

Blood Brothers

Willy Russell's classic, *Blood Brothers* is set in Liverpool and is about twins separated at birth but whose paths cross in later life.

Now commonly regarded as one of the all time great British musicals, *Blood Brothers* began as a play, with Russell composing his own score as the production grew. The story has touched the hearts and minds of a generation of theatregoers in dealing with two of the most pressing social issues of our time - inequality and unemployment, the debate of nature vs nurture at its heart.

The story of *Blood Brothers* takes us to Liverpool, around the time of the coal miner strikes. Beginning with the birth of twin brothers. A single mother in financial desperation gives away one of her newborn sons to her wealthy employer and attempts to keep them from discovering one another's true identity. However, their lives become unavoidably linked and her secrecy leads them to a tragic ending.

The pressures of superstition, economics and class trap them both and seal their fate - their paths are destined to cross again in both friendship and anger with the most tragic consequences imaginable.

A powerful and moving story, with both lively and sad parts. A wonderful tale that will capture your heart and leave a lasting impression. The play is both hilariously funny, deeply moving and features one of the most well-known songs of the musical, sung by Mrs Johnston, Marilyn Monroe.

The play has an entirely adult cast. We would welcome auditionees as young as 16, but please bear in mind we are looking for the youngest cast members to appear at least 20 in their presentation.

Characters

Mrs Johnston – Birth Mother of Mickey and Eddie

Female. Character age spans late twenties to 50s. Mrs Johnston must age before our eyes as troubles take their toll. She is portrayed to have totally good intentions and is the heroine of the audience, experiencing of a halfhearted marriage and the arrival of her numerous children. It is with a bittersweet attitude of acceptance that she explains the moment her husband deserts her, the costs of living for which she has little means, and the news that she is expecting not one more mouth to feed... but two. Despite being trapped by her social position and her lack of funds, she is down-to-earth and does not see money as the answer to all of her problems.

Auditionees will need to demonstrate strong characterization and stage presence. The comparison between Mrs Johnston and Mrs Lyons defines the contrast of social classes. Mrs Johnston is portrayed as the more kind and reasonable of the two mothers. Her delivery must be able to create a highly emotional atmosphere for the finale, representing the crescendo of the truth coming out. She must also have excellent comic timing and relationship with the audience. Her dialect must be thick Liverpudlian. She must be able to deliver a strong vocal number, ultra-catchy Marilyn Monroe.

Mrs Lyons – Adoptive Mother of Eddie

Female. Character age spans late twenties to 50s. She is very conscious of her social position and sees money as a solution to the problems of Mrs Johnston. Mrs Lyons is a cold woman who doesn't show much emotion. She is frustrated by the feelings of others. She is very over-protective of Eddie and fears his bond with the Johnstons. Later in the play this fear becomes more evident and she appears as a neurotic, obsessive character who appears to be losing control.

Auditionees will need to demonstrate strong characterization and stage presence. The comparison between Mrs Johnston and Mrs Lyons defines the contrast of social classes. They must be able to deliver an inner torment within their portrayal of Mrs Lyons, as the 'posh woman' who brings up another woman's child, always fearful of discovery. Their dialect should be perfect Queen's English.

Mickey Johnston

Male. Playing age spans from 7 to early to mid twenties. The character of Mickey appears both as a boy and a young man. In the first half of the show, Mickey appears as a childhood ringleader, and a hero-figure for Eddie, who is in awe of Mickey's unrestrained energy. He is an untamed, loveable character with an overwhelming air of innocence. As he grows throughout the play, we see Mickey face imprisonment and fall into depression. His character takes on a dark edge and he develops a

bitterness toward his brother Eddie, who he once idolized. Mickey and Eddie's natural bond unfolds throughout the show and as their inhibitions fall away, they appear more alike.

Auditionees must have excellent comic timing and characterization skills. As much as the relationship between Eddie and Mickey is intense and emotionally charged, it also sets up much of the comedy in the play. The actor must be able to play a variety of ages and be able to portray a sense of childhood innocence in the first half of the play. They must also be able to create a highly emotional atmosphere for the finale, representing the crescendo of the truth coming out. Dialect for this character is thick Liverpoolian.

Eddie Lyons – Twin Brother of Mickey

Male. Playing age spans from 7 to early to mid twenties. The character of Eddie appears both as a boy and a young man. In childhood, he is very adult in his mannerisms and is polite and contained. There is a sense that his adoptive mother, Mrs Lyons, has been overprotective and has not allowed her young son to interact with other children in messy, noisy childhood games. Eddie is excited by the untamed nature of Mickey. We see Eddie grow into a well-mannered, well-spoken, middle class adult with a successful career. Mickey and Eddie's natural bond unfolds throughout the show and as their inhibitions fall away, they appear more alike. Eddie becomes the role model towards the end of the show, the audience should appreciate him for his foundations and consideration of Linda.

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Linda

Female. Playing age spans from 7 to early to mid twenties. The character of Linda appears both as a girl and a young woman. Linda is Mickey's childhood sweetheart. In the first half of the play, she is energetic, with tomboy qualities but a mother-like warmth. She is loyal and protective of Mickey and magnetic to the brothers. As the story progresses, she becomes the object of both brothers' desire. Her character becomes softer as she supports Mickey through dark times but her loyalty is tested when her dreams are crushed by his imprisonment. The chemistry between she and Eddie grows as the story progresses.

Auditionees must have excellent comic timing, stage presence and characterization skills. Her relationships with the brothers are intense and emotionally charged. She also sets up much of the comedy in the play.

The actress must be able to play a variety of ages and be able to portray a sense of childhood innocence in the first half of the play. They must also be able to create a highly emotional atmosphere for the finale, representing the crescendo of the truth coming out. Dialect for this character is thick Liverpudlian.

Narrator

Male. Character age anywhere between late twenties to 60s. The audience should be unable to identify anything about his character. He has a sense of anonymity throughout the show. His presence on the stage is mostly unacknowledged which gives him a ghostlike quality.

His main role throughout the show is to act as a constant reminder of the brothers' tragic fate, a social conscience. His presentation is like that of somebody who is attending a funeral throughout the entire play. He could be portrayed as being quite frightening, delivering prophecies of doom with an exaggerated stage presence but this must be delivered in a strong, consistent, reserved manner.

Auditionees should also have good comic timing as well as strong characterization skills and good repartee with the audience. The dialect for this character is Liverpudlian.

Supporting Cast

We are also looking for up to eight adults to play supporting roles. These roles have limited dialogue but are key to the comic timing of the play. Auditionees should have excellent comic timing and strong stage presence. Characterization skills are essential as these roles include the characters of Mickey and Eddie's childhood siblings/friends.