



Directed by Stephen Brown  
Screenplay by John Banville

**Starring:** Ciarán Hinds, Charlotte Rampling, Natascha McElhone,  
Rufus Sewell, Bonnie Wright and Sinéad Cusack

Running Time: 87 mins

**Distributor Contact:**

Sarah Townsend / Independent Distribution  
sarah@independentfilmcompany.com

**Press Contact:**

Sarah Corney / Organic  
sarah.corney@organic-publicity.co.uk  
+44 (0)20 3372 0989

## SYNOPSIS

Grieving after the death of his wife, art historian Max Morden (**Ciarán Hinds**) returns to the sleepy seaside resort where he spent summers as a child. Max lodges at a boarding house he once frequented, where frosty proprietor Miss Vavasour (**Charlotte Rampling**), and eccentric resident Blunden (**Karl Johnson**), now reside. Before long - and despite protestations from his daughter Clare (**Ruth Bradley**) - Max revisits the ghosts of his past.

Max's mind returns to an idyllic summer in 1955 when, as a child, he encountered the Grace family. Carlo (**Rufus Sewell**) and Connie (**Natascha McElhone**) were unlike any adults he had met before: nonchalant, bohemian and filled with worldly grace and candour.

Young Max (**Matthew Dillon**) befriends the young Grace twins, Chloe (**Missy Keating**) and Myles (**Padhraig Parkinson**), and his fascination for this unconventional clan transforms into intimacy and love. Meanwhile, the children's young nanny Rose (**Bonnie Wright**), an outsider like Max, regards the Grace's new surrogate with quiet suspicion.

While Max attempts to deal with the loss of his wife, and recalls moments with his departed partner Anna (**Sinéad Cusack**), he also confronts a distant trauma from the past.

The Sea is a haunting, uplifting, meditation on the human condition - at times elegiac, poetic, and nostalgic. A story of memory, love, loss, regret... and the persistent possibility of rebirth.

## EXPLORING THE SEA

The Sea is an adaptation of a novel by **John Banville** that won the Man Booker Prize in 2005. The book has achieved universal acclaim for its compelling and deft treatment of the grand themes of love, death, identity and the strongest emotions associated with the human condition, told through an engaging plot with perfectly drawn characters.

**Luc Roeg**, producer at Independent Film Company (*We Need To Talk About Kevin*, *Mr. Nice*) expands on the story. "*The Sea* is a film about a man who reaches a point in his life when he has to go back and discover a time in his past that reveals himself. Something in his past that he has lived with throughout his adult life. When he loses his wife to cancer, he makes a decision to go back and revisit that time. It's the unfolding of those events that unlock his present. It's a coming of age story for a man in his 50's."

The story opens with Max Morden (**Ciarán Hinds** - *Munich*, *Rome*) learning that his wife Anna (**Sinéad Cusack** - *Camelot*, *Eastern Promises*) has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Not long after her death, Max arrives at a seaside boarding house, The Cedars, with his daughter Clare (**Ruth Bradley** - *Grabbers*, *Primeval*), where he is tended to by the proprietor Miss Vavasour (**Charlotte Rampling** - *The Verdict*, *The Duchess*) and doddery resident Blunden (**Karl Johnson** - *The Illusionist*, *Rome*).

As he settles into The Cedars guesthouse, Max retreats into his memories, retracing his steps on an idyllic summer from his childhood, remembering an unusual family he once adored.

"This is the journey of a man whose wife has died and he goes back to his childhood haunt where he was taken on holiday and fell in love," says director **Stephen Brown**. "It's the revisiting and the re-examining of that time in light of the great loss he has just suffered."

"The plot of the film is Old Max looking back on his past, which is where I come in as Young Max," adds **Matthew Dillon**.

The myriad of themes conjured up in Banville's remarkable book are preserved in Brown's directorial debut. Hinds believes the story is about the human condition: "A man discombobulated or unbalanced, living with grief and confused as to what he can do and how he should deal with it. He's not very good at dealing with it."

Is returning to this town, the scene of a childhood trauma, therapy for him? Is he fleeing one sadness by revisiting the scene of an old one? "He's trying to escape," says Hinds. "He's trying to hide - going into the dark of a revelation that happened to him and never quite went away, but seems to be coming into his life more and more now at his age."

Max's daydreams take him back to a summer in the 1950's when he encountered the exotic Grace family, who lived in The Cedars while on vacation. **Natascha McElhone** (*The Truman Show*, *Californication*) plays otherworldly mother Connie Grace; **Rufus Sewell** (*Dark City*, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*) slips into the sandals of her eccentric husband Carlo. **Missy Keating** and **Padhraig Parkinson** play their young children: the tumultuous Chloe and her mute twin brother Myles.

**Bonnie Wright** (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*) plays the children's au pair Rose. "Max is still haunted by his past... The summer he spent at this seaside village. That's one of the reasons he comes back to the place where he spent his childhood," she says.

Young Max is amazed by the characters he encounters. "I'm totally enthralled with the Grace family, who I see as God-like," remarks Dillon. "I'm especially in love with Chloe and Connie."

"Chloe is kind of a feisty girl," laughs Keating. "She gets what she wants all the time. She likes Max. They have a good relationship." How about her relationship with Myles, her twin brother? "They're very close. Even though Myles can't talk. He understands her and pretty much does whatever she says. They fight a lot. They're twins."

Parkinson ponders on his character, Myles: "He's very aloof; very cheeky in his own way. He can't talk. He just does his own thing and doesn't care about anyone else. He's got a strong

bond with his sister. His family is really eccentric. He's a mute." Is he biologically a mute? "I think he chooses not to talk. I think he's in his own little world."

Why does Young Max find the Graces so alluring? McElhone talks about the first time Max sees the family on the beach. "He's an only child," says McElhone. "His father goes off to work every day. He finds his mother slightly annoying, as lots of 12 year old boys do. He sees this tableau on the beach. This very bohemian family. It's sort of like stepping into a painting and seeing it come to life. Parents swigging wine and chain-smoking; being irreverent, singing and dancing. It seems very appealing. It's almost like there is a circus tent over there, he wants to see what's inside it. He does and becomes embroiled."

The Sea has a tapestry of themes, one of which is its summer-drenched childhood nostalgia.

"One of the reasons I loved the script was it reminded me of my childhood in Wales," suggests Sewell. "We had similar missions to the beach on the Pembrokeshire Coast. No matter what the weather was doing, we'd all pile into the car. We'd sing songs in the car and fight in the back. That slightly mad mismatch of a family. The people who I kind of adored when I was a child were probably very flawed people, but were so exciting. This reminds me of that. It's so different of Max's own life. Max's relationship with his parents is very troubled. To meet this family who are so unconventional and crazy. They have their own troubles, but to someone like him it seems like another world."

**Michael Robinson**, producer at Independent Film Company, continues: "I loved the look back into the idealised childhood. The summer holiday feeling of things. It was a strand to the story that had me hooked. Anyone can relate to the story of bereavement and loss and looking back at your life. It was the different strands of the story that got us all collectively hooked. The idealised summers. Glamorous adults, new people, and that sort of thing."

Max is swept up in the Grace's wake, even though they are a bit dysfunctional.

"Young Max is very shy, but he's determined," continues Dillon. "He's obsessed with Connie Grace. He follows her around - it's a bit weird. The Grace kids pick on him a lot but he doesn't mind because he's so sucked into their world. He's nearly ashamed of his mum and dad because he wants to be a part of this group."

For John Banville, who adapted his own novel for the screenplay, this unrequited romance is a key element of the story. "The Sea is about memory - it's about young love which is very important in our lives. Perhaps the most important thing. When we're children, we're locked inside ourselves. We're totally self-centered. Each experience is a new one. We're simply absorbing these experiences and interpreting them. We barely have time to look around.

"It's only when we fall in love - whatever falling in love was at the age of 10 or 11 - that we discover the world is full of other people. They are just as self-absorbed as you are. It's a way of discovering the world and moving into the world. That kind of young love is very important. So it's pure in all senses of the word."

Young Max falls in love, in his own childhood way, with Connie and Chloe. "From the outside, things always seem different to how they are," says McElhone. "He's projected a lot of his fantasies onto this family, including his own burgeoning sexual awakening. He hangs it on the mother, then he hangs it on the daughter. Like any adolescent boy, he just wants experience. He wants to know what things feel like. He wants to try new things out."

Meanwhile, Rose is on the sidelines. Who is she? Why is she with the Grace family?

"Rose is with the Grace family as the nanny governess to the two children," explains Wright. "She's with them on their holidays in Ireland. You get a sense she travels with them everywhere. She's a bit like a surrogate extra child." Instead of minding the children, she appears to be tortured by them. "That's true. They run circles around her. Especially Chloe. Most of the time Rose is fed up with their behaviour."

The story flits between childhood memories of the 1950's, and present day when Old Max interacts with the other inhabitants of The Cedars. Miss Vavasour is "a woman who is not retired from life but stayed in one place," according to Charlotte Rampling. "Something happened in the story that caused her to do so." Max endures the presence of retired army colonel Blunden. Karl Johnson describes their relationship as "a little touchy, a little difficult. They don't get on. He's polite to Max at least, even if Max isn't polite back."

When he is not recalling his childhood, Max retreats to memories of his wife. Sinéad Cusack is a fan of John Banville's work and particularly adored *The Sea*.

"I never thought it could be made into a movie because I thought it was so much an interior monologue of the man," says Cusack. "Anna figured quite strongly in his psychological, emotional, mental breakdown and journey. She is very strong... a very strong character. A photographer: feisty. Didn't take any bullshit. Then she gets cancer and leaves him. Or that's how he perceives it... she has left him. She dies."

Has she come to terms with her fate, whereas perhaps he has not? "I think Anna has found acceptance of her cancer and her imminent death. I think she has come to terms with it and he obviously hasn't dealt with any of his issues... going back to his childhood. That is of course his journey... and the journey of the movie."

Max is working out his problems during the story, Hinds explains. "Sometimes he behaves stupidly or ignorantly. It's not like he's a raging screaming, angry drunk. He's just confused. He doesn't know where to place himself. He's awkward in life now. And resentful that he's been left alone. He almost blames his wife, selfishly. He's a half pint empty man - belligerent, slightly mean-minded. He's not generous in his spirit and treats his daughter appallingly, I think, at a time of crisis. But he's so locked up in himself that he can't reach out."

Ruth Bradley, as Clare, is sympathetic toward Max's predicament. "Clare's mother has just died, seven weeks previously," says Bradley. "She's grieving and needs her dad at this stage of her life. Her concern is for her father. Obviously, he's gone away to find himself. She thinks he should be with her and at home. From her perspective, although she's very worried about him, she wants to have her dad because she is going through it all on her own. They have a sparring relationship but there's a lot of love there."

For Stephen Brown, the challenge in making *The Sea* was transitioning between the past and present. "For me, the overriding principle has been that everything that takes place is in the psychological space of our hero's mind," says the director. "It's a film about a man who goes on a journey, starts off in a terrible place with his wife dying, and ends down the line with... well, I won't say. Hopefully we'll go with him, weaving in and out of the past and present."

What will audiences get out of the film? "The story relates to people in different ways," continues Brown. "You can choose to see one or other of the storylines, or all three. Most people can relate to the story of bereavement or loss. Most people can relate to looking back on your life and trying to figure out why things happened the way they did. Also, looking back to the ideal childhood summer holidays and the joy of that. The mystery contained in that mix will attract audiences, along with the cast and hopefully a great look for the movie."

Despite its dark themes, *The Sea* is ultimately uplifting. Max is on a voyage of discovery.

"I find Max's journey fascinating," says Cusack. "Everything we do as adults is predicated on our childhood experiences. It dictates so many decisions we take in adult life."

In a way, muses John Banville, the death of Max's wife is incidental. "He is trying to cure himself, he's trying to reappraise; he's trying to find himself again. Of course, it's in a way that people, particularly men, always try to find themselves again - they retreat into the far past. That's what Max does. What he discovers there are a lot of delightful things. A lot of terrible things as well. But that's life."

## BETWEEN THE LINES - FROM NOVEL TO SCREENPLAY

**John Banville's** novel *The Sea* won universal acclaim. The actors in the filmic adaptation are amongst the book's fans. "It's a very poetic, disquieting novel about memory and grief," says **Ciarán Hinds**. "It's almost like a work of art - very poetic, very fluid, very discursive, cruelly witty in its observations about a man's behaviour in grief and memory."

"It's about loss, memories, reliving parts of your life that you won't get back," continues **Natascha McElhone**. "It's one of those epic novels. There's a whole landscape of emotions and relationships uncovered and studied. It's very meditative. The book is a bit stream of consciousness. [John Banville] writes that so brilliantly."



Director **Stephen Brown** read the novel before it won the Man Booker Prize. The book resonated with him on many levels: "That moment of capturing childhood wonder. Also, as an adult, facing great challenges in one's life. In one's family, illness, etc. Lots of things resonated. And it was such a beautiful novel. It felt to me very powerful on a psychological level. That has always appealed to me as material for a film."

Although Brown had not directed a film before, he had many years of experience behind the lens. He started his career producing and directing music videos with **Luc Roeg**. The pair remained friends; some years back he told the producer about Banville's book.

Roeg picks up the story. "That was how it came into my life. I've known Stephen for a long time and I've been working with him ever since he read that book and made that first call. In the distant past, we made music videos together. Our careers went in different directions but our friendship remained. I've always regarded Stephen as a very intelligent, creative force. It was an easy decision to make the film."

What was it about the story that appealed to Roeg, and **Michael Robinson**, his fellow producer at Independent? "What appealed to me were the secrets that were locked up inside it. When you initially read the novel, it's a fantastic piece of literary work. Finding the film - a visual way of expressing that - was a challenge, but we never doubted it was in there. It's really the internal voice of Max that is the driving force of the movie."

The idea of memory, and the idea of past as a foreign country, was a theme that Roeg and his collaborators explored in the 2011 picture *We Need to Talk About Kevin*. Like *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, *The Sea* is a meditation on undisclosed trauma.

Roeg nods. "We enter this world in a very subjective way, in the way we did in Lionel Shriver's novel and Lynne Ramsay's film, where you're experiencing past events through Max's point of view. They're informing his present in the future. There is a parallel there."

Independent Film Company optioned the film rights for Banville's book. Not long after, Roeg met Banville in London. The novelist recalls their meeting: "We sort of looked at each other and I said, 'Well, I could do the script'."

A writer adapting his own work, however, is not always the best course.

"You proceed with caution in those circumstances, not least because when a novel has had that much attention and been that successful, you still need to make certain choices for a film adaptation," explains Roeg. "It's sometimes difficult for authors to change their work. John was fantastic. From the outset he made it clear there were no rules, nothing was sacred in the text, and he was really up for doing it."

Brown continues: "It was great working with John because he obviously knows the material inside out. There is a maxim that one doesn't always work with the author of a novel on a

film adaptation because they're so close to it. John's a film nut. He absolutely adores cinema. He knew what needed stripping right back. He made this a very practical blueprint."

Banville's experience in the screenwriting trade helped. Since adapting his own novel *The Newton Letter* into 1984's *Reflections*, for Channel 4, he has worked in film-making. His projects include *The End of the Affair*, a collaboration with director Neil Jordan, and Deborah Warner's *The Last September* (1999). In recent times, he co-authored *Albert Nobbs* with Glenn Close.

The screenwriting process is different to writing a novel, he remarks: "It's completely flat. You have to write flat. In a novel, every line of dialogue is description. Every line has to do all the work. It has to stand for itself. In the screenplay, the dialogue is given life by actors, directors, designers, cameramen, lighting people."

Like Max Morden in the story, Banville had to revisit his past in writing the screenplay. "Unfortunately, one has to read one's own stuff which is pretty grim," says the writer. "Mostly, you can just read the dialogue. Of course, the thing is in one's head. But then it has to be changed for the screen. You can't transpose a novel to the screen - it never works. You have to write a new work based on the novel, which is what I did with *The Sea*."

Adapting *The Sea* was no easy task, since the story is not a linear narrative.

"The story doesn't go in one straight line," says Ciarán Hinds, who plays Old Max. "As you do in novels, you disappear back into history. A lot of the storyline takes part in the 1950's when he's a 10 year old. A good third of the story is about his past. These memories haunt him later on when his wife dies. Then you've also got memories of her before she died. You're talking about three different time lines inside the story, and it's not science-fiction. It's not time-travelling. There are no zombies or aliens."

The film-makers were delighted with Banville's results. The writer captured the essence of the book and the characters without allegiance to his former work. Instead, *The Sea* screenplay stands out as a masterpiece in its own right. "There's something very beautiful in the austerity of the script," muses Hinds. "It's like weaving a quilt of memory."

Natascha McElhone was moved when she read the script. "I think it's quite unusual to have the writer adapt the screenplay," she says. "I hadn't worked on something before where that's the case. It's always someone else who has done the adaptation of the book. I think he's done it incredibly it well."

**Rufus Sewell**, who plays McElhone's onscreen husband Carlo Grace, continues: "The script has a very different energy to the book. The character of Carlo is revealed in ways in the script that he isn't in the book - it makes total sense to me. It's very evocative. It struck a chord. It has the ring of truth. The oddity and misshapeness of truth. I love that evocation of a family in the past that's, in its own way, bonkers and daft. Bad stuff and dark stuff, at the same time a lot of love, fun, and delight. All mixed up. Like in life."



**Ruth Bradley**, who plays Max's daughter Clare, continues the theme: "So much in the book is descriptive. John managed to weave that seamlessly into the present. There are pieces of dialogue in the script that you remember from the book. They don't read as dialogue or exposition in the script, they just make perfect sense. It's kind of effortless. You can pick up the script without knowledge of the book and be left with the same feelings. That's a real achievement in itself to get both from it. It's seamless."

When she first heard about the project, **Sinéad Cusack** couldn't see how this reflective story could transpose into a screenplay, "but he's done it. There are three different time lines, so it's complicated but it's the sort of complication that I love seeing in a movie. You have to use your head as well as your heart."

With the screenplay written, the producers at Independent needed the final piece of the puzzle: an Irish connection. Banville, after all, is an Irish writer and the story is set in Ireland's southeast. Enter producer extraordinaire **David Collins** (*Once*, *Eden*) from Samson Films.

Collins had read the book and knew Banville. He also brought the Irish financial components to the package. "We came with a package of private investors from the UK and overseas," says Independent's Michael Robinson. "We knew there was some pent up demand for the film, because our company has a sales agent and a distributor as well. We're quite plugged in to what the market is looking for. David brought in the Irish Film Board, RTÉ, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, and the Section 481 [tax relief] mechanism."

Collins also brought enthusiasm. "David has been a great motivator, a force of great energy and determination. He's been the completion of the financial picture," says Robinson.

The Sea was almost ready to set sail. All the film-makers needed now was a seaworthy cast.

## CASTING A WIDE NET

Most of the central cast in *The Sea* committed to the project long before production commenced. **Ciarán Hinds** read the screenplay around three years before becoming Old Max. **Charlotte Rampling**, **Rufus Sewell**, **Sinéad Cusack** and **Bonnie Wright**, signed on around the same time. John Banville's writing motivated the actors to get involved. **Luc Roeg**'s production history and **Stephen Brown**'s passion for the project helped.

"The casting came together quite easily," remarks Roeg. "The cast responded to the script and when they met Stephen, they responded to his ideas and approach to the film."

When it came to casting the lead role, Hinds was always the first choice, says Brown. "Ciarán Hinds is a formidable actor - he held all the characteristics of what we saw in Max, what he could bring to the performance in terms of internalisation. Physically, he's fantastic for the part. There wasn't a reason not to cast him. He was top of the list; first choice."

Producer **Michael Robinson** agrees: "It's always the intention to get people with the highest possible pedigree - people right for the roles. Ciarán was the perfect choice for Max. He was always our first choice - we kind of got the first choice across the board, which is great."

Hinds also has a history with Sinéad Cusack, who plays Max's wife Anna. After sharing the stage together in plays such as Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, and Conor McPherson's version of Hitchcock's *The Birds*, *The Sea* marks the fourth time they have worked together. Cusack refers to Hinds as her second husband, as the two have played husband and wife on numerous occasions. "We know each other a lot, but I also respect him hugely as an actor. I think he's wonderful. Also, he's one of the nicest men on the face of the planet," she says.

"Sinéad came to the project very early in the process," says Roeg. "She was our first choice and had been working a lot with Ciarán in the theatre so there was a relationship there: personal as well as professional. They were very happy to be working together on screen. That fell into place quite nicely."

Irish actress Ruth Bradley "perfectly fitted the part" of Clare, according to Robinson.

In casting the Graces, the producers looked for "people who were in some way otherworldly, glamorous," continues Robinson. "A family unit with chemistry. **Rufus Sewell** and **Natascha McElhone** have a great onscreen chemistry - they're great fun to have around."

"They bring an element of glamour to the parts and an element of fun as well," says Roeg. "I think they'll be a very good counter balance to Ciarán, Sinéad, Charlotte."

Casting the child actors was more challenging. In liaison with Irish casting director **Louise Kiely**, the producers saw dozens of kids. After eight weeks of auditions, the core team of **Matthew Dillon**, **Missy Keating**, and **Padhraig Parkinson**, was cast.

Casting the role of Young Max was crucial, since the character is present in much of the movie. The film-makers were delighted with the results. "When I first saw Matthew I thought, 'My God, he's like a young Ciarán Hinds'. He's incredible," says Brown.

Keating "went for an audition in Dublin and got a call back. After two weeks, I was told I had the part." The acting bug has bit her household. This is Keating's second feature performance, while her dad, pop star Ronan Keating, has also taken up acting. Parkinson also comes from acting stock – his brother, Art, has a role in HBO drama *Game of Thrones*.

Although John Banville took a step back after completing the screenplay, he is delighted with the casting. "I'm always fascinated by casting," says Banville. "You put words on a page and you may have an image in your head of the character, but it's not literally given flesh by a casting director - it springs to life. Lines written flat on the page suddenly leap off the page and become spoken by living, breathing human beings. That's an amazing process."

Surely he has specific images in his head when he creates characters?

"They're in my head, but I know they're not going to be in the casting director's head or anybody else's head except mine," the author continues. "That's the great thing about movies. It's an adventure - a group of people coming together. Not one of them is more important than the other. Even if it's a great Hollywood superstar, he or she has to blend in with a project that takes place over a couple of months. It's a very democratic process."

Finding a suitable location to shoot *The Sea* was almost as important as the casting itself. In the initial stages of pre-production, Samson's **David Collins**, alongside the other producers, looked in Northern Ireland and Dublin. But Wexford was always the ideal location.

"I was always very keen to shoot the whole film as authentically as possible," explains Collins. "That's why we made a decision, early on, to shoot in Wexford. I think we found some fabulous locations that will emerge in the film. The fact John is from Wexford was important. I was keen to see if we could find a way to shoot it in his own county. The most important thing was to find locations we felt could work without too much alteration. When we made the commitment to shoot in Wexford, we did a huge location trawl."

The Cedars, the house Max Morden revisits to explore his childhood memories, was a key location. Eventually, Wexford-based line producer **Brian Willis**, and the location manager, found an ideal property. Director Stephen Brown, cameraman **John Conroy**, and set designer **Derek Wallace**, began to build the production around the house.

"This was how we all envisioned the Cedars," says producer Michael Robinson.

## THE LOOK OF THE SEA

Time is reversed. History has been made.

**Derek Wallace** (*Good Vibrations*, *In the Name of the Father*), production designer on *The Sea*, strolls along the road in Courtown in county Wexford, southwest Ireland. We enter a small diner, The Strand Cafe in the story, and are brought back to the sandy-coved seaside setting of 1955. Era-specific menus sit upon the tables. Hand painted murals adorn the wall.

Nearby, a 1950's sweet shop has been reconstructed. Wooden shelves hold rows of liquorice allsorts, raspberry drops, dolly mixture, gobstoppers, sherbet lemons, and toffees. All sorted in pristine jars. It's enough to make you want to whip out a penny farthing.

A gang of local schoolchildren peek through the door of the set. Although they hail from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, their jaws drop at the authentic 1950's treats stored within.

Beyond the cafe and the sweet shop is the town cinema, which Young Max visits with Chloe and Myles Grace. The production team built a tin hut, as was the fashion at the time, to

display the cinema exterior. Inside, they constructed a sloped floor with wooden pews for the on-screen audience. Wallace used the magic of cinema to reconstruct this 1950's picture house, running the film on a digital projector and aiming a beam of light at the image, filtered through a spinning bicycle wheel to capture the old-fashioned filmic flicker.

This is the tip of the iceberg.

Wallace and his team laid 66 tonnes of gravel on the streets to recreate 1950's roads. Contemporary railings, flower decorations, lights, alarms, CCTV's, were removed. Huge wind turbines in the distance were erased through digital editing. Afterwards, Courtown had to be returned to its original state (for the sanity of its residents).

Wallace engaged in lots of research before dipping into *The Sea*, talking to Wexford locals about their memories of the 1950's. "I looked at a lot of postcards of the time," says the production designer. "I studied colours and styles of *Edward Hopper*. I worked on the theme that the childhood you remember was always sunny."

Is the 1950's production design led by nostalgia? Is it dream-like instead of specific? "In a way," nods Wallace. "It's in Max's head when he has flashbacks. He sees something that triggers a memory. At that point, we're back on a beach, or we're back in a cafe with Carlos, or we're back in the sweet shop. Every time he sees somewhere as an older man, it triggers a feeling that takes him back to that wonderful summer of 1955 when he was 11."

Production design plays a key role in *The Sea*, according to producer **Luc Roeg**. "Derek has done a fantastic job. There are wonderful natural locations in *The Sea*. The sea itself - fantastic beaches in Wexford - but also intricate production design elements. We're dealing with different time zones. This is a man visiting the past and coming back to the present. There's a lot involved in turning those sets around. Derek is an essential element of the vision of the film."

Constructing three time zones - Max's contemporary world, his 1950's childhood, and memories of his dying wife - posed a challenge for the film-makers. The contemporary scenes are set in 2006, when the book was published, which is a period unto itself.

"So much has changed in technology in six years, particularly cars," says Wallace. "We had to get 2006-specific cars for the sets."

Years before production started, cinematographer **John Conroy** and director **Stephen Brown** discussed how to approach the look of the film. The film-makers approached each era with different visual techniques. Conroy explains: "We used a lot of handheld stuff for the 1950's flashbacks - high camera angles and much more movement. We used classic framing and shooting for the present day stuff. Then there are the scenes when Max is with his wife. Those have a colder feel."

For contemporary scenes in *The Cedars*, the guest house Max Morden visits that Miss Vavasour runs, the colours are subdued: dark blues, browns and greys. These are in contrast to the vibrant yellows of the past. In some scenes, Max enters a shop in 2006, then leaves in 1955. Organising these logistics required a lot of planning. Producer **David Collins** looks forward to seeing how the past and present will play out.

"The whole structure of the story is Max returning to places he visited in his childhood," says Collins. "It was a question of designing the past and present in mind. That was a major production challenge. You have to make sure the props are accurate and there's a balance between the resources that go into the design of the film and the resources that go into everything else. Also the time constraints. We think we've overcome it very well."

**Ciarán Hinds** is impressed with the visual design partnership of Brown and Conroy: "To watch two completely different people work together to create the overall visual effect has been a joy," says the actor. **Bonnie Wright**, who plays Rose, continues: "It's been lovely working with Stephen. I think his partnership with John has been really interesting. Both are very different in the way they work. Together, it creates this lovely partnership."

From the outset of *The Sea*, Brown brought numerous aesthetic influences to the table, including Michael Haneke's *The White Ribbon*.

"*The White Ribbon* is the culmination of a great tradition of European film-making where there is stillness and a great sense of waiting for things, or allowing things to happen," says the director. "That's appeals to me. I feel like I need to be patient in making this film. It's not one of those films where things are rushing at me, although the movie won't be slow-paced."

In the story, Old Max is working on a stalled book about the French artist **Pierre Bonnard**. Were his ghost-like paintings an influence on the film? "I wanted to remain faithful to Bonnard because that's central in John's book," continues Brown. "I haven't used him as a visual cue, but I've made sure he's there. His paintings are there. The only conscious visual cue is a scene in the bathroom that is referenced in the script. Anna, our hero's wife, is constantly taking baths, which is a parallel with Bonnard's wife. I think the atmosphere of Bonnard's painting is quite intriguing. It's something I can transfer into *The Cedars*."

Bonnard influenced Conroy's colour palette. For the 1950's scenes, such as the Grace family's picnic scenes on the beach, the cinematographer used colours from his paintings.

"Nevertheless, this film has its own look," says Conroy. "We've tried to give it its own stamp and footprint, rather than just copying other stuff. Also, we shot this widescreen because of the sea. We wanted to make sure we had a big aspect ratio for the landscape. Also, in framing three kids, it needed room for the wide screen."

Bonnie Wright says the "colours of the costumes and the locations are beautifully depicted. Hazy summer day memories of the past. I think the present day stuff is going to be a bit darker and heavier."

Costumes play a significant role in *The Sea*.

**Kathy Strachan** (*I Went Down, The Clinic*), costume designer, is ensconced on location in a county Wexford farmyard. In the costume van around her is a mixture of clothing from the 1950's and 2006. Due to the different time periods, it's like she's working on two different films.

Clothing often reveals something about a person's inner nature. How has Strachan approached the character of Old Max?

"Ciarán's character has been through a lot emotionally," she says. "We had to suggest that here is someone who at some point took great care in his clothes and had quite an eye. He's artistic. Due to the emotional journey he's been on, and the grief he's going through, they might not be in the same state of repair as they were in happier times. He hasn't looked after himself very well. His coat, which is featured a lot, has lovely fabric: cashmere with hints of colour. It's quite stylish. The coat suggests his past life, but it's soft, broken down, rumpled. That suggests his present state of mind: he's not hanging it neatly or looking after it."

Strachan approached the 1950's costumes with a different aesthetic. "It's the summer holidays, so there are classic swimsuits: trunks, shorts, vests," she says. "The Graces are more bohemian. They have a more global attitude. They might have been in France, which would have been unusual for kids in Wexford in the 1950's. They have a slightly different take on costumes, whereas the local lads have regular tweed shorts."

In the story, Young Max is besotted with Connie Grace, played by **Natascha McElhone**. Her costumes shed insight on her character.

"She's a mum but not necessarily a regular mother," continues Strachan. "Due to the bohemian ethos of the family, she's more free spirited than Max's mother, who we see doing regular mum things, like the washing in her dressing gown. Max is not just in love with Connie - he's in love with her entire family and their lifestyle. We had to show what made her tick: she's slightly more artistic, shambolic, but gorgeous nonetheless. We stayed away from florals - anything at home in Wexford - and went for Mexican textiles, embroidered textiles. Things that suggested what was going on in the art world at the time."

**Bonnie Wright** is impressed with the quality of the costumes. "It's always fun playing someone in a totally different era," says the actress. "Wearing high-waisted jeans and sculpted tops, as they would have been worn in the 1950's, instantly gives you a feel for a character. Rose has lots of deep reds and greens. I think Rose holds quite a strong front. We



show that in the hair, make-up and costume. It's very much of the period - very stiff, which is masking this young, vulnerable girl beneath it."

Numerous scenes in *The Sea* were shot on the beach. Even this location required a degree of set design, says Derek Wallace. "We made subtle changes on the beach. In the 1950's, beaches had no health and safety on beaches. Now you have lifebuoys and warning signs. We've used two beaches: a picnic beach and one where the children go into the water. In one of the scenes, Young Max breaks into a hut. Fifty years later, he revisits it, so I recut all the timber so it looks like teeth sticking out of the sand."

The sea - and the beaches that border it - is not just an apt location in this story. It is part of Max's journey. The sea is another character in the film.

## ON WATER'S EDGE - FILMING THE SEA

When it came to filming *The Sea*, the cast and crew used **John Banville's** prize winning book as a template alongside the screenplay.

"Most of the preparation was in my instinctive reaction to it," says **Rufus Sewell** (Carlo Grace). I grew a goatee beard, which I figured he'd have. There are things in the script that aren't in the book and vice versa. I read the book a couple of times. Other than that it's just what it ignited in me. They trust me to come up with my interpretation of it."

**Ruth Bradley** went through the novel with a fine-toothed comb. "I like to do as much as I can in terms of preparation, breaking the scenes down in the script. The book is great because it has a little bit more about Clare. You learn about her from Max's perspective. There are references to her as a child and the relationship between Anna and Max. You can never do enough research."

**Sinéad Cusack** used the novel to inform the character of Anna. "Because Banville had done the script, it was fantastically useful to re-read the book. The book informed the screenplay, so I could use it without danger. Sometimes if you get someone else doing the screenplay, they can completely alter the trajectory of a book."

**Charlotte Rampling** (Miss Vavasour) continues: "You can't have the whole story in a film - it never works that way. I think John did a very beautiful job - that's the reason why I did this film. The story and what John Banville did to his story for the film."

John Banville's screenplay and book are descriptive, which helped cinematographer **John Conroy**. "Even though there is stuff in the book that isn't in the film, it's good to have a back story," says Conroy, "Maybe there's something in the book that you can bring to the film. Being descriptive always helps. By the nature of film-making, you might not exactly replicate what's in the book or the script, but it puts you in a place where you can get the best out of things, or at least evoke the feeling that Banville is trying to get."

The cast and crew felt camaraderie on set, largely due to the upbeat nature of their director. *The Sea* is **Stephen Brown**'s directorial debut - and he's loved every minute of it.

"It's been wondrous for me, a real wonder entering the world of feature film making," he says. "It's like an illness. I can't imagine myself returning to my old life now. I've kind of recalibrated my life. I'm not the world's youngest first time feature director, but in a sense this is the right material for me at the right stage of my life."

Brown's enthusiasm is infectious, particularly for the child actors. **Matthew Dillon** (Young Max) pipes up: "Stephen is by far the bounciest, happiest man I know. Every morning, it doesn't matter what the weather is like, he's happy. It doesn't matter, he's happy as can be."

**Missy Keating** (Chloe) agrees: "Stephen is great. He's great help. When you need to ask questions, he knows exactly what he's talking about... and he's really nice."

"He's a good laugh," adds **Padhraig Parkinson** (Myles). "So funny. When you're freezing, he makes you laugh all the time. Always happy and with loads of energy."

The vibe on set was upbeat, largely due to the guerrilla-style nature of the film. Producer **Michael Robinson** loved every minute: "I've never laughed so much on a film set. It's a great atmosphere. Very professional. A lot of fun."

Although **Bonnie Wright**, a veteran of the *Harry Potter* movies, was only on set for two weeks, she thought the production was a perfect size. "I always find it's lovely working on a smaller scale crew," says Wright. "You get to know people much more. The dynamic is much smoother and it becomes more of a collaborative and creative process."

Sinéad Cusack praises the crew. "We have an amazing director of photography John Conroy. He's just wonderful. We have a crew that are very fast, efficient, and on the ball, which they need to be because of budget restrictions. You've got to get it right first time."

Ireland is not exactly the Caribbean - weather was always going to pose a problem for the film-makers. Although the film is set during summer time, it was shot in autumn. It reminded Rufus Sewell, who first worked in Ireland over a decade ago on *A Man of No Importance* with Albert Finney, of his family trips to the beach as a youngster in Wales.

"We'd plan the night before when we were going to the beach in Wales. Then the clouds would flock over. No one would mention it. You'd hope silently the sun would break out. Sometimes it would. Our experience in Wexford seems quiet appropriate," Sewell laughs.

**Natascha McElhone**, who plays Connie Grace, says the film-makers have been lucky with the weather. "It has poured with rain, but then there has been this incredible rainbow, or suddenly the sun comes out for the five minutes," says the actress. "It's been a real smash and scramble. We've had to grab stuff very quickly and just get one take."

Rampling, who worked not far from Wexford in the 1970's, on John Boorman's sci-fi extravaganza *Zardoz*, professes a love for Ireland. "It's really special - you come somewhere else when you come to Ireland. I like this world, the fact that it's Ireland and I come from Great Britain. Here, it has its very own magic and music." An added advantage is that all her scenes are in The Cedars, Miss Vavasour's guesthouse. "It's been good because I've always been in my house. When I read the script, I thought 'I'm safe from the Irish weather!'"

Nevertheless, the film-makers were constantly at the mercy of the elements. "It was challenging," remarks Brown. "We just got in with some amazing weather. We had days when the weather was superb and days when it fluctuated wildly. The crew have been amazing and rose to the challenge."

Aside from the weather, the team behind *The Sea* faced other challenges. Child actors can only work for a certain number of hours, explains John Conroy. "When we were on the beach, because we had children, we could only shoot for seven hours. In the first two weeks we shot everything in about four to five hours of filming a day."

Was filming on beach a challenge? "By its nature, it had to be more handheld and organic. Some of it was lit, some wasn't. Because the weather changed, you'd end up with sun for one minute then it could be cloudy for two or three hours. We're lucky in that we could maximise our shooting time for the sun in the wide shots and then light the close ups."

For some sequences, the kids had to swim in the sea. Matthew Dillon says although it was cold in the water, his experience as a competitive swimmer at school gave him confidence.

"For the parts I had to get into the sea, it was freezing," says Missy Keating, shivering at the memory. "It was a really cold day and raining as well. They had a boat and we jumped out into the water. We had to swim about ten feet."

The 1950's swimming costumes provided little protection from the elements, admits costume designer **Kathy Strachan**: "They don't really offer much coverage. In the 1950's, lads wore woollen trunks. We couldn't cover that up too much. There was no lycra in those days."

Bonnie Wright, who plays Rose, is grateful she got to stay on dry land. "My character never goes in the sea," she smiles. "I was quietly pleased. The three kids have done an amazing job, throwing themselves into those scenes with such energy. If you're going to have kids playing in the sea it can't be reserved or quiet. There has to be full action."

In the warmer environment of The Cedars, the older actors threw themselves into their roles. The film is a game of two halves, muses director Stephen Brown. "We've had the past and the 1950's and a great sense of fun and adventure. Then we had the present, or the near present, which is a sense of reflection. More stillness in the frame," he says.

Much of this stillness emanates from **Ciarán Hinds**'s interpretation of Max. "Ciarán is a towering man for me," continues Brown. "He's been one of the main motivators for the project. He has stood by me when I showed him the script. I approached him myself. It's taken a while for me to get the project financed and on the road. Ciarán has stood by us through thick and thin. I can't begin to tell you how much he's repaid us in the project. He's brought luminosity to the screen in his presence as well as his interpretation."

**Ruth Bradley**, who plays Max's daughter Clare, concurs: "He is a brilliant actor and I'm a huge fan. He's also a lovely man. He's very strong but there's also something very warm about him. It's very easy to play his daughter."

When Old Max arrives at The Cedars, he meets proprietor Miss Vavasour and a resident, Blunden. A sense of mystery surrounds Miss Vavasour, played by Charlotte Rampling.

"She is a quietly eccentric woman in this story," explains Hinds. "You know her and Max have some sort of history but won't come clean with it. They dance around it. They won't face the truth. It's complicated. A bit of a dance." In 2009, Hinds and Rampling shared a few scenes on the Todd Solondz film *Life During Wartime*. "It's really nice to come back and work with her again on a different project," he says.

Karl Johnson, who plays Blunden, describes working with Rampling as a dream come true: "She's a wonderful and great actress, and a great person."

Rampling is equally delighted with her co-stars. "We had a tremendous rapport. You never know quite how things will go on a shoot. You can nearly always be sure that there is strong camaraderie amongst us actors. We are usually instantly very close."

Ruth Bradley, one of Ireland's new generation of great actors, got to work alongside this gang of vintage actors. Hinds believes she handled the part of Max's daughter with perfection.

"Ruth is in her late 20's," says Hinds. "I have a daughter of 21. That father/daughter connection is strong for whatever reason. There's that idea in the book - even if your father is a disaster, there's still something about wanting your daddy. In our scenes together, she's a joy to work with. She's absolutely present and connected. Also, we get on really well which is useful. You can embrace the closeness of each other. This story is being told in the bad times in their lives, but they also had some good times."

Max's scenes with his dying wife Anna are poignant. These moments allowed Hinds and Sinead Cusack to reconnect, since the actors worked together on numerous occasions beforehand. For ten months leading up to *The Sea*, the pair played husband and wife in the play *Juno and the Peacock*. This history gives their performances real emotional resonance.

"She's an amazing actress - very truthful," remarks Hinds. "You connect with that. I feel we have a connection to play husband and wife, even though we're not married. We have a concern for each other that will hopefully translate on the camera."

Cusack jokingly calls Hinds her second husband: "We have worked together a lot. We know each other well and I respect him hugely as an actor. Also, he's one of the nicest men on the face of the planet. Playing difficult scenes - this is a small budget movie - there's not a lot of luxury of take after take, so you need to be incredibly focused and concentrated. You usually only get two takes, if that. So to have somebody that you trust completely, in terms of a vocabulary, is wonderful. He understands me; I understand him. It has an ease and a background. It makes you feel much more solid and grounded. Ciarán is very different from Max. The fact we've known each other for so many years - there's an ease there."

The children - **Matthew Dillon** (Young Max), **Missy Keating** (Chloe), **Padhraig Parkinson** (Myles) - approached their roles with professionalism. "They brought a great willingness, enthusiasm and discipline," says director Stephen Brown. "I felt that they wanted desperately to get it right. I can't tell you how much fun it was to work with the children."

Hinds reserves praise for Dillon, who plays his younger self. "He's very gifted, really intuitive and has a real eye for this game of acting," says Hinds. "The three young ones have quite a lot to do. They formed little relationships together, which is picked up by camera. They have quite a journey to go on their roles. As is usually the case, they will shine and the older ones will be left floundering trying to catch up with them."

Rufus Sewell reckons Dillon has coped well with the weighty subject matter. "To my knowledge, he's a very self-contained and confident actor. He's already very smart and inquisitive. For someone his age, he asks very interesting questions that a lot of other kids his age wouldn't. He has a knowing twinkle to him. He's a good match for a younger Ciarán."

Although their scenes were shot separately, Dillon spent time with his older self. "The impression I get from Ciarán is he's a really nice fella," says Dillon. "He's been in a load of movies - *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* - but he's very modest and straight forward. A very easy going guy." Is it odd looking at his future self? "Yeah, as Ciarán said to me, 'You might end up like this in the future, so be careful'. I said, "That would be great, though, wouldn't it?"

In the story, Chloe and Myles Grace are unusual characters. Chloe is mutinous and confrontational; the mute Myles is sullen and mysterious.

Did Parkinson find advantages to playing a mute? After all, he didn't have to learn any lines. The young actor laughs. "Well, I have to act more. I have to use facial expressions. I read the script and knew what he was like as soon as I read it." Does Myles communicate in other ways? "He communicates with his facial expressions. With his hands."

"The fact he's silent creates a mystique about him," ponders Sewell. "It's a relationship between a silent boy and a noisy girl. I spend so much time talking to him before filming; I

forget his character can't talk. Padhraig is a normal boy - we chat, laugh, have a lot of fun. When you work with Chloe and Myles, it's a strange dynamic. As soon as they say cut, they are 12 year old kids again."

Bonnie Wright plays childminder for the twins. Dillon is chuffed to be sharing the screen with the actress, who found fame in the *Harry Potter* series. "Bonnie Wright is Ginny Weasley," says Dillon. "But she's so level-headed. Not a bit of fame has gone to her head."

Stephen Brown is impressed with Wright's acting chops. "She has a great sense of less is more. She brings nuanced and powerful moments to life with her eyes - with great subtlety."

The young actors formed friendships during the making of *The Sea*. "Matthew is my best friend on set," says Parkinson. "We hang out after the filming because we have to get tutoring. As soon as tutoring is over we just hang out all day with Missy."

Missy Keating's father, pop star *Ronan Keating*, has visited set on occasion. Has he given her any acting tips? "Yes," she replies. "'Don't forget your lines!'"

Keating is delighted with her onscreen parents. What's it like having Natascha McElhone as her mother? "It's amazing; she's so nice," says Keating. "Rufus is the same. He's very funny and cool." Parkinson concurs: "Natascha is like my second mum now. Rufus is the funniest person on set. Between takes, he makes you laugh all the time."

In the story, Dillon falls in love with Connie Grace, in his own childish way. Connie barely acknowledges Young Max's longing looks, however.

"Connie is not privy to thought processes going on in the little boy's head," says McElhone. "The camera finds those moments from his point of view, but I don't think she has to be aware of what is going on. Matthew and I never discussed anything. He's 12. John Conroy, our amazing director of photography, would say, 'Can you just look at that spot and keep looking at it? Look like you really want it. It could be a sweet. We don't say 'Can you look down Connie's cleavage'. It's so far from that. You can get things from children, not in a manipulative way, but in a way they don't have to become involved in the politics or intricacies of desire."

Wright ponders on her character's role in the Grace family: "From Max's perspective, their characters are elegant, weird and new. They played that quiet comedy quite brilliantly. My character is also drawn in by Connie Grace - Natascha made it so easy for me. Visually, in comparison to my character, she's much lighter and more feminine. My character is quite hard in costume so it's nice to have that balance. There's a dynamic between the four in the family, then me as an outsider and another outsider in Max. Although Rose is this family's nanny, she is an outsider in the same way that Max is. The minute he enters the family dynamic she feels threatened by his arrival. She's the other surrogate."



Sewell and McElhone relished their roles as onscreen partners.

"I've known Natascha for years but never worked with her," says Sewell. "We've nearly worked together lots of times. She's a lovely woman. She's beautiful and really fun to be with. She's fabulous as Connie. It's very easy to do."

McElhone continues: "I've known Rufus from afar for many years. When I left drama school, he was already doing brilliantly. Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* was the first thing I saw him in. I followed his career. He's incredibly talented. It's really exciting to finally get to work with him."

Stephen Brown says the Grace parents "brought a sense of fun, humour, wit, style, energy. They're a troubled, exotic and different family. The underlying erotic tensions and familial tensions combined very well."

Although Brown dabbled in short films, music videos, and corporate video, *The Sea* marks his directorial feature debut. How did the Londoner fare? Top marks all around, reckon his collaborators. Brown's intellectual powers and dedication to the project won over Hinds.

"He's an extraordinarily well-read man," says Hinds. "He has a great knowledge - an intellectual and passionate connection with art. That is thrilling to hear and see him enthuse about what these things mean to him in a different way, from a purely emotional thing. He connected with the book personally. He is engaged with the humanity of the piece."

"I practically only ever work with first timers," remarks Sewell. "If I play a large part, it's normally because someone is doing their first film. In the end, it's just about personalities. It's possible to be a first-time director and be unteachable, or you can be open about what you haven't learned yet. Stephen is wonderfully open. That gives you an enormous confidence. You're not working with someone who has a front. As he says, he doesn't do status. He's someone whose sense of taste I trust. I think he's a clever director."

Rampling also works with a lot of debut directors. "Something very special happens when it's your first time," she says. "A director has been waiting for this moment for so long."

Brown's passion for the project won over Sinéad Cusack. "He's been working for five years to get this off the ground. He sees it in his head. He seems pleased. It's his love of the project that is very endearing. Very obvious."

McElhone concurs: "A lovely man. He's a real pleasure. So enthusiastic every day. It's Christmas every day for him." She laughs. "Well, it's not because he's Jewish."

When production began on *The Sea*, did **John Banville**, the story's creator, take a step back? Was it as though the bird has flown? "Oh yes," says the writer. "I think I went to the set twice. Once when filming had finished, and another time to say hello to some of the people."

We left after about 20 minutes. Apart from anything else, you're walking into a day's work for all these people. You're just annoying and interrupting so I stay away."

During the production, McElhone, Sewell, and other members of the cast had a chance to attend a reading of Banville's latest book *Ancient Light*, in a bookshop in the nearby town of Gorey, county Wexford. McElhone, who has been "bitten by the Banville bug" since reading *The Sea*, was delighted at the opportunity to hear him reading.

Not as delighted as Banville was to see her there.

"It was funny to see them sitting there in the middle of the audience," says Banville. "As if the Gods had just landed. Two extraordinarily beautiful people. I'm not sure which one is more beautiful. I was thrilled they came. My star point went up in Gorey. It's one thing doing a bloody reading. If you can muster stars like this, you're doing very well."

After six weeks of filming, production on *The Sea* wrapped.

"There is a lot of publicity about the fact *The Sea* won the Booker Prize," says producer **David Collins**. "People know it's a highly intelligent story. Having Ciarán Hinds as the lead of a wonderful cast, people will be interested to see how all that combines and plays out. Hopefully, it will be entertaining, funny, but overall moving and slightly heartbreaking."

For the actors involved, the project felt intimate and collaborative.

"Whenever I do big films, it's always an attempt to break into films like this, rather than the other way around," says Sewell. "That's difficult to finesse. I only do things that I think will be interesting for me. This is the kind of thing I want to do. This is all I'm asking for - to play varied parts in small interesting things. If I could do continually different things on this scale, I'd happily do nothing else."

McElhone adds: "This is a sort of work I dream of doing, really. This is where it is for me. A little film with amazing actors and a great story to tell. It doesn't get better than that."

For the film's young actors, *The Sea* has been a fantastic introduction to the world of film-making. "This is what I want to do forever," grins Parkinson. "Playing different characters; meeting all the crew and cast."

*The Sea* is a story with universal themes. It is a story that resonates.

"You come to the end of it and it makes you think how we waste so much time worrying about little things we think are so important," muses Ruth Bradley. "We forget to live in the moment. Max's search for the past... Looking for peace in something that's gone... I think we can all relate to that. I was left with the feeling of, 'God, life is short and precious. What are we doing going around with our eyes shut worrying about taxes?'"

## THE CREW

### Stephen Brown – Director

Stephen has been directing for over twenty years since leaving film school. He began his career directing music videos, working with Luc Roeg at Vivid Productions on many projects for MTV and VH1, until he began focusing on corporate and commercial videos and has since directed hundreds of spots for almost every recognisable corporate brand including major banks, supermarkets, airlines, car manufacturers, high street chains, media companies, utility providers and charities. He has also directed numerous programmes for broadcast on the major terrestrial channels, including a year as a staff director on *The Word*, and two award-winning short films: *Breathing*, starring Charlotte Coleman and *The Curious*, starring David Suchet. *The Sea* is his first feature.

### Luc Roeg - Producer

Producer Luc Roeg is an outstanding figure in the British film industry and CEO of production, International sales and UK distribution outfit, Independent. Prior to *The Sea*, Luc was the producer on Bernard Rose's Tolstoy adaptation *Boxing Day* which had its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival in 2012 and the critically acclaimed adaptation of Lionel Shriver's novel *We Need To Talk About Kevin* directed by Lynne Ramsay and starring Tilda Swinton and John C. Reilly. The film had its world premiere in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011 and won the Best British Film Award at the London Critic's Circle. It was also nominated for three BAFTAs, including Outstanding British Film.

Previously, Roeg produced and executive produced numerous features including Bernard Rose's *Mr Nice*, David Cronenberg's *Spider*, Bernard Rose's *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Oliver Parker's *Othello* and Nicolas Roeg's *Two Deaths*.

Prior to Independent, Roeg was Head of Independent Film Europe at the William Morris Agency, UK. Previously, he was one of the founders of Vivid Productions, where he produced Tom Waits' *Big Time* and Peter Medak's *Let Him Have It*.

### Michael Robinson – Producer

Michael Robinson is a London based producer, focusing on development of a new slate of films for 2014 onwards, as well as their production and finance through his company MGR Films. He produced *The Sea* with Luc Roeg and David Collins in 2012 / 2013, and prior to that was at Independent where he executive produced all of Independent's films since 2006, including *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, *Mr Nice* and *Boxing Day*. Prior to this, Michael was involved in film finance and structuring, including studio franchises and independent

productions from the UK. He lived in Argentina for 3 years in 1990s where he helped local producers raise finance for their production.

### **David Collins – Producer**

David Collins runs Samson Films, one of Ireland's leading independent film companies. Notable recent credits include the Oscar-winning low budget musical *Once* and *Eden*, which won Eileen Walsh the best actress award at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2007. Through his television company Accomplice TV, David has produced the multiple award winning television drama series *Bachelors Walk* and *Pure Mule* both for RTE Television.

Recent feature projects include *Babygirl* written and directed by Macdara Vallely, a low budget film, which premiered at the Tribeca Film festival. Samson co-produced *The Moth Diaries* written and directed by Mary Harron, which premiered at Venice (2011) and is co-produced with Ed Pressman and Mediabiz (Canada). It is being released in the USA by IFC and in the UK by Lionsgate.

Samson also co-produced *Grabbers* a UK/ Ireland co-production written by Kevin Lehane, financed by Sony Pictures, Irish Film Board and the UK Film Council, which premiered at Sundance 2012 and released in Ireland by Element Distribution in August 2012.

Samson is currently in post production on a number of projects.

*Mister John*, written and directed by Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor and starring Aidan Gillen. Shot on location in Singapore and London, this film is supported by the Irish Film Board, The British Film Institute and the Media Development Authority Singapore.

*STAY* shot on location in Galway and Montreal and written and directed by Wiebke von Carolsfeld starring Aidan Quinn and Taylor Schilling.

*Run and Jump* written by Ailbhe Keogan and Steph Green and directed by Steph Green, this film was shot on location in Wicklow and Kerry and stars, Maxine Peake, Edward MacLiam, Will Forte and Sharon Horgan. This is co-produced with Bavaria Pictures.

David is a board member of Screen Producers Ireland and a founding director of the Lighthouse Cinema in Dublin. He is also a member of the European Film Academy.

### **John Conroy – Cinematographer**

John Conroy, although 44, is a Cinematographer with nearly thirty years experience of working in the movie industry. Son of veteran Cinematographer, Jack, he has been on and around film sets since he was a baby. Starting out as a Trainee and then 2nd and 1st assistant Cameraman respectively. He has amassed a credit list of over 70 productions. John

has worked with directors such as Tim Burton, Ron Howard, Paul Greengrass, Jim Sheridan, John Boorman, Joel Schumacher and cinematographers such as Philippe Rouselot, Dariusz Wolski, Chris Menges, Peter Biziou, Billy Williams and of course his Father. Five years ago he decided to take the step up to cinematography. In a relatively short time John has shot award-winning films like *Parked* and over 40 hours of prime time drama in Britain such as *Silent Witness*, *Upstairs Downstairs* and *Luther* for the BBC, and *Mr Selfridge* for ITV. *Wild Decembers* for RTE and *Jack Taylor* for ZDF in Germany and TV3 in Ireland. Currently John is shooting *The Smoke* for SKY TV in Britain. *The Sea* is John's most recent feature film.

### **John Banville – Writer**

John Banville's novels include *The Book of Evidence*, *The Infinities* and, most recently, *Ancient Light*. His screenplays include *The Last September* and, co-written with Glenn Close, *Albert Nobbs*. *The Sea* won the Man Booker Prize in 2005.

### **Kathy Strachan – Costume Designer**

Kathy trained at Central St. Martin's, London. She has worked extensively as a set and costume designer in the theatre, designing many productions throughout the UK, Ireland and Europe.

Designs for the theatre in Ireland include *The Synge Cycle* with Druid, and *New Morning*, *Shiver* and *Three Days of Rain* with Rough Magic.

Her film work as a costume designer includes *I Went Down*, *Saltwater*, *On The Nose*, *Spin The Bottle* and the Oscar-winning short *Six Shooter*. This year she completed filming *Run & Jump* with Steph Green directing, John Banville's *The Sea*, directed by Stephen Brown and *The Stag* written by Peter McDonald and directed by John Butler.

Television work has included *Bachelor's Walk*, *The Clinic*, *Pure Mule*, *Showbands*, *Father and Son* and *Vexed*.

Kathy won an IFTA for best costume design for *Spin The Bottle* in 2003 and an Irish Theatre Award for her work on *Playboy Of The Western World* and *Improbable Frequency* in 2004.

## THE CAST

### Ciarán Hinds

Ciarán began his career at The Glasgow Citizens Theatre and was a member of the company for many years. In Ireland he has worked at the Lyric Theatre Belfast, the Druid Theatre in Galway and at the Project. Most recently he appeared on Broadway as Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, in a co-production with the Royal National Theatre of *Juno & The Paycock* by Sean O'Casey, directed by Howard Davies.

For the Gate Theatre he appeared in Conor McPherson's *The Birds*, The Field Day Company's version of *Antigone*, *The School For Wives* and Brian Friel's *The Yalta Game*.

He toured internationally with Peter Brook's Company in *The Mahabharata* and has played leading roles at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Court, the Donmar Warehouse and the National Theatre, where he last appeared in *Burnt By The Sun* and played Larry in Patrick Marber's *Closer*, which transferred to Broadway. He also performed on Broadway in Conor McPherson's *The Sea Farer*.

On television he recently appeared as Bud Hammond in the new US series *Political Animals* and is soon to be seen in *Game Of Thrones*. Previous to this he appeared as DCI Langton in Linda La Plante's *Above Suspicion* and as Julius Caesar in the BBC/HBO co-production of *Rome*. This follows extensive television credits including leading roles in *The Mayor Of Casterbridge*, *Jane Eyre*, *Seaforth*, *Ivanhoe*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Prime Suspect 3* and the award-winning film of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, in which he played Captain Wentworth.

Extensive Film credits include Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thiel, His Wife And Her Lover*; *December Bride*; *Circle Of Friends*; *Titanic Town*; *Some Mother's Son*; *Oscar And Lucinda*; *The Lost Son*; *The Weight Of Water* and *Mary Reilly*; *The Road To Perdition* for Sam Mendes; *The Sum Of All Fears*; *Jonjo Mickybo*; *Calendar Girls*; *Lara Croft: The Cradle Of Life*; *The Statement*; *Veronica Guerin* and *The Phantom Of The Opera* both for Joel Schumacher; *Miami Vice* for Michael Mann and *Munich* for Steven Spielberg. He also starred in *Amazing Grace* for Michael Apted; *Nativity* for Catherine Hardwicke; *Hallam Foe* for David Mackenzie; *The Tiger's Tail* and *Excalibur* for John Boorman; *Margot At The Wedding* for Noah Baumbach; *There Will Be Blood* for Paul Thomas Anderson; *Stop Loss* for Kimberly Pearce; *In Bruges* for Martin McDonagh; *The Tale Of Desperaux*; *Miss Pettigrew Lives For A Day*; *Cash Race To Witch Mountain*; Conor McPherson's *The Eclipse* for which he won BEST ACTOR at the Tribeca Film Festival; *Life During Wartime*; *The Debt*; *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows*; *John Carter Of Mars*; *Salvation Boulevard*; *The Rite*; *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*; *Ghost Rider: Spirit Of Vengeance*; *The Woman In Black*; *Closed*; and *John Carter*. He is soon to appear in *The Disappearance Of Eleanor Rigby*.



## Rufus Sewell

Rufus Sewell is a leading British actor of film, television and theatre. He most recently starred in the ground-breaking *Hotel Noir*, directed by Sebastian Gutierrez; *I'll Follow You Down*, directed by Richie Mehta; *All Things To All Men*, directed by George Isaac; and Timur Bekmambetov's *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*. He is also starred in the UK television movie, *Restless*.

He has 2 feature films in line for release: *Where The Devil Hides* by Jacob Brown and *Hercules: The Thracian Wars*. He is also due to star on UK television this December in *Restless*.

Sewell first gained attention on screen for his performance as 'Will Ladislav' in the BBC adaptation of *Middlemarch*. He received further acclaim in Christopher Hampton's feature film *Carrington*, as well as in John Schlesinger's *Cold Comfort Farm*.

Sewell's other films include: *The Tourist*, directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck; *Vinyan*, directed by Fabrice du Welz; *Downloading Nancy*, directed by Johan Renck; *The Illusionist*, directed by Neil Burger; Wes Craven's *Paris Je T'aime*; *The Holiday*, directed by Nancy Meyer; *The Legend Of Zorro*, directed by Martin Campbell; *Tristan & Isolde*, directed by Kevin Reynolds; *A Knight's Tale*, directed by Brian Helgeland; *Dark City*, directed by Alex Proyas; *Dangerous Beauty*, directed by Marshall Herskovitz; *Illuminata*, directed by and co-starring John Turturro; *The Very Thought of You*, directed by Nick Hamm; *Bless The Child*, directed by Chuck Russell; *Victory*, directed by Mark Peploe; *Hamlet*, directed by Kenneth Branagh; *The Woodlanders*, directed by Phil Agland; and *A Man of No Importance*, directed by Suri Krishnamma.

Sewell's television work includes the role of Petruchio in the critically acclaimed BBC production of *The Taming of The Shrew*, for which he was nominated for Best Actor at the BAFTA Television Awards, and lead roles in *Zen* (Left Bank Pictures/BBC), *Pillars of the Earth* (Starz/Channel 4), *Eleventh Hour* (produced by Jerry Bruckheimer), *John Adams* (HBO) and *Charles II* (directed by Joe Wright for BBC Television).

On stage, Sewell made his West End debut in 1993 as 'Thomas Kratsky,' the Czechoslovakian hustler, in *Making It Better*, which garnered him the London Critics Circles' Best Newcomer Award, and the following year he played 'Septimus Hodge' in the original production of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* at the National Theatre, for which he was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at The Olivier Awards. In 2009, Sewell played 'Jan' in another Stoppard play, *Rock n' Roll*, which won critical and popular acclaim first in London (at The Royal Court and the Ambassadors Theatre), where he won the Best Actor awards at the Evening Standard, London Critics' Circle and Olivier Awards, and then on Broadway, where he received a Tony Award nomination and a Drama Desk nomination for Best Actor. Other theatre credits include: the Broadway revival of Brian Friel's *Translations*, opposite Brian Dennehy and Dana

Delany; *Rat In the Skull*, directed by Stephen Daldry at The Royal Court; *Macbeth*, directed by John Crowley; *Luther*, directed by Peter Gill at the National Theatre; 'Darcy' in *Pride And Prejudice* at Royal Exchange Manchester; and *As You Like It*, *The Seagull*, and *The Government Inspector*, all at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield.

### **Natasha Mc Elhone**

Natascha McElhone established herself as a talented leading actress when she left drama school to play the lead in her first film, Merchant Ivory's *Surviving Picasso*, opposite Anthony Hopkins in 1995. She quickly followed this with Peter Weir's film, *The Truman Show*; Alan J. Pakula's *The Devil's Own*, with Brad Pitt and Harrison Ford; and John Frankenheimer's action epic *Ronin*, in which she co-starred with Robert De Niro. She also played Rosalind to Kenneth Branagh's Berowne in his musical version of William Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. In 2003, McElhone co-starred with George Clooney in Steven Soderbergh's futuristic love story, *Solaris*.

McElhone starred in TNT's mini-series *The Company*, a Golden Globe-nominated drama. In 2005, she starred in NBC's Emmy-nominated mini-series, *Revelations*. Natascha McElhone currently stars opposite David Duchovny in the Golden Globe-winning Showtime series *Californication*, currently in its sixth season.

McElhone also stars in the children's fantasy film, *The Secret Of Moonacre Manor*, with Ioan Gruffud. She shared the title role in *Mrs Dalloway* with Vanessa Redgrave directed by Oscar winning director Marleen Gorris.

McElhone's other major film credits include *City Of Ghosts*, with Matt Dillon and Gerard Depardieu; *Laurel Canyon*, with Christian Bale and Francis McDormand; and *Ladies in Lavender*, with Dame Judi Dench and Dame Maggie Smith.

She also played Mary Boleyn in the original critically acclaimed BBC production of *The Other Boleyn Girl*. She has most recently starred in *The Kid* and in two other British feature films, *The Theatre Of Dreams* with Toby Stephens and Brian Cox and in Julian Fellowes' adaptation of *Romeo And Juliet* to be released in 2013.

A student at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art for three years before beginning her career in theatre, McElhone's early stage credits include starring roles in productions of *Richard III*, *The Count Of Monte Cristo*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 2006, she starred in the West End production of Joanna Murray-Smith's award-winning play, *Honor*.

## Charlotte Rampling

Charlotte Rampling began her career in films in 1964 with Richard Lester in *The Knack*. In 1966 she appeared as Meredith in the film *Georgy Girl* and after this her acting career blossomed in both English, French and Italian cinema. Rampling has often performed controversial roles. In 1969, in Luchino Visconti's *The Damned* (La Caduta degli dei) and in Liliana Cavani's 1974 film *The Night Porter*, playing alongside Dirk Bogarde.

She gained recognition from American audiences in a remake of Raymond Chandler's detective story *Farewell, My Lovely* and later with Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories* and particularly in *The Verdict*, an acclaimed drama directed by Sidney Lumet that starred Paul Newman. Her long list of films also includes Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*; Ian Softly's *The Wings Of The Dove*; Michael Cacoyannis' *The Cherry Orchard*; Julio Medem's *Caotica Ana*; and Dominik Moll's *Lemming*.

Charlotte has collaborated extensively with the director Francois Ozon appearing in the *Under the Sand*, *Swimming Pool* and most recently, *Angel*. She also starred in Laurent Cantet's *Heading South* (Vers Le Sud), a 2005 film about female sexual tourism.

Recent films include another collaboration with Ozon on *Young & Beautiful*, in competition at the Cannes Film Festival 2013; *Night train to Lisbon*; *Restless*; *I, Anna*; *Melancholia*; *The Eye Of The Storm*; *Clean Skin*; *Streetdance 3D*; *Never Let Me Go*; *Babylon AD*; *Life During Wartime*; *Boogie Woogie & The Duchess*.

## Ruth Bradley

Irish actress Ruth Bradley has an extensive acting career including Film, Television and Theatre.

Ruth's first appearances on screen were in 2002, in *Ultimate Force* as Georgia Gracey and *Sinners* as the role of Angela. Since then she has built up extensive television credits including *Threesome* with fellow Irish actress Amy Huberman; *Beauty and the Beast*; *Titanic*, *Primeval IV*; *Plus One*; *Innocent*; *Legend*; *Golden Hour*; *Showbands*; *Love is the Drug*; *The Clinic*; and *Tebberware and Frannie*. She also features in seasons one and two of *Love/Hate* as Robbie Sheehan's older sister Mary – receiving an IFTA nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role for season one and another for her role in *The Galway Races*. Ruth received an IFTA Award for her performance as Antoinette Keegan in the TV mini series *Stardust*.

Ruth's film credits include *Love; Alarm; In Her Skin* and *Flyboys*. In 2010, she starred in the Irish monster movie *Grabbers* as the female lead Garda Lisa Nolan for which she received an IFTA Award for 'Best Actress' this year. *Grabbers* was also screened worldwide.

Ruth has featured in numerous theatre productions including Jimmy Fay's *The Playboy of the Western World* at The Abbey Theatre, and Paul Mercier's production of *Buddleia* at the Donmar Warehouse. For The Druid Company, Ruth performed in *Sive* directed by Druid's Gary Hynes.

### **Sinead Cusack**

Sinead Cusack began her professional career at the famed Abbey Theatre in Dublin, and subsequently made a name for herself on the London stage with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) playing Lady MacBeth in *MacBeth*; Katerina in *The Taming of the Shrew*; and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. In 1984, she made her Broadway debut in *Much Ado About Nothing* which earned her a Tony nomination, followed by *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

In 1990, she returned to London's West End for an acclaimed revival of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, co-starring her father, noted actor Cyril Cusack, and her sisters Sorcha and Niamh.

In 1998 she won Best Actress Awards from The Evening Standard and London Critic's Circle for her role in *Our Lady of Sligo*, which later transferred off Broadway. More recently she played Cleopatra in the RSC's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and performed in *A Lie of the Mind; The Mercy Seat*; and Tom Stoppard's award winning play, *Rock'n'Roll* which transferred to Broadway in 2007.

The Irish-born actress made her feature film debut in Clive Donner's *Alfred the Great* in 1969 followed by starring roles opposite Peter Sellers in the comedy *Hoffman* and the last remake of *Beau Geste* in the '70's.

She concentrated on working in the theatre for more than a decade before resuming her big screen career in the late 80's in such films as *Rocket Gibraltar; Dublin Murders; Venus Peter; Waterland* (with her husband Jeremy Irons); Les Blair's *Bad Behaviour* opposite Stephen Rea; and the dramas *The Cement Garden* and *The Nephew*.

She co-starred with Vanessa Redgrave in Franco Zeffirelli's *Sparrow* and was re-teamed with Irons and Liv Tyler in Bernardo Bertolucci's *Stealing Beauty* in 1996. Additional film credits include *My Mother Frank; I Capture the Castle; Mathilde*; the Wachowski brothers' *V for Vendetta*, based on the graphic novel by Alan Moore; John Boorman's *The Tiger's Tail*; David Cronenberg's *Eastern Promises; Cracks* and *Wrath of the Titans*.

Among her numerous television credits are BBC's *Home Again; The Strange Case of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; North and South; Have Your Cake and Eat It; Oliver's Travels; Tales From Hollywood; Twelfth Night; The Henhouse; Loves Labours Lost; Trilby; Shadow of a Gunman; Playboy of the Western World*; and *A Room With A View*.

Additional television roles include *Dad* for ITV; *Summer Solstice*; *Winter Solstice*; *Mirad A Boy from Bosnia*; Channel 4's *God on the Rocks*; London Weekend Television's *Scoop*; and Thames TV's *Romance: The Black Knight*, among others.

### **Karl Johnson**

Karl is best known for his role as series regular *Twister* in the hugely successful *Larkrise To Candleford*. Some of Karl's extensive television work includes *Rules of Engagement*; *A Tale of Two Cities*; *Judas and The Gimp*; *Wing and a Prayer*; *Vanity Fair*; *David Copperfield*; *Born and Bred*; *Rome*; *The Chatterley Affair*; *New Tricks*; *Small Island*; *Modern Men*; *Merlin* and the BBC's *Call the Midwife*.

Karl's many film appearances include *The Deep Blue Sea*; *The Edge of Love*; *I Know you Know*; *Third Star*; *Four Songs*; *Hot Fuzz*; *The Illusionist*; and *Tomorrow La Scala*. He starred in *The Pier* for which he won the Best Actor Award at the Croatia Film Awards. He has also recently starred in *Good Vibrations*, directed by Lisa Barros D'Sa.

Karl's numerous theatre credits include regular appearances at the Royal National Theatre, and the Royal Court. Credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Don Quixote*; *Uncle Vanya*; *The Sea*; *The Machine Wreckers*; *The Seafarer*; *The Weir*; *Boy Gets Girl*; *The Night Heron*; *This is a Chair*; *Almost Nothing/At the Table* (Royal Court); *In the company of Men* (RSC); *Amadeus* (The Peter Hall Company); and *War Crimes* (ICA). He starred alongside Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee Miller in Danny Boyle's *Frankenstein* at The National Theatre and has recently finished *Noises Off* at the Old Vic and its West End transfer.

### **Missy Keating**

Landing the lead role in Marina De Van's *Dark Touch* at her very first audition, Missy starred as Niamh opposite Padraic Delaney for Element pictures and swiftly went on to shoot another young leading role as Chloe in *The Sea* shortly after. Next up, Missy will shoot Niall Herry's *God for Subotica*.

### **Matthew Dillon**

Matthew Dillon has been taking Acting and Drama classes at The National Performing Arts School for the last 4 years. He has been in a number of NPAS School productions during that time at The Olympia Theatre. *The Sea* is his first major film role, playing the part of Young Max. Matthew can also be seen in the short film *Ghost Train*.

## **Padhraig Parkinson**

Padhraig Parkinson, 12, has been acting from a very young age. He attended his mother Movania Parkinson's drama school, in Co. Donegal, where he played roles in various stage productions as well as writing, acting and producing short films with other children from the drama school.

He comes from a family of actors as his mother and two brothers also act, with younger brother Art playing Rickon Stark in the popular TV series *Game of Thrones*. Before winning the role of 'Myles ' in the John Banville screen adaptation of *The Sea*, he played various small TV roles in *Agnus Jones* and *Maru* for Stirling Television productions.

Padhraig was overjoyed when he found out he had won the role of 'Myles '. The fact that Myles is a mute, made it even a more challenging role, as Padhraig is such a chatterbox! Working in Wexford and with such an accomplished cast was a dream come true for him. He was very privileged to be surrounded by such an amazing cast and crew, and Stephen Brown the director injected such fun into the production it was easy going to work every morning. He is very excited for his future as an actor and has decided that this is what he wants to do forever.