

# HUMBLE BOY

by Charlotte Jones

Directed for RDG by Judith Dolley

Performances at the Riverhouse Barn, Walton on Thames  
24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at 7.45pm

A play for 3 men & 3 women  
(1m 1w playing age 30+ - 2m 2w playing age 50+)

Set in a flower-filled garden on the edge of the Cotswolds this is a comedy tinged with sadness. On the surface this play - which won numerous Best Play Awards following its original production at the National Theatre - is about a son coming home to attend his father's funeral.

But in fact there is a honeycomb of ideas beneath the surface. It is a play about bereavement, black holes, mothers and sons, gardening, ambition, disappointment, relationship problems, and bees!

At the heart of the play is a family meal, which takes on all the painful comedy of an Alan Ayckbourn set-piece. But there are strong echoes of a latter-day Hamlet, complete with a dithering son, a widow being wooed in haste and a ghostly figure drifting in the background.

All these disparate elements need to be explored by the director during the rehearsal process, whilst the actors have 6 meaty roles to explore in depth. The play is a set designer's dream, a pretty English country garden complete with an apple tree and the essential beehive.

The play should be enjoyable, at times hilarious, and make the audience think and feel.

## CHARACTERS

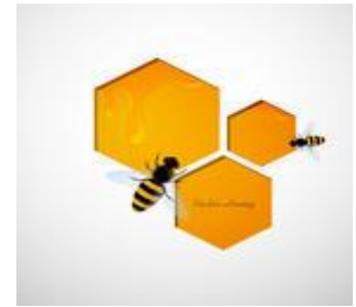
FELIX playing age 30+

Attempting to hide from the world outside he has to tackle the fraught relationship with his prickly mother, Flora, and other family secrets that have been bumbling away in his absence. He is an astrophysicist who discovers solving the riddles of his emotional life more difficult than his quest for the unified string theory. Dishevelled and uncomfortable in his own skin he struggles with a stammer and grapples with suicidal despair. He is uneasy, uncoordinated, highly intelligent but lacking in emotional intelligence.

Nevertheless, he is a lovable and likeable figure. The audience must relate to his struggles.

FLORA playing age 50+ She has a horticultural name - attracting the bees! She is the perfect picture of elegant disdain and self-absorption; her dark glasses hide a recent nose job. Very glamorous and fashionably dressed like a model she speaks in clipped tones, but her bitchy disdain hides a deep vein of sadness. A quality that needs to be explored.

Waspish and searching for happiness, she bullies her friend Mercy and plays with George Pye's feelings for her. Her need for absolute control contributes to her problems and the unsatisfactory relationships with the people around her. Throughout the summer the distance between Flora and Felix grows ever wider and his refusal to give the funeral eulogy is the source of her fury and dissatisfaction.



MERCY playing age 50 +

Flora's downtrodden friend, her endless expressive chatter of embarrassment and her very poor dress sense make for a highly comic character. She is good natured, well meaning and needy and works in a charity shop. She hides her fears under a wealth of nervous mannerisms. Her long speech at the family meal is a comic tour de force. As she attempts to say grace it becomes a conversation with God about her problems - she feels abandoned in life and nurses a big crush on George Pye.

GEORGE PYE playing age 50+

A confident brash lover of big bands and the owner of a coach company, he is an extrovert who enjoys a drink and a laugh. Loud and exuberant he is the complete opposite of Flora's dead husband, James.

He has big plans to marry Flora with whom he is in lust, but has an acid relationship with Felix. A comic go-getting character, he runs rough-shod over anyone who gets in his way.

ROSIE PYE playing age 30+

George's daughter, who was once involved with Felix. She is a capable practical nurse and single mum of a 7-year-old daughter she believes to be Felix's.

A very sensible, down to earth, no nonsense person she attacks everything with a mixture of good grace and ferocity. Charming and articulate she is a free spirit and dresses with hippy abandonment.

JIM playing age 50 +

A mysterious gardener who is ignored by everyone but Felix.

Gentle and mysterious he speaks in a calm voice and offers Felix sage advice. Intelligent and passionate about biology and horticulture he haunts the action as he tends the beautiful peaceful garden. Jim is pivotal to the play and the characters in it; he is the calm presence in the story and brings it to a satisfactory and warm conclusion.

Felix finds hope in his Father's beloved bees as he tries to navigate a path towards clarity and re-establishing some sense of family connection.

So, Felix reminds Flora of the intelligence and devotion of James to his unfaithful wife which results in Flora cancelling her wedding to George.

As Felix and Flora have a moment of forgiveness in the garden, Flora finally sees Jim who is the spirit of James Humble her late husband.

**Auditions 24<sup>th</sup> April**

**Rehearsals**

**Production week**

**Workshop 25<sup>th</sup> April**

**Wednesdays & Thursdays.**

**July 21<sup>st</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>.Riverhouse Barn**

*Please contact Judy for reading copies and to indicate your interest in auditioning:  
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