NEW EXHIBITION CELEBRATES ALL THINGS PANTO

Pantomime season is almost here, and this year Canterbury is celebrating the history of this popular British institution in a brand new interactive exhibition at The Beaney.

Panto came to Britain in the 16th century having started out as a form of Italian street theatre, or 'commedia dell'arte'. Over the centuries it has developed into a much loved tradition, and for many people, this popular genre is the first experience of the world of theatre.

Developed in partnership with the University of Kent Special Collections and Archives department, the new exhibition, titled 'Oh Yes It Is!', opens on Saturday 25 November and features items from the David Drummond collection.

Recently acquired by the University of Kent, it is one of the largest collections of pantomime related material in the UK and includes posters, props, programmes and costume designs spanning over two hundred years.

The exhibition has a special section presented by David Drummond celebrating the life and work of Joseph Grimaldi. An influential figure from the world of pantomime, Grimaldi expanded and developed the role of the clown within the harlequinade genre throughout the early 1800s.

The Beaney is also showcasing items from its own collection as part of the exhibition. Interactive spaces allow visitors of all ages to immerse themselves in the genre and include Widow Twankey's launderette, Dick Whittington's road to London and the Giant's library.

Children and the young at heart can enjoy pantomime-themed dressing up and colouring as well as a Dick Whittington-themed trail around the Beaney. There is also a graphical timeline tracking the people and wider historical events that have shaped and influenced pantomime since the 1700s.

The timeline concludes with an area featuring current set and costume designs kindly loaned by Evolution Productions. Emily Wood and Paul Hendy started Evolution Productions in 2005 and have since built a reputation for superior, bespoke pantomimes with the emphasis on high quality production values, strong casting and genuinely funny scripts.

Chairman of Canterbury City Council's Community Committee, Cllr Neil Baker, said: "Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre is home to one of the best pantomimes in the country, so it makes perfect sense for The Beaney to host this celebration just around the corner. It's a must-see exhibition for all panto fans and I'm sure it's going to prove very popular."

Paul Hendy said: "We are absolutely thrilled to be working with the Beaney on this incredible pantomime exhibition. I was lucky enough to be given a sneak preview of some of the exhibits and it's a marvellous insight into British culture over the last 150 years. Pantomime is a truly unique British tradition and it's wonderful that it is being celebrated in this way."

Canterbury City Council's Director of Museums and Galleries, Joanna Jones, said: "We're delighted to be working with key partners to celebrate Canterbury's long association with pantomime through this interactive show. The Beaney exhibition and the Marlowe Theatre's pantomime are complementary activities, providing a great day out for families and other audiences to enjoy during the festive season."

The exhibition coincides with Canterbury's 2017 pantomime, Peter Pan, which runs from Friday 24 November at the Marlowe Theatre.

'Oh Yes It Is!' is free to visit and runs from Saturday 25 November to Sunday 18 February 2018 in the Special Exhibitions Room at The Beaney. It is organised in partnership with the University of Kent Special Collections and Archives department, with special thanks to Evolution Productions, and co-curated with Jo Dyer from Animate Arts Company.

For full details visit www.thebeaney.co.uk or call 01227 862162.

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