**Introduction**

**Dick Whittington – Lyric Hammersmith**

Hello and welcome to this introduction to the audio described performance of **Dick Whittington**, written by Jude Christian and Cariad Lloyd and directed by Jude Christian.

We’re looking forward to welcoming you to the Lyric Hammersmith on Saturday 15th December. The show begins at 6.00pm. If you’d like to explore the set and costumes, come along to the touch tour before the performance at 4.30pm. The pantomime lasts for two hours and thirty minutes, including an interval of fifteen minutes. We’ll repeat this introduction live in the theatre 15 minutes before the show, so we can let you know of any last minute changes and you can check that your headset is working. **Dick Whittington** will be audio described by Ruth James and Alison Clarke.

If you’ve never been to a pantomime before, here’s **what to expect**. Unlike other plays where people sit and listen quietly, at pantomimes you’re allowed to shout out and sing along, boo the baddies and cheer the goodies. Some characters will ask you to greet them with songs and actions. Once or twice they throw sweets out to us or even ask a member of the audience to come up and take part. We’ll describe all of this during the show. There’s also a pit just in front of the stage, where the band sits and play keyboards, guitars and drums.

Please note that this performance includes flashing lights, strobes, haze, loud bangs, songs and sweets. The music is often very loud – we’ll try to avoid speaking then but you may need to turn us up using the volume control, the wheel on the right hand side of the headset - but please don’t forget to turn it down again!

**Dick Whittington** is a tale of changing fortunes, romance and magic, with lots of jokes thrown in. The story takes place in **Hammersmith**, in London. We visit centre of London, with a blue pigeon on a plinth, The Over Easy Café and also a very creepy green cellar.

When we enter and take our seats a painted cloth screens most of the stage. The background is green and in the centre is an image of huge red spotted bundle tied to the end of a rough wooden stick. This seems to have burst through the screen leaving and impression of torn white fabric around it.

The cloth is framed by a high arch decorated in a turquoise and gold chequer board pattern which extends down to the floor on the left and right. Three additional identical panels stand on each side one behind the other. Long, thin lighting strips are attached to the frame and panels and during the performance these will sometimes light up in a variety of different colours. In front of the cloth the centre of the stage floor is blue with the chequer board, blue and gold repeated on the left and right.

As we wait for the performance to begin, coloured lights sweep across the audience, seeming to chase and dodge one another. Chinese lanterns in pastel shades hang from the front edge of the balcony and a glitter ball casts speckled lights over the walls of the theatre and the floor of the stage.

When the performance gets underway location changes quickly and often. Some of the locations are suggested by colourful backdrops and a few pieces of scenery. Backdrops are fabric painted with the place where the scene is happening and they cover the whole width of the stage.

The first person we meet is **Fairy Bow Belles,** who leaps out with a ringing of bells. Her dress is metallic bronze and in the shape of a large bell, and she has a sparkly golden jacket on top with the letters BB on the back. Bow’s hair is a short blonde bob that curls up at the ends with an enormous bright golden bow perched on the top. There’s another, small golden bow on a black ribbon round her neck. She wears glittering golden glasses on her very friendly round face which is wreathed in smiles whenever we meets us. On her feet are golden boots with tiny wings at the heels and there are more wings on the back of her jacket edged with white feathers. When Bow comes in, she shouts ‘Who loves London?’ and we shout back ‘We love London!’

**Dick Whittington** appears next – he’s a tall, skinny young man, newly arrived on the streets of London. He has a thatch of very black hair sticking straight up from his innocent, open face. He’s all the way from Wales and surveys the scene wide-eyed. He wears a waterproof orange cagoule over a stripy fairisle sleeveless pullover and long, green, waterproof shorts. He has blue ankle socks and bright orange Crocs – plastic sandals with holes in and straps at the back.

Now the cloth flies away and the stage is open to us. Facing us are cartoon like images of some London landmarks: dominating these is Tower Bridge painted in gleaming gold and edged with lights, and the river, A statue of Nelson stands high on his column in Trafalgar square on the right and on the left a huge blue pigeon stands on a stone plinth . At the back of the stage is a wide flight of five stairs leading to a small raised platform. The stairs are edged in blue light but during the performance the lights will change colour, often several times in one scene.

Bow Belles makes sure he meets **Tomasina Cat**, known as **Tom Cat**. She is a tall, slender girl dressed all in white, with tight white leggings, and a white crop top – both with Cat Power written on them in big black letters on the hems. There are black stripes on both, and over them she wears a white bomber jacket with black stripes, lined with white fur. She has a long white fluffy tail which sweeps round behind her, and big fluffy white furry ears on her dyed blond tightly sprung curls. Cat has blue sparkly eyebrows and a little black painted nose and white whiskers on her cheeks. Cat has pink ankle socks and black converse hi-top sneakers.

London is ruled by **Mayor Pigeon**. She is a small woman, her little face peeps out from a huge feathering Dic pigeon’s head with big goggly eyes of orange and yellow and a shiny yellow beak. Over a very blue suit and red tie, she wears a luxurious red velvet cloak with a blue hem that sweeps the floor and has a wide collar of grey feathers. Around her neck hangs a massive, glittering gold chain and her feet are red claws.

Cat takes Dick to the Over Easy Café, a back street greasy spoon. The exterior is painted onto a cloth which drops to conceal the area behind it. It’s an unprepossessing, down at heel little establishment with the river running nearby and in the street to one side is a red London bus, a bike propped against a wall and a car’

Here we meet **Sarah Fitzwarren** theproprieter and mother of Alice. Sarah is played by a man and so is very tall and towers over everyone. Sarah is statuesque, a larger than life character in every sense of the word from her extravagant costumes to her ample bosom and vivid make up. Her face is painted with a vivid palette. Her brilliant red lips are drawn in a pursed cupid’s bow, her cheeks glow a bright,shocking pink, and her eyes are shaded in electric blue. Her black false eyelashes are as long as the legs of the most terrifying spider and her eyebrows are thick black lines.

Sarah always ensures her clothes are appropriate to the occasion. When we first meet her she is wearing a full English breakfast; a creation in orange, black and green. This consists of a figure hugging bodice of baked beans which spill down onto her full skirts which feature sausages, an enormous fried egg, tomatoes, black pudding and ,as a nod towards current culinary fashion, half an avocado pear. On her feet she wears long bright orange platform boots with high heels and her hat is an elaborate creation of green vegetables and glittery pancakes and a tomato.

We’ll describe her other outfits as they appear.

We soon enter the Over Easy café where we face a counter with old fashioned cash machine. On the left stands a very complicated coffee machine a contraption labelled Grinder 2000. On the right of the counter are stands displaying cakes and croissants and a jug containing a few flowers. Cupboards are set into the front of the counter one of which displays the safe. High above the counter on the back wall four blackboards display the menu handwritten in chalk.

In front of the counter on the left and the right stand two identical small, square tables with faded worn blue and yellow tops. On each table stands ketchup and mustard Drawn up to each table are two red chairs which stand facing each other.

Her daughter is **Alice Fitzwarren**. Alice is a tomboy, in kneelength denim dungarees with red pockets . One strap hangs down. There’s a gold star on one leg. Under it, Alice wears a bright green vest sewn with glittery bobbles of different colours over a blue and white long-sleeved top. She wears lots of shiny coloured bobbles – even on her purple and pink pyjamas! On her mass of frizzy blonde ringlets she has a red woolly hat with a glittering blue bobble. Her legs are covered with orange tights and she wears yellow trainers. She has a lovely wide smile, big blue eyes and lots of freckles on her oval face.

There are four girls and two boys in **Chorus** - all in street clothes. Everyone wears something in denim – skirts, cut off jeans or dungarees, all paint-spattered with luminous paint and worn with bright fluorescent t-shirts and jackets, with extra bits of multicoloured flapping fringes of plastic sewn into shapes randomly placed on their clothing. They all wear white sneakers. They also play other characters. In the café they are chefs in white jackets and hats and black and white checked trousers. chefs and rats. As sailors, they wear long navy shorts, held up with braces over stripy t-shirts and red bobble hats.

From the café we descend into the damp green brick lined lair of Queen Rat, the evil baddy. Her purple throne is made of a network of pipes and discarded timber. Scattered around are numerous Harrods bags and there is a mountain of assorted cheese.

As rats they all wear grey short legging, big jumpers padded round the middle to make them look fat well fed. They have grey hoods with long cone-shaped noses and big ears. Their ears are bright fushia pink on their insides and match their long, long pink tails. They all wear grey fingerless gloves. **Robert and Roberta** lead the pack and wear shiny black and gold epaulettes over their grey shoulders.

They serve **Queen Rat**. Her hair is cut into a shoulder-length bob – one half black and the other shiny green, with a small pointed silver crown is perched between her long black ears, which have pink insides. Her face is pointy too, with black whiskers and a silver circle on the end of her nose. Queen Rat has a wide-shouldered short silver jacket . Her draped skirt hangs asymmetrical and swishes and swirls over her pink and black stripy tights. It is greeny black, shiny, sparkly and metallic.. worn over a draped, asymmetrical greeny black skirt, shiny and metallic. She also has a long fushia pink tail and pink feet with claws, while her hands are covered with long pink fingerless gloves.

We return to the streets of London, where a painted cloth presents us with a collage of iconic buildings: Tower Bridge again features prominently but now the scene includes among other buildings, the Houses of Parliament, the dome of St Paul’s cathedral, the London Eye, Big Ben and a green of a London park tower blocks and towering cranes.

The action moves to a boat on the River Thames. Initially only the stern of the boat is visible: a red, white and blue lifebelt prominently displayed.

The ship sets sail in act two.

We’re also asked to sing along during the show. There’s the traditional Hammersmith song

*Glory Glory Hammersmith*

*Glory Glory Hammersmith*

*Glory Glory Hammersmith*

*Hammersmithmas everyone!!*

Later there’s a songsheet and we’re invited to sing along. The words are:-

*Oh, I wanna dance with Somebody*

*I wanna feel the heat with Somebody*

*Yeah, I wanna dance with Somebody.*

*With Somebody who loves me*

**Cast and Creative Team Credits**

Cast (in alphabetical order) –

Mayor Pigeon, Captain P Jones and First Minister Merpigeon are all played by Margaret Cabourn-Smith

Alice Fitzwarren by Hollie Edwin

Bow Belles by Jodie Jacobs

Tom Cat by Keziah Joseph

Dick Whittington by Luke Latchman

Sarah Fitzwarren by Carl Mullaney

And Queen Rat by Sarah-Louise Young

All the other characters are played by members of the young ensemble:

Amelia Gregorian, Tristan Jones-Smith, Helena Morais, Corey Peterson, Stevie Ruffs and Rebecca White

The Musical Director is Oli Jackson

The Composer and Arranger is Corin Buckeridge

The Sound Designers are Ben and Max Ringham

The Lighting Designer is Tim Deiling

The Designer is Jean Chan

and the Director is Jude Christian.

That’s the end of these introductory notes. We’re looking forward to meeting you at the touch tour. If you have any queries, please call the Lyric Theatre on 020 8741 6850.