

The Chalk Garden

by Enid Bagnold

Headgate Theatre Productions

Director: Elly Kent-Johnson

Elly is best known as an actor at the Headgate Theatre, having performed there for nearly twenty years. She made her directorial debut for Headgate Theatre Productions with *The Haunting of Hill House* in October 2023 and can't wait to get started on *The Chalk Garden* next year.

Assistant to the Director: George Deadman

Production week: w/c Sunday 15th June

Performances: Wed 18th to Sat 21st June with Saturday matinee

Rehearsals: Sundays 10.30am to 1pm & Wednesdays 7.30 – 9pm from 9th March 2025

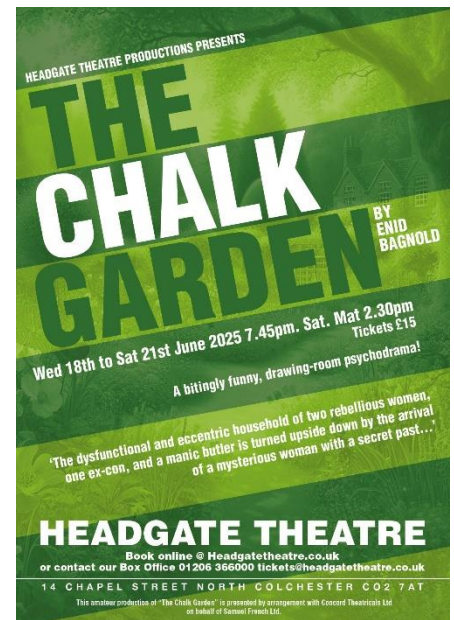
Read Through: Sunday 29th December at 6pm in the Headgate Studio. Bar open with complementary Christmas nibbles!

Auditions: Audition workshops are scheduled for Sunday 2nd February at 4pm AND Wednesday 5th February at 7.30pm at The Headgate.

Synopsis

First performed in 1955, *The Chalk Garden* by Enid Bagnold, tells the story of the imperious Mrs St Maugham and her granddaughter Laurel, a disturbed child under the care of Miss Madrigal, a governess. Miss Madrigal's secretive past life is a mystery that is solved during the action of the play. The story also explores the impact of Miss Madrigal on a dysfunctional household, including the put-upon manservant, Maitland, and the unseen but malignant ex-butler living upstairs.

During its initial two-year Broadway run, the play was well received and compared by *The Manchester Guardian* to Chekov's *The Seagull*, while *The Observer* described it as 'possibly the best artificial comedy' since William Congreve, the restoration comedy playwright. It combines two of my favourite things - a secret to be discovered, and joyfully biting comedy full of delicious one liners and moments verging on farce. The play has at least five fantastic parts for actors to get their teeth into, and as a director, I was immediately drawn to the character driven plot.



Character description/skills (including playing age)

This is a fast paced, character driven play. All actors will need exceptional comic timing and the ability to keep up the pace!

ROLE	PLAYING AGE	DESCRIPTION	Notes
Mrs St Maugham	60 - 70	Imperious, robust and overpowering, Mrs St Maugham is the proudly eccentric matriarch of the household and takes care of her granddaughter, Laurel.	
Miss Madrigal	Mid 40s	Miss Madrigal is employed as companion to Laurel and is very secretive about her past. She is exceptionally calm and self-possessed with an air of authority. A lonely woman with exceptional inner strength, she is also a positive force for good.	
Laurel	16	Precocious, self-dramatising and eccentric, Laurel has a tendency towards exaggeration and regularly tells lies during the play. She is a child damaged by her past, and the world of licensed eccentricity encouraged by her grandmother.	Laurel is a role requiring a certain element of maturity and older actors who appear young enough will be considered for this part.
Maitland	30 - 40	A much put upon and neurotic manservant, Maitland's role in the household is all encompassing and frantic. Maitland was a conscientious objector during ww2 and served a jail sentence. He is fascinated by true crime, a passion he shares with Laurel.	As one of the main drivers of the play's comedy, Maitland will need exceptional comic timing.
Olivia	Mid to late 30s	Laurel's mother, a shy and pleasant woman. She has returned to reclaim her daughter from Mrs St Maugham.	
The Judge	60 - 75	The Judge is an old friend of Mrs St Maugham's and appears during the second half of the play. He is wise and ultimately kindly, providing the key to solving the mystery of Miss Madrigal's past.	
Nurse	30 - 60	The nurse is caring for the unseen but malignant Mr Pinkbell, the household's ex-butler	May double with Little Lady
Little Lady	30 - 50	Another applicant for the role of companion to Laurel	Only appears at very beginning of play, may double with Nurse