

*Agatha Christie*

---

**POIROT**

**Elephants Can Remember**

Adapted by Nick Dear

Directed by John Strickland

Produced by David Boulter

# PRODUCTION NOTES

**\*\*\*The information contained herein is strictly embargoed from all press use, non-commercial publication, or syndication until Wednesday May 29 2013\*\*\***

Introduction .....	Page 3
Character profiles.....	Page 4
David Suchet is Hercule Poirot.....	Page 6
Synopsis .....	Page 9
Cast list .....	Page 10
Production credits.....	Page 11

## ITV Press Office

### Press contacts:

Natasha Bayford - 0161 952 6209 / [natasha.bayford@itv.com](mailto:natasha.bayford@itv.com)

Sarah Banbury – 020 7157 3018 / [sarah.banbury@itv.com](mailto:sarah.banbury@itv.com)

### Picture contact:

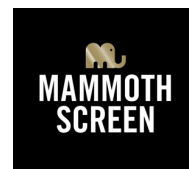
Patrick Smith - 0207 157 3044 / [patrick.smith@itv.com](mailto:patrick.smith@itv.com)

*Agatha Christie*™

In association with

 **Acorn Productions**

An RLJ | Entertainment, Inc. Company



## INTRODUCTION

David Suchet celebrates 25 years playing the world famous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, in *Elephants Can Remember*, the first of five new Agatha Christie adaptations to screen on ITV.

In this feature length film David is joined by a stellar cast that includes: Emmy award winner Greta Scacchi (*Brideshead Revisited*, *Broken Trail*, *Rasputin*), Iain Glen (*Game of Thrones*, *Downton Abbey*), Vincent Regan (*Strike Back*, *Scott & Bailey*, *Hit & Miss*), Ferdinand Kingsley (*Van Gogh: Painted with Words*, *The Hollow Crown*) and Vanessa Kirby (*Labyrinth*, *Great Expectations*).

Also making a return to the cast is the award winning stage and television actress Zoë Wanamaker (*My Family*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *My Week with Marilyn*) who reprises her role as Mrs Ariadne Oliver.

*Elephants Can Remember* is scripted by the BAFTA winning writer Nick Dear, whose recent credits include the 2011 adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* for the National Theatre. It is directed by John Strickland (*Mr Selfridge*, *Whitechapel*, *Bedlam*) and produced by David Boulter (*Whitechapel*, *He Kills Coppers*, *The Forsyte Saga*).

It was filmed across 23 days in a variety of locations including: Greys Court; Netherwyld Equestrian; Shepperton Film Studios, Pinewood Studios, The Park Lane Hotel.

The film forms part of the thirteenth and final series, which includes *The Big Four*, *Dead Man's Folly*, *The Labours of Hercules* and *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case*.

Adapted from crime writer Agatha Christie's famous novels and short stories, *Poirot* airs on over 200 broadcasters worldwide including: USA (WGBH), Australia (ABC), Brazil (Globosat), France (France Televisions), Italy (Mediaset), Japan (NHK) and Russia (TV Center).

The Poirot stories are co-produced by ITV Studios and Agatha Christie Ltd, an RLJ Entertainment group company. Mammoth Screen's Michele Buck, Damien Timmer and Karen Thrussell (*Parade's End*, *Endeavour*, *Monroe*) executive produce Poirot on behalf of ITV Studios. Hilary Strong is executive producer for Agatha Christie Ltd. ITV Global holds international distribution rights.

**Note to editors:** David Suchet accepted the role of Hercule Poirot in 1988. In the same year David filmed the first Agatha Christie adaptation, *The Adventure of the Clapham Cook*, which was broadcast on 8 January 1989.

The most recent film to be broadcast, *Murder on the Orient Express*, aired on ITV in December 2011, attracting a consolidated audience of 5.7 million viewers and a 25.7% share.

*Elephants Can Remember* was first published in 1972. The Observer of November 5, 1972 said, "A quiet but consistently interesting whodunnit with ingenious monozygotic solution. Any young elephant would be proud to have written it."

## CHARACTER PROFILES

### **Mrs Ariadne Oliver played by Zoë Wanamaker**

One of Poirot's dear friends Mrs Oliver, the infamous crime novelist, has to embark on an investigation of her own delving, in to the past to aid the future of her goddaughter Celia Ravenscroft.

### **Mrs Burton-Cox played by Greta Scacchi**

Mrs Burton-Cox is a rather ruthless lady who seems to be very protective of her son Desmond. She is intent on preventing him from marrying Celia Ravenscroft using the rather ill mannered accusation that there is madness in her genes.

### **Celia played by Vanessa Kirby**

A young intelligent girl with a bright and happy future ahead of her with the man she hopes to marry. However, the events from her family's past force her to confront the mysterious and tragic death of her parents in Eastbourne 13 years ago.

### **Desmond played by Ferdinand Kingsley**

Desmond is a charming and highly talented pianist. Deeply in love with Celia his desire to marry her is thwarted by events that start to spiral out of control.

### **Detective Inspector Beale played by Vincent Regan**

An extremely good officer of the law dedicated to solving the investigation alongside Hercule Poirot.

### **Dr Willoughby played by Iain Glen**

A doctor at the Institute of Psychiatry set up by his father, Professor Willoughby. He then discovers his father brutally murdered and drafts in the expertise of Hercule Poirot to try and solve the case.

### **Mrs Willoughby played by Jo-Anne Stockham**

The upper class wife of Dr Willoughby enjoys horse riding but finds her husband's indiscretions vastly infuriating.

### **Superintendent Garroway played by Danny Webb**

Now a retired detective, Garroway was the detective investigating the death of General and Mrs Ravenscroft. He was never able to solve the case but has valuable details that assist Poirot.

**Marie played by Alexandra Dowling**

A 23-year-old American who has recently arrived in England. Now working at the Willoughby Institute as a filing clerk she has become more than just a colleague of Dr Willoughby.

**General Ravenscroft played by Adrian Lukis**

An ex army man, respected member of the community and a decent family man. But why did he and his wife die in an apparent suicide pact on Eastbourne cliffs. Why is this now bearing significance on their daughter's future?

**Lady Ravenscroft played by Annabel Mullion**

A loving mother, sister and wife whose later years were inflicted with illness. The tragic end to her life with her husband is still a mystery 13 years later.

**Madame Rosentelle played by Ruth Sheen**

Once hairdresser to the wealthy on Bond Street Madame Rosentelle is now working in Tooting Bec. She supplied custom made wigs to Mrs Ravenscroft.

**Dorothea played by Claire Cox**

The twin sister of Lady Ravenscroft who suffered from mental illness and tragically fell to her death one night while sleepwalking.

**Julia Carstairs played by Caroline Blakiston**

An old acquaintance of the Ravenscroft family from a high social class. She recounts tales to Mrs Oliver of the General and Lady Ravenscroft to give her a sense of their lives before they died.

## DAVID SUCHET IS HERCULE POIROT

**It's been over two years since the last Agatha Christie film, *Murder on the Orient Express*, was completed. How easy is it to step back into the character of Hercule Poirot having played various other characters in between?**

It is always more difficult than I ever imagine it will be for two reasons. I do so many things in between and play so many different characters, but also because Poirot is so particular and so precise. Agatha Christie was famous for never changing his character.

Although the scripts allow me some development, every time I come back to Poirot I have to come back to his voice, his walk, and his mannerisms. What I always think is going to be an easy glove to fit again, it's always very hard. I usually have to watch up to ten hours (of previous footage) prior to filming and then practise getting the voice correct so that I match exactly, apart from natural ageing and things like that.

Viewers should be able to see from 25 years ago to now that the character himself is still there and hopefully hasn't changed and is the Agatha Christie character from day one.

**What preparation for the character do you undertake before a filming day begins?**

As well as watching ten hours of footage and perfecting his mannerisms, I also conduct a detailed script study to make sure everything I say is valid, especially when I come to Poirot's summing up. I work very, very closely with the script editor to make sure there are no assumptions and it is all fact.

In addition to the character preparation I like to rewrite my script in the vernacular of Poirot.

**For a fifth time you are reunited with Zoë Wanamaker. Describe your working relationship?**

Zoë and I started working together way back in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 1978 and we've worked together on and off ever since. Two years ago we played in the West End for six months with *All My Sons*, a wonderful American play. We have been close as an actor partnership over the years and we've done lots of things. When she was originally cast as Ariadne Oliver it was just a joy. We have such a trust with each other that has developed over the years.

**In this particular film Ariadne becomes an amateur detective. Tell me about this?**

In this film, Ariadne goes out in the field and Poirot tells her to sniff around and to ask questions to those who live nearby and things like that.

**How does Poirot then become involved in the case?**

He becomes involved sort of against his wishes until he realises that the case he's working on is linked to what Ariadne Oliver is doing. He's forced into it and has to turn round and say, 'Madame I think you are correct and I've now discovered that these two cases are connected.' He's brought in and can solve both.

**How close to the novel is this script? What changes have been made?**

One is always in a situation with the adaptation of books and I get letters from Poirot diehards saying 'oh its moved too far away from the book.' Very often the books themselves are not that filmable from a commercial point of view. For instance, they maybe set in one setting and the audience loves us going out to other locations. Sometimes the stories do get changed but they are always pretty close to the book.

***Elephants Can Remember* has a fantastic ensemble cast. Aside from Zoë Wanamaker, have you worked with any of the actors before?**

I've worked with Vanessa Kirby in *Great Expectations*, where I played Jagers. She's a wonderful actress and going to go a very, very long way. I've never worked with Greta Scacchi before, but I was so thrilled she was involved with this film. Although I didn't work with her, I was also thrilled that Caroline Blakiston was joining the cast.

Iain Glen is a wonderful actor but I've never worked with him before either, so it was a real treat.

**With a passion for photography have you been capturing any of your own images during filming?**

It's been very frustrating because I sent away three films for developing as I don't use digital and they got lost in the post. I've been so busy lately but I'm really going to try and take some more pictures soon.

**As Associate Producer how much input and direction do you have on each of the films?**

Quite a lot now, more so on the scripts before we start shooting and everyday I'm on the set I can always have an input if I see things that are not going quite right. Cast and crew can also come to me with a problem if our producer is not available. I like it very much because I'm the only one really that's been there from the beginning so I can be very useful and helpful hopefully!

**This year (2013) marks 25 years since you first accepted the role of Hercule Poirot in 1988. Have you celebrated or marked this occasion in anyway?**

I went to Cannes for MIP TV and ITV threw a wonderful dinner for forty of their chief buyers to celebrate 25 years of Poirot. It was a great celebration and Mathew Prichard, Agatha Christie's grandson, was there but so far nothing else. I've still got one more film to record (*Dead Man's Folly*) so I'm not going to do anything until we've finished.

**Why do you think the character of Hercule Poirot and the stories continue to engage with viewers?**

Poirot is of course very popular because he has good manners. He's very respectful and he's very charming, but my son in-law gave the best answer I've ever had for this question, which is that Poirot is enduring because he's a great moral compass and people would like to be like him. Whenever you watch him, as he sums up a case you think the world is a better place.

**Poirot has some distinctive traits are there any that you have picked up from playing him over the years?**

He's taught me how to listen. He's taught me to be a much better listener than I would have been had I never played him. Poirot has a little expression he says, 'I listen to what people say, but I actually hear what they mean.'



## SYNOPSIS

**The following synopsis is published in the production notes for forward planning purposes only. Please do not reproduce entirely and do not reveal the ending. Many thanks.**

Whilst Poirot (David Suchet) is pre-occupied with investigating the strange and gruesome murder of an elderly psychiatrist, his old friend, the crime writer Ariadne Oliver (Zoë Wanamaker), has a case of her own to solve.

She is pressed by the loathsome Mrs Burton-Cox (Greta Scacchi) to uncover the truth of two decade-old deaths; were they murders or a double-suicide? And if it *was* murder then who killed whom? Did General Ravenscroft (Adrian Lukis) shoot his wife, Margaret (Annabel Mullion), Ariadne's old school chum, or did Margaret shoot him?

In spite of Mrs Burton-Cox's impertinence, Ariadne can't help but be curious, and she takes it upon herself to set matters straight when her god-child, Celia (Vanessa Kirby), the dead couple's daughter, begs her to uncover the truth.

However, Poirot's skills remain engaged elsewhere, as the case of the dead professor twists and turns, with Poirot reluctant to accept that his good friend, the psychiatrist's son, Doctor Willoughby, is himself responsible.

So Ariadne sets off on a journey into the past to dig for the facts, but theories abound as memories get muddled and old secrets remain stubbornly hidden. Before long though, the old Ravenscroft puzzle is pulled sharply into the present-day, when the life of Desmond (Ferdinand Kingsley), Mrs Burton-Cox's son and Celia's intended, is threatened by a mysterious figure in black...

Poirot's already twitching mind is immediately piqued, and when he realises the murder of his old professor is connected with Mrs Oliver's investigation, they join formidable forces.

With the help of the great detective's little grey cells, a trip to Paris, a wig-maker and the evidence of a clever dog, Poirot manages to penetrate the fog of memory to uncover the truth of two long-ago deaths, and how that tragic story inspired the vengeful present-day killer whom he himself has been hunting...

## CAST LIST

Hercule Poirot .....	David Suchet
Mrs Ariadne Oliver .....	Zoë Wanamaker
Mrs Burton-Cox .....	Greta Scacchi
Celia.....	Vanessa Kirby
General Ravenscroft.....	Adrian Lukis
Lady Ravenscroft .....	Annabel Mullion
Desmond .....	Ferdinand Kingsley
Dr Willoughby.....	Iain Glen
Mrs Willoughby .....	Jo-Anne Stockham
Detective Inspector Beale .....	Vincent Regan
Marie .....	Alexandra Dowling
Superintendent Garroway.....	Danny Webb
Zelie .....	Elsa Mollien
Dorothea .....	Claire Cox
Julia Carstairs.....	Caroline Blakiston
Mrs Matcham .....	Hazel Douglas
Mrs Buckle.....	Maxine Evans
Madame Rosentelle .....	Ruth Sheen

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producers ..... Michele Buck  
..... Damien Timmer  
..... Karen Thrussell  
Managing Director Agatha Christie Ltd and Acorn Productions Ltd..... Hilary Strong  
Chairman Agatha Christie Ltd..... Mathew Prichard  
Writer ..... Nick Dear  
Producer ..... David Boulter  
Associate Producer..... David Suchet  
Line Producer .....Matthew Hamilton  
Director ..... John Strickland  
Production Executive ..... Phil Hunter  
Director of Photography.....Gavin Finney BSC  
Casting Director ..... Susie Parriss  
Editor ..... Michael Harrowes  
First AD ..... Marcus Catlin  
Script Editor..... Karen Steele  
Production Designer ..... Jeff Tessler  
Costume Designer .....Sheena Napier  
Dresser to David Suchet .....Anne Marie Bigby  
Make Up Designer ..... Pamela Haddock  
Make Up Artist to David Suchet ..... Sian Turner Miller  
Composer ..... Christian Henson  
Location Manager .....Chris White  
Production Co-ordinator ..... Pat Bryan