

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

9 Roles (5 women, 4 men) +Ensemble, Rated PG, 2 Acts

Millie Dillmount

A spunky, gutsy, plucky, charismatic with moxie, pragmatist modern woman who dreams big trying to make it in New York City. She falls in love with Jimmy. Our story's protagonist. Millie is a demanding role which demands a triple threat: Strong actress, strong dancer and strong vocalist. Millie will be call to almost every rehearsal.

Gender: Female

Age: 20 to 30

Vocal range top: E5

Vocal range bottom: G#3

Jimmy Smith

A suave city slicker with an irrepressible, buoyant personality who unexpectedly becomes the story's hero. He falls in love with Millie.

Gender: Male

Age: 20 to 30

Vocal range top: A4

Vocal range bottom: C3

Mrs. Meers

A former actress turned human trafficker pretending to be a kindly Chinese woman. She oversees the Hotel Priscilla where she secretly sells her tenants.

Gender: Female

Age: 40+

Vocal range top: Bb4

Vocal range bottom: E3

Miss Dorothy Brown

A naive, wealthy girl who has moved to New York to change her lifestyle. She becomes Millie's roommate and confidant.

Gender: Female

Age: 20 to 25

Vocal range top: C6

Vocal range bottom: B3

Ching Ho

A Chinese immigrant working to bring his mother to the United States. Younger brother of Bun Foo and henchman to Mrs. Meers. Sings and speaks in Chinese.

Gender: Male

Age: 18 to 25

Vocal range top: E4

Vocal range bottom: Bb2

Bun Foo

A Chinese immigrant working to bring his mother to the United States. Older brother of Ching Ho and henchman to Mrs. Meers. Sings and speaks in Chinese.

Gender: Male

Age: 20 to 30

Vocal range top: E4

Vocal range bottom: E3

Miss Flannery

An uptight, stern office manager. She runs the stenographer pool at Sincere Trust Insurance Company.

Gender: Female

Age: 35 to 45

Vocal range top: D5

Vocal range bottom: Bb3

Trevor Graydon

An executive at the Sincere Trust Insurance Company. He is sharp, ambitious, and secretly romantic.

Gender: Male

Age: 30 to 40

Vocal range top: G4

Vocal range bottom: A2

Muzzy Van Hossmere

A glamorous actress and singer at a night club. She becomes Millie's friend and mentor.

Gender: Female

Age: 35 to 45

Vocal range top: D5

Vocal range bottom: G#3

**MTI additional note on this character: It is the authors' preference that, for thematic reasons, the role of Muzzy be played by an actress of color as an African-American character. Within an American context, Muzzy being African-American resonates very differently than her being Caucasian because show business was traditionally one of the only ways an African American could circumvent the worst of racism and embark on the same kind of self-reinvention that Millie is attempting -- and, in 1922, there were limited avenues for that trajectory available to African-Americans. That said, from a narrative perspective, the story can be told no matter what the race of the actress playing Muzzy, so if your talent pool doesn't include a qualified actress of color, cast another kind of actress.*

**MCT Production Team Note: While originally played by an African-American on Broadway, we will be open to all races for this character though it is preferred to cast per the author's preference if possible.*

Hotel Priscilla Girls:

Ruth, Gloria, Rita, Alice, Cora, Lucille, Ethel Peas

The Pearl Lady- Jimmy's date at the Speakeasy

The Letch- Millie's dance partner at the Speakeasy

Policeman- Officer who busts up the Speakeasy and arrests Millie, Jimmy, etc.

George Gershwin- Composer, guests at Muzzy's

Dorothy Parker- Poet, Guest at Muzzy's

Guest 1- 3- Guests at Muzzy's

Rodney- Party guest and acquaintance of Miss Dorothy's

Kenneth- Muzzy's Butler

Daphne- a rich woman

Dexter- Daphne's husband

Mathilde- Muzzy's Maid

New Modern- A young girl arriving in NYC with wide eyed enthusiasm. Cameo Role.

Ensemble:

Moderns- Citizens of new york who are on the scene as Millie arrives in NYC

Stenographers- The typing pool at 'Sincere Trust'

File Clerks- Workers at Sincere Trust

Speakeasy Denizens- Patrons of the speakeasy Millie and friends visit

Muzzy's Party Guests- Guests at Muzzy's party

Muzzy's Quartet- Backup singers of Muzzy's at Café Society

Dishwashers- Employee's at the Café Society

Café Society Ensemble- Patrons and staff of Café Society

A LETTER FROM DICK SCANLAN

The character of Mrs. Meers -- a failed actor-turned-criminal-- is intended to behave in a manner consistent with an ignorant person's idea of how a Chinese woman would behave (i.e., her portrayal of a Chinese woman is based on her own stereotyping).

On the other hand, there are two genuine Chinese characters in the show-- Bun Foo and Ching Ho-- and other than the fact that they speak in their native tongue (i.e., Chinese dialects) they are no different than any of the other characters in the show--human, earnest and multi-dimensional.

Specifically, I want to clarify that from the authors' perspective, there is only one stereotype: Mrs. Meers. She is a Caucasian woman using her "acting skills" to impersonate a Chinese woman in an effort to avoid police detection, and does it in a highly offensive way. If you feel you must stay away from that approach, in terms of narrative, all that is required is that Mrs. Meers be a failed actor who is using acting techniques to shield criminal activity. It does not have to be a "Chinese" act she's doing.

The easiest and boldest way to solve this: cast a boy as "Mrs. Meers." When he's "Mrs. Meers," he's wearing a wig and fully trying to pass as a woman; when he's alone with Bun Foo and Ching Ho, the wig comes off and he's "David Crumpler," failed actor-turned-criminal. There need be nothing Chinese about his disguise; he can disguise himself as any woman he wishes. Stereotype problem solved; story still told.

You may also, of course, cast an actress, and direct her to differentiate between "Mrs. Meers" and "Daisy Crumpler," e.g. "Mrs. Meers" is a flighty, fluttery, aging Southern belle, and "Daisy Crumpler" is a tough-as-nails, Brooklyn born-and-raised villain, or some such contrast. Again, this avoids any reference to anything Chinese in regards to this character's arc.

As for Bun Foo and Ching Ho, they are not stereotypes, they are people. Characters. That is why they speak and sing in Cantonese and Mandarin, respectively. I think the script states clearly -- and if it doesn't, I'm stating it clearly here -- that in no way are their performances to be exaggerated, -2- lampooned, made fun of, nada. The actors should approach their roles no differently than the actress playing Millie approaches hers: with truth, integrity, imagination and intentionality. The Chinese should be rendered as authentically as possible. (The audio guide is conducted by an actor born and raised in China until he was 15; if that's not enough guidance, hire a Chinese coach.) They should not be in "coolie" costumes. When they speak in English, e.g. "I love you, Miss Dorothy," I's do not become r's; listen to the cast recording for confirmation of that. They don't speak English, but they shouldn't speak English: they've been in America for a few weeks. Make them as dimensional and differentiated from each other (they are as different from each other as Millie and Miss Dorothy are), and not only will you NOT be presenting stereotypes, you will be BUSTING stereotypes. I know this for a fact because I've seen it happen on Broadway, on Tour, in London, and in many, many productions I've seen since then.

I hope this letter provides you with the flexibility you might need in producing MILLIE. Thank you, and best of luck with your production.

*Warm regards,
Dick Scanlan*