

**ROGER MICHELL TO DIRECT EILEEN ATKINS IN**  
**JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH'S COMEDY**  
**THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES**

Roger Michell will direct a cast led by Eileen Atkins in Joanna Murray-Smith's latest play, *The Female of the Species*, opening at the Vaudeville Theatre on 16 July, with previews from 10 July. Joining Atkins are Paul Chahidi, Anna Maxwell Martin, Con O'Neill, Sophie Thompson and Sam Kelly. Designs are by Mark Thompson, with lighting by James Whiteside and sound by Matt McKenzie. *The Female of the Species* is produced in the West End by David Richenthal and Mary Beth O'Connor, Nica Burns and Max Weitzenhoffer for Nimax Theatres.

*Margot Mason is a literary giant on a deadline. When an uninvited fan arrives unexpectedly at her home, followed by her family and friends, Margot's feminist world begins to spiral hilariously out of control.*

Multi award-winning actor Dame Eileen Atkins (Margot Mason) has most recently been seen on stage playing Mrs Rafi in Jonathan Kent's production of Edward Bond's *The Sea* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket and Bridget in Michael Attenborough's production of Frank McGuinness' *There Came a Gypsy Riding* at the Almeida Theatre. She has worked extensively for the National Theatre including most recently, *Honour*, and the Royal Shakespeare Company, including *The Unexpected Man*, which later transferred to Broadway. Her other theatre work includes *The Birthday Party* at the Duchess Theatre, *A Delicate Balance* at the Haymarket and *Vita and Virginia*, her own play, which premiered at Chichester Festival Theatre before transferring to the West End. In 2006 she played Sister Aloysius on Broadway in John Patrick Shanley's award-winning *Doubt*. Her many film credits include *Wolf*, *Vanity Fair*, *Ask The Dust*, *Cold Mountain*, *The Hours*, *Jack and Sarah* and *Gosford Park*. On television her credits include *Upstairs, Downstairs* – which she co-created, *Cold Comfort Farm*, *The Maitlands* and *Bertie*, *Elizabeth* and *Ballet Shoes*, as well as *Cranford* for which she has recently received the BAFTA Television Best Actress Award for her portrayal of Miss Deborah Jenkyns.

Paul Chahidi's (Bryan Thornton) theatre credits include *The Cherry Orchard* for Chichester Festival Theatre, *Rhinoceros* and *The Arsonist* for the Royal Court, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cyberline* and *As You Like It* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His television credits include *Oliver Twist*, *Blackpool* and *Blonde Bombshell*. His film credits include *Venus* and *Notting Hill*, directed by Roger Michell, as well as *The Libertine* and *Stella Does Tricks*.

Sam Kelly's (Theo Reynolds) recent theatre credits include *Kean* at the Apollo Theatre, *Aladdin* for the Old Vic, *Much Ado About Nothing* for the Theatre Royal Bath, *HMS Pinafore* and *Dead Funny* at the Savoy Theatre, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *The Homecoming* for the National Theatre and *Under the Whale Back* for the Royal Court. His extensive television credits include three series of *Barbara* in which he played opposite Gwen Taylor, *New Tricks*, *Christmas on the Riviera*, *Where the Heart Is*, *Northern Lights*, *Cold Feet* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. His film credits include Mike Leigh's *Topsy Turvy* and *All or Nothing*.

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Anna Maxwell Martin (Molly Rivers) has recently played Sally Bowles in Rufus Norris' production of *Cabaret* at the Lyric Theatre. Previously her theatre credits include *The Entertainer* and *Dumb Show* both for the Royal Court, *His Dark Materials*, Joanna Murray-Smith's *Honour*, *Three Sisters* and *The Coast of Utopia* for the National Theatre and *Little Foxes* for the Donmar Warehouse. On television her credits include *Poppy Shakespeare*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Bleak House*, *Dr Who*, *North and South* and *Midsomer Murders* and on film she has been seen in *Becoming Jane*, *The Other Man*, *Enduring Love* and *The Hours*.

Con O'Neill's (Frank) theatre credits include *The Caretaker* for both Sheffield Theatres and the Tricycle, *Midnight Cowboy* for the Assembly Theatre Edinburgh, *Southwalk Fair* and *Mother Clap's Molly House* for the National Theatre, *Featuring Loretta* and *The Awakening* for Hampstead Theatre and *Blood Brothers* both in the West End and on Broadway. On film his credits include *Telstar*, *A Perfect Match* and *Bedrooms and Hallways*. On television he has appeared in *The Stepfather*, *My Hero*, *Trial and Retribution*, *Tom Jones* and *Waking The Dead*.

Sophie Thompson's (Tess Thornton) theatre credits include Isabella in *Measure for Measure* for the Globe Theatre, *Company* and *Into the Woods* for the Donmar Warehouse and Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. On film her credits include *Gosford Park*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Emma*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. On television she will soon be seen in *Morris: A Life with Bells On* and recently played Stella in BBC1's *EastEnders* and has been directed by Roger Michell in *Persuasion* and *The Railway Children*, both for the BBC.

*The Female of the Species* is Australian writer Joanna Murray-Smith's first full-length comedy. In 2003 her play *Honour*, starring Eileen Atkins and Corin Redgrave, debuted at the National Theatre. A production starring Diana Rigg and Martin Jarvis was later seen in the West End. Earlier this year Trevor Nunn directed Iain Glenn and Imogen Stubbs in Murray-Smith's *Scenes from a Marriage* at the Belgrade Theatre Coventry. In 2004 Caroline O'Connor starred in Murray-Smith's *Bombshells* which transferred to the Arts Theatre from the Edinburgh Festival. Her other plays include *Ninety*, *Rapture*, *Nightfall*, *Love Child*, *Flame* and *Redemption*, the later was subsequently recorded for BBC Radio.

Award-winning stage and screen director Roger Michell's recent theatre credits include *Betrayal* and *Old Times* both at the Donmar Warehouse and Joanna Murray Smith's *Honour* at the National Theatre, where he has also directed productions of *Landscape With Weapon*, *Blue/Orange*, *The Homecoming*, *Under Milk Wood* and *The Coup*. He directed *My Night with Reg* at the Royal Court and subsequently in the West End. For six years he was Resident Director at the Royal Shakespeare Company where productions included *Restoration*, *The Constant Couple*, *Hamlet*, *The Dead Monkey* and many more. His many screen credits include the hugely successful romantic comedy *Notting Hill* as well as *Venus*, *Enduring Love*, *The Mother*, *Changing Lanes*, *Titanic Town*, *Persuasion*, *My Night with Reg* and *The Buddah of Suburbia*, for which he also wrote the screenplay.

**LISTINGS INFORMATION FOR THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES**

Theatre: Vaudeville Theatre  
404 The Strand  
London WC2R 0NH

Dates: previews from 10 July 2008  
press night 16 July 2008  
initial booking period until 4 October 2008

Performances: Tuesday – Saturday at 7.30pm  
Matinees Wednesdays & Saturdays at 2.30pm (please note there are no matinees on Saturday 12 or Wednesday 16 July)

Press Night at 7pm

Previews performance schedule:  
10, 11, 12, 14, 15 July at 7.30pm  
16 July at 7pm

Running time: 90 minutes straight through without an interval

Box Office: 0844 412 4663 (plus booking fee)

Tickets £22.00 - £47.50 plus concessions and booking fee  
There will be a limited number of day seats at £15 each which will go on sale at the Vaudeville Box Office at 10am on the day of the performance

Website: [www.nimaxtheatres.com](http://www.nimaxtheatres.com)  
[www.thefemaleofthespecies.co.uk](http://www.thefemaleofthespecies.co.uk)

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For further press information on *The Female of the Species* –  
Premier PR Theatre Department 020 7292 8330  
[Janine.shalom@premierpr.com](mailto:Janine.shalom@premierpr.com); [nicki.plowman@premierpr.com](mailto:nicki.plowman@premierpr.com)  
[emma.holland@premierpr.com](mailto:emma.holland@premierpr.com); [esther.beaumont@premierpr.com](mailto:esther.beaumont@premierpr.com)