

Hello and welcome to this introduction to **The Velveteen Rabbit** by Margery Williams. Directed for the Unicorn by Purni Morell.

The touch tour performance is on Sunday the 26th of March at 1pm, and the performance itself is at 2pm. The show lasts for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The first act is 45 minutes, there is a 15 minute interval and act 2 is 25 minutes.

We're looking forward to meeting you at the touch tour.

In this introduction I am going to tell you about *The Velveteen Rabbit* — the characters, costumes and what the stage looks like. The story is told by a multi-ethnic cast of 4 performers, all men, who play all the characters in the play. 1 of these men plays a black baby grand piano throughout the show.

The story is about The Velveteen Rabbit, a very shy toy rabbit who longs for nothing more than to become real. He spends his days waiting patiently on the nursery floor, watching the Boy play with other toys and dreaming of being picked up and loved. And then, one day, he is rediscovered and all his hopes start to come true...

The Weston stage is very big, open and wide. The stage floor is slightly raised, by approximately 1 centimetre and has been made to look like white planks of wood that taper at the back to a thinner point. This gives the illusion of being drawn into the stage. Most of the action is centre stage and the floor contains trap doors where toys and other set pieces are collected from.

The show begins with a very large white Christmas stocking hanging in the middle of the stage. The stocking looks like it might be full, it is plump and lumpy. Like the wooden planks the stitching on the stocking is painted with black and white details. The sock and later the bed are framed by large curtains and pelmet that are also painted to look like black and white drawings of wood. The set is designed to look like a Victorian etching.

The Velveteen Rabbit is a tall, athletic man; his short mousy hair is ruffled on top to appear a bit messy and natural. He wears dark brown trousers, a light brown roll neck jumper and a medium brown corduroy jacket. He has a smart pocket handkerchief in his jacket pocket. The clothes all look soft to the touch. All his clothes and shoes are shades of brown and look like they might feel like the fur of a Velveteen Rabbit.

On Christmas morning the Boy is very excited and runs around exploring the toys in the Nursery. There is a large wooden rocking horse with long hair, some shiny, metal robots and wind-up toys that make noise and flash their lights. He also has a dog on wheels, a delicate wooden sail boat and some wooden soldiers that live in large wooden towers. He uses the wooden soldiers to show a battle with wooden cannons and makes the sounds of explosions.

The Boy is a tall, athletic young man with cropped afro hair that is clipped on the sides to appear younger. He wears a white shirt with a check pattern, dark trousers with white and red braces and a red bow tie. He sometimes wears a Victorian style soft, cloth cap. He has sturdy boots, he moves around with high energy.

The Boy is very excited, moving around the nursery and makes quite a mess. Nana likes the nursery to be tidy and asks the Boy to tidy up. Nana likes to rush around being quite loud.

The Narrator/Nana/The Doctor

The actor who plays the three roles is a tall, stocky, older man with strawberry blonde hair and facial hair. He has an Irish accent. When he is playing Nana he will wear a cream colour mop hat and a cream colour, frilly apron. His voice will be a slightly higher pitch when saying the words of Nana.

When he is the Narrator or later The Doctor he wears dark gray trousers, a light blue shirt and a dark grey waistcoat buttoned up. He has shiny black shoes. He looks very smart.

The Pianist is a medium height man with a stocky build. He has dark hair and facial hair. He wears a dark grey suit, with a light blue shirt and a dark blue tie. He has shiny black shoes. He enters with the other men at the start of the show but then moves to sit at the piano on the left side of the stage. He is only centre stage at the very start and the very end of the show.

The Velveteen Rabbit and the Boy become great friends and go on great adventures together. The adventures in act one use a bed set in the nursery.

The bed has a large metal frame with a tall raised back. It is angled so the actors appear to be higher up at the head end. There are metal bars at the head and the feet end of the bed. The four posts have gold orbs at the end for decoration, these orbs also remove from the bed to become swords during the adventures, and you will hear the sound of metal being scrapped through metal.

During the adventures the bed will be made to look like a great ship, a mountain, an elephant and a beach with a bonfire and a storm. There will be a big white, silk sail pulled from the bead head to make it look like a ship. During the storm, snow will fill the stage from above and the sounds of wind and louder music will be heard.

During the interval the stage Management team will reset the stage in view of the audience. They will place a wooden park bench big enough for two people in the centre of the stage. There will be a raised wooden crate containing earth and cabbages that is made to look like a small garden patch. It has tall wooden trellis sticks that look like tall letter X's. There is also a small wooden swing on very long rope hanging from the ceiling. The Narrator will sit on the bench during the interval and read a paper and eat a sandwich. HE is having his break with you. The scenes in act 2 are mainly set in the garden outside the Boy's house. There will be lots more running around outside for the adventures.

During a scene when The Velveteen Rabbit is alone in the garden the stage will become darker and the image of a moon and stars will appear at the back of the stage.

During a bonfire scene the stage will become darker again and a large pile of dark wooden items will be stood at the very back of the stage. The large pile will include old chairs, old wooden crates and other old or broken items that need to be burnt.

“Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.'

Cast and Production Credits

The Velveteen Rabbit is played by Christian Roe

The Boy is played by Ashley Byam

The Narrator (who tells you the story), Nana and the Doctor are played by David Ganly

The Pianist and composer is Jason Carr

The Lighting Designer is David W. Kidd

The Designer is James Button

Stage Managers are Kayleigh Heathcote and Zoe Saunders

The Velveteen Rabbit was written by Margery Williams and Directed by Purni Morell