

# MASTERPIECE

**Jane Austen's Final Unfinished Work—Finished!**

## *Sanditon*

**Scripted by Emmy® Award Winner Andrew Davies**

**Premiering on MASTERPIECE on PBS January 12, 2020**

Jane Austen was chronically ill with a mysterious disease in early 1817, when she turned her thoughts to a happier subject. She started work on a witty and delightful novel set in a seaside town. She never finished it. Now, noted screenwriter Andrew Davies (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Les Misérables*, Primetime Emmy® winner for *Little Dorrit*) picks up Austen's plot and takes it in a glorious and satisfying direction, on *Sanditon*. Produced by Red Planet Pictures, the eight-hour series will premiere on MASTERPIECE on PBS on Sunday, January 12, 2020 at 9pm ET.

MASTERPIECE's bold and lavish adaptation of Jane Austen's final work stars Rose Williams (*Curfew*) as Austen's lively but levelheaded heroine, Charlotte Heywood; Theo James (*Divergent*) as the humorous, charming (and slightly wild!) Sidney Parker; Anne Reid (*Years and Years*) as the forthright grande dame of Sanditon, Lady Denham; Kris Marshall (*Love Actually*) as Sanditon's compulsively enterprising promoter, Tom Parker; and Crystal Clarke (*Ordeal by Innocence*) as the mysterious West Indian heiress, Miss Lambe.

Also appearing are Kate Ashfield (*Secrets and Lies*) as Tom's stalwart spouse, Mary; Jack Fox (*Riviera*) as the fortune hunter Sir Edward Denham; Charlotte Spencer (*Watership Down*) as Sir Edward's scheming sister, Esther; and Lily Sacofsky (*Bancroft*) as the enigmatic and elegant Clara Brereton.

With four acclaimed Austen adaptations to his credit (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Emma*), plus the *Pride and Prejudice* modernization *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Andrew Davies is no stranger to Jane Austen's story strategies—which makes him the perfect candidate to channel the creative spirit of one of the world's most amusing and penetrating novelists.

The storyline, as Austen left it in 11 beautifully crafted chapters, is as follows: Tom Parker (Marshall) is obsessed with turning the sleepy seaside village of Sanditon into a fashionable health resort, and he enlists the backing of local bigwig Lady Denham (Reid). Through a mishap, Tom makes the acquaintance of the Heywoods and invites their eldest daughter, Charlotte (Williams), for an extended stay at Sanditon.

There, the sensible Charlotte observes hypochondria, avarice and attempted seduction run amok. Lady Denham, a widow, is playing matchmaker for her destitute nephew, Sir Edward (Fox), who is determined to seduce Lady Denham's ward, Clara (Sacofsky). The arrival of wealthy, mixed-race heiress Miss Lambe (Clarke), under the protection of Tom's upright brother Sidney (James), adds an interesting complication. Eligible men naturally find Miss Lambe fascinating, while Charlotte is intrigued by Sidney...



With many promising loose ends and romantic possibilities, how will the young people pair off? Who will Lady Denham designate as her heir? Will Tom's tourist spa finally catch on with the public? Where will that lead? Andrew Davies imaginatively enters this world of Georgian-era suitors, hustlers, and health cranks and boldly tells us what happens next.

Remarkably, even as Jane Austen was succumbing to the ravages of her fatal illness, she chose to lampoon the contemporary fad for tonics, sea water cures, and other medical remedies. Undiagnosed at the time, her malady was probably Addison's disease, which today is easily treatable. She might have had many years of writing ahead of her, but Jane Austen died at age 41, on July 18, 1817.

*Sanditon* is a Red Planet Pictures production commissioned for ITV by Polly Hill and MASTERPIECE by Rebecca Eaton. Based on the unfinished novel by Jane Austen, it is written and executive produced 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 it is directed by Olly Blackburn, Lisa Clarke and Charles Sturridge. BBC Studios is distributing the series internationally.

### **About MASTERPIECE**

Winner of 83 Primetime Emmys® and 16 Peabody Awards, MASTERPIECE has been essential Sunday night viewing for millions of fans since 1971. Rebecca Eaton is the executive producer of 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. Presented on PBS by WGBH Boston, MASTERPIECE is known for recent hits such as *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Victoria*, and beloved classics such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Poldark*.

### **About Red Planet Pictures:**

Red Planet Pictures has produced some of the UK's most popular drama content of recent years, including eight series of the BBC One ratings hit *Death in Paradise*, with episode one of the latest series pulling in a consolidated audience of 8.2 million, and a slot winning share of 32%.

The dynamic indie has 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. Red Planet Pictures productions also include big budget adventure drama series *Hooten & The Lady* for Sky One, the critically acclaimed WWI drama *The Passing Bells* and the retelling of Noah's Ark, *The Ark*, both for BBC One. *Babs*, a 90-minute drama written by Tony Jordan, was produced by BBC Studios in association with Red Planet Pictures.

Red Planet Pictures was founded by award-winning writer Tony Jordan in 2005, and in 2007 the company launched the Red Planet Prize, a writing competition designed to find and establish Britain's next generation of showrunners and writing talent. The creative initiative has uncovered and developed a number of aspiring writers including previous finalist Robert Thorogood, who created the BBC One smash-hit series *Death in Paradise*.

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