



A Giant Panto Sprouts at the Huron Country Playhouse in Grand Bend

Wednesday, July 31, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum, a giant panto your way comes! Magic beans, an enchanted harp, and a hungry giant take over Grand Bend as a brand new panto version of the popular fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk* hits the stage at the **Huron Country Playhouse II** from **August 8 to August 31**.

Jack and the Beanstalk: The Panto tells the story of a boy named Jack and his mother who need to make money fast. Jack must sell their beloved cow Daisy at the market, but much to his mother's dismay, he returns with only a few beans. But these are no ordinary beans ... they're enchanted. When Princess Buttercup is kidnapped by Evilus Maximus, the giant's wicked assistant, Jack offers to save the day to win the royal reward. He climbs the enormous beanstalk that has sprouted up in the middle of his family's garden to reach the giant's castle. Jack is quickly joined by his friends who help him break into the castle inhabited by a humongous giant who has an even bigger appetite. The story has been adapted for the stage by **Caroline Smith**.

"*Jack and the Beanstalk: The Panto* is packed with family fun," says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment. "The outrageous characters, beloved storyline, extravagant costumes, and contemporary music make for a wildly entertaining production. You can't help but get caught up in the action – cheer for Jack and boo the villain!"

Credited with several past Drayton Entertainment hits, including *Newsies*, *Mamma Mia!*, and the previous panto productions of *Cinderella*, *Aladdin* and *Snow White*, Director and Choreographer **David Connolly** creates a lively production full of humour and heart. He is joined by Music Director **Nico Rhodes** who leads the five-piece band through familiar pop songs from artists including Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Rascal Flats, ABBA, Whitney Houston, and many more.

From Jack's village to the castle in the sky, Set Designer **Jean Claude Olivier** brings the fairy tale to life with stunning backdrops that are complimented by **Kevin Fraser's** kaleidoscopic lighting design. Costume Designer **Rachel Berchtold** offers extravagant costumes full of vibrant colours, cheery patterns and lots of glitz and glamour that help to bring this joyous story to life.

Leading the charge on this harrowing adventure is **Ben Chiasson** making his Drayton Entertainment debut as Jack. A recent graduate of Sheridan College, he previously appeared in *Freaky Friday* at Theatre Aquarius, *Red Rock Diner* at Stage West Calgary, and *Anne of Green Gables* at the Charlottetown Festival.

A panto isn't a panto without a dame – **Justin Bott** is Jack's zany mother Widow Twaddle. Bott appeared as one of the stepsisters in last season's panto *Cinderella*, and as Simeon in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* in 2017. **Tim Porter**, whom audiences may remember from several pantos including *Snow White* (Woody), *Aladdin* (Wishy) and *Cinderella* (Buttons), is Jack's jovial younger brother, Super Simon.

Aaron Walpole elicits many boos from the audience in the role of the baddie, aptly named Evilus Maximus. Walpole has appeared in several Drayton Entertainment productions including this season's hits *Rocky: The Musical* and *You'll Get Used To It! ... The War Show*.

Sheldon Davis takes on the role of Clarence, The Town Crier, with **Karen Wood** as Mother Nature, a goofy fairy who assists Jack in his adventure. Davis has appeared in many Drayton Entertainment productions including *Sexy Laundry*, *All Shook Up*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, among others. Wood spent eight seasons at the Stratford Festival and ten seasons at the Shaw Festival. She has appeared in many Drayton Entertainment productions including *All Shook Up*, *The Ladies Foursome*, *Too Many Cooks*, and *The Sound of Music*.

Mariah Campos makes her Drayton Entertainment debut as Princess Buttercup, the spirited royal who rules the land with her overprotective father King Buttercup, played by **Curtis Sullivan**. Campos appeared in *The Music Man* at the Stratford Festival, *Air Farce New Year's Eve Special* on CBC, and *King of the Camp* on YTV, while Sullivan has appeared in numerous productions with Drayton Entertainment including *Man of La Mancha*, *Anything Goes*, *Carousel*, and more.

Matthew Chenuz, Sam DiGiuseppe, Heather Kosik, Tyler Pearse, Kristen Pottle and **Sash Striga** round out the impressive ensemble, which also features 30 local youth who perform on a rotating schedule throughout the run alongside the professional cast.

The children's chorus includes:

- **Cassie Wilkie**, and **Tyler Wilkie** of Cambridge
- **Madeline Leung** of Carlisle
- **Claire Stecho** of Exeter
- **Emerson Caramao**, and **Julia Green** of Grand Bend
- **Marissa Gosse** of Ilderton
- **Genevieve Huggins** of Kitchener
- **Claire Allen-Curry, Emma Blesity, Jasmeen Boparoy, Maggie Busch, Preslee Candy, Ryan Dodge, Evan Doerr, Abigail Jean, Ava Polcz, and McKenzie Trudgeon** of London
- **Maizy Bryans** of Mount Brydges
- **Owen Smith** of Oakville
- **Evan Johnson** of Stratford
- **Erica Mota, Jasmine Melo, Lauren Therrien, and Jennifer Weeks** of Strathroy

- **Ashley Aarts**, and **Grace Aarts** of Tavistock
- **Cale Sitter** of Thedford

Regular performance tickets are \$48 for adults, \$29 for youth under 20 years of age and \$39 for groups of 20 or more and select Discount Dates. HST is applicable to all ticket prices.

Jack and the Beanstalk: The Panto is proudly sponsored by **Agway Metals**. The Media Sponsor is **Jack 102.3** of London. The Design Sponsor is **Darlene O'Rourke Photography**. The Youth Theatre Education Sponsor is **TD Bank Group**. The 2019 Season Media Sponsor is **CTV**.

Jack and the Beanstalk: The Panto is on stage from **August 8** to **August 31**. Tickets may be purchased in person at the **Huron Country Playhouse** Box Office, online at www.huroncountryplayhouse.com or by calling the Box Office at **(519) 238-6000** or toll free at **1-855-DRAYTON (372-9866)**.

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