



In this document we cover the outline of the show, an introduction to each of the characters, an explanation of what the **workshop** will entail, an outline of the **audition** process, and how to get in touch with the production team.

Written in 1938, the play *Heaven Can Wait* inspired a number of films and TV dramas. The earliest (and most comparable to the play) is the 1941 film, **Here Comes Mr Jordan**, starring Robert Montgomery. Other films include the 1978 adaptation, **Heaven Can Wait**, starring Warren Beatty and Julie Christie, and the 2001 Chris Rock film, **Down to Earth**. The most well-known programme to be inspired by the play is the 90's cult TV series **Quantum Leap**.

Please note that this notice is not just a call-out to performers, **we would also love to hear from anyone who wishes to be involved backstage** (costumes, props, lighting, sound, etc.).

To get in touch, book an audition slot or register for the workshop please e-mail:
SedosHeavenCanWait@gmail.com.

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SYNOPSIS

The play begins in an ethereal place between heaven and earth where the dead are being registered before boarding a heavenly aeroplane to their final destination. [Joe Pendleton](#), a boxing pro (and amateur pilot) is among them, having apparently just crashed his plane on the way to his next fight. Joe – an under-educated and ‘salt-of-the-earth’ sort – insists that he can’t be dead, there must be a mistake.

And indeed he is right.

To save Joe from the pain of death, [Messenger 7013](#) – a rather bumbling klutz working as Joe’s guardian angel – lifted Joe from his body before the crash. Upon investigation by the more senior angel ([Jordan](#)) had Joe been left alone he would have saved himself and continued to live for a further 60 years through to 1998.

Jordan feels compelled to take Joe’s case over and agrees that Joe should be returned to his body. However, Joe’s body has already been cremated by his hapless yet dear friend and boxing trainer [Max Levene](#). Jordan is forced to seek a replacement body for Joe to inhabit for the rest of his ‘natural’ life, though Joe’s mind and soul will remain as himself.

Keen to get back on the circuit and to win the world boxing title, Joe is extremely choosy about which body to take on. Having rejected the ‘very cream of last week’s crop’, Jordan takes him to the last candidate – Jonathan Farnsworth, a wealthy and ruthless business tycoon, just murdered by his wife ([Julia Farnsworth](#)) and her lover [Tony Abbott](#) (Mr Farnsworth’s confidential secretary) who have drowned him in the bath. On arrival at the Farnsworth mansion (run admirably by [Mrs Ames](#)), Joe first sees the beautiful [Bette Logan](#), whose father wrongly faces jail as a result of Farnsworth’s fraudulent dealings. She has come seeking Farnsworth’s help and Joe is instantly taken with her.

Joe is not keen to become a physically ‘rather run-down’ type who everyone despises but, unable to allow Jonathan Farnsworth to ruin Bette’s life, he agrees to become Farnsworth.

Recruiting his old trainer (Max Levene) to train the below-par Farnsworth’s body, Joe shuns the world of finance and arranges a fight between himself and the reigning world titleholder K.O.Murdock. A relationship between Joe/Farnsworth and Bette blossoms, until fate intervenes and ends Joe’s ‘tenure’ of Farnsworth; Mrs Farnsworth and Mr Abbott shoot him dead – before the fight has taken place.

Back in limbo, Joe and Jordan oversee the distraught Bette whilst a police investigation, run by [Inspector Williams](#), of the disappearance of Mr Farnsworth. Joe influences Max Levene to turn on the wireless to hear Murdock’s gripping fight for the world title. We hear K.O.Murdock is way out in the lead when he suddenly goes down. Jordan explains to Joe that he has been shot. He was supposed to throw the fight yet wouldn’t so was murdered. Joe, who cannot quite let go of his dream to be world champion one day, takes the chance to possess Murdock’s body, understanding that he may lose Bette forever. He finishes the fight as Murdock, who is managed by the crooked [Lefty](#).

Through the contrivances of a saxophone (Joe’s lucky sax), Max Levene and the murder investigators catch up with Joe/Murdock. Joe informs them that Farnsworth’s body is in the ice box in the basement of the mansion.

In Murdock's body, Joe is keen to get back to Farnsworth and to propose to Bette but that simply is not possible and Jordan wipes Joe's memory. Joe becomes K.O.Murdock fully but with his soul intact.

At the very end of the play K.O.Murdock and Bette meet. Feeling that somehow they already know each other, the play ends with them walking off together...to live happily ever after.

SETTING & DIALECTS

The show will be true to the text being set in late 1930's New York or Chicago with authentic dialects. All costumes and staging will also be of that time period.

Most of the parts will require a 'stock' slightly posh American accent with the exception of Joe Pendleton and Max Levene (more 'street') and Jordan, Messenger 7013, and the Escorts (these characters can have any English-based accent).

Whilst we intend to have authentic accents, acting ability will take primacy – if you can do accents comfortably then great but please do not jeopardise your audition by concentrating solely on the accent. We will be holding accent coaching sessions as required during the rehearsal period.

CHARACTER LIST

The following is a view of what we're looking for in the casting...but do treat this slightly with a 'pinch of salt'. Whilst we are keen for the actors to adhere to the direction noted in this document we would certainly appreciate any alternative ideas or approaches to the characters.

A number of characters will be auditioned as both male and female, with the final decision being subject to the best auditions.

In order of time on-stage the principal roles are:

JOE PENDLETON – Male – 20's or 30's

Main character.

Key characteristic: **Endearing**

Kind-hearted, jovial, and an ambitious boxer. He has four key relationships with Jordan, Max, Bette and Messenger 7013. Joe will need to convey a soft side and ability to deliver comedy in an apparently accidental fashion. When 'converted' to K.O.Murdock at the end of the play there must be a clear difference in voice and physicality yet retain Joe's 'soul'.

JORDAN – Male or Female – Any age but older than Joe Pendleton

Joe's guide throughout the play.

Key characteristic: **Wise**

Very level-headed and kind natured throughout the play, yet obviously a powerful figure in heaven. It is key that Jordan's relationship with Joe is platonic (if played by a female) and respectful (in both directions).

MAX LEVENE – Male – 40's or 50's

Joe's boxing trainer and loyal friend.

Key characteristic: **Basic**

Joe's trainer and dear friend since Joe was a boy. Max and Joe have formed a bond where they trust each other more than anyone else. Max is not the wisest of men but is a delightful chap. We are looking for an actor who can pull off an amusing rendition of someone who cares more for Joe than anyone else and is 'simple' enough to actually believe that Joe inhabits Farnsworth's body.

TONY ABBOTT – Male – 30's or 40's

Farnsworth's financial secretary.

Key characteristic: **Dastardly**

Wiley and thoroughly untrustworthy; a 'moustache-twizzling' rogue. He is highly intelligent and devious and whilst he has no love for Julia he does have a passion for the money and power which she may inherit. He is the out and out villain of the piece however on the surface he is suave and charming.

MESSENGER 7013 – Male or Female – Any age

An angel new to heaven.

Key characteristic: **Incompetent**

Accidental clutz, very low in competence. Slightly pathetic but with a propensity to whinge and squabble. Messenger 7013 is not unkind, rude or uncaring...just a little useless.

BETTE LOGAN – Female – 20's - 30's and a feasible match with Joe Pendleton

Joe's sweetheart whose family is being ruined by the Farnsworth Empire.

Key characteristic: **Assertive**

Pronounced "Betty" not "Bet"; a forthright although sweet girl who is trying to do what is right by her father. She loathes Farnsworth yet is charmed by Joe. There must be a clear transition from hating Farnsworth through to loving him, however brief the text. There must also be a very immediate and plausible connection between Bette and Joe.

JULIA FARNSWORTH – Female – 20's or 30's

Farnsworth's wife, in love with Abbott.

Key characteristic: **Oppressed**

Elegant and beautiful, with an entrenched dislike for her husband. She loves Tony Abbott and is smitten by his charms. Not an evil lady at heart yet she does undertake evil acts due to her circumstance and Tony's influence. We are looking for a portrayal of a soul that is conflicted and is really a kind caring person underneath.

MRS AMES – Female – 40's +

Housekeeper at the Farnsworth residence.

Key characteristic: **Matriarchal**

Matriarchal and a little superior. The long-serving housekeeper who keeps herself subservient albeit within reason. A very proud lady who most certainly does not suffer fools gladly.

INSPECTOR WILLIAMS – Male - Any Age

Inspecting Farnsworth's death.

Key characteristic: **Serious**

There are a number of ways that this role could be played. The obvious is to be rather officious and stern and slightly 'over the top'. We welcome those auditioning to review the script extracts and interpret in the most imaginative and amusing ways possible. Consider movement, physicality and facial expressions as well as tone of voice and accent. One thing that is clear is that the Inspector role needs to have a certain element of gullibility.

LEFTY – Male – 40's or 50's

Rival boxing trainer to Max.

Key characteristic: **Shifty**

Lefty does not really care about anyone other than himself and the amount of cash in his pocket. Not necessarily overly clever but he is corrupt and not particularly nice – especially since he tried to get K.O.Murdock to throw his fight, illegally. Lefty is a bit of a 'geezer' with a working-class cockyness.

SMALLER ROLES/ENSEMBLE

There are also a number of smaller roles:

- **DOCTOR** – inspecting Joe as K.O.Murdock after the fight [*1 page*]
- **PLAINCLOTHESMAN** – policeman supporting Inspector Williams [*1 page*]
- **WORKMAN** – delivers gym equipment to the Farnsworth mansion [*1 page*]
- **1st ESCORT** – worker in heaven at the beginning of the play [*2 pages*]
- **2nd ESCORT** – worker in heaven at the beginning of the play [*3 pages*]
- **MANSFIELD** – visual-comedy butler at the Farnsworth residence [*3 pages*]
- **ANN** – maid under the leadership of Mrs Ames' [*2 pages*]
- **SUSIE** – maid under the leadership of Mrs Ames' [*3 pages*]
- **NURSE** – looking after Jonathan Farnsworth, non-speaking part [*1 page*]

These smaller roles may be combined into a few 'ensemble' parts or allocated as additional parts to the cast playing the principal roles.

THE WORKSHOP

*There will be a workshop on **Tuesday 12th November** to give more information about the show and an insight into what to expect at the auditions.*

DATE: Tuesday 12th November
TIME: 7:00pm for a 7:30pm start (end by 9:30pm)
VENUE: The Blackfriars Room, St Bride Foundation, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, EC4Y 8EQ
CONTACT DETAILS: SedosHeavenCanWait@gmail.com

The workshop will be an informal session to learn more about the play and the characters. You can opt to partake heavily, or simply sit and observe – there is no pressure or expectation but please do make the most out of the session and ask as many questions as you wish.

We will trot through the story chronologically and pick on a few key scenes (the audition pieces) to then read-through. Whilst we will cover the whole play we will skim over some elements by explaining the story and stop at points to read through scenes – rather than read-through the whole play page-by-page. In addition to familiarisation with the script, we will explore the characters a little bit either in a general analysis and discussion or via improvisation and some brief character work (as time allows).

We hope you will find the evening to be fun and relaxed – the main objective being to equip you with the knowledge you'll need in order to be prepared for the auditions.

Please do register for the workshop so we know how many people to allow for (e.g.: number of chairs to sort) via SedosHeavenCanWait@gmail.com.

AUDITIONS

The auditions will be held on **Saturday 7th December**, with recalls scheduled for **Tuesday 10th & Wednesday 11th December**....with a possible session on the **afternoon of Sunday 15th December** if we need to do any final pairings.

DATE (Main): Saturday 7th December
TIME: 10:30am for an 11:00am start – finish at around 6pm
VENUE: City Business Library, 1 Brewer's Hall Garden, EC2V 5BX (nr. Moorgate/Barbican tube)
CONTACT DETAILS: SedsoHeavenCanWait@gmail.com

Recalls on the following Tuesday, Wednesday (& Sunday afternoon) will be by invitation. Please note that if you are not able to attend the workshop (on 12th November) you can use the morning session as a way to get to know the play before you audition for a certain role (or roles).

The day will be in two halves:

- 1st for the casting of the smaller ensemble roles; and
- 2nd for the casting of the principal roles.

Those wishing for just a principal role may also use the 1st half of the day as a 'warm up' for their main audition later in the day. The agenda for Saturday 7th December is as follows:

Type	Start Time	Duration	End Time	Description
Setup	10:00am	30mins	10:30am	Arrival and administration.
Group Ensemble Audition	10:30am	15mins	10:45am	Welcome & introduction to the format of the group audition
	10:45am	1hr 45mins	12:30pm	Group audition – reading through audition pieces all together in a workshop setup.
Break for lunch	12:30pm	30mins	1:00pm	Break for lunch.
Principal roles session A	1:00pm	1hr	2:00pm	Auditions for principal characters – primarily Joe Pendleton, Jordan & Messenger 7013.
Principal roles session B	2:00pm	1hr	3:00pm	Auditions for principal characters – primarily Max Levene, Tony Abbott & Julia Farnsworth.
Principal roles session C	3:00pm	1hrs	4:00pm	Auditions for principal characters – primarily Bette Logan, Mrs Ames, Inspector Williams & Lefty.
Pairings & matching	4:00pm	1hr	5:00pm	Pairings of characters – to see how well people match in-character.
Spare slot	5:00pm	1hr	6:00pm	<i>A spare slot for anyone unable to attend earlier in the day (may not be used).</i>

Arrival and administration at 10am is 30 minutes set aside to discuss which parts you may want to audition for (if you have not already decided), to receive the audition pieces (if you have not got them with you) and to start your preparation for the day ahead. This slot will not be necessary for those who are pre-prepared with the roles they wish to audition for.

The Group Ensemble audition will commence at 10:30am where we will go over all the various audition pieces that involve the smaller characters (eg: Doctor, Plainclothesman, etc.). Most pieces will also involve the principal roles (Joe Pendleton, Jordan, etc.) so we encourage all to attend. **If you**

choose to attend this session and register for a principle role you will have priority for the earlier sessions in the afternoon irrespective of your character choice.

As for the audition sessions from 1pm onwards, once you have emailed us your interest we will let you know which session you are allocated to – we will be grouping a number of auditionees together based on character preference and the key relationships between characters. We will also take into account your availability on the day – if limited. Please note that we may ask you to stay after your allotted session to read-in for other auditions (to be paired with other characters) or to see you audition for other roles that the production team suggest/offer.

Audition packs (script extracts and hints & tips on how to prepare for each character) will be sent via email and be available in hard-copy on the day. These are structured as per the **Characters** section of this document, including a pack for ‘smaller roles/ensemble’.

When you register please let us know:

- a. Your name & contact telephone number
- b. Which roles you would like to audition for (indicating preference)
- c. Whether you will (or will not) be coming to the Group Ensemble Audition (morning)
- d. Any limitations regarding availability during the day on Saturday 7th December

You may audition for as many parts as you wish but please do let us know your preference (in rank order) so that if time does not allow you to audition for all of your selections, at least you will be able to audition for your favourite(s).

We recommend that you bring a packed-lunch, water and snacks to eat at your leisure during the day.

SHOW SCHEDULE

We aim to have the show fully cast before Christmas, after which we will rehearse as follows:

First cast read-through & social

Saturday 4th January (afternoon)

Rehearsal period (8 weeks)

Weekdays: Tuesdays and Thursdays (from 5th Jan inclusive)

Weekends: Alternating Saturday & Sunday (Sun 12th Jan, Sat 18th Jan, etc.)

Show week (6x performances)

Sunday 2nd March	Get-in & Technical Rehearsal
Monday 3rd March	Dress Rehearsal
Tuesday 4th March	1st Performance
Wednesday 5th March	2nd Performance
Thursday 6th March	3rd Performance
Friday 7th March	4th Performance
Saturday 8th March	5th Performance (matinée), 6th Performance (evening) & after-show party

A NOTE ON THE NEXT SHOW: INTO THE WOODS

Heaven Can Wait is the first show in Sedos's 2014 season which will be auditioned and rehearsed at the same time as the second show in the season – Sedos's *Into The Woods*.

You are welcome to audition for both shows. Please let us know if you are planning to audition for both so that we can ensure that we don't give you clashing audition slots. If you are fortunate to be cast in both shows, you will have to choose one or the other. Unfortunately it is not feasible to be in both.

ABOUT SEDOS

The Stock Exchange Dramatic & Operatic Society (Sedos) is one of London's pre-eminent amateur theatre societies, with the aim of producing quality amateur shows to the best artistic quality possible. *Please note that performers are not paid – not even expenses.*

Audition, participation and membership fees

To perform in *Heaven Can Wait* you must be a full member of Sedos and pay a participation fee of £30. Full membership is currently £30 per year, which entitles you to a range of benefits (more information can be found at <http://sedos.co.uk/aboutus/faq.htm>).

There is a £5 audition fee for non-Sedos members (however, if you are cast in the show your audition fee will be deducted from your participation fee).

For more information about Sedos, please visit our website, www.sedos.co.uk.

...AND FINALLY – WHAT TO DO NEXT...

If you wish to be involved in Sedos's production of *Heaven Can Wait* in any capacity or simply would like some more information please email us at SedosHeavenCanWait@gmail.com.

As for performing in the show, please:

- 1) Email us and tell us if you would like to attend the workshop on **Tuesday 12th November**.
- 2) Email us and tell us if you would like to audition for the show on **Saturday 7th December**:
 - a. Your name and telephone number (so we can communicate on the day, as required);
 - b. Which roles you would like to audition for (indicating preference);
 - c. Whether you will (or will not) be coming to the Group Ensemble Audition (morning);
and
 - d. Any limitations regarding availability during the day on Saturday 7th December.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope to see you soon!



Director – *Heaven Can Wait*