Hairspray The Musical — Character Breakdown

Sumter Players, Inc. · Performances March 11–14, 2027 · Thu–Sat 7 pm, Sun 2:30 pm

Book by Mark O'Donnell & Thomas Meehan · Music by Marc Shaiman · Lyrics by Scott Wittman & Marc Shaiman

Baltimore, 1962. Tracy Turnblad, a big-hearted teenager with big hair, dreams of dancing on *The Corny Collins Show* — and ends up leading the fight to integrate it. Hairspray is a high-energy, heavy-dance show with a large, diverse cast of teens and adults.

Important casting information

The licensor (Music Theatre International) requires that the cast reflect the races of the characters as written in the script, and blackface or other makeup to portray Black characters is not permitted. Race requirements below come from MTI's official breakdown. Ensemble roles have no race requirement. Vocal ranges are as listed by MTI. Main cast is high school and older.

Lead roles

TRACY TURNBLAD — Female, plays 15–20 · White · Range G3–G5 Our heroine: a plus-size, irrepressibly optimistic teen who loves to dance and believes the world can be fairer than it is. Needs a strong belt, real comic timing, boundless energy, and solid dance skills. On stage nearly the whole show.

EDNA TURNBLAD — Traditionally played by a man in drag, plays 30–50 · White · Range F3–G5 Tracy's mother, a home laundress who hasn't left the house in years. Warm, funny, and self-conscious, she blossoms into a glamorous, confident woman. A big comic role requiring a strong character voice and great chemistry with Wilbur.

WILBUR TURNBLAD — Male, plays 55–65 · White · Baritone Tracy's father, owner of the Har-De-Har Hut joke shop. A gentle, goofy dreamer who adores his wife and daughter. Needs comic warmth and a charming soft-shoe sensibility for his duet with Edna.

LINK LARKIN — Male, plays 15–20 · White · Range G3–A5 The teen heartthrob of the Corny Collins Show and Amber's boyfriend. Handsome, a bit vain, and focused on his career until Tracy opens his eyes. Needs a smooth, Elvis-flavored pop tenor and good movement.

PENNY PINGLETON — Female, plays 15–20 · White · Range A3–G5 Tracy's loyal, sheltered, endearingly awkward best friend. Gets plenty of laughs and grows into her own as she falls for Seaweed. A great role for a gifted comedienne who sings well.

SEAWEED J. STUBBS — Male, plays 15–20 · Black · Range F3–D5 Cool, confident, and charismatic; the best dancer at school and a natural leader on Negro Day. Falls for Penny. Must be an excellent dancer with a smooth R&B voice.

MOTORMOUTH MAYBELLE — Female, plays 40–50 · Black · Range F3–E5 Host of Negro Day on the Corny Collins Show, owner of a record shop, and mother of Seaweed and Inez. Big-hearted, larger than

life, and the moral center of the show. Requires a powerhouse gospel/soul voice — her Act 2 anthem is the emotional peak of the evening.

VELMA VON TUSSLE — Female, plays 45–55 · White · Range G3–E5 The station manager of WYZT and Amber's mother; a former beauty queen who will do anything to keep the show segregated and her daughter on top. A deliciously villainous role; needs a brassy voice and strong stage presence.

AMBER VON TUSSLE — Female, plays 15–20 · White · Range A3–F5 The Corny Collins Show's reigning princess and Tracy's rival. Pretty, spoiled, and shallow, she's desperate to be crowned Miss Teenage Hairspray. Needs a strong belt and a flair for comic snobbery.

CORNY COLLINS — Male, plays 25–35 · White · Range D3–A4 The smooth, charismatic host of the TV dance show. A genuinely decent guy who sides with integration. Needs a polished game-show-host charm, a good pop voice, and comfortable movement.

LITTLE INEZ — Female, young (often a child or young teen) · Black · Strong singer and dancer Seaweed's spunky younger sister, who is kept out of the Miss Teenage Hairspray contest because of her race. A spirited, show-stealing role for a confident young performer.

Featured roles

THE DYNAMITES (3 women) · Black · Range E4–A5 A Supremes-style girl group with tight harmonies and polished, synchronized choreography. Need not look alike, but must blend vocally and move as one.

PRUDY PINGLETON — Female, plays 40–50 · White · Range D4–B4 Penny's strict, judgmental, overprotective mother. Often doubled with the Gym Teacher and the Matron (see below).

MALE AUTHORITY FIGURE — Male, adult · White Traditionally one actor plays Harriman F. Spritzer (president of Ultra Clutch Hairspray, the show's sponsor), the Principal, Mr. Pinky (owner of the Hefty Hideaway dress shop), and a Guard. A great comic character actor who can switch personas quickly.

FEMALE AUTHORITY FIGURE — Female, adult · White Traditionally one actress plays Prudy Pingleton, the Gym Teacher, and the Matron of the women's prison. A versatile comic character actress.

THE COUNCIL KIDS — Mixed, plays 15–20 · White The featured dancers of the Corny Collins Show: Brad, Tammy, Fender, Brenda, Sketch, Shelley, IQ, and Lou Ann. Strong dancers with big personalities; several have featured lines and solo moments.

STUDENTS AT NEGRO DAY / DETENTION — Mixed, teens · Black Includes Gilbert, Lorraine, Thad, Duane, Stooie, and Cindy Watkins. Strong dancers and singers; Cindy Watkins has a featured moment as a dance contest contender.

Ensemble

ENSEMBLE — All genders, teens and adults · No race requirement Students, Baltimore citizens, protesters, reporters, prisoners, and more. Hairspray is a heavy-dance show, so ensemble members should be comfortable learning energetic 1960s-style choreography. All roles may sing.