

# Blood, guts and sequins

The *Casualty* 1909 star on six decidedly gory new episodes, her *Strictly...* tour and early 20th-century nursing



**DANCING QUEEN**  
Cherie with *Strictly...* partner James Jordan



**CARRY ON MATRON**  
Eva runs her wards with a rod of iron

**NEW CASUALTY 1909**

Sunday BBC1

**A**narchy, political upheaval and deadly new medical practices were all in a day's work for the staff at The London Hospital - now The Royal London - 100 years ago, along with the usual blood and guts. And they're in plentiful supply in BBC1's *Casualty* 1909. Not that Cherie Lunghi, who reprises her role as queen of the wards Matron Eva Luckes, has noticed.

'I'm immune to the gore, like a butcher, come to think about it,' laughs Cherie, 57, whom we last saw waltzing her way around the *Strictly Come Dancing* ballroom. 'I'm not very good in real life but when it's make-believe I'm OK!'

The period drama - which takes its inspiration from original case notes - is grittily realistic in its portrayal of hospital life.

'When I was in make-up in the morning, the prosthetic artists would be at the same table making a leg with false blood

coming from it, so I could see it wasn't real!' says Cherie.

During filming earlier this year, Cherie - who also has a recurring role as Professor Camille Windsor in BBC1's modern-day *Casualty* - was presented with the unique challenge of leaping from the *Strictly...* tour to the early 20th Century and back again.

'Half of my filming days I was still doing the tour,' she explains. 'I was shedding my ballgown at 10.30pm in one city and then driving through the night to put on my corset and Edwardian garb. It was a bit of a juggle!'

Following on from the pilot episode *Casualty* 1906, and the subsequent series *Casualty* 1907, the year 1909 poses all kinds of new challenges for Matron Luckes and the staff of The London Hospital.

'There's lots of anarchy due to all the overcrowding and immigration in that part of London,' explains Cherie. 'In the first episode we deal

with a suspected terrorist bombing, and the police come into the hospital to carry out their interrogations. Matron doesn't feel good about that; she believes it's a sanctuary for the sick.'

She stands her ground, as we've grown to expect, but is finally forced to give in. She's left fighting against the tide again when a new anaesthetic is experimented with at the hospital.

'A lot of surgeons are for it and a lot are against it and it rips the profession down the middle,' Cherie adds. 'Matron believes her patients are being used as guinea

pigs. It really is life or death.'

Matron remains strong, keeping her girls in line, always reminding them that the job must come before all else. However, this time around, she's met with opposition from Sister Ada Russell (Sarah Smart).

'Matron is like an army officer leading a platoon, and she has to have absolute obedience. She has to teach Sister Ada to draw a line between her professional life and private concerns,' says Cherie. She never imagined in 2006 the show would be commissioned again and again, and she's got her own ideas about the future...

'World War One would be interesting,' she says. 'The London was the first hospital to receive the wounded coming back from the front line. Also, it's where Joseph Merrick, "The Elephant Man", was treated, so it has a few claims to fame!'

MARTHA HAYES

**A BRUSH WITH DISASTER?**

Cherie got her 1909 make-up among all the fake gore!



*Casualty* 1909 is previewed on pages 40-41