**Mary Poppins.**

Audio description notes for Act 2.

Saturday 15th March 2025 the Lyric, Theatre Royal Plymouth. W.S.

Welcome back to the second half of this magical 20th anniversary, touring production of “Mary Poppins.”

My name is Wendy and I shall attempt to guide you through Act 2- again, there is so much happening it’s hard to describe it all in detail ! Suffice to say there are plenty more fabulous dance routines, new and old favourite songs **plus** that special sprinkling of magic that appeals to the child in all of us !

Act 2 runs for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes- it contains moments of complete darkness, flashing lights, smoke and haze and loud music - and some utterly fabulous en masse tap dancing !

In Act 2 there are 14 scenes with several new characters, new settings, new costumes and some very important props which I’ll describe later. We often find ourselves in different parts of the park- the flats with impressions of pale tree trunks, glide into various configurations- and sometimes there is a tall metal gas lamp or a bench. The scenery backdrops seamlessly fade in and out or move forward and back as in the house scenes- it is all tremendously clever and slick.

We left poor Mr. Banks in a very depressed state at the end of Act 1 when he’d been suspended, without pay, from the Bank after missing an important investment opportunity with Herr Von Hussler. Instead, he had chosen to support bluff Mr. Northbrook who’d wanted a loan for his factory in order to expand his workforce and create decent skilled jobs. As he waits for the Board’s decision, George Banks is very stressed and has sunk into a rapid decline- he is mooching about the house, getting under everyone’s feet - he’s even loosened his collar and taken his jacket off ! George fears that unemployment, penury and destitution must follow and that it’s all his fault.....

Meanwhile, the marvellous Mary Poppins has suddenly left 17, Cherry Tree Lane and the household is nanny-less **again** and still in a state of chaos. Mary felt the Banks family, especially the children, Michael and Jane, needed to work things out for themselves and learn to behave as a team. Mrs. Banks, in an effort to prove her capability as mistress of the house, has had a brainwave. She is hurriedly tidying everywhere before the surprise arrival of her husband’s much lauded nanny, Miss Andrew, as a replacement. She thinks this will cheer George up and bring order to their lives......

Act 2 opens with the Mary Poppins logo and the many lighted windows and silhouetted skyline of the chimney pots of London. As the curtain goes up we are in Cherry Tree Lane on a very blustery and wet winter’s evening as people hurry about their business. Bert is blown in, struggling with a large black umbrella and passes Admiral Boom going the other way. No. 17 moves forward and unfolds to reveal the fevered activity inside- thunder and lightning announce the arrival of the dreaded Miss Andrew- otherwise known as the Holy Terror ! George takes one look at his terrifying old Nanny and bolts out the back door leaving his wife to deal with the situation !

Miss Andrew is a very commanding figure – she arrives in a swirl of black bombazine and a short sequinned cape, carrying a large black bag and a small birdcage draped in black silk. Miss Andrew is short and rotund with bouffant black hair that sports a white streak at the side. Her black outfit is set off by a grey and black wide striped satin blouse, with chevrons over her ample bust and long white cuffs and a pointed collar. She wears a scary black hat with two large black feathers at the front, sticking up like rabbit’s ears. Dangling from her waist is a large silver spoon on a silver chain. Miss Andrew opens her bag to produce a big, fuming bottle of her favoured cure-all of brimstone and treacle- she has very different ideas about how to bring up children and how to run a household- and she expects to be obeyed at all times ! The bird cage is the cramped home for a wild lark called Caruso ( named after the famous opera singer. ) A very large, black birdcage mysteriously appears in the broom cupboard and is put to good use later !

We move to a different part of the park- there is black metal gas lamp on the left. The sky is now blue and we find Bert, covered in soot and now dressed as a chimney sweep, skywriting in yellow, assisted by young Neleus the statue. Michael and Jane dash in and announce they’ve run away from home. Bert teaches them how to fly a red kite with bows on its tail string, as others arrive to do the same thing- the park keeper is desperate to have a go ! Mary Poppins suddenly reappears to the children’s- and Bert’s- delight.

In another corner of the park, we find George Banks looking rather dishevelled, sitting on a black bench and bemoaning his situation- Bert watches over him as he lights another gas lamp with a long pole.

Meanwhile elsewhere in the park, a very worried Mrs. Banks rushes in looking for her husband and her children.

In Scene 5 we’re back at the house as Mary and the children sneak in by the back stairs. A very vocal battle then ensues between Mary and Miss Andrew (who warbles operatically ) over who has the best child-rearing methods- helped along by a spot of magic and the giant birdcage !

During this dramatic confrontation, involving just a smidgeon of magic, Mr. Banks is quietly returned to the family home by the local, friendly policeman.

We’re up in the Nursery for Scene 7- Mary has a golden locket on a matching chain- she agrees to stay and help until the chain is broken.

The children, wearing bright red scarves against the cold night air, suddenly find themselves sucked up onto the roof, among the chimney pots with Bert and a whole crew of chimney sweeps in Scene 8. The sweeps all wear dark grey or black suits, shirts and baker boy caps that all have the hint of a shimmer of stardust on them as they catch the light. They carry chimney sweeping brushes and wear black tap shoes and a matching red and white neckerchief. Bert also has a red and yellow spotted shirt and a deep red waistcoat of patched velvet. Mary Poppins joins them in a red version of her trademark fitted coat and they all have a fabulous time to the vibrant tune of “Step in Time” up amongst the actual chimney pots (various trucks of black pots are danced on and over then removed. ) The sweeps later dance through 17, Cherry Tree Lane- literally sweeping all the family before them ! This joyous mayhem is suddenly interrupted by a messenger boy in full dark uniform and cap, presenting Mr. Banks with a letter from the Board at the Bank as the sweeps leave.

In Scene 9 George is resigned to being dismissed. An incident with the blue and white family heirloom vase has an upside in that he finds the ginger star biscuits he’d hidden as a child- he’d loved star-gazing with a telescope as a boy. His own children are unexpectedly kind and he finds a damaged brown paper kite–more small reminders of the really important things in life. Bert tries to encourage George to think positively- as he sings “Anything can happen.... “ a song picked up by Mrs. Banks, upstairs in the nursery with her children as she says goodnight.

Michael and Jane are suddenly whisked off into the dark, starlit sky by Mary as they fly over the city. They see their father pass the Bird woman on his way to the Bank.

The Board of directors at the Bank are all very old and decrepit- some wear gold rimmed spectacles or carry a walking stick, a cigar or an ear trumpet as they stagger about at the very mention of money. They are all white haired and conservatively dressed in dark frock coats, pin-striped trousers, white shirts and black bow ties with waistcoats and watch chains. Mrs. Banks’ acting background bursts out as she arrives to champion her husband, forcefully negotiating their future with the Chairman !

Scene 12 finds Mr. and Mrs. Banks in the park revelling in what has just happened as Bert with a team of lamplighters lights the lamps. They are all dressed in suits in dark shades of blue velvet, spattered with sparkles and sequins. The sky is full of stars and an enormous inverted umbrella descends with a distinctive green parrot’s head as everyone waltzes to “Anything can happen”.

We are back at the park entrance with the tall metal gates-in the background Neleus the statue has been re-united with his father, Poseidon, god of the sea, and Mary is talking with Michael, Jane and Bert.

The final scene starts in the nursery- there are now only 2 beds. The children find several items left by Mary Poppins as their excited parents enter. Finally the Banks family all end up on the parapet looking at the sky as a shooting star appears !

Then there’s just the rumbustious finale to look forward to.........Marvellous......!

After the performance ends.....

Well, how fabulous was that !!? Exhausting- but marvellous- and “practically perfect in every way”- obviously ! We really hope that you have enjoyed the show today and look forward to meeting you again, here at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth.

The next show to be audio described will be “The Shark Has Broken” a comedy based on the actual making of the world famous film “Jaws”. This is on Saturday 5th April at 2:30pm , here in the Lyric.

For further information about ADed performances and bookable Touch Tours etc please go to “Explore” on the theatre’s website then to “Access”. Further details are also found in the relevant “What’s On” brochure or you can ring the Box Office on 01752 267222 or visit in person.

Thank you again for your company- have a safe journey home.