

Under Milk Wood

by
Dylan Thomas

Director's Notes, Guidance and Information for Actors

Director:	Clare Lewis
Reading date:	Tuesday 26 th May 2026, 7.30pm
Audition Date:	Tuesday 7 th July 2026, from 7.00pm for 7.30pm start
Performance Dates:	Monday 17 th May 2027– Saturday 22 nd May 2027, including two performances on the Saturday 22 nd May.
Rehearsals:	Starting mid March 2027

About the play

What happens? Bugger all! (Llareggub).
What's it about? Everything, and in Dylan Thomas's beautiful words.

Commissioned by the BBC for radio, the 'play for voices' is set in a fictional Welsh coastal town, Llareggub and follows the inhabitants through 24 hours. Opening in the quiet of the night, we enter the dreams of the townspeople - probably not the fairest way to get to know them! We observe their daytime interactions and obsessions, and leave them as the sun sets and they return to their dreams.

So, not much actually happens - but the play presents snapshots from the range of humanity. These are ordinary (if eccentric), but very different people, who have inner lives they may believe are hidden, but the neighbours have ways of finding out and gossiping about them. As the Rev Eli Jenkins says in his evening prayer, they "are not wholly bad or good". There are a fair few undesirables, yet their minister, and the town in general, tolerates them, and many rather enjoy bad-mouthing them.

I love this play - but some have criticised it as sentimental or "nostalgic". I suppose it is, in the sense of the Welsh word, 'hiraeth', which means a homesickness or nostalgia for something that never really existed.

It will be hard work, and pretty challenging for all of us, but I hope it will also be great fun.

About the Writer

Dylan Marlais Thomas 27 October 1914 - 9 November 1953.

Thomas was developing the concept that would become Under Milk Wood from the 1930s. He may not have finished working on it when he died in November 1953, although the first official

stage performance had taken place in May that year. The fictional town in the play Llareggub was influenced by his familiarity with several real Carmarthenshire towns and their people.

The Director's Vision

As with any ideas about a production still almost a year off, things may change a little as practicalities bite, but the general vision is this.

Firstly, this will not be presented as a radio play. There will be action and movement, and the cast will be involved in creating different settings with simple props and furniture, as part of the flow of the play.

There are 87 characters in Under Milk Wood, (not all of them speak), so each actor will play multiple parts, often in rapid succession.

This will be an ensemble piece, in which every actor is a star. In the definitive, original version, there is an enormous narrator role - First Voice - but in this production this will be split between the cast, with each character delivering their own narration. The remaining sections of the narration that are not character-based will be shared between the actors (eg the opening).

The set will be simple at least in terms of “furniture”; the cast will enter together(ish) and then remain on stage, with their own props and simple costume pieces near them. Costume changes will be merely token items, and will all take place onstage. But don't worry - there will be an interval!

If you would like to read the full play online, this is the version on Project Gutenberg: <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0608221h.html>. Please bear in mind the comments above about how the First Voice role will be changed in our production.

Grouping of Roles and Character Outlines

There are a large number of characters in the play which will be grouped so that each actor will be playing a number of roles.

We are therefore looking for a cast of up to 12 actors, who are up for playing widely different characters, and engaging in bringing the spoken word into lively action.

Do not be concerned about actors' ages fitting the roles, as long as you can be reasonably convincing, for example, as a 17 year old girl full of teenage passion, a gossipy middle-aged housewife, and a taunting child, or a young jack the lad, a murderous middle-aged headmaster and a blushing bride. There are some female roles that could be played by men and vice-versa. To some extent, the characters are caricatures, but I want to restrain the temptation to play them all that way.

The actual grouping of character roles between actors may be amended after auditions, but current thinking is attached at Page 7 of this document. These groups contain some very small parts, some of which have no lines, but are included here to give an indication of the range

required from each actor. Actors will have to rapidly change from role to role - sometimes on the same page.

Please let us know at the start of auditions if you have a preference for playing any particular actor or character as listed in this document or we will assume you are happy to be considered for any.

You can find details about the grouping of characters at **Page 7** of this document and some brief details about each individual character at **Page 9**.

Accent

This is very much a Welsh play, so naturally, we need to work on the accent, and that will happen during the course of rehearsals. For now, to prepare for audition, please listen to Welsh speakers, and try to at least aim for the intonation - the tune - of their speech. I am more keen to have good performances than perfect accents.

Music

There are some songs in the play. You don't have to be an opera singer, or even to be able to sing at all, but we do need the actor who plays Polly Garter to be able to sing sweetly. It would also be nice if a few others could carry a tune, as I have an idea for the ending that would rely on this! There's the odd snatch of a nursery rhyme, a playground song sung by "children", and also a bawdy drinking song in the Sailor's Arms, led by Mr Waldo, with a chorus of drunks. Enthusiasm is more important than tunefulness for those.

Please note: as long as you're not auditioning for Polly Garter, you will not be passed over if your spoken audition is fab but you're tone deaf or don't want to sing, but we would love you to be willing to sing a simple song or nursery rhyme at the audition to give us an idea of how many singers we may have and what types of voices.

What do I need to prepare for the audition?

Audition Approach and Process

Auditions will be a bit different ...

The audition pieces are not from the play - or indeed, from any play script.

Given the nature of the play and the need for versatile actors, we will be taking a different approach. We hope you'll enjoy this approach, and it will give us the opportunity to see how you'd differentiate between several characters.

For the audition, you need to completely distance yourself from the content and meaning of the audition text, and instead, focus on your delivery of it, in several different styles, demonstrating your versatility. In choosing your characters for audition, your age and gender don't matter.

Please choose any **3 contrasting characters** from the list below to demonstrate a range, it doesn't matter which you select.

1. Blind old seafarer
2. Paranoid older man
3. Sassy teenage girl
4. Romantic middle aged spinster
5. Witty and competent young woman
6. Menacing middle aged man
7. Exotic, overtly sexy middle aged woman
8. Judgy, nasty middle aged woman
9. Kind elderly minister
10. Young woman trying to be sophisticated
11. Motherly, wistful young woman
12. Middle aged man who fancies himself
13. Elderly lady still full of life
14. Young Jack the Lad
15. Ghostly woman
16. Naughty child
17. Wheedling middle aged man
18. Gossipy, pleasant, frumpy wife
19. Drunk middle aged man
20. Domineering woman

Audition Text

There are **3 different sections** of audition text attached to this document. Please prepare to deliver each of the three sections of text in the style of one of your 3 selected characters. (eg: section 1 as a blind old seafarer; section 2 as a paranoid older man; section 3 as a sassy teenage girl).

We'd like you to try a Welsh accent for at least one section.

We would like you to incorporate some movement into your interpretations if possible and where you feel it is appropriate.

The three sections of text can be found on **Page 12** of this document or in the separate document online.

We'd also like as many of those who are willing and or able to sing to give us an unaccompanied verse or two of their favourite simple song or even nursery rhyme

Other Useful Information

- **Reading Evening.** We would encourage anyone who may be interested in auditioning to come along to the reading evening to find out more. Our Director will chat about their thoughts and overall vision and we will read excerpts from the play to get a feel for the piece. You will be able to collect audition pieces if required and register your interest. If you are interested in auditioning but unable to attend the reading evening, please get in touch to let us know at pscc@greenroomwilmslow.org.uk
- **Who can audition?** Anyone is welcome to come along to the reading nights and auditions, you do not have to be a member. You will be required to join the Society as a

member if you are offered and accept a role. We welcome auditionees and volunteers regardless of previous experience and of all ages (above the age of 18), genders, ethnicities, sexualities, disabilities and races.

- **What to prepare?** Copies of the sections of text for auditions will be available to take away on the reading night if you are unable to print them yourselves from this document.
- **What happens at the auditions?** On audition night, please arrive at the theatre anytime from 7.00 pm and register in the bar ready for a 7.30pm start. You will be called into the auditorium to audition in front of a panel comprising the Director and members of the Play Selection and Casting Committee. Auditions will start at 7.30pm.
- **How long will auditions take?** We will endeavour to make the audition process as quick and smooth as possible, but please be patient as it can take some time and there may be some waiting around.
- **When will I hear?** We will let you know as soon as possible after the auditions whether or not you have been successful, but whatever the outcome we hope that you will still audition for other productions and continue to support the Green Room. We will always welcome any offers of help with our productions in any other way.
- **When are rehearsals?** Rehearsals are usually held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons, although the Director will discuss with you if this is any different.
- **Do I need to attend every rehearsal?** It is expected that if you accept a role in the production you will be generally available throughout the rehearsal period. We do, of course, understand that sometimes other commitments or special occasions may arise, and we ask that you inform us of any dates you are not available as soon as possible so we can try to accommodate this. There may also be additional rehearsals the week before the production, so we ask that you are potentially available that week if called.

You may not be called to every rehearsal, and the Director will produce a rehearsal schedule as far in advance as possible, but we do still ask that those successful in being cast in the production remain flexible, as rehearsal schedules can often change during the process.

Thank you very much for your interest in this production and we hope to see you soon at the reading evening and at the auditions. If you're in two minds, why not just give it a go! This is sure to be a beautiful, imaginative production and one to part of.

Break a leg!

Grouping of Roles

The roles will be grouped as set out in the table below.

<p>Actor 1: First Voice 1 Gossamer Beynon Mrs Cherry Owen First Bride p 12 Child pp 29-30 Second Woman p 33+ Little Girl p 53 Drinker (no lines) pp 59-60.</p>	<p>Actor 2: First Voice 2 Captain Cat Utah Watkins Preacher p 12 Butcher Beynon Fourth Neighbour pp 11-12</p>
<p>Actor 3: First Voice 3 Second Bride p 12 Mrs Ogmores Pritchard Mr Ogmores; Mr Pritchard Mary Ann The Sailors Mrs Butcher Beynon Third Woman p 33+ Girl 1 pp 42-45</p>	<p>Actor 4: First Voice 4 Mr Mog Edwards Sinbad Sailors Mr Waldo's Wife pp 9-12 Jack Black</p>
<p>Actor 5: First Voice 5 Polly Garter Mr Waldo's Mother pp 8-11 Bessie Bighead Child pp 29-30 Mrs Pugh Drinker (no lines) pp 59-60</p>	<p>Actor 6: First Voice 6 Mr Waldo (child and adult) PC Atilla Rees Old Man (1 line p 29); Voice of a Guidebook Fisherman p 39 Child pp 29-30</p>
<p>Actor 7: First Voice 7 Miss Myfanwy Price Gwennie (child) pp 42-46 Lily Smalls; Child pp 29-30 Lord Cutglass Third Neighbour pp 11-12</p>	<p>Actor 8: First Voice 8 Organ Morgan Mr Pugh Nogood Boyo Ocky Mikman Third Bride p 12 Billy (child) pp 42-46 First Drinker 59-60</p>
<p>Actor 9: First Voice 9 Mae Rose Cottage Mrs Organ Morgan Mrs Dai Bread Two Lily Smalls' Reflection pp 21-22 Second Neighbour pp 9-10</p>	<p>Actor 10: First Voice 10 Willy Nilly Dai Bread Fourth Bride p 12 Evans the Death p 8 & p 46 Johnny Cristo (child) pp 42-45</p>

Matti Richards p 12 Child 29-30 Mrs Twenty Three (no lines) p 33 Girl 2 pp 42-45 First Woman p 59	Cherry Owen(who must also be the 2nd Drinker)
Actor 11: First Voice 11 Mrs Willy Nilly Mrs Dai Bread One Matti's Mother p 12 Child pp 29-30 Mrs Floyd (no lines) p 33 Second Woman p 59-60	Actor 12: First Voice 12 Rev Eli Jenkins; First Neighbour pp 9-10 Mrs Utah Watkins p 15 Child pp 29-30 First Woman pp 33+ Dicky (Child) pp 42-45

These groups contain some very small parts, some of which have no lines, but are included here to give an indication of the range each actor will play. A brief outline of all the different characters is attached at the end of these notes. This will give an idea of the range required from each actor.

Summary of Characters

First Voice 1-12 (ALL ACTORS) - Narrative at the opening will be split between the 12 actors. Each character will narrate themselves throughout the play, and further First Voice lines that aren't specifically related to a character will be split and allocated to members of the ensemble.

Captain Cat (ACTOR 2) - Blind retired sea-captain, who 'sees' additional action for us. His dreams are haunted by the ghosts of his drowned sailors & by Rosie Probert - the love of his life, whose memory moves the old sea dog to tears.

The Drowned - 5 of them - They ask Captain Cat about the world of the living - things they can no longer imagine & how everyday life goes on without them. They are still bothered by things they did or claim they didn't do when they were alive. May be pre-recorded and played as a ghostly optical illusion, therefore not allocated to any role group (yet).

Rosie Probert - A prostitute from a sea-port, loved by Captain Cat. She is long dead and comes to him in dreams, at peace now and forgetting, but wanting to be remembered. May be pre-recorded and played as a ghostly optical illusion, therefore not allocated to any role group (yet).

Mr Mog Edwards ACTOR 4 - The draper. Loves Miss Myfanwy Price, but only on paper & in his dreams. His real love is money.

Miss Myfanwy Price ACTOR 7 - Owns the sweet shop. Neat and dainty. Loves Mr Mog Edwards - dreams of him & they exchange love letters, but it will never go any further - she's content with the dreams & her neat and orderly spinster life.

Jack Black ACTOR 4 - *The cobbler. A puritanical self-appointed seeker-out of sinners, in a village where, although gossip and disapproval is rife, questionable morality is actually tolerated by most of the villagers, and the actual minister is utterly forgiving.*

Evans the Death ACTOR 4 - *The undertaker. Dreams of his mother making Welshcakes in the snow. No dialogue - just narration, but needs to move in a child-like way in his dream.*

The pages covering Mr Waldo's dream call for all of the cast to be involved playing lots of minor characters in rapid succession:

Mr Waldo's mother ACTOR 5 - *Chants a nursery rhyme and expresses her disappointment with her young son.*

Mr Waldo ACTOR 6 - widowed quack and Jack of all trades, a florid 17 stone and an unlikely womaniser.

Matti Richards ACTOR 9 - *Little girl & immediately adult; won't kiss little boy / older Waldo as he hasn't got the penny she demands.*

Preacher ACTOR 2 - *asks young Waldo will he take a succession of young women as his wife*

First Bride Dulcie Prothero; Second Bride Effie Bevan; Third Bride Lil the Gluepot; Fourth Bride Mrs Flusher ACTORS 1, 3, 8 & 10 - *Tiny rapid roles - potential (or actual?) brides of Mr Waldo in his dream.*

Mrs Ogmores Pritchard ACTOR 3 - The twice-widowed, hygiene-obsessed proprietor of the Bay View Guest House, where she refuses to take guests as they will breathe on her furniture and sleep in her sheets. Her dead husbands come to her dreams, to be micromanaged even in death. A single actor will play Mrs O-P and her two dead husbands, and bring the husbands to life as glove-puppets - I'm sure that's what she'd have preferred!

Mr Ogmores ACTOR 3- Linoleum, retired: first husband of Mrs Ogmores Pritchard.

Mr Pritchard ACTOR 3- Failed bookmaker and second husband of Mrs Ogmores Pritchard, who died after (accidentally or deliberately) swallowing disinfectant.

Gossamer Beynon ACTOR 1 - schoolteacher & daughter of the butcher. The lovely object of Sinbad Sailors' desire, but is he too common for her? Her outward pretty primness hides a passionate interior - she dreams of an animal-like lover, and concludes that it doesn't matter how unsophisticated Sinbad is, as long as he's got what it takes. (I'm on the hunt for an old Basil Brush glove puppet for her 'foxy lover!')

Organ Morgan ACTOR 8 - Bach-obsessed organist, though the villagers' gossip possibly insinuates that he has obsessions with another sort of organ.

Mr Utah Watkins ACTOR 2 - Farmer, counts sheep in his sleep. He's an unpleasant man, who is angry and verbally cruel to his animals, but they are affectionate to him in return.

Mrs Watkins ACTOR 12 - knits in her sleep.

(Rest of cast playing sheep!)

Mrs & Mrs Floyd ACTOR 1 - The cocklers. No dialogue just narration. May use dolls/puppets with one actor.

Ocky Milkman ACTOR 8 - Cries over spilt milk in his dream, although he's the one tipping it into the river. Has a wife nobody's ever seen.

Cherry Owen ACTOR 10 - Poverty-stricken hard drinker who resorts to domestic violence when drunk. Dreams of drink.

PC Atilla Rees ACTOR 6 - Main purpose seems to be a helmet joke - wees in it half-asleep, walks his beat in a damp helmet as Mrs Pugh hopes he'll arrest Polly Garter "for having babies!"

Willy Nilly ACTOR 10 - Postman, snoop and gossip-monger. Knocks at doors in his dream, but it's his wife he's knocking on.

Mrs Willy Nilly ACTOR 11 - With her husband, steams open the mail and shares gossip about everyone's private lives. They're very open about it and nobody seems shocked. Dreams of being late for school and being spanked by teacher, as her husband knocks on her sleeping form.

Sinbad Sailors ACTOR 4 - Desperately in love with Gossamer Beynon, but believes she is too educated for him. Works for his gran at the Sailor's Arms, and thinks she would disapprove of him getting together with Gossamer. Dreams of his unrequited love.

Lily Smalls ACTOR 7 - “Mrs Beynon’s treasure” - home help at the butcher’s house. Nobody’s fool. Self-deprecating but has a secret lover. Dreams of being caught in the wash-house by a ‘mogul’. Late in the play, she’s “up to Nogoood Boyo in the wash-house”. May have another actor as her reflection in the mirror scene, replying to the real Lily. **(ACTOR 9)**

Mae Rose Cottage ACTOR 9 - “17 and never been kissed ho ho”. Dreams of being sinful. “Call me Dolores, like they do in the stories”. She’s a romantic at heart & probably going to remain very demure - or get a big shock facing reality.

Bessie Bighead ACTOR 5 - *only in narration (actor would narrate own description / back story) - a sad little tale of an unwanted workhouse child who grows into an unloved woman, laying flowers at the grave of the only man who ever kissed her - but it was only for a bet. Works with the cows on Utah Watkins’ farm.*

Mrs Butcher Beynon ACTOR 3 - Dreams of her worst fears about the source of her husband’s meat products. Horrified at her husband’s confessions but defends his integrity.

Butcher Beynon ACTOR 2 - Biggest liar in Llareggub - or is he? Tells his wife he’s killing pets for meat. Dreams of hunting wild giblets on pig-back.

Rev Eli Jenkins ACTOR 12 - Minister & poet. Narrative shows he’s capable of writing complex work in the old bardic tradition, but the poems he recites here are simple and a little sentimental. He is a forgiving man, in total contrast with Jack Black. “We are not wholly bad or good, who live our lives under Milk Wood.”

Mr Pugh ACTOR 8 - Schoolmaster: constantly imagines killing his wife.

Mrs Organ Morgan ACTOR 9 - Runs the grocery shop. Has the sympathy of village women as she’s “a martyr to music!” Dreams of silence, and relays gossip.

Mary Ann the Sailors ACTOR 3 - Keeps the Sailor’s Arms. Grandmother of Sinbad Sailors. 85 years 3 months & 1 day, she dreams of the garden of Eden & is grateful to see each new day. She has a deep faith.

Dai Bread ACTOR 10 - The baker. Sex-mad and exhausted. Has two contrasting wives.

Polly Garter ACTOR 5 - Fallen Madonna figure. Gentle, naive, maternal, can’t say no to the men who prey on her. Cleans for the respectable women who look down on her, though many of their husbands are among those seducing her. Extremely fertile, with a host of illegitimate children. Still mourns her dead true love & sings about him.

Nogoood Boyo ACTOR 8 - Wants to be Good Boyo but nobody lets him. A younger Mr Waldo? Give a dog a bad name ... Lives down to their expectations. Small role but one of the most memorable names from the play.

Lord Cutglass ACTOR 7 - *66 years old with a clock for each year, all to keep him alert so he’s not caught out by an undefined enemy. Paranoid perhaps. He’s down at heel but well-spoken. Is he an incomer? Has he come down in the world or had aspirations he failed to reach?*

Voice of a Guide Book ACTOR 6 - *Condescending and dismissive of the village, its architecture and people. Maybe an English or “Cut glass” Welsh accent.*

Mrs Pugh ACTOR 5 - Cold, judgemental and domineering. Can you blame Mr Pugh?

Mrs Dai Bread One ACTOR 11 - Likes to be comfy. Bit slatternly in contrast to:

Mrs Dai Bread Two ACTOR 9 - Exotic, gypsy-like, reads the crystal ball

Mrs Cherry Owen ACTOR 1 - Unbelievably tolerant beaten wife of her drunken husband. They have very little & he's no great catch, but seem to genuinely love each other.

AUDITION TEXT

Audition Text Section 1

Mrs Smiling nodded her approval, but she told Flora that she talked too much.

She added: "Now about this going to live with someone. Of course, you can stay here as long as you like, darling; but I suppose you will want to take up some kind of work some time, won't you, and earn enough to have a flat of your own?"

"What kind of work?" asked Flora, sitting upright and graceful in her chair.

"Well—organising work, like I used to do." (For Mrs Smiling had been an organiser for the L.G.G. before she married "Diamond" Tod Smiling, the racketeer.) "Do not ask me what that is, exactly, for I've forgotten. It is so long since I did any. But I am sure you could do it Or you might do journalism. Or book-keeping. Or bee-keeping."

Flora shook her head. "I'm afraid I couldn't do any of those things, Mary."

"Well... what then, darling? Now, Flora, don't be feeble. You know perfectly well that you will be miserable if you haven't got a job, when all your friends have. Besides, a hundred pounds a year won't even keep you in stockings and fans. What will you live on?"

"My relatives," replied Flora.

Audition Text Section 2

Mrs Smiling gave her a shocked glance of inquiry, for, though civilised in her tastes, she was a strong-minded and moral woman.

"Yes, Mary," repeated Flora firmly, "I am only nineteen, but I have already observed that whereas there still lingers some absurd prejudice against living on one's friends, no limits are set, either by society or by one's own conscience, to the amount one may impose upon one's relatives.

"Now I am peculiarly (I think if you could see some of them you would agree that that is the word) rich in relatives, on both sides of the family. There is a bachelor cousin of Father's in Scotland. There is a sister of Mother's at Worthing (as though that were not enough, she breeds dogs). A female cousin of Mother's lives in Kensington. And there are also some distant cousins, connections of Mother's, I believe, who live in Sussex..."

"Sussex . . ." mused Mrs Smiling. "I don't much like the sound of that. Do they live on a decaying farm?"

"I am afraid they do," confessed Flora, reluctantly. "However, I need not try them unless everything else fails. I propose to send a letter to the relatives I have mentioned, explaining the situation and asking them if they are willing to give me a home in exchange for my beautiful eyes and a hundred pounds a year."

Audition Text Section 3

“Flora, how insane!” cried Mrs Smiling; “you must be mad. Why, you would die after the first week. You know that neither of us have ever been able to abide relatives. You must stay here with me, and learn typing and shorthand, and then you can be somebody’s secretary and have a nice little flat of your own, and we can have lovely parties...”

“Mary, you know I hate parties. My idea of hell is a very large party in a cold room, where everybody has to play hockey properly. But you put me off what I was going to say. When I have found a relative who is willing to have me, I shall take him or her in hand, and alter his or her character and mode of living to suit my own taste. Then, when it pleases me, I shall marry.”

“Who, pray?” demanded Mrs Smiling, rudely; she was much perturbed.

“Somebody whom I shall choose. I have definite ideas about marriage, as you know. I have always liked the sound of the phrase ‘a marriage has been arranged’. And so it should be arranged! Is it not the most important step a mortal creature can take? I prefer the idea of arrangement to that other statement that marriages are made in Heaven.”

Mrs Smiling shuddered at the compelling, the almost Gallic, cynicism of Flora’s speech. For Mrs Smiling believed that marriages should arise naturally from the union of two loving natures, and that they should take place in churches, with all the usual paraphernalia and hubaboo; and so had her own marriage arisen and been celebrated.