

A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.



Press Packet

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A delicate Zen-like passing of wisdom from an older man to a young boy when they meet by chance in the early morning hours at a roadside café in 1947.

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Actor/Director Karen Allen and Producers Brian Long and Diane Pearlman came together in 2014 to work collaboratively to create a short film of Carson McCullers' short story "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud." McCullers is best known for her first novel, "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter" written in 1939 when she was just 22 years old. It was adapted into a Academy Award nominated film in 1968.

After two years of preparation and fundraising, "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud." began shooting in western MA in June of 2016. The film was edited and finished in NYC and Boston in the Summer and Fall of 2016.

Joining the cast of the film were two extraordinary NY actors that Allen had worked with previously; Jeffrey DeMunn (The Green Mile, The Shawshank Redemption, The Walking Dead, Billions) and James McMenam (Orange is the New Black). After a casting search that included hundreds of young actors, newcomer, 12 year-old Jackson Smith, was chosen for the role of the Boy in the story. Allen is an award-winning director in the theatre, but this is her directorial and screenwriting debut in film. She was joined on the set by an experienced and gifted creative team: cinematographer Richard Sands, Academy Award nominated production designer Kristi Zea, film editor Noriko Sakamoto and composer Mark Kelso.

Note from director Karen Allen

"I came across this story when I was in my early 20's. As a young actor I was drawn to Carson McCullers as a playwright and novelist, and then began to read everything I could find that she had written. The story "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud." was in a collection of her short stories and poems. It is a quiet, subtle, mysterious story and it has stayed indelibly etched in my mind and imagination all these years. When pondering what I might want to write and direct as a first film, it became clear that this was the story that had most inspired me and that I most needed to tell. Her estate has supported us in this project, as has the Carson McCullers Center in Columbus, Georgia, where she was raised. 2017 is the 100th year anniversary of her birth, which I was unaware of when we began planning this film. It is a beautiful synchronicity, and a way to celebrate an extraordinary writer's work in a film. In the 40 years I have known this story, I have rarely met anyone who has read it, so it is particularly meaningful to me to introduce it on film.

It is a delicate, Zen like passing of wisdom from a older man to a young boy in the early morning at a roadside café when their lives unexpectedly intersect and the man tells an illuminating story of loss and love and redemption. The story, as I see it, is flooded with the raw, tangible beauty of the natural world, set beside the complex, intangible yearning for love and connection in their interior worlds.

I am delighted to have the chance to work with two actors that I have known and admired for many

years; Jeffrey DeMunn and James McMenam. They are joined by twelve year old Jackson Smith, in his remarkable acting debut. My desire was to stay very close to the story Carson McCullers wrote and to bring to life the characters she has so beautifully drawn in the pages of her story. “

Synopsis

Based on the short story by groundbreaking southern American writer Carson McCullers, written when she was just 25, the film, “A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.”, is set at a roadside café in the early morning in the Spring of 1947.

A young boy and an older man meet by chance. The man relates a luminous tale of personal heart-break and loss, and of his hard won understanding of the nature of love. The film is the directorial debut of award winning NY actor/director Karen Allen.

Production Notes by Karen Allen:

Casting Jeffrey and James

Once we set our shooting dates I lived in constant fear of losing Jeffrey DeMunn and James McMenam- in to schedule conflicts since they were both about to start new seasons of television shows and the dates kept shifting. They were both friends of mine and actors I knew well and deeply admired. I had imagined Jeff in this role for 20 years (long before he was old enough to play it), and I had stubbornly refused to even have another actor in mind should I lose him. I had many sleepless nights until the day they both showed up for rehearsals and I realized I would be able to make the film with them both.

Independent Filmmaking!

This was as independent a film as can be made. We slowly raised the money through contributions over a two and a half year period. The cast and crew slept in every room of my home, in the basement, on the porch, in a garage down the road. Another part of the crew slept at the home of my assistant a few miles away, and at the home of our 1st AD. Local B&B's and restaurants stepped up to help us feed and shelter everyone else. One of our producers slept at the location site throughout the shoot to protect our equipment and save us the cost of hiring someone. By day he did traffic control and shoveled sand onto the white lines in the road to make them 1947 correct. Everyone pitched in doing multiple jobs to get us through. It had a tremendous spirit of collaboration.

The Boy

The young actor, Jackson Smith, who plays the Boy in the story of A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud. was the first child recommended to us when we did our first fundraiser several years ago. He was a local boy who had no acting experience and his Aunt told me she thought he would be perfect for the role. Two years later when we began to cast, I remembered what she said and asked to meet him. He was out of town when we did the casting sessions and screen tests, but I had a feeling I should wait and meet him when he returned. Jeffrey DeMunn and I knew instantly he was the right boy to play the role. We had had 270 submissions for the part.

The Location

I feel as though this story, since I first read it in 1974, has followed me, insisting that I make a film of it. Ten years ago I drove along a country road and noticed the old Silverbrook Cafe in Sandisfield, MA. I had an unexplainable but powerful feeling about this crumbling building. I had almost trepidations about stopping and going inside, because I had a sense that it would look just the way I imagined the

café in the story of A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud, so I avoided going in for many years although I often passed by. I think I was convinced that the desire to make this film would overtake me if the café was indeed how I envisioned it inside. One afternoon, on an impulse, I stopped and went inside, and it did look exactly the way I had pictured it in McCullers story. I felt myself surrender. Not long afterwards Brian Long, Diane Pearlman and I came together to get permission to shoot at the location, get the rights to the story and to put our cast and crew together to shoot the story at the Silverbrook Café.

For Information regarding Festivals and Screenings of the Film, please visit our website at www.atreearockacloudthefilm.com

Bios

Carson McCullers (Author) Born in Columbus, Georgia, Carson McCullers was a prolific American writer of novels, short stories, essays, plays, and poetry. McCullers examined the psychology of lonely, isolated people, which she depicted through her eccentric characters and interpreted with deep empathy. She is best known for her novels, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), which she wrote at the age of twenty-two, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1942), and for her play, *A Member of the Wedding* (1952). Her novel, *The Ballad of a Sad Café* (1951), was adapted for the stage by playwright Edward Albee. Four of her novels and plays have been made into feature films. She died in Nyack, New York, in 1967, at the age of 50.

Karen Allen (Director and Screenwriter) Known for her work as an award winning actor in over forty feature films (*Animal House*, *A Small Circle of Friends*, *The Wanderers*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Until September*, *Starman*, *Scrooged*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Malcolm X*, *The Perfect Storm*, *King of the Hill*, *The Sandlot*, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, *White Irish Drinkers*, *Bad Hurt* and the soon to be released *A Year By The Sea*) and in the theatre *On and Off Broadway* (*A Summer Day*, *Speaking in Tongues*, *The Monday After the Miracle*, *Extremities*, *The Country Girl*) and numerous television films and shows. Karen began directing in the theatre ten years ago at Bard College at Simon's Rock, the Berkshire Theatre Festival (*Moonchildren*, *Extremities*, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair du Lune*) and in NYC with the Obie winning production of Lucy Thurber's *Ashville*. "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud." by Carson McCullers, is her debut as a film director. She is a lifetime member of the Actor's Studio and is on the board of the Berkshire International Film Festival and the Amazon Conservation Team..

Jeffrey DeMunn (Actor) is a film, television and stage actor. His film credits include: *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Green Mile*, *The Mist*, *The Majestic*, *The Blob*, *The X-Files: Fight the Future*, *Hollywoodland*, *Burn after Reading*, *Citizen X*, *Barbarians at the Gate*, and *Empire Falls*. TV: *Billions*, *The Walking Dead*, *Divorce*, *The Affair*, *Mob City*, *The Good Wife*, *Storm of the Century*, *Kojak: The Price of Justice*, *Moonlighting*, *LA Law*, *The West Wing*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *E.R.*, *The Practice*, *Trial by Jury*, and *Hill Street Blues*. Theater: *Death of a Salesman*, *Our Town*, *The Price*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Spoils of War*, *Sleight of Hand*, *K2*, *Bent*, *Comedians*, *Modigliani*, *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

James McMenamain (Actor) James is best known for his portrayal of Charlie "Donuts" Coates on the Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*. Other recurring television credits include TNT's *Public Morals*, Showtimes' *Nurse Jackie*, and HBO's *Olive Kitteridge*. He's appeared as a guest star on *Person of Interest*, *Inside Amy Schumer*, *The Good Wife*, and many others. He recently appeared in the fea-

ture films *In Dubious Battle*, *The Long Home*, and *Blood Heist*. He has worked extensively in theatre and made his Broadway debut in the 2014 production of *Of Mice and Men*. He has previously worked on stage with director Karen Allen in *Extremities* at the Berkshire Theatre Festival, and in Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre's production *Ashville*.

Brian Long (Producer) Brian Long is a film and theater producer as well as an artist manager. His films include *A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.* directed by Karen Allen, *Brown Fish*, directed by Troy Deutsch and the upcoming films *A My Name Is*, *Life After You* and *Hamlet In Bed*. Brian served as the Managing Director of Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, an Obie-Award winning producer of Off-Broadway Plays for nine years. During his tenure, Rattlestick produced over 40 World Premieres by some of our nation's most important playwrights, including Annie Baker, Sam Hunter, Jesse Eisenberg, Jose Rivera, Adam Rapp, Craig Lucas and many others.

Diane Pearlman (Producer) Diane Pearlman is an independent film producer who currently serves as the Executive Director of the Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative, a non-profit organization dedicated to creating education, workforce and production opportunities in the film and media industry in western Massachusetts. In the 1990's, Diane was Executive Producer and General Manager of Mass. Illusion, a visual effects movie studio located in Lenox, Massachusetts. MI created groundbreaking effects for *The Matrix* (Academy Award 2000, Best Visual Effects), *What Dreams May Come* (Academy Award 1999, Best Visual Effects), *Starship Troopers*, *Evita*, *Die Hard with A Vengeance*, and many others. Prior to that Diane served as producer for The Trumbull Company's production of three specialty film attractions for Circus Circus' hotel, Luxor Las Vegas. She also produced commercials and movie titles for R/Greenberg Associates in NYC. Diane holds a degree from Vassar College and attended Princeton University and NYU Film School. She is currently Chairman of the Board of Berkshire Pulse, a performing arts center in Housatonic, MA. She is an active member of New York Women in Film and Television, The Massachusetts Production Coalition, New England Women in Film and The Visual Effects Society.

Amy Lynn (Co-Producer) Amy Lynn grew up in suburbs of NYC and is a lover of film and television from a young age. Amy attended St. Michael's College Winooski, Vt. for Liberal Arts and New School NYC graduate program for Film & photography. She worked as a still photographer and as a production assistant in the Film/Video Dept of The Kitchen, center for the arts, Wooster St. SOHO, and West 19th st. in the late 80's early 90's. Amy interned for a video artist John Sanborn, as well, involved in projects that have been showcased in the Whitney Biennale. She continued to work as a production assistant in NYC and in 1992 and joined the Directors Guild of America, in the category of Assistant Director. She was sponsored by the television series 'Law & Order'. For the last 25 years Amy has worked with many great directors, Michael Figgis, Walter Salles, John McNaughton, Phillip Noyce, Adam McKay, Peter Howitt, Raymond DeFillitta and many others. She's currently working on ABC's *Quantico* in NYC and enjoying her free time at home in the Berkshires. Amy has a 19 yr old son currently attending college.

Richard Sands (Director of Photography) Richard Sands is a film technician whose roots are in cinema production. He has done the lighting and/or DP on 35 theatrically released motion pictures with directors such as Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola, 47 television movies, over 100 one-hour television episodes and numerous advertising pieces. He was responsible for many award-winning projects; including three commercials he was Cinematographer on that have won "Addy" Awards. For nearly fifteen years, Sands has created the elaborate lighting for the fine art narrative photographs of artist Gregory Crewdson. Through this unique collaboration, Sands' lighting has been featured in

6 books and several international photographic exhibition tours. Crewdson on Sands: "I always call him 'the genius of light.' He puts all of the lighting scenes together...He thinks differently than everyone else I know. He just responds to light. It's remarkable."

Kristi Zea (Production Designer) Kristi Zea was nominated for an Academy Award and BAFTA for her production design work on Revolutionary Road, directed by Sam Mendes. She has received worldwide acclaim for her work as a production designer, costume designer, and producer. Zea began her career in film as costume designer for Alan Parker's Fame and Shoot the Moon, along with James L Brooks' Academy Award-winning Terms of Endearment among others. As a production designer, Zea has worked with director Martin Scorsese, designing The Departed, Goodfellas and New York Stories. For director Jonathan Demme, she designed The Manchurian Candidate, Beloved, Philadelphia, and Silence of the Lambs. Among her numerous other design credits are Oliver Stone's Wall Street 2, Neil Jordan's The Brave One, Brett Ratner's Red Dragon and Tower Heist, Roger Michell's Changing Lanes, and Barry Levinson's Sleepers. As a producer, Zea's credits include James L. Brooks' As Good As it Gets, and The Joneses, starring Demi Moore and David Duchovny. She directed the Ace Award-nominated Domestic Dilemma for the HBO Series Women and Men 2, starring Ray Liotta and Andie MacDowell. Zea production designed the pilot for the HBO drama The Leftovers, as well as the NBC pilot and series American Odyssey. She also production designed Nancy Myers latest comedy The Intern starring Robert DeNiro and Anne Hathaway. Just after designing Taylor Hackford's The Comedian also starring Robert De Niro, Zea finished directing her documentary Everybody Knows... Elizabeth Murray, which recently premiered at the Whitney Museum as part of the Tribeca Film Festival.

Noriko Sakamoto (Editor) Noriko Sakamoto first met Karen Allen while editing the award-winning feature film Year by the Sea. She enjoyed working closely with Karen to bring her vision to life on A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud. Noriko has 15 years of experience editing various TV shows and documentaries for Discovery, History, A & E and TLC. She lives with her family on New York's Lower East Side.

Mark Kelso (Original Music) In addition to his recordings on the Virgin Records/Narada label, Mark Kelso has been creating soundtracks for picture for the past 30 years. With over 25 solo and collaborative recordings to his credit, Mark has toured extensively throughout North America, including performances at Madison Square Garden, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and the National Music Center, appearing with Christopher Reeve, Deepak Chopra, Oriah Mountain Dreamer and Michael Jackson among others.

Carisa Kelly (Costume Designer) Carisa found her love of fabric when she was 8 and her mom taught her to sew. A passion was born and from it 15+ year career in telling stories through clothes. Her time is spent in the theatre and films. She is beginning work on Michael Caton-Jones 'Asher'. Other recent works include Mike Bribiglia's 'Don't Think Twice' (SxSW, Tribeca, SIFF) Alexander Janko's 'Year By The Sea' (Vail, PTFE, Woodstock, Heartland) Ido Fluk's 'The Ticket' (Tribeca), Danny DeVito's 'Curmudgeons' (Tribeca, SIFF, BFI). Carisa holds an MFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

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