

Vera Drake Production Notes

Written and directed by Mike Leigh

Production Notes

Credits

Written & directed by	Mike Leigh
Produced by	Simon Channing Williams
Producer	Alain Sarde
Cinematographer	Dick Pope BSC
Editor	Jim Clark
Production Designer	Eve Stewart
Music Composer	Andrew Dickson
Costume Designer	Jacqueline Durran
Make-up & Hair Designer	Christine Blundell
Sound Recordist	Tim Fraser
Casting	Nina Gold
Coproducer	Georgina Lowe
Executive Producers	Gail Egan Robert Jones Duncan Reid

Cast

Vera	Imelda Staunton
George	Richard Graham
Reg	Eddie Marsan
Nellie	Anna Keaveney
Ethel	Alex Kelly
Sid	Daniel Mays
Stan	Phil Davis
Mrs Wells	Lesley Manville
Susan	Sally Hawkins
Mr Wells	Simon Chandler
David	Sam Troughton
Mrs Fowler	Marion Bailey
Vera's mother	Sandra Voe
Sid's customer	Chris O'Dowd
Frank	Adrian Scarborough
Joyce	Heather Craney
Very young woman	Sinead Matthews
Very young man	Sid Mitchell
Ronny	Leo Bill

Kenny	Gerard Monaco
Lily	Ruth Sheen
Mother of Seven	Tilly Vosburgh
Sick Husband	Alan Williams
Children	Heather Cameron
	Billie Cook
	Billy Seymour
Dance Hall Girls	Nina Fry
	Lauren Holden
Cynical Ladies	Elizabeth Berrington
	Emma Amos
Susan's Confidante	Fenella Woolgar
Peggy	Joanna Griffiths
Ivy	Wendy Nottingham
Private Doctor	Nicky Henson
Psychiatrist	Allan Corduner
Nurse Willoughby	Angie Wallis
Sister Beech	Judith Scott
Jamaican Girl	Vinette Robinson
Married Woman	Rosie Cavaliero
Jessie Barnes	Lesley Sharp
Pamela Barnes	Liz White
Mr. Walsh	Anthony O'Donnell
Sister Coombes	Lucy Pleasence
Nurse	TRACY O'FLAHERTY
Det. Inspector Webster	PETER WIGHT
Det. Sergeant Vickers	MARTIN SAVAGE
WPC Best	HELEN COKER
Police Constable	TOM ELLIS
Station Sergeant	ROBERT PUTT
Station Constable	CRAIG CONWAY
Ruffian Mr. Lewis	JAKE WOOD
Gaoler	VINCENT FRANKLIN
Magistrate	MICHAEL GUNN
Magistrate's Clerk	PAUL JESSON
Judge	PAUL RAFFIELD
Clerk	JIM BROADBENT
Prosecution Barrister	PHILIP CHILDS
Defense Barrister	JEFFRY WICKHAM
Usher	NICHOLAS JONES
Prisoners	STEPHAN DUNBAR
	ANGELA CURRAN
	JANE WOOD
Prison Officer	EILEEN DAVIES

Crew

First Assistant Director	JOSH ROBERTSON
Second Assistant Directors	DAN JOHN HAYLEY WILLIAMS
Production Manager	DANIELLE BRANDON
Production Co-ordinator	SARAH MCBRYDE
Script Supervisor	HEATHER STORR
Producer's Assistant	CLAIRE BROUGHTON
Third Assistant Directors	SARAH COOMBS MERRY IRWIN
Set Third Assistant Director	DARREN PRICE
Camera Operator	DICK POPE
Focus Puller	GORDON SEGROVE
Clapper Loader	JAMES SCOTT
Grip	COLIN STRACHAN
Stills Photographer	SIMON MEIN
Sound Maintenance	LOVEDAY HARDING
Sound Assistant	TOM BARROW
Art Directors	ED WALSH ANDREW GRANT
Standby Art Director	TOM READ
Production Buyer	JOHN BUSH
Assistant Production Buyer	RHONA WILSON
Assistant Art Director	TANYA CLARK
Art Department Assistant	ROWANNA LACEY
Art Department Co-ordinator	JO LITTLEJOHN
Property Master	RICHARD MILLS
Prop Storeman	ALAN D BRIANT
Dressing Props	JONATHAN DOWNING ANDREW `MONTY' WILSON DON SANTOS RICHARD LLOYD JONES GARY PEED TERRY STINSON
Standby Props	ANDY FORREST REBECCA NEVILLE
Standby Carpenter	LEON MCCARTHY
Standby Rigger	ANDY ORMESHER
Standby Painter	JUSTIN OVERHILL
Props Runaround	VINCE BARTLET

Assistant Costume Designer	GAETANO SPERANZA
Wardrobe Supervisor	CHARLOTTE FINLAY
Wardrobe Mistress	LAURA GRACE
Costume Design Assistant	HELEN MATTOCKS
Costume Maker	JENNIFER ALFORD
Standby Costume Assistant	CELIA YAU
Costume Department Buyer	GABRIELLA LORIA
Seamstresses	SUE BRADBEER
Costume Assistants	SALLYANN DICKSEE
	JULIA DOLLIMORE
	ANDREW FLETCHER
	SOPHIE FINLAY
	FRANK GALLAGHER
	JENNY HAWKINS
	STEPHEN HYAMS
	SARA MEEK
	JANE PETRIE
	RACHELE VERRECCHIA
Make-up Artists	LESA WARRENER
	KERRY SCOURFIELD
Make-up Assistants	JULIA WILSON
	CHARMAINE FULLER
	JULIUS GOOSEN
Title Design	CHRIS ALLIES
Choreography	FRANCESCA JAYNES
Location Managers	NEIL LEE
	HENRY WOOLLEY
Location Assistant	MANDY EDWARDS
Location Scout	ALI JAMES
	Matthew Woolf
Unit Manager	STEVE MASON
Production Accountant	WILL TYLER
Assistant Accountants	JUSTIN MILLER
	ANDREW MACLEAN
First Assistant Editor	GAVIN BUCKLEY
Supervising Sound Editor	NIGEL STONE
Sound Effects Editor	ZANE HAYWARD
Sound Editor	JOHN WARHURST
Post Production Supervisor	STEVE HARROW
Re-recording Mixers	ADRIAN RHODES

	CHRIS BURDON
Foley Mixer	ROBERT FARR
ADR Mixers	PETER GLEAVES
	PAUL CARR
Foley Walkers	PETE BURGESS
	ANDI DERRICK
Construction Manager	MARK COLLISSON
Carpenter	DAVE HILL
Painter	KEN DAVEY
Stagehand	GARY DAVIES
Gaffer	MATHEW MOFFATT
Best Boy	MARTIN SMITH
Generator Operator	BRIAN MILLER
Electrician	LEE ELDRED
	AVELINO FERNANDEZ
Unit Medic	DOUG VALE
Production Runner	DOMINIC CHANNING WILLIAMS
Casting Assistant	ROSALIE CLAYTON
FT2 Trainees	TAMARA WALSH
	GEORGINA ADAMS
	NEIL FLAHERTY
Additional 2nd Assistant Director	NICK SHUTTLEWORTH
Additional 3rd Assistant Directors	ROBERT BURGESS
	SAM SMITH
	TOBY LEIGH
Additional Boom Op	DENISE YARDE
Additional Riggers	JOHN HANKS
	LES MILLS
Additional Runners	JOY SCOTT
	ROWAN LAIDLAW
Additional Painters	JOSEPH RAYNES
	HANNASTINA CRICK
	MARKO PAVOLIC
Unit Drivers	MARTYN GILES
	MARK WILLIAMS
Minibus Driver	KELVIN BENNETT
Location Vehicles	ON-SET LOCATIONS
Facilities Captain	DANNY BROWN
Costume Vehicle Driver	GLEN ANDERSON
Camera/Grips Driver	LUKE CHISOLM
Construction Driver	JOHN MCMEEKIN
Props Driver	DAVE COKER

Action Vehicles	TLO
Security	NETWORK SECURITY
Completion Bond	GRAHAM EASTON OF FILM FINANCE LTD
Solicitors	RICHARD PHILIPPS & VICTORIA KING OF RICHARDS BUTLER DAVID LEWISOHN
Insurance	ROGER SAMPSON OF AON/ ALBERT G. RUBEN
Publicity	JONATHAN RUTTER OF MCDONALD & RUTTER
Health & Safety Advisors	HANNONMEDIA
Camera Equipment	ICE FILM
Lighting	AFM LIGHTING HIRE
Originated on	KODAK
Prints by	DELUGE
Post Production	VTR
Avid Editing Equipment	HYPERACTIVE
Rushes Telecine	THE MACHINE ROOM
Catering	WHITE HEAT
Music Engineer	GERRY O'RIORDAN
Music Supervisor	STEP PARIKIAN
Music Preparation	FIESTA MEI LING
Vocal Co-ordinator	BEN BEVAN
Violin/Viola	ROSEMARY WARREN-GREEN
Double Bass	STACEY WATTON
Bass Flute	HELEN KEEN
Harp	LUCY WAKEFORD
Conductor	NICK BICAT
Medical History Advisor	JONATHAN EVANS
Legal History Advisor	JEFFREY GORDON
Police History Advisor	RAY SEAL
World War II Advisor	TERRY CHARMAN
Motor Car Advisor	CLIVE LOVELESS

With thanks to The London Hospital, The Metropolitan Police
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Filmed entirely on location in England

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY PARENTS, A DOCTOR AND A MIDWIFE

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SYNOPSIS

London, 1950 - Vera Drake lives in a small flat with her husband Stan, and their grown-up son and daughter, Sid and Ethel. The family is not rich, but their combined incomes make for a reasonable life. Vera is a cleaner, Stan a mechanic in his brother Frank's garage, and Ethel works in a light-bulb factory. Sid is an apprentice tailor. The Drakes have something money can't buy: they are a genuinely happy family.

Vera is always helping people. She regularly visits one sick neighbor, and invites another, Reg, to supper because she thinks he isn't eating properly.

Vera cleans the houses of the "well-to-do." In one of these, we encounter Susan, the daughter of the family.

Vera visits a house that is much shabbier than those of her employers. A distressed young woman is waiting. Vera offers her kind words of reassurance as she removes various items from her bag, and proceeds to perform an abortion.

This is Vera's secret life that she has never discussed with her family. They are totally unaware of her activities, which were of course illegal in England until the late 1960's.

We see the perennially cheerful Vera visiting a number of pregnant women. They vary in age, but all are working- or lower-middle class.

Her appointments are made through Lily, whom she has known since they were children, and who now operates a black market service for items such as tea and sugar, which are still in short supply in post-war England.

Susan, meanwhile, has been raped by a date, and finds herself pregnant. She seeks advice from an experienced older woman, and, following visits to a private doctor and a psychiatrist (to whom she has to demonstrate instability), she attends an expensive and discreet private clinic. Her parents are quite unaware of her termination and of her ordeal.

Vera's home life goes on happily, as before. Reg quickly becomes part of the family, and starts to "walk out" with the somewhat introverted Ethel. Eventually, he proposes marriage, and she accepts, much to everybody's delight.

Sid enjoys the life of an urban post-war young man, and Stan continues to work for Frank, whose 1930's semi-detached house contrasts vividly with Vera and Stan's small if clean tenement flat. While Frank is extremely fond of his brother and family, his wife Joyce, with her upwardly mobile material aspirations, looks down on them.

One weekend, a girl whom Vera has "helped" is suddenly taken ill, and is rushed into hospital. It is obvious to the doctor what has happened, and the girl's mother reluctantly admits the truth when the police are called in.

Frank and Joyce go to Vera and Stan's flat one Sunday to celebrate Ethel and Reg's engagement, and to announce their own news - that Joyce is expecting their first child.

They have barely broken this news when there is a knock on the door. Stan opens it, to discover the police, who enter and ask to see Vera. They will not reveal to the family the reason for their intrusion.

The Detective Inspector, his Detective Sergeant and the uniformed policewoman accompany a stunned Vera into the bedroom. She knows why they have come. Barely able to speak, she admits everything, and, at their request, produces her abortion kit from a cupboard.

Still with no explanation given to the increasingly distressed family, Vera is taken away in a police car. Stan follows on foot in the snow, while the others stay behind.

At the police station, Vera is interrogated further, and then makes and signs a statement, while a perplexed Stan waits, still in the dark.

Detective Inspector Webster is as sympathetic and as patient as possible. Vera explains how she just tries to help girls who are in trouble. Her sole motive is compassion. She is horrified at the suggestion that she might have received money for doing this, and is deeply shocked to discover that Lily has been charging the women fees.

Vera is now formally charged with her crime, and Inspector Webster suggests that since Stan is inevitably going to find out the truth anyway, why doesn't she tell him herself? The Inspector brings in the bewildered Stan, and Vera confesses all.

Stunned, Stan goes home. His reaction is to be understanding and supportive, but he is angry as well. Ethel is distressed, and Sid is at first furious and disgusted, but later relents.

After a night in a cell, Vera appears before the magistrate, and with no opposition from the police, she is released on bail.

Vera is completely traumatized by what has happened. Just before Christmas, she is brought back before the magistrate's court, and she is committed to trial in January.

Christmas at the Drake flat is a subdued affair. Joyce makes it clear that she would rather not be there, but Reg declares it's the best Christmas he's had in a long time.

Prior to the criminal trial, Vera's solicitor tells her that none of her employers will give her a character reference, and that the shortest sentence they can hope for is eighteen months.

At the trial, in spite of the effort of her defense lawyer to emphasize her strong moral character, and the fact she did not profit from her "crimes", the judge determines to make an example of Vera Drake, and she is sent to prison for two-and-a-half years.

In the women's prison, Vera talks to two other inmates, both abortionists. They are serving longer sentences than hers because their clients both died. They assure her that, as a first-time offender, she will have to serve only half her sentence.

Meanwhile, at the flat, Stan, Sid, Ethel and Reg sit around the table all lost for words...

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

MIKE LEIGH, FILM AND TELEVISION CREDITS

Bleak Moments (1971) - III min

Chicago Film Festival 1972 Grand Prix (Golden Hugo)

Locarno Film Festival 1972 Grand Prix (Golden Leopard)

Hard Labour (1973) - 75 min

The Birth of the Goalie of the 2001 F.A. Cup Final (1975) - 5 min

Old Chums (1975) - 5 min

Probation (1975) - 5 min

Afternoon (1975) - 5 min

A Light Snack (1975) - 5 min

The Permissive Society (1975) - 5 min

Nuts in May (1975) - 75 min

Knock for Knock (1976) - 30 min

The Kiss of Death (1976) - 80 min

Abigail's Party (1977) - 104 min

Who's Who (1978) - 80 min

Grown-Ups (1980) - 90 min

Home Sweet Home (1982) - 90 min

Meantime (1983) - 90 min

Berlin Film Festival 1984 (Forum) People's prize

Four Days in July (1984) - 96 min

The Short and Curlies (1987) - 18 min

Cork Film Festival 1988 Best Short Film

High Hopes (1988) - 110 min

Venice Film Festival 1988 Critics' prize

London Evening Standard 1988 Peter Sellers Best Comedy Award

European Film Awards 1988: European Film of the Year, Best Actress (Ruth Sheen)

Best Supporting Actress (Edna Doré), Best Music (Andrew Dickson)
Life is Sweet (1991) - 102 min
Europacinema Academia Italiana 1991 Best Film
Taormina Film Festival 1991 Best Film
Taormina Maschera Di Polifermo (awarded for the first time to the whole cast)
Geneva 1992 Stars de Demain Best Actress (Claire Skinner)
National Society of Film Critics 1991:
Best Film, Best Actress (Alison Steadman),
Best Supporting Actress (Jane Horrocks)
Los Angeles Film Critics Association 1991 Best Actress (Jane Horrocks)
A Sense of History (1992) - 28 min
Clermont-Ferrand 1993 Best Short Film
Naked (1993) - 126 min
Cannes Film Festival 1993 Best Director, Best Actor (David Thewlis)
Toronto Film Festival 1993 Metro Media Award
San Sebastian Film Festival 1993 Author 'g3 Jury Prize
Haugesund Film Festival 1993 Best European Film
Cinequest/ TV Ontario 1993 Best Foreign Film
Geneva 1993 Stars de Demain Best European Female Newcomer (Katrin Cartlidge)
New York Film Critics Circle Award 1993 Best Actor (David Thewlis)
Boston Society of Film Critics 1993 Runner up Best Actor (David Thewlis)
National Society of Film Critics 1993 Best Actor (David Thewlis)
Stockholm Film Festival Mont Blanc Award for Best Original Screenplay
London Evening Standard Award 1994 Best Actor (David Thewlis)
Secrets and Lies (1996) - 141 min
Cannes Film Festival 1996 Palme d'Or, Best Actress (Brenda Blethyn)
Fipresci International Critics Award
Ecumenical Festival Award
Sydney Film Festival 1996 Most Popular Film, Best Film - critics' poll
Los Angeles Film Critics Association 1997 Best Film, Best Director,
Best Actress (Brenda Blethyn)
Golden Globe Awards 1997 Best Actress (Brenda Blethyn),
Nominated Best Supporting Actress and Best Film
Southbank Show Award 1996 for Cinema
Empire Magazine 1996 Best Actress (Brenda Blethyn)
Spanish Goya 1996 Best Foreign Film
French Critics' Prize for Best Foreign Film of 1996
Academy Award Nominations 1997:
Best Film, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Actress (Brenda Blethyn)
Best Supporting Actress (Marianne Jean-Baptiste)
BAFTA Awards 1997: Best Original Screenplay
Alexander Korda Award for Best British Film Best Actress (Brenda Blethyn)
Humanitas Prize 1997
1997 Australian Film Institute Awards Best Foreign Film
Kinema Jumbo Award (Japan) for Best Foreign Film 1997
Career Girls (1997) - 90 min

London Evening Standard Award 1997 Best Actress (Katrin Cartlidge)
Topsy-Turvy (1999) - 159 min
Venice Film Festival 1999 Best Actor (Jim Broadbent)
New York Film Critics Circle Best Picture, Best Director (Mike Leigh)
National Society of Film Critics Best Picture, Best Director (Mike Leigh)
Academy Awards 2000: Best Makeup & Hair Design - Winner, Best Costume Design - Winner
Nominations: Best Original Screenplay, Best Production Design
BAFTA Awards 2000 Best Makeup & Hair Design - Winner
Nominations: Best Original Screenplay, Best British Film
Evening Standard Awards 2000 Best Film, Best Actor (Jim Broadbent)
All or Nothing (2001) - 128 min
London Film Critics' Circle 2003 Best British Film, Best British Actress (Lesley Manville)
Evening Standard Award 2003 Best Technical Achievement (Eve Stewart)

SIMON CHANNING WILLIAMS, PRODUCER

Simon Channing Williams' association with Mike Leigh began when he worked as first assistant director on the 1980 BBC film 'Grown-Ups'.

After working with Leigh again as co-producer on the BAFTA nominated short film 'The Short and Curlies' and as producer on the feature film 'High Hopes', Channing Williams and Leigh decided to form an on-going partnership and set up Thin Man Films for the purpose.

Their first project for Thin Man was the feature 'Life is Sweet', which gained critical honors and won new audiences for Leigh's work internationally. They then collaborated on the 1992 short 'A Sense of History', named Best Short film at the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival, the multi-award-winning 'Naked', the Palme d'Or winning 'Secrets and Lies', 'Career Girls', the Oscar-winning 'Topsy-Turvy' and, most recently, 'All or Nothing'.

Outside of his relationship with Mike Leigh and Thin Man Films, Simon Channing Williams has produced several other projects, including 'Puccini' for director Tony Palmer, the feature films 'When the Whales Came', 'Jack and Sarah', which was a hit at the UK box-office in 1995, Doug McGrath's 'Nicholas Nickleby', and, most recently, Paddy Breathnach's 'Man About Dog'. He is currently in production on Fernando Meirelles' 'The Constant Gardener', starring Ralph Fiennes and Rachel Weisz and based on the novel by John Le Carre.

As Executive Producer, Channing Williams' credits include the BAFTA nominated 'Little Pig Robinson' (TVS) directed by Alan Bridges, the short film 'The Pan Loaf', winner of a Silver Hugo at the Chicago Film Festival and Best Short Film at the Cork Film Festival, and Irwin Winkler's Cannes 2004 closing night film, 'De-Lovely'.

ALAIN SARDE, PRODUCER

Alain Sarde began his film career in 1976 with Roman Polanski's 'The Tenant' and Andre Techine's 'Barocco'. He is one of France's foremost producers, alternating mainstream and art house projects. He has produced more than 150 films with directors including Jean-Luc Godard, Roman Polanski, Pierre Granier-Deferre, George Lautner, Andre Techine, Bertrand Tavernier, Alain Corneau, Bertrand Blier, Nicole Garcia, Coline Serreau, Jeanne Labrune, Daniele

Thompson, David Lynch, Claude Sautet, Patrice Leconte and Jacques Doillon. His next project, 'Oliver Twist', reunites him with Roman Polanski. Their most recent collaboration, 'The Pianist', won the Cannes Palme d'Or, three Oscars, two BAFTA awards and seven Cesars.

DICK POPE, BSC, CINEMATOGRAPHER

Dick Pope has worked with Mike Leigh on 'Life is Sweet', 'Naked', 'Secrets and Lies', 'Career Girls', 'Topsy-Turvy', 'All or Nothing' and his television short 'A Sense of History'. At Camerimage (the International Festival of the Art of Cinematography) Pope won the main prize in 1996 for his work on 'Secrets and Lies', and in 2000 he and Mike Leigh won for best director/cinematographer collaboration. His feature film credits include Beeban Kidron's 'Amy Foster', Anthony Neilson's 'The Debt Collector', Chris McQuarrie's 'The Way of the Gun', Jill Sprecher's 'Thirteen Conversations About One Thing' and Doug McGrath's 'Nicholas Nickleby'.

JIM CLARK, EDITOR

Jim Clark is a distinguished veteran film editor who has worked with many directors including John Schlesinger, Stanley Donen, Michael Apted, and more recently Richard Loncraine for whom he edited 'The Gathering Storm', an award-winner for HBO. He received the Academy Award for Roland Joffe's 'The Killing Fields'. Jim also worked with David Puttnam and Roland Joffe on 'The Mission', and was part of Puttnam's team at Columbia Pictures. Jim also edited a James Bond movie: 'The World is Not Enough'.

EVE STEWART, PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Eve Stewart was nominated for an Oscar for Best Production Design for Mike Leigh's 'Topsy-Turvy' and has also worked with him as production designer on 'All or Nothing' (for which she won an Evening Standard Award for Technical Achievement), as production and costume designer on 'Career Girls', as art director on 'Secrets and Lies', 'Naked' and 'A Sense of History' and as designer of his play 'Smelling A Rat'.

She is currently working on 'The Dark' with John Fawcett and other film credits include 'De-Lovely', 'Cheeky', 'Wondrous Oblivion', 'Nicholas Nickleby', 'The Hole', 'Kiss Kiss Bang Bang', and 'Saving Grace'. Eve Stewart worked with Nike on their 2002 World Cup Campaign with Terry Gilliam, VW and McDonalds.

In theatre, she was Head of Design at the Nottingham Playhouse and the New Vic at Stoke. In 2002, Stewart designed for the filmed George Harrison concert 'A Concert for George' at the Royal Albert Hall and she has also designed 'King Lear' at the National Theatre and 'Little Shop of Horrors'. Eve Stewart is the recipient of three Best Window prizes from The Evening Standard Awards for her work at Harvey Nichols and she has worked with the Cliveden House Hotel, where she designed the Stable Restaurant, Main Dining Room and Poolside Restaurant. She has also worked as a book illustrator and a presenter on the television series 'Homefront'.

ANDREW DICKSON, MUSIC

VERA DRAKE marks Andrew Dickson's sixth collaboration with Mike Leigh following 'Meantime', 'High Hopes', 'Naked', 'Secrets and Lies' and 'All or Nothing'. As well as writing music for

numerous television projects, Dickson also has extensive theatre credits as an actor, musician, director, writer and composer. He has written music and songs for many theatre companies including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Court, Hull Truck, Nottingham Playhouse, Sheffield Crucible, Leicester Haymarket and Liverpool Everyman. He has also staged several large-scale community plays in the west of England.

JACQUELINE DURRAN, COSTUME DESIGNER

VERA DRAKE is Jacqueline Durrán's second film with Mike Leigh, after 'All or Nothing', which marked her first solo work as a costume designer. Previously she had collaborated for several years with designer Lindy Hemming on numerous projects including 'Topsy-Turvy' for which Hemming won the Oscar. Recently, Jacqueline Durrán was costume designer on 'Young Adam', starring Ewan McGregor, on the Broadway production of 'Medea' starring Fiona Shaw for director Deborah Warner, and on the film 'Yes' starring Joan Allen and Sam Neill, for director Sally Potter.

CHRISTINE BLUNDELL, MAKE-UP AND HAIR DESIGN

VERA DRAKE marks Christine Blundell's seventh collaboration with Mike Leigh following 'Life is Sweet', 'Naked', 'Secrets and Lies', 'Career Girls', 'Topsy-Turvy', for which she won an Oscar and a BAFTA for Best Make-up, and 'All or Nothing'. Her other recent credits include Mike Nichols' 'Closer', on which she was Personal Make-up Artist to Natalie Portman, 'Around the World in 80 Days', 'Cheeky', 'Finding Neverland', 'To Kill a King', 'The Full Monty' and 'Seven Years in Tibet' on which she designed David Thewlis's hair and make-up.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

IMELDA STAUNTON / Vera Drake

VERA DRAKE marks Imelda Staunton's first collaboration with Mike Leigh.

One of the UK's best-known stage and television actresses, Imelda Staunton has also been seen in numerous feature films, including the Oscar-winning 'Shakespeare in Love' and 'Sense and Sensibility', as well as 'Crush', 'Much Ado About Nothing' and 'Peter's Friends'. Recent television roles include the Queen Mother in 'Cambridge Spies' and Mrs. Micawber in 'David Copperfield'.

For her stage work, Imelda Staunton has won three Oliviers, the UK's most prestigious theatre award: Best Supporting Actress for 'The Corn is Green' at the Old Vic and Alan Ayckbourn's 'A Chorus of Disapproval' at the National Theatre, and Best Actress in a Musical for her performance as the Baker's Wife in the original London production of Stephen Sondheim's 'Into the Woods'. She has appeared regularly at the National Theatre, most notably as Miss Adelaide in Richard Eyre's production of 'Guys and Dolls'. At the National, she also worked with Eyre on 'The Beggar's Opera' and 'Schweyk in the Second World War', and with Matthew Warchus on 'Life X 3'. Other London stage appearances include three productions with the Royal Shakespeare Company, as Sonya in Michael Blakemore's production of 'Uncle Vanya' at the Vaudeville Theatre and with Jim Broadbent and Brenda Blethyn in Sam Mendes' production of 'Habeas Corpus' at the Donmar Warehouse. She was most recently seen in Michael Hastings' 'Calico' at the Duke of York's Theatre.

PHIL DAVIS / Stan (Vera's husband)

Phil Davis is probably best-known to film-goers for his role as Cyril, the motorcycle courier, in Mike Leigh's 1989 'High Hopes'. Prior to this he had worked with the director on the television films 'Who's Who' and 'Grown-Ups'. He also made a brief appearance in 'Secrets and Lies'.

Davis is a well-known face on British television, most recently in the highly acclaimed 'North Square' and the adaptation of Zadie Smith's 'White Teeth', and perhaps most notably in Alan Clark's legendary, 'The Firm'.

On stage Phil Davis was last seen in Christopher Hampton's 'Tales from Hollywood' at the Donmar Warehouse, while other film appearances include 'Nicholas Nickleby', 'Face', 'Alien III', 'The Bounty' and 'Quadrophenia'.

Phil Davis has also directed two feature films ('Hold Back the Night' and 'id') and for television ('Prime Suspect 5' and 'Real Women').

PETER WIGHT / Detective Inspector Webster (leader of the investigation)

VERA DRAKE marks Peter Wight's fourth collaboration with Mike Leigh following 'Meantime', 'Secrets and Lies' and 'Naked', in which he plays the security guard who encounters David Thewlis's Johnny towards the end of the film.

A recognizable face from numerous British television series, including the acclaimed 'Out of the Blue', and, more recently, Craig Cash's 'Early Doors', in which he has a recurring role as a work-shy policeman, Peter Wight has also been seen in many films. He has extensive stage credits throughout the UK, including work with the National Theatre, Shared Experience and with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

ADRIAN SCARBOROUGH / Frank (Stan's brother)

A highly-acclaimed stage actor, Adrian Scarborough has appeared in supporting roles in several recent films including 'Bright Young Things', 'Gosford Park' (as one of the downstairs staff), 'Dirty Pretty Things' and 'Love is the Devil' (as Daniel Farson).

On television he made an impact as Quiggin in the 1996 adaptation of 'A Dance to the Music of Time'.

He has worked extensively at the National Theatre: as Flute for Robert Lepage in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and as Mole for Nicholas Hytner in 'The Wind in the Willows'. Other National productions include Hytner's 'The Recruiting Officer', Richard Eyre's production of David Hare's trilogy of 'Racing Demon', 'Murmuring Judges' and 'The Absence of War', and 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead' in which he appeared as Rosencrantz. Elsewhere, he has been seen in Howard Davies' production of 'Vassa' at the Albery Theatre, in 'To the Green Fields Beyond' for Sam Mendes at the Donmar Warehouse, in 'Platanov' for Jonathan Kent at the Almeida, in the West End transfer of 'Humble Boy', and, most recently, in Robert Delamere's Donmar Warehouse production of Dario Fo's 'Accidental Death of an Anarchist.'

HEATHER CRANEY / Joyce (Frank's wife, Vera and Stan's sister-in-law)

Heather Craney appeared as one of Timothy Spall's taxi passengers in Mike Leigh's 'All or Nothing', and was also seen as Violet Russell in 'Topsy-Turvy'. She has performed in regional theatre throughout the UK, most recently at Liverpool Playhouse in Noel Coward's 'Still Life' and 'Astonished Heart'. In the West End she was in Michael Grandage's revival of Peter Nichols' 'Passion Play' and her television work includes 'The Bill' and 'Silent Witness'.

DANIEL MAYS / Sid (Vera and Stan's son)

Daniel Mays has worked with Mike Leigh before when he played Jason, the psychotic boyfriend, in 'All or Nothing'. A RADA graduate, he has worked extensively at the Royal Court, most recently as the lead in Vassily Sigarev's critically acclaimed, 'Ladybird'. Television roles include 'EastEnders', 'Bodily Harm' and 'Tipping the Velvet'. Film credits include 'Pearl Harbor' and the leading role of Jason in Antonia Bird's 'Rehab' for which he won the Best Actor Award at the Palmare-Reims Television Festival this year.

ALEX KELLY / Ethel (Vera and Stan's daughter)

Like VERA DRAKE co-star Heather Craney, Alex Kelly was last seen as one of the passengers in Timothy Spall's mini-cab in 'All or Nothing'. She has appeared in numerous television series, including 'Tipping the Velvet', and extensively on stage. She appeared in several productions at the National Theatre, most notably as Cunegonde in John Caird's production of 'Candide'.

SALLY HAWKINS / Susan (daughter of rich family for whom Vera cleans)

RADA-trained Sally Hawkins made her film debut as Samantha in 'All or Nothing', and has since filmed Matthew Vaughan's 'Layer Cake'. On stage she has appeared in numerous productions and was seen as Hermia in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and Hero in 'Much Ado About Nothing' at the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. Her television credits include 'Tipping the Velvet', 'Byron', in which she played Mary Shelley, 'Little Britain', 'Promoted To Glory' and 'The Young Visitors'.

EDDIE MARSAN / Reg (neighbor and soon to be son-in-law of the Drakes)

VERA DRAKE is Eddie Marsan's first film with Mike Leigh. He was recently seen as Benicio del Toro's preacher in '21 Grams', and has also appeared in 'The Rocket Post', 'Gangs of New York', and 'Gangster No. 1'. His television credits include 'Charles II' and 'Bodily Harm' with Timothy Spall. His stage work includes 'Antartica' in the West End, and Roger Michell's production of Harold Pinter's 'The Homecoming' at the National Theatre.

RUTH SHEEN / Lily (black-marketeer and fixer)

VERA DRAKE marks Ruth Sheen's fourth collaboration with Mike Leigh. In 1989, she was named European Actress of the Year as Shirley in 'High Hopes' (opposite VERA DRAKE co-star Phil Davis), and in 1993 she appeared at the Theatre Royal Stratford East in his play, 'It's A Great Big Shame!'. Most recently, she played Maureen in 'All or Nothing'. Other film work includes 'Virtual Sexuality', 'The Young Poisoner's Handbook', and 'Little Dorrit'. Between 'All or Nothing' and VERA DRAKE, Ruth Sheen filmed 'Cheeky' for David Thewlis and 'Vanity Fair' for director Mira Nair. On television she has been seen in numerous plays and series including 'Holding On' and 'Never Never', both written by Tony Marchant, 'Bramwell', 'Cracker'

and 'Tom Jones'. She was last seen in the television adaptation of Zadie Smith's best-seller 'White Teeth'.

HELEN COKER / WPC Best (who assists at the investigation)

Helen Coker previously worked with Mike Leigh on 'All or Nothing', in which she appeared as the pregnant teenager Donna. A graduate of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Helen Coker was seen in Terence Davies' 'The House of Mirth' and Doug McGrath's 'Nicholas Nickleby'. She can also be seen in Mira Nair's 'Vanity Fair'. Her most recent television credits include 'Cruise of the Gods' and 'Little Britain'.

MARTIN SAVAGE / Detective Sergeant Vickers (who assists at the investigation)

Martin Savage made his film debut as the drug-addicted actor George Grossmith in Mike Leigh's 'Topsy-Turvy'. He was also seen briefly as a taxi-passenger in 'All or Nothing'. His other film credits include 'The Tailor of Panama', and the upcoming 'Piccadilly Jim' and 'Dirty War', in which he has one of the leading roles. He has appeared in numerous television series and stage productions, including the Royal Shakespeare Company's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in which he played Peter Quince.

SINEAD MATTHEWS / Very young woman (Vera's first abortion client in the story)

A 2003 RADA graduate, Sinead Matthews makes her film debut in VERA DRAKE. On stage, she appeared as Abigail in the Crucible Theatre Sheffield's recent production of Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible', and her television credits include 'The Bingo Club' and 'He Knew He Was Right'.

ALLAN CORDUNER / Psychiatrist

Allan Corduner is best-known for his portrayal of Arthur Sullivan in Mike Leigh's 'Topsy-Turvy'. He has done extensive theatre work both in London's West End and on Broadway. Prior to shooting 'Topsy-Turvy', he had a leading role in the Tony award-winning Broadway musical 'Titanic'. Other stage work includes the London and New York productions of Caryl Churchill's seminal '80's play 'Serious Money'. Since 'Topsy-Turvy' Allan has appeared in several feature films including 'The Grey Zone', 'Moonlight Mile', 'Food of Love', 'Me Without You' and the upcoming 'De-Lovely'. Recent television includes 'Foyles War' and the mini-series 'The Way We Live Now' and 'Daniel Deronda'.

LESLEY SHARP / Jessie Barnes (mother of the girl who becomes ill)

One of Britain's best-known television actresses, Lesley Sharp previously worked with Mike Leigh on 'Naked'. On television she has starred in some of the most prominent contemporary drama series of recent years, including 'Playing The Field', 'Clocking Off' and 'Bob and Rose', as well as the single dramas 'Great Expectations', 'The Moonstone', 'The Second Coming' (recently BAFTA-nominated), 'Carrie's War' and 'Carla'. On stage, she has appeared in recent National Theatre productions of 'Mother Courage' and 'Uncle Vanya' as well as David Hare's 'Murmuring Judges'. At the Royal Court Theatre she was seen in the revival of Caryl Churchill's 'Top Girls', 'Our Country's Good' and 'The Recruiting Officer'. Lesley Sharp's film credits include 'The Full Monty' and 'From Hell', and, most recently, 'Cheeky'.

JIM BROADBENT / Judge

A regular collaborator with Mike Leigh, and one of the best-known faces in British acting, Jim Broadbent works with Mike Leigh for the sixth time on VERA DRAKE following the stage plays 'Goose-pimples' and 'Ecstasy', the films 'Life Is Sweet' and 'Topsy-Turvy', and the television short 'A Sense of History', which Jim wrote. Winner of the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for 'Iris', Jim Broadbent has appeared in numerous films including 'Nicholas Nickleby', 'Moulin Rouge', 'The Borrowers', 'Richard III' and 'Bullets Over Broadway'. He was recently seen on stage at the National Theatre in 'The Pillowman' and previously in Sam Mendes' acclaimed production of Alan Bennett's 'Habeas Corpus'.

FENELLA WOOLGAR / Susan's confidante

Nominated for numerous awards for her scene-stealing role as Agatha Runcible in 'Bright Young Things', Fenella Woolgar will soon be seen in Richard Eyre's film 'Stage Beauty'. She has appeared in several television productions, including 'The Way We Live Now', and at various leading theatres throughout the UK.