Roles and descriptions

Camdenlightopera 1776

Music and Lyrics by Sherman Edwards
Book by Peter Stone

Directed by Shannon Elliott
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Audition dates times location

Monday, June 15 at 6:00 PM
Wednesday, June 17 at 6:00 PM

John St Methodist Church
98 John St, Camden, ME 04843.

Cast size

We hope to cast approximately 25 performers.

Depending on audition turnout and production needs, some roles may be doubled. We strongly encourage anyone interested in participating to audition.

No prior theatre experience is necessary.

We welcome first-time performers, experienced actors, singers, musicians, history enthusiasts, and anyone interested in becoming involved with community theatre.

This production offers opportunities for performers of many experience levels, including:

• Non-speaking and limited-speaking ensemble roles for those new to the stage or looking for a lower-pressure introduction to theatre.

• Character and supporting roles that emphasize acting and stage presence, with limited vocal requirements.

• Chorus and ensemble opportunities for singers who enjoy performing as part of a group.

• Featured supporting and principal roles requiring stronger acting, vocal ability, memorization, and rehearsal commitment.

Whether this is your first audition or your fiftieth, we encourage you to come and find the place where you can best contribute to the production.

Casting

Men ages 15 and over.
Women ages 18 and over.

This production primarily features male roles, reflecting the historical makeup of the Continental Congress. However, performers of all genders are welcome to audition.

Our goal is to cast men in as many of the historical male roles as possible. However, women may be considered for a variety of traditionally male roles as part of the production's artistic vision.

The two principal female roles, Abigail Adams and Martha Jefferson, are also open for auditions.

Not every role in *1776* carries the same demands. Some parts require extensive dialogue, solo singing, and significant stage experience, while others focus primarily on acting, ensemble singing, or simply helping bring the world of the play to life. Principal roles will generally require the strongest combination of acting ability, vocal skill, preparation, and rehearsal commitment.

We encourage everyone to bring their talent, enthusiasm, and creativity to the audition process.

Hair, facial hair, and costuming

1776 is a period production and requires a period appearance.

Many performers will wear wigs as part of the costume design. In some cases, performers may be asked to modify hairstyles or facial hair to fit the production's design requirements.

Singing roles

Most characters sing as part of the ensemble. Several characters also have featured solos.

All auditioners will sing "Sit Down, John" together as a group.

Auditioners for singing roles should additionally prepare ONE selection from the following list:

- Cool Considerate Men (Dickinson)
- The Lees of Old Virginia (Lee)
- Momma, Look Sharp (Courier)
- Yours, Yours, Yours (Abigail)
- He Plays the Violin (Martha)
- Piddle,Twiddle (Adams)
- Molasses to Rum (Rutledge)
- Is Anybody There? (Adams)
- But, Mr. Adams (Sherman, Jefferson, Livingston, Franklin)

Auditioners will sing with accompaniment tracks.

All roles

Please select two or three characters that interest you and prepare the audition sides listed for those characters.

Memorization is not required, but preparation is encouraged.

Auditioners may also be asked to participate in cold readings from the script.

Role descriptions:

Roles are open to all ethnicities and genders. Men age 15 and over. Women ages 15 and over. While our goal is to primarily cast men in the leading historically male roles, we are open to considering women for the many roles traditionally played by men. Women interested in auditioning for these roles should be prepared to portray male characters. The genders in the character descriptions refer to the gender of the character, not the actor. Any females auditioning for male roles will need to be able to sing Alto or Tenor. The only (Female) Soprano or Mezzo roles are Abigail Adams and Martha Jefferson.

PRINCIPAL ROLES

JOHN ADAMS (Baritone/Tenor)
The driving force behind independence. Passionate, intelligent, stubborn, and often abrasive, Adams is at the center of nearly every major scene. Requires a strong actor, strong singer, excellent memorization skills, and significant rehearsal commitment.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (Baritone/Bass-Baritone)
Wise, witty, diplomatic, and politically savvy. Franklin balances humor and humanity with moments of great seriousness. Requires a strong actor with excellent stage presence and substantial dialogue.

THOMAS JEFFERSON (Tenor)
Thoughtful, reserved, and highly intelligent. Jefferson is tasked with writing the Declaration of Independence and serves as the romantic counterpart to Martha Jefferson. Requires a strong actor and singer.

JOHN DICKINSON (Baritone)
The principal opponent of independence. Charismatic, persuasive, and confident in his convictions. Requires a strong actor capable of handling lengthy dialogue and a major featured song.

EDWARD RUTLEDGE (Strong Baritone)
A powerful advocate for Southern interests and one of the show's most challenging dramatic roles. Requires a commanding actor, strong singer, and excellent public-speaking skills.

ABIGAIL ADAMS (Soprano)
John Adams' wife and closest confidante. Intelligent, warm, and witty. Featured in several musical numbers and serves as the emotional heart of the story.

MARTHA JEFFERSON (Mezzo-Soprano)
Thomas Jefferson's charming and spirited wife. Appears briefly but has one featured musical number and leaves a memorable impression.

RICHARD HENRY LEE (Tenor)
Colorful, confident, and larger-than-life. A comic show-stealing role featuring one of the musical's best-known songs.

THE COURIER (Tenor)
A young messenger carrying dispatches from the battlefield. Features one of the show's most moving solo songs and serves as a reminder of the human cost of war.

FEATURED SUPPORTING ROLES

JOHN HANCOCK (Baritone)
President of Congress. A respected leader who works to maintain order amid constant political conflict. Moderate dialogue and ensemble singing.

STEPHEN HOPKINS
An older Rhode Island delegate known for his wit, bluntness, and fondness for rum. A memorable character role with several strong comic moments.

CHARLES THOMSON
Secretary of Congress. Reads official correspondence, announcements, and reports throughout the show. Requires strong speaking ability and clear diction.

ANDREW McNAIR
Custodian of the State House. Observant, practical, and often frustrated by the politicians around him. A substantial non-singing acting role.

DR. LYMAN HALL
Georgia delegate. Thoughtful, diplomatic, and ultimately faced with an important moral decision. Moderate dialogue and strong dramatic moments.

REVEREND JOHN WITHERSPOON
A New Jersey delegate and clergyman. A speaking-focused role with several important scenes and no major singing requirements.

SUPPORTING DELEGATES

ROGER SHERMAN (Tenor)
Connecticut delegate and member of the committee that drafts the Declaration. Featured ensemble singing and some dialogue.

ROBERT LIVINGSTON (Tenor)
New York delegate and member of the drafting committee. Featured singing and limited dialogue. May be doubled with Richard Henry Lee.

LEWIS MORRIS
A New York delegate caught between personal conviction and the position of his colony. Some dialogue and ensemble singing.

JAMES WILSON
Pennsylvania delegate whose vote becomes crucial to the outcome. Limited dialogue and ensemble singing.

CAESAR RODNEY
Delaware delegate whose dramatic arrival becomes one of the pivotal moments of the story. Moderate dialogue and ensemble singing.

COLONEL THOMAS McKEAN
A vocal supporter of independence and member of the Delaware delegation. Character role with speaking lines and ensemble singing.

GEORGE READ
Delaware delegate opposed to independence. Speaking role with several memorable moments.

SAMUEL CHASE
Maryland delegate known for his appetite and outspoken opinions. Character role with limited dialogue.

JOSEPH HEWES
North Carolina delegate. Ensemble role with limited dialogue and singing.

DR. JOSIAH BARTLETT
New Hampshire delegate. Limited dialogue, ensemble singing, and participation throughout congressional scenes.

ENSEMBLE & CONGRESS MEMBERS

Additional delegates, citizens, apprentices, and congressional personnel will be cast from the ensemble.

These roles are ideal for:
• First-time performers.
• Actors seeking a smaller role.
• Singers who prefer ensemble work.
• Community members interested in participating without carrying a major speaking role.

Ensemble members may be assigned named characters, speaking lines, featured moments, or additional responsibilities based on casting needs and individual strengths.

LEATHER APRON
Young apprentice assisting Andrew McNair. Small featured role with limited dialogue and ensemble singing.

PAINTER (optional/double-cast role)
Small featured appearance. Often combined with another role.

MONOLOGUES (Choose one option for your audition)

OPTION #1

Dickinson: Is that all England means to you, sir? Is that all the pride and affection you can muster for the nation that bore you? For the noblest, most civilized nation on the face of this planet? Well, would you have us forsake Hastings and Magna Carta, Strongbow and Lionheart, Drake and Marlborough, Tudors, Stuarts and Plantagenets? For what, sir? Well, tell me. For what? For you? Some men are patriots, like General Washington, and some are anarchists, like Mr. Paine. Some even are internationalists, like Dr. Franklin. But you, sir... You are merely an agitator, disturbing the peace, creating disorder, endangering the public welfare. And for what? Your petty little personal complaints. Your taxes are too high. Well, sir, so are mine. Come, come, Mr. Adams. If you have grievances, and I'm sure you have, our present system must provide a gentler means of redressing them short of revolution. Yes, that's what he wants. Nothing less will satisfy him. Violence, rebellion, treason. Now, Mr. Adams, are these the acts of Englishmen? (Dickinson, Scene 3)

OPTION #2

I have come to the conclusion that one useless man is called a disgrace, that two are called a law firm, and that three or more become a congress. And by God, I have had this Congress! For ten years King George and his Parliament have gulled, cullied, and diddled these Colonies with their illegal taxes — Stamp Acts, Townshend Acts, Sugar Acts, Tea Acts — and when we dared stand up like men they stopped our trade, seized our ships, blockaded our ports, burned our towns, and spilled our blood — and still this Congress won't grant any of my proposals on this Independence even so much as the courtesy of open debate! Good God, what in hell are they waiting for? (Adams, Scene 1)

OPTION #3

Rutledge: Just a moment, Mr. President.... I wonder if we might prevail upon Mr. Thomson to read again a small portion of Mr. Jefferson's declaration. The one beginning "He has waged cruel war." ...That will suffice, Mr. Thomson. I thank you, sir. Mr. Jefferson, I can't quite make out what it is you're talking about….Oh, yes. You're referring to us as slaves of the king. ...Why didn't you say so, sir? Were you trying to hide your meaning?... Just another literary license, then. ... I don't like at all, Mr. Jefferson. To us, in South Carolina, black slavery is our peculiar institution, and a cherished way of life. ... I am not concerned with the book of fate right now, Mr. Jefferson. I'm more concerned with what is written in that little paper there...Oh, really? Mr. Adams is now calling our black slaves "Americans." Are they, now?...They are here, yes, but they are not people, sir. They are property….Then see to your own wounds, Mr. Jefferson, for you are a practitioner! Are you not?...Then I'm sorry, for you've also resolved the ruination of your personal economy….

Is it really, Mr. Hopkins? Then what is that I smell floating down from the North? Could that be the aroma of hypocrisy? For who holds the other end of that filthy purse string, Mr. Adams? Our Northern brethren feeling a bit tender toward our slaves. They don't keep slaves. Oh, no. But they're willing to be considerable carriers of slaves to others. They're willing. For the shilling. Or haven't you heard, Mr. Adams? Clink, clink.(Rutledge, Scene 7)

OPTION #4

Thomson: "From the Commander, army of the United Colonies in New York, dispatch number 1, 157, to the Honorable Congress, John Hancock, president. Dear sir, it is with the utmost despair that I must report to you the disorder and confusion that reign in every department."

(McNair: Oh, sweet Jesus!)

Thomson: "The Continental soldier is as nothing ever seen in this or any other century. He is a misfit, ignorant of hygiene, destructive, disorderly and totally disrespectful of rank. Only this last is understandable, as there is an incredible reek of stupidity amongst the officers. The situation is most desperate at the New Jersey training ground in New Brunswick where every able-bodied whore in the...Whore? "In the colonies has assembled. There are constant reports of drunkenness, desertion, foul language, naked bathing in the Raritan River, and an epidemic of the French disease. I have placed this town off-limits to all military personnel with the exception of officers. I beseech the Congress to dispatch the War Committee to this place in the hope of restoring some of the order and discipline we need to survive. Your obedient, G. Washington."