



Elite Film AG Badenerstrasse 156 CH-8026 Zürich Phone +41 44 298 81 81 Fax +41 44 298 81 89 info@ascot-elite.ch  
www.ascot-elite.ch

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presents

# A Serious Man

**A Film by Joel & Ethan Coen**

USA, 2009, 155 min, 35mm (1 :1,85), Couleur

**Press :**

Miriam Raccah, Ascot Elite, Marketing & PR, Genève

Tel: 022 344 40 25 – Fax: 022 344 40 26 – Email: miriam@ascot.-elite.ch

Corinne Otto, Ascot Elite, Marketing & PR, Zürich

Tel: 044 298 81 72 – Fax: 044 298 81 89 – Email: Corinne@ascot-elite.ch

**www.ascot-elite.ch**

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# A Serious Man

## Synopsis

Imaginatively exploring questions of faith, familial responsibility, delinquent behavior, dental phenomena, academia, mortality, and Judaism – and intersections thereof – **A Serious Man** is the new film from Academy Award-winning writer/directors Joel and Ethan Coen.

**A Serious Man** is the story of an ordinary man's search for clarity in a universe where Jefferson Airplane is on the radio and *F-Troop* is on TV. It is 1967, and Larry Gopnik (Tony Award nominee Michael Stuhlbarg), a physics professor at a quiet Midwestern university, has just been informed by his wife Judith (Sari Lennick) that she is leaving him. She has fallen in love with one of his more pompous acquaintances, Sy Ableman (Fred Melamed), who seems to her a more substantial person than the feckless Larry. Larry's unemployable brother Arthur (Richard Kind) is sleeping on the couch, his son Danny (Aaron Wolff) is a discipline problem and a shirker at Hebrew school, and his daughter Sarah (Jessica McManus) is filching money from his wallet in order to save up for a nose job.

While his wife and Sy Ableman blithely make new domestic arrangements, and his brother becomes more and more of a burden, an anonymous hostile letter-writer is trying to sabotage Larry's chances for tenure at the university. Also, a graduate student seems to be trying to bribe him for a passing grade while at the same time threatening to sue him for defamation. Plus, the beautiful woman next door torments him by sunbathing nude. Struggling for equilibrium, Larry seeks advice from three different rabbis. Can anyone help him cope with his afflictions and become a righteous person – a *mensch* – a serious man?

A Focus Features presentation in association with StudioCanal and Relativity Media of a Working Title production. **A Serious Man**. Michael Stuhlbarg, Richard Kind. Casting by Ellen Chenoweth, Rachel Tenner. Music by Carter Burwell. Costume Designer, Mary Zophres. Production Designer, Jess Gonchor. Edited by Roderick Jaynes. Director of Photography, Roger Deakins, *ASC*, *BSC*. Executive Producers, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Robert Graf. Written, Produced and Directed by Joel Coen & Ethan Coen. A Focus Features Release.

# A Serious Man

*Receive with simplicity everything that happens to you.* -- Rashi

*When the truth is found to be lies  
And all the joy within you dies...* -- Jefferson Airplane

## **About the Production**

### **WRITE WHAT...YOU KNOW?**

**A Serious Man** is, according to executive producer Robert Graf, “a story told from the perspective of the place that Joel and Ethan Coen knew when they were growing up.”

Ethan Coen comments, “The picture takes place in 1967 among a Jewish community in an unnamed Midwestern suburb; Joel and I are from the Midwest and so it’s reminiscent of our childhoods. The milieu, the whole setting is important to us and was a big part of what got us going on this story. Where you grew up is part of your identity. That doesn’t go away, even if you’ve been away for a long time.”

Joel Coen notes, “The landscape of a place informs a story a great deal, although the genesis of the project dates back many years; we considered making a short movie about a bar mitzvah boy who goes to see an ancient rabbi. The rabbi character would be loosely based on a rabbi we knew when we were kids.”

Ethan remembers, “This rabbi we knew was a sage, a Yoda. He said nothing, but he had a lot of charisma.”

As the script developed, Joel notes that “that element stayed in it, but the feature we now have is quite different and deals with other things as well.

“Although Larry Gopnik is a made-up character, he is based on people who were familiar to us growing up because he’s an academic and both our parents were academics. Through them we met lots of people who were professors at universities. Also, Larry is a middle-aged Jewish father in a community not unlike the one we grew up in, where there were lots of them.”

“Everybody in the Gopnik family has an agenda,” says Ethan. “The son, Danny, wants to get pot and LP records. His sister, Sarah, wants to get a nose job. The wife and mother, Judith, wants to run off with another man, Sy Ableman, whom she sees as ‘a serious man,’ unlike her husband.”

Joel notes, “Larry is the head of the family, and he just wants to keep things going. At the beginning of the story, he’s happy with the way things are, with the status quo. But misfortunes befall him – and he can’t believe that the apple cart is being upset.”

The screenplay was initially equally about Larry and his son Danny, but the emphasis shifted as the script developed. Ethan admits, “The fun of the story for us was inventing new ways to torture Larry. His life just progressively gets worse.

“Two key experiences for Danny remain at the climax of the movie, yet Larry’s fate became more of what the story was about – maybe because there are more ways to beleaguer an adult.”

Though the majority of **A Serious Man** is set in the suburban Midwest of 1967, the movie opens with a prologue set a century earlier – in a Polish *shtetl* (small Jewish village), where an unsettling folk tale plays out completely in Yiddish.

Ethan explains, ““We thought a little self-contained story would be an appropriate introduction for this movie. Since we didn’t know any suitable Yiddish folk tales, we made one up.”

Joel adds, “It doesn’t have any relationship to what follows, but it helped us get started thinking about the movie.”

Actor Fred Melamed confides, “I asked Joel about the screenwriting process. It turns out that he and Ethan write scenes as they wish to see them, as if they were in a movie theater.”

## CASTING CALLS

In casting **A Serious Man**, Joel Coen reports that “we wanted a lead actor who would be essentially unknown to the audience. Now, Michael Stuhlbarg isn’t unknown if you’re a theatergoer in New York, but to movie audiences he’s relatively unknown. From his theater work, we knew how good he was.”

The Tony Award-nominated actor was originally called in to read for a part in the film’s prologue, scripted entirely in Yiddish. To prepare, Stuhlbarg “studied with a Yiddish tutor and had a wonderful time working on it. At the audition, Joel and Ethan Coen laughed a lot and I was really pleased. But they ended up going with an actor who spoke Yiddish fluently.”

The Coens were impressed enough to bring Stuhlbarg back to read for both Larry and Uncle Arthur. “I was excited because there was so much material to work with,” remembers Stuhlbarg. “Time passed, and then a call came; they said they wanted me in the movie, but weren’t sure which part I should play. Finally, while at a theater retreat in Vermont, Joel called and said, ‘I’ll put you out of your misery; you’re playing Larry.’”

Stuhlbarg enthuses, “I fell in love with this script when I first read it, taking the whole story in, marveling at its twists and turns, and thoroughly enjoying the artistry with which it was constructed.

“Being on the set almost every day was a blessing and a terrific education in how the Coen Brothers work, and how and why it all flows so beautifully. I felt I was able to shape the character over a long period of time.”

Of his character, the actor comments, “Larry goes about his life in a very normal way, having developed his routines. He’s quite content to continue his life the way it’s going. He enjoys his mathematics and his physics, loves his family, and probably takes a lot of what’s around him for granted. He’s not aware that he’s doing that until it all starts to slip away and he discovers that life isn’t what he expected it to be, which throws him into a crisis of faith and takes him out of his bubble.

“He hopes that, through his community’s spiritual leaders’ wisdom, he will learn why these things are happening to him. Then other wrenches get thrown at him. His brother, Arthur, is having his own crisis, which is another weight on Larry’s shoulders, though one he bears well because of the great bond between them.”

Furthering their approach to work with actors new to movie audiences, the Coens cast the roles of Larry’s wife and children with local actors from Minneapolis, where they would be filming the movie. Joel points out, “As we did when we made *Fargo*, a lot of roles in **A Serious Man** are played by local actors.”

Beyond various speaking parts, extras and background players were also recruited, as Rachel Tenner, one of the film’s two casting directors (the other being the Coens’ frequent collaborator Ellen Chenoweth), logged considerable time in Minneapolis and St. Paul visiting Jewish youth centers, retirement communities, and synagogues. Robert Graf remarks, “Rachel was trying to dig a little deeper, to go beyond just those actors represented by agents, because we felt we had to go a little off the beaten path – especially on some of the more specific parts, for which we held open calls.”

Only by discovering fresh faces that would resonate with the Coens and on-screen could the production convey what Ethan calls “the whole incongruity of Jews in the Midwest. We wanted to cast real Jews as opposed to the Hollywood ethnic type. They are Jews on the plains – that’s we wanted to get across. It is a subculture, and a feeling, that is different from Jewish communities in New York or Los Angeles.”

Joel notes, “We wanted to involve the real-life community as much as possible in the movie. The local religious leaders that we went to all had a good perspective and a sense of humor about the story.”

Ethan reports, “Occasionally people would ask, ‘You’re not making fun of the Jews, are you?’ We are not, but some will take anything that isn’t flattering as an indication that we think the whole community or ethnicity is flawed.”

Joel states, “People can get a little uptight when you’re being specific with a subject matter. From our point of view, **A Serious Man** is a very affectionate look at the community and is a movie that will show aspects of Judaism which are not usually seen.”

Location manager Tyson Bidner remarks, “The Jewish community in Minneapolis really got behind the project; people enthusiastically came out to the casting calls and to be a part of it. We found amazing faces and amazing actors.”

Bidner himself answered the call to step in front of the camera for a bit part as the Torah holder in the bar mitzvah sequence. Ethan says, “We chose Tyson because he just looked like he’d fit into the shul [synagogue and its congregation] there.”

Bidner reveals, “I was happy to oblige, and it worked out, because I had been a Torah lifter before. It’s a nerve-wracking job because in the Jewish religion, if a Torah should fall during a ceremony and you witness it, you’re obliged to fast for 30 days.

“So there was the pressure of not only performing – we had a real cantor and synagogue and community officials there – and lifting but also the very real obligation of making sure that the Torah was secure – and the one we used happened to be one of the heavier ones I’ve come across!”

Actress Sari Lennick had relocated to Minneapolis from the East Coast a couple of years ago. One day, she ran into her agent – who, she says, “had kind of forgotten about me.” But a week later, Lennick found herself auditioning for Tenner, although the actress saw landing the role of Judith Gopnik as “a long shot.” But she did well enough to land a face-to-face audition with the Coens. Lennick marvels, “They were incredibly gracious and they laughed at all my jokes, which made them my two favorite people on the planet.” Not long after, the Coens offered her the part.

Lennick says, “Joel and Ethan wrote an extraordinary screenplay. During filming, I would go back and read it, and not just the scenes that I got to be a part of.

“She’s a parent who has food on the table promptly every evening. But her relationship with Sy offers Judith something that she’s not getting with her husband Larry. To Judith, Sy is ‘a serious man,’ engaged and very engaging – while she feels that Larry is not serious about the right things; physics, mostly.”

Lennick feels that she was able to take her character to heart because “I’ve never had directors – even in the tiniest theater production – who trusted me so much as an actor. Joel and Ethan consulted with me on everything, including my hairdo. Although they conceived, wrote, and directed the story, once we started working, they handed Judith over to me. I believe they felt that I knew her better than they did.”

Also from the local talent pool, teenagers Aaron Wolff and Jessica McManus were chosen to play Danny and Sarah. McManus’ grandmother saw a news item in [The Minneapolis \[- St. Paul, Minnesota\] Star Tribune](#) announcing the open auditions in May 2008 for the roles of the Gopnik kids, and encouraged her granddaughter to try out. “I didn’t even have a résumé, so I never imagined I would even get the first callback,” says McManus. “When I got the part, I was so happy I cried. Being on the set was nothing like I expected, but everyone made it so easy to adapt.

“Sarah wants what she wants, her way, and now. That’s admirable – to a certain degree. Playing her, it was fun to yell at people and not get any backlash, but I did have to tone down the way I spoke – the slang I use – because the film is set in 1967.”

Wolff decided to try out for the role at the open auditions even though his family was about to relocate to another state. “We knew we’d suffer the consequences, but it was worth it,” admits the young actor. “I read the script and pictured things, but then when I’d go on the set it would be 10 times better. It was a great experience.”

Having just recently been through his own real-life bar mitzvah ceremony, Wolff experienced déjà vu in filming Danny’s. “Those were probably the most fun scenes for me,” he recalls. “The toughest thing I had to do was on the first day of shooting – a smoking scene. What a turn-off!

“Joel and Ethan are so personable but usually they won’t say anything before we rehearse and block a scene. Then, if they want something different or specific, they’ll say so.”

A more familiar face to audiences, Richard Kind, takes on a more dramatic role than usual in **A Serious Man**. The Coens had remembered him from an audition for their previous film, *Burn After Reading*, and Kind was called in to read for one of the rabbi roles in the new movie. Later, while doing a play in Fort Worth, Kind got the call that the Coens wanted him to read for the part of Uncle Arthur. He remembers, “I had to do it on tape, from Fort Worth. I never get parts from auditioning on tape, but I did this time!”

The actor remarks, “Arthur is not on-screen for a long time. It wasn’t until rehearsals, when everybody was saying to me, ‘Oh, Uncle Arthur’s a terrific part,’ that I fully realized it. When I started studying what I wanted to bring to him and listening to what the Coens were telling me about how they saw him, it became very clear to me. Still, much of what goes on with Arthur can only be filled in by the imagination, and I tried to present him that way – leaving it up to the audience, as Joel and Ethan do.”

Stuhlbarg reveals that “Richard and I did speak about what we thought their history might be; that Arthur is older than Larry and was always more intelligent but also more socially inept. As time went by, Larry became more self-possessed and assertive, and Arthur started to atrophy.”

Unemployed, possibly brilliant, and homeless, Uncle Arthur is physically afflicted by a sebaceous cyst on the back of his neck. Kind sees it as “this little monster, as if the ugliness of the world has attached itself to the back of his neck. He’s always draining it with this evacuator, yet it just keeps regenerating.”

To play Sy Ableman, Larry Gopnik’s rival for his wife’s affections, the Coens tapped actor Fred Melamed. “Sy is the sex guy in our movie; every film needs one,” notes Joel.

“Yet he’s not your usual movie homewrecker,” qualifies Ethan.

Melamed was up for the task, quipping that he was happy “to move a pompous, overweight, pushy guy who speaks in rabbinical tones back to the center of American sexuality, where he belongs!”

Nearly two decades earlier, Melamed had auditioned for the Coens for a pivotal role in *Barton Fink*. That role went to Michael Lerner, who subsequently received an Academy Award nomination for his performance, “and deservedly so,” says Melamed. “But they remembered me, and got in touch with me first, which was very exciting. The script put me in mind of their best films, which get in between your conscious and subconscious, and rattle around in there and affect you.”

Melamed elaborates, “In **A Serious Man**, Judith falls for this man who is significantly older and not movie-star handsome. She sees him as a bigger deal than Larry, who she doesn’t think is enough of a *macher*, as they say in Yiddish – an achiever, an important person. Larry doesn’t have a following where he teaches, whereas Sy does. Ethan told me that Sy is ‘smoothly free of self-doubt,’ and that they knew someone like that growing up. Sy is one of those people who, throughout history, have done the most outrageous things and really earnestly believed that they were doing what was best for everybody; because they don’t have the doubt mechanism in place like normal people do, they destroy people. But Sy is gentle about it...”

On the set, Melamed was reunited with his former Yale School of Drama classmate Katherine Borowitz, who also appears in the film; and with lifelong friend Adam Arkin, who plays a divorce lawyer and who – like Melamed – was acting in his first movie for the Coens. Melamed recalls, “Adam and I were talking one day, and he described it, rightly; ‘Being on this movie make you feel good about being an actor, because it’s so unlike the way most people work.’”

Melamed explains, “Some directors don’t like the actual shooting of the film, because they have to give up control. That’s not at all true of Joel and Ethan. They love every aspect of filmmaking – writing it, making it, post[-production]ing it, the whole thing.

“Perhaps because they have conceived a story from the beginning, they are unthreatened by other people’s ideas or other people’s takes on things – even from a jobbing actor like me. You feel that you’re in the heart of telling the story with them.”

## **BETTER HOMES AND MORE**

“1967 in the Midwest was a great period,” reflects production designer Jess Gonchor. “New designs styles were developing.

“We did a lot of research, and we looked for practical locations to alter and then film in. Walking in and just shooting? That’s never happened on any movie I’ve been on...”

Indeed, a key challenge in recreating a Midwestern suburb of the 1960s was to find a neighborhood that had remained largely unchanged over the past 40-plus years. Robert Graf elaborates, “There are a lot of neighborhoods in the Twin Cities area that are very well-

preserved from the standpoint of the architecture, but most of them are 50 years old now and very overgrown, with big trees.

“What we really wanted was the feeling of a neighborhood when it was still new. If you look at archival photos, most of these suburbs were built on cornfields and prairies.”

Tyson Bidner and Gonchor’s staff searched within and just outside Minneapolis/St. Paul for areas that had undergone heavy storm damage or blight that destroyed some of the more mature growth. Graf reports that “we finally happened on a neighborhood that had suffered some storm damage about 8 years ago which left it remarkably open, particularly in the front yards.”

Bidner adds, “They had had to replant trees, so that helped it look like a new suburban neighborhood in the 1960s, where trees would have been planted with new homes.

“We received the full cooperation and support of twelve different homes and families in this one neighborhood – four on one street, the four across from them, and four which shared some of the others’ back yards.”

Gonchor reveals, “It’s a great neighborhood as it is, but for several houses we did clear out vegetation and put in new driveways – or, rather, narrow them down from the current two-car ones to the period’s one-car ones. We also had to re-sod lawns.”

Also located was a Hebrew school which, says Bidner, “we could use for 3-4 different settings – and that’s always helpful on a low-budget movie – including the on-screen Hebrew school. Their school cafeteria became our school’s classroom...”

“...and we could never have gotten a classroom this big otherwise unless we’d built it,” adds Gonchor. “The script called for wide shots with 20-24 students at desks, so we got lucky.”

As with other locations, the filmmakers needed a local synagogue that had a newly constructed look. Most of the temples in and around Minneapolis had a decidedly classic architectural style, so the Coens suggested the very synagogue they attended while growing up in the region.

However, in the intervening years, it had been turned into a church; transforming it again would have taken up too much time and labor.

Bidner finally located the right shul – B’nai Emet, formerly B’nai Abraham and itself not far from where the Coens grew up. He notes, “We worked our shooting schedule around the High Holy Days in September and October, and it was perfect.”

B’Nai Emet is the location for one of the more uniquely filmed sequences in **A Serious Man**. In close collaboration with their longtime director of photography, eight-time Academy Award nominee Roger Deakins, operating his own camera the Coens particularly enjoyed devising the look for the bar mitzvah sequence. Some particulars of the sequence

necessitated overall approval from the temple elders, who granted permission after reading the script.

Ethan Coen says, “It was great to shoot, because Roger had these swing and tilt lenses that skew the focal plane. They give this weird, soft effect to everything in the frame except for one almost arbitrary plane. He had used them a lot on *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. With us, he used them for two sequences in the movie, the bar mitzvah one and the one where Larry goes next door to visit the sexy, mysterious Mrs. Samksy [played by Amy Landecker].”

Other Twin Cities locations included Interstate Park on the St. Croix River, where the Coens had gone canoeing while growing up; and Lake Rebecca in Independence, Minnesota, a picturesque lake with (as seen on-screen) a small beach area. Bidner states that the production was “able to find everything – and every location – we needed in the Twin Cities.”

Throughout filming, the production was conscious of the environment; cast and crew were given metal canteens which were refilled from a water source, thereby eliminating plastic water bottles. Additionally, many of the utensils used were made of cornstarch, which could later be composted. “We recycled the sets and the food service,” reveals Bidner. “Everyone was aware of the importance of finding ways to make things a little bit better.”

The careful preparation and working methods of longtime collaborators also go a long way towards making things that much better. Joel Coen remarks, “We have the huge advantage of being able to work with the best people in the movie business – it makes our movies what they are – which is especially helpful when you’re working on a little budget with a tiny amount of resources.”

Ethan confirms, “When you’re making a movie about a Jewish Midwestern community in 1967 and Fred Melamed is the sex guy, they don’t give you a lot of money.”

Budgets notwithstanding, Joel marvels at how “our set decorator, Nancy Haigh, always shocks us in terms of what she’s able to unearth for whatever universe we’ve chosen to create. She supplies all those small details that make the sets look authentic.”

Ethan adds, “She’s a Gentile, and here she was accumulating all this Judaica and Hebraica that was familiar from our childhood; Nancy outdid herself, accumulating more than audiences will see in the movie.”

Similarly, special effects coordinator Larz Anderson and his team fashioned a human brain out of clay and silicon rubber – as a prop in the 1950s black-and-white movie that Danny is watching on television.

Gonchor offers, “Joel and Ethan write things out so specifically and storyboard everything; that makes my job easier; I know what I have to zero in on. But they’ll let me create until it maybe goes too far, and then they’ll reel it in.”

“I have a lot of block construction in **A Serious Man**; there’s the prologue, with the couple, and then right after that there’s Danny’s classroom. Larry’s office has a bit of that, and then the Jolly Roger motel definitely does. These are concrete worlds that the characters are often looking to get out of. One reason this script was so good is because it comes from something – and some place – real, and it’s reality pushed a bit...”

## AUTO FOCUS

Any feature film set in the past is looking for visual shorthand of “the kind of detail that immediately conveys the period,” notes Joel Coen.

Vintage automobiles invariably signal that, and **A Serious Man** was no exception – especially since one pivotal sequence entails cross-cutting between two automobiles, each in transit. Still, as Joel explains, “It was important not to populate the movie with cars that looked too new, the kind of cars you find from collectors who keep them shiny and perfect and don’t look like they would have looked at the time. It was a constant struggle to get cars that were period but not in quite as perfect condition, or at least ones where the owners would let you knock them down a bit.”

Weeks before the start of production, picture car coordinator Mike Arnold (who had previously worked for the Coens on *Fargo* over a decade earlier) began scouring local antique car shows in search of the right vehicles for the characters to drive and to pepper the backgrounds of exterior scenes. Arnold comments, “They told me the background cars were up to me; they were mainly interested in picking the main cars. The only thing they said was ‘no reds, no whites and no big fins.’ They also didn’t want anything from before 1960, because it looked too ‘period.’”

The car that the filmmakers settled on for Larry Gopnik was a Dodge Coronet, a mid-sized car that Chrysler introduced in the ‘50s and then again in the mid-‘60s. Arnold says, “The car really fits Larry’s personality; it’s just a plain 1966 every-day looking car. It’s nothing fancy and he’s not a fancy guy.” Sy Ableman, on the other hand, is behind the wheel of a Coupe de Ville.

For Mrs. Samsky’s car, Arnold managed to get an exception to the Coens’ mandate. He notes, “I felt she needed a Mustang. I picked out a gold one first, but then I sent Joel and Ethan Coen a photo of a red one anyway – and they loved it, as did Jess Gonchor. She’s a spicy character, so she had to have something spicy. So we got a little red in our car palette after all.”

Gonchor’s favorite vehicle in the film was “the yellow school bus – I always wanted to do a movie with one – on which I was able to put writing in Hebrew, because it’s for Danny’s school. It was a double *mitzvah* for me.”

The biggest adjustment that the actors had to make in driving the vintage cars was to the absence of many of the innovations that have become standard since the 1960s, such as power steering. Arnold laughs, “When they got in one of these cars, they’d turn the ignition

and turn and turn and turn. But nothing happened because there's no electronic transmission. You have to punch the gas."

The several dozen cars that needed to be parked outside the synagogue for the bar mitzvah sequence were rounded up by enlisting the help of local TV and radio stations to invite participants. But an added incentive was needed to ensure participation. Joel reveals, "The owners of these cars tended to be very proprietary about their vehicles, so we thought it was best to get them to be extras in the movie – and let them drive their own cars."

## UP/TUCK

For Sari Lennick, it was the girdle and other foundation garments; for Aaron Wolff, the high-waisted pants did the trick. When making a movie set in the past, actors rely upon components of their costumes to impact and enhance their portrayal so that they truly feel in-character.

It's all in day's work for the Coens' longtime costume designer Mary Zophres and her department. She notes, "Every scene and tableau in **A Serious Man** had a personality to it.

"The Jewish Cultural Foundation of the Upper Midwest has a photo archive that they were kind enough to share with me, as well as with the art department; we in turn shared it with the hair and make-up crews. I was inspired by the Foundation's archive as much as I was by the script."

Zophres discovered that the Minneapolis area in 1967 was not yet keeping pace with more fashion-forward-looking parts of the country. "If the film had taken place in 1969, it would have had a completely different look," she asserts. "But in 1967, in this suburb of a smallish city, things were more conservative; it was still not yet 'the swinging '60s.' Danny Gopnik may be listening to Jefferson Airplane, but he's not dressing like Jefferson Airplane; his father would have grabbed him by the ear, and it's his mother who still buys his clothes."

Many of the film's characters are obliged to adhere to a specific formal dress code, from the university faculty and students to the younger Hebrew students. With that in mind, Zophres discussed the film's clothes' color palette early on with the Coens and with Jess Gonchor and Roger Deakins. The Gopniks' story transpires in May, which would seem to call for pastel colors, yet Zophres felt otherwise; "I showed Joel and Ethan Coen a page from a Sears Roebuck catalog called 'Deep Autumnal,' and that's more or less the color palette we decided on. This movie has quite a bit of blue, and some color combinations – like turquoise with olive green, which is a very '60s mix. I only used certain colors, but I used them intensely. The women were all costumed in the darker ends of our palette – black, chocolate brown, or deep deep green."

The main cast and the extras frequently needed instructions on how to dress in what was oddly unfamiliar clothing. For instance, notes Zophres, "In the 1960s there was very little break in a pair of men's pants. To a lot of the actors who were used to wearing contemporary pants, I had to say 'Pull up your pants!' It became my mantra for the extras.

“[Assistant costume designer] Jenny Eagan and I also went around saying ‘Tuck in your shirt,’ because back then people took care in how they dressed. When you went to the grocery store, you put on clothes, not sneakers or a track suit. Those weren’t everyday clothes yet. It was still a time when people made the effort to prepare and present themselves to their neighbors.”

Zophres clarifies, “Every extra who was dressed for the movie was dressed by either Jenny or myself. We had to be happy with the way everybody looked, so that any of them could be called for any scene or shot and ready to go. People would come in from casting, and I would get inspired just from seeing their faces. We had some great faces on **A Serious Man.**”

Women’s clothes were the most specifically fit and tailored. Zophres reveals, “All of the women in the movie wore the appropriate undergarments. Blouses had darts in them then, so if you didn’t wear the right bra, the shirt didn’t fit the right way.”

Judith Gopnik’s look was fashioned after the Jewish Cultural Foundation photographs, requiring a head-to-toe transformation of Sari Lennick. Zophres remembers, “We broke it to Sari slowly; she would get to keep her hair length, but we were going to dye it brown to match the other Gopniks’. Her hair was cut and styled to match a specific photo that we had found from 1967.

“Then we put on the clothes. Low shoes. Skirts at the most unflattering length ever, right in the middle of the calf. Plaid blouses. It was quite a ‘before and after’ transformation, but Sari was totally into it.”

Photos of physics departments’ professors in 1960s Minnesota college yearbooks pointed the way towards the ensemble for Professor Larry Gopnik. Short-sleeved dress shirts were key, not only because the month is May but also “because they had a nerd appeal,” states Zophres.

The short-sleeved dress shirts were combined with conservative suits and ties, sport coats and trousers, and outfitted with a pocket protector. Zophres offers, “It might be a cliché, but on Michael Stuhlbarg it looked so real. His pants were also a bit short and he was able to wear the ideal period shoes, some of which had never been worn before. Michael put on the clothes and he just became the character!”

In the era before contact lenses became more prevalent, eyeglasses were more commonplace, and “these were so important to the character of Larry in particular. From the first reading of the script, I was sure he should have them. But between him and a number of other characters wearing glasses, it was an added challenge for Roger Deakins,” admits Zophres. “So each set of glasses was made with two different sets of lenses – one set clear, one anti-reflective-coated – that could be alternated depending on the lighting needs.”

The unhappy Uncle Arthur remains in his pajamas a great deal of the time, and Richard Kind further suggested that his character’s clothing be a bit too big. Zophres agreed, so that

“nothing fits him quite right – the sleeves are too long, for instance – and that adds to his depression. You give someone a costume with shoulders that come down low, and his shoulders will themselves slope.”

It was for Sy Ableman that Zophres was able to go all-out. She notes, “Sy is the cosmopolitan one of the community. In the script, it says that he wears his shirts outside of his clothes and they tent out over his stomach. We wound up making all of his shirts; the first one he wears in the movie was from a Tahitian-styled fabric I originally bought for Leonardo DiCaprio on *Catch Me If You Can*. I had ended up not using it and still had it in my garage. Sy’s the kind of guy who you can imagine as having been on vacation, maybe on some cruises to places the Gopniks would not have had to money to go to.

“We did not have the money to make this on the budget that most period films would be, so we prepared exactly what we needed to prepare. I loved doing it all.”

### **THIS IS SERIOUS**

Richard Kind states, “**A Serious Man** is, I believe, how Joel and Ethan Coen view the world and ‘the human condition.’ It’s also a good yarn about one very sad SOB.”

Fred Melamed muses, “In **A Serious Man**, bad things happen, good things happen, and a lot of it goes unexplained. Larry wants to know what he’s done wrong; he wants to see that he’s done something morally wrong so that he can straighten things out and not be that way, and not have these horrible things befall him. But, in fact, he hasn’t really done much wrong at all. He’s just gone through life.”

Michael Stuhlbarg cites the quotation that appears on-screen at the start of the film; “‘Receive with simplicity everything that happens to you.’ That’s a great mantra to keep in mind in terms of how we live our lives.”

Mary Zophres sees the film as “a comedy of angst. There’s drama and sorrow, yet it’s told with a great sense of humor. So, to me, it’s like life, and it’s hilarious.”

## Glossary

**Agunah** (pronounced “ahgoonah”) – a divorced person who has not been religiously sanctioned to remarry

**Bar mitzvah** – Jewish religion’s important ceremony, held in a *synagogue* for a young man who has come of age (at 13) and will now be responsible for practicing and upholding Jewish values, morals, and traditions; female equivalent (at 12 or 13) is a **bas mitzvah**

**Bupkes** (also spelled *bupkis*) – nothing; applied with great emphasis, e.g., “And what do I have? *Bupkes!*”

**Dybbuk** (pronounced “dibbuck”) – The soul of a dead person, often looking to possess a live person and as such inspiring fear among the living

**Gett** – ref., *agunah* (above); a religiously sanctioned divorce, tandemed with the sanction to remarry

**Goy** – colloquial term for a person not of the Jewish faith (i.e., a Gentile)

**Haftorah** – Portions of the Hebrew Bible read aloud in *synagogue* services, including by a *bar mitzvah* boy

**Hashem** – means The Name, and is basic Hebrew term/name used for God

**Macher** (pronounced “mohhcc-er”) – an achiever, a person of importance/influence

**Mazel tov!** (pronounced “muzzle-tov!”) – Congratulations!

**Mensch** (pronounced “mensch”) – someone with strength of character/an applied sense of purpose

**Mitzvah** – good deed or blessing, though mostly used in an everyday and non-religious context, e.g. “Picking up your groceries while you were stuck in bed with a broken leg – that was a *mitzvah* your neighbor did.”

**Nu?** – What’s up? What’s the story here?

**Rabbi** (pronounced “rab-eye”) – Ordained Jewish religious scholar/teacher, often relied upon as community leader

**Reb** – Formal-address equivalent of Mister, as in “Reb Nudell is coming to visit our family;” or, more colloquially, abbreviation of a prominent *rabbi*, as in “Which Reb is conducting the service today?”

**Shabbas** (or, *shabbos*, from **Shabbat**) – Judaism’s Sabbath, from Friday evening through Saturday evening

**Shtetl** (pronounced “shtet-el”) – a small Jewish village, in bygone times, in Eastern Europe

**Shiva** – means seven, and also refers to the participatory seven-day mourning period for the recently deceased; e.g., “We are sitting *shiva* for my wife’s uncle, who passed away earlier this week”

**Shul** – a *synagogue* and its congregation

**Synagogue** (pronounced “sinagog”) – a Jewish house of worship

**Torah** – the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, transcribed onto a scroll for use in *synagogue* services including a *bar mitzvah*

# A Serious Man

## About the Cast

### **MICHAEL STUHLBARG (Larry Gopnik)**

In 2005, Michael Stuhlbarg was a Tony Award nominee and a Drama Desk Award winner for his performance in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, staged by John Crowley. He has also been honored with the New Dramatists Charles Bowden Actor Award and the Elliot Norton Boston Theatre Award, the latter for his performance in *Long Day's Journey into Night*.

The actor's other Broadway credits include the National Actors Theatre productions of *Saint Joan*, *Three Men on a Horse*, *Timon of Athens*, and *The Government Inspector*; Ronald Harwood's *Taking Sides*, staged by David Jones; Sam Mendes' revival of *Cabaret*; and Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*, staged by Jack O'Brien.

Mr. Stuhlbarg's New York Shakespeare Festival stage credits include *Twelfth Night*, as Aguecheek, and *Richard II*, in the lead role. He has starred in a host of off-Broadway productions, playing the title roles in Oskar Eustis' staging of *Hamlet*, for which he won a Drama League Award; and David Warren's staging of *The Voyage Inheritance*, for which he received Obie, Callaway, and Lucille Lortel Award nominations. He has also starred off-Broadway in such shows as *Cymbeline*, reprising his role in a U.K. stint of the production; *The Waverly Gallery*; *Old Wicked Songs*, for which he was a Drama League Award recipient; and *The Grey Zone*.

When the latter show's playwright Tim Blake Nelson adapted and directed a feature film version, Mr. Stuhlbarg appeared in the movie as well, playing a different role than he had in the stage version. His other films include Ridley Scott's *Body of Lies*, opposite Leonardo DiCaprio; Boaz Yakin's *A Price Above Rubies*; Antonio Campos' *Afterschool*, which was showcased at the 2008 New York and Cannes International Film Festivals, and which will be released in the fall of 2009; Sophie Barthes' *Cold Souls*, with Paul Giamatti and David Strathairn; and Martin Scorsese's short homage to Alfred Hitchcock, *The Key to Reserva*. He recently reteamed with Mr. Scorsese, costarring in the latter's just-wrapped cable pilot *Boardwalk Empire*.

He has made guest appearances on such television series as *Damages* and, most recently and memorably, *Ugly Betty*.

Mr. Stuhlbarg received his BFA from The Juilliard School. He also studied at UCLA; at the Vilnius Conservatory in Lithuania's Chekhov Studies unit; at the British-American Drama Academy at Baliol and Keble Colleges in Oxford; and, on a full scholarship, with Marcel Marceau.

### **RICHARD KIND (Uncle Arthur)**

Richard Kind is a familiar face (and voice) to audiences through his screen, television, and stage appearances.

Among the latter have been *Candide*, at the New York City Opera; Charles Busch's *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*, on Broadway, and *The Lady In Question*, at the Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor, NY; *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, at the Williamstown Theatre Festival; Stephen Sondheim's *Bounce*, directed by Hal Prince, at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago and then the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; as Max Bialystock in *The Producers*, again on Broadway; and Larry Gelbart's *Power Failure*, staged by Arthur Penn at The Actors Studio Free Theatre.

Mr. Kind began his career in Chicago at the Practical Theatre Company, founded by Gary Kroeger and Julia Louis-Dreyfus & Brad Hall. He was then hired by Second City, where he honed his comedic talents for a few years in such productions as *How Green Were My Values*; *John, Paul, Sartre and Ringo*; and *True Midwest*.

His best-known television work is from the shows *Spin City* (on which he was a series regular) and *Mad About You* (on which he was a semi-regular); he also starred alongside Carol Burnett on the sketch comedy series *Carol & Company*. He has guest-starred on numerous shows, including arcs on *Scrubs* and *The Commish* as well as multiple visits to *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

Mr. Kind's many feature films include Thomas McCarthy's award-winning *The Visitor* and *The Station Agent*; Billy Crystal's *Mr. Saturday Night*; Roland Emmerich's *Stargate*; Scott Silver's *Johns*; Gary Rosen's *Hacks*; George Clooney's *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*; Susan Stroman's *The Producers*; Christopher Guest's *For Your Consideration*; and, in voiceover, Phil Roman's *Tom and Jerry: The Movie* (speaking for the famous cat), John Lasseter and Andrew Stanton's *A Bug's Life*, and John Lasseter and Joe Ranft's *Cars*.

### **FRED MELAMED (Sy Ableman)**

Fred Melamed's acting career has encompassed everything from leading roles to character turns to an extensive catalog of voice work.

Among his feature films are Peter Yates' *Suspect*; Leonard Nimoy's *The Good Mother*; Marshall Brickman's *Lovesick* and *The Manhattan Project*; and a long list of Woody Allen titles, including *Hannah and Her Sisters*, *Radio Days*, *Another Woman*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Shadows and Fog*, *Husbands and Wives*, and *Hollywood Ending*.

Mr. Melamed earned his BA from Hampshire College; and his MFA from the Yale School of Drama, which he attended with frequent Coen Brothers collaborators Frances McDormand, John Turturro, and Katherine Borowitz (who also appears in **A Serious Man**). At Yale, he starred in productions of *God's Smoke*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Benten Kozo*, among others. He has since acted with Minneapolis' Guthrie Theatre Company and the Kennedy Center's Shakespeare & Company; and appeared on Broadway in *Amadeus*, directed by Sir Peter Hall.

As a voice actor, he has recorded literally thousands of television programs, documentaries, commercials, promos, and audio books. He has been the voice of Mercedes-Benz, The Olympics, National Geographic, CBS Sports, USA Network, and Disney's syndicated series *Gargoyles*, to name but a few.

### **SARI LENNICK (Judith Gopnik)**

Sari Lennick was born and raised in Miami, and currently lives in Minneapolis. She earned her BA in theatre and philosophy from the University of Southern California, where she received the Eileen Stanley Award for Outstanding Talent and the Ruth & Albert McKinley Award for Outstanding Performance.

She performed onstage in L.A. and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in many productions, including *Spring Awakening*, *Raised in Captivity*, *Sylvia*, *A Flea in Her Ear*, and *What the Butler Saw*.

Ms. Lennick earned an MFA in Acting from the Actors Studio at The New School in New York City, where she received the Bob Hope Fellowship for Excellence in Comedy. Her N.Y. stage credits included her solo show *I'm Not Sorry* (at the West Bank Theatre) and *Fat Men in Skirts* (at the Westbeth Theatre).

### **ADAM ARKIN (Divorce Lawyer)**

Actor/director Adam Arkin's career continues to span television, theatre, and motion pictures.

In the latter medium, his credits as actor include Randa Haines' *The Doctor* and *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway*; Steve Miner's *Halloween H20*, opposite Jamie Lee Curtis, and *Lake Placid*; Steven Schachter's telefilm *A Slight Case of Murder*, with William H. Macy; Philip Messina's *With Friends Like These...*; Diane Keaton's *Hanging Up*; Andy Tennant's *Hitch*; and two upcoming independent films, Michael Nickles' *Just Peck* and Joseph Kell's *Summer Eleven*. Among the short films he has appeared in are Todd Haynes' *Dottie Gets Spanked* and his father Alan's *People Soup*, which was an Academy Award nominee for Best [Live Action] Short Subject.

Mr. Arkin was a Directors Guild of America Award nominee, and won a Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Direction in a Children's Special, for the telefilm *My Louisiana Sky*, whose star Kelsey Keel also won a Daytime Emmy Award. His other credits as director include episodes of such top television series as *Grey's Anatomy*, *Boston Legal*, *Ally McBeal*, and *Monk*.

He also directed episodes of the hit series *Chicago Hope* and *Northern Exposure*. As actor, Mr. Arkin received Emmy Award nominations for his regular and recurring, respectively, roles on the latter shows; and was also an Emmy Award nominee for a role on *Frasier*, one of the many

shows that he has guest-starred on over the years. Among the other series that he has had recurring roles on are *The West Wing*, *8 Simple Rules*, and, currently, *Sons of Anarchy*; among the other series that he has been a regular on are *A Year in the Life* and, most recently, *Life*, for which he also directed episodes.

He received a Tony Award nomination, and won a Theatre World Award, for his performance in Paul Rudnick's play *I Hate Hamlet*, staged by Michael Engler; and returned to Broadway as Nathan Detroit in Jerry Zaks' revival of *Guys and Dolls*, and in Daniel Sullivan's staging of Donald Margulies' *Brooklyn Boy*, for which he was a Drama Desk Award nominee. Mr. Arkin's off-Broadway stage credits include John Patrick Shanley's *Four Dogs and a Bone*; and he starred opposite Meryl Streep and Julianne Moore in Daniel Sullivan's Seattle Rep staging of Wendy Wasserstein's *An American Daughter*.

### **AARON WOLFF (Danny Gopnik)**

Aaron Wolff was born in Minneapolis in 1994. **A Serious Man** is his first film.

In school productions, he has portrayed Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Michael Darling in *Peter Pan*; Conrad Birdie in *Bye Bye Birdie*; and Wallace in *Women and Wallace*.

From 2000 to 2005, Mr. Wolff lived in London, where he attended University College School and the Royal Academy of Music. A gifted cellist, he was heard earlier this year on *From the Top*, a nationally broadcast radio show which showcases America's most talented young musicians. He is now studying cello and piano at the New England Conservatory, and also plays guitar. He and his brothers had a rock band called Bedrin, which is English slang for "brethren."

### **JESSICA McMANUS (Sarah Gopnik)**

Jessica McManus was born in 1991 in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. and raised in Minnesota. She began her acting career at age 8, performing in several local plays and dance productions.

Following her film debut in **A Serious Man**, Ms. McManus will continue to pursue her acting career while attending college.

## **About the Filmmakers**

### **JOEL COEN (Director/Writer/Producer)**

Joel Coen was honored by the Cannes International Film Festival in 2001, as Best Director for *The Man Who Wasn't There*, and in 1991, as Best Director for *Barton Fink*. He was honored as Best Director by the New York Film Critics Circle, the National Board of Review, and the BAFTA Awards for 1996's *Fargo*; and also won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for *Fargo*, which he co-wrote with his brother Ethan.

The screenplay for *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, also co-written with Ethan, was nominated for a BAFTA Award and the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. Other films that he has directed and co-written are *Intolerable Cruelty*; *The Big Lebowski*; *The Hudsucker Proxy*; *Miller's Crossing*; *Raising Arizona*; and *Blood Simple*.

He co-directed and co-wrote the 2004 comedy *The Ladykillers* with Ethan. Joel and Ethan Coen's 2007 adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* brought them the Directors Guild of America, BAFTA, and Academy Awards; the Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay; Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay from the New York Film Critics Circle; and Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay from the Oscars and the National Board of Review. The film's cast was voted the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture, and Javier Bardem won the Screen Actors Guild and Academy Awards for Best Supporting Actor, among other accolades.

Joel and Ethan Coen's most recent film, *Burn After Reading*, was nominated for the BAFTA Award and the WGA Award for Best Original Screenplay.

### **ETHAN COEN (Director/Writer/Producer)**

Ethan Coen has produced and co-written such critically acclaimed films as *Miller's Crossing*, *Barton Fink*, which won the Palme d'Or [Best Picture], Best Director, and Best Actor (John Turturro) Awards at the 1991 Cannes International Film Festival; and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, which was nominated for two Academy Awards, five BAFTA Awards, and two Golden Globe Awards (winning one).

One of 1996's most honored films, *Fargo*, which he produced and co-wrote, received seven Academy Award nominations and won two, including Best Original Screenplay for Ethan and his brother Joel. Among the other films that he has co-written and produced are *Blood Simple*; *Raising Arizona*; *The Hudsucker Proxy*; *The Big Lebowski*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; and *Intolerable Cruelty*.

He co-directed and co-wrote the 2004 comedy *The Ladykillers* with Joel. Joel and Ethan Coen's 2007 adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* brought them the Directors Guild of America, BAFTA, and Academy and Awards; the Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay; Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay from the New York Film Critics Circle; Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay from the Oscars and the National Board of Review; The film's cast was voted the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding

Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture, and Javier Bardem won the Screen Actors Guild and Academy Awards for Best Supporting Actor, among other accolades.

Joel and Ethan Coen's most recent film, *Burn After Reading*, was nominated for the BAFTA Award and the WGA Award for Best Original Screenplay.

*Almost an Evening*, comprising three short plays by Ethan Coen, was staged in 2008 off-Broadway by Neil Pepe at the Atlantic Theater Company's Stage 2 and then at the Bleecker Street Theater; in 2009, the same director and company staged his three new short plays under the title *Offices*.

### **TIM BEVAN and ERIC FELLNER (Executive Producers)**

Working Title Films, co-chaired by Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner since 1992, is Europe's leading film production company, making movies that defy boundaries as well as demographics.

Founded in 1983, Working Title has made over 90 films that have grossed over \$4.5 billion worldwide. Its films have won 6 Academy Awards (for Tim Robbins' *Dead Man Walking*; Joel and Ethan Coen's *Fargo*; Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*; and Joe Wright's *Atonement*), 26 BAFTA Awards, and prestigious prizes at the Cannes and Berlin International Film Festivals.

Mr. Bevan and Mr. Fellner have been honored with two of the highest film awards given to British filmmakers; the Michael Balcon Award for Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema, at the Orange British Academy Film [BAFTA] Awards, and the Alexander Walker Film Award at the Evening Standard British Film Awards. They have also both been honored with CBEs (Commanders of the Order of the British Empire).

In addition to *Fargo*, their previous films with the Coen Brothers have included *The Hudsucker Proxy*; *The Big Lebowski*; *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; and *Burn After Reading*.

In addition to the Coen Brothers, Working Title enjoys ongoing and successful creative collaborations with filmmakers Richard Curtis, Stephen Daldry, Edgar Wright, and Joe Wright; and actors Rowan Atkinson, Cate Blanchett, Hugh Grant, Keira Knightley, and Emma Thompson, among others.

Its worldwide successes (in addition to those mentioned above) include Mike Newell's *Four Weddings and a Funeral*; Richard Curtis' *Love Actually*; Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot*; Roger Michell's *Notting Hill*; Mel Smith's *Bean* and Steve Bendelack's *Mr. Bean's Holiday*; Sydney Pollack's *The Interpreter*; both *Bridget Jones* movies (directed by Sharon Maguire and Beeban Kidron, respectively); Joe Wright's *Pride & Prejudice*; Kirk Jones' *Nanny McPhee*; Paul Greengrass' *United 93*; and Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*.

The success of *Billy Elliot* on film has since been repeated on the London, Sydney, and Broadway stages. Director Stephen Daldry and screenwriter Lee Hall reunited for the stage musical version, with songs composed by Sir Elton John. The hit production, marking Working

Title's debut theatrical venture (co-produced with Old Vic Prods.), continues to play to full houses in London and New York, having garnered nine 2005 Olivier Award nominations, with a win for Best New Musical; and fifteen 2009 Tony Award nominations, winning ten including Best Musical.

The 2009/2010 slate includes Paul Greengrass' *Green Zone*, starring Matt Damon; Richard Curtis' *Pirate Radio*, starring Philip Seymour Hoffman, Bill Nighy, Rhys Ifans, and Nick Frost; Beeban Kidron's *Hippie Hippie Shake*, starring Cillian Murphy, Sienna Miller, Emma Booth, and Max Minghella; Rupert Wyatt's *Birdsong*, based on the Sebastian Faulks novel; Greg Mottola's *Paul*, written by and starring Simon Pegg and Nick Frost; and Susanna White's *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang*, with Emma Thompson reprising her starring role.

### **ROBERT GRAF (Executive Producer)**

Robert Graf was executive producer on Joel and Ethan Coen's *No Country for Old Men* and *Burn After Reading*.

He has had a long association with the Coen Brothers, serving as location manager on *Fargo* and *The Big Lebowski* before becoming associate producer on *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; *Intolerable Cruelty*; and *The Ladykillers*.

Mr. Graf also executive-produced Joe Carnahan's *Smokin' Aces* and co-produced Peter Berg's *Friday Night Lights*. He is currently at work executive-producing Greg Mottola's *Paul*, written by and starring Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, for Working Title Films and Universal Pictures release.

### **ROGER DEAKINS, ASC, BSC (Director of Photography)**

Roger Deakins has been nominated eight times for the Academy Award for Best Cinematography. Cited was his work on Joel and Ethan Coen's *No Country for Old Men*; Frank Darabont's *The Shawshank Redemption*; Martin Scorsese's *Kundun*; Andrew Dominik's *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*; Stephen Daldry's *The Reader* (shared credit with Chris Menges); and Joel Coen's *Fargo*, *The Man Who Wasn't There*, and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

He has been nominated nine times for the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) Award. Cited was his work on the eight features listed above, as well as on Sam Mendes' *Revolutionary Road*. Mr. Deakins has won the ASC Award twice, for his cinematography of *The Man Who Wasn't There* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. His other films with the Coen Brothers are *Barton Fink*, *The Big Lebowski*, *Intolerable Cruelty*, *The Ladykillers*, and *The Hudsucker Proxy*. For his work on the latter, he was a British Society of Cinematographers (BSC) Award nominee; he subsequently won the BSC Award for his cinematography *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

Mr. Deakins' many other features as director of photography include Michael Radford's *1984*, *White Mischief*, and *Another Time, Another Place*; Mike Figgis' *Stormy Monday*; Alex Cox' *Sid and Nancy*; Bob Rafelson's *Mountains of the Moon*; David Mamet's *Homicide*, for

which he was an Independent Spirit Award nominee; John Sayles' *Passion Fish*; Tim Robbins' *Dead Man Walking*; Edward Zwick's *Courage Under Fire* and *The Siege*; Norman Jewison's *The Hurricane* and telefilm *Dinner with Friends*; Ron Howard's *A Beautiful Mind*; Sam Mendes' *Jarhead*; Paul Haggis' *In the Valley of Elah*; and John Wells' soon-to-be-released *The Company Men*.

The U.K. native studied graphic design at the Bath School of Art and Design before attending the National Film and Television School. After graduation, he worked on documentaries, as both director and camera man/cinematographer, for both film and television. Among the documentaries he worked on were *Around the World with Ridgeway – Round the World Yacht Race*, and ones on the liberation wars in Eritrea and Zimbabwe (Rhodesia).

### **RODERICK JAYNES (Editor)**

Roderick Jaynes began his film career minding the tea cart at Shepperton Studios in the 1930s. The U.K. native eventually moved into the editing department, where he worked on some of the British film industry's more marginal features from the 1950s and '60s.

With the demise of the *Carry On* series, he retired from film editing, only to emerge from retirement to work on Joel and Ethan Coen's first feature *Blood Simple*. He has since worked on most of their films.

Mr. Jaynes resides in Hove, Sussex, with his chow Otto. He remains widely admired in the film industry for his impeccable grooming and is the world's foremost collector of Margaret Thatcher nudes, many of them drawn from life.

### **JESS GONCHOR (Production Designer)**

Jess Gonchor came to industry attention as a production designer with his work on Bennett Miller's *Capote*, starring Academy Award winner Philip Seymour Hoffman.

He went on to design the blockbuster *The Devil Wears Prada*, which starred Golden Globe Award winner Meryl Streep for director David Frankel; and the Coen Brothers' Academy Award-winning *No Country for Old Men* and *Burn After Reading*, for which he was an Art Directors Guild Award winner and nominee for Excellence in Production Design, respectively.

The native New Yorker first honed his craft in off-off-Broadway theater productions. Segueing into films, he worked in the art departments of such features as Nicholas Hytner's *The Crucible*; Clint Eastwood's *A Perfect World*; and Rob Reiner's *The American President*.

Mr. Gonchor worked as an assistant art director on Edward Zwick's *The Siege*, and was later an art director on the filmmaker's *The Last Samurai*, sharing in the design team's Art Directors Guild Award nomination.

He was recently production designer on Sam Mendes' *Away We Go* (also for Focus Features), starring John Krasinski and Maya Rudolph; and has just completed work as

production designer on Doug Liman's *Fair Game*, starring Sean Penn and Naomi Watts.

### **MARY ZOPHRES (Costume Designer)**

**A Serious Man** is Mary Zophres' ninth consecutive collaboration with the Coen Brothers as costume designer, following *Fargo*; *The Big Lebowski*; *O Brother Where Art Thou?*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; *Intolerable Cruelty*; *The Ladykillers*; *No Country for Old Men*; and *Burn After Reading*. Earlier, she was assistant costume designer for the Coens on *The Hudsucker Proxy*.

She has been the costume designer on several movies for Steven Spielberg including *The Terminal*; *Catch Me If You Can*, which brought her a BAFTA Award nomination for Best Costume Design; and *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.

Ms. Zophres' other films as costume designer include the Farrelly Brothers' first three movies (*Dumb and Dumber*, *Kingpin*, and *There's Something About Mary*); Timothy Hutton's *Digging to China*; Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*; Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World*; Brad Silberling's *Moonlight Mile*; Bruno Barreto's *View from the Top*; Nora Ephron's *Bewitched*; Joe Carnahan's *Smokin' Aces*; and Robert Redford's *Lions for Lambs*.

She earned a degree in art history and studio art from Vassar College before beginning her professional career working in the fashion industry for Norma Kamali and Esprit. She began working in the film industry as the extras wardrobe supervisor on Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*.

Ms. Zophres is currently at work as costume designer on Jon Favreau's *Iron Man* sequel, starring Robert Downey, Jr.

### **CARTER BURWELL (Music)**

For Joel and Ethan Coen, Carter Burwell has scored the films *Blood Simple*; *Raising Arizona*; *Miller's Crossing*; *Barton Fink*; *The Hudsucker Proxy*; *Fargo*; *The Big Lebowski*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; *Intolerable Cruelty*; *The Ladykillers*; and *No Country for Old Men*. He also composed additional music for the Coens' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, which brought him a BAFTA Award nomination. His score for their most recent film, *Burn After Reading*, earned him the International Film Music Critics award for Best Original Score for a Comedy Film.

Mr. Burwell's other film scores include Julian Schnabel's *Before Night Falls*, which earned him the [Nino] Rota Soundtrack Award at the 2000 Venice International Film Festival; Spike Jonze's *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation*; Bill Condon's *Kinsey* and *Gods and Monsters*, for which he was honored by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association; John Lee Hancock's *The Rookie* and *The Alamo*; David O. Russell's *Three Kings*; Todd Haynes' *Velvet Goldmine*; David Mamet's *The Spanish Prisoner*; Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's *The Celluloid Closet*; Sidney Lumet's *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*; Martin McDonagh's *In Bruges* (also for Focus Features); and Spike Jonze's soon-to-be-released *Where the Wild Things Are*.

His work in the theater includes the chamber opera *The Celestial Alphabet Event*; Ariel Dorfman's play *Widows*; Henry Miller's *The 14<sup>th</sup> Ward*; and Mabou Mines' 1994 production of *Mother*. Mr. Burwell also wrote music to accompany William Burroughs' reading of his novel Junky for Penguin Audiobooks.

As a vocalist, accordionist, and synthesist, Mr. Burwell has performed with the Harmonic Choir, Big Joe, and the Litwinski Ensemble in New York City; as well as France, Italy, Germany, and Australia.

Recordings of his work are available on the following record labels; Universal Music, Virgin, Varèse Sarabande, Factory, and Les Disques de Crepuscule.

# A Serious Man

## Credits

### CAST

Larry Gopnik	Michael Stuhlbarg
Uncle Arthur	Richard Kind
Sy Ableman	Fred Melamed
Judith Gopnik	Sari Lennick
Danny Gopnik	Aaron Wolff
Sarah Gopnik	Jessica McManus
Mr. Brandt	Peter Breitmayer
Mitch Brandt	Brent Braunschweig
Clive Park	David Kang
Danny's Reefer Buddy	Benjamin Portnoe
Boy on Bus	Jack Swiler
Cursing Boy on Bus	Andrew S. Lentz
Mike Fagle	Jon Kaminski, Jr.
Arlen Finkle	Ari Hoptman
Rabbi Marshak	Alan Mandell
Mrs. Samsky	Amy Landecker
Rabbi Nachtner	George Wyner
Dr. Sussman	Michael Tezla
Friend at the Picnic	Katherine Borowitz
Clive's Father	Stephen Park
Shtetl Husband	Allen Lewis Rickman
Shtetl Wife	Yelena Shmulenson
Dybbuk?	Fyvush Finkel
Hebrew School Teacher	Ronald Schultz
Dr. Shapiro	Raye Birk
Larry's Secretary	Jane Hammill
Marshak's Secretary	Claudia Wilkens
Rabbi Scott	Simon Helberg
Divorce Lawyer	Adam Arkin
Cop #1	James Cada
Solomon Schlutz	Michael Lerner
Hebrew School Principal	Charles Brin
Torah Blesser	Michael Engel
Magbiah	Tyson Bidner
Hebrew School Tea Lady	Phyllis Harris
D'vorah	Piper Sigel Bruse
Sarah's Friend	Hannah Nemer
Law Firm Secretary	Rita Vassallo
Dick Dutton	Warren David Keith
Cantor	Neil Newman
Detective #1	Tim Russell
Detective #2	Jim Lichtscheidl

Russell Krauss      Wayne Evenson  
 Sci-Fi Movie Hero      Scott Baker

Stunt Coordinator  
 Jerry Hewitt

Stunts  
 Danny Downey      Eric Howell

### CREW

Written, Produced and Directed by	Joel Coen & Ethan Coen
Executive Producers	Tim Bevan Eric Fellner Robert Graf
Director of Photography	Roger Deakins, <i>ASC</i> , <i>BSC</i>
Edited by	Roderick Jaynes
Production Designer	Jess Gonchor
Costume Designer	Mary Zophres
Supervising Sound Editor	Skip Lievsay
Music by	Carter Burwell
Casting by	Ellen Chenoweth Rachel Tenner
Unit Production Manager	Robert Graf
First Assistant Director	Betsy Magruder
Second Assistant Director	Bac DeLorme
Set Decorator	Nancy Haigh
Script Supervisor	Thomas Johnston
Production Sound Mixer	Peter F. Kurland
Production Supervisor	Karen Ruth Getchell
Production Accountant	Cheryl Kurk
Post-Production Supervisor	Catherine Farrell
Camera Operator	Roger Deakins, <i>ASC</i> , <i>BSC</i>
First Assistant Camera	Andy Harris
Second Assistant Camera	Michael Lindquist
Camera Loader	Cole Koehler
Camera PAs	Maria Juranic Matt Olson

Associate Editor	Katharine McQuerrey
First Assistant Editor	Emma Gaffney
Apprentice Editor	Zana Bochar
Editorial Intern	Buster Coen
Art Director	Deborah Jensen
Assistant Art Director	Jeff Schoen
Pen Grappler	J. Todd Anderson
Set Designer	Maria Baker
Art Department Coordinator	Jarrette Moats
Graphic Designer	Gregory Hill
Lead Dresser	Scott Troha
On Set Dresser	Scott Nordhausen
Buyer	Jill Broadfoot
Swing Gang	Matt Joyer
	Sarah Kruchowski
	Quentin Matthys
	Brian Simpson
	Ryan Tallant
	Chris Thickins
	Rob Walstead
Art Department PA	Cate Hahneman
Asset PA	Sahm McGlynn
Art Department Intern	Eric Helmin
Property Master	Keith Walters
Assistant Property Master	John Cameron
Props Assistant	Bryan Shelley
Boom Operator	Randy Johnson
Utility Sound	Chris Benson
Additional Utility Sound	Peter Zimbicki
Chief Lighting Technician	Bill O'Leary
Best Boy Electric	Joseph L. Grimaldi
Rigging Gaffer	Tom Franchett
Best Boy Rigging Electric	Joseph Slagerman
Electricians	Edward Cohen
	Craig Hanson
	Travis Hottinger
	Kevin Karpinski
	Jeff Villars
Rigging Electricians	Steven Jacobson
	Chris Malone
	Gerhard Riautshnig

Key Grip	Mitch Lillian
Best Boy Grip	Paul Candrilli
Dolly Grip	Bruce Hamme
Key Rigging Grip	Peter Clemence
Best Boy Rigging Grip	Michael Winn
Grips	Joe Gallup
	Scott Jolstad
	David Pope
	Darin Spring
Rigging Grips	Tristan Allen
	James E. Farrell
	Peter Von Grossmann
Assistant Costume Designer	Jenny Eagan
Costumer Supervisor (MN)	Virginia Burton
Costume Supervisor (LA)	Lori DeLapp
Key Costumer	Corrine Larson
Key Set Costumer	Jane Williams
Set Costumers	Nikki Fallenstein
	Melissa Seitzer
Stitchers	Cynthia Kurkowski
	Jan E. Adams
Costume Assistants	Cerah M. Tymoshuk
	Joan Lee
Make-up Design/Department Head	Jean A. Black
Make-up Co-Department Head	Mary K. Flaa
Assistant Make-up Artist	Carrie Messina
Age/Effects Make-up	Christien Tinsley
Hair Department Head	Frída S. Aradóttir
Assistant Hair Stylist	Deanna L. Johnson
Production Coordinator	Rachael Lin Gallagher
Assistant Production Coordinator	Kris Barberg
Production Secretary	Shannon E. Schaefer
Second Second Assistant Director	Terrence B. Zinn
Location Manager	Tyson Bidner
Assistant Location Managers	Anne Healy Shapiro
	Kat Donahue
Location Assistant	Christopher Cloud
Location Staff Assistant	Kai Miller
Location Scout	Mark Har
Location Intern	Ben Wood
Casting Associate	Amelia Rasche, CSA
Extras Casting	Debbie DeLisi

Extras Casting Assistants	Kati Batchelder Aaron Greenwood
Extras Casting Interns	Sonja Thorson Kelly McMahon
Voice Casting	Sondra James
First Assistant Accountant	Jennifer Luther
Second Assistant Accountants	Rachel Richardson Paul Kenney
Payroll Accountant	David Hickey
Construction Accountant	Lisa M. Kurk
Additional Assistant Accountant	Megan Brown
Post-Production Accountant	Trevanna Post, Inc.
Sound Designer	Craig Berkey
Music Editor	Todd Kasow
Dialogue Editors	Byron Wilson James Morioka
ADR Editor	Kenton Jakub
Foley Editor	Joel Dougherty
First Assistant Sound Editor	Phil Barrie
Assistant Sound Editor	Johnna Chism
Foley Mixer	George A. Lara
Foley Artist	Marko A. Costanzo
Re-Recording Mixers	Skip Lievsay Craig Berkey Greg Orloff
Re-Recorded at	Sony Pictures Studios
Special Effects Coordinator	Larz Anderson
Special Effects Foreman	Paul Deely
Unit Publicist	Claudia Gray
Still Photographer	Wilson Webb
Video Assist Operator	Tim O'Toole
Construction Coordinator	Steve Anderson
Construction Foreman	Mike Wallien
Construction Gang Bosses	Donavan M. Hake Kelly Rae Hemenway Pat Owen Gary C. Surber Dwight C. Swanson
Construction Utility	Pat Wilson
Lead Scenic Artist	Anne Hyvarinen
Scenic Gang Boss	Benjamin Bayne

	Sign Writer	Phil Vandervaart
	Scenic Artists	Faith Farrell Windy Fleischaker Wayne Grimsrud Renee T. Schendel Liz Schreiber Shannon M. Schumacher Hans Schumacher
	Painters	Andrew Gustafson Luther Hill
	Stand-by Painter	Sarah Regan
	Prop Makers	
John A. Champion	David Franicola	Steve Hintz
Mark Edmo	Bradley "Wizard" Grasser	Dennis J. Perry
Matt Erkel	Brian Koehn	Keith Reitmeier
Garrett Fulton	David K. Hartman	Brian Rhea
	Head Greensman	Mark Wojahn
	Greens Gang Boss	Janet Lobberecht
	On Set Greens	Kemper Harris
	Greens	James Kindt
	The Last of the Just	Drew Houpt
	Office Production Assistants	Amy Thompson Troy Lochner
	Office Production Interns	Colleen Beach Andrea Bias
	Set Production Assistants	Stephen Clarke Carrie Bush Jeremy Pierce-Sunia Ben "the Kroog" Krueger
	Medics	Kurt W. Gensmer Kristopher W. Gensmer David Dustin
	Catering	Tony's Food Service
	Chefs	Ivan Kerum Mara Kerum
	Craft Service	Nikki Martin
	Craft Service Assistant	David Mathiason
	Transportation Coordinator	Marc Scott
	Transportation Captain	Byron Roland
	Transportation Co-Captain	Richard "Itchy" Anderson
	Picture Car Coordinator	Mike Arnold
	Dispatcher	James Mahathey

## Drivers

Carolyn J. Anderson	Timothy S. Kennedy	Gary Olander
Curtis W. Anderson	Steve Kenney	Rajiv Sarin
Michael Bakri	Frank L. Ketchum	Leonard Schneider
Jon Bjornson	Anthony P. Kettner	Ernest Simon
Denny Braun	Eugene Kisch	Leo Matthew Skudlarek
Guy Eckert	Scott Lecy	Greg Viglione
Andrew Garski	George Lundquist	Jon Westerlund
William L. Gillespie	Jean-Pierre Molina	Fred Whipple

“Larry” Stand In	Adam DeLisi
“Sy”/“Uncle Arthur” Stand In	Jonathan Pruett
“Danny” Stand In	Leigh Rydberg

Weather Guru	Patrick Hammer
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Language and Liturgy	Rabbi Cantor Dan Sklar Cantor Neil Newman Cantor Shirah Sklar Sean M. Murphy
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Yiddish Translation	Wendy Zierler Allen Rickman
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**For Working Title**

Chief Operating Officer	Angela Morrison
Executive in Charge of Production	Michelle Wright
Head of Legal & Business Affairs	Sheeraz Shah
Legal & Business Affairs Manager	Christina Angeloudes
Assistant to Tim Bevan	Chloé Dorigan
Assistant to Eric Fellner	Cara Shine

**SONGS**

“Somebody to Love”  
written by Darby Slick  
performed by Jefferson Airplane  
courtesy of the RCA Records Label  
by arrangement with Sony BMG Music  
Entertainment

“Comin’ Back to Me”  
written by Marty Balin  
performed by Jefferson Airplane  
courtesy of the RCA Records Label  
by arrangement with Sony BMG Music  
Entertainment

“Dem Milners Trern”  
written by Mark Warshavsky  
performed by Sidor Belarsky  
courtesy of Isabel Belarsky

“3/5 of a Mile in 10 Seconds”  
written by Marty Balin  
performed by Jefferson Airplane  
courtesy of the RCA Records Label  
by arrangement with Sony BMG Music  
Entertainment

“Machine Gun”  
written and performed by Jimi Hendrix  
courtesy of Experience Hendrix LLC/  
Geffen Records  
under license from Universal Music  
Enterprises

“F-Troop Theme” from *F-Troop*  
written by William Lava & Irving Taylor  
courtesy of Warner Bros. Entertainment

“Today”  
written by Marty Balin & Paul Kantner  
performed by Jefferson Airplane  
courtesy of the RCA Records Label  
by arrangement with Sony BMG Music  
Entertainment

“Good Times”  
written by P. Applebaum  
performed by Art of Lovin’  
courtesy of Mainstream/Hunnypot  
Unlimited  
by arrangement with EverGreen/ICG

Music Clearances by	Chris Robertson Diamond Time, Ltd.
Orchestrated and Conducted by	Carter Burwell
Orchestra Contractor	Sandra Park
Copyist	Tony Finno
Composer's Assistant	Dean Parker
Score Recorded at	Clinton Recording Studio
Mixed at	The Body
Music Scoring Mixer	Michael Farrow
Visual Effects by	Luma Pictures
Executive Visual Effects Supervisor	Payam Shohadai
Visual Effects Supervisor	Vincent Cirelli
VFX Supervising Producer	Steven Swanson
VFX Producer	Steve Griffith
Digital Effects Supervisor	Justin Johnson
CG Supervisor	Oliver Arnold
VFX Coordinator	Katie Godwin
Digital Coordinator	Marla Neto
Technical Coordinator	Justin Porter
Lead Composer	Alexandre Cancado
Compositors	Jared Simeth Joey Sila James Waterson Michael Cashore
Junior Compositors	Andy Burmeister Jennifer Gutierrez
Matte Painters	Anthony Grant Safari Sosebee
Senior FX Artist	John Cassella
Matchmove TD	Jason Locke
Roto/Paint Supervisor	Glenn Morris
Roto/Paint Artists	Jessica Bakke Jacob Harris
Titles Sequences and Subtitles	Big Film Design
Titles Designer	Randy Balsmeyer
Lead Digital Artist	J. John Corbett
Digital Intermediate and Dailies by	EFilm
Digital Colorist	Michael Hatzer
Digital Intermediate Producer	Loan Phan

Digital Intermediate Editor Lisa Tutunjian  
 Dailies Producer Ken Lebre

Post-Production Facility Post Factory  
 Opticals by PlethoraFX  
 Edited on Final Cut Pro

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 Laura Sevier  
 Cassandra Barbour  
 Serious Matters Patricia Mary Murphy, Esq.

*F-Troop* clip courtesy of Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

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American Humane monitored the animal action.

No animals were harmed. (AHAD 01440)



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