**Notes for Jellyfish**

Welcome to these pre-show notes for Jellyfish, by Ben Weatherill, directed by Tim Hoare for the Bush Theatre. The designer is Amy Jane Cook, the sound is designed by Ella Wahlstrom, and the lighting by Jamie Platt.

 The audio described performance is at 2.45 on Saturday July 14th. There will be a touch tour at 1.45, these notes will be read live through the headsets at 2.30 to allow you to refresh your memory and check that your headset’s working, and the performance itself begins at 2.45. The play lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes, with one interval.

Please note that the touch tour, at 1.45, and the performance, at 2.45, are both a quarter of an later than the usual times at the Bush.

Jellyfish is being staged in the Studio Theatre at the Bush, an intimate venue which seats just 70 people in a room little more than eight metres square. For this production the acting area is in the centre, with the audience seating on three sides.

The play is set in Skegness in the present day.

The moment we enter the auditorium, the sounds of surf breaking and the squawk of gulls tell us we’re at the seaside. The crunch and give of sand underfoot confirms it – if you visit the theatre wearing sandals you might even feel a few grains between your toes, for the whole floor is covered in a thick layer of rich orange sand, which extends to the first row of audience seats.

Facing the auditorium door, a ramp runs up the middle of the performance area towards the back wall. It’s a pier, bout four metres long and three metres wide, constructed of light wooden planks.

The slope of the pier is quite shallow; it’s probably no more than half a metre high at the back.

Two rails rise at the back and curve down into the space behind the pier, like handrails on the ladder of a swimming pool, and there’s a pair of black trainers about halfway down the pier, on the right hand side.

At the back right corner of the pier, a board propped against the wall is the shape of a huge ice cream cone, its white top spiralling upwards. It’s surrounded by fairground lights, which when switched on rise in a bulbous V shape. A white surfboard rises from the foot of the cone to rest its tip against the right hand corner of the studio, near the ceiling. It has VEGAS printed on it in purple capitals, and a picture of a rocket.

On the left back corner of the ramp, a merry go round horse leans against the wall, propped up as though it’s rearing. The horse is sideways on to us, and painted in bright colours, red, yellow and green. Beside it, what looks like a square blackboard with the brightly coloured words ‘FREE and ‘PLENTY OF PRIZES’. As the story unfolds, we discover that this is actually a foldaway metal table with a black top. The legs are turquoise, and three matching chairs are stowed near the fairground objects on right and left.

The letters S and K are on the wall above the horse in fairground lights, and a long red and yellow sign rises from beside the horse to the left hand corner of the Studio, reflecting the diagonal line of the surfboard on the other side. It reads Cheeseburgers, Chips, Chicken, in bright yellow capital letters.

As the story unfolds, and at the interval, the fairground lights, and the food sign and surfboard, light up.

A blue wash of light from behind the ramp indicates the sea, yellow suggests sand, and pink could be a sunset.

A row of large round theatre lights is fixed on the back wall near the ceiling, and small fairground lights are slung over the audience on all three sides. Banks of pink lightbulbs are on the left and right side walls, and a large banner by the auditorium door bears the words ‘We hope you enjoyed your ride’ , with ‘WAY OUT’ and a big arrow towards the door.

This door, and another on the opposite side of the Studio, form the entrance and exit doors for the cast, who walk through the auditorium to reach the performance space.

We meet four characters – two men and two women. All are white.

The first to arrive is Kelly, a determined woman of 27, who often looks younger than her years. Kelly is about five feet tall, with a round face, brown eyes, and short chestnut hair clipped back off her face with a slide, like a schoolgirl. We first meet her barefoot, wearing sand coloured trousers and a blue and white top under a turquoise anorak. If Kelly disagrees with somebody she is hard to deflect – in an argument, she often stands rigid, hands curled at her sides, fixing the other person with a single-minded stare. Kelly has Down’s syndrome and is played by Sarah Gordy, who also has Down’s.

Her mother, Agnes, is in her early forties, a slender woman in casual clothes. Her tanned face looks tired and a little lined, and her streaked blonde hair is scraped off her face in an elastic band, then twisted into a bun at the back of her head. She often looks preoccupied and strained but when roused, her blue-eyed stare is a match for her daughter’s. We first meet Agnes in a charcoal anorak with peach facings, grey leggings and dark sandshoes. Her outfits are all similar and always practical, as if she has no time to pay attention to what she wears. Agnes is played by Penny Layden.

Neil is in his thirties, a thin man of medium height with mousy brown hair and prominent features. A dark beard frames his narrow face. We first meet him in beige chinos, black trainers and a blue and red polo shirt bearing with the legend ‘Lucky Strike’ in white – but Neil doesn’t behave as if there’s anything lucky in his life. He is a little round shouldered and sometimes looks ill at ease: he has a habit of staring at his feet. He is played by Ian Bonar.

Finally, Dominic appears in an ill-fitting black suit incongruously worn over a white T shirt with a bold black and red design of two heads, half hidden beneath his jacket. He is stiff, holding himself very straight. Dominic has a square face, regular features and wavy jaw length fair hair brushed back – he could be good looking, but his face is always serious and he stares straight ahead, never meeting anybody’s eyes. Dominic has Asperger’s. He is played by Nicky Priest.

That’s the end of these pre-show notes.