



**AMERICAN PREMIERE OF LONGEST
VERSION OF ABEL GANCE'S LEGENDARY
MASTERPIECE NAPOLEON TO SCREEN IN
SAN FRANCISCO SILENT FILM FESTIVAL
AT OAKLAND PARAMOUNT,
MARCH 24, 25, 31 & APRIL 1, 2012**

**USA PREMIERE OF COMPLETE
RESTORATION BY RENOWNED FILM
HISTORIAN KEVIN BROWNLOW & BFI
NATIONAL ARCHIVE**

**USA PREMIERE OF ORCHESTRAL SCORE BY
CARL DAVIS, WHO WILL CONDUCT
OAKLAND EAST BAY SYMPHONY**

(July 14, 2011 – Bastille Day) The BFI is pleased to announce that the the San Francisco Silent Film Festival will present the U.S. premiere of Abel Gance's legendary **NAPOLEON** in its complete restoration as undertaken by Academy Award®-winning historian, documentarian and archivist Kevin Brownlow and the BFI National Archive, in four special screenings at Oakland's **Paramount Theatre** on **March 24, 25, 31 and April 1, 2012**.

The Brownlow restoration, produced with his partner Patrick Stanbury at Photoplay Productions in association with the BFI National Archive, is the most complete version of Gance's masterpiece since its 1927 premiere at the Paris Opéra.

The San Francisco screenings also mark the US premiere of the renowned orchestral score, written over 30 years ago (and twice expanded since), by Carl Davis, who will conduct the Oakland East Bay Symphony.

The spectacular presentation at the 3,000-seat, Art Deco Oakland Paramount will be climaxed by its finale in "Polyvision" – an enormous triptych, employing three specially-installed synchronized projectors, that will dramatically expand the screen to triple its width. The logistics and expense of screening *Napoleon* properly with full orchestra and

special equipment have made it nearly impossible to mount. Gance's *Napoleon* hasn't been screened theatrically in the U.S. with live orchestra for nearly 30 years and there are no plans to repeat this event in any other American city.

Stacey Wisnia, Executive Director of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival said, "This will be 'the cinema event of a lifetime' and for once that's not just hype, considering that we may never have another chance to see *Napoleon* presented on this scale and with Carl Davis' magnificent score. But we're also referring to the lifetime of passion that Kevin Brownlow has devoted to bringing Abel Gance's original vision back to life."

Kevin Brownlow, who last year became the first film historian ever honoured with a special Academy Award, became fascinated with Gance's film when, as a schoolboy in the 1950s, he projected two 9.5mm reels he had stumbled upon at a street market.

"I was stunned by the cinematic flair," says Brownlow. "I was exhilarated by the rapid cutting and the swirling camera movement. What daring! I had never seen anything comparable – and I set out to find more of it." That determination led to a lifelong quest.

The first major Brownlow/BFI restoration culminated in a screening at the Telluride Film Festival in 1979, with 90-year-old Gance watching from a nearby hotel window. Under the auspices of Francis Ford Coppola and Robert A. Harris, a version of this restoration, accompanied by a score composed by Coppola's father Carmine, was presented to great acclaim at Radio City Music Hall and other venues in the US. and around the world in the early 1980s. Brownlow and the BFI National Archive did additional restoration work in 1983.

The current restoration, completed in 2000 but not previously seen outside Europe, reclaims more than 30 minutes of additional footage discovered since the 1979 screening and visually upgrades much of the film. This unique 35mm print, made at the laboratory of the BFI National Archive, uses traditional dye-bath techniques to recreate the colour tints and tones that enhanced the film on its original release, giving an extraordinary vividness to the image..

Abel Gance's *NAPOLEON* is being presented by the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, in association with American Zoetrope, the Film Preserve, Photoplay Productions, and the BFI.

Heather Stewart, Creative Director, BFI said , ““We are very excited to be working towards the US premiere of this version of Napoleon and hugely grateful for the support of everyone who has made this happen”.

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Notes to editors:

Selected images are available for use in publicizing this screening via www.imagenet.com/BFI/archive/Napoleon

Each screening of the 5 1/2 hour epic will begin in the afternoon and will be shown in four parts with three intermissions, including a dinner break. Tickets will be available online through the SFSFF website, www.silentfilm.org, beginning July 18.

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences

BFI National Archive

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the largest collection of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films. With specialist storage facilities in Warwickshire and Hertfordshire the archive also boasts significant collections of stills, posters and designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera. We are funded partly by OfCom as the official archive for ITV, Channel Four and Channel Five. We record a representative sample of television across Britain's terrestrial channels and are the official archive of moving image records of Parliament.

BFI Mediatheques

Anyone can get access to collections of over 2000 titles from the archive for free at BFI Mediatheques around the UK, currently at BFI Southbank, BFI National Library, QUAD Derby, Central Library Cambridge and Wrexham Library, and Discovery Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

BFI National Archive Online

Our YouTube channel **BFI Films** has over 300 items which can be viewed online. [Over 1,000,000 views have been recorded for *Alice in Wonderland* (1903) uploaded to coincide with the release of Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*]. Academic access for higher education is through the **BFI InView** project. Schools and educational institutions have access to a wide range of material at **screenonline.org.uk**. This is in addition to paid access at the BFI for other research needs.

BFI Films

12,000 prints a year are loaned out by the BFI National Archive to support the programmes of 800 venues across the UK and overseas and our DVD label regularly issues selected items. These have included the hugely popular British Transport Films Collection series, the legendary documentaries of The GPO Film Unit, the collections of the Central Office of Information, *Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain 1951 – 1977*, *Tales from the Shipyard: Britain's shipbuilding heritage on film* and most recently Herbert Ponting's magnificent record of the Scott's ill-fated polar expedition *The Great White Silence* (1924)..