

Newsies Role Descriptions

About the accents: Students who watch the movie or listen to the Broadway soundtrack will notice that many characters speak with a New York accent. Actors are welcome to use an accent when they audition, but it is not required. Because the characters in the story can be portrayed as coming from a variety of places in America and beyond, we will decide on each character's "voice" (including accent) for performance once the roles are cast.

About role genders: You will notice that many roles are listed as "*male OR female playing male.*" The lead roles in this show are overwhelmingly male characters. Because this story is based on an actual historical event, and nearly all newsies were male, we will still be costuming all newsies as "boys," but most roles (*as noted below*) are available for performers of any gender.

THE NEWSIES

JACK KELLY *Male, sings solo, many lines, some dancing, stage combat*

The charismatic leader of the Manhattan newsies, is an orphaned dreamer and artist who yearns to get out of the crowded streets of New York and make a better life for himself out West. Fiercely protective of his friends and strongly loyal, Jack isn't afraid to use his voice to attain better conditions for the working kids of New York City. Though living on the streets has given him a tough-guy exterior, Jack has a big heart and can demonstrate a sweet vulnerability.

DAVEY *male OR female playing male, sings solo, many lines, some dance*

Les's straight-laced, bright big brother starts selling newspapers to help his family earn a living, but becomes swept up in the fervor of the strike. A leader in his own right who is learning to use his voice to uplift others, Davey is the brains of the resistance.

LES *male OR female playing male, sings solo, many lines, featured dancer*

Davey's cheeky little brother, is inspired by the freedom of the newsies and loves their independent lifestyle. A precocious and natural newsie, Les is an intuitive salesboy and a pint-sized charmer.

CRUTCHIE *male OR female playing male, sings solo, many lines, character dancing feature, stage combat*

A dedicated newsie with a bum leg that's painful, but helps sell more papers. Though he walks with the assistance of a crutch, Crutchie doesn't let it define him; when in a jam, Jack Kelly's best friend relies on a goofy- sweet sense of humor and optimistic resilience. Crutchie is the heart of the newsies' resistance. The performer in this role must be able to dance enthusiastically in character while still physically portraying Crutchie's "bum" leg.

OTHER NEWSIES *male OR female playing male, solos, lines, lots of dance, stage combat*

The core group of newsies who work the same neighborhoods as Jack, Crutchie, Davey, and Les, these hard-working kids function as a family that cares for and helps one another. Many of them are orphans, have families outside of NY who they send their money to, or have such poor families that they can't live at home, so they become "roommates" with the other newsies as well as close friends. There are 14 newsies in Jack's "Gang": **Albert, Buttons, Elmer, Finch, Henry, Ike, Jo Jo, Mike, Mush, Race, Romeo, Specs, Splasher, and Tommy Boy.** Performers in these roles must create unique and specific characters with physical and vocal details that distinguish them from the other newsies. All roles have multiple lines and solos and/or dance features.

FRIENDS AND ALLIES OF THE NEWSIES

KATHERINE PLUMBER *Female, sings solo, many lines, some dance, stage combat*

An ambitious young reporter working hard to make a name for herself as a legitimate journalist in a time when women aren't taken seriously. Quick, funny, and resourceful, she boldly captures the voice of a new generation rising in her coverage of the newsies' strike. While she generally has no time for cocky, streetwise young men, she makes an exception for Jack Kelly.

MEDDA LARKIN *female, sings solo, some dance*

Inspired by vaudeville performer Aida Overton Walker, this big-voiced saloon singer and star of the Bowery offers her theater as a safe haven for the newsies. An astute entertainer with great comic delivery, she's a good friend to Jack and stands firmly behind the newsies in their fight for justice.

SPOT CONLON *male OR female playing male, one solo, some lines, featured dancer*

The proud leader of the Brooklyn newsies, boasts an intimidating reputation and an unforgettable swagger.

MR(S). JACOBI *male or female, several lines, no singing or dance*

Allows the newsies to congregate in his(her) restaurant to plan their strike – when (s)he doesn't have any paying customers, that is. This role may be played with an accent of the actors choice, and the character can be portrayed as a first-generation immigrant to NY.

STAGE MANAGER *female or male, does not sing, some lines, no dance.*

The stage manager of Medda Larkin's club and also the MC of her show, running the backstage area and introducing performers on stage. This performer must be able to switch from a practical, efficient stage manager personality to an energetic and entertaining 'host of the show' when they are 'on stage' at the club.

DARCY AND BILL *male or female, some lines, some dance*

Other publisher's children who help Katherine break in to use the basement printing press to print the newsies' paper. These actors will double in other roles.

MAYOR OF NEW YORK *male OR female playing male, some lines, no singing or dance.*

The Mayor of New York City rebuffs Pulitzer's attempts to shut down the newsies' strike. This performer will double in other roles.

GOVERNOR TEDDY ROOSEVELT *male OR female playing male, some lines, no singing or dance*

A well-respected lifelong public servant, inspires Jack to stand up to Pulitzer. This performer will double in other roles.

PULITZER AND HIS STAFF

JOSEPH PULITZER *male OR female playing male, sings solos, many lines, no dance*

A pompous businessman through and through, owns the World (*a major NY newspaper*) and is concerned solely with the bottom line. Katherine's no-nonsense father, Pulitzer doesn't sympathize with the strikers, but he does eventually – and grudgingly – respect Jack.

PULITZER AND HIS STAFF CONT.

WIESEL *male OR female playing male, sings ensemble only, several lines, no dance*

Or “Weasel,” runs the distribution window for the World and knows most of the newsies by name. Assisted by the intimidating Delancey brothers, who keep order by any means necessary, Wiesel is Pulitzer’s disgruntled paper-pusher, and requires an exaggerated, cartoonish vocal and physical performance.

OSCAR AND MORRIS DELANCY *male OR female playing male, several lines, no dance, stage combat*

Tough brothers who work at the distribution window for the World, take the side of the publishers in the strike and are known to use their fists to make a point. These roles require two performers who work together well with good comic timing, but can also be physically intimidating. Although they do not dance, these roles still require a strong physical performance with excellent self-control for stage combat sequences.

SEITZ *male OR female playing male, small solo, some lines, limited dance*

An editor at the World who advises Pulitzer, but ultimately admires the newsies’ paper.

BUNSEN *male OR female playing male, small solo, some lines, limited dance*

Pulitzer’s bookkeeper, comes up with the ideas to raise the newsies’ price per paper.

HANNAH *female, small solo, some lines, limited dance*

Pulitzer’s practical and insightful secretary.

NUNZIO *male OR female playing male, does not sing, some lines, character movement feature*

Pulitzer’s barber, who is trying to cut Pulitzer’s hair during the song *The Bottom Line* and the scene prior. This role requires a strong physical comedy performance. Italian accent optional.

SNYDER *male or female, several lines, no dance*

The crooked and sinister warden of The Refuge, a filthy and horrible orphanage, is concerned only with catching enough kids to keep his government checks coming. Though he doesn’t work for Pulitzer, he’s happy to team up with him to take down the newsies and get his hands on Jack. This role requires a strong physical and vocal character performance.

GUARDS *male OR female playing male, do not sing, one line*

The guards who throws Jack, Davey, and Les out of the building when they try to get in to see Pulitzer. These performers will double in other roles.

PHOTOGRAPHER *male or female, sings ensemble, limited dance*

Takes the triumphant photo of the newsies at the end of “Sieze the Day.” This performer will double in other roles.

SMALL ENSEMBLES

These are small group features with 4-10 in each ensemble. Additional features in dance, solos, and lines will be cast from among the ensembles.

BROOKLYN NEWSIES *male and female playing male, sing ensemble, dance feature*

Spot Conlon's gang, the Brooklyn newsies are feared, admired, and respected by the other newsies city-wide. When they add their support to the strike in their feature number *Brooklyn's Here*, they cause a waterfall effect that brings every other newsie in the city on board.

SCABS *male and female playing male, sing ensemble, some dance, some stage combat*

Newsies from other boroughs brought in to "break" the strike. Instead, they throw down their papers and become new members of Jack Kelly's gang.

THE BOWERY BEAUTIES *female, sing ensemble, dance feature*

A small group of dancers who join Medda Larkin on stage. Vaudeville-style dancers, these performers must have strong, sharp dance skills, big facial expressions, and be strong singers.

NUNS *female, small ensemble singing feature*

A small group of nuns who offer free breakfast to hungry newsies. These performers must have strong singing voices and an ability to hold their melody while other performers sing counterpoint.

LARGE ENSEMBLES

Larger ensembles—most performers will be a member of at least one of these groups.

GOONS *male and female, stage combat*

Hired thugs that join the Delanceys to rough up the newsies at the end of Act I. Students in these roles must demonstrate excellent physical self control and strong physical acting.

POLICEMEN *male OR female playing male, stage combat*

Cops that show up during the strike riot. At first the newsies think the cops are there to help them, but the police join the fight on the Snyder's side and begin arresting newsies and taking them away.

MANHATTAN, FLUSHING, RICHMOND, WOODSIDE, AND BRONX NEWSIES *male and female, sing ensemble, dance*

Newsies from every other corner of the city that assemble to join the strike.

KIDS AT THE REFUGE *male and female, physical performance only*

Other kids who are incarcerated at the Refuge along with Crutchie.

Newsies Audition Monologues

- Pick any monologue you like (regardless of implied gender). The monologue you choose does not have any bearing on which roles you will be considered for.
- We are looking for actors who make strong choices and show us character movement as well as voice.
- You might be asked to do your monologue a second time with additional direction.

Jack Kelly 1: *Jack is speaking to the 'scabs'—other newsboys who have been paid extra by the newspaper to cross the strike lines and keep working.*

It ain't just about us. All across this city there are boys and girls who ought to be out playin' or going to school. Instead they're slavin' to support themselves and their folks. Ain't no crime to bein' poor, and not a one of us complains if the work we do is hard. All we ask is a square deal. Fellas ... for the sake of all the kids in every sweatshop, factory, and slaughter house in this town, I beg you ... throw down your papers and join the strike.

Jack Kelly 2: *Jack is talking to Davy, Les, and Medda. He is frustrated, injured, exhausted, and feeling extremely guilty about his friends' injuries*

Want to see a place I seen? How about this? (*he displays a large political cartoon he has drawn of the newsies being crushed by Pulitzer in Newsie Square*) Newsie Square, thanks to my big mouth, filled to overflowing with failure. Kids hurt, others arrested - Is that what you're aiming for? Go on and call me a quitter, call me a coward. No way I'm puttin' them kids back in danger.

Katherine Plumber: *Katherine is responding to Jack's attempt to give up. He claims that nothing they can do will make a difference and her ideas won't help.*

Really, Jack? Really? This would be a good time to shut up. The strike was your idea. The rally was Davey's. And now *my* plan will take us to the finish line. Think, Jack, if we publish this - my words with one of your drawings - and if every worker under twenty-one read it and stayed home from work ... or better yet, came to Newsie Square - a general city-wide strike! Even my father couldn't ignore that.

Davey: *Davey is trying to convince Jack that it's worth continuing the strike despite a shaky start*

They got us this time. I'll grant you that. But we took round one. And with press like this our fight is far from over. **Every newsie who could walk showed up this morning to sell papes like the strike never happened.-- And I was there with them. If I don't sell papes, my folks don't eat.** But then I saw this look on Weasel's face; he was actually nervous. And I realized this isn't over. We got them worried. Really worried. And I walked away. Lots of other kids did, too. And that is what you call a beginning.

Les: *Les is around 8 years old, and during this monologue is trying to impress his older brother and friends.*

What's the hold up? I need to let my girl know. We've got a date. Yeah, you heard me. Fame is one intoxicatin' potion. And this here girl, Sally, she's a plum. So can we table the palaver* and get back to business? Will Medda let us have the theater or not?

**"table the palaver" means "cut out the small talk and get to the point." Palaver is pronounced 'puh-LAV-er'*

MORE MONOLOGUES

Crutchie: *Crutchie is talking to Jack, one of the few newsies he trusts to treat him as an equal despite his disability.*

I wanna beat the other fellas to the street. I don't want anyone should see; I ain't been walkin' so good. Someone gets the idea I can't make it on my own, they'll lock me up in The Refuge for good. Be a pal, Jack. Help me down. Let's get our papers and hit the streets while we still can.

Pulitzer: *Pulitzer is used to getting what he wants, and frustrated with Jack for causing a disruption.*

Mark my words, boy. Defy me, and I will have you and every one of your friends locked up in The Refuge. I know you're Mr. Tough Guy, but it's not right to condemn that little crippled boy to conditions like that. And what about your pal Davey and his baby brother, ripped from their loving family and tossed to the rats? Will they ever be able to thank you enough?

Medda Larkin: *Medda feels very motherly and protective towards Jack, who is about 10 years younger than she is.*

Here's everything I owe you for the first backdrop, plus this one, and even a little something extra just account'a because I'm gonna miss you so. Just tell me that you're going somewhere and not running away. When you go somewhere and it turns out not to be the right place, you can always go somewhere else. But if you're running away, nowhere's ever the right place.