

# Monstrously talented family

Hunter and Sutton Foster each shine in a Frankenstein musical



NEWSDAY PHOTO / ARI MINTZ

Hunter and Sutton Foster, pictured with his dogs Chewbacca and Stella, are both starring in Frankenstein musicals.

BY JOSEPH V. AMODIO  
Special to Newsday

**H**unter Foster would like to make it very clear: "Young Frankenstein" is his favorite film. He tossed that tidbit around a lot earlier this year while starring as Leo Bloom in Mel Brooks' "The Producers" on Broadway. He'd heard Brooks was planning to mount a musical version of "Young Frankenstein," so he made sure the honchos knew that, y'know, it's his favorite.

Didn't work.

"One day, someone runs into my dressing room, saying, 'Guess what — they just cast Sutton,' and I said, 'Oh, greeeeeat,'" Hunter, 38, recalls. He was happy for his sister. But he realized she'd scored the role of Inga, Victor Frankenstein's love interest. "So I knew they'd never consider me" for Victor, he says.

His own monster musical

came to life a few months later. He was cast as the misguided Dr. F in "Frankenstein," a darker version based on the Shelley classic. Both sibs lucked out — his "Frank" (playing Off-Broadway at 37 Arts) and her "Young Frankenstein" (playing on Broadway at the Hilton Theater) were unaffected by the stagehand strike.

That's typical of the Fosters, a brother-sister duo who've sung and danced on Broadway since the mid-1990s. Hunter's big break came in 2001, when he earned acclaim for his role in the wry, offbeat musical "Urinetown." Months later, in 2002, Sutton made her splash, starring in "Thoroughly Modern Millie" — and nabbing a Tony Award. Hunter earned a Tony nomination (for "Little

Shop of Horrors") in 2004 — then came Sutton again, with nominations in 2005 (for "Little Women") and 2006 ("The Drowsy Chaperone"). It's enough to fuel a sibling rivalry, yet their leapfrogging careers only seem to have brought the two closer.

"I've never felt competitive with Hunter," says Sutton Foster, 32, sitting in her "YF" dressing room at the Hilton Theater. "I think we encourage each other."

The two grew up in Augusta, Ga., and admit they weren't terribly close. Sutton started ballet at age 4 and Hunter discovered community theater at the University of Michigan; she toured with a road company of "The Will Rogers' Follies" her senior year of high school, getting

time off to attend her prom and graduation.

They each eventually moved to Manhattan and married (he to actress-dancer Jennifer Cody; she to actor Christian Borle, though the pair recently separated).

Despite their array of Broadway credits, the two have only shared the stage twice — for two days in "Les Misérables" and for two weeks in the '90s revival of "Grease." Hunter was understudying the role of Danny when Sutton arrived from the tour to play Sandy. One day, when the regular Danny couldn't perform, "they came to me and asked, 'Can you go on with your sister?'" Hunter recalls.

Hmmm . . . and sing "You're the One That I Want?"

"Nooo," he repeats now, laughing. "I told them, 'Let the other understudy go on.'"

Sutton laughs, too, at the thought of it. "I just love the idea," she says, "that they even had to ask."

NOW ONLINE

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**S**ibling rivalry isn't among the many traits Hunter and Sutton Foster share on and off the stage. We asked the theatrically talented pair to tell us some little-known facts about themselves and each other.



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / ARI MINTZ

	HUNTER FOSTER	SUTTON FOSTER
<b>When did you know you wanted to perform?</b>	Age 13, playing Linus in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."	Age 10, playing Annie in "Annie."
<b>You're picked for "Dancing With the Stars" — who's your dream dance partner?</b>	My wife [he laughs]. I think that's the best answer.	Noah Racey (a friend from "Millie").
<b>Who's your fave brother-sister team?</b>	Warren Beatty and Shirley MacLaine — I respect Beatty, and I've met MacLaine — she's really cool.	The Cusacks. They're the greatest — they're related yet both so singular.
<b>Tell us one thing about your sib nobody knows.</b>	For years, as a kid, she carried a pillowcase that we had to keep in the refrigerator. It had to be cold.	After he saw "Jaws" he wouldn't take a bath — he was scared of the water.
<b>Besides acting, my sib is good at . . .</b>	Art — painting, sculpture, crafts.	Writing. (Hunter penned the book for the Off-Broadway musical "Summer of '42" and is working on a "Bonnie & Clyde" musical.)
<b>If not an actor, my sib would be a . . .</b>	Teacher, though when she was little her dream was to be a bank teller. [Sutton agrees.]	Novelist. [Hunter agrees.]
<b>When did you first realize your sib was talented?</b>	When she played Annie. She carried the show, and I thought, "Wow, she's really got something."	In [a local production of] "Godspell." He sang "All Good Gifts" and I was like — oh my gosh! He was really wonderful. — JOSEPH V. AMODIO

## Brother and sister acts

**T**here are brother-brother combos (Kennedys, Baldwins, Jacks-sons) and sister-sister tag teams (Williamsses, Gabors, Olsens), but brothers and sisters excelling in the same field are few and far between. Some successful pairs include:

**MUSIC**

Donny & Marie Osmond  
Karen & Richard Carpenter  
**Michael & Janet Jackson**



**DANCE**

Fred & Adele Astaire

**FILM**

Shirley MacLaine & Warren Beatty  
Jane & Peter Fonda  
Julia & Eric Roberts  
John & Joan Cusack  
**Jake & Maggie Gyllenhaal**



**LITERATURE**

Henry & Alice James

**SPORTS**

Billie Jean King & Randy Moffitt (tennis/baseball)  
Al & Jackie Joyner (track and field)  
Peter & Kitty Carruthers (figure skating)  
Reggie & Cheryl Miller (basketball) — JOSEPH V. AMODIO