



Blue Stockings

AUDITION PACK: March 2021

Blue Stockings is a relatively new play, first being performed at Shakespeare's Globe in London on the 24th August 2013. The play is about the women who attended universities even though they were unable to receive their degrees, due to the fact of their sex.

This was the first play written by Jessica Swale, who has in the six years in between its first playing and today, become quite a well-renowned director and writer. She has written and spoken a great deal about the inspiration for the play, and I share much of her frustration around knowing that women were once unable to graduate equally from university.

This struggle, whilst it took place at a similar time to the fight for women's suffrage is not the same fight. The play looks at those struggles with the main staff member at Girton College, Elizabeth Welsh (based on a real woman) desperately trying to ensure that a suffragist visiting Cambridge isn't invited to speak to the girls. In fact, all women got the vote in 1928 in Britain, yet it took another twenty years for women to be awarded degrees at Cambridge University.

Prospective Performance Dates: Tuesday 16 – Saturday 20 March 2021

6 performances over 5 days at Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff.

Performances every evening from 7.30pm and a matinee at 2.30pm on Saturday 20 March.

Rehearsal days: TBC - we may start off with a zoom readthrough and then do some online rehearsals until it is possible to get into the theatre space at Chapter, where we will then socially distance rehearse.

THE PLAY

The play is set around the university year, starting in September, and finishing the following summer. Tess, Carolyn, Maeve and Celia are four new students at Girton College, Cambridge in 1896. They are not undergraduates, as Cambridge University does not award degrees to women, but have allowed them to study as men do, which is a step-up from ladies' colleges of the day.

We see the different classes the women take, and that in common spaces where men are studying, that they are required to be chaperoned as the time's propriety and etiquette demanded of society.

All four women are brilliant thinkers but Tess is the brightest and early on she challenges an eminent psychologist who is lecturing on hysteria. The psychologist refuses to treat her as equal to the male students and is one of the most jarring moments of the play, as we start to feel the injustice felt by those women who worked tirelessly to claim their equality.

The college year is taken up by romances developing between Tess and Ralph from Trinity College; Maeve, a working-class woman being sponsored to study, has to return home to look after her family when their mother dies, and slowly but surely the new students learning what is important in education.

Before the end of the first Act, Mrs Welsh, a character based on the real life woman who campaigned for women to be awarded their degrees and taught women at Girton College, reads an essay written by Tess which she uses as an argument for why any great thinker deserves to be recognised whatever their gender. The Senate members grant a vote to the membership of Cambridge as to whether women should be allowed to graduate.

In the second half of the play, we learn that a bright young teacher at Trinity who also teaches the women in his spare time has been offered a fellowship of the college, ensuring his continued and protected tenure. However, he is expected to give up teaching women if he accepts. We later learn he has turned it down and also lost his regular job.

There are smatterings of discussions about the growth of the suffragist movement and it is mentioned that Millicent Fawcett will be visiting. Mrs Welsh is adamant that this cannot get in the way of the impending vote on graduation.

We find out that Tess has been passed over by Ralph for a less politically difficult wife at a ladies' college, and that she has not passed her first year, though Mrs Welsh gives her a chance to resit in September. There are ugly scenes as men grapple with the idea that women may be allowed to earn the same degrees as them despite not having as formal and rigorous education in their youth.

The culmination of the play is the vote. The play builds to a crescendo where many members of Cambridge University have returned to the city to vote and there is fierce opposition to it. Will, Tess' friend from home and a Trinity scholar, enters Girton in shock as he has witnessed a Bluestocking "Guy" being burnt outside and an angry mob is breaking the windows of the college. As the argument between intruders and women results in Mrs Welsh being thrown to the ground, the vote's result is given by Mr Peck, the gardener. They have been unsuccessful.

THE CHARACTERS

The play has 9 female parts and 13 male parts, and the age range is relatively well balanced too. There are 9 "main" roles who are students of which 4 are women and 5 are men, giving a very good gender balance to the main parts. In the original production, and in the script, 13 actors were used with some of the male roles being doubled up.

As the play has had to be put on hold due to Coronavirus, most of the cast have continued in their roles, except for three which we are now looking to recast. The full character breakdown is below and the highlighted roles are the vacant roles.

The Girton Girls

Tess Moffat, a bright woman who is the central character

Celia Willbond, fragile and hard-working

Carolyn Addison, bohemian, well-traveled and well monied

Maeve Sullivan, working class girl

The Trinity Boys

Ralph Mayhew, Tess' love interest

Lloyd, an angry, entitled young man

Holmes, Lloyd's side-kick

Edwards, a bit of a clown and unlucky

Will Bennett, a student at King's and Tess' friend from home

(Both the Girton Girls and the Trinity boys will all be aged from 18-21, and dependent on other cast members could be any age from their late teens to a young early 30s).

The staff

Elizabeth Welsh, Mistress of Girton College (30-55)

Dr Maudsley, renowned psychiatrist, (40-60)

Mr Banks, a lecturer at Girton and Trinity, a liberal (30-45) **Miss Blake**, a lecturer at Girton and former student (30-40) **Professor Collins**, a lecturer at Trinity (35-65)

Professor Anderson, a lecturer at Trinity (35-65) **Professor Radleigh**, a board member at Trinity (45-70)

Minnie, the housemaid (18-30)

Mr Peck, gardener and maintenance man (30-70)

Miss Bott, a chaperone (30-60)

The others

Billy Sullivan, Maeve's brother (approximately the same sort of age as she is)

Mrs Lindley, shopkeeper in the haberdashery (any age over 30)

THE AUDITIONS

Before auditioning, please take note of the rehearsal period and be honest about your availability within it. I will do a rehearsal schedule as soon as everyone is cast so please do try and ensure you have let me know of any dates you are not free in the rehearsal period.

Auditions will be held in groups and pairs, reading for individual scenes. You may be asked to try a number of different characters during your auditions.

The auditions will be held on:

Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 November **via Zoom**

When booking an audition slot, please refer to the character breakdown.

Please arrive promptly for your audition slot and bring with you your completed audition form. **Please attach a photograph if you can.**

To reserve your place at the audition, please email emmaehenwood@gmail.com



Please attach a [current] photo of yourself here!

Audition Form for

Blue Stockings [2021]

To book your audition time please email emmaehenwood@gmail.com

Name.....
Date of audition..... Time.....
Address.....
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Email.....
Tel.no.....
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Please state **any and all commitments** [family/work/holidays/other shows *etc*] that **may** conflict with the rehearsal period!

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PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

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Is there a particular role in which you are interested?

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Are you already a member of Everyman Theatre? yes / no

PLEASE NOTE – everyone cast must become an Everyman member.

FOR DIRECTOR'S USE ONLY

NOTES:

Not cast/recalled/cast as