FORCE OF DESTINY
A Spacial Love Story

A film by Paul Cox
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Synopsis

Established artist Robert is told he has liver cancer and limited time to live. This unexpected message leaves him feeling confused, scared and utterly alone. In the process of physical decline and mental turmoil, he meets Maya, a marine biologist who comes from a different world, a different reality.

Most of Maya’s education happened in the West, but she never lost touch with her deeply rooted Indian soul. Intuitively she always connected more with the metaphysical and the organic relationship between all forms and living things. With humour and grace she introduces Robert to her world of ‘organic’ awareness, of all that is transient.

She’s extremely close to her uncle and aunt who brought her up. Even though they live in India they are constantly present and represent tradition, solidity, the past.

Robert has a close relationship with his twenty-one year old daughter Poppy, and a not so close relationship with his ex-wife Hannah. They offer support and help that is sometimes welcomed, sometimes not.

Past tensions resurface as Maya becomes more and more involved with Robert, more in tune with his art, and his fight for survival.

Robert falls deeply in love with Maya. His life blossoms but his sense of loss intensifies. He has to confront the agony/ecstasy of finding a love that has evaded him his entire life just as his body is about to be taken away from him.

Against all the odds, Robert is put on the liver transplant list. New life and hope appear, which deepens his almost planetary journey with Maya.

When Robert receives a new liver from his deceased donor, Maya’s uncle dies. A rich life of giving and creating passes on symbolically and cosmically. All that Uncle received from life is not wasted through death.

Force of Destiny is a story of survival. A journey of love and hope, of courage and sacrifice, and Robert’s miraculous salvation through a life-saving liver transplant.
Director’s Statement

The ‘inner voice’ of Force of Destiny and the chronological order, are from my recent book Tales From the Cancer Ward. The actual story was inspired by an experience I had in India years ago. Moods and scenes overlap as distinctions between reality and fantasy blur. A human drama plays out against the backdrop of organ transplantation, a highly charged phenomenon and one of the most extraordinary advancements in modern medicine.

Vaslav Nijinsky, the great Russian dancer, wrote in his diary, “You will understand me when you see me dance”. Nobody living has ever seen Nijinsky dance ... and yet the poignancy of this message has lingered and grown stronger as the years have passed. Similarly it is impossible for me to fully describe the imagery that played in my mind for some time after my transplant. Thankfully the digital age has made it possible to show how the mind ‘dances’, not with words but with images, to capture and share personal visions and planetary encounters, or at least make an attempt at doing so. Maybe one could call Force of Destiny a ‘spacial love story’. Recently I saw images of the universe taken by the Hubble Space Telescope. They were breathtaking. We can now create our very own universe within the confines of our personal environment as Maya’s uncle does in the film.

In the Zulu language, the word for liver means courage. Historically, the liver features in mythology, among several archetypes of Gods and Goddesses, and the occult. Seen as the source of passion, it is synonymous with the darkest, deepest, most mysterious realm inside the human anatomy. Force of Destiny has the potential to match any drama in terms of truth, anguish, humour and high emotion. Above all it is a love story and is my first feature film in this new phase of my life.
Team

Writer/Director/Producer  z  Paul Cox
Producer  z  Mark Patterson & Maggie Miles
Associate Producer  z  Tony Llewellyn-Jones
Executive Producer  z  Shaun Miller
1st AD  z  Kyra Cox
Director of Photography  z  Ian Jones
Sound Recordist & Sound Designer  z  James Currie
Gaffer  z  Chris Haywood
Design Supervisor  z  Asher Bilu
Sculpture  z  Trefor Prest
Supervising Editor  z  John Scott
Editor  z  Aden Young
Composer  z  Paul Grabowsky

Cast

Robert  z  David Wenham
Maya  z  TBC
Hannah  z  Jacqueline Mckenzie
Poppy  z  TBC
Derek  z  Terry Norris
Louise  z  Julia Blake
Aunt  z  Seema Biswas

With Chris Haywood, Derryn Hinch, Wendy Hughes, Hugo Weaving and Jack Thompson.
“Not a day goes by now that I don’t think about Paul Cox’s film, Force of Destiny. Completely emotionally involving, intellectually stimulating and creatively surprising and uplifting - the script is a very strong blueprint for a beautiful film about love, the possibility of death and an area never really explored on film: organ donation. Indeed it is a film about life itself. With Cox’s compassion, intellect and humour this is one of the finest scripts I have read. Paul has fired up my imagination and I can’t wait to begin working with this master filmmaker on Force of Destiny.”
Pledge of Support

Our Liver Transplant Unit Social Worker Catherine Bradley and other staff assisted with Paul Cox’s 2011 documentary - The Dinner Party - produced by Maggie Miles and supported by DonateLife. This documentary was made as a gift to the organ donation community and we hope that it will provide comfort and insight for recipients, patients on waiting lists, hospital staff, donor families and others touched by the impact of organ donation.

The Austin has welcomed Paul Cox’s strong connection with us since his liver transplant. He is a great support to others and a champion for organ donation. Having enjoyed Paul’s films over the years I am delighted that he will make his next film - Force of Destiny - on this powerful subject. We will provide any technical and logistical support that our schedules and capacity will allow. We are as keen as Paul to see the machinations of hospital procedures and patient care realised as accurately as possible.

Robert Jones AM
Director
Liver Transplant Unit

21 February 2012
Trefor Prest Sculpture

Trefor Prest’s sculpture will feature in Force of Destiny.

‘Requiem’

Trefor rarely accepts commissions, preferring instead to follow his own enquiries, producing mainly small personal pieces.

Trefor has exhibited widely since 1972 in Australia and overseas including at the National Gallery of Victoria; ‘Volume and Form’ Singapore and the 8th International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition, University of Hawaii.
Background

The Dinner Party

‘How can one get used to miracles.’

The Dinner Party may well be Mr Cox’s most personal film in a career where he has explored the human condition with warmth and insight.

The film begins with a group of people (or as Cox calls them, ghosts) sharing a meal. “The Ghosts” have one thing in common, they have all received organ transplants. The audience becomes part of this understated gathering, observing and listening to profoundly personal stories from people who have shared a unique experience.

During the course of the meal the guests find trust and understanding. This is not acting. The Dinner Party participants provide an open heart experience.

While the intended message of the film is that by giving part of our bodies, donating our organs, we can prolong life for others, The Dinner Party also delicately expresses the joy of being alive, of the second chance and how that experience can make us more human, kinder and gentler to others.

Watching The Dinner Party makes our most important organ, the heart bigger, it transplants love. At the Byron Bay Film Festival there were no tears on screen but plenty in the audience. Many lingered after the screening seemingly unable to leave the intimacy that we felt for this group of strangers, moved by their wisdom and grace.

This is a very noble, inspiring and tender film. Only Paul Cox could have made it. A word of caution, by the end of the titles you may find yourself to be a better person.

Greg Aitken
Executive Producer, Byron Bay International Film Festival
Tales From the Cancer Ward

Published by Transit Lounge 2011

“Beats any fictional story in terms of drama, anguish and high emotion.”

Corrie Perkin, The Weekly Review
Critique, Awards & Biographies

DAVID STRATTON - On Borrowed Time

“Paul’s best films have been those that are the most personal to him.”

ROGER EBERT - Chicago Sun Times

“Paul Cox is a director who never loses sight of the humor even in the most fraught situation. He is a great film director, a great artist, and above all, a great soul.”

RITA KEMPLEY - Washington Post

“Cox doesn’t make movies, just little miracles.”

ALEXANDER GARCIA DUTTMAN - Senses of Cinema

“Cox teaches me that the intensity of a feeling is physical as much as spiritual.”

LYNDEN BARBER - Screen Australia Portrait

“Cox’s films have consistently explored the inner landscape of human feeling, prizing emotion over intellect. His protagonists frequently reflect his own life journey as a sensitive man who has trouble existing in a world out of joint.”
Awards for Paul Cox Feature Films

1981    AFI Award - Best Film: Lonely Hearts
1983    AFI Award - Best Actor in a Leading Role - Norman Kaye: Man of Flowers
1984    Valladolid Int. Film Festival - Golden Spike: Man of Flowers
1984    AFI Award - Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Actor in a Leading Role - John Hargreaves: My First Wife
1986    Grand Prix, Ghent International Film Festival: My First Wife
1986    Flanders International Film Festival - Golden Spur: My First Wife
1991    Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Feature Film Award: A Woman’s Tale
1991    AFI Award - Best Actress – Sheila Florance: A Woman’s Tale
1992    Flanders International Film Festival - Golden Spur: A Woman’s Tale
1993    Brisbane International Film Festival - Chauvel Award: for distinguished contribution to Australian Cinema: Paul Cox
1994    AFI Award - Best Cinematography - Nino Martinetti: Exile
1994    44th Berlin International Film Festival - Golden Bear (nominated): Exile
2000    Joseph Plateau Music Award - Wim Mertens: Molokai
2000    Taomina Int. Film Festival - FIPRESCI Critics Award: Innocence
2000    Montréal World Film Festival - Grand Prix des Amériques: Innocence
2000    Toronto Film Festival - People’s Choice Award (tied): Innocence
2000    Saint-Tropez International Film Festival - Best Film: Innocence
2000    Vissengen Film Festival, Holland - Best Film: Innocence
2000    CineVegas Film Festival, Holland - Best Film: Innocence
2000    IF Awards - Best Feature Film: Innocence
2000    IF Awards - Best Sound Design: Innocence
2000    IF Awards - Best Actress: Innocence
2000    IF Awards - Best Editing: Innocence
2003    Montréal Int. Festival of Films on Art - Jury Prize: Nijinsky
2004    Montréal World Film Festival - Grand Prix des Amériques: Human Touch
2007    Special Jury Mention Louis Vuitton Hawaii International Film Festival: Kaluapapa Heaven
Team Biographies

Paul Cox - Producer/Writer/Director

Born in Holland and settled in Australia, Paul Cox is an auteur of international acclaim and is one of Australia’s most prolific filmmakers with 46 features, shorts and documentaries to his name. Paul has been the recipient of numerous special tributes and retrospectives at film festivals across the world including a major retrospective at the Lincoln Centre in New York.

Mark Patterson - Producer

Mark produces both feature films and documentaries. Most recently he produced Race to London (2012) a six part documentary series for ABC 1. His international experience saw him produce the feature film The Dragon Pearl (2010), the first official Australian/Chinese co-production. Mark’s first feature credit was the box office and festival hit Innocence (2000) with Paul Cox. Again with Cox, Mark produced Human Touch (2004), was executive producer of the documentary The Remarkable Mr Kaye (2006) and produced the feature documentary Kalaupapa Heaven (2007). Mark has filled senior positions with the South Australian Film Corporation and Film South.

Maggie Miles - Producer

Maggie’s first feature Van Diemen’s Land directed by Jonathan auf der Heide, distributed by Madman Entertainment, earnt a special mention at the ‘Sitges’ Film Festival 2009 and screened at numerous international festivals including the Montreal World Film Festival. Previously senior producer with Burrundi Pictures Maggie has developed a diverse range of creative projects including the highly successful The Audition Event and Yirrkala Workshop Program, facilitating community input into the script development of the feature Yolngu Boy. Maggie also cast Yolngu Boy and was intimately involved in the production. Maggie is currently working with Robert Connolly of Arenamedia co-producing features The Turning and Paper Planes.
Shaun Miller - Executive Producer

Shaun Miller Lawyers specialises in film and entertainment law. Previously, Shaun was a partner in the Media Department at Marshalls & Dent Lawyers. Earlier in his career, Shaun worked in film production, distribution and exhibition with Sharmill Films and Cinema Nova. Shaun has worked on a vast number of feature films, television series, animations, short films and new media projects. Legals credits include Ned Kelly, Gettin’ Square, The Rage In Placid Lake, Van Diemen’s Land and Mary And Max. Shaun has also EP’d on numerous feature films including Surviving Georgia and Hail, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival 2011.

Ian Jones ACS - Director of Photography

Ian has worked with the likes of Ken Takakura, Meryl Streep, William Dafoe, Harrison Ford, David Gulpilil and Michelle Pfeiffer as well directors Oliver Stone, Dr George Miller, Rolf de Heer, Rob Cohen, Martin Campbell and Paul Cox. Ian has won numerous cinematography awards at the Australian Film Institute Awards, Inside Film Awards, Film Critics Circle Awards and Australian Cinematography Society Awards. Ian’s experience and film industry knowledge has been drawn from Features, TVC’s, Pilots, Series TV and Shorts.

James Currie - Sound Recordist & Sound Designer

James has worked for 32 years as a location recordist, sound editor, mixer and sound designer. Films with Rolf de Heer include Alexandra’s Project, The Tracker, The Old Man Who Read Love Stories and Dingo for which he won the 1991 Australian Film Institute Award for Best Sound Track. James has sound designed 26 productions, and worked extensively with film maker Paul Cox, including Human Touch, Lust And Revenge, Molokai and Innocence, for which he won the 2000 IF Award for Best Sound Track. James won an AFI Award for Best Sound Track for The Light Horsemen, and the Golden Clapper Award for Artistic and Technical Excellence at the Venice Film Festival for Bad Boy Bubby for which he was instrumental in developing the binaural sound system used on the film.
Cast Biographies

David Wenham - Robert

One of Australia’s most respected actors, David Wenham has received critical acclaim for his diverse performances in film, theatre and television. Film credits include Baz Luhrmann’s Moulin Rouge! And Australia, Better Than Sex, The Bank, The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers and The Return of the King, Getting, Square, Van Helsing, The Proposition, 300 and Oranges and Sunshine.

For Television he received acclaim for his roles in Seachange and his portrayal of Andrew Fraser in Killing time. He will next be seen in Jane Campion’s Top of the Lake. David received a AFI Award in 2007 for his role in Answered by Fire, a Screen Actors Guild Award for The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King, and a IF Award, FCCA Award and AFI Award for Getting’ Square, he has received AFI Nominations for Oranges and Sunshine, The Bush Off, Molokai: The Story of Father Damien, The Bank, Better than Sex, The Boy’s, Seachange and Simon De Beauvoir’s Babies. He has received a Silver Logie for his role in Seachange and nominations for After the Deluge, Answered by Fire and Killing Time.

Jacqueline McKenzie - Hannah

Renown Australian actress Jacqueline McKenzie has an extensive film career, highlights include Romper Stomper, Talk, Roses are Red, A Cut in the Gates, peaches and Kiss Kiss (Bang Bang), Beneath Hill 60, Deep Blue Sea, The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood Preservation and Paul Cox’s Human Touch. Jacqueline has also appeared in numerous TV movies and series both in Australia and the US. Throughout her career she has received numerous nominations and awards, including two AFI Awards, a Logie and a FCCA Award for her roles in Angel Baby and Halifax fp: Lies of the Mind.
Paul Cox Filmography & Bibliography

Feature Films
1972  The Journey
1976  Illuminations
1977  Inside Looking Out
1978  Kostas
1981  Lonely Hearts
1983  Man Of Flowers
1984  My First Wife
1986  Cactus
1987  Vincent - The Life and Death of Vincent Van Gogh
1989  Island
1990  Golden Braid
1991  A Woman’s Tale
1992  The Nun And The Bandit
1994  Exile
1996  Lust And Revenge
1997  The Hidden Dimension (IMAX - 3D)
1998  Molokai - The Story of Father Damien
2000  Innocence
2001  Nijinsky
2004  Human Touch
2007  Kaluapapa Heaven
2008  Salvation

Documentary Films
1970  Calcutta
1974  All Set Backstage
1979  For A Child Called Michael
1980  The Kingdom Of Nek Chand
1980  Underdog

1984  Death And Destiny
1985  Handle With Care
2006  The Remarkable Mr Kaye
2011  Shinkichi Tajiri - Samurai In Space
2011  The Dinner Party

Children’s Telemovies
1985  Paper Boy
1986  The Secret Life Of Trees
1988  The Gift

Short Films
Matuta, Time Past, Skindeep, Marcel, Symphony, Mirka, Phyllis, Island, We Are All Alone My Dear, Ways Of Seeing, Ritual

Books
1970  Home Of Man, with Ulli Beier
1970  Human Still Lives From Nepal
1975  Mirka, with Ulli Beier
1997  I Am, with Wim Cox
1998  Reflections: An Autobiographical Journey
1998  Three Screenplays
1999  My One True Love (short story)
2011  Tales From the Cancer Ward