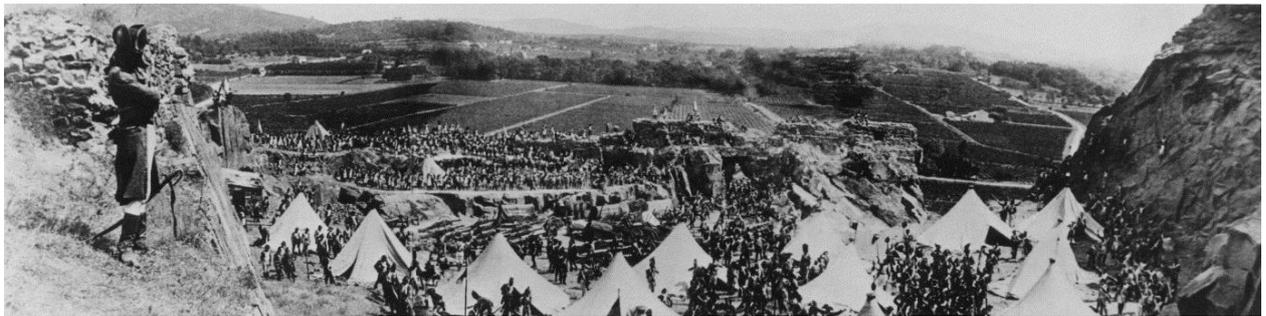


**BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE &  
PHOTOPLAY PRODUCTIONS  
PRESENT**

**ABEL GANCE'S *NAPOLEON* (1927)**

**ENTERING THE DIGITAL ERA FOR  
UK-WIDE THEATRICAL AND BLU-RAY/DVD RELEASE**



**London – 27 January 2016.** The BFI today announces a new chapter in the epic history of one of the world's greatest films: Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927). In the culmination of a 50-year project, Academy Award™-winning film historian Kevin Brownlow and the BFI National Archive have completed a new digitally restored version of Abel Gance's cinematic triumph. From Autumn 2016, for the first time ever, audiences across the UK will be able to experience this extraordinary cinematic masterpiece with Carl Davis' magnificent score when the film goes on theatrical release in UK cinemas and is available on BFI DVD/Blu-ray and BFI Player.

This legendary 5 ½ hour film was first presented, partially restored, at the BFI London Film Festival in 1980. The latest digital restoration of *Napoleon* will have its premiere screening with a live performance by the Philharmonia Orchestra of Carl Davis' score (the longest ever composed for a silent film) in early November 2016 at the Royal Festival Hall.

This project has been achieved thanks to major work undertaken by the experts of the BFI National Archive and Photoplay Productions working with Dragon DI post-production in Wales, and to the generosity of Carl Davis and Jean Boht, who have made possible the recording of the score by the Philharmonia. The original restoration of the 35mm film elements in 2000 was funded by the generous support of the Eric Anker-Petersen charity, with the support of many archives around the

world but especially the Cinémathèque Française and the Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie in Paris.

Heather Stewart, Creative Director, BFI said, “Several generations of staff at the BFI have worked on this project. *Napoleon* is a landmark in the history of cinema and we are grateful to all of the great talents who have helped us along the way but especially, of course, Kevin Brownlow for his indefatigable championing of the film and Carl Davis for his amazing score.”

Kevin Brownlow, Photoplay Productions said, “This is a tremendous step forward for film history.’

Carl Davis, composer said, ““Thanks to the BFI we have this splendid DVD (Blu-Ray). In the words of Napoleon ‘At last!’ “

This new version of *Napoleon* will allow audiences to see the film’s original tinting and toning, including colour combinations which could not be achieved in the existing 35mm print. Integration of sections sourced from a wide range of elements have also been improved by detailed digital image repair and alignment.

The film has been entirely re-graded and received extensive digital clean-up throughout, all of which offers significant improvements in overall picture quality. This is the most complete version of the film available, compiled by Academy Award™-winning film-maker, archivist and historian Kevin Brownlow who spent over 50 years tracking down surviving prints from archives around the world since he first saw a 9.5mm version as a schoolboy in 1954. Brownlow and his colleagues at Photoplay, initially the late David Gill, and then Patrick Stanbury, worked with the BFI National Archive on a series of restorations. The film version has been screened only 4 times in the UK since the year 2000 at memorable events with full orchestra performing the original score by composer Carl Davis.

Running at over 5½ hours on screen, the film demands a huge investment of resources, from projectionists, musicians, conductor and audiences; in a live performance with intervals the experience adds up to over 8 hours from start to finish. *Napoleon* offers one of the most richly rewarding and thrilling experiences in the history of cinema, a brilliant pairing of music and film, comparable to grand opera in its intensity, offering dazzling scenes of unparalleled brilliance, with full scale historical recreations of episodes from the personal and political life of Napoleon from the French Revolution to the heroic arrival of French troops in Italy marking the beginning of the First Italian campaign of 1796.

Following the premiere of the digital restoration of *Napoleon* it will be released in cinemas UK-wide in its music-synched version. The simultaneous BFI Blu-ray/DVD release of the film is the first, of this full version, anywhere in the world and will include the recording of the score and a significant package of extras. *Napoleon* will also be available to view on BFI Player.

**STILLS:**

**A selection of images for journalistic use can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under  
BFI UK Publicity > BFI > BFI National Archive > Napoleon**

**About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead organisation 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

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Greg Dyke.

**About the BFI National Archive**

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage. That heritage includes all-time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts a significant collection of filmmakers'



**PRESS  
RELEASE**

papers as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.

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