



ENGLISH LANGUAGE THEATRE IN BASEL SINCE 1975

AUDITION INFORMATION

“Top Girls” by Caryl Churchill

Theater Rampe, Borromäum, Byfangweg 6, Basel

Director: Richard Brown

Technical and Dress Rehearsal dates: 3, 4, 5, and 6 June 2018

Performance dates: 8, 9, 15, 16, 22 and 23 June 2018

Auditions will take place at Theater Rampe, Borromäum, Byfangweg 6, Basel

10 January: 19.00 - 22.00; 13 January: 10:00 - 14.00; 18 January: 19:00 - 22:00

Director’s guidelines:

Caryl Churchill is one of Britain’s leading playwrights. She is known for dramatizing the abuses of power, using of non-naturalistic techniques, the exploration of sexual politics and feminist themes. Her best known works apart from *Top Girls* include *Serious Money*, *A Mouthful of Birds*, *The Shriker*, *Softcops*, *Love and Information* as well as the libretto for the Royal Opera House’s 2010, *A ring a lamp a thing*.

Top Girls is described as Epic Theatre; this is a documentary approach to story-telling, pioneered by Berthold Brecht, looking at how people are buffeted by social and political issues and the emotions that are triggered. The play uses overlapping text to raise the tension at various points, these are often followed by dramatic pauses while the intensity of what has just been said sits for a while

Though the play is written in three acts, it can be presented in two and that is what we will be doing. The play is set in the early 1980s and though it addresses issues for women in the workplace that were considered by the establishment to have been resolved since then, current events underline that this is far from the case and that the messages of *Top Girls* remain clear, prophetic and poignant today. These issues are intertwined with the political changes at the time. This is why the play was revived by the National Theatre in London and why I was drawn to it. We will set the piece as if in the early 1980s and it will be supported by some music from the period to create the atmosphere. I will also be using some more contemporary pieces that highlight the emotions and introduce the non-naturalistic section.

There are 7 performers presenting 16 characters; this means that apart from the main character, *Marlene* who only plays herself, all of the others performers play 2 or 3 characters that are different but related through a common theme. It is important that we go deeply into these characters to reveal and capture those common themes but also the unique features of each one.

Synopsis of “Top Girls” (Full description provided to audition applicants)

It is the 1980s London, Margret Thatcher is Prime Minister and the “Big Bang” of finance in the City is about to happen. *Marlene* is a successful business woman who, on return from working in the USA, has risen through the ranks of the “Top Girls” employment agency and has just been promoted to manager. *Marlene* is focused on her own development and has fought the paternalistic system, leaving both men and women in her wake, whereas her sister *Joyce* has stayed behind and given much of herself to others; may be too much. The lives of these sisters are shown in a series of scenes from a fantasy world through the Top Girls office to *Joyce*’s house in Suffolk, posing questions about the way that women are treated and how they respond, as *Marlene*’s story is unravelled.

Approach:

The play observes the dilemmas of *Marlene*’s life reflected in the lives of those around her as well as in political changes of the time, also highly relevant to today. *Marlene* may be hard but the system is very unforgiving and tramples on those who do not fight their corner. This emotional journey will be explored and we will peel back the layers of the text to find what the characters are actually meaning, what emotions that triggers and how these can be authentically expressed. I have worked with the final scene with two actresses and director Sue Colgrave at the 2017 Luxembourg European Annual Theatre Summer School, to understand how to direct the overlapping text and to start to investigate the emotional landscape of the play, which is enormous.

Costumes:

The historical characters will need distinctive costumes. *Marlene* will have a costume for the party, one for the office and one for her visit to *Joyce*. *Angie* will have jeans & a jumper and a blue dress that is a present from *Marlene*. *Kit* will wear shorts and a T-shirt. The rest will have ‘80s office clothes, apart from *Mrs Kidd* who will be dressed in a more formal style and *Joyce* in a more casual one.

Roles:

The roles are described in the application form.

Script:

The Semi-Circle has been granted performance rights to stage this play on the dates and at the location mentioned above. For intellectual property legal reasons, we cannot provide copies of the full script here. However, it is possible for you to preview part of the script at the following link:

(Link)

Rehearsals:

Rehearsal schedules will be available for review at the auditions and is arranged so that not all actors will be required for every rehearsal. The first read through will be on the Tuesday 6th February. Actors will be expected to be off book by Tuesday 10 April.

- Actors accepting a role in this production must be members of The Semi-Circle Basel:

Individual membership	CHF 50
Family membership (all living at the same address)	CHF 75
Student membership (evidence of full-time education may be requested)	CHF 20

- Accepting a part in the play means 100% commitment to all performance dates, and being available for all full run-throughs as well as for the technical and dress rehearsals 3, 4, 5 and 6 June.
- Please read the Terms & Conditions for Actor Participation under the “Members” tab on our website www.semi-circle.ch.

Crew

We are also looking for volunteers for the crew;

- Production manager
- Leader for props and set pieces, mostly furniture
- Social media manager
- Front of house
- Light and sound board operators
- Stage crew