



## OPEN AUDITIONS ANNOUNCED TO FIND LEADING ROLE IN NATIONAL TOUR OF TWO PENCE TO CROSS THE MERSEY

PRODUCERS IN SEARCH OF AN EXCEPTIONAL ACTOR TO PLAY A YOUNG  
HELEN FORRESTER ON STAGE IN THE HIT PERIOD DRAMA

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Open auditions are to be held to find a talented young actor for a brand-new stage adaptation of Helen Forrester's *Twopence To Cross The Mersey*. The show, featuring a cast of nine, will visit 15 theatres across the UK when it takes to the road between September and November later this year.

*Twopence To Cross The Mersey* UK premiere tour will open on Tuesday 6 September 2022 at the Floral Pavilion in New Brighton, and then go on to tour a further 14 venues nationwide through to mid-November.

The tour will also visit venues in Rhyl, Stockport, Crewe, St Helens, Blackpool, Warrington, Darlington, Halifax, Croydon, Coventry, Lichfield, Bolton, and Southport, before closing in Liverpool.

**About the show:** In 1931, Helen's spendthrift father was declared bankrupt forcing the family to leave behind the nannies, servants, and beautiful middle-class home in the gentler Southwest of England. With nothing more than the clothes they stood up in, the family of nine took the train to Liverpool where they hoped to rebuild their shattered lives. It came as a terrible shock to find the thriving, wealthy port Helen's father remembered as a boy, the place his own father made his fortune, had long since gone.

While 12-year-old Helen's inept parents searched unsuccessfully to find work, she was taken out of school to look after her six younger siblings and the full burden of keeping house fell on Helen's young shoulders. Having

never had to manage a family budget in their previous life, the Forrester's found themselves relying on meagre handouts from the local parish, charity organisations and the kindness of strangers.

At the age of 14, Helen had finally had enough of her miserable existence and so began a bitter fight with her mother and father to attend evening school in an effort to educate herself and make her own way in the world. But Helen's parents had no intention of releasing their unpaid slave. They had other plans for their selfish daughter.

**Open auditions** for the role of young **Helen Forrester** will take place on **Tuesday 5 April 2022**, at the **Epstein Theatre** on Hanover Street in Liverpool City Centre. **Registration will open at 10am.**

The actor will be required to join the cast from **Mon 22 August – Sat 12 November** for the full rehearsal and performance schedule so, **anyone attending the audition must check their full availability in advance.**

Actors must be **aged 18 or over, to play the role of a 12/14-year-old Helen**, be **under 5ft 2in (maximum)** and, **most importantly, of petite build.** The actor will be required to deliver a two-minute monologue that they bring along themselves (this can be self-penned or a section from a published work), which should include a **very well-spoken RP English accent.**

The new touring production of *Twopence To Cross The Mersey* is produced by **Rob Fennah and Lynn McDermott for Pulse Records Limited in association with Bill Elms** and **Directed by Gareth Tudor Price.** The successful actor will work alongside a well-known cast from stage and screen, to be announced soon.

Millions of people around the world know Helen Forrester's life story told through her best-selling volumes of autobiography, ***Twopence To Cross The Mersey, Liverpool Miss, By The Waters Of Liverpool, and Lime Street At Two.***

**Rob Fennah said:** *"Twopence To Cross The Mersey is such a poignant true story and, although based in the 1930's, it tackles many scenarios people can still relate to today. It's the main reason why it has remained so popular. The new 'Helen' will be following in the footsteps of five other great actors who played the role in previous productions so our expectations will be very high. I strongly recommend those thinking of auditioning should do their homework and read the book."*

**Bill Elms added:** *"This is an exceptional role for a young actor. There is a wealth of talent out there and this is a fantastic opportunity for any budding or fully trained actor to come along and audition. Getting the right person to play Helen Forrester is key, given it's a major role, it demands a powerful and emotional performance. Whoever is selected will work alongside a highly professional and experienced team of cast and creatives."*

**Lynn McDermott concluded:** *"It is vitally important everyone attending the audition adheres to the criteria we've set out. 'Twopence' is set in 1931 and as such we seeking a 'natural' looking actor."*

Any enquiries can be sent to [info@billelms.com](mailto:info@billelms.com)

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**For more information, interviews, images, review or competition ticket requests please contact Bill Elms at Bill Elms Associates on 0151 245 0135 or [bill@billelms.com](mailto:bill@billelms.com).**

## **EDITORS NOTES**

### **More about Helen Forrester**

Helen Forrester was born June Huband in Hoylake, Cheshire (now in Merseyside), the eldest of seven children of inept, socialite, middle-class parents who lived on credit. When her father was made bankrupt during the Great Depression, the family was thrown into poverty. Evicted from their comfortable home in an English market town and with nothing more than the clothes they stood up in, the large family took the train to Liverpool where they hoped to rebuild their lives. While Forrester's father searched unsuccessfully for work, the family were forced to live together in a single room. As the eldest child, the 12-year-old Helen was kept away from school to look after her six younger brothers and sisters. For the next few years the family were forced to rely on meagre hand-outs from the parish, and the kindness of strangers. At the age of 14 Forrester rebelled against her life of drudgery and her parents agreed to allow her to attend evening classes to make up for her missed years of education.

Throughout her teenage years, Forrester worked for a charitable organisation in Liverpool and Bootle, which provided background for her novels *Liverpool Daisy*, *A Cuppa Tea and an Aspirin*, and *Three Women of Liverpool*. After surviving the Blitzing of Liverpool and losing two consecutive fiancés to the Second World War she met and, in 1950, married Dr. Avadh Bhatia; her life with him in India provided background for *Thursday's Child* and *The Moneylenders of Shahpur*. The couple travelled widely, eventually settling in Edmonton, Canada, in 1955, where Dr. Bhatia became the director of the Theoretical Physics Institute at the University of Alberta. He was a pioneer in electronic transport theory and the study of diffraction of light by ultrasonic waves. The best-selling memoir of her childhood was *Twopence to Cross the Mersey*. It was later turned into a successful musical. Living in Alberta provided background for Forrester's novels *The Latchkey Kid* and *The Lemon Tree*. *Yes Mama*, which takes place mostly in late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Liverpool, also includes a section about Alberta. She died on 24 November 2011 in Edmonton, Alberta.