

Hello Auditioners!

I'm so very excited to begin work on *Eleanor* and to meeting you on audition day. Mark St. Germain has put together a rather spectacular play that is both charming, challenging, and delightful.

I will be casting two parts for this show:

Narrator

Eleanor

The **Narrator** will be integral to setting the scene changes, providing visual cues and other information about what would normally appear in sound or via projections, and in providing information about the location in which each scene is set.

Eleanor, the eponymous center of this play, will be challenged with playing herself and with presenting the many other characters who live in her orbit.

We will be auditioning from the first six pages of the script and will audition the Narrator and Eleanor together.

For the **Narrator**:

Authoritative, playful, invested in Eleanor's various challenges, an ally.

For **Eleanor**:

I am not looking, necessarily, for an exact replica of Eleanor Roosevelt's voice as I am in her carriage and demeanor. Your interpretation of this is what I'd like to see. Regarding the many characters Eleanor gives voice to, I'd like differentiation with subtlety. You are welcome to prepare any voice you choose for all the players, as long as they remain human, accessible, and real.

I'm excited to begin this process! See you very soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffery Battersby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Jeffery Battersby

ELEANOR

(LIGHTS UP ON SCRIM WITH THE PROJECTION OF THE STATUE GRIEF AND THE STONE BENCHES BEFORE IT. TREES ARE BUDDING. IT'S SPRING)

ELEANOR (O.S.):

Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington D.C. It's beautiful, isn't it? The trees, the flowerbeds. You might appreciate it more if you don't look at it as a graveyard. Think of it as a park with permanent residents.

(LIGHTS UP ON ELEANOR.)

ELEANOR:

This was my favorite spot, especially in Spring. I came here all the time to sit and think, and I still do. Some of you might be wondering how I'm here at all. Yes, I heard you!

“She's dead! She's buried next to FDR in Hyde Park, New York! You must go. There's a museum and a nice café, too. Senior discounts!”

You're absolutely right. My husband was a great President. He gave us hope during the Great Depression and the courage to fight the Second World War.

My body lies beside Franklin's, but not my spirit. For the forty years we were married we not only had separate bedrooms but separate lives.

He's still a mystery to me. Even his Vice President said no one had a clue who he really was.

But, then, who was I, besides a First Lady? I view those years almost impersonally. It was like I had erected someone outside myself because I didn't know who I was inside, and not brave enough to find out.

Who are any of us but the choices we make? How we lived, who we loved. Looking back, I can't stop doubting those choices. I need to know, to be unafraid. I can't rest until I do.

(SOUND OF BELL RUNG from Franklin's bedroom)

It was 1918, the First World War was ending and Franklin was serving as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He came back from Europe with double pneumonia. I became his nurse and was happy to do so. He was home.

(A SECOND BELL.)

I'm here, Franklin. Which pills? Don't you dare get up. I'll find them.

(SHE LOOKS FOR HIS PILLS UNDER THE BENCHES and pulls out a SUITCASE)

You never unpacked! They might be in here!

(SHE OPENS THE SUITCASE AND POKES AROUND IN IT)

Franklin; you have more cigars than socks! *(SHE PULLS OUT A MARTINI SHAKER)* Does no one in Paris have a martini shaker?

(TAKES OUT A BOOK, LETTERS FALL FROM IT. ELEANOR IS AFRAID SHE LOST HIS PLACE, STARTS TO PUT THEM BACK, THEN STOPS. READS. WE SEE A PICTURE OF LUCY MERCER, THEN A YOUNG FDR APPEAR BEHIND HER)

“Dearest Franklin,

How I shall miss you when we return home. Here we can be man and woman, back in New York, I become merely staff and you my employer. After these weeks, I don't know how I can live without your touch. With love always, your Lucy.”

“My Darling Lucy,

What we have is too strong a bond to fade. To deny this gift of each other is cruel and impossible. But in the words of Corinthians, ‘Love is patient...’”

(Still holding the letters she rises and storms in to Franklin)

Lucy Mercer?

My secretary? I've loved you, all these years. We have five children. Does that mean nothing?

I endured all your time away and putting everyone

first but us! I suffered your mother, who you allow to control our lives! Who told my children that the only thing I was good for was giving birth? How dare you! I want a divorce, Franklin. *(Pause)* Franklin! Say something!

He didn't. But his mother, Sara, did. Sara worshiped her son. Her only son. Think Mary and Jesus. He was perfect. And when Sara found out about the affair, she was determined he would remain so.

(As SARA, she eyes her son)

AS SARA:

Eleanor offered you a divorce? I see. *(Pause)* No, she will not take the children and neither will you. They will stay with me. And you will be disinherited without a penny or a roof over your head if you take her up on it.

Do you really think you have a future with this trollop Lucy? I never thought you a fool, Franklin. *She's a Catholic!* She won't marry you! You were brought up better. End it. Immediately.

ELEANOR:

But for once, it wasn't his mother who changed Franklin's mind. It was Louis Howe. A gnome-like man, badly dressed and barely bathed. A newspaperman who loved politics and Franklin because he saw a future in him.

AS HOWE:

(With cigar) Divorce your wife? Hell, why not? It's the fastest way to be quit with politics. I'm dead serious,

pig head. You think anybody out there will vote for a divorced man? You might as well be seen dancing bare-ass naked down Main Street with a two buck floozie.

ELEANOR:

I don't need to point out that times have changed. But, then, I couldn't have been more surprised when Louis Howe came calling.

AS HOWE:

Mrs. Roosevelt, I know you don't like me, and I can't care less. I've watched you and your Mister and I can see why you're married, even if the two of you can't right now. A man like him doesn't come around often. He's got the brains, charm, looks and the money to succeed, big time. What he doesn't have, you do. You can put yourself in anybody's shoes and see the world like real people do. He's got the head for this game and you've got the heart. He needs you.

*(PHOTO OF GRIEF STATUE APPEARS
BEHIND HER)*

ELEANOR:

I came here, to think. Should I trust him? Could I love him again?

His betrayal opened a wound that never healed my entire life. Simply put: Lucy was very attractive. I never was. My mother, who was the most beautiful woman I ever knew, told me so herself.

*(PHOTO OF ELEANOR'S MOTHER
ELEANOR sits and rocks)*

AS HER MOTHER:

Just look at your baby pictures, Eleanor. You were a more wrinkled, far less attractive baby than most. I hoped that would change as you grew, but...well, you're less wrinkled. Keep rocking, go on, it soothes me.

You always were so serious! That's why I call you "Granny." Never a smile. You were so embarrassing in front of company. You should play more with Uncle Teddy's daughter, Alice. Not just because she's such a pretty little thing, but she's so terribly clever. People think everything she says is amusing.

AS ALICE:

Happy Birthday, Eleanor. Maybe *someone* will give you a chin!

ELEANOR:

A word about Cousin Alice. She carried a green snake in her pocket she named after our Aunt Emil. Enough said?

AS MOTHER:

Eleanor, don't rock so fast, it hurts my head! Do you have another cold cloth? Never mind, just rub my temples. It soothes me.

ELEANOR:

I was always eager to do it. It meant she needed me. And I realized, even that young, a truth that carried me through my life. People want you when you're attractive, yes, but they also want you if you're helpful to them. I resolved that I would be of use.

I had to make a decision about Franklin, right or wrong. I wouldn't know which for 27 years.