

Cast and crew at Capital Theatres look forward to the relaxed performance of the panto

Each year Capital Theatres invite more than 600 children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) to enjoy a relaxed performance of the pantomime, which this year will be in early December.

A spokesperson for the theatre company said: "Pantomime is one of Britain's greatest festive traditions and Capital Theatres believe everyone should be given the opportunity to enjoy the magical childhood experience.

"Due to additional needs, pantomime and indeed theatre generally, is largely inaccessible for children who attend ASN schools and the relaxed panto is often their only theatre experience."

The term relaxed means a less formal performance, and includes a dialling down of sound and light, (roving lights which might be shone at the audience will most likely not be used), but it may also affect the script or the content of the panto. Pantomime is a very loud event so the actual sound level is turned down from start to finish but specific moments may also be looked at. Some teachers may be invited to watch a

performance beforehand to assess if there are any trigger points or anything which could be overwhelming and which would impact on the young audience. Those invited to the special performance will, for example, include children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, sensory and communication disorders, or a learning disability, but there are also audience members with physical disabilities.

It is possible to offer the free tickets for this performance thanks to support from [Cash for Kids](#). There are also some free tickets for children with care experience and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and all members of the audience are invited along with a carer or teacher.

This is a performance which the cast and crew at Capital Theatres enjoy a great deal. Usually there are around a dozen ushers working at each performance, but for this one day around 25 volunteers from all areas of the company come forward to treble that number. Each school is then assigned one member of the front of house team to look after them during their visit to the theatre.

The auditorium is made to feel quite different as the house lights are not fully dimmed as they would be for other performances. Some young people can find it too intimidating to be in full darkness, and it allows anyone who might need to get up and walk around to do so more easily. There are few expectations of “proper” audience behaviour – and keeping quiet and still is not one of them.

Children and carers are able to feel relaxed, free to make noise, move around, be themselves and enjoy the pantomime in a way that suits their needs.

The audience comes from Edinburgh and beyond and will be welcomed to the production by the main cast members coming out on stage at the beginning and introducing themselves, so that any nuances in their character are made known. If someone is a

goodie or a baddie then they must declare themselves at this point. And if there is something which could be a bit scary about their character then they will outline that and give a bit of background.

The sound levels during the show are reduced from start to finish, and loud bangs and sound effects may be removed if thought necessary. The production crew look at anything which could be overwhelming or which could be triggering for certain conditions such as epilepsy.

As well as in the auditorium, the theatre creates some breakout spaces where anyone who needs to leave the theatre can feel safe. Some of these have a TV screen so that young people can still watch the production albeit from a distance.

Capital Theatres was the first organisation in Scotland to produce a fully accessible Relaxed Performance in 2012, and these have become an essential feature in their annual programme.

Below you will see some of the photos from last year's relaxed performance.



Festival Theatre – Relaxed Panto Capital Theatres PHOTO © Stewart Attwood Photography 2022.



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