



Sensory Synopsis for “Into the Woods”

Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Book by James Lapine

Overview

Into the Woods is a fairy-tale musical that brings together characters including Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack (and the Beanstalk), and Rapunzel. The story begins in a playful, storybook style and becomes darker and more emotional in Act Two.

The show contains moments of comedy, fantasy, danger, loud sounds, and emotional scenes. There are no sudden audience interactions, but there are some surprising sound and lighting effects described below.

General Sensory Information

- Running time: Approximately 2.5–3 hours including interval.
- Music: Live or recorded orchestra. Music ranges from soft and melodic to loud and dramatic.
- Lighting: Changes throughout — warm fairy-tale tones at the beginning, darker blues and reds later. Occasional flashes and sudden blackouts.
- Sound effects: Thunder, crashes, loud footsteps, magical sounds.
- Haze/Fog: There may be light stage haze to create a forest atmosphere.
- Themes: Loss, responsibility, consequences, and growing up.

Potentially Startling Moments

- Loud, amplified Giant voice.
- Sudden bangs and crashing sounds.
- Quick lighting blackouts.
- Emotional confrontations.
- A staged slap (brief physical contact between characters).

Reassurance for Relaxed Performance

- House lights may remain partially on.
- Audience members are free to move, leave, and re-enter as needed.
- Sound levels will be slightly reduced.
- There will be no unexpected audience participation.
- A quiet space will be available in the venue (Upstairs in Studio 4. Please check with front of house staff if you need help finding it).

Interval

- The auditorium lights will come up. This is a chance to take a break. Feel free to make use of our Sensory Room in Studio 4 (upstairs).

ACT ONE

Opening (“Prologue”)

- The full cast sings overlapping lines. This can sound busy and loud.
- Lighting shifts quickly between characters’ homes and the woods.
- The Witch appears with dramatic music and possibly green or shadowed lighting.

The Woods

- The forest may feel dark. Trees and set pieces may move.
 - Characters run across the stage.
 - Occasional loud musical moments.
 - Grandma gets “eaten” by the wolf

Jack and the Beanstalk

- When Jack climbs the beanstalk, there may be:
 - Loud magical sound effects.
 - Bright lighting changes.
 - A large “giant” voice amplified and booming.

The Giant

- The Giant is not usually seen at first.
- Her voice is very loud and may feel sudden.
- There are heavy “thud” sounds to suggest her footsteps.
- The stage may shake (through sound effects and lighting shifts).
- A character death is referenced (offstage).

End of Act One

- Celebratory wedding scene.
- Bright lighting.
- Full ensemble singing loudly and joyfully.

ACT TWO

Act Two has a darker tone overall.

The Giant’s Return

- Loud crashes and bangs.
- Sudden lighting flashes.
- Characters scream and run.
- The Giant’s voice is amplified and angry.
- Some scenes include destruction of set pieces.

Emotional Scenes

- There are references to death and loss.
- Some characters die (not shown in graphic detail).
- Music becomes slower and more emotional.

The Witch’s Anger

- Strong singing.
- Dramatic lighting.
- She may disappear suddenly (often through lighting effects or staging tricks).

Final Scene

- Quieter, reflective tone.
- Soft lighting.
- Gentle music at the end.