



Amazon Studios Announces Cast For New Series Based On The Lord Of The Rings

January 14, 2020

Season One to Span Eight Episodes, Featuring Multigenerational Cast of Breakout Talent From Around the Globe

PASADENA, Calif. – January 14, 2020 – Amazon Studios today announced the first group of series regulars set to star in the new Amazon Original series based on stories from the iconic “The Lord of the Rings” novels by J.R.R. Tolkien. Newly revealed cast members including Robert Aramayo, Owain Arthur, Nazanin Boniadi, Tom Budge, Morfydd Clark, Ismael Cruz Córdova, Ema Horvath, Markella Kavenagh, Joseph Mawle, Tyroe Muhafidin, Sophia Nomvete, Megan Richards, Dylan Smith, Charlie Vickers, and Daniel Weyman. Production will begin in February.

As previously announced, the series is led by showrunners and executive producers J.D. Payne and Patrick McKay; they are joined by filmmaker J.A. Bayona (*The Orphanage*, *Jurassic Park: Fallen Kingdom*), who is directing the first two episodes and serving as executive producer, alongside his partner Belén Atienza; with executive producers Lindsey Weber (*10 Cloverfield Lane*), Bruce Richmond (*Game of Thrones*), Gene Kelly (*Boardwalk Empire*), Sharon Tal Yguado, Gennifer Hutchison (*Breaking Bad*), Jason Cahill (*The Sopranos*), and Justin Doble (*Stranger Things*).

Said McKay and Payne: “After undertaking an extensive global search, we are delighted finally to reveal the first group of brilliant performers who will take part in Amazon’s *The Lord of the Rings* series. These exceptionally talented women and men are more than just our actors: they are the newest members of an ever-expanding creative family that is now working tirelessly to bring Middle-earth to life anew for fans and audiences worldwide.”

Set in Middle-earth, the television adaptation will explore new storylines preceding J.R.R. Tolkien’s “The Fellowship of the Ring.” A world-renowned literary work, and winner of the International Fantasy Award and Prometheus Hall of Fame Award, “The Lord of the Rings” was named Amazon customers’ favorite book of the millennium in 1999 and Britain’s best-loved novel of all time in BBC’s *The Big Read* in 2003. Its theatrical adaptations, from New Line Cinema and Director Peter Jackson, earned a combined gross of nearly \$6 billion worldwide and garnered a combined 17 Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

Below are biographies and headshots for the announced cast of the new Amazon Studios series based on *The Lord of the Rings*:

ROBERT ARAMAYO is a British actor and Juilliard graduate. He recently wrapped filming the Netflix/Left Bank limited series *Behind Her Eyes*. Later this year he will be seen in Lionsgate’s *Antebellum*, and *The King’s Man* directed by Matthew Vaughn. Currently, Robert can be seen in *Suicide Tourist*, opposite Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, and *Mindhunter*, directed by David Fincher. He had two films screen at TIFF last September, *Galveston* – opposite Ben Foster and Elle Fanning, and directed by Melanie Laurent – as well as the Black List script *Standoff At Sparrow Creek*, directed by Henry Dunham.

Additional work this past year includes *Stray Dolls* opposite Cynthia Nixon, which premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival. Previously he was seen in Tom Ford’s critically-acclaimed feature *Nocturnal Animals* opposite Amy Adams, Jake Gyllenhaal and Michael Shannon, as well as HBO’s *Game of Thrones* playing a young Ned Stark. He then starred in the leading role of Bill Harley on the Discovery Channel miniseries *Harley and the Davidsons*.

OWAIN ARTHUR is renowned for playing Francis Henshall in The National Theatre’s production of *One Man, Two Guvnors* at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, having understudied James Corden at the Adelphi Theatre. His theatre credits include Nicholas Hytner’s *The History Boys* (NT), *Romeo and Juliet* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *The Comedy of Errors* (Royal Exchange) and *Birdsong* (Comedy Theatre). Television credits include *A Confession*, *London Kills*, *Hard Sun*, *Hinterland*, *Babylon*, *Casualty*, *Ddoo Am Ddeg*, *Cei Bach*, *New Tricks* and *The Palace*. His film credits include *White Island*, *The Patrol*, *Mr. Nice*, *Eldra*, *Higher Grounds* and Disney’s upcoming *The One and Only Ivan*.

NAZANIN BONIADI is a British-Iranian actress, rapidly making her mark in both film and television as well as continuing her heartfelt work as an activist. On the big screen, Boniadi portrays former Fox News reporter Rudi Bakhtiar in Lionsgate’s drama *Bombshell*. The film has been recognized for its ensemble cast with a Critics’ Choice and Screen Actors Guild Award nomination. Boniadi starred as Zahra in Bleecker Street’s feature *Hotel Mumbai*. The film was an Official Selection of the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival, opened the Adelaide Film Festival, and garnered 13 Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) Award nominations (including Best Lead Actress for Boniadi). On television, Boniadi starred as Clare opposite J.K. Simmons in the critically acclaimed Starz original, *Counterpart*. Boniadi co-starred as Fara Sherazi in seasons three and four of the Emmy and Golden Globe Award-winning drama *Homeland*, for which she shared a 2015 SAG-AFTRA Award nomination for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series. She also played Nora in seasons six and seven of *How I Met Your Mother*. Additional on-screen credits include *Ben-Hur*, *Passengers*, *The Next Three Days*, and the first installment of *Iron Man*.

Born in Tehran, Boniadi and her family relocated to London shortly after the Iranian Revolution. Boniadi later moved to the United States to pursue medicine. After completing a Bachelor’s Degree with Honors in Biological Sciences from the University of California, Irvine, and receiving an undergraduate research award in heart transplant rejection, she switched gears back to her first love and trained in Contemporary Drama at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. Boniadi is a dedicated human and women’s rights advocate with a focus on Iran. From 2009-2015, she served as a spokesperson for Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) and continues to partner with the non-profit as an Amnesty International Artist of Conscience. In 2014, she was selected for term membership by the Council on Foreign Relations and in 2015, she joined the Board of Directors at the Center for Human Rights in Iran. Boniadi’s advocacy work has taken her to Capitol Hill, British Parliament, and most recently, the Bundestag. Boniadi is fluent in English and Persian. She currently resides in Los Angeles.

TOM BUDGE is an Australian actor, musician and writer. He burst onto the big screen as the unforgettable Pickles in Paul Goldman’s highly praised *Australian Rules*. Since then he appeared as Samuel Stote in Nick Cave and John Hillcoat’s multi-award winning film *The Proposition*, Alister Grierson’s *Kokoda*, Rachel Perkins’ *Bran Nue Dae*, Neil Armfield’s *Candy*, Julius Avery’s *Son Of A Gun*, and Jeremy Sims’ *Last Train To Freo* - which earned him best supporting actor nominations at both the 2006 AACTA Awards and the Film Critics Circle Awards. Most recently Budge played the self-appointed town mayor Mr. Frankly in Mirrah Foulkes’ directorial debut feature film *Judy & Punch*, which premiered to critical acclaim at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. Budge has also appeared in the tele-movie *Mabo*, the HBO mini-series *The Pacific*, and the WWI Australian mini-series epic

Gallipoli.

Budge's stage work regularly garners glowing reviews; the Company B Belvoir St. production of "The Lieutenant of Inishmore" earned him a Best Supporting Actor nomination at the 2004 Helpmann Awards and after a 10 year break from theatre work he was again nominated in the Best Supporting Actor category for Eddie Perfect's "The Beast" at the Melbourne Theatre Company in 2013. He received rave reviews for his performance as Clov in Andrew Upton and Hugo Weaving's re-energized multi award winning staging of Samuel Beckett's "Endgame" at the Sydney Theatre Company in 2015, and in Kate Mulvaney's "The Rasputin Affair" at the Ensemble Theatre in 2017. Tom is also a seasoned musician, composer, lyricist and emerging screenwriter. He has long split his time between acting and music and has toured with the Tom Budge Band locally and internationally.

MORFYDD CLARK has firmly established herself as one of the industry's most promising actors, and her triumphant performances across three features at the 63rd BFI London Film Festival led her to be identified by the Guardian as the "breakout" star of the 2019 festival. At the beginning of 2020 Morfydd starred as 'Mina' in the BBC and Netflix co-production of *Dracula*. She also recently portrayed 'Sister Clara' in Jack Thorne's eight-part adaptation of Phillip Pullman's best-selling novels *His Dark Materials*, alongside James McAvoy, Ruth Wilson, Anne-Marie Duff, Andrew Scott and Dafne Keen. Morfydd will next be seen in cinema in Armando Iannucci's *The Personal History of David Copperfield*, playing the role of 'Dora' whilst also briefly appearing in a second role as David Copperfield's widowed mother. The film received its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival before opening the 63rd BFI London Film Festival. Later this year audiences will see Morfydd take on the title role in *Saint Maud* - the feature debut from BAFTA Breakthrough Brit director Rose Glass.

2020 will also see her as 'Young Jane' in Craig Robert's BIFA-nominated feature film, *Eternal Beauty*, which had its world premiere at the BFI London Film Festival. In 2018, Morfydd starred as 'Debbie Hickman' in *Patrick Melrose* (a Showtime/Sky Atlantic production) alongside Benedict Cumberbatch and Allison Williams. Also that year, she was seen in *The Alienist* (playing 'Caroline Bell'). Around the same time, she completed filming her role in BBC Two's adaptation of China Miéville's *The City And The City*. Morfydd's other notable screen credits include: 'Kate Dickens' in the 2017 feature *The Man Who Invented Christmas*; 'Zuzanna Luptak' in 2016's *Interlude in Prague*; 'Frederica' in Whit Stillman's feature comedy *Love & Friendship*; and her "stand out" performance as 'Miss Charron' in 2014's *The Falling*, opposite Maisie Williams and Florence Pugh. Theatre credits include: 'Cordelia' in the 2016 production of *King Lear* at the Old Vic; her critically acclaimed 2016 performance as 'Cecile' in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* at the Donmar Warehouse opposite Dominic West; and 'Jen' in the Olivier nominated four hander *Violence And Son*, which opened at The Royal Court in June 2015.

ISMAEL CRUZ CÓRDOVA just wrapped a series regular role on David E. Kelley's HBO miniseries *The Undoing* opposite Nicole Kidman and Hugh Grant for director Susanne Bier, which will be released Spring 2020. He is currently shooting Wyatt Rockefeller's feature *Settlers*, opposite Sofia Boutella and Brooklynn Prince, in South Africa. He can currently be seen in Working Title's period feature *Mary Queen of Scots* opposite Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie, as well as in the Sony Pictures remake of the Oscar nominated film *Miss Bala*, as the male lead opposite Gina Rodriguez. Previous credits include the third season of the Anonymous Content / Epix series *Berlin Station*, the fourth season of Showtime's *Ray Donovan* opposite Liev Schreiber, as well as Ang Lee's *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*. Ismael is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

EMA HORVATH is a Slovak American actress whose film career began in the summer of 2015 when she landed the role of 'Shell' in the Blumhouse/Cinemax film *Like.Share.Follow*. Horvath had come to LA to study screenwriting and was working as a script coverage intern for Blumhouse Productions when she was offered the opportunity to audition for the role. Since then, her credits have grown to include *The Gallows 2*, *The Mortuary Collection*, and *Viscous*.

Horvath is a classically trained theater actress. She is a graduate of the prestigious boarding arts high-school Interlochen Arts Academy, where she studied theater performance for two years under the tutelage of the acclaimed Shakespearean performer, teacher, and author Dr. David Montee, Comedia dell'arte practitioner Gulshirin Dubash, and the current Director of Theater at Interlochen Arts Academy, Bill Church. After graduating from the school in 2012, Horvath was offered admission to several notable theater conservatories but ultimately chose to pursue a B.A. in English Literature from Harvard University.

MARKELLA KAVENAGH made her screen debut in the Stan series *Romper Stomper*, opposite Sophie Lowe and David Wenham. She then went on to appear in Foxtel's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, alongside Natalie Dormer, and the acclaimed BBC series *The Cry*, opposite Jenna Coleman and Ewen Leslie. Markella's film credits include Katie Found's coming of age feature, *My First Summer* and Phoebe Tonkin's short, *Furlough*. Markella will be seen in next in Vicki Madden's *The Gloaming* on Stan.

JOSEPH MAWLE played long-lost 'Benjen Stark' on the award-winning HBO series *Game of Thrones*, to much fanfare. He was nominated for a BAFTA TV Award for his performance in *Birdsong*, opposite Eddie Redmayne and Matthew Goode. Mawle also starred in *MotherFatherSon* with Richard Gere, and opposite Rosamund Pike in the BBC remake of *Women in Love* (in which he played the role originated by Oliver Reed). His film credits include Ron Howard's *In the Heart of the Sea*, *Kill Your Friends* with Nicholas Hoult, *Half of a Yellow Sun* with Chiwetel Ejiofor, and the male lead in *TheHallow*. He can be seen next in Terrence Malick's *The Last Planet* with Mark Rylance.

TYROE MUHAFFIDIN is an Australian actor who has appeared in a number of short films including *Two Sands*, as well as the online series *Caravan*. The upcoming Amazon Original is his first major series.

SOPHIA NOMVETE was born in the UK, is African/Iranian heritage and speaks fluent Farsi. Her credits include: the leading role 'Dexter' in *Vice Versa* (RSC); *Miss Littlewood* (RSC); *England People Very Nice* (Royal National Theatre). She also played the leading role of 'Miss Sofia' in the European premiere of *The Color Purple* (Menier Chocolate Factory) for which she was nominated for a WhatsOnStage 'Best Supporting Actress Award' and 'Best Supporting Role in a Musical' by *The Evening Standard* and *Broadway World*. Sophia has also worked at Chichester Festival Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and the Royal Exchange Theatre, amongst many others.

MEGAN RICHARDS is just 20 years old. She trained at West London Drama Training and The Brit School. Megan started her professional career in 2018 working on a BBC1/Netflix series, *Wanderlust*, written by Nick Payne. She guested in *Doctors* on BBC1. Most of 2019 was taken up appearing in the German made *Pan Tau*, which is due to transmit later in 2020. She has also appeared on stage in a National Theatre Connections play, *Extremism*, at the Soho Theatre. She is an accomplished singer and musician – playing the piano, saxophone and guitar.

DYLAN SMITH has studied and worked in theatre, film and TV around the world. He most recently starred in Patty Jenkins' *I Am The Night* for TNT opposite Chris Pine, and can soon be seen in Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow* (A24). Dylan began in Canada on stage with the renowned Soulpepper Theatre Company. He studied acting at Webber Douglas in London, England, where he took leading roles on films including, *Murder On The Orient*

Express, with Alfred Molina, and on television in the British classic, *EastEnders*. Smith returned to the stage with the premiere of *Blasted* by Sarah Kane. While in Canada, Dylan was cast in *300*, *The Immortals*, *Total Recall*, *Forsaken*, *The Englishman's Boy*, and the independent film *Eddie the Sleepwalking Cannibal* - in which he took the title role. Smith won The Maverick Movie Award for best actor from *Hangnail*, and Best Actor in a Short Film for *Twine* at The London Independent Film Festival. Smith was cast in *Private Lives* on Broadway where he met his wife, British theatre director Anna Ledwich. He returned with love in his eyes to London and proceeded to work both stage and film, acting in *Spectral*, *The Mummy*, *The Maze Runner: The Death Cure*, and on the small screen with the *Dawn* for Hulu, *The Tunnel*, *Ripper Street*, and *Into The Badlands*. His film *Lemonade*, from esteemed Romanian filmmaker Cristian Mungiu, is currently making a wide festival run.

CHARLIE VICKERS is at the start of an exciting career. He graduated from the prestigious drama school, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2017 and since then he has appeared in a number of projects including Netflix's *Medici: Masters of Florence* opposite Sean Bean. Charlie also had a key role in Rachel Ward's Sydney set feature film, *Palm Beach*, opposite Greta Scaachi, Richard E. Grant and Sam Neill.

DANIEL WEYMAN is a decorated British actor whose most recent film credits include *Where Hands Touch*, *The Happy Prince* (starring opposite Colin Firth, Colin Morgan and Emily Watson), and *Great Expectations* (starring opposite Ralph Fiennes, Sally Hawkins and Helena Bonham Carter).

His career includes leading roles in television shows such as *Silent Witness*, *Gentleman Jack*, *Foyle's War*, *Dunkirk*, along with appearances in *The North Water*, *Treadstone* and *A Very English Scandal*. His extensive theater work has earned him great acclaim, leading productions including *The Mentor*, *Sideways*, *4000 Days*, *The Crucible*, *King Lear*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Glass Room*, and many more.

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