



PBS



## RELEASE

### This old coffin

*Dracula*

On MASTERPIECE THEATRE

Sunday, February 11, 2007 at 9pm ET/PT on PBS

Seized with a powerful thirst, the Lord of the Undead stirs from his bed of Transylvanian dirt in MASTERPIECE THEATRE's chilling new adaptation of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, airing Sunday, February 11, 2007 from 9 to 10:30pm ET/PT on PBS (check local listings and lock your doors).

The London *Observer* called this innovative, new interpretation "dark, sexy, and fresh. True to the genre, this is proof again of Dracula's ability to rise from the dead."

Marc Warren (*Band of Brothers*) joins the ranks of the great screen Draculas with a performance that is as demonic as Bela Lugosi's from the 1930s, as urbane as Christopher Lee's from the 1950s, and as ominously sensual as Gary Oldman's from the 1990s.

David Suchet (*Poirot*) stars as vampire scholar Dr. Abraham Van Helsing, an authority on the powers of garlic, crucifixes, and wooden stakes to combat these bloodsucking monsters.

Also appearing are Sophia Myles (*Art School Confidential*, *Marple*) as Lucy Westenra, the chaste victim of Dracula's first attack in England; and Stephanie Leonidas as Mina Murray, who seems certain to follow her friend Lucy into the realm of the undead.

Rafe Spall (*A Good Year*) plays Mina's fiancé, Jonathan Harker; Dan Stevens (*Marple*) is Lucy's newlywed spouse, Arthur Holmwood; and Tom Burke (*Casanova*) plays Dr. John Seward, Lucy's unsuccessful suitor and the attending physician during her horrible descent into vampirism.

Drawing on themes that Bram Stoker hints at darkly but dares not state outright in his 1897 novel, screenwriter Stewart Harcourt (MYSTERY!'s *Jericho*) recasts the plot to focus on the Victorians' anxiety about sex and especially syphilis. Some scholars believe that Stoker himself died from syphilis, but the evidence is inconclusive.

Nonetheless, the novel could not be more explicit about the invisible infection that seeps into the bloodstream and slowly turns its victims into demented fiends: which is what Dracula does to his prey and also what syphilis often produced in the age before antibiotics.

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In MASTERPIECE THEATRE's retelling, Holmwood learns as a young man that he contracted syphilis at birth from his mother, who had been infected by his debauched father. Engaged to Lucy, he seeks out a cure to protect her from the disease. In this way, he falls into the clutches of the Brotherhood of the Undead, a London cult devoted to the worship of Dracula, although they are unaware of his true megalomania.

"I can guarantee you a transfusion," says Singleton (Donald Sumpter, *The Constant Gardener*), the head of the cult.

"And then I'll be alright?" asks Holmwood.

"Then you will be cured of your fate," replies the Dracula devotee ambiguously.

Holmwood dispatches solicitor Harker to Transylvania to make arrangements for the Count's move to England to effect Holmwood's cure, unwittingly setting in motion a nightmarish sequence of events.

Dracula fans will savor the familiar scenes and themes in this production: the horror of the Count's castle; the arrival in England of Dracula's storm-tossed ship with no one aboard except the dead captain lashed to the wheel; Dracula's nighttime blood feasts on Lucy; and the peculiar rules of vampire etiquette, such as that a vampire can only go where freely invited.

One common misconception about vampires is that they can't go out in the sun. As Bram Stoker makes clear, daylight is not fatal; it is just not the vampire's preferred feeding time.

However, one circumstance that is invariably fatal is the wooden stake through the heart. Or is it?

*Dracula* is a Granada and WGBH Boston production for BBC in association with Granada International. It is written by Stewart Harcourt (*Jericho*), directed by Bill Eagles, and produced by Trevor Hopkins with Julie Gardner (BBC). The executive producers are Michele Buck and Damien Timmer for Granada and Rebecca Eaton for WGBH.

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

For more information about *Dracula* and MASTERPIECE THEATRE, visit [\*\*pbs.org/masterpiece\*\*](http://pbs.org/masterpiece).

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