

PRE-SHOW IN-THE-KNOW

FAST FACTS

TITLE:

Children of the Sun by Maxim Gorky. Adapted by Andrew Upton. Directed by Kip Williams.

ABOUT THE PLAY:

Born to privilege, bound for revolution.

Following on from his adaptation of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, Andrew Upton's new adaptation of Maxim Gorky's *Children of the Sun* takes a fresh, colloquial look at the human condition.

In a rambling mansion in provincial Russia in 1860, a sister, a brother, their partners and admirers pursue their intimate intrigues oblivious to bigger new realities brewing at their door. A family born to privilege but bound for dysfunction. Protasov might be the man of the house, but, even when he lifts his eyes from his chemistry set, he is blind to his wife's infidelities, his friend's advances and his sister's quiet despair.

In something of a casting coup, three of our most treasured actresses - Justine Clarke (*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*), Jacqueline McKenzie (*Sex with Strangers*) and Helen Thomson (*Mrs Warren's Profession*) - form a formidable trio around our hero, as outside the propulsive energy of revolution reaches a crescendo.

Both a sparkling comedy and a thoughtful exploration of the larger issues of privilege, progress and being caught at the wrong end of history, *Children of the Sun* captures the atmosphere of upheaval of its era - with more than a fleeting resonance to our own troubled times.

CHARACTERS

Pavel Protasov - A Scientist

Yelena - Pavel's wife

Liza - Pavel's sister

Boris - The loval vet

Melaniya - Boris's sister

Nanny - Protasov's nanny

Vageen - An artist and love interest of Yelena

Feema - A maid

Nazar - the landlord

Misha - his son

Yegor - the blacksmith and employee of Pavel

Avdotya - Yegor's wife

STYLE

Naturalism.

RUNNING TIME

2 hours and 30 minutes including interval.

ACTIVE AUDIENCE

THINK ABOUT:

- 'Children of the Sun' as a metaphor for the main characters in the play working towards change and a brighter future for both themselves and society
- The tension between the now and the historical time period of the play. How is *Children of the Sun* relevant to audience's today?
- Gorky and Upton telling audiences to "look up and pay attention the world around you."
- Perspective on life and how people who are consumed by their own pursuits become disconnected from the world around them and fail to take responsibility for the actions.

WATCH FOR:

- Creation of comedy through sarcasm, dry wit, analogies and comic timing
- The tragedy of Pavel's brilliance leading to his negligence with the leaking poison and ensuing chaos
- The character of Yelena - intelligent, loyal, passionate towards change
- Characters crossing class, intellectual and economic boundaries
- Each character representing an element of a changing Russia

MEMORABLE MOMENTS:

- The visually poetic revolve of the Drama Theatre stage and the use of lighting and shadows
- Protasov's speech about sailing in to the light of the sun
- Liza's forewarnings about violence and upheaval in the future
- The final moment of the play when fire breaks out and Yelena leads the family, rifle in hand, to fight the masses