

Press Release – 30 January 2012

IWM and ElfMusic present

The Battle of the Somme Tour 2012



A live Film and Music event
with digitally restored film and a new score composed by
Laura Rossi

"And these troops in the mud grinned or stared at us to a new music score by Laura Rossi, brilliantly effective, played with typical dexterity and polish."
Geoff Brown, The Times ★★★★★

Tour Dates

25 February 2012: Philharmonia Britannica - St John's Church, London SE1 www.ph-br.co.uk

10 March 2012: Ealing Symphony Orchestra – St Martin's Church, London W3 www.ealingso.org.uk

About The Film

Smiling awkwardly at the new-fangled cameras, troops move towards the Front in the Great War. Their actions are far removed from the swagger and march of war films, but then this is real.

The Battle of the Somme remains one of the most successful British films ever made. It is estimated over 20 million tickets were sold in Great Britain in the first two months of release, and the film was distributed world-wide to demonstrate to allies and neutrals Britain's commitment to the First World War. It is the source of many of that conflict's most iconic images. It was made by British official cinematographers Geoffrey Malins and John McDowell. Though it was not intended as a feature film, once the volume and quality of their footage had been seen in London, the British Topical Committee for War Films decided to compile a feature-length film.

Laura Rossi's new score was commissioned in 2006 to mark the 90th anniversary of *The Battle of the Somme* as a soundtrack for the newly-released digitally restored film. When embarking on her research on the film and the battle in preparation for her composition, Laura discovered her great uncle, Fred Ainge, (whom she knew as he survived the war) was a stretcher-bearer attached to the 29th Division on 1 July 1916. In preparation for composing the new score she visited the Somme Battlefields, using Fred's diaries to locate the areas in which he served. The re-mastered film was screened for the 90th anniversary of the Battle to a full house at the Queen Elizabeth Hall with the premiere of Laura's orchestral score, performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra and received a glowing 5 star review in The Times.

This tour will present the film and live music together for the first time since 2006.

The Battle of the Somme gave its 1916 audience an unprecedented insight into the realities of trench warfare, controversially including the depiction of dead and wounded soldiers. It shows scenes of the build-up to the infantry offensive including the massive preliminary bombardment, coverage of the first day of the battle (the bloodiest single day in Britain's military history) and depictions of the small gains and massive costs of the attack.

The Battle of the Somme's importance was recognised in 2005 by its formal inscription in the UNESCO 'Memory Of The World' register – the first British document of any kind to be included, and one of the few films that has so far been added to the register.

'Memory of the World' is a programme established by UNESCO to raise awareness of the planet's rich and diverse documentary heritage, and to encourage its preservation. The most visible face of the project is a register of recognised documents and documentary collections.

About The Composer

Laura Rossi has written extensively for film and television, including the critically acclaimed *Silent Shakespeare* for the British Film Institute. She has composed music for the feature films *London to Brighton*, *The Cottage* and *The Firm*. Laura's music has been performed by the London Music Orchestra, the BBC Concert Orchestra, the Prague Filmharmonic Orchestra, The Chamber Orchestra of London and the Philharmonia Orchestra. Her works have been performed at the Barbican, the Royal Festival Hall and the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.

For more information about Laura's music and a full transcription of her great uncle Fred Ainge's diaries please go to www.laurarossi.com

The CD is available to purchase from www.virtuosarecords.co.uk and the CD booklet includes extracts from Laura's great uncle Fred's diaries including the first days of the Somme battle from July 1st 1916.

To buy the DVD of *The Battle of the Somme* with Laura Rossi's new score please go to www.iwmshop.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

For press information and images, contact Eleanor Ward - Tel: 07740 350001, eleanor@elfmusic.co.uk

To contact Laura Rossi - Tel: 07765 293 822, Email: laura@laurarossi.com

Laura Rossi and Toby Haggith (from the Imperial War Museum) are available for interviews

Details about the Imperial War Museum and its collections, and its activities across all its sites, can be found on the Museum's website: www.iwm.org.uk