



# WONDERSTRUCK

## PRODUCTION NOTES

A film by Todd Haynes

Running Time: 1 hr 57 min

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Starring:

Julianne Moore  
Oakes Fegley  
Millicent Simmonds  
Jaden Michael  
Cory Michael Smith  
Tom Noonan  
Michelle Williams

Written by: Brian Selznick, based on his novel

Directed by: Todd Haynes

Produced by: Christine Vachon, Pam Koffler and John Sloss

Executive Producers: Brian Bell and Sandy Powell

An Amazon Studios Production

# WONDERSTRUCK

## Cast

Ben	Oakes Fegley
Rose (age 12)	Millicent Simmonds
Rose (age 62) / Lillian Mayhew	Julianne Moore
Jamie	Jaden Michael
Walter (age 20)	Cory Michael Smith
Walter (age 70)	Tom Noonan
Elaine	Michelle Williams
Aunt Jenny	Amy Hargreaves
Janet	Morgan Turner
Robby	Sawyer Nunes
Rose's Father	James Urbaniak

## Crew

Director	Todd Haynes
Screenplay	Brian Selznick
Producers	Christine Vachon
	Pam Koffler
	John Sloss
Executive Producer / UPM	Brian Bell
Executive Producer / Costume Designer	Sandy Powell
Director of Photography	Ed Lachman
Editor	Affonso Goncalves
Production Designer	Mark Friedberg
Art Director	Ryan Heck
Casting Director	Laura Rosenthal

## WONDERSTRUCK

In 1927, a young girl runs away from home in New Jersey and makes her way to Manhattan, hoping to find someone who was an important part of her past. Fifty years later, a deaf boy befallen by personal tragedy finds a clue about his family that leads him to run away from rural Minnesota to New York. As their adventures lead them to strange new places, where mysteries about themselves and the world seem to lurk around every corner, their stories of discovery reach across years of silence and regret, and find each other through a mesmerizing symmetry driven by wonder and hope.

For Rose (Millicent Simmonds), life under the strict control of her father is typical for a deaf child of her era, kept out of public view with little connection to the world outside of her beloved scrapbook, an elaborate, living work of art dedicated mostly to the career of an actress, Lillian Mayhew (Julianne Moore). When Mayhew comes to New York to open up a new play, Rose manages to find her way into Manhattan, hoping to connect to the silent movie star. For lifelong Minnesotan Ben (Oakes Fegley), his deafness is recent, the result of a freak accident that occurred shortly after the loss of his mother, free-spirited Elaine (Michelle Williams). Sorting through her things, he finds a clue about his unknown father – a souvenir book from New York City. He boards a bus, unbeknownst to his bereft aunt, and eventually arrives in Manhattan.

For both young people, their inability to hear and communicate (neither know sign language) makes their quest in the big city fraught with excitement and danger. Their simple goals quickly turn complex as the chaos and confusion of city streets derail them. Despite their maturity and determination, they are easily overwhelmed and reluctant to seek help. Both wind up seeking solace at the American Museum of Natural History, where new and old friends join them in confronting the questions that Rose and Ben so desperately need answered.

Short Synopsis: Based on Brian Selznick's critically acclaimed novel Ben and Rose are children from two different eras who secretly wish their lives were different. Ben longs for the father he has never known, while Rose dreams of a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in a scrapbook. When Ben discovers a puzzling clue in his home and Rose reads an enticing headline in the newspaper, both children set out on quests to find what they are missing that unfold with mesmerizing symmetry.

## WONDERSTRUCK

### ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

#### **WHAT SILENCE LOOKS LIKE: ADAPTING WONDERSTRUCK FOR THE SCREEN**

Anyone who read Brian Selznick's novel The Invention of Hugo Cabret, or saw Martin Scorsese's acclaimed film adaptation "Hugo," probably won't be surprised to learn that Selznick's follow-up, Wonderstruck, documents a child's sense of awe as they discover an adult world that is often marked by loneliness, confusion and regret. And like its predecessor, Wonderstruck manages to infuse its story with a childlike sense of magic and possibility, rendered both in word and image. A master of what he calls "bookmaking," Selznick's novels are as much informed by his amazing illustrations as they are by the vividly imagined characters and marvelous historical settings that populate his work.

"A lot of people who read The Invention of Hugo Cabret said to me that they like the sections of drawings, because it's like everything becomes quiet," Selznick recalls today about the inspiration for Wonderstruck. He goes on to explain how, "You hear the words in your imagination, and then the narrative continues in the pictures but without words – I think it shifts into a different part of your brain. All those words fall away and we're just watching what's happening, and I was so intrigued by the feeling of quiet from looking at pictures." A similar thought occurred to Selznick when he watched the 2007 PBS documentary "Through Deaf Eyes." "There was a man describing deaf culture as a visual culture because the language is a visual language," says Selznick. Describing with his voice and in sign language, Selznick continues, "I thought... Maybe if I make a book, where there are pictures that tell the story of a

deaf character, it would parallel in some fashion the way that she experiences her life, because they would both be visual.”

The result is a book that is unlike any other reading experience. Immediately after its publication in 2011, Wonderstruck became must-reading for people of all ages. The initial impulse to tell the story of a remarkable journey from the perspective of one deaf child grew into two stories and two journeys, told alternatively throughout the book. One story is shown entirely in Selznick’s exquisitely detailed and delicate illustrations, in the tradition of the graphic novel – but without any text or words, the life as seen through young Rose in 1927. Born deaf, Rose lives with a father who hides her away, and she escapes into New York City hoping to make a connection with a famous actress, Lillian Mayhew. The sights of the great urban landscape at the height of the jazz age are experienced by the reader as if through Rose’s eyes, the silence of her life all the more powerfully rendered.

The second story takes place fifty years later, and also features a young hero, Ben, traveling to New York City, this time looking for clues about his long-lost father. Ben is only recently deaf, so his story is told in traditional prose, as he experiences many of the same challenges and obstacles that Rose faces, but with a different set of memories, intentions, and abilities. Ultimately, of course, the two stories intersect; the girl who was once Rose emerges as an older woman who might hold the key to Ben’s identity as well. But along the journey, the reader is drawn in and out of each story through Selznick’s deft and confident play between these two very different modes of reading. What the reader “sees” in Rose’s story defies language; what the reader “hears” in their head via the words in Ben’s story spark the visual imagination in a way that no words could properly describe.

The Invention of Hugo Cabret as a film became a reality for Selznick only once Martin Scorsese became involved. Someone with such a rich sense of cinematic history, as well as brilliant technique, would be able to capture the book's magic. "Sometimes people ask me for advice about how to get into the movie business," Selznick jokes. "And I say, 'Oh, it's easy. You make books for about 15-20 years and then you wait for Martin Scorsese to call.'" Indeed, even with the amazing success of Scorsese's "Hugo" (which was adapted into a screenplay by John Logan), Selznick was sure that Wonderstruck would be even more difficult to get to the screen, simply given the unusual nature of the novel's main characters. "I thought, this book can't be adapted," explains Selznick. He goes on to describe that, "Unlike 'Hugo,' where it's one story told with words and pictures, Wonderstruck is designed to be two stories, one with pictures only, one with words only. I made the book thinking that it can't be adapted."

But finishing the book and seeing how successful Scorsese and Logan were in making "Hugo" a reality prompted the writer to reconsider. "I began to think maybe there were ways," he says. He took on the initial exercise of drafting a screenplay on his own, with some input from John Logan. "He really took me under his wing, and gave me lots of notes and guidance. His first one was the toughest," recalls Selznick with a chuckle. "Cut the first 50 pages in half." With Logan's veteran eye to keep him focused, Selznick settled on a screen worthy equivalent of his literary technique; Rose's story, set in 1927, would be shot in black-and-white and in the aesthetic mode of a late-era silent film, while Ben's would be shot in color and with a fully realized soundtrack. "We can weave those two stories together, and play with sound in silence, and include music. It's not restricted to words and pictures like it has to be for the book, and it's something that I thought would work for the screen," explains Selznick.

## **A PROJECT FINDS A TEAM**

One of the people Selznick showed his draft of a film version of “Wonderstruck” to was another member of the esteemed “Hugo” crew, veteran costume designer (and a three-time Oscar winner) Sandy Powell, whose passion for the project and creative vision ultimately resulted in her assuming the role of executive producer as well as costume designer. “Even before Brian thought about writing the script,” Powell remembers, “I had said to him about the book, wouldn’t this be great as a film? And even at that point, I thought it would be great if Todd [Haynes] did it.” After reading one of Selznick’s early draft, Powell knew her instinct was spot on; “I’m going to ask Todd if he is interested,” she resolved. Haynes was in the midst of editing his most recent film, “Carol,” and Powell knew he would be preoccupied. “But towards the end of that process, I at least got Todd and Brian to meet. I knew Todd would instantly like him and be more inclined to read the screenplay and take an interest. He did straight away, which was thrilling for everybody.”

With dozens of films to her credit—many of them lush, visual masterpieces by internationally acclaimed directors who demand precision and perfection—Powell’s creative sensibilities told her that this was a special, almost magical project. “I just loved it,” she enthuses. “I loved reading the book, where the story is told purely from visuals...but the most interesting part was the theme of deafness, and dealing with deafness, something that would be really interesting to tackle in film. How can you do that? It’s interesting to see how sound and lack of sound is going to work in this story.”

A dedicated cinephile, Selznick was flattered that the renowned veteran Haynes wanted to become a part of “Wonderstruck,” though like many viewers, the fit might seem a bit odd at first. After all, Haynes is known for making provocative films about very “grown-up” situations

related to sexuality, identity, and social responsibility. While his films do often feature children as characters, he is not the first person one might think of to make what is essentially a film about children for general audiences. But Haynes' strengths play right into the possibilities in Selznick's story, according to the author.

"I had never thought of Todd," Selznick admits, "but as soon as Sandy mentioned his name I thought, 'there's no one else who can do this.' Todd is one of the few directors whose intellect matches their artistry. You don't feel any sort of cold, clinical distance, when you see a movie of his. You feel the characters, you feel the life of these people, but you understand that he is in total control of the world in which they exist. He's a master of genre. He can make a movie feel like it came from any time period. The sensitivity that he brings to all of this, the queerness, the sense from seeing the world from an outside perspective – that was exactly how I was thinking about the way these kids in the book, as deaf kids, understand the world around them. They're both in search of family. They're both in search of community...in search of a history. And that is and feels in so many ways, part of what Todd has been working with from the very beginning."

For his part, Haynes was immensely impressed by the quality of Selznick's adaptation. "What was so remarkable," he recalls, "is that this is the first adaptation Brian had done of one of his books. It was so powerfully cinematic and it basically invited a maker of film into the process of re-visioning his beautiful book through a cinematic view which is what I responded to initially."

When describing the source material, Haynes says, "The book works at the deepest level, evoking the imagination and allowing spaces to fill in the gaps yourself, and you take possession of it and it's your own. The fact that it created a dialogue between these two periods of time, but

having the continuity of New York fifty years changed—from the 1920s story to the 1970s story—just begged to be turned into the language of cinema.”

Haynes’ longtime producer Christine Vachon adds that in addition to the finely tuned characters and remarkably original story, the distinct timelines were something that gave the project a creative center and depth that made it a worthwhile challenge. Vachon explains, “The way these stories intersected in unexpected and beautiful ways means there is an evocation of childhood in both stories that also felt very authentic. There was the challenge of recreating 1970s New York...and I grew up in New York City, I was a young teenager in the ‘70s, so that really resonated with me.”

That personal connection was important to Vachon, as some audiences might have forgotten about New York City’s bleaker years. “That was the time of that famous Daily News headline – ‘Ford to City: Drop Dead,’” she recalls about New York’s national reputation as decaying and crime-ridden. Indeed, viewers of “Wonderstruck” who are more familiar with the New York of Woody Allen or “Sex and the City” might be thrown by “Wonderstruck”’s spot-on depiction of a once-glorious metropolis struggling to survive. “When we were shooting at the Port Authority,” recalls Vachon, “one of the younger PAs turned to me and said ‘Oh, but it was never really this dirty...and I thought ‘are you kidding me, this is nothing compared to what it was like!’ The infrastructure was crumbling, the city was bankrupt, street crime was up, people were fleeing for the suburbs, so the character of the city was very different – still exciting, but in a very different way.”

“The story works so well because 1927 was a period of ascendancy and hope, and the city was still being built,” adds producer John Sloss. “It was New York on the rise. But 1977 was the nadir and falling apart, and that’s just factually true, and something that Brian really

conveyed in his novel that is a key element of the film.” Sloss believed so much in “Wonderstruck” that he came aboard as a full producer: a renowned dealmaker in the world of independent film for the last thirty years, Sloss is frequently credited as an executive producer, rarely taking on a more direct role in the day-to-day production work as he is with “Wonderstruck.” But, the combination of the creative team and the material was inspiring to him. “It was the script – Brian is brilliant, and wrote a brilliant script. We were able to say to potential financiers, ‘There’s no reason to make this film if you’re going to make it without this sort of inherent magic.’” It wasn’t long before Sloss was able to set up the project on a workable but modest budget for Amazon Studios. “Amazon is a big corporation,” Sloss concedes, “but it’s also very familiar. Ted Hope [head of Amazon Studios’ film production] is someone we grew up with and he’s very close with Christine and Todd, someone we’ve worked with for a long, long time. Amazon Studios was smart enough to bring in a crew of people who are immersed in the independent film community, and they got the good ones.”

## **WORLDS OF SILENCE**

Studies indicate that about 1 in 20 Americans is functionally deaf; however, the vast majority of that population (well over 95%) become deaf long into adulthood, often as a result of progressive hearing loss that can be addressed and adapted to over time. The population of deaf children—some of whom, like Rose, were never able to hear, and others like Ben who become deaf because of illness or accident— is very small. For members of the deaf community and their allies, that has not prevented recent generations of deaf artists from expressing themselves creatively through storytelling and the visual and performing arts. The Tony Award-winning National Theatre of the Deaf celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> year of existence this year, and Deaf West’s

production of the musical “Spring Awakening” has proven to be a hit with all audiences.

However, the crossover of deaf characters into mainstream culture has been largely restricted in recent times to adult characters, from dramatic fare like “Children of a Lesser God” to Marvel Comics’ deaf Avenger “Hawkeye.”

The result is that there isn’t much precedent in cinema for telling a story—two stories, in fact—from the perspective of a child who cannot hear. Because both protagonists in the film set out on their own, there is no guardian or protector, no “translator” (at least at first), and neither of them know how to use sign language. “Wonderstruck” cannot rely on secondary characters, subtitles, or other familiar narrative devices that might be used as a point of access for a film viewer.

Selznick had consulted with a variety of friends and colleagues involved in deaf culture and education as he was writing the novel, wanting to make it as authentic to the deaf characters’ experience while still not making the story exclusively about the characters’ disability. His own brother is deaf in one ear—the state that Ben begins in, before an accident shortly after his mother’s death removes the hearing from the remaining ear—and that provided a different kind of perspective than others he knew who had been fully deaf for a large portion of their lives, like Rose. But books, at least the traditional kind on paper, don’t have an audio component. Even so-called “silent” films were never silent, so Haynes knew that he would have to address the complex problem of what “deaf” feels like while still employing some sort of sound track.

“What’s so exhilarating about ‘Wonderstruck’ is that it was always designed as a half-silent film,” the director explains. “The black-and-white story would be told as a silent film, and silent film plays a role in the story itself – Rose’s mother is a silent screen star. Meanwhile, Ben, who’s newly deaf, spends a good hour of the film on a silent voyage not conversing with anyone,

just observing. So, the two stories interact without sound in very different ways. It allows for a very rich and nuanced role that the sound design plays between music and ambient sound, between subjective and objective interplay of sound that Ben is sensing, since he just lost his hearing. There's the suggestion that there's the phantom sound that haunts him, the memory of sound. I took this movie on because I had never made a film aimed at younger audiences and about younger subjects exclusively. I thought, there's a way to ignite the imagination of kids without the conventions of sound, just like how you filled in the gaps of the illustrations. When you ask the audience to fill in gaps, it ignites certain powers we all possess as viewers that we sometimes overlook."

Although it might not be immediately evident to viewers of the film, Haynes and his team went to great lengths to ensure that deafness was embedded in the film's creative process in a number of ways. For example, in an early scene from Rose's story, she visits a theatre where silent film star Lillian Mayhew (played by Julianne Moore) is in rehearsal for a new play. Many of Lillian's co-stars in that play are portrayed by hearing-impaired actors. "We cast seven deaf actors as hearing characters in the film, including Millie," Haynes explains. "The most prominent deaf actor cast was Lauren Ridloff, who plays Pearl, the Maid. Additionally, there was Dr. Gill, the deaf teacher, one of the policemen, Miss Conrad (who works at the museum) and the Director and Lead actor at the theater. Since they all appear in the silent portion, they were afforded the unique task of playing hearing characters. A lot of these people came from deaf theatre, and brought their own experiences and points of view to the process. It was one particularly unique way in which Deaf artists and contributors were woven into our experience making the film. That was really awesome."

Similarly, Haynes decided to immerse some of his hearing cast into a new frame of mind through some old-fashioned acting exercises conducted with some new technology. With young Oakes Fegley (as Ben), Haynes employed noise-cancelling headphones on a walking tour of the portions of New York City where the action takes place. Haynes remembers, “It’s a grossly reductive version of what a deaf person might experience on a daily basis, and we did it in a very condensed amount of time, but it was so intensely memorable and vivid, it was an indication of how perception can be heightened with a diminished range of senses, and how experience is heightened. I’ll never forget the color and images that afternoon. It was the way my eye was registering the world and touch and smell and shards of light hitting the bits of the city as we walked around. When we took off the noise-cancelling headphones there was a dullness to life – it just shows how the senses could be heightened.”

### **CASTING FAMILIAR STARS – AND FINDING NEW ONES**

Anyone who has ever made a serious, ambitious and dramatic film with children as the main characters knows that finding the right child actor to bring a role to life can be a daunting challenge. Often operating with a minimum of trained technique and “life experience” that make for strong film performance, young actors often work by instinct and have to “get lucky” with the right combination of material, character and director. “Wonderstruck” would be no different—except that both of the main characters, in addition to being complex individuals experiencing an almost fantastic once-in-a-lifetime journey through the world’s most famous city, also happened to be deaf.

This was slightly easier for the role of Ben who, only recently deaf, is comfortable speaking out loud and has lived in communication with other people, a more-or-less “normal”

kid who grew up with a single mom in rural Minnesota before fate and circumstance change his life forever. Although only eleven years-old when he was cast as Ben, young Oakes Fegley had the right combination of presence and experience for Haynes to be confident in the performance. “Oakes is a very precocious, and intensely bright young man,” Haynes says. Ben also has the benefit of a sidekick, Jamie—initially conceived of as a Caucasian child in the novel, Haynes suggested to Selznick that Jamie be played by a Latino actor, to reflect 1977 New York City’s demographics more accurately and bring some perspective to how these two “outsiders” connect. “I knew right away that this was a fantastic idea,” Selznick says about the change. Jaden Michael, an actor Haynes brought on board as Jamie, was praised for his maturity. “He is a lovely actor with the dearest, most generous soul,” says the director.

Fegley drew rave reviews for his performances in last year’s “Pete’s Dragon,” holding his own against no less than Bryce Dallas Howard and Robert Redford. Even though Ben is a deaf child from the year 1977, Fegley saw a lot of parallels between himself and the character. “I think he likes to learn, and I like to learn,” he ponders. “Ben is very curious; he has specific things that he has found out that he likes, and he likes those things a lot.” He was also appreciative to conquer the challenge of representing deafness. Recalling his noiseless afternoon walking around the city with Haynes in headphones, he remembers, “It was crazy – you pay a lot more attention to visual detail, looking at people’s lips, smelling things. I also met with some deaf people before we started filming, and that has helped me figure out what it’s like to be deaf.”

“The story made me cry, and that’s not something I do often,” says Jaden Michael, a native New Yorker who has been acting since the age of three and already counts no less than Viola Davis (in “Custody”) as a onetime costar, and most recently appeared in “Paterson” for

acclaimed indie icon Jim Jarmusch. Michael can't hide his enthusiasm for working with Todd Haynes. "Todd Haynes is an amazing director. An amazing person. He's inspiring. You get into the character, but Todd Haynes just gives you the extra push and he's a wonderful director. I mean, the awards say it all. He's an awesome person to be around. He has a wonderful finesse about him, you just get a little bubbly happy feeling just sitting next to him."

But finding the right performer to play Rose was going to be more of a challenge, and from the beginning, Haynes, Selznick, Vachon and the rest of the team were determined that the character needed to be played by a deaf actress, to underscore the authenticity of Rose's experience as well as provide more opportunities for the production to be informed by real-life deaf culture. "During the silent era," explains Selznick, "deaf actors were employed all the time because they were so expressive, they could tell stories with their bodies. I thought we could pay great homage to the history of cinema, and we could have most of them do something they don't normally do, which is play hearing characters." The exception is the permanently deaf Rose, and that meant that casting director Laura Rosenthal had her work cut out for her. Contacting schools for the hearing impaired and deaf theatre companies all over North America, she led the search for a young performer who shared Rose's condition and could also render her professionally and with the complexity that Selznick's story demanded. "I imagine casting is a hard enough job to find the right person for each part, so the pride that Laura and her team then took in finding Millicent Simmonds is great," says Selznick.

Utah native Simmonds, thirteen years old when she was cast, does not have an extensive professional career, but her work on the set and her contributions towards the fleshing out of Rose has left her much older and more experienced colleagues almost speechless. That was evident from an early audition tape that Selznick still tears up as he describes it. "I have to learn

how to not get emotional when I talk about Millie,” he says. “They asked her to make a tape and just tell us about herself...and with her mother, she made some posters to show along with the English translation of what she was signing. She was able to sign to the camera who she is, her name, what she was thinking – and then hold up a poster, for us hearing people. Then she would put that poster down, sign the next part...it was her pride at being deaf and the beauty of the language that she felt, and she was so excited to share and talk about. It was just beautiful.”

Working with Simmonds, particularly in the scenes where other deaf actors were present and felt empowered to contribute to the process, was an eye-opener for director Haynes. Working through a hired translator (and sometimes Simmonds’ mother, fluent in sign language), Haynes found his young charge imaginative and responsive. “One of the most moving and informative parts of making this film was bringing Millie into the fold and sharing it with her,” he says. “We just lucked out... She had never been in front of a camera before, and her ability to evoke emotion, and her ease with her body was just remarkable.”

Any young teenager working with an Oscar Award-winning cast and crew on their first film is likely to be a bit daunted, and Simmonds is no exception. “I never thought I’d be doing this,” she says in sign language. “I thought I would just sort of lead a normal deaf life. You know, and try to get through my life and deal with the typical problems you face growing up. But this, this is an amazing experience. I’m helping Rose come to life, and by bringing her to life it’s making the movie come true. The crew is like my family – it’s really been an amazing experience.”

And of course, she is more than a little, let’s say, “wonderstruck.” “I didn’t think it would be this big a deal. But when I got here and I was like ‘What?! Todd Haynes?! Wait, wait the real Todd Haynes who wins awards and makes these awesome movies?!’ I mean, this is crazy. And

Julianne Moore! I mean, when I was little I always looked up to her, she is the person I aspired to be. She's an Oscar-winning actress and here I am. This is crazy. And they're both so nice and so sweet to me. And they're not afraid of me, they're really open and comfortable working with me." Haynes is now a Simmonds fan in return. "This a singularly special, unique, strong, and self-possessed person who taught us everything," he says of Simmonds. "She really moved and touched the crew and all of us and informed us deeply of what we were doing."

About the material and the character that she plays, Simmonds is equally enthusiastic. "I was so surprised that a hearing person would write this book, would tell a story about two deaf people and it just, it really grabbed my heart. I thought, the person who ever wrote this is a special person... I loved the drawings and the artwork. I loved how the two stories blended together." As for Rose, Simmonds finds much fodder for her character. Noting that her own family has been generous and supportive (they all use sign language, and new text-based technologies have made communicating with the deaf much easier than it was in the 1920s), Simmonds sees how different things were for Rose and what a challenging obstacle her deafness must have been. "Rose's family, they don't really understand how deaf people live in the world, and they're afraid of her. They're really afraid of her...it must be really hard to be Rose." Though she recognizes that Rose's father, a physician ashamed of his daughter's condition, means well by trying to keep his daughter "safe" and essentially locked up, Simmonds also thinks that Rose's absent mother factors into Rose's psyche in a complicate manner. At the beginning of the story, Rose seems to suspect that famous actress Lillian Mayhew is her real mother, and that possibility suggests more than just abandonment. "She's a young mother, almost a little too young," Simmonds imagines, "and I think maybe she didn't want children. I think she wanted to be free and independent, and I understand that as a woman back then, she

didn't have a lot of rights. Maybe she wanted to be the one to show her daughter that women can do things and be independent," she concludes as to what Rose finds so fascinating about the mysterious Lillian.

Rounding out the principal cast as Lillian, and as an older Rose, is Julianne Moore, who has worked with Haynes before on several projects ("Safe," "Far from Heaven"), who was thrilled to take on the challenge of performing multiple parts as well as bringing Selznick's novel to life. Though her initial impression as Lillian Mayhew is important in establishing Rose's journey, it was playing the elder Rose, 50 years on, that Haynes knew would be a worthy challenge. "As always, Julianne does meticulous research and wants to feel confident that she really has explored all the parameters of the role and its terrain," he says, noting that she immersed herself in learning ASL to better communicate with Simmonds and the other deaf actors on the set, as well as to build her character. "She worked with great translators, but she worked with non-speaking deaf people as well. And because her brother in the movie—played by Tom Noonan as an adult and Cory Michael Smith as a younger man—signs with her, but he's a hearing man, he would sign differently than a non-hearing person would and those differences were very, very important to Julianne."

A fan of Selznick's and the novel, Moore knew that the author and producers, Powell and Vachon, were eager for her old friend Haynes to come on board, and was initially skeptical, only because she thought Haynes preferred to only direct projects that he had initially written and conceived of himself. But once Haynes was on board, she says it wasn't a surprise to see the appeal. She explains, "I'm not surprised because of the depth of the storytelling, and the interesting characters and the huge amount of emotion and the tremendous production value. All of those things are things that Todd really responds to."

And working again with Haynes was a no-brainer for the veteran actress, who was just coming off her Oscar-winning performance in “Still Alice.” “We’ve known each other for twenty years now,” she explains, “and he’s someone who is as gifted visually as he is with language, and that’s very unusual. You know you can always rely on him for this extraordinary visual storytelling. It’s pleasure because he gives you such a tremendous frame to work in.”

It has also been a growing experience, both when the cameras were rolling, as she took on the challenge of playing to different characters fifty years apart in time, as well as in between takes, fully absorbing the magnitude of the story. “I think one of the things that’s been really wonderful for all of us working on this movie is how much we’ve learned about deaf culture. I think anytime you’re learning another language it kind of expands your brain and opens up possibilities for you in terms of thought and relationships, and this is a true example of that. It’s been, that’s the most exciting part, actually, of making this movie, our introduction to deaf culture.”

And she is equally thrilled by her young co-star as Millicent Simmonds is with her. “Millie just clearly has a natural ability for it—not just for being at ease on camera but for vivid emotional storytelling. You see it in her body, you see it in her face, you see it in her complete understanding of who this character is and it’s a wonderful thing. Everyone has noticed it; this is also a crew that I’ve worked with for a long time, and we watching her work and saying how extraordinary she is. And they’re like, ‘How does she do it?’ And I said, ‘Who knows, I think she’s just a natural.’”

## ONE PLACE – TWO TIME PERIODS

It's not a stretch to say that Todd Haynes and his crew are experts at period recreation, but the filmmakers' ability to capture a specific time and place is often more than just a matter of getting the details right. For example, the lush suburban 1950s setting of "Far from Heaven" is as much a tribute to the films of Douglas Sirk and other directors of the era as it is about precision and accuracy, while the dazzling 1970s of "Velvet Goldmine" owes more than a debt to the stylized glam rock lifestyle of its characters as much as it does to the real time and place. That ability is demonstrated again, twofold, in "Wonderstruck," as the story takes place fifty years apart and almost entirely in New York City, with much of the action occurring at the iconic American Museum of Natural History.

The first important element for Haynes, his team and moviegoers, to appreciate is that the dates selected by Selznick aren't random. 1927, the year that Rose ventures forth from her home into the city, is the year that is often remembered as the turning point in film history, when Warner Brothers' "The Jazz Singer" ushered in the era of sound moviemaking after its debut in October of that year. In fact, most film historians note that the transition to sound film dates back much earlier and the full impact of "talkies" was not realized until a couple of years later, but for a "symbolic" point in time, 1927 will do. Brian Selznick points out that this key event in 1927 is often pointed out as "a triumph in technology, something that moves everything forward. But from the perspective of deaf culture and deaf history, it was a tragedy for the deaf community, because it separated them from the audiences who were enjoying the movies. Before that, you could go as a deaf person, and the action is mostly happening visually on screen. I had never thought about this moment as something that would be problematic for part of the population." Indeed, though the character of Lillian Mayhew is not deaf, she finds herself in an equally

troubling transition from visibility to perhaps irrelevance. As a young girl, Rose can't quite appreciate it, but Lillian's stock as a film star is clearly falling with the coming of sound, and her return to the stage is more of a desperate act to keep her fame alive than an ambitious career move.

When he thought about setting Ben's story fifty years later, the year 1977 also had a particular resonance for Selznick, as it would for anyone who remembers the image of New York City and the events of that year. "Fifty is a nice round number," Selznick concedes. "I was eleven in 1977, and that was the summer of the blackout, one of the lowest points in New York history. I had forgotten that the blackout actually happened over my birthday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, and was caused by a lightning strike – and I knew that lightning was going to play a part in the story, that Ben was going to go deaf because of a lightning strike." Beyond the personal and creative synchronicity, it also felt like an appropriate balance for the more optimistic and dazzling New York of flapper-era 1927. "I thought of Hugo as a kind of love letter to Paris," Selznick adds. "And I thought well, you know, maybe I could make a book that was kind of a valentine to New York, and it might be more powerful if it's set at New York's lowest point."

"The fact that the story created a dialogue between these two periods of time, while retaining the continuity of New York, just begged our foregrounding of the cinematic styles of these two eras and how they had changed," he says. "First, it was an invitation to go back to the crowning years of silent film and some of its greatest masters--Murnau, Vidor, Chaplin--and study how it was they accomplished what they did. And what they accomplished was nothing less than the invention of the language of film, not to mention some of its greatest masterpieces. But for Rose, the looming transition from silent film to sound takes on a profound meaning, severing her from a universal experience the hearing world takes for granted. Contrast to that

what was happening fifty years later, directly following the demise of the studio system, in the filmmaking styles of the 1970's, a period of independent vision and artistic invigoration which continues to inform filmmakers today, and there you have the radical spectrum offered by Brian's parallel stories.”

Bringing those eras to life fell to Haynes’ veteran design collaborators like Sandy Powell, production designer Mark Friedberg and cinematographer Ed Lachman. There was no question that production needed to be centered around New York – so much of the film occurs at the museum, that a stand-in urban environment on a backlot or in Canada would be impractical. But New York of the present day actually barely resembles the New York of four decades ago, let alone one nearly a century in the past. Mark Friedberg, who jokes that his preparation for “Wonderstruck” was “spending the better part of forty or fifty years driving around the city and learning its ins and outs,” explains: “Most places we went to shoot our 1970s sets, we were ruining people’s neighborhoods, just making them look trashed.” Ultimately, Friedberg found some portions of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights that have not yet been gentrified, and could pass—with a lot of art direction—as the Upper West Side of 1977.

Citing Haynes’ visual inspiration in films like “The French Connection,” “Mean Streets” and “Taxi Driver,” Friedberg observes that, “The last vestige of the ‘mean streets’ is hardly left in the five boroughs... So a lot of our art direction on the streets is a lot of distressed signage and storefronts. And Todd’s been very particular about the art direction of our garbage. In those movies, the ground has garbage blowing all over the place. We forget how badly behaved we once were, and how dysfunctional we had become.” Actor Oakes Fegley agrees. He explains, “I’m from the 2000s, so it wasn’t easy for me to understand what it was like. But I watched a

movie about the 1977 blackout...and in 1977, New York was not the best place! It was dirty, just not a very nice place...completely different now.”

Though perhaps a bit more glamorous and in ways easier to disguise because of the freshness of the architecture and built environment, bringing 1927 to life was also quite a challenge, particularly in finding a “typical” Broadway theatre where Rose tries to find Lillian Mayhew at the beginning of her journey. Friedberg explains, “There are certain theaters that are historically preserved... A very limited amount of theaters in New York that were available, or even things that could be theaters or look like theaters. We looked at them all – we looked at Broadway, we talked about big digital expansions and it just didn’t feel right. Then I was driving around Crown Heights, and I screeched the car to a halt, and there was a building I had never seen before, which is always unusual for me. It was a church and it had these signs covering all of it, and it was an unusual building and I saw this strange detail from under the signs and we looked it up and found out that it was the original Loehmann’s department store. Under these signs were some spectacular friezes, which the people who ran the church didn’t even realize they had under there. After some negotiation, we were allowed to build our set and take off all of the church signage, which was nothing special, and build our set. But actually, what we uncovered was this beautiful building, unseen before, at least for the last 75 years. And that became our Promenade Theatre.”

But for Friedberg and many of the New York based crew—many of whom, like Friedberg and Vachon, grew up in and around New York City—the high point may have been working so many long nights, after hours, in the Museum of Natural History. It has stood as a benchmark for New Yorkers in film and literature for decades, from Holden Caulfield’s

remembrances of sister Phoebe in J.D. Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye" to the playful tweaking of the museum's exhibits in the "Night at the Museum" films with Ben Stiller.

"That was a place where I've grown up and have great reverence for and know well," says Friedberg. "It's not a place where I'm trying to influence terrifically from a design place. I'm trying to honor it. There's been a lot of updating that went on over the last fifty years, so we couldn't just transform it back. Fortunately, the museum was very cooperative with us, in an unusual way...a way they have never been with any other project before. When Brian wrote it there, he got to know the people in the museum and brought them into this process of research and how that research became the meat of his story. The book is about the amazing power of curation, about the inherent energy of things in the museum, and they were very excited about partnering with us. They sensed that this story isn't trying to exploit anything about the museum and quite the opposite that we were trying to honor it."

### **HARD WORK, DEDICATION...AND A LITTLE BIT OF WONDER**

In a sense, the backdrop of the museum—which, in "Wonderstruck" is not just a location, but a place where collected precious objects hold the secret to Rose and Ben's mysterious connection—is a perfect reflection of the magic that Selznick's novel and now Haynes' film attempts to render. While not relying on the supernatural or any sleight of hand, the "wonder" implied in the title emerges as a combination of time, space, character and circumstance that would inspire awe in viewers of all ages and persuasions, just as they might feel encountering one of the world's greatest collections for the first time. Mark Freidberg explains, "You know, the dioramas there are really like short films. They're not much about frozen moments but

they're more about what's just happened and what's about to happen. I think they are great places to get lost in your imagination. And that's where these stories intersect, in this cabinet of wonders, and the idea that this sacred room has maintained the energy of what happened fifty years ago. It still lives in there enough that it propels Ben to the truth that he's really looking for."

Producer Christine Vachon, who has produced all of Haynes' films and is thrilled to be still working with him "at the top of his game," points out that despite the "family" nature of the film and the young age of the protagonists, adults will have no lack of wonder. "Both the characters' journeys, they're really about people discovering that they're artists, and I think that will speak to a lot of people who are trying to figure out who they're really are. I mean look for anyone who has kids and has suffered through the majority of children movies—not all, but the majority—and I know how grateful I would be to have something I can watch with my child and appreciate along with them."

Todd Haynes agrees, pointing out that the complex storyline—which winds up with surprising revelations about Ben's past as well as opening a window towards both characters' potential futures—is likely to resonate with all viewers. "In many ways, the story functions as a mystery, in turn answering and then uncovering more questions about what is driving each child's journey and why they are being paralleled. In the end, we learn the value of following your own instincts and curiosity and overcoming your fears through various kinds of creative practices... It's a transformational power that we have in our own hands. It's very much about what you can learn and experience through your own eyes and what you can accomplish with your own hands. Not just overcoming loss and the unknown, but how to reach out and communicate with one another."

For someone who will spend much of her life communicating with her hands, young Millicent Simmonds sees value in “Wonderstruck” beyond the film’s more obvious themes. “I think this movie will help a lot of deaf kids,” she signs. “It will show them that they can do everything, that they can do anything. And it will help hearing people to understand how people live, how deaf people live and the struggles that they go through. I’m so happy to help spread that message.”

“I want to continue acting,” she concludes. “And maybe if I become an actress, then I can also have influence over hearing parents and tell them that it’s very important to learn sign language to communicate with your children and have a good relationship with your children. And I want to show hearing parents that we can do it! Deaf kids can do it! I mean the only thing we can’t do is hear. But we can read, we can be active, we can be strong leaders, we have all our other senses just like everyone else. Deaf people are very expressive and we use a lot of our body language and a lot of our facial expressions and I love using all of these tools to tell a story.”

## WONDERSTRUCK

## About the Cast

### **OAKES FEGLEY (Ben)**

Prior to starring as Pete in last year's hit "Pete's Dragon" for Disney, Oakes Fegley co-starred with Michelle Monaghan and Ron Livingston in "Fort Bliss," directed by Claudia Myers. He also appeared in "This Is Where I Leave You" as Jason Bateman's younger self in flashback, directed by Shawn Levy. On television, he had a recurring role as Young Eli Thompson, Nucky's little brother on the HBO hit series "Boardwalk Empire," and he also recurred as Gabriel the avatar to the evil force Samaritan in "Person of Interest" (CBS). Fegley's love for acting started on local stages near his home in Allentown, PA, including ArtsQuest (Bethlehem, PA), Bucks County Playhouse, and Civic Theatre of Allentown. He performed in the Two River Theater production of "On Borrowed Time" for Oscar winning actor and director Joel Grey. He has performed as Tiny Tim in "A Christmas Carol" multiple times during his young career, most recently at New York's Century Club with Alec Baldwin and Sam Waterston.

### **MILLICENT SIMMONDS (Young Rose)**

After a nationwide search, Millicent Simmonds landed the coveted lead role of Rose opposite Julianne Moore in "Wonderstruck." Director Todd Haynes shot half the film without sound, not only as a nod to the films made during the period in which the story takes place but also to highlight the perspective of Millicent's character Rose who is deaf. Millicent herself is deaf, and communicates by using American Sign Language. Simmonds has been performing Shakespeare plays with The Jean Massieu School of the Deaf Drama Club for the last five years, and received a certificate of excellence for her portrayal as Puck in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." She was also seen in the short film "Color of the World" which received recognition from Utah State University. A Utah native, Millicent enjoys soccer, reading, traveling, being with her family and feels passionately about becoming an advocate for Deaf actors.

### **JULIANNE MOORE (Lillian Mayhew)**

Julianne Moore is a *New York Times* Bestselling author, Academy Award and Emmy winning actress, and the ninth person in Academy history to receive two Oscar nominations in the same year. She also became the only American actress to be awarded the top acting prizes at all three major European film festivals, Berlin, Venice and Cannes. Having appeared in more than 60 feature films, 2015 saw her win both the Oscar, and BAFTA for Best Actress for her stunning turn in "Still Alice." Moore is on the Advisory Council of The Children's Health Fund, and is a supporter of Everytown, Planned Parenthood and the Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance.

### **JADEN MICHAEL (Jamie)**

Jaden Michael began his career at the age of three appearing in Nick Jr. and *Sesame Street* programming. At a young age, he played the voice of Baby Jaguar in “Dora the Explorer.” Michael is best known for his role as David Diaz in the feature film “Custody” with Viola Davis and Ellen Burstyn. He has guest-starred in Baz Luhrmann’s “The Get Down,” and appeared in sketches for “Saturday Night Live,” “The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon,” “The Late Show with David Letterman,” “The Colbert Report,” “Last Week Tonight with John Oliver,” and “The Daily Show.”

### **CORY MICHAEL SMITH (Young Walter)**

Cory Michael Smith currently plays Edward Nygma (The Riddler) on FOX’s “Gotham.” Previous projects include roles in Todd Haynes’ “Carol,” opposite Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara; the award-winning HBO miniseries “Olive Kitteridge” opposite Frances McDormand; and “Camp X-Ray” opposite Kristen Stewart. He made his Broadway debut with Truman Capote’s “Breakfast at Tiffany’s.” Also during the 2012-2013 theater season, he starred Off-Broadway in both the U.S. premiere of “Cock aka The Cockfight Play” by Mike Bartlett at The Duke and the NY Premiere of “The Whale” by Samuel D. Hunter at Playwrights Horizons (having originated the role at the Denver Center Theatre Company). Prior to that, he was seen in the NY premiere of “The Shaggs: Philosophy of the World,” produced by Playwrights Horizons and New York Theatre Workshop. Regional credits include: world premiere of A. Rey Pamatmat’s “Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them” (Humana Festival, Actors Theater of Louisville), and “The Fantasticks” (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis; Barrington Stage Company). He is a graduate of Otterbein University.

### **TOM NOONAN (Old Walter)**

Tom Noonan has most recently been seen in the acclaimed Syfy series “12 Monkeys” and the Cinemax series “Quarry.” He was a series regular on AMC’s series “Hell on Wheels” and can also be seen in the films “Anomalisa,” directed by Charlie Kaufman, and “The Shape of Something Squashed,” which premiered as a play at the Paradise Factory in New York in March 2014. He was a part of the Gotham and Independent Spirit Award winning ensemble of the Charlie Kaufman film “Synecdoche, New York,” and is best known for his work in features such as “Manhunter” and “Robocop 2.” He memorably guest starred on the first seasons of NBC’s breakout hit “The Blacklist” as well as HBO’s “The Leftovers,” and has also appeared on television in FX’s “Damages” (where he recurred for several seasons) and “Louie.” He will next be seen in the upcoming HBO anthology series “Dimension 404.”

As a writer/ director, Tom Noonan’s first film, “What Happened Was...,” won the Sundance Grand Jury Prize for Best Dramatic Feature Film and the Sundance Waldo Salt Award for Best

Screenplay and was nominated for two Independent Spirit Awards. His second film, "The Wife," was named one of the 10 Best Films of 1996 by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and one of the 10 Best Films of the Decade (1990-2000) by *Artforum* Magazine. Since 1985, Noonan has worked extensively with his Paradise Factory theater ensemble in NYC, where his work as a playwright won him the OBIE award in 1995 for his play "Wifey." Winner of the 1998 Guggenheim Fellowship in Filmmaking, Noonan has been a professor of film at Yale University (where he is also an alumnus), Columbia University, the School of Visual Arts and New York University.

### **MICHELLE WILLIAMS (Elaine)**

Michelle Williams' performances have established her as one of Hollywood's most sought-after and respected actors, earning her a Golden Globe Award and three nominations, a Tony Award nomination, a Critics' Choice Award and four Academy Award nominations. Williams was most recently seen in Kenneth Lonergan's "Manchester by the Sea," opposite Casey Affleck. Her performance earned her a Golden Globe nomination, a Critics' Choice nomination and an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress. She is currently in production on "The Greatest Showman," the story of P.T. Barnum, founder of the famous traveling Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, where she stars opposite Hugh Jackman.

Previously, Williams was seen in Derek Cianfrance's "Blue Valentine" opposite Ryan Gosling. Williams' captivating performance earned her an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress as well as Golden Globe, Broadcast Film Critics Association nominations and Independent Spirit Award nominations. Williams' performance in Ang Lee's "Brokeback Mountain," released in 2005, earned her nominations from Independent Spirit Award, SAG, Golden Globe, BAFTA, Broadcast Film Critics Association as well as an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress. In late 2011, she took on the iconic Marilyn Monroe in "My Week with Marilyn" opposite Kenneth Branagh and Judi Dench, a role that garnered her third Academy Award nomination, as well as nods from BAFTA and the Screen Actors Guild Awards, in addition to Golden Globe and Independent Spirit Award wins.

In her first collaboration with Kelly Reichardt in the critically acclaimed independent film "Wendy and Lucy," Williams' moving and evocative performance garnered a Toronto Film Critics Award for Best Actress in 2009 and her third Independent Spirit Award Nomination. 2010 marked Williams' second collaboration with director Kelly Reichardt in the period drama "Meek's Cutoff," which won the Producers Award at the 2011 Independent Spirit Awards as well as the SIGNIS Award at the 2010 Venice Film Festival. Williams' third collaboration with Reichardt, "Certain Women," premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival to rave reviews, and was released by IFC Films. "Certain Women" received the BFI London Film Festival's best film award. Williams' other film credits include Martin Scorsese's "Shutter Island," Sam Raimi's "Oz: The Great and Powerful," Saul Dibb's "Suite Française," Sharon Maguire's "Incendiaire," Sarah Polley's "Take This Waltz," Charlie Kaufman's "Synecdoche, New York," Todd Haynes' "I'm Not There," Wim Wenders' "Land of Plenty," Ethan Hawke's "The Hottest Slate," Thomas McCarthy's "The Station Agent," Sandra Goldbacher's "Me Without You," and Andrew Fleming's "Dick." In 2005, Williams was honored by the Motion Picture Club as Female Star of Tomorrow.

On television, Williams starred opposite Chloë Sevigny in Martha Coolidge's HBO movie "If These Walls Could Talk 2." She also had a six-year run as Jen Lindley on the WB's hit television series "Dawson's Creek." The series premiered in 1998 and remained one of the WB's top-rated shows throughout its run.

On stage, Williams was most recently seen on Broadway starring in David Harrower's "Olivier" Award-winning Drama "Blackbird" opposite Jeff Daniels with Joe Mantello directing and Scott Rudin producing. Her depiction of Una garnered her a Tony nomination for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play. She made her Broadway debut as Sally Bowles in the recent Roundabout Theatre Company production of "Cabaret." Her previous theatre credits include the Off-Broadway productions of Mike Leigh's "Smelling a Rat" and Tracy Letts's "Killer Joe," and the Williamstown Theatre Festival production of "The Cherry Orchard."

## WONDERSTRUCK

### TODD HAYNES (Director)

Todd Haynes is an acclaimed American independent film director and screenwriter. Born in Los Angeles on January 2, 1961, Haynes grew up interested in the arts and attended Brown University where he received his BA in Arts and Semiotics. After college, Haynes moved to New York City where he made his controversial short film “Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story” (1987), using Barbie dolls to portray the life and death of singer Karen Carpenter. Haynes made his directorial feature debut with the provocative 1991 film, “Poison,” which went on to win the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, spearheading what would become known as the New Queer Cinema. In 1995, Haynes’s 2nd feature film, “Safe,” starred Julianne Moore as a Los Angeles housewife who becomes environmentally ill. The film would be voted, by decade’s end, the best film of the 90’s by the *Village Voice*’s Critic Poll. Haynes’s next film, “Velvet Goldmine,” an homage to the glam rock era of the early 70’s premiered in Official Selection at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, where it received a Special Jury Prize.

Haynes’s next film, “Far From Heaven” (2002), inspired by the 50’s melodrama’s of Douglas Sirk, also starring Julianne Moore, earned both critical and mainstream success, receiving four Oscar nominations, including one for Haynes’ Original Screenplay. Haynes won several other awards for this film, including the Independent Spirit Award for Best Director. His 2007 film, “I’m Not There,” imagined the life and work of Bob Dylan through the guise of seven fictional characters, and once again won him critical acclaim, especially for the cross-gender casting of Cate Blanchett, who received the Oscar nomination and Golden Globe award for Best Supporting Actress. In 2011, Haynes directed and co-wrote “Mildred Pierce,” a five-hour mini-series starring Kate Winslet, which garnered 21 Emmy nominations, winning five of them, in addition to 3 Golden Globes Awards.

2015’s “Carol,” is based on Patricia Highsmith’s seminal novel The Price of Salt. Starring Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara, “Carol” received much critical acclaim and many accolades including six Academy Award nominations, five Golden Globe Award nominations, and nine BAFTA Award nominations. It has also been voted the Number 1 LGBT Film of All Time by BFI.

### BRIAN SELZNICK (Screenwriter)

Brian Selznick is the author and illustrator of many books for children, including The Invention of Hugo Cabret, winner of the Caldecott medal and the basis for the Oscar-winning movie “Hugo,” directed by Martin Scorsese. He’s also the author and illustrator of Wonderstruck, as well The Marvels. Other titles include The Doll People trilogy by Ann M. Martin and Laura Godwin, The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins by Barbara Kerley (winner of a Caldecott Honor) and Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride by Pam Muñoz Ryan. He wrote the

story for a new version of “The Nutcracker” at the Joffrey Ballet, choreographed by Tony Award winning choreographer Christopher Wheeldon (“An American in Paris”). He has worked professionally as a puppeteer with Basil Twist, and is currently writing a musical based on his first book The Houdini Box, commissioned by the La Jolla Playhouse. He lives with his husband, Dr. David Serlin in San Diego, California and Brooklyn, New York.

### **CHRISTINE VACHON (Producer)**

Christine Vachon is an Independent Spirit Award and Gotham Award winner who co-founded indie powerhouse Killer Films with partner Pamela Koffler in 1995. Over the past two decades, they have produced over 100 films and some of the most celebrated American indie features including: “Carol” (nominated for six Academy Awards), “Far From Heaven” (nominated for four Academy Awards), “Still Alice” (Academy Award winner), “Boys Don’t Cry” (Academy Award winner), “One Hour Photo,” “Kids,” “Hedwig and the Angry Inch,” “Happiness,” “Velvet Goldmine,” “Safe,” “I Shot Andy Warhol,” and “I’m Not There,” (Academy Award nominated). In television, Vachon executive-produced the Emmy and Golden Globe winning miniseries “Mildred Pierce” for HBO. Other recent work includes: “Goat,” “Weiner Dog,” “White Girl,” and “Beatriz At Dinner.” Killer Films recently produced “Z: The Beginning Of Everything,” starring Christina Ricci for Amazon Studios and is currently in post-production on Paul Schrader’s latest feature, “First Reformed.”

### **PAM KOFFLER (Producer)**

Pamela Koffler is an award-winning producer who in 1995 co-founded New York-based indie powerhouse Killer Films with partner Christine Vachon. Since founding Killer Films, she has worked with dozens of auteur filmmakers, producing many of the most celebrated American independent films including Academy Award® winners “Still Alice,” “Far From Heaven” and “Boys Don’t Cry.” Other credits include box office hit “One Hour Photo,” the ground-breaking “Kids,” “Hedwig and the Angry Inch,” “Happiness,” “I Shot Andy Warhol,” “Dirty Girl,” “Then She Found Me,” and “Savage Grace.” In television, Koffler executive produced the Emmy® nominated film “Mrs. Harris” in 2005 and the Golden Globe winning miniseries, “Mildred Pierce” for HBO. In January 2017, Killer Films launched the scripted bio-series about the iconic Zelda Fitzgerald for Amazon Studios “Z: The Beginning of Everything” starring Christina Ricci, with whom Killer Films developed and produced the series.

Pamela runs an MFA program in digital storytelling with Vachon for Stonybrook University.

## **JOHN SLOSS (Producer)**

John Sloss is the founder of Cinetic Media, a co-founder of FilmBuff, and was a co-founder, with director Gary Winick, of the groundbreaking digital production company, InDigEnt. He is the founder of and a partner in the entertainment law firm Sloss Eckhouse LawCo LLP, and he co-founded Producers Distribution Agency, the theatrical distributor of “Exit Through the Gift Shop,” “Senna,” “The Way,” “Brooklyn Castle” and “Escape From Tomorrow.”

Through Cinetic Media, Sloss has facilitated the sale and/or financing of well over 400 films including “Before Midnight,” “Life Itself,” “The Square,” “Short Term 12,” “Safety Not Guaranteed,” “Friends With Kids,” “The Kids Are All Right,” “Precious,” “We Own the Night,” “I’m Not There,” “Napoleon Dynamite,” “Little Miss Sunshine,” and “Super Size Me.” Sloss has worked with Richard Linklater since the sale of “Slacker” in 1991, and produced his Golden Globe and Academy Award-winning film, “Boyhood.” He is currently producing Linklater’s “Last Flag Flying,” and Ethan Hawke’s “Blaze.” Sloss has also executive produced over 60 films including “Before Midnight,” “Bernie,” “Far From Heaven,” and the Academy Award-winning “The Fog of War” and “Boys Don’t Cry.” He is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences and his clients include Killer Films, Kevin Smith, Bob Dylan, Charles Ferguson, Alex Gibney, Todd Haynes, John Hamburg, Justin Lin, Jake Kasdan, and Big Beach Films.

Prior to founding Sloss Law Office in 1993, Sloss was a partner at the international law firm Morrison & Foerster. Sloss received his J.D. and B.A. from the University of Michigan. He has served as an adjunct professor in the NYU Stern-Tisch MBA/MFA joint degree program and speaks regularly on entertainment related topics. He lives in New York with Bronwyn Cosgrave, his daughter Loulou and son Henry.

## **SANDY POWELL (Executive Producer / Costumer Designer)**

Winner of three Academy Awards for her work on “The Young Victoria” for Jean-Marc Vallée, “The Aviator” for Martin Scorsese and “Shakespeare in Love” for John Madden, Sandy Powell has also been nominated nine times for her work on “Carol,” “Cinderella,” “Orlando,” “The Wings of the Dove,” “Velvet Goldmine,” “Gangs of New York,” “Mrs. Henderson Presents,” “The Tempest” and “Hugo.” She has received two BAFTA Awards for “The Young Victoria” and “Velvet Goldmine” and has also been nominated nine times. In 2011, Powell was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for her services to the film industry.

Powell’s work on Martin Scorsese’s “The Wolf of Wall Street” marked her 6<sup>th</sup> collaboration with the director, having previously worked on “Shutter Island,” “The Departed,” “The Aviator,” “Gangs Of New York” and “Hugo.” She has also collaborated numerous times with director Neil Jordan on “The Crying Game,” “Interview with A Vampire,” “Michael Collins,” “The Butcher Boy” and “The End of the Affair” and director Derek Jarman on “Caravaggio,” “The Last of England,” “Edward II” and “Wittgenstein.” Her work can also be seen in “The Other Boleyn Girl,” “Sylvia,” “Far from Heaven,” “Miss Julie” and “Hilary & Jackie.” Recent credits include Kenneth Branagh’s “Cinderella” and Todd Haynes’s “Carol.” Sandy has received 2016

Academy, BAFTA and CDG nominations for her work on both features. She recently completed work on “How to Talk to Girls at Parties” directed by John Cameron Mitchell, and is currently working with Rob Marshall on “Mary Poppins Returns.”

### **ED LACHMAN (Director of Photography)**

Ed Lachman is best known for his collaborations with director Todd Haynes, including “Far From Heaven” in 2002, which earned Lachman an Academy Award nomination, and “Carol” in 2016, for which also received a nomination. He’s also worked with Ulrich Seidl, Wim Wenders, Steven Soderbergh and Paul Schrader. Other pictures include Werner Herzog’s “La Soufrière” (1977), “Desperately Seeking Susan” (1985), Sofia Coppola’s directorial debut, “The Virgin Suicides” (1999), Robert Altman’s last picture “A Prairie Home Companion” (2006), and Todd Solondz’s “Life During Wartime” (2009). In 1989, Lachman co-directed a segment of the anthology film “Imagining America.” In 2002, Lachman co-directed “Ken Park” with Larry Clark. In 2013, Lachman produced a series of videos in collaboration with French electronic duo Daft Punk, for the duo’s album “Random Access Memories.” Lachman was born in Morristown, New Jersey, the son of Rosabel and Edward Lachman, a movie theater distributor and owner. He attended Harvard University and studied in France at the University of Tours before pursuing a BFA in painting at Ohio University.

### **AFFONSO GONÇALVES (Editor)**

Affonso Gonçalves has edited over thirty films, including three Sundance Film Festival winners: Benh Zeitlin’s “Beasts of the Southern Wild,” Debra Granik’s “Winter’s Bone,” and Ira Sachs’ “Forty Shades of Blue.” Gonçalves’ other film credits include Tanya Hamilton’s “Night Catches Us,” Jim Jarmusch’s “Only Lovers Left Alive” and Ira Sachs’ “Love Is Strange.” He teamed up with Todd Haynes on the HBO mini-series “Mildred Pierce” and again on the movie “Carol,” and also worked on the HBO series “True Detective.” He has just finished working on Jim Jarmusch’s Iggy Pop and the Stooges documentary “Gimme Danger” and the feature “Paterson.”

### **MARK FRIEDBERG (Production Designer)**

Originally a student of fine art, New York City native Mark Friedberg married his passions for both film and painting as a production designer on a series of influential low-budget movies that came about during the indie film movement of the early ‘90s. Friedberg’s early work on Alexandre Rockwell’s “In the Soup” and Maggie Greenwald’s “The Ballad of Little Jo” earned great attention, leading to Friedberg’s collaboration with a variety of independent mavericks like Mira Nair (“The Perez Family,” “Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love”), Ang Lee (“The Ice Storm,” “Ride with the Devil”), Ed Harris (“Pollack”), Todd Haynes (“Far From Heaven,” “Mildred Pierce”), Jim Jarmusch (“Coffee and Cigarettes,” “Broken Flowers”), Wes Anderson (“The life

Aquatic with Steve Zissou,” “The Darjeeling Limited”), Julie Taymor (“Across the Universe,” “The Tempest”), Jodie Foster (“The Beaver”) and Charlie Kaufman (“Synecdoche, New York”). Friedberg also explored his interest in comedy on studio projects such as Garry Marshall’s “Runaway Bride” and “New Year’s Eve,” James Mangold’s “Kate and Leopold” as well as the musical “The Producers.” Friedberg also designed the plot for “Sex and the City.” Other studio projects include Kevin MacDonald’s “State of Play” and Mangold’s “Identity.”

Other recent films designed by Friedberg include “Noah” by Darren Aronofsky, where he built Noah’s Ark in real scale. He went on to the highly acclaimed “Selma” directed by Ava DuVernay. In 2014, he designed “The Amazing Spiderman 2” for Marc Webb. Last year he completed the groundbreaking “Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk,” a new film by Ang Lee. He just completed “Paterson” with his close friend Jim Jarmusch, where he also directed the second unit photography. He and is currently designing “Untouchable” with Neil Burger.

### **RYAN HECK (Art Director)**

Ryan Heck attended Ringling School of Art and Design studying illustration, then transferred to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago to continue studies in film. He then graduated with a degree in Film Technology from Valencia College in Orlando Florida (1997). Soon after graduation, Heck began working as an Illustrator and Set Designer on various television series and joined I.A.T.S.E. United Scenic Artists Local 829. He has traveled throughout the United States to design many feature films, including “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button,” which won the Academy Award for best Art Direction in 2008. Heck lives with his wife Amy and daughters Dorothea and Juniper in New York City where he continues to work on major studio feature films and television series.

### **CARTER BURWELL (Composer)**

Carter Burwell has composed the music for more than 80 feature films, including *Blood Simple*, *Raising Arizona*, *Miller’s Crossing*, *Barton Fink*, *The Hudsucker Proxy*, *Rob Roy*, *Fargo*, *The Spanish Prisoner*, *Gods and Monsters*, *Velvet Goldmine*, *Three Kings*, *Being John Malkovich*, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (BAFTA Nominee for Film Music), *Before Night Falls*, *A Knight’s Tale*, *The Rookie*, *Adaptation.*, *Intolerable Cruelty*, *No Country for Old Men*, *In Bruges*, *Burn After Reading*, *Twilight*, *Where the Wild Things Are* (Golden Globe Nominee for Best Original Score), *A Serious Man*, *The Blind Side*, *The Kids Are All Right*, *True Grit*, *Twilight: Breaking Dawn – Part 1 & 2*, *Mr. Holmes*, *Legend* and *The Finest Hours*.

Burwell most recently wrote the music for *Wonderstruck* which premieres at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2017 and marks Burwell’s fourth collaboration with director Todd Haynes. The film stars Julianne Moore and Michelle Williams. Other upcoming projects for 2017 include *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* written and directed by Martin McDonagh and

*Goodbye Christopher Robin* starring Domhnall Gleeson and Margot Robbie and directed by Simon Curtis.

Burwell wrote the music for the drama *Carol* starring Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara directed by Todd Haynes which premiered in Cannes and was released in theatres in November 2015. He also wrote the score for Charlie Kaufman's stop motion film *Anomalisa* which opened in December 2015 in New York and Los Angeles. Burwell received his first Oscar nomination for Best Original Score for *Carol*. He was also nominated for a Golden Globe and a Critics' Choice Movie Award for *Carol*. Burwell won the Los Angeles Film Critics Association's Award for Best Music Score for *Carol* and *Anomalisa*.

Burwell also previously worked with Todd Haynes on *Velvet Goldmine* and HBO's mini-series *Mildred Pierce* starring Kate Winslet in which Burwell was nominated for two Emmy Awards, winning for his work in the category of Outstanding Music Composition for a Miniseries, Movie or Special (Original Dramatic Score).

Other recent film projects for Burwell include *Hail, Caesar!* written and directed by Ethan and Joel Coen which opened in February 2016; the Nicole Kidman-Jason Bateman drama *The Family Fang* released in May 2016 and *The Founder* starring Michael Keaton and directed by John Lee Hancock which opened wide in January 2017 and is the true story of how Ray Kroc met Mac and Dick McDonald, and created a billion-dollar fast food empire.

His theater work includes the chamber opera *The Celestial Alphabet Event* and the Mabou Mines productions *Mother* and *Lucia's Chapters of Coming Forth by Day*.

In 2005 he developed a concert work for text and music titled *Theater of the New Ear*, presented in New York, London and Los Angeles. The text, by Joel and Ethan Coen and Charlie Kaufman, was performed by a dozen actors including Meryl Streep, Steve Buscemi, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Hope Davis, Peter Dinklage, and Jennifer Jason Leigh. The music was performed by the 8-member Parabola Ensemble, conducted by Mr. Burwell.

Burwell's dance compositions include the pieces *The Return of Lot's Wife*, choreographed by Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig, and *RABL*, choreographed by Patrice Regnier. He has performed around the world with his own ensembles as well as others, such as The Harmonic Choir.

His writing includes the essay "Music at Six: Scoring the News Then and Now," published in the inaugural issue of *Esopus* magazine in 2003 and reprinted in *Harper's Magazine* in 2004, and the essay "No Country For Old Music" in the 2013 *Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics*.

Burwell has taught and lectured at The Sundance Institute, New York University, Columbia University, and Harvard University.

His website is [carterburwell.com](http://carterburwell.com)