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 TalkingBirdsWhale



talking birds presents
THE WHALE



a talking birds project



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.
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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."

(audience comment)



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 Cultrpedia 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)

