



## Review: Jack and the Beanstalk Fortismere School, Muswell Hill

By Jessica Holt

Fortismere School's drama department has given us a jolly interpretation of the much-loved fairytale Jack and the Beanstalk. Produced and directed by head of drama Lauren Overs, the pantomime format is an inspired choice, offering many opportunities for audience participation, jokes, puppetry, musical numbers and for teacher Ewan Scott to shine as the Dame.

Lauren told me how important it was to the ethos of the department to be inclusive and to give as many students as possible the opportunity to participate.

She followed the three-cast model with each character played by a different student across the three nights. The plot unfolded via several short

self-contained scenes linked together by a fairy known as Mother Nature and an MC sitting at the piano with the band who supplied the excellent



All singing, all dancing: The energetic cast members of the Fortismere School pantomime were a huge hit with the audience



Going up: The Beanions emerge from the beanstalk to sing one of their songs

beanstalk occupying centre stage and providing much laughter from the audience as the beans known as the Beanions emerged at different places on the beanstalk singing their song Dancing Beans. The costumes were an integral part of the colour and vibrancy of the production as well as adding another element of humour. I lost count of how many costumes the Dame wore.

Tribute should be paid to the backstage, front-of-house and technical crews who ensured the smooth execution of the production. And one of the most successful elements of this production was the inclusion of teachers, including headteacher Zoe Judge. Students and staff blended well together on stage. Sometimes it was difficult to tell them apart!

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musical accompaniment to the songs.

The show opened with Good Morning, Muswell Hill, a humorous song performed by the full cast gently poking fun at the local community and delighting the audience. The musical numbers contributed enormously to creating a buoyant and energetic mood throughout as well as commenting on the action on stage.

An excellent example of this was the well-choreographed movement and superbly articulated rap song My Shot performed by the trio known as the Giants Sidekicks, which was enthusiastically received by the audience. The panto's script was written jointly by teachers and students with a clear focus on what Lauren calls "the unique Fortismere vibe". The jokes certainly highlighted the locality's ambience!

The set design was beautiful and intricate and was lit with changing colours throughout establishing the scene's place and mood effectively.. The panels either side of the stage were covered in stalks and leaves with the body of the

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