

Servants

Introduction	21
Production notes	22
Cast and production credits	24
Interviews with the cast	
Christopher Fulford plays Mr Jarvis	25
Orla Brady plays Flora Ryan	26
Joe Absolom plays George Cosmo	27
Felicity Jones plays Grace May	29
Kenny Doughty plays William Forest	30
Episode synopses	31

Servants

A new Lucy Gannon drama set below stairs comes to BBC One

Servants is a bold and irreverent new drama for BBC One, set below stairs in a country house in 1850s England. Written by Lucy Gannon, it focuses on the hopes, dreams and ambitions of the servants who make a great household work.

An ensemble cast of established and new talent is led by Christopher Fulford (*Spooks*), Joe Absolom (*EastEnders*), Orla Brady (*Pure Wickedness*), Kenny Doughty (*Sunday*), Shaun Parkes (*Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels*) and television newcomer Felicity Jones (*The Archers*).

Servants enters Taplows, the Sturges Borne family seat, not through the elegant façade of its portico, but by the backstairs. Life below stairs is a hive of activity; home to a thriving hidden community, where intrigue, rivalry, secrets, laughter and love abound.

Servants opens as the Sturges Borne family return with their retinue of servants after a summer away in Italy. As the house springs into life, canny head butler Mr Jarvis (Christopher Fulford) is unconvinced by the merits of the newly arrived second footman, George Cosmo (Joe Absolom). Housekeeper Flora Ryan (Orla Brady) is happy to take him at face value, but first footman William Forest (Kenny Doughty) sees George differently, sensing a rival in more ways than one. Elsewhere at Taplows, life is not what it might seem and young Lord Harry's nursemaid, the beautiful and clever Grace May (Felicity Jones), has painful choices to make about her future.

Lucy Gannon says: "I really wanted to write a new drama set in the past which was funny, relevant, energetic and exciting – definitely not set in a stuffy drawing-room! *Servants* is about you and me as we would have been had we been born in another era."

Gareth Neame, the BBC's Head of Independent Drama Commissioning, says: "Costume dramas are often adaptations filmed in lavish locations and usually concerned with aristocratic characters, but Lucy has created an original precinct drama that focuses on the real lives of ordinary working people who found themselves below stairs in an

English country house in the mid-19th century. It is not, however, a show about drudgery and servitude because Taplows is a place of opportunity, rivalry, advancement and love affairs."

Servants is produced by Tim Whitby and Harriet Davison (whose previous collaboration with Lucy Gannon was ITV's *Bramwell*) for BBC One in association with BBC Wales and RTE. The series is also directed by Tim Whitby (*Cold Feet*) with Hettie Macdonald (*Beautiful Thing* and *In A Land Of Plenty*). The executive producers are Gareth Neame, Matthew Robinson (Head of Drama, BBC Wales) and Mary Callery (RTE Television).

Filming began in the West Country in locations in and around Bristol in October 2002 and completed in early February this year.

Lucy Gannon is one of British television's most prolific and successful writers, with a career spanning popular series, serials and hard-hitting single films. She created *Soldier, Soldier*, *Peak Practice* and *Bramwell* for ITV and *Hope And Glory* and *Insiders* for the BBC. Her films and serials for the BBC include *Pure Wickedness*, *Big Cat*, *The Gift*, *Trip Trap* and *Tender Loving Care*.

Production notes

Expectations of buttoned-down collars and genteel palpitations in the drawing-room are put on the back burner, as Lucy Gannon's fast-moving and irreverent new series comes to BBC One. *Servants* is about what goes on behind the façade, about the people who were up at five in the morning, laid the fires, set the tables and downed their breakfast beer long before those upstairs had even pulled on a silk stocking.

Servants is a working-class drama set in the 1850s and, as series producer Harriet Davison says: "The toffs in our stories are like the black mama in *Tom And Jerry* – you only see their calves occasionally."

Not hidebound by costume drama conventions or a chocolate-box view of the past, this drama puts the servants' lives centre stage, explains Davison. "There's not a moronic valet or a buxom maid in sight. Lucy's characters inhabit a very real world and are written with insight and passion – they are not hackneyed figures of fun."

Nor, stresses Davison, is the series about drudgery and servitude: "These servants are vibrant, bright young people who work and play hard, have good prospects in life and healthy appetites to match. Because they are much smarter than their 'superiors', they know a thing or two about ducking and diving and playing the game."

The early Victorian era really appealed to doyenne of television drama, Lucy Gannon, creator of the fictional Sturges Borne family and their teeming household of servants, all of whom live cheek by jowl at the great country seat of Taplows. "It's a fascinating period to bring to life, a time when the great houses were ridiculously rich and service was a career of first choice for a bright, working-class youngster."

Gannon is clearly delighted to be collaborating again with Davison and her husband, Tim Whitby. Whitby has directed the first three episodes as well as produced the series alongside Davison, following their work together on the hit ITV Victorian drama, *Bramwell*, starring Jemma Redgrave.

Once Whitby had assured Gannon that they had no interest in developing a project about kings and queens, she set about learning what mattered to

the early Victorian working classes and how they lived. "What's really interesting about this era is that it was before Queen Victoria lost Albert and went into interminable mourning. There wasn't that air of po-facedness about this time, the sort of pious uprightness that we think of as typically Victorian," says Gannon.

"What is a real eye-opener is how very similar ordinary people were to us today. The more I looked at them, the more I thought, 'I know these people – they're us.' Despite social and economic restrictions, they were fun, loving and aspirant – on the make, ready to take every opportunity life offered.

"As a result, we have been very bold and subversive in our storytelling. We have not been remotely obsequious to those upstairs. We have treated them in the same way as the servants would have – as rather stupid, spoilt pets."

This approach enabled Gannon to give the series a realistic, contemporary edge. "The masters are more like decorative wallpaper," she says, "nothing more than a meal ticket in the busy lives of the servants. The thing that will really stand out is the idiocy of the toffs – they deserve everything they get.

"Our servants don't talk with naff olde-worlde accents," continues Gannon. "Their speech is easily recognisable and immediate. They don't use obvious anomalies like 'cut to the chase' or 'okay' but their language is colourful and energetic, and splattered with swear words. It is notable how many choice words haven't changed over the years."

Composer Murray Gold (*Clocking Off*, *Queer As Folk*) has foregone a conventional classical approach in favour of a more contemporary feel – more Van Morrison than Vivaldi. He has composed original scores to accompany writer Lucy Gannon's lyrics, comprising ditties and bawdy songs for the cast.

"Without being a-historical, no one can convince me they know what the common folk were singing pre-1850," says Gold. "I'll bet there were nights when 'great' musical traditions were smashed by some grand virtuoso fiddler and no one with delicate sensibilities ever got to hear it."

Davison praises the servants' quarters that production designer Claire Kenny (*Foyle's War*, *Queer As Folk*) has created in a disused warehouse in Bristol. "She's designed a very large and intricate set that is a real Aladdin's cave of corridors and nooks and crannies." For the masters' living spaces, the crew filmed at Longleat in Wiltshire and Tredegar House near Newport. The exteriors were shot at Dyrham Park, near Bath.

Davison gives credit for the fresh and realistic look of the drama to the expertise of costume designer Ros Ebbutt (*The Edwardian House*, *Tom Jones*) and directors of photography, Tim Palmer (*Bob And Rose*) and Matt Gray (*Rescue Me*). "It's an action-packed world where viewers see the work it takes to keep an enormous house running. Itineraries and schedules are juggled – gloomy, ponderous moments are simply not on the agenda," she says. Indeed, the speed of the drama is more like *The West Wing* than the stately pace so often depicted in period dramas.

"A salient historical point that we miss about being a servant back then is that, despite the relentless hard graft, it was a good job," says Gannon. "Times were harsh and dismissal was a terrifying prospect – it could mean factory work, labouring on the land or, worse still, destitution. A position in service meant a clear career structure through which both girls and boys could progress. A lowly boot boy could work his way up to become head butler; the scullery maid could become a housekeeper – jobs which brought prestige and comfort.

"Gaining a position in a house like Taplows was a fantastic break for any bright, working-class youngster. These people were intelligent and capable – the cream of the crop. A house like this was a place of incredible affluence, a centre processing fortunes daily in food and luxury goods, and there is always the chance of perks, tips, deals, kickbacks and even outright theft."

She continues: "Servants enjoyed three free meals a day and regular wages, they were provided with clothing and had a roof over their heads. At home, they might have shared a bed with their parents, siblings and other relatives; at work, they had a bed of their own. They might even have picked up some formal education along the way. Another bonus was

the possibility of sending regular money home to their needy families."

A household on the scale of Taplows might employ 100 servants, drawn from all over Britain, with the chefs usually recruited from Europe. "Most servants were young and single. The name of the game was access – Victorian architects went to elaborate lengths to keep the sexes apart. The sexes went to equally elaborate lengths to get together," says Gannon.

Davison continues the theme: "The rule in these houses was that you strictly segregated the sexes, but they would have been hothouses. Most of the servants were under 30 – *Big Brother's* got nothing on it! Think of all those healthy libidos – it was a ready-made marriage market."

While researching the intricate hierarchy and detail of the period, Gannon discovered that footmen were frequently picked for their looks and shapely calves, and were teamed in pairs. "They were notoriously vain and idle. We have come to think of them as a sort of cross between male models and personal body guards.

"The four actors who play the footmen, including Joe Absolom and Kenny Doughty, were given etiquette coaching, which was helpful because, as young actors today, it's hard to understand the mindset of footmen then. It's not just a matter of deportment and how to bow; those young men wore their liveries with pride. But they knew that looks don't last forever and new career paths would have to be sought.

"Our two black actors, Shaun Parkes and Daon Broni, play the high-status footmen, whom the perverse Earl likes to put on show – exhibiting a handsome pair of matching men, just as he likes to have a matching pair of horses."

Gannon's favourite series, such as *Soldier, Soldier*, *Bramwell* and now *Servants*, all explore hidden communities. "They're all little microcosms – like a substrata of a wider society – existing in isolation and subject to their own petty politics, joys, sorrows, hopes, dreams, laughter and love."

Servants

Cast

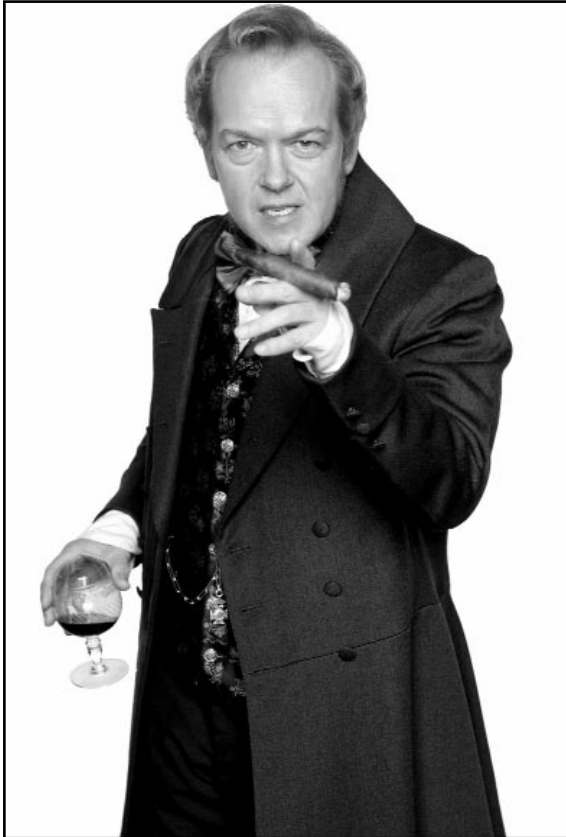
Jarvis	Christopher Fulford
Flora Ryan	Orla Brady
George Cosmo	Joe Absolom
Grace May	Felicity Jones
William Forest	Kenny Doughty
Esther Spicer	Caroline Hayes
Frederick Matkin	Shaun Parkes
Joseph James	Daon Broni
Andrew Adams	Jon Morrison
Felix Kraus	Anatole Taubman
Charlotte Lewis	Catherine Shepherd
Susan Eliot	Leona Walker
Lizzie Sabin	Amanda Brewster

Production Credits

Writer	Lucy Gannon
Producers	Harriet Davison
	Tim Whitby
Line Producer	Annie Rees
Music	Murray Gold
Director, Eps 1-3	Tim Whitby
Director, Eps 4-6	Hettie Macdonald
Director of Photography, Eps 1-3	Tim Palmer
Director of Photography, Eps 4-6	Matt Gray
Casting Director	Sarah Beardsall
Production Designer	Claire Kenny
Costume Designer	Rosalind Ebbutt
Make-up Supervisor	Meinir Jones Lewis
Executive Producers	Gareth Neame (BBC)
	Matthew Robinson (BBC Wales)
	Mary Callery (RTE)

Servants is a Whitby Davison production for BBC One.

Christopher Fulford plays head butler Mr Jarvis, the most senior of the upper servants



Mr Jarvis is smart, self-educated and at the top of his tree. He has been in service all his life and has spent the last 10 years at Taplows, but the person he cares about most is himself. Jarvis doesn't grub around with the usual petty thefts of butlers, having realised early on that small messy scams ruin reputations. Instead, he concentrates on large, lucrative scams. He's a difficult man to read – he can be petty, tyrannical and sentimental by turns. The staff respect and fear him.

"Jarvis is everyone's rock and commands total respect," says Christopher Fulford of his latest television role, which is a million miles away from his recent incarnation as a serial killer in the blockbuster *Detox*, opposite Sylvester Stallone. So how did Fulford, a happily married father of two young children, approach the formal and rather solitary Mr Jarvis? True to form, the actor, known for his

attention to detail, read ES Turner's classic historical trait, *What The Butler Saw*, from cover to cover.

"What comes over from the book is that service was the first service industry," notes Fulford. "Mr Jarvis is really managing a gigantic hotel complex and knows all about the needs of his clients, even before they do. He is the professional's professional. It's a high-status job of which he can be proud, and it's a means of self-improvement, no more, no less."

Jarvis's realistic approach to his position is the right one, says Fulford, especially when we learn that his real name is Walter Cory. "The Earl renamed him because it is the tradition at Taplows that the butler is called Jarvis. One of the many breaks with received wisdom is that the butler and master aren't personally close, despite the years they have known each other. The bottom line is that the Earl is his client, not his friend."

Playing Jarvis was a challenge, acknowledges the actor. "He's a complex and very astute man. Despite being a cynic, he still manages to not only see the best in people but also to get the best out of them. He demands very exacting standards from his staff but we've got to understand how far he's come in life. No expensive schooling for him – Jarvis would have come from very humble roots, perhaps from a small-holding somewhere. What he's achieved is through hard work and dedication and that's what he expects from others. Through his devotion to duty and other people, he's gained an education both formally and in the university of life."

The actor adds that he sees Jarvis as an essentially kind man. "He wants to do right by his staff, even if his footmen and his housekeeper do seriously try his patience! Whether he will ever come to terms with his more complicated feelings for Flora Ryan is anyone's guess."

Orla Brady plays housekeeper Flora Ryan



Flora Ryan is the senior female member of staff, permanently resident at Taplows, and in charge of all the female servants. She has considerable managerial and pastoral skills but the stresses of the job can get to her. She has chosen career and security over romance and marriage – a choice she tries not to regret.

“You know Flora’s never going to be the paragon of efficiency and organisation she feels she should be. She’s just not the right temperament for the job,” Orla Brady says affectionately of her character. “She should be a good Catholic girl, a farmer’s wife in the West of Ireland with a brood of kids clutching at her skirts.

“She does her job conscientiously and well, but there’s just that feeling that some of the pragmatic choices she’s made in her life have come back to haunt her – she has a thirst for the things beyond the mundane.”

Brady is full of praise for the brilliant way in which writer Lucy Gannon conveys Flora’s repressed and confused feelings for Mr Jarvis. “She doesn’t always like

him but there are heart-stopping moments between them when she longs for things to be different.”

And while Flora’s job brings absolute status, high pay, her own quarters and beautiful silk clothes and jewellery, Brady feels that the housekeeper is lonely in her gilded cage. “I think the defensiveness we see in her sometimes comes from a sense of disillusionment about love, men and God. Flora knows that if she had chosen another path, then she would lose her job. The masters didn’t like ‘divided loyalty’ – if you were married, you were out.”

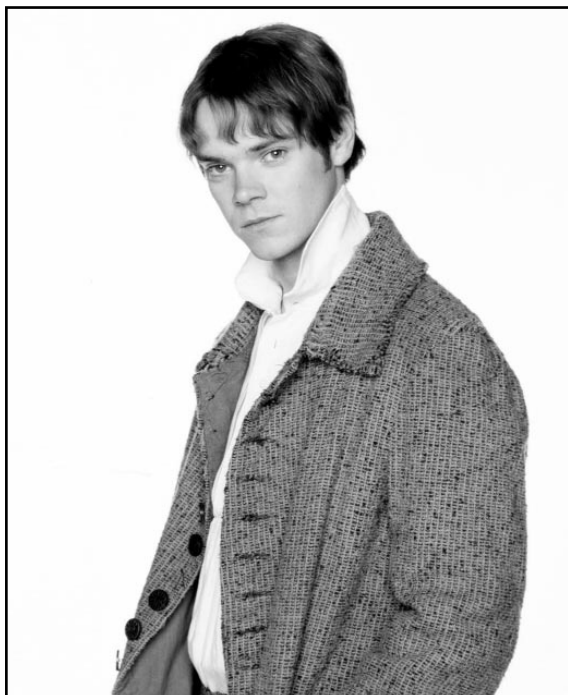
Flora’s predicament reminds Brady of the situations in which women can find themselves today. “Her latent loneliness reminds me of some of the seemingly glittering senior corporate executives I’ve met when in the States: mature career women, who enjoy beautiful homes, cars and gorgeous bodies. But at the end of very long working days, they go home to an empty apartment, sentenced to being single because it’s so hard to meet prospective partners.”

Brady explains that she sees Flora as a kind of sheriff, trying to keep an opportunistic town of pioneers in order. “She would have managed up to 50 resident female staff, as well as the supplies from local tradesmen, and overseen all the domestic tasks of the estate out-workers. It’s terrifying to think about her daily routines – it must have been like co-ordinating a state event every day during which the peace must be preserved and everyone kept happy!”

Brady is delighted to be in a Lucy Gannon drama again, her first since *Pure Wickedness*. “What I love about Lucy’s work is that she sees the invisible people. She’ll write about the cab driver that you ignored because you were chatting on your mobile phone. She’s very egalitarian. What’s even more fortunate for us is that she can show us ourselves with a deftness of touch, regardless of whether it’s in our time or the past.”

Brady’s own romantic prospects couldn’t be further away from Flora’s. Her joyful excitement about her recent marriage to photographer Nick is infectious. As soon as filming ended last Christmas, the pair jetted to Tanzania to exchange vows in the shadow of Kilimanjaro: “The most beautiful place on earth.”

Joe Absolom plays second footman George Cosmo



George Cosmo arrives at Great Taplows and inveigles his way into the job of second footman. He is attractive, ambitious and amoral, yet always charming and amusing. But, at heart, George works the system and is loyal to no one but himself. He taught himself to read and write as a boy and has always been quick to learn – he's even tried to pick up some French.

"George is a happy, clever chap who wants to get the job done and sees being a footman as his way to move on to bigger and better things," says 24-year-old Joe Absolom, whom viewers will remember as Matthew in *EastEnders* and, most recently, as the kidnapper in ITV1's *Unconditional Love*, opposite Robson Green and Sarah Parish.

The fact that George can be amoral at times endeared the character to Absolom. "That's what makes him human, the fact that his relationships with everyone in the house aren't clear cut. He's a rival of Will [first footman William Forest] but he's also his companion and good friend. That's what I like about Lucy's writing – she never paints characters black and white," says the actor.

In *Servants*, Lucy's characters are realistic, believable and recognisable, says Absolom. "The way the servants are together reminds me of that programme last year, *Lad's Army*, when they put those young blokes into barracks to do National Service and they went through thick and thin together. At the end of the day, all they had for fun was a piano in the mess and a fantastic camaraderie, which saw them through it all.

"I see we servants like those blokes. All day we're charging around, jumping to orders and serving the Earl, but as soon as he falls asleep we relax and sit around to have a good banter.

"I like the way Lucy shows what happens when you put a group of birds and blokes together in a room with a few beers and they're all good friends. It's exactly like it would be today; the only difference is our characters happen to be wearing period costumes."

He continues: "George loves being part of that scene – part of a team – even though he's out for himself, too. He's a wheeler-dealer, always on the look out for the next scam, trying to make a quick buck. He definitely watches his back first but he'd never let anyone else get sacked because of his antics. Though he wouldn't think twice if he had the chance to better himself at the expense of someone else."

There is a special bond between the servants which few other occupations allowed, says Absolom. "If you imagine three blokes working all day together then sharing a piss pot and a room – not much bigger than a cupboard – well, they would get to know each other pretty well! Privacy just isn't on the agenda."

George's friendship and professional rivalry with William Forest is dictated by his relationship with nursemaid Grace May. "George turns up just at the right time, when Grace breaks up with Keneally, the under butler. He's interested in her straight away and goes after her on day one, two, three, four and five..." laughs the actor. "George has always been pretty footloose and fancy-free but then things develop with Grace in a way that he doesn't anticipate."

Absolom has shown that he is no shirker on the career front. The actor is based in Lewisham, where he lives with his mum and dad, and jokes that he will have to leave home soon before his parents kick him out. His success as *EastEnders* Matthew Rose clearly hasn't gone to his head and Absolom is grateful for the break and recognition the role gave him.

The actor started working when he was around 10 years old and, for a few years, he and his brother and sister acted in advertisements. His siblings went off the idea but he stuck with it, and soon moved on to speaking parts, which were much more enjoyable. He liked going to the auditions: "You'd just turn up and read scripts," he says, matter-of-factly.

His hard work has paid off. Now, he says, he can't believe his luck. "What other profession allows you such a range of experience and fun?" he asks. "I've been air-lifted to safety, chased by the police, shot at, stabbed and, in this drama, we've skinny-dipped in February!"

"Making *Servants* has been a real laugh," he says. "It's been a great opportunity to enjoy tremendous scripts and there's been loads of socialising with everyone on the shoot."

The actor reveals that the cast are off again tonight to The Famous Old Duke, where the born-and-bred Londoner is trying to acquire the taste for West Country cider. But tomorrow, in between scenes and during their lunchtimes, he and his "footmen colleagues" will be straight back to their latest, decidedly 21st-century, craze: PlayStation 2.

Felicity Jones plays Lord Harry's nursemaid, Grace May, later to become fifth housemaid



Beautiful, clever and sharp, Grace May is practical, resilient and determined. She understands the ambitions and ruthlessness of the servants around her, but she has always believed that there is more to life than the daily drudge and acquisition of power and money.

Nineteen-year-old actress Felicity Jones is no stranger to working in country houses. As Emma Carter in the world's longest-running radio drama, Radio 4's *The Archers*, she works in the shop at Loxley Hall. In fact, explains Jones, Emma Carter's accent helped her gain the role of Grace May.

"Luckily for me, the production team wasn't looking for pronounced olde-world accents – they were after something much softer.

"Apparently, in those days, the servants came from all over the country, so below stairs would be a melting-pot of accents and dialects. Accents probably wouldn't have stayed really strong and

must have merged a bit and, fortunately, Emma's West Country accent fits the bill."

The young, gently spoken actress is clearly thrilled to have landed the part of Grace and has conscientiously researched the period in which the drama is set. "I've really enjoyed reading about lives back then, and our historical advisor Pamela Sambrook's book, *The Country House Servant*, is full of wonderful insights. What really comes through is how little we've changed and I think Lucy really captures that brilliantly in her scripts."

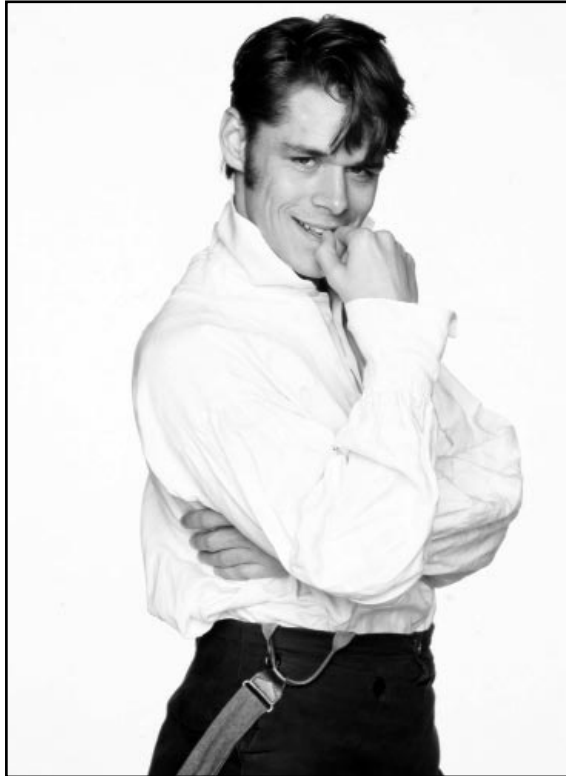
Jones's enthusiasm for drama began at an early age and was consolidated when she joined the Carlton Television Junior workshop in her hometown of Birmingham. Her first break came as a schoolgirl, when she played Alice Bastable in *The Treasure Seekers*, but her best-known role from her school days was as Ethel Hallow in *The Worst Witch* and its sequel, *Weird Sister College*, both successful television adaptations of Jill Murphy's children's books.

But juggling a burgeoning acting career with school work caused few problems for the talented Jones, who has always kept up with her local friends and enjoyed a good social life. She does admit, however, that it has been stressful from time to time. "I suppose it's wanting everything and learning how to balance responsibilities and fun without letting anyone down," she says with a maturity that belies her years.

Jones is full of admiration for her character. "I don't think I could do what she does – having to get up at 4am to light all the household fires and coping with the loss of her position as nursemaid. Sometimes, acting feels like really long hours but then you look at the length of the servant's day and it's humble pie time.

"We've all had great fun making this drama – I'll be sorry when filming ends. I've even got used to wearing a corset 10 hours a day. I shall miss all the fun and games we've had on and off set."

Kenny Doughty plays first footman William Forest



William Forest is the most senior of the footmen. He has done well to achieve the position so young, but he is becoming impatient for promotion.

It was the quality of the *Servants* scripts that attracted actor Kenny Doughty to the project. "Lucy's storytelling is just fantastic – it's energetic, compelling and emotionally charged," he says.

Doughty also applauds the approach of the creative team, who tackled a period drama from a new perspective, putting the spotlight on the "underlings". "It's refreshing to look at working-class lives rather than those of languid aristocrats."

Doughty describes making *Servants* as: "Having a ball with your mates on a speedboat running at full throttle. The pace of the schedule has been gruelling but I've been a part of a friendly and supportive team. There are no egos, no tantrums. Everyone's pulled together to get the job done."

Doughty admits that he undertook little research before starting filming ... but felt it his duty to try the local West Country cider. "It's called Black Rat and I felt sure that William would have had a taste for it!"

Drinking habits aside, there are some aspects of William's character that Doughty feels little connection with. "His attitude to disability is ugly and totally unacceptable. He's also negative and sexist when it comes to women, but we have to remember he's from another period. Lucy writes with such immediacy that it's easy to forget we're in the 1850s," he comments.

"William is a real challenge to play and we see him go on a dark psychological journey. I love getting my teeth into multi-layered, realistic characters with conflicts to solve."

Doughty compares the footman's life to playing in a football team. "The enemy of both is time. The two professions demand athletic prowess and finely tuned skills, which inevitably diminish with time. This means that, despite the camaraderie and pulling together of teamwork, scratch the surface and everyone's out for himself. It's a dog-eat-dog world. Life has made William selfish and tough and afraid of emotion and tenderness – traits he sees as weak. Women equal conquest, so it's not surprising that he has no female friends!"

Doughty, a graduate of London's Guildhall School of Music & Drama, clearly does not have such a cutthroat attitude to life. "I've had lucky breaks that have enabled me not only to travel, but to work across television, film and theatre. William's been stuck in the same job and in the same place for seven years! The only downside of my freedom are those inevitable periods away from my home and my girlfriend."

Episode synopses

Episode One

Servants opens as the Sturges Borne family return to their country seat, Taplows, with their retinue of servants after a summer away in Italy. As the household springs into life, new boy, second footman George Cosmo, is determined to impress, but struggles to survive his first day when his fraudulent reference is almost exposed. While housekeeper Flora Ryan is happy to take George at face value, the butler, Mr Jarvis, wants to dig deeper into his background.

The surprise departure of the under butler, Frank Keneally, presents George and first footman William Forest with the prospect of promotion and instantly makes them rivals – though, ultimately, both are thwarted.

In the meantime, young Lord Harry's nursemaid, the beautiful and clever Grace May, has to choose between her head and her heart.

George Cosmo is played by Joe Absolom, Flora Ryan by Orla Brady, Mr Jarvis by Christopher Fulford, Frank Keneally by Jason Barry, William Forest by Kenny Doughty and Grace May by Felicity Jones.

Episode Two

Preparations are under way for a grand dinner and Taplows' servants, particularly Mr Jarvis, are keen to impress the visiting servants. The extravagant dinner is also an opportunity for the footmen to make a little extra cash on the side.

William Forest embroils George Cosmo in a scam with Andrew Adams, the new, bullying under butler. But the plan starts to unravel when the cheap fish procured by George and William poisons the guests. When Andrew discovers what has happened, he wastes no time in humiliating William and pocketing the profits. Meanwhile, Grace has to sell her old engagement ring to get George off the hook.

Mr Jarvis is played by Christopher Fulford, William by Kenny Doughty, Andrew by Jon Morrison and Grace by Felicity Jones.

Episode Three

Below stairs, the squabbling between Grace and housemaid Esther Spicer escalates to new heights, in the midst of preparations for the annual hunt ball.

William trips on a loose rug and drops Harry, the Earl's handicapped son, down some stairs. Housekeeper Flora and butler Mr Jarvis seek to blame each other's staff for the accident. When Harry dies, the ball is cancelled but, to everyone's relief, no one is blamed for the accident. The servants, determined to have fun, eat chef Felix Klaus's sumptuous dinner, which had been intended for upstairs.

Only Grace is genuinely upset by Harry's death. Secretly, she covers his body with a blanket of flowers from the Earl's prized orangery. But all hell breaks loose when the Earl discovers the vandalism of his plants and all of the servants' wages are docked. Grace escapes discovery, but Esther, her tormentor, is blamed and sacked.

Grace is played by Felicity Jones, Esther by Caroline Hayes, William by Kenny Doughty, Harry by Jake Woodward, Flora by Orla Brady, Mr Jarvis by Christopher Fulford, Felix Klaus by Anatole Taubman.

Episode Four

Housekeeper Flora discovers that Mr Jarvis has been embezzling wages for years. She is appalled that her esteemed colleague could stoop so low. She confronts him and has to decide whether or not to expose his dishonesty.

Meanwhile, Frederick Matkin, a good runner, is set to race a visiting servant. For the household, it's a matter of reputation; for the Earl, it is a matter of a £5 wager; but, for Fred, it's about keeping his job.

Later, Flora decides that loyalty to her fellow servants is more important than loyalty to her masters, and Grace and George realise that if they are going to have a relationship, they will have to keep it secret.

Flora is played by Orla Brady, Mr Jarvis by Christopher Fulford, Frederick by Shaun Parkes, Grace by Felicity Jones and George by Joe Absolom.

Mr Jarvis regards the new regime as idiocy and decides to move the household to Cumbria for the next few months. Flora is heartbroken – and comes to realise that she is fonder of the butler than she thought. Later, George's fraudulent past finally catches up with him.

Grace is played by Felicity Jones, George by Joe Absolom, Flora by Orla Brady and Mr Jarvis by Christopher Fulford.

Episode Five

The servants are having a double celebration – it's New Year's Eve and, better still, payday. Secret sweethearts Grace and George are just about managing to hide their ardent passion for each other. However, the bonhomie that fills the servants' hall is lost on William, who is becoming increasingly tormented by nightmares about the death of young Harry.

While William struggles with his demons at night, he becomes vulnerable to the goading and cruelty of under butler Andrew by day. On New Year's Day, their simmering resentment boils over into violence when what begins as a jovial dip in the freezing pond, turns into a terrifying underwater fight.

Meanwhile, tension and misunderstandings still beset Flora and Mr Jarvis, and lead to a painful estrangement.

Grace is played by Felicity Jones, George by Joe Absolom, William by Kenny Doughty, Andrew by Jon Morrison, Flora by Orla Brady and Mr Jarvis by Christopher Fulford.

Episode Six

When Grace and George are nearly discovered together in the middle of the night, Flora instigates a witch-hunt to identify the errant servants and institutes a moral clampdown.