

King Lear - May 11th – 18th 2019

Audition dates: Sunday 21st October - 2pm

Rehearsals: Sunday's & two week nights TBC

Modern setting of the classic Shakespeare play, offering key roles to both male and female actors.

Ensample piece allowing actors to take multiple roles (where appropriate)

King Lear has three daughters, but no sons. Boldly he makes a decision to divide his business kingdom among his children, but fails to anticipate the consequences of his actions. His generosity is cruelly repaid and Lear finds himself adrift, wandering homeless and destitute. As he comes to realise the false values by which he has lived, he finally encounters his own humanity.

Modern day context – Lear is head of multinational business empire (kingdom); France leads a competing business. The daughters become the new owners of the divided empire, except for the youngest, who is disowned by Lear in a cruel act of temper. The rivalry between the remaining sister and their families causes the business to start to fail, making this vulnerable a hostile takeover from France, who has married Cordelia.

Lear who is showing clear signs of age related mental problems, is shunned by his daughters and finds himself sleeping rough, where he encounter Edgar who has been forced into hiding having been accused of wanting to murder his father, as situation created by his treacherous half brother Edmund in an attempt to gain his father's riches.

Unless gender specifically stated roles open to all actors. Ages a guide only

Role	Association	Age indication (guide only to indicate age range)
Lear	<i>Head of family business (Lear Group)</i> Aging head of Lear Group; protagonist of the play; Used to enjoying absolute power and to being flattered; Does not respond well to being contradicted or challenged. At start his values are notably hollow— prioritising the appearance of love over actual devotion Wishes to maintain power while unburdening himself of the responsibility. Inspires loyalty in subjects such as Gloucester, Kent, Cordelia, and Edgar, all of whom risk their lives for him.	50/60's
Goneril	<i>Lear's eldest daughter - on the board</i> Ruthless Goneril is jealous, treacherous, and amoral. She challenges Lear's authority, boldly initiates an affair with Edmund, and wrests power away from her husband.	<i>Female</i>

Role	Association	Age indication (guide only to indicate age range)
Gloucester	<i>Loyal friend to Lear</i> A nobleman loyal to Lear Gloucester is an adulterer, having fathered a bastard son, Edmund. He misjudges which of his children to trust. He appears weak and ineffectual in the early acts, when he is unable to prevent Lear from being turned out of his own house, but he later demonstrates that he is also capable of great bravery.	<i>Male 50's/ 60's</i>
Edmund / Edmanda	<i>Gloucester's illegitimate child</i> Resents his status as a bastard and schemes to usurp Gloucester's title and possessions from Edgar. He is a formidable character, succeeding in almost all of his schemes and wreaking destruction upon virtually all of the other characters.	<i>20's / 30's</i>
Edgar	<i>Gloucester's child</i> Gloucester's older, legitimate son. Edgar plays many different roles, starting out as a gullible fool easily tricked by his brother, then assuming a disguise as a mad beggar to evade his father's men, then carrying his impersonation further to aid Lear and Gloucester, and finally appearing to avenge his brother's treason. Edgar's propensity for disguises and impersonations makes it difficult to characterize him effectively	<i>20's / 30's</i>
Oswald	<i>Goneril's loyal steward</i> Obeys his mistress's commands and helps her in her conspiracies	<i>20's / 30's</i>
Fool	<i>Lear's fool – carer / lover?</i> Lear's jester/companion, who uses double-talk to give Lear important advice and provides comfort.	
Albany	<i>Goneril's husband</i> Albany is good at heart, and he eventually denounces and opposes the cruelty of Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall. Yet he is indecisive and lacks foresight, realizing the evil of his allies quite late in the play	<i>40/50</i>
Kent	<i>later disguised as Caius – loyal manager</i> A nobleman like Gloucester who is loyal to Lear. Kent spends most of the play disguised as a peasant, calling himself "Caius," so that he can continue to serve Lear even after Lear banishes him. He is extremely loyal, but he gets himself into trouble throughout the play by being extremely blunt and outspoken	<i>40's</i>

Role	Association	Age indication (guide only to indicate age range)
Regan	<i>Lear's second daughter – on the board</i> Regan is as ruthless as Goneril and as aggressive in all the same ways. In fact, it is difficult to think of any quality that distinguishes her from her sister. When they are not egging each other on to further acts of cruelty, they jealously compete for the same man, Edmund.	<i>Female</i>
Cornwall	<i>Regan's husband</i> Unlike Albany, Cornwall is domineering, cruel, and violent, and he works with his wife and sister-in-law Goneril to persecute Lear and Gloucester.	<i>40/50</i>
France	<i>suitor and later husband to Cordelia – (head of rival business to Lear Group)</i>	<i>Male late 30's</i>
Cordelia	<i>Lear's youngest daughter – on the board</i> Disowned by her father for refusing to flatter him. Held in extremely high regard by all of the good characters in the play—France marries her for her virtue alone; Remains loyal to Lear despite his cruelty, forgives him, and displays a mild and forbearing temperament even toward her evil sisters; Cordelia's reticence makes her motivations difficult to read, as in her refusal to declare her love for her father at the beginning of the play.	<i>Female</i>
Burgundy	<i>suitor to Cordelia</i>	<i>Male late 30's / 40</i>
Curan	<i>Courtier</i>	
Attendants		<i>Male / Female – varying ages</i>

Audition approach

Open audition with the group all hearing the presentation of one two speeches (your choice) from the actors; there will be some movement / emotional work, and then specific people will be asked to read for the main roles based on preferences and some shortlisting after the group phase.

There will be call backs as required.

All interested actors to present their version of one of the following speeches:

Please focus on presenting a character, and the meaning of the text therefore the intended emotion of the speech.

Henry VIII (Chorus)

I come no more to make you laugh: things now,
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe,
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
We now present. Those that can pity, here
May, if they think it well, let fall a tear;
The subject will deserve it. Such as give
Their money out of hope they may believe,
May here find truth too. Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree
The play may pass, if they be still and willing,
I'll undertake may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours. Only they
That come to hear a merry bawdy play,
A noise of targets, or to see a fellow
In a long motley coat guarded with yellow,
Will be deceived; for, gentle hearers, know,
To rank our chosen truth with such a show
As fool and fight is, beside forfeiting
Our own brains, and the opinion that we bring,
To make that only true we now intend,
Will leave us never an understanding friend.

OR

Henry IV, Part 2 (Epilogue)

First my fear; then my courtesy; last my speech.
My fear is, your displeasure; my courtesy, my duty;
and my speech, to beg your pardons. If you look
for a good speech now, you undo me: for what I have
to say is of mine own making; and what indeed I
should say will, I doubt, prove mine own marring.
But to the purpose, and so to the venture. Be it
known to you, as it is very well, I was lately here
in the end of a displeasing play, to pray your
patience for it and to promise you a better. I
meant indeed to pay you with this; which, if like an
ill venture it come unluckily home, I break, and
you, my gentle creditors, lose. Here I promised you
I would be and here I commit my body to your
mercies: bate me some and I will pay you some and,
as most debtors do, promise you infinitely.
If my tongue cannot entreat you to acquit me, will
you command me to use my legs? and yet that were but
light payment, to dance out of your debt. But a
good conscience will make any possible satisfaction,
and so would I. All the gentlewomen here have
forgiven me: if the gentlemen will not, then the
gentlemen do not agree with the gentlewomen, which
was never seen before in such an assembly.

Specific speeches for call back / named parts on the following pages

Those asked to will be required deliver the following for the character they are called for:

LEAR

O, reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need,--
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall--I will do such things,--
What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep
No, I'll not weep:
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

EDGAR

A serving-man, proud in heart and mind; that curled
my hair; wore gloves in my cap; served the lust of
my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with
her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and
broke them in the sweet face of heaven: one that
slept in the contriving of lust, and waked to do it:
wine loved I deeply, dice dearly: and in woman
out-paramoured the Turk: false of heart, light of
ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth,
wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey.
Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of
silks betray thy poor heart to woman: keep thy foot
out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen
from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend.
Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind:
Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny.
Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by.

EDMUND

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
Well, then, legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to the legitimate: fine word,--legitimate!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

GONERIL – (to Oswald) – also to hear potential Regan's

By day and night, he wrongs me! Every hour
He flashes into one gross crime or other
That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,
I will not speak with him. Say I am sick.
If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows. I'd have it come to question.
If he distaste it, let him to our sister,
Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,
Not to be overrul'd. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again, and must be us'd
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abus'd.
Remember what I have said.