

InterAction Children's Theatre presents Robin Hood: A Musical Panto Adventure

written and directed by Kate Elman Wilcott Choreography by Sarah Johnson and Sarah Butler, Vocal Direction by Michael McDonald and Zoe Caddell Live Music performed by The Aviators under the direction of Chuck Teed

December 16th-18th Imperial Theatre Saint John NB

(Saint John, NB) – InterAction Children's Theatre Co. presents the world premiere of Robin Hood: A Musical Panto Adventure, at Imperial Theatre Dec. 16th-18th. The production will be staged by IACT's Advanced Performance Company, with "celebrity" cameo appearances throughout each show. Tickets are available at Imperial Box Office 674-4100 and on-line at imperialtheatre.nb.ca. For information on the company, visit www.interactiontheatre.com

This is IACT's 10th anniversary season, and the company's holiday productions have become a theatrical tradition in Southern New Brunswick. This December, IACT will stage its first Panto, a tradition borrowed from England, where almost every town has a panto during the holiday season. Pantos are a mix between a "fractured fairy tale" and a musical extravaganza. Pantos are exuberantly larger than life, using familiar stories to form the basis for exaggeration, variation, and topical social commentary, as well as outrageous jokes and rollicking songs and dances.

Robin Hood incorporates traditional Panto standards, including audience participation (in the form of cheering the heroes and booing the villains), candy passed out to audience members, and familiar rock n' roll songs performed by the talented young actors.

"I have been approached for the past 10 years to produce a traditional panto, and after this season's Advanced Performance Company auditions I knew this company had the talent and skills to go for it," explains director Wilcott. "Pantos require actors who have the musical abilities to rock out to the songs, and the sophistication to nail the comic timing. Many of the performers have "grown-up" studying live theatre, and they've created larger than life characters and tell the story with flair."

"Pantos are a tradition throughout England, where the whole town joins together for the event. It's not theatre where you sit in the dark and remain quiet and still, rather you are encouraged to sing along, talk to the characters, and maybe even join them on stage." Robin Hood incorporates popular music from the '80's, as well as jokes for the children and the adults. Maid Marion and her Maiden friends decide that rather than marrying their "Suitors" they'll set off on an adventure in Nottingham. They infiltrate the Army of Merry Men, led by a washed-up Robin Hood, by disguising themselves as archers. Meanwhile, the village has been ravaged by the "King's cruel, evil, nasty brother", Prince John, and his band of eager but bumbling thugs. With all Pantos, there is a Grand Dame character, Nurse Chicken, played by a man, as well as a series of cameo appearances by celebrities from the local community.

"The Shrek movies are a great example of a Panto. Fairy Tale characters, familiar music, jokes aimed at adults and many jokes and pranks for the kids."

This production has been created by a wealth of talented performing arts professionals who live and work in Saint John. Sarah Butler and Sarah Johnson choreographed the dances, Michael McDonald is the production vocal director, and Chuck Teed is the band leader. Local music scene favourites, The Aviators, will perform as the live pit band. Wilcott is the playwright and director.

Robin Hood: A Musical Panto Adventure has public performances on Thursday Dec. 16th at 7 p.m. and Saturday Dec. 18th at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. School productions are Dec. 16th and 17th at 9:30 a.m. Schools should contact the IACT office at 674-9192 to book package tickets. A teaching guide is also available.