



## The Red Shoes

*The Entire Production Directed, Produced and Written by:* Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger

©: Independent Producers

*A production of* The Archers *presented by*

J. Arthur Rank *released through*

General Film Distributors

*Assistant Producer:* George R. Busby

*Assistant Director:* Sydney S. Streeter

*Continuity:* Doreen North

*Additional Dialogue by:* Keith Winter

*From an Original Screenplay by:*

Emeric Pressburger

*Based on the story by:*

Hans Christian Andersen

*Director of Photography:* Jack Cardiff

*Colour Control:* Natalie Kalmus

*Associate:* Joan Bridge

*Camera Operator:* Christopher Challis

*Technicolor Composite Photography:*

F. George Gunn, E. Hague

*Editor:* Reginald Mills

*Liaison Editor:* John Seabourne Jr

*Production Designed by:* Hein Heckroth

*Art Director:* Arthur Lawson

*Special Paintings:* Ivor Beddoes, Józef Natanson

*Scenic Artist:* Alfred Roberts

*Miss Shearer's Dresses by:* Jacques Fath of Paris,

Mattli of London

*Mlle Tchérina's Dresses by:* Carven of Paris

*Wardrobe:* Dorothy Edwards

*Music Composed Arranged and Conducted by:*

Brian Easdale

*Music [Played by]:*

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

*Music [Aria Sung by]:* Margherita Grandi

*Music [of Café de Paris Sequence]:*

Ted Heath's Kenny Baker Swing Group

*The Ballet of the Red Shoes Orchestra Conducted*

*by:* Sir Thomas Beecham Bart

*Music Recorder:* Ted Drake

*The Ballet of the Red Shoes Choreography by:*

Robert Helpmann

*Part of the Shoemaker Created/Danced by:*

Leonide Massine

*Assistant Maître de Ballet:* Alan Carter

*Assistant Maîtresse de Ballet:* Joan Harris

*Sound:* Charles Poulton

*Sound System:* Western Electric

*Dubbing:* Gordon MacCullum

*Made at:* D&P Studios, Pinewood Studios

*uncredited*

*Production Assistant:* Gwladys Jenks

*Production Secretary:* Marjorie Mein

*2nd Assistant Director:* Kenneth Rick

*3rd Assistant Directors:* J.M. Gibson,

Lawrence G. Knight

*Assistant Continuity:* Joanna Busby

*Focus Puller:* George Minassian

*Clapper Loaders:* Bob Kindred, John Morgan

*Stills:* George Cannon

*Assistant Stills:* Alistair Phillips

*Special Stills:* Cornel Lucas

*Assistant Editor:* Noreen Ackland

*2nd Assistant Editors:* Tony Haynes,

Lawrence G. Knight

*Assistant Art Director:* Elven Webb

*Draftsmen:* Don Picton, Vic Wilkins, V. Shaw,

Alan Withy, G. Heavens, Bernard Goodwin

*Wardrobe:* Elsie Withers

*Masks:* Terence Morgan II

*Make-up Supervisor:* Ernie Gasser

*Make-up:* Eric Carter

## PREVIEW

# The Red Shoes

## 5 things to know about 'The Red Shoes'

### 1. It's a spectacular rejection of realism

*The Red Shoes*, which premiered on 6 September 1948, followed a tremendous run of films by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. Between 1943 and 1947, they made *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *A Canterbury Tale*, *'I Know Where I'm Going!'*, *A Matter of Life and Death* and *Black Narcissus*. For their next trick, they took a decisive step away from the tendency towards realism in postwar cinema, pushing the emotional expressiveness of Technicolor photography yet further, in collaboration with genius cinematographer Jack Cardiff.

Pressburger had originally worked on the idea for the film before the war. Producer Alexander Korda had hired him to write a script that combined the story of the dancer Nijinsky, and his time at Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, with the Hans Christian Anderson fairytale about enchanted shoes that force the wearer to dance on and on until death. He'd also instructed Pressburger to write a role for Merle Oberon, but as that passion cooled, so did the producer's interest in the film.

Powell and Pressburger returned to the idea in 1946, convinced its time had come: 'We had all been told for 10 years to go out and die for freedom and democracy,' Powell recalled. 'Now the war was over, *The Red Shoes* told us to go out and die for art.'

The gamble paid off eventually. While the initial release in Britain was very small, as the Rank Organisation resented the fact that it had gone wildly over budget, *The Red Shoes* played for two years in New York – and was soon acclaimed a triumph.

### 2. It's a dance film made by dancers

While some ballet films use stand-ins and cutaways to make it appear that their actors have the right moves, Powell and Pressburger cast dancers instead. Moira Shearer, who plays the heroine, rising star Vicky Page, was a featured dancer at Sadler's Wells. French prima ballerina Ludmilla Tchérina played one here too – the glamorous Boronskaya. Léonid Massine, former choreographer for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, played Grisha Ljubow, who so brutally coaches Page; while Robert Helpmann played the lead male dancer in the company, Ivan Boleslawsky, and also choreographed the astonishing extended ballet sequence.

Shearer proved an elegant and natural actress on camera – easily able to hold her own with co-stars Anton Walbrook as impresario Lermontov and Marius Goring as young composer Julian Craster. As for the other dancers, if their performances at times veer toward the high-key gestural style of ballet mime, then that all adds to the film's heady, hyper-real excitement.

### 3. It's inspired by one star... and created another

The film's scenario is said to have been inspired by the moment when Diaghilev saw 14-year-old Diana Gould in the premiere of Frederick Ashton's ballet *Leda and the Swan*. He intended to hire her for his own company but died before that could happen. Anna Pavlova was similarly impressed by Gould, saying she was the only English dancer 'who had a soul', but she too died before they could work together.

*Boom Operator:* Al Burton  
*Dubbing Editor:* Leonard Trumm  
**Cast:**  
 Anton Walbrook (*Boris Lermontov*)  
 Marius Goring (*Julian Craster*)  
 Moira Shearer (*Victoria Page*)  
 Robert Helpmann (*Ivan Boleslawsky*)  
 Leonide Massine (*Grischa Ljubov*)  
 Albert Basserman (*Ratov*)  
 Ludmilla Tcherina (*Irina Boronskaja*)  
 Esmond Knight (*Livingstone 'Livy' Montague*)  
 Jean Short (*Terry*)  
 Gordon Littmann (*Ike*)  
 Julia Lang (*a balletomane*)  
 Bill Shine (*a balletomane's mate*)  
 Austin Trevor (*Professor Palmer*)  
 Eric Berry (*Dimitri*)  
 Irene Browne (*Lady Neston*)  
 Jerry Verno (*George, stage-door keeper*)  
 Derek Elphinstone (*Lord Oldham*)  
 Madame Rambert (*herself*)  
 Joy Rawlins (*Gwladys, Vicky's friend*)  
 Marcel Poncin (*M. Boudin*)  
 Michel Bazalgette (*M. Rideaut*)  
 Yvonne Andre (*Vicky's dresser*)  
 Hay Petrie (*Boisson*)  
 Alan Carter, Joan Harris (*solo dancers*)  
 Joan Sheldon, Paula Dunning,  
 Brian Ashbridge, Denis Carey,  
 Lynne Dorval, Helen France,  
 Robert Dorning, Eddie Gaillard,  
 Paul Hammond, Tommy Linden, Trisha Linova,  
 Anna Marinova, Guy Massey, John Regan,  
 Peggy Sager, Ruth Sandler  
 (*dancers in 'The Ballet of The Red Shoes'*)  
 Hilda Gaunt (*accompanist*)  
*uncredited*  
 Richard George (*doorman*)  
 Peggy Sager, Audrey Harman  
 UK 1948©  
 133 mins  
 New 35mm BFI National Archive Print

A BFI release

## IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

### Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 20 Nov 18:30

#### Exhibition: *The Red Shoes: Beyond the Mirror*

From Fri 10 Nov to Sun 7 Jan

**Preview: Typist Artist Pirate King + Q&A with director Carol Morley, cast Monica Dolan, Gina McKee and Kieran Bew, producer Cairo Cannon, composer Carly Paradis and editor Alex Mackie**

Mon 13 Nov 17:55

**Journey to Italy** Viaggio in Italia + extended introduction by Jeremy Cooper and Ben Rivers

Mon 13 Nov 20:40

### Joanna Hogg in Conversation

Wed 15 Nov 18:30

**Preview: Rustin + Q&A with director George C. Wolfe. Hosted by David Olusoga**

Tue 21 Nov 18:15

**Talk: The Creative Worlds of Powell + Pressburger**

Sat 25 Nov 12:00-17:00

**TV Preview: Vigil + Q&A with cast Suranne Jones, Romola Garai, Dougray Scott and writer Tom Edge**

Mon 27 Nov 18:15

One of Lermontov and Vicky's early exchanges sets up both the film's morbid obsession and its central question: what is life without art? Lermontov asks Vicky: 'Why do you want to dance?' Her ingenuous reply is: 'Why do you want to live?'

In truth, there was probably more than a little of the Lermontov about director Michael Powell. His film made a star out of Shearer, as much as Lermontov's ballet launches Vicky to fame. Shearer retired from ballet in 1953, but continued to act, becoming such a popular household name that her wedding to Ludovic Kennedy in 1950 was thronged by well-wishers – and she danced twice more for Powell, in 1951's *The Tales of Hoffman* and in 1960's *Peeping Tom*.

## 4. It's about the agony of artistic expression

Lermontov chides Vicky: 'Don't forget, a great impression of simplicity can only be achieved by great agony of body and spirit.' Few films reveal, either as cruelly or as eloquently as this one, the sacrifices that artists make. We see more bruising rehearsals than standing ovations, and yet, the Ballet Lermontov dances on.

Page's final, anguished choice between love and art only makes tangible the decision that Lermontov clearly made long ago. Walbrook, who plays him so brilliantly, was gay, as was Diaghilev. Lermontov knows nothing of Page's 'charms' and cares less, he says; his 'family' is his company, and he asserts that: 'The dancer who relies on the comforts of human love will never be a great dancer. Never!'

As certain critics have noted, there is a striking gay subtext to *The Red Shoes*, but it is a tragic one – Lermontov is a lonely figure whose obsessive nature demonstrates the danger of living for art rather than love.

## 5. From Scorsese to *La La Land*, its influence lives on

*The Red Shoes* is one of the most widely influential movies of all time. Regularly hailed as a favourite in critics' polls and by directors including Martin Scorsese ('It's one of the true miracles of film history'), Francis Ford Coppola, Steven Spielberg and Brian De Palma, it has also been reworked by artists outside the cinema. Kate Bush's 1993 album *The Red Shoes* was inspired by the film, for example. Coming full circle, Matthew Bourne choreographed the film as a ballet at Sadler's Wells in 2017.

The film also has an afterlife in the classic Hollywood musical. Gene Kelly screened the film multiple times for the producers of *An American in Paris* (1951), as he persuaded them to let him include a ballet sequence in the film. He did, and in the following year's *Singin' in the Rain* too. The popularity of the ballet sequence as a genre trope was underlined when Damien Chazelle included one in his pastiche *La La Land* (2016).

There are several, pointed, references to the film in a very different musical, the 1985 Broadway adaptation *A Chorus Line*. That's not a direct cinematic influence but rather a testament to the film's impact on generations of girls. The book for that musical was based on interviews with New York dancers, several of whom confided that *The Red Shoes* inspired their choice of career.

In a 1970 interview with *The New York Times*, Shearer expressed a little self-deprecating regret on this score: 'I'm a bit embarrassed whenever I hear how many girls were influenced by it. The dancing in it wasn't terribly good.'

Pamela Hutchinson, bfi.org.uk, 6 September 2018