

BLUE STOCKINGS”

By Jessica Swale

Set in 1896, "Blue Stockings" is the story of 4 young women fighting for their right to a university education in a world that assumed women belonged at home. The girls study hard and match their male counterparts grade for grade but little do they anticipate the hurdles in their way – the distractions of love, the cruelty of the class-divide, the stigma of being a 'blue stocking', or the strength of the opposition to deny them degrees. They will return home unqualified and unmarried.

It is always fascinating to work on plays about real events as this adds an extra dimension to the performance. Whilst this play has serious and dramatic themes, there are also opportunities for humour and romance for us to explore. There will be doubling and crowd scenes so that everyone can be more involved. Casting both young people (5F and 6M) and adults (3F and 3M), I anticipate a challenging and interesting journey.

Performances	10th – 14th September
Play reading	Wednesday 1st May 8.00 p m
Auditions	Wednesday 8th May 8 00 p m Sunday 12th May 2.00 p m
Rehearsals	Mondays and Wednesdays <u>starting</u> 24th June 8 p.m. (or 7.30 if possible) and Sundays from 14th July at 2.30. <i>Please bring details of dates not available</i> <i>to play reading/audition so that I can plan rehearsal schedule</i>
Director	Sheila Carr 01737 357588 or 07724 684689 or sheilacarr@inbox.com

Scripts available from Jane Foster at jane_foster16@hotmail.com must be returned or brought to the read-through and audition.

Anyone interested but not able to make either of the audition dates, please contact Sheila direct.

CHARACTERS AND AUDITION PIECES

YOUNG PEOPLE

Tess Moffat is the central protagonist in the play, events being largely seen through her eyes. First year student with a passion for astronomy, she is hungry for knowledge. She acts instinctively, is sensitive and throws herself into things. When she falls in love she is joyful and is devastated when it falls apart. (*She needs to ride a bicycle!*)

P32 (with Dr Maudsley) "But sir, I believe..... throw the whole lot of you out"

P79 (with Ralph) "Its like being on top of the world.....no-one like you Tess Moffat"

P102 "There was a girl at home.....what do I do?"

Celia Wilkinson is a hard worker, repeating her first year at Girtons, having previously been sent home with nervous exhaustion. This has affected her attitude to her studies and the other girls. Has a strong sense of propriety and how the girls are perceived by others.

P86 "You should watch yourself.....only just started"

P103 "That girl on the roof.....Come on. Tess?"

Carolyn Dobson is an early bohemian, extravagant and carefree. A well travelled girl, she feels rules are there to be broken. Rather lonely girl with a lack of sensitivity to others' feelings.

P25 (with Miss Blake) "He didn't believe in material things.....what you have"

P54 (with Miss Blake, Tess & Celia) "A fine theoristI'm still going to be a doctor"

Maeve Sullivan is a scholarship girl from a different background. Possessed of a quiet intelligence, she often holds back from expressing her views but then surprises with her knowledge, insight and reasoning powers. A benefactor pays her family an allowance so that she can study but after her mother dies, she is forced to return home and all the girls feel her loss.

P55 “All the great scientists.....no more than a barn”

P59 (with Billy) “No good though..... I can’t even look at you” then p61 “But this is who I am.....don’t take that away, please”

Minnie is the housemaid at Girtons. She takes an interest in the girls and keeps their secrets (A small part but there will be opportunities for more involvement)

P48 (with Tess) “I could let you out.....never miss”

Ralph Mayhew is a 2nd year student at Trinity College who is sympathetic to the women’s cause. A scientist and a romantic, he falls in love with Tess but is too weak to stand up to his father and ends up taking the cowardly way out.

P79 (with Tess) “Its like being on top of the world.....no-one like you Tess Moffat”

P98 (with Will) “No more. Here’s to Newnham ladies.....wish her well”

Lloyd is a 2nd year student at Trinity College and a vocal opponent of women studying at Cambridge. From an illustrious and privileged background, he is highly educated and very competitive. Scared of change and worried he may not make the grade, he fears being undermined by the women students.

P64 “Alright.....No question”

P88 “Listen..... a doctor for God’s sake”

Holmes is a 2nd year student at Trinity College. Around the other men he has a bravura that may mask a more artistic side. His behaviour suggests a privileged upbringing. As the play progresses, although he never agrees with women graduating, he respects their courage and is ashamed at the violence of the riot.

P63 (with Banks) “Agreed..... something - more”

P114 (No-one wanted this.....I’m sorry for your loss”

Edwards is a 2nd year student at Trinity College. Whilst more sympathetic to the women’s cause, he is ridiculed by Lloyd and Holmes and becomes the butt of their pranks. (*Needs to be able to sing!*)

P114 “So what happens now?.....What will you do?” (put all his speeches together)

Will Bennett is a 2nd year student at King’s College who needs a first class degree to help secure his employment prospects. A childhood friend of Tess, he has promised her father to ‘look out’ for her, becoming a supporter of women studying as the play progresses. Strong and open-minded.

P42 (with Tess) “Listen I’m sorry.....what will you do?”

P98 (with Ralph) “No more. Here’s to Newnham ladies.....wish her well”

Billy Sullivan (playing age 25 -30) Maeve’s brother, illiterate and a labourer, also doing ad hoc work on/around ships. When his father abandoned the family, Billy was the oldest male and became the breadwinner. After his mother’s death, he travels to Girton as the Head of the family to bring Maeve home.

P59 (with Maeve) “No good though is it??..... I can’t even look at you”

(*Will also play another role in Act 2*)

ADULTS:

Elizabeth Welsh (1843 – 1921) was Mistress of Girton College from 1885 – 1903. Only she and Dr Maudsley are based on real people, although they have been written with a degree of artistic licence. A disciplinarian, resolute in pursuit of her aims, she also shows a caring side for the students. She fears the suffragette movement's reputation for radicalism and violence will undermine their case for the right to graduate.

P37 "Oh the world.....Do you understand?"

P62 (with Miss Blake) "What are you doing?.....Not at all"

P68 "A remarkable mind.....a full membership vote"

Miss Blake (playing age 40-50) is a lecturer in moral science at Girton College. Was previously a student and supports suffragettes. Does not necessarily mean everything she says – often trying to provoke discussion. She challenges the students to choose between love and knowledge, as she did.

P54 (with Carolyn) "A fine theorist can argue.....I'm still going to be a doctor"

P62 (with Elizabeth) "What are you doing?.....Not at all"

P90 (with Mr Banks) I'm so late.....She forced my hand"

Miss Bott is the girls' chaperone outside college and supervises them when in the company of men. Seems to take her job very seriously, taking her knitting wherever she goes.. Not many lines but a chance for strong characterisation!. (*will double as Mrs Lindley, haberdasher*)

Dr Maudsley (1835 -1913) (playing age 50-60) is a renowned psychiatrist, specialising in the field of mental health. Genuinely concerned in preserving the institution of the family which he feels is under threat by educating women. Dictatorial and opinionated.

P32 (with Tess) "But sir, I believe..... throw the whole lot of you out"

P14 "Gentlemen.....degrees for women"

(*Will also play other roles*)

Mr Banks (playing age 30 -40) is a lecturer in natural science at both Trinity and Girton colleges. He is a committed supporter of womens' rights, to his personal cost.

P30 "Gentlemen. Ladies.....Be excellent"

P90 (with Miss Blake) I'm so late.....She forced my hand"

Professor Collins (playing age 45-60) is a senior lecturer at Trinity College and is sceptical about the value of educating women.

p103 "Morning.....your evidence?" (*just his speeches*)

P107 "With whom did he complete his study.....ladies, thank you very much" (*just his speeches*)

(*Will also play other roles*)

Professor Radleigh (playing age 45 – 60) is a board member at Trinity College . Totally opposed to the idea of women studying.

P72 "Have you thought.....Its irresponsible"

(*Will also play other roles*)