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SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

presents  
A Westerly Films Production

**Whit Stillman's**  
**DAMSELS IN DISTRESS**



**2011 Venice Film Festival, Closing Night**

**2011 Toronto International Film Festival**

Total Runtime: 98min

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*Preliminary Press Notes*

## The Cast

Violet Wister	GRETA GERWIG
Charlie Walker	ADAM BRODY
Lily	ANALEIGH TIPTON
Rose	MEGALYN ECHIKUNWOKE
Heather	CARRIE MacLEMORE
Xavier	HUGO BECKER
Frank	RYAN METCALF
Thor	BILLY MAGNUSSEN
Priss	CAITLIN FITZGERALD
Jimbo	JERMAINE CRAWFORD
Depressed Debbie	AUBREY PLAZA
Rick DeWolfe	ZACH WOODS
Mad Madge	ALIA SHAWKAT
“Freak” Astaire	NICK BLAEMIRE
Alice	MEREDITH HAGNER
Positive Polly	AJA NAOMI KING
Prof. Black	TAYLOR NICHOLS
At the diner: Carolina	CAROLYN FARINA
Waitress	SHINNERIE JACKSON
Sincere Highway Worker	GERRON ATKINSON
Fresh Highway Worker	JONNIE LOUIS BROWN
Seminar Suzanne	COLLEEN DENGEL
Ed School Girlfriend	CLARE HALPINE

## The Filmmakers

Writer-Director-Producer	WHIT STILLMAN
Producers	MARTIN SHAFER LIZ GLOTZER
Co-Producer	CHARLIE DIBE
Line Producer	JACOB JAFFKE
Consulting Producers	CECILIA KATE ROQUE ALICIA VAN COUVERING
Editor	ANDREW HAFITZ
Cinematographer	DOUG EMMETT
Composers	MARK SUOZZO & ADAM SCHLESINGER
Production Design	ELIZABETH J. JONES
Costumes	CIERA WELLS
Casting	KERRY BARDEN & PAUL SCHNEE AMY BRITT & ANYA COLLOFF
Choreographer	JUSTIN CERNE
Locations	CHRIS MENGES
Makeup	ANOUCK SULLIVAN
Hair Stylist	SATOKO ICHINOSE
Script Supervisor	DUSTIN BRICKER
Production Sound	MIKHAIL STERKIN
Re-recording Sound Mixer	TOM PAUL
Special Fashions	KRISTA BLOMBERG

**DAMSELS IN DISTRESS** follows a trio of beautiful girls who set out to revolutionize life at a grungy East Coast College – the dynamic leader Violet Wister (Greta Gerwig), principled Rose (Megalyne Echikunwoke) and sexy Heather (Carrie MacLemore). They welcome transfer student Lily (Tipton) into their group which seeks to help severely depressed students with a program of good hygiene and musical dance numbers. The girls become romantically entangled with a series of men -- including slick Charlie (Brody), dreamboat Xavier (Hugo Becker) and the mad frat pack of Frank (Ryan Metcalf) and Thor (Billy Magnussen)—who threaten the girls’ friendship and sanity.

### **PARTIAL SYNOPSIS**

Seven Oaks is an East Coast college with beautiful Greek Revival architecture and a boorish male student population. Decades after coeducation’s arrival the male atmosphere still prevails.

A dynamic trio of girls -- group leader Violet Wister (Greta Gerwig), principled Rose (Megalyne Echikunwoke) and sexy Heather (Carrie MacLemore) -- sets out to change all that, as well as rescue their fellow students from depression, grunge and low standards of every kind. They spot lost-looking Lily (Analeigh Tipton) at New Student Orientation and take her under wing to guide her through the world of Seven Oaks.

First stop is a weekend dance at the D.U. fraternity, part of Seven Oaks Roman-letter fraternity system – “Youth Outreach” in Violet’s parlance. She introduces Lily to Frank (Ryan Metcalf), her naïve but enthusiastic D.U. boyfriend. After leading everyone in dancing, Violet explains her own lifetime goal – to start an international dance craze that might enhance “the life of everyone and every couple.”

Next the girls introduce Lily to their main activity, running the university’s “Suicide Center” where a regime of donuts, good coffee, and musical dance numbers are intended to distract severely depressed and suicidal students from self-destruction. There they quiz Lily on her love life – “boyfriends are a major suicide risk.” Lily reveals that over the summer she became “pals” with a grad student named Xavier though he has a girlfriend Lily likes too.

When a young student rushes in, he's immediately sat down for a coffee, donut and in-take interview. When Jim Bose – his friends call him “Jimbo” (Jermaine Crawford)-- says that he lives at Doar Dorm the girls gasp: Doar Dorm is notorious for its foul odor. Finding a better smelling place to live might assuage his depressed state, they advise. Jimbo says it's not himself but Priss, a beautiful girl in his dorm, whom he's worried about. After a sad break up she's gone silent. The campus cops are called as the group rushes to Doar Dorm, rescuing Priss (Caitlin Fitzgerald) with police help.

At the Coffee Cottage Violet consoles the distraught Priss, recently dumped by her blue eyed boyfriend, Josh. Lily joins them. After somewhat assuaging Priss's distress, Violet suggests they go to the orientation meeting at the Seven Oaks' newspaper, *The Daily Complainer*, though warning that its editor, Rick DeWolfe, is conceited and arrogant. On the walk to the *Complainer* Lily questions whether Violet might not seem a little arrogant too. “A rebel is amongst us!” Violet declares but says she welcomes such “chastisement.”

At the *Complainer*'s office Rick DeWolfe (Zach Wood) strikes an arrogant note, mocking one of Violet's preferred therapies, tap dancing, as “moronic and barbaric. You seriously expect tap dancing to solve these people's problems?” Back at the Suicide Center Violet reassures “‘Freak' Astaire” (Nick Blaemire) but faces an outburst from Debbie (Aubrey Plaza), a black-clad depressive.

Meanwhile Lily visits handsome grad student Xavier (Hugo Becker) and his girlfriend, Alice (Meredith Hagner); as they prepare a meal Lily shows herself strangely ignorant of artichokes and balsamic vinegar. Another day Violet proposes to cheer Priss up by taking her over to meet the guys at the D.U. while Lily peels off to visit Xavier again. When Violet expresses her foreboding, Lily snaps back.

Xavier catches up with Lily, inviting her to drinks at the Oak Bar where Alice joins them. As Lily and Xavier argue about Rick DeWolfe's campaign to extirpate Seven Oaks' Roman-letter

fraternities, Charlie Walker (Adam Brody) -- a suave young businessman -- sends drinks over to their table.

The next day the nature of this gesture sharply divides the girls -- Rose calls it a classic “playboy or oper-a-tor move,” while Violet sees it as generous and romantic. When the apparent playboy Charlie takes Lily out and seems to be plying her with martinis Xavier interrupts to “rescue” her – to both Lily’s and Alice’s annoyance. Consumed with jealousy, Alice soon departs Xavier’s life leaving the way open for him to begin a relationship with Lily.

Meanwhile Priss has started hanging out at the D.U. with Frank whose blue eyes intrigue her; there she encounters Thor (Billy Magnussen), an incongruously studious frat brother who’s defensive about the very basic educational subjects he still has to cover.

A sudden reversal sends Violet into a tailspin and slowly the contradictory narrative of her life and those around her is revealed.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

There's a saying that the way to end up in the future one wants is to invent it oneself.

It's hard not to admire the idealists who, not content with the existent world, seek to invent new ones. But the confidence and mastery these future-architects embody often disguise a fragile persona that's frail, inadaptive and, finally, easily shattered.

In the film the word "tailspin" plays a key role. In aviation, the term evokes the image of a plane in steep dive, nose-first, spiraling downward. The second, informal usage is "a loss of emotional control sometimes resulting in emotional collapse."

Just as pilots use steep dives to build speed and regain control, pulling out just before they hit ground, our heroine finds downward velocity reforming her life – but in steep descent one cannot be sure a fatal crash will be avoided.

--Whit Stillman, August 2011

# # #

## **PRODUCTION NARRATIVE**

### **- Whit Stillman**

Returning to college to visit friends some time after graduating everyone was full of stories of an amazing group of girls who had revolutionized campus social life. They dressed up, wore perfume and transformed university socializing which in our day had been grungy and grim.

I never knew the girls or learned any specifics of their escapades but, proposing a college comedy to film companies, I found that analogous groups had emerged at many other colleges in the wake of coeducation. Suddenly I had a film idea more than one company wanted.

Coeducation had swept American university campuses in the very late 1960s and more particularly the early 1970s. But years and decades later some colleges with distinctly male identities still lacked an atmosphere entirely comfortable for women. Our idea was that “Seven Oaks University” would be such a school – a formerly male bastion where decades after coeducation an atmosphere of male barbarism still prevails.

I was fortunate that the project ended up with Liz Glotzer and Martin Shafer at Castle Rock Entertainment with whom I had had such good experiences making BARCELONA and THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO.

Again the experience of writing a script for them was exhilarating, as such supervision rarely is. In late January 2010, a month after submitting the delivery draft, standing on the deserted and windswept main street of Mark Twain’s old haunt -- Virginia City, Nevada – I got the call that they wanted to go ahead with a “polish” with the idea of moving ahead with the film soon after.

For the production the pivotal moment came in the spring when we were discussing how to raise financing – the usual frustrating obstacle course of star casting, foreign presales, equity financing, and searching for a domestic distribution deal loomed. Having seen two good projects become hopelessly stuck in that morass I had been thinking of how it could be avoided. The experience with our first film, METROPOLITAN, had been to go ahead with whatever resources were at hand and that had gone well. The response was that for a film on that scale, or even



quite a bit above it, private investment would be immediately available. We were a go but our production had to be compact.

We had already started casting in Los Angeles with the young casting team of Amy Britt and Anya Colloff. Through them we had almost immediately found Analeigh Tipton (part undecided), Aubrey Plaza (part undecided) and Megalyn Echikunwoke for ROSE.

I was starting from the usual position of ignorance with the excuse this time that I'd been living abroad. The film style known as "Mumblecore" I had heard of but not actually witnessed or strained to hear. A meeting with the highly recommended Greta Gerwig was set for a West Village watering hole. As a striking pretty blond we assumed that it would be to play the "bombshell" LILY part.

Fortunately Greta had the insight to see herself in the VIOLET part, and she and her agents did not adhere to the stultifying rule that established actors not audition. After the casting base had shifted to Paul Schnee and Kerry Barden's operation in New York (Kerry had helped cast THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO) Greta came in to perform the Violet role in all its aspects, including stellar singing and tap dancing turns.

At one casting session Amy and Anya brought an actress in to read for HEATHER who seemed a bit unlikely for that role. It had been a discouraging morning with the script sounding like wood in the mouths of the talented performers who came in and I was in despair.

Suddenly the wooden words made great sense in this actress's version. She still seemed a stretch for Heather but – in what I learned was a "Mumblecore" pattern – the good actress turned out to be good at other film tasks too: in this case, a terrific director. Lena Dunham had just won the top prize with her film TINY FURNITURE at the South by Southwest and was involved in all sorts of promising activities.

This was a key meeting. Lena became a friend to the production, helped at a table reading, agreed to play a funny part in the film until work on her TV show intervened and -- most

importantly – introduced us to her film’s co-producer, Alicia Van Couvering. The line producer Cecilia Roque had advised us on all our films and would help on DAMSELS as well. We had the idea of combining the production approach we had taken on the previous films with the techniques and young crew Mumblecore films such as Lena’s used. Alicia would help set the path we’d follow. Through her we found the key young crew who would execute the film: co-producer Charlie Dibe, line producer Jacob Jaffke and cinematographer Doug Emmett. Then at a key moment Cecilia brought in the highly experienced indie Assistant Director Curtis Smith to run the set.

In New York the casting sessions run by Paul and Allison Estrin found a trio of actors who came in with beautifully worked out comic performances: Ryan Metcalfe as FRANK (“do you mind if I try a version that’s a little broad?”), Billy Magnussen bouncing off the walls as THOR (and later destroying a couple of costly radio mikes in his energetic performance – but worth it), and the very funny when sad Caitlin Fitzgerald as PRISS. They would all be united in a colorful D.U. frat house scene.

An authentic Southern belle -- from both Mississippi and Alabama – Carrie MacLemore was a knockout for the key Heather part, Jermaine Crawford (known for his work on “The Wire”) would be JIMBO, and Nick Blaemire, a skilled musicals hand, “FREAK” ASTAIRE.

The shoot was a true case in Youth Outreach. Almost no one seemed much older than twenty-five and the great mass seemed college age or just out. They were joined by collaborators who had worked on nearly all our films such as Cecilia, composer Mark Suozzo and editor Andy Hafitz. Key for our shoots has been finding a central location where much of the work can be achieved. For DAMSELS locations manager Chris Menges found the dream location of all time.

## **ABOUT THE LOCATION – SNUG HARBOR**

Except for a day on a Brooklyn sound stage the entire film would be shot at or just around Sailors' Snug Harbor in Staten Island, New York – legally within the New York City limits but geographically and culturally (if that's the word) connected to the New Jersey-Pennsylvania mid-Atlantic land mass which we had always considered the probable locus of the fictional Seven Oaks.

Snug Harbor, also known as the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, is a collection of architecturally significant 19th century buildings set in a park located along the Kill Van Kull on the north shore of Staten Island in New York City. It was once a home for aged sailors and is now an 83-acre (340,000 m<sup>2</sup>) city park. Sailors' Snug Harbor includes 26 Greek Revival, Beaux Arts, Italianate and Victorian style buildings. The site is considered Staten Island's "crown jewel" -- "an incomparable remnant of New York's 19th-century seafaring past" – and has been declared a National Historic Landmark District.

Snug Harbor was founded by the 1801 bequest of New York tycoon Captain Robert Richard Randall who left his estate to build an institution to care for "aged, decrepit and worn-out" seamen. When Sailors' Snug Harbor opened in 1833, it was the first home for retired merchant seamen in the history of the United States. It began with a single building, now the centerpiece in the row of five Greek Revival temple-like buildings on the New Brighton waterfront. Captain Thomas Melville, a retired sea captain and brother of Moby-Dick author Herman Melville, was governor of Snug Harbor from 1867 to 1884.

### **Architecture of the Site**

The five interlocking Greek Revival buildings at Snug Harbor are regarded as "the most ambitious moment of the classic revival in the United States" and the "most extraordinary" suite of Greek temple-style buildings in the country. With the 1833 Main Hall as the centerpiece, five stately Greek Revival buildings "form a symmetrical composition on Richmond Terrace, an eight-columned portico in the center and two six-columned porticoes on either end."

The New York Times' architectural critic Paul Goldberger wrote, "Snug Harbor has something of the feel of a campus, something of the feel of a small-town square. Indeed, these rows of classical temples, set side-by-side with tiny connecting structures recessed behind the grand facades, are initially perplexing because they fit into no pattern we recognize - they are lined up as if on a street, yet they are set in the landscape of a park. They seem at once to embrace the 19th-century tradition of picturesque design and, by virtue of their rigid linear order, to reject it."

The 1833 administration building by Minard Lafever is a "magnificent" Greek Revival building with a monumental Ionic portico, and is the architect's oldest surviving work. It was renovated in 1884 with "an eye-popping triple-height gallery with stained glass and ceiling murals," and restored in the 1990's.

### **Greenery of Sailors' Snug Harbor**

All five of the famous row of Greek Revival buildings are individually landmarked, as are the 131-year-old chapel, which has been renovated as a recital and concert space; the Italinete Richmond Terrace gate house (1873), the mid-nineteenth century iron fence surrounding the property, and the interiors of the Main Hall and the chapel.

The buildings are set in extensive, landscaped grounds, surrounded by an individually landmarked, nineteenth century cast iron fence. They include a beautiful 1893 zinc fountain featuring the god Neptune, now indoors with a replica in its place. According to the New York Times, "He sits in the middle, astride a shell held aloft by sea monsters, his trident raised. Jets of water spurt from the fountain's center and from bouquets of metal calla lilies to its sides... Noisy New York and its busy harbor only 200 feet (61 m) away, beyond Richmond Terrace, might just as well be on Mars. Or at least at the other end of His Majesty's sea."

*(Credit for Snug Harbor history: Wikipedia.)*

Also on the grounds is a bronze statue of Robert Randall by Augustus Saint-Gaudens and the Staten Island Botanical Gardens, which provide the exotically floral setting for the cast to dance through during two stanzas of George and Ira Gershwin's depression remedy, "THINGS ARE LOOKING UP!"

## **THE DAMSELS & THEIR DISTRESS - characters and cast:**

**VIOLET WISTER** (Greta Gerwig) is the indomitable group leader -- though later shown somewhat dominated -- whose central project is looking for troubled souls to rescue. “Violet has the element of the child who goes around looking for hurt birds,” says Stillman. “Her group is a self-designated animal rescue league, looking for ‘hurt birds’ they can assist. Unfortunately they sometimes misidentify a bird that isn’t a hurt; sometimes the hurt bird strikes back.” Says Gerwig: “Violet has such strange convictions, but she stands behind them so firmly and tries to get everybody else to see them too. The more people make fun of her and tell her she’s crazy, the more it steels her to the task of improving the world and helping people improve themselves. While she’s convinced that she’s right about certain things, she’s also pathologically open to being wrong. She’s a glutton for punishment, which I think is very funny—she almost seeks disapproval so that she can improve herself.” Violet later also turns out to be quite different than she initially presents herself to be.

**ROSE** (Megalyne Echikunwoke) is Violet’s closest collaborator and the two have a long back-story. While Violet is sometimes painfully open to other people’s criticism, Rose is more judgmental. “Rose is the opinionated voice of reason in the group,” says Echikunwoke. “She tends to be practical, but she’s got some pretty strong ideas about certain things, especially college life. She presents herself as a bit of a snob” -- manifest in her skeptical attitude toward a variety of men as “charlatans,” “playboys” or “op-er-a-tor types” – though much of this is almost certainly a comic pose. “The Rose character is based on the Anglo-colonial Caribbean women I’ve known who greatly impressed me with their strong personalities and oblique humor,” Stillman says. None of this was in the character description when Megalyne came in to read for the part but during the audition Stillman asked if she could try it with an accent. Megalyne had just been visiting a Nigerian-British friend who had a snob British accent. “The British version immediately clicked with the character,” Stillman said. “Though Megalyne did a brilliant job with the accent we always wanted to use its fraudulent conception in some way.” Occupied with pre-production and then the shoot Stillman didn’t write the Rose back-story scene until the morning before the shoot’s final day but it ended up a signature moment in the film.

**HEATHER** (Carrie MacLemore) is the third wheel in Violet's group. Petite and sweet, she has developed unique theories regarding the relationship between physical characteristics and human behavior. "Heather is not tremendously smart but has a lot of candid opinions and is not afraid to turn those opinions against herself," says Stillman. While conceding that Heather's ideas are odd, MacLemore doesn't believe that Heather considers herself to be unintelligent. "I play her as the brightest person ever," she says. "Heather is always explaining really basic things to people, and I think that if you're always doing that, you must actually think you're smarter than everyone else." Carrie's background – an authentic Southern belle who grew up in Mississippi and Alabama and only recently came to New York – gives a texture to her performance filling out the central trio.

**LILY** (Analeigh Tipton) is a new transfer student to Seven Oaks, whom the Violet group immediately seeks to rescue from "failure and sadness." "Lily is a normal, middle-of-America girl. She doesn't know a lot of things, and she's suddenly pulled into this very elaborate world by Violet, Rose and Heather," says Tipton. "She's a little hesitant; she finds it a bit weird, but she decides to ride that vibe for awhile." While Lily generally displays all signs of being a sophisticated young woman, there are occasional moments where we catch sight of her provincial background. She grew up in the kind of house where the only vegetables came in cans and a "dry" town where one had to drive far to buy alcohol legally. She allows herself to fall under the influence of a handsome but holds to her own conformist views against Violet's extravagant ones.

**CHARLIE** (Adam Brody) is the suave young businessman who attracts the attentions of two of the women in the group. "Charlie is a man of strong ideals and opinions," says Brody. "He's extremely nostalgic for a bygone era of art and manners and civility in expression, of being chivalrous. He's a really good guy, and yet at the same time he thinks that making it up and lying are different things, as long as his intentions are good." Says Stillman: "Charlie is a person with the gift of gab who has considerable imagination without much outlet for it at Seven Oaks. His creativity goes into developing an alternate identity which strangely complements Violet's similar tendency. Like everyone else though he is initially, and for a long time, attracted to Lily who is a bit of a tabula rasa on which expectations can be projected. But Lily has her

own nature that's not a blank." Charlie proved the hardest part to cast. "We had submissions for lots of wonderful actresses but no Charlies came close," Stillman says. Consulting Producer Cecilia Roque had worked with Adam on *The Romantics* and strongly recommended him. "Finally on an unexpected late trip to Los Angeles we could meet. Adam immediately had the part and carried it out with aplomb. Nothing could be faster and better than shooting with Adam Brody."

**XAVIER** (Hugo Becker) was originally conceived as an American character -- "Tom," a handsome grad student, attractive to women but otherwise quite conventional. His adherence to Cathar Love was to have been his "interesting" incongruity. "We never found an America Tom," Stillman says, "Maybe Cathar Love scared them off or our girl dominated story. We were in extremis when Paul Nelson of Mosaic submitted an audition of Hugo's on tape. Hugo's version combined attractiveness and charm with the strangeness of the character." It was a struggle getting Hugo a visa in time -- he still had a slender resume in France and had not yet been crowned as the romantic "Prince Louis" of *Gossip Girl*. The nationality change also meant changing the character's name and the script -- the "Xavier as Xorro" debate came out of these last minute revisions.

## DAMSELS TOPICS:

### The major problem in contemporary social life

*VIOLET*

*Take Frank, my friend -- he's not some cool, handsome, "studly" macho-guy. No, not at all -- I can't bear guys like that! Frank's sort of a sad-sack really, wouldn't you say?*

*Rose and Heather nod.*

*LILY*

*What's a "sad-sack?"*

*ROSE*

*A loser!*

*LILY (to Violet)*

*You like losers?*

*VIOLET*

*Very much so. Do you know what's the major problem in contemporary social life?*

*LILY*

*What?*

*VIOLET*

*The tendency, very widespread, to always seek someone "cooler" than yourself -- always a stretch, often a big stretch. Why not instead find someone who's frankly inferior?*

*HEATHER*

*Someone like Frank.*

*VIOLET*

*Yes. It's more rewarding and in fact quite reassuring.*

*LILY*

*You mean, someone you can really help? Not just thinking of yourself?*

*VIOLET*

*Exactly! That's it. Precisely! But without the goody-goody implications -- our aspiration is pretty basic: Take a guy who hasn't realized his full potential, or doesn't have much, then help him realize it -- or find more.*



## **Lifetime career goals**

*VIOLET*

*I know that people can have useful careers in many areas: Medicine. Law. Finance—*

*ROSE*

*--Education--*

*VIOLET*

*Yes, even education -- but I'd like to do something especially significant in my lifetime, the sort of thing that changes the course of human history: such as start a new dance craze.*

*LILY*

*Really?*

*VIOLET*

*Yes. Something that might enhance the life of every one -- and every couple.*

## **The Suicide Prevention Center**

*VIOLET*

*You probably think we're frivolous, empty-headed, perfume-obsessed college coeds. You're probably right. I often feel empty headed--*

*Violet picks up the "Prevention" from the Center's sign from ground.*

*VIOLET (CONT'D)*

*But we're also trying to make a difference in people's lives. And one way to do that is to prevent them from killing themselves.... Have you ever heard the expression, "Prevention is nine-tenths the cure?" Well, in the case of suicide, it's actually ten-tenths.*

## **Rick, the Daily Complainer's editor, doubts their efficacy:**

*RICK*

*You should know something about these girls -- they run the "Suicide Center" where their preferred therapy for seriously depressed and suicidal people is ...tap dancing. I kid you not.*

*VIOLET*

*Tap is a very effective therapy as well as a dazzlingly expressive dance form. It's been sadly neglected for too many years.*

*RICK*

*It's moronic and barbaric. You seriously expect tap dancing to solve these people's problems?*

VIOLET

*No, we don't -- we're using the whole range of musical dance numbers which over many years have proven themselves effective therapies for the suicidal and hopelessly depressed.*

## **Education**

THOR

*I don't know about you but I don't think anyone should feel embarrassed about not knowing stuff. What's embarrassing is pretending to know what you don't -- or putting down other people just because you think they don't know as much as you. I'm happy to admit I'm completely ignorant. That's why I'm here and plan to really hit the books. The next time you see me, I'll know more than I do now. I'll be older, but also wiser -- or at least know more stuff. For me, that's education.*

## **The Decline of Decadence**

VIOLET

*Have you chosen a topic for your paper?*

FRED

*Uh, "The Decline of Decadence."*

VIOLET

*You think decadence has declined?*

FRED

*Definitely. Big time. Major, major decline.*

VIOLET

*How?*

FRED

*"How" or "in what ways?"*

VIOLET

*Either.*

FRED

*Okay, take the flit movement in literature, or homosexuality--*

VIOLET

*What?*

FRED

*Homosexuality. It's gone completely downhill. Right down the tubes.*

*He makes the sound: “Whchht.”*

*FRED (CONT'D)*

*Before, homosexuality was something refined, hidden, sublimated, aspiring to the highest forms of expression and often achieving them. Now it just seems to be a lot of muscle-bound morons running around in T-shirts.*

*Violet looks a little shocked.*

*FRED (CONT'D)*

*It's pretty disillusioning.*

*Violet pauses in thought for a long moment*

*VIOLET*

*Are you gay?*

*FRED*

*Not especially but in another era, it would have had more appeal. Now, I just don't see the point.*

*# # #*

## ABOUT THE CAST

**GRETA GERWIG (Violet)** made her mark starring in independent films such as HANNAH TAKES THE STAIRS and NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS. In 2010 she appeared opposite Ben Stiller in Noah Baumbach's GREENBERG, for which she was nominated for both a Gotham and an Independent Spirit Award.

Born in Sacramento, California, Gerwig studied ballet until her early teens and performed with the Sacramento Ballet, including playing the lead in "The Nutcracker." She fenced competitively in high school, ranking in the top eight nationally in the Junior Fencers category. At the same time she began acting in numerous plays, with a particular fondness for musicals: she appeared in productions of *Into the Woods*; *A Chorus Line*; *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*; *The Wiz* (as Dorothy); *The Boyfriend*; and *Babes in Arms*.

She attended the same Sacramento Catholic girls' school as DAMSELS' Analeigh Tipton – then went to Barnard College at Columbia University on a scholarship, where she studied English and Philosophy, continued acting, and wrote two absurdist plays: *Eloise in Suits* and *The There There*. After graduating Magna Cum Laude from Barnard in 2006, she was a writer-in-residence at the Vassar College and New York Stage & Film's Powerhouse Theater Festival. Soon after, Gerwig went to Chicago to play the title role in Joe Swanberg's HANNAH TAKES THE STAIRS (which she co-wrote), where she met her co-star Mark Duplass and his brother Jay, which led to her playing a lead role in their film BAGHEAD. She followed by teaming with Joe Swanberg to co-write, co-direct, and star in NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS. As low-budget films by Swanberg, the Duplass brothers, Andrew Bujalski and others came to be known as "Mumblecore," Gerwig became somewhat emblematic movement. Her other film credits include Mary Bronstein's YEAST, and Ti West's THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL.

This past year Gerwig appeared in the remake of ARTHUR with Russell Brand and in Ivan Reitman's NO STRINGS ATTACHED with Natalie Portman. She recently finished playing parts in Daryl Wein's LOLA VERSUS with Bill Pullman and Debra Winger and in Woody Allen's BOP DECAMERON with Woody Allen, Penelope Cruz, and Alec Baldwin.

**ADAM BRODY (Charlie)** is best known for his role as “Seth Cohen” on the popular TV series *The O.C.*, known as *Newport Beach* in many countries. He was raised near San Diego with his initial aspiration to surf – he considered acting a likely day job but almost immediately succeeded in getting work. Recent film roles have included *COP OUT*, with Bruce Willis, Sean William Scott and Tracy Morgan; Wes Craven’s *SCREAM 4*, and Julian Farino’s ensemble dramedy, *THE ORANGES*, Alia Shawkat, and Allison Janey. Other films include: *THE ROMANTICS*; Diablo Cody’s *JENNIFER’S BODY*; *IN THE LAND OF WOMEN*; *SMILEY FACE*; *THE TEN*; *THANK YOU FOR SMOKING*; *MR. AND MRS. SMITH*; *GRIND*; *THE RING*; and *MISSING BRENDAN*.

In addition to his work on *The O.C.*, Brody played recurring roles as “Coop” in *Once and Again*; as “Dave” in the WB’s Emmy®-nominated *Gilmore Girls*; and guest-starring roles in *Judging Amy*, *Family Law*, and *Smallville*. Upcoming for Brody are starring roles in Lorene Scafaria’s *SEEKING A FRIEND FOR THE END OF THE WORLD*, opposite Keira Knightley and Steve Carell; and *HEMLOCK DRIVE*, with David Arquette and Susan Sarandon, and directed by Rosanna Arquette.

**ANALEIGH TIPTON (Lily)** can currently be seen starring opposite Steve Carell and Julianne Moore in Dan Fogelman’s *CRAZY, STUPID, LOVE*. Recently, she appeared as Seth Rogen’s girlfriend in Michel Gondry’s *THE GREEN HORNET*. Upcoming for Tipton, are several episodes on HBO’s *Hung*, and a lead role in *SAMARITAN*, directed by Tenney Fairchild and produced by Daniel Dubiecki (*JUNO*, *UP IN THE AIR*). Born in Minnesota and raised in Central California, Tipton grew up as a competitive ice skater, competing twice in the U.S. Junior Figure Skating Championships. She is also a singer, dancer and an artist. After moving to Los Angeles, Tipton was a runner-up on *America’s Next Top Model*.

**MEGALYN ECHIKUNWOKE (Rose)** began acting at 14 when she moved from the Navajo reservation, where she grew up, to LA after being cast in her first movie. Megalyn is half Nigerian and her last name means “leader of men”. Along with numerous film and television roles Megalyn is known for playing “Nicole Palmer” in the first season of *24*, “Angie Barnett”

(Kelso's girlfriend) in the seventh season of *That 70's Show* and "Isabelle Tyler" in *The 4400*. Some of her indie film credits include the movie *WHO DO YOU LOVE* where she played a heroin-addicted lounge singer opposite Alessandro Nivola and did all her own singing. Currently she is starring opposite Don Cheadle in Showtime's *House of Lies* slated to begin airing in Jan 2012.

**CARRIE MacLEMORE (Heather)** makes her feature film debut in **DAMSELS IN DISTRESS**. Previously, she made guest appearances on *Gossip Girl*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, and *The Guiding Light*. Born in Mississippi and raised both there and in Montgomery, Alabama, MacLemore studied acting at New York's T. Schreiber Studio with Peter Miner, the Endeavor Studio, Upright Citizens Brigade, and at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

**HUGO BECKER (Xavier)** makes his American feature film debut in the film. The part of the dreamboat grad student who snogs Lily was originally conceived as the American TOM character but rewritten to accommodate Hugo's French nationality. His French films include Julien Leclercq's *L'ASSAUT*, *LA PREMIÈRE FOIS*, *LA CROISIÈRE*, and *LA PROIE*. Trained at the University of Lille, the Florent School in Paris and at RADA, Becker was selected for Adami's "Talents Cannes" at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, a prestigious list of notable up-and-coming actors. Since being cast in *DAMSELS* Hugo has created a stir as the romantic "Prince Louis Grimaldi" in a recurring role on *Gossip Girl*.

**BILLY (Thor) MAGNUSSEN's** recent feature film credits include starring roles in the feature films *TWELVE*, directed by Joel Schumacher, and *HAPPY TEARS*, starring Demi Moore, Parker Posey and Rip Torn. This year he filmed starring roles in the features, *TAN LINES*, *SURVIVING FAMILY* and *THE BRASS TEAPOT*, starring Juno Temple, all to be released in 2012. His television credits include guest starring roles on *IN PLAIN SIGHT*, *LAW AND ORDER*, *LAW AND ORDER CI*, *THE UNUSUALS* and *NCIS LA*. He played the role of Alex on the short lived CW Series *THE BEAUTIFUL LIFE*. This past February he starred along with Betty White in the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie *THE LOST VALENTINE* on CBS. He is best known for playing the lovable but unpredictable Casey Hughes on the daytime drama, *AS THE*

WORLD TURNS. Billy made his Broadway debut in THE RITZ starring Rosie Perez and made his Off Broadway debut in the play PAPER DOLLS. He is a proud graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and is a member of the rock band, Reserved for Rhondee.

**RYAN METCALF (Frank)** makes his film debut in a leading role in **DAMSELS IN DISTRESS**. A native of Detroit, Metcalf began acting professionally at 12, working often at the Attic Theatre in Detroit until he was 18. During his high school years, Metcalf played in the band As Dawn Falls. After graduating from the University of Detroit Mercy, he moved to New York, where he was accepted into the Masters Program at The Actors Center Conservatory. Metcalf appeared as “John” in Annette Apitz’s film FIGHTING FISH.

**CAITLIN FITZGERALD (Priss)** first attracted the attention of the film world with her role as “Lauren,” Meryl Streep’s daughter in Nancy Meyer’s IT’S COMPLICATED. She also starred opposite writer/director Edward Burns in NEWLYWEDS, which was the closing night presentation at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival, and played a role in Ang Lee’s TAKING WOODSTOCK. Fitzgerald’s other film credits include A JERSEY CHRISTMAS, MOVING PICTURES, MY LAST DAY WITH YOU, LOVE SIMPLE, and NATIONAL LAMPOON’S DIRTY MOVIE. On TV, Fitzgerald has a notable recurring role on *Gossip Girl* as “Epperly Lawrence,” Leighton Meester’s high-strung boss at W Magazine, and has been seen on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Mercy*, *How to Make it in America*, and *Blue Bloods*.

**JERMAINE CRAWFORD (Jimbo)** is best known for his starring role as “Dukie” on HBO’s classic TV series *The Wire*. He made his motion picture debut in 2010 in Joel Schumacher’s TWELVE, with Kiefer Sutherland. Crawford’s stage credits include: *Children of Eden*, *Carousel*, *The Miracle Worker* and *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*. He will soon be seen in the pilot for the series *Person of Interest*, starring Michael Emerson and Jim Caviezel, and in MALADIES, starring James Franco and Catherine Keener. Also a social activist, Crawford created “Code Blue,” a campaign to bring awareness of teenage homelessness, for which he recently created an online PSA, *Fight for Homeless Teens*.

**AUBREY PLAZA (Depressed Debbie)** currently stars as “April Ludgate,” the deadpan intern in the hit NBC comedy *Parks and Recreation*. She played Seth Rogen’s love interest in FUNNY PEOPLE and appeared in SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD. Upcoming for Plaza is SAFETY NOT GUARANTEED, with Kristin Bell and Jeff Garlin, and THE HAND JOB, with Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Alia Shawkat and Andy Samberg. Her TV credits include *30 Rock*, *The Jeannie Tate Show*, *Keith Powell Directs a Play*, *Mayne Street*, and *Portlandia*. Plaza began her career performing improv and sketch comedy with the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater, and has recently begun performing standup.

**ZACH WOODS (Rick DeWolfe)** plays “Gabe Lewis” on the NBC comedy *The Office*, and was highly praised for his role as the ambitious State Department assistant in the acclaimed film IN THE LOOP. Woods is a regular performer at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre and is part of the improvisational sketch troupe “The Stepfathers.” His other film credits include HIGH ROAD and THE OTHER GUYS.

**ALIA SHAWKAT (Mad Madge)** is best known for her role as “Maebly Fünke” in the acclaimed TV series *Arrested Development*. Her film credits include THREE KINGS, AMREEKA, WHIP IT, THE RUNAWAYS, THE LIE, CEDAR RAPIDS, THAT’S WHAT SHE SAID and upcoming THE ORANGES and THE HAND JOB. Shawkat is also slated to reprise her role as “Maebly Fünke” in announced feature version of *Arrested Development*.

**NICK BLAEMIRE (Freak Astaire)** wrote the music and lyrics for the Broadway musical *Glory Days*, when he was 26 years old. The show premiered in early 2008 at the Signature Theatre in Arlington, Virginia, and was transferred to Broadway in May of that year. Blaemire recently appeared on Broadway in *Cry-Baby*, and appeared on *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*.

**TAYLOR NICHOLS** -- who played lead roles in Whit Stillman’s METROPOLITAN and BARCELONA, and cameos as those two characters in THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO -- reprises his METROPOLITAN role as “Charlie Black,” now a teacher at Seven Oaks. His film credits include THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT, BOILER ROOM, and JURASSIC PARK III. Nichols had recurring roles on the TV series *Man of the People*, *Chicago Hope*, *Judging Amy*, *The Mind*



*of the Married Man, The Practice, and Criminal Minds, and has recently appeared on Modern Family, Monk, Medium, 24, Sleeper's Cell, Grey's Anatomy, and CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, among many other shows.*

In addition to playing “Audrey Rouget” in Whit Stillman’s METROPOLITAN and THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO, **CAROLYN FARINA (Carolina)** appeared in Martin Scorsese’s THE AGE OF INNOCENCE and Jane Spencer’s LITTLE NOISES.

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## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**WHIT STILLMAN (Writer/Director/Producer)** is the writer-director of four films, the last three in collaboration with producers Martin Shafer and Liz Glotzer. His first film, METROPOLITAN (1990), was well-received at the Sundance, Deauville and Cannes festivals, as well as winning several awards and an Oscar nomination. His next two films, BARCELONA and THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO, were also well received and won awards. He turned the latter story into a novel, *The Last Days of Disco, with Cocktails at Petrossian Afterward*, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Stillman graduated from Harvard where he was an editor of the *Harvard Crimson*. After stints in book publishing and journalism he became involved in the Spanish film industry, working on and appearing in Fernando Colomo’s Manhattan-set comedy SKYLINE and Fernando Treuba’s SAL GORDA with Paco Rabal. For the past decade he lived in Paris and Madrid while working film projects in London. He has two daughters, one in college in the United States and the other studying law in Dublin.

**MARTIN SHAFER (Producer)** is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Castle Rock Entertainment. Castle Rock recently produced FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS, BERNIE, FASTER, FLIPPED, DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MORGAN’S?, NO RESERVATIONS, MUSIC AND LYRICS, MICHAEL CLAYTON, FRACTURE, SLEUTH, IN THE LAND OF WOMEN, FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION, MISS CONGENIALITY 2: ARMED &

FABULOUS, and THE POLAR EXPRESS. Among Castle Rock's most critically praised and memorable films are: WHEN HARRY MET SALLY; A FEW GOOD MEN (which was nominated for four Academy Awards®); ABSOLUTE POWER; CITY SLICKERS; IN THE LINE OF FIRE; HONEYMOON IN VEGAS; MISERY (for which Kathy Bates won the Academy Award® for Best Actress); THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT; THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION (nominated for seven Academy Awards®); and THE GREEN MILE (nominated for four Academy Awards®). The company also produced the enormously popular and award-winning television show *Seinfeld*. In 1995, Castle Rock Entertainment received the "Excellence in Filmmaking Award" at ShoWest.

Prior to forming Castle Rock, Martin Shafer was President of Production for Embassy Pictures and served as Executive Vice President of Production at Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. In October 2000, Shafer received the Lifetime Achievement Award at Show East. Martin Shafer was also one of the producers of BEOWULF.

**LIZ GLOTZER (Producer)** joined Castle Rock Entertainment at its inception, and was then promoted to President of Motion Pictures. During her tenure, Castle Rock has produced over ninety films including: WHEN HARRY MET SALLY; MISERY (with Kathy Bates winning the Academy Award® for Best Actress); HONEYMOON IN VEGAS; IN THE LINE OF FIRE; THE GREEN MILE; A FEW GOOD MEN (nominated for four Academy Awards®); THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION (nominated for seven Academy Awards®); CITY SLICKERS; BEST IN SHOW; MISS CONGENIALITY; THE POLAR EXPRESS; and MICHAEL CLAYTON. Glotzer has most recently produced the upcoming films FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS (starring Justin Timberlake and Mila Kunis) and BERNIE (starring Jack Black and Shirley MacLaine), as well as FRACTURE, MUSIC AND LYRICS and FASTER.

Prior to joining Castle Rock, she was an executive at Samuel Goldwyn Company and was involved in a number of projects, including the sleeper hit, MYSTIC PIZZA. Glotzer received her B.A. from Bennington College and her M.F.A. from USC's Peter Stark Program.

**CHARLIE DIBE (Co-Producer)** has worked for a dozen years in independent film. Most recently he was coordinator on Steve McQueen's SHAME and an additional producer on Susan

Youssef's *HABIBI*, both screening at the Venice and Toronto Film Festivals. He also worked with the artist Gregory Crewdson for the past 7 years on his *Beneath the Roses* series. Currently he's in production on *IMOGENE*, directed by Bob Pulcini & Shari Springer Berman. With the director Bobby Abate he also has in development the feature project *DRESSED IN BLACK*, inspired by music of the Shangri-Las. Originally from Cleveland, Charlie attended Bard College prior to coming to New York City.

**Cecilia Kate Roque (Consulting Producer)** has served producer or line producer for many independent films, working with such directors as Jim Jarmusch, David Mamet, Hal Hartley, Ed Harris and Robert Benton. She advised Stillman on the production of *METROPOLITAN* and was co-producer of *BARCELONA* and *THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO*. Roque received an Emmy nomination for "Postwar Hopes; Cold War Fears" part of the Bill Moyers' series *A Walk Through the 20th Century*. *POLLOCK*, directed by Ed Harris, was a selection for the New York Film Festival and won an Academy Award. Roque's recent TV production credits include the popular series *RESCUE ME* and HBO's *HOW TO MAKE IT IN AMERICA*.

**Alicia Van Couvering (Consulting Producer)** is a producer of Lena Dunham's first film, *TINY FURNITURE*, which won the SXSW Film Festival in 2010 as well as recognition from the Independent Spirit Awards, Gotham Awards, and New York Film Critics Circle. Other production credits include Barbara Kopple's *MY GENERATION*, Phil Morrison's *JUNEBUG*, Todd Solondz's *PALINDROMES* and *LIFE DURING WARTIME*, Frank V. Ross' *AUDREY THE TRAINWRECK*. Current projects include the documentary *PAUL WILLIAMS: STILL ALIVE*, Bryan Wizeman's *THINK OF ME* and Ry Russo-Young's *NOBODY WALKS*. She is a contributing editor to *Filmmaker Magazine* and in 2010 was named a Creative Producing Fellow of the Sundance Institute.

Since graduating from NYU Film School in 2006, **DOUG EMMETT (Director of Photography)** has shot six feature films, including Academy Award-nominated director Dana Adam Shapiro's *MONOGAMY*, which won Best New York Narrative Film at the 2010 Tribeca Film Festival and was recently released by Oscilloscope. After lensing numerous shorts and an episode of the ESPN series, *30 for 30*, "Silly Little Game," Emmett made his feature debut with Annette Apitz's *FIGHTING FISH* in 2009, followed by Ramin Serry's *LOVELESS, BUT*

BEAUTIFUL, and Lee Kirk's THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN, with Jenna Fischer, Chris Messina, Topher Grace, and Malin Ackerman.

**ELIZABETH JONES (Production Designer)** was born in Fairfax, Virginia, where she developed her love for the arts at an early age. Jones studied at Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, completing her BFA in film with an emphasis on art history. Over the past few years, she has worked with MTV, The Learning Channel, Alloy Marketing, Showtime and Condé Nast. Her recent feature production design work includes Jaffe Zinn's MAGIC VALLEY (Official Selection at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival); Sam Neave's ALMOST IN LOVE; Steven Kampman's BUZZKILL; James M. Hausler's KALAMITY; and Nick Sandow's PONIES. Jones recently completed work on THE CONFESSION, directed by Kiefer Sutherland and Brad Mirman. Jones is also slated to design UNICORNS, Leah Meyerhoff's debut feature later this year and this will be her second collaboration with producer Heather Rae.

Before returning to New York City in 2005 to complete her MFA in costume design at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, **CIERA WELLS (Costumes)** spent four years in Antwerp, Belgium and Nagoya, Japan designing costumes for theater, dance and film and teaching. Her film credits include Nayan Padrai's WHEN HARRY TRIES TO MARRY; Bruce Ornstein's VAMPIRIFICA; and Zeina Durra's THE IMPERIALISTS ARE STILL ALIVE!, which played in competition at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. Her theatre credits include *Green Girl* (Public Theater), *Misalliance* (NY Classical Theater), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (Loft Theater), *What the Thunder Said* (Bluemouth), and numerous productions for the 52nd Street Project. Wells also designed the costumes for works by choreographers Cherylyn Lavignino and Christopher William. Wells is one of the resident costume designers for Actor's Studio at Pace University's repertory season and for the past two years has been The Continuum Company's set and costume designer of their essential Shakespeare series.

**ANDREW HAFITZ (Editor)** has collaborated on Whit Stillman's films since 1993 when he started as Associate Editor on BARCELONA and then served as co-editor for THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO. He has edited such features as Lodge Kerrigan's KEANE; Larry Clark's BULLY; and Cruz Angeles' DON'T LET ME DROWN, which has garnered several festival

awards, including Best Editor at the 2009 Woodstock Film Festival. He also has extensive documentary credits, including the feature *THE LIFESTYLE: GROUP SEX IN THE SUBURBS*, and the 2005 winner of the Edward R. Murrow Award for Best Network News Documentary, *True Life: I'm in Iraq*, both directed by David Schisgall. Hafitz maintains homes in Manhattan and Willow, New York.

**MARK SUOZZO (Composer)** began his composing career on Whit Stillman's debut film, *METROPOLITAN*, and the collaboration has continued with all of Stillman's subsequent features: *BARCELONA*, *LAST DAYS OF DISCO*. Suozzo's other feature credits include Shari Springer-Berman and Robert Pulcini's *AMERICAN SPLENDOR* and *THE NANNY DIARIES*, and Mary Harron's *THE NOTORIOUS BETTIE PAGE*. His documentary credits include *SOUND AND FURY*, *SHELTER DOGS*, *WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?*, and *WELL-FOUNDED FEAR*. As an arranger, Suozzo has recorded with Creed, Aretha Franklin, Jaheim, The Matrix, and Britney Spears. He lives in New York City.

**ADAM SCHLESINGER (Composer)** is a songwriter, performer and record producer. He has been nominated for Oscar, Tony, Emmy, Grammy, and Golden Globe Awards. He is the bassist for the bands Fountains of Wayne, Ivy and Tinted Windows and is an owner of Scratchie Records and Stratosphere Sound. Schlesinger wrote and co-produced the title song to Tom Hanks' directorial debut, *That Thing You Do!* He composed and produced several original songs, including *Way Back into Love*, for the 2007 film *Music and Lyrics*, starring Hugh Grant and Drew Barrymore. His music has also been featured in films such as *Shallow Hal* (which he scored with Ivy); *Robots*; *There's Something About Mary*; *Me, Myself & Irene*; *Josie and the Pussycats*; *Scary Movie*; *Art School Confidential*; *Fever Pitch*; *The Manchurian Candidate*; *Because of Winn-Dixie*; *Orange County*;<sup>1</sup> *Two Weeks Notice*; and others. Schlesinger grew up in Manhattan and Montclair, New Jersey.

**JUSTIN CERNE's (Choreographer)** career has run the spectrum from stage actor to film choreographer and various projects in-between. He has worked all over the country including productions at the MGM Grand Las Vegas (as an actor in the American Premiere of *Jerry Springer: The Opera*); Yale School of Drama (Musical Stager for Bertolt Brecht's *Man is*

*Man*); and the NYC Fringe Festival (Musical Stager for *Saving Throw*). Cerne is currently working on a stage project, *Foiled by a Feeling*, a collaboration with his sister on an original screenplay dealing with how a family's loss of a loved one forces them to face unresolved issues. The son of a naval aviator, Cerne lived all over the country and world before settling in New York City, where he received a degree in Theatre from Marymount Manhattan College. He has been dancing since he was five years old.

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