



# Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> Nov.**  
**7:30 pm**

## FOUR MOTHERS

Ire, 15, 89 mins, 2024

**Director;** Darren Thornton

**Stars;** James McArdle,  
Fionulla Flanagan, Dearbhia  
Molloy.

An author is saddled with caring for his mother after she suffers a stroke. His plans for a book tour are thrown into disarray when three more elderly women arrive on his doorstep in Dublin.

*Essentially a relocation of the Italian film Pranzo di Ferragosto (2008) Gianni Di Gregorio's comedy about a man living with his mother in a small apartment, only to get saddled with three additional old women – all of them strangers – during an Italian holiday.*

Interview Darren Thornton;

**Were these ideas about upbringing and caring in Ireland on your mind before finding the template of the earlier Italian film?**

Probably from before. And it's interesting you say that because Colin and I are big fans of *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* [2005] and *Fingers* [1978], the James Toback film [it was a remake of]. In talking with the producers, we would say *Four Mothers* is to *Mid-August Lunch* what *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* was to *Fingers*. *Mid-August Lunch* is a fantastic film that I don't want to try to recreate. I want to use it as a way into things that are interesting for us right now. We'd been going through a very painful period with our mum where she was unwell and needed care. By the time we got an email from producer Jack Sidey, with a DVD for *Mid-August Lunch* in the post, we were sort of living a version of what Gianni Di Gregorio had done with his film. It was a conversation that we really wanted to get into and share our point of view on what was funny, absurd and heartbreaking to us about the situation.

When our mum passed away, the feeling around it was so raw that we just needed to explore all of that. We needed to write about that period we had shared with her before we lost her, as some kind of healing or to find some kind of catharsis. We had to follow that impulse.

**Why did you make the lead character a novelist?**

Part of what we went through in the period that we were at home with Mam was that *[A Date for Mad Mary]* had come out and we were supposed to be promoting that film. We were trying to have these [interview] conversations while at the same time, like in *Four Mothers*, dealing with someone whose capacity is diminishing and trying to help them – literally that scenario at the start of the movie where he needs to do a radio interview while bringing Mam to the toilet.

So many different, crazy things are happening while you're trying to speak in an articulate way about this thing that you made. Having to be a salesman for your own work, that's the most difficult part of the job for us. We're always filled with self-doubt around those things. And just like in the film, our mum lost her voice and was reliant on a voice app. The loss of a voice and what that means to both of them in different ways was a compelling starting point for us with the film.

We have a pretty specific approach to comedy where we want the actors to just play the truth. Usually with comedy, even the greatest, most subtle actor will want to lean into the comedy. We're always trying to get them to not lean into the comedy, to just trust it, because there's nothing worse than when you're on set and the actors are having a good lark and the crew are chuckling and you kind of know you're going to get into the edit room and it's not going to be funny at all. The more craic that people are having on the shoot, the less funny and interesting it's going to be when you get there. So, I usually want to shoot it in such a way that they're just fucking bored with it. And then when it gets to the cutting, it comes to life.

