

# FOUNDERY PICTURES

## NEWS RELEASE

FROM: Foundery Pictures  
TO: Area News Outlets  
CONTACT: Rev John Jackman  
336.946.2080 OFFICE  
336.624.0115 CELL

*Lead actors BURGESS JENKINS and KEITH HARRIS are available for interview.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The world premiere screening of the locally-produced feature film **Wesley** will be held on Saturday, November 14, 2009 at the historic Stevens Center of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. The screening is scheduled at 7:00 pm.

The motion picture, which was mostly filmed in locations in Forsyth county, tells the story of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement. The film focuses on his early life and the personal struggles that lead to his spiritual transformation – and ultimately to revolutionary changes in England in ministry to the poor and outcast. Wesley’s movement included some of the first shelters for battered women and children, early recovery groups for alcoholics, free medical clinics, and ultimately led to the movement to abolish slavery.

The film features Winston-Salem native Burgess Jenkins (*Remember the Titans, The Reaping*) as the troubled young clergyman who travels to Georgia in the hopes of evangelizing the natives. There he falls in love with the beautiful young Sophy Hopkey (Carrie Anne Hunt), an affair that ends bitterly in a lawsuit. Searching for peace and true faith, Wesley is counseled by the Moravian missionaries who were living in Savannah, and then by Moravian Peter Boehler (Bill Oberts, Jr.) upon his return to London. Their influence leads to Wesley’s famous Aldersgate Experience, where he “felt his heart strangely warmed.”

The movie also stars television legend June Lockhart (*Lassie, Lost in Space*) as Wesley’s mother Susannah, and Golden Globe winner Kevin McCarthy (*Death of a Salesman, Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) as Bishop Ryder, who defends Wesley against attempts to defrock him and outlaw the fledgling renewal movement. Greensboro native R. Keith Harris (*Big Fish, Junebug*) portrays John’s brother Charles Wesley, whose own personal transformation leads him to become one of the most prolific hymn writers in history. There were 76 speaking parts in the movie, and over 160 extras, making Wesley perhaps one of the biggest low budget films to be locally produced. All told, hundreds of Triad area residents were involved in both on-screen and behind-the-scenes roles.

The Rev. John Jackman, a Moravian minister who is also an award-winning filmmaker, directed the film and was the driving force behind most of the production. The film started off as an ill-fated script *The Burning* that almost got produced by the BBC, but was shelved. When Jackman read the script and started thinking about how the Wesley story would translate into a movie, he says “the story just got under my skin and wouldn’t go away.” Jackman has produced several films about religious leaders of

**P. O. Box 1042 • Lewisville, NC 27023 • Phone/Fax: 336-946-2080 • Email: [info@founderypictures.com](mailto:info@founderypictures.com)  
[www.founderypictures.com](http://www.founderypictures.com)**

the past, and says most of them make pretty boring movies. “There’s too much preaching and praying and reading of books, not very dramatic.” The story of the Wesley brothers was different, though. “There’s a storm at sea, a star-crossed love affair, and mob violence – all the things you want to put in a movie!” Jackman said. He set about extensive research on the story; the current script is based largely on the actual journals of John and Charles Wesley, and was co-authored by screenwriter Carolyn Haywood.

The challenge was how to produce such an ambitious movie on a very small budget. Unlike most low-budget movies that are produced locally, Wesley had many challenges: it was a period film requiring a huge number of costumes, wigs, horses and carriages, and (most difficult) a square-rigged ship in a storm. The one thing that was not a problem were authentic appearing period locations. By filming at Old Salem, Salem Academy, Salem College, Bethabara Park, Graylyn and other locations in the county, Jackman was able to find locations and settings that seemed authentic for early Savannah, 18<sup>th</sup> century London, and Oxford.

For the scenes on the ship, the crew built a 35 foot section of ship deck and a 35’x50’ blue screen in a disused gym at The Children’s Home of Winston-Salem. Storm scenes were created as computer-generated animation.

The original score for the movie was composed by Bruce Kiesling, who has been the Resident Conductor of the Greensboro Symphony. Kiesling recently completed a degree in film scoring at the School of the Arts. A full orchestra of professional musicians, all locally based, were assembled to perform the score, which was recorded at Ovation Sound and on the scoring stage at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts Films School. It was the first time that the scoring stage has been used for a commercial project. Recording and mixing was under the supervision of award-winning sound designer Evan Richie.

The premiere screening of Wesley is scheduled at 7:00 pm on November 14th. Tickets are \$14 for adults, \$12 for students (ID required), and \$10 for children under 12. Tickets are available from the box office of the Stevens Center; call (336) 721-1945. A number of the actors who starred in the film will be present for a meet-and-greet and autograph opportunity after the screening.

/30/