

THE LAST STATION

STARRING
HELEN MIRREN
CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER
PAUL GIAMATTI
ANNE-MARIE DUFF
KERRY CONDON
and
JAMES MCAVOY

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
MICHAEL HOFFMAN

PRODUCED BY
CHRIS CURLING
JENS MEURER
BONNIE ARNOLD

***Official Selection: 2009 Telluride Film Festival**

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SYNOPSIS

After almost fifty years of marriage, the Countess Sofya (Helen Mirren), Leo Tolstoy's (Christopher Plummer) devoted wife, passionate lover, muse and secretary—she's copied out *War and Peace* six times...by hand!—suddenly finds her entire world turned upside down. In the name of his newly created religion, the great Russian novelist has renounced his noble title, his property and even his family in favor of poverty, vegetarianism and even celibacy. After she's born him thirteen children!

When Sofya then discovers that Tolstoy's trusted disciple, Chertkov (Paul Giamatti)—whom she despises—may have secretly convinced her husband to sign a new will, leaving the rights to his iconic novels to the Russian people rather than his very own family, she is consumed by righteous outrage. This is the last straw. Using every bit of cunning, every trick of seduction in her considerable arsenal, she fights fiercely for what she believes is rightfully hers. The more extreme her behavior becomes, however, the more easily Chertkov is able to persuade Tolstoy of the damage she will do to his glorious legacy.

Into this minefield wanders Tolstoy's worshipful new assistant, the young, gullible Valentin (James McAvoy). In no time, he becomes a pawn, first of the scheming Chertkov and then of the wounded, vengeful Sofya as each plots to undermine the other's gains. Complicating Valentin's life even further is the overwhelming passion he feels for the beautiful, spirited Masha (Kerry Condon), a free thinking adherent of Tolstoy's new religion whose unconventional attitudes about sex and love both compel and confuse him. Infatuated with Tolstoy's notions of ideal love, but mystified by the Tolstoys' rich and turbulent marriage, Valentin is ill equipped to deal with the complications of love in the real world.

A tale of two romances, one beginning, one near its end, *The Last Station* is a complex, funny, rich and emotional story about the difficulty of living with love and the impossibility of living without it.

PRODUCTION NOTES

FILMMAKERS

Written and directed by Michael Hoffman (*A Midsummer Night's Dream, One Fine Day, Soapdish, Restoration*), *The Last Station* recounts the drama of the final year in the life of the great Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy. It is a true story, both dramatic and humorous, that covers the themes of passion, love, family, greed, intrigue, conflict and revolution.

Produced by Chris Curling (Zephyr Films), Jens Meurer (Egoli Tossell Film) and Bonnie Arnold, in partnership with Andrei Konchalovsky, the movie focuses on two contrasting love stories - the extraordinary relationship between Tolstoy and his wife of 48 years, the immensely impassioned Sofya, and the burgeoning love between Valentin, Tolstoy's idealistic young private secretary, and Masha, a teacher equally committed to the writer's values.

At the same time, the film shows that Sofya is engaged in a ferocious battle for her husband's soul. She believes that Tolstoy's wealth should be left to the family. She is fighting tooth and nail against Chertkov, the zealous keeper of the Tolstoyan flame, who is adamant that the writers' fortune should be bequeathed to the Russian people. All these elements come together in a gripping climax as Tolstoy nears the end of his life at a remote little railway station in the Russian countryside.

Filmed at stunning locations in the beautiful German regions of Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg, Thuringia and Leipzig, the movie features an enormously accomplished cast led by Christopher Plummer (*The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*) as Tolstoy, Academy Award winner Helen Mirren (*The Queen*) as Sofya, James McAvoy (*Atonement*) as Tolstoy's private secretary Valentin, Academy Award nominee Paul Giamatti (*Sideways*) as the committed Tolstoyan Chertkov, Anne-Marie Duff (*The Magdalene Sisters*) as the writer's loyal daughter Sasha, and Kerry Condon (*Rome*) as Valentin's beloved Masha.

The film is adapted from the best-selling novel by Jay Parini, who drew on the diary entries of Tolstoy's closest relatives and friends. Descendants of Tolstoy have acted as advisers throughout the production.

Michael Hoffman begins by saying that, "*The Last Station* gives us a very unusual opportunity to go beyond the standard biopic, in order to create a vivid, moving picture about the difficulty of living with love and the impossibility of living without it. It's not a film about Tolstoy. It's a film about the challenges of love."

The director continues, "it's a great story about relationships and a wonderful juxtaposition of old love and new love. The core of the movie is this great battle between idealism and reality. All of us start life with an ideal of what love should be, which contrasts sharply with what it turns out to be like in reality. That contrast is compelling.

"We follow Valentin's progression in *The Last Station* from a boy who is infatuated with the ideal of fleshless, spiritual love to a man who gradually realizes that all we can hope for is the messiness of love in the real world."

That dichotomy is reflected in Tolstoy himself, Michael muses. "He is seen as a living saint and a prophet of perfect love. Yet at the same time, he endures the most tricky marriage and in his private life is haunted by the difficulty of love as it manifests itself in the world. He is

revered as the ultimate authority on love, but he can't sort it out in his own living room and bedroom. That conflict is fascinating."

Producer Chris Curling takes up the theme. "*The Last Station* is the story of two love affairs. Tolstoy and Sofya are an old couple who have obviously had the most incredible life together. They have been working partners and had thirteen children together. And yet they've got to a stage where their politics are so different that despite the magnetic attraction between them, they can't live with each other.

"It's intensely moving to watch their love through the eyes of Valentin, who is himself falling in love for the first time and realizing there is more to life than idealism and politics. He comes to see that the only way you can make love work is by entering into it whole-heartedly. He is witnessing the perils of relationships played out by Tolstoy and Sofya, and through him we can feel their pain. It's about the often highly emotional waxing and waning of love."

Executive Producer Phil Robertson adds that, "Sofya and Tolstoy love and hate each other at the same time. It's a fantastically passionate affair as well as a marriage. It's amazing that nothing can break their deep bond. They throw crockery and scream at each other, and yet they can't exist without each other. Russian people are incredibly passionate. They cry, argue, laugh and sing with this astounding ardor."

In the view of Jens Meurer, "*The Last Station* tells us about our inability to live with or without love. It shows what a hard, bittersweet experience love can be."

Hoffman beams "we feel so privileged to have assembled this magnificent cast. Christopher (Plummer), for instance, brings a great warmth and sophistication to the role of Tolstoy. He has a tremendous sense of poetry and a lovely sense of humor. But above all, he possesses a terrific energy."

Chris Curling concurs. "His performance is wonderful. He has great presence on screen, which is ideal because Tolstoy dominated the room. He also has this wonderful twinkle in his eye and a lovely sense of humor. But the most incredible thing is that when you're watching *The Last Station*, you forget it's Christopher Plummer. As an actor, he never draws attention to himself – he simply inhales the character. He's a real film actor - he does it all with the most subtle looks. It's all in his face. He just draws you in."

Jens admits that beforehand casting the role of Tolstoy seemed like, "a scary prospect. We thought, 'who can play this larger than life central character?' But Christopher is just so right for the role – he combines tremendous gravitas with a wonderful lightness. He doesn't declare, 'this is a great thespian playing a great writer'. He simply makes it very real. It is never an imitation or a parody."

Hoffman on Helen Mirren: "she's magnetic in this role – she takes no prisoners as Sofya! She has such subtlety as an actress that audiences are immediately drawn to her integrity. She's moving and funny, but she's also really brave. She never shirks anything. That inspires everyone else. If she isn't backing off, then no one else will, either. That's a great quality."

Curling adds "There is so much for Helen to get her teeth into. Her character is so proactive – she's raging or seductive, teasing or play-acting, hurling plates or trying to drown herself. There is so much for her to work with. We're very lucky to have Helen – she's perfect for this part. She's born to play it. She simply inhabits the role and you can't take your eyes off her."

"James McAvoy offers many remarkable qualities as Valentin," Michael observes. "He has great purity, and an audience willingly give themselves over to him as an Everyman. In *The*

Last King of Scotland, they were quite happy to be led by him, and it's the same here. Audiences completely trust him.

Curling adds "We see the action through Valentin's eyes – he provides the emotional centre of the film. The part is so pivotal."

According to the director, "Paul Giamatti is so charismatic. He can play a kind of villain, and yet you still love him! He is also able to find comedy in the midst of the most serious situations."

The principal reason these first-rate actors were attracted to *The Last Station* was the excellence of Michael's screenplay. Curling praises the screenplay: "The most important thing Mike did was place Valentin at the centre of the movie. That liberated him as a writer to create a compelling human drama rather than a straight biopic. The film has to hook the 99 per cent of the audience who haven't read *Anna Karenina* or *War and Peace* and won't know who on earth Tolstoy is."

Author Jay Parini is very pleased with Michael's adaptation of his novel. He emphasises that, "Mike has captured the inherent drama of the story. Drama is all about conflict, and the last year of Tolstoy's life was one conflict after another. You can't beat the conflict between Sofya and Chertkov. They are like night and day, and their battle mirrors Tolstoy's own psychological split. What is great is that Mike's script deeply understands that *The Last Station* is all about psychological strife and the endless fight of the spiritual versus the material."

Michael adds "Before writing the screenplay, I went back and re-read all of Chekhov's major plays. I'm very grateful to Chekhov because he helped me understand the tone. I wanted to create a story where tragedy and comedy lie really close to each other."

Curling on Hoffman as a director: "He used to act himself, and his greatest skill lies in working with actors and finding a scene with them every day. He prioritises the acting above all else and gets great performances out of his cast."

Jens stresses that the director has exactly the right sensibilities for this project. "Mike is the most European American director I've ever come across. He brings great understanding, passion and respect for what we have here in Europe. He has brought together an international cast and crew to create a film that crosses all borders."

The Last Station has many riveting things to say about politics. Phil Robertson reckons that, "one of the great themes of the film is the contradiction of a blue-blooded count who wrote this great socialist manifesto. The two don't necessarily go hand in hand, and that was Tolstoy's epic struggle. It makes for terrific drama."

The film is equally strong on the theme of sexual politics. Bonnie Arnold asserts that the ideas in *The Last Station* are very modern. "In public, Tolstoy was revered. He was the first celebrity, the 'Brangelina' of his day, and yet one on one, Tolstoy and Sofya were absolute equals. She never let his fame and his career get in the way of their relationship. She said, 'you're not only a writer – you're a husband and father, too.' At that time, that was darn bold of her. Like Hillary Clinton or Margaret Thatcher, Sofya could certainly hold her own! She was a pretty amazing woman, and I really admire her for that."

Jens adds that, "Tolstoy was such a fascinating man. He was such a mass of contradictions. He was the author of *Anna Karenina*, the greatest love story ever written. Yet later in life he preached celibacy, but could never stick to it."

Dramatists have long been drawn to the lives of great artists. Hoffman explains why. “The life of an artist provides a constant tension between the claims of work and the claims of love. There is always a mistress – whether it’s work or a woman – and there is always conflict. That’s why artists’ lives always lend themselves so well to drama.”

The producers were delighted by the experience of shooting in Germany. The German countryside also possessed exactly the right Middle European sense of authenticity.

PRODUCTION BACKGROUND

HELEN MIRREN (Sofya Tolstoy)

Helen Mirren plays the part of Sofya, the impassioned wife of the magisterial writer, Leo Tolstoy (Christopher Plummer). She enjoys a passionate, highly charged relationship with the writer and is locked in a mighty struggle for his soul. Ranged against her is the most zealous of all the “Tolstoyans,” Chertkov (Paul Giamatti). He believes with all his heart that Tolstoy’s legacy should be bestowed upon the Russian people, while Sofya is absolutely resolved that her husband’s estate should pass to his family after his death. The most titanic fight for the writer’s inheritance unfolds.

Helen, who deservedly won the Best Actress Oscar for her regal performance in *The Queen*, begins by declaring that she immediately felt an affinity with her character in *The Last Station* because they share a Russian heritage. “It’s in my blood,” she smiles. “My great great grandmother was a Russian countess. That side of my family was Russian aristocracy and the other was English working-class. So I’m a good contradiction!”

Beyond that, the actress was drawn to Sofya because, “the moment I read it, I thought, ‘this is one of the great women’s roles in film. So often women’s roles could be described as ‘long-suffering’, but Sofya is the opposite of long-suffering! She doesn’t suffer anyone for any length of time. She is a wonderfully tempestuous and passionate person. She’s also very funny. It’s a fabulous role. Whatever scene she’s in, Sofya simply dominates. That’s very nice to play. She just comes in, hijacks a situation and takes it over with passion and charm.”

That passion manifests itself in the epic tug of war with Chertkov over Tolstoy’s bequest. Helen explains that, “Tolstoy and Sofya are coming to the end of their life and their 48-year-old marriage. They’re caught in a battle for what will happen to his inheritance – his copyright, his estate and his money. The present-day Tolstoy family are very grateful to Sofya because she fought very hard to keep the estate in the family – and to this day it is still there.

“She was fighting for her rights because she’d given her life to Tolstoy’s work. She copied *War and Peace* out six times – think of the work! She was very much involved in all his work, so the novels belonged to her, too. Nowadays in a similar situation where a couple get divorced and the wife has been supportive throughout the marriage, by law the husband has to give her half of what he owns because she’s helped him achieve that. It’s exactly the same with Sofya and Tolstoy. She is simply fighting for what she is owed.”

Helen, who also delivered marvellous performances in *State of Play*, *Inkheart*, *Prime Suspect*, *Elizabeth I*, *Calendar Girls*, *Gosford Park*, *Last Orders*, and *The Madness of King George*, continues that she was also magnetized by the grand passion between Sofya and Tolstoy that Michael Hoffman’s screenplay conjures up. “Michael has written a superb

screenplay and he's making a marvelous film. You don't often get to read wonderful scripts and this really is a wonderful script.

"The film is all about love – young love and old love. It shows the practicalities and the disasters that love can involve. I have a few favorite lines as Sofya. At one point, for example, Tolstoy says to her, 'why do you have to make it so difficult?', and she replies, 'why should it be easy? I'm the work of your life and you're the work of mine – that's what love is.' That's a great line."

The actress has adored her scenes with Plummer. "I've known Christopher for a long time – he was in a film called *Dolores Claiborne* that my husband [Taylor Hackford] directed. He's a marvelous actor. He's an actor in my tradition who's worked both on film and on stage. It's been terrific working with him."

Helen concludes by praising Germany, and especially the Saxony-Anhalt region where much of the film has been shot. "I've never spent a long period of time in Germany before, but it's great. We arrived in winter and watched this wonderful spring develop. It's very, very beautiful. Apparently I've invented the idea of 'Sexy Anhalt'. I like that. Anhalt is pretty sexy. It's gorgeous!"

CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER (Leo Tolstoy)

Christopher Plummer takes the central role of Leo Tolstoy in *The Last Station*. As the great Russian nears the end of his life, two factions fight over his legacy. His wife Sofya (Helen Mirren) is determined that his estate should be left to the family, while Chertkov (Paul Giamatti), Tolstoy's most ardent supporter, asserts that his wealth should be bequeathed to the people. As death approaches and Tolstoy makes his final resting place in a railway station, an almighty battle rages around the ailing writer.

The actor says that he was attracted by the immensely high quality of Michael Hoffman's script. "Mike does so cleverly is concentrate thoroughly on just one aspect of the great writer. He shows us the emotional canvas of Tolstoy's life by focusing on his marriage. That reveals so much to us about Tolstoy the man."

Plummer was delighted to be able to tackle a part of such rare complexity. "I'm thrilled to be playing this role," enthuses the actor. "I jumped at the chance. I have a history of playing real-life figures such as Rudyard Kipling and the Duke of Wellington, and I always love the challenge. I enjoy the research, and if they put enough make-up on, it does the work for you!"

What Christopher relished above all was bringing out Tolstoy's contradictory nature. "He's such a hypocrite," laughs the actor, who has starred in such memorable works as *The Insider*, *The Man Who Would Be King*, *The Battle of Britain*, *Waterloo*, *Aces High*, *Jesus of Nazareth*, *The Return of the Pink Panther*, and *A Beautiful Mind*. "He says he'll free the peasants, while living the life of an aristocrat! He says he will help the tsar liberate the serfs, and yet still sits down at the dinner-table attended by servants!"

"He also has a great affair that lasts throughout his entire marriage. He leads a double life. As an actor, one has to enjoy his naughty side. Tolstoy must have had a twinkle in the eye, so I try to give him as much humor as possible."

Christopher says that the writer also had many up to date attitudes that will strike a chord with a modern audience. "He's very much a contemporary character," the actor muses. "For instance, he treated marriage in a very modern way. He didn't employ the tradition of the

aristocratic boys' club who keep women down. Tolstoy revered women and was always guided by passion.

“Sofya is a very modern character, too. She helped Tolstoy no end with his work. She proof-read and copied out his novels. She did a massive amount for him. So at the end of the film, I think he's callous towards her when he says he wants to leave her nothing and give it all to the people. It appears that she will get a raw deal. You want to say to him, ‘wait a minute, she worked so hard to help you!’”

The actor was also drawn to the film by the prospect of co-starring with Helen Mirren. “A huge reason for me doing this movie was the opportunity to work with Helen,” he beams. “If it had been just another actress, I wouldn't have been as interested. But Helen is one of my favorite actresses – I've admired her tremendously for so long.

“Very few actresses have her range. She can do anything. She's one of the greatest actresses in the English language. She's charismatic, naughty, fun and sexy. She'll never stop being sexy, even when she's 90! She won't let you forget that. I'm crazy about her!”

The actor closes “Tolstoy is such an immense, global figure. I'd put him in the classic range of roles because he's larger than life. This has been one of my favorite professional experiences. How could I not love doing this?”

JAMES MCAVOY (Valentin Bulgakov)

James McAvoy plays Valentin, the idealistic young man who comes to work as Tolstoy's secretary. Chertkov, who is battling Tolstoy's wife Sofya over the writer's legacy, attempts to recruit the youngster as a spy for his cause, but Valentin is ultimately resistant to the idea. Chertkov takes revenge by expelling Masha from Tolstoy's estate, the beautiful young teacher with whom Valentin has fallen in love.

The actor, a rising star who is hugely in demand on both sides of the Atlantic, says that he was instantly taken by the character of Valentin. “He's a watcher, like parts I've played before, such as Dr Nicholas Garrigan in *The Last King of Scotland*. He's an innocent and a virgin, an idealistic academic in love with the idea of Tolstoy. Like students these days who are obsessed by bands, Valentin is a devoted fan of Tolstoy's. He represents the idea of being in love with an idea.

“It's about the danger of deifying leaders. Of course, that had immense resonance when the Russian Revolution happened seven years after the writer's death. Tolstoy wouldn't have stood for the Revolution, but you could say that his work paved the way for it. Valentin and Chertkov demonstrate the two, very different ways Tolstoy's work influenced people.”

The actor, who has starred in such successful movies as *Wanted*, *Atonement*, *The Last King of Scotland*, *Starter for Ten*, *Penelope* and *The Chronicles of Narnia: the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, continues that a bond soon grows between Valentin and Tolstoy. “The writer greatly appreciates frankness. He is fascinated by the eternal search for the truth. When he transcribed the Bible, he simplified the Gospels hoping to get to the heart of the matter more quickly. He sees that love of the truth reflected in Valentin. That's what brings them together.”

James, who comes from Glasgow in Scotland, goes on to explain why Valentin eventually becomes disillusioned with Tolstoy's ideas. “He falls out of love with the writer's ideas

because begins to realise that Tolstoy's life contradicts his teachings," reckons the actor, who is married to Anne-Marie Duff, who plays Sasha in this movie.

"He sees that there is great turmoil in his mentor's life and huge discord with his wife, and yet all Tolstoy's work is about the supremacy of love. Valentin finds it very hard to reconcile the two. The inconsistencies make it difficult for Valentin to follow this idealised image he had built up in his head."

The other main strand in Valentin's story is his tortuous love affair with Masha. "In many ways, the film is about the impossibility of love," muses James. "He's initially drawn to Masha for the same reason he's drawn to Tolstoy: the ability to cut through all the nonsense in life. Valentin and Masha share this great passion for Tolstoy's ideals and for each other. But all sorts of obstacles are put in the way of their love."

James emphasises how special his working relationship was with Michael Hoffman, the writer-director of *The Last Station*. "Mike and I first talked about this movie several years ago, even before I went to Uganda to shoot *The Last King of Scotland*. I remained attached to *The Last Station* for all these years because it was a great opportunity to act in such a well-written script."

James closes by underlining that Tolstoy makes a wonderful subject for a film. "He still strikes a chord because his work is so universal. It really speaks to people. Other artists may not last, but Tolstoy will. We'll still be reading Tolstoy in several centuries' time."

PAUL GIAMATTI (Vladimir Chertkov)

Paul Giamatti, the acclaimed actor, plays the role of Chertkov, the zealous disciple of Leo Tolstoy. Determined to keep the Tolstoyan flame alive at all costs, he engages in a ferocious battle of wills with Sofya for the writer's soul. He is desperate to persuade Tolstoy to sign a new will and leave his estate to the people.

Paul, who has delivered highly regarded performances in movies such as *Sideways*, *American Splendor* and *Saving Private Ryan*, begins by underlining that even before accepting the role, he was a huge fan of Jay Parini's source novel. "I'd always been fascinated by Tolstoy and had already read *The Last Station*. It's an absolutely gripping book."

When Paul then read Michael Hoffman's screen adaptation, the prospect of appearing in the movie proved irresistible. "Michael's take on the novel is brilliant. What he does so well is embrace the comedy inherent in this story."

Paul was also excited by the idea of playing such a compelling character as Chertkov, a man who is slavishly committed to the Tolstoyan cause. "He's something of a fanatic," observes the actor. "He's one of those incredibly dedicated guys who doesn't have a lot of imagination. He's a devoted disciple who becomes more doctrinaire than his leader. It's a strange phenomenon – some people who attach themselves to a cause end up wanting to be better than its leader."

The actor is careful, however, not to paint Chertkov in black and white. "I hope we avoid making him an out and out baddie. We try to explore what has made him who he is today. He's so obsessed, he doesn't think that he is manipulative. But of course he is, because he's so committed. His philosophy is 'by any means necessary'. In his eyes, he'll do whatever he has to in order to save humanity.

For all that, Paul adds, “there is a school of thought that Chertkov was very much a force for good. He certainly did some amazing things – for instance, he started a publishing company that made religious literature available to people for the first time in Russian. He also had a very interesting background which might explain what became of him. He was reportedly the illegitimate son of the Tsar and came from a very wealthy, aristocratic background.

“Chertkov’s conversion came because he thought it was wrong for people to have things too easy. He was gripped by self-loathing, a feeling that he was unworthy to be living a privileged life. When he met Tolstoy, he had a real Road to Damascus moment – as if struck by lightning, he had a complete epiphany. He immediately identified with Tolstoy and thought, ‘this is the way I must lead my life’.”

Chertkov’s zeal leads him into conflict with Valentin, the idealistic young student who works as Tolstoy’s secretary. “The way Chertkov treats Valentin is sick and twisted!” exclaims Giamatti. “He’s extraordinarily manipulative of the poor guy. He uses Valentin because he thinks he’s innocent, malleable, won’t question anything and will be a good tool. But he’s completely wrong. The problem is, Chertkov is a complete narcissist who only sees the world through his own prism.”

ANNE-MARIE DUFF (Sasha Tolstoy)

Anne-Marie Duff plays Sasha, Tolstoy’s daughter. She is absolutely devoted to her father and has an extremely difficult relationship with her mother. As the story unfolds, relations between Sasha and Sofya steadily deteriorate.

Anne-Marie, rightly hailed as one of the finest young actresses in the UK, says she was drawn to the project by Michael Hoffman’s absorbing screenplay. “It’s such a wonderful script. It’s very appealing to actors because it’s like a play. It reads like Chekhov or Gorky. It has an ensemble of people who are all fully-formed characters. They’re so well-rounded and believable. All the characters flutter like moths around the flame of Tolstoy and his wife. It’s wonderful to portray that. The film has these beautiful long scenes which are a joy to shoot.”

The actress, who has starred in such movies as *The Magdalene Sisters*, *Notes on a Scandal*, and *Is Anybody There?* continues that she was fascinated by the character of Sasha. “She’s so complex. She is completely besotted by her father and spends her whole life devoted to him. She loves his philosophy and is absorbed by his work. Even as an old woman later in life, she ran the Tolstoy Museum. She is so close to him - there is no one else in her life. He is her utter hero. But the downside is, she has no relationship at all with her mother.”

Sasha has furious rows with her mother. That could have created tension with the actress playing Sofya, but fortunately Anne-Marie and Helen Mirren are very old friends. “We knew each other of old,” the actress laughs. “We worked together on a two-hander in the theatre eight years ago and remain very close. That meant we could have fun in the scenes where Sasha and Sofya confront each other. Helen is so lovely, she’s not in the least bit precious. With her, I can always get away with murder!”

Anne-Marie, a hugely gifted television performer who gave a memorable performance as Elizabeth I in *The Virgin Queen*, found it just as pleasurable collaborating with Christopher Plummer, who takes the role of Tolstoy. “I was nervous beforehand because he’s a legend, but I needn’t have worried. Christopher is charming. I love it when you get the chance to listen to older actors talking about their careers. You wouldn’t believe the wealth of stories Christopher has. There is no acting hero he hasn’t worked with! It’s bliss – I could just sit there listening to him all afternoon.”

Anne-Marie, who has also starred in such TV productions as *Shameless*, *Charles II: The Power and the Passion*, *The Way We Live Now*, *The History of Mr Polly*, reckons Tolstoy is a terrific subject for a movie. “I relish his novels,” she beams. “I’d read them all before, and they’re simply brilliant. If you pick up another novelist afterwards, you feel you’ve been robbed. He’s a god-like figure in Russia, and that is one of the really interesting aspects this film explores.”

The actress, who is married to James McAvoy, the actor portraying Valentin in *The Last Station*, thinks audiences will be swept along by the film. “I hope people will be captivated by the crazy, complicated love affair between Tolstoy and his wife. There is an element of Burton and Taylor about them. We love going behind the scenes and finding out what goes on behind closed doors with people we consider untouchable – God knows, we’re such a nosy culture!”

KERRY CONDON (Masha)

Kerry Condon plays Masha, a beautiful young teacher. When the idealistic Valentin meets her on the Tolstoy estate, he is instantly smitten and forgets his vow of celibacy. But in order to punish Valentin for what he sees as his insubordination, the scheming Chertkov banishes Masha. It seems that the burning love between Masha and Valentin will be forever extinguished.

The actress, who has made her name playing Octavia of the Julii in the HBO/BBC series *Rome*, was delighted to be offered this role in *The Last Station*. She says that Masha immediately struck a chord with her.

“It’s very unusual to be given such a part,” asserts the actress, who hails from Tipperary in Ireland. “Masha is the love interest, and yet at the same time she is still a very feisty, strong independent. She’s not a typical love interest at all – and that really appealed.”

She goes on to outline Masha’s other characteristics. “She’s very sure of herself, confident and not easily led. She comes from a very wealthy family, but has rejected all that to follow Tolstoy. People from well-to-do backgrounds tend to have that innate confidence.

“She’s bohemian and drawn to Tolstoy’s idealism. She does not think things should be imposed on people by the Church. Rather, Masha believes that Tolstoy’s philosophy is a fair and kind way of doing things.”

The actress can see why there is such a strong attraction between Valentin and Masha. “Like her, he is in it for all the right reasons. He hasn’t been corrupted by it. He’s also very shy, and she likes that because for all her confidence, Masha is also very shy. Shy recognises that part of herself in him.”

Finally, the actress reflects on why we remain compelled by Tolstoy. Kerry ventures that, “he possessed this great idealism. He was never self-righteous. He never preached – he only suggested. His was a more peaceful way of thinking. He never felt he was above everyone else and he never said people would go to hell if they made a mistake. He espoused eternal, compassionate values. His ideas have stood the test of time and still hold true today. And that’s why he is such a fascinating subject for a film.”

JOHN SESSIONS (Dushan)

John Sessions plays Dushan, the doctor who lives on the Tolstoy estate and tends to the great writer as he begins to ail. In close proximity to the author, he becomes fervently committed to the Tolstoyan cause evangelically promulgated by Chertkov (Paul Giamatti).

John was offered the part in *The Last Station* without an audition and had no hesitation in accepting. "I was very excited to do a film about Tolstoy, who's one of my favourite authors," beams the Scot, one of the most erudite actors in the business. "I love playing in historical pieces such as *Tom Jones*, *Gormenghast* and *Boswell and Johnson*. I love getting up in all the old-fashioned gear, although I'm not so crazy about wigs! I particularly love the period in which *The Last Station* is set – it's all about lost innocence."

The actor, who has also appeared in such movies as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Gangs of New York*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Princess Caraboo*, goes on to describe his character. "For Dushan, living with Tolstoy is an epiphany. He becomes an absolute devotee of the writer, as fanatical as Chertkov. He wanted to spend his life at the service of this great thinker."

John was mightily impressed by Michael Hoffman's adaptation of the best-selling novel by Jay Parini. "One of the great things about Mike's screenplay is that it functions like one of Tolstoy's novels. It poses the essential question: whose truth is most valid? Is it Sofya's or Chertkov's?"

"It dramatizes that clash brilliantly. Chertkov is trying to wrestle the copyright of Tolstoy's estate from the family and give it to the state. He feels that making money is obscene and that in handing over his wealth Tolstoy would be performing his sacred duty for the people of Russia. He leads the keepers of the Tolstoyan flame- they are like an impassioned fan club who believe that this great body of work should not be sullied by the family making money out of it.

"Quite understandably, Sofya sees this as a diabolical liberty and is determined the estate should stay with the family. She feels her husband is being taken away from her by Chertkov, a figure she hates and ironically calls 'Tolstoy's lover'. All in all, it makes for a compelling conflict. Like *War and Peace*, this is an astonishingly modern tale of love and hate which will really speak to audiences today."

John has loved working with this high-quality cast. "It's been a joy," he enthuses. "It's such a privilege just to watch these great actors at the top of their game. Christopher, for instance, brings this great stature. He's a superb Shakespearean actor, and as Tolstoy he is walking around like Lear. He's absolutely magnetic."

The actor is equally enthusiastic about collaborating with Helen. "In reality, Sofya was a rather large, dark-haired woman – very different from the diminutive and blonde Helen! She is bringing to the role this wonderful admixture of coquette-ish minx and drama queen. She's a wronged, broken-hearted, passionate figure. Sofya is as showy as Helen's Elizabeth I was restrained. Anyone expecting to see Helen deliver another Elizabeth I will be very disappointed!"

CAST AND CREW

Sofya Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy

Valentin Bulgakov

Vladimir Chertkov

Sasha Tolstoy

Masha

Dushan

Sergeyenko

Writer/Director

Producers

Executive Producers

Director of Photography

Editor

Production Design

Costume Design

Composer

Helen Mirren

Christopher Plummer

James McAvoy

Paul Giamatti

Anne-Marie Duff

Kerry Condon

John Sessions

Patrick Kennedy

Michael Hoffman

Chris Curling

Jens Meurer

Bonnie Arnold

Andrei Konchalovski

Phil Robertson

Judy Tossell

Robbie Little

Sebastian Edschmid

Patricia Rommel

Patrizia von Brandenstein

Monica Jacobs

Sergey Yevtushenko

CAST BIOS

HELEN MIRREN

Helen Mirren is one of the best-known and most respected actresses with an international career that spans stage, screen and television, she has become renowned for tackling challenging roles and has won many awards for her powerful and versatile performances. This was never more so the case than with her recent role as Queen Elizabeth II in *The Queen*, for which she won an Academy Award, a BAFTA and a Golden Globe together with numerous other awards from all over the world.

In the same year she filmed *The Queen*, Mirren won recognition for two other performances. For HBO, she portrayed Queen Elizabeth I in the miniseries *Elizabeth I*, winning an Emmy, Golden Globe and SAG Award. Mirren also reprised her old role as Detective Jane Tennison in *Prime Suspect: The Final Act*, the last installment in the PBS series. The performance earned her an Emmy and also a Golden Globe nomination – but she lost to herself, for her role as Elizabeth I.

Mirren's film career began in the late 1960s with Michael Powell's *Age of Consent* playing opposite James Mason. Her breakthrough role though was in John Mackenzie's iconic film *The Long Good Friday*. After this Mirren starred in numerous acclaimed films including John Boorman's fantasy adventure *Excalibur* and Neil Jordan's Irish thriller *Cal* which earned her the Best Actress Award at the Cannes film festival in 1984. She continued to push boundaries in films that include Peter Weir's *The Mosquito Coast*, Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, Charles Sturridge's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and Terry George's *Some Mother's Son*, which she also co-produced. Her more recent films include *Calendar Girls*, *Shadowboxer*, *Inkheart* and *National Treasure: Book of Secrets*

Prior to *The Queen*, Mirren also played a monarch in Nicholas Hytner's feature film *The Madness of King George*, a role for which she was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Academy Award and won the Best Actress Award at Cannes film festival in 1995. She earned her second Academy Award nomination for her performance in Robert Altman's *Gosford Park* and a Golden Globe nomination for Nigel Cole's *Calendar Girls*.

This year she has appeared in Universal's *State of Play*. She has also finished work on *Love Ranch* directed by her husband Taylor Hackford, working together for the first time since *White Knights*, Julie Taymor's film version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *The Debt* directed by John Madden.

Helen Mirren became a *Dame Commander of the British Empire* in 2003.

CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER

Christopher Plummer has enjoyed 50 years as one of the most distinguished actors in English-language theatre and cinema. A Canadian from Montreal, Plummer made his professional debut on stage and radio in both French and English, and ever has since appeared in well over 100 motion pictures.

Since his New York debut (1954) he has starred in many prestigious Broadway productions, including his Tony winning performances in *Cyrano* (1973) and *Barrymore* (1997), and more recently as *King Lear* at Lincoln Center (2004). In 2007, Plummer starred in the successful Broadway revival of *Inherit the Wind* (2007), which earned him his seventh Tony nomination.

He has been a leading actor at Great Britain's National Theatre under Sir Laurence Olivier, the Royal Shakespeare Company under Sir Peter Hall, and in its formative years, the Stratford Festival of Canada under Sir Tyrone Guthrie and his mentor Michael Langham. During his career in the theatre he has portrayed most of the great roles in the classic repertoire.

Since Sidney Lumet introduced him to the screen in *Stage Struck* in 1957, Christopher Plummer has appeared in a host of films ranging from the Oscar-winning *The Sound of Music*, John Huston's *The Man Who Would Be King*, to *The Silent Partner*, *Murder by Decree*, *The Battle of Britain*, *Fall of the Roman Empire*, *Inside Daisy Clover*, *Eye Witness*, *Star Trek VI*, *Malcolm X*, *The Pink Panther*, *Wolf*, *Delores Claiborne*, *Twelve Monkeys*, *Oedipus the King*, *The Insider*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *Ararat*, *Syriana*, *Inside Man* and the award-winning *Man in the Chair*. Prior to *The Last Station* he played the title role in Terry Gilliam's *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, which is set to be released worldwide in 2009.

Among his many honours, he has received Great Britain's Evening Standard Best Actor Award plus one nomination; two Emmy Awards plus six nominations; a Genie Award for *Murder by Decree*, and Genie nominations for *The Amateur*, *Impolite*, and *Blizzard*. In 1968, sanctioned by Queen Elizabeth II, he was made a Companion of the Order of Canada, the equivalent of an Honorary Knighthood. He has also received the Governor General's Life Achievement Award, an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts at New York's Juilliard School and Honorary doctorates from five major Canadian universities. Plummer was elected into the Theatre's Hall of Fame (1986) and Canada's Walk of Fame (1999).

JAMES MCAVOY

James McAvoy was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1979 and is a graduate of the prestigious Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. He is regarded as one of the UK's most exciting acting talents and has won awards at the Cannes and Santa Barbara film festivals and at the BAFTAs.

James began his career with small parts in projects like the World War One drama *Regeneration*, and the successful HBO series, *Band of Brothers*, produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg. He came to international prominence when he played Leto Atrides II in the Emmy Award-winning mini-series, *Children of Dune*. He went on to play the role of Dan Foster in the BAFTA-winning BBC ONE political drama series, *State of Play*, which became one of the most successful UK TV exports of recent years. In 2004, he starred on the big screen in Stephen Fry's comedy *Bright Young Things*. James' popularity grew with the TV series *Shameless*, which began in the UK in early 2004, and for which he was nominated in the Best Comedy Newcomer category at the 2004 British Comedy Awards.

Also in 2004, James took his first lead role in a feature film in *Rory O'Shea Was Here* (UK title: *Inside I'm Dancing*), directed by Damian O'Donnell. He was nominated in the British Actor of the Year category at the 2005 London Critics Circle Awards for his performance.

In 2005, James McAvoy took on the iconic role of Mr. Tumnus the Faun in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, which became a global phenomenon, making over \$700 million worldwide. He then played the lead in the award-winning *The Last King of Scotland* alongside Forest Whitaker. For his portrayal of a Scottish doctor in Uganda who becomes close to the dictator Idi Amin, James was nominated for a BAFTA, a BIFA (British Independent Film Award), a European Film Award and a London Critics Circle Award. In late 2006, James starred in *Starter for Ten* and he went on to play the male lead in *Becoming Jane* opposite Anne Hathaway.

James's next film, *Atonement*, opened the 2007 Venice Film Festival to a rapturous standing ovation. James's performance as a Cambridge graduate falsely accused of rape enthused critics and audiences alike and gained him Golden Globe and BAFTA Best Actor nominations and won him Best Actor awards at the London Film Critics Circle Awards and the Empire Awards.

In Summer 2008, James was seen in the lead role of Wesley Gibson in the big-budget graphic novel adaptation, *Wanted*, alongside Morgan Freeman and Angelina Jolie and directed by Timur Bekmambetov. The film was a global smash hit and made over \$330 million worldwide.

James is currently preparing to play the lead in the tentatively-titled dramatic comedy, *I'm With Cancer*, directed by Nicole Holofcener and co-starring Seth Rogen.

PAUL GIAMATTI

With a diverse roster of finely etched, award-winning and critically acclaimed performances, Paul Giamatti has established himself as one of the most versatile actors of his generation.

After studying English and Literature at Yale University and Drama at the Yale School of Drama, Giamatti appeared in numerous plays, including Kevin Spacey's Broadway revival of *The Iceman Cometh*, for which he won a Drama Desk Award for Best Supporting Actor. His other Broadway credits include *The Three Sisters*, Richard Eyre's *Racing Demon and Arcadia*. Giamatti was also part of the ensemble cast in *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*, alongside Al Pacino.

Giamatti first captured the eyes of America in 1997 in his role as program director Kenny Rushton in Betty Thomas' hit comedy *Private Parts*, an adaptation of Howard Stern's autobiography. Supporting roles in films like *The Truman Show*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *The Negotiator* followed. In 1999, Paul Giamatti performed his breakthrough role in Milos Forman's *Man on the Moon*, a biopic about the comedian Andy Kaufman. Giamatti's other film credits include *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *Big Momma's House*, *Donnie Brasco*, *Paycheck*, Tim Burton's Remake of *Planet of the Apes*, and the animated film *Robots*, as well as independent films such as *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, *Duets*, and *Storytelling*.

Paul Giamatti established himself as a lead actor in Shari Springer Berman's and Bob Pulcini's *American Splendor*, an autobiographic film about the comic-strip artist Harvey Pekar. His performances in Alexander Payne's *Sideways* and the Ron Howard directed *Cinderella Man* earned him numerous awards and nominations. His performance in the latter earned him a SAG Award for Best Supporting Actor in 2006, as well as Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations in the same category.

In 2006, Giamatti starred in M. Night Shyamalan's *Lady in The Water*, and in *The Illusionist* opposite Edward Norton and Jessica Biel. In 2007, he starred as the killer in the action thriller *Shoot 'Em Up* alongside Clive Owen, and played Nick 'Santa' Claus in the Christmas comedy *Fred Claus*.

Giamatti most recently appeared as John Adams in the HBO miniseries *John Adams*, based on David McCullough's best selling book of the same name. He was also recently seen in the 2008 Sundance debut, *Pretty Bird*, which he produced through his production company Touchy Feely Films. Giamatti recently wrapped production on Touchy Feely Films' *Cold Souls*, directed by Sophie Barthes and *Duplicity* directed by Tony Gilroy.

ANNE-MARIE DUFF

Anne-Marie Duff is an actress whose work spreads extensively over screen and stage.

She became well known to a larger audience through her memorable role as Fiona in the TV series *Shameless*, for which she received an IFTA (Irish Film and Television Award) in 2004, and was BAFTA nominated the year after. Two years later in 2007 she was again nominated for a BAFTA Award as Best Actress for her remarkable portrayal of Elizabeth I in *Elizabeth - The Virgin Queen*. Other television credits include *Charles II* (Joe Wright), *Doctor Zhivago* (Giacomo Campiotti) and *Sinners* (Aisling Walsh) for which she won a Best Actress award at the Monte Carlo and Shanghai film festival in 2002.

Anne-Marie took the National theatre by storm in 2007 as the title role in the revival of *Saint Joan*. She was nominated for an Ian Charleson Award for her Cordelia in Richard Eyre's *King Lear* and an Olivier for Howard Davies' *Collected Stories* at the National Theatre. Other notable theatre credits include *Days of Wine and Roses* (Peter Gill) at the Donmar Warehouse and *War and Peace*.

Anne-Marie's unforgettable portrayal of Margaret in Peter Mullan's *The Magdalene Sisters* helped the film win the Best Film award in Venice and the Critics Choice at Toronto. Last year in Dominic Savage's *Born Equal* Anne-Marie played Sophie, a heavily pregnant woman fleeing from her violent partner. This year she has recently finished filming the soon to be released *French Film* alongside Hugh Bonneville and Douglas Henshall and she has just completed filming the John Crowley film *Is There Anybody There?* with Michael Caine.

KERRY CONDON

Kerry Condon is an Irish actress born in 1983 in Tipperary. Having studied at the Dublin Theatre Arts School, she made her TV debut in a two-episode arc of the BBC series *Ballykissangel* in 1999, and her film debut later that year with a role in Alan Parker's Academy-Award nominated adaptation of Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*.

At the age of 19, she became the youngest actress ever to play Ophelia for the Royal Shakespeare Company, in Steven Pimlott's staging of *Hamlet*. Her other stage work includes Wilson Milam's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, Paddy Kineen's *The Lonesome West* and a role in Garry Hynes recent New York run of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*.

Following *Angela's Ashes*, Kerry appeared alongside Imelda Staunton in the Steve Barron film *Rat*. In 2001, she starred in *How Harry Became a Tree* by Goran Paskaljevic, and in 2003 she played Kate Kelly alongside Heath Ledger, Orlando Bloom and Naomi Watts in *Ned Kelly*. In 2005, Kerry Condon appeared with Jet Li, Morgan Freeman and Bob Hoskins in *Unleashed* and also made her first appearance in the hit HBO/BBC series *Rome*. Kerry appeared in all 22 episodes of the acclaimed show between 2005 and 2007, playing the role of Octavia of the Julii,

As well as appearing in *The Last Station* this year, Kerry will also be back on our screens in the J.J. Abram directed series *Anatomy of Hope* for HBO.

JOHN SESSIONS

John Sessions is a Scottish actor and comedian known for his comedy improvisation and work as a character actor in numerous films, both in Britain and Hollywood.

He attended RADA, and in the early 1980s worked on the small venue comedy circuit with largely improvised freewheeling fantasy monologues, as well as securing a number of small parts in films including *The Sender* in 1982, *The Bounty* in 1984 and *Castaway* in 1986.

During the 1980s and 1990s he appeared in a series of one-man TV shows, as well as voicing several characters in the puppet satire show *Spitting Image* and co-creating the surreal TV 'soap opera' comedy *Stella Street*, about a fantasy suburban British street inhabited by celebrities like Michael Caine and Al Pacino.

During this time, Sessions also returned to more formal acting, with parts ranging from James Boswell (to Robbie Coltrane's Samuel Johnson) in the UK TV series *Boswell and Johnson's Tour of the Western Isles* (1993) to Doctor Prunesquallor in the BBC adaptation of *Gormenghast* (2000). He has also appeared in several film adaptations of Shakespeare's works, playing Macmorris in Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* (1989), Philostrate in the 1999 film of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Michael Hoffman and Salerio in 2004's *The Merchant of Venice*, with Al Pacino and Jeremy Irons.

Other recent film roles have included parts in *The Good Shepherd* with Robert De Niro, Matt Damon and Angelina Jolie, and in Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York* with Daniel Day-Lewis and Leonardo Di Caprio.

In between his regular film and TV roles, Sessions has made appearances on *Have I Got News for You* and, more recently, as a semi-regular panelist on *QI* hosted by Stephen Fry.

PATRICK KENNEDY

Patrick Kennedy trained at LAMDA. His most recent television appearances include Harry Sinclair in *The 39 Steps* and Gerald Mills in *Consuming Passion*, both for the BBC.

Other television credits include: *Einstein & Eddington*, *The Inspector Lynley Mysteries*, *Cambridge Spies* and *Spooks*, all for the BBC; *The Somme* for Channel 4 and Richard Carstone in the BBC's 2006 BAFTA Award-winning Drama Serial *Bleak House*.

As well as appearing in *The Last Station*, his extensive list of film credits includes: Leon Tallis in *Atonement* (2008 BAFTA Award winner for Best Film), *Me & Orson Welles*, *In Tranzit*, *A Good Year*, *Mrs. Henderson Presents*, *Munich*, *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* and *Nine Lives*.

Patrick's numerous theatre roles include: Lucio in *Measure for Measure* for Plymouth Theatre Royal and National Tour, Camille in *Therese Raquin* for the National Theatre, Jonathan in *Everything is Illuminated* for Hampstead Theatre, George Holly in *Suddenly Last Summer* at the Lyceum Sheffield and Albery London; Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Danceny in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, both for the Bristol Old Vic and Charles Perrault in *Maps of Desire* for Southwark Playhouse.

WRITER/DIRECTOR BIO

MICHAEL HOFFMAN

Michael Hoffman grew up in Idaho and studied at Boise State University in his home State. Awarded a scholarship by the renowned Rhodes Foundation, Michael went to study at Oxford University in 1979, where he discovered the young Hugh Grant and shot his debut film with him: *Privileged*, a story about an upper class adolescent.

Together with Rick Stevenson, with whom he and others founded the Oxford Film Company after graduation, Michael created *Restless Natives*, a comedy about two Scotsmen who rob American tourist parties.

He attracted great attention in the US in 1988 with *Promised Land*, a dark coming-of-age story with Kiefer Sutherland and Meg Ryan in the leading roles. In 1991 he was entrusted with the \$25 million comedy *Soapdish* – likewise, an all-star cast production: featuring Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Whoopie Goldberg, a very young Robert Downey Jr. and Terri Hatcher among others.

In 1995 Hoffman returned to British material with *Restoration*. The film celebrated its world premier in 1996 at the Berlin Film Festival. In the same year, Michael shot the romantic comedy *One Fine Day* with George Clooney and Michelle Pfeiffer. The internationally acclaimed Shakespeare adaptation *A Midsummer Night's Dream* followed, as well as *Game 6*, a film starring Michael Keaton and Robert Downey Jr. in the leading roles, which is based on a screenplay by the successful author Don DeLillo and premiered at Sundance Festival in 2005.

Prior to *The Last Station*, Michael completed a pilot for HBO with and about the star journalist Seymour Hersh, and the documentary *Out of The Blue: A Film About Life and Football*.

Michael Hoffman is married to the screenwriter Sam Silva, he has three children and a distinctive sense of British humour.

PRODUCER BIOS

CHRIS CURLING

Chris Curling is a respected independent producer based in London with excellent connections throughout Europe and North America. In 1990 he founded his own company, Zephyr Films, which specialises in the financing and production of feature films for the international market. In the last ten years he has acted as producer, executive producer and co-producer on over twenty films with combined budgets of over \$275,000,000.

Following completion of Michael Hoffman's *The Last Station*, Chris has worked as executive producer on Gurinder Chadha's *It's A Wonderful Afterlife*, which recently finished principal photography in London, and on *Black Death* from director Chris Smith, which just completed principal photography in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.

2008 saw the release of Gillian Armstrong's Houdini film *Death Defying Acts*, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and Guy Pearce, and *Penelope*, with Christina Ricci, James McAvoy and Reese Witherspoon. Other recent releases include a trio of films that Chris co-produced

with The Dino De Laurentiis Company and Tarak Ben Ammar's Quinta Communications. *Hannibal Rising*, *The Last Legion* and *Virgin Territory* had combined budgets in excess of \$150,000,000 and were shot in the Czech Republic, Slovakia/Tunisia and Italy respectively. Chris was also executive producer on David Mackenzie's *Asylum* for Paramount, and associate producer on Mike Binder's film *The Upside of Anger* for Media 8 and Fine Line. In addition, Chris was a co-producer on Richard E. Grant's directorial debut *Wah-Wah*.

Chris is a member of the British and European Film Academies, the European Producer's Club and ACE. He also serves on PACT's film committee and BSAC's Co-Production working group.

JENS MEURER

Jens Meurer was born in 1963 in Nuremberg, Germany. In 1975, he moved with his parents to Johannesburg, South Africa, where he grew up and went to High School, before he returned to Germany and received his High School diploma in Dachau in 1983. In the same year, he began working in film production as a production driver and production assistant in Munich. Jens also worked as a journalist for South African newspapers, and as a music composer for theatre, while studying Modern History at Balliol College, Oxford University in England, where he graduated in 1987. In 1988, Jens received a post-graduate degree in Political Science at "Sciences-Po" in Paris, and a M.S. in Journalism at Columbia University New York.

He returned to Munich in 1990 to work at Dialog Filmproduktion as a producer and director, where he spent three years on a 35mm documentary series on the Soviet Union (*Beyond The Kremlin Walls* and *Im Osten was Neues*), coproducing with Leningrad Documentary Film Studio and GDR TV.

In 1993, Jens founded his production company Egoli Films, and directed a number of cinema documentaries short films, and TV series. In 1995, he received the European Academy Award Felix as "European Documentary Filmmaker of the Year".

His company merged with Tossell Pictures in 2001 to create a bigger, more prolific production company, Egoli Tossell Film AG. Since that time, the company has opened several subsidiaries all over Germany and produced more than 60 films.

PRODUCTION COMPANY / EGOLI TOSSELL FILM AG

Together with his partner Judy Tossell, Jens Meurer and Egoli Tossell Film AG have produced a number of international feature films such as award-winning Alexander Sokurov's one-shot masterpiece *Russian Ark*, Paul Verhoeven's *Black Book* and Michael Caton-Jones' *Shooting Dogs*. This year, Sandra Nettelbeck's heart-rending drama *Helen* starring Ashley Judd and Goran Visnjic celebrated its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival and *Hilde*, Kai Wessel's biopic starring Heike Makatsch as German Diva Hildegard Knef closed the Special Gala Screenings at the Berlinale before being released on 250 screens in Germany.

As well as *The Last Station*, other upcoming releases are culinary romance *Bon Appétit* with top European stars, Nora Tschirner and Unax Ugalde; Epic thriller *Carlos The Jackal* by Olivier Assayas - a major French-German co-production chronicling the rise and fall of the infamous terrorist. And finally *Black Death* - a spectacular medieval horror movie directed by Christopher Smith and starring Sean Bean, Carice van Houten and Eddie Redmayne.

As well as producing all of these films, Egoli Tossell has raised a significant share of their finance. We specialize in combining the various financing elements available in Germany with premier international co-productions. Future projects such as our franchise based on the hugely successful *Hector* novels, will make use of federal and regional funds, the DFFF, German state guarantees and international gap finance.

Egoli Tossell is also active on the television market, producing one or two TV movies every year, such as the German remake of Richard Curtis' *The Girl In The Café*.

ETF's library encompasses more than 70 titles, to which we own the majority of rights. With Germany's Wüste Film, we are co-owners of our own distribution company Timebandits Films.

BONNIE ARNOLD

Her interest in journalism led Bonnie Arnold to her first professional entertainment industry assignment as the unit publicist for American Playhouse's debut production, *King of America*. Following that, Arnold began working with several independent filmmakers' groups and helped to promote the Atlanta Independent Film and Video Festival. In addition, she oversaw a touring showcase of independent films, sponsored by the American Film Institute. Her efforts to arrange financing for independent ventures influenced her decision to pursue a career as a producer.

In 1984, Arnold worked on her first major Hollywood film as a production coordinator for Neil Simon's *The Slugger's Wife*. She went on to serve as the production coordinator for the U.S. portions of Peter Weir's *The Mosquito Coast*. While working in a similar role on *Leader of the Band*, she met David Picker, who invited her to work with him at Columbia Pictures. Assignments as a production supervisor on such films as *Hero, Stars and Bars, The Mighty Quinn* and *Revenge* followed. Her association with Kevin Costner and her reputation for managing complex productions led to her work on the Oscar®-winning epic Western *Dances with Wolves*.

Shortly after that, Bonnie Arnold began her animation career in 1992 when she was hired by Walt Disney Pictures to produce the landmark computer-animated feature *Toy Story* (1995), the first film in their joint venture with Pixar, and in 1999 the Disney blockbuster *Tarzan* followed. In addition she produced the 2006 release of *Over the Hedge* for DreamWorks, featuring the voices of Bruce Willis and Garry Shandling. Bonnie Arnold is currently producing the DreamWorks Animated feature *How to Train Your Dragon*, scheduled for released in March 2010.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER BIOS

ANDREI KONCHALOVSKY

Andrei Konchalovsky is a writer and director of film and theatre, and a cult figure in Russian and international cinema.

His career started over forty years ago when he co-wrote the screenplays of Ivan's Childhood and Andrei Rublyov for the legendary Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky.

Konchalovsky's own Russian films, such as *Romance for Lovers* (1974) and *Asya's Happiness* (filmed in 1967 and released in 1988), are classics. Several of his Hollywood

films, most notably *Runaway Train* (1985) and the action-packed *Tango & Cash* (1989), enjoyed significant success. His U.S. miniseries of the *Odyssey* (1997) for NBC is often re-run on American television.

Andrei Konchalovsky is a winner of the most prestigious International film prizes and awards. In 2002 he received the Grand Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival for *House of Fools*, and in 1997 won an Emmy for *The Odyssey*. His film *Runaway Train* was nominated for three Academy Awards and the Palm d'Or at the Cannes film festival. In 1978 he won the Grand prix special de jury at Cannes for *Sibiriade*.

In 2003, Andrei directed the made-for-television film *The Lion In Winter* starring Glenn Close and Patrick Stewart. Glenn Close won a Golden Globe for her role, in addition to the film receiving eight other Golden Globe and Emmy nominations.

Konchalovsky's work is not limited to cinema and television – he also successfully works in theatre and opera. His theatre productions in Paris, Moscow and Warsaw include Chekhov's "Chaika," Strindberg's "Froeken Julie" and Shakespeare's King Lear." He has also worked in the world's greatest opera theatres: La Scala, Bastilia and Mariinsky.

As well as executive producing *The Last Station*, Andrei Konchalovsky has just completed work on his upcoming international family film *Nutcracker: The Untold Story*.

PHIL ROBERTSON

Phil Robertson is an independent London based producer. Along with Chris Curling he runs Zephyr Films, which specializes in the financing and production of films for the international marketplace. In the last decade Phil has been involved in the raising of finance and successful production of over 20 international feature film productions.

Following *The Last Station*, Phil is currently overseeing production of Chris Smith's *Black Death*, which Zephyr are producing with Egoli Tossell Film and Ecosse Films. The film stars Sean Bean, Eddie Redmayne and Carice van Houten.

2008 saw the release of Gillian Armstrong's Houdini film *Death Defying Acts*, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and Guy Pearce, and *Penelope*, with Christina Ricci, James McAvoy and Reese Witherspoon. Other recent releases include a trio of films that Phil co-produced with The Dino De Laurentiis Company and Tarak Ben Ammar's Quinta Communications. *Hannibal Rising*, *The Last Legion* and *Virgin Territory* had combined budgets in excess of \$150,000,000 and were shot in the Czech Republic, Slovakia/Tunisia and Italy respectively.

Phil has raised finance for and successfully delivered a host of British and European qualifying international co-productions working with the likes of Film Four, BBC Films, the UK Film Council, Miramax, the Weinstein Company, Canal+, RAI, RTL, Filmax, Arte Cinema, and France 2 and 3.

JUDY TOSSELL

Born in England, Judy Tossell studied at Balliol College, Oxford University in England, before she moved to Berlin, Germany, in 1989.

After first working as a freelance journalist, Judy entered the Berlin based film production company Ziegler Filmproduktion where she worked as a producer between 1990 and 1995,

and produced films as an Associate Producer, such as the international film series *Erotic Tales* (with films by Susan Seidelman, Bob Rafelson and Melvin van Peebles).

In 1996, Judy founded her own independent company Tossell Pictures as a production platform for a group of talented young Berlin-based filmmakers. Her production company merged with Egoli Films GmbH to form Egoli Tossell Film AG in 2001.

For more information on Egoli Tossell Film AG and Judy Tossell's work as a producer, please see *Producer Bios / Jens Meurer*.

CREW BIOS

CINEMATOGRAPHER SEBASTIAN EDSCHMID

After studying at the German Film and TV Academy in Berlin (DFFB) at the end of the 90s and his first Award for the short film *Ku'damm Security* in 1998, Sebastian Edschmid started working as a cinematographer on many German and international projects.

He has worked with several well-known German directors, including Ed Herzog (on *Twisted Sister* in 2006 and two others) and Hermine Huntgeburth (on *Teufelsbraten* in 2006 and three others).

As well as *The Last Station*, his recent international projects include *Sweet Mud*, directed by Dror Shaul, *Adam Resurrected*, an American-German-Israeli co-production directed by Paul Schrader and *Black Death* by director Chris Smith, which stars Sean Bean, Eddie Redmayne and Carice van Houten.

EDITOR PATRICIA ROMMEL

Patricia Rommel was born in Paris in 1956 and currently lives in Berlin. Her breakthrough as an editor came on Caroline Link's *Beyond Silence* (1996). Since then, she has further collaborated with Caroline Link on the movies *Annaliese and Anton* (1998) and *Nowhere in Africa* (2001). The latter won an Oscar for best foreign film in 2002.

Rommel began her career in the film industry in 1977, completing several advertising films and dubbing productions. She has worked as a freelance editor since the early 1980s and also teaches at several German film schools. She has edited over 40 films for cinema and television.

She has received numerous nominations and awards for her work. Wolfgang Beckers *Life Is All You Get* (1997) saw her nominated for the German Camera Award (Deutscher Kamerapreis) and she subsequently won the coveted prize for her work on the film *Off Beat* (2005) by Hendrik Hölzemann.

Other works include Nina Grosses *Fire Rider* (1997), Franziska Buchs *Emil and the Detectives* (2001), Romuald Karmakars *Nightsongs* (2003) and Christian Ditters comedy *French for Beginners* (2006).

She has worked with well-known TV directors such as Dominik Graf (*Dr. Knock*), Dieter Wedel (*My old friend Fritz*) and Maria von Heland (*Suddenly Gina*).

Most notably, Rommel edited the Oscar-winning *The Lives of Others* (2005) by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. The film was also nominated for the German Movie Award and received the German Critic Award. She got her second nomination for the German Movie Award for her work on *A Year Ago in Winter* (2008) by Caroline Link.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER ***PATRIZIA VON BRANDENSTEIN***

Patrizia von Brandenstein was born in 1943 as the daughter of Russian emigrants in Arizona. She spent two years in France as a technical apprentice in a program for young people at the Comédie Française and later went to New York to study art. She worked, among others, at the Actors Studio, the Public Theatre, and the experimental theatre La MaMa as a scenic artist, prop master and tailor in the 1960s. She spent 5 years from 1966 onwards as costume and scene designer at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, where she also met her future husband, the production designer Stuart Wurtzel.

Patrizia von Brandenstein got her first screen credit in 1972, as set decorator on *The Candidate*. In the following years, she worked as costume designer for *Between the Lines* (1977), *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and more. She soon began working as an art director, such as on *Ragtime* (1981), Milos Forman's panorama of the New York Ragtime era, for which she shared her first Oscar® nomination.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, her works as production designer have strongly influenced the visuality of movies. One of her first works was *Heartland* (1979), which won the Berlinale's Golden Bear in 1980 and was followed by the biopic *Silkwood* in 1982 by director Mike Nichols – with whom she also realised *Working Girl* (1988) and *Postcards from the Edge* (1990).

It was another collaboration with Milos Forman, on the film *Amadeus* (1984), for which Patrizia was finally awarded an Oscar® though. She collaborated with Milos Forman in the following years as well on films like *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (1996), *Man on the Moon* (1999) and *Goya's Ghosts* (2006).

Further films with production design by Patrizia von Brandenstein include the musical *A Chorus Line* (1985), *The Untouchables* (1987), *Six Degrees of Separation* (1993), *A Simple Plan* (1998) and *Mercury Rising* (1998).

COSTUME DESIGNER ***MONICA JACOBS***

Monika Jacobs was born in 1946 in Düsseldorf, Germany. Having finished an apprenticeship as a tailor and studied at the academies of art in Vienna and Berlin, Monica started working as a costume designer in theatre.

As Barbara Baum's assistant, she worked on several films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, such as *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980), *Veronika Voss* (1982), and *Querelle: A Film About Jean Genet's "Querelle de Brest"* (1982).

Since then she has worked as a freelance costume designer, and has since created the costumes for such directors as Wim Wenders, Frank Beyer, and Tom Tykwer.

COMPOSER

SERGEY YEVTUSHENKO

Sergey Yevtushenko is a Russian composer, conductor, and music producer from St. Petersburg. He has been a member of the Composers' Union of Russia since 1990.

Having been Professor of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire and Special Music School, in 1990 he became Director of the CAMERATA St. Petersburg Orchestra, later known as the Orchestra of the State Hermitage Museum.

In 1997 he became Director of the Hermitage Music Academy Charity Foundation, and in the year 2000 he was elected vice-president of the Royal Musical Festival in Sweden.

Since 2001 he has also been Artistic Director of the Hermitage Music Academy Program and International Music Festivals in the State Hermitage Museum (The Musical Hermitage and Music of the Great Hermitage).

In 1996 he composed original music for *Robert: A Fortunate Life* by Alexander Sokurov, and in 2002 did the same for Sokurov's film *Russian Ark*. Filmed entirely in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Sokurov's breathtaking film recreates 300 years of history and culture and is the first entirely unedited, single take, full-length feature film.

In 2007 Sergey composed and conducted music for the Finnish-Russian co-production *RAJA 1918*, for which he was nominated in the category of Best Music at the Jussi Awards, the main national film awards in Finland.

After composing the music for *The Last Station*, Sergey Yevtushenko is currently working as a music producer on the Hermitage film project *The Symphony*.

As well as writing and performing his own suites, concertos and cantatas, Sergey is an accomplished piano improvisator. In 1994, Hamburg representatives of Sony became interested in his phenomenal talent and offered to record some of his improvisations. They were dumbfounded when he improvised non-stop for eight hours. The whole eight hours of recording were released in a six CD package.

THE LAST STATION

LIST OF CREDITS

DIRECTED BY
MICHAEL HOFFMAN

SCREENPLAY BY
MICHAEL HOFFMAN

HELEN MIRREN

CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER

PAUL GIAMATTI

ANNE-MARIE DUFF

KERRY CONDON

JOHN SESSIONS

PATRICK KENNEDY

and JAMES McAVOY

PRODUCED BY
CHRIS CURLING
JENS MEURER

PRODUCED BY
BONNIE ARNOLD

EGOLI TOSSELL FILM AND ZEPHYR FILMS PRESENT

AN EGOLI TOSSELL FILM HALLE PRODUCTION

IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH
THE ANDREI KONCHALOVSKY PRODUCTION CENTER
AND SAMFILM

A FILM BY MICHAEL HOFFMAN

THE LAST STATION

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
ANDREI KONCHALOVSKY
PHIL ROBERTSON

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
JUDY TOSSELL
ROBBIE LITTLE

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
JAY PARINI

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
SEBASTIAN EDSCHMID

PRODUCTION DESIGN
PATRIZIA VON BRANDENSTEIN

COSTUME DESIGN
MONICA JACOBS

MAKE-UP DESIGN
JEKATERINA OERTEL

EDITED BY
PATRICIA ROMMEL

MUSIC COMPOSED BY
SERGEY YEVTUSHENKO

SOUND RECORDIST
MARTIN TREVIS AMPS, CAS
RE-RECORDING MIXER
MARTIN STEYER

CASTING BY
LEO DAVIS AND LISSY HOLM

LINE PRODUCER
BRIAN DONOVAN

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
JEAN-LUC ORMIÈRES

CO-PRODUCED BY
EWA KARLSTRÖM
ANDREAS ULMKE-SMEATON

CO-FINANCING
DREFA
FILMED AT
MCA

SUPPORTED BY
MITTELDEUTSCHE MEDIENFÖRDERUNG
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THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

