

## Auditions For Bothered and Bewildered

Wednesday 23rd October. 7.30. Manor Gardens

Author: Gail Young Samuel French 2015 version

### Cast (8 or 9)

**Irene:** Matriarch suffering from dementia. Kaleidoscopic memory and has conversations with imaginary characters. Tormented by imaginary noises. Increasingly unpredictable and divorced from reality.

**Barbara Cartland:** A vision in pink and pearls. Larger than life. Enables Irene to relive her youth and enjoy the present within the confines of her changing perception.

**Beth:** Irene's eldest and sterner daughter. Realistic and weighed down by both the responsibilities of the present and the diminishing options for the future.

**Louise:** Irene's more empathetic daughter. Still trying to see the brighterside and views the past through rose tinted lenses.

**Shelley:** Irene's granddaughter. Traditionally this actor also plays Young Irene. Shelley is an intergenerational pebble thrown into an increasingly troubled pond whilst young Irene falls in love with the dashing young Jim in uniform.

**Consultant:** Calm, collected, probing. Asks searching open questions to both sisters. Could be male or female.

**Policeman:** Local Bobby who carries the wandering and 'lost' Irene back into the house

**James/Young Jim** Irene's former lover from WW2 and his son James. Traditionally played by the same actor.

**Doctor Johnson (GP):** Could be Noises Off or stylised - role could be doubled with Policeman

### Audition Pieces

Consultant; Louise; Beth Pages 19 -21

Shelley Page 61

Irene, Barbara Pages 23 - 25

Poicemail Page 36

Dr Johnson/ Irene Pages 4 -5

James Page 68

Email me at [sbaker.baker5@gmail.com](mailto:sbaker.baker5@gmail.com) if you want me to take a photo of the relevant pages and send them to you. Alternatively I bought 8 copies of the script for the play reading and I am happy to lend you a copy. I am rehearsing for Girl on a Train and so happy to take them down to Manor Gardens. Email or phone me on 07549 940037 to arrange to collect.

## **The Play**

Gail Young followed her successful play 'Cheshire Cats' with this tender and touching portrayal of what is sometimes described as 'the long goodbye'. She lost her own father-in-law to Alzheimer's. We follow Irene and her 2 daughters as they begin the sad journey whereby they slowly lose their mother in spirit but not in body. It is a poignant drama (1 hour 40 minutes) with 2 Acts first performed in 2014.

Her family struggle to come to terms with Irene's Alzheimers. The play explores how they cope with the taxing, debilitating illness. However, there are sprinklings of joy emanating from Irene's memory and her current obsession with romantic novels. The present and past come endearingly intertwined and confused. Irene develops an on stage relationship with her imaginary friend Barabara Cartland. This dramatic device not only enables hidden snippets of Irene's past to be revealed but simultaneously raises the status of this proud generation.

Whilst there are some gentle comedic moments this drama exposes the devastation of dementia. It does not shy away from the bewilderment and changes in personality from a much loved Irene. Nor does it skate around the effect this has on her immediate family. Lighter moments serve only as a relief to the tragedy.

From the outset we are led into the prognosis as the two sisters are interviewed by a calm professional consultant. Beth is the more straight talking and brusque of the two. Louise is more socially conscious and conciliatory. However, neither want to see their beloved mother put into a home. We return to the consultation room several times during the play as Irene deteriorates. Irene is both vulnerable and compelling. She does see Barbara as a real living being; she does believe her teddy bear is her baby. This leads us hauntingly back to both the early 1960s and 1940s to understand the unfulfilled life Irene had kept hidden.

Barbara Cartland appears gaily dressed in bright pink from time to time to enjoy conversations with Irene. Her books, read by Irene obsessively, seem normal by comparison to the confusing landscape of her brain. These conversations at first provide comic respite but gradually lead Irene to reveal some guilty secrets from her past. There are also some touching and comedic moments with the arrival of her Grand Daughter (Shelley) and a denouement with Irene's long lost son Jim. The play is under consideration for a Tamaritans production in 2025.

## **Venue**

We will be performing the play at The Watermark Ivybridge in the second week of March. Obviously we won't have access to the full space at Manor Gardens until mid January. Whilst we won't therefore be able to do blocking and full rehearsals until then we can do some work in small groups during November and December to enable you to start working with each other and developing characters.

*Steve*

