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Playground Announces Little Women Cast for BBC AND Masterpiece on WEDU PBS

Dame Angela Lansbury and Michael Gambon star with BAFTA Award-winner Emily Watson as beloved Marmee

Maya Hawke, Willa Fitzgerald, Annes Elwy and Kathryn Newton to play iconic March sisters alongside Jonah Hauer-King as Laurie Laurence

Tampa, FL- Golden Globe® and BAFTA Award-winning drama producer **Playground** has announced the cast for the upcoming adaptation of **Little Women for BBC One** and **MASTERPIECE** on **WEDU PBS**. Based on the classic novel by Louisa May Alcott, this three-part adaptation from the award-winning creator of Call the Midwife Heidi Thomas (Cranford, Upstairs Downstairs) will be directed by **Vanessa Caswill** (Thirteen, My Mad Fat Diary) and starts principal photography this month in Ireland.

BAFTA Award-winner **Emily Watson** (The Theory of Everything, Genius) is set to play Marmee, the iconic matriarch of the March family. The March sisters will be played by an ensemble of four exciting young actresses - newcomer **Maya Hawke** takes the role of willful and adventurous Jo, **Willa Fitzgerald** (Scream: The TV Series, Misfortune) will play the eldest daughter Meg, **Annes Elwy** (Philip K. Dick's Electric Dreams) will play Beth, and **Kathryn Newton** (Big Little Lies, Halt and Catch Fire) takes the role of the youngest sister Amy.

Academy Award-winner **Dame Angela Lansbury** (Murder, She Wrote, The Manchurian Candidate) will play the girls' wealthy relative – the cantankerous Aunt March. BAFTA Award-winner **Michael Gambon** (Harry Potter, Churchill's Secret) takes the role of their benevolent neighbor Mr. Laurence, and **Jonah Hauer-King** (Howards End, The Last Photograph) will play his grandson Laurie Laurence, the charming boy next door.

Loved by generations worldwide, Little Women is a truly universal coming of age story, as relevant and engaging today as it was when originally published in 1868. Set against the backdrop of the American Civil War, the story follows the four sisters Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy March on their journey from childhood to adulthood. With the help of their mother Marmee, while their father is away at war, the girls navigate what it means to be a young woman: from gender roles to sibling rivalry, first love, loss and marriage.

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Little Women has been commissioned by Piers Wenger and Charlotte Moore at the BBC, and will be produced by Playground (Wolf Hall, Howards End) for BBC One. The series is a co-production with MASTERPIECE on WEDU 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.

ABOUT PLAYGROUND

Playground is a New York and London based television, film and theatre Production Company founded in 2012 by award-winning producer Colin Callender. It is committed to producing smart, entertaining drama for the screen and the stage bringing together the finest US and UK talent from the worlds of theatre, film, and television.

Playground has produced over 60 hours of prime time television drama garnering 15 Emmy nominations, 20 BAFTA nominations, and 12 Golden Globe nominations, including winning a Golden Globe for Best Miniseries. Recent productions include *Wolf Hall*, the BAFTA, Golden Globe and Peabody Award winning miniseries starring Mark Rylance, Damian Lewis and Claire Foy for the BBC and MASTERPIECE, and *The Dresser*, the RTS winning television adaptation of Ronald Harwood's acclaimed play starring Ian McKellen and Anthony Hopkins and directed by Richard Eyre for the BBC and Starz.

Alongside *Little Women*, Playground's slate this year includes *The White Princess*, a limited series for Starz drawn from the bestselling book by Philippa Gregory, *Howards End*, Academy Award winner Kenneth Lonergan's adaptation of E.M. Forster's classic novel starring Hayley Atwell, Matthew Macfadyen and Tracey Ullman directed by Hettie Macdonald for the BBC and Starz, and *King Lear* starring Anthony Hopkins and directed by Richard Eyre for the BBC.

Playground's recent theatre productions on Broadway include: Nora Ephron's Tony-nominated *Lucky Guy* directed by George C. Wolfe starring Tom Hanks in his Broadway debut, Harvey Fierstein's Tony-nominated *Casa Valentina* directed by Joe Mantello, the Tony® award-winning revival of musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Jez Butterworth's *The River* directed by Ian Rickson starring Hugh Jackman, and Kenneth Branagh and Rob Ashford's critically acclaimed groundbreaking production of *Macbeth* at The Park Avenue Armory in New York, and John Tiffany's *The Glass Menagerie* in the West End. Playground is currently represented on Broadway with this year's Tony® Award-winning best musical *Dear Evan Hansen*, and on the West End, in partnership with Sonia Friedman Productions, on Casey Nicholaw's *Dreamgirls*, and the hit two-part play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, which recently won a record breaking 9 Olivier Awards.

ABOUT MASTERPIECE

The top-rated primetime show on PBS, MASTERPIECE celebrated its 45th anniversary in 2016. MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for the series is provided by Viking Cruises 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*, *Cranford*, *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Victoria*. pbs.org/masterpiece

ABOUT PBS

PBS, with nearly 350 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches nearly 100 million people through television and nearly 28 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS' premier children's media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV – including a new 24/7 channel, online at pbskids.org, via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](#).

ABOUT WEDU PBS

WEDU is West Central Florida's leading PBS station reaching 16 counties through media platforms including on-air programming and online experiences that broaden horizons, transport and transform and open gateways to new ideas and new worlds. Financially supported by the community, the organization offers a wealth of award-winning inspirational, educational and enlightening content over a variety of multi-media platforms including: television programming, station website, www.wedu.org and various social media platforms, monthly member magazine *Premiere*, educational outreach activities and a myriad of special events. WEDU's focus on the local community has resulted in the station being regarded as a beacon of trust for men, women and children of every walk of life no matter their age, ethnicity or socio-economic status. WEDU is a treasured community resource; a window to the world for the homebound and a vital educational source for the youngest members of society. WEDU prides itself on its position in the Tampa Bay community as a leader, partner, informed citizen and a member of PBS, the most trusted institution in America (Marketing & Research Resources, Inc. M&RR, January 2017). For more information, program schedules or to support WEDU visit www.wedu.org; WEDU Public Media on Facebook and Twitter (@wedupbs) or call (813) 254-9338.

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