

MASTERPIECE

ITV, RED PLANET PICTURES AND MASTERPIECE ON PBS SET TO BRING JANE AUSTEN'S UNFINISHED FINAL NOVEL, *SANDITON*, TO LIFE

Lavish new drama, based on Austen's final manuscript, developed
by Emmy® and BAFTA-Award winning writer Andrew Davies

The final incomplete novel of Jane Austen is to be brought to a wide television audience for the very first time as ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill, announced today the commission of *Sanditon*.

Austen's original 11-chapter fragment has been extended into a sumptuous 8 x 60-minute drama series by acclaimed screenwriter Andrew Davies (*War & Peace*, *Mr Selfridge*, *Les Misérables*, *Pride and Prejudice*). The series will be executive produced by Rebecca Eaton at MASTERPIECE and Red Planet Pictures' Creative Director, Belinda Campbell (*Death in Paradise*, *Dickensian*, *Hooten & The Lady*) and distributed by BBC Studios.

Written only months before Austen's death in 1817, *Sanditon* tells the story of the joyously impulsive, spirited and unconventional Charlotte Heywood and her spiky relationship with the humorous, charming (and slightly wild!) Sidney Parker. When a chance accident transports her from her rural hometown of Willingden to the would-be coastal resort of the eponymous title, it exposes Charlotte to the intrigues and dalliances of a seaside town on the make, and the characters whose fortunes depend on its commercial success. The twists and turns of the plot, which take viewers from the West Indies to the rotting alleys of London, expose the hidden agendas of each character and sees Charlotte discover herself... and ultimately find love.

ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill commented: "It's a rich, romantic, family saga built upon the foundations Jane Austen laid. There is no one better to adapt her unfinished novel than Andrew who has an incredible track record for bold and original adaptations. We're delighted to commission *Sanditon* from Belinda Campbell and her team at Red Planet Pictures."

MASTERPIECE's Executive Producer, Rebecca Eaton commented: "Jane Austen and Andrew Davies are a match made in MASTERPIECE heaven. We can't wait to introduce our audience to this wise and wonderful drama." MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston.

Executive Producer, Belinda Campbell commented: "Andrew Davies' compelling scripts bear all the hallmarks of the biting social commentary and realism that makes Jane Austen one of the most widely read writers in English literature. *Sanditon*'s themes of class divide, ambition, powerplay and matters of the heart are as relevant today as they were in the early 19th century and we can't wait to bring this incredible adaptation to life for ITV audiences to enjoy."

Screenwriter Andrew Davies added: “Jane Austen managed to write only a fragment of her last novel before she died - but what a fragment! *Sanditon* tells the story of the transformation of a sleepy fishing village into a fashionable seaside resort, with a spirited young heroine, a couple of entrepreneurial brothers, some dodgy financial dealings, a West Indian heiress, and quite a bit of nude bathing. It's been a privilege and a thrill for me to develop *Sanditon* into a TV drama for a modern audience.”

Sanditon is a Red Planet Pictures production commissioned for ITV by Polly Hill. Based on the novel by Jane Austen, it is written by Andrew Davies with Belinda Campbell as Executive Producer for Red Planet Pictures and Rebecca Eaton as Executive Producer for MASTERPIECE. Series producer is Georgina Lowe, and casting director is Jill Trelvelick. Casting will be announced in due course, with filming expected to commence in Spring 2019.

About Red Planet Pictures

Red Planet Pictures was founded by award-winning writer Tony Jordan in 2005 and has gone on to produce some of the UK's most popular drama content of recent years. Red Planet Pictures has produced seven series of the award-winning ratings hit, *Death in Paradise*, which is now in production for its eighth series, the critically acclaimed WWI drama *The Passing Bells* as well as the retelling of Noah's Ark, titled *The Ark*, all for BBC One. The prolific indie also produced the ambitious and critically acclaimed 20-part drama *Dickensian*, a studio drama that brought together iconic characters from Charles Dickens' most famous works, for the BBC, and the big-budget adventure drama series *Hooten & The Lady* for Sky One.

About MASTERPIECE

The top-rated primetime show on PBS, MASTERPIECE celebrated its 45th anniversary in 2016. Funding for MASTERPIECE on PBS is provided by Viking 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*.

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