

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME EDUCATION PACK



BASED ON THE NOVEL
BY MARK HADDON
ADAPTED BY
SIMON STEPHENS

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CONTENTS

CAST LIST.....	3
ABOUT THE PLAY	4
REFLECTING ON THE PLAY	5
DRAMA TECHNIQUES	6
PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES.....	6
THEATRICAL CONVENTIONS.....	7
THE CHARACTERS	8
TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENTS.....	9
ASK AN ACTOR	10
HOT SEATING.....	11
THE MOVEMENT	13
THE ENSEMBLE	14
PRODUCTION	15
THE DIRECTOR.....	16

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY MARK HADDON
ADAPTED BY SIMON STEPHENS

CAST

Christopher Boone Tim Earl
Siobhan Claire Dougan
Ed Mark Wright
Judy Serena Cotton
Mrs Alexander / Ensemble Margaret-Mary Hollins
Mrs Shears / Ensemble Keagan Carr Fransch
Mr Shears / Ensemble Roy Snow
Policeman 1 / Ensemble Matt Hudson
Punk Girl / Ensemble Kathleen Burns
Reverend Peters / Ensemble Steven Ray
Sandy Charlie/Astro
Toby Rata or Tui Riley

PRODUCTION

Director Lara Macgregor
Movement Director Shane Anthony
Stage Manager Ashlyn Smith
Set Designer Mark McEntyre
Costume Designer Tina Hutchison-Thomas
Lighting Designer Joe Hayes
Sound Designer Giles Tanner
AV Designer Andrew Todd
Composer Henri Kerr
Lighting & Sound Operator Sean Hawkins
Properties Manager Christy Lassen
Costume Manager Sarah Douglas
Construction Manager Ioan Bramhall
Production Manager Flore Charbonnier
Costume Construction Louise Galloway & Deborah Moor
Workshop Supervisor Nigel Kerr
Set Construction Henri Kerr, Nick Lowry, Nigel Kerr, Richard Daem, Rob Hood
Education Pack Rachel Sears & Nick King

Running time: Approximately 2 hrs 20 minutes, with 20 minute interval.

Acknowledgments: Adgraphix, Auckland Theatre Company, Autism NZ, Danielle Colvin Photography, Fab Plastics, Hayley Brown, Helen Broad, Simon Stephens, TootToot.co.nz, Wendy Riley & Arina Riley-Biddle.

First produced at the National Theatre's Cottesloe Theatre, 2 August 2012 in a production which subsequently transferred to the Apollo Theatre, in London's West End, from 1 March 2013. The Production opened on Broadway at the Barrymore Theatre, New York on 5 October 2014.

The Court Theatre production was staged from 18 March – 22 April 2017.

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ABOUT THE PLAY

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time tells the story of how fifteen-year-old Christopher John Francis Boone discovers the murdered body of his neighbour's dog, Wellington. He sets out to investigate the crime at times aided, and at other times hampered, by the form of autism he lives with.

DISCUSS: As a class talk about your immediate response to the play. What parts do you feel connected to personally? Are there any familiar moments that you recognise from your own family dynamic?

A play adapted from a novel

The script of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time has been adapted from the novel of the same name by Mark Haddon. You can read more about the process that Mark Haddon (Novelist) and Simon Stephens (Playwright) went through on this blog <http://www.curiousonstage.com/latest/>

One of the challenges that Stephen's identifies was determining how to turn Christopher's remarkably internal world into an active world in which the drama can be revealed. Christopher doesn't handle human interaction well, particularly with strangers. Therefore it was impossible to assume he would be able to tell his story to an audience. Stephens turned to the two other people who have a chance to read Christopher's book – Ed and Siobhan. Christopher is too honest in his writing about his feelings towards his parents, which causes tension within their household. Therefore the only real option was to have the play built around Siobhan and her experience in reading Christopher's book.

DISCUSS: Think about your experience of watching the character Siobhan read elements of Christopher's story. What worked and what didn't work for you as an audience experiencing this theatrical device?

HAVE A GO: In groups choose a novel (with a strong protagonist) that you love. What approach would you take if commissioned to turn this novel into a play?



REFLECTING ON THE PLAY

HAVE A GO:

In groups work to complete the tables below, adding your own ideas and thoughts on how The Court Theatre's production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* used drama elements, techniques, conventions and technologies within this performance. Remember to consider why the director/designer/actor made these choices and what impact this had on your interpretation of the play.

DRAMA ELEMENTS AND HOW THEY IMPACT THE MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

ELEMENT	HOW IT WAS USED	THE IMPACT
ACTION		
TENSION		
SITUATION		
SYMBOL		
PLACE		
FOCUS	The ensemble gives focus to Christopher.	
MOOD		
ROLE		
CONTRAST		
TIME	The show doesn't follow a linear pattern at all times, sometimes it jumps to the past for a moment.	This shows the audience how much Christopher holds in his head at any one point.

DRAMA TECHNIQUES AND HOW THEY IMPACT MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

TECHNIQUE	HOW IT WAS USED	THE IMPACT
USE OF SPACE		
BODY		
MOVEMENT	Lifts, chaotic movement, repeated movements, choreographed sections	
VOICE		

PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES AND HOW THEY IMPACT MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

TECHNOLOGY	HOW IT WAS USED	THE IMPACT
SET	There is lots of light and dark and a grid with lots of cubes.	
PROPERTIES		
COSTUME	The ensemble wear grey and sometimes they add colour.	This means the audience understands when characters are important to him and when they are helping him tell the story.
LIGHTING		
SOUND		
MUSIC		
AV		

THEATRICAL CONVENTIONS AND HOW THEY IMPACT MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

CONVENTION	HOW IT WAS USED	THE IMPACT
MONOLOGUES	Christopher uses monologues to tell the audience what has happened.	This tells the audience that Christopher is the main character and that we are being told the story from his perspective.
FLASH BACKS		
NARRATION	Siobhan reads from Christopher's book.	
DIRECT ADDRESS	During the second half Siobhan and Christopher break the fourth wall and talk directly to the audience.	
PHYSICAL THEATRE		
ENSEMBLE		
PLAYING MULTIPLE CHARACTERS	The ensemble plays lots of different characters	

THE CHARACTERS

CHRISTOPHER. Christopher is 15 years old, he lives with his father and pet rat Toby at 36 Randolph Street. He views the world differently, dividing things into a series of likes and dislikes. He feels most comfortable with logic and order. He finds Wellington's murder an irresistible puzzle to solve.

SIOBHAN. Christopher's teacher at school. She is one of the few people Christopher trusts, in the play Siobhan acts as the narrator, often reading Christopher's words aloud.

ED. Ed is Christopher's father and they live together, just the two of them. Ed owns a heating maintenance and boiler repair business. During the play, Christopher uncovers elements of Ed's life that he has long tried to keep hidden.

JUDY. Christopher's mother. Christopher believes she died of a heart attack and during the play he discovers that this is not true. Christopher remembers her as a loving but impatient mum, she is at times overwhelmed by the difficulty of caring for her son.

MRS SHEARS. Christopher's neighbour. Mrs Shears is the ex-wife of Roger Shears. The murder of her dog, Wellington, is the starting and focal point for the story.

MRS ALEXANDER. An elderly resident of Randolph Street. A kind lady, Mrs. Alexander cares for Christopher and enjoys talking to him. She reveals to Christopher important information about the affairs of Christopher's father and mother.

ROGER (MR SHEARS). Ex-husband of Mrs Shears. His mysterious nature leads Christopher to investigate him as a possible suspect in Wellington's murder. During the play we discover that he ran away with Judy, Christopher's mother.

WELLINGTON. Mrs. Shears's large black poodle he is found dead in the opening scene of the novel with a pitchfork through his side.

TOBY. Christopher's pet rat. He becomes Christopher's sole companion on his journey to London.

There are also a variety of other characters, played by members of the cast. The actors use hats, costume, voice and body to depict the various characters that Christopher meets on his journey.

DISCUSS: How did the ensemble demonstrate to the audience that they were playing different characters. What worked and what did not work about these choices?



TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENTS

The Director of The Court Theatre's production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* wanted to create three transformational moments within the production which give the audience an insight into Christopher's sensory experience of the world.

Space Moment

- Lifts are used to transport Christopher into a different playing space.
- Lights and sound are used to create a magical atmosphere and to give the illusion of floating through stars.
- Christopher engages with the space like world around him whereas Siobhan and Ed continue as if nothing has changed.



The Train Set

- The model train set is built on stage and then flies up into the grid, this helps the audience understand that the train set is a memory that Christopher and his mother share.
- Christopher moves at speed throughout the sequence while Judy (mother) sits still as she reads aloud the letters.
- The letters fall from the ceiling as Christopher becomes agitated, the audience see how many letters he is encountering at once and this enhances the feeling of being overwhelmed that the actor is communicating.



The London Underground

- The use of movement, specifically repetition helps to communicate the vast number of people Christopher encounters during his journey.
- There is a lot of loud music and use of projected images during the section with allow the audience to be part of the sensory overload that Christopher is experiencing.



DISCUSS: Focus on each of these three moments in turn.

What were these like to experience as an audience? Did everyone in your group have the same interpretation? How many different interpretations can you find for each moment from within your class? What was effective about the way production technologies were used to support the actors in these moments?

HAVE A GO: In groups take each of these moments in the play and devise a different approach to staging these sections.

ASK AN ACTOR

Interview with Tim Earl who plays Christopher Boon in The Court Theatre's production of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.

What was it like playing a character that is younger than your actual age?

I've been playing characters younger than myself throughout my career, I have found with Christopher it is about really paying attention to the way he is written on the page. Although he is younger he has this vast intelligence so it is about finding the moments where he demonstrates that intelligence but also celebrating the moments where he needs to be represents very clearly in a simple and straight forward way. It is all in the script.

And also relying on the fact that I'm small!

What tools did you use to create the physicality of Christopher?

We've been working with a really awesome movement director called Shane Anthony and we have been using Viewpoints, a methodology for creating dynamic bodies in space. We have also been able to utilise the wonderful details in the novel. If I look at the action scene by scene in the play, I am able to go away and read the chapters in the novel that relates to that scene, the novel is so detailed in the way it describes what is happening in Christopher's mind and how he is affected in his body and what he does to help manage that. That detail is really useful in helping me figure out to present Christopher accurately on stage.

How do you prepare to perform such a physical and emotional demanding role every night?

I'm lucky that I have done the show before so I do have a sense of the shape, energy and stamina that is required. Because Christopher is on stage the whole time, once you start the show it is a bit of whirlwind where you just keep going and you don't stop until the show stops and you step off stage. The shape of the piece also gives me an idea of where I need more energy and where I get to re charge.

I also have to monitor my body and make sure that I warm up and warm down physically and vocally every night.

You also played Christopher in Auckland Theatre Company's Production of this play, what are the similarities and differences between these two productions?

The script is slightly different, and the space we are playing in is really different, the show in Auckland was in the round so that really changed the way we connected to the audience. The movement element is much more significant and integrated throughout the entire piece in this production compared to the Auckland production. The cast are completely different and the director is different and everyone brings their own interpretation and ideas about the characters and the stories.

It is really exciting for me to visit something that is really familiar but get to approach it a new way.

Can you choose three words which describe Christopher?

Intelligent

Determined

Resourceful

Hot seating

HOT SEATING

We used a technique called hot seating to understand more about Christopher Boone.

You can read our interview below.

How old are you, Christopher?

I am 15 years, 3 months and 2 days.

Where do you live?

I live in Swindon and I live at 36 Randolph Street.

We know you've been going to a special school for unique individuals. How long have you been going to the special school?

I started going to the special school when I was seven years old, six months and eighteen days.

Do you have friends at this special school?

I have Siobhan who is my teacher, which means she is technically not my friend, but she's very nice to me, and I respect her. The other students at the school are not as smart as me. I would not say I was friends with them; they are more acquaintances, but we do get along.

Tell me what it's like at your school.

It's good. Siobhan teaches me life skills. The other students don't use the bathrooms properly. Sometimes they just wet themselves wherever they are in the middle of whatever they're doing. Sometimes they're having a bad day, then sometimes they soil themselves too and they do a lot of screaming. They also throw things around the room like calculators and books and they snap pencils and sometimes they try to eat the stationery. They are just generally disruptive.

What makes you different?

Well I am very smart; I'm very intelligent and I have passions and I know lots of things about those passions and I'm also good at listening to instructions and I am very good at maths so I am intelligent. I'm also becoming more and more independent through the life skills that I'm practicing and learning from Siobhan and she says I'm making very good progress.

Tell us about the writing you've been doing lately.

Well I have been writing a book as a school project and I have been writing about the investigation I am doing into who killed Wellington. I am doing this because I was supposed to write fiction, but I don't really like fiction very much because I think it's pointless, so I am writing about something that has true facts to it that I can write truthfully. Siobhan told me she quite likes it and finds it quite exciting. So that's good, but really I'm just writing what has really happened and is the truth.

I heard they were turning your book into a play at school. Is that correct?

That is correct, for now. They asked me if I wanted to and I said no.

Who would you have acting in your play?

I wouldn't have anyone acting in it because actors are just liars and I don't like liars. So it would have to have the real people playing the real parts, but that would be difficult because Wellington has been dead for a while now and so I don't think people would like to see him on stage in a play. It also might be quite difficult or traumatic for the people involved in the play to play out the parts because it actually happened to them.

Would you like to see your play?

No, because I've already seen it when it happened and if I want to I can replay that in my head at any time, which I

often do when I am writing the book because I want to get the facts true and right.

What do you do when you're not at school?

My favourite thing to do when I am not at school is I like to play computer games. Tetris and Minesweeper are two of my favourite computer games. I like to go for walks late at night when everyone else is asleep and look at the stars. Looking at the stars is one of my favourite things because the galaxy is one of my favourite things and probably my main passion. I also like to look after my pet rat Toby.

Do you know what you want to do when you leave school, Christopher?

I want to be an astronaut, but that's difficult because I don't have 20/20 vision and you need 20/20 vision to be an astronaut. So I want to go to university and I want to study mathematics and physics and astrophysics and I might quite like a job working as a researcher in a laboratory or at NASA. I probably wouldn't be the person flying the space rocket up in space, but I could be communicating with them via a radio link up from NASA on Earth.

You're about to sit your A-levels in maths, aren't you?

Yes, I'm going to get an A grade, which is the best grade. I know I am going to do this because I know the kind of content that is in the A-level mathematics and it's very easy. I'm very capable.

You have a pet rat, don't you?

Yes, he's called Toby.

Why do you like having a rat?

I like Toby and I like having him because he's very easy to communicate with and he's very predictable. I can easily tell when he's hungry, or when he wants to be held, or when he doesn't want to be held, or when he needs to go to the bathroom. He is not tricky and difficult to read like people are. He's very loyal and he's also fascinating to watch.

What do you dislike?

I hate yellow and brown. I also hate metaphors, because they make no sense. My least favourite one is "time flies" because time is not actually a thing; time is a construct so it can't actually fly like a bird or a plane. It's stupid. I also don't like to be held because it is very creepy and I don't like the sensation when people touch my skin with their skin. I don't know what people are going to do when they touch me because people have free will and if they're going to touch me I have no way of knowing if it's going to be a hug or if they're going to punch me or push me.

Are you planning to go on any more adventures?

I plan to continue revising my mathematics so I can get my A grade on my A-level maths and then my next adventure will be to do A-level physics so that I can go on my biggest adventure, which will be leaving home and going to university and living in a flat.

Thank you for talking with us, Christopher. All the best with your writing and turning your book into a play!

HAVE A GO: Hot seating is a technique where you ask an actor to take on a character and then the rest of the group ask them questions which they answer as if they were that character. This is a good way of coming up with ideas for characters back stories or figuring how they feel about certain things. In groups take it in turns to be hot seated as other characters from the play, find out what you learn about them. Would you have presented these versions of the characters any differently from the production you watched?

THE MOVEMENT

Movement plays a key role in this production, the cast and director worked with Shane Anthony (Movement Director) to create the choreography.

Viewpoints

Viewpoints is a technique of composition or staging of movement that gives actors a vocabulary to talk about movement, gesture and creative space. Originally developed in the 1970s by choreographer Mary Overlie as a method of movement improvisation, The Viewpoints theory was adapted for stage acting by directors Anne Bogart and Tina Landau.



The Viewpoints are

- Tempo (the speed at which you do something)
- Duration (for how long you do it)
- Kinesthetic Response (when you do something, and how the people around you affect that)
- Repetition (repeating movement from others)
- Spatial Relationships (how you are positioned compared to the other performers)
- Architecture (how the space is informing what you do)
- Topography (how you move in the space)
- Shape (the shapes your body makes)
- Gesture (recognisable human gestures that indicate mood, time, place or character)

DISCUSS: Think about the section of the play where Christopher travels on the underground. How did the movement draw on all the Viewpoints to show the audience what the experience was like for Christopher?

HAVE A GO: In groups devise how you would stage this section of the play. Perhaps you would focus on different Viewpoints or utilise production technologies to communicate to the audience.

Expressive v Descriptive Movement

When creating performance it is possible to stage descriptively or expressively. Descriptive staging repeats the external physical and vocal reality of an event, whereas expressive staging is more concerned with the what an event felt like and finds a way to physically and vocally represent those emotions.

DISCUSS: Identify a point in the production where expressive movement is used and a point in the production where descriptive movement is used. What do you think is most effective about each of these choices?

Find out more

Anne Bogart; Tina Landau (1 August 2004). The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition. Theatre Communications Group. pp. 7–12. ISBN 978-1-55936-677-9.

THE ENSEMBLE

Interview with Kathleen Burns who plays one of the Ensemble in the play.

What did you first think about your role when you read the play?

Often when you do a play the first thing you do is read the script but I actually first experienced this story by reading the book and I loved it, I didn't even know there was a play until I saw that it was on in the West End in London. My immediate reaction after watching it was, this is the BEST use of ensemble I have ever seen in my life, I want to be in this ensemble. The whole of the ensemble tell the whole of the story, they show you Christopher's journey. I can picture one of the actresses in the ensemble and I remember how fascinated I was with her attention to detail. This was before it was even programmed at The Court Theatre so when I came back to Christchurch and we were doing it and I got asked to be involved I was so excited.

Have you expectations been met or challenged during the rehearsal process?

I can't know because we haven't opened yet, we're about to open and you never really know what you've got until you put in in front of the audience. You can really feel the strong ensemble dynamic, and the way Shane and Lara have worked together and with us has felt like some of the best directing I've ever experienced. When you are playing a small character it isn't small in its importance, every little character has their own back story and their own reason for being there. Each actor needs to know how they can best serve the story, every glimpse we see of those characters is to serve the telling of Christopher's story

What is your favourite moment in the performance?

My favourite moment is this tiny exchange I have with Keegan, another actor in the ensemble. At this point in the play I'm playing a character called 'voice 5'. We both reach for a bag and then realise we have each other's bags, she says 'oh bollocks', I snatch my bag off her and then we walk off and I shout at someone off stage. It is this tiny nothing moment, the briefest of human exchanges, but it paints a bigger picture of the chaos that Christopher finds himself in, showing the audience how he can be surrounded by people but at the same time feel so alone.

DISCUSS: There are moments in the play where the ensemble represent other characters that Christopher interacts with and then at time they become part of Christopher and his experience of the world. What was your experience of this theatrical convention? What worked and what didn't work for you as an audience member about this choice? If you were directing this show how would you use the ensemble?

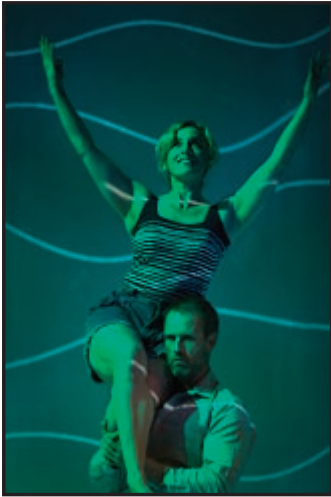


PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGIES

The creative team of this production wanted to focus on telling the story from Christopher's point of view, all the decisions about staging and use of production technologies support this goal.



Set Design – Mark McEntyre the Designer for this production was inspired by visual artists like Bob Wilson and Sol Lewitt to create a playing space that mirrored the binary way Christopher views the world, the design plays with light and dark, order and allows for the action to go in and out of focus.



Lighting Design – the use of lighting aims to reveal to the audience how Christopher is perceiving the world, the Lighting Designer Joe Hayes did research into colours associated with odd and even numbers and used this knowledge within his lighting design.



Composer – Henri Kerr, the Composer for this show, collaborated with the choreographer and created the music that was required for each sequence. He wanted to include many layers and lots of repetition to show the complexity of the story and situation however there are also moments of childlike simplicity which ground the audience and remind us of Christopher's innocence and clarity.



Costume Design – the ensemble are all wearing neutral grey colours, the Costume Designer Tina Hutchinson Thomas wanted to use colour to demonstrate that a character was present to Christopher, you will notice that the only colour in the costumes is worn by characters who are important to Christopher, this may be all the time (Siobhan and Ed) or at certain moments (the police officer, Mrs Alexander).



AV Design – Andrew Todd the AV Designer did research into the work of Autistic Artists and used these images to inspire his AV design, the images you see via the projection are not descriptive of the settings Christopher travels to but aim to give the audience an insight into what the world is like for Christopher to experience.

DISCUSS: how did the theatre technologies work in this production to help tell the story?

HAVE A GO: At The Court Theatre the first day of rehearsals always includes a design presentation where the director and designers present their ideas to the cast and company. In groups take on the role of Director, Lighting, Set, Costume and Sound designers and decide a concept for this show. Present your ideas to your classmates, use a mood board, key words and images to communicate your ideas.

THE DIRECTOR

This text is taken from the first page of the programme, it is called a 'Director's Note' and is designed to be read by the audience before they watch the show.

Mark Haddon describes his story as having "...a very simple surface, but there are layers of irony and paradox all the way through..."

Creating that simple surface has been a complex journey filled with a matrix of decisions. In the National Theatre world première it took well over a year to engineer the production that garnered their well-deserved accolades.

I am amazed at what this ensemble of actors and creatives have achieved in only five short weeks.

Movement Director, Shane Anthony, was with us for twelve days throughout our process. Within two days of working with the actors he had them lifting, leaping and hurtling through space. (No injuries to report to date.)

It was clear from the get-go that the use of movement, AV, sound and lights were important devices to assist the audience into the inner workings of Christopher's brain. But if we strip that all away, as Simon Stephens reminded us half-way through rehearsal: "It's a play that only works if you attack it with energy. Kick the @\$&! out of the @\$&!er! Have a lot of fun with it. If you do those things, then I think it yields. I think it yields".

This beautiful story has taken us all on a world of discovery — of what it means to be on the spectrum, of what it takes for parents to parent, and of what it means for neurotypical people to understand what it is to be on the spectrum.

My gratitude goes to all involved, particularly the departments at the theatre who have had to remain fluid with their creativity while we discovered how to make this simple complex story yield.

Lara Macgregor

Director

HAVE A GO: In pairs or individually have a go at writing your own programme note for this show, what do you want the audience to be thinking about before the lights go down?

DISCUSS: Do you think the director achieved her vision for this production?

