**AWFUL AUNTIE: LYRIC THEATRE December 7th 2018**

Welcome to the Lyric Theatre. My name is Jayne and I am your audio describer for Act One this evening and Veryan will take over for Act Two. I do hope you are looking forward to tonight's performance of AWFUL AUNTIE, because you are in for a treat.

The play runs for approximately 2 hours and there will be an interval in the middle.

The introduction will commence in 3 minutes.

David Walliam’s hugely popular book has been adapted and is directed by Neal Foster. The music is composed by Jak Poore.

The story is set in Saxby Hall, a large country house in England belonging to Lord and Lady Saxby. Saxby Hall is a very old house full of medieval carved fretwork, gothic stone arches and huge wooden doors. It is created for us within 4 revolving towers, each topped with elegant, pointed Gothic arches representing the 4 towers of Saxby Hall itself. Each tower glides across the stage and rotates to reveal 12 different locations within the house although sometimes 2 towers are used to create one room - for example in the Library - one tower has the rows and rows of books presented neatly on shelves and is complimented by another tower housing a large fireplace.

Three of the towers have doors - one leading to Stella’s bedroom, one is the front door to Saxby Hall and one leads to the cellar.

The kitchen has a huge copper funnel (used by Gibbon the rather eccentric Butler as a telephone,) a pair of bellows, a carpet beater and a cosy tartan rug folded on a seat by the hearth. The Cellar has a large black fireplace with a chimney wide enough to be climbed into, which leads up a helter-skelter slope to the rooftop.

There is a rather elegant suit of armour in one of the towers – a full sized outfit comprising a metal breast-plate, pointed helmet, and jointed arm and leg armour; Wagner the Bavarian owl sits on the arm of it for a while. This tower also houses a cage made from tall white iron railings with a padlocked door. It is lined with metal and has a big red lever on the side, which causes an electric current to be passed through the cage and electrocute whoever is inside. When this happens there is a loud buzzing noise and a bright flash of lights.

In another tower there is a cupboard full of papers and an old-fashioned telephone with a tall black stand to dial from and a trumpet piece to hold to your ear; there is also a larder full of white dinner plates and tins of food where Stella searches for poison.

In addition to the towers there is a real life car that is driven by Stella, out of the garage through two large green gates into the grounds of Saxby Hall. The vintage Rolls Royce was the Saxby family car. It is dark red, with black trim and large round wheels trimmed in white. It has a folding black roof, which is down making it easy to see the passengers who sit on cream leather seats, holding a large steering wheel. The round, protruding headlights stick out at the front and shine brightly as the car moves.

The action begins with a Pathe newsreel projected onto a screen: it is a documentary about historic houses with images of Blenheim and Chatsworth and so we are introduced to Saxby Hall. We can also see a beautiful old yellow dolls house and a rag doll with long brown hair and a flowery smock sat propped against it.

This heartwarming tale has many twists and turns but it is named after the Awful Auntie of a young girl called Lady Stella Saxby. Lady Stella is a 13 year old girl (played by Georgina Leonidas) who wakes up one morning in a pretty wrought-iron bed with lacy pillowcases and a bedspread tucked up to her chin, to find her world has been turned upside down. She is wrapped in bandages from head to toe as she is greeted by her Aunt, and what an awful Aunt she turns out to be! When her bandages are unraveled Lady Stella is dressed in white broadrais anglais ‘undergarments’ a pair of knickerbockers and a sleeveless top. She is a very pretty girl, with long brown hair and big brown eyes.

With a nod to pantomime, Richard James plays Aunt Alberta - as a woman! She is on a mission to cheat the young Lady Stella Saxby out of her inheritance - Saxby Hall. Aunt Alberta wears a brightly coloured purple and green checked woollen jacket, fastened with a big belt, over matching plus fours (3/4 length trousers) and a green deer stalker hat. She has messy, shoulder length ginger hair, rosy cheeks and wears a lot of bright red lipstick. Checked stockings and brown brogues finish the look (lace up shoes) and allow Aunt Alberta to stride around the mansion menacingly! Aunt Alberta is often seen smoking an enormous pipe!

There is a ghost in this tale, but he’s very friendly: the mischievous and irrepressible Soot, the cockney ghost of a chimney sweep, who helps Lady Stella in her quest against her mean aunt. Soot is played by Ashley Cousins and he has a strong London cockney accent. He is dressed in baggy trousers, a collarless shirt and a waistcoat - all whitish-grey, representing the fact he’s a ghost … and was a chimney sweep. He has a peaked cap on his mop of dark hair and a really cheeky grin.

Gibbon, the butler of the house, played here by Harry Sutherland,

is absolutely insane and brings great hilarity to the play. Long white hair flows from his shiny bald head and round metal rimmed glasses perch on his pointed nose. He wears a wing-collared shirt with a bright red bow-tie, black tails and a coloured waistcoat. Gibbon has a huge array of props he carries around and although he says very little, he is not to be missed.

You will see cars, motorbikes and a giant bird cage at Saxby Hall, but the star of the show is Wagner - the giant owl puppet operated by Roberta Belakom. With a large grey head, spiky black ‘eyebrows’ and long feathery ears his bright orange eyes stand out and watch the events as they unfold. His wings are made of beautiful brown feathers and he uses them to fly through the house and into the night. He is not the only puppet though, as both Stella and Aunt Alberta take puppet form as they chase around the grounds of Saxby Hall.

The madcap pranks that occur in Saxby Hall are waiting for you. Sit back, relax and prepare to be entertained. Awful Auntie is about to begin.