**Annie - May 2019 – Theatre Royal Plymouth**

**Introduction Act 1**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to today’s performance of Annie, presented by Michael Harrison and David Ian. Directed by Nikolai Foster, musical director Daniel Griffin, choreographer Nick Winston. Annie is a Broadway musical based on the comic strip “Little Orphan Annie”. It opened on Broadway in 1977, and has undergone revivals ever since. The story is set in 1930s New York, during the Great Depression. Homeless people lived in Hoovervilles, so called because former president Herbert Hoover was held to blame for the state of the economy. Even billionaire tycoons like Oliver Warbucks were feeling the pinch. Orphan Annie goes from rags to riches, down to her optimism, and her ability to see good in everyone and everything.

My name is Gwen and I will be audio describing the first Act. My colleague Pauline will take over for Act 2.

The proscenium arch is made of jigsaw puzzle pieces, some of them suspended chaotically above the stage in the corners of the arch. They are a blue-green colour, printed with parts of maps and road signs, but at times are illuminated in orange or red.

The first scene takes place in an orphanage. Two rows of iron bedsteads, three on each side, line the gloomy dormitory, sideways on to the audience. Each bed has a lumpy pillow and thin blankets. A lamp on a swan-neck bracket is attached to each bed, so the light glares down on the occupant. Each bed has a wooden foot-locker with a slanting lid. A metal light fitting is suspended above the room, with 3 lamps. A teddy bear is wedged upside-down in the fitting, presumably having been thrown there by the orphans. To the back of the room are a pair of tall green double doors, the windows in them mostly painted over. A broken window is abover the door.

For the street scene, the rear wall is decorated with blue-green jigsaw pieces and a row of 5 doorways open from it.

The shanty town, or Hooverville, is home to a group of people who have been made homeless during the Great Depression in the 1930s. To the left is a contraption with two car seats. In front of that are a couple of orange boxes for use as a table. To the right is an old vehicle with a pram stacked on top. In front a woman cooks stew in a pot suspended over an ash-can brazier.

Miss Hannigan’s office in the orphanage has a green desk in the centre, covered in clutter. To the left a yellow fridge sits askew, perched on top of some filing cabinets. A large filing cabinet is to the right of the scene, though the files are mostly stacked on the floor under the desk! The door to the office is in the rear wall, and contains a window.

Mr Warbucks’ mansion oozes 1920s Art Deco grandeur. In the main hall, the rear wall bears a huge stylised letter W in gold, cunningly framing the entrance door. In his office, Mr Warbucks’ desk has a triangular base and is of Art Deco design. His office chair is padded red leather.

Now for the characters.  **Annie** is a small 11 year old girl, slim and wiry with red hair in untidy ringlets, and a cheeky face. She wears a hand-knitted orange cardigan over a faded and grubby cotton pinafore and dress. She wears short socks and ankle boots. Round her neck she wears a locket on a chain, her most prized possession.

The **6 other orphans**, all girls, vary in age from 6 to 13. They wear faded and dirty dresses and pinafores, some with cardigans. On their feet are short boots and socks. Their faces are dirty and their hair is unkempt, tied back with bits of ragged ribbon. Molly, is the youngest, then Kate, Tessie is the cry-baby, Pepper the toughest, July the quietest and Duffy the biggest.

**Miss Hannigan** is the orphanage keeper. She is a tall buxom woman of about 40, her short and wavy red-dyed hair showing greying roots. A gin-soaked bully, she exercises her power and control over the orphans, while at the same time yearning for a better way of life. When we first see her she wears mauve cami-knickers trimmed with fuschia-pink lace, over which is a floral robe, not fastened at the waist. She wears grey stockings, with the suspenders visible, and shoes with heels and straps. Her daytime attire is a white dress with orange trim. It has a close-fitting bodice and a gathered calf-length skirt. Around her neck is a whistle on a cord. She continually takes sips from a gin bottle.

**Grace Farrell**, Mr Warbucks’ assistant, is a smart and shapely woman of about 35. Her short blonde hair is styled with the neat Marcel waves of the 1930s. She wears a purple hat with a brim and a purple calf-length coat, belted at the waist. Under the coat she wears a pale grey pin-striped fitted jacket and skirt with shirt and tie, and high heeled grey shoes. She is poised and elegant, but with a friendly manner.

**Mr Warbucks**, the billionaire, is aged about 40. He is tall, slim and bald-headed. He wears a dark suit, white shirt and striped tie. For outdoors he wears a dark overcoat and black homburg hat.

**Rooster Hannigan** is Miss Hannigan’s brother. He is short and round-faced with Brylcreemed hair. Aged in his 30s, he wears a brown suit and brown trilby hat, a blue waistcoat, white shirt and striped tie, and brown brogues.

His girlfriend, **Lily St Regis**, is a slim and tarty woman, her blonde hair styled in the finger-waves and curls of the 1930s. She wears colourful feathers in her hair, a flowing print dress with draped hemline and sleeves, with v-neck showing her cleavage. She wears a fox fur stole, fishnet stockings and shoes with heels. She and Rooster kiss and canoodle at every available moment!

**Bundles**, the laundry-man, makes a brief appearance, wearing white jacket and black trousers, a back-to-front white cap on his head.

**Lieutenant Ward**, the **Cop,** wears a policeman’s uniform of 1930s USA, with brass buttons, and a truncheon and handcuffs tucked into his belt.

Other parts, such as the New Yorkers, vagrants and Mr Warbucks’ staff are played by the dancers and other cast members, both male and female. As **New Yorkers**, they wear smart winter clothing. As **vagrants** the men and women dress for warmth, wearing coats, hats and scarves. Their clothing is patched and dirty. Some wear fingerless gloves. As **Mr Warbucks’** **staff,** the women wear pink maids’ dresses with full skirts, white starched caps and aprons. The male staff wear burgundy and gold waistcoats over white shirts with wing collars, black trousers and shoes. **Drake,** the butler, wears a penguin suit and white gloves. **Mrs Pugh**, the housekeeper, is a comfortably-shaped woman with a jolly face.

And last but not least: **Sandy** the dog is a medium-sized canine with a light sandy coat, floppy ears and a stubby tail which he wags often. He wears a collar, to which a rope lead is attached. He loves doggy treats, which he knows are hidden in Annie’s pocket! The part is played by Amber, a 5 year-old Labradoodle, trained by Animals Galore Ltd.

The music for the show is played live by musicians in the orchestra pit, under the supervision of George Dyer.

The cast consists of: Craig Revel Horwood as Miss Hannigan, Alex Bourne as Daddy Warbucks, Carolyn Maitland as Grace Farrell, Richard Meek as Rooster, Jenny Gayner as Lily. Annie is played tonight by Freya Yates. The orphans are played by three different teams. Tonight is the turn of team Rockefeller, consisting of Honey-Rose Quinn, Tilly Stephany, Francesca Robinson, Aliya Bashir, Chance Quaye and Tori Ryan.

At the end of Act 1 there will be a 20 minute interval, and an introduction to Act 2 will begin about 7 minutes before Act 2 is due to start

Before the show begins, the orphans arrive in the dormitory and get into bed. One of them has to sleep on a pile of bedding on the floor. The radio plays.

**About 12 minutes**