

***A Monster Calls* Pre-show Notes**

Welcome to this introduction to *A Monster Calls*, presented by the Singapore Repertory Theatre. Patrick Ness' piercing novel is brought vividly to life in this Olivier Award-winning production by director Daniel Jenkins and performed by the graduation class of The Young Company 2022.

This audio described performance is at 2pm on 17th December, and runs for approximately one hour and 45 minutes with a 15-minute intermission. The touch tour will begin an hour before the show, at 1pm. Your audio describers will be Seren Chen and Wiggie.

'Stories are wild creatures', the monster said. 'When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?'

Thirteen-year-old Conor and his mum have managed just fine since his dad moved. But now his mum is sick and not getting any better. His grandmother won't stop interfering and the kids at school won't look him in the eye. Then, one night, Conor is woken by something at his window. A monster has come walking. It's come to tell Conor tales from when it walked before. And when it's finished, Conor must tell his own story and face his deepest fears.

From the critically acclaimed bestseller, *A Monster Calls* offers a dazzling insight into love, life and healing.

The play is based on the novel by Patrick Ness, inspired by an original idea by Siobhan Dowd, and devised by Sally Cookson, Adam Peck and the Singapore Repertory Theatre.

The director is Daniel Jenkins.
Assistant directors are Jelaine Ng Sha-Men, Rachel Sam and Violet Huang.
Set designer, Grace Lin,
Wardrobe Designer, Michaela Leong,
Multimedia Designer, Clio Chuang,
Lighting Designer, Amirul Azmi,
Sound Designer, Noor Hidayat,
Movement Coach, Rachel Nip
Stage Manager, Tiara Emily,
Chief Props, Cristelle Heng,
And Props Assistant, Anya Dewabrata.

While the play revolves primarily around Conor and his relationship with his mother, the cast features 14 actors, 11 of whom play characters in Conor's life, and 3 of whom are ensemble members who play characters within the stories that the monster tells.

Jovan Aw plays Conor, our protagonist, who struggles emotionally with his mother's illness, the coldness of his grandmother, the absence of his father, and bullying in school. He's quite tall, but his demeanor makes him seem small in the face of his bullies.

The Monster, played by Ramzie Tahar, appears one night and begins to tell Conor stories. While the core of the Monster is played by a single actor, Ramzie, he is often surrounded by every other member of the cast, pulsating around him like a powerful aura, and sometimes serving as extensions of his voice or will.

Conor's mother, Beatrice, sometimes called Bea by her mother, is played by Annika Mock. Her illness requires treatments that leave her completely drained, but she tries to put on a strong front for her son. She wears a beige scarf tied tightly around her head.

Conor's grandmother, Yvonne, is played by MacKenzie Rae Shoon. She wears a pink blazer, and is not very outwardly emotionally expressive. Conor finds it difficult to be around her.

Conor's school bullies, Harry, Sully, and Anton, are played by Jorgan Ong, Charmaine Teo, and Wilfred Lee respectively. Harry is the leader of the pack, sharp and cruel, while Sully, real name Jessica, is his right-hand man. Anton is a reluctant participant.

Sully's actor, Charmaine, also plays a parson's daughter in one of the monster's stories.

Meanwhile, Salma Salim plays Lily, a former friend of Conor's who tries to help him stand up to his bullies.

However, she ends up in trouble with their head teacher, Miss Godfrey, played by Jasmine Kuah, who is sympathetic to Conor's plight but limited by her role as their teacher.

An English teacher, Mr. Marl, is played by Isaac Ong. He assigns the class a life-writing assignment. Isaac also plays a parson in one of the monster's stories.

And finally, Conor's absentee father is played by Clement Yeo, who also plays a Prince in one of the monster's stories.

The three ensemble members, Bethan Loh, Elodie Lieu, and Nayah Perry, play characters in the Monster's stories, from a witch to a princess, to daughters of a parson, a member of the clergy.

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At the beginning of the play, eight wooden chairs painted mostly in lime green with haphazard streaks of dark brown are lined along each side, the right and left, of the performance space which lies bare. The entire floor is a mosaic of random, translucent blocks in the same colour scheme.

The entire backdrop is a white canvas cloth upon which images such as the clock are projected. From left and right, three protruding thin metal rods undulate towards the centre across one third of the wall, with wispy strips of silvery chiffon twirled loosely round the lower rods, evoking a metaphorical reference to the yew tree.

The play revolves around Connor and we follow Connor wherever he goes, from his bedroom to the kitchen, or from school to the hospital and even in Grandma's car.

The actors never leave the stage. Together with lighting cues, the chairs lining the sides indicate they are outside of the space and are utilised in versatile ways, from deftly depicting places such as the classroom, stairways, corridors, Mother's bedroom, Grandma's living room to serving as furniture such as sofa and a hospital bed. They even act as percussion instruments, a worthy contribution to the overall sound design.

The chairs do create quite a chaotic commotion as they are moved about so be prepared the sound might be jarring to some ears,

While awaiting their turn, the actors sit at the chairs where they also change in and out of costume in full view of the audience. On occasion, they speak from the sides as if they were in a different part of the house. They also take their props held up by the other cast members. Tucked under the chairs until needed, the props include a kettle, a ceramic bowl, a glass mug, a spoon, a box of cereal, a carton of milk, a carton of fruit juice, a plastic axe, a book with a bright orange cover, a packet of Ritz crackers, white laundry basket, black backpack, a pair of white sneakers, a big green plastic bowl and an iv drip bag hung from a metal stand.

Aided by lighting and sound cues, the space also transitions seamlessly back and forth between his nightmares and reality.

At certain times, a pendulum in the form of a giant light grey ball drops down in the middle, suspended by a thin metal chain.

Two inverted-v shaped structures of wooden ladders , one about 2m tall and the other about half metre, are assembled into different configurations and wheeled around by the cast.

SRT aims to provide an excellent experience and service for all patrons who may require additional support to access our venue and enjoy our events.

For accessible booking options, please contact us at 6733 8166 from 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

The nearest parking options are Robertson Quay Hotel, located at 15 Merbau Road, Singapore 239032, opposite the theatre's front door, or the Robertson Walk Carpark at 11 Unity Street, Singapore 237995.

For Public Transport options, the nearest bus stop is UE Square (13109), serving buses 64, 123, and 143.

The nearest MRT station is Fort Canning (DT20) on the Downtown Line.

The Touch Tour will commence at 2pm, 1 hour before the show begins. Please inform the staff at the front door that you are there for the Touch Tour and they will bring you to the assembly point.

Please have your mobile device and headset with you. The Box Office will have headphones and devices on standby if needed.

KC Arts Centre, the home of SRT, is assistance dog friendly. It is also accessible for wheelchair use from both the front and rear entrances. There is currently 1 wheelchair space on row Q in the theatre stalls.

If you require a wheelchair space, or would like to understand more about transferring options, please contact our venue team via email at boxoffice@srt.com.sg or call 6733 8166.

We look forward to welcoming you and hope you have a wonderful time with us!

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