Welcome to the Audition Pack for *Woman in Mind* by Alan Ayckbourn. This will be the Bench Theatre’s Summer Show for 2016 – performing in July. This pack provides key production dates, an overview of the play and characters, details of the auditions, contact details and copies of the audition pieces.

### Key Production Details

**Auditions:**
- 8pm – 10pm, Wed 17\(^{th}\) February, Langstone Room, The Spring
- 2pm – 4pm, Sun 21\(^{st}\) February, Langstone Room, The Spring

**Rehearsals:**
- Starting from 23\(^{rd}\) April

**Performances:**
- Thurs 14th to Sat 16th July
- Wed 20th to Saturday 23rd July

Rehearsals will be usually on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays, typically 2 rehearsals per week, attendance depending on size of role. Rehearsals will never be on a Friday or Saturday.

### About the Play

*Woman in Mind* is a comedy about a woman having a mental breakdown - a black comedy. Susan finds herself middle-aged, in a loveless marriage with a son who doesn’t speak to her anymore and despairs on how she got there. She invents a fantasy family who is everything her real family isn’t – a world she can escape into and live out her dreams. However, as the play unfolds, she loses control of her fantasy leading to increasingly hilarious scenarios until she can no longer tell the difference between her real and imaginary worlds. It’s very funny, undercut with poignant moments about living in a loveless marriage after the love, and the children, have gone.

Uniquely this play is written as a first person narrative and is imaginatively plotted. What Susan experiences is what the audience see and hears, whether that be real, fantasy or something in between.

### About the Characters

*Woman in Mind* has a cast of 8. The playing ages are ‘illustrative’, actual casting to be based on the best combination between auditionees rather than age.

**Susan (mid-40s to early 50s) [Stage time – 100%]**
- Wife, mother - in most respects very ordinary. A woman who has doggedly played the role of a vicar’s wife for many years without any reward, playing second fiddle to more determinedly motivated personalities than her own.
- A complex character – comforted and enthused in her fantasy, bitter and despairing in the real world - her natural charm and wit occasionally breaks through.
- Susan is the centre of the play through whose eyes and ears the audience see and hears the action. However, beware, she may not be a reliable witness.

**Gerald (mid-40s to mid 50s) [Stage time – 48%]**
- Susan’s husband, the vicar. More interested in writing his history of the parish than his wife. The sort of vicar who doesn’t really inspire anyone to believe in God. Avoids conflict.
Muriel (mid-40s to mid 50s) [Stage time – 30%]
- Muriel, Gerald’s live-in sister, a widow who has known her share of suffering and is anxious that others know it too. Described as dark, angular, grim looking in a rather firm sort of way.
- She fiercely stands up for her brother much to the annoyance of Susan. And she can’t cook.

Rick (early 20s) [Stage time – 20%]
- The son who has escaped to a religious sect who forbid members from talking to their parents.
- Appears first time just before the interval, contrary to the build-up there is nothing at all extraordinary or alarming in his appearance.

Andy (early 40s to early 50s) [Stage time – 33%]
- Susan’s fantasy husband. Like Tony and Lucy, appears to come straight out of a 50’s TV ad.
- Charming, considerate, good looking - however turns out to have a demonic side.

Tony (30s) [Stage time – 36%]
- Susan’s fantasy younger brother, her antidote to Muriel. A lovable cad, always pulling her leg as younger siblings do. His charming, easy going personality however masks a cruel streak.

Lucy (early 20s) [Stage time – 39%]
- Susan’s fantasy daughter. Every mother’s dream – high achiever, good looking in a classic way (wears fresh, timeless summer dresses etc.) but still ‘Mummy’s little girl’. Idolises Susan.

Bill (mid-40s to early 50s) [Stage time – 56%]
- The locum doctor. Eager to reassure, quick to apologise for his shortcomings. Alas not an instinctive healer of the sick. Lacks belief in his self.
- He has had a ‘thing’ about Susan for many years, not that Susan has ever noticed.

About the Auditions

The aim of the auditions is to find out what combination of cast has the best chemistry. Therefore it is requested you stay for the whole audition and be prepared to be asked to audition with various combinations of auditionees. You may also need to stand in for roles you are not auditioning for. Although you only need to attend one of the two auditions I won’t stop you attending both if you want.

When you arrive there will be some paperwork to fill out. So can you please be prepared to bring:
- Any block out periods or ‘can’t do’ rehearsal days
- Your contact details (e-mail and phone)

Note - you don’t need to be a member of the company to audition but must join if cast.

The audition pieces are attached – four in total. These pieces have been chosen to give an idea of the play style and more insight into the characters. You are not expected to learn the lines (scripts in hand are OK), but you are expected to have read the pieces as preparation.

Contact Details

If you have any questions, or want to audition but can’t make the two audition sessions, or just want to let me know what audition session(s) to intend to attend, please contact me, Andrew Caple, on:

E-mail: andrew.caple@tiscali.co.uk
Home Phone: 01243 376263 (evenings/weekends)
Audition Piece 1 – Susan, Andy, Lucy, Tony

In Susan’s garden. Susan’s fantasy family are on hand to cheer her up after she had knocked herself unconscious with a garden rake. Bill, the real doctor, has gone off-stage to arrange an ambulance.

Lucy  (off, calling) Mummy! Daddy!
Andy  (calling) Over here, chaps. In the herb garden. (To Susan) We’ll soon nurse you better.  
Lucy and Tony enter together

Lucy  Is Mother all right? Is she alright?
Andy  Don’t panic. She’ll be OK. She’s OK.
Susan  Nothing to worry about……
Tony  What have you been up to now, Big Sis?
Susan  Something quite ridiculous. I refuse to tell you. You’ll only laugh……
Lucy  (Indignantly) We won’t laugh.
Susan  Yes, you will. I know you two.
Tony  (Proffering the glass) Here, drink this.
Susan  What is it?
Tony  Champers. I’ve only just opened it.
Lucy  Champagne at eleven in the morning, I ask you. He’s actually playing with a play in his hand.
Tony  The thing that’s really annoying her is that I’m inflicting a crushing defeat as well. (Offering Susan the glass) Here. It’s vintage.
Andy  Drink it, darling, it’ll buck you up.
Susan  Do you think I should?
Andy  Best possible thing, isn’t it, Tony?
Tony  Absolutely….
Lucy  But what happened to Mother? I’m dying to know. How did she bang her head?
Andy:  Well…..
Susan  Andy, don’t you dare tell them. I’m not having them screaming with laughter at me….
Lucy  We’re not going to scream with laughter. Are we, Tony?
Tony  Absolutely not.
Susan  Well, you might not, Lucy, but he’s bound to.
Andy  There’s no big deal about it. All that happened------
Susan  Andy, don’t you dare…. 
Andy  All that happened was, Susie went into the potting shed and the old tin bath in there slipped off the nail and fell on her------
Lucy  Gosh!
Susan  Thank you, darling. Thank you.
Tony  I loathe and detest tin baths…..
Andy ----and she was in such pain she came hopping out of the shed cursing and swearing and stepped on the garden rake…..(He laughs).

Susan Andy, you beast!

*Lucy and Tony laugh*

Tony (laughing) Stepped on a rake, I say….

Lucy (laughing) Honestly, Mummy. I didn’t know people actually *did* that sort of thing……

Susan I think you’re all absolutely horrible and heartless.

Andy (taking command) OK, kids. Joke’s a joke. Lucy….

Lucy Daddy?

Andy We must get your mother up to bed…

Susan Oh, Andy, don’t fuss------

Andy Ask Mrs Simmonds to make up a hot water bottle and light the fire in the master bedroom…

Lucy Right. *(She turns to go)*

Andy And give her a hand if she needs it. It’s Ethel’s day off…..

Lucy I’ll see to it Daddy.

Andy Good girl.

*Lucy rushes off to the house*

Susan You really do spoil me, all of you…..

Andy Nonsense

Tony We just want to get you fit so you can carry on slaving for us as usual.

Andy *(taking the empty glass from Susan)* Tony, get your sister another glass of this, will you?

Susan Andy, do you think I should? Bill Windsor’s fetching some tea…..

Andy Tea? Oh, to hell with that…..

Tony If it comes to a choice between Dom Perignon or Lapsang Souchong…. Tell you what, I’ll bring the ice bucket as well. You can pour it over your head.

*Tony lopes off*

Susan *(watching him go, affectionately)* He never alters, does he?

Andy Not a tittle. Feel sorry for him is a way.

Susan Sorry? Why?

Andy Well, mostly, when you get a brother and sister like you two, things get shared. She gets the beauty, he gets the brains; or he gets the beauty, she gets the brains. Or even a bit for each of them. But with you and Tony, you’ve got the lot. All the brains, all the beauty. Hardly fair, is it?

Susan It’s not true.

Andy I’m afraid it is.

Susan But I love you for saying it, just the same.
Audition Piece 2 – Susan, Bill

Bill returns from the house after checking when the ambulance will arrive. Andy, Lucy and Tony (Audition Piece 1) have already left the garden. Andy doesn’t think Susan needs to go to hospital.

Bill .... Felling any better?
Susan Much better, thank you.
Bill Splendid. It’s on its way. I just checked. The ambulance.
Susan Ah, my husband hasn’t spoken to you yet, then?
Bill Your husband?
Susan Yes, he seemed to think I shouldn’t go. He felt I’d be better off staying in bed here.
Bill Really? When did he say this?
Susan Just a minute ago.
Bill Extraordinary. I mean, I didn’t even know he was at home. I understand he was on his way. He’d been telephoned and was on his way.
Susan We’ll, he’s here. He’s just been talking to me.
Susan My sister-in-law?
Bill Yes--- Marion, isn’t it.
Susan You mean my brother.
Bill Muriel, That’s it.
Susan Tony
Bill Tony?
Susan You mean my brother, Tony. Tall, fair, slim, good-looking in a rather weak sort of way…
Bill No, definitely Muriel. Dark, angular, grim-looking in a firm sort of way… I haven’t seen any Tony at all.
Susan We don’t have a Muriel. We have an Ethel but it’s her day off. So it can’t have been her.
Bill Anyway, the woman in the kitchen. The one who made the tea.
Susan Oh, that’ll be Mrs Simmonds
Bill Mrs Muriel Simmonds
Susan I’ve no idea what her first name is, I’ve never asked her.
Bill But Mrs Simmonds is your sister-in-law?
Susan Certainly not, she’s our cook.
Bill Cook?
Susan Yes. She’s been with the family for---- oh, ages and ages.
Bill (very puzzled) Has she? I see (he pauses) She---- er---- seemed to be fairly convinced, in her own mind at least, that she was your sister-in-law.
Susan Did she?
Bill: That’s the distinct impression she gave.

Susan: Well. She can be very strange. (She pauses). She’s Cornish, I believe.

Bill: Is she? I got the overall nuance from talking to her of someone from slight nearer--- South London. Anyway. The woman who found you lying in the garden, the woman who phoned me---- or rather phoned your own doctor. Geoff Burgess, who happens to be on holiday, so you got his partner. Me. That woman.

Susan: Possibly.

Bill: The one that brought you out the tea. That one.

Susan: Tea? What tea?

Bill: Didn’t you get tea?

Susan: Not yet. I thought you were bringing me some.

Bill: No. She did. Her. Your Mrs Thing. I passed her just now. She was coming back with an empty cup of tea in her hand.

Susan: Really?

Bill: So where did the tea go?

Susan: Perhaps she drank it herself?

Bill: She didn’t come out here, then?

Susan: I haven’t seen her.

Bill: No. Yes. I see. (*He stares at her for a moment*)

Susan: The only woman I’ve seen all day is my daughter.

Bill: Oh, yes.....

Susan: She was playing tennis with Tony.

Bill: Tennis?

Susan: Yes.

Bill: Where?

Susan: (*Mildly exasperated*) On the tennis court.

Bill: Which is--- where exactly? From here?

Susan: (*with enormous patience*) Over there.

Bill: Ah, yes. Silly question. (*he looks at his watch*) Any minute now. It’ll be here.
Audition Piece 3 – Susan, Gerald, Muriel

Susan confronts her husband about how disappointed she is with him, Gerald is saved more embarrassment by the arrival of Muriel and ‘coffee’.

Susan We’ve know each other rather a long time, haven’t we?
Gerald Said by anyone else, that could have been interpreted as quite an affectionate remark. Spoken by you, it sounds like an appalling accusation.
Susan (offhandedly) Well, you know I don’t love you any more, Gerald. You knew that.
Gerald Yes, I did know. (He pauses) I don’t think you’ve ever said it – quite so baldly as that before---- but I got the message….
Susan I’m still reasonably fond of you.
Gerald Yes?
Susan Most of the time. Well, don’t look so glum. You don’t love me, either.
Gerald Yes, I do.
Susan Oh. Come on….
Gerald I do. At least, I’m not aware that my feelings towards you have been altered that much----
Susan What? Not at all?
Gerald Not that I’m aware of.....
Susan Oh, Gerald….
Gerald I still feel the same....
Susan We don’t kiss---- we hardly touch each other--- we don’t make love---- we don’t even share the same bed now. We sleep at different ends of the room----
Gerald That’s just sex you’re talking about. That’s just the sexual side----
Susan Well, of course it is----
Gerald There’s more to it than that, surely?
Susan Not at the moment there isn’t.
Gerald You mean that the---- sex---- is the only thing that’s mattered to you in our relationship?
Susan Of course not.
Gerald That’s what you seem to be saying.
Susan What I’m saying is..... All I’m saying is, that once it’s gone---- all that---- it becomes important. Over-important, really. I mean before, when we---- it was just something we did together. Like gardening. Only now I have to do that on my own as well. It was something we shared. A couple of time a week. Or whatever.
Gerald More than that. More than that.
Susan Yes. Whatever. The point is that then, everything else, the everyday bits, just ticked along nicely. But take that away, the really joyous part of us---- and everything else rather loses its purpose. That’s all.

Muriel comes from the house at the moment bearing a tray with some dubious-looking cups of coffee.
Muriel    I thought I'd make some coffee. Since nobody else was…..
Gerald    *(now full on bonhomie)* Ah, bless you, Muriel. *(Susan has closed her eyes)* Muriel's made us a nice cup of coffee, dear.
Susan     Goody, goody, goody…
Muriel    I hope it’s all right. Susan generally manages to find something wrong with my coffee…. I’d have thought she’d have made herself by now, rather than leaving it to me….

*Susan ignores them*

Gerald    *(in a loud whisper)* She’s in a little bit in of a mood, Muriel. Don’t worry.
Muriel    *(whispering in turn)* Oh. Do you want me to go?
Gerald    Heavens, no. Stay here. Sit here with us. You can help cheers things up.

*Susan makes a mirthless, laughing sound. Muriel sits down with them.*

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Gerald    This is an interesting cup of coffee, Muriel.
Muriel    Nice?
Gerald    Very Interesting. Yes.
Susan     *(examining her cup for the first time)* What powder did you use?
Muriel    Here we go, the Spanish Inquisition----
Susan     I was only curious----
Muriel    Use the coffee in the in the tin marked “Coffee”. All right?
Gerald    That sounds logical to me….
Susan     Yes, it is. Fairly. This is the ready ground coffee, Muriel, not instant….
Muriel    I don’t know what sort it is. If you don’t want it I’ll take it back…
Gerald    No, no, this is perfect, Muriel. First rate.
Muriel    *(muttering)* I can’t do anything right, can I?
Susan     Delicious, Muriel. You must give me the secret.
Gerald    Susan, now....
Muriel    I don’t know what she’s talking about, I’m sure. You just put it in the cup and pour water over it, don’t you?
Gerald    Perfect. *(He smiles at Muriel)*

*Pause*

Muriel    I don’t know why I’m suddenly this terrible cook. Why I’m suddenly made to feel so incompetent. I nursed our mother perfectly satisfactorily for her last twelve years….
Gerald    True, true……You gave away your prime, Muriel.
Muriel    I did. And my dear, late, bedridden husband Harry for another seven. I cooked three meals a day, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year for that man until the day he died….
Start of Act 2. Rick appears in the garden in front of Susan and, to her surprise, speaks to her.

Rick  Mum? (Susan stares at him) Mum?
Susan (bemused) Ricky? (She sits up with difficulty) Ricky? I dreamt you spoke to me. Are you speaking to me?
Rick  Yes, it's me. It's Rick speaking.
Susan  What happened? (Smiling) It must be Mother's Day. Or have you got special discompensation?
Rick  No. I've left the group.
Susan  You have? When?
Rick  Oh----three months ago. Something like that.
Susan  Why didn't you come and see us before.
Rick  I had one or two things to sort out.
Susan  Oh. I see. Well, I don't know what your reasons for leaving were, but I can't pretend I'm not delighted at the news. If it means we'll be able to see you occasionally. Talk to you like a normal human being.
Rick  (non-committally) Yes.
Susan  Where are you living now? Not still in Hamel Hampstead?
Rick  No. I've moved back to London. South London.
Susan  I see. And so? What are you doing? Have you got a job?
Rick  Not just at the present, no.
Susan  Must be difficult, then? Making ends meet? Oh, this feels so odd talking to you--- like a stranger. Do you have a room in South London?
Rick  No, we've got a flat.
Susan  We?
Rick  Me and this girl.
Susan  Oh? You've got a girl-friend?
Rick  Well, she's more than that, really.
Susan  (smiling rather coyly) A lover, then?
Rick  No. Really, more of a wife, really…
Susan  (blankly) A wife?
Rick  Yeah.
Susan  You're married
Rick  Yeah.
Susan  When? When did you marry?
Rick  About two months ago. Tess, she was in the group, too and--- we both decided we'd had enough really. I mean, we'd got what we could from it….
Susan  Yes, yes…
Rick    And we’d felt we’d grown, you know, through it.
Susan  Yes. Good. Yes.
Rick    So we left. And we thought maybe we should give things a week or two, you know, just to see them in perspective. You know?
Susan  Yes.
Rick    And--- things seemed OK so we got married. You know.
Susan  Where?
Rick    Where?
Susan  Where did you get married?
Rick    Some registry office, I can’t---
Susan  Which one?
Rick    (slightly irritated) I don’t know which one, Mum. It doesn’t matter, does it?
Susan  No, no. No. (After a slight pause) You didn’t even tell us. Send us a--- card.
Rick    No
Susan  And you haven’t brought her with you…..
Rick    No.
Susan  Tess? That’s her name?
Rick    Yeah.
Susan  Did you have to get married? Was she…?
Rick    No, of course she wasn’t. We wouldn’t have got married just because of that.
Susan  Then why did you?
Rick    Why does anyone? We love each other.
Susan  Oh, yes. Of course. I just thought perhaps.
Rick    What?
Susan  You’d got married as another way to get back at us. Your father and me. Silly idea, is it?
Rick    It’s a bloody ridiculous idea.
Susan  Yes (She sits up with a little cry of grief) Oh….sorry. I’ll be alright in a moment.
Rick    (muttering) I knew you’d take it like this---
Susan  Well, what did you expect?

Lucy appears at a distance from them