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PRESENTS

JASON SCHWARTZMAN CAROL KANE

BETWEEN THE TEMPLES

A film by NATHAN SILVER



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SHORT SYNOPSIS

A cantor (Jason Schwartzman) in a crisis of faith finds his world turned upside down when his former grade school music teacher (Carol Kane) re-enters his life as his new adult bat mitzvah student.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Ben Gottlieb (Jason Schwartzman) is a cantor who's lost his voice, his faith, and his purpose following the sudden death of his novelist wife. His obtuse rabbi (Robert Smigel), his doting mother (Caroline Aaron) and his overeager stepmother (Dolly de Leon) are all very ready for him to snap out of it, maybe date a little, and re-engage with his community. But Ben, beset on all sides by miseries, large and small, is not convinced that his mothers' sneak-attack blind dates (while they hover nearby) is the way forward. After fleeing Shabbat services and re-listening to his dead wife's voice messages, he half-heartedly attempts to throw himself under a semi-truck. The truck driver instead drops him off at a bar where drunk on mudslides, Ben confronts a loudmouth who knocks him flat. Carla (Carol Kane) helps him to his feet and gets him a proper drink. They discover they once knew each other: Carla was Ben's music teacher in elementary school. Learning of his profession, Carla starts to pursue Ben for bat mitzvah lessons. He refuses. She refuses his refusal and strongarms him into teaching her. Where all the authority figures and institutions seem to leave Ben cold, it's Carla who gives Ben a much-needed kick in the ass, inspiring him to reconnect with humanity while, simultaneously, he leads her to reconnect with her faith.

With a 1970s aesthetic and screwball comedy tone, *BETWEEN THE TEMPLES* is a sharply witty and heartwarming portrait of suffering, faith, and relationships, starring Jason Schwartzman and Carol Kane, directed by Nathan Silver.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The origin of *BETWEEN THE TEMPLES* is a story a mother could definitely love. In 2018, Silver was working on *CUTTING MY MOTHER*, a documentary series about his mother, Cindy, who figured prominently in his earlier films, but whose scenes in a recent feature film had ended up on the cutting room floor.

“I found out that she was going to B’nai mitzvah class to get her bat mitzvah,” says Silver. Becoming a bat mitzvah, or “daughter of the commandments,” signifies that a young woman—usually age 13—has attained adulthood under Jewish law. Cindy, for whom age 13 was a few decades in the rearview mirror, was a decidedly atypical student.

Intrigued, Silver filmed Cindy at her adult bat mitzvah study class. Adam Kersh, a producer on this film and the publicist on several of Silver’s early films, was delighted by the idea of Cindy—smart, outspoken, sardonically funny—in that setting. Silver was inspired to make a fiction film about a later-in-life bat mitzvah student and her cantor teacher.

Silver and Kersh developed the idea, and Kersh began pitching the concept the following year, as he was starting a new management/production company. They took the project to Tim Headington and Theresa Steele Page’s newly formed Ley Line Entertainment, which commissioned the project’s development based on the pitch.

“It was such a wonderful concept,” says Page, “with so much potential between these two characters. We knew this was a story we wanted to tell, and we wanted to support Nathan in his process.”

Silver enlisted his writing partner, C. Mason Wells (*THIRST STREET*), and the pair created the character of Ben Gottlieb, a cantor at a synagogue in upstate New York who had lost his voice. It’s an ironic tragedy for a cantor, the vocalist who leads the congregation in song and prayer, and teaches bar and bat mitzvah classes, to have to sit pathetically inert and mute before the congregation while the rabbi takes over his duties at services.

“The cantor can’t sing,” says Wells, “It feels like a cosmic joke.”

Ben’s vocal malady is prompted by the sudden, accidental death of his famed novelist wife. He has left the house they shared and moved in with his mother, Meira, and his stepmother, Judith, a zealous Filipina

convert to Judaism. His family, his rabbi, and his congregation are all desperate for him to emerge from his mourning and move forward with his life. Would it kill him to find a new love interest? But Ben is ambivalent about moving forward—and about everything.

The shock to Ben's system comes when Carla O'Connor, Ben's elementary school music teacher, re-enters his life. Recently pushed into retirement, Carla wants to pursue her long-stymied desire to reconnect with her Jewish heritage and have a bat mitzvah. She wants reluctant, recalcitrant Ben to be her teacher, and she's not about to let a little thing like Ben's repeated refusals stand in her way.

For the character of Ben, Silver, and Wells found inspiration in the life and work of the late musician-poet David Berman, whose bands included Silver Jews and Purple Mountains. "David Berman means a lot to both Nathan and me as a songwriter, as a soul," says Wells. "He was one of the greatest writers of lyrics of our times, and no one was better with a one-liner. There's something about his worldview that's a little askew, which informs both the character of Ben and the film's overall sensibility."

"For Carla, we pulled from a lot of places, including my mother," says Silver. The character of Carla was a folk singer before motherhood and marriage altered the trajectory of her life. "My mother wanted to be a modern dancer when she was a teenager and ended up having a family very early, and became a teacher, like Carla. We also thought about folk singers like Sibylle Baier, whose music was discovered years after she recorded it in the 1970s."

Ben and Carla are at in-between moments in their lives, untethered from the routines and people that had sustained them in the past. Their meet-messy takes place at a bar where sad sack Ben, tipsy on mudslides, confronts a jerky local and gets laid out with a punch. Carla, at the bar for the weekly karaoke night, picks him up and dusts him off. He recognizes her first. "You always gave me As," he says, hoping to ring a bell. "It was music class. Everybody got As," she replies.

Both are widowed, Carla's out of a job, and Ben can't figure out why he still has one, since he can't sing. "They're both unmoored," says Silver.

Wells coins a neologism. "Romantic *traumedy*," he says, describing an off-beat comedy that also has a sense of "loss and devastation and depression and anxiety coursing through the movie."

Carla's arrival allows Ben a chance to look at his faith with a new perspective. Through Ben, Carla can finally delve into the philosophies of Judaism and learn the music that enchanted her as a child. Ben and

Carla find each other interesting and the relationship offers each of them something they're not getting anywhere else.

Silver and Wells drew tonal inspiration from screwball comedies, including the classic BRINGING UP BABY by Howard Hawks, and modern iterations such as Maren Ade's TONI ERDMANN and David O. Russell's FLIRTING WITH DISASTER. "Usually in a screwball comedy there's a character who's uptight and then someone comes in like a whirlwind and turns their world upside-down, but in the process loosens them up and makes them a happier person," says Silver.

When Carla first encounters Ben, she doesn't recognize the grumpy cantor as the perpetually smiling boy in her class who loves music and singing. "Ben's lost the person that he loves, and he's reverted to living back at home with his mothers," observes Wells. "He has kind of become a kid again in many ways, but not temperamentally, the way he almost needs to be. It takes Carla interacting with him to bring back this person that he used to be. And that's at the root of a lot of screwball comedy—this reversion to childhood and innocence."

Ben is fielding significant pressure from everyone around him to start dating again. Ben's boss at Temple Sinai, Rabbi Bruce, knows just the woman: his daughter Gabby. On the one hand, dating or marrying Gabby and more completely integrating himself into temple affairs is a fate for Ben that Rabbi Bruce and his mothers all seem to support. Is it safe, predictable—inevitable? On the other hand, Ben has begun to really enjoy his time with bat mitzvah student Carla and her lived example of doing what one is passionate about, not what one is expected to do. They've been learning from one another. Says Silver, "I think Carla brings out this idea that Ben's just not living his life. He's not doing what he is there to do, which is to express himself and to actually pursue what he wants rather than what has been given to him."

Their aesthetic also found common ground in another musical influence. Says Wells, "We both like a band called Dead Moon from the late '80s and early '90s. Their music is very melodically beautiful, but very rough in the recording. We wanted to accomplish something similar here where the story itself is very simple and beautiful, but the way that it's filmed, the way that it's performed, there's a certain roughness to it, a certain liveliness and mistakes in a way and invite that in and let the kind of messiness of the life screw up the story in a way."

Silver and Wells wrote Ben specifically with Jason Schwartzman (I HEART HUCKABEES, RUSHMORE) in mind. “Jason is a one-of-a-kind comic genius,” says Silver. “His timing is impeccable... but more than that he radiates a soulfulness that feels crucial to the heart of Ben.”

In pursuit of Schwartzman, Silver turned to a colleague they shared in common, French actor Damien Bonnard, a close friend of Silver’s who was in his 2017 film THIRST STREET and who had recently worked with Schwartzman in ASTEROID CITY. On Silver’s behalf, Bonnard emailed Schwartzman, asking him to read and consider BETWEEN THE TEMPLES.

Schwartzman recalls, “Damien said, ‘Make sure you read this document because Nathan’s a very special director and person, and I could see you guys really getting along and working together well.’ Anytime someone that you’ve worked with says something like that, it really does go a long way, so I was excited to read it. And from page one, it’s something totally unusual and different. I had never read anything quite like it, both in formatting style and in subject. I responded to this character whose job is to help young people prepare for this big event in their life, but he himself needs help. He’s at a moment where his rudder is sort of busted, which was interesting to me. The way Nathan talked about doing it, working out and rehearsing the characters, working from a book, not a script, it felt like a really great adventure.”

Schwartzman signed on and over the course of a year, the director and actor discussed and shaped the character of Ben. “Because I came in so early in this process—at least from my perspective—we had a lot of time to free-associate leading up to it that you don’t typically have,” says Schwartzman.

Schwartzman was drawn to these people who are having trouble moving forward and have lost their faith in all things including themselves, but that if you just keep pushing through and keep asking questions, things begin to change. And he was intrigued by the relationship between Ben and Carla. “There’s a phrase: ‘Sometimes you find your mirror’,” Schwartzman says. “Who knows what would have happened six months before the movie started or six months after, but at this moment these two definitely reflect each other. And one, I think, is much more aware of that than the other.”

With Schwartzman committed, Ley Line officially greenlit production of BETWEEN THE TEMPLES, with Tim Headington, Theresa Steele Page, Nate Kamiya, Adam Kersh, and Taylor Hess producing.

The next crucial step was to cast the role of Carla. One day, it hit Silver like a thunderbolt: “I thought, oh my God, Carol Kane is perfect for this movie,” he says. “I texted everyone and everyone was like, ‘Oh, duh. Yes, of course, that’s Carla.’”

CASTING

BETWEEN THE TEMPLES makes nods to the films of Joan Micklin Silver including CROSSING DELANCY (1988) and her directorial debut HESTER STREET (1975), which stars Carol Kane, who was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance. Both center the lives of women contending with their Jewish communities and identities.

Like Schwartzman, Kane was intrigued by the unusual nature of BETWEEN THE TEMPLES. Silver sought out Kane and told her Schwartzman was onboard. “I’d always been in love with Jason’s work and wanted to work with him, and now I even feel more passionately that way,” she says. “Then I saw this wonderful documentary that Nathan made about his mom [CUTTING MY MOTHER], which is just incredible and that just sucked me into having to be part of it.”

Kane was also moved by Carla’s resolve to pursue her dream of a bat mitzvah some 57 years after her thirteenth birthday, a path made clear because her disapproving Communist parents are long gone, and her more recently departed atheist husband too. Says Kane, “Carla’s wanted this all her life, and she decides to go for it, even though it’s very problematic because her only child, her son, thinks it’s a joke. So, she has to deal with the fact that he doesn’t believe in it and still powers through, which is so brave and so hard.”

She continues, “The story was just fascinating and a gift to me—as a person who’s not 13—to have a lovely three-dimensional character who connects so strongly with other human beings, unlikely but essential connections for her in her life. It’s also about a lot of people also starting over and the suggestion that that can happen at any time, at any age, anywhere, with some faith, support, and connection.

Kane believes Carla and Ben’s relationship benefits from the fact that they initially tussle over whether he will be her bat mitzvah teacher. “He doesn’t really want to do it, and she really wants him to do it. They’re very honest with each other and it lays the groundwork for something new,” she comments. “It’s like a new territory that they occupy together, an island of trust and understanding. It becomes this very intimate relationship, though later there may be some misunderstanding about what that intimacy entails.”

Caroline Aaron (THE MARVELOUS MRS. MAISEL) and Dolly de Leon (TRIANGLE OF SADNESS) joined the cast as Meira and Judith Gottlieb, Ben's mother and stepmother. Meira is retired and spends her days painting, while her wife is a dynamo who has built a successful real estate business and serves on the board of the temple, very enthusiastically and a bit stridently—to comic effect. Each woman is trying, in her own way, to help Ben move forward. For Meira, the approach involves great delicacy, lest she overstep. Judith is much more overt in her efforts, whether she's chastising Ben for worrying his mother or not-so-subtly playing matchmaker between him and Gabby, and lurking around corners to see if they click.

Silver and Wells had multiple conversations with Aaron and De Leon to develop their characters and fill in their backstories. Silver gave Aaron CUTTING MY MOTHER to screen and the actress took it from there. "Caroline has her own wonderful personality that she brought to the idea of my mother. She created this character, Meira, who I adore. Meira can justify anything her son does, and it's so funny," Silver says. "And Dolly brought so much to the character of Judith, who is doing so many things at once. Judith wants her wife to stop babying her son and wants Ben to be able to cope in the world. Caroline and Dolly hit it off immediately, which was great. You can feel them as a couple, down to the small details like the exchange of glances."

Meira, warm and nurturing, tries her best to balance her roles as wife and mother. "Meira, like all mothers, is a master multi-tasker, moving between Judith's needs and Ben's—how to make them both happy. It is something that keeps Meira up at night," says Aaron. "The relationship with Ben felt like a lot of tiptoeing. If she goes too far, she will lose him, but she cannot stand by and let him drown in sorrow. If she gives in to his moroseness it will inflame Judith. These are her two great loves, and Meira cannot let either of those balloons hit the ground."

De Leon's Filipino heritage was incorporated into the backstory of her character Judith, who converted to her wife's religion. "Judith is a very strong, opinionated, self-made woman who basically married a family—Meira and Ben," says De Leon. As a relative newcomer to a community and a religion, Judith reacts to situations differently than the other characters. She's highly offended to learn that some study rules have been bent for Carla's benefit. As De Leon notes. "I find that people who aren't born into a set of values or a religion can take it too seriously, sometimes to a fault. And Judith has this strong sense of integrity that she wants her family to espouse as well, so it can be really frustrating for her when they don't. Also, the mindset of an immigrant isn't anything like those naturally born in the place they live and work. There's a strong sense of self-preservation to the point of aggression that can be quite funny."

Because Ben is unable to fulfill part of his duties, his boss, Rabbi Bruce, gamely steps in as substitute cantor. Silver was delighted when Robert Smigel, the fertile mind behind SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE's "TV Funhouse," signed on to play the self-satisfied rabbi. "Robert Smigel is one of my comedic heroes. We wanted him from the get-go," he affirms. "He's so funny and his understanding of comedic timing is phenomenal. He's also an observant Jew, so there was a great overlap of interests."

Smigel was impressed BETWEEN THE TEMPLES explored serious themes without becoming weighed down by them. "I thought it was, interestingly, both dark and sweet-natured at the same time. Which I really liked," Smigel comments. "And the part of the rabbi was very funny. It wasn't necessarily a comment on the rabbi as a religious leader, but I liked the fact that he's somebody in a position of authority who's kind of shallow and full of himself. He thinks he's full of wisdom but he's passing on advice that's essentially useless. He likes to hear himself talk and he's more interested in playing golf and cheating than anything else. That's always fun to play."

Silver's friend and former roommate Madeline Weinstein plays Gabby, the sweet, eager, and somewhat pitiable daughter of Rabbi Bruce. "She's a mess," the rabbi tells Ben. "With Gabby, we wanted someone who was completely ill at ease," Silver explains. "We knew Maddie could make this character cringe-y, but you would still want Gabby to succeed, even if it meant our protagonist wouldn't."

When Rabbi Bruce and Ben's mothers set them up, Gabby is a somewhat dutiful pursuer, but she's not averse to a rebound relationship. Observes Weinstein, "Gabby is being pushed into it much like Ben. She's sad and lost. I think their fling is kind of a red herring. It speaks to the way we glimpse futures in others so quickly, and how just as quickly they dissolve."

"I've wanted to work with [Silver] for a long time and have an immense amount of faith in him and his unique wonderful sensibility," says Weinstein. "The script just moved me and made me laugh when I first read it. He has such a dark, mischievous sense of humor, but also warmth."

Matthew Shear (THE ALIENIST) plays Nat, Carla's prickly psychotherapist son. Nat pays a surprise visit to his mother, but it's evident that he'd rather be anywhere else. Says Silver, "Nat is someone who you wouldn't expect to be hostile, but he's so wounded by things that happened in his childhood that all he has left is anger. I'd seen Matt play a version of that character in MISTRESS AMERICA and he was hilarious. I thought he'd be great for the part."

Nat's visit gets off to a rocky start. Ben has spent the night at Carla's and Nat, arriving at her house with wife and kids in tow, is put off seeing a stranger wearing his pajamas. "Nat doesn't really like visiting or keeping up with Carla, despite his mother's sincere dotting. He has trouble trusting new men in her life and Jason's character is pretty easy for him to judge," says Shear. At Silver's request, Shear grew a mustache in the style of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, one of the director's heroes. "On my first day of shooting, I asked Nathan if I could shave it off. He said no."

FAITH

Given the centrality of Judaism in the lives of their characters, Silver and Wells wanted to depict the religion and its adherents respectfully and without condescension. And they certainly didn't want to make any mistakes in following its characters' lives, whether at the temple, in the Gottlieb home, in Ben and Carla's study sessions, or in the final scene of Carla's bat mitzvah itself.

Two Jewish consultants—Rabbi Mikey Hess Weber and Jesse Miller, who teaches B'nai mitzvah students—helped co-writers Silver and Wells through the writing and production of the film. Silver found their discussions made a difference in accuracy and in bringing ideas and themes into focus. Rarely, if ever, would there be a single, hard-and-fast rule about how to approach a given situation. "We'd ask them a question and they'd be like, 'Well, it depends'," recalls Silver. "There are a million possible answers. And that is Judaism. It's a life spent questioning. I think that idea helped us understand these characters and understand that this is a movie about questioning in order to find your way in life."

Schwartzman's father was Jewish, though he died when the actor was young. "On a selfish level, I was excited to do the movie because I wanted to learn more about Judaism," he says. "Judaism is a part of my life, but one that was, through my own personal history, a bit obscured. I always had questions. Like Carla learning about herself culturally, I ultimately feel less nervous about asking questions about the faith."

As a musician, Schwartzman was also excited to immerse himself in the music that is part of the Jewish religious tradition. He taught himself how to play and sing the songs heard in the film: "I wanted to understand the structure and theory behind these songs and how they were arranged. It was for my own pleasure but also so that I could understand the songs and absorb them and have them be part of the character. It was so fun to figure out how to play the songs, to find the little nuances and melody, and to hear different versions of how they're sung. I really fell in love with the music."

Smigel, who describes himself as a “Jewish person who is somewhat observant,” says he appreciated the film’s approach to the faith, and to the conclusion of *BETWEEN THE TEMPLES*. “Judaism—and many religions rooted deeply in humility—are bastardized and dismissed in today’s society. So, I’m very grateful [that this film gets] to the root of what makes religion valuable.”

FILMING

With Taylor Hess, who had been developing the project with Silver for the previous years, as the lead physical producer, production on *BETWEEN THE TEMPLES* began in March 2023 in Kingston, New York, and filmed for 18 days. Myriam Schroeter was brought on as the line producer, Jesse Miller as the Production Supervisor, and Ani Schroeter as the production coordinator.

Silver and Wells’ writing process is tailored to Silver’s approach to filmmaking, which is influenced by the work of Mike Leigh, who doesn’t write or direct using a traditional, formal screenplay. Like Leigh, Silver prioritizes intensive collaboration with the actors to develop their characters and build the world they will inhabit. Proper dialogue is written only after the film is cast, sometimes even just a day before a particular scene is filmed.

Consequently, the script that goes out to actors doesn’t resemble a screenplay. The text—Silver and Wells call it a “scriptment”—lays out the story, describing what happens within scenes and sometimes giving suggestions of conversations.

“It reads like a novella where the dialogue is not separated the way it traditionally is in a standard script,” says Silver. “We script the dialogue a few days before we shoot the scene as we’re moving through the production. The actors don’t necessarily have time to memorize all the written lines, so we edit while we’re shooting and we find the scenes as we’re making the movie. It gives the shoot the vitality it needs.” The elements of the story are there, but the dialogue is not set in concrete, leaving more room for actors to imagine, explore, and take ownership of their characters. “I think that leads to stronger performances,” he says.

The story and characters continued to evolve as production proceeded. Says Schwartzman, “Everyday questions would come up and we’d be sitting there talking about these people like they’re real and right there beside you. That’s such a testament to Nathan and Chris creating this world where as an actor you could really be in the moment and every move you made could be warranted.”

“It’s somewhat terrifying not to have a more solid blueprint,” says Kane. “I come from a theater background where you rehearse for so long and you memorize so solidly. So it’s kind of a big leap of faith to just get there and hope to fly together. It’s also very exciting and freeing that anything goes. We’ll do a take and Nathan will say, ‘I like this but I didn’t like that,’ and we’ll do it again. It’s invigorating creatively.”

Schwartzman likens it to constructing something with a built-in time constraint. “With certain materials, there’s a specific amount of time before a thing cures,” he says. “This shoot was like a quick-curing resin. Once we get to the set this is how much time we get before it dries. And I like that, though it’s hard.”

Smigel adds, “I don’t know if I’ve ever worked with a more invested crew.”

Schwartzman says, “One of the wonderful things about working with Nathan is his emphasis on the actor having to bring a lot before you show up to the table, I felt safe though. Faith in Nathan is the ultimate thing. That’s why collaborating is so wonderful—you pick the people who you work with for a reason. Every day on set I felt that this is the only way to make a movie.”

Weinstein adds, “Coming from a theater background where you spend like weeks working with the text and like the text informs everything, *BETWEEN THE TEMPLES* was a little scary because you’re getting pages of text the day before. So we had to have a lot of trust in Nathan—we all did.”

Smigel wasn’t thrown off by this style, saying, “Nathan has his own process. It was essentially scripted in its own way. First, it reads as a book, but then there’s dialogue the day of [shooting], but it’s flexible. For me that made it easier rather than harder. I’m not used to memorizing lines in the first place, so just capturing the essence of the scene made it easier for me.”

“Jason and Carol are both extremely funny and full of life, and they brought that to this movie,” Silver says. “Their natural charisma seeped into the characters and shifted my understanding of them. You never feel like Ben is dead inside or that he’s stripped of humor because Jason is naturally animated and funny. As played by Carol, Carla has this vivid frustration with reality, which I love.”

Schwartzman and Kane came to the project with great admiration for one another and excitement about working together. And the experience more than lived up to their hopes. Says Kane, “I just have been in love with Jason for so long. And he was so game and so open that he laid the groundwork for me to feel

the same. I would just follow his lead, and his lead was to trust and to give everything he could of himself. So I owe a lot to him. He's an amazing guy."

Schwartzman describes working with Kane as "an honor. I loved working with Carol so much. There's a reason she's a legend. She brings with her the feeling of someone who knows what they're doing, wants to learn more, and is excited about everyone else. She has a quality about her that is so sweet and full of love, and so keen that she brings things out of you that are unexpected. To be in front of her and watch her act was a real treat. I still don't understand how she does it. It's magic."

By the final days of the shoot, the actors were thoroughly immersed in their characters and ready to film the climactic sequence: a Shabbat dinner at the Gottlieb house with their guests Rabbi Bruce, his wife, Gabby, and Carla. Silver had purposely left the sequences loosely scripted so the actors could follow their characters' leads as glasses are raised, toasts are made and an awkward evening grows progressively bizarre. Says Silver, "We wanted the movie to erupt at this climactic point, so we made the shooting itself volatile. The actors were game and embraced the tension between the scripted and the improvised coming to a head."

CINEMATOGRAPHY

The film is Silver's third collaboration with director of photography Sean Price Williams, following *THIRST STREET* (2017) and *THE GREAT PRETENDER* (2018). Silver knew from the start that he wanted to shoot on film, the better to give the film a nostalgic warmth. Williams took the opportunity to try out a particular Kodak stock that's rarely used and made in small quantities. "Nathan is very open to experimentation, and it's fun for me because when he likes something his face lights up and he's giddy, like a little kid," says Williams. "I wanted the film to feel like it's cold outside and warm inside. The stock was at 200T, and we pushed it to two stops, and it looked different. There are shadows and contrasts, but It's a wintery, soft light movie, which is what we wanted."

In a film so closely focused on characters' emotions and interpersonal dynamics, Silver valued Williams' gift for moving seamlessly alongside actors. "I always think of Sean as one of the actors who's engaged with what's happening in the moment," says Silver. His feel for what is important in a scene, his sensibilities of rhythm and when to hold—that was essential with this movie in particular, so we could follow whatever emotional qualities the actors brought."

Kane adds, “Our brilliant director of photography Sean Price Williams was part of the scenes, part of collaboration in a way that’s very unusual for a DP. He is like a musician, riffing along with you and he’ll go where you’re going. I’m so pleased at how it all turned out and I’m so proud of the whole cast and crew.”

EDITING

After production wrapped, Silver and editor John Magary (FIT MODEL, LOVE AFTER LOVE) spent approximately seven months shaping the final film. “It was a really interesting process because there’s improv in the movie, and so many different kinds of improv,” says Magary. “Some scenes were more or less completely scripted, but actors were free to go loosely off dialogue to pave a slightly new direction for the scene. With other scenes, like the Shabbat dinner, the actors basically had the guidelines for what needed to happen and went from there. Sometimes it felt almost like editing a documentary because the improv would be so unexpected that you’re watching an actor’s natural reaction in real time. You have this very untamed conversation, and you need to find the shape of the scene.”

Magary was able to do that time and again, Silver notes. “John Magary brought so much to this project, giving some scenes a staccato style and a wonderful integration throughout. He had a massive task because there were some scenes initially that everyone thought were uncuttable. But John’s a wonder and he was able to find what each scene needed to be.”

Not surprisingly, the most challenging portion of the film to edit was the Shabbat dinner sequence, the only scene filmed with two cameras. It was shot over the course of two nights and the seven actors never played the same way twice. “It took weeks to edit that scene,” Magary notes. “Its first incarnation was probably 25 minutes long; it got shorter and shorter, but Nathan and I held on to keep it as rich and weird and unpredictable as possible.”

Funny and serious, unusual and big-hearted, BETWEEN THE TEMPLES gives the viewer plenty to think about. Says Schwartzman, “It’s almost like smuggling something into customs and lying about what you have in a suitcase. Yes, the movie is about this cantor helping his former teacher prepare for her bat mitzvah, but that simple one-liner sends out so many tentacles. It’s just so alive.”

ABOUT THE CAST AND FILMMAKERS

NATHAN SILVER (Director and Co-Writer)

Nathan Silver is a writer, producer, and director. His work has played festivals and venues around the world, including NYFF, Sundance, Berlinale, Venice, Tribeca, Mar del Plata, AFI, Locarno, Rotterdam, Viennale, MoMa, Film at Lincoln Center, Museum of the Moving Image, La Cinémathèque Française, and Cineteca Nacional, Mexico. The New Yorker recently called Silver “a modernistic master of melodrama,” and said that “[he] proves himself to be one of the most original American independent filmmakers working today.”

C. MASON WELLS (Co-Writer)

C. Mason Wells is a screenwriter, producer, and actor based in New York. He has written THIRST STREET (Tribeca & Venice Film Festivals), produced ANNE AT 13,000 FT (Toronto & Berlin Film Festivals) and TWO PLAINS & A FANCY (BAM Cinema Fest), and acted in films for Alex Ross Perry (THE COLOR WHEEL), Dan Sallitt (FOURTEEN), and Joe Swanberg (LOL). He served as the Director of Programming for New York's Quad Cinema and has programmed film series for Anthology Film Archives, IFC Center, and BAM Cinematek; has written about films for *Film Comment*; and is currently the Director of Distribution (US) for MUBI.

JASON SCHWARTZMAN (Cast)

Jason Schwartzman is a prolific actor with an extensive and diverse range of roles in film and television including THE HUNGER GAMES: THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES. He will next be seen in Francis Ford Coppola's MEGALOPOLIS and Luca Guadagnino's next feature QUEER. Previously, he starred in Wes Anderson's ASTEROID CITY, Jen D'Angelo's QUIZ LADY, and voiced a role in SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE. Additional credits include THE FRENCH DISPATCH, MAINSTREAM, KLAUS, WINE COUNTRY, BETWEEN TWO FERNS: THE MOVIE, and MEDICAL POLICE. Schwartzman also co-created the Emmy- and Golden Globe-winning series MOZART IN THE JUNGLE for Amazon MGM Studios.

CAROL KANE (Cast)

Emmy Award-winning and Academy Award-nominated actress, Carol Kane's career has spanned across several decades as she has established herself as a sought-after actor on stage, screen, and television. Her theater credits include THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE, THE TEMPEST, MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, WICKED, LOVE, LOSS AND WHAT I WORE, HARVEY, THE CHILDREN'S

HOUR, Beth Henley's THE DEBUTANTE'S BALL and THE LUCKY SPOT, John Cassavetes' A WOMAN OF MYSTERY, among many others. Kane's television and film work is extensive. She was nominated for Best Actress at the Academy Awards for HESTER STREET. She won two Emmy Awards and earned a Golden Globe nomination for her work on the television series TAXI and garnered an Emmy nomination for her work in CHICAGO HOPE. Also, she was a series regular on the award-winning Netflix series UNBREAKABLE KIMMY SCHMIDT and HUNTERS. Additional television credits include STAR TREK: STRANGE NEW WORLDS, TWO AND A HALF MEN, and DINNER WITH THE PARENTS among many others. Her voice-over work includes BIG MOUTH, F IS FOR FAMILY, THE SIMPSONS, and MIGRATION. Feature film credits include THE PRINCESS BRIDE, SCROOGED, ANNIE HALL, ADAM'S FAMILY VALUES, THE PACIFIER, WEDDING IN WHITE, CARNAL KNOWLEDGE, THE LAST DETAIL, THE LEMON SISTERS, and DOG DAY AFTERNOON to name a few.

DOLLY DE LEON (Cast)

Dolly de Leon is a veteran stage and screen actress from the Philippines. She received her long-overdue international breakout role in Ruben Östlund's 2022 critically acclaimed feature TRIANGLE OF SADNESS, which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and was released in theaters by Neon. De Leon was awarded the Best Supporting Actor prize by the LA Film Critics Association and was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actress and the BAFTA Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role—the first Filipino to be nominated in an acting category at either association. More recently, De Leon starred in the Filipino box office sensation A VERY GOOD GIRL co-starring Kathryn Bernardo, the drama KEYS TO THE HEART in which she plays the mother of an autistic piano virtuoso, and THE MISSING, the first feature-length animated film to play at the Cinemalaya festival. THE MISSING won Best Film at the festival and Dolly was awarded Best Supporting Actress and a special NETPAC award for her performance. It was selected as the official Oscar entry for the Philippines in 2023. Upcoming, Dolly will appear in Paul Feig's feature film GRAND THEFT LOTTO with Awkwafina and Simu Liu and season two of the Amazon series NINE PERFECT STRANGERS, shooting next year. Dolly also recently wrapped on GHOSTLIGHT co-directed by Kelly O'Sullivan and Alex Thompson. Classically trained in the theater, de Leon has starred in more than 30 stage productions ranging from Shakespeare to Harold Pinter to Samuel Beckett and has received numerous accolades for her contributions to the theater community in the Philippines. In film and TV, she has worked with highly regarded Filipino directors Lav Diaz in his HISTORYA NI HA and Erik Matti on the HBO anthology series FOLKLORE, in which she played the leading role. She also won a 2020 Best Supporting Actress prize at the Philippines' Academy Awards (FAMAS) for her performance in

VERDICT. De Leon earned a B.A. in Theater Arts Performance from the University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, and currently lives in Manila with her four children.

CAROLINE AARON (Cast)

Caroline Aaron recently wrapped her fifth and final season as Shirley Maisel in the hit Amazon series THE MARVELOUS MRS MAISEL. She is currently recurring as Pete's Wife on the hit CBS show, GHOSTS. Also, on television, she starred in TRANSPARENT and recurred on CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM as well as Showtime's EPISODES opposite Matt LeBlanc. Other television credits include guest starring roles in THE ODD COUPLE, DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES, MODERN FAMILY, CODE BLACK, as well as all the LAW AND ORDERS. Onstage Ms. Aaron recently starred in MADWOMEN OF THE WEST in Los Angeles and New York. Broadway: COME BACK TO THE FIVE AND DIME JIMMY DEAN, JIMMY DEAN, THE ICEMAN COMETH, SOCIAL SECURITY, I HATE HAMLET, THE RITZ and RELATIVELY SPEAKING. Additional stage credits CALL WAITING later made into a feature film, FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIRE DE LUNE (Westside Arts), and A KID LIKE JAKE (Lincoln Center) among many others. She returns to the Eisenhower Theatre having headlined Wendy Wassersteins' THE SISTERS ROSENSWEIG. She has over fifty feature films to her credit including the recent indie hit THEATRE CAMP as well as the upcoming independent 31 CANDLES set for release later this year. Other film credits include 21 and 22 JUMP STREET, PRIMARY COLORS, CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS, BEYOND THE SEA, EDWARD SCISSORHANDS, JOE DIRT and so many more.

ROBERT SMIGEL (Cast)

Robert Smigel is a writer, producer, actor, and director known best for his SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE "TV Funhouse" cartoon shorts and as the creator and voice of Triumph, the Insult Comic Dog, the foul-mouthed puppet who mercilessly mocks celebrities and others in the style of a Borscht Belt comedian. Triumph debuted on LATE NIGHT WITH CONAN O'BRIEN, for which Robert served as the first head writer/producer. Robert co-wrote, co-directed, and wrote all the original songs for and voices characters in the animated Netflix movie LEO, starring Adam Sandler and Bill Burr. The film premiered on November 21, 2023, as the #1 movie on Netflix, setting a record as the biggest debut of an animated Netflix film with 34.6 million views in the first six days. He also co-wrote and produced HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA, HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 2, and YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN, all starring Adam Sandler. His film debut as a director was THE WEEK OF (2018) starring Sandler and Chris Rock.

Robert has had roles in many Sandler films as well as THIS IS 40, PUNCH DRUNK LOVE, and MARRIAGE STORY as well as featured roles on CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM, PORTLANDIA, and WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS. Robert has won three Emmys for his work on SNL and for NIGHT OF TOO MANY STARS, a biannual benefit he and his wife Michelle created for autism programs, hosted by Jon Stewart. Robert was also nominated for a writing Emmy for his TRIUMPH ELECTION SPECIAL '16, Hulu's first-ever primetime Emmy nomination.

MADELINE WEINSTEIN (Cast)

Madeline Weinstein made her film debut in Eliza Hittman's BEACH RATS opposite Harris Dickinson, which won Best Director at Sundance in 2017. She has performed on Broadway in HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD and Sam Gold's production of THE REAL THING, as well as off-Broadway and regionally in Simon Stone's MEDEA (BAM) and the world premiere of Tracy Letts' MARY PAGE MARLOWE (Steppenwolf) directed by Anna D. Shapiro. Most recently in theater, Madeline performed in the world premiere of Itamar Moses' play, THE ALLY, directed by Lila Neugebauer at The Public in New York. Other credits include the Netflix feature film ALEX STRANGELOVE and HBO's MARE OF EASTTOWN. Madeline is a graduate of Northwestern University.

MATTHEW SHEAR (Cast)

Matthew Shear was a break-out star of Noah Baumbach's 2015 Sundance film MISTRESS AMERICA opposite Greta Gerwig. He also appeared in Baumbach's 2017 film THE MEYEROWITZ STORIES opposite Ben Stiller. Shear co-starred in Paramount/TNT's series THE ALIENIST, alongside Dakota Fanning and Daniel Brühl. His other credits include Ang Lee's TAKING WOODSTOCK, THE BOY DOWNSTAIRS (opposite Zosia Mamet), M. Night Shyamalan's OLD, Hulu's DEADBEAT, Max's LOVE LIFE, and HORACE AND PETE (opposite Alan Alda). Shear is currently in post-production on his directorial debut FANTASY LIFE, which he wrote and stars in opposite Amanda Peet, Alessandro Nivola, and Judd Hirsch.

SEAN PRICE WILLIAMS (Director of Photography)

Sean Price Williams is an American cinematographer, film director, and actor. He is known for his textured, fluid camerawork (often handheld) and heightened attention to available light. *The New Yorker* film critic Richard Brody described Williams as "the cinematographer for many of the best and most significant independent films of the past decade, fiction and documentary." He was the cinematographer for the Safdie Brothers's GOOD TIME, Alex Ross Perry's GOLDEN EXITS, and Nathan Silver's

THIRST STREET. His directorial debut, THE SWEET EAST, made its debut at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival.

JOHN MAGARY (Editor)

John Magary grew up in Dallas, Texas. He has written and directed several films, among them THE SECOND LINE (Sundance, SXSW), THE BIG TRIM (currently on the Criterion Channel), and his debut feature film THE MEND, which played at festivals around the world, including SXSW, Entrevues Belfort (Jury Award), Torino, and Indie Lisboa. For THE MEND, John received a Gotham nomination for the Bingham Ray Breakthrough Director Award and an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best First Screenplay. A critically acclaimed editor, John worked on FIT MODEL (dir. Myna Joseph, NYFF), LOVE AFTER LOVE (dir. Russell Harbaugh, Tribeca), and two films directed by Nathan Silver, THIRST STREET (Tribeca), and BETWEEN THE TEMPLES (Sundance, Berlin, Tribeca). He has received support from the Jerome Foundation, the Film at Lincoln Center NYFF Artists Academy, and the Sundance Directors and Screenwriters Labs. He edits frequently for the Criterion Channel and does not like heights.

MADELINE SADOWSKI (Production Designer)

Madeline Sadowski is a New York Based Production Designer originally from Minnesota. She is known for designing films such as Sean Price Williams' THE SWEET EAST which played at Cannes in 2023; PET SHOP DAYS starring Willem Dafoe which played at Venice and SXSW; and FUNNY PAGES for A24 & Elara Pictures. She is currently designing Charlotte Ercoli's feature directorial debut, FIOR DI LATTE, starring Tim Heidecker.

LEY LINE ENTERTAINMENT (Producer & Financier)

Ley Line Entertainment is a content development, production, and financing company with projects spanning film, television, stage, and music. Highlights include the Daniels' Academy Award-winning film EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE; David Lowery's THE GREEN KNIGHT; a documentary on Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys entitled LONG PROMISED ROAD; the original, Tony-nominated musical and Olivier-winner & JULIET featuring the international megahits of Max Martin and Book David West Read (SCHITT'S CREEK); MISS JUNETEENTH, the original film from Channing Godfrey Peoples; and Sundance darling STRAWBERRY MANSION from Albert Birney & Kentucker Audley. The company was formed in the spring of 2018 by Tim Headington and Theresa Steele Page to foster both new and established talent and tell unique, meaningful stories across a broad range of media.

TIM HEADINGTON (Producer)

Tim has been involved in all facets of the entertainment business, financing and producing such films as David Lowery's THE GREEN KNIGHT and the Daniels' Academy Award-winning film EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE. Tim is an originating producer for the musical & JULIET, which premiered on the West End and is currently on Broadway and expanding globally. He serves as producer on Nathan Silver's BETWEEN THE TEMPLES premiering at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival. He co-founded the Headington Institute, which provides care and resiliency training for caregivers worldwide.

THERESA STEELE PAGE (Producer)

The principal at Ley Line Entertainment, Theresa, oversees film, theatre, and television projects. Recent releases include the Daniels' Academy Award-winning film EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE. Previous releases include David Lowery's THE GREEN KNIGHT and Channing Godfrey People's MISS JUNETEENTH. Theresa is a producer on Nathan Silver's BETWEEN THE TEMPLES that premiered at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival. Theresa is an originating producer of the Tony-nominated and Olivier-winner & JULIET. The musical is currently on Broadway and expanding globally. A former music industry and advertising executive, she was instrumental in overseeing the careers of internationally recognized artists including Britney Spears, NSYNC, Justin Timberlake, and Backstreet Boys. She is an avid supporter of the Headington Institute.

NATE KAMIYA (Producer)

Nate joined the Ley Line team in 2018. He serves as the head of the feature division. Nate is responsible for overseeing the strategy of development and production for each film. Recent highlights include Channing Godfrey Peoples' MISS JUNETEENTH, Sundance darling STRAWBERRY MANSION, and the Academy Award winner EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE. He has a background in handling logistics in live theater and independent film and has put more than 17,000 miles on the road for documentary work.

ADAM KERSH (Producer)

Adam Kersh is a manager, producer, and former publicist with nearly 20 years of experience in the entertainment industry. Throughout his career, he has established himself as a passionate advocate for new and distinctive voices and has played a pivotal role in launching a host of benchmark independent films and talent. He is the co-founder of Fusion Entertainment, a boutique artist-driven filmmaker and talent management company. BETWEEN THE TEMPLES marks the company's first feature film production.

Kersh also executive produced Alex Thompson and Kelly O'Sullivan's acclaimed 2024 feature GHOSTLIGHT and previously associate produced several notable independent films including THE EYES OF MY MOTHER, MADELINE'S MADELINE, AND SWALLOW.

Prior to Fusion, Kersh co-founded Brigade Marketing: a next-generation publicity, digital marketing, and creative agency that pioneered a new and highly influential model in entertainment PR and marketing. He spent nearly a decade devising release campaigns and festival launches for film and television projects and publicity initiatives for actors, filmmakers, and screenwriters. His PR work encompassed Oscar-nominated films (THE FLORIDA PROJECT, THE CAVE), acclaimed independent narrative films (DON'T THINK TWICE, SHORT TERM 12), award-winning documentaries (JIRO DREAMS OF SUSHI, LAST MEN IN ALEPPO), cutting edge genre films (IT FOLLOWS, THE BABADOOK) and notable prestige television shows (WILD, WILD COUNTRY, HIGH MAINTENANCE). Kersh has been an important champion for LGBTQ films, strategizing campaigns for such admired titles as Andrew Haigh's WEEKEND, Ira Sachs' trilogy of New York-set films in the 2010's, and Eliza Hittman's BEACH RATS, among others.

Kersh began his career working in studio publicity departments, most notably in the New York office of Lionsgate, where he had an early success orchestrating the theatrical and subsequent Oscar campaign for Sarah Polley's directorial debut, AWAY FROM HER. He got his start working for the Writers Guild Foundation, the nonprofit arm of the Writers Guild of America, West.

TAYLOR HESS (Producer)

Taylor Hess is an independent producer with a proven track record of developing and overseeing successful non-fiction and fiction projects. Notable highlights include multiple award-winning MACK WRESTLES for ESPN 30 for 30 (SXSW 2019), Independent Spirit Award nominee LAPSIS (SXSW 2020), Gotham Award nominee THE SURROGATE, (SXSW 2020), the Sandbox Films documentary IN SILICO (DOC NYC 2020), and Vox Media's docuseries hit for Netflix, EXPLAINED. Taylor has worked at Jigsaw Productions, Vox, Part 2 Pictures, The Gotham by IFP, and Scott Rudin Productions. She is a contributing editor for Filmmaker Magazine and graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

CREDITS

a Ley Line Entertainment and Fusion Entertainment production

Cast

Jason Schwartzman Carol Kane Dolly de Leon Caroline Aaron Robert Smigel
Madeline Weinstein Matthew Shear

Casting by

Kate Antognini

Costume Design by

Holly McClintock

Production Design by

Madeline Sadowski

Edited by

John Magary

Director of Photography

Sean Price Williams

Produced by

Tim Headington Theresa Steele Page
Nate Kamiya Adam Kersh Taylor Hess

Written by

Nathan Silver C. Mason Wells

Directed by

Nathan Silver

Executive Producers

David Darby Lauren Shelton
Jason Schwartzman Carol Kane Joshua Blum

Co-Producers

Daniel April Jesse Miller
Myriam Schroeter C. Mason Wells

Associate Producers

Ani Schroeter Emma Myers

Line Producer

Myriam Schroeter

Production Supervisor

Jesse Miller

First Assistant Director

Laura Klein

Second Assistant Director

Kathryn Hess

Cast

Ben Gottlieb	Jason Schwartzman
Carla Kessler	Carol Kane
Judith Gottlieb	Dolly de Leon
Meira Gottlieb	Caroline Aaron
Rabbi Bruce	Robert Smigel
Gabby/Ruth	Madeline Weinstein
Nat	Matthew Shear
Darcy	Lindsay Burdge
Twin 1	Julia Walsh
Twin 2	Brittany Walsh
Cindy	Diane Lanyi
Bartender	Keith Poulson
Priest	Jason Grisell
Rachel	Annie Hamilton
Bar Mitzvah Boy	Jaden Waldman

Nerdy Girl	Simona Sickler
Leah	Pauline Chalamet
Yael	Cindy Silver
Mildred's Owner	Stephen Lack
Young Ben	Jacob Morrell
Muscular Blond Guy	John Magary
Beanie	Herself
Stunt Coordinator	Bobby Beckles
Stunt Performer	Larry Nuñez
Production Coordinator	Ani Schroeter
1st Assistant Camera	Sinclair Neff
2nd Assistant Camera	Katie Mlinek
Loader	Connor Keep
B Camera Operator	Hunter Zimny
B Camera Loader	Rhys Scarabosio
Still Photography	Leia Jospé
Art Director	Madison Pflug
Set Decorator	Bailey Brown
Set Dresser	Conor Fay
Set Dresser	Charlie Turner
Prop Master	Scott Lamica
Assistant Costume Designer	Nicole Fuentes
Key Hair and Make Up Artist	Emily Schubert
Asst Make Up Artist	Nat Carlson
Script Supervisor	Gordon Bell
Production Sound Mixer	Samuel O'Sullivan
Boom Operator	John Nicholls
Gaffer	Conner Schuurmans
Key Grip	Rome Petersson
Key Grip	Levi Wilkinson
Best Boy Grip	Adam Kim
Best Boy Grip	Zachary Forsyth
Best Boy Electric	Eli Freireich
Dolly Grip	Barrant Clark Nelson
Dolly Grip	Caiya Sanchez-Strauss
Assistant to Producers	Sierra Slaughter
Covid Compliance Officer	Ivano Pulito
Set Medic	Yvette Zambrano
Medical Assistance	Patricia Ruska
Intimacy Coordinator	Alex Bain
Location Manager	Joey Massa
Background Casting Director	Danny April
Second Assistant Director	Amy Hutchings
1st Team PA	Kaileen Rozanski
Set PA	Ashley Christopher Leach
	Logan Skole
	Maxwell Garson
	Adrián Lausell Cabán
	Carol Kim
	Owen Sullivan
	Ainsley Samuda
	Kirk Patrick
	Martin Sherrod
	D West
Production Legal Counsel	Rina Dhaliwal
Production Accountant	Michael Ullman
Production Payroll Accountant	Jamie Mandel
Supervising Sound Editor	Arjun G. Seth
Re-Recording Engineer	Arjun G. Seth
Music Supervision	Melissa Chapman
	Annie Pearlman
	Metropolis Post
DI Facility	Jason Crump
Colorist	Jack Rizzo
DI Supervisor	