

Rebecca

Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to the Theatre Royal Plymouth and the Kneehigh Theatre production of Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier.

My name is Penny Williams and I will be describing the first act. My colleague for the second act is Veryan Williams Wynn.

The total running time is 2 hours 15 minutes. The first act lasts 62 minutes with a 20 minute interval. Act 2 lasts 48 minutes. We request that you take your seats at least 10 minutes before the second act starts for your continuing Audio description, and the musical sequence that precedes the beginning of act two.

Please note that the performance includes loud noises, smoke effects and flashing lights.

The play is directed by Emma Rice.

Daphne du Maurier wrote Rebecca in 1938, and it is now regarded as a classic novel. Daphne discovered a cache of love letters from her husband's glamorous former lover from before his marriage, and although they were happily married, the jealousy this provoked in her, was the inspiration for Rebecca

SYNOPSIS

Maxim de Winter meets and marries a gauche young woman in Monte Carlo. They have a honeymoon in Venice, before returning with the new bride, to his home in Cornwall. The locals and the staff at Manderley are haunted by the spirit of the beautiful first Mrs de Winter, who died in mysterious circumstances, and whose memory is fiercely guarded by the sinister housekeeper, Mrs Danvers.

SETS AND SCENERY

The curtain is black with the cover of a book titled 'Daphne du Maurier Rebecca - a study in jealousy'. Illustrated with the face of a beautiful blonde woman with raised eyebrows, red lips and a coquettish half smile on her face. She is wearing a black off the shoulder dress, a thick gold necklace with a black pendant, and an orchid corsage.

As the curtain rises we are underwater, it is dark, though a wreck on the sea bed is lit by a shaft of light piercing the surface of the water. A woman in a kimono walks forward along the sea bed, she is smoking, and looks unkempt. The body of a woman falls through the water, and is trapped beneath the hull of a wooden rowing boat.

We then arrive in the grand hall at Manderley. There are galleried landings with an ornate balustrade at first floor level. The plastered and panelled walls are topped with a wide cornice, though the plaster is falling off in patches, the laths showing beneath. On the right landing, there is a doorway which leads to the top of a short flight of stairs. At ground level on the left is a rising flight of a dozen simple steps. There is a space between the two stair levels, which at times is bridged with planks to resemble a jetty. The underside of the landings are wrought iron columns, hung with storm lanterns. In the foreground on the left is a brown leather wing chair. In the centre is a floor containing a trap door, and to the right a small footstool. There are multi paned rectangular window frames held up, from which the characters regard the vista from Manderley. For the fancy dress ball, an ornate chandelier and a garland of red and white lights illuminate the festivities. There is a fireplace with an elegant blue vase on the mantelpiece. On the seashore there is a small boathouse converted to a cottage. It has rugs and cushions, and contains a variety of personal objects.

CHARACTERS

Beatrice - Maxim's gregarious sister. She is wearing a full length plum coloured velvet gown, with turquoise stockings. Her fancy dress outfit is a Middle Eastern belly dancer costume

with a jewelled bra and full, floaty pantaloons.

Frith – the butler. He wears a black tailcoat and trousers, with a white wing collared shirt and white waistcoat.

Giles – Bee’s husband. He is a bluff, portly man and is sporting a tweed shooting jacket, cravat at the neck, waistcoat and plus fours, with checked knee length socks. His fancy dress outfit is a thick Egyptian brocade tunic, and a fez.

Robert – the young Welsh manservant wears black trousers and a waist length black jacket with a double row of gold buttons.

Maxim de Winter - arrives wearing a long coat and trilby over a tweed three piece suit. He is a handsome man with short dark hair. For the ball he wears a dinner suit, with white shirt and waistcoat.

Mrs de Winter – is has jaw length blond wavy hair. She is unsophisticated and a picture of youthful innocence. She arrives wearing a grey flannel coat and a blue beret. Under this she has a simple light blue cotton dress with a pale grey cardigan. Her first outfit for the ball is a surprise for all! Mrs Danvers has auburn hair cut in a severe bob. She wears an ankle length unadorned black dress.

Jack Favell cuts a dashing figure in a tweed suit and braces with a white shirt and blue tie. The Fishermen and the Coastguard are clad in long black oilskins with black sou westers.

Ben – the local urchin wears shabby, ragamuffin clothes.

Jasper – Maxim’s tan coloured Labrador.

CAST

Mrs de Winter is played by Imogen Sage

Beatrice by Lizzie Winkler

Frith and the Doctor by Richard Clews

Giles and the Coastguard by Andy Williams

Robert and Ben by Katy Owen

Maxim de Winter by Tristan Sturrock

Mrs Danvers by Emily Raymond

Jack Favell by Ewan Wardrop

Fishermen / Musicians played by Robert Burgess, Samuel Martin and Emily May Smith. They play the Mandolin, piano accordion, clarinet and double bass with other members of the cast.

Hello and welcome back to Act 2 of Rebecca, I am Veryan your describer for this half.

Whilst the audience return to their seats the curtain is up revealing the set, which remains the same as before. It's four-thirty in the morning, and although mid-summer, the sun still hasn't risen and the house is in semi darkness.

Stretching across the room from the gallery on one side to the side opposite are two garlands of coloured lights with the dimly lit chandelier suspended in the middle over the stair well.

The last of the guests have gone home, and a thin stream of moonlight casts deep shadows through the dark and empty rooms as the staff of Mandalay drift in and start to clean and tidy up after the ball.

All the staff are there. Mrs Danvers, Robert, Frith and several more maids and footmen, all dressed in black. The men in tailcoats and white tie, the women in black dresses with starched white pinafores and matching caps.

The cleaning done, the staff begin to relax, swaying and clicking their fingers in time to the music playing on the gramophone. Soon all restraint is abandoned and the mood escalates into one of high kicks and exuberant dance moves as they perform an energetic Charleston.

When the dancing ends, Robert gathers the staff into a group and encourages them to sing, to the audience, as Frith conducts.

When Mrs De Winter reappears, she's changed out of the disastrous slinky black lace dress and is wearing a very demure pale pink, floor length dress, belted at the waist with short puff sleeves and peter-pan collar. Her hair is back to its normal unkempt style framing her face, which is now devoid of make-up.

Towards the end of Act 2 a doctor arrives dressed in a bright red duffle coat and white bobble hat.

During the second half, some of the actors will access the stage through the auditorium.