



New six part drama series

The Durrells

comes to ITV this April



Press Release	Pages 3 - 6
Foreword written by Simon Nye	Pages 6 - 7
Interview with Sally Woodward Gentle (Executive Producer)	Pages 8 - 11
Lee Durrell on her late husband Gerald Durrell	Pages 12 - 13
Character Biographies	Pages 14 - 15
Interview with Keeley Hawes (Louisa Durrell)	Pages 16 - 20
Interview with Josh O'Connor (Lawrence 'Larry' Durrell)	Pages 21 - 23
Interview with Callum Woodhouse (Leslie Durrell)	Pages 24 - 26
Interview with Daisy Waterstone (Margo Durrell)	Pages 27 - 29
Interview with Milo Parker (Gerald 'Gerry' Durrell)	Pages 30 - 33
Interview with Alexis Georgoulis (Spiro Hakaiopulos)	Pages 34 - 35
Interview with Leslie Caron (Countess Mavrodaki)	Pages 36 - 39
Episode one synopsis	Page 40
Episode two synopsis	Page 41
Cast and production credits	Page 42

Keeley Hawes leads the cast of new ITV drama The Durrells



Keeley Hawes (*Line of Duty*, *Ashes to Ashes*) plays Louisa Durrell in ITV's brand new six part series *The Durrells*, written by acclaimed screenwriter Simon Nye and produced by Sid Gentle Films Ltd. International film star **Leslie Caron** (*An American in Paris*, *Gigi*) also stars in the series.

The Durrells is based upon Gerald Durrell's classic trilogy of Corfu memoirs including the much loved 'My Family and Other Animals'. Set in 1935, this timeless drama is full of warmth, humour and fun.

The story focuses upon Louisa Durrell (Hawes) whose life is in meltdown. Her husband died years ago and his money has all but run out. Her four unruly 'children' Larry, 21, played by **Josh O'Connor** (*Ripper Street*, *Peaky Blinders*), Leslie, 18, a role taken by newcomer **Callum Woodhouse**, Margo, 17, played by **Daisy Waterstone** (*Silent Witness*, *Testament of Youth*) and Gerry, 11, with **Milo Parker** (*Mr Holmes*, *Ghosthunters*) cast in the role, are going off the rails. Gerry is obsessed with animals and about to be thrown out of school; Larry is a would-be novelist but the worst estate agent in Bournemouth, and the middle two are hitting adulthood like a car-crash. It is the 1930s, and a woman's options are limited.

Louisa realises she can carry on struggling, marry someone comfortably off but oppressive, or make a radical change and escape... from a domestic pressure-cooker, British weather, uptight Englishness and narrow horizons. This is a rescue mission to somewhere her family can heal itself before it's too late. So, they uproot and move to Corfu!

Over six episodes we follow the Durrell family as they adjust to their new life. Along the way they'll meet new friends, rivals and lovers.

Alexis Georgoulis (*My Life In Ruins*, *Eisai to Tairi mou*) the hugely popular actor in Greece, plays the handsome Spiro Hakaipoulos - an all round Mr Fix It, who Margo at first thinks her mother should marry, but Louisa has other ideas.

Leslie Caron stars as the shrewd and exotic Countess Mavrodaki who employs Margo as her companion, and **Lucy Black** (*Jericho*, *One Day*) plays fellow Brit and wife of the local doctor, who Louisa hopes to befriend.

A local, Theodore, played by renowned Greek actor **Yorgos Karamihos**, welcomes the Durrells. He's sane, wise and knows everything there is to know about the animals and plant life of Corfu, so is an ideal informal teacher for Gerry.

At the time of accepting the role, Keeley Hawes said: "I'm delighted to be playing Louisa Durrell. As a life long fan of Gerald Durrell's wonderful books, I can't wait to start filming and telling his stories through Simon Nye's hilarious and poignant adaptation."

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, of which Lee Durrell is the Honorary Director, is delighted that Sid Gentle Films Ltd have adapted the work of her late husband. Lee Durrell said: "I am absolutely thrilled that Gerald Durrell and his idyllic childhood in Corfu will appear on our television screens. Those sunny, magical days, when eccentric family affairs were interwoven with Gerry's discovery of the natural world, inspired his life's work to rescue animals from the brink of extinction. I hope that the new series will be a gentle, but timely reminder of the importance of Gerry's work today and will inspire others to take up his cause."

Each of the episodes are written by Simon Nye (*Tommy Cooper: Not Like That, Like This, Just William, Men Behaving Badly*). The Durrells is produced by Sid Gentle Films Ltd and executive produced by the company's founder, BAFTA award winning filmmaker Sally Woodward Gentle (*Whitechapel, Any Human Heart, Enid*). Sid's Managing Director Lee Morris (*Da Vinci's Demons, Any Human Heart, The Jury*) executive produces the series together with Simon Nye. Christopher Hall (*Critical, Dracula, Murder on the Home Front*) is the producer, and Steve Barron (*Merlin, Treasure Island*) and Roger Goldby (*Call The Widwife, Cutting It*) direct.

ITV's Director of Drama Steve November and Controller of Drama Victoria Fea commissioned The Durrells.

The series has been filmed in Corfu, Bournemouth and Ealing.

Note to Editors:

Sally Woodward Gentle formed Sid Gentle Films Limited in September 2013 to produce original and innovative television drama and feature films. Prior to setting up her own company, Sally was Creative Director of Carnival Films responsible for the production of *Whitechapel*, *Murder on the Home Front*, *The Last Weekend*, *Any Human Heart* and *Enid*.

The Gerald Durrell classic trilogy of novels includes: 'My Family and Other Animals', 'Birds, Beasts and Relatives' and 'The Garden of the Gods'.

Info on the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust:

www.durrell.org

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust is an international charity working globally to save species from extinction. Headquartered in Jersey in the Channel Islands, Durrell focuses on the most threatened species in the most threatened places.

Established by author and conservationist, Gerald Durrell, in 1963, Durrell is unique among conservation organisations in integrating four core areas of operation: the Wildlife Park in Jersey as a centre of excellence in animal husbandry, research, training and education; the Field Programme which undertakes conservation action where it is needed most; the Conservation Academy which builds the capacity of conservation practitioners; Conservation Science which underpins all activities.

Durrell makes a difference:

Its unique approach has saved some of the world's most threatened species and put them on the road to recovery. See <http://www.durrell.org/durrell-index/red-list-index/>

Durrell is dedicated:

With a track record of more than 50 years Durrell leads some of the world's longest-running and most successful endangered species and habitat recovery programmes.

Durrell is pioneering:

Innovations in field research and action, conservation leadership training, community empowerment and specialised captive husbandry and breeding have led to Durrell's many successes.

Durrell's work is vital:

As the natural world faces unprecedented pressures that threaten wildlife, wild habitats and people, Durrell's conservation work is more vital than ever before.



FOREWORD WRITTEN BY SIMON NYE

When adapting another work for television or film a writer has a wish-list which starts with *clear and dynamic characters*, moves through *a well-defined sense of place* to *memorable storytelling*. If you're lucky you may also be handed *charm* and *originality* and even *something important to say*. And *tears-running-down-the-face hilarity* is always a bonus.

Gerald Durrells' Corfu Trilogy - My Family & Other Animals, Birds Beasts & Relatives, and The Garden Of The Gods - is stuffed full of all these. It is a celebration of pre-war innocence and family life, though brilliantly highlights the casual cruelties siblings and parents inflict on each other, and turned a generation on to the joys of the natural world.

So when Sally Woodward Gentle, television's funnest and preeminent producer-executive, asked me to think about converting the books into a series for ITV, I didn't need to reach for my Writers' Book Of Excuses (e.g. "I'm concentrating on movies" or "I'm in a grittier place right now" or "Children and animals...").

The story of Mrs Durrell taking her four children off to Corfu in 1935 is no stranger to television. I myself adapted My Family And Other Animals into a BBC film ten years ago. But this was a chance to splurge Durrell's vision of Corfu over at least 6 TV hours, and hopefully many more in the future.

I *love* these characters. Louisa Durrell is the mother we'd all like - loving, occasionally daft, wry, generally right, and alternately proud and appalled by her offspring. Lawrence, proto-writer who *knows* he knows best. Leslie, the misfit with the gun obsession. Margo, gauche deciphering how the world works. And Gerald himself, agog at the marvels of nature. And their Greek angels: rumbustious Spiro who takes them under his wing; Theo, the polymath father Gerry never had; and uncomfortably plain speaking hypochondriac home-help Lugaretzia.

We adapted and plumped up other characters from the books, for example the hard drinking old roué Captain Creech, accordion-playing love interest Sven, and enigmatic convict Kosti. The trilogy is teeming with them, and they were all real people.

The fact that most of our characters existed - Margo died only in 2007 - creates an obvious responsibility. We have used creative licence and added new characters but the essential truth of their lives remains. I have talked to people who knew Gerry's family in the 1930s in Corfu, and Gerald Durrell's lovely second wife Lee Durrell, in between tirelessly managing his legacy, has been most supportive.

The happy news is that although Corfu has been developed for tourism, it is still beautiful. We did half of our filming there. Our locations are breath taking. We all want to live in the Durrells' house, even though bits are falling off it. We also filmed in the house where Prince Philip was born, don't you know. And our characters wear some great hats. But The Durrells is not *bonnet drama* or *heritage porn* (though I like the sound of that) - it's about a normal family struggling to survive. It's about migration, grappling with an alien culture. And about conservation and our relationship with the natural world.

The wildlife. Yes, not always easy. I sometimes wished Gerry was interested in model trains rather than hard-to-get or even harder-to-film animals. Not, as we writers are fond of saying, my problem... except it is, if you can't get Gerry his beloved pelican - say - because it has to be specially flown in from two countries away. Tortoises were more reliable. But then there were the adorable puppies, a ubiquitous dog (Roger), an octopus or two, a small flock of turkeys, goats, bats obviously, donkeys, insects, I could go on - ask the now rather care-worn producer.

Much as I love to carp at TV executives and claim the artistic high ground, ITV and Victoria Fea in particular have been incredibly enthusiastic. In the scripts we agreed on a “No funny foreigners” rule - although technically many characters are funny and they are foreign - to avoid depicting a British family surrounded by silly locals. The silliness and wisdom are evenly allocated. We may have exaggerated the Greeks’ knowledge of English here and there... The writing challenges stem in part from the sheer sunniness of the books - nice problem to have - as Gerald Durrell didn’t dwell on the tribulations and drama. But we, frankly, have to. And a special mention to script editor Sam Symons who had to put up with me scowling childishly at concepts like *character trajectories* or *jeopardy*, owing to my gag-centric leanings.

I have four children and am one of four, so I have no excuse if I haven’t captured the Durrell family dynamic. Being English, the siblings studiously hide any love and sentiment for each other unless or until anyone really suffers (and they do, in this series - from unrequited love, near-death, imminent prison, thwarted love, hovering murderers, car crashes, and yet more problematic loving). In any case hugging had barely been invented in 1935. But they do love each other, when they aren’t teasing, mocking or being competitive. Most of their mother’s time is spent coaxing kindness and awareness out of her children, the time we now spend persuading our children away from their screens.

Louisa Durrell is the lynchpin of the whole show so it's hard to convey just how grateful I am to Keeley Hawes for what she’s done with the role - natural, touching and very funny. Comedy is a delicate thing and in my actually not very humble opinion the whole cast are very good at it, when they’re not being very good at all the other things actors have to do. Including, in the case of Milo (playing Gerry), acting while holding at least one squirming animal. It's fair to say we have hoovered up most of Greece’s best actors, though finished with them just in time for the Greek panto season.

As always, but particularly with this project, it would be fabulous to find a large audience for The Durrells. I’m not saying reality TV and gritty dramas about homicidal psychopaths don’t have a place in The Radio Times but surely, as Downton Abbey has proved, there’s a little more room for something between Little House On The Prairie and Dexter.

If there is, it would be a pleasure to write and make more episodes. In the meantime, pull up the viewing device of your choice, pour yourself an ouzo, and I really hope you enjoy The Durrells.

INTERVIEW WITH SALLY WOODWARD GENTLE (EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)



Q: How did The Durrells come to the screen?

“It came out of a conversation I had with ITV about the sort of thing they were looking for. This was the one thing I thought we would really enjoy making that might fit that brief. There are numerous stories and brilliant characters in the three books of The Corfu Trilogy. That is an amazing jumping off place for a returning series. Simon Nye had written the last TV adaptation and we thought it would be stupid to ignore him. So I phoned Simon and he said, ‘It’s a really good idea.’ He really got it.”

Q: What was Simon Nye’s approach?

“Simon knows those books incredibly well. In the first episode you have Louisa making the decision to move the family from England to Corfu. Then it becomes an adventure about a family taking a risk. In real life it was incredibly bold of Louisa to uproot her four children and take them off to Corfu, with the notion they probably had very little money.

“The books are incredibly funny but moving as well. Simon has taken some of the storylines directly from the books, some are inspired by the books and others are invented by him. It’s a real mixture of the three. Gerry’s trilogy was written some years later and both he and Larry didn’t let truth stand in the way of a good story when they wrote about Corfu.

“Simon is a brilliant writer. You read his scripts and they just feel very funny and the characters are wonderful. But then you realise how much emotional truth there is to them as well. He is also an animal lover in real life. In fact while he was writing this he had a sneaky little holiday in Madagascar which, co-incidentally, has very close links to the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.”

Q: How did the Greek financial crisis impact on your filming plans?

“It was all going on while we were preparing to film in Corfu. There were quite a lot of people saying, ‘Why don’t you film it in Croatia or Malta, where they’ve got a tax break and they haven’t got a financial

crisis?’ We did recce Malta and realised it only had about two trees. While Corfu is the most fantastically lush island. Extraordinarily beautiful. Also it’s The Corfu Trilogy. Lee Morris and I realized you really can’t film this anywhere else.

“I had never been there before and was totally seduced by Corfu, along with everyone else. We did a recce in April 2015 and within 12 hours we’d gone a bit Corfiot. We suddenly got a bit more laid back and everything didn’t have to be in such a hurry. When we were wandering around looking at locations the ground was covered in oranges, lemons and kumquats. It was like heaven.

“But during our preparations there were questions like, ‘Where do you open a bank account?’ Also you couldn’t get cash out. And we needed that for things that turn up from day to day. So we had to take cash in ourselves when we flew in. Cast and crew members would also take cash over.

“On the news in Britain there was speculation about civil unrest in Greece and a definite sense of panic and concern. At one point where we were looking to block book hotel rooms, there was a rumour the British Consul had booked some hotel rooms for their own staff so they could get British people out of Corfu. But when they actually went out to the island they realised nothing had changed at all. So we got their hotel rooms.

“Also you get a sense there is a semi-autonomy about Corfu and micro-economies. I suspect that’s how Corfu was functioning and there was no sense there of what we had seen on the news.”

Q: Who else did you talk to while you were preparing to film?

“My mother’s doctor happens to be Greek. I was with her one day and said to him, ‘Oh, we’re filming in Greece. In Corfu.’ He said, ‘Oh my God, what are you filming?’ And I said, ‘The Durrells.’ It turns out he trained on Corfu and the doctor he trained with is the main Gerald Durrell expert on the island. He also turned out to be one of the best friends on Corfu of Gerry Durrell’s widow Lee Durrell. Amazing. So we went over there and he gave us a little drinks party and introduced us to the mayor. He was fantastic.

“Corfu is the most brilliant place and we’re going back this year on holiday because it’s gorgeous. We’ve totally fallen in love with it. There is something incredibly seductive about Corfu. And that sense of Durrell-ness to the island is so important.”

Q: How did you decide that Louisa would be at the centre of this adaptation?

“It happened relatively quickly. Because Louisa is the heart of it. Gerry is amazing but you can tell all of his stories in among all of the rest of the family’s stories. So it made total sense to put her at the centre of it.”

Q: Tell us about Keeley Hawes as Louisa?

“It really is a role she was born to play. Keeley is completely stunning in this series. She is an absolutely amazing actress. If you talk to either of the directors, she didn’t put a foot wrong. She got absolutely everything spot on. There were no notes about her performance. I think she got fed up of us telling her how brilliant she was.

“Keeley has fantastic comic timing, she is really emotional and because she has got children of her own, she fell in love with the rest of the cast as her screen family. So you really get a sense of her as a proper mum. But also she is young and beautiful. So the love interest works. Keeley is properly amazing in this.”

Q: Where do we find Louisa at the start of the series?

“Louisa is widowed with four children and slightly lost. We have her in Bournemouth waiting until the sun’s over the yardarm so she can have her first gin. She’s completely thrown herself into her family and is defined by her family. But she still has a huge amount of life in front of her.

“And she’s like all parents. You do your best but you can’t help but occasionally muck up and be flawed. There’s a lovely line where she says to Gerry, ‘Just bear in mind, I’m not being inconsistent. I’m being flexible.’

“Simon Nye has also got four children and he understands that thing of, ‘You do your best and sometimes it’ll work and sometimes it won’t work. But you just love your children to bits.’ So it is difficult for Louisa and she is yearning for more life, with a sense there must be more than this.”

Q: What is her eldest son Larry’s solution?

“He thinks his mother needs a man. We took a lot from the sense of the books that Lawrence then went on to write and the fact he was sex-obsessed. Because he’s going to have a very different attitude to the one Gerry had. We’ve painted Leslie as the one who is incredibly protective of his mother and doesn’t want to think of her as a sexual being at all, as a lot of children don’t really like to think of their parents. And then you’ve got Gerry who knows about sex because he studies animals.”

Q: What about young Milo Parker as Gerry?

“Milo is amazing. Works really hard. Is spot on, knows all of his lines, is incredibly polite and charming. A genuinely lovely boy. Given that he has played some important roles against really big actors, he is not spoilt in any shape or form. His dad, who is his chaperone, is just fantastic. And clearly he’s got a family that keep him really grounded. He probably understands how lucky he is to get these experiences but he doesn’t take anything for granted. You talk to him like an adult. He was also brilliant and very natural with the animals. He clearly really likes animals as well. So that was never a problem.”

Q: Tell us about Josh O’Connor (Larry), Callum Woodhouse (Leslie) and Daisy Waterstone (Margo)?

“They are fantastic. Josh, who plays Larry, is an experienced actor. Again, he hardly put a foot wrong. Really understood his character. And what we really got from him is although Larry is a bit of a ‘Smart Alec’, a bit cynical and he likes to tease his family and put them down, he clearly completely adores them.

“Because he is the oldest boy and there isn’t a father, his relationship with Louisa is a little bit different. He’s a grown up and he understands her in a grown up fashion. He’s sort of her confidante, even though she understands where the boundaries are and there’s only so much that you can use your children as your best friend.

“Callum is amazing. Straight out of drama school. He is a stunning actor. His comic timing is immense and he’s got 1930s’ legs.

“Daisy is completely charming and naturally other-worldly. And I think Margo is slightly other-worldly. A young woman who is starting to appreciate she’s quite sexy and attractive to the boys on the island. Traditionally in the book she is seen as a bit of a dimwit. But what we’ve also given her is a sense of burgeoning feminism. I think that’s really important. It’s also latent in the books. So Daisy was just fantastic and she looks like Keeley’s daughter.”

Q: How was Hollywood screen legend Leslie Caron cast as the Countess?

“Leslie’s son Christopher Hall is our God send of a producer of The Durrells and his son Ben Hall plays Donald in the series. But he had nothing to do with Leslie being cast. Our casting directors Crowley Poole phoned me and said, ‘What do you think about Leslie Caron before we tell Chris we’re quite keen on her for the role?’ And we said she was a brilliant idea.

“Then we had to ask Chris if he wouldn’t mind if his mother was in it. He thought it was a lovely idea too and was very happy to broach it with her. Leslie’s dog is in it as well. He goes everywhere with her. He

came to the script read-through and I said to Chris, 'Can we not get the dog in the series?' He said, 'Yes, of course.'"

Q: What was your approach to the casting of Greek roles?

"We really wanted to be authentic in the casting. Both Alexis Georgoulis as Spiro and Yorgos Karamihos as Theo are fantastic and huge stars in Greece. When we were at the hotel, Alexis walked into the bar next door and they couldn't believe it was him. The takings quadrupled because it went around the island that that's where he went. Alexis is on the front cover of magazines like Esquire and GQ. While Ulric von der Esch, who plays Scandinavian Sven, is Swedish and a really clever actor."

Q: How was it working with all the animals Gerry collects in Corfu?

"The animals were kept very cool in the heat. In fact they were probably cooler than the humans. The main thing was a lot of the crew got bitten by mosquitos until they got used to it. Keeley got a really bad infected bite. There was one poor wardrobe assistant who must have had a hundred bites on her leg. And the heat's tough. But we did start filming in the beginning of September so while it was really hot, it was getting cooler.

"There were two pelicans. Our production designer was trying to get a selfie with a pelican and it turned around and whacked her in the face. So she was rather embarrassed by that. Roger the dog, who is played by Mossup, is just the most expressive dog. We had to bring some of the animals over from Athens. The pelicans and seagull were specially sourced from outside Corfu. But the donkeys all speak Greek. They're all Corfiot donkeys. And the baby owls were filmed in the UK.

"Then when we filmed the interiors at Ealing we decided that big animals would naturally stay outside and smaller animals would naturally stay inside. So other than Mossup / Roger, there isn't an animal that came back from Greece to Ealing. And you can double tortoises quite easily."

Q: How did you find the exterior location for the Durrells' house on Corfu?

"That was through our location manager Nikos. Because there isn't really any infrastructure on Corfu in terms of filming, he was recommended by an agent who recommended her friend who then recommended him. We didn't know him from Adam and sent him off to Corfu for a week to do this scouting and he absolutely got it.

"He was like Spiro in the book. This amazing fixer and run around-er and chatter. He very quickly got the aesthetic. He's a Spartan and he fell in love with Corfu. It was actually the first house he showed us. Everybody sort of knows everybody else on the island. So there were many recommendations. But this house could not be more beautiful. Stunning."

Q: Corfu had basic facilities in 1935?

"Back then there was no electricity and no telephones. At one point we wanted a telephone for the storyline and our script executive had to do a lot of research into when the first telephone came to Corfu. It didn't arrive there early enough for us to use it as a plot point."

Q: Gerry went on to create what is now the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust based in Jersey?

"I had never been there before we did The Durrells and it is a beautiful place in Jersey. Since then I've also learned of the extraordinary work they do in conservation and education. "

LEE DURRELL ON THE INCREDIBLE LIFE OF HER LATE HUSBAND GERALD DURRELL



Lee with Gerald Durrell in 1978

Whatever his age, Gerald Durrell always claimed he felt like he was 12 years old inside. His childhood on the enchanting island of Corfu not only made an indelible impression on him, it defined him. His passion for animals and the natural world was nurtured there, and his egalitarian outlook was fostered by the people he knew, from peasants to priests. Brother Lawrence led him into the realms of art, music, poetry and literature and gave him the confidence to write. Theodore, the eclectic and beloved family friend, taught him to have a 'wide-spectrum mind' (one of Gerry's favourite phrases) – to appreciate the principles of science as well as the scansion of doggerel and the intricacies of doodling. All this plus Gerry's inimitable sense of humour emerged from a milieu of sunshine and happiness, laughter and the love of a mildly eccentric family, whose lynchpin was Louisa Durrell, who taught her youngest son much more than how to cook.

Gerry always said that if he had the gift of Merlin, he would give every child the kind of childhood he had in Corfu.

The family thought the boy would outgrow his 'unseemly' fascination for animals.....so he worked in a pet shop, then at Whipsnade Zoo and then as an animal collector for zoos. He became disillusioned and exasperated with the zoos of those days, their ignorance of caring for animals and their arrogant attitude that if an animal died, there were plenty more where it came from. Among the first to recognise the general decline in animal numbers and the loss of their wild habitats, Gerry resolved that his own zoo would be devoted to saving species from extinction. He started it more than 60 years ago on another enchanting island, Jersey, and one of its first inhabitants, among the gorillas, owls and tortoises, was Louisa, whom he'd always promised a little cottage in his zoo. Actually, it was a 16th century granite manor house, Les Augrès Manor, now headquarters of the international charity, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.

The Trust, today simply called Durrell, is proof that Gerald Durrell was a visionary, a pioneer and a mentor. It has saved dozens of endangered species and habitats and trained thousands of conservationists who, in turn, save more species and train more conservationists. The books of Gerald Durrell, all 41 of them, have instilled in millions an appreciation of animals and nature and a desire to cherish and protect our natural world.

No one was more delighted at Gerry's success as a writer than his brother Lawrence. Larry often told the story of a signing session in Foyle's for his latest book, when a fan approached him, clutching a copy of *My Family and Other Animals*, and apologising that he couldn't afford to buy Larry's book but would he mind signing his brother's. Larry gaily signed it, "In the absence of the author, by a better one."

No one would have been more delighted than Gerry that the stories and the ethos of his glorious childhood would be shared with millions through ITV's captivating new television series – the next best thing to having the gift of Merlin!



Lee Durrell
Honorary Director, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
www.durrell.org

The Durrell family's personal images:



1938 – The Durrell family at Daff Yellow Villa



Gerald with a barn owl



Gerard and Spiro make a fire

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

LOUISA DURRELL (Keeley Hawes)



Louisa, widowed eight years ago, is an amalgam of her children's personalities: intellectually curious but unpretentious, occasionally cussed but fun. She is ambitious for happiness, for herself and her family. Alternately proud of her children and exasperated by them. It has been a while since the death of her husband and she is only now ready to entertain the idea of finding a man.

LAWRENCE DURRELL (Josh O'Connor)

21, funny but often cruel. Larry thinks he knows best so tries to run everyone's life, which Louisa points out is like putting a lunatic in charge of the asylum. And if anyone's going to screw up the Durrells, she would prefer it was her. On his way to becoming a brilliant novelist, Larry believes he is surrounded by idiots. He talks about sex a lot but is devoted to his girlfriend Nancy with whom he has an on-off relationship.



LESLIE DURRELL (Callum Woodhouse)



18, the family misfit. Infatuated with guns. Leslie is plain-speaking and most happy when shooting or sailing. He has a Mother Complex, so fiercely opposes any liaison Louisa might be planning. Intellectually bullied by Larry, he can be volcanic and melancholy. He increasingly believes he is plagued by bad luck and goes to the dark side after the loss of his first girlfriend Alexia. Would benefit from a job but prefers to act as the family hunter-gatherer.

MARGO DURRELL (Daisy Waterstone)

17, cheerfully identifies herself as “dim”, but isn’t. Prone to neuroses about her looks and her place in the world but a magnet for the island’s testosterone-heavy young men. Louisa tries to stop her from obsessing about boyfriends, and steer her towards something more profound and satisfying in an era when girls her age were still expected to wait politely for a husband. Sure enough, feminism stirs in Margo, when she’s not falling in love disastrously... Grapples in Corfu for the first time with the complexities of work.



GERALD DURRELL (Milo Parker)



11, youngest but in many ways Louisa’s most mature child. Endlessly inquisitive about animals, and vaguely interested in people. His passion for nature is the making of him but a constant worry to his mother as his conventional education suffers. He is happy to spend *hours* staring at beetles on a wall, goes missing for hours on epic nature trails, and turns the home into a zoo. A wry observer of his family members’ foibles.

SPIRO HAKAIOPULOS (Alexis Georgoulis)

Corfu’s Mr Fix-It, loud and confident Anglophile who spent several years in Chicago and has the automobile to prove it. Officially a taxi-driver, he knows everyone. Generous with his time for the Durrells, and especially Louisa. More than a hint that, were he not married, he and Louisa would be very good together.



THEO STEPHANIDES (Yorgos Karamihos)



If Spiro knows everyone, Theo knows everything. And everyone. Greek, a sane and wise voice. An academic, biologist and lover of the outdoors, he and Gerry are made for each other. Single, but devoted more to his interests than the pursuit of a partner.

INTERVIEW WITH KEELEY HAWES (LOUISA DURRELL)



Q: What appealed to you about The Durrells?

“The scripts are fantastic and so funny. I love the books so that was the one thing I was most relieved about. I came to Corfu on a family holiday when I was around nine or ten. It was the first time I had been abroad. I had just read the first book and it was literally like stepping into the pages. It was amazing. So I’ve always been very close to it.

“I had started reading the first book to my two youngest children when The Durrells came along. So it was all rather nice and timely. I think my children will love this show. They have been over to Corfu and I’ve been able to fly home during breaks in filming. It’s not far and it’s not forever. Usually I get to film in Bermondsey and Luton. I don’t think anyone could blame me for jumping at this and making the most of it.”

Q: Were you familiar with the previous TV adaptations in 1987 and 2005?

“Before the second one I was working on a Marple with Matthew Goode who was then going off to play Larry Durrell in that film. I was really frustrated because this was 10 years ago, I wasn’t old enough to play the mother and there just wasn’t a part for me.

“So when I heard they were doing this my heart skipped a beat. I was about a quarter of the way through reading it to my children when The Durrells came up and I was genuinely thrilled. Then I thought, ‘Oh, I might not be old enough.’ But I was about to turn 40. The oldest child Larry is 21 and in those days Louisa would have been not much older than me. So I’m playing my age, which is good. My mum had my brother when she was 19. People did.”

Q: Who is Louisa Durrell?

“Louisa Dixie Durrell is slightly different from the woman we know from the Gerald Durrell books. Because the books are told from a child’s point of view and the stories about his mother are of this

perfect woman. There's no mention of any money worries or troubles. She's the perfect mother. He's the baby of the family and she lets him get away with everything.

"One of the things I really like about this TV version is Louisa is a woman struggling. She's been on her own for eight years since her husband died, bringing up three teenagers and a little boy on her own. And she does something so brave and amazing to move from Bournemouth to Corfu.

"Today it's relatively easy to get to Corfu in a few hours by plane. But it would still be seen as a big step. Back in 1935 Louisa took four children to Corfu. A single mother taking four children to a foreign country. To a Greek island with a different language, no electricity, no telephone, no quick budget flight back home. Just a complete change of life. To lift them all up and say, 'Right, I'm going to give you a better life than the one we have now and this is what we are going to do.' That is such a brave, forward-thinking, modern thing for a woman on her own to do. Amazing. A real achievement.

"When Louisa gets there she says she came to Corfu to rescue her family. That's exactly what she's doing. She is saving them from an existence in England which isn't good enough for them. They have not been making the most of who they are. She wants a better life for them and just takes life by the horns and makes it happen.

"I think today everybody probably has a little fantasy about dropping everything and going to live in the sun. But we also live in an age where you can travel fairly easily. You can take your children to these amazing places and have once in a lifetime experiences with them."

Q: Tell us about your screen family?

"It really does feel like we have been a real family forever: Larry (Josh O'Connor), Leslie (Callum Woodhouse), Margo (Daisy Waterstone) and Gerry (Milo Parker). That's not anything we've worked at. It just happened. I could not wish for a better 'foster' family. They're all completely different and all so well cast. Exactly what you want your Larry, Leslie and Margo to be if you're a fan of the books. You fall in love with them all. And Milo as Gerry is heaven. He's such a natural actor. He can just do it."

Q: Could you have played this part as well if you hadn't been a mother yourself?

"I hope so. But it absolutely helps to work with children if you're very used to them and you know how you behave with your own children. One of the things I really love about Simon Nye's scripts is the fact that some of the arguments they have take your breath away. They're quite full on, some of them. Some of the things, particularly, that Larry says. You think, 'Well that's a bit strong. God, that's so hurtful. Even if it is true.' But actually that's what families are like. If your family can't say those things to you then who can? It feels very real.

"Louisa is a loving, protective mother. Her children are the be all and end all. That's why she's made this journey. And it's very difficult for her. She doesn't work and they weren't wealthy. So there were struggles. What do you do if you have no money? There's no fall back. You have to feed four children and yourself.

"Yet when one of them is taken ill, money is suddenly meaningless. Money doesn't matter at all when real things happen. But she does need to feed them!

"At one stage Louisa says, 'Nothing is about me, my life is devoured by my children.' Anybody who is a mother will know exactly what that's like. Once you're a mother it's not about you anymore, ever again. I wouldn't have it any other way."

Q: Has there ever been a time in your own life where you had no money?

"Yes there has. I'm pleased I had a time like that because it does make you appreciate things more. Also with acting it's feast or famine. And if you're not very good at putting something aside for when you're

not busy then that's that. There's no holiday pay for actors. If you're not working you don't get paid at the end of the month."

Q: Louisa is frustrated by the language barrier when she tries to get a job. Have you learned any Greek while working in Corfu?

"I am also crushed by the language barrier. Just ordering a beer is hard enough for me. I might have a bit more Greek vocabulary by the time I finish this though."

Q: Gerry brings a number of animals home from his explorations. Have you had many scenes with them?

"There has been a lot of interaction with the animals. We have two pelicans on location in Corfu. A pelican and a pelican double. We have our lovely dog who is gorgeous and playing Roger. People say never work with children or animals but they clearly haven't worked with this lot because it's a joy."

"When you have an animal in a scene - trained or not - you don't know what they're going to do. It's a magical thing because they're improvising all the time. It keeps everybody on their toes and you just go with it. Which is great. It brings something very real to all of it and it's lovely having them all around, including tortoises wandering about on the table. Then there are the gorgeous puppies who appear. They've all been very well behaved."

Q: What about other creatures?

"If you're on holiday in Corfu then the mosquitos aren't a problem. It's only when you go to some of the very wooded locations where we have been to film. That's when you know all about it. We're all very relaxed with each other now and if you were to look at us from a bit further away you would just see a lot of people slapping each other. You need your friends around you at those moments."

Q: How would you describe Louisa's relationship with Spiro, played by Alexis Georgoulis?

"That's a lovely relationship. I think the casting of Alexis is really refreshing because he's not the stereotypical chap from the book. Spiro is a wonderful character in the book and I'm sure he was a fantastic man. But there's nothing wrong with re-inventing him slightly. He still has all of the qualities that man obviously had and brought to that family. He was their rock. They couldn't have done without him."

"Alexis is so charismatic. He has all the attitude of the Spiro that you know and love if you've loved the books. But in just a slightly different wrapping. And he brings all of that personality."

"It's also heaven for me when Alexis is around. He is so famous in Corfu and across Greece. A couple of Brits have recognised me in Corfu but otherwise not. It's Alexis who gets all the attention. Which is nice."

Q: Tell us about Leslie Caron, who plays the Countess?

"I met her for the first time at the script read-through. It's amazing casting. I have a couple of scenes with her but mostly it's Daisy, as Margo, and the fabulous Jeremy Swift."

Q: Theo, played by Yorgos Karamihos, befriends Gerry and the family in Corfu?

"Theo knows everything. And Yorgos, the actor who plays him, also knows everything. So that's very useful. Yorgos has studied all sorts of things and is very well educated, charming, funny and a brilliant actor. You could not find a better Theo from your imagination in the book."

Q: Louisa's eldest son Larry decides his mother needs a man. Who does he invite to dinner?

"Larry decides that Louisa needs sex and then sets about finding some wholly inappropriate partners for her. One of which is Captain Creech, played by James Cosmo, who Larry meets in a bar in Corfu Town. He brings him home to meet mother and the captain promptly gets absolutely blotto. He is a lecherous old sea dog who is totally unsuitable. Everything he says is inappropriate, offensive and hilarious.

"She takes it well, considering. But later he seizes Louisa and kisses her rather brutally on the lips. That's when she grabs a gun and ends up shooting the food off his plate. It was actually me with the gun in that scene. I enjoyed doing that. It was an air rifle so exciting to do but you know it's not going to hurt people. James Cosmo is terrific in that role."

Q: How would you describe Louisa's look when she gets to Corfu?

"It's 1930s. A working wardrobe, really. Make do and mend. But beautiful. Our costume designer Charlotte Holdich has done such an amazing job. Everybody looks so perfect. It looks really wonderful."

Q: Gerald Durrell went on to create what is now the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Durrell Wildlife Park in Jersey. You've worked in Jersey?

"I have. I filmed Under The Greenwood Tree in Jersey for ITV about 10 years ago. I had a lovely time on the island and took my children over there. Durrell is a great charity and it's very nice to be linked to them through this series. I'd love to go back to Jersey. I thought it was a wonderful place."

Q: What has it been like filming in Corfu, including some locations linked to the real Durrell family when they lived there?

"It was pretty much paradise here in Corfu the other day where we shot a scene near the family's house which is right next to the sea. They place a table and chairs in the sea, which is very shallow at that point, and eat their lunch there to keep cool.

"The area by the Durrell's house is just unspeakably beautiful. You look down over the wall at the front of the house and the sea comes right up. But the tide never gets too high. So it just got up to the tops of the chairs and then flows away again when the tide turns."

Q: The Greek financial crisis meant the producers explored other possible locations for filming before deciding the series really had to be shot in the original setting?

"We had to film this in Corfu. Nowhere else would do. The house we're in could not be more perfect. It's wonderful. It all looks so authentic, how it would have looked back then.

"Corfu is gorgeous and the people are so lovely. They can't do enough for you. They're a very generous, welcoming people and so friendly. It's very relaxing everywhere you go. People saying, 'Why are you so stressed? Just chill out.' It's a lovely atmosphere.

"People in this part of the world haven't been having a great time of late and yet they are open and friendly. You wouldn't know that they'd been through this financial nightmare. There's a big difference between what you see on the news and the reality. It's a lovely place to come to."

Q: How would you sum up the appeal of The Durrells?

"Every way you look here there is something of beauty. I really hope people enjoy it. The scripts are so sweet and funny. But they're not saccharine. You believe in these people and you're with them. It's a real ensemble thing as well. Everybody has their story.

“I’m usually filming at the back end of nowhere. So I was determined to come here and enjoy it. There are children and animals and every day is different. You have to embrace it and have fun. It’s just a fantastic opportunity and it would be crazy not to make the most of it.

“This is really up there with the best of what I’ve done.”

INTERVIEW WITH JOSH O'CONNOR (LAWRENCE DURRELL)



Q: Who is Lawrence Durrell?

"Larry is the eldest of the children, the siblings. He is Lawrence Durrell, the famous and brilliant writer. Although it was his younger brother Gerry who wrote The Corfu Trilogy of books on which this series is based.

"He is working as an estate agent when we first meet the family in Bournemouth. The worst estate agent ever and he knows it. It's Larry's idea in the first place to come to Corfu when the family are struggling and much to his surprise his mother takes his advice. So they arrive in Corfu to begin this new life and he's a bit of a rebel without a cause. A would-be writer at that stage who likes to go out and get drunk and isn't much help at all to his mother or the rest of the family."

Q: Were you familiar with the books before this came along?

"I knew My Family and Other Animals but I had no idea there was a trilogy. When I was meeting for the part of Larry I obviously looked into it a bit more. It's a brilliant trilogy. I think the second book is maybe even better than the first."

Q: What did you make of Simon Nye's scripts for The Durrells?

"His scripts are amazing. Most television drama tends to be murder mystery or crime drama. Which is great. It's a formula that works. But I get so excited when I see something else. It's quirky, brilliant, hilarious and I really loved it when I first read it."

Q: How would you describe the family's move to Corfu?

"It was a really brave thing to do. Especially in the 1930s. Now it's relatively easy to do. You don't have to pay a fortune to get here on a budget flight. Whereas back then it would have been a huge step. Which makes it all the funnier that Larry suggests it and Louisa takes him up on it.

"It's scary now to think about it. Today Corfu is such a tourist destination that everyone speaks English here. But then the language wouldn't have been accessible. And no telephone or electricity. How would we cope today? How would you charge your iPad?"

Q: What is it like filming in Corfu?

"I'd never been to Corfu before. It's an amazing place and so hot. In fact when we first got here at the height of summer it was oppressive, quite humid. But later in the year it was fine. You could not film this anywhere else. The locations are unique and so beautiful.

"The owners of the house we use for the exterior of the Durrells' house in Corfu use it as a summer house. But it's been left untouched. They wanted to leave it exactly as it was.

"We had a week of rehearsals before we started filming which is unheard of. That's so amazing. We worked out some of the scenes, so we could start filming in Corfu and be well prepared."

Q: Do the Durrells get on with each other?

"You need the family at war to appreciate the loving moments. Families do shout at each other but there's so much love in this family. A lot of the time we're at loggerheads. But at one stage, for example, Larry takes Leslie out to sort his love problems and Larry says to him, 'You're a decent enough chap.' In contrast to Larry's usual behaviour, that's the most warm, lovely and heartfelt thing you can imagine.

"I've got two brothers and I know that I don't say to them very often, 'I love you,' or anything like that. I might say, 'You're brilliant,' and then we blush and will be embarrassed. So those little words are telling."

Q: What is it like having Keeley Hawes as your screen mother?

"It's been lovely working with Keeley. I worked with her husband Matthew Macfadyen on Ripper Street and that was great. So I assumed I would get on with her. Keeley has just been brilliant and so intelligent, sweet and open. She is perfect for the role."

Q: Were you skilled at using an old typerwriter?

"I took Larry's typewriter back to the hotel for the first week to have a go on it and got a complaint from the next door room about the noise. They were like, 'Can you please shut up? Use a laptop.' Larry hits the keys hard because he's so angry with himself. I found that pretty tough. But the joy of television and film is you get people coming and stroking your fingers afterwards!!

"I also tried to type Larry's own real lines on the paper just in case those people who check everything they see on TV were watching. We've been fairly accurate.

"Everyone thinks of Gerry's books but Lawrence was a writer first. He's an almost forgotten talent. He was amazing and well respected. Hopefully this will prompt people to seek out his books."

Q: Is it fair to say that Larry is obsessed with sex?

"Yes. Definitely. He is 100 per cent obsessed with sex. I love that. I think most writers are. The 'x' on his typewriter has been removed by his family so he can't write 'sex' so much. But I don't think it stops him. He just writes about it more when he eventually gets it back."

Q: Larry has a young woman he left behind in England?

"She appears in the later episodes. That's a beautifully written relationship and hilarious. He seems like one of the hellraisers but it's nice to think of him settling down. She stands up to him and that's what Larry needs."

Q: Does Larry have many scenes with the animals Gerry investigates on the island and sometimes brings home?

"Some of my favourite scenes are with Gerry and the animals. Larry thinks, 'Why on earth is he fascinated with these horrible things?' He just finds them all annoying. There's a great scene where Gerry brings back this albatross and Larry is confused about it all and why it's gnashing away. It's in his way when he's trying to write."

"The animals have been amazing on this job. It's very hard for me trying to be grumpy Larry in a scene when there are beautiful puppies on the ground and all I want to do is give them a cuddle."

Q: Milo Parker appears to have really embraced the role of Gerry?

"He's a young man beyond his years. You see him and he looks such a little kid. And then he just talks like one of my housemates. He's really mature, clever and intelligent."

Q: Gerry went on to create what is now the Durrell Wildlife Trust and Durrell Wildlife Park in Jersey. Have you visited?

"I haven't been over to Durrell at Jersey but I've heard lots about it and knew about it before this role came along. But I'd never made the link to the books. I'd love to go and I will."

Q: Aside from Corfu, do you have a paradise you would like to escape to?

"I've been up to Scotland and Loch Lomond. But my dream is to go to the Hebrides. For me, that is the absolute paradise."

INTERVIEW WITH CALLUM WOODHOUSE (LESLIE DURRELL)



Q: You went straight from drama school to this major ITV drama series. How did that happen?

"I'm from Stockton-on-Tees and went to LAMDA (London Academy Of Music & Dramatic Art). I found out I had got this job an hour before my final ever performance there, which was exactly seven days before I graduated in July 2015.

"I had done the audition on the Thursday and had a chemistry read with Daisy Waterstone, who plays Margo, the next day. Then on that Friday I was in my dressing room ahead of my final play - Journey's End - putting my costume and make-up on. My agent rang me and said, 'You've got it.' And then I went on and did the play, playing the role of Stanhope, and had to be depressed and very moody. Which was hard.

"At first I thought my agent must have got something wrong. I thought he was joking. Everything runs through your mind. Especially when it's your first job and it's something so amazing as this project. I never thought I'd be that lucky. I was just bowled over. It didn't really sink in for me until the first day of filming. I was still thinking, 'I'm dreaming here.'"

Q: How did you tell your family?

"I waited to tell my family because I wanted to tell them face to face as they were coming to see me before I graduated. I don't really like telling them too much about roles I've gone for because then they might get their hopes up and be disappointed.

"They were over the moon. My mum was so cute when I told her. She said, 'What do you mean?' And I said, 'Well, I've got this job, mam, I'm going to be working for ITV.' And still she said, 'What does he mean?' It was so funny. It didn't sink in for hours. Then the next morning she said, 'I'm sorry about last night. Well done!'

"There's no history of acting in my family. My dad always likes to credit himself for my acting roots because he played Joseph when he was in primary school. So maybe that's where it all stemmed from!

He's a managing director at an oil company and my mum is a nurse practitioner. They can't wait to see this."

Q: Who is Leslie?

"Leslie is a funny old character who only seems interested in shooting and guns. He appears to very much despise everything his family are into. Especially Larry. So he can't stand literature and art or any of that world. He's very much a hands on guy. He likes to get his gun and spend all day hunting animals which the family will later eat.

"Which is a really funny contrast to his younger brother Gerry who is all about the conservation of animals. And Leslie is going out to shoot them to eat them. His interests could not be further away from other members of the family.

"Leslie is also very protective of his mother. He's a bit of a mummy's boy. His mum is everything. I'm a bit of a mummy's boy myself, so that wasn't too hard to step into."

Q: Have you read Gerald Durrell's Corfu Trilogy of books?

"I've read the first book and I'm just starting the second in the trilogy. The first book is amazing. What I didn't realise until I read that is the fact that The Durrells' writer Simon Nye has taken stories from all three of the books. He's not following a linear route from the first book to the third. He's taken stories from all three and put them in this first series."

Q: Leslie loves shooting with his guns. Did you need any training before filming?

"There's an armourer on set called Tom who is amazing. I've been working very closely with him. The first day I met him was the Friday before we started filming. He opened this big box of guns - a double-barrel shotgun, a 12 gauge, a single barrel and two air rifles - and talked me through how to dismantle them all and put them back together. Also how we would be shooting them, if we ever did shoot them.

"I hadn't had to shoot any of the blank firing guns, I'd just used the air rifles. But then I had to do a scene where Leslie shoots a rabbit. It was in the script that it was going to be an air rifle. But when we got there the director Steve Barron said, 'We'll change that. We'll use a 12 gauge.' So I had a very quick lesson on how to load and fire and how much recoil you would need. Hopefully that's going to look good.

"There's another scene where Leslie is acting like a gunslinger in the garden of the family home in Corfu and drawing his gun. It then gets snagged on his pocket and he shoots a rug out of the Lugaretza's, the maid's, hand. That was a very funny scene. But it was hard to get right because we had to sew a little bit from my pocket to the gun in order for it to snag. In the end it was fine and we managed to get it right.

"I had fired blank pistols at stage school and the blank pellet for the shotgun was actually the same size as one of the ones from stage school. There's a scene where I have to clean a gun. I'm also going to get taught how to skin a rabbit. Which will be very interesting."

Q: Does Lugaretza take offence?

"Leslie is still her favourite. He's the best child. Which I found very strange as he nearly kills her. It's a really sweet relationship between them."

Q: What has it been like having Keeley Hawes as your screen mother?

"It's been amazing working with Keeley. She is so lovely. Keeley has taken all of us under her wing. It really does feel like we're a family and have known each other all of our lives. That's because we all get on so well. We've been going out for meals a lot and have our own private in-jokes now."

Q: One day Leslie leaves the house without a gun. What has happened?

“He meets Alexia, his first girlfriend. I don’t think he’s interested in girls at all until he meets her. His interest is in guns. Then he meets this beautiful girl played by Hara Ermidi who is amazing. It’s her first acting job as well and she’s such a natural. He falls head over heels in love with Alexia, forgets about the family, his mother and hunting, stops taking guns out with him every time he leaves the house. Everyone is thinking, ‘What’s going on with Leslie?’ And then Margo tracks him down and sees him with her.”

Q: Aside from shooting them, does Leslie have any other encounters with the animals?

“He gets stung by a scorpion in episode six.”

Q: Do you get much reaction from local people when filming in Corfu?

“Lots of people stand around and watch us when we film. But the most attention we’ve had is when we’ve been out for a meal or a drink with Alexis Georgoulis, who plays Spiro. Because he is very famous in Greece, like the Greek answer to Leonardo DiCaprio. If you ever want a free meal just make sure you go out with Alexis.”

Q: How would you describe the family’s move from Bournemouth to Corfu in the 1930s?

“It was a very bold thing to do. There was no electricity in Corfu then. No telephones. I don’t think we’d cope with that today. No more mobile phones, no more laptops. It would be like losing a limb. They were so cut off. It was a brave and astonishing thing to do.”

Q: Do you have a personal paradise?

“I went to the Dominican Republic for two weeks and that was rather special. But Corfu is lovely. It’s the first time I’ve been here and there are some wonderful places. The sea here is crystal blue overlooked by amazing mountains. I think it’s fair to say that Corfu is, perhaps, the main character in The Durrells, the driving force. It’s beautiful.”

INTERVIEW WITH DAISY WATERSTONE (MARGO DURRELL)



Q: Who is Margo?

“Margo is a young girl who is a little different. She’s not your typical 16-year-old girl. She’s a very lateral thinker. Margo is very clever and intelligent but doesn’t think she is. And she falls hopelessly in love and keeps falling in love with different people. She’s got an amazing point of view about everything. Margo has a great attitude to life and a great sense of life.

“I had two auditions before I had a chemistry test with Callum Woodhouse, who plays Leslie. And I somehow ended up slapping him really hard across the arm during that. I thought, ‘Oh gosh, I hope that’s not going to mess it up.’ But somehow something worked there. It’s funny because I kind of knew him before because he had just left LAMDA and my friend is at LAMDA. Once we got the parts we worked out that we actually did know each other.”

Q: Had you read Gerald Durrell’s Corfu Trilogy of books?

“I’d never actually heard of them before. But then I got the first audition and read them, fell in love with them and was annoyed I hadn’t read them before. When I read them I also fell in love with them and he was annoyed I hadn’t read them before. The Durrells is inspired by the books but it is different. But the characters in our scripts are very close to how they are written in the books.

“I decided not to go back and look at the previous TV adaptations because I thought I might end up simply copying them. I’m not trained at all so I have to find my own route. I’m going to watch them eventually but not until after this.”

Q: What do you think of the Durrells moving from Bournemouth to Corfu in the 1930s?

“It was a really brave thing to do. Margo wants to be at home, hanging out with her friends. Then suddenly she is taken to Corfu. It must have been very tough for her. But Margo really grows up and finds herself in Corfu. It’s a lovely coming of age thing for her where, as time goes on, she becomes

more and more of the woman she is going to be. She grows to be more comfortable in herself and moves on in life."

Q: What about Margo's emerging feminism?

"Bearing in mind her age, circumstances and the time she lives in, all of that will be brewing in her mind. Also she has a mother who is very strong-willed and feisty. So she's following in her mother's footsteps a little bit. She's the only girl so in a way there is a close bond and tight knit in that. They are very close but Margo is a real teenager at times and can get very stropky with her brothers and Louisa."

"The great thing about the script is everyone is very argumentative with each other and it would appear everyone hates each other. But underneath that there are glimpses showing they adore each other and will do anything for each other."

Q: What is it like working with Keeley Hawes?

"Keeley is wonderful. She's so great, lovely, bubbly and fun. And such an easy actress to work with, so easy in scenes. Charismatic, trustworthy and just a really wonderful person."

Q: Who does Margo encounter on Corfu?

"Margo goes sunbathing on a rock and suddenly a monk appears and starts shouting at her, so she runs off. But she won't be put off and goes back. We filmed those scenes in a beautiful area next to a tiny church. You had to get a boat there. A really isolated spot with no tourists. Just the crew and this man dressed as a monk. He is played by Nick Orestis Chaniotakis who was fantastic and great to work with. Such a fun thing to film."

Q: Margo also meets Max (Max Befort) and Donald (Ben Hall). Why does she fall in love with Max and not Donald, who really likes her?

"Max is classically attractive. He's very dark and handsome and chiselled. For a 16-year-old girl who dreams about movie stars and reads books and novels, he is the ultimate for her."

Q: Do you have any scenes in the sea?

"Margo swims out to a yacht at one stage. I have to wear this very uncomfortable knitted swimming costume that was only around in the 1930s. The costume was so heavy in the water. But it was really fun to film."

Q: What about Margo's hair?

"Margo's hair is classic young 1930s. I had really long hair before this and I had to cut it. It was quite traumatising because I hadn't cut it for years. I was like, 'It'll be OK, I'm cutting it for a good reason.' It's really short now. They curl it because my hair is naturally dead straight. So this is completely different for me. In a way it's nice because it makes me a bit more Margo, rather than Daisy. And it's good in the heat."

Q: Does she eventually get a job?

"Margo becomes the assistant to the local doctor on the island. I am very squeamish in real life. I throw up if I see blood. Like Margo. Those scenes in the doctor's surgery are some of my favourites."

"She studies an English-Greek dictionary to try and learn the language. I'm actually pretty terrible at languages. I'm picking up a tiny bit. I have one Greek word which is 'kalimera' which is one of my lines and means 'good morning'. But that's the only one I've learned. If someone tells me a word it just goes in my head for about two seconds and then vanishes."

Q: Does Margo get involved with the animals Gerry brings home?

"I have scenes with the puppies and dogs. Later on Gerry builds his own zoo at home and we all have to live with that. But it's mainly Gerry, of course."

Q: Had you visited Corfu before?

"I'd been to Corfu once when I was little. It's an amazing place and I feel so lucky that I get to work here. You couldn't film this anywhere else. Corfu is so special. There was a place where we were filming the other day which they built to look identical to how Corfu Town used to look. It was so weird to be there with us and all the extras in costume with all the cars, carriages, animals and donkeys there. It was surreal."

"I've had some time off during filming but it's very minimal. I have so much fun on the set itself that it's a joy anyway. Last week I had a couple of days off. But I felt very lost because I just wanted to be back on the set as there's such a lovely vibe there. We also hang out with each other all the time."

"It makes a big difference that they've cast real Greek actors for the roles of the Corfu characters. It makes it so much more real."

"It's a bit different filming away from England. It feels like you're on holiday but you're not, you're working. And it is quite hard to work in this heat. But at the same time you just look around and it's so gorgeous."

Q: The Durrells had to cope on Corfu with no electricity. How would you get on?

"I wouldn't cope very well. How would you charge your phone? Where do I watch Modern Family? What would I do? You do tend to slow down here and with the beauty of it all, it's actually really relaxing. I love London but I wouldn't mind living here. It's a slower pace of life and very liberating."

Q: Do you have your own personal paradise somewhere in the world?

"For me, Venice is my paradise. I love it there. But I grew up in central London and I'm a big city girl. So London is my paradise as well."

INTERVIEW WITH MILO PARKER (GERALD DURRELL)



Q: Who is Gerald Durrell?

“When we first meet him in Bournemouth, Gerry is a young, naive boy who has been brought up very close to his mother, Louisa. She is very protective of him and he doesn’t really know anything about self independence or life outside of England.

“So when they all move to Corfu it’s quite a shock to his system. Although he loves it because he gets to spend time with the wildlife, it’s quite daunting. But obviously he grew up to become a very well renowned animal expert and conservationist. He was very passionate about what he did.”

Q: How is Gerry treated at school in Bournemouth?

“He’s very different because of his love of animals and so he sticks out. He’s not got many friends, if any. The teachers aren’t really big fans of his and he feels very isolated because he hasn’t got any brothers or sisters his age to be there with him at school. So when his mum comes and gives the headmaster a piece of her mind, he’s quite relieved because he’s thinking, ‘I don’t have to go to school anymore.’”

Q: His mother Louisa (Keeley Hawes) breaks the headmaster’s cane?

“That was great fun to film. The props department brought four canes and when Keeley broke all of them they just had to start taping them up in the middle. I think we had to break them about six or seven times before we got the perfect shot. The headmaster’s reaction was brilliant.”

Q: What did you think of Simon Nye’s scripts when you first read them?

“They were brilliant. It was so well written. The relationships between Gerry, Leslie, Larry, Margo and Louisa were so well done, along with the other characters. It was very clever.”

Q: Did you know anything about Gerald Durrell before this?

"No, I didn't. During filming I read the first book and that was really good. I got a feel for how Gerry Durrell really was and started working with the directors on how we wanted to play Gerry."

Q: Gerry starts off in Corfu with Roger the dog?

"A dog called Mossup plays Roger. She was one of my best friends on the set. So well behaved and Alan her trainer was fantastic at teaching me all the little gestures that made her do the tricks. She was brilliant to work with.

"Although it sounds funny, because she's a dog, she was actually very intelligent. You could almost communicate with her. And she was so experienced. It was tough because she's a Glasgow girl and she was brought into the Corfu heat. But she coped with it."

Q: Do you have any pets at home?

"I have two dogs: Inka and Sybil. Inka is 16 and she's a golden retriever and Sybil is a little toy poodle, a Shih Tzu Cross who is two. That helped a little bit to get me into the philosophy of it. I'm very close to them both. But reading the book was the main thing that got me into the role fully."

Q: The animals Gerry collects in Corfu include a pelican he brings home on a string lead? Was that difficult to film?

"That was one of the first days of filming so it was quite surprising to see a pelican - one of two - thrust in my hand. I was quite nervous of the pelican at first because it has a huge wingspan. But Anthony, who was the owner of the pelicans, was brilliant in teaching me how to control it. So it was fine.

"There's a scene where Gerry is burying a dead bat. When we were filming the bat burial, I was holding a tin to put it in the ground and I sprinkled soil on it. But the pelican thought it was food so it started nipping me with its beak on my shoulder. The first time I thought it was just the wind but it was rather distracting."

Q: What were some of the other animal highlights?

"Gerry rides on his donkey called Sally. I was doing my school work when I first heard I had to go and practise on a donkey. So I started riding the donkey and got a feel for it. There was a lovely man from Greece who owned the donkey but he couldn't speak any English. So we had to get a translator out. It worked very well in the end.

"There was a seagull, again owned by Anthony the pelican man. Rob, who's in the props department, was getting loads of selfies with it. That was funny. I had to hold it and walk with it. It was a tame seagull and very well behaved.

"Other animals included some really sweet baby owls. In the script Gerry feeds them cheese. But they can't eat cheese. So I had to feed them this red meat but not let the camera see it. In the end I think they changed the script."

Q: Gerry throws himself into water in a creek to try and catch a terrapin?

"It was such a quick terrapin. In the script Gerry is trying to catch it but can't. Then a character called Kosti, played by Christopher Sciueref, comes in and expertly grabs it. So poor old Chris was in this water trying to grab this terrapin and it was going all over the place. It was really funny."

Q: Were you able to cool down in the Corfu heat during filming?

“In one scene the Durrell family place a table and chairs in a shallow part of the sea by the shore to have a meal on. It was a hot day, about 37C, so it was lovely to go in the sea and splash in this cool water.

“Josh O’Connor, who plays Larry, has to sit on the beach as, for reasons that will become clear, Larry can’t go in the water. He was sitting there with the sun beating down on him. We all felt for him while we were in the sea. But everyone really enjoyed it because it was just like being on holiday that day.

“In many ways Corfu is the star of the series. It comes across so well. The camera picks up the blue sea and sky and sunlight. You can get a real feel good factor from seeing Corfu on screen. It was a brilliant place to film. Although it was tough when you wanted to relax and get a tan but you had to work and stay pale. But it was 100 per cent worth it to film in such an amazing place.”

Q: Did it feel like you were in a real family?

“It really did feel like we were a real family. That was what I loved about doing The Durrells. We were all so close and there was such a family atmosphere. I think that comes across. It does seem like a real family on screen.”

Q: What’s it like working with Keeley Hawes as your screen mother?

“She is lovely and a fantastic actress. It was brilliant working with Keeley and she taught me lots of things. She’s so lovely both on and off the screen. Keeley got bitten by a mosquito on her hand. She had to have a drip in because her hand was swelling up. It looked like a balloon.”

Q: Who does Gerry meet on Corfu?

“He meets Theo, played by Yorgos Karamihos, who shares his interest in animals. Yorgos has such fantastic English and was very calm with all of the animals. He was thrown right into it. Such a lovely man.”

Q: Gerry comments about the animals: ‘They’re lovely. All creatures are. Especially the ones nobody likes.’ Did you have any favourites among the ‘unloved’ animals?

“In the studios at Ealing we filmed a scene where the ceiling falls down in the Durrell’s house. And Gerry spills his lizard. You could see it as this horrible ugly lizard. But it’s so much more than that. It was just this beautiful creature.

“Lizards aren’t very popular and freak some people out. But I just thought it was amazing how quickly it ran. I was taught how to pick it up and hold it. I just thought, ‘Why are these creatures hated? What have they done to us and why should we hate them?’ I think some animals are treated unfairly when they shouldn’t be.”

Q: Gerry says, ‘Please, all I ask is love and cherish these creatures, Because they need us to watch over them, as much as we need them.’ That’s quite poignant bearing in mind what Gerald Durrell went on to achieve?

“Yes. He was such an inspirational man, the way he cared so much for animals and devoted his life to the upkeep and conservation of animals. In a way he’s shaped the way society looks at animals today. Without him the world might have a very different opinion on species of various animals.”

Q: Do you hope to visit the Durrell Wildlife Park in Jersey one day?

“I would love to go. It would be really interesting to see who I played and what he created. There was talk of me meeting his wife Lee Durrell on set but that didn’t come about. But hopefully that can happen in the future. Because I think it would be amazing just to go over there and see what he did.”

Q: You are aged 13 and would normally be at school. How does school work fit in with filming?

“It’s quite difficult at some times because obviously I was very busy on The Durrells. But my teacher Katherine Hook has been with me for my last couple of jobs. We have this little trailer on set where I do my schooling in conjunction with filming.

“I have to do 15 hours minimum a week of tutoring in between filming, when they’re setting up the cameras and so on. So I don’t miss out on it.

“I’ve got a close group of friends I hang out with at school and we keep in touch when I’m away. They’re very supportive of what I do. So that makes it a lot easier.”

Q: Would you like to make acting your full time career when you finish your studies?

“Yes, That’s the ideal path. But I’m quite open to journalism as well, which I think seems quite interesting as well.”

INTERVIEW WITH ALEXIS GEORGOULIS



Q: How did the role come about?

"I live in Los Angeles and Athens. I had to come to Greece for family reasons and knew I would have to stay here for some time. So I decided to try and figure out what was happening in London because it's much closer to Greece. I got an agent there, the audition for The Durrells came up and I became friends with the casting director Gilly Poole.

"Then I was sitting on a bench in London by the Thames with a friend of mine. A tourist was passing by and said, 'You're Spiro?' I said, 'No, not yet.' It was like, 'How do you know that?' It turned out he was from Cyprus and had seen another TV show I did where I played a character also called Spiro. So I thought, 'That's a sign!'"

Q: Had you read Gerald Durrell's Corfu Trilogy?

"I wasn't familiar with the story of the books. I didn't know the Durrells spent that much time in Greece and did all those things for the Greeks and the Corfiots. But now I'm part of it. Now I'm part of the family!"

Q: Who is Spiro?

"Spiro is the Mr Fix guy in Corfu. Spiro knows everyone and everyone knows him. So he is just the right person at the right moment to help the Durrells when they arrive and need help. The first time he meets the family he has a positive feeling about them, wants to help and they develop a good relationship.

"He shouts and bargains with people on the island for a better deal for the family. This is just the Greek mentality and their expression. The weather, the landscape, the language, everything creates bigger vibrations. So you're resonating with the environment. It's Spiro's way of expressing himself.

"He likes and admires the British and their culture very much. Especially the people, who he sees as polite and trustworthy. He has a wife and two children but we don't see them.

"There is a special connection between Spiro and Louisa, although not in a romantic way. He respects her as the mother of this family and wants to help her. He is an old fashioned guy.

“Spiro lived for a while in the United States, in Chicago, and brought back an American car which he drives. The car we use for Spiro was made in 1929 and I drive it for real. Obviously it’s different to a modern car but you get used to it and I like it very much. As long as the camera is rolling I am this guy Spiro and he can drive the car.”

Q: What is Spiro’s relationship with the Durrell children?

“He becomes one of their father figures in a way. Because their real father is dead and his place is empty. The family needs people who are positive and want to help. One of them is Spiro.”

Q: The rest of the cast say you get recognised everywhere they go here in Corfu, as a famous face in Greece?

“Yes, I’m well known in Greece and I do get recognised in Corfu. So that’s good for Keeley because they don’t bother her. At least not yet.”

Q: What has it been like filming in Corfu?

“You definitely have to film The Durrells in Corfu. It’s the real location and exactly what we need to tell their story. The Greek government want to make this a more film friendly country and I hope that will happen.

“There is a historical link between Corfu and Britain. It wasn’t just by chance the family decided to come over here. English people travelled here a lot and some stayed and made their home in Corfu. There is something powerful that kept them here.

“I think Corfu will be very happy if this series shows people in Britain what a wonderful island this is to visit. The local people have asked me what we’re filming, what the story is and what channel it will be screened on. And when I told them it was about the Durrell family they were very excited because that will help the island. It’s a happy story and the Durrells are very well known here. The series shows just how beautiful Corfu is.”

Q: Would this series translate to Greek TV?

“It’s a very nice TV series and very suitable for Greek TV. I don’t know if they have the money to buy it nowadays. But hopefully they will give them a discount so the people of Greece can see this show.”

Q: Gerald Durrell went on to create what is now the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Durrell Wildlife Park in Jersey. Have you visited?

“I wanted to go to Jersey before we started filming but there just wasn’t enough time. But I plan to go in the future.”

Q: What has it been like working with a British TV production?

“It’s quite different compared to the Greek and American productions. I feel as if every country has a specific way of filming and working. But the bottom line is we have a common, universal language.

“There are a lot of things that are different and a lot that are the same. It’s like music. When the musicians from different countries play together, the first notes are exploring, ‘Ah, you play like this?’ But after a while they play together as a team.

“I would love to work on more UK shows. I’m thinking of moving to London. I have a tiny problem. I can’t stand the cold in the winter. But I think you have very nice coats, yes? So I can overcome that.”

INTERVIEW WITH LESLIE CARON (COUNTESS MAVRODAKI)



Q: What was your reaction when you were approached about the role?

"I agreed to play the role of the Countess after reading a resume. It seemed to indicate she was capricious, very rich and given to being mischievous. I thought, 'Oh, that's delightful. Yes, I would love to do that.'

"While I was trying costumes, I was saying to the costume designer, 'Oh, we want pink and blue. She thinks she's a little girl and she wants to dress like a young girl, very fashionably.' And she said, 'Well what about later when she becomes Miss Haversham?' I said, 'What are you talking about?'"

"Then I was given the real meat of the part and discovered that, yes, indeed, she had troubled moments when she really fell apart. And I thought, 'Oh my goodness, this makes it twice as desirable.'"

Q: Your son Christopher Hall produces The Durrells. Who had the idea to cast you?

"It was the casting directors' idea. Christopher was delighted when they suggested me for the role of the Countess. He was hoping I wouldn't cause any trouble for him. But he need not fear. I was a very professional and conscientious actress. I never caused any trouble."

Q: Christopher's son Ben Hall - your grandson - plays Donald. Do you have any scenes together?

"The Countess and Donald have no contact and don't know each other in the script. But in one party scene when the characters are all together I said, 'I'm just going to grab you and dance with you. And they can leave it on the cutting room floor if they want to.' So we did do a little swing around together."

Q: Someone else close to you also features on screen?

"I brought my Shih tzu dog Tchi Tchi along when we filmed the interior scenes in England. I shot in a magnificent mansion in Surrey called West Horsley Place which Bamber Gascoigne inherited. All the inside rooms were filmed at that mansion."

Q: Had you been to Corfu before?

"I had never been to Corfu before and I was enchanted. I filmed in Corfu for two weeks and had a fabulous time. I loved the old town. I thought it was a real community with neighbours. You sit at a restaurant and notice all sorts of friends come in to have a drink with the owner. People are extremely friendly.

"What I liked particularly is the number of olive trees. The olive tree is my favourite tree with the oak. I was really thrilled to see so many and so much olive oil. It's a wonderful island."

Q: The Countess lives in a villa. Where was that?

"The villa we used for the exterior filming is Mon Repos Palace, the birthplace in Corfu of Prince Philip. It's now owned by the state and become a museum. There's a plaque on the building saying Prince Philip was born here. We filmed the Countess coming and going there, painting in the garden and a car scene."

Q: There is a running joke about the Countess's painting ability. Can you paint in real life?

"I'm a somewhat gifted primitive painter. I think I paint a camel in the series. There's also a portrait of the Countess done by a member of the crew but it's not something I would be tempted to buy."

Q: The Countess is troubled. Were you able to use any of your own life experience when playing her?

"Oh yes. I can drop into depression any time a director wants me to. I've had difficult moments too. People who don't suffer from depression don't understand. My son doesn't understand. He's been jolly from the moment he was born until now. He just simply has a sunny disposition."

Q: Jeremy Swift plays her butler Dennis or Demetrious as she insists on calling him. His many previous roles include Spratt in Downton Abbey. How was it working with him?

"He is sensational. I was an avid Downton Abbey viewer. So I was very pleased he was cast. Jeremy does remind me very much of Oliver Hardy in Laurel and Hardy. He's got this sort of bonhomie and wicked smile, like a cat who's eaten all the milk."

Q: What was it like working with Keeley Hawes, who plays Louisa Durrell?

"I think she is a remarkable actress. She amazed me by the speed of her brain. And wonderful precise diction. She is very fast. And very colourful. Everything has lovely colours. Her face changes so quickly and she's very gifted."

Q: Daisy Waterstone plays Margo, who becomes the Countess's companion?

"Daisy was really very plucky. Sometimes there were scenes she thought were a bit difficult but she just threw herself into it and did really very well."

Q: Margo was a young woman uprooted from her home to a foreign land. What memories do you have of your own sudden move from France to Hollywood at the age of 18?

"It was very difficult. I think the difficult thing is not to have all the comfort of well known faces, childhood friends, well known language that surrounds you. One doesn't realise that just the shopkeepers around you are very important in your life. It's very difficult to be uprooted. And I was uprooted too many times.

"When I arrived I had no idea what filming was about and I couldn't really speak English. I was also fresh from the Second World War. Very difficult. Now I'm delighted to be in England and I am staying put here in London."

Q: How has filming changed today compared to 1951 when you starred as Lise with Gene Kelly in the classic film *An American In Paris*?

"The technical side is remarkable. Everything is very different. The subjects being made are sometimes politically very harsh and really very blunt and brutal sometimes. Whereas when I came into films it was imperative for films to be very pleasant and to please the public. Now it's something else. Many films are made to educate and to show some kind of political or social abuse. All of those films are really fascinating."

Q: You have danced with Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Rudolf Nureyev. What are your memories of those four legends?

"Fred was very light footed. He danced skipping along very gracefully. Whereas Gene danced in a more modern style, much more athletically. So it was a different style but they were both superb. It was the golden era of the Hollywood studios but it was very harsh. The hours were hard. We worked Saturdays as well. Putting on 'toe shoes' from eight in the morning to five is pretty tough."

"I made a film with Rudolf called *Valentino*. I also danced on stage for seven minutes with Nureyev and Baryshnikov. I giggle when I think I'm the only dancer who danced with both of them together. It was a seven minute little number for charity purposes at the Met (Metropolitan Opera House) in New York and it was great fun. But you can't really say I've danced with them. Seven minutes isn't a career."

Q: Despite your glittering CV, you have said in the past that most people today may either have forgotten you or are too young to be familiar with your work. Is that true?

"Yes. I think it's starting to change a little bit because of *The Durrells*. But two years ago when I came to England, I really had to spell my name. Which is quite painful. But I'm starting to be recognised now in the street and on the bus. I suppose somebody reads my name and then a month later they see me on a bus and it's, 'Ah, there she is.'"

Q: But you were certainly recognised on your recent visit to New York?

"About a year ago, out of the blue, one of the world's very greatest choreographers Christopher Wheeldon sent me a bunch of flowers saying, 'I'm going to do *An American In Paris* on Broadway and I want to tell you what an inspiration you are for us all. Please accept this bouquet of flowers.'"

"Then in January 2016 I was invited by the Broadway production of *An American In Paris* to go to New York and see their wonderful musical, which is quite different from the film but just fabulous. I was so thrilled to see the film we made 66 years ago is still alive. Still inspiring people. It warms my heart."

"All the kids in the company were asking a million questions about the filming and about Gene and how we did it, the costumes, how long it took. It was really heartwarming to see this emotion and admiration they had for the film which, of course, is there to be seen forever."

"I was telling Leanne Cope, who plays Lise on Broadway, that she and I have been plucked out and given this fabulous part. We didn't audition, we didn't make efforts to get the part, we didn't long for it. It was just given to us. How lucky can you get?"

"I went on stage for the curtain call after the performance. The audience stood up and applauded for 10 minutes. It was a wonderful night."

Q: What do you think when you watch An American In Paris on film today?

"I can still remember everything. Even the faults. When I didn't quite hit the measure. Because I was quite sick during the filming with mononucleosis, which is really serious.

"When I watch myself on screen I usually feel it's somebody else. It's my granddaughter. My family is quite jaded about my work. Sometimes they are polite and they will come along to something. But usually they have seen the films when they were little and that's that."

Q: Your initial stage appearance was at the age of 14 and you were 16 when you were first engaged as a professional dancer. Why do you still want to work at 84?

"Retirement would be a bore. I really enjoy acting and I had so much fun filming this part. It was so rich. The older you get the more you can direct yourself to do anything you want. I was eaten away with shyness and introversion when I started as a young girl. And all of that has gone. You don't need to retire. The public is interested in older people, which is just great."

Q: Are you able to sum up what your career has given you?

"It's given me such a marvellous life. Lots of sacrifices though in my private life. Being a movie star is not the recipe for a comfortable life. Not a cosy life. It was full of ups and downs and difficult moments. But so thrilling when you're given a great part, or you're given an award. All that is just wonderful. But the big bonus of my life, of course, is having children. And then now grandchildren."

Q: How do you look back on your experience of filming The Durrells?

"It was delightful. I was treated so nicely. All of my co-actors were so friendly. I also really admired them. It's a thrill to work with such good actors."

Q: Is the world a less romantic place today?

"Certainly compared to the 1930s when The Durrells is set. But romance is always with us. It's what people long for, want and love. I think producers should remember that. You can't go wrong if it's sincerely about love."

SYNOPSIS

Episode 1



Louisa Durrell's (Keeley Hawes) life is in meltdown. Her four unruly children are going off the rails. 11yr old Gerald (Milo Parker) is about to be thrown out of school, Larry (Josh O'Connor), the eldest is a would-be novelist but the worst estate agent in Bournemouth and the middle two, neurotic Margo (Daisy Waterstone) and gun mad Leslie (Callum Woodhouse) are hitting adulthood like a car crash. It is 1935 and a woman's options are limited. Much to Larry's bemusement she takes his flippant advice and makes a radical change by whisking her family away to the sun drenched island of Corfu. A cheap and untamed paradise - which also happens to have no electricity.

Having barely enough money to survive they find themselves relying on charismatic local, Spiro Hakaipulos (Alexis Georgoulis). Spiro not only finds them a ramshackle house to live in, he also installs Lugaretzia (Anna Savva) as their home-help who is very cheap but a complete hypochondriac.

Despite the beauty of the island, the children soon fall back into their old ways. Corfu provides the perfect inspiration for Larry's writing and he exacts his revenge on Leslie who insists upon shooting at anything and everything, driving the family mad. Margo takes advantage of the idyllic weather but soon runs into trouble with a local monk (Nick Orestis Chaniotakis) and has to use her feminine guile to win him round. Words fail Margo however, when Larry's wealthy, party loving friends Max (Max Befort) and Donald (Ben Hall) arrive and she finds herself instantly besotted with Max.

For Gerry the island is his paradise. Rich in exciting species he happily spends his days exploring with Roger the dog and his new found friend and kindred spirit, Dr Theodore (Theo) Stephanides (Yorgos Karamihos). Much to the family's bewilderment the terrace is soon filled with an eclectic menagerie of animals (pelican and tortoise) and insects (wolf spider), which Gerry eagerly brings home to study.

Believing their mother needs a love interest, Larry invites Captain Creech (James Cosmo) for dinner. However, his suitability for Louisa's affections quickly proves doubtful when it appears that Larry has brought an old sea dog to the table.

Episode 2



Unable to pay the landlord to fix their dilapidated house and fed up of existing on kumquats, Louisa demands the children forage for anything they can sell – something they do with little success.

Gerry is more concerned with the delightful news that Lugaretzia's aunt, Mama Kondos (Olga Damani) has some puppies and he insists on adopting one. When the wrong puppy is delivered he quickly returns only to discover Mama Kondos about to bury the rest alive. Incensed, he rescues them all but what will he do with six puppies?

Leslie is deliriously happy and spends his time with newfound love, Alexia (*Hara Ermidi*). As a result, he finds it hard to show sympathy for Margo who is emotionally wounded following a harsh rejection from Max.

With money worries a perpetual reminder Spiro's constant haranguing of the Corfiot bank seems to pay off when the family come into some money, despite, it coming from a surprising source.

Missing the lack of female friendship, Louisa's attempt at befriending the wife of the island's only doctor, Florence Petrides (Lucy Black) doesn't go as planned. Louisa is later forced to swallow her pride and call on Florence when Larry falls dangerously ill. With her husband away, the responsibility to save Larry falls on Theo and handsome neighbour, Sven (Ulric von der Esch). Despite their being an obvious spark between Sven and Louisa, she worries if their rudimentary medical skills will be enough to save Larry.

Also in the episode, the Durrells find a novel way to stay cool – they dine in the sea!

SYNOPSIS FOR EPISODES 3 – 6 ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE ITV PRESS OFFICE

CAST AND PRODUCTION CREDITS

PRODUCTION

Director - Episodes 1-3 - **Steve Barron**
Director - Episodes 4-6 - **Roger Goldby**
Written by **Simon Nye**
Produced by **Christopher Hall**
Executive Produced by **Sally Woodward Gentle, Lee Morris and Simon Nye**

CAST

Louisa Durrell – **Keeley Hawes**
Larry Durrell – **Josh O'Connor**
Leslie Durrell – **Callum Woodhouse**
Margo Durrell – **Daisy Waterstone**
Gerald Durrell – **Milo Parker**
Spiro Hakaipoulos – **Alexis Georgoulis**
Lugaretza – **Anna Savva**
Theodore Stephanides – **Yorgos Karamihos**
Sven – **Ulric Von Der Esch (eps 2 – 6)**
Captain Creech – **James Cosmo (eps 1 & 4)**
Nancy – **Lizzy Watts (eps 5 & 6)**
Florence Petrides – **Lucy Black (eps 2 – 6)**
Countess Mavrodaki – **Leslie Caron (eps 3 – 6)**
Dennis – **Jeremy Swift (eps 3 – 6)**
Max – **Max Befort (eps 1, 2 & 6)**
Donald – **Ben Hall (eps 1, 2 & 6)**
Mr Trevitt – **Graham Seed (ep 1)**
Headmaster – **Andrew Bicknell (ep 1)**
Kosti – **Christopher Sciueref (ep 3)**
Dr Petrides – **Alexis Conran (eps 3 & 6)**
Mama Kondos – **Olga Damani (ep 2)**
Monk – **Nick Orestis Chaniotakis (ep 1)**
Alexia – **Hara Ermidi (eps 1, 2 & 3)**
Stratos – **Andreas Mandas (ep 3)**
Desk Sergeant – **Nestoras Kopsidas (eps 3 & 4)**
Pretty Woman in bar – **Electra Nikolouzou (ep 3)**
Angel – **Jamie Christian-Ward (eps 4, 5 & 6)**
Bank Clerk – **Nikolas Katsaros (ep 2)**
Farmer Vasilis – **Antonis Tsiotsiopoulos (ep 2)**
Taxi Driver – **Spiros Padelios (ep 3)**
Sotos – **Manolis Emmanouel (eps 3 & 4)**
Fotis – **Vangelis Diamantis (eps 3 & 4)**
Guesthouse Manager – **Arsenis Grimmas (ep 1)**
Durrells House Owner – **Spiros Kasfikis (ep 1)**
Mam Kondos Daughter 1 – **Fani Papatthemistokleous (ep 2)**
Mam Kondos Daughter 2 – **Vera Hartofilaka (ep 2)**
Horny Corfiot Lad 1 – **Alexandros Mastradonis (ep 3)**
Horny Corfiot Lad 2 – **Xenofontas Lefteriotis (ep 3)**
Burly Gardener – **Alexandros Katechis (ep 3)**
Market Trader – **Yorgos Tryfonas (ep 1)**
Crippenopoulos – **George Kopsidas (ep 4)**
Aunt Hermione – **Barbara Flynn (ep 5)**
Cousin Prue – **Felicity Montagu (ep 5)**
Geoffrey – **Jeff Rawle (ep 5)**
Mrs Vadrukakis – **Etela Pardo (ep 5)**
Judge – **Andreas Karras (ep 4)**