You shall go to the ball!

We take a peek behind the scenes of the Benevolent Christmas panto, Vinderella, now deep into rehearsals – despite the fact it’s still summer

When the idea of a drinks industry pantomime was first suggested by the Benevolent there were fears that not enough volunteers would take part. In reality, the charity was so inundated by budding thespians willing to take up the panto challenge that it had to run a series of auditions to find its cast.

Vinderella is an extremely ambitious project for the charity and promises to be a night to remember for everyone involved, cast and audience alike. It is all being co-ordinated by the Benevolent’s very own theatre of wine director, and experienced all-round thespian, Daniel Illsley.

It tells the story of a young woman struggling to keep her wine estate afloat, while finding herself a prince, in challenging economic times. Full of contemporary references, it will be both witty and outrageous, showcasing the theatrical talents of some very well-known trade members.

Rehearsals are already under way, as our pictures testify, for the show that will run for four nights at the John McIntosh Theatre at the London Oratory School in West Brompton, London, between January 20-23, 2010.

The principal roles have all been picked and are as follows: Vinderella: Anna Noble (Phipps PR); Prince Charmes: Andrew Reed (William Reed Business Media); Bouchon: Venla Freeman (Wine Institute of California); Botrytis Moisi: Charles Metcalfe (wine writer); Phylloxera Moisi: Alastair Llewellyn-Smith (Thorman Hunt); King Chambertin: Chris Porter (JF Hillebrand); Lord Sterling: Walter Speller (Walter Speller Consultancy); Lady Sterling: Rina Maiden (Maiden Associates); and Eutypiose: Sarah Reed (Woods Hillhouse).

Get involved

The Benevolent, which hopes to raise £20,000 for the charity, is now looking for many more to get involved.

The production requires a large cast, and even if you have no previous experience, can’t sing or dance, there is a role for you. Or you can help in the stage management, technical, construction, costume, promotion or front-of-house departments.

Tickets go on sale in October and sponsorship packages will be available for companies to advertise their brand and products. To get involved, contact Eleanor Perry at eleanorperry@thebenevolent.org.uk or on 020 7089 3888.