

THE SOUTH DEVON PLAYERS THEATRE & FILM COMPANY

Jack the Ripper - Audition Pack 2020



www.southdevonplayers.com

  sdevonplayers  southdevonplayers  sdevonplayers1

WELCOME TO THE SOUTH DEVON PLAYERS THEATRE & FILM COMPANY

“The power of the final scene was such that the audience sat transfixed in silence, barely able to comprehend the beauty of what they’d just witnessed ”

Rick Stone – Audience member, 2019.

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, offers a new approach to theatre-making. Involving people of all levels of experience, from beginners to seasoned professionals, the Players create full scale dramatic productions primarily focussing on historical events and classical texts, which have attracted local, national, and international awards, as well as glowing audience feedback both online and in person, for the productions performed at a variety of venues centering on, but not limited to, the region of South Devon, in the United Kingdom.

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, offers a truly unique experience; taking a pride in creating excellent productions working to the strength of the venues, with painstaking research and attention to detail in perfecting costumes, props and performance, the shows often have a strong interactive element, making the audience feel part of the action.

Based in the beautiful setting of South Devon, showcasing the diverse and considerable talents of local people, our creative use of performance space allows us to create breathtaking, world-class theatre, with our own unique style, while not compromising the production itself. We bring together talented performers, writers, technicians and costume makers, from the Southwest, with enthusiastic, loyal audiences and together, we create magic.



What We Do



At the The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, we make theatre from some of the world's most powerful history, legends and classical texts; stories that help us see the world in new and unexpected ways, while revisiting both much loved classical texts and known historical events, coupled with also exploring commonly overlooked historical events which are invaluable insights into pivotal events which made our community, and world, as it is now.

With a rehearsal base at Chestnut Community Centre, on the edge of our hometown Brixham, we tour our shows out to a variety of exciting performance spaces, mostly to local theatres, but also to museum spaces, church halls, and even open-air venues, facilitating accessible, approachable opportunities for people to experience theatre.

Our team members are welcomed regardless of initial experience, sexuality, religion or national origin. What we look for is the desire to create powerful new theatre productions in line with our fundamental values of excellence in performance, alongside personal empowerment; mutual respect between team members and the public; learning and improving new skills; and collaboration.

Over the course of a typical year, we produce two to four productions, as well as also collaborating with other theatre & film production companies to help our team members find further work in the area, in the creative industries. We also take our community responsibilities very seriously and support external community events, amateur groups, historical and cultural events with our skills, wherever feasible through time and our team members availability. As we are able to build funds and the organisation, the number of productions and collaborations will be able to increase.

We also seek to build an educational, training arm to facilitate accessible training to local people, of a wide range of diverse backgrounds, enabling them to develop strong performance skills to seek employment in the creative industries, and alongside that, develop excellence in transferable skills in communication, self-presentation, self-confidence, teamwork, literacy, and technical skills.

Our productions have won awards including the Long Island Theatre Award 2019 in New York, the all-England Epic Award 2017, the Torbay Together: Creativity In The Community Award 2014, with national and international film festival nominations for our film and video projects, including the Los Angeles Cinefest, Miami Epic Trailer Film Festival, and UK Screen One International Film Festival.

We are passionate and determined to create high-quality theatre featuring local and regional performers, proving that local people can put on world-class performance.



“Consistently high-quality shows and films created by a powerhouse of up and coming local talent ” Gerard Christiaans - 5 star Google page rating

“It was educational, and entertaining in equal measure ”

Simon Parks – 5 Star Google page rating

About our production

Our production of Jack the Ripper explores various theories of Jack The Ripper's identity (although it is never revealed, leaving the audience to draw their own conclusions at the final scene). While there are myriads of theories about Jack The Ripper and other personalities living in Whitechapel at the time, we have kept to specific theories, and linked them together into a maze of drama and leads, reflecting the complexity of the investigations, while also running a linear, narrative drama.

The show, set in 19th Century London, has been given a steampunk re-imagining, with a steam-powered technology, which mainly appears within the sets, costuming and props.

Abberline, the detective in charge of the investigations, while battling his own inner demons and dark past, meets various personalities of Whitechapel, including local tradesmen, drunks, and prostitutes, in his race to identify and stop the Ripper.

This is an energetic, fast moving drama with a wide range of characters, almost all of whom are historical personages. Obviously given the content, of a Victorian serial killer who preys on prostitutes, there the show does involve on-stage violence, sexual soliciting and references to prostitution, although there are no onstage sexual scenes and those activities are referred to only.

We are casting the show in July 2020, and expect to have an age range in the cast from 18, though to about 60 or 70, from the profiles of the actors whom we know are auditioning. We will be looking at a cast of 15 to 20 actors.

Any actor aged under 18 on the date of casting, must be chaperoned in line with our child protection policy and the law. This means that they must attend all auditions, rehearsals and performances accompanied by a parent, their legal guardian, or a registered chaperone hired by a parent.

We take excellent professional practice extremely seriously, and all castings are held in line with Equity's Manifesto for Casting. We have Equity Executive members in our cast and always exceed minimum best practice with regard to ethical treatment of our cast and crew, which is extended to venues and venue staff with whom we work.

We are unable to cast any actors who have not formally attended the audition session.

Our shows may be performed at venues for one or two days. We arrive and set up quite promptly, and pack down on the same evening to depart the same night as the final performance. We are extremely strict with our cast and crew to leave venues in excellent condition, as you would expect of fellow professional theatre-makers.

Auditions

COVID NOTICE : Temporary alteration to how we audition and rehearse, for the period of the UK's Covid-19 lockdown: *If lockdown is lifted, then please disregard this Covid-19 notice and move straight on to the original plans.*

Auditions, for the period of lockdown, or for any demographics which may have extended legal requirements for self-isolation after lockdown ends, will take place via video audition. This will take the form of an initial request from us for a self-tape of your chosen character(s). Most of the sides are dialogue, and if you do not have someone to read in for you, then simply do not speak the other characters lines, but react to them silently as if they are speaking to you. We will look for natural "convincing" performances, rather than obvious expressionless reading, in the same manner as at our "physical" castings.

These videos should be submitted to us on email at southdevonplayers@gmail.com, on July 19th 2020 by 11.59pm.

Auditions filmed on your phone without any especial equipment are perfectly acceptable. Please just ensure that we can see and hear you clearly.

We will hold callbacks for all performers who are new to our company, on video-conference; where the show director will provide an appointment date and time to call you via Zoom, or Facebook Messenger (your preference), to discuss the role, the production, find out more about you, and give you the chance to ask any questions you may have.

Castings will be announced at the end of the week following the deadline for the self-tapes, and will be subject to the usual contracts (as available on our website audition page)

Any rehearsals taking place during the lockdown period, will take place using the Zoom video conferencing app, which available for PC, and all types of phone/ tablet. Once lockdown ends, rehearsals will go back to those taking place at our usual rehearsal hall at Chestnut Community Centre in Brixham, which you will be expected to be available for and attend, as per the usual details below.

If/when lockdown is no-longer in force, we move back to our usual casting and rehearsal plans.

AUDITION DATE – Sunday July 19th 2020, doors open at 12 midday, auditions start 1pm.

AUDITION VENUE – Chestnut Community Centre (ground floor), 1-3 Poplar Close, Brixham, Devon, TQ5 0SA

WHAT TO PREPARE – You will be asked to bring a prepared audition side (please contact us for audition sides for any character from the list below). If auditioning for Rose, you will be asked to also prepare two verses of a song of choice. We will be able to play MP3 backing tracks from email or USB stick

SELECTION PROCESS – the selection process is detailed on our website but in short, we look for excellent characterisation, the ability to work with others in the scene, as well as pleasant socially acceptable behaviour at the audition. We send out casting offers within 24 hours of the audition date, and announce the final castings on the Friday, at latest.

REHEARSAL/ SHOW DATES – commence on the following Sunday. At the same venue as our audition space, timings are 12pm - 4pm on Sundays, and 6.30pm – 9.30pm on Wednesdays. Then: Full show: Torquay Museum: Oct 30th, Brixham Theatre: November 6th & 7th, Plymouth -Stoke Damerel Church: November 14th, Bristol St Thomas The Martyr: Nov 20th. One of these shows will also be filmed for online streaming, and another will be livestreamed online. These are likely to be the Brixham performances.

About the characters

While characters are organised according to historical gender in the table below, we are not averse to altering some for the production, if needed, as we are aware we have a large number of male roles. The names of the characters would then be feminised. You can see the alternatives on the list below.

We fully expect to ask some of the actors playing smaller roles, to play more than one character as the story progresses, with relevant time for costume and make-up changes.

Many characters may be Jack the Ripper himself, he appears seven times in the script. Because we never reveal his identity, he will appear played by ideally different men from within the cast, so that while he is always dressed the same, with a hat, mask and long coat, he is fractionally different each time. As well as scripted lines, characters may be expected to join in crowd scenes as well, as relevant. We are also looking for people who may not be so confident in solo speaking roles but who want to appear as extras in inn/ crowd/ mob scenes.

Actors of all ethnicities are welcomed – we love (and prefer) to have a diverse team.

We are very flexible on age, therefore no ages are stated, with the following caveats.

- None of the prostitutes, their clients, or Jack, are to be played by performers under the age of 18. We also prefer that characters who “find” bodies are not aged under 18 due to graphic makeup of wounds and body parts.
- William Gull needs to be older than many of the other characters.

Male Characters

John Kelly - paranoid schizophrenic, one of Ripper suspects, hates prostitutes, blaming this wife – whom he murdered - for giving him VD. Currently on the run at the time the story takes place.

Henry/ Harry Turner -local pedlar, cheerful, slightly cynical and very practical.

Frederick Abberline -chief investigator from Scotland Yard. Down-to-earth, humanitarian, with a long hidden grief .

Inspector Edmund Reid – Local policeman, very competent, somewhat a freethinker

William Gull (Famous doctor, freemason and personal physician to Queen Victoria). Aloof, but practical

Inspector Barrett. - Abberlines assistant. They have worked together on several cases before. Practical and pleasant.

Adam – client of the whores.

John Pizer - local Jewish workman, accused of being the Ripper.

Diemschutz - local carter, historically male, however can become a female character if needed.

Charles Lusk - local businessman, Freemason and founder of local vigilante group. Confrontational, not afraid of making unpopular choices.

Artist - person targeted as per a news paper article for having something red on his shirt – turns out to be paint. Depicted in our script as a character whose personality seems gay although never stated

Carl - soldier from the local barracks

Kenneth – soldier from the local barracks

Thomas Bowyer – Mary-Jane Kellys landlord (historically male, could be female)

Female Roles

Rose – Abberline's sister, appears in a duet song at the opening of the show, and later as a ghost in the opium den.

Polly” Mary Ann Nichols - Prostitute, murdered by Jack

Annie Chapman - Prostitute, murdered by Jack

Mary Ann Kelly - Unrelated to John, Prostitute, murdered by Jack. Friendly, pleasant, quite a chatterbox, takes a liking to Abberline.

Martha Tabram - Prostitute, murdered by Jack, cynical , angry, barely tolerated at the Ten Bells

Elizabeth Stride - Prostitute, murdered by Jack . New to London after working in the country all summer on farms.

Catherine Eddowes - Prostitute, murdered by Jack

Eliza – friend of Mary Jane Kelly, also a prostitute, but newer to that line of work

John Waldren - Landlord of the Ten Bells inn. Ideally and historically male, however can become a female character if needed.

Diemschutz - (local carter historically male, however can become a female character if needed)

Susie - Waldrons serving girl at the Ten Bells, younger and saucy, but tough

Inspector Edmund Reid – Local policeman, very competent, somewhat a freethinker (ideally and historically male, could be female if needed)

Thomas Bowyer – Mary-Jane Kellys landlord (historically male, could be female)

Where it all began: Brief history & Background of the South Devon Players

We were founded during the winter of 2005-2006, by four local actors. Struggling to find opportunities beyond those offered by annual amateur musicals, we decided to start our own.

We started with very little; one of us, who owned a car, was recruited to transport as much as the rest of us could “clear out” at home to a car-boot sale. This gave us starting funds of £80. In the meantime, we also found a small rehearsal space at the local Royal British Legion social club. Researching local history and discovering the court records of a 17th Century scandal in the nearby town of Totnes, provided material for our first script. And thus we began our journey.

Over the years we have encountered many challenges. Despite good reviews for our work, we found it very difficult, as a new organisation, for many years, to find good venues, and were heavily limited by public perceptions of what the quality of a show in a church hall would be like, thus finding ourselves usually performing to audiences of around 10 or 12 people, and unable to attract the programme managers of actual theatres so that they could see our work.

The first big change came in 2013, when we first performed our production of *Les Miserables*; *The Memoirs of Jean Valjean*; a script we wrote ourselves, based on Victor Hugo's novel. During our tour to local church halls, a producer from London came to see our show. Within 24 hours, he had emailed us, telling us how impressed he was with the show and how more people should see it. He paid for us to take the show to the Palace Theatre in Paignton. We reprised the show, to excellent full-house audiences, who now willingly came, now that they could see us in a theatre instead of a church hall.

The glass ceiling of finding venues was broken. We were slowly able to move away from church halls, and into theatres. More and better venues began to accept us, although some continued to avoid us until more recently, due to our small beginnings, and we continued to slowly grow.

While we have never been able to successfully obtain grant funding to expand as we would have liked, we have survived and managed to grow with scrimping and saving from having stands of plants & bric a brac at table top sales, sponsored activities, etc, and learning how to recycle and repurpose clothing and items obtained from charity shops and on websites such as Freecycle.

We have worked with a number of other local organisations, providing actors, historical recreations, photographers, voiceovers, and anything that we could help with, towards a shared goal of increasing participation and opportunity in the local arts.

The ultimate aim is to continue to grow into a successful self-sustaining regional theatre company which is not only providing work for local creatives, but also provides a significant contribution to the creative community of our home region. We welcome anyone who would like to join us on this journey.

Participation for people aged under 18

This production has scenes that may be deemed age restricted. These are visual scenes of

- scenes of murder
- graphic special effects makeup of wounds and body parts
- scenes of prostitutes sexually soliciting clients in the street.

If you are aged under 18, you will be restricted in what roles you can take in this production. As with all our cast, involvement is by attendance at our audition date.

No actor under 18 can take part in scenes which involve scenes of murder, or prostitutes soliciting, and it should be noted that they are likely to witness these scenes in rehearsal.

As with all productions, actors aged under 18 can only be taken on, in line with full compliance with our child protection policy as available on our website. (Governance documents section).

The child's involvement is also, by law, subject to a child performance licence being granted by the Child's Local Authority, and Torbay Council, and a letter of permission personally signed by the headteacher of their school, and to the attendance of a parent of the child attending all auditions, rehearsals, and performances as the child's chaperone.

Child performers are expected to work at the same level of professionalism, and attendance, as their adult counterparts.

Child performers being accepted for the production is subject to their attendance at the auditions, the same as all other actors wishing to be considered for the show. Our casting process takes place strictly by the guidelines laid down by the trade union Equity.

Child actors and their parent/ chaperone, should be aware that if selected, child actors will need to learn their roles and attend rehearsals and performances in the same manner as the rest of the cast.

Child actors and their parent/ chaperone, should be aware that the Jack The Ripper show tour will take place in venues across the Southwest, from Plymouth to Bristol, with a likelihood of touring to London, and must be able to attend all performances.

Parents/ legal guardians are required to sign the actors performance contract on behalf of the child, and ensure that the child follows the details of the contract (available on our website – Auditions tab).

Parents/ legal guardians/ licenced chaperones are required to also adhere to company policies including, but not limited to, health & safety, respectful behaviour, production guidelines, no unauthorised disclosure of intellectual property.

Our Audiences & Marketing Reach

Awards:

Our productions have won international, national and regional awards including the Theatre Partner Award at the Long Island Theatre Awards New York in 2019, the BrixAward for community contribution in 2019, the All-England Epic Award in 2017, the Torbay Together: Creativity In The Community Award in 2014, with national and international film festival nominations for our film and video projects, including the Los Angeles Cinefest, Miami Epic Trailer Film Festival, and the UK Screen One International Film Festival.

Audience Figures for The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company are growing:

- Between June 2018 and Oct 2019, our physical audiences increased by 490%.
- Online followers on social media increased to over 22,000 from 44 countries.
- Audiences grew with both many new attendees, and a high retention of returning audiences from previous shows.
- Audiences are also building abroad with those who cannot attend our shows in person, viewing our stage productions online. These include private individuals, and schools, primarily in the Americas, Middle East, and Asia.

Marketing Reach:

- Online newsletters and social media posts reach over 23,000 people internationally, directly, and many more with shared posts and forwarded messages.
- Printed theatre programmes for each show reach all audiences, around 63% of audience members purchase one. They are often shared when people make group bookings.
- Online sales have increased year on year although box office sales “in person” remain popular.

Audience Profile:

- We have a local physical audience based on regional demographics.
- The average local age is 44, with a higher number of retired people
- An average of 91% of residents are UK born, however in the summer we see an increased footfall from people on holiday due to being a high-tourist area.
- We have a large international following, who follow our shows online using such tools as YouTube or social media feeds. Our current social media following is over 22,080, before counting an organic reach.

Location & physical footfall:

- While our rehearsal venue is a small community centre out-of-town, we ensure that our performances take place at central locations in towns and cities, close to public transport as well as parking.
- Show / project advertising in physical locations is centred on, though not in any way limited to, the town centres & city-centre locations where the shows are taking place. Current shows typically tour South Devon, and then go on to Bristol. We are hoping to expand further as funding and venues permit.

Performer and crew policy

Everyone in our team (actors, crew, admin) is integral to maintain the day-to-day operation of the South Devon Players Theatre And Film Company.

(Hereafter referred to as “The Players”.)

The Players recognise the rights of team members to:

Know what is (and what is not) expected of them

Have adequate support in their role

Receive appreciation

Have safe working conditions

Be insured

Know their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong

Receive appropriate training, if necessary

Be free from discrimination, bullying, or other socially unacceptable behaviour.

Be offered the opportunity for personal development.

Be respected in the same manner as anyone else in our organisation.

The Players expect all team members to:

-Be reliable, honest and trustworthy at all times.

-Respect confidentiality

-Carry out tasks in a way that reflects the aims and values of The Players, and our reputation for excellence.

-Work within agreed guidelines

-Respect the work of the Players and not bring us into disrepute

-Comply with the Players policies, and the law, including health & safety, equal opportunities, workplace respect, child protection, and data protection.

-Treat other members of the organisation and members of the public, as you yourself would wish to be treated.

-To maintain the confidential information of the organization and its clients

-To meet time commitments and standards agreed to, and, when this is not possible, to give reasonable notice so other arrangements can be made.

-Attend rehearsals and performances in a reliable, consistent manner.

Team members are required to adhere to the policies and procedures of The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company, and to legal requirements of entertainment law, in order to ensure everyone's well-being, foster a sense of respect, safe-space, learning, and creativity. Anyone who breaches the policies and procedures, may have their involvement immediately terminated .

The Players commit to the following:

Clarity and communication

- To explain the standards we expect for our services and to encourage and support you to achieve and maintain them.
- To make every effort to avoid lone-working. In the vast majority of situations you will be working with an experienced member of our organisation.

Provision to our team

- All team members are entitled to free tea/ coffee/ squash, and light refreshments while working on a task with us.
- Any specialist equipment (including, but not limited to, tech, costume, notebooks, scripts, craft materials) is supplied.
- We ask team members not to spend money on our behalf ,without checking in advance. We ask that any expenditure for which you wish to receive reimbursement, are discussed with, and approved by our admins, prior to the expenditure being made, and subject to the provision of receipts. Expense incurred outside of this agreement cannot be reimbursed.

Health & Safety

- To provide adequate feedback in support of our Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which is available from the The Players website, a production director, or a committee officer.

Equal Opportunities

- To ensure that all team members are dealt with in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy, a full copy of which is available from The Players website, a production director, or a committee officer.
- In essence, our equal opportunities policy stipulates that no person involved with our organisation, will be discriminated against, on grounds of race, religion, sexuality or gender identification.

Problems

- To try to resolve fairly any problems, grievances and difficulties you may have while you work with us.
- In the event of an unresolved problem, to offer the opportunity to state your case to officers of the committee.

The Players aim to treat all team members fairly, objectively and consistently. We seek to ensure that team members views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution. The committee is responsible for handling problems regarding complaints or conduct, please refer any complaint/concern to them at the earliest opportunity. If the problem involves a member of the committee, the problem should be referred to any other committee member. In the event of a problem, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible. Support will be provided by the Players to the team member while it endeavours to resolve the problem.

- All team members are subject to our members rules of conduct, and the disciplinary procedure laid out therein.

Zero Tolerance

The South Devon Players Theatre And Film Company has a zero tolerance policy in respect of aggressive verbal or physical behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual impropriety, bullying, gaslighting, harassment, antisocial conduct, theft, rehearsal disruption, or other behaviour not in keeping with the norms of socially acceptable behaviour, at any event, or location (physical or digital), towards any of our members or any members of the public. Any such behaviour, or clear evidence of such behaviour, may result in the immediate ejection from the premises, termination of your involvement and a lifetime ban from the premises and all events managed by South Devon Players Theatre And Film Company.