

# CHARLEY'S AUNT

FEB. 2004  
(D. Young)

BY BRANDON THOMAS





# Supporting Players of Wimborne Drama

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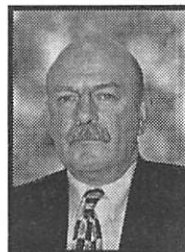
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**Dave Williams**  
(Sir Francis)



After an initial introduction to acting in Berkshire in the early 1970s, Dave had a run of four panto seasons at Exeter. A period in Gibraltar saw him in various productions including *Hands Across The Sea*, *The Miasma of Mostyn Mews* and *Oh What A Lovely*

*War*. For Wimborne Drama his credits include Andrew Merill in *The Roses of Eyam*, Sir Percy Shorter in *Habeas Corpus*, Fox in *The Madness of George III*, Zangler in *On the Razzle* and Boldwood in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

**Stuart Glosop**  
(Director)



Stuart is an experienced

actor, director and writer. His last project before moving to Wimborne last year was to co-write *Space Cadets* for Nottingham Arts Theatre Youth Group. His previous directing credits include *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning* and *Mac* (a modern version of *Macbeth*). In May 2002 he played Lord Fancourt Babberley in Nottingham Arts Theatre's production of *Charley's Aunt*. Other acting roles

include Captain Lesgate in *Dial M For Murder*, Drake in *Annie*, The Prince in *Romeo and Juliet*, Morris Townsend in *The Heiress*, Captain Bertorelli in *Allo, Allo* and Simple Simon in *Jack And The Beanstalk*. In 1999 Stuart toured England with Labyrinth Theatre Company in association with English Heritage, performing *Alice In Wonderland*, *The Lion*, *The Witch & The Wardrobe* and *The Legends of King Arthur*.

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**PROGRAMME DESIGN Richard Neal**

**Paul  
Hewitt  
(Jack)**



Paul is a long standing member of Wimborne Drama, but in recent years his time has mostly been spent ensuring, through his role as Treasurer, that the club's finances are in sound order. His last acting appearance was as Fitzroy in our award-winning production of *The Madness of George III*, and before that as Richard Sydall in *The Roses of Eyam*. He has directed *Elegy for a Lady* and provided musical accompaniment to *The Owl and The Pussycat Went to See*.

**Helen  
Martland  
(Amy)**



This is Helen's first acting role with Wimborne Drama, although since becoming a member in March 2003 she has appeared in a murder mystery evening and assisted backstage on *Far from the Madding Crowd*. This is also Helen's first acting role for over five years. Previous credits, all with Sheffield Experimental Theatre, include Breda in *Digging for Fire*, Cherry in *Salt of the Earth*, Ellen in *Silence* and backstage work for *Once a Catholic* and *Claw*.

**Richard  
Neal  
(Charley)**



Richard's last appearance was as *David Copperfield* in 2001. Previous credits include: Dennis in *One for the Road*, John Smith in *Run for Your Wife*, Tempest in *Forty Years On*, Dan in *An Evening with Gary Lineker*, Mompesson in *The Roses of Eyam*, Throbbing in *Habeas Corpus* and Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors*. Richard has twice won best director Daily Echo Curtain Call Awards - for *The Madness of George III* and *On the Razzle*.

**Jan  
Singfield  
(Donna Lucia)**



This is Jan's second production with Wimborne Drama, having previously played Mrs Hurst in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

Jan is no stranger to the Tivoli having appeared in many musical productions including *Oklahoma!*, *Showboat*, *Me and My Girl*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Brigadoon*, and in the pantomimes *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Little Miss Muffett* and *Cinderella*.

# WIMBORNE DRAMA

presents

# CHARLEY'S AUNT

BY BRANDON THOMAS

**DIRECTED BY  
STUART GLOSSOP**

**FEBRUARY 11-14, 2004  
TIVOLI THEATRE WIMBORNE**

# Three acts, one dress and millions of pounds

Welcome to the second production from Wimborne Drama this season and my first as a member of this group. I hope that this is the start of a long and happy association.

Before I go any further I have a confession to make. The fact of the matter is that I'm still not sure how I came to direct this production. I remember seeing a copy of *Charley's Aunt* sitting on a large pile of scripts. I also remember commenting on the fact that I had done this production in Nottingham. I think I said that I wouldn't mind having a go at it (not expecting to be taken up on the offer) mainly because I wanted to recreate the role I had in Nottingham.

When I told a friend of mine from The Nottingham Arts Theatre that I would be directing this production, I was greeted with the response "What on earth for?"

My reply was a simple one. "Because it is bloody good fun!"

Why else has it been a staple of regional, college and professional theatres everywhere since its initial opening at the Royalty Theatre in 1892.

It is said that Brandon Thomas wrote *Charley's Aunt* as a lark to help the career of actor and comedian W.S. Penley, if not his own. Clearly, that lark paid off and has put him permanently on the theatrical map.

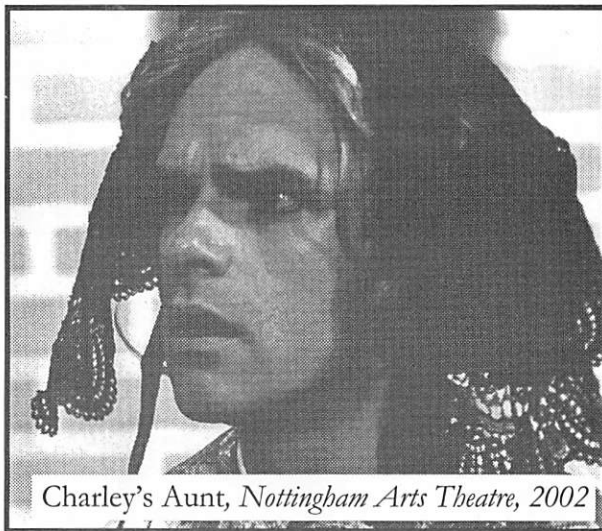
For the piece to work, it has to go at fairly brisk pace. I remember that while I played the role of Fancourt in Nottingham I managed to lose about a stone in weight by the end of the run.

At this point my thoughts go back to the auditions for this production last year. I remember thinking how high the standard of those auditioning was. In fact it was the cause of several sleepless nights trying to work out which actors to use.

I can't believe how quickly the rehearsals have flown by. I hope my cast has enjoyed this period of time working with me as much as I have enjoyed working with them.

All it leaves me to say now is sit back, enjoy the show and have a bloody good laugh!

**Stuart Glossop, Director**



Charley's Aunt, Nottingham Arts Theatre, 2002

## Jeremy Austin (Spettigue)



Jeremy played Inspector Goole in our sell-out production of *An Inspector Calls* in 2002 and Inspector Colquhoun in *The Hollow* last October. Other roles include DS Troughton in *Run For Your Wife*, Pepys in *And So To Bed*, Headmaster in *Forty Years On*, Baines in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, Thomas Stanley in *The Roses of Eyam*, Charles in *Blithe Spirit*, Wicksteed in *Habeas Corpus*, and Danforth in *The Crucible*.

## Vicki Ballard (Ela)



This is Vicki's second acting role with Wimborne Drama. She played Philippine in *On the Raggle* in 2002. Vicki is studying drama and theatre studies, English and general studies in the sixth form at QE.

## Chris Brown (Braslett)



Chris is well known in Wimborne as Town Mayor's

Serjant. Onstage he has appeared in *The Roses of Eyam*, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, *The Crucible*, *The Madness of George III*, *Arms and the Man* and *David Copperfield*. He has also directed Civil War re-enactments for the Sealed Knot Society and appeared in two films (*The World Turned Upside Down* and *Sedgemoor 1685*).

## Clare Downs (Kitty)



Clare studied ballet at Bristol and has performed at Bristol's Victoria Rooms. Since moving to Dorset ten years ago she has helped design *Lysistrata* for

Bournemouth Youth Theatre, and for Wimborne Drama has appeared in *Habeas Corpus*, *No Room for Love*, *The Madness of George III* and *The Hollow*.

## Tony Feltham (Fancourt)



Tony played Jack in our 1990 production of *Charley's Aunt*. His most recent acting roles were Steerforth in *David Copperfield*, Gerald Croft in *An Inspector Calls*, Richard in *The Lion in Winter* and Dr John Cristow in *The Hollow*. Of his many musical performances, the highlight was the lead in *Me and My Girl*. In 2003 he directed *Far from the Madding Crowd*.



## Going nuts in Brazil

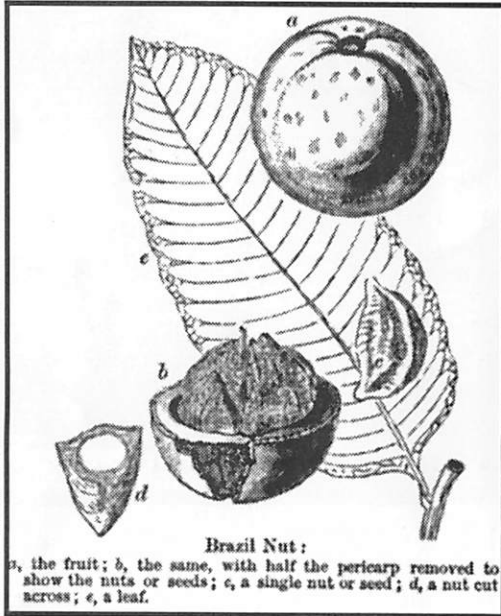
Brazil nuts are found in the Amazonian countries of Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. The tree from which they are harvested is enormous, frequently attaining the height of 160 feet or more. The fruit is a large spherical woody capsule or pod and measures an average of six inches in diameter and can weigh up to five pounds. The fruit pods grow at the ends of thick branches, then ripen and fall from the tree from January to June. Inside each fruit pod is 12 to 25 Brazil nuts with their own individual shell.

Brazil nut trees can produce approximately three hundred or more of these fruit pods. The monetary value of Brazil nut exportation today from Brazil, which began in the 1600s by Dutch traders, is second only to that of rubber. Although thousands of tons of Brazil nuts are exported each year from Brazil, virtually all Brazil nut production comes from wild forest trees and wild harvesting. The trees grow very slowly and very little are actually cultivated.

Brazil nuts are three sided with white meat or flesh that consists of 70 percent fat or oil and 17 percent protein. The oil is extracted from the nuts and is commonly used in Peru and other South American countries to manufacture soap. In the Brazilian Amazon, the tree bark is brewed into tea to treat liver ailments and diseases. For centuries, the indigenous tribes of the rainforest have relied on Brazil nuts as an important and significant staple of their diet.

With such a high oil content, Brazil nuts will even burn like miniature candles when lit. The oil is extracted from the nuts and used for cooking oil, lamps, soap, and livestock feed. The empty seed pods, often called 'monkey's pots,' are used to carry around small smoky fires to discourage attacks of black flies, and are also used as collection cups to collect rubber latex from tapped trees and as drinking cups. The husks of these seed pods have also been used in Brazilian folk medicine to brew into tea to treat stomach aches.

Brazil nut oil is a clear yellowish oil which has a pleasant and sweet smell and taste. In addition to protein and fat, Brazil nuts are a substantial source of selenium, an important antioxidant. The oil is often used in soaps, shampoos and skin care products - it acts as a wonderful skin moisturiser.



Brazil Nut:  
a, the fruit; b, the same, with half the pericarp removed to show the nuts or seeds; c, a single nut or seed; d, a nut cut across; e, a leaf.

## Brandon Thomas

The actor and writer was born in 1856 in Liverpool. He was privately educated and pursued song writing in addition to his acting and writing. He made his first stage appearance as a comedy actor in 1879.

It was around this time that he married Marguerite Blanche Leverson. In the original production of *Charley's Aunt* he took on the role of Colonel Sir Francis Chesney opposite W.S. Penley as Fancourt Babberley.

Other plays written by Brandon Thomas include *Comrades* (1882), *Marriage* (1892), *Women Are So Serious* (1901) and *A Judge's Memory* (1906).

Brandon Thomas died on June 19, 1914 in London aged 57. Mrs Brandon Thomas died in 1930, leaving a will of £26,563. W.S. Penley died November 11, 1912 aged 59, leaving a will of £15,642.

## Charley's Aunts

This popular farce has been produced on radio, television and made into at least ten films. The first film version was produced in 1915; another version was filmed in 1925 featuring Sydney Chaplin. In 1930 the first talkie version appeared starring Charles Ruggle. In Britain, Arthur Askey appeared in the 1940 spoof version entitled *Charley's Big Hearted Aunt*. A year later Jack Benny took on the role of Fancourt in a version known in this country as *Charley's American Aunt*.

A musical version was produced between 1948 and 1950 titled *Where's Charley?* This was also turned into a film in 1952.



W.S. Penley - the original Charley's Aunt

There have been at least two television productions of this show. The first was in 1957 under the Playhouse 90 banner starring Art Carney and Jeanette Macdonald.

The second was in 1977 when Eric Sykes appeared in his own adaptation of *Charley's Aunt* for Yorkshire Television. This cast included Jimmy Edwards and Barbara Murray.

Other notable Fancourt Babberleys have over the years included Roddy McDowell, Darryl Hickman, Michael Medwin, and Frankie Howerd who appeared in the role in 1955. The previous year John Mills had taken on the role at the New Theatre in a version produced by John Gielgud.

One of the longest runs of *Charley's Aunt* on the London stage was at the Royalty Theatre with 1,466 performances from December 21, 1892.

One of the longest runs on the New York stage was at the Cort Theatre with 233 performances from October 17, 1940.

## Gender bender

At various points in its venerable history, male transvestism has been more noteworthy than it is today.

In the 18th century, men who liked to wear dresses, wigs and make-up kept their interest very much to themselves.

There was one such man, however, who got away with it quite spectacularly. In his lifetime, he was a spy, a soldier, a diplomat and a woman in the service of a king.

Charles-Genevieve-Louis-Auguste-Andre-Timothee d'Eon de Beaumont, more conveniently known as the Chevalier d'Eon, was born in Burgundy in 1728. It has been suggested that his feminine second name was chosen because his mother wanted a girl.

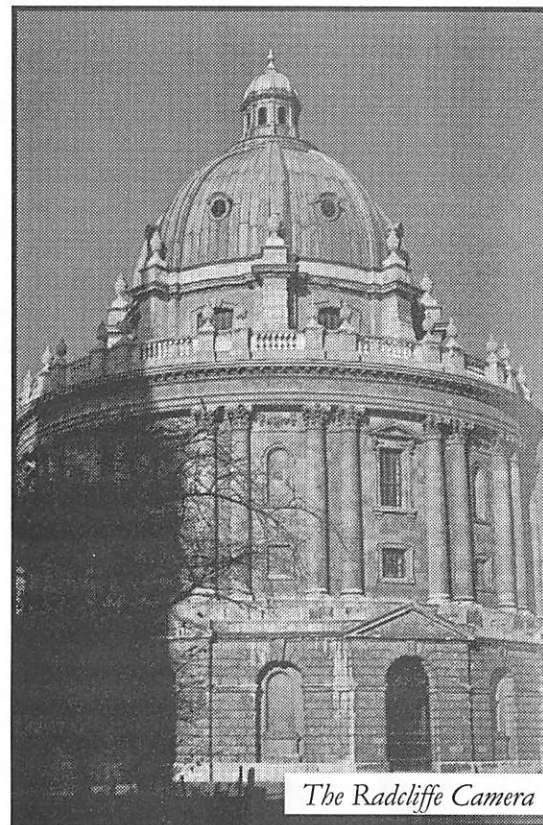
In his memoirs, d'Eon claimed to have been born female and raised as a boy, but his other five names support the biological fact that d'Eon was born male.

In his childhood, it amused his mother to dress him as a girl. This appears to have amused d'Eon as well, as he was to spend a substantial part of his life in women's clothing.

D'Eon excelled at school, and entered government service in 1749, where he wrote a treatise on state finance. Seven years later, after a spell as royal censor, he joined 'The King's Secret' - Louis XV's personal spy network.

Men disguising themselves as women is now the stuff of comedy, but d'Eon was able to carry it off. He was slightly built, and his ability to pass as female was first put to use on a mission to Empress Elizabeth I of Russia. As a woman, he was able to gain Elizabeth's private confidence, and advance Louis' political interests.

After his successful gender-bending in Russia, d'Eon returned to more masculine pursuits, serving as Captain of Dragoons in the Seven Years War. He



*The Radcliffe Camera*

for its invaluable contribution to learning; he also commented on the services rendered to the state by distinguished Oxford graduates.

Oxford early on became a centre for lively controversy, with scholars involved in religious and political disputes. John Wyclif, a 14th-century Master of Balliol, campaigned for a bible in the vernacular, against the wishes of the papacy. In 1530, Henry VIII forced the University to accept his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. During the Reformation in the 16th century, the Anglican churchmen Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley were tried for heresy and burnt at the stake in Oxford. The University was Royalist in the Civil War, and Charles I held a counter-Parliament in Convocation House.

In the late 17th century, the Oxford philosopher John Locke, suspected of treason, was forced to flee the country. The 18th century, when Oxford was said to have forsaken port for politics, was also an era of scientific discovery and religious revival. Edmund Halley, Professor of Geometry, predicted the return of the comet that bears his name; John and Charles Wesley's prayer meetings laid the foundations of the Methodist Society.

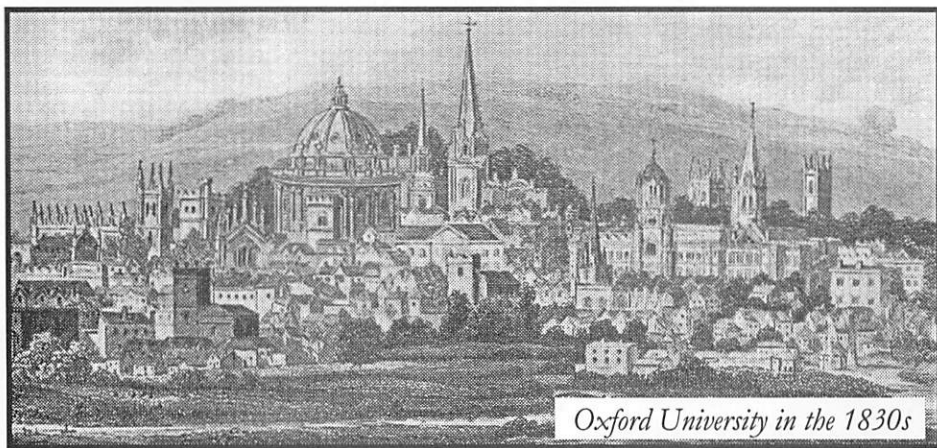
The University assumed a leading role in the Victorian era, especially in religious controversy. From 1811 onwards The Oxford Movement sought to revitalise the Catholic aspects of the Anglican Church. One of its leaders, John Henry Newman, became a Roman Catholic in 1845 and was later made a Cardinal. In 1860 the new University Museum was the site of a famous debate between Thomas Huxley, the champion of evolution, and Bishop Wilberforce.

From 1878, academic halls were established for women, who became members of the University in 1920. Since 1974, all but one of Oxford's 39 colleges have changed their statutes to admit both men and women. St Hilda's remains the only women's college.

In the years since the war, Oxford has added to its humanistic core a major new research capacity in the natural and applied sciences, including medicine. In so doing, it has enhanced and strengthened its traditional role as a focus for learning and a forum for intellectual debate.



# The city of dreaming spires



*Oxford University in the 1830s*

Oxford is a unique and historic institution. As the oldest English-speaking university in the world, it lays claim to eight centuries of continuous existence. There is no clear date of foundation, but teaching existed at Oxford in some form in 1096 and developed rapidly from 1167, when Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris.

In 1188, the historian, Gerald of Wales, gave a public reading to the assembled Oxford dons and in 1190 the arrival of Emo of Friesland, the first known overseas student, initiated the University's tradition of international scholarship. By 1201, the University was headed by a magister scholarum Oxonie, on whom the title of Chancellor was conferred in 1214, and in 1231 the masters were recognized as a universitas or corporation.

In the 13th century, rioting between town and gown (students and townspeople) hastened the establishment of primitive halls of residence. These were succeeded by the first of Oxford's colleges, which began as medieval 'halls of residence' or endowed houses under the supervision of a Master. University, Balliol and Merton Colleges, established between 1249 and 1264, were the oldest.

Less than a century later, Oxford had achieved eminence above every other seat of learning, and won the praises of popes, kings and sages by virtue of its antiquity, curriculum, doctrine and privileges. In 1355, Edward III paid tribute to the University



*Magdalen College*

distinguished himself in action, was wounded, received the Cross of Saint Louis and was elevated to the rank of Chevalier.

In 1763, Louis appointed him Plenipotentiary Minister to London, a cover for clandestine work as Louis' agent for a secret invasion plan.

D'Eon enjoyed his position and spent lavishly, acquiring a large library and occasionally appearing publicly in women's clothes.

An expert swordsman, he did not take ridicule lightly, and applied his fencing skills in several duels, which he fought in female dress.

He remained in London until ordered back to France when Louis XV died in 1774. D'Eon was in debt, but also in possession of a lot of sensitive information, and demanded terms for its delivery to the new King, Louis XVI.

By now, d'Eon's cross-dressing had become a habit, and one of his conditions was that the King recognise him as a woman.

D'Eon was now something of an embarrassment. Rumours had spread that he was a woman or even a hermaphrodite, and large wagers were placed on his real gender.

He had written a book that revealed diplomatic secrets, and his reputation made him rather too obvious for espionage work. With compromising documents in safe hands, Louis was happy to grant d'Eon's request, and made the drag act official by decreeing that he dressed as a woman for as long as he lived in France.

With a comfortable pension and an extensive wardrobe, the Chevaliere (as he was now known) lived quietly on the family estate until 1785. He moved back to England where he continued to live as a woman, although to Horace Walpole "her hands and arms seem not to have participated of the change of sexes, but are fitter to carry a chair than a fan".

James Boswell found "she appeared to me a man in woman's clothes". D'Eon had crossed gender lines so many times that everyone was thoroughly confused.

D'Eon lost his pension when Louis XVI lost his head in the French Revolution. The Chevaliere sold off his library, then turned to supporting himself by giving fencing lessons and taking part in tournaments.

He received a serious wound in 1796, and lived the rest of his life in genteel misery, dying in 1810.

In order to settle outstanding wagers, it was insisted that a coroner determine the sex of the deceased. He confirmed that under his petticoats, d'Eon had always been male.



*Chevalier d'Eon*

## Synopsis of scenes:

### Act I

#### Jack Chesney's Rooms in College (morning)

*"When pious frauds...are  
dispensations" - Hudibras*

### Act II

#### Garden outside Jack Chesney's Rooms (afternoon)

*"While there's tea there's hope" -  
Pinero*

### Act III

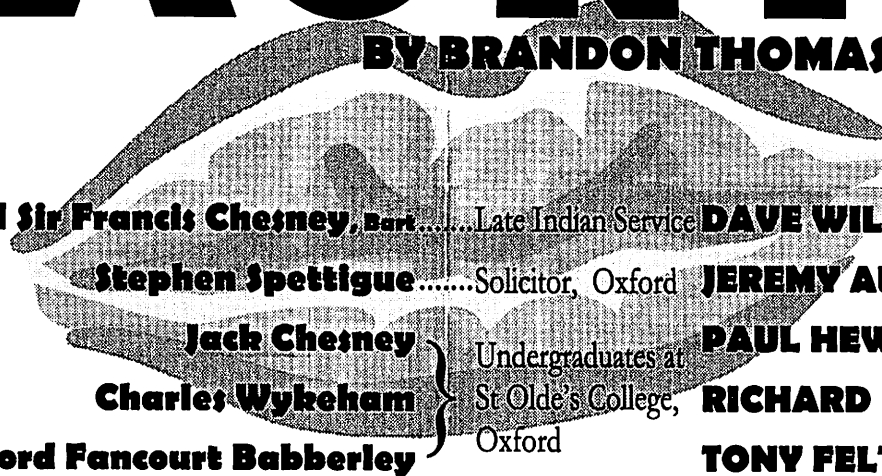
#### Drawing room at Spettigue's House (evening)

*"Dinner lubricates business" -  
Boswell*

**There will be an  
interval of  
15 minutes between  
Acts II and III**

# CHARLEY'S AUNT

BY BRANDON THOMAS



Colonel Sir Francis Chesney, Bart.....	Late Indian Service	DAVE WILLIAMS
Stephen Spettigue.....	Solicitor, Oxford	JEREMY AUSTIN
Jack Chesney	} Undergraduates at St Olde's College, Oxford	PAUL HEWITT
Charles Wykeham		RICHARD NEAL
Lord Fancourt Babberley		TONY FELTHAM
Brassett.....	A College Scout	CHRIS BROWN
Donna Lucia d'Alvadores.....	From Brazil	JAN SINGFIELD
Kitty Verdun.....	Spettigue's Ward	CLARE DOWNS
Amy Spettigue.....	Spettigue's Niece	HELEN MARTLAND
Ela Delahay.....	An Orphan	VICKI BALLARD

**Other parts played by members of the company**

## For the Company:

Director

**STUART GLOSSOP**

Set Design

**JACKSON ELLEN**

**MARK ELLEN**

Wardrobe

**CAROLYN HEWITT**

Properties

**CAROLINE UWINS**

Assistant Stage

Managers

**BARRY BAYNTON**

**BOO FELTHAM**

**NEIL THORNTON**

**ALFIE TYSON-BROWN**

**MEZ TYSON-BROWN**

## For the Theatre:

Stage Manager

**ASHLEY THORNE**

Technical Manager

**RUSSELL PARKER**

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Costumes

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