ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS

AUDITION INFORMATION

These pages are meant for those interested in auditioning for ETHS' Winter Play, One Man, Two Guvnors. The play runs from February 9-11.

Before we go any further, please sign up for a five-minute audition slot. Callbacks will be established based on your availability somewhere within the frame of 10/26-29.

Herein, one might find:

- A quick (impossibly quick but somehow still too long) summary of the play. Keep in mind: it's quite confusing, and ultimately I'm not even sure that the plot matters. It's funny. (Page Two.)

- Other unique requirements of/opportunities in this play. (Page Three.)

- Character descriptions (What part fits my skill set best? Who does what? What's a lead?) (Pages Three through Six.)

- The schedule. Which is, let's be clear, too short to really get anything accomplished. (Page Seven.)

- Auditions—how to audition, what you should prepare, etc. (Pages Eight through Eleven.)

- Really, though, my office is behind the upstairs theatre, my name is Mr. Herbert, and if you have any questions you can see me or drop me a line at herbert@eths.k12.il.us.

PART ONE:

THE PLAY:
Okay, here goes. The play is really about a guy named Frances Henshall. (He is the titular “man”.) He has a quest for love and food. He gets to eat at the intermission, after he (and this list is by no means complete) knocks an old person down the stairs, catches a peanut in his mouth as he tumbles over a chair, drinks an entire soup tureen, and gets his tongue caught in a mousetrap, etc. But first...

The play is set in Brighton, England in 1963. At the top of a play, there is an engagement party. Pauline Clench is marrying Alan Dangle. Pauline is, well, a little dimwitted. She is the daughter of a gangster, Charlie “The Duck” Clench. Alan is the son of Charlie’s lawyer, Harry Dangle, and he is an extremely dramatic/pretentious wannabe actor. Other important people at the party include Lloyd Boateng (a friend from prison who is running the local restaurant) and Dolly, an extremely intelligent and sociable young woman who works as Charlie’s bookkeeper.

Anyway, it turns out that Pauline is only able to marry her true love Alan because her previous fiancée, a criminal named Roscoe Crabbe, was murdered. The engagement between Roscoe and Pauline was one of convenience, as Roscoe wasn’t interested in women. Roscoe (and this is where it really gets confusing) has a twin sister, Rachel. Rachel is in love with the man who murdered her brother, another criminal named Stanley Stubbers.

Into this engagement party comes Frances. He’s behaving like a tough guy (he isn’t one), immediately become attracted to Dolly, and announces that he is there representing his boss (the first “guvnor”), Roscoe Crabbe, who isn’t dead after all! When Roscoe enters the room, it is not Roscoe at all but his twin sister, Rachel, wearing his clothes (she is described as resembling Ringo Starr) and trying to get a little money that she can use to escape the law, hopefully with her missing boyfriend, Stanley. She doesn’t really seem to mind that Stanley murdered her brother.

This is all established in the first scene. After that, Francis meets Stanley, who has no idea that his beloved is there in Brighton. Stanley hires Francis to do some work for him. (Thus, Stanley becomes the second “guvnor”.) Francis tries to keep these people and their various tasks organized and separated, but the fact that he is really, really hungry and things are moving quite fast make it impossible.

You know, you should read the play. This summary really only applies to the first two scenes. But I hope you get a feel for it.

**PART TWO:**
UNIQUE THINGS ABOUT THIS PLAY:

Not an easy category. It seems too broad.

Here are a few things that come to mind.

1) This play is based on a play from the Commedia period known as *Servant of Two Masters* by Carlo Goldoni, originally performed in 1746. Commedia Del’Arte is a style of theatre popular in the 17th century in which actors used to travel from town to town and work through an unscripted but pre-established story while playing particular, fixed characters. Those particular characters include the wily servant or the young romantic lovers or the angry old father, etc. The major characters (there are nine of those) are based directly on this play and this style. The plays were improvised within an established dramatic structure. Anyway, I thought you should know that for educational purposes.

2) This play features a live band with a singer. The idea is that before the play, the band plays a mini-concert of a few songs. After that, the band plays one complete song in each transition between scenes. Occasionally, they are joined by a character (examples: Frances is supposed to play a xylophone solo, while Lloyd at another time plays a steel drum) to solo on a random instrument. The band is supposed to play through the intermission and then plays through transitions in Act Two, and ultimately there is a sung finale as though this is a musical. The song is called “Tomorrow Looks Good From Here”. Obviously you can’t audition for the band here. However, we will need a great singer and that singer should be a woman. One more complication: the band is supposed to be a skiffle band. Skiffle is a form of folk rock popular in England in the late 1950s/early 1960s. The Beatles started out playing skiffle. Check this out (it’s a skiffle performance from a Russian film): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2UoWr6Si4M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2UoWr6Si4M) (I mean, that can’t be real, right?)

3) The play is performed in English accents. English accents are not just one thing, though. Generally speaking, this play should be performed in a Brighton accent, which is more working class than, say, a teacher at Hogwarts and more like a Hagrid at Hogwarts. However, there are some variations—Alan and Harry (or Harriet—more on that later) have a more upper class, “posh” British accent while Lloyd’s accent has a bit of Jamaican. As far as the audition goes, give it your best shot. The lines are written in dialect so to not attempt it at all would make it sound
very weird. However, recognize that there will be recordings and coaching specific to this accent, and I don't expect you to have it down at the audition.

4) Non-traditional casting—often when we’re choosing shows in this day and age, we need to consider these ideas because: patriarchy. Look it up, freshman. In years past, most of the playwrights and performers were men (as were most of the elected government officials...oh wait, that’s still true), and today, putting on a play is so expensive that casts are extremely small. So this is a long way to say that we need to be a little flexible when it comes to gender in this play. This is a long way of saying that, at the very least, Alfie, Harry and Gareth can be played by women.

5) There is a lot of audience participation in the play. Frances improvises with the audience several times. He brings people onstage to move a trunk he thinks is too heavy. There are also audience plants. Francis asks for food at one point, and a member of the ensemble posing as an audience member gives him a hummus sandwich. There is also an audience member named Christine Patterson, who is brought onstage and who is at the center of some very ridiculous business. She’s also singed by flames (in theory). So those are actual parts, playing someone awkwardly pulled onstage by a character to take part in some craziness.

**CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:**

In years gone by, we might cast you regardless of your conflicts. If you were the only person who could play Dolly, well, even if you had two days you needed to work on student government and a day for tap dancing, we’d work around it. That is not the case anymore. If you want to be considered for a lead, you need to attend 90% of after-school rehearsals. In other words, you can miss an hour per week. Leading roles will be identified at the end of the description with the words “leading role”. It’s very scientific.

Frances Henshall—Frances...well, the actor has to have a tremendous amount of energy. Frances is onstage most of the show. He communicates directly with the audience. He eats, a lot. He's described as big-boned, but that's not necessary to make the character work. Though Frances was made famous by James Corden, his size is not his defining characteristic. To me, it's his hunger (for food and Dolly) and his childish frustration whenever anything gets in the way that makes him Frances. It would be great if he could sing. LEADING ROLE

Charlie “The Duck” Clench—Originally from London, Charlie spent some time in Brixton Prison, had an unhappy marriage to a long-gone wife, and now is devoted to his daughter. Charlie's very smart about some things (his relationship to the Crabbes) and very stupid about other things (he doesn't understand twins at all). LEADING ROLE
Rachel Crabbe—She does not seem to be very upset at the death of her brother. Dressed up as Roscoe, she’s described as looking very similar to Ringo Starr. She is desperately, passionately in love with Stanley, and though she has a very honest relationship with Pauline, she should terrify everyone else (particularly Frances and the Duck). It’s great if Rachel can sing, as there is a trio performance near the end. She is the first guvnor. LEADING ROLE

Stanley Stubbers—He’s a thug, a murderer, a romantic. He’s covered in hair. He’s not so smart. He is a bully and a little casually racist (at one point he says that he “doesn’t do first names. First names are for girls and Norweigans.”), but his heart seems to be in the right place. He also speaks directly to the audience at times. He is comfortable with violence—he knocks Alfie around with a cricket bat twice. He is the second guvnor. LEADING ROLE

Lloyd Boateng—An old friend of Clench’s (from prison), Lloyd makes his living these days as the chef at the Cricketer’s Arms, a pub that is the center of the action for the end of the first act. Lloyd is smarter than most everyone in the play and figures out some of the insane misunderstandings long before the rest. It would be great if we could play him as he was originally conceived—a man of Jamaican descent. He also plays the steel drum in a segue. LEADING ROLE

Harry Dangle—Clench’s lawyer and the father of the groom. Harry’s a crooked lawyer who thinks of himself as a really fancy gentleman. Obviously he is pushing his son into an alliance with a crime family. As things get more chaotic in the second act, Harry’s class and sophistication is juxtaposed against the insane ridiculousness of the action. He loves to speak Latin, irrelevantly. This role, again, can be played by anyone and is not bound by gender. This is NOT A LEADING ROLE.

Pauline Clench—She gets some of the greatest jokes. Charlie’s moronic daughter, Pauline is always slightly confused as to what exactly is happening. She is very easily persuaded, though, and after Rachel explains the situation to her she is totally on board in deceiving her father. She and Alan are star-crossed-lovers. Her emotions are huge, her intellect tiny. Alan says that she has a brain like an empty thermos. He means it as a compliment. It would be great if Pauline could sing as well. LEADING ROLE

Alan Dangle—He was born Orlando Dangle, but there was already one of those in the actor’s union. He is an artist! A poet! He speaks with a lot of exclamation points! He challenges Roscoe/Rachel to a duel with a knife he got at the drugstore. He’s really not cut out to hang around with these criminals. His accent/dialect is much fancier and he is joyously pretentious. This is a LEADING ROLE

Dolly—Just Dolly. Dolly is the most intelligent person in the show (well, her and Lloyd) but she does have a bit of an irrational crush on Frances. She really sees through him but plays along much of the time because his outrageous lying delights her. Dolly has a lot of proto-feminist speeches in the show, acting as counterpoint for some of the period chauvinism on display here. She directly interacts with the audience, particularly the females in the audience. She works as a bookkeeper but winds up being drawn into all the madness surrounding the Clench household. It would be wonderful if Dolly could sing. This is a LEADING ROLE.
Alfie—Alfie is either eighty-six or eighty-seven and in very poor health. He fought in WWI and saw some terrible things. He has a pacemaker implanted that can be turned up to give him an extra jolt. In Act I, scene four, Alfie will be thrown down the stairs (twice), get hit in the head with a cricket bat, and knock himself unconscious with a corkscrew. Later, he will beat up a bunch of cops for some reason. This role is a slapstick dream. This is NOT A LEADING ROLE, but Alfie is in a lot of the show. And I don't know why Alfie has to be a played by any particular gender.

Beyond that, we have Gareth the head waiter, “Christine Patterson”, various waiters and police officers, the guy with the hummus sandwich, bartender, cab driver, and the band.
THE CALENDAR:

The expectation is that you are off book for the first rehearsal. You'll have two months.

Monday, December 19th: 4-6:30
Tuesday, December 20th: 4-6:30
Wednesday, December 21st: 4-6:30
Thursday, December 22nd: 4-6:30

Monday, January 9th: 4-6:30
Tuesday, January 10th: 4-6:30
Wednesday, January 11th: 4-6:30
Thursday, January 12th: 4-6:30
Friday, January 13th: 4-6:30
Saturday, January 14th: 10-4

Monday, January 16th: 10-4 (MLK Day)
Tuesday, January 17th: EXAMS 3-6
Wednesday, January 18th: 3-6
Thursday, January 19th: 3-6
Friday, January 20th: 10-4 (Exam make up day)
Saturday, January 21st: 10-4

Monday, January 23rd: 10-4
Tuesday, January 24th: 4-6:30
Wednesday, January 25th: 4-6:30
Thursday, January 26th: 4-6:30
Friday, January 27th: 4-6:30
Saturday, January 28th: 4-6:30

PRETECH WEEK

Monday, January 30th: 4-8
Tuesday, January 31st: 4-8
Wednesday, February 1st: 4-8
Thursday, February 2nd: 4-8
Friday, February 3rd: 4-8

TECH WEEK:

Saturday, February 4th: 9-6
Monday, February 6th: 3-10 Tech rehearsal
Tuesday, February 7th: 4-10 Dress rehearsal #1
Wednesday, February 8th: 4-10 Dress rehearsal #2
Thursday, February 9th: Performance #1 (6 p.m. call)
Friday, February 10th: Performance #2 (6 p.m. call)
Saturday, February 11th: Performance #3 (6 p.m. call)
AUDITION PIECES (I didn’t put a speech in for Harry/Harriet, as I will deal with that role and Alfie at callbacks):

You can do as many of these as you want. You’ll have five minutes.

The speech below is in the middle of the first act, when Frances is dealing with his new job.

FRANCES 1: You got to concentrate, ain’t ya, with two jobs. I can do it, long as I don’t get confused. But I get confused easily. I don’t get confused that easily. Yes. I do. I’m my own worst enemy. Stop being negative. I’m not being negative. I’m being realistic. I’ll screw it up. I always do. Who screws it up? You, you’re the role model for village idiots everywhere. Me? You’re notting without me! (He slaps himself) You slapped me?! Yeah, I did. And I’m glad I did. (He punches himself back.) That hurt. Good. You started it. (A fight breaks out between Frances and himself.)

Frances is starving.

FRANCES 2: Roscoe has insisted on having lunch with Charlie, up here, in private. Mr. Stubbers is having a lie down, which I guess you have to do a lot of when you’re lying low. I’m only alive because me gall bladder’s worked out a way of eating me kidneys. But! The good news is it’s lunch time. There’s gonna be food everywhere, and all I’ve got to do is organize a stash, you know, leftovers, the odd whole course going missing. Hide it under here, maybe. (He finds a mouse trap.) A mouse trap with a chunk of CHESHIRE CHEESE! My favorite! All white and crumbly. And this bit’s only slightly nibbled.

Alan is despondent after his fiancée must marry Roscoe. (Roscoe’s the dog in the last line.) Allan is extremely melodramatic and actor-y (not a word).

ALAN: What is my life? Am I to eat, drink, sleep, get a good job, marry, honeymoon, have kids, watch them grow up and have kids of their own, divorce, meet someone else, get old, and die happy like any other inhabitant of Brighton and Hove? What kind of life is that? No. I am an artist. Character is action. I cannot allow this late suitor to come along and end my beautiful dream, like a dead, discarded Russian astronaut dog landing on my head. (He notices Francis.) My rival’s lackey. This will be the beginning of the end. (To Francis.) Where is the dog, your guvnor? He will die today!

Charlie is making a toast at his daughter’s engagement party. He’s a little gruff and uncomfortable being emotional.

CHARLIE: I’ve only ever spoke three times, formally, in public, in my life, and each time I’ve been banged up by the judge straight afterwards! For twenty years, me and Pauline’s mother, Jean, we were happy, and then, unfortunately, just by chance, we met each other. I done me best bring up Pauline, on me own, after her muvver... (Cries.) Sorry... I’ve had to be her dad and her mum after her muvver left me and went to live in Spain. It’s a disappointment that Jean can’t be here in Brighton for her daughter’s engagement party, and a shame she can’t even afford a stamp for a card neither. But I’m not gonna go on about it.
Dolly is counseling Pauline on how to treat Alan, who’s just threatened to engage in knife fight. Note: the joke at the end is that twenty years after the action of the play, England elected a female Prime Minister, who was named Margaret Thatcher. Ironically, she was extremely conservative and the author here is having some fun at her (and Dolly’s) expense. Compassion for the poor and an end to war were not things Thatcher was interested in at all.

DOLLY: (To Pauline:) He’s not worth it, love. He’d stand there and watch you do it, and not raise a finger. Look at him. You’re not the great romantic lover, are you? You’re a bit of a prick. Let me give you some advice. Men, they’ll do anything to get you into bed. Lie, cheat, buy you a bed. And the tragedy is that once they’ve had you, they’ll never want you as much ever again. (Aside.) Don’t take notes girls, there’s a handout at the end. (To Alan:) You want to watch your tongue, young man, slagging us women off. It’s 1963, there’s a revolution coming. I predict in twenty years’ time there’ll be a woman in Ten Downing Street, yeah, and she won’t be doing the washing up. Then you’ll see exactly what women can do. You’ll see a more just and fair society. The feminine voice of compassion for the poor will be the guiding principle of government, and there’ll be an end to foreign wars.

This speech below is Rachel’s introductory speech, during which you can play Roscoe (a man) and Rachel (a woman). The contrast should be huge. Rachel is a tough woman, regardless.

RACHEL: (As her brother, Roscoe) Lloyd Boateng. My sister worked the bar for you at the Palm Tree. Rachel? She runs this nightclub now, it’s her boyfriend’s. The Stiletto, Mile End. It’s rough. Criminals, gangsters, Princess Margaret. Rachel like you, Lloyd. A lot. She said you could be trusted. (As herself.) You’re looking pretty good, Lloydie! The fuzz are looking for me. Can I trust you? My brother Roscoe is dead. My boyfriend killed my twin brother, yeah. I should hate Stanley for that. But I love him. Me and Stanley are going to have to go to Australia. It’ll be a terrible outdoorsy life, sustained by lager, barbecues and opera.

First, Pauline is being romantic with her fiancée, but doesn’t really understand what a metaphor is. Then, she is complaining to her father about having to marry Roscoe/Rachel.

PAULINE: The bird is your heart? Is it a real bird? A metaphor? Oh, lovely! I accept your bird heart thing, and I promise to look after it properly. I got a bird in my hand an’ all—this bird is my heart, the only one I’ve ever had.

And (Do both, please, as they are so short:)

PAULINE: I can’t marry that tiny, weird looking, vicious, homosexual runt of a criminal. I want to marry for love! I love Alan! Five years ago I agreed to marry Roscoe, but five years ago I was young and stupid! I’m a lot older now! It’s weird, innit. Love. It’s like being mad!

Again, an introductory speech with a lot of exposition, but allows you to play Lloyd’s intelligence.
LLOYD: Yeah, me and Charlie go way back. (To audience.) Brixton Prison. (To Charlie) Man! What's going on? Last week I gets this invitation to an engagement party of Pauline Clench and Roscoe Crabbe, which was a shock, because I always thought Roscoe was, you know, a homosexual. But today it's a different groom, man! I get it, you thought, Roscoe's dead, Pauline seems to love this Alan and, I've paid for the sausage rolls so why waste them?! Look, good riddance to Roscoe! Rachel and her boyfriend killed him for revenge! The boyfriend testified against Roscoe in court. Put him away for four years. Man! It's obvious! Who is Roscoe gonna get in a fight with on his first day of freedom? Rachel's boyfriend, Stanley Stubbers.

Stanley is talking to Frances at first, then to Alan, and then finally to the audience. Stanley is clearly something of an idiot and a bully.

STANLEY: Shh! I'm Stanley Stubbers. I'm going to have to make up a false name, because I'm lying low. What do I call you? I don't do first names. First names are for girls and Norwegians. (To new character:) What's my name? Gonna have to be creative now. Not my best game! (Stanley looks at a trash can.) Dustbin, dustbin, Dustin! (He looks at the pub sign.) Dustin Pubsign. Pubsign. It's an old Anglo-Saxon guild name. The bakers baked bread, the Smiths were the blacksmiths, the Pubsigns. Yup! We made the pub signs. (Aside.) Roscoe is in Brighton! I'd be better off lying low in London than lying low in Brighton. Poor dear Rachel must be terrified. My God! Can this be happening? What to do?! I must go to London, find Rachel. Damn it! I can't! I have to wait here for Rachel's letter.