AUDITION INFORMATION:

THE CHILDREN’S HOUR
By Lillian Hellman
Directed by Brad Dell

Performance Dates: November 3-12, 2017

Rehearsals Begin September 25 and will Monday-Friday from 6:30-10:30 pm

About the Play: Written in 1934 by Lillian Hellman, The Children’s Hour is considered an American classic. The searing drama set in an all-girls boarding school run by two women, Karen Wright and Martha Dobie. When the school bully Mary Tilford is punished by Karen and Martha, she runs away from the school. To avoid being sent back she tells her grandmother that the two headmistresses are having a lesbian affair. The accusation proceeds to destroy the women’s careers, relationships and lives.

Roles Available for 12 Women and 2 Men

Audition Process: Please sign up for auditions and prepare one of the monologues from the packet below. Callbacks will be held on Saturday, August 26 from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

MARTHA DOBIE (25-30 years old)
Karen Wright’s friend and co-owner of their school, Martha is about the same age, twenty-eight. She is described as “nervous” and “high strung” and is certainly far less composed and self-assured than her friend. It quickly becomes obvious that she greatly depends on Karen’s emotional stability and good sense to provide her with the confidence needed to make a go of their school.

KAREN WRIGHT (25-30)
Karen Wright is Martha Dobie’s close friend and partner in the Wright-Dobie School. She is twenty-eight, attractive, warm, and outgoing. She is admired and respected by her students, for whom she has a genuine affection. She is also an emotionally stable woman, at ease with herself and others.

DR. JOSEPH CARDIN (26-33 years old)
Cardin, about thirty-five, is a relaxed and amiable doctor and Karen Wright’s fiance. His casual dress reflects his warm, easy-going nature. He is also gracious and humorous and seems ideally suited to Karen.

LILY MORTAR (45-55 years old)
Hellman describes Lily Mortar as “a plump, florid woman of forty-five.” She is Martha Dobie’s aunt and teaches at the Wright-Dobie School. A self-centered woman, she lives in romanticized delusions of her past triumphs as an actress. She is also vain and very susceptible to flattery, an easy patsy for a conniving student like Mary Tilford. She refuses to grow old gracefully, dying her hair and dressing too fancifully for her reduced circumstances.

MRS. AMELIA TILFORD (60’s)
A wealthy widow, Mrs. Tilford is a grand, wealthy, dignified woman in her sixties. She has been an influential supporter of the Wright-Dobie School, where her granddaughter, Mary, is enrolled. Although she is a fair and generous person, she lacks good judgment when it comes to matters concerning her granddaughter. She recognizes that Mary is both spoiled and manipulative, but she dotes on the child and is utterly blind to the girl’s vicious nature.

AGATHA (55-65 years old)
A no-nonsense, middle-aged maid in the employ of Amelia Tilford. She is stern and straight-laced with Mary, who calls her “stupid,” although Agatha clearly sees through Mary’s deceptions. Agatha’s attempts to make the child
into a “lady” are frustrated by Mrs. Tilford, who is deaf to the maid’s common-sense observations. Agatha also attempts to support Martha and Karen in their efforts to convince Mrs. Tilford that Mary concocted her story to destroy the young teachers.

MARY TILFORD (12-14)
The spoiled granddaughter of Amelia Tilford, Mary is a problem child at the Wright-Dobie School. She appears “undistinguished,” but she is clever and used to having her own way with her doting grandmother. She also attempts to manipulate everyone at the school, resorting to a variety of tricks, including flattery, feigned sickness, blackmail, physical intimidation, and whining complaints.

ROSALIE WELLS (12-14)
Rosalie, a student at the Wright-Dobie School, appears first in the hectic scene opening the play, having her hair badly trimmed by Evelyn Munn. Unlike Peggy and Evelyn, she is not cowed by Mary Tilford, whom she does not like.

EVELYN MUNN (12-14)
One of the girls at the Wright-Dobie School, Evelyn is first encountered in the opening scene, in which she mangles Rosalie Wells’ hair with a pair of scissors. Evelyn, who lisps, is relatively quiet and timid. With Peggy Rogers, she overhears the conversation between Martha Dobie and Lily Mortar; the overheard conversation becomes the keystone in the malicious arch of lies that Mary Tilford constructs. Like Peggy, Evelyn is a victim of Mary’s intimidation, which, at the end of the first act, turns to physical abuse. When Mary attempts to extort money from Peggy, Evelyn tries to interfere and is slapped in the face for her efforts.

PEGGY ROGERS (12-14)
A student at the Wright-Dobie School, Peggy, like Evelyn Munn, is easily intimidated by Mary Tilford. She appears in the opening scene, where, under Lily Mortar’s tutelage, she tries to read Portia’s famous speech on the quality of mercy. Unimaginative, she shows little interest in Shakespeare. Her grandest aspiration is to marry a lighthouse keeper. Peggy is with Evelyn when they overhear the fateful conversation between Martha Dobie and her aunt. Thereafter the pair confide in Mary, who immediately puts her malicious scheme into operation by extorting money from Peggy, who was saving it for a bicycle.

HELEN BURTON (12-14)
One of the girls at Karen and Martha’s school. It is her bracelet that classmate Rosalie Wells “borrows.” an act which allows Mary to blackmail Rosalie into confirming Mary’s lies about Karen and Martha. Helen is one of the first to be pulled out of the school when Mrs. Tilford begins spreading the fiction that Karen and Martha are lesbian lovers.

CATHERINE (12-14)
Catherine is one of the students at the Wright-Dobie School. She appears only in the first scene, where she attempts to help Lois prepare for a Latin test. The Latin lesson contributes to the chaotic lack of discipline in Mortar’s classroom, revealing Lily’s incompetence as a teacher.

LOIS FISHER (12-14)
Another of Karen and Martha’s students, she receives Latin tutoring from Catherine at the play’s opening, conjugating Latin in hectic counterpoint to Peggy Roger’s reading of Portia’s “quality of mercy” speech from Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice and Lily Mortar’s languid criticism.

GROCERY BOY
The unnamed grocery boy makes a very brief appearance in the last scene, carrying a box of groceries into the school’s living room. He is almost mute, but his puerile gawking and giggling are indicative of the damage done to the reputations of Karen and Martha as a result of Mary’s accusations.