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Summer Season 2014 Audition Notice

Twelfth Night

Written by William Shakespeare

Directed by Alex Hedges

Tuesday 24 – Saturday 28 June

The Rosemary Branch Theatre

1. Newcomers Meeting

Each season we hold a Newcomers Meeting where the directors will tell you more about their plays and the audition process. It's a great way to find out more about the season and of course you can quiz the directors and committee too.

Date: Wednesday 9th April

Time: Join us from 7pm for a drink. The meeting will start at 7.30pm

Venue: The White Swan, 20 Farringdon Street, EC4A 4AB. The nearest tube is Blackfriars

2. Auditions

You do not need to register for auditions, pay to participate or bring anything with you.

For the first round, please prepare a two-minute speech from any of Shakespeare's comedies. Gender is not important – I am happy to see a male Viola or a female Orsino! At the second round, I will ask auditionees to read parts of scenes in pairs or groups, so that I can see how people work together.

No prior experience of 'doing Shakespeare' is necessary. I am looking primarily for actors with energy and a sense of fun!

Date: 22nd, 23rd & 24th April. Please come on whichever day suits you

Time: 6.30pm

Venue: Clean Break Studios, 2 Patshull Road, Kentish Town, NW5 2LB. The nearest tube is Kentish Town

Recalls will be on Saturday 26th April from 10am to 2pm. You will be called on Friday 25th if we'd like to see you again.

3. Show Dates

We'll be performing from Tuesday 24th to Saturday 28th June at The Rosemary Branch Theatre in Shoreditch. The shows will start at 7.30pm and you'll need to be at the theatre at

least an hour beforehand. The dress rehearsal will be on Monday 23rd June. You will need to be free from midday onwards, possibly all day.

4. Rehearsals

Rehearsals will be on Monday and Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons/evenings. All rehearsals will be in central London.

5. Synopsis

Twelfth Night is one of Shakespeare's best-loved comedies. This version will be set at the English seaside, in the 1950s. To a backdrop of rock-and-roll music, I would like to explore the atmosphere of a country emerging from the dark shadow of two world wars. I will particularly be exploring both the change and continuity in the position of women in this period.

At the start of the play, a young man named Orsino sits on the beach listening to Elvis and fantasising about the beautiful Olivia, who has turned from all men ever since losing both her father and brother in the war. Meanwhile, Festa (Olivia's cousin) returns to the town after many years, bringing with her her friend Viola who, like Olivia, is mourning the loss of her twin brother, Sebastian, who went missing in the war. When Festa tells Viola that an attractive, single young man (Orsino) lives in the town, Viola decides to go and meet him. She decides to go disguised as a man, hoping that this will be an easier way to get to know him.

Viola, dressed as the boy Cesario, becomes a favourite with Orsino and finds herself falling in love with him. Orsino makes Cesario his wing-man, sending her/him to speak to Olivia on his behalf. Olivia instantly falls in love with Cesario. A love-triangle ensues: Viola loves Orsino, Orsino loves Olivia, and Olivia loves Cesario!

Meanwhile, we also meet Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's dissolute uncle, who is always to be found drinking in her kitchen. He has befriended a young man, named Andrew Aguecheek, who he keeps happy by promising that he will introduce him to his niece. Andrew, Toby and Maria (Olivia's housekeeper) all decide to play a trick on Malvolio, the local priest, who visits the house to help Olivia through her sorrow. Maria writes a forged letter to Malvolio, in which she pretends to be Olivia declaring her love for him. Malvolio, after the reading the letter, starts behaving oddly towards Olivia and everyone believes he is mad and he is locked up.

Andrew, jealous of Olivia's attraction to Cesario, challenges Cesario to a fight. However, at this moment, Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, comes to the town by chance. Believing his twin sister dead, he drinks in a pub to drown his sorrows. Sir Andrew then bumps into Sebastian and, thinking that he is Cesario, tries to fight him. Olivia enters amid the confusion. Encountering Sebastian and thinking that he is Cesario, she asks him to marry her. He is baffled, since he has never seen her before, but is more than willing to go along with her.

Eventually, Cesario and Orsino make their way to Olivia's house, where Olivia welcomes Cesario as her new husband, thinking him to be Sebastian. Orsino is furious, but then Sebastian himself appears on the scene, and all is revealed. The siblings are joyfully reunited, and Orsino realizes that he loves Viola, now that he knows she is a woman, and asks her to marry him.

Finally, someone remembers Malvolio and lets him out of the dark room. The trick is revealed in full, and the embittered Malvolio storms off, leaving the happy couples to their celebration.

6. Cast Breakdown

I am looking for 11 actors: 6 male and 5 female. Although I have given rough indications of the playing ages I am looking for, I am happy to be flexible.

MALE

Orsino (20-30)

Orsino begins the play passionately in love with Olivia. His behaviour tends towards the self-indulgent: he is deeply romantic and is in love with the idea of 'love'. He finds himself increasingly attracted to Cesario, making him feel confused over his sexuality. He is relieved when Cesario removes his/her disguise and is shown to be in fact a woman - Viola!

Sebastian (20s)

Sebastian is Viola's twin brother and therefore should to a degree resemble the actress playing Viola. In this version, Sebastian is to be played as a young man who fought bravely in the Second World War. He has been travelling since the end of the war and believes that all of his family members, including Viola, have been killed. When we first meet him, he seems to be a rather 'lost' young man, with an air of melancholy. He is an opportunist and, when Olivia throws herself upon him, he is more than happy to go with it!

Antonio (20s or 30s)

Antonio, like Sebastian, is a rather lost individual. Since fighting in the war, he has made little of himself and has become involved in crime. He meets Sebastian in a local club and is immediately attracted to him. He grows obsessed by Sebastian and displays real loyalty through his protection of him.

Sir Toby Belch (40s)

Sir Toby Belch is uncle to Olivia. He fought bravely in the war and was injured, but since then he has lived a rather dissolute life, sponging off Olivia. He is always round at her house, drinking with his young friend, Andrew Aguecheek. Toby is very attached to Andrew in an avuncular way.

Young Andrew Aguecheek (20s)

In this version, Andrew Aguecheek will be played as younger than Toby Belch. He is a rather purposeless and irresponsible young man. He pursues Toby purely because Toby promised to introduce him to Olivia. Andrew is rather weak and foolish, and is often the butt of the joke.

Malvolio (20+ - can be flexible)

In this version, Malvolio is the local priest. He has been helping Olivia through her bereavement, but in doing so has found himself attracted to her, against his better judgment. He is self-righteous, pompous and full of self-love. He enjoys taking the moral high ground.

FEMALE

Olivia (20-30)

At the start of the play, Olivia is mourning her brother's death and appears rather staid and pious. However, she soon changes when she meets and falls for Cesario; she then becomes a passionate lover, who cannot control her desire.

Viola (20s)

Viola is a feisty and determined character, who is willing to devise schemes to get what she wants. She enjoys the freedom of a man's suit; disguised, she is able to speak freely to Orsino and to win his respect as well as his love.

Festa (20s)

Festa (Feste in Shakespeare's text) is the Fool character. In this version, she will be played as Viola's friend and Olivia's cousin. She used to live in the town, so knows everyone and is liked by everyone. She is witty, intelligent and bold – and she too enjoys a good joke. She can also be saucy and pert. Ideally, I am looking for an actress who can hold a tune.

Maria (30s-40s)

Maria is Olivia's housekeeper. Like Viola, she is feisty and scheming. She likes a good joke and enjoys making fun of others. She is happy to be the ringleader in a new scheme.

Valentina (20s)

Valentina is a girl who lives in the town. She is friends with Orsino and always hopes that he might look at her as something more. She is clever and always able to pass on the gossip.