Harvey Fierstein's

torch song

Show Information

Directed by Wain Douglas April 2027

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Synopsis

The 2018 Broadway revival of Torch Song is an abridged, two-act adaptation of Harvey Fierstein's classic 1982 play Torch Song Trilogy. Running just over two hours instead of the original four-hour runtime, the story follows Arnold Beckoff, a sharp-tongued, Jewish drag performer living in New York City during the late 1970s and early 1980s, as he searches for love, family, and respect.

Production Team

Producer : Michelle Newton
Directors : Wain Douglas

Key Dates

Auditions - 10th and 15th December 2026

Rehearsals - Monday and Thursday starting January 2027

Show dates - 8th – 11th April 2027 (Availability needed from Sunday 4th April to Sunday 11th April inclusive.)

Membership is required to take part in this production.

Plot Overview

Act I: Romance and Heartbreak. Arnold meets Ed Reiss, a schoolteacher struggling to accept his own bisexuality. Though the two fall in love, Ed's insecurities drive him to leave Arnold and settle down with a woman named Laurel. A year later, Arnold finds genuine happiness with a younger model named Alan, and the two visit Ed and Laurel at their country home. The weekend exposes lingering romantic tensions between Arnold and Ed, ending with the news that Ed and Laurel are engaged.

Act II: Grief, Parenthood, and Respect. Several years later, Arnold is raising a gay teenager named David after Alan was tragically murdered in a homophobic hate crime just before their adoption was finalized. Ed, now separated from Laurel, is temporarily staying with Arnold to help out. The central conflict erupts when Arnold's overbearing mother, Mrs. Beckoff, visits from Florida. Grieving her own late husband, she disapproves of Arnold's sexuality and his non-traditional family, leading to an emotional confrontation in which Arnold demands her respect as an equal.

Cast list

Arnold	A drag queen, Jewish, and gay.
Ed	A Brooklyn school teacher, older than Arnold, handsome, charming, claims he is bisexual.
Mrs. Beckoff	Arnold's widowed mother.
Laurel	A woman Ed meets while in a relationship with Arnold. Later becomes Ed's lover.
Alan	A handsome man, younger than Arnold, who models and aspires to be an actor.
David	Arnold's fifteen-year-old foster child (played by an adult).

Character breakdowns

Arnold Beckoff (Playing Age: Early 30s)

Role & Personality: The central protagonist. He is a sharp-witted, unapologetically gay Jewish drag queen who performs torch songs under the stage name Virginia Ham. Fierstein's script describes him as a "kvetch of great wit and want". Beneath his biting, defensive humour, he deeply craves a traditional, loving family and mutual respect.

Arc: He begins the play around age 25, disillusioned with casual hookups, and matures into his early 30s as he navigates heartbreak, loss, and single fatherhood.

Ed Reiss (Playing Age: Late-30s)

Role & Personality: Arnold's handsome, well-meaning, yet emotionally conflicted bisexual lover. Introduced at age 35, Ed works as a New York City schoolteacher and lives in constant fear of losing his job or facing societal rejection if outed.

Arc: Often oblivious to the emotional toll his indecisiveness takes on others, he leaves Arnold to pursue a conventional marriage with a woman, though he remains deeply tethered to Arnold as a friend and confidant over the years.

Mrs. Beckoff / "Ma" (Playing Age: Late 50s to Mid-60s)

Role & Personality: Arnold's traditional, overbearing, and fiercely proud Jewish mother. Introduced around age 60, she is quick-tongued, stubborn, and deeply set in her ways.

Arc: Appearing primarily in the second act, she struggles to reconcile her genuine love for her son with her refusal to accept his sexuality, his grief over Alan, and his decision to adopt a teenage son. She requires strong comedic timing paired with formidable dramatic weight.

Alan (Playing Age: Mid to Late 20s)

Role & Personality: Arnold's devoted, younger lover. Introduced at age 18, Alan is a charismatic former hustler transitioning into a successful modelling career.

Arc: Sweet-natured, earnest, and fiercely loyal, Alan provides the unconditional commitment Arnold has always wanted. He eagerly plans to build a life and adopt a child with Arnold before being tragically killed in a homophobic street attack between acts.

Laurel (Playing Age: Late 20s to Mid-30s)

Role & Personality: Ed's perceptive, grounded girlfriend and eventual wife.

Arc: Initially representing the safe, heterosexual normalcy Ed thinks he wants, Laurel is far sharper and more empathetic than Ed gives her credit for. She is fully aware of Ed's bisexuality and past with Arnold, navigating the messy dynamics between the three of them with surprising grace, wit, and maturity.

Character breakdowns cont..

David Beckoff (Playing Age: 15–17/ Mid-Teens)

Role & Personality: Arnold's bright, street-smart, and openly gay foster son.

Arc: Having bounced through the system before being placed with Arnold after Alan's death, David is perceptive, resilient, and unafraid to push back against authority. He brings youthful energy to the second act and shares an affectionate, banter-heavy dynamic with Arnold they await the finalisation of his adoption.

Sides Breakdown

If you would like to audtion for any of the roles in Torch Song, please look at the audition sides for each character. Below is a breakdown of the sections you need to familiarize yourself with in preparation. Torch Song is set in New York so we may ask you to use a NYC American accent.

Arnold: P7 – from 'I think my biggest problem is being young and beautiful…..
To P8: his wonderful Mother or shrinker.'

Ed: P25 – from 'You're doing it again; asking questions you don't really want the answers to…….To: P27: I'm so scared, I need you. '

Ma: Pg73 – from 'You want I should do a bubble dance…….
To: Pg 75: How dare you talk to me this way.'

Alan: Pg 41 – from 'To own a disco…….
To: Pg 42: I'm not proposing marriage,'

Laurel: Pg 36 – from 'So tell me about yourself……
To: Pg 37: speak to my therapist and that was that.'

David: Pg 55 – from 'Will these impress Granny?…..
To: Pg 57: You too…..Ma.'

Audition Information

Auditions will take place:

7.30pm on 10th and 15th December 2026

BHOS Community Arts Hub and The Campbell Studio Theatre
County Oak Avenue
Hollingbury
Brighton
BN1 8DJ

If you would like to Audition please register your interest with info@bhos.org