A balletLORENT PRODUCTION

Hansel & Gretel and the Witch



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Access Pack

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Welcome

Hello, thank you for coming to watch **ballet**LORENT's Hansel & Gretel and The Witch. These notes are for you to read before the show. They explain some of what happens in the dance and what to expect when you visit the theatre.

Arriving at the theatre

As you arrive at the theatre you will come into the foyer. It could be busy and loud in the foyer. You can put your hands over your ears, or if you have ear defenders, you can put them on. There will be toilets that you can use before you enter the auditorium.

You may hear loud bells ringing and announcements before the performance. Don't worry about this – it is just to let the audience know the performance will start shortly.

Once you have your tickets you can make your way to the auditorium. Sometimes the doors to the auditorium will be closed until just before the performance is due to start, but you can wait near the doors until they are opened by an usher.

There may be ushers there to check your tickets, help you find your seat and answer any questions you may have.

When you enter the auditorium, you will see the stage with the set for the first act of the show all set up. Only the performers and stage technicians are allowed to go onto the stage. There may be music playing in the auditorium.

When the performance is about to start the auditorium doors will be closed and the lights in the auditorium will go darker.



About the show

Hansel & Gretel and The Witch is a dance theatre production performed by **ballet**LORENT's professional dancers. They will be joined by members of **ballet**LORENT's Youth Academy who are aged between 7-12yrs.

This version of the story has been written for **ballet**LORENT by Carol Ann Duffy – a writer and poet. This story may be different from other versions you've heard or read before.

The performers tell the story through dance and theatre.
They will not talk during the performance.

The performance is split into two acts – Act 1 44 minutes and Act 2 40 minutes, with a 20 minute break in the middle. During the break, stage technicians will move the set into a different position. The audience are welcome to walk around, go to the toilet, and talk during the break. Loud bells and announcements in the foyer areas will let the audience know when it is time to take your seat for Act 2.

There is music throughout the whole performance which sometimes gets loud. There is also a recorded narration with a female voice.



Lights only go dark at the begining and end of Act 1 and Act 2, and for a few moments near the end of act 2 when the Witch tells Hansel and Gretel the story of leaving her own children.

If it gets too bright, or too noisy you can cover your eyes or ears. If you would like to go out into the foyer you can with your parent or carer.

About the show

On stage you will see the large set. The set is moved throughout the performance to show different scenes. Dancers will sometimes climb on or through the set – they have practiced this lots and know how to climb safely. Sometimes you will see a cloth with shadows of the dancers.

The dancers use props, including pretend food, knives, and pots and pans. These are all designed and made to be used safely on stage.

There are many characters in Hansel & Gretel and The Witch, all played by the dancers and children - most characters are human, and there are two large chickens. The dancers will be wearing masks, so you will not be able to see all their faces.





The characters

As the dancers play the different characters they will move in different ways. Some dancers play more than one character.
Here are the main characters:



Hansel



Gretel



Witch



Chickens



Scavenger Matriarch



Father



Mother



The full cast

What to expect

Content warning
The following notes highlight moments some people may find frightening or scary. The performers are acting, and what you see happening on stage is not real.



Act 1

- Hansel and Gretel's Mother and Father argue and fight about how they are going to get enough food to feed the family.
- Children are hungry and looking for scraps of food.
- Wild children roam the forest and scare Hansel and Gretel – they don't mean to and are just looking for food.
- Hansel and Gretel get lost in the forest and can't find their way home.
- The Scavengers in the forest are dressed in shabby clothes, and some look unusual or deformed (The dancers are wearing costumes to make them look different).
- The Witch is left sad and angry when all the children have eaten her treats and left. She is grieving the loss of her own children. Her strong emotions show in her dancing and she twists and turns anxiously. A small sugar house appears to grow from her back.
- A mirror ball is used during the funfair to shine light all over. You may want to cover your eyes if the lights flash too much.

What to expect

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Act 2

- We hear the Witch's story of having to abandon her children because of war and famine in her home country, how that made her feel, and how it influenced the decisions she makes.
- The Witch eats children's body parts (You will see this in shadows, and it is only pretend).
- The Witch has two knives to cut her food (The knives are made of rubber and won't hurt anyone).
- The large cloth used to show the shadows will drop suddenly, covering some of the dancers.
- Hansel is captured and trapped in a tall cage by the Witch. He is forced to eat to get fatter, and Gretel is threatened if she doesn't help the Witch.
- Hansel is tied up and put into a cooking pot.



- The Witch is tied up and thrown into the oven by Gretel. We see her shadow dancing in the fire. Then she comes out of the oven, smouldering. (The fire is only stage lighting, and no one is hurt).
- The lights will go dark for a few moments as the Witch tells the story of leaving her own children.
- The Witch is chained to a pole to stop her escaping.

Hansel & Gretel and The Witch - Synopsis

Act 1

Hansel and Gretel live with their parents at the edge of a huge forest, at a time when food has become scarce and everyone is worried and hungry. The children hear their parents arguing and, although they feel frightened, they want to help. One night, they creep into the forest to look for food, leaving shining white stones behind them so they can follow the trail home.

In the darkness, they hear terrible noises and see Scavengers searching for scraps. This moment may feel frightening, but Hansel and Gretel stay together, and Gretel's brave shout sends the scavengers running away. The children gather enough food to bring home, and for a while their family is happy and relieved.



When hunger returns, Hansel and Gretel try again. This time they use breadcrumbs to mark the path, but the crumbs are eaten, and the children become lost. Deep in the forest, they find a dazzling fairground full of colour, music, performers and wild, hungry children. The lights will be flashing lots. Cover your eye if it is too bright. There they meet a strange Witch made of sweets, biscuits and cakes. She seems generous at first, but when the crowd snatches everything from her, she is left hurt, angry and empty.



As the fairground moves on, the Witch begins to change. Her body twists into a magical sugar house, glowing in the dark and smelling of sweetness. It may look scary, but the story is showing how sadness, loneliness and hunger can become dangerous when they are not cared for.

Hansel & Gretel and The Witch - Synopsis

Act 2



Hansel and Gretel find the Witch's sugar house and, because they are starving, begin to eat it. The Witch welcomes them inside, gives them pancakes, lets them ride on her giant Chicken and Cockerel, and tucks them into soft beds. At first, the house feels warm and safe, but Gretel soon realises that the Witch's kindness is hiding something frightening.

The Witch has lost her own children and, in her grief, has become confused and cruel. When the Witch traps Hansel and forces Gretel to help feed him, Gretel realises she must be brave and clever. With help from the giant Chicken and Cockerel, she stops the Witch before Hansel can be harmed. Gretel's instinct is to hurt the Witch, so ties her up and throws her in the oven. Yet when the children see that the Witch is in real danger, they choose mercy instead of revenge.

On the journey home, they learn that the Witch has been made cruel by grief and loss. This does not excuse what she has done, but it helps the children understand that she must change.

The scary parts of the story are wrapped up in a safe and hopeful ending: the children are safe, bravery and kindness shine and the Witch slowly begins to understand that she has made mistakes.



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