

Blackadder Goes Forth

Audition Pack

Key Dates

Audition Dates:

- **Tuesday 8th May** – 6:00 – 10:00pm (Everyman Clubroom)
- **Saturday 12th May** – 10.30am – 5.00pm
- **Sunday 13th May** – 10:00am – 3.00pm

Recalls (if required):

- **Friday 18th May** – 6:00 – 10:00pm (Everyman Clubroom)
- **Saturday 19th May** – 10:00am – 1:00pm (Everyman Clubroom)

Actors who are successfully cast need to understand that they **MUST** be available for all the following key dates

- **Technical Rehearsal:** Sunday 11th November (cast need to be available all day)
- **Dress Rehearsal:** Monday 12th November (evening)
- **Performance Dates:** Tuesday 13th – Saturday 17th November; Evening Performances at 7.30pm, Saturday matinee at 2.30pm

Rehearsal Nights

Rehearsals will begin w/c Monday 3rd September.

Exact rehearsal nights will be confirmed nearer the time but are quite likely to be Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Not all cast will be required for every rehearsal.

Plot

Blackadder Goes Forth is set in 1917 on the Western Front in the trenches of World War I. Captain Edmund Blackadder is a professional soldier in the British Army who, until the outbreak of the Great War, has enjoyed a relatively danger-free existence fighting natives who were usually "two feet tall and armed with dried grass". Finding himself trapped in the trenches with another "big push" planned, his concern is to avoid being sent over the top to certain death. The show thus chronicles Blackadder's attempts to escape the trenches through various schemes, most of which fail due to bad fortune, misunderstandings and the general incompetence of his comrades. The aforementioned comrades are his second-in-command, idealistic upper-class Edwardian twit Lieutenant George and their profoundly stupid but dogged batman Private S. Baldrick.

Rather than the Germans, who remain generally unseen (with the exception of "Private Plane", where they are a means to escape the trenches), Blackadder's nemeses come in the form of his superior, the eccentric General Melchett who rallies his troops from a French château 35 miles from the front, and Melchett's bureaucratic assistant, Captain Kevin Darling. Despite the two being of equal rank, Blackadder treats Darling with contempt—while the former is on the front line, the latter is "folding the general's pyjamas". Their animosity is mutual, largely as a result of Blackadder exploiting the comic potential of Darling's surname at every opportunity.

For this stage version of the show, I have decided to stage the following 4 episodes:

Act 1

1. Corporal Punishment (the dead pigeon / firing squad episode)
2. Major Star (the music hall / George in drag episode)

Act 2

1. Private Plane (the Flasheart episode)
2. Goodbyeeee (the famous and emotional 'over the top' episode)

Directors Vision

The challenge I have with directing this production is two-fold – 1) make something that was written for TV, into a satisfying and fluid theatrical experience; and 2) find the right balance between honouring the nostalgic memory that the audience will have of the original, well-loved TV series, and producing something that myself, the cast and production team can take ownership of as our own interpretation.

There are numerous practical challenges apparent in staging a TV series, particularly how we seamlessly cut from one scene to another. My task is to ensure that we find interesting, theatrical solutions that allow us to maintain the comedic pace.

Principal Characters

There are 5 principal characters who appear in every episode.

Blackadder

Captain Edmund Blackadder is an officer in the British Army during World War I. He is a disillusioned and grumpy soldier, and incredibly cynical and sarcastic. Characteristically reluctant to meet his end in the mud of the trenches of the Western Front, his sole goal is to escape his inevitable fate. He doesn't suffer fools gladly but deep in the trenches of World War I he doesn't have much choice, surrounded on all sides as he is by idiocy of varying degrees, hence his constant state of annoyance.

He joined the army in the late 19th century and earned his stripes in the battle of Mbotto Gorge in 1892, where he battled against pygmies armed with sharp kiwi fruit and melons. He therefore finds the prospect of fighting against armed soldiers who could actually kill him both distasteful and stupid. When the First World War started he was sent to the trenches with Private Baldrick and Lieutenant George, whom he considers idiots but seems to have a genuine affection for. Captain Blackadder is a stone cold realist, and knows that if he and his men are sent "over the top," most or

all of them are going to die, and therefore spends much of his time coming up with plans to avoid this possibility.

George

Lt. The Honorable. George Colthurst St Barleigh, is the epitome of a dim-witted upper class twit, though quite lovable. He is a front line officer who is very overexcited, painfully enthusiastic, keen and optimistic. Although he lacks any kind of skill, competence, or authority as an officer, his upper-class status and educational background meant he went straight into the commissioned ranks upon enlisting. Although George is shown to have benefited from his background of privilege he still remains a generally kind and hopeful individual, and shortly before the big push at the end of the final episode George finally expresses some genuine fear and sadness that he may indeed die.

He often fails to see what is right in front of his eyes. He isn't stupid as such, at the very least in comparison to Baldrick, but he is certainly naïve. With a privileged but heavily sheltered upbringing, he has a limited grasp of the world, society or history, and fails to even make the connection between his best friend facing an unfair court-martial and his favourite uncle having been appointed Minister of War.

Baldrick

Private S. Baldrick is Blackadder's loyal servant, sidekick and foil. He can arguably be seen as Blackadder's best friend despite Blackadder's apparent contempt for him.

Although his stupidity is legendary, his intelligence has slightly risen compared to previous series, enough that he desires a rise in social status (such as in the third episode when he considers marrying General Melchett). He is also more aware of the classes than previous Baldricks (and is apparently a supporter of the Russian Revolution) and is angry when Blackadder hits him several times (previous Baldricks never complained).

Melchett

General Sir Anthony Cecil Hogmanay Melchett is a loud, childish, blustering domineering oaf, maniac and pompous warmonger who only hears what he wants to hear; with seemingly no common sense and less concern for the men under him. Blindly following orders from the few higher up in the ranks than him, he wouldn't know the meaning of 'impartiality' if it hit him in the face, nor does he realize the futility of the war. He fails to understand or comprehend the basic concepts of modern trench warfare and is totally unable to come up with a new strategy that would suit it. Instead he continuously sends men to a senseless death with seemingly no tactics at all.

Darling

Captain Kevin Darling is a by-the-books officer who sycophantically panders to General Melchett in hopes of staying far away from the front lines. He is a vile, snivelling little oik who hides from action in Melchett's formidable shadow, and encompasses all that Blackadder hates about the modern army. He delights in barking orders down the line and in getting petty revenge on others, but will tremble and falter at the slightest hint of some real work himself. He is constantly at odds with Blackadder, his intellectual peer and bitter rival, whose schemes he is constantly trying to undermine.

Supporting Characters

All the male supporting characters will be doubled-up to give the actors who are cast more to do.

Bob (appears in 'Major Star' and 'Private Plane')

Driver Parkhurst is a woman, disguising herself as a man so she can 'Do her Bit!' She becomes General Melchett's Driver. Upon entering Capt. Blackadder's trench, Blackadder recognises Bob's gender immediately. She begs Blackadder not to give her away, explaining that all her brothers have signed up, and she wants to see how a war is fought "so badly".

In "Private Plane", she appears to have revealed the truth to Melchett, as she is shown dressed in more gender-neutral clothes and goes by the name "Bobbie", but still serves as Melchett's driver. She is seduced by Squadron Commander the Lord Flashheart, and runs off with him, much to Blackadder's annoyance.

Flashheart (appears in 'Private Plane')

Squadron Commander the Lord Flashheart is a scene-stealing, boisterous and arrogant roister-doister and is attractive to all the women he meets. He is extremely popular among his peers and becomes the centre of attention whenever he enters a room. He is a stereotype of a certain kind of hero (the World War I RFC flying ace), slanted to emphasise the negative qualities associated with such characters such as narcissism, sexism and promiscuity. His catchphrase is to shout "Woof!" or "Let's do-ooo-oooo it!", while thrusting his pelvis. He commonly uses sexual innuendo in ordinary conversation.

Corporal Jones (appears in 'Corporal Punishment')

Corporal Jones is the overly-cheerful head of a firing squad sent by a court martial to shoot Captain Blackadder. When he is in firing squad mode, he is loud and blustery in the stereotypical military style.

Baron Von Richthaven (appears in 'Private Plane')

A German Flying ace who gleefully imprisons Blackadder behind enemy lines.

Private Fraser (appears in 'Corporal Punishment')

One of the comical firing squad, under orders to shoot Captain Blackadder.

Lieutenant Van Gerhardt (appears in 'Private Plane')

Another German flying ace.

Private Robinson & Private Tipplewick (appears in 'Private Plane' - *will be combined into one character for this production*)

Members of the comical firing squad, under orders to shoot Captain Blackadder.

Corporal Perkins (appears in 'Corporal Punishment')

Corporal Perkins is the very polite jailer of Captain Blackadder, when he was up for a court martial.

Field Marshall Haig (appears in 'Goodbyeeee')

The hard-nosed leader of the British Army during the First World War whose best advice for Blackadder to escape the final push was to stick two pencils up his nose and his underpants on his head so that he would be classed as insane and sent home, a plan which Blackadder had already tried... "The phrase rhymes with clucking bell." (i.e. "fucking hell").

Cast of this Production

This production will have a cast of 10 (9 men, 1 woman) with 5 men doubling up roles across the supporting cast. The cast will be as follows:

- Blackadder
- Baldrick
- George
- Melchett
- Darling
- Bob (*the only female part*)
- Flasheart / Corporal Jones*
- Baron Von Richthaven / Private Fraser*
- Lieutenant Van Gerhardt / Private Robinson (*also incorporating the lines of Private Tipplewick*)*
- Field Marshall Haig / Corporal Perkins*

* The exact doubling of these roles may be changed depending upon the actors who are cast.

The supporting cast of males will also be used for other parts of the show (e.g. the trial in 'Corporal Punishment', audience for 'Major Star', other flying students in 'Private Plane')

Audition Pieces

- As a director, I prefer auditionees to have access to the audition pieces in advance.
- There will be someone present in the room to read in the dialogue for the other characters in the scene.

The audition pieces are as follows:

- Blackadder: Goodbyeeee - Pages 1, 2 and 3
- Baldrick: Corporal Punishment – Pages 6 & 7
- George: Corporal Punishment – Pages 1 & 2 / Major Star – Pages 7 & 8
- Melchett: Goodbyeeee – Pages 8 & 9
- Darling: Major Star – Pages 5 & 6 / Goodbye – Pages 8 & 9
- Bob (the only female part): Major Star – Pages 3 & 4
- Flasheart: Private Plane – Pages 3 & 4 (Scenes 4 & 5)
- Baron Von Richthaven: Private Plane – Pages 11 & 12 (Scene 12)

- Lieutenant Van Gerhardt: Private Plane – Page 10 (Scene 10)
- Field Marshall Haig: Goodbyeee – Page 9

We are casting this production (and also that of Journeys End) early because we anticipate there being a lot of demand for period costumes due to the impending centenary of World War 1, and so we want to cast the parts, measure the actors and secure our costumes well in advance.

Audition Notes

Actors are permitted to audition for as many roles as they wish within the confines of their time slot. My advice is to think carefully about which part best suits your acting style and physical appearance, and focus your time and energy on that role.

You don't have to learn the words of the audition pieces for your audition, but I would strongly recommend you read it a few times beforehand and prepare your performance, with particular emphasis on the style and tone of your voice, and any physicality you want to demonstrate. Remember these are caricatures. Don't leave it to the audition room to think about these things for the first time – COME PREPARED!

Please note that as director I reserve the right to offer an actor a part they may not have auditioned for but which I believe they might be better suited to. Of course you are not obliged to accept that part, but I would kindly ask that any offers are responded to promptly.

Recalls will only be required if it's imperative I see actors again before finalising the casting. Traditionally I usually cast after the first round of auditions, but I will use the allotted recall nights if necessary.

BOOKING AN AUDITION

YOU CAN BOOK AN AUDITION FROM APRIL 1st NOT BEFORE!

To book an audition slot, please contact amabourke@gmail.com

If you have any questions about the audition pieces or characters, please contact Richard Thomas – 07914 848493 / richiedt25@hotmail.com