

# MASTERPIECE

**They say it can't be done!**  
***Around The World In Eighty Days***  
**David Tennant, Ibrahim Koma, and Leonie Benesch star**  
**in an adaptation of the Jules Verne classic**  
**Sundays, January 2 - February 20, 2022 on MASTERPIECE PBS**

Literature's most famous race against the calendar comes to MASTERPIECE in 2022 with an innovative new adaptation of Jules Verne's classic novel *Around The World In Eighty Days*, airing on MASTERPIECE in eight thrilling episodes Sundays, January 2 - February 20, 2022 at 8/7c on PBS. David Tennant (*Doctor Who*) stars as the Englishman who bets a fortune that he can circumnavigate the planet in a mere eighty days—quite a feat, considering that it's 1872. Ibrahim Koma (*As Far as I Can Walk*) and Leonie Benesch (*Babylon Berlin*) costar as his intrepid traveling companions on an expedition that packs far more adventure than the trio bargained for. This captivating tale is brought to life by UK production house Slim Film + Television and French production company Federation Entertainment.

Updating Verne's enduringly popular tale, MASTERPIECE introduces new themes, characters, and stories, drawing in part on the author's own personal history of disappointment in love, and also echoing the record-breaking around-the-world trip in 1890 by journalist Nellie Bly in emulation of Verne's plot.

Shot on location on two continents, the miniseries follows our heroes as they head east from London on October 5, 1872, intending to make it back to the reading room of the city's snobbish Reform Club no later than one o'clock on Christmas Eve. En route, they take ships, trains, balloons, camels, stagecoaches, and other conveyances, while meeting increasingly dangerous obstacles. At stake is a wager of 20,000 British pounds, equal to over \$3 million in today's U.S. currency.

The idea for the trip is sparked by a news article reporting a recently finished railway line in India that completes an unbroken chain of modern transportation links spanning the globe, making it possible to circle the planet in eighty days—at least, in theory. Phileas Fogg (Tennant), a diffident bachelor and regular at the Reform Club, muses longingly about the possibility and is goaded by his old antagonist, Nyle Bellamy (Peter Sullivan, *Poldark*), into undertaking the journey, with a hefty bet riding on the outcome.

Deciding that his octogenarian butler (Richard Wilson, *Merlin*) is not up to the voyage, Fogg recruits a new valet, Passepartout (Koma), who is a sharp-witted French wanderer, and they immediately set forth. Doggedly following their trail is the ambitious reporter of the story that launched the adventure, Abigail "Fix" Fortescue (Benesch), daughter of British newspaper magnate Bernard Fortescue (Jason Watkins, *The Crown*). Fogg soon concludes that he can't get rid of Abigail and enlists her as an official member of the expedition. Little do they know but Abigail has made a crucial error in her original article.

However, that is the least of their worries as Fogg, Passepartout, and Abigail experience revolution, starvation, false arrest, surreptitious drugging, life-threatening attacks, and stranding on a desert island, among other perils. Clearly, fate—or somebody—does not want Fogg to win his bet!

Among the interesting, helpful, and menacing individuals they meet are the notorious English libertine Jane Digby (Lindsay Duncan, *Sherlock*) and her latest husband, Sheik Medjuel el Mezrab (Faical Elkihel, *The Spy*); dogged U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves (Gary Beadle, *Grantchester*), who is enforcing the law in the Old West; and ubiquitous private detective Thomas Kneedling (Anthony Flanagan, *Gentleman Jack*), who is definitely operating outside the law.

Furthermore, since even the most remote excursion invariably reconnects by chance with a long-lost acquaintance, Fogg runs into an old friend who wastes no time giving him a piece of her mind (Dolly Wells, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*). A good thing too, since time is of the essence on this trip!

*Around The World In 80 Days* is a Slim Film + Television and Federation Entertainment co-production for France Télévisions, ZDF and RAI, in co-production with Peu Communications, MASTERPIECE, Be-FILMS and RTBF in association with The Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa Limited, Daro Films, and BBC. It is executive produced by Simon Crawford Collins for Slim, Lionel Uzan and Pascal Breton for Federation, and Winnie Serite for Peu Communications. The series is adapted by a team of renowned writers led by Ashley Pharoah (*Life on Mars*, *The Living and the Dead*) and helmed by film, television and music video director Steve Barron (*The Durrells in Corfu*, *Treasure Island*).

Susanne Simpson is the Executive Producer of MASTERPIECE.

### **About MASTERPIECE**

Winner of 83 Primetime Emmys® and 18 Peabody Awards, MASTERPIECE has been essential Sunday night viewing for millions of fans since 1971. Susanne Simpson is the executive producer and Rebecca Eaton is the executive producer-at-large for the series. Funding for MASTERPIECE is provided by Viking and Raymond James with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust. Produced for PBS by GBH Boston, MASTERPIECE is known for hits such as *All Creatures Great and Small*, *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Victoria*, and beloved classics such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Poldark*.

**[pbs.org/masterpiece](http://pbs.org/masterpiece)**

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