**“ Annie – the Musical.”**

**Saturday 19th August 2:30pm performance. W.S.**

 **Audio description notes for Act 1.**

Welcome to this afternoon’s performance of **“ Annie – the Musical “** here in the Lyric at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth. My name is Wendy and I shall audio describe Act 1 for you. The show has a running time of approximately two and a half hours including a 20 minute Interval. My colleague Veryan will take over for Act 2- she will start her introduction to the second half, 10 minutes into the Interval.

This production includes repetitive flashing lights and visual effects, pyrotechnics, smoke and haze, plus lots of shouting and loud music ! It is deemed to be suitable for all, aged 5 and above.

This new touring smash-hit production is brought to you by Michael Harrison Entertainment Ltd straight from the West End. It includes many famous songs such as “Tomorrow “ and “Hard knock life “, several spectacular dance routines, Craig Revel-Horwoodf “Strictly come dancing “ fame as Miss Hannigan and even an adorable dog ! You can “bet your bottom dollar “ that you’ll love it !

“Annie- the Musical “ is loosely based on the Tony award-winning story by Thomas Meehan with original music by Charles Strouse and lyrics by Martin Charnin. This production is directed by Nickolai Foster with the set and costumes designed by Colin Redmond and choreography by Nick Winston.

“Annie” is set in1933 in New York during the Great Depression which followed the Wall Street Crash in 1929 when many people lost their jobs and savings and were made homeless. Shanty towns nicknamed “Hoovervilles” ( after Herbert Hoover the Republican previous President ) sprang up in many cities across America.

Eleven year old Annie, has lived a life of misery in a state orphanage run by the child-hating Miss Agatha Hannigan. Annie, being an eternal optimist, clings on to the hope that her birth parents are still alive and will eventually come and collect her- she treasures a broken locket and a letter that they left with her when she first arrived at the institution as a baby. After attempting to escape from the orphanage, Annie has an extraordinary stroke of luck when she is chosen to be a special Christmas guest of a very rich local businessman. Her nemesis, the bitter Miss Hannigan is determined to spoil her stay and to undermine Annie’s search for her family.

**Act 1** begins on a cold December night in the communal dormitory of the orphanage. The set is massive with a huge back wall and a series of three tall wing screens either side of the stage that are made from parts of an enormous street map of New York. There are pink dashed lines, arrows and characters’ names scribbled across the set suggesting Annie’s journey around the city. Many large jigsaw pieces of this map are dotted haphazardly across the back wall and around the proscenium arch. Some are bright yellow with black markings- these sometimes light up in various colours throughout the show. Centre back of the stage is a pair of tall, green wooden-panelled doors. Above them is a large broken pane of glass. There are six heavy iron-framed single beds arranged horizontally in two rows of three with a wide walkway between, leading from the doors. The scuffed pale green bedsteads face each other-they have tired, patched bedding and thin mattresses. At the outer, pillow end of each bed is a tall, thick metal pole supporting an industrial light with a metal shade –three similar lights hang down over the centre of the dorm. Strapped to the foot of each bed is a small wooden cabinet for personal items. It all looks very institutionalised, hard, cold and grubby. There is very little colour- everything looks neglected and battered. There is a large old-fashioned wooden radio on the floor on the far right. Each bed contains a sleeping child clutching a moth-eaten old teddy or stuffed toy- we meet Molly, only 6 who often has nightmares about her Mother, Kate who is 7 and tries to be tough, then there is Tessie who at 10 still cries easily. Next are two 13 year olds- July who wears glasses and quietly stands up to bullies and Duffy the biggest girl of the group. Pepper is 12 and the toughest and most street-wise, always ready for a fight. Finally we meet Annie- the 11 year old optimist, with long ginger hair and a cheeky grin, always planning ahead and looking for a way out of their miserable prison. The girls all wear drab and dirty pinafore aprons, over tired frocks, woolly stockings and shapeless cardigans with old, scuffed ankle boots, all in muted earthy shades. Annie’s clothes are dull orange and beige -she always wears a broken heart-shaped silver locket on a chain. The girls’ matted long hair is scraped back into a ponytail, a plait or pigtails- they look very grubby, unloved and unkempt. They are used to hard, dirty work sweeping or scrubbing the floors with old mops, brushes, rags and battered tin buckets which are stowed under their beds.

 Next, we meet the harridan Miss Agatha Hannigan,the reluctant matron of this orphanage. She has dyed ginger curls with a blond front streak kept in check by a pale silk scarf as a hair band. She wears garish make-up and jewellery and a tight orange-edged yellow print crepe dress by day. At night she prances about unabashed in a mauve camisole playsuit edged in pink over suspenders and thick stockings with a gaping white crepe kimono dotted with primary coloured circles. Miss Hannigan wears important keys and a silver whistle on a long chain around her neck. She’s tall, busty, feisty and always on the prowl and flirtatious where men are concerned. She is rough and consistently mean and nasty to the girls in her charge - she shows no maternal instincts and staggers through each day with the help of copious swigs of gin.

The next character we meet is Bundles the laundry man- he wears a simple company uniform of a cream short jacket and matching cap, worn back to front – he arrives on his regular visit pushing a large, deep wicker laundry basket full of clean sheets.

 Miss Hannigan’s office is swiftly assembled- there is a central green wooden door with a frosted glass panel, marked Private- there are some long, bowed shelves above, loaded with random books, toys and confiscated items. A tall, battered cream filing cabinet with papers spilling from every drawer stands on the right side of a plain green office desk and chair. The top of this messy desk is covered in teetering piles of folders and documents–some have fallen onto the floor. An old cream telephone and green desk lamp are buried amongst the chaotic debris. There is an overflowing waste paper basket on the left and behind this is a large, lopsided cream metal fridge haphazardly balanced on a lot of junk- it holds no food, just many large bottles of gin.

**Scene 2** takes place outside the orphanage in the street– there are five openings in the back wall and people flood through going about their business. They are dressed in a variety of colourful warm coats and hats- several people carry shopping bags. We meet an apple seller and two dog catchers with their wagon then Lieutenant Ward, a feisty, old New York cop smartly dressed in his dark uniform and cap. Annie helps a scruffy but friendly stray dog– the lovely Sandy, a long-haired mongrel who will no doubt steal the show !

**Scene 3** finds us at night in a very different part of the city, in a makeshift Hooverville or shanty town. An assortment of people down on their luck, dressed in sludge brown old coats, woollen scarves and random clothes and hats they have salvaged from their past lives, have made a temporary home here. This is built from old car parts, seats, a pram, a bedstead and anything scavenged. A string of bare bulb lights hangs between the dwellings and a kindly woman named Sophie is stirring a stew pot hanging from a tripod over a fire in an old dustbin, on the right. She ladles soup onto chipped enamel plates.

 **Scene 4** finds us back in Miss Hannigan’s untidy office where we meet the immaculately dressed Miss Grace Farrell, a very organised and competent personal assistant. She has blonde curly bobbed hair and wears a stylish muted pink tweed coat with matching felt cloche hat over a smart grey skirt suit, blouse and grey tie. Her jewellery is simple and expensive-she carries a small maroon leather document case. She has come about a public relations stunt suggested by her employer, Oliver Warbucks, a very influential and wealthy businessman.

 **Scene 5** finds us inside Mr. Warbucks’ lavish mansion on the other side of town, depicted simply by a huge ridged gold W, which includes a pair of inset art deco doors. A bracket with three matching glass globe lights is flown in above the centre of the stage. There are many staff who run the house- Drake, the English butler, immaculate in his jet black tail coat uniform, keeps order with Mrs. Greer the housekeeper dressed here in a simple wine red frock and matching loose coat. Cecille and Annette the French maids and Mrs. Pugh the cook are neatly turned out in finely striped red and white dresses with long starched white aprons and caps edged with red piping. This dark red and white theme is repeated in the uniforms and striped waistcoats of the two male servants and the jodhpurs and jacket of the chauffeur. All is clean, starched and exclusive.

Oliver Warbucks sweeps in like a tornado, back from a 6 week tour of his many factories and businesses spread across America. He is completely work-focused in his expensive black felt hat and overcoat, double-breasted black pinstripe suit, white shirt, red and gold striped tie and shiny black shoes and leather briefcase. He is a commanding figure-tall and broad-shouldered with strong facial features and a bald head. He is used to giving orders and being quickly obeyed ! Annie meets him for the first time proudly wearing her brand new dark red wool coat with white piping.

In **Scene 6** we, like Annie experience the busy, more opulent streets of uptown New York via a whirlwind of dancers- there’s a mobile hot dog stand and some dancers represent the famous yellow New York taxi cabs. Mr. Warbucks, Annie and Miss Farrell are swept inside a cinema on a row of red plush tip-up seats by the two ushers in smart dark green and white jackets. The trio eat popcorn and watch a dance troupe- the men wear striped matelot shirts, white bell bottoms and sailors’ hats and the women are dressed in short, red, white and blue nautical frocks.

 We’re back in the orphanage in Miss Hannigan’s untidy office for **Scene 7**. We meet two new characters- Agatha’s slimy spiv of a younger brother, Rooster and his light-fingered girlfriend Lily St. Regis. Rooster is not long out of jail- he has a dangerous edge to him. He has short, oiled black hair with a ginger streak in it, a thin moustache, one silver hoop earring and a black eye. He is dressed in a dusky pink shirt, a purple waistcoat, a ginger wool suit and a black felt pork pie hat, tipped at a rakish angle. His girlfriend Lily wafts around in a dark, floral crepe wrap dress, frilled at the hem and wrists, a ratty fox fur and feathers in her curly blonde bob. Her high, loud voice grates and she likes to flaunt her body. Both appear slightly unhinged, unpredictable and feral !

The final scene of Act 1 finds us in Mr. Warbuck’s office- he has a huge, matt gold modern desk in the shape of a wide W. His leather chair, matching blotter and desk lamp are red and expensive. A large black telephone is in constant use. There is no clutter- everything is spare, ordered and business-like. Annie looks different now she is cleaned-up and well-dressed in a white and red pleated tennis dress and pullover. Mr. Warbucks has a gift for her from Tiffany’s famous jewellery store, that sparks off a whole new chain of events in Act 2 !

I hope you enjoyed Act 1 of “Annie”- now we’ve set the scene there’s plenty more action and surprises to come ! Veryan will start her Act 2 notes in 10 minutes, halfway through the Interval.

Annie

Act 11

Saturday 19th August 2023

Good afternoon and welcome back to the second half of Annie. I am Veryan your describer for this Act, which runs for 55 minutes.

The sets will remain the same as Act 1, with the addition of a few new scenes, locations and characters, which I will now describe for you.

As the audience return to their seats, the stage is open with the same jig saw backdrop as before, and is empty apart from the radio standing on the floor on the right.

The show then opens in a N.B.C. radio studio, where a live radio program called “The Oxydent Hour of Smiles," is about to be broadcast. The show is presented by the effervescent and dapper, **Bert Healy** dressed in an immaculate white tuxedo with black trousers and a bow tie. It is all hustle and bustle as people stride around creating the studio. A cluttered sound-effects table will be brought in by two casually dressed studio technicians and placed on the left. Behind them, seated on red directors chairs, are the three **Boylan Sisters** whoall wear identical half black, half white long sleeved dresses with pearls around their necks and strappy black shoes. The sisters all have bouffant hair, one blond, one red and one dark.

More folding directors chairs are placed on the right of the studio where Grace and Mr. Warbucks and at times, Annie, will sit. Also on the right, stands another sound effects man - **Jimmy Johnson,** the masked announcer. He is formally dressed in a black tailcoat with a swirling cape, top hat and black eye mask as he hovers to one side with a cue-card which he holds up, cueing the audience when to applaud with the card that reads “Applause**."** Standing by a microphone at the front of the stageis **Fred McCracken,** the ventriloquist, with his dummy, **Wacky**. Fred is flamboyant in patched red and yellow tartan trousers with a black tailcoat and top hat, while his dummy, Wacky wears black trousers with a tartan waistcoat. **Annie**, now wearing her smart new red coat with a matching hat, long white socks and black buckle shoes arrives in the studio to be greeted by Bert Healy.

Oliver Warbucks and Grace are the last people to enter the studio. Everyone taking part in the radio program will be given pages of the script to read when prompted. As the show goes live, an illuminated sign saying, 'On Air' will appear overhead along with a huge poster of a smiling woman clutching a toothbrush and advertising Oxydent toothpaste.

The story then moves to the sewing room at the orphanage where six sewing machines are lined up in two rows, each machine with lengths of coloured cloth and topped by spools of thread. The girls sit, bent over the machines as they work. Behind them hangs a blackboard with the words, 'The three golden sewing rules', Sit up, Shut up, and Sew. The orphans have been listening to Annie on the radio. MIss Hannigan will come in, later followed by Rooster and Lily who are both in disguise, their normal clothes hidden under rather dowdy beige and grey coats, Lily's hair hidden beneath a sensible felt hat and Rooster wearing a cloth cap and scarf.

The next new scene will be the Cabinet Room at the White House. The room is dominated by an imposing boardroom table with chairs place around it on the far side facing us, with two more at either end. Stacked untidily beneath the table are cardboard boxes and files, whilst on top of the table are more files, papers and glasses of water. Hanging on the wall at the back of the Cabinet Office is the spread Eagle emblem of the Great Seal of the United States with the stars and stripes shield in the center. Here we meet President Roosevelt, who sits in a wheelchair to the right of the table with the Cabinet members, Ickes, Hull, Perkins, Howe and Morganthau. They will be joined by Warbucks and Annie.

The story then moves to Warbucks mansion on Christmas Eve. Here the staff will change out of their uniforms - the women into red evening dresses and the men into black tailcoats, with Grace looking glamorous in an emerald green, low-backed gown adorned with sparkling jewels. Warbucks will wear a tuxedo and Annie, a new red dress with white piping and sailor collar.

The final scene takes place in the ballroom early the next day. It's Christmas morning and huge piles of parcels, wrapped in glittering gold paper and tied with green bows are stacked either side of the entrance door. Annie now wears a red and green tartan dress with puffed sleeves and a wide white sash around her waist tying in a bow the back, her hair loose and tumbling over her shoulders.

**The Cast and Credits**

Annie - Zoe Akinyosade, Harlie Barthram, Sharangi Gnanavarathan

Miss Hannigan - Craig Revel-Horwood

Daddy Warbucks - AlexBourne

Grace Farrell - Amelia Adams

Franklin Roosevelt / Lt. Ward - David Burrows

Drake - Martin Mccarthy

Rooster - Paul French

Lily - Billie-Kay

Bert Healy - Lukin Simmonds

The Orphans: -

Molly - Suki Hillier, Chloe Angiama, Karin Narumi

Pepper - Chanai Owusu-Ansah, Shai Codrington, Maise MacMahon

Duffy - Janai Bartlett, Marie Love, Kyla Semper

July - Gabriella Harris-Sullivan, Ava Masters, Hanya Zhang

Tessie - Isobel Stanish, Jessica Rodgers, Georgie Fisher

Kate - Lola Green, Myla Park, Jasmine O'Riordan

Sandy, the dog - Amber from Animals Galore Ltd

**Ensemble,**

David Burrows, Tommy Wade-Smith, Lukin Simmonds, Alistair Beattie,

Martin McCarthy, Rosalind James, Phoebe Roberts, Dawn Williams, and Emily Barnett-Slater.

Orchestra under the direction of Joshua Grffith

Lighting by Ben Cracknell

Sound design by Richard Brooker,

Choregraphy by Nick Winston

Set and costume design by Colin Richmond

Directed by Nikolai Foster