Visual Story
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

National Theatre Live Relaxed Screening

This visual story is designed for visitors to Relaxed screenings of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time. This document contains information about the play and lots of images to help prepare anyone who may be anxious (or curious) about their visit.

Please note that The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time has been classified as 15 by the BBFC.
General Information about the Cottesloe Theatre and the play The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

Where is the play happening?
A performance of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time was recorded in the Cottesloe Theatre at the National Theatre in London in September 2012 and broadcast live to cinemas around the world. What you are watching today is a screening of this recording.

How long does the play last?
The play is shown in two halves with a break in the middle (called the ‘interval’) and is 2 hours and 20 minutes long. There is also a special short film which will be shown before the play starts. The whole screening will last approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes. 
• The introductory film will last 7 minutes. The introductory film is called ‘Working on the Spectrum’ and includes interviews with the play’s writers, director and actors about how they brought Christopher’s world to life on stage
• The first half of the play will last 75 minutes
• The interval will last 20 minutes. During the interval a clock on the cinema screen will count down the time remaining until the second half of the play begins
• The second half will last 65 minutes

What is the play about?
This play is about Christopher and his family. Christopher is fifteen years old and has an extraordinary brain – he is exceptional at maths but finds it difficult to understand everyday life. He doesn’t like being touched, he doesn’t like strangers and he has never gone further than the end of his road on his own. At the beginning of the play Christopher discovers his neighbour Mrs Shears’s dog, who was called Wellington, has been speared with a garden fork and is dead. Christopher decides to do some detective work to try to solve the mystery of who murdered Wellington. He decides to write a book about the mystery and records each fact he discovers in this book. But this detective work, forbidden by his father, takes him on a frightening journey that upturns his world.
Information about the Auditorium, the Stage and the Set

• The auditorium is the part of the theatre where the audience sits when they are watching the play.
• The stage is the area where the actors perform the play.
• The set is the name for all the scenery, furniture and objects used on stage in a play.

What will the play look like?

• Throughout the play lots of different lights, words and sometimes pictures are projected onto the floor (there are no strobe lights).
• The play is ‘in-the-round’ which means the audience sits around the stage and you will be able to see audience members when you are watching the show.
Here are some pictures of the auditorium, the stage and the set so you know what they will look like:

These are the seats in the auditorium where the audience sit. Around the stage are light boxes, which the actors sit on and props are placed on throughout the play.

In this picture Christopher is visiting his neighbours, their different houses are represented by numbers which are projected onto the floor.

In this picture Christopher is lying on the floor surrounded by letters which fall from the ceiling.
This is a picture of Christopher on the train travelling to London with other passengers. Images of trees are projected onto the floor to show the train is moving through the countryside.

This is a picture of Christopher when he arrives in London. The images of the different signs he can see at the train station are projected on to the floor.

This is a picture of the set when the lights around the edge of the stage light up. They light up at different times during the show, and in different colours.
The actors and the characters they play

This is Christopher, who is the main character in the play. Christopher has a pet rat in the story, which is a real pet rat on stage. But don’t worry, it is in a cage at all times!

This is Siobhan, she is Christopher’s helper at school.

This is Ed, he is Christopher’s dad.

This is Judy, she is Christopher’s mum.
This is Mrs Alexander, she is Christopher’s neighbour.

This is Mrs Shears, she is Christopher’s neighbour, she is usually quite cross. The actress who plays Mrs Shears plays lots of different parts during the show, including Mrs Gascoyne who is the headmistress of Christopher’s school and a woman on a train.

This is a policeman that Christopher meets in the play. The actor who plays this policeman plays lots of different parts during the show, including Mr Shears (whose first name is Roger), a neighbour and a man in the train station.

This is Mr Thompson who Christopher meets in the play. The actor who plays Mr Thompson plays lots of different parts during the show including a policeman and a businessman.
This is one of Christopher’s neighbours. The actress who plays this neighbour plays lots of different parts during the show including a punk and a woman who gives information at the train station.

This is Rhodri, who works with Christopher’s dad. The actor who plays Rhodri plays lots of different parts during the show including a policeman and Reverend Peters.
Further information on the story and the characters

In this section you will find out more about what happens in the play and there are also some notes on particular moments which are dramatic, distressing or exciting which you might want to talk through before coming to see the show.

Show Notes:

• During the play, Siobhan often reads from a book – this is the book that Christopher has written about his detective work, so she is speaking his words.

• Remember – sometimes in this play the action (where things take place) changes very quickly from place to place. Also sometimes there will be two different things taking place. For example – sometimes Christopher will be ‘at school’ talking to Siobhan and his mum will also be on stage talking to him at home.

• Sometimes the actors will use movement to ‘represent’ real objects like doors, fridges, computer game or waves in the sea.

• The show begins with the audience seeing a dog which has been speared by a garden fork – the dog is a real, stuffed dog.

• Towards the end of the first half of the play Christopher has a seizure which is very realistic – he thrashes around on the floor and he is sick (this is referred to but not seen).

• There are a few short moments of physical violence between Christopher and other characters and other moments when he screams and shouts when distressed.

• Just before the end of the show a live puppy is brought onto stage.
Part One

At the beginning of the play a dog called Wellington is lying dead in Mrs Shears’s garden. Mrs Shears is Christopher’s neighbour and Wellington was her dog. Mrs Shears thinks that Christopher has killed Wellington because Christopher is in her garden when she discovers that Wellington is dead. Christopher says that he isn’t responsible for Wellington’s death. Mrs Shears calls the police and, when a policeman comes to talk to Christopher to find out what has happened, he gets upset and hits the policeman, who arrests him. Ed, who is Christopher’s dad, comes to help Christopher get out of the police station and to explain that Christopher didn’t mean to hurt the policeman.

Throughout the scenes just described we sometimes see the action change to go to Christopher’s school and we see him and Siobhan talking about different things. Siobhan is reading aloud from the book Christopher has written and she says ‘Mother died two years ago’ so we learn that Christopher’s mum is dead.

Christopher decides he is going to investigate Wellington’s death and starts to question different people. He questions his neighbours – Mrs Shears, Mr Thompson, the woman who lives at No 40 (we don’t find out her name), Mr Wise and Mrs Alexander.

Ed (Christopher’s dad) goes to his school to talk to his headteacher (whose name is Mrs Gascoyne) to see if she will allow Christopher to take his maths A Level early which, after some persuading, she agrees to.

Christopher and his dad have an argument as his dad doesn’t want him to ask their neighbours any questions about Wellington’s death. Siobhan is then reading aloud from Christopher’s book again and reads out how Christopher has described how much he would like to go to space. Christopher is lifted off the ground and carried around the stage by some of the other actors and the whole theatre is covered in little lights which look like stars.

Christopher goes to see Mrs Alexander, one of his neighbours, again and they talk about his mum. Mrs Alexander tells
Christopher a secret – that his mum and Mrs Shear’s husband (who is called Roger) were very good friends before his mother died. Christopher asks if this means they were ‘doing sex’ and Mrs Alexander says yes.

We then briefly meet Rhodri who works with Christopher’s dad. When Rhodri leaves, Ed finds Christopher’s book and he starts to read that Christopher has been asking the neighbours questions. He is very angry. At the same time we also meet Christopher’s mum who comes on to the stage.

Ed is very angry at Christopher and they have a fight. Christopher is upset because his dad takes his book and hides it. He decides to do some detecting and looks all over the house for his book. After looking all over the house he finds his book at the bottom of his dad’s wardrobe in a box. Inside this box are also lots of letters, all addressed to Christopher.

Christopher reads the letters and they are from his mum and he realises that she is still alive. Ed talks to Christopher and tells him that he pretended his mum is dead as he was very angry with her for leaving him and Christopher and moving away to London to live with Mr Shears (Roger). Ed also admits that he killed Wellington because he thought Mrs Shears was going to move in with him but she didn’t want to. Christopher is very upset and he decides that if his dad can murder Wellington, he could murder him too – so he runs away to London to see his mum.
Part Two
The second part of the play begins with Siobhan asking Christopher if he would like his book to be turned into a play which will be performed at his school.

Christopher is running away to London but before he goes he talks to Mrs Alexander and he steals his dad’s credit card. He goes to his local train station, Swindon, and we see him talking to a policeman, buying a ticket and getting on the train.

Just before his train is about to leave Swindon on its way to London, a policeman gets on board. The policeman is looking for Christopher because his dad (Ed) has reported him missing. Before the policeman gets Christopher off the train the train doors shut and the train sets off to London. Christopher hides on the train so that the policeman doesn’t find him and manages to avoid him and another policeman when they reach London.

Christopher then makes his way to his mum’s house (where she lives with Mr Shears). When he finally gets there a policeman comes to see him to check that he is happy to live with his mum and his mum says that he can stay for as long as he likes. Ed (Christopher’s dad) also arrives and wants to see Christopher but Christopher stays in his bedroom and won’t talk to his dad. Mr Shears is worried that there isn’t enough room for all three of them – Mr Shears, Christopher and Judy (Christopher’s mum).

Christopher wants to go back to Swindon so he can sit his maths A level examination but his mum tells him she has called his headteacher (Mrs Gascoyne) and has asked her to cancel the exam until next year. Christopher is very upset that he cannot take his A level and he screams.

Later (at night) Mr Shears comes home, he is drunk and angry with Christopher. In the middle of the night Christopher and his mum leave the flat in London and run away from Mr Shears. They go to stay in Swindon with Christopher’s dad who goes to live with his workmate Rhodri so that Christopher and his mum can stay in the house.
Judy (Christopher’s mum) goes to visit Siobhan, Christopher’s teaching assistant who has some good news – the school still have his maths A level papers so now that he is back in Swindon, if Christopher would like to take it he still can. Christopher decides that he will take the A level.

Christopher and his mum move out into their own place but Christopher doesn’t like it very much. Ed (Christopher’s dad) comes to see him but Christopher is still nervous about talking to his dad since he found out he killed Wellington. Ed brings a present for Christopher – a puppy called Sandy – and Christopher starts to visit his dad so that he can see Sandy.

Christopher gets an A* grade for his maths A level – he is happy because this is the best grade. The play then ends with Christopher and Siobhan talking – they are talking about the book which Siobhan has been reading throughout the play, which has been turned into a play for Christopher’s school and which is the story of who killed Wellington.
Contact us
We hope you enjoy the screening. If you have any questions, or feedback on your experience, you can get in touch with us at ntlive@nationaltheatre.org.uk

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The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time on stage
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time will re-open in the West End at the Gielgud Theatre in June. The production will also tour venues around the UK from December.

Find out more at curiousonstage.com