

THE HANDLEBARDS

Cycling Shakespeare Tour 2025

Call for Actors

We are seeking three **actors** for our 2025 UK Tour of Shakespeare's '**Much Ado About Nothing**', which will tour by bicycle from May - September 2025.

Tour and Production Information

The HandleBards are a four-strong troupe of cycling actors, who have performed their unique brand of irreverent, energetic and environmentally sustainable Shakespeare in venues across the world. In Summer 2025, the troupe will cycle from London to Scotland, stopping every 30 miles or so for nightly performances in castles, gardens, theatres, bicycle shops and stately homes throughout the UK.

Much Ado About Nothing is a revival of our 2019 production directed by Emma Sampson, which was last revived in 2023 for a run at Shakespeare North Playhouse and at the Neuss Shakespeare Festival. The 2025 UK tour will be Associate Directed by Mark Collier.

The HandleBards are an ensemble company, and all actors will play multiple roles in the production. Most performances will take place in the outdoors, in all weathers.

Each actor will be required to cycle approximately 30 miles per day at a pace of 10mph, for up to six days per week during the length of the contract. The troupe typically perform a 5/6-show week. Bikes, related equipment and training will be provided by the HandleBards. Set, props and costumes will be transported using two using bicycle trailers, which will be carried by company members on a rota system.

The acting troupe work as part of a team with the company manager on a variety of tasks, including get-ins/outs, checking and maintaining the bikes (training provided), helping with pre-show duties like selling programmes and seating the audience, plus other similar tour-related tasks that come up. Please have a read through of the "day in the life" document at the end of this callout for an idea of what an average day of touring by bicycle looks like.

Accommodation is provided by the company for touring days, and will largely be in hotels and airbnbs with room sharing, but will occasionally include dormitories and homestays. Please note that we are not able to provide accommodation for the rehearsal period in London.

Casting Information

We are looking for actors with a flair for adventure and friendly personality, who are prepared to participate and immerse themselves in all that the experience on- and off-stage requires. We are looking for actors above the age of 18 of any height, appearance, gender and playing age.

One actor is returning to the troupe from the 2019/2023 productions so we are seeking three performers to join the cast.

Experience with Shakespeare texts, comedy and movement is essential.

Experience with bicycles, bicycle touring, and/or long-term fitness training is desirable.

Puppetry skills are desirable and musical ability is highly desirable - ranging from singing to playing an instrument small enough to carry on a bike.

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Desirable offstage skills include bike maintenance, photography, blogging, sewing, and experience of working as part of a team.

The tour may involve some international travel, so all applicants must hold a valid passport and no reason to be denied entry to EU member states, and all applicants must have the right to work in the UK.

The fee for all posts is £523 per rehearsal week and £550 for touring weeks, with a £22.50 per diem for touring days. The contract is approximately 23 weeks long, and includes around 1500 miles of cycling.

The terms of the contract will adhere to the conditions of the Equity Charter for Outdoor Theatre and any applicable variation agreement.

How to Apply

To apply please do the following by 1pm on Monday 6th January:

1. Submit the following two self-tape videos (details below) using the Dropbox link found here: <https://www.dropbox.com/request/txMRzcQVskB4eZq7GyHa>
 - A self-tape of one of the eight monologues from the monologue pack found on our website (www.handlebards.com/jobs).
 - A self-tape of a short song (accompanied or unaccompanied), please include examples of any instruments you can play in this video.
2. Email your Spotlight link or CV and a headshot to auditions@handlebards.com (please upload videos via Dropbox rather than emailing) . You can also upload your headshot/CV alongside your self-tape videos using the link above if preferred.

For any uploaded submissions please make sure your full name is the first part of any filename e.g. *Sally Henderson HandleBards self-tape Monologue 1.mp4*.

We are a multi-rolling ensemble so please feel free to choose from any of the monologues in the pack regardless of gender – if you are invited to the first round of auditions we will ask you to continue working with your chosen monologue.

We want our cast and workforce to be representative of all sections of society and welcome applications from everyone. If you require the information in this callout in a different format, or would like to discuss any access requirements for the roles, please contact us at auditions@handlebards.com.

Please direct all questions about the positions to the producer, Will Orton, at auditions@handlebards.com.

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Key information and dates

The HandleBards: *Much Ado About Nothing*

A four-actor production of Shakespeare's original, slightly abridged.

Associate Director: **Mark Collier**

Application deadline: 1pm – Monday 6 January

Shortlist decision made by 10 January

First round auditions: Thursday 16 January (London - daytime)

Shortlist decision made by 17 January

Second round auditions: Wednesday 22 January (London - daytime group workshop)

Final decision made by 23 January

Rehearsals: **14 April - 16 May (London)**

First performance: **17 May**

Last performance: **17 September**

Please note that these dates are subject to change.

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A Day in the Life of a HandleBard

This example schedule should give you a good idea of what a day of cycling with an evening performance looks like with The HandleBards.

Tonight's Venue – An outdoor amphitheatre north of Edinburgh

7pm Show Mid-August Weather - Drizzle

9:30AM – Travel Call

The Company Manager has called you for 9:30AM to check over your bikes, load them with panniers, hitch the trailers up and get ready for the cycle ahead.

10:00AM – Start Cycling

Today's cycle is approximately 25 miles but quite hilly. For a cycle like this you'll normally be pedalling for approximately 3.5 hours with an hour extra allocated for punctures/stoppage just in case.

11:00 – 11:15AM – Pit stop

Quick pit stop at a corner shop to stock up on flapjacks and snacks.

12:30PM – Lunch (break in travel call)

You stop at a local village for an hour's lunch break, some of you pop into a local café for a sandwich and the rest of you grab lunch at a supermarket.

1:30PM – Travel Call – Back on the Road

You've got around 9 miles left to go.

1:45 – 2:00PM – Puncture!

You've got a puncture! But you're all back on the road soon.

3:15PM – Arrive at the venue - End of travel call

You arrive at the venue a little early – you all head to the dressing room and go on break for some down time while the venue get some pre-show food ready for you.

5:00-9:30PM - Show Call

5pm – the Company Manager gives you the next day's calls, you put up the set and get the performance area ready (this doesn't take too long as everything fits on the back of a bike), 5:30pm – into costume and warm-up, 6pm – quickly help seat the first audience members to arrive, 6:45pm – help with selling programmes, 7pm – 9pm – the show, 9-9:45pm – pack down.

10:00PM – End of Day

You get a taxi to a local hotel where you're sharing a twin room – end of the day!

It's a long day but we make sure to balance things out over the tour: there are days with no cycling when you're at the same venue for 2-3 performances, cycle days with no shows, extra scheduled days off and some shorter cycles. Our working hours adhere to the Equity Charter for Outdoor Theatre.