

HANDBAGGED

by Moira Buffini

Directed for RDG by Judith Dolley



AUDITIONS Wednesday 25th April 2018

Performances 25th to 28th July 2018 at Riverhouse Barn, Walton

When Maggie met the Queen

Tea at Four

Handbags at dawn

Two strong ladies; one believed there was no such thing as society,

The other had vowed to serve it.

Two icons; one destined to rule, the other to lead.

Two women of different backgrounds but similar ages, both shaped by fathers they adored.

THE PLAY

Has recently been released for Amateurs

This funny, insightful and brilliantly-written sharp satire was nominated for an Olivier award for best new comedy in 2015 and went on to become a West End success.

Moira Buffini's highly original comedy looks behind the closed doors of Buckingham Palace to speculate what really happened when two of the world's most powerful women - Margaret Thatcher and the Queen - met for tea in the years between 1979 and 1990.

- This playful, intelligent speculation is at times comic at others sad.
- It is written with wit and irreverence and is effervescent with humour & energy.
- It is a fresh, exciting piece of Theatre which should be performed with knockabout glee.
- Many of the major events in British politics in the eighties and nineties are touched upon but it is anything but dry history.
- It blurs time lines, cleverly interweaves political events with humour, and reveals the humanity of two strong women.
- There are constant gear changes as the action veers from slapstick to moments of poignancy and pathos.
- Both women are instantly recognisable in every aspect of their appearance, mannerisms and politics. It brings out the clash of personality, politics and power wonderfully.
- A simple dramatic setting allows for a sense of intimacy with the audience whilst their older selves watch over them like hawks correcting and embellishing the action as it goes along.

THE CHARACTERS

Parts for 4 women playing Margaret Thatcher and the Queen and 2 possibly 3 men:

2 Queens

Q & Liz

2 Thatchers

T & Mags

2 or 3 Actors

who play many parts

The older monarch Q sits in judgement on her younger self. Whilst the older Thatcher T looks back on the woman that she once was. Loved or loathed, respected or reviled both women must be instantly recognised by every aspect of their appearance, mannerisms and vocal nuances.

Two men periodically get to comment on the way the show is being handled and the many parts they are required to play. They both engage in a face-off about who is to play Neil Kinnock. They provide much of the slapstick humour which contrasts with the pathos in the play. Another Actor may play some of the other politicians.

Q. The older Queen Elizabeth 2nd is a fun-loving, dotty old lady who comments on her younger self, talks to the audience, and longs for the interval ~ she prefers horses to plays! She is anxious to keep the record clean. Her wry comments and comic contradictions of statements and events are highly amusing. She clutches her handbag in her white gloved hands, with a posture redolent of the present Queen as she meets the public.

LIZ. The young, naïve and sprightly Queen Elizabeth. Quietly determined with a strong sense of duty to her subjects and the Commonwealth. Well bred, well-mannered with a plummy voice and intonation. Her love of Balmoral, picnics and Polo is very evident.

T. The older Margaret Thatcher who comments on her younger self. Single minded with strong convictions and an obsequious iron will. She often contradicts her young self with cynical asides. She has a manic imperiousness and is frostily well mannered She has a touching relationship with Dennis and reveals the humanity underneath the brash exterior.

MAGS. A younger Margaret. Immaculate in her appearance and bursting with self-belief. She lectures the Queen with impeccable phrasing, a calm approach, a tilt of the head and a patronising breathy tone. Unlike the Queen she has no sense of humour. There is a pronounced difference in temperament with Liz. There is deep pathos when the Queen mourns the death of Lord Mountbatten and Margaret is involved in the Brighton bombings.

The other actors are required to show great versatility and comic humour as they portray many roles and address the audience. They require exuberance, energy, enthusiasm and spontaneity in their approach to a variety of roles. Their crack-pot playfulness enables them to portray 16 cameo roles.

ACTOR 1. Playing:

Palace Footman
Kenneth Kaunder
Nancy Reagan
Michael Shea
Neil Kinnock
A Protester

ACTOR 2. Playing:

Dennis Thatcher
Peter Carrington
Ronald Reagan
Prince Phillip

ACTOR 3 (maybe). Playing:

Gerry Adams
Enoch Powell
Michael Heseltine
Arthur Scargill
Rupert Murdoch

Kenneth Clarke
Geoffrey Howe

Actor 1 provides a counter narrative about the race riots, Miners' Strike and Poll Tax riots, expressing left wing views and explaining events to younger viewers. They break down the 4th wall and chat to the audience. They have lightning quick changes of character and costume, bring on the furniture and props and provide much of the humour of the play.

All the characters will require plenty of research to effectively portray these real-life characters. Their personalities, outward appearance, vocal delivery and distinctive mannerisms will take time and study to develop them fully.

It is a challenge that I hope you will wish to take on.

If you want further information or want to express a wish to audition, please contact Judy on 01932 244754 or dame.judith@virgin.net