

Dickensian Press Pack



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Dickensian

Where The Old Curiosity Shop sits next to The Three Cripples Inn, and Fagin's Den is hidden down a murky alley off a busy Victorian street. This Christmas, BBC One transports you to 19th century London, to a world where some of Charles Dickens' most iconic characters co-exist, including Scrooge, Inspector Bucket and a young Miss Havisham. With a wealth of back stories inspired by the novels, *Dickensian* delivers fast-paced storylines with surprising twists and turns.

As the snow falls on Market Street this Christmas Eve, the festive hustle and bustle is hushed as the body of wealthy brewer, Mr Havisham, is driven to his final resting place, followed by son Arthur and daughter Amelia. Later that day, at the reading of the will, pain strikes further when Arthur finds his father has left the vast majority of the Havisham wealth to Amelia. Set on the path to revenge, what grave consequences will sister Amelia face as a result of Arthur's indisputable envy?

Meanwhile, the free-spirited Honoria Barbary meets in secret with her young love Captain James Hawdon, much to her sister Frances' disdain. Will their clandestine love affair survive the scheming and plotting of her sister due to her desire of a wealthier suitor?

Elsewhere, gang-master and pimp Fagin has organised for street girl Nancy to visit Jacob Marley for his evening's entertainment. Accompanying the young girl for her safety is house-breaker and ruffian, Bill Sikes, who will do anything to protect her.

Secrets are lurking around every corner and as the bell tolls 9pm on Christmas Eve, tragedy strikes as Jacob Marley's dead body is found lying in the snow. As the deceased was not short of enemies, can the newly appointed Inspector Bucket determine the murderer?

Cast List

Inspector Bucket
Jacob Marley
Arthur Havisham
Honoraria Barbary
Amelia Havisham
Frances Barbary
Meriwether Compeyson
Bob Cratchit
Ebenezer Scrooge
Bill Sykes
Mrs Gamp
Peter Cratchit
Grandfather
Edward Barbary
Nancy
Fagin
Captain James Hawdon
Martha Cratchit
John Bagnet
Nell
Emily Cratchit
Silas Wegg
Fanny Biggetywitch
Jaggers
Mr Bumble
Sir Leicester Deadlock
Mr Venus
Mrs Bumble
Mary
Tiny Tim
Artful Dodger

Stephen Rea
Peter Firth
Joe Quinn
Sophie Rundle
Tuppence Middleton
Alexandra Moen
Tom Weston-Jones
Robert Wilfor
Ned Dennehy
Mark Stanley
Pauline Collins
Brennock O'Connor
Karl Johnson
Adrian Rawlins
Bethany Muir
Anton Lesser
Ben Starr
Pheobe Dynevor
Oliver Coopersmith
Imogen Faires
Jennifer Hennessy
Christopher Fairbank
Ellie Haddington
John Heffernan
Richard Ridings
Richard Cordery
Omid Djalili
Caroline Quentin
Amy Dunn
Zaak Conway
Wilson Radjou-Pujalte

Tony Jordan – Series Creator & Writer



Where did your inspiration for the series come from?

I am not a Dickens scholar; I haven't read all the books, but I do love the adaptations, ranging from the marvellous David Lean films to the Muppet's Christmas Carol, which I have to admit is probably my favourite. I love the world of Charles Dickens and the characters that inhabit it. The key for me was not to simply do another adaptation of the novels, but to take the characters that we all love from all those novels and mash them up to make something new and original.

Where did you start? How did you go about plotting the storylines then to get pen to paper?

The scale of this show is immense, so I started from a point of identifying the things about Dickens characters that interested me most. I have always been fascinated by the character of Miss Havisham – this mad woman in a wedding dress and veil, sitting at the table, jilted on the day of her wedding, an event she found so traumatic that she never took off her wedding dress. We've all seen that image and we all know it, so I was interested in how she got to be that woman. What was she like as a young woman and in love? Did she laugh? Who was she? What did she care about? So I decided that was one of the first stories I wanted to tell, it was exciting because nobody had ever seen the young Miss Havisham before, it was then that I knew I had something. From that point on, my writing room became covered in hundreds of different coloured post-it notes as the series took shape.

Other characters leapt out at me, crying out to be included, two favourites of mine had always been Ebenezer Scrooge and Fagin, so I thought, can I get those two together and create a new story? More post-it notes followed, then pages of research and before long I had a wall 20ft by 16 ft, covered in old photographs, bits of Victorian London and 200 post-it notes. The challenge then was to take all these characters, all these stories and to turn it into a series.

Did you have a lot of creative input into the making of the set? How important was it that the set fitted with your vision of the show?

I've worked with set designer Michael Ralph before. He set up *Death In Paradise* for us and was the designer on BBC 1's *The Ark* where he actually had to build Noah's ark! So I started talking to Michael very early on, even before I'd started writing the scripts, about the world that was in my head. Michael was amazing, he got it straight away sketched some things out and showed them to me. We did it together really; I explained what my vision was and he built it. He's a genius and the set is incredible. It's the biggest set ever built for television in the UK. It's more like a movie set. It's stunning – it has 27 two storey buildings, The Three Cripple's Pub from *Oliver Twist*, Satis house, a police station, and 100m of cobbled streets. We ran real horses and carriages down the street and all the shops and buildings are open and have interior sets. So you can actually walk into The Old Curiosity shop, Scrooge & Marley's, Mantalini's dress shop and Mr Venus' Taxidermist – it's stunning.

Do you think Dickens would be proud of your work?

I think he'd love it! Dickens had more talent than I'd ever dream of having, but I wasn't just interested in him in the literary sense - I wanted to do more research about him as a man and a fellow writer and find out what his process was. It seemed to me that we had more in common than I'd first thought, he was a writer who wrote episodically and he loved his audience. He'd also had a somewhat complicated personal life and worked incredibly hard. Although I could never replicate his talent, I think I understood where it came from and that really helped me.

Why should viewers tune into *Dickensian* this Christmas?

I think *Dickensian* is the television event of the decade. This is the biggest show that I have ever been involved in – it's huge! You can watch it whether you have read every Dickens book and have a degree in Dickens, or you'll enjoy it if you've never read a Dickens book in your entire life and your movie was the Muppets Christmas carol. It's the best of BBC drama, amazing characters involved in gripping stories and it's one of those shows that will bring everyone in the family to the TV together.

Michael Ralph – Production Designer

When working on a show of such scale of ambition, how did you begin to create your vision of this world?

I made a big black book of so many references and images all compiled together so architecturally I could find the world I was after. Once I'd found all our imagery, it wasn't good enough to have it on the computer, I needed to have printed copies of everything, so I could refer to it and submerge myself in it, and get a visual image library in my head. When I look through the book now, I can see influences that became part of the street by second nature. I bound six of these books and I gave them to all the executives at Red Planet, including Tony Jordan, for Christmas! So my book has been really helpful in creating our *Dickensian* world.

Was the set always going to be this big or did it grow in size as your creative vision took over?

The set grew exponentially; it got bigger as we went along in terms of decor, but not much has changed. It's a matter of then sticking to your vision, but allowing contribution from other people to bring it along. But my vision has not much changed since the beginning.

The set had snow and different seasons – explain to us how this works?

From the beginning it was always about the snow! We ended up producing the snow ourselves from an artificial material. We put a special effects person on it full time in the art team - we did tests and worked with 3 different types of application to make sure it worked perfectly. Weirdly you could walk on set and people would put puffer jackets on - but we were filming in the height of summer! People would honestly say there was cold coming up from the ground – it's a weird psychology.

What was your favourite building or set to design?

All of it really! I dressed every set myself because I needed to be grounded in it and so therefore the invention of it was constant. I guess if I lean to anything it would be the inn, and the only reason is because it is a community space for all. You can see the drink, the sawdust, the fires and the idea of the paintings above the fires that gave us that sense of history.

There is so much detail in the props used, how did you research what was needed other than what's within the script?

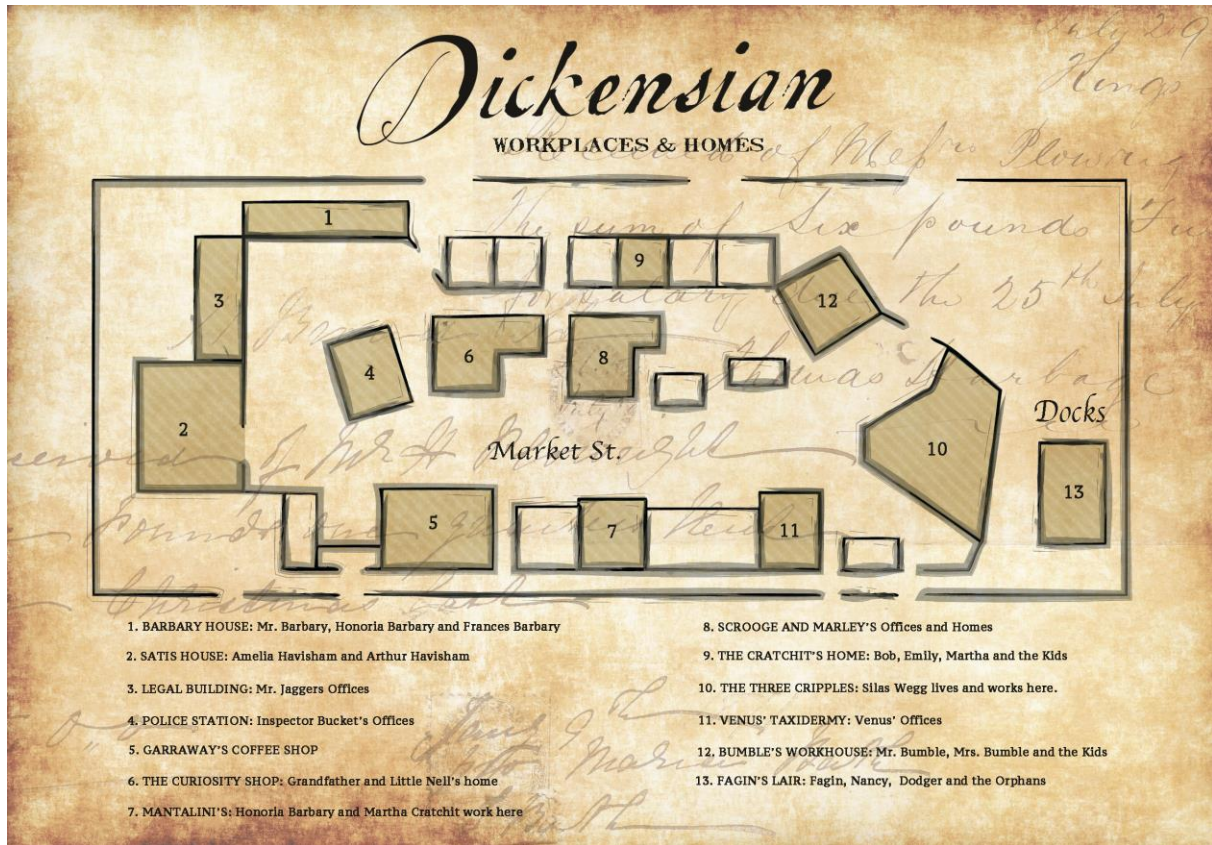
I read a lot of books, including Henry Mayhew's interviews with real people on the street of the period which was a huge insight for me into the general public of the time. There were people who made a penny a day by gathering horse poo off the ground and selling it for brickwork or mortar. We had to dress the sets as if people lived there - everything had to have a heart.

Beyond all of those thoughts, we needed to own all the props so we could reinvent them and stick them together, paint it dirty brown or put it on the wall. I wanted everything to be real and atmospheric – so you can taste it. Detail is everything.

Did you have some fun with the set?

There is a painting in the Three Cripples Pub of Tony Jordan actually. He said "if you are going to paint me, paint me as Poldark", so I called it "Jordark". The paintings were all done properly by us in-house with oil and water. So we produced all the portraiture ourselves, so it has our heart in it.

The *Dickensian* Set



The *Dickensian* set features a 90 metre cobbled high street with a fully functioning inn at one end and a 16 column colonnade, church and law courts at the other. Overall there are 27 two storey buildings on the street and seven back alleys that lead to a parallel 30 metre street.

***Dickensian* set fun facts from Michael Ralph:**

- There are 15 working fireplaces which are all built with true fire in them
- There are 100 tonnes of sand and cement on the floor to make cobbles
- There are 12 major shoot offs from inside doorways
- There are 9 working shops that have back doors, front doors and interior working windows onto the street
- There are 112 working doors throughout the whole set. Every single one of those doors had to be hung and built
- There are 33 building facades that constitute the whole street
- There are 9 built-in alleys
- There are 15 interior sets that aren't on the street and are all fully dressed and decorated
- There is a 90m adjacent street to the main street
- The main street itself can take two carriages passing each other at speed. We tried it!
- There are 20 street lights and each building has its own window lighting set up
- There are 103 windows which means a large amount of glass

Stephen Rea plays Inspector Bucket



Can you tell us a bit about your character and where we meet him in *Dickensian*?

Inspector Bucket is a character from *Bleak House* and the interesting thing about this series is that his role is to investigate a murder of a character from another Dickens novel. So I meet lots of different characters from different books as I try to work out who committed the murder. He's a very interesting character as he's the first detective ever written in fiction.

How did you go about researching the role?

I re-read *Bleak House* and there were a lot of things in it that were interesting about him – for example even though he and his wife don't have any of their own he loves children so I wanted to emphasise that. It is good to see he has humanity, especially when you're living in a world where children like the Artful Dodger are exploited so badly.

Were you well read in Dickens before starting work on *Dickensian*?

Writers like Dickens and Shakespeare changed the world and altered our landscape. Whether we've read it or not we all seem to know the characters and the stories. I've always wanted to do Dickens and when Tony asked me to do Bucket I jumped at the chance because I love detectives as well.

An incredible set was created for the series, what was it like to work on something of that scale?

It was brilliant to have all the sets in the one place and we didn't have to worry about the weather! But it was very demanding as my character would talk a lot and try and work things out. The scripts were wonderful and the writers were very welcoming of input too. It was a dream job in a way.

Was there anyone in particular you were looking forward to working with?

I worked with Tuppence Middleton on *War & Peace* and she played my daughter and she is a wonderful actor. There's a new young guy called Joe Quinn who is great. There's a level of acting in

England that is second to none. As English theatre is still very text orientated, people in England still understand literature, so all of these actors really got what *Dickensian* was about and what their place in it was.

What do you think true Dickens fans will enjoy most about the series?

I think they will love to see the Dickens world recreated in a different way. Pauline Collins is superb and Mr Bumble played by Richard Ridings is hilarious. It's deeply moving at the same time as it's a world where everyone is compromised by money. It's very relatable in that sense. So it's not just about these funny characters combined it's the whole terrifying world portrayed.

Can you sum up why viewers should tune into *Dickensian* this Christmas?

Grab yourself a nice drink; this is the BBC at its best. Only they can produce something like *Dickensian*, and to this level.

Peter Firth plays Jacob Marley



Tell us about your character and where we meet him in Dickensian?

I play Jacob Marley, who has only appeared in Dickens previously in the shape of a ghost in *A Christmas Carol*. So my story in *Dickensian* is a prequel to that, and we first meet him we see right away that he is not a sympathetic character. All may not go well for him as he is not the friendliest of characters.

How does he interact with other characters?

Marley is Scrooge's attack dog - if you can imagine anything worse than that! He is the guy that Scrooge sends out to collect the debts, so his main interaction is with him.

Did you feel any pressure portraying the character and have you brought any of your own touches to him as a result?

That's the beauty of *Dickensian*: there is no pressure as no one has ever really seen Marley; they've only witnessed him as a spirit. This is the first time we meet him as a man which is exciting. The great thing is that there is no comparison; no one will be able to say... "Oh he's not as good as" because I haven't based him on anyone.

You look so different in *Dickensian*. Did you have to spend a lot of time in hair and makeup?

I am in hair and makeup for an hour which is unusual for me, as I usually have a light dusting and I am on my way. I wear this big wig, mutton chops and a hot wool suit.

An incredible set has been created for the show, including two-storey buildings and a full working pub. What was it like to work on something of this scale?

Well it is unusual to have something of this scale in England. It instils a certain seriousness, as you know when you walk in that this is an impressive, serious project. Then with my costume and the set, half the work is done to help you get into character.

Tony Jordan has created a new world for Dickens' famous characters. What do you think true Dickens fans will enjoy most about the production?

Viewers will love the variety - their favourite characters will be doing things they haven't seen before, so it's new and fresh ground.

With such an impressive cast, was there anyone in particular you were looking forward to working with?

Stephen Rea of course, and Pauline Collins; I have been looking forward to working with her for a couple of years as I just have the biggest crush on her!

Pauline Collins plays Mrs Gamp



Tell us about your character and the role she plays in the fictional setting?

Mrs Gamp is one of the first people we see in the series. She is a wonderful character as she never misses an opportunity to further herself one way or another – to make food, money or drink or to put herself in a position of authority, so I love that about her. She is poverty-stricken so she needs every bit of help she can get. I kind of admire that about her and she remains relentlessly cheerful for most of the time; I think the position she'd like would be sitting behind the bar in the pub, lording over everybody else.

Who does Mrs Gamp interact with most out of the other Dickens characters?

Like many period dramas, there is a real divide in the society and they hardly mix the rough trade and the upstairs people. In *Dickensian*, the so-called comedy characters, they're a little bit like the comedy bits in Shakespeare – a little light relief in the darker aspects of the story. There is a coterie made up of the Bumbles, Silas, Mrs Gamp and Fanny Biggetywitch who is her best mate. They tend to congregate together, not necessarily because they like each other as they're always tormenting each other. Mrs Gamp and Biggetywitch have chanced upon each other but need each other for companionship and support. Silas probably finds Mrs Gamp fairly revolting but as she does lots of medicinal work for him as a herbalist, she treats his one good leg so he relies on her. They all use each other in different ways. She gets very close and moves in on him. Mrs Gamp is very good at making people think they need her.

Is your portrayal of Mrs Gamp based on any previous incarnations?

For my Mrs Gamp, I pictured her as this old woman that used to walk down my street when I was young. She wore a ginger coat and a ginger beret and she was quite huge and bosomy with a booming voice and she used to shout at children that ran near her. I thought I'd like to make her not just a drunk and not only a manipulator. Tony offered a side of her that is a bit sweeter and you see

this in her treatment of children because she's so lovely to tiny Tim and little Nell. She's a very different person with the children, but she still wants gin from their families!

Did you have to spend a lot of time in hair, makeup and costume?

Well I was very lucky on the costume because Andrea Galer I'd worked with before on *Bleak House* so I knew whatever she came up with would be wonderful. We started with the costume and it all felt brilliant, even my very heavy skirt was the weight of 3 small children! We can have the character in our head but it doesn't work fully until you look like the character too.

Was there anyone in particular you were looking forward to working with or enjoyed working with the most?

I was really looking forward to working with Stephen Rea because I've always admired him. I treasured the small moments we did have together. It was great to watch him when he was working and I love everything he does. We are also introduced to a whole raft of wonderful new actors who are all brilliantly cast. It's wonderful to see new talent who are so comfortable in their skins.

Why should the viewers tune into *Dickensian* this Christmas?

I think the audience will love *Dickensian* because it is set at Christmas and it's a really good story that is unbelievably appropriate for this time for this time of year.

Caroline Quentin plays Mrs Bumble



Who is your character and where do we meet her in Dickensian?

We meet Mr and Mrs Bumble when they are running a London workhouse, opposite the Three Cripples Inn which is the main scene of action for *Dickensian*. They are at a point in their lives where Mrs Bumble feels they should be living a better, wealthier life and we see her try and force her husband into improving their lot. She is a social climber and absolutely desperate to better herself. She is brazen in how she uses her sexuality to improve her circumstance and is very keen that she and her husband are respected. Despite the fact that she complains about him all the time and he drives her mad, she loves him. They make for a very comical duo.

Who does Mrs Bumble interact with most out of all the Dickens characters?

There is Mr Bumble played by Richard Ridings, but we see her with Mrs Gamp and Fanny Biggetywitch who are the town gossips. She runs into many of other characters including Nancy and Bill Sykes in the pub. Mrs Bumble doesn't have a lot to do with the wealthy characters even though she'd like to. Unfortunately her social status doesn't allow her to mix with the very wealthy like Amelia Havisham, but generally speaking everyone knows everybody else's business on the street.

Mrs Bumble is a smaller role in Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* but a larger than life character in *Dickensian*. Did this present any unexpected challenges?

The thing I loved about Mrs Bumble is that she is a very manipulative woman. You watch her using all of her skills to manipulate the men around her and I loved that. It's been such good fun! But I didn't look to any previous Mrs Bumbles for inspiration due to her being a smaller role in adaptations. My Mrs Bumble is absolutely the creation of Tony Jordan and myself.

Did you re-read Dickens in preparation for your role?

I reminded myself of *Oliver Twist* again and I had a look through my favourite which is *David Copperfield*. But that was the only research I needed to do as Tony Jordan's scripts themselves were so good and rich. I did a lot of research reading around what London was like at the time to immerse myself too, but that was just fun!

Did you have to spend a lot of time in hair, makeup and costume?

I had no real make up whatsoever, sometimes my cheeks were made a bit redder and then I had these great sausages in my head.

What attracted you to the show and the role?

It was the brilliant writing and such great storytelling that attracted me to the series. I love a good story, as does Dickens and Tony Jordan, so it was all about that. I love period pieces because the time and place changes but the people stay the same. There have always been social climbers, good natured characters, the baddies, but it's fun to do it set in a different period.

Tuppence Middleton plays Amelia Havisham



Can you tell us about your character and where we meet her in *Dickensian*?

I play Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations* but as a young woman. In the story we meet her when she has just inherited her father's fortune. This is a vast amount more than her brother Arthur Havisham and he becomes vengeful, jealous and sets about to ruin her. She is a young woman growing up and trying to navigate her way through a male-dominated society.

Who does Miss Havisham interact with out of the other Dickens' novels?

Miss Havisham's story is a very isolated part of *Dickensian* actually – she interacts mostly with her brother Arthur and Compeyson. She has a lot to do with Mr Jaggers, the lawyer, and Honoria Barbary from *Bleak House* is her best friend. From a story point of view, it makes sense that she is relatively isolated because when it comes to the climatic part of the story, she has less people to turn to and I think that's a really important factor.

Miss Havisham is an elderly jilted bride in *Great Expectations*, but is a young woman full of life and hope in *Dickensian*. Did this present any unexpected challenges?

I read the book again not long before we started filming and although it's not the same as I played her, it was really helpful in informing me how to play her as a young woman. It helped inform how not to play her too – I was very aware of the typical view of Miss Havisham being this crazy eccentric lady living in one room with cobwebs and in her wedding dress and I thought actually that was a young woman once who was ordinary and had hopes and dreams and fell in love. I thought it was important to show that she started off like anyone.

What do you think true Dickens fans will enjoy most about the production?

I think it's a hugely fun exploration of the characters for people that do know it and I think Dickens

would have been proud. Tony is a real master at what he does and it's one of those ideas where you think I can't believe it hasn't been done before.

The cast is so impressive. Was there anyone in particular you were looking forward to working with or enjoyed working with the most?

I'd just come from working with Stephen Rea as my father on *War and Peace* so it was lovely to know I knew someone on set already. I was really excited to work with a great young cast too. I knew a lot of Sophie Rundle's work and Ben Starr as I grew up in the same town as him. To see Joe Quinn develop in his first acting job was amazing. The cast is genius.

Omid Djalili plays Mr Venus



Can you tell us about your character and where we meet him in *Dickensian*?

Mr Venus is probably one of the most bizarre characters of the series; he is an osteopath and taxidermist and we meet him in episode 2. He has forged a bizarre friendship with Inspector Bucket. With his skills in taxidermy he is into forensics, and they are like a strange Detective Holmes and Watson. It's a complex and interesting character, and ultimately one of the most influential characters in the whole series because he leads Inspector Bucket to make key decisions.

Does Mr Venus interact with any of the other characters?

He doesn't really interact with any of the other characters. He only interacts with Inspector Bucket, which is very interesting, kind of like a side show. They have a great chemistry. The duo is very bizarre, two people from very different worlds that somehow fuse and do some incredible work.

Mr Venus is featured in *Our Mutual Friend* which is one of the lesser known novels, did this prove any challenges?

I think it made it easier, because I could make the role totally my own. They wanted to give it a slightly eastern flavour. Dickens London was more multi-cultural than you think. You would be amazed how two hundred years ago London was similar to what it is now.

What drew you to Mr Venus?

Mr Venus is so bizarre and a very interesting character. We don't know much about him, just that he is a bit of a loner, and has this shop. He has a stuffed cat dressed as Little Bo Peep, that belonged to the glove stretchers wife. This world is bizarre; we don't know if he is gay or not, we just know he is single and dedicated to his work and dedicated to Inspector Bucket.

Did you bring your comedic skills to Dickensian?

No I played him very straight, but somehow it was very funny. We kept playing scenes very seriously and then when we would cut there would be these guffaws of laughter.

What do you think true Dickens fans will enjoy most about the production?

I think the fans will enjoy the authenticity of it all. *Dickensian* is dark, rich, interesting, fascinating and filled with colourful characters.

Were there any funny moments from set?

I think the stuffed cat in my shop was very distracting for everyone, and I naughtily used to make it face Inspector Bucket and it would put him off. I was very happy, every time he would struggle with his lines I would change the angle of the cat to make him worse.

Meet Honoria Barbary & Captain James Hawdon Played by Sophie Rundle & Ben Starr



Tell us about your characters and their relationship.

Rundle: I play Honoria Barbary and she comes from a well-off family. When we meet her, she's full of life and fun. She's working in a clothes shop Mantalini's, which was quite outrageous for a woman of her standing at the time, and she is very much in love with a dashing young captain called Captain Hawdon but they are keeping their romance hidden.

Starr: James Hawdon is a charming charismatic Captain in the British army with the aspiration of becoming a major. He dresses like Prince Charming and parties like Prince Harry! Like a lot of these *Dickensian* characters, he's innately flawed which makes him so human. We meet him when he has found the love of his life, Honoria Barbary who he cannot live without. They have a great but painful love story throughout. Honoria's sister is less than thrilled that Honoria is flaunting about town with this young drunk Captain who in her eyes is potentially dangerous for the continuation of the Barbary house.

What attracted you to the series?

Rundle: I thought it was such a clever idea and it's so well executed. I think the scripts are punchy and well written and exciting. I desperately wanted to be in it.

Starr: The show just sounded fantastic and the scripts were so vivid. I was actually in LA when I got them and I read all the scripts in one sitting at LAX airport while waiting for my plane, it was amazing. I thought I would just have a browse, but I wanted to find out what was happening next and couldn't stop reading.

Were there any funny moments from set?

Rundle: There were so many funny moments – when you put that many actors together in a hot studio in the middle of summer, in funny costumes, it’s just bound to be mayhem! But it was sort of ironic because we were filming in the height of summer so we were all wearing fur cloaks, and bonnets and trying to act like we were freezing cold under the snow machine, when in fact were all sweating and hitching our skirts up and running outside to cool off.

What do you think true Dickens fans will enjoy about the series?

Starr: True Dickens fans will absolutely love seeing their favourite characters brought to life in a new way. I think the whole team had a great sense of who their character was and how they wanted to play them, so that we are loyal to Dickens. I remember seeing Ned Dennehy’s Scrooge and thinking, “he doesn’t look like a Scrooge to me, Scrooge is Michael Caine.” Then when I saw Ned act it was perfect, as he is playing a slightly younger Scrooge just before the events of *A Christmas Carol*. It is a fresh reinvention but still so familiar.

Why should viewers tune into *Dickensian* this Christmas time?

Rundle: *Dickensian* is the best example of what the BBC and British television does so well; it’s a combination of a classic period drama but it’s all new original content. I think it’s everything you want from drama and it’s everything you want at Christmas.

Arthur Havisham & Meriwether Compeyson Played by Joe Quinn & Tom Weston-Jones



Can you tell us about your characters and the role they play in *Dickensian*?

Quinn: I play Arthur Havisham, who is Miss Havisham's younger brother. When their father dies, Arthur feels he doesn't inherit enough money from the Havisham brewery which leaves him angry and bitter. This spurs him to seek revenge to try and redeem this fortune. Arthur's relationship with his sister Amelia is very turbulent as he fluctuates between enormous guilt and then fury.

Weston-Jones: Compeyson is originally from *Great Expectations* but only for a brief period of time and he has a huge part to play in *Dickensian*. Compeyson is a manipulative conman and what at first seem to be innocent in Arthur's eyes turns sour.

Who do your characters interact with most out of the other Dickens novels?

Weston-Jones: Our story is very much contained to the Havisham family because it is so intense. However, we meet Honoria Barbary from *Bleak House*, who is Amelia's best friend in *Dickensian*. There were many times where I'd be walking down the street and I'd brush shoulders with Bill Sykes, so it's great how we all mix in more subtle ways too.

Did you read a lot of Dickens' work before starting on the show?

Quinn: I read *Great Expectations*, even though my character is only in 6 pages, I thought it would be important to read to see the consequences of my actions. What Arthur does in *Dickensian* plays a huge part in *Great Expectations* so it's really interesting to see it played out.

Weston-Jones: I hadn't read any Dickens before the series and it was a great opportunity for me to dive into it. It's a fascinating world and the man himself is a particularly interesting person. I didn't know much about him or his work so I did a lot of research into his state of mind and his life history. I read *Great Expectations* and *Christmas Carol* to get myself into the mindset and the world.

Fagin & The Artful Dodger

Played by Anton Lesser & Wilson Radjou-Pujalte



Tell us about your characters and where we meet them in *Dickensian*?

Lesser: I play Fagin from *Oliver Twist* and we find him doing the only thing a man of his condition was allowed to do which was live by his wits. He traffics children and runs prostitutes including Nancy who he has a very significant relationship with. I wouldn't brand him as bad, but he's a survivor and certainly a dark character.

Radjou-Pujalte: The Artful Dodger lives on the street and mainly interacts with Fagin, Nancy and Bill Sikes because they are the only people who care about him. He is a tricky character, who mostly picks pockets for Fagin and has a bunk in Fagin's place. Fagin is like a father figure to him as he was brought up by him.

Have you based your portrayals of these characters on any previous incarnations?

Lesser: No I tried to allow Tony's writing to inform my natural response to the character as I feel it is my duty to honour the writing of both Charles Dickens and Tony Jordan. I never felt any pressure to compare to other incarnations as I've played so many roles that other great actors have played and while you acknowledge and respect them, you can't really let that affect you. The pressure comes from just wanting to rise up to the challenge of the writing.

Radjou-Pujalte: I saw the *Oliver Twist* movie before, but I didn't base my character on that, I decided to do it my own way.

Did you have to spend a lot of time in hair, makeup and costume?

Lesser: We had to decide to what extent Fagin would have a big prosthetic nose! One thing I thought about the costume for Fagin was, had he had a more fortunate upbringing, he'd probably have had rather good taste. His clothes are shabby chic! He'd probably have had lavish jewellery and we see the reflection of that in his interest in other people's jewellery!

What do you think true Dickens fans will love most about the series?

Lesser: It's thrilling to see Scrooge in a conversation with Fagin or Mrs Gamp talking to Miss Havisham and all meeting up in the pub. It will be delicious for people that know the books, and people that don't know the books. It'll be this gallery of characters that will hopefully inspire people to read the books.

Why should viewers tune in to *Dickensian* this Christmas time?

Lesser: We all need a bit of magic in our life and what better time of year to have a magical display of rich, moving, scary, wonderful, entertaining characters such as Dickens'!

Radjou-Pujalte: *Dickensian* isn't like anything else out there. I think there is something for everyone!

Nancy & Bill Sikes Played by Bethany Muir & Mark Stanley



Tell us about your characters and where we meet them in *Dickensian*?

Muir: We meet Nancy when she is very young and vivacious. She is spirited, vivacious and young but is also a broken soul due to her life and upbringing.

Stanley: Sikes and Nancy in *Dickensian* are a prequel to the story in *Oliver Twist*. We meet Sikes at a time when he's looking out for Nancy as she's selling herself under Fagin. The prequel works well as we see the characters when they still have a heart.

Which other Dickens characters do you interact with?

Stanley: Together we mainly interact with Fagin and the Artful Dodger, but I bump into quite a lot of other characters. For instance I pick pocket Arthur Havisham and then he even hires me at one point for a job! In the Three Cripples Pub you can't help but interact with other characters like Silas Wegg, Mrs Gamp and The Bumbles who all live in the same world.

Muir: Nancy and Bill mainly interact with the rest of the working class characters but due to her strong personality and survival instincts she is able to talk to anyone, even those that think they are above her.

Have you based your characters on any of the previous incarnations?

Muir: I tried to honour the novel as much as I could, but not make a mockery of her. Nancy is seen as a sexy, light hearted character, so I tried to be quite original with her. In *Dickensian* we were looking at her from a different angle so I made her tough but funny too.

Stanley: I've seen many different versions of Oliver Twist, but Oliver Reed's take on Bill Sikes is the most animal and raw in my eyes, and where I see my younger Bill Sikes ending up. I've wanted to make it my own and I've been given the opportunity to work outside the typical realms of Dickens plot lines.

Were there any funny moments on set?

Muir: We had our very own Bullseye the dog who is meant to be very vicious. But in reality our Bullseye was the most timid dog I have ever met! There would be scenes where we were supposed to be scared of him but it was just this little puppy staring up at us.

What attracted you to this role?

Stanley: It was very different to *Game Of Thrones* so I was excited to get stuck in. But it does have its similarities as it is a character piece where I had to work with accent and costume. The *Dickensian* set also matches up to some of the *Game Of Thrones* sets!

Muir: Anything that is to do with Dickens was always going to be brilliant. Nancy has such a story to tell so I immediately felt quite possessive of her. I was really excited about working with Anton Lesser, who plays Fagin, because he is a massive actor on screen and in theatre.

Meet The Cratchits (Bob & Emily) Played by Robert Wilfort & Jennifer Hennessy



Can you tell us about your characters and their relationship?

Wilfort: Bob Cratchit is originally from *A Christmas Carol* and he works for Scrooge and Marley, the money lenders. Bob has six lovely children, including Tiny Tim. Bob makes the best out of every situation and his family and home means everything to him.

Hennessy: We meet Bob and Emily outside Scrooge's shop because the Cratchit's aren't getting the wages they deserve. Although you expect them to be sweet and lovely, as they are the heart of the novel *A Christmas Carol*, Emily is much pushier and has a lot of strength in her which was quite nice to play. She believes in fairness and that you should work and provide for your children.

Did you base your character on any previous incarnations?

Wilfort: Kermit the frog is one of the definitive Bob Cratchits! I read *A Christmas Carol* and tried to get as much out of it as I could, but I made a point of not watching anyone else so I could put my own stamp on it.

What first attracted you to the role?

Wilfort: At school, a friend and I wrote our own adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* and I played Scrooge! I've always loved the story, mainly from watching the Muppets version as a child. It was so much fun to get a chance to go back into the Dickensian world.

Hennesy: For me, it was Tony's writing. Before I did *Dickensian*, I did a series called *Passing Bells* which was written by him. So as soon as the call came in to do another Tony Jordan piece I jumped at the chance.

Was there anyone in the cast you were most excited to be working with?

Wilfort: I've always admired Stephen Rea's work and it was hugely thrilling to work with him. People like Pauline Collins and other actors I'd see perform in the past such as Jennifer Hennessey, who plays my wife. We had a lot of scenes together and it was an absolute joy working with her. We used to sit around on the set and feel like a real family!

Why should viewers tune into *Dickensian* this Christmas time?

Hennesy: I think if Dickens saw *Dickensian*, he would be jumping for joy, as it plucks the best bits of every novel and puts them into the same street. The plots are thick and fast which gives the most exciting premise.

Meet Mr Bumble Played by Richard Ridings



Tell us about your character and where we meet him in *Dickensian*?

In *Dickensian* you meet the Bumbles later in their lives than in *Oliver Twist*. Mrs Bumble is very ambitious and wants to move to a bigger place with a maid. Mr Bumble adores her and we decided on this analogy that he was like a frustrated walrus as he still finds her attractive but you get the impression she wants nothing to do with him on the sexual front. We play this out throughout the series with quite hilarious results!

Have you based your portrayal of Mr Bumble on any previous incarnations?

The public has quite a strong image of what Mr Bumble is like from *Oliver Twist*, however in *Dickensian* he's a different man, with 20 years of frustration and living with a harridan who bullies him, which must take its toll on a man!

Was there anyone in particular you were looking forward to working with?

I couldn't wait to work with Caroline Quentin! We had such a good time as husband and wife and she is so funny and inventive. There is a lot of comedy involved but we also wanted to make it very real as well.

Why should viewers tune in *Dickensian* this Christmas time?

It is wonderful good British drama that has everything: compelling, heart-rending stories, murder mystery and great comedy! It's in lovely half hour chunks that I think people will become addicted to.

Dickensian
Series 1
PI Episode 1

Where The Old Curiosity Shop sits next to The Three Cripples Inn, and Fagin's Den is hidden down a murky alley off a busy Victorian street. This Christmas, BBC One transports you to 19th century London, to a world where some of Charles Dickens' most iconic characters co-exist, including Scrooge, Inspector Bucket and a young Miss Havisham.

As the snow falls on Market Street this Christmas Eve, the festive hustle and bustle is hushed as the body of wealthy brewer, Mr Havisham, is driven to its final resting place, followed by son Arthur and daughter Amelia. Later that day, at the reading of the will, pain strikes further when Arthur finds himself out in the cold and on the path to revenge.

Meanwhile, malevolent money-lender and partner to Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley, is visiting clients to collect their outstanding debts, and nothing steers him from his brutal resolve. His first visit is to the Old Curiosity Shop where Grandfather is keeping vigil at the bedside of a desperately ill, Little Nell.

At the same time, gang-master and pimp Fagin has organised for street girl Nancy to visit Jacob Marley for his evening's entertainment. Accompanying the young girl for her safety is house-breaker and ruffian, Bill Sikes, who will do anything to protect her. Elsewhere, the free-spirited Honoria Barbary meets in secret with her young love Captain James Hawdon. Will their clandestine love affair run smoothly?

Secrets are lurking around every corner and as the bell tolls 9pm on Christmas Eve, tragedy strikes and Jacob Marley's dead body is found lying in the snow.

Arthur Havisham by Joseph Quinn, Amelia Havisham by Tuppence Middleton, Jacob Marley by Peter Firth, Ebenezer Scrooge by Ned Dennehy, Fagin by Anton Lesser, Mrs Gamp by Pauline Collins, Mrs Bumble by Caroline Quentin, Nancy by Bethany Muir, Bill Sikes by Mark Stanley, Bob Cratchit by Robert Wilfort, Tiny Tim by Zaak Conway.

Dickensian
Series 1
PI Episode 2

This Christmas, BBC One transports you to 19th century London, to a world where some of Charles Dickens' most iconic characters co-exist, including Scrooge, Inspector Bucket and a young Miss Havisham.

As Christmas Day dawns, a stranger going by the name of Inspector Bucket turns up in Market Street and everyone has something to say about the new face. Here to solve the murder, the detective begins his investigation into the last known movements of Jacob Marley with help from local taxidermist Mr Venus. As the deceased wasn't short on enemies, it quickly transpires that it could have been any number of people.

Following Little Nell's miraculous recovery, Grandfather, alongside inn landlord, Silas Wegg, gin-soaked midwife, Mrs Gamp, and the local busy body, Fanny Biggettywitch, are having lunch with a generous side order of gossip about the new detective.

Elsewhere, following the news that he is to inherit only a fraction of his father's wealth, a distraught Arthur Havisham is slumming it in rooms above the pub and plotting revenge on his kind-hearted sister who has shockingly inherited the majority.

After a chance meeting with the charming Compeyson, Amelia finds the same attractive gentleman at her door promising to help. Could this be the answer to her loneliness and a chance to bring her family back together?

Inspector Bucket by Stephen Rea, Mr Venus by Omid Djalili, Arthur Havisham by Joseph Quinn, Amelia Havisham by Tuppence Middleton, Jacob Marley by Peter Firth, Ebenezer Scrooge by Ned Dennehy, Fagin by Anton Lesser, Mrs Gamp by Pauline Collins, Mrs Bumble by Caroline Quentin, Nancy by Bethany Muir, Bill Sikes by Mark Stanley, Bob Cratchit by Robert Wilfort, Tiny Tim by Zaak Conway.

Dickensian
Series 1
PI Episode 3

This Christmas, BBC One transports you to 19th century London, to a world where some of Charles Dickens' most iconic characters co-exist, including Scrooge, Inspector Bucket and a young Miss Havisham.

With Bucket's investigation gathering momentum, the detective follows up on a new lead from Marley's journal and finds himself in Fagin's den interrogating the old man on Bill Sikes. A furious Sikes is duly arrested and slung in the cells to simmer down. But as Bucket returns, Venus is soon to dash his hopes when he reveals the evidence doesn't add up. Could they have caught the wrong man?

In the Barbary household, as Honoria and Captain Hawdon enjoy a carefree day together, her bitter sister Frances answers the door to a colleague of Hawdon's. He brings an important note regarding Hawdon's much-needed promotion. With Frances the only one available to take the message, will she find it in her heart to pass on the coveted information or use it to her advantage?

Meanwhile, Mrs Gamp has her eye on a home in The Three Cripples Inn. Aiming to sweeten landlord Silas Wegg by healing the sores on his one good leg in exchange for a tippie or two of gin, can the mischievous Mrs Gamp convince him that she is indispensable?

Inspector Bucket by Stephen Rea, Mr Venus by Omid Djalili, Arthur Havisham by Joseph Quinn, Amelia Havisham by Tuppence Middleton, Ebenezer Scrooge by Ned Dennehy, Fagin by Anton Lesser, Mrs Gamp by Pauline Collins, Mrs Bumble by Caroline Quentin, Nancy by Bethany Muir, Bill Sikes by Mark Stanley, Honoria Barbary by Sophie Rundle, Ben Starr by Captain James Hawdon, Bob Cratchit by Robert Wilfort, Tiny Tim by Zaak Conway.