

CARDIFF OPEN AIR THEATRE FESTIVAL: EVERYMAN 20

Sophia Gardens
Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9SQ



AUDITION NOTICE

"... if nothing else works, a total pig-headed unwillingness to look facts in the face will see us through."
General A.C.H. Melchett, VC KCB DSO (May 1917)

BLACKADDER GOES FORTH

— THE FINAL PUSH —

from the BBC TV Series
by
Richard Curtis & Ben Elton

It's 1917 and Edmund Blackadder is now a captain in the British Army at the Western Front, commanding gallant-but-dumb Lieutenant George St. Barleigh and the even dumber Private S. Baldrick.

Waiting in fear of the dreaded order to go 'over the top' from the patently insane General Melchett and his twitchy staff officer, Captain Darling, Blackadder devises serial attempts to escape the trenches always with the offer of one of Baldrick's cunning plans.

First broadcast on the BBC in 1989, Blackadder Goes Forth is one of the most intelligent as well as among the funniest of British sitcoms.

Adapted & Directed by
SIMON H WEST

Performance Dates: Thursday 18th June to Saturday 27th June 2020

Festival Theatre, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff

No performances on Sunday 19th June

Technical & Dress Rehearsals: Sunday 14th June to Wednesday 17th June

Rehearsal period will be short and intensive, taking place over just one month beginning around May 14th.

Rehearsal days are to be confirmed but will include all day Sundays (10-5) plus a weeknight (7-10)

Additional rehearsal days will be called nearer production period.
Rehearsals will be carefully scheduled and not everyone will be called to every session.

Please note that all performances take place in the open-air.

Character Breakdown

This production will centre around **three of the original episodes with additional material from the other three**. The breakdown below is for the entire series as the script adaptation will not be finalised until after the auditions.

Whilst the aim is to build our own show rather than seeking to accurately mimic the TV version, we will need to respect the characterisations with which audiences are familiar, therefore it is strongly recommended that anyone intending to audition should view some of the TV performances. At the time of writing the series is available on Netflix but also you'll find extracts on You Tube.

PRINCIPAL CAST

Captain Edmund Blackadder (1871 - 1917) An accomplished career soldier who holds the overly-enthusiastic and idealistic volunteers he commands in withering contempt. Cunning.

Lieutenant The Hon. George Colthurst St. Barleigh, MC (1892 -1917) Serves under Captain Blackadder and alongside Private Baldrick. Last remaining member of the Trinity Tiddlers, he signed up on the first day of the War. Enthusiastic.

Private S. Baldrick (c1874 – 1917) Serves under Captain Blackadder and Lieutenant George. Found under the same dunghill as his ancestors. As platoon cook, his speciality is Rat-au-Vin. Foul.

General Sir Anthony Cecil Hogmanay Melchett, VC, KCB, DSO (1864 – 1939) Educated at Oundle where he was part of the Great Fag Beating Contest of 1880; he went on to break wind for his college at Cambridge. Insane.

Captain Kevin Darling, MC (1890 – 1917) Born in Croydon and educated at Ippllethorpe Primary School. Staff officer and aide to General Melchett. Engaged to Doris, he is a keen cricketer and keeps wicket for the Croydon Gentlemen. Twitchy.

SUPPORTING CAST

Corporal Jones, Privates Fraser, Robinson & Tipplewick
a cheery firing squad

Driver Bob Parkhurst
a pert and efficient young lass

Squadron Commander The Lord Flashheart
woof

Baron von Richthofen
the 'Red Baron'

Corporal Perkins
a really friendly prison guard

Lt Von Gerhardt
a not so friendly prison guard

Nurse Mary
a spy with a good bedside manner

Brigadier Smith
a spy with a thick German accent

Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig
not happy

From the Director

"I have very fond memories of directing *Blackadder II* and *Blackadder the Third* for the Festival in 2014 -15 as they were some of the most hilarious times I've spent in a rehearsal room, so I am delighted to have been invited back to take on the final season of one of my favourite sitcoms. For *Blackadder Goes Forth*, I will be looking for a small company of strong, comedy players that excel in character roles plus an ability to play pathos. There will be plenty of opportunity for casting if you can offer the strengths of acting, with vocal skills, physicality and the ability to relate directly to our audiences plus the technical requirements of being heard in the open-air!

A quick note about rehearsals: BE THERE! This year the rehearsal period will be short and intensive. I can work around scheduled unavailability and you will not be called unless I intend working with you; those who have worked with me before will know that rehearsals are busy and concentrated but always a laugh! Looking forward to seeing both new and familiar faces at the auditions." - SHW

Simon H West is a freelance director, performer and producer. Before he trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Simon was a member of Everyman Theatre and appeared in many of their productions at Dyffryn Gardens and Chapter Arts Centre. Since then he has directed nearly sixty professional productions for the stage, appeared in theatre, television and commercials across Europe and lectures in Theatre for University of South Wales and Cardiff and Vale College. He also works regularly for Simply Theatre Academy in Geneva, Switzerland where he has directed 'Macbeth', 'The Tempest', 'The Railway Children' & 'The Crucible'. He directed his first production for Everyman – Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' – at the 2001 Festival. Other Festival shows include 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'Comedy of Errors', 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', 'The Gondoliers', 'HMS Pinafore', 'Blackadder II', 'Blackadder the Third', 'Allo 'Allo!', 'Macbeth', 'The Merchant of Venice' and last year's acclaimed production of 'Hi-de-Hi'. With GO Productions, Simon has also co-produced the Festival's Family Show since 2013 as well as productions of 'Confusions', 'Flint Street Nativity', '13: The Musical', 'Carrie', 'Be More Chill', 'Godspell' and 'Urinetown'. 'Blackadder Goes Forth' will mark his twenty-second year as part of the Festival and his fifteenth production as a director.

How *Blackadder Goes Forth* captured the absurd tragedy of war

by Mark Butler

<https://inews.co.uk/culture/television/blackadder-goes-forth-absurd-tragedy-of-war-521430>

Back in 1989, fans of British comedy institution *Blackadder* must have wondered how its writers hoped to wring laughs from the harrowing backdrop of World War One. But in the end, its fourth and final series was a triumph as Ben Elton and Richard Curtis managed that rare trick of turning a TV sitcom into something much more sobering, and poignant. A comedy it may be, but *Blackadder Goes Forth* captures the madness of armed conflict as well as *Apocalypse Now*, its absurdities as keenly as *Catch-22*, and its tragedies as powerfully as any war drama.



From cunning plans to desperate measures

In previous series of *Blackadder*, the title character concocted schemes and "cunning plans" in a bid to acquire wealth and power; here, he is simply trying to stay alive. Desperate to avoid the horrors of the 'big push', he resorts to increasingly frantic tactics, ultimately sticking pencils up his nose and saying "wibble", in a bid to feign madness. As amusing as the sight is, it hints at a deep, underlying fear. It's not for nothing that *Blackadder* seeks a way out, the image of a commanding officer in his map room, sweeping up all those little models of dead soldiers with a dustpan and brush, sticks with you.

Madness and lunacy

The insanity of the war itself is a frequent theme: Stephen Fry's General Melchett is utterly mad - as are the high command's tactics. Untold thousands are being sent to their deaths with little rhyme or reason; the whole enterprise a senseless waste of life. The objective of the big push is summed up by *Blackadder* as Field Marshall Haig "moving his drinks cabinet six inches closer to Berlin". The British effort, as helpfully spelled out by Melchett, captures a grand total of 17 feet of land. This madness and lunacy extends to some of the series' most memorable moments: *Blackadder* is court-martialled, branded the 'Flanders Pigeon Murderer' and sentenced to death for shooting a beloved bird called 'Speckled Jim'. But that also reflects a harrowing reality as many British soldiers were senselessly executed by their own commanders throughout the conflict. When *Blackadder* escapes to the '20 minutes' air squadron, meanwhile, he soon learns this is named for the average length of time a pilot survives. Death seems increasingly certain, and futile.

The only one left

Part of the genius of *Blackadder Goes Forth* is how the horrors of war gradually creep over the viewer more and more intensely as the series progresses. By the end, the sense of fatalism and futility is raw and painful. Hugh Laurie's usually cheerful George finds himself experiencing a bout of sadness, as he recalls signing up with his friends, and then realising they're all dead. It's joked that he, *Blackadder* and Baldrick would meet up again after the war; *Blackadder* suggests that they can dig a trench in the garden and have George's gamekeeper shoot at them to recreate the experience. There was no way these men could know how the war would totally change their lives. Or that they most likely would never make it home.

Funny, stoic and bitterly sad

By the time Captain Darling joins *Blackadder*, Baldrick and George for the big push, these characters - whom we dearly love - are resigned to their fate. "I rather hoped I'd get through the whole show," notes Darling, who reflects on an entire future that will be stolen from him. The humour is now literally of the gallows variety. "Don't forget your stick," *Blackadder* reminds George. "Bravo, sir. Wouldn't want to take on a machine gun without this ...". The final 'going over-the-top' scene is beautifully realised, and very British. It's endearingly funny, stoic, and bitterly sad at the same time. You really want *Blackadder* to get out of it - he's been trying since day one - but of course he doesn't. In real-life, a cunning plan stood no chance against the chaos and terror of the 'Great War'. And Elton and Curtis do not shy away from that here. As our heroes surge forward to their fate, and it goes to slow-motion, a gentle piano version of Howard Goodall's iconic theme tune strikes a poignant, reflective note. And then we transition to a field of poppies. Few comedies have made an entire audience of TV viewers weep. But *Blackadder Goes Forth* was no ordinary comedy.

The Auditions

Before auditioning, please take a moment to consider the necessary level of commitment.

Take careful note of the rehearsal period and be honest about your availability within it.

This year, the rehearsal process will take place over just one month, so consistent and punctual attendance is essential as we will be operating within a very tight schedule.

A high level of unavailability, persistent lateness and/or no-show will regrettably result in your being asked to leave the production.

Auditions will be held at **Chapter Arts Centre** on **Sunday 2nd February (11am – 1pm & 2pm – 4pm)** and **Monday 3rd February (7pm – 9pm)**. Further auditions and/or recalls will be held the following weekend.

If you would like to audition but cannot attend on these days, please let us know as soon as possible.

- Please arrive **15mins before** your audition slot and bring with you your completed audition form with photograph attached. Spare audition forms will be available on the day.
- **When booking an audition slot**, please refer to the character breakdown.
- You will be **reading** dialogue and may also be asked to work with other auditionees. Script extracts will be provided. Please arrive in good time to look at them.
- **Not being recalled** does not necessarily mean you are not being considered for a role.
- **Attendance at the Festival Company Meeting during May is strongly urged.**
- **Please Note:** By accepting a role in the Festival you acknowledge that your photograph will be taken during rehearsals and performances and permit these to be used for any marketing (including on our website, social media, and printed material). Consent can be withdrawn at any time by emailing festivalmarketing@everymantheatre.co.uk This will not apply to material already published.

To reserve your place at the audition, please email:
festival-auditions@everymantheatre.co.uk

We look forward to seeing you!

*"I Have A
Cunning
Plan Sir"*



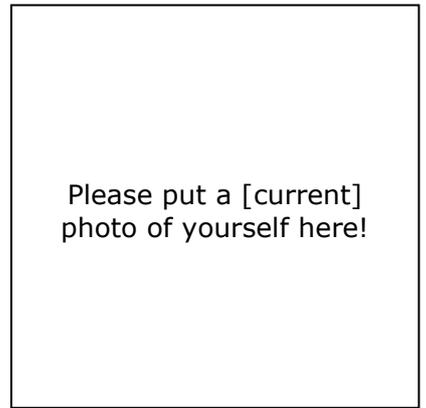
Everyman Theatre Cardiff Ltd.

Audition Form for

Blackadder Goes Forth [2020]

To book your audition time please contact:
festival-auditions@everymantheatre.co.uk

Please write clearly and don't forget to bring this form with photograph to your audition!



Name

Date of audition Time

Email address

Tel.no [home] [work/mobile]

FOR WHICH ROLE/S ARE YOU AUDITIONING?

WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER OTHER ROLES IF OFFERED? YES / NO

ANY SPECIAL SKILLS – e.g., dancing, singing, juggling, musical instrument playing, etc.

Please state **any and all commitments** [e.g. shows / work / holidays / cunning plans] that will conflict with rehearsals!

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE [continue overleaf if necessary]

Are you auditioning for the other Festival shows? Yes / No (if yes, please state which ones)

Are you already a member of Everyman Theatre? Yes / No (please note that everyone cast must become an Everyman member)

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PLEASE DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

NOTES:

Not cast / recalled / cast as acceptance rec'd: **yes/no**