

PRESS BOOK

THE VINTNER'S LUCK

JÉRÉMIE RENIER
GASPARD ULLIEL
VERA FARMIGA
KEISHA CASTLE-HUGHES

a film by
NIKI CARO

A NEW ZEALAND – FRANCE CO-PRODUCTION



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CONTENTS

Fact Sheet

Introduction

Short Synopsis

Full Synopsis

The Cast:

- Jérémie Renier
- Gaspard Ulliel
- Keisha Castle-Hughes
- Vera Farmiga

The Filmmakers:

- Niki Caro – Director, Producer, Writer
- Denis Lenoir – Director of Photography
- Grant Major– Production Designer
- Beatrix Aruna Pasztor – Costume Designer
- Denise Kum – Make-up Designer
- David Coulson – Editor
- Antonio Pinto - Composer

The Writers:

- Joan Scheckel
- Elizabeth Knox

The Producers:

- Robin Laing
- Pascal Judelewicz
- Ludi Boeken
- Laurie Parker

Behind the Scenes:

- Wings
- Wine
- Working with Niki Caro
- Costumes
- Locations

Cast List

Key Crew List

FACT SHEET

Format	35mm
Duration	126 mins
Ratio	2.35:1
The Cast	J�r�mie Renier Gaspard Ulliel Vera Farmiga Keisha Castle-Hughes
Director	Niki Caro
Screenplay	Niki Caro and Joan Scheckel
Producers	Robin Laing Pascal Judelewicz Ludi Boeken Laurie Parker Niki Caro
Production Companies	Ascension Film / Kortex Acajou Films
Based on the novel by	Elizabeth Knox
Executive Producers	Chica Benadava Jeremy Burdek Masahura Inaba Nadia Khamlichi Adrian Politowski
Co-Producers	Jean-Francois Klein Cla�s Wachtmeister
Director of Photography	Denis Lenoir AFC ASC
Editor	David Coulson
Music	Antonio Pinto
Production Design	Grant Major
Costume Design	Beatrix Aruna Pasztor

The film is a New Zealand-France co-production, backed by the NZ Film Production Fund, New Zealand Film Commission, Motion Investment Group, CPB₃, OLC/Rights Entertainment (Japan), Ascension Film, Acajou Films, Kortex, NZ on Air, TV3, and Birka Holding AB.

INTRODUCTION

The Vintner's Luck is the latest feature from acclaimed New Zealand based filmmaker Niki Caro, director of the Academy nominated films *Whale Rider* and *North Country*.

Adapted from Elizabeth Knox's award winning novel by Caro and Joan Scheckel, this unconventional love story is set in 19th century France.

The Vintner's Luck is a story of love, wine and angels; recounting the life of Sobran Jodeau, a peasant winemaker and his life-long ambition to produce a great wine - a wine that has never before been tasted. Set in Burgundy in the years spanning 1810 - 1837 the film was shot on locations in France and New Zealand.

Caro has brought together an outstanding young international cast for the film. Belgian actor Jérémie Renier plays Sobran Jodeau, with New Zealander Keisha Castle-Hughes as his beautiful but troubled wife, Celeste. French Actor Gaspard Ulliel is Xas, an angel who seems more human than divine. American actress Vera Farmiga is baroness Aurora de Valday, an aristocrat who encourages Sobran in his winemaking ambitions, and becomes romantically involved with the peasant vintner.

The Vintner's Luck reunites Caro with Keisha Castle-Hughes, the young star of *Whale Rider*, who received international acclaim, and an Academy nomination, for this role.

Behind the scenes creative talent includes Academy award winning production designer Grant Major, (the Lord of the Rings trilogy) director of photography Denis Lenoir (*Angel*, *Carrington*), costume designer Beatrix Pasztor (*Vanity Fair*, *The Fisher King*), and editor David Coulson (*Whale Rider*, *North Country*).

Mechanical special effects are designed by Harry Harrison, and the choreography is by Guiliano Peparini and the aerial choreographic team for Cirque du Soleil.

The Vintner's Luck is produced by Robin Laing, Laurie Parker, Niki Caro for Ascension Film and Pascal Judelewicz and Ludi Boeken for Acajou Films.

A New Zealand-France co-production, *The Vintner's Luck* is backed by the New Zealand Film Production Fund, the New Zealand Film Commission, Motion Investment Group (Belgium), OLC/Rights Entertainment (Japan) and New Zealand on Air in association with Ascension Film, Acajou Films, Kortex, Birka Film Production and Les Films 2 Cinema.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The compelling tale of Sobran Jodeau, an ambitious young peasant winemaker and the three loves of his life – his beautiful and passionate wife Celeste, the proudly intellectual baroness Aurora de Valday and Xas, a fallen angel who strikes up an unlikely but enduring friendship. Under his guidance Sobran is forced to fathom the nature of love and belief and in the process grapples with the sensual, the sacred and the profane – in pursuit of the perfect vintage.

FULL SYNOPSIS

On a midsummer's night in 1808 the life of an ambitious young vintner changes forever when he encounters an angel, Xas, a compelling creature who appears to be more human than divine. Sobran confides to Xas his love for the beautiful Celeste, whom he has been forbidden to marry because there is madness in her family. The angel counsels him in life and love, promising to return a year later to celebrate a marriage.

Believing the angel to be his mentor and protector Sobran marries Celeste and makes her pregnant. He keeps his appointment with Xas, who begins to educate his new friend in the matter of winemaking and gives him some vines from his own garden, in return for a pledge to meet every year on the same night.

Desperate to finance his own vineyard Sobran breaks the agreement by joining the army and marching with Napoleon to Moscow where he almost loses his life. Returning to his father's death, his wife's despair and a vineyard in disrepair he confronts the angel. Why didn't Xas protect him? Why did he allow Celeste to suffer?

Xas reveals he is powerless to prevent suffering and reiterates their pact. Both pleasure and pain are required to make a great wine. It may take a lifetime but he promises to stand by him. Sobran agrees not to miss another meeting.

He prospers under the Angel's guidance, makes his first vintage, fathers more children, and earns the respect of his employer, the Comte de Vully.

The tragic death of their second child causes Celeste to lose her grasp on reality and once again Sobran's faith in his angel is tested. He demands Xas bring evidence of his daughter in Heaven. A year later Sobran is overjoyed by Xas's implication that he has seen Nicolette in Heaven.

His desire to become the chateau's chief winemaker is realised on the death of the Comte. Sobran feels invincible. And all his luck is reflected in the wines man and angel make together. But his friendship with the Comte's niece and heir, Baroness Aurora de Valday turns Celeste's grief to an obsessive jealousy.

When Xas is forced to reveal that he did not see Nicolette in Heaven and confesses to Sobran that he is, in fact, a fallen angel, the vintner is driven to the edge of sanity. Believing he is betrayed, Sobran's enthusiasm is gone and his wines become bitter. He hides from Xas on the eve of their next annual meeting amongst the vines. Convinced her husband has been bewitched by Aurora, Celeste vows to avenge his hurt.

Aurora becomes ill; she has cancer and undergoes a brutal operation. As she recovers, Sobran shares the secret of the angel with her.

When Sobran next meets Xas the encounter is explosive; an exquisite struggle expressing mutual interdependence and desire is interrupted by Celeste who finds her husband in the arms of a creature she believes to be an incarnation of Aurora. An act of passionate violence by Celeste forces Sobran to react in an instant and he brutally rejects Xas.

Celeste's madness deepens and she retires from daily life. Bereft of spirit Sobran loses his taste, the vines become disease-ridden and must be destroyed. But at the point where he has lost everything a miracle occurs. One of Xas's vines has survived. Together Aurora and Sobran replant the land. Their long suppressed feelings for each other are finally acknowledged and they become lovers. Aurora understands Sobran is incomplete without Xas and encourages him to call the angel back into his life.

But there is price to pay. As Xas becomes human, Sobran prepares to die. Together they make the final wine of Sobran Jodeau's life. A wine that is a culmination of all of life's experiences – joy, loss, sorrow, ambition, success, fear and humility – a wine that reflects the character of the vintner. A wine that has never before been tasted.

THE CAST

JÉRÉMIE RENIER

SOBRAN JODEAU

"This is my first role in English. It's good for an actor to have something difficult in a role, it makes you more creative."

In 1995, aged fourteen, Jérémie Renier gave a memorable performance in *La Promesse*, for the Belgian filmmaking brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. The film won fifteen international awards including the Los Angeles Film Critics and National Association of Film Critics Awards.

Ten years later his leading role in *L'Enfant*, for the Dardenne brothers, earned him a nomination as Best European Actor at the European Film Awards, while the film won the Palm D'or at Cannes Film Festival. In 2008, Renier again starred for the Dardennes in *The Silence of Lorna*, a film that won Best Screenplay award at Cannes, and was nominated for the Palm D'Or

Renier has starred in films for a range of European directors including Francois Ozon (*The Criminals*), Olivier Assayas (*Summer Hours*), Christophe Gans (*The Brotherhood of the Wolf*), and Jean-Marc Matout (*Violence des Echanges en Milieu Tempere*).

In 2006, Jérémie Renier was awarded the Jean Gabin Award.

Having already appeared in supporting roles in the films *Atonement* and *In Bruges*, *The Vintner's Luck* marks Renier's debut in a lead role in an English language film.

GASPARD ULLIEL

XAS

"I think everyone has their own interpretation and their own image of an angel. I'm not really into religion or spiritual or mystical ideas, I'm quite down to earth, so it was interesting for me to work on such a character."

Gaspard Ulliel was nominated Most Promising Actor at the French César Awards in 2003 for *Embrassez Qui Vous Voudrez*, co-starring with Charlotte Rampling, and again in 2004 for *Les Egares*, with Emmanuelle Beart, before winning in 2005 for his

performance in Jean-Pierre' Jeunet's *A Very Long Engagement*, where he co-starred with Audrey Tatou.

He began his film career at twelve years of age in *A Woman in White*, and spent the next few years appearing on television and in short films. His breakthrough came when director Michel Blanc cast him in *Embrassez Qui Vous Voudrez*, a role that also won him recognition with the award for Best newcomer in the Lumiere Awards.

Ulliel's English language debut was the leading role in *Hannibal Rising* (2007) for director Peter Webber. Other recent leading roles include *La Troisieme Partie du Monde*, directed by Eric Forestien, and *The Sea Wall*, directed by Rithy Panh, based on the novel by Marguerite Duras, and co-starring Isabelle Huppert.

KEISHA CASTLE-HUGHES

CELESTE

"When I first read the script for Celeste I was just completely in love with her... really scared too because it's a huge step for me as an actor to play someone who ages from 16 to 40 in the course of the film. I had to take a step at some time in my career to become an adult as an actor and to do that with someone like Niki... I feel extremely lucky."

Keisha Castle-Hughes was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress in 2003 for her leading role in Niki Caro's film *Whale Rider*, and at 13 years old, was the youngest ever Best Actress nominee. The role also won her the Chicago Film Festival Award as Most Promising Performer and the New Zealand Film Awards recognised her as Best Actress.

Keisha was chosen for the role when casting directors came to her primary school. She later admitted that when she started filming the story of a young girl who struggles to fulfil the destiny her grandfather refuses to recognise, she was unable to swim.

After the international success of *Whale Rider*, which won multiple awards at festivals worldwide, Keisha returned to school. In 2005 she was cast in a cameo role,

as Queen of Naboo, in George Lucas' third film in the blockbuster series *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*.

For director Catherine Hardwicke she took the role of young Mary in *The Nativity Story* in 2006, and the same year starred in the Australian comedy *Hey Hey, It's Ester Blueburger*, written and directed by Cathy Randall. Most recently Keisha Castle-Hughes has appeared as Young Kat in the TVNZ drama "Piece of my Heart".

VERA FARMIGA

AURORA

"Aurora is everything Celeste is not. Celeste is instinct and animal and Aurora is cerebral and emancipation. Celeste is mad, and Aurora is very much in control... all reason and rationale, with little sensual experience."

Vera Farmiga gained international recognition in 2007 for her role in Martin Scorsese's Academy Award-winning film *The Departed*, co-starring with Matt Damon, Leonardo di Caprio, Jack Nicholson and Mark Wahlberg, with whom she shared the National Board of Review Award for Best Ensemble Cast.

In 2004, her leading role in *Down to the Bone* won her the Independent Spirit Award nomination as Best Actress, and awards from the Sundance Film Festival, Bendfilm Festival, the Marrakech Film Festival and LA Film Critics Award.

Farmiga began her acting career in 1996, on stage and television, taking the lead in the television adventure series *Roar*, opposite a then unknown Heath Ledger. In 1998, she appeared on film in *Return to Paradise*, directed by Joseph Rubin. Other notable roles include *Breaking and Entering* for director Anthony Minghella, *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*, directed by Mark Herman, and Jaume Collet-Serra's *Orphan*.

THE FILM-MAKERS

NIKI CARO **DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, CO-WRITER**

*"I felt a strong instinct for natural and human elements of *The Vintner's Luck*. Adapting books is a great love of mine. This one has unique challenges and I felt that cinema could express Elizabeth Knox's angelic vision."*

"My idea was that the film should be more about being human than being divine and I wanted to concentrate on the natural world as opposed to the supernatural."

Niki Caro gained international recognition and acclaim when her film *Whale Rider*, the story of a young Maori girl fighting to fulfill a destiny her grandfather refuses to recognize, won numerous awards including a 2003 Oscar nomination for leading actress Keisha Castle -Hughes, then 13 years old. One of the year's most successful independent hits worldwide, the film won Best Children's Film Awards from BAFTA and Chicago Film Festival, US Independent Spirit Award for Best Foreign Film, Mexico City Film Festival Special Award and New Zealand Film and Television Awards for Best Film and Best Screenplay, which Caro wrote with Witi Ihimaera, based on his novel. In addition, *Whale Rider* won eight audience awards at prestigious international festivals including Sundance.

After graduating from Elam School of Fine Arts in her native New Zealand, Caro began working in television, writing and directing drama series, including *True Life Stories*, *Jackson's Wharf* and *Mercy Peak*.

In 1994 her short film, *Sure to Rise*, was selected for the Cannes Film Festival.

Her debut feature, *Memory and Desire*, won a Special Jury Prize at the 1997 New Zealand Film and Television Awards, and the Bronze Horse at the Stockholm Film Festival.

Following the international success of *Whale Rider*, Caro directed *North Country*, a drama starring Charlize Theron and Frances McDormand. The actresses were

Recent film credits include Francois Ozon's *Angel*, and *Righteous Kill*, directed by Jon Avnet and starring Robert de Niro and Al Pacino.

GRANT MAJOR

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

"As preproduction progressed we became a little looser with historical accuracy of the period, so that, in combination with the camera work and the costume design, the film has a different style and a more contemporary feel than most period dramas."

New Zealander Grant Major won the Academy Award for Best Art Direction in 2004, for his work on Peter Jackson's blockbuster *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, the final film in the trilogy. In 2002 and 2003 he received Academy Award nominations for the previous two Lord of the Rings films – *Fellowship of the Ring* and *Two Towers*. In 2006 he was nominated again, for his work on Peter Jackson's *King Kong*. For the Lord of the Rings trilogy he received a plethora of international design nominations and awards including the American Film Institute, Art Director Guild and National Board of Review Design Awards.

Major began his collaboration with director Peter Jackson on *Heavenly Creatures* (1994), working with him again in 1996 on *The Frighteners*.

He has worked with Niki Caro since her directorial feature debut, *Memory and Desire* in 1997, for which he was awarded a New Zealand Film and Television Award for Best Design, and was nominated for his work on *Whale Rider* in 2002. He also won a New Zealand Film Award for *Heavenly Creatures*, *The Ugly* and Jane Campion's international success *An Angel at My Table*, on which he is also credited as a producer.

Major began his screen design career on New Zealand television and has varied credits including production design for the Commonwealth Games ceremonies, and designer of New Zealand Pavilions at the World Expos in Spain and Australia.

More recently he turned his hand to directing and his short film *Undergrowth* is selected for the New Zealand International Film Festival 09. Grant Major is currently working on *The Green Lantern* for Warners.

BEATRIX ARUNA PASZTOR **COSTUME DESIGNER**
"Niki encouraged me to go with my instincts, which is how I prefer to design costumes. I'm painting a picture with the clothes that fits into the overall look of the film."

Beatrix Pasztor began a long collaboration with director Gus van Sant in 1989, soon after leaving her native Hungary to live and work in the USA. She designed costumes for *Drugstore Cowboy*, and went on to work with the director on *My Own Private Idaho*, *Even Cowgirls Get The Blues*, *To Die For*, *Good Will Hunting* and *Psycho*.

For her work on Terry Gilliam's *The Fisher King*, Pasztor was nominated for a Saturn Award, and nominated by the Costume Designer's Guild for *Alfie*, directed by Charles Shyer in 2005. In the same year she won the Golden Satellite Award for Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair*, starring Reese Witherspoon.

Other recent film credits include Curtis Hanson's *Wonder Boys*, *The Secret of Moonacre*, directed by Gabor Csupo and *The Brothers Bloom*, directed by Rian Johnson. Beatrix Pasztor is currently working on the new (untitled) Woody Allen London Project.

DENISE KUM **MAKE UP DESIGNER**
Denise Kum has worked with Niki Caro on all three of her previous features *Memory and Desire*, *Whale Rider* and *North Country*.

She has twice won the New Zealand Film & TV Award for Best Make-up for her work on *Channelling Baby* (1999) and *Savage Honeymoon* (2000) and was nominated for the award in 2003 for *Whale Rider*.

Prior to commencing *The Vintner's Luck*, London based Kum worked with director Gillian Armstrong on *Death Defying Acts* starring Catherine Zeta Jones and Guy Pearce.

DAVID COULSON

EDITOR

Long-time collaborator, David Coulson has previously worked with director Niki Caro on both *North Country* and *Whale Rider*.

An award-winning editor he has worked on a range of feature films including director Harry Sinclair's *Topless Women Talk About Their Lives* and Gregor Nicholas' *Broken English*.

ANTONIO PINTO

COMPOSER

Brazilian composer/performer Antonio Pinto's versatility shows in the range of films he has scored – from Walter Salles award-winning *Central Station* and Meirelles indie hit *City of God*, to Hollywood pictures such as *Perfect Stranger* for Sony and *Lord of War* for director Andrew Niccol.

He received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Original Song (co-written with performer Shakira) for Mike Newell's *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

The Vintner's Luck was a challenging collaboration, with Pinto working from his studio in Brazil while director Niki Caro was engaged in post-production in New Zealand. Modern recording and communications technology enabled the two to work together across the miles and for this film set in 19th century France, he has created a very modern and original score which beautifully complements the work of the other creative collaborators.

THE WRITERS

"I was entranced by the script, by the pull of opposites – sacred and profane, heaven and hell, very pure and very erotic, fantastical and very real – I loved that push and pull." Vera Farmiga – Aurora

JOAN SCHECKEL

SCREENPLAY CO-WRITER

Joan Scheckel previously collaborated with director Niki Caro on her award-winning film *Whale Rider*, where Scheckel is credited as script consultant.

She is renowned throughout Hollywood and the international film production community for her filmmaking workshops, which have been the driving force behind some of the most exciting films being made today, including the Academy Award winning *Little Miss Sunshine*.

Since 1998, Joan has work-shopped over 280 films in her labs and as a highly valued script doctor and directing coach. To date, films which have benefited from her workshops have earned a total of 305 award nominations and 163 awards including major wins at the Academy Awards, Cannes, Independent Spirit Awards, BAFTA, Cesar Awards, Producers' Guild of America, Writers' Guild of America, Screen Actors Guild, Berlin, Toronto, and Sundance Film Festival.

ELIZABETH KNOX

AUTHOR

"Because of the long time scale of a man's life, and the technical difficulties of the angel, I did think that it was a bit of a hard ask for a filmmaker. But ... I was very keen for it to happen and I had great faith that if anyone could do it, Niki could put it together."

Elizabeth Knox is one of New Zealand's leading authors and *The Vintner's Luck* is her best-known novel to date, described by the New York Times as an "original, often astonishingly vivid novel."

Winner of New Zealand's most prestigious literary prize, the Montana Book Awards' Deutz Medal for Fiction, and the inaugural Tasmania Pacific Region Prize, the novel is published in eight territories including USA, UK and France, where it was shortlisted for the Prix Ville De Saumur, in the Esprit Baccus section.

The inspiration for the story was a dream about the friendship between a winemaker and angel experienced by Knox when she was ill. Although her story is set in Burgundy she did not visit the region until after the book was published.

Elizabeth Knox' novels include the *Dreamhunter Duet*; two fantasy novels for young adults. The first book, *Dreamhunter*, won the Esther Glen Award, and *Dreamquake* was a Michael L Printz Award Honour book in 2008.

Her first novel *After Zero Hour* (1987) was followed by *Treasure*, which was shortlisted for the 1993 New Zealand Book Award. In 2002 *Billie's Kiss* was a finalist in the Montana Book Awards.

In 1997, Elizabeth was Writer in Residence at Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, and 1999 was chosen as the Katherine Mansfield Fellow at Menton, France.

In 2002, Elizabeth Knox was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

She has recently published *The Angel's Cut*, a sequel to *The Vintner's Luck*.

Elizabeth Knox and her husband Fergus Barrowman visited *The Vintner's Luck* set in France and appear as featured guests at the wedding of Sobran and Celeste's daughter Sabine.

THE PRODUCERS

ROBIN LAING

New Zealand Co-producer Robin Laing has produced and executive produced nine feature films and a range of short films and documentaries for her Wellington based company Meridian Film Productions. Her credits include *Perfect Strangers*, *Stickmen*, *Ruby and Rata*, *Bread and Roses* and *Mr Wrong*. She has served as Chair of the Trust Board for the NZ Film and Television School, a trustee of the NZ Film Archive and NZ Film Festivals Trust, founding President of WIFT in New Zealand and as a Board member of the NZFC. In 1993 she was awarded an MBE for services to the film industry.

Robin Laing has produced for several New Zealand directors including Gaylene Preston, Christine Jeffs, Hamish Rothwell and Anna Reeves.

The Vintner's Luck is her first collaboration with Niki Caro.

PASCAL JUDELEWICZ

French Co-producer Pascal Judelewicz has produced and coproduced with Acajou Films, Les Films de Cinéma, Les Films des Tournelles and Les Films de l'Étang (Belgium) 30 feature films as well as a large number of shorts. His credits include *Unter Bauern*, *Place Vendôme*, *Every Body Famous* (2001 Academy Award nomination), *Ginostra*, *Slogans* (Director's Fortnight, Cannes 2002), *C'est Gradiva Qui Vous Appelle* (Venice Mostra 2006) and *La Methode Bourchnikov* (Cesar nomination 2005).

Judelewicz has collaborated again with *Vintner's Luck* producers Chica Benadava and Ludi Boeken on his current production "Q" with director Laurent Bouhnik.

LUDI BOEKEN

Amsterdam-born producer Ludi Boeken is an award winning former war correspondent, journalist and director. A prolific producer, he has produced over 14 feature films and 15 documentary features. Production credits include *Cross My*

Heart (Prix Italia), *Like a Boat out of Water* (Unicef Prize, Berlin), *Train de Vie* (Sundance Audience Award 1999), and Altman's *Vincent and Theo*. His 1981 documentary *Who Killed Georgi Markov* received an Emmy Award.

Ludi Boeken also has three director credits, most recently for *Unter Bauern*.

LURIE PARKER

American producer Laurie Parker has produced nine feature films. Her producer credits include *What Sebastian Dreamt*, *Rough Magic*; Jane Campion's *In the Cut* and Gus van Sant's *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* and *My Own Private Idaho*. She has executive produced *Trance*, *Afraid of the Dark* and *The Rapture*. She was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award and won a Nova Award for *My Own Private Idaho*.

BEHIND THE SCENES

WINGS

(Grant Major – Production Designer)

"One of my first conversations with Niki was about realising the angel, Xas. Niki wanted real wings, and we agreed that he is not an idealised angel; he is earthy, he has come to earth, he drinks wine and he is tangible. He's also somewhat androgynous, not just a muscular presence with wings attached. We spent a lot of time discussing the live nature of the wings. Very few people in the world could conceive the amazing mechanics needed, but Harry Harrison was the perfect man for the job. He is a "from the ground up" engineer; he builds his own motion control cameras and he is very inventive. We also had to have feathers made, in varying lengths and thicknesses, plus the costumes had to be adapted to accommodate the mechanics of the wings, so a lot of different crafts and engineering went into the making of an angel."

(Harry Harrison – Wings Designer and Mechanical Effects Supervisor)

"Niki Caro's brief was that the wings be as believable as possible, even though they were part of this mythical being. The imagery was designed by Niki and Grant Major, the production designer, and I think it was largely modelled on swans.

But when I started looking at it from the mechanical point of view, I developed a sudden interest in bird watching, and from my point of view, the heron was the most interesting bird. They are very anthropomorphic and have enormous wings in relation to the size of their bodies. They are able to fly directly upwards, which seemed a good model for something angelic. You don't want an angel running along a beach trying to take off! So I looked at herons, and also geese. What I used as an everyday blue print were humble supermarket chickens, which we dissected to use as models. Chickens are not the most elegant birds, but their internal wing structure is the same as most other birds. (Afterwards most of the chickens were cooked and eaten, so no birds were harmed or wasted in our experiments.) In the end we

discovered that you cannot depart to a major degree from what nature has developed. Every time we tried to take shortcuts we've always been caught out and had to go back to the blueprints and follow them as faithfully as possible. "Follow nature" has been the watchword for our design process. After all, it took several billion years for the physiology of birds to evolve.

I'm not a trained engineer, but I'm an engineer by inclination. I had always said that I wanted to make wings one day, so I was pleased and excited when Niki asked me to get involved.

We made three pairs of wings, that all have slightly different capabilities. We wanted to give Niki the freedom to shoot whatever she wanted, and not be restricted by having to hide any mechanism.

The wings are divided into active and passive wings. The active wings can not only open and shut, but they can flap and do the same major movements that a bird can do with a pair of wings. The downside is that we had to make a relatively large backpack to accommodate the machinery, as Xas has a torso which is virtually naked, unlike a bird's breast which is muscular. The passive wings were used when the angel wasn't flying, but they still have a lot of life in them; they have free movement and float.

The key element in making it all feasible was a piece of technology that was an extraordinarily simple idea, known as an "air muscle". It is simply a rubber pipe that, when inflated with compressed air, will shrink and grow, mimicking the biological muscle. Of course it needs a lot more sophisticated equipment to control the movements, and give the fluidity to keep the movements lifelike.

Working with Gaspard as Xas we were fortunate that he has a very erect stature, his posture seems very bird-like, so it all began to look very natural when he wore the wings for the first time.

I was involved with the wings for so long that they became a central part of my life, and the amount of emotional and intellectual involvement is much much higher than anything else I've worked on. Everyone involved became fascinated by the idea of

making wings that work. Wings and angels are a part of many major religions in some form, and there is a universal aspiration to having a pair of wings that strikes a chord with everybody; it fires the imagination.

When I look at Grant's original drawing of what he wanted the wings to look like, it seems extraordinary that, after two years of work, the wings look more or less the same as his drawing."

(Gaspard Ulliel – Xas)

"I was filming in Cambodia and flew in (to New Zealand) for a couple of days to work with the wings. When I first saw them it was very moving, they were so big and beautiful. When I was working in them it was tough, as they were very heavy. The crew made me a special "resticle" with a bicycle seat and something to rest my arms on, and a metal bar with a bungee to take the weight of the wings. I worked hard with Guiliano from Cirque du Soleil to choreograph scenes with Jérémie. He helped me to be graceful, and with my body language so that I would look natural with the wings, particularly on the ascents and descents. I'm not really keen going up in the air, so that was another challenge for me, but it was exciting."

BEHIND THE SCENES

WINE

(Gaspard Ulliel – Xas)

"What Xas is trying to do, by helping Sobran make his wine, is to help him learn about himself, to accept his pains and his pleasures. He explains that Sobran's experiences in life are going to be tasted in the wine he makes. It's about the journey you take to understand your own life, and how you should live it."

(Jérémie Renier – Sobran)

"It was important for me to spend time with a vintner and his family in their home in France, and in New Zealand I met a vintner who makes his wine in exactly the same way as they did last century. I'm not very intellectual when I prepare for a role, so it was good to really touch the earth and touch the vines. I could understand that for Sobran Jodeau the vines are his life, his whole life is spent with those plants."

"It's incredible that you take the same grapes all over the world, but with each man and each vineyard, the taste is completely different."

(Grant Major – Production Designer)

"For the winemaking scenes in France we shot in the heartland of Burgundy wine making country, around Beaune and Fleurie, and found plenty of wine museums, with archive information on techniques and seasonal activities. I also interviewed some very old people who grew up in the early 1900s when the cultivation and winemaking would have been very similar to 100 years earlier."

(Elizabeth Knox – Writer of the Novel "The Vintner's Luck")

"I set it in Burgundy because I know that people worship the wines of Burgundy"

(Vera Farmiga – Aurora)

"Sobran is her teacher, and Aurora is his confidante. Their relationship in the end is like a Grand Cru wine. A deep deep friendship that develops into a profound love and something complex and potent that should be savoured. Like this whole experience."

BEHIND THE SCENES

WORKING WITH NIKI

(Vera Farmiga – Aurora)

"Niki is amazing to work with. She has a very staunch commitment to realism and to a bold new vision. In everything she does she aims for authenticity and for truth. She loves her characters, having been living with them for over five years while she and Joan Scheckel wrote the script, and she has a deep affection and respect for her actors. She creates a playground where the actors have the freedom to do our boldest, deepest and most intimate work."

(J r mie Renier – Sobran Jodeau)

"It's great to work with a director like Niki who is very strong and confident about her movie. We spent a lot of time talking about Sobran and his life. "

(Gaspard Ulliel – Xas)

"At first she allows a lot of freedom to the actors and it's just a matter of sharing different ideas, different points of view, and then building a character together. Niki always has a very precise and clear idea of what she wants, in the scene or in the character. And I remember in the preparation she knew exactly how she would shoot the scenes so this was quite helpful."

(Keisha Castle-Hughes – Celeste)

"It's strange to work with her as an adult because our use of language is completely different from how it was when I was eleven (but) all the dynamics are exactly the same, they haven't changed at all. It's a real magic because there's so much (shared) experience."

(Denis Lenoir - Director of Photography)

"We collaborate totally and deeply, and although Niki is very clear about what she wants, and won't leave the set until she gets it, she guides with a very light hand. She has a will of steel, but at the same time is extremely patient and understands what it takes to give her what she wants. One of the pleasures for me on this film has been to gain her trust, and to have the freedom to express my ideas."

(Beatrix Pasztor – Costume Designer)

"Niki Caro is very special; it was a pleasure to work with someone who is an artist."

BEHIND THE SCENES

COSTUMES

(Vera Farmiga – Aurora de Valday)

"The costumes were a great way to help me find the character. Beatrix is a genius in her audacity and boldness, the verve with which she approaches the costumes, taking certain things that were accurate to the period and turning them upside down. "

(Beatrix Pasztor – Costume Designer)

"The film takes place over thirty years, so we had to make a strong design decision from the outset. We wanted clothes that were anchored in the period, but not slavishly accurate."

"Most of the cast and extras are peasants, so we wanted to be able to see the dirt and the sweat, but not make it boring. We went for rich, earthy colours and textures. These people would have used the material in their clothes many times over, re-stitching and retying it to make new garments. At the same time, they work with their hands, on their knees, in the vineyards and the farms, so their clothes had to be practical for all weathers. Nothing would have been particularly fitted."

"Although some things are not historically correct, they look right and feel right for the film, and most importantly, have the right silhouette."

"We were really concerned about giving it a "look", rustic and real, and not polished at all. The palette changed with the occasion – the colours of the Feast of St Ely, where the people were celebrating nature, include saffron and orange, where the funeral scene tones are more muted, blues, grays and burgundy."

"Dressing Xas, the angel, was complicated because of the range of movement, and the way his wings were attached. We decided on period trousers, but made of white leather, because we wanted him to look sexy. Originally, his chest was going to be bare, but then Niki asked that we devise something to cover him, so we decided on pieces of material that draped on him, rather than any kind of shirt that would restrict his movement or get entangled in the wing structure. On the first day of shooting, two of our seven pairs of trousers split – not on the seams, but totally split,

ruined, unfixable, so I was worried that we wouldn't get through the film, but in the end we finished with one pair to spare!"

"Dressing Vera Farmiga as Baroness Aurora was all about her Paris fashion, more about shape. Her colour palette was very rich – browns, burgundies and dark blues, and very clean lines. At the beginning of the film she is very closed up emotionally, so her clothes are very tied, like armour to protect her feelings. Celeste, Sobran's wife, is the opposite. She is a peasant girl who knows she is sexy and beautiful, and is comfortable with her sexuality, so her clothes are loose and show off her figure."

"The challenge to dressing Sobran was the change the character undergoes in class and status as well as aging over thirty years. At the beginning he is a peasant and by the end he is still a peasant at heart, so the changes in his clothes are subtle. They are almost the same, just a little more lavish."

"All the actors were great to work with, and really spent a lot of time discussing their wardrobe, having input into the various stages of each of the characters' development."

"It was a joyful experience all the way through and I'm really pleased with the results."

BEHIND THE SCENES

LOCATIONS

"The story is way more about being human than being divine. As such, the visual style of the film is anchored strongly in the earth, in the winegrowing region of France in the 19th century." Niki Caro – Director

The Vintner's Luck was shot on location in France and New Zealand.

The story is set in Burgundy and the production moved between Beaune and Fleurie to take advantage of a range of magnificent settings and period locations – from the dense forests and grasslands in the North and West to the hillside vineyards of Beaune in the East and the slopes of the Chalonnaise in the South. The region boasts more medieval castles, chateaux and strongholds than any other part of France. Those included in the film are the medieval fortress town of Châteauneuf-en-Auxois, Château Commarin and the 13th century Château de Berzé-le-Châtel with its 13 towers in the Saône-et-Loire.

Also featured are the Bout du Monde and the chapel at Nolay, the wine village of Mersault and the ruined Abbey Sainte-Marguerite de Bouillard. With the assistance of the Burgundy Film Commission, French producer Pascal Judelewicz spent considerable time researching and visiting locations "we felt would match the vision Niki had for this extraordinary film."

"The New Zealand shoot involved recreating a Burgundy landscape in Henderson where we shot the big summer grape harvest scenes. With a story set over all four seasons (and several decades) it was always going to be difficult to film all the seasonal changes in only eight weeks of shooting and this was our solution" explains producer Robin Laing, "a huge exercise for the art and greens departments but very effective."

(Grant Major – Production Designer)

"The film takes place over all four seasons, in Burgundy, two hundred years ago. Of course this was before photography, so we used paintings for reference. At that time a lot of country folk were moving to the city, so a lot of paintings and etchings were reportage of country life, but romanticised, as nostalgia. Architecturally there are

*still plenty of buildings standing from the period so we could find accurate details
from country cottages to chateaux.*

THE VINTNER'S LUCK CAST LIST

Sobran Jodeau	JÉRÉMIE RENIER
The Angel Xas	GASPARD ULLIEL
Aurora de Valday	VERA FARMIGA
Celeste	KEISHA CASTLE-HUGHES
Comte de Vully	PATRICE VALOTA
Father Lesy	ERIC GODON
Jodeau Senior	VANIA VILERS
Sabine	LIZZIE BROCHERE
Chief Winemaker	FRANCOIS BEUKELAERS
Henri	JEAN-LOUIS SBILLE
Didier de Thierry	QUENTIN GUILLEMIN
Young Soldier	STÉPHANE GARNEAU
Surgeon	BERNARD JARILLOT
Aurora's Lawyer	PASCAL JUDELEWICZ
Sabine (7-10 years)	MARION PARISOT LAROSE
Sabine (4-5 years)	JULIE BERTHOUX
Sabine (2-3 years)	CHARLOTTE CHEVEAU
Baby Sabine	JULIETTE MARIOTTE
Baby Nicolette	FINN VAN MELL
Nicolette (12-18 months)	FELICITY-AMORE CASTLE-HUGHES
Nicolette (sick, 12-18 months)	ELOISE DESPRÉS
Baby Baptiste	HANS ROPITEAU
Toddler Baptiste	MATTHIAS JAVOS
Baptiste (3-5 years)	PIERRE DORET
Baptiste (13-15 years)	TARIK VACCARO
Baptiste (19-21 years)	KAJ BENSON
Antoine (9 – 10 years)	ARTHUR RAILLARD
Antoine (15 – 17 years)	CLEMENT COQUILLE

**THE VINTNER'S LUCK
KEY CREW**

<i>directed by</i>	NIKI CARO
<i>based on the novel by</i>	ELIZABETH KNOX
<i>screenplay</i>	NIKI CARO <i>and</i> JOAN SCHECKEL
<i>produced by</i>	ROBIN LAING PASCAL JUDELEWICZ LUDI BOEKEN LAURIE PARKER NIKI CARO
<i>executive producers</i>	CHICA BENADAVA JEREMY BURDEK MASAHARU INABA NADIA KHAMLICH ADRIAN POLITOWSKI
<i>co-producers</i>	CLAËS WACHTMEISTER JEAN-FRANCOIS KLEIN
<i>director of photography</i>	DENIS LENOIR AFC, ASC
<i>production designer</i>	GRANT MAJOR
<i>editor</i>	DAVID COULSON
<i>music composed by</i>	ANTONIO PINTO
<i>costume designer</i>	BEATRIX ARUNA PASZTOR
<i>associate costume designer</i>	JOAQUIN BALLABRIGA
<i>set decorator</i>	REGINE CONSTANT
<i>makeup & hair designer</i>	DENISE KUM
<i>mechanical effects supervisor</i>	HARRY HARRISON
<i>flying concepter & choreographer</i>	GIULIANO PEPARINI

<i>visual effects supervisor</i>	GEORGE PORT
<i>visual effects creative supervisor</i>	GEORGE RITCHIE
<i>casting by</i>	MARK BENNET ELAINE GRAINGER SYLVIE BROCHERE PATRICK HELLA
<i>dialect coach</i>	CATHERINE CHARLTON
<i>line producers</i>	NICOLAS ROYER NICOLA OLSEN
<i>1st assistant director</i>	LIZ TAN
<i>unit/location manager</i>	OLIVIER LAGNY
<i>script supervisor</i>	KATHLEEN THOMAS
<i>sound recordist</i>	DOMINIQUE WARNIER
<i>financial controller</i>	EMMANUELLE BALESTRIERI
<i>post production supervisor</i>	SHARA HUDSON