

## Synopsis for Pantos by Rob Fearn and Leo Appleton

### Aladdin

The tale itself is very traditional and this panto sticks pretty much to it and why not it's a good story, but what makes it special are the development of the characters within the plot, the snappy banter between them and the comic situations that arise. We have Widow Twankey and her other son Wishee trying to run a laundry and a washing line that just will not behave. All the while Aladdin is being pursued by the Peking police for stealing an orange whilst he is also pursuing Princess Jasmine who he has fallen madly in love with after seeing her in Scrubbers Yard. This is all punctuated by the occasional commentary from Aladdin's parrot, Lola. Then we have Abanazar trying to locate the fabled magic lamp only to be told by a spirit that he needs the help of Aladdin.

Aladdin is cornered by the Peking police after sneaking into Jasmine's garden and is captured not because he dared look on the princess but because he stole an orange and so is put in prison to face the consequences. This of course is not very helpful to Abanazar, so he, unbeknown to Aladdin, uses his wizardry to get Aladdin out.

Later, Abanazar turns up at the laundry and declares he is Aladdin's long-lost uncle and is now very rich. After much confusion over names and Abanazar's exact wealth, he enlists Aladdin's help to get the magic lamp. This of course goes wrong and Aladdin ends up imprisoned in the cave unsure of how he is going to escape. The Genie of the Ring appears and helps Aladdin escape along with the old lamp that remained in his clutches. Aladdin doesn't realise what he has until the lamp is cleaned and then poof, the Genie of the Lamp appears. Long story short, Aladdin becomes very very rich and seeks the hand of Jasmine for his wife and the Sultan (Jasmine's father), who is not as rich as he seems, is quite happy for Aladdin to marry her once he has seen the size of Aladdin's palace.

All is well in the Prince Aladdin household until one day Jasmine decides to trade the old lamp for a new one. Abanazar, the evil wizard disguises himself as a lamp seller and tricks Jasmine into parting with the old lamp and using the Genie of the Lamp whisks the palace and all its occupants to the other side of the world.

Aladdin comes home and can't find his palace anywhere. Convinced his mother has had a hand in its disappearance he goes to see Widow Twankey to see if she has done something to it. The Genie of the Ring again comes to his aid. The genie tells Aladdin where the palace is and although can't transport the palace back (he is not made for heavy lifting) transports Aladdin, Wishee and Widow Twankey to the palace.

There they trick Abanazar into using up all his wishes from the Genie of the Lamp on frivolous things. However, Abanazar isn't too bothered. He is over the other side of the world, in a very big palace, full of riches, so he threatens to destroy the lamp. Again, they enlist the Genie of the Ring's help to make the lamp too hot to handle. Abanazar can't hold onto it and eventually throws it into the air to be caught by Aladdin who then has another three wishes. He banishes Abanazar, and then they all return to his palace home on a magic carpet.

## **Cinderella**

This is the traditional story of Cinderella, with the usual characters, Buttons, the Ugly Sisters, wicked Stepmother and of course Fairy Godmother. It is imaginatively re-written with witty dialogue and opportunities to scale the show up or down as the staging demands.

Cinderella or Cinders is the heroine of the piece and although down trodden and mistreated by her 'sisters' and Stepmother she remains upbeat and perseveres with her lot and is a strong character. Buttons who is in love with Cinders sees all that is happening but cannot bring himself to tell her how he feels. A Royal Ball is announced for the prince to find a bride and although Cinders thinks she will also get to attend her erstwhile relatives think otherwise. She becomes resigned to her lot until her Fairy Godmother intervenes. Cinderella does indeed attend the ball as the mysterious princess and of course the prince falls madly in love with her as they dance the night away. Midnight strikes and Cinders runs away leaving her slipper behind, as usual. The prince then sets about looking for Cinders with hilarious consequences until finally he arrives at Cinders house. The stepmother and her daughters deviously try to keep Cinderella out of the way whilst the prince is in their house but they are foiled by a selfless act by Buttons. It all ends happily ever after with Cinderella marrying her prince and the Stepmother and the Ugly sisters getting their just desserts.

## **A Christmas Carol – the Panto**

This is a pantomime that broadly follows the plot of Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, but it concentrates on the more comic elements and family themes to engage all age groups. Not all the characters are portrayed as in the original story. There are also new characters including a Narrator who helps to move the show along through interactions with the audience, Sid Spectre an additional ghost and Rapsallion a cheeky cockney street urchin.

The opening scenes develop Scrooge's character to emphasise his meanness to others particularly through comedic interactions. We are introduced to Fred his nephew and various visitors to his business premises. Last but not least we meet his put upon but loyal employee Bob Cratchit who has a poor but happy family which includes the ever suffering youngest son, Tiny Tim.

Scrooge, the mean old skinflint, now runs his money lending business alone as his partner Jacob Marley passed away seven years ago. Jacob comes back to haunt him with his comic side kick Sid Spectre. Together they try to teach him the error of his ways. This of course fails. Jacob then tells Scrooge of what will take place over the coming three nights.

This then sets the show up for the introduction of the three ghosts who in turn hilariously and tragically transport him back and forth through time to see his past present and future, all aided and abetted by the spectres and other pantomime characters.

Scrooge resists the appeals to change and is eventually confronted by his own mortality and the impact of his continued heartlessness towards others.

The Ghosts efforts are eventually rewarded and we are left with an uplifting scene as Scrooge is re united with his nephew. Scrooge has reflected on his life and his attitude towards Christmas and indeed humanity and he has realised that he has missed out on much and is determined to make amends. The main recipients of his largesse are his family, Bob Cratchit and of course Tiny Tim.

### **Jack and the Beanstalk**

This is the traditional story of Jack and the Beanstalk with the usual characters (and some more unusual) Mother Betty, Jack, Jill, Silly Simon, Squire Root, Right Guard, On Guard and of course the giant. It is imaginatively re written with witty, family friendly dialogue and plenty of opportunities to sing songs and engage the audience with a script that easily scales up or down as the staging demands.

Jack lives with his mother Betty Bitsnbobs, his brother Silly Simon and of course his cow Daisy in a town called Poverty. It was quite prosperous until Squire Root lost his daughter and then his will to do anything else other than be mean to everyone. So it is up to the resourceful Mother Betty, who is the squire's help, to 'acquire' food from his table to help feed the villagers.

This though isn't enough and in the end Mother Betty decides that Buttercup has to go.

Jack and Simon take the cow to market but before they get there they meet a fairy who offers them five magic beans for the cow, which Jack accepts. Then follows the usual story of the beanstalk and Jack's encounter with the giant. Whilst in the giant's castle he meets Jill the squire's daughter who has been held there by the giant for many years, the three blind mice, the two guards Right Guard and On Guard and the giant's wife. Jill guides Jack to the treasures in the castle and he promises to help her escape. But with a golden harp that bursts into song at the slightest nudge their escape is almost undone. However, with the help of the two guards who make a deal with Jack they all eventually escape the clutches of the giant with the gold, the goose and the harp. Then, the ever forward thinking, Silly Simon, helps to dispatch the giant.

### **Puss in Boots**

This is the story of a fairly magical cat and a pantomime littered with jokes. All the key characters are there, Puss, the ogre, princesses and the hero plus many others re imagined in this original and comic re telling of a traditional fairy tale.

A kingdom is being plagued by a vicious ogre who is eating the inhabitants and the king is in need of hero to kill the beast but there isn't anyone. Alf the non-descript hero of this tale inherits a cat from his deceased father. It turns out the cat is unusual in that he can walk and talk, goes by the name of Puss and is quite cunning and uses this gift to great effect, wheedling his master into the court of the king.

Puss has his own 'enemy' the Cat Warden, who persists in chasing him throughout the story, but to no avail. The ogre meanwhile, agrees to stop eating the people of the kingdom if the king agrees to a marriage between him and the king's youngest daughter, Rene. Alf by now is in love with the young princess and she with him.

The king does not agree to the marriage and the ogre sets a plan in place for his henchmen to kidnap her. When the henchmen arrive at the castle there is some confusion as to who the real Princess Rene is. In a comical misunderstanding they dismiss the real Rene as a fake and they kidnap her two (uglier) sisters instead assuming one of them must be Rene and thereby covering all bases. The sisters eventually 'persuade' the henchmen to return to their own castle as they are all in love.

Meanwhile Alf has concocted a ruse to kill the beast but the ogre sees through the cunning plan and captures him. In the end it is up to Puss in Boots to outsmart the ogre and kill him thereby saving his master and freeing the kingdom from the threat of being eaten. This duly done leads to a happy ending for all.

### **Synopsis of Snow White**

A mother wishes for a baby girl and it is granted with the birth of Snow White. At her christening she receives a present of a Magic Mirror. Snow Whites mother dies and is replaced by her new wicked stepmother. The stepmother uses the Mirror and it tells her Snow White now grown is more beautiful than she is. She then instructs her three bumbling huntsmen to kill Snow White in the forest. As proof of the deed she wants Snow Whites heart. They can't do this and instead (not wishing to kill any wild animals) use a supermarket to get one. When she realises she has been tricked she wants them killed. Snow Whites nanny, Edith saves the day and the Huntsmen leave the country. Snow White meanwhile still in the forest stumbles across a cottage and falls asleep in a bed. The owners, the Seven Dwarves return to the cottage and find Snow White. They decide she can stay and she impresses them with her skills for cooking squirrel.

The Dwarves warn her not to let any strangers in whilst they are in their mine but Snow White is tricked by the stepmother three times. On the stepmothers third attempt to kill Snow White she succeeds and Snow White falls into the deep sleep of death.

Throughout this Billy the palace Paige whose love of cakes leads him into conflict with the mysterious Cake Bandit provides commentary on what is happening within the palace walls.

The story of Snow White reaches a prince from a neighbouring kingdom and he convinces the dwarves he can restore her to life with a kiss. This doesn't work so he says he will take Snow White back to his kingdom to search for a cure. In a quirk of fate Snow White is restored to life and falls immediately in love with the prince and he takes her away to his Kingdom to be married at once and rule with him. A celebration is held by the new King and Queen and as Queen of the neighbouring kingdom the wicked stepmother is invited not realising the new Queen is Snow White. The stepmother can't stop herself and unleashes a tirade on Snow White trapping herself by her own admissions. She is eventually banished and the Huntsmen, identified by Snow White as her kidnappers and potential assailants are forgiven and everyone lives happily ever after.

### **Synopsis of ROBIN HOOD**

Here we have the re-imagined tale of the fabled Robin Hood and how he escapes the evil clutches of the Sheriff of Nottingham and ultimately wins the hand of the fair Maid Marion. It is a colourful story of evil doings and heroic derring do with all the usual characters making an appearance, plus some others that really should have been there as well. We have the witty narrator, Lincoln Green and his sidekick Alan a Dale, Maid Marion's nurse, Nurse Nellie from Netherwich, Sir Guy and the evil Sheriff of Nottingham and last but not least the bumbling duo Bow and Arrow. These plus Little John, Much, Will and Friar Tuck are all involved in the tale of Robin Hood and his quest for Maid Marion's hand.

Robin steals from the rich (of course) and gives to the poor enamouring himself of Maid Marion. The Sheriff is not happy with any of this and with the fawning Sir Guy of Gisborne sets about snaring Robin with the competition for the Golden Arrow. Robin gets captured but with the aid of his merry men (and women) he is set free by some crafty goings on. He learns that the Sheriff is to marry his beloved but of course won't let this happen and in disguise along with his men (and women) attend the wedding and ultimately after a dashing sword fight subdues the Sheriff and his sidekick Sir Guy freeing Maid Marion and winning the day.

Maid Marion still says she is unable to marry Robin as she still a ward of the true king Richard. He of course turns up and absolves Robin and his men of all their misdeeds leaving Robin and Marion free to marry.

### **Synopsis for Rumpelstiltskin**

Not often performed, forsaken for the more popular in the panto canon. But what a great tale it is with all the magic, mystery and opportunity for comedy that a good pantomime could wish for.

As usual we have taken the tale and given the story our little twist and added a couple of extra characters for the audience to love and hate in equal measure.

Madam Miller and her lovely daughter own a windmill but they don't make any money. The evil Sir Rupert, the king's tax collector comes looking for his taxes but of course they can't pay. After much slapstick involving flour bags Millie (daughter) blurts out she can spin straw to gold. This then seals her fate. Sir Rupert imprisons her to do just that.

The king a handsome, kindly man, but unmarried, is also being bamboozled by Sir Rupert in the hope that the king may give up his kingdom and let him rule instead. Luckily he has his wily Queen Mother taking care of him.

All the while Millie is locked away with the 'villain' Rumpelstiltskin appearing three times to help her spin gold in exchange for tokens, the last one being her first born child which she of course agrees to.

Eventually Madam Miller hears about her daughter's imprisonment through Sir Rupert's youthful help, Sid Kick and goes to the palace with the help of her friend Teddy 'two sails' Baker and the rest of the village. The king is upset to hear about the unlawful imprisonment and whilst setting Millie free banishes Sir Rupert to the chorus for the rest of the show. The King then falls madly in love with Millie (and her gold).

They have their first son, Jaspar and Rumpelstiltskin turns up to claim his prize but of course Queen Millie is reluctant. Rumpelstiltskin agrees to a game. The queen has three chances to guess his name correctly to save her son. The first meeting doesn't go well. The second one, the same, but this time Sir Rupert has followed her and after Queen Millie has left hears Rumpelstiltskin say his name and he tricks him into making a pact vowing not to tell his name if Rumpelstiltskin will make him king when he wins the game. Reluctantly, Rumpelstiltskin agrees. The Queen now asks her mother and the two bumbling guards Cringe and Cower to search the furthest woods to find out his name before the final meeting. They stumble across Sir Rupert and Rumpelstiltskin and overhear his name and at the last gasp arrive to say his name and save the day and the Queen's son. Rumpelstiltskin gets banished to the deepest bowels of hell and Sir Rupert becomes Rupert and is jailed and everyone lives happily ever after.

### **Sleeping Beauty – Synopsis**

The story is set up as the traditional fairy story, but with a unique twist in that, instead of the usual three fairies we have gone back to the old tale where originally there were seven, all of whom we have given their own unique characters and one we have made the dame. There are also magic spells to enchant the children, a magical raven and jokes and gags aplenty to keep all ages enthralled.

As usual, the wicked Godmother (in this case Minerva) is not invited to the christening of the lovely Aurora and she curses the child only to have her curse comically moderated to sleeping for one hundred years by the fairy (Dame) Edna. As the curse is for the child to prick her finger on a spinning wheel the king banishes all spinning wheels and destroys the others. This though does not stop Minerva from attempting to get spinning wheels sent or given to the young Aurora who is fatally attracted to them. And so, the plucky fairies guard the growing Aurora from these special gifts with many comic twists.

The night before her sixteenth birthday the king decides to hold a party for his daughter Aurora (well why not?) and although the fairies do their best to keep her safe until after midnight when she will turn sixteen, just before midnight, Minerva along with her two henchmen, Sniff and Snot and her magical Raven (puppet or

character) get to the princess and of course the inevitable happens and along with Aurora the whole court drop into a deep, one hundred year, sleep.

In the second act the tale shifts hundred years later and a young prince, Prince Custardos is introduced. He hears about the sleeping beauty and against his parents wishes decides to go in search of her. All the while the magical Raven and the two henchmen, preserved for the hundred years, try to confound and stop the prince from getting to the sleeping Aurora.

They almost manage it but in the end the prince arrives at the wall of thorns only to find two other princes have also arrived to wake her. Prince Custardos and the other two vie for who will break through the thorns, with our prince winning the day.

At last he gets into the castle and sees the princess asleep in the court and is about to kiss her when Minerva enters and freezes him, inches from Aurora's lips. Thus, the scene is set up for a standoff between the wicked Godmother and the seven fairies.

Through some cunning and not a little magic the seven fairies blow the prince onto Aurora's lips and she awakes along with all the court, enraging Minerva, who is far more powerful than the seven and she casts a mighty spell. One of the fairy's thinking quickly, blocks the spell with a mirror and it bounces back onto Minerva who is at once plunged into the sleep of a thousand years.

Hurrah!

And of course, everyone lives happily ever after!