



## **WHY THE WHALES CAME** **by MICHAEL MORPURGO**

**Standard Q&A Questions**  
**Danyah Miller**  
**Autumn Tour 2017**

### **What can audiences expect from Wizard Presents 'Why the Whales Came'?**

*Why the Whales Came* is a theatrical storytelling family show, telling the story of Gracie and Daniel, two children who've been forbidden to go near the mysterious and seemingly dangerous Birdman. However when they find a message in the sand things are not always as they seem. The two friends get stranded on the Birdman's tiny island and begin to unravel his secrets...

It is a story filled with fun, mystery and adventure. I love how Michael Morpurgo's stories are full of surprises, sadness, hope, joy. Above all they're about ordinary folk often doing extraordinary things during extraordinary times and this is true of *Why the Whales Came*.

The show has something for everyone, it is a 'family' show in the widest possible sense. It's suitable for all ages from 7 to 107, whether or not children are in the party. Good stories, good books, good theatre appeal across the ages and we have been told by audiences that our show does this too.

*'Danyah's performance is a tour de force...a glorious example of the magic of storytelling...'* Michael Morpurgo

*'It is a wonderful story brilliantly told that kept the audience entranced from start to finish'*  
LondonNewsOnline

### **Is there a character you prefer to play in the story, and why?**

Gosh, this is a difficult question, I'm not sure I can answer it definitively. There are three main characters, Gracie, Daniel and the Birdman. I care about each of them very much and have grown to know who they are through rehearsals but also whilst performing the show on tour. Perhaps if I had to choose one it would be the Birdman because I love how we get to know him better throughout the show and by the end he probably isn't who we first thought he was.

**Danyah, you play every character in this stage production. What is it like switching between characters so quickly? Do you ever get them mixed up?**

As a solo performer I'm the only person on stage, but I feel as if I have a collaborator when I perform on this set, created by the hugely talented Kate Bunce. The world of Brhyer has been created by the whole creative team together... set, projection, lighting and sound and I'm thrilled that people who have visited the Scilly Isles tell us that it's like being transported back there.

*"Absolutely riveting telling of the story – we were there on the beach! Thank you."*

Throughout the show I switch from being the storyteller, 'holding' a central point, to characters, sometimes one speaking to another. I don't ever get muddled although it is quite a challenge, particularly in rehearsals, to find and portray each separate character. I do relish being stretched in this way. I love to paint the world of the story, become characters, weave in and out of landscapes and people, and then come back to the centre as storyteller again.

**We know you can't tell us why the whales actually came because that would be a spoiler, but does the play have an important message?**

I love working on Michael's stories because they're multi-layered as well as being gripping tales which are always based on some true story.

The story of *Why the Whales Came* makes us think about others, about strangers, about how we view difference and how sometimes we misjudge when we're unsure or afraid. It is such a relevant and topical subject. I would hope that the audience take away a sense of hope and joy and perhaps the feeling that one person can make a huge difference.

**Michael Morpurgo himself calls you a 'storytelling phenomenon.' Do you have any tips for parents to tell the perfect bed-time story?**

I really recommend that parents regularly find time to share stories, both written and from memory or imagination, with their children. I think one of the most important thing to remember is to relax and know that neither you nor your story has to be perfect. Just enjoy being together, let your imagination roam, tells stories of and from your childhood. Children will enjoy your stories most if you enjoy telling them.

My top ten tips for storytelling with children was published in The Guardian in 2014 <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2014/oct/06/danyah-millers-top-ten-tips-for-stunning-storytelling>

If you want to learn more about storytelling the International School of Storytelling runs superb course, short and long. I'm one of the course leaders there.

<http://www.schoolofstorytelling.com>

For information on our touring schedule [www.whythewhalescame.co.uk](http://www.whythewhalescame.co.uk)

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