

MASTERPIECE

MASTERPIECE on PBS to Co-Produce Playground's new James Herriot adaptation ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

Boston, MA; June 27, 2019 - MASTERPIECE on PBS will co-produce *All Creatures Great and Small*, a brand new adaptation based on best-selling author James Herriot's cherished and iconic collection of stories. The series is a production from BAFTA and Golden Globe®-winning production company Playground (*Howards End*, *Wolf Hall*). Channel 5 in the UK commissioned the series and All3Media will distribute internationally. The production will also receive funding and support from Screen Yorkshire.

All Creatures Great and Small will shoot on location in Yorkshire, England, as 2020 sees the 50th anniversary of the original publication of the much-loved books. The production, a six-part series plus a Christmas special, will be produced by Richard Burrell (*New Tricks*, *Silent Witness*). Executive Producers are Colin Callender and Melissa Gallant for Playground, Hugo Heppell for Screen Yorkshire and Rebecca Eaton for MASTERPIECE. MASTERPIECE on PBS is presented by WGBH Boston. Ben Vanstone (*The Last Kingdom*) is lead writer and Executive Producer and Brian Percival (*Downton Abbey*) is lead director.

Since their first publication in 1970, the beloved books of James Alfred Wight, published under the pen name James Herriot, have held a special place in people's hearts throughout the world. Chronicling the heartwarming and humorous adventures of a young country vet, the books introduced readers to his unconventional mentor and the cast of farmers and townsfolk who lived and worked in the Yorkshire Dales in the 1930s. This new adaptation will preserve the rich spirit, tone and values of Herriot's iconic characters and stories and will bring to life his sharply observed, entertaining and incredibly funny tales of country life in the North of England for a modern audience, introducing a new generation to his life-affirming stories.

"Revisiting James Herriot's beloved stories is an immense privilege and we are honoured that Alf Wight's family have entrusted us with his legacy. It is a responsibility we take very seriously," says Colin Callender, Executive Producer and CEO of Playground. "At a time when the country feels more divided than ever, Herriot's glorious books remind us how to connect and belong again. The series will embrace the fun and the nostalgia of revisiting the England of the past, while celebrating Herriot's values that, despite all our current upheaval, still underpin British life today."

"When it originally aired on public broadcasting, *All Creatures Great and Small* captured the hearts of millions of television viewers," says Rebecca Eaton, Executive Producer of MASTERPIECE. "We promise that the new series will have all the wit, warmth, and quirky charm of the original - and of course, lots of irresistible animals."

Sebastian Cardwell, Channel 5 commented: “James Herriot has a special place in the heart of the public and the commission of this iconic drama series, against the stunning backdrop of the Yorkshire Dales, is set to bring joy to a new army of TV viewers. The original books affectionately captured a unique slice of British life; in challenging times, we hope the charming and heart-warming stories of community and compassion will resonate with new audiences.”

Executive Producer Hugo Heppell, Head of Investments at Screen Yorkshire, says: “People all over the world know Yorkshire through James Herriot and ‘All Creatures Great And Small’ and we are thrilled to see the warmth, the down to earth wit and the generosity of spirit that infuse his stories brought back to the screen for a new generation.”

Never out of print, the books have sold 60 million copies internationally becoming a global cultural phenomenon with devoted fans around the world. Their focus on community and its importance in our lives gives Herriot’s work an enduring power and contemporary resonance that reminds us all that belonging to a community makes us part of something greater than ourselves.

James Alfred Wight OBE FRCVS was a veterinary surgeon who graduated from Glasgow Veterinary College at the age of 23. He headed to a veterinary practice in Thirsk, Yorkshire, in 1940 where he fell in love with the Dales and the woman he would marry, Joan Danbury. Wight later wrote stories based on his own adventures as a young country vet, under the pen name James Herriot. Herriot quickly became one of Britain’s best-loved authors.

Jim Wight and Rosie Page, Wight’s children, say: “The books of James Herriot have enchanted millions of readers worldwide for almost half a century. We are delighted that our father’s work will be brought to life once again for a new generation of viewers Great and Small.”

All Creatures Great and Small is a timeless classic that continues to be loved by generations. The collected works of *All Creatures Great and Small* is comprised of Herriot’s debut novel *If Only They Could Talk*, originally published in the UK in 1970, and its follow-up *It Shouldn’t Happen to A Vet*. Herriot went on to write over a dozen subsequent stories and collections which have gone on to sell millions of copies internationally.

About Channel 5:

Channel 5 is a public service broadcaster and the UK’s third latest commercial TV station. Launched in March 1997 Channel 5 has been owned by Viacom International Media Networks since September 2014. Channel 5, 5STAR, 5USA, 5Spike, 5Select and My5 TV reach 3 in 4 of the UK viewing public each month with a diverse schedule including issue-led documentaries, popular factual, accessible history, stunning natural history, inclusive entertainment and reality, top level sport, high quality scripted programming and critically acclaimed children’s and news programming. Through its agenda-driving commissions, Channel 5 has led on societal issues from inequality to inner city gang life, homelessness to mental health, aiming to tell the story of modern Britain by reflecting the lives of people across the nation. My5 is an on-demand service allowing viewers to watch content online for free from Channel 5, 5STAR, 5USA, 5Select and 5Spike. In 2018, Channel 5 won its first BAFTA for *Cruising with Jane McDonald* and was named ‘Channel of the Year’ at the Edinburgh TV Festival.

About Viacom International Media Networks:

Viacom International Media Networks (VIMN), a unit of Viacom Inc. (NASDAQ: VIA, VIAB), is comprised of many of the world's most popular multimedia entertainment brands, including MTV, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, BET, Paramount Channel, VH1, VIVA and COLORS. Viacom brands are seen globally in more than 600 million households in 170 territories and 37 languages via more than 200 locally programmed and operated TV channels and more than 550 digital media and mobile TV properties. For more information about Viacom and its businesses, visit www.viacom.com. Keep up with Viacom news by following Viacom's blog at blog.viacom.com and Twitter feed at www.twitter.com/Viacom

About Playground

Playground is a New York and London based television, film and theatre production company founded in 2012 by award-winning producer Colin Callender. It is committed to producing smart, entertaining drama for the screen and the stage bringing together the finest US and UK talent from the worlds of theatre, film, and television.

Playground has produced over 75 hours of primetime television drama garnering 15 Emmy nominations, 26 BAFTA nominations, and 12 Golden Globe nominations, including winning a Golden Globe for Best Miniseries.

Recent productions include *Wolf Hall*, the BAFTA, Golden Globe and Peabody Award winning miniseries starring Mark Rylance, Damian Lewis and Claire Foy for the BBC and Masterpiece, and *The Dresser*, the RTS winning television adaptation of Ronald Harwood's acclaimed play starring Ian McKellen and Anthony Hopkins and directed by Richard Eyre for the BBC and Starz, *The White Princess*, a limited series for Starz drawn from the bestselling book by Philippa Gregory, *Howards End*, Academy Award-winner Kenneth Lonergan's adaptation of E.M. Forster's classic novel starring Hayley Atwell, Matthew Macfadyen and Tracey Ullman directed by Hettie Macdonald for the BBC and Starz, *Little Women* adapted by Heidi Thomas and starring Emily Watson, Michael Gambon and Angela Lansbury for the BBC and Masterpiece, *King Lear* starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson and directed by Richard Eyre for the BBC and Amazon, Lucy Kirkwood's *Chimerica* starring Alessandro Nivola, Cherry Jones and Sophie Okonedo for Channel 4, and *The Spanish Princess*, a continuation of *The White Princess* and *The White Queen* starring Charlotte Hope, Laura Carmichael and Harriet Walter for Starz.

Playground's previous theatre productions on Broadway include: Nora Ephron's Tony-nominated *Lucky Guy* directed by George C. Wolfe starring Tom Hanks in his Broadway debut, Harvey Fierstein's Tony-nominated *Casa Valentina* directed by Joe Mantello, the Tony award-winning revival of musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Jez Butterworth's *The River* directed by Ian Rickson starring Hugh Jackman, and Kenneth Branagh and Rob Ashford's critically acclaimed groundbreaking production of *Macbeth* at The Park Avenue Armory in New York, and, in the West End, John Tiffany's *The Glass Menagerie* and Casey Nicholaw's *Dreamgirls*.

Playground, in partnership with Sonia Friedman Productions, is currently producing *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* in the West End where it won a record-breaking 9 Olivier Awards, on Broadway where it won 6 Tony Awards, including Best Play, and in Melbourne. Other current theatre productions include the Tony Award-winning best musical *Dear Evan Hansen* on Broadway.

About Screen Yorkshire:

Screen Yorkshire champions the film, TV, games and digital industries in Yorkshire and the Humber, UK. Its aim is to secure and support the very best projects, companies and individuals, helping to make Yorkshire and the Humber one of the most sought-after destinations for production in the UK.

Screen Yorkshire offers production financing through the Yorkshire Content Fund. Credits include: *Hope Gap*, *Official Secrets*, *Ackley Bridge*, *Dark River*, *Yardie*, *Ghost Stories*, *Stardog & Turbocat*, *Journeyman*, *Dad's Army*, *Swallows and Amazons*, *Testament of Youth*, *'71*, *National Treasure*, *The Great Train Robbery*, *Peaky Blinders*, *Jonathan Strange* and *Mr Norrell* and *Hank Zipzer*.

Screen Yorkshire delivers the film office services for Yorkshire & Humber and has been leading the development of the Yorkshire Screen Hub, a cluster for the screen industries, recognised by the BFI in 2016 as the first awardee of funds from its Creative Cluster Challenge Fund. Screen Yorkshire also works with ScreenSkills and the BFI to develop regional and UK wide talent by designing and delivering industry schemes www.screenyorkshire.co.uk

About MASTERPIECE

Winner of 83 Primetime Emmys® and 16 Peabody Awards, MASTERPIECE has been essential Sunday night viewing for millions of fans since 1971. Rebecca Eaton is the executive producer of the series. Funding for MASTERPIECE is provided by Viking and Raymond James with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust. Presented on PBS by WGBH Boston, MASTERPIECE is known for recent hits such as *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Victoria*, and beloved classics such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Poldark*.

pbs.org/masterpiece

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