



## Audition notice: Steel Pier

**Book by David Thompson**

**Music and lyrics by John Kander and Fred Ebb**

**Conceived by Scott Ellis, Susan Stroman and David Thompson**

This amateur production is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH LIMITED, a Concord Theatricals Company.

Following *West Side Story* and Broadway World-nominated *Ragtime*, Bishopsgate Institute is excited to announce their April 2020 musical theatre production: *Steel Pier*. This production will continue the Institute's commitment to providing amateur performers the chance to work with a professional creative team and a full-size (28 piece) orchestra of West End professional musicians. This production is supported by Swing Patrol London, our Dancers in Residence.



**Performance dates:** Tuesday 28 April – Sunday 3 May 2020 (7 performances)

**Performance location:** Great Hall, Bishopsgate Institute  
230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QH

**Director:** Louise Roberts

**Musical Director:** Luke Holman

**Choreographer:** Chris Whittaker

**Designer:** Adrian Gee

**Musical Supervisor:** Ben Ferguson

**Associate  
Choreographers:** Krystal Chavez Bedolla (Swing Patrol)  
Alexander Vinokurov (Swing Patrol)

**Costume Supervisor:** Charlie Baptist

**Promotional  
photography & design:** Daniel Penfold

**First round auditions:** Saturday 11 January 2020

**Recalls:** Saturday 18, Sunday 19 January 2020

**First rehearsal:** Saturday 25 January 2020

**Rehearsals:** Tuesday and Thursday evenings, Saturday daytimes plus two Sundays and Easter Monday

## 1. The show

*"...forty five minutes every hour, dancing for your pleasure, how many hours can they go?"*

Atlantic City, America, 1933, the Wall Street crash and subsequent Great Depression have sent unemployment and poverty rocketing to an all-time high. Against this backdrop, Dance Marathons have flourished. Part dance, part endurance contest, competitors dance for the lure of a large cash prize awarded to the couple who dance the longest. From those desperate for fame to those simply desperate for respite, the marathons provide escape from reality and all its trappings.



*"I've run Marathons from Catalina to Kalamazoo and never have I seen a dance floor filled with more confident couples, each certain they can outlast the other and claim the pot of gold worth \$2000!"*

Kander and Ebb's *Steel Pier* centres around five of these couples, 'a captivating assortment of depression era souls', puppeteered by Master of Ceremonies **Mick Hamilton**. At the centre of this mix is **Rita Racine** a seasoned Dance Marathon competitor, determined that this will be her last. When her partner fails to show she is matched with pilot **Bill Kelly**, and as the hours whirl on, realises all is not as it seems. Other couples include fame hungry performer **Shelby Stevens** and **Luke Adams**; struggling young newlyweds from Utah, **Precious** and **Happy McGuire**; Olympic wrestler **Johnny Adel** and one-time socialite **Dora Foster**; and vaudeville brother-and-sister team **Bette** and **Buddy Becker**.



*"Life's a party, why don't you come to the Steel Pier?"*

Songs by the creators of *Chicago* and *Cabaret* perfectly capture the rhythms of the era and mirror the set-up of their previous work examining the descent from glamour to desperation. From the captivating opening number [Everybody Dance](#) to Shelby's powerhouse [Everybody's Girl](#), Rita's desperate eleven o'clock number [Running in Place](#) to the haunting finale [Steel Pier](#), it is no wonder the composers have previously commented that this is some of their favourite work.



## 2. Casting

Steel Pier is a show **about** dancing and **set** in a dance marathon as opposed to being purely a **dancers'** show.

There will be opportunities for both featured dancers and those who enjoy using movement to create character. We do not have a fixed view on ages or dance experience and are excited to build the cast around what we see in audition. The movement in the show is hugely important in driving the narrative, exploring physical and mental endurance.

### 3. Character breakdown

**Rita Racine:** Charismatic; vulnerable. Previously the darling of the press and Vaudeville Circuit, now reduced to performing in side shows, air shows and dance marathons. Dreams of settling down and believes this will be her “one last marathon.”  
**Strong belt and mix (belt to C).**

**Bill Kelly:** Charming; adventurous. Daredevil Pilot who crashed his plane chasing the American dream. Saw Rita in an Air Show and has been in love with her ever since.  
**Strong Tenor/High Baritone (up to Ab)**

**Mick Hamilton:** Smooth; manipulative. The Marathon’s Master of Ceremonies. Performs for crowds but beneath his polish is willing to do anything to get what he wants. **Baritone with strong top F**

**Mick’s Picks:** Glamorous; mysterious. Close harmony group of women who sing backing for Mick during the Dance Marathon. **Mezzos - need to be strong harmony singers.**

**Mr Walker:** Impressionable; anxious. The floor judge and Mick’s henchman. **Tenor.**

**The Couples.....**

**Shelby Stevens:** Confident; dry. Older, seasoned Marathon performer and by her own admission ‘*Everybody’s Girl.*’ Cares about others but, like so many in the Marathons, desperate. **Strong mid belt with some head voice.**

And

**Luke Adams:** Quiet; opportunist. Musician who keeps to himself despite Shelby’s dominant presence.

**Precious McGuire:** Wide-eyed; driven. Young newlywed married to Happy. Determined to get her shot so she doesn’t have to return home to Utah. **Strong Soprano with good high C, and ideally a top E.**

And

**Happy McGuire:** Loyal; inexperienced. Married to Precious and struggling to adapt to the world of Dance Marathons. **Baritone.**

**Dora Foster:** Proud; resolute. An attractive woman who at one time in her life had money. Now has nothing, however she still tries to keep up the facade. **Mezzo/Alto.**  
And

**Johnny Adel:** Imposing; competitive. Athlete who sees Marathons as just another sport he's determined to win. **Baritone.**

**Buddy Becker:** Energetic; manic, desperate to 'make it.' Vaudeville performer and non-stop talker. Oblivious to those around him. Dances with his sister Bette. **Tenor/High baritone.**

And

**Bette Becker:** Optimistic; hopeful, also desperate to 'make it.' Vaudeville performer who cares deeply for her brother. **Mezzo.**

**Ensemble:** Other competitors in the Dance Marathon. Multi-role, including as many couples, and vital to creating the world. Featured heavily throughout.

## 4. Rehearsals

We will rehearse on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday daytimes, starting on Saturday 25 January 2020. We will also rehearse on Easter Monday (13 April) and on two Sundays to be confirmed before the start of rehearsals.

Not all cast members will be required for all rehearsals although we are keen to maximise the opportunity to fully explore the story and develop movement and character.

Because of the collaborative nature of this process, it will be difficult to accommodate large gaps in attendance, and once you are called to a rehearsal, we expect your attendance except in the case of a severe emergency. If you are unable to meet the commitment, we may not be able to include you in the scenes you miss or we may even have to discontinue your involvement in the show altogether.

## 5. Show week and required availability

In addition to attending rehearsals from 25 January 2020 on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, Saturday daytimes, Easter Monday and the 2-3 Sundays to be confirmed, all company members must be available at Bishopsgate Institute on the following dates:

Friday 24 April evening: from 1830, lighting tech with full cast and piano

Saturday 25 April from 0930, all day and evening: lighting tech with piano

Sunday 26 April from 0930, all day and evening: sitzprobe and wandelprobe (rehearsals with orchestra), and orchestra dress (open) rehearsal

Please note: we have currently left Monday 27 April free to allow recuperation. Although there is no call planned on this date, we recommend keeping the time clear of other commitments so close to the run.

## 6. Auditions

### a. First round

There are two parts for everyone: a group dance and movement call and an individual singing audition. You need to do both.

There will be two group dance and movement calls to choose between (only book onto one) and both take place on Saturday 11 January: please book either 1200 – 1300 or 1400 – 1500.

Individual singing auditions will take place on Saturday 11 January in three blocks and you will need to book into a specific time block (i.e. 1000 – 1055, 1100 – 1150 or 1515-1630) during which all those who have booked that block will be seen individually.

If we only see you for one of the two parts of the audition, it is unlikely we will be able to cast you.

Audition slots must be pre-booked (process below).

### b. Recalls (by invitation)

If you are invited for a recall, further details will be communicated to you by email. Please note that we intend to recall for both ensemble and principal roles.

The recall dates are **Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 January** 1000 – 1700.

### c. Booking your audition

You will need to **request two slots** for your first round audition on Saturday 11 January<sup>1</sup>. That means a dance and movement call slot (you will be seen as part of a group for this) and a separate singing slot (you will be seen individually within your booked block of time). We need everyone that wants to audition to make sure they have had **confirmation of their booking for one slot of each type**.

Booking requests will open via our website, by phone or in person from mid-December 2019.

You will receive confirmation of your booked slots by email. Life can get in the way, we know, so if for any reason you are no longer able to attend your booked audition, please email [enquiries@bishopsgate.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bishopsgate.org.uk) asap to rearrange and book a different slot, if spaces remain. If you cannot attend at all, please use the same email address and give us as much notice as you can as we'd like to be able to offer your slots to the waiting list.

If you are a no-show for either of your confirmed slots without notice, we will not be able to consider you for this show.

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<sup>1</sup> We might be able to accommodate individual singing slots on the evening of Friday 10 January but will not release further slots unless all available Saturday slots book up.

#### **d. What to prepare**

For the group movement and dance call, please wear clothes and footwear in which you can move easily.

For your singing audition, please bring a song that shows off your voice and its suitability to the show - we are looking for voices that can imitate and convey the vocal styles of 20s and 30s America. The songs of the Great American Songbook are a good starting point - songs by Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and similar would all be very suitable.

Other potential areas to explore are other shows by Kander and Ebb (Chicago, Cabaret, Flora The Red Menace, The Rink) and other golden age theatre composers (Rodgers & Hammerstein, Lerner & Loewe).

These are only suggestions, and as long as what you bring demonstrates your ability to sing in the appropriate style then we will be thrilled, so feel free to be creative. As a guide, songs in a contemporary musical theatre style (Rent, Dear Evan Hansen, Hamilton) are not likely to demonstrate suitable vocal qualities.

Please perform the song from memory. Please bring your music printed out and ideally taped, or if not in a sturdy folder. Please do not bring unbound music, or music on a tablet. Please also do not bring backing tracks in place of sheet music.

Some suggestions of suitable songs:

- Love Walked In, Our Love Is Here To Stay (Gershwin)
- So In Love, Where Is The Life That Late I Led, Always True To You In My Fashion (Cole Porter)
- Roxie (Chicago), A Quiet Thing (Flora The Red Menace), I Miss The Music (Curtains), Coloured Lights (The Rink)
- Oh What A Beautiful Morning, Many A New Day (Oklahoma)
- All The Things You Are, Make Believe (Jerome Kern)

Please do not sing a song from *Steel Pier* in your first round audition.



#### **e. Audition form**

When we confirm your audition, we'll send you the audition form to complete and bring with you on the day. We'd like to know about any previous and relevant experience, any roles in particular for which you'd like to be considered, and we ask you to declare in advance any non-availability on key dates.

#### **f. Casting decisions**

Final casting will take place after the recalls have been completed. The process can be lengthy, but we will communicate the expected timeline throughout the process.

#### **g. Where auditions are held**

All auditions and recalls take place at Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QH (Liverpool St, Moorgate and Shoreditch High Street stations).

### **7. Pre-audition workshop**

To introduce potential auditionees to the show and the team, we are running a FREE workshop on **Tuesday 10 December 1900 – 2100** in the Great Hall (the space in which the show will be performed).

You do not have to attend, and casting decisions will be made independently of attendance at the workshop.

The workshop will include learning some music from the show, led by Luke, and getting a taste for The Shag and other dance of the era, led by Krystal and Alexander of Swing Patrol. Louise will also lead some scene work. There is no need to book.

### **8. Participation fee**

As with all our classes, workshops and most events at the Institute, there is fee for taking part in this production. This goes towards the opportunity for you to work with a professional musical director supported by some of the best musicians in London. We don't charge any membership or audition fees. The participation fee amount is **£90 per person**.

### **9. Our vision**

Dance Marathons have been described as the earliest form of reality TV. In a society currently obsessed with quick fix fame and, more importantly, as we start to see the fall-out from this, the themes of *Steel Pier* seem more pressing and exciting to explore than ever.

The setting of The Great Hall at Bishopsgate Institute provides a unique opportunity to create a version of the show in a setting very similar to spaces used for original Dance Marathons. We are aiming to use minimal set and a theatre-in-the-round set-up to

create a fast-paced and claustrophobic atmosphere, making the audience feel immersed in the world.

We hope to create a collaborative and stimulating rehearsal process, enjoyable for all and look forward to meeting you at auditions.

## **10. What is Bishopsgate Institute and why are you producing this show?**

Bishopsgate Institute is a charity offering people living and working in the City of London the opportunity to come together to do the thing(s) they love in an extraordinary setting. We provide ways for them to learn and to develop and, crucially, to enjoy.

In a nutshell, part of what we do is incubate and develop talent, and the rehearsal and development process of a show is one of the ways we achieve that. 2016's co-production of *Ragtime: The Musical* was the first of these, providing amateur performers the chance to work with a professional director, musical director and choreographer and perform with a full, professional orchestra in a spectacular space.

2018's production of *West Side Story* built on this ambition and success, with a cast of 39, an orchestra of 28 and an audience of 200 caught up in the tragedy presented in traverse, once again, and with minimal set.

Bishopsgate Institute has also joined NODA (National Operatic and Drama Association) in the *Schools, Colleges and Universities* category.

Our production of *Ragtime* was nominated for four Broadway World West End Awards 2016: Best Director (Toby Hine), Best Fringe Production, Best Choreography and Best Costumes (both Lemington Ridley).

To find out more about us, please look at the ***Bishopsgate Institute: Past Present Future*** document downloadable from our website.

Swing Patrol London are our Dancers in Residence, which means we run all sorts of social dances, classes, troupe rehearsals and teacher training here [www.swingpatrol.co.uk](http://www.swingpatrol.co.uk). The London Musical Theatre Orchestra is our Orchestra in Residence, which includes the monthly Sitz private playthroughs of a full musical [www.lmto.org](http://www.lmto.org).