

Cast Breakdown

20-24 in the cast, 9 principal male roles & 3 principal female roles

Assassins

Below is a synopsis of all the roles. There is a fair amount of historical detail & links to Wikipedia, as well as some links to footage of the more recent Assassins to allow you to try & get a clearer understanding of who they were.



1. **Historical characters** - all the Assassins have songs & dialogue. All need to be strong actors, not all have to be great singers. The playing ages are based on their actual historical ages at the times of the assassinations but these can be adapted. We are looking for highly energised performances.

The Assassins



- **John Wilkes Booth** [1838-1865] - Assassin of Abraham Lincoln

6 songs - Opening; The Ballad of Booth; Gun Song; Another National Anthem; November 22, 1963; Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

Age - 27

Booth was an actor - in the words of one critic "a star of the first magnitude", much admired by female fans for his good looks ...

Passionate supporter of the Confederate cause ... Concocted a plan to kidnap Abraham Lincoln and exchange his freedom for that of thousands of Confederate prisoners of war ... Assassinated Lincoln at Ford's Theater - April 14, 1865 - during a performance of Our American Cousin ... Broke his leg as he escaped ... Finally run to earth in a Virginia tobacco barn, where he either was killed or killed himself to avoid capture ... Sent a letter to the newspapers on the day of the assassination explaining his motives - letter never published.

Booth is attractive, charming, persuasive & manipulative with great presence but is also a racist with a dark obsession with Lincoln. In order to present both light and shade, a strong actor is required with **Strong Baritone voice up to G**. He sings the Ballad of Booth - a great dramatic piece - and he leads the other assassins in persuading Lee Harvey Oswald to murder Kennedy in a very powerful scene towards the end of the show. A role worth killing for!

Recall Song: Ballad of Booth [part 2]
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wilkes_Booth





- **Charles Guiteau** [1841-1882] - Assassin of President James Garfield

6 songs - Opening; Gun Song; The Ballad of Guiteau; Another National Anthem; November 22, 1963; Everybody's Got the right [finale]

Age - 41

Born in Illinois ... Pursued various careers, from the law to evangelism, failing at all of them ... Published a volume of theology "The Truth" which was almost entirely a plagiarism ... Composed an unsolicited and barely coherent campaign speech for Republican Presidential candidate James Garfield, which he felt was responsible for Garfield's election; expected, as a reward, to be appointed Ambassador to France ... Rebuffed, he shot Garfield twice in the back - July 2, 1881 - as the President prepared to board a train at the Baltimore and Potomac railroad station, Washington, D.C. ... On the morning of his execution, composed a poem, I Am Going to the Lordy, which he recited from the gallows immediately before he was hanged.

Guiteau is a great comic role but he is also dangerous & utterly deluded. Gets one of the most memorable moments of the show with his rendition of the Ballad of Guiteau, when he performs a cakewalk to the gallows. Comedy actor needed for this. **Baritone or tenor, up to G.**

Recall Song: Ballad of Guiteau

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_J._Guiteau



- **Leon Czolgosz** [1873-1901] - Assassin of President William McKinley

5 songs - Opening; Gun Song; Another National Anthem; November 22, 1963; Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

Age - 28

Born in Michigan, son of recently arrived Polish immigrants ... Full-time labourer by age 12, first in a glass factory, later in a wire mill ... As a child was bullied ... Became a recluse ... Attended a number of anarchist rallies and had a brief meeting with anarchist agitator Emma Goldman ... Assassinated President William McKinley - September 6, 1901 - at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo ... Refused to talk to his defence lawyers or testify at his trial ... There was a great deal of debate about his sanity at the time of the assassination but he was convicted and executed. His last words were "I killed the President because he was the enemy of the good people, the good working people". He also said "I am not sorry for my crime."

Czolgosz is a lovely dramatic role. He was a reclusive, broken young man who became an anarchist. He passionately believed in social justice. He needs to be played with sincere commitment. He leads the Gun Song & needs to take the audience with him to the world of the poor working man. **Baritone, up to G.**

Recall Song: Gun Song

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Czolgosz





- **Giuseppe Zangara** [1900-1933] - Attempted assassination of President elect, Franklin D Roosevelt

5 songs – Opening; How I saved Roosevelt; Another National Anthem; November 22, 1963; Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

Age - 33

Immigrant bricklayer from Calabria, Italy ... Barely five feet tall ... Suffered burning pains in stomach, which he blamed on the capitalist system that forced his father to put him to work at age 6 ... Attempted to assassinate President elect Franklin D. Roosevelt - February 15, 1933 - as Roosevelt spoke to crowd of supporters in Miami's Bayfront Park ... Too small to see over the crowd, he stood on a chair which wobbled, causing him to miss Roosevelt and instead kill Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago.

Zangara is an intensely angry man, who gets a darkly comic song just before he is electrocuted. **Tenor up to A**. By the way, he delivers a monologue in Italian!

Recall Song: How I Saved Roosevelt

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Zangara



- **Lee Harvey Oswald** [1931-1963] - Alleged assassin of President John F Kennedy

1 song - Everybody's Got the Right [Finale]

Age - 32

Born in New Orleans ... Father died before he was born ... Temporarily placed in an orphanage aged 2 ... Withdrawn temperamental child ... Attended juvenile reform school ... Joined the Marines ... Defected to Soviet Union ... Married & had a child then moved back to USA ... Attempted to kill Major General Edwin Walker, an anti-communist, with the same gun used to shoot Kennedy ... Got a job at Texas Book Depository Oct 1963 ... On November 22 1963, President Kennedy was shot from the 6th floor of the building ... Oswald was arrested in the Texas Theater ... Shot by nightclub owner Jack Ruby on 24 November 1963 & died that day.

Strong actor required for an intensely dramatic scene with John Wilkes Booth and other assassins in the Book depository in Dallas, just prior to JFK's assassination. Very little singing required, just a few solo lines in the final song.

Recall Song: Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lee_Harvey_Oswald

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xU7Lhd7Wwo&feature=related>





- **Samuel Byck** [1930-1974] - Attempted assassination of President Richard Nixon

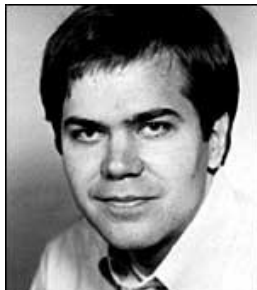
Age - 44

Born to poor Jewish parents in South Philadelphia ... Dropped out of high school to support parents ... Joined Army 1954 ... Discharged 1956 ... Married & had 4 children ... Wife divorced him in 1972 ... Suffered long bouts of depression ... Unemployed tyre salesman ... Sent long, rambling tape recordings to various celebrities, among them Jonas Salk, Senator Abraham Ribicoff and Leonard Bernstein ... Convinced that the American political system was fundamentally corrupt, he picketed the White House, Christmas Eve 1973, dressed in a Santa Claus suit ... Attempted to assassinate President Richard Nixon - February 22, 1974 - by hijacking a commercial jetliner that he intended to crash dive into the White House ... Killed two before he killed himself.

Byck is a tremendously exciting dramatic role for a fearless actor. He is required to deliver two monologues, which must portray his sense of rage & hopelessness. He doesn't need to be a strong singer but does get some lines in 3 of the assassins songs so needs to be able to hold a tune. **Baritone.**

Recall Song: Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Byck



- **John Hinckley** [born 1955] - Attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan

5 songs - Opening; Unworthy of your love; Another National Anthem; November 22, 1963; Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

Age - 26

Born in Oklahoma ... Grew up in Texas ... Son of a successful oil company executive; mother, a self-styled model homemaker ... Attended college for seven years without graduating ... In 1975 moved to Los Angeles in the hope of becoming a songwriter ... Was unsuccessful and so moved back in with his parents ... In late 1970s & 1980s started buying weapons and practising with them ... Started taking tranquillizers and antidepressants ... After seeing the film Taxi Driver, he developed an obsessive infatuation with movie actress Jodie Foster ... After several failed attempts to make contact with her, determined to attract her attention by killing a prominent public figure ... Attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan as he left the Washington Hilton Hotel - March 30, 1981 - seriously wounding four people, including the President. Was tried & found not guilty by reason of insanity & has remained under institutional psychiatric care since then.

Hinckley should give you the creeps! He is a deeply inadequate, impotent young man. He gets a great scene with Squeaky Fromme before singing Unworthy of your love. Needs a **pop middle range baritone voice, with ability to sing up to G**. Ideally also plays guitar.

Recall Song: I am Unworthy of Your Love

<http://www.maggiesnotebook.com/2011/02/john-hinckley-cynthia-bruce-love-at-washington-psych-ward-remembering-how-gravely-reagan-was-wounded-video/>





- **Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme** [born 1948] - attempted assassination of President Gerald Ford

5 songs – Opening; Unworthy of your love; Another National Anthem; November 22, 1963; Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

Age - 27

Born in Santa Monica, California ... Middle class childhood in Los Angeles suburbs ... As a child, performed for a dance group which toured US & Europe ... Cheerleader in high school ... In 1963, her family moved to Redondo Beach, California and she started drinking & taking drugs ... Graduated 1966 ... After an argument with her father she became homeless and depressed ... She met Charles Manson in Venice Beach in 1967 and became one of his disciples; believed Manson was the Messiah whose teachings could save mankind ... Planned to commit a crime for which she would be arrested and put on trial; Manson would appear as a witness at the trial and preach to the world ... Attempted to assassinate President Gerald Ford - September 5, 1975 - as he left the Senator Hotel in Sacramento ... Received a life sentence ... Released from parole in 2009.

Fromme was called "Squeaky" because of her rather syrupy sweet, even-toned speaking voice, which was so out of keeping with what she was actually saying. She will be required to sing the duet Unworthy of your Love. It is a gentle sounding ballad to begin with, then she lets rip! **Mezzo soprano (with strong belt)**

Recall Song: I am Unworthy of Your Love

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynette_Fromme

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-fJGxTfeqI>



- **Sara Jane Moore** [born 1930] - attempted assassination of President Gerald Ford

5 songs – Opening; The Gun Song; Another National Anthem; November 22, 1963; Everybody's Got the Right [finale]

Age - 45

Born & raised in Charleston, West Virginia ... Married five times, had four children, entered and dropped out of nursing school, joined the Women's Army Corps, became a C.P.A. ... At age 42, abandoned marriage and career to immerse herself in the counter-culture lifestyle and revolutionary politics of the day ... Recruited as informant by the F.B.I. ... In effort to re-establish her radical credentials, attempted to assassinate President Gerald Ford - September 22, 1975 - as he left the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco ... Sentenced to life imprisonment ... Released December 31 2007.

A great comic role. We need to see her dark & dangerous side too and this is demonstrated when she shoots her dog & threatens to shoot her 9 year old son. A confused middle aged housewife with a dangerous streak. **Mezzo soprano**

Recall Song: Gun Song

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sara_Jane_Moore

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/30978817#30978817>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=da668XwQLuY>



2. Fictional characters

- The **Proprietor** - any age

2 songs – Opening; Another National Anthem

Needs great stage presence and a good strong **baritone** voice. Should be a confident performer who remains present throughout the piece as an enabler of the dark acts the assassins will go on to perform. Really interesting role, very open to interpretation. May get some dialogue, such as voice of Ronald Reagan, radio announcer etc if he is good at nailing accents but this is not imperative.

Recall Song: Opening

- The **Balladeer** - any age

4 songs - The Ballad of Booth; The Ballad of Czolgosz; the Ballad of Guiteau; Another National anthem

This role requires someone who can connect easily with the audience - a commentator who leads us through the story and is the voice of reason through the madness. Needs to have the common touch. Ideally can play banjo or guitar but certainly not essential.

Country/folky voice, tenor range. No dialogue.

Recall Song: Ballad of Booth and Ballad of Czolgosz

- **Ensemble** - any age

3 songs - How I saved Roosevelt; The Ballad of Czolgosz; Something Just Broke

Male & female bystanders, representing the American public, involved in 3 songs. Something Just Broke in particular is a beautiful haunting song about the impact of the assassinations on the American people. Some of the historical characters will come from the ensemble too [see below] with a variety of playing ages needed. Need to be good movers but do not need to be strong dancers.

Recall Song: Something Just Broke and How I Saved Roosevelt

Other historical characters

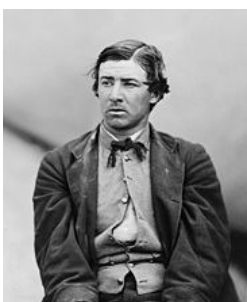


- **Emma Goldman**

Age - 32

Anarchist known for her political activism who also interacted several times with Leon Czolgosz. Cast from ensemble - has a lovely scene with Czolgosz - strong confident actress needed.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Goldman



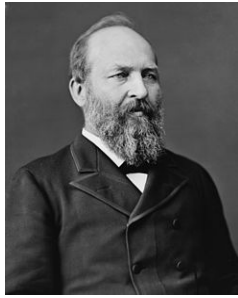
- **David Herold**

Age - 23

Accomplice of John Wilkes. From ensemble.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Herold





- President James Garfield

Age - 49

20th president of USA. From ensemble.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_A._Garfield



- James Blaine

Age - 52

Secretary of State who received a deluge of letters from Guiteau.
From ensemble.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_G._Blaine



- President Gerald Ford

Age - 62

38th president of USA. From ensemble.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald_Ford

Billy - Sara Jane Moore's 9yr old son – we are looking for a cool kid with some theatre experience whose mum doesn't mind a gun being pointed at him. Required to go into a tantrum over an ice cream & will be in some ensemble numbers – Something Just Broke & The Ballad of Czolgosz. Some movement but no formal dance required. Doesn't need to sing.

