

## **'The Producers' production/role information (1 of 3 pages)**

**Dates:** Music rehearsals: Sept-Dec (Monday evenings)

Floor rehearsals: Jan-Mar (Mon, Weds, Fri eves and alternate Suns)

Performances: 20-24 March 2018, Hull New Theatre

**Accents:** The show is set in 1950s America. All the characters speak with American accents except Ulla who is Swedish and Franz who speaks with a broad German accent.

**Performance style:** The tone of the show is broad comedy/farce. Though at all times the performers must retain believability in their characters, the comedy arises from archetypal characters drawn with broad brush strokes in extreme situations in which they often react in heightened ways. Physical comedy skills and verbal dexterity are required of performers.

**Chorus:** Rather than being integrated into the story the chorus are used in the classical manner of a 'traditional' Broadway musical comedy of the Golden Age. There is considerable movement in the show and humour. Men who can sing falsetto are included in the number 'Along Came Bialy' as little old ladies alongside the female chorus.

**Dancers:** The show also demands a number of 'conventional' female chorus girls with strong dance skills to create the glamorous, scantily clad chorus of Leo's imagination. These may double into the ensemble as appropriate.

### **Song List**

It's Opening Night	<i>Chorus</i>
The King of Broadway	<i>Max &amp; Chorus</i>
We Can Do It	<i>Max &amp; Leo</i>
I Wanna Be a Producer	<i>Leo, Office boys, Glamorous Chorus girls</i>
In Old Bavaria	<i>Franz</i>
Der Gutten Tag Hop-Clop	<i>Franz, Max, Leo</i>
Keep it Gay	<i>Roger, Carmen, Max, Leo and Roger's Team</i>
When You've Got it Flaunt It	<i>Ulla</i>
Along Came Bialy	<i>Max, Leo, Little old ladies, Ulla, Roger, Carmen, Franz, Chorus</i>
That Face	<i>Ulla, Leo</i>
Have You Ever Heard The German Band	<i>Franz</i>
It's Opening Night	<i>Usherettes</i>
It's Bad Luck to say Good Luck	<i>Carmen, Roger, Leo Franz</i>
Springtime for Hitler	<i>Roger, Ulla and Chorus</i>
Where Did we Go Right	<i>Max &amp; Leo</i>
Leo Goes to Rio	<i>Ulla &amp; Leo</i>
Betrayed	<i>Max</i>
'Til Him	<i>Max, Leo, Little Old Ladies (Chorus)</i>
Prisoners of Love	<i>Max, Leo, Franz, Ulla, Girl Prisoners, Roger, Convicts</i>
Goodbye	<i>Full Company</i>

# "The Producers" - CHARACTER OUTLINES

## Lead Characters

MAX BIALYSTOCK: (playing age 50s). *A failed Broadway producer. Good singer with excellent physical and verbal comedy skills. Ruthless, unprincipled and quick witted with verbal banter. He will stop at absolutely nothing to succeed. A likeable rogue who despite his egotistical persona and indefensible antics has the audience secretly rooting for him.*

LEO BLOOM: (playing age mid 30s). *A meek-mannered accountant. Good singer with excellent physical and verbal comedy skills. Movement/dance ability advantageous (including tap). Leo is neurotic, unassertive and utterly lovable. He discovers his inner confidence, follows his dream of becoming a Producer, and 'gets the girl' by running off to Rio with the leading lady.*

## Main Characters

FRANZ LIEBKIND: (playing age late 20s+) *A wild-eyed German immigrant and Nazi fanatic. Excellent comedy skills with ability to sing. A strong physical presence, he is hot-tempered, intensely obsessive Nazi supporter (with a soft spot for his pet pigeons). More than slightly nuts, he eventually loses the plot and attempts to shoot our main characters in a comic fit of rage.*

ROGER DE BRIS: (playing age 30s+) *A cross-dressing renowned (in his own eyes) Broadway director. Excellent comedy skills and good singing and dance ability. Tap skills advantageous. Beneath a (somewhat) convincing straight-acting persona lies a full-blown Judy Garland waiting to burst out. When opportunity gives him the leading role in 'Springtime For Hitler' he becomes a 'gay as a daisy', all singing all-dancing showbiz Hitler.*

CARMEN GHIA: (playing age 30s +) *Roger's possessive live-in lover. Excellent comedy skills and good singer. Thin, 'strange looking' and intense queen. He overreacts to every eventuality and is mortally wounded by any of Roger's thoughtless remarks. Comically sibilant beyond all measure.*

ULLA: (playing age 20s) *The knock-out Swedish secretary. Excellent comedienne with great song and dance skills. Gorgeous, young, blond and leggy. Enthusiastic, innocent and adorable but with a very loose grasp of the English language she is generally utterly inept in her work.*

## Minor Roles

We are planning on casting the following roles from the ensemble once the first phase of casting is complete:

Mr. Marks: Short-tempered, cigar chomping, little tyrant of an office manager.

Roger's creative team: (Scott) choreographer, Bryan (set designer), Kevin (costume designer) all as camp as Christmas apart from Shirley Markowitz (the lesbian lighting designer) who out-butches them all.

Little Old Ladies: 'Hold-me-touch-me' "Lick-me-bite-me" etc. They're little old ladies.

They're sex crazed. What else can you say?

Auditionees: Jason (mousy singer from "No No Nietzsche"), Donald ("Little Wooden Boy"),  
Jack (a G&S devotee)

Usherettes

Storm Trooper (tenor soloist in "Springtime for Hitler")

Police (all with thick New York Irish accents): Sergeant; O'Rourke; O'Riley; O'Houllihan  
(who is also black)

Judge, Prison trustee

## **SYNOPSIS**

In New York in 1959, theatre producer Max Bialystock opens "Funny Boy", a musical version of Hamlet ("Opening Night"). It is terrible, and the show closes after one performance. Max, who was once called the King of Broadway, tells a crowd of down-and-outs of his past achievements and vows to return to form ("King of Broadway").

The next day, Leo Bloom, a mousy accountant, comes to Max's office to audit his books. When one of Max's little old lady "investors" arrives, Max tells Leo to wait in the bathroom until she leaves. She plays a sex game with Max, who eventually persuades her to give him a check to be invested in his next play, to be called "Cash". Leo reveals his lifelong dream: he's always wanted to be a Broadway producer. After a panic attack when Max touches his blue blanket, Leo tells Max that he has found an accounting error in his books: Max raised \$100,000 for "Funny Boy", but the play only cost \$98,000. Max begs Leo to cook the books to hide the discrepancy. Leo reluctantly agrees. After some calculations, he realizes that "under the right circumstances, a producer could actually make more money with a flop than he can with a hit. ... You could've raised a million dollars, put on your \$100,000 flop, and kept the rest!" Max proposes a scheme:

Step 1: We find the worst play ever written.

Step 2: We hire the worst director in town.

Step 3: We raise two million dollars. ... One for me, one for you. There's a lot of little old ladies out there!

Step 4: We hire the worst actors in New York and open on Broadway and before you can say

Step 5: We close on Broadway, take our two million, and go to Rio.

However, Leo refuses to help Max with his scheme ("We Can Do It"). When he arrives at work six minutes late, Leo's horrid boss, Mr. Marks, reminds him that he is a nobody. While he and his miserable co-workers slave over accounts, Leo daydreams of becoming a Broadway producer ("I Wanna Be a Producer"). He realizes that his job is terrible, quits, and returns to Max ("We Can Do It" (reprise)). The next day, they look for the worst play ever written. Max finds a sure-fire flop that would offend people of all races, creeds and religions: *Springtime for Hitler: A Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva at Berchtesgaden*, written by Franz Liebkind, which Max describes as "a love letter to Hitler".

They go to the playwright's home in Greenwich Village to get the rights to the play. Ex-Nazi Franz is on the roof of his tenement with his pigeons reminiscing about the grand old days ("In Old Bavaria"). The producers get him to sign their contract by joining him in singing Adolf Hitler's favourite tune ("Der Guten Tag Hop Clop") and reciting the Siegfried Oath, under penalty of death, promising never to dishonor "the spirit and the memory of Adolf Elizabeth Hitler".

Next, they go to the townhouse of flamboyant homosexual Roger De Bris, the worst director in New York. At first, Roger and his "common law-assistant" Carmen Ghia decline the offer to direct because of the serious subject matter ("Keep It Gay"). After much persuading and invoking the possibility of a Tony award, Roger agrees and tells them the second act must be rewritten so the Germans win World War II. Max and Leo return to the office to meet a Swedish bombshell who wants to audition for their next play: Ulla Inga Hansen Benson Yansen Tallen Hallen Svaden Swanson. She auditions for them ("When You've Got It, Flaunt It"). The producers are impressed, mostly by her beauty, and hire her to be their "secretary-slash-receptionist". Max leaves to raise two million dollars for "Springtime for Hitler" by calling on all the little old ladies in New York ("Along Came Bialy"), which he does ("Act I Finale").

## **Act II**

Leo and Ulla are left alone in Max's office (redecorated by Ulla), and they start to fall in love ("That Face"). Max walks in and sees the perfect form of Ulla's covered behind ("That Face" (reprise)).

At the auditions for the title role, Hitler, one terrible actor after another is rejected by Roger in summary fashion. Finally, Franz performs his own jazzy rendition of "Haben Sie Gehört Das Deutsche Band?", at the end of which Max stands up and shouts, "That's our Hitler!". Opening night arrives ("It's Bad Luck to Say 'Good Luck' on Opening Night"), and Franz falls down the stairs and breaks his leg. Roger is the only one who knows the part of Hitler, and he rushes to the dressing room to get ready. The curtain rises, and Max and Leo watch the theatrical disaster unfold ("Springtime for Hitler"). Unfortunately, Roger's performance is so camp and outrageous, the audience mistakes it for satire, and the show becomes the talk of the town. Back at the office, Max and Leo are near-suicidal ("Where Did We Go Right?"). Roger and Carmen come to congratulate them, only to find them fighting. Franz bursts in, waving a pistol, outraged by Roger's portrayal of his beloved Führer. Cowardly Max suggests that he shoot the actors, not the producers. The police hear the commotion and arrest Franz, who breaks his other leg trying to escape. They also arrest Max and take the accounting books. Leo hides; Ulla finds him and persuades him to take the two million dollars and run off to Rio with her.

In jail awaiting trial, Max receives a postcard from Leo and, feeling betrayed, recounts the whole show including the intermission ("Betrayed"). At his trial, Max is found "incredibly guilty"; but the now-married Leo and Ulla arrive to tell the judge that Max is a good man who has never hurt anyone despite his swindling ("Till Him"). The judge is touched by this and decides not to separate the partners, sending both (plus Franz) to Sing Sing prison for five years. In prison, they write a new musical entitled *Prisoners of Love*, which goes to Broadway ("Prisoners of Love") (starring Roger and Ulla), and they are pardoned by the Governor. Leo and Max become the kings of Broadway and walk off into the sunset ("Leo & Max"). Everyone comes back for one last song, telling the audience that they have to leave ("Goodbye").