

University of York Drama Society Presents

# LABOUR OF LOVE

## AUDITION PACK

Directed by **Harry Tallis (he/him)**

Assistant Directed by **Anna Walters (she/her)**

Produced by **Izzy Thomas (she/her)**

### KEY INFORMATION

- [Book your audition slot now!](#)
- Audition extracts are linked below.

### KEY DATES

- First Round Auditions will take place during **w/c 25th May** (Week 14)
- Recall Auditions will take place during **w/c 1st June** (Week 15)
- Production Week is **w/c 12th October** (Week 3)

### CONTACT INFO

- Get in touch via the show instagram, **@labouroflove\_dramasoc**
- Or contact via email: **Harry Tallis** [cst543@york.ac.uk](mailto:cst543@york.ac.uk) **Anna Walters**

### SYNOPSIS

*Labour of Love* takes place over the span of **twenty-seven years**, starting in **2017** and rewinding time to **1992** throughout Act One, and going back forward in Act Two. It focuses on the relationship of **David Lyons MP** and his constituency manager, **Jean Whittaker**. The play explores the shifting politics and ideologies within the Labour Party throughout the years, and the internal divisions within a broadchurch party.

### CONTENT WARNINGS

Mentioned: Bombing, cancer, classism, death/dying, divorce, funeral, grief, guns, rioting, terminal illness, terrorism, war.

Present: Strong language

## VISION / CONCEPT

We feel this play is particularly important against the current **political landscape** in the **UK**. Labour are back in power, but are finding it hard to pull the levers of government and **enact real change**. Who knows what could happen between now, and the autumn season? We could have a **new Labour prime minister** if Keir Starmer is toppled.

For this play, I want to focus on the character dynamics at play. This play is fundamentally about its characters and how they themselves and their relationships with each other change over time. Whilst the dialogue is written to be naturalistic, the play's structure is not - it jumps around in time. Therefore, to allow the action onstage to move fluidly in time, I would make the visual aesthetic more bold and stylised. Largely speaking, everything onstage will either be black, grey, white or red. From costume to set to lighting to video.

## CHARACTERS

- **David Lyons**, a Labour MP (*Male Presenting*)
- **Jean Whittaker**, a constituency agent (*Female Presenting*)
- **Elizabeth Lyons**, David's wife (*Female Presenting*)
- **Len Prior**, a local councillor and party worker (*Male Presenting*)
- **Margot Midler**, a constituent and party worker (*Female Presenting*)
- **Ensemble / Mr. Shen**, a chinese businessman investor\* (*Male or Female Presenting*)
  - Please only audition for Mr Shen if you are of Chinese descent
  - There is an alternate version of this character, Mr Smith

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

### David Lyons

 High Commitment - Large Role

A 'few years younger' than Jean, David was also born and brought up locally before winning a scholarship to Oxford University. Part of a new generation of Labour MPs, he's keen to modernize the party, rebranding it in the hope of making it more electable after years in opposition. Jean's concerned he's more interested in image than content, but she recognises his passion and pragmatism.

Accent: Soft midlands

Intimacy: Casual intimacy with Elizabeth; a kiss between Jean and David.

 David Extract 1.docx  David Extract 2.docx

## Jean Whittaker

 High Commitment - Large Role

Born and bred in North Nottinghamshire, Jean's been a card-carrying member of the Labour Party since the age of 14. Described by David as 'hard as nails', she's spent a lifetime fighting for the rights of the working-class left in her community. Her husband, a former miner, was the local Labour MP before ill health forced him to retire and David replaced him.

Accent: Midlands or Northern.

Intimacy: Casual intimacy with Len; a kiss between Jean and David.

[W Jean Extract 1.docx](#) [W Jean Extract 2.docx](#)

## Elizabeth Lyons

 Medium Commitment - Medium Role

Not a local, Elizabeth reluctantly followed her husband to his new constituency, although she thinks they should have waited for a seat closer to Westminster, Number 10 and, ultimately, a place in the cabinet – she has ambitions for her husband's career to match her own and they don't start in North Nottinghamshire.

Accent: Typical posh southerner/middle England

Intimacy: Casual intimacy with David

[W Elizabeth Extract 1.docx](#) [W Elizabeth Extract 2.docx](#)

## Len Prior

 Medium Commitment - Medium Role

'London born, nominally middle-class, with a slightly affected working-class tone', Len is Secretary of the local Labour Party, eventually becoming Leader of the Council. A Fabian scholar, he's always had his doubts about David's loyalties to the grassroots party members, his frustrations barely concealing his own political ambitions.

Accent: Soft Cockney


Intimacy: Casual Intimacy with Jean

[W Len Extract 1.docx](#) [W Len Extract 2.docx](#)

## Margot Midler

 Low Commitment - Small Role

Another local, Margot started her working life as a travel agent, campaigning for the local Labour Party in her spare time, before securing a position on the council and eventually becoming Deputy Leader.

 Margot Extract.docx

## Mr Shen / Mr Smith

 Low Commitment - Small Role

Mr. Shen's in the final stages of choosing a European city in which to build his new train plant, thereby boosting employment and the economy. David argues that his constituency is the ideal place: a prime location with excellent transport links and, most importantly, a willing workforce. Securing this multi-million pound deal would also secure the area's future.

Originally written as a Chinese business man. We encourage people with Chinese heritage to audition for this role.

We have also created an alternative version of this character who is an American, Silicon Valley businessman. Dramaturgically, this change doesn't impact the plot of the play.

**Please only audition for Mr Shen if appropriate to do so. If not, please perform as Mr Smith instead.**

 Mr Shen Extract.docx

## AUDITIONS AND CASTING

First Round Auditions will take place during w/c 25th May (Week 14). For the first round auditions, please prepare to perform at least one of the extracts above. We may offer redirection, or ask you to have a go at another extract. This is to maximise the time we have with you, and to see everything you've got!

Date	Time	Location
Thu 28th May	13:30 - 17:00	LMB/047
Fri 29th May	9:00 - 13:30	RCH/006
Sun 31st May	13:30 - 15:30	AEW/003
Mon 1st June	15:00 - 19:00	LMB/020
Tue 2nd June	10:00 - 11:30	AEW/003

Recall Auditions will take place during w/c 1st June (Week 15). These will be longer, workshop-style auditions in small groups. We will give you a taste of how we intend to run rehearsals, and will give you the opportunity to perform with other people.

## Self Tapes and Online Auditions

If you would like to arrange an online audition, or send in a self tape, please contact [cst543@york.ac.uk](mailto:cst543@york.ac.uk)

## REHEARSALS

Rehearsals will commence in September, once everyone is back in York. We will begin with a read through, and then go straight into rehearsing the play.

Rehearsals will comprise of both workshop exercises as well as blocking the scenes.

## Wellbeing

Due to the level of commitment and collaborative nature of this production, we would like to highlight the measures we will put in place to ensure everyone is having a great time making this show! Whilst much of this is standard Dramasoc practice, we wanted to clarify to make sure new and returning students are on the same page, so everyone knows what to expect!

- The rehearsal schedule will be created with cast and crew availability taken into account.
- Rehearsals will begin with a check in with everyone in the room.
- Exec will check in individually with cast and crew at key points throughout the rehearsal process to ensure everyone is confident and happy.

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