



Presents

PASSCHENDAELE

A film by Paul Gross

PASSCHENDAELE- SYNOPSIS

France, 1917. The Allied lines are taking a pounding from German artillery. Sergeant Michael Dunne leads a reduced platoon in a desperate bid to knock out an enemy gun nest set up in the charred ruins of a church. The skirmish is short, brutal and successful, but short-lived as a Howitzer shell crashes through the burnt out ceiling, throwing Dunne 25 feet in the air. Shipped back to Canada to recuperate in a Calgary hospital, he meets Sarah Mann, a nurse whose father was killed in the battle of Vimy Ridge. She has been left alone to rear her younger brother, David.

Sarah is instrumental in healing Dunne's physical wounds, but he is haunted by the war. He is diagnosed as neurasthenic, with a recommendation that he remain in Calgary. Assigned to the 10th Battalion recruiting office, Dunne works under Major Randolph Dobson-Hughes, who takes an immediate dislike to him, believing his declared medical condition a euphemism for cowardice. One of Dunne's first potential recruits is David Mann, whose application he rejects because David's asthma renders him unfit for service. Dunne's encounter with David leads him back to Sarah and a tentative romance kindles. She's guarded and wary, frightened of intimacy, believing that if she opens up, catastrophe would follow. But Dunne is dogged, because for him, Sarah represents salvation.

It emerges, to the delight of Dobson-Hughes, that Sarah's father was a German and at Vimy Ridge he actually fought for the enemy. Dunne is warned off her on grounds of national security. The same argument is used when Sarah is let go from the hospital – her lineage presents a security threat. David's anger over this injustice is incendiary. On a day when Dunne is absent from the recruiting office, David slips in and attempts to enlist again. Dobson-Hughes is only too pleased to sign him up. When Sarah learns of this, she desperately tries to persuade David to talk with Dunne, convinced that Dunne will release David from military service. David lies, telling his sister that it was Dunne himself that signed him up.

As the troops ready for departure, Sarah confronts Dunne, accusing him of sending the weak and the sick to fight the war while he, with no visible injuries, relaxes at home. He offers no defence, knowing that he was destined to return to the trenches one way or another. He will follow David back to Flanders, and try as best he can to see that David survives for Sarah's sake. Too late, Sarah learns the truth – Dunne had nothing to do with her brother's enlistment. She tries frantically to intercept Dunne before he jumps the troop train, but time is against her. Dunne has left for Europe.

We now return to combat, and the third battle of Ypres, commonly known as the Battle of Passchendaele.

Dunne is re-united with his old platoon and takes a defiant, but frightened David under his wing. The Battalion is camped on the outskirts of Ypres, anticipating they will be sent in as a support company. A long-range shell creates havoc and Dunne carries a wounded soldier to the field hospital. There he is thunderstruck to find Sarah. With her life in Calgary reduced to an empty shell, and the only two people she cared for away at the front, she has enlisted her services as a nurse. She apologizes to Dunne for her misguided accusations. Dunne is thrilled to see Sarah, assuring her that David is well. Their encounter is urgent and impassioned, but cut short when Dunne has to return to his platoon.

Dunne's company enters the battlefield – an unholy mass of mud and death. Contrary to Dunne's initial beliefs, they are thrown to the front as the line weakens. The battalion of 800 they arrive to support suddenly pulls out, leaving Dunne's company of only 80 soldiers to defend the line. Woefully undermanned and defenseless, they dig in as the enemy masses for attack. A ghastly, gruesome battle ensues and David realizes how much he needs Dunne's strength as they go hand-to-hand with the Germans. The company holds and the Germans pull back in retreat. Dunne's company returns to its original position - all except for David. He hasn't heard the signal to fall back and lunges forward in his pursuit of the German foe.

Dunne searches valiantly for him in the aftermath of the first attack. Suddenly, a hush goes up over the troops, all eyes trained across the hell of No-Man's land to the front of the German line. A makeshift cross has been erected by a wayward explosion. A wounded David is lashed to it.

Dunne takes a breath, drops his pack and ventures into No-Man's land. The company offers him cover fire as he picks his way through the battlefield. A sniper's bullet hits his side but he continues, undeterred. For a second, an extended remarkable second, everyone on both sides stops shooting. Finally Dunne reaches David, lowers the cross onto his back and starts back toward his own line. The battlefield is silent, every soldier, Canadian and German, willing Dunne on. Dunne falters for a second and the life seems to drain from him. He rallies, lifting the cross and pushing through the muck until he falls exhausted into the Canadian trench. The silence is broken and the war is back on.

In the hospital, a cheer goes up as the news that the Canadians have taken Passchendaele is announced. Sarah's joy is cut short as Dunne arrives on her gurney. He is terribly shot up and weakening rapidly. They talk quickly, finally finding one another in the midst of the horror.

PASSCHENDAELE- THE BATTLE

15 DAYS

1.5 MILES

20,000 CANADIANS

By the spring of 1917, it was clear that the Allies were in trouble on the Western Front. The French army was in near mutiny and heading for home. The Russian Front was collapsing, freeing over one million German soldiers for the Western Front. The Allies desperately needed a victory.

In July 1917, Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig launched the Third Battle of Ypres – soon to be known to all Canadians as Passchendaele. The Allied Forces launched a ten-day artillery bombardment using 3,000 heavy guns and 4,250,000 shells. The Battle for Passchendaele had begun. It was fought on blood-soaked, battle scarred ground and lasted almost four months, claiming a million casualties on both sides. The soldiers fought in cold and rain on terrain so ghastly that, as one soldier said: If hell is anything like Passchendaele, I would not wish it on my worst enemy. Over the years, this battle has become synonymous with the horrors of the First World War.

By late October 1917, the British, Australian and New Zealand troops, who had failed to take Passchendaele, were exhausted. Finally, the high command turned to their elite corps – The Canadian Expeditionary Force, led by General Arthur Currie. After victories at Vimy Ridge and Hill 70, the Germans had nicknamed the Canadians “storm troopers” for, like a storm, they could not be stopped.

Even for the tough Canadians, Passchendaele was a living hell. Currie spent weeks training his troops, but with men dragging over 100 lbs of gear on their back, fighting from shell hole to shell hole, advancing against sophisticated concrete pillboxes housing the best German troops and machine guns, the casualties were high. Many would drown in the mud before ever seeing the enemy. Others fought and died - some from disease carried by the ever-present rats, some from the cold, some from gas and others from artillery shells.

In just two weeks the Canadians had done the impossible – on November 6th, they took the village of Passchendaele. On November 10th, they reached Hill 52 where they dug in, bringing victory to the Allied cause, though it cost 16,000 casualties.

It was an extraordinary achievement for a young nation only 50 years since Confederation, with a population of less than 8 million souls. Canada sent over 600,000 men to the crucible of the Western Front and our sacrifice forged the definition of what it meant to be Canadian. Proud. Strong. Resolute. British Prime Minister Lloyd George summed it up when he said, “Whenever the Germans found the Canadian Corps coming into the line, they prepared for the worst.”

Among the most feared was the 10th Canadian Infantry Battalion, known as The Fighting Tenth which was based in Calgary and drew its soldiers from all walks of Albertan life. As their commander, General Ormond, said, “There may have been equally good fighting units but, there was never one any better.”

PASSCHENDAELE- ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Story the Canadian Government Didn't Want Told.

“The time has now come to pay homage and honour to the 173,000 casualties and 67,000 dead Canadians who fought on behalf of a very small country.”—Paul Gross

1917. Canada had promised 500,000 soldiers to the war effort and by 1917, only 300,000 men had signed up. The Canadian volunteer effort was flagging. After the battle of Vimy Ridge, news from the front had reached the Canadian public and enlistment was dwindling. Prime Minister Robert Borden had visited the front lines and was horrified by the suffering, realizing that Canadian soldiers desperately needed reinforcement. But conscription bitterly divided both the country and his cabinet, and the issue had boiled down to a debate about loyalty versus treason. The upcoming December election in 1917 would determine whether conscription (in which “all able bodied men would be required to join the army”) would be implemented or not. Enlistment would no longer be a choice.

At the same time, the Battle of Passchendaele, which ran from August to November 10, 1917, had become synonymous with death, horror and enduring sorrow. Knowing that the 15,000 Canadian casualties suffered there would fuel arguments put forth by conscientious objectors thereby raising the stakes of the debate over conscription, “Borden, the media and the government did their best to make sure that this battle wasn't talked about and hasn't been front and centre in the Canadian psyche. That is the reason why Passchendaele has been lost in Canadian history,” detailed historian Norman Leach. “But as gory as this battle was, Passchendaele was a glory for Canada, as glorious as Vimy Ridge.”

Paul Gross' grandfather, Michael Dunne, fought in the Ypres Salient. As the father of five daughters, he had never talked about his experiences with them, until one day, when he was out fishing with Paul, at the time his 15 year-old grandson. Dunne enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915 and served until 1918, when he was wounded for the third time at the Battle of Amiens and was invalided out and sent home. His battlefield experiences became the defining moments in his life – ones he did not speak about until that day on the lake. He told his story about being on patrol in a small town in northern France after the battle of Vimy Ridge. His patrol encountered a German machinegun nest set up in the ruins of a church. Gunfire was exchanged, leaving everyone in his patrol dead with the exception of Dunne himself. The machinegun nest was quiet, so he fixed on his bayonet and moved forward, dropping over the sandbags to find dead gunners everywhere except for one boy, still alive. “My grandfather said the German boy's eyes were like water, a watery blue. The boy raised his hand to my grandfather, saying, “Kamerad,” and my grandfather bayoneted him in the forehead,” Gross recalled.

“My grandfather would have been, at the time these events took place, only a few years older than I was when I heard this and I could feel a door open. It was like a hinge on

adulthood, a life of consequence. I could feel my life change suddenly,” said Gross. “His story is both remarkable and unremarkable because it was repeated over and over again by so many other soldiers. We sent almost a tenth of our population over to fight in that war. And I don’t think it is hyperbole to suggest that what it means to be Canadian was forged in the fields of Flanders and our understanding of ourselves came out of that great cataclysm.”

Gross, captivated by the story, read prodigiously on the subject of the Great War. As the years went by, he knew he had to do something on the subject, but he wasn’t sure exactly what. Twelve years ago when Gross was filming in London, England, he visited the British War Archives. As he reviewed the old photographs, scenes began to form in his mind, and he then began the process of writing.

“There’s a powerful emotional core that this subject touches,” continued Gross. “But Canada’s film library is all but silent on the First World War. Compared to other countries where they have extensive film libraries dramatizing their war efforts, very little has been done here, yet generations of Canadians have great pride about their military history. It would be wonderful if we didn’t have to fight in wars, but it would equally be wonderful to honour the people who did fight for our country. As the wise man said: how do we know where we’re going if we don’t know where we come from? Hopefully this film will ignite an interest in our history. To that end, a large part of what we are doing with *Passchendaele* will be adding a web-based educational component in the form of a study guide that will be distributed to schools across the country.”

In 1998 Gross and Frank Siracusa, his partner in their production company Whizbang Films, traveled together to Belgium. “Paul had been talking about this project for a long time, so we followed the trail that the 10th Battalion took from the English Channel all the way to the final line in Passchendaele where our story takes place. This movie has been a matter of passion right from the beginning. This is Paul’s story. Actor, director, writer, producer, leader – everybody looks up to Paul. They look to his ambition, they look to his leadership, and they see he is stepping up to the plate. They believe in him.”

Working closely with Siracusa, they sent the script to many people and everyone fell in love with it, throwing what support they could behind the project. The decisive move was showing the script to Niv Fichman of Rhombus Media. “On first reading,” Fichman recalled, “I was completely riveted. *Passchendaele* is so emotional, so patriotic. I’ve never seen anything like this coming from Canada, so shamelessly passionate.”

What was apparent to Fichman was the pure Canadian nature of the story, that it was a film for Canada about the Canadian war effort, about Canadian bravery, and Canadian heroism. This could be viewed as a detriment in terms of funding. Efforts to find financing from outside of the country for a co-production invariably resulted in recommendations to make the story less Canadian and more generic. But this is history – Canadian history and the victory of the Fighting 10th Battalion is an immutable fact. “Canadian films tend to be about relationships, about emotions, about our psyche, but not necessarily about our history,” explained Fichman. “Other countries, particularly

America, have exported stories of their military legacy. *Gallipoli*, the Australian film shot in the early 80s, was about a battle similar to Passchendaele in which they shone. Our intention was to make a film that would show our own people, and the people around the world, what we, as Canadians, are all about.”

Thus began the second battle of *Passchendaele* - to raise a very significant budget from inside the country. “We did it with tireless work from a number of different people, and ultimately it has been tremendously gratifying. The funding on this project is the most unusual and the most unrepeatable structure that I’ve ever been involved with,” continued Fichman. “We found public money, private investment, corporate sponsorship and private donations plus a grant from Ralph Klein, the then Premier of Alberta which came from the Alberta Centennial Legacy Fund that brought in a quarter of our financing.”

The multi-layered job of writing, producing, directing and starring in *Passchendaele* is something Gross has often been asked about. “Producing is an essential part of making any film in Canada, but as we moved closer to principal photography, Niv, Frank and Thom Pretak (Line Producer) stepped in to handle the burden of that work. Directing while acting was made possible with Francis Damberger, the Alberta Co-Producer along with Director of Photography Greg Middleton who worked with Gross at the monitor.

“Paul and I go back a long way,” said Damberger. “We met in acting school. The first time I heard about *Passchendaele* was ten years ago during one of our ‘porch sits’ where we’d sit on the front porch at his place in the Badlands. When the film became more of a reality three years ago, Paul asked me if I would help co-produce on the creative side. His grandfather was in WWI and my father served in WWII and came home with shrapnel in him, so I saw the value of bringing this part of history to light for Canadians. The Great War really made us a nation to be reckoned with and we have never celebrated in film the men who fought in it.”

The Story - Paul Gross' *Passchendaele*

As much as *Passchendaele* is a story about the war, it is also a romance. The central character, Michael Dunne is named after Gross' grandfather. "This is not really my grandfather's life, but his spirit is in this," explained Gross. "Two-thirds of the movie is the home front in Calgary and one-third is the actual battle of Passchendaele. The romance was invented, but the rest was taken from diary accounts of soldiers."

Gross' character, Sergeant Dunne, a decorated, but wounded hero suffering from neurasthenia (a much-debated diagnosis of exhaustion of the central nervous system, first made popular in 1869), is sent home to Calgary after extended time at the front. Eventually he takes up work in the 10th Battalion Recruiting Office, run by the vainglorious British officer Randolph Dobson-Hughes (Jim Mezon) who holds the sergeant, and every other man who is not fighting, in contempt as cowards. No matter what Dunne does, but particularly his relationship with Sarah Mann, further provokes Dobson-Hughes' disdain.

The romance between Dunne and Sarah Mann and between David Mann and Cassie Walker underscores the calamities of the war, both on the front lines and on the home front. Sarah and David, played respectively by Caroline Dhavernas and Joe Dinicol, are of German-Canadian decent. Their father answered the call to fight, but instead of wearing the Canadian uniform, he fought for his native country, Germany, dying in battle. His children, now orphaned, had to care for each other, and as the war dragged on, German-Canadians were increasingly viewed with suspicion. Sarah is dismissed from her work in the hospital; David, because of his asthma, is unable to fight for Canada and his family honour, and their home is vandalized.

"The whole cast is fantastic," said Gross. "I have never had an experience like this where everyone comes on set, we do our scenes and I think, "Well, that was perfect." Joe Dinicol is startlingly genuine and Meredith Bailey is beautifully sassy and smart. And Caroline Dhavernas is a wonder. She is simply and completely a beautiful actress – exceptionally generous and incapable of dishonesty. Her Sarah is everything I had hoped for and more – she is the emotional heartbeat of the story."

"The core of the movie is summarized in the letter Dunne writes to Sarah," professed Caroline Dhavernas. "He says, 'Kings may fall and countries may crumble, but people will go on.' When we first see Sarah, she's a shell shock ward nurse in Calgary, where she meets Dunne for the first time. Right away, you see she is damaged. She's been through a lot, forced early on in her life to be a responsible woman given the loss of her mother. So her family unit is small and becomes even smaller when her father is killed at Vimy. So it's just her and her brother. Every day people let them know they are not 100% Canadian. Her life is all about sacrifice, and she's emotionally drained. When she meets Dunne, she can't let herself feel tenderness. But on a deeper level, she can relate to Dunne because she senses that he is just as wounded as she is. Slowly, she lets go, but makes him promise that he will not die. He does make that promise."

Dhavernas, an accomplished actress who began working at the age of twelve, had never previously encountered a lead actor who was also the director, writer and producer. “I was wondering how that would work! Paul and I have gotten along so well. There is something about him that makes my work easy. He’s a wonderful actor, so when you are around someone that talented, you become a better actor. His writing is beautiful and the casting for this film is great. My character is a fighter, and I was inspired by her on a personal level.”

The role of David Mann is a complex and determining force in the story. As the young brother of Sarah Mann, he endures the taunts of the community directed at his German heritage; furthermore, his asthma prevents him from proving his loyalty to Canada by enlisting. Wishing to marry his sweetheart, young Cassie Walker, his efforts are frustrated by her father, Dr. Walker (David Ley), a strident patriot who is sympathetic to Dobson-Hughes’ rhetoric. Deceptively, Dr. Walker agrees to the engagement, setting David on a terrible course to enlist under false pretenses. Sarah mistakenly believes it is Dunne who had facilitated this, not realizing until too late it is subterfuge instigated by Dr. Walker. Cassie, as well, eventually comes to understand that her father has effectively signed David’s death warrant. Dunne, ultimately, follows David to the front lines to protect him.

“David has been shamed by his father,” observed Dinicol. “He’s been put in a position where he is being ridiculed by the townspeople, and he can’t do anything about it. He’s helpless, frustrated and, at his wit’s end, he’s willing to do anything to feel like a man, to prove himself.”

“Paul is a great actor’s director,” continues Dinicol. “He knows what an actor needs and what he tells you is very direct, very easy to follow and always makes sense.”

Newcomer Meredith Bailey recently graduated with a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Alberta (where she was taught by Francis Damberger (*Passchendaele* Co-Producer) and David Ley - who plays her character’s father, Dr. Walker). Bailey discovered an extraordinary resource when researching her role as the love-struck Cassie Walker – letters to her great-grandmother from a lover who fought and died in WWI. “I chose not to read too much about the reality of the battle,” said Bailey. “And the letters, you’d think they’d be more romantic, but with the exception of the sign offs, they were really just practical.”

Cassie, the daughter of a wealthy, established Calgary physician, lives a world apart from the family of her *inamorato*, David Mann. “It is so exciting to finally have our own Canadian story and such a beautiful story too! This young love can’t be stopped,” she said. “It’s fascinating, being from the 21st century, because I have never experienced what Cassie goes through. She has no inkling of the brutality of war and suffers a sweeping loss of innocence as she begins to realize what it means for David to go off to fight - and why her father insisted that, even with his asthma, David enlist. What starts off with great

pride and romance about the idea that her fiancé is now a soldier, suddenly changes when she understands that he may well die and that she is responsible for sending him there.”

The Crucified Soldier - The Enduring Myth of the First World War

One of the myths which came out of World War One is that of the crucified Canadian soldier. Rumours started circulating after the second Battle of Ypres in 1915 that German soldiers impaled a Canadian sergeant against a barn door with bayonets in St. Julian, Belgium.

“In 1918, at the request of the Germans, there was an investigation into these allegations which was unable to find any evidence that it ever happened,” noted Gross who did incorporate a version of the myth into his script. “In 2004, The History Channel ran a story, naming Sgt. Harry Band of the 48th Highlanders of Canada as the victim, which kept the story alive. I don’t think it happened, but when you go through the photographic records you can see what artillery did to the human frame, throwing people into the weirdest positions. Yet, the soldiers believed it. When I stumbled across that story, I saw it as an extraordinary symbol of self-sacrifice which was at the centre of what these men went through and what they did. And it was that courage and love that counterbalances the implacable brutality.”

Complementing the key cast, which also included actors Gil Bellows as Royster, Michael Greyeyes as Highway, Jim Mezon as Dobson-Hughes and Brigadier-General Greg Gillespie, Deputy Commander, Land Forces Western Area in Edmonton as General Currie, were soldiers from the Canadian Forces who played background performers. So enthusiastic were these soldiers that they camped out on set at the T’suu Tina Reserve, in spite of the sub-zero temperatures.

The Battlefield – “The most brutal shooting conditions I have ever encountered.”
--Paul Gross

“In the most personal way, I now understand more about my grandfather than I did previously and by extension, I understand more than I did about all of those men.” The completion of principal photography brought with it the realization that in reenacting history, particularly the battlefield scenes, lessons are learned that could not otherwise be taught. “I can’t for the life of me imagine what breed of man could survive in those conditions. It was cold. It was wet. The water was glacial; the weather was bitterly cold; and, the mud made it impossible to move around. Cast and crew were getting stuck all the time, and we had to dig them out, literally, with shovels. We were doing hand-to-hand combat with mud sucking us in up over our knees. We were whining even though we knew we were going to get warm, we had reasonably good food and no one was shooting at us.”

Filming took place entirely in the province of Alberta. This is where Gross grew up and also where the 10th Battalion (part of The Canadian Expeditionary Force which was eventually reorganized as The Calgary Highlanders), which took Hill 52 at Passchendaele, was based. The primary location for the sets was on the T’suu Tina Nation Reserve. “It’s the most extraordinary thing,” said Gross. “The T’suu Tina reserve, sitting right in the middle of Calgary, is 8,000 acres of wilderness. They have been very accommodating with the production (after wrap, the production team plowed down and reseeded the land). There was a sunrise ceremony where the project was blessed on the first day of filming on the reserve.”

The physical creation of the set began in the spring of 2007 with Gross and award-winning Production Designer Carol Spier - although she began her research of archival photography and film footage two years in advance. No dramatization was required. By all accounts, the battleground sets were so accurate that if photos from the original sites were held up against Spier’s work, it was impossible to tell the difference. “Carol thinks big, but it did come down in size, but only a bit,” said Gross.

The set covered 40 to 50 acres on the T’suu Tina Reserve, half of which was the battlefield. It was an arduous process that required bringing in approximately 1000 dead trees and digging craters. World War One marked the end of trench warfare, but in the village of Passchendaele, Belgium, which sits largely below sea level, the water table was controlled by canals which had been destroyed by the excessive shelling which preceded the battle in an effort to weaken the German defenses. “By August 1917, there weren’t many trenches left on the Canadian side because they had all become water-filled craters,” observed Spier. The narrow, wooden duckboards (the method used by soldiers to walk over the muddy terrain) were all made for the film, according to historical specs provided by historian Norman Leach, slotting together so one would hold the next one down.

Proportionally, the distance of No Man's Land, the space between the Canadians and the Germans, was shortened from 100 to 75 yards and the incline of the hill was only marginally steeper than it was in actuality. "We used many photographs from Australian war-photographer, Frank Hurley," noted Spier. "Once the set was properly dressed with corpses, barbed wire and 3000 sandbags, 22 truckloads of water were brought in daily for the rain towers which soaked the area. While Alberta has staggeringly beautiful landscape, it is also the one province in the country with the most days (312) of sunshine per year." The final stage before filming was a controlled burn of an additional 150 acres around the set so wherever the camera turned, all that could be seen was black ground.

The second major build was the ruined French village and church used in the opening battle scene. Spier researched destroyed villages spanning from WWI all the way through to current photography in Afghanistan because, as she found "It doesn't really matter what country they are in, these bombs do the same kind of damage to stonework and woodwork. Only the architectural details were based on French buildings of the WWI period. The design of the church itself was taken from photographs of intact and ruined churches and cathedrals throughout Europe." The building process was to start with the complete building and then systematically destroy it, but the initial set was a series of cones and cardboard boxes laid out in the parking area in front of the Calgary production office with Gross running about pretending he had a gun in his hands so Spier could map out how far in each direction the camera would be moving.

The Alberta town of Fort Macleod stood in for Calgary which was a thriving city in 1917. Most of the other sets were built on the reserve. One additional note of authenticity is that the Canadian flag in the field dressing station where the character of Sarah Mann works was found at Crown Surplus in Calgary which has an extensive collection of war memorabilia. Spier was very pleased to discover that the flag had been hanging in an actual field dressing station in Passchendaele.

One of the many extraordinary aspects of production design was the need for rats. "During the real battle there were rats everywhere," said Gross. "We had to have them, but I'd forgotten that Alberta is the world's largest rat-free land mass, with provincial borders guarded by the rat patrol to keep them out. Using gophers wasn't an option. The solution was to get one rat from the university. It arrived with three people in attendance and a special fence around so the rat couldn't escape." As if that was not preposterous enough, the rat was white - so it had to be dyed brown.

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"I think Paul truly inspires people," notes Niv Fichman. "He has a passion and conviction about his country that infects others. The spirit on the set of *Passchendaele* is something never seen before; everyone was there for Paul. On other sets people are there, supporting the director on an artistic level, but for this, it is deeper. It's about a sense of self and nation, and that is very rare. This film has been done in a very pure way. Every dollar spent is spent in Canada, on Canada, by Canadians, for Canadians. There's no straying

from that, and people sense that energy and they follow him. He's a leader, a true, pure leader."

ABOUT THE CAST

CAROLINE DHAVERNAS (Sarah Mann) It's at age 12 that Caroline Dhavernas makes her television debut in the daily series *Marilyn*. Since then, she has accumulated lead roles in most of Quebec's successful series, such as *Zap*, *Jasmine*, *Urgence I and II*, *Lobby* and *Le Pollock*. But it is in *Tag I and II*, in which she plays the unforgettable role of Stephanie, that her French Canadian public understand how the child-actress is now a woman of great talent.

Caroline Dhavernas is also very present on the movie scene. Her first feature film, *Comme un voleur*, is followed by *L'île de sable*, *The Baroness and the Pig*, *Heart; The Marilyn Bell Story*, *Edge of Madness*, *Out Cold*, *Nez Rouge* and *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*, by English director Peter Greenaway, to name only a few. She recently held leads in *These Girls* and *Niagara Motel*, which released in 2005, as well as in *Comme tout le monde*, with French actor Thierry Lhermitte. She also recently shot *Hollywoodland*, playing opposite Adrien Brody, *La Belle Bête*, with Carole Laure and Marc-André Grondin (C.R.A.Z.Y.), *Breach*, playing opposite Ryan Phillippe and Chris Cooper and most recently, *Surviving My Mother*, directed by Émile Gaudreault, and *Cry of the Owl*, opposite Julia Stiles and Paddy Considine.

The actress made an impression on the American public, mainly with her critically acclaimed portrayal of Jaye in the FOX network series *Wonderfalls*, which was bought by more than twenty countries around the globe. Prior to that, she also appeared in the American series *Law and Order*.

Caroline Dhavernas was nominated for two Gémeaux awards (Quebec's television awards), one for Best Interpretation in a Youth Series for *Zap III* and the second for Best Supporting Role in *Tag*. She was also nominated for a Genie Award last year for best supporting actress in *Niagara Motel*.

JOE DINICOL (David Mann) Joe began acting at the age of nine at the Stratford Festival of Canada where he spent five seasons. While there, Joe performed in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Richard III*. After leaving in 1998, he began working in film and television. So far he has appeared in numerous films and television shows that include George Bloomfield's film adaptation of Mordecai Richler's children's book: *Bottom Feeder*, *The Marsh*, *Kart Racer*, *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* and Sophia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides*. More recently Joe spent two years as one of the regular cast members on Global TV's *Train 48* – a show that was largely improvised. He has recently worked with director Allan Moyle on *Weirdsville* and George A. Romero on *Diary of the Dead*.

JIM MEZON (Randolph Dobson-Hughes) This Dora Award-winning actor is a graduate of the Vancouver Playhouse Acting School and spent 23 seasons working at the Shaw Festival in Niagara on the Lake in over 40 productions as an actor and director. Additionally, he has also worked at the Stratford Festival, Neptune Theatre in Halifax,

Centaur Theatre in Montreal, Tarragon Theatre, Factory Theatre, Canadian Stage Company, all in Toronto, Theatre Calgary, Manitoba Theatre Centre, Chicago Shakespeare in Chicago and the New Victory Theatre in New York City. Currently teaching at the University of Northern Colorado, Mezon will be directing at the National Theatre School in Montreal in 2008 as well as appearing and directing for the Pittsburgh Irish Classical Theatre. On television, he has been seen in “The Best Years,” “Road to Avonlea,” and “Adderly.”

MEREDITH BAILEY (Cassie Walker) Newcomer Meredith Bailey graduated from the University of Alberta in 2007 with a Bachelor Of Fine Arts in Acting. At the U of A, she was the recipient of the Jason Lang Scholarship. She holds a Theatre Arts Diploma from Mount Royal College, attained the Dean’s list and the Dean’s Wall of Honour. *Passchendaele* marks Meredith’s feature film debut. On television, she can be seen in the series “Heartland.”

MICHAEL GREYEVES (Highway) Michael Greyeyes is an actor, writer, producer, and choreographer. He is a member of the Muskeg Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Mr. Greyeyes began his professional career as a classical ballet dancer with The National Ballet of Canada and with the company of Eliot Feld in New York City. In 1993, Mr. Greyeyes began to choreograph and direct his own theatre work, which has appeared in festivals in Canada and Europe. As an actor he was worked on stage and extensively in film and television for the last 14 years. Recent credits include *Passchendaele*, Terence Malick’s *The New World*, *Skinwalkers* for PBS Mystery!, *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*, *Numb3rs*, *Skipped Parts*, *Smoke Signals* for Miramax and the ABC mini-series *Dreamkeeper*.

Professor Greyeyes received his M.F.A in Acting from Kent State University, where he taught as an instructor and first began his on-going research into post-colonialism and the staging of ethnicity in both film and dance. He has presented papers on “Notions of Indian-ness” at the PCA/ACA conference in 2007 and was an invited keynote speaker at Wilfred Laurier University’s Indigenous Film and Media conference that same year.

Mr. Greyeyes has continued to create theatre work, alongside his film and television credits. This past year he was invited to create new dance works for the Dusk Dances festival in Toronto and for Nozhem: First Peoples Performance Space and Trent University’s Indigenous Studies Program. The theatre work developed for Trent University was a duet, co-choreographed by Santee Smith, which will tour across Canada in 2008 and is an invited dance work for the 2008 Canada Dance Festival held bi-annually in Ottawa, Ontario.

Mr. Greyeyes next wrote and performed in a short dance film entitled *Triptych* for BRAVO!, directed by Byron McKim in November 2007, which he also co-produced and choreographed. Mr. Greyeyes will next direct a new opera work, entitled “The Journey” for Soundstreams Canada, with music by Melissa Hui, and libretto by Tomson Highway.

In 2009, he will appear in Ric Burn's new documentary/ live action film for PBS, entitled "We Shall Remain: Tecumseh" in the title role.

GIL BELLOWS (Royster) Most recently, Bellows has completed work on "Toronto Stories" – a collaborative project by Sook-Yin Lee, David Sutherland, David Weaver, and Aaron Woodley as well as Paul Gross and Niv Fichman's Canadian War-time Drama "Passchendaele". Previous to those, he worked on Dimension Films' "The Promotion" starring opposite Seann William Scott and John C. Reilly, written and directed by Steve Conrad, and also starred in Aria Films' "Kill Kill Faster Faster." In 2005, Bellows was seen in Paramount Pictures "The Weatherman" opposite Nicolas Cage. That year he also starred in The Channel 4 ten-part miniseries "Terminal City" for which he was nominated for a Gemini Award.

Bellows gained attention among filmgoers and critics for his portrayal of an inmate with a penchant for knowledge in the critically lauded "Shawshank Redemption," opposite Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman. Shortly after, Bellows starred opposite Renee Zellweger in "Love and a .45" and with Sarah Jessica Parker in "Miami Rhapsody." His additional film credits include "The Substance of Fire," "Richard III," directed by Al Pacino, "The Assistant" with Joan Plowright and Armin Mueller-Stahl, "Dinner at Fred's" with Parker Posey, "Judas Kiss" with Emma Thompson and Alan Rickman, "Chasing Sleep" opposite Jeff Daniels and "Beautiful Joe" opposite Sharon Stone.

He is widely recognized for creating the role of 'Billy Alan Thomas' in the Emmy and Golden Globe Award winning FOX series "Ally McBeal."

On stage, Bellows appeared in Manhattan Class Company's production of "A Snake in the Vein" in the Playwrights Horizon production of "Flaubert's Latest" and UBU Repertory's "Best of Schools." He is a founding member of the Seraphim Theater Company in New York for whom he starred in "True West," "Road," and "The User's Waltz." He was also a member of the Act One Repertory Company of the prestigious Williamstown Theater Festival in Massachusetts.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

PAUL GROSS (Producer, Director, Screenwriter and “Michael Dunne”)

Known foremost as an actor, Canadian Paul Gross is also a writer, producer and director. His portrayal of Constable Benton Fraser on *Due South*, a drama series he co-wrote and executive produced, won international acclaim. His directorial debut, *Men with Brooms*, broke Canadian box office records. Paul was the recipient of a Golden Nymph Award for Best Lead Actor at the Monte Carlo Television Festival for his role in *H2O*, a Whizbang mini-series that he also co-wrote and executive produced. For his portrayal of Geoffrey Tenant in the critically acclaimed series *Slings & Arrows* Paul recently picked up his fourth Gemini Award and is currently nominated for a fifth. He portrayed Romeo and garnered a Dora Award and a career highlight was playing Hamlet to record-breaking audiences at the Stratford Festival in 2000. Paul served as Playwright-in-residence at Stratford and the National Arts Centre and has won numerous playwriting and screenwriting awards.

NIV FICHMAN (Producer) Niv Fichman has more than 25 years experience and some 200 documentaries, television series and feature films to his name. Currently working with Fernando Meirelles on an adaptation by Don McKellar of *Blindness*, the best-selling novel by José Saramago, Niv has previously produced directors such as Francois Girard, Olivier Assayas, Guy Maddin, Don McKellar, Peter Mettler, David Wellington, Peter Wellington, Kevin McMahon, Marc Evans, as well as his partners at Rhombus, Larry Weinstein and Barbara Willis-Sweete. Feature films include *The Red Violin*, *Thirty-Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, *Last Night*, *Saddest Music in the World*, *Clean*, *Snowcake*, and *Silk*. Selected television projects include “Slings & Arrows,” “Yo-Yo Ma: Inspired By Bach,” “September Songs,” and “Le Dortoir.” Awards include an Oscar for *The Red Violin*, seven Emmys and numerous Genies, Geminis, Golden Pragues as well as a Golden Rose of Montreux and a Prix Italia.

FRANK SIRACUSA (Co-Producer) As a producer, Frank Siracusa has amassed an impressive list of credits, including the television pilot *The Others*, where he worked under DreamWorks and Steven Spielberg. He has produced numerous television movies including *The Triangle* with Luke Perry and Dan Cortese, *Sanctuary* with Melissa Gilbert, *Santa Who?* with Leslie Nielsen, *One True Love* with David Hasselhoff, *On Hostile Ground* with John Corbett, *Common Ground* with Ed Asner, *Love Songs*, written by Nobel Prize winning playwright Charles Fuller, *Murder Most Likely*, which was nominated for a Gemini Award for Best Dramatic Program and *Summer’s End*, which won Best Cable Movie at both the Chicago International Children’s Film Festival and the Young Artist Awards. Siracusa also received a Daytime Emmy Award on behalf of *Summer’s End* for Outstanding Children’s Special.

In 1999, Siracusa partnered up with *Due South* Producer Paul Gross to form Whizbang Films. In 2001 Frank was Producer on *Men with Brooms*, a feature film written and directed by Paul Gross that was released in March 2002 and garnered the highest box office for an English speaking Canadian film of the last twenty years.

In 2002 Siracusa produced the critically acclaimed television movie *The Sins of the Father*”, starring Tom Sizemore and Ving Rhames as well as *The One* for ABC and *A Christmas Visitor* for the Hallmark Channel. In 2003 he produced the Series *Platinum* for CBS, UPN, American Zoetrope and Greenblatt Janollari Studios and was also Supervising Producer for the series *This is Wonderland*, currently airing on CBC. Siracusa Executive Produced *H2O*, a mini-series for CBC starring Paul Gross and Leslie Hope. He is recently completed *Martha: Behind Bars* for CBS and *Tilt* and *Codebreakers* for ESPN and Executively Produced the sequel to *H2O*, *The Trojan Horse*. Currently Frank is Executive Producing *ZOS: Zone of Separation*, *The Good Witch*, and *Bridal Fever*.

FRANCIS DAMBERGER (Co-Producer, Associate Director, 2nd Unit Director)

Francis Damberger is an award winning filmmaker who hangs his hat on a ranch in Tofield, Alberta, where he is the president of The Damberger Film and Cattle Co. Francis is a graduate of the BFA Acting program at the University of Alberta. He has worked as an actor in film, TV and stage. In 1985, Francis turned his talents to film making. His first film “On the Edge”, a drama about teenage suicide, won awards around the world. His first feature film *Solitaire*, swept the Alberta Film Awards and received four Genie nominations and a Genie award for Best Supporting Actor. Francis was nominated for Best Original Screenplay. *Solitaire* was also invited to several film festivals, including the prestigious Cannes TV Festival. Francis’ second feature film *Road to Saddle River* was well received and the Toronto Star called it “perhaps the best Canadian film of the year!” Among his many other credits, Francis has directed episodes of “Due South”, “Jake and the Kid”, “Honey I Shrank the Kids”, “So Weird”, “Mentors,” “AD. 2030,” and “Caitlin’s Way.” He also directed the TV movie “Trial By Fire”, a “North of 60” mystery. Francis used the beautiful South Saskatchewan River valley as the backdrop for his third feature film *Heart of the Sun*. The film has earned much critical praise and several awards. Marc Horton, Edmonton Journal, called the film “an ugly story, told with skill and beauty”..

GREG MIDDLETON (Director of Cinematography) Greg Middleton previously collaborated with director Jeremy Podeswa on *Fugitive Pieces*, and *The Five Senses*, a Director’s Fortnight Selection at the 1999 Cannes International Film Festival. He also worked with Podeswa on the short films *Touch* and *The Susan Smith Tapes*. Additional film credits include *Slither*, *Cake*, *Going the Distance*, *Falling Angels*, *Between Strangers*, *After the Storm*, *Better Than Chocolate* and *Kissed* for which he received the first of five Genie nominations for Achievement in Cinematography. Middleton received Leo Awards for Best Cinematography for the feature films *Suspicious River* and *Rupert’s Land* and for the short film drama *White Out*. Middleton recently completed work on *Possession*, directed by Simon Sandquist and Joel Bergvall.

CAROL SPIER (Production Designer) is perhaps best known for her longtime association with director David Cronenberg. Her collaborations with Cronenberg includes *Eastern Promises*, *A History of Violence*, *eXistenz*, *Crash*, *M. Butterfly*, *Naked Lunch*,

Dead Ringers, The Fly, The Dead Zone, Videodrome, Scanners, The Brood and *Fast Company* as well as two television docudramas for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) including "Scales of Justice". She received Gene Awards (Canadian Oscars) for *both Naked Lunch and Dead Ringers* and Genie nominations for *The Brood, Videodrome, Scanners* and *eXistenz*.

Her numerous other feature film credits include *Silent Hill, The Man, The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Noel, Mimic, Joe's Apartment, The Santa Clause, Canadian Bacon, Consenting Adults, Where The Heart Is, Renegades, Sing, Search and Destroy, Running Brave* and *I Miss Your Hugs and Kisses*, which, in 1976, marked her first film as a production designer.

For television, Spier designed the PBS/CBC series "Anne of Green Gables," for which she won a Gemini Award (Canada's Emmy Award) for Best Art Direction, Showtime's "Gotham", for which she received a nomination for an ACE award for best Art Direction, the CBS movie-of-the-week "Escape From Iran:" and the PBS/American Playhouse production of "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank."

Spier is Canadian-born and studied Interior Design at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Architecture. She began her professional career as an interior designer

In Winnipeg, Manitoba. During this period she also worked as a set and costume designer with various theater groups, including the Manitoba Theater Center.

She began her motion picture career with *The Mourning Suit*, on which she served as set designer, set dresser, and property master. She then moved to Toronto, where she worked as an Assistant Art Director on several feature films, including *Equus* and *Why Shoot the Teacher*, before serving as Art Director on such films as Norman Jewison's *Agnes of God* and John Schlesinger's *The Believers*.

WENDY PARTRIDGE (Costume Designer) started off by dressing her dolls at the age of seven and has gone on to design for some of the most exciting films in the last several years including *Whiteout, Underworld* and *Underworld Evolution*, starring Kate Beckinsale, *Resurrecting the Champ*, starring Samuel L. Jackson and Josh Hartnett, *Silent Hill*, starring Radha Mitchell, *The Cave*, starring Cole Hauser, Marcel Iures and Lena Headey, *Fantastic Four*, starring Julian McMahon and Jessica Alba, *Hellboy*, for which she received a 2004 Best Costumes nomination for Best Costumes from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films, and *Blade II*, starring Wesley Snipes. Additional credits include *Texas Rangers, Snow Day, Come L'America*, for which received a 2001 Genie nomination for Best Costume Design, and *Loyalties*, for which she won a 1986 Genie Award for Best Costume Design. For television, Partridge has designed for "Broken Trail" with Robert Duvall and Greta Scacchi, "and "The Secret of the Nutcracker."

DAVID WHARNSBY (Editor) David is the editor of numerous award-winning films. He recently received a Genie for his work on Guy Maddin's *The Saddest Music in the*

World. David has collaborated with many of Canada's most important filmmakers. Some of his numerous credits include TIFF top ten films, *Away From Her*, directed by Sarah Polley, *I, Claudia*, by Chris Abraham and *The Uncles* by Jim Allodi. Ken Finkleman's Gemini and Emmy winning *The Newsroom* and *Foreign Objects*. Genie winning short *I Shout Love* by Sarah Polley. Atom Egoyan's Gemini winning *Sarabande*. Emmy nominated *The Four Seasons* and *Don Giovanni Unmasked* by Barbara Willis Sweete. David Weaver's *Siblings* and *Century Hotel*. Genie nominated *Three Stories* by Semi Chellas. David received a Gemini for his work on Jennifer Baichwal's documentary *The Holier it Gets*. He has also worked with Jennifer on the Gemini winning *The True Meaning of Pictures*, the Emmy winning *Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles*.