**Pre-show notes for Of Kith and Kin**

Welcome to these pre-show notes for Of Kith and Kin, by Chris Thompson, directed by Robert Hastie in a co-production with Sheffield Theatres.

The audio described performance takes place next Saturday, November 11th. There will be a touch tour at 1.30, to give us a chance to visit the set, handle the props and perhaps meet some of the actors; then, after a short break, at 2.20pm these notes will be read live over the headsets with any changes, to refresh your memory and make sure that your headset is working. The play itself begins at 2.30, and lasts for roughly two hours, with one interval of 20 minutes.

The story unfolds in a central acting area surrounded on three sides by several rows of tiered seating. For this production, there is a space of several metres between the seats and the stage, and the whole area has a spacious feel.

The stage portrays a modern living room, sleek and expensive, not a hair out of place. The back wall is soft grey, with a hint of lilac. It’s bounded by two pillars, one at either end, tiled in a matching shade. They stand slightly forward of the wall, and the whole area is top lit from behind a pelmet, giving it a cool, modern appearance. A large Swiss cheese plant, with waxy green leaves, stands in a square, light grey stoneware container at the base of the left hand pillar.

The floor of the room is covered in an oatmeal Berber carpet, and the edges of the area are neatly taped in white.

In the centre of the room, towards the back, a lemon-yellow leather sofa faces us. It is neatly curved into a sculpted shape and rests on a white marble base. A large peacock-blue tote bag has been propped against the front left corner of the sofa.

At the left of the sofa is a small round occasional table, its circular top balanced on a cage-like framework of copper wire. On it, a cylindrical, pale yellow lamp with a white shade glows gently.

On the front left of the room is a small, round dining table, splay-legged in dark wood, a modern, Scandinavian design. Four charcoal coloured moulded plastic chairs are set round it. On the table is a beaten copper champagne bucket with an uncorked bottle in it; a second bottle of white wine, half full; three champagne glasses, a small bowl of crisps and a phone.

At the front right, a wide-screen television mounted on a low white cabinet stands facing the sofa.

After the interval, the area has been transformed into a courtroom. The back wall is now grey, with tall rectangles

The living room belongs to Daniel and Olly. **Daniel**, in his mid forties, is tall, tanned and toned, his dark hair streaked with silver. He looks effortlessly elegant in thin navy polo shirt and slouchy jeans with a brown belt. On his feet are wine coloured socks, and on his wrist an expensive watch on a metal bracelet.

**Olly** is younger, in his early thirties. He is Daniel’s husband. Olly is about the same height as Daniel, but thinner, with rumpled brown hair and chiselled features. His face is pale, and when he is agitated, his eyes burn with intensity as he turns them on the cause of his unease. Olly is slightly round shouldered, with a hollow chest, lacking Daniel’s physical presence. His thin frame is covered in grey skinny jeans and a white tee shirt with narrow black stripes.

The couple are friends with **Priya,** who is in her late thirties. She has glowing dark skin and black hair which waves to her shoulders, fading to honey colour at the tips. Priya has a huge smile, which is almost constantly there when we first meet her. She is heavily pregnant, the lycra of her black t-shirt stretched tight across her enormous belly. Over her tee shirt she wears a lime green kaftan top with tiger stripeswhich does nothing to disguise her bulk. Her outfit is completed by ripped jeans, gold bangles, and glittering hoop earrings. Her eyes glow with warmth as she looks at her friends.

Danial’s mother **Lydia** comes to visit. In her sixties, she bustles about the flat, head poked forward, big blue eyes alert. Lydia has bubbly grey hair and is dressed for comfort in old grey leggings, flat black ankle boots and a transparent pink and grey top with a butterfly pattern, which reveals her white slip and the black bra beneath. Over this she wears a purple quilted jacket with a fur trimmed hood, and a pink and grey nylon scarf tucked in round the neckline.

The scene changes briefly to a hospital ward, simply suggested by a U shaped length of plastic curtain that juts out towards us, as if round a hospital bed. The area behind it is lit, and the surrounding area dark, while another scene is prepared.

When the lights brighten, we are in a court room. The back wall is grey, and three narrow rectangular frames hang at equal distances along its length, suggesting tall windows. A desk stands on a low platform at the back of the room. It is simple and modern – veneered wood on the top and front, supported on a metal frame. A number of files are laid on the surface.

Sitting at the desk is a judge. A tall slender black woman in her forties, she wears a sleek black suit, over a striking tangerine blouse, a vibrant burst of colour against her dark skin. Her short hair is sllcked back immaculately, and her elegant spectacles set off her narrow face as she watches the room with sharp, observant eyes.

Two identical desks are placed further forward, to right and left, both of them angled to face the desk at the back. They are bare except for glasses of water. Both desks have two chairs set at them. At this point we meet **Miss Kerr**, a grey-haired solicitor, poised in neat heels and a trim pencil dress, in an abstract pattern of black, grey and pink, with a matching jacket of light dove grey. Her hair is neat, her lips bright red and her long nails flawlessly painted dark red.

After the interval, the lights brighten on an immaculate nursery. A white door frame at the back indicates the entrance to the room.

A white high-sided cot stands at the back right, sideways on to us, with a blue and white star mobile positioned above the head end. The cot is piled with soft toys, and a pastel sheet with animal designs hangs over the side.

At the back left is a white chest of drawers, with a soft toy leopard comforter on its top, together with two photographs in sea blue frames, one of the Priya, the other of Daniel and Olly. Behind the photographs is a row of bright children’s books.

There’s a circular baby pink rug in the middle of the floor, and at the front, a beechwood rocking chair with a padded white set and back faces away from us, with a grey plaid blanket folded over its back. At the front left is a play mat, with red and blue oft play bricks and a soft toy drum. A large cuddly grey elephant sits at the front end, facing the toys.

A soft light warms the room, with a spotlight on the cot. Eeverything is ready for a new arrival.

Now, to end these notes, here are the details of the cast and the creative team.

Daniel is played by James Lance, and Olly by Joshua Silver.

Their friend Priya is played by Chetna Pandya.

Daniel’s mother Lydia, and the solicitor Miss Kerr, are both played by Joanna Bacon, and the Judge is played by Donna Berlin.

The sound was designed by Ella Wahlstrom, and the lighting by Prema Mehta.

The designer was James Perkins.

Of Kith and Kin was written by Chris Thompson, and directed by Robert Hastie.

And that’s the end of these pre-show notes.