

Season Premiere of Masterpiece Classic: Upstairs, Downstairs Series II to Air Oct. 7

LINCOLN, Neb. (Sept. 26, 2012) -- While Europe teeters on the brink of war, life goes on upstairs and downstairs at 165 Eaton Place--elegant, serious, sexy, and chaotic as ever--on "Upstairs Downstairs Season 2," the second season of the Emmy-nominated sequel on the long-running "Masterpiece" series, airing over six Sundays, Oct. 7 - Nov. 11, at 8 p.m. CT on NET1 and NET-HD.

Critics loved the first season, with The New York Times writing, "the sequel holds its own against the many period series and movies...from 'Brideshead Revisited' to 'Remains of the Day' to 'Gosford Park' to 'Atonement.'" As a lead into the second season, NET Television will rebroadcast the first season of "Upstairs Downstairs" on Sunday, Sept. 30, beginning at 8 p.m. CT on NET1 and NET-HD.

The returning cast includes Keeley Hawes as Lady Agnes Holland, the beautiful mistress at 165 Eaton Place; Ed Stoppard as her diplomat husband, Sir Hallam; and Claire Foy as Agnes's obsessively defiant sister, Persie, who is in love with fascist politics and Nazis in particular.

Repeating their roles downstairs are Anne Reid as the fractious gourmet cook, Mrs. Thackeray; Adrian Scarborough as the resourceful butler, Mr. Pritchard; Neil Jackson as the beefy chauffeur, Harry Spargo; and Art Malik as Amanjit Singh, the private secretary to Hallam's recently deceased mother (played last season by Eileen Atkins). Jean Marsh, who was star and co-creator of the original "Upstairs Downstairs" and also of the sequel, appears in the new season in a cameo role.

Guest stars include Alex Kingston as Hallam's freethinking aunt, Dr. Blanche Mottershead; Emilia Fox as Blanche's former lover, Lady Portia Alresford; and Michael Landes as the American self-made millionaire Caspar Landry, whose latest venture is nylon hosiery--a convenient lure in his quest to seduce a certain aristocratic Englishwoman.

And with Hallam's diplomatic connections, a string of historic figures also make their appearance. These include an appealing young Harvard student named John F. Kennedy and his blustering father, the American ambassador, as well as the notoriously hedonistic Duke of Kent (Blake Ritson), youngest brother to the king, and British Foreign Secretary Lord, who was later to concede the contest to become wartime prime minister to Winston Churchill.

Hallam's post as Principal Private Secretary to Halifax, and earlier to Anthony Eden, parallels the career of the real-life Oliver Harvey, who kept a riveting diary about the bitter dissension in England's inner circle on how to deal with Hitler, a plot element that moves steadily to center stage in "Upstairs Downstairs Season 2."

The series also addresses other burning issues of the day: lesbianism, adultery, and sexual license in high places; conscientious objectors; home-grown fascism; war mobilization; and the lure of America--its money, style, and apparent safety an ocean away, far from the drumbeat of war.

Meanwhile, as Europe flirts with catastrophe, many just flirt.

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