Programme Notes for Fame the Musical

Fame the Musical is based on the 1980 pop culture film following the lives of students at New York’s High School for the Performing Arts as they navigate highs and lows, bitter sweet, and uplifting triumphs. Fame is celebrating its 30th anniversary tour, starring Keith Jack (Any Dream Will Do and Joseph and The Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat), and Mica Paris (Love Me Tender, Chicago, Mama I Just Want to Sing) and Jorgie Porter (Hollyoaks, and Dancing On Ice).

The show is just over two hours long and there will be a short interval.

Scenery

The show opens with an abstract scene of concrete walls of red and cream of a corrugated design. We are uncertain of the nature of the design, but are alerted to its purpose by loud street sounds. Centrally we see a small rectangle of light that becomes the light at the end of a subway tunnel which extinguishes completely as we open to the scene of the school were prospective students queue for auditions.

The High School of Performing Arts:

A gauze curtain lifts to reveal open metal stairs with bannisters running down to the right and left of the stage floor, they each have a small landing before making an angled turn to the stage floor. These landings provide miniature platforms for the actors when required. The stairs are joined by a long metal landing or gantry that is above head height and has open work hand railings. The right hand side of the stairway angles as though following a wall of the school. The stairway and gantry effectively divide the stage into lower and upper levels where the pupils will practice different arts.

At the end of the show parts of the staircase will be removed from the main structure to provide a single platform.

Behind the stairway, and at the back of the stage is a floor to ceiling bank of small square portraits of past pupils or teachers in monochrome colours. There are approximately 84 facial images which change colours throughout the performance. There are three gaps in the portraits providing entrances and exits for the actors, two on the gantry, one centrally, one to the right, and one beneath the stairs facing us at stage level. At times the portraits are faded out completely and we see a grid of thin vertical strips of neon lights running from the floor to the stage ceiling that change colour at various times.

Auditions at the School of Performing Arts are advertised by a large neon sign bearing the words “Auditions” in upper and lower case. Later we see another large sign projected onto the back of the stage saying “Freshman Year 1980”.

Furniture is wheeled on and off stage portraying the various classes taking place.

The Classroom has a black board on a wooden stand, and six wooden desks with attached wooden back and seats. The desk frames are metal and they have wheels.

The Dance Studio has an upright mirror with a bar attached for ballet practice. Three lights with metal shades hang from the studio ceiling and are lowered or raised when required.

The Canteen has long red metal tables with red benches attached on wheels for easy removal.

The Changing Rooms have a small wooden bench and two sets of tall grey metal cabinets, each consisting of four lockers.

The Music Studio has a metal dais with wheels, on which stands a set of drums and an upright piano on the left. The music students use the various parts of the staircase to perform throughout the show.

There are also snapshots of the student’s homes at the beginning of the show where we see prospective students awaiting letters of either acceptance or rejection to the academy. We see an armchair of cream velvet in one home, and a kitchen table and chair in another.

The street scenes outside of the school are portrayed by a tall section of wire mesh fencing with a metal strut running diagonally from top right to bottom left. There is a metal lamp post. The back ground is obscured into blackness and dry ice rises like steam from the sidewalk.

A set of six black bentwood chairs are used during the Flamenco dancing scene.

Instruments are played live throughout the show. There is an upright piano, a full set of drums, guitars, trumpets, and a saxophone.

Other props include kit bags with handles which the students use. But other than the class room furniture which is wheeled on and off stage when required there are not a lot of props used in the performance.

Dry ice is used for effect in the busy street scenes to show the steam and heat from an underground subway, along with city traffic noises.

Lighting on the school portraits changes colours throughout the performance and spot lights are used from the theatre ceiling to good effect. At other times the lighting is subdued and the portraits are faded out to focus our attention on action on the stage.

Characters and Costumes

Miss Esther Sherman is played by Mica Paris: Tall and thin with thick, dark hair tied in a roll at her neck. She wears a blue skirt suit with a yellow blouse with black stripes and dark coloured heels.

Carmen is played by Stephanie Rojas. She has long dark hair in a pony tail and a bright, smiley face. At first she wears a loose fitting tee shirt, jersey shorts and black boots. Later, a striped casual jumper. In the lunchroom scene she has changed into a grey coloured vest top and cut off black jeans shorts. In the Bandroom with Schlomo she is wearing a white cropped jumper and short brown jeans. In Act 2 Carmen wears torn jeans, boots and an anorak. Her hair is loose and she has a woolly hat on.

Serena is played by Molly McGuire: She has mousey, lanky, fair hair. She first appears in baggy jeans and trainers with a cardigan. She has a rucksack on her back. When rehearsing The Seagull Serena holds her cardigan over her head and shoulders like a scarf and shawl. As Juliet she wears an Elizabethan gown with cap sleeves and a blue bodice, a chintz skirt with a blue over-skirt above it. She has a band of flowers on her head. At Prom Serena wears a sparkly black bra style top and a tight short pink skirt.

Schlomo is played by Simon Anthony. He is tall with dark hair. At first he wears chinos and a polo shirt with brown leather shoes. In the bandroom scene with Carmen he wears a loose woolly cardigan open over his shirt.

Nick is played by Keith Jack. Nick is a muscular young man with thick, dark hair. When he first appears he is wearing a white tee shirt and jeans. Later he changes into a woolly jumper and short, brown jacket. In the rehearsal scene he wears a brown shirt and then with Serena in Act 2 he wears blue trousers and a blue shirt. At Prom he wears a shiny blue dinner jacket and a bow tie.

Joe is played by Albey Brookes: He is tall with dark hair down to his jaw line. When he first appears he wears a patterned shirt, denim jacket and red Converse trainers. As Romeo Joe wears a white shirt with a tight blue doublet, tight blue breeches and a cod piece, with his trainers.

Tyrone is played by Jamal Kane Crawford. He is tall and muscular. When he first appears he wears a baseball cap on backwards, green vest, blue hoodie, rust coloured trousers and baseball style trainers. Later, in dance class, he wears white knee length shorts.

Mr Myers, the acting teacher, is played by Spencer Lee Osborne. He is stocky and bald with glasses. He wears a white shirt, fine wool tank top and loose fitting trousers.

Ms Bell, the ballet teacher, is played by Katie Warsop. She is graceful and poised, with long, brown hair. At first she wears a blue tight-fitting leotard with a matching short skirt wrapped round her waist and a loose open cardigan. She has shoes with a small heel. Later in the dance rehearsal scene with Tyrone and Iris she has changed into a green sleeveless knee length dress.

Mr Sheinkopf, the music teacher, is played by Duncan Smith. He’s a stout older man, bald with a white beard and moustache, waxed into points at the ends. He has small, fine framed glasses that perch half way down his nose. He wears a three piece suit with white shirt and bow tie.

Lambchops, the drummer, is played by Louise Beadel. She is a pretty, young woman with loose dark hair. At first she wears a red shirt with a black studded waistcoat open over the top and a short black skirt with black tights and black DM boots. Later she wears a loose Ramones vest top.

Goody, the trumpet player, is played by Alexander Zane. He has a happy, open face with dark curly hair. He wears casual, loose fitting clothes with a soft sporty top.

Iris Kelly is played by Jorgie Porter. She is a pretty young dancer with blonde hair bound up in a bun. She wears a tight fitting top and long flowing white skirt with pale ballet tights, leg warmers and ballet pumps.

Mabel, played by Hayley Jonston, is a stocky blonde with her hair worn in bunches on top of her head. She wears thigh length shorts and a wide tee shirt. In the song Mabel’s Prayer she wears a striped tee shirt and blue jeans rolled up to the ankle.

In ballet practice all the girls wear high legged leotards, ballet pumps and leg warmers. Boys are in shorts and vests.

In the flamenco scene all the boys wear black shirts, open to show their chests, and black trousers with a black satin stripe down each leg. They have glossy black shoes with a Cuban heel. The girls wear low cut black dresses with a ruffle that flows into pleats near the hem of the short skirt so it flares out and spins when they turn. They have a red flower in their hair. Except Carmen who wears a black top with spaghetti straps and a red skirt that is shorter at the front and longer at the back.

At graduation they all wear blue gowns and mortar board hats.