"A Bit of Magic Glitter"

was how Chris Harris described the design work of John Elvery in his last production for the Bristol Old Vic, **Aladdin**, in 1997. Pantomime has come to signify the Christmas season in Britain as surely as jolly bearded men in red and Christmas trees, and despite its many transformations over the years, is still popular.

M M M

The word pantomime comes from the Greek meaning 'imitator of things'; thus the word initially referred to the performer rather than the performance. Although there are elements of classical comedy to be traced in pantomime, its real roots are to be found in the Italian Commedia dell'Arte of the 16th century which featured among others the characters of Pantaleone (Pantaloon), Punchello (clown, who became Punch), and Arlecchino (Harlequin). From these, Harlequin became the main pantomime character. In the 18th and 19th centuries he and the Clown – immortalised by Joseph Grimaldi - formed an essential part of pantomime, as witnessed by the number of pantomime titles which incorporate his name. The 'Harlequinade' has since lapsed.

M M M

The Victorian development of the traditions of Christmas as we now know it anchored pantomimes eventually to that season, although they had been performed additionally at Easter, Whitsun and summer. The advances made in stage machinery enabled managers to mount elaborate spectacle in their pantomimes, primarily in the transformation scene where the stage would change before the audience's eyes. Gradually the stories adhered to fairytales, familiar and colourful.

M M M

Later in the 19th century, stars of the music hall made their mark on pantomime and the tradition of the pantomime dame was set, most memorably by Dan Leno. Nowadays the stars hail instead from television, sport and music.

M M M

The fact that most theatres will offer a pantomime as a sure success is proof of its continuing appeal. *Oh yes it is!*

December 1999
Sarah Cuthill & Frances Carlyon

"He that says he does not like a pantomime either says what he does not think, or is not so wise as he fancies himself. He should grow young again and get wiser." *Leigh Hunt*

"Pantomime is dying on account of the marvellous complexity of mechanism, painting, limelight, coloured fire and ballet girls which form what we call a transformation scene. Upon this one effect depends success or failure. Dancers, singers, plot and pantomimists are all secondary to this consideration. The glories of the Clown and Harlequinade pale before their brilliance, and pantomime as our fathers and grandfathers knew it is a thing of the past."

Anon., 1877

TCD/C/000187 described on reverse:
Perfectly tightfitting white satin bodice (<u>not combinations</u>) crosses over in front, embroidered in silver & diamonds with bosses of metal work & diamonds. The silver & diamond sword is fastened to the right hip by means of several chains of diamonds, it passes through the belt, which is of silver with two tassels in front. White gloves fastened at the elbows by silver & diamond ornaments. Very ample train of white satin, the border carried out in silver & diamonds & the whole surface powdered with crescents & stars in silver & diamonds & lined with violet velvet. The headdress is the turban shape in white & silver with a large fan of feathers tipped with diamonds, & a crescent in front.

Wilhelm (John Charles Pitcher) designed extensively for pantomimes in London and the provinces, most notably Bristol, where the shows at the Prince's Theatre on Park Row were hugely popular. See also the model theatre in the library

Postcards depicting characters played by George Grogie, George Brooks and Iris Elverton in **Babes in the Wood**, Theatre Royal Bristol, 1911-1912

TCP/C/000055/1-6,8

Harlequin and Little Thumb
Playbill, Theatre Royal Drury Lane, 1832

TCPB/000260

Aladdin; or, The Wonderful Lamp
Playbill, Theatre Royal Bristol, 1814

TCPB/000283

Harlequin Whittington
Playbill, Theatre Royal Covent Garden, 1814

TCPB/000401

Cinderella
Satin Playbill, New Theatre Royal Bristol (Prince's Theatre), 1884
Benefit for James Chute

TCPB/000653

Beauty and the Beast
Playbill, New Theatre Royal Bristol (Prince's Theatre), 1877   TCPB/000667

The Chimes
Playbill, Theatre Royal Adelphi, 1844
An example of other popular stories besides pantomimes which were presented at Christmas

TCPB/000020

The Sleeping Beauty, Arts Theatre Cambridge, 1951
Set Design by Edward Seago
Watercolour   TCD/S/000021

Aladdin, Bristol Old Vic, 1997
Design for Backcloth by John Elvery
Gouache   TCD/S/000461

Cinderella, Nottingham/Bristol Old Vic, 1994/1996
Costume Design for Buttons by John Elvery
Gouache   TCD/C/000509

Cinderella, Nottingham/Bristol Old Vic, 1994/1996
Costume Design for Gertrude by John Elvery
Gouache   TCD/C/000497

Cinderella, Nottingham/Bristol Old Vic, 1994/1996
Costume Designs for Chorus by John Elvery
Gouache   TCD/C/000513

Cinderella, Nottingham/Bristol Old Vic, 1994/1996
Costume Design for Cinderella by John Elvery
Gouache   TCD/C/000489

Aladdin, Bristol Old Vic 1997
Sketches by John Elvery   TCD/C/000616/4,7

Mother Goose, Bristol Old Vic 1985
Costume Design by John Elvery
Watercolour & ink   TCD/C/000607
Please DO lift the transparencies!

Mother Goose, Bristol Old Vic 1985
Designs for Goose by John Elvery
Watercolour & ink   TCD/C/000536

'Grimaldi's Bang Up from the Popular Pantomime of Golden Fish'
Hand-coloured etching by W. Heath. 1812
Grimaldi, the famous clown, was enormously popular in pantomime
                                                     TCP/C/000088

Flower Costume Designs by Wilhelm for pantomimes at the Prince's
Theatre Bristol, 1880s: **Marigold** (TCD/C/000397); **Snowdrop** (TCD/C/000401);
Violet Queen (TCD/C/000403); **Poppy** (TCD/C/000400)

Character Designs by Wilhelm for pantomimes, 1880s: **Queen Quipsand
Kranky** (TCD/C/000382); **Ali Baba** design 1 (TCD/C/000391/1); **Captain O'Scuttle**
(TCD/C/000383); **Ali Baba** design 2 (TCD/C/000391/2)

The Queen of Hearts, Lyceum Theatre, London 1933
Costume Design for the Princess by Berkeley Sutcliffe
Watercolour   TCD/C/000142

'Blowing Up the PicNics or Harlequin Quixote attacking the Puppets',
showing Mrs Billington, Mrs Siddons, Kemble and Sheridan (Harlequin)
Scene from Totttenham Street Pantomime, 1804
Colour print satirising the theatre of the day   TCD/S/000038

Robinson Crusoe, Theatre Royal Drury Lane, 1895
Design for the transformation scene by Robert Caney   TCD/S/000363

Beauty and the Beast, Theatre Royal Bristol, 1843
Set Design by George Gordon
Watercolour   TCD/S/000011

Cinderella, London Coliseum, 1936
Edna Best as Cinderella – waiting for her cue

Cinderella, Theatre Royal Drury Lane, 1934
Phyllis Neilson-Terry as Prince Charming

Her First Bouquet by Charles Green, 1868
Britannia Theatre, Hoxton. The clown is George Hook Lupino
Watercolour   TCP/S/000026

Wilhelm's model theatre, showing sets from **Aladdin**, 1880s
Please do not touch

Dick Whittington, London Hippodrome, 1902
Costume Designs by Herbert Norris: Emperor (played by
Miss Girdlestone) (TCD/C/000187); Sir Richard Whittington (TCD/C/000379)
Watercolour

Red Riding Hood, Theatre Royal Bristol, 1859
Stage Manager's working copy, open at the scene where
Red Riding Hood enters her grandmother's cottage   TCW/PB/000003

Pantomime souvenir books, Prince's Theatre Bristol. These contained
story synopses, lists of songs and photographs of the star performers:-
Cinderella 1931-1932
Robinson Crusoe 1932-1933
Mother Goose 1933-1934

<u>Display case and wall:</u>
Posters and Programmes from 1970s-1990s