

# IN CAHOOTS

## By Melissa Reeves

Director: Emma J Leaver

Producer: Clare Harding

## Audition Notice



### KEY DATES

Workshop: April 14<sup>th</sup>

Auditions: April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>

Recalls: April 27<sup>th</sup>

Rehearsals: from mid-May

Tech and Dress rehearsal: 6-7<sup>th</sup> July

Performance dates 8-12<sup>th</sup> July, all performances at the Bridewell Theatre,  
Bride Lane, EC2Y 8EQ

## INTRODUCTION & SHOW BLURB

The first Cardwell Street Brownie Pack is holding the most sensational annual meeting you're ever likely to attend. Under the absent-minded guidance of Brown Owl, witness a bizarre and hilarious pow-wow as some radical secrets unfold, as when the new District Commissioner arrives to inspect the Brownie Troupe, she's not expecting spray cans, a hip flask full of whisky and a mushroom that incorporates a short wave radio.

*In Cahoots* features seven extraordinary women on stage in a fast-paced show, which combines humour, dancing, playing and acapella singing.

## BASIC INFORMATION / STYLE OF SHOW

- In Cahoots is an award-winning Australian play by Melissa Reeves. It was written in 1989 and has been part of a number of festivals including the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.
- It will be set in Australia in the late 1980s.
- It is a short two-act play (comedy / drama) which is performed without an interval (approximately running time 60mins).
- It is absurd but will be played "straight".
- There will be a fair amount of audience interaction and improvisation.
- There will be music in the play (primarily singing of Brownie songs) but it is not a musical.
- It is an all-female cast of 7. We will not be auditioning males for any of the roles.

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

Brown Owl, the leader of the Brownie pack, opens the evening by welcoming the absent Commissioner. It transpires that Rhonda, one of the Brownies, picked up the Commissioner but accidentally drove off without her. The Commissioner, new to the job, arrives riding a little bicycle and feeling rather irritated. To make matters worse she is introduced to the audience incorrectly. A Brownie Ring is formed around the Brownie Toadstool. The Commissioner queries the crackling noises coming from the toadstool. Everyone claims ignorance. Clearly all is not as it seems. The Brownies are not dressed in the correct uniform, do not know the answers to simple Brownie questions and seem far too old. Rhonda drives a car, carries a flask of whisky, and has been involved in a criminal investigation. The Commissioner becomes suspicious, discovers the girls are indeed too old to be Brownies and threatens to reveal their secret. The girls tie her up in a chair. The Commissioner manages to free herself enough to alert the local Boy Scout Troop with an SOS message on the hidden radio in the toadstool. The Boy Scouts and Cubs come enthusiastically to the rescue, first attempting to knock the door down, then organising to set the building on fire. The Brownies calm the Commissioner, while counting down the time to the Scout attack, informing her they are part of a worldwide spy network. Realising she can be the Brownie she has always wanted to be the Commissioner joins them, sending the disappointed Boy Scouts back to their Scout Hall.

## THEMES

The audience, just by coming along to the show, will play the role of the 'parents and friends', and because theatre is a ritualised game of shared pretending, they will be asked to believe that these young adult women (the actors) are in fact naive pre-pubescent girls:

Brownies. There is fun enough in this since the characters of the girls are wittily drawn and it is apparent that their sweet old leader, Brown Owl, has a few roos loose in the top paddock. But as the play unfolds, the pleasure turns subversive, when it is revealed that the Brownie characters (all but one) *are* actually young women pretending to be naive girls, hiding out in the carefree nonsexual world of Brownies rather than progressing to what, by their analysis, is the conformist marriage-preparation factory of Guides. Why? Well, so as to have the freedom to organise together, using their Brownie skills and resourcefulness, to build an international underground activist coalition for social change, of course. Their scheme might be refreshingly far-fetched but it appears to be working and, what's more, their belief and optimism cannot be doubted. Every audience member, will laugh and cheer the Brownies on, swept up despite themselves in the outrageous joy of revolution.

At the end of *In Cahoots*, after the Brownies have stared down the threat from the Boy Scouts who've come to lay siege, Tony Abbott-style, to the hall but like all bullies turn out to be more bluff than substance, and after the Thatcher-esque 'Commissioner' from Girl Guide HQ, the Brownies' nemesis, has been taken hostage by the Brownies but later breaks down and cries and talks about her traumatic childhood and departs on friendly terms with the 'girls', as old Brown Owl, who has missed all of the conflict, climbs back in through a window. She's been out walking, so she says, across the night-time roofs. She is growing weary she asks for one last song and they join her in singing and the audience is witness to a final shared tradition and a sense of community.

*In Cahoots* is a celebration of the strength and solidarity of a group of young women working together, and a fascinating examination of the pressures they face to conform to feminine stereotypes and a need to escape from "growing up".

## CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

### The Grown-Ups

#### **Brown Owl** – age: 50s-70s

Is starting to lose her memory but is a sweet lady who enjoys still being "part of things" although probably doesn't really know what's going on. Or does she? Could she be steadfast and obtuse and the dotty old lady is just an act? Believes in individuality and the Brownies having fun above anything else. She probably wears a cape or a hand-stitched owl on her jumper.

Think: Sister Monica Joan from "Call the Midwife" (TV) and/or Geraldine McEwan's "Miss Marple" (TV)

#### **The Commissioner** – age 40s-50s

Is new to the commissioner role and is determined to play by the rules at all costs. The Brownies / Girl Guide movement has been her life and is conservative on her outlook on the role of women. Is she just flustered by the crazy world she's stepped into and retreats into the stability of the handbook or is there something more there?

Think: Captain von Trapp pre-Maria's arrival from "The Sound of Music" (Movie)

### The Brownies

Should look late teens – early 30s but able to "play" aged seven years old to ten years old

#### **Jeanie**

The youngest of the Brownies, a "Tweenie", takes her Brownie pledge very seriously and is overly literal / black and white in her interpretations.

Think: Logainne Schwartz and Grubenierre from “The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” (Musical)

### **Monica**

The peace-keeper and mother hen of the group but in a Type A personality kind of way.  
Think: Hermione from “Harry Potter”.

### **Natalie**

The most girly of all the Brownies – wears lacy polka dot socks with her uniform. This over-achiever has got the same badge multiple times over because she can. Sweet, wants to be special / acknowledged - rebels with little things rather than anything actually rebellious.  
Think: Matilda from Matilda the musical

### **Rhonda**

Probably the biggest delinquent of the group and the most “yobbo”, a bit rough round the edges, the muscle, no-nonsense tomboy and probably the oldest, imagine her supplementing her uniform with “Blunnies” (Blundstone workman’s boots) and Hawthorn Football Club socks.

Think: Bruce (the Shark) from “Finding Nemo” (Movie)

### **Ruth**

Sixer of the Tookies – is quite a goody-two-shoes and is in competition for most badges. Is very bossy and often takes control whether it is needed or not, plays by the rules (most of the time).

Can be a little bit vague and eccentric.

Think: Charlie Brown from “You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown” (Musical)

## **WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR**

### **Accents**

Please note – Australian accents are required, however we will consider a British accent for Brown Owl **or** The Commissioner. Accent coaching will be available and accents should be attempted at audition – even if they aren’t “perfect”.

Recommend watching:

*Kath and Kim*

*We Could Be Heroes*

*Summer Heights High*

*Heartbreak High*

*Neighbours* (from the 80s – Kylie & Jason era!)

*Home & Away* (from the 90s – Angel & Shane era!)

### **Playing as a child**

Reference points – productions of “You’re A Good Man Charlie Brown” or “The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”

From the Brownies we are looking for actors who aren’t afraid to let go and act like a primary-school aged child (eg have childhood qualities), not necessarily “perform” a child (eg a caricature).

### **Improvisation and interaction with the audience**

It is anticipated that some audience members will be seated on the stage “in the hall” alongside the action. You may be required to serve them cups of tea, play memory games with them or teach them to tie knots – this is an integral part of the show and we will support

you in this but it must be something you are willing to engage in. Additionally, some of our potential marketing involves “being a Brownie” in mock everyday situations. Most characters will have a lot of room for development and interpretation.

### **Singing / musical ability**

All cast will be singing Brownie songs throughout the show. You don’t necessarily need to be a particularly good singer; we are looking for actors who can hold a tune. If you can play an instrument (particularly piano, recorder, guitar) it would be great to let us know.

### **Craft & Lending a Hand**

Please note as part of the dramaturgy of the play you will be doing craft and/or assisting the production team in creating the set dressing. You do not necessarily need to be good at this just willing to muck in. Same goes with assisting us with putting together your costumes and the get in and get out / moving furniture and set as part of the action of the play.

## **WORKSHOP**

**Date:** Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014

**Time:** 7-9pm

**Location:** City Library, 1 Brewers Hall Garden, EC2V 5BX

**Format:** The workshop will be a chance to find out a bit more about the show, the production team, read a bit of the script, practice some Aussies accents, do some craft and maybe play a game or two.

There is no requirement to attend the workshop to be able to audition, or to audition if you attend the workshop.

The workshop is free for all to attend regardless of whether you are a current Sedos member or not.

If you are planning on attending the workshop please email Clare at [incahoots.sedos@gmail.com](mailto:incahoots.sedos@gmail.com) so we have an idea of numbers.

## **AUDITIONS**

**Dates:** Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014

**Time:** Half hour time slots at: 6pm, 6:30pm, 7pm, 7:30pm, 8pm and 8:30pm. Three auditionees will be allocated per half hour slot

**Location:** City Library, 1 Brewers Hall Garden, EC2V 5BX

### **Prepare:**

1. A nursery rhyme of your choice from <http://www.rhymes.org.uk/>  
If you are auditioning for a Brownie: retell a nursery rhyme as a child of seven – ten years old  
If you are auditioning for a Grown Up: retell a nursery rhyme as a strict Headmistress  
  
We will then ask you to change the age / the emotion / or give you a few hand gestures to add.
2. You will be asked to read a short excerpt from the script that will be provided on the evening. A reading partner will be provided.

Each auditionee will be allocated a half hour slot but have approximately 10minutes with the panel. This should allow everyone to be seen on a first come, first served basis and allow for any late running / late comers.

## **RECALLS**

**Date:** Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2014

**Time:** 11am-4pm

**Location:** City Library, 1 Brewers Hall Garden, EC2V 5BX

Details are still being finalised but these will be group auditions.

We may not recall all roles if we don't feel it necessary.

It is likely to include a sing-along of Brownie songs, further script reading and some guided character-based improvisation.

## **BOOKING AN AUDITION**

To book an audition please email Clare at [incahoots.sedos@gmail.com](mailto:incahoots.sedos@gmail.com), specifying a first and second choice audition slot and if you are interested in any particular parts.

If you are unable to make the advertised audition dates, and wish to audition, please get in touch and we will do our best to accommodate your availability.

## **SUMMER FESTIVAL AUDITION RESTRICTIONS**

In Cahoots is the middle show of the Sedos Summer Festival. Because of rehearsal times it is only possible to appear in one Summer Festival show. Whilst you are able to audition for multiple shows you will not be able to audition for In Cahoots if you have been cast in EuroSedos and subsequently will not be able to audition for Government Inspector if cast in In Cahoots.

## **AUDITION, PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP FEES**

Sedos is one of London's pre-eminent amateur theatre societies with the aim of producing quality amateur theatre to the best artistic quality possible. In the nature of amateur theatre performers are not paid – not even expenses. To perform in In Cahoots you must be a member of Sedos (membership is currently £30 per year) and pay a participation fee of £30. There is a £5 audition fee for non-Sedos members. If you are cast in the show, your audition fee will be deducted from your participation fee.

## **BACKSTAGE HELP**

If you are not interested in auditioning, but are interested in helping out backstage, in any capacity (from crewing to building scenery, sewing costumes and front of house) please contact the Production Group at [production@sedos.co.uk](mailto:production@sedos.co.uk).

## **REHEARSALS**

It is planned that rehearsals will start on mid-May and be on Monday and Thursday evenings and Sunday daytime. There may also be an additional Saturday rehearsal to make an intensive rehearsal weekend; the date of this is TBC. Where possible all rehearsals will be held at City Library, if for any reason this is not possible then rehearsals will be held at a venue in Zone 1.