



TOP GIRLS

by Caryl Churchill

PROGRAMME



WELLINGTON
R E P E R T O R Y
T H E A T R E



WHITEHAVEN

WINES OF MARLBOROUGH
NEW ZEALAND



TOP GIRLS

By Caryl Churchill

Wellington Repertory Theatre

2-12 August 2023

Gryphon Theatre

Community theatre production

in association with Play Bureau

CONTENT ADVISORY

The following subject matter is talked about in moments throughout the play:

- Implied and actual references to abortion and miscarriage.
- References to rape.
- Characters discuss violence and murder.
- A character tastes menstrual blood at one point in the show.
- Swearing / course language.

If you have questions or concerns about the contents of the show, please contact our production manager, or talk to our friendly front of house volunteers.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Lifeline

0800 543 354 (0800 LIFELINE)
or free text 4357 (HELP).

Women's Refuge Crisisline

0800 733 843 (0800 REFUGE)

Depression Helpline

0800 111 757
or free text 4202

Family Services

211 Helpline

0800 211 211



*“What use is female emancipation, Churchill asks, if it transforms the **clever women into predators** and does **nothing** for the **stupid, weak and helpless**? Does freedom, and feminism, consist of **aggressively adopting** the very **values** that have for centuries **oppressed your sex?**”*

- Benedict Nightingale (1988),
British journalist and theatre critic.



Top Girls has three acts with two intervals, running 2 hours (excluding intervals).

Act One

Saturday night. 1982.

Marlene celebrates her recent promotion, with not-so-typical dinner guests. A summary of the invitees is available on the following pages.

First interval 5 mins

Act Two

Sunday afternoon.

Angie (16) and Kit (12) hide away in the backyard of Joyce's home.

Monday morning.

Marlene returns to work with Nell and Win, in the fast-paced Top Girls Employment Agency in Central London.

Second interval 15 mins

Act Three

Sunday evening. One year earlier.

Marlene visits Joyce and Angie.

CAST

Marlene

Rachel McLean

she/they

Isabella / Joyce / Mrs Kidd

Beth Draper

she/her

Waitress / Kit / Shona

Aston Matheson

she/her

Lady Nijo / Win

Kelly Mui

she/her

Dull Gret / Angie

Shemaia Dixon

she/they

Pope Joan / Louise

Susannah Donovan

she/her

Griselda / Nell / Jeanine

Danielle Le Bon

she/her



MEET THE CHARACTERS

DINNER GUESTS

Isabella Bird

"I ordered a tricycle, that was my idea of adventure then."

Lived 1831-1904

Explorer, writer, photographer and naturalist. She lived in Edinburgh, and travelled extensively in her life.

Lady Nijo

"I'm not a cheerful person, Marlene, I just laugh a lot."

Born 1258

Japanese Emperor's courtesan and later a Buddhist nun. She wrote accounts of her life, and as a nun, travelled on foot throughout Japan.

Dull Gret

"Big cock."

Painted 1563

Dull Gret is a figure painted by Bruegel who leads an army of women into hell to fight the devils.

Waitress

"..."

Server at Marlene's restaurant of choice.

Pope Joan

"Women, children and lunatics can't be Pope"

Possibly Pope 854-856

Disguised as a man, she studied and became Pope. "Most scholars" believe her to be fiction, and we're not saying we know differently, but isn't that a convenient belief for religious patriarchy?

Patient Griselda

"It was always easy because I always knew I would do what he said."

Subject of stories in 1300s

Appearing in stories by a number of writers, including Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, the story of Griselda is that of a patient and obedient wife to a prince.



TOP GIRLS EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

Marlene

"I knew when I was thirteen, out of their house, out of them, never let that happen to me, never let him, make my own way, out."

Promoted to Managing Director of the Top Girls Employment Agency. Severed her roots and now lives and works in London.

Nell

"If I chose to play house I would play house ace."

Employee at the Top Girls Employment Agency. Was beaten to the top job by Marlene.

Win

"It's his funeral, don't waste your time"

Employee at Top Girls Employment Agency. Well travelled and educated.



Jeanine

"I'm saving to get married."

Interviewee at Top Girls. Would like to travel.

Louise

"I've seen young men who I trained go on, in my own company or elsewhere, to higher things."

Interviewee at Top Girls. Looking for a place where she is valued.

Shona

"We look young. Youngness runs in the family in our family."

Looking for employment. Has an impressive CV.

Mrs Kidd

"You're one of those ballbreakers, that's what you are."

Concerned about the recent change in staffing at Top Girls Employment Agency, as it pertains to her husband, Howard Kidd.



BACK HOME

Angie

“Now I'm a cannibal, I might turn into a vampire now.”

Angie is 16 years old, and lives with her mother, Joyce, somewhere near Ipswich.

Kit

“I suppose you thought you'd do it with a brick?”

Kit (12 years old) is close friends with Angie.

Joyce

“She's one of those girls might never leave home.”

Marlene's sister. Joyce has stayed in the place she grew up. Her time is spent looking after Angie, working several cleaning jobs, and visiting her elderly mother.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

A controversial figure, and staunch supporter of individualistic capitalism, Margaret Thatcher became Britain's first female Prime Minister in May of 1979. Through the privatisation of state-owned industries and public services, weakening the power of the unions, and the closing of firms, there was an enormous rise in unemployment.

Some praised her as a feminist icon, a pioneering woman in leadership, despite her saying:

"The feminists hate me, don't they? And I don't blame them. For I hate feminism. It is poison."

Thatcher's government saw a diminishing of the middle class and a bolstering of the 1%. With actions that proved to do little to improve equality for marginalised groups in society, it seems inaccurate to list her as a feminist victory. After all, you can't have equality for some. That's not equality.

Which is where *Top Girls* comes in.

Coming at a time when Britain's mindset changed from a socialist to capitalist one,

Churchill's *Top Girls* questions the change, explores what it means to be a working woman, and reflects on our attitudes towards motherhood. It's simultaneously a celebration of women's achievements, a lament of our oppression, and a warning to check our privilege.

MARLENE

I don't mean anything personal. I don't believe in class. Anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes.

JOYCE

And if they haven't?

MARLENE

If they're stupid or lazy or frightened, I'm not going to help them get a job, why should I?

JOYCE

What about Angie?

This play, it seems to me, marks a turning point in history. A point where we start to consider a larger number of barriers that a wider range of people face. *Top Girls* was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London in 1982. Only a couple of years prior in 1978, American writer Marilyn Loden created

the phrase “the glass ceiling”, a phrase that describes the invisible barriers women face in advancing in the corporate hierarchy. In 1981 - only a year before *Top Girls* - the term “ableism” appeared in print, putting a word to the discrimination felt by those with mental or physical disabilities. Later, in 1989 we finally got the word “Intersectionality”, thanks to Kimberlé Crenshaw, describing the interlocking systems of power at play, affecting those most marginalised in society. What an influential decade!

It's been an incredible honour working this delicious text with such an incredible team of women. It's clear to me why this remains such an iconic and frequently performed play. Here's to a better world for Angie, for us all.

*“When I said “Take me to the moon”,
I never meant take me alone,
I thought if mankind toured the sky,
it meant that all of us could go.
But I don't want to see the stars
if they're just one more piece of land
for us to colonise for us to turn to sand”
- Rät, by Penelope Scott*

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Rep is very excited to be reviving this fine, fine drama. If any play is due for revival, it's *Top Girls*. When I was a very young student, I was lucky enough to see the original production at The Royal Court in London. It was the first modern play to make a strong impression on me. Here were plot, characters, writing just as potent as anything I'd ever encountered in the "classic" theatre.

Though very much grounded in the struggles of the "Thatcher years" in the UK, *Top Girls*, like all great plays remains a living, vital experience. It can still speak to us now, in the very different world of 2023. I am delighted that we have been able to work with a strong production team and cast who have done full justice to Caryl Churchill's vision of a modern world where women can succeed "like men", if they choose -- but at what cost? The answer to that question will keep you on the edge of your seats. Enjoy the ride!

- Paul Stone

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	<u>Bel Campbell</u>	<i>she/her</i>
Production Manager	Laniet Swann	<i>she/her</i>
Stage Manager	Tasman Hughes	<i>she/her</i>
Stage Crew	Rosie Mazur	<i>she/her</i>
	Ava Stuart	<i>she/her</i>
	Pola Gorodkova	<i>she/her</i>
	Maia Ingoe	<i>she/her</i>
Intimacy Direction	Angela Pelham	<i>she/her</i>
Set Design	Sam Hearps	<i>she/her</i>
Set Construction	Vince Jennings	
	Slaine McKenzie	<i>he/him</i>
	Oli Webber	
Sound Design	Bel Campbell	<i>she/her</i>
Sound Operator	Jamie Byas	<i>she/her</i>
	Shay Tanirau	<i>he/him</i>
Lighting Design /Ops	Jamie Byas	<i>she/her</i>
	Shay Tanirau	<i>he/him</i>
Wardrobe	Carol Walters	
Props	Tasman Hughes	<i>she/her</i>
	Laniet Swann	<i>she/her</i>

PRODUCTION TEAM

Poster Design	<u>June Ha</u>	<i>she/her</i>
Poster Photos	<u>June Ha</u>	<i>she/her</i>
Publicity	Oliver Mander	<i>he/him</i>
	Shay Tanirau	<i>he/him</i>
Promo Photos	Shay Tanirau	<i>he/him</i>
Production Photos	<u>Alex Rabina</u>	<i>he/him</i>
Stage Food	Tasman Hughes	<i>she/her</i>
	Beth Draper	<i>she/her</i>
	Bel Campbell	<i>she/her</i>
	Felix Coy	<i>he/him</i>
Lighting Support	Scott Maxim	
	Riley Gibson	



MUSIC

A Leaf's Lament by cloud mouth

Balance (1980) by Nova Scotian Arms

Back in the 80s by HoliznaCC0

1980 by Opéra Mort

Neon Womb by Toyah

Money (That's What I Want) by The Supremes

Rät by Penelope Scott



SPECIAL THANKS

All auditionees for their time and effort,
our wonderful WRT volunteers and committee
members for their support,

Gryphon Theatre for their generosity,
The Backbencher Gastro Pub for lending
us a serving tray,

Tasman Hughes, Felix Coy, Beth Draper,
Bel Campbell for preparing all the stage food,
Sam Hearps, Tasman Hughes, Kelly Mui,
Shemaia Dixon, Susannah Donovan, Pola
Gorodkova, Bel Campbell, Slaine McKenzie for
the late night set painting,
and Scott Maxim and Riley Gisben for last
minute tech help.



STOP PRESS!

The fourth and final production of the 2023 Repertory season will be:

Picnic at Hanging Rock

Directed by Tanya Piejus

"On a summer's day in 1900, three Australian schoolgirls on a picnic expedition to the remote Hanging Rock abscond from their group. They are last seen heading towards the beckoning Rock."

In Tom Wright's chilling adaptation of Joan Lindsay's classic novel, five performers struggle to solve the mystery of the missing girls and their teacher. Euphoria and terror reverberate throughout the community as the potential for history to repeat itself becomes nightmarishly real."

Auditions will be held on **19 and 20 August 2023** at Toi Poneke. More details shortly on Rep's website and social media.

