

= The Wedding of River Song =

" The Wedding of River Song " is the thirteenth and final episode in the sixth series of the British science fiction television series Doctor Who , and was first broadcast on BBC One on 1 October 2011 . It was written by lead writer and executive producer Steven Moffat and directed by Jeremy Webb .

In the episode , alien time traveller the Doctor (Matt Smith) attempts to escape his apparent death at the hands of the Silence . River Song (Alex Kingston) , whom the Silence had programmed to kill the Doctor , refuses , and they end up in an alternate timeline where all of time is running simultaneously and beginning to disintegrate . The Doctor tries to restore the universe with the help of River and the alternate universe versions of his companions Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) and Rory Williams (Arthur Darvill) . It is revealed that he had already planned escape by posing as himself using the shape @-@ shifting Teselecta .

" The Wedding of River Song " concludes the story arc of the series and reveals what really happened at the start of the season premiere , " The Impossible Astronaut " . The episode features many returning characters . It also pays tribute to the classic series character Brigadier Lethbridge @-@ Stewart following the death of the character 's actor Nicholas Courtney . One of the last episodes to be filmed for the series , production for " The Wedding of River Song " finished in April 2011 . The episode was watched by a total of 7 @.@ 67 million viewers in the UK , and received positive to mixed reviews from critics . While visual elements were praised , the characters and resolution of the episode received a mixed reception .

= = Plot = =

= = = Teaser = = =

A prelude to the finale was released online 24 September 2011 after the previous episode , " Closing Time " . It shows Area 52 with the clock stuck at 5 : 02 p.m. , where Silence are kept in stasis and River Song is wearing an eye patch in the same fashion as Madame Kovarian .

= = = Synopsis = = =

The Doctor , aware of his imminent death at the fixed point of time on 22 April 2011 at Lake Silencio in Utah , attempts to track down the Silence to learn why he must die . He encounters the Teselecta shapeshifting robot and its miniaturised crew who are currently posing as one of the members of the Silence ; they offer him any help within their power as he faces his death . Through them , the Doctor is led to the living head of Dorium Maldovar , one of the Doctor 's allies taken by the Order of the Headless Monks (" A Good Man Goes to War ") . Dorium reveals that the Silence are dedicated to averting the Doctor 's future , warning him " On the fields of Trenzalore , at the fall of the Eleventh , when no living creature can speak falsely or fail to answer a question will be asked ? one that must never be answered . And Silence must fall when the question is asked . " (" The Time of the Doctor ") The Doctor continues to refuse to go to Lake Silencio until he discovers his old friend Brigadier Lethbridge @-@ Stewart has died , at which point he accepts his fate . To avoid crossing his own time stream , he gives the Teselecta crew four invitations to Lake Silencio for Amy and Rory , River Song , Canton Everett Delaware III , and a younger version of himself .

As shown in " The Impossible Astronaut " , the Doctor joins his friends at Lake Silencio and then approaches the astronaut , now known to be a younger version of River Song , Amy and Rory 's daughter , trained to kill the Doctor by the Silence and Madame Kovarian . River does not want to kill him but is unable to fight the suit 's control , and the Doctor says he forgives her and reminds her that the event is inevitable . River , despite his warning against interfering with a fixed point , surprises the Doctor by draining the astronaut suit 's weapons systems and averting his death . Time becomes " stuck " as a result and begins to disintegrate ; all of Earth 's history begins to run

simultaneously at a fixed moment of 5 : 02 p.m. on 22 April 2011 . In London , Holy Roman Emperor Winston Churchill takes the Doctor , his " soothsayer " , out from his locked cell to ask him about the condition of time . The Doctor explains the preceding events , as tally marks begin appearing on his arms , indicating the presence of the Silence . After noticing a Silence nest overhead , they are rescued by Amy and a squad of soldiers under her command . Due to the effects of the crack in her bedroom , Amy is cognizant of the altered timeline , though she is unaware that her trusted captain is her husband Rory . Amy takes the Doctor to " Area 52 " , a hollowed @-@ out Giza pyramid , where they have captured over a hundred Silence and Madame Kovarian . River is also there , aware of the consequences of her actions she refuses to allow the Doctor to touch her , an event that would " unfreeze " time and allow it to resume . They all wear " eyedrives " , external memory eye patches which enable them to avoid the Silence 's effect of erasing themselves from memory .

They realise that this was a trap arranged by Kovarian , as the Silence begin to escape confinement and overload the eyedrives , killing their users . The Doctor and River escape to the top of the pyramid while Amy and Rory fight off a wave of Silence and Amy realises who Rory is . Madame Kovarian dislodges her own eyedrive as it begins to overload , but Amy forces it back in place with the intention of killing her as revenge for Kovarian taking her child (Melody Pond) away . Amy and Rory regroup with River and the Doctor . River tries to convince the Doctor that this frozen timeline is acceptable and that he does not have to die , but the Doctor explains that all of reality will soon break down . River claims she 'll suffer more than anyone else in the universe if she has to kill the Doctor , despite his horror at the idea . To stop it , the Doctor marries River on the spot and whispers something in her ear , declaring that he had just told her his name . He then requests that River allow him to prevent the universe 's destruction . The two kiss , and reality begins to return to normal .

Sometime later , Amy and Rory are visited by River , shortly after the events of " Flesh and Stone " in River 's timeline . When Amy explains that she had recently witnessed the Doctor 's death , River reveals that the Doctor lied when he said he told her his name ; instead he had said " Look into my eye " . The Doctor had asked the Teselecta to masquerade as him at Lake Silencio , and the Doctor and his TARDIS had been miniaturised within it . Elsewhere , the Doctor takes Dorium 's head back to where it was stored and explains that his perceived death will enable him to be forgotten as he had been getting " too big " and drawing too much attention . As the Doctor leaves , Dorium warns of the prophecies that still await him and the question which Dorium calls out after him : " Doctor who ? "

= = = Continuity = = =

The Doctor mentions the possibility of visiting Rose Tyler and Jack Harkness . He also says that Queen Elizabeth I is still waiting to elope with him as hinted in The End of Time ; this explains why she was so angry in " The Shakespeare Code " . Amy 's office contains the model of the TARDIS she made as a child (" The Eleventh Hour ") , along with drawings of various monsters and scenes from her adventures with the Doctor . River Song states that she used her hallucinogenic lipstick on President Kennedy , a possession of hers that was introduced in " The Time of Angels " .

One of the Silence calls Rory " the man who dies and dies again " , a reference to the many times he appears to die . In " Forest of the Dead " , River whispers something in the Doctor 's ear that makes him trust her , which the Doctor states just before her death was " my name " and that " There 's only one reason I would ever tell anyone my name " . The episode 's main plot centres around the damage caused by River when she tries to re @-@ write a fixed point in time . The concept of " fixed points " in history which may not be altered , even by the Doctor or his companions , was introduced in The Aztecs (1964) and was named and explored in the new series with episodes such as " The Fires of Pompeii " and " The Waters of Mars " . When River meets Amy for a bottle of wine , she is wearing military fatigues and says that she " just climbed out of the Byzanthium " , and that she saw Amy there . This refers to events in " Time of Angels " and " Flesh and Stone " (the " crash of the Byzanthium " first being mentioned in " Silence in the Library " .)

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" The Wedding of River Song " concludes the story arc of the Doctor 's apparent death which began in the series opener , " The Impossible Astronaut " and resolves more pieces of River Song 's timeline . Despite this , it leaves ambiguous whether the Doctor and River are legitimately married . Showrunner and episode writer Steven Moffat described it as " a big roller coaster ride of Doctor Who madness " . One of the " mad idea [s] " he included in the episode , " Live Chess " , came because Moffat wanted to make chess ? which he called " one of the most boring games in the world " ? into a dangerous spectator sport . Originally , the script did not include the brief scene with a Dalek ; Moffat had intended to rest the Doctor 's most famous adversary for the sixth series . Amy 's confrontation with Madame Kovarian , a scene which shows what she might have been like had she not met the Doctor , was also added into the script later .

Following the death of actor Nicholas Courtney , the Doctor learns in the episode that Courtney 's character Brigadier Lethbridge @-@ Stewart has died peacefully in a nursing home . Moffat said of the reference , " In a story about the Doctor going to his death , it seemed right and proper to acknowledge one of the greatest losses Doctor Who has endured . " Moffat has confirmed that the eyedrives are also a tribute to Courtney , who wore an eye patch when playing an alternative version of the Brigadier in *Inferno* (1970) . Several characters reappear in the episode , including Charles Dickens (Simon Callow) from " The Unquiet Dead " , Winston Churchill (Ian McNeice) from " Victory of the Daleks " , the Silurian doctor Malohkeh (Richard Hope) from " The Hungry Earth " / " Cold Blood " , the Teselecta and Captain Carter (Richard Dillane) from " Let 's Kill Hitler " , and the Headless Monks and Dorium (Simon Fisher @-@ Becker) from " A Good Man Goes to War " . McNeice felt there was room for his character to return , as " Victory of the Daleks " had hinted that he and the Doctor knew each other well .

= = = Filming and effects = = =

" The Wedding of River Song " was one of the last episodes filmed for the series ; 29 April 2011 was the last day of filming . However , a scene from " Let 's Kill Hitler " was delayed and shot on 11 July 2011 , making that the last day of filming for the series . American television hostess Meredith Vieira recorded her report of Churchill 's return to the Buckingham Senate in front of a green screen while filming a segment for *The Today Show* 's " Anchors Abroad " segment in May 2011 .

Mark Gatiss , who played Gantok , was credited in this episode under the pseudonym " Rondo Haxton " , a homage to the American horror actor Rondo Hatton on whom the character 's look was based ; Gatiss underwent prosthetics to play the part . Gatiss , who has written for *Doctor Who* , also played Professor Richard Lazarus in " The Lazarus Experiment " (2007) and provided the voice of Danny Boy in " Victory of the Daleks " .

The cast found working with the eye patches strange as they had to act with one eye ; Kingston remarked that it made her " slightly dizzy " . Gillan was allowed to fire a specially @-@ made machine gun used for films . Churchill 's Roman Buckingham Palace was filmed in the Cardiff 's City Council building . The script called for an Indiana Jones style tunnel for the Headless Monks ' chamber , but as that kind of location was not available in Cardiff a set was built instead . The skulls were hand @-@ crafted and required a lot of preparation , so it was one of the first things started for the episode 's production .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" The Wedding of River Song " was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC One on 1 October 2011 and on the same date in the United States on BBC America . Overnight ratings showed that the episode was watched by 6 @.@ 1 million viewers , the third most @-@ watched

programme of the evening and an improvement upon preceding weeks of Doctor Who as well as the previous series finale . Final consolidated figures by the Broadcasters ' Audience Research Board were 7 @. @ 67 million viewers , the seventh highest for BBC One and the second most @- @ watched programme for 1 October . It was given an Appreciation Index of 86 , placing it in the " excellent " category . However it was the lowest rated finale since the revival of Doctor Who , with the others scoring an AI of 88 to 91 .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The episode received positive to mixed reviews from critics , with some reservations over the resolution and character interactions . Dan Martin of The Guardian gave a positive review , believing that the episode " moves along the bigger , 50 @- @ year story and effectively reboots the show " . He particularly praised it for being simplistic , as well as the visuals of all history running together at once . Rachel Tarley , writing for Metro , praising the " gripping race " against time and noting that the script was " snappy and witty throughout , but the episode had its eerie and touching moments where necessary , too " . The A.V. Club 's Keith Phipps gave the episode an A , calling it " pretty close to a perfect season finale " for those not looking for all of the answers . Morgan Jeffery of Digital Spy wrote , " As a piece of Saturday night entertainment , it works ? packed full of strong performances , stunning visuals and sharp dialogue . And as the resolution to a series @- @ long arc , it 's mostly satisfactory ? though the episode poses as many questions as it answers . "

Dave Golder of SFX gave the episode four @- @ and @- @ a @- @ half out of five stars , explaining that he was in conflict whether to rate it five or four stars and calling it " about nine tenths a great , great episode " . He referred to the many concepts of the episode as a " sumptuous confection made mostly out of the finest ingredients " and found the Teselecta resolution a " cool twist " at first but it meant " the whole episode is just an elaborate version of the classic Star Trek : Voyager alternate timeline shtick complete with reset button " . IGN 's Matt Risley rated " The Wedding of River Song " 8 @. @ 5 out of 10 , writing it " managed to tie together plot threads and character arcs without too much Deus Ex Maguffiny predictability and with a whole host of trademark sci @- @ fi spectacle to boot " . Though he thought the wedding " felt a little too rushed to leave any lingering emotional aftertaste " , he praised other emotional moments in the episode and the fact that everyone thinks the Doctor is dead will help the show explore a new angle .

Gavin Fuller of The Daily Telegraph called it an " uneven ending " ; he praised it for being " visually clever " and liked the way the Silence were handled , but thought the Teselecta solution was " a bit of a cop @- @ out " . Neela Debnath of The Independent was displeased with the episode , calling it a " brainteaser " that " refused to tie up the loose ends neatly " , and that as a finale it was " underwhelming in terms of drama and overwhelming in terms of information " . However , she praised the fact that Moffat appears to be spreading storylines over several series , believing it " strengthens the show " . On the other hand , HitFix 's Alan Sepinwall thought that the resolutions from the wedding on were " excellent " , but felt it could have done without another alternate universe , as it was similar to the previous finale " The Big Bang " . Maureen Ryan of TV Squad criticised the episode for having too many " bells and whistles " which undermined the emotional moments , especially the wedding , which she did not believe showed that the Doctor was really in love with River . However , she did enjoy " callbacks " to previous episodes such as Churchill and Amy and Rory 's relationship . Charlie Jane Anders of io9 thought it was better than the previous finale , " The Big Bang " , as there were more answers , fun , and a satisfying resolution . However , she was critical of the reason River had to kill the Doctor as well as their relationship , and believed that Amy killing Madame Kovarian was " no substitute " for Amy dealing with what Kovarian had done to her child .