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**Louisa May Alcott *American Masters* documentary,
The Woman Behind 'Little Women,' Airs
May 20 on PBS**

Special encore broadcast in honor of "Little Women on Masterpiece" and "The Great American Read" on PBS

Film stars three-time Obie winner Elizabeth Marvel as Louisa May Alcott and Tony winner and Oscar nominee Jane Alexander as Alcott's first biographer, Ednah Dow Cheney

A special encore broadcast of ***American Masters -- Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women'*** airs nationwide Sunday, May 20 at 10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings) and will be available to stream the following day on pbs.org/americanmasters and PBS apps. This special encore broadcast coincides with the premiere of *Little Women on Masterpiece* (Sunday, May 13 and 20 at 8 p.m. on PBS) as well as *The Great American Read* (Tuesday, May 22 at 8 p.m. on PBS), a new eight-part television and online series that explores America's 100 most-loved novels, including *Little Women* by author Louisa May Alcott.

Alcott's reputation as a morally upstanding New England spinster, reflecting the conventional propriety of mid-19th century Concord, Massachusetts, is firmly established. Raised among reformers, iconoclasts and Transcendentalists, the intellectual protégé of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, Alcott was actually a free thinker, with democratic ideals and progressive values about women – a worldly careerist of sorts. Most surprising is that Alcott led, anonymously and under the pseudonym A.M. Barnard, a literary double life not

discovered until the 1940s. As Barnard, Alcott penned some thirty pulp fiction thrillers, with characters running the gamut from murderers and revolutionaries to cross-dressers and opium addicts – a far cry from her better-known works featuring fatherly mentors, courageous mothers and impish children.

Originally broadcast in 2009, ***American Masters -- Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women'*** is the first film biography about the celebrated author and reveals a remarkable woman, ahead of her time, who was much more than a writer of children's books. Combining elements of documentary, drama and animation, the film stars three-time Obie winner Elizabeth Marvel (*Homeland, House of Cards*) as Alcott and Tony and two-time Emmy winner and Oscar nominee Jane Alexander (*The Great White Hope, Warm Springs*) as Alcott's first biographer Ednah Dow Cheney. With dialogue taken exclusively from writings or firsthand reports of conversations, the film is shot on locations including Orchards House in Concord, Emerson's house in Concord, and Fruitlands in Harvard, site of the Alcott's utopian experiment. Interwoven with dramatic scenes are interviews with Alcott scholars Sarah Elbert, John Matteson, Joel Myerson, Daniel Shealy, Madeleine Stern, Dr. Leona Rostenberg, Jan Turnquist, and novelist Geraldine Brooks.

New classroom resources for educators are also available on [PBS Learning Media](#) with video segments, discussion questions, and accompanying activities examining Louisa May Alcott's life and work.

Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women' is a co-production of Nancy Porter Productions and THIRTEEN in association with WNET. The film is directed/produced by Emmy Award winner Nancy Porter and written/produced by Harriet Reisen, author of the biography of the same title published by Henry Holt and Company. Michael Kantor is ***American Masters*** series executive producer.

Major funding for ***Louisa May Alcott: The Woman Behind 'Little Women'*** is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, with additional funding provided by Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and Audrey Simons.

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Original support for this program provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, Rolf and Elizabeth Rosenthal, Michael and Helen Schaffer Foundation and Jack Rudin.

Websites: <http://pbs.org/americanmasters>, [@PBSAmerMasters](http://facebook.com/americanmasters), <http://pbsamericanmasters.tumblr.com>, <http://youtube.com/AmericanMastersPBS>, [#AmericanMastersPBS](http://instagram.com/pbsamericanmasters)

About WNET

WNET is America's flagship PBS station and parent company of [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#). WNET also operates [NJTV](#), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its broadcast

channels, three cable services (THIRTEEN PBSKids, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [PBS NewsHour Weekend](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings. WNET's groundbreaking series for children and young adults include [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) And [Cyberchase](#) as well as [Mission US](#), the award-winning interactive history experience. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Theater Close-Up](#), [NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams](#) and [MetroFocus](#), the daily multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. In addition, WNET produces online-only programming including the award-winning series about gender identity, [First Person](#). Through multi-platform initiatives [Chasing the Dream: Poverty and Opportunity in America](#) and [Peril and Promise: The Challenge of Climate Change](#), WNET showcases the human stories around these issues and promising solutions. In 2015, THIRTEEN launched Passport, an online streaming service which allows members to see new and archival THIRTEEN and PBS programming anytime, anywhere: www.thirteen.org/passport.

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