



Marion Bridge



A film by Wiebke von Carolsfeld
Canada, 93 Minutes, 2002

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Press Kit

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Short Synopsis

In the midst of struggling to overcome her self destructive behavior, the youngest of three sisters, Agnes (Molly Parker), returns to her hometown in Nova Scotia determined to confront the past. Her arrival sets in motion a chain of events that allows a family of women to each in their own way re-connect with the world and each other. First time director Wiebke von Carolsfeld's debut speaks volumes about sibling and parental relationships with a beautifully realized tale of loss, healing and humor.

The film stars **Molly Parker** (*Max, Kissed*), **Rebecca Jenkins** (*Bye Bye Blues, Black Harbour*) and **Stacy Smith** (*New Waterford Girl*).

Directed by first-timer Wiebke von Carolsfeld, *Marion Bridge* was written by Daniel MacIvor, based upon his Governor General's Award nominated play. The film is produced by Julia Sereny, Jennifer Kawaja and Brent Barclay of Sienna Films (*New Waterford Girl*), and Bill Niven of Idlewild Films.

Festival History

- Toronto International Film Festival winner
Best Canadian First Feature
- Rotterdam International Film Festival 2003 Official Competition
- Santa Barbara International Film Festival 2003 Official Competition
- Vancouver Film Festival 2002 Official Selection
- Calgary Film Festival 2002 Official Selection
- Atlantic Film Festival winner
Outstanding Writer Award

About the Story

Agnes (Molly Parker) returns to Sydney, Nova Scotia from Toronto because of the failing health of her mother Rose (Marguerite McNeil). She is met by her older sister Theresa (Rebecca Jenkins), a devout catholic who has recently been dumped by her husband for a younger woman, and Louise (Stacy Smith), the middle child who has retreated from the outside world. Upon visiting Rose in hospital, Agnes realizes how deteriorated her mother's condition has become, and pressures her siblings into bringing Rose home.

Agnes repeatedly sets out to observe a young woman, Joanie, 15 (Ellen Page) who lives in a small town outside of Sydney. When Theresa [witnesses Agnes' increasingly destructive behavior and](#) learns of Agnes' trips, she implores her to cease all contact with the [girl](#), effectively sending Agnes into a tailspin that ends in a night of hard drinking, cocaine, and finally, a confession about her teenage pregnancy.

Later, Theresa driven by her own curiosity accompanies Agnes to meet Joanie. Joanie's mother Chrissy (Hollis McLaren) observes their meeting. She travels to Sydney to confront Agnes and her sisters and asks that they leave Joanie alone so as not to further confuse an already troubled teenager.

Rose's health takes a turn for the worse and sensing her impending death, she reaches out to her daughters. Upon receiving forgiveness for her past failures, Rose is able to let go and passes on peacefully. When Joanie turns up at the sister's doorstep a few days later, Agnes does the right thing: she returns the young girl to Chrissy.

Agnes and her sisters decide the time has come to face her father, a man neither has seen in years. But when they finally encounter him, very little is left of the former man. Deprived of the confrontation she's been imagining for years, Agnes finds it within herself to just turn around and walk away - forever.

A tale of loss and healing, *Marion Bridge* speaks volumes about parental and sibling relationships. In a world where nothing turns out exactly the way anyone imagined it would, these three sisters learn to embrace what they've got: themselves and their love for each other.

About the Production

Director Wiebke von Carolsfeld defines her fascination with *Marion Bridge*: "I fell in love with this story as soon as I read it. The characters have such a refreshing immediacy, are developed with honesty and clarity and their very human failures and desires give each one of them room to breath and live. They are compassionate and conflicted, loving yet deeply flawed. I like and relate to them all".

It is the unique expression of truth and honesty in Daniel MacIvor's celebrated writing that makes *Marion Bridge* so compelling. Wiebke enthuses, "It's because of Daniel's ability to pick up the nuances and the strange comedy of life that we see that these characters are like us. The humour comes out of the dynamics between the characters and is emphasized by the amazing performances by the actors."

The casting of the three sisters was a crucial element in bringing this story to life. Molly Parker, who had acted in one of Wiebke's short films and admired Daniel's writing, was committed to starring as Agnes from day one. "Molly is an amazingly intelligent and forceful actress, vigorously dedicated to finding the emotional truth in every moment, and she is a tireless collaborator" Wiebke states.

Molly's on-screen charisma is complemented beautifully by that of Rebecca Jenkins, who plays her older sister Theresa. In fact, their chemistry was confirmed when they were mistaken for sisters while in Halifax for the production. Having just completed another MacIvor-penned film, *Past Perfect*, Rebecca knows his writing well. She marvels, "Because the story is so real and it unfolds so naturally, we go from laughter to tears just as people do. Daniel's dialogue is effortless to remember because it's inherent".

The rest of the cast comes out of the rich talent pool that Nova Scotia has to offer. Rounding out the principal cast is Stacy Smith as the middle sister Louise. She was first brought to Wiebke's attention in the Sienna Films produced *New Waterford Girl*, in which Stacy gives an equally memorable performance.

The immensely gifted Ellen Page plays young Joanie. Wiebke first encountered her in a preliminary casting session last year and immediately knew that she had found her Joanie. "Originally, I thought that this would be a particularly difficult part to cast, but Ellen is such a strong talent that all my worries were immediately put to rest."

Marguerite McNeil, who plays the mother Rose, hails from Cape Breton. Like her character she is a very spirited person, attested to by the fact that she ran away to New York at 16 to join the theatre. Jackie Torrens plays Agnes' old friend Marlene and Ashley Maclsaac joined the cast to play Mickey the stoner boyfriend alongside fellow musician turned actor Heather Rankin, as his girlfriend Sue.

With such a high caliber of writing and acting talent involved, Wiebke took an elemental approach to directing. "I tried to keep it real, organic and simple. A lot of energy was focused on illuminating emotions and on finding truth in the small moments." She feels her background as an editor gave her "insight into the essentials needed to make a scene, transitions and ultimately when to call 'cut'". Rebecca Jenkins agrees, "Wiebke's experience in editing gives her a clear sense of how to tell story".

Principal Photography commenced at the end of April 2002 in Halifax. Stefan Ivanov (*Bliss, Full Blast*) joined the crew from Montreal and shooting proceeded for five weeks in predictably unpredictable Nova Scotia weather. The last two weeks were shot in a Dartmouth studio where Bill Fleming (*Deeply, Margaret's Museum*) had build the beautiful set of the family home. After wrapping principal photography, a small second unit crew travelled to Cape Breton to shoot exterior shots of Sydney and its surroundings.

Marion Bridge was edited by Dean Soltys (*Trudeau*) and Lesley Barber (*You Can Count On Me, Mansfield Park*) came on to compose the hauntingly minimal score.

Marion Bridge is a story about our need accept our past, rediscovering a sense of hope and finding a way to move on. The sense of hope in the film was of key appeal to both the director and actors. Wiebke von Carolsfeld explains, "We all need to find ways to forgive ourselves and those around us, and only then can we live in peace. In *Marion Bridge* there is no easy "happily ever after". No one gets exactly what they wanted, or even what we want for them, but they get something that allows them to move forward, and that feels real."

For Molly Parker, the sense of hope in her character comes from Agnes' ability to forgive: "Agnes comes to a place of acceptance and forgiveness of her family and of herself, and it's from there that she is able to move on". As Rebecca Jenkins observes, "in the end the three sisters find something within themselves that they didn't know they had before".

About the Filmmakers

Wiebke von Carolsfeld, Director

Wiebke von Carolsfeld was born, raised and educated (University of Cologne) in Germany. Since coming to Canada, she has worked as picture editor for such filmmakers as Tim Southam (*The Bay of Love and Sorrows*), Jeremy Podeswa (*The Five Senses*, *After the Harvest*), Renny Bartlett (*Eisenstein*- Genie Nomination for Best Editing), Daniel MacIvor (*Permission*, *Until I Hear From You*) and many others. She has made two award-winning short films as a director, *From Morning On I Waited Yesterday* and *spiral bound*, which have screened at festivals all across Canada, the United States as well as in Europe. Last year, she was the Director Observer on Atom Egoyan's feature "Ararat". [Marion Bridge](#) is her first feature.

Daniel MacIvor, Writer

Daniel MacIvor is the co-writer and star of *House* directed by Laurie Lynd, and writer and star of the Genie Award winning musical short *The Fairy Who Didn't Want To Be A Fairy Anymore*, also directed by Lynd. His short films *Permission* and *Until I Hear From You* both premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and his short tapes *Margaret Atwood and the Problem with Canada* and *Wake Up Jerk Off*, have played to great acclaim internationally. As an actor he has appeared in Thom Fitzgerald's *Beefcake*, in Don McKellar's inventive CBC series *Twitch City*, and in Jeremy Podeswa's *The Five Senses* for which he was nominated for a Genie. With Producer Sherrie Johnson, Daniel is the artistic director of the international touring theatre company da da kamera, recently winning a Village Voice Obie Award for their New York production of MacIvor's play *In On It*. In addition to writing the feature film adaptation of his play [Marion Bridge](#), MacIvor also recently directed his first feature, *Past Perfect*.

SIENNA FILMS, Producer

Producers Jennifer Kawaja and Julia Sereny are the principals in Sienna Films, an award-winning Toronto-based film and television production company, and are currently celebrating their ten-year anniversary. They are joined by producer Brent Barclay, who has been an associate with Sienna for the past two years. In addition to *Marion Bridge*, Sienna recently completed *Saint Monica*; both films are premiered at the 2002 Toronto International Film Festival.

The company is best known for its box office hit *New Waterford Girl*. The film premiered at the 1999 Toronto International Film Festival and went on to win the award for Best Film at the Atlantic Film Festival. It played to sold out audiences at Sundance and Rotterdam Film Festivals. The film was nominated for several Genie Awards and was both a critical and box-office phenomenon. Peter Howell of the *Toronto Star* named it his "Favorite Canadian Film" and the *Globe and Mail* called it "consistently clever and entertaining." *Variety Magazine* describes it as "an

extremely likable coming-of-age comedy that effectively captures a slice of teen angst.”

Sienna's production credits also include the critically acclaimed feature film *April One*, a Bronze winner for Independent Feature at the Houston Film Festival starring David Strathairn, Stephen Shellen and Djanet Sears, distributed by Astral in Canada and Alliance Atlantis in the U.S. In 1999, two of Sienna Films' documentaries, *Black, Bold and Beautiful: Black Women and their Hair* and the feature-length *Erotica: A Journey into Female Sexuality* were broadcast on CBC. *Erotica*, which premiered at the 1997 Toronto International Film Festival, also enjoyed a limited theatrical release and extensive festival play internationally.

A two-part documentary series entitled *Hidden Children*, winner of a Gold Plaque at the Chicago Film Festival and nominated for the Donald Brittain Award for Best Documentary at the 1994 Gemini Awards, was co-produced with October Films in Britain.

IDLEWILD FILMS, Producer

Idlewild Films was created in 1998 by independent producer Bill Niven to develop and produce feature films and television projects with an emphasis on Nova Scotian stories with universal themes.

Niven has over 18 years experience in the film and television industry in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. He began his career in 1984 by establishing the Atlantic office of Telefilm Canada. In 1986 he was appointed head of Telefilm's Vancouver office. In 1987 he was promoted to Manager of Creative Affairs at Telefilm Toronto. From 1989 to 1995 he held international postings with Telefilm in Paris, London and Los Angeles responsible for brokering international co-productions and the administration of Telefilm's Foreign Distribution Fund for Canadian feature films.

In 1995, Niven produced the Gotham Awards in New York City for the Independent Feature Project. Later that year he taught at the Havana Film School in Los Baños, Cuba.

In 1996 he joined Salter Street films as Vice President, Operations for Salter's international division overseeing distribution and marketing activities. In 1997 he became Vice President, Development at Salter where he was responsible for developing new television and feature film projects.

In 1998 Niven produced 40 episodes of Salter Street's *PIRATES!*, for YTV. Later that year he launched Idlewild Films to produce independently. In 2001 he co-produced the feature film *TOUCH & GO* with Chronicle Pictures of Halifax. In 2002, in addition to Marion Bridge, he produced *Think Tank*, a pilot for a documentary series in development with CBC with Halifax-based Lynk Inc, featuring British journalist and writer Christopher Hitchens and novelists Margaret Atwood and Russell Smith.

Bill Niven Co-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Atlantic Film Festival and Vice-chair, Eastern Region of the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television.

Lesley Barber, Composer

Lesley Barber is one of Canada's most significant, prolific and multi-talented young composers. She began composing at the age of 10, was an award winner in Canada's Socan National Competition for Young Composers and then went on to complete a Master's Degree in Composition at the University of Toronto. The score for Patricia Rozema's award-winning film "When Night Is Falling" marked Barber's outstanding film debut.

Barber has also composed music for the world premiere productions of groundbreaking Canadian plays "Unidentified Human Remains and The True Nature of Love", "Love and Anger", "Nothing Sacred", "The Warriors" and "Escape From Happiness" (the latter two received Dora Awards for Outstanding Original Score). As a composer of "new music" for the concert hall her commissions include works for The Canadian Electronic Ensemble, Hemispheres, and Juno Award-winning musicians – harpist Erica Goodman, percussionist Beverly Johnston, pianist Eve Egoyan.

Lesley's credits include the Polygram/Propaganda feature "Los Locos", (starring Mario Van Peebles), Boaz Yakin's "A Price Above Rubies" (starring Renee Zellweger and Julianna Margulies) for Miramax, the Emmy Award Winning "Yo-Yo Ma: Six Gestures", Good Machine's "The History of Luminous Motion" and "Mansfield Park" (starring Embeth Davidtz, Alessandro Nivola and Harold Pinter) for Miramax. She is also the composer for Maurice Sendak's award winning television series "Little Bear" and "Seven Little Monsters". Lesley most recently scored the Oscar nominated "You Can Count On Me" (starring Matthew Broderick and Laura Linney), and Mira Nair's "Hysterical Blindness" (starring Uma Thurman and Juliette Lewis). Current films include Marion Bridge, Miramax's "Wrinkle in Time", directed by Patricia Rozema and MGM's "Molly Gunn", directed by Boaz Yakin.

Stefan Ivanov, Director of Photography

Stefan Ivanov began his career in his native Bulgaria where he worked on a variety of film and television projects. Ivanov has directed photography for such films as *Vercingetorix (aka The Druids)* for director Jacques Dorfman, *Quelque Chose dans L'Air*, directed by Peter Popzlatev and winner of the audience award at the 6th annual Rencontre Cinematographique de Cannes '93, *Les Amours estivales d'un doux Reveur*, directed by Ludmil Tororov and winner of the Grand Prix at the 1991 Turin Film Festival, and *Les Amis d'Emilia*, also directed by Tororov and nominated by the Cinematographic Society of Bulgaria. In 1996, he moved to Montreal, Quebec while continuing to work in Europe, as well as in Canada. Ivanov caught the attention of acclaimed director Raoul Ruiz, who brought him on as director of photography for *Genealogie d'un Crime* (starring Catherine Deneuve, Michelle Piccoli and Melville Poupaud). The film was awarded a "Silver Bear" at the 1997 Berlin Film Festival

About the Cast

MOLLY PARKER ('Agnes')

Molly Parker first turned heads with her extraordinary performance in Lynne Stopkewich's controversial film *Kissed*, for which she received a Genie Award for Best Actress. She won her second Genie Award in 2001, this time as Best Supporting Actress, in Bruce Sweeney's *Last Wedding*. She will be seen at the 2002 Toronto International Film Festival in three films; Wiebke von Carolsfeld's *Marion Bridge* which filmed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Gilles McKinnon's (*Hideous Kinky*) *Pure* which filmed in London, England and Menno Meyjes's *Max* which filmed in Budapest, Hungary with John Cusack and Leelee Sobieski.

Parker starred opposite William Hurt in *Rare Birds*, Paul Gross in *Men With Brooms* and Ralph Fiennes in the Golden Globe nominated film *Sunshine*, by Academy Award-winning director, Istvan Szabo. Her recent films also include Wayne Wang's *Center of the World* for which she received an Independent Spirit Award Nomination for Best Actress, Michael Winterbottom's critically acclaimed *Wonderland* as well as *Suspicious River*, where she reunited with director Lynne Stopkewich, Keith Gordon's *Waking the Dead*, co-starring Billy Crudup and produced by Jodie Foster's *Egg Pictures*, Jeremy Podeswa's *The Five Senses*, Meg Richmans' *Under Heaven*, David Bailey's *The Intruder*, and the IMAX film *Wings of Courage*, directed by Jean Jacques Annaud.

On television, Parker worked on two episodes of the hit series *Six Feet Under*. She starred opposite Don McKellar in the comedy series *Twitch City*, directed by Bruce McDonald and earned a Gemini nomination for her starring role in *Paris or Somewhere*. Among her other credits are the lead roles in the television movies *Serving in Silence* and *The Ranger, the Cook and the Hole in the Sky*, as well as the Fox mini series *Intensity*, directed by Yves Simoneau.

REBECCA JENKINS ('Theresa')

Jenkins burst onto the Canadian film scene with her charismatic acting and singing performance in Anne Wheeler's *Bye Bye Blues*, for which she received a Best Actress Genie Award. Her feature films include *Interstate 60*, *Bob Roberts*, *Darrow*, *South of Wawa*, and *Cowboys Don't Cry*. She will next be seen in another Daniel Maclvor adaptation; *Past Perfect*.

On television, Jenkins is well known for her starring roles in CBC and Alliance's successful series *Black Harbour*, and in Atlantis's *Destiny Ridge*. She recently guest-starred on A&E's *Nero Wolfe* and CTV's *The Associates*, and has appeared in *Outer Limits*, *Beyond Reality*, *Avonlea* and *Street Legal*.

Jenkins' many starring roles in movies for television include CBS's *And Never Let Her Go*, *Guilty Hearts*, *Catch A Falling Star*; Disney's *Angels in the Infield*; ABC's *The*

Ruby Silver; and NBC's *Bad Prospects*, *Till Death Do Us Part*, *Honour Bright* and *Harvest*, for which she received a Gemini Award nomination as Best Supporting Actress in a Dramatic Program or Mini-Series. Her films for cable include Showtime's *Bad Prospect* and USA Networks' *Split Image*.

As a singer, Jenkins toured with Parachute Club and Jane Siberry, and continues to perform on occasion, as in the recent tribute to Joni Mitchell.

STACY SMITH ('Louise')

Nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Genie Award for her charming performance in *New Waterford Girl*, Stacy Smith comes by her busy career honestly. A graduate of Dalhousie University's Professional Acting Programme, she will next be seen in *Liocracy*.

On television, Smith starred in the series *Lexx: The Dark Zone* and appeared in the heart-wrenching CTV movie *Blessed Stranger*, as well as *A Town Without A Christmas*, *Dragon Wheel*, *Phase IV*, *The Daily Blade*, *Shelter*

On stage, Stacy Smith has appeared in productions of *Sylvia*, *Raining Cats and Daughters*, *Anne*, *The Government Inspector*, *Apple Tree Road*, *Anne Of Green Gables*, *Gaslight Follies*, *The Comedy Of Errors*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Midsummer Nights Dream* and *Rummabubba*.

MARGUERITE McNEIL ('Rose')

Born in Cape Breton, Marguerite left for New York at an early age to pursue her theatre studies. She appeared in more than 40 plays in New York, among them revivals of *Glass Menagerie*, *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Look Back In Anger*, *No Exit* and *The Brownsville Raid - 1916*, for which she received an Obie Award nomination.

McNeil's feature film appearances include her memorable portrayal of 'Sister Louise' in *The Divine Ryans*, as well as *Sweet Angel Mine*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Life With Billy* and *Where Beauty Lives in Memory*. On television, her credits include *Lexx- The Dark Zone*, *Liography*, *It's Our Town* and *Unexpected Heroes*.

McNeil was a founding member of the Hudson Guild Theatre Centre in New York and toured the U.S. with the Lyric Players, having directed over a dozen plays. She travelled to London where she appeared in the Act Inn production of Beckett's *Happy Days*. Since her return to Nova Scotia, McNeil founded the North Wall Players of Glace Bay, ran the newly renovated Savoy Theatre, presenting more than 52 live performances during her tenure.

ELLEN PAGE ('Joanie')

Native Nova Scotian Ellen Page is just another fifteen-year-old when she is snowboarding or playing soccer, but put her in front of a camera and watch this skilled young actor work! From the moment Ellen was cast in the Lead role of

Maggie MacLean in the movie *Pit Pony*, she commanded the attention of producers and directors across Canada.

Pit Pony evolved into a prime-time, award-winning dramatic series. Running for just over three years, *Pit Pony* aired in more than 73 countries worldwide. The series garnered Ellen a Gemini Award nomination for *Best Performance in a Children's or Youth Program or Series* and a Young Artists Awards nomination in Los Angeles for *Best Performance in a TV Drama Series*.

One short year ago, Ellen entered the Toronto market. She was immediately cast in the L.A. Film *I Downloaded a Ghost*, produced by well-known Saskatchewan-based production company, Edge Productions. *Ghost* is expected to release across Canada in September.

Ghost was followed by the Halifax feature *Touch and Go* and Andrea Dorfman's latest film *Love That Boy*. Ellen had just finished a short in Toronto with Maury Chaykin and her new film with Molly Parker *Marion Bridge*, which is premiering this September in both the Toronto International Film Festival and the Atlantic Film Festival.