

Q&A with The Eulogy director Janine Hosking



When did you become interested in the life of Geoffrey Tozer? Had you heard of him before the famous eulogy that inspired the film or was it Paul Keating's moving words that caught your attention?

I first became interested in the life of Geoffrey Tozer when a friend who is a book publisher gave me an article to read about Tozer as well as a copy of Paul Keating's Eulogy to Tozer. Keating's eulogy was powerful and it piqued my curiosity to learn more about the circumstances of Tozer's life and death. It was definitely Keating's words that inspired me to make the film, but once we embarked on the journey of interviewing Geoffrey's family and friends the film took on a life of its own which was very much driven by Tozer's own diaries and letters. The aim had always been to take the story beyond the Eulogy to dig deeper and rediscover the artist and as Richard Gill says in the film, try to dissect "what went wrong?"

How did you initially approach Paul Keating with the concept for the documentary?

At the time I became interested in producing and directing a film about Geoffrey Tozer, I was already working on another film with producer Katey Grusovin. Katey and I met with Paul Keating on several occasions during the period when we were developing the project and trying to raise finance. I was always very keen to structure the film around Keating's eulogy to Geoffrey and once we presented the idea to him he agreed to recreate his reading of the Eulogy at St Patrick's Cathedral.

Richard Gill is a pretty big name in music. What was it like working with him?

Richard is a complete force of nature. I feel incredibly privileged to have collaborated with him. He was always remained open minded in his approach to the film and the genuine journey he would take in analyzing Tozer's career. As a experienced music educator, Richard has the creditability and impartiality to assess Tozer's legacy. He went into the film knowing very little about Tozer and at times was skeptical about some of the claims that were being made about Tozer's brilliance. His reactions to hearing Tozer and learning about what happened to him were completely authentic. Neither one us wanted to make a hagiography and Richard was willing to take the path less traveled.



Delving into the past can be difficult when you've lost someone close to you. How did you get Tozer's family and friends onboard with the project and being interviewed? Were there any particular challenges in this?

Surprisingly it wasn't hard to find people who were willing to be interviewed about Geoffrey. He was a much-loved figure and there was something about him which inspired friends to want to "look after him". Initially the list of potential interviewees from the research stage was very long and a little daunting to "cull", but in the end it wasn't a difficult decision to decide who we would feature. In many ways the right people sort of "turned up" and on some occasions it was as if Geoffrey himself was guiding us to them. By the time we had finished the interview process the real Geoffrey Tozer emerged—a kind and gentle soul, who was a wonderful and loyal friend to all who knew him.

During Tozer's career, he was significantly more successful abroad than at home. How do you think an Australian audience will relate and respond to his story?

I think Geoffrey's story will come us a revelation—particularly when audiences see the archival footage and hear the music. In Australian classical music circles Geoffrey was well known—going back to his days as a child prodigy. Owing to Paul Keating's Creative Fellowships, Tozer performed regularly in Australia in the late 1980s and early 90s. He constantly toured and performed as a solo artist and took great joy in performing in country areas. But it is true that the most significant acclaim came from revered overseas critics as a result of his recordings with the London based Chandos Records. Sadly, his last major orchestral performance in Australia was in 1995, but overseas he continued to record with some of the world's finest orchestras.