**WHAT THE REINDEER SAW**

**Programme Notes for the Audio Description**

The audio described performance will take place at the performance of the show on Thursday 4th January 2018, and is brought to you by Sightlines NI with the Lyric Theatre. The audio describers are Florence Stewart and Marie Abbott. If you wish to hear these programme notes read aloud on your headset before the show, please take your seats in the theatre ten minutes before the show starts.

The show was devised and written by Conor Grimes and Alan McKee. The Lyric programme for this new Christmas show tells us that it is about

*‘A brand new Santa has taken over the family business from his father. He is an entitled, lazy, plump 40-something man-baby. With his formidable former model wife at his side, the new Santa has some out-of the-box ideas for making the North Pole great again. He just needs to get the elves to implement his sweeping reforms and the job’s a good’un.*

*While the elves are hard-working, magical little creatures, they don’t welcome change. Santa wants to make plenty of time to hang out with his best friends, the beer-drinking football-watching reindeers. If only Mrs. Claus will give him a pass out.*

**SET and SCENERY**

The curtains are open when we first enter the theatre, and the entire stage is bathed in electric, icy blue light, representing the frozen North Pole. Centrally on the back of the stage wall is a large circle, a screen which changes to show various moving or static images. The first face of which shows a forest with pine trees where snow is falling heavily. This circle will depict various images as the show progresses.

The whole set resembles a gigantic snow globe in the centre of which all the action takes place. Outside the globe area, on both the right and left of the stage are three steps. Often, the globe area is the only part of the stage that is illuminated. The base of the globe is the stage floor, which is a revolving turntable, like a record deck where in the past one played vinyl records. The turntable has two raised steps running round the edge, but with a gap breaking up the circle in one section. This gap is towards the back of the stage at the start of the show.

In the centre of the turntable we see the back of a white swivel office chair tucked into the knee space of a white twin pedestal desk that looks like it is carved in ice. The desk has ornate drawers on both sides. On the top is a white phone. Later as the turntable moves round the front of the desk is revealed showing a carving of a green Christmas tree on the centre part of the desk between the two pedestals.

The circular window on the rear wall of the stage acts as a monitor where we can observe what is happening outside Santa’s office which is made to look like the Oval Office of the President of the United States of America. The circular window changes and becomes variously a symbol depicting a partridge sitting amid mistletoe, a stained glass window with a star like design in blue, red and green, a television monitor where an announcer gives the latest news updates, a stall where a full antlered reindeer peeps out, a virtual airport runway where Santa will try out his new sleigh, the outside of an elf tavern bearing the words “Ye Olde Tavern”, a full moon, and a high needle like tower standing at the head of a canal over which Santa will fly when delivering presents.

As the show progresses two elves insert red and white candy cane levers into two sprockets on the stage turntable which enables them to push it round until the gap is centre stage and aligned with the steps on the left and right of the stage.

At the top of the steps, on the right hand side of the stage is a small platform where an elf sits playing live music on a keyboard and other instruments throughout the performance.

At the rear of the stage on the right are three bare, leafless white trees each standing on a white root ball, with a matching set of trees on the left of the stage.

Ye Olde Tavern is the elves pub. Elves sit on short circular three legged stools around small round tables on a wrought iron plinth.

The white desk when turned sideways will become Santa’s virtual sleigh when he takes his first flying lesson.

When Santa’s office furniture is moved from the centre of the turntable it becomes the reindeer enclosure which is signified by the reindeers bringing on white rectangular bales which they use as seats and a card table. Later a white picket gate descends from the centre of the stage roof with the reindeer sitting in front of it on the bales.

Other props include a dart board on an easel, a wheelchair which an injured elf uses, a golden bugle that is blown to summon the elves, protest placards, a head set and virtual reality goggles used to help Santa master his new sleigh, and a large canvas scroll of children’s names. Later a red sleigh on runners, complete with flashing head lamps, will be pushed centre stage via a ramp linked up to the turntable. A snow machine is used at the end of the show.

The revolving turntable is cleverly designed, and can serve as a balcony, where from a height, Santa addresses his workforce of elves. When the elves rotate the turntable with the use of candy cane levers the gap aligns with the steps on the left and right of the stage and opens up the circular area.

A snow machine is used at the end of the show, but throughout there are times when an impression of gently falling snow is created, through the clever use of filter lighting.

**CAST**

**Several of the cast play more than one character.**

**Alan McKee** plays **Mr. Claus.** Tall and well-built, he first appears wearing a traditional Santa outfit of red suit, with the jacket and hat trimmed with white fake fur. A long thick white beard covers the lower half of his face and reaches down to his chest. He wears black wellington boots and a black belt with a square silver buckle. When the show opens one of his trouser legs is tucked into one of his wellingtons, as if he hasn’t dressed properly. Later in the show he appears in his new Santa suit. A tight-fitting green shiny satin top and tights with shiny shorts, shiny boots and a green fur-trimmed cape transform Santa into Starman.

**Conor Grimes** plays the part of **Mrs Claus**. As in pantomimes, men play women and vice-versa. Tall and imposing in pale blue high heel shoes,Mrs Claus first appears wearing a bright blue wig, cut in a short hairstyle with a fringe. Her knee length red dress is very tight-fitting, and emphasises her curvaceous shape. The dress is worn with a short leopard skin fur jacket. Her jewellery consists of a sparkly silver necklace and bracelets. She also wears large sparkly spectacles.

Later **Conor Grimes** also plays the part of **Dander,** a key member of Santa’s team of Reindeers.

The part of **Cornelia,** the elf who is Santa’s personal assistant, is played by **Rosie McClelland.** She is slim and wears the standard elf outfit consisting of green baggy trousers, tucked in to knee high striped socks and pale blue laced up shoes. On top she wears a blue tunic, with a black belt around her waist. Her large pointy elf ears are clearly visible nestled in among her curly hair. She is brisk and businesslike in her manner, and wears red-framed spectacles. **Rosie** also plays the part of **Rudolph,** one of Santa’s best-known Reindeers, who appears in a pale coloured reindeer outfit.

**Gerard McCabe** plays several characters, elf and Reindeer. He plays **Adrian** one of the two Elf Special Secret Service agents, on duty at the inauguration of the Santa Claus. Adrian wears a grey mackintosh and dark glasses. He constantly checks his wrist watch and earpiece for security instructions. Gerard also plays **Theobald**, an Engineer Elf wearing a yellow high-Viz jacket and helmet over his elf outfit. He later plays **Francie** one of the Elf Sleigh mechanics. For this part he wears a curly wig, and a brown, hip length padded jacket, over his elf outfit. Gerard also plays Comet**,** one of the team of Reindeers. The Reindeers all appear in the same outfits, wearing loose furry brown waistcoats and three-quarter length furry trousers, with brown stockings and ankle boots with a fur trim. Each reindeer wears a brown furry hat, with long ear flaps, and the hat supports two felt -covered antlers on their head. The sleeves of the reindeer suits end at the wrist, with hands covered by solid hooves, shaped like cylinders.

**Jo Donnelly** plays several characters, elf and Reindeer. Small and with short dark hair, she first appears as **Acacius,** one of the Elf Special Secret agents at Mr. Claus’s inauguration. In this role she wears a grey, double-breasted raincoat over her elf outfit, and dark spectacles. Like her companion, she has an earpiece and wrist radio. Jo next appears as Leonard**,** one of the Engineer Elves, wearing an orange high-Viz jacket and yellow plastic protective hat over the usual elf outfit. All elves have large pointy ears. She also plays the part of Honorious**,** the Elf Union Representative**.** Hewears a navy three-quarter length coat and a flat cap, and walks with his hands in his pockets**.** Jo also plays the part of **Elijah,** one of the two Elf Sleigh mechanics. In this part she wears a black padded biker’s jacket and carries a rucksack. Jo also appears as a reindeer, called **Vixen**.

The part of the Musician**, Sir Elfton John,** is performed by **Rod McVey**, who plays all the music live during the show. He sits at a keyboard on the right-hand side of the stage and plays a variety of instruments.

**The Creative Team**

**The writers**  **Conor Grimes and Alan McKee.**

**Director** **Tony Devlin**

**Set and Lighting Design Ciaran Bagnall**

**Musical Director Rod McVey**

**Costume Designer Rosie Moore**

**Choreographer Deborah Maguire**