

**LIL & SATCHMO** (a play with music)

By Jo Morello

**CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS**

**Cast of Characters:** 3M, 3F; all African-American

**Cannot be doubled:** 1F (Lil); 1M (Louis)

**Swing/doubled:** 2F actors/singers; 2M actors/singers. All are in the ensemble; all dance.  
(If possible, “Louis” should be dark-skinned and M Swing 2 should be light-skinned for Creole roles.)

**LIL HARDIN ARMSTRONG...** (Feb. 3, 1898–Aug. 27, 1971). Second wife of Louis Armstrong. Slender, tiny (actually 5’ tall, 85-90 pounds). Feisty, vivacious, exuberant. Laughs easily and often. A highly educated, respected jazz musician who plays piano, composes, arranges, sings. Often the only woman in all-male bands; bandleader. Strong business sense, capable and self-sufficient. Memphis native with light Southern accent, always drops the final “g,” resulting in a lilting speech pattern. Strong singer, pop style. Age range 19-73.

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG...** Aug. 4, 1901–July 6, 1971. Second husband of Lil Hardin. Short, stocky (actually 5’6”); weight fluctuated from 170-230), dark-skinned. Brilliant musician with no business sense, an outwardly humble manner, and a deeply inferior sense of self-worth that leads him to take advice from others—except when it comes to music. New Orleans accent (similar to Brooklyn). Must be able to portray Louis convincingly. Age range 21 -70.

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**Doubled Roles in Order of Appearance, with Suggestions for Doubling**

**RED SAUNDERS...** 69 at start. (1912-1981). Chicago-based drummer; played with Lil and Louis.

(M Swing 1: may double with Bill Bottoms)

**MRS. JENNY JONES** . . . mature. Owner of Jones Music Store. (F Swing 1: doubled with Decie)

**FRANK CLEMENTS** . . . any age. “Song plugger” at Jones Music Store. (M Swing 1: may double with Georgie)

**JELLY ROLL MORTON** . . . 27. (1890-1941). Creole. Big, flashy. A diamond in his teeth.

(M Swing 2: may double with Dewey, Joe “King” Oliver, Zutty Singleton)

**DEWEY** (Lawrence Duhé) . . . 30. (1887–1960). Likely Creole. Clarinetist; bandleader.

(M Swing 2: may double with Jelly Roll, King Oliver, Zutty Singleton)

**DECIE (DEMPSEY HARDIN MILLER)**. 18XX-July 1938 . . . Lil’s mother. Supportive, controlling.

(F Swing 1: may double with Mrs. Jones)

**MAE BRADY**... 30. (born 1892). Violinist, bandleader, Lil’s friend. (F Swing 2: may double with Fanny, Mae Alix)

**JOE “KING” OLIVER**. . . 37 (1885-1938). Cornetist/bandleader, Louis’s mentor/father figure.

(M Swing 2: may double with Jelly, Dewey, Zutty)

**MAE ALIX** . . . youngish; band vocalist, must dance (F Swing 2: may double with Mae

Brady, Fanny). Must be able to do a cartwheel and split.

**GEORGIE** . . . any age. A musician. Attractive, street-smart, not in a good way. (M Swing 1: may double with Frank)

**ZUTTY SINGLETON** (ZOOT-e); rhymes with “Cutie”). (1898-1975) Creole. Drummer. Friend of Louis and Lil. (M Swing 2: may double with Jelly Roll, Dewey, Oliver)

**FANNY**. . . 18-30. Beautiful, young. (F Swing 2: may double with Mae Brady, Mae Alix)

**BILL BOTTOMS** . . . any age. Manager at Dreamland. (M Swing 1: may double with Red)

**DANCERS/CROWDS/ENSEMBLE** . . . as desired.

**VOICES** . . . KID ORY, MAN #1, MAN #2, WOMAN, POLICE OFFICER