

Auditions notice:

Richard III by William Shakespeare, directed by Alex Wakelam

Auditions: Tuesday 18th and Thursday 20th February at 7.30pm (just choose one evening to attend) at Lantern Methodist Church, Griffiths Road, Wimbledon, SW19 1SP.

Performances: Tuesday 13th-Saturday 17th May at 7:45pm, plus matinee at 3:00pm on the Saturday. All at the Studio at New Wimbledon Theatre, SW19 1QG.

Rehearsals: Must be available for most Tuesdays and Thursdays 7:30-9:30pm, starting with a read through on 25th February, with the exceptions of Thursday 27th February and Thursday 13th March, which will be replaced with a rehearsal on Monday 17th March. You will also be needed from 11:30am on Sunday 11th May for the get-in and tech rehearsal and all evening on Monday 12th May for the dress rehearsal.

If you have any questions about the information in this Auditions Notice, or about the production generally, please email auditions.carlton@gmail.com.

The Play:

The King is dead, long live the King! Let's eat.

Peace has broken out at last in England, and good King Edward, victorious at last, invites you all to dinner. Just hand your coats to our master of ceremonies, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. But there are rumours that Edward is not well and rumblings are abroad he is more interested in the servants than the administration of the state. Perhaps a more suitable ruler lies waiting in the wings, and, as guests drop dead before the soup has made its entrance, the number of candidates for the English crown narrows with each course.

*'Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.
Can I do all this, and cannot get a crown?'*

The Auditions:

Auditionees will be asked to read two pieces from the play: a monologue and one short dialogue scene with a member of the panel. All auditionees will read the same monologue which can be found below for those who wish to study it before attending (though this is not a necessity and further copies will be available on the day – please don't try to memorise it). On the day, dialogue pieces will be available featuring a range of characters though auditionees will be asked to select only one. However, you will be considered for all possible parts regardless of what you read so if a part you are particularly interested in is not available do not fear.

This Production:

This production is not set in the late fifteenth century or upon the fields of Bosworth. As such, all parts are open to any auditionee, regardless of age, gender, etc. as neither of these impact the plot within the setting. Those cast will not be cast truly "gender/age blind" – rather the cast will be playing within their own age/gender. For example, while a young female Lord Hastings would be referred to within dialogue as 'he' or 'a man' (as in Shakespeare's original text), such an actor would appear on stage as a woman of the actor's own age. The intention is to cast broadly based on auditionees rather than on historical accuracy.

Almost all those cast will be playing more than one role within the play – though the intention of the multiroling will be that, save where characters have ‘died’ and actors return as other parts, cast members will be playing the same ‘character’ throughout. If hypothetically (and this won’t happen) an actor was cast as Queen Elizabeth and as Prince Edward then from an audience’s perspective they would both be Elizabeth. Some degree of multirole work is essential given that the play contains 54 unique speaking parts. The exact breakdown will be decided based on auditions to ensure that the distribution of smaller parts across the cast serves the plot. Ideally the cast will be between fourteen and sixteen, but we are flexible on exact numbers.

Key characters (with illustrative, but not definitive descriptions (see above)):

Richard – a confident and devious young man, intent on supplanting those placed above him by birth or circumstance rather than by merit

Lord Buckingham – Richard’s closest ally who most fervently, and amorally, works to place Richard on the throne. As ambitious as his liege, but perhaps less subtle

Queen Elizabeth – the resolute and stalwart wife of King Edward, Elizabeth has been raised above her station and is determined (for herself, her children, and her allies) to remain there

Lady Anne – a young widow, cast adrift by the civil war, Anne appears a victim to circumstance, but her sharp tongue might hide a greater capacity than is at first evident

Lord Hastings – the aging Lord Chamberlain, Hastings is a loyal servant to the House of York and a rare beacon of integrity within the play

Clarence – the middle of the three brothers of York, Clarence is wry and soft hearted, not above ambition himself but naïve as to the plotting that surrounds him

Derby – aloof and secretive (almost as much as Richard), the Earl of Derby plays both sides of the game until its final moments

Queen Margaret – widow of the dead King Henry VI, Margaret remains (by Shakespeare’s invention) to haunt the court of King Edward. Her bitterness and icy curses are all that might unite the quarreling court

Catesby – Richard’s loyal henchman

King Edward – the dying elder brother of Richard and Clarence, Edward (once a great warrior leader) spends more time chasing young women than he does focusing on the needs of his realm, much to chagrin of his younger brothers

Rivers, Dorset, and Grey – the allies and relatives of Queen Elizabeth, these braggadocious young men are ignorant of how precarious their position can be

Audition Monologue:

And yet I know not how to get the crown,
For many lives stand between me and home:
And I, —like one lost in a thorny wood,
That rends the thorns and is rent with the thorns,
Seeking a way and straying from the way;
Not knowing how to find the open air,
But toiling desperately to find it out, —
Torment myself to catch the English crown:
And from that torment I will free myself,
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.
Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.
I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.
I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavelli to school.
Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down.