

ASSASSINS Character Breakdown

CHARACTERS

The Balladeer — Tenor C3-G4. Actor is male, over 21; ability to play guitar a plus. The Balladeer is the conscience of America and the champion of the American Dream. He acts as a foil against the assassins and their warped perspectives and actions.

The Proprietor — Tenor Gb2-F4. Actor is male, 30s or older. The Proprietor is the Grim Reaper, handing out weapons and overseeing the demise of presidents and assassins alike. His power is in his omnipresence and indifference; his characterization requires both dramatic irony and restrained wit.

John Wilkes Booth — Baritone F2-G4. Actor is mid-20s to 40; tall and distinguished; character will need a genteel Southern accent. A political zealot, “Wilkes” is the pioneer of American assassination and acts as leader and twisted mentor to the other assassins. “The Ballad of Booth” and his seduction of Lee Harvey Oswald are two of his pivotal scenes.

Leon Czolgosz (pronounced “CHOL-gash”) — Bass Baritone G#2-G4. Actor is mid-20s to mid-30s; slight of build. Czolgosz was an anarchist who, in killing William McKinley, decided to take matters of government into his own hands for the sake of the common man. Important scenes include “The Gun Song” and the meeting with Emma Goldman.

Guiseppe Zangara — Tenor B2-A4. Actor is mid-20s to 40; a short actor is preferred but not required; MUST use a heavy Italian accent for this character. Zangara blamed capitalists and “kings” for his medical conditions and attempted an assassination of Franklin D. Roosevelt—instead killing Mayor Cermak of Chicago. Zangara has a solo on the electric chair in “How I Saved Roosevelt.”

Sara Jane Moore — Soprano F3-Eb5. Actress is middle-aged and frumpy. Moore, a former FBI informant five times married, nearly assassinated Gerald Ford in 1975 — the second such attempt on his life in three weeks. Moore provides much of the comic relief in the show and requires an actress with good comic timing.

Lynette “Squeaky” Fromme — Mezzo A3-G5. Actress is mid-20s to mid-30s; slender and pretty. Fromme, a flower child and member of Charlie Manson’s cult “family,” attempted an assassination of Gerald Ford in 1975. She is the lunatic foil to Sara Jane Moore’s airheadedness in several scenes and sings a duet with John Hinckley.

John Hinckley — Baritone A2-G4. Actor is early-20s to 30; blond and husky; ability to play guitar a plus. Hinckley used a sociopathic obsession with Jodie Foster as his excuse to attempt an assassination of Ronald Reagan in 1981. Hinckley’s clinical insanity and love-sickness add dramatic weight to this character. His pivotal scene is a duet with Squeaky Fromme.

Charles J. Guiteau — Tenor A2-Ab4. Actor is 30s to 50s; average in stature; a beard would be helpful but not required. Guiteau was a multi-careered charlatan with delusions of grandeur who assassinated James Garfield in 1882. This intense libertine requires a multi-personality characterization and a flair for the dramatic. His key scene involves a cakewalk to the gallows.

Samuel Byck — Actor is 30s to 50s; heavy set; blue-government and all it stood for when he attempted to hijack a plane with the intent of crashing it into the Nixon White House. A small vocal role, it requires an actor capable of presenting two dramatic, page-and-a-half monologues. *For Byck, please choose from the excerpt that fits your vocal range (tenor, baritone, or bass-baritone).*

Lee Harvey Oswald — Actor is mid-20s to mid-30s; slight to average build; rural Louisiana twang required. Oswald sings in the closing number and requires the dramatic capacity to spar with John Wilkes Booth in the pivotal Book Depository scene. *For Oswald, please choose from the excerpt that fits your vocal range (tenor, baritone, bass-baritone).*
