

AUDITIONS NOTICE

THE RISE AND FALL OF LITTLE VOICE by Jim Cartwright

Please read carefully all the details, in particular rehearsal dates. Please do not audition if you have significant clashes or regular unavailability within the rehearsal period, or any unavailability during the performance period. If you are unsure whether unavailability will be an issue please check first by emailing jez.pike@maddermarket.org

Production Dates: 22nd-30th May (10 performances – 7.30pm Monday-Friday & Saturday plus 2.30pm on both Saturdays. No performance Sunday).

Location: Main House

Director: John Hales

Rehearsal Dates: Read-through likely to be the weekend of the 7th/8th March.

The actor playing Little Voice will probably have a couple of singing rehearsals around the weekend of 28th/29th March and week of 30th.

Full rehearsals to begin Sunday 5th April. There will be a total of 4 rehearsals a week up until 11th May. These will comprise of weekday evenings (7-10pm) and regular Sunday rehearsals (morning or afternoon, and occasionally both).

From the 11th May it will be 5 nights a week (6.30-10pm) plus the tech rehearsal on the 17th May. Actors will be required in the afternoon and evening. Dress rehearsals are on the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st May and the production opens on Friday the 22nd.

Actors will be called for rehearsals when required and the exact schedule will be worked out following casting and released in mid-February.

Audition Dates: *All auditions will be held at The Maddermarket Theatre. There will be signs directing you where to go on arrival.*

1st Round:

Option A: 27th January - Audition slots between 6.30pm & 10pm

Option B: 28th January – Auditions slots between 6.30pm & 10.30pm

**FOR THE ROLE OF LITTLE VOICE ONLY – There is an Option C which is an open (X Factor-style) audition on Sunday 26th January between 2pm & 6pm. Slots won't be given in advance, auditionees can turn up at any point within the time-slot and will be seen in order of arrival.*

Recall Audition

2nd February – Group sessions: 11am -1pm and 2pm to 5pm

Please note that all auditionees should in principal be available for the recall audition. If you are unable to make any of the audition dates but would still like to be seen, contact the director jez.pike@maddermarket.org and alternative arrangements may be possible, though are not guaranteed.

Format of auditions

First Round

For the role of Little Voice: The focus will be purely on singing. Auditionees will be asked to sing solo three of the songs that the character sings in the play, giving their best impression of the original artist. Auditionees will get two go's at each song; the first-time round singing along to a recording of the track (which will be provided at the audition) and the second time round on their own with no accompaniment. Auditionees will be notified of which songs they'll be required to sing after submitting an audition form

All other roles: Auditions will be primarily focused on text and will use extracts from the play. All extracts used will be provided in advance. These extracts do not need to be learnt by heart. Actors should seek to be familiar with them enough to read confidently and be able to lift their eyes off the page as much as possible. First round auditions will consist of one-to-one readings with the director. Each actor will have their own audition slot lasting approximately 15mins, with the chance to speak to the director about their interest in the part/play, acting experience and the director's ideas for the production.

Recall: This audition will take the form of a group session beginning with some games and exercises, before work on extracts in groups. Actors auditioning for the role of Little Voice may spend some additional time looking at songs with the Musical Director. The director may wish to try various combinations of casting and it is likely that actors may have periods of waiting in between being seen.

The Maddermarket is committed to making its audition process as accessible as possible. Auditionees may request that reasonable adjustments are made to the audition process in order for them to attend and participate. Please contact the Director of Productions, Jez Pike – jez.pike@maddermarket.org to enquire.

How to sign-up

Please download the Auditions Submission Form from the website. Complete and return it as an attachment to the Director of Productions at The Maddermarket Theatre, Jez Pike at jez.pike@maddermarket.org. Your information will then be processed, stored and distributed in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Jez Pike will then contact you via email to arrange an audition slot.

Scans of the audition extracts can be emailed to you. Alternatively hard copies can be picked up from the theatre office (10.30am-6pm, Mon-Fri). In addition a scan of the script may be requested by email, or alternatively a reading copy is available at the theatre office to read on-site.

Please note that all auditionees must complete an 'Auditions Submission Form' **prior to** auditioning, even if they have had existing contact with or made informal arrangements with the director of that production.

About the Play

“The Rise and Fall of Little Voice” (or “LV” from now on) premiered at the National in 1992 and was adapted into “Little Voice” (Maybe they were worried about spoilers) in 1998, scooping an Oscar nomination and BAFTA and Golden Globe wins. It's a dream piece for actors, cracking dialogue and characters that surprise and go deeper than the stereotypes on first glance...

Mari is a drunk widow, raising her reclusive, nervous wreck of a daughter, LV, in a firetrap of a terraced house in an unspecified northern town, back when having a phone was a big deal. As Mari pulls talent promoter Ray Say at Mr Boo's club and brings him home, LV, a painfully shy girl retreats upstairs. When her anxiety overwhelms her, she plays her late father's classic vinyl in her room upstairs. As the power goes out for the second time that night, LV continues singing acapella. Ray's jaw drops as she has the most incredible talent – complete mimicry of the original artists – Judy Garland, Shirley Bassey, Dusty Springfield, Marilyn Monroe, Gracie Fields, Edith Piaf and more. Ray smells an opportunity and works with Mari to persuade LV to perform at Mr Boo's club.

After a shaky start, LV grows in confidence and produces a heart stopping, extraordinary set (live with a live band in the show). But the success begins to bring out the worst in most of those around her – Ray becomes greedy and feral and uses Mari, Mari cares more about Ray and money than LV and only Mari's almost mute friend Sadie and Billy, a young, equally innocent trainee phone engineer have LV's best interests as best they can.

As the greed escalates and Mari makes a mess of managing LV, the whole fall of the title becomes unstoppable, literally bringing their house down in a fire. But from the ashes, and unusually for Cartwright, there is hope and one of the sweetest, most powerful endings to any of his work.

The play is fast paced, raucous and rowdy dialogue and situations but all the time never loses sight of the smallest human interactions and the way each of the different characters see the world – Mari through being desired and high status – not having to fight for everything, Ray for the success he feels entitled to and LV keeping the spirit of her father, he poor father that “sparkled” until Mari drained the light from him, through the music. It's upsetting, uplifting and unmissable play, with the added bonus of being infused with classic motown, jazz, rock, pop and showtunes.

About the Production

“Little Voice” marks an exciting development for productions at the Maddermarket – not only are we committing to staging Cartwrights extraordinary, hilarious and heart-breaking play, we are developing it even further into a more “immersive” or “Secret cinema” style approach. So, as well as the play itself, we will be turning the foyer and bar into “Mr Boo's”; the nightclub where Little Voice performs. Everyone will get involved in creating the world of the club, with acts beforehand, actors role-playing customers and staff of the club and novelty drinks at the

bar. In the interval they'll be hilariously bad acts (teeing the audience up for LV's incredible performance after the interval) and after the show local musicians will keep the night going.

Hence, there's a ton of opportunities to get involved in this production. As well as casting the play, we will be looking for actors to be part of the role-playing of the night club – you wouldn't have to do every show, we can make it as large or little commitment as you like. Everyone who auditions will be offered this opportunity, so if you don't get cast in a named part there will still be the chance to get involved.

Alternatively you might want to put yourselves forward solely to be part of Mr Boo's club – whether as an actor, musician, comedian or variety act. This would suit those with instrumental skills, those with secret variety talents, who want to test the waters of performing, those who can't commit to all rehearsals or performances, those who love the idea of immersive theatre, those who love improvisation, those who are terrified of improvisation but want to conquer their fears and those who just fancy being part of something slightly different at The Maddermarket.

About the Director

John is delighted to be returning to direct in Norwich after studying drama and film at the UEA in the early 90s! He is currently Directing his new play *The Response* for Arts Council England, being performed at the Seagull before being showcased at the Soho Theatre in London. He was previously the Manager of the Seagull Theatre in Lowestoft from 2009 to 2013 after initially helping to save and re-open it. He founded the professional Seagull Rep Company. He was nominated as a BAFTA "Breakthrough Brit" in 2015 and directed *Little Shop of Horrors* and a special Co-Production of *Oliver!* for the Marina and Seagull Theatres in 2018. John is also a full produced member of the Writer's Guild and works as a professional actor, most recently as Henry VIII for Channel 5, with Rebel Wilson in *The Hustle* and one of his favourite Directors, Danny Boyle, on *Yesterday*, written by Richard Curtis.

Casting Breakdown

The Maddermarket is committed ensuring its volunteer community – both onstage and off – reflects and celebrates the diversity of the world of which it is a part of. We welcome interest from actors of all backgrounds and identifications and our productions strive to approach casting with a progressive and flexible mind-set at all times.

Ideally all characters will be Northern accent, possible exception of Ray and Sadie.

Please note that the character of Mari (LV's mother) has already been cast.

LV (Playing age 16-21)

"Little Voice" and yes, she's quiet. Speaking as good as kills her. Her relationship with her mother is pretty much slave and Cinderella with no ball in sight. Mari is abusive and bullying, resenting and jealous of LV's youth and in the end her talent. But for LV the singing is her escape, it's her safe place – she's not trying to get on *Stars In Their Eyes*, she's trying to stay

sane. When she finds a kind and equally quiet and gentle soul, there is a real chance of personal change for her, a chance to find something for herself, not other people.

She's often compared to a little bird in the script and when we do see her spread her wings in the second half it is a tour de force for the actress involved. A tour de force that includes having to nail not only the songs but voices and styles of Judy Garland, Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Marilyn Monroe, Gracie Fields, Edith Piaf and Shirley Bassey. No mean feat... we may find some flexibility in the artists used but our LV has to not only be able to be vulnerable and have us worrying and rooting for her but able to transform into the most incredible, freed songbird...

The actor needs to be a strong singer with prior experience of singing solo onstage. There will be a Musical Director who will work with the actor to develop the singing and in particular the impersonations, however some existing ability to do these would be useful. The first round of auditioning will focus on the singing. Auditionees will be asked to sing a verse/chorus from three songs in the play, first time round singing along to a recording and second time round singing acapella.

The production is interested to hear from both actors who sing and singers who would like to branch into acting.

RAY SAY (Playing age 40-60): Ray is a throwback to the Rock N Roll era. He's the archetypal guy too old to be in the disco but who now has moved onto better pickings at pubs and Boo's. He claims to be a talent agent but he's never had a winner. The closest he's come to fame is Freddie "Parrot" Face Davis. Meeting him, not managing him. Underneath the jewellery and hair gel, there's a very angry man who, like Mari, feels he was destined for and deserves better. When he discovers Little Voice, he finally feels he's hit the jackpot. He could be managing in the big leagues "Telly and all that".

To his credit, he's smart and cleverly manipulates Mari and Little Voice into performing when she doesn't want to – as the success blooms so does Ray's desire and ego. In the end, when it all falls down on what was supposed to be the breakthrough moment of his career, he unleashes the most vicious tirade upon Mari before losing it entirely and performing "It's Over" by Roy Orbison to the club audience as he breaks down.

Ray is charming, roguish and jack the (too old to be a) lad. But he gets away with it – the real skill with this role is peeling away the layers to get to his dark and desperate heart. He's confident and we need to believe he has enough savvy in amongst the flannel to deliver what he promises, if he only gets the chance...

MR BOO (Playing age 50-70): Mr Boo ("Call me Lou") is a big deal in the town. Owns the big venue – Mr Boo's and is probably just about getting by. When Ray and Mari bring him round to hear LV he is at first all ego and not able to wait around. When she won't sing he just starts to leave... and then she sings in her room. There is something likeable about Boo – he is the archetypal Northern wannabee Comic, the only gigs he's probably ever had in his career, or at least recently were at his own club. He really isn't talented or even learning after all these years.

But, in all this, whereas Mari and Ray see nothing but profit... well, actually, Boo's all about the money too. Well, almost. For him, there is an almost spiritual element to what he sees in LV. Maybe for a moment when she sings, he feels close to the Divas and their talent, maybe it's being in the presence of a truly extraordinary performer – possibly the first genuine star he has seen. Or maybe it is all the money. But it'd be more exciting to explore the idea he “gets” what LV is and has to offer.

It's a great character-actor part, bombastic and self-important and then humbled and moved. Boo has a couple of stand up comedy monologues that will take some skill to realize the sheer cringe factor so brilliantly written in...

BILLY (Playing age 18 – 25)

The one person that genuinely cares for LV in the story – not for what she can do or provide but because she is his kindred spirit – gentle and kind. He's a soft spoken lad and trainee telephone engineer – which is how they meet and the Romeo to her Juliet. Between them, the pair are innocent but bruised, not sickly sweet. Survivors coming together. Throughout the play, emotionally and at the end, physically, Billy comes to her rescue, using the “cherry picker” crane (!) from his job to sneak up to her window. There's a goodness and naivety to Billy without ever being wet. Another person, who, like LV needs confidence and people to believe in him. He finds that in her and gives her affection back in spades, providing the most beautiful end to the show with his love of creating spectacular lighting displays (light is a big theme in the production). In the film they changed it to pigeons but in the play, Billy is a light to her and it's perfect...

SADIE (Playing age 30 -55)

Poor Sadie – another of life's overlooked. She is Mari's long suffering sidekick. Never says much but, like LV, is caught in Mari's orbit. Sometimes Sadie and Mari are like girls on the town, dancing and having the time of their lives, other times, Sadie is, again like LV a bit of a slave. But in all the comedy moments involving Sadie, there is also pathos – she is a witness and at a couple of key points, Sadie is more of a Mother to LV than Mari – protecting her and feeling her pain. There's clearly a parallel between them and a connection – but poor Sadie doesn't have a showy talent like LV, she endures to be wanted and of value. But she's all heart, loving Mari and Sadie and wishing all could be well. It's one of the rare roles that is all about the feeling, not the lines – we need a strong actress that can emote from joy to heartbreak, almost like a silent movie character. She needs to be free and unabashed as there is lots of ridiculous dancing and comedy and drunkenness but never cartoony clownish. We want a real person that probably just needs a hug...

TELEPHONE MAN (Playing age 40-60)

Installs a lot of phones. Meets a lot of housewives. Bit of a leech. But not entirely unsuccessful... Mentor to Billy as they install Mari's phone at the beginning of the show. We'd also reuse him on a date in the interval in Mr Boo's. Telephone man is a finely drawn cameo part and a great role for someone looking to get involved but who can't commit to lots of rehearsals or line-learning.

ENSEMBLE FOR MR BOO'S TAKEOVER OF BAR AND FRONT OF HOUSE

Whatever your talent, interest or experience and virtually whatever your availability there's an opportunity for you and the production is interested. **For these roles separate meetings will be arranged over February and March (rather than the standard audition dates).**

Simply email the Director of Productions, Jez Pike to express your interest – jez.pike@maddermarket.org