned him an Emmy, a Golden Globe and a SAG Award. In 2007 he starred in Lonesco’s *Exit the King* at the Malthouse in Melbourne and Belvoir Theatre in Sydney. After a triumphant season in New York in 2009, Geoffrey received a Tony Award as Best Actor for his Broadway debut.

He has won three BAFTAS, two Golden Globes, four SAG awards, two AFI awards and two Helpmann awards for recent work in Australian theatre.

Since 2003, he has played the swashbuckling Captain Barbossa in Jerry Bruckheimer’s *Pirates Of The Caribbean* tetralogy. Other international films include *The Book Thief*, *The Best Offer*, *Munich*, *Intolerable Cruelty*, *Frida*, *The Banger Sisters*, *Elizabeth*, *The Tailor of Panama*, *Mystery Men* and *Les Miserables*.

Australian film credits include *The Eye of the Storm*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *Candy*, *Lantana*, *Swimming Upstream*, *Ned Kelly*, *Children of the Revolution*, and *Dad and Dave: On Our Selection*.

“Henry runs the saw mill and he’s probably the outsider of the town. He comes from a dynasty, a family heritage of owning the mill for well over a hundred years, he has to confront moving on and instill in those around him that it’s never too late to start again - but on an emotional level, he’s looking for an escape from the elements of the darker secrets that lurk behind his family and his relationship with his son.” - Geoffrey Rush on his character, Henry.

“It’s a kind of a clash between the deep, dark history of two separate families. Henry happens to live in a very posh rural stately home that we shot in Camden, which was Macarthur’s. He was the great Merino king of Australia. This house was built in the 1830s. The other family, the Finch family, Oliver and Charlotte and Hedvig, live in what looks like a beautiful little pseudo Norwegian hut. Instantly both houses have become characters in the film.” - Geoffrey Rush on the story and how the locations became integral characters in the film.

“Deceptively it’s kind of a genre piece. It’s almost a thriller but it’s not so much that. Things unfold in this story as they did in Ibsen’s original play where what you think you’re watching suddenly keeps opening out into revealing, sad, interesting, troubled

undercurrents in all of these people's lives.” - Geoffrey Rush on how the layers of this film help evolve this genre piece to a thriller.

“The film, I suppose honoring Ibsen's basic impulse, has been given a very realistic setting. It's a logging town somewhere in rural Australia, which is closing down and that becomes the trigger for what we think the story might be. Some pretty deep, dark secrets start to emerge.” - Geoffrey Rush on the storyline:

“I think the film really becomes its own identity. It's a different title to the play. The play was part of Simon's creative process towards discovering that he did actually want to adapt this into a piece of cinema. I think the strength of the film will rely on its storytelling and its cast and if there's a certain engaging dynamic on screen it's very contemporary in the sense that it's still in the wake of the big financial crisis from six years ago and how that's impacted on a logging town. Then it goes into seemingly the ordinary lives of this community and opens up, as Ibsen would have liked, big human dimensions that exist in small towns that we might think of as not containing those kind of qualities.” - Geoffrey Rush on the original play and how it's evolved to the film:

“Simon has a tremendous gift and an inspiring level of engagement that's sharp and smart with actors and he also knows how expressionistic the lens and the framing of the lens can be to add to the dynamic of the performance that's being captured. Being a low-budget film he was extremely well-prepped in terms of the clarity, the purposeful clarity that he had about the dynamic of certain shots. He communicated that really well in the shooting because we were on a very ... it's a 30-day schedule, so it was all hard and fast but no one felt that they were becoming breathless and behind the eight-ball because the level of discussion and attacking the scenes and approach to them were very, very focused, which was great.” - Geoffrey Rush on director Simon Stone.

EWEN LESLIE – ‘Oliver Finch’

Ewen graduated from the WAAPA in 2000. Theatre credits include *Hamlet* and *Richard III* for the MTC, *Hamlet*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Promise* and *Paul* for Company B, *The Trial* and *The Wild Duck* for the Malthouse. Ewen was a member of the STC's Actors Company in 2008 and performed in *The War of the Roses*, *Gallipoli* and *The Serpents Teeth*.

Other theatre credits include *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Riflemind* (STC), *Dead Caesar* (STC-Push Production), *Shakespearealism* (The Naked Theatre Co.), *Cross Sections* (Tamarama Rock Surfers Co.) and *This Blasted Earth* (Old Fitzroy Theatre).

Ewen's films credits include *The Mule*, *The Railway Man*, *Dead Europe*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Three Blind Mice*, *Katoomba*, *Kokoda* and *Jewboy*.

Some of his television credits include *Deadline Gallipoli*, *Wonderland*, *Mr and Mrs Murder*, *Top of the Lake*, *Redfern Now*, *Devil's Dust*, *Mabo*, *My Place*, *Lockie Leonard*, *Love My Way*, *The Junction Boys*, *All Saints* and *The Road From Coorain*.

He received the Helpmann Award for his role in Richard III and the Helpmann Award and the Sydney Theatre Award for The War of the Roses. He also received a Green Room Award for his role in Richard III. Ewen has also received an AFI nomination for his performance in Jewboy in 2005.

“He's someone that I think had a fairly sort of different idea as to where he might end up in life. I think he thought that he was going to be, you know, a hotshot wealthy lawyer living in the city or overseas but he's found himself living in the country in quite an isolated environment, working at a timber mill, trying to make ends meet. However, he has ended up with this beautiful wife and this extraordinary daughter who he absolutely dotes upon.” - Ewen Leslie on his character, Oliver.

“In 2011, we did The Wild Duck as a play at Belvoir Street Theatre in Surry Hills. Then a year later we did it again in Melbourne at the Malthouse Theatre and then later that year we went to the Ibsen Festival in Oslo. Since then it's also gone to Amsterdam, Vienna and also London at the Barbican about two days after we finished shooting. Simon's version of the play went for about 90 minutes. It was quite filmic and was very successful, so I guess I kind of thought when he was first talking about doing a film version of it that we would essentially do that and he'd pad it out and chop and change it, but when I first read the screenplay of it I was quite taken aback at first because it was so different. Other characters who were sort of support characters in the play were now the lead characters and new characters had come in from the original Ibsen. The more I read it, the more I really fell in love with it and realised that of course that's what he was going to do. I mean, he reinvented Ibsen's The Wild Duck to do his version of The Wild Duck.” - Ewen Leslie on the original Belvoir Street adaptation by Simon Stone.

“A lot of the time when we're doing plays together he'll kind of speak in sort of filmic terms. He'll sort of say, ‘It needs to be small. It's like a close up’. Although you're on a stage, you completely understand what he's talking about. I suppose coming in to do a film with him, the one thing that I knew that he'd be incredibly good at was working with actors and performance. I suppose the big thing that I've been really, really impressed by is how at home he is on a film set.” - Ewen Leslie on Simon Stone as both a stage director and a film director.

“Odessa is pretty extraordinary. I mean, it's a really huge role for her to play and I'm sure she'd probably feel some level of pressure but she certainly doesn't show it, she's a fantastic actor with great instincts.” - Ewen Leslie on actress Odessa Young.

“Miranda, Sam and Geoffrey are three actors that I've seen in so many films and just admired their work for so long that to find myself on a film set with them, acting opposite them, is extraordinary and I feel very lucky.” - Ewen Leslie on the calibre of the ensemble cast.

“I think a large part of the reason that this story, first in play form and hopefully now in screen form, has been so successful and has resonated with audiences is that it deals with family and I think the second you're dealing with family as an audience, you bring so much of yourself to it. I mean, the film is about fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, husbands and wives.” - Ewen Leslie on the story's ability to resonate with audiences.

“I first met Simon working on a film called *Kokoda*. We were both actors on it. During that time he said, ‘I'd really like to direct you in something’. Three years later he got a job at Belvoir Street Theatre working as their resident director and one of the first shows we did was *The Wild Duck*. It was about week two of rehearsals he said, ‘I think this would make a really good film.’ I agreed and I think it was then about two years later that he said that he'd like me to play the same role in the film.” - Ewen Leslie on Simon Stone.

PAUL SCHNEIDER – ‘Christian Neilson’

Paul Schneider is an award-winning actor, filmmaker and favorite of preeminent directors the world over. Paul was most recently seen in We TV's *The Divine* and the film *Goodbye to All That*, which earned him the Best Actor Award for Narrative Feature at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival.

Paul's work with Zooey Deschanel and Patricia Clarkson earned him a Gotham Award nomination for *All the Real Girls*, Special Jury Prize Winner at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival. Co-written by Schneider, the script was nominated for the Chlotrudis Award.

Other acting credits include *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, *Lars and the Real Girl*, *Family Stone*, *Water for Elephants*, *Elizabethtown*, *Bright Star*, *Away We Go*, NBC's *Parks & Recreation*, and HBO's *The Newsroom*. In 2007, Paul was one of Variety's '10 Actors to Watch' and in 2010 he was named one of the Nifty Fifty, the New York Times' annual list of young innovators.

Paul grew up in Western North Carolina and studied Film Editing at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

“The best situation to be in is when the subject matter is challenging but the peripherals, the production itself and the people that you're working with, are great. I mean, that's the kind of combination that I have known Jan Chapman to conjure, which is why I was keen to work with her again.” - Paul Schneider on Jan Chapman.

“I think Christian is a very intelligent man and someone who is very hurt by his upbringing. He reminds me of the kind of person who something horrible has happened to when they're a kid and you have a lot of empathy for that person and then they grow up and because of this terrible trauma that they've endured they grow up to be the kind of person who is very difficult to deal with. It's tragic because those are the people that deserve your most forgiveness but they are actually the people who are hardest to deal with.” - Paul Schneider on his character, Christian.

“I think he's just trying to help himself through helping others but because of his kind of zealous evangelical nature he doesn't know what kind of fires he's starting.” - Paul Schneider on his character, Christian.

“Jan, Nicole, Simon and I had a long discussion about who this guy Christian was and we really wanted to play on the fact that he was kind of the stranger in the film. He was someone who was coming in from the outside and was different than everyone else.” - Paul Schneider on his character, Christian.

“The intelligent Christian is very hurt by his upbringing. After escaping to the USA to run away from all reminders of his Australian history, he has to return to Australia concerned that he might fall back into what he had been so desperate to escape.” - Paul Schneider on his character Christian.

“Simon is really great because people ask a lot about first-time directors and is there any danger, is there any difference. I will take enthusiasm over expertise any day. People can learn filmmaking but they can't learn enthusiasm for content.” - Paul Schneider on working with Simon Stone.

MIRANDA OTTO – ‘Charlotte Finch’

Miranda Otto is recognised internationally as the Warrior Princess Eowyn from Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy. She is also known for her role in Steven Spielberg’s remake of *War of The Worlds*, alongside Tom Cruise and Tim Robbins.

After graduating from the National Institute of Dramatic Art, she starred in *The Last Days of Chez Nous* directed by the highly acclaimed Gillian Armstrong, as well as *Love Serenade*, which won the 1996 Camera d'Or at Cannes, and *The Well*, which screened in competition in the following year.

Film credits include *Blessed* by acclaimed Australian director, Ana Kokkinos, and *South Solitary* directed by Camera d’Or winning director, Shirley Barrett. Other credits include *In My Father’s Den*, *Art Of Losing*, *The Flight Of The Phoenix*, *What Lies Beneath*, *The Thin Red Line*, *The Nostradamus Kid*, *True Love and Chaos*, *Doing Time For Patsy Cline*, *Dead Letter Office*, *In The Winter Dark*, *I, Frankenstein*, Tim Winton’s *The Turning*, *Danny Deckchair* and Charlie Kaufman’s *Human Nature*.

Recently, she appeared in *Reaching For The Moon*, the tragic love story of poet Elizabeth Bishop and *The Homesman* starring Tommy Lee Jones and Hilary Swank. In television, she stars alongside Greg Kinnear in *Rake* directed by Sam Raimi.

“We see Charlotte as very capable, in a great relationship, straight with people and straight up about exactly who she is. The town thinks Charlotte is a well-adjusted person but maybe that’s not entirely the case. There’s a lot more to Charlotte than meets the eye. Charlotte has a secret.” - Miranda Otto on her character Charlotte.

“There is a back, back, back, back story, which is that when ... maybe I was about 13 or 14, I actually auditioned for *The Wild Duck*. They made a film of it in Australia and I auditioned for Hedvig. It was the first audition that I had ever done.” - Miranda Otto on her original auditions for the character Hedvig.

“I think Simon's kind of fearless as a director. He just seems so at home standing next to the camera. He's unafraid to do it his way. He's not tied to the way things were done in the past. He will make really bold changes and I think that's why people are so knocked out by his work because he is able to find the very essence of what it is. He has a theatricality in the way that he constructs things. So I thought that his eye for truth was really strong and that's what's so important in film. He understands the essence of something and the truth of the situation and he really sort of digs deep into things. He is extremely enthusiastic and affable and just a very lovely person to be around.” - Miranda Otto on working with Simon Stone.

“Nicole and Jan have been really present and that always makes you feel like it's a special film that, you know, they're prepared to be sitting up until three in the morning out at Camden in the cold or being an extra in a scene because it's very personal. I think all of Jan's work is very personal to her. I think she doesn't do projects unless she feels some personal connection to them.” - Miranda Otto on producers Nicole O’Donohue and Jan Chapman.

ANNA TORV – ‘Anna’

Anna Torv is a graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). In the U.S. she has become a household name as the female lead “Olivia” in JJ Abrams’ critically acclaimed television series *Fringe*. In recognition of her performance, Anna was honoured with several Teen Choice Award nominations, two Saturn Awards for Best Actress, and a Broadcast Critics nomination for Best Actress Drama, among others.

Anna’s other international television credits include *The Pacific*, *Mistresses* and *Frankenstein*, and in Australia *The Secret Life Of Us*, *Young Lions* and *McLeod’s Daughters*.

In 2014, Anna filmed the role of ‘Gwendoline Churchill’ in director Michael Rymer’s much anticipated mini- series *Deadline Gallipoli* produced by Matchbox Pictures.

Anna’s feature film credits include *Travelling Light*, *The Book of Revelation*, and *Love Is Now*.

In theatre, Anna played Anya in *The Cherry Orchard*, directed by Howard Davies for Sydney Theatre Company, Hamlet’s ‘Ophelia’ for the Bell Shakespeare Company and the role of ‘Amelia’ in *The Credeaux Canvas*.

Anna is currently in production in the U.S. on the feature film *Stephanie*, directed by Akiva Goldsman.

“Anna is about to marry Henry (Christian’s father), that’s the reason Christian returns home, putting the carnage into motion. Henry and Anna have an honest and intimate relationship.” - Anna Torv on her character Anna.

“He takes these really classic fantastic stories with awesome plots and makes them mean something today. He makes them current.” - Anna Torv on director Simon Stone.

“Simon's really articulate and he has a background as an actor and he's been directing theatre and is used to being in charge. He knows what he wants. He's happy to try different things. He thinks on the fly, but his directions are really applicable and also you can play them.” - Anna Torv on director Simon Stone.

ODESSA YOUNG – ‘Hedvig Finch’

Odessa Young is an emerging Australian actress with a growing body of work. Odessa made her television debut as a spoiled and imperious Victorian-era child on the award-winning ABC series *My Place* and most recently as a troubled teenager in Channel Ten's popular drama *Wonderland*.

Other television credits include *Tricky Business* (Channel 9) in which she played Emma, daughter to Gigi Edgley’s lead character, and an appearance in *The Moody’s* (ABC).

Odessa’s visceral performances on screen demonstrate a depth and complexity far beyond her age. Highlights include: high school outcast, Stella, in the comedy *Bloomers*; the bored and fatally curious Alice, drawn to the dark and dangerous in neo-noir thriller *Blood Pulls a Gun* (official selection for 2014 SXSW Film Festival and 2014 Melbourne Film Festival); and the dreamy, yearning Lucy of 50s-era *The Tender Dark*.

She recently completed filming as the lead in Sue Brooks’ (Japanese Story) film *Looking For Grace* alongside Richard Roxburgh and Radha Mitchell.

“I play Hedvig, who’s 14. She’s a very interesting kid. She’s not by any means what you’d call a normal teenage girl. She feels everything. That’s the main thing about her. She feels so deeply – whether it’s extreme happiness or extreme depression – and she doesn’t have the experience to understand what she’s feeling. So, all the time, every day, every second, her heart and her head and the relationship between them is just a mess. But she’s got the most beautiful brain. The way she thinks about things and what she finds beautiful and what she holds onto as beautiful memories. There’s something really special about that and special about her and the relationship she has with people and what she takes out of them – what she values in those relationships is really unique.” - Odessa Young on her character Hedvig.

“I think if I’d gone in a different direction, I could have been Hedvig. I could have been very close to Hedvig but I think I’ve got too much self-awareness, man. I can’t sit comfortably in a room. But I think she’s so pure. I think I censor myself more than Hedvig censors herself because I don’t think she understands that normal societies have

self-discipline, I think it's just she feels and she does." - Odessa Young on her character Hedvig.

"I think everyone is going to respond to the exploration of dysfunctional family life. I think everyone has a moment, be it in their childhood or their teenagehood or adulthood, where they realize that their parents are humans and do human things and have bad days and make mistakes. That's a really difficult thing to work out as a kid." - Odessa Young on the storyline.

"Can you imagine being a 16 year old and rocking up to set with Geoffrey Rush, Sam Neill, Miranda Otto, Paul Schneider, Ewen Leslie and standing there and just being like, 'What the Hell am I doing here? How did this happen? Who allowed this to happen?' Then actually having the opportunity to learn how these amazing actors do their job." - Odessa Young on working with her fellow actors.

SAM NEILL – 'Walter Finch'

Sam Neill is internationally recognized for his contribution to film and television. He is well-known for his roles in Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* and Jane Campion's Academy Award-winning film *The Piano*. Other film roles include *Backtrack* opposite Adrian Brody, *Deus Ex Machina*, *F2014*, *A Long Way Down*, *The Tomb*, *The Hunter* with Willem Dafoe, *Daybreakers*, *Legend Of The Guardians: The Owls of G'Ahoole*, *Little Fish* opposite Cate Blanchett, *Skin*, *Dean Spanley*, *Wimbledon*, *Yes, Perfect Strangers*, *Dirty Deeds*, *The Zookeeper*, *Bicentennial Man* opposite Robin Williams, *The Horse Whisperer* alongside Kristin Scott Thomas, *Sleeping Dogs*, and *My Brilliant Career*.

He received Emmy and Golden Globe nominations for the NBC miniseries *Merlin*. He also received Golden Globe nominations for *One Against The Wind* and for *Reilly: The Ace Of Spies*. The British Academy of Film and Television honored Sam's work in *Reilly* by naming him Best Actor. Sam received an AFI Award for Best Actor for his role in *Jessica*.

Other television includes *Rake*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *To the Ends of Earth*, *The Tudors* with Jonathan Rhys Meyers, *Crusoe*, *Alcatraz* and recently in *Old School* opposite Bryan Brown, *Peaky Blinders* alongside Cillian Murphy, *House Of Hancock* and *The Dovekeepers* for CBS Studios.

"It's about a lot of things that are universal. I think it's about family as much as anything. It's about, very importantly, secrets and lies and the terrible power of secrets, the terrible power of telling the truth sometimes and the awful business of holding a secret, a very important secret, for so long and how these things can kind of blow up like landmines. Yes, it's about regret and mistakes. It's about human beings and fallibility and love, you know, a lot of things." - Sam Neill on the storyline.

“This is based on some very profound material. It's no accident that Ibsen's plays continue to sell out, like Chekov or these great playwrights. They write things that are enthralling and exciting but also things that we understand because they relate to our own experiences and most life really teeters between comedy and tragedy.” - Sam Neill on the original work by Ibsen.

“Walter is a man who was Henry's best friend. They were business partners and he was terribly betrayed by Henry and took the blow and went to jail, so he's had a disappointment in his life and been disappointed in people. Nevertheless, I think he's the one person who has the most faith in human nature than anyone else. He's kind and thoughtful and a decent man. We should all aspire to be Walter.” - Sam Neill on his character Walter.

Cast in Order of Appearance:

Henry....Geoffrey Rush

Peterson....Nicholas Hope

Walter....Sam Neill

Oliver....Ewen Leslie

Craig....Richard Sutherland

Christian....Paul Schneider

Taxi Driver....Robert Menzies

Anna....Anna Torv

Caterer....Eden Falk

Hedvig....Odessa Young

Charlotte....Miranda Otto

Greg....Gareth Davies

Adam....Wilson Moore

Grace....Ivy Mak

Julianne....Kate Box

Siobhan....Nicola Frew

Jane....Sara West

Marriage Celebrant....Jessie Cacchilo

Barman....David Paterson

Headmaster....Steve Rogers

Local Woman....Jackie Spicer

Receptionist....Ann Furlan

Emergency Nurse.... Danielle Blakey

Doctor....Sheila Kumar

Crew:

Written and Directed by...Simon Stone

Produced by...Jan Chapman, Nicole O'Donohue

Director of Photography...Andrew Commis, ACS

Editor...Veronika Jenet, ASE

Production Designer...Steven Jones-Evans, APDG

Costume Designer...Margot Wilson

Composer...Mark Bradshaw

Sound Designer...Liam Egan

Casting...Nikki Barrett

Line Producer...Lorelle Adamson

Associate Producer...Alex White

First Assistant Director...Deborah Antoniou

Second Assistant Director...Nerida Groth

Art Director...Maxine Dennett

Makeup & Hair Designer...Chiara Tripodi

Production Coordinator...Jasmin Lyford

Script Supervisor...Kristen Voumard

Sound Recordist...Nick Emond

Locations Managers...Edward Donovan, Lisa Scope

Post Production Consultant...Jane Maguire

Head of Post Production...Craig Deeker

Music Supervisor...Andrew Kotatko

Unit Publicity...Jess Carrera, Carrera Press Agency

On Set Publicist...Sarah Sneddon

Stills Photographer...Mark Rogers