



# HEIDELBERG THEATRE COMPANY

## AUDITIONS

### BIRDSONG

Adapted by Rachel Wagstaff from the book by Sebastian Faulks

Director: Michelle Swann

#### AUDITION DATES:

- Sunday 29 March 2026 from 7.00pm
- Monday 30 March 2026 from 7.00pm
- Callbacks (if required): Wednesday 1 April 2026 from 7.00pm

#### SEASON DATES:

3 July – 18 July 2026

#### PERFORMANCE DATES:

Evenings at 8.00 pm: July 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18

Matinees at 2.00 pm: July 4, 5, 11, 12

Note: The first Saturday has no 8pm performance.

The middle Saturday has two performances: at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm

#### PLAY SUMMARY:

Utterly raw, emotional and powerful, 'Birdsong' is a beautiful and haunting story about one man's journey through an all-consuming illicit love affair and into the horror of the First World War. Set alternately between the French village of Amiens and the Battle of the Somme, this thought-provoking play ebbs and flows between the tender love story, the heart-warming camaraderie of the soldiers, and the harsh realities of war.

Birdsong is an impactful and insightful drama.

Setting: France 1910, 1916 – 1918 and the present day.

#### OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

An Intimacy Coordinator will attend relevant rehearsals to support actor safety.

## CHARACTER DETAILS:

NOTE: A variety of accents are required including English, French, Scottish, Welsh, Irish and German. See each character description for more information.

### Stephen Wraysford

Gender: Male

Playing age: 20s

English

Passionate, idealistic, lonely. He has a modern outlook and a sense of adventure. From Act Two, Stephen is an officer in the British army. He becomes increasingly jaded and broken but wanting to survive so that he can understand what this war is for. He becomes desperate to find out, or to make some meaning from all the suffering he has endured and seen around him.

*Content advice: Stephen is in most scenes of the play and rarely leaves the stage.*

*There are several intimate scenes between Stephen and Isabelle*

### Jack Firebrace

Gender: Male

Playing age: 30s

English

A sapper who is part of those digging tunnels during the First World War. He cares for all around him, always digging deep (metaphorically), and relying on his sense of humour and warmth to pull others through. He is warm, kind, deeply loyal and loving. He works hard and believes in God – or he tries to cling to this belief in the face of all he experiences. Paternal but one of the lads, Jack is the man you would most want fighting alongside you.

Sings.

### Isabelle Azaire

Gender: Female

Playing age: Late 20s/early 30s

French

Isabelle is a repressed and oppressed young woman, who has been passed from one dominant male (her father) to another (Rene Azaire). She knows in her heart that she has a far richer inner life than she can ever share in society or her marriage. Isabelle comes across as in control, the dignified Madame Azaire, but really is still passionate and idealistic, doing whatever she can to help those in need, even behind her husband's back, despite her fears of the repercussions. She loves her stepdaughter, Lisette, but has never known or felt real passion until Stephen challenges the carefully built walls around her heart.

*Content advice: There are several intimate scenes between Isabelle and Stephen.*

### Rene Azaire

Gender: Male

Playing age: 40s/50s

French

Factory owner, self-important, a bully. He believes himself to be an important, respected man and strives to assert his authority wherever he can. He can be sycophantic, knowing he needs a man like Berard on his side, while despising, that he needs this help. Azaire is blind to the inner life of his wife and daughter, so focused is he on his work and his reputation. He is fearful of losing control in any

way; deeply repressed, he stamps out any challenge to him. He is a cruel, neglectful and abusive husband but at heart, he is deeply unhappy. A man who has lost his way and cannot see how to pull himself back.

### Berard

Gender: Male

Playing age: 50s

French

A Town Councillor, with an over inflated sense of self-worth. Pompous and patriotic, he prides himself on his importance and believes himself to be universally admired and respected. He is a traditionalist, who looks down on those 'beneath' him in society. He is distrustful of foreigners or of anything that threatens his great country, his great town.

### Lisette Azaire

Gender: Female

Playing age: 15/16

French

Daughter of Rene Azaire. Flirtatious, yearning to be a woman and to be wanted. Vulnerable, conflicted, loving, a little lost, Lisette is still grieving her real mother but she was open-hearted enough to have bonded quickly with Isabelle. Lisette is desperate for adventure but just wants to be loved.

### Marguerite

Gender: Female

Playing age: 40s-50s

French

The maid to the Azaire household. She watches everything and distrusts everyone. She dislikes any change to her routine or anything that threatens to disrupt the status quo. She is not afraid to show her disapproval and is particularly distrusting of foreign men, i.e. Stephen!

### Joseph Evans

Gender: Male

Playing age: 20s

Welsh

A Tunneller. Desperate to be liked and to fit in, he uses humour to get people to warm to him. A little immature, outwardly cocky, warm and fun to be around, but beneath all his bravado, he is very innocent and naïve. A farm boy at heart who would be much happier at home. He never fully recovers from the death of his brother on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

### Tom Brennan

Gender: Male

Playing age: 20s

Irish

A warm, loyal and good-hearted man, with a ready wit. He has endured much in the war but maintained his sense of humour, for the sake of others. He tries to lighten the moment when needed but is full of heart and yearning for his homeland. Brennan is the musical heart of the play, playing and singing to pull both others and him through.

### Lucien Lebrun

Gender: Male

Playing age: 20s/early 30s

French

Self-appointed head of the workers at the factor. Lucien is idealistic, principled, passionate, likeable, and determined to protect those around him.

### John Wraysford

Gender: Male

Playing age: early 30s

English

Stephen's great-grandson. Present day. A good man determined to honour those who have sacrificed so much for his generation.

### Captain Gray

Gender: Male

Playing age: 40s

Scottish

From Edinburgh. He is Stephen's commanding officer. He is a deeply intelligent man. A 'doctor' in his real life, compassionate, insightful, caring but also determined to do whatever it takes to finish the war. Gray is strong, paternal but also steely, with a keen sense of irony.

### Colonel Barclay

Gender: Male

Playing age: 50s

English

A hardened professional soldier and leader. A truly dignified man. This man has heart, guts and passion for his country and for his men.

### Arthur Shaw

Gender: Male

Playing age: 30s

English

A miner from Sheffield, now a tunneller in the war. Arthur is a brave, stoic, taciturn working-class man, who is kind, fair and big-hearted. Deeply loyal, he is prepared to endure to the end. He is Jack's closest friend. Neither man ever asks himself if their bond is more than friendship but they become everything to each other as the war progresses.

### Michael Tipper

Gender: Male

Playing age: 15

English

Tipper is a new recruit. He had only just signed up and lied about his age, buying into the propaganda: thinking that war would be an adventure and that he'd prove himself a hero. He is horrified by what he encounters when he gets there. He quickly unravels and reveals himself to be a frightened child. In a moment of terror and despair, he takes his own life.

*Content advice: Michael Tipper shoots himself at the end of Act Two.*

### Jeanne Fourmentier

Gender: Female

Playing age: 30s

French

Isabelle's older sister. An intelligent, warm, insightful woman with a ready wit. She is brave, loyal, kind and would fight to the death to protect her younger sister. Jeanne is somehow more grounded than Isabelle. A survivor, determined to make the best of any situation. Jeanne is like a ball of light, with real depths and heart.

### Nurse Mary

Gender: Female

Playing age: 30s

French

Mary is practically minded with a stern exterior but inside, she has deep compassion for those around her.

### Turner

Gender: Male

Playing age:

English

A British miner, now a sapper, terrified of all he has endured and all to come. Turner is already shellshocked when we meet him.

### Levi

Gender: Male

Playing age: 30s

German

A soldier who has endured years of fighting and recently lost his beloved brother in the war but is still full of enough humanity and compassion to embrace Stephen as a brother-in-arms when he discovers him alone in the tunnel. Levi is Jewish. A strong principled man of faith and compassion.

### OTHER CHARACTERS to double/triple with major roles:

#### Prostitute

Gender: Female

Playing age: late teens/early 20s

French

#### Barman (1918)

Gender: Male

Playing age: 40s

French

#### Gardener

Gender: Male

Playing age: 40s-50s

English

#### Modern day barman

Gender: Male

Playing age: 40s

French

Chaplain  
Gender: Male  
Playing age: 40s  
English

Factory Worker  
Gender: Male  
Playing age: 30s  
French

Orderly  
Gender: Male  
Playing age: 30s  
English

Military Policeman  
Gender: Male  
Playing age: 30s  
English

German soldiers

#### **AUDITION DETAILS:**

- Location: 36 Turnham Ave. Rosanna, Vic (opposite Rosanna Railway Station)
- Please check that you are available for all performance dates before booking your audition time. Please also inform the director if there are any rehearsal dates on which you are not available. You must also advise if there is a possibility of you taking on professional acting work that may conflict with rehearsal and performance dates.
- It is necessary that you are familiar with the play and should know it well enough to be able to describe the “story”. A copy of the script is available from the director.
- Auditions will be by individual appointment, at 15-minute intervals.
- To book an audition, contact the Director via [michelleswann65@gmail.com](mailto:michelleswann65@gmail.com)
- Auditions will involve reading from specified sections of the script. There is no need to memorise anything for the audition.
- The Director will advise, in advance, which sections of the script will be used for the auditions
- Please arrive at least 15 minutes early to either review the audition pieces and/or complete an audition form, if you’ve not already completed one.
- For queries, including arranging for a perusal copy of the script, contact the Director via [michelleswann65@gmail.com](mailto:michelleswann65@gmail.com)