DRIVING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

PROGRAMME NOTES

This year’s festive offering by Grimes and Mckee is directed by Frankie Mc Cafferty and choreographed by Deborah Maguire.

Welcome to The Dander Inn, deep in the Sperrin Mountains, which the elderly owners, Pat and Paddy (twin brother and sister) claim is the highest pub in Ireland. It’s Christmas Eve and a raging snowstorm is disrupting travel as people try to make their way home for the festive season. Various travellers take refuge in The Dander Inn as the roads become impassable, but the solace of been stranded in a pub soon wears thin as the pub’s Superser runs out of gas. Hungry and cold they huddle together for warmth. They soon discover that the owners are miserly, especially Paddy who takes advantage of their situation.

Costumes and Characters

Connor Grimes plays both Pat and Paddy who are “identical twins” and elderly owners of The Dander Inn, so they don’t appear together in the pub. He is of medium height and has a grey wig and glasses, and a paunch. As Paddy he wears a white shirt beneath a brown tank top. Over brown trousers and brogues he wears a long white apron, tied at the waist.

As Pat he has wavy grey hair and glasses and a hunched back. She wears a cable knit cardigan buttoned to the neck, a calf length tweed skirt and a white apron tied at the waist, and flat shoes. Pat is quite deaf and moves slowly. He also plays Rudy’s father wearing a fancy waist coat and a cravat.

Gary Crossan plays the care home manager Martin, who wears a short blue medical tunic, blue trousers and trainers. He carries a clip board and talks to us in the audience as if we were residents of the home. His main part is as Rudy Sinnamomd, Ciara’s fiancé. He’s in his twenties, thin and has black short hair, side burns and a moustache and beard. He is medium height and wears a denim jacket over a striped jumper and tan trousers, showing his bare ankles and trendy sneakers. Later he wears a yellow puffer jacket and woollen bobble hat. And he will act as the young Paddy in the pub when Pat recalls their childhood there.

Ruby Campbell plays Ciara. She first appears as part of the Abba tribute band when she wears a kimono style top with a red belt and sparkly fringed leggings and boots. She is about twenty four. As Rudy’s fiancé she is a nurse, small and pretty with long blond hair. She wears a red sparkly Christmas jumper beneath a knee length blue coat with a long knitted scarf, black leggings and ankle boots. She has a red backpack. She describes her folks as “culchies” in comparison with Rudy’s “upwardly mobile” parents. Later she will act as the young Pat in the pub.

Ali White is Alison. She first appears in the Abba tribute band when she wears a white kimono belted top, long sparkling fringed boots and legging. She is about forty, with a thin face, tall and slender with shoulder length wavy dark hair. As Alison she wears a full camel coloured wool coat with lapels and belted at the waist, beige slacks, and shoes with a small heel. She carries a large grey handbag, filled with church supplies which she sells as part of her business franchise. She also plays Rudy’s mother clutching champagne and wearing a large woven poncho. She also becomes Lady Gladys Peacock, a faded theatrical lady dressed in exotic red embroidered coat draped with fox fur and wearing a black hat with a large feather.

Alan McKee first appears as part of the Abba tribute band when he wears a blond wig, a white belted top and wide white flares with embroidery. He is about 45, tall, balding, and well made with a round face. When not in the tribute band Frank wears a short leather jacket with zips and a fur collar, white shirt and black waistcoat, and blue loose denims. He also plays Rudy’s older brother, Brent who is a famous surgeon and wears a blood-stained green hospital operating gown. He is also Sir Arthur Peacock wearing a gold jacket with fox fur collar and soft hat.

Rod McVey who plays Rod also first appears as a male member of the Abba tribute band with a white jacket and wide white flares. He is about 55, tall and stooped with a retreating hair that is longer at the sides. He has a thin face and wears black rimmed glasses. As Rod he doesn’t speak, but plays a piano that he uncovers at the pub. He has a long black over coat and scarf, a shirt and tie.

All the men in the cast will also appear briefly as members of the clergy dressed in long black cassocks, and one in a long red one with a fur trimmed cape, and wearing a cardinal’s hat.

SCENERY

When we first enter the theatre the curtains are open and we can see on the right a hospital screen with yellow curtains and tinsel draped across the top. This represents the care home.

The pub door has 2 glass sections and is slightly behind, and to the right of the screen. In the foreground are small pub tables with decorative carved hearts cut from the sides, and some small stools. There is a piano covered by a sheet against the pub wall, which has flowered wallpaper, below a dado rail. There are some pictures of animals and birds framed on the walls. The pub counter is of dark wood with some high stools in front of it. Behind it there is a shelf with the till, optics and a board with pub snacks. Christmas lights are draped above the shelf. There are string curtains on the left behind the counter leading to the living quarters.

Above, the shelf and optics, rising upwards is a cross section of the gable end of the inn. It has a lighted window with blue curtains, below which is a sign in capital italics letters “*THE DANDER INN*”. As the show progresses the letters begin to go askew. There are stars in the sky above the roof.

 On the left of the counter is a wall mounted television set, and beneath that is a superser, and on the extreme left is a door leading to the pub toilets.

Music is played live on stage or recorded as in the case of the Abba Tribute Band. Rod McVey, who plays Rod is the musical director for the show and plays the pub piano and accordion live on stage.

The lighting is excellent. Yellow laser lights criss-cross the stage when the tribute band are playing and the stage is bathed in blue neon lights when Pat tells a story. When the electricity goes out in the pub we see good use of mobile phone torches which adds to the atmosphere. Spot lights of different colours illuminate the stage when Frank relives some of his appearances on various quiz shows.

 A snow machine effectively blows flakes into the pub when the door is opened to the storm.

Lots of different props are used throughout the show. The pub scene remains the same throughout and our attention is drawn to other scenes with the use of lighting and the hospital screen denotes a theatrical backdrop when the yellow curtains are replaced by red velvet. When we first meet the travellers they are sitting on the left of the stage in car seats which are wheeled on to represent the drivers in their cars.

Sound effects are also used to good effect.