

URINETOWN AUDITION PACK

A note from the team

Welcome to Urinetown, a show as anarchic and kooky as it is urgent in our ecologically challenged age.

If you know the show already, you'll know it's a wild ride: an exploration of disaster capitalism and corporate greed, told through the lens of a doomed love story. If you haven't come across it before; well, if you like your musicals off-the-wall and meta, you'll love this.

It's simultaneously broad-brushed and socially incisive: many of the characters are unsubtle cut-outs, but the story yields a Brechtian complexity where nothing is as it seems, and good intentions aren't enough to make the ostensible good guys win out.

I'm new to Cambridge and the theatre scene here but have been based in London as a professional director for much of my working life. I believe in working with the whole team to find a shared understanding of the show and the characters, and I'm looking forward to creating a collaborative rehearsal process where we make discoveries and take ownership of the story — together.

There's an exciting array of parts available, including some minor roles and a sizeable ensemble who will have lots to do. Strong comedy bones are a must for all.

Look forward to chatting more about the show and hopefully seeing you at audition!

- Justin

Synopsis

Officer Lockstock, our narrator, introduces us to a post-apocalyptic town wracked by the horror of years of drought, where the only toilets are public ones and urination is taxed ("Urinetown"). At one of these public toilets, manager Penny Pennywise castigates Bobby Strong's father for trying to pee without paying ("It's A Privilege To Pee"). Lockstock and the cops arrive, and Old Man Strong is carted off to Urinetown, a place of mysterious punishment.

Meanwhile, up at the offices of the Urine Good Company, Hope Cladwell returns to work at the business run by her father Caldwell B. Cladwell, who controls all the toilets in town as well as the lawmaking body ("Mr Cladwell") represented by Senator Fipp.

Down in the streets, Lockstock reflects on the necessity of the fear of punishment for a lawful society to function ("Cop Song"). In a chance meeting, Hope encourages Bobby to look within to find his purpose ("Follow Your Heart") and a romantic connection sparks between them. Fuelled by a new desire for change, Bobby inspires the Poor to question the status quo and refuse to pay to urinate ("Look at the Sky").

When Hope questions the ethics of her father's company, Cladwell educates her on the harsh realities of life ("Don't Be The Bunny") but as news arrives of the discontent in town, Cladwell and the police arrive at Bobby's urinal in force. Bobby takes Hope as a hostage and escapes ("Act One Finale").

As Act Two opens and Cladwell combs the town for Hope, the Poor lament their lot in life ("What is Urinetown?") Tensions rise and the Poor debate killing Hope ("Snuff That Girl") but Bobby calms them down and inspires them to seek a better future ("Run Freedom Run"). Penny arrives and persuade Bobby to agree to a meeting with Cladwell, who offers Bobby an obscene amount of cash in exchange for Hope and dropping the revolution. When Bobby refuses, Cladwell orders he be 'sent to Urinetown', even if it means the Poor kill Hope in revenge.

Penny, Hope, Bobby, and Fipp regret their choices ("Why Did I Listen To That Man?") as Bobby is 'sent to Urinetown' by being thrown off the roof and dies. Little Sally reports Bobby's final words back to the Poor ("Tell Her I Love Her"). Hope, seeing her opportunity, assumes command of the Poor and leads a murderous purge of the UGC establishment ("We're Not Sorry") culminating in the deaths of Fipp, Cladwell, and others.

Hope takes control of the UGC and allows everyone to pee for free in a bright new future ("I See A River"). Unfortunately, it turns out that Cladwell was right and his restrictive methods were necessary in order to preserve the town. All surviving characters embrace their annihilation with the recognition that their town had been the feared Urinetown all along.

Auditions

We'll be running the audition process for the show in two rounds. For the first round, we'll ask you to perform a song of your choosing, read a scene of your choosing from the sides below, and attend a short dance & choreography call.

For the recall, we'll ask you to perform an excerpt of a song from the show, and possibly read a new scene if we didn't previously hear you read for that character.

Music

We'll ask you to perform your chosen piece (we will provide an accompanist) and will also perform a vocal range check, and possibly a quick harmony test.

Text

For the text element of the audition, we'll ask you to read the sides of your choosing with a member of the panel. We're mostly interested in watching how you take direction and adapt to what we give you in the room. No need to try to learn the section beforehand.

Note that all characters in the show (or at least, the vast majority) have American accents, but don't worry about a pitch-perfect American accent for audition - we can work on this. A general American accent will suffice, and the show is all about big, bold characterisations. For principals, skill with American accent (and singing in one) would be advantageous.

If you don't see an audition side for the role you most see yourself in, just choose the one you feel showcases you best or feel drawn to.

Dance

The audition will include a short dance call with a group of auditionees. We will send you a video of a choreography sequence to learn and practice when you book an audition slot.

Please audition for any part you feel comfortable being considered for (though please bear in mind that rights dictate we cannot change the script or score, and you must be able to sing the part as written and be comfortable for your character to be addressed by the pronouns in the script.

Music notes

There is not really a single musical style to the show, as it has so many pastiche numbers in it which act to satirise other shows or musical styles. It shares a lot of DNA with shows such as Guys and Dolls, Little Shop of Horrors, and The Toxic Avenger.

The show is fast-paced and, although the songs are generally not technically complex, almost every number has some sort of close harmony singing in it and so all the cast (principals as well as ensemble) will need to be comfortable singing in harmony with others, sometimes, particularly for principals, only one or two to a part. The ability to read music, while not essential, will be very useful, as there may not be time to provide everyone with recordings of all the vocal lines during the rehearsal period.

Character Breakdowns

Adapted from <https://www.mtishows.co.uk/urinetown>, 'Full Cast Info'.

Officer Lockstock

The tongue-in-cheek narrator of our story, he is a corrupt policeman who secretly kills off the guilty offenders. Toes the line between likeable narrator and nasty cop. Has a lesson for the audience, but isn't always quite sure what it is.

Male, 35-55, Baritone (A2-A4)

Audition song (for recalls): 'Cop Song', start to bar 92 (learn everything, rather than swapping between Lockstock and Barrel).

Penelope Pennywise

The tough, jaded warden of the poorest, filthiest town urinal. She is Cladwell's one-time lover and mother to Hope who eventually softens her temper.

Female, 30-45, Belty soprano/high mezzo (A3-G5, opt. C6)

Audition song (for recalls): "It's A Privilege To Pee", start to bar 79.

Bobby Strong

The dashing, rebellious everyman who works for Miss Pennywise at the poorest, filthiest town urinal. He becomes an unwitting protagonist and romantic hero when he starts a revolution and falls in love with Hope Cladwell.

Male, 20-30, Boyish tenor (A2-C5)

Audition song (for recalls): "Look At The Sky", start to bar 50.

Little Sally

A precocious and empathetic street urchin. She serves as a quasi-narrator who often questions Lockstock and the play's logic.

Female, 20-40, young-sounding alto/mezzo (A3-E5)

Audition songs (for recalls): "Tell Her I Love Her", start to bar 21, and "We're Not Sorry", start to bar 23 (sing both Sally and Harry).

Caldwell B. Cladwell

The president and owner of the Urine Good Company. Is he a miserly money-grubber who gleefully exploits the poor, or a ruthless pragmatist who sees the only way to save the town?

Male, 50-65, Baritone (A2-G4)

Audition song (for recalls): "Don't Be The Bunny", start to bar 54.

Hope Cladwell

Cladwell's daughter, torn between her father and her new love for Bobby. She begins as an innocent, naive angel but becomes vengeful and determined after being exposed to her father's evil.

Female, 20-30, Lyrical soprano (A3-A5)

Audition song (for recalls): "Follow Your Heart", bar 39 to bar 91.

Senator Fipp

A greedy politician in Cladwell's pocket. A bumbling coward.

Male, 40-55, Baritone (C#3-F4)

Audition song (for recalls): "Why Did I Listen To That Man", bar 36 to bar 44.

Mr. Mcqueen

Cladwell's sycophantic lackey. A servile assistant.

Male, 30-45, Bass/baritone (B2-E4)

Audition song (for recalls): "Why Did I Listen To That Man", bar 36 to bar 44 (singing Fipp's part)

Officer Barrel

Lockstock's patrol partner. A thuggish and aggressive policeman.

Male, 30-50, Baritone (G2-F4)

Audition song (for recalls): 'Cop Song', start to bar 92 (learn everything, rather than swapping between Lockstock and Barrel).

The below are 'minor' roles (featured members of The Poor ensemble or roles in 1-2 scenes:

Dr. Billeaux

Head of Research and Development at UGC.

Male, 30-50, Tenor/high baritone (E3-A3)

Joseph "old Man" Strong

Bobby's rebellious father. His refusal to pay the fee sends him to Urinetown, ultimately launching the revolution.

Male, 50-65, non-singing.

Tiny Tom

One of the Poor, he is an idiotic man-child.

Male, 30-50, bass/baritone (D3-A3)

Soupy Sue

One of the Poor, she is excitable and easily panicked.

Female, 25-40, alto/mezzo (Bb3-B4)

Little Becky Two-shoes

One of the Poor. She is foul-mouthed, impulsive, and accusatory.

Female, 20-40, alto/mezzo (Bb3-F5)

Josephine "ma" Strong

Bobby's mother and Joseph's wife. Jittery and malleable.

Female, 55-65, Alto/mezzo (Bb3-D5)

Hot Blades Harry

One of the Poor, he is radicalised by Bobby's rebellion and can become a violent loose cannon.

Male, 45-60, Baritone (A2-F4)

Sides

HOPE / BOBBY

In this scene, Bobby's father has recently been 'disappeared' by the police. Hope (who he only met that morning) tries to cheer him up.

BOBBY Did you mean what you said to those policemen? About everyone having a heart?

HOPE Well, sure I did.

BOBBY Because...well, because mine feels awful cold just now.

HOPE Cold?

BOBBY Or empty. One of the two.

HOPE Not because of me, I hope?

BOBBY No. Because of something I did. Or, rather, something I didn't do.

HOPE If it feels cold, then it must still be there, don't you think?

BOBBY Unless there's a vacuum where it used to be.

HOPE A vacuum? In your chest? It sounds so implausible.

BOBBY I did something wrong this morning is all I'm trying to say. I can't seem to get it out of my head.

HOPE The vacuum?

BOBBY My action. I let someone down that I love dearly. I feel real bad about it.

HOPE Well, maybe that's nature's way of telling you that now's the time to lift someone up?

BOBBY Really?

HOPE Sure. Do you think you'd be feeling as bad as you do if you didn't have a heart?

BOBBY I don't know. I suppose not.

HOPE Of course you wouldn't. Because then you'd be dead!

PENNY

In this scene, Penny has discovered Bobby and the rebels' secret hideout, and wants Bobby to make a deal. Note: the 'girl', Hope, is Penny's daughter.

BOBBY How about a real plan?

PENNY [*appearing from the shadows*] I've got a real plan.

BOBBY Ms. Pennywise? How did you find us?

PENNY I had a feeling you'd be here. No one knows the sewer system like you do, Bobby.

BOBBY Or you.

PENNY Cladwell would like to talk to you, Bobby.

BOBBY What about?

PENNY He wants to discuss the situation with you man-to-man. He says he now understands how unhappy the people of this community have become and he wants to work out a solution with you. Peacefully.

JOSEPHINE But can we trust him?

PENNY Mister Cladwell doesn't want a fight, Mrs. Strong. He just wants his amenities up and running, smooth and natural. That's all he's ever wanted.

BOBBY All right, I'll go.

PENNY What about the girl?

JOSEPHINE She stays here. Any funny business and she gets it. You tell that to Cladwell.

a place you'll hear people referring to a lot throughout the show. It's kind of a mythical place, you understand. A bad place. A place you won't see until Act Two. And then...? Well, let's just say it's filled with symbolism and things like that. But Urinetown "the musical," well, here we are. Welcome.

LITTLE SALLY Say, Officer Lockstock, is this where you tell the audience about the water shortage?

LOCKSTOCK What's that, Little Sally?

LITTLE SALLY You know, the water shortage. The hard times. The drought. A shortage so awful that private toilets eventually became unthinkable. A premise so absurd that-

LOCKSTOCK Whoa there, Little Sally. Not all at once. They'll hear more about the water shortage in the next scene.

LITTLE SALLY Oh. I guess you don't want to overload them with too much exposition, huh?

LOCKSTOCK Everything in its time, Little Sally. You're too young to understand it now, but nothing can kill a show like too much exposition.

LITTLE SALLY How about bad subject matter?

LOCKSTOCK Well-

LITTLE SALLY Or a bad title, even? That could kill a show pretty good.

LOCKSTOCK Well, Little Sally, suffice it to say that in Urinetown (the musical) everyone has to use public bathrooms in order to take care of their private business. That's the central conceit of the show!