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Foxtel announces cast gathering for *Picnic at Hanging Rock*

Foxtel today revealed the first details of the Australian and international cast gathering for *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, with cameras set to roll in Victoria later this month on the bold event drama produced by **FremantleMedia Australia** and with production investment from **Screen Australia** and **Film Victoria**.

Natalie Dormer (*Game of Thrones*, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Parts 1 and 2*, *In Darkness*) will star as English headmistress Mrs Hester Appleyard in the re-imagining of Joan Lindsay's timeless Australian novel.

The teachers of Appleyard College for Young Ladies will be played by French actress **Lola Bessis** (*Cassandra*, *Swim Little Fish Swim*) as Mademoiselle Dianne de Poitiers, mistress of French Conversation, Music and Dance; **Yael Stone** (*Orange Is The New Black*, *Deep Water*) as Miss Dora Lumley, mistress of Deportment and Bible Studies; **Anna McGahan** (*The Doctor Blake Mysteries*, *Anzac Girls*) as Miss Greta McCraw, mistress of Geography and Mathematics and **Sibylla Budd** (*Tomorrow When The War Began*, *Winners & Losers*) as Mrs Valange, mistress of Art and Literature.

The roles of the students of Appleyard College are filled with an exciting contingent of rising stars, including **Lily Sullivan** (*Camp*, *Jungle*) as Miranda Reid, **Madeleine Madden** (*Tomorrow When The War Began*, *High Life*) as Marion Quade, **Samara Weaving** (*Monster Trucks*, *The Babysitter*) as Irma Leopold, **Ruby Rees** (*Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*) as Edith Horton and introducing **Inez Curro** as Sara Waybourne.

Other characters both inside and beyond the college walls will be played by **Don Hany**, **Harrison Gilbertson**, **James Hoare**, **Marcus Graham**, **Mark Coles Smith**, **Jonny Pasvolsky**, **Philip Quast**, **Emily Gruhl**, **John Flaus**, **Ros Gentle**, **Julie Nihill**, **Kaarin Fairfax**, **Randall Berger**, **Mayah Fredes**, **Alyssa Tuddenham**, **Kate Bradford**, **Bethany Whitmore**, **Markella Kavenagh**, **Felix Johnson**, **Ines English**, **Huw Higginson**, **Rob Jacobson** and **Kim Gyngell**.

Picnic at Hanging Rock will plunge viewers into the mysterious disappearances of three schoolgirls and one teacher on Valentine's Day 1900, taking the audience on a new journey into the revered Australian novel through the six part drama.

Foxtel Head of Drama Penny Win said: "The accomplished cast who have been secured for *Picnic at Hanging Rock* will give new forms to Joan Lindsay's iconic characters as the actors take up the scripts our writers, Bea Christian and Alice Addison, have drawn from the provocative spirit of the original mystery.

"Though the story remains in 1900, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* will be 21st century storytelling for the premium Foxtel drama audience."

FremantleMedia Australia Director of Drama Jo Porter said: "*Picnic at Hanging Rock* is celebrated as an iconic, female-led story and we are thrilled to be announcing our strong and diverse cast who will bring the characters to life in the most vivid manner.

"We have an exceptional mix and depth of established names and exciting young Australian talent who will redefine these characters for a new generation. The strength of the scripts, the appeal of the story and our directors' vision has drawn an incredible calibre of actors to the project including Natalie Dormer. Natalie is known for her bold choices in playing powerful, smart and fearless women. Her rendering of Mrs Appleyard is sure to be just as intriguing and complex.

"Hot off her listing in *Interview* magazine's 'Hollywood's Most Wanted', we look forward to audiences seeing French actor Lola Bessis join us to play Mademoiselle de Poitiers."

Picnic at Hanging Rock's executive producers are FremantleMedia Australia's Jo Porter and Anthony Ellis and Foxtel's Penny Win, the producer is Ewan Burnett, writers are Beatrix Christian and Alice Addison, directors are Larysa Kondracki, Michael Rymer and Amanda Brochic. **FremantleMedia International** is distributing the series worldwide.

Picnic at Hanging Rock will premiere on Foxtel's showcase channel at a date to be confirmed.

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