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**WINNER**  
BEST DRAMATIC DIRECTOR  
SARA COLANGELO

# THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER



## PRESSKIT

**Directed by** | Sara Colangelo

**Cast** | Maggie Gyllenhaal, Parker Sevak,  
Michael Chernus and Gael García Bernal

**Running time** | 97 minutes

**Language** | English

**Swiss german release date** | 7th February 2019

**Swiss french release date** | 13th March 2019

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## SYNOPSIS

de

Lisa (Maggie Gyllenhaal), eine New Yorker Kindergärtnerin in der Midlifecrises, sieht in ihrem 5-jährigen Schüler Jimmy Roy den Ausweg aus ihrem langweiligen bürgerlichen Leben. Fasziniert vom einzigartigen poetischen Talent des Buben, ist sie zu allem bereit, um Jimmy das zu ermöglichen was ihr verwehrt bleibt.

fr

Lisa (Maggie Gyllenhaal), enseigne dans une école maternelle new-yorkaise. Quand Jimmy Roy, un élève de 5 ans, s'avère doué d'un don extraordinaire, elle décide de se lancer dans une aventure qui va bouleverser une vie bien réglée mais sans relief. Fascinée par le talent poétique unique du garçon, elle est prête à tout pour donner à Jimmy ce qu'on lui refuse.



## SARA COLANGELO, DIRECTOR STATEMENT

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER is a psychological thriller about a woman, named Lisa Spinelli, who lives a mundane life in Staten Island and teaches at a local kindergarten. She takes night classes in poetry and is a forgettable student. But she trudges forth, still enjoying the artistic pursuit, with a certain understanding of her mediocrity. One day she discovers that a boy in her class has a prodigious gift for poetry and, from that moment forward, does everything in her power to support and cultivate his talent—going to dangerous extremes to deliver his art to the world.

This film is an exciting project for me because it is the story of, predominantly, one woman. It has given me an opportunity to delve deeply into the fascinating psychology of Lisa-- to explore her inner-workings, her good intentions gone awry, and her desire to live a more meaningful life. The story also provides what I think is a nuanced, complex lead role for a 40- something woman— an unfortunate rarity in both Hollywood and the independent film industry. Finally, it has been a unique opportunity to discuss what role, if any, poetry has in modern American life. Is there space for beauty, meaning and human expression in the current Administration and in a world of smart phones, videogames, guns, and remote overseas wars? It's a vital question, and one that I think is worthwhile for American audiences to grapple with.

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER is about the unfulfilled desire to be a poet, about prodigy, about mediocrity,

about striving to see the world in new ways, about the search for beauty in uncommon places. And I hope it raises interesting questions about authorship, about who gets to decide what art is, and about who gets to lavish praise onto whom.

The poet Carl Sandburg wrote that “poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air.” Something about that depiction of poetry reminds me very much of Lisa. She is a woman in mid-life, awakening to art for the first time. In many ways, she is a displaced creature wanting to be airborne, wanting to be a better version of herself, and wanting to feel more alive. When Lisa can’t fulfill her own artistic ambitions, she decides she will do it through her student. She is on a quest— an earnest, well-meaning, but twisted quest— to deliver a young poet to the world and to make sure his voice is heard amidst the noise and banality of modern life.



# MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL

Maggie Gyllenhaal is one of the great young actresses of today. In 2014, Gyllenhaal headlined the BBC/Sundance TV original series *THE HONORABLE WOMAN* garnering a 2015 Golden Globe Award, a SAG Award nomination, and an Emmy Award nomination. She also gained critical acclaim and an Oscar nomination for «Best Supporting Actress» for her portrayal of Jean Craddock in *CRAZY HEART* alongside Jeff Bridges, further exemplifying her talent and versatility as an actress.

After receiving rave reviews out of the 2002 Sundance competition for her starring role opposite James Spader in Lion's Gate's *SECRETARY*, she went on to receive a Golden Globe nomination for "Best Actress in a Comedy or Musical", an Independent Spirit Award nomination for "Best Actress," a Chicago Film Critics' Award for "Most Promising Performer," A Boston Film Critics' Award for "Best Actress," a National Board of Review Award for "Breakthrough Performance" and an IFP/ Gotham "Breakthrough Performance" Award. Gyllenhaal made her feature film debut in 1992, alongside Jeremy Irons and Ethan Hawke in *WATERLAND*. This was followed by a memorable performance as "Raven", the Satan-worshipping make-up artist in John Waters' quirky Hollywood satire, *CECIL B. DEMENTED*, which led her to a co-starring role in *DONNIE DARKO*, a fantasy-thriller about disturbed adolescence.

Years later, back at Sundance in 2007, Gyllenhaal





starred in *SHERRYBABY*; she played a female convict struggling to overcome her drug addiction and regain custody of her daughter. The film was well-received by critics and garnered her second Golden Globe nomination, this time for Best Actress in a Motion Picture-Drama. Gyllenhaal was also nominated for a 2006 Independent Spirit Award for her role in Don Roos' *HAPPY ENDINGS*, opposite Lisa Kudrow and Tom Arnold.

She was Rachel Dawes in the Warner Bros. box office hit *DARK KNIGHT* directed by Chris Nolan. She was also seen in Sam Mendes's *AWAY WE GO*.

Also accomplished onstage, Gyllenhaal starred as "Alice" in Patrick Mauber's award-winning *CLOSER* at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles for director Robert Egan, and previously at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. She has also appeared in *ANTHONY AND CLEOPATRA* at the Vanborough Theatre in London. In 2004, Gyllenhaal starred in Tony Kushner's play *HOMEBOY/KABUL*, which ran in both Los Angeles and at B.A.M. Next, Gyllenhaal will be seen alongside Peter Sarsgaard and Mamie Gummer in *UNCLE VANYA* by Anton Chekhov.

In August 2010, Gyllenhaal was seen in *NANNY MCPHEE AND THE BIG BANG* with Emma Thompson. In 2011, Gyllenhaal appeared in the Anton Chekhov play *THREE SISTERS* alongside Peter Sarsgaard, Jessica Hecht and Josh Hamilton and also starred alongside Hugh Dancy in the romantic comedy,

HYSTERIA. In 2012, Gyllenhaal starred in the drama, *WON'T BACK DOWN* alongside Viola Davis and directed by Daniel Barnz.

On the silver screen, Gyllenhaal was seen in Lenny Abrahamson's *FRANK*, co-starring Michael Fassbender and in *WHITE HOUSE DOWN*, directed by Roland Emmerich alongside Channing Tatum and Jamie Foxx.

In 2014, Gyllenhaal made her Broadway debut in Tom Stoppard's *THE REAL THING*, opposite Ewan McGregor and Cynthia Nixon.

Gyllenhaal most recently produced and starred in David Simon's HBO drama *THE DEUCE*, which has been picked up for a second season. This year, she wrapped filming on *THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER*, an independent film of which she is also producing and starring, that will premiere at Sundance in 2018.



## PARKER SEVAK

Parker Sevak is a 5-year-old actor making his acting debut in *THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER*, for Maven Pictures, in the role of Jimmy Roy opposite Maggie Gyllenhaal. When he is not working and in school, Parker loves playing soccer and hanging out with his big brother Kadin.





# GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL

Gael García Bernal is one of the great actors of today, recently gaining critical acclaim and a Golden Globe award for Best Actor in a Comedy Series for his role in *MOZART IN THE JUNGLE* in 2016. Amazon's hit web series also won a Golden Globe for "Best Comedy Series." In 2017, Bernal received another Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor in a Comedy Series for his role in the second season 5.

Having worked as an actor since childhood in Mexico, Bernal made his feature film debut in Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's Academy Award-nominated *AMORES PERROS*, which earned him a Silver Ariel Award (Mexico's equivalent of the Oscar) as well as a Silver Hugo Award at the Chicago International Film Festival, both as Best Actor.

Bernal has starred in countless films including the globally celebrated feature, Alfonso Cuarón's Academy Award-nominated *Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN* (And Your Mother Too) and *THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES* (Diarios de una motocicleta). Bernal received a BAFTA and Satellite Award nomination in 2005 for Best Actor for his work in *THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES*. In 2006, Bernal was recognized by BAFTA again with a nomination in the Rising Star category, acknowledging new talent in the acting industry. Other credits include *ROSEWATER*, *EL ARDOR*, *DESIERTO*, and *NERUDA*. Bernal earned Best Actor



in a Foreign Language Film for his role in *NERUDA* at the Palm Springs Film Festival. The film was also nominated for a 2017 Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture – Foreign Language.

Most recently, Gael lent his voice to the Pixar animated feature *COCO*, which was released in November 2017 and wrapped production on the film *THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER*, premiering at Sundance in 2018. He is currently directing his second feature film, *CHICUAROTES* and is in production of Season 4 of his hit Amazon series, *MOZART IN THE JUNGLE*.



**SARA COLANGELO**  
**WRITER/DIRECTOR**

Sara Colangelo is a New York based writer and director whose short films have screened at festivals around the world, including U.S. festivals such as Sundance, Tribeca, and SXSW. Colangelo's debut feature, *LITTLE ACCIDENTS*, had its world premiere at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. Inspired by her short film of the same title, it explores tragedy and redemption in a modern-day American coal mining town. During its development, Colangelo was invited to the Sundance Screenwriters and Directors Labs and received support from the Annenberg Institute, the San Francisco Film Society, IFP, and Indian



Paintbrush. The film stars Boyd Holbrook, Elizabeth Banks, Chloe Sevigny, Josh Lucas, and Jacob Lofland. It was theatrically released in over fifteen U.S. cities and was subsequently nominated for a 2015 Independent Spirit Award in the category of Best First Screenplay. Sara's second feature film, *THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER*, is an adaptation of Nadav Lapid's acclaimed Israeli film. It will have its world premiere in the U.S. Dramatic Competition of the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. It stars Maggie Gyllenhaal in the titular role, as well as Gael Garcia Bernal, Michael Chernus, Rosa Salazar, Anna Baryshnikov, Ajay Naidu and Parker Sevak.

Sara Colangelo lives in Brooklyn with her son, Oscar and husband, Chris. She graduated from Brown University with a B.A. in History and went on to receive her M.F.A. at NYU's Graduate Film Division.



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