

Audition Notice for Calendar Girls, a play by Tim Firth

On stage: 11-26 November 2022

Auditions:

All auditionees for the calendar girl roles please be advised you will be posing nude for your calendar picture scene but completely camouflaged by props. The other cast members will arrange the props and ensure your “privates” are not seen by the audience. You will be safely covered.

Auditions to be held on Saturday 23 July 2022 commencing 10:00 am at the theatre – 14 Mains Road Sunnybank. All auditionees will be contacted after audition to advise the outcome of their audition.

Accents: The women of the real calendar in truth came from many parts of the country.

Tim Firth comments: *“Actors should resist the pressure to perform any kind of Yorkshire pyrotechnics. Nothing compromises the truth of comedy like a slavish attention to vowel-sounds and diphthongs. It will become a pebble in a shoe. If you can flatten the “a” so that the word “giraffe” no long rhymes with scarf then that will be more than sufficient; but even that should not be championed over the intrinsic rhythm of the line. People travel. Communities are now gloriously multi-instrumental. We’ve had accounts from Glasgow to Texas make the same part their own.”*

Audition material: Please prepare a monologue of your choice. ALSO Contact Leonie Walsh via email - leonie.director@gmail.com so Leonie can email audition material. Confirm receipt of your email via text to Leonie on 0414 893 843.

Synopsis: Based on a true story, eleven middle-aged Englishwomen pose nude for their annual Women's Institute calendar as a fund-raiser for the local hospital. Chris gets the idea to raise money for the hospital after Annie's husband dies of leukemia. The calendar is a little different in that each woman is posing behind a different task that the Women's Institute teaches their members, such as making bread rolls, knitting, planting flowers, and playing the piano. Before they know it, the calendar is a big hit in England with tremendous sales. Eventually, they are flown to America to be interviewed by Jay Leno. The calendar has made almost a million dollars for the local hospital.

Characters

Chris, to play in her 50s

You want Chris at your party. She will talk to people she doesn't know, find things to say and fill silences and generate laughter. Part is because Chris is because Chris is at home in crowds, holding court, being the centre of attention. Without Chris in her life Annie would be better behaved, her life less fun. The two of them are like naughty schoolgirls. Ideal car – who cares, as long as it's a cabriolet. Ideal holiday – Algarve.

Annie, to play in her 50's

Annie will join in the mischief but is at heart more conformist and less confrontational than Chris. After Chris has put a waiter's back up in a restaurant, Annie will go in and pour calm. The mischievousness Chris elicits save Annie from being a saint. She has enough edge to be interesting, and enough salt not to be too sweet. Ideal car – who cares, as long as it's reliable. Ideal holiday – walking in the English countryside.

Together these are greater than the sum of their parts. They would be lesser humans had they not met each other. Each is spiritual mustard to the others' meat.

Cora, to play in her 40's

Cora's past is the most eclectic, her horizons broadened by having gone to college. This caused a tectonic shift with her more parochial parents. She came back to them pregnant and tail-between-her-legs, but Cora has too much native resilience to be downtrodden. She is the joker of the pack, but never plays the fool. The wit is deadpan. IT raises laughter in others, but rarely in herself. Her relationship with her daughter is more akin to that between Chris and Annie. Cora doesn't need to sing like a diva but must be able to sing well enough to start the show with Jerusalem and sing the snatches of other songs required. The piano keyboard can be marked up to enable her to play basic chords should she not be a player. Ideal car – who cares, as long as the sound system is loud. Ideal holiday – New York.

Jessie – to play late 60s/70s

Get on the right side of Jessie as a teacher and she'll be the teacher you remember for life. Get on the wrong side and you will regret every waking hour. A lover of life, Jessie doesn't bother with cosmetics- her elixir of life is bravery. Jessie goes on a rollercoaster. Her husband has been with her a long time and is rarely surprised by her actions. Jessie bothers about grammar and will correct stallholders regarding their abuse of the apostrophe "s". Ideal care – strange looking European thing which is no longer manufactured. Ideal holiday – walking in Switzerland or Angkor Wat.

Celia to play 35-50

The fact that Celia is in the WI is the greatest justification of its existence. A woman more at home in a department store than a church hall, she may be slightly younger than Chris or the same age, but she always feels like she's drifted in from another world. Which she has. She is particularly enamoured of Jessie, and despite the fact Jessie has very little time for most of the Celias of this world, there is a rebelliousness in Celia to which Jessie responds. It's what sets Celia apart from the vapid materialism of her peer group and made her defect. Ideal car – Porsche, which she has. Ideal holiday – Maldives, where she often goes.

Ruth to play 40-50s

Ruth's journey is from the false self confidence of the emotionally abused to the genuine self confidence of the woman happy in her own skin. Ruth is eager to please but not a rag doll, and despite being Marie's right-hand woman she is desperate to be the cartilage of the spine of the WI and keep everyone happy. She has spine herself – if she was too wet, no-one would want her around. But they do, and they feel protective of her because they sense there is something better in Ruth than her life is letting out. They are proved right. Ideal car – at the start, whatever Eddie wants; at the end whatever she wants. Ideal holiday – at the start wherever Eddie is, at the end wherever he isn't.

Marie to play in her 50s

Marie has gradually built the current "Marie" around herself over the years as a defence mechanism. She went to her Oz, Cheshire, and found Oz didn't want her. She came back scorched. The WI is a trophy to her, which justifies her entire existence. There is a lingering part of Marie that would love to be on that calendar. Ideal car – something German and well-valeted. Ideal holiday – a quasi-academic tour of somewhere in Persia advertised in a Sunday Supplement which she could then interminably bang on about.

John, Annie's husband to play in his 50s

John is a human sunflower. Not a saint. Not a hero. Just the kind of man you'd want in your car when crossing the USA. When he dies it feels like someone somewhere turned off a light.

Rod, Chris's husband to play in his 50's

You have to be a certain kind of guy to stick with Chris and Rod loves it. He can give back what he gets, and has a deadpan humour which has always made Chris laugh. He drinks a lot but never too much as to have a problem. He would work every hour to make his job a success. And John was his mate, and even though the relationship was originally channelled through their wives.

Lawrence, to play late 20's

Hesitant without being nerdy. Lawrence is a shy young man with enough wit to make a joke and enough spirit to turn up at the WI hall in the first place. When he arranges the shots, he is as close to female nudity but sees only the photo.

Lady Cravenshire to play in her 60s

Lady Cravenshire doesn't really mean to be so patronizing. But the WI girls seem from another world. The world of her estate workers. **Dress:** When she makes an entrance, she must make an entrance. Largely white or cream to outplay the others, with a bigger hat than Marie. She is not a tweed wearer. She must glide in like a galleon.

Elaine in her 20s

Elaine really doesn't mean to be so patronizing. But Jessie seems from another world. The world of her gran. **Dress:** her clinical whites slice through like a knife. You feel you could cut yourself on that dress.

Liam – late 20s

Liam would rather be directing other things than photoshoots for washing powders. He's not so unprofessional as to let it show, but we can sense a slight weariness at having to deal with these women. There's a resigned patience to his actions and each smile he makes we feel is professional. For Liam, the photoshoot is a job. And not a job he wanted.