



genre: drama | running time: 14 minutes | country: USA

All Press Inquiries:

SAMBA

FILMWORKS

Todd I. Gordon
Director & Executive Producer
toddgordon229@gmail.com

About the Film

Logline

Henry, a septuagenarian cross-dresser, finds his life abruptly changed when Dolores, his long-time co-worker and closest friend, suddenly dies, forcing him to come to terms with losing the only person who truly accepts his cross-dressing.

Synopsis

Henry, an older man working in a city government office, has developed a warm, intimate relationship over many years with Dolores, his co-worker and best friend. With Dolores's support, Henry has been brave enough to express his need to cross-dress, but only within the confines of the office. When Dolores dies suddenly, Henry must not only find a way to mourn his friend despite the hostility of her family, but also decide whether his cross-dressing habit will die with Dolores or prompt him to take the courageous step of cross-dressing outside the cocoon of their office.

Technical Information

Runtime: 14:01

Color

Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1

Shooting Format: HD 2k

Language: English

Exhibition Format: .MOV, DCP

Director's Statement

Genesis of the Story

The idea for writing "Old Hen" came out of two distinct narrative strands.

First, when I worked in a NYC government bureaucracy many years ago, there were two older employees who had worked in facing desks for thirty years or more and who maintained a warm and intimate, though presumably platonic, relationship in what was an otherwise impersonal and dreary environment.

Second, I have an old friend, Richard Eagan, who is an artist and actor. Richard, who is in his mid-70s, has been cross-dressing publicly and happily for many years. We have had many heartfelt conversations about the fear, guilt and anxiety that Richard struggled to overcome and how his gender identity has developed and changed over the years.

Richard and I developed the script together and he plays Henry, the lead role, in the film.

Themes

By merging these narrative strands, I have been able to further explore some of the themes that preoccupy me, including loneliness, isolation, loss and the disparity between the way we yearn to build and even luxuriate in our own particular safe spaces (homes, offices, other literal and metaphoric communities) versus how we are treated in the world outside the walls and doors (literal or figurative), that protect us.

Why The Story is Important

Gender exploration among young people is increasingly portrayed in theater and film. With a few obvious exceptions, however, relatively little attention is paid to how older people explore their gender identities and the support systems they rely on. Similarly, relatively little serious attention is paid to friendships between older men and women because of our youth-oriented culture and its emphasis on sexuality. I would like to shine a small light on both of these phenomena.

Visual Approach

My DP and I chose a visual approach for "Old Hen" that used a fairly saturated, harder light with a bit of graininess, somewhat reminiscent of older Hollywood color

films. This reflects both the age of the main characters and the fact that Henry and Dolores’s conversations are laced with references to old movies.

We privileged the warmth and intimacy between Henry and Dolores in their shared office by using colorful clothing, and warm colors and lighting. Our overarching goal was to illustrate that the well-worn, bittersweet, sometimes humorous, banter of old friends can turn even the dullest physical space into an oasis.

Cinematic and Other Influences

For the intimate scenes between Henry and Dolores, I would cite, as influence, the intimate scenes in such films as “The Barbarian Invasions” (2003), “The Remains of the Day” (1993), and “Maudie” (2016), all of which use a naturalistic style to focus attention on character and intimacy (or the lack of it) above all else. Like the main character in “Maudie,” whose wildly colorful paintings belie the physical and emotional pain she suffers, Henry’s colorful cross-dressing hides the turmoil he clearly feels at not being able to fully express his inner life to the world at large.

I was also inspired by “A Fantastic Woman” (2017), a film that deals with a transgender woman whose male partner dies, leaving her at the mercy of his resentful and greedy family and the suspicions of prejudiced authority figures.

Finally, I was influenced, in the office scenes, by the colors used by Edward Hopper in his paintings of street and room scenes populated by one or two individuals. Unlike Hopper, however, who used his *mise-en-scene* to emphasize isolation and alienation, Henry and Dolores are able to transcend their drab surroundings.

Audience Response

My hope is that the film will raise audiences’ awareness of two issues that should be obvious, but aren’t often, if ever, taken or treated seriously in film: (1) that older people can go through the same gender confusion and exploration that younger people go through, and (2) that warm, playful, fulfilling and intimate friendships are as important to older people as they are to young people.

Todd I. Gordon

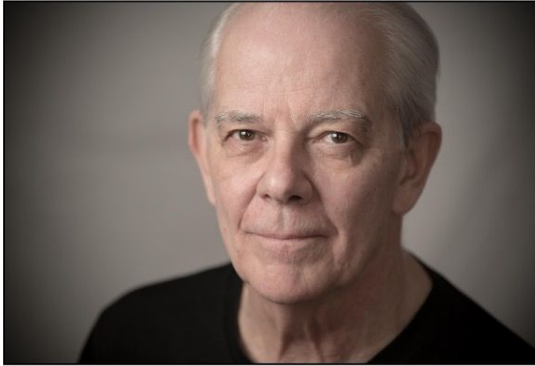
Director’s Bio



Todd I. Gordon is a filmmaker in his 60s based in Westchester County, New York. Todd spent much of his adult life practicing entertainment law and managing complex web development projects for a large media company. A few years ago, he began writing feature screenplays, with a particular focus on adapting unfairly obscure or forgotten novels, which were the only ones to which he could afford the rights. More recently, Todd has pivoted to short films to pursue more collaborative projects. “Pianoforte,” a short narrative film that he wrote and produced, was released in 2018 and was an official selection of two

international film festivals in the United States. "Old Hen," which he also wrote and produced, was his first foray into directing.

Cast Bios



Richard Eagan

Richard Eagan (*Henry*) - As a young man in Westport, CT, Richard appeared in various community theater plays and musicals before deciding to pursue acting as a career.

He worked off-Broadway and in summer stock in the 1960s, but had a change of heart, which took him out of the theater and into other life pursuits.

In 1987 he agreed to act in a friend's production of Len Jenkins' *Kid Twist* at Sideshows by the Seashore in Coney Island, where his then nine-year-old daughter Daisy saw him perform and decided she wanted to do the same thing herself.

In the 1990s he was cast in HBO Films *Judgment*, with Keith Carradine and Blythe Danner, and joined Avalon Repertory Theater in NYC, appearing in a baker's half-dozen stage dramas including *The Elephant Man*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Shaw's *Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, and Jerome Davis' *Pas de Deux*.

Opportunity knocked twice again when two friends asked him to act in their debut films--Eric Werthman's *Going Under* (2004) and Todd Gordon's *Pianoforte* (2018). Since then, Richard has been featured in a variety of short dramatic films, and is most proud to be seen as the title character in Todd Gordon's latest film, *Old Hen*. This fall, he will begin shooting a new feature by John Painz, *The Mourners*.



Ann McDonough (*Dolores*) - Ann was born on April 21, 1949 in Portland, Maine, USA as Ann Folan McDonough. She is an actress, known for *The Mothman Prophecies* (2002), *Moonstruck* (1987) and *Deceived* (1991). She has been married to Jack Gilpin since December 14, 1985. They have three children.



Beth McDonald (*Ruby*) - Beth is a Juilliard Drama graduate who has worked at regional theaters around the United States. She has appeared in the original Broadway companies of “Angels in America,” “A Few Good Men” and “Einstein and the Polar Bear.” Her television credits include several appearances on “Law and Order” and the role of Warden Helen Oliver on the soap opera “As the World Turns.” Other films beside “Old Hen” include “Mona Lisa Smile” and “The Bell Jar.” Her favorite productions are her three children Caitlin, Madeline and Tommy.



Alison Cimmet (*Megan*) - Film/TV: *The Big Sick*, “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel,” “Blacklist,” “Younger,” “Bull.” Broadway: *Gary, a Sequel to Titus Andronicus*; *Amelie*; *She Loves Me*; *Mystery of Edwin Drood*; *Bonnie & Clyde*; *Baby, It’s You!*; *Tale of Two Cities*. NYC/Regional: *Romeo & Juliet* (Westport); *Party Face* (City Center); *Into the Woods* (Fiasco/Old Globe); *Twelfth Night* (Prince Theater); *3 Kinds of Exile* (Atlantic Theater). Brown University graduate.



Anitra Brooks (*Minister*) - Anitra is an actor, singer-songwriter, musician, and educator. A graduate of Brown University and The Integrative Sound and Music Institute, she has toured the US and world with Drama Desk Award-nominated puppet performers and masked musicians **Big Nazo**, Drama Desk Award-nominated “bad-ass masters of vocalogy” **Hotmouth**, and with the dance and live music performance

installation **echo::system**. In her twenty years in New York City, she has performed at such venues as the Public Theater, Belasco Theater, LaMama, HERE Arts Center, Kraine Theater, Ohio Theatre and National Black Theatre. She has also been featured in numerous TV and radio commercials, TV shows and soap operas. As a recording artist, she has released two albums of original music: *Flood* in 2008 and *I Walk in Your Light* in 2015.

www.anitrabrooks.com



Jared Beasley (*Edgar*) - Jared is an actor, non-fiction author and screenwriter. He holds a degree in Theatre and Literature from the University of Alabama, and was recently featured on Ultrarunner Podcast. He has been published in Runner's World, Ultrarunning, and Like the Wind magazine, and his second book, "In Search of Al Howie," will be released on October 8th through Rocky Mountain Books.

Other Production-Team Bios

Kim Spurlock (*Producer*) – Kim received her MFA at NYU, where she directed several award-winning short films including the Student Academy Award winning and DOWN IN NUMBER 5. Her feature projects include THE BREAKLINE, which was featured by the Black List, selected for the Venice Biennale Cinema College and a grant from New York State Council on the Arts; and KIN, a Sundance Lab Finalist that was selected for IFP Emerging Visions and the Artists' Academy at the Film Society at Lincoln Center. Kim's web series LIVIN' THE DREAM, a comedy created with her sister Mai and set in NYC's Indie film world, was named *Best Bet* by BUST MAGAZINE, and won BEST ACTRESS at Austin Webfest and BEST COMEDY SERIES at Brooklyn Web Fest.

Robert Leitzell (*Director of Photographer*) - Robert was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Seattle, Washington. He graduated from Wesleyan University, where he studied Studio Art, Philosophy, and Set Design for the Theater. After designing an opera for an aspiring filmmaker, his photographs of the show got him his first job as a cinematographer, eventually leading him to attend graduate school at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Robert's work as a director of photography has taken him around the world, most recently spending four months in Cambodia on a Khmer/English feature film. He has also worked in a number of other countries including Mexico, England, Vietnam and Hong Kong, and spent extensive time working locally in New York, New Orleans, Miami, and Los Angeles.

His work has won awards at numerous festivals, including Sundance, SXSW, and Tribeca, and has been written up in magazines such as *American Cinematographer*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, and *CineFex*. In addition to his talents as a

cinematographer, Robert has done well-received work as the Technical Director of Visual Effects for such films as *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and *Approaching the Unknown*.

His experience in art departments, background as a director, and marriage to a brilliant production designer have made him uniquely aware of the challenges of friendly and active collaboration on a film set. He works really hard, he likes unusual circumstances, and he admires the difficulty of telling a story beautifully and appropriately.

When he's not working, he loves to play tennis and travel with his wife Olga. They currently reside in Brooklyn, NY and love to do their best work together.

Joseph Gutowski (*Editor*) - Joseph is a film editor who has cut over 20 feature films in a wide variety of genres, such as *Echelon Conspiracy*, *Bella*, *Front Cover*, and *Passenger 57*. He apprenticed with some of the industry's top film editors including Dede Allen, Stephen A. Rotter, and Richard Nord. Joseph is also a painter, and has had several exhibitions of his works in New York and California.

Elle Kunnos de Voss (*Production Designer*) – Elle is a Swedish award winning designer, visual artist and director. Her work ranges from production design, set and costume design for dance, theater and opera to architectural design and writing.

Elle holds an M.A. from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Design. After graduating in 2004, she came to New York City and has since completed production design for films, designed sets and costumes for performing arts productions in Europe and the US.

Her opera, *The Echo Drift*, premiered as part of the 2018 PROTOTYPE Festival in New York. For her work on *The Echo Drift* libretto she received the Opera Genesis Fellowship, alongside composer Mikael Karlsson, in 2015.

She has directed music videos for Swedish Grammy Award winning singer-song writer Anna Ternheim and for, former frontman of Polite Sleeper, Jason Orlovichs, solo debut Julio Nickels.

She also recently collaborated with choreographer Charlotta Öfverholm developing a physical dance piece, *Prosthesis*, playing at The Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm Sept 2019. Other recent work includes set and costume design for Johannes Wielands *Show to be true* / Fernando Melos *If walls could speak* at The Apollo Theater, NYC, costume design for *Too Much* by Wendy Houston, Dansens Hus Stockholm, *The Misanthrope* by Hunger and Thirst Theater New York, story and illustration for *Book of Loveistanis* with co-writer Gudlaug Fridgeirdottir for Gudrun Publishing / Safnabókin, Reykjavik.

Recent film projects include *Old Hen* by Todd Gordon / Samba Filmworks, Aizhan Tuganbays *Little Brain Surgeries* / Peilin Kuo's *Pianoforte* / Samba Filmworks NY, *The Frigid* by Aizhan Tuganbay / NY, *The Ceremony* by Lina Mannheimer /

French Quarter Film which premiered at SXSW in 2015, *Girls Lost* by Alexandra-
Therese Keining / Gotafilm which premiered at TIFF 2016.

“Old Hen” Crew

Writer & Director - Todd I. Gordon

Producer - Kim Spurlock

Director of Photography – Robert Leitzell

Editor - Joseph Gutowski

Production Designer - Elle Kunnos de Voss

Executive Producer - Todd I. Gordon

Assistant Director - Coren Helene-Gitomer

1st Assistant Camer - Isaac Banks

2nd Assistant Camera - Elizabeth Fletcher

Additional Assistant Camera - Corey Stein

Gaffer - Julian Tran

Grip - Jesse Moritz

Sound Mixer - Andrey Radovski

Art Director - Celina Arslanian

Casting Director - Byron Beane

Casting Coordinator - Michael Nicholas

Hair & Makeup - Ilise Harris

Script Supervisors - Elle Cohen, Monica Perez

Audio Post-Production Services - Audioworks NYC

Julian Evans - Supervising Sound Editor

Lisa Moyer – Sound Editor

Jake Pollack – Assistant Sound Editor

Digital Intermediate - Harbor Picture Company

Colorist – Alex Berman

DI Producer – Sheila Lobo

Conform Artist – Frederick Agyemang

Support Engineer – Jerome Raim

Supervising DI Producer – Kevin Vale

Account Executive – Molle DeBartolo

VFX Artist - Charlie Laude

Still Photographer - Jim Metzger

Production Assistants - Ashley Ferrieri, Jeremiah Gallagher, Anthony Di Martino,
Henry Weed

Music in “Old Hen”

"What A Difference A Day Makes"

Performed by Dinah Washington

Courtesy of Verve Music Group under license from Universal Music Enterprises

“Old Hen” Stills



Richard Eagan as Henry in “Old Hen.” Cinematographer: Robert Leitzell

“Old Hen” Stills (cont’d)



Richard Egan as Henry in “Old Hen.” Cinematographer: Robert Leitzell



Richard Egan as Henry and Ann McDonough as Dolores in “Old Hen.”
Cinematographer: Robert Leitzell

“Old Hen” Stills (cont’d)



Ann McDonough as Dolores in “Old Hen.” Cinematographer: Robert Leitzell



Richard Eagan as Henry and Beth McDonald as Ruby in “Old Hen.”
Cinematographer: Robert Leitzell

“Old Hen” Stills (cont’d)



Anitra Brooks as the Minister in “Old Hen.” Cinematographer: Robert Leitzell



Jared Beasley as Edgar in “Old Hen.” Cinematographer: Robert Leitzell

“Old Hen” Social Media

Official Website: www.sambafilmworks.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/sambafilmworks

The electronic press kit may be downloaded at www.sambafilmworks.com