

The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim

The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim is an upcoming [anime fantasy film](#) directed by [Kenji Kamiyama](#) from a screenplay by [Phoebe Gittins](#) and [Arty Papageorgiou](#), based on the novel *The Lord of the Rings* by [J. R. R. Tolkien](#). Produced by [New Line Cinema](#) and [Warner Bros. Animation](#), the film is a prequel to [Peter Jackson's](#) *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. Starring [Brian Cox](#), [Gaia Wise](#), [Luke Pasqualino](#), [Miranda Otto](#), [Laurence Ubong Williams](#), and [Shaun Dooley](#), *The War of the Rohirrim* is set 183 years before the events of those films and tells the story of [Helm Hammerhand](#) (Cox), a legendary king of [Rohan](#), and his family as they defend their kingdom against an army of [Dunlendings](#).

Development was being fast-tracked by June 2021, when the film was officially announced, to prevent the studios from losing the film adaptation rights for Tolkien's novels. Kamiyama was involved by then, as were producer [Philippa Boyens](#)—who co-wrote the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy—and initial writers [Jeffrey Addiss](#) and [Will Matthews](#). Gittins and Papageorgiou re-wrote the script, which is based on details in the [appendices](#) of *The Lord of the Rings* covering the history of Rohan's rulers. [Sola Entertainment](#) provided the [traditional 2D animation](#), taking visual inspiration from Jackson's films. The cast was revealed in June 2022, including Otto reprising her role as [Éowyn](#) from the film trilogy.

The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim is scheduled to be released theatrically in the United States on December 13, 2024, by [Warner Bros. Pictures](#).

Premise

Set 183 years before the events of the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, *The War of the Rohirrim* tells the story of [Helm Hammerhand](#), a legendary king of [Rohan](#), and his family as they defend their kingdom against an army of [Dunlendings](#).^{[1][2]} Helm goes on to be the namesake for the stronghold [Helm's Deep](#).^[1]

Voice cast

- [Brian Cox](#) as [Helm Hammerhand](#): The hot-tempered king of [Rohan](#) who attempts to protect his people^{[1][3]}

The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim



Official logo

Directed by	Kenji Kamiyama
Screenplay by	Phoebe Gittins Arty Papageorgiou
Story by	Jeffrey Addiss Will Matthews
Based on	<i>The Lord of the Rings</i> by J. R. R. Tolkien
Produced by	Philippa Boyens Joseph Chou Jason DeMarco
Starring	Brian Cox Gaia Wise Luke Pasqualino Miranda Otto Laurence Ubong Williams Shaun Dooley
Music by	Stephen Gallagher
Production companies	New Line Cinema Warner Bros. Animation Sola Entertainment
Distributed by	Warner Bros. Pictures
Release date	December 13, 2024

- Gaia Wise as Hèra: The tomboy-ish daughter of Helm who helps defend their people^{[1][2]}
- Luke Pasqualino as Wulf: The ruthless leader of the Dunlendings who seeks revenge against Rohan for the death of his father^[1]
- Miranda Otto as Éowyn: A future shieldmaiden of Rohan who narrates the film^[1]
- Laurence Ubong Williams as Fréaláf Hildeson: Helm's nephew and successor to the throne of Rohan^[4]
- Shaun Dooley as Freca: Wulf's father, a Dunlending lord with Rohirric blood who attempts to claim the throne^{[2][4]}

Countries	United States
	Japan
Language	English

Lorraine Ashbourne, Yazdan Qafouri, Benjamin Wainwright, Michael Wildman, Jude Akuwudike, Bilal Hasna, and Janine Duvitski have been cast in undisclosed roles.^[1]

Production

Development

In June 2021, during 20th anniversary celebrations for the beginning of the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy (2001–2003),^[5] film studio New Line Cinema announced that it was fast-tracking development of an anime prequel film with Warner Bros. Animation.^[6] This was intended to prevent Warner Bros. and New Line from losing the film adaptation rights for J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* novels.^[7] The new film, titled *The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim*, was being directed by Kenji Kamiyama and produced by Joseph Chou, both returning from Warner Bros.' anime television series *Blade Runner: Black Lotus* (2021–22).^[5] It is connected to the film trilogy's continuity,^[5] and co-writer Philippa Boyens returned from those films as a consultant and producer.^{[6][8]} The trilogy's director, Peter Jackson, and co-writer Fran Walsh were not officially involved,^[5] but Boyens used them as a sounding board for ideas.^[3] She said an animated expansion of the franchise had been discussed for years before they settled on making an anime film.^[2] Jason DeMarco, Warner Bros.' senior vice president of anime, was also producing the film.^[8]



Producer Philippa Boyens, who previously co-wrote the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, at the Annecy Film Festival in June 2023 where she promoted the film

Writing

Several story ideas were suggested for the first anime film based on Tolkien's novels, but Boyens insisted that they focus on the kingdom of Rohan as she felt that culture was best suited for the medium and would be familiar to viewers of Jackson's films.^[9] *The War of the Rohirrim* is set 183 years before those films and tells the story of Helm Hammerhand, a king of Rohan.^[5] Tolkien mentions his story in the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings*, specifically the "House of Eorl" section in Appendix A which details the history of Rohan's rulers. The producers chose to tell this story because its setting earlier in the timeline avoids the villain Sauron and the influence of his One Ring,^[2] and because they felt the intensity of the conflict and

the way it escalates made it the right choice for a film adaptation.^[9] Boyens said it allowed them to tell a tragic story about the "wreckage of war", and examine ideas of honor, revenge, family, and resilience.^{[2][3][9]}

Jeffrey Addiss and Will Matthews were hired to write the initial screenplay.^[5] During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, Boyens asked her daughter Phoebe Gittins and Gittins's writing partner Arty Papageorgiou to re-write the script. Boyens referred to them as the "next generation" and felt it was important for new, young voices to join the franchise. The pair, who were working on another project at the time, were hesitant to join the film because of the reverence for the source material and previous films held by themselves and other fans. They were convinced to join based on the other people working on the project, including many who worked on Jackson's films. This allowed them to focus on the storytelling and bringing the material closer to the styles of anime, Japanese cinema, and animation in general. Kamiyama had key details that he wanted to include that did not fit within the initial script, including how exactly to lay siege to a citadel.^[9] He worked with Gittins and Papageorgiou to put a focus on the darker, more claustrophobic, and horrific elements of the war rather than just large-scale battles. The fact that the Dunlendings who invade Rohan do so based on historical grievances was an element that particularly resonated with the director.^[3]

The inclusion of giant elephant-like *mûmakil* in concept art for the film led to concern from some fans that the film was inserting the armies of Harad into the story when Tolkien did not mention their involvement. Boyens acknowledged that the appendices do not explicitly mention forces from Harad in this story, but felt their involvement could be inferred since Tolkien mentions enemies of Gondor arriving to aid the Dunlendings and elsewhere in the appendices he includes Harad as one of the enemies of Gondor in this time period. The writers also interpreted Tolkien's description of the Dunlending leader, Freca, as being wealthy enough to afford mercenaries from places like Harad as well as the Corsairs of Umbar, another enemy of Gondor.^{[3][10]} As development of the script progressed, the writers decided to introduce a narrator who would be telling the film's story as part of an oral tradition. The character Éowyn from the main events of *The Lord of the Rings* was chosen. Boyens said having a familiar voice in the film helped the writers with their work. She added that the narration gives context for fans of the previous films who are unfamiliar with Tolkien's wider Middle-earth history, and she felt that framing the story as an oral tradition was fitting because it was being constructed based on fragments and references in the source material.^[3]

Tolkien gave details on the deaths of Helm and his sons, Haleth and Hama, but the fate of his unnamed daughter is left unclear.^[3] The producers decided to expand on her role, making her the protagonist of the film.^[2] The first name suggested for the character did not start with "H", but Boyens felt it should start with the same letter as Helm, Haleth, and Hama.^[3] She asked Walsh for ideas and the latter suggested they name her after Hera Hilmar, the Icelandic actress who starred in their film *Mortal Engines* (2018).^[9] For *The War of the Rohirrim*, the name is spelled "Hèra" based on Old English. It was not intended to be a reference to the goddess Hera of Ancient Greek religion.^[3] The writers did not want to completely invent her characterization themselves, and Kamiyama suggested they take inspiration from the historical female leader Æthelflæd since she played a similar role to Hèra and Tolkien was himself inspired by such historical figures.^{[2][3]} Though the character can fight and ride horses like the men of Rohan, the writers were not interested in depicting her as a "warrior princess" which they felt had become a common trope. Instead, they focused her character arc on the choices she makes and the choices that others make which impact her life.^[9] They also took inspiration from Tolkien's other female characters, including Éowyn.^[11] Another character that was expanded on for the film is Fréaláf Hildeson, Helm's nephew who eventually inherits the throne. Only Fréaláf's mother is known, creating the possibility that his father is not Rohirric and is instead

from a neighboring land. Boyens felt going in this direction made Fréaláf's ascension to the throne feel unlikely to audiences, and helped differentiate him from the *Lord of the Rings* character Éomer who has a similar story.^[9]

Casting

Casting for the film began by the time of its announcement in June 2021,^[6] and details on the cast were expected to be revealed soon after February 2022.^[12] That June, Brian Cox was revealed to be voicing Helm, with Gaia Wise voicing Hèra, and Miranda Otto reprising her role as Éowyn from Jackson's films.^[1] Cox was previously part of the English voice cast for *Black Lotus*, and Boyens felt he was an appropriate choice for Helm based on his performance in a 1987 stage production of William Shakespeare's play *Titus Andronicus*.^[3] She also praised Wise for bringing a "fiery-ness" to her performance without making Hèra sound petulant.^[3]

Also revealed to be cast in the film in June 2022 were Luke Pasqualino as Dunlending leader Wulf, Laurence Ubong Williams as Fréaláf Hildeson, Shaun Dooley as Wulf's father Freca, and Lorraine Ashbourne, Yazdan Qafouri, Benjamin Wainwright, Michael Wildman, Jude Akuwudike, Bilal Hasna, and Janine Duvitski in undisclosed roles.^{[1][4]}

Animation and design

Richard Taylor, the creative director of special effects company Wētā Workshop, and illustrators Alan Lee and John Howe all returned from the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy to work on *The War of the Rohirrim*.^{[1][12]} The film's visual style is based on that of Jackson's trilogy rather than the style of the previous animated *Lord of the Rings* films by Ralph Bakshi and Rankin/Bass.^[2] Boyens said they also took inspiration from the works of Akira Kurosawa and Hayao Miyazaki, particularly their focus on small details.^[9] Kamiyama wanted the characters and locations to look as realistic as possible while still being recognizable as anime. Locations in the film that were previously seen in the live-action films include the Rohan capital of Edoras, their stronghold at the Hornburg which becomes known as Helm's Deep, and the fortress of Isengard. Old models from Wētā's archives were used as inspiration for some designs.^[2]



Director Kenji Kamiyama at the Annecy Film Festival in June 2023 where he promoted the film

Sola Entertainment began work on the film's animation by the time of its announcement in June 2021.^[6] A unique approach was used to create the film's traditional 2D animation: actors performed every scene of the film using motion capture, which was translated into 3D animation within Unreal Engine's real-time game engine; the 3D environment was used to determine the film's camera angles and movements, and this was translated into the final 2D animation. Kamiyama did not want to use rotoscoping to trace over the 3D scenes. Instead, he asked the artists to use the 3D version as reference when creating their traditional 2D

drawings. This process created more fluid movements but maintained the feeling of hand-drawn animation. One of the biggest challenges for the animation team was the large number of horses in the film; horses are important in Rohan culture but they are also notoriously difficult to animate.^[2]

Music

Stephen Gallagher was revealed to be composing the score for the film in February 2023. Gallagher was the music editor on the *Hobbit* film trilogy, working closely with composer Howard Shore,^[13] and his music for *The War of the Rohirrim* continues Shore's style including reprising the Rohan theme from the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy.^[2] Recording for the score took place with an orchestra at Angel Recording Studios in March 2024.^[14]

Marketing

A first look at the film's concept art, showing the influence of the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy on its visuals, was revealed in February 2022.^[12] Kamiyama, Boyens, Chou, and DeMarco discussed the film and showed unfinished footage at a panel during the Annecy International Animation Film Festival in June 2023. The footage received positive responses for its combination of film influences and anime stylings;^[15] John Hopewell of *Variety* felt fans of Jackson's films and fans of anime would both enjoy the film, and highlighted the brutal, bloody violence shown.^[16] Rafael Motamayor at */Film* said it was one of the most anticipated animated films of 2024.^[2] Kamiyama, Boyens, and Chou will promote the film with Andy Serkis—who portrayed Gollum in Jackson's films—at a panel during the Annecy Film Festival in June 2024, where the first completed footage from the film will be screened.^[17]

Release

The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim is scheduled to be released theatrically in the United States on December 13, 2024, by Warner Bros. Pictures.^[18] It was originally scheduled for release on April 12, 2024,^[19] before it was delayed to the December 2024 date due to other Warner Bros. schedule changes caused by the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike.^[18]

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