



A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND



Directed by MORGAN MATTHEWS
Written by JAMES GRAHAM

Starring
ASA BUTTERFIELD
RAFE SPALL
SALLY HAWKINS
EDDIE MARSAN

In theaters September 11, 2015
111 minutes. A Samuel Goldwyn Films release. Not rated.

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CAST

ASA BUTTERFIELD..... Nathan Ellis
RAFE SPALL.....Martin Humphreys
SALLY HAWKINS.....Julie Ellis
EDDIE MARSAN.....Richard Grieve
JO YANG.....Zhang Mei
MARTIN MCCANN.....Michael Ellis
JAKE DAVIES.....Luke Shelton
ALEX LAWOTHER.....Isaac Cooper
ALEXA DAVIES.....Rebecca Dunn
ORION LEE.....Deng Laoshi
PERCELLE ASCOTT.....Ben Morgan
SURAJ RATTU.....Pav Kamdar
EDWARD BAKER-CLOSE.....Nathan (9 years old)

A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND

Synopsis

In **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND**, a young math genius didn't count on one thing: love.

Teenage math prodigy Nathan (Asa Butterfield, HUGO) struggles when it comes to building relationships with other people, not least with his caring mother, Julie (Oscar-nominated Sally Hawkins, BLUE JASMINE).

In a confusing world, Nathan finds comfort in numbers. And when he's taken under the wing of an unconventional and anarchic teacher (Rafe Spall), the pair forge an unusual friendship. Eventually, Nathan's talents win him a place on the U.K.'s National team at the International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO) and the team travels to a training camp in Taiwan, under the supervision of enthusiastic squad leader Richard (Eddie Marsan).

In unfamiliar surroundings, Nathan is confronted by a series of unexpected challenges — not least the unfamiliar feelings he begins to experience for his Chinese counterpart, the beautiful Zhang Mei (Jo Yang), feelings that develop when the young mathematicians return to England for the IMO, held at Trinity College, Cambridge.

From suburban England to bustling Taipei and back again, this original and heart-warming film tracks the funny and complex relationships that Nathan builds, as he is confronted by the irrational nature of love.

Featuring an all-star British cast, **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND** is directed by BAFTA award-winning filmmaker Morgan Matthews and is inspired by his documentary BEAUTIFUL YOUNG MINDS. The film is photographed by Oscar-nominated cinematographer Danny Cohen (THE KING'S SPEECH and LES MISÉRABLES) and written by James Graham.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Beautiful Young Minds

For filmmaker Morgan Matthews, the journey that led to his debut feature film, **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND**, began when he started work on a trilogy of documentary films, all of which aired in 2007 and explored a series of very different — and somewhat unusual — competitions.

These included *Hair Wars*, *Blue Suede Jew* and *Beautiful Young Minds*, the latter emerging as a 90-minute feature documentary that recorded the trials and travails of a group of students heading to the International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO).

All three documentaries were successful, with *Beautiful Young Minds*, proving a critical hit, and going on to be nominated for a BAFTA TV Award for Best Single Documentary. One of the film's subjects was a student called Daniel, who has a neurodevelopmental disorder that fosters mathematical genius.

Indeed, such was the drama and substance to Daniel's story that Matthews began contemplating a dramatic retelling of a similar tale, a fictional story inspired by the personalities and events that unfold in the documentary.

"I always felt this story had the potential to be dramatized and that this fascinating world could be represented in a feature film," he begins, "you often find that while a documentary film is very close to the subject, you can't be there all of the time, and that there are certain aspects of these people's lives that you are simply not able to cover."

"Also, the period of time in which you are filming a documentary is often quite restricted," he adds. "With **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND**, we have a much longer film in terms of the time period it covers. In addition, it brings this subject to a different and wider audience."

Telling a dramatic story also allows for creative licence. "It is a real liberation, and we took a lot of creative licence with this story," Matthews says. "Some of the characters are inspired by the documentary and perhaps recognizable but it is important to remember that the people on screen are *not* the same people from the documentary."



According to **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND** producer Laura Hastings-Smith, Matthews' particular skills as a documentarian, and the insights he has revealed in his films, made him a prime candidate to become a feature director.

"Really, *Beautiful Young Minds* is an inspiration for **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND** and if you look at Morgan's documentaries he is always interested in people who are maybe a little on the edge, a little different," she explains.

"He is keen to understand them and to show them for their strengths as well as their weaknesses, to validate them as individuals with talent and with things to say. He gets into what makes people human."

Fellow producer David M. Thompson agrees. "I have always thought Morgan had a really great eye and had rather an unusual take on the world," he says. "I've been really excited by his work in documentary filmmaking. Over the years I have worked a lot with first-

time fiction directors and I had a hunch that he would do a great job, which he really has.”

“Morgan has a great warmth about him and a great instinct for a strong and emotional story,” continues Thompson. “He has a very direct way of communicating. Obviously, it is a big leap to move from documentaries to fiction, and he does it with real skill and aplomb.”

Rafe Spall — who takes on the key role of mathematics teacher Mr. Humphreys in the film — points out that while Matthews is helming his first fiction feature film, he possesses bags of vital experience.

“He’s probably made more films than most feature directors so he understands the language of film and the dynamism that is required to run a floor and to tell a story in a visual manner.”



In order to bring his film to life, Matthews turned first to playwright James Graham asking him to work on the screenplay.

“I wrote a treatment and decided to pair up with a writer. I knew James Graham, who was doing really interesting things in theatre and specifically in fringe theatre at the time,” Matthews says. Graham has since staged *This House* at the National Theatre.

Though Matthews knew the world he showed on screen in *Beautiful Young Minds*, Graham did not. This prompted Graham to join the UK team leader from *Beautiful Young Minds* on a visit to an IMO in Hamburg.

“That was obviously a different team from the guys I talked with for my documentary, but James got a real sense of that world too. We both ended up with a very strong grounding in the reality of that world and felt that we understood that world very well. We were then able to run with it from our creative perspective.”

Characters and Casting

The character at the center of **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND** is a young boy, Nathan. His parents understand that he’s different from other boys of his age and that he has difficulty understanding and expressing his emotions. He is keenly intelligent and displays a supreme talent for mathematics.

“He is a boy who is fascinated by the world around him,” says Matthews of his main character, “he loves patterns, color and light. He is diagnosed as having a form of aphasia which is quite specific to him and is related to changes in pattern and light.” But as a consequence, “he doesn’t really engage very well with the emotional world, he is also diagnosed as being on the spectrum [of autism].”

To bring this complex and engaging character to life, the filmmakers turned to young English actor Asa Butterfield. “I had seen Asa in *Hugo* and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*,” says Matthews, “and I think he is a wonderful young actor. He does brilliantly in what is quite a difficult role.”

One of the main difficulties that Matthews and Butterfield had to overcome was where to place Nathan on the spectrum; neurodevelopmental disorders — including both autism and Asperger's — can vary greatly from one person to another.

“There is not just one way to play something like this, but Morgan knew a lot about the emotional reaction that he wanted people to get from each of the characters,” Butterfield says.

“He knew where he wanted things to be in terms of Nathan's condition and it was just a case of finding that on screen and bringing it to life.”

In a bid to bring as much authenticity to the role as possible, Butterfield watched *Beautiful Young Minds* a number of times. “That was really helpful because it showed different people coping with different levels and different intensities of neurodevelopmental disorders. Morgan and I then had to decide where we'd want to place Nathan on the spectrum.”

The actor also visited a number of different schools that specialized in treating people with different mental disorders. “I talked to people who had autism and Asperger's and talked to them about what they found difficult when they were teenagers,” he says.

“We talked about the hardships they went through, mentally and physically. It was a really interesting learning experience.”

Butterfield found the character very rewarding. “Every actor wants to find a role that will push them,” he says, “and which is very different from anything that they've done before. This was all of that and much more.

“The character was unlike anyone I have played before,” he adds, “and it required me to understand things on a totally different level and to really get under the skin of the character to find out what made him tick. There were times when it was hard work but it was all worth it.”

Nathan struggles to interact successfully with other people, although he enjoys a close relationship with his father — the one person with whom he can readily communicate. His dad understands him. “There is a very strong bond between them,” says Butterfield.

“When Nathan was younger, his dad was really the *only* person who could communicate with him. He understood what Nathan enjoyed, what would make him excited and what would make him want to communicate with people.”

A tragic accident then robs the boy of his father. “When he loses his dad that is a massive blow, not only because he lost the only person he could talk to but also because he is now in his mom's hands,” Butterfield explains.



Nathan's mom, Julie, is a prominent character in the film played by Academy Award® nominated actress Sally Hawkins. “She is an incredible actress,” says Matthews of Hawkins. “To see what she put into the performance in terms of the depth of emotion was fantastic.”

“Sally brings this soulfulness and a great sense of humour as well. It is her emotional intensity and range, however, that is really quite extraordinary.”

According to Hawkins, Nathan's relationship with his mother is far from easy. "Their relationship is strained and difficult, or it is for Julie," she says. "She loves him deeply and yet Nathan can't give back emotionally as she needs."

"Julie is kind and sensitive and tends to feel things very deeply," she adds. "She loves Nathan very much but struggles with not being able to show that love in a conventional way and she is intimidated by the condition in a way that holds them apart."

"When we first meet Julie she is just learning to understand what Nathan's condition is, and what that means for the rest of his life."

The loss of Nathan's father, therefore, is a major setback. "Julie and Nathan's lives are completely turned upside down," says Hawkins. "They have both lost the one person who made everything okay. Everything changes at that point."

"His father was the key for Nathan," the actress adds. "He understood him. Their relationship was easy compared to Julie's relationship with Nathan. She is left without any clues about how to even talk to her son. She struggles with this, and suffers from depression in the aftermath [of her husband's death]."



An important figure then emerges in Julie and Nathan's lives: Mr. Humphreys, a mathematics teacher at Nathan's school. "The Humphreys character is quite brilliant," says the producer, Hastings-Smith. "He is your classic damaged soul, and darkly wistful with it."

Rafe Spall brings Humphreys to life on screen. "Rafe brought so much to Humphreys," Matthews notes. "He has a great talent of being able to bring humour and warmth to a scene and a lot of that comes naturally from him."

"He is a very funny guy as well. But he also takes his acting very seriously, and he does some great improv."

Matthews encouraged his cast to deviate from the script at certain points, "and if there was then something in that take, then we would do another take and keep that as part of the scene. Rafe was a master at doing this in a way that generated humour."

It is through Nathan's interaction with Mr. Humphreys that he is exposed to the fresh and exciting world of competitive mathematics. When he was growing up, Mr. Humphreys had been an extremely promising mathematician who had enjoyed success at the IMO.

"But where we find him in the film, his life has not gone to plan," says Spall of his character. "He had huge promise as a mathematician but when we find him he is a lonely bloke who has now got multiple sclerosis, which is a mysterious disease, and he has not achieved all that he should have done in his maths career."

As a result of both his career trajectory and his illness, the teacher self-medicates, "with marijuana and loads of booze," says Spall, "and he is getting more and more ill. His relationship with Nathan, however, reignites his love for maths and gives him something to live for."

“Playing a character with multiple sclerosis was difficult”, says Spall, who researched the disease in great detail. “The MS Society where I live were very nice to me and I went to some of their discussion groups,” he adds.

“I also did a lot of research on it and spoke to a lot of doctors about it, and I watched a number of documentaries, including a really good one called *Here’s Johnny* about a comic book artist who had MS and I based a lot of it on him.”

“When you have MS or a debilitating disease, it is going to affect your personality. In that way I think the condition is a big part of who the character is.”

According to Asa Butterfield, Mr. Humphreys is a “brilliant character.” He explains, “Nathan’s teacher is one of the few people he can interact with, because Nathan interacts through maths and puzzles and patterns. He really appreciates people who are good at maths and the two of them develop a really lovely relationship.”

Mr. Humphreys also develops a relationship with Nathan’s mum. “After all that she has been through, Julie learns that it is okay to feel good again,” says Hawkins, “and that it is okay to want to feel attractive again; that it is okay to laugh again.”

Spall adds, “Julie is extremely grateful to Mr. Humphreys because she is trapped in a world where she looks after her son and that is all-consuming.”

“People are always defined by how they deal with adverse situations and when you get two people dealing with difficult things it can make for a lovely relationship.”



The other prominent relationships in Nathan’s life emerge when he joins the British mathematics team for the IMO training camp, to be held in Taiwan. Richard, for example, becomes an important focus - the UK team leader, played by Eddie Marsan.

“Richard is very in control of all the students at the maths camp and he pushes them to the limits,” says Butterfield. “He wants to get the best out of Nathan.”

“He really wants to push him because he sees a lot of potential. Nathan, though, is resistant to it because he is used to very passive conversing, so it is a big change for him.”

“When Eddie turned up and launched into this performance, I was so pleased that we’d made the decision to go with him,” adds the director.

“On his first day, Eddie delivered a master-class in acting. He had quite a long speech to do on the coach when the team are on the way to the airport to fly out to Taipei. It is quite a long piece of dialogue in front of the team and he just got on the coach and nailed it in a way that was so impressive. I think that inspired us.”



The most important character that Nathan meets on his journey, however, is the beautiful Zhang Mei (played by Jo Yang), a member of the Chinese mathematics team heading to the IMO.

“Nathan meets Zhang Mei at the IMO training camp in Taipei,” Matthews says. “She is the catalyst to his emotional maturation.”

“He automatically respects her. In some ways he is in awe of her because she is so good at math, probably better than him, and he is instantly attracted to her.”

Zhang Mei encourages Nathan to explore his feelings and to open up. “And through her he begins to unlock some of the feelings that have been repressed since his father died,” says Matthews.

Other than his mother, Zhang Mei is the first female with whom Nathan builds a relationship, “and he is not sure what it is that he has with her,” Butterfield says.

“He really struggles with any sort of social interaction and to be paired up with this girl who doesn’t speak the best English is a huge shock to him; he doesn’t know quite how to handle it.”

“As their relationship develops,” continues Butterfield, “they become better friends and he starts to have stronger feelings towards her. He is really confused by that and a bit scared.”

Ultimately, this is a journey about a boy learning to love, notes Matthews. “He has to come to terms with it, not just falling in love with Zhang Mei but learning to have an emotional relationship with his mother, and coming to terms with the loss of his father whom he loved so deeply.”

When casting a character as integral to Nathan’s story as Zhang Mei, the filmmakers were keen to recruit an actress from China, rather than someone who had lived exclusively in the West.

“I was quite keen to have someone who was actually Chinese as opposed to British-Chinese,” Matthews says, “and we cast the net over to China and involved a Chinese casting director in Beijing.”

“I wanted someone who could speak Mandarin and it had to feel believable. I didn’t want someone who was putting it on. We were besieged by loads of self-taped auditions, but when Jo Yang appeared she really stood out. We flew her over and got her in a room with Asa and their chemistry felt very natural.”

The actress’ cultural experience of China was also a real boon. “When we were rehearsing,” the director recalls, “there was quite a bit she told me about the experience of being a young person growing up in China, and that informed the script and the performance.”

Hastings-Smith agrees. “She is wonderful,” says the producer. “And one of the things that was most useful for us was that she was very much a young, modern girl living in Beijing. That was very important because she brought an authenticity to the character.”

Look and Location

According to the **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND** producers, authenticity was an important watchword for their director and their film.

“A lot of his (Matthews) work has seen him recording sound and recording picture out there in the world with his characters,” says Laura Hastings-Smith. “and he wanted to film this in a very responsive way, and an intuitive way, at speed. Hopefully that naturalness and authenticity will come through.”

Fellow producer Thompson, meanwhile, says that Matthews’ shooting style proved liberating for the actors. “He has a natural flair for fiction, quite clearly, but he also works in an unusual, unconventional way, which is refreshing,” Thompson says.

“He doesn’t approach making drama like other directors, because he comes from a documentary background, so he is good at slinging out some of the rules, as it were, and working in a freer way, which was great for the actors.”

Matthews worked alongside acclaimed cinematographer Danny Cohen, who earned an Academy Award® nomination in 2011 for *The King’s Speech*. “He has done amazing work on *Les Misérables* and *The King’s Speech*,” says Matthews, “but I was really keen on Danny having seen a lot of his earlier work with Shane Meadows.”

Cohen worked with Meadows on projects like *Dead Man’s Shoes* and also the series *This Is England 86* and *88*, “which I thought were brilliant,” says the director. “There is a realism to Danny’s work, a quality which combines that realism with an aesthetic beauty.”

“I wanted to be able to move around quite freely and I wanted somebody who was comfortable with that, but I also wanted a film that was quite beautiful. That’s why Danny was so important.”

“This is a film about beauty, says Matthews, “about a boy who sees beauty in the world around him that other people don’t see, and it’s also about the beauty of relationships. So I wanted the film to reflect that as well.”

Much of **A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND** was shot on location in Sheffield and in the university grounds at Cambridge. Nathan’s home life unfolds in the Yorkshire city. “Sheffield is a fantastic place to shoot in with quite a wide range of locations so I think the city will look great,” says Hastings-Smith.

“And then coming to Cambridge is everything for Nathan - the goal of his life up until this point - to be part of the beautiful world of maths, epitomized by the IMO at Trinity College.”

“It is there in all its glory, a wonderful thing, and you have these tremendous contrasts between Sheffield and Cambridge and, of course, Taipei.”

Shooting in the Taiwanese capital, Taipei was a mesmerizing experience for the filmmakers. “That was the first time I’d been to Taiwan or indeed anywhere in that part of the world and we had a lot fun there,” says Butterfield.

“Filming there was brilliant because life on the streets was just so amazing. Once you’ve finished shooting you could explore this amazing city, with really cool temples, and interesting people and food.”

The primary location in Taipei was a schoolhouse, which, says Hastings-Smith, was like another world in itself. “And the street life of the city is fabulous. It is a very, very different society and putting our characters in that world changes them and hopefully you can see it on the screen. You feel a totally different way of being.”

The fast paced city life in Taipei complemented the manner in which Matthews wanted to shoot his film. “Because we were often shooting on the streets, that really suited me; we could work with either hand-held or Steadicam.”

“We were running around night markets and parks, on the streets, without any kinds of restrictions. The people in shot are not extras; they are just the people walking past.”

“They are shot with real people walking around and, hopefully, that gives our film a realistic quality that is still very beautiful. The whole project has been a wonderful experience.”

The producers agree. “It is really quite an emotional story — someone described it recently as Billy Elliot with sums — but it is also a great celebration of the power of maths,” says Thompson. “It deals with the emotional power of maths itself and unashamedly celebrates that.”

“It is unusual in its themes as well,” he adds, “and it is quite difficult to pigeonhole; it is a coming-of-age story in some ways, with these two young people who find love, but it is also very much about the adults.”

Cast Biographies

ASA BUTTERFIELD

As a young actor, Asa Butterfield has endeared audiences and garnered the attention of critics with his brilliant and captivating performances on screen.

Butterfield recently wrapped production on Tim Burton's big screen adaptation of Ransom Riggs' *MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN* for Twentieth Century Fox opposite Judi Dench, Samuel L. Jackson, and Allison Janney. Butterfield plays Jacob, a teen who follows clues to a mysterious island, but soon discovers its former occupants were far more than peculiar; they possessed incredible powers, and may still be alive. Butterfield will soon begin production on Peter Chelsom's *OUT OF THIS WORLD* about a young boy who returns to Earth to find his father after being raised by scientists on Mars.

Butterfield will next be seen in *10,000 SAINTS* opposite Ethan Hawke, Emile Hirsch, and Hailee Steinfeld. Set to be released by Screen Media Films on August 14, 2015, the film tells the story of a teenager, a pregnant girl, and the lead singer of a punk-rock band form their own surrogate family in late 1980s New York.

In 2013, Butterfield received a Critics' Choice Award nomination for Best Young Actor for his portrayal of 'Ender' in the film adaptation of the best-selling book by Orson Scott Card, *ENDER'S GAME*. Directed by Gavin Hood and co-starring Harrison Ford, Sir Ben Kingsley, and Viola Davis, the film brings to life the story of an unusually gifted child who is sent to an advanced military school space to prepare for a future alien invasion. Previously, the actor appeared on screen starring as the title role in Martin Scorsese's *HUGO*, which earned him a Critics' Choice Award nomination for Best Young Actor and was nominated for 11 Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Butterfield garnered critical acclaim for his starring role in *THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PAJAMAS* opposite Vera Farmiga and David Thewlis, for which he received a nomination for "Most Promising Newcomer" from the British Independent Film Awards and "Young British Performer of the Year" from the London Critics Circle Film Awards. His previous film credits include *SON OF RAMBOW*, *THE WOLFMAN*, and *NANNY MCPHEE AND THE BIG BANG*. His television credits include a recurring role on the BBC series *Merlin*.

Butterfield, along with his father and brother, launched a driving game app for the iPad titled, *Racing Blind*. The app is uniquely played with your eyes closed and is based on a pen and paper game they invented to pass the hours while on the set of *THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PAJAMAS*.

SALLY HAWKINS

Sally Hawkins most recently was nominated as Best Supporting Actress for both the Academy and Golden Globe Awards for Woody Allen's *BLUE JASMINE* opposite Cate Blanchett. She recently starred as 'Mary Brown' opposite Nicole Kidman and Hugh Bonneville in the hit family film *PADDINGTON* as well as the international successful remake of *GODZILLA (Legendary)*. In addition, *THE PHONE CALL* (short film) with Sally and Jim Broadbent won the 2015 Academy Award.

She received critical acclaim as well as a Golden Globe Award, Silver Bear (Berlin) Award, Evening Standard Award, Hollywood Film Festival (Breakthrough Award), NY, LA, Mill Valley, San Francisco and Santa Barbara Film Critic's Awards; as well as a host of nominations for her performance as 'Poppy' in Mike Leigh's *HAPPY-GO-LUCKY*.

The RADA trained Hawkins made her film debut as Samantha in 'All or Nothing,' and was then seen as Susan in 'Vera Drake', both Mike Leigh films.

Other recent film roles include Phil Morrison's ALMOST CHRISTMAS opposite Paul Rudd and Paul Giamatti, Mike Newell's GREAT EXPECTATIONS, Richard Ayoade's SUBMARINE, Mark Romanek's NEVER LET ME GO, Lone Scherfig's AN EDUCATION, Cary Fukunaga's JANE EYRE and a starring turn in Nigel Cole's MADE IN DAGENHAM winning her further accolades and honors. In addition, she has appeared in Matthew Vaughan's LAYER CAKE, LOVE BIRDS directed by Paul Murphy, Tom Shankland's WAZ, Sherry Hormann's DESERT FLOWER, Stephen Burke's HAPPY EVER AFTERS, Gurinder Chadha's IT'S A WONDERFUL AFTERLIFE and Woody Allen's CASSANDRA'S DREAM.

Sally recently wrapped the BBC mini-series THE HOLLOW CROWN, playing 'Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester' with Benedict Cumberbatch and Tom Hiddleston. Her performance as Anne Elliott in the ITV production of Jane Austen's 'Persuasion' won her the Golden Nymph Award for Best Actress at the Monte Carlo Television Festival 2007 and the Royal Television Society Best Actress Award. Other television credits include leading roles in Simon Curtis's adaptation of Patrick Hamilton's '20,000 Streets Under the Sky,' 'Tipping the Velvet,' 'Byron,' in which she played Mary Shelley, 'The Young Visitors,' directed by David Yates, in which she starred opposite Jim Broadbent, 'Fingersmith,' two series of 'Little Britain,' as the recurring character Cathy, and she played the leading role in 'Shiny, Shiny Bright New Hole In My Heart' for the BBC, directed by Marc Munden.

Sally most recently closed 2 sold out runs at the Royal Court and West End of Nick Payne's 2 character play 'Constellations' opposite Rafe Spall. Her extensive theatre credits include playing the role of Adele in the recent Howard Davis production of 'House of Bernarda Alba' at The National Theatre opposite Penelope Wilton, to which she won rave reviews. She has appeared at The Royal Court Theatre in 'The Winterling' directed by Ian Rickson and 'Country Music' directed by Gordon Anderson. Her credits also include 'The Way Of The World' (Wilton Music Hall), 'Misconceptions' (Octagon), 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'Much Ado About Nothing' (both at Regents Park Theatre), 'Perpalas' (National Theatre Studio), 'The Cherry Orchard' and 'Romeo & Juliet' (both for Theatre Royal York), 'The Dybbuk' and 'Accidental Death Of An Anarchist' (both for BAC), 'Svejk' (The Gate Theatre), 'The Whore Of Babylon' (Globe Ed. Centre) and 'As You Like It' for The Buckingham Palace Gala.

Sally was born in Lewisham, South East London.

RAFE SPALL

Rafe Spall has had an incredible few years. Last year Spall starred in Working Title's new romantic comedy *I Give It a Year*. The film which also starred Simon Baker and Rose Byrne, as well as being released in the UK, was released in the US by Magnolia Pictures. In 2012 Spall featured as the role of 'The Writer' in the hugely celebrated and award winning Ang Lee film *Life of Pi*. Spall was also seen in Ridley Scott's box office smash *Prometheus* alongside Michael Fassbender, Charlize Theron and Idris Elba.

In August, Spall will also feature in indie romantic comedy *What If* opposite Daniel Radcliffe.

Most recently Spall was seen on stage in the critically acclaimed Broadway show *Betrayal* in which he starred opposite Daniel Craig and Rachel Weisz. Directed by Mike Nichols, Spall played Jerry who was having an affair with his best friend's wife. The play ran for 14 weeks only but grossed \$17.5million in that time.

Prior to that Spall was seen on stage in *Constellations* at the Duke of York's Theatre in London's West End. Fresh from its Royal Court transfer, Spall starred opposite Sally Hawkins once again in a play consisting of over 100 scenes, in just 70 minutes, exploring the concept of multi verse. The play opened to rave reviews at both theatres and Spall was nominated for a Best Actor Olivier Award. *Constellations* also won Best Play at the Evening Standard Theatre Awards.

Spall has also been seen on our cinema screens in Roland Emmerich's controversial feature *Anonymous*. The historical thriller, in which Spall plays Shakespeare, tackles the theory that Shakespeare's plays were written by Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. He appeared alongside a stellar cast including Vanessa Redgrave, David Thewlis and Rhys Ifans. He also featured in the romantic comedy *One Day*, the adaptation of David Nicholls' bestselling novel starring Anne Hathaway, Jim Sturgess and Romola Garai. Directed by Lone Scherfig, Spall plays Ian, a would-be stand-up comedian and boyfriend of Hathaway's character, Emma.

Spall's television career to date has been prolific. He starred in Channel 4's popular comedy *Pete Vs Life* in which his character tackles life's dilemmas to the backdrop of sport-style commentating. Spall also starred in the *The Shadow Line*, a thrilling six part drama for the BBC. Written and directed by Hugo Blick, this intelligent and gripping conspiracy thriller saw Spall star alongside a superb cast including Chiwetel Ejiofor, Christopher Eccleston and Lesley Sharp.

2009 saw Spall in the coming of age drama *The Scouting Book for Boys* directed by Tom Harper. The film previewed to critical acclaim at the London Film Festival and won its writer, Jack Thorne, the award for Best British Newcomer. Spall's other film credits include the British comedy *Hot Fuzz* directed by Edgar Wright in which he appeared alongside Simon Pegg, Martin Freeman and Bill Nighy, and the romantic drama *A Good Year*, directed by Ridley Scott and starring Russell Crowe and Marion Cotillard. He also appeared in award-winning *Kidulthood*; the comedy *Shaun of the Dead*; and *The Calcium Kid* directed by Nick Cohen.

On the small screen Spall has starred as William Holman Hunt in *Desperate Romantics*, a six-part drama for the BBC which follows the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. His other television credits include the BBC drama *Rather you than Me*, and *He Kills Coppers* directed by Adrian Shergold; a drama about three policemen who were brutally murdered during the 1966 world cup. In 2006 Spall received critical acclaim for his performance as lead character Rochester opposite Rebecca Hall in the BBC adaptation of Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Spall's earlier television credits include *The Chatterley Affair*, *Cracker*, *The Romantics* and *The Rotter's Club*.

Spall's theatre credits are also extensive and include *Just a Bloke* and *Alaska* at the Royal Court; *The Knight of Burning Pestle* at the Young Vic; Michael Grandage's production of *John Gabriel Borkman* at the Donmar Warehouse; and *If There Is, I Haven't Found It Yet* at The Bush.

EDDIE MARSAN

Eddie Marsan has an extensive film career in which he has worked with a range of highly accomplished actors and directors, including Michael Mann, Martin Scorsese, Terence Malik and Stephen Spielberg. He has appeared in over 50 films including *Gangster No.1*, *Gangs of New York*, *The Illusionist*, *Miami Vice*, *V for Vendetta*, *Mission Impossible III*, *Happy Go Lucky*, *Hancock*, Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, *War Horse*, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, *The World's End* and *Filth* to name a few.

Marsan has collaborated with director Mike Leigh on three occasions, in *Vera Drake*, *Happy Go Lucky* and *A Running Jump*. For both *Vera Drake* and *Happy-Go-Lucky*, he won an award for Best Supporting Actor at the British Independent Film Awards. He also picked up a number of other awards for *Happy-Go-Lucky*.

Aside from his many film roles, Marsan has also appeared in a number of critically acclaimed television shows. He recently starred in the first series of the popular crime drama *Ray Donovan*, which was honoured with the Critic's Choice Television Award in 2013 for Most Exciting New Drama.

Marsan was brought up in Bethnal Green in London. He served as an apprentice for a printer before beginning an acting career, for which he trained at Mountview Academy of the Arts. He is a patron for the Academy of the Science of Acting and Directing, as well as Kazzum, a children's theatre company that promotes the acceptance of diversity.

Filmmaker Biographies

MORGAN MATTHEWS – Director

“One of Matthew’s virtues as a film-maker is his ability to get behind the oddity of his subjects to the places where they’re feeling the same things as the rest of us... if you spot his name on a film, watch it” - The Independent.

BAFTA winning director Morgan Matthews has been making critically acclaimed documentaries for over ten years. Distinctive in their cutting-edge style, Morgan's films combine intelligent story telling with evocative and powerful portrayals of our society.

Morgan began directing at the prestigious *Century Films*, and amongst his first work was the two part series *My Crazy Parents*, which earned him a nomination from the Royal Television Society (RTS) Awards. This was soon followed by the celebrated feature length documentary on the World Taxidermy Championships, *Taxidermy: Stuff the World*, which was nominated for BAFTA, RTS, and Grierson awards.

In 2005, Morgan joined *Blast! Films*, where he directed four films for the BBC - *Blue Suede Jew*, *Hair Wars*, *Million Dollar Pigeon*, and the feature length *Beautiful Young Minds*, which followed a group of gifted British teenagers competing in the International Mathematical Olympiad. *Beautiful Young Minds* garnered blanket nominations across the top documentary awards bodies, picking up nods from BAFTA, RTS, Prix Europa and the Grierson Awards.

Having become a tour de force in the documentary world, Morgan decided to set up his own independent production company, Minnow Films, with the simple aspiration to create documentaries of the highest quality. Morgan launched this ambition, with the Grierson nominated *Battleship Antarctica*, a one-hour film for Channel 4, which followed Greenpeace on their expedition to confront the Japanese whaling fleet.

Morgan followed this thought-provoking documentary with *The Fallen*, a three-hour landmark film for BBC2. This moving piece paid an intimate tribute to every British serviceman and woman to have died whilst serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. Among countless credits, *The Fallen* was named Best Documentary of 2008 at the RTS awards and won two BAFTA's, including Best Factual Director.

Then in 2010, the influential *Broadcast* magazine ranked Morgan as second in their list of the top 100 directors, just one place behind Oscar-winning director James Marsh.

Morgan's most recent work for the BBC chronicled every teenager who died as a result of violence in the UK over one year. The powerful *Scenes from a Teenage Killing* premiered at the Sheffield DocFest, where it won the audience award, and it was also nominated for a BAFTA awards in the much-coveted Best Single Documentary category.

Following this, Morgan worked with Ridley Scott and Kevin Macdonald on the ambitious *Britain in a Day* project. He then directed *Shooting Bigfoot*, a feature-length co-production for BBC Storyville and BFI. Morgan recently finished directing *A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND*, his first feature film for the cinema – a drama inspired by *Beautiful Young Minds*, starring Asa Butterfield, Rafe Spall, Sally Hawkins and Eddie Marsan.

Looking to the future Morgan wants to explore different genres to continue to make heart-felt films that surprise and enthrall.

JAMES GRAHAM – Writer

James Graham is a British playwright and film and television writer who won the Pearson Playwriting Bursary in 2006 and went on to win the Catherine Johnson Award for the Best Play in 2007 for his play *Eden's Empire*.

James' play *This House* premièred at the Cottesloe Theatre in September 2012, directed by Jeremy Herrin, and transferred to the Olivier in 2013 where it enjoyed a sold out run and garnered critical acclaim and admiration from current and former MP's for his rendition of life in the House of Commons.

James's play *Tory Boyz* for the National Youth Theatre caused a storm during its run at the Soho Theatre and received excellent reviews for its portrayal of young, gay men in the modern Conservative Party. His play *The Whisky Taster* premiered at the Bush Theatre in early 2010 to uniformly excellent reviews.

James has written the book for *Finding Neverland* the musical with music by Gary Barlow. It opened in Boston in Summer 2014 and transferred to New York in Spring 2015. His play *The Vote* at the Donmar Warehouse aired in real time on TV in the final 90 minutes of the 2015 polling day.

His first film for television, *Caught in a Trap*, was broadcast on ITV1 on Boxing Day 2008. James was picked as one of *Broadcast* Magazine's Hotshots in the same year. He is developing original series and adaptations with Tiger Aspect, Leftbank, Kudos and the BBC.

He is currently working on an adaptation of *1984* for director Paul Greengrass.

DANNY COHEN – Cinematographer

Cinematographer Danny Cohen has worked with a variety of directors including Stephen Frears, Lenny Abrahamson, Richard Curtis, Rupert Goold, Tom Hooper, Shane Meadows, Stephen Poliakoff and Dominic Savage on a number of feature films and television dramas.

A member of the British Society of Cinematographers since 2008, Danny's credits include *This Is England*, *This is England 1986*, *This is England 1988*, and *Dead Man's Shoes* directed by Shane Meadows; Tom Hooper's *The King's Speech*, *Les Misérables*, *John*

Adams and, most recently, *The Danish Girl*; Lenny Abrahamson's *Room*; Oliver Parker's *Johnny English Reborn*; *Richard II* directed by Rupert Goold for the BBC; Dominic Savage's *Dive*; Adrian Shergold's *Pierrepont*; Steven Poliakoff's *Glorious 39* and *A Real Summer*; and Richard Curtis' *The Boat That Rocked*. Danny was nominated for a "Best Cinematography" BAFTA for lighting *Les Misérables*, an Oscar and a BAFTA for his work on feature film *The King's Speech*, and was also nominated for the BAFTA for "Best Photography and Lighting: Fiction/Entertainment" for his work on *Longford*.

He has just completed shooting *Florence Foster Jenkins* for Stephen Frears, with whom he worked on the soon-to-be-released *The Program*.

DAVID THOMPSON – Producer

David M. Thompson, former head of BBC Films, has been the recipient of multiple awards, including three BAFTAs, two Golden Globes, and three Emmys. He has produced/executive produced over 100 films. His feature film credits include *Billy Elliot*, *Dirty Pretty Things*, *Iris*, *Notes on a Scandal*, *Eastern Promises*, *Revolutionary Road*, *Fish Tank* and *An Education*.

Over his career, David made a special contribution to introducing the work of new directors such as Pawel Pawlikowski, Lynne Ramsay, Andrea Arnold, Saul Dibb, Dominic Savage, Sarah Gavron, Francesca Joseph, Justin Chadwick and Nick Murphy. His TV credits as producer include several Alan Clarke films such as *The Firm* and *Road*, as well as the first *Shadowlands* and numerous award winning television dramas which he executive produced/produced such as *Into the Storm*, *The Storm*, *The Gathering Storm*, *Conspiracy*, *The Lost Prince* and *Einstein & Eddington*.

David left the BBC in 2008 to set up Origin Pictures, producing high quality feature films and television dramas. Recent productions include the BAFTA-nominated *The Crimson Petal and The White*, as well as *Death Comes to Pemberley* and *Jamaica Inn*. David's recent feature films include *The Awakening* starring Rebecca Hall and Dominic West, and the Nelson Mandela biopic *Long Walk to Freedom*, written by William Nicholson and starring Idris Elba and Naomie Harris. David is currently in production on *Woman in Gold*, starring Helen Mirren and Ryan Reynolds.

Technical Data Sheet

TITLE: A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND

RUN TIME: 111 minutes 17 seconds

LANGUAGE: English, Mandarin

COUNTRY: United Kingdom

YEAR: 2014

GENRE: Coming-of-age drama

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Lipsync Productions**

An Origin Pictures – Minnow Films Production

A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND

Directed by
Morgan Matthews

Written by
James Graham

Story by
Morgan Matthews and James Graham

Produced by
Laura Hastings-Smith David M. Thompson

Executive Producers
Christine Langan Joe Oppenheimer Lizzie Francke

Executive Producers
Phil Hunt Compton Ross

Executive Producers
Hugo Heppell Norman Merry Peter Hampden

Co-Producers
Ed Rubin Joanie Blaikie

Director of Photography
Danny Cohen BSC

Editor
Peter Lambert

Original Music by
Mearl

Featuring Songs by
Keaton Henson

Production Designer
Richard Bullock

Costume Designer
Suzanne Cave

Hair and Make-up Designer
Sue Wyburgh
Line Producer
Sarah Jane Wheale

Music Supervisor
Sarah Bridge

Casting Director
Shaheen Baig

Asa Butterfield

Rafe Spall

and **Sally Hawkins**

with **Eddie Marsan**

Jo Yang Martin McCann

Jake Davies
Alex Lawther
Alexa Davies

Orion Lee
Percelle Ascott
Suraj Rattu
Edward Baker-Close