

# Stage Center Theatre

## 2008-2009 Stage Center Theatre

### *Charley's Aunt* by Brandon Thomas

*Director:* Dan Wirth

*Assistant Director:* Diana Kwiecien

*Stage Manager:* Ben Arrington

*Assistant Stage Manager:* Albert Bautista

*Dialect Coach:* Melanie Bujan

*Set Design:* Jessica Kuehnau

*Light Design:* John Rodriguez

*Costume Design:* Jana Anderson

*Sound Design:* James Mallory

*Cast:*

Kyle Young

David Mitchell

Andrew Berlien

Mike Jando

Tom Camacho

Mark Heard

Erin O'Shea

Whitney Behr

Gail Wittenstein

Cheryl Lyman

### **\*Director's Notes\***

*Charley's Aunt* – the grandma of all sitcoms.

When I started to look for *Charley's Aunt* I couldn't find it. It is apparently not included in any drama anthology (and I checked a pile of them). It also isn't in the NEIU library or our departmental library. Yet it is one of the most produced plays in theatre history. Now how can this be? I have a theory as to why (I'm a college professor I'm supposed to have theories). It isn't "literary" enough. It is a farce and farce defies conventional literary analysis. Boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back again. Toss in a man in drag, and in the end everyone goes away happy. Everything is on the surface and it is only alive on the stage. Its only purpose is to make an audience laugh.

First produced in 1892, *Charley's Aunt* broke all records for a theatrical run, with an original London run of 1,466 performances. It opened on Broadway on October 2, 1893, where it ran for another long run of four years. So our production opens exactly 115 years to the day from the original U.S. premiere! The play also toured internationally (with long runs in Paris and elsewhere) and was revived extensively. It has been performed in Rep all over the world with many different translations. At one time it was running in 48 theatres in 22 languages at the same time (including Chinese, Esperanto, Gaelic, Russian, Zulu and Afrikaans). It has also been made into a film with Jack Benny and into a musical called *Where's Charley?*

And *Charley* has had children! Comedian Flip Wilson dressed in drag as "Geraldine" as did Milton Berle for his many drag incarnations including pretending to be Carmen Miranda. *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Tootsie*, and *Some Like It Hot* all use a similar formula and every few years a cross dressing farce shows up on Broadway. The most recent example is *Is He Dead?* a revision of the Mark Twain play. Tom Hanks established himself on television in the 80's while dressed in drag in *Bosom Buddies*. Of course, most television comedies are farces to begin with.

When my son was younger nothing made him laugh more than watching adults act like silly children. That's how the characters in farce behave. They are stripped of their pride and dignity and nothing is sacred. They are driven by their desires for love or money and will stop at nothing. We laugh at them because we see ourselves. As Shakespeare's Puck says, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

Oh and yes, I did finally find a copy of the play.

Dan Wirth

### UPCOMING EVENTS FOR STAGE CENTER THEATRE

#### *Charley's Aunt*

by Brandon Thomas

October 2-4, 9-11, 16-18 @ 7:30 p.m.;  
Stage Center Theatre

#### *An Evening with Chekhov: The Bear and The Proposal*

by Anton Chekhov

Adapted by Michael Frayn

October 28, 29, 30, 31 @ 7:30 p.m.;  
Studio Theatre, F 109

#### *Electra*

by Sophocles

Translated by Frank McGuinness

November 13-15, 27-29, December 4-  
6 @ 7:30 p.m.; Stage Center Theatre

#### *Bocon!*

by Lisa Loomer

November 3—December 3; Monday,  
Wednesday, Friday @ 10:30 a.m.;  
Children's Theatre Workshop @ Stage  
Center Theatre; For reservations call  
Anne Hartdegen, 773.442.5917

### *For reservations call*



**Box Office**  
**773.442.5971**

Call the Stage Center Theatre box office for reservations and ticket sales at 773.442.4274. Tickets are free for all NEIU faculty, staff, and students with NEIU ID



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## ***Brandon Thomas***

Brandon Thomas (born Walter Brandon Thomas) was a British playwright and actor. He was born in Hull in either 1848, 1849, 1850, or 1856 (depending on where you look) and died in London in 1914. He worked as a shipping clerk in Liverpool and Hull before going on the stage in John Hare's company in 1879. In 1888 he had his first big London success in *Sweet Lavender* by Arthur Wing Pinero. After touring in America he had another success in London when he starred in the 1895 revival of *The Rivals*.

He acted in comedy parts in England and the USA, but was more successful as a playwright. His greatest triumph was with his farce, *Charley's Aunt*, produced in 1892. Among his other plays were *Comrades*, produced in 1882; *The Colour-Sergeant* produced in 1885; *The Swordsman's Daughter* produced in 1895; *Women Are So Serious* produced in 1901; and *A Judge's Memory* produced in 1906. He also wrote a number of popular songs.

## ***An Evening with Chekhov: The Bear and The Proposal*** By Anton Chekhov

Two One Act plays by one of Russia's most celebrated playwrights.

In *The Bear*, an argument about a debt owed escalates into a battle of the sexes, but has an unexpected turn in the end. In *The Proposal*, a young man comes to ask for the hand of the neighbor's daughter, and the conversation soon turns into a heated debate about land ownership and hunting dogs.

*Director:* Kyle Martin  
*Set Design:* Jessica Kuehnau  
*Costume Design:* Jana Anderson  
*Cast:*  
Miles Smith  
Robert Babcock  
Michael Wagman

*Stage Manager:* Chris Rosen  
*Light Design:* John Rodriguez  
*Sound Design:* James Mallory

Jenn Miller  
Mindy Youroukos

## **THEATRE FUN FACTS & QUIZ**

### *Theatre History: September Newsletter Quiz Answers*

1. When did the first actor appear on stage?

*The first actor to appear in stage was Thespis in 534 B.C.*

2. What was the first theatre in England called?

*The first theatre in England was called The Theatre*

3. Most people know it's bad luck to say 'Macbeth' in a theatre. How do most people refer to it if they need to?

*Supposedly, saying the name 'Macbeth' inside a theatre will bring bad luck to the play and anyone acting in it. The only exception is when the word spoken as a line in the play. In order to reverse the bad luck, the person who uttered the word must exit the theatre, spin around three times saying profanity and then ask permission to return inside. Most people refer to the play as The Scottish play.*

[www.neiu.edu/~stagectr/](http://www.neiu.edu/~stagectr/)