

TASHTEGO FILMS AND PALADIN PRESENT

# A BIRD OF THE AIR

DIRECTED BY MARGARET WHITTON  
BASED ON THE NOVEL "THE LOOP" BY JOE COOMER  
SCREENPLAY BY ROGER TOWNE

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98 Minutes

Not Rated

Official Website: [abirdoftheair.com](http://abirdoftheair.com)

## ABOUT THE STORY

Lyman (Jackson Hurst) is a quiet, reclusive young man whose parents were killed in a car crash when he was four years old. He lives alone and works nights, driving in circles on the highway as a courtesy patrol, prepared for any emergencies that might arise. His life is no less of a loop. When not working, he takes courses at the community college, always with an eye towards practical skills that can help him navigate life's emergencies. His life takes a wild and unexpected turn when a green parrot flies into his trailer and delivers a curious repertoire of one-liners. Fascinated, then becoming obsessed, Lyman sets out to find the wise man who taught the bird these phrases. He reluctantly teams up with a spirited, unconventional librarian named Fiona James (Rachel Nichols) who insists on helping him solve the mystery of the parrot's origins. She, in turn, becomes curious about Lyman's past and these classic opposites -- an introvert and an extrovert -- embark on a quest that leads them to each other.

Despite Lyman's reluctance to accept Fiona's help, their detective work uncovers the bird's amazingly long and intricate history. The parrot's cryptic sayings learned from a succession of eccentric owners, begin to reveal a larger world to Lyman. As they search for information about the parrot, Lyman and Fiona grow closer.

One evening, Lyman finally agrees to let Fiona join him on his nightly rounds. On their unconventional date, Fiona reveals her research into his parents' accident and their unknowable past. She surprises him with a birthday cupcake since he's 'a birthday cake virgin' and declares tonight is his birthday. They are about to make love when they hear the terrible noise of a car hitting a stray dog. Lyman puts the dog out of its misery,

but Fiona is so upset by the scene she must separate herself from him and the reality of what he does for a living.

Lyman gives the bird the name Zane and continues his search for its owner. He brings the parrot to the home of Duncan Weber (Buck Henry) and his wife (Anjanette Comer), where he witnesses the warmth of a happy, loving family. For the first time, he starts thinking about the possibility of this kind of happiness in his own life. But he may be too late. Fiona announces that she is leaving town. Lyman asks her to reconsider, but she refuses, she does not want to share his dark view of the world. As a parting gift she gives him the name of address of the elusive 1930's owner they have been seeking.

Lyman's routine begins to break down; he is sleepless, he begins to take risks, he confesses to Margie (Linda Emond) the loss of meaning in his life. She reassures him 'Being lost is only temporary'.

He goes to see Ivy Campbell (Phyllis Somerville), and learns that her father, killed in World War II, bought the parrot from a band of gypsies. Lyman is unsure what to do next when he realizes there is no wise man with the answers he needs. Ivy Campbell urges him to move "Forward." He returns to his trailer exhausted, finally able to sleep. In the middle of the night, Lyman runs out of propane during an ice storm and the parrot nearly freezes. He rushes Zane to the vet, hoping to save his life. Then he receives an emergency call about Fiona, who has been in a multi-car accident. Lyman races to the scene. Fiona is fine, except for a few scratches. Suddenly, as Floyd crosses to greet Lyman, an SUV skids down the highway. Lyman decides to move Floyd out of harm's way, seemingly sacrificing himself to save Fiona's dog. He is hit and thrown

over the bridge into the water. At the hospital, Fiona calls her parents and confesses “Life sucks.”

Fortunately, he survives. Bruised and in a cast, Lyman wakes up in his trailer as it is being pulled down the highway. A note pinned to his shirt explains that Fiona is taking him with her -- but she will turn around if he wants to go back. She has had the trailer inspected and even has a tool belt for his wheelchair, she’s now prepared. Lyman decides that what he wants is Fiona, and they drive off to start a new life...together.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The annals of on-screen romance are filled with couples who "meet cute," but no movie has ever brought a man and woman together quite like *A BIRD OF THE AIR*. Based on Joe Coomer's acclaimed novel, "The Loop," it tells the story of Lyman, an inveterate loner, whose solitary existence is transformed by a remarkable parrot who literally flies into his life and leads him to an irresistible woman and a bright future. Starring Jackson Hurst ("Drop Dead Diva") and Rachel Nichols ("Conan the Barbarian" "Star Trek," "Criminal Minds") as the initially mismatched pair, the film represents the feature directorial debut of noted screen actress Margaret Whitton, whose affection for the conventions of classic Hollywood romance is palpable, even as she stands most of those conventions on their ear. Adapted for the screen by Roger Towne ("The Natural") and photographed by Oscar-winner Philippe Rousselot ("Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows," "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "A River Runs Through It," "Interview with the Vampire,"), the film was produced by Steven Tabakin and Whitton, and executive produced by Warren Spector for their company, Tashtego Films.

Hailed as "deliciously quirky and perceptive" by *Publishers Weekly*, "impossible to resist" by *The New Yorker*, and named one of the "Notable Books of the Year" by *The New York Times*, Coomer's 1992 novel tells the story of Lyman (Hurst), a loner whose job patrolling highways at night, aiding stranded motorists, keeps him at a distance from other people. When a rare and talkative parrot flies into his home one day, Lyman needs to figure out where the bird comes from and tries to decode its often cryptic and literary utterances. Enlisting the aid of Fiona (Nichols), a sexy librarian who is as interested in

Lyman's secrets as she is in the bird's, the pair set off on a search that doesn't always lead them where they think they're going, but which gradually leads them to one another.

Like the serendipitous coming together of *A BIRD OF THE AIR*'s central characters, Margaret Whitton first discovered Joe Coomer's novel in a bookstore looking for a summer read when she randomly pulled a paperback from the shelf, and it just happened to be "The Loop." "I read the first paragraph, finished the book in one sitting, and was enchanted," she recalls. Drawn to the novel's unconventional romance and winning juxtaposition of humor and heartbreak, Whitton decided that "The Loop" *had* to be a film. But when she inquired about the rights, she discovered that her new favorite novel was beloved by many, and was always under option. "I called and found out that Oprah Winfrey, who arguably has a brilliant antenna for storytelling, had the rights. I believe she tried several passes at the script, and then gave the project to Matthew McConaughey. Every May 1<sup>st</sup> I would call and ask, 'Is it out of option yet? And for six years the answer was 'No.''" Finally, Whitton's patience and persistence were rewarded when she and her producing partner, Steven Tabakin, obtained the elusive film rights.

As much as she loved "The Loop" and was happy to be on the road to pre-production, Whitton knew Coomer's book would be challenging to adapt. Somehow, the film, now titled *A BIRD OF THE AIR*, had to open up beyond Lyman's interior perspective, which dominates the narrative. At the same time, the story had to retain its many emotional levels, questions about identity, tonal changes, and the potent reminder that we must mourn our pasts in order to imagine a future.

A combination of screwball/romantic comedy, mystery, road movie, and fairytale, *A BIRD OF THE AIR* mimics life in its wonderful variety and volatility. Throughout the

process of adaptation, Whitton believed that it was more important to capture the novel's complexity and charming eccentricity than to reduce it to a conventional, predictable story. "Life is unexpected," she says. "I dislike movies that are formulaic. A BIRD OF THE AIR takes some sharp, sudden turns -- including the fact that one of the leading characters is a seemingly immortal parrot -- and, at times, I wondered if the audience would go with it. But, I knew that viewers who invested in the characters (human and otherwise) would see the real romance of life and recognize the hero's quest that we are all on in one way or another."

The best way to navigate the tricky process of turning the book into a film was to place the project in the hands of a master storyteller. After an extensive screenwriter search was settling on a few candidates, enter Roger Towne, the scribe who adapted Bernard Malamud's "The Natural." Towne's daughter, Jocelyn, had introduced him to the novel and, like Whitton, he became enchanted and tried to acquire the rights. "When he discovered that I had them," Whitton recalls, "he met with us and gave us a new perspective on the material," which Towne described as a drama, a comedy, a romance, and a mystery. "His passion was unmistakable. His first draft was 160 pages: the novel is 201. At one point, we all met in Fort Worth and locked ourselves in a hotel room for four days to hash out the story."

Producer Tabakin, whose credits include the film "The Exonerated" and several drama projects for PBS, was George C. Wolfe's Associate Producer at the Public Theater for a number of years, and developed and produced such notable projects as Tony Kushner's "Caroline, or Change," Neil LaBute's "This Is How It Goes," Stew's "Passing Strange," and the Martha Mitchell one-woman show, "Dirty Tricks" (which was directed

by Whitton), calls *A BIRD OF THE AIR* “a rich and rewarding experience that deals with very real and very important issues about mortality and the spiritual questions that come along with it.” He suggests that “it’s quite profound material when you look more closely.” He and Whitton were happy that Towne’s screenplay artfully incorporated all of these elements.

With their script and financing in place, and a start date on the calendar, the producers believed that their most difficult days were behind them. Then, they lost their director and the project was imperiled. Faced with catastrophe, “my producing partner and I did what any smart producers would do,” says Whitton. “We opened a bottle of wine and considered our options.” At some point in the conversation, Tabakin convinced Whitton that *she* should direct the film. It was an inspired idea because in addition to being an accomplished actress, Whitton was an experienced stage director.

Of course, she is best known for her appearances in such films as “The Secret of My Success,” alongside Michael J. Fox; “Nine ½ Weeks,” with Kim Basinger and Mickey Rourke; “The Man Without a Face,” alongside Mel Gibson; and as the rapacious team owner in the hit comedy “Major League” and its sequel. Arthur Penn, who was directing Whitton in a play, was the first to suggest that she trade acting for directing. “You’re a brilliant actor,” he told her, “but you know, what you really are is a director. Here’s my theater, here’s the budget, and here’s the slot -- go find a play you love.” Whitton followed Penn’s advice and discovered that she was a director at heart, and that she had been learning from her directors throughout her film career. “As an actor, I was exposed to many extraordinary directors and visual artists -- Max Stafford-Clark, Les Waters, Herb Ross, Mel Gibson, and so many others. You learn so much -- you’re

involved with nearly everyone on the set.” Whitton’s years of experience in film and theater facilitated her journey from one creative discipline to the other, so she decided to bring *A BIRD OF THE AIR* to life. “It’s all storytelling,” she explains

Whitton certainly felt secure about the next critical step on the road to production -- casting. She predicted that “these parts would be catnip for smart actors.” In developing the script, she and Towne were eager to emphasize the classic screwball comedy elements in the story, especially in the roller-coaster relationship between Lyman and Fiona. Towne found them reminiscent of couples in 1930s romantic comedies. “These were movies that allowed scenes to play out,” he observes. “In today’s films, they want to punch it up, get in and get out.” Whitton felt the same way, pointing out that “It seems as if we have gone backwards from the days of sassy Irene Dunne, Carole Lombard, Barbara Stanwyk, and Katherine Hepburn in our portrayals of women.” In assembling her dream cast for *A BIRD OF THE AIR*, Whitton wanted to invoke classic screen pairings with strong romantic leads. “I thought Carole Lombard for Fiona and ‘second-look handsome’ for Lyman – you know, the kind of guy who you look at, and then look again.” When she found Rachel Nichols and Jackson Hurst, their on-screen chemistry was “lightning in a bottle,” as she describes it, and she thought, “Well, aren’t we lucky!”

Whitton always envisioned Lyman as the strong, silent type. “I think sometimes in America it’s hard to find a real man,” she observes. “There are a lot of boys out there.” Jackson Hurst (who, in addition to being a superb actor, turned out to be *first-*, not second-look handsome, according to Whitton) felt an immediate affinity with the character when he read the script and was passionate about wanting to portray Lyman.

“In my research building Lyman’s world,” he explains, “I went out and met with people who had gone through similar situations growing up. It was tough, to be honest, to sit down with these people, not just to listen and identify with them, but to become them.” He had to transform himself into the ultimate loner -- a man who lives in moonlight and shadows -- and emerge as a romantic hero.

Rachel Nichols, Whitton’s ideal “Fiona,” was won over by the screenplay. “I read the script and then read it a second time and fell in love with it,” she recalls. “It made me laugh out loud, an indicator of something you want to do.” Like Hurst, Nichols faced challenges in bringing her role to life. Her character had to be spirited – even charmingly irritating -- without being abrasive or unsympathetic. “Fiona is one of those people you want to be around. She’s funny and kind of quirky, but lovable. She’s a little bit of a bird with a broken wing,” Nichols suggests.

Both Nichols and Hurst were excited by the prospect of working with Whitton. “When I met her, any trepidation about working with a first-time director was gone,” Nichols recalls. “I think directors absolutely benefit from having acting experience,” she continues. “She is so good at knowing what an actor needs, and how to say or rehearse something, and it’s because of her acting experience.” Similarly, Hurst felt great chemistry with his director. “We had a thirty-minute meeting about the character and the project itself before any readings. I felt like it was just a divine connection.”

Whitton also managed to establish a deep connection with the animals in her cast. The script called for significant performances on the part of a parrot and a dog, and both roles required charismatic players. Whitton, an animal lover, was not concerned by the adage ‘never work with animals’ because she treated them as *actors*. “I gave them

rehearsal time and insisted the set was quiet and respectful. It was almost like a nude scene, when they were working, only necessary people were allowed on the set and distractions were minimal.”

Oscar, one of the parrots who played “Zane,” had been a veteran performer for twenty-three years. “Oscar was a pro,” praises Whitton. “He’s about 60 years old and when he was getting full commitment from the actors, boy, did he respond, to an amazing degree. He rarely stepped on lines.” A BIRD OF THE AIR also features two thespian Basset Hounds, George and Jared, both rescued from shelters, to portray Fiona's dog, Floyd. George, who is nine years old and has been working since he was nine months, served as the family dog in the ABC comedy “The Middle,” and appeared on NBC's “My Name Is Earl,” and in the feature film “Magic.”

The production depended on professional behavior on the part of the animals. “We could not afford face replacement or computer-generated anything,” Whitton explains. “We relied on the animals to really perform. And later, in the edit, I chose not to have the added dog whines you see in most films. Animals are mostly silent. I cringe when you hear those every time you see an animal on film.”

Whitton cast the *human* supporting characters of A BIRD OF THE AIR with equal care. “One of the things I love about screwball comedies are the supporting players – they all have lives and histories off camera, they are not just plot pushers,” she says. “In this story, it was important to me that they all have flaws, physical or emotional.” The stellar supporting cast includes such highly-regarded performers as two-time Tony-winner Judith Ivey (“Flags of Our Fathers”), Linda Emond (Julie & Julia”), Buck Henry (“Heaven Can Wait,” “The Graduate”), Phyllis Somerville, (“Little Children,” “The Big

C”) and, following a long absence from the screen, Anjanette Comer, who played the female lead in Tony Richardson’s 1965 satire “The Loved One” and starred opposite Marlon Brando in the 1966 western, “The Appaloosa.”

The film also benefited from an exceptional technical team headed by Academy Award-winning cinematographer Philippe Rousselot, long-associated with such major filmmakers as Tim Burton, Robert Redford, Stephen Frears, and Neil Jordan. Rousselot maintains that he reads only for story and character, and he found A BIRD OF THE AIR to be rich in both. His poetic images of the lonely, night landscape capture the essence of the material.

Nearly half the film takes place on the road at night, a setting described by Whitton as “Lyman’s world of mayhem and emergencies.” A BIRD OF THE AIR shot in and around Santa Fe, New Mexico, home of some of the blackest skies in the west. “I’ve never been so cold, nor in such good company,” Whitton remembers, although she considered their locations to be extraordinary places that enhanced the film’s themes. In the film, the highways and byways of America become a metaphor for death, abandonment, and loss. “What happens to us when we get behind the wheel?” Whitton wonders. “The carnage is insane. Lyman struggles against it by being hyper-prepared. He cleans up our collective messes.” His road warrior existence is his armor: it protects him from emotional pain, but it also prevents him from experiencing life. “It takes a small, lost bird -- a talkative parrot -- to shove a shim into Lyman’s locked heart,” Whitton explains. “Eventually, a whole community of flawed people, a mysterious bird, a sad-eyed hound, and a woman who makes her own rules, awaken him to the possibilities of an unknowable, uncontrolled, and ultimately joyous, new life.”

Like Lyman himself, *A BIRD OF THE AIR* moves from the dark to the light. “We start with a mysterious man in the dark on the highway at the scene of an emergency,” says Whitton, “but by the end, he rides the crest of a hill and breaks into the dawn, headed for home.”

## ABOUT THE CAST

### **Rachel Nichols**

#### *Fiona*

Rachel first caught the attention of a modeling scout while attending Columbia University in New York City, where she earned a degree with a double-major in math and economics. After campaigns with such brands as Guess, L'Oreal, Abercrombie & Fitch and Nicole Miller, she broke into the world of acting when her agent sent her out to audition for a role on "Sex and the City." Though it was the first audition she had ever been on, she was offered a role in "The Vogue Idea" episode as the restaurant hostess who became the birthday present from Kim Cattrall to her boyfriend. She followed that role with "Autumn in New York" with Richard Gere and, in 2003, she starred in "Dumb and Dumberer: When Harry Met Lloyd." She went on to guest star on the ABC series "In the Line of Fire" and starred in the Fox drama "The Inside." She had a breakout performance in the last season of the ABC hit drama "Alias" as Rachel Gibson, who worked with in the special ops division of the CIA.

Nichols joined the ensemble cast of Warner Brother's "Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2" starring America Ferrera and Blake Lively. She also appeared in Mike Nichols' "Charlie Wilson's War" with Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts.

Nichols recently starred in two summer blockbusters: she was able to once again work with "Alias" creator JJ Abrams in the reinvention of the Star Trek franchise in the role of Galia; and she showed her tougher side as Scarlett in the live action thriller "GI Joe: The Rise of Cobra," alongside Channing Tatum and Marlon Wayans. She also stars in the independent feature film *Meskada*, directed by Joshua Sternfeld, which premiered at the 2010 Tribeca Film Festival. In 2010-11 she was a series regular on the hit series "Criminal Minds," playing Agent Ashley Seaver, and portrayed the female lead in the action-fantasy film "Conan the Barbarian," directed by Marcus Nispel, which was recently released.

### **Jackson Hurst**

#### *Lyman*

Jackson Hurst landed the break-out lead role of Grayson in Lifetime/Sony Television's pilot "Drop Dead Diva." Prior to the rating's hit, which began its third season earlier this year, Hurst had a significant role in the Lifetime movie "Living Proof," which put him on the radar of the prolific producers Craig Zadan and Neal Meron, who served as Executive Producers on both projects. He has also guest starred on "Inspector Mom," "The Closer" and "NCIS," as well as Dimension Films' "The Mist." Since completing "A Bird of the Air," he also finished shooting "Hidden Moon" in Mexico.

The middle child of three sons, Hurst was raised in the town of Klein, Texas. Aside from his passion for acting, he is also a serious tri-athlete. His next challenge will be training and testing solo for his pilot license. A graduate of Baylor University, where he earned a BBA in math, Hurst spent a few years in corporate America before moving to Los Angeles to pursue his acting career.

### **Linda Emond**

Linda Emond is a Tony Award-nominated actress with an impressive list of credits that include "Julie & Julia" (in which she plays "Simone 'Simca' Beck" opposite Meryl Streep), "The Missing Person," "Stop-Loss," "Trade," "Across the Universe," "North Country," "Dark Water," "The Dying Gaul," and "City by the Sea." Emond's television work includes "Georgia O'Keeffe," Hallmark Hall of Fame's "A Dog Named Christmas," and "American Experience: John & Abigail Adams." Her episodic work includes "The Sopranos," "Wonderland," "Gossip Girl," and multiple episodes on all four "Law & Orders."

For her work on stage, Emond has been nominated for a Tony Award, received an Obie Award, the Lucille Lortel Award, an Outer Critics Circle Award, multiple Chicago Jeffs, and nominations for the Drama Desk, LA Drama Critics and LA Ovation Awards. On Broadway, she appeared in "Life x 3" and in "1776." Off-Broadway, she appeared opposite Al Pacino in "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui", and in the premieres of pieces by Craig Lucas, Yasmina Reza, Kander and Ebb, A. R. Gurney, Peter Hedges, and Tony Kushner. Her work as "The Homebody" in Mr. Kushner's "Homebody/Kabul" spanned five years and three productions. She is recently worked with him on his latest piece, "The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures."

### **Buck Henry**

Buck Henry has appeared in more than 40 films, including "Catch-22," "Taking Off," "The Man Who Fell to Earth," "Gloria," "Eating Raoul," "Aria," "The Graduate," "Tune In Tomorrow," "Defending Your Life," "The Player," and "Grumpy Old Men." He has also appeared in many television shows, including "30 Rock," "Will & Grace," "Saturday Night Live", and "Alfred Hitchcock Presents."

His many screenwriting credits include "Candy," "The Owl and the Pussycat," "What's Up, Doc?," "Catch-22", "The Day of the Dolphin," "Protocol," "To Die For," and the classic Mel Brooks series "Get Smart." He shared an Oscar nomination for his screenplay to "The Graduate."

Henry is also an acclaimed director garnering his second Oscar nomination for co-directing, with Warren Beatty, "Heaven Can Wait." His Broadway credits include the 2002 revival of "Morning's at Seven." Off-Broadway in July 2009, he starred opposite Holland Taylor in "Mother," a play by Lisa Ebersole.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **Margaret Whitton**

*Director, Producer*

Margaret Whitton makes her feature film directorial debut with “A Bird of the Air.” She began her career as an actor working on and off Broadway, on television and in many feature films. In the theater she has worked on new plays by Caryl Churchill, Richard Nelson, John Guare, Wallace Shawn and Jeffrey Hatcher. Roles in Shakespeare include Juliet in “Romeo and Juliet”; Ophelia in “Hamlet;” Miranda in “The Tempest;” Lady Percy in “Henry IV;” and Mistress Page in “Merry Wives of Windsor.” She has also played roles in Chekhov and Moliere; as Raul Julia's willing victim, Lucy, in “Dracula;” and the title role in “Camille.” Favorite theater directors include Arthur Penn, Max Stafford-Clark, Les Waters and Howard Davies. Favorite film roles include Aunt Vera in “The Secret of My Succe\$\$” (dir. Herbert Ross); Rachel Phelps in “Major League” 1 & 2; Molly in “9 1/2 Weeks” (dir. Adrian Lyne); and Catherine in “Man Without a Face” (dir. Mel Gibson). Her favorite television role is Louisa in the international series “A Fine Romance,” and she has starred in the series “Hometown,” “Good and Evil,” several made-for-television movies, and has recorded many audio books.

Her theater directing credits include Marina Carr’s “Portia Coughlin” and “By the Bog of Cats;” The Public Theater’s production of “Dirty Tricks,” starring Judith Ivey as Martha Mitchell; and John Walsh's “The Dinosaur Within” as part of The Public Theater's New Work Now! series. She has written about baseball for publications including The New York Times, The Village Voice, New York Newsday, The National, and Hank O’Neal’s forthcoming book about Ty Cobb. Her garden designs in collaboration with Lew French and Phyllis McMorro have been featured in national magazines and the book “Stone by Design.”

### **Joe Coomer**

*Author*

Joe Coomer is a fiction and nonfiction writer who lives outside of Fort Worth, Texas, and on the coast of Maine. He spends his winters in Springtown, Texas, where he runs a pair of large antique malls. He lives in a fairly new Victorian house that he spent a year and a half building in the late eighties, a project he wrote about in “Dream House” [1991]. His wife, Isabelle Tokumaru, runs her paintings conservation practice in the third story, while he writes novels in the kitchen, where the food is close. Summers, they live in Stonington, Maine, an active fishing village on the coast. When the weather's nice, he takes his old motor sailor, "Yonder," on day sails and cruises down east. He chronicled her purchase, restoration, and his stupidities at sea in “Sailing in a Spoonful of Water.”

## **Roger Towne**

### *Writer*

Roger Towne is a prolific screenwriter with nearly 30 years of experience in the industry. He began his film career in 1976 as a story analyst under Richard Sylbert and Don Simpson at Paramount. In 1978 he was hired by Robert Evans to be the producer's Director of Development where he discovered a book that would change his life forever. It was "The Natural." After pursuing the material in various ways, eventually Towne was hired to adapt the book, and "The Natural" was released in 1984, directed by Barry Levinson and starring Robert Redford, Kim Basinger, Robert Duvall and Glenn Close. Towne also served as executive producer on the film, and received a nomination for Best Screenplay from the Writers' Guild of America.

He went on to write "Sword of the Valiant: The Legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" and a number of other screenplays. Years of research about Langley, the CIA's headquarters, helped to inform his work on the Paramount/Showtime feature "In the Company of Spies" with Tom Berenger and Ron Silver. It garnered Towne an Edgar nomination for Best Screenplay and was the first picture ever to film on location at the CIA facilities where it also premiered. It later led to Towne's original screenplay "The Recruit," starring Al Pacino and Colin Farrell.

In 2008 Towne completed work on "Street of Dreams," the true life story of legendary gambler Montana Joe, the first Japanese American to become a made-man in Chicago's Mafia.

Towne is presently writing a World War II drama, the true story of opera singer Michiko Tanaka for Japanese producer Fumiori Hayashida.

## **Philippe Rousselot**

### *Cinematographer*

Philippe Rousselot began studying cinema at the French University, l'École Louis Lumière in 1962. He began his working as an assistant to Nestor Almendros, then quickly emerged as chief operator, leading to a dazzling career. He collaborated, in particular, with Jean-Jacques Beineix ("Diva"), Alain Cavalier ("Thérèse"), Jean-Jacques Annaud ("The Bear"), Robert Redford ("A River Runs Through It"), Stephen Frears ("Dangerous Liaisons"), Patrice Chéreau ("Queen Margot"), Bertrand Blier ("Thanks Life"), and Tim Burton on "Planet of the Apes," "Big Fish," and "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory."

In 1992, Rousselot won an Academy Award for Best Cinematography for his work on "A River Runs Through It." He had earned three César Awards previously: in 1982 for "Diva," in 1987 for "Thérèse" and in 1995 for "Queen Margot."

**Steven Tabakin***Producer*

Steven Tabakin was George C. Wolfe's Associate Producer at The Public Theater from 2003-2005, responsible for the development and production of projects, including "Dirty Tricks," starring Judith Ivey as Martha Mitchell; "This Is How It Goes" by Neil LaBute with Amada Peet, Ben Stiller and Jeffrey Wright; Tim Robbins' "Embedded;" "Well" by Lisa Kron; Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori's "Caroline, or Change;" "The Story" by Tracey Scott Wilson; Michael John LaChiusa's "See What I Wanna See;" "The Public Sings: A 50th Anniversary Celebration," and Stew's "Passing Strange." In 2004 he produced Bob Balaban's film adaptation of "The Exonerated" for Court TV, starring Brian Dennehy, Danny Glover, Delroy Lindo, Susan Sarandon, Aidan Quinn, and David Brown, Jr. From 1999-2003 he produced original drama programs for PBS, including A.R. Gurney's "Far East;" Anna Deavere Smith's "Twilight: Los Angeles;" "Beckett on Film" (2002 Peabody Award); and live broadcasts of "The Man Who Came to Dinner" and "The Women." Documentary credits include "Tantalus: Behind the Mask;" "The Topdog Diaries;" and "Changing Stages," Richard Eyre's six-part series on the theatre of the 20th Century. He also supervised Alan King's "College of Comedy" series and the London filming of "Kiss Me, Kate" for Great Performances. At The Public Theater from 1994-98 he worked on "Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk;" "The Wild Party;" "Saturn Returns;" "On the Town;" "The Tempest;" Steve Martin's "WASP;" and solo shows by Andrea Martin, Marga Gomez and Irene Worth. He was producing associate of the New Lyric Festival in Northampton, Massachusetts, premiering Adam Guettel's "Myth's & Hymns."

**Warren Spector***Executive Producer*

Warren Spector spent 24 years in the financial services industry before retiring from Bear Stearns Companies, Inc. as President and Co-Chief Operating Officer in 2007. In addition to his executive producing role at Tashtego Films, he serves as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Public Theater and is active in numerous philanthropies related to advancing healthcare and medicine, eradicating poverty and homelessness, supporting higher education, and protecting the environment.