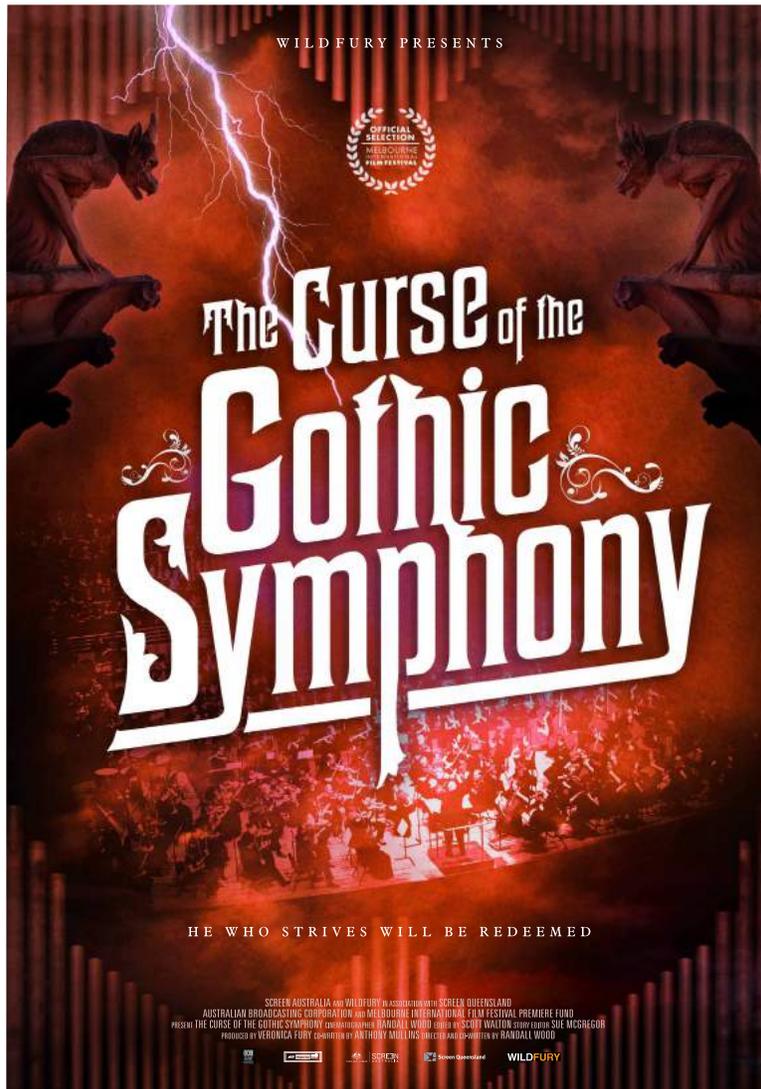


The Curse of the Gothic Symphony

PRESS KIT



**SCREEN AUSTRALIA and FURY PRODUCTIONS in association with SCREEN QUEENSLAND,
AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION and
MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PREMIERE FUND
present THE CURSE OF THE GOTHIC SYMPHONY**

**With Gary Thorpe John Curro Alison Rogers Veronica Fury and Eugene Gilfedder as Havergal Brian
Cinematography RANDALL WOOD Editor SCOTT WALTON Story Editor SUE MCGREGOR
Producer VERONICA FURY Co-writer ANTHONY MULLINS Director and Co-writer RANDALL WOOD**



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Synopsis

Logline

A fanatical and eclectic group of music lovers aspire to break the curse behind British composer Havergal Brian's notorious First Symphony.

Short Synopsis

The Curse of the Gothic Symphony follows the journey of a fanatical and eclectic group of music lovers who aspire to break the curse behind British composer Havergal Brian's notorious First Symphony. At over two hours long and requiring two orchestras, four brass bands and five full choirs it is regarded as the Mt. Everest of classical music. Grippled by the challenge to bring off the first staging of this monstrous symphony, these modern day crusaders will not stop until they triumph against all odds ... failure is not an option. The curse must be broken.

One Page Synopsis

The Curse of the Gothic Symphony follows the journey of a fanatical and eclectic group of music lovers who aspire to break the curse behind British composer Havergal Brian's notorious First Symphony. Brian wrote the symphony in the 1920s. It has long been recognised by the Guinness Book of Records as the largest, longest and most challenging symphony ever composed.

For over eighty years the immense Gothic Symphony remains unperformed in its entirety. At over two hours long and requiring two orchestras, four brass bands and five full choirs it is regarded as the Mt. Everest of classical music. Seemingly impossible to stage due to its complexity and massive scale the Gothic Symphony is the ultimate cult neglected work by a British composer. Since his death in 1972, Havergal Brian has moved from near total obscurity to recognition as one of twentieth century England's most significant composers.

Filmed over 5 years, The Curse of the Gothic Symphony charts the parallel stories of the life of Havergal Brian and the dedicated team who aspire to mount a performance of his infamous symphony in Brisbane. At the core of this odyssey is Gary Thorpe who for over twenty-eight years has been pitching the idea to stage the massive symphony without success. Then there is John Curro, conductor of the Queensland Youth Orchestra who is challenged by the opportunity to stage big productions and wants a crack at the Gothic Symphony. And Alison Rogers a choral master who wants to prove herself despite there not being enough choristers in Brisbane for such a huge undertaking. And finally, Veronica Fury, who is gripped by the curse and crosses the line from film producer to entrepreneur caught up in the odyssey, seized by the sheer titanic scale of the task...

The Curse of the Gothic Symphony reveals the passion, the obsession, the incalculable scale required to stage a massive event that has eluded others for eighty years. Grippled by the challenge to bring off the first staging of this monstrous symphony, these modern day crusaders will not stop until they triumph against all odds ... failure is not an option. The curse must be broken.

Havergal Brian **(1876-1972)**

Lauded for his "courage and fortitude in the face of total neglect," over the course of a creative life of 80 years -- one of the longest ever -- Havergal Brian composed big and ambitious works, including 32 symphonies and several operas, most of which went unperformed in his lifetime. Since his death, he has moved from near total obscurity to recognition as one of twentieth century England's most significant composers.

His first successes as a composer were part-songs and choral works for various British music festivals. Through those experiences he befriended Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Henry Wood; the latter's performance of Brian's English Suite No. 1 (1904) inspired an anonymous patron to help Brian get his music published. In 1912, Brian moved to London. He was very poor, his works weren't being performed, and at one time he contemplated suicide. He did brief service in World War I; after the war, he worked as a freelance music copyist and for many years did writing and editing work for publications like Musical Opinion and Musical World. All the while, he was composing huge pieces of music, such as the comic opera *The Tigers* (written 1916-1918, orchestrated 1918-1930) and the *Gothic Symphony* (1919-1927).

After completing his four-hour long opera *Prometheus Unbound* (after Shelley, 1937-1944), Brian stopped composing for a few years. But in 1948, as he put it once, "the muse returned with a rush." He then embarked on the most prolific period of his career: from 1948 to 1968 he completed 27 symphonies, four operas, and various other instrumental works. Twenty-two of those 27 symphonies were written after Brian had turned 80, and seven were written after his 90th birthday. With the completion of his *Symphony No. 32 in A flat* in October 1968, Brian decided he no longer had any impulse to compose. He died at age 96.

Brian was 78 years old before he heard one of his symphonies performed, in a 1954 BBC concert. Performances of his works have remained fairly rare, though the pace picked up with the formation of the Havergal Brian Society. His most notorious work is still his *Symphony No. 1*, the "Gothic," listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the "Largest Symphony." Close to two hours in length, the work calls for a vast orchestra (supplemented by four brass bands and organ), four soloists, two choirs, and children's choir. It was completed back in 1927.

– **Chris Morrison, All Music. c**

Quotes from the Film

GARY THORPE

"Why on earth did we take this on?"

"It's a huge thing. It's almost, well it is, it's too big."

"There are reasons why it's only been performed four times."

"No one else is crazy enough to try this."

"It's the Mount Everest of classical music."

"This must be the best known work of music in this town that's never been performed".

MALCOLM MACDONALD

"There are demonic forces in this music."

"It's a tragic drama. It's an epic drama. It's a drama of someone grappling with almost ungovernable forces."

"Failure, I presume, is not an option here."

"Brian once said that the piece came to him in a flash, and he wanted to write the whole thing in about twenty bars. And sometimes I just have this weird feeling that in that flash, he somehow had a vision of the universe."

"And it's a sort of imperishable monument, really. It's like a Gothic cathedral, like the pyramids, like Stonehenge. You know, the Gothic Symphony is another one of these enormous architectural things that just can't ignore and they're here for the ages, really."

VERONICA FURY

"There is a frightening aspect that the curse is real."

"Everything's in place, but it's hanging on a thread. I can't stand the thread. I can't stand it."

"I swear, it's cursed. It's cursed. Every time something comes in, something falls away."

"The curse has been quiet today, which is a bit of a worry, and I'm hoping it's taking the day off."

OLGA PRINGLE

"I would say leave the Gothic alone. Seal it up and either bury it or put it into a museum for many years later."

"I do think it could be put in a box and buried. I mean, it's a wicked thing to say, but I think that's where it will be happier."

JOHN CURRO

"The more you look into this, the more of a Pandora's Box it becomes."

PAUL GRABOWSKY

"It's a gigantic dinosaur, actually."

"I would give it a very small chance of success."

DEBORAH CONWAY

"...it's actually teetering on the edge of failure at all times."

ALISON ROGERS

"This project could be professional suicide. But in some ways, it was a gift."

"...there was no certainty of anything with the Gothic."

"When you go to a choral concert, you don't want seafood filler in there. You want your good prawns."

KERRYANNE FARRER

"...it's a massive beanstalk and it's out of control."

SARAH CURRO

"I think the curse is the thing that makes Dad want to do it all the more."

"I think it's like a big challenge for Dad, because he's heard that heaps of people have tired and failed."

HAVERGAL BRIAN

"It wrote itself".

Comments by the Director and the Producer

RANDALL WOOD – Director

The most compelling stories are those about peoples' obsessions. *The Curse of the Gothic Symphony* explores the obsession of a composer, entrepreneur, music-critic and film producer fixated on one piece of music. It's an irresistible on-screen alchemy.

Having studied classical music composition in my youth and having spent twenty years as a filmmaker I was delighted when producer Veronica Fury approached me to direct what would become my first music film, *The Curse of the Gothic Symphony*. After listening to Havergal Brian's epic work I realised with excitement that this was great film music but my excitement soon changed into apprehension. There was a film to make. But after two years the Entrepreneur in the story had failed to come even close to mounting a performance.

After surveying the terrain I decided to turn the camera onto the strange parallel drama going on behind the scenes. Veronica Fury, the film's producer, had become infected with the obsession. To her surprise the camera's lens was turned onto her. Thankfully she agreed as neither the film nor the symphony would have been completed without her commitment.

The Curse of the Gothic Symphony combines a rich tapestry of elements: an epic story of struggle leading to triumph, a soundtrack drawn directly from the symphony itself, an eclectic mix of characters, rarely seen archival footage and alluring animation. The film is a tribute to what people can achieve when they tenaciously follow their dreams.

RIP Havergal Brian. Your curse is broken. After 28 years, the quest for a Brisbane performance has now been realised and an ensuing performance of the Gothic Symphony is scheduled for the London Proms.

VERONICA FURY - Producer

When Havergal Brian dedicated his epic Gothic Symphony to the Faustian quote: "He who strives shall be redeemed", he was not quoting it lightly. For it is a monster of a composition that takes a lot of work and dedication to stage – and I should know!

I first heard about the Gothic Symphony when Wendy Lang a friend working at 4MBS Classic FM (a community radio station) told me about her boss Gary Thorpe who had been trying to stage this mammoth symphony in Brisbane for years and years and that it was said to be cursed.

I was immediately smitten and started to follow the journey that entrepreneur Gary Thorpe had already been treading for over twenty years. That was the start of what would become an eight year odyssey for me. I became completely and utterly obsessed with it.

It's quite unusual for a Producer to cross the line and become a part of the story. But I became involved out of pure frustration. After years of watching Gary pitch the Gothic to various festivals and performance bodies without success, I decided to become involved in staging the event.

With the fabulous creative team that came together – lead by director Randall Wood, and Scott Walton, Paul Gomez and Sue McGregor to name a few, we crafted an eclectic, quirky and original film with a fabulous human story of striving for success against all odds.

Production Team Biography

RANDALL WOOD – Director, co-writer, Cinematographer

Born and educated in Brisbane, Randall has directed documentaries for television, is an ACS award-winning cinematographer, studied scriptwriting and feature film directing at the Binger Film Lab in Amsterdam and has a degree in music composition and performance from QLD Conservatorium.

Randall's directorial credits include television projects *The Worm Hunters*, *The Grammar of Happiness*, *To Be or Not To Be*, *Nonna*, *Rare Chicken Rescue* (Sydney International Film Festival 2008 Dendy Documentary Award, Silver ACS Award, and Slamdance Festival Grand Jury Award - Best Short Documentary), and *Downunder Grads*.

VERONICA FURY – Producer

Veronica Fury is a Brisbane based producer and company director of Wild Fury Pty Ltd., in partnership with Bettina Dalton and Hugh Marks. Veronica has made award-winning programs for Australian and international broadcasters. She is a graduate of Griffith University Film School.

Her television productions include *Fairweather Man*, winner 2010 NSW Premier's Award for Best Script, and *World Champion Santa*. In 2011, Veronica completed *Constructive Mob* and *The Trouble with St Mary's* and will soon complete *Dancing Down Under*. She produced *Machete Maidens Unleashed!* for ABC and the MIFF Premier Fund which had its overseas premiere at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival.

Wild Fury has a large number of documentary projects in various stages of commissioning including *Bringing Uncle Home*, *First Fagin*, and *Mysteries of the Human Voice*.

Veronica is an active member of the QSIC board, a full SPAA member and is a sponsor on the QLD Young Film Makers Awards.

SUE MCGREGOR – Story Editor

A graduate of Griffith University, Sue is an experienced and creative producer and director. Her work predominantly consists of hour-long documentaries and factual entertainment and her programmes have been broadcast on international and Australian broadcast networks. She has been producing and directing documentaries for 11 years and has made over 50 hours of television

SCOTT WALTON – Editor

Scott Walton has edited and directed well over 100 music videos including for Powderfinger, Russell Crowe, Regurgitator, Spiderbait, Eskimo Joe, and Bernard Fanning to name just a few. He has edited several documentaries and short films including, *The Worm Hunters*, *World Champion Santa* and *Rare Chicken Rescue*.

PAUL BUTLER – Animation Director, Fifty/Fifty Films.

Paul has produced animation, titles and visual effects for broadcast television, feature drama productions and television commercials.

The Gothic Symphony Production team

Gary Thorpe OAM — Executive Producer



Gary Thorpe OAM has been the General Manager of Brisbane's classical music radio station 4MBS Classic FM since 1989. In his role as General Manager, he has instigated several annual festivals including the *4MBS Festival of Classics* – now in its 17th year and one of Australia's largest classical music festivals. In 2006, he created the annual *Cathedral's Week* choral festival in partnership with the Queensland Choir and Brisbane's Cathedrals. The same year, Gary helped to create the theatre company, *4MBS Classic Productions* to provide employment and opportunities for Queensland professional actors and directors to perform classic texts. The company has toured its acclaimed production of the play *Amadeus* to four Australian capital cities – a first for a radio station in Australia. He initiated the popular annual *Shakespeare on Oxford* festival in 2007 and *Shakespeare by the Bay* in 2009. Gary has a passion for the music of the 20th century and was awarded a medal of the Order of Australia in 2009 for services to music and community broadcasting.

John Curro AM MBE – Conductor



John Curro AM MBE is the founder and Director of Music of the Queensland Youth Orchestras. He has conducted the Queensland Youth Symphony for 44 years. In 2009, John was Director of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music's Youth Winter School Program, conductor of the Bishop Orchestra at the Victorian State Music Camp and guest conductor of the Tasmanian Conservatorium and Brisbane Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2008, John conducted the Queensland Youth Symphony during its 11th international tour with critically acclaimed concerts. In 2007, he was conductor of the Queensland Conservatorium's Alumni Orchestra, Music Director for the Australian Youth Orchestra's Youth Symphonists String Program and guest conductor with the Australian National Academy of Music Orchestra. John has conducted many opera seasons and has held the position of guest conductor with the London Virtuosi, the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra, and principal guest conductor with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. Throughout his career, John has received Honorary Doctorates from the University of Queensland and Griffith University, Rotary International's Paul Harris Fellow Award, the Australian Music Centre Award (QLD), the Don Banks Music Award, the Sir Bernard Heinze Memorial Award, the Orchestras Australia Lifetime Achievement Award and the Queensland Premier's Millennium Award for Excellence in the Arts.

Alison Rogers – Creative Producer and Chorusmaster



Alison Rogers is the Director of Vocal Manoeuvres specialising in the services of Creative Production, Chorus Mastering, Choral / Vocal Performance and Education. She designed the Young Conservatorium Choral Program at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU) for which she served as director for four years. While regional director for the QCGU, Alison implemented choral programs on the Gold and Sunshine Coast campuses and led ensembles on tours of Europe, Japan, the US and Canada. Alison works regularly with high profile national and international performing artists in the provision and training of backing vocalists, backing choral ensembles and one-on-one vocal coaching services. Alison currently directs the chamber ensemble Exaudi Australis, the project based Queensland Festival Chorus and the QPAC Choir – a 180 voice symphonic chorus based at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre. Vocal Manoeuvres has provided their services to Education Queensland's *Creative Generation State Schools Onstage* each year since the event's premiere in 2005. In 2009 and 2010, the Queensland Festival Chorus under Alison's direction toured to Singapore to perform Holst's *The Planets* and Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*. Alison is Creative Consultant and Chorusmaster for the Queensland Music Festival's project based in the Torres Strait Islands.

Veronica Fury – Documentary Producer



Veronica Fury is a Brisbane based producer and company director of Wild Fury Pty Ltd., in partnership with Bettina Dalton and Hugh Marks. Veronica has made award-winning content for Australian and International television broadcasters. See producer biography for credits.

Complete Credit List

Director/Co-Writer
RANDALL WOOD

Producer
VERONICA FURY

Editor
SCOTT WALTON

Cinematographer
RANDALL WOOD

Co-Writer
ANTHONY MULLINS

Story Editor
SUE MCGREGOR

ABC Commissioning Editor AMANDA DUTHIE

Production Manager MELISSA HINES

Production Coordinator ELLA HOLMES

Dramatic Recreations Cast

Havergal Brian EUGENE GILFEDDER
Young Havergal Brian JASON POCOCK
Young Olga Brian ALYSON STIMSON

Additional Camera HELEN BARROW
 RICHARD BELL
 JASON HARGREAVES
 ELLA HOLMES
 FARAMARZ K-RAHBER
 NIK LACHAJCZAK
 DAN MACARTHUR
 ANTHONY MULLINS
 ADRIAN PAGANO
 AURORA SCHEELINGS
 DAN SCHIST
 LINTON VIVIAN

Multi Camera Coordinator	DAN MACARTHUR
Performance Camera Operators	MARK BROADBENT MICHAEL CROWLEY NIK LACHAJCZAK RICHARD MANSFIELD
Multi-Camera Assistant	MICHAEL CROWLEY
Technical Support	DOUGLAS LY
Score Caller	JEFF WECKER
Recreation Camera Assistant	LUIS A. BRAN
Sound Recordists	OLI COHEN KATE ELLOVEE CHRIS GILLETTE JUSTIN HARRISON BASIL KRIVOROUTCHKO MICHAEL MADER SCOTT MULREADY DARREN THOMAS JOY BILHA WANGARI MAINA SILA WIKANINGTYAS
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Production Assistants	CHARLIE ASPINWALL MACKENZIE BENSTEAD AMELIA PAXMAN SALLY WORTLEY JADE VAN DER LEI
Stills Camera	JOHN SMALLBONE
Editorial Support	KEN SALLOW
Melbourne Post Producer	ROBERT DE YOUNG
Gothic Performance Editor	MARK HARTLEY

Edit Assistants CHARLOTTE CUTTING
JOSH DAWSON
GHITA FIORELLI
JOSH TANNER

Animation FIFTY FIFTY FILMS
PAUL BUTLER
ANDRES GOMEZ IZASA
RANGI SUTTON

Post Production Facility BLUE POST
Facility Manager PETER MILLINGTON

Online Editor/Colourist PETER PILLEY

Audio Post Production SOUNDWAVES

Assistant Sound Editor RHYS RICHARDS

Dialogue Editor ANDREW McGRATH

SFX Editor ERIN McKIMM

Music Editor BRETT APLIN

Foley JOHN & LISA SIMPSON - FEET 'N' FRAMES

Sound Mixer MICHAEL GISSING

Legals PETER BOLAM - BOLAM LEGAL

Accounts JACINTA MORRIS
CORPACC AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

Insurance H W WOOD AUSTRALIA PTY LTD
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Michael Black, Helen Burton, John Gilfedder, Tom Adeney, Richard Fidler,
Graham Evens, Margy Stimson, Jude Weaver, Susie Forster,
Michaela Hillam, David Hood, Tom Walters, Kasia Rymar, Marisa Bartolini,
Alan Osborne, Sebastian Schmidt, Ruby Schmidt, Zac Schmidt, Amber Schmidt

Havergal Brian Family

Olga Pringle, Caroline Jackson, Michael & Margaret Pringle,
Jean Furnivall, Margaret Beachamp

The Gothic Symphony Team

Gary Thorpe, Kerryanne Farrer, Alison Rogers, John Curro, Jeff Wecker,
Ken Francey, John Connolly, Philip Legge, Sarah Curro, Peter Luff, Neil Flottmann,
Alan Smith, Nick Kolomeitz, Nikki-Ann Tuaru, Chris Osborne, David Webster,
Horst Schirra, Colin Hardcastle, Tom O'Kelly, David Mibus, Scott Willsallen,
Dane Leeson, Annie Peterson, Chloe Goodyear, Brett Howe, Libby Lincoln

Queensland Music Festival

Nigel Lavender, Paul Grabowsky, Erica Hart, Deborah Conway

Havergal Brian Society

Malcolm MacDonald, Professor John Pickard, John Grimshaw, David Jenkins,
Jeremy Marchant Gary Jobsey, Christopher Tarry, Rev. R. Leonard Hollands,
Mark Henegar, Kathryn Henegar, Martin Anderson, Damian Rees, Kevin Mandry,
Nigel Barnes, Martyn Becker

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Music

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BRIAN: Symphony No. 1, 'The Gothic'
Conducted by Ondrej Lenard
Naxos Rights International Ltd.

BRIAN: Symphony No. 1, 'The Gothic'
Conducted by John Curro
Courtesy of 4MBS Classic FM

Sir Edward Elgar's "Scene from the Saga of King Olaf: As Torrent in Summer"
Arranged by Albert O. Davis and Published by LudwigMasters Publications, Inc
Used by arrangement

Performed by the St Olaf Band and conducted by Timothy Mahr

Dmitri Shostakovich, LADY MACBETH OF THE MTSENSK DISTRICT.
OperaLibretto: Arkadi Preiss, Dmitri Shostakovitch
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Julia Overton



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cinematographer RANDALL WOOD edited by SCOTT WALTON story editor SUE MCGREGOR
produced by VERONICA FURY co-written by ANTHONY MULLINS directed and co-written by RANDALL WOOD



Technical Notes

Production Format:	HD 16:9 Anamorphic
Release Formats:	Digital Betacam 16:9 Anamorphic HD Cam 16:9 Anamorphic
Sound Configuration:	5.1 channel audio surround sound.
Date of Production:	2010
Release Date:	2011
Duration:	Feature Release 82'