

An Introduction to Pantomime

(Key Stages 1 & 2)



WELCOME TO PANTO LAND!

This teachers support pack is designed to help your students gain the maximum benefit from their visit to our pantomime.

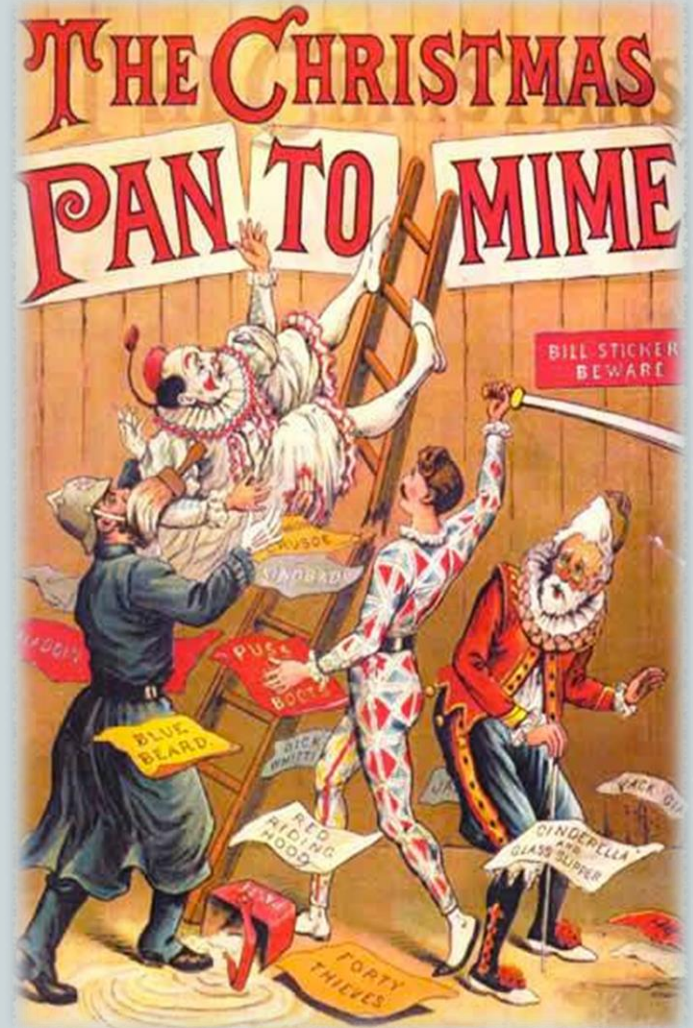
This pack provides a brief background on the history of pantomime and some of the key elements in today's show... plus classroom activities, which are fun and informative, as well as easy for teachers to organise.



WHAT IS PANTOMIME?

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

Pantomime was originally entertainment in the form of mime, with the meaning conveyed through gestures and physical actions. Pantomime, Punch and Judy, and the circus clown are all descendants of Italian commedia dell' arte, and, in turn the characters of Harlequin (a comical figure), Columbine (Harlequin's sweetheart), and Pantaloon (a masked character, and the butt of Harlequin's jokes) dominated early English pantomime.





At the beginning of the 18th century, John Weaver, a dancing master from Shrewsbury, presented pantomime ballets at London's Drury Lane Theatre. He then teamed up with John Rich, a famous theatre director and manager who owned theatres in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

As the theatrical genre developed, with the introduction of other characters, it acquired more structure, with opening scenes taken from classical mythology and a second act turning into a harlequinade, an old form of buffoonery – now interpreted in various guises of silly behavior.

By the early 19th century, pantomime had established certain traditions, including the dame being played by a man and the comedy moving from Harlequin to a clown.

Much of this was due to the genius of Joseph Grimaldi, who spent most of his life at Sadler's Wells and Drury Lane as an actor, clown, comic, acrobat, dancer, mime artist, singer and swordsman; he excelled in melodrama and farce.

His costume was extremely extravagant and coloured, and he changed the standard ruddy make-up of a clown, into a white face with two half moons on the cheeks. His comic routines, entering cry of "Here we go again" and sing-alongs became hallmarks of the pantomime clown, with many of these elements still included today (e.g. slapstick, songsheets, etc).



With the arrival of Music Hall, new stars surfaced and appeared in pantomime to attract different audiences to the shows. The humour was more adult and specialist acts started to dominate.

During the 1890s and well into the 20th century, some of the biggest pantomimes were staged at Drury Lane and many pop stars of the era, such as Cliff Richard and Cilla Black, made pantomime appearances.



21ST CENTURY PANTOMIME

Today's pantomimes still follow traditional storylines, from the opening enchanting scene to the spectacular walk down at the finale. One tradition which is on the wane, however, is that of the Principal Boy being played by a thigh-slapping girl! The comedy characters, such as Simple Simon, Buttons and Muddles, have many of the tricks and traits of the original pantomime clown. Song sheets and slapstick remain, and the dame is still a man dressed in outrageous costumes! Contemporary shows often mix current music hits with more traditional numbers, and good productions use creative choreography, colourful costumes and spectacular scenery.



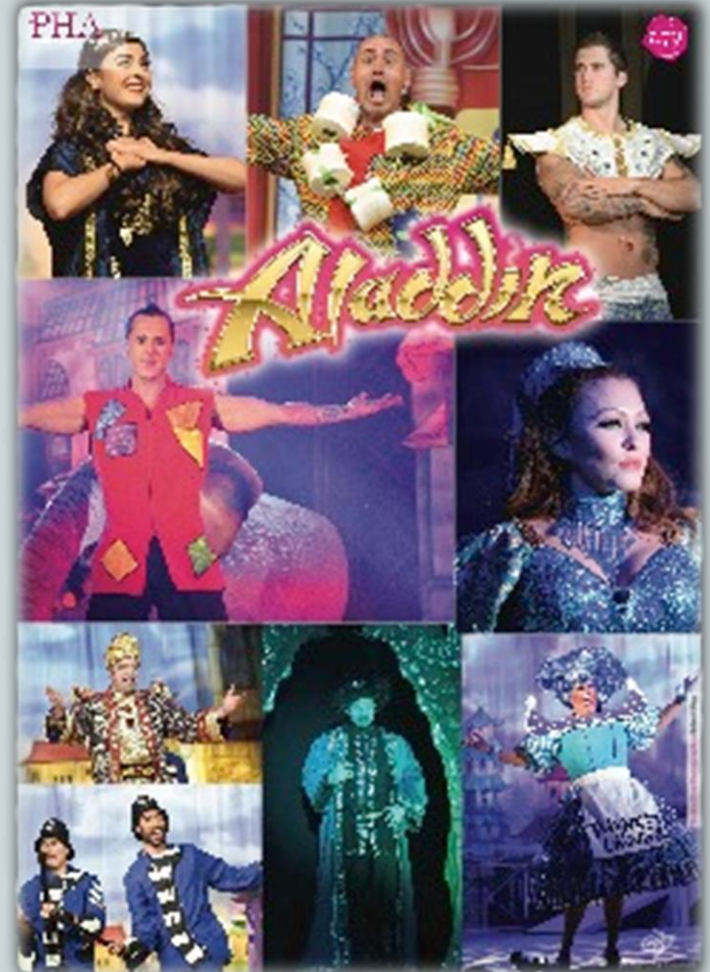


As for casting, pantomimes often include roles played by stars from British and Australian TV soaps (such as EastEnders, Coronation Street and Neighbours), and others from television (such as the Gladiators) perhaps in part to attract different theatre audiences, in a similar way to how the Music Hall stars were attracted at the turn of the 20th century.



PANTOMIME STORIES

Aladdin originated as a story from the Arabian Nights and was first performed in 1788. The Arabian Nights was the basis for the tales of Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

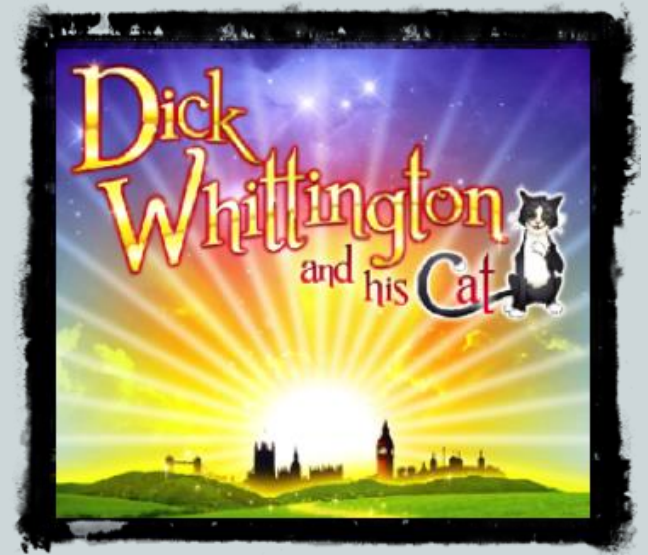




Babes in the Wood is based on the old ballad, The Children of the Wood. In 1754, George Colman suggested that The Children of the Wood would be the perfect story for a pantomime but it was almost a hundred years before this happened, although an opera based on the story was produced in 1793.



First performed as a pantomime in 1814, it was based on the story of Richard Whittington, who was Lord Mayor of London three times and married his employer's daughter, Alice Fitzwarren. However, he was never poor, never heard the bells say 'Turn again, Whittington!' and apparently never owned a cat!



JACK & THE BEANSTALK

Jack and the Beanstalk" is the best known of the "Jack tales", a series of stories featuring a young hero from Cornwall called Jack.

The story first appeared more than 5,000 years ago, based on a popular and widely told story called 'The Boy Who Stole Ogre's Treasure.'



MOTHER GOOSE

Mother Goose is based on an old nursery rhyme and tells the story of greed and envy. This is a unique pantomime tale as it's the only one to include the dame's name in the title.



SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is one of the top pantomime titles. The story has been popular ever since the Grimm Brothers' fairytales were translated in the 1820s. However, its popularity today owes much to the 1937 Walt Disney film.



Classroom activities for Key Stage 1 & 2

PANTO NAME GAME

This is a physical activity which aids memory and develops listening skills.

Sit pupils in a circle and give each one a pantomime title, such as Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Snow White and Peter Pan.

The teacher should then call out one of the pantomime titles, and all the children with that title should run round the circle in a clock wise direction, until they get back to their place in the circle. Each pupil starts with three lives and the last pupil back loses one life.

By calling out 'costume change!', the teacher can change the direction of the running at any time, encouraging the children to keep listening as well running!

Continued...

MIRROR, MIRROR

This involves pupils playing in pairs. One pupil is the reflection of the other and has to copy everything the other one is doing.

PANTOLAND

This activity aims to develop pupils' imaginations and creative skills.

Divide pupils into small groups. Ask them to discuss and then improvise what they might discover at given settings, such as at the top of a beanstalk, somewhere over a rainbow, in the mine of the seven dwarfs, at a royal ball given by Prince Charming, or in a magical forest.

CASTING - Taking current day stars of TV, film, music and sport, ask pupils to re-cast any pantomime they've seen. For example, Dick and Dom might play Ugly Sisters, Tracy Beaker could be Cinderella and Wayne Rooney could be a panto dame.

COSTUMES - Discuss the costumes the new cast would wear or get pupils to cut out famous faces from magazines and create their own costumes for the cast.

CHARACTERISATION - Discuss the nature of the different pantomime characters. The pupils might make a sound or noise to represent the characters' personalities or create a piece of music which represents the entrance of the fairy or baddie onto the stage.

GOOD AND EVIL - Discuss the differences between good and evil as depicted in the pantomime. Tradition dictates that the Fairy, who always represents good, makes her stage entrances and exits from the right of stage (the audience's left), while the baddie, who represents evil, enters and exits the stage from left. (The origin of this stems from the Latin word for left, inistra). Some actors have a superstition about leaving their dressing room with their left leg first in case this brings them bad luck!

COMEDY - Discuss which parts of the pantomime made pupils laugh and, where possible, encourage them to act out their favourite scenes

REVIEW - Having discussed pupils favourite scenes or parts of the panto, ask them to write a review of the show They could send their reviews to the theatre or the cast.

PANTOMIME WORDSEARCH

D	F	A	I	R	Y	G	O	D	M	O	T	H	E	R
B	A	I	E	I	N	E	G	L	O	D	V	S	A	O
A	E	M	P	U	S	S	I	N	B	O	O	T	S	B
B	S	D	E	M	O	N	A	T	R	O	S	A	N	I
E	R	D	T	Y	I	T	N	I	G	H	S	O	O	N
S	E	A	E	N	S	A	T	R	O	N	H	E	W	S
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O	U	I	E	C	N	I	R	P	S	H	O	O	K	E
D	I	C	K	W	H	I	T	T	I	N	G	T	O	N

FIND

Aladdin
Babes in the
wood
Bears
Buttons
Cinderella
Daisy
Emperor
Fairy Godmother
Genie
Giant
Goldilocks
Hook
Mother Goose
Peter Pan
Prince
Priscilla
Puss in Boots
Rats
Snow White
Ugly Sisters
Wicked Queen

AND FINALLY...

We hope that our Teachers' Support Pack adds to the enjoyment of your pupils' experience of their visit to panto land, and they continue to talk about the show long after the curtain has fallen.



PHA Pantomimes



@phapantos

