

# TROUBLE-HIT PANTO TROUPE COMES UP TRUMPS

DESPITE serious casting problems, Fowey Funnybone Youth Theatre's production of *Jack and the Beanstalk* had all the right ingredients necessary for a traditional panto.

Because many of the young people originally cast had dropped out, including the actor who was to have played Jack, director Ken Jones had the unenviable task of directing himself in the lead role.

But he was given sterling support by the other adult leads, including scriptwriter Penny Vernal, who played the perpetual worrier Mistress Poll. There was also an excellent performance from Emma Cross as Jack's friend Eric, played with great assurance and skill, and from Peter Gleed, who was a giant of a giant as he bellowed: 'Fe Fi Fo Fum' on smelling the blood of an Englishman.

The five remaining youngsters from the original

## REVIEW by JONATHAN BARKER

12 all gave spirited and enthusiastic support in their all-singing, all-dancing roles, with Emma Covus, as the farmer who buys the cow; Caitlin O'Shea as the giant's wife; and especially six-year-old Julia Shufflebotham, who sang her songs and delivered her lines with confidence.

First class support was also given by youngsters Phillip Nile, Brigitte Cross and Rosie McDonald.

In his first acting role, Ken Jones played the dim-witted Jack with exactly the right amount of unworldliness and the many malapropisms called for in the script covered up some of the verbal stumblings that were inevitable given that he had only eight days to learn his lines.

The panto involved the audience from the start,

and they were keen to sing along with the many pop songs that were sprinkled throughout the show and, of course, boo the giant at every opportunity.

The storyline, written by Penny Vernal, had a number of interesting twists in the plot, with Jack discovering that the farmer who bought Daisy the Cow was in fact his father and the giant was not a children-scoffing ogre at all, but a very nice man.

Around 20 people supported back stage, with the sound and lighting effects particularly worthy of mention. However, the production, bravely put on in adverse circumstances, deserved more of an audience, with only Saturday's matinee a sell-out.

Young talent needs to be encouraged and the children who had put so much effort into the panto need local support.



LEFT: The cast of the Fowey Funnybone Youth Theatre production *Jack and the Beanstalk* with Peter Gleed, Giant; Penny Vernal as Mistress Poll; Emma Cross, Eric; Emma Covus, Farmer; Gill Butler and Yve Hempell as Daisy; and Ken Jones, Jack and show director; with children in the front: Brigitte Cross, Phillip Nile, Julia Shufflebotham, and Rosie McDonald.

INSET: Caitlin O'Shea, who played the giant's wife.

Picture:  
Jonathan Barker