



## **AUDITION NOTICE** ***BLEAK EXPECTATIONS***

By **Mark Evans**

Directed by Mike Smith

(based on the award-winning BBC Radio 4 series)

Audition Date: **Tuesday 28th April 7.30 p.m.**

**Production dates:** 22nd to 29th August 2026 at 7.30

### **Synopsis:**

Bleak Expectations is a very silly parody of Charles Dickens' Great Expectations, with more than just a hint of Blackadder. It features actors multi-rolling and will need expert comic timing, physicality and absolutely no humility whatsoever.

Sir Phillip Bin, a successful Victorian philanthropist, narrates his family's struggles against their ironically-named nemesis: Gently Benevolent. Gently sets his sights on bringing as much misery to the Bin family as possible, through having their father killed, driving their mother mad, sending young Pip Bin off to St Bastard's under the cruel leadership of Wackwell Hardthresher, and almost killing Pip himself with a cannon. Pip defies the odds and eventually defeats Benevolent, while simultaneously cleaning up the street of Victorian London and making his fortune. There's a happy ending, of sorts, all round and our hero lives to tell his tale!

### **CHARACTERS:**

#### **Sir Phillip Bin**

Our show's narrator, and famously played by such celebrities as Stephen Fry, Jo Brand, Julian Clary and Sue Perkins among others. Sadly, their fees are too high, so I'm looking for a charming and gentle, yet engaging performer to lead our audience through the story. This part is not gender-specific and should ideally be aged between 30-60.

#### **Pip Bin**

Pip is the younger version of Sir Phillip yet need not bear the slightest resemblance to his older self. Pip is trying hard to be stoic and manly in his father's absence and despite the many challenges he faces. Pip will need to be energetic and open-minded, have great comic timing and be aged between 18-30.

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## **CHARACTERS (CONT.):**

### **Harry Biscuit/Skinflint Parsimonious**

Harry is Pip's best friend from St Bastard's, and devotes his life to both helping Pip defeat Gently Benevolent, and finding a way to train swans to do...anything. Harry is well-meaning, but a bit light upstairs. The actor also doubles as Benevolent's equally ironically-named business-partner, Skinflint Parsimonious. Therefore, the actor will need to be able to sustain two different characters of different ages with great physicality and vocal skills.

### **Gently Benevolent**

Our villain, Benevolent is the antithesis of Pip's youthful optimism and stoicism. Benevolent revels in the misery of his quarry, Pip Bin. Master of disguise, fiendish plans and absolutely no morals at all. The actor will have a commanding stage presence through strong physicality and a powerful voice, ideally aged between 40-60, the part will go to the very best candidate irrespective of age.

### **Poppy Bin/Ripely Fecund**

One of Pip's sisters, Poppy's suffering at the hands of Benevolent is even worse than Pip's. Poppy ultimately succumbs to the bitterly-cold Victorian winter, but the actor reappears as the bewitchingly beautiful Ripely Fecund – Pip's sort-of-adopted-sister-who-gives-him-tingles. The actor should be ideally aged 20-40 and able to exaggerate their acting to suit these two silly characters.

### **Thomas Bin/Bakewell Havertwitch/Broadly Fecund**

Thomas is Pip's unfortunate father and victim to Gently Benevolent's dastardly schemes. Thomas dies early, but returns as a spirit to inspire/haunt Pip during his coming-of-age journey. The actor also portrays Pip's mysterious benefactor and guardian, Bakewell Havertwitch, the convict he frees in a marshy graveyard. Finally, as Broadly Fecund, he helps nurse a critically injured Pip back to health with the help of his 'hideously disfigured' daughter, Ripely. The actor must be an enthusiastic and versatile performer, capable of presenting three very different roles with humour and conviction. Their age is unimportant.

### **The Hardthrashers (Wackwell/Praygood/Chastity/Solomon)**

A family of cruel, heartless sadists, the Hardthrashers are behind every scheme to bring misery to poor Pip Bin's existence. Performed by one actor, versatility is not as important as being a commanding and malicious presence, as it should be completely obvious that the same actor is playing these four roles. Again, age is unimportant, the right candidate is the priority.



## **CHARACTERS (CONT.):**

### **Agnes Bin/Flora Dies-Early**

Poor Agnes, widowed and insane, spends her life clinging to a staircase spindle while wrestling with an existential crisis of being. No longer able to be a mother to her children, she is variously a cat and a carpenter. This actor suits a character capable of excellent physical comedy and eccentricity. Not for the faint-hearted, the actor will be between 30-50 and able to draw great sympathy from the audience.

### **Pippa Bin**

Pippa is as devoted to her brother, Pip, as she is to her pet anvil. She dedicates her life to the fruitless endeavour of improving a woman's lot in Victorian Britain, whilst being the pawn in Gently Benevolent's games of cat-and-mouse with Pip. Pippa will play this role completely straight, but with excellent comic timing and commitment. The actor should be a similar age to Pip.

### **Lily**

Lily lends a hand to Sir Phillip Bin, literally, as an off-stage performer with only a white-gloved hand visible to the audience. However, top-drawer hand acting is required, as well as excellent focus and timing. Age and gender is unimportant here.

Audition pieces are available upon request. Please email [Yasmin.nixon@me.com](mailto:Yasmin.nixon@me.com)

**All are welcome**

**N.B. Non-members are welcome to attend the auditions.**

**If cast you will be expected to join the company (£15.00) and pay a Production Fee of £15.00 to help towards the cost of scripts and the provision of teas and coffees at rehearsals.**