



The Church

Michele Soavi

Italy, 1989, 90 minutes
 Colour/35mm
 Production Company: Cecchi Gori Group Tiger
 Cinematografica/ADC/Reteitalia
 Executive Producer: Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori
 Producer: Dario Argento
 Screenplay: Dario Argento, Franco Ferrini,
 Michele Soavi
 Cinematography: Renato Tafuri
 Editor: Franco Fraticelli
 Art Director: Antonello Geleng
 Costume Designer: Maurizio Paiola
 Principal Cast: Tomas Arana, Hugh Quarshie,
 Feodor Chaliapin, Barbara Cupisti, Antonella
 Vitale, Asia Argento

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Last year, Dario Argento's *Opera* introduced Toronto to the unique world of Italian horror. Its saturated flavour and uncompromising experimentation were enmeshed within a truly terrifying storyline. Argento has long surrounded himself with promising new talent and *The Church* proves that his nurturing has produced at least one great success. Heavy with metaphor and concealed terror, director Michele Soavi has created a gothic masterpiece. With its swirling camera angles and menacing use of colour and light, *The Church* represents perfectly the unabashed visual elegance which dominates the Italian horror scene. A team of medieval knights discovers a town embroiled in satanic heresies. They slaughter the villagers, bury them in a mass grave and attempt to bury the heresy forever along with the corpses by building a church on the site. The secret is hidden until the ancient cathedral is sent a new librarian, who unravels the puzzle of a tattered scroll. The spirits are let loose while a motley assortment of unsuspecting visitors are gathered in the cathedral. The doors slam shut, bolted for eternity, and the trapped guests mutate into violent embodiments of hate and evil, each gradually turning into vengeful demons of past heresies and crusades. As the stench of evil fills the house of God, physical objects and structures also become agents of past evil acts, until the total destruction of the church becomes the only solution.

Michele Soavi was born in Milan in 1959. At 18, he left school to work first as an actor for five years, and then as an assistant director on *Bambule* by Marco Modugno. At this time, he met Dario Argento. He worked as assistant director on Argento's *Tenebre* and *Phenomena*, as well as Bava's *Demoni 1*. He began directing in 1987 with *Deliria*, which was a modest success in Italy. He then worked as second unit director on both *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* and Argento's *Opera*. *The Church* is his second feature film.