

Launton Village Players' Preservation of Music and Dramatic Arts Policy
Registered Charity No: 1190149

Pantomime

“Pantomime is important in British tradition. More commonly referred to as ‘Panto’, this theatrical form is passionately devoted to its audience. The sole purpose of Pantos is to make you laugh, dance and sing your heart out. And they deliver.”

The Grand Theatre Blackpool.

Pantomimes are very much rooted into British culture, appearing for the first time in the 17th century.

Pantomime started in ancient Rome. Pantomimes were then a production starring only one male dancer. The word ‘pantomime’ comes from the Greek ‘pantomimos’, which meant a dancer who acted all the roles in the story.

The Roman pantomime, because it was a solo performance, is not often considered the real deal. Instead, many recognise pantomime’s origin in the Italian ‘Commedia dell’Arte’, from the 16th century. This was a sort of street theatre, including acrobats and music. One of the most well known characters was Pulcinella, and Pulcinella is still a traditional figure of Italian theatre.

The Italian ‘Commedia’ arrived in British theatres in the late 1600s. This new form of theatre became known as ‘Harlequinades’, and gradually evolved into the pantomime we all know and love today. Although pantomime began in Italy it is now a part of our British identity. In Victorian times, theatre changed from using mime to also using spoken words with witty puns and word play. Pantomime’s physicality, which was typical of mime performances, along with a witty script resulted in the beginning of the tradition of Pantomime.

Pantos started to be performed at Christmas in the Victorian era, during the holiday period.

The stories of pantomime then began to develop and be centred around fairy tales and include some magic. The different characters, the comedy and happy ever after ending began to attract adults and also children.

Its long and interesting history is one of the reasons why pantomime is an important part of our culture and history. It is still popular today, and many families make the pantomime a regular Christmas tradition.

This tradition is one that persists today and the true spirit of a “family panto” needs to continue to be maintained.

Variety Shows

There is a history of these types of shows in Britain. From Victorian Music Hall to influencing shows on television, variety shows have played a great part in our history of entertainment.

A compere would introduce these shows and they would consist of a variety of acts including music, sketches, comedy, magic and ventriloquism for example. This style of show moved from the 1800s to radio and then television in the 1900s.

The Royal Variety Performance is still a well watched and popular variety show today but although the style of variety shows have influenced many shows on TV there are not so many actual variety shows televised today.

This entertainment form allows for the widest participation of different art forms and so we feel it's important to preserve this inclusive form of entertainment.

Theatrical Drama and Plays

"Theatre is a sense of escape, it transforms you into a new space. It can however, be many things. Theatre can be a source of intellectual learning, inspiration, and can even reflect your life. Theatre is live, and that's important. So much of our art is consumed through live-streams, through computers and so on – and this misses that extraordinary atmosphere, and sense of grounding and presence that theatre gives."

Darcey Bussell

Apart from the obvious reason of preserving and also bringing to life an author's works there is also the aspect of human endeavour which is that performance is key to human experience and live theatrical performance of a play can enrich all.

Conclusion

Live theatrical productions whether a pantomime, a variety show or a play engage with the audience in a different way to a recorded show, as the audience will use all of the senses in listening, seeing, feeling and participating in the atmosphere.

For the performers too it can be a personal development in confidence and self-esteem.

A live performance provides not just entertainment but also has inherent intrinsic value as well as having potential to be many other things such as thought provoking, educational and social.

Update

This document will be updated on an annual basis, or earlier if there is requirement to, or new statutory requirements are made.