

JOURNEY OF A STORY – INDEPENDANT FEATURE FILM

Tagline

War was only half the battle.

Synopsis

JOURNEY OF A STORY follows the life of William Brown, a fictional New Zealand serviceman both physically and emotionally damaged by his tour of duty in Europe and time as a Prisoner of War during World War II. Returning home, he finds a very different world to the one he left behind. Forced to leave the home he planned to enjoy with his wife Lily and young son James, he struggles to cope until an observant War Pension medical officer convinces William to follow his interest in writing. Fuelled with a new passion for life, William finally finds a road to success and redemption, in ways he could not have possibly imagined.

Description

Centred on a concept by Executive Producer **Kay Rayner**, JOURNEY OF A STORY is based on the experience of her father Private George Parrish, who escaped a Prisoner of War camp during World War II and spent many months living under a farmhouse in Austria before being liberated by Allied Troops.

George's letters sent home during the war were used to shape the fictional story of William Brown's wartime experience.

The story is told from the elderly William's point of view, as he relays his story to a young theatre director attempting to bring William's life to the stage.

About the film

JOURNEY OF A STORY is a labour of love for an Auckland-based filmmaking family. Shot over eight months of weekends in late 2010, the war-era drama is a considerable achievement for a project of this budget and scope. The film is the directorial debut for producer/director **Jonathon Rayner-Burt**.

Crewed entirely by volunteers, JOURNEY OF A STORY was also supported by a large number of groups, societies and businesses in the wider community. Every participant brought their own reason for helping to the production, from a simple love of the medium, to a passion for recreating a bygone era, to being able to pay tribute and respect to the struggles of the generation of New Zealanders being represented in the story.

Executive Producer **Kay Rayner** initiated the project in early 2009 after coming into possession of a number of letters from her late father George Parrish. George, a member of the 5th Field Ambulance, had his own story to tell. George was captured in 1941 after the catastrophic attack on the Greek port of Piraeus and the destruction of his ship the *Hellas*. After spending a number of years in a prisoner of war labour camp, George escaped and was hidden in the home of an Austrian farming family until the end of the war.

The screenplay was written by **Chantal Rayner-Burt**, drawing on written and anecdotal accounts of her grandfather. Although the places, names, and overall narrative is fictional, the actions played out until the return home are virtually verbatim.

Shooting began in April 2010 with a four day block over Easter. Ignoring the cautions of shooting a low budget feature with a limited number of locations, the shoot for JOURNEY OF A STORY stretched over the wider Auckland area. The heritage-home rich area of Helensville hosted about a quarter of the shoot: from a number of private homes to the Helensville Pioneer Museum. Pukekohe, across the other side of Auckland, was the location for the theatre, the fields of Austria, and the 'local' RSA.

Production designer **Sean J G Hurst** faced the considerable task of recreating the physical environment of a past time. While a considerable amount of wardrobe was on loan from a local theatrical society, the balance were found or borrowed from other sources by **Kay Rayner**. Numerous props and set pieces- including effectively the entire set design for a stage production – had to be created.

Production drew to a close in November 2010 after a 32 day shoot.

Director's notes

From the kernel of an idea in June 2009, to where we stand now, we have travelled a journey of our own. I say this as a first time director, as a production company, and as a family. I have grown both professionally and personally during the course of production, and I thank my cast and crew for indulging me in that development. The currency of goodwill has financed this production, and the results are enriched for it.

Since April until mid November 2010, a total of 32 shooting days, we have shot in 20 locations around the Auckland region. From Tairua to the east, Dairy Flat to the north, South Head and Helensville to the west and Pukekohe to the south, we've shot in an impressive range of locations.

It was around the time of the second draft that the idea of merging the concept of a theatre play into the narrative to provide a simple yet effective solution to some of our staging needs. Carefully enough balanced, scenes portrayed on stage could cover for the requirements of having large sets and a large number of visual effects elements, while still allowing us to use flashback to re-visit the 1940s.

Subsequent script drafts were spent balancing the action off stage, on stage and within the flashbacks themselves. The down-side to using the stage was that any characters effectively needed to be 'duplicated' to have stage versions of their flashback selves. This in itself ultimately proved to be a restriction. Therefore I chose to limit the on-stage action to scenes directly involving William and Lily.

The challenges of producing a period film on a limited budget meant that imaginative solutions often needed to be found to realise the scope of the script. For instance, accumulating enough authentic props, wardrobe and locations to recreate the era of the 1940s would have been impossible with our scope without the assistance of a number of local historical societies and groups. First to partner with us were the local military re-enactors group, the Historical Re-enactment Society.

The HRS regularly attend commemorative events and perform displays for the public. Their participation in JOURNEY OF A STORY meant that we had access to fully kitted soldiers from New Zealand, the United States, and Germany. Locating accurate uniforms and weapons was always a major concern of mine but we got ourselves into the enviable position of having ready-made soldier extras at our disposal.

For crowd scenes, we had a dozen members from the Auckland Art Deco Society, with cars and members from the North Shore Vintage Car Club complimenting the

realism of scenes. The Pukekohe Light Opera Club not only provided their theatre over Easter 2009 but also a large chunk of their wardrobe department for a long-term loan.

It was the participation of these groups, in addition to our own volunteer cast and crew, that gave me a lot of confidence in this project, and that the story, so close to our family, was not only compelling but very common amongst other families. The majority of people that we spoke to identified readily with the film's themes and story. Christine Grace, a resident of Parakai near Helensville, embraced the project, allowing us to shoot in her private home and negotiating several more in the area to be used as shooting locations.

Recreating a different era for film means acquiring, or then researching and recreating, a huge amount of material to add authenticity to any given scene. This task has been particularly interesting for creating items from the decade spanning 1938-1948.

I've always been an aspiring Art Department person, having a design background and always enjoyed creating items in particular style or aiming to achieve a particular look.

A key set-piece in the script was the attack on the steam-yacht Hellas: a real-life event that took place in April of 1941 in the Greek port of Piraeus. Realising this scene effectively in any real-world sense would have been beyond our means. With the help of **Felicity Moore**, Visual Effects Specialist we were able to illustrate the enormity of this attack.

We were fortunate to have the support of a UK based film company Ffab UK and its director **Phil Moran**. Phil travelled to Graz in order to provide us with exterior shots for our POW escape sequence. This footage added a unique level of authenticity and I am proud to say we have actual Austrian landscapes within the film.

Planning for a feature film shoot over weekends is a challenge. Initial scoping laid out 33 shooting days and ultimately this ended up being pretty close to the mark. Continuity for hair and appearance was another big challenge; fortunately, due to the way narrative changes time and place, it allowed us a bit of lee-way. That being said, I am very proud of how scenes shot months apart marry up on screen with very little discerning changes. We only had to re-shoot one minor scene to take into account restrictions we had with one of the actors taking on another role mid way through the shoot and having to maintain a particular look. In fact, the most challenging thing that came up during the shoot was that **Bill Leathwick** had a bad fall and received a scar to his forehead. Bill's shoot days ended up at being at either extreme ends of the schedule, and our hairdressers were forced to do some strategic placement to cover up the new scar.

Shooting through the winter months was always going to be risky with so many exterior shoots. We lost a couple of weekends to bad weather but ultimately this didn't push the schedule out too far. Our most challenging exterior shoot was at the beach in North Head, which involved getting actors and crew into shallow water in the dark for the post-Hellas bombing and subsequent capture by the Germans. Kitted out with a generator truck and three cameras, we went until 4 am to cover everything off. Wrestling with a tide and trying to throw enough light on dark water, we ultimately came away with what we needed.

Ultimately, my approach as a director was to introduce all of the actors to their characters and then step back and see what they did with them. In a sense I trust actors as professionals in their role, and much like a relationship with an editor, feel it's always best to see if someone else's interpretation brings a flavour that I hadn't

imagined. This approach was enjoyed by the cast, especially those who had worked with more prescriptive directors. Given the fact that from the first day of auditions we advertised the project for what it was – a volunteer low budget production with a very long shoot period – I am very happy with the calibre of acting talent we attracted for JOURNEY OF A STORY.

We set out to make an authentic, compelling drama made in honour of a family member, while respecting an entire generation of post-war families. This project has challenged me considerably but I have definitely grown as a result. During the pre-production phase, there were any number of nay-sayers that said that this type of film did not in any way fit the traditional genres or production methods of a low-budget feature. In a way, this criticism spurred us all on to create the best film we could. I am very happy with the results as they stand: against a considerable number of challenges, we have managed to create 90 minutes of period drama. This has come at a time and effort investment of almost twelve months of fundraising and planning, then onto 32 days of shooting spread over eight months. I am proud of what we have accomplished, and I am looking forward to showing it to the world.

Jonathon Rayner-Burt
April, 2011

Credits List

<i>Producer</i>	Jonathon Rayner-Burt	
<i>Executive Producer</i>	Kay S Rayner	
<i>Director</i>	Jonathon Rayner-Burt	
<i>Screenplay</i>	Chantal Rayner-Burt	
<i>Director of Photography</i>	Dimi Nakov	
<i>Cast</i>	Jesse Allam Jordan Ancel Andrew Birkill Lisa Brickell Ron Brown Colin Buckley Steve Ciprian James Crompton George Ferrier James Fletcher Angela Franklyn-Lewis Virginia Frankovich Nichola Gilchrist Lutz Halbhubner Scott Harding Ursula Hartmann-Williams Maria Hewitt Jaydn James Graeme Joyce Natalie Joyce Margareta Lammer Bill Leathwick Paul Thomas Lewis Duncan Lucas Kelly Manning Ryan Miller Hugo Rayner-Burt Coben Storer Samuel Thomas Paul Trimmer Robyn Worthington	Thomas Brown American Sergeant Mr Mullholland Stage Nurse Audrey Jack Percival (elder) James Brown, 50 years Henry Smithers Laurence Burton James Brown, 6 years Jack Percival (younger) Lily Brown Maude Smithers Mrs Mullholland Hans Seidler Roger the neighbour Stage Lily Brown Heidi Seidler James Brown, 14 years Stage Willy the Postman Greta Seidler Maria Seidler William Brown (elder) William Brown (younger) Stage Dr Pike Willy the Postman James Brown, 3 years James Brown, 6 months American Lieutenant Stage Jack Percival Stage William Brown Esther Smithers
<i>Extras</i>	Brendon Lovell Matthew Davison Olivia Wannan Barry Duffield Kate Nicholson Emma Conway Lisa Green Michele Liuvaie Alexandra McAlwee Ken N Maule Michele Melchior Rebecca Louise Andrews Katarina Lavender	

Suzie Lewis
Ngauru Rawiri
Daniel Gilmour
Robert Furci
Maurizio Piglia
Alec Ramsdale
Adrienne Louise Ramsdale
Amy Parlane
The Venerable John
Marcon
Bob Jessopp
Adam Carberry
Kevin Carberry
Sebastian Solberg
Andrew Sunde
Rudolf Hendrikx
Dennis Lowe
Ella Baker
Peter Forde
Richard J Fletcher
Clare Fletcher
Edward Perry
Edward Rayner
Michael Hughes
Philip Hobbs
Brett Curtis
Marie Cameron
Melanie-Alexandra Jarvis
Karena Jarvis
Rodger Phillips
David Gunson
Barry Clewett
Matthew Paul
Ann-Marie Jagusch
Renee Palmer
Margaret Perry
June Clewett
Katharine Brown
Susan Harding
Christine Grace
IJP Fearon
Peter McKenna
Jocelyn Aydon
Gabrielle Batenburg
Sally Whitley
David Lane
Aleisha Moore
Brent Mathieson
Lou Pendegrast-Mathieson
Cari Batenburg
Nicole Lucas
Celeste Strewé
Sean J G Hurst
Jack Crichton
Maru Tamehana
Henry Jian
Andrew Birkill

Sinead Birkill
Marie Hawkins
Shirley Brewer
Simone Colwill
Shana Lang
Damian Gavin
Gary Walker
Mervyn Hair
Jean Hair
Jeff Yeh
Enny Benzonelli
Alan Surrey
Theo Thomas
Ann McGarry
Nicole Scheid
Henric Matthiesen
Kirsty Russell
Murray Tomlin
Craig Miller
Louise Miller
Dave Johnston
Aola Johnston
C Patena
Samuel Gavin
Beth Parker
Myrtle Thomas
Sharon Gray
Lily Hutchinson

Camera

Tracie D'Ath
Gary Foster
Sam James
Henry Jian
Kevin Luck
Stephen Morris
Mariya Nakova
Lydia Stott
Ioannis Montes
Mark Tronson

**Camera
Assistants**

Tracie D'Ath

Tom Dyson
Henry Jian
Garth Jansen
Kevin Luck
Christos Montes
Stephen Morris
Michelle Melchior
Kimberley Norman

**Lighting
Assistants**

Jack Crichton

Tracie D'Ath
Henry Jian
Kevin Luck
Christos Montes
Donald Montes

	Stephen Morris
Sound	Josiah Burren Dylan Crummer Tom Dyson Bala Krishna Kevin Luck Christo Montes Kimberley Norman Katherine Sasse Maru Tamehana Cléa Thomas Daniel Wadman CJ Withey
Production Coordinator	Graeme Cash
1st Assistant Director	Corinne Ash Tim Butler Graeme Cash Reynald Castenada Merrin Cavel Jennifer Jansen Kevin Luck CJ Withey
Production Assistants	Tim Butler Giles Coverdale Ken N Maule Kimberley Norman Edward Rayner
Continuity	Graeme Cash Jodie Hart Jennifer Jansen Kylie Newman Kimberley Norman Shivneil Maharaj
Second Unit (Austria)	Phil Moran (FFAB UK)
Stills Photographers	Nicola Gilchrist Bob Jessopp Allan Johnston Duncan Lucas Reynald Castenada Henric Matthiesen Stephen Morris Jonathon Rayner-Burt Mariya Nakova
Location Scout	Edward Rayner
Production	Sean J G Hurst

Designer

***Wardrobe
Supervisor***

Kay S Rayner

Wardrobe

Sean Hurst
Julia Manzanero
Genevieve Smith
Jasmine Rogers-Scott

Art Department Assistants

Giles Coverdale
Jess Davies
Angela Gray
Clare McLean
Marzena Krusinska
Henric Matthiesen
Genevieve Smith
Krysalla Ikahihifo
Josh Finnigan
Rudolph Hendrikx
Vanessa Numans
Jasmine Rogers-Scott
Tim Butler
Maru Tamehana

HOD Make Up

Celeste Strewé

***Make Up
Assistants***

Kiri Fiddes

Samantha Gilliver
Astrid Shrinack
Sharon Saunders
Monique Witsenburg
Greer Williams
Frances Wilkie

HOD Hair

Cari Batenburg

Hairdressers

Nicole Lucas
Sarah Thomas
Pre-work by Sirocco Hair
and Beauty

Editors

Bob Jessopp
Jonathon Rayner-Burt

Visual Effects Supervisor

Felicity Moore

Visual Effects

Damon Keen
Kieran Ogden-Brunel

Sound Mix

Ricky Sayster

***Sound and Technical
Advisor***

Miriam Ludbrook

Music Score

Gary Daverne O.N.Z.M

Colour

Fin Desmond
Martin Colllyns

Research

David Filer
Paul Luker
Jonathon Rayner-Burt
Kay Rayner
Chantal-Rayner-Burt