

QUEENS PICTURE
presents

viola
HARRIS

siobhan
FALLON

The Secret Friend



2010. USA. Running time: 15 mins. 35mm. Aspect ratio: 1:1.78.



Based upon the short story by **joão silvério**TREVISAN

a film by
flavioALVES

PRESS CONTACT

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Veteran actress Viola Harris (*The Other Guys*, *Sex and the City 2*) gives a remarkable performance alongside Siobhan Fallon (*Men in Black*, *Forrest Gump*) in this poignant and subtly playful story.

A reclusive, elderly widow, Anna Marshall (Harris), lives in quiet desperation following her husband's death until she begins receiving daily phone calls from a silent stranger. At first Anna finds the calls intrusive, but as the calls continue Anna finds herself waiting for her phone to ring with growing anticipation prompting her to reach out to her silent prankster. An odd and mysterious friendship evolves between the two as Anna shares her life experiences with startling honesty. Empty days are filled with new hope, but when the calls abruptly end a devastated Anna is compelled to surprising action to fill the unbearable void.

LONG SYNOPSIS

An elderly widow, Anna Marshall (Harris), lives in isolation following the death of her beloved husband. With no friends and an estranged son, Anna is a senior citizen alone in the world—obsolete and discarded.

The only visitor since her husband's funeral is her sympathetic neighbor, Julia (Fallon). But with seemingly little in common their polite tea break ends far too quickly, leaving Anna unable to ask for the companionship she desperately longs for as her nervous neighbor quickly leaves to attend to her children.

Anna's empty days are filled with restless routines and ticking clocks until a silent stranger calls. With this, Anna's phone rings every day promptly at 3:30pm. At first Anna finds the calls intrusive and tells the stranger the calls are invading her privacy, but as the calls continue, Anna finds herself waiting for her phone to ring. When the stranger calls 15 minutes late one afternoon, Anna realizes just how dependent she has become on the calls and does something that completely surprises herself. She talks to the stranger: "Who are you? Are you a man or a woman? Are you married?"

In desperation, Anna begins to befriend her prankster. An odd and mysterious friendship evolves as Anna recounts the events of her days and her life's experiences with startling honesty. The daily phone calls grow in duration—lasting hours with Anna feeling newly inspired and connected if only by a silent phone call.

Happy weeks and months pass until New Years Eve arrives. Dressed to the nines, Anna pops a cork and toasts her silent friend. At the stroke of midnight, the silence is broken at last when the stranger speaks. Anna is startled—overjoyed and incredulous. But Anna's phone never rings again. Devastated, she turns to the phone company frantic to find the name and number of her caller. The manager tells Anna that the number is private and that by law he is unable to reveal the caller's name or number. Inconsolable, he encourages Anna to get a private number and assures her that if she does, she'll never be 'bothered' again. Anna's return to her bleak life of isolation. With no one to talk to and with no other recourse, Anna is compelled to action that surprises none as much as herself.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Queens Picture, in association with *Factor 8 Productions*, is proud to present, *The Secret Friend*, a 35mm short film. The screenplay, adapted from the short story by Brazilian writer, João Silvério Trevisan, was written by award winning director, Flavio Alves, whose last film, *Even in My Dreams*, received the *Golden Ace* award at the *Las Vegas Film Festival*.

The Secret Friend, along with Alves' past films, deals with issues and problems the elderly population faces on a daily basis. The struggles they battle, the stereotypes they encounter and the general misunderstandings they are met with. Alves has chosen to focus on these issues in his innovative and creative films. It is his goal of the director to challenge the view of the audience regarding elderly characters in roles that allow the exploration of their personalities in unexpected ways.

The film's star, Viola Harris, whose films include: *Sex and the City 2* (2010); *Choke* (2008); Sydney Pollack's *The Slender Thread* (1965), and Woody Allen's *Deconstructing Harry* (1997), plays the role of "Anna Marshall," a reclusive, elderly widow living in quiet desperation until she begins to receive daily calls from a silent stranger.

Rounding out our star-studded cast is Siobhan Fallon, who plays Julia. Fallon's feature film appearances include: *New in Town* (2009); *The Negotiator* (1998); *Men in Black* (1997); *Striptease* (1996); and *Forrest Gump* (1994). In addition, Fallon has appeared 20 times on *Saturday Night Live*.

The Secret Friend is the result of a remarkable collaborative effort from an outstanding crew, whose work behind the scenes has made the film possible. It was shot in New York City over the course of five days. The goal is to feature this film at all major film festivals including *Sundance*, *Cannes*, *Berlin*, *Toronto*, *Venice* and others as opportunities arise.

TECHNICAL SPECS

Processing	Technicolor (New York)
Original Film Stock	Kodak 5229
Camera	MovieCam Compact 35mm
Lenses	Zeiss Ultra Primes 16-135mm
Color Correction	Company 3
Footage Shot	9,300 feet
Final Footage	1,250 feet

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

During filming, I often thought of my childhood in Rio de Janeiro and the integral role my grandmother played in my upbringing. It was genuinely inspiring to watch her bound over the hurdles that come with age. Although I now live on the opposite side of the globe, more than three decades later, I still remember her strength and perseverance.

Soon after I arrived in the United States, I realized that loneliness and depression are common themes in the elderly universe. Without the help of close relatives, some have no one to call for help or solace and furthermore have no meaningful structures of community or support. Aging often brings illness, reduced income and loss of family and friends. So rather than ignore the problems facing the aging communities, I decided to build upon them by creating films that push these issues into the spotlight.

The Secret Friend is my third film and just like the others I have directed, the elderly character is the protagonist. I came across the story about 12 years ago after reading a collection of short stories written by famous Brazilian author, *João Silvério Trevisan*. The story that follows Anna, an elderly widow, spoke to me in a very powerful way. After my initial reading, I remember thinking it would make a wonderful film but never dreamed it would make it to the big screen, much less, that I would be the one to direct it.

So I was both surprised and delighted when Trevisan agreed to allow me to shoot the film. I had just finished film school and was very enthusiastic about my first project in the professional arena. However, I never imagined the journey that awaited me. I was fortunate enough to have a great producer, Nicholas Eisenberg, who helped me bring the film alive. I have also been blessed with an amazing crew and talented cast who gave everything they had to this project. Through the invaluable collaboration, we began to reshape the film from a short story to a timeless tale.

Now that the film is ready to be shown to people around the world, I hope that it will not only be of entertainment value but will also become a window into the lives of an often invisible segment of society.

– Director Flavio Alves, New York

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Flavio Alves is a writer, screenwriter, producer, and film director. He is best known for his courageous book Toque de Silêncio (*Call To Silence*), an autobiographical account of his experiences as a gay man in the Brazilian navy.

To escape the increasingly hostile environment he was personally encountering in Brazil upon the publication of his book, Alves sought political asylum in the United States. His claims of receiving death threats were supported by various human rights organizations, LGBT activists, as well as former São Paulo Mayor Marta Suplicy.

In 1998, with the help of the *Immigrants and Refugee Rights Clinic* at New York University's School of Law, the *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service* agreed to grant Alves political asylum. Shortly thereafter, he attended Columbia University in New York City where he earned an undergraduate degree in political science. After graduating, Alves worked as an assistant to then-New York *Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton* (D-NY) and to *Congressman Anthony Weiner* (D-NY).

In 2006, Alves left politics and returned to school to study film production at New York University. While there he wrote and directed three short films, including his final project, *Even in My Dreams*, which received the *Technisphere Award* from NYU for Best Student Film and later screened at a variety of domestic and international film festivals.

In 2008, Alves founded *Queens Picture LLC*, a New York-based production company. He soon contacted Brazilian author *João Silvério Trevisan* and optioned the rights to produce one of his many works, *The Secret Friend*.

FILMOGRAPHY

DIRECTOR

- 2010 - THE SECRET FRIEND
- 2008 - EVEN IN MY DREAMS
- 2007 - SUPERPOWER

PRODUCER

- 2010 - CASE CLOSED (by Kevin Stocklin)
- 2010 - THE MASTERPIECE (by Courtney Lauren Penn)
- 2010 - THE EMPTY PLAYGROUND (by Phil Giordano)
- 2010 - THE SECRET FRIEND
- 2009 - HUMAN BEING (by Fernando Pinheiro)
- 2009 - WE ALL FALL DOWN (by Kevin Stocklin)
- 2008 - EVEN IN MY DREAMS
- 2008 - TOM AND JERALDINE (by Kevin Stocklin)
- 2007 - PASTA (by Tomás Welss)
- 2007 - CAP XV:12 (by Fernando Pinheiro)
- 2006 - A GAROTA (by Fernando Pinheiro)

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

I first met Flavio in the winter of 2009. He had a script, a few crewmembers and a very small budget. He asked me to join the production team and I was invited to the first crew meeting. Since that time, this project has grown and evolved in almost every way imaginable.

If you had asked me then where I thought we would be today with this amazing film, I could not have imagined such success. Through the inevitable ups and downs that come with making a film, we were able to come away with something that is in every way, a work of art. From the hours of work that went into the planning, scouting, interviews and phone calls, to the delicate details of the wardrobe and production design, to the endless fine-tuning of the script, to the remarkable acting. Never have I experience such a collaborative effort result in something so wonderful.

For me, the process of making this film has been more than a job. It has been a journey. As production progressed, the crew and I became more and more attached to the story itself and more specifically the character of "Anna." It seemed that whoever we talked to, who ever we began to explain the story to, they could immediately relate her character to someone they knew. "Oh, that sounds like my neighbor Bill," they would say. "I always see him walking but no one ever talks to him." It was then that I realized how important this story really is, how many "Anna's" there are in the world and how many people would be able to relate to the story.

We have come so far from that first production meeting in January and I could not be happier with the work of everyone involved with this project. This has been by far the most enjoyable group of professionals that I have ever had the opportunity to work with and I will be able to use this production as a model for other work for years to come.

– Producer Nicholas Eisenberg, New York

THE CAST

VIOLA HARRIS (*Anna Marshall*) Viola Harris, a veteran actress, has appeared in several films, most notably: *The Other Guys* (2010), *Choke* (2008), Sydney Pollack's *The Slender Thread* (1965), and Woody Allen's *Deconstructing Harry* (1997). In addition to film and television, Harris has had several national stage appearances, including the national tour of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- *The Other Guys* (2010)
- *Sex and the City 2* (2010)
- *Choke* (2008)
- *Noise* (2007)
- *Law & Order* (2 episodes, 2000-2005)
- *Sour Grapes* (1998)
- *Deconstructing Harry* (1997)
- *Fire Sale* (1977)

SIOBHAN FALLON (*Julia*) Siobhan Fallon's film, television, and stage credits are numerous. Her most recent blockbuster feature film appearances include: *New in Town* (2009), *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), *The Negotiator* (1998), *Men in Black* (1997), *Striptease* (1996), *Forrest Gump* (1994), and *Seinfeld* (1991-1994). Fallon has also appeared 20 times on *Saturday Night Live*.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- *The Bounty Hunter* (2010)
- *New in Town* (2009)
- *Baby Mama* (2008)
- *Funny Games, USA* (2007)
- *Charlotte's Web* (2006)
- *Dogville* (2003)
- *Daddy Day Care* (2003)
- *What's the Worst That Could Happen?* (2001)
- *Dancer in the Dark* (2000)
- *The Negotiator* (1998)
- *Men in Black* (1997)
- *Striptease* (1996)
- *Forrest Gump* (1994)
- *Seinfeld* (3 episodes, 1991-1994)
- *Saturday Night Live* (20 episodes, 1991-1992)
- *The Golden Girls* (1 episode, 1990)

Richard Scott (*Phone Company Manager*) Richard Scott is a native New Yorker and a graduate of the *American Academy of Dramatic Arts*. After graduating from the Academy, he moved to Los Angeles where he worked in local theater productions and episodic TV. This process eventually enabled him to obtain his *Equity* and *SAG* memberships. Upon returning to New York in the late 1990s, after working in other fields, he turned his attention back to the dramatic arts. Richard is currently in rehearsals for a production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and is grateful for having had the opportunity to work with the talented cast and crew of *The Secret Friend*.

Beau Hauser (*Street Reporter*) When In recent years, Beau Hauser has assumed numerous theatrical roles including, Brick in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Tony in *Dial 'M' for Murder*, and Curley in *Oklahoma!*. After examining the nature of film and realizing the human subtleties a camera could pick up, Beau reluctantly abandoned the stage and began a career transition that has granted him leading roles in over 15 short films in just two years. His role as The Male Doll in Flavio Alves' *Even In My Dreams* garnered Beau acclaim throughout film festivals worldwide. He is now a member of the *Screen Actors Guild* (SAG) and is currently represented by *Kolstein Talent Agency* (KTA).

Melvin Shrebnick (*Gregory*) Melvin Shrebnick made his stage debut in *The Mikado* while he was a young boy in elementary school. Despite his affinity for the arts, Melvin's desire to become a medical professional would eventually win out, and he would go on to enjoy a lengthy career as an emergency medicine physician. Nevertheless, Melvin continued to pursue his passion for the performing arts in his spare time, appearing in plays such as *The Diary of Ann Frank*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *California Suite*, *1776*, and many others. In 2005, Melvin retired from medicine and has been actively pursuing roles in motion pictures ever since. Melvin recently assumed a leading role in the feature film *Change*, a supporting role in the feature film *Élan*, and was the story teller and narrator for *Trace Burrough's* 2008 documentary film, *Endless Orgy for the Goddess of Perversion*.

Jerry Jaffe (*The Secret Friend-voice*) Jerry Jaffe has appeared in Film, TV & Theater. Film appearances include "*Gloria*" directed by *John Cassavetes*, "*Ragtime*," directed by *Milos Forman*, "*Dadetown*", "*Rich Kids*" and the following films yet to be released, "*Bottleworld*", "*100 Years of Evil*" and "*Crime Scene*". TV appearances include "*Law and Order*" and "*One Life to Live*". Jerry's theater appearance include productions written and directed by *Eduardo Machado* and *Irene Fornes*.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Adam McDaid is based dually in New York and Los Angeles. Adam believes cinematography is an art form that requires a unique ability to see minute details that advance elements of a story, characters, and emotion. Adam traces his innate gift back to his frequent childhood daydreaming, for which he was often chastised.

Since receiving a Masters of Fine Art in Cinematography from the *American Film Institute* in 2006, Adam has kept busy shooting narratives, commercials, music videos and documentaries—in all formats. Last summer, Adam had the opportunity to work under the tutelage of *Janusz Kaminski* as a camera intern on *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. He worked on *Una y Otra Vez*, which recently was accepted into *Slamdance 2009*. Adam is a visual storyteller who looks for projects that are challenging, collaborative, and that can push the medium forward. And he has not stopped daydreaming.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Jack Woodbridge is currently in the studio working on his new CD “Jack of Hearts.” Set for release in 2010, the regrouping of Woodbridge and Dean Balin (Grammy Award winning guitarist and uber-producer (Rupert Holmes’ Pina Colada (Escape) and multi-platinum “Partners In Crime”) is sure to secure national attention. “Hearts” features guest appearances by Rob Popparzzi, Sweet Sue Terry, Monique Paulwell and Marrianna Meringola.

Woodbridge and Balin first partnered in 2006 with “Picture This” a collection of jazz-pop and blues recorded at Balin’s NYC Four Cats studio. “Our Love Is Beautiful” received enthusiastic attention, including radio airplay and was featured on the Oasis Records “Best Of Jazz Sampler”.

A prolific composer, Woodbridge has written hundreds of songs. His work includes two off-Broadway scores (The Tale of Tyler T, Vampire Blues) and a rock opera (The Great Northeast) for WVIA-FM (National Public Radio). Jack’s music has been featured in numerous venues including plays by William Fowkes; television(CNN), film scores and special events including the NYC Marathon and New York Dance Alliance.

His music has been recorded by Babs Winn and the Kicking Boogie Band; Laurie Naughton and Cabaret Queen- Sharon McNight. McNight has featured Woodbridge’s songs in her hugely popular shows and is currently touring the music from her CD “Songs to Offend Almost Everybody”. Donna McKechnie, Sally Mayes, Teri White and Gentry Clausen have also sung his songs.

REVIEWS

"It's only 15 minutes, but they're golden"

- Harry Haun, *PLAYBILL MAGAZINE*

"Viola Harris gives an extraordinary performance"

- Phil Hall, *FILM THREAT*

"...thought-provoking piece."

- Domenick Rafter, *QUEENS TRIBUNE*

"Mysterious, clever, and sweet... a slice of life."

- Felix Vasquez Jr., *CINEMA CRAZED*

"...from scene to scene this short will captivate you"

- Kenneth Rosen, *DISTRICT NEWS*

**"[A] heartfelt and literate human drama
that deserves a wide audience."**

- Tom Becker, DVD VERDICT REVIEW

"...a fine way to spend 15 minutes"

- Andy Kaiser, PAPERBLOG

"...absolutely worth seeing"

- Alec Kubas-Meyer, FLIXIST

"Viola Harris hits a home run"

- Richard Propes, THE INDEPENDENT CRITIC

"...it captivates the eyes"

- Kay Durbin, THE FILM DILETTANTE

"Alves' film is a great piece and put together expertly"

- Vatche Arabian, LONELY REVIEWER

**"If you have fifteen minutes to spare,
I can't think of a better way to spend them"**

- Sean Walsh, FLIXIST

CREDITS

Director	FLAVIO ALVES
Writer	JOÃO SILVÉRIO TREVISAN
Producers	NICHOLAS EISENBERG FERNANDO PINHEIRO RAINA OBERLIN
Executive Producer	MICHAEL PERTAIN
Co-producer	KEVIN STOCKLIN
Consulting Producer	GARY GASGARTH
Associate Producer	JILLIAN ISCARO DORE HAMMOND
Director of Photography	ADAM MCDAID
Composer	JACK WOODBRIDGE
Editors	MATT MALTESE CHRIS HOUGHTON
Costumes Designer	STEVE ISKOWITZ
Production Designer	VANESSA BARAN
1 st Assistant Director	PHIL GIORDANO
Music Producer	DEAN BAILIN
Production Manager	SCOTT GABRIEL
Sound Designer	CARMINE PICARELLO
Script Supervisor	AKIVA PEÑALOZA
Storyboard Artist	RICK EMOND
Casting Director	CHRIS PAVAGANH
Wardrobe Supervisor	ARA-ZIOR WILSON
Location Managers	BEAU HAUSER EDWIN MARTINEZ
Script Editors	RAINA OBERLIN BETH TERRILL
Prop Master	MARY BROWNLEE
Still Photographers	MICHAEL SETO THOMAS DOWNS TOM STARKWEATHER
Make-up Artists	WILMA NICOLE VICKY MODICA
Webmaster	REINALDO SACCHETTE
Key Production Assistant	BEAU HAUSER
Production Assistant	MELISSA COLE
Publicity Editor	RYAN J. MURRAY
Post Production Supervisor	GLENESE MARKES
Colorist	ANDREW GEARY
Gaffer	DANIEL CHOY BOYAR
1 st Assistant Camera	GEORGE TUR
2 nd Assistant Camera	CHRISTIAN FLORES
Key Grip	ADAM MACBETH
Grip	JASON BEASLEY
Best Boy	HOLLY HOSMAN
Electrician	EVAN STULBERGER