

BLOG: Girls just wanna have fun - Behind the scenes at Theatre Royal Plymouth for Priscilla Queen Of The Desert

By Angela Roy (TRP Blogger & Critic)

“Check, 1,2,3,4,5.... 1,2,3,4,5”

Sneaking around the wings of the Lyric stage at the Theatre Royal Plymouth, with microphone checks echoing all around me, I was thrilled to be given an insight into the pre-show preparations for Priscilla Queen of the Desert, currently delighting Plymouth audiences. Despite being in the middle of a 10-month tour of Priscilla, Company Manager Leighton Vickers’ dedication and pride in the show was evident as he enthusiastically told me about the hard work and organisation that goes into making Priscilla the show that it is.

With changes to the set, script and costumes, Leighton explained that this is the first time any company has been allowed to change the design of the show. When the producers at Nullarbor Productions saw the latest incarnation, having overseen and managed all international versions of the musical since its Australian premiere in 2006, they tearfully pronounced, “Our baby’s a teenager!” By scaling down some of the costumes in physical size, this has enabled the choreography to be enhanced, giving the performers the freedom to dance, sashay, flounce and strut their way around the stage without inhibition.

Costumes are a major focal point of the show with Adam, played by the incredible Nick Hayes, undertaking 14 costume changes in every performance. It was fascinating to see the work that goes into ensuring all pieces are in the correct place, labelled and ordered for the show’s performers to swiftly change in and out of, ably assisted by the company and dressers, including a team from TRP.

I was privileged to be allowed to ‘drive’ Priscilla the bus, a beautifully created and very versatile part of the set which appears from several angles to the audience but which must also be re-set each night before every performance.

Leighton also told me about touring life with many of the company not seeing their families for days or weeks on end. The show is packed up on a Saturday night and re-

set in a new town, sometimes on the other side of the country, on a Monday morning. This gives Sunday as the only day to catch up with family, one of the hardest elements of being on tour according to Leighton.

As the cast stepped on stage for their pre-show physical warm-up, some at various stages of their make-up routines, I got a brief insight into the camaraderie experienced by members of a touring company. News shared, jokes flowing and girls (and boys) just having fun, it was clear to see that this is a show buzzing with love and energy from all involved. Something that was confirmed when this girl got to have her own fun, watching it an hour later.