

HOUSE OF GAMES - Introduction Hampstead Theatre - June 2025

Welcome to this introduction to House of Games based on the screen play by David Mamet, story by David Mamet and Jonathan Katz, stage version by Richard Bean, directed by Jonathan Kent.

The audio-described performance at Hampstead Theatre is on Saturday the 8th of June. There is a touch tour at 12:45pm, the introductory notes will start in the auditorium at 2.15 pm, and the performance at 2:30pm. The performance runs for approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes without interval and the live audio description will be given by Miranda Yates.

Information on Hampstead's website tells us... ***'Celebrated psychoanalyst and author Dr Margaret Ford has a new client. Billy needs help: he's addicted to sex, drugs and, most dangerously, gambling big money at an illicit poker lounge, the House of Games. Dr Ford also happens to be in search of subject matter for her next bestseller - a search which takes her deep into Chicago's underworld and into the path of Mike, a charismatic gambler. A complex game commences, in which even the players themselves don't know the rules, their roles, or who will be left holding the trump card...'***

Please note - this production contains depictions of violence, gambling and guns, use of strong language and discussions of drug-use and sex. There is also use of herbal cigarettes and one loud gun shot.

The story unfolds in America in Chicago around 2008 in two locations, each on a different level, with a seedy basement bar - the House of Games - occupying the lower level, and Doctor Ford's brightly lit office on the level above.

There are 8 actors 6 male and 2 female.

Doctor Margaret Ford is a white woman in her early forties, of average height with a trim physique. Her blonde hair is cut into a neat bob and she wears subtle makeup. When we first meet her she has a contained, professional air, and wears a fitted calf length skirt with a short split at the front, that's fastened at the waist by a slim matching leather belt. She wears this with a white silk blouse and sandy toned wedged shoes. Later when out of the office she throws on a dark navy blazer and carries a small cream handbag. As the story unfolds she takes on a more relaxed

look and energy wearing a pair of mid blue Levis's jeans, and adding a pale grey waistcoat over her blouse. Initially Margaret holds herself with a controlled formality, and as events unfold her posture softens.

Billy Hahn is white and in his early twenties, tall and slim with a scruffy appearance. His brown hair is short and messy and he has a stubbly jaw. He wears a pair of camouflage cargo pants with scuffed skater shoes and a washed out, long sleeved maroon top with ragged cuffs worn with a faded grey t-shirt over it. He also wears a short necklace of brown and turquoise beads. We meet Billy in a session as a client in the confines of Margaret's office. He has a restless energy and often fidgets or paces.

Kathleen, Margaret's secretary is a plump white woman of about sixty years of age. Her blonde hair is cut short and she wears a smart mid-grey skirt suit with a white blouse and low heels. Kathleen has a grounded energy, unphased and dependable.

Mike is white and aged around his late forties, he has a strong build, thick short cut greying hair and a neat, trimmed grey-white beard. He wears a smart tailored black suit with a faint pinstripe. Underneath the jacket is a long-sleeved black top with a short zip at the collar, his shoes are beige leather loafers. Mike exudes calm control, and is charming, but with a simmering edge.

Bobby, a Hell's Angel is in his fifties with a pale olive complexion, a sturdy muscular frame and lumbering gait. His greying brown hair falls to the top of his shoulders with the top section tied back. He wears a denim shirt with cut off short sleeves rolled up over his muscular biceps, with a black t-shirt underneath and a black leather waistcoat over the top. His arms are covered by several tattoos including a large snake and a skull wearing a bikers helmet decorated by the US stars and stripes. Bobby also wears filthy oil-stained jeans and biker boots and has a thick leather cuff strapped to one wrist and a thin leather band on the other with a set of metal dog tags on a chain around his neck.

George is in his mid-forties, a burly white man with a ruddy complexion, and thick set middle. He has a jowly face and his thick mutton chop whiskers hint at a somewhat flamboyant nature. At first he wears a blue, black and yellow Hawaiian style shirt with short sleeves and jeans. His yellow baseball cap is worn backwards

with his pale framed glasses perched on top. George also has a number of fabric wristbands. Later he changes into a plaid lumberjack style shirt removing his baseball cap and glasses.

Joey is the oldest in the group, a white man in his mid-seventies, with neatly combed grey hair and metal framed glasses. Joey is of average height and solid build, with the air of an elder statesman, and dresses smartly in a dark suit jacket, with a white hankie in the breast pocket, over a white shirt and maroon patterned bow tie. His cream trousers are pressed and worn with polished black leather lace ups.

Trudi is in her late thirties, tall and slim with a pale complexion. Her makeup is well applied with defined brows and muted rose lipstick and her blonde shoulder length hair is coiffed into perfect waves. When we first meet her she looks every bit the sophisticated banking executive, in a maroon power suit with a contrasting turquoise silk blouse and high heels. Later Trudi removes her jacket and swaps her heels for trainers.

PJ is in his early forties and has light brown skin and a muscular athletic physique, his afro hair is cut into a high-top fade, and he has a neat moustache. He wears a plain tailored black suit, with a white shirt fastened by a lemon-yellow tie patterned by tiny spots. Later, more casually, his white short-sleeve shirt is worn undone revealing his white t-shirt underneath.

The large basement bar has a seedy and grubby appearance, it's about 12 metres wide and 6 metres deep – the walls angle in slightly so that the back of the space is a little narrower at about 8 metres. The floor is covered by well-worn wooden boards that run front to back and the plastered walls are a grimy dark grey and heavily smoke stained. At the back of the space, at head height is a narrow basement window that looks directly out onto the street, with a metal grille on the street side, it's a couple of metres wide and tall enough to allow a glimpse of the lower legs of those approaching and leaving the bar.

In the window facing the street a red neon sign says House of Games. The door into the bar from the street is a couple of metres to the left of the window, and fronted by another metal grill that's just visible when the door is opened. A short set of steps doglegs down from the left to a doorframe that face us at floor level.

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At the bottom of the steps to the left is the door into a ladies washroom. A couple of metres further forward on the same side is a larger doorway with a sliding door through which is a pool and TV room. A couple of metres in from this doorway is a round poker table covered by a circular green baize cloth just big enough for the tabletop and the tables is surrounded by half a dozen bentwood chairs.

The right-side wall has two further doors, one towards the back which opens onto a set of stairs that leads up to an unseen apartment. The other door is a few metres further forwards and leads to the men's washroom. In between these two doors, a dim light spills down onto three narrow shelves that contain various liquor bottles. Parallel to the wall about a metre in front of the shelves is a wood panelled bar about three metres long, painted a dull gun-metal grey, with a worn and scuffed surface.

Margaret's office on the level above has a bright and clean, utilitarian feel, devoid of distracting personal touches. The office is about 6 metres wide and a couple of metres deep, with the door into the office on the far left. The upper half of the door is a pane of opaque glass, on the reverse side of the glass at the top letters spell out Dr Margaret Ford. Just inside the door in the back wall is a short row of coat hooks. In the centre of the back wall daylight spills in through a large window about three metres wide and a metre in height covered by white venetian blinds. There's a desk just in front of the window with a seat, so that the person sitting behind the desk faces us. On the desk in the centre is a laptop, and an intercom, attached to the laptop is a headset with microphone, there's also a small alarm clock and on the left side of the desk is neat white lamp. The right-side wall of the office is taken up by pale wooden bookshelves with cupboards underneath. Some shelves are filled by neat rows of books with others displaying framed certificates. The only other items in the office are two other chairs, a leather swivel chair for clients to the right of the desk and a simple pale wooden armchair with a padded black seat and back rest.

Cast and Production Credits

Dr. Margaret Ford is played by **Lisa Dillon**

Billy Hahn is played by **Oscar Lloyd**

Kathleen is played by **Joanna Brookes**

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Mike is played by **Richard Harrington**

Bobby is played by **Andrew Whipp**

George is played by **Sion Tudor Owen**

Joey is played by **Robin Soans**

Trudi is played by **Kelly Price**

PJ is played by **Laurence Ubong Williams**

The Screen play is by **David Mamet**, th Story is by **David Mamet** and **Jonathan Katz**, with the stage version written by **Richard Bean**.

The Director is **Jonathan Kent**

The Designer is **Ashley Martin-Davis**

The Lighting is **Peter Mumford**

The Sound Designer is **Paul Groothius**

The Dialect Coach is **Carter Bellamy**

This is the end of the introduction to ***House of Games*** at Hampstead Theatre. If you have any question or need further assistance please contact the box office on **020 7722 9301**.