

# Petula Clark heads for Broadway

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NEW YORK — "No, there were no show-business types in my family when I was growing up," says Petula Clark, who began her show business career more than 50 years ago as a child star in England. "But my father always wanted to be an actor. He looked like Errol Flynn, had the same kind of mustache, and once was bitten on the leg by an Errol Flynn fan."

"Yes, bitten. And he treasured that scar for the longest time," she says, laughing.

Petula Clark is in New York to take over a major role this week in "Blood Brothers," the British musical at the Music Box. She's to play the mother of twin boys, an impoverished woman who agrees to let one of the boys be adopted by a wealthy, childless couple. The boys grow up in different spheres, but their lives intertwine until the story's tragic ending.

(The actor-singers who will play the brothers are half-brothers in real life as well as musical stars on their own: Shaun and David Cassidy.)

Blond, curly-haired "Pet" Clark attained instant fame in this country back in 1965 with the single "Downtown," a bouncy tune that blared out of radios, TV sets, stereos and record shops until downtown seemed to be uptown, midtown, crosstown and nearly everywhere else.

That song brought Clark her first gold record. It was followed by such hits as "Don't Sleep in the Subway," "The Other Man's Grass is Always Greener" and many more.



Associated Press

David Cassidy and Petula Clark pause for photos at a New York rehearsal studio. The pair took over the roles in the Broadway musical "Blood Brothers" this week.

Her music fame soon translated into film roles (she starred with Fred Astaire in "Finian's Rainbow" in 1968 and with Peter O'Toole in "Goodbye, Mr. Chips" in '69) and frequent TV appearances.

Now Clark is trying something new — a starring role on Broadway. She's done musicals and straight plays over the years in Europe, but "Blood Brothers" is her first here. And she's a bit nervous.

"It's funny how I got involved," she says. "I was here a few

months ago, and I went to dinner on my own — something I rarely do — on 45th St. When I left the restaurant, I saw the sign for 'Blood Brothers,' and I walked in and sat down. Nobody stopped me."

She liked what she saw, even if the critics didn't, and was intrigued when the show's producer called in June to see if she would be interested in taking over the mother's role when the show's British cast had to leave.

"I thought it was total madness," she says, "but I flew

over and saw it again, then did a lot of soul searching before I said yes — which I finally did. I just hope I'll be good in it.

"It's very dramatic. I don't want to feel like an alien in it. The music fits me like a glove. I'm beginning to feel very much at home."

Clark got her start in show business at age 10, as a child actress for the J. Arthur Rank studio in Britain. "Julie Andrews, Anthony Newley and I were child prodigies together," she says. "We'd go sing for troops during the war. I thought it was great — it got me out of going to school."

"It's funny the things you learn as a child performer. You learn tricks — how to be cute, how to make people adore you — things you have to unlearn when you grow up."

She started making records when she was 15. "I had some hits. Then rock 'n' roll arrived, and everyone was floundering," she recalls. "But I was asked to give a concert in France, where a French girl was doing covers of my records. That part didn't bother me. My records were covers, too — of American hits."

On one of her trips to France, she met and married Claud Wolff, a record company executive who's now her manager. They have three children (Barbara, Kate and Patrick) and split their time between London and Paris, where Clark has been giving concerts regularly for the last three years at a theater there.

For someone with no family history of show business, it surely is in her blood.