**PROGRAMME NOTES**

**The Life of Pi.**

The audio description of this show will take place on Saturday 24th February at the Matinee performance at 2.30 pm at the Grand Opera House in Belfast. The audio-describers are Noirin Mc Kinney and Marie Abbott. If you would like to hear these Programme Notes read out, please take your seats ten minutes before the show starts. The show will last approximately 2 hrs and ten minutes including an interval.

*The Life of Pi* is based on the best-selling book by Yann Martel, and was winner of three Tony Awards 2023 and five Olivier Awards.

*The Life of Pi* tells the magical story of a young Indian boy from Pondicherry, a city by the Bay of Bengal on the south-east coast of India. After deciding to sell their zoo and move to Canada, Santosh and Gita Patel board a freighter with their sons and daughters and a few of the remaining animals. Tragedy strikes when a terrible storm sinks the ship, leaving the Patels' teenage son, Pi , as the only human survivor who manages to find a large lifeboat. However, Pi is not alone; a fearsome Royal Bengal tiger called Richard Parker, an Orang-utan, a Zebra and a Hyena have also found refuge aboard the lifeboat.

As days turn into weeks and weeks drag into months, Pi and the tiger must learn to trust each other if both are to survive.

**The Set and Lighting**

The lighting and sets are very sophisticated, and evocative of the various settings in the play.

Act 1 opens in an austere hospital ward with a single clinical bed, a medical stand, wooden floorboards and a tall backdrop of windows and doors which open and close throughout to reveal various scenes and through which characters enter and leave. In Act one there are kaleidoscopes of colour and projections of images from nature. Wooden or metal rods are used to create temporary structures like the cages in the family zoo at different times of the day.

In Act 1 the backdrop changes from from hospital to zoo, to a vibrant street market and then the interior of a huge ship, and finally at the end of Act 1 the scene becomes a stormy sky over the small lifeboat that contains Pi and his animal companions who are surrounded by a tempestuous ocean. The animals are life-size puppets with articulated limbs and they are manipulated by several puppeteers. Richard Parker, the Bengal tiger, has three puppeteers.

In Act 2 the action takes place in an open lifeboat, and the stage is washed in water and ocean effects, with dramatic skies as the backdrop.

**The Cast**

There is a large cast for this show and some play more than one role.

**Divesh Subaskaran** is making his professional debut as Pi - Pi Molitor Patel also sometimes called Piscine. Pi is the narrator for most of the story. This role is sometimes performed by a young man and at other times by a young woman. Pi wears a white three-quarter length tunic over loose calf-length trousers, and his feet are bare. His hair is short and wavy.

**Adwitha Arumugam**  is the young female actor who alternates to play the role of Pi in some shows.

**Dhwana Bhawsar** plays two roles in the performance - as Lulu Chen and as Mrs Biology Kumar.

**Ralph Birtwell** will play two different roles, as Mamaji ( a friend of the Patel family and a former champion swimmer in his youth). Mamaji teaches Pi how to swim and to love the water. Ralph also plays Admiral Balbir Singh.

**Kriss Dosanjh**, plays two roles, firstly as Pi’s father who established the Pondicherry Zoo. Tall and well-built, he is very protective of his family as well as the creatures in the zoo. He wears a patterned waistcoat, trousers and sandals. He also plays a zookeeper.

There are six **Puppeteers- Sebastian Goffin, Akash Heer**

**Romina Hytten, Katy Kennedy-Rose,** **Kate Rowsell** and **Aziah Khan.**

**Chand Martinez** plays Pandit-Ji.

**Goldy Notay** plays Amma, Pi’s sister.

**Sharita Oomeer** plays Lulu Chen and Mrs Biology Kumar.

**Kate Rowsell** plays Tiger Heart and Hind.

**Lillian Tsang** plays the roles of Mrs Okamoto, a Japanese official from the Maritime Department of Transport, who is investigating the sinking of the Japanese ship Tsimtsum. She also plays Zaida Khan and Ships captain.

**Keshini Misha** plays the role of Gita Patel, Pi’s beloved mother and protector. She does not subscribe to any religion and questions Pi’s religious declarations. She is dressed in colourful traditional silk saris.

**Satish Kumar**

Pi’s atheistic biology teacher at a secondary school in Pondicherry. His devotion to the power of scientific inquiry and explanation inspires Pi to study zoology in college.

**Peter Twose** plays three roles, as Father Martin, the Catholic priest who introduces Pi to Christianity. He preaches a message of love. The actor is very tall and as Father Martin he wears an ankle length black soutane and beret. He also plays a Cook and is a part of the puppetry team for the Royal Bengal Tiger.

**Satish Kumar**

A Muslim mystic with the same name as Pi’s biology teacher. He works in a bakery. Like the other Mr. Kumar, this one has a strong effect on Pi’s academic plans: his faith leads Pi to study religion at college.

**The Hindu Pandit**

One of three important religious figures in the play. He is outraged when Pi, who was raised Hindu, begins practicing other religions. He and the other two religious leaders are content with Pi’s declaration that he just wants to love God.

**Directors and Designers.**

The playwright for The Life of Pi was Lolita Chakrabarti, the director was Max Webster, Puppetry and Movement designer and directors Finn Caldwell and Nick Barnes. Set design was by Tim Hatley