

## Join Us

If you enjoy theatre, why not join us and benefit from membership:

- ✓ Half price personal tickets for Questors productions\*
- ✓ Discounted Guest tickets when you bring friends to Questors productions\*
- ✓ Children's FREE tickets†
- ✓ Opportunities to be actively involved in our productions
- ✓ Opportunity to audition to join our company of actors
- ✓ Exclusive or discounted training courses
- ✓ Access to **IQ** – the members-only website: [members.questors.org.uk](http://members.questors.org.uk)
- ✓ Access to exclusive news on **IQ** and email newsletter
- ✓ Receive the regular programme leaflet
- ✓ Membership of The Grapevine Club
- ✓ Special invitations, events and offers not available to the public
- ✓ Ticket reservation facility (conditions apply)
- ✓ Voting rights in the company

*\*Reduced prices exclude certain events. †Under 18, excludes certain events, maximum four per event. Must be collected at the performance and accompanied by the member.*

### Getting the most from your membership

We have a wide range of opportunities for you to become actively involved front-of-house or backstage. Volunteer help is always needed for selling programmes or stewarding, and training is provided if you'd like to work in Box Office with our computerised system. To meet members in a social setting, volunteer to help behind the Grapevine bar. Backstage staff including stage managers, prop makers, set builders, sound and lighting designers and operators, painters, wardrobe and costume and set designers are always welcomed; whatever your skills, we'll find a place for you. We also have courses for those wishing to direct.

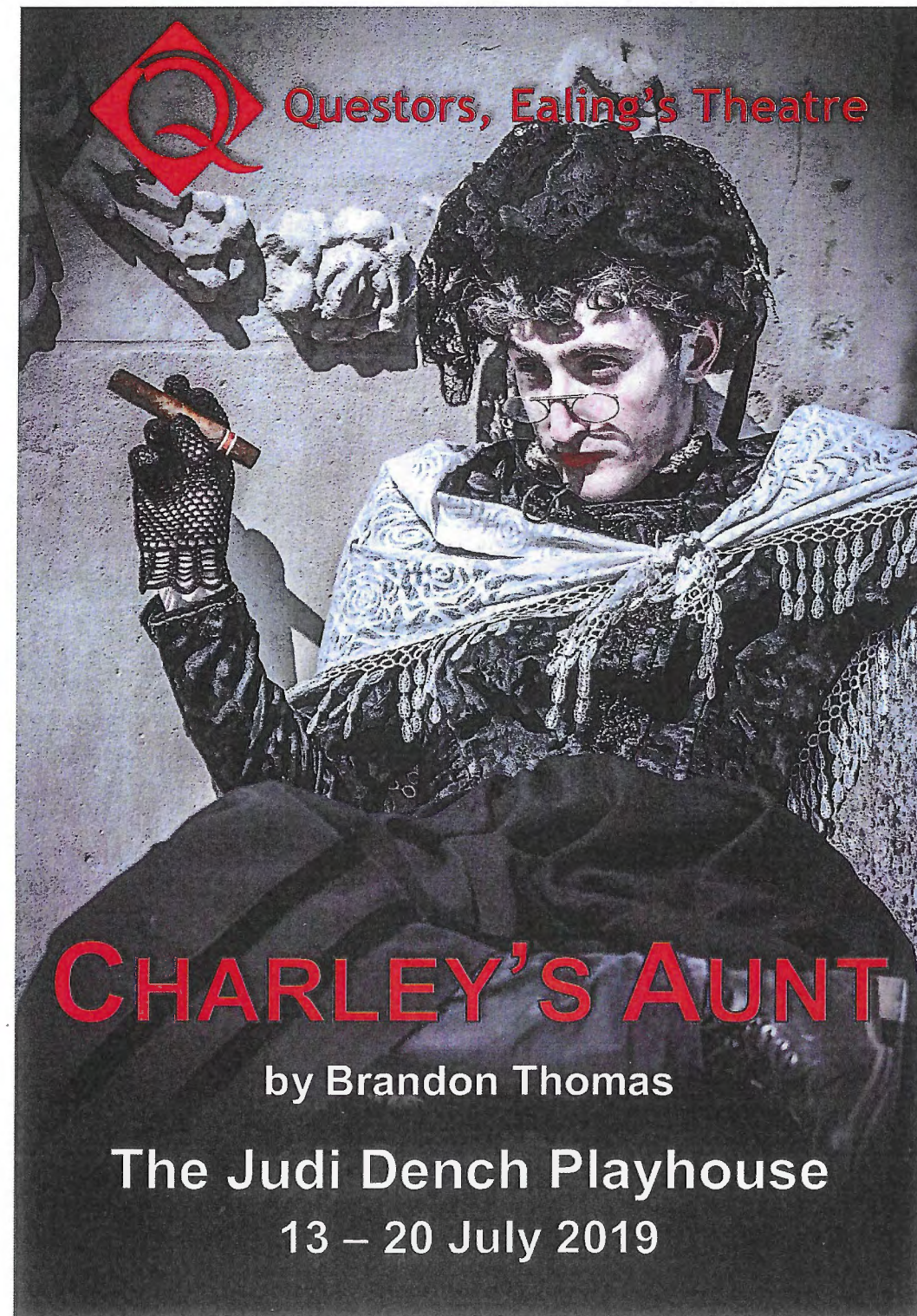
The Questors has a high standard of acting and, to maintain this, everyone wanting to act must first take an audition. These are held every month – call the Theatre Office for details of forthcoming auditions.

### The Questors Youth Theatre – QYT

Our Youth Theatre, QYT, runs weekly drama classes for all ages from 6 to 18. Younger groups meet on Saturday mornings and older ages at weekday teatime. There's often a waiting list for membership, so put your name down now! Details are online at [questors.org.uk/qyt](http://questors.org.uk/qyt).

The Questors Theatre  
12 Mattock Lane, Ealing, W5 5BQ  
Registered Charity No. 207516

Programme: Nigel Bamford  
Theatre Office: 020 8567 0011  
Box Office: 020 8567 5184  
Email: [enquiries@questors.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@questors.org.uk)





## Fields at The Questors

Fields at The Questors serves Italian coffee, fine teas, hearty meals and handmade cakes, and is the perfect spot for a pre-theatre meal or intermission ice-cream.

Order interval drinks before the show to beat the crowds.

Regular opening hours:  
Monday to Saturday,  
9:00 am to 7:30 pm

Also open before and during the interval of all Judi Dench Playhouse evening and matinee performances.

Find **Fields** on **Facebook**.



## The Grapevine Bar

The Grapevine is our friendly club bar open to Members and Friends of The Questors Theatre and their guests, as well as audience members on show nights.

The club is open seven nights a week and Sunday lunchtimes, and is managed and staffed entirely by volunteers.

We are the proud holders of a Cask Marque award for the quality of our real ales, we appear in the 2019 edition of The Good Beer Guide and we are **CAMRA West Middlesex Club of the Year**. A choice of at least three real ales is usually available, including Fuller's London Pride. We also provide a range of draught lagers and ciders, as well as wines and spirits – all at very reasonable prices.

Opening Hours:

7:00 pm – 10:30 pm (Sunday – Wednesday)

7:00 pm – 11:00 pm (Thursday – Saturday)

Sunday lunchtime: midday – 2:30 pm

See [questors.org.uk/grapevine](http://questors.org.uk/grapevine) for more details.

**Fields and the Grapevine accept payments by card.**



image: Robert Vass

## CHARLEY'S AUNT

by Brandon Thomas

**The Judi Dench Playhouse**

**13 – 20 July 2019**

# CHARLEY'S AUNT

In 1890, the comedian W.S. Penley told his friend, Brandon Thomas, that he was thinking of going into management and 'Why don't you write a comedy for me?' Thomas hit on the idea that, given Penley had played practically everything else, it might be a good idea to cast him as a woman.



MR. W. S. PENLEY.—"Charley's Aunt."

Thomas wrote the first draft of *Charley's Aunt* in two months and read it to Penley, who convulsed with laughter and fell to the floor. The pair hawked the script around all the obvious managements, none of whom were in the slightest bit interested. Despite this, they stuck to their guns and eventually decided to do a 'try out' production at the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds where they considered themselves safe from the London critics. Thus, with second-hand scenery, *Charley's Aunt* opened in 1892 with Penley playing Fancourt Babberly and Brandon Thomas directing. Penley was a star in London but hardly known in the provinces: as a result, the audiences in Suffolk were thin

and the management was enjoined to move them together into a decent group in the stalls. The reception was such that Penley wired Thomas with the message, 'Your fortune is made'. He was right: after its inauspicious first night, it had a successful transfer to London where it ran for 1,466 performances, it transferred to Broadway where it ran for more than four years and has since been filmed five times (including a parody with Arthur Askey as *Charley's Big Hearted Aunt*) and, inevitably, there is a largely forgotten musical version *Where's Charley?* Prominent actors who have stepped into Auntie's frock are too numerous to list in full but they include Ray Bolger (the scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*), John Inman, Mel Smith, Danny La Rue, John Mills and Michael Kitchen.

It remains one of the best-loved farces of all time and could well be described as a 'one-hit-wonder' (nowadays, nobody knows anything else Brandon Thomas wrote). The plot is somewhat ludicrous and, at times, sentimental. The Victorians ignored implausible coincidence and adored sentiment; we see this reflected in the works of Charles Dickens, W.S. Gilbert and Oscar Wilde.

W.S. Penley later fell out with Thomas and took him to court in a dispute about who actually invented the plot, Penley's contention being that 'We worked it out on stage'. Thomas himself said, 'I hoped to go down to fame as a great actor. If I go at all it will be as the author of *Charley's Aunt*'.

Back in the late seventies, as a young actor, I played Charley: it proved to be a seminal production for me in that it led to my being invited to audition for drama school (my advisor probably thought I badly needed the training). At the time, I remember that playing in this piece of frothy nonsense was harder than practically anything else because of the necessity of absolute precision (both vocally and physically) and the wonderful joy of getting it right and nailing the laugh with just the right turn of the head or nuance of speech.

The world the play is set in has disappeared: one where penniless upper class students fool their way through Oxford, whilst guzzling champagne and smoking expensive cigars. When the curtain falls, eight people are united in neat couples and only Spettigue is left (very much like Shakespeare's Malvolio) to stew in his own juice. (True, that's omitting Brassett, the college scout, who, presumably, will lord it over similar idiots for years to come.) The coincidences that lead to this come thick and fast but we must suspend our disbelief and enjoy the intricacy of the exposition.

The 'aside' is used liberally: nowadays, this is a discarded device where the audience becomes party to the internal thoughts of the character that almost always diametrically oppose what they are actually saying.

The Victorian audiences found the idea of a man in a frock utterly hilarious; today, this has slightly lost its shock impact but we can still enjoy the absurdity of the reluctant drag artist 'from Brazil, where the nuts come from'.

Just a few of the jokes might be lost on a modern audience. (For instance: 'I know Charley visits his uncle sometimes when he's hard up' is a reference to 'Uncle' being a pawnbroker; 'Look at some [of your old ladies] ... holding very high positions' is clearly a snipe at Queen Victoria; Charley's final 'My aunt!' in its day would be understood as 'Good grief!') That being said, most of the humour still resonates and slapstick never dates. There are not many other plays that give so much opportunity for cavorting around a stage and generally having fun.

**Richard Gallagher, Director**



# Rehearsal Photographs by Laura Clifford



QUESTORS STUDENT GROUP 72 PRESENTS

# CHARLEY'S AUNT

by Brandon Thomas

*First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 13 July 2019*

## CAST

Jack Chesney	Joshua Perry
Brassett	Jake Burman
Charley Wykeham	Bradley Peake
Lord Fancourt Babberley	Tony Sears
Kitty Verdun	Ruth Comerford
Amy Spettigue	Sunaina McCarthy
Sir Francis Chesney	Matthew Saldanha
Stephen Spettigue	William Busby
Donna Lucia D'Alvadorez	Jordan Fowler
Ela Delahay	Julia Caldwell

**Setting: Oxford 1892**

**Act One:** Jack Chesney's rooms, St Olde's College, morning

**Interval**

**Act Two:** The garden outside Jack's rooms, afternoon

**Interval**

**Act Three:** The conservatory of Spettigue's house, North Oxford, evening

The performance will last approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes,  
including two 15-minute intervals.

Please turn off all mobile phones and similar electronic devices. The use of  
cameras, video cameras and recording equipment is strictly prohibited.  
Thank you.

## PRODUCTION

Director	Richard Gallagher
Associate Director	Lucy Aley-Parker
Set Designer	Anjali Karadia
Costume Coordinator	Sarah Andrews
Lighting Designer	John Green
Sound Designer / Operator	Paul Wilson
Stage Manager	Sadie Crowder
Deputy Stage Manager	Robert Eagle
Assistant Stage Managers	Marcus Carr, Sarah Clopet, William Connor, Monica Gilardi, Rachel Griffiths, Azaldeen Mohamed
Prompter/Production Assistant	Dorothy Lawson
Wardrobe Assistants	Mary Davies, Adina Elmasry
Hair and Make-Up Leads	Rosie Allison, Grace Firmin
Hair and Make-Up	The Delamar Academy
Lighting Assistants/Operators	Andrew Quick, Carole Swan, Ellie Vidal
Lighting Riggers	Terry Mummery, Chris Newall
Set Constructors	John Barron, Toby Burbidge, Adina Elmasry, Jennifer Kerr, Alex Marker, Emily Sanctuary, Andrew Whadcoat
Set Decor	Ian Black, Angus Duke
Production Photographer	Robert Vass
Rehearsal Photographer	Laura Clifford
Social Media	Laura Clifford, Peter Gould, Gavin Jones
Thanks to	Jan Auvache, Sue Collins, CJ, Paul Francis, Rory Hobson, David Hovatter, Helen Karasiewicz, Shaan Latif-Shaikh, Francis Lloyd, Harriet Parsonage, Jenny Richardson, Sarah Vass, Sylvia Wall, Rickmansworth Players wardrobe

2008 production ladies' dresses designed by Raymond Childe,  
and made by Jean Derby and Pam Smith



# Tea Darling

## Refreshingly Vintage

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*Tea Darling*

Congratulates the Cast, Crew & Creatives of

'Charley's Aunt'

and wishes them all the best for the run!



*Tea Darling Presents...*

**Tea & Laughs** : It's back! Our popular stand up night is becoming a regular event!

**Date:** Saturday 27th July **Time:** Doors open 7.30pm for 8pm start.

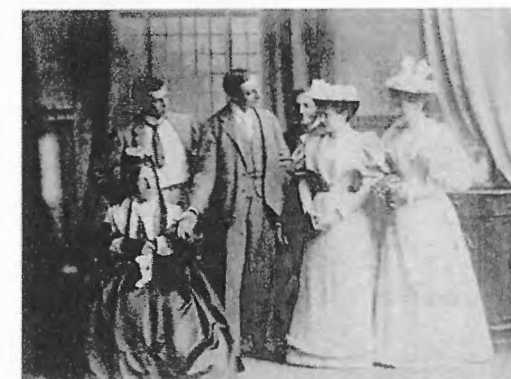
**Comedy Line-Up includes:**

Jaime Finn, Sadia Azmat, Pauline Eyre, and Headliner: Sean Sellers, with MC Eamon Goodfellow.

Only 20 seats per night – book early! Tickets £20 per person includes tea, savoury nibbles and cakes. BYO £5 corkage.

At Tea Darling we are proud to support creativity. Our lower ground floor room – Velvet Underground – hosts regular craft and creative workshops from writing to up-cycling, to linocut printing, knitting and gift making. See [www.teadarling.co.uk](http://www.teadarling.co.uk)

## The Original Charley's Aunt



# Biographies



**Jake Burman** – *Brassett*

After featuring in numerous productions elsewhere during his youth and teenage years, Jake auditioned for the Questors Academy to reignite his love for the theatre and acting. Jake last appeared in *Future Conditional* as Rob. He'd love to work professionally as an actor one day.



**William Busby** – *Stephen Spettigue*

William has been acting from a young age and became besotted under the wing of his actor-grandfather, Ken. Having been a member of amateur dramatic companies – even starting his own – he was delighted to be invited to be a member of the Questors student group. William is also a keen musician and luthier. His last appearance at The Questors was as Mr Crane in *Future Conditional*.



**Julia Caldwell** – *Ela Delahay*

After discovering *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* in her family home at the age of ten, Julia first attended drama classes. Having completed film school in Australia, she moved to London and started training with The Questors in 2017. She made her debut theatre performance in *Future Conditional* in which she played the double roles of Meg and Sarah.



**Ruth Comerford** – *Kitty Verdun*

This is Ruth's third production at The Questors, after making her debut as a mousy maid in *Diana of Dobson's* and playing croc-wearing Niamh and ice queen Kate in *Future Conditional*. She works in the theatre press office at the Barbican and sometimes pretends to be a writer. Ruth's many aspirations for the future include continuing to act but never wearing a corset again.



**Jordan Fowler** – *Donna Lucia D'Alvadores*

This is Jordan's second time performing in a Questors production. She performed as part of a youth theatre group in Essex before taking a break to study classics at university. Her last appearance was as Kaye in *Future Conditional*. Jordan looks forward to continuing her training with the Bridge Theatre Training Company in September 2019.



**Sunaina McCarthy** – *Amy Spettigue*

From an early age, Sunaina trained in acting, dance, singing and as a portrait artist. She has always followed the artistic paths in life which led her to The Questors in 2016. She is overjoyed to be back on the Playhouse stage where she originally debuted during the Young Studio production of *Love and Money* as Val. Sunaina was last seen as Alia in *Future Conditional*.



**Bradley Peake** – *Charles Wykeham*

Bradley has pursued acting since returning from Portugal in 2012, where he trained in dance. He has since performed in various musical theatre gigs and productions with the Anna Fiorentini Performance Troupe. Bradley wishes to further his training at degree level next year. Outside of The Questors, he performed in *Milked* in the West End in 2017. In *Future Conditional*, he appeared as Oliver.



**Joshua Perry** – *Jack Chesney*

This is Joshua's second play on the Questors stage. Joining in 2017, Joshua co-starred in a piece for last year's Questival, and has been involved in first readings for many potential plays and in backstage work. Whilst completing his A-levels, he was cast in a lead role in a production of *Macbeth* (a collaboration with the RSC). He played Bill in *Future Conditional*.



**Matthew Saldanha** – *Sir Francis Chesney*

This is Matthew's fifth performance at The Questors. Previous credits include *Love and Money*, *Medea*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Metamorphosis*, *Saved*, *Alfie* and *Dez* in *The Limit*, as well as appearing in student films. Matthew can also strum at least one chord on the guitar and likes to dabble in a bit of writing here and there. He appeared in *Future Conditional* as Richard and David.



**Tony Sears** – *Lord Fancourt Babberley*

Tony started at The Questors with Acting for All, where he showcased in an excerpt from *The Birthday Party*. After that, as part of Encore, he played one of the Insecurity Guards in *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* and Ben in *Breathing Corpses*. With Group 72 Tony has had onstage roles in *Peer Gynt* and appeared in the Questival. Tony played Matt and Ed in *Future Conditional*.



**Lucy Aley-Parker – Associate Director**

Lucy graduated from Webber Douglas many years ago and did a variety of work including rep, TV, panto and radio. Having now returned to the profession after a long gap, she's mixing acting, directing and writing. Last year at The Questors, Lucy directed *Animal Farm* with QYT and she has previously worked as associate director on a number of student group productions. Next season she is directing Roy William's turbulent play, *Days of Significance* in the Studio.

**Sarah Andrews – Costume Coordinator**

Sarah joined The Questors in 1977 as a member of Student Group 32 and since graduating has appeared in many plays. In addition to acting she has designed and dressed a countless number of productions, most recently *The Country Wife*, *Sleepers in the Field*, *Krapp's Last Tape* & *Rockaby* and *King Charles III*.

**Richard Gallagher – Director**

Richard trained at the Manchester Polytechnic School of Theatre. At The Questors, previous acting appearances were as Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest* and as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. More recently, he appeared as Clarence in *All Joy of the Worm* in honour of Shakespeare's 400th anniversary and *Being for the Benefit of Mr Kite*. He has been tutor/director for the second year student group since Group 64. Also for The Questors, he wrote the 2013 pantomime, *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*.

**John Green – Lighting Designer**

John has had a lifelong interest in the use of light to sculpt a space, set a mood and direct the eye, but only got involved in stage lighting comparatively recently. In his nine years as a member of The Questors he has been involved with the lighting of numerous shows. Previous shows as Lighting Designer include *Trelawny of the 'Wells'*, *Animal Farm*, *Daisy Pulls It Off* and *Bugsy Malone*.

**Anjali Karadia – Set Designer**

Anjali joined The Questors towards the end of last year and, after a couple of sessions behind the Grapevine bar, turned her interest to set construction. She has been involved with several productions, including *Sleeping Beauty* and *Bugsy Malone*, but *Charley's Aunt* marks Anjali's first credit as set designer.

**Paul Wilson – Sound Designer**

Paul has been involved in many productions at The Questors over the years. This is his second sound design this season, following *Rutherford & Son*.

## The Questors – The Future

Help to make The Questors an even better place! Donations and bequests are continuing to contribute to the life of this unique theatre. For instance, a generous donation made possible a recent training programme for young ESOL students (English for Speakers of Other Languages), and ambitious work on the fabric of the site is ongoing. This is your theatre and the theatre of future generations of playgoers and participants. Donate now or in your will, anonymously if you prefer. Andrea Bath, our Executive Director (020 8567 0011), will answer any enquiries in confidence. Or go to [questors.org.uk/giving](http://questors.org.uk/giving) to see ways in which you can support The Questors.



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## Questors Student Group Tutors

Director of Studies and First Year Tutor

**David Emmet**

Second Year Tutor

**Richard Gallagher**

Voice Teacher

**David Brown**

Movement and Physical Theatre Teacher

**Nicholas Jonne Wilson**

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## University of West London Tutors

**John Davey and Alex Marker**

Students from the second year of the BA (Hons) Theatre Production course at the University of West London (in Ealing) have contributed significantly to the design and management of this production. The course, which starts again in September, is run in close collaboration with The Questors. If you'd like to find out more, visit the website at [www.uwl.ac.uk](http://www.uwl.ac.uk) or email the course leader, John Davey ([john.davey@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:john.davey@uwl.ac.uk)).

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