

Robert Juliat shines it's lights on the Panto at Joburg Theatre



Few holiday traditions are more treasured in Joburg than the annual pantomime, held at The Mandela Stage at Joburg Theatre in Braamfontein.

This year, acclaimed writer, director and South Africa's queen of pantomime, Janice Honeyman has brought us the story of a poor local country boy, Jack the Joller, and his adventures with a family cow, some magic beans, an enormous beanstalk, an unfriendly giant and an enchanted hen that lays golden eggs.

Not seen on The Mandela Stage at Joburg Theatre since 2012, this ever-popular pantomime story is jam-packed with Honeyman's singular wit, double-entendres, charm and magic. Jack the Joller is being played by musical theatre sensation, Zolani Shangase with Casper de Vries making his pantomime debut as the villain, who is pitted against the ever-charming Lelo Ramasimong in the role of the Good Fairy.

Joburg Theatre's technical crew are renowned for pulling out all the stops when it comes to staging the pantomime. Long-standing technical manager at the Joburg Theatre and industry veteran, Enos Ramoroko, points out that the panto is one of the biggest drawcards for the Joburg theatre over the December holidays, and is a highlight in the year for cast and crew alike. "The characters on stage are always larger than life, and everyone has a leading role. In some productions, you can switch the followspot from one lead to another – but this simply does not work for the panto," he points out. "You need at least six followspots on the stage to keep up with the action."



According to Enos, the Joburg Theatre has been relying on some fairly out-dated fixtures to serve as followspots for a number of years. “The followspots that we have been working with at Joburg Theatre are well past their prime. We were running six units, two of which were thirty years old, another two twenty years old, and the newest are already a decade old. As a result, we had different outputs on all six of them and it was a huge challenge to try to balance them out.

“When we finally decided that there was space in the budget to upgrade the theatre’s followspots, I turned to a number of colleagues in the industry for product reviews and the overwhelming response was that Robert Juliat was the brand to invest in,” he says. Enos had the opportunity to see the Robert Juliat Cyrano in action at Mediatech 2019, held at the Ticketpro Dome in July. “When I saw the units in action, and got to experience them for myself, I knew that we had found the right solution,” he says.

In August of this year, the Joburg Theatre purchased four Robert Juliat Cyrano followspots from local distributor DWR Distribution and, according to Enos, they have not looked back.

“Our follow spotters tell me that they are really enjoying working with the Cyrano followspots, especially because they are able to achieve much smoother fading and they don’t have to deal with problems like stuck irises anymore. We are using all four units, in addition to two of our older ones, on the panto and have achieved uniformity across all of them without having to stress about balancing individual fixtures, which solves all of my problems. Most importantly, when you buy a world-renowned brand like Robert Juliat, you know that your fixtures will serve you for years to come, ensuring that the theatre will get a solid return on their investment,” he concludes.

Jack and the Beanstalk, a giant pantomime, is written and directed by Janice Honeyman, with choreography by Nicol Sheraton, musical direction by Dale-Ray Scheepers, lighting design by Graham McLusky and sound design by Akhona Bozo and will be staged from 2 November to 22 December at the Joburg Theatre.

For more information about Joburg Theatre’s Jack and the Beanstalk, and to book your tickets, visit <https://www.joburgtheatre.com/jack-and-the-beanstalk/>