

Soulful Boychoir soars triumphantly

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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The glory of music changes lives in the inspirational Boychoir, a heart-warming coming-of-age story from celebrated director François Girard, who gave us Oscar-winning *The Red Violin*.

In Boychoir, the most elite private boy-choir schools in the country, the National Boychoir Academy, becomes a battlefield, where a rebellious outcast with an angelic singing voice battles other boys as they take their boy choir to competitive heights.

Newcomer Garrett Wareing delivers a heartfelt performance as Stet, a teenager who is at odds with the world, with great support from Joe West as the star singer who is Stet's fiercest rival.

Boychoir is not a film about music, but a wonderful story of a troubled teenager who does not receive love and understanding from his estranged father (Josh Lucas), and needs to win the heart of a jaded headmaster (Dustin Hoffman).



Coming-of-age journey

It is always wonderful to see Hoffman in performance and Boychoir proves that he is indeed one of the best actors of his generation. The scenes between Hoffman and Wareing are truly wonderful. It is also great to follow the coming-of-age journey of Hoffman's character, showing how we all have to grow up someday, no matter how old we are.

It's a compelling film with rich-and-colourful characters who confront their own insecurities. Its journey into a rarely seen

world, its probing of musical passion and its story of lost dreams reconciled quickly drew a cast of major screen presences in the adult roles, including Eddy Izzard as the headmaster's rival, and Kathy Bates as the school's down-to-Earth headmistress.

It follows in the tradition of films like *The History Boys* and *Dead Poets Society*, where young men come of age and find their place in the world, and films like *As It Is In Heaven*, *The Music Never Stopped* and *Rudderless*, where music transforms lives.



A feel-good film

If you are looking for a feel-good film to share with friends and loved ones, *Boychoir* will not disappoint, it's an honest independent film that allows us to see the world differently and re-evaluate our relationships with those who love and befriend us in life's journey.

The soaring, open-hearted treble pitch of pre-teen singing voices is here for a flash and then it is gone - a reminder of the fleeting beauty of childhood and the profound power of time.

For centuries, the stunningly pure tones attained by boy choirs have been an artistic and spiritual inspiration, but even now in the 21st century, amidst a cacophonous landscape of electronic sounds, the raw clarity of the human voice hits a chord within like no other.

It was that chord that seemed to universally draw a group of fervent performers - young and old, new and legendary - to the production of *Boychoir*.

It all began with a script by Ben Ripley, who, though perhaps best known for the sci-fi thriller *Source Code*, is also a classical pianist with a deep musical background.

Genius comes with an expiry date

When he first learned about boy choir schools where kids make the most of golden voices in the fast-moving years before puberty hits, Ripley couldn't help but be intrigued by this rarely seen world where genius comes with an expiry date. He was also drawn to the collision of today's savvy, irreverent kids with such an ancient, otherworldly art form. And, most of all, he saw a chance to hinge a redemption story around rich themes of childhood, teaching, dreams, impermanence and the ever-changing rhythms of life.

Thus was born the fictional story of Stet, a most improbable entrant to boy choir school -- and the choirmaster who, in spite of his steely, perfectionist nature, is moved to give him a chance.

Musical talent abounded across the production, which features an original end-title song performed by Josh Groban - the

classical vocalist who became one of the world's biggest pop stars -- written by Groban and the film's composer, Golden Globe nominee Brian Byrne.

But behind it all was the choral music. Every great composer has left his mark on this genre, often perceived to reach the heights of musical beauty. And though the sound is sometimes associated with the Middle Ages or modern churches, choral voices have recently seen a great resurgence, even becoming the subject of reality television shows.

Stripped-bare human voice

For Girard, the stripped-bare human voice will always be something extraordinary. "I think people love even instrumentalists like Yo-Yo Ma and Joshua Bell because they hear the human voice in their playing," he says. "When I've directed operas, some of the most joyful rehearsals are when the chorus shows up and they launch themselves into vocal harmonies that move me to tears. There is such an emotional power there."

The sound of a boy choir takes that concept to its highest level. "While choosing the music, I did a lot of research and listening - and I constantly found a purity that touches your heart in a special way. I had to keep my listening sessions short because I would get so emotional, so nostalgic. When you have the innocence of young children mixed with the soul-touching vision of great composers, there's no other experience like it," Girard concludes. "So this was the driving force for Boychoir - those pure voices that pry your heart wide open."

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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