



THE SEMI-CIRCLE PRESENTS

TOP GIRLS

BY CARYL CHURCHILL

Directed by Richard Brown

Women changing society
changing them

8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23

June 2018

Theater Rampe

Byfangweg 6

Basel



Performances at 19:30h, in English
Box office and Bar open at 18:45h
Tickets CHF30 (CHF25 for groups of 10 or more)



Tickets at www.starticket.ch

Additional charges apply

Ticket Vendors: Bider & Tanner, Stadtcasino,
Swiss Post, Manor, Coop City,
and evening box office at the theatre

www.semi-circle.ch

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This amateur production of "Top Girls" is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD

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WELCOME FROM THE COMMITTEE

We are delighted to present to you *Top Girls*, a culturally and socially significant play. At home, in the workplace and throughout the wider world we find historic and contemporary women learning how to survive in the societies in which they find themselves. Although the play is set in the 1980s, we believe that it will speak to you - both women and men - as much today as it did then. In this spirit of renewal, the new committee would like to welcome one and all of you to join us - the young and not-so-young; the old-hands and newcomers; potential performers and talents behind-the-scenes. And we extend a big thank you to all involved in this production. All future events can be followed on our website, and we highly encourage you to participate. But now - it's time to enjoy the show!

www.semi-circle.ch



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*Early bird rates for tickets bought by 2 June

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Top Girls – Director’s note

Top Girls is set in mid-1980s Britain, a time of rapid change. Heavy industries are in decline and being replaced by nimble service, finance and retail businesses. Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is leading this change, promoting a world of individual opportunity, supposedly free from control by the government and vested interests. Some people are able to benefit greatly from this but others fail to grasp what they need and fall behind. The Cold War is reaching its climax and American tactical nuclear cruise missiles are stationed in Britain, reminding everyone that they are on the nuclear front line. Second wave feminists are finally breaking through the social and sexual stereotypes of the past. The style magazines are full of stories of powerful individualists who are out-doing men at their own game, but are they satisfied?

Our play starts with an enigmatic party at an exclusive London restaurant to celebrate Marlene’s promotion to managing director of the *Top Girls* employment agency. Marlene’s great friends, women from the past and mythology, toast her achievements and tell tales of their own struggles while they carouse like ‘80s yuppies. On the same evening, in the rainy country garden of Marlene’s sister Joyce, teenagers Angie and Kit are hiding and planning their next moves. In Act 2, we are in the *Top Girls* office where the staff discuss their weekends and interview candidates with differing outlooks and abilities. Unexpected visitors turn up, Angie and then Mrs. Kidd whose husband Howard has been passed over for the managing director role. Finally, the clock goes back a year to when Marlene visited Joyce in her home and we find out what was said before this story began.

The play is in the style of epic theatre of which the works of Bertold Brecht are the best-known example. Epic theatre looks at the impact of changes in the larger political and social landscape on the lives of individuals, often using actors playing multiple characters in a simplistic setting, sometimes speaking directly to the audience. *Top Girls* was named as one of the 101 greatest plays ever written in a western language by the theatre critic Michael Billington; the only play on the list to be written by a living woman. Today, the revelation of continued inequality and harassment in public and private institutions shows that this play remains relevant 35 years after it was first performed.

Richard Brown





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Richard Brown - Director

My passion for directing is the chance to create a piece of living art, telling a story and conveying ideas and emotions with light, sound and movement. I have directed Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*, Pinter's *Night*, *Jerry Springer is God*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Young King Arthur, the Panto*. I have produced *Side by Side* by *Sondheim*, *Blithe Spirit* and the Semi-Circle's *RENT*. With Yardbird Theatre I have provided lights and sounds for *The Tragedian* and *Colour* and also for the first two productions of *The Vagina Monologues*. As a performer I appeared as Lucky Eric in *Bouncers* and Prof. van Helsing in *Dracula*. In panto in recent years I have been Long John Silver, Mother Goose and also King Rat.



TOP GIRLS – The Cast

Cathy Barker	Marlene
Eleanor Low	Lady Nijo, Win
Liz Shaw	Isabella Bird, Joyce
Anouk Dutruit	Dull Gret, Angie
Miriam Cohn	Pope Joan, Louise
Stephanie Chuah	Patient Griselda, Nell, Jeanine
Sabrina van Steenderen ...	Waitress, Kit, Shona
Alison Bolton	Mrs. Kidd





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Circle every success!**

Bruno Moser and Ka Seng Ha

About Caryl Churchill

Caryl Churchill is a playwright known for addressing politically challenging subjects and for her use of non-naturalistic dramatic techniques. She has written 49 plays and received 12 major awards. Born in London in 1938 to a fashion model and a political cartoonist, Churchill emigrated with her family to Montreal in 1948 and later returned to England to attend Oxford University; since then she has lived in London. While raising her own family, she began to write short radio dramas such as *Not, not, not, not enough oxygen* (1971), and television plays such as *After dinner joke* (1978).

Her first stage play to receive wide recognition was *Cloud Nine* (1979), a farce about Victorian colonial sexual politics. She went on to write *Top Girls* (1982) and *Softcops* (1984). *Serious Money* (1987) is a comedy about the financial world, mostly written in rhyming couplets and with a strong choreography. *Ice cream* (1989) explores Anglo-American stereotypes and in *The Skriker* (1994), the fate of a poor urban girl becomes intertwined with that of an ancient and shape-shifting underworld character.

Churchill collaborated with composer Orlando Gough to produce operas called *Hotel* (1997) and *A ring, a lamp a thing* (2010) at the Royal Opera House, London. Her 2002 play, *A Number*, looks at the subject of human cloning and questions of identity. She continues to write politically controversial pieces such as *Drunk Enough To Say I Love You* (2006) and *Seven Jewish Children* (2009). *Love and information* (2012) gained great critical and popular acclaim. This play is a series of more than 50 fragmented scenes, all of which are apparently unrelated but together create a startling mosaic of the need for human intimacy, love and connection.

Caryl Churchill's early work developed the theatrical techniques of epic theatre to explore issues of gender and sexuality. From *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986) onwards, she began to experiment with forms of dance-theatre and elements of the 'theatre of cruelty'. This is a style that aims to create unexpressed emotions in the audience. Recurring themes in her work are the isolation and neglect of children, sexual politics and the abuse of power. Never far from controversy, Caryl Churchill is arguably Britain's greatest living playwright.



The Semi-Circle has been bringing English-language theatre
to Basel since 1975, and first performed at the Borromäum in 1978.

Programme

Act I Sunday evening

Scene 1 Marlene's party

Scene 2 Joyce's garden

Interval - Refreshments at the Bar

Act II Monday morning

Scene 1 At the office

Scene 2 Interviewees

Scene 3 Visitors

Scene 4 Shona

Scene 5 The future

Act III A year earlier

Scene 1 Joyce's house

This amateur production of TOP GIRLS is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.

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Cathy Barker



Cathy grew up in northwest England and was a teenager in the early 1980s, the era in which *Top Girls* was written and set. She well remembers those times, first as a schoolgirl in Liverpool during the Toxteth Riots and then as a student debating issues affecting women in society (when not marching against Trident and for the miners). Marlene, the character she plays, would most definitely not approve! Cathy is very excited about being a part of this challenging and thought-provoking play, which raises questions that - more than thirty years later - are still very much with us. She has previously played Chris in *Calendar Girls* (2014), Ethel in *Alas, Poor Fred* (2016) and Ruth Condomine in *Blithe Spirit* (2017). A teacher and editor by profession, she also sings with Basel Chamber Voices and loves to exercise the little grey cells with cryptic crossword puzzles.

Eleanor Low



Eleanor is an actress and singer and has been performing on and off for the last eighteen years. Credits include *Avenue Q* with MachArt Musicals, *Rent* with Happyville Productions, *Return to the Forbidden Planet* with Upstart Entertainment and *Roleplay* by Alan Ayckbourn with Semi-Circle. She is a full-time juggler - a busy working mum with two girls aged one and three. Eleanor enjoys any opportunity to do corporate acting and voiceover work. She has worked for Novartis, Roche and Art Basel. Eleanor is very happy to be getting back on the stage with a great cast and crew.



Liz Shaw

Liz has performed in a number of productions since joining the Semi-Circle in 2010: *Quartet* (2010), *Night* (2011), *A Murder is Announced* (2013), *The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish* (2013). She was thrilled when *Syrinx* (2015), another play she performed in, was chosen to represent the group at FEATS in Brussels in 2016. In addition to various roles for the Semi-Circle, her last performance was in *The Vagina Monologues* in February for Vday Basel where she performed two monologues which took her (and the audience!) through a wide range of emotions. Now in another production portraying strong women, Liz hopes to rise to the challenge of playing a Victorian traveller and, again, a "northern woman"!



Anouk Dutruit

Anouk has touched audiences in both Europe and the US. She has performed off-Broadway and in TV shows such as *Blue Bloods*. She has also voiced characters in video games, such as *Grand Theft Auto V*, and has worked in numerous feature films, short films and commercials. An adventurous learner at heart, Anouk enjoys snowboarding, kite surfing and travelling in her spare time. She graduated from La Sorbonne, from King's College and from Cornell law schools. She now practices law as a New York licensed attorney when she is not acting. This is Anouk's first performance with the Semi-Circle. She is very much looking forward to it. For more info please visit www.anoukdutruit.com.



Miriam Cohn



Miriam is a Swiss cultural anthropologist, a museum pedagogue and a theatre pedagogue. Her love of theatre started with portraying Mary in a nativity play in kindergarten and has never stopped. She has acted in different amateur and semi-professional groups in both Swiss German and German, most recently at the Theater Arlecchino. After mastering “Bühnendeutsch” (stage German) - a most demanding endeavour for a Swiss - she decided to face the next language challenge at the Basel English Pantomime Group. She is very excited to make her first steps as part of the *Top Girls* cast and happy to contribute to this challenging and thought-provoking production. And to be actually acting not in one but in two foreign languages. (Hexameters beware!)

Stephanie Chuah



Stephanie is excited to be taking on her first three roles on stage here in Basel. Many years before this show, she had her start in theatre as a stage manager with the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Center. She then decided to take it up a notch by teaching drama to children and since then has directed several full-length children’s musicals in Kuala Lumpur and Beijing i.e. *Sound of Music*, *Annie* and *Yes, Virginia, There’s a Santa Clause!* When not playing a multitude of “top girls” in front of an audience, Stephanie invests most of her time entertaining one on one - and that is her year-and-a-half old toddler.



Sabina van Steenderen

Hi there, I am **Sabina**! I have been living in Basel for about one and a half years now. Before that, I studied in Amsterdam, and I grew up in Leerdam, Netherlands. Besides working, I enjoy sports, reading, acting and basically just enjoying life! Performing on stage energizes and inspires me - playing different characters is fun, exciting, and sometimes awkward and confronting at the same time. After a year of living in a new country, I decided to join a theatre group again to follow my passion, and I am very happy I decided to do so! To me, rehearsing and being on stage is, like meditation, a way to clear my mind and let go of all unnecessary thoughts: "Keep calm and play on!"



Alison Bolton

Arriving in Basel in 2010, **Alison** grew up in England, Zambia and New Zealand where she thoroughly enjoyed being involved in several dramatic productions - including being an extra in a couple of films shot in NZ (sadly not *LOTR!). She recently decided to reignite this long-dormant passion and joined the Semi-Circle family as stage manager for *Blithe Spirit*, then played the part of Joy, the sparky antipodean waitress in *Waiting*, one of the four short plays in last year's Semi-Circle autumn production. She is thrilled to play the small but perfectly formed role of Mrs. Kidd.



*Lord of the Rings

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Production Crew

Director	Richard Brown
Technical director	Heather Genini
Production manager	Peter Hilton
Stage manager	Kirsten Gräser
Stage hands	Tanja Spichty, Isabell Buttron, Ana Branco, Susanne Hillier, Gurpreet Singh Gill
Set design and build	Ash Chumber, Peter Nixon, Richard Brown
Lighting design	Jerome Salyers
Sound design	Richard Brown
Light and sound board	Gabi Solomon
Props manager	Scott Holland
Costumes	Claudia Ott, Natalya Goldbach
Make-up	Valentina D'Alessandro and others
Rehearsal prompt	Susan Aeschbach
Tickets	Georgina Rotter
Publicity	Beatrix Castellote-Iselin, Georgina Rotter
Artwork design	Ruth Lowe
Programme compilation	Georgina Rotter, Cathy Barker
Photography	© Ralf Pfaff 2018
Front of house and bar	Peter Hilton, Chris Jones, Jan Hawley, Billy Gilbert
Box office	Sue Aeschbach, Wendy Monard, Danielle Zammit, Catherine Matter
Ushers	Edward Atkinson, Valerie Walder, Zuzana Cox

Special thanks...

.... goes to all family members of the committee, and of the cast and crew – without their support and patience this production would not have come to the stage. Thanks also to David Laurie for publicity advice.



A very special and warm thanks goes to our former President, Sue Newstead, who incorporated the soul of Semi-Circle and carried a multitude of responsibilities in the finest manner in recent years, and whom we would like to wish the very best for her future.

The
Semi-Circle
recent
productions



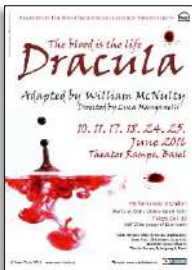
2017



2017



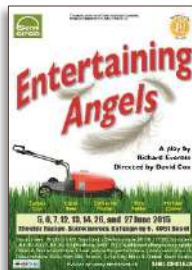
2016



2016



2015



2015



2014



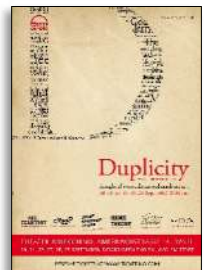
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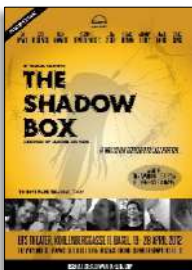
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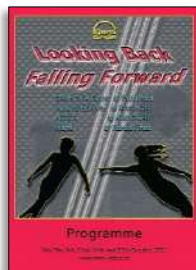
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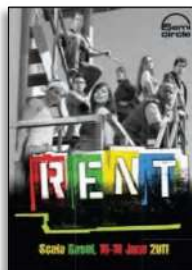
2012



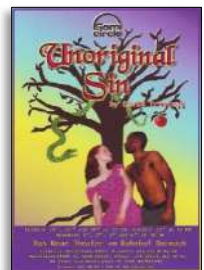
2012



2011



2011



2010

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