

SYNOPSIS OF NORMAN!

NORMAN! is a wildly imaginative musical parody of the classic suspense film *Psycho*, poking fun at its dated sexism, the quirks and foibles of the main characters, and the tropes and clichés of detective and suspense films. The film parody is framed by a Faustian bargain made by a bored and arrogant psychiatrist, Dr. Simon, in Beverly Hills, who offers his soul to Satan if Satan can send him a patient whose case he cannot solve. Satan sends Norman Bates, who proceeds to tell his tale with wide-ranging musical numbers in a variety of styles with the help of a singing and dancing cast who conspire with Satan to send the arrogant shrink to hell. The obtuse and long-winded explanation given by the psychiatrist at the end of the classic film was the inspiration for the character of Dr. Simon in the show.

In Act One, the Faustian bargain is made by the arrogant Simon (“Great Satan”), whereupon Satan sends Norman Bates to answer the challenge. Norman introduces himself and tells us of his strange obsession with Mother (“Got the Hots for Momma”). The cast then becomes a crew to tell Norman’s tale and to run the mechanics of the show itself (“The Ballad of Norman Bates”) as we pick up the plot of the film from its beginning. Marion Crane and boyfriend Sam wish for money to get married (“Forty Thousand Reasons to be Happy”); Marion embezzles from her office and skips town, facing a choice of whether to tell Sam or just disappear (“Marion’s Choice”). Arriving at the Bates Motel in a storm, she meets Norman, who tells her about himself and his strange hobby (“What Taxidermy Means to Me”).

After a figure in a dress murders Marion, the spirits of three prior victims appear, tell their stories, and comment on the proceedings like a Greek Chorus (“We Are Your Shower Curtain Girls”). Mother then gives her backstory and explains how she led Norman to kill his father for insurance money (“I Was a Debutante”). Marion’s sister Lila finds Sam and tells him Marion has disappeared with stolen money; detective Arbogast soon appears as well to find her. After Arbogast also disappears, Sam and Lila go to the sheriff’s house late at night, unknowingly interrupting a bizarre S&M ritual involving the sheriff and his wife, both in their seventies (“The Whiplash of Love”). The act ends with the mysterious revelation that Norman’s mother has been dead for ten years.

Act Two opens with a surprisingly heartfelt ballad sung by Norman dressed as Mother (“I Want to Be You”). We then flash back to the night Norman killed Mother and her boyfriend in a fit of jealous rage. The spirit of Mother immediately reappears in Norman’s mind after he has killed her; they sing and dance with each other in a bizarre ritual of love and hate (“A Mother is a Boy’s Best Friend”). Meanwhile, back in the real world, Sam and Lila search the old mansion behind the motel and discover the preserved corpse of Mother in the fruit cellar; Sam saves Lila from being killed and discovers that the murderer was Norman all along.

They go to police headquarters to hear an explanation of the case from the psychiatrist (played by Simon), who preens and babbles on arrogantly without regard to the feelings of Sam and Lila (“Psychiatrist Mumbo-Jumbo”). Satan declares that Simon’s ramblings are incoherent and proclaims that he has won the Faustian wager, summoning the sheriff’s wife to administer a whipping to Simon (“Satan Triumphant”). As Simon is about to be led off to hell, the entire cast joins Norman and Mother in a reprise of their love-hate duet and waltz (“A Mother is a Boy’s Best Friend” reprise and “Finale”).

NORMAN! is a collaboration with writer David Smith, composer Kelly Krebs, stage director Eric Morris, and music director Sonja Thompson. Work on the show began in 2018 at

the Nautilus Music-Theater Composer-Librettist Studio, where David and Kelly met. Showcase performances for potential producers are planned for later in 2021.