**“ Zog “**

**Based on the children’s book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler.**

**Audio described programme notes for performance on Wednesday 17th  at 10:30am. W.S.**

Good morning and welcome to the Theatre Royal, Plymouth for this performance of **“Zog”**  based on the well-loved children’s book about a friendly little dragon, written by **Julia Donaldson** and illustrated by **Axel Scheffler**. This magical, smash-hit show is brought to you by Freckle Productions ( who were behind “Zog and the Flying Doctors “ and “Stick Man “ ) in association with the Rose Theatre.

My name is Wendy and I shall audio describe “Zog “ for you- it runs for approximately an hour, without an interval and is deemed suitable for those aged three and above. It’s bright and cheerful- full of fun, singing and dancing- with plenty for you to join in with !

Julia Donaldson’s much loved story about a little orange dragon has been cleverly adapted for the stage and includes some of the original repeated rhyming couplets. It has additional songs and music composed by **Joe Stilgoe** and several lovely puppets designed by **Lyndie Wright**. A very talented and creative five strong cast is directed by **Emma Kilbey** and the musical director is **Bobby Delaney**.

Zog is a keen young dragon- he is determined to win a gold star award at Madam Dragon’s school and tries very hard at everything. He starts in Year 1 as a tiny scared dragon but soon befriends Ronnie and Edwin. Over the years they learn all the basic skills that young dragons need - like flying, roaring, flame-throwing, capturing princesses and fighting knights ! The young dragons have to learn to deal with frustration and failure as they practise these vital skills and gradually acquire them. Of course, there’s lots of playful fun along the way and strong friendships are forged -Madam Dragon gently encourages them to aspire to greater things as they grow up.

 Our little orange hero Zog tries so very hard- perhaps too hard and he bumps, roars and burns his way through Years 1, 2 and 3 often becoming upset when he fails. Luckily the plucky Princess Pearl patches him up so he is ready to face his biggest challenge yet- a duel with the knight, Sir Gadabout the Great !

**The set.**

The set is very simple (and rather precarious for the actors ! )- it looks like a children’s giant metal climbing frame and is painted pale green with some added peach coloured planking and boards. On the left third there is a low ramp connected to three levels like deep steps- the lowest level is waist high and like a counter that juts out - above and behind it is the second level which has a planked floor, then above and behind that is the upper level. This is also reached by a tall scaffolding ladder at the back and it runs across the top as a planked gantry or walkway. This joins to the right hand side of the scaffolding stage – it steps down onto a climbing frame with inbuilt side ladders but no platforms. The centre third of the frame below the gantry is a clear space for the cast to enter, exit and perform. The nimble actors scurry up and down, swinging on the framework, using all the levels, ladders and platforms. The only other pieces of set are two cartoon-like, free-standing small fabric trees- they are bright green and fern-like with heavy bases and can be easily moved around. Woodland creatures often appear in or on them.

This pastel coloured set is placed on a large pale rectangular mat – above it hang three, 5 pointed stars which sometimes light up and twinkle against a beautiful deep blue back drop.

**Characters and costumes.**

We first meet **Madam Dragon** who runs the school- she is dressed in two shades of turquoise. She is warm and encouraging with a distinct Geordie accent and she wears large spectacles. Madam Dragon and 3 other actors are dressed in standard dragon costume- sneakers and socks are colour-matched to their high-waisted, below the knee shorts. These trousers have braces plus fabric triangles or scales running down the outer side-seams. They all wear a long sleeved tee shirt and a colour–matched woolly hat with floppy ears attached. When they turn around we see their stubby pointed tails and small fabric wings. **Zog** is in bright orange- he has a central twisted horn on his forehead- his friend **Ronnie** is in 2 shades of pink and she has two little horns. **Edmund** is dressed in shades of blue- he has no horns. The young dragons carry beige fabric school bags which hold their kazoos and glockenspiels when they arrive at school.

The fifth actor is **Princess Pearl**- she wears a no nonsense white button-through short sleeved dress with a fine navy check, like graph paper. Her long brown hair is in sensible plaits and she wears brown sneakers and white socks. She carries a brown leather doctor’s bag which holds lots of useful things like sticky plasters, peppermints, a stretchy bandage, a stethoscope, a gold fabric sash and a fold-up crown ! She’s not very keen on frilly frocks and hates being a princess.

We later meet **Sir Gadabout** the bored knight - he is dressed in a blue top and grey knee shorts with red crested padded chest armour and a grey helmet with a visor and a dashing red feather plume. He clumsily uses of a long sword, juggling balls, a trumpet and a skipping rope-though not all at once ! What he really wants is a white coat like Pearl’s.

**Puppets and hand props.**

 The actors who play dragons also operate matching coloured dragon hand puppets which increase in size as they grow older ! These are lovely fabric creatures closely resembling Axel Scheffler’s illustrations with the characteristic bulging eyes and sharp little teeth. They are finally nearly a metre long and are attached to long black poles for the flying sequences. Other fabric hand puppets include Steve the gangly pale green frog, two brown rabbits and a red squirrel with a magnificent furry tail- a bright-eyed owl and two bickering black crows fly in on poles and a giant fabric world spins at the end. The dragons breathe fire with ingenious silk flame flags of varying sizes and 3 old-fashioned string floor mops complete with hair bows, double for captured princesses !

Madam Dragon uses a wheeled small blackboard, a clipboard, a music beater, a school bell and a set of large letter flash cards whilst teaching her young charges. We also meet an invisible horse.....but that’s another story........

 The show begins at night in a dark, rustling wood- we meet the swooping owl, the noisy crows, Steve the frog and other wild creatures- then as we settle down and a new day begins it’s off to dragon school we go.....

The cast.

**Zog**  is played by Danny Hendrix

**Madam Dragon** Louise Grayford

**Princess Pearl** Lois Glenister

**Edwin** the blue dragon

and **Sir Gadabout** Ben Locke

**Ronnie** the pink dragon Etta Williams

Members of the ensemble cast also operate the various puppets.

 Well that was fun ! I hope you really enjoyed the show this morning and will return to the Theatre Royal in the future. The next audio described children’s show is the much praised musical version of Roald Dahl’s classic **“Charlie and the Chocolate Factory “** on Saturday 17th June at 2:30pm, here in the Lyric.

 For further information regarding future audio described shows please go to **Your Visit** on our website and then click on **Access .** We also have seasonal brochures and leaflets in the foyer or you can always visit or ring the Box Office on **01752 267222**  with any queries.

Have a safe journey home- goodbye for now. And remember- keep practising all those new skills....... !