



Character Descriptions

AFRICAN-AMERICANS

Coalhouse Walker Jr.

A pianist who is in love with Sarah, and the father of her child. He woos her back with ragtime tunes, and when tragedy hits, he seeks vengeance by resorting to violence. A proud, sophisticated man who fights to live within his social boundaries and then rebels against them when even that is not good enough.

African-American – Male identifying – Baritone with an easy and rich top – Stage age: 25 to 45

Sarah

A washwoman who is adopted into Mother's home when Mother finds Sarah's baby in the garden. Naive yet headstrong, she fights to make her and her family's life better; she falls in love with Coalhouse after resistance;

African-American – Female identifying – High mezzo/Belt - Stage age: 20-35

Sarah's Friend

A friend of Sarah's who attends her funeral, where she sings a mournful elegy.

African-American – Female identifying – Mezzo (note: needs to be able to sing gospel riffs) - Stage age: any age

Booker T. Washington

The dominant figure in the Black community of the United States at the turn of the century. He attempts to be the example of wisdom and restraint for his people in the face of many injustices. He is idolized by Coalhouse.

African-American – Male identifying – Baritone - Stage age: 45 to 55

Coalhouse Walker III

Coalhouse and Sarah's son. Small cameo at the very end

African-American – Male identifying – non-singing - Stage age: 2-6

NEW ROCHELLE**Mother**

A strong, kind woman who defies social norms to do the things she knows to be right. She represents the rapidly changing ideals and cultural norms evident during the time period, and embraces the changes that she sees happening in the country.

Mezzo/Belter – Female identifying – Stage age: 30 to 45

Father

The head of a well-to-do family, and a manufacturer of fireworks. Upon returning from a year-long voyage to the North Pole, he finds things have changed far beyond his understanding.

Baritone – Male identifying – Stage age: 30 to 50

Younger Brother

Mother's Younger Brother. An intense, awkward young man who is always searching for something fulfilling in his life. He lacks direction and focus. His heart is broken by Evelyn Nesbit, and joins Coalhouse in his protests towards discrimination

Tenor – Male identifying – Stage age: 20 to 35

Little Boy

Mother and Father's son. Curious, kind, inquisitive, smart, and creative. Perhaps also clairvoyant.

Juvenile voice – Male identifying – Stage age: 7 to 12

Grandfather

Mother's conservative father. A retired professor. Irritated by everything

Baritone – Male identifying – Stage age: 55 to 75

IMMIGRANTS**Tateh**

A haggard, Latvian-Jewish artist who immigrates to New York with his young daughter. He progresses from having naïve optimism about the new world to being miserable in the face of poverty. He is fully committed to his daughter, and does everything he can to make life better for her.

Baritone/Tenor – Male identifying – Stage age: 30 to 55

Little Girl

Tateh's daughter, a young Latvian girl in a new home. She is reserved, quiet, and mature for her young age
Juvenile voice – Female identifying – Stage age: 7 to 12

HISTORICAL FIGURES**Emma Goldman**

Historical figure, a Russian born radical anarchist in early 1900's New York City. Attempts to enlist Tateh in the fight for worker's rights. Sometimes seen as a staunch anarchist, she is able to inspire large masses to take action even under the possibility of strong consequences.

Mezzo (belt) – Female identifying – Stage age: 30 to 55

Evelyn Nesbit

Historical figure. Evelyn is a model, chorus girl, and vaudeville performer at the height of her notoriety. Famous for the murder of her high profile lover by her rich husband, she is idolized by Younger Brother.

Belter/soprano – Female identifying – Stage age: 18 to 29

Henry Ford

An American industrialist and founder of the Ford Motor Company. Very folksy and full of himself

Baritone – Male identifying – Stage age: 30 to 50

Harry Houdini

The famous magician who immigrated to America, Houdini embodies the story of an immigrant's success in America.

Baritone/tenor – Male identifying – Stage age: 25-40

J.P. Morgan

The rich, famous financier. Pompous

Baritone/Tenor – Male identifying – Stage age: 50 to 70

Willie Conklin

A racist volunteer fireman who destroys Coalhouse's car. His actions are the spark for Coalhouse's revolution

Baritone/Tenor – Male identifying – Stage age: 25-60

CHORUS AND ENSEMBLE

A large and diverse group to play: Citizens of New Rochelle and Harlem, Coalhouse supporters, reporters, vaudeville girls, immigrants, crude baseball fans, and various other supporting roles.