**AD notes HIR**

Welcome to this introduction notes to HIr at the Bush Theatre. It was written by Taylor Mac and has been directed by Nadia Fall.

The audio described performance will be on Saturday July 15th. There will be a touch tour at 1 pm, the programme notes will begin at 2.15 and the performance itself at 2.30.

The performance lasts for approximately two hours, including a twenty minute interval.

The audio describer will be Di Langford.

In the programme the author comments:

I’m choosing to call the genre of this play, Absurd Realism. What I mean by this is that the absurdity comes from a heightened but realistic point of view. For example, the blinds are broken and nobody has bothered to fix them. This means at a certain point during the day the sun shines into the house so brightly that everyone wears sunglasses or walks around with their hands shielding their eyes. Absurd Realism is simply realistic characters in a realistic circumstance that is so extreme it is absurd.

The action takes place in California, during a particularly hot August, in the home of the Connor family. The audience is seated facing each other on either side of the performance area. As we enter the auditorium there is one block of seating immediately ahead of us, facing towards the right. The opposite block of seating is reached via a passage which runs to the right. The left hand wall of this passage is formed by one wall of the Connor’s house. A few steps lead up to a screen door covering the back door, which leads into the open plan family room. Next to the door there is a bay window. The room is on a wooden dais raised up on bricks about half a metre from the ground. There are exposed joists in the ceiling giving the impression that the house is only half built. It certainly appears neglected. At some time in the past decorative teatowels have been pinned up in place of pictures, but they are now as dusty as the other decorations still hanging from the ceiling, A string of faded triangular bunting is draped across the inside of the bay window. Looped fairylights and a row of apparently random letters hang overhead just inside the back door. They read – LGBTTSQQIAA.

The floor covering delineates the separate living areas – lino resembling terracotta tiles for the kitchen, and grubby olive green carpet for the living room. Here a small, sagging sofa covered with rugs and cushions is tucked into a corner beside the bay window. A twisted and broken blind sags against the glass. An electric air conditioning machine is plugged in beside the sofa. There’s a TV set on a cluttered shelf and a polystyrene head topped with a blonde wig – the mouth is clumsily made up with bright red lipstick.

Opposite the bay window, on the other side of the room, a doorway on the left leads to the rest of the house. Then, against the wall, there’s a tall fridge freezer with a working surface and a sink to the right, and a range of basic drawers and cupboards above and beneath. A breakfast bar supported on a chrome pillar extends forward into the room. Behind the sink a window looks out onto a brick wall. To the right of the window is the front door which leads straight into the kitchen. But it’s completely blocked by chairs and other furniture stacked up against it, with bulging black plastic bags balanced on top.

At the front of the pile is a large cardboard box lying on its side, with blankets and an orange duvet spilling out of it.

Every flat surface in the room, including the floor, is covered with a jumble of assorted items. In the kitchen area the working surface is barely visible. The usual kitchen equipment like kettle and toaster are surrounded by half open cereal boxes and packets, and piles of unwashed crockery. A spray bottle and an electric blender stand on the breakfast bar. The doors of the fridge freezer and the kitchen cupboards are covered with coloured stars and stickers and the tops of the cupboards are piled with an assortment of items, including a radio and a rainbow flag which hangs down over one side.

Other items scattered across the floor include a red Coca Cola crate, a pink plastic basket, an overturned stool, a white plastic chair, and a blow-up pink flamingo. Piles of discarded clothes are heaped untidily all around the edges of the room.

There are four members of the Connor family.

We first meet Arnold, a large man in his late fifties. He is tall, but shuffles with his shoulders hunched. One side of his mouth is permanently turned down. He has a vague expression and his eyes are unfocussed. Arnold has a greying moustache and a short beard and wears a curly nylon clown’s wig in shades of red, yellow and purple. His face is smeared with makeup – bright eyeshadow, rouge and lipstick. He is dressed in a woman’s long cotton nightie and pink slippers. Later he pulls on a knitted pink jumper with a picture of a ginger cat on it and a pink netting frill around the neck. He does very little, mainly sitting and staring into space. He does contribute to the action when instructed but his reactions are very slow as if he has difficulty understanding.

His wife Paige is a large plump woman of average height. She’s in her mid fifties with an oval face, her brown hair drawn back carelessly into a bun. She is wearing a long shirt with a washed out floral pattern and short sleeves, over loose, beige, mid calf cotton pants, white socklets and comfortable pink Crocs. Later she changes into a pair of blue sparkly sneakers. Paige fills the room – the action revolves around her and she exults in being in control.

Arnold and Paige’s son, Isaac is in his late twenties. His light brown hair is closely shaved, army style, at the back, but slightly longer on top. He is slim and tanned from three years in the marines, wearing a white tee shirt, and khaki trousers tucked into heavy wellworn boots. He has a canvas army pack on his back. Despite being a soldier Isaac looks vulnerable rather than strong. His eyes are troubled. He seems wound up – he holds himself stiffly, never relaxes. He keeps his arms close to his body, his elbows bent, jabbing with his hands as he tries to reason with his mother. Taken unawares, Isaac reacts like a coiled spring.

The fourth member of the family is Isaac’s sister, Maxine. The author specifies that this character should be played by someone who was a biological female and now identifies as transgender or gender-queer. As tall as her brother, Max is an androgynous teenager. She is aged about seventeen, but looks younger, with large dark eyes and delicate features. She is very thin with pale skin and her dark hair is cut very short, like a boy. She has a faint shadow around her chin. Max wears skinny dark jeans, soft sneakers and a black sports bra under a white vest. She wears a black leather strap around her right wrist and has a tattoo on the inside of her left arm.

Arnold Connor is played by Andy Williams

His wife Paige by Ashley McGuire

Their son Isaac by Arthur Darvill

And their daughter Maxine by Griffyn Gilligan

The designer was Ben Stone

The lighting was designed by Elliot Griggs

And the sound by Elena Peña.

The play was directed by Nadia Fall