

We Happy Few

We Happy Few is a 2004 play by Imogen Stubbs



"Darkness. Footsteps. A rim of light delineates a fastened double door at the very back of the space"

This play opened in 2003 in Malvern and came to London in 2004. It was directed by Trevor Nunn, who is Imogen Stubbs' husband. The cast included such stalwarts of British theatre as Juliet Stevenson, Marcia Warren, Kate O'Mara, Patsy Palmer & Caroline Blakiston.

The play is about an itinerant troupe of mainly female actors, travelling around England during the war and is based on a real group of actors called the Osiris Players. They formed in 1927 and performed until 1961 under the care of Nancy Hewins who believed that theatre was for the people, the masses. All female life is represented here, not so much tropes, more as characters. They are led by the indomitable Hetty who leads her group through thick and thin as they all travel across the UK in a 1920 silver Rolls Royce.

The play uses journey as a way of bringing out the characters, the troupe work together and against each other, witnessed through snippets of their lives and interplay and snippets of plays.

The play closes with a proposal of marriage, disagreements between families, an air raid, death, a child, and Hetty speaking Henry V's speech, closing to the same setting as the beginning. All elements of human life are represented here.

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It would be easy to make each character a stereotype, I am looking for a natural characterisation, not stereotypes, you need to be confident as the stage is going to be mostly empty.

I'm looking for flexibility and an ability to find something interesting and different about your character. The character has to be believable, someone that you might actually know.

Characters: 8 Women, 2 Men

The play features a good range of ages and distinct character types:

- **Hettie Oaks**, leader of the troupe: Stalwart, mother, mother hen
 - Hettie needs to be thirties/ early forties, could be older, RP accent? She's certainly well spoken, a very large part, indomitable but able to persuade, energetic, calm and resolute, can play any character and does. This is a very large role and she is hardly ever off stage, if at all.
- **Flora Pelmet**, co-founder of the troupe
 - Flora can anywhere between mid-twenties and mid thirties, a worthy sidekick, Hetty needs her, she is the sensible back-up to Flora.
- **Helen**, alcoholic children's radio presenter and frustrated actress
 - Helen, troubled, drinker, liable to get herself into trouble
- **Jocelyn**, stage manager
 - Jocelyn, capable, no nonsense
- **Ivy**, Joseph's girlfriend
 - Ivy is black or mixed race, she is a singer and she is from the midlands, a young woman, late teens or early twenties
- **Charlotte**, Cockney tomboy, latterly Rosalind's girlfriend
 - Charlotte is not obvious, but likes to wear men's clothes, and patterns herself on how men look including hair, twenties?

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- **Gertrude**, German Jewish refugee
 - Gertrude and Joseph are Jewish refugees from Germany
- **Rosalind**, new RADA graduate, Helen's daughter
 - Rosalind, RP, there needs to be a tension, perhaps a slight anxiety, about her, she has much to deal with. Is she hiding her sexuality? Self-conscious about her mother and her training, she is different to everyone and feels it, early twenties
- **Joseph Rosenbaum**, Gertrude's son
 - Joseph is a musician, plays saxophone (not a requirement), a young man, twenties, German accent (soft)
- **Reggie Pelmet**, Flora's cousin, older than the rest of the group, also doubling a number of characters who flit through the play. Needs to be adaptable.
- **Elsie**, dancer
 - might be an opportunity for someone to undertake their first role?

Doubling is required, there are other minor roles e.g. civil servants, auditionees.

Two Acts, some singing by all, doesn't have to be polished, dancing by some, enthusiasm is more important than technical ability.

Black box set, setting can be very simple rails of clothes, tables with props. Cast will be on stage most all (?) the time, if not speaking at the back as if in conversation. Period Costume.

You need to be enthusiastic, calm and flexible, Actors need to move chairs and rails around to make the setting for each scene, it will be very much a collaborative effort.

Contact Colleen for further details on batsonca@gmail.com