



PRESS RELEASE

By sail to Sydney Cove...or Davey Jones' locker

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Based on the sea trilogy by William Golding

On MASTERPIECE THEATRE

Sundays, October 22 and 29, and November 5, 2006 at 9pm on PBS

A perilous early nineteenth-century ocean voyage from England to Australia is portrayed in all its excitement, chaos, and random horror in a three-part adaptation of *To the Ends of the Earth*, based on the trilogy by Nobel Prize-winning author William Golding, airing Sundays, October 22 and 29, and November 5, 2006 from 9 to 10:30pm on PBS (check local listings).

Best known for his survival tale *The Lord of the Flies*, Golding probes a similar theme in this work, comprising *Rites of Passage* (which won the Booker Prize in 1980), *Close Quarters*, and *Fire Down Below*—sea yarns that rival Melville, Conrad, and Patrick O'Brian in their nautical and social authenticity.

Benedict Cumberbatch (*Tipping the Velvet*, *Cambridge Spies*) stars as Edmund Talbot, a young aristocrat bound for a post with the Australian colonial governor at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. He books passage aboard an aging, leaking, converted man-of-war, commanded with icy detachment by Captain Anderson (Jared Harris, son of Richard, *The Notorious Betty Paige*, *Igby Goes Down*).

The passenger list includes a core sample of British society: Sam Neill (*Doctor Zhivago*, *Jurassic Park*) as Mr. Prettiman, a free thinking radical; Victoria Hamilton (*King Lear*, *Victoria and Albert*) as Miss Granham, a down-on-her-luck governess; Daniel Evans (*The Virgin Queen*) as Parson Colley, a hapless cleric; Richard McCabe (*The Constant Gardener*) as Mr. Brocklebank, a dissipated nautical artist; and Paula Jennings (*Foyle's War*) as Zenobia, Mr. Brocklebank's sensuous "daughter."

The ship's crew forms its own community: Brian Pettifer (*Bleak House*) as Wheeler, a steadfast steward with a fear of drowning; Jamie Sives (*Doctor Who*) as 1st Lieutenant Summers, who becomes a friend and mentor to Edmund; and JJ Feild (*Poirot*) as Lieutenant Deverel and Niall Macgregor (*Monarch of the Glen*) as Lieutenant Benét—a matched pair of vain officers.

Making a guest appearance from a passing vessel are Charles Dance (*Bleak House*) as Sir Henry Somerset; Cheryl Campbell (*The Way We Live Now*) as Lady Somerset; and Joanna Page (*Love Actually*) as Lady Somerset's protégée, Marion Chumley, who incites Edmund to love at first sight.

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Episode 1, *Rites of Passage*, airing Sunday, October 22 at 9pm, opens to the haunting tune of “Pleasant and Delightful,” a sea shanty about a sailor who embarks for the Far East, never to return. It is early 1814; Britain is at war with both France and America; and Edmund and his fellow passengers are underway on a voyage that is more trying than they ever imagined—especially for Parson Colley, who becomes trapped in a shipboard role that leads to a mysterious and deadly crisis.

Episode 2, *Close Quarters*, airing Sunday, October 29 at 9pm, finds the ship in the doldrums, damaged and becalmed, when another vessel is sighted in the fog. Is she friend or French? Captain Anderson enlists the passengers to bolster the ship’s defenses in preparation for the worst. Events see the miraculous return, then demise, of a man thought drowned; and a glittering shipboard ball, at which romance beckons Edmund.

Episode 3, *Fire Down Below*, airing Sunday, November 5 at 9pm, chronicles the worsening plight of the ship, which has lost use of two masts and is held together by ropes. With passengers and crew facing starvation in the stormy southern seas, Lieutenant Benét devises a drastic plan to repair the mainmast with red-hot bolts—a technique that may also ignite a fire within the massive timbers. Can the vessel hold out until landfall?

Throughout these ordeals, Edmund learns a thing or two about himself—his upper-class hypocrisy, duplicity, elitism—and about some unsuspected good qualities as well.

To the Ends of the Earth won resounding praise when it aired on the BBC in the UK. “Beautifully done,” wrote the Glasgow *Herald*, “...comedy, high tragedy, magnificent storms, some wonderful Golding dialogue, and a satisfying number of grisly deaths.”

To the Ends of the Earth is a BBC/Power coproduction in association with Tightrope Pictures from the trilogy by William Golding. The producer is Lynn Horsford. The executive producers are Justin Bodle, Hilary Salmon, Laura Mackie, Paul Abbott and Hilary Bevan Jones. The writer is Tony Basgallop and the director is David Attwood (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Moll Flanders*).

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MASTERPIECE THEATRE has been presented on PBS by WGBH since 1971. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for MASTERPIECE THEATRE is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public television viewers.

For more information about *To the Ends of the Earth* and MASTERPIECE THEATRE, visit **pbs.org/masterpiece**.

Press materials and photography are available at **pressroom.wgbh.org** and **pbs.org/pressroom**

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