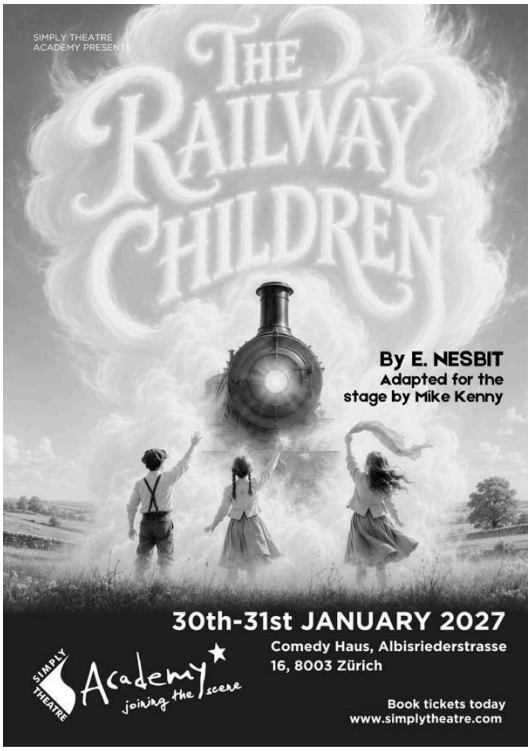

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN AUDITION PACK

Our Zurich Academy production of The Railway Children will take place at: **Comedy Haus, Zurich**

On Saturday 30 January 2027 – 2:30pm and 6:30pm
And Sunday 31 January 2027 – 11:30am & 3:30pm
This much-loved story follows Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis, whose lives are turned upside down when their father mysteriously disappears and they move from London to the Yorkshire countryside.
There, the railway becomes the centre of their new world – bringing friendship, adventure, danger and the hope that their family might one day be reunited.

Want to audition?

If you are aged between 8 and 18 you can book your audition time by signing up at **www.simplytheatre.com/audition**

Audition details

Auditions will take place on **24th and 25th October 2026** at **Simply Theatre Studios, Zurich.** If you are selected for a CALLBACK, you will need to be available on the morning of Sunday 25th November. If you want to audition but cannot make any of these dates, please let us know and we may be able to help.

Audition times are:

Saturday 24th October
Session 1: 13.30 – 14.30
Session 2: 14.40 – 15.40
Session 3: 15.50 – 16.50

Sunday 25th October
Recall auditions: 10.00 – 12.00 (by invite only)

Other ways to get involved!

If you are unable to audition for The Railway Children, or fancy doing something a bit different, there are still ways you can be involved in the production!

If you are over 10 you can volunteer to help Front of House (tickets & programme selling)

If you are over 14 you may be able to help backstage – with sound and lights, stage management, costume or hair & makeup.

Please email **productions@simplytheatre.com** to register your interest!

What will I be doing in the audition?

For the first round of auditions, you will be asked to prepare one of the audition extracts included in this pack**.**
Please learn your chosen piece as thoroughly as possible. The better you know the words, the more freedom you will have to concentrate on the character and what they are trying to communicate.
You may choose any of the extracts in the pack, regardless of the role you would ultimately like to be considered for. However, if there is a particular character you are interested in playing, you may wish to prepare their piece.
During the audition, the director may ask you to perform your piece again in a different way or give you some direction to explore. You may also be asked to work with other auditionees or take part in some short group exercises.
We are not looking for a finished performance. We want to see your potential, imagination, ability to respond to direction and how you work with others.

Rehearsal Commitment

Being part of a Simply Theatre Academy production is an exciting experience – but it is also a significant commitment.

Cast members are expected to attend all rehearsals for which they are called.

We understand that occasional existing commitments may be unavoidable. Any absences must therefore be declared on your conflict schedule before casting and agreed by the production team when a role is offered.

Please review the rehearsal and conflict schedule carefully with your parent or guardian before auditioning.

Once you have accepted a role, we expect you to honour the availability agreed as part of your casting.

Production Fee

If offered and accepting a role in the production, performers will be required to pay a production fee.

The production fee for Academy students enrolled on weekly Academy courses is a one-off fee of CHF495.

Students who are not members of the Academy will pay a fee of CHF900.

ABOUT THE SHOW

The Railway Children is a much-loved family classic, full of adventure, humour and heart and adapted from the novel by E. Nesbit.
Set in Edwardian England, the story moves between the warmth of family life and the excitement of the railway, as three children adapt to a dramatically changed world and discover the importance of friendship, courage and hope.
This is a true ensemble production, with a rich collection of characters and plenty of opportunities for performers to create the bustling world around Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis.

Synopsis

Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis live a comfortable life in London with their Mother and Father. But when Father is suddenly taken away under mysterious circumstances, everything changes. With little money and no explanation for his disappearance, Mother moves the family to a small cottage called Three Chimneys in the Yorkshire countryside.

The children soon become fascinated by the nearby railway and befriend Perks, the local station porter. They wave each day to an Old Gentleman who passes on the train, never imagining the important part he will eventually play in their lives.

Their new life brings a series of adventures. They help a Russian exile searching for his family, organise a birthday surprise for Perks and, when a landslide blocks the railway line, act bravely to stop an approaching train and prevent disaster.

But Bobbie remains determined to discover the truth about Father. When she finds an old newspaper revealing that he has been imprisoned for allegedly selling state secrets, Mother finally tells her that Father has been wrongly accused. Bobbie secretly turns to the Old Gentleman for help.

What follows is a story about growing up, helping others and a family holding onto hope when their world has been turned upside down.

Themes and Style

At its heart, *The Railway Children* is a story about family, courage, friendship and hope. Bobbie, Peter and Phyllis are forced to adapt when their comfortable lives are suddenly changed, but their curiosity and resilience lead them into a series of extraordinary adventures.

The play balances warmth and humour with moments of real drama and emotion. Although set in Edwardian England, the characters should feel truthful and immediate rather than overly formal or old-fashioned.

The railway itself is central to the world of the play. Through ensemble storytelling, movement and theatrical imagination, the company will help create its people, places and sense of adventure.
We will be looking for performers who can create believable characters, work generously as an ensemble and bring energy, imagination and emotional truth to the story.

The Railway Children Characters

<u>Please note:</u> Playing ages are provided as a guide to the age and relationships of the characters, rather than the actual age of the performer. Students may be considered for any role the production team feels they can portray convincingly.

BOBBIE (Playing age: 11–14)

The eldest of the three railway children. Bobbie is thoughtful, perceptive and increasingly aware of the difficulties facing her family. She has a strong sense of responsibility and often takes the lead when the children find themselves in trouble.

Warm, compassionate and quietly determined, Bobbie has perhaps the greatest emotional journey in the play. Her relationship with Mother is particularly important, as she gradually begins to understand more about the truth behind Father's disappearance.

A substantial leading role requiring a strong, emotionally truthful actor with warmth, maturity and confidence.

PETER (Playing age: 9–12)

The middle child and only boy of the three siblings. Peter is energetic, adventurous and endlessly fascinated by the railway. He enjoys taking charge and likes to think of himself as the practical one, although his confidence can sometimes get him into trouble.

Quick-witted and spirited, Peter brings plenty of humour and energy to the story, but also shows real courage when it matters.

A substantial role requiring excellent comic timing, energy and a confident stage presence.

PHYLLIS (Playing age: 7–10)

The youngest of the railway children. Phyllis is lively, funny, impulsive and wonderfully honest. She doesn't always understand everything happening around her, but that rarely stops her from having an opinion about it.

Her innocence and tendency to say exactly what she thinks provide much of the play's humour, but she is also affectionate, brave and fiercely loyal to her family.

A substantial role requiring a confident young performer with strong comic instincts and lots of personality.

MOTHER (Playing age: Adult)

An intelligent, loving and resourceful mother whose life is transformed when her husband is suddenly taken away.

Determined to protect her children from the truth of their situation, she holds the family together while quietly dealing with her own fear and uncertainty.

Mother is warm and reassuring, but also strong, independent and resilient. Much of the character's emotion lies beneath the surface.

A significant role requiring maturity, warmth and emotional depth.

FATHER (Playing age: Adult)

A loving and devoted father whose unexplained disappearance changes the family's life overnight. Although Father has less stage time than some of the other principal characters, his absence hangs over the entire story and his relationship with the children – particularly Bobbie – is central to its emotional heart.

A featured role requiring warmth, sincerity and a strong emotional connection with the family.

PERKS (Playing age: Adult)

The porter at the local railway station and one of the children's closest friends. Perks is hardworking, straightforward and immensely likeable, with a dry sense of humour and a strong sense of pride.

Initially slightly suspicious of the children's enthusiasm for the railway, he soon becomes extremely fond of them. His pride can make him uncomfortable accepting help, but beneath his gruffness is a generous and affectionate man.

A fantastic character role requiring warmth, humour and strong comic timing.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN **(Playing age: Older Adult)**

A kind and distinguished gentleman whom the children regularly see travelling on the train. What begins as a simple exchange of waves develops into an important friendship, and he becomes instrumental in helping the family when they need it most.

Calm, compassionate and authoritative, the Old Gentleman should have an immediate sense of warmth and trustworthiness.

A featured role requiring maturity, presence and quiet authority.

MR SCHEPANSKY **(Playing age: 30+)**

A Russian writer who has been forced to leave his homeland and becomes stranded in England while searching for his wife and children. The railway children befriend him and bring him home to Mother, who is able to communicate with him.

Schepansky brings another dimension to the children's growing understanding of the wider world and the difficulties faced by others.

A featured character role requiring strong physical and expressive acting.

FEATURED & ENSEMBLE ROLES

The production also includes a range of featured characters who help create the busy world of the railway and the surrounding community.

MRS PERKS – Perks' wife and mother to their children. Warm, practical and part of the heart of the local community.

JIM – A young railway worker involved in one of the children's adventures.

THE STATION SUPERINTENDENT – An authority figure at the railway station.

POLICEMAN – A featured character appearing within the children's adventures.

MAID / COOK / BUTLER / MRS VINEY – Characters from the children's life and the different households within the story.

Plus an ensemble of **railway workers, villagers, passengers and other characters who bring the world of the story to life.**

AUDITION EXTRACTS

BOBBIE

Bobbie remembers the comfortable life her family enjoyed before everything changed. Later, when Mother becomes ill, she tries to explain to the Doctor why she is worried about the cost of his help.

Looking back we were very lucky, though we didn't know it then. We had everything we needed. Everything. Pretty clothes, good fires, a lovely nursery, a whole room just for us, with heaps of toys, and mother goose wallpaper. A dog called James…

(To the doctor) It's rather hard you see, to out with it – because of what mother said. She said I wasn't to go telling everyone that we're poor. But you aren't everyone, are you? I know doctors are expensive, and Mrs Viney told me that her doctoring only cost her tuppence a week because she belonged to a club. So can we be in the club too, the same as Mrs Viney?

PHYLLIS

Phyllis reflects on what it is like being the youngest of the three children. Later, she addresses the audience after one of the children's railway adventures.

I'm not so sure I do mean well. I don't know what I mean half the time. It's a bit of pressure being the youngest because everyone knows what you are if you're the eldest. And if you're the boy. The youngest is a bit confusing to be. You have to sort of fit yourself in between the others. That must be what a between-maid is. Me.

Look, you really do have to go now. If I were you I'd go off and have an icecream or something, while we get all this sorted out. I expect some of you are rather disappointed you didn't see a rail disaster. I would point out that this is supposed to be family entertainment.

PETER

Peter imagines how he would defend their new home from unwanted visitors. Later, he recalls the moment the children first decide to explore the railway.

I wish we really did have a moat and a drawbridge, then we could just pull it up when we didn't want people and no one could get in. And a tower, so I could pour boiling oil down on people we didn't like.

It wasn't until later that afternoon when mother told us 'that'll do for today'. She went to have a lie down and we all looked at each other and we all thought the same thought, at the same time. The question was 'where shall we go?' and the answer: To the Railway!

MOTHER

Mother reflects on the close relationship she has always had with her children. Later, she must find the courage to tell them that Father is going to be away for some time.

I was never the kind of mother who spent all their time making dull calls on frankly dull ladies making conversation about dull things. I'd rather spend my time with the children,

who generally had more interesting things to say. I would make up stories for them, which turned out to be a good thing when you think about it…

(To the children) Now my darlings, I want to tell you something. Those men did bring some very bad news, and Father will be away for some time. I'm very worried about it and I want you all to help me, and not to make things harder for me.

PERKS
Perks has been lying in wait to catch someone stealing coal from the railway yard. When he finally catches the culprit, he is surprised to discover that it is Peter.

But then came the dreadful night, when Perks the porter put on an old pair of sand shoes that I had worn at the seaside on my summer holiday. I crept out very quietly to the yard where the coal heap with the whitewashed line stood. I crept out there and waited like a cat at a mouse hole…

Peter creeps along and takes some pieces of coal. Perks jumps out and catches him.

So I've caught you at last, have I, young thief? Stow your jaw, you young rip, and come along to the station. Let's take a look at you. Why, you're the children from Three Chimneys. What made you do such a thing? Don't you know it's wicked to steal?

MR SCHEPANSKY
Mr Schepansky is a Russian exile who finds himself lost and alone at the railway station. Unable to speak English, he desperately tries to find someone who can understand him.

Moxhet li kto-nibud' mne pomoch?
[Help me, someone. /MOH-zhet lee ktoh-nyee-BOODT mnyeh paMOATCH? – 'zh' as in French 'jour]

Oh, Dieu Merci! Quelqu 'un qui parle français. Je suis perdu. J'aurais dû changer à cette gare, mais je ne suis pas certain. Je suis à la recherché de ma famille. Dernièrement, il me semble qu'elle se trouve à Londres. J;ai perdu mon billet, malheureusement.
[Oh, thank god, someone who speaks French. I'm lost. I was supposed to change at this station but I'm not sure it's right. I'm trying to find my family. The last place they were heard of was in London. I've lost my ticket though.]

OLD GENTLEMAN
The Old Gentleman presents the children with an award for their bravery. Later, he learns about Mr Schepansky and is deeply impressed by the kindness Mother has shown him.

I would like to present our heros a small token of our appreciation. Watches. From the Directors of the Northern and Southern Railway in grateful recognition of the courageous and prompt action which averted a serious accident.

Now, what did you say his name was? Szezcpansky?! Bless my soul, I've read his book. A wonderful book – a notable book. And your mother took him in – like the Good Samaritan. Your mother is a very good woman.

MRS PERKS
Mrs Perks discovers that the children and local community have organised a collection of gifts for her husband's birthday. Overwhelmed by their generosity, she struggles to contain her emotions.

I'm a bit late changing, miss, owing to me having had an extra clean-up today, along 'o Perks happening to name it's being his birthday. I don't know what put it in his head to think of such a thing. We keep the children's birthdays, of course, but him and me – we're too old for suchlike, as a general rule.

Mrs Perks starts to cry as she is so overwhelmed by the generous gifts given to Mr Perks

(through tears) There there, don't mind me. I'm alright. It's just that it's a birthday such as Perks has never had, not even when he was a boy. Like it. Oh, you are the dearest, sweetest, most precious darling children in the whole world.

SIMPLY THEATRE AUDITIONS – HELP FOR AUDITIONEES AND PARENTS

We want our auditions to be a positive, rewarding and fair experience. An audition is not about arriving with a finished performance. It is an opportunity for us to see your potential, learn more about you as a performer and explore how you might fit within the production.

Our auditions are open to everyone within the advertised age range. You do not need to have performed in a Simply Theatre production before, and you do not need to wait for someone to suggest that you audition. If you have the enthusiasm, commitment and determination to take part in the rehearsal process, we encourage you to give it a go. Casting a show involves many different considerations. These may include acting, singing and dance ability, playing age, vocal range, chemistry between performers, suitability for particular characters and the overall balance of the company.

Not being offered the role you hoped for does **not** mean that you gave a bad audition or that you are not a talented performer. There are always more talented performers than there are roles available, and every production requires a different combination of people. We therefore encourage everyone to audition with an open mind about casting. You may arrive with a particular role in mind, but the production team may see something in you that makes you right for a completely different part.

How Should I Prepare?

If you have been asked to learn an extract, learn it as thoroughly as possible. The better you know the words, the more freedom you will have to concentrate on acting rather than trying to remember what comes next.

Think about who your character is, what has just happened, who they are speaking to and what they want from them. The short introductions provided with each audition extract will

help you understand where the piece takes place, but you may also find it useful to do a little research into the character and the story.
Acting isn't simply about saying words convincingly – it is about communicating with another person.
If you have been asked to prepare a song, make sure to prepare carefully and ensure it is comfortable for your voice.
Most importantly, arrive ready to listen, respond and try things.
A director may ask you to perform something differently. This is not a correction or a sign that your first attempt was wrong. We often do this simply to see how you respond to direction and what other possibilities you can find.
And don't worry if something goes wrong. Forgetting a line, missing a step or making a mistake will not automatically cost you a role. We are interested in how you recover and continue just as much as whether everything goes perfectly.

Tips for the Big Day

- Arrive in plenty of time.
- Wear comfortable clothing and footwear that allows you to move freely.
- Students with long hair should bring something to tie it back
- Bring water.
- Warm up your voice and body beforehand.
- Know your audition material as thoroughly as you can.
- Listen carefully to instructions.
- Be supportive of the other auditionees.
- Don't worry if something goes wrong – keep going!
- Be willing to try something differently.
- Keep an open mind about the roles you may be considered for.
- Most importantly – enjoy it!

The audition team is not looking for perfection. We are looking for potential, personality, commitment and performers who are excited to work with us.
Good luck!

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

AUDITION FORM (2 pages)

To be completed and returned at your audition

IMPORTANT
Please attach a recent, clear photo of yourself

Student's Name _____

Age at time of audition _____

Course attended _____

Student's Email _____

Parent/Guardian's Details

Full Name _____

Email (for production notices) _____

Home Phone _____ Mobile _____

Please list your last 3 Academy auditions (if any)

Please tell us about anything you think the production team should be aware of:

Terms and Conditions

- All students must have the permission of a parent/guardian in order to audition and participate.
- If offered and accepting a part, students must agree to pay the show fee of CHF 495/CHF 900 for non-members in full, in advance of the rehearsal start date.
- On accepting a role, each cast member agrees to attend all rehearsals for which they are called. Any known conflicts must be declared on the Conflict Schedule before auditioning and agreed by the production team at the time of casting.

- Simply Theatre Academy reserves the right to withdraw a cast member from the production if their behaviour is detrimental to the rehearsal process, or if they are absent from rehearsals without prior agreement.
- No refunds will be given once rehearsals have commenced.
- Photographs and videos may be taken of students during performances and rehearsals for promotional purposes. Simply Theatre Academy reserves the rights to use these photos in print, media and online.

I agree to the terms and conditions above and give my permission.

Signature of parent/guardian named above: _____ Date: _____

Signature of student named above: _____ Date: _____

TRC AUDITION FORM pg. 2/2 Student's Name _____

CONFLICT SCHEDULE

We need to know about any conflicts so that we can create the final casting and rehearsal schedule. Please understand that the more conflicts you have, the more difficult it may be for us to cast you.

All dates listed below are rehearsal dates and cast members must be available to attend if called. Dates marked ATTENDANCE REQUIRED are for the full cast; on all other dates, cast members will be called as required. **These dates are not optional unless an absence has been declared below and agreed at the time of casting.**

All conflicts must be declared before auditioning. Additional absences will not be allowed.

Month/Date	Day	Times	**YES, I can attend rehearsal**	**NO, I cannot attend rehearsal**	**REASON why I am not available**
October 31st	Saturday	13:00 – 18:00	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
November 01st	Sunday	10:00 – 18:00	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
November 14	Saturday	13:00 – 18:00			
November 15	Sunday	10:00 – 18:00			
November 21	Saturday	13:00 – 18:00			
November 22	Sunday	10:00 – 18:00			
December 5	Saturday	13:00 – 18:00			
December 6	Sunday	10:00 – 18:00			
January 9	Saturday	13:00 – 18:00			
January 10	Sunday	10:00 – 18:00			
January 16	Saturday	13:00 – 18:00			
January 17	Sunday	10:00 – 18:00			
January 23	Saturday	13:00 – 18:00	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 24	Sunday	10:00 – 18:00	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 25	Monday	16:30 – 20:30	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 26	Tuesday	16:30 – 20:30	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 27	Wednesday	16:30 – 20:30	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 28	Thursday	16:30 – 21:00	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 29	Friday	16:30 – 21:30	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 30	Saturday	11:30 onwards	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	
January 31	Sunday	12:30 onwards	Attendance Required	Attendance Required	

PLEASE BRING TO YOUR AUDITION COMPLETED