



## ZORADA TEMMINGH

### ORGAN The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse

📅 Sunday 14 July 🕒 8.45pm – 10.15pm 📍 St John's Church

**Zorada Temmingh**, renowned organ improviser, has performed in South Africa, the UK, the USA, Switzerland, Belgium, Israel and Namibia. She was the first South African to do soundtrack improvisations for silent movies: *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* is her third performance at Buxton International Festival after *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

The programme notes have been kindly supplied by Zorada Temmingh.

Over the past 100 years, references to the Four Horsemen (of the Apocalypse) frequently appeared in popular culture. The English translation of Spanish author Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's seminal 1916 novel *Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis* became the best-selling novel in the US in 1919. Director Rex Ingram's stirring anti-war film, based on the book, was the first major film to be made about World War I and became the biggest box-office hit of 1921. The film also catapulted actor Rudolph Valentino to stardom – he became known as Hollywood's original 'Latin Lover'.

The title refers to the four horsemen of the Book of Revelation in the Bible (chapter 6:1-8). In the film, they become a powerful symbol of the devastation that war brings to humanity.

The story begins in Argentina just before World War I. The wealthy patriarch, Madariaga (Pomeroy Cannon), rules his family and employees with equal zeal. His two daughters marry foreigners: Luisa (Bridgette Clark) marries the Frenchman Desnoyers (Josef Swickard) and Elena (Mabel van Buren) the German Von Hartrott (Alan Hale). After the death of the patriarch, the two daughters and their families return to their respective husbands' native countries.

The German grandsons quickly climb the ladder of success in the army, while life in Paris becomes more complex for the French family; the father becomes increasingly materialistic, and the much-indulged son, Julio (Rudolph Valentino), becomes an accomplished womaniser and tango instructor, and a less accomplished part-time painter. Julio starts an affair with Marguerite Laurier (Alice Terry, the real-life wife of director Ingram), the frustrated young wife of Desnoyers's friend (John St. Polis). As the family intrigues reach a climax, war breaks out, putting the two families into opposing camps.

While the men are called to war and patriotism is on the rise, Julio meets 'The Stranger' (Nigel de Brulier), a Russian exile who 'sees' the Four Horsemen of the Book of Revelation and explains their symbolism to Julio through an artwork by Albrecht Dürer. The Stranger declares, 'It is the age of fulfilment. The Angel of Prophecy is revealed. The voice of the Beast shall be heard, commanding the Four ill-omened Horsemen as they ride forth – to scatter desolation throughout the world!' The first Horseman (on a white horse, carrying a bow and crown) is called 'Conquest'. The second Horseman (on a red horse, holding a sword) is 'War'. The third (on a black horse), trailing in their wake, is 'Pestilence', and carries the Scales of Famine. The fourth Horseman, 'Death', is depicted with a scythe in his hand. 'The agony of humanity under the brutal sweep of the Four Horsemen has already begun!', says The Stranger.

Little by little the characters lose everything dear to them – for Desnoyers, his earthly treasures; for Von Hartrott, his sons. Marguerite, torn between her love for Julio and her responsibility to her husband and country, joins the medical corps as a nurse. Julio, at first indifferent to the drama around him, is gradually drawn into the conflict and joins the French army, not out of conviction but out of shame for his ineffectual life amid tragedy. His character eventually grows into maturity.

The film reaches its climax when the French and German cousins face each other on the battlefield.

The soundtrack is both narrator and character. I attempt to imbue every visual nuance with meaning through the music, thereby weaving a narrative thread that runs throughout the film. As in *Hunchback*, I create a recognisable theme for each main character, which is announced when the character first appears on screen, and develops as the character faces different situations. Apart from some sensual tangos, there are also original themes for Love, Loss, War, Paris, and of course, the ominous Horsemen. Fragments of well-known Great War songs might also be recognised. These elements are all used to convey the emotional journey of the characters.