The BIRDS WILL SING

A spirited boy's journey to discover his true identity, find his family and escape to freedom.

A SCREENPLAY BY

DEBORAH HENRY



The Story

In 1950s Dublin, a spirited boy separated from his family searches for his true identity, belonging and freedom – and finds the courage to escape a brutal industrial school for a new life in America.

FORMAT

Coming-of-age feature film · 125 mins · PG
Set in 1950s Dublin and America

A secret kept for twelve years

Ben Ellis agreed to a secret birth to protect Marian, the woman he would marry. He believed their son, Aidan, had gone to America.

Then the nurse who delivered Aidan returns. The boy has been in Dublin all along.

A family with no easy way back

BEN

A journalist determined to repair the choice he made at Aidan's birth.

AIDAN

Twelve years old, seeking a home and a place in his family.

MARIAN

Ben's wife, forced to face the past inside her present life.

JOHANNA

Their eleven-year-old daughter, whose world changes when Aidan arrives.

One summer together

Through books, sport and chess, Ben and Aidan begin to know each other. Ben hopes the trial stay will become a permanent home.



The court separates them

After a serious incident between the children, the juvenile court sends Aidan to Surtane Industrial School for Boys.

The fragile trust built over the summer must survive the school's walls.

A failed attempt

After a failed escape, Aidan is sent back to a brutal detention.

Dublin, seen from inside the family

LITTLE JERUSALEM

The Ellis family's Jewish identity and community shape Ben's choices.

DONNYBROOK AND SURTANE

Home life and institutional life show the distance Aidan must cross.

A father and son story

Aidan wants identity and belonging. Ben wants to put right what happened at Aidan’s birth. Their love gives the escape its emotional cost.

Tonal references and comparables

FILM	PRODUCTION BUDGET	WORLDWIDE GROSS
Stand By Me (1986)	$7.5 million	$53.5 million
Belfast (2021)	$10–15 million	$49.5 million
Brooklyn (2015)	$11 million	$62.1 million

Figures in USD. Sources: The Numbers, Box Office Mojo; Belfast budget as stated by Kenneth Branagh.

Casting inspiration

For consideration only. No cast attached.

BEN
Daniel Radcliffe

MARIAN
Jessie Buckley

AIDAN
Jude Hill

BEVA
Bette Midler

BROTHER MACK
Barry Keoghan

BROTHER RYDER
Sean Penn

FATHER BRENNAN
Liam Neeson

Deborah Henry

WRITER / PRODUCER

Deborah Henry is a critically acclaimed novelist and film producer. Her debut, The Whipping Club, received a Kirkus starred review, Kirkus Reviews Best of 2012, praise from Publisher's Weekly and was selected for Oprah's Summer Reading Issue. Henry has successfully adapted her novel into her current screenplay, The Birds Will Sing. Heartbreaking and heartwarming, The Birds Will Sing shares an atmospheric world rarely depicted on the screen, and lives intimately within Deborah's own experiences as the child of an Irish Catholic mother and a Jewish father.

She is the Co-Writer and Executive Producer, and played a role, in the comedy drama, Cross Talk, filmed in the United Kingdom, with an all-star cast, in post-production.

Her first short story was published in the Copperfield Review, was a historical fiction finalist for *Solander Magazine* and was long listed in the Fish Short Story Prize. Her children's book, Watch Her Shine, set in the Bwindi Forest, was published in Uganda, Kenya and Western Australia, with proceeds to benefit the Bambino Life Foundation which helps girls reach their goals as well as disadvantaged children.

Henry holds an MFA from Fairfield University. She has been an expert guest on radio programs as well as on NBC, FOX and CBS television in top markets nationally. An active member of The Academy of American Poets, a patron of the Irish Arts Center in New York, she founded the Deborah Henry Scholarship Fund for the Abroad Writers Conference in Dublin.

Chryssy Tintner

SCRIPT PRODUCER

Chryssy is the third generation in a family of Jewish and Irish creators and entertainers, a full member of the Australian Directors Guild and the Australian Writers Guild. She is an Australian citizen repped by BMEG and is a graduate of the Peter Stark Masters Program at USC's School of Cinematic Studies in LA, where her mentors were Stacey Sher (*Hateful Eight, Get Shorty, Pulp Fiction*) and Gareth Wigan (*Star Wars, Bram Stokers Dracula, Spiderman*) at Columbia Tristar. Chryssy's focus is on contributing to quality genre projects and reaching a broad audience. She is attached to direct two feature projects, the western *Copperhead* (producer, Andrea Smith) and musical *Songs of the Walking People* (producer, Helen Leake AM) and is producing *Trio* with Producer Judi Levine (*How to Please a Woman*) and Director Ben Lewin (*Falling for Figaro, Please Stand By, The Catcher Was A Spy, The Sessions*).

Chryssy previously worked as a script development executive and script producer for studios and production companies in three continents, including for Susan Landau (*Cool Runnings, An Ideal Husband*) and Laura Ziskin (*When Harry Met Sally, Fight Club*) at Fox 2000 in LA and Morgan O'Sullivan and James Flynn (*The Banshees of Inisherin, Vikings*) at Ardmore Studios in the Republic of Ireland. She has directed award winning short films (*Petrushka, Eclipse*) for international festivals and plays including *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Phaedra* at the Sydney Opera House and Verbruggen Hall. She has done fellowship work with Sydney Dance Company, Opera Australia, Sydney Symphony Orchestra and The Australian Ballet. Chryssy is a Board member of Boomalli, the First Nations art gallery.

Mary-Ann Vale

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Mary-Ann is an award-winning Australian Producer, Manager, General Manager, Director and Actress with credits in screen and stage projects for a number of decades. She has been the Executive of Talent Agency BMEG since 2013. BMEG represents screen actors, directors and writers across Australia and around the globe. Mary-Ann previously worked for live performance theatre companies in the Australian states of Queensland and New South Wales.

She has completed productions with Queensland Theatre Company, Griffin Theatre Company at the Stables Theatre, Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre, Tightrope Theatre and Drama Queens. She has extensively produced Cabaret, Live Performance and directed 25 plays. Mary-Ann has also worked professionally as an actress herself in Sydney for 18 years in theatre, TV & film and TVCs. She is thrilled to work on the feature film “The Birds Will Sing” by Deborah Henry.

Estimated production budget

USD $10–20 million

Based on filming in Ireland; subject to final scheduling and casting.

"You can't stop the birds from singing."

The BIRDS WILL SING

Screenplay by **Deborah Henry**

Thank you to Jason Mladjenovic, Creative Director
at Adams Media Group, and his team for their professional expertise.

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