



PRESENTS

# SECRET OF MOONACRE

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Runtime: **103 minutes**  
Censors Rating: PG  
New Zealand Release Date: 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009



Velvet Octopus presents

A Forgan-Smith Entertainment/Spice Factory UK Production

# THE SECRET OF MOONACRE

DIRECTED BY GABOR CSUPO

ADAPTED BY LUCY SHUTTLEWORTH & GRAHAM ALBOROUGH  
FROM THE CHILDREN'S CLASSIC  
*THE LITTLE WHITE HORSE* BY ELIZABETH GOUDGE

## STARRING

Ioan Gruffudd..... *Sir Benjamin Merryweather/  
Sir Wrolf Merryweather*  
Tim Curry..... *Coeur De Noir/Sir William De Noir*  
Natascha McElhone..... *Loveday/Moon Princess*  
Juliet Stevenson..... *Miss Heliotrope*  
Augustus Prew..... *Robin De Noir*  
Michael Webber..... *Digweed*  
Andy Linden..... *Marmaduke Scarlet*  
and  
Dakota Blue Richards...as... *Maria Merryweather*

RUNNING TIME: 103MIN  
FORMAT: SUPER 35MM  
SOUND: DOLBY SR/DOLBY SRD  
RATING: PG -12 (TBC)

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Director: Gabor Csupo

Producers: Meredith Garlick and Monica Penders

Producers: Jason Piette and Michael L. Cowan

Writer: Lucy Shuttleworth

Writer: Graham Alborough

Director of Photography: David Eggby A.C.S.

Production Designer: Sophie Becher

Editor: Julian Rodd

Costume Designer: Beatrix Aruna Pasztor

Make-Up & Hair Designer: Lynda Armstrong

Composer: Christian Henson

Visual Effects Supervisor: Sean Farrow

## **Short Synopsis**

*The Secret of Moonacre* is an enchanting tale of magic and adventure. It follows the quest of thirteen-year-old orphan, Maria Merryweather (Dakota Blue Richards), who is sent away to live with her uncle, Sir Benjamin (Ioan Gruffudd), in the mysterious Moonacre Manor. It is there Maria uncovers the dark truth of the ancient curse that has nourished the feud that has been destroying Moonacre Valley for centuries. She has only until the next full moon to undo the curse and save Moonacre from destruction. Aided by a stable of wonderful characters and fantastical beasts, Maria sets out to bring peace to this magical world.

The cast includes: Dakota Blue Richards, Ioan Gruffudd, Tim Curry, Natascha McElhone, Juliet Stevenson, Augustus Prew, Michael Webber and Andy Linden.

The film is directed by award-winning Hungarian director Gabor Csupo. The screenplay has been adapted by Lucy Shuttleworth and Graham Alborough from the children's classic novel *The Little White Horse* by Elizabeth Goudge. It is produced by Meredith Garlick and Monica Penders for Forgan-Smith Entertainment and Jason Piette and Michael L. Cowan for Spice Factory UK with partners Eurofilm Studio in Hungary and Davis Films in France. The film is released in the UK by Warner Bros. Pictures. [www.theseecretofmoonacremovie.co.uk](http://www.theseecretofmoonacremovie.co.uk)

## **Long Synopsis**

*“Once upon a perfect time, when the old magic clung to Moonacre, there lived a young woman who possessed such beauty and purity of spirit that she was beloved by the moon as if she were its own daughter. To show its adoration the moon bestowed upon her a magical gift of moon pearls and from that day forth she was known as the Moon Princess.”*

When thirteen year old Maria Merryweather (Dakota Blue Richards) is orphaned her world is changed forever. Dying penniless, her father leaves her with only her loyal governess Miss Heliotrope (Juliet Stevenson) to care for her and a huge, musty, old, leather bound book: “The Ancient Chronicles of Moonacre Valley”. Perplexed by her father’s mysterious legacy, Maria is told she must leave London and go to the country where she will live with her uncle, Sir Benjamin Merryweather (Ioan Gruffudd).

Her curiosity piqued, Maria discovers within the Ancient Chronicles’ pages the tale of the Moon Princess (Natascha McElhone) and her magical pearls. Possessing unique powers, the moon pearls were to bring good fortune and prosperity to all. They also ensured that anyone who touched them was compelled to speak the truth.

Maria is amazed when, before her eyes, the book’s illustrations come to life and the Moon Princess looks directly at her. Rubbing her eyes in disbelief, she questions, can this be real or is it a dream?

When Digweed (Michael Webber), Sir Benjamin’s manservant, delivers Maria and Miss Heliotrope to their new home, Maria recognises it instantly from the book – Moonacre Manor. She now begins to realise that sometimes dreams can come true.

Sir Benjamin is far from welcoming and Maria and Miss Heliotrope wonder what secrets he is holding so close to his heart. Taken to her bedroom in the tower, Maria is terrified but entering through its tiny doorway her fear gives way to intrigue. What is this place? Spurred on by a new determination, Maria sets out to find the answers. Continuing to turn the book's pages, Maria discovers that on the day of the wedding between the Moon Princess and Sir Wrolf Merryweather a curse was cast over the valley and since then there has been a feud raging between the Merryweather and De Noir families.

Exasperated by her constant questioning, Sir Benjamin confiscates the Chronicles and tells Maria that she is to stay on Moonacre property and away from the forest. He warns her that there is an evil clan that inhabits that side of the valley. The De Noirs, he tells her, are a dark and sinister clan led by the menacing Coeur De Noir (Tim Curry) and his rebellious son Robin (Augustus Prew).

Exploring the mysterious manor with her new companion, Wrolf the dog, Maria discovers a hidden doorway and falls into the amazing manor kitchen. Here she discovers the magical Marmaduke Scarlet (Andy Linden) who is relieved to see the 'little princess'. Chef extraordinaire, Marmaduke helps Maria understand that she too is a Moon Princess and only she can save the valley from its ancient curse. But time is running out and she must do this before the 5000<sup>th</sup> moon rises. Maria is stunned when she calculates that this is in fact the very next full moon!

Upset by her uncle's temper and fearful of the De Noirs, Maria finds it impossible to have anything to do with this blighted valley and its proud inhabitants. But with each passing day she begins to see for herself the impending tragedy that the curse will bring. Helped by her new-found friends Marmaduke, Wrolf, Digweed, and Loveday (Natascha McElhone), Maria accepts her mission and sets out to unlock the mysteries of the past and save Moonacre.

## **Character Profiles**

### **Maria Merryweather (DAKOTA BLUE RICHARDS)**

Vulnerable, feisty, loyal, and brave, Maria is a compelling heroine. Like most teenagers, Maria firmly believes that she knows best. Maria's mother died when she was a baby and she has only met her father on a handful of occasions, which has caused her great heartache. Miss Heliotrope, her governess, has looked after her moral and educational welfare but she has been unable to meet Maria's emotional needs. As a result, Maria has grown up into a proud and headstrong city girl who, to cap it all, is also animal-phobic! When Colonel Merryweather dies and the house has to be sold to pay his gambling debts, Maria's world is thrown into disarray. At first Maria is horrified by Moonacre and by everything in it. But Maria changes irrevocably after she learns that her family is at risk because of an ancient curse. Aided by an assortment of creatures, including a mystical white horse and a wayward teenage boy, Maria overcomes all obstacles, including her own pride, breaks the curse and proves that she is both strong and true. Deep down all Maria really ever wanted was to be part of a family and to be loved in return. Maria is a bewitching, often maddening protagonist who appeals to children of all ages.

### **Robin De Noir (AUGUSTUS PREW)**

Robin is a good-looking 15-year-old bad boy who hunts and traps animals and hates the Merryweathers with a vengeance – and he has good reason. His father, Coeur De Noir, has had little time for him since his sister, Loveday, was banished from the castle for becoming engaged to Sir Benjamin. As soon as Maria arrives in Moonacre, Robin's raison d'être is to kidnap Maria, as he knows it will please his father. Unlike his father, however, he doesn't believe in ancient curses and believes that action speaks far louder than magic. But Maria soon changes his mind and he quickly realises that everyone will be much happier if both families can live in harmony. There is an instant chemistry between Maria

and Robin that is always bubbling under the surface. By the finale we realise that there may be something much more than friendship between these two.

### **Sir Benjamin Merryweather (IOAN GRUFFUDD)**

Sir Benjamin is the epitome of the grumpy old man (although he is not old in years, just in spirit) and is often unintentionally very funny. Sir Benjamin is miserable because his heart has been broken and he has lived without female company for over thirteen years. Sir Benjamin hates the De Noirs with a vengeance although he doesn't believe in the curse and therefore doesn't actually believe that Maria really is the last moon princess. Sir Benjamin has no idea how to relate to young girls, and he is rude and clumsy in his initial dealings with his feisty niece. Sir Benjamin has a terrible temper that erupts when he is vexed with often-catastrophic results. Ultimately, he is an honourable and loyal man who feels a great sense of responsibility for the estate and the valley. Finally, with Maria's help, Sir Benjamin changes irrevocably and realises that love can after all, conquer all!

### **Loveday (NATASCHA McELHONE)**

Fiery, yet graceful, Loveday is an exquisitely beautiful woman who has a big heart but like both Maria and Sir Benjamin she is extremely proud and this has ultimately been her downfall. Like Maria, Loveday was a moon princess but she failed in her quest and in the process lost the two most important men in her life - Sir Benjamin and her beloved father, Coeur De Noir. Loveday longs to nurture the motherless Maria and, above all the other characters in the film, she understands the terrible obstacles that Maria has to overcome to achieve her goals. Loveday's arc is to forgive Sir Benjamin and become the mother that Maria has always yearned for.

**Coeur De Noir (TIM CURRY)**

Mean and moody, Coeur De Noir is bad through and through. He lives in the dark forest and the only thing that gives him pleasure is the knowledge that the Merryweathers are going to be destroyed when the curse is fulfilled and they are driven from the valley forever. De Noir loved his daughter Loveday intensely and he will never forgive Sir Benjamin for her loss. But of course, he didn't bank on an irrepressible 13-year-old who returns the family's pearls, reunites him with his daughter, and makes him realise that there is much more to life than ancient grudges.

**Miss Heliotrope (JULIET STEVENSON)**

Loyal and true, Miss Heliotrope is Maria's governess and she has been looking after her since she was a baby. She is a rather eccentric lady with terrible digestive problems, which means she is prone to loud belching! Timid by nature, Miss Heliotrope finds that Moonacre has an extraordinary effect on her too and makes her braver than she ever could have imagined.

**Marmaduke Scarlet (ANDY LINDEN)**

Tiny, loveable, witty, and a master cake maker, Marmaduke is a unique character who has a timeless quality that may mean that he has lived at Moonacre since the dawn of time. Marmaduke is the 'Wise Old Man' of the Moonacre world and it is his job to feed Maria information without ever actually telling her what to do. Marmaduke is witty, comic, and obsessed by cooking.

**Digweed (MICHAEL WEBBER)**

Digweed is Sir Benjamin's servant who loves to state the obvious, often with comic results. Like Marmaduke, he wants Maria to succeed in her quest to undo the curse and offers her all the support he can.

## **About the Production**

*The Little White Horse*, by Elizabeth Goudge, is often cited as one of the key inspiration novels J.K. Rowling read prior to writing the Harry Potter series. “It is easy to see why; this is the magical adventure of a young orphan, sent away to live in a new place where she soon discovers that magic inhabits this world as well as sinister forces. There are lots of parallels, except of course we’ve got a fantastic feisty female lead!” says producer Meredith Garlick.

“Well, anything boys can do girls can do better!” continues fellow producer Monica Penders, highlighting that one of the attractive qualities of this story is the fact that the film’s heroine is a young girl. Reminiscing on their childhood love of the book Penders recalls, “I knew it word for word, I just loved the story, and I truly believed I was Maria Merryweather.” Garlick agrees, “I read it over and over again and when years later we were talking about projects we would like to do, we thought of this book and it went from there. People, ourselves included, who have read the book, just fall in love with its magic.”

Garlick notes that it was this ‘magic’ that led them to choose Gabor Csupo — an award-winning Hungarian director — to helm the project. “We wanted someone who would bring a strong visual sense to the piece because it was always going to be a project that had a richness of detail. We had heard a lot about Gabor’s first feature, *Bridge to Terabithia*, and knew of his animation background, so our choice of director was really based on gut instinct hoping he would bring a wonderful, rich and interesting perspective to the material.”

Director Csupo recalls, “I read the screenplay and immediately felt it could translate into a visually enchanting movie that would appeal to boys and girls alike. It was refreshing to read such a well-written script which had some meaningful messages for a modern audience.” Lucy Shuttleworth, who co-wrote

the screenplay, explains, “This is a story rich in mystery and intrigue and I know that children will respond to the mythical resonance of the book’s themes of loss, pride, vanity and hope. My co-writer, Graham Alborough, and I set out to write a screenplay that would appeal to the modern child. We hoped to create a film that was action-packed and also had characters with real depth. We wanted to craft a magical tale that amazes, enchants and keeps the audience gripped until the very end.”

“It was important for us to preserve the spirit of the book,” observes producer Monica Penders, “but we knew that we would have to make changes in order for it to translate to the screen.” Csupo agrees, “I think the weight of our picture is more on the emotional journey, where Maria’s heroic commitment will enable her to solve the mysteries of Moonacre. When the magic starts to happen around her and she meets these strange characters, she realises she alone has the wit to put the puzzle together.”

For the director and producers the first part of their puzzle was to find Maria Merryweather and a worldwide search began. Running open casting sessions across the UK, Australia and New Zealand the producers were overwhelmed by the response and the high standard of young actresses they auditioned. Finally, it was during a casting session in the UK that they found their Maria.

Csupo recalls, “We heard that a young girl had been picked out of nowhere to play the lead in *The Golden Compass* and I asked who she was and if we could see some pictures. When we saw them I said OK, can we get her in to read for Maria.”

Penders remembers that audition, “Dakota was Maria, as soon as she walked in the room. There was something about the way she held herself, confident but still a little tentative. She looked fabulous on camera and was just so intense. We all thought - she can do it, she is our Maria.” Csupo affirms, “We just had to get her.”

Dakota Blue Richards remembers, “I was really excited by the role and I knew I wanted to go to the audition the moment I heard it was about a moon princess. I was like – ‘that sounds great!’ On working with Csupo, Richards enthuses, “It’s been really good; he imagines things the way a child would imagine them, which makes everything so much easier for me.”

Csupo, equally impressed by his lead, says, “I feel really blessed to have her as our lead. Dakota has so much charm and intelligence and she had some wonderful suggestions for her character.”

With Maria confirmed the rest of the casting fell into place. Ioan Gruffudd and Natascha McElhone were cast as Sir Benjamin Merryweather and Loveday De Noir. Garlick observes, “In the book Sir Benjamin is a much older man but it was a conscious decision to make the characters of Sir Benjamin and Loveday younger and thus more appealing to a family audience. Also, with the romantic element of their story we wanted to make sure they had chemistry.”

Gruffudd, on taking the role of the cantankerous Sir Benjamin, says, “This was an opportunity to play against type as a darker character. I have never really played mean and moody before and that really attracted me.” Gruffudd also welcomed the opportunity of working with Csupo, “He is a director who has such a wealth of experience from his animating past and has a clear vision of what he wants to see on the screen.”

Casting Coeur De Noir was to provide Csupo with the opportunity to continue a fifteen-year working relationship with Tim Curry. Vocal star of many of his animated films, including *The Wild Thornberrys* and *The Rugrats Movie*, Curry, Csupo explains, “Is a wonderful character actor and I knew that he could bring what we needed for the dark side of Coeur De Noir but, also, add depth to this character.” Garlick agrees, “We needed someone who could give us a particular

vulnerability beneath the evil. Tim can just fix you with a look and has such resonance in his voice it gives you shivers.”

Tim Curry on taking the role says, “I have worked with Gabor over many years and it’s always been enormous fun. He has such an astonishing visual imagination, I was very happy to be reunited with him.”

Casting Augustus Prew in the role of Coeur De Noir’s son, Robin was an equally quick decision. Garlick remarks, “We had seen Augie at previous auditions and we thought he would make a great Robin but it was when we asked him to read opposite Dakota that we knew it for sure. They worked so well together - they just had the spark we were looking for.”

Prew himself confirms, “Dakota is great, she’s so organic as an actor, we do a lot of improvisation work and it is very exciting to work with somebody who is so good at such a young age.”

For Miss Heliotrope, it was crucial for the production to have an actor that could not only bring authority to the role of the governess but also a light comic touch. This would require an actor with an extraordinary range. Casting Juliet Stevenson was a dream come true according to Csupo, “She is just wonderful. She plays Miss Heliotrope like a mother bird watching her nest and has these bird-like movements. She is so hugely talented and brings a great amount of comedy to the scenes.”

Stevenson states, “I knew this book well and read it as a child so it meant something to me. I love its purity and think it has all the strong primary colour ingredients of a great classic – goodies, baddies, forests, unicorns and magic. I also like this character; I thought I could have fun with her.”

Garlick attests, “Juliet is amazing, she truly is. She has tapped into something with Miss Heliotrope which is incredibly funny and has grabbed the script by the scruff of the neck.”

This is a story with a collection of weird and wonderful characters including Marmaduke Scarlet and Sir Benjamin’s loyal servant, Digweed. On casting these characters Csupo confesses that he asked the film’s casting agent to, “Give us the most interesting-looking characters she could. At the time we weren’t sure which actors would be right for which part but when we saw Michael Webber and Andy Linden we knew that Michael was our Digweed and Andy was right for the mischievous and magical Marmaduke.”

Michael Webber affirms, “I had read the book, so when I heard it was being turned into a screenplay I was very keen to be involved. When I got the part and walked on to the set of Moonacre for the first time I was overwhelmed, it was everything I imagined it would be – stunning.”

With the cast in place the producers needed to find the two other stars for the film: the locations for Moonacre Manor and Coeur De Noir’s castle.

Producer Monica Penders attests, “We did a lot of research in England and there are many manor houses to choose from and we could have easily gone down the conventional path with any number of them. But once we started looking around Hungary it became clear that the history of the country had created exactly what we needed for the film – a lot of great dilapidated buildings. We found one that had been blown to bits 150 years ago and just left – it was perfect for Coeur De Noir’s castle.” Production Designer Sophie Becher agrees, “Hungary offered us places that had the design elements I needed.”

Joining the creative team were Costume Designer Beatrix Aruna Pasztor and Make-Up and Hair Designer Lynda Armstrong. The producers and director were keen to ensure they were given as much freedom as possible for their imaginations to run wild. Smiling, Becher recalls those early conversations, “I think Gabor, Beatrix, Lynda and I decided early on that there were no rules for this film.” Csupo confirms that he told the designers to, “Give me the most fantastical creation you can come up with, just go for it!”

Pasztor responded with extraordinary costume designs, creating a whole new style for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century period in which the film is set. The designer explains, “I thought because it was a fantasy piece it would be good to create something fresh. I mixed modern film noir with contemporary fashion influences. My inspiration was to use just the silhouette from the period and do it in a modern way. Gabor was very supportive and I think we managed to do something really interesting.”

Lynda Armstrong continued the film’s unique look in her own designs, “We met Dakota during her costume fittings with Beatrix. Seeing that she had a colour palette of blues, oranges and pinks for Maria, I knew then that I wanted to dye her hair red. I also decided that we would give her tumbling curls and that meant using hair extensions. Those inspirations came from the costumes.”

Cinematographer David Egby agrees, “This film has been a great opportunity visually. It is a wonderful period, the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, but we took great poetic license and are left-of-centre as far as the look. The locations, the costumes, the whole design, have given us the opportunity to create some really interesting pictures.”

## **Chronicles and Curses**

No sooner has Maria left her father's graveside than the grieving orphan is taken by her protective governess, Miss Heliotrope, to hear the last will and testament of Colonel George Herbert Merryweather. When the lawyer hands Maria a huge, musty, old leather bound book, "The Ancient Chronicles of Moonacre Valley", Maria's magical journey into another world begins.

Producer Monica Penders points out, "Maria is a rather spoilt, indulged, little London Miss, until she is orphaned and we then very quickly see her journeying off to the mysterious valley that she reads about in "The Ancient Chronicles of Moonacre". This book, we discover, is her portal into another world."

Dakota Blue Richards explains, "Maria is obviously very upset, her father has just died and she has to go and live with her uncle Sir Benjamin. All she has is this book, which at first she can't understand and is slightly ungrateful for. But it turns out that this is her guide to moon princesses, Moonacre and its curse."

Victorian London is our entry point to the film but director Gabor Csupo is quick to point out, "This is not your typical 19<sup>th</sup>-century period piece." He continues, "I wanted to take the audience to another world, I wanted to create something a little bit different from the traditional well-groomed, historical image of this era, I wanted something a little bit twisted." Hungary provided production designer Sophie Becher with the suitable locations to create just that: "For the London streets we used the back of Budapest Opera House, providing us with an authentic look for Victorian London. I wanted to show how Maria's world in London is structured and relatively normal and how that dramatically changes when she arrives at Moonacre."

The constraints of Victorian architecture did not apply to costume designer Beatrix Pasztor, “London in the 1800s was an interesting time. Traditionally women wore bustles and this created a very interesting shape. For our version, I thought why don’t we just use the underskirt as an outer skirt. I wanted to create the idea of cages because for me when we first see Maria she is like a little girl trapped before she goes on this incredible journey.” Writer Lucy Shuttleworth adds, “The language has the flavour of the Victorian era but lacks the formality that would potentially alienate a modern audience. In the same way, Maria is a timeless and inspirational protagonist.”

Accompanying Maria on this journey is her loyal governess Miss Heliotrope, played by Juliet Stevenson. The actress observes, “You get the impression that they have lived a very sheltered life in London and then their world explodes with the death of Maria’s father. Unable to afford to stay in London they are dispatched to this distant place where their adventures start.” For Stevenson, creating Miss Heliotrope’s ‘look’ was a little daunting. “The fittings with Beatrix were not like any I’ve ever had; they were more like an architectural exercise than a costume fitting.” Stevenson continues, “I soon realised this wasn’t going to be some classic Victorian, ringletted archetype.”

Richards agrees, “They really are the most gorgeous things I have ever had to wear in my life but you do wonder how people wore clothes like this every day. It takes so long to put them on! The biggest costume I wear has a bustle, an underskirt, another bustle, the dress, another bustle and a corset on top!”

Enthralled by the tale of “The Ancient Chronicles”, Maria discovers that the 1400s were a time of great harmony in Moonacre Valley, until the fateful wedding day of Sir Wrolf Merryweather and his Moon Princess bride. On that day her father, Sir William De Noir, presents his daughter’s suitor with a lion, who returns the gesture by giving his betrothed a magical white horse with a single horn on its forehead.

As Maria looks down at the illustrated pages of the dusty tome, she gasps as the images begin to move.

Natascha McElhone, playing the first Moon Princess, explains, “The book shows Maria the tale of how the curse came about. When the first Moon Princess offers her moon pearls as a gift, the men start fighting over them exposing their selfish tendencies. Clearly unable to co-exist with nature, she tells them that from now on the valley will be cursed until one day a pure heart can save them.”

Ioan Gruffudd, also playing the medieval suitor Sir Wroff, says, “The families go their separate ways and Moonacre valley is divided forever. On one side are the De Noirs, a really nasty clan of evil bandits who hundreds of years later are led by Coeur De Noir and his feckless son Robin. On the other, Sir Wroff’s descendants are the Merryweathers, including Sir Benjamin who ends up alone in Moonacre Manor.”

Garlick explains, “The story is quite complex. There are so many story elements the audience need to pick up on to piece together the mystery of what became of the Moon Pearls. The pearls hold all the power of nature and, without them, Maria cannot break the curse. The window into the past is just the beginning of her quest.”

Creating this “portal” to the past and bringing “The Ancient Chronicles” to life was just one of the film’s visual effects, supervised by Sean Farrow, “We pre-visualised the medieval wedding scene, to give us the feel, pace and scale. We then shot the live action based on this. Next, the book’s illustrator illustrated the first frame of that sequence. Scanning his painting in, we were able to track from that into the live action bringing the ancient world of Moonacre out of the book and for Maria, the magic to life.”

Csupo explains, “I wanted to take the audience to another world and allow them to experience the same magic that Maria does.”

Becher explains, “The book of the “Chronicles” is one of the key props in the film. It was essential it looked genuine. We commissioned a bookbinder to bind it in leather, the traditional way, a copperplate-engraver to produce the gold leafing on the front, and a Hungarian jewellery designer to produce the key and clasp. The illustrations, which later turn into live action, were hand-painted using water-colour and ink.”

The book’s flashbacks also provided Pasztor with another opportunity to let her imagination run wild, creating the medieval wedding party. The designer explains, “We hand-printed the wedding dress and created a head piece that is more elaborate than you would expect for 1458. We wanted to make it very rich and promote the fantasy elements so the beading on the dress is made up of over 5,000 pearls. I wanted to tie in the Moon Princess with her later re-incarnation, Loveday, so you will see both characters have elements of nature adorning their costumes. I used the emblem of a deer’s head on the wedding brooch and, later, on Loveday’s cane. For Sir Wroolf, we used hand-embroidered silver material to give him a sleek silhouette.”

With Gruffudd, McElhone and Curry all playing the ancestors of their main characters, hair and make-up designer Armstrong needed to create some very different looks. Armstrong explains, “For the Moon Princess I designed a look using very structured hair and this created a beautiful shape for Natascha. I used influences from the medieval period and in those days men did have long hair, so we had a wig made for loan by the wonderful wigmaker Alex Rouse. I also gave him a goatee beard. This is a totally different look not only for Sir Wroolf, but for loan too. It really suited him. In fact he liked the hair so much he kept it!”

Gruffudd attests, “It’s just a perfect fantasy world we are creating and that’s what I love about it. These little flashes and details take us a little bit off-centre and create a really breathtaking look.” McElhone agrees, “Lynda is masterful. I love the look she created for the Moon Princess, although the hair was so big it was like wearing a wedding cake on your head!” The setting for this medieval wedding required a grand location, but even Hungary, with its unique architectural offerings, could not provide what was required.

Csupo explains, “We don’t have any coastlines or cliff tops here in Hungary. In the script there is dramatic action that takes place on a cliff top high above the water’s edge so Sophie had to design a set that would allow us to create that coastline later on via visual effects.” Sean Farrow explains, “The amphitheatre set provides the backdrop for some of the film’s key scenes – the wedding scene, the casting of the curse, as well as the finale. The first is an ethereal, magical moment when the Moon Princess is given the pearls, nature lifting her up into the air and gifting her with these magical pearls. It is a short sequence but it establishes the sense of magic in the film. In reality this meant lifting Natascha McElhone up on wires to allow her to fly through the air and across a fantasy landscape that we created in CG. The landscape extends beyond the amphitheatre set encompassing a wild coastline, the ocean and the huge moon above them”.

Becher continues, “I wanted it to look like a shell carved into the rock, and there are a lot of sea motifs in addition to those of the lion and unicorn. For example, at its main entrance the arch has two lions supporting it and wild horses carved along its sides. For the wedding sequence it was dressed with thousands of flowers which gave us the wonderful opportunity of going to Hungary’s flower market in Budapest which was fantastic.”

David Eggby confesses that, “The amphitheatre set was the most challenging of all the sets, certainly of this film, and probably of my entire career. Due to space it

was a wall to wall build, so lighting it was very tricky and it required a number of visual effects.”

The music also ties the magic of the moon and the pearls together when their power is harnessed during the laying of the curse, as told in the Ancient Chronicles. For composer Christian Henson it was important that “the moon and pearls needed their own tonal presence. For this I wanted something other-worldly. I was sceptical about using any instruments that anyone could recognise. I decided therefore to build my own instead out of glassware, metal ware and crockery bought from the catering suppliers that line Shaftesbury Avenue near my studio. We then recorded them dry and filled with water, and with different beaters - soft to hard - and built virtual keyboard instruments out of them.”

## **Maria's Mission at Moonacre**

Digweed, Sir Benjamin's manservant, is sent to collect Maria and Miss Heliotrope by carriage. Driving deep into the countryside they eventually reach a dark and mysterious valley, and buried amongst the trees a massive, decrepit manor house. This "other-worldly" and decaying estate, with its flaking plaster and crumbling stonework is a far cry from the London town house they left behind. An imposing figure appears in the manor's doorway; it is Sir Benjamin Merryweather: "Welcome to Moonacre Manor."

Producer Monica Penders explains, "This is an interesting time for Maria, she is a teenager who has just lost her father and has to move house. That's a lot for a young girl to take on. When she first comes to Moonacre she's is used to getting her own way and she is expecting things to go her way now. Until she locks horns with Sir Benjamin! Then she starts to understand that she has a mission here at Moonacre."

Csupo affirms, "It is her mission to solve the mysteries of the past and bring the feuding families back together. She needs to be brave and heroic in her actions. But time is of the essence, she needs to put all the pieces of the puzzle together and solve the mystery of Moonacre." Dakota Blue Richards continues, "Maria is not very happy at first but when she starts finding things out, it becomes quite magical. It is all a bit odd for her, but she starts to enjoy it and she starts to realise that she has to save this amazing place."

Dejected by his brother's demise, Sir Benjamin Merryweather is less than happy at the arrival of his niece Maria and her governess Miss Heliotrope. As Gruffudd surmises, "The arrival of Maria for Sir Benjamin is a real inconvenience; he is enjoying wallowing in self-pity for the loss of Loveday, his one true love. He has let the place go to ruin and he is sort of enjoying his solitude there."

An abandoned manor house in the town of Tura provided Sophie Becher with the perfect location to create the magical Moonacre Manor. With its assortment of Victorian, Baroque and Renaissance architectural influences, it offered the perfect foundations for Becher's fantasy. The designer explains, "In the book Moonacre is a lovely medieval house but, when I saw Tura I just fell in love with it. There was general concern that the place was a total wreck but to me it just offered a huge opportunity."

Csupo agrees, "It was totally run down but the design and architecture of the place were breathtakingly beautiful. Sophie convinced us she could bring it back to life and transform it into something magical. She was right."

Following Sir Benjamin along the hallways of Moonacre Manor, Maria is anxious to see where she will be staying. When Miss Heliotrope is offered a room within the main house, Maria expects that hers will be next door. Much to her disappointment and shock, however, she is led to a remote tower staircase. Arriving at the upper landing, she sees ahead a tiny door, with a silver horseshoe for a door-knocker.

"Maria's bedroom was always the thing that captured my imagination when reading the book as a child, and I wanted it to be the thing that really wowed our audience," says producer Meredith Garlick. "Sophie has done a marvellous job in realising that fantasy."

It is here in the bedroom that the first magical clues appear to Maria. There is no ceiling, just the starlit night sky above her, or so she thinks until she reaches up and discovers there is a ceiling and the sky and stars are painted.

Garlick explains, "The ceiling stars represent more than just the inherent magic of Moonacre Manor - they also function to propel the narrative. As the stars fall from

the sky, the fate of the valley becomes uncertain. There is finite time for Maria to save her new home, the shooting stars are the precursor to a valley plunged into eternal darkness; they are literally our “ticking clock”.

Becher admits, “Maria’s bedroom had to be so special that when Maria walks in she (and I hope the audience) is overwhelmed by it. It also had a number of storyline requirements. It needed to be in a tower, have a ceiling with stars on it, and a fireplace with a secret doorway leading us into Loveday’s world. From a design perspective I wanted it to be really magical and evoke this ‘other world’. It has a panorama of Moonacre painted on its walls, which I wanted to feel like a Renaissance fresco.” Richards affirms, “It is a beautiful bedroom, I want one! It is so well designed. It is not what I imagined, having read the book, it is better and it just brings it all to life.”

One of the features of the bedroom is its tiny doorway which means that only children can enter the room. “Maria’s door into her bedroom is really small, you have to bend double to get inside, so I am bit worried that from the hallway all you will see is a big bustle!” Richards laughs. The only adult that can enter the bedroom, thanks to a secret passageway, is Loveday. Natascha McElhone playing Loveday enthuses, “The bedroom is every little girl’s fantasy, and tragically, it is also my fantasy! With its mural on the wall, domed ceiling open to the sky and fireplace it is beautiful. It is the ultimate in civilisation having a fireplace in one’s bedroom! The mantelpiece is in the shape of a wave, which then flows into a horse’s head, and this is the secret lever to the secret door.”

Each morning Maria sees that someone has left a plate of small biscuits and a glass of milk on the mantelpiece and a medieval-style blue velvet dress has been laid out on the chair. Puzzled she checks the tiny door. It is still locked. Armed with “The Ancient Chronicles”, Maria sets out to confront her uncle and question him on the mysterious goings on. This is unacceptable to Sir Benjamin who

quickly spells out to Maria that there are rules at Moonacre Manor. Gruffudd explains, “To have a very curious child there asking countless questions, and getting herself into all sorts of trouble and bother, is a real inconvenience to Sir Benjamin”.

Confiscating “The Ancient Chronicles” and banning Maria from venturing into the forest, Sir Benjamin explains to Maria that, “There is a band of ruffians in the woods called the De Noir Clan.” But, rather than scaring Maria off her mission, this only makes her more determined to get to the bottom of things. Indifference gives way to intrigue as Maria hears mysterious music coming from the conservatory. Following the sound to the conservatory she is lead to a beautiful old piano. Unable to resist, she plays along with the unknown tune and extraordinary things start to happen.

Penders explains, “This haunting melody is the melancholic theme to the blighted lost love between Loveday and Sir Benjamin and underscores the ancient feud between their two families. It demonstrates to Maria that magic inhabits this world. Also, when she hears Loveday play the same tune, she discovers the truth about their ruined love-story and understands that she has to heal the rifts that exist in Moonacre.”

Composer Christian Henson explains, “I was staggered by the look of Moonacre, it is luxurious but with a dilapidated feel. It's totally original in style, a real feast for the eyes. It instantly informed the direction I wanted to take the music, and I aimed to provide an equally exuberant banquet for the ears. The score has classical, European sensitivities but told in a modern and epic way.”

## **Secrets and Pies**

“The original secret for Maria to unlock is the mystery of the moon pearls and where they are hidden,” producer Monica Penders explains, “but Moonacre is also peppered with additional secrets which Maria has to solve in order to find the pearls.”

One such secret is when Maria learns the truth about the food that keeps appearing in her bedroom. Falling through a secret doorway and into an enormous steamy kitchen, Maria is confronted by the wondrous chef Marmaduke Scarlet. With a repertoire that includes Stargazer Pie, Astral Meringue and Eggy Beer, the manor’s resident cook is right to introduce himself to Maria as “chef of all chefs!”

“Marmaduke holds the clues Maria needs to unlock Moonacre’s secrets,” Andy Linden, playing Marmaduke, explains. “He welcomes Maria’s arrival, because he knows she is the only one that can break the curse. She is Moonacre’s only hope and he wants to help her on her mission.” Dakota Blue Richards observes, “Marmaduke is the helping hand that Maria needs. He gives her the hints she needs; he tells her where Sir Benjamin has hidden the book; he gives her clues about her identity as a Moon Princess and how she can break the curse - and he also bakes her yummy cakes.”

Csupo explains, “Marmaduke has the ability to transport himself, he can one second be in the kitchen, the next in the herb garden. He can juggle knives, peel potatoes with both hands simultaneously and create hundreds of culinary delights in a flash. I wanted him to be the embodiment of Moonacre’s magic.”

As Andy Linden points out, “Marmaduke is thrilled to see Maria because it gives him his “gusto” back. It is an exciting time for him and he goes into overdrive. Juggling, spinning, chopping and slicing, he goes crazy in the kitchen!”

These exotic rich textures in both set and character were developed by Pasztor as she explains, “Marmaduke is such a fun character and we wanted to highlight that in his costume it is therefore very flamboyant. I used lots of different textures to give him a rich look, two waistcoats on top of each other and another as a cravat, topped off by a Japanese obi. Like all the characters at Moonacre I wanted to give the impression that they have lived in this house for many years and over time they have created their own fashion there. I also wanted every character to have their own very distinct silhouette so we designed a very unusual chef’s hat for him.”

When Maria stumbles through the door she discovers at last the secret to where all the food is coming from and who is behind the special biscuits she finds each day in her bedroom. Creating the kitchen for this magical scene, designer Sophie Becher was able to truly put the icing on the Manor’s cake. As Becher explains, “I wanted the kitchen to be a warm inviting place. I also wanted it to resemble a Victorian kitchen but with all the magic of Moonacre. Unlike the minimalism of the rest of the house the kitchen is bursting with food and activity. It is the one place where life has started to come back.”

Marmaduke is not the only one with a secret doorway to Maria’s world or a desire to help her. Finding Maria lost in the forest; Loveday also befriends Maria and takes her under her wing. Loveday recognises that Maria is reluctant to take up her mantle as a Moon Princess. Seeing that Maria needs help to understand the importance of her identity, Loveday explains that she is the valley’s only hope.

Richards observes, “Loveday is like the mother Maria never had and she is the first person to be affectionate to her. It is as if she has been her best friend all her life.” Natascha McElhone continues, “Loveday has been living a hermit-like existence in the forest for 13 years. Loveday tells Maria that in order to break the curse she must find the moon pearls before the 5000<sup>th</sup> moon rises.”

Garlick explains, “Loveday’s role in the film is pivotal, not only does she nurture Maria but she, with the assistance of Marmaduke, exposes the terrible nature of the curse and the destruction it has the capability to unleash. Loveday gives Maria the strength to embrace her destiny and become the true Moon Princess.”

## **Black Hearts and White Horses**

“Only a brave heart can take on what lurks within the forest.” Tim Curry, playing the formidable Coeur De Noir, says, “That is where I’m lurking in my sinister black hood.”

Maria has to prove she is that brave of heart in order to enter into the forest and face the band of ruffians that her uncle has warned her of. Csupo explains, “The De Noir clan inhabit a dark and scary world with decay at the heart of it. It is here that we see Maria and Robin’s adventure really take place. Maria proves that her mind, determination and her heroic commitment are all necessary to uncover and solve the puzzle of Moonacre. She learns in the process she has a lot to do here and she goes for it, big time!”

“I wanted the De Noirs and the Merryweathers to be extreme opposites, like black and white,” designer Becher explains. “My brief for the De Noirs was that everything had to be very masculine and with very little colour. The only colour I wanted was dashes of red, which we put in the family crest and Beatrix used in the costumes.”

As Curry states, “Sophie is truly extraordinary, she has made two completely different worlds: Moonacre which is so simply pretty and the De Noirs’ world, which is as black as can be. Coeur De Noir has a very black heart, just as his name translates. He is not a happy man.”

Highlighting the difference between the De Noirs and the Merryweathers is the film’s score. As composer Christian Henson explains, “For the De Noirs I planned a very tribal approach, dramatic drums and unorthodox use of some interesting guitars that I own. Contrasted with this is the musical characterisation of the moon and the Moon Princesses where I used the voice as an instrument; this solo

texture is provided by Natascha Khan, of the band Bat for Lashes, accompanied by the chorus of singers known as Synergy Vocals.”

Accepting her Moon Princess mission and aware that she has to find the pearls, Maria sneaks into Coeur De Noir’s castle. Csupo describes the scene, “Maria arrives inside the castle at the top of a vertigo-inducing staircase! She’s high above the gloomy Great Hall where Coeur De Noir is sitting, stately at the head of the vast banqueting table.”

A ruined fortress was the location for the impressive Coeur De Noir castle exterior. The designer explains, “What struck me about this castle was it had character to it. It had this amazing tower with a bridge across giving it a very graphic look.” A church-turned-museum provided the interior shell in which the art department built Coeur De Noir’s vast banqueting hall and his gloomy dungeons. “Basically we installed the whole lot, from the wooden floor to the 50ft-high twisting staircase.” Cinematographer David Eggby was very happy with the locations that Sophie chose, “They did present us with certain challenges but visually they were terrific. The location – Kiscelli – had an 80ft ceiling so I had to have a truss rig designed for and put in allowing us to light the vast space effectively and swiftly.” However, it wasn’t just these structural elements that provided the castle’s dramatic look, as Becher explains, “It’s very masculine and medieval. The chairs are made from antlers and there are no glasses on the table, only goblets and tankards. Even the food has a black and white theme to it.”

Creating hundreds of costumes for the banquet’s guests, Pasztor achieved looks for the De Noir clan that would not look out of place on today’s haute couture catwalks. Curry enthuses, “It’s all black leather and velvet! Beatrix is extraordinary; she has invented a style and period all of its own. It has not got a great deal to do with the 1870s and everything to do with the twisted nature of the Coeur De Noirs. I think it is dazzling.”

Make-up and Hair Designer Lynda Armstrong agrees, “I saw the costume Beatrix was making and the direction she was going in and, having worked with Tim before, I knew we could do something quite different with him. Seeing the black leather and velvet, I decided to give him black dreadlocks. Woven into these are feathers, bones and beads, echoing the elements of the forest.”

Pasztor herself explains, “Corsets for millinery, Victorian underskirts hitched up, spats from shoes over black boots, we used so many elements of traditional period costume and applied them in a totally new way. Also I wanted to create striking silhouettes and when you use chromatic colours it is important, in order to create depth and richness, to use a lot of textures.”

Unfazed by the challenge of lighting black on black Egby laughs, “It reminded me of my days on *Mad Max*! Black on black is pretty tricky but I used a lot of silver and white reflectors and got quite close to the subject.” He continues, “There is a kind of good cop bad/cop theme going on. Moonacre is light and pastel with lots of light streaming in, so even with its crumbling façade it remains beautiful despite the curse. This is opposed to *Coeur De Noir*’s dank and dark domain, lit by firelight and candles. It is a bit like Dante’s *Inferno* to Moonacre’s pearly white gates.”

When Maria’s mission is uncovered, *Coeur de Noir* ensures that the only gates she sees are those to his dungeon. Neither guards nor gates can incarcerate heroic Maria and using her wit she escapes into the forest. This no-man’s land provides the link between the Merryweathers and De Noir worlds, and it is here that once again their paths cross.

Loveday, having abandoned Maria, dwells beneath the roots of an enchanted tree while her brother Robin leads his team of bandits in pursuit. Csupo explains, “Robin is Maria’s nemesis to begin with and follows family tradition by disliking

Maria for the sole reason that she is a Merryweather. However, as the story takes a dramatic turn, he begins to see past the feud, risking his own life and sacrificing his relationship with his very powerful father to do so. “

Playing Robin, Augustus Prew states, “When Robin and Maria meet in the forest it is a clash of two worlds, two very different worlds that have a lot in common but come from opposing ends. They are like fire and water. They are intrigued by one another.” Richards attests, “Robin is ahead of his time really. Although at the beginning he is mean to Maria and fairly menacing, he does see the light!”

The intrigue doesn’t stop there, on Robin De Noir’s unique styling Garlick quips “He is a bit Clockwork Orange, a bit Duran Duran, a bit Adam Ant, and the girls are going to love him!”

Curry wryly observes, “Coeur De Noir is so eaten up with the many generations of this feud - the anger and despair – that he hates himself and everybody else. It’s not an ideal breeding ground for good parenting.”

Robin and Maria are not the only ones to bridge the gap between the feuding families. When Loveday appears from behind a secret door in her bedroom, Maria understands that she is the one who has been leaving her the dresses every morning. Convincing Loveday to help her search Moonacre for the lost pearls, Maria leads her into the conservatory where they hear the beguiling piano play its haunting melody. Lost in a reverie, Loveday begins to play and, joined by Maria, the two become lost in the music. Looking up Maria once again sees the past come to life but this time in the gilt mirror. Somehow, she sees the years turn back, the mirror revealing a love scene between Loveday and Sir Benjamin on their wedding day.

Penders reflects, “That scene had to achieve so much, revealing not only the intrinsic magic of Moonacre Manor but demonstrating the incredible love that

Loveday and Sir Benjamin once shared and how the old family rivalries poisoned their union thereafter.”

Gruffudd recalls, “Natascha and I had to play through a whole relationship in the first 10 minutes of us meeting on set. We were learning how to waltz, saying the lines, having a passionate embrace, and then falling out. We were very fortunate to have known each other before in real life!” Tura once again provided the perfect romantic setting for this emotional scene as David Eggby affirms, “Tura was wonderful, with its big windows, high ceilings and huge rooms. The conservatory especially just lends itself to being lit. I could do a whole movie in there, it was great.”

Maria has only hours left to find the pearls and bring Loveday and Sir Benjamin together. Only one person with a matching spirit to her own can help her and it is in her search with Robin that Maria sees the little white horse.

Penders explains, “At this stage of the story, Maria has embraced her quest to reunite the families. Where before the sight of the little white horse made her uneasy and bewildered, here it gives her strength and hope, empowering her to fulfil her destiny as the true Moon Princess.”

Maria is led by this vision, to the setting of the medieval wedding and stepping into the vast amphitheatre she is followed by Coeur De Noir. This is her last chance to save Moonacre - does she have the courage and strength to fulfil her mission?

Garlick states, “Maria has reluctantly assumed the mantle of Moon Princess but when she sees that only her purity of spirit can break the curse she summons all her fortitude to make the ultimate sacrifice and save the two families.” Lucy Shuttleworth agrees, “It reminds us that good can triumph over evil and that love and humility can eventually conquer all.”

Garlick surmises, “Nowhere is Maria’s admirable character more aptly displayed, or her pivotal role more acutely played out, than in the dramatic scenes on the cliff top of Moonacre valley, when she risks everything on her instincts to prove to Coeur De Noir that the history between their two families has more to do with pride and misunderstanding than conspiracy and manipulation.”

## **Animal Magic**

Moonacre Valley is not only home to some weird and wonderful characters, but it also boasts a menagerie of magical beasts that aid Maria in her 'Moon Princess' quest.

City girl Maria has never previously encountered "wild life" so is terrified when she sees, lying in front of the manor's grand fire place, the largest dog she has ever seen – 5ft in length with a black coat and dagger teeth. Sir Benjamin Merryweather introduces the animal: "His name is Wrolf. There are those that find him alarming. If he wants, he can kill in an instant." In reality production required three dogs to play the part, all with differing acting specialisations for example one was used just for barking. Although as Richards attests, "It was hard to be scared of Wrolf because he was such a big snuggly dog." Garlick states "I remember Wrolf with such affection from reading the book as a child, so casting him was almost as important as casting the actors!"

Michael Webber explains, "Maria is introduced to animals at Moonacre, one of which is the pony Periwinkle. This moment when Digweed shows her how to interact with these beautiful creatures, is a truly touching part of the story. She is quite terrified of the countryside at the beginning, because she is a city girl but Digweed is there to reassure her."

Periwinkle provided Maria the opportunity to learn to ride and, as art often imitates life, it was for actress Dakota Blue the chance to learn to ride too.

"Periwinkle despised me!" declares Richards. Crucial to the story is the symbolism of the little white horse. The title of the original book, this magical creature is Maria's sign that she is a Moon Princess. "I loved the little white horse; she was beautiful and so easy to ride."

Richards was not the only one to experience a little ‘horse-play’ as Tim Curry explains, “I am not a great horseman but I am on horseback in this movie. My first horse was terribly badly behaved unlike my hawk who is wonderful. I love hawks, I am fascinated by them and this one is extraordinary.”

The hawk provides Coeur De Noir with more than a handsome pet; it allows him to be omnipresent within his dark domain. Spying on Maria and the events in the forest, the hawk warns the clan of impending trouble from the Merryweathers.

Rescuing injured animals means that Loveday’s cave is a menagerie of creatures, including a hedgehog, a snake and even a goat. It means for Maria that she once again comes face to face with some of the creatures of the valley.

One of the animals that she befriends is a Moonacre rabbit, which as Sir Benjamin tells her is one of the most “serene creatures”. Maria, embracing nature, claims she will take care of the injured rabbit and names her “Serena”. This is a reflection of her compassionate nature, a quality that all Moon Princesses must possess. Garlick reflects, “The theme of nature is pervasive in the film. The concept of nature retaliating against a civilisation which has abused it is obviously topical. Lessons can be drawn from Maria and the way she comes to appreciate and respect animals and nature.”

Visual Effects Supervisor Sean Farrow, says “Gabor has a very strong visual idea of what he wants and he responds very well to concepts, sketches, drawings, animations, pre-visualised – which is great because we prefer to work with pictures rather than words.”

Farrow states, “We were fortunate to have a real little white horse which looks beautiful, so a lot of the effects are practical, for example we needed to put hair extensions in the mane and tail. The unicorn part is obviously the horn; therefore

we used a place-holder on the horse's forehead which we replaced in post production with a CGI horn. The look for the unicorn was the cause of many design discussions, but we are very happy with the finished product. It has a very magical quality to it."

The black lion, although based on footage of a real lion, was created totally from scratch as Farrow explains, "Wroolf the dog is a large black dog but, as Maria discovers, he holds his own secret. In his past life he was in fact a lion so to match these two characters we needed to create a black lion. This presented a challenge to make it look real because there is no such thing as a black lion in nature. There is an animal called a black lion but it is not in fact black."

We also needed to create something for the actors to act to so we had a stand-in lion built by the puppet theatre in Hungary. This allows everyone to see how big a lion really is which is shocking when you see an 8ft long, 4.5ft tall lion! It helps us too with things like shadows, we can tell where and how big his shadow is on the floor and to help David Eggby with lighting, how the black will show up on film. We needed to create all the real elements we could to help us produce the unreal elements in post-production. The more reality you have on-set, the better the VFX."

One of the iconic visual sequences from the book has been translated onto the screen and is a purely CGI creation. Garlick enthuses, "The white horses from the sea gallop in under cover of darkness, a flowing series of images that provide a place in the imagination where colour is absent but luminescence is present – not an easy feat for our VFX team but they certainly rose to the challenge!"

## **About the Book**

### ***The Secret of Moonacre – an adaptation of *The Little White Horse****

Explaining the long-term appeal of the book, and what inspired her and Penders to create the project, Garlick comments, “One of the enduring legacies of Goudge is that she has created an entirely separate world, in Maria’s world reality and fantasy are cosily co-existent.”

Written by Elizabeth Goudge and published in 1946, the book is currently published in 16 languages. The book appeals to consecutive generations of girls and was the favourite childhood book of J.K. Rowling. *The Little White Horse* is a classic story which won the Carnegie Medal for children's literature in 1947. It continues to enjoy success today and was voted top book for 8 - 12 year olds by *The Independent*. Written more than 60 years ago, it still sells over 30,000 copies each year throughout the English-speaking world.

Garlick and Penders’ dream of translating the book to the screen brought some, at times, quite comical challenges. Garlick smiles, “The visual delights Goudge created in the book lingered in my imagination. If anybody else made this film there would be particular things I would be looking for and if they weren’t there, as a fan, I’d be furious!” Garlick elaborates, “So when there was a problem sourcing the number of geraniums required for shooting, the art department kindly suggested we go with a different flower, Monica and I became uncharacteristically autocratic and insisted that they had to be pink and they had to be geraniums!”

Penders agrees, “During the process of adapting the script we had to make some necessary plot changes to suit the medium of film but we were always committed to upholding the essence of the book and maintaining the visual motifs and themes in the book, these include; the white horses galloping in from the sea,

Maria's tower bedroom and Marmadukes's kitchen packed to the brim full of culinary delights." She continues, "The white horses from the sea is not simply a stunningly beautiful visual motif, they are intrinsically tied to the legend of the book; as the little white horses sweep out of the sea their pure spirit cleanses the valley of past sins and restores peace and harmony. This is a basic moral and spiritual aspiration that is universal."

The book's place in history as a children's classic is richly deserved. Juliet Stevenson comments, "Thirteen years old is an extraordinary age when children have one foot in childhood, one foot in adulthood, and they go into very interesting and strange places. Maria has these passionate responses to people and things, and an enormously strong sense of right and wrong, and of herself as the heroine of the story. It is a much more interesting book than many children's books."

Garlick surmises, "The triumph over good and bad is universal, this is a book about general matters of humanity and community – the core belief being that there is always redemptive opportunity to replace the negative with positive and if you have courage, opportunity and you trust the trustworthy, it could be you who makes the difference to the world around you."

### **Director's Vision, May 2007 – Prior to Shooting**

When I read the screenplay for *The Secret of Moonacre*, I immediately felt that it could translate into a great and visually enchanting movie which could appeal to boys and girls alike. It moved me and I liked enormously all the rich characters, the engrossing story, the mysteriously dark settings of the locations and sets, and I could see all the visual possibilities of the film. It was refreshing to read such a well-written script which had meaningful messages and a deep substance to it. I also read the book which it was based on, *The Little White Horse*, by Elizabeth Goudge – it is a beautiful book, and I understand why it has such a loyal fan-base.

My goal is to make a faithful version of the book, an artistically gorgeous picture with an enticing and thrilling story, not only for children but for adults as well. One of the young male characters takes a dramatic turn and becomes the biggest supporter of our heroine, even sacrificing his own life and relationship with his very powerful father to do so. This unexpected motive adds extra drama and surprise to the overall story arc, as well allowing the film to become more accessible to the young male audience.

We want to take the beautiful Victorian English settings to another level with the movie and introduce unexpected modern twists on some of the designs, costumes, jewellery and hairstyles, without sacrificing the integrity of the original. Our goal is to make the movie more appealing to today's young audience by giving them wondrous and fantastical eye candy throughout the picture.

There are tremendous opportunities for mind-boggling visuals and effects in the picture, with big set-pieces of magic, fantasy and mystery. The movie will end with an ambitious visual-fx fanfare with oceans roaring and wild horses emerging from raging waves, plus forests and mountains changing colours and transforming to vivid magic. I will be very selective with the choice of creative talent, starting with

the cast, cinematographer, production designer, costume designer, composer, editor, visual effects company, etc., to make a most memorable and sophisticated family movie.

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### **Director's Reflection, July 2008 – Upon Completion of the Film**

I am very pleased with the finished film of *The Secret of Moonacre*. Our original idea was to give this classic period movie a slightly modern and fantastic twist and we have certainly attained that. The production design, costumes, cinematography and the music have added extra layers of richness to the magic of the script. Our locations in Hungary are just that little bit other-worldly and fantastical.

Our cast is fabulous. Dakota is definitely a rising star – she is a talented and adventurous young lady, willing to jump off walls and into tanks of water without batting an eye. She brings a lovely, multi-layered and mature performance to the lead character of Maria and I believe she has a huge career ahead of her. Juliet was a total scene stealer – her Miss Heliotrope even had the rest of the cast and crew in stitches. The beautiful Natascha was perfect for the role of Loveday – a slightly mad in the forest, but ethereal as the original Moon Princess – and Ioan looks very dashing as Sir Wroff and played the worn and torn role of Sir Benjamin with the right level of angst and hopelessness.

*The Secret of Moonacre* is a magic tale of mystery, adventure, fantasy and romance – we have all of the hallmarks of a classic story, one that is beautifully rendered on the big screen.

## About the Cast

**DAKOTA BLUE RICHARDS** leads the cast as Maria Merryweather. Securing the role at open auditions, Richards had to fight off fierce competition to win the part that attracted hundreds of girls worldwide. This is the second leading role of her career, following her highly acclaimed film debut last year in the lead role of Lyra in New Line's production of the Phillip Pullman modern classic, *The Golden Compass*. Marking her professional film debut in the year's biggest budget film has not fazed Richards who continues to balance filming with her school studies.

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**IOAN GRUFFUDD** is the mysterious Sir Benjamin Merryweather, Maria's cantankerous uncle and lord of Moonacre Manor.

Gruffudd began his acting career at 14, winning a part in the Welsh drama *People of the Valley*. Four years later he gained a place at RADA, and on graduating in 1995, secured a role in the television production of *Poldark*. This was followed by film roles in Brian Gilbert's *Wilde* and the multi award winning *Titanic*. In 1998 he won the eponymous role in the hugely popular ITV production of *Hornblower*, a role he continued to play until 2003. As Pip in the BBC's production of *Great Expectations* Gruffudd starred alongside Charlotte Rampling. With his role in *102 Dalmatians* Gruffudd became a Hollywood name, and subsequently his work in Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down*, *The Gathering* with Christina Ricci, and Antoine Fuqua's *King Arthur*, paved the way to the role of Reed Richards/Mr Fantastic in the *Fantastic Four* series. Gruffudd has most recently voiced the lead character in the animated feature *Agent Crush*, and is currently playing Tony Blair opposite Josh Brolin's George W. Bush in Oliver Stone's *W*.

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**TIM CURRY** plays the villainous Coeur De Noir, father to Loveday and Robin, and rival to Sir Benjamin and Maria Merryweather.

Acclaimed British actor and two-time Tony Award nominee, Curry is best known for his performance in the cult phenomenon *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The role of stocking wearing Frank-N-Furter was Curry's film debut and won him not only critical acclaim but instant worldwide fame that would endure for generations. Since then Curry has gone on to a diverse career with film credits that include *Kinsey*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Scary Movie 2*, *The Scoundrel's Wife*, *Addams Family Reunion*, *McHale's Navy*, *The Muppets' Treasure Island*, *Congo*, *The Shadow*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Loaded Weapon 1*, *Home Alone 2*, *Passed Away*, *Oscar*, *The Hunt for Red October*, *Pass the Ammo*, *Clue*, *Legend*, *The Ploughman's Lunch*, *Times Square* and *The Shout*.

He has also voiced characters for numerous animated productions and has a long association with director Gabor Csupo working on his animated series for television and subsequent box office hits, *The Rugrats Movie* and *The Wild Thornberrys*. Curry was delighted to be re-united with Csupo in what will be their first ever live-action collaboration.

On television, Curry has been seen in numerous mini-series and telefilms including starring as William Shakespeare in *Life of Shakespeare* and in *Attila* for the USA Network. Other television credits include *Jackie's Back* for Lifetime, *Titanic* for CBS, Stephen King's *It* for ABC, *The Worst Witch* for HBO, and *Oliver Twist* for CBS. He also starred in several films for the BBC: *Three Men in A Boat*, directed by Stephen Frears; *Napoleon and Love*; and *Schmoedipus*. Curry was part of the initial cast of *Family Affair* and *Over the Top*, a series regular on *Wiseguy*, and also worked on *Earth 2*. He has recently completed filming Terry Pratchett's *The Colour of Magic*.

In theatre, Curry earned Tony Award nominations for his Broadway roles in *Amadeus*, in which he played Mozart, and *My Favourite Year*. He also starred in Broadway's *Travesties*. On the London stage, Curry has played in the Royal National Theatre productions *Pirates of Penzance*, *The Rivals*, *Love for Love* and *The Threepenny Opera*. Curry reprised the role that launched his career in both West End and Broadway productions of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. His continued stage success was marked most recently by his performance as *King Arthur* again in both the West End and Broadway stage productions of the critically acclaimed *Spamalot*.

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**NATASCHA McELHONE** joins the cast playing two roles: the Moon Princess who appears in the “Ancient Chronicles of Moonacre”; and Loveday, the beautiful daughter of Coeur de Noir and star-crossed lover of Sir Benjamin Merryweather.

McElhone has starred in a wide range of film, television and stage projects both in the United States and in her native England. McElhone made her film debut in James Ivory's *Surviving Picasso* and has since made a plethora of films including *The Truman Show* with Jim Carrey, *Ronin* with Robert De Niro, *The Devil's Own* with Brad Pitt, Kenneth Branagh's adaptation of *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Lighthouse Keeper*, and Charles Dance's *Ladies in Lavender* starring Dame Judi Dench and Dame Maggie Smith. McElhone also starred alongside George Clooney in Steven Soderbergh's *Solaris*. Her small screen credits are equally as impressive, with the lead role alongside David Duchovny in the hit show *Californication* for Showtime, and starring with Chris O'Donnell, Alfred Molina and Michael Keaton in *The Company*.

Her stage credits include productions of *Honour* directed by David Gridley, *The Count of Monte Cristo* at Manchester's Royal Exchange and *The Cherry Orchard*

with the Moscow Arts Theatre. She manages her time between work and family life, sharing her work between London and Los Angeles.

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**JULIET STEVENSON CBE** plays Miss Heliotrope, Maria's straitlaced governess accompanying her on her adventures in Moonacre Valley.

One of the most respected actors of her generation Stevenson started her stage career in the early 1980s, after her graduation from RADA, with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Her television career took off when she appeared in the popular TV serialization of Catherine Cookson's novels, *The Mallens*. It was, however, the 90s that saw Juliet making her name in films playing Nina opposite Alan Rickman in *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, a performance that won her the Evening Standard Film Award for Best Actress. Other accolades include the Laurence Olivier Best Actress Award for *Death and the Maiden* plus a BAFTA nomination for *The Politician's Wife*. Her mainstream popularity continues with recent roles in *Bend it Like Beckham*, *Mona Lisa Smile* and Anthony Minghella's *Breaking & Entering*.

As well as her extensive film, television and radio work, Stevenson continues her stage performances with recent highlights being *Beckett Shorts*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *As You Like It* with the Royal Shakespeare Company, *The Seagull* at The National, and *Alice Trilogy* at The Royal Court. Stevenson was awarded a CBE in 1999.

\* \* \* \* \*

**AUGUSTUS PREW** plays Robin, Coeur De Noir's son and Maria's nemesis.

Graduating from the Young Blood Theatre Company, with stage experience in the company's productions of *Zonal*, *Burning Ambitions* and *Relative*, Prew's talent

was quickly recognised and he was given a regular television role in the Granada television series *24/Seven*. Prew later enjoyed leading roles in BBC ONE's popular drama *Spooks* and Granada's *The Time of Your Life*. Prew made his film debut in 2002 as Rachel Weisz's bullying teenage son, Ali, in *About a Boy*.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MICHAEL WEBBER** plays Digweed, Sir Benjamin's loyal manservant and the first friend Maria makes in her new life in Moonacre Valley.

Trained at The Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art, Michael has since had a full and varied stage career, with recent credits including Yvan in *Art*, and Cheswick in Peter Doran's production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Webber has also enjoyed success on television with appearances in popular dramas including *Bramwell*, *Peak Practice*, and *The Bill* on ITV and more recently *Hustle*, *Silent Witness*, *Wire in the Blood*, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Holby* on BBC ONE. Character actor Webber has also enjoyed recent film roles in Luc Besson's *Unleashed*, family adventure *Stormbreaker* and *Tooth* helmed by Ed Nammour.

\* \* \* \* \*

**ANDY LINDEN** plays Marmaduke Scarlet, "Chef of all chefs" and friend to Maria from the moment she discovers him in the magical kitchens of Moonacre.

Linden has a string of television and film credits behind him, many of which demonstrate his ability for comedy; *Hale & Pace*, *Comedy Nation* and *Harry Hill* being just a few that have cast Linden in a comedic role. With his roots in East London, it is not surprising that Linden has also often been cast as the hard man, in films such as *Punch*, *Love is the Devil*, *The Case* and *The Business*, as well as in the hit cable television series *Rome*. Linden has worked with an impressive

range of directors including David Yates, Oliver Parker and the great Roman Polanski on the recent production of *Oliver Twist*.

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## **About the Crew**

### **Director: Gabor Csupo**

Csupo helmed this project hot on the heels of the box office and critical success he enjoyed with his first live-action film *Bridge to Terabithia*. His record for creating quality family entertainment combined with his unique storytelling ability made him a good choice to direct *The Secret of Moonacre*.

Multi-E Emmy-winning animation artist Gabor Csupo was born in Budapest, Hungary where he studied music and art before commencing his professional training in animation at Hungary's famed Pannonia Studios in 1971. Leaving Communist Hungary in 1975 for artistic opportunities in the West, Csupo and four fellow artists and musicians escaped into Austria through a darkened train tunnel.

Csupo's first job in the US was at the legendary Hanna Barbera Studios where he worked as an animator. In 1981, Csupo formed his own animation company, Klasky Csupo. In 1988, Klasky Csupo was asked to animate a cartoon strip called *The Simpsons*. The enormous success of those early bumpers led to its work on the series, which Klasky Csupo animated for the first three seasons of the show and for which they won two Emmys. Csupo co-developed, produced and animated the phenomenally successful *Rugrats* series, the most popular children's show in the US Csupo also produced and animated such distinguished series as *Duckman*, *Rocket Power*, *The Wild Thornberrys* and the latest Nickelodeon hit *As Told by Ginger*. In 1998, Csupo co-produced the company's first venture into feature films, making the enormously successful *The Rugrats Movie* (the first non-Disney animated film to gross over US\$100million), as well as its hit sequel, *Rugrats in Paris: The Movie*.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Producers: Meredith Garlick and Monica Penders**

Meredith Garlick and Monica Penders are the originating producers of *The Secret of Moonacre*, under the banner of their company Forgan-Smith Entertainment. Founded by Garlick, Penders and Jennifer Smith in 2003, and with offices in the US and Australia, Forgan-Smith has concentrated on developing medium-budget films based on quality scripts.

Meredith Garlick, a graduate of the Columbia University MFA producing program, has worked in various producing and production roles in film including Woody Allen's *Sweet and Lowdown*, Ron Howard's *A Beautiful Mind* and Peter Weir's *Master and Commander*, as an associate producer in television including *New York Dating Blues* and *Flicks*; and on the documentaries *Ima*, *Texas* and *Hitting the Road*. Garlick has been awarded screenwriting grants for the scripts *Oasis* and *Sidetracked*, and consults as a script editor.

Previous industry experience includes a three-year stint as Director of the Polo Ralph Lauren Columbia University Film Festival and over six years as a theatrical agent. Garlick also teaches film production, film studies and art history at various universities in Australia and New York.

Garlick has served as Queensland chapter head of the Screen Producers' Association of Australia, and holds the University Medal for her Bachelor of Arts honors thesis from the University of Queensland.

Founding partner Monica Penders brings extensive corporate knowledge to the partnership having over 20 years of international marketing, advertising and global communications experience. Penders has worked for The Walt Disney Company in marketing, as an Associate Producer for ETOPIA (a Germany and US-based feature film company) and has been active in the New York independent film scene, working with the late Adrienne Shelly on her feature *I'll Take You There*. Penders's last corporate position was as Vice President of Media Relations for a

global conglomerate. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Griffith University, Queensland, and has been awarded a screenwriting grant for the script *Eight Seasons*.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Producers: Jason Piette and Michael L. Cowan**

Combining their creative backgrounds as screenwriters with a flair for business and a good sense of commercial opportunities, Michael L. Cowan and Jason Piette founded Brighton-based Spice Factory in 1995.

With access to production financing, international sales and distribution, Spice Factory has built up an impressive and diverse slate numbering over 40 features. Identified by Screen Finance as one of the UK's most prolific production companies, Spice Factory has accumulated extensive experience in international co-productions. Working with a large number of leading companies within the international film community, the company is considered a leader within this field in the UK.

In the last three years Spice Factory has been involved with over US\$450M worth of production including *Undertaking Betty* winner of a Welsh BAFTA starring Christopher Walken, Brenda Blethyn, Alfred Molina, Lee Evans and Naomi Watts; *Bollywood Queen* (selected by Sundance Film Festival 2003); *Bridge of San Luis Rey* which boasts a stellar cast including Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, Kathy Bates and Gabriel Byrne; *Head in the Clouds* which teams Charlize Theron, Penelope Cruz and Stuart Townsend; and most recently *The Merchant of Venice* starring Al Pacino, Jeremy Irons and Joseph Fiennes.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Writer: Lucy Shuttleworth**

Lucy Shuttleworth moved into film production following a career in publishing. Commencing as a script reader for Miramax, she recommended such projects as

*The Usual Suspects*, *The English Patient*, *Breaking the Waves* and *Nil By Mouth*. This was followed by reading for Universal and Buena Vista International, where she recommended projects including *Trainspotting*, *Regeneration* and *Bound*. As a freelance script editor Shuttleworth was employed by Robert Jones to work on *High Times*, followed by a biopic of *Howard Marks* adapted by Eitan Arrussi, *Simon Magus* directed by Ben Hopkins, and Iain Softley's *The Boathouse*, as well as on the TV comedy series, 'Orrible. Shuttleworth later joined the UK Film Council as a script consultant assessing the suitability of various books and novels for cinematic adaptation.

Shuttleworth most recently worked as Head of Development at Spice Factory, working on such projects as Michael Radford's *The Merchant of Venice* starring Al Pacino, and John Duigan's *Head in the Clouds*, starring Charlize Theron and Penelope Cruz. Shuttleworth has co-written *Men Don't Lie* with director Jane Spencer.

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### **Writer: Graham Alborough**

Alborough has created and written numerous BAFTA, British Comedy Award, and Royal Television Society award winning productions. Starting in theatre, his original feature film *Bye Bye Harry* was adapted from his successful stage play and directed by Robert Young. TV work in comedy-drama includes *Out of The Blue* directed by Nick Hamm starring Colin Firth, Catherine Zeta Jones, and Cathy Tyson. Alborough also co-wrote for *Murder Most Horrid*, winner of the Best Comedy Drama at the British Comedy Awards 1992. Alborough has penned many award-winning children's television programmes including *The Gibley Boys* (General Winner, Children's BAFTA), *Sunny's Ears* (Winner, Royal Television Society Award 1997), and *Woof!* (BAFTA, Emmy and British Comedy Award winner).

\* \* \* \* \*

**Director of Photography: David Eggby A.C.S.**

Internationally regarded cinematographer David Eggby earned critical acclaim for his first film as cinematographer, the cult classic *Mad Max* directed by George Miller and starring Mel Gibson. Since then Eggby has directed the photography on numerous classics including *Harley Davidson & the Marlborough Man*, *Dragonheart* directed by Rob Cohen, David Twohy's *Pitch Black* (for which he won Cinematographer of the Year from Australian Cinematographer's Society), and *Underdog* starring Jason Lee and John Belushi.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Production Designer: Sophie Becher**

Becher started her design career working at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This led to a post graduate course in theatre design at the Riverside Studios in London where she also started working on low budget films. From there she worked her way through the art department ranks working on such films as *The Good Father*, *Personal Services* and *Life is Sweet*. Her first film as production designer was *A Business Affair* starring Christopher Walken and Carole Bouquet. Becher then designed *The Borrowers*, directed by John Henderson, for which she won an RTS Award for Best Production Design, as well as a BAFTA nomination for Best Production Design. Thereafter followed *Loch Ness* for Working Title Films and the sequel to *The Borrowers*, both directed by John Henderson, and for which Sophie received BAFTA and RTS nominations respectively. Other credits include: Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night*; *B Monkey* for Mike Radford; *Best Laid Plans*, *Lorna Doone* and *To Kill a King* for Mike Barker; and Charles Shyer's *Alfie* starring Jude Law.

Recent credits include Mike Radford's *Flawless* starring Michael Caine and Demi Moore, and *Run Fat Boy Run* directed by David Schwimmer and starring Simon Pegg and Thandie Newton.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Editor: Julian Rodd**

With a background in television documentary and drama, Rodd has edited a number of award-winning productions including the Emmy nominated and BAFTA winning Howard Goodall's *Big Bangs*, Emmy nominated *The Holocaust on Trial* and the Grand Jury Prize winner at Sundance 1992, *A Brief History of Time*. In 2005, Rodd edited *Dunkirk: Deliverance* which went on to win the Huw Weldon BAFTA Award, swiftly followed by *Storyville: A Company of Soldiers*, which achieved a BAFTA Current Affairs Nomination.

Rodd's film credits most recently include: *Revelation*, *Partners in Action*, Paul Lynch's *The Keeper*, *Broken Threads*, and *The Walker* for Paul Schrader.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Costume Designer: Beatrix Aruna Pasztor**

LA-based, Hungarian Pasztor is one of the film industry's most unique costume designers. Her outlandish imagination allows her to create designs that would not look out of place on the couture catwalks of the world's most exclusive fashion houses. Pasztor has had a prolific career, working as the costume designer for films as diverse as *Drugstore Cowboy*, *My Own Private Idaho*, *The Fisher King*, *Indecent Proposal*, *Good Will Hunting*, *Vanity Fair*, *Alfie* (where she worked alongside Sophie Becher), *AEon Flux*, and most recently, *The Hunting Party*. Returning to Hungary to work alongside Gabor Csupo in Budapest was a rare treat for Pasztor who now lives in the US.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Make-Up & Hair Designer: Lynda Armstrong**

Armstrong joined the production team as Make-up & Hair Designer fresh from the set of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Lynda has had a broad-ranging career in both film and television. Working up to the role of designer, Armstrong was the make-up artist on classic films as diverse as *Absolute Beginners*, *Little*

*Shop of Horrors, Empire of the Sun, A Fish Called Wanda, White Hunter Black Heart, City of Joy and Die Another Day.* Armstrong then took the helm as Make-Up & Hair Designer on *Michael Collins* and since has been in charge on projects such as *Incognito, The Count of Monte Cristo, The Feast of the Goat, Valley of the Wolves: Iraq* and *In Bar*.

Highlights have included a BAFTA nomination for her work on *101 Dalmatians*, and a nomination for a Saturn Award for Best Make-Up from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films for her work on *Batman* (1989).

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Composer: Christian Henson**

Henson worked as a writer, arranger and producer for the likes of Scott Walker, Roy Ayers, The Freestylers and LTJ Bukem. Forging a successful career composing music for prime time domestic and international television productions, Henson moved into film composing key scenes for films such as *Spy Game*, Celador's *Dirty Pretty Things*, *Hotel Rwanda* and *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe*. Echoes of Henson's eclectic musical experience can still be found in both the orchestral and electronic aspects of his scores enabling him to combine a career composing scores for both mainstream movies such as *Chasing Liberty*, *It's a Boy Girl Thing* and *Miss-Conception*, alongside edgy independents such as *Les Fils Du Vent* for which Henson earned a World Soundtrack nomination as Best Newcomer. Henson is also the composer for the highly-anticipated television mini-series *Lost in Austen*.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Visual Effects Supervisor: Sean Farrow**

Farrow started working in digital media, designing titles and visual effects for television. Quickly developing his skills as a digital artist Farrow worked on HBO's highly successful series *Band of Brothers*, and *The Gathering Storm*, as well as

*Stranded* for Hallmark. His work on *Undertaking Betty* for Miramax was his debut for the film industry and was swiftly followed by *Ella Enchanted* and the Warner Bros. box office hit, *Batman Begins*, for which Farrow was Digital Effects Supervisor. Supervising Digital Artist for Columbia's *The Da Vinci Code*, Farrow has since been the Visual Effects Designer for projects including *It's a Boy Girl Thing* and *1408*.

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