

The Providence Journal

How do your favorite 'Gilded Age' moments compare with the actors'? See them on video

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NEWPORT – The last two episodes of "[The Gilded Age](#)" held the favorite moments for five of the actors who brought the [Julian Fellowes drama](#) to life on HBO.

For four of those actors, their favorite moments were shown in the Aug. 10 season finale, and for one, Christine Baranski, who plays Agnes Van Rhijn, her favorite moment was in the episode before the finale.

The moments chosen by the actors – Morgan Spector, as George Russell; Denée Benton, as Peggy Scott; Jordan Donica, as Dr. William Kirkland; Carrie Coon, as Bertha Russell; and Baranski – touch on how the show has dealt with the sensitive topics of race and sexuality.

The actors were interviewed after the filming and editing of Season 3 was complete but before the final episode aired, with the agreement that The Providence Journal would not publish this story until the season was done.

Benton, Donica, Coon and Spector were interviewed by video chat from New York. Baranski was interviewed by phone and in person in Newport.

Watch it here: [Stream your favorite shows, the biggest blockbusters and more.](#)

'I love that they shot me'

Morgan Spector, as George Russell

Spector enjoyed that his near-assassination took the show in a different direction – true to the violence of the 1880s – where viewers could no longer rest assured that main characters were immune from lethal threats.

"Our show has sort of consistently told the viewer ... we're going to test these people, but mostly things are going to resolve," Spector said. "I think when we introduce an element like that kind of sporadic violence, it's exciting."

'To see Peggy really get showered in the love that she deserves'

Denée Benton, as Peggy Scott

Benton said she burst into tears when she saw the shot when Kirkland, who had stopped talking to Peggy, surprised her at the charity ball. "To see that moment of her really feeling chosen" after Peggy has moved through so much grief in the show was "such a long time coming," Benton said.

Using all her skills as an actor

Christine Baranski, as Agnes Van Rhijn

Agnes Van Rhijn was struck speechless – an unfamiliar condition for her – when she realizes that her son, Oscar, is mourning the death of the man he loved. But that opened an opportunity for Baranski to use all her tools as an actor, playing the very emotional scene without saying a word. "You see her pain," Baranski said, "and you see that without even having to speak words."

'This is what this doctor lives for and what he loves'

Jordan Donica, as Dr. William Kirkland

Donica had trouble choosing a single moment as his favorite, noting affection for three different scenes: The scenic beauty of the doctor and Peggy strolling on [Newport's Cliff Walk](#), the grandeur of the ball scene that Benton named as her favorite, and, perhaps tops among all, the scene during which he saves the otherwise mortally wounded George Russell from a gunshot wound.

Donica loved how the scene provided a "bookend" for the scene in Episode 1, where Kirkland was forced to treat Peggy for a respiratory infection after a White doctor refused.

The actor also identified with his sister, a real-life trauma nurse, and how she and her colleagues approach those types of situations.

'We're coming up against the mores of that society'

Carrie Coon, as Bertha Russell

Has anyone ever accused Carrie Coon of being an engineering geek? Well, part of her excitement regarding the surgical scene of Kirkland saving George was the technology and techniques needed to render it on screen.

But she also appreciated the social boundary stretching of having a Black doctor saving a White industrialist.