

The White Countess

A film by
James Ivory

A Sony Pictures Classics Release
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THE WHITE COUNTESS

Brief Synopsis

Shanghai, 1936 was a crossroads for political intrigue, refugees escaping turmoil, gathering military forces, international business, and underworld culture. Two people caught in this maelstrom forge a bond on the brink of the Japanese invasion: a beautiful Russian countess, reduced by circumstances to supporting her family as a bar girl and taxi dancer; and a blind former diplomat, devastated by the loss of his family in political violence and disillusioned by the world's inability to make peace. The story revolves around "The White Countess," the elegant nightclub created by the diplomat to shut out the chaos and tragedy that surround him.

Principal Cast

Jackson	Ralph Fiennes
Sofia	Natasha Richardson
Aunt Sara	Vanessa Redgrave
Olga	Lynn Redgrave
Greshenka	Madeleine Potter
Uncle Peter	John Wood
Katya	Madeleine Daly
Matsuda	Hiroiyuki Sanada
Samuel	Allan Corduner
Liu	Luoyong Wang

Principal Crew

Director	James Ivory
Producer	Ismail Merchant
Original Screenplay	Kazuo Ishiguro
Co-Producer	Paul Bradley
Co-Producer	Richard Hawley
Director of Photography	Christopher Doyle
Music	Richard Robbins
Editor	John David Allen
Production Design	Andrew Sanders
Costumes	John Bright
Choreography	Karole Armitage
Sound Design	Robert Hein
Casting	Celestia Fox
First Assistant Director	George Every
Associate Producer	Rahila Bootwala
Associate Producer	Yue-Sai Kan
Executive Producer	Andre Morgan
Producer for Shanghai Film Group	Ren Zhonglun
Producer for VIP Medienfonds 3	Andreas Schmid
	Marcus Schofer
Executive Producers for Shanghai Film Group	Wang Tianyun
	Fu Wenxia
Executive Producer	Patrick Ko
Executive Producer for Century Hero	Wang Daqing

About The White Countess

SOFIA

The once-aristocratic BELINSKY family's fortunes are much reduced since the Bolshevik Revolution displaced Russia's nobility. They occupy a slum flat in Shanghai, supported by SOFIA (Natasha Richardson), a beautiful young widow who sets out at night dressed in a threadbare evening gown to earn a sparse living as a taxi dancer and presumably as an occasional prostitute. Sofia supports her young daughter, KATYA (Madeleine Daly), her elderly AUNT SARA (Vanessa Redgrave) and UNCLE PETER (John Wood), and her spiteful mother-in-law and sister-in-law, OLGA (Lynn Redgrave) and GRESHENKA (Madeleine Potter). Olga and Greshenka ceaselessly lament the shame and degradation that Sofia brings upon them, but she is their only means of support. Ten-year-old Katya, who adores her mother, is caught in a tug of war between her mother's love and her relatives' meddling. Sofia views her lot with weary resignation, but manages to show small kindnesses to the people around her.

Sofia is friendly with SAMUEL (Allan Corduner), the downstairs neighbor in the Shanghai tenement, a European Jew. Samuel keeps a concerned eye out for little Katya, who plays with his children, and tries to help out Sofia whenever he can.

JACKSON

On the other end of the social spectrum, JACKSON (Ralph Fiennes) snores audibly through a board meeting, to the dismay of his other company directors. As the businessmen leave the meeting, it is evident that Mr. Jackson is blind; he walks unaided and shrugs off attempts to assist him. While they sympathize with the as-yet unnamed tragic circumstances that led to his blindness, they are disturbed by his present eccentricity and disreputable habits.

These habits include nightly tours of Shanghai's many lowlife dives. TOM, a young American, the son of an old friend, seeks Jackson out and finds him in a lively, if rather louche, bar. A man of Jackson's stature, Tom says, shouldn't frequent such a place. Jackson brushes him off, assuring him that he's fine.

MATSUDA

Another man has been watching Jackson: MATSUDA (Hiroyuki Sanada) introduces himself as a fellow connoisseur of nightlife. Jackson is pleased to find a companion who seems to understand and share his fascination with finding just the right ingredients for the perfect nightlife ambience: comfortable, but with a frisson of violence; not too posh nor too grimy; a volatile chemistry of people, music, bouncers, and women.

Matsuda accompanies Jackson on his prowls of Shanghai's pleasure district, and they part at the taxi-dance hall where Sofia works. Sofia, a stranger to Jackson, notices some thugs planning a move on him, and she intervenes, taking his arm and guiding him out of the dance hall as if he is her client. But Jackson knows that Sofia is no ordinary prostitute; he has overheard a conversation she had in the dance hall with an old acquaintance: a Russian prince, reduced to working as a porter, who comes over and pays his respects to the one-time White Russian countess. When Jackson's chauffeur and faithful caretaker LIU (Luoyong Wang) arrives to pick him up, Jackson points Sofia out: she is the one Jackson has been looking for—although we don't yet know why.

THE PERFECT NIGHTCLUB

Jackson, increasingly cut off from the respectable world, decides to gamble his life savings on the horses in hopes of raising the funds required to underwrite his dream project—his perfect nightspot. Even at the racetrack, his former fame as a diplomat shadows him; we learn that Jackson was instrumental in establishing the League of Nations, is a hero to Chinese nationalists, but remains deeply disillusioned by the failure of diplomacy to establish peace.

The racetrack brings other fortunes, however: Jackson has won enough to finance the bar of his dreams. He returns to Sofia at the taxi-dance hall and asks her to come and work for him: she'll be his centerpiece, the hostess who sits at his bar and never has to augment her income with "other work." Jackson and Liu recruit musicians, dancers, vamps, and strong-arm men to spice up the atmosphere. Soon, "The White Countess" is the new gathering-place of Shanghai nightlife, with Sofia ensconced at the bar as the real thing, the White Countess herself. The atmosphere evokes glamour, sophistication, a vibrant international elegance.

POLITICAL INTRIGUE

A year since he and Jackson had first met, the mysterious Matsuda is back in town. He admires Jackson's creation and offers to help with the one ingredient still lacking: political tension. With the Kuomintang (General Chiang Kai-Shek's anti-communist government), the Maoists, Western interests, and Japanese aggressors all circling each other warily, political intrigue is an explosive commodity. Jackson welcomes Matsuda's orchestrations of the byzantine politics within The White Countess—a table of communists here, a military cadre there, an underworld power broker staring down his rivals.

JACKSON AND SOFIA

Jackson has imposed an arrangement of polite distance in his relationship with Sofia: they will tell each other nothing of their private lives outside the bar. Nevertheless, an undercurrent of interest develops, a sympathetic bond born of

mutual loss and sadness. Sofia ventures to ask Jackson about the accident that took his sight, but Jackson is silent. In flashback, however, we learn that, ten years earlier, Jackson's wife and their young son died when their house in China was burned in anti-Western riots. This was not, however, the incident that took Jackson's sight, but the forerunner that left him alone caring for his little daughter CHRISTINA.

One day, Sofia and her daughter Katya are out walking when they spot Jackson sitting at a French district café. Sofia tries to hurry Katya along, but she approaches Jackson and thoroughly charms him. Sofia worries that this small intimacy is a breach of their agreed-upon impersonal relationship, but Sofia and Katya are clearly reaching Jackson through the shell of his grief.

AUNT SARA AND THE EMBASSY

A question of etiquette confounds kind Aunt Sara and Uncle Peter: an old acquaintance is appointed the French consul in Shanghai, but should they call on him, or wait for him to call on them? Olga, rigid as always, insists that it would be bad form to call, even though it's obvious that their reduced station means that no respectable member of society would venture to seek them out. Sara and Peter take matters into their own hands, and go to the French Consulate. They are spotted by a young aide who remembers them from bygone years—Aunt Sara had given him piano lessons. He offers to help them leave Shanghai for the safety of Hong Kong.

What the family needs for this salvation is money. Although Greshenka has reviled Sofia for her loose morals, going so far as forbidding Katya from seeing her mother and trying to take her place as Katya's caretaker, now Greshenka comes to Sofia asking for the money. Sofia reluctantly promises to do what she can.

CHRISTINA AND KATYA

Jackson is beginning to come unraveled. After an incident at the nightclub when he explodes in rage at a patron flirting with Sofia, Jackson's raw emotions can no longer be hidden. Sofia tentatively consoles him, and confides that she worries about being a bad influence on Katya. Jackson assures her that she must never allow Katya to be separated from her, and he finally tells the story of his blindness: after promising Christina that he would never be apart from her, they were caught up in a streetcar bombing. Christina was killed and Jackson was blinded. His promise was broken.

Jackson asks Sofia if he could see Katya again. The three stroll together in the public marketplace, where they encounter Samuel, Sofia's neighbor, and witness the sort of casual Jew-baiting Samuel suffers every day. Despite this closeness, Jackson understands that when Sofia asks him for money, he is

providing the means for her to leave Shanghai—and him—behind. Before they part, he asks to touch her face, and “sees” her beauty with his fingers for the first time.

FLEEING THE JAPANESE

Throughout Shanghai, fear and unrest grow as a Japanese invasion appears imminent. Jackson, who has remained studiously ignorant of Matsuda’s real purpose in Shanghai, is told by Tom Crane that Matsuda is at the very center of Japanese aggression; wherever Matsuda shows up, a Japanese invasion is close behind.

Sofia arrives home to find the Belinsky apartment in an uproar of packing. The boat to Hong Kong is leaving that night—but Olga drops her bombshell: there are no exit papers for Sofia. Without the disreputable Sofia, Olga explains, the family can start over in Hong Kong, reestablish themselves in society, provide Katya with “prospects.” Once they’re accepted, they will send for Sofia. Stunned and confused, Sofia concedes.

With the streets in a chaos of crowds fleeing the oncoming Japanese, Jackson’s loyal driver Liu urges him not to go to The White Countess, but Jackson willfully ignores him and pushes on alone. Nobody but a few drunks can be found at the bar, till Matsuda pays a last call on Jackson to offer him a safe passage out of the city. In the face of war’s outbreak, Jackson can’t maintain the illusion of comradeship or overlook Matsuda’s role. Nevertheless, Matsuda leaves Jackson with the insightful advice that he should make a new life with Sofia, whom Matsuda has just seen amidst the throngs making their way to the docks.

Back at the Belinskys’, Samuel hears Sofia sobbing and learns that she has allowed the family to leave without her. Urgently, he tells Sofia that if they can get Katya back, Sofia and Katya can escape with him and his children to Macao that night—he has a boat arranged. They race to the waterfront and search for the boat carrying the Belinskys. Jackson, too, has come looking for Sofia. With his blind man’s keener hearing, he picks out Katya calling for her Mama from the chaotic din. They race to intercept the boat, and just as it’s pulling away from the slip, Sofia runs up and claims back Katya; Greshenka is grief-stricken to lose the girl.

Reunited, Sofia, Katya, and Jackson finally get aboard the boat for Macao with Samuel and his children. Jackson and Sofia agree to help each other—as close to a declaration of love and commitment as they can manage to speak aloud. The city of Shanghai explodes in shelling behind them as their boat moves out through the harbor; The White Countess is seen in flames. A last image of two boats filled with refugees on a peaceful sea is a hopeful portent.

Historical Background China in the 1930s

“The White Countess” takes place in 1936 and ’37, during the tense prelude to the Japanese invasion of eastern China and the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945. The film’s climax, with Shanghai under attack, takes place on August 14, 1937, known as “Bloody Saturday.” On Bloody Saturday, the Japanese launched bombing raids on Shanghai but were deterred by dense cloud cover. The Chinese responded by bombing Japanese ships in Shanghai’s port, but the attempted retaliation went awry when Chinese bombs hit crowded areas of the city instead, including the International Settlement where the film’s nightclub would have been situated. The bombs caught crowds of onlookers gazing up at the planes and the loss of life was appalling—thousands killed and injured. The incident sparked the beginning of full-scale Chinese resistance to Japanese aggression and the start of the Sino-Japanese War.

Leading up to this outbreak of war, politics and power in China were already complex and volatile. Most of China was nominally united as a republic led by Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang nationalists. The Communists led by Mao Tse-tung, however, challenged the nationalists in a series of regional civil wars. Warlords held sway over other regions. Japan had occupied the rich northeastern province of Manchuria, renamed Manchukuo, since 1932 (film buffs will remember this period depicted in Bertolucci’s 1987 “The Last Emperor”). The Soviets played their own part, fighting Japan over Mongolia and manipulating the struggles between Chinese communists and nationalists.

Japan’s brutal occupation of China continued through WWII and ended only with Japan’s surrender to the Allies in 1945. The collapse of Japanese control plunged China into full-scale civil war, from which the Communists under Mao emerged triumphant in 1949. Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang forces retreated to Taiwan, a partition of China that is still a source of conflict today. The international business hub of Shanghai was absorbed into greater China and has only recently regained its place as one of the richest and most vibrant cities of the Far East.

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About the Production

A Conversation with James Ivory

“You can’t force a really topnotch novelist to do something—they will do what they feel they have to do or want to do,” relates James Ivory about Merchant Ivory’s collaboration with Japanese novelist Kazuo Ishiguro. “*The White Countess*” is testament to an adaptable working process that values inspiration over predictability.

“We gave Ishiguro a novel by Junichiro Tanizaki, a very respected Japanese author, called *The Diary of a Mad Old Man*,” says Ivory, “With some not-very-precise ideas about how we wanted to adapt it. Ishiguro did his first draft, but he just kind of tossed it out the window and embarked upon writing his own story. He was still in his Shanghai phase; his previous novel, *When We Were Orphans*, is set in Shanghai in exactly the period of “*The White Countess*.” Ishiguro’s grandfather was a Japanese businessman in the International Settlement, and his father was there as a child. He’d heard lots of stories, and seen family photographs, and he just wanted to go on with that kind of material about Shanghai and the start of the Second World War. He presented us with a draft that came as a complete surprise—but we were very intrigued.”

Kazuo Ishiguro, whose earlier novel *The Remains of the Day* had been adapted for Merchant Ivory’s film version by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, conferred with Merchant Ivory to develop “*The White Countess*,” the romantic relationship between the Countess and Jackson emerged over the course of several drafts.

The result, with its sweeping backdrop of political strife and impending war, is something of a departure from the intimate dramas that Merchant Ivory so often excel at creating. We see the Japanese militarist Matsuda’s “broad canvas” of global war and politics juxtaposed with the enclosed, idealized set-piece world of Jackson’s nightclub. “The nightclub couldn’t just be a hole in the wall; we had big themes, and for that we needed room.” To find the right visual style for this balance between broad canvas and intimate drama, director Ivory once again gave a collaborator ample latitude:

“We wanted to have a lot of variety in the style of photography, and our choice of the cameraman, Christopher Doyle, would tend to lead to that.” (Doyle is a veteran of both Chinese action cinema and Asian and Western ‘art films.’) “He loves to bring variation in both speed and compositional style—he’s always looking for what he calls “the jazz” that’s inherent in every piece he’s working on. He doesn’t want it to be too straightforward a thing, and I was glad that he didn’t, because I felt that everything about “*The White Countess*” needed to be different from anything we’d ever done before.”

A small but pleasing example of the unpredictable style that Ivory sought to give the film is the short animation section that little Katya “sees” in her

imagination as she looks into a shadow box: “We found a Chinese artist in New York who created Katya’s daydream of a happy river trip to Soochow within an appropriate Chinese painting style.”

Such creative cross-pollination has long been a hallmark of Merchant Ivory, who cultivate a network of professional and personal collaborators and inspirations. Even the casting of Katya fits the principle of finding talent and letting it shine; Madeleine Daly, who plays Katya, is the daughter of Madeleine Potter, who plays her aunt Greshenka. “I’ve known that little girl since she was born, and she’s always been very special, a highly intelligent and unusual, imaginative child. I just happened to go to dinner at Madeleine’s, and saw her daughter and watched her, and I thought maybe she would do as Katya and maybe she’d like to do it also. She wanted to do it, though she’d turned down other opportunities to act before. She’d known Ismail and me for a long long time, and felt comfortable. It worked out very well because she turned out to be a very good little actress.”

James Ivory had a wealth of very good actresses, in addition to Madeleine Potter, to play the Belinskys: Natasha Richardson, her mother, Vanessa Redgrave, and her aunt, Lynn Redgrave. “In one way, there’s nothing particularly unusual about directing a room full of Redgraves,” says Ivory. “They’re all professionals, they’re all playing their roles. But there is a magnetism among them, and a warmth between mother and daughter that comes through in the kindly relationship between Vanessa Redgrave’s Aunt Sarah and Natasha Richardson’s Sofia.”

“The White Countess” was nearly completed when its producer, Ismail Merchant, died unexpectedly after a brief illness in May of this year. “In the last week of shooting in Shanghai, Ismail fell and broke his ankle, which didn’t stop him from coming to the wrap party in a wheelchair. Throughout a hospital stay in Shanghai and physical therapy back in New York, he was very involved in the film’s completion and was present throughout most of the editing. The broken ankle—which had nothing to do with the illness that caused his death—didn’t get in his way. He was very proud of the film and very pleased with how it turned out, having screened the successive versions and provided me with the highly useful suggestions I’ve always relied on.”

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About Merchant Ivory Productions

“The White Countess” marks the finale to a collaboration that has spanned forty-four years and over thirty films. Ismail Merchant and James Ivory founded Merchant Ivory Productions in 1961, and their partnership flourished until Merchant’s death on May 25th, 2005.

“If anybody told me there was another company like them,” remarked Vanessa Redgrave, “I’d be amazed to hear it; there isn’t any equivalent to them and what they do. With Merchant Ivory, you have an opportunity to do a role that really interests you and that you care about deeply. You respect them for the spirit and the outlook that obviously guides their choice of films, and what they do, and who writes their films and plays in them. They’ve got a record that literally cannot be matched.” (From *The Films of Merchant Ivory* by Robert Emmet Long, Harry N. Abrams, Inc.).

James Ivory and Ismail Merchant were both neophyte filmmakers when they met and discovered mutual interests in both cinema and Indian culture. Bombay-born Merchant, young, charming, brash, and energetic, had already parlayed an MBA degree from NYU and a determination to become a film producer into his first short film, “The Creation of Woman,” a tale set to Indian dance and music. The film was shown in competition at the Cannes Film Festival, and, passing through New York en route, Merchant was invited to a screening of “The Sword and the Flute,” a documentary on Indian miniature painting narrated by Saeed Jaffrey (who also narrated Merchant’s short) and directed by young American filmmaker James Ivory. As quoted in *The Films of Merchant Ivory*: “During our conversation that first evening,” Merchant recalls of Ivory, “I realized that he knew about India not in a dry, academic way but with understanding—something I have never encountered in an American either before or since. What was absolutely extraordinary was his *feeling* for India.”

The first Merchant Ivory Production brought a third collaborator into the nucleus of the team: writer Ruth Praver Jhabvala. Praver Jhabvala had grown up in a German Jewish family that was displaced by Nazism. She had married an Indian architect and was raising a family and writing in New Delhi when Merchant and Ivory approached her about a film adaptation of her fourth novel, *The Householder*. The three formed an indissoluble creative and personal bond, and Praver Jhabvala went on to write original screenplays and screenplay adaptations for twenty-three Merchant Ivory Productions.

Ismail Merchant was the indefatigable engine of the enterprise, whether raising funds, choreographing shoots, courting collaborators and supporters, or even, in the early, lean days, cooking lavish Friday night feasts to reward underpaid cast and crew; his self-taught, loaves-and-fishes cookery evolved into the sophisticated recipes of *Ismail Merchant’s Indian Cuisine*, his 1986 cookbook

“My style is pragmatic and experimental,” Merchant remarked, “and not so different from the way I go about finding finance for my films.”).

Throughout this unique four-decade partnership, Merchant Ivory has nurtured a congenial extended family of talented friends and collaborators in India, New York, and London; at Ivory’s upstate New York country house, where what must be the most inviting of editing studios was built; and around the world, wherever the latest project took them. Longtime collaborators like composer and music director Richard Robbins, and recurring onscreen faces like Vanessa Redgrave, Madhur Jaffrey, James Wilby, Greta Scacchi, and many others, contribute to a continuity of vision and quality that permeates the Merchant Ivory filmography.

Here is Ismail Merchant’s account of receiving perhaps the greatest award in a long and much-lauded career:

“After receiving many honors and tributes internationally, only an honor from India was missing. Every year on Republic Day, January twenty-sixth, the president of India bestows honors on people of distinction in different fields...I was to receive *Padma Bhusan*, the equivalent of a British knighthood.

“The ceremony took place on March 27, 2002, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the magnificent Presidential Palace. Dressed in a traditional flowing kurta and shawl, I felt I was in a scene from an Indian miniature painting...This was a ceremony rooted in history and, for me, it represented a reality absent from the glitz and glamour of show business awards whose artificial tone paled beside the dignity of this occasion...It was a thrilling moment for the boy from Bombay whose only dream had been to make movies.”

From *Ismail Merchant: My Passage from India*

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A Merchant Ivory bibliography:

The Films of Merchant Ivory by Robert Emmet Long, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991, updated 1997

James Ivory in Conversation: How Merchant Ivory Makes Its Movies by Robert Emmet Long, University of California Press, 2005

My Passage from India: A Filmmaker's Journey from Bombay to Hollywood and Beyond by Ismail Merchant, Studio Press, 2002

About the Filmmakers

James Ivory (Director)

James Ivory was born in Berkeley, California. After attending the University of Oregon, where he majored in Architecture and Fine Arts, he received his Master's degree in Film from the University of Southern California. His first film, which he wrote, photographed, and produced, was "Venice: Theme and Variations," a half-hour documentary made as his thesis for his Master's degree. The New York Times named Ivory's evocation of the city in 1957 as one of the ten best non-theatrical films of the year.

An easy rapport with India was evidenced in Ivory's second film "The Sword and the Flute," based entirely on Indian miniature paintings in American collections. Its success led to a grant by the Asia Society of New York to make "The Delhi Way," a film about the Indian city. In 1961, Ivory teamed up with Ismail Merchant to form Merchant Ivory Productions. Their first theatrical feature was "The Householder," based on an early novel by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, who also wrote the screenplay. Since then, Ivory's feature and television filmmaking career has taken him to Great Britain, France, Italy, back to India several times and to the United States.

The many theatrical films that Ivory has made for Merchant Ivory Productions include the classic "Shakespeare Wallah," three Henry James productions, "The Europeans," "The Bostonians," and "The Golden Bowl," "Heat and Dust" from the prize winning novel by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, and "A Room With A View," "Maurice," and "Howards End," all from novels by E.M. Forster. "A Room With A View" was nominated for eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director, and won Oscars for Jhabvala's adaptation of Forster's novel, Best Costume, and Best Production Design. "A Room With A View" was also voted Best Film of 1986 by the Critics' Circle Film Section of Great Britain, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) and the National Board of Review in the United States. The film also received the Donatello Prize for Best Foreign Language Picture and Best Director in Italy. Ivory's next film, "Maurice," received a Silver Lion Award for Best Director at the Venice Film Festival as well as Best Film Score for Richard Robbins and Best Actor Awards for co-stars James Wilby and Hugh Grant.

After "Maurice," James Ivory returned to the United States to film "Slaves of New York," based on the stories by Tama Janowitz, and "Mr. & Mrs. Bridge," which Ruth Praver Jhabvala adapted from the novels *Mr. Bridge* and *Mrs. Bridge* by Evan S. Connell. This film received an Oscar nomination for Best Actress (Joanna Woodward), as well as Best Actress and Best Screenplay awards from the New York Film Critics Circle.

Ivory's next project was "Howards End," based on the E.M. Forster novel. "Howards End" was nominated for nine Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director, and won for Best Actress (Emma Thompson), Best Screenplay Adaptation (Ruth Praver Jhabvala), and Best Art Direction/Set Direction (Luciana Arrighi/Ian Whittaker). The film also won Best Picture at the BAFTA Awards, as well as awards for Best Actress (Emma Thompson) and Best Director (James Ivory) from the National Board of Review, and Best Actress from the New York film critics.

"The Remains of the Day," based on Kazuo Ishiguro's bestseller, followed "Howards End." It reunited Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson in the starring roles of the butler Stevens and his housekeeper Miss Kenton. This film, too, received eight Oscar nominations including Best Picture and Best Director and was chosen Film of the Year by the British Film Critics Society. "Jefferson in Paris," starring Nick Nolte, Greta Scacchi, Thandie Newman, and Simon Callow, was Ivory's next project and was released in 1995. During that same year, the Directors Guild of America awarded the D.W. Griffith Lifetime Achievement Award, its highest honor, to Ivory for his body of work. "Surviving Picasso" starring Anthony Hopkins as Picasso, Natascha McElhone as Francoise Gilot, and Julianna Moore as Dora Maar, followed "Jefferson in Paris" in 1996. His next film, "A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries," starring Kris Kristofferson, Barbara Hershey, and Leelee Sobieski was filmed in Paris and released in 1998.

"The Golden Bowl," starring Nick Nolte, Uma Thurman and Anjelica Huston, was released in 2001. The film reunited many of the artists and technicians of Ivory's earlier films such as composer Richard Robbins, cinematographer Tony Pierce-Roberts and costume designer John Bright. Ivory's longtime collaborator Ruth Praver Jhabvala wrote the screenplay of "The Golden Bowl." In 2001, James Ivory, Ismail Merchant, and Ruth Praver Jhabvala received the Fellowship of the British Academy of Film and Television, one of the highest awards in film.

In 2003 Merchant Ivory Productions made "Le Divorce" from the best-selling novel by Diane Johnson. The novel was adapted for the screen by James Ivory and Ruth Praver Jhabvala, and stars Kate Hudson, Naomi Watts, Glenn Close, Stockard Channing, Matthew Modine, Sam Waterston, Thierry Lhermitte, Stephen Fry, Bebe Neuwirth, and Leslie Caron.

Ismail Merchant (Producer; Founding Partner and Co-President of Merchant Ivory Productions)

Although Ismail Merchant was born in Bombay, he lived and worked for most of his life in the West. Merchant's first film was a theatrical short, "The Creation of Woman," which was nominated in 1961 for an Academy Award, and was an official entry from the United States in the Cannes Film Festival that same

year. While en route to the festival Merchant met James Ivory, who agreed to form a partnership, Merchant Ivory Productions, to make English-language theatrical films in India for the international market.

Attracted by India's visual beauty, as well as by the opportunity to finance his films with frozen rupee accounts of major American distributors, Merchant produced "The Householder," the team's first collaboration with writer Ruth Praver Jhabvala, "Shakespeare Wallah," "The Guru," and "Bombay Talkie." For forty years, Merchant Ivory Productions has enjoyed one of the most productive collaborations in cinema, making such films as "Roseland," "The Europeans," "Quartet," "Heat and Dust," "A Room With A View," "Mr. and Mrs. Bridge," "Howards End," "The Remains of the Day," "Jefferson in Paris," "Surviving Picasso," and "A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries."

In addition to producing, Merchant was a director. His directing credits include a short film entitled "Mahatma and the Mad Boy," a television feature "The Courtesans of Bombay," and his first theatrical feature, "In Custody," which won four National Awards from the government of India, including Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Costumes, and Best Production Design. Additional directing credits are "The Proprietor" starring Jeanne Moreau, "Cotton Mary," starring Madhur Jaffrey, Greta Scacchi, and James Wilby, and "The Mystic Masseur," based on the novel of V.S. Naipaul, shot in Trinidad in the winter of 2001.

"The Golden Bowl" marked the fortieth anniversary of Merchant's career in film production, a career that has already earned the Merchant Ivory team a place in *The Guinness Book of World Records* for the longest partnership in independent cinema. In addition to the numerous accolades Merchant has won in the world of film, he is also an Honorary Doctor of Arts at Bard College, New York, has been honored by the Mayor of New York, and was made a *Commandeur des arts et des lettres* by the French Government in 1996. He received India's Padma Bhushan in 2002, bestowed on artists and writers for their lifetime achievements. In 2002 Merchant produced the hit "Le Divorce," starring Kate Hudson, Naomi Watts, Glenn Close, Sam Waterston, Stockard Channing, and Leslie Caron. He next produced the New York feature "Heights," again starring Glenn Close, and directed by newcomer Chris Terrio.

The difficulties of producing "The White Countess" in China were similar to those Merchant often faced in India, where he and James Ivory first began working: a multiplicity of languages and entrenched customs, many-tiered bureaucracies, and vast distances between lab and the production company. His genius at balancing artistic and cinematic necessities with the realities of a volatile location were never more evident than in "The White Countess," his final film. Ismail Merchant died in London in May of 2005 after a short illness.

Kazuo Ishiguro (Original Screenplay)

“The White Countess” is the second collaboration between Merchant Ivory Productions and novelist Kazuo Ishiguro. In 1993, Ruth Praver Jhabvala adapted Ishiguro’s Booker Prize-winning novel *The Remains of the Day* for Merchant Ivory. The film, starring Emma Thompson and Anthony Hopkins, garnered eight Academy Award nominations and was named “Film of the Year” by the British Film Critics Society.

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki, Japan, on 8 November 1954. He came to Britain in 1960 when his father began research at the National Institute of Oceanography, and was educated at a grammar school for boys in Surrey. Afterwards he worked as a grouse-beater for the Queen Mother at Balmoral before enrolling at the University of Kent, Canterbury, where he read English and Philosophy. He was also employed as a community worker in Glasgow (1976), and after graduating worked as a residential social worker in London. He studied Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, a member of the postgraduate course run by Malcolm Bradbury, where he met Angela Carter, who became an early mentor. He has been writing full-time since 1982. In 1983, shortly after the publication of his first novel, Kazuo Ishiguro was nominated by *Granta* magazine as one of the 20 'Best of Young British Writers'. He was also included in the same promotion when it was repeated in 1993. In 1981 three of his short stories were published in *Introductions 7: Stories by New Writers*. His first novel, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982), narrated by a Japanese widow living in England, draws on the destruction and rehabilitation of Nagasaki. It was awarded the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize. It was followed by *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), which explores Japanese national attitudes to the Second World War through the story of former artist Masuji Ono, haunted by his military past. It won the Whitbread Book of the Year award and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction.

Ishiguro's third novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), is set in post-war England, and tells the story of an elderly English butler confronting disillusionment as he recalls a life spent in service, memories viewed against a backdrop of war and the rise of Fascism. It was awarded the Booker Prize for Fiction. His next novel, *The Unconsoled* (1995), a formally inventive narrative in which a concert pianist struggles to fulfil a schedule of rehearsals and performances in an unnamed European city, was awarded the Cheltenham Prize in 1995. □□Kazuo Ishiguro's fifth novel, *When We Were Orphans* (2000), is set in Shanghai in the early part of the twentieth century, and is narrated by a private detective investigating his parents' disappearance in the city some 20 years earlier. It was shortlisted for both the Whitbread Novel Award and the Booker Prize for Fiction. His latest novel is *Never Let Me Go* (2005).

As a screenwriter, Ishiguro's first full-length film was *The Saddest Music in the World* (2003), a melodrama set in the 1930s starring Isabella Rossellini. He has also written two original screenplays for Channel 4 Television, *A Profile of Arthur J. Mason* (1984) and *The Gourmet* (1986).

He was awarded the Order British Empire in 1995 for services to literature and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He was awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in 1998. His work has been translated into over 30 languages. Kazuo Ishiguro lives in London with his wife and daughter.

Bibliography: <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth52>

Christopher Doyle (Director of Photography)

Cinematographer Christopher Doyle has worked prolifically in the Asian and Western film industries. He grew up in Sydney, Australia, and left home at eighteen for an adventurous career that included working as an oil driller in India, a cow herder in Israel, and a doctor of Chinese medicine in Thailand; he also spent three years traveling the world on a Norwegian ship. He learned Mandarin in Taiwan, and began his cinematography career there in the '80s. Among the many films from China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan shot by Doyle are the international hit "Hero" and eight films by noted director Wong Kar Wai, including "Happy Together" (1997) and "Eros" (2004). In 1998, Doyle shot Gus Van Sant's remake of "Psycho" without having ever seen the classic Hitchcock original. Doyle has also worked with Australian director Phillip Noyce on "Rabbit-Proof Fence" and "The Quiet American" (both 2002), and with American directors Barry Levinson on "Liberty Heights" (1999) and Jon Favreau on "Made" (2001). Doyle's recent films include the forthcoming "Invisible Waves" from Thailand and M. Night Shyamalan's "Lady in the Water." Doyle is directing the "13th Arrondissement" segment of "Paris je t'aime," an omnibus film on Paris's different neighborhoods shot by various acclaimed directors.

Christopher Doyle's Chinese name is Du Ke Fung which means 'like the wind'.

John David Allen (Editor)

John David Allen has edited two Merchant Ivory films in addition to "The White Countess": "The Golden Bowl" in 2000 and "Le Divorce" in 2003. He also edited Ismail Merchant's and Madhur Jaffrey's "Cotton Mary" in 1999, and worked on a number of independent features including "Woman Found Dead in Elevator" and "13 Moons."

About the Actors

Ralph Fiennes (Jackson)

Fiennes was born in Suffolk and grew up in England and Ireland. He attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, after which he began his professional acting career on stage. He performed at London's Regents Park in both The Theatre Clwyd and The Oldman Coliseum. Two years after graduating RADA, he joined Michael Rudman's company at the Royal National Theatre. He later joined the Royal Shakespeare Company, where for two seasons he appeared in such plays as "Henry VI," "King Lear," and "Love's Labours Lost."

In 1991, Fiennes landed his first television appearance in a small but telling role in the award-winning "Prime Suspect." Fiennes was then cast by David Puttnam as T.E. Lawrence in "A Dangerous Man: Lawrence After Arabia," a film which detailed the legendary hero's struggle to secure Arab independence on the battlefield of the Paris Peace Conference.

Fiennes made his feature film debut starring opposite Juliette Binoche as Heathcliff in Peter Kosminsky's "Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights." Steven Spielberg was so impressed by Fiennes' performance that he cast him as the sinister Nazi Aman Goeth in "Schindler's List," opposite Liam Neeson. His role as Aman Goeth earned him an Academy Award nomination, and awards from BAFTA, the New York Film Critics Circle, National Society of Film Critics, Boston Society of Film Critics, Chicago Film Critics Association, and London Critics Circle for best supporting actor.

Other notable acting performances include Robert Redford's acclaimed "Quiz Show," Kathryn Bigelow's "Strange Days," Gillian Armstrong's "Oscar and Lucinda," and Martha Fiennes' "Onegin" opposite Liv Tyler, which Fiennes also executive produced. Fiennes also starred in Neil Jordan's "The End of the Affair," "The Good Thief," and "The Avengers," and Istvan Szabo's "Sunshine."

In 1994 Fiennes opened as "Hamlet" in a sell-out production by Jonathan Kent for the Almeida Theatre Company at the Hackney Empire, which became the theatrical event of the year. The production moved to Broadway, and Fiennes won the coveted Tony award for his performance in June of 1995.

In 1995, Fiennes starred in the Academy Award-winning "The English Patient," directed by Anthony Minghella, for which Fiennes was nominated for an Academy Award, a Golden Globe and a BAFTA for Best Actor.

Fiennes then returned to the theatre in Jonathan Kent's acclaimed production of "Ivanov" at the Almeida Theatre in London. Fiennes performance won rave reviews, which took the play to Moscow. During 2000, Fiennes appeared

triumphantly on the London stage in the title roles of Richard II and Coriolanus for the Almeida Theatre, and he triumphed in a guest cameo role in Kenneth Branagh's West End production of "The Play I Wrote."

In 2002 Fiennes starred in David Cronenberg's film "Spider" as the disturbed schizophrenic in search of his past and in "Red Dragon" as the psychotic but vulnerable serial killer, opposite Emily Watson and Edward Norton. He had a cameo role in Neil Jordan's "The Good Thief" and also starred opposite Jennifer Lopez in "Maid In Manhattan."

Currently, Fiennes can be seen in Fernando Meirelles' (director of "City of God") "The Constant Gardener," opposite Rachel Weisz and Danny Huston. Fiennes plays Kenya-based English diplomat Justin Quayle, a man whose wife is murdered along with the man with whom she is suspected of having an affair.

Also in 2005, Fiennes appeared in New Market's "The Chumscrubber," opposite Rita Wilson and Glenn Close. "The Chumscrubber" debuted at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival. Fiennes was also seen in Martha Fiennes' "Chromophobia" with Kristen Scott Thomas and Penelope Cruz. "Chromophobia" world premiered as the closing-night film at the 2005 Cannes International Film Festival.

Also upcoming for Fiennes is Dreamworks' animated feature "Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were Rabbit." In the film, Fiennes will be heard as the voice of Lord Victor Quartermaine as Wallace and Gromit set out to discover the mystery behind the garden sabotage that plagues their village. "Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were Rabbit." opens on October 7th.

In the latest installment of Warner Brothers' blockbuster Harry Potter series, "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," Fiennes plays the pivotal role of the dreaded Lord Voldemort. The film will be released on November 18th.

In early 2006, Fiennes will reunite with Jonathan Kent for Brian Friel's "Faith Healer," which will premiere at Dublin's Gate Theatre before coming to Broadway. Fiennes' next role on the silver screen will be opposite Susan Sarandon in Bob Balaban's "Doris & Bernard." Fiennes will play the butler of rich tobacco heiress Doris Duke (Sarandon).

Fiennes currently resides in London, England.

Natasha Richardson (Countess Sofia)

“The White Countess” is graced with the talents of three members of the Redgrave theatrical clan: Natasha Richardson as Countess Sofia, her mother Vanessa Redgrave as Aunt Sara, and her aunt Lynn Redgrave as Olga.

Natasha Richardson made her feature film debut as Mary Shelley in Ken Russell’s 1987 feature film “Gothic.” Her performance caught the attention of director Paul Schrader, who cast her in the title role in his 1988 film “Patty Hearst.” Since then, Ms. Richardson has achieved notable success in such films as Pat O’Connor’s “A Month in the Country,” Roland Joffe’s “Fat Man and Little Boy,” and “The Favour, the Watch and the Very Big Fish.” For her performance in Volker Schlöndorff’s “The Handmaid’s Tale” and Paul Schrader’s “The Comfort of Strangers,” Richardson earned The London Evening Standard Award for Best Actress of 1990; and for “Widow’s Peak,” also starring Mia Farrow and Joan Plowright, she received the Best Actress Award at the 1994 Karlovy Vary Festival. In 1995, she co-starred with Jodie Foster and Liam Neeson in “Nell,” and, in 1998, in “The Parent Trap,” with Dennis Quaid. Her recent films include “Blow Dry,” released in 2001, and Ethan Hawke’s “Chelsea Walls.”

Trained at London’s Central School of Speech and Drama, Richardson has performed extensively on stage in roles including Helena in “A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream”, and Ophelia in “Hamlet” at the Young Vic. In 1986, she garnered the London Drama Critics’ Most Promising Newcomer Award for her performance as Nina in “The Seagull”, with Vanessa Redgrave and Jonathan Pryce. In 1987, she performed the role of Tracey Lord in Richard Eyre’s musical “High Society.” She performed the title role of “Anna Christie,” first in London, where she was voted London Drama Critics’ Best Actress Award in 1992; then on Broadway at the Roundabout in 1993, where she was nominated for a Tony for Best Actress in a Play, a Theatre World Award for Outstanding Debut, the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Debut of an Actress, and a Drama Desk nomination for Best Actress. For her performance as Sally Bowles in Sam Mendes’ production of “Cabaret,” she won the 1998 Tony, Outer Critics Circle, Drama League and Drama Desk Awards for Best Actress in a Musical. She then appeared on Broadway in Patrick Marber’s Tony nominated play “Closer.”

Richardson’s television credits include Ibsen’s “Ghosts” for the BBC, also starring Judi Dench, Michael Gambon and Kenneth Branagh; the HBO cable feature “Hostages;” the BBC film “Suddenly Last Summer,” based on the play by Tennessee Williams, and also starring Maggie Smith and Rob Lowe. In 1993, she starred as Zelda Fitzgerald in the TNT movie “Zelda,” co-starring Timothy Hutton and directed by Pat O’Connor (cable Ace nomination for Best Actress). She played Ruth Gruber in the 2001 CBS mini-series “Haven” based on Ms. Gruber’s autobiography.

In addition to Vanessa and Lynn Redgrave, Natasha Richardson's family ties to theater and film also include her father, the late film director Tony Richardson; her grandfather, actor Michael Redgrave, and grandmother, actress Rachel Compton; her uncle, actor Corin Redgrave; her sister, actress Joely Richardson; her cousin, Jemma Redgrave; and her husband, actor Liam Neeson, with whom Natasha Richardson has two children.

Vanessa Redgrave (Aunt Sara)

Vanessa Redgrave has long been noted for her uncompromising approach to difficult and even controversial roles. "The White Countess" is her third Merchant Ivory film: she starred in "The Bostonians" (1984, for which she was Oscar-nominated) and "Howards End" (1992, Oscar-nominated for her heartbreaking performance as the owner of the estate named in the title). She also appeared as herself in the 1995 documentary "In Ismail's Custody" about Ismail Merchant.

Redgrave trained for the stage at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. In her first major theatrical role, "A Touch of the Sun" (1958), she played the daughter of a school headmaster (played by her own father, Sir Michael Redgrave). She made her screen debut that year in "Behind the Mask." In 1959 she became a member of the Stratford-Upon-Avon Theater Company, where she worked with some of the most distinguished talents of the British stage, including her future husband, director Tony Richardson.

After successfully negotiating Shakespearean roles, Redgrave easily moved into film work, winning her first international notices for her role in Michelangelo Antonioni's landmark "Blowup" (1966). The same year, she played Anne Boleyn in "A Man for All Seasons" and was nominated for her first Best Actress Oscar for her work in "Morgan!" She was a charming Guinevere in "Camelot" (1967), and was again Oscar-nominated for her performance as famed dancer Isadora Duncan in 1968's "Isadora." Redgrave aroused the ire of the Vatican for her portrayal of a sexually delirious Mother Superior in Ken Russell's scandalous "The Devils" (1971), and captured yet another nomination for her superbly nuanced portrayal as "Mary, Queen of Scots" (1971). In 1978 Redgrave won an Academy Award for her haunting work in the title role of "Julia" as the woman who inspires writer Lillian Hellman (played by Jane Fonda). Among her many other memorable film appearances are "Oh! What a Lovely War" (1972); "The Trojan Women" (1974); "Murder on the Orient Express" (1976); "Agatha" and "The Seven Percent Solution" (1979); "Wagner" (1985); "Prick Up Your Ears" (1987); "Wetherby" (1988); "Romeo-Juliet" (1991); "The Ballad of the Sad Café" (1993); "Little Odessa" and "A Month by the Lake" (1995); "Mission Impossible" (1996); "Smilla's Sense of Snow," "Mrs. Dalloway" and "Wilde" (1997); "Girl, Interrupted" (1999); and many others. She appears in the forthcoming "The Thief Lord" and is currently filming "Running With Scissors."

Vanessa Redgrave has done some of her best work in high-profile television films such as "Playing for Time," for which she won an Emmy in 1980 playing a Jewish concentration camp survivor. In 1986 she starred as transsexual tennis star Renee Richards in "Second Serve," and a 1991 TV remake of "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?" paired her, for the first time, with sister Lynn. *Vanessa Redgrave: An Autobiography* was published by Random House in 1994.

Lynn Redgrave (Olga)

Stage, film, and television actress Lynn Redgrave made her professional debut, after training at London's Central School, in a 1962 production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Royal Court Theatre. Following a tour of "Billy Liar" and rep in Dundee, she made her West End debut at the Haymarket, in N.C. Hunter's "The Tulip Tree" with Celia Johnson and John Clements.

Then came an invitation to join The National Theatre for its inaugural season at the Old Vic, and with it the opportunity to work with such directors as Gaskill, Dexter, Olivier, Zeffirelli and Coward in roles such as Rose in "The Recruiting Officer," Barblin in "Andorra," Jackie in "Hay Fever," Katrin in "Mother Courage," Miss Prue in "Love for Love," and Margaret in "Much Ado About Nothing."

During that time she appeared in films such as "Tom Jones," "Girl With Green Eyes," and "The Deadly Affair." Her film breakthrough came in 1966 with the title role in "Georgy Girl," which earned her the New York Film Critics Award, the Golden Globe and an Oscar nomination. Highlights of her early movie career also include "The National Health," "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex," "The Happy Hooker," and "Getting it Right."

In 1967 she made her Broadway debut in "Black Comedy" with Michael Crawford and Geraldine Page. London appearances included Michael Frayn's "The Two of Us" with Richard Briers at the Garrick, David Hare's "Slag" at the Royal Court, and "Born Yesterday," directed by Tom Stoppard at Greenwich.

In 1974, she returned to Broadway in "My Fat Friend." There soon followed "Knock Knock" with Charles Durning, "Mrs. Warren's Profession" (for a Tony nomination) with Ruth Gordon, and "Saint Joan." In the 1985/86 season she appeared with Rex Harrison, Claudette Colbert, and Jeremy Brett in "Aren't We All?" and with Mary Tyler Moore in A. R. Gurney's "Sweet Sue." Outside New York, she was in "Misalliance" in Chicago with Irene Worth, (earning the Sarah Siddons and Joseph Jefferson awards), "Twelfth Night" at the American Shakespeare Festival, "California Suite," "The King and I," "Hellzapoppin'," "Les Dames du Jeudi," "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," "The Cherry Orchard," and in the early winter of 1991 starred with Stewart Granger and Ricardo Montalban

in a Hollywood production of “Don Juan in Hell.” With her sister Vanessa as Olga, she returned to the London stage playing Masha in “Three Sisters” in 1991 at the Queen’s Theatre, London. She played Broadway again in “Moon Over Buffalo” (1996) with Robert Goulet, and starred in the world premiere of Tennessee Williams’ “The Notebook of Trigorin,” based on Chekhov’s “The Seagull.”

Lynn Redgrave’s television roles include “Whatever Happened to Baby Jane,” again with Vanessa. For American television Redgrave was seen in the series “Teachers Only,” “House Calls,” “Centennial” and “Chicken Soup,” while for the BBC she starred in “The Faint-Hearted Feminist,” “A Woman Alone,” “Death of a Son,” “Calling the Shots” and “Fighting Back.”

Her film career has been revitalized in recent years, including Bill Condon’s “Gods and Monsters” (1998, Golden Globe winner), Scott Hicks’ 1996 “Shine,” P.J. Hogan’s “Peter Pan,” Bill Condon’s “Kinsey,” and now James Ivory’s “The White Countess.”

Hiroyuki Sanada (Matsuda)

Hiroyuki Sanada was born on the 12th of October 1960 in Tokyo. He made his film debut when he was 5 in “Game of Chance” (1965). Sonny Chiba, the “godfather” of martial arts action films, played the lead role and became a mentor to Sanada. Sanada’s father died when he was 11. Sanada joined Japan Action Club, organized and run by Sonny Chiba, when he was 12. Sanada first became famous as an action star for his role in “Shogun’s Samurai” (1978). His roles have transcended action films, and Sanada is known as one of the most talented actors in Japan. From 1999 to 2000, Sanada played the fool in an English-language production of “King Lear” with members of the Royal Shakespeare Company, as the first Japanese actor to play with the RSC. He received an honorary MBE (Member of the British Empire) for this work.

Sanada has appeared in over 60 films, and is best known in the United States for his roles in “The Last Samurai” with Tom Cruise, and hit horror film “The Ring.” His recent portrayal of a reluctant samurai in “The Twilight Samurai” caught the attention of critics and art house audiences in Europe and America.

Madeleine Potter (Greshenka)

Madeleine Potter has been associated with Merchant Ivory Productions since she made her feature film debut with Christopher Reeve and Vanessa Redgrave in 1984’s “The Bostonians.” She appeared in Merchant Ivory’s “Slaves of New York” (1989) and “The Golden Bowl” (2000). She was also seen as herself in the documentary “The Wandering Company” (1984) about Merchant Ivory

Productions. Among Potter's recent films are "Refuge," (2002), "Muffin" (2002), and a number of television films, including "The Girl in the Café" (2005), "Caught in the Act" (2004), and "The Whistle-blower" (2001).

Madeleine Daly (Katya)

The family resemblance between Katya and her aunt Greshenka is no accident: Madeleine Daly is the daughter of Madeleine Potter. This is her first film.

Allan Corduner (Samuel)

Allan Corduner's long and distinguished film and television career have made him a face familiar from numerous character roles, including Sir Arthur Sullivan in "Topsy Turvy," (1999), and roles in "Moonlight Mile" (2002), "The Grey Zone" (2002), "De-Lovely" (2004), "William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice" (2004), and "Bigger Than the Sky" (2005), among many others. He is also a frequent presence in British television.

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