

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...

Panto stalwarts Kit Hesketh-Harvey and Eagle Radio's Peter Gordon are once again back at **Guildford's Yvonne Arnaud** for a show with some real X Factor and we literally mean some X Factor! Finalist from the 2017 series Holly Tandy stars as Princess Aurora in this year's panto *Sleeping Beauty*. Holly promises audiences a surprising twist adding that her character is all about "female empowerment". Can the princess wake from the sleep spell cast on her as a baby? Will the charming prince save the day? Award-winning choreography, sparkling sets and costumes, magic and laughter all come together to make this a must-see family show. *Sleeping Beauty* runs from Friday 6th December to Sunday 5th January. Tickets from £23; call the box office on **01483 440000** or visit www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk

Godalming folk are in for a treat this festive season with the first professional family

pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, at **The Borough Hall**. 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 show, from 12th to 24th December. Tickets £22, call the box office on **01483 361101** or visit www.GodalmingPanto.com

One of panto-land's most sought after comedians, Bobby Davro, is back on stage doing what he does best at **The New Victoria Theatre** in **Woking** where the funny man will be playing Wishee Washee in *Aladdin* in his own inimitable style. He'll be joined by another very familiar face in that of former *Strictly Come Dancing* star Brendan Cole as the Genie of the Ring. Younger panto goers will also recognise CBBC star Mischa Eckerley who joins as Princess Jasmine. And there can't be

many pantos across the country with an opera singer (David Phipps-Davis as Widow Twankee) and ventriloquist (Dawson Chance as the Chief of Police) among the cast from 6th December to 5th January. Tickets from £13, book at www.atgtickets.com/woking or call **0844 871 7645**.

The Haslemere Thespians will be putting on the fast and fur-ious 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. For tickets – £8.50-£13.50 – call **01428 642161** or visit www.tickets.haslemerehall.co.uk/sales/genres/theatre/puss-in-boots

The biggest stars of **Leatherhead Theatre's** *Sleeping Beauty* will be some of its smaller cast members as many of the town's youngsters will be showcasing their talents in this classic tale. As Queen Maleficent bids to rule the Kingdom of Nod, will the handsome prince succeed in waking the sleeping princess with a kiss before it's too late? Find out from 20th to 31st December. Tickets from £18.50 adults. Call the box office on **01372 365141** and visit theleatherheadtheatre.com

Take a magical carpet ride to the Far East at **Dorking Halls** when *Aladdin* hopes to make wishes come true in this year's fun-filled family panto. Starring Harry Reid, known to *EastEnders* fans as Ben Mitchell, along with Jenny Richardson from *The Worst Witch* as The Spirit of the Ring. Wacky Widow Twankey will make you laugh at the laundry, boo and hiss at the evil Abanazar and marvel at the magical Genie of the Lamp.

This Aladdin is sure to be genie-ous! *Aladdin* runs from 14th to 29th December.

Tickets from £20 adults; to book visit www.dorkinghalls.co.uk/whats-on/panto/ or call the box office on **01306 881717**.

You shall go to the ball at **Shamley Green** when SHADES perform the classic *Cinderella* on 23rd to 25th January at Arbuthnot Hall. For details of performance times and tickets, visit www.shamleygreenshades.co.uk

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**.

There's a treat for younger theatre goers at **G-Live** in Guildford from Father Christmas who is on his rounds... and he needs a wee! At every house Father Christmas eats and drinks the tasty treats that have been left for him. But when he reaches number 10 he realises that he's forgotten to do something rather important and he really, really, really needs a wee! TaleGate Theatre Productions hit the perfect combination of witty humour, fantastic music and the extra sparkle for which they have become known in this fabulously funny and brilliantly bouncy musical adaptation of Nicholas Allan's much-loved book *Father Christmas Needs a Wee*. This is a 45 minute production followed by a meet and greet with the big man himself where the children will receive a Christmas present. Find out if Father Christmas does indeed get to have a wee on 14th, 15th and 20th to 24th December. Tickets £16.50 adults, £15.50 children. To book call **01483 369350** or visit www.glive.co.uk/online/tickets-father-christmas-needs-a-wee-guildford-2019

For something a little different, let **Spectrum Ice** transport you to Neverland this Christmas, as the popular pantomime *Peter Pan* returns to the rink. The fun-filled festive show in Guildford will run from 13th to 15th December and will feature performances from some rising skating stars. To book and for performance details visit www.guildfordspectrum.co.uk/ice-skating/pantomime/ Enjoy!

