**Matthew Bourne’s**

**THE RED SHOES**

**Audio Describe Performance**

**Saturday 23rd November 2019 @ 2:30pm**

**Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Theatre Royal Plymouth for the opening of the new National tour of Matthew Bourne’s wonderful production of the ballet The Red Shoes; before going onto The Lowry in Salford, ahead of a seven week Christmas season at Sadler’s Wells, London and further venues; closing in Wycombe in June 2020.**

**I am Denise your audio describer for Act One which lasts for 56 minutes followed by a 20 minute interval. My colleague Gwen will then describe Act Two.**

**Magically and beautifully choreographed and directed by Matthew Bourne it is produced by his ‘New Adventures’ company. Based on the iconic and romantic music of celebrated Hollywood composer Bernard Herrmann, orchestrated by Terry Davies and played live by the New Adventures Orchestra. The sumptuous set and costumes are designed by Lez Brotherston**

**The ballet is set in London,**[**Monte Carlo**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monte_Carlo)**and [Villefranche-sur-Mer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villefranche-sur-Mer%22%20%5Co%20%22Villefranche-sur-Mer) in the late 1940s.** **It is based on the film by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger and the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, thereby incorporating not one but two stories.**

**First we encounter a young girl who dreams of being a great ballerina and the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale that he wrote in 1845 of a young girl who puts on a pair of red slippers that once worn will not allow her to stop dancing. So much so that even amidst finding happiness it seems she must dance until she dies.**

**Then there is the love story of two young artists; one a dancer, Victoria Page and the other, a composer Julian Craster; and the love and lure of the highest artistic achievement as represented by the company’s legendry impresario Boris Lermontov, who unreservedly believes that you cannot be a great artist if distracted by human love.**

**I will now give you a synopsis of Act One followed by a description of the sets and scenery, the characters, costumes, cast list and credits.**

**Synopsis for Act one**

**Victoria Page dreams of being a ballerina and thanks to her well connected Aunt, gets the chance to audition for the great Boris Lermontov at an after-ballet party. Lermontov, whose ballet company is well renown, whilst charismatic is a difficult taskmaster. Vicky joins the company as a student, where she is taught by among others, Grisha the chief choreographer.**

**During a performance of Les Sylphides, Lermontov recognizes her true potential and under his obsessive guidance the young Victoria is poised for stardom. That is until she meets Julian Craster, the brilliant young composer of a new ballet The Red Shoes, which Lermontov stages to showcase her talents.**

**Vicky is catapulted to stardom by a twist of fate, but the ballet star is torn between the composer she falls in love with and her pursuit to become a prima ballerina under the imperious impresario Boris Lermantov who demands utter devotion to the art of ballet and complete loyalty to himself.**

**Sets, Scenery, cast and costumes.**

**As the audience take their seats we are met with an open stage. A proscenium arch and curtains of the opera house at Covent Garden London, frame the central part of the stage. The opulent gold and red damask curtains, deeply fringed at the bottom, fall to the floor from the ornate gilded arch. Across the top in the centre is a coat of arms with curlicues and patterns along the edge and down the sides. In the centre the words The Red Shoes shine out in scarlet lettering across the curtains. Spotlights from above the arch fan out onto the stage.**

**With the sound of a loud click, the lettering begins to fade and a central spotlight moves to the left of the stage. We hear the sound of footsteps as Boris Lermantov walks slowly into the spotlight and looks lingeringly out into the audience. He then turns to the curtain behind, raises his arms aloft as the orchestra begin their overture to the ballet The Red Shoes. Lermantov leaves the stage as the lettering fades on the curtains and the proscenium arch, the curtains closed slide forwards.**

**The curtains slightly open to reveal Vicky in the centre on ballet points wearing a black leotard and red shoes dancing briefly in the spotlight before she disappears.**

**Dancers then appear through the centre of the curtain, dressed for a ballroom scene. The ladies wear pale apricot ballerina length crinoline style dresses with long white gloves, their dark hair in ringlets with small apricot coloured flowers. The men in formal evening dress of black tailcoats and white tights. The ladies carrying fans waltz with the men. As they disappear behind the curtain it opens up to reveal a very ornate chandelier overhead as two leading dancers take centre stage. As they continue to waltz the curtains revolve so that the dancers are now facing the audience at the theatre where they are staging the ballet. Either side in the wings we see dancers waiting to make their entrance. It is here that we first meet Victoria Page sitting in the audience dreaming of one day dancing at Covent Garden. Vicky is a pretty young petite girl with wavy shoulder length red hair. She wears a 40’s style fitted white jacket, black skirt and heeled shoes. The ballet they are watching is called ‘Countess Tamara’s Dilemma’ – about a woman who has to choose between two suitors.**

**As the curtains fall and the show ends the set changes to Lady Neston’s grand drawing room which is dominated by the gilt-framed picture of Sarah Bernhardt, in front of which is an elegant round turquoise seat edged in deep gold fringe. On the left is a black grand piano scattered with sheet music. In the centre, a large chandelier shines down casting light on her elegantly dressed friends. Lady Neston and the ladies are all glamorously dressed in long narrow gowns of various colours with small tiaras in their hair. The men are in formal black evening dress of white tie and tails. It is here that we meet Boris Lermantov. A tall upright and distinguished looking man with dark slicked down hair and moustache. He looks stiff but immaculate in his dark suit with almost always a stern and unsmiling expression. Sitting at the piano is the struggling composer Julian Craster wearing evening dress, a tall, good looking young man with a short back and sides.**

**It is here that Vicky is presented to Lermantov by her aunt, Lady Neston who encourages her to dance for him. Vicky wears a stunning soft green tulle skirted ballerina length dress and ballet shoes. Her hair falls softly onto her shoulders.**

**Returning to Covent Garden, backstage we meet the prima ballerina of Lermantov’s company. The curtains open revealing Irina on the dimly lit stage looking like a glamourous diva in an ankle length mink coat with matching hat perched on her dark shoulder length hair and high heeled shoes. It is here that we also meet the very flamboyant premier male dancer Ivan. As well as Grisha, the ballet master, choreographer and character artist. The corps de ballet rehearse Les Sylphides and we also encounter Joyce, an auditionee, Edith the company costume designer, Sergei the scenery designer and Dimitri, Lermontov’s secretary and the company manager. I will describe the costumes as we meet these characters.**

**Then we move to Monte Carlo where the Lermontov ballet company are relaxing on a sunny promenade. Welcome to the Ballon de Plage. Four male dancers dressed in 1940’s stripped swimming costumes stand in front of a beach scene projected onto the screen behind. Two of the men carry large beach balls. Two ladies in striped costumes with similar beach balls join them and more dancers in a delightful and amusing dance.**

**As the dancers leave, the scene is transformed to the terrace of Lermantov’s mansion in Monte Carlo. The terrace is depicted by a white curved stone balustrade on the left looking out onto the sea and sky with fluffy clouds on the screen behind. A gland piano with various folders and manuscripts on top is on the left, together with a scale model of the Monte Carlo opera house showing the same scenery as that of the ballet of The Red Shoes. Lermontov appears looking dapper in white flannels, shirt and tie, dark blazer Panama hat and dark glasses. Others are dressed in white casual clothes.**

**Moving on to the inside of the Opera House where rehearsals are taking place for the ballet of The Red Shoes. The simple almost clinical set is that of four plain white mounts, as if framing a picture and four dimensional like, coming in from the wings to fill the stage. At the back in monotones is the image of a village with a church spire and a few crooked houses. Later this is replaced by a desolate landscape with a solitary wind-blown tree, then finally by a church and graveyard. All is in black, grey and white, saving that of the red overskirt and bodice of Vicky’s white dress and her red ballet shoes. I will describe the ballet and characters in this scene as it happens.**

**The Principle cast are:-**

**Boris Lermentov - played by Adam Cooper or Glenn Graham**

**Victoria Page - by Cordelia Braithwaite or Ashley Shaw**

**Julian Craster – by Harrison Dowzell, Stephen Murray or Dominic North**

**Irina Boronskaja – Prima Ballerina – by Cordelia Braithwaite or Michela Meazza**

**Ivan Boleslawsky – premier male danseur - Jackson Fisch or Liam Mower**

**Grischa Ljubov – Ballet Master, choreographer and character artist is played by Glenn Grahan, Liam Mower or Danny Reubens**

**Musical Hall Performers, Lady Neston’s guests and other characters are played by members of the Company.**

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