

The Diary of Anne Frank
by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett
adapted by Wendy Kesselman
Forest Moon Theater Production Audition Information

The Diary of Anne Frank
Show Information

This is the dramatic true story of eight people and their time hiding in Amsterdam during World War II, as told through the eyes and words of the eloquent, optimistic, and sometimes terrified Anne Frank. The play opens the morning the Franks go into hiding to avoid persecution for their Jewish heritage/faith and moves through the next two years living with one other family and a dentist in a tiny annex with the help of a couple of Otto Franks former employees. In this hiding place the audience joins and experiences their hope, despair, and everything in between. Much of it communicated by a wise young girl coming of age and coming to grip with her world. A world that is filled with beauty and opportunity to her, but also currently filled with hate for her and her kind. It is a story of the best and the worst of humanity.

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Character Information

The Diary of Anne Frank was originally written for a cast of 5 women and 5 men with 3 extras. The original 1955 Pulitzer Prize and Tony award winning play was adapted successfully into a motion picture that won 3 academy awards including Best Supporting Actress for Shelly Winters playing Mrs. Van Dann. Ed Wynn was also nominated as Best Supporting Actor for Mr. Dussel. Obviously, even supporting roles are deep and strong in this story. This new adaptation by Wendy Kesselman featured Natalie Portman as Anne Frank and well-known character actress Linda Lavin as Mrs. Van Dann when presented on Broadway in 1997. Lavin was nominated for a Tony. The play was nominated for best revival of a play.

Our casting is open to all. Ages indicated are guidelines, not set in stone. So, no adult, nor race or gender, should be discouraged from auditions. However, due to adult themes and the dark nature of the events dealt with, and because Anne, in particular, deals with those events and coming of age in her body and her thinking in the years of hiding, the director asks that those who would audition be at least 14 years of age.

Anne Frank: 14-18 year old female/must play 13-15 in the annex. Extraordinary in her hope, passion, and belief in the good in the world at the start of the show, she is innocent, precocious, and does not hesitate to speak her mind. As she matures through her time in hiding, she becomes

introspective, compassionate, and ultimately eager and hopeful for a more accepting future for everyone. She does not feel close to her mother at all, but idolizes her father. She is compelled to write, documenting every moment and feeling experienced in the annex. She would say: *"When I write I shake off my cares. But I want to achieve more than that. I want to be useful and bring enjoyment to all people, even those I've never met. I want to go on living even after my death."* Warm, witty, intelligent, charming, self-aware, sensitive, often impatient, sometimes a know-it-all, open, determined, easily hurt, spirited, hopeful, fun-loving, with all the longings, expectations and attitudes that adolescence brings. Though hiding and in constant fear and isolation, she never gives up.

Otto Frank: 38-55 year old male.

Father of Anne and Margot and head of the group living in his Annex. He leads with love and strength in all he does. Unlike Anne, he is even tempered and strives for peace in every situation. He has the resilience of a younger man but the experience to recognize the reality of the world around him. He has an upper middle-class background. He is wise, fair, loyal, attentive, patient, intelligent, soft, level-headed, optimistic, genuinely likes people. He is beloved by his workers who protect him and his family, as well as the other tenants of the Annex throughout the war. He loves Anne, but is very susceptible to her charms. He is devoted to his wife, Edith, and comforts her depression about their living conditions, the attitudes of the van Daans/Dussel, and her relationship with Anne.

Edith Frank: 38-48 year old female.

A lovely woman, wife and mother. She is from a wealthy German family. She is loving, moral, concerned, gracious, cultured, devoted to tradition, devastated by her relationship with Anne. Closer with her older daughter, Margot, she longs for a deeper connection with Anne. She has a bit of Anne's fortitude, however, and when pushed will make her mind known. She is barely able to cope with the demands of everyday life in hiding and the isolation. She tries hard to accommodate the lower middle-class Van Daan family whose uncouth and argumentative ways are an irritant to her and causes her to finally erupt into a rage.

Margot Frank: 16-20 year old female/must play 15-17 in the annex.

Anne's older sister. Like her mother, she is quieter, and more mature than Anne. Margot feels alone and unsure of her place in the annex. She is reserved and respectful of others. Although they are opposites, she loves and admires Anne, and longs for deeper connections to others, but does not know how to achieve them. She is obedient, frail, sickly at times, friendly, intelligent, overwhelmed by the trials of hiding. Like Anne, she longs for a friend in whom she can confide. She plays peacemaker like her father. She is a good girl and admired by all.

Putti Van Daan/: 45-60 year old male.

The head of the Van Daans, he is struggling to find his place as a second family head in the Annex. He is pragmatic and a bit harsh and bombastic. He wishes to make his wife happy, on his terms, and wants to teach his son to be more outgoing and to toughen him up during their time in the annex. He is grateful to Otto for welcoming his family into the Annex without question. He is also dour, selfish, complaining, superficial, quarrelsome, highly critical of his son Peter and of Anne, easily irritated. His transgression causes the great blow-up in the Annex.

Petronella Van Dann: 40-55 year old female.

She is not ready to give up her lifestyle from outside, and views the annex as simply a new locale, rather than a necessity for survival. She is a bit of a flirt. Anne calls her frivolous. She clings to her fur coat like one would cling to their very identity. She hides her fear of the unknown by worrying about trite things such as Anne and Peter's growing friendship. She is loud, egotistical, talky, often crude, suspicious, bossy, moody, self-important, critical of others, manipulative, sometimes depressed. She enjoys a good laugh or story, and is more accepting of her introverted son than his father. She reveals some delusions about her younger self's popularity and looks. She thinks she is the Queen Bee in the group, chafes under her husband's control, tries to run the household. She stirs up strife! Yet she is amazingly acceptable.

Peter Van Daan: 15-20 year-old male/must play 16-18 in the annex. The Van Daan son. He is annoyed with Anne initially, but later confesses to admiring her spirit. They become good friends in hiding, He is trying to find his place - not only in the annex but in the world. He is not sure of who he will become or if he will be given the chance to find out. He has a good heart and is protective of those he loves. Awkward, immature, shy, sometimes amusing, attached to his cat. He hates his mother and father's constant quarrels. He ages from the introverted teenager to a more mature young man enjoying the company of the girls in the Annex. He and Anne share each other's first kiss, and become confidants.

Mr. Dussel: 35+ year old male.

He is a fussy dentist. He is the only one in the annex without family, having left behind his live-in girlfriend who is Christian. He puts himself first at every turn, has little patience for his roommate, Anne, and is skeptical of everyone's future. He is old-fashioned, disciplined, hypercritical, selfish, horrified at Anne's behavior, picky, unhappy with everything. He has not come to terms with his situation and is a whiny perfectionist, ungrateful, and easily irritated.

Miep Geis: 25-40 year old female.

She is a kind, Dutch secretary from the office of Otto Frank that helps hide

the Franks, Van Daans, and Mr. Dussel. She is their connection to the outside world as she keeps them informed and supplied. She is worried, but determined to protect them. She collects fake ration cards, purchases all their foodstuffs, visits the library on their behalf, and generally tries to keep their spirits up, and sometimes brings treats. She is courageous, empathetic, compassionate, and friendly. She finds Anne's diary and saves it until after the war delivering it to Otto upon his return.

Mr. Kraler: 35+ year old male.

He helps Miep with the responsibilities of feeding and hiding the occupants of the Annex He is an employee of Mr. Frank's company, a trusted colleague and friend. He is sympathetic to their plight, does what he can for them, and runs the company in Mr. Frank's name. He is an honest and good man who never questions his obligations to the Franks and doing what is right. He is at a loss to explain the world around him.

Extras

Although these three men do not come in until the end of the show, they are exceedingly important. Those who play these parts will be given a very flexible rehearsal schedule, but time will be spent on character development and scene timing.

First Man: 30+ year old male.

German Nazi in uniform

Second Man: 20+ year old male.

Dutchman sympathetic to the Nazi cause.

Third Man: 20+ year old male.

Dutchman sympathetic to the Nazi cause.

For *The Diary of Anne Frank* Auditions,

In order to identify your particular abilities and character potential, Please prepare a monologue of one to two minutes length, of your choosing, appropriate for the characters. Nothing off color please. (I won't be impressed *just* because you can use potty humor or the F word.)

Those auditioning for Anne Frank, Peter, or Margot may choose to tell me a prepared story in their own words, of one to two minutes in length, about how being confined to safe space at home and away from friends and school during the recent pandemic affected them.

Or

If you cannot prepare a memorized monologue, please be prepared to read from a dramatic monologue of your choosing that you have familiarized yourself with. Some monologue scripts, you may peruse, will be made available at auditions if you have not brought one.

At some time, you will also be asked to do some cold reading with others auditioning from *The Diary of Anne Frank* sides or monologues which will be provided.

In addition, you may want to familiarize yourself with one of the following monologues. It does not need to be memorized, but I would love for you to be as familiar with it as you can be, if interested in one of these characters. Not all of the characters from the play are represented, but I may ask you to read one these

OTTO FRANK

"We're all having nightmares, Anne. Only you let them out. Your mother has them too. Terrible nightmares. She's having a very hard time. I understand - we've always understood each other, you and I. You know, Anneke, you taught me something the day we came here. Remember when we arrived - your mother and Margot were numb. Couldn't speak. Couldn't move. I was a wreck with worry, but you...you skipped around the room calling it "an adventure". You showed me you could escape. Now, when I read my Dickens, it takes me to another world. In that world I feel safe. You have something too. A diary. You're lucky. You can write. You can put all your thoughts, all your feelings, down on paper..."

EDITH FRANK

“Oh Miep, I remember when a New Year was something to look forward to. But now there’s no hope to be had. I know that. I knew it the night Hitler came to power, when that voice came screaming out of the radio. I sat there paralyzed. And now in London, what is the Dutch Queen doing? What are they all doing? They’re not even mentioning the word Jews. The trains are still leaving. Why don’t they bomb the tracks? I can’t talk about this with the others, Miep. I know they’re making plans, counting the days till the war is over, but I have to tell you...I feel the end will never come. Sometimes...sometimes I want to give myself up. I’m ashamed to feel this way. I know you and Mr. Kraler have it just as hard. Thank you. For listening to me.”

ANNE FRANK

“It’s the silence that frightens me most. Every time I hear a creak in the house, a step on the street, I’m sure they’re coming for us. I wander from room to room, feeling like a songbird whose wings have been ripped off and keeps hurling itself against the bars of its cage...Let me out, where there’s fresh air and laughter! But then I remember the Jews who are not in hiding, and I know we live in a paradise. We’re as quiet as baby mice. Who would have dreamed a quicksilver Anne would have to sit still for hours and what’s more, could?”

...And as far as I’m concerned Mother can go jump in a lake! I don’t know why I’ve taken such a terrible dislike to her, but I can imagine her dying someday, while Papa’s death seems inconceivable to me. It’s very mean of me I know, but that’s how I feel. I hope Mother will never read this or anything else I’ve written. She’s not a mother to me - I have to mother myself. Who can I turn to? Only my diary. I have to become a good person on my own, but I know it will make me stronger in the end.”

MRS. VAN DAAN

“Putti? You know what I was just thinking? You won’t believe this, but I was thinking about that first day we met, when you were buzzing around with the rest of the boys in Bremerhaven. I picked you right away, you know. You were the one who made me laugh, and laugh!... That afternoon you took me out on the ferry, first you made me laugh and then you started to kiss me, and kiss me... And the kisses were even better than the laughter - remember? You gave me so many, the ferryman kept watching us and the ferry went off course, and then you made me laugh even more! When we got back, you had such a ravenous appetite you made that little restaurant open its’ doors and you ordered almost everything on the menu. “What an appetite!” the waiter kept saying. “The man can really eat!” We’ll go back on that ferry one day, Putti. I promise. It won’t be long now. And soon I’ll be cooking all your old favorites - sauerbraten with red cabbage, latkes with your cherished applesauce. We’ll even to to Berkhof’s for cream cakes! But in the meantime, Putti, if you’re hungry, hold onto me. Oh Putti, please. Just hold onto me.”

MR. KRALER

“I’m sorry to come at this hour. But something’s happened. I must ask you all to be more careful. More quiet. A man in the storeroom - a few days ago he asked me, “What do you hear from Mr. Frank?” I said I’d heard a rumor you were in Switzerland. He said he’d heard that too, but thought I might know something more. And then today, signing some invoices, I looked up and saw him staring at the bookcase. He said he thought he remembered a door there. Then he said he wanted more money. Ten more guilders a month. I said I had to think about it. Should I pay him the money? Take a chance on firing him? Maybe he knows nothing. But it’s more dangerous out there every day. No one can be trusted. You must be quiet. Quiet! ...I’ll offer him half - we’ll hope for the best.”

MR. VAN DAAN

“The coat was seventeen years old, for God’s sake! Those skins had definitely seen their day. We need the money - we have no money. Can’t you get that through your head? ...Oh God - here we go again. That coat was not the last thing. You’ve still got us haven’t you? ...Do we have to hear about your father again? If you hadn’t been so attached to your father, your coat, the apartment with all our goddamned possessions, we’d be in America by now! I only stayed because of you! Believe me, I knew which way the wind was blowing. You never listen.”

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The play opens on July 6, 1942 in Amsterdam. Because they are Jews, the Frank and Van Daan families move into hiding to avoid arrest by the Nazis. Mr. Kraler and Miep Gies, Christian business associates and trusted friends, help everyone get settled in the secret annex: Mr. and Mrs. Frank and their daughters, Margot and Anne, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan and their son, Peter. The outsiders leave, assuring the two families that they will help them in hiding for as long as it takes. As the families begin to unpack, Anne tries to get acquainted with the shy Peter.

Months pass, and Anne's carefree nature begins to cause problems. Mrs. Van Daan thinks she is rude, Margot is becoming distant, and Peter (her only hope for a friend) is very shy. In addition, her relationship with her mother is strained and difficult.

Next, Mr. Dussell joins them in the annex and tells them what has been happening since they went into hiding. They are relieved to hear that people believe the Franks escaped to Switzerland, but are terrified when they learn of the death camps that hundreds of Jews are sent to each day.

Soon, it is their first Hanukkah in hiding, and Anne is determined to celebrate. She has thoughtfully prepared presents for everyone. However, the good mood is broken when Mr. Van Daan and Peter start arguing. The argument is quickly ended by a crashing sound in the offices below the annex. Fearing they will be discovered, everyone immediately quiets down.

Over many more months, Anne and Peter's young teenage friendship begins to blossom. They talk of all sorts of things, and share their first kiss. Tensions are growing between the annex occupants in the cramped quarters. The families learn from Miep that the Allied invasion of the European continent has begun, and they are hopeful that they may soon come out of hiding. However, only a few weeks later, the Nazis arrive to take them away.

The play ends with the return of Mr. Frank to the abandoned hiding place. He has Anne's diary which Miep had discovered and saved and tells the audience exactly what has happened to each of the characters.

Only Anne's words remain.