

Handa's Surprise

A Little Angel Theatre production

Adapted from the book by Eileen Browne

9 February – 16 April 2022

CREDITS

Adapted from the book by Eileen Browne.

Directed by Marleen Vermeulen

Designed by Sophia Lovell Smith

Puppets Designed and made by Peter O'Rourke

Performed by Rujenne Green and Hannah Akhalu

Stage Managed by Jordan Mackey and Jordan Lewis

This play is based on the original book Handa's Surprise written and illustrated by Eileen Browne. Text and illustrations copyright © Eileen Browne 1995. Published by Walker Books Ltd, London.



EILEEN BROWNE – Author

Eileen has written and/or illustrated over forty children's books and her latest is Handa's Noisy Night. She is the author and illustrator of Handa's Surprise, a picture book classic translated into more than forty languages. Handa's Surprise and Handa's Hen have been animated by television and film companies and made into puppettheatre productions by London's Little Angel Theatre. Since 2004 these productions have been performing in theatres, schools, festivals and other venues. The Handa books have sold over a million copies. Eileen has had a few "firsts" with her children's books:- In 2009 Handa's Hen became the first book ever to be published in the Shilluk language of Sudan. Through My Window (written with Tony Bradman, 1986) was the first picture book published in the UK and the USA featuring an interracial family, where the family's ethnicity was not part of the story. Where's That Bus? (1991) was the first picture book published in the UK and the USA featuring an all-female cast of animals: (books with inherently female animals e.g. cows excepted). There were hundreds with all-male animal characters. All Eileen's protagonists are female, since she discovered (early on in her career) that male picture book characters outnumbered females by two to one. Further studies (2019) show that this is still the case. In 2016 Eileen launched a quarterly list of 200+ recommended picture books with female and BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) characters. It is a free resource for teachers, librarians, parents, carers, publishers and bookstores. Email eileenbrowne@btinternet.com to request it. Born and brought up in Birmingham, UK, Eileen has a degree in Graphic Design and is a qualified art teacher. She lived in London for many years where she taught secondary school students, wrote and illustrated books and ran a junior youth club. She lives and works in Wiltshire. Eileen loves doing author visits – especially with small children.

MARLEEN VERMEULEN – Director

Marleen Vermeulen, who is originally from Belgium, moved to London to work in children's theatre. She worked as an actor with various companies such as Polka, Unicorn and Theatre Rites, where her interest in puppetry grew. She set up her own company Tam Tam Theatre in 1993.

The company is dedicated to developing and presenting high quality multi-cultural theatre for young children and recently developed their first show for babies. Marleen also wrote a book, called Forest Tales from far and wide, published by Barefoot Books. Marleen is very excited to be back at the Little Angel, her favourite theatre in London, where she previously directed Handa's Surprise and Handa's Hen.

SOPHIA LOVELL SMITH – Designer

Sophia Lovell Smith studied Theatre Arts at Bretton Hall and designs for theatre, opera, dance and interactive performance for children. She designs and makes masks, props and costume and loves working with paint, cane and fabrics. Sophia has four shows on tour this Spring – Chasing Dots (a collaboration between MishMash Productions & Royal Northern Sinfonia at the Sage, Gateshead), Catch A Sea Star (Seaglass Arts, a show for 0-2&half year old babies and toddlers, touring to Germany & Holland in March), Handa's Surprise (Little Angel Theatre) and Jina and the STEM Sisters (HMMDT) and this is coming to the Little Angel Studios in April!

Recent productions include Maanika & the Wolf (Polka Theatre), The Bed for Little Angel Theatre (Offies 2020 finalist), My Mother Said I Never Should for Crucible, Sheffield Theatres & fingersmiths, Paper Aeroplane for Half Moon Theatre (Offies 2021 finalist), Full House Theatre's Little Darling, Peace At Last for Opera Up Close and Spitalfields Music (Musical Rumpus Programme, inc. Run Rindle Rill, The Fairy Queen, Fogonogo).

Past work incl. Polka Theatre (Hatch, Operation Magic Carpet, Property of Polka), Southbank Centre (A Child's Guide To Brutalism), Barbican & ZArts (Sponge), Trestle Theatre (Rachel, Tonight we Fly) and many more. www.sophialovellsmith.co.uk

PETER O'ROURKE – Puppet Designer

Peter is a puppet maker, designer and director and founder of Cubic Feet. Little Angel Theatre credits include The Dong with a Luminous Nose, The Giraffe and the Pelly and Me, Alice in Wonderland, Jabberwocky, The Mouse Queen, Fantastic Mr Fox and Romeo and Juliet. Cubic Feet's ethos is to develop and explore innovative puppet theatre.

Hannah Akhalu – Performer (Handa)

Hannah Akhalu is an actor and theatre practitioner, and works closely with children and young people. She trained at East 15 Acting School and has worked with companies such as artsdepot, Company Three and The Paper Birds.

Rujenne Green – Performer (Akeyo)

Rujenne's previous credits include: HISTORY ON THE ROAD (The Cockpit Theatre), THE BORDER (UK Tour/Theatre Center), SQUARE ROUNDS (Finborough Theatre), THE DOG BENEATH THE SKIN (Jermyn Street Theatre), COOKIES (Theatre Royal Haymarket), THE HALCYON (Stephen Woolfenden), I STAND FOR US (Almir Dato).

JORDAN LEWIS – Stage Manager

Jordan is a technical stage manager and theatre maker from London. Having worked with Little Angel during his MA training at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, he's happy to be able to contribute once again to such a brilliant organisation, particularly for a show as wonderful as Handa's Surprise.

JORDAN MACKEY – Stage Manager

Jordan is delighted to join Little Angel Theatre this season as stage manager.

After finishing studies at the University of California, Riverside, and working on and off stage for several years in San Francisco and Los Angeles, Jordan moved with his wife Caitlin to Portland, Oregon. There, they established Enso Theatre Ensemble. With a focus on movement, mindfulness, and storytelling, Jordan's values align very much with Little Angel Theatre, and (we've been told) he's very much enjoying his time here.

Were you inspired by the show?

Draw a picture about Handa's adventure and we will include it on our website and social media!



