



A Samson Films and Desperate Optimists production
in association with Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland.

**Written and Directed by
Christine Molloy & Joe Lawlor**

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FILM INFORMATION

Genre	Psychological Thriller
Year	2019
Production Companies	Samson Films, Desperate Optimists Productions
Funding	Developed with the assistance of Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland and with the participation of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and RTÉ.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Shooting Format	2K
Sound Format	5.1
Country of Origin	Ireland
Language	English
Running time	100 minutes
Aspect Ratio	2.35:1

CREW

Directors	Christine Molloy & Joe Lawlor
Writers	Christine Molloy & Joe Lawlor
Producers	David Collins & Joe Lawlor
Co-Producer	Eoin O'Faolain
Executive Producer	Celine Haddad
Director of Photography	Tom Comerford
Production Designer	Emma Lowney
Editor	Christine Molloy
Composer	Stephen McKeon
Line Producer	Cathleen Dore
Costume Designer	Joan O'Clery
Casting Director	Emma Gunnery
Production Executive	Claire McCabe
Production Coordinator	Dawn Mac Allister

CAST

Rose	Ann Skelly
Ellen	Orla Brady
Peter	Aidan Gillen
Molly	Annabell Rickerby
Teresa	Catherine Walker
Valerie	Joanne Crawford
Dr. Langan	Alan Howley
Eva	Sadie Soverall
Young Man	Jack McEvoy
Young Woman	Hannah Behan
Archaeologist	Esosa Ighodaro
Oldest Child	Molly Rose Lawlor
Farm Hand	Lochlann O'Mearáin
Derry	Derry Lawlor
Vampire Girl	Lily Brand



LOGLINE

A young adopted woman tracks down her birth mother only to be confronted by revelations that draw her into the dark world of her father.

SYNOPSIS

Rose is at university studying veterinary science. An only child, she has enjoyed a loving relationship with her adoptive parents. However, for as long as Rose can remember she has wanted to know who her biological parents are and the facts of her true identity. After years trying to trace her birth mother, Rose now has a name and a number. All she has to do is pick up the phone and call. When she does it quickly becomes clear that her birth mother has no wish to have any contact. Rose is shattered. A renewed and deepened sense of rejection compels her to keep going. Rose travels from Dublin to London in an effort to confront her birth mother, Ellen.

Ellen is deeply disturbed when Rose turns up unannounced. The very existence of this young woman threatens the stability of the new life Ellen has painstakingly put together. But Rose proves very tenacious and Ellen is forced to reveal a secret she has kept hidden for over twenty years. This shocking revelation forces Rose to accept the violent nature of how she came into existence.

Rose believes she has little to lose but much to gain when she sets out to confront her biological father, Peter. What Rose cannot possibly foresee is that she is on a collision course that will prove both violent and unsettling – dark forces gather and threaten to destroy her already fragile sense of her own identity.



DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

In the early stages of developing a new script we begin by walking. The walk to the river Thames from our home in East London takes about 90 minutes there and back. Walking and talking has been pivotal to how we work on scripts together. Over the course of a year, we began most days with this walk. Making our way along the Regent's Canal, a story about a young adopted woman began to take hold, and as the months went by, we slowly began to tease out the details of the story and how we wanted to express the story. This encapsulates the two most important things for us in filmmaking: the story but equally the storytelling.

IDENTITY

One day we will subject ourselves to psychoanalysis to find out why it is exactly we are so drawn to narratives and characters where the central focus is identity under duress. We're particularly interested in the loss of identity or the moment of transformation when someone's sense of their own identity is altered. Having made two previous films in which our main characters quite literally step into someone else's shoes and assimilate themselves into someone else's life, and in so doing find a way to move forward with their own life, with *ROSE PLAYS JULIE* we were intrigued by the idea that our central character Rose, could become a different version of herself, Julie, the

person she would have been if she hadn't been put up for adoption. At the heart of the film is Rose's desire to reconcile these two different versions of herself, as not knowing her past – where she came from – she is struggling to imagine her future.

The theme of acting, or playing a role, is also a recurring idea in our previous films. In *ROSE PLAYS JULIE*, Rose isn't the only one to employ the skills of role playing. By its very nature, adoption – in particular closed adoptions where identifying information is withheld – creates alternative stories and narratives, and is often shrouded in mystery and even lies and untruths. Names get changed. Alternative certificates are issued. Histories get erased. Relationships are severed as new relationships are forged. How people experience adoption is different for everyone.

Whether an adopted person wants to find their birth parents or not, whether a birth parent wants contact with the child they gave up or not, is a very personal decision. In our story our character Rose is caught up in the reality of adoption as it exists in Ireland. In Ireland the power has always resided with the birth parent – specifically the birth mother. If the birth mother doesn't want to be traced, it is her right (legally) to deny her child contact. Rose's birth mother, Ellen, has good reason not to want contact of any kind with the daughter she gave up, and she has done everything she can to evade such contact, but Rose is tenacious and inevitably finds her way into Ellen's carefully constructed world. This is when the central idea in *ROSE PLAYS JULIE* merges with the other main idea that preoccupied our thoughts on our many walks – the exploration of the impact of sexual violence and the need for justice in whatever form it takes.

VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT

When we were nearing the end of the development of *ROSE PLAYS JULIE* the #MeToo movement took off and a spotlight was shone on the pervasiveness of sexual assault and violence in our society and the widespread abuses of power that allow it to happen unchecked and unpunished. It seemed that the themes at the heart of our story were suddenly center stage. From the first walk we undertook to the Thames, we always knew we also wanted to focus on the impact of rape. Not the act itself, but the aftermath. It seems so obvious to say, but it's not something we think of often in relation to rape, but it is the only crime that can be committed that can lead to the creation of a

new life. The impact of the violation, when it leads to rape conception, is shocking and challenging – particularly when we think of current regressive attitudes towards abortion – but we knew we wanted to explore this reality through Rose and Ellen’s story. We wanted to enter into this dark, painful world by creating three characters – the Mother, the Father, the Child – who are irrevocably bound together by an act of violence. In that way, the story has an archetypal quality to it. It plays out like a Greek drama in a way.

LOCATION

With all of the above in mind, and a story that was taking shape, we stopped our walks to the Thames, and replaced those walks with trips back and forth to Dublin as we began to think about the storytelling – how we would tell this Greek drama for the screen. Locations are central to our thinking and central to the writing process.

ROSE PLAYS JULIE is our third narrative feature, but the first we have shot entirely in Ireland, with an Irish cast and crew. As the elements of our story began to crystallize, defining the worlds for our three main characters became as important as finessing the dialogue. Characters for us always exist within worlds. Worlds that have been specifically imagined for our character. They are not naturalistic worlds bound by the rules of realism. They are constructed worlds that express what we wish to say about our character. So, the worlds are very much “made up.” For Rose, Ellen and Peter (Rose’s birth father) we wanted to find the location they lived in – their private space where they could reveal things about themselves that otherwise would remain hidden – and the location(s) they worked in – the public spaces they occupied where they presented only a carefully controlled/acted version of themselves to the world. As well as this we needed to find two symbolic, resonating locations – the place of the rape and the place where Rose/Julie reside. These locations ultimately become the arenas in which the cast and crew, who will realize the film with you, get to play. You don’t always get exactly what you want. Lots of practical considerations bare down on proceedings and compromises need to be made, and mental adjustments are needed to clear the obstacle course that is pre-production. But if the thinking has been laid down properly and you are surrounded by good, talented people, all becomes possible.

Our heads of department were all people we were working with for the first time – Tom Comerford (DoP), Emma Lowney (Production Designer), Joan O’Clery (Costume Designer) – and so it is an act of faith on all our behaves. Filmmaking is a social undertaking. Collaboration is at its heart. We value that aspect of filmmaking more than anything. With ROSE PLAYS JULIE we got lucky.

SOUND DESIGN AND MUSIC

From the outset we knew that sound design would play an important role in how ROSE PLAYS JULIE would develop during post production. When we’re editing we like to divide the roles. And so, Christine edits picture and dialogue while Joe begins to lay down a temp soundscape. This is not just a guide for the sound design team but it also helps to direct and navigate the edit. Allowing it to take shape. Normally a temp music track would be part of this work. But ROSE PLAYS JULIE proved curiously resistant to temp music. We just couldn’t find the music to sit with the edit as it was taking shape. And yet we always imagined music being an essential part of the world of the film.

Then we invited Stephen McKeon to respond with a score. We had worked with Stephen on our previous narrative feature, MISTER JOHN. In the end it was clear why temp music was so difficult to find for the film. It never existed in the first place. The film was waiting for Stephen’s singular response all along.

Of course, a psychoanalyst might want to know why we’re drawn to the darker, more unsettling sides of these themes of ROSE PLAYS JULIE. There’s no doubt that what drives the film forward is unsettling but what underpins it is our central characters – Rose and Ellen – moving beyond the pain to a place where they love and can be loved. Perhaps by having both qualities held in balance the ideas move beyond the genre of a psychological thriller and hopefully engage with important societal concerns regarding the complex relationships between men and women.



DIRECTORS' BIOGRAPHY

Born in Dublin, Ireland Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor studied theatre in the UK in the late 80s at Dartington College of Arts. From 1992 to 1999 they devised, directed and performed in several internationally acclaimed theatre shows before shifting their attention towards moving image-based work. Between 2000 and 2003 they directed a number of episodic, interactive works for the internet, and large-scale community video projects for galleries.

Between 2003 and 2010 Molloy and Lawlor produced, wrote and directed 10 acclaimed short films including the award winning WHO KILLED BROWN OWL and JOY. All shot on 35mm, the CIVIC LIFE films have screened extensively around the world including screenings at the 33rd Telluride Film Festival, the 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam, the 49th Thessaloniki International Film Festival and IndieLisboa '09.

HELEN, their award-winning debut feature film, premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June 2008 before screening at over 50 film festivals worldwide, as well as being released in several countries. In 2009 HELEN was nominated for an Evening Standard Film award and a Guardian First Film award. Their second feature film, MISTER JOHN, also premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June 2013 and was released in the UK and Ireland by Artificial Eye in September 2013.

In 2016, Molloy and Lawlor released to critical acclaim their debut documentary FURTHER BEYOND, and they are currently working on a follow up documentary, THE FUTURE TENSE.

Molloy and Lawlor live in London, UK with their daughter.

DIRECTORS' FILMOGRAPHY

FEATURES

Further Beyond

Ireland | 2016 | Color | HD | 16:9 | 89 mins

Mister John

UK/Ireland/Singapore | 2013 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 95 mins

Helen

UK/Ireland | 2008 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 79 mins

SHORTS

Tiong Bahru

Singapore | 2010 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 19 mins

Joy

UK | 2007 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 9 mins

Daydream

UK | 2007 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 29 mins

Now We Are Grown Up

UK | 2005 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 12 mins

Leisure Centre

UK/IRL | 2005 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 18 mins

Town Hall

UK | 2005 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 11 mins

Twilight

UK | 2005 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 5 mins

Revolution

UK | 2004 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 10 mins

Moore Street

IRL | 2004 | Swahili/English | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 6 mins

Who Killed Brown Owl

UK | 2004 | Color | 35mm | 2.35:1 | 9 mins



PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

David Collins runs Samson Films, one of Ireland's leading independent film companies. In addition to developing his own material, David acts as a co-producer and executive producer on a wide range of Irish, European and international feature film projects. The company has been awarded slate funding by Screen Ireland and the EU MEDIA programme amongst others. David Collins is on the executive board of Screen Producers Ireland and is a member of the European Film Academy. Samson Films has a sister company, Accomplice Television, which specializes in producing original drama for television.

Notable recent credits include *FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY* (2018), *CELLAR DOOR* (2018) and *THE WITNESS* (2018). Past achievements include the Oscar award-winning musical *ONCE* (2006), *EDEN* (2007), *GRABBERS* (2012) which screened during the Midnight Section at the Sundance Film Festival and was part of the official selection at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, *TIGER RAID* (2016) which was part of the official selection at the Tribeca Film Festival and the Edinburgh International Film Festival and *A DARK SONG* (2017) which won the SITGES New Vision Award for Best Motion Picture.

Through Accomplice Television, David has produced the multiple award-winning television drama series *BACHELORS WALK* and *PURE MULE* both for RTE Television and more recently co-produced *JACK TAYLOR SHOT DOWN* for ZDF and TV3. He was also the Irish Co-Producer on the \$15m ITV Studios television series *TITANIC*, written by Julian Fellowes.



CAST BIOGRAPHY

ANN SKELLY (Rose)

Ann was most recently seen as the female lead, Beth Winters, opposite Jamie Dornan in the BBC drama *DEATH AND NIGHTINGALES*, an adaptation of the novel written and directed by Allan Cubitt. Ann also appeared as Annie Moffat in the BBC mini-series *LITTLE WOMEN*, Bidy Lambert in the drama series *REBELLION* for RTE, Hannah Baylor in the *Blackpills* series *PLAYGROUND* created by Luc Besson for Apple TV France.

As a teenager Ann created the recurring role of Rachel Reid in the IFTA award winning serialized Irish drama, *RED ROCK* for TV3/BBC/Amazon Prime, produced by Element Pictures and Angel Station.

Recent films include: *KISSING CANDICE* (2017) directed by Aoife McArdle for which she was nominated for a Rising Star Award and a Best Actress in a Lead Role at the 2018 IFTA's.

Ann will be one of the leads in the Joss Whedon created, upcoming HBO original sci-fi drama series *THE NEVERS*, which will premiere in April 2021.



CAST BIOGRAPHY

ORLA BRADY (Ellen)

Irish-born Orla Brady studied acting at the Ecole Phillippe Gaulier in Paris. Upon returning to Dublin, she won the role of Adela in *THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA* at the Gate Theatre. Since then, she has been working on both sides of the Atlantic with a career mix of television, film, and stage to her credit.

Recent credits include *A GIRL FROM MOGADISHU* (2019), *THE FOREIGNER* (2017), *INTO THE BADLANDS* (2015-2019) and *COLLATERAL* (2018).

Orla stars in the lead role of the current RTÉ/Acorn TV comedy-drama series *THE SOUTH WESTERLIES* (2020).



CAST BIOGRAPHY

AIDAN GILLEN (Peter)

Aidan Gillen is an Irish actor. He is best known for portraying Petyr "Littlefinger" Baelish in the HBO series *GAME OF THRONES* (2011), CIA operative Bill Wilson in *THE DARK KNIGHT RISES* (2012), Stuart Alan Jones in the Channel 4 series *QUEER AS FOLK* (1999), John Boy in the RTÉ Television series *LOVE/HATE* (2010), and Tommy Carcetti in the HBO series *THE WIRE* (2002).

Recent films include: Oscar winning *BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY* (2018), *DAVE ALLEN AT PEACE* (2018), *WE OURSELVES* (2018), and *MAZE RUNNER: THE DEATH CURE* (2018).

Gillen has won three Irish Film & Television Awards and has been nominated for a British Academy Television Award, a British Independent Film Award, and four Screen Actors Guild Awards.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- ROSE PLAYS JULIE was shot on location in Dublin and Wicklow in the summer of 2018.
- The film's soundtrack was originally composed and arranged by IFTA winning Irish composer, Stephen McKeon.
- Post production was carried out by Fonic, Splice and Point1Post.
- ROSE PLAYS JULIE was developed with the assistance of FísÉireann/ Screen Ireland with the participation of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and RTÉ.
- ROSE PLAYS JULIE had its World Premiere at the BFI London Film Festival 2019 as part of the Official Competition.