

Oh yes it is...

Pantomimes are many children's first experience of the theatre and what a way to start! Dashing heroes, beautiful heroines and villains you can boo and hiss at, they really are great family fun for all. Karen Neville offers up our guide to some of the star-studded highlights and those on the local stages...

Take a trip down the yellow brick road and join Dorothy and friends as they journey to visit *The Wizard of Oz* in the classic tale. There's the Scarecrow in need of a brain, the Tin Man who needs a heart, the cowardly Lion who wants some courage and of course, Dorothy who just wants to get back home. But what will happen on their way to Oz as they encounter the Wicked Witch of the West? Will the ruby slippers help take you to **The Phoenix in Bordon** to enjoy superb songs, laugh out loud comedy and lots of opportunity for you to join in and have a great time. *The Wizard of Oz* is on 16th to 18th and 23rd to 25th January. Tickets £10. Call **01420 472664** or visit www.phoenixarts.cloudvenue.co.uk/thewizardofoz

Who wouldn't want to rub a magic lamp and have all their wishes come true? Join Aladdin, Widow Twankey, Abanazar and Princess Jasmine with lamp-fuls of laughter and a cave of surprises in this

year's panto *Aladdin* at **The Anvil, Basingstoke**. Starring as Aladdin is BBC favourite Mark Rhodes, half of duo Sam & Mark. Another familiar TV face, Mark Moraghan known to many from *Holby City* and *Emmerdale*, is the evil sorcerer Abanazar. Join Wishee Washee in the laundry and follow Aladdin on his fearless quest. With spectacular scenery, sensational special effects, stunning costumes and a surprise or two you're sure for a great family night out at The Anvil, Basingstoke. Catch Aladdin from 12th December to 5th January. Tickets start at £20, call the box office on **01256 844244** or visit www.anvilarts.org.uk

Join Dick and his cat on their adventure as they try to seek their fame and fortune in London with the sinister King Rat and Revolting Rabbits trying to thwart them all the way. *Dick Whittington* is full of everything that makes a great panto – hilarious jokes, sing-a-long songs and lots of audience participation. Making the show accessible for

all there are 'relaxed' performances, an audio described show for visually impaired and a sign-language interpreted performance. Tickets for Dick Whittington at **Theatre Royal, Winchester**, cost from £10.50-£25.50. To book visit www.theatreroyalwinchester.co.uk/whats-on/dick-whittington

It's time to watch Jack climb that beanstalk in this year's panto *Jack and the Beanstalk* at **Princes Hall, Aldershot** – the foolish boy has swapped the family's only cow for some magic beans, but what will he and his mum Dame Trott find at the top of the beanstalk – will he be able to defeat the giant and reunite with the girl he loves? This Christmas cracker runs from 6th to 31st December and tickets cost from £15 to £29. Call the box office on **01252 329155** or book at www.princeshall.com/book-online

Aladdin seems a popular choice for panto this year and there's another version courtesy of **The Harlington in Fleet** where

once again, Aladdin will be hoping aboard the magic carpet to find the magic lamp and release the genie but that's only where his adventures start. Will Aladdin become the hero, save Princess Jasmine and defeat the evil Abanazar? The panto runs from 12th to 28th December with school shows on 12th, 13th, 18th and 19th. Tickets £18. To book call **01252 811009** or visit www.theharlington.co.uk

A panto with a difference is being staged at **The Phoenix in Bordon** (as well as *The Wizard of Oz*, details above) – this one's strictly for over 18s only. Following on from the success of last year's adults panto, this year Pumpkin Pantos bring you *Cinders-A-Fella!* They'll throw in a naughty mix of cross-dressing, smut and rather rude words in this show set in the 1970s,

Cinders-A-Fella is 'probably' the world's first glam-rock panto and includes all your favourite panto characters, but set in the era

of T-Rex, Sea Monkeys and the Ford Cortina – be prepared to snigger! *Cinders-A-Fella* is on 19th to 21st December. Tickets £12. Call **01420 472664** or visit www.phoenixarts.cloudvenue.co.uk/cindersafella

Godalming folk are in for a real treat this festive season with the first professional family pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, at **The Borough Hall** and one of its stars is local radio presenter Mark Carter who says: "Being part of a panto is always something I've fancied. Best of all, it's on home soil in Surrey. In my role as the baddie, I'm expecting plenty of boos but hopefully some cheers along the way too!" Mark stars as Fleshcreep in the production from 12th to 24th December. Tickets £22, call the box office on **01483 361101** or www.GodalmingPanto.com

Godalming Players present what they are calling "the fairy godmother of all pantomimes" at **The Ben Travers Theatre, Charterhouse School, Godalming**. So you can probably guess they are putting on *Cinderella* complete with the ugly sisters, Prince Charming and the rush to get home before the clock strikes midnight. Will all be happy ever after? Find out on 14th, 15th and 19th to 22nd December. Tickets £12.50, book online at www.gtguk.com or call **07402 484 484**.

The Haslemere Thespians will be putting on the fast and furious tale of *Puss in Boots* at Haslemere Hall in the new year, just when you need a lift after Christmas. Join them for the classic story of the miller's son, a princess, a nasty ogre, a talking cat, two fighting fairies, a pair of old boots and some rather scary rabbits and leave feline like you're the cat's whiskers! *Puss in Boots* runs from 10th to 18th January. Tickets £8.50-£13.50, call **01428 642161** or www.tickets.haslemerehall.co.uk/sales/genres/theatre/puss-in-boots

The Lynchmereans are a splendid group who give children from the age of 8 upwards the opportunity to perform and they're doing just that again with their panto this year, *Aladdin*. They'll be on stage at the **Hardman Hoyle Memorial Hall in Hammer** on 26th to 28th December with this magic carpet ride of a show. General admission tickets are just £7 with offers available for families and group bookings. To book and for more details visit www.lyncmherepantomime.co.uk/ or call **01428 658179**.

