

## Guys and Dolls: Notes for Characters and Auditions

Set in 1950s New York, 'Guys & Dolls' follows a host of colourful and sometimes eccentric characters in a humorous and touching story based around the bright lights and shady corners of Times Square: it is "a musical fable of Broadway". The characters are vividly drawn, sometimes wise, often funny, with their own idiosyncratic language and wise cracks. We are looking for realistic characters (not caricatures) though it is true to say that the whole show is varnished with a gloss of light-hearted charm and well-meaning.

### **Story**

In the twilight world of gangsters and their molls, Nathan Detroit is losing his grip on the institution of the floating 'crap game' (the dice gambling scheme he runs that switches venue to avoid detection by the local police) and desperate to find the money to pay for the only location he can currently get his hands on. To seal the deal and quell the tempers of the gangsters who are gathering in town and keen to 'shoot crap' he bets his buddy, Sky Masterson, a thousand dollars that Sky will not be able to take a local Salvation Army girl, Sarah Brown, on a date to Havana. Meanwhile Nathan, engaged for fourteen years to cabaret artist Miss Adelaide, is struggling to keep her demands for marriage at bay, whilst she continues to battle with the symptoms of an incessant psychosomatic cold that plagues her all the time she is waiting to go down the aisle. Sarah isn't taken in by Sky's obvious charm and brushes off his advances until it becomes clear that her struggling Salvation Army mission will be closed down by General Cartwright if it doesn't prove itself to be more successful in attracting the local population of 'sinners'. Since Sky has promised her that one dozen of his comrades will show up at a forthcoming prayer meeting, she is convinced to travel with him to Cuba where, under the influence of alcohol, her defences slip and they realise they are falling in love with each other.

On returning to New York, Sarah discovers that, unbeknown to Sky, Nathan and his buddies have been using the empty mission as a site for the crap game. Sarah feels duped and Adelaide is furious that Nathan can't give their relationship priority over his gambling habits. At a crap game held in the sewers of New York, Sky bets all the members of the floating crap game that if he wins his roll of the dice, they must go join him at the mission to repent their sins. After winning his bet, and after Sarah & Adelaide plot to reform their respective lovers after marriage, the mission is saved by a successful prayer meeting led by Nicely's gospel-like confession and the couples tie the knot in a joyous double wedding.

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**Age ranges:** The playing ages are a rough guide. When casting roles the panel will consider the relative ages of performers cast in those roles that require the audience to believe in particular relationships e.g. romantic partnerships, couples, family relationships and work roles. Therefore, your suitability for casting might depend on the 'playing age' of the person you are being cast opposite.

**Sky Masterson:** Male. Baritone B to Eb. Playing age 25 - 35. Lead role  
Charismatic, cool and charming. Sky is a suave, intelligent and confident gangster who naturally commands others' respect and attention. Handsome, with buckets of stage presence and sex appeal, he is familiar with attracting the attention of the ladies but finds himself falling in love with the one woman who brushes off his advances. He surprises himself by discarding his spontaneous, free-wheeling lifestyle for a conventional romance. Some dance/movement ability needed for the crap shooting sequence.

**Sarah Brown:** Female. Soprano to High A. Playing age 18 - 30. Lead role.  
Conventional, respectable and principled, Sarah is initially a little too buttoned-up for her own good. She has genuine passion for her calling and compassion for her 'fold' but gives Sky an initial frosty response. The actress playing this role should play convincingly drunk, when under the influence of alcohol, she allows her straight-laced persona to slip and falls exuberantly and madly in love. She goes on a journey of reconciling her feelings with her beliefs, and changing some of her prejudices so that her head can follow her heart.

**Nathan Detroit:** Male. Baritone to High F. Playing age 35 - 50. Lead role.

Organiser of the floating crap game. With a tendency towards neuroticism Nathan is a lovable rogue who is always struggling to stay one step ahead of the pack and looking for the big break he never seems to get. Funny, frustrated but romantic his heart is torn between the camaraderie of his gambling circle and the woman he loves.

**Adelaide:** Female. Mezzo to A. Playing age 30s to 40s. Lead role

Lead performer at the 'Hot Box' a somewhat tacky and dodgy cabaret joint. Strong comic actress required with dancing ability and ability to carry off a basque and stockings. She spends the whole show with the symptoms of a cold, acting through sneezes and congestion. She adores Nathan but is driven crazy by his antics with the gambling ring and having been engaged to him for 15 years.

**Nicely Nicely Johnson:** Male. Tenor to high B flat. Playing age 30 to 50. Supporting role Best pal to Nathan Detroit. With a voracious appetite and boundless enthusiasm, Nicely is 'nice' by nature and name. Comic, cheerful and likeable he delivers hilarious one-liners and a big, Broadway showstopper ('Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat') with equal aplomb.

**Benny Southstreet:** Male. Baritone. 25 - 55 supporting role.

Nicely's pal with whom he sings the duet 'Guys & Dolls' and trio 'Fugue for Tinhorns'. Upbeat, sometimes nervy, he is more of a novice in the gangster business and further down the pecking order. Characterful

**Harry the Horse:** Male. Supporting role.

Another gangster. Has come into money by collecting the reward on his father (!). Side kick and mouthpiece to Big Jule, so, though a pleasant rogue, is more on the ball and can be a cool customer who can stand his ground when necessary. Sings with ensemble but not alone.

**Big Jule:** Male. Speaking role. Playing age 35+. Supporting role.

Powerful, intimidating, high status gangster from out of town, whose reputation precedes him. A man of few words but much clout. There is comedy in his straight-talking bluntness. Usually played by an actor of large height and stature to match his name, but can be played a diminutive actor as an ironic and comic gesture. Enters the story part way through the first act.

**Arvide Abernathy:** Male. Baritone 60 - 90 supporting role.

Sarah's grandfather and significant member of the Salvation Army mission. Wise, warm and caring. Minor roles

**Lt. Brannigan:** Male. Non-singing role. Playing age 35+. Minor Role

Member of the local police force, wise to the gangsters' exploits and trying to keep them in order. Commands respect from Nathan and the guys.

**General Matilda B. Cartwright:** Female mezzo 40 - 65 cameo

Regional representative of the Salvation Army. Powerful, matronly, no-nonsense with a formidable presence and, it transpires, a sense of humour.

**Hot Box Girls** female 16 - 35 chorus/Dancers

Chorus of performers who back-up Adelaide in her night club act. Strong dancing, singing and character performance required. They perform 2 numbers with Adelaide - one of which involves stripping down to a basque and stockings. They will double into other aspects of the female ensemble.

**Male & female dancers:** Featured male and female dancers will be required for the Havana Sequence and male dancers for the Crapshooters Dance. They will all double into the ensemble.

**Ensemble:** The ensemble make up the characters of Times Square, gangsters and their molls, Salvation Army personnel and other cameos. We are looking for strong performers who can create individual, well-drawn characters.

Other roles (including Rusty Charlie, Joey Biltmore, Agatha, Angie the Ox, Liver Lips Louie, Waiter etc.) will be allocated at the discretion of the auditioning panel.

