**Introduction**

**Fangirls**

Welcome to this introduction to **Fangirls**, a new musical, with book, music and lyrics by Yve Blake, directed by Paige Rattray. It first opened in Brisbane, Australia in 2019, and this UK premiere is co-partnered by the Lyric Hammersmith with Sonia Friedman Productions.

The audio described performance will be on Monday 12th August at 7.30pm. There will be a touch tour at 6.00pm. The performance lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes with an interval of 20 minutes. The audio description will be given by Ruth James and Willie Elliott.

This performance makes use of a number of special effects including strobe lighting, flashing lights that stream out over the audience, low smoke and haze, and features a generally loud soundscape.

In the programme, the writers acknowledge that Fangirls was initially created on the lands of many first Australian Nations, and pay their respects to the elders of Australians and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The theatre’s website sets the scene like this:

Meet Edna: she’s 14, she’s a misfit, and she’s in love with Harry. There’s just one problem: Harry’s in the world’s biggest boy band, Heartbreak Nation, has 38 million fans, and doesn’t know she exists. When Harry’s band announces a tour stop in Edna’s hometown of Sydney, Australia, she knows this is her destiny – her one chance to meet him. But how on EARTH will she get Harry’s attention?! And exactly how far is she prepared to go in the name of love?

When we arrive in the theatre, the stage is open to us. The stage is dark and bare. Three screens, each about two metres high, hang one above the other at the back of the stage and curve around the back, filling the back wall. These screens rise and lower swiftly and silently, folding one behind the other, as needed. As we enter, the top screen shows the outline of a pink neon heart, with the word Fangirls across it. Pink clouds sweep through it repeatedly.

The screens show projections that range from idealised, dreamlike star-scapes, whirling rainbows of light, to sunset skies. Sung and spoken words are sometimes projected, along with the faces of those on stage, as well as an online chat group of hundreds of fans, who act as a chorus.

Set in the centre of the floor is a large circle upon which the same images or plain colours are projected. Around this circle and behind the screens, everything else is dark. A black curtain stretches across the back wall. When the black curtain is raised, the live band for the show is revealed on a balcony high up behind the screens.

A laptop with a blue front and a set of white headphones beside it, sits on the floor in the near right corner of the stage.

Different locations are indicated by small elements of set that lower, or glide in from the sides. A bedroom is created simply with a doorframe painted with orange and blue swirls, that lowers in, to the right of the space. A single bed with a battered white metal frame and multi-coloured duvet, and pillows stands on the left. The screens behind are a plain light blue.

This is the bedroom of Edna, a 14-year-old, with black hair smoothed back from her brown face, into a ball of fluff. Edna first appears in her school uniform of knee-length blue plaid kilt, white shirt and tartan ribbon tie at the collar of her white shirt. Over her shirt she wears a grey knitted cardigan – the only one to do so - her schoolmates wear grey V-neck, sleeveless pullovers. Edna wears long white socks that sag in wrinkles to her ankles, and sturdy black Doc Martin shoes.

Another bedroom has a bed with an elaborate velvet covered base, coloured in swirls of purple, red and blue, and a tall mirror edged with ripples of pink neon lights. The floor and screens behind gleam with bright neon colours, which change and glow. This room belongs to Jules, who’s slender and tall, seemingly self-possessed, and elegant, even in school uniform. Jules’ dark brown hair is smoothed back into a high ponytail, and her pale face is immaculately made-up.

In contrast, Brianna, known as Bri to her friends, is almost always slightly stooped and apologetic. Her long dark hair is held in two pigtails that hang limply either side of her pale, make-up free face.

In the school gym, the students wear gym gear of white polo shirt, black shorts, and jacket, with a white stripe down the sides. They all carry laden backpacks. Most of the backpacks are black, apart from Jules’, which is silver, and Edna’s, which is multi-coloured.

At school, the screens show orange bricks and white squares on a ceiling, with neon strip lights lower down. The school swimming pool has blue tiles with a ripple of reflected light from the water. A lifeguard, wearing red bathers, sits high on a silver metal ladder. There are various benches brought in, with orange legs for the school hall, and blue legs at the pool.

Edna’s mother, Caroline, appears in blue scrubs, worn with white trainers. She’s a single mum and works as a nurse on night shifts. She sometimes has a drooping baggy cardigan over the top, or a dark blue denim jacket. Her shiny, dark brown hair is pulled roughly back into a short ponytail or worn loose down to her shoulders. Her weary, light brown face is often creased with a worried frown.

Edna is part of an online Fan Fic Forum. Short for Fan Fiction, this is an online space where members write romantic fictional stories about their idols. The forum includes seven others. As Edna writes to them on her laptop, coruscating rainbow rays swirl on the screens behind them. All the Fanfics wear very typically teenage geeky clothes – mismatched bright short skirts, shorts or leggings, with t-shirts or baggy jumpers. They are evidently from all over the world; one with a very strong German accent and another British.

There are two standout characters in the group. Firstly, there is **Lily**, a white girl with long blonde ringleted hair tied into bunches either side of her face. Lily is brightly made-up with purple eyeshadow. She glitters with sequins, and can sing up a storm, riffing like Mariah Carey.

The other is Salty, also known as Saltypringle. Salty is a tall black guy, his hair concealed with a doo rag. He wears pale checked blue jeans and a white and beige sweatshirt with a blue arrow on the front. When Edna DM’s him, the words ‘Direct Message: Saltypringle float across the screens.

The fanfics arrive, each clutching a pillow to their chest. One side of the pillow is a mottled pink and purple design, but the other side is printed with a huge closeup photograph of their idol, Harry’s, face.

Harry is the lead singer of Heartbreak Nation, a world-renowned Boy Band. He is 18 years old and, of course, stunningly good-looking. Harry is possessed of amazingly thick black, carefully coiffed hair. His outfits are reminiscent of those worn by K-Pop boy bands, first appearing all in black. Harry wears shiny parachute pants with a t-shirt or, later, silver parachute pants worn with a silver woven vest under a silver jacket with stylish black or silver trainers. Around his neck is always a chunky silver chain.

The other four members of Heartbreak Nation are never named, but they are similar in appearance, all with exaggeratedly dyed, curled and groomed hair. One has a baggy jumpsuit of olive green with silver strips; another maroon parachute pants worn with a baggy jacket; another’s in orange and purple and the last in blue. There are also two dancers in black and white jumpsuits.

The ensemble plays a variety of other parts, such as Police and Security Guards. The Police wear large black helmets and stab vests, while the guards appear in black cargo pants and black shirts with hefty work boots, and wear black baseball caps and reflective shades.

 **Cast**

Brianna Miracle Chance (she/her)

Edna Jasmine Elcock (she/her)

Greta/Ensemble Max Gill (he/she/they)

Harry Thomas Grant (he/him)

Pat/Ensemble Max James Hodge (he/him)

Salty Terique Jarrett (he/him)

Caroline Debbie Kurup (she/her)

Jules Mary Malone (she/her)

Lily Gracie McGonigal (she/her)

Dom/Ensemble Eve De Leon Allen (they/them)

Ash/Ensemble Lena Pattie Jones (she/her)

Odette/ Ensemble Nicky Wong Rush (he/they)

**Creatives**

Music Producer David Muratore

Musical Direction Candida Caldicot

Music Supervisor,

Orchestrator and

Vocal Arranger Zara Stanton

Sound Design Tony Gayle

Lighting Design Jessica Hung Han Yun

Video Design Ash J Woodward

Choreography Ebony Williams

Production Design David Fleischer

Directed by Paige Rattray

Book, Music and Lyrics by Yve Blake