

MASTERPIECE

The Yanks Are Coming!

My Mother and Other Strangers

Starring Hattie Morahan and Aaron Staton

in a World War II love story set in Northern Ireland

MASTERPIECE on PBS

Sundays, June 18 – July 16, 2017 at a special time of 8pm ET on PBS

Hattie Morahan (*Sense and Sensibility*) and Aaron Staton (*Mad Men*) star as a village teacher and U.S. air force officer whose chance meeting in Northern Ireland during World War II leads to a friendship that blossoms into something deeper, on *My Mother and Other Strangers*, airing in five parts on MASTERPIECE, Sundays, June 18 – July 16, 2017 at 8pm ET on PBS.

Also starring is Owen McDonnell (*An Klondike*) as the teacher's dour but loving husband, along with Eileen O'Higgins (*Brooklyn*), Michael Nevin (*Game of Thrones*), Des McAleer (*Wuthering Heights*), Kate Phillips (*Wolf Hall*), Fiona Button (*Grantchester*), and Ciarán Hinds (*Persuasion*).

During its recent UK broadcast, viewers and critics were deeply moved by this bittersweet tale. "No other recent drama has captured quite so keenly a sense of the complex, hidden, unspoken desires that can roil away beneath even the quietest surface," wrote the reviewer for *The Telegraph*, who added, "Hattie Morahan is superb."

Shot on the stunningly beautiful Ards Peninsula in Northern Ireland, *My Mother and Other Strangers* portrays the culture clash when a U.S. bomber base is established near the fictional village of Moybeg in 1943, bringing hundreds of gum-chewing, swing-band-listening American airmen to a remote Ulster farming community, with its winsome women and stolid workingmen.

The action is framed from the point of view of a young boy, Francis Coyne (played by Nevin, with voiceover of Francis as an older man by Hinds). Francis's childhood is populated by strangers. On the one hand, there are the friendly Americans in their Jeeps and airplanes, who treat him like a little brother. Then there is his mother, Rose (Morahan), an upright Englishwoman who married Michael Coyne (McDonnell) and moved to his hometown, Moybeg, where she is raising their three children, teaching in the village school, and tending a grocery shop next to Michael's pub. Despite being a pillar of the community, Rose has never fit in. She speaks more properly than the locals, loves English literature, and has a lively interest in the wider world.

Into this isolated domain comes Captain Ronald Dreyfus (Staton), U.S. Army Air Forces, who encounters Rose during a walk on the heath. When they meet again, he quotes her a line from Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott"—one of her favorite poems.

Captain Dreyfus is as reserved as Rose is. But in his capacity as base liaison officer, he has occasion to see her frequently: dealing with a fracas between airmen and regulars at the pub, arranging for an army nurse (Phillips) to care for a sick child, and planning a Christmas party for the school.

Both would-be lovers fight against the stronger feelings that are overwhelming them—emotions that are increasingly evident to those around them.

Wary of betraying her husband, Rose feels seized by some otherworldly force, a sentiment she can only recognize from a piece of literature—Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*—which she quotes from memory: “Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!”

My Mother and Other Strangers is a BBC Northern Ireland Drama Production and MASTERPIECE co-production. The executive producers are Barry Devlin and Stephen Wright. The executive producer for MASTERPIECE is Rebecca Eaton. The producer is Grainne Marmion. The writer is Barry Devlin. The director is Adrian Shergold.

About MASTERPIECE

The top-rated primetime show on PBS, MASTERPIECE celebrated its 45th anniversary in 2016. MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for the series is provided by Viking Cruises and Farmers Insurance® with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust. MASTERPIECE is known for presenting iconic shows such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga*, *Poldark*, *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey*, and *Victoria*.

pbs.org/masterpiece

MASTERPIECE Press Contacts

Ellen Dockser, ellen_dockser@wgbh.org, 617-300-5338
Laura Garvey, laura_garvey@wgbh.org, 617-300-5342

March 2017

FUNDING FOR MASTERPIECE PROVIDED BY

