

Six by Agatha

A festival of murder from Agatha Christie
On MASTERPIECE MYSTERY!

Sundays, June 21 to July 26, 2009, at 9pm ET on PBS

With grey cells firing and knitting needles clicking, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple make their triumphant return to PBS in “Six by Agatha,” a half dozen whodunits by the greatest mystery author of all time, Agatha Christie, airing on MASTERPIECE MYSTERY!, Sundays, June 21 to July 26, 2009, at 9pm ET on PBS (check local listings).

The six weeks of suspenseful stories include two new Poirot mysteries, with David Suchet (*Henry VIII*, *The Way We Live Now*) reprising his signature role of the Belgian private eye who cracks cases with the help of his “little grey cells,” plus four new Marple mysteries, introducing award-winning actress Julia McKenzie (*Cranford*) as the newest grandmotherly sleuth.

Now in his 22nd year as Poirot, David Suchet is as absorbed as ever in the role. “The time has flown by,” he marvels. “It’s wonderful that people see a character who is cocky, proud, and boastful, and yet they just want to spend time with him. There is enormous affection for the little man.”

Stepping into the shoes of a succession of screen Marples, including Margaret Rutherford, Angela Lansbury, Joan Hickson, and Geraldine McEwan, Julia McKenzie feels both honored and awed. “I’m very excited but also slightly daunted by the enormous responsibility that comes with taking on such an iconic role,” she says. “And I suppose I’ll have to remind myself how to knit!”

Suchet and McKenzie are joined by a who’s who lineup of top actors, playing some very suspicious characters. They include Joan Collins (*Dynasty*) as Miss Marple’s old school chum, Rupert Graves (*The Forsyte Saga*) as a flamboyant prodigal son, Matthew MacFadyen (*Little Dorrit*) as an earnest police inspector, Prunella Scales (*Fawlty Towers*) as a vengeful widow, Jemma Redgrave (*Bramwell*) as a widow gone bonkers, David Haig (*My Boy Jack*) as a power-hungry politician, and Zoë Wanamaker (*David Copperfield*) as Poirot’s occasional sidekick Ariadne Olivier, an eccentric mystery writer who Christie may have based on herself.

Transcending the mystery genre, Christie remains the most popular novelist in history, with her work appearing in 50 languages in over 70 countries and more than two billion of her books sold to date. Published between 1920 and 1976, her 85 volumes of detective novels and short stories include other sleuths besides Poirot and Miss Marple. Yet these two are the best loved by far—improbable as they may seem as crime solvers. One is a spat-wearing Belgian refugee; the other is a kindly but keen-eyed spinster.

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Oddly enough, in all of Christie's works Poirot and Marple never meet, even though they work some of the same crime beats. It's a sure sign that there are more than enough unsolved murders in England to go around.

"Six by Agatha" features the following programs:

Hercule Poirot: "Cat Among the Pigeons"—Sunday, June 21, 2009 at 9pm

Something is amiss at Meadowbank School for Girls, where hidden rubies, kidnapping, and murder disrupt the term. With the killer on the loose and pupils fleeing with frantic parents, only Poirot can save the school from ruin.

Hercule Poirot: "Mrs. McGinty's Dead"—Sunday, June 28, 2009 at 9pm

A man is about to hang for a brutal murder. But did he do it? Poirot finds an article about missing persons connected to a pair of 30-year-old homicides and concludes that a ghost from the past has returned.

Miss Marple, Series IV: "A Pocket Full of Rye"—Sunday, July 5, 2009 at 9pm

A string of murders is committed by a killer who seems obsessed with the nursery rhyme "Sing a Song of Sixpence." Even Miss Marple's former housekeeper falls victim. Blackbird pie anyone?

Miss Marple, Series IV: "Murder is Easy"—Sunday, July 12, 2009 at 9pm

A woman on a train tells Miss Marple about a series of perfect murders in her village. When the woman later falls to her death, the grey-haired sleuth vows to get to the bottom of the mysterious string of "accidents."

Miss Marple, Series IV: "They Do it With Mirrors"—Sunday, July 19, 2009 at 9pm

During rehearsal for an amateur show, the power goes out, commotion ensues, and a murder takes place elsewhere in the house. As witness to the confusion, Miss Marple must decipher the elaborate conjuring trick played by the killer.

Miss Marple, Series IV: "Why Didn't They Ask Evans?"—Sunday, July 26, 2009 at 9pm

The last words of a dying man lead sole witness Bobby Attfield to team with beautiful socialite Frankie Derwent to find out if foul play was involved. Miss Marple joins them as they land in a hotbed of homicide and intrigue.

Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, Series IV are co-productions of ITV Productions and WGBH/Boston in association with Agatha Christie Limited (A Chorion Company).

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