**Programme Notes for Audio Description of Jack and the Beanstalk**

**Pantomime at the Grand Opera House Belfast**

**Saturday January 5th 2019**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SHOW STARTS AT THE GRAND OPERA HOUSE AT 7.00 PM.**

This audio described performance is brought to you by Sightlines and the Grand Opera House. The describers are Cara Smith and Marie Abbott. The audio description is done live and does not happen when the cast are speaking – only in between dialogue. These Programme notes will be read out ten minutes before the start of the show, so if you would like to hear them, please collect your headsets and take your seats ten minutes before the show commences.

Jack and the Beanstalk is a traditional tale, based on several folk myths of giants and magical trees and plants. The story first appeared in print in 1734, but the story first appeared as a pantomime version in 1819 at the Drury Lane Theatre in London, under the title *Jack and the Beanstalk; or, Harlequin and the Ogre.* It was one of the first pantos to feature a female principal boy, as well as a tall beanstalk that reached from the stage floor to the theatre roof.

The music in this show is played live, with an orchestra located in front of the stage. There are all the ingredients of a 21st century pantomime, music, dance, special effects, fireworks, magic, banter and dancing cows.

**The Set**

The sets for Jack and the Beanstalk appear like illustrations you would find in a child’s picture book – simply drawn images of imagined buildings that could date from the 16th century. As in a picture book, everything is flat and one dimensional, with bright colours and no attempt made to look realistic. Before the show begins, the curtains are open to reveal dark green beanstalks curving up both sides and across the top of the stage, dotted with tiny glowing white lights. These form a frame for most of the show, with sets appearing behind them. The first is a full size gauzy screen right across the stage on which is projected the title Jack and the Beanstalk next to an image of a large, twisting green beanstalk with leaves and tendrils. This beanstalk recedes up through dark blue clouds away into the distance. A tiny palace is just visible at the top of the beanstalk. When the show begins this screen flies upwards to reveal other locations. The Land of the Giants is a dark space with a background of dark sky, dotted with stars. Other scenes take place in a village square, with two tall houses facing the audience, one on either side of the stage. Each has a door and window that opens and a short curving set of steps that lead on to the large open space which forms the square. Characters enter and leave from each side. Between these two large houses three steps lead up to a higher level walkway and images of other buildings can be seen. Another scene takes place in the countryside, with a screen showing a thatched farm building and barn, located next to a stream and bridge, with rolling green fields beyond. A Market Fair shows three stalls painted on a simple background with a single stall covered in a white cloth set in front of the screen. Later in the story we are in the bedroom of the home of the Trot family. This room has a wooden ceiling and beams, and contains only a large family-sized bed. The bed stands upright facing us, the audience. Later the story moves to Cloudland, at the top of the beanstalk, with 3 arches of white billowing clouds receding to the back of the stage. The kitchen of the Giant’s palace is shown simply with images of a door with large sacks of potatoes, shelves and a large bucket along a brick wall.

**Characters**

This pantomime features lavish, colourful characters and costumes that include a whole host of farm animals with excellent costume details – pigs, sheep and a cow called Daisy. As well as the main characters, an ensemble of dancers and singers take several parts and perform as villagers , animals and guards. A troupe of children from a local stage school also perform in the show.

Dame May Trot is played by May McFettridge

David Bedella plays Fleshcreep

Rikki Jay plays Simon

Paddy Jenkins plays Farmer Paddy Trot

Joaana O’Hare plays Mother Nature

Georgia Lennon plays Princess Apricot

Michael Pickering plays Jack Trot

Armando Ferriandino and Giovanna Manuela Mar feature as The Belfast Roller Rollers

The Ensemble is comprised of Kathryn Barnes, Marie Finlayson, Scott Hayward, Aaron Hendry, George Lyons, Shona Masson, Steven Merry and Holly Prentice

The Babes are a troupe of young performers from McMaster Stage School

May McFettridge is the queen of comedy and grand dame of panto, alter-ego of John Linehan. This is May’s 29th year in pantomime and like Jack she has been known to meet one or two strange characters in her time, as well as purchasing a dodgy bean or two at Nutts Corner Market. She has been described as big, bold and beautiful, in need of some strong support from a sturdy corset. She has a round, heavily made-up face – striking blue eyeshadow, rouged rosy cheeks, bright pink lipstick, a painted beauty spot and blacked out tooth. She wears a variety of outlandish wigs and hats to top off her extravagant gowns.

When we first meet May she has a vibrant wig of ginger curls with 2 big bunches on top of which sits a whit puffy milk maid’s hat. She wears a yellow dress with blue spots, colourful ruffles and has puffy sleeves. The skirt comes to below her knees and has a hoop so it sits out and can swish about to comic effect. She wears an apron with a picture of a cow and flowers decorating it. Later, she wears a blue and red floral dress with a green apron. In the bedroom scene, she wears a blue striped nightgown with ruffled sleeves, adorned with a pink bow and topped off with a pink hat.

David Bedella who plays Fleshcreep has a number of theatre, television and film credits to his name including Dr Carlos Fashola in Holby City. He is our pantomime baddie. He has dark hair and skin with a devilish sparkle to his eyes and a full mouth which sneers widely to reveal gleaming white teeth. He is often scowling. He wears a black leather coat studded with diamonte over a buckled up black jacket with a diamonte collar. He wears tight velvet trousers tucked into knee-length leather boots. He appears in disguise wearing a brown trench-coat and black hat, glasses with bushy eyebrows, a false nose and moustache.

Rikki Jay plays Simon, the son of May and brother of Jack. He got his first break into television in the 90s on The Big Big Talent show. He has performed on cruise liners and has his own production company. Simon is a comic character with a round cheerful face, he has a sparkle to his eyes and often a huge grin on his face. He is a friendly, bubbly and bouncy character who wears a colourful costume reflecting his personality. His bright yellow shirt has puffy sleeves and red buttons. Over this he wears a blue waistcoat trimmed with yellow and red. He wears blue wide-legged pedal pushers held up with a red belt, they reach to just below his knees where they meet a pair of red socks. On his feet he is wearing comfortably soft looking spotty trainers.

Paddy Jenkins who plays Farmer Paddy Trot hails from Belfast and has a number of film and television credits. Farmer Paddy Trot is the happy-go-lucky put-upon husband of May Trot. He is a slight man with a pleasant demeanour, who sports a ragged straw hat and red neckerchief with black spots. He wears a yellow and orange tunic with a brown belt and lace-up rubber boots. In the bedroom scene he wears a black and white spotted long night-gown with a sleep cap and enormous Homer Simpson slippers.

Mother Nature is played by Joanna O’Hare, an Irish actress and proud graduate of Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. Mother Nature is tall and striking with ginger hair and a shimmering dress of lace and silk green and gold leaves. She waves a small gold wand. She has a smiling pretty face and a kind and caring character.

Georgia Lennon who plays Princess Apricot trained at Laine Theatre Arts. She is small and pretty with long brown ringleted hair. She wears a yellow gown trimmed with white fur cuffs, adorning her head is a fur-trimmed tiara.

Michael Pickering who plays Jack Trot has a number of theatre credits and graduated with a first class honours degree from Arts Educational Schools. He is a handsome young man who wears a brown tunic.

Armando Ferriandino and Giovanna Manuela Mar perform a daring roller-skating act. They are from Italy and are accomplished circus performers across various disciplines. Armando is tall and dark, Giovanna is petite with long red curly hair and dark lipstick. Armando cuts a striking figure in black trousers and muscled torso. Giovanna wears a luminous bikini which reveals her lithe toned body.

The Ensemble open the show as the giant’s guards - black cat-like figures with orange and green luminous coloured spiky wigs. Next they are cheerful and colourful peasant-style folk with full floaty skirts and floral cummerbunds. At the market, they are a variety of charming and cute farm animals – they look like stuffed toys with large eyes and lolling tongues in hues of grey and beige. The Babes are like little fluffy lambs. Later, the ensemble are spectacular butterfly and moth-like creatures with luminous silken wings and colourful feathered antennae. Their bodies like an insect shell.

**Production**

**Director/ Choreographer-** Andrew Wright

**Lighting Designer-** Matt Clutterham

**Musical Supervisor** – Rick Coates

**Sound Designer-** Nick Sagar

**Production Manager-** Matt Jones

**Musical Director –** Mark Dougherty

**Assistant Choreographer-** Marianne Phillips