Around The World In 80 Days

Programme Notes – Act Two

Saturday 16th September @ 7pm

Welcome back everyone to this imaginative and highly spirited adaptation of Jules Verne’s novel Around the World in 80 Days. I am Denise your audio describer for Act Two which lasts for 50 minutes.

As the safety curtain is raised and the audience take their seats after the interval, the same main set greets us from the end of Act One. The backdrop is a coloured map of the world depicting all the countries that Mr Phileas Fogg and the intrepid Passepartout have crossed, so far.

Just prior to the opening of Act 2, Passepartout walks into the auditorium and across the steps in front of the first row seats of the stalls. He wears a placard and carries a ukulele. He begins to interface with the audience and engages some individuals in conversation as to where he and his companions have been and where they are now heading. In so doing, he reveals the word “Bound” written on the front of the placard and then turns around to reveal the words “for America” on the back. He then invites the audience to join him in a traditional American song, playing the ukulele as he does so.

Meanwhile, a ring master – William Batulcar an American appears, dressed in a red top hat, long tailed red jacket over red and white striped top and trousers and black boots. He calls out to passersby to step right up for the appearance of his Acrobatic Troupe. Passepartout having been a circus man himself is excited at the thought of perhaps doing so once more and impresses Batulcar with some physical tricks.

Four other circus performers appear. Three men dressed in red and white all-in-one tops, cropped trousers and short brown boots, are joined by a girl dressed the same but with a tutu added around her waist and head band in her dark hair which is tied back. Passepartout, now similarly dressed, quickly joins them as they perform various circus acts, such as juggling and wire walking, albeit with long red and white sticks laid on the floor to imitate the wire. Batulcar introduces his acrobatic troupe and with much styling to the accompanying lights and music, the circus performers begin a human pyramid.

For the next stage of their journey, a man holding a boat above his head walks across the stage as they begin to sail from Japan to the USA.

Now on board the General Grant and with amazing skill and imaginative use of props, people move elegantly depicting the swaying movement of the boat across the water. A string of coloured lights hung across the deck rails create a tranquil setting behind Fogg and Mrs Aouda as they sit drinking tea out on the deck. By some twist of fate, Mr Fix is spotted by Passepartout who is not best pleased to see him and soon a fight breaks out.

Having arrived in America, they are soon on a train heading across the plains. Once again, clever use is made of luggage to create the seating in the train car whilst the passengers move in time to the rhythm of the train. Fogg places a small case on his lap to create a table whilst they play cards to pass the time. Suddenly Aouda shouts out to look out of the window. As they look around, three men appear behind them with headdresses on representing buffalo. The moment having passed, they return to playing cards. As Fogg goes to play a card, a man appears behind with some advice on which card he should play. It is Colonel Proctor, a tall rather brash and loudly spoken American who does not impress Fogg at all, indeed quite the opposite. He is dressed in a wide brimmed hat, long fawn coat over white shirt with brown neckerchief and brown trousers. Soon cries and gunshots are heard as an unexpected happening occurs in which Passepartout’s presence is compromised.

As Passepartout is his valet, Phileas Fogg feels bound to do his duty and soon differences are put aside in helping to address the situation.

With the clock ticking, they are anxious to continue their journey across America. But the mode of transport is proving difficult in order to reach New York in time.

They meet Mr Mudge who provides one such solution in the form of a sledge. He is dressed in a Davy Crocket style hat and goggles, with long coat over jacket and trousers.

The sledge is created out of pieces of luggage placed in a couple of lines on which everyone sits, holding a long cloth which is stretched across them all to create a triangular sail. Clever movement by them together with sound effects and the wind blowing recreate the hazardous journey they undertake.

The train having now replaced the sledge they eventually arrive in New York and rush to the dock looking for a particular steamer to get them to Liverpool. But all does not go to plan and Fogg approaches another captain, who is not as at first appears.

Now aboard The Henrietta, Fogg is forced to take action in order to make haste and reach their required destination. But soon thunder and flashes of lightning precede a storm at sea. What follows is a sequence with water and yelling of nautical terms and at times action in slow motion – as in silent movie mode - to enhance the scene.

Eventually they arrive in Liverpool, but their journey is not over as they still have to get to London and more importantly in time for Fogg to win his bet. Now it is a race against time. This is cleverly depicted by three men holding rolled up umbrellas. As they step up onto some luggage thereby creating a platform, they stand behind one another with their arms outstretched at various angles to form the time of 10 to 9 on a clock face.

Inside the Reform Club, Stuart, Ralph and Flanagan wait in anticipation for the arrival – or not – of Mr Phileas Fogg from his globe spanning adventure which has taken them from the misty alleys of Victorian London to the exotic subcontinent and the Wild West in a race against the clock.