

AUDITION NOTICE

Arden of Faversham

Uncertain authorship

Director: Gerald Baker

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Reading: Monday, 24th June, 7.45p.m. at the Mary Wallace Theatre

Auditions: Monday, 1st July, 7.45p.m. at the Mary Wallace Theatre

Playing dates: Saturday 26th October to Saturday 2nd November (excluding Wednesday 30th)

Rehearsals: *Starting 11th August, and from then on, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings at 7.45pm until 10.15pm - and Sunday afternoons starting at 2pm. Rehearsals will be held in the vicinity of the theatre.*

AUDITIONS ARE OPEN TO ALL. The RSS actively encourages diversity in casting and casting decisions will *not* be constrained by the perceived gender or ethnicity of the roles being auditioned, unless specified by the author.

Faversham: Arden's wife Alice is having an affair with a lower-class lover, Mosby. After their own unsuccessful attempt to murder Arden by poison, they sub-contract the killing to two hitmen. They turn out to be the most incompetent hitmen in the history of professional killing. Or maybe they're just unlucky. Will they ever succeed? Will Arden ever notice people are trying to kill him? And if anyone does manage to do the murder, can the plotters hold things together afterwards?

Alice Arden is one of the most complex female lead roles in Elizabethan theatre. It can stand with Cleopatra or Lady Macbeth or Malfi's Duchess, in a ground-breaking play. *Arden of Faversham* is the story of a real murder that happened in 1551. It was the first tragedy about ordinary people rather than royals and nobles, and it mixes quite delicate psychology, black comedy, social criticism and a sense of circuitous nightmare.

Our production will play on an almost bare stage, in a Victorian style of dress and with at least 50:50 gender mix in the cast. Do not expect Tudor kitchen-sink.

And do not worry about who wrote it. The authorship of the play is uncertain but hotly-contested, with Shakespeare's name in the frame as a possible junior partner. But concern about that takes away attention from a script that is in the first rank of Elizabethan plays.

Characters

The figures in brackets indicate the percentage of lines the role has in the uncut play.

Arden: Anxious husband, valued friend, cruel landowner, testy master. (12.5%)

Alice: Arden's wife. Passionate, volatile, quick-tempered, determined until she isn't. (24.7%)

Franklin: Well-connected, a good friend to Arden, but underestimates the danger he's in. (7.3%)

Mosby: Alice's lover. Lower class than Arden (but not *low* class). Loves Alice in his way, but his way could involve 'riding' himself of her if she gets in the way of his social climb. (11.9%)

Michael: Arden and Alice's servant, gets involved in her schemes as a means to hitching with Susan, but ends up in something much deeper and scarier than he expected. (8.8%)

Black Will: Loud, violent, brutal, former soldier. Talks a good killing but takes a long time to accomplish one. Dark comic potential in the role. (12.2%)

Shakebag: Also loud, violent, brutal, but not as voluble as Black Will. Dark comic potential also. (5.8%)

Guide: Not Death, not a demon, but something other than human, this role is crucial to the whole show----- it combines the small one-scene roles of the Prentice, Lord Cheiny, the Ferryman, Dick Reede a cursing sailor and the Mayor of Faversham, so needs to be able to assume five different roles boldly and clearly. Small on lines, but big on presence. (4.9%)

Greene: Has serious but justifiable grudge against Arden. Manages Black Will and Shakebag on behalf of Alice and Mosby, but how effectively? (5.7%)

Susan: Alice's maid, Mosby's sister, wooed by both Michael and Clarke. Pulled into the schemes, and is in way over her head. (0.9%)

Clarke: a local artist with a side-line in poisoned pictures and crucifixes. (2.4%)

Bradshaw: Bradshaw does a neighbourly act in carrying a message: it costs him his life. Possibly the only really tragic character. (2.4%)

Audition Pieces

The script is based on the edition by Martin Wiggins included in *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays*, in Oxford World's Classics (ISBN 9780192829504), but with my own cuts, some rearrangements and a little rewording for clarity. I will be supplying soft copy of the text prepared for this production to the cast and crew and have extracted from it the audition pieces as Word documents. They are on the RSS website and I can email you any that you need. *Please audition for any role that interests you, irrespective of gender - and make sure that you have seen and prepared all of the audition pieces for the role(s) you are auditioning for.* Please use the Word documents as in some cases I have cut or edited the original. But I have added references to the Wiggins volume below. The full list of pieces follows:

Solo pieces:

Alice: Scene 1, p. 5, 'Ere noon he means...' to '...Hymen, and of rites.'

Bradshaw: Scene 2, p.19, 'The one I know not...' to '...murder any man.'

Franklin: Scene 4, p. 29, 'Ah, what a hell...' to '...and bare it so.'

Michael: Scene 4, pp. 29-30, 'My master's kindness pleads...' to '...we are but dead!'

Mosby: Scene 8, p. 35, 'Disturbèd thoughts...' to '...although to danger's gate.'

Susan---please prepare the Michael piece

Duo pieces:

Alice + Mosby: Scene 1, pp. 7-8, 'Where is your husband?...' to '...I am resolute.'

Arden + Alice: Scene 1, pp. 4-5, 'Husband, what mean you...' to '...long from thee, gentle Alice.'

Clarke + Michael: Scene 10, pp. 44-45, 'But who is this?...' to '...lay upon this stroke!'

Guide as Dick Reede + Arden: Scene 13, pp. 49-50, 'Master Arden, I am now bound...' to '...and fatal unto thee!'

Greene (with Alice infill): Scene 1, pp. 15-16, 'Pardon me, Mistress Arden...' to '...whatever hap to me.'

Trio pieces:

Black Will + Shakebag + Greene: Scene 3, pp. 24-25, 'Why, sirs, Arden's as well as I...' to '...swallow up this Arden's blood.'

Black Will + Shakebag + Guide as Ferryman: Scene 12, pp. 47-48, 'Help, Will, help!...' to 'missèd the mark of our intent.'

You do not have to be an RSS member to audition but, if cast, you will be required to become a member before the first rehearsal.

Membership Application forms are available in the theatre - or contact the Membership Secretary at - membership@rss-mwt.org.uk

Audition Application forms are available in the theatre, or can be downloaded via the GET INVOLVED and ACTING pages of www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk Please return your form to the Hon. Secretary at the theatre, or by e-mail to - secretary@rss-mwt.org.uk