

# Murder on the Orient Express

## Audition Information

*Agatha Christie's*  
**MURDER ON THE  
ORIENT EXPRESS**

Written by: Agatha Christie  
Adapted by: Ken Ludwig  
Directed by Todd Thomas

**Auditions:**  
**August 9 & 10 at 7:00pm**  
**Callbacks if needed:**  
**August 12 at 6:30pm**

**Pit & Balcony Theatre, 805 N. Hamilton Street  
Saginaw, MI 48602**

**Murder on the Orient Express**  
**Performances: October 1-3 & 8-10, 2021**  
**Fridays and Saturdays 7:30pm, Sundays 3:00pm**

Thank you for your interest in auditioning for the Pit & Balcony production of *Murder on the Orient Express*. This combination of a story written by the world's best-selling author Agatha Christie and adapted by one of the world's most successful authors of farce creates a challenging and energetic show that will engage audience and actors alike.

The time is 1934 and the Orient Express is zooming along when it is suddenly brought to a halt by a snow drift. And while the luxurious train is surprisingly full for this time of year, there is one less passenger by morning...an American business man lies dead in his personal compartment. His cabin is locked from the inside yet he was stabbed a dozen times apparently with nobody being the wiser. Luckily, Detective Hercule Poirot is also on the train and must identify the murderer as quickly as possible or run the risk of he or she striking again.

**Auditioning for this show at this time**

One of the key characteristics for being in the cast of *Murder on the Orient Express* is a willingness to be flexible and accept ambiguity. Given the status of COVID-19 in Michigan at the time of writing this audition pack, we look forward to in-person rehearsals and normal performances. We ask that, if you are auditioning and/or cast in the show and have not been vaccinated, please continue to wear a mask. Otherwise, we will proceed as normal.

Please note that this is as of the time of writing. If over the next few weeks conditions change, we will change with them. If the State of Michigan posts new advisories or recommendations, we will follow them as we will continue to err on the side of health and safety of our volunteers and staff. If changes or adjustments are made along the way, you can trust that you will be notified immediately.

## Cast

Note: All ethnicities and physical abilities will be considered for all roles. We are considering actors of all races, ethnicities, genders, and abilities for all roles

- **Hercule Poirot (Male, plays 55-65)** a famous Belgian detective; a "Big" personality; authoritative, witty, charismatic and slightly pompous; driven to find the answers, good or bad, with a strong moral sense; very aware of his ability and his well deserved reputation.
- **Monsieur Bouc (Male, plays 30-60)** a Belgian man of good humor; playful, proud, generous; a predilection for grandeur; a whirlwind of energy; must be an excellent comedian.
- **Mary Debenham (Female, plays 30-40)** an English beauty; a governess, capable yet romantic; a sadness around her eyes and a hardness about her person.
- **Hector MacQueen (Male, plays 30-40)** tightly wound, edgy and nervous; he seems to always be on the verge of falling apart or coming unwound.
- **Michel the conductor / Marcel: (Male, plays 35-60)** one actor will play two roles: Michel: a good-looking Frenchman, about 40, a quiet, almost grave sense of humor; unflinchingly polite; Marcel: a Turkish waiter, snooty, smooth; must have great comic timing.
- **Princess Dragomiroff (Female, plays 60-79)** a Russian dowager; very formal, a sweeping, impressive presence; imperial, impatient.
- **Greta Ohlsson (Female, plays 25-60)** inherently odd, and very devout Swedish woman; a frightened, sheeplike quality; must be an excellent comedienne with an impeccable Swedish accent.
- **Countess Andrenyi (Female, plays 25-40)** brilliantly beautiful, like something out of a fairytale; impeccably put together, with a warmth that wins over everyone she meets; her delicacy belies a steely edge; she is no wilting flower; Hungarian accent.
- **Helen Hubbard (Female, plays 40-65)** an outspoken and flamboyant American from the Midwest; jovial, obnoxious, domineering, deliciously nosy and brash; unapologetic; must be an excellent comedienne.
- **Colonel Arbuthnot / Samuel Ratchett (Male, plays 35-59)** one actor will play two roles. Samuel Ratchett: middle-aged American businessman, evil at heart and frightening, brusque, unforgiving, stern demeanor; pushy, domineering; Colonel Arbuthnot: Scotsman, also middle aged, handsome, very matter of fact, occasionally tender; must have great comic timing.

# Rehearsal Planning

**PLEASE NOTE ANY CONFLICTS YOU MAY HAVE.**  
**CONFLICTS DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY ELIMINATE YOU FROM CONSIDERATION BUT ALLOW US TO PLAN REHEARSALS AS CONVENIENTLY AS POSSIBLE.**  
**PLEASE NOTE: NO CONFLICTS ARE ACCEPTED AFTER SEPTEMBER 20, 2021**

AUGUST						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
8	9 Auditions 7:00pm-9:00pm	10 Auditions 7:00pm-9:00pm	11	12 Call backs 6:30pm Pit & Balcony	13 6:30 pm Read through and Paper work	14
15	16 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	17 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	18 TBD Potential Rehearsal	19 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	20 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	21
22	23 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	24 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	25	26 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	27 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	28 3:00-5:30pm Rehearsal
29	30	31 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal				
SEPTEMBER						
			1	2 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	3 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	4
5	6 Labor Day	7 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	8	9 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	10 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	11 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal
12	13 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	14 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	15	16 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	17 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	18 TBD Potential Rehearsal
19	20 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	21 6:30pm-9:30pm Rehearsal	22 Tech Run 1 6:00p-10p Rehearsal	23 Tech Run 2 6:00p-10p Rehearsal	24 Tech Run 3 6:00p-10p Rehearsal	25 TBD Potential Rehearsal
26 Dress Rehearsal 3:00 Run	27 Dress Rehearsal 7:30 Run	28 Dress Rehearsal 7:30 Run	29 Final Dress 7:30 Run	30 <b>Dark</b>		
OCTOBER						
					1 <b>7:30 Show</b>	2 <b>7:30 Show</b>
3 <b>3:00 Show</b>	4	5	6	7 7:30 Brushup	8 <b>7:30 Show</b>	9 <b>7:30 Show</b>
10 <b>3:00 Show and Strike</b>						

## **AUDITIONS**

Please fill out the online audition form here: [Murder on the Orient Express Audition Form](#). This form is *required* for your audition to be considered.

I will consider your casting based on your audition form and interests. Choosing to read a particular character does not assume that this is the only character for which you are being considered nor in which you are interested.

## Dialogues

### Mary & Arbuthnot

MARY. James! At last! Where have you been?!

ARBUTHNOT. Oh, I'm not that late, am I?

MARY. Of course you are. You're always late. And I was terrified we'd miss the train. It would ruin everything!

ARBUTHNOT. I was just exploring a bit. I've never been to Istanbul before and I quite adore all this Eastern nonsense.

MARY. Well I don't. I just want to leave right now and get it over with. (He puts his hand on her cheek)

ARBUTHNOT. I wish to hell you were out of all this. You deserve better, you know.

MARY. Shh! Not now! No one should see us like this. Not till it's all behind us. Besides, I think we're being observed by that funny little man over there. (She nods towards Poirot, who is hidden behind his newspaper.)

ARBUTHNOT. What, him? He's just some damned foreigner who probably doesn't even speak English.

MARY. Shall we order? I'm starving.

ARBUTHNOT. Not here. I found a cute little place around the corner where I'm sure the food will be ten times better.

MARY. But we can't be late for the train! We can't miss it!

ARBUTHNOT. We won't be late, I promise, now stop fussing and come on, let's hurry.

## **Ratchett & Poirot**

RATCHETT. Mr. Poirot, slow up! Now I'd like to discuss that proposition I mentioned.

POIROT. Non non, I'm afraid it is not a good time.

RATCHETT. Oh, sure it is. Sit down. I'll be quick, I promise.

POIROT. I am afraid—

RATCHETT. Sit down.

POIROT. ... Eh bien. Proceed.

RATCHETT. Now I want you to take on a job for me.

POIROT. I take on few new cases.

RATCHETT. You'll take this one on, I guarantee it.

POIROT. And why is that?

RATCHETT. Because I'm talkin' big money here. Mr. Poirot, I have an enemy.

POIROT. I would guess that you have several enemies.

RATCHETT. Now what is that supposed to mean?

POIROT. You are successful, n'est-ce pas? Successful people have many enemies.

RATCHETT. Right. That's it exactly! You see I've been getting some threatening letters lately and I want an extra pair of eyes to do some snoopin' around. And that's what you do, am I right? Snoopin'? Of course I can take care of myself (he flashes the gun under his coat) but I'll pay you five thousand dollars. How does that sound?

POIROT. Non.

RATCHETT. All right, ten. For a few days' work.

POIROT. I am not for sale, monsieur. I have been very fortunate in my profession and I now take only such cases as interest me—and frankly, you do not interest me.

RATCHETT. You want me to grovel, is that it?

POIROT. I want nothing, monsieur, except to leave. (Poirot exits. Ratchett is darkly unhappy.)

**Poirot, Bouc, Head Waiter**

BOUC. I hope that the food at this humble establishment is up to your usual standards .

POIROT. What? What's this? ... Ah, mon Dieu, it is Monsieur Bouc!

BOUC. My friend! Ha haaa!

POIROT. Mon ami! But what are you doing here?

BOUC. What am I doing here? This is my city! I live here!

POIROT. Of course, I'm a fool!

BOUC. I run Wagon-Lit, the greatest train company in the entire world, and the central office is in this hotel. Garçon! This meal is on me, please charge my office.

POIROT. Ah non.

BOUC. Ah oui. It will give me pleasure, you are my guest here . So tell me, what are you doing here? You are solving a crime, eh?

POIROT. No no, I did that last week in Syria. It was a bad affair. An army officer, a missing check, a beautiful woman, puh. It did not end well. The man was guilty, that was certain. But perhaps, because I pressed the man too hard to admit his guilt ... It was unfortunate in the extreme. And yet I believe I did nothing wrong.

BOUC. Of course you did nothing wrong. If you break the law you must pay the price. That is what you have told me.

POIROT. It is what I live by.

BOUC. Now tell me, you are staying here at the hotel?

POIROT. I was hoping, eh? I was going to play the tourist, but at the desk there was a telegram from Scotland Yard, begging me to return at once, so I have asked the Concierge to get me a ticket for tonight on your famous Orient Express.

BOUC. There will be no problem, and the best news is, I will be joining you, for I go to Lausanne tonight on business.

POIROT. Ha, ha! C'est magnifique. (The Head Waiter approaches Poirot.)

HEAD WAITER. Pardon, monsieur. The Concierge said to tell you there are no more first-class tickets for the Express tonight. It is sold out.

POIROT. Ah non!

BOUC. Attends. It is my train and it is never sold out at this time of year. That is ridiculous.

HEAD WAITER. It must be a party, or a convention, perhaps.

BOUC. Well, you tell the Concierge to find a berth for Monsieur Poirot. He is my personal friend.

HEAD WAITER. But monsieur—

BOUC. The Number 7 is always available. It is held in reserve. Now go tell him!

HEAD WAITER. Right away, monsieur. (He exits.)

POIROT. Merci.

BOUC. It is nothing. A gesture. Now you see this menu? Throw it away. Tonight we shall sit on the train together, just like old times, and we will dine like kings.

POIROT. The food on the train, it is edible?

BOUC. Monsieur Poirot! You stab me in the heart! I am writhing on the ground at your feet! It is not a mere train that will carry you tonight, it is a legend. It runs like no other vehicle on the earth. The fittings are from Paris, the paneling Venice, the plate are from Rome and the taps from New York. The best food, the best beds, the best pillows, the best feathers inside the pillows. It is poetry on wheels, and Lord Byron himself could not write it better. Monsieur, prepare yourself. In one hour, I will meet you on the platform of the Orient Express.

## Poirot & Michel

POIROT. I see that none of your buttons are missing, and moreover, the thread for each button is old, so nothing was sewn on recently.

MICHEL. That is correct, but may I ask—?

POIROT. Mrs. Hubbard found this button in her room this morning.

MICHEL. (examining it) It is not mine, Monsieur.

POIROT. So I see. But it matches yours exactly.

MICHEL. It does.

POIROT. Michel, are there other attendants on this train at the moment?

MICHEL. There is one in second class. A ticket-taker I have known for years.

POIROT. Is he large or small?

MICHEL. Quite large, I'm afraid. Shall I ask him to see you?

POIROT. Non non, that is quite all right. And what other passengers, besides the ones in this coach, are on the train?

MICHEL. There is hardly anyone at the moment. It is the off-season. There is a mother and child on the Belgrade carriage and that is all.

POIROT. And could there be a second conductor on this train wearing a uniform like yours?

MICHEL. Oh no, monsieur, there is no such thing. I had to earn this uniform with many years of service. However ....

POIROT. Oui?

MICHEL. Well, frankly, I am not sure I trust her word, but Miss Ohlsson says that last night she saw what she calls a second conductor on the train.

POIROT. (suddenly alert) Miss Ohlsson?

MICHEL. Oui, she told me this morning. She said he was wearing a uniform like mine and when she spoke to him he did not respond. In fact ...

POIROT. What? Tell me quickly!

MICHEL. The Princess tells me that she also saw this man last night.

POIROT. Oh la la, oh la la, oh la la.

MICHEL. What is it?

POIROT. It is just the kind of clue that I have been waiting for.

## **Poirot, Bouc & Countess**

COUNTESS. Excuse me, but you have asked to see me - Oh dear God.

POIROT. Forgive me, Countess, but I understand you were trained as a physician, so I thought perhaps you could help me with the body.

COUNTESS. I am happy to help. (Without hesitation, she strips off her jacket and rolls up her sleeves.)

POIROT. I'm afraid it is not a very pleasant sight.

COUNTESS. I have seen worse, believe me. I volunteered in the war. (The Countess begins examining the body.)

POIROT. Regardes. The left side of his face is slightly red, do you see?

COUNTESS. I do. It has been slapped.

BOUC. How do you know?

COUNTESS. Because I slapped it. (beat, as she examines the body) I count eight separate wounds.

POIROT. That was my count also. Can you estimate the time of death?

COUNTESS. I would say it is between eight and ten hours ago, which puts the time between midnight and two o'clock.

POIROT. I am in accord.

COUNTESS. It appears that the killer was wild - in a frenzy of some sort.

POIROT. Regardes. See this. Of the eight stab wounds, five appear strong and three are mere scratches. And wait, do you see, the wounds are from different directions. Do you see it? I need a pencil.

BOUC. Here.

POIROT. Bon. Now watch. We place the pencil inside each wound and push it gently

BOUC. Ugh! Is this necessary?

COUNTESS. Perhaps the man changed hands during the stabbing .

BOUC. Or there were two assailants. One right-handed and one left-handed.

COUNTESS. One strong, one weak.

POIROT. It is not impossible. But now another question presents itself: why did Mr. Ratchett not fight back when all the while he had this gun under his pillow? (He pulls the revolver out from under the pillow .)

COUNTESS. Oh la la.

BOUC. Alors. May I see it? (He takes the gun .)

COUNTESS. How did you find it?

POIROT. He showed it to me yesterday so I knew it was here somewhere.

BOUC. It is an automatic and I believe it is loaded. (He waves it around.)

POIROT. Attention!

COUNTESS. Ah!

BOUC. Wait! There is a safety switch, it is not on.

POIROT. S'il vous plait, mon ami! Have you not heard of the fatal accident?!(He takes the gun from Bouc, but stops suddenly and sniffs the air.) Un moment.(He sniffs again and puts his finger up.)I have a very good nose.(He picks up Ratchett's empty wine glass and sniffs.)Aha. Smell the glass of wine.

COUNTESS. It smells of almonds. (She pulls Ratchett's eyelids up and examines his eyes.) He was clearly drugged, which is why ...

POIROT and THE COUNTESS. ... he did not fight back.

## **Bouc & Mrs. Hubbard**

MRS. HUBBARD. Help! Someone come quickly! Help!

BOUC. (running in) What? What is it?!

MRS. HUBBARD. There was a man in my room! He ran off! I'm sure of it!

BOUC. Which way did he go?!

MRS. HUBBARD. That way! Just this second!

BOUC. But madam, that is where I am coming from and I saw no one.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well...well maybe he ducked into one of the compartments or something! I don't know. I tell you I was lying there in my bed, dead to the world, and I open my eyes and I see this man going out the door. And he's wearing a uniform.

BOUC. But where would he come from?

MRS. HUBBARD. I don't know. He just suddenly appeared.

BOUC. And he looked like ...?

MRS. HUBBARD. I don't know! I could barely see him! One second he was there and then he was gone. He was like a phantom!

BOUC. But how is this possible?

MRS. HUBBARD. HOW SHOULD I KNOW!

BOUC. Perhaps you were dreaming.

MRS. HUBBARD. I wasn't dreaming. I know when I'm dreaming. My mouth gets dry. Does my mouth look dry to you?

BOUC. And your door was locked - ?

MRS. HUBBARD. Of course it was locked, but people have keys, don't they? I'll bet you have keys. Don't you own the company?

BOUC. No, madame, I run the company. And I will look into it.

MRS. HUBBARD. Well all right then. But hurry up about it. I don't feel safe!

**Poirot, Princess, Greta**

PRINCESS. Monsieur Poirot, we are here out of a sense of duty, that is all. I do not like having my day disturbed.

POIROT. Then let us begin immediately. Now it says in your passport that you are Russian.

PRINCESS. That is correct. I have been in exile since the Bolshevik dogs took over.

POIROT. And I see that your first name is

PRINCESS. Natalya.

POIROT. And is this your handkerchief, madam?

PRINCESS. Of course not. It has the letter H on it. My initials are N. D. Natalya Dragomiroff.

POIROT. Is it yours, mademoiselle?

GRETA. No, no, I could not afford such a beautiful thing as this. It would be a sin.

PRINCESS. Oh!

POIROT. And may I ask each of you where you were last night between midnight and two o'clock.

PRINCESS. I could not sleep, so at midnight the Countess Andrenyi and I read a book together in my room. Out loud. It is the very best way to get to sleep when you are anxious.

POIROT. And what were you anxious about?

PRINCESS. The Bolsheviks.

POIROT. And what book did you read?

PRINCESS. The Tale of Two Cities, it is very comforting.

POIROT. And you, Miss Ohlsson? Where were you?

GRETA. I was in my room with Miss Debenham, who is also nice. We talked from twelve o'clock until two o'clock and then we slept. You can ask her!

POIROT. And have either of you ever been to America?

PRINCESS. Yes, many times.

GRETA. I have not been to America but I must go some day to raise money for my babies in Africa.

POIROT. You are very religious.

GRETA. Ja, since I was little girl and Jaysus came to visit me in my garden. He spoke with me, and told me I must work hard to help little babies in

POIROT. And I'm sure you have done it beautifully, mademoiselle. Just one more question for both of you ladies. Are you aware of the identity of the man who was killed last night?

GRETA. His name was Ratchett (sob) and I pray for his soul.

PRINCESS. No, my dear, his name was Bruno Cassetti, the Countess told me, and what I pray is that his soul is damned and that he burns in hell for all eternity.

GRETA. Princess!

PRINCESS. He murdered a girl named Daisy Armstrong and her grandmother is my dearest friend. You would know her as the actress Linda Arden.

BOUC. She was very great.

PRINCESS. Not was, monsieur. She is very great. She is very much alive and remains the greatest actress of the American stage. And when her five-year old granddaughter was murdered by this monster Cassetti, it took her years to recover, indeed she has not yet recovered!

POIROT. There were four who died?

PRINCESS. No, five, monsieur! Five people died! Little Daisy, and then her mother, who was pregnant, died in childbirth, and the baby died, too. And the little girl's father, Colonel Armstrong, who could not live with what happened and ended his life! And a housemaid as well! Five human souls were extinguished. So please forgive me, Greta, if I take the view that there is no forgiveness in a case such as this and that Mr. Cassetti should have been flogged to death and his remains cut up and thrown onto a rubbish heap!!

GRETA. Ahhh! (Greta runs out.)

**Poirot, Arbuthnot, Bouc, Mary**

ARBUTHNOT. Poirot! I have brought Miss Debenham as you requested, now what do you want with her?

POIROT. I merely wish to ask her some questions. Colonel, you may go.

ARBUTHNOT. I beg your pardon?

POIROT. You are not needed for this.

ARBUTHNOT. Well I'm sorry to hear it, because I'm staying.

POIROT. I am sorry also because you are not.

ARBUTHNOT. Now listen to me you little Frenchman—

BOUC. He is Belgian .

ARBUTHNOT. I don't care if he's the man in the moon, I'm not leaving her!

MARY. It's all right, James. Honestly. I'm sure it won 't take long.

POIROT. She is correct. I need a mere ten minutes.

ARBUTHNOT. Well I don't like it! Do you understand? And you can put that in your meerschaum pipe and smoke it!

BOUC. That is Sherlock Holmes.

ARBUTHNOT. Oh go to hell! (Arbuthnot stalks out.)

POIROT. Bon. Please sit down, Miss Debenham. There is much pain?

MARY. Well, it's rather sore, that's all.

POIROT. You are very brave. Let us all be grateful that it is not worse.

BOUC.(crossing himself) Thank the Lord.

POIROT. Now Miss Debenham. In the hotel yesterday I heard you speaking with the Colonel and you said you were terrified you would miss the train. Can you tell me why it was so important to you?

MARY. It wasn't that at all. I didn't want to be late.

POIROT. But you said you wanted to "get it over with." Get it "all behind you." Get what behind you? You seemed quite agitated.

MARY. I'm afraid you're reading into it. I'm tremendously punctual, that's all.

POIROT. Aha. Pardon. It is my profession. Sometimes I am too imaginatif. And you and the Colonel are very close, I take it?

MARY. We only met a few days ago, and I suppose we rather hit it off.

POIROT. And as for the murder, I assume you know that the dead man was Bruno Casseti.

MARY. I heard .

POIROT. And what do you know of the kidnapping?

MARY. Not much, I'm afraid. I've never been to the States.

POIROT. Aha. I see. And what is it that brought you to Istanbul?

MARY. I lived with a family for about a year. I'm a governess.

POIROT. And can you tell me your whereabouts last night between midnight and two o'clock?

MARY. I was in my room with Miss Ohlsson. We chatted until quite late. You see she...she talks quite a bit, especially when she's anxious, and I may have dozed off for a few minutes.

POIROT. I see.

MARY. May I go?

POIROT. You may. Oh wait. There is one last thing. Would you sign your name please.

MARY. All right. (She does.) It's a good thing I'm left-handed. I'd have trouble signing with my right at the moment.

POIROT. Merci.

BOUC. Please get some rest. And on behalf of the company I will have some champagne sent straight to your room.

MARY. Thank you so much. (She exits .)

BOUC. (calling to her) And if there is anything else I can do to help, please let me know. (pleasantly) Good bye! Good bye! (He closes the door.) Oh my God, can you imagine if she had died? Thank goodness she is such a lovely young woman.

POIROT. She is more than lovely. She is a complete liar.