Moon Over Buffalo

Synopsis

The farce, *Moon Over Buffalo* centers on George and Charlotte Hay, a fading film and Broadway headlining duo. It is spring, 1953, and they're playing *Private Lives* and *Cyrano De Bergerac* in repertory in Buffalo, New York with five actors. The company operates on a shoe-string budget, members haven't been paid in weeks. All the action takes place in Buffalo's Earlinger Theater – either in the green room or onstage as they rehearse or perform *Private Lives* and *Cyrano De Bergerac*.

On the brink of a disastrous split caused by George's dalliance with a young ingénue, they receive news that they might just have one last shot at stardom: Frank Capra is coming to town to see their matinee, and if he likes what he sees, he might cast them in his movie remake of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, rejuvenating their careers.

Unfortunately for George and Charlotte, everything that could go wrong does go wrong, abetted by a visit from their daughter's clueless fiancé and hilarious uncertainty about which play they're actually performing, caused by Charlotte's deaf, old stage manager mother who hates every bone in George's body.

Moon Over Buffalo is a fast-paced, hilarious screwball comedy in the old tradition, a throwback farce, a valentine to the stage, and the larger-than-life personalities that inhabit the world of the theatre.

Character Descriptions

George Hay - (Male, 50s) very dramatic, a slapstick type, over-the-top actor Must be able to do strong physical comedy, including pratfalls, running, stage combat (fencing), etc.

Charlotte Hay - (Female, 50s) She helps to run the acting troupe and plays all the leads even those for which she is a bit too old. Must be able to do an upper-class British accent.

Ethel - (Female, 70s) Charlotte's mother. Grumpy, troublemaker, hard of hearing, leading to comic misunderstandings. Should have huge stage presence and strong comedic skills.

Rosalind "Roz" Hay - (Female, 20-30s) George and Charlotte's daughter, used to be an actress and a member of their acting troupe, but she decided that she wanted a real career, so she left - determined never to act again - or be like her parents. Must be able to do an upper-class British accent.

Eileen - (Female, early 20s) is an aspiring actress, eager to please. She has a crush on George and has been having a fling with him.

Howard - (Male, late 20-30s) – a weatherman and Rosalind's fiancé. He comes across as a wimp, a little annoying, nervous, and very excitable. Must be able to do strong physical comedy.

Paul – (Male, 20- 30s) is a member of the acting troupe, who used to be with Rosalind and still loves her and wants her back; but he is an actor first and foremost, so he wouldn't leave the troupe to be with her. Must be able to do strong physical comedy

Richard - (Male, 50s) He is George and Charlotte's attorney, but he is in love with Charlotte - always trying to get her to leave George. He is wealthy and used to getting what he wants, and he is both amused and perplexed by the Hay family.

Director's Note: Age ranges are an approximation so don't let that discourage you from auditioning. You may be asked to play younger or older than your actual age. Also, the character's genders are fixed by the playwright/script and noted (Male/Female) within the character descriptions.

Audition Sides

George and Charlotte: ***Pages 22-23*** from George "Do you know what I like most..." through Charlotte "Kiss me now..." ***Pages 26-27*** from Charlotte "George?" through George "Well it's too late..."

Roz and Paul: ***Pages 62- 63*** from Paul "Let's run your lines..." through Roz "Oh darling I'm so sorry kiss me."

Ethel and Roz: ***Pages 13-15*** Complete scene

All (except Ethel) ***Pages 108-111*** from Charlotte "You give me a pain,,," through Howard "Well she wants to start a family..."

Tentative Rehearsal Schedule

I would like to rehearse three days a week starting with a read through on Tuesday, January 5. Rehearsal would then be every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday until we reach Tech Week and then more will be added. I would note that the closer we get to opening the frequency and time of rehearsals will increase. Rehearsals will initially run from 6:30-8:45 PM with more time added as necessary. That, being said, as a cast we will tweak and adjust this schedule and try to accommodate everyone's needs if possible.

ETHEL. "Eat a toad
For breakfast every morning?
Wear out my belly grovelling in the dust?
No, I thank you, and again I thank you no!
But..."

*(***ROSALIND** *enters from the street door, carrying a suitcase. She's bright and attractive, in her 20s or 30s. She sees* **ETHEL** *and smiles with affection.* **ETHEL** *is facing the other way and can't see* **ROSALIND**. *Also, as we'll soon realize,* **ETHEL** *is quite deaf and is never aware of very much unless it's in front of her and shouting.)*

"To sing, to laugh, to dream,
To walk in my own way and be alone,
Free, with an eye to see things as they are."

ROZ. Grandma.

ETHEL. "To travel any road under the sun,"

ROZ. *Grandma!*

ETHEL. "Nor doubt if fame or fortune—"

ROZ. *GRANDMA!!*

ETHEL. *(Startled, then overjoyed.)* Oh! ...Rosalind! Dearest girl! What a surprise! You're getting more beautiful every day. *(A big hug.)* You look adorable!

ROZ. So do you.

ETHEL. What?

ROZ. *(Louder.)* So do you! You look great!

ETHEL. I'm afraid you'll have to speak up, dear.

ROZ. *Grandma, can I get you your hearing aid?!*

ETHEL. *(Fondly.)* No thank you, dear, I'm not in the mood for lemonade. Oh, I miss you terribly. It isn't the same here without you.

ROZ. *I miss you too, Grandma. Hey! How is the tour going? Do you like Buffalo?*

ETHEL. No. I don't. It stinks. If it wasn't named for an animal, it would have nothing going for it. I don't

mind so much for myself, really, but it's quite a come-down for your mother. She played Broadway, you know, in the forties. Then your father dragged her down to his level.

ROZ. Grandma—!

ETHEL. Revivals of tired old plays. B-movies. You should have heard him doing Cyrano just now at the dress rehearsal. The man is a walking ham. They should stick cloves in him and serve him with pineapple.

ROZ. *Grandma, listen! I have a surprise. I'm getting married.*

(It takes a moment to sink in...then **ROZ** *and* **ETHEL** *squeal with delight, like schoolgirls, jump up and down and hug each other.)*

ETHEL. Oh, Rosalind, how wonderful! I've always said that you and Paul were made for each other.

ROZ. It isn't Paul.

ETHEL. The boy has spunk—

ROZ. *Grandma, it's not Paul! Paul and I broke up!*

ETHEL. ...It isn't Paul?

ROZ. *NO!*

ETHEL. Well that's a mistake.

*(***ROZ** *sighs; here it comes.)*

You look ravishing on the stage together. You could do all the great couples—

ROZ. *Grandma, I'm not an actress anymore! I'm in advertising.*

ETHEL. Yes, I know, and it's revolting.

ROZ. *Don't you remember the talk we had at Christmas?!*

ETHEL. ...No.

ROZ. *(Holding* **ETHEL***'s hand and really pouring her heart out.)* Grandma, this is your life. And Mother and Dad's. And that's fine. I'm very proud of you. But I grew up with it. I want something different. Something that doesn't drive me crazy all the time. Does that make any sense?

ETHEL. *(Fondly.)* Rosalind, dearest, can I tell you something?

ROZ. Sure.

ETHEL. I haven't heard a single word you've said.

ROZ. ...*Grandma, can I please get you your hearing aid!!!*

ETHEL. All right. Fine. One glass. ...Now listen to me, young lady. The theatre may be dying. The glamorous invalid may be crawling through the desert with but a single lung in its feeble chest, but it is still breathing and it is all we've got. It is our lifeline to humanity. Without it, we would all be Republicans. I'm very tired now, dear, and I'm going to lie down. *(At the door.)* It's wonderful having you back.

*(***ETHEL** *exits.* **ROZ** *runs to the door and shouts:)*

ROZ. *GRANDMA! I LOVE YOU!*

(At which moment, we hear a knock at the street door.)

Come in. *(...Knock knock knock.)* Come in! *(...Knock knock knock; angry:) Would you come in, please, the door's open!!*

*(***HOWARD** *enters. He's in his late 20's, very good-natured and quite good-looking. At the moment, he's rather frightened.)*

HOWARD. ...Sweetheart?

ROZ. Hi, honey. Come on in.

(They kiss.)

HOWARD. Are your parents here?

ROZ. I don't think so.

HOWARD. *(Relieved.)* Oh, good.

ROZ. Howard...

HOWARD. Well I'm sorry. You know how I feel about this. "Meeting the in-laws." It makes me nervous.

ROZ. You have nothing to worry about.

HOWARD. I'd be all right if they weren't such...big stars. The glamorous life...

ROZ. Howard, does this look glamorous?

(And they're gone. **HOWARD** *gets to his feet, panting. After a beat,* **ROZ** *enters at the top of the stairs.)*

ROZ. They're not in their dressing rooms.

HOWARD. I-I-I-I-

ROZ. Howard?

HOWARD. I have to go now.

*(***HOWARD** *heads for the street door.)*

ROZ. Where are you going?

HOWARD. I need a few minutes. I'll be back.

ROZ. Howard, what's wrong?

HOWARD. I have to think about this! You don't just-just-just rush into a relationship! It takes some thinking!!

*(***HOWARD** *exits.)*

ROZ. Howard! Are you crazy?! *(Exiting.)* Get back here!!

*(***ROZ** *runs out. A moment later,* **GEORGE** *and* **CHARLOTTE** *reenter in high spirits.)*

GEORGE. Do you know what I like most about the author of *Cyrano*? He's dead, so he can't argue with me.

*(***CHARLOTTE** *laughs.)*

Now listen, I have a new idea for tomorrow. When the carriage arrives, during the battle, and you step out, I want you to pause, curtsey to the soldiers—and I'm going to put a spotlight on your face to suggest that you have descended like an angel from heaven.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, George, let's try it! Now!

GEORGE. All right.

CHARLOTTE. Clip clop clip clop clip clop. Na-a-a-y. *(A whinny.)*

GEORGE. "Halt, who goes there?!"

CHARLOTTE. "It's a coach!"

GEORGE. "What? In the camp?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Look! 'Tis Roxane!"

GEORGE. "Thank God."

CHARLOTTE. *(Weakly.)* "Yay." *(Stepping elegantly down the last two steps of the stairway.)* And I float down, out of the carriage, like an angel from heaven..."

GEORGE. Spotlight!

CHARLOTTE. *(As* **ROXANE.***)* "Good morning, gentlemen."

GEORGE. "Roxane, on the King's service?!"

CHARLOTTE. "Yes. In the service of my own king: Love."

GEORGE. That's it! It'll make the scene!

CHARLOTTE. "Cyrano. My best friend. I need your help."

GEORGE. *(As* **CYRANO**, *kneeling, taking her hand.)* "I am at your disposal, madam, now and forever."

*(***GEORGE** *kisses her hand and lays his cheek upon it.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Moved.)* When you do that, George, center stage, in front of a thousand people holding their breath, I wet myself, I can't help it.

GEORGE. Thank you, my darling.

CHARLOTTE. Kiss me. Now. Before the moment passes.

*(***CHARLOTTE** *lifts his nose and kisses him on the lips. They start necking on the chaise—when* **ETHEL** *enters from backstage.)*

ETHEL. Don't mind me, I'm just the hired help.

GEORGE. Well, well, if it isn't the Hound of the Baskervilles.

(During the following, **GEORGE** *and* **CHARLOTTE** *remove their* **CYRANO** *clothes and put on their relaxing clothes.* **CHARLOTTE**, *of course, looks stunning.* **ETHEL** *gathers up their costumes to take them away.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(To* **GEORGE.***)* Don't start.

GEORGE. Oh, she can't hear a thing I'm saying. She hasn't heard a word in twenty years. *(To* **ETHEL.***)* Have you, Quasimodo?

CHARLOTTE. George, stop it.

(The massage continues. **GEORGE** *is relaxing. He's almost asleep.)*

CHARLOTTE. George?

GEORGE. Hm?

CHARLOTTE. Can I ask you a question?

GEORGE. Mm.

CHARLOTTE. Did you sleep with Eileen?

GEORGE. *(Sitting up with a start.)* Charlotte! How can you say such a thing?!

CHARLOTTE. I've seen how you look at her.

GEORGE. She's a pretty girl. I'm not dead.

CHARLOTTE. Not yet. I know exactly when it happened, George. We were in the middle of that terrible fight.

GEORGE. And whose fault was that?

CHARLOTTE. It was your fault, dear. You called me the world's oldest living ingenue.

GEORGE. I merely mentioned that a woman in her fifties should not try to play Saint Joan. It's like watching Eleanor Roosevelt play Peter Pan.

CHARLOTTE. I happen to admire Eleanor Roosevelt.

GEORGE. So do I, but I don't want to watch her fly out the window.

CHARLOTTE. You're changing the subject.

GEORGE. For heaven's sake, Eileen barely knows I exist.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, please. When you walk into the room she starts to glow. I could use her for a reading lamp.

GEORGE. You are off your rocker. It's extraordinary. It is unkind.

CHARLOTTE. George, I don't mind as long as you tell me the truth! Did you sleep with her or didn't you?! Yes or no?!

GEORGE. ...*No*!!! All right?! The answer is no!!

CHARLOTTE. *(Skeptically.)* Really?

GEORGE. Oh, it's killing you about the film, isn't it.

CHARLOTTE. Don't be silly, that has nothing to do with it.

GEORGE. Scarlet Pimpernel, Scarlet Pimpernel.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, stop it.

GEORGE. *Greer Garson!*

CHARLOTTE. Don't be an idiot!

GEORGE. I'm sure it's slaying you to be stuck out here in Siberia while Miss Garson swans around the set in Hollywood like the Queen of Sheba.

CHARLOTTE. George—

GEORGE. I'm sure you had fantastical visions of being slobbered over by a legion of toadies, having your ears powdered.

CHARLOTTE. All right, George, I'm sorry!

GEORGE. *(The injured husband.) Well it's too late now, isn't it?! You have hurt my feelings!*

*(***GEORGE** *turns away and sits down, rolling his eyes, thinking that she can't see him.)*

CHARLOTTE. ...I saw that.

GEORGE. Saw what?

CHARLOTTE. You big faker.

GEORGE. I don't know what you're talking about.

*(***CHARLOTTE** *sits on* **GEORGE***'s lap and starts to tickle him.)*

CHARLOTTE. Faker, faker, faker, faker...

GEORGE. *(Laughing, overlapping.)* Stop it! Charlotte! I'm warning you—!

(And **EILEEN** *walks in from the street. She's young and very beautiful. They see her and stop cold.)*

Eileen!

CHARLOTTE. Good morning.

(Beat. **EILEEN** *bursts into tears and runs across the room and out the door to the dressing rooms.)*

GEORGE. Eileen! Wait! Eileen!

PAUL. *(Into the phone.)* Two tickets to *Private Lives.*

ROZ. With dinner afterwards.

PAUL. *(Into the phone.)* With dinner afterwards... *(Beat; to the others.)* He wants free parking.

ROZ. *(Grabbing the phone; a killer.)* Listen to me, you pinhead! You want a reward?! Well you keep him there for the next ten minutes I *won't* tear your heart out!! ...*Fine!*

*(***ROZ** *slams down the phone.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Shaking* **ROZ***'s hand)* Atta girl.

PAUL. I'll go.

CHARLOTTE. No, I know where Delaney is. I'll be right back.

*(***CHARLOTTE** *exits to the street.)*

ROZ. ...Do you see what I mean?! About the theater?! I'm back here for three hours and I'm acting like a lunatic. I'll be in analysis till I'm a hundred.

PAUL. It won't help.

ROZ. Oh shut up.

(Pause.)

PAUL. So why did you come back?

ROZ. I came back—! ...to see my parents. Is that a crime? And I didn't know you were here or I wouldn't have come.

PAUL. Well I'm sorry. Next time I'll put up a sign on the Thruway. "Paul in Buffalo. Turn Back. Save Yourself."

ROZ. Okay. Just forget about it.

PAUL. Fine. That's fine with me.

ROZ. Well fine!

PAUL. ...Let's run your lines and get it over with.

*(***PAUL** *tosses* **ROZ** *a script.)*

ROZ. Don't bother. I've done *Private Lives* a hundred times. I know it backwards. And I don't see why I have to play Sibyl.

PAUL. Because Eileen took the day off. We don't know where she is. Why don't you blame me for that too?

ROZ. I'm not blaming you.

PAUL. I suppose *I* got her pregnant.

ROZ. I wouldn't be at all surprised.

PAUL. Fine.

ROZ. Well fine!

PAUL. *(Opening the script.)* Two adjoining balconies. Posh hotel. South of France.

ROZ. I know the play!

PAUL. The lights come up.

ROZ. For the record, I hate this. I swore I'd never set foot on a stage again. I'm breaking a vow here.

PAUL. The lights come up.

*(***ROZ** *glances at the script, then delivers her lines totally deadpan, straight out front, with an English accent:)*

ROZ. "Elli Elli dear do come out it's so lovely."

PAUL. "Just a minute." Elyot comes out. Your father plays Elyot.

ROZ. No kidding. He always plays Elyot. He's been playing Elyot since I was five years old.

PAUL. He looks at the view. "Not so bad."

ROZ. *(Deadpan.)* "It's heavenly look at the lights of that yacht reflected in the water oh dear I'm so happy."

PAUL. "Are you?"

ROZ. "Aren't you?"

PAUL. "Of course I am. Tremendously happy."

ROZ. "Just to think here we are you and I married."

PAUL. "Yes, things have come to a pretty pass."

*(***PAUL** *laughs as Elyot.)*

ROZ. "Don't laugh at me, you mustn't be blasé about honeymoons just because this is your second."

PAUL. "That's silly."

ROZ. "Have I annoyed you by saying that?"

PAUL. "Just a little."

ROZ. "Oh darling I'm so sorry kiss me."

(Beat. **PAUL** *looks at the script—a sort of double-take—to make sure the kiss is really in there. It is. He kisses her—a peck, to get it over with.)*

PAUL. "There."

ROZ. "Ummm, not so very enthusiastic. Again."

(Beat **PAUL** *kisses her again.)*

PAUL. "That better?"

ROZ. "Three times, please, I'm superstitious."

(Pause. **PAUL** *leans into* **ROZ** *and they kiss with conviction. Then with passion. They really get involved. In fact, they're both getting hotter by the second. He starts kissing her neck and her ears. She's panting for breath.)*

(Hardly able to talk.) This isn't in the script...

PAUL. I know. I'm ad-libbing.

*(***PAUL** *and* **ROZ** *go at it again. The following lines come in gasps, between kisses.)*

ROZ. OH, Paul... We have to rehearse... It's so important... to Mother and Dad...

PAUL. You're right. ...I agree. ...Take your clothes off.

*(***PAUL** *starts to undress* **ROZ.***)*

ROZ. Wait! Paul, there's something important I have to tell you.

PAUL. Tell me later, when you're naked.

ROZ. Okay.

*(***PAUL** *and* **ROZ** *drop their scripts and hit the floor—when the phone rings.)*

Oh, hell.

(It rings again. **PAUL** *answers it.)*

PAUL. Hello? ...Yes it is. ...Oh my God!

going to turn your back on them because you lost a measly role in a film?

CHARLOTTE. ...You give me a pain, George.

GEORGE. I know I do. I'm sorry. I can't help it. But I do love you, Charlotte. I haven't the faintest idea why. But the thought of living without you terrifies me.

(Long pause. **CHARLOTTE** *just looks at him. Then her face crinkles up and she starts to cry. She looks and sounds like a sweet little girl who is crying because she can't have all the candy in the window. This is the real* **CHARLOTTE** *breaking through at last.)*

CHARLOTTE. I wanted to be a movie star!

*(***CHARLOTTE** *sobs on* **GEORGE***'s shoulder.)*

GEORGE. *(Comforting her.)* I know you did.

CHARLOTTE. I wanted to be rich and famous. I wanted everybody to admire me!

GEORGE. I admire you.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, George, we were *so close*! We almost made it. After all these years.!

GEORGE. There will be other movies.

CHARLOTTE. No there won't. That was our last chance and you know it. Oh...crap!

GEORGE. Perhaps we're not meant to be movie stars. Isn't it nice to know our limitations?

CHARLOTTE. No. I hate it.

GEORGE. I find it rather comforting, now that I think about it.

CHARLOTTE. I don't. I despise it. And I hate getting older. I'm starting to look like Ed Sullivan.

GEORGE. You're as beautiful now as the day we met. No. I take it back. You're more beautiful.

CHARLOTTE. You have glaucoma.

GEORGE. *(Shakes his head.)* Cataracts.

(They kiss. As they're kissing, **RICHARD** *enters from the street and sees them.)*

RICHARD. Oh, I take it this means we're not running off together.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, Richard. I'm so sorry. You must think I'm hateful.

RICHARD. No, no...

CHARLOTTE. Can you *ever* forgive me?

RICHARD. Well—

CHARLOTTE. You know I love you, but just in a different way.

RICHARD. I like his way better.

(At this moment, **ROZ** *enters, chased by* **PAUL.***)*

ROZ. Paul, stop it!

PAUL. You're in love with me and you know it!

ROZ. I am not!

(By which time, **HOWARD** *has entered through the street door.)*

HOWARD. Roz...?

ROZ. Howard, darling, how are you feeling?

HOWARD. Well, I'm-I'm better, I think, but—

GEORGE. Young man, I owe you a profound apology.

HOWARD. That's okay, I just—

CHARLOTTE. He thought you were someone else entirely.

ROZ. I still think it's unforgivable.

PAUL. It was a mistake! *(To* **HOWARD.***)* Did I say I was sorry?

HOWARD. *Would you all just be quiet!!! (Silence.)* I'd like to say something.

CHARLOTTE. Please do.

GEORGE. Absolutely.

*(***GEORGE** *and* **CHARLOTTE** *sit quietly.)*

HOWARD. Roz... I can't go through with it.

ROZ. Howard...

HOWARD. It's too much pressure! I mean, I'm sure it's just me, but... I've never been gagged and locked in a closet before.

ROZ. It was a mistake.

HOWARD. I know, but...well...something else happened. I met this girl, and—

(At this moment, **EILEEN** *enters through the street door.)*

EILEEN. Howard, honey. The cab is waiting. We'll miss the train.

HOWARD. Okay, right. I'll be right there.

(Shocked silence. They **ALL** *gape at* **HOWARD** *and* **EILEEN.***)*

GEORGE. Eileen?

EILEEN. *(To* **HOWARD.***)* You didn't tell them yet, did you?

HOWARD. I was just, you know, starting...

ROZ. Howard?

HOWARD. Well...this is a funny story... We, uh, we met at the hospital. I mean, we didn't "meet" there, we went steady in high school. Here in Buffalo. Anyway, we started talking and it was like, Oh my God, she's so *normal!*

*(***EILEEN** *takes his hand.)*

So we went to the cafeteria, for some jello, and then it just "happened." It was like magic. We sort of...knew.

EILEEN. Couldn't you just eat him up?

HOWARD. And hey, you know what the best part is? *(To* **EILEEN.***)* You tell 'em.

EILEEN. Go ahead.

HOWARD. Well...she wants to start a family *right away*!

(Everyone is stunned. **EILEEN** *looks sheepish.* **HOWARD** *looks proud.)*

GEORGE. ...What a good idea!

CHARLOTTE. George—!