



### **Creative Outline**

A giant metal Whale which swallows audiences whole, to enjoy a charming, playful and submersive theatre experience inside. Performed by a solo actor, for one person at a time, or small family groups.

It can be sited outdoors, in urban spaces, near water, beautifully counterpointing a building, or on a festival site. The Whale is an extraordinary and unexpected visitor to high streets, public squares and green spaces, transforming each environment it enters.

Inside The Whale you (the audience) meet a lovesick submariner - or in the case of our new show for Under 6s, a cat-loving sailor - who tells you a story, sings a song and hands you a message (or map) to take away, folded in the shape of a Whale (or a pilchard!).

The Whale is performance-ready within 45 mins of arriving on-site, is entirely self-contained, does not require power\* and is especially effective in contexts involving water or environmental themes. The Whale is weather resilient and performances can continue in all but the most extreme conditions. Plus we make the Queue fun too!

\*For night-time events additional exterior lighting may be required.

# **Brief biog of company**

Since 1992 Talking Birds has been producing thoughtful, playful, resonant, mischievous and transformative meditations on people and place. Our work is characterised by a distinctive blend of humour, music and visual flair and has been seen in venues both conventional and unconventional across the UK and internationally - from the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank, to Kilkenny Livestock Mart; from a cavernous underground car park in Scarborough, to a decommissioned hospital in Coventry.

Recent work includes Troy Story - An Intergalactic Opera with Orchestra of the Swan, performed at Birmingham Town Hall and shortlisted for the Music Teacher Award for 'Best Musical Initiative'; The OakMobile, commissioned by the National Trust; and Trade in Lunacy, produced in collaboration for the Centre for the History of Medicine, University of Warwick.

Talking Birds is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council, England.
<a href="https://www.talkingbirds.co.uk">www.talkingbirds.co.uk</a>

# How audiences engage with the work

Audiences see the whale and are invited to queue. The queue is entertained by a sou'westered Able Seaman who distributes Q Managing Fish™, umbrellas (if required) and builds anticipation. A second Able Seaman briefs audience members as they reach Front of Mouth and sees them safely inside (The Whale can comfortably contain 1 to 4 people, more if particularly busy).

Depending on the the age of the audience, the performer inside The Whale gives one of two performances.

- 1. Pilchard (Suitable for Under 6s) is the story of a faithful ship's cat whose magical powers can calm a storm at sea. Pilchard has gone missing and young visitors are set a quest to try and find him.
- 2. Jonah (Suitable for all ages)
  You discover yourself inside a submarine,
  with a submariner named Jonah. S/he has a
  dilemma how to communicate a message of
  great importance to his/her loved one on shore,
  using the regulation 40 words prescribed by the
  Operations Manual for Submariners. S/he asks
  you for help composing the message, which
  s/he then serenades you with. You are asked
  to pass the message on in the form of a paper
  whale, which s/he has folded for you during the
  course of the performance.



Our performers are adept at putting audience members at their ease. Surprise, delight and disbelief are the common characteristics of people on their way out.

### **Audience comments have included:**

"I loved being swallowed by a whale."

"Like nothing I have experienced before."

"I couldn't stop laughing."

"You leave feeling lifted, warm... and with a small gift."



# What promoters say about us:

"Talking Birds were a really

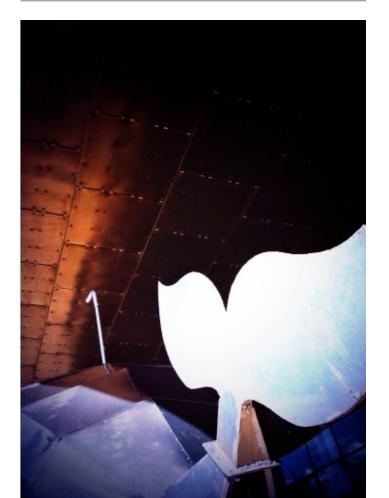
easy company to programme: who doesn't want a giant whale in their park or on their high street?! They were organised, contactable and always cheerful. We'd happily have them back with another creation...The Whale is a fantastic adventure for children and their grown ups. Really accessible and adaptable for those who might be a little hesitant at stepping into the mouth of a giant tin whale."

(Lyndsey Wilson, Company Manager Cultrapedia Rural Touring /Spot On Lancashire)



"It is always a pleasure to have the Whale in Theatre Square – and to see all the happy faces on the way out!"

(Angus MacKechnie, National Theatre Watch This Space Festival Producer)



## Track record

Talking Birds has a 20 year track record of successfully managing productions in a wide variety of contexts both inside and out, and with engaging with the public in formal and informal contexts. It has worked in partnership with various organisations to deliver its work including local authorities, heritage organisations, city events teams, schools, as well as galleries, theatres and festivals.

# Previous performance history

The Whale was originally commissioned by the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, as part of "The Battle of the Guilds", which reinvented the tradition of performing mystery plays from the back of carts.

Since then The Whale has seen over 10,000 people pass through it (including at least one government minister), and been present at events, festivals and openings including The National Theatre Watch This Space Festival, Kendal Mintfest, Millennium Centre, Cardiff, Lyric, Hammersmith, Sloane Sq/Royal Court, Kinsale Arts week, Kilkenny Arts Festival, Terryglass Arts Festival, Dartmouth Regatta, Appetite Festival, Buxton Festival, Larmer Tree Festival, Birmingham Hippodrome, outside football stadia and more...





## **Technical Specification**

The Whale is mounted on a car trailer, which is towed to the site and then the tow vehicle unhitched. Being entirely self-contained it is of very low logistical impact and low environmental impact, without the need for elaborate infrastructure.

**Site:** The Whale is best sited outdoors on flat paved areas, grass, public squares. It is towed to and from site. It is entirely self-contained in terms of power etc, highly weather resilient and positively enjoys the rain. (In 7 years of touring no performances to date have had to be cancelled.)

**Size:** In transit the dimensions are: 5.5m long x 3m wide x 3.5m high.

The minimum space required during performances is: 7m long x 5m wide x 5m high.

Approx weight (without tow vehicle) is 800kg.

### Get-in/aet-out:

Get-in time from arrival is 45mins-1 hour. Get-out time 45 mins. When staying overnight locally, secure overnight storage is required for Whale + tow vehicle

### Number of shows per day

**Audience capacity:** 200-400 per day (based on 6 hours of shows, 2 x 3hr slots with a 1 hr break, 12-15 shows/hour average).

**Admission:** The Whale works best as a free, non-pre-booked event for audiences. Promoters wishing to charge the public will need to provide FOH staff to manage this.

**Crew / Front of house:** 2 perfomers and one stage manager look after The Whale day to day. Total in team on tour: 3

The crew steward the Whale, so no additional FOH staff required, unless the local situation requires this.

**Lighting:** During the day no lighting is required; the Whale can also be highly effective at night when suitably lit.

**Insurance:** The Whale is fully risk assessed and Talking Birds has public liability insurance to the value of £5 million.

# Accessibilty

The Whale is a multi-sensory experience, accessible for wheelchair users and is fitted with an induction loop. Our actors are highly skilled at tailoring performances to individual audience members and can take specific access needs into account.

Welsh language version available.



#### Links

More info: www.talkingbirds.co.uk Trailer: http://tinyurl.com/TBwhale

#### Cost

Please contact us for details.
Our daily rate includes up to 6 hours of performances and we offer discounts for longer runs (ie more than a single day).
Accommodation for 3 crew is required for overnights.

### **Contact Information**

Talking Birds' Artistic / Creative Directors are Derek Nisbet (Composer) and Janet Vaughan (Designer)

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