

TRANSMISSION
Presents

TESTAMENT OF YOUTH

Based on Vera Brittain's beloved memoir



STARRING: ALICIA VIKANDER, KIT HARINGTON, TARON EGERTON,
EMILY WATSON, HAYLEY ATWELL

Directed by JAMES KENT

Screenplay by JULIETTE TOWHIDI - Based on Vera Brittain's *TESTAMENT OF YOUTH*

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Directed by
James Kent

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+61 2 8333 9000 / corey@transmissionfilms.com.au

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TESTAMENT OF YOUTH
BASED ON THE MEMOIRS OF VERA BRITTAIN

Directed by JAMES KENT
Produced by DAVID HEYMAN & ROSIE ALISON
Screenplay by JULIETTE TOWHIDI
Based on Vera Brittain's "TESTAMENT OF YOUTH"
Executive Producers CHRISTINE LANGAN, JOE OPPENHEIMER
Executive Producers HUGO HEPPELL, ZYGI KAMASA,
RICHARD MANSELL

Starring
ALICIA VIKANDER
KIT HARRINGTON
TARON EGERTON
EMILY WATSON
HAYLEY ATWELL
COLIN MORGAN
JOANNA SCANLAN, ALEXANDRA ROACH, JONATHAN BAILEY
ANNA CHANCELLOR NICHOLAS LE PREVOST NICHOLAS FARRELL
with DOMINIC WEST and MIRANDA RICHARDSON

Co-Producer CELIA DUVAL
Director of Photography ROB HARDY, B.S.C
Production Designer JON HENSON
Edited by LUCIA ZUCCHETTI, A.C.E
Costume Designer CONSOLATA BOYLE
Make up & Hair Design CHRISTINE WALMESLEY-COTHAM
Music by MAX RICHTER
Casting by LUCY BEVAN

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Brief Synopsis

Testament of Youth is a powerful story of love, war and remembrance, based on the First World War memoir by Vera Brittain, which has become the classic testimony of that war from a woman's point of view. A searing journey from youthful hopes and dreams to the edge of despair and back again, it's a film about young love, the futility of war and how to make sense of the darkest times.

Introduction & Synopsis

Testament of Youth is a powerful coming-of-age story which tackles love, war, loss and remembrance. It's based on the beloved First World War memoir by Vera Brittain, which was a bestseller on publication, heralded as the voice of a generation – and has become the classic testimony of that war, from a woman's point of view. Vera's story encompasses many searching themes - youth, hope, dreams, love, war, futility, and how to make sense of the darkest times. It's a key witness account of WW1, which continues to resonate because it is above all a personal story of how one person faces war and tragedy, and rises above them.

The story begins in the Edwardian spring of 1914, with Vera Brittain - a youthful feminist, free-minded and irrepressible - determined to sit exams for Oxford, against her conservative parents' wishes. She is encouraged and inspired by her brother and his friends, particularly the brilliant Roland Leighton, who shares her dream of being a writer. But her hopes for Oxford with Roland turn to dust as war is declared, and all the young men enlist; she herself gives up her dream of writing, and becomes a nurse. What follows is a story of heightened, urgent love between Vera and Roland - interrupted by the war, as Vera moves closer and closer to the front, eventually nursing German soldiers, who help her to recognise the futility of war. Through Vera we see youthful love buffeted by fatal losses and the overpowering tide of history, as one by one those closest to her are lost to the war. Yet Vera's story is also one of survival, as she returns from the war determined to find a new purpose, and to keep faith with those she has lost, spurring her towards a powerful act of remembrance.

The film follows Vera's rites of passage through war, and through her wartime experiences, we understand how she went on to write one of the defining memoirs of her age, which gave voice to a lost generation. Many elements in the film (such as some of the key letters from the front and Roland's poems) are authentic, and it's the fact that *Testament of Youth* is a genuine witness testimony which gives the story its power.

Origins of the film

In 2008, Christine Langan and Joe Oppenheimer of BBC Films were exploring the BBC archive for dramas with film potential, and, with the centenary of World War 1 looming, their attention turned to the classic 1979 BBC series of *Testament of Youth*. Rosie Alison, of Heyday Films, had recently worked with Christine Langan on *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and when she learned of the BBC's exploratory conversations with the Vera Brittain estate, she made a strong plea for Heyday to produce the film. Alison, like Langan, had fallen under the spell of both Vera Brittain's memoir and

the original television series as a schoolgirl – and had retained a passionate attachment to *Testament of Youth*. BBC Films agreed that Rosie Alison and David Heyman (of Heyday Films) should be the producers for the film.

Adapting *Testament of Youth*

Alison and BBC Films undertook an extensive search for writers, before Juliette Towhidi was chosen. Although previously best known for a very different film, *Calendar Girls*, Towhidi made a passionate pitch to write the script. Says Alison: *“Juliette just stood out - she had the emotional intensity and rigorous intelligence to tackle the big story because it’s not only the book of ‘Testament of Youth’, there were also Vera’s diaries, and a wonderful collection of correspondence between Vera and the men in her life. There’s an overwhelming wealth of material to draw from, including Roland Leighton’s frontline poetry, and we needed to find a writer who could tackle all that and not get lost within it.”*

Juliette Towhidi says: *“My task was to translate Vera’s memoir into a screenplay, which for me meant sticking to the book - that was my beginning and end point for research. I read and re-read and re-read the book and because I come from a journalistic background it is in my DNA to research things thoroughly. I did a lot of research around the First World War, always from a civilian perspective and of course discussing her with Shirley Williams (Vera’s daughter) and Mark Bostridge, (Vera’s biographer) really brought her to life for me.”*

While it was decided not to use a literal first person narrator, Vera’s first person voice is implied through the use of her letters (such an important aspect of Vera’s memoir). Says Alison: *“Over two or three years, Juliette’s script evolved to achieve that balance between the big historical story and Vera’s personal journey. We didn’t want a stately biopic; we wanted to make an intimate film where you really felt the interiority of Vera on her extraordinary journey from youth and hope through the war and its losses, and out the other side to a kind of a reawakening of the value and purpose of her life. Juliette brought to the script both Vera’s inner life, and the bigger picture of the times.”*

Says Towhidi: *“It’s a little bit like one of the great Russian novels in the sense that you have individuals experiencing a great tide of history that they are powerless to do anything about. Vera’s very personal journey set against this extraordinary epic backdrop of the war is what I think makes the story really special. The fact that she struggled with different forms of expressing her experience - she began by trying to write it as a totally fictionalized novel, and then ended up writing a very personal first-hand account. I think that’s actually what gives the book its power. You feel the truth of it.”*

Choices made in adapting a true story

In condensing a 600 page memoir into a two hour film, it was clear that some omissions and changes would have to be made, to distil the source material. During the process of adaptation, the writer and the producers were very mindful of identifying the key aspects of Vera’s story, the bare bones,

and building the script around those. For example, the film concentrates on two key periods of Vera's nursing – at the First London General hospital in Camberwell, then at the military camp Étaples in France. This meant that Vera's period as a nurse in Malta, had to be left out: it felt too much of a digression within the narrative drive of the film. Another example of a conscious change made concerns Vera's nursing of Edward: although Vera did nurse her wounded brother, in reality this was in the First London General Hospital at Camberwell after he was wounded in the Somme – but the film makers shifted this encounter to a later period of the film, during Vera's stint as a nurse in France at Étaples; this was to help the pacing of her relationship with Edward through the film. (When Vera Brittain was thinking of fictionalising her war experiences, before she settled on writing a memoir instead, she herself toyed with moving her nursing of Edward to France.)

There was also the question of where to begin and end Vera's story. The film makers decided to open with Vera on Armistice Day in 1918, drawing from her powerful descriptions of herself as a broken figure on that day, disconnected from the cheering crowds around her; this was to establish a keen, visceral sense of seeing the world with Vera and through her eyes. Through Vera's memory, the film then flashes back to 1914, as we meet her in her pre-war innocence.

Much thought also went into where to end the film – how far to show Vera on her journey both as a writer and as a political activist, working for the League of Nations in the 1920s. And whether to show the start of her attachment to her future husband, George Catlin. In the end, it felt more dramatically satisfying to keep the timescale of the film more contained than the full scope of *Testament of Youth*. Although we meet, briefly, her future husband George Catlin, the film focuses more on Vera's determination to honour the memories of Edward, Roland, Victor and Geoffrey. We leave Vera at the moment when she first finds her voice as a speaker. And there is the sense that, formed by her wartime experiences, Vera can now go on to write the book of remembrance which defined her legacy, *Testament of Youth* (which she actually didn't publish until 1933.)

Sources

There is a wealth of original source material from which the current adaptation has been able to draw. Aside from the primary source of Vera Brittain's WW1 memoir *Testament of Youth*, which she wrote and published retrospectively in 1933, there are also her diaries from those years (published as *Chronicle of Youth*), and her correspondence with Edward Brittain, Roland Leighton, Victor Richardson and Geoffrey Thurlow (published as *Letters From A Lost Generation: First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends*, edited by Mark Bostridge). There is also a definitive biography of Vera Brittain by Mark Bostridge and Paul Berry, as well as Bostridge's edited collection of Vera's poetry and prose (*Because You Died*). Roland Leighton's poetry is featured by Vera Brittain within *Testament of Youth*.

Vera Brittain's biographer, Mark Bostridge, was the consultant on the film. Vera's daughter Shirley Williams was extremely supportive and generous with her time, meeting with the production team and discussing script drafts, and giving insights into her mother.

Finding the director

In 2012, the search began for the right director. Says Alison, *"We met a number of highly interesting directors; but we needed to find someone with a very particular combination of qualities for this film: who could capture the idyll of Vera's pre-war life with lyrical grace, but could also explore her frontline work as a nurse with visceral, documentary rawness. Above all, we wanted to find a director who would embrace the first person viewpoint of the film – seeing the world with Vera and through her eyes, in a supple way – as we were very keen to avoid the film ending up as a detached, external biopic, devoid of emotional connection. We also needed a director who would be comfortable with including Roland's poetry, and the memory glimpses which go with his poetry."* After a number of director meetings, the award-winning TV documentary and drama director James Kent was chosen. Says Alison: *"I had watched James Kent's work over a number of years, and his qualities had made an impression: the visual elegance, grace and intelligence of his film-making; the emotional authenticity of the performances he could elicit; and the fluidity and dynamism of his shooting style which had grown from his background as a documentary film maker. It seemed to me that, given a chance on 'Testament of Youth', he could shine – as indeed he has!"* David Heyman also embraced the choice, especially after Heyday made an acclaimed BBC single drama with James Kent, *The Thirteenth Tale*.

Says James Kent: *"I think what they saw in my work was a synthesis, a kind of coming together of documentary and drama. As a director I've always been drawn to real stories and to the authenticity of a real event. I think it makes great drama. I'd directed a number of stories about strong women, often anchored in the past, because I find that women are often pushed to the margins of society in the past. Therefore, their struggle is something that really makes me insatiably curious about how they survive. I made a television film about Margaret Thatcher, who struggled against the maleness of the conservative party to become Prime Minister for three terms (Margaret, 2009). I directed a true story about a lesbian at the time of the Georgians, (The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister, 2010) in the 18th century who had a very active sexual life. Of course, Vera Brittain was really an incredible pioneer for women and what they could expect from life."*

Casting Vera Brittain

It was clear that for the film to thrive, a truly exceptional young actress had to be found as Vera. For a while, Saoirse Ronan had been attached to the role - but she was busy on a number of projects for 2013-2014, and the producers and director had to begin their search afresh. It was casting director Lucy Bevan who suggested Swedish actress Alicia Vikander, knowing that one of her films had been delayed and that there was a small time window of opportunity. The producers and director had seen Vikander's stunning performance in *A Royal Affair*, and her English speaking debut in *Anna Karenina*, and were immediately drawn to this idea. Vikander responded speedily and with passion to the script, and a meeting was set with James Kent and Rosie Alison. They were immediately struck by her exceptional life-force, drive, passion and fierce intelligence; she seemed the perfect match for Vera. She was cast in December 2013, necessitating a race to complete the funding.

Further casting

Once Vera was cast, a number of brilliant young actors (Kit Harington, Taron Egerton, Colin Morgan, Jonathan Bailey and Henry Garrett) were drawn in to play the young men in her life; and award-winning actors Dominic West and Emily Watson were persuaded to play her parents, alongside Miranda Richardson as her Oxford tutor and Hayley Atwell as the indomitable nurse (Hope Milroy) she serves under at Étaples. Anna Chancellor and Nicholas LePrevost came on as Roland's parents, Joanna Scanlan as Vera's Aunt Belle, and Alexandra Roach as Vera's Oxford friend, the writer Winifred Holtby. Casting was done by Lucy Bevan and her team.

Funding

Funding *Testament of Youth* was an uphill task over several years. While a number of financiers and studios flirted with the film, the lack of truly established younger stars, together with a first-time director, made this a difficult film to finance. In the end, it was the realisation that there was only a brief window when Alicia Vikander might be free which persuaded the producers to take a financial risk and begin pre-production, in the hope and belief that assembling an impressive casting ensemble would be the key to securing finance. Once several key members of the cast were in place, then BBC Films, Screen Yorkshire and the BFI felt able to join together with Heyday to support the film. Nordisk and Lipsync also provided clinching finance, together with Lionsgate UK who took on UK distribution, and Ingenious who provided gap finance. Key to the process was the passion and enthusiasm of Mike Goodridge, Sales Agent at Protagonist, and Richard Mansell, who came on as Executive Producer to structure the deals with the different financial partners. The budget was £7million.

The production team

Vera's story attracted a very dedicated production team. Rob Hardy – known for his superb work on *Red Riding* and *The Invisible Woman* – was the cinematographer, chosen in part for his ability to capture psychological nuance and subjectivity in his camera work. Production designer Jon Henson (*The Awakening*, *Shadow Dancer*) had worked before with James Kent and Heyday on *The Thirteenth Tale* and his brilliance in working with real locations, and adapting them into period settings with grace, authenticity and rich detail, was key to the film. The much feted costume designer Consolata Boyle, known for her work on films such as *The Iron Lady* and *The Queen*, had a long term attachment to Vera Brittain's memoir, and brought to her designs an extensively detailed knowledge of the costumes of the period. There were 1,200 extras who had to be dressed in period costume, and Consolata's team did superb work in sourcing costumes which could do justice to Consolata's vision of the era.

Christine Walmesley-Cotham was the make-up and hair designer, a veteran of period drama from her work on *Call the Midwife*. She brought Vicky Voller to the team, an expert in medical prosthetics who was in charge of the wounded extras and hospital scenes. Framestore, the premier visual effects house, was on hand to do various key moments of set extension in the film (supervised by Anthony Smith). Lucia Zucchetti (Bafta nominated for films such as *The Queen* and *Boy A*) edited the

film. John Pearson (*My Summer of Love*, *Thirteenth Tale*) was the production sound mixer, and Andy Shelley and Stephen Griffiths (Bafta nominated for *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*) were the supervising sound editors. In the final stage of production, acclaimed German composer Max Richter (known for albums such as *Memoryhouse* and *The Blue Notebooks*) was so inspired by the film that he took time out of his exceptionally busy concert schedule to compose a hauntingly beautiful score.

Filming on location

Filming began on March 14th for 41 days. The principal locations were Yorkshire, Oxford and London. As Screen Yorkshire was a funding partner, the production was based in Yorkshire. The North Yorkshire moors doubled for the Derbyshire dales, and the Yorkshire coast doubled both for the Brighton coast (where Vera received news of Roland's death), and for the Suffolk coast where Roland Leighton's family had a house (at Lowestoft.) Locations in Bradford, Sheffield and York doubled for London streets, and London hospital corridors and wards. Vera and Roland's first London date (at the gallery and theatre) was filmed in Leeds. Keighley Station was filled with extras and transformed into Charing Cross railway station, using the Keighley and Worth Valley heritage railway station and rolling stock.

The film's principal location was the Welbeck Estate, just south of Sheffield. This vast estate (which had been a military academy) provided a wide range of locations, both interior and exterior. A house on the estate doubled as Melrose, Vera's Buxton home. And Welbeck Abbey doubled as Uppingham School on Speech Day. Welbeck's sunken garden doubled both as a courtship location for Vera and Roland, and as a hospital convalescent garden during the war. An orangery doubled as a hospital convalescent ward. Outside, in the estate grounds, one field was transformed into a set for the Western Front, complete with a trench. And in another field, the production built the French field hospital camp of Étapes, where Vera served in 1917.

Outside Yorkshire, the lake (which begins and ends the film) was filmed at Darley Dale in Derbyshire.

The opening sequence of the film – Vera among Armistice Day crowds celebrating in London – was filmed at Greenwich Naval College, doubling for Whitehall. And the church to which she retreats from the Armistice crowds is St Bartholomew-the-Great in Smithfield.

In Oxford, a number of streets and colleges were used to evoke the city in 1914-1918. Radcliffe Square, Brasenose Lane, Merton Street, and the Bodleian courtyard besides the Sheldonian Theatre all featured. Budget-wise, the film-makers were restricted by the need to find period locations without too many modern features, requiring only a minimum of production dressing (this made it hard to film in Vera's actual college, Somerville, which has a number of modern additions). The quads of Merton College were used to evoke Vera's time both at Somerville College and Oriel College (which she moved to in her first year after Somerville was turned into a hospital.) Merton College also had a connection with *Testament of Youth*, in that it was Roland Leighton's college and his name is featured on Merton's roll of honour board. Balliol dining room, Trinity library, and the SCR at Exeter College (doubling as Miss Lorimer's study) were all used as sets. The blossom tree

featured was at Trinity College. But the interior of Vera's study was shot at the Welbeck estate near Sheffield.

Étaples field hospital

A number of amputees were featured in the field hospital scenes, from the agency Amputees in Action, whose extras included a number of veterans from Afghanistan; their presence on set added extra poignancy and resonance to the filming.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROSIE ALISON PRODUCER

Why did you want to make this film and how important is it to you?

In 2008 I heard that the BBC, who'd made a television series of *Testament of Youth* years ago, were looking at the rights for the book again, with a view to making a film this time.

Heyday already had a relationship with BBC Films having produced *The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas* so I called Christine Langan and explained that I loved this book and pleaded with her to make it. I'm very happy to say that she went along with our enthusiasm.

The book first came on my radar while I was at school, when the 1979 television series made a searing impression on me. I knew nothing about Vera Brittain when I began watching, and so I had no idea of the succession of grief and losses that Vera was about to go through. It drove me straight to the book, which I devoured. So I'd found Vera's writing and her story deeply inspiring since adolescence. The chance to work, many years later, on the film of this powerful and passionate book of remembrance has been the most extraordinary honour and privilege.

Why did the book appeal to you?

As a writer, Vera herself has this wonderful bracing candour, a psychological intimacy and an extraordinarily searching articulacy. She gets right to the heart of all her feelings and responses, no emotions are left uncovered. There's something very special about the book; once you imbibe it, it becomes a part of you.

Its great appeal is that it is this quintessential rites of passage story; you begin with this young woman who has all these hopes and dreams of fighting for her education, she loves poetry and the natural world around her, she loves these young men she grows up with. She has this dream of going to Oxford and becoming a writer, and has no idea that she's about to be thrown into a horrifying inferno of war, mud and battlefields. She endures so much and loses so much, and yet she refuses to give up. *Testament of Youth* is, for me, an anthem to the human spirit and Vera's refusal to give up on people. It's this passionate act of remembrance, which says 'We must never forget these people that I lost, because if I forget them, then all that they were will lose any value'. So here we are still remembering Roland, Victor, Edward, Geoffrey because she wouldn't let us forget them. In a sense, her book became a self-fulfilling prophecy; a book of remembrance that has become an anthem for the lost generation.

What do you think is the value of *Testament of Youth* and how important is it to make this film now, 100 years after outbreak of the First World War?

Testament of Youth is one of the few books or memoirs of the First World War written from a female point of view. Vera is the most intense and passionate single window on that conflict and it's always through a single window that you appreciate these stories the most. You really feel the losses and you really feel the hope and youth and idealism of these young people.

Vera's life was a succession of obstacles; she wanted to go to Oxford and her father wouldn't take her education seriously, so she rolled up her sleeves and made her own way there. Once she got there and the war had taken over, she realized she had to be active and become a nurse. So that's what she did. There was resistance from her colleagues the ward sisters where she did her training. They thought she was a bluestocking fake from an ivory tower and she had to work hard and win them over. She then felt a need to get closer to the front, and ended up at Etaples. There, instead of looking after English soldiers she ended up nursing German soldiers which in a way was a definitive moment in her story. She was nursing the enemy, which gave her this great insight into the utter absurdity of the war, and that those her brother and fiancé were fighting were similar to them. It was these insights gleaned from the Front, which eventually led to her becoming a lifelong pacifist.

Of course today her anti-war memoir feels as pertinent as ever. It isn't just about the First World War – it's an elegy for all young lives lost in all wars.

What was it about Juliette Towhidi's approach to the story that won her the role of screenwriter?

We (together with Christine Langan and Joe Oppenheimer of BBC Films) spent quite a long time meeting different writers and hearing their pitches. Juliette just stood out - she had the emotional intensity and rigorous intelligence to tackle the big story because it's not only the book of *Testament of Youth*, there were also Vera's diaries, all the letters and a wonderful collection of correspondence between Vera and the men in her life. There's an overwhelming wealth of material to draw from and we needed to find a writer who could tackle all that and not get lost within it.

Juliette did an amazing job of whittling it all down to something manageable. Then, over a period of several years, the script evolved to achieve a balance between the big historical story and Vera's personal, intimate, emotional journey. We didn't want something that was a stately biopic; we wanted to make a film where you really felt the profound interiority of Vera on her extraordinary journey from youth and hope through all the worst the world has to offer out the other side to a kind of a reawakening of the value and purpose of her life. Juliette wrote a beautiful and deeply affecting script.

Finding the right director is key to the success of a film. What was it about James Kent's approach that made him the right choice to direct?

James really appealed for a variety of reasons; partly because of his documentary background that I knew he'd be able to capture the raw authenticity of some of the scenes we were going to need, the hospital scenes, and the glimpses of war. I also knew that he's always had this rather lovely, restrained elegance and lyricism in his work, a sort of poetic gift. I was very keen to find a director who wouldn't shy away from Roland's poems, and that side of the script – memories, glimpses. He's also wonderful with actors; he's very, very good at coaxing with great gentleness nuanced and authentic emotional performances from them. It's a combination of knowing that he would be able to achieve wonderful performances, have this sort of documentary authenticity, but also achieve this poetry and passion that I was after that attracted me to him as the director for this.

Given how passionate you are about the book how important or difficult was it to find the perfect Vera?

I first saw Alicia Vikander in a Danish film called *A Royal Affair* and remember writing an email saying 'Oh, I've just seen this actress who would be the most fantastic Vera.' I think this film, really, was going to live or die by finding the right actress to play Vera so we were incredibly lucky that Alicia engaged with the role: we leapt at the chance to make the film when we saw a free window with Alicia at the start of the year.

I do think she's a truly exceptional actress. She has Vera's extraordinary life force, her tenacity, her wilfulness, her spirit, her determination, her passion and feistiness. She also has this lovely vulnerability and these reservoirs of grief and sorrow, which really speak to the character. She has this ability to transmit emotion, which pours from her face through her eyes. She transmits the spirit of this remarkable young woman and everything she goes through with incredible intensity.

What do Kit Harington, Taron Egerton, and Colin Morgan bring to the roles of the three young men in Vera's life?

All of the young men we cast were so passionate about the film, which was a wonderful reaction. As God's Englishman the part of Roland was a hard one to fill. He's this charming, educated, handsome, intelligent, vulnerable, tender, romantic, sincere, very emancipated young Englishman who recognized Vera for her qualities, was unafraid of her and embraced her abrasive feistiness. All characteristics that I would assume would be unusual for a young man of that era to possess - that respect for female emancipation. We needed to find somebody you believed could be a poet, and intelligent, and had won all the school prizes. When Kit came into his audition he had really thought about Roland and immediately had all these insightful things to say about Roland's poems and was so keen to play the role and to take on the challenge of being this rather perfect young Englishman. I feel he brought this wonderful, charming, playfulness, but at the same time a depth, integrity and sincerity.

Taron Egerton blew us away with his warmth, depth, and lightness of touch. He doesn't look at all like Edward Brittain, who was tall and willowy. But we knew we wanted an Edward who had this lovely bond with his sister and he was, alongside Roland, one of the great loves of Vera's life. They had this incredibly intense sibling bond. We wanted to find somebody who could exude this warmth with an ability to tease Vera, who's very serious and rather earnest. Taron just exudes this likeability and this warmth. He's a completely heartbreaking Edward.

For the part of Victor we needed somebody who could express a sort of yearning for Vera yet who possessed an inner poise, determination and poignancy. Vera adores him and he adores her back but her heart has already belongs to Roland. That someone was Colin Morgan. He had to be the perfect gentleman, a Captain Oates character who stands aside and says 'after you' and yearns in private. Colin conveys that so beautifully. He's got wonderful precision and delicacy. The most heartbreaking eyes full of poignancy and he's delivered a beautiful, restrained performance.

Baroness Shirley Williams is Vera Brittain's daughter, how important was it to you to have her input and support?

You feel the strong link between her and her mother because Shirley has always been so driven to achieve political and social change, like Vera. Shirley is so clearly egalitarian – she treats everybody with dignity and respect, and that really came through when she came to set, she just wanted to meet everyone; all the extras and crew.

We've had meetings with her over the years going through different drafts of the scripts, and introducing her to the director. We had a lovely tea with her in the House of Lords, when she met Alicia for the first time, and that was very moving. She's always been very open-minded and an absolute joy to deal with. She read various script drafts, which was enormously helpful to the production. She was quite wary of making sure we got the etiquette of the period right. She has always given great insight into her mother including Vera's love of nature, which we've really tried to weave into the film.

One note she was always giving was that the real heart of her mother's life was her longing to be a writer, and that the writing of *Testament of Youth* had been her salvation, and had been what had really given her life hope and meaning. That was something that we've woven into the film; the idea that it was a real redemption for Vera to come out of all the suffering of the war and realize and recognize that she could do something, which was to write this witness account, and that her book of remembrance could count for something.

What were the main challenges of this film?

One of the biggest challenges was that there is such a wealth of material about Vera the process of distilling it into a film did take quite a few years. In total it has taken six years for us to get it to the screen, and of course, you don't want to make it unless you can find a really good director for it, and the perfect cast. The other main challenge was that because the cast had to be young - and therefore not particularly well-known - it has been an uphill struggle to raise the funding for this quite elaborate period film.

How do you hope this story will impact on its audience?

Vera is this indestructible spirit and there's something incredibly optimistic and hopeful about *Testament of Youth* despite her losses. She goes through the worst that the world has to offer yet she still stands up at the end determined to make something of her life. There is a very powerful scene when she's talking at a town hall meeting and she literally finds her voice as an activist. You feel exhilarated that Vera has not been defeated by what she's endured, that she will not forget those she has lost, and that she insists there is a value to human life. She won't be defeated. It's the invincible human spirit that shines through, I feel, by the end of the film. Though terrible things happen to them, the beauty of the traces of their lives is still with you, and Vera doesn't give up. There is a catharsis by the end in that there's a beautiful remembrance of this lost generation.

How would you describe the film's appeal?

One of the great appeals of this film is that it's a true story – I hope audiences will engage with it because it allows such a powerful window on actual events. I also think it's a deeply romantic film. There's nothing in this film that is melodramatic because it all happened. It's a real story and the love story between Roland and Vera rings down the years. It's also a powerful coming of age story about a young woman who fights for an education, endures exceptional grief and hardship, and emerges with a political voice.

How much does it mean to you to bring Vera's story to the screen?

It has been such a pleasure, a privilege and an honour to work on this film because I've loved Vera Brittain's story and *Testament of Youth* since adolescence. To be able to make it with such an extraordinary actress as Alicia Vikander, who really does embody the spirit of Vera in such a compelling and spellbinding way has been a real joy to me personally. We all went through Vera's journey with her as it unfolded. We lived with her in this lovely Edwardian house and we saw Edwardian Oxford and the dreaming spires returned to the past, and wondered at that. We recreated Etaples, this appalling place of mud and rain and amputated bodies. One really had a sense, then, of the journey that Vera had gone on from her comfortable home and the ivory towers to this place of death and blood and gore. Each and every one of the crew travelled with her on her journey. It was a powerful and moving experience for us all.

Have you made the film you set out to make?

There was a very particular thing we were trying to achieve with *Testament of Youth*, which is a film that feels very first person. You see so many films where it's very external and distanced – stately biopics. We wanted to make a film that is seen very much through one person's eyes, including her memories and glimpses of her inner life. We wanted this subjectivity and this experiential quality to the film. Vera appears in every scene and somehow you have easy access into her mind through the letters she writes and through the poems that she and Roland exchange. I hope we have achieved that intimacy with Vera.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIETTE TOWHIDI

WRITER

What was it about the book that you loved?

I had read the book as a teenager and loved it, and what struck me then, is what struck me re-reading it and that is how modern Vera feels. It is that sense of connection with someone from a forgotten time that can really strike you when you read a book. That's also something we wanted to capture in the film, how her concerns, fears, hopes and aspirations feel so timeless. Yet Vera went through something extraordinary, something so unimaginable to most of us.

Can you give us an insight into Vera?

The film begins with Vera, a rebellious young woman of 19 and 20, who is deeply frustrated with her parental surroundings and their expectation that she's just going to get married. She desperately wants a higher education and to go to university. There were far few universities in those days, so Oxford was her goal. She has a very close relationship with her brother Edward, and then meets his close friend from school, Roland Leighton. They unexpectedly fall in love. Vera wasn't looking for marriage and romance, but they do fall in love. Suddenly and shockingly, the war breaks out and gradually her brother and fiancé, as well as her two closest male friends, who are also part of their intimate circle, all go off to fight. The story told from her perspective of what its like to go through that sense of jeopardy over your closest friends in your generation, and the loss and the fear and the terror. Her experience represents the English experience of that war. She ends up getting into Oxford, but leaving quite quickly to go and serve at the front as a voluntary nurse. I won't spoil the story entirely, but she has some pretty searing experiences. It's about how she reconstructs herself from those as well.

How dramatically different was Vera's life to the life of women today?

It was both a shock and surprise that the lives of women were so circumscribed only a hundred years ago. She couldn't go anywhere on her own and had to be chaperoned. She had no privacy and her letters were supposed to be read by her mother. Even sitting in a room on her own was considered a bit odd. Women were expected to learn the piano and maybe paint a bit. For a middle class girl like Vera it was all about her decorous attributes, being suitable for marriage and finding the right husband. Vera herself said that the time in her life that she was most unhappy was at home in Buxton. That tells you something about how suffocating it was for women a hundred years ago.

What makes her unique as a female character of this period?

I think she was an instinctive feminist, in the sense that she rebelled against her lot in life, which was meant to include getting married, not bothering about education or broadening her horizons in any way, and she just wasn't going to have that. I think that's something we can all relate to today. She was clever and questioning, but at the same time she was representative of her generation in that they were trusting and innocent. I think that led them to a collective sacrifice that she then emerged from, very changed by, and very questioning of. There's a big, epic feel to her life journey. She goes through changes that for some people would happen over a lifetime, but for Vera these are

concentrated into four dramatic and terrifying years. She is an incredibly courageous, strong, rebellious, and very brave young woman.

How do you begin to condense this woman's life and experiences into a feature film?

My task was to translate Vera's novel into a screenplay, which for me meant sticking to the book - that was my beginning and end point for research. I read and re-read and re-read the book and because I come from a journalistic background it is in my DNA to research things thoroughly. I did a lot of research around the First World War, always from a civilian perspective and of course Shirley Williams (Vera's daughter) and Mark Bostridge (Vera's biographer) really brought her to life for me.

There's a nice quote 'What makes *Testament of Youth* so special is that it moves and it educates at the same time.' What did that mean to you?

It's a little bit like one of the great Russian novels in the sense that you have individuals experiencing a great tide of history that they are powerless to do anything about. It is the human struggle against that backdrop that makes it so powerful. Vera's very personal journey set against this extraordinary epic backdrop of the war is what I think makes the story really special. The fact that she struggled with different forms of expressing her experience - she began by trying to write it as a totally fictionalized novel, and then ended up writing a very personal first-hand account. I think that's actually what gives the book its power. You feel the truth of it.

So when did you form a plan of how you were going to condense this long and very personal book into a story that fits the film but also doesn't feel too enclosed?

When you are a screenwriter, you have your instincts from the outset to capture the essence of the story. If you're adapting a book, your job is to distil the essence of that book and to find the central threads that carry you through. So much of it is about structure, you want to capture the characters, the tones, the themes, and then structure them in a way that feels dramatically coherent. One of the first things I look for are image systems. For me in *Testament of Youth* there were trains, mud, blood, and a sense of decorum, as well, that contrasts with those. It was a journey away from Buxton and her decorous upbringing and into the chaos and horror of war, but with this amazing personality as the thread through all of that, taking you on that journey with her.

What were the key moments of the book that you had to include in the screenplay?

One of the scenes that hit me the hardest in the book that we retained in the film is when Vera was nursing German wounded prisoners and officers at the Front. Vera holds the hand of a dying German officer and sees him through until the end. That scene is so powerful because she enters the war nursing at the Front seeing the Germans as a sworn enemy. It is about that moment of connection with that human being and experiencing that universality of what it is to be facing death. The humanity of a wounded person, no matter their nationality was a very transformative, pivotal scene. It really leapt out at me in the book, and hopefully will do the same in the film. It catapults her change of heart about war, and ultimately led to her becoming a pacifist.

Do you feel an obligation and responsibility to Vera to represent her faithfully in this story?

I think when you are creating a film often you have to condense a life in order to show a fuller meaning. You don't get to hide behind chronology, necessarily; you want to be true to the essence of something. In order to capture that essence, sometimes you have to play with the facts a bit. We wanted to show that her ultimate end point is a complete change of view of war and conflict. Otherwise, the story doesn't have the same resonance and meaning.

One of the unique elements of this film is the wealth of source material that exists between the key players such as letters and poems. What did it mean to you to have these at your disposal?

Having the letters is amazingly powerful because so much is expressed more directly than through other sources. One of the moments that brought the reality of these characters to life for me most fully was when I visited Shirley Williams at her office in Westminster and she still has her Uncle Edward's filing case on top of a cupboard. That was an amazing moment to look at this object and you think 'that's from 1914.' That moment really brought it home. We all felt it was important to include Roland's poetry in the film and to me, the poems they wrote were a way of sticking two fingers up at war and what they were going through. It was almost like they were saying 'this is the essence of us - this is an expression of something different and something higher.' Here were these men, bogged down in waist high mud and horror and rats, conflict and imminent death. The fact that they were able to write these beautiful, expressive poems, which were often full of the horror of their experience but were instilled into a beautiful art form, is very inspiring. It says something about the human spirit. They also told me a little bit about who these young people were - brilliant, gorgeous, clever, the bright stars of their generation. I do think that increases the sense of tragedy, again.

What is it like to see Alicia embodying all those attributes and what do you think she brings to the role?

Alicia Vikander is amazing and looks uncannily like Vera. She's an extremely, emotionally intelligent actress who just gets where Vera is in her life at every given moment. It was really exciting actually seeing her inhabit the role.

Describe the three young men in Vera's life?

Roland is the alpha male in the sense that he's clever and charming and has had a gilded life up to that point. He's effortlessly good at things, and very gifted. There's a certain touch of arrogance and over confidence about him, because of that. He's smart enough to realise that the challenge Vera presents to him is a great one, something that he really needs. I think that gives an interesting friction to their relationship. And he's just fundamentally a very kind, loving person, and that's how they connect.

Victor is the best friend you always want. He's warm and kind and the person to whom everyone would go to talk about their problems. He's a loyal, empathetic human being but perhaps lacking the leadership qualities of Roland.

Edward is Vera's very gifted brother who is both an artist and musician. They were incredibly close and teased each other a lot. He more than anyone else was the reason Vera decided she too must head for the Front.

In reality Roland and Vera only knew each other for a few short weeks before war broke out. Was it your intention for Roland to become something of a romantic fantasy for Vera?

I think the fact that in reality and in the film, they spent very little time together did lend a sort of romantic aura and a sense of longing to their relationship. It's really important to us that Roland feels like a real flesh and blood person, so you feel the events of the film much more vividly. It's a difficult balancing act because it's a strong romance but you want it to feel very real as well. I wouldn't say we wanted to deliberately romanticize him, but obviously he was an incredibly appealing, charismatic person. Kit (Harington) was perfect for embodying that.

We're at a time now where the First World War is no longer within living memory - who is the film aimed at?

I think it is a story with cross-generational appeal. There'll be older people who will remember the family stories and remember people for whom it was a first-hand experience, but then there will be younger people who will be discovering the story for the first time. I think it's really important for them to see stories like this in an era where we still have the same questions facing us about warfare and is it the right way to solve conflicts? What should our attitude towards authority be? This was a generation who trusted entirely what they were told by their so-called 'elder's and betters'. I think there's a big warning in there for young people today to always question and make demands of our politicians and those who represent us to justify their decisions. This was a generation who didn't do that. Vera's experience was that their young men were all lambs to the slaughter. Certainly, it was a position she never adopted again, she questioned everything, even if it went against the grain of popular belief and that is an amazing message for young people.

How does it feel to bring Vera's story back into popular culture?

It's really gratifying and really important to bring this amazing book back into fashion but more importantly it is a story that deserves to be told. Whatever the reasons for war I think Vera's story teaches us that the human cost of war is what we have to look at. The fact that she ended up as such an unflinching pacifist tells us a lot about the conclusions she drew from it, and I think it's a really important story to put out there at a time when we're looking back at the First World War and remembering its centenary.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES KENT DIRECTOR

How did you come to direct *Testament of Youth*?

I'd never directed a feature film before and prior to this I was making documentaries and television dramas. But I was approached by Rosie Alison, the producer of the film and I think what Rosie saw in my work was a synthesis, a kind of coming together of documentary and drama. As a director I've always been drawn to real stories and to the authenticity of a real event. I think it makes great drama. I'd directed a number of stories about strong women, often anchored in the past, because I find that women are often pushed to the margins of society in the past. Therefore, their struggle is something that really makes me insatiably curious about how they survive. I made a television film about Margaret Thatcher, who struggled against the maleness of the conservative party and became Prime Minister for three terms (*Margaret*, 2009). I directed a true story about a lesbian at the time of the Georgians, (*The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister*, 2010) in the 18th century who had a very active sexual life. Of course, Vera Brittain was really an incredible pioneer for women and what they could expect from life.

How did you see the film?

The way I conceived the film is that there would be quite a strong narrative arc to the film. In a way, the first act is the summer before the storm and the audience knows the storm is coming. It was a beautiful Edwardian summer and they're kind of children in innocence. We were very fluid with our camera work and very lush with the photography. As the film progresses we compress the scale onto these individuals as if the tide of history is pushing itself into their psyche. What happens is that the film gets increasingly darker with more handheld camera-work. By the end, in the aftermath of Vera's grief, we're really up close and tight to her. You feel that she is literally pressing up the burden as it's forcing itself down upon her. There is a real cinematic journey to the look of the film. What I hope is current throughout is the presence of nature. I really do believe that when you look at the film and you see the landscapes, plant life, flowers, birds, that the one thing that always renews, as much as we try to eradicate it, is nature. Nature is a kind of objective observer that carries on despite us.

What did you think you could bring to the film that set you apart from other directors?

I'm told that my work is very visceral and personal and that I use metaphor a lot. For example, in the film, landscape for me, echoes Vera's temperament. At the same time, because I've often made dramas about one singular person that in itself presents a very subjective view on the material. I believe I have empathy for the struggle that women undergo to make their voices heard. It would've been far too easy for this film to be a kind of biopic on Vera Brittain however I felt that the quality that I could bring to the film was something that was a poetic equivalent to Vera Brittain's love of nature and of writing and of the world around her.

What was your particular research process?

I always do a lot of research when I begin a project. I trained as a historian and journalist, so research is in my blood. I particularly drew upon my previous documentary film past including *9/11*:

Phone Calls From The Towers, Holocaust: A Music Memorial Film and other war films I worked on that involved wars in Kashmir, Uganda and Afghanistan which helped me recall those emotions people feel when they are put under stress.

Do you think there are generational similarities between today's young people and Vera's era?

One of the really powerful themes of this film is that it speaks to today's young generation, whom, like Vera, I believe also feel abandoned by their elders. If you recall the great crash of 2008, the materialism of my generation and now how young people still cannot afford to buy properties. It's obviously not on the same scale as the First World War, but there is a real generational divide in existence. Particularly of this Edwardian generation, which had come out of a very staid, Victorian era, technology during the early 20th century – the telephone, the motorcar, the airplane, armaments, electricity – all these things were rapidly changing the world. Vera, Victor, Edward, and Roland were already in a massively shifting environment. Of course, they were to discover that a lot of that technology could be used for mass extermination, which had never happened before. That was their realization; that the world they would have to face after the war wasn't the optimistic place they'd lived in before.

How do you think it will affect the audience?

The film I wanted to make isn't meant to be a period film in the conventional sense. It's a kind of experience for the audience. It has a real uplift. To love in the way that Vera loved Roland, to achieve what she achieves and her survival after her very personal struggle is something that we can all learn from. One of the core themes is 'How do you find a unique and personal voice for yourself in the world?' Vera felt she had a voice, but it wasn't formulated. What she goes through, which is a great lesson for us all, is that all experience, bad as well as the good, will enrich you as an individual and as a human being. We all leave a legacy and influence people around us, as they in turn influence us.

It was of vital importance that you found the right actress to play Vera – what was it about Alicia that convinced you she was the one?

The film is Vera Brittain. What Alicia Vikander offered to me, and why I was so delighted that she took the part, is that she has an incredible emotional intelligence and wells of depth. You simply sink into those eyes and the luminosity Alicia possesses is not something many young actresses of her age would have. What you inherit with Alicia is a young woman with tremendous emotional awareness and intuition of what Vera was going through. Vera Brittain was determined, honest, passionate, driven; and in some respects, intolerant. You need an actress of real fortitude to deliver that which Alicia has great reserves of.

Why did you choose the actors you did to play the three young men?

What's wonderful about our three lead men is that they're very different. Colin Morgan has a wonderful kind of nuance in his accent and he played Victor brilliantly. Victor is the least confident of the three and is a follower not a leader. He was deeply in love with Vera and Colin captured that beautifully. Taron Egerton, who's relatively new to the acting scene, has Edward's artistic side and played him as a very gentle, affectionate brother who loved Vera deeply.

Finally in Kit Harington's Roland you get a soulful, romantic, leader of men - a very accessible, charming, handsome kind of Renaissance man, who was both brilliant at rugby but wrote wonderful poetry. I think Kit enshrines that in a nutshell.

How important was the look of the period

It was absolutely paramount that we didn't listen to the clichés of the period. For example, Mr and Mrs Brittain are an affluent couple; they have a house in Buxton and were leading players in that particular society. Mrs Brittain was the daughter of an actress, so she had taste. Perhaps, it wasn't Vera's taste, or the young generational taste, but it is a loving household and we wanted to get that right.

We had a medical consultant with us the whole time when we had medical scenes; we wanted to get that right. Etaples, the hospital, we wanted to make sure that we replicated the kind of horror of that environment. All the time, we were judging against the plethora of photographs of the era. One is fortunate to have a photographic record, but the point to remember is that a lot of the photographs are taken during the First World War were heavily propagandized pictures; they were watched by their officers. It was illegal to take pictures as a private and just send them home. Some did, and those were the ones we were much more interested in. Those were the ones that show you the bodies lying at the bottom of the trenches and the terrible weather that they experienced. In our production design, we wanted to get not the British version, but we wanted to get the private's version of that war.

What have been the moments from the whole experience of filming that have been the most memorable and will stay with you forever?

If there's one moment that stays with me, and I think it is a turning point in the film; it is the scene between Vera Brittain and a German officer, a dying German officer in the German ward of the military hospital. It's consummately acted and quite graphic, but it is the kind of scene where Vera Brittain sees that the forces that wiped out her fiancé and her best friend, and will wipe out her brother, that actually, they're made up of good human beings. One looks at what's happening in Iraq at the moment and it's very easy to say 'they're bad and no good'. But actually, everybody has a mother. Everybody will have a child. That is what Vera sees when this German officer is dying there. He looks at her and he mistakes her for his love, Klara. It's a real moment of truth for Vera Brittain, and it will feed into this big speech that she makes in the film, which is a kind of call for the end of the war. Everybody is a human being.

Do you have another one as well?

Another scene that was pivotal was the scene very near the end, if it's not the end. There's a scene where Vera Brittain, having made the speech where she declares her advocacy of pacifism and the evils of war, she goes back to Derbyshire where she was brought up, and she returns to this beautiful lake where she and the boys swam right at the beginning of the film. She goes into the lake, she starts swimming in it. In a way, it purges her; it kind of replenishes her of all her grief and the burden that she's been carrying. It was incredibly important to me that that scene worked,

because it is, in a way, what that film was about, which is that everybody can pull resources from somewhere. If you really dig deep and you go to what really matters, then you will survive. You will come out of grief. One of the big essays that I wanted to make in the film was that you don't have to go through World War to experience grief. You will be told, perhaps you have cancer. You may lose a relative in some awful way. Grief will come to us all. Handling grief is something we will all need to learn. That, whether you're young or old, is something that I think this film has something quite profound to say. That scene at the lake seems to encapsulate that message.

As for your audience, you touched on that. For a modern audience now, what do you think will appeal to them?

I think what will appeal to a modern audience about *Testament of Youth* is that it is a universal film. It's love, it's documentary truth, it's survival, it's finding your voice, it's going out in the world and damn well getting on with it. You know, 'Don't give in, go out there'. I think parents can take their children to the film, they will get incredible message about World War I, which they should know, because we lost a lot of brave people in that war. It gave us liberty. Older people can go and really connect with the stories of their grandparents or their parents. It has, at its core, some of the real essences of what it means to be a human being. You can be of any generation and indulge and enjoy the love. You can really glean powerful messages from the loss, and you can get hope from the redemption.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK BOSTRIDGE

BIOGRAPHER OF VERA BRITTAIN

As the film's expert on Vera Brittain there is no one better placed to give us an insight into the woman behind the book *Testament of Youth*?

Vera Brittain (b.1893 – d.1970) was brought up in Buxton in Derbyshire, as the daughter of a paper manufacturer. She had one younger brother, Edward and from an early age she wanted to be a writer. She also wanted the type of education that was difficult for a woman to get at that time, an education at a university. Just before the outbreak of the war, in 1914, she managed to get into Somerville College, Oxford and she went up to Oxford in October 1914, just a couple of months after the war had broken out. By the beginning of 1915, she'd fallen in love with a school friend of her brother Edward's and by the summer of that year, she decided that her university studies were increasingly irrelevant to what was going on in the world, and that she really had to do something for the war effort. She went off to become a VAD nurse, and in all, she served in some seven civilian and military hospitals throughout the war. She finally left hospital in 1919 after the war had ended and she suffered huge personal losses. What is remarkable about her story is not only that she went on to write about it so memorably, but that she rebuilt her life and really dedicated much of the rest of it to being a pacifist, to fighting the idea that society should ever go to war.

What do you do as a consultant on the film?

As a consultant, you're called upon to read the various drafts of the script, and say where you think they're not being true to the book or to the characters. Then on set, I was asked questions by the director, the screenwriter and sometimes the actors asked about their characters. Colin Morgan, I remember, was particularly keen to know more about Victor and his background. So, I asked Victor's niece if I could show Colin some letters that had been written by Victor that aren't published and that helped him a great deal.

At what point did you become involved?

BBC Films first made contact with me in 2008, because we had just finished making a documentary about Vera Brittain for the Remembrance Sunday season. One year later, Heyday Films joined the project. For Heyday's producer Rosie Alison, this was a real passion project and her determination drove the film pretty much all the way through. She fell in love with the story herself when she was a schoolgirl and really wanted to make it. There was an attempt to make a film version of the book in 1934, which fell apart.

Explain how challenging it was for women to study at university at this time?

Vera Brittain came from a well-off family and at the time it wasn't expected a woman should need to go to university unless she wanted to be a governess or a teacher in order to make a living. Vera was still quite a rarity in wanting to go to university. She could study and she could go to lectures, though she had to be chaperoned in order to go to those lectures in case she came into contact with male students. However, until after the First World War in 1920, women were not awarded degrees. They could only read their chosen subjects. Vera and her great friend, Winifred Holtby, were among the first women to receive degrees at Oxford.

Why did you choose to make Vera Brittain the focus of your studies?

I read *Testament of Youth* for the first time over thirty years ago and I've read a lot of books about the First World War since. No single book has ever had the impact on me that Testament of Youth did. It really moved me. I didn't know it at the time but my own grandmother had lost her husband and her brother within three months of each other at the Battle of the Somme. Coincidentally I had been at school with one of Vera Brittain's grandchildren and at university with another. There seemed to be a real connection with her. When I left university, I worked for Vera Brittain's daughter, Shirley Williams and that's really where my serious interest began.

Do you think Vera would have approved of a film version of her life and loss?

Absolutely. She would have approved of both our film and the TV series that was made in 1979. There are letters from Vera to friends to this effect. At that time the experiences of women during the First World War were still largely overlooked. When you think of the BBC's great landmark series, *The Great War*, which was first shown in 1964-65, in all 20 hours of footage only 10 minutes is devoted to women and their experience during the war.

So why is it that Vera's story has stood the test of time?

I think it unites lots of different universal elements. It has great drama and a terrific narrative plot line. It's a book about a woman's struggle to emancipate herself and get an education. It's a love story and it's a story about keeping faith with the dead. How do you go on living? How do you rebuild your life when you have lost so much?

What do you think Vera's intention was when she wrote the book?

Vera's intention was to educate and inform the world about how movements opposing war grew out of the experience of the First World War. Shortly after she left Oxford University in 1921 she began lecturing for the League of Nations Union, which was committed to an international policy.

By the time Vera Brittain wrote *Testament of Youth* in the early 30's, the League of Nations was failing and Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany. She began to realise that ultimately the only thing that would stop war is for everybody to oppose the idea of war completely.

Were you confident that the film could exist on those two levels as both a drama and a political message?

I knew it would be a challenge but I'm absolutely amazed at the way Juliette Towhidi has boiled down a very complex and didactic book, yet retained its essence. That's one of the great things about the script.

The book has had several resurgences of popularity since it was first published – what are the reasons for this?

It has been an extraordinary process. She had been a best-selling author on both sides of the Atlantic, right up until the beginning of the Second World War, when her pacifist worldviews began to damage her book sales. When Virago republished *Testament of Youth* in 1978, it sent the book

back into the Bestseller list again. That re-publication, along with the BBC television series in 1979 really established the book. But never the less it's taken 30 years to embed *Testament of Youth* in the canon of First World War literature. In my mind, what's extraordinary, eighty years on from its first publication is that it's the most powerful work of love, loss, and remembrance to emerge from the First World War.

It took ten years after the end of the First World War before Vera began writing *Testament of Youth* – why do you think it took her so long?

The actual experience of writing the book we now know as *Testament Of Youth*, (which she started writing in November 1929 and finished in the spring of 1933), was a searing one, not only because the process of remembering very painful things was obviously difficult to deal with, but also because she was trying to build a family and build a marriage at the same time.

She was middle class and she could afford to employ people to look after her children, it was nevertheless a very stressful existence. When you read letters that she wrote, especially from 1931 to 1933 when the book was finished, she really is close to breakdown at times. It was so important to her that the book should succeed, not only because she wanted to be a writer but also because she wanted to immortalise the lives of those she had lost.

Vera Brittain was both a mother and a successful author – how do you think she balanced the two?

I think it's difficult for us to understand that for women of that generation who were committed to equality, like Vera Brittain, there was a sense that they had a right to have a career, to fulfil themselves and also to have a marriage and children. The fulfilment of being a writer was very important to Vera Brittain. One thing she says at the end of the war in 1918 is that the war had left her with nothing and the only thing that held her to life was ambition itself.

What kind of a man was Roland Leighton?

Despite having all his letters it is still very difficult to really understand what sort of man Roland was. We know he was obviously quiet, confident and self-assured and Vera said in *Testament of Youth*, 'he may have been only 19, but he could easily have passed for 30.' Roland was a born writer and Vera Brittain recognised that bond between them. He came from a literary family and his father had been the literary editor of The Daily Mail while his mother was a flamboyant romantic novelist who was initially kind to Vera but later disapproved of her increasingly left-wing politics and feminism.

Tell us a bit more about Edward?

I think Edward was always the temperamental foil to Vera Brittain. He was quieter, he didn't flare up, and he didn't have her temperament. Therefore, he was quite an essential counter-balance within the Brittain family. Mr Brittain had a terrible temper and was a depressive. There were quite a lot of lively rousts in the family, and Edward was always sort of the mediating influence. Much later in life she says somewhere that its so extraordinary that such a quiet, withheld personality could've been so courageous in the war without really making much fuss about it.

He had, of course, been extraordinarily courageous during the first Battle On The Somme when he'd gone over the top and then been caught in No Man's Land. He survived on water for a number of hours before attempting the crawl back.

What can you tell us about Victor?

Victor was undoubtedly less academically gifted than Roland and Edward, though he had a place at Cambridge where he was going to study medicine. I think he was a very dependable, caring person who'd been through quite a lot personally before the war started. In the early months of the war, Victor caught meningitis and almost died from that, but nevertheless was very keen to enlist and eventually went off to France.

What's the trick to making the film work on both a political and a personal level?

I think partly, it lies with the actress. Alicia is obviously very beautiful, and the camera loves her. What's interesting is that even when she's in repose an extraordinary flow of different emotions flood across her visage. That is mesmerizing to watch and draws you in. The thing about Alicia is she's incredibly intelligent and also interested in the visual setup and in the way the director is putting the scene together.

Of course, the adaptation is also important and Juliette has cleverly conveyed the essence of the pacifist, or at least the anti-war message, in certain key scenes that aren't necessarily in the book. Finally, the director allows you to feel that you're not hearing an autographical voice, but perceiving an autobiographical voice. The film has a very strong point of view, which I think is essential in an adaptation of *Testament of Youth*, because ultimately, it's one woman's story. It's an autobiography.

Do you get the sense that Shirley Williams is still keen for another story to be told to a wider audience?

She is thrilled. I mentioned to her that the Twitter comments around the film show how this new generation is responding to the casting of these incredible young actors and how it will take her mother's reputation to a whole new level.

It seems quite foreign to us now that a whole generation could join in a war effort so wholeheartedly – was it part of the breeding?

It's important to remember that the four men in Vera Brittain's life belonged to a very precise class in society; they were young officer material and educated at public schools. A public school like Uppingham was extremely militaristic - probably the most militaristic of all the public schools. That kind of attitude, patriotism and desire to serve your country, to die if necessary was inculcated into them through their education. It's important to remember, however, that not everyone reacted as these men did. There's a myth that everybody rushed to the colours in August 1914 – they didn't. These young public school officers did, and their life expectancy could be as short as three weeks in the trenches.

Can you explain the role of a VAD nurse?

The VAD scheme, or the Voluntary Aid Detachment, had actually been established before the war following fears of German invasion. The VAD nurses were generally drawn from the upper and middle classes. You didn't get many working class girls doing that job. It was intended to be a support system for the professional Queen Alexandra nurses. As time went on and conditions became more difficult, especially near the front, VADs were called upon to do more and more difficult and more extreme tasks like assisting in operations.

What kind of work did Vera do when she was a VAD nurse and what would have been her daily regime?

Vera began as a VAD nurse at the Devonshire Hospital in Buxton and then transferred to the first London General at Camberwell, which appears in the film. At first she was doing very simple tasks, such as cleaning the hospital, making sure the patients were comfortable and ensuring the bed linen was kept clean. As soon as the wounded began to arrive, more and more pressure was imposed on the young VADs, who had no formal training. Because of this, the professional nurses often regarded them with contempt as depicted in the film. It was a great shock for Vera when she goes to a military hospital to actually be responsible for giving a young man a bed bath. Given her restricted upbringing it was extraordinary for her to see a man naked for the first time. When she travelled to Etaples, she was very close to the front line and supplies were short so the pressure was even greater. One thing that is very true about Vera Brittain's character is that she was often extremely frightened, but she believed that the only way of dealing with that fear was to face up to it. She stayed in France during the worst times, even though she was scared stiff.

In what way did this job contribute to shaping Vera's future ideology?

The point that's so important about Vera's experience of France is that she is nursing German prisoners of war whilst her brother Edward, in a different part of the line, is trying to kill them. Vera is there, patching them up and trying to save their lives. That drove home the whole incomprehensibility of war contributing ultimately to the pacifist ideals that she would embrace after the war.

What sort of themes in the film do you think will appeal to an audience?

It's a great wartime love story, and I think that's what a lot of people will come to this film wanting to see. It is an extraordinary story of love and about keeping faith with the dead. But I think the message that Vera Brittain would want most people to take away from the film is the agony and destructiveness of modern warfare to the human race.

AN INTERVIEW WITH CONSOLATA BOYLE **COSTUME DESIGNER**

How did you first become involved in *Testament of Youth*?

I was sent Juliette Towhidi's script by my agent, which I really enjoyed reading. I then met with the director, James Kent and producer, Rosie Alison to discuss the project and my thoughts on the film, the look and the importance of the story and its background. I was very moved by the script and the book, which I had read many years prior. Wonderfully, I was invited to join the team.

What elements of the script moved you?

I think one thing that was very important to me when I read it was, as well as the vastness of the subject matter and large scale depiction of the horror of war, there was this element of a young woman who was hugely ambitious in every way and who was full of spirit. I think that it is very important to celebrate young women who have ambition and clarity of thought and not to be afraid of that. For Vera Brittain to have such ambition and her love and thirst for knowledge while staying true to her free spirit and being brought up in what was a very claustrophobic society really struck a chord with me. Juliette's script combined all of these elements as well as the beautiful portrayal of Vera as a young woman experiencing these extraordinary, horrific and unbelievably traumatic events. It really touched me very deeply.

How did you go about drawing your inspiration when designing the costumes for Vera Brittain?

I began with a lot of research, which was absolutely vital. After which I put it to one side because sometimes it can dominate the process. It was then a matter of refining each character look. During that process I worked very closely with the director in those important weeks of prep to discuss the way in which each character's arc is portrayed through the clothes.

Along with the text and the look of the film, everything Vera does tells her story so the clothes are absolutely crucial. They are not just a decoration; they are completely intrinsic. Vera was a young woman who loved clothes; her diaries are full of little notes about what she chose to wear and how she combined this with that, so the clothes were a really important element for her both as a person and as our character. It tells her story and her position in the context and vision of the film. All of those elements are worked out during the prep time along with the fittings and choices of fabrics and colours.

How do Vera's clothes define her in the film?

I was very keen to show that, prior to the war, Vera had a decorative element to how she dressed. With the film focussing on the spring and summer before the war the look was light, summery and rather dream-like. This was then challenged when she goes to work at the front with the control and discipline of the VAD's uniform. Then later, post-war, I tried to show how Vera had changed by adopting simplicity to her style of dressing and we moved into monochromes and neutrals and greys. There was a simplicity of dress that, because of the scarcity of materials and fabrics, became very subtle and structured.

Were the designs of the soldiers and nurses uniforms based on original designs?

The uniforms are completely based on authentic uniforms of that time. There was no deviating from that and the designs were immaculately and meticulously matched to reflect those historical references. The importance and meaning of what the uniform symbolised was very important for this story and we had to get that right.

What were the challenges in the design of the costumes, creating the colour palette and sourcing materials for the film?

From the beginning there were numerous challenges in sourcing the right colours, fabrics and textures for the costumes worn during that period. It was crucial that the materials reacted in a certain way to the lighting. There was a softness, femininity and fragility about the women's clothes and a delicacy that mirrored both the social class and the world that Vera and her parents belonged to.

How many of Vera's costumes were original sourced pieces?

As much as I could I found original materials from that era for the dress designs. We would discover a key piece that could be made into a bodice around which the rest of the dress could be fitted from a more neutral source. So pieces that still existed, for example a collar that could set off a whole garment that then could be built around one little collar. Those original pieces are such wonderful treasures to find.

How important was it to reflect Vera's personality through her costumes?

Vera Brittain's clothes really do tell a story. They reflect how Vera would have wanted to be perceived by her peers. We know from her diaries and writings that she was quite a self-conscious dresser in the early years and she was really aware of fashion. As well as being super intellectual and bright she had this absolute love of clothes and understood the power of them, combining different things and noticing everything, making notes of all the items she wore and the events she wore them to.

What was the process of working with Alicia Vikander?

Alicia was so intelligent about her approach to Vera and had very clear ideas about the character and a profound understanding of Vera the young woman. We had wonderful conversations about how her look would progress throughout the film from the early part to the darker, more muted section and then the positivity of the ending of the film. It was very important that we discussed those transitions quite a bit.

Vera's hats are quite a feature throughout the film. Was that a reflection of the times?

Hats were everywhere at that time. During the pre-war period the hat she wore to Uppingham School for example is very feminine and decorative. It matches perfectly with what she is wearing and then as she comes back from the war the simple knitted beret appears which looks just as beautiful, if not more beautiful on her.

How many costumes did you design for Alicia?

Vera had about 75 potential story day changes throughout the script. We didn't have 75 different costumes because we reused and combined costumes like one would do in real life. A lot of the knitwear and all the dresses, shirts and blouses were made from scratch knowing that there were 75 possibilities of Vera's appearance we needed to achieve.

What was your inspiration in designing the non-military costumes for Kit Harington, Taron Egerton and Colin Morgan?

The costumes were very much based on research and as with Vera's costumes you can jump off from that point and add other possibilities. Men's clothes of that period were very beautiful. A suit could be worn casually and there was a lot of linen and separates with different types of wool, waistcoats and shirtsleeves. These were beautiful, high-minded, intellectual, young men who had a physical beauty that we needed to do justice to and reflect through what they wore. Along with their uniforms they also had their pre-war summer clothes that had a lightness and casualness to them. I used a number of fabrics from causal tweed and linens to the dark wool of their formal suits that were really carefully made.

How were the boys' character traits expressed through their clothes?

There was a difference in the textures and depth of texture and colours used when designing for Roland, Edward and Victor. We would look at how casually a character would dress or how romantic we could take it and in the example of Roland, how self-aware the character was about his appearance. You can see this in the original photographs of Roland. We can see his physical beauty was very important. He obviously was aware of that with a lightness of touch and what sort of man he wanted to be and so his personality was reflected in how he wore his clothes.

Looking at Mr and Mrs Brittain and Mr and Mrs Leighton what was your inspiration?

The difference between the two families was like chalk and cheese. The Brittains were conservative and that was shown in the formality of their appearance. Mrs Brittain is corseted, wears lots of hats and is a fussy dresser while he is very straight and formal. The Leighton's on the other hand were almost bohemian in comparison with much more colour and a feeling of the artistic movement of that time which influenced their style. That is how we portrayed the two families. The Brittains – typical of an Edwardian family holding on to that period while the Leighton's were more cosmopolitan with elements of that visible in their son Roland, which was very attractive to Vera.

Do you have a favourite costume from the film?

I think some of Vera's pieces that she wore at pre-war Oxford are beautiful. They say everything about the character. The blouses and skirts have an austerity about them because Alicia wore them and carried them so beautifully. There is simplicity in the fabric that was unfussy and showed what a beautiful period it was for women's clothing. There is also a kind of discipline about it and clarity of silhouette that I loved.

What was it like to work with James Kent as the director?

I think of all the directors that I have worked with James immediately makes you feel that your contribution is important. He creates an atmosphere without boundaries so much so that you can go straight to him with any question you need to pose. He is utterly welcoming in that way and that brings out the absolute best in everybody because he creates this world of safety, where people can experiment and try new things. It was a forum where we could take risks, but knowing that he would always be, as all great directors are, the final arbiter. His clarity of vision combined with a gentleness of spirit really drew out many things that may have lay dormant in another situation and I think that is a true skill.

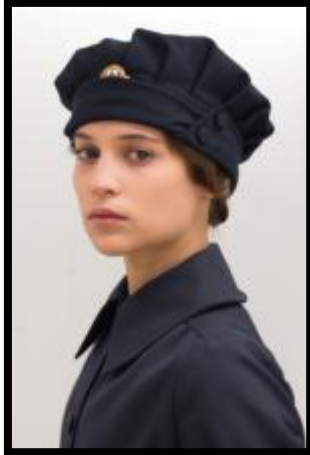
What do you think is so appealing about the story that has attracted such an impressive cast?

Testament of Youth has got the drama of the big historic events but it also has the intimate and personal dilemma of the characters deeply woven throughout the script. I think that is the draw of this film. People are intrigued and fascinated by the subject matter and there is this fascination that it is from a young woman's point of view as well as it is clear that all the characters have an individual clarity within the script that you can get right to the heart of. I am not surprised that so many wonderful actors and actresses were drawn to this project.

Do you have a moment that will stay with you from this particular film?

There were moments when Vera was in the hospital in France at Etaples, where she is confronting and dealing with things that she would have never possibly imagined could ever be exposed to her. She literally goes in and does it even though nothing in her background has prepared her for this experience. Alicia acting those moments will be etched on my mind.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALICIA VIKANDER PLAYING VERA BRITTAIN



How did you come to be cast as Vera Brittain?

I attended the premiere of *Anna Karenina* two years ago and my agent, a friend and I were all talking about what scripts we had read recently when he told me about a book called *Testament of Youth* being made into a film. He said it was one of the most amazing roles for a young woman out there. Initially the timing was wrong on both sides but when I heard last autumn that it was all systems go to get made, I immediately got a hold of a copy and read it.

I was already in love with the script and had read the book and so did all I could to be a part of it. When I met Rosie Alison and James Kent and the other creative people involved that's the point when I knew how much I wanted to play this part. I need to meet the people that want to create the project and feel the whole aura and energy around it. Rosie and James were so passionate and wonderful that I knew I wanted to be a part of it.

What was your reaction when you first read the script? What kind of emotional reaction did you have?

As a young woman, I was struck to see a journey of a similarly young woman who lived just 100 years ago and who endured this emotional, devastating but extraordinary journey, to mature and become an adult. I did cry, a lot; even more when I read the book because that was a longer read. It was the complex part that all actors are looking to play. I was deeply touched and amazed how the book and script were in part so personal and emotional, but also educational about the horror of the First World War. Especially about how women weren't really permitted nor expected to do very much or have the right to an education. Vera had a chaperone to simply get on a train and she had to fight both her family, and by default, the whole of society just to be able to go to University and educate herself. It's quite extraordinary to know how far we've come in only a few years, really. And how fortunate I am as a young woman now, to have the choices I have.

Explain who Vera Brittain is and how she fits into the story of *Testament of Youth*?

Testament of Youth is her story, but it's more than that. It is also her gift to the people that she lost in the First World War. She explains that the book is a way for her to keep their memory alive. She is a very feisty young woman. It was a pleasure to embrace the energy that I believe she had. Sometimes she stepped on a few toes because she doesn't think, but she has a force within her that just goes for it. I am really impressed by her. A young woman who grew up in Buxton in a high-middle class English family and how she decided that if no one was going to help her get the education she wanted, she was going to go and get it herself. She was so determined.

Vera has a line ‘Our generation will never be new again, Roland, or truly young’. Did you and James, the director, discuss the effects that the war had on people of Vera and Roland’s generation?

James and I spent so many hours talking in preparation for this film. Part of it was about a whole generation that was lost, and also how that influenced her later when she decided to go back to Oxford after the war. She was suddenly sharing her classes with much younger women and men who hadn’t experienced or fought in the war. She must’ve felt extremely lonely because suddenly there weren’t many people that she could share her experiences with. She had a lot of people questioning why she couldn’t let go and why she couldn’t stop talking about the war and talking about the loss. She became the great pacifist that we all know of, but it must’ve been quite hard to be that young and have other teenagers question you like that when you’ve lost everyone. We did talk a lot about that.

How did you go about researching the role of Vera?

My research started with the book. I also read parts of *Chronicle of Youth*. But it was the letters between Vera and Roland, her brother and Victor that were the key for me. The book was something that Vera created from her memories ten years after they happened but the letters are the insight into what actually happened between those young people right then. To read the last letter that Roland sent to Vera when he was going to come home on leave to get married were the actual last words she ever heard from him. I kept that letter with me in my pocket when filming because it was such fast access for me to get emotionally attached to whatever trauma that she went through.

I also met Shirley Williams and some of her family when they came on set, which was a real honour for me. They visited us in Oxford while we were shooting. Shirley is such an extraordinary woman. It was like a little glimpse through a window of how Vera might have been. It was also quite terrifying to hear her say, “So, you’re going to play my mother”. Just by getting to know Shirley a little certainly gave me a sense of the woman her mother was.

It’s a truly tragic story about loss. What do you think an audience will take from it or how will it impact them?

I think that this film will have hopefully a huge impact on people in the same way that I got emotionally attached to it when I read the book and the script. It is a film about loss and grief, but also about truly believing in something and fighting for it. It’s educational about the role of women during the First World War and is written from a woman’s point of view, which was rare for that time. But mostly, it’s a story about youth, about young people, about the relationships that they have, about being naïve but still so hopeful for what the world can offer. It’s also about how war makes everything suddenly break down and how your dreams can shatter. Hopefully, afterwards, Vera’s proof that you can rise from it and decide to put up a fight. She became a pacifist and feminist and she showed that it is possible to survive and rebuild your life.

What sort of responsibility did you feel portraying a real character from history?

I think it is quite terrifying for any actor to portray a person who existed in real life. I felt an enormous responsibility to the people who knew Vera and to her family and descendents. What we and the people who knew her wanted was to make a story that connects with the audience and that actually tells her story in as rounded and complete a way we could in terms of film. I'm not Vera but I did try my best to bring out the emotional impact she had on the other people in her life. I had to use all my imagination and hopefully be true to all the information I had been given from the people who knew her best. I've tried to create her in my head and stay true to the story we were making which was to tell the story of who Vera Brittain was.

What do you think is so appealing about this story that it's attracted such an impressive cast?

Kit, Taron and Colin are all brilliant actors. They are brave, emotionally intelligent and they made me a better actress. With our director James steering us it all felt very natural. We had to dig deep which was difficult at times but we still enjoyed a lightness and humour on-set. We got to know each other very well, which helped to create a strong bond between us and in turn hopefully create a great film. Then I got to work with Dominic West and Emily Watson, people that I'd looked up to and admired for a long time. I was very fortunate to be able to be amongst them.

Vera has many significant relationships, but none more so than with the men in her life. How did you go about creating these relationships with them?

Kit and I knew each other already as we'd worked on the same movie together but didn't have any scenes. I was excited to finally work closely with him. So Kit and I already had a connection, which given the intense romantic relationship that they had, was a real gift. I think in total they only met for about 21 days.

Taron, who played my brother made me laugh the most on set. He always brought so much energy to the set, which was incredibly infectious and helped us to recreate the relationship that Vera and Edward had in the film. It's almost like they're so close they are like twins. It was like they could finish each other's sentences. It was very important in this film to also show the lightness. We know what is to come in the story is painful but you also want to see the humanity that existed underneath that pain. It is instinctive for some people to fight against grief and that is simply another means of survival. Even in the worst of times everyone tries is to keep humour.

Vera loved clothes and would make notes in her diary of what she wore and to which occasion. What role do her costumes play in the film?

To say that Vera was a fashionista almost makes her sound flippant however we know from her diaries that she did enjoy fashion and clothes. Obviously we knew what era we were going to portray and instinctively when you think of wartime it can be seen as a dull period for fashion because there was so much destruction around. She definitely had other things in her head that took up much more space but she was not a boring girl who sat in her room only reading books. She enjoyed life and the beauty in nature particularly and I loved how she talked about nature. Consolata (costume designer) and I talked a lot about what Vera would wear and she had over 75 costumes to choose from. The costumes and Consolata's choice of colours very much tell the story of Vera's journey too from pre-war to post-war; from the lightness of those final summer days with

the boys, through the darkness of war and then emergence into the light again once the war was over. That first costume fitting is always the most important step for me to begin to realise and feel the character I'm playing and Consolata let me be very much a part of that process which was important for me.

The script is careful to highlight the hardships endured by the VADs and the soldiers. What scenes did you find particularly challenging to film?

The toughest scenes to film were the most emotionally charged ones. My absolute favourite is when she is nursing a dying German soldier and says goodbye to him. She partly sees Roland and all the other young English soldiers reflected in him. Whatever person, whichever country you're from, whichever side you're on, war is devastating. In another scene she undresses this badly wounded man and washes him, which sparks a memory where she emotionally connects with Roland. Those scenes were tough and quite small in the script, but then turned out, for me at least, to be two of the biggest scenes in the film.

Vera's journey is an incredibly emotional personal one. How did you approach the different emotional elements within her character?

It helped in the way that James shot the film because it made it feel almost like three films in one. We begin Vera's story at her family home in Buxton - that glorious summer when she is excited about life, trying out for Oxford, and falling in love for the first time. Then when she goes down to Oxford, Vera discovers her independence, meets other like-minded young women and for the first time feels connected to the world, through finding a means to express her thoughts and feelings. Finally, we see Vera nursing at the front and immersed in the horror of war where she finds a new emotional self before coming out the other side as a survivor.

What work did you do on the speech and the dialect patterns to achieve that early 1920's British accent?

I had a dialect coach who worked with me before and during filming who gave me the confidence I needed to simply let go. I had a big speech at the end of the film, which we shot on the penultimate day, which was great because I'd had weeks to discover Vera's voice. In reality she really did find her voice in that scene. People need to see that she has it in her to be a spokesperson, that she's able to express herself. It's when the rest of her life began. I knew it was a big job and I hope I did well.

What have been the moments that will stay with you through this particular filming experience, do you think?

When I look back on the films I've made it's those when the entire experience is a similar one for the cast and crew that stick in my memory. We all fell in love with this project together which was a very beautiful thing. On this film, I had a particularly strong connection with the director James and with Rosie the producer. When you feel that early on and then you start to actually feel that you're doing something that you truly believe in and that audiences will hopefully love it too it makes you feel very proud.

AN INTERVIEW WITH KIT HARINGTON

PLAYING ROLAND LEIGHTON



How did you become involved with *Testament of Youth*?

I studied *Testament of Youth* in school and knew a lot about the First World War. I was immediately interested in the script, especially the war poetry. I then met with James Kent and Rosie Alison to read for the part.

What were your first impressions of the script?

Juliette Towhidi did a brilliant job writing the script. She has created an extremely moving and dreamlike piece. Everyone around Vera, including Roland, seems to be a snippet in Vera's life, almost part of her imagination.

Who is Roland?

Roland is an ultra-confident, charming, mysterious schoolboy. He challenges Vera. The Roland we see in the film is a reflection of Vera's image of him. There's no real way of knowing who Roland actually was. We only know him from Vera's story and from his poetry.

What did you think of Roland's poetry?

He was more romantic than poets of the same generation. His poems are beautiful and simple and touch on the war in a soft, non-accusatory way. His poetry explores the idea of war and heroism. The poem read at the end of the film is particularly moving. Roland is saying to Vera 'I want you to live on after I die.' He tells her to meet someone else if he dies.

Which resources did you use to prepare for this role?

I looked at the few photos we have of Roland and was quite pleased that we have similar appearances. I also read all the letters that Vera and Roland sent to one another because I wanted to hear their voices. Initially, they wrote to each other every three days. As the war progressed, however, Roland becomes increasingly more silent.

What does it feel like for an actor to portray a real person?

This is the first time I have played a character that really existed. It is quite a profound thing to play someone real, and I wanted to really do him justice.

What is Roland's journey?

At the beginning of the film, Roland is very assured and confident. He is an alpha male, yet is tender and loving at the same time. He is also obsessed with going to war and the idea of heroism, so the biggest change in Roland is when he realizes that it is not what he expected. He returns from war and distances from Vera as he tries to make sense of it. He wants to harden himself to the war, but can't harden himself towards Vera.

What was your experience working with James Kent?

James is a wonderfully generous director. We rehearsed each scene numerous times prior to filming in order to discover the different elements in them. I really respected being given such a generous rehearsal period. Understanding the dynamics of the events and how they affected Vera was really important to James. He never rushed the process and was always willing to further discuss what needed to happen in a scene. We spoke a lot about Roland and the complexities of his character.

Did you and James discuss how Roland would be affected by the war?

James and I talked a lot during the filming process about the horrors that these young men went through and how they affected them. There was a moment during filming where I was lying in the rain for half an hour. It was only a short amount of time and there were people bringing me blankets and trying to keep me warm, but I was miserable. I can't imagine how these young men did that under heavy gunfire for four years.

Was Roland brought up to support the war?

Whether intentional or unintentional, the men of that generation were raised to believe in the war. They all genuinely believed in their country and never stopped believing, even at the front. They questioned whether it was worth it and what the war was all about, but they always believed in the glory of it.

Describe Taron and Colin's characters?

At the beginning of the film, we are introduced to Edward Brittain, Vera's brother, and his friend Victor Richardson. Victor secretly likes Vera, but never gets a chance because of Roland. There is a quiet competition between the three boys. They all try to one-up each other with quiet comments or slight ribbing. Both Taron and Colin bring different energies to the group. Taron is 25 and Colin and I are 27, so we focused on transporting ourselves back to being 19 and 20. It would've been easy to portray them as our own ages, but we needed to remember the energy that men of that age have.

What was the dynamic between the three of you?

It was wonderful working with them both and they each brought different elements to their characters. Taron was brotherly and playful and Colin was tender and soft. I was very lucky to be working with them and we got along very well.

Why is Alicia perfect for the role?

Knowing that Alicia was going to play Vera really drew my attention to this project. I knew her previous work and thought she was an incredibly sensitive and strong willed woman. She has the same combination of hardness and vulnerability that Vera had.

What was biggest challenge for Alicia?

The real challenge for Alicia was finding the variation in how Vera felt with each different loss she experiences. As Vera hardens, the impact of each death affects her in a different way. It was also an

extremely challenging filming process for Alicia. She is in every scene and worked every day. It's an emotional journey for an actress to go on, which is the most challenging and rewarding type.

What were the sets and locations like that you used?

For all the scenes I was in, we filmed in Sheffield, Scarborough and Bradford. Vera and Roland were Northern, so it was right to film it in the north. I had never filmed anything in England, so I've enjoyed filming here tremendously. The locations were beautiful and the costumes really fitted the dream-like quality that we wanted the film to have.

Why did this film attract such a talented cast?

Since the story is centred on Vera's life and interactions, there are many smaller roles in the story. This appeals to actors on two levels: they do not need to be on set for the entire film, but they have a major role in the story. It's also a wonderful script and a truly special project. Working with Dominic West, Emily Watson and Anna Chancellor has been a dream come true. I admire and respect their work and watch them with amazement. I knew I had made the right choice joining a film that attracted such huge talent.

Why was it important to include the chaperone scenes?

The montage to Roland and Vera's chaperoned trip to London was vital because you see them falling in love and how attracted to each other they are. Joanna Scanlan brilliantly plays Aunt Belle, who serves as the chaperone put between them. The chaperone fails to put a damper on Roland and Vera's trip, and they actually find it funny that she is there. In a way, she makes the date even better. It is nice to have some humour in such a heavy film. You need parts that are loving and funny to partner with the gloom.

What is the significance of the chaperone scene?

I have a line in the film, "I'd like to see Vera again, Mrs. Brittain, fully chaperoned of course". You'd never hear that now. The film shows a lot about how women were repressed at this time and what their role was during the war. The importance of showing the chaperone scene is that it highlights the restrictions placed on Vera and how all that was about to change.

Do you think the film works both as a narrative and a historical piece?

Yes, I think it does. It's both a biography and a story, which is very engaging. It isn't a film made only for people to learn about the First World War or women's role in the war. The story alone draws people in, which is a credit to Juliette Towhidi. She was able to make a coherent story out of an expansive biography.

Which particular moments in the film will you remember?

The death scenes will stay with me the most. Roland's death scene is not written in the book or the letters, so imagining his death was very poignant. The audience sees how the war has affected each of the young men, and then how their deaths affect Vera.

Why do you think it was important to include the scene when Roland's uniform is returned to his family?

The Leightons were sent Roland's blood soaked tunic after he died. The army sent the fallen soldiers' uniforms back so their mothers had something to bury and to help them realize their sons were dead and not just missing. They couldn't send all the bodies back, so they chose to send the uniforms. Seeing the uniforms of a dead soldier was like seeing a ghost come back, so the scene was very moving.

How has this work experience differed from *Game of Thrones*?

I have spent a lot of time in the fantasy world with *Game of Thrones*, so I have loved playing a character that really existed in *Testament of Youth*. They are very different stylistically, but both have aspects of horror to them. *Game of Thrones* is very CGI and VFX heavy so many camera positions are fixed. You do a classic close up shot, then a medium shot, and then a wide shot. I found *Testament of Youth* offered more freedom as an actor. The camera moved a lot and I was fond of being in a more tangible world.

How will young people react to this film?

I think young people still think the First World War is relevant. I remember studying it in school and being intrigued, then visiting the First World War graves and being very sombre. The war still feels modern because it was when modern warfare first began. I think young people are truly interested in it and realize the importance of what it means.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TARON EGERTON

PLAYING EDWARD BRITTAIN



How did you become involved in *Testament of Youth*?

Around Christmas 2013 my agent sent me Juliette Towhidi's script and I thought it was wonderful. I then went to dinner with Rosie Alison, the producer and James Kent, the director where we talked about the project and all the people involved at that time after which I was offered the part of Edward.

Were you familiar with the story?

I came to the story completely fresh. After talking to my friends and family about it, particularly one of my older friends who directed me in youth theatre, I bought a copy of the memoirs to read.

What was your reaction on reading Juliette Towhidi's script?

It was so moving and it's rare that you read something that actually affects you so much just off the page. It's a very tragic story and what I loved about it was that it didn't shirk away from any of the horrors of war. It was very much an anti-war story. I think it has a very empowering sense of the futility of it all and it felt a very real retelling of what happened at that time.

Who do you play in *Testament of Youth*?

I play Edward Brittain, Vera's brother and extremely close friend and confidante. I think they bond growing up and become incredibly close. Both want to be doing different things with their lives other than what their parents wish for them. Edward wants to be a musician and composer and Vera a writer. James (the director) said early on that he wanted them to appear almost like twins, although they are not, but that they should have an unspoken understanding and sensitivity to one another. Edward is a very sensitive young man, artistic, gentle and extremely lovely.

Why is Edward's story pertinent to the film?

There are three men in Vera's life, Roland, Victor and Edward. Of all the men going off to war and the aftermath that follows it is perhaps Edward's death that affected Vera the most. Yes of course she was utterly heartbroken after Roland's death but she was devastated when Edward died. *Testament of Youth* is that, a testament to all those young men that went off to war. Edward being one of them and I think that is what makes Edward's story an important part of Vera's.

What kind of research did you do for this role?

I read *Testament of Youth* and I had a lot of books left over from when I studied the war at school that I looked through. I wanted to read about trench life and what it was like and their time there. But it was really reading *Testament of Youth* that gave me the most insight into the role, as it is so full of personal recollections. There is also a book of letters between Edward, Roland and Vera which was extremely useful as it fleshed out all those gaps in time and their backstories and what actual

happened to Vera in the future helps you and informs their relationships. That was really useful and great to read.

Along with Roland and Victor, Edward is described as one of the Three Musketeers. What was the camaraderie like on set between you, Kit Harington and Colin Morgan?

Kit and Colin were fantastic. Colin and I on the first day on set were making each other laugh and in the gentlest fashion larking about a bit in between takes. There was an instant familiarity between us and he is such a wonderful guy. After a long day's shooting Kit and I spent many nights hanging out and playing pool. There was a very tangible sense of camaraderie and we all got on incredibly well. I hope that translates onto the screen.

What was Edward's relationship like with his sister and how did you and Alicia work out how to play those roles?

Vera was a very strong-minded and at times brash character that would constantly rage against her parents' will but with Edward it was different. There was a sensitive and caring connection between them. I think there was a special relationship between us both because you have to be as familiar and as tactile with each other as possible so that an audience can believe that you have been raised together and that you have the love that a brother and sister have for each other. I tried to make Alicia laugh as much as possible, and Alicia did the same to me. We had a lot of fun together

It is quite intimidating working with Alicia because her work ethic is enormous. She is performing in a second language, is so diligent and comes incredibly prepared and focussed. You get the sense that she almost adopts part of the character she is playing. She is such an enormous talent and when you are filming scenes with her it is very hard not to get distracted and become like an audience member because she is just that good.

How do you manage the responsibility of portraying a real life person?

You always have to make the part your own and there is no way that you can play these people exactly as they were. You build up a picture of who they might have been from accounts and letters and create your interpretation of them but the pressure you feel as an actor is that you know they are real. You devour as much material as possible because you want to get as close as you can to the character but ultimately it is going to be one's own version of Edward or Roland or Vera.

Did you find it harrowing to film the scenes in the field hospital?

The scenes in the hospital bed when Edward was wounded were difficult to play but by far the most harrowing thing to watch was Alicia's performance. She is such a force of nature, she feels it so truthfully and is so emotionally connected but watching her and experiencing all those different stages of Vera's turmoil that was very moving to watch from the sidelines.

What impact do you think this film will make?

I think the wonderful thing about the film and what James talked about very early on is that these are young people just leaving school and in that respect it should not feel any different from a contemporary drama about young people. What I hope we have achieved is that they won't just feel

like people in costumes and actually there is a true representation of the anarchy, the reverence and pedestrian quality of being a young person oblivious to all of the massive things around them in the context of that time.

What was it like to work with Emily Watson and Dominic West, who played Vera and Edward's parents?

I have been a fan of both of them for a very long time and to have them playing my Mum and Dad was super exciting. They have all of those years of experience and are every bit as wonderful as you expect them to be so I hope that we are believable as a little family. Those couple of weeks we spent together as a family were such a laugh. Dominic is quite a cheeky chap and they made us feel very relaxed and at ease on set. It was mostly Alicia, Kit, Colin and myself on set together and a variety of characters coming and going throughout the filming but Emily and Dominic were probably the biggest of the those colourful characters. It was great to work with them.

Did you have a favourite location?

I can tell you what my least favourite location was...all the trench filming. Lying in the mud in an itchy costume was particularly gruelling however you are also constantly reminding yourself that, 'I have to deal with this for two hours and someone is going to bring me a lovely cup of tea and actually there are people that did this for four years.' It reminds you of what those men had to live through all those years. But my favourite locations are the ones we shot by the sea when we were visiting Roland's family home. We filmed at some gorgeous locations up north on the coast and it looks stunning. It gives a real sense of perspective to it all with big rolling landscapes that make the characters feel very small and reminds you of the larger world and what is happening outside of their bubble.

Did you have to do any dialect training for the film?

I'm from Wales and Alicia is Scandinavian so we both did a bit of work on the pronunciation but I know James didn't want the dialect to be as clipped and heightened as it actually would have been in that time because he wanted it to feel like these young people could have been living now. There is always a danger with very heightened speech that it can be slightly alienating and stiffening for an actor.

What is the moment that will stay with you from this particular project?

Watching back the scene where Alicia finds me amongst a mound of half dead soldiers and watching her work is a memory I will keep. It is so raw, painful and brutal and Alicia's performance in that scene is incredible.

If you want the audience to take something away from the film what would that be?

The optimism at the end of Vera's story and the fact that she goes on to marry despite all of the horror she has been through; her resilience and toughness and her ability to carry on is quite inspiring. At a time when such awful things are happening in the world, life will find a way. That is one of the great messages of the story and the film I hope.



AN INTERVIEW WITH COLIN MORGAN PLAYING VICTOR RICHARDSON

How did you become involved in this film in the first place?

I first became aware of *Testament of Youth* when I received the script. Some scripts immediately speak to you, and this one certainly did. The script was what sparked my interest in the film. I immediately wanted to come in and have my shot at Victor. I was lucky enough to do that, and that's how the process started.

What was it about the script that moved you?

The entire story of *Testament of Youth* is emotionally wealthy. Vera's story is about a girl on the cusp of being a woman who saw the most unimaginable things during the war. The theme of lost youth really struck me. An entire generation of people lost their lives. Even those who survived the war came out the other end lost as well. They never got to experience being young men. They never got a chance to go to university. The younger generation still had life to come, and the older generation had a life to go back to. The generation that went to war didn't know where to go after it was over. Vera is the cornerstone of the story – as people fall away around her, she carries on straight ahead. It's an absolute testament to her. To be such a courageous woman, especially in that time period, is an inspiration.

Describe your character Victor?

Victor Richardson is Roland and Edward's schoolmate and best friend. They are a band of brothers, affectionately called 'The Three Musketeers'. Victor is from a less privileged background than Edward and Roland and sometimes feels unable to articulate himself. He is quite reserved in showing his feelings, even to those closest to him and doesn't have the common egotistical nature of that era. He's good-natured, trustworthy, caring, and sensitive to others feelings. In the moments of Vera's tragedy, Victor is there for her completely, despite all that he's been through during the war and is very drawn to her. He and Vera are both good-natured and honest, but while Victor is self-effacing and timid, Vera is strong, passionate, opinionated, and direct. She possesses qualities that are almost polar opposite to him, which he is attracted to. He finds her very exciting.

What is Victor's journey?

At the beginning of the film, we find Victor excited about the future. Being a young man at that time, there was a huge pressure to go to war. Having gone to Uppingham School, Victor had been conditioned and bred to be a part of the war heroics. Victor was heavily conflicted because he never fully felt that duty in his heart. He is not initially fit for service due to poor eyesight, and he struggles with the shame of not going to war. At that time, there was a big question of masculinity and what it meant to be a man if you didn't go to war. He was surrounded by men in uniform and he wasn't a part of them. Because of England's desperation for soldiers, Victor eventually gets drafted into the

war and unfortunately comes out with a disability. It is a testament to Victor's character the way he deals with a disability in such a cheerful manner. Victor's ultimate battle is understanding how he could put so much trust in his country and have it betray him so badly.

Where did you start with your research for this film?

I began my research for *Testament of Youth* by going to the book itself. We're very lucky to have the inspiration for the film as a resource to use. The book has allowed me to really understand Vera's voice, which is also strong in the film. The letters are also very useful in determining the characters' voices. Knowing that I was reading Victor's own words in his letters was incredible and extremely helpful. I was able to access exactly how he spoke, how he thought, what expressions he used, and how he felt about all the tragedies he underwent.

How do you feel about representing a real person?

Representing someone else's life brings a sense of honour and pride, but also a sense of duty. I don't think Victor could've imagined that there would be a book or film featuring him, so I want to portray him accurately. I became very attached to these characters as I began to understand them, even a hundred years apart. Because I connected in such a special way with Victor, I have to fight to achieve a portrayal of him that's as truthful, honest and honourable as possible.

Describe Victor and Vera's relationship?

Victor is Vera's grounding force. He is there for Vera during her ultimate grief. He is very trustworthy and has the ability to handle a tough burden. After Victor is deployed, there is a sense that he wants to honour Roland by going to war and surviving, and in doing so, honour Vera. He feels that if he can go out and serve then come back a hero, maybe she'll love him.

Can you tell me a bit about Roland, Edward and Victor's relationship?

Roland, Edward and Victor are best friends with Roland as the lead musketeer. He's the head of the class and the head of all the teams and represents the ideal boy at that age. Victor and Edward are very driven by him. Edward is quite private and sometimes hard to get to know, but also the driving force behind the fun of the three boys. Victor doesn't come from as affluent a background as the others, so there is a slight sense of inadequacy surrounding him. The harrowing part of this film is seeing how strong and happy these three boys are together and how the war splinters that. You see them learn how to deal with things on their own.

What was it like working with Kit and Taron?

Working with Kit Harington and Taron Egerton has been great. We bring very different qualities and preparations to the project. It was very clever casting. When we got together, the emotion generally happened quite organically. The pre-war scenes needed to have a sense of excitement about them because Roland, Victor and Edward were young and had their futures and dreams right ahead of them. We wanted to create that feeling onset, and James Kent was brilliant in injecting a true sense of fun, energy and excitement before those takes. We relished the pre-war scenes, knowing what was to come.

How was working with director James Kent?

James is a very passionate and sensitive director, as well as a genuinely nice man. You could immediately tell that he had a real love and drive for this story. He wants the audience to feel how real these people were who inhabited Vera's world. James has an incredible ability of making each moment as full and energized as possible.

How did you and James Kent approach the tragedies that occur in the film?

James approached each scene with a specific theme in mind in order to correctly convey what the characters were feeling. It could be something as simple as being on the cusp of life, being in the glamour of war, or being in the horror of reality. Those are all very definite blocks within our story. As an actor, that is extremely valuable to know. With those themes in mind, I brought my own mark and preparation to the role.

Why makes Alicia perfect for the part of Vera?

Vera is a very challenging character to portray, and both Alicia and Vera are driven, determined, compassionate and positive. Many women would not have approached the war and gender inequality as Vera did. Alicia has been on an emotional rollercoaster and had a gruelling schedule throughout this film process but has remained positive throughout. She took this project on in the way Vera probably would.

What is the transition of Vera from the beginning of the film to the end?

It is incredible to see both Vera and Alicia transition into different stages of the story. There is a definite shift within everyone in the story, but particularly Vera because the audience is experiencing her story head on. At the beginning, she is excited for her future and her acceptance into Oxford. She has found the love of her life and is buzzing with excitement. When Roland heads to war, you see the heartbreak she endures. She is aware of what is happening in Europe and the impending circumstances. She has a sense of duty to sacrifice her ambitions and be a part of the war effort. Despite all the tragedy, she carries on. She comes out of the war completely changed, but no less driven. Vera's message is one of resilience.

What were the sets and locations like that you worked on?

The team have been absolutely brilliant in creating the sets and choosing locations. I walked into some really derelict buildings and have been unable to recognise them once inside. Walking onto the set of the Brittain's house felt as if you walked right into that time period. The detail and specificity is incomparable. They created the hospital out of an old chocolate factory, which was astounding. The exteriors were filmed in Yorkshire, which was absolutely stunning.

What role did the war scenes play in the film?

In the film, it is extremely heartbreaking to see young, happy boys marching off to war in the film and then watch them come back incomplete. It did not occur to anyone that it would happen to them. Vera and her colleagues at the hospital didn't fully know how to help them. They did what they thought was right under the circumstances. People were reading about the deaths in the

papers and seeing the injuries in the streets. Everyone was engulfed by the tragedy. On set, we only got a glimpse of the war by being present in that atmosphere. It really moves you and terrifies you knowing that the characters actually experienced it in real life.

How accurately does the film portray what happens to the boys?

The film stays completely true to what happens to each of the boys. It tells the story exactly how it happened. The sad reality of the war was that most young men didn't come home. The men who survived, even those who were injured, considered themselves extremely lucky. There were unending reports of the men who had been killed, so the injured had a sense of 'it could have been much worse'.

Has working on this project changed your perspective on war?

I didn't know as much detail about the First World War as I do now. *Testament of Youth* is important because it approaches the war from a very human level. It is much more than just a blanket cover of boys going to war. We get intimate details of their lives through the first hand accounts available. Approaching the film from such a real perspective has been inspiring. I found the glamour of wanting to go to war relatable to the glamour of wanting to be an actor. It was a very exciting prospect for those boys. The idea that they would ever come back injured was an alien thought. It was fascinating that through all the letters, no one ever thought about being injured during war. The cold realities never occurred to them. Understanding the betrayal and shock that those men felt was eye opening for me. Going to war wasn't just something that people told them they should do; it was something that they felt they should do. If they didn't go to war, they felt guilty and shameful. Going to war was better than the shame of staying home.

Who do you think is the audience for this film?

This film is relevant to all generations, genders and ages. It has taught me so much about the war and the time period. It is important that we not forget what happened. The men and women in *Testament of Youth* can inspire us all. In today's world, we don't realize how easy we have it. These films help to put our lives into perspective.

What do you hope audiences take away from this film?

This story has universal appeal because it is more than a film about the First World War. It is a film about a young woman having to overcome unimaginable circumstances. We often think about the death and loss that occurred during the war, but rarely think about the entire lost generation and the personal traumas that they endured. Watching Vera battle the most extreme grieving processes brings hope and positivity. The audience will take such inspiration from Vera's determination. She decided that the lost generation didn't have to remain lost, and she never gave in. She came out fighting in the end.

THE CAST – BRIEF FILMOGRAPHIES

VERA BRITTAİN | Alicia Vikander

(HOTEL, THE FIFTH ESTATE, ANNA KARENINA, A ROYAL AFFAIR, TULIP FEVER, THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E., EX MACHINA, SON OF A GUN, SEVENTH SON.)

ROLAND LEIGHTON | Kit Harington

(GAME OF THRONES, POMPEII, SPOOKS: THE GREATER GOOD).

EDWARD BRITTAİN | Taron Egerton

(THE SECRET SERVICE, THE SMOKE).

VICTOR RICHARDSON | Colin Morgan

(MERLIN, DOCTOR WHO, THE CATHERINE TATE SHOW and QUIRKE).

GEOFFREY THURLOW | Jonathan Bailey

(BROADCHURCH, LEONARDO, ME AND MRS JONES, PRAMFACE, CAMPUS.

AUNT BELLE | Joanna Scanlon

(DEATH COMES TO PEMBERLEY, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN, THE THICK OF IT, PSYCHOBITCHES, IN THE LOOP).

WINIFRED HOLTBY | Alexandra Roach

(UTOPIA, CUBAN FURY, THE THIRTEENTH TALE, THE SUSPICIONS OF MR WHICHER, THE IRON LADY, ANNA KARENINA, HUNDERBY, ONE CHANCE).

MR BRITTAİN | Dominic West

(THE WIRE, APPROPRIATE ADULT, JOHNNY ENGLISH REBORN, THE AWAKENING, THE HOUR, PRIDE).

MRS BRITTAİN | Emily Watson

(BELLE, THE BOOK THIEF, WAR HORSE, THEORY OF EVERYTHING)

HOPE MILROY | Hayley Atwell

(AVENGERS, CINDERELLA, CAPTAIN AMERICA)

MISS LORIMER | Miranda Richardson

(BELLE, HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS 1, MADE IN DAGENHAM, YOUNG VICTORIA)

THE CREATIVE TEAM

David Heyman (Producer)

David Heyman is the producer behind all of the film adaptations of J.K Rowling's hugely successful HARRY POTTER books. Heyman's producing credits also include the Robert Carlyle/Guy Pearce film RAVENOUS (directed by Antonia Bird), hit science-fiction thriller I AM LEGEND (directed by Francis Lawrence and starring Will Smith), THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS (directed by Mark Herman), YES MAN (directed by Peyton Reed, with Jim Carrey starring), and IS ANYBODY THERE? (directed by John Crowley and starring Michael Caine). Most recently, Heyman produced Alfonso Cuarón's GRAVITY, which received numerous Baftas and Oscars including Best Picture (Bafta) and Best Director (Oscar). He is currently in post-production on PADDINGTON (written and directed by Paul King) and production on THE LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS (written and directed by Derek Cianfrance).

Rosie Alison (Producer)

Rosie Alison was a documentary producer/director for ten years, working on many television films about writers, dancers, actors and playwrights. Her documentary credits include The South Bank Show, Omnibus, Bookmark, and Grand Designs. In 2001 Alison joined David Heyman's production company Heyday Films, where she has been Co-Producer of THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS (directed by Mark Herman), IS ANYBODY THERE? (directed by John Crowley, starring Michael Caine), and David Hare's BBC TV spy thriller PAGE EIGHT. Most recently, she has been Executive Producer on PADDINGTON (written and directed by Paul King) on the BBC TV movie THE THIRTEENTH TALE (adapted by Christopher Hampton, directed by James Kent), and on the forthcoming THE LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS (written and directed by Derek Cianfrance.) Alison is also the author of a novel, *The Very Thought of You*, which was shortlisted for the Orange Prize in 2010.

James Kent (Director)

James Kent began as a documentary director, and won a BAFTA in 2004 for his 90-minute TV Single HOLOCAUST: A MUSIC MEMORIAL FILM FROM AUSCHWITZ. He went on to direct a number of acclaimed television dramas including THE SECRET DIARIES OF MISS ANNE LISTER in 2009, which was made for television but became a hit on the film festival circuit for gay and lesbian films, winning a number of awards. He also directed the acclaimed thriller INSIDE MEN for the BBC and THE WHITE QUEEN, a flagship BBC historical drama series for which James was the lead director, and THE THIRTEENTH TALE (starring Vanessa Redgrave and Olivia Colman) for BBC and Heyday Films. TESTAMENT OF YOUTH is his first feature film.

Juliette Towhidi (Writer).

Juliette Towhidi wrote the 2003 hit comedy, CALENDAR GIRLS, which was nominated for a BIFA for Best Screenplay. She has also adapted DEATH COMES TO PEMBERLEY from the P.D. James' novel of the same name for Origin Pictures and the BBC, and the romantic comedy LOVE, ROSIE which will be released by Lionsgate this autumn.

Celia Duval (Co-Producer)

Celia Duval has recently produced the final two films in David Hare's Worricker Trilogy for the BBC – SALTING THE BATTLEFIELD, and TURKS AND CAICOS. As a Co-Producer or Line Producer, she has worked on many prestige films and dramas, such as THE LONG WAY TO FINCHLEY, CHRISTOPHER AND HIS FRIENDS, RED RIDING, MARGOT, WUTHERING HEIGHTS, and PAGE EIGHT.

Richard Mansell (Executive Producer)

After a decade working with Jeremy Thomas on structuring independent films at Hanway, Richard Mansell has become an independent producer. Recent work includes coordinating all the partners and financing on POSH.

Executive Producers:

Christine Langan and Joe Oppenheimer (for BBC Films)

Zygi Kamasa (for Lionsgate UK)

Hugo Heppell (for Screen Yorkshire)

HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY | Rob Hardy

(EX MACHINA, EVERY SECRET THING, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN, BROKEN, SHADOW DANCER, STOLEN, RED RIDING: 1974, IS ANYBODY THERE?, BOY A, EXHIBIT A)

PRODUCTION DESIGNER | Jon Henson

(THE THIRTEENTH TALE, LAST DAYS ON MARS, SHADOW DANCER, STOLEN, THE AWAKENING, CHATROOM, LAST CHANCE HARVEY, BOY A)

COSTUME DESIGNER | Consolata Boyle

(PHILOMENA, BYZANTIUM, THE IRON LADY, THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP, TAMARA DREWE, THE ECLIPSE, CHERI, THE OTHER MAN, THE QUEEN)

EDITOR | Lucia Zucchetti

(CLOSED CIRCUIT, GAME CHANGE, I AM NASRINE, TILDA, CHERI, BOY A, THE QUEEN, MRS HENDERSON PRESENTS, THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, THE DEAL, INTERMISSION)

Winner: BAFTA Award for Best Editing 2008 for BOY A

Nomination: BAFTA Award for Best Editing 2007 for THE QUEEN

COMPOSER | Max Richter

(LORE, SARAH'S KEY, DANCE WITH BASHIR)

HAIR & MAKE-UP DESIGNER | Christine Walmesley-Cotham

(CALL THE MIDWIFE, WALLANDER, MARCHLANDS, THE LITTLE HOUSE, MARGARET, PLUS ONE, LINE OF BEAUTY)

END CREDITS

CAST

In Order of Appearance

Vera Brittain	ALICIA VIKANDER
Edward Brittain	TARON EGERTON
Victor Richardson	COLIN MORGAN
Mr Brittain	DOMINIC WEST
Mrs Brittain	EMILY WATSON
Roland Leighton	KIT HARRINGTON
Aunt Belle	JOANNA SCANLAN
Miss Lorimer	MIRANDA RICHARDSON
Exam Candidate	RACHEL REDFORD
Headmaster	NICHOLAS FARRELL
Clare Leighton	DAISY WATERSTONE
Mr Leighton	NICHOLAS LE PREVOST
Mrs Leighton	ANNA CHANCELLOR
Passenger	TERESA CHURCHER
Boy on bicycle	XAVIER ATKINS
Sister Jones	NIAMH CUSACK
Nurse Scott	LAURA ELSWORTHY
Nurse Milton	NAOMI EVERSON
Wounded Soldier	JOSH TAYLOR
Geoffrey Thurlow	JONATHAN BAILEY
Hotel Clerk	CHARLIE WOODWARD
Convalescent Nurse	EMILY BEVAN
George Catlin	HENRY GARRETT
Sister Eliot	JANET AMSDEN
Dorothy	JENN MURRAY
Hope Milroy	HAYLEY ATWELL
Wounded German Soldier	LAURENCE DOBIESZ
Dying German Soldier	ADAM GANNE
Mustard Gas Victim	JAMES ESLER
Orderly	JOLYON COY
Wounded Tommies	HUBERT BURTON
	HENRY RYLANDS
New Maid	MAYA HENSON
Celebrating Nurse	HEATHER NICOL
Winifred Holtby	ALEXANDRA ROACH
Town Hall Speaker	HARRY ATTWELL
Bereaved Mother	MARY ROSCOE

STUNTS

GARY CONNERY	LUCY CORK	GORDON SEED
Unit Production Manager		DANIKA KOHLER DOMAN
1 st Assistant Director		NIGE WATSON
Production Sound Mixer		JOHN PEARSON
Gaffer		JULIAN WHITE

Key Grip	SAM PHILLIPS
Props Master	STEVE REGISTER
Supervising Locations Manager	CHARLIE THOMPSON
Financial Controller	DIANNE TWIDDY
Additional Unit Production Manager	TIM WELLSRING
Supervising Sound Editors	ANDY SHELLEY
	STEPHEN GRIFFITHS
Post Production Supervisor	MIRANDA JONES
Camera Operator	ROB HARDY BSC
Steadicam Operator	VINCE MCGAHON, ACO
Grip Assistant	JACK GLASCODINE
Additional Grip	DAVE WELLS
Crane Technician	NEIL TOMLIN
Head Technician	STEVE HIDEG
Script Supervisor	SARA DOUGHTY
2 nd Assistant Director	TAMARA KING
Crowd 2 nd Assistant Director	NIKKI MOLLOY
3 rd Assistant Director	ANNIE HITCHCOCK
Additional 2 nd Assistant Director	SARAH SELWAY
Floor Runner	SIGGY STONE
Base Runner	OLIVIA FITZROY
Additional Runners	
LUKE KIMBLE WILLIAMS	CHARLOTTE LEE
	RHYS PERKINS
Sound Maintenance	RIC PERRIN
Sound Assistant	JENNIFER ANNOR
Sound Trainee	STEPHEN JABLONSKI
Supervising Art Director	CHRISTOPHER WYATT
Art Directors	PHILIP A. BROWN
	DARYN MCLAUGHLAN
Standby Art Director	SOPHIE MCCONVILLE
Assistant Art Director	AOIFE WARREN
Art Department Assistant	DEAN MCLEOD
Set Decorator	ROBERT WISCHHUSEN-HAYES
Set Decorating Buyer	ELEANOR SHANKS
Assistant Buyer	ELIN STONE
Graphics Designer	SHAUN MITCHESON
Storyboard Artist	JOHN GREAVES
Assistant Production Co-ordinator	HELEN TURPIN
Additional Assistant	
Production Co-ordinator	BENI HARDIMAN
Production Secretary	EMMA CHAPMAN
Production Runners	ERIN ANDERSON
	JAKE HOLDSWORTH

Rushes Runner	CLARE BREWER
First Assistant Editor	REBECCA LLOYD
Music Editor	MICHAEL CONNELL
Post Production Co-ordinator	NADIYA LUTHRA
Editorial Trainee	MICHELA IOVANE
Assistant to James Kent	ISLA BADENOCH
Assistant to David Heyman	ROB SILVA
Assistant to Rosie Alison	ALICE SEABRIGHT
Best Boy	PAUL BREWSTER
Electricians	
PAUL HELM NICK MITCHELL	MICHAEL SHERNO KIERAN WAITES
Rigging Gaffer	DAN LOWE
2 nd Unit Electricians	
ANDY CLARKE STEWART RENWICK	JACK WAKEFIELD
Balloon Technician	LEE MILLS
Assistant Costume Designer	POLI KYRIACOU
Costume Supervisor	JENNA MCGRANAGHAN
Wardrobe Mistress	SUE CASEY
Costume Standbys	YANNICK GONDRAN
	ELIZABETH MOUL
Crowd Costume Supervisor	SOPHIE BUGEAUD-LABRUNE
Military Costume Supervisor	RICHARD COOKE
Costume Trainee	ALEXINA DUNCAN
Additional Costume Assistants	
KAREN AVENELL JO BARNSDALE HELEN FELSTEAD	BRONWEN THOMPSON
Key Costume Makers	
MALIN ANDERSON JANE LAW CLARE RAMSELL	KIM WITHCEL
Make-up & Hair Artist (Vera)	NORA ROBERTSON
Make-up & Hair Artist	KAY BILK
Crowd Make-up & Hair Supervisor	JANE LOGAN
Make-up & Hair Trainee	NATALIE MORTON
Prosthetic Make-up & Hair Artist	VICKY VOLLER
Additional Make-up & Hair Artists	SALLY COLLINS
	STEPHEN ROSE
	TRACEY WELLS
Prop Storeman	STEVEN BARNES
Prop Hands	GUTO HUMPHREYS
	MIKE SPENCE
Standby Props	MICHELLE FIELD
	STUART FRIFT
Construction Manager	JOHN MOOLENSCHOT
HOD Painter	DEREK COWIE

Chargehand	DORIAN MILLMAN
Painters	
JESSICA BLAMIRE	DAVID GILLIAN
MATT GRACE	DAVID PEARCE
Assistant Painter	DINA KARKLINA
HOD Carpenter London Workshop	DEREK BELLCHAMBERS
HOD Carpenter Locations	JAMES WADDINGHAM
HOD Carpenters	STEVE DEANE
	NICK LINDEN
Carpenters	
GARRY BIRD	LEE DEANE
MATT LLOYD	
GRAHAM MITCHELL	BOB NOBLE
SEBASTIAN PALMER	
GILES ROWNTREE	KEVIN SWABEY
Stagehand	CHARLIE BELLCHAMBERS
Standby Rigger	TOM CHEETHAM
Standby Carpenter	GARRY MOORE
Location Manager (London & Oxford)	ANDREW RYLAND
Location Manager (Yorkshire)	RICHARD KNIGHT
Unit Location Managers	JAMIE SUMNER
	AARON SUTTER
Location Scouts	LEON SETH
	SAM SIMON
Location Assistant	AMANDA MUTHADA-POTTAYYA
1 st Assistant Accountant	MAGGIE MURRAY
2 nd Assistant Accountant	CARLA GALE
Accountants Assistant	ALICE COLLINS
Post Production Accountant	LARA SARGENT
Accounts Assistants	KIRSTIE WHITE
	JAMES WHITE
Casting Associate	RUTH KEY
Casting Assistant	EMILY BROCKMANN
SFX Supervisor	NEAL CHAMPION
Senior SFX Technicians	ALISTAIR ANDERSON
	SCOTT PETERS
SFX Technician	LEON HARRIS
SFX Co-ordinator	EMMA CHAMPION
SFX Trainee	LOUIS CHAMPION
Post Production Services by LIPSYNC POST	
Facility Director	LISA JORDAN
Post Producer	PAUL DRAY
Assistant Producer	KESHIA AGYEI
Colourist	ADAM INGLIS

Assistant Colourists SAM CHYNOWETH

JAMIE WELSH

Head of DI JAMES CLARKE

Senior DI Editor CONNAN MCSTAY

D-Lab Operators

SARAH MOROWA FREYA PEARSON MATT ROBERTS

THOMAS WADDINGTON RUEEBEN YARWOOD

Head of VT RICK WHITE

VT Operators

GARTH MERRY BEN NORTH LOUISE PURVIS

Sound by LIPSYNC POST

Recording Assistant BRIAN GILLIGAN

Sound Effects Editor BLAIR JOLLANDS

Dialogue Editor PETER GATES

ADR Editor JENNIE EVANS

ADR Mixer SANDY BUCHANAN

ADR Assistants TUSHAR MANEK

BEN TAT

Foley Recorded at FEET FIRST SOUND

Foley Mixer BARNABY SMYTH

Foley Artist KEITH PARTRIDGE

Voice Casting BLEND AUDIO (UK)

Visual Effects By FRAMESTORE

Visual Effects Supervisor ANTHONY SMITH

Visual Effects Producer MELODY WOODFORD

Visual Effects Co-ordinator THANDIWE PHILIPS

Lead Matte Painting Artist DAMIEN MACÉ

Matte Painting Artists

LAURA MACFADYEN ROBERT JUNGGEBURT

IRENE NAVARRO MARK TAYLOR

Lead Composer TOM BASKAYA

Compositors

IAN FELLOWS SAM SALEK ADAM PARKER GIACOMO BARGELLES

JONATHAN TURNER AMY DAVIS PAUL CHAPMAN THEODOR GROENEBOOM

SERHII YURSKYI LUKE ARMSTRONG ELENA TOPOUZOGLOU DANIEL MORENO OLIVA

Paint & Rota Artists

OLLY HAGAR DANIEL BATT

KYE DORRICOTT SCOTT ROBERTSON

Camera Tracking Artists DIEGO PASTOR

MAX SMITH

VFX Editor LUKASZ BUKOWIECKI

Visual Effects By MUNKY

VFX Supervisor GARY BROWN

VFX Line Producer GILLIAN MACKIE

Lead Flame Artist MARK EPSTEIN

VFX Artists

MIGUEL ALGORA ZISSIS PAPATZIKIS RYAN PASSMORE

Titles by LIPSYNC DESIGN

Head of Design	HOWARD WATKINS
Senior Designer	JULIA HALL

Consultant	MARK BOSTRIDGE, BIOGRAPHER OF VERA BRITTAIN
Dialect Coach	PENNY DYER
Clearances	DEB BANBURY LTD

Horse Master	EMMA DENT
Carriage Drivers	DANNY BOWSEY
	ROBERT WILMOT

Stills Photographers

LAURENCE CENDROWICZ GILES KEYTE LAURIE SPARHAM

Unit Publicists	MILK PUBLICITY
B Roll	MARK DOMAN
EPK	PMA

Transport Captain	JAMES WILSON
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Unit Drivers

JAVED ELAHI DAVID LITTLETON NICOLA TAYLOR PAUL TAYLOR

Minibuses	BARRY GRIFFITHS
	RONALD ROBSON
Facilities Manager	ANDREW DEVLIN
Facilities Captain	JAMES MOORE
Camera Truck Driver	STEVE SLATER
Grip Truck Driver	KEVIN DORAN
Standby Chippie Driver	PETER CONNOLLY

Health & Safety Advisor	CLEM LENEGHAN
Unit Medic	TEAM MEDICS
Caterer 1	ENVISION CATERING
Caterer 2	PREMIERE CATERING

UNDERWATER UNIT

Underwater Camera Operator	MARK SILK
Underwater Supervisor	DAN TRAVERS
Underwater 1 st AC	BARNY CROCKER
Underwater 2 nd AC	DANNY PRESTON
Underwater Gaffer	BERNIE PRENTICE
Underwater Surface Sparks	MARK BRENNAN
	CHRIS BRENNAN
Underwater Surface Rigger	JOHN CHIMNEY

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Director of Photography	JEREMY POLLARD
1 st Assistant AC (Yorkshire)	IWAN PRYS REYNOLDS
1 st Assistant AC (London)	CRAIG PORTER
2 nd Assistant AC	LOUISE BEN-NATHAN
DIT	KEIR GARNET-LAWSON
DIT (prep)	ADAM SHELL
Location Manger (London)	JONAH COOMBES
Assistant Co-ordinator	DAVE WARE
Vera Double	KIRA HARPER
Roland Double	HENDRIK HALMS
Edward Double	RAVEN HART
Victor Double	TIMOTHY GOUGH
Facilities	ON SET
Transport Captain	JAMES WILSON
Camera Truck Driver	GEORGE FRAZER
North Yorkshire Moors Railway Liaison	SANDRA MCNICOLL

FOR HEYDAY FILMS

Development Executive	BEN IRVING
Development Assistant	ALICE SEABRIGHT

FOR BBC FILMS

Senior Business Manager	MICHAEL WOOD
Head of Legal & Business Affairs	ZOE BROWN
Legal & Business Affairs Manager	HELEN GILES
Development Executive	BETH PATTINSON
Marketing Executive	JACQUI BARR
Legal & Production Assistant	RUTH SANDERS

FOR SCREEN YORKSHIRE

Chief Executive	SALLY JOYNSON
ERDF Contract Manager	LIZ WEST
Marketing & Communications Manager	RACHEL MCWATT

FOR LIPSYNC PRODUCTIONS

Executive Producers

ANDREW BOSWELL	PETER HAMPDEN
NORMAN MERRY	PETER RAVEN

Legal Services for Screen Yorkshire & LipSync	CHRISTOS MICHAELS
Productions	ANTONY SWIATEK
	LEE & THOMPSON

FOR BFI

Director of Lottery Film Fund	BEN ROBERTS
Senior Development & Production Executive	NATASCHA WHARTON
Head of Production	FIONA MORHAM
Head of Production Finance	IAN KIRK

Business Affairs Manager VIRGINIA BURGESS
Development Executive DAVID SEGAL HAMILTON
PRODUCED BY HOTWELLS PRODUCTIONS LIMITED
Executives for Ingenious Media
CHARLES AUTY TED CAWREY
SIMON WILLIAMS LESLEY WISE

FOR NORDISK FILM PRODUCTION

Executive Producer for Nordisk
Film Production HENRIK ZEIN
Associate Producer MIKAEL RIEKS
Legal Affairs LENA HAUGAARD
Acquisition Manager CHRISTOPHER SEIDELIN

INTERNATIONAL SALES BY PROTAGONIST PICTURES

Chief Executive Officer MIKE GOODRIDGE
Head of Legal & Business Affairs SIMON OSBORN
Head of Marketing BRIDGET PEDGRIFT
Head of Sales VANESSA SAAL

Music Supervisor CLAIRE FREEMAN
Orchestra Contractor ISOBEL GRIFFITHS
Assistant Orchestra Contractor SUSIE GILLIS
Orchestra Leader & Solo Violin EVERTON NELSON
Leader of 2nd Violins RICHARD GEORGE
1st Viola EDWARD VANDERSPAR
1st Cello & Solo Cello IAN BURDGE
1st Bass CHRIS LAURENCE
Harp HUGH WEBB
Piano ANDY MASSEY
Flute KAREN JONES
Conductor ROBERT ZIEGLER
Orchestration DAVE FOSTER
Music Preparation DAVE FOSTER FOR SWING CITY MUSIC LTD
Score Recorded & Mixed by RUPERT COULSON
Protools TOM BAILEY
Score Co-ordinator SUSANNE GEISLER
Composer's Assistants HENNING FUCHS
CARLO KRETZSCHMAR

Camera Equipment MOVIE TECH
Video & DIT Equipment COACH HOUSE
BOB BRIDGES
Grip Equipment FILM GRIP LTD
Lighting Services PANALUX
Speciality Lighting Services AIRSTAR

Rigging Equipment
LIGHT SYNTHESIS FSS TYBURN RIGGING

Testament of Youth

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Laboratory	CINELAB
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	WAVEND
Trains supplied by	NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS RAILWAY
	KEIGHLEY AND WORTH VALLEY RAILWAY
Action Vehicles	MOTOR HOUSE HIRE
Horse & Carriages	R & S DENT HORSES & CARRIAGES
Armourer	BAPTY
Crane & Dolly Services	ARRI MEDIA
Construction Services	CINECO
Location Equipment	ATV HIRE LTD
	LOCATION ONE LTD
Location Security	CAPRICORN SECURITY LTD
	LOCATION SECURE

Costumes Supplied by	
ANGELS . ARAM . CORNEJO . COSPROP	
EURO COSTUMES . HERO COLLECTION POLAND . LE VESTIAIRE .	
Wigs Supplied by	PETER OWEN

Extras Casting	
ACTION AMPS . AMPUTEES IN ACTION . BOND MODELS . CASTING COLLECTIVE . CELEX CASTING	
SALLY KING CASTING . SEVEN AGENCY . SOLDIER IN BLUE . ON SET EXTRAS	

Editing Equipment	HIREWORKS
Payroll Services	SARGENT-DISC LTD, LONDON
Post Production Script	FATTS
Legal Services by	SARAH BING
	ALEXANDER LEA
	WIGGIN LLP
Insurance	KEVIN O'SHEA
	GALLAGHER ENTERTAINMENT
Completion Bond Services Provided by	FILM FINANCES, INC
Auditor	SHIPLEYS LLP, STEVE JOBERNS
Collection Agent Services by	FINTAGE COLLECTION ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT BV
Score Recorded and Mixed At	AIR LYNDHURST STUDIOS, LONDON

"IN DULCI JUBILO"
Arranged by Otto Sieben
Imagem Production Music

"SOLACE" by Scott Joplin
Played by Alexander Peskanov, piano
Licensed Courtesy of Naxos Rights US Inc

"BEAUTIFUL ISLE OF SOMEWHERE"
Written by Jessie Brown Pounds & J.S Fearis
Performed by John McCormack

"DVORAK: HUMORESQUE op.101 no. 7"
Performed by Fritz Kreisler, 1905
Sound Recording Courtesy of British Library

Source: Library and Archives
Canada/Beautiful Isle of Somewhere
1921/AMICUS 31399650

WITH THANKS TO

Welbeck Estate, Nottinghamshire
Chris Hansell
Billy Hinshelwood

The red cross emblem is a protective symbol used during armed conflicts and its use is restricted by law. The Producers wish to thank the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence and the British Red Cross Society for authorization to use the red cross emblem in this film.

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