

Arsenic and Old Lace Audition Packet
Joseph Kesselring
Fall 2023

Who?

Producer(s): Ishikaa Kothari
Directors: Roy Kohavi
Stage Manager: Julia Murphy
Preferred Contact Email:
julia.murphy@yale.edu or roy.kohavi@yale.edu

MEET THE TEAM

Director: Hi! My name is Roy Kohavi (he/they) and I'm a sophomore in Saybrook majoring in political science! I'm SO excited to bring this production to life and cannot wait to welcome you all to the Arsenic family! Before coming to Yale, I majored in theater at a performative arts high school and directed shows at an arts summer camp! I was actually in this show myself and absolutely fell in love with it! At Yale, I've acted in a couple of shows so far and directed a musical called *Newsies* in the spring! Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Stage Manager: My name is Julia Murphy (she/her)! I'm a first-year in Franklin hoping to study English and theater or film. *Arsenic and Old Lace* will be my first Yale production and I'm looking forward to working with everyone! In high school, I managed multiple ensembles and was one of the student leaders of my theater program, so I'm excited to join the Yale theater community.

What?

Mortimer Brewster discovers one day that his dear aunts have been poisoning lonely old men for years to try to rid them of their misery! When Mortimer's maniacal brother, Jonathan, returns on the night that the aunts are planning to bury the newest victim, Mortimer must rally to help his aunts and protect his fiancé – all while trying to keep his own sanity, as well.

Creative Notes

Although all character descriptions are written with the original genders in mind, we are open to gender-bending all of the roles and **welcome anyone of any gender identity** to audition. Additionally, we are particularly excited about the possibility of having the leading women be *women of color*, we are open to auditioning **people of all races and ethnicities for all roles**.

The mission of putting on *Arsenic and Old Lace* today is to **empower stories about older characters in theater**—a group whose roles are frequently restricted in art—and to explore mental illness in comedies. Additionally, the creative team hopes to slightly modernize the play, as there are many references that modern audiences likely won't understand; however, we wish to keep the play true to its original writing and structure.

When?

Date of First Rehearsal: The week of Sept. 11 - Sept. 16 (likely on Sept. 13)

Current Tech Week Dates: Nov. 26 - Nov. 30

Performance Dates: Nov. 30 - Dec. 2

Overall Dates (First Rehearsal to Last Performance): Week of Sept. 11 - Dec. 2

Time Commitment

Weekly Estimated Time Commitments (in Hours):

The intention of this production team is to make this production as fun and relaxing as possible and allow for it to be a space to truly find a safe, joyous haven outside of the stresses of Yale. For that reason, we intend to hold around **3-5** hours of rehearsals a week but to get a general idea, it might be best to split it up by role and time!

Before fall break (Lead): ~4 hours a week

Before fall break (Supporting): ~ 2 hours a week

After fall break (Lead): ~ 6-7 hours a week

After fall break (Supporting): ~4-5 hours a week

Expect an **uptick in hours and general availability** during all of tech week + performance dates!

With that in mind, please keep in mind it is totally POSSIBLE to be involved in other shows this semester!

Content Warnings

Content Warnings: murder, mental illness, minimal stage violence (slapstick)

Audition Expectations

Please prepare one of these options:

1. **Any monologue** (preferably comedic- but ANY work, including dramatic, is fine). Does NOT have to be memorized.
2. **A funny or interesting story** you want to share in a story-telling way!

- + You will be asked to **read a side** (a dialogue from the show)! It does NOT have to be memorized. Here is the link to [our sides!](#) Please come knowing which side you want to read and who you'd like to read for. You do not have to practice reading it, but you can if you like!

Audition Location(s)

Aug. 30th: **LC317**

Aug. 31st: **LC317**

Sept. 1st: **LC 317**

Sept. 2nd: **LC317**

LC, also known as Linsley-Chittenden Hall, is located on Old Campus, right by Vanderbilt Hall, McClellan Hall, and Dwight Hall! 317 is on the third floor. Address: 63 High St.

Sept. 4: **WLH 211** ([William L. Harkness Hall](#))

WLH, also known as William Harkness Hall, is located on Cross Campus directly across from Hopper College and near the entrance to Bass Library! 211 is on the second floor. Address: 100 Wall St.

SCROLL BELOW FOR MORE DETAILED INFO

DETAILED PACKET- ARSENIC AND OLD LACE

Hello and thank you for your interest in *Arsenic and Old Lace*! Below you will find information about the play, our rehearsal timeline, the characters we're looking for, and how to audition.

SYNOPSIS

This dark comedy revolves around Mortimer Brewster, who discovers one day that his dear aunts have been poisoning lonely old men for years to try to rid them of their misery! When Mortimer's maniacal brother, Jonathan, returns on the night that the aunts were planning to bury the newest victim, Mortimer must rally to help his aunts and protect his fiancé – all while trying to keep his own sanity, as well. With a slightly modern spin on this hilarious play, this play provides a comedic break during troubling times! :)

Content Warnings: mentions and depictions of murder, mental illness; minimal stage violence (slapstick)

TIMELINE

Casting:

- Auditions will be held August 30st - September 4th at 220 York St. in the Ballroom. You will **hear from us by September 4th** regarding your callback status. You do NOT need to be called back in order to be offered a role in the show.
- Callbacks will be September 5th and 6th
- Casting decisions will be issued on September 10th. You are at liberty to accept or decline a role if it is offered to you.

Rehearsal:

- Rehearsals will begin in early September and be scheduled around actors' availability.
- Tech week is Nov. 26 - Nov. 30.
- Performances will be Nov. 30 - Dec. 2.

CHARACTERS

All characters can be played by any race, ethnicity, and gender, and might also be gender-bent! Especially all the officers

LEAD ROLES:

Abby Brewster: Female, mid-50s to mid-70s. A darling lady, and the very model of Victorian charm and grace, who poisons elderly gentlemen, with her sister as an act of charity. She and her sister Martha seem to be the absolute embodiment of the values and polite society of a bygone age. *More dominant*, and a bit older than Martha, both ladies are happy, healthy, lucid, and spry. The Aunt to Teddy, Jonathan, and Mortimer.

Martha Brewster: Female, 50-70 years old. Very sweet, but *more submissive* than Abby, Martha still is a strong woman. She and her sister have lived together for many, many years. Their personalities and pecking order around each other have been firmly rooted for eons. Always wears a high collar. The Aunt to Teddy, Jonathan, and Mortimer.

Mortimer Brewster: Male, 30-50 years old. Nephew of Abby and Martha, brother to both Teddy and Jonathan Brewster. A very likable, Mortimer is a drama critic who is in love with, & engaged to Elaine Harper. A good-hearted cynic who is about to have his world turned upside down..

Special Note: The actor who plays this role must be comfortable to utterly “LET GO.” Mortimer controls the show. From the discovery of the first body, Mortimer carries that energy all the way through the show

Jonathan Brewster: Male, 40-60 years old. Nephew of Abby and Martha Brewster, brother to Teddy and Mortimer. Jonathan is a psychopath who has numerous murders to his credit and no scruples whatsoever. He is creepy. Jonathan is a killer that loves his business and he’s got an unbelievably short temper. Dr. Einstein has changed Jonathan’s face three times, currently

BIG SUPPORTING ROLES:

Elaine Harper: Female, 25-40 years old. An Attractive girl, daughter of Rev. Dr. Harper, and Mortimer’s fiancée. She is surprisingly wise in the ways of the world for a minister’s daughter. She is a little bit wily, sassy, and absolutely sharp.

Teddy Brewster: Male, 40-60 years old. Very likable, kindhearted brother to Mortimer and Jonathan, Nephew of Abby and Martha Brewster, Teddy is a man who believes that he is the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt.

Dr. Einstein: Male, 45-55 years old. A German plastic surgeon, with an accent to prove it. Right hand to Jonathan, Dr. Einstein is mousey and submissive to Jonathan. Einstein should be viewed as a good guy whose life has gone bad. The audience truly has to sympathize with this guy. With somewhat of a ratty appearance, his face wears the benevolent smirk of a man who lives in a pleasant haze of alcohol.

SUPPORTING ROLES: all potentials for double casting with each other (an actor may play one or more of these roles)

The Reverend Dr. Harper: Male, 50-70 years old. Elaine Harper’s father who is also a minister with a sense of polish, refinement, and mild-mannered sensitivity towards others. He is not in favor of Mortimer and Elaine’s relationship.

Officer Brophy: Male, 25-45 years old. The first police officer we meet in the show, Brophy is a thoroughly likable sort of fellow. Is making his rounds collecting Christmas toys for the needy.

Officer Klein: Male, 25-45 years old. A flatfoot Brooklyn officer who makes his rounds with Officer Brophy collecting Christmas toys.

Officer O'Hara: Male, any age. He is the quintessential example of an Irish-American police officer: Full of life, good-natured, and played big. He is on very good terms with the Aunts. O'Hara is a would-be playwright and needs to plainly display the nagging, persistent drive that's kindled within him once he discovers that Mortimer is a famous dramatic critic. Well-intentioned, O'Hara really doesn't mean to come across as annoying as he does.

Lieutenant Rooney: Male, 50-60 years old. The man in charge at the local police precinct. He has very little patience for blunder and mistakes, and needs to run a pretty tight ship. He is loud, decisive, and clearly in charge of every situation in which he finds himself.

FEATURED ROLES: all potentials for double casting with each other (an actor may play one or more of these roles)

Mr. Witherspoon: Male, 50-60s years old. The superintendent of Happy Dale Sanitarium. Very mild-mannered and kind.

Mr. Gibbs: Male, 55-80 years old. An elderly gentleman who wishes to rent a room from the Brewster sisters; and nearly falls victim to the sisters' "charity". He is a little gruff, but he warms up fairly quickly upon being offered a treat he hasn't had since he was a child.

AUDITION PREPARATION

Sign up for an audition slot on the Yale College Arts page.

Please prepare one of these options:

1. **Any monologue** (preferably comedic- but ANY work, including dramatic, is fine). Does NOT have to be memorized.
2. **A funny or interesting story** you want to share in a story-telling way

NOTE: Choosing one over the other does not disadvantage you!

-You will be asked to also **read a side** (a dialogue from the show)! It does NOT have to be memorized. Here is the link to [our sides](#)! Please come knowing which side you want to read and who you'd like to read for. You do not have to practice reading it, but you can if you like!

Basically, it's a cold read that you already know about in advance and can prepare if you WANT to (but don't have to).

Audition Location:

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CALLBACKS

Callbacks are a fantastic opportunity for us to get to know you better as a performer and for you to showcase any other skills you have! We will call you back for a specific role (or multiple roles) that we think would be a great fit for you!

All the callback materials will be sent to you ahead of time. Just like the audition, sides will not need to be memorized, but the hope is that people could review them ahead of time and think about how they can embody the character.

That being said, not everyone is needed for a callback and it does NOT mean you are not considered for the show. It simply means that we have seen what we believe we need from you to make the best decision!

AUDITION PROCESS

We hope to prioritize your health and well-being throughout the entire process! The goal of the team is to make theater as accessible, equitable, and enjoyable as possible! Please feel free to reach out if you experience anything that makes you uncomfortable about the process or if you think we or anyone else violated these important values we set aside to prioritize AUDITIONEES and ACTORS.

CONTACT

Please reach out to us with any questions!

Stage Manager- julia.murphy@yale.edu

Director- roy.kohavi@yale.edu

Thank you so much for auditioning for Arsenic and Old Lace! We are incredibly excited to see you!