

Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company presents  
Kenneth Alan Taylor's

# Sleeping Beauty

INSIGHT PACK



**Nottingham  
Playhouse**



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## INTRODUCTION TO NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE

The Nottingham Playhouse makes bold and thrilling theatre. It is world-class, made in Nottingham and as diverse as our community.

Situated in Nottingham city centre, Nottingham Playhouse puts on a wide variety of drama, music, dance, comedy and of course, the legendary Nottingham Playhouse pantomime.

Nottingham Playhouse has been one of the United Kingdom's leading producing theatres since its foundation in 1948. Touring work nationally and internationally, the Playhouse remains firmly rooted in its vibrant home city, where its spacious modernist building – fronted by Anish Kapoor's Sky Mirror – is one of the region's most popular landmarks.

Within these walls we create productions large and small: timeless classics, enthralling family shows and adventurous new commissions.

We are currently The Stage Regional Theatre of the Year – an award made in large part in recognition of our uniquely ambitious and meaningful engagement with our many diverse communities.



Full of pantomime fun, read on to learn more about the characters and world of Nottingham Playhouse's production of Sleeping Beauty. We have lots of information, not only about the classic fairy tale, but also about the history of pantomime itself and the history of pantomime at the Playhouse.



## PLOT SYNOPSIS

EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC OF THIS YEAR'S PANTOMIME, SLEEPING BEAUTY.

With spectacular costumes, stunning sets, plenty of belly-laughs and magical musical numbers, our legendary panto is the perfect festive treat.

Discover the magical kingdom of Princess Rosalind a.k.a. Sleeping Beauty brought to life on Nottingham Playhouse's stage. When Sleeping Beauty pricks her finger on evil fairy Maleficent's spinning wheel the entire kingdom is sent to sleep.

Join us to find out if brave Prince Alexander, Jerry the Jester and Fairy Wisheart can foil the evil fairy's plans and save Sleeping Beauty. Will they live happily ever after?

Featuring all your festive favourites – slapstick comedy from your pantomime dame, "It's behind you!" banter, and a colourful pantomime villain in the shape of evil fairy Maleficent.

# CHARACTER BREAKDOWN



## **Jerry the Jester**

A loyal friend of the King and Queen, Jerry is part of the household staff in the Royal Palace as the Royal Jester. His dedication to the protection of Princess Rosalind led him to living in a cottage in the woods for 20 years. He is a funny young man who is close friends with Nurse Tilly Trot and the other members of the household, and he might even have a soft spot for the princess.



## **Nurse Tilly Trot**

Granted with the responsibility of being Princess Rosalind's nurse, Tilly Trot is an important figure in the court. She is so important that she is selected to look after Rosalind for the 20 years that she must live away from the palace. Although she can be a bit uncouth, she is a loving figure who stands up for the Princess in her times of need.



## **Princess Rosalind**

The only child of the King and Queen, Rosalind's christening is rudely interrupted when an evil fairy curses her to die. Although the curse is altered to a deep sleep, Rosalind is still destined to suffer at the witch's hand unless she can find true love's kiss. A wilful lady, Rosalind isn't going to go for the man instructed to be her husband by her parents, instead she follows her heart to true love.



## **Prince Alexander**

A brave and caring young man, Alexander originally appears to Rosalind as a sad prospect in the way of a husband; she hadn't even met him! But, when walking in the woods, Alexander bumps into a beautiful young lady and falls in love. Fate works in mysterious ways, and the arranged marriage no longer seems so daunting when the Prince and Princess discover that they have already met, and agreed to marry each other! Will his kiss save the day when Rosalind is sent into a deep sleep?

# CHARACTER BREAKDOWN



## Fairy Wisheart

The only one with the power to help prevent Maleficent's curse from coming true, Fairy Wisheart is a good fairy who protects Rosalind from afar. It is her gift that changes the nature of the curse Maleficent places on Rosalind, and enchants the castle to prevent them from aging during the Princess' 100-year sleep. She is wise and thoughtful, and brave to stand up to the evil witch.



## King Hubert

More susceptible to the jokes of Jerry and Tilly than his wife, King Hubert is a just and friendly King. He goes to great lengths to protect his daughter from the curse placed upon her by Maleficent, ordering all the spinning wheels in the country be destroyed. However, he is forced to say goodbye to her daughter for 20 years as she grows up away from the palace. Where his wife can be quite controlling and snobby, King Hubert has occasionally stood up to her ways!



## Queen Gertrude

Prim and proper, the Queen is not in favour of the constant jokes of both Nurse Tilly and Jerry. She is the Queen, you know! She has a streak of snobbery, especially towards commoners, and is very insulted at the idea of her daughter being betrothed to one. However, she loves her daughter very much and is devastated at the curse that Maleficent places upon her.



## Maleficent

Outraged at being forgotten in the invites for Rosalind's christening, Maleficent the Mean arrives in a flash of lightning to deliver the bad news; she also has a gift for the Princess and it's not a good one. She curses Rosalind to die before she reaches the age of 21. Even though Fairy Wisheart was on standby to help fight the curse, Maleficent still has many tricks up her sleeve to help her get her way!

# CAST AND CREW

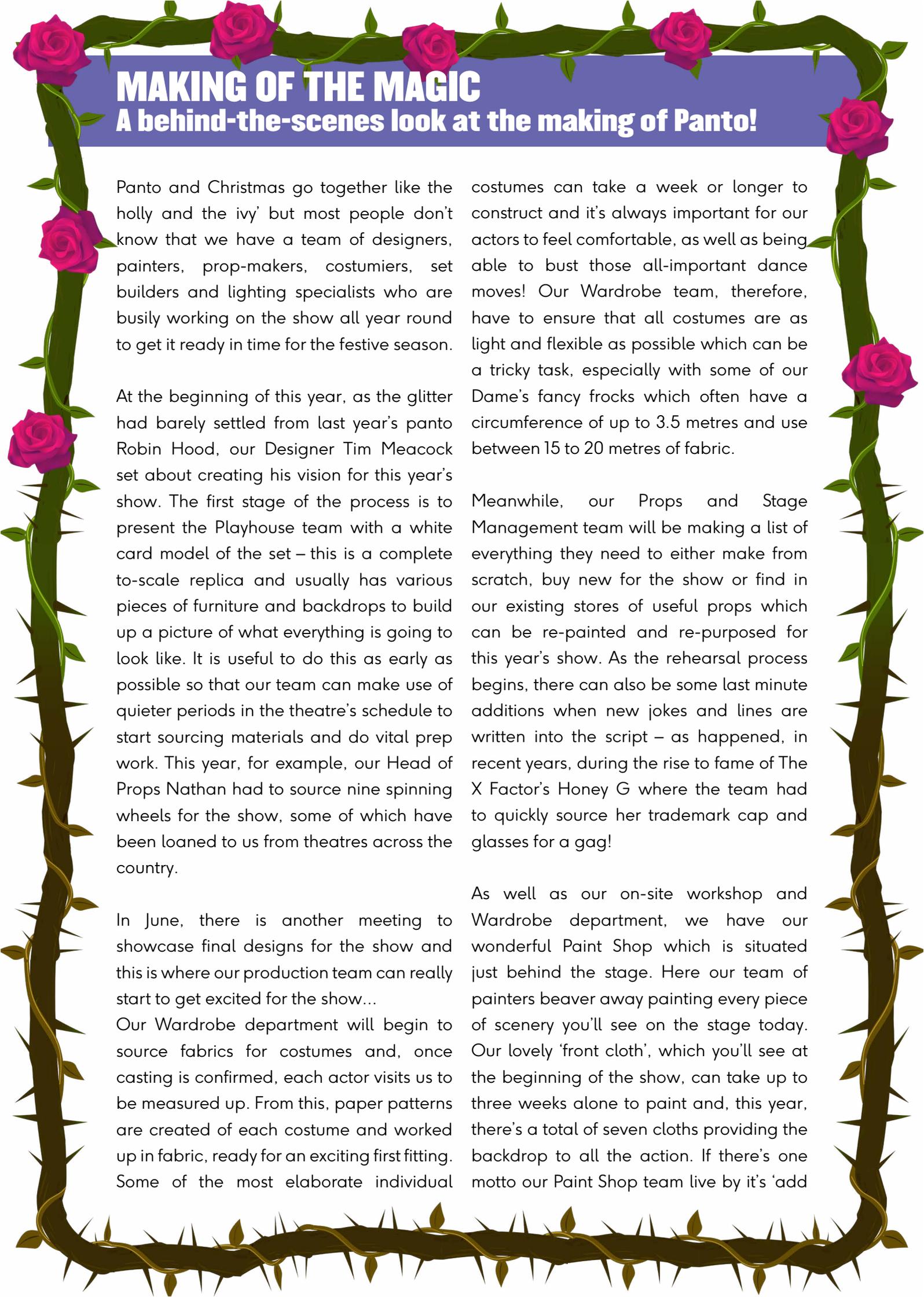
**John Elkington** as Nurse Tilly Trot  
**Darren Southward** as King Hubert  
**Rebecca Little** as Queen Gertrude  
**Tim Frater** as Jerry The Jester  
**Lisa Ambalavanar** as Fairy Wisheart  
**Toyin Ayedun-Alase** as Maleficent  
**Louise Dalton** as Prince Alexander  
**Maddie Harper** as Princess Rosalind



# MEET THE TEAM

Director & Writer - **Kenneth Alan Taylor**  
Designer - **Tim Meacock**  
Lighting Designer - **Jason Taylor**  
Sound Designer - **Adam P McCready**  
Choreographer & Assistant Director - **Adele Parry**  
Additional Casting - **Will Burton CDG**





# MAKING OF THE MAGIC

## A behind-the-scenes look at the making of Panto!

Panto and Christmas go together like the holly and the ivy' but most people don't know that we have a team of designers, painters, prop-makers, costumiers, set builders and lighting specialists who are busily working on the show all year round to get it ready in time for the festive season.

At the beginning of this year, as the glitter had barely settled from last year's panto Robin Hood, our Designer Tim Meacock set about creating his vision for this year's show. The first stage of the process is to present the Playhouse team with a white card model of the set – this is a complete to-scale replica and usually has various pieces of furniture and backdrops to build up a picture of what everything is going to look like. It is useful to do this as early as possible so that our team can make use of quieter periods in the theatre's schedule to start sourcing materials and do vital prep work. This year, for example, our Head of Props Nathan had to source nine spinning wheels for the show, some of which have been loaned to us from theatres across the country.

In June, there is another meeting to showcase final designs for the show and this is where our production team can really start to get excited for the show...

Our Wardrobe department will begin to source fabrics for costumes and, once casting is confirmed, each actor visits us to be measured up. From this, paper patterns are created of each costume and worked up in fabric, ready for an exciting first fitting. Some of the most elaborate individual

costumes can take a week or longer to construct and it's always important for our actors to feel comfortable, as well as being able to bust those all-important dance moves! Our Wardrobe team, therefore, have to ensure that all costumes are as light and flexible as possible which can be a tricky task, especially with some of our Dame's fancy frocks which often have a circumference of up to 3.5 metres and use between 15 to 20 metres of fabric.

Meanwhile, our Props and Stage Management team will be making a list of everything they need to either make from scratch, buy new for the show or find in our existing stores of useful props which can be re-painted and re-purposed for this year's show. As the rehearsal process begins, there can also be some last minute additions when new jokes and lines are written into the script – as happened, in recent years, during the rise to fame of The X Factor's Honey G where the team had to quickly source her trademark cap and glasses for a gag!

As well as our on-site workshop and Wardrobe department, we have our wonderful Paint Shop which is situated just behind the stage. Here our team of painters beaver away painting every piece of scenery you'll see on the stage today. Our lovely 'front cloth', which you'll see at the beginning of the show, can take up to three weeks alone to paint and, this year, there's a total of seven cloths providing the backdrop to all the action. If there's one motto our Paint Shop team live by it's 'add

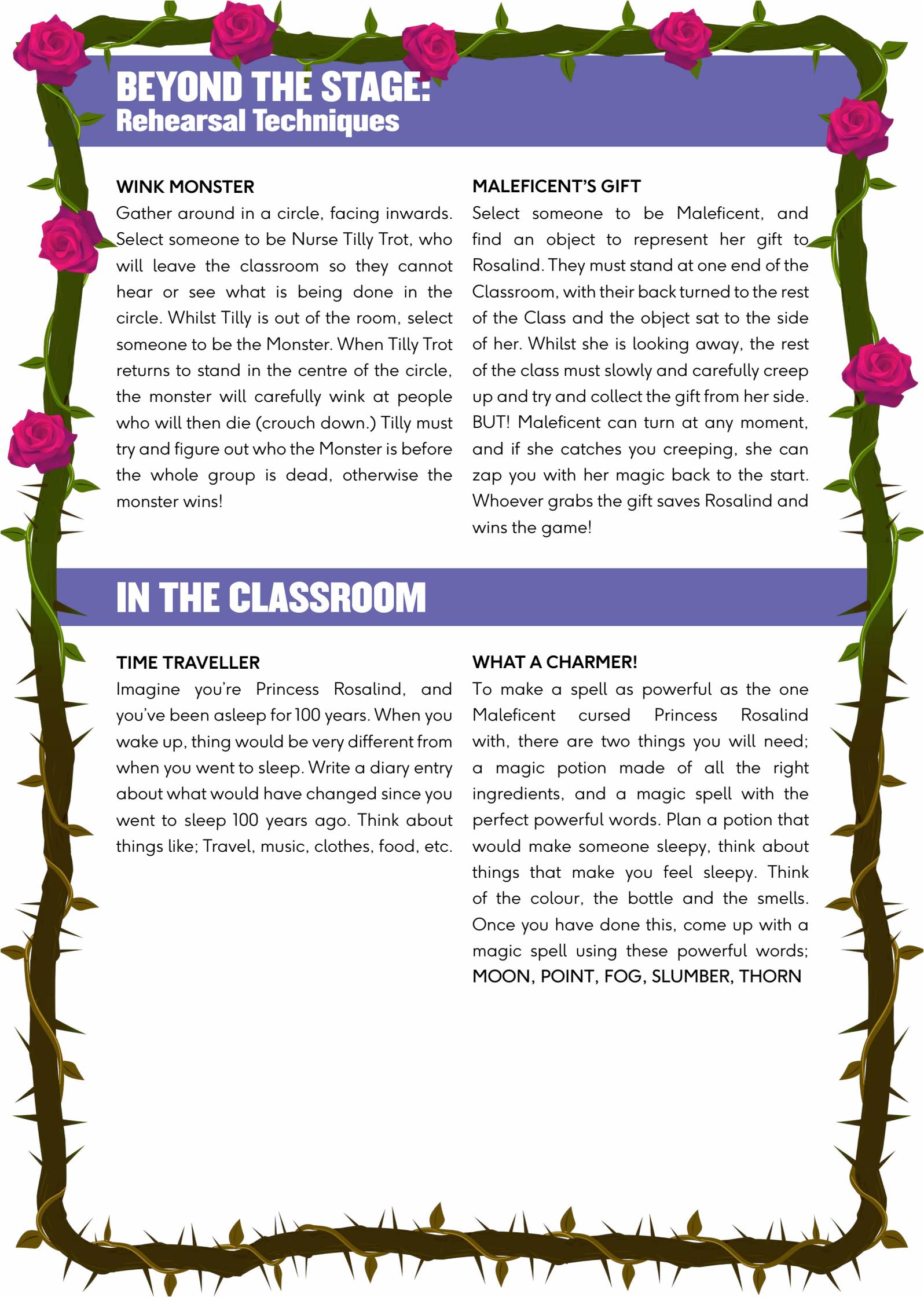
more glitter' and a fun, lesser known fact is that Kenneth, the Director, paints his own small section of one of the cloths each year as a fun, annual tradition.

Throughout the autumn, work on the production really begins in earnest and, following three to four weeks of rehearsal, it's then time for Tech Week! This is where all aspects of the production come together – our actors get to run through the show on the stage for the first time and all our production teams get to see their props, costumes and paintwork in all their glory, glistening underneath the stage lights. But work doesn't stop there, as tweaks will be made throughout the week and, once the show opens, our teams have to maintain their handiwork. Our Wardrobe team, for example, can use up to 100 pairs of shoes, 60-80 pairs of tights and around 500 hair grips throughout the festive season. Not to mention the daily laundry run and our two Dressers who are on hand for every show - especially to help with those quick costume changes!

We're incredibly lucky at the Playhouse to have such a dedicated and creative production team and army of technicians who work hard to create the magic you see on stage. Many of them agree that Panto is always the most special time of the year; it's exciting to see their designs and creations brought to life onstage and the pleasure it brings to you, our wonderful audiences.

Photography by Fraser Youngson





## BEYOND THE STAGE: Rehearsal Techniques

### WINK MONSTER

Gather around in a circle, facing inwards. Select someone to be Nurse Tilly Trot, who will leave the classroom so they cannot hear or see what is being done in the circle. Whilst Tilly is out of the room, select someone to be the Monster. When Tilly Trot returns to stand in the centre of the circle, the monster will carefully wink at people who will then die (crouch down.) Tilly must try and figure out who the Monster is before the whole group is dead, otherwise the monster wins!

### MALEFICENT'S GIFT

Select someone to be Maleficent, and find an object to represent her gift to Rosalind. They must stand at one end of the Classroom, with their back turned to the rest of the Class and the object sat to the side of her. Whilst she is looking away, the rest of the class must slowly and carefully creep up and try and collect the gift from her side. BUT! Maleficent can turn at any moment, and if she catches you creeping, she can zap you with her magic back to the start. Whoever grabs the gift saves Rosalind and wins the game!

## IN THE CLASSROOM

### TIME TRAVELLER

Imagine you're Princess Rosalind, and you've been asleep for 100 years. When you wake up, things would be very different from when you went to sleep. Write a diary entry about what would have changed since you went to sleep 100 years ago. Think about things like; Travel, music, clothes, food, etc.

### WHAT A CHARMER!

To make a spell as powerful as the one Maleficent cursed Princess Rosalind with, there are two things you will need; a magic potion made of all the right ingredients, and a magic spell with the perfect powerful words. Plan a potion that would make someone sleepy, think about things that make you feel sleepy. Think of the colour, the bottle and the smells. Once you have done this, come up with a magic spell using these powerful words; **MOON, POINT, FOG, SLUMBER, THORN**

# THE HISTORY

## SLEEPING BEAUTY

The history of Sleeping Beauty goes all the way back to the Dark Ages. There have been many different versions of the traditional story, the one that is seen as the first one came about in the 1340s in the same publication of tales as the Legend of King Arthur.

Since then, there have been many adaptations of the tale, but all root around the important facts that the Princess must fall asleep for 100 years and that only the kiss of true love can revive her. The most famous version is the version by the Brothers Grimm which was used as inspiration for the 1959 Disney film!

## PANTOMIME AT THE PLAYHOUSE

Sleeping Beauty was written and directed by Pantomime legend, Kenneth Alan Taylor. It is his 37th panto at Nottingham Playhouse, a tradition he introduced to the Playhouse himself when he was Artistic Director in 1984.

He played the Dame at the Playhouse for over 20 years, and still writes and directs the show to this day. Our Dame is now played by John Elkington.



# THE HISTORY

## PANTOMIME

Pantomime also comes from the Middle Ages, originating in the Royal Courts of the Kings and Queens. During the Tudor age, there would be a series of performances around Christmas leading up to Twelfth Night on the 6th of January in which an atmosphere of “misrule” would take over and social and gender norms would be inverted. Until the 1930s, pantomime would also include an alternative storyline called the Harlequinade which would also follow the same characters of Harlequin, Columbine, and Pierrot. This was very popular through the 1800s and is where the modern appearance of clowns comes from.

There are several features that are very important to the genre of Pantomime. Pantomimes generally revolve around a traditional folk tale, such as Jack And The Beanstalk, Cinderella, or Puss In Boots. The narrative is adapted to incorporate some of the essential pantomime moments. These include the characters resting on a log and being picked off one by one by a monster, to which the audience is encouraged to shout “Its behind you”, as well as other moments of interaction such as the main villain arguing with the audience.

One of the most unique aspects of the Pantomime is its emphasis on cross-gender casting. This is traditionally called Travesti, which means disguised in French. The central male character is often played by a woman, and this is known as a ‘Breeches role’, which comes from a time when laws restricted the use of child actors. One of the most famous Breeches roles is the role of Peter Pan on the stage. Pantomime

also features the older woman character being played by a man, which is called a ‘Pantomime Dame.’ This can be dated back to the 1500s when women were not allowed on stage and therefore all female characters were played by men. Nowadays, cross-gender casting is called “Cross-casting.”



# INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH ALAN TAYLOR, WRITER AND DIRECTOR

## **What do you think makes pantomime special at the Playhouse?**

I think it is because it is aimed at families, it's very much a family show. A 4-year-old or an 84-year-old could enjoy it. We are very strong on storyline, and the fact that it is squeaky clean. It is designed so that no one is offended. And I am very strict about that. I aim at the families. That doesn't mean that we talk down to the audience, there are scenes in the performance that get quite dark. Even if they don't quite understand each word, they will get the feeling of it. The story is so important.

## **How do you adapt a story for the panto?**

I always go back to the original story, if I can find it. One of the problems nowadays is that Disney gets hold of them and change them completely, down to the names. I still stick to the original when I can. For instance, the Pantomime for the Playhouse next year Beauty And The Beast the Disney one is completely different to the original. I've gone to the original story, where she had two sisters and a brother and a father who isn't an inventor because I think you should stick to the traditional narratives. The Disney one, whilst very good, has almost nothing to do with the original story despite the fact that there is a beast and a beauty. It's quite a complex story this year, and the original story sort of wraps up when she wakes up. We've added in an additional comedy scene, and a rabbit! It's a very funny scene, I think. I keep to the story, but I want to get as much comedy in as possible. Even the baddie, who is a very bad baddie, has a comedy scene.



## **Who is the best character to write for?**

Well I love writing for the Dame. I don't really think I have a favourite, but I concentrate on writing for the Dame because I used to play her. It obviously is a big part. I don't think I have a favourite. When I write, I write with our Playhouse regulars in mind. I know them, and I know their strengths, I write for them.

## **What has been your favourite panto to be involved in?**

Oh I have no doubt whatsoever, and it's hardly ever done, and it's Mother Goose. When I was in them I used to play the Dame, and Mother Goose has the best Dame. She's a completely rounded character. The Dame in nearly every Pantomime is there for the comedy relief, for people to take the mickey out of. In Mother Goose, she's vain, she's lovable, she's nice, and then she turns nasty. It's also the most moral pantomime.

# INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH ALAN TAYLOR, WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Usually, the plot of the Pantomime revolves around money. If you think about Jack and the Beanstalk, or Dick Whittington, it's all about gaining money. Mother Goose is about wanting just money and how wrong it is. It's a very moral pantomime. It's also a fantastic Dame. The reason that it is rarely performed nowadays is the absence of star Dames, the only one really now is Christopher Biggins.

## What are the essential ingredients for a good pantomime Dame?

I always say it has to be a man in a frock, not a drag act. There was a wonderful one-man play about a Dame, where the old Dame talks to the audience as he prepares himself to go on stage, applying makeup and such. I think there's a line in that which sums it up; "She's a creature of wonder, because when she comes on stage the children sit and wonder: is she or isn't she?" I prefer the more traditional approach rather than drag. The odd thing is, when I was doing the Dame, the children outside wouldn't recognise you, as they believe the illusion on the stage. I think that's essential. This year we also have the Breeches role of a girl as the prince, which is something we've gone back to after a few years. In the rehearsal supper for this years, we had people saying 'Oh how wonderful' because they love the tradition of it. The Dame, and indeed all of pantomime, is also about the actor's personality. John, our Dame, is all John when he is on stage. Pantomime is all about personality.



# SONGS

When you see the show, listen out for this song! It might come in handy to know the lyrics!

## I Lift Up My Finger

Now some people make a fuss  
When a thing goes wrong  
Some start to swear and cuss  
Others sing a song  
I don't do either, that's all 'nah poo'  
When a thing goes wrong with me  
This is what I do

I lift up my finger and I say  
"Tweet Tweet, Shush Shush, Now Now,  
Come Come"

And there's no need to linger when I say  
"Tweet Tweet, Shush Shush, Now Now,  
Come Come"  
I just can't curse it makes me feel worse  
And I cannot suck my thumb

So I lift up my finger and I say  
"Tweet Tweet, Shush Shush, Now Now,  
Come Come"



## GO DIGITAL



**Sleeping Beauty Trailer**



**Sleeping Beauty Rehearsals**

## WHEN YOU WATCH THE SHOW

### Look out for:

- Keep an eye out for the aspects of traditional pantomime; such as the rest on the log scene, audience interaction, and the characters of the Breeches' Role and the Pantomime Dame!
- Watch out for topical references, what do you recognise from other films or music?
- Look out for the different ways that changes in scene are shown on stage, and how characters are included in scenes when they are not physically present.

