

MASTERPIECE

Forbidden love

Man in an Orange Shirt

Oscar®-winner Vanessa Redgrave stars in a heart-rending
tale of love outlawed and redeemed
on MASTERPIECE
Sunday, June 17, 2018 at 9pm ET on PBS

A remarkable cast headed by Oscar-winner Vanessa Redgrave (*Julia*) portrays a pair of love stories, sixty years apart, linked by family ties, sexual identity, and a mysterious painting, in *Man in an Orange Shirt*, scripted by bestselling novelist Patrick Gale (*A Place Called Winter*) and airing in a single two-hour presentation on MASTERPIECE on PBS, Sunday, June 17, 2018 at 9pm ET as part of LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

Joining Redgrave are Joanna Vanderham (*The Paradise*), Laura Carmichael (*Downton Abbey*), Julian Sands (*A Room with a View*), Frances de la Tour (*The Collection*), Adrian Schiller (*Victoria, Beauty and the Beast*), and Joanna David (*Rebecca*).

Playing the star-crossed lovers are Oliver Jackson-Cohen (*Mr. Selfridge*), James McArdle (*Salting the Battlefield*), Julian Morris (*Little Women*), and David Gyasi (*Interstellar*).

Man in an Orange Shirt was broadcast to wide acclaim in the UK in 2017 for the fiftieth anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality. *The Telegraph* (London) praised the drama as “a well-crafted and moving dialogue between past and present.” *The Guardian* (London) wrote, “*Man in an Orange Shirt* does a beautiful job of showing the consequences of repression for all during this time of upheaval.” And *The Mail on Sunday* (London) proclaimed “Vanessa Redgrave is a magnificent standout.”

The plot opens on the Italian front near the end of World War II. British Captain Michael Berryman (Jackson-Cohen) saves the life of a wounded fellow officer and recognizes him as Thomas March (McArdle), an old schoolmate, now serving as an official war artist. Though engaged to his childhood sweetheart, Flora (Vanderham), Michael feels a powerful attraction to Thomas, who feels the same way. After the artist’s recuperation, the two share a brief, passionate encounter before parting.

With the war over, Michael looks up Thomas in London, and they spend a liberating, amorous weekend at Michael’s rundown country cottage. There, Thomas sketches Michael for a painting that will become “Man in an Orange Shirt.” In an era when homosexuality in England was punished by prison, there is no hope of living together. Furthermore, Michael feels honor-bound to marry Flora, and he asks Thomas to be his best man. This sets the stage for a turbulent marriage, not least because Flora suspects nothing about her fiancé’s sexual preference.



PBS



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The second half of the drama skips two generations to the present day. Michael and Thomas have died, and Flora (Redgrave) keeps house with her grandson, Adam (Morris), a young veterinarian active in London's gay hookup scene—a subject Flora carefully avoids.

Into Adam's restless life comes Steve (Gyasi), an architect eager for a stable relationship and intrigued by the challenge of fixing up the cottage that Adam has been given by Flora—the same place where Michael and Thomas spent their idyllic weekend six decades earlier. The times change, the laws change, the technology changes (as illustrated by Adam's addiction to dating apps), but the problem of love, commitment, and acceptance is as persistent and formidable as ever.

It's not just Adam and Steve who face this dilemma. So does Flora, for she has unfinished business with the past.

Summing up *Man in an Orange Shirt*, Britain's arts and entertainment guide *The List* recorded the fervent wish of the screenwriter: "I hope this is much more than just a drama about gay men and their difficulties," remarked Patrick Gale. "I hope that its two love stories will touch people simply as love stories."

"He'll be pleased to know," wrote *The List*, "he succeeded."

Man in an Orange Shirt is produced by Kudos for MASTERPIECE and BBC TWO. The executive producer is Diederick Santer. Lucy Richer is the executive producer for the BBC. Rebecca Eaton is the executive producer for MASTERPIECE. The producer is Lisa Osborne. The writer is Patrick Gale. The director is Michael Samuels.

pbs.org/masterpiece

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