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The Mystery of Edwin Drood

Based on Charles Dickens' celebrated unfinished novel

On MASTERPIECE CLASSIC

Sunday, April 15, 2012 at 9pm ET on PBS

On June 8, 1870, Charles Dickens concluded a full-day's work on his latest novel and set down his pen. He died the next day, leaving *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* a mystery indeed. MASTERPIECE CLASSIC uses clues left by the author himself, together with inspired guesswork, to solve this famous literary puzzle. Adapted and completed by Gwyneth Hughes (*Miss Austen Regrets*), *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* stars Matthew Rhys (*Brothers & Sisters*), Tamzin Merchant (*The Tudors*), and Julia MacKenzie (*Miss Marple*), and airs Sunday, April 15, 2012, 9-11pm ET on PBS (check local listings).

MASTERPIECE's resolution of the intricately tangled plot is a fitting tribute to Dickens 200th birthday, celebrated in 2012.

The recent UK broadcast of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* enthralled critics, with *The Sunday Telegraph* (London) praising its "darkly compelling pull." *The Guardian* (London) applauded the film's "uniformly brilliant performances." And *The Daily Telegraph* (London) saw it as "the evil twin of *A Christmas Carol* ... another story in which a central character is visited by 'Specters ... at midnight,'" adding, "Gwyneth Hughes has found a solution that is clever and ingenious."

Joining the cast are Ron Cook (*Little Dorrit*), Alun Armstrong (*Bleak House*), Freddie Fox (*Any Human Heart*), Rory Kinnear (*Cranford*), Ian McNeice (*David Copperfield*), Amber Rose Revah (*House of Saddam*), and Sacha Dhawan (*The History Boys*).

In failing health as he wrote the serialized installments of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Dickens abandoned the sunny geniality of his earlier work for a plot that was more dreamlike, erotic, and sinister than anything he had ever published. He was halfway though his dark tale when he died.

The story opens in an opium haze, as John Jasper (Rhys) smokes his way into oblivion to take his mind off his detested duties as a village choirmaster—and to fantasize about murdering his guileless nephew, Edwin Drood (Fox). Drood is engaged to marry the beautiful Rosa Bud (Merchant), with whom Jasper is perversely in love.

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He is not alone. A mysterious visitor from Ceylon, Neville Landless (Dhawan), has arrived in town with his twin sister, Helena (Revah). Taking an intense interest in Rosa, Landless objects to Drood's treatment of her, sparking a feud between the two young men. At the same time, Helena becomes Rosa's best friend.

Meanwhile, Jasper's curiosity about possible resting places for the dead takes him to the crypt beneath the cathedral where he works, with the eccentric stonemason Durdles (Cook) as his guide. Durdles has the unnerving habit of referring to himself in the third person, as if his body is somewhere else.

From there, things get spookier and spookier, until Drood disappears on the night of his supposed reconciliation with Landless.

There are no end of Dickensian suspects who may have wished Drood harm. Besides Jasper, Rosa, and the Landless twins, there are Rosa's pathologically generous guardian, Hiram Grewgious (Armstrong); the too-good-to-be-true Reverend Crisparkle (Kinnear); and the self-important Mayor Sapsea (McNeice), who happens to have a gigantic key to an empty tomb.

Even *MASTERPIECE MYSTERY*'s Miss Marple is on the scene—at least the actress (MacKenzie) who plays her is, starring as Reverend Crisparkle's nosy mother, who is too jumpy to crack a case.

Which is just as well, for Marple and Poirot combined could never guess the solution to this supreme mystery of mysteries!

The Mystery of Edwin Drood is a BBC/*MASTERPIECE* Co-Production, directed by Diarmuid Lawrence and written by Gwyneth Hughes, based on the unfinished novel by Charles Dickens. The Producer is Lisa Osborne. The Executive Producers are Anne Pivcevic for the BBC and Rebecca Eaton for *MASTERPIECE* on PBS.

About Masterpiece

MASTERPIECE on PBS is presented by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for *MASTERPIECE* 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. Visit pbs.org/masterpiece for more information about *MASTERPIECE* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

Press Contacts:

Ellen Dockser, WGBH, ellen_dockser@wgbh.org, 617-300-5338

Olivia Wong, WGBH, olivia_wong@wgbh.org, 617-300-5349

Press materials available at pressroom.wgbh.org and pressroom.pbs.org