42nd Street

The song and dance fable of Broadway

Thursday 10th August at 2.30 and Saturday 12th August at2.30

Good afternoon and welcome to The Theatre Royal Plymouth for this gloriously spectacular production of the musical classic, 42nd Street. Brought to us by David Ian for Crossroads Live and Jonathan Church Theatre Productions. It is from the book by Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble and based on the novel by Bradford Ropes. Directed by Jonathan Church, with music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dubin, the live music under the direction of Jennifer Whyte.

I am Veryan your describer for the first Act with my colleague, Denise describing the second half. The show runs for approximately two hours thirty-five minutes including a 20minute interval.

I will begin by telling you a little bit about the show, followed by a brief synopsis, a description of the sets, characters and costumes, and finally the cast list and credits.

42nd Street was originally a novel by Bradford Ropes before being made into a film during the Great Depression in 1933 and then a stage show in 1980. It is a musical about a musical, a timeless and inspiring showbiz fairy tale that combines breath-taking tap dance routines, backstage intrigue, classic romance and delightful comedy - all in all one of show business's most beloved tales. This iconic song-and-dance spectacular features a hit parade of toe-tapping songs, including the title number, “*We’re In The Money*”, “*Lullaby of Broadway*”, “*Shuffle Off To Buffalo*” and “*I Only Have Eyes For You*”.

**SYNOPSIS**

Fresh off the bus from small-town America, young and beautiful Peggy Sawyer arrives in New York City from her hometown of Allentown, Pennsylvania, armed with her tap shoes and dreaming of her name in lights. Her talent quickly catches the eye of legendry Broadway director Julian Marsh, who gives her a spot in the chorus line of Broadway’s newest show, 'Pretty Lady'. Here she joins a fast-talking, hard working gang of Depression-era New York dancers. When the leading lady, Dorothy Brook, a prima donna past her prime, is injured during the show's preview, 'Pretty Lady' looks like it will have to close, unless a new girl talented enough to lead the show can be found - someone like Peggy Sawyer perhaps?

**Sets, Characters and Costumes**

There are many different scenes and locations in the show all of which flow seamlessly from one to the other without any breaks, the sets being changed by members of the cast.

As the audience take their seats, a black curtain covers the stage. Once the show begins, this curtain will act as a projection screen for black and white images of newspaper articles depicting the great depression and still photographs of the New York streets. Similar images will appear interspersed throughout the show, some filling the entire back of the stage, with others no more than a glimpse of a New York street seen through a narrow opening. These 1930s images will be described as they take place.

The gauze will lift to reveal the backstage area of the 42nd Street Theatre. The stage is huge, open, devoid of any scenery or backdrops and very dark. The far wall facing us is built of black brick, as are the three sets of wings on either side of the stage. The wall is divided horizontally by a narrow walkway that crosses the wall about ten feet above the ground, with above it on the right, are huge double height wooden doors, used for scenery to access the stage. On the left of the doors, a narrow metal ladder rises from the walkway and disappears out of sight. Interspersed along the wall are drainpipes, scaffolding poles and dangling or coiled ropes along with various single black radiators. Below the walkway, at ground level, is a single door with, attached to the wall on its right, a pin board covered with flyers, schedules and notices. This whole lower level can be changed to become a wide opening, the dark void filled with a misty light. Towards the front of the stage, on either side, are towering iron railings similar to extremely tall gates, and dotted around the dark walls are naked light bulbs that glow in the darkness. There are several pairs of double steps, which are moved around to form different locations.

Scene one opens to the stage of the 42nd Street Theatre in New York City. It is 1933 and an audition is in progress. The stage is wide open and devoid of any scenery or props apart from a piano on the right where, Oscar the rehearsal pianist plays as a group of young hopefuls, men and women, go through a dance routine. **Andy** **Lee,** the dance director and chorographer is also there, barking out directions as he takes the ensemble through a routine. Also present is the eager to please young tenor, **Billy** **Lawton**. He is one of the young leads, tall, slim and good-looking with bright blue eyes, and although he could appear a tad caddish, is really quite a decent chap. The stage manager, **Mac** is also there, watching from behind the piano. All the young men are dressed more or less the same in trousers, creases down the front of course, it is the 1930s, white shirts with either waistcoats, sleeveless pullovers or some with braces - and all with correspondent tap shoes. The girls also all dress in a similar style consisting of high waisted shorts with neatly fitting short sleeved blouses, some with pussy bows, and all with tap shoes. The men's hair is cut in classic short back and sides, whilst the girls hair is styled in a variety of short wavy bobs, face framing kiss curls or pined up. Five of the more prominent dancers are **Phyllis, Lorraine, Diane, Annie and Ethel**. There will be many costume changes throughout the show, too many to describe here, especially with the ensemble as their costumes, whilst remaining much the same style, will differ in colour and glitz for the different dance routines.

During the audition **Maggie** Jones, the show's sassy co-script writer and **Bert** **Barry** the shows' somewhat sleazy co-writer and producer arrive. Maggie is a middle-aged powerhouse who strides on stage dressed in a vibrant pink checked two-piece suit, the jacket fitted, the straight calve-length skirt ending with kick pleats at the hem. She wears pink T bar shoes, has a pink fur stole over her shoulder, carries a handbag and wears her bright auburn hair piled high with a fascinator perched on top. Bert, a portly man in his sixties, sports a very loud yellow checked suit with a brown waistcoat and a trilby covering his balding grey hair.

As the audition ends, **Peggy** **sawyer,** fresh off the bus from Pennsylvania, burst in. She seems flustered, as she stands alone on the emptying stage clutching a suitcase and handbag. Peggy is petite, has glowing brown skin, and a wide-eyed, smiling face framed by an abundance of short dark curls. She exudes innocent enthusiasm, has a tendency towards being accident prone, but above all is brimming with raw talent. She arrives wearing a dark navy coatdress trimmed with white polka dots, a matching hat and tap shoes. Once she starts to dance, she pulls off her coat to reveal navy and white polka dot shorts with a matching top.

Next to appear backstage, is the shows' well-respected, demanding and sometimes-cantankerous director, **Julian Marsh.** He is a tall distinguished looking man in his sixties with a chiselled jaw line and neat grey hair. He is dressed in a formal, well-cut navy blue suit with a shirt, tie, grey waistcoat and two-tone brogues. Despite seeming to be somewhat gruff and authoritarian, he is always fair.

Soon after Julian Marsh's arrival, the fading prima donna, **Dorothy Brock** sweeps in looking very much the glamorous diva that she is. Despite her inability to dance and being well past her prime, Dorothy has claimed the star role in 'Pretty Lady' because of her sugar daddy**, Abner** **Dillon** funding the show. She is a difficult and demanding woman who's highly indignant at being asked to come in to the rehearsals. She is beautiful, tall, slender, and exudes glamour with her bright red lipstick and pale blond hair that tumbles in soft waves to her shoulders. When she first arrives, she will be wearing a figure hugging lilac dress with long bell shaped sleeves and frills edging the V neckline. She has a tiny hat that matches her dress and wears high heel shoes. Dorothy will appear in many different costumes, all in a similar style - fitted dresses, which show off her neat figure, with long sleeves, high heels and pretty hats. Some ankle sweeping gowns will be edged in pink marabou.

Dorothy is followed by her wealthy beau, **Abner Dillon**. He is a tall thin, older man with a swarthy complexion, dark hair, long moustache and beard, who, by his dress, seems to be trying to appear younger than he is. He's dressed in tan coloured casual trousers with a bright blue, sliver-studded shirt beneath a fringed suede jacket, black boots and a wide-brimmed Stetson.

Finally we meet, **Pat Denning,** Dorothy's secret long-term boyfriend and former Vaudeville partner. He is a tall, slim good-looking man, with a gentle manner with his greying hair slicked back from his face. He wears a formal pale grey suit with a shirt, tie and polished shoes.

When the action moves to 'The Gypsy Tea Kettle' restaurant in a side street off Times Square, the 42nd Street stage will fade and a square of light come up on the right with a sign in the shape of a kettle hanging above it with the words, The Gypsy Tea Kettle on it. Waiters dressed in black trousers, waistcoats with stripped aprons and red Turkish style caps, will bring in five chairs and a small table. At the back on the left a flight of steps lead up to a narrow opening through which we get a glimpse of a New York street.

We then move to the stage door in a dimly lit street behind the theatre, and then to Dorothy's dressing room back stage.

Her dressing room is simply represented by an Art Deco chaise upholstered in duck-egg blue on the left with a similar styled dressing table and matching stool in the centre. The surface of the curved pale wood dressing table is cluttered with make up, brushes, photos, perfume bottles and a posy of flowers - tiny lights surround the circular mirror. Here Dorothy will wear a long brocade robe edged with pink marabou.

When the story moves to the Arch Street Theatre Philadelphia for the 'Pretty Lady's' out of town try out, a ravishing gold art deco proscenium arch will be lowered across the front of the stage. The arch has columns on either side curving in on both sides before rising to an ornate cross piece with a crest motif in the centre - the whole arch lit by tiny lights. For the rehearsal, the lighting will be in tones of pink and purple. Here the girls will wear long tight fitting green fishtail dress, big red hats like poppies and carry red parasols, whilst Billy will be wearing a bright green suit.

Another scene in the pre-view will have a backdrop of a bright sunny beach with the sea in the background and a beach parasol placed in the sand.

The action then moves to the Regency Club and Dorothy's sitting room in her hotel suite. Representing the club is an upholstered art deco bar adorned with golden palms, the back picked out in a sunburst of lights. Behind the glitzy bar, double steps rise in both directions to a small overhead platform. On the left, a daybed with a brass telephone on it will light up to represent Dorothy's room.

We then return to the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia for the opening night where a front cloth will descend with the words, 'Pretty Lady' emblazoned across it and a sketched image of a woman in 1920s dress perched in front of a full moon on the right. When the show begins, a backdrop depicting a night sky, with a huge portal in the shape of a full moon from which long beams of moonlight radiate. Within the full moon is a glowing crescent of the new moon. The night sky twinkles with stars whilst the moon is surrounded by pale blue, art deco clouds.

During the show of 'Pretty Woman', the performers will wear a variety of different costumes, which vary, with the men being in grey trousers and waistcoats with different coloured bowler hats, to bright blue tailcoats and trousers with matching top hats, or highly sequined gold jackets. The girls are all equally glitzy with an abundance of sequins shimmering in the light. Their low-cut skimpy costumes predominantly in shades of blues and gold with swirling diaphanous material suspended from their wrists or about their waists, silver moons perched on their white wigs.

Pretty Lady also has a routine, which begins with four Ragamuffins scrabbling in the dirt on the ground searching for coins before switching to a brightly lit art deco backdrop with giant coins piled up on the ground in front of it.

We will also see Dorothy on a darkened stage standing in a pool of red light cast by a curved Victorian lamppost.

Throughout the show, the cast will have many changes of costume, and where possible, we will describe them at the time. I should warn you that the show is very loud so description will be kept to the minimum during the dance routines.

a

**Cast**

* Samantha Womack - Dorothy Brock.
* Michael Praed - Julian Marsh.
* Faye Tozer - Maggie Jones.
* Les Dennis - Bert Barry.
* Nicole-Lily Baisden - Peggy Sawyer.
* Sam Lips - Billy Lawlor.
* Oliver Farnworth - Pat Denning
* Anthony Ofoegbu - Abner Dillon
* Alyn Hawke - Andy Lee
* Kevin Brewis - Mac
* The cast will be completed by **Erica-Jayne Alden**,**George Beet**, **Charlie Bishop**, **Kevin Brewis**, **Olly Christopher**, **Briana Craig, Jordan Crouch, Rhianna Dorris, Ashleigh Graham**, , **Aimee Hodnett, Connor Hughes, Deja Linton, Sarah-Marie Maxwell**, **Greta McKinnon**, **Ben Middleton**, **Benjamin Mundy**,  and **Jessica Wright.**

Choreographed and designed by Olivier Award winners**Bill Deamer** and **Rob Jones**,

Set by Robert Jones

The show begins with a short prologue where we hear the voices of Mac, the stage manager for 'Pretty Woman' and some of the chorus girls, Annie, Phyllis, Diane, Lorrain and Ethel and others before the gauze lifts to reveal dancers warming up at a practice bar backstage.