

The Velveteen Rabbit

or how toys become real

A **ballet** LORENT PRODUCTION



Visual Story Pack

John Ellerman
Foundation



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Photo credit Luke Waddington

The Velveteen Rabbit

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Welcome

Hello, we hope you're looking forward to watching balletLORENT's The Velveteen Rabbit. These notes are for you to read before you see the show. They tell you what happens in the dance and also what to expect when you visit the theatre.

Arriving at the theatre

As you arrive at the theatre you will come into the foyer. It could be busy and loud in the foyer. You can put your hands over your ears if you want to. There will be toilets at each venue, well-marked from the foyer and auditorium

You may hear tannoy announcements.

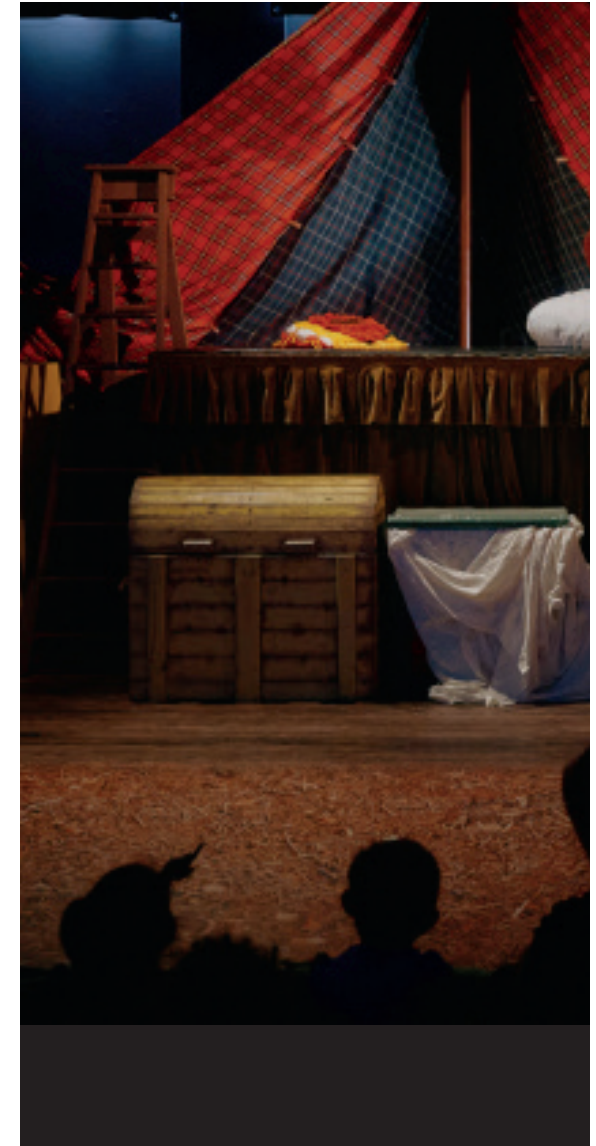
This is to let the audience know the performance will start shortly.

The doors to the auditorium remain closed until just before the performance is due to start.

There may be ushers there to check your tickets, help you find a seat and answer any questions you may have. Seats may be allocated or it may be free seating. There will be cushions and rugs on the floor which you can sit on. You are welcome to move around or leave the auditorium at any time.

When you enter the auditorium you will see the stage in front of you with the set for the show all set up. There will be a green line at the front of the stage. Please do not cross the line - only the performers and stage technicians may go onto the stage and touch the set. Music will be playing. There may be dancers in costumes on the stage already as you enter the auditorium.

When the performance is about to start the doors to the auditorium will close and the lights will go darker.



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About the show

The Velveteen Rabbit is a dance theatre show performed by **balletLORENT**'s dancers. The performers dance and act to tell the story. They will not talk throughout the performance.

There is music throughout the whole performance which sometimes gets loud. There is also a recorded narration with a male adult voice and a child's voice to help you follow the story. The lights will change lots of times throughout the performance – sometimes they will get darker. If it gets too bright, or too noisy you can cover your eyes or ears.

The story is set in the attic of an old house, which also used to be the playroom. Dust sheets cover a toy chest, wardrobe, bed, bookcase and other items. These items will be used in the show for dancers to climb on, or to hide in.

There are many characters in The Velveteen Rabbit. One is a man, and all the others are toys or animals played by dancers. As the dancers play the different characters they will move in different ways and wear different costumes. Some dancers play more than one character.



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Here are the main characters:



The Velveteen Rabbit



The Man / Boy



Rag Doll



Nana



Pink Dolly



Soldier

The Velveteen Rabbit

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Tin Robot



Monkey with Cymbals



Skin Horse



Wild Rabbits



Playroom Magic Fairy

The show will last around 45 minutes and there will be an opportunity to meet some of the characters at the end.

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Story Notes

These notes describe what happens in the performance, so do not read any further if you would rather not know!

If there are any sudden or loud sounds, actions or changes you will see this symbol ! and bold red text

When text is narrated, it will be shown in italics and blue text.

! The lights will go darker in the auditorium and on stage. !

The attic hatch opens and a man climbs out.

Once upon a Christmas time a man returned to his family home. He climbed the stairs to the attic which used to be his playroom as a boy. The house was being sold and the man wanted to visit it one last time.

The man looks around – he has strong memories of this room from when he was a child.

Underneath the dust sheets and stuffed into trunks, the man found some of his old playthings.

As he removes the dust sheets the man finds his old toys and remembers playing with them when he was younger. He finds his old astronaut helmet and pretends to float through space.



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*And then he saw a toy he recalled with great fondness.
A soft, floppy honey coloured velveteen rabbit.*

The man picks up the velveteen rabbit from a corner, and gently snuggles up in his old bed with it.

The playroom had always had an air of magic about it. And as the man drifted off, he dreamt of the boy he had once been, and the happy times he'd spent with his favourite toys. For when he'd been younger he could have sworn that the rabbit was real.

The man starts to dream of his childhood. In his dream the man is a boy again and the toy rabbit comes alive – played by one of the dancers. The pair play and dance around the playroom. They are delighted to see each other and remember all the games they used to play.

There was a kindly but strict woman who used to look after the boy. Her name was Nana. She had a big bustling skirt and fancy hat. She would often call up to the attic and tell the boy to tidy up the playroom. And when she wasn't there the boy would dress up as her and pretend to be her as he busied around tidying away the toys.

The boy dresses in Nana's old skirt and bonnet and walks around the playroom pretending to be her. He dusts and tidies just as Nana would. The velveteen rabbit watches, amused.

The boy scoops up the rag doll and plays with it, lifting and spinning it around the room. The rag doll moves in a stilted and stiff way. The velveteen rabbit enjoys watching the boy and rag doll and joins in some of the games.



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When the boy and velveteen rabbit hide in the back of the wardrobe, the rag doll pops out of the toy chest and dances alone. He finds the old toy dog to play with, before disappearing back into the toy chest.

The playroom was also home to some mechanical toys. They thought they were superior to the silly rabbit, and were quite mean to him.

A Pink Dolly comes out of the wardrobe and glides and spins across the space in a large pink dress.

! The stage will look as though it's sparkling as a light shines on a mirror ball !
A soldier marches in and dances with the Pink Dolly. He rides a hobby horse, and plays his bugel. **! There may be a loud noise as the bugel plays !**

A silver robot appears from the wendy house, and a monkey with cymbals from a toy chest. **! There may be loud noises as the monkey plays the cymbals. !**

The soldier, robot, and monkey are all mechanical toys, so their movement is slightly stiff and clunky. The velveteen rabbit tries to join in with their games, but they don't let him as he is not a mechanical toy. The velveteen rabbit is sad and feels rejected when they all leave him alone in the playroom.

The only person who was kind to him was the skin horse.

An old thread bare black horse trots out of the wendy house and makes his way to the velveteen rabbit to see that he is feeling ok.



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The skin horse had lived longer in the playroom than any of the others. He had seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger and by and by break their main springs and pass away. And he knew they were only toys and they would never turn into anything else. For playroom magic is very strange and wonderful, and only those playthings that are old and wise and experienced, like the skin horse understand all about it.

The pair play together as the skin horse reassures and comforts the velveteen rabbit.

‘What is real?’ asked the rabbit one day. The skin horse thought for a moment. ‘It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time’ said the skin horse. ‘Not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become real.’

The velveteen rabbit listens to the skin horse’s words of kindness and advice.

‘Does it happen all at once?’ the rabbit asked, ‘or bit by bit?’ ‘It doesn’t happen all at once’ said the skin horse. ‘You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept.

The velveteen rabbit takes a look at his shabby bare threads in the mirror. He’s wondering if he has already started to become real or not. The skin horse reassures the velveteen rabbit that it will happen if he is patient.

The boy sensed the rabbit was sad and went to comfort him.

The boy dances for the velveteen rabbit and tries different ways to make him smile and happy.



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But the rabbit's unhappiness had made the boy sad too. And as soon as the rabbit saw the boy looking down, he thought 'Oh no, I can't have this. I must fix him'.

The velveteen rabbit jumps into action, pulling a first aid box from the chest and playing doctors with the boy, pretending to patch him up as best a toy rabbit can.

The boy and the rabbit could always rely on each other to cheer the other one up. When no one else was around, one of the toys favourite games to play was hide and seek.

The boy, the velveteen rabbit and other toys pop in and out of the wardrobe, toy chests and wendy house, hiding from each other in a fun game of hide and seek. The attic is a labyrinth of tunnels, and toys come and go from every corner! **! There may be a loud noise as the bugel plays. !** The boy hides under a large green cloak.

But one day, when a game spilled out of the playroom, down the stairs, and into the garden, the velveteen rabbit became lost. And found himself outside.

As the scene moves outside the cloak represents a lush green field of grass. The velveteen rabbit is feeling a little scared as he is alone and has not been outside before. He is not sure where he is or how he might get back to the boy and the playroom.

And there he came upon a group of wild rabbits.

Three large brown furry wild rabbits appear from behind a wall and dig and forage in the grass. The velveteen rabbit has never seen wild rabbits before, and the wild rabbits don't seem to have seen a velveteen rabbit before either.



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'Hello', he said. The wild rabbits stared at the velveteen rabbit. He stared back at them. After a moment, one of the rabbits declared 'You're not a real rabbit', and the others agreed. And while the velveteen rabbit tried to join in his raggedy stuffed body meant he couldn't bound and kick in the way the real rabbits could.

The wild rabbits are curious to see what the velveteen rabbit is made from and take a closer look.

'Can you dance?' one asked. 'I don't feel like dancing' the velveteen rabbit replied. And soon they disappeared through the hedgerows in the direction of the forest leaving the velveteen rabbit all alone. ! There may be a loud noise as a rumble of thunder is heard and the lights will get darker to look like a night-time storm. !

The boy is looking for his favourite toy, the velveteen rabbit, and carrying a bright torch. He uses a carrot to try to tempt him from wherever he may be hiding.

It was many days before the rabbit was found. Soggy and tired and more tattered than before.

The boy is so pleased to have found his beloved toy, and carries him back to the playroom, and to his bed.

From that day on, the boy slept with the rabbit every night through the changing seasons, he held him tight. The rabbit was a constant comfort to him. And as the boy grew and the years passed the rabbit became more worn and more dishevelled. The man awoke. He had loved that rabbit and that rabbit had loved him.



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The man takes great care in holding his old toy rabbit and is happy to have found it again.

But the time had come to put away childhood things and to start a new life. With a sadness in his heart, he collected the rabbit and the last of his playroom toys and bagged them up to be cleared out.

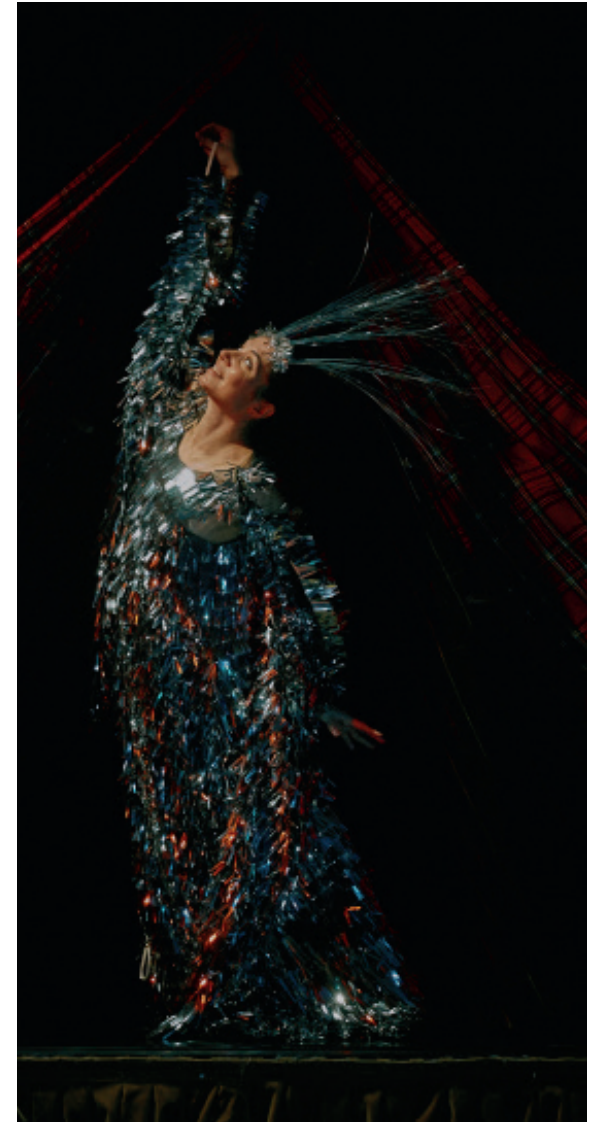
The man is sad to be putting his old toys away in bin bags. He knows that there are lots of happy memories associated with these treasures, but also knows he has to let them go now. Once he has placed the bin bags in a cart, he tidies the attic, takes one more look around, and leaves for the final time.

One of the black bin bags rustles and moves. The velveteen rabbit pops out!

As the rabbit emerged from the sack, he knew their time in the playroom was over. He thought of the skin horse, so wise and kind and all that he had told him. What use was it to be loved and lose one's beauty if it all ended like this? And a tear, a real tear trickled down his shabby little velvet nose and fell to the ground.

The velveteen rabbit is sad that he will not see his friend, the boy again. He is sad enough to cry, and what follows is a moment of magic.

And then a strange thing happened. For where the tear had fallen. A glistening pool of water slowly formed. Expanding the water began to rise and take shape. And the shape it took was that of a beautiful, shimmering fairy. It was so beautiful. That the rabbit forgot to cry.



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A kind, gentle fairy dressed in a silvery sparkly dress rises from where the velveteen rabbit's tear drop landed. She appears to shine as her outfit reflects the light. The velveteen rabbit is curious to find out more about the fairy.

'Who are you?' asked the rabbit.

'I am the playroom magic fairy. I take care of all the playthings that the children have loved. When they are old and the children don't need them anymore then I come and take them away with me and turn them into real.'

'Wasn't I real before?' asked the little rabbit.

'You were real to the boy,' the fairy said, 'because he loved you. Now you shall be real to everyone.'

The fairy reassures the velveteen rabbit that there is nothing to be afraid of, and he will be ok. The velveteen rabbit and the fairy dance and play.

She took the velveteen rabbit to the forest where the wild rabbits roamed at night.

The wild rabbits appear once more from behind the hedgerows and welcome the velveteen rabbit.

'I've brought a new play fellow' the fairy said. 'You must be very kind to him and teach him all he needs to know in rabbit land.'



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The velveteen rabbit gains confidence with his new friends, and despite their differences, all the rabbits enjoy playing, dancing, and having lots of fun!

And so, the velveteen rabbit lived out the rest of his days with the wild rabbits. Happy and real at last.

**This is the end of the show and the audience may clap.
! You may cover your ears if it is too noisy !**

The audience will now be invited to meet some of the characters from the performance and offer them pretend carrots to eat. You can join them if you wish.

It will then be time for the audience to leave the auditorium.



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CAST:

Natalie MacGillivray - The Velveteen Rabbit

Gavin Coward - The Man and Boy

Toby Fitzgibbons - Ragdoll, Wild Rabbit, Soldier

Virginia Scudeletti - Skin Horse, Playroom Fairy, Pink Dolly

Berta Admetlla - Wild Rabbit, Monkey, Dog

Montaine Ponceau - Wild Rabbit, Robot

Direction & Choreography by **Liv Lorent**

Creative Partners **Geoff Hopson & Debbi Purtil**

Movement contribution by **the dancers**

Retold and narrated by **Ben Crompton**

Costume & Set Designer **Nasir Mazhar**

Music composed and played by **Murray Gold & Albie Crompton**

Lighting Designer **Malcolm Rippeth**

www.balletlorent.com

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Welcome to the Lilian Baylis Studio

This Visual Story is to help prepare you to come and see a performance of **The Velveteen Rabbit** by **balletLORENT** in the Lilian Baylis Studio at Sadler's Wells.

The Lilian Baylis Studio is a small studio theatre for dance in London. People come here to watch a wide variety of dance shows.

This Visual Story has information about the show and images to help anyone who may be anxious (or curious) about their visit.

It also has information to help you find your way to the Lilian Baylis Studio.

We hope that this Visual Story helps you feel more prepared for your visit.

If you have any questions, please contact Stage Door Reception by e-mail at reception@sadlerswells.com or call 020 7863 8198.

What is a Relaxed Performance?

A Relaxed Performance is a more informal theatre experience for anyone who would benefit from a relaxed atmosphere to enjoy a show.

This means:

- You are welcome to leave and re-enter the auditorium if you need to. The house lights will stay at a low level throughout so you can find your way.
- You are welcome to make noise in the auditorium and react to the performance in whatever way feels natural.
- We provide a Visual Story (like this one) to help you feel prepared for your visit.
- There is a separate Chill-Out Space where you can relax away from the other people if you need a quiet space to retreat to.
- Ear defenders and/or ear plugs are available from staff on request, if you feel you might need them.

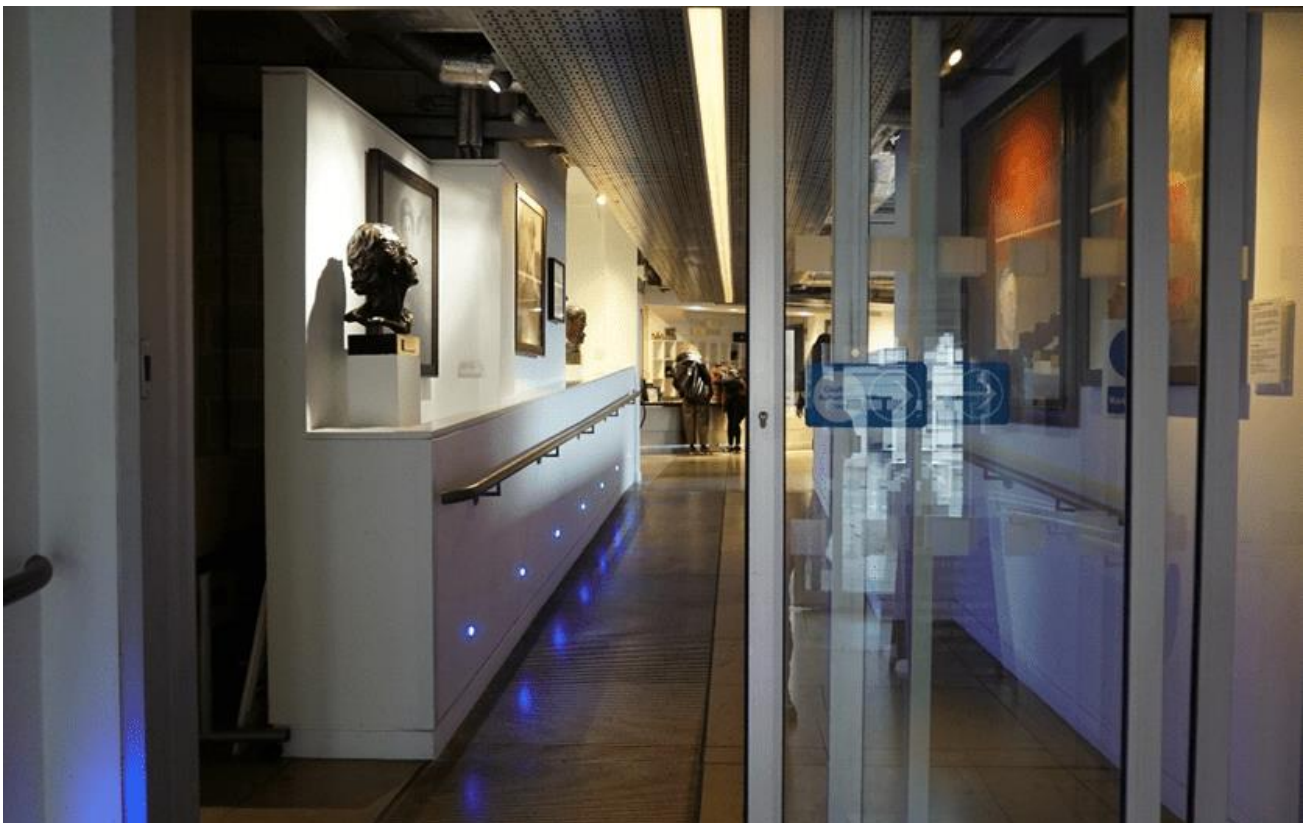
Arriving at Sadler's Wells on Rosebery Avenue



The Lilian Baylis Studio is along Rosebery Avenue in Angel, London and is part of a larger building we call Sadler's Wells in Angel.



You will walk through these sliding doors towards the Stage Door Reception and the Fox Garden Court Café.



Fox Garden Court Café



Turn right past the reception and into the Fox Garden Court café. You are welcome to buy food and drink from the café before your show starts. There will be children-friendly food available.

There is a tap available in the dining area where you can help yourself to a glass of water or fill up your bottle.

There will be a space to place buggies in a room called The Kahn.



Food is not allowed in the auditorium (where the show is performed), so please finish anything beforehand or save it for afterwards. Breast and bottle feeding is welcome in the auditorium and everywhere at Sadler's Wells.

The café will be busy and noisy with people eating and drinking.



You can find toilets by following the corridor through the café. There are baby-changing facilities available in the accessible toilet.





The toilets for 'women' are signposted with a figure in a dress and has individual toilet cubicles. The toilets for 'men' are signposted with a figure in trousers and has both urinals and individual toilet cubicles. We encourage you to use the facilities that you feel most comfortable using.

The Auditorium



The hosts will lead you into the auditorium, which is through the double doors opposite the café counter.

Our team of ushers will check your ticket on your way in. The seating is allocated, which means you can sit in the seat you have booked.

The seat name will be a letter and a number. For example, A1 or H5. The letter is to tell you what row

you are in, and the number is to tell you which seat you are in. You can find your row by looking at the letters on the floor at the end of each row of seats and you can find the number by looking at the number on the top of the seat.

Our ushers can help you to find your seat.

Other people will be taking their seats too and it might feel busy and a little bit noisy.



This is the auditorium where the show will be performed. There is space for 80 people at this show.

The doors to go into the auditorium will open at 10:45 for the morning show and 13:45 for the afternoon show.

How long will the show last?

The show will last for approximately (which means that sometimes it is a little bit more,

sometimes a little bit less) 45 minutes with no interval. An interval is a break in the middle of the show, but this show does not have one.

Show Notes

It is very important that no one goes passed the green line at the front the stage as it could be dangerous for you and the performers. Please stay in your set or leave the auditorium if you need to leave.

Wheelchair users will enter the auditorium using the lift at Stage Door Reception. Sadler's Wells staff will lead you safely through the backstage area and into the auditorium to find you a seat (if you would like to transfer) or a space (next to your companion if you like).

You will know when the show ends when the lights will get a bit darker, and the dancers will bow. The audience will clap for them, which might be a bit noisy.

After the performance in the auditorium, the

audience will start to leave the same way they came in. If you prefer, you are welcome to wait in your seat and leave after everyone else has gone and it becomes quieter.

Chill-Out Room

If you need somewhere to relax before, during or after the show you can go to the Chill-Out Room. This is a space reserved only for audience members of The Velveteen Rabbit.

The Chill-Out Room is through a corridor at the back of the café, past the toilets on the right just before the grey door. You will need to press the square silver button to the right of the door and the door will open automatically. There will be signs to direct you and ushers to show you where this is.



There will be sofas and cushions for you to relax on and there will be water available in the café. The performance in the auditorium will be shown on the TV screens in both rooms, so you can watch this way if you like.

We hope you enjoy your visit to the Lilian Baylis Studio. If there is any further information you need, please contact Ticket Office by phone on 020 7863 8000 (Monday to Saturday, 12pm-6pm) or by e-mail at tickets@sadlerswells.com.

At the links below, find out more about:

Relaxed Performances at Sadler's Wells

See our list of upcoming Relaxed Performances