

## Nell Gwyn Character Breakdown -

Please Note:

- that any ages specified relate to “playing” age not actual age, and some named parts may be doubled requiring an actor to portray characters from different age groups.
  - All cast members will be required to sing and except for Nell and Hart will never sing on their own (except at the audition).
  - In addition to the parts listed below there are ensemble parts available (actors, Hecklers, Attendants, Courtiers pages, dressers, and backstage crew).
  - Named Characters will also be expected to take on ensemble roles (so even if the character is only in one or two scenes there will be plenty to do)
1. **Nell Gwynn (20 -35)** –LEAD The central character, Nell is plain-speaking, funny, cheeky and holds a strong feminist perspective. A common girl from a whorehouse in Cheapside she was a prostitute before the action starts and becomes an orange seller at the theatre. She has an affair with the lead actor and joins their ranks as one of the very first women on the stage. She has an affair with the King and falls in love with him. The actor should be a decent singer (Sings solo) and mover and be confident and comfortable with bawdy humour.  
English accent, Londoner
  2. **Rose Gwynn (20-35)** –Nell’s sister, slightly older. A smaller but key role, Rose is Nell’s main confidante, especially early on, but distrusts the King and the court; with good reason, as Arlington eventually hurts Rose to get to Nell. She too has a Cheapside upbringing and may well still work as a prostitute. (to be doubled with another part)  
English accent, Londoner
  3. **Ma Gwynn (50 -60)** - Their mother is a small role, a brothel-keeper who only appears in a single scene in Act 2 (to be doubled with another part)  
English Accent Londoner
  4. **Thomas Killigrew (40-60)** Killigrew is the manager of the King’s Company – an important medium sized role throughout the play. He must take the decision to recruit Nell, deals with the impact of that on the wider company, and battles the consequences of her fame/infamy for his business. Generally kindly and ‘normal’  
English Accent
  5. **Charles Hart (25-45)** - LEAD A very famous actor of his day and the (romantic) lead actor of the Company. It is Hart who spots Nell, takes her under his wing and immediately begins an affair with her. He sponsors her joining the Company and is very jealous of the King, unnecessarily at first. A central role with some comic moments, especially as ‘straight man’ to Nell in Act 1. Appears as the romantic lead male in most of the plays within the play that we see in rehearsal and performance. 4 or 5 solo singing lines.  
English Accent
  6. **John Dryden (25+)** - Dryden was a prodigious and successful playwright in his day, though his work has not lasted. In this play he is a slightly depressed character always up against an impossible writing deadline (end of the week for a new play!) and is delighted when Nell joins as his new muse – a ‘real woman’ he can write for. His comedy comes from his reworking of some classic Shakespeare plays... (to be doubled with another part)  
English Accent

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7. **Nancy (30-60)** - older than Nell -The Company seamstress – a commoner, a friend, and a bit of a mother figure to Nell, this is a broad comedy role particularly when she has to step in for Nell when she leaves the company for a while. She is a terrible actor and the rehearsal scene in act 2 should be very funny as Nancy wrestles with the acting process. English accent, Londoner
8. **Edward Kynaston (20-45)** The actor in the Company who has always played the romantic female leads. Replete with his splendid pair of ‘linen tits’ he is mortified by the fact a real woman will join the team. Broad comedy role with scope for controlled hamming, but also a figure with whom the audience must eventually empathize.  
English accent
9. **Ned Spigget (16-25)** The youngest and newest actor in the troupe, Ned is impressionable and nervous, but a champion for Nell who he probably fancies. He opens the play with a terribly delivered prologue that gets him booed offstage by the hecklers, but he grows up somewhat through the play and is an established member by the end. Some comedy lines.  
English Accent
10. **King Charles II (35-45)** The real deal – a King! A central character in fine clothes, famous for his devotion to hedonism and restoring a pleasurable and colourful culture to England after the puritans had been sent packing, Charles has an important speech in Act 2 when he explains that his playboy lifestyle and ‘do nothing’ political strategy makes sense in the context of his father losing his head, parliament having too much power, his having no direct heir, and balancing the Protestant and Catholic factions in the country after years of civil and religious war. He has a wife and three mistresses (in this play alone) and seems permanently up for it... Must wear the regulation wig! Regal but human, with lots of funny lines.  
English Accent, well spoken.
11. **Queen Catherine (35-45)** older than Charles Queen Catherine gave Charles no legitimate heirs and theirs seems a political marriage. She has just one Act 1 scene in which she speaks about 20 hilarious lines almost entirely in Portuguese, railing and swearing at Charles about his mistresses. Must be credible with learning to speak the Portuguese fluently and with great gusto.  
Portuguese accent, broken English
12. **Lord Arlington (50+)** - Charles’ principal advisor, Arlington is a sizable and key role in the play, constantly keeping an eye on politics, parliament, and the nation while his playboy boss seems uninterested in affairs of state. His motivations are clear, he is necessarily a bore and a drag on Charles, but this produces comedy, and he goes to extreme lengths to try and rid the Court of Nell. English accent,
13. **Lady Castlemaine** – The most ambitious of Charles’ mistresses and ousted from the King’s affections by Nell. Very used to being at court. She is proud, manipulative, and scheming, only interested in the King for the title and children he can give her. But she is also seductive/sexy and teasing. She has a couple of good scenes; getting one over on the Queen, and later when she makes way for Nell. English Accent, well spoken
14. **Louise de Keroualle** - The beautiful, saucy French mistress who Charles takes on, partly for political reasons, while he is still with Nell. Nell is terribly jealous and mocks Louise’s flamboyant clothes in one of her comic songs – a production number. Louise is not a large part - she appears in two Act 2 scenes and speaks mainly in French.  
French Accent