TRANSMISSION

Presents

# TEA WITH THE DAMES

Directed by **ROGER MICHELL** / In cinemas **7 June 2018**

Starring **DAME EILEEN ATKINS, DAME JUDI DENCH, DAME JOAN PLOWRIGHT** and **DAME MAGGIE SMITH**

**PUBLICITY REQUESTS:**

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**IMAGES**

High res images and poster available to download via the DOWNLOAD MEDIA tab at:

http://www.transmissionfilms.com.au/films/tea-with-the-dames

**Distributed in Australia by Transmission Films**

**A Field Day Productions BBC Arena co-production**
**For Kew Media**

# TEA WITH THE DAMES

A Film by Roger Michell

**Dames**
Eileen Atkins
Judi Dench
Joan Plowright
Maggie Smith

Running time: 82 mins

**Logline:**
Directed by multi award winning Roger Michell (Notting Hill, Venus), TEA WITH THE DAMES invites you to spend time with screen icons Eileen Atkins, Judi Dench, Joan Plowright and Maggie Smith as they talk about their lives: their experience in theatre, TV and cinema and the memories they have from when they were bright young things right up to the present day.

**International synopsis:**
Sixty years ago, seismic changes ripped through the cultural establishment and, together with music and fashion, British theatre experienced an explosion of creativity and talent, the impact of which was felt around the world and is still tangible today.

Pivotal to these creative and social shifts were a group of young actresses including Eileen Atkins, Judi Dench Joan Plowright and Maggie Smith. All have received Damehoods in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the acting profession.

Directed by Roger Michell (Notting Hill, Venus), TEA WITH THE DAMES invites you to spend time with these icons as they talk about their lives now and then: their experience in theatre, TV and cinema and the memories they have from when they were bright young things right up to the present day – as they look back with the wisdom of their years.

**UK Synopsis**
From time to time four old friends, all extraordinary actresses, meet up in the English countryside to gossip, to remember and to laugh. For once they let the cameras in…

TEA WITH THE DAMES is a unique celebration of the lives and careers of four of our most iconic actresses; Dame Eileen Atkins, Dame Judi Dench, Dame Joan Plowright and Dame Maggie Smith. All four have gone from being fledgling actresses in the 1950s to acting royalty. They've watched each other's careers grow and bloom and have celebrated life's ups and downs together. TEA WITH THE DAMES invites you to spend time with these acting legends as they talk about their lives and their professional experiences across Theatre, Television and Film. Directed by Roger Michell (My Cousin Rachel, Notting Hill), the film also includes a range of astonishing archive material. Candid, funny, caustic, irreverent, poignant and utterly engrossing, this unmissable release is proof that there is truly TEA WITH THE DAMES...

**Director's synopsis**
Together, they're 342 years old.

They're in their seventh decade of cutting-edge, epoch-defining performances on stage and on screen.

Funny, smart, sharp, competitive, tearful, hilarious, savage, clever, caustic, cool, gorgeous, poignant, irreverent, iconic, old ...

... and unbelievably young.
Special friends, special women and special Dames: and in this special film a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hang out with them all, at the same table, at the same time, and enjoy sparkling and unguarded conversation spliced with a raft of astonishing archive.

Atkins, Dench, Smith, Plowright. The dream Dame team.

Don't miss it.

**Production credit**
TEA WITH THE DAMES IS A FIELD DAY PRODUCTIONS / BBC ARENA CO-PRODUCTION and produced by Emmy, Peabody and RTS Award Winner Sally Angel (NIGHT WILL FALL) and Karen Steyn. Sally Angel and Debbie Manners are Executive Producers for Field Day and Anthony Wall for the BBC.

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**Director's Vision**
I wanted these amazing women to do what they are all world champions at doing: talking: yacking, gossiping, reminiscing, reflecting, cursing, loving, praising and laughing. I wanted the film to make us feel like we're eavesdropping, that nothing's been rehearsed, or is being presented to camera. My ambition was to create something that felt like anthropology, like journalism, like a privileged intimacy, not reverential, not polite, not hovering deferentially around Grand Dames. I wanted to put these extraordinary women around a table or two and get a glimpse of their pasts, their presents, their affection for each other and their interaction with each other. I didn't want to stage anything, repeat anything, fake anything. More in the spirit of a rockumentary than a lyrical study in Lavender: more the Rolling Stones than the rolling countryside: more Spice Girls than Sibelius.

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**THE DAMES BIOGS**

**EILEEN ATKINS**, was born in Clapton and brought up in Tottenham - her mother was a dressmaker and her father an electric metre reader. On the strength of a gypsy's prediction that she'd be a famous dancer, her mother enrolled her into dancing lessons from the age of three. She started performing at the age of seven at working men's club. She joined the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1957 and married fellow actor Julian Glover. From the late 50's Eileen starred in BBC TV dramas along with Judi Dench, and earned numerous BAFTA nominations. She made her Broadway debut in 1966 in *The Killing of Sister George* for which she landed her first (of four) Tony Award nominations for Best Actress. With Jean Marsh, she created the award-winning drama series *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971) and *The House of Eliott* (1991). Starring again with Judi Dench in the TV drama *Cranford* (2008) she won a Bafta and an Emmy for the role of Deborah Jenkyns. Her first love is the theatre and has appeared on Broadway many times to great acclaim. She starred with Maggie Smith in the play *A Delicate Balance (*1997) which earned her an Evening Standard Best Performance Award. With Maggie again, they appeared in Robert Altman's film *Gosford Park* in 2001. Americans will have seen her most recently playing Queen Mary in *The Crown* on Netflix.

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**JUDI DENCH** was born in 1934 in Heworth, North Riding of Yorkshire. Judi followed her brother Jeff into the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Judi met Maggie Smith at the Old Vic and made her professional debut there in 1957 as Ophelia in *Hamlet.* In 1961 Judi joined the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon, where she met her husband Michael Williams. During this time, her television plays gained critical acclaim. A change in direction saw her take the lead role of Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* her first musical in 1968. Michael and Judi's daughter Finty was born in 1972 and she continued her work on stage and screen, starring opposite Michael in the television comedy series *A Fine Romance.* In the early 80s Judi appeared alongside Maggie Smith in *A Room with A View* in 1985. In the late 80s Judi accepted Kenneth Branagh's request for her to direct *Much Ado about Nothing* on the stage and she continued to direct over the next few

years. Judi had another successful television sitcom with *As Time Goes By* with Geoffrey Palmer. In the 90s her audience grew when cast as Queen Victoria in the film *Mrs Brown* and she was nominated for her first Academy Award®. One of her most iconic film roles was as M, James Bond's boss, in *GoldenEye* (1995) and she continued in that role until *Skyfall* in 2012. She won an Academy Award® as Best Supporting Actress for her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth I in *Shakespeare in Love* (1998). Since then she has been nominated for an Academy Award® for the films *Chocolat, Iris, Mrs Henderson Presents, Notes on a Scandal* and *Philomena.* She also appeared alongside Maggie Smith in the 2011 film *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, and they both returned for its 2015 sequel.

**JOAN PLOWRIGHT** was born in Brigg, Lincolnshire in 1929 later moving to Scunthorpe which had become a boom town in the 30's. Her Father was editor of the local newspaper and her mother a leading light in the amateur dramatic society. Studied at the Laban Art of Movement Studio before winning a scholarship to The Old Vic Theatre School run by Michel Saint-Denis and George Devine who was to have a great influence on her career. She joined The Old Vic Theatre Company and married fellow actor Roger Gage. Her early Theatre career included being chosen by Orson Welles to appear in his extraordinary stage adaptation of *Moby Dick*. In 1956 George Devine asked her to join his Company at The Royal Court Theatre where she appeared in a number of landmark plays – by Eugene Ionesco, George Bernard Shaw, Bertolt Brecht, Arthur Miller, Arnold Wesker and John Osborne. Her first success in a leading part was in Devine's classic revival of *The Country Wife* which transferred to the West End. Sir Laurence Olivier, a friend of Devine, came to see the play and she was offered the part of Jean Rice in Osborne's *The Entertainer*. But the part that put her on the map was Beatie Bryant in Arnold Wesker's *Roots*. Drama Critic Bernard Levine wrote "…M*iss Joan Plowright's mammoth performance as the bud which has begun to open, reaches true greatness".* Dame Sybil Thorndike, the original Saint Joan, came to see the play and said she must play Saint Joan. Early in 1959 she went to New York to re-join Olivier for the New York production of *The Entertainer* – they fell in love. At the time both were still married but living separately. Although he was still married to Vivien Leigh the relationship was over and divorce had been agreed. In 1961 they returned to New York he to play in *Becket* with Anthony Quinn and she in *A Taste of Honey* with Angela Lansbury. She won The Tony Award and The Page One (New York Guild of Newspapers) Award. They married in 1961 secretly in Wilton, Connecticut and went back to their respective Theatres for their performances. They were given a Wedding Party by Richard Burton (who was playing in Camelot) and his first wife Sybil, Lauren Bacall and Jason Robards. They returned to England in 1961 where Olivier took charge of the new Chichester Festival Theatre and settled in Brighton. In the same year Joan gave birth to the first of their three children – Richard, Tamsin and Julie- Kate. In 1963 Olivier was appointed founder Director of the New National Theatre. Joan played *Sonya in Uncle Vanya* and her first Award winning performance as *Saint Joan* at Chichester and repeated both at The National Theatre in its first season. Other early National Theatre productions included *Masha in The Three Sisters*, *Portia in The Merchant of Venice* and she took over from Maggie Smith as *Hilde Wangel* in *The Master Builder* with Olivier as Solness. She and Maggie also alternated as Beatrice in Zeffirelli's production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Joan was later to work with Zeffirelli in the Award winning productions of Edwardo de Filippo's *Saturday Sunday Monday* and *Filumena in the West End* – (SWET Award: Adeline Rastori Italian Prize: Golden Pulchinelli Italian Prize and the Evening Standard Award). In the late 90's she also appeared in his films *Jane Eyre* and *Tea with Mussolini* which brought her together with Maggie Smith and Judi Dench. In the early 80's she joined Director Lindsay Anderson and Producer Helen Montague to form The Lyric Theatre Company and appeared as Madame Arkadina in Chekhov's *The Seagull* with the young Helen Mirren as Nina. They played together again in *The Bed Before Yesterday* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. Television Credits included: Viola in *Twelfth Night:* Edith in *A Dedicated Man* (Granada): *Daphne Laureola* (Granada): *Merchant of Venice* (ITV): Rosa in *Saturday Sunday Monday* (Granada): *Encore Encore* with Nathan Lane (USA): Lady Teazle

*School for Scandal* (BBC): Lady Bracknell *The Importance of Being Ernest* (BBC): *House of Bernarda Alba* (BBC): *Driving Miss Daisy* (Warner Brothers TVFilm): Meg in *The Birthday Party* (BBC) and *Sophie By Herself* (Channel 4). She came late to films but enjoyed success in *I Love your to Death* with Tracy Ullman, Keanu Reeves and Kelvin Klein, *Enchanted April*, *Dennis the Menace* with Walter Matthau, *Equus* with Richard Burton and Eileen Atkins and her last film before semi-retirement was *Mrs. Palfrey at The Claremont*. She won an Oscar Nomination and two Golden Globes for *Enchanted April* and *HBO Stalin* and a BAFTA. Nomination for the film The *Three Sisters***.**

**MAGGIE SMTH** has had a distinguished career in theatre, film and television. She has won two Academy Awards® for *THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE* and *CAILIFORNIA SUITE* and numerous other awards for performances on stage and on film and on television. Her most recent film is *THE LADY IN THE VAN* (directed by Sir Nicholas Hytner and written by Alan Bennett from his book and play, which Dame Maggie appeared in on stage in London). Of course she is known worldwide as Professor McGonagall in all the *HARRY POTTER* films and as the Dowager Duchess in the very popular series of *DOWNTON ABBEY* on ITV. She has been honoured with the CBE and DBE and most recently has been made a Companion of Honour. She received the Hamburg Shakespeare Prize in 1991, is a Fellow of the British Film Institute, and was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from BAFTA® in 1993. She is an Honorary D.Litt of Cambridge University and of St Andrews, and is a patron of the Jane Austen Society. She is also a Vice-President of the Royal Theatrical Fund.

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**Roger Michell Biog**

The son of an English diplomat, Roger Michell was born in South Africa and as a child lived in Beirut, Damascus and Prague. He started directing plays at school before going on to Cambridge where he won the RSC Buzz Goodbody Award at the National Student Drama Festival in 1977and a Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival in the same year.

He has subsequently directed plays at the National Theatre, the Old Vic, Lyric Hammersmith, Donmar, Hampstead, Royal Court, Almeida, in the West End and on Broadway and elsewhere and for six years he was resident director at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford and London.

In the early nineties, he began directing for TV and film and his work includes the award-winning mini-series *'Buddha of Suburbia', 'The Lost Honour of Christopher Jefferies*' (TV), and the films *'Persuasion', 'Titanic Town', 'My Night with Reg', 'Notting Hill', 'Changing Lanes', 'The Mother', 'Enduring Love', 'Venus', 'Morning Glory', 'Le Week-end'* and *'My Cousin Rachel'*.

He has also directed documentaries for the BBC and a number of commercials.

He has received many awards for his film work including two BAFTAs®, an Evening Standard Award, two EMPIRE Awards, Critics Circle Award and Awards from Festivals at Emden, Locarno, Seville, Shanghai, Rheims and elsewhere.

He is married to the actress Anna Maxwell Martin and lives with his four children in North London.

He is a member of the Academy.

**Roger Michell Awards**

2015 BAFTA® TV Award (Best Mini-series) The Lost Honour of Christopher Jefferies
1996 BAFTA® TV Award (Best Single Drama) Persuasion.
1999 Emden International Film Festival Award of the German Unions Assoc.

2000 Empire Awards UK. (Best British Director) Notting Hill (1999).
1998 Locarno International Film Festival (Prize of the Ecumenical Jury) Titanic Town (1998).
2006 Seville European Film Festival Winner Golden Giradillo - Best Film - Venus (2006).

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**Sally Angel Biog**

Sally Angel's most recent production was the Emmy® and Peabody winning Cinema Documentary, *'Night Will Fall'*, telling the story of the film shot when the Allies liberated the concentration camps in 1945. *'Night Will Fall'* was broadcast on C4 in the UK and HBO in the USA and Netflix. It has since been screened in over 32 countries and has been seen by over 30 million people.

Most of Sally's career was at the BBC where she worked on many flagship BBC programme strands and devised and launched a number of returning series. Sally worked in senior management at the BBC. She has made series and programmes for many broadcasters including HBO, History, BBC, Channel 4 and ITV. She is also a psychotherapist with a small practice in North London.

**Sally Angel Awards**

2015 FOCAL International Awards - (Best Use of Footage in a History Production) *Night Will Fall* (2014) & (Best Use of Footage in a Cinema Release).
2016 Emmy Awards® (Outstanding Historical Programming - Long Form) *Night Will Fall* (2014).
2016 Emmy® (Outstanding Historical Programming - Long Form) *Night Will Fall* (2014).
2016 Peabody Award (Documentary & Education) *Night Will Fall*.
2016 RTS (Best History) *Night Will Fall*.
2014 Sheffield International Documentary Festival - (special mention) *Night Will Fall*.

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**Debbie Manners Biog**

Debbie has held a number of senior roles in Independent production companies: most recently as CEO of Keo Films and Field Day Productions and previously as Chief Operating Officer at Hat Trick Productions and Group Commercial Director for RDF Media Group (now Zodiak). She has been Chair of PACT, the trade association representing the commercial interests of UK independent television, film, digital, children's and animation media companies.

For the first 17 years of her career Debbie held various business and commercial roles at the BBC including Director of Rights and Business Affairs. She is chair of the Charity Safe Hands for Mothers and a consultant for Ingenious Media.

**Karen Steyn Biog**

Karen has a proven track record in creating and producing factual entertainment programmes, often as returnable formats – as with the long running biography brand *The Unforgettables* for ITV - and has produced many high rating and returning series for BBC 1,2 and 4.

She has a particular aptitude in archive-based comedy and biography, and has a vast amount of experience in gaining access to the personal archives and stories of some of our best-loved names including Bob Monkhouse, Richard Beckinsale, Kenneth Williams and Dudley Moore, and has produced studio shows with Fiona Bruce, Ruby Wax, Clive James, and Jonathan Ross amongst others. Previous roles include head of development at Watchmaker and for eight years as an in-house exec at BBC entertainment.

Recent credits include, *The World According to Kenny Everett* ITV (2015), *Darcey Bussell's Looking for Audrey* BBC1 (2014).

**Joanna Crickmay Biog**

Joanna Crickmay has edited a range of BAFTA® nominated documentaries which include *'Alan Bennett's Diaries'* and *'Arena: The National Theatre'*. Her other films for BBC Arena range from Pete Doherty to T.S Eliot, and her most recent film has been the five years in the making Royal Academy of Arts.

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**Eben Bolter Biog**

Eben Bolter is a UK/US dual national cinematographer represented by Casarotto (UK) and Gersh (US) and was named a BAFTA® Breakthrough Brit 2016.

In drama Eben has shot 14 feature films including the Netflix Original *'IBOY'*, best-selling book adaptation *'MUM'S LIST'* and the award winning *'CHICKEN'*. Eben has also recently completed *'THE WOMAN IN WHITE'*, BBC One's new mini-series adaptation of the classic Wilkie Collins novel, and DPed additional photography on *'AMERICAN MADE'* starring Tom Cruise. In documentaries Eben has two feature docs in post; '*MCKELLEN'* on the life of Sir Ian McKellen, and *'TEA WITH THE DAMES'* for the BBC and director Roger Michell.

Eben is currently in production on *'WHITE DRAGON'*, an 8-part mini-series thriller for Amazon and ITV set in Hong Kong, directed by Paul Andrew Williams for Two Brothers Productions.

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**BBC Biog – Anthony Wall and Arena**

Described by Martin Scorsese as 'home to some of the greatest non fiction filmmaking in the past 40 years', Arena is the longest running arts series in the world. Anthony Wall became the editor in 1985 with Nigel Finch, before that they had been the core directors on the strand, pioneering the distinctive Arena style of applying the highest filmic values to art and culture low and high.

Wall continued to edit the series after Finch's death in 1995. During his forty year tenure, Arena has won over a hundred international awards including nine BAFTAs®, with twenty five nominations; six Royal Television Society awards; the Prix Italia; Primetime and International Emmys®; the Peabody and the Special Medallion at the Telluride Film Festival for 'its commitment to cutting edge film making.'

From the first edition in 1975, which featured Laurence Olivier discussing with Kenneth Tynan the life of the founder of the National Theatre, Lilian Bayliss, Arena has never failed to attract the greatest names from Bob Dylan to Bette Davis, Nelson Mandela to Tammy Wynette, Sonny Rollins to Amy Winehouse, Derek Walcott to The Sex Pistols.

In recent years, the strand has cultivated an impressive international profile on the documentary feature circuit and at film festivals all over the world. Arena has also built up a body of digital and online work including *Night and Day*, a 24 hour evocation of a single day in the life of the planet,

made entirely from within the Arena archive. *Sgt Pepper – Meet The Band* is a compendium of short films featuring every person on the cover of The Beatles' most successful album.

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**Kew Media Group Biog**
Kew Media Group produces and acquires more than 1,000 hours of new multi-genre content every year and distributes Kew's catalogue of film, television and digital assets to more than 150 countries worldwide on almost every available viewing platform. Kew Media Group distributes a library of more than 10,000 hours of TV and digital content including major drama series, non-fiction entertainment, special event programming, kids' series, TV movies and mini-series. For more information, please visit the Company's website at www.kewmedia.com

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**Field Day Biog**
Field Day is a new production company based in London and a joint-venture between the Emmy and Peabody Award winning producer of *Night Will Fall*, Sally Angel, and BAFTA® and Emmy® award winning Keo Films, who were also Academy Award ®-nominated for the Banksy film, ***Exit Through Gift Shop***. Field Day have made films for BBC, Sky Arts, Little Dot and are currently filming *Embassy – behind the scenes at the US Embassy* in London for Channel 4. For more information please visit our websitewww.Fielddayproductions.co.uk.

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**CAST & CREW**

**CREDIT BLOCK**

A Field Day Productions BBC Arena co-production
For Kew Media

*TEA WITH THE DAMES*
A Film by Roger Michell

**Cast:**
**Dames**
Eileen Atkins
Judi Dench
Joan Plowright
Maggie Smith

**Production Team**
**DOP** Eben Bolter
**Editor** Joanna Crickmay
**Assistant Producer** Tanya Rumins
**Line Producers** Jade Miller-Robinson, Duncan Nichol
**Archive Producer** Andrew Wright
**Head of Production** Maddy Allen

**Commissioning Editor for BBC** Mark Bell
**Executive Producers** Sally Angel, Debbie Manners, Anthony Wall, Jamie Carmichael, John Schmidt
**Producers** Sally Angel, Karen Steyn
**Director** Roger Michell

**Logos** Fieldday, BBC Arena, Kew Media, Picturehouse

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**FULL CREW CREDITS**

**With thanks to:**
Tor Belfrage
Patricia Doyle
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Debbie Mayhew
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Tamsin Olivier
Julie-Kate Olivier
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**Additional Sound**
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Andrew Wright

**Line Producers**
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**Assistant Producer**
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**Commissioning Editor for BBC**
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**Head of Production for Field Day**
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**Director of Photography**
Eben Bolter

**Film Editor**
Joanna Crickmay

**Executive Producers for Field Day**
Sally Angel
Debbie Manners

**Executive Producers for Kew Media**
Jamie Carmichael
John Schmidt

**Executive Producer for BBC Arena**
Anthony Wall

**Producers**
Sally Angel
Karen Steyn

**Director**
Roger Michell

FIELD DAY LOGO / KEW MEDIA LOGO / BBC ARENA

Arena LOGO
**Series Editor for Arena**
Anthony Wall

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