

Cinderella The Awesome Truth – Introduction

The Polka Theatre, December 2021

Welcome this introduction to the audio described performance of *Cinderella The Awesome Truth*, written and directed by Sarah Punshon, created with Toni-Dee Paul, with music and lyrics by Felix Hagan and designed by Oliver Townsend.

The audio described performance is on Saturday the 8th January at 2.30pm.

Unfortunately the theatre is unable to offer a touch tour due to the current health situation. The performance will be described by Eleanor Margolies with support from Ess Grange. The performance lasts for 1 hour and 50 minutes, including a 20-minute interval. This introduction will take about ten minutes to listen to.

The Polka theatre website says the production is recommended from age 5 upwards. A notice on the doors leading to the theatre invites audience members aged 5-9 to take part in a five-minute survey about their response to the production, completed before and after the performance. Clipboards with the survey can be collected from the box office.

To reach the main auditorium, take the corridor just to the left of the Polka's box office. On the right, there is a staircase which leads to a foyer on the upper floor. Red double doors to the auditorium first bring you into a space a couple of metres deep, facing a display cabinet holding props. Further stairs lead up to both left and right, bringing you to the back of the auditorium. From here, the floor slopes down towards

the stage – some 15 rows, with 20 red velvet flip-up seats in each row. The stage is about a metre above floor level, with steps on left and right leading up to it.

When we first take our seats, the long red curtains are closed, hiding most of the stage, with just a couple of metres of apple green floor in front. Standing in front of the curtains to the left and right, there are flat cut out trees, their branches curving together to meet above the curtains, making a frame. On the floor in front of each tree, there is a stack of large Christmas presents wrapped in gold paper and red and purple ribbon with big bows. A garland of white fairy lights loops between the trees. In the centre, where the branches meet at the very top, there is a home-made banner with words painted in fluorescent colours that reads *The Ugly Sisters Present: Cinderella, the Awesome Truth.*

This version of the story features four friends who have come together as a group called 'The Ugly Sisters', to tell the truth about Cinderella in words and music. Though their styles are very different, all four wear shiny metallic bomber jackets as part of their costume, making them feel like part of a group. Appearing alongside them is Dave, an actor who doesn't say anything aloud during the performance, and various puppets, who say quite a lot...

With the curtains still closed, the four step forward to introduce themselves in song. First we meet teenage friends Cindy and Ella.

Cindy is the tallest of the four and sometimes doesn't know what to do with her long arms and legs, like someone who is still getting used to her new height. She loves

the colour pink and is wearing a sugar-pink tutu over white ballet tights, shocking pink legwarmers and pale pink converse trainers – and of course a pink metallic jacket. She has light brown skin and curly golden hair pulled up in a high ponytail, and sparkly fingernails. She later wears a white fluffy jacket with a hood.

Ella is sporty: she loves kick-boxing, climbing trees and parkour. She describes her body as strong and rounded. She has dark brown skin and big hair, at first up in two bunches on top of her head, and later fluffed out in a full Afro held back by a gold headband that matches her gold earrings. Her favourite colours are orange and gold and she's wearing a gold glittery bomber jacket over a sporty patterned top that shows her midriff, orange tracksuit bottoms and white hi-top trainers.

We also meet Prince Francis and his best mate Dandini.

The **Prince** is the shortest of the four friends and has pale skin and light brown hair with the fringe swept into a floppy wave. Francis, or Frankie to his friends, describes himself as a bit like a meerkat – he is cautious and nervous, and can make himself completely still when he needs to. His favourite colour is purple and he wears a stripy t-shirt, white jeans and purple trainers with orange stripes. He absolutely hates his official royal outfit of yellow velvet tailcoat with gold embroidery down the front and fringes on the shoulders, worn with a huge floppy beret topped with yellow ostrich feathers, and a sword tucked into his belt. A round badge with the Royal Crest of Murtonia is sewn onto the jacket.

The prince's best friend is **Dandini**, or Danni, the palace chef. They wear dungarees with big black and white checks over a bright patterned t-shirt, with a metallic blue bomber jacket. They describe themselves as a 'punk and chunky'. Dandini has pale, freckly skin and wavy ginger hair cut into a mullet, shaved at the sides. They wear glasses and orange neon eyeshadow. Dandini uses a wheelchair to get around: sometimes they wheel themselves or stand up for a bit, and sometimes they are pushed by **Dave**, a fellow chef in the palace kitchen. Dave is white, with short brown hair, and wears a chef's uniform of white cap, white buttoned up jacket, and trousers with small black and white checks. A badge with the royal crest is sewn onto the uniform.

Cindy and Ella have just become step-sisters and moved into a new home with mum Bridget and dad Steve. When the red curtains open, we are in their bedroom. A narrow bed with a metal frame is piled up with cardboard boxes labelled with their names. Both girls have laptops and tablets, shown on stage as empty wooden frames, outlined with tiny white lights. They turn the empty frames round to show the audience what's they're looking at – internet celebrities played by energetic puppets who practically burst through the screens, into the room. The girls' parents are played by Francis and Dandini – they become **Bridget** by adding a long, floaty green silk scarf, and **Steve** by putting on a flat cap.

All the actors take turns to puppeteer some of the other characters – a **squirrel** and four slightly intimidating **fairy godmothers** from the internet. The squirrel is a puppet about three times life size, and one person can lift him up, leap him from branch to branch or use a rod in the back of his head to make him look around. The four **fairy**

godmothers are puppets with fabric faces in bright green, peach, lilac and turquoise – and yellow fabric mouths and eyes. They have long eyelashes and glossy painted fingernails. Their bodies are made of gauzy fabric that matches their faces and their hair is made of the same fabric tied in a topknot.

The action also takes us to the woods near the royal palace. Tall tree trunks wrapped in ivy are pushed into the space, along with a giant toadstool mushroom, with a red cap spotted with white dots. At the sides, layers of cut out trees lead into the distance, where a painted backcloth shows a fairytale palace with turrets, on a hill surrounded by green fields. We later go inside the palace, decorated with garlands of red and purple balloons for the prince's birthday. The picture of the palace at the back is replaced by the shield of the kingdom of Murtonia, and then by a projection of a giant clock with the hands ticking towards midnight...

Cast and Production Credits

Cindy Jade Lauren

Ella Tiajna Amayo

The Prince James Keningale

Dandini LJ Parkinson

Dave Andrew Chevalier

Creatives

Music & Lyrics: Felix Hagan

Co-creator: Toni-Dee Paul

Set, Puppet & Costume Designer: Oliver Townsend

Video & Lighting Designer: Gillian Tan

Movement Director: Jreena Green

Puppet Designer & Maker: Judith Hope

Puppet Maker: Chris Gadd

One Tenth Human Producer: Rafia Hussain

Scientific Advisor: Viren Swami

and it's been directed, with the book by: Sarah Punshon

That's the end of this audio introduction to ***Cinderella***. If you have any questions please contact the Polka Theatre box office on 020 8543 4888.