**Son of a Preacher Man**

**Saturday 27th January 7:30 pm**

**Programme Notes – Act One**

**Audio Describer – Denise Reeves**

Good evening everyone and welcome to the Theatre Royal Plymouth for this new musical of Son of a Preacher Man. The story comes from the book by the internationally renowned writer Warner Brown and features the hit songs of Dusty Springfield. It is directed and choreographed by Strictly judge Craig Revel Horwood, who brought Annie and Sister Act to Plymouth in past years. There are nine live on-stage musicians under the direction of Musical Director and keyboards of Brady Mould.

I am Denise your audio describer for act one with my colleague Pam describing act two. The show runs for approximately two and a half hours including a twenty-minute interval.

I will now give you a brief synopsis of Act 1 followed by a description of the sets, principle characters and their costumes followed by the cast list and credits. Pam will give you the programme notes for Act 2 five minutes before the start of the second half.

Synopsis for Act 1

Although this isn’t the story of Dusty Springfield, it is a real story of love being misunderstood in three different ways and is told through the wonderful songs that we associate with the iconic mystic music of Dusty herself.

The plot is a multigenerational fantasy, in which a mysterious figure in Soho, London, helps solve romantic agonies.

There are no scene breaks as such, but crossfades between the characters Paul, Alison and Kat from the present time into yesterday and back again. When we first meet them they are not known to one another, but share a fascination and somewhat wonderment of life in the sixties and what it had to offer. They chase after this dream and in so doing open their minds to what may have been in their journey back in time and then to present day.

The Cast

I will only describe the principle characters in detail.

Paul Knapman is the first person we meet. He is around 65, slim and sprightly still, but with a look of sadness. When we first meet him in front of the wall, he is dressed in a blue shirt over a white T-Shirt, dark trousers and trainers. Paul feels he is still a mess after all these years and could do with some advice. He wants to go back to the sixties, if only in his mind.

Alison Hooper is around 35. Although a slim woman, she could look great, but there is something of a feeling that she has let herself go. She first appears dressed in a sleeveless midi-dress and a white bag slung over her shoulder. Her long dark curly hair is drawn back from her face. She knows that she cannot go on as she is and is looking for a little piece of wisdom. She, like Paul wants to go back to the sixties …just in case ….

Kat Carter is about 18, a very slim young girl, with a beanie hat over her long straight blond hair. She wears tight jeans a hoody over a white T-Shirt and trainers. Kat is a bit feisty, off the wall, but not her happy self at this moment. Her Gran has just passed away and she is in a mess. She recounts the days of the sixties through her Gran and would like to go to Soho as a pilgrimage to her.

Simon, the son of The Preacher Man is middle-aged and diffident. When we first meet him inside the Double Shot coffee shop where he works, he is dressed in a check shirt over dark jeans. He carries a tray and white tea towel as he clears the tables. The sixties do not hold good memories for Simon who really doesn’t want to talk about those times. However, through meeting Paul, Alison and Kat, finds himself drawn into the past with surprising consequences.

The Sets

The open stage is set with a backdrop of a brick wall lit with a mosaic design in soft muted colours of blue and pink. Hanging down on the far right is a circular sign edged in a blue light, with the words “Son of a” lit up in yellow and “Preacher Man” lit in pink. At the bottom of the sign is a flashing red arrow pointing downwards. As the music strikes up the introduction to the song “When I said I needed You”, the sign disappears and Alison, Paul and Kat enter and stand facing us in three separate pools of light. They speak separately, but their thoughts are inextricably linked as they recall a record shop in Soho which had a silly “Sixties” name. It was called “The Preacher Man” and was in fact run by a guy simply known as the Preacher Man. As they recount their memories the curtain rises to reveal almost a 3-D effect of the street where it all began. In the centre is the corner of the street with two side streets running off left and right. The main shop on the corner has a double frontage with items of food displayed, such as pizza, in the lit up windows either side of the double doors in the centre. The windows in the rooms above the shops are also lit up.

As Paul recalls the shop as if it were yesterday, the double doors of the corner shop open out to reveal the inside of The Preacher Man as it was in the late nineteen sixties. On the back of the left hand door are posters of the latest popstars and a rack of headphones to enable customers to listen to their favourite artist before they buy the record. At the back in the centre is a counter, either side are display cabinets with refreshments and records. On the back wall and to the right are posters of the latest popstars and vinyl covers.

Psychedelic heaven is then created as a sixties medley plays and the focus switches to the Kids who are dancing to the latest dance the twist and singing up a storm. They are dressed in typical sixties clothes. The boys with short clean haircuts, jeans,T-shirts and trainers and the girls in dresses, jeans, or short skirts. Some with colourful knee length boots, sneakers or pumps. Others wear matching berets over short hairstyles whilst another has her long dark hair in bunches tied with a pretty ribbon.

We then fly back to the present time and Paul, Kat and Alison stand in front of the wall wondering if the shop is still there. They want to go back and why is told through the words of the song “I Think I’m going Back” which they sing together as they live their days, instead of counting their years.

Next back in time to the exterior of a rundown coffee shop, The Double Shot which was once very famous and the three of them are deciding whether or not to go in. Whilst doing so, Madge appears, an elderly cleaning lady in a hurry, who works there.

Once again the double doors of the corner house open wide to reveal the inside of the Double Shot, a typical coffee shop with small round metal tables and plastic chairs. Here they encounter The Cappuccino Sisters – a trio who look very cute dressed in their waitress costumes. One wears a check baseball cap over her light hair which is rolled up to frame her face. She has a short sleeve shirt tucked into her check shorts fringed with blue net, blue tights and silver sneakers. Her lace edged apron is postage stamp in size over her shorts. Sister number two is a tall leggy girl with knee length black boots, a very short check skirt over a yellow underskirt, short blue blouse with a small apron in front. Her black hair is worn up with a fascinator on her head of an ice-cream cone. Sister number three is shorter and with long blonde pigtails and a fascinator in the shape of a cup and saucer. She wears a knee length dungaree style check full skirt over pink netting and white trainers.

They prepare cute coffee and cute cookies as they sing and dance to Great News, Great Days A-Comin.

It is here in the Double Shot that Paul, Alison and Kat meet up with Simon, the son of the Preacher Man and the action, told in flashback, takes them back to their youth, leaving them wondering what life would be like now if their fantasies had materialised.

In so doing they find again Maitland Music in Denmark Street. The shop is redolent of yesteryear with a sign of an oversized guitar hanging down. The large letters across the guitar spell out Maitland. Three lovers of a vintage look sit riffing ….Sandra in her late twenties; Andy, a middle-aged muso, and Pippa, an enthusiastic kid plays the saxophone.

Back to the Double Shot, now a pub and the Cappuccino Sisters are stacking tables. The friends are looking for Simon.

Songs such as I’m Going Back; I only want to be with you; I just don’t know what to do with myself; enhance the storyline of this new musical, culminating in the end of act one with a rousing rendition of Little by Little.

Cast in order of appearance

Paul Knapman played by Michael Howe Alison Hooper played by Debra Stephenson Kat Carter played by Alice Barlow Simon played by Nigel Richards Jack who also plays Madge is Jon Bonner The three Cappuccino Sisters are played by Michelle Long, Kate Hardisty and Cassiopeia Berkeley-Agyepong Liam who also plays young Paul is played by Lewis Kidd Mike who also plays the young Jack and Andy is played by Liam Vincent-Kilbride Pippa who also plays Miss Marsh is played by Rachel McAllister Sandra who also plays Anna is played by Ellie-Jane Goddard

Certain members of the company also become Girls and Boys, Singles, Lovers and Lonely Hearts Club members.

Sets and costumes are designed by Morgan Large.