Programme Notes for

**CINDERELLA-The Greatest Pantomime of them all!**

Grand Opera House Belfast

The audio described performance will take place on Thursday 12th January, and is brought to you by Sightlines NI with the Grand Opera House. The audio describers will be Marie and Susie. If you wish to hear a shortened version of these programmme notes read out before the show, please take your seats ten minutes before the show starts.

Cinderella is one of the most popular fairy tales with various versions from across the world. The Cinderella story that we know today originates with a book of fairy tales for children published by Charles Perrault, a Frenchman, in 1697. Perrault’s book was translated in to English and published with the title *Stories of Mother Goose .* The first pantomime of Cinderella was performed in 1804, more than 200 years ago, at the Drury Lane Theatre in London. Over time new characters were introduced , including the Prince’s valet, Dandini- first introduced in an opera version of the story in 1817. Cinderella’s friend Buttons was another addition to the story. This show is performed with storytelling, song and dance and special effects. There is an orchestra which plays live music in the area in front of the stage. The show has much humour, jokes and mistaken identities, and, in the tradition of pantomime, there are some men playing roles as women.

**Set**

When you enter the auditorium the stage is covered with a pale pink gauze screen edged with blue wooden lattice frame. The name Cinderella is written in large letters across the centre, and faint images of classical cupids and other figures in a woodland setting feature on this gauze screen. On each side of the screen is a small lattice arched entrance. Behind this screen there is a dark sky dotted with stars.

The various settings are simply created by scenes painted on a flat backdrop curtain, in muted pale colours. The first scene shows the village of old Belfast with distant houses and an old mill. There are trees arched over the road and to the right stands a wall and the stone pillars and entrance gates of a house.

The next scene is outside Hardup Hall, a tall 3 storey stone building with a red-tiled roof, and a tower at each end and yellow stone walls.

The forest scene shows trees arched over the stage, with a view of fields and fences beyond. In front of this scene stands a low stone wall.

The Kitchen of Hardup Hall is shown as a dilapidated room, with wood timbers in the ceiling, a large open fireplace with a cauldron hanging and a table to the left on which sits a pumpkin. To the right a small flight of stairs with a metal handrail leads off to the upper part of the house.

In the centre of the Palace ballroom stands a delicate lattice structure- the clock tower on which sits a large round clock. Below it, from both left and right sweeps each side of a curving staircase that leads down to the floor of the ballroom. There are several candelabra placed on columns by the staircase and at the edge of the dance floor which add glittering light to the room.

The sisters Boudoir is a room with lilac stripped wall paper with a central window overlooking a garden. On either side of the windows there are two wardrobes with ornate carved doors. Two chairs are placed in the room.

**Cast (in order of appearance)**

The cast includes 10 key actors, supported by a team of 8 dancers and much of the story is told through song. A chorus of young boys and girls from a local stage school also appear. The cast members wear several different costumes during the story, as fits the scene. The costumes are beautifully made from rich colourful fabrics and some outfits - like those worn by the Ugly Step-Sisters- are exotic creations. Details of other costume changes will be described as the show proceeds.

**May McFettridge** plays the part of the Fairy Godmother **FAIRY MAY.** Small and stout, May first appears in a pink glittering dress, with a flounced two-tier skirt that stands out with a net under skit. On top the dress has two large sparkly silver balls for breasts. Fairy May has a curly white wig, worn in two buns over her ears and a sparkly silver coronet is perched on her head. She also wears red leggings and pink sparkly shoes, and carries a silver wand. Fairy May has rouged cheeks and red lips and wears bright blue eye-shadow.

**CINDERELLA** is played by **Jayne Wisener.** Jane is slim, of medium height and has an oval shaped face, with delicate features and below shoulder-length wavy blond hair. She first appears wearing a calf-length red skirt, which is torn in places. She also wears a white, short-sleeved blouse worn under a pink bodice with lacing across the front. She wears low-heeled shoes, with an ankle strap.

For the Palace Ball she wears an ornate wig ,with hair piled high and in ringlets, with a tiara and matching diamond earrings. She is dressed in a stunning white silken gown, with long sleeves edged with lace and a bodice outlined with gilt threads. The full gathered skirt has a central panel that reveals a white lace underskirt. Silver shoes complete this outfit.

**AMANDA** and **ALESHA** are the two Step-sisters, and they always appear together wearing different but complimentary outrageous outfits- usually brightly coloured, with larger- than- life hats. **Amanda** is played by **Tommy Wallace.** **Alesha** is played by **Gerard McCabe**. Both are tall and of medium build. The sisters first appear wearing long outdoor coats,- or dressing gowns- with two artificial dogs on leads and wheels. One sister Amanda, is dressed in a long brown coat with leopardskin trim, large brown and orange slippers and a large conical brown fur hat trimmed with a large bow. Her dog is a tall, brown terrier. Alesha’s dog is a white poodle. Alesha wears a long pink and white fur coat, with fluffy white slippers. Her hat is white and furry with long dog-like ear flaps. Both sisters wear extra-large sunglasses.

Later in the show they both appear in red high-heeled boots, wearing hats shaped like Christmas trees, and dresses with red fur trim cuffs and hems and green tights. Both carry matching handbags designed like christmas trees with decorations hanging on them.

**BUTTONS** is Cinderella’s friend, and this role is played by **Michael Joseph.** He is young, of medium build and height, with an open fresh-faced appearance with short, neatly cut fair hair. His first outfit is a suit comprising bright blue trousers, with a matching waistcoat and a white shirt, with full sleeves. Silver stripes adorn the front of the waistcoat, and down the side seams of the trousers.

**VATMAN** and **ROBIN** are two characters- the taxmen- that appear together and look like brothers. Vatman is slightly taller than Robin but both are of medium build with short neatly cut hair, clean-shaven faces and regular features. **Vatman** is played by **Damian Patton** and **Tom Rolfe** plays **Robin.** Vatman is dressed in knee-length britches with white stockings and shoes with gilt buckles. His white shirt has long full sleeves and lace trimmed cuffs and a white tied neckerchief. Over the shirt he wears a short neat buttoned up waistcoat. A long sleeveless yellow coat completes the outfit. Robin wears a similar outfit of long-sleeved shirt, neckerchief and britches, but his coat and knee-length breeches are red and patterned.

**BARON HARDUP** is Cinderella’s father and this role is played by **Paddy Jenkins.** He is small and thin with a neatly trimmed short white beard and a white 18th century -style wig tied back. He wears a long dark-grey coat and matching britches, with a white shirt and grey waistcoat. He has a white lacy cravat tied at his neck and the coat is edged with silver embroidery on the lapels and cuffs. White stockings and black shoes with silver buckles complete his outfit.

**DANDINI** is the Prince’s valet. This character is played by **Jordan Harrington.** Tall and elegant, Dandini has regular features and thick, well-cut short dark hair. He wears a short jacket over a waistcoat, made from a rich deep pink brocade fabric. Leggings and knee high boots complete his outfit. At the Palace Ball Dandini appears in a black three-quarter length coat decorated with silver braid, over a waistcoat and black velvet trousers.

**Gareth Gates** plays the part of **PRINCE CHARMING.** Gareth is a well-known star of stage and television, as a singer and musician. Tall and slim, he has an oval face and fine features, with a high forehead and thick dark-brown hair worn in a neat side-parting. He first appears wearing a short red and gilt braided tunic over a white shirt. Red velvet leggings are tucked in to knee-high boots. He wears a gilt-edged sash across his body, which is part of a short cloak that he wears.

In the scene at the Palace Ball he wears a black and white brocade coat trimmed with white fur and black ermine tails, over white brocade waistcoat and purple silk britches, white stockings and silver shoes.

Dancing is an important part of the show. When dancers appear the four men all wear the same basic costume of knee britches, waistcoats or short jackets and white shirts and stockings. The four women wear skirts, with laced bodices over white short-sleeved blouses and stockings and shoes, and occasionally a headdress. Each dancer’s outfit is made in a different main colour - blue, green, red, pink, brown, yellow. They dance together as couples or a chorus line, often during a song performance.

**Creative Team**

The Director was Jonathan Kiley; Musical Director was Mark Dougherty; Choreographer was David Wood; Lighting design by Alex Marshall; Sound Designer was Nick Sagar; Wardrobe Supervisor was Joanne Lewis; Production Manager- Matt Jones; Visual Special Effects- The Twins FX.