

The Winter's Tale 2022

Audition Pack: Roles and Audition Pieces

Please note: double-castings may change post-auditions, depending on final cast. Where characters appear in both the first and second half, all actors will play the same characters 16 years apart. Ages given are playing age rather than actor's age, and most have no upper limit. Equal opportunities casting, including gender, unless specified. You will have to be over the age of 18 as of 14th November 2021.

Please have a read of the roles below, and prepare two of the speeches given. You will not be expected to have memorised the pieces, but acting is encouraged rather than straight reading. All roles will also be expected to learn a short song at the audition, although singing will not necessarily have to be tuneful!

Roles (by size of part)

LEONTES, (M) 30+ / Both Halves

King of Sicilia

Leontes' jealousy drives the first half of the play, accusing his pregnant wife of adultery with his friend. He reconciles with his wife, and his child at the end of the play. He needs to portray all aspects of this character: loving, later suspicious but authoritative, with true reconciliation at the end.

PAULINA, (F) 30+ / Both Halves

Friend to Hermione, wife to Antigonus

Paulina is the only one who calls out Leontes for his behaviour towards his wife. One of only two characters in the first half who seem to be thinking straight, she should be plain-speaking, and be able to deliver the humour in the part.

CAMILLO, 30+ / Both Halves

Sicilian Lord, travels with Polixenes to Bohemia

The puppetmaster of the second half, helping to reconcile the estranged brothers of Leontes and Polixenes. Their quick thinking saved Polixenes' life sixteen years ago, but it cost him exile from his home which he loves. An honest fellow. Perhaps too honest for their own good.

AUTOLYCUS, 18+ /2nd Half. Doubles as SERVANT / 1st Half

A rogue

A former courtier in the Bohemian court turned pickpocket. The equivalent of a fool in the play. A wheeler-dealer. Singing role. In addition to the speech, please also prepare a short folk song, either self-accompanied or sung acapella.

POLIXENES, (M) 30+ / Both Halves

King of Bohemia, childhood friend of Leontes, father to Florizel

Along with Hermione, the focus of the brunt of Leontes' rage – thankfully, he escapes before Leontes can enact his plan to have him killed. In the 2nd half, he follows his son, Florizel, and is upset to find him courting Perdita – who he believes is a shepherd girl.

FLORIZEL, (M) 18 - 30 /2nd Half. Doubles as JAILER / 1st Half

Son of Polixenes, courting Perdita.

A prince who dresses as a shepherd to meet Perdita. Once his father finds out about this relationship, he tries to separate them, but Florizel runs away to Sicilia with Perdita.

HERMIONE, (F) 30+ / Both Halves

Wife of Leontes, accused of adultery. Mother of Perdita and Mamillius.

A faithful wife who gets caught up in her husband's mad jealousy. She has to justify herself in court, and when she cannot, and learns that her son has died, and her baby daughter is likely dead, promptly also 'dies'. She is then brought back to life in the form of a statue at the end of the play, reconciling with her husband, and meeting her adult daughter.

CLOWN, 18 - 30 / 2nd Half. Doubles as FIRST LORD / 1st Half

Child of Shepherd, adoptive sibling of Perdita.

Earnest and likable, they are quite gullible, and is tricked by Autolycus. They function as one of the fools in the play, but unknowingly. A fun part: comic timing a must!

SHEPHERD, 50+ / 2nd Half. Doubles as OFFICER / 1st Half

Adoptive parent to Perdita, father to Clown.

Reliable and earthy. They are part of the drive of the second half. A lot of their humour revolves around not quite understanding what's going on, but must be likeable and sympathetic rather than dull.

PERDITA, (F) 18 - 30 / 2nd Half

Daughter of Leontes and Hermione, banished as a baby and adopted by Shepherd and Clown. Courting Florizel.

Brought up as the daughter of a Shepherd, Perdita doesn't know her true identity until the end of the play. She is warm, tomboyish, and the life and soul of the party. Not afraid to tell off Florizel when he doesn't reveal his identity sooner.

ANTIGONUS, (M) 40+ / 1st Half. Doubles as ENSEMBLE / 2nd Half

A Lord of Sicilia, Husband to Paulina. Rescues the baby Perdita and dies in the process.

The lord who speaks for the newborn Perdita – rather than see her killed he faces banishment, and delivers some wonderful speeches before exiting 'pursued by a bear'.

MAMILLIUS, 18-20 / 1st Half. Doubles as TIME, ENSEMBLE / 2nd Half

Child of Leontes and Hermione. Dies when their mother is in prison.

Mamillius is quite a small role, but with some fun lines. They should be played young. Time is the personification of time, who moves the play forward 16 years in the interval. A narrator role. Will also play one of the shepherds and other ensemble roles.

CLEOMANES / ENSEMBLE, 18+ / Both Halves

A Sicilian Lord or Lady

Cleomanes has been sent to visit the oracle to find out whether Hermione is faithful or not. Will also play a shepherd, a lord, and a gentleman.

DION / DORCAS / ENSEMBLE, 18+ / Both Halves

A Sicilian Lord or Lady / Shepherd(ess)

Dion has been sent to visit the oracle to find out whether Hermione is faithful or not. Dorcas is a silly shepherd(ess) who sings and makes fun of the clown. Will also play a lord, and a gentleman.

EMILA / MOPSA / ENSEMBLE, 18+ / Both Halves

One of Hermione's Ladies / Shepherdess

Emilia stays in prison with Hermione to deliver Perdita, and gives a report to Paulina. Mopsa is a silly shepherdess who sings and makes fun of the clown. Will also play a lord, and a gentleman.

The audition speeches follow.

LEONTES, (M) 30+ / King of Sicilia Please look at both speeches

Too hot, too hot!
To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.
I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances;
But not for joy; not joy. This entertainment
May a free face put on, derive a liberty
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,
And well become the agent; 't may, I grant;
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practised smiles,
As in a looking-glass, and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o' the deer; O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows!
There have been, Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now;
And many a man there is, even at this present,
Now while I speak this, holds his wife by the arm,
That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't
Whiles other men have gates and those gates open'd,
As mine, against their will. Should all despair
That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
Would hang themselves. Physic for't there is none;
It is a bawdy planet, that will strike
From east, west, north and south: be it concluded,
No barricado for a belly; know't;
It will let in and out the enemy
With bag and baggage: many thousand of us
Have the disease, and feel it not.

Your mother was most true to wedlock, prince;
For she did print your royal father off,
Conceiving you: were I but twenty-one,
Your father's image is so hit in you,
His very air, that I should call you brother,
As I did him, and speak of something wildly
By us perform'd before. Most dearly welcome!
And your fair princess,--goddess!--O, alas!
I lost a couple, whom might have stood 'twixt heaven and earth
thus begetting wonder as
You, gracious couple, do: and then I lost--
All mine own folly--the society,
Amity too, of your brave father, whom,
Though bearing misery, I desire my life
Once more to look on him.

PAULINA, (F) 30+ / Friend to Hermione, wife to Antigonus Please look at both speeches

I care not:

It is an heretic that makes the fire,
Not she which burns in't. I'll not call you tyrant;
But this most cruel usage of your queen,
Not able to produce more accusation
Than your own weak-hinged fancy, something savours
Of tyranny and will ignoble make you,
Yea, scandalous to the world.

I pray you, do not push me; I'll be gone.

Look to your babe, my lord; 'tis yours:

Jove send her

A better guiding spirit! What needs these hands?

You, that are thus so tender o'er his follies,

Will never do him good, not one of you.

So, so: farewell; we are gone.

What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me?
What wheels? racks? fires? what flaying? boiling?
In leads or oils? what old or newer torture
Must I receive, whose every word deserves
To taste of thy most worst? Thy tyranny
Together working with thy jealousies,
Fancies too weak for boys, too green and idle
For girls of nine, O, think what they have done
And then run mad indeed, stark mad! for all
Thy by-gone fooleries were but spices of it.
That thou betray'dst Polixenes, 'twas nothing;
That did but show thee, of a fool, inconstant
And damnable ingrateful: nor was't much,
Thou wouldst have poison'd good Camillo's honour,
To have him kill a king: poor trespasses,
More monstrous standing by: whereof I reckon
The casting forth to crows thy baby-daughter
To be or none or little; though a devil
Would have shed water out of fire ere done't:
Nor is't directly laid to thee, the death
Of the young prince, whose honourable thoughts,
Thoughts high for one so tender, cleft the heart
That could conceive a gross and foolish sire
Blemish'd his gracious dam: this is not, no,
Laid to thy answer: but the last,--O lords,
When I have said, cry 'woe!' the queen, the queen,
The sweet'st, dear'st creature's dead,
and vengeance for't not dropp'd down yet.

CAMILLO, 30+ / Sicilian Lord

Then list to me:

This follows, if you will not change your purpose
But undergo this flight, make for Sicilia,
And there present yourself and your fair princess,
For so I see she must be, 'fore Leontes:
She shall be habited as it becomes
The partner of your bed. Methinks I see
Leontes opening his free arms and weeping
His welcomes forth; asks thee the son forgiveness,
As 'twere i' the father's person; kisses the hands
Of your fresh princess; o'er and o'er divides him
'Twixt his unkindness and his kindness; the one
He chides to hell and bids the other grow
Faster than thought or time. I'll write you down:
[writes a note]
The which shall point you forth at every sitting
What you must say; that he shall not perceive
But that you have your father's bosom there
And speak his very heart!

AUTOLYCUS, 18+ / A rogue Please also prepare a folk song.

He has a son, who shall be flayed alive; then
'noited over with honey, set on the head of a
wasp's nest; then stand till he be three quarters
and a dram dead; then recovered again with
aqua-vitae or some other hot infusion; then, raw as
he is, and in the hottest day prognostication
proclaims, shall be set against a brick-wall, the
sun looking with a southward eye upon him, where he
is to behold him with flies blown to death. But what
talk we of these traitorly rascals, whose miseries
are to be smiled at, their offences being so
capital? Tell me, for you seem to be honest plain
people, what you have to the king: being something
gently considered, I'll tender your persons to his presence.

Now, had I not the dash of my former life in me,
would preferment drop on my head. I brought the old
man and his son aboard the prince: told him I heard
them talk of a fardel and I know not what: but he
at that time, overfond of the shepherd's daughter,
who began to be muchnsea-sick, and himself little better, extremity of
weather continuing, this mystery remained
undiscovered. But 'tis all one to me; for had I
been the finder out of this secret, it would not
have relished among my other discredits.

POLIXENES, (M) 30+ / King of Bohemia

[to FLORIZEL] Mark your divorce, young sir!
Whom son I dare not call; thou art too base
To be acknowledged: thou a sceptre's heir,
That thus affect'st a sheep-hook! [to SHEPHERD] Thou old traitor,
I am sorry that by hanging thee I can
But shorten thy life one week!
And thou, [to PERDITA] fresh piece
Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know
The royal fool thou copest with,--
I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briers, and made
More homely than thy state. [to FLORIZEL] For thee, fond boy,
If I may ever know thou dost but sigh
That thou no more shalt see this knack, as never
I mean thou shalt, we'll bar thee from succession;
Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin,
Far than Deucalion off: mark thou my words:
Follow us to the court. Thou churl, for this time,
Though full of our displeasure, yet we free thee
From the dead blow of it. And you, enchantment.--
Worthy enough a herdsman: yea, him too,
That makes himself, but for our honour therein,
Unworthy thee,--if ever henceforth thou
These rural latches to his entrance open,
Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,
I will devise a death as cruel for thee
As thou art tender to't!

FLORIZEL, (M) 18 - 30 / Son of Polixenes

Why look you so upon me?
I am but sorry, not afeard; delay'd,
But nothing alter'd: what I was, I am;
More straining on for plucking back, not following
My leash unwillingly.
This cannot fail but by
The violation of my faith; and then
Let nature crush the sides o' the earth together
And mar the seeds within! Lift up thy looks:
From my succession wipe me, father; I
Am heir to my affection.
This is desperate, sir, I am put to sea
With her whom here I cannot hold on shore.

HERMIONE, (F) 30+ / Wife of Leontes

Sir, spare your threats:
The bug which you would fright me with I seek.
To me can life be no commodity:
The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,
I do give lost; for I do feel it gone,
But know not how it went. My second joy
And first-fruits of my body, from his presence
I am barr'd, like one infectious. My third comfort
Starr'd most unluckily, is from my breast,
The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth,
Haled out to murder: myself on every post
Proclaimed a strumpet: with immodest hatred
The child-bed privilege denied, which 'longs
To women of all fashion; lastly, hurried
Here to this place, i' the open air, before
I have got strength of limit. Now, my liege,
Tell me what blessings I have here alive,
That I should fear to die? Therefore proceed.
But yet hear this: mistake me not; no life,
I prize it not a straw, but for mine honour,
Which I would free, if I shall be condemn'd
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
'Tis rigor and not law. Your honours all,
I do refer me to the oracle:
Apollo be my judge!

CLOWN, 18 - 30 / Child of Shepherd

You are well met, sir. You denied to fight with me
this other day, because I was no gentleman born.
See you these clothes? pray you see them not and
think me still no gentleman born: you were best say
these robes are not gentlemen born: give me the
lie, do, and try whether I am not now a gentleman born.
I was a gentleman born before my
father; for the king's son took me by the hand, and
called me brother; and then the two kings called my
father brother; and then the prince my brother and
the princess my sister called my father father; and
so we wept, and there was the first gentleman-like
tears that ever we shed.

SHEPHERD, 50+ / Adoptive parent to Perdita

I would there were no age between sixteen and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting--Hark you now! Would any but these boiled brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather? They have scared away two of my best sheep, which I fear the wolf will sooner find than the master. Good luck, an't be thy will what have we here! Mercy on 's, a bairn a very pretty bairn! A boy or a child, I wonder? A pretty one; a very pretty one: sure, some 'scape: This has been some behind-door-work: they were warmer that got this than the poor thing is here. I'll take it up for pity: yet I'll tarry till my son come; he halloed but even now. Whoa, ho, ho!

ANTIGONUS, (M) 40+ / A Lord of Sicilia

Come, poor babe:
I have heard, but not believed,
the spirits o' the dead
May walk again: if such thing be, thy mother
Appear'd to me last night, in pure white robes,
Like very sanctity, she did approach
My cabin where I lay; thrice bow'd before me,
And gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
Became two spouts: the fury spent, anon
Did this break-from her: 'Good Antigonus,
Since fate, against thy better disposition,
Hath made thy person for the thrower-out
Of my poor babe, according to thine oath,
Places remote enough are in Bohemia,
There weep and leave it crying; and, for the babe
Is counted lost for ever, Perdita,
There lie, and there thy character: there these; (Empties purse)
Which may, if fortune please, both breed thee, pretty,
And still rest thine. The storm begins; poor wretch,
That for thy mother's fault art thus exposed
To loss and what may follow! Weep I cannot,
But my heart bleeds; and most accursed am I
To be by oath enjoin'd to this. Farewell!
The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have
A lullaby too rough: I never saw
The heavens so dim by day. A savage clamour!
Well may I get aboard! This is the chase:
I am gone for ever.

Exit, pursued by a bear

PERDITA, (F) 18 - 30 / Daughter of Leontes and Hermione Please look at both speeches

I'll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
No more than were I painted I would wish
This youth should say 'twere well and only therefore
Desire to breed by me. Here's flowers for you;
Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram;
The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
And with him rises weeping: these are flowers
Of middle summer, and I think they are given
To men of middle age. You're very welcome.
Now, my fair'st friend,
I would I had some flowers o' the spring that might
Become your time of day; and yours, and yours,
O Proserpina, for the flowers now, that frighted thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! Daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; pale primroses
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength--a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one! O, these I lack,
To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend,
To strew him o'er and o'er!

Even here undone!
I was not much afeard; for once or twice
I was about to speak and tell him plainly,
The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage but
Looks on alike. Will't please you, sir, be gone?
I told you what would come of this: beseech you,
Of your own state take care.
How often have I told you 'twould be thus!
How often said, my dignity would last
But till 'twere known!

MAMILLIUS / TIME, 18-20

I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
To me or my swift passage, that I slide
O'er sixteen years and leave the growth untried
Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom.
Your patience this allowing,
I turn my glass and give my scene such growing
As you had slept between. All this allow,
If ever you have spent time worse ere now;
If never, yet that Time himself doth say
He wishes earnestly you never may.

CLEOMANES

DION / DORCAS

EMILA / MOPSA

Please prepare either of these speeches

He hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes; he has the prettiest love-songs for maids; so without bawdry, which is strange; with such delicate burthens of dildos and fadings, 'jump her and thump her;' and where some stretch-mouthed rascal would, as it were, mean mischief and break a foul gap into the matter, he makes the maid to answer 'Whoop, do me no harm, good man;' puts him off, slights him, with 'Whoop, do me no harm, good man.'

Did you see the meeting of the two kings? No?
Then have you lost a sight, which was to be seen,
cannot be spoken of. There might you have beheld one
joy crown another, so and in such manner that it
seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their
joy waded in tears. Our king, being ready to leap out of
himself for joy of his found daughter, as if that
joy were now become a loss, cries 'O, thy mother,
thy mother!' then asks Bohemia forgiveness; then
embraces his son-in-law; then again worries he his
daughter with clipping her; I never heard of such
another encounter, which lames report to follow it
and undoes description to do it.