Welcome to this introduction to **A Face in the Crowd,** based on the 1957 film written by Budd Schulberg and directed by Elia Kazan. The music and lyrics for this production of *A Face in the Crowd* are by Elvis Costello, the book is by Sarah Ruhl, and it has been directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah with design by Anna Fleischle.

There will be two audio described performances: on Tue 1 0ct, 7:30pm and Sat 26 Oct at 2:30pm. For both performances touch tours will be 90 minutes before the show and the introductory notes will start fifteen minutes before the show. The production lasts for 2 hours and 35 minutes, with one twenty-minute interval, and the live audio description will be given by Miranda Yates and Eleanor Margolies.

The Young Vic website introduces the show like this: ‘When radio producer Marcia Jeffries meets drifter “Lonesome Rhodes”, she immediately gives him a slot on her show. But as Lonesome's fan base grows and the politicians take notice, Marcia realises she has unleashed a force she can no longer control.‘

Please note that the content of the musical includes physical violence, alcoholism and drug use, references to racist themes, animal hunting, war and death, depiction of a threat of suicide, sexism and sexual harassment. The production includes live music, flashing lights, guns and loud live gunshots onstage, haze, blood, smoking on stage of herbal cigarettes, actors in the audience and moments where actors climb over the audience to get to the back of the auditorium. An ensemble of 15 performers perform all the roles, many taking on lots of different characters.

The set is open to us and dimly lit as we come in. The audience benches are in long rows facing the stage, with further seating wrapping around the space on balcony levels. The stage is raised about a metre above the stalls level of the auditorium.

The musical is set in the 1950s, with a stylised design that draws on the graphic art of the period and plays with the candy colours that were in fashion. We move from a radio studio in a small Arkansas town to Chicago and New York, via the town jail, tv studios, various bars and a railway carriage.

A proscenium arch about four metres high and eight wide frames the central part of the performance area. The arch is studded with round lights that can change colour to help create locations or mood. The back wall of the space within the arch evokes an earlier Art Deco period. It’s covered with thin vertical slats of dark polished wood and contains a door and a large window. This connects the main space and a studio control room. The control room walls are covered in grey sound insulation in a chevron pattern. A slatted blind over the window can close the room off from view. The wooden door to the right has a delicate Art deco sunburst created by strips of brass that radiate from the brass doorknob.

In front of the proscenium arch, there is an area of open space about two metres wide which is used flexibly for many different locations. A semicircle about a metre in diameter protrudes from the front of the stage, creating a spot for solos.

High above the proscenium arch, extending the full width of the space, there is a much larger tv control room in 1950s style, jutting out from the back wall. It has a sloping window divided into three sections that allows the occupants to look down on the action below. A series of wooden clipboards hang on the blue back wall inside. Long strips of frosted glass under the upper tv control room window light up to show words in capital letters: the title A FACE IN THE CROWD, flanked by ON AIR warnings on either side.

To the far left of the space, outside the proscenium arch, three deep steps with shiny silver handrails lead up to another door painted burnt orange with an Art Deco pattern in relief. This can be used to suggest an external door leading to the street. But when a sign above it reading JAILHOUSE is illuminated it works the other way – as a door taking us down inside the jail.

To the right of the proscenium, on a low semi-circular platform covered with red carpet, a step up from the main stage, a piano and drum kit stand ready, alongside guitar and trumpet and three mics on stands. The six-piece band sometimes appears here, and sometimes plays unseen.

Linking the band area and the streamlined design of the area inside the arch, there is a curved bar, finished with vertical strips of dark polished wood.

The settings are suggested with minimal props. The Arkansas radio studio is indicated by two wooden chairs, with a silver trolley in between them. There is a dial phone on the trolley and a mic on a stand between the chairs. Here we meet **Marcia Jeffries**. She’s in her early 30s with light brown skin, refined features, large, thoughtful eyes and subtle makeup that enhances her natural beauty. Her soft brown curls are styled into a bob. Marcia is slim, elegant and poised. She wears stylish clothes that reflect her professionalism. When we first meet her, she wears a knee length skirt, knee high boots and a blue fitted jacket; later she wears tailored wide leg trousers, turned up at the hem, with a plain cream shirt, and flat polished loafers. Later she wears a two-piece trouser suit, in a bold mustard and beige plaid. The jacket has wide lapels and is worn with a pale shirt open at the collar, the trousers are fastened by a tan leather belt.

Marcia’s boss at the radio station is a balding man and wears a short-sleeved shirt, a red tie that he’s loosened and red braces. He listens to the broadcast from the other side of the glass window in the control room, answering calls to the radio station and sometimes putting them through to Marcia in the studio.

We also meet everyday Arkansas citizens going about their daily business – a mother pushing a hooded pram, a student in a pink coat and aqua rubber boots, a milkman.

Visiting the town jailhouse on assignment, Marcia makes her way down the stairs on the far left, as if heading down into a basement cell. On a strap over her shoulder, she has a portable reel-to reel tape recorder. Here in prison we meet the Sheriff, in his brown uniform, ten-gallon hat and silver star.

Among the four male prisoners, one is asleep on a thin mattress on the floor. This is **Lonesome Rhodes.** Lonesome is in his forties, with dishevelled dark curly hair. He has rugged good looks with sharp features and expressive eyes; his charismatic grin can easily turn into a sneer. He’s tall and athletic with bold tattoos on his muscular arms. His posture is relaxed but becomes more commanding and upright as his confidence grows. Initially he wears a tight-fitting dirty khaki t-shirt and dark jeans with battered brown cowboy boots. Later his jeans are replaced by tailored trousers, and his plain shirts replaced by fancy cowboy shirts with embroidery and fringes. A black shirt has red piping around the collar and cuffs with red and green floral embroidery over the yoke and breast pockets. Lonesome’s most elaborate outfit is a pristine white cowboy suit with red roses embroidered across the chest, and swirls of silvery red trim snaking up the sides of his trousers, the outfit completed by a white 10-gallon hat.

A bar is created by sliding a dark wooden counter out from the band area into the main space. Soft under-lighting picks out the brass trim on the edge of the bar, and orange lights glow on the proscenium arch. Customers sit at a small square table to the left. In Arkansas, a **Waitress** wears a demure blue and white uniform with a cropped jacket over a shift dress; in New York, there’s a smartly dressed male bartender.

A private pool is evoked as the space is washed with blue and green dappled light and members of the ensemble appear in shorts and bathing costumes, waving striped towels and matching beach balls in the air as they dance.

For a train journey to Chicago, the space behind the ground floor studio window is transformed into a train compartment, the benches upholstered in lurid yellow and green. At the back of the space, a naively painted panorama of the passing countryside unrolls with deliberate jerkiness to evoke the technology of early television.

In a Chicago television studio, similar techniques are used: a painted backdrop showing a desert landscape with a large cactus and distant mountains. In front, a three-dimensional farm gate and a barrel give the presenters something to lean on.

Here we meet producer **Joey DePalma** and the television writer, **Mel Miller**.

Joey is in his early 30s, with a light olive complexion. His black hair is short and slicked back and he has a thick black moustache. Joey is slim and toned, and his eyes are bright and ambitious. He dresses to impress, in sharp suits, initially wearing a pair of cream tailored high-waisted trousers with matching braces. His yellow shirt is short-sleeved with a multicoloured, Chinese-style pattern, it’s open at the collar showing his cream vest and dark chest hair.

**Mel** is in his late 30s, with pale skin and neatly combed brown hair. He has a warm smile and a relaxed demeanour. Mel’s clothing is smart and preppy in style. Initially he wears tailored grey trousers with a navy v-neck sweater over a soft orange shirt with a wide collar that’s worn open. Later he wears dark trousers with a soft green wool sweater and a toning green bomber jacket.

We briefly meet an unhappy Chicago couple in their fifties. **Oscar** has sparse hair combed over his head and wears an orange striped sweater and brown trousers. **Wilma** has blonde hair set in a bouffant style and wears a yellow cardigan over a denim dress.

Later we meet the baton-twirling champion **Betty Lou Fleckum**. Betty Lou is in her early 20s, petite and bubbly, with a pale complexion and long wavy blonde hair, a sweet smile and a look of wide-eyed innocence. At the baton-twirling competition she wears a pair of white denim shorts with a lacy white sleeveless top, white kneesocks with love hearts on them, a pair of silver fringed white cowboy boots and a light red cowgirl hat.

Back in Chicago Lonesome is approached by a **General** in khaki peaked cap and forage jacket who introduces him to **Senator Worthington Fuller**. The Senator is white and in his late fifties with neat grey-brown hair. He’s shortish, with an upright posture. He wears a plain beige tailored suit with a pocket square, his tie fastened with a tie pin.

Throughout, the sound world of 1950s TV and radio is evoked by the jingles and advertising songs of The Ajax Sisters. This trio of three women, two in their 30s, one somewhat older, are dressed in frivolous tulle skirts and embroidered blouses in shades of pink and aqua green. They wear pale green ankle socks with pink high-heeled sandals. In passing, we also meet studio managers, secretaries, directors, casting directors and sound engineers – all hurrying around the tv studios.

Other characters appear very briefly, spotlit in their positions on either side of the main playing area, up on the same level as the audience in the balcony seats. These include two avid listeners to the local radio station: a farmer with a flat cap hugging his transistor radio, and **Mrs Grable**, a pie-making older housewife with a headscarf tied in a bow over her hair who sits knitting as she listens.

**The Cast and Production Credits**

Marcia Jeffries is played by Anoushka Lucas

Lonesome Rhodes is Ramin Karimloo

Joey DePalma is played by Stavros Demetraki

Mel Miller is Olly Dobson

Betty Lou Fleckum is Emily Florence

**The Swings are**:

Jasmin Colangelo and Bobby Windeban.

**The Members of the Ensemble are**:

Andrew Coshan, Howard Gossington, Chris Jenkins, Sadie-Jean Shirley, Durone Stokes, Vicki Lee Taylor and Annie Wensak

**The Band Members are:**

On Keyboard, the MD Phil Bateman

Drums & Glockenspiel Tim Goodyer

Clarinet /Tenor Sax Laura Manship

Double Bass

& Bass Guitar Jo Nichols

Trumpet & Flugelhorn Seb Philpott

Guitar Allan Simpson

**The Creative Team:**

The Production Designer is Anna Fleischle

The Lighting Designer is Jackie Shemesh

The Musical Supervisor, Musical Director and Arranger is Phil Bateman

The Sound Designer is Emma Laxton

The Choreographer is Lizzi Gee

The Music and Lyrics for A Face in the Crowd are by Elvis Costello, the book is by Sarah Ruhl, and it has been directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah.

This is the end of the introduction to A Face in the Crowd. If you have any questions or require further assistance, please call the Young Vic box office on 020 7922 2922.

Upcoming audio descriptions at the Young Vic include *Girl in the Machine* by Stef Smith on Fri 25 Oct at 7.45pm; *The Little Foxes* by Lilian Hellman on Thu 19 Dec, 7:30pm and Sat 18 Jan, 2:30pm, and *Punch* by James Graham on Fri 14 Mar, 7.30pm & Sat 22 Mar, 2.30pm.