

MASTERPIECE®

The End of an Era
Downton Abbey
The Final Season

Premieres January 3, 2016 on MASTERPIECE on PBS

The top-rated PBS drama of all time approaches its climactic chapter as *Downton Abbey* enters its sixth and final season on MASTERPIECE, bringing exciting closure to a remarkable series. Where will fate, passion, ambition, and duty lead television's most beloved characters? Millions of devoted viewers will soon find out on the final season of *Downton Abbey*, airing in nine enthralling episodes at 9pm ET, Sundays, January 3 – February 21, 2016 with the series finale airing Sunday, March 6, 2016 on MASTERPIECE on PBS. MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston.

Making their bittersweet farewell are members of the beloved cast, including Maggie Smith, Hugh Bonneville, Michelle Dockery, Elizabeth McGovern, Jim Carter, Joanne Froggatt, Penelope Wilton, Phyllis Logan, Laura Carmichael, Brendan Coyle, Lesley Nicol, Sophie McShera, Robert James-Collier, Allen Leech, Kevin Doyle, Samantha Bond, David Robb, Raquel Cassidy and Michael Fox.

Written and created by Julian Fellowes, *Downton Abbey* is a Carnival Films/MASTERPIECE Co-Production. Carnival Films, headed by *Downton Abbey* Executive Producer Gareth Neame, is a division of NBCUniversal International Television Studios. With 59 Emmy® nominations, more than any other non-US show in Emmy® history, *Downton Abbey* is one of the most honored series on television, having captured 12 Emmys®, three Golden Globes®, three Screen Actors Guild Awards, a Producers Guild Award, and three BAFTAs, plus a 2015 BAFTA Special Award in recognition of the series' outstanding global success.

Reviewers have been no less impressed, lauding last season as “marvelously sustained” (*Wall Street Journal*), “delicious as ever” (*New York Daily News*), and “the perfect way to begin the new year” (*Los Angeles Times*). Writing of the Season 5 finale, *Variety* marveled at “just how splendid the show can be—warm, funny, and emotional on a dazzling assortment of fronts.”

Since *Downton Abbey*'s first season, its audience has grown at a phenomenal rate, more than doubling by Season 5, which reached 25.5 million viewers. The show is consistently one of the most-watched dramas on American television, often beating all competitors in its Sunday night time slot.

Downton Abbey opened Season 1 with a crisis sparked by the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. Having weathered the demise of a string of heirs, the horrors of World War I, the Spanish flu, false convictions and romantic betrayals, not to mention the compromising death of a Turkish diplomat in the throes of passion, *Downton Abbey* is primed for new surprises in Season 6.

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Season 6 opens in 1925 with a series of crises reflecting the momentous changes that are transforming society. Women's rights have given Lady Mary and Lady Edith new positions of responsibility: Mary runs the estate, and Edith manages the magazine she inherited from Michael Gregson. Meanwhile, Tom Branson has left for Boston, and newlyweds Lady Rose and Atticus Aldridge are trying their luck in Jazz Age New York. Anna Bates faces a murder charge, though many still suspect her husband. And for the rest of the servants, big doubts hang over their jobs. Will great houses and the fortunes that support them soon be gone?

Explaining the difficult decision to cue the final curtain, Carnival's Gareth Neame says, "We wanted to close the doors of *Downton Abbey* when it felt right and natural for the storylines to come together, and when the show was still being enjoyed so much by its fans. We can promise a final season full of all the usual drama and intrigue, but with the added excitement of discovering how and where they all end up."

Reflecting on the spectacular success of *Downton Abbey*, which has been the most popular series in the 45 years that MASTERPIECE has been on the air, MASTERPIECE Executive Producer Rebecca Eaton sums up: "We are indebted to our UK partners for making a show that will go down in television history, not just for its impeccable writing, acting, and production values, but most importantly, for its enormously warm-hearted audience appeal."

Downton Abbey is a Carnival Films/MASTERPIECE Co-Production written and created by Julian Fellowes. The series is Executive Produced by Gareth Neame, Julian Fellowes, Liz Trubridge, and Nigel Marchant. Chris Croucher is the Producer. The Executive Producer for MASTERPIECE is Rebecca Eaton. The Senior Series Producer for MASTERPIECE is Susanne Simpson.

About MASTERPIECE

The top-rated primetime show 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 and Audible with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust, created to help ensure the series' future.

About PBS

PBS, with over 350 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches more than 103 million people through television and over 33 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS' premier children's TV programming and its website, pbskids.org, are parents' and teachers' most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following PBS on Twitter, Facebook or through our apps for mobile devices. Specific program information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following PBS Pressroom on Twitter.

About Carnival Films

Carnival Films is a division of NBC Universal International Studios and is the UK's largest drama specialist. The company is responsible for the global TV sensation *Downton Abbey*, winner of three Golden Globes and twelve Primetime Emmy awards, including Best Mini-series. It is the most nominated non-US show in the history of the Emmy's with a total of 59 nominations and is now in over 250 territories worldwide. Among numerous national and international awards, including three Screen Actors Guild Awards and three National Television Awards, the show has even garnered a Guinness World Record for highest critical ratings for a TV show. *Downton Abbey* is executive produced by Carnival's Managing Director Gareth Neame, who sold the production company to NBCUniversal in 2008.

Founded in 1978, Carnival Films has produced many hundreds of hours of popular drama both in the UK and US, including primetime series such as *Poirot*, *Hotel Babylon*, *Whitechapel*, *Dracula* and *The Philanthropist*, as well as mini-series such as C4's iconic *Traffik*, David Nicholl's *The 7:39*, David Hare's *Worricker Trilogy* as well as William Boyd's BAFTA-winning *Any Human Heart*, and Peter Morgan's BAFTA-winning *The Lost Honour of Christopher Jefferies*.

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The sixth and final season of *Downton Abbey* is currently airing on ITV and will return to PBS in January 2016. Carnival's latest series *The Last Kingdom* is currently airing on BBC TWO and BBC America. Stan Lee's *Lucky Man* also airs on Sky One in 2016.

Carnival Films was recognised as best production company at the 2011 Bulldog Awards and 2012 Broadcast Awards.

About WGBH

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcaster and the largest producer of PBS content for TV and the Web, including Frontline, Nova, American Experience, Masterpiece, Antiques Roadshow, Arthur, Curious George and more than a dozen other prime-time, lifestyle, and children's series. WGBH also is a major supplier of programming for public radio, and oversees Public Radio International (PRI). As a leader in educational multimedia for the classroom, WGBH supplies content to PBS LearningMedia, a national broadband service for teachers and students. WGBH also is a pioneer in technologies and services that make media accessible to those with hearing or visual impairments. WGBH has been recognized with hundreds of honors. More info at www.wgbh.org.

pbs.org/masterpiece

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