

# MASTERPIECE

A new television adaptation of America's best-loved novel.

## *Little Women*

Emily Watson, Michael Gambon and Angela Lansbury Star  
with four exciting young actresses in a new adaptation by Heidi Thomas  
of Louisa May Alcott's coming-of-age classic  
MASTERPIECE on PBS

Sundays, May 13 and May 20, 2018 at the special time of 8pm

Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy—there are few more iconic names in American literature. They are the March sisters of Concord, Massachusetts during the Civil War, created by Louisa May Alcott in her timeless novel *Little Women* and now brought to life in a new MASTERPIECE/BBC coproduction.

From Colin Callender's Playground, the Golden Globe®-winning producer of *Wolf Hall*, adapted by the award-winning creator of *Call the Midwife*, Heidi Thomas (*Cranford*, *Upstairs Downstairs*), and directed by Vanessa Caswill (*Thirteen*), the two-part drama premieres on Mother's Day, May 13 at the special time of 8-9pm and concludes on Sunday, May 20 at the special time of 8-10pm on MASTERPIECE on PBS.

*Little Women* is a Playground production for BBC and MASTERPIECE. MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston.

"*Little Women* is one of the most-loved novels in the English language, and with good reason," says writer and executive producer Thomas. "Its humanity, humor, and tenderness never date, and as a study of love, grief, and growing up it has no equal. There could be no better time to revisit the story of a family striving for happiness in an uncertain world."

Set against the backdrop of a country divided, the story follows the four March sisters on their journey from childhood to adulthood while their father is away at war. Under the guidance of their mother Marmee, the girls navigate what it means to be a young woman: from gender roles to sibling rivalry, first love, loss and marriage. Accompanied by the charming boy next door Laurie Laurence, their cantankerous wealthy Aunt March and benevolent neighbor Mr. Laurence, *Little Women* is a coming-of-age story that is as relevant and engaging today as it was on its original publication in 1868.

Heading the cast are Academy Award® nominee Emily Watson (*The Theory of Everything*, *Hilary and Jackie*) as Marmee, the devoted mother of the four adolescent March girls; Michael Gambon (*Churchill's Secret*, *Page Eight*) as Mr. Laurence; and Academy Award® winner Angela Lansbury (*Murder, She Wrote*, *The Manchurian Candidate*) as the March family matriarch, Aunt March.

The March sisters—the “little women” of the title—feature newcomer Maya Hawke as the willful and adventurous Jo; Willa Fitzgerald (*Scream: The TV Series*) as the eldest and most virtuous, Meg; Annes Elwy (*King Arthur: Excalibur Rising*) as the shy sister, Beth; and Kathryn Newton (*Big Little Lies*) as Amy, the youngest of the family.

Also appearing are Jonah Hauer-King (*Howards End*) as Laurie, the loveable boy next door; Dylan Baker (*The Good Wife*) as Mr. March, who is serving as a chaplain with the Union Army; Julian Morris (*Mark Felt*) as John Brooke, Laurie’s cultured and handsome tutor; and Mark Stanley (*Star Wars: The Force Awakens*) as the charming Professor Bhaer.

A celebration of family as much as it is a recognition of the challenges of growing up and forging an individual identity, *Little Women* remains relevant due to the universal themes at its core. Backed by a nearly all-female creative team, Thomas’ adaptation doesn’t shy away from tackling the darker, more complex emotions the March family experiences. Drawing from a novel that was well ahead of its time, *Little Women* speaks to current issues as much as it does to the issues women faced at the turn of the 20th century.

Devotees of the original novel will relish the book’s indelible scenes in this MASTERPIECE production: the cruel fate of Jo’s manuscript, Amy’s accident on the ice, Meg’s first ball, Beth and the forbidden piano, the pickled limes affair, and many other cherished episodes in a journey to a bygone time.

Although modern society would be disorienting in the extreme to the March sisters, Thomas notes that even today “girls are still confused about their desires and their desirability, and the passage from innocence to experience is more turbulent than ever.”

“We need hope, and we need empathy,” she adds. “We need laughter, and we need catharsis, we need joy and inspiration. *Little Women* gives us all of these things.”

*Little Women* has been commissioned by Piers Wenger and Charlotte Moore at the BBC, and is produced by Playground (*Wolf Hall*, *Howards End*) for BBC One. The series is a co-production with MASTERPIECE on PBS. The producer is Susie Liggat. Executive producers are Colin Callender and Sophie Gardiner for Playground, Heidi Thomas, Lucy Richer for the BBC and Rebecca Eaton for MASTERPIECE.

[pbs.org/masterpiece](https://pbs.org/masterpiece)

### Press Contacts

Ellen Dockser, 617-300-5338, [ellen\\_dockser@wgbh.org](mailto:ellen_dockser@wgbh.org)

Laura Garvey, 617-300-5342, [laura\\_garvey@wgbh.org](mailto:laura_garvey@wgbh.org)