

TRUE CALLING

Director's Statement

“In recent years, my interest in the contemporary relevance of old and ancient stories has increased and taken on a core role in the creation of my films. The more I delve into, and understand, old stories, the more I realise that Muriel Rukeyser’s statement that “the universe is made of stories, not atoms” and Ben Okri’s equally prophetic observation that “stories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories individual and nations live by and tell themselves and you change the individual and nations” highlight the centrality of prototypical storytelling in shaping our world. The key stories that define that world are old and can be traced back to our earliest cultures and civilisations, but they are continually retold in contemporary narrative forms. I don’t invent stories; stories come through me to become manifest in my contemporary context, and this discovery has been a profound revelation to how I conceive and make films. By thinking in this way, I feel I am able to connect with themes, aspirations, dilemmas and conflicts that transcend time and culture. True Calling is the second of my films, following in the footsteps of Cleft Lip, where I take explicit inspiration from old stories and bring them to life in a contemporary narrative that speaks of transcendent themes which are as real and relevant now as they were thousands of years ago. True Calling is inspired by the stories of St Augustine and John the Baptist in that the themes in the film revolve around the idea of re-birth, or awakening, and being confronted by a calling. The eminent psychiatrist Carl G. Jung talked about this sort of thing when describing one of his archetypes: rebirth. True Calling touches on these themes in the contemporary secular and materialistic context; a context in which I feel there is a spiritual poverty that is felt by many, yet about which few English speaking films are made. As a writer and director, I therefore felt a calling to make a film that would, hopefully, go some way to engaging audiences in spiritual and religious themes in a way that is relevant to their contemporary lives. And that is how True Calling came to be.

“The film was shot in extraordinary times. The COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020-2021 impacted on our original plans of shooting the film in late May 2020. We had cast the film and the production team was in place. But we had to postpone, since concerns for the health and wellbeing of our team and UK pandemic lockdown rules prevented us from shooting. In many ways this was a blessing for the film, in that it allowed us to spend a bit more time on preparations - in particular location preparations. We were able to strengthen the quality of our locations - which were all exclusively exterior locations - and when lockdown regulations eased temporarily during the summer of 2020, we were fortunate to have a very enthusiastic and committed cast and crew that were keen and ready to get working. The film was shot in August 2020 and soon after that the UK went into further pandemic lockdowns. Post production was able to take place during the subsequent lockdown.”

Erik Knudsen, April 2021.