



BLEAK EXPECTATIONS – by Mark Evans

PRODUCTION DATES: 26 September to 3 October 2026 (excluding Monday)

AUDITIONS: Tuesday, 2nd June, from 7.30 p.m.

Directed by Mark Bailey - Tel: 0113 204 9772 – Mob: 07896 970858 email – bails1966@btinternet.com

Take a pinch of Dickens period drama, a smidge of British ironic self-deprecation, a soupcon of outrageous situation and a hefty splash of surreal silliness. Mix well in a fast-paced script and voila! A hilarious heady cocktail of laughs and entertainment that will keep audience and cast alike rolling in the aisles. Think '39 Steps' or 'Baskervilles' meets a Muppet Christmas Carol as imagined by Spike Milligan and Eric Idle, and you might be close to imagining this piece.

A loving parody with a suite of outrageously named characters Bleak Expectations evokes the spirit of Dickens and transports you to that familiar world, yet remains rooted firmly in today's world. This is a fast moving and challenging piece but will be lots of fun for the actors who get an opportunity to send up Dickens as well as dabble in romance, melodrama, farce and slapstick – often mixing these at the same time. Actors will need to effectively shift scenes, furniture and props and seamlessly move from one piece of action to the next and there will likely be lots of physical comedy too. Even the stagehand gets a role as a mysterious helping gloved hand from the wings (LILY).

Period: Victorian
Set: Fluid and moveable it needs to evoke Victorian London
Costumes: Of the period.
Props: many and silly – Anvil, Ironed Puppy, Ironed hand, Baguette swords... just the usual nonsense for this kind of thing
Sound: lots of comedic value here
Lighting: will need to play a large part of creating atmosphere and sense of place

CHARACTERS AND AUDITION PAGES

Playing ages here are character ages and just a guide. Essentially, aside from Pip, Gently and Pippa most roles work well doubled and really what's important is the energy and dynamics with the rest of the cast rather than a strict alignment to ages. Usual doubling is Poppy/Ripely, Harry/Parsimonious, Thomas/Broadly /Bakewell and Agnes/Flora (but none of that is fixed although some of that is alluded to in the lines).

SIR PHILIP 50+	Our narrator – essentially Pip as an older man – provides the continuity and drive – can potentially dip in and out of the action	10-11 82-83
PIP BIN 20s/30s	Our hero – exuberant and optimistic, even in the face of tragedy, he suppresses his true feelings as all good Englishmen of the time should	13-15 65-67
PIPPA 20s/30s	Pip's sister – proud proto feminist, prone to jolly hockeysticks and melodramatic moments	13-15 65-67
POPPY 20s/30s	Also jolly like Pippa but also usually doubling as RIPELY FECUND so she has lots of opportunity for innuendo too!	13-15
RIPELY FECUND 20s/30s	Loves Pip madly, and (like Pip) denies it but cannot contain it for long. Cant really be overplayed	62-64
HARRY BISCUIT 20s/30s	Pip's best friend – loyal, unwavering and dim with a swan and hugging fixation	32-35 37-38
SKINFLINT PARSIMONIOUS 40s/50s	A kindly older gent usually doubling with HARRY	

GENTLY BENEVOLENT 40s/50s	A less kindly older gent – the villain of our piece – all melodrama and evil laughter	36-37 87-88
THE HARDTHRASHERS 30s/40s	A quartet of complete sadists with an almost evangelical commitment to dealing misery – these ae definitely all the same actor who plays both genders	29-31 75-76
AGNES BIN 40s/50s	The siblings mother, has some nice coy moments with Thomas her husband, defiant independent woman, goes mad but eventually regains her senses	23-25 99-100
FLORA DIES EARLY	20s/30s Pip's first wife who is clearly gold digging but dies early !!	
THOMAS BIN 40s/50s	Oddly naïve, slightly saucy and very clumsy (has a recurring 'trip' gag (dies soon in the play)	
BAKEWELL HAVERTWICH 40s	The Magwitch character – eccentric, mysterious and a little bit over the top	18-20
BROADLY FECUND 40s/50s	Father of RIPELY, slightly deranged and controlling	58-59

Contact Mark with any questions please and/or for a reading copy of the script, contact details above. Please also do get in touch if you are interested in working backstage on props, lighting, sound, stage managing or prompting.