Villanova Student Musical Theatre Presents:

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

**Audition Information**

**Dance Auditions:** Tuesday, September 2nd– 6 pm  
**Acting Auditions:** Wednesday, September 3rd–time slots from 7 pm to 11 pm

**Callbacks:** Thursday, September 4th – 5:30 pm  
  
Ahh, *There You Are*! Cheerio, and thank you for your interest in Villanova Student Musical Theatre’s fall production of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*! I’m just going to go *Out on a Limerick* here and guess that you are as excited as we are about this show! Though we may be *Perfect Strangers* now, we can’t wait to meet you and become *Two Kinsmen*. Please read through all of this information thoroughly, **fill out the attached audition form (on pages 9 and 10), and bring it with you to dance auditions on the 2nd.** We will use the same form for vocal/acting auditions on the 3rd, so you only need to fill it out once.

In order to be considered for a role, you MUST attend both the dance auditions (at 6pm on the 2nd), AND the individual vocal/acting auditions (time slots from 7pm-11pm on the 3rd). You must also be available for callbacks (should you receive one), beginning at 5:30pm on the 4th.

If you have a conflict with any part of the audition process, please let us know as soon as possible to make alternate arrangements.   
  
Thank you again for your interest! Feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Directors: Allyce Morrissey and Vincent Raspa   
Musical Director: Jen Buono   
  
Contact: [vsmtdrood@gmail.com](mailto:vsmtdrood@gmail.com)

**Things to know:**

* If cast, the first rehearsal/read through will be Friday September 5th at 3 pm
* Rehearsals will be three weeknights per week, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons (a total of 5 days per week, subject to increase later in the rehearsal process)
* We will have rehearsals over a portion of fall break (this is usually referred to as “boot camp”) from October 15th through the 19th
* Conflicts with rehearsals and boot camp may seriously impact casting
* The show opens on Tuesday, October 21st and runs through Saturday, the 25th

**Dance Auditions** (Tuesday, September 2nd 6pm)   
  
We will teach a short dance combination from a number in the show. Dance shoes are preferred but not required; sneakers are perfectly fine. Drood is not a dance heavy show, but we want to see if people can move. Do not stress about this portion of the audition if you do not consider yourself a “dancer”; it will by no means make or break your chances of being cast.

**Individual Vocal/Acting Audition** (Wednesday, September 3rd 7pm-11pm)  
  
Please prepare 32 bars of a musical-theatre song in the style of the show. When looking for a song, please try to avoid songs from contemporary or rock musicals (Rent, Next to Normal, Wicked, Here Lies Love, etc.) Some starting points would be Holmes’s other musical, *Curtains*, character-heavy songs from the 80s/90s, or other musicals with older subject matter. It may also be beneficial to cater your cut to the style of a specific character you are interested. As always, play to your strengths. Songs must be memorized, and a copy of the song must be provided for our musical director, who will be accompanying.

Also prepare one of the attached monologues. It does not need to be memorized, but you should be comfortable with it. We may ask you to read another monologue in addition to the one you select, so familiarize yourself with all of them. ***It is up to you to decide whether or not to audition with the accent appropriate for your character***. Do whatever you feel will best showcase your talents, but also be prepared to try it another way if we ask you to. ***Do not stress about accents!*** This is really tough, we are not expecting perfection….we just want to see what you can do!

**Callbacks (**Thursday September 4th)  
  
Sides and song cuts for the callbacks will be provided when we release the call back list on Wednesday night, following individual auditions.

\*Receiving a callback does not guarantee that you will be cast. Conversely, not receiving a call back does not mean that you have been cut.

***The Mystery of Edwin Drood*—A Brief Summary:**

*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is a show-within-a-show-musical-mystery extravaganza, based on the unfinished Charles Dickens novel of the same name.   Our audience enters the theater into the world of 1892, at the Music Hall Royale’s premiere performance of *the Mystery of Edwin Drood*. We meet John Jasper, and his nephew, Edwin Drood (played by the famous male impersonator, Alice Nutting), as well as a series of other curious characters. When Edwin Drood mysteriously goes missing, the search is on to discover who killed him…and it seems that there are many suspects! But the show abruptly comes to a halt when we reach the point where author Charles Dickens’ novel was left unfinished when he died. The solution to the mystery is put out to the audience to decide. Voting takes place to elect a detective, murderer, and a pair of lovers (for a happy ending, of course). With over 100 different combinations of endings, it is a guaranteed to be a different show every night! Drama, hilarity, and British accents ensue!

**What we are looking for at auditions:**

We are looking for people who are absolutely fearless. The players of the Music Hall Royale are larger than life, and they are portraying even larger than life characters in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. This show involves in-character improv, and audience interaction/participation. We are looking for people who are willing and committed to put themselves out there, and dive completely into another character.

This show is going to be so much fun, but it is also going to be a challenge. We are not expecting perfection at auditions, but we need people who are fearless and dedicated; that is the most important thing!

**Cast Size (18 people)**

All actors in this production portray two roles: a “player” (member of the 19th century Music Hall Royale) and the “character” (in the Music Hall’s production of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*). In the descriptions below, the “player”is listed first, with the “character” role second.

All characters speak with a British accent (with the exception of Helena and Neville Landless, who have an “untraceably eastern” accent). Variations like Cockney, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, are fine as well.

**Men (9)**

William Cartwright…as…the Chairman

Mr. Clive Paget…as…John Jasper

Mr. Victor Grinstead…as…Neville Landless

Mr. Cedric Moncrieffe…as…Reverend Crisparkle

Mr. Nick Cricker…as…Durdles

Mr. Phillip Bax…as…Bazzard

Mr. James Throttle…as…the Stage Manager and ensemble

Master Nick Cricker (junior)…as…Durdles

Mr. Nicholas Michael…as…Horrace and ensemble

**Women (9)**

Miss Angela Prysock…as…Princess Puffer

Miss Deirdre Peregrine…as…Rosa Bud

Miss Alice Nutting…as…Edwin Drood

Miss Janet Conover…as…Helena Landless

Miss Florence Gill…as…Flo

Miss Isabel Yearsley…as...Wendy and ensemble

Miss Sarah Cook…as…Beatrice and ensemble

Miss Gwendolen Pynn…as…maid and ensemble

Miss Violet Balfur…as…maid and ensemble

**Men:**

**Chairperson/Mayor Thomas Sapsea:** The leader of the music hall troupe. The Chairperson carries the majority of the dialogue and must be quick with a joke and able to improvise. He is in charge of keeping the pace of the show moving. Unexpectedly fills in as the Mayor character in *Drood* when another actor fails to show up. Baritone (D#3 – F#4 – can pop octaves if needed). British accent.

**Clive Paget/John Jasper:** The Royale’s male lead, a devilishly attractive cad, and knows it. In *Drood*, he is the baddie. Choirmaster of Cloisterham Cathedral, and uncle of Edwin Drood. In love with Rosa Bud. Madness lurks beneath smooth exterior. Strictly speaking, a suspect, but didn’t do it. Bari-tenor (A2 – A4). British accent.

**Victor Grinstead/Neville Landless:** Victor is enjoying his premier performance with the Music Hall Royale. His character, Neville, is Helena’s twin brother and suffers from a ”geographically untraceable” approximation of an East Asian accent. Falls for Rosa Bud, falls out with Edwin, and is therefore another suspect in the murder. Very passionate and often angry. Bari-tenor (C3 – G4), strong ensemble singer. Will need to switch between his British accent and the “geographically untraceable” approximation of an East Asian accent (think Indian).

**Cedric Moncrieffe/Reverend Crisparkle:** This troupe member is a bit of an open book who plays an archetypal vicar, who is also a bit of a lurker, and was in love with Rosa’s mother. A suspect. Must be significantly older than Rosa. Baritone (C3 – G4), strong ensemble singer. British accent.

**Phillip Bax/Bazzard:** Devotee of the theatre, the everlasting understudy, who finally gets his moment. May have quite a major part if the evening turns out that way. A sad sort of clown. In his role as Bazzard, he is often an audience-favorite suspect. Very capable of stealing the whole show. Bari-tenor (A2 – Eb4 [opt G4 or Bb4]). British accent.

**Nick Cricker, Sr./Durdles:** ”Clown Prince of the Royale” who makes the most of every line and plays the drunkard sexton in *Drood*. Gets to announce the murderer. Baritone or Tenor (B2 – F4) – ensemble singer. Cockney accent.

**Nick Cricker, Jr./Deputy:** Boy any age younger than Cricker, Sr. As the Deputy, lowest in the pecking order, and very funny. Any voice range – ensemble singer. Cockney accent.

**James Throttle, Stage Manager:** A non-singing role, who helps to keep the Chairperson on track throughout the play. British accent.

**Women:**

**Angela Prysock/Princess Puffer:** Angela has been a favorite of London audiences forever, a staple of the stage. As the mysterious Princess Puffer, Madam, opium dealer and general purveyor of vice of all kinds, she is glamorous in her ruin. A suspect. Serious low alto (F3 – D5) – must have a big chest voice and lots of rapport with the audience. British/cockney accent.

**Alice Nutting/Edwin Drood:** Prima donna and London’s leading male impersonator, charming but, as you might expect, with determination and a lot of ego. Must command the stage. As Edwin Drood, she is an attractive, rich, and popular young man who has everything. The victim. Mezzo (B3 – E5). British accent.

**Deirdre Peregrine/Rosa Bud:** The not-so-innocent ingenue of the Music Hall Royale, Deirdre portrays the love interest of *Drood*, the young, beautiful and apparently fragile Rosa Bud. She is betrothed to Edwin Drood, the only man who isn’t in love with her. A suspect in his murder. True soprano (A3 – B5), with a high B natural. British accent.

**Janet Conover/Helena Landless:** Janet is a long-standing member of the acting troupe, asked to play the mysterious Helena Landless who hails from a mysterious foreign colony not unlike India. Twin sister of Neville Landless. Another suspect. Mezzo (G3 – D5 [optional E5]), strong ensemble singer. Will need to switch between her British accent and a “geographically untraceable” approximation of an East Asian accent (think Indian).

**Wendy and Beatrice:** Drawn from the company, these characters are contemporaries of Rosa Bud who sing a fabulous quartet with Rosa and Helena in Act I as well as participating in the rest of the company goings-on. (C4-D5) British accents.

**Company Members:** Takers of small parts in the Drood, but along with other non-suspects, these will be important characters throughout, taking much of the responsibility for making the audience participation work, and working individually with sections of the audience. In addition, these characters are vital in creating the atmosphere of the touring theatre company. Lots of scope for creation of individual characters. BRITISH ACCENTS

*(Character descriptions adapted from those used by the Staples Players of Westport, CT)*

**Monologues**

**Men:**  
**Chairman:** Miss Nutting! Really! Well! Ladies and gentlemen, please! Such appalling behavior is due entirely to upbringing! Her parents were in the Iron and Steel business. (pause) Mother irons, Father steals. (regards audience, invites boos…if they occur, turn back on audience in disbelief) You mean you didn’t like that? Well, how about this, then: she was previously known as the Orthopedic Soprano! (dramatic pause) She sang in all the joints! (begging for applause, will receive none) You mean to say you didn’t like that? Then how about this: she sang in a pub called “The Cock and Comfort”……..not much comfort, but plenty of………..if you catch my drift…(as audience gets the joke) Oh, so *that’s* the mood we’re in tonight! Which brings us, ladies and gentlemen, to a much more serious matter. For now, as I all great mystery stories, we must find ourselves…a killer. A culprit. A fiend. In short, the murderer of the dear, departed, vanished, vanquished, late lamented title character of our play, Edwin Droooood!

**Jasper:** I will go mad! Do you not realize there is more than one side, one face to all things in nature? (towards a frenzy) Beneath Neville’s tainted English accent and adopted English manners, there is a heathen Landless, a tribesman Landless, a half-blooded, half-bred, half-caste who would kill as easily as he would comb his sleek hair! I myself suffer from this sort of duality on occasion. Sometimes I will…forget things…and in going back to fetch them, half-expect to meet myself rounding a corner I’ve already turned…indeed, like our two-sided Neville Landless, I find that I am not myself these days.   
  
**Neville:** You never saw him beat my sister. My stepfather was a brute, Mr. Jasper. In desperation, Helena tried on more than one occasion to flee his cruel and miserly hand, even disguising herself as a boy. But to no avail. As for myself, I have had, from my earliest remembrances, to subdue a deadly and bitter hatred, which has made me secret and revengeful. However, sir, your kindness and goodwill have deeply moved me. I pledge to change my ill-tempered ways, and break new ground for myself.   
  
**Crisparkle:** What a storm for Christmas Eve! ‘Twas like this the night that Rosa’s mother died. I was once engaged to Rosa’s mother, you know. Yes yes, but I fear I was a bit too Anglican, a bit to Angular for her taste. (He reflects) And then, at a seaside party celebrating her second anniversary…only a few months after Rosa was born…she apparently slipped while walking unobserved along the cliffs, and drowned the the embrace of the ungrateful waves…(catches himself) But enough! Let us follow Mr. Jasper’s lead and forget our grievances with life and with each other over a sturdy Christmas dinner.

**Women:**

**Rosa:** (bitterly) Love!!! You dare to use that word! Love is an innocent word that wandered here from pastures green where it was rarely said or seen and seldom sung. It was intended to be used on rare occasions, not abused by every tongue! Rarely has a word been ever taken so in vain; what little meaning might remain to it is quickly blurred. Never has there been such a term so exhausted. Your sighs and syllables confirm how drained this word is. You call it love?! I call it rude, lust, lewd, cruel. I cannot bear to call it love! I am the only soul in Cloisterham, it seems, who senses the sort of dreams you dream at night. Did you think your stare would stop my seeing? You must know how much I loathed to know your wants, your clutch, your voice, your touch!   
  
**Prysock/Puffer:** (to gentleman) ‘Allo, love. Fancy seeing you two nights in a row? What piece of crumpet you been buttering up instead of me. What little slice of raspberry tart- oh, beggin’ your pardon, Miss, I’m sure. First time out on the town with him, is it? Eh? Never you fear, love- I’ve had him on numerous occasions- and whatever he’s got in store for you, praise God, it will be over with in an instant!   
  
**Helena:** (whirling on Sapsea) You have an interesting way with the law here in Cloisterham, Mr. Sapsea. And you, Mr. Jasper…for days now you have been warning all Cloisterham of impending violence between your nephew and my brother…what do you know of all this? Before you utter the word murder again, you laughable man, perhaps you will be good enough to supply a body, a victim, a corpse…something more tangible than an errant nephew, a timorous uncle, and a ludicrous city official who has no backing for his charges beyond pure pomp and sheer circumstance. Oh, bless you for your sense Mr. Crisparkle. (More as Conover) I only wish I could express my gratitude without this strange, somewhat geographically untraceable accent!

**The Mystery of Edwin Drood:Audition Form**

**Name:**

**Year:**

**Gender:**

**Cell:**

**Email:**

**Voice Part** (include range, if possible)**:**

**Height:**

**Hair Color:**

**Role(s) You Are Auditioning For:**

**Are You Willing to Accept a Different Role?:**

**Theatrical Experience/Training** (You may attach a resume if you have one, please include years of training):

**Musical Experience/Training** (Vocal lessons, choirs, cabarets, instruments etc.; please include years of training):

**Dance Experience/Training** (Please include the years and style of dance studied):

**Special Talents/abilities** (juggling, intense dance moves, acrobatics, accents, funny voices etc.)

**Class Schedule:**

**Conflicts (Please do your best to include everything and anything you can think of between now and October 25th, including weekends):**

**Are you available to come to Boot Camp over part of Fall Break?** (October 15th through the 19th)**?**

**What is your favorite British phrase?**

**Who is your favorite British Person?**

**Questions, Concerns, Thoughts, Jokes:**