



Schools Pack, Recourses & Production Info

## Singin' in the Rain Resource Pack

This resource pack has been designed to support young audiences attending the performances of Singin' in the Rain. We've created this pack to give an insight into the play and the making of this production.

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## **Pre-Visit Information**

#### **Running Time**

2hrs 45 mins (including 20min interval)

#### **Content Warnings**

Age Guidance: 8+

For the most up to date content warnings, please visit the show webpage.

#### **Travel Recommendations**

#### **Trams**



If your school or college is near a tram stop you can get your students to us for just £1 each and £2 per teacher. A great way to save money on coaches and also give students the life experience of how a lot of our audiences use public transport to access our theatre. More information here:

<u>Fares</u> and passes for young people | Transport for Greater Manchester (tfgm.com)

#### **Coaches**

For all information about coach drops offs and parking please click <u>here</u>

Show Information 2

## **About the Show**

Director Raz Shaw returns to the Exchange, following his smash hit production of THE PRODUCERS; with SINGIN' IN THE RAIN – a musical packed with iconic songs such as Make 'em Laugh, Good Morning, Moses and of course the iconic title tune Singin' In The Rain.

A timeless masterpiece, and perhaps one of the greatest musicals ever made, this charismatic, tap-dancing extravaganza tells the story of the highs and lows of Hollywood through the eyes of the infamous Don Lockwood, Lina Lamont, Cosmo Brown and Kathy Selden as a radical move is made from silent movies to the 'talkies'.

Seamlessly blending song and dance the audience will find themselves in the heart of the action of this much-loved musical on the Exchange's iconic in-the-round stage.

"It's a story about expression, how music and dance can help you say the things that you might not be able to say, and the magic of that." - Raz Shaw, Director



About The Show

# Singin' in the Rain -Who's Who



Don Lockwood
Vaudeville
performer now
silent movie star
& the hero of our
story



Vaudeville performer turned music mood man



Lina Lamont
Silent movie star
& on screen
partner of Don



Singer &
performer, set
up as the voice
of Lina



RF Simpson
Studio Head and
movie producer



Roscoe Dexter
World famous
film Director

Who's Who

## Cast



Laura Badwin Lina Lamont



Tanisha Mae Brown
Ensemble



Danny Collins
Cosmo Brown



Adam Davidson
Ensemble
Cover - Don Lockwood



Frances Dee
Ensemble
Cover - Kathy Selden



Julius D'Silva RF Simpson



Carly Mercedes Dyer Kathy Selden



Zac Frieze Ensemble

Meet The Cast 5

## Cast



Louis Gaunt
Don Lockwood



Jessica Keable Ensemble Cover - Lina Lamont



Gregor McCann Ensemble



Benjamin Mundy Ensemble/Dance Captain



Clancy Ryan Ensemble/Dora Bailey



Carl Sanderson
Roscoe Dexter



Ria Tanaka Ensemble



Thomas Walton
Ensemble
Cover - Cosmo Brown

Meet The Cast

## **Creative Team**

Director

Designer Richard Kent
Lighting Designer Jack Knowles
Sound Designer Yvonne Gilbert
Choreographer Alistair David
Musical Supervisor & Orchestrator Matthew Malone
Musical Director Matthew Malone
Fight and Intimacy Director Haruka Kuroda

Raz Shaw

Voice & Dialect Coach Natalie Grady

Casting Director Will Burton

<u>Associate Director</u> Piers Black

Associate Musical Director Francesca Warren

Assistant Choreographer Ben Mundy

Birkbeck Assistant Director Sadie Mears

Creative Team 7

## **Rehearsal Photos**











## Director & Cast Talk



"You have to make your performance generous to a whole auditorium, to an audience whose behind you, in front of you, to the sides of you. It becomes really free and really enjoyable to get lost in the space." Louis Gaunt (playing Don Lockwood)

Watch the Rehearsal Trailer here





Trailer & Teaser 9

#### An interview with the creatives

Several weeks before the show opened, three key members of the creative team — Raz Shaw (director), Alistair David (choreographer) and Matthew Malone (music supervisor, orchestrations, additional arrangements and musical direction) — gathered to share their thoughts on how this new production has come together and the hopes they have for it.

What's your personal history with SINGIN' IN THE RAIN? When did you first see it?

Alistair David: I don't remember a time when I hadn't seen it, if I'm honest. I don't remember the first experience of watching it, so I must have watched it at a very earlier age. It's always been in there.

Raz Shaw: Well, it was never in there for me. I never really knew it properly. I mean, I'd seen it a couple of times, but for me it wasn't one of those film musicals that people talk about as being very significant to their lives and stuff. It wasn't until we started talking about this that I actually got to know it as a film. It wasn't really in my DNA.

Matthew Malone: I don't remember the first time I watched it either, and it's not something I've watched religiously, but I've known the music for ages. It's certainly ingrained in my head, but I'd never properly studied it or looked into it before doing the show. The songs in the show are sort of part of the language of like musical theatre. I'd definitely listened to it more than I'd watched it.

Have the three of you collaborated before in different combinations?

Alistair: Me and Matthew have just recently, this summer [on ANNE BOLEYN: THE MUSICAL at Hever Castle], for the first time.

And me and Raz did on THE PRODUCERS [at the Exchange in 2018].

#### How did you all come onto this project?

Raz: Well, I've been talking for ages — since THE PRODUCERS, actually — about doing another show here. Then COVID happened, madness happened. Over the last 18 months, we came to the conclusion that I'd do this Christmas show, and then it was exploring what that might be. In the end, it came, in a very positive way, to SINGIN' IN THE RAIN.

One of the reasons it came to this, in a similar way to when we did THE PRODUCERS, was that it felt like a musical where being in the round would give it something completely unique and different to any other production that's ever happened.

Once I knew that this was going to be a big song-and-dance show, there's only one man who you want as choreographer... but sadly he wasn't available.

Alistair: Haha!

Raz: When we did THE PRODUCERS, what we discovered – I think it was your first properly 'in the round' show?

Alistair: Yeah, after lots of stuff in 'thrust'.

Raz: Yeah, and in rehearsals for THE PRODUCERS, after the first week of Alistair changing that mind-space of his, suddenly it unlocked. I saw it happen – he completely understood and completely jumped into it and made new dynamics of a thing that may have been still beautiful in an 'end-on' theatre, but became something new and powerful and brilliant in the round. So I knew we'd have to have Alistair, and then I heard about this unique talent...

Matthew: 'Maverick'?

#### An interview with the creatives

Raz: Ha! The maverick, unique talent that was Dr Matthew Malone. It was actually very lucky that, purely by chance, Alistair and Matthew ended up working together just before this, so that cemented their working relationship.

Alistair: That meant we were much closer when it came around to start working on this, which has been fantastic in terms of a collaborative partnership

Iconic' is an over-used word, but the SINGIN' IN THE RAIN film is genuinely conic. With a production like this, how difficult it is to decide how much you lean into the original, and how much do you lean away from it and give audiences something they're not expecting?

Alistair: You can't get away from the fact that it's iconic, and we've definitely given little nods to some of the elements that are really iconic. But I think this space allows you to be completely theatrical, so you're not recreating the movie in any way. You're taking the story and presenting it in a really theatrical way.

Raz: We want it to be recognizable to the people who love the movie, because it's an incredible piece of work. We don't want to deliberately shy away from that 'just because'. But also, for the people who don't know the movie at all, it needs to feel like a brand new, fresh piece of work. Those two things have to land side by side.

**Matthew:** There's not much point coming just to watch the film on stage – just watch the film!

Are there moments that you think audiences will be particularly struck by?

Matthew: Yeah, definitely. It's not a secret, but we've been given permission to do a new ballet for the show. There's a very famous ballet in the film that then went into the MTI theatrical rental version, and it's great, but while Alistair and I were working on that other project, we were saying 'wouldn't it be great if we were allowed to do

a new ballet?'. Then between the three of us, me, Raz and Alistair came up with a new story for it.

Given that the audience might think they know SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, is the ideal aim to satisfy and surprise simultaneously?

Alistair: I mean, I don't know that your average theatregoer would necessarily think 'this is a completely new Broadway ballet', for instance, but what they might think is that it feels modern and sexy and a little bit grungier maybe than they were perhaps expecting, and that might be the element of surprise. They might think, 'I've never seen SINGIN' IN THE RAIN done like that before'

What are the particular issues involved in staging this show here in the round?

Alistair: The first time I worked here, I found it really, really liberating. For me, the work can become almost 3D in a way, because you're not just seeing what's being presented to you. An audience member might be seeing something, but there's also something else going on behind that which they're seeing. It becomes much more 3D and immersive – more multi-layered in a way.

Raz: The space is, by its very nature, immersive. The audience is not just watching Don sing on the street, they're in the street with him. That's what we get for free, so with every element we've started with that and then extended from it.

So the space offers more positives than negatives?

Raz: Well, there are no negatives! Even something that you think is a negative to start with can turn into something much more unique and exciting and individual.

Are there any issues around including a band and how you integrate them?

Matthew: Probably the trickiest thing about the space is the sound, in that it's really temperamental because it's in the round. You've got to be so careful where mic positions are for the cast,

#### An interview with the creatives

or if you've got ambient mics that are picking everything up.

There are nine players in the band, and we have five in the space, four outside, so we're giving the audience that aesthetic quality of seeing musicians playing in the space, but for practical reasons we also have to have people outside, so as to not ruin the sound.

Raz: It's very common in musicals these days to not see the band at all, which is fine, and that's a creative decision, and also probably a logistic decision as well. In that space, again, because we're all in this world together, what we discovered in THE PRODUCERS is that it's really nice to look up on the first gallery where the audience are, and see the band leader and some of the band really involved in the show, rather than separate in a box outside.



Raz: I think it's a celebration, a celebration of singing and dancing, a celebration of movies, a celebration of, dare I say the word, love — not just a singular form of love, love in all its forms, and unexpected ways of finding love. I'd say that's pretty Christmassy!

I think what we are discovering in rehearsals is that, in a good way, without us being complacent about it, it feels like it's going to be an event. So yeah – in terms of people coming out to watch something over Christmas, I think it's going to feel special.

Interview by Andy Murray.





# History of the Show & Making Theatre in the Round

Singin' in the Rain was created for the big screen, released in 1952 the original film brought together big names Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen as directors for Betty Comden & Adolph Green story, with a star-studded cast.

"Compounded generously of music, dance, color, spectacle and a riotous abundance of Gene Kelly, Jean Hagen and Donald O'Connor on the screen, all elements in this rainbow program are carefully contrived and guaranteed to lift the dolors of winter and put you in a buttercup mood"

- Bosley Crowther, New Yorker Review (1952)

Adapted for stage in the 1980s by writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green, the world premiere at the London Palladium in 1983. The musical's since run worldwide, including on Broadway.

Bringing Singin' in the Rain to the Royal Exchange's unique, in-the-round theatre, raises questions for the making of a large-scale musical. Crucially big backdrops and set pieces, usually key to scene-setting in end-on theatres, are made impossible without sacrificing the 360degree views of the stage.

How then to bring to life the all singing, all dancing world of 1930s Hollywood? For Designer Richard Kent, the answer lies in:

"Finding a way to create a [visual] language that can do multiple things, there's so many places this musical takes us, there's the naturalistic, the fantasy of the musical pieces, and this extra layer of film within plays. So it's about finding something that can carry us through all of that."

Creating a rhetoric of sound and colour which can paint the world of the big screen and big stars with minimal props and dressing.

## A Playground: Creating a Set

The first task of designing the play was making the set. For Designer Richard Kent, this needed to be a sort of "empty box", "a playground" across which all the scenes can move, each bringing to life new places, characters and atmosphere.

Design is a process of questions and answers, a conversation between meaning and materials. Kent's process was orientated by questions such as:

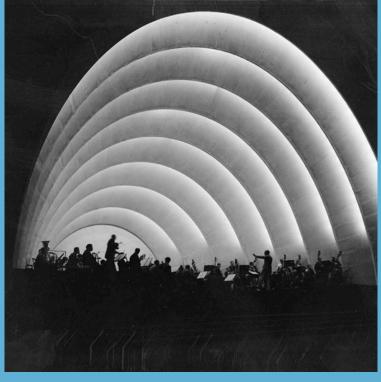
"What that world could look like, how naturalistic or abstract it should be?"

"[The answer] we came to was a silver tone as the underlying theme", returning to the heart of the show, the Silver Screen.

A practical consideration also weighed into creation of the bespoke silver floor – tap dancing will scuff and damage flooring over time, so rather than a shiny black, which would fade quickly, scratches on the silver will add to it's filmic quality.

For this base layer of stage and set, Kent took inspiration from the architectural gestures of the time, the art deco and curves which characterised 1930s design, complimenting the circular theatre. This shaped the engraved floor and curved hanging fixtures.

"The simple space allows us to be punchy with colour choices for costume and props", choosing a colour pallet for each place and number in the play.



The Hollywood Bowl, 1930s



'A Symphony in Silver' (1925), by Cecil Beaton

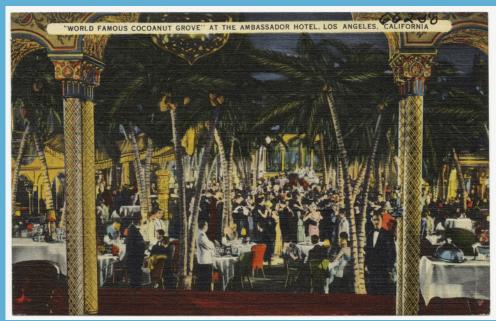
Design Notes 1

## Pops of Pineapple: All I Do

Design for this scene began with a question of what the team wanted to do with the element of surprise. Crucially, matching Alistair David's choreography, it had to be really fun!

Exploring references of the time, including the interiors of the Cocoanut Grove Club, Richard Kent took pineapples as inspiration. This gives us the colour palette of warm oranges, bright greens and rich golden yellow, which run through the props and showgirls' costume. And of course, the pineapple cake!

The bursts of colour bring us to a lively new space with minimal props and backdrop.



"World Famous Cocoanut Grove" 1930s, Tichnor Bros. postcard

The Cocoanut Grove was a nightclub inside the Ambassador Hotel on Wilshire **Boulevard in Los Angeles** (1921-89). It featured lavish "exotic" décor, including golden doors etched with palm trees. The room seated 1000 in tiered seating, with boxes reserved on an annual basis, and had a large celebrity clientele. Historian Jim Heimann called the club Holywood's "first playground of the stars."



Miniature Prototype Cake



Costume Design, Richard Kent

Design Notes 15

## Filming: The Duelling Cavalier

## "In the round you don't need to represent everything to represent it properly. It's about allowing the acting to tell us where we are"

- Raz Shaw, Director

A few simple props - camera, director's chair - create the world of the film studio. A touch of comedy is brought by oversized props - such as the a large Romanesque pillar, chicken and a cake! - busily carried back and forth.

While the reference point for the costumes and props of the film is Versailles, and the beauty of the original silent films, their lavish costumes and sets. The scene is set in a blue tone, which runs through props such as the planter and costumes, including Lina's dress.



Anne Bauchens and Cecil B. DeMill (1939)



Monsieur Beauclaire (1924) Silent Film

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## Screening: Duelling Cavalier

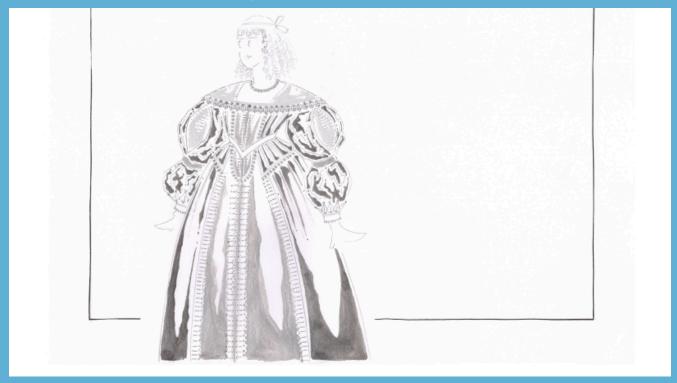
While many productions choose to show filmed versions of film within the play via projection, here all elements are portrayed live.

The silver tone marks the shift to the black-and-white world of the silver screen. Meaning every piece of prop and costume needed a silver double.

#### 9 costumes were recreated in silver for the scene!



Costume Design for 'The Royal Rascal', Richard Kent



Design Notes 17

# Made for the Round: Design and Function

Props and set pieces are designed and made in house by the team to ensure they work both to create atmosphere and are functional objects for the performance.

For example, the bespoke chairs created for Moses Supposes are reproductions of Walter Gropius Chairs from the period, however, they have been specially made with reinforced metal which allows them to play a role in the rigorous tap number.

While for Good Morning, a Walter Gropius sofa is reimagined in circular form preventing any obstruction of sight-lines in the number, it's top has been reinforced to allow for tap.

Walter Gropius was a German American architect and founder of the Bauhaus School (1919), widely regarded as one of the pioneering masters of modernist architecture. "Form follows function": Gropius adhered to the modernist principle that an object's design should be primarily dictated by its intended purpose, eliminating any unnecessary ornamentation.



Walter Gropius Chairs (1920s)

Design Notes 18

### Broadway Melody: Making a New Ballet

Broadway Melody is one of the final numbers in the show, a dream ballet which follows Don through Cosmo's pitch for a new film about film to studio head RF Simpson. The creative team worked to choregraph a brand new ballet for the scene.

Starting the process of choreography meant exploring the scene's meaning and intention. For Director Raz Shaw the sequence is about "going into the fears, imagination and fantasies of Don."

Playing with the strangeness of the original film's ballet and the surrealism which ran through artistic imagery of the 1930s to delve into Don's dreams. For "some of those fears are dark": it's a moment where the world of a film star becomes playing field for the human struggle "to find out what is real and what is fantasy", and within that "who you are".

"Ultimately, Broadway Ballet is a beautiful 10 minute journey of Don going into a world of discovery, seeking to find who he is, and coming out the other side into a feeling of release into his love for Cathy"

- Raz Shaw, Director

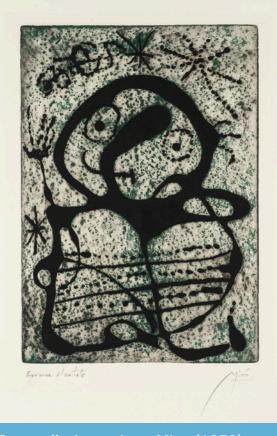


From Singin' in the Rain, 1952

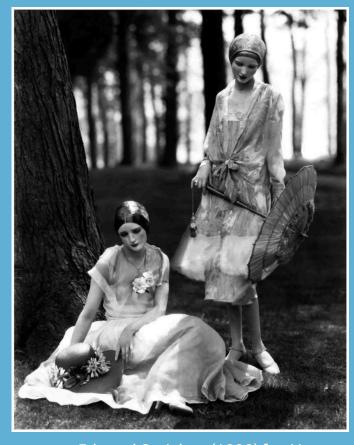
#### **Broadway Melody: Design**

Designer Richard Kent wove a colour pallet of greens and blues, drawing on the shapes and imagery of 1930s abstract art, such as Joan Miro's prints, to create the scene's dream-world. The overall effect is to capture both their melancholia and vivid, brightness.

Set and prop dressings pull us into the shifting reality of dreams: for Kent "playing with masks gives the ballet it's edge and strangeness," while light-up tabletops allow a play with shadow and light across the casts' faces offering a visual metaphor for Don's search for reality and identity.



Constellations, Joan Miro (1959)



Edward Steichen (1926) for Vogue

## **Making it Rain**

For Director Raz Shaw the titular song Singin' in the Rain is the moment where Don first experiences love for someone. Rather than a simple naturalism in which we witness Don falling in love, feeling becomes the fabric of the scene – song, street and rain are not simply backdrop but all elements of Don's expression of feeling.

#### How then to make it rain in the Royal Exchange?

To achieve this spectacle the producing and technical teams worked with Water Sculpture Company to create a bespoke rain rig...

#### RIG

Two concentric rain rings are hung above the stage – one smaller central ring of piping with 5 nozzles, and a second larger ring, 4 meters in diameter (so large in fact we had to cut it in half to fit it into the building!). The rain system is controlled by DMX, that is, it's run by the lighting desk.

A key design feature is that the second ring's nozzles can be controlled individually, allowing us to create zones of rain and a greater range of play, Don expressing himself through the rain.

#### **WATER**

2000 litters of water are stored in 2 large tanks (visible outside Door 1), which have to be heated so that the cast aren't drenched in cold water once a day. The weight of all that water meant the tanks had to be placed on a concreted corner of the Exchange, in turn demanding 30 meters of hose to carry water from the tanks to the stage.

#### **FLOOR**

After covering the theatre with 2000lts of water, careful consideration must be paid to where it all goes! The team designed a 3-tiered flooring system – first, the original theatre floor, second, a plastic lining on top of which sits a large tank, and finally, the decorative show floor. Embedded within the ornate silver flooring is a guttering system for water drainage, which has been hand painted by designers to blend in with the other beautiful embellishments. This allows water to drain into a large tank below the stage, where it is filtered and treated before being reused.

Making it Rain 21

#### **Questions**

#### How did the use of colour across the play make you feel?

- How do you think colour can be used to create a feeling & what makes it effective?
- You might considered established symbolism culturally coded to different colours (e.g. blue for sad, yellow for happy) - why do you think each colour has taken on this meaning?
- If you were designing Singin' in the Rain what colours would you use?

Director Raz Shaw describes the musical numbers as "uber theatrical, both reality and fantasy at the same time." How do you feel this mix of "reality" and "fantasy" was created?

- You might consider the use of sound, lighting, costume and choreography.
- Do you find this exaggerated reality interesting?
- What do you think it allows the show to explore, how does it support the story telling? You might consider what it allows us to understand about character's internal worlds and emotions.
- Choose 1 musical number, if you were directing the scene how would you create the play with reality?

#### **A Question from the Team**

**Helen Hall, Production Manager**: My first impression when watching any show is the set, but I'd like to ask you to consider the lighting and sound.

Good lighting and sound go unnoticed, becoming simply the atmosphere of the show, what did you make of our use of lighting and sound in the show?

And pay close attention to where the band is placed, did you notice where they were sat?

Questions 22

## Coming Up at Royal Exchange Theatre



#### Road

By Jim Cartwright, featuring Lucy Beaumont, Shobna Gulati, Lesley Joseph, Johnny Vegas, and with special guest Sir Tom Courtenay on film.

Jim Cartwright's award-winning masterpiece invites you to join the inhabitants of this derelict northern road on an unforgettable journey. Shockingly relevant to our lives today, the play's visceral, eloquent poetry paints a tough world with tenderness.

Directed by Artistic Director Selina Cartmell, this revival marks the 40th anniversary of the play. In this exhilarating theatrical experience, audiences explore the Royal Exchange before taking their seats in the theatre.

'You want something different. Stay, I mean it.'



## Schools & Colleges Days

Our Schools & Colleges Days offer an exclusive performance for students with additional activity for young people to get involved in, helping bring each play to life. Watching theatre with a room of peers brings an electrifying energy to our shows, supporting students in laying claim to the space, performance, and theatre.

#### <u>ROAD - Tuesday 10 March 2026 (SOLD OUT)</u>

Explore the legacy of Thatcher's Britain as Johnny Vegas leads the audience through a promenade experience of Jim Cartwright's ROAD 1PM performance, followed by a Q&A with members of the cast

#### KING LEAR - Wednesday 21 October 2026

An intimate view of David Threlfall's searing portrait of a king unable to distinguish truth from lies.

A morning of on stage demonstrations & workshops with the creative team

Performance, followed by a Q&A with members of the cast

Pricing: Whole day — £20 per ticket
Pricing: Show and Q&A — £15 per ticket
1x free teacher ticket per 15 students
Content of the day TBC, keep informed by filling out this <u>short form</u>.



Schools & Colleges Days 24

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