



4th - 7th September 2024 – Putney Arts Theatre, London SW15 6AW

Show Summary

Set in the streets of Dublin, *Once* tells the story of a 'Guy' and a 'Girl', whose chance encounter evolves into a friendship and love that will change their lives forever. We see the two of them, an Irish busker and a Czech immigrant, become slowly entwined, drawn together by their shared love of music and learning. Through their relationship with each other, the show explores love in its purest form, and the power of finding someone who you can completely harmonise with. This is an unconventional romance story, complicated by circumstance and narrated through emotive folk-influenced music.

The show, based on the 2007 film of the same name, won the 2012 Tony Award for Best Musical and includes the Academy Award-Winning song 'Falling Slowly'. Traditionally performed with a cast of actor-musos, the show speaks to the power of utilising music to build community and belonging within the world around us, particularly by capturing the unique, diverse and eclectic sounds of Dublin.



Our Production

For this production, we are keen to create the sense of found community that is so prevalent in *Once*. We want to create a playing world that feels akin to walking into any Irish bar around the world, where you are greeted by strangers as a familiar face. The set will use instruments and other simple features to transform between spaces, as well as using ensemble cast to create the wider world of Dublin through character work and transitions. Regardless of your casting type, we encourage you to audition for whatever role speaks to you most - we are keen to find a cast that represents the many and varied influences of life in Dublin and, similarly, represents the diverse community we work in in London.

First Meeting and Audition Workshop

We will be holding a first meeting on **Monday 22nd April, 7:30pm** at **St. Barnabas Church, Lavenham Road, Southfields, SW18 5EP** where you will have a chance to meet the creative team and experience some of the material in the show, as well as ask any questions you may have.

Audition Information

Please submit an [audition form](#) to book your audition slot. The deadline to submit a form is **Friday 26th April**.

Format of Auditions

First round

In the first round of auditions you will be expected to:

- **Music:** Prepare no longer than 1 min 30 secs (verse and chorus), depending on your skill set, of the following:
 - Singing only:
 - Extract 1: Sing a style appropriate song of your choice. Please send music in advance or bring it with you for the audition for me to accompany you.
 - Extract 2: If you're not confident playing an instrument, I would encourage you to bring something musically creative to the audition. For example, the Cup Song!
 - Singing/Instrument combo:
 - Extract 1: Please bring a section of anything on your instrument to show off your skills.
 - Extract 2: Sing a style appropriate song of your choice. Please send music in advance or bring it with you for the audition for me to accompany you.

- Extract 3: If your instrument allows it, please prepare a piece you can sing and play at the same time. This can be the same song as you have sung above or something different.
- Instrument only:
 - Extract 1: Please bring a section of anything on your instrument to show off your skills.
 - Extract 2: Please bring a section of something that reflects the folk rock genre of the show.
- Please find more information from Ash here: [☐ Initial Auditions](#)
- **Acting:** Select one extract from this folder, based on the role you would like to audition for:
 - ☐ [First round extracts](#) - a member of the production team will read in the other roles
- **Dance:** There will not be a dance call in first round auditions

Callbacks

In the second round of auditions you will be expected to:

- **Music**
 - Prepare any song that is requested in your recall email
 - Be prepared to sing and play anything from your initial audition
- **Acting**
 - Prepare any additional script requested in your recall email - these can be accessed here:
 - ☐ [Callbacks extracts](#)
 - These will include group/partner scenes where we will do chemistry reads
- **Dance**
 - There will be a short, workshop-style dance call - you do not need to prepare anything in advance

Character descriptions

Character Name	Description	Vocal Type	Instruments
Guy Playing age 20-35	An Irish busker desperately trying to make ends meet. He has become disenchanted with life but has a lot of untapped potential and is, underneath first appearances, very charming.	Tenor	Guitar

	We are particularly interested in auditionees with an Irish background for this role.		
Girl Playing age 20-35	Life has not been kind to her, yet she remains kind and hopeful. Funny, wise and generous. She is hard not to fall in love with! We are particularly interested in auditionees with an Eastern European background for this role.	Mezzo	Piano
Reza Playing age 25-30	Opinionated, sassy and forward. Housemate to Girl and source of guidance.	Original Sop but flexible	Flexible (in the original: violin)
Eamon Playing age 20-50	Owens the music studio where Girl and Guy record the album. Is reluctant and a touch cold but eventually comes round and is unable to be unimpressed by their talent.	Flexible	Flexible (in the original: Violin, piano, guitar, melodica, cajon, castanets)
Andrej Playing age 20-30	Works in a fast-food chain restaurant but has ambition and talent. Dreams of bigger things for himself- supportive and friendly.	Original Bari but flexible	Flexible (in the original: Guitar, bass, ukulele)
Da Playing age 50-70	Father of Guy - Quiet type but believes in Guy and is a good parent.	Bari	Flexible (Original: Mandolin)
Baruska Playing age 45-60	Mother of Girl - Takes no prisoners but is a giving host and will always welcome and feed guests.	Flexible	Flexible (Original: Accordion)
Svec Playing age 20-40	Another of Girl's eclectic housemates. Good sense of humour and big fan of television, which he learns English through.	Flexible	Flexible (Original: Banjo, Mandolin, Guitar, Drums)

Bank Manager Playing age 30-50	Secretly passionate musician who initially appears as a barrier to Guy and Girl. Softens throughout.	Original Tenor but flexible	Flexible (Original: Mandolin, Cello, Guitar)
Ex-Girlfriend Playing age 20-40	The woman who broke Guy's heart. Now lives in New York- is generally likeable and thought of by Guy with a level of regret/love still.	Flexible	Flexible (Original: Violin, Cajon)
Billy Playing age 30-50	Owner of the music shop. Very fond of Girl and willing to help her out and facilitate her passions. Big character with quiet sensitivity.	Flexible	Flexible (Original: Cajon, Guitar, Ukulele)
Emcee Playing age 20-50	Emcee at a bar - typical Irish bar type, passionate about a good time.	Original Bari but flexible	Flexible (Original: Guitar)
Ensemble	Range of roles - including singers, musicians and dancers	Flexible	Flexible

Note on gender of parts:

We are generally looking to cast named parts (particularly Guy, Girl, Baruska and Da) accordingly with their original written gender in the production. However, we are open to all gender presentations for each part and will rework them as necessary to make sense of the script and narration of the story. There is greater flexibility within ensemble roles. We encourage all auditionees to audition for the role that they feel most interested in and we can adapt accordingly.

Note on disability accommodation:

Due to the nature of the show, all movement direction and choreography will be designed to accommodate the individual needs of performers, including those with physical and other disabilities, so we encourage such auditionees. Please get in touch with the production team if you require any additional support through the audition process.

Note on accents:

Once celebrates the diverse community of Dublin and the stories of people from around the world who have made the city their home. As such, we would encourage auditions from people of all backgrounds and accents. We are particularly keen to audition those of Irish or Eastern European heritage. We would particularly like to encourage these auditionees to look at the roles of Guy (Irish) and Girl (Eastern European) who we would like to cast as authentically as possible.

Audition Pieces

You can express interest to be considered for more than one part, but please audition with the pieces from your preferred role, as time is limited. All audition pieces will be added to this drive in the lead-up to the auditions: [☐ Audition Material](#)

Acting/Dialogue

Audition pieces for each character are available on the drive. Someone on the audition panel will read in the lines of the other characters in the piece.

Music

Musically, we will be looking for singers, musicians and actor musicians. For this production, the musicians will be working closely with the singers and actor musicians to help build the sound for the production. All performers will be on stage meaning that there will be more learning for music than a 'typical' show, as well as the usual script and lyrics. We have the opportunity to build the sound from scratch with potentially a different combination of instruments and skills from the original production. I'm really excited to see your skill set!

Dancing

There will be no dance call at the initial auditions. At the callbacks, there will be a short physical warm up/movement workshop, accompanied by the folk/trad-style music that inspires the show. There are no preparatory videos for this call - *Once* is a very movement based show rather than your typical MT choreography, utilising your bodies and your instruments to build the world of the show. So this workshop will be more about seeing how you respond to the music and interact with each other - any non-dancers don't worry!

Understudies

We will be considering casting understudies for the main parts (details on which roles to be announced) from the ensemble. There will not be an allocated show for understudies to perform in and this is just a precaution, but you will have the opportunity to rehearse and receive coaching for principal roles.

Rehearsals and Shows

Rehearsals will be on **Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 7.30pm-10pm**, and from Sunday 28th July onwards, on **Sundays at 2pm-6pm**, at **St Barnabas Church Hall, Lavenham Road, Southfields, SW18 5EP**. The first rehearsal will be Tuesday 14th May.

The rehearsal schedule has not been finalised yet and will partly depend on cast availability, so please let us know your availability as accurately as possible on the audition form.

We understand that people may have long-standing commitments and holiday bookings that can't be moved, but please prioritise the show in your diaries so we can make it as good as it can possibly be. It's

very difficult to have productive rehearsals with lots of people missing, especially for this show where everything is so intertwined and ensemble-driven.

Availability is something that is considered as part of the casting process.

Key Dates

*Meetings, auditions and rehearsals will be held at **St Barnabas Church Hall, Lavenham Road, Southfields, SW18 5EP***

- First meeting: 7:30pm, Monday 22nd April
- Auditions: Thursday 2nd and Monday 6th May
- Recalls: Thursday 9th May
- First rehearsal: Tuesday 14th May
- Rehearsals: Tuesday and Thursday evenings, Sunday afternoons
- Show week: Sunday 1st - Saturday 7th September (performances Wednesday - Saturday including Saturday matinee)

Show week takes place at the performance venue, **Putney Arts Theatre, London SW15 6AW** from Sunday 1st to Saturday 7th September 2024 with full cast called:

- Sunday 1st September – Get-in and Sitzprobe: all cast required 9am-11pm
- Monday 2nd – Technical rehearsal, 2pm-Late (cast called from 6pm)
- Tuesday 3rd – Dress Rehearsal, 5pm-11pm (cast called from 6pm)
- Wednesday 4th - Friday 6th – Shows, call time 6pm-11pm (7:30pm show)
- Saturday 7th – Shows + Get-out, call time 12pm-Late (2.30pm show, 7.30pm show, get-out)

Membership and Show Fee

Membership is **£35 a year** if you pay as a one-off, or **only £30 when you set up a standing order or direct debit**. This lets you audition for all productions within that year (usually two musicals and a play). It also gives you discounted members' rates to our social events and access to the dedicated members' Facebook group and mailing list.

In amateur dramatics, because we are self-funded and doing this for fun, a show fee is paid by participants to cover all the costs of the show – things like performance rights, venue hire, scenery, costumes, lighting, insurance and lots more! For *Once*, the fee will be **£110**.

Other Costs

So there are no surprises (especially if you are new to 'am dram'), it's worth noting that there may be other costs associated with participating in the show. Many of these are optional (for example, show t-shirts and contributions to gifts for production/backstage teams), but we may ask cast members to provide their own character/tap/dance shoes, makeup, and other personal items.

Please note there will also be a refundable deposit due to be paid for use of a libretto throughout the rehearsal process. The cost is £25 and this will be returned to you at the end of the show upon return of your lib.

Payment Plans

The cost of living has risen sharply recently and we don't want financial circumstances to be a barrier to participation. If you are concerned about the show fee or membership cost, or due to current circumstances you are unable to pay the full amounts upfront, please speak to the Cygnet Players Committee in confidence to arrange a payment plan by emailing info@cygnetplayers.com.

Promoting the Show

It's crucial that everyone involved with the show does everything they can to spread the word and encourage their friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances to buy tickets and come along. At the end of the day, we want big audiences to perform too and appreciate all the hard work that you've put in!

The Committee marketing team will coordinate efforts across our social media channels and we ask everyone involved to help by sharing posts, and capturing photos and videos in rehearsals that we can use for content.

If you have a particular flare for insta stories and want to help further with the social media campaigns, there will be opportunities to be more involved to support the marketing team - more details to follow once the show gets going!

Closer to show week, we will organise some targeted promotional events, such as flyering and live performances in areas local to Putney Arts Theatre. More details on these events, including confirmation of dates, will be given in due course.

Each member of the cast will be expected to participate in at least one promotional event, as these are vital for making sure you have big audiences to perform to!

Social Events

Cygnets organises lots of socials and events throughout the year. During the rehearsal period for *Once* there are already some socials planned, plus the usual end of year Christmas event. They are a great opportunity to get to know your fellow cast members and meet other members of the society. Dates we have so far are:

- **Cygnet Cycles** spin class social (the first of its kind!) - Friday 7th June
- **Annual Summer Barbecue** - Saturday 10th August
- **Cygnets Entertains** - our infamous Christmas extravaganza! - Saturday 30th November

Put the dates in your diaries and look out for further details on the website, mailing list and social media!

Meet the team

Ashley Harvey (Musical Director) Ashley trained as a classical pianist in Manchester. She read Natural Sciences at University College London graduating with first class honours. She returned to music to pursue a career as a musical director. Highlights include the Last Five Years (Electric Theatre), West Side Story (Michael Frayne Theatre), Life Could Be A Dream (UK Premiere), Wizard of Oz (Cockpit Theatre), Mess (Ed Fringe), Urinetown (Cockpit Theatre), Luck Be A Lady (Upstairs at the Gatehouse), Kinky Boots (London Oratory Theatre), Big Fish (Putney Arts Theatre), Yeast Nation (Southwark Playhouse), Young Frankenstein (Arthur Cotterell Theatre), The First Years (New Musical) and Fame (London Oratory Theatre) Ashley has starred in the live final of the Iranian X-Factor, performed with Mexican "The Voice" star Morganna Love and cabarets across London including The Sing Easy West End.

Lauren Brewer (Director) Lauren is a director and writer based in London. Lauren was half of the writing team behind 'The Single Lady' (book/co-lyricist and director), which, in its most recent outing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival received awards for 'Best New Musical' and Best New Student Writing'. Lauren studied English Literature at Durham University where she directed several sold-out runs of shows including: 'The Addams Family', 'Edges', 'Disco Inferno', 'A Mother's War' and an immersive production of 'Much Ado About Nothing'. Lauren now works for the Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation where she is part of the team who run the world's largest youth drama festival, as well as continuing development on her Musical Theatre writing.

Anna Kendall (Movement Director) Anna is thrilled to be joining Cygnet Players for the first time as the choreographer for *Once*. Both a performer and a choreographer, her recent choreography credits include *Guys and Dolls* (Gala Theatre, Durham) and *Carrie* (Assembly Rooms Theatre, Durham). Most recently, she was the assistant choreographer on NYMT's new production 'The Boy Who Sailed the Ocean in an Armchair', which was nominated for 12 Broadway World awards. Having recently performed in Mayhem's 'Anything Goes' and Geoids' 'Spring Awakening', this is Anna's first time choreographing for London Am Dram, and she couldn't be more excited to be working on one of her favourite shows alongside an amazing production team!

Izzy O'Flanagan (Producer) Izzy is a producer and performer who has previously appeared in *Fame* and *Big Fish* with Cygnet Players. She currently works as a Production Coordinator for Kenny Wax Productions, most recently on *SIX* (UK and International Tour) and with Mischief Theatre on *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* and *Mind Mangler: Member of the Tragic Circle*. Izzy is excited to combine her day job with her passion for amdram and turn her hand to the producing side of things with Cygnets.

Contact

Please contact cygnetsonce@gmail.com with any questions.

Good luck with your audition!

About Cygnet Players

Cygnet Players is a young and vibrant company based in South West London. We rehearse in Southfields and put on shows in and around Putney. We perform two musicals and a play every year, as well as putting on various concerts and other events. We also have regular social events, which are great opportunities to meet and catch up with other Cygnets. We always welcome new members, so if this is your first show with us – welcome to the family!

For more information about the company in general, have a look at our website at www.cygnetplayers.com or email info@cygnetplayers.com.

You can also find us on social media:

- Facebook – www.facebook.com/cygnetplayers
- Instagram – [@cygnetplayers](https://www.instagram.com/cygnetplayers)
- TikTok- [@cygnetplayers](https://www.tiktok.com/@cygnetplayers)

Diversity and Inclusion

Cygnet Players strives to create an accessible and welcoming environment for members and audiences. We are committed to diversity and inclusion within our casting and storytelling to ensure there are opportunities for all people, from every walk of life, to take part.

As part of this, we are committed to a conscious casting process; making conscious decisions about how a show can be cast, rather than following the “traditional” model that repeats whatever has been done before. We are always open to non-traditional casting, and conscious artistic decisions will be made whenever race, ethnicity, gender or other factors are a key component of the story or integral to the relationships between characters. Where this is the case, it will be clearly highlighted in character breakdowns.

Cygnets is a member of the South West London amateur theatre societies’ Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Accessibility Group (IDEA): a group of five societies working towards improved diversity and inclusion in amdram.

We are open to feedback to improve our processes and create a warm and welcoming atmosphere that creates opportunities for people of all ethnicities, gender identities and physical abilities.

If you have any suggestions, feedback or ideas please speak to a member of the Committee or Production Team, or email swamdramidea@gmail.com. It will always be treated in the strictest of confidence but if you wish to provide feedback anonymously, please fill in this form.