

MASTERPIECE™ *Classic*

Gillian Anderson in *Great Expectations*

Also starring David Suchet, Ray Winstone, Douglas Booth, and Vanessa Kirby
Sundays, April 1 and 8, 2012 at 9pm on PBS

An orphan boy meets an escaped convict, a crazed rich woman, a bewitching girl, and grows up to have great expectations of wealth from a mysterious patron, on *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens' remarkable tale of rags to riches to self-knowledge, starring Gillian Anderson (*The X-Files*, *Bleak House*), David Suchet, Ray Winstone, and Douglas Booth. The three-hour mini-series airs in two parts on MASTERPIECE CLASSIC, Sundays, April 1 and 8, 2012 at 9pm on PBS (check local listings).

Anderson appears as one of Dickens' most haunting creations: Miss Havisham, a bride-to-be who was jilted at the altar years before and has worn her fading wedding dress ever since, surrounded at home by the fossilized remains of the marriage feast and hell-bent on getting even with the male sex.

Newcomer Booth stars as Pip, the promising young man who is snared in Miss Havisham's lair. On the way to becoming a gentleman, he falls in love with Miss Havisham's beautiful adopted daughter, Estella, played by Vanessa Kirby (*The Hour*).

Great Expectations airs during the bicentennial of Dickens' birth and marks the fifteenth MASTERPIECE adaptation of the great novelist's works, including the acclaimed *Bleak House*, starring Anderson; *Little Dorrit*, the winner of seven Emmy awards; and *David Copperfield*, which introduced the very young Daniel Radcliffe (*Harry Potter*) to American audiences.

As part of the Dickens bicentennial, MASTERPIECE will also broadcast its sixteenth Dickens production, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, an unfinished work that will be given a new ending by writer Gwyneth Hughes (*Five Days*, *Miss Austen Regrets*).

Great Expectations co-stars David Suchet (*Poirot*) as Jaggers, Miss Havisham's crack attorney; and Ray Winstone (*Sexy Beast*) as the fugitive felon Abel Magwitch, who is by turns dangerous, vengeful, and recklessly loyal.

Filling out the spectacular cast are Shaun Dooley (*South Riding*) as the kindly blacksmith Joe Gargery, Pip's brother-in-law and childhood hero; Mark Addy (*The Full Monty*) as the village blowhard, Uncle Pumblechook; Paul Ritter (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*) as Wemmick, Jaggers' super-efficient clerk who has a secret life; Paul Rhys (*Vincent & Theo*) as Compeyson, whose dastardly swindles link several lines of the intricate plot; and Harry Lloyd (*Game of Thrones*) as Pip's guileless buddy Herbert Pocket (in real life Lloyd is the great-great-great grandson of Dickens himself).

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Not to mention many other colorful Dickensian characters, populating a world that is full of conspirators, rogues, rakes, and wretches.

Great Expectations opens with Pip as a boy (played by Oscar Kennedy) on the marshes near his home, where he encounters the desperate escapee Magwitch. Pip is coerced into stealing a metal file to break Magwitch's chains, but the boy willingly snares a piece of meat pie to feed the famished man.

So begins a classic coming-of-age story about innate kindness and learned indifference. Young Pip expects no more from life than to join his brother-in-law Joe at the blacksmith's forge. But fate intervenes when the neighboring rich eccentric Miss Havisham seeks Pip out as a playmate for her adopted daughter, Estella.

This sets Pip on a course that sees him tested in many ways, not least in being thrown into a wish-fulfillment paradise for a young man, where he has the pleasures of London at his disposal and true love—and great expectations—in his future. Or so he thinks.

Great Expectations is a BBC/MASTERPIECE Co-Production, directed by Brian Kirk (*Game of Thrones*, *Luther*) and written by Sarah Phelps (*Oliver Twist*), based on the novel by Charles Dickens. The producer is George Ormond. The executive producers are Anne Pivcevic for the BBC and Rebecca Eaton for MASTERPIECE on PBS.

MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is Executive Producer. Funding for the series is provided by Viking River Cruises, with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust, created to help ensure the series' future.

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