

BECKENHAM THEATRE PRESENTS THIRD PANTOMIME COMMISSION FROM LOCAL PLAYWRIGHT ALEXANDER VAIL

Embargo: 00:01hrs Tuesday 15th December 2009
Opening night: Friday 18th December
Press enquiries: Please contact Fleur Buckley: 020 7957 4709 (daytime); fleur.buckley@bfi.org.uk

Following the huge success of Alexander Vail's previous commissions for Beckenham Theatre: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (2004) and *Cinderella* (2008), the director of this year's pantomime, approached Alexander Vail to write a modern script for *Dick Whittington and His Cat*.

Director Tim James, 49, said "Having agreed to direct the panto, I couldn't find a script that was strong or current enough to appeal to a 21st century audience, so I asked Alexander to creating a new script for us. His writing is so sharp and engaging, the resulting script has been an absolute delight to work with."

Playwright Vail, 29, whose powerful drama *That Stocks Will Stand* was produced at the same venue in August, says "pantomime is one of the great British art forms. For most children, pantomime is their very first foray into an auditorium, so it is essential to put on a stunning show for them. Beckenham Theatre produces excellent shows throughout the year, and the panto season is no exception. It was an honour to be asked to write another show for them, and I can't wait to see it on opening night!"

ABOUT THE PLAY:

The famous tale of Dick Whittington - the boy who travelled to London to make his name and his fortune - has been popular in England since the fifteenth century. Part true story (he really did exist, he really did fall in love with Alderman Fitzwarren's daughter; and he really did become one of the richest and influential men in London), part Persian myth (which may explain the cat!), his adventure has survived the ages through the magic of pantomime. This exciting, fast-paced, modern production of one of the best-ever pantomime stories opens at Beckenham Theatre Centre on Friday 18th December 2009 and runs until Saturday 2nd January 2010.

[Complimentary tickets for press reviews are available from Fleur Buckley (details above).]

ABOUT BECKENHAM THEATRE CENTRE:

- Beckenham Theatre Centre Ltd is a registered charity, staffed entirely by volunteers, which has been committed to serving, involving and delighting the local community for over 60 years. Registered number 236434 (England & Wales).
- Beckenham Theatre is a member of the Bromley Theatre Guild.
- Situated in the heart of Beckenham, this unusual Victorian building houses one of the smallest auditoria in the country - with just 47 seats - and the unique charm of the venue delights all who enter.
- Address: Beckenham Theatre Centre, 46 Bromley Road, Beckenham, BR3 5JD
- BTC is a traditional community theatre and membership is open to anyone interested in the dramatic arts, either as an audience member or as an active participant. Joining costs just £20.00 per year - more information is available on the website: www.beckenhamtheatre.co.uk.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT:

Alexander Vail is a playwright based in south London, and has been writing for the last eight years. His debut *Parisienne Ladies* was performed to acclaim at Beckenham Theatre Centre in 2002. Since then, he has had several further plays performed by various companies both in the UK and America: *In Vino Veritas*, *Help the Aged*, *Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Moirai*, *Broadway Baby*, *Cinderella* and *That Stocks Will Stand*. He writes for stage, television, radio, film and digital platforms and currently has a number of scripts under consideration with the BBC, Soho Theatre, Richmond Theatre and independent production companies. More information can be found at www.vailplays.co.uk.

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