

TOM JONES

A FOUR PART MINISERIES COMING
TO ITVX 4 MAY 2023



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Solly Mcleod is Tom Jones

Sophie Wilde is Sophia Western

Hannah Waddingham is Lady Bellaston

Pearl Mackie is Honour

Writer – Gwyneth Hughes

Director – Georgia Parris

Costume Designer – Hazel Webb-Crozier

Cast & Crew

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TOM JONES

MASTERPIECE, ITV and Mammoth Screen (Endeavour, The Serpent, Poldark) have partnered on a four-part adaptation of Henry Fielding's classic novel, Tom Jones. A rollercoaster story of the title character's complicated journey to find real love, Tom Jones has delighted and scandalised readers since it was originally published in 1749.

Solly McLeod (The Rising) stars as the hero Tom, alongside Sophie Wilde (You Don't Know Me) as the heroine Sophia Western and Emmy award winner Hannah Waddingham (Ted Lasso) as the seductive and vengeful Lady Bellaston. Written by Gwyneth Hughes (Vanity Fair, Miss Austen Regrets), Tom Jones is directed by Georgia Parris (Mari).

Abandoned as a baby, rescued and adopted by a country gentleman called Squire Allworthy, Tom grows up kind, handsome, free-spirited, and very popular with the ladies. But he cannot escape his lowly birth. So when he falls in love with wealthy heiress Sophia Western, and she falls in love with him, their families unite against the match. Tom is banished in disgrace, and Sophia runs away from home to escape a forced marriage to William Blifil, the heir to Paradise Hall. Sophia is prepared to give up everything for Tom – until she learns that he seems quite unable to say no to a series of adventurous flings with other women along the way. Eventually, they both end up in London, facing the wiles and whims of Sophia's aunt, the beguiling but dangerous Lady Bellaston, who will stop at nothing to destroy their love. Sophia quickly learns that the life of a young woman in London's high society can be cruel and dangerous.

Can Tom ever convince Sophia that he can be true to her? Can love really conquer all?

Also starring are James Fleet (Bridgerton) as Squire Allworthy, Tom's warm-hearted adoptive father; Alun Armstrong (Breeders) as Squire Western, Sophia's hard drinking but loving grandfather, and Olivier-winner Shirley Henderson (Happy Valley) as Sophia's Aunt Western. Tamzin Merchant (Carnival Row) is Sophia's Aunt Harriet, with Julian Rhind-Tutt (Britannia) as her bellicose husband Fitzpatrick. Susannah Fielding (This Time with Alan Partridge) is Mrs. Waters. BAFTA-winner Daniel Rigby (Black Mirror) is the disgraced schoolteacher Partridge, who befriends Tom on his journey; James Wilbraham (In My Skin) is Tom's bitter cousin Blifil; Felicity Montagu (The Durrells) plays Blifil's mother Bridget Allworthy, a devoted aunt to Tom, and Janine Duvitski (Benidorm) is Mrs. Wilkins, Allworthy's testy housekeeper. Dean Lennox Kelly (Jamestown) is poacher-turned-gamekeeper Black George and NTA winner Lucy Fallon (Coronation Street) is his daughter Molly, who charms young Tom.

Commented writer and executive producer Gwyneth Hughes: "Tom Jones is the mother of all romcoms and isn't that just what we all need after the last couple of years of misery? It's a story where the sun barely stops shining, where love conquers all, and at its warm heart stand a pair of young sweethearts everyone can root for. Tom and Sophia overcome enormous obstacles before finding their way home and to each other. This is a classic adaptation with a wise soul and a great big smile on its face."

Written by Gwyneth Hughes (Vanity Fair, Miss Austen Regrets), Tom Jones is directed by Georgia Parris (Mari) and produced by Benjamin Greenacre. With funding from Northern Ireland Screen, Tom Jones filmed entirely on location in and around Belfast. The executive producers are James Gandhi, Gwyneth Hughes, Damien Timmer and Helen Ziegler for Mammoth Screen, Susanne Simpson and Rebecca Eaton for MASTERPIECE, and Polly Hill for ITV. Tom Jones is a co-production between Mammoth Screen and MASTERPIECE. Global distribution for the series is being handled by ITV Studios.

Tom Jones

Synopses

Episode One

Tom Jones was abandoned at birth and doesn't know who his father is. When Sophia, his rich, bright, beautiful neighbour, falls into his arms, Tom can't help but fall in love. But her irascible grandfather, his adoptive father, and a scheming cousin, all unite to conspire against the match.

Episode Two

Cast out of Paradise Hall in disgrace, Tom heads for London. On the eve of her wedding to wicked Blifil, Sophia runs away from home in pursuit of Tom. Tom learns that Sophia escaped marriage just as Sophia learns that Tom spent the night in the arms of the worldly Mrs Waters. Heartbroken, Sophia heads for London to find a new life, with Tom in pursuit.

Episode Three

All hope of love with Sophia now seemingly lost, Tom is seduced by the charms of her aunt, the beguiling, dangerous Lady Bellaston. Wanting no rival for Tom's affections, Lady B persuades an eligible bachelor to woo Sophia by any means necessary. Squire Western rescues Sophia in the nick of time, but only to ensure she marries Blifil.

Episode Four

Tom resolves to win back Sophia's heart, but Sophia resolves never to marry anyone. Lady Bellaston takes her revenge on Tom by revealing their affair to a heartbroken Sophia. Tom is jailed for wounding Fitzpatrick in an unprovoked fight. A chance encounter starts to unravel a tangle of secrets – but will the truth out in time to save Tom from the gallows?

Solly McLeod is Tom Jones

Who is Tom?

He's a young man who is adopted by a kind, rich Squire [Squire Allworthy, James Fleet]. He was brought up without a mother and not who his father was. And he falls in love with Sophia [Western, Sophie Wilde], who he knew as a child. The story is his journey of him growing up, finding maturity, learning about consequence and self-discovery. He's trying to be a better person and a better man in 18th century England.

How did you come to be cast?

I was working on a job up in Manchester. The audition came through for 'Tom Jones' and I thought, 'I don't look a thing like Tom Jones. I can't even do a Welsh accent...' Then I read it and it wasn't *that* Tom Jones. So I went out and bought the novel [Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*], a nice hardback, got about three chapters in... and I didn't have a clue what was going on! So I just used Gwyneth's Hughes's brilliant script as reference to give me what I needed to get in to character.

Essentially Tom is a decent man. Was that harder to play than being a baddie?

It was. It was a lot of work and I'd be tired and then you'd get people shouting at me across the set saying, 'Just smile a bit more please!' 'Open your eyes!' I'm a cheery person I hope — if I've had enough sleep. The thing is it has been rare to get that in the last year. But in the end, it's been very enjoyable.

Today you're in a full sleeved shirt, breeches and suede riding boots. How authentic to period is this Tom Jones?

This is my primary outfit that I wear most of the time. The costumes all look fantastic, the landscapes we were shooting in, the houses, all really helped make you feel like you were there in the 18th century. In fact with costume, I got away quite lightly... Sophie [Wilde] Not so much in those corsets. I enjoyed my boots, wore them the whole time. They're really quite fetching.

What was it like shooting in Northern Ireland?

It was amazing. We were on these massive estates in these big manor houses and mansions. Each one we went to helped to build that world that we were trying to create. We even managed to find a few that *Game of Thrones* hadn't used! Ones that I think haven't been seen before. They all fit in to the world really nicely.

Tell us a little bit about your background...

I was born in Scotland in the borders and then we moved up to the Orkney Islands when my younger brother was born. My early childhood was up there with my grandparents and my mum and dad. We moved down to London when I was ten years old. Acting has been something I've wanted to pursue from when I was about eight or nine. Mum went to drama school and was an actor so I was lucky to have the support from her, my dad and my stepdad. Throughout school it was the only thing that I was interested in — I didn't pay as much attention at school in London to anything else. Then I left college, spent a year doing various bar jobs and then thought I should do something to better my skills. I started this course at The Unseen Acting School. I just ended up progressing really quickly. Then I got signed to a new agent and almost within a month I started getting work. It's just been a crazy year. I'm still trying to process it all.

And has that fed into Tom at all?

Even though it's not contemporary and a very different experience to my own I've looked at the parts of his life that I can relate to. Him being a young man, trying to figure out what's right, what's wrong, and then thinking about stories that I've heard from friends about growing up without parents.

How did you find the self-confidence to be number one on the call sheet on such a big production, in one of your first jobs?

I like to think that I have confidence but then it's never the same when you get on set. You're always bricking it but you have to get over it. It all ended up working out in the end.

What was it like working with actors like James Fleet, Alun Armstrong...

I don't tend to get starstruck. It's more excitement than nervousness to be able to work with these people that I've grown up watching and admiring.

Were you a fan of period drama before this?

I can't say I was. But this Tom Jones — is quite a different kind of period drama. There's a realness to it, and there's humanity, I think. A lot of period dramas are quite serious: this one has comedy and emotion and peril added in to make it feel really different.

There's a lot of movement, duels, fights, how did you find it?

Tom tries to not get into fights. I say tries... But his impulsiveness does lead him in to... situations. There are a fair few intense fight scenes which were great fun to film.

And love scenes?

A few! There were three or four encounters. Again, it's been done differently in that they've come from the point of view of female desire in our show. In all of the encounters that Tom has he's the one who is seduced. Which is interesting, fun, and important I think to show that side of things.

How did you work up a relationship with Sophie?

I did four or five rounds of auditions and I didn't meet Sophie once throughout! We met the first evening when I landed in Belfast, went out for a couple of pints and just had a chat. I knew then it was going to be fine – we got on well.

Sophie Wilde is Sophia Western

Who is Sophia?

Sophia – rhymes with 'fire' - Western is Tom's predominant love interest in the story. The Westerns are neighbours to Squire Allworthy [James Fleet], who adopted Tom, so Tom and I met as kids and we've always been friends. Then I went off to Bath and now I've come back aged eighteen and a woman, all grown up. And yeah — then we fall in love!

How would you describe your Sophia?

In the script it doesn't really feel like it's just Tom's story. It feels like it is more balanced in a way and you see both of their journeys as equally important. She's fiery and she has opinions and she goes on this journey as a reaction against what her grandfather wants. I don't think she's your typical English rose. And I wouldn't want to play someone like that, especially not now in modern times when you can give her a bit more – why not?

Was it a conscious decision to cast a woman of colour in the role?

It was a conscious decision. And that's very much in the script. It's talked about. It's true to the period and it discusses racial issues. Which I think is unusual in a period genre and kind of reminds me a bit of Belle [the 2013 period drama starring Gugu Mbatha-Raw.] I really loved that film when I was in high school and I resonated a lot with it.

How did you come to be cast?

It's a bit of a dream for me to do a period drama because I was really obsessed with period dramas as a kid. I loved the BBC Pride and Prejudice [1995]. I had it on VCR and I would watch all six hours and then I would rewind all the tapes and then watch it again. I dressed up as Jane Bennet for book week in year two! So I love a period piece! It meant when I got the audition for this I was just so excited to be able to audition for a period drama and comedy. And then I got it. It's been a dream to come and work with such an incredible group of creatives — and the cast is delightful.

How authentic to the period is it?

It's big houses, it's corsets. It's literally everything I wanted! The design is incredible; everyone's worked so hard. I really lucked out on the costumes. It's been the full tight corsets every day. I was really excited at the start and then three months in it wasn't quite as exciting: eating is not easy. Hazel [Webb Crozier, Costume Designer] and her team pretty much handmade all of my costumes and when you see them, they are incredible. I would come out of fittings screaming: I was so excited.

What was the story of the shoot for you?

It's been shot all around Northern Ireland, in so many wonderful country houses. So it's been nice to be able to see the countryside and explore different parts of that country. Castle Ward [an 18th-century National Trust property located near the village of Strangford, in County Down, Northern Ireland], and Galgorm Castle [near Ballymena, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, reportedly haunted by the ghost of 'The Englishman', Dr. Alexander Colville] were both amazing. I think I recognised some of them from Game of Thrones and I'm a big fan so that was great.

What story are you telling in this adaptation of Tom Jones?

I think that it is almost more of a coming-of-age story in a way. Obviously the love story between Sophia and Tom is at the core of it. But what's beautiful is you really see Sophia and Tom's different journeys coincide with each other. They're constantly missing each other like ships passing in the night. I think Gwyneth [Hughes, writer] has done a brilliant job of managing to condense such a huge story into four episodes.

Did you try and read Fielding's original novel? It's a whopper...

It is dense! I tried it and I was like, 'Oh, it's just too dense for me.' He'll spend four pages describing a field. I was like, 'Man, I can't deal with this!' So basically, no.

What themes does your version look at that will resonate now?

All the themes are quite universal — it's love again, coming of age, family; what it means to become empowered in yourself and in your choices. I think a lot of it will resonate with people of all ages.

Was the dream you had of being in *Pride and Prejudice* realised?

Oh yeah. I loved the dress-up and you're in these incredible locations. And I had to wear this great wig. Actually I had two. I had one which is more of like an up-do, London look. And then my country girl look was less vertical. It was intense. Every day for three months with these early calls, getting up at 4.30 in the morning to have the hair and make-up done. It was freezing. But to be immersed in the world is creatively very satisfying. Especially when I've always loved those kinds of worlds. So to be able to be on a set, in costume and surrounded by all the props was wonderful.

It couldn't be more different from [British courtroom drama] *You Don't Know Me...*

I think for me I want to be able to explore a variety of different characters and worlds. I think I've been quite fortunate — and I don't even know if it's specifically by choice — but I have had such a varied career, if I can call it a career, so far.

What's been your path in to acting and then to this point?

I was five years old when I started going to NIDA, which is the National Institute of Dramatic Arts in Australia. It's like RADA or LAMDA or something. And I started doing short courses there when I was little. So I always knew I wanted to be an actor from a very young age, and I did that until high school. And then I went to Newtown Performing Arts [in Sydney] for drama. And then I went back to NIDA, did the BFA [Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting] and now I'm here. So it's been a fairly consistent kind of passion.

Hannah Waddingham is Lady Bellaston

Introduce Lady Bellaston

Oh my god, Lady Bellaston! I'm only saying that because she's such an over-the-top creation with this horrifically sybaritic lifestyle of debauchery. That's brilliant. She is very, very wealthy, known for being a lover of the luxuries in life — and I mean all different sides of the luxuries of life. She kind of commandeers this young niece of hers, Sophia [Sophie Wilde] and I think is immediately thrown off by how alluring she is. It's very much meant to be Lady Bellaston finding Sophia a suitor, which she does — and then she meets the young, dashing Tom Jones [Solly McLeod]. And I think perhaps for the first time Lady Bellaston's life goes slightly sideways, and she doesn't quite know what to do with herself.

What is Lady Bellaston and Tom's relationship?

I mean, wonderful Solly McLeod and I discussed it a lot. They have an immediate chemistry that is not just frivolous and sexual. They have fun together and I wanted to lean into as the most kind of disturbing and derailing thing for Lady Bellaston. Because she married a wealthy old man and has always been very much the boss of her relationships. And then this young boy, whom she knows can't really teach her anything about life suddenly comes in and he is a breath of fresh air. He's dangerous. He's just so inviting that she's intoxicated by him. So you're not just getting the regular kind of 'cougar' of the times as it were, bedding this young man. You're getting a woman who is actually derailed emotionally by someone for the first time. And that someone is more than half her age.

For a series set in the 18th century that's a type of relationship that modern TV drama largely ignores...

Absolutely. I was very keen with our director Georgia [Parris] to constantly humanise Lady Bellaston. Because she could very easily be this vampy nightmare. But I thought, 'No, what if we actually have her really being rattled by him,' and you'd see the fact that she doesn't want to be falling for him, but she's completely intoxicated by him.

Tom Jones has a female writer and a female director. Does that make any difference to you in filming it?

It does. I certainly notice every time I work with a female director that I am comfortable with getting into a different way of looking at things or a different conversation than I might have had with a male director. I found it with this piece and also with Ted Lasso, with (thankfully) the large number of female directors we had there. With Georgia [Parris], we would go out for dinner together, we would absolutely chew the fat about where we wanted Bellaston to sit in terms of not being a stereotype in age or temperament. We thought, 'Yes, we can do that old, hackneyed thing of the battleaxe, the gossip, all the rest of it. But wouldn't it be more interesting if we made her very sexual, and heartbroken in the final analysis and unable to cope with it?' But does she learn? No, she doesn't.

How did you come to be involved in this production?

I had always wanted to do a period drama but you know, being nearly six foot in heels it's not something that has ever come my way! And I've always watched these beautiful period dramas and assumed that it would be something that would always elude me. And then Georgia and our producers sent it through to my agent. And I thought did I want to play somebody that was just pursuing a young man for the sake of it? Because if I can't find anything that makes a character appealing, it's always a doubt for me. Even if I'm playing somebody that's not particularly nice, or somebody that has a very dark agenda, is there something that's going to make the audience go, 'God, I kind of like her. Yeah, she's fun.' If there's something in a character that I find compelling then in general, it's that that interests me. And how exciting to get something during filming Ted Lasso that I could go off and do and fully immerse myself in and be absolutely, unrecognisably different in it.

How does this Tom Jones differ from the usual British period drama?

I think partly because of Solly McLeod. He is so natural and so raw, that you know you are along for the ride — he's not like some typical pretty boy, matinee idol type that I always find a bit wet. He's really got something about him. And I love that they've gone to a beautiful, spirited, hugely charismatic, endlessly watchable, gorgeous woman of colour from Australia to play his young sparring partner. I mean Sophie [Wilde]: God, I used to watch her on the monitor and just think, 'How did they find you? You're just delicious?' And then you have somebody like Julian Rhind-Tutt being brilliant and ludicrous. And Alun Armstrong... I mean the whole cast is just unbelievably good. And then there's the whole look of the piece. You don't feel like it's chocolate boxy. It feels like you're actually in that world.

What was it like to inhabit the world of being a woman in London in the mid 19th century?

I loved it. There was one day when we were shooting a scene in my great big fancy pants house. That's a technical term. And I was sitting down doing a scene where I was scheming and trying to get rid of my young ward and I thought, 'Oh, God, I feel like I'm either going to faint or be sick or both.' It was because my costumes had been made so beautifully and so lovingly to the period... they were so effing heavy, that I nearly passed out. And they had to cut swathes out of the under workings! But my costumes are quite something: they look fantastic.

Pearl Mackie is Honour

Who are you playing in Tom Jones?

I play Honour, who is maid to Sophia Western [Sophie Wilde.] Sophia is a young woman who is of Caribbean descent and was born to a slave mother on a plantation in Jamaica. As we imagine it Honour has been with Sophia for quite a long time. So whilst there's obviously a Maid/Servant relationship, there's also quite a strong friendship there. For Sophia, Honour is one of the only people she can confide in and be honest with, and that brings a closeness to their relationship which is nice to play and to watch I think.

How did you feel about being cast in a period piece?

I thought it was great. For me, I had kind of ruled out the idea of being in a period drama, even though I used to love them when I was younger: the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is an all-time classic, isn't it? So yeah, I used to love them and I used to watch loads of them with my mum. But I didn't ever see any black people in period dramas. Ever. So with this I thought, 'Oh, this is interesting. It's black people in period drama that isn't *Bridgerton*. Okay: cool!' I mean I love *Bridgerton*, but it's really interesting to see that other re-imaginings of classic stories are being told to include black people, because as we all know, there were black people in England at the time and in many other European cities in the world... crazy, I know.

Then, delving into the story a bit more, I really enjoyed that they explore Sophia's heritage and where she's from. It's not just, 'She just happens to be here.' It's like, 'Let's look at what was happening in terms of colonisation in the world at the time. And let's explore that.' The fact that they go into it in episode one was quite refreshing and that really drew me in. I thought it was going to be a different way of exploring it: these women are black women, and our show is going to look at what their experience of life at the time would have been like. I don't want to give spoilers but as they move away from the comforts of their own home, you do experience what life is like for them to a certain degree. And it's not all roses.

Do they encounter racism?

Yeah, for sure. There are definitely some moments where they are made to feel quite uncomfortable and they do encounter some pretty blatant racism. Which is realistic. I mean,

I think it's kind of challenging to watch. But Honour's a bit more of a woman of the world: she knows what life is like. She's not from a fancy, aristocratic family; she hasn't had servants her whole life. She's a woman, she's a Londoner, she's a maid, she's poor. So she's had experiences like that before and as they go out into the world she's quite protective of Sophia. She thinks, 'I can handle this, I know what life is like, because I have to go to the market to get the cloth to make your dresses and all of that kind of stuff.' I'm not saying it's given her a thicker skin or anything like that, but she's more knowledgeable. I think there's a bit of a fear there on her part that with Sophia being younger and more naive life is going to be scary for her and kind of dangerous. But Sophia's a stronger woman, especially by the end of this, than Honour thinks. So, yeah, I think it's a nice journey that they go on metaphorically — as well as it being an actual journey too.

What did you make of Gwyneth Hughes' script?

What struck me when I first read it was Honour's sense of humour. She's definitely got a bit of personality. She's not just, 'Oh yes ma'am, no ma'am.' The closeness that they have allows Honour to feel comfortable enough to make a few jokes here and there. She's like, 'We're kind of in this together, though, obviously, I respect your position and respect my position.' The humour is almost familial. It's like your older cousin or your older sister sharing jokes that if someone else said them, you'd be like, 'Excuse me?!' But they're comfortable enough with each other to say it.

I also love that this Tom Jones is told from Sophia's perspective. I think that's really original. It's nice to see a classic novel that is about a man and definitely told from his perspective be told through Sophia's eyes.

What would a maid's role have been back then in the mid 18th-century?

I think she pretty much does everything! She'll fix holes in Sophia's dresses, she will make her bed, she'll throw out her chamber pot... all of the slightly unsavoury things and some of the nicer stuff as well: she'll put makeup on her and do her hair. One thing for me in exploring the character was I felt like she should never be still. She's always got something to do, especially in those massive houses: there's unpacking, there's tidying, there's getting mud off dresses because she's been walking around in a field with Tom Jones and that kind of thing... I thought that was quite important — while Honour does feel comfortable enough to have those funny conversations with Sophia we've talked about, she's busy. There's always something to be doing.

And what does Honour make of Tom?

Well, I don't think she's that keen on Tom [Solly McLeod] to start with, because she's heard some of the gossip from the servants' quarters. She knows he's very good looking, but she feels like he knows that too and has taken advantage of that around the village. That's sort of hard for her to shake off at first, especially as she knows what men can be like. She just wants Sophia to find someone who will treat her with love and respect, and not take advantage of her kind nature. With Tom I think Honour does get to see that he is a good person. And that he does mean well, even if he does act a little stupidly sometimes!

Gwyneth Hughes - Writer

How did you come to adapt Tom Jones?

We did *Vanity Fair* [ITV, Amazon, 2018] and before that was even over Damien Timmer at Mammoth was saying, 'What's next?' He suggested *Tom Jones* actually, and I hadn't read it [The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling by Henry Fielding]. My degree was in Russian, so I'd read a lot of really long books but not this one.

Anyway, I read it and it's just so funny and charming: it was just like bathing in sunshine, the sun never sets. It's just fantastically cheerful and romantic and funny. I read it, I should add, before everything in the world became as bad as it's got: what could be better than a lovely romantic comedy at the moment? I really fell in love with it. It wasn't at all what I was expecting: randy shagger lays his way across London was what I *thought* it was. But it's not like that at all.

We patronise the past at our peril: Fielding's book is so confident in its own skin. You know, there's no self-doubt in it, he thinks he's doing something fantastic, funny and marvellous. And he is doing exactly that. I really responded to that and responded to how it's very funny and it can be very cutting but it's fundamentally incredibly kind-hearted and very positive. It's also got these gorgeous characters who are just so funny and you really root for them I think.

What surprised you about the original?

I expected it to be randy, which it isn't, I mean, poor old Tom's got 1000 pages... and three sexual partners. That's not that bad in the grand scheme of things. He's an innocent, he doesn't know how to say no. You also find that the female characters, completely to my surprise, are just so loud and confident and full of beans. It's absolutely clear to Fielding that in the 18th century they're just as up for it as the men. In fact more so. What holds them back is that they have so much more to protect and hide but there's absolutely no question that Sophia has completely got the hots for Tom as much as he has for her. That's also incredibly charming. It was clear to me that the energy driving the book, driving the story is hers. Because Tom sort of wanders about being a bit useless and having crises; she leaves home and goes to find him and leaves behind everything she's ever known to go after this completely — at this point in the story — slightly rubbish boyfriend. Again that was just charming. So although I had to work out how to leave an awful lot out, what was driving it and what was at the heart of it was so vivid and muscular and just great.

How did you fillet the book to leave four hours of television?

What we tried to do — and what, actually, I got wrong a lot in early drafts of this — was working out — and this sounds so obvious - what's in each of the four eps and where each one ends. Fielding gives you a lot of help — Tom leaves home! Sophia leaves home! But actually, I kept finding that I needed to pack more in, I needed to get further on in each episode. Partly because the thing that's rather difficult for a television writer is the main

characters, Tom and Sophia spend an awful lot of time apart. So you've got to work out how to make that work, how not to have the audience always asking, 'But where has Tom or Sophia gone?'

Then there's what, ultimately, you think the theme of it is. It's funny, because I'm sure there's many writers much cleverer than I am who would start from that point. But it took me quite a long time to work out what's the one-word thing that this story is about. Once I had that idea it all fell into place.

What is that one idea?

It's identity: it's a story about a young man who has no idea who he is on any level. He doesn't know who his father is. He doesn't know his place in society. He doesn't know who he is as a moral being in the universe. He's so young! He's 20, you know, and he's a young 20, where she is quite an old 18-year-old, as you often find with young people. So it's about his search to find out who he is. He and we know some things about him — he is very warm, he's very loving, he's incredibly outdoorsy, he wants to be good. He's incredibly attractive to women. There's not a bad bone in his body. But he has to find out, in their society, where does he fit in? And who is he, in the deepest parts of himself? And of course, he finds that out through his love for Sophia.

How is this 18th century story relevant to the modern age?

I always hate talking about relevance, but I think the thing about identity in the modern world is very big, isn't it? We all make far too much fuss about it but for Tom he really doesn't know who he is. And he goes off and he's forced to go and find out. That gives you a spine that you can build his story around.

Yet Sophia is much more prominent and fully written in your adaptation than in the original...

Yes, because the actual driving force behind the unfolding of the story is Sophia. Trying to leave home, trying to find Tom, giving up on him, trying to make a way for herself. In that sense it's just an absolutely straightforward romcom — two people who are meant to be together are parted by circumstance over and over again. Usually, famously romcoms are difficult to do because it's very hard to keep the lovers apart. But here it's really easy to keep Tom and Sophia apart because the world keeps them apart. They're simply not allowed to see each other. So it works perfectly as a romcom. I really hope people are going to like it because these are tough times and it's a funny, wordy, mad old book that I hope will cheer people up.

Georgia Parris - Director

How did you come to direct Tom Jones?

This time last year [2021] the script was sent to me. I'd just had a baby, and then the pandemic happened and so this was the first thing that had come my way that I was really interested in. I'd always wanted to do a costume drama — it was one of those things that had been on the bucket list. So I read this and found it really exciting and different. I didn't want to do a costume drama for the sake of it. But this immediately felt relevant and exciting to me, because of what Gwyneth [Hughes, writer] had done with the adaptation. Then I pitched for it and got the job.

This is my first TV job. It was a whole new experience. And I've never directed anything I haven't written before as well. I definitely felt quite out of my comfort zone with it and the scale of it. I mean, I did a tiny, low budget feature film and we were on set for about two weeks and that was it. So to go from that to this... and also having had three years off having a baby and the pandemic, it was quite a jump! But I wanted that. It felt liberating and I wanted to do something that felt light and something that I wanted to watch. I wasn't really into watching anything too dark. I think we were all going through it a bit weren't we... probably still are and this is the kind of stuff I wanted to consume and watch.

What did you like about the script?

If you're going to do an adaptation of something that's already been told then there's got to be a reason to do it. I just don't see the point in rehashing it otherwise. Gwyneth brought a freshness and a relevance to it that made it feel like it would relate to a contemporary audience. When I grew up watching the BBC Pride and Prejudice adaptation that had a huge effect on me. But it was all in a recognisable style — the women were all depicted in the same way. I think we actually have a responsibility when we're making shows now to make sure you feel like you could perhaps recognise yourself in it in some way. We've moved on and if you're going to do costume dramas, there's got to be something in there that makes people who aren't into costume dramas interested.

How is your retelling relevant to a contemporary audience?

That was a challenge for me, because I'm particularly interested in female stories and women and I feel very strongly about it. So, if I'm going to do an adaptation of something that's about a man who romps his way around, the challenge to me is how am I going to make that feel... justified, to be honest. Charm and wit don't cut it anymore.

What's so interesting is that it's actually all there in Fielding. What Gwyn's brought out are these amazing characters that are really rounded, and they're all just as bad and badly behaved and wonderful as each other. The men and the women... it feels like there's a real equality there in them. So that that was what got me particularly excited — the female experience is really brought to the forefront. From the moment it starts, it's narrated by a woman, which is obviously a huge difference. So we're telling a man's story, but through the eyes of the woman's experience. Then some of the decisions that were made before I came

on board, like changing the race of Sophia — that was a huge thing. And that was something that excited me because I wanted to make it feel recognisable to the people that are going to be watching it. Because essentially, the themes in the show are universal: it's love and family, loss, identity... they always need exploring. It's just about exploring them in a fresh way.

What was your approach to filming?

Sometimes with period pieces or costume dramas they're so composed and beautiful, but they kind of keep the audience at arm's length. I wanted to be right in there with our characters. So they've got these big set pieces of like, a masquerade ball, or a hunt or a wedding or whatever. I wanted to make sure that you felt like you were part of that and you wanted to be at that party. For the masquerade ball, I approached it like a nightclub or a rave and we made sure that the background actors were really having fun. Something I talked to them and the actors about was if they made mistakes, lean into it — just react truthfully; that was really important to me. It's hard, because the style of the show is sometimes quite heightened. But I thought that if the actors were giving authentic performances, it would balance out that farcical elements of swapping bedrooms and doors opening and closing,

How authentic to the period did you want this to be?

I hate it when you see a costume drama and their costumes are pristine. I definitely wanted it to feel more real and authentic and to see the grit and the dirt. Not be prim and proper. In terms of production design and costume, I really wanted it to feel real. So that you went into this world thinking, 'This feels authentic to the period, I trust what I'm seeing here'. And then I wanted to bring a kind of contemporary feel to it in slightly more subtle ways. So for example, the way that Tom and Sophia interact with one another and their romance, I wanted that to feel quite modern.

How did you cast your Tom and Sophia?

The starting point was this amazing couple that had buckets of chemistry. Because Tom and Sophia are the only ones that really evolve — it's a coming-of-age story for them. When I saw the tapes of Solly [McLeod] and Sophie [Wilde], it was just an instinctual thing. I looked at hundreds of different types of guys to play Tom and yet Solly had something that just instantly felt different. Same with Sophie — she is just breathtakingly brilliant. They were both utterly perfect for the roles.

Hazel Webb-Crozier - Costume Designer

Describe the period of Tom Jones and what your particular approach was to it.

This is a period I've never worked on before, so we had to do a lot of research. We looked at lots of artwork from the period to get an idea of what people would wear. We spent quite a few weeks just reading up on how dresses were made. You can get the patterns, or a type of pattern, online that we were able to copy. There were three main dresses of the period including robe à la Française and robe à l'Anglaise. But my assistant designer, Malachi

taught himself how to cut a pattern, and came in to impress me with a dress made about 10 weeks before we started. And I said, "Yes, it's lovely, you've done a really good job – but if you really want to impress me, go away and do it perfectly. Make me a perfect dress." So he went off, he taught himself how to cut the pattern, made a dress, and brought it in. He came back with a dress, nicely made. And I said what we needed to do now was to teach ourselves how to decorate these dresses, because they were all handmade. Everything was handmade. And they did everything with ruffling and ruching. So we decided we'd have a go at this ourselves. We ended up making all of Sophia's dresses, and all of Lady Bellaston's dresses for the show.

The tone of the show is slightly heightened, are the costumes heightened in any way to reflect that or have you based it entirely in reality and research?

It's not entirely in reality. But for the ladies, we have stuck pretty much to what they would have worn then. And what I did want to do was to use Irish linen. So for Sophie's dresses, they're all made out of Irish linen, specially woven for us. I decided on the colour palette early on, along with Georgia (Parris – the director) - she had quite a clear idea of what she wanted. She didn't want it to look like Jane Austen. She didn't want it to look like Bridgerton. Bridgerton is a very heightened version of these clothes, and Jane Austen is a much more pastel, soft look. So we were looking for something that would sit well in the middle.

For Sophia, we loved the idea of coral and yellow. I kept saying that she could look like a buttercup walking through the house. That was the first dress made for her, and we used that for the dream sequence.

And then why particularly did you want to use Irish linen?

I wanted to use Irish linen because my family are all from the linen mills in Dungannon and Moygashel and because it's what they used in those days. Linen was one of the most popular fabrics. It's really durable, it's wonderful for filming, we can wash it to death and it still comes up looking beautiful. A lot of fabrics break down and they just don't suit the wear of the filming because you're throwing them through everything. They go through an awful lot!

Tell me a little bit about the outfits you made for the female characters?

We got it down to about a dress every three days. So Malachi would cut it out, then I would make all the skirts and do all the embellishments. And he would then line it. And then, once we had Sophie's dresses nearly made, we decided to make Honour's dresses as well, because I wanted her also to reflect that she was of the same household, but it was not as nice a dress, not as embellished, much plainer, with an apron. And she had a little mop cap.

And then we have Lady Bellaston, and she was she was an exciting one to make for. We went through two or three different ideas of how Hannah (Waddingham) should look. So at first, we had an awful lot of flounces in a lot of other colours. There was pink, and various other colours, and Georgia wanted to strip that right back. She wanted less but she didn't

mind me going a bit mad with Bellaston. So I started making these ruffles, and I would say I spent a week just making ruffles, and they're all hand made. And then I decided to attach them to the dress, and that's the way they would have done it in the 18th century. And then Malachi made this stomacher, which is this central part of the dress, and put the covered buttons on it. And then I proceeded to decorate it, and we attached it then to the dress. We managed to make that dress in about three days. And then from that, all of Lady Bellaston's dresses have this detail on the front. She's a bit more masculine than Sophia who is very pretty and soft and country – and she's very much a lady of the town in London.

What about Tom Jones?

We started off with Solly's (McLeod) outfit, I knew I was going to need three of them because he falls, and he loses things, and he runs off in this one particular outfit. Also, we were told by the producers that they wanted him to look quite rough because he's always spending time outdoors. So we had an outfit made for him, and it was the green jacket you'll see him in, grey waistcoat and grey britches, which he wears when he's on the run, when he's thrown out of the house. The green jacket, a grey waistcoat, and grey britches. And we have one that's really broken down, one that's halfway there, and one that is still pretty okay, but they were all broken down really at the start – we couldn't have been looking too new.

How many outfits have you made, between you and your team, yourselves?

We've made at least 30 outfits. And shirts, and children's clothes. Because none of these were available, especially children's clothes, so we made new. We had so much time, so we just spent our time making things. And it turned out to be a really creative process, and much more enjoyable. If I'd had a workroom, and everybody making these dresses for me, I wouldn't have had the same satisfaction at all that I'd been able to inject everything I wanted into each dress. I must say that I just loved making this period. I really loved it. In most of the films that I've worked on I've made one or two pieces. Either I've knitted the piece or something, I always do on each film, but this has been exceptional.

How does it feel to see your creations being worn?

It was just lovely. Because when you're making them, you know that you like them, and they're lovely, and you love the fabric, but to see them on the body, and the way they swished and moved in them. And the linens are so beautiful in the countryside, they look stunning. And the silks really worked for London. There's nothing to beat it.

Cast List

Core Cast:

Tom Jones.....	Solly McLeod
Sophia Western.....	Sophie Wilde
Lady Bellaston.....	Hannah Waddingham
Squire Allworthy.....	James Fleet

Squire Western..... Alun Armstrong
 Aunt Western Shirley Henderson
 Aunt Bridget Felicity Montagu
 Partridge Daniel Rigby
 Honour..... Pearl Mackie
 Blifil..... James Wilbraham
 Mrs Wilkins Janine Duvitski
 Black George Dean Lennox Kelly
 Molly Lucy Fallon
 Aunt Harriet Tamzin Merchant
 Mrs Waters Susannah Fielding
 Fitzpatrick Julian Rhind-Tutt

Crew List

Based on the novel by HENRY FIELDING

Executive Producers (Mammoth Screen) James Gandhi, Gwyneth Hughes,
 Damien Timmer, Helen Ziegler
 Executive Producers (MASTERPIECE) Susanne Simpson & Rebecca Eaton
 Created for television and written by Gwyneth Hughes
 Director Georgia Parris
 Producer..... Benjamin Greenacre
 Director of Photography..... David Mackie
 Production Designer..... Ashleigh Jeffers
 Costume Designer..... Hazel Webb-Crozier
 Make-Up Designer..... Liz Boston
 Casting Director Susie Parriss
 Composer..... Matthew Slater
 Additional Music Score by Louise Anna Duggan
 & Zands Duggan
 Additional Music by Score Draw Music

Tom Jones is a co-production between Mammoth Screen and MASTERPIECE. Global
 distribution for the series is being handled by ITV Studios