



PBS



PRESS RELEASE

He loved them all. Then he met his match.

CASANOVA

MASTERPIECE THEATRE's season premiere
Sundays, October 8 and 15, 2006 on PBS

"Many new series are touted as a television treat. Few are. This one is."

—*Daily Express*

A legendary lover romances his way across eighteenth-century Europe in MASTERPIECE THEATRE's rollicking retelling of the life of *Casanova*, with Peter O'Toole (*Lawrence of Arabia*, *Troy*) as the champion seducer in his golden years and David Tennant (*Viva Blackpool*, *Doctor Who*) as Casanova in his frisky prime.

With a "whizzy script that brims with pace and wit" (*The Independent*) by writer-of-the-moment Russell T. Davies (*Doctor Who*, *Queer as Folk*), *Casanova* kicks off MASTERPIECE THEATRE's 36th season on Sundays, October 8 and 15, 2006 from 9 to 10:30pm on PBS (check local listings).

Also starring is Laura Fraser (*He Knew He Was Right*) as the beautiful Henriette, a match for Casanova in charm, trickery, repartee, and romantic longing. In other words, she is the perfect soul mate and perhaps even spouse for our hero—except she is unattainable.

Rupert Penry-Jones (*Match Point*) plays Count Grimani, Casanova's rival in love for Henriette; Shaun Parkes (*Doctor Who*) is Casanova's cheeky servant, Rocco; and Nina Sosanya (*Love Actually*) is Bellino, a castrato impersonator who complicates Casanova's love life.

Based on the historical Casanova's infamous twelve-volume memoirs, the program follows Giacomo Casanova, a.k.a. "Jack," from his birth out of wedlock to an actress mother; through his eventful career masquerading as a doctor, lawyer, astrologer, and the Chevalier de Seingalt (a title invented to gain him entrance to noble circles); and into his declining years as a librarian for a sympathetic count.

The abiding theme throughout is love for the opposite sex, and at least once for the same one. Casanova was noteworthy in his time for taking a sincere interest in his partners' personal interests and pleasure, which perhaps explains his spectacular success as a lover.

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MASTERPIECE THEATRE's production shifts back and forth between the aging Casanova (O'Toole), at work on his memoirs and reminiscing to a very curious parlor maid, Edith (Rose Byrne, *Troy*); and the young Casanova (Tennant), whom we see enacting these astonishing adventures with gusto.

Episode 1, airing Sunday, October 8 at 9pm, opens in Venice, where young Casanova rises from a childhood as an outcast to become a witty, intelligent hedonist gone wild. Along the way he meets the love of his life, Henriette, who is engaged to Grimani out of financial necessity. Only money stands in the way of Casanova's true happiness.

He gets his lucky break in the confessional, when his too candid report of his sins causes a stroke in the father confessor, Bragadin (Freddie Jones, *The Libertine*). Casanova nurses Bragadin back to health and in thanks is made heir to the cleric's family fortune. About to lose Henriette due to this turn of events, Grimani has Casanova arrested for crimes, real and imagined.

Episode 2, airing Sunday, October 15 at 9pm, continues the shifting perspective between the older and younger Casanovas, with vivid recollections of his daring prison break from Venice, his arrival at the royal court in Paris (where he has his second encounter with the cross-dressing singer Bellino), his invention of the lottery, and his sojourn in England and subsequent duel with Grimani.

As the years flow by, Henriette is always just out of reach, although the flame of longing for her still burns brightly—even in the aged Casanova, who has reason to hope that he will see her once again before he dies.

Casanova is a Power/Red Production coproduction for BBC Wales in association with Granada. The writer is Russell T. Davies, the director is Sheree Folkson (*My Family and Other Animals*, *Touching Evil*), and the producer is Gill McNeill. The executive producer for Power is Justin Bodle. The executive producers are Michele Buck, Julie Gardner, and Damien Timmer. The executive producers for Red Production Company are Russell T. Davies and Nicola Shindler.

MASTERPIECE THEATRE has been presented on PBS by WGBH since 1971. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for MASTERPIECE THEATRE is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public television viewers.

For more information about *Casanova* and MASTERPIECE THEATRE, visit **pbs.org/masterpiece**.

Press materials and photography are available at **pressroom.wgbh.org** and **pbs.org/pressroom**

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