



PRESS RELEASE: 7 April 2011

**A New BFI National Archive Restoration of**

**THE GREAT WHITE SILENCE**

**A film by Herbert Ponting**

**With a new score by Simon Fisher Turner**

UK 1924 | 106 mins | Cert U

A BFI release

[www.bfi.org.uk/releases](http://www.bfi.org.uk/releases)

**Release date: 20 May 2011**

**Venues: BFI Southbank, Broadway Nottingham, Cambridge Arts Picturehouse, Phoenix Oxford, Chapter Cardiff, Curzon Mayfair, HMV Curzon Wimbledon and a further 20 selected cinemas nationwide**

The BFI's new restoration of *The Great White Silence*, one of the greatest records of British polar exploration, was a much acclaimed highlight of last year's London Film Festival. It is now released in cinemas nationwide with a newly commissioned score by leading contemporary composer Simon Fisher Turner, especially renowned for his haunting scores for filmmaker Derek Jarman.

More than a hundred years ago the British Antarctic Expedition led by Captain Scott set out on its ill-fated race to the South Pole. Joining Scott on board the *Terra Nova* was Herbert Ponting, the expedition's official photographer and cameraman, and the images that he captured have fired imaginations ever since.

Ponting's footage begins in 1910 with the departure of the *Terra Nova* from Lyttleton, on New Zealand's south island, for the Antarctic – a perilous journey during which animals and stores were lost overboard in a gale and the ship had to break through unusual amounts of pack ice for 400 miles to reach the Great Ice Barrier. Ponting took some of his most impressive footage - showing the ship breaking through the ice - from a makeshift platform over the side of the ship. Once arrived on Ross Island, Ponting filmed almost every aspect of the expedition: the scientific work, life in camp and the local wildlife - including killer whales, seals, Antarctic skuas and the characterful Adélie penguins. Those things he was unable to film he boldly recreated back home. Most importantly, Ponting recorded the preparations for the assault on the Pole - from the trials of the caterpillar-

track sledges to clothing and cooking equipment - giving us a real sense of the challenges faced by the expedition.

Ponting used his footage in various forms over the years and in 1924 he re-edited it into this remarkable feature, complete with vivid tinting and toning. The BFI National Archive - custodian of the Expedition negatives - has restored the film using the latest photochemical and digital techniques and reintroduced the film's sophisticated use of colour. The alien beauty of the landscape is brought dramatically to life and the world of the expedition revealed in brilliant detail.

Restoration supported by the Eric Anker-Petersen Charity.

For further information please contact:

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or

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**The Great White Silence** plays at the BFI Southbank, Broadway Nottingham, Cambridge Arts Picturehouse, Phoenix Oxford, Chapter Cardiff, Curzon Mayfair, HMV Curzon Wimbledon and a further 20 cinemas nationwide (see [www.bfi.org.uk/releases](http://www.bfi.org.uk/releases)) from 20 May.

On 18 May at 18.20 there will be a panel discussion at BFI Southbank hosted by Francine Stock. Participants include composer Simon Fisher Turner, sound recordist Chris Watson, plus Bryony Dixon and Kieron Webb (BFI National Archive).

**Original Music composed by Simon Fisher Turner featuring the composer, the Elysian Quartet, Sarah Scutt, David Coulter and Alexander L'Estrange**

Simon Fisher Turner is a prolific composer and a major figure on the contemporary British music scene. He has had a longstanding relationship to film. He is known for his haunting scores for directors such as Derek Jarman (**Caravaggio**, **The Garden**, **The Last of England**), Mike Hodges (**The Croupier**), Neil Jordan (**The End of the Affair**) and many more. He was also an actor/teen star in the 1970s.

His part-improvised score includes some pre-recorded elements and Simon Fisher Turner has gone to great lengths to include relevant 'found sounds'. The first was a gift from a friend, Chris Watson, who made a recording of the ambient silence in Scott's cabin in the Antarctic. Fisher Turner has also recorded the striking of the Terra Nova ship's bell at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge. He has even managed to track down the expedition's original gramophone to play some of the records which were played by members of the expedition.

[www.simonfisherturner.com](http://www.simonfisherturner.com)

**Simon Fisher Turner is available for interview. Contact Sarah Harvey: [sarah@sarahharvey.info](mailto:sarah@sarahharvey.info) to request interview.**

The BFI releases **The Great White Silence** in a Dual Format Edition (DVD and Blu-ray discs in one box) on 20 June. A host of extra features include *90° South* (1933, 72 mins), Ponting's re-edited sound version of the legendary footage he shot in 1910-11.

## **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
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

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**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting**

**BFI theatrical releases can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net)**