

V&A acquires the original Joey puppet from the National Theatre's West End stage production of *War Horse*

Joey in the V&A John Madejski Garden. Nicholas Hart (Head), Stuart Angell (Heart), Thomas Goodridge (Hind).



The V&A is delighted to announce that Handspring Puppet Company have donated Joey, the original West End horse puppet from the National Theatre's award-winning stage adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's novel *War Horse*.

War Horse tells the story of a young boy Albert, and his beloved horse Joey, who has been requisitioned by the army to fight in World War I. Caught in enemy crossfire, Joey ends up serving on both sides during the war before landing in No Man's Land, while Albert, not old enough to enlist,

embarks on a treacherous mission to find his horse and bring him home.

War Horse, which continues its run at the New London Theatre, has been seen by over 4 million people worldwide and features ground-breaking puppetry by South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company, which brings breathing and galloping horses to life on stage. Joey has been donated to the V&A by Handspring's Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones who designed and fabricated the puppets in *War Horse*. The horse puppet acquired by the V&A made his stage debut at the New London Theatre on Saturday 28 March 2009, and subsequently performed in over 1,640 shows, during that time he was operated by over 20 puppeteers.

Joey will go into the V&A's Theatre and Performance Galleries from 18 October 2013 in a specially created display showing how the life-size puppet is operated on stage. Three mannequin puppeteers in costumes designed by Olivier award-winning theatre designer and illustrator Rae Smith will be displayed with Joey and accompanied by a newly-produced behind-the-scenes interactive video display created by 59 Productions.

On stage Joey is operated by three puppeteers; the Head, the Heart and the Hind, who work together to create the character and noises of the horse. Using the Japanese *Bunraku* 'exposed' style of puppetry the manipulators can be seen on stage as they articulate the limbs of the horse and communicate its emotions and breathing with life-like accuracy. The puppet is made primarily of cane, leather and Tyvec (synthetic fibre) and its spine is reinforced with aluminium to allow for a rider on top. It takes eight months to build a complete set of puppets for *War Horse* all of which are handmade in Cape Town, South Africa by 14 craftsmen and women.

Martin Roth, Director of the V&A said: *“War Horse is undoubtedly one of the most memorable theatre productions of the 21st century and is an example of one the most spectacular and captivating set designs in the theatre industry. We are thrilled to acquire the original horse puppet for the V&A’s Theatre and Performance collection. Joey demonstrates the skill and ingenuity of the Handspring Puppet Company in creating a remarkably life-like puppet which audiences across the world connect and empathise with throughout the performance.”*

Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones, Puppetry Directors of War Horse said: *“Ever since we first started visiting the V&A in our late teens, it has been a source of inspiration to us as artists. How wonderful that something Handspring has created will now become a source of inspiration for a new generation. We are delighted and feel hugely honoured that Joey will have a permanent home in this great institution.”*

Nick Starr, Executive Director of the National Theatre said: *“When War Horse opened six years ago at the National Theatre, it was inconceivable that the star of the show would find such an illustrious home. The production was the result of 18 months of intensive workshops with an incredible creative team and a talented group of actors and puppeteers and of course Handspring Puppet Company, who improvised and experimented to transform a story with a horse as its central character into a moving and inventive piece of theatre. It is testament to this creative team and the many skilled puppeteers who have brought Joey to life over the years that a puppet made from cane, aluminium and leather is now in the world’s leading museum of art and design.”*

Handspring Puppet Company and Rae Smith have jointly received numerous awards for *War Horse* in the UK and around the world. Awards include the Laurence Olivier Award for Set Design, Critics' Circle Award for Design, the Evening Standard Award for Set Design and a Special Tony Award for Handspring Puppet Company and a Drama Desk Award for the Creative Team of *War Horse*.

The success of the stage adaptation is a result of the collaboration between a team of leading creatives. Michael Morpugo’s book was adapted by Nick Stafford, it is co-directed by Marianne Elliott and Tom Morris, puppet design by Adrian Kohler, set, costume and video drawing designed by Rae Smith, lighting by Paule Constable, and movement and horse choreography by Toby Sedgwick. The puppetry directors are Basil Jones and Adrian Kohler, video design by 59 Productions Ltd, song-making by John Tams, music by Adrian Sutton and sound by Christopher Shutt.

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Notes to Editors

- The puppet will be on display in the V&A’s Theatre and Performance Galleries from 18 October 2013. Free admission.
- The West End Production of *War Horse* continues at the New London Theatre, currently booking until 26 October 2014. It is also currently on a tour of the UK and Ireland.

- A German language production entitled *Gefährten* opens on 20 October 2013 at the Theater des Westends in Berlin.
- A North American production continues to tour throughout 2013 and 2014.
www.warhorseonstage.com

About the V&A Theatre and Performance Collections

The V&A's Theatre and Performance Galleries opened in March 2009 and explore all performance types from theatre and ballet to pantomime and rock music. More than 250 objects from the V&A's collections are on display including set models, stage props, costumes, original posters, paintings and photographs, representing live performance in Britain over the last 350 years. The V&A also houses the National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP), which has recorded nearly 300 theatre performances since 1992, from classic plays and musicals to new-writing and physical theatre. www.vam.ac.uk

About the National Theatre

The National Theatre of Great Britain is dedicated to the constant revitalisation of the great traditions of the British stage and to expanding the horizons of audiences and artists alike. Founded in 1963, and established on the South Bank in London in 1976, the National Theatre strives to be a national centre of theatrical arts, central to the creative life of the country and unmatched in the world for scale, range of repertoire and audience reach. The National stages over 20 new productions each year in one of its three South Bank theatres and transfers popular shows to the West End as well as touring productions around the UK and internationally.

In 2012, the National Theatre's audience reached 3.2 million worldwide, through attendances on the South Bank, in the West End and internationally, on tour and through National Theatre Live, the digital broadcast of live performances to cinema screens all over the world.

For further PRESS information about *War Horse* please contact Nada Zakula, Head of Press and Communications on +44 (0)207 452 3046 or email nzakula@nationaltheatre.org.uk

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