

# UPSTAGE

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*After Miss Julie* is Patrick Marber's version of Johan August Strindberg's 1888 play *Miss Julie*. Originally written for the BBC as a teleplay, Marber adapted it for the stage and it premiered at the Donmar Warehouse in London in 2003. The time of the play is updated to post-war Britain on the eve of the Labour Party's election. On these pages you will find interviews with the playwright, director and star of the production as well as their biographies.

## Interview with the Director: Mark Brokaw

### **Why did you want to direct *After Miss Julie*?**

Patrick Marber has written a fantastic reimagining of August Strindberg's original story, and I've wanted to tackle it for the last four years. But like always, it's about casting. I've waited to get the right three actors for the parts, and I feel so fortunate to have gathered the cast that I have for this production. The relationships and balance of power feel right. Strindberg's play *Miss Julie* is a compelling, tinderbox of a play – and Patrick Marber's transposing of the action to 1946 on the eve of the Labour party's famous landslide election not only cranks up that heat and explosiveness, but gives the contemporary audience an immediate emotional window into the action. Considering our recent presidential election, I actually think we're lucky that the production hasn't happened until now. The play starts with a party that's heard outside in the barn celebrating the Labour victory. England at that moment was experiencing a collective, joyous release prompted by the Labour victory and the defeat of Churchill's conservative party. We just experienced that same feeling this past November with Obama's victory. On election night here what had seemed impossible happened, and in my neighborhood people were literally dancing in the streets, hugging strangers. It was a night that promised great change and potential reform – and that's exactly what is happening in the world of this play. An American audience will have an immediate

and visceral connection to the motor that kicks off this story.



### **What do you feel the play is about?**

It's about: the power struggle between men and women, sex, class, sex, master and servant, status, sex. It's about a night of unbridled passion that should never have happened, but was destined to happen. All of the rules are changing. The social order in the world of *After Miss Julie* is shifting; the etched-in-stone boundaries between the classes are rapidly shifting and the characters have lost their solid ground of

accepted social custom to stand upon. This shift has been exacerbated by the war and now has gone into hyper-drive with the election results and the promise of great social reform. These three people in our story are struggling to gain their footing again in this brave, new world. The days are numbered for the life represented in this kitchen on this large country estate in the world of the play.

**What kind of research and preparation did you have to do in order to direct the play?**

I read every translation of Strindberg's *Miss Julie* I could get my hands on. That helped put into relief that changes and adjustments that Patrick implemented in his version of the story. And that also made me appreciate even more the shrewdness of all of his choices in setting story when he has, and the location of the story on a large country estate on this special election night. So that meant looking into that time period and that election, and making the connections to our world now. And the wonderful surprise is that the context of this world feels very much like ours right now. It doesn't feel like something coming to us from across the dusty ages – we are living these people's struggles right now. I also had the good fortune to go to England and visit a number of country estates like the one in our play. Patrick and I spent a day at Petworth, which



is southwest of London – it has some of the best-restored kitchens and servant's quarters in England. I spent some time as well at Uppark – a somewhat smaller estate, but just as grand. It also had a fantastic kitchen and a wonderful representation of life “downstairs” in a house such as this. It made a huge difference to feel first-hand in those rooms the distance between the life of the “masters” and the “servants” – and that even though a staircase may have been all that physically separated them, centuries of accumulated social protocol and stricture made that staircase metaphorically very steep and tall. And it was great to have the face time with the author to discuss the play in great detail. That was a lucky luxury.

**What are the challenges of directing an adaptation/updated version of another play?**

As I said earlier, Patrick has made it very easy with his version of the play because it is not simply an updating, or adaptation of an existing translation. He has created his own version of the story. And while a great portion of the play is still Strindberg's in words and action, the adjustments that Patrick has implemented have truly transformed the play into something fresh that I feel is more immediate and powerful for an audience today. The story stands on its own terms even if you have never heard of a play called *Miss Julie*, or seen or read Strindberg's original. So the greatest challenge is to always direct Marber's play – not Strindberg's. Patrick's given circumstances in the story are very specific and different from those of Strindberg's 1800's Sweden. So I immersed myself as deeply as possible into the historical context of Patrick's 1946 world: the war, life on country estates, life on those estates and how it was changing, balance of power between men and women at that time, shifting balance of power between the classes, etc. Doing that kind of detailed historical

research only reinforced my hunch that the play is incredibly current.

**How did you go about working with your design team?**

It's a play where you need the "stuff". It's a working kitchen of a very particular size on a very specific sort of estate at a very particular time in history. It's also a very well documented period of history, both in photographs and written social history. So the sharing of all that research amongst the design team was our initial window into the world -- after we had carefully gone through the text of the play and determined how the action unfolds and what ground plan would help prompt that action. It was all about the ground plan -- the placement of the entrances and exits, the stove, refrigerator, sink, sideboard, Christine's "office" area, and the

large table that dominates the physical life in the room. After the "bones" of the room were determined we moved on to making choices about the look of the room, it's color, the specific props, etc. Sharing my research from the time spent on the estates in England and my time with Patrick was invaluable. We knew that the kitchen needed to be a physical world that had been updated in an ad-hoc manner, slightly neglected and crumbling, and soon destined for the metaphorical trash heap as a working home. And it needed to be a world that could press in upon them, an uncomfortable room, a room where there is no place to lounge and comfortably pass the time. It's a room where three souls butt up against each other and the accumulated tinder brush of centuries-old social tension erupts on this one night of unleashed passion.

**MARK BROKAW** (Director). At Roundabout, Brokaw recently staged Lisa Loomer's play *Distracted*, starring Cynthia Nixon at the Laura Pels Theatre. Other Roundabout productions include the Off-Broadway production of *Suddenly Last Summer*, starring Blythe Danner and Carla Gugino & the Tony® Award nominated revival of *The Constant Wife* starring Kate Burton and Lynn Redgrave. Other Broadway: *Cry-Baby the Musical*. Other recent New York revivals include *Reckless* (Manhattan Theatre Club and Second Stage at the Biltmore) and *Baltimore Waltz* (Signature Theatre Company). New York premieres include Paula Vogel's *The Long Christmas Ride Home* and *How I Learned to Drive* (Vineyard Theatre), Kenneth Lonergan's *Lobby Hero* (Playwrights Horizons and its UK premiere at London's Donmar Warehouse and West End) and *This Is Our Youth* (New Group and Second Stage), Craig Lucas' *The Dying Gaul* and *Stranger* (Vineyard Theatre), Douglas Carter Beane's *As Bees in Honey Drown* and *Music From a Sparkling Planet* (Drama Dept.), Wendy Wasserstein's *Old Money* (Lincoln Center Theater), Lisa Kron's *2.5 Minute Ride* (New York Shakespeare Festival) and Lynda Barry's *The Good Times Are Killing Me* (Second Stage). Regional credits include the new musical *Marty* with John C. Reilly at the Huntington, *A Little Night Music* in the Sondheim Celebration at the Kennedy Center, as well as work at the Guthrie, Mark Taper Forum, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage Company, La Jolla Playhouse and the Gate Theatre in Dublin, Ireland. He is an Associate Artist at Roundabout Theatre Company, serves on the executive board of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers and is a member of Drama Dept.

# Interview with the Actor: Sienna Miller



**You grew up in England and were sent to an all-girls boarding school. Were you in all the school plays?**

I was so keen to be in them but I never got the good roles! We did *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and I was desperate to be the Pharaoh but I was about two feet tall – I was about nine—and so they made me the understudy and invented a part for me as his helper and I had to sit there onstage fanning him. It wasn't really fair. I did get to play Lady Sneerwell in *School for Scandal*. That was my first big role.

**You have said that you always knew you wanted to be a professional actor, but was there a point in your life where you realized, “I can actually make a career of this”?**

I was always pretty insecure and hard on myself—I still am. And I used to find it very hard to cry on film, to get into that emotional state. Then I did *Factory Girl*. One day, I had to do the most intense emotional scene where I confront Andy Warhol in a restaurant and it requires really heavy sobbing and all that. It's the second day of the whole shoot! So I didn't know anyone and it was really scary. I managed to do it and get myself to a really emotional place and I gained a bit of confidence then because I learned how I could access something quite deep.

**Do you consider your “Method” studies at Lee Strasburg Institute your main acting training?**

I never did any other training, but to be honest, I only did three months at Lee Strasburg and then I went traveling in Central America. I went back for another three months so I never really did a full-on training. I think a lot of acting is instinctual and I would say a lot of people are “Method” without really knowing it. You have to get emotionally involved and have something intense to do and you probably pick some sense memory to get yourself in that place and that might be typed “Method acting” but it's just acting.

**When you were at Strasburg, did you do all those infamously idiosyncratic exercises?**

We'd sit for two hours pretending we had a lemon in our hands and try to smell it and

taste it—then you kind of do. It's the weirdest experience in the world. We did all of that—the animal work, sense-memory—all of it. The main thing I got out of it was confidence. I loved being in New York. I was 18 and set free for the first time and amongst crazy people doing crazy things. It made me realize I was doing what I wanted to do.

**I imagine you've been offered a number of theatre projects and it seemed impressive to me that you chose Shakespeare—which some actors avoid for years—as your first West End show.**

Helen McCrory got sick, and I took over the role of Rosalind in *As You Like It* at the last minute, one of the most demanding female roles in Shakespeare. I wasn't even her understudy. God knows how I got through that. She was sick and we'd just opened two days before. Somehow I knew her lines since I was playing Celia and Celia's in almost every scene with Rosalind. You hear the play all day every day in rehearsals and so I kind of knew the lines. But it's something I'd never like to do again. I've never been so scared in my life.

**How did you come to be involved with *After Miss Julie*?**

Roundabout's Director of Artistic Development/Casting Jim Carnahan asked me, but Patrick Marber, the author, had to give his approval to casting. For me it's a dream come true since I've always been a huge fan of Patrick's writing, from *Dealer's Choice* on. He's just so respected and so brilliant that to be asked to do one of his plays is exciting.

**Have you seen productions of *After Miss Julie* in the past?**

I saw *After Miss Julie* at Donmar Warehouse in London about six years ago and it's a really heavy play, but it's just an incredible role for an actor. The writing is superb and

the relationship between the three characters is really thought-provoking and very dramatic and therefore fun to perform. But it is scary being Miss Julie.

**How are you approaching this project?**

I read Strindberg's version to see what happens there. And I've been up to a big stately manor house in England that's open to the public. Patrick Marber suggested I have a look at the kitchen to see the kind of room the play comes from. The other thing Jonny Lee Miller, who plays Miss Julie's father's chauffeur, and I plan to do is talk to his father who was alive when the election happened in 1945, which is the night when Marber's version takes place and what it meant to the people living then. That's a big part of what the play's about: the class struggle and the breakdown of social boundaries and the hang-ups these people have about it. The setting, the election where the Labour Party had its famous landslide victory, is important. Other than that, so much of the play is in the writing. It will come together through the discussions we'll have in rehearsals and how Mark Brokaw, the director, envisions it, and eventually Patrick will be really involved as well.



**When you're doing a famous role, do you watch previous film or TV versions or do you block them out?**

I say avoid it. Even seeing Kelly Reilly playing Julie at Donmar in London has made me hear her voice sometimes when I'm reading it because she was so good it's stuck with me—and that's quite scary. My biggest concern is to make Julie sympathetic. There are a lot of different possible readings and she can come across as vulgar and crass and awful but I think there's a real vulnerability in the writing that could get lost. I really want to find her vulnerability.

**How do you think American audiences will respond to the issue of class in the play?**

Patrick describes the play as being about

two people who slept together and shouldn't have—and the complications that come with stupid decisions. Everyone can relate to that—it's just the human condition, it's a very human play. It's very real.

**Will this be the beginning of more theatre in your future?**

Yes. Just the whole idea of being on Broadway is so exciting. And having seen shows in New York City, the audiences are brilliant. I love seeing theatre in New York. It's really weird but the only thing I dreamed of doing since the age of three was being an actor. My mother actually went into labor with me during a performance of *The Nutcracker Suite* so I was kind of born in the theatre. I'm pretty sure I'm going to be bitten by the bug and never want to leave Broadway.

**SIENNA MILLER** (Miss Julie). Born in New York, Sienna Miller spent the majority of her childhood in London and Wiltshire. She went on to study drama at the Lee Strasberg Institute in New York. In 2000 she starred in the off-Broadway production of *Independence* at the Neighbourhood Playhouse. Sienna portrayed “Celia” in the Young Vic’s critically acclaimed production of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, at the Wyndhams Theatre in London’s West End. She starred alongside Helen McCrory, Dominic West and Reece Shearsmith. Sienna Miller was presented with the 2009 ShoWest Supporting Actress of the Year Award. Recently released movies include *The Edge of Love* with Keira Knightly, directed by John Maybury and *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* opposite Peter Sarsgaard. In August, Sienna can also be seen in the highly anticipated action film *G.I. Joe: Rise Of The Cobra* directed by Stephen Sommers in which she plays the baroness Anastasia DeCobray. Sienna has starred in *Interview* opposite Steve Buscemi and played “Nikki,” a beautiful but unstable party girl, in Charles Shyer’s high profile remake of the 1960’s classic *Alfie*. She starred alongside Jude Law, Susan Sarandon, Marisa Tomei, Jane Krakowski and Nia Long. Sienna also starred opposite Heath Ledger in Lasse Hallström’s production of *Casanova*. She plays the part of Francesca, the only woman Casanova fails to seduce. Sienna completed four other feature films in 2006, the most notable of which was *Factory Girl* directed by George Hickenlooper in which she plays the ill-fated Andy Warhol muse, Edie Sedgwick, opposite Guy Pearce. In addition, she starred in *Interview* opposite Steve Buscemi, *Camille* opposite James Franco, and had a cameo in *Stardust* directed by Matthew Vaughn.

# Interview with the Playwright: Patrick Marber



**What made you decide you wanted to write for the theatre?** I can't remember. No 'eureka' moment. I loved going to the theatre with my parents when I was a kid. I hung out at the National Theatre when I was in my teens and saw everything I possibly could. I liked acting in plays at school.

**What inspired you to write *After Miss Julie*?**

A commission from the BBC in 1995. A man called Simon Curtis produced a great but no longer existent series on BBC2 called *Performance*. He put plays on TV. He asked me to write and direct a version of *Miss Julie*.

**Can you tell us a bit about the production history of the play?**

I directed the TV version in 1995. It was broadcast in November of that year. The cast was Geraldine Somerville, Kathy Burke and Phil Daniels (who had been in my first play *Dealer's Choice*). The director, Michael Grandage, saw it on TV (he was one of the

few that did) and years later when he took over the artistic directorship of the Donmar Warehouse in London he asked if he could direct it for the stage. I did some rewriting for the Donmar (the text performed in NY is this version). The play had its stage premiere in 2003 directed by Michael Grandage.

**What are the fundamental differences between your version and the Strindberg original?**

I'd rather not say too much. I added some things and took away some things. I gave Christine a 'knowledge' of the night that she doesn't have in the Strindberg. My play is less 'elemental' than the original. And shorter. And tauter. Same steps, different moves. And I adore the characters and am moved by their predicament. I'm not sure that Strindberg felt this way about them.

**As a playwright, were you influenced by Strindberg's work before you wrote your version of *Miss Julie*? If so, in which ways?**

Not influenced particularly. But I admired his work. His variety and integrity in particular. He was a very decent painter as well as a great writer.

**What are the challenges of adapting/updating a work like *Miss Julie* or Moliere's *Don Juan*?**

Oh...I don't know. Writing is hard work. The End.

**What do you look for in a director?**

Patience, wisdom, integrity, kindness, intelligence, ruthlessness, wit and efficiency.

**What attributes must the actors bring to the three roles in *After Miss Julie*?**

Volume. Alarming sensuality. Stillness. The ability to smoke. Poise. Guile. Guts.



**PATRICK MARBER** (Playwright). Patrick Marber was born in 1964. Theatre: His first play *Dealer's Choice* opened at the National Theatre in February 1995. It subsequently transferred to the Vaudeville Theatre, London. It was revived at The Menier Chocolate Factory in 2007 and transferred to The Trafalgar Studios. *Dealer's Choice* received the 1995 Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy and the Writer's Guild Award for Best West End Play. His second play *Closer* opened at the National Theatre, Cottesloe auditorium in May 1997. In October 1997 it transferred to the NT Lyttelton Theatre and then in March 1998 to the Lyric Theatre, London. The play opened on Broadway in March 1999. *Closer* received the 1997 Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy, the Critics Circle Award for Best Play and the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play. The Broadway production won the 1999 New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Foreign Play. There have been productions of *Closer* in more than a hundred cities across the world. *Howard Katz* opened at the National Theatre in June 2001. It received its New York premiere in March 2007 at the Laura Pels Theatre in the Roundabout Theatre.

*After Miss Julie* opened at the Donmar Warehouse in November 2003. Patrick Marber's play for teenage actors *The Musicians* premiered at the National Theatre as part of Shell Connections in summer 2004. Patrick's most recent play is *Don Juan in Soho* which opened at the Donmar Warehouse in November 2006. As well as his own plays Patrick Marber has directed Craig Raine's '1953' (Almeida), Dennis Potter's *Blue Remembered Hills* (NT, Lyttelton), David Mamet's *The Old Neighborhood* (Royal Court, Duke of York's) and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* (Comedy Theatre). Television and Radio: "After Miss Julie", which he adapted and directed for the BBC2 'Performance' series in 1995. He has co-written and appeared in the award winning comedy programmes "The Day Today", "The Paul Calf Video Diary", "Knowing Me, Knowing You..." with Alan Partridge and "Three Fights", "Two Weddings and a Funeral". His short film *The Egg* (Dir. Richard Wilson) was shown on BBC2 in 2002, and his short radio play *Hoop Lane* was transmitted on BBC Radio 3 in November 2004. Film: *Old Street* (short film, released 2004) directed by Angus Jackson and starring Ray Winstone. *Closer* was released in the US in December 2004 and in the UK in January 2005. It received two Golden Globes for Best Supporting Actor (Clive Owen) and Best Supporting Actress (Natalie Portman), and was nominated for Golden Globes for Best Picture, Best Screenplay (Patrick Marber), and Best Director (Mike Nichols). Clive Owen and Natalie Portman also received Academy Award nominations. *Notes on a Scandal* from the novel by Zoe Heller (dir. Richard Eyre), starring Judi Dench and Cate Blanchett, opened in the UK in February 2007. It received numerous award nominations; Patrick Marber for Best Adapted screenplay (Golden Globes, Oscars, BAFTAs), Judi Dench for Best Actress in a Leading Role (Golden Globes, Oscars, BAFTAs), Cate Blanchett for Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Golden Globes, Oscars), Outstanding British Film (BAFTAs), Philip Glass for Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures (Original Score) *Love You More* (short film, released 2008) directed by Sam Taylor-Wood was nominated for both BAFTA and Palme D'Or awards. It has won numerous prizes on the international festival circuit where it has been screened in more than fifty festivals world wide. Patrick is currently working on a screenplay based on Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday*.

# education

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