

# **SINGIN' IN THE RAIN**

**A Chichester Festival Theatre Production**

**Saturday 21st June 2014 @ 2.30pm**

Good afternoon and welcome to the Theatre Royal Plymouth to Singin' in the Rain, the musical based on the iconic movie, with screenplay by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, songs by Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed, and directed by Jonathan Church.

The performance lasts for approximately two hours and forty minutes, with an interval of 20 minutes. I am Veryan and will be describing the first half, whilst my colleague Denise will be with you for act 11.

Please note that this production makes use of smoke effects, flashing lights and lots of water – 12,000 litres, and when it rains, if you are sitting at the front, you might just get wet!

I will now give you descriptions of the set, the main characters and their lavish costumes. This will be followed by the cast list and credits.

The action unfolds in Hollywood in 1927 and tells the story of the first Hollywood musical, when the Silver Screen found its voice.

As we enter the auditorium the stage is open to us. It's an open space, suggestive of a vast empty film studio with grey brick walls. The central floor is bare wooden boards, enclosed on three sides by a pavement of grey paving stones, many of which have famous hand prints and autographs within them – including one for Charlie Chaplin. There are also autographs for two of the studio's stars - Lina Lamont and Don Lockwood.

Filling most of the width of the back of the stage is an archway with a wooden frame, topped by an oval carving, with flame like shapes. Within the archway are huge grey rectangular sliding doors, known in the film world as barn doors. To the right of the archway is a circular handle, like a ship's wheel. This is sometimes turned to open the doors, or lift and lower a cinema screen. To the left are levers, switches, and lengths of coiled rope.

Above the archway is a high platform where the show's band is just visible. There are nine musicians as well as the Musical Director. To the left of the band is an outline of the hills outside Los Angeles, familiar from the iconic Hollywood logo. Here the bold white capital letters spell out Hollywoodland. Behind the hills and the band, a section of sky glows a variety of colours depending on the time of day and the mood of the scene.

To either side of the archway are grey walls, with standard sized glazed doors and higher up, large tall windows. There are more windows set in grey panels on either side of the stage, four each side, which stand facing us. These windows are sometimes lit up, so at times the space can suggest a street or exterior location, as well as becoming various interiors. The space can be further transformed when the grey barn doors in the archway, which initially appear to be solid, glow with rectangular panels of light. The top of the archway can light up with light-bulbs and for several of the scenes a lit sign for Monumental Pictures is picked out in the centre. When the action moves to a theatre, the barn doors are replaced by rich dark red curtains, and when it changes to backstage, the curtains become silvery grey.

For these locations the ensemble play various roles - they become passers-by in the street, and film crew - assistant directors, wardrobe and make-up staff. They are also dancers and singers.

Hanging above the centre of the stage is a lighting bar with 10 lanterns, as well as several more around the edges of the space. When filming is taking place in the studios, these illuminate. As the action begins, items of scenery or furniture are brought in for filming - a large bush, red roses in a stone urn, a bench. The camera, lights, an upright piano, the director's chair, with his name on the back, and his megaphone are positioned as needed.

In the studios the men wear sleeveless jumpers with white shirts, baggy trousers or knee length breeches and socks. The women workers wear overalls or low-waisted, knee-length patterned dresses. The men's hair is short and the women almost all have a side parting and a "Marcel" wave, cut to jaw length. One has her hair in a sleek black Cleopatra style bob.

After the bustling activity in the studio, we move to a film premiere at the Graumann's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard. Tall vertical banners in orange and gold with the name of the theatre written in Oriental style lettering stand to the left and right. Between the banners is an orange and gold doorway with a small canopy hung with drapes. An assembled crowd, warmly dressed in their hats and coats, wave and cheer the glamorous stars as they arrive.

Dora Bailey, a reporter, stands to the left, at a period microphone. Dora is middle aged and matronly, richly dressed. She wears a headband with a sparkly flower around her chestnut waved hair, and white stud earrings. Her ankle length coat of silk velvet has a pattern of sparkling flowers in dark pinks and greens and an astrakhan collar and cuffs of soft dark wool. Dora wears a glittering necklace, and black evening gloves.

The male celebrities arriving for the movie premiere wear tuxedos and bow ties, with black patent shoes. The women drip glamour in sparkling, beaded evening gowns and fur stoles.

Amongst those from the Studio, is RF Simpson, the Boss of Monumental Pictures. Tall and broad shouldered, RF is always immaculately dressed in double-breasted suits, with a smooth air, twinkling smile and a genial air of authority. His brown hair is wavy and he has a trimmed moustache. He arrives attired in a double-breasted black suit and white bow tie.

Also from the studio is Roscoe Dexter, one of the directors. Roscoe is older, balding with thin white hair, and anxious eyes behind horn rimmed spectacles. He wears a black bow tie with his tuxedo. During filming Roscoe wears tweedy checked plus fours, often with a beige cap and mustard coloured socks.

Next to arrive is Cosmo Brown, who plays the piano at the film studios. He wears a plain, dark blue coat, white scarf and trilby. Cosmo is in his 30s, of medium height with an athletic build. He has coarse black hair, thinning a little on top and receding from the temples, and a wide and highly mobile expressive face. On the film set Cosmo wears striped sleeveless jumpers, over a shirt, with wide trousers.

Cosmo is the boyhood friend of Don Lockwood. Don is tall and suave. His dark hair is greased into place above a high forehead. He has deep set dark eyes and an easy, charming smile. Don first appears in a full-length white camel coat, with matching white trilby and silk scarf. On set, he wears loose fitting trousers with white shirts and sleeveless jumpers of blue or red, or a beige three-piece doubled-breasted suit.

Arriving at the movie premiere, clinging possessively to Don's arm, is his co-star, Lina Lamont. Lina is always expensively and lavishly dressed, her outfits often trimmed with fur or feathers. For the premiere, she wears a white fur stole with a silvery white full-length beaded gown, slit to the thigh, her silver shoes peeping out from below the hem. She has a slender figure, and her peroxide blonde curls are topped with a diamond tiara, with glittering earrings, necklace and bracelet to match. Lina almost always poses with a cigarette holder and her make-up is carefully applied to draw attention to her features – her large eyes and pouting lips. She later appears in a silk dress with red and black spots, worn with a cloche hat and a velvet coat with fur collar. She also appears in a slinky, baby-doll style slip, worn with a pale pink, satin dressing gown. She has a quite unmistakably high pitched voice.

During filming for *The Duelling Cavalier*, Lina and Don appear in powdered white eighteenth Century wigs. Lina wears a lavish, low cut gown in lilac and silver, the sweeping skirts worn over wide pannier hoops. Ropes of pearls grace her slender neck. Don is in a silvery blue frock coat with long lilac waistcoat, silver breeches and white tights with buckled shoes. .

Away from the glamour of the studios and the stars, the first time we meet the actress, Kathy Selden, she is waiting on a bench for a tramcar. Slim and shapely, Kathy is in her twenties with light brown hair, worn in a waved bob with a side parting. Kathy has a heart shaped face, smooth clear skin and shining blue eyes. She wears a light coat with an orange trim, a fetching little hat and sits holding her clutch bag tightly.

Later on she wears a sleeveless, mint-green, floaty dress, with an asymmetric hemline and a white scarf attached to the neckline. She also appears in a low-waisted cream dress, with red

polka dots and ribbon, and another of blue - grey. Her make-up is subtly applied and she wears small stud earrings.

At the opening party for the movie premiere, there are champagne towers - bottles and flutes, stacked high, next to mountains of strawberries, and luscious cream gateaux . Dancers wear short robes, like mini kimonos in dark blue, embroidered with pink flowers and secured with silky pink ribbons. On their heads are miniature pink top hats with flowers, and under their robes they wear shimmering pale pink camisoles and knickers.

We travel back in time to when Don and Cosmo were just starting out in variety theatre. In front of red velvet curtains a bored looking dancer in a sage- green, burlesque-style leotard, holds a makeshift sign reading ,Flick Flack, whilst Flick and Flack, in burgundy red, perform an acrobatic routine. After this Don and Cosmo perform their song and dance number featuring violins, in brown and red striped suits with red bow ties and red hats.

As the story unfolds we meet a number of other characters including Rod, the publicist, a short, slim young man with an anxious to please smile and neat brown hair. There are two voice coaches, one an elderly and bespectacled lady, in long bohemian style clothing, a scarf tied around her head. The other is a man, earnest and also bespectacled, in a tweedy brown suit and cravat.

Sid Phillips, a director, is small and balding, and Zelda Zanders is a glamorous actress who struts about with her nose in the air. A young policeman in a New York Cops uniform with peaked cap and white gloves, who has a truncheon tucked under his arm.

In one of the big dance numbers, Beautiful Girl, the male lead wears a crisp white pilot's uniform with a peaked cap. The dancing girls are in red, white and blue with blue sparkly, halter-necked waistcoats, with silver stars on the lapels and red and white striped shorts. White feathers attached to spangly blue hair-bands bob about on their heads.

#### Cast and Production Credits

Dora Bailey, a reporter, is played by Jacqueline Clarke

RF, the boss of Monumental Pictures, by Maxwell Caulfield

Roscoe Dexter, a film director, Paul Grunert

Cosmo Brown is played by Stefan Anelli

Don Lockwood, by James Leece

Lina Lamont is played by Vicky Binns

And Kathy is Amy Ellen Richardson

All other parts are played by members of the ensemble.

The lighting is by Tim Mitchell

The Set and Costumes are designed by Simon Higlett

The choreographer is Andrew Wright

The Musical Director is John Donovan

And The Director is Jonathan Church

### **Singin' in the Rain – Act 11**

Welcome back everyone to this smash hit production of Singin' in the Rain, which is proving to be quite spectacular.

I am Denise your audio describer for Act 2 which runs for approximately 45 minutes.

As the lights come up we begin the second half of the show in **RF's office**, suggested by a large, white and silver, semi-circular art-deco style desk, with a large chair behind it. As well as several framed photographs of stars, a box of cigars and scripts, eight white phones are arranged at regular intervals around the desk. The office girls wear dresses in pink, orange, red, blue or green, each with a cloche hat to match as they sing and dance to the song **Good Mornin'**.

We go to **Lina's dressing room**, which has a silver dressing table with matching silver chair. Lina wears an elegant silk dressing gown with swansdown around the cuffs and neckline. A costume rail stands to the right. On the dressing table are her hairbrush and perfume as well as a small framed photograph of Don, in one of his 18<sup>th</sup> century costumes. When Lina sits, she looks out towards us, as if at her reflection in the mirror.

In the **Broadway** number, the pavement in the floor flashes with strips of bright coloured lights. The barn doors and the windows in the walls flash every colour of the rainbow. Up above are neon signs for the various Broadway Theatres, such as *Tivoli, Palace and Strand*, plus one which reads **Gotta Dance** and is also the title of a great song and tap dance number performed by the whole ensemble.

In the distance are the silhouettes of New York buildings. The dancers are a riot of colour – the women in strappy, flapper-style dresses of fringing, the men in three piece suits and hats of pink, red, blue, purple, yellow, green and lilac. Don plays a character who wears thick, dark-framed glasses, a yellow bow tie, a checked yellow waistcoat and black trousers. He carries a small yellow case.

Finally we are at another movie premiere, Lina is her usual glamorous self, dressed in a sequined knee length dress of silver, black and grey, trimmed with feathers, worn with a studded black tiara, her diamonds and a grey fur wrap. Kathy is all elegance in a full-length sequined gown of pale blue, with matching feathers in her hair.

**Cast Credits** - there are no new characters in Act 2 to introduce you to, so sit back and enjoy this spectacular show which I am sure you will agree is showering you with everything you could wish for in a musical.

Please note that the next audio performance is One Man, Two Guvnors on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 2:30 pm.