

THE SNAIL AND THE WHALE

ACCESS GUIDE 2023



This guide provides detailed information about Tall Stories' production of The Snail and the Whale so that audience members know what to expect before attending the show. If you have any specific questions or concerns please contact us at info@tallstories.org.uk or 020 8348 0080. We hope to see you at a performance soon.

About the Play

How long does the play last?

55 minutes – with no interval

What is the play about?

A tiny snail longs to see the world, so she hitches a lift on the tail of a humpback whale. Together they go on an amazing journey, experiencing sharks and penguins, icebergs and volcanoes. But when the whale gets beached, how will the tiny snail save him?

Tall Stories' adaptation is inspired by the work of **Storybook Soldiers**, who help British military personnel abroad to record bedtime story CDs for their children back home. The amazing journey of the tiny snail is seen through the eyes of a very adventurous young girl – who'd love to be going around the world with her seafaring father...

The show is inspired by the book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler.

The story is told by the **Narrator** who tells the audience about games she used to play when she was a child with her father. Her favourite story was The Snail and the Whale and they would act this out in her bedroom. She saw herself as the Snail – desperate for adventures - and her dad as the Whale who was in the Navy and so away from home at sea. The play is told through the **Narrator** remembering her time with her dad with two other actors playing the **Dad** and the Narrator's younger self – the **Daughter**.

The Characters

1. **Daughter**
2. **Dad**
3. **Narrator / Teacher**
4. **Speedy the Snail**

There are 3 people in the play. One man and two women. The male actor plays the role of the **Dad**, one of the female actors plays the **Daughter** and the other female actor is the **Narrator** (the Daughter as a grown-up). The **Narrator** plays the viola throughout the show, creating all of the music and sound effects in the play live on stage. She also plays the part of the **Teacher**.

Speedy the Snail is a large, stuffed snail toy that is used as a puppet when retelling the story of The Snail and the Whale.

The play includes all the text from The Snail and the Whale book, but we add some more words, music, singing, lots of fun and some audience participation. The characters will speak directly to the audience, who are encouraged to feel free to sing along and answer back when prompted.

The costumes are simple and hint towards the character that the actor is playing without being a full skin type costume, e.g. **Dad** is dressed in Naval blue (also representing a grey-blue whale) and the **Daughter** frequently wears headphones with deeley boppers and a snail shaped rucksack to represent the snail's eyestalks and shell. The actors' faces are shown throughout the performance so they can have more direct contact with the audience.

The Actors

Amy Jackson-Ives - Narrator / Teacher

This is Amy:



What have been your favourite projects to work on? What was your favourite story as a child?

During my training at GSA, I played Emily Webb in Thornton Wilder's 'Our Town'. This opportunity was the first time I felt valued as an actor and still remains close to my heart.

What was your favourite story as a child?

The Hungry Caterpillar! I used to ask to my Mum to read this to me every night, but would usually take over after one page, and could recite the whole book, complete with inflections and all!

What possession would you really not want to lose?

My childhood teddy bear - a polar bear named Snuffy. He still sleeps with me every night.

This is Amy dressed as the Narrator:



Amy plays the Narrator in the show. She plays all the music and creates all the sound effects live on stage using her electrically amplified viola and a loop pedal.

She wears beige coloured trousers with a white top and braces.

She wears a long brown cardigan and brown boots.

Amy wears the same costume to play the teacher. She puts on a pair of glasses to show the change of character.

Molly Rolfe – Daughter / Snail

This is Molly:



What was your favourite story as a child?

The Hairy Maclary books – I still remember all the names of the dogs (my favourite's Hercules Morse as big as a horse).

What possession would you really not want to lose?

My brother made me a little toy cat which I'd be very upset to lose!

What is your favourite ocean creature?

I really like cuttlefish, I think they have sweet faces. I especially like the ones that glow because I think it's spectacular that sea creatures can do that!

This is Molly dressed as the Daughter:



Molly plays the Daughter, who tells the story of the Snail and the Whale with her dad in her bedroom.

During the storytelling she pretends to be the little Snail, desperate to travel around the world with the Whale.

Molly wears light brown shorts with brown tights and a brown cardigan.

She wears brown Converse trainers.

Molly's hair is in two long plaits.

When pretending to be the Snail, Molly wears the same costume but puts on a headband with deeley boppers (antennae), a yellow raincoat and wears a brown rucksack with a snail shell on it.

Aaron Millard - Dad

This is Aaron:



What have been your favourite projects to work on?

I loved working on 'The Gruffalo', I was able to travel around the world working with such lovely people, to wonderful children

What was your favourite story as a child?

I loved reading and being read Roald Dahl. My favourite was always Fantastic Mr Fox. He was mischievous and outsmarted the Farmers.

What possession would you really not want to lose?

I would really not want to lose my writing book. I love writing, it has all of my ideas in it for rhyming stories.

What is your favourite ocean creature?

I really like humpback whales. They're so big and so graceful. A group of them is called a pod, and they travel so far across the ocean together. Most importantly they sing songs with each other which can be heard for miles around!



This is Aaron dressed as Dad:

Aaron plays the Dad, acting out the story of the Snail and the Whale with his daughter. He is in the Navy and goes off to sea for long periods of time, just like the Whale. The daughter longs to go with him, just like the little Snail in the story.

Aaron wears navy blue trousers, a navy-blue jumper with naval uniform style epaulets and black boots.

Aaron does not change costume during the play. When pretending to be the Whale, he speaks in a deeper voice and changes his movement.

The Set

The play is set in the Narrator's childhood bedroom.

When you arrive in the auditorium you will see what looks like a child's bedroom. There is a curved wall at the back of the stage painted in a green/blue colour. It is designed to look like the shell of a snail.

In the middle of the wall is a round porthole window with a yellow frame. The window spins during the show and is written on with a blue pen. There is a light attached to the wall on the right of the window.

There are three shelves attached to the wall on the left of the window with children's books, a toy fire engine, a bucket and spade and three wooden snails in different sizes. All these items are moved and used in the play at different times. There are two pictures hanging on the wall next to the shelves – these are a child's drawing of a whale and a child's drawing of a family. A blue rain mac and a rucksack hang on the wall.

In front of the wall there is a grey/blue armchair covered with a purple blanket and cushion. There is a brown drawer unit on the floor in front of the wall, under the window. It is about 40cm high x 60 cm wide and has three drawers in it. A small grey bench sits in another hole in the unit. A large grey bench is placed upside down on top of the drawer unit to look like a bed. These benches are moved and used throughout the show.



There is a grey bookcase that is curved at the top. It has eyes on the back, but these can't be seen when you first enter the theatre. There is a world map poster on the top shelf, a miniature set of drawers in the middle and two multi-coloured crates on the bottom.



During the play, the actors 'create' the whale using the bookshelf and the benches. This is when you see the eyes on the bookshelf. The armchair is used as the tail of the whale.



At the front of the stage on the right, there is a stool and a speaker. This is where the Narrator sits and plays the viola. She will sit here and play the viola, as you wait for the show to start. There is a child's easel with a chalkboard on one side and a whiteboard on the other. It is used by the Daughter and the Teacher.

On the left side of the stage at the front is a piece of set that looks like a ship's railing. It is grey with a life ring on the side saying HMS Ocean. Dad stands here to signify being away at sea on the naval ship.



The floor is a painted blue/green to look like the sea.

Lighting

When you enter the auditorium, the lighting on stage will be dim but the lights in the auditorium will be bright so that you can find your seats. The Narrator will be on stage when you enter the auditorium. She will be lit and will be playing sea shanties on a viola.

When the play begins the lights on the audience will dim.

For Relaxed Performances, when the play begins, the lights in the auditorium will dim, but will remain on at a low level, and the lights on stage will brighten. **If you are not attending a Relaxed Performance, please be aware that the lights in the auditorium will go off completely for a few seconds when the show begins.**

There is a short thunderstorm sequence in the middle of the show. The lights will dim slightly and there will be flashes of white light to signify the lightning. **This is not strobe lighting**

and will only last for about a minute. **If you are attending a Relaxed Performance, there will be no flashes. If you are not attending Relaxed Performance but have light sensitivity or specific concerns relating to flashing lights, please alert the Box Office when booking and a member of the Front of House team on the day so that they can assist you. This may be through alerting you before the scene takes place or assisting with leaving the auditorium for this scene if necessary.**

At the end of the show the lights go out completely to signify the end of the show. This is only for a few seconds before they quickly come up for the cast to bow. There is then a final song to clap along to.

Sounds

All of the music and sound effects in this show are created by the Narrator who plays the viola live on stage. She has an electronic pedal to be able to do this, so you will see her create all the sounds.

She creates sounds like the sea, seagulls and boat horns, and plays the song the company sings – ‘Shimmering Ice & Coral Caves’.

Towards the end of the show, the cast ask the audience to join in with the song in a call and response way. Dad will sing a line and the audience sing it back. The final lyrics are:

I sail the sea so wild and free
How many wonders have I seen?
I've seen...
Shimmering ice and coral caves
Shimmering ice and coral caves
Shooting stars and enormous waves
Shooting stars and enormous waves

Don't worry, you don't have to join in if you don't want to!

If you are attending a Relaxed Performance, we will be turning the overall level of the sound down so that it is not too loud during the performance.

Other information

Recommended age The Snail and the Whale is recommended for ages 4+.

During the story, the Whale gets beached in a bay and the fire department need to save it. In this sequence, the cast will use water pistols to spray the ‘whale’. They then turn and start to spray water above the audience's heads – one of them might come into the auditorium to do this briefly.

You might get a little sprinkling of water above your head during this scene. If you think you might need to leave at this point, please inform a member of the theatre staff in advance so that they can assist you.

Announcements

There will be an announcement just before the show or signs up in the auditorium asking for mobile devices to be switched off and advising that photography or filming of any kind is not permitted. If you need to use a specific electronic device such as an iPad to aid with communication, please inform the ushers as you enter the theatre.