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**“WONDERS ARE MANY: THE MAKING OF DOCTOR ATOMIC,”
A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT THE MAKING OF A GRAND OPERA ABOUT
OPPENHEIMER AND THE ATOMIC BOMB**

**Film Premieres on the PBS Series *Independent Lens* on
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2008, AT 9 PM**

*“Art and science form a combustible fusion in Jon Else’s elegant and wide-ranging **WONDERS ARE MANY: The Making Of Doctor Atomic**. A dazzling case of the right filmmaker attached to the right subject.”*

—Robert Koehler, *Variety*

“Enthralling ... a profound and sorrowful meditation on warfare, the possibility of nuclear annihilation and how developing a doomsday weapon affected the lives of the scientists building it.”

—Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*

(San Francisco, CA)—In **WONDERS ARE MANY: The Making Of Doctor Atomic**, acclaimed filmmaker Jon Else achieves the impossible by combining two of his epic fascinations—nuclear weapons and opera—in one film. Each subject had been explored by Else in earlier projects: nuclear weapons in the Academy Award-nominated *The Day After Trinity: Oppenheimer and the Atomic Bomb* (1979) and opera in *Sing Faster: The Stagehands Ring Cycle* (2000), which took viewers backstage from the perspective of those who really do the heavy lifting.

WONDERS ARE MANY goes behind the scenes once again, this time to follow the collaborative process of composer John Adams and director Peter Sellars as they work to forge the tale of J. Robert Oppenheimer into a music drama like no other: the strange and beautiful *Doctor Atomic*. As Sellars and Adams struggle to make high art from the most savage weapon in history, the film explores the spectacular and unnerving 60-year history of nuclear weapons. It shows the real events behind the drama on stage and the unintended consequences of the actions—and inactions—of men working on the first nuclear device. **WONDERS ARE MANY** premieres on Tuesday, December 16, at 9 PM (check local listings) as part of the seventh season of the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard.

Weaving the intense and sometimes hilarious process of making an opera with newly declassified historical film clips of Robert Oppenheimer, the Manhattan Project and nuclear testing, **WONDERS ARE MANY** focuses on the 48 hours leading up to the Trinity atomic test in July 1945.

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The film unfolds in the deserts of Nevada and New Mexico and in the backstage frenzy at the San Francisco Opera. At the center of a swirling vortex of singers, scenery, physicists, stagehands and bombs stand the indomitable Sellars and Adams. Simultaneously tracking the creation of both the bomb and the opera, the film builds in tension toward the terrible and inevitable bang.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **WONDERS ARE MANY** at pbs.org/independentlens/wondersaremany. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

About the Filmmakers

Jon Else, Producer/Writer/Director

Jon Else's film *The Day After Trinity: J. Robert Oppenheimer and the Atomic Bomb* was described by Tom Shales in *The Washington Post* as "the best film ever made about living intimately with doom of our own design." Winner of the first-ever documentary prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 1980, it has been broadcast repeatedly in virtually every developed country over the past 20 years. It is used widely in schools and universities and in institutions as varied as the Pentagon, the CIA and the Union of Concerned Scientists.

In 2000, Else released *Sing Faster: The Stagehands Ring Cycle*, which won the Filmmakers Trophy at Sundance and that year's National Emmy for Best Documentary. This film looks at the grand moral narratives of Richard Wagner's epic *Der Ring Des Niebelungen* entirely through the eyes of union stagehands at the San Francisco Opera. Else also produced and directed *Cadillac Desert* (1997), *Palace of Delights: The Exploratorium* (1983) and *Yosemite: The Fate of Heaven* (1989) for the Sundance Institute; *A Job at Ford's* for Henry Hampton's PBS series *The Great Depression* (1992); and *Open Outcry* (2001). He was series producer and cinematographer for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years* (1987) and has photographed hundreds of documentaries for PBS, the BBC, ABC, MTV and HBO, including the BBC/PBS *History of Rock and Roll* (1993), *Who Are the DeBolts* (1976, Academy Award winner), Paramount/MTV's feature *Tupac Resurrection* (2003, Academy Award nominee), Barbara Kopple's recent documentary on rapper MC Hammer, and Doug Hamilton's *Alice Waters* (2003), as well as dozens of music videos and concert films. He has just returned from doing camera work in Afghanistan for a PBS documentary about that country's new constitution.

Else was a MacArthur Fellow from 1988 to 1993, has won four National Emmys (for writing, producing, directing and cinematography), several Columbia-duPont awards, Polk Awards and Peabody Awards, and the Prix Italia and has earned several Academy Award nominations.

Bonni Cohen, Producer

Bonni Cohen founded Actual Films, an independent documentary film company based in San Francisco in 1998. Cohen produced and directed a film about the last Christians of Bethlehem for National Geographic and is currently making another film for them. She recently executive produced and co-directed *The Rape of Europa*, a two-hour historical documentary about the fate of Europe's art treasures during World War II. Cohen co-produced *Democracy Afghan Style* (2004), about Afghanistan's constitutional process, for PBS in the United States and for Arté in France and Germany. In 2003, she produced and directed *The New Heroes*, a series for PBS, hosted by Robert Redford, about social entrepreneurs around the world.

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In 2001, Cohen produced and directed *The Nobel: Visions of Our Century* (2001), a chronicle of 100 years of the Nobel Prize told from the perspectives of 11 Nobel laureates that was broadcast on PBS. For the BBC she directed and produced *Eye of the Storm* (1999), an intimate, vérité portrait of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan that follows his diplomatic efforts from Baghdad to Nigeria to New York. *Eye of the Storm* has been shown around the world in more than 125 countries. For PBS, she co-produced *They Drew Fire* (1998), a portrait of the combat artists of World War II. Her other works include *The Human Sexes With Desmond Morris*, an Emmy®-nominated six-part series about gender differences around the world, and two episodes of the Emmy® Award-winning series *Eyewitness*, for PBS. She was the producer of Jon Else's film *Open Outcry* (2000), a documentary about the open trading pits at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Before coming to documentary film, Bonni worked as a journalist for Reuters Television and NBC, based in London and Jerusalem.

Deborah Hoffman, Editor

Deborah Hoffman received a National Emmy for editing *The Times of Harvey Milk*. She edited Marlon Riggs' *Color Adjustment*, which received a Peabody, as well as Jon Else's *Mulholland's Dream* and *Sing Faster*, both of which won Emmys. She also worked on HBO's Academy Award-winning *Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt*. As a director, she was honored with an Academy Award nomination, an Emmy, a Peabody and a Columbia-duPont Award for *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter*, her now-legendary film about her mother's battle with Alzheimer's disease. The feature documentary *Long Night's Journey Into Day*, directed with Frances Reid, which chronicles South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, won the Sundance Grand Prize for Documentary and received an Academy Award nomination.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen. Further information about the series is available at pbs.org/independentlens

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