

The Wonderful World of Lapin - Artistic Statement

Tania Czajka started her professional career as a childcare worker when she moved from her native France to Scotland in 1991. She noticed that children in nurseries related very well to puppets, and that puppetry had the potential to open up language acquisition in a way she hadn't anticipated.

Whilst working with young children in Edinburgh, Tania began performing bilingual shows for early years' audiences, set in a French colourful garden, which conveniently unpacked from inside a suitcase, where Lapin and his French-speaking puppet friends lived. As she performed these shows, she sought to improve the theatricality of the work, and the concepts underlying *The Wonderful World of Lapin* started to take form.

Tania first met Alasdair Satchel, a theatre director based on Mull, in 2014. She approached Alasdair to co-create a brand-new show drawing on a loose series of ideas. Alasdair jumped at the chance to join the project. The spark Tania needed to turn her vision into a fully formed theatre production was ignited. The making of the show proved to be a rich experience for everyone involved, as the whole team worked together to make Tania's dreams a reality.

As the story developed, it became apparent that it would be about two journeys. Lapin quickly became the emotional embodiment of a young child and the French lady, Tania, turned into a parent figure, with her own strong desires. *The Wonderful World of Lapin* was to explore the immediate needs and feelings of the child and the point at which they intersect with those of the parent figure.

The premise of the show is simple, Tania has only one carrot in her garden; although Lapin wants to eat it, she can't bring herself to give him her precious vegetable, which is destined to take part in The World's Tastiest Carrot competition. This, we discovered, was very much part of the French educational theory led by the psychologist Dolto and became very useful knowledge for us creatively. We wanted to show the dilemma parents can find themselves in when bringing up children.

"The child is in front of someone who has a desire and who defends it"
(Dolto)

Several themes inform the dramatic structure of the show. It explores empathy, competitiveness, honesty and the importance of sharing. All of these ideas lead to a magical and unanticipated conclusion. The production is underpinned by a musical score by Nik Paget-Tomlison & Niroshini Thambar, which is beautiful in its playful simplicity.

The heart of *The Wonderful World of Lapin* is in its combination of puppetry and language. The set, made by set designer and puppeteer Iain Halket, came to complete the overall charm of the production.

Thus, in bringing inert objects to life with clarity of intention and emotion, Le Petit Monde created an engaging and immersive experience for all the family, which encourages all ages to play. Tania's vision of a quality bilingual production with strong universal messages and for young audiences was complete!