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Their Finest Hour

***Home Fires***

Starring Samantha Bond and Francesca Annis

In a World War II–era drama

Sundays, October 4 – November 8, 2015 at the special time of 8pm ET on MASTERPIECE on PBS

Samantha Bond (*Downton Abbey*) and Francesca Annis (*Reckless*) head an extraordinary cast in a moving drama about women in an English village facing the onset of World War II. Calm, fortitude, and creativity are the watchwords on *Home Fires*, airing in six inspiring episodes on MASTERPIECE, Sundays, October 4 – November 8, 2015 at the special time of 8pm ET on PBS.

Bond plays forward-thinking Frances Barden, a born leader with a stubborn streak, while Annis is her antagonist, Joyce Cameron, obsessed with class and tradition. The two are bitter rivals for control of the local Women's Institute, a nationwide service organization. With war looming, their chapter faces its moment of truth. Will the largely social group shut up shop for the duration, or will it reinvent itself to help the nation in its hour of need?

Audiences and critics fell in love with *Home Fires* during its recent UK broadcast, which enticed over six million viewers each week. *The Daily Mirror* (London) applauded the series as "an astonishing story about women as war breaks out." "There are few better dramas on television," echoed the *Sunday Express* (London). And *The Guardian* (London) promised, "You can't go wrong with a face-off between Samantha Bond and Francesca Annis!"

Co-starring with Bond and Annis are a multitude of gifted British actresses playing the spectrum of women in the village, from maids to shopkeepers to gentry, including Ruth Gemmell (*Fever Pitch*), Claire Rushbrook (*Great Expectations*), Frances Grey (*Case Histories*), Clare Calbraith (*Downton Abbey*), Rachel Hurd-Wood (*Peter Pan*), Leila Mimmack (*Inspector Lewis*), Claire Price (*The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*), Fenella Woolgar (*Case Histories*), Leanne Best (*Worricker: Salting the Battlefield*), and Daisy Badger (*Shelter*).

Appearing as the principal local men are Ed Stoppard (*Upstairs Downstairs*), Mark Bazeley (*Endeavour*), Mark Bonnar (*The Paradise*), Mike Noble (*Mr. Selfridge*), Daniel Ryan (*Worricker: Salting the Battlefield*), and Chris Coghill (*Nowhere Boy*).

*Home Fires* opens in August 1939. War with Germany is all but certain, and the citizens of the isolated village of Great Paxford are each facing it in their own way. Men of fighting age are mostly enlisting or waiting to be called. Some of the women are joining the female military services; others already have essential jobs, such as farming; and still others are planning to "dig for victory," planting gardens to reduce the need for food imports. Since German submarines will be attacking merchant ships, any task that adds to the nation's self-sufficiency is vital.

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PBS WGBH

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Frances (Bond), whose husband owns a local factory, believes that the Women's Institute has an important role to play. Joyce (Annis), the longtime president of the institute, vehemently disagrees and proposes suspending activities until the war is over. So begins a quarrel that mirrors the fragmentation rending the wider world. In Great Paxford, this crisis ends up cementing the friendships of a group of women who have their own personal troubles, but who now have a shared mission that will lead them to their finest hour.

*Home Fires* is based on *Jambusters*, Julie Summers' enthralling history of the Women's Institute in World War II. Watch for Summers in a cameo role: she's "Mrs. Summers" in the brown hat, presiding over the suspenseful election for president in episode two.

*Home Fires* is a Co-Production of ITV Studios and MASTERPIECE. The Creator is Simon Block. The Executive Producers are Francis Hopkinson and Catherine Oldfield and Rebecca Eaton for MASTERPIECE. The Producers are Sue de Beauvoir and Jeremy Gwilt. The Writers are Simon Block, Mark Burt, and Tina Pepler. The Directors are Bruce Goodison and Robert Quinn.

The top-rated primetime show on PBS, MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is Executive Producer. Viking River Cruises is the exclusive corporate funder of *Home Fires* on MASTERPIECE on PBS, with additional funding provided by PBS, WGBH, and the MASTERPIECE Trust.

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