

Character Descriptions

Note to actors: Some characters, traditionally played by males, may be cast as females.

Sheridan Whiteside - Male, 40-60 Eccentric radio personality. He is a critic, lecturer, and the intimate friend of anyone worth knowing. He is an egomaniac who “would see his mother burned at the stake if that was the only way he could light his cigarette.” His cruel wit and penchant for aggressive repartee make him a great comic character, insofar as humor often depends on other people’s misery or discomfort.

Maggie Cutler - Female, 20s-40s Whiteside's executive assistant, very businesslike most of the time, but also a romantic who falls in love with Bert Jefferson. Whiteside's private secretary and chief interference runner for the past ten years. In her thirties, she is sarcastic and cynical, and she knows where the bodies are buried. After she meets Bert Jefferson and goes ice skating with him, she decides that the fast lane with Whiteside is infinitely less preferable than conventional delights of domesticity. The fear of losing a good secretary prompts Whiteside to try to destroy the relationship, but her seriousness about her love induces him to help her achieve her goal.

Mr. Earnest W. Stanley - Male, 40-60 Rich factory owner, uptight and put out by the audacity of his guest.

Mrs. Stanley (Daisy) - Female, 40-60 Always trying to play the hostess, and keep her husband from flying off the handle.

Richard Stanley - Male, 18-25 Grown son of Earnest and Daisy, photographer, wishes he could travel and take pictures.

June Stanley - Female, 18-25 Grown daughter of Earnest and Daisy, wants to get married to Sandy who is starting union trouble at the factory.

Harriet Stanley - Female, 50+ Earnest Stanley's eerie sister, floats in and out when Whiteside is alone.

Miss Preen - Female, 30+ Frantic Nurse attending to Whiteside, not enjoying the task of taking care of him. A spinsterish, humorless prude, she becomes the constant butt of his insults and name-calling, to which she reacts with routine indignation.

John – Male/Female 40+ Butler who has been around awhile

Sarah - Female, 40+ Housekeeper who has been around awhile

Mrs. Dexter - Female, 30+ Visiting society friend of Mrs Stanley

Mrs. McCutcheon - Female, 30+ Visiting society friend of Mrs Stanley

Dr. Bradley - Male, 50+ Whiteside's doctor while Whiteside is in Mesalia. He diagnoses Whiteside's injuries by looking at the wrong X rays. He is also a late-blooming author who tries to get Whiteside to read his book, *Forty Years an Ohio Doctor*.

Bert Jefferson - Male, 20s-40s The owner and editor of the *Mesalia Journal*. He is "an interesting looking young man" who has written a producible play. He naïvely and ambitiously allows himself to be lured by the chance of making it to the big time, even if it means the sacrifice of personal happiness.

Professor Metz – Male/Female, 30+ "a strange-looking little man," an entomologist who once lived for two years in a cave with nothing but plant lice. He is the first of three eccentrics to visit Whiteside during his convalescence. He brings the great man a present of a colony of ten thousand roaches.

Lorraine Sheldon - Female, 30s-40s a snobby actress, young and beautiful, the vicious epitome of the glamorous, brainless, superficial superstar. Whiteside lures her to Ohio by telling her that Jefferson's play has a marvelous part for her. She thus unwittingly lets herself be used to break up the romance between Jefferson and Maggie. Seducing a man for benefit is, for her, all in a day's work.

Sandy - Male, 20s a labor-organizer in Mr. Stanley's factory, big strong lad.

Beverley Carlton – Male/Female, 30s-50s English thespian, songwriter, musician. A Noël Cowardish character who dashes around the world composing and writing plays and being devastatingly charming. His latest comedy, he says, is the best since Molière. He breezes in to visit Whiteside and wish him a "Merry Christmas. He stays about a quarter of an hour, using part of the time to regale him with a number from his new revue. Maggie enlists him in an attempt to lure Jefferson away from Lorraine Sheldon, trying to counter Whiteside's attempt to break up her romance. (pianist preferred, not required)

Banjo – Male/Female - 30s-50s a famous Hollywood comedian, a grown-up adolescent. He is as loony off-screen as on-the Marx brothers all wrapped into one-but he good-heartedly allows himself to be the means by which Maggie can retrieve her happiness.

Also seeking:

Cast members to play multiple smaller & non-speaking roles, including:

- Westcott (the head radioman)
- the Luncheon Guests (prisoners)
- Mr. Baker (guard)
- Expressman
- Radio Technicians
- Deputies

- A plain clothes man