

Film Review: Mediated Performances Highlight Alternative Story of Charles Dickens' Personal Life

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 24, 2014 - 3:59pm

- [Charles Dickens](#) [2]
- [Felicity Jones](#) [3]
- [Film Review](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Kristin Scott Thomas](#) [6]
- [Nick Allen](#) [7]
- [Ralph Fiennes](#) [8]
- [The Invisible Woman](#) [9]
- [Tom Hollander](#) [10]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

After years of enlivening adapted work in front of the camera and on the stage, only recently has the prolific actor Ralph Fiennes taken to directing films; in 2011 he gave the world a version of Shakespeare's "Coriolanus," which included the odd treat of watching Gerard Butler espouse the Bard's words from his mouth, and a sporadically-lauded performance from Vanessa Redgrave.

Not long after the completion of that film, Fiennes has returned with a second directorial bid, "The Invisible Woman," which finds a focus within the world of another praised artist of the word, but within a much more intimate setting.

"The Invisible Woman" is the story of Charles Dickens' #2, a fan-turned-mistress named Nelly (played by Felicity Jones from "Like Crazy"). Providing a refreshing perspective to stories set within the social confines of the Victorian period, it is told from the specific recollection of Jones' "other woman," making for a tale less one-sided than those out to shame a groupie.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "The Invisible Woman" in our reviews section.](#) [11]

Nelly, originally known as Ellen Ternan, comes from a family of touring actors. Her mother (played by Kristin Scott Thomas), sister Maria (Perdita Weeks) and eldest sister Fanny (Amanda Hale) meet Charles Dickens (Ralph Fiennes) when performing "The Frozen Deep," an adaptation by Dickens of his friend Wilkie Collins' (Tom Hollander) play. Though Dickens has a wife and ten children, he becomes smitten with Nelly, who already admires the author's work. With Dickens' celebrity preceding him, he begins an affair with Nelly, but reaches an extremely difficult crossroads as to how close she can be to him during a very public life.

If it is not too sacrilegious a connection, Jones' aura is immediately reminiscent of many Liv Ullman performances, especially whenever she played romantic innocent bystanders in Ingmar Bergman films. It's not just a distinct physical resemblance, of which I'd be lying if I didn't think they shared two distinct facial features: large, thoughtful eyes, and lips, as contemplative as they are sensual (think Ullman in something like "Scenes from a Marriage," especially).



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico's full "The Invisible Woman" review.](#) [11]

'The Invisible Woman' stars Ralph Fiennes, Felicity Jones, Kristin Scott Thomas, and Tom Hollander. It was directed by Ralph Fiennes. It opens in Chicago on January 24, 2014.



The Invisible Woman
Photo credit: Sony Pictures

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 - [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/felicity-jones>
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