

AS A CRISP PANTO THIS 'JACK' WAS ALRIGHT

Today's two performances end the Nairobi City Players current run of their pantomime "Jack and the Beanstalk" and if you have not seen it, you have missed an excellent show.

Someone listened to previous criticisms of shows that were over-long and boring for adults. This one was crisp, taut and cracked along at a pace that more should emulate. Parents who arrived more out of duty than expectation went away singing.

It mattered very little that this Jack and the Beanstalk bore little relation to the story-line most of us have

By Johnny

read to our children. There was a story, flimsy though it was, but in pantomime the script is usually lashed together to provide a vehicle for colour, song, dance, gaiety and laughter.

And that is what Director Larry Oaks did at the National Theatre. He spiced it all with imagination, peppered it with rehearsed skill and then let the cast have its head.

Spiced it

No-one actually acts in a pantomime. They just give themselves to the audience for approval. Maureen Turner as Principal Boy Jack Durden was suitably loud and leggy. Jane Corfield as the Princess was suitably demure and coped well with some difficult music.

No panto is complete without a Wicked Villain and a "pot-boiler" whose job is to stir up the audience. Jerry Murray's "Fleshcreep" was wonderfully hammy, and Simple Simon kept the children — and not a few parents — fully involved in the action.

A good half of panto is spectacle, and this matched the live performances in its quality. Tim Rowson's sets were imaginative and the costumes, designed by Mary Epsom and put together by Mrs Round-Turner, could have graced a fully professional production.