The Buddy Holly Story. Saturday 3rd June 2023 Programme notes for AD Act 2

Welcome back ladies and gentlemen for Act 2 of The Buddy Holly Story. My name is Penny and I will be describing Act 2 for you. Act 2 lasts for 1hr 15 mins and this matinee will finish at 5.05 approximately

Please be aware that there are lights which strafe the auditorium, and some dry ice effects. There is not much time between dialogue and the musical numbers for me to describe what is happening on stage, so, I will explain as much as possible for you now.

SYNOPSIS

Buddy, and the style of his music, for so long underappreciated by the critics and music producers, is now getting radio air time, rapturous reviews, soaring record sales, and huge audiences in iconic venues. His Cricket musicians are now joined by a small orchestra of trumpet, piano, celeste, saxophones and backing singers. The tour line ups include J P Richardson – aka The Big Bopper, and Richie Valens. They travel from the Apollo Theatre in Harlem - New York, to the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, Iowa. The Apollo is known as a venue for black musicians, and the New York musicians are very doubtful that a group of white, Southerners singing rock and roll will be tolerated by the locals. In New York, Buddy meets and quickly marries Maria Elena Santiago, who is the receptionist for music producer Murray Deutch.

SETS AND SCENES

Act 2 opens in Music publisher Murray Deutch’s office in New York. On the left is a battered brown wooden desk with a large radio set, a wire document basket and a black Bakelite telephone. To the right, a long low black leather sofa. In the top centre of the backdrop is a large screen on which is projected the lights and skyline of New York, it is surrounded on either side and vertically forward by a series of square and rectangular panels of blue, white, grey and green. Maria Elena is a beautiful Puerto Rican girl, her dark hair is tied back in a bun. She is wearing an ivory full skirted dress with a fitted bodice and three quarter length sleeves, a white cardigan draped over her shoulders. Her outfit is completed by cream slingback shoes and a coral coloured necklace. Later on she wears a fitted skirt suit in white with a blue trim. Buddy, Joe, Jerry arrive looking very suave in matching dark slacks, mid blue ties and pale blue jackets with a white triangle of handkerchief showing in their breast pockets. They are all wearing sunglasses and have their dark hair slicked back in a tidy quiff. The boys chat with Maria Elena before her high roller boss, Murray Deutch sweeps into his office wearing a camel hair coat over his immaculate suit. When Maria leaves, her place on reception is taken by Shirley, a blowsy, gum chewing brunette from the Bronx. The action then moves to Central Park at night, the lights of the New York skyline in the background. The path is lit by a triple lit lamp post with a public payphone at the base. The MC then describes Buddy’s meteoric rise to fame as we arrive in Buddy and Maria’s New York apartment. Sitting on the sofa, his packed suitcase on the floor, Buddy strums an acoustic guitar, before being joined by Maria in her white satin nightdress and dressing gown. We then find Buddy and fellow musicians backstage at the Surf Ballroom at Clear Lake, Iowa. The Big Bopper is ironing his red shirt which he wears with pink trousers and a black string tie. Over these, on stage he wears a leopard print jacket with gold collar and cuffs and leopard and black brothel creeper shoes. To the left are two large wicker prop baskets, and on the front right two amplifiers. At the back on the right is a clothes rail hung with costumes. The female backing singers arrive wearing brown coats over their full skirted knee length black dresses, trimmed with pink on the shoulder collars, a pink front panel and diamante earrings. The men wear black dress suits except for the MC who wears a red jacket with black lapels, over a white shirt, black dress trousers and black patent shoes. Richie wears a blue fitted bolero style jacket with rhinestones on the lapels, over a white ruffle fronted shirt open to midway down his chest, and blue high waisted slinky flared trousers with a silver belt. The show opens with beauty pageant winner, Mary Lou Sokolof singing the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ wearing a short satin dress in red, white and blue, with a stars and stripes top hat to complete the outfit. Jack Daw and The Snowbirds sing acapella in front of the curtain. The curtain then rises to reveal the stage set with musicians to the left, backing singers to the right, and at the back the drummer with his drum kit centre stage on a black sparkly dais, with a piano and celeste to either side of him concealed by white panels of musical notes on a stave. The backdrop is a white ruched silky fabric, onto which different colours are projected. The Big Bopper is the first performer, after which Buddy takes the stage to sing three numbers before Richie sings La Bamba. Buddy then sings alone in the spotlight before they all join him. The lights go out, and in front of the curtain, propped on a stand, is Buddy’s guitar in the spotlight, as the MC announces Buddy’s tragic early death. The curtain then rises for a jacketless Buddy leading the rousing finale, which the audience are urged to join in.

I hope you have enjoyed this performance. Our next Audio Described performance is Charlie and the Chocolate Factory on Saturday 17th June at 2pm