

The Wonderland Garden

A musical story
for babies and
young children

‘Mesmerising
for adults and kids.
Poetic.’

—Audience member, Deptford



**City of
London
Sinfonia**

A co-production between
City of London Sinfonia
and Landmark Theatres



**LANDMARK
THEATRES**



What is The Wonderland Garden?

A co-production between City of London Sinfonia and Landmark Theatres, The Wonderland Garden beautifully brings to life a young person's joy in discovering the magic of a garden through the changing seasons, alongside their new friend Robin.

'The most perfect piece of art to present to my daughter. I cried all the way through.'

—Audience member
Key Theatre, Peterborough



[Click here to watch the trailer!](#)

Overview

The show offers a **gentle exploration** of the theatrical space and focused music and narrative, set in a garden inspired by pop-up books.

Music and story

In a series of **improvised soundscapes**, three orchestral players and a South Indian percussionist use their instruments to evoke the changing seasons as our protagonist forms a friendship with Robin ('voiced' by a flute or violin).

Show structure

The performance lasts about **25 minutes**, followed by a 20-minute 'stay and play' session in which the audience is invited to interact with the musicians and their instruments.

Audience seating

There is **floor seating on mats** throughout the space for families who wish to sit in the 'garden', and chairs along the back and sides of the room.



‘My 18-month-old watched the whole thing! Very gripped, which is unlike him! And my 4-year-old was also engrossed in it! Very captivating!’

—Audience member
Landmark Pavilion, Ilfracombe

Key features

- Engaging **musical storytelling** with charming storybook-style set and props
- **Live music improvised** by world-class performers
- Approachable introduction to Western and South Indian musical traditions and instruments
- **Relaxed setting** for children who may be too young for a traditional concert experience
- Babes-in-arms welcome, breastfeeding-friendly
- Largely **nonverbal narrative**
- Soft start and soft ending with **interactive elements**
- Adaptable set and seating for traditional and nontraditional performance spaces

Show development

The Wonderland Garden has been expertly crafted for young people.

We wanted to offer different 'ways in' for our audiences, knowing that little ones may be drawn in by the sound, the colours, the storytelling, the characters, or the dancing. We also wanted to tell a story about the natural world, and the life cycles connected to it. It was important to us to create a space where the youngest members of our society can feel inspired and engaged, and their grown-ups can feel relaxed bringing children to a live performance.

The devising and creation process was led by acclaimed children's theatre director Sarah Argent, who specialises in cross-art form collaborations that channel artists' playfulness and spontaneity into entertaining yet meaningful theatre for the very young. Under Argent's direction, the actor and musicians learned to combine their art forms to tell a story, determining where words were needed and where music was needed.

'My baby had such a good time, and so did I. Dancing at the end was a complete and unexpected joy.'

—Audience member
Idea Store Watney Market



Performers

The Wonderland Garden features award-winning, classically trained South Indian percussionists with extensive experience in cross-cultural and cross-generational collaboration, alongside Western instrumentalists from the City of London Sinfonia who draw on a practice of improvisation and responsive playing refined through CLS's award-winning participation work in care homes, hospitals, and psychiatric hospital schools. In these settings, CLS musicians improvise to create bespoke experiences that performers and listeners can share, born out of the connection between those people in that moment.

Bringing this ethos of collaboration and connection to The Wonderland Garden, the result is a fluid piece of music and text which is sometimes funny and gentle, sometimes loud and dynamic, and which creates a safe space to explore – with a joyous communal dancing session at the end.

‘Wonderful initiative and engaging musicians – we would love more sessions! My 5-month-old loved it.’

—Audience member
Bethnal Green Library

‘The performers were wonderful with the children.’

—Audience member
Idea Store Watney Market



About the director

Sarah Argent is an award-winning director specialising in theatre for the very young. Her productions have been performed in high-profile venues across the UK and Ireland, Europe, North America, Australia, and the Middle and Far East. Argent has received multiple awards from Welsh, European, and world organisations in recognition of her practice. A prestigious Creative Wales Award from the Arts Council of Wales in 2007 kick-started her journey into making theatre for babies, and she is now considered to be one of the UK's leading practitioners in this area.



About Landmark Theatres



Landmark Theatres is a portfolio of regional venues in North Devon and Peterborough receiving a wide variety of arts and cultural opportunities for local communities. We pride ourselves on an in-depth understanding of the locations in which we operate. Working in areas of lower cultural engagement across the UK, we are respectful of and responsive to local priorities, deliver innovation, and work in partnership to empower our communities. We deliver a breadth of creative activities and ways in which our communities can engage, whether that be as an audience member, participant, decision maker, or through developing talent.

About City of London Sinfonia

City of London Sinfonia (CLS) is a chamber orchestra. We believe that music – making it, sharing it, enjoying it – can change a person's relationship to the world around them. We explore ideas, emotions, and what it means to be human through the music we commission and play. We find joy in what we do. We think about the people and the places we encounter. We seek wonder wherever we go. We hope to create moments of magic through shared experience, wherever we find ourselves, for whoever we meet along the way.



Technical requirements

The Wonderland Garden is a flexible production which can be performed in a variety of spaces.

There can be up to three shows per day (e.g. 10:30, 13:00, and 15:30).

How to book

If you are interested in bringing The Wonderland Garden to your venue, please contact CLS Producer Fi Johnstone at fjohnstone@cls.co.uk

Company

Five performers and stage manager

Parking

One small van or large car for set unload and pack-up

Ideal playing space

10.5 m x 8 m flat floorspace

Get-in

2.5 hours before first performance

Get-out

One hour following final performance

Sound

Pre-show Mp3 of birdsong to be played as audience enter; no sound to be operated during the show

Lighting

Full design available in advance of tour; pre-rig if available (venue tech support required if lighting design is used)



Photo credits

Henoc Bayolekama
Suzi Corker
Sarah Argent
Landmark Theatres

www.cls.co.uk