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**PHILIPPA BOYENS (*Screenwriter/Co-Producer*) Q&A**

**QUESTION: What was it like for you, Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh to see fans connect with the first film and watch it become such a phenomenon?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: It felt good. [laughs] The reaction was heartwarming and in many ways, it’s why we went back there, especially for the kids. We get a lot of letters from children, and people who are no longer children but who grew up on the *The Lord of the Rings* films, and to whom it means something. One of the letters we quite regularly get is from families who say how much going to *The Lord of the Rings* movies at Christmastime has become a family tradition. They’ll get the movies out and watch them at Christmastime. It’s this little tradition that sprang up all on its own. So the response from those people was fantastic, because they wanted more, which is exactly what we were hoping for.

It was a hard film to do, following in the footsteps of The *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, and it’s quite a different adventure than those films. We knew going in that it was going to be hard to pull off because it’s not an obvious adventure, so to speak, and Bilbo’s not an obvious hero. He hasn’t been given a ticking time bomb like Frodo is given with the One Ring, the ring of power, that he needs to destroy. He’s basically coming out of his door on a rather strange quest to reclaim this homeland of the Dwarves. So we felt really happy that people invested in it and came along for the ride, and they wanted more.

**QUESTION: As the resident J.R.R. Tolkien geek among the screenwriting team, has working on these films expanded your appreciation and understanding of *The Hobbit* book?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Very much so! There is so much more in there than you might first understand or recognize. It is easy to see it as separate from the mythology of *The Lord of the Rings*, as a children’s story that Professor Tolkien quickly wrote for his kids. All of that is true.

But, actually, there’s so much more in that story. It very much began the mythology of Middle-earth that we know today. And when I say that, I don’t mean that Professor Tolkien wasn’t already working on some of the grander stories; there was a mythology that was in existence already. When you read *The Hobbit,* what you discover is a writer who fell in love with the characters he created. He couldn’t let go of Hobbits. Hobbits became incredibly important. I think you can see the germs of that in the storytelling of *The Hobbit*.

It actually takes quite a dark turn and quite a dramatic twist at the end of this children’s book, as we shall see, and it leads us down the path towards the greater Middle-earth that we’ve all come to know through *The Lord of the Rings*.

**QUESTION: What aspects of writing and making the second film did you most enjoy, and what overall themes of the story do you think come to the forefront in this film?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Oh, that’s interesting. I very much enjoyed this one. It felt like we were allowed to now get into different stuff—not that there wasn’t lots of great stuff in the first film, but there’s such a wealth of great adventure, and a different kind of adventure in *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*. This is when we come upon the world of Men again. It’s kind of weird, but when you think about it, we hadn’t encountered a single human on our travels so far.

We get to go to places like Lake-town. We get to meet the Elves of Mirkwood, who are really fascinating in that they have quite a complex history behind them that is very different from the history of the Elves of Rivendell and the Elves of Lothlórien, and it’s more anchored in the earthy world, the world of the forest. So that was exciting. You can’t go too far along without giant Spiders, as we know. I love that sequence. But, also, we know these characters now. We’re familiar with them; we’ve become friends with them; we’ve kind of become part of their Company, and we’re on the journey with them.

One thing Pete didn’t want to do was to continue the ‘road movie’ feel. He wanted the Dwarves to arrive at a location pretty quickly. It was about the obstacles that come at them to stop them from achieving their goal, which is to get to The Lonely Mountain, get inside and retrieve the Arkenstone.

This movie was really fun. I hope that fans, particularly Tolkien fans, will enjoy it because they’ll know exactly what’s happening and where some of the story in our film comes from, which is from the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings*. That was fun as a Tolkien fan.

**QUESTION: With the clock ticking, and the Dwarves having no safe haven, is their journey more dangerous now?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Yes. There is no safe haven; there’s nowhere to hide. The dangers that were present in the first film have only gotten bigger, and then, at the end of all of this, even if they should reach their destination, their greatest danger is right before them, which is an enormous fire-breathing Dragon such as you’ve never seen before. This movie was always going to be special because of that amazing confrontation between Bilbo and Smaug.

**QUESTION: Could you talk a bit about the Orcs Azog and Bolg? Why are the Orcs hunting the Dwarves?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Azog is what we call an Orc chieftain. He is the leader. As in the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings*, we discover that the Dwarves went to war with a group of Orcs who had invaded the ancient Dwarf mines of Moria. When grandfather Thror had been driven out of The Lonely Mountain, he took his people and attempted to reclaim his old homeland of Moria. Unfortunately, it was a stalemate. In the appendices, we’re told that Azog slayed Thror and carved his initials into the Dwarf King’s head, which is why he’s called the Defiler.

Bolg is Azog’s son, and we knew we needed both of them for this film, and the reason why will become clearer when you see the film because there are two parts to this story—what’s going on in the Lonely Mountain, and what we will see in the forest fortress of Dol Guldur where this Necromancer resides.

Azog is in pursuit of Thorin and the Company, one, for revenge. Thorin cut off his arm, which was our addition to his history, I have to admit. [Laughs] Also, Azog has a psychopathic hatred of all living things, but particularly Dwarves, especially those Dwarves of the line of Durin, of Thorin Oakenshield. He hates them for their own sake, but beyond that, he does not want them to reach the Mountain, and that is all to do with alliances he has made and with the power he now serves.

**QUESTION: Can you talk about the decision to incorporate into the film the journey that Gandalf takes when he leaves the Company at the beginning of the second film, and how it relates to their Quest?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: One of the things that you get to do when you watch this film is follow some of the characters and find out what happens to them—what they did and where they are going—and you get to do it in real time, which is exactly what we did with Gandalf the Grey in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring,* when he describes what happens when he goes to see Saruman the White. We get to see exactly what happened and why he failed to meet with Frodo in Bree. That is all told as reported in the book.

Even more frustratingly so, in *The Hobbit*, we don’t get any back story from Gandalf when he reappears. He simply leaves the story on urgent business that’s obviously troubling and worrying, and he returns with a hurried explanation to the Dwarves and the readers as to exactly what he was doing. We knew that wasn’t going to work particularly well on film.

We also know that Professor Tolkien knew exactly where Gandalf had gone, because he told us in the appendices, and actually within the text of *The Lord of the Rings*. And what Gandalf was up to was confronting, once and for all, the dark power that resides in the fortress of Dol Guldur. That is what happens in this film; we’ll get to follow Gandalf to that fortress.

How he comes to understand that he needs to do this is also part of what is shown in these films. It’s the uncovering of the secret. Galadriel says in the first film, ‘Something moves in the shadows, something hidden from our sight. It will not show itself.’ It’s a very important instinct that she has. It’s something that is very true, even today, as to how certain atrocities can exist in the world, how certain evils can come to be. That was true when Professor Tolkien was writing these stories in the 1930s and a great evil was growing in Europe, and it is true now.

**QUESTION: As the Dwarves are journeying toward their destination, they encounter a character called Beorn. Can you talk about him and Mikael Persbrandt, the actor who plays him?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Beorn is a fantastic character, and very unique to *The Hobbit*, which is wonderful. He’s a skin-changer, as he’s described by Professor Tolkien, which means that sometimes he can be a huge, great bear, and sometimes he’s an equally huge, giant man. It’s an extraordinary character. He’s not like a werewolf; he’s different from that. As wonderfully written by Professor Tolkien in *The Hobbit*, Gandalf describes Beorn as being ‘under no enchantment but his own.’ So he’s a creature unlike any other that has existed in the mythology and is peculiar to *The Hobbit*. He lives alone for a reason. He doesn’t have a lot of respect for the other people who inhabit Middle-earth. He’s the last of his kind, and that’s sad.

When we started thinking about how to make this character come to life, how to make him real and what part he played in the storytelling, we naturally started thinking of some of the great Scandinavian actors. There’s something about the notion of someone living in the woodlands, in the Wild, and it felt like Beorn’s mythology was a natural fit with the great Norse mythologies.

So we asked our casting director in London what he thought about that notion and who was out there. One of the people he suggested was Mikael. Pretty much from the moment we met with him, he was our Beorn. And, luckily, he said yes.

**QUESTION: Was it a lot of fun for you to bring to life the sequence with the giant Spiders in Mirkwood?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Yes, it was. It’s one of the obstacles for the Dwarves. They’re so close to their goal and can almost see the Lonely Mountain, as Bilbo does when he climbs up the trees and gets above the canopy of the forest. They’re so close, yet they have to get through this forest and it’s not an easy thing to do.

We had a lot of fun. Peter especially had a very strong sense that, as it does in *The Lord of the Rings* films, the old forest has a will of its own. There’s an evil that lies upon the forest now that leads you astray. It’s a very subtle thing. Suddenly you’re lost, and you don’t know quite how you got lost. It’s very creepy. In its own way the forest, in and of itself, becomes very dangerous, which is cool. And then we discover what else is in there, which is equally dangerous ... the Elves.

**QUESTION: What led you to bring Legolas back into the story, and what it was like to work with Orlando Bloom again, who memorably played the role in *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: The decision to include Legolas in *The Hobbit* Trilogy, even though he doesn’t actually appear in the book, was pretty easy. Our fans would have killed us if we hadn’t. The Mirkwood is his homeland. He is Legolas Greenleaf. He’s called that for a reason, as described in *The Lord of the Rings*. It is because he is a Mirkwood Elf. He’s from the Woodland Realm. His father is the Elvenking Thranduil, whom we met in the first *Hobbit* film. So it was pretty much a no-brainer that we were going to meet Legolas if we went into Mirkwood.

It also meant we got to work with Orlando Bloom again, which is always a good thing. He hadn’t changed after ten years—not just in terms of him being such a nice guy, a friend, and easy to work with, but also because he actually looked exactly the same, for which I cannot forgive him. [Laughs] He has the most extraordinary genes. I think he must be, in fact, part Elvish because he fit in his costume from *The Lord of the Rings* films and still looks like he’s 23, which is the age he was when he first came to us.

**QUESTION: There’s an entirely new Elf in this film, which is Tauriel, played by Evangeline Lilly. What went into creating this character and what does Evangeline bring to the role?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: The decision to include Tauriel came with a decision that we made because we very strongly felt the lack of female characters. Beyond our ability to bring Galadriel into the story, we were pretty much bereft of any other female characters in the book. And what felt most natural was that she should be an Elf.

Once we made that decision and knew that we were going to meet a Woodland Elf, a Silvan Elf, which is quite different from the High Elves of Lothlórien and Rivendell, she started to come to life on her own. She’s more earthy than Galadriel or Arwen. She is in the Royal Guard. She has a job to do, so to speak.

She’s grown up defending the borders of the Woodland Realm. She’s a very skilled fighter. She’s an Elf, so there is a wisdom about her. She’s ethereal, but she’s also more earthy. She’s actually very inexperienced with the outside world. She has very little knowledge of it. So when a Company of Dwarves and this Hobbit come crashing into her world, she’s fascinated by them. Perhaps more so than someone like Legolas or Thranduil, who have experience with the outside world.

Then we had to find the person who could play that role, and that was not easy. We felt very lucky when Evangeline said yes and said she was up for doing it. She is a Tolkien fan. She has always loved the books and loved *The Lord of the Rings* movies. She was very aware that this was a new character that we were creating, and she wanted to be sure that we were going to do it properly. She became part of that process. She very much wanted to make sure that it was in keeping with the spirit of the books, and in keeping with what she could bring to the character. I think she did that in a spectacular way, and she’s created such a memorable character that I will guarantee you, she’s going to be a favorite.

**QUESTION: Can you tell us about Thranduil, played by Lee Pace, and what makes him different from other Elf Lords?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Thranduil *is* different. He is the father of Legolas and he resides in Mirkwood, which is a pretty dangerous place. The Elves of Mirkwood are described in the book as ‘less wise and more dangerous’ than other Elves—not less wise as in stupid, but perhaps more reckless, which adds to their danger. They’re more shut off from the rest of the world.

Thranduil is a High Elf, so he is actually very similar to Galadriel and Elrond, the other Elf Lords that we meet in *The Hobbit* films. But he’s different. The difference being—and here’s an interesting piece of trivia—he fought in The Last Alliance, the battle that opens *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring,* the battle that you see Elrond fighting, when Isildur takes the Ring from Sauron. We know from the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings* that Thranduil was part of that. He’s very much a part of this world. But after The Last Alliance and the fall of Sauron, he didn’t leave Middle-earth, he stayed in Middle-earth and became the Elvenking, over a race of other Elves called Silvan Elves. They’re the Wood-elves of Mirkwood, which was called The Greenwood at that time.

What’s interesting about that is there is a kind hierarchy among the Elves of Mirkwood. There are the High Elves, which are Thranduil and Legolas, and then there are the more lowly, more earthy Elves, the Silvan Elves. Tauriel is a Silvan Elf. She’s very much an Elf of Middle-earth, whereas the High Elves have come from somewhere else across the seas, and they are slightly more ethereal.

Thranduil was a very hard character to cast. He’s the father of Legolas, so he’s got to be a fairly beautiful-looking Elf. We also needed the stillness, grace and sense of power that Elves possess, that sense of having lived a long time in the world, and of being separate from the other races. There’s always that distance between the Elves and the other races. Not so much with Legolas and Tauriel, because they engage with the world, but there is a sense with Elves such as Thranduil that they are separate from the goings on in the rest of the world.

When we meet him, Thranduil has already made the decision many years ago to isolate his people to protect them; to not engage with the rest of the world or the rise and fall of the fortunes of other races outside his borders. He has shut himself off. This is how he lives. To do this, he has created quite a strict, closed-off world around himself. His rule is law.

We needed to find an actor who could play this character with that sense of iciness, dispassion and ruthlessness. But we also knew that he’s not evil. He’s ultimately still good.

It was very hard to find someone who can bring all that status to the character that Thranduil requires, but yet still engage the audience, still be interesting and able to draw us into his world, how he’s thinking and what he’s feeling. He’s sympathetic in a strange way.

That was a very difficult role to cast. On the way back from England on our casting trip in 2010, we stopped in New York for one reason and one reason only, and that was to meet with Lee Pace. He was the only person we were meeting with in New York at that time. We met with him and by the time he left, we knew we’d found Thranduil.

**QUESTION: The next place the Dwarves find themselves is near Lake-town, where the Dwarves meet Bard. Can you talk about Bard, and what Luke Evans brings to that role?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Bard was an interesting character to look at in terms of bringing the book to life, because he’s introduced after the fact in the book. He comes into the story after the Dwarves have left Lake-town. He then assumes an incredibly important role in the story.

When it came to adapting the book, right from the word ‘go,’ we had a very strong sense that you can’t do that in the film. We felt it was important to meet this character sooner, engage with him and give him some history with the Dwarves, especially for what comes later in the storytelling.

The other interesting thing about Bard, from the appendices of *The Lord of the Rings,* is that he had a son. It made him distinct from, say, Aragorn [from *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy]. Although they have a very similar feel in some ways, Bard is a father. We really liked the notion that Bard has children. It makes for a different kind of hero, someone who’s driven by different impulses, which are to protect those children. He’s living in a town where times are really tough, it’s really hard and he’s doing the best he can. Everything that is at stake for this character is so much higher.

It became every easy to decide that he didn’t just have one child, he had three, because just having one child, that’s not enough. [Laughs] It so happened that we had these two wonderful young actresses who came with their daddy down to New Zealand, which are James Nesbitt’s two gorgeous daughters, Peggy Nesbitt and Mary Nesbitt, who became Bard’s daughters, Sigrid and Tilda.

The other interesting piece of information that we get from the book and from the appendices is that Bard is a descendant from the Lords of Dale. We made the decision to take this wonderful thread that Bard, as we discover, has in his lineage a direct link back to the time when Smaug invaded The Lonely Mountain. That terrible tragedy is in his blood. He remembers it, as all of the descendants of Dale do.

You bring all those threads together—this widowed father who’s trying to raise his kids with very little money, but yet his ancestors were once Lords of Dale, and the terrible tragedy that happened to his people—and it makes for a really interesting character.

We also wanted him to be incredibly likeable. The first time you meet him, we didn’t want you to know who this stranger is. Is he a good guy, or is he a bad guy? But we also had an instinct that we needed people to like and trust him. He’s got to have that quality. It’s part of the theme that runs through this film. It’s about leadership and what makes for a natural leader.

We have the wonderful Stephen Fry playing the Master of Lake-town, who is the epitome of a disastrous leader. In contrast to the Master, you have Bard, someone who people naturally turn to. There’s an instinctive quality about him. It’s not about someone who’s the biggest or the loudest or even the strongest. It’s about someone who has real courage, decency, and empathy for those around him. Luke immediately brought those qualities to this character. That is very much who he is. He’s just got that wonderful calm about him that’s very genuine. He’s an enormously likeable person.

**QUESTION: Can you elaborate on Stephen Fry’s performance as the Master, and why someone like him has been able to seize power over the people of Lake-town?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: The Master of Lake-town is the consummate politician and he’s managed to somehow figure out how to stay in power permanently. Even though it’s a position that’s supposed to be elected, he’s used all the powers of his office to put himself in a pretty untouchable position. Yet he will pay lip service to the notion that he serves the people, but we know that he’s serving only himself and his own ambition.

He was a great character to write for, and the brilliance of Stephen Fry just made him better. It brought him to life so immediately. Stephen relished playing that role and Pete relished directing him in that role. [Laughs] And I think you can see that.

It also gave us a chance to introduce the wonderful character of Alfrid as his off-sider. The combination of Alfrid and the Master of Lake-town pretty much sums up all that is wrong in politics. But they’re wonderful characters for all that. They are a terrible and almost lethal complication to the storytelling. Things could, in fact, go disastrously wrong because of their actions, which are driven by their greed. They represent the other strong theme that very much runs through these films, and that is greed.

**QUESTION: What does it mean for Thorin to finally reach his homeland of Erebor?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: At the beginning of the films, and this again was taken from the appendices, we have the lines about the young Dwarf prince who never forgave and never forgot. That all comes to fruition when we reach the slopes of Erebor and then Thorin finally enters his homeland again. It feels very much like a noble and worthwhile Quest, and, hopefully a moment of triumph for Thorin. In many ways, you might think it was the end of his journey, but it’s not. For Thorin, it’s actually the beginning of a much darker journey.

Thorin’s intentions are very pure when he returns to his homeland. He intends to do what we say at the beginning of this film. His goal is still the same: to reclaim the King’s jewel, the Arkenstone.

This is actually a divergence from the book, but something we felt we needed to make clear, because the Arkenstone becomes very, very important in this story. We needed Bilbo to have a very strong reason for going into Erebor. What’s his goal, what’s he going in there to retrieve? And it became obvious that what it needed to be was the Arkenstone.

**QUESTION: What did Richard Armitage bring to the character of Thorin that surprised you?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Richard is an incredible actor. Every day he gives you something new. You can write a line, and he can transform it and take it far beyond what you thought it was going to be. He worked really hard to get to the heart of his character, to understand what motivates Thorin and how he feels. I think he achieves it beautifully.

One of the moments that stands out for me, and one of the choices he made, was when Thorin finally enters The Lonely Mountain—the way he played it was so understated. It was so emotional. It should be this moment of huge triumph, and instead it is this moment of quiet emotion: ‘I’m home, and I remember.’ All the things that he remembers come flooding back to him. It’s so simple. There’s a beautiful simplicity to what he did in that moment.

I think that’s part of his power as an actor. He’s a very powerful actor. He’s physically very powerful. He plays a great warrior. He has that great Northern English spirit in him, so he can really easily reach for that stuff. But he can do the other stuff as well. He’s got a fantastic range. He’s actually also incredibly funny and can do comedy as well, although he doesn’t get much chance to do so playing this character. And I have to say, as nice as he seems, he’s genuinely that nice of a guy.

**QUESTION: What was it like for you and the other screenwriters to devise the confrontation between Bilbo and Smaug?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: That scene was a bit of a journey. We worked amongst ourselves, and also with Benedict [Cumberbatch] and Martin [Freeman]. There are two of these scenes in the book. Bilbo goes into Smaug’s Lair twice. But we felt we didn’t have time to do that in the film.

There are underlying currents in the books that we wanted to make more clear, like the notion that Smaug is very subtly pumping Bilbo for information, and all the tension that goes into that. You couldn’t have a smaller person than the Hobbit, or a larger creature than the Dragon. The scale between the two is huge, and yet they engage one-on-one. It’s an incredibly deadly game of cat and mouse.

This is also the moment where you actually see the true courage of Bilbo, in that he said he would do something and he is going to try. He doesn’t renege on his contract, and you see that he has that sense of decency, that courage about him that is innate. He goes down there to try and do what he promised he would do. Even in the face of this incredible terror, this horror, he still tries. And he takes you down there with him, which is great.

**QUESTION: He summons his courage to face the Dragon, but he also has the ring he found in Gollum’s cave. How does that affect him?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Yes. All the way through this journey, since the Goblin tunnels, Bilbo has been carrying this gold ring that can turn him invisible. We needed to show the audience that it’s not just this convenient little magic trinket that can suddenly make you disappear you whenever you need it to, but that Bilbo puts it on rather reluctantly. He’s beginning to have a strange relationship with this gold ring. He’s beginning to have a sense there’s something off about it.

It was something that Martin Freeman really liked—that it was a tough thing to make that choice to put it on and disappear. It’s not a good thing. He doesn’t like wearing this ring, and he takes it off as soon as he can.

Having such a great actor as Martin Freeman play the role helps you find your way through these sorts of things—that notion that this is not just a trinket, it’s not just a ring that turns you invisible; this is a hard thing to do. Not every choice he has to make is a good choice down in those holes beneath the mountain.

**QUESTION: Can you talk about creating this incredible character of Smaug with Benedict Cumberbatch, and what ideas of his own he infused into the character?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Benedict is phenomenally smart. He’s someone who explores every tiny little corner of the character. He explores every little nuance in the text. He loved finding his way into Smaug. He came to us with a sense of what he wanted to do, but was incredibly open to what Peter wanted from this character and how he wanted to bring him to life.

Physically, he actually made a lot of those choices for the character. He did the motion capture for the confrontation with Bilbo and Smaug. So a lot of the physical choices that were made—even simple little choices such as a slight turn of the head that tells you he’s just picked up on a morsel of information from Bilbo, or the rearing back, or the vanity or viciousness he conveys—all of those body movements were choices that Benedict made for the character that helped bring Smaug to life.

It’s actually quite physically draining to do that sort of thing, so it was good that he was fit. [Laughs]

Ben is extremely talented. He has an enormous wealth of knowledge about himself that he draws on when he approaches a line or a moment, and yet he is also incredibly instinctual, which is wonderful, because it means you get these lightning fast reflexes in terms of the choices that he makes as an actor that are often surprising and just brilliant.

**QUESTION: Howard Shore is once again providing the score for this film. Can you talk about working with him and how he interprets the music?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: So much of the world as it’s received in these films has come through the music, and been defined by the music. You hear a piece of the theme from *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and it can immediately transport you into that world, and that’s what a great score does. That’s exactly how Howard works, he wants it to feel of the world.

My experience of working with Howard has been wonderful. I’ve worked with him writing lyrics for the choir. He will talk to me about what he needs or which themes he’s working on as he’s focusing on certain areas of the film. For example, in Mirkwood, he’ll talk about the voices that are in there and what he’s thinking of for those moments. He loves working with the choir and uses it throughout the film in some really interesting ways, particularly in Mirkwood. I love the way the choir works in those sequences. It’s strange. It’s a way in which he brings Professor Tolkien very much into the musicality of that world, because the sounds of the languages he wrote really inform the choir and the way things are sung.

That great choir that you hear of male voices of the Dwarves are actually singing in Dwarvish. And the sound of the language when it’s spoken has a particular timbre to it, so it’s really exciting to me when I begin to hear those sounds, which are so uniquely Tolkien, come alive and become part of the musical score and the music of this world. It just makes it feel authentic and that’s what Howard brings to this.

There are some actors who find the truth of the moment; that’s how they work. They are said to be very truthful in their performances. In very much the same way, that’s how I think of how Howard works. It makes it feel true to the world.

**QUESTION: Can you talk about writing the lyrics? What are your references or inspirations?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: Lyrics and chorus are interesting because sometimes it depends on who is commenting. What voice is engaged in this particular moment? Is it a choric thing commenting on the action as in a real chorus? It’s interesting to find whose voice it is that you’re using.

In the case of the voice of the storyteller, again, Professor Tolkien wrote a lot of songs himself. There are songs throughout *The Lord of the Rings* and in *The Hobbit*. There’s a particularly beautiful one that the Dwarves sing in *The Hobbit* that I love. That’s part and parcel of his world. That’s very much a function of his world that this is an ode, that this would be a lay, and they would say l-a-y, that is sung by someone, which tells the story. And so you’re always thinking, Who’s telling this part of the story?

**QUESTION: Can you talk about how Ed Sheeran came to compose the song *I See Fire* for the film?**

PHILIPPA BOYENS: That was a wonderful experience. There was always a sense that the film needed something at the end. It felt like part of a tradition. We were really lucky last year when we had Neil Finn write a beautiful song, which was wonderful and a great experience. When it came to the second film, it was one of those moments with the right person at the right time, and suddenly it all came together.

We’d actually met Ed when he was performing in New Zealand while we were shooting the pickups. We met him through a number of people we knew who said, ‘He loves the work of Professor Tolkien and the films.’ He was such a nice guy, and so was his manager. We got on really well with him.

Fran and Peter’s daughter, Katie, said to us, ‘He’s such a great singer.’ She gave us his last album. I remember Fran and I listening to it and going, ‘Wow, this guy’s got an amazing voice. He’s a really good writer.’

Then, as things were starting to take shape and we were thinking about what the song could be and who could do it, it became one of those moments where we all thought, ‘What about Ed?’ Fran said, ‘We think Ed might be a great choice,’ and Pete agreed completely. I think he shot him an email and the response was so immediate and so enthusiastic—within a couple of days, Ed was on a plane to New Zealand to come work on it. He had some ideas on the plane. I think he talked to Fran and Pete, had a talk with me, and he then went and saw the film. The next day he was in the studio writing it. It was that fast. He knew what he wanted. Pete very much had a sense of what he wanted for the end of film as well.

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