

THAMES MUSIC THEATRE – FIRST ROUND ACTING AUDITION SCRIPT

For those aged 10 – 13

Joe and Annie Cooper, aged 13 and 11 respectively, are destitute orphans living in desperate poverty in Victorian London. They share a lodging house room measuring 18 feet by 10 with fifty-eight other people, several dogs, let alone the vermin. They live by begging and petty theft, and look after each other as best they can. Joe is intelligent and has taught himself to read. Annie has the early symptoms of cholera and is very ill. Joe has been given the chance to emigrate to Australia and start a new life there, but he won't go without Annie, and she's far too ill to travel. They argue about it in their cockney accents.

Please prepare both ANNIE and JOE regardless of your gender.

ANNIE *(longingly)* We agreed, Joe. We agreed, didn't we? One day we'd go away together.

JOE But I come with a better idea. I'm learning fast and I've got plans.

ANNIE What plans?

JOE Well, I wasn't going to tell you yet, but I've decided I'm going to try to become a teacher. Then I can take care of you properly.

ANNIE You does anyway.

JOE We'll be able to move out of the Acre. Live on Primrose Hill or even Bloomsbury.

ANNIE But when, Joe?

JOE Well, I dunno. In a year or two.

ANNIE *(frustrated)* But we've got our chance to get out now, Joe. It's what we dreamed about. *(wistfully)* Sailing away to a better land.

JOE *(angrily)* No, Annie, I said no....

ANNIE Next week, Mr Giles said, Joe. Just think – one week and we could be off. All that sunshine. *(She starts coughing, uncontrollably)*

JOE Now calm down Annie, for Gawd's sake.

ANNIE You always said you wanted to crawl out the gutters, Joe. Now you can. We both can.

JOE What makes you think they don't have no gutters in Australia, Annie, eh?

ANNIE Oh Joe.....

JOE *(getting angry with frustration)* Or diseases, or poor people, or thieves and crooks? I don't like it, Annie, and we shouldn't go.

ANNIE Joe....