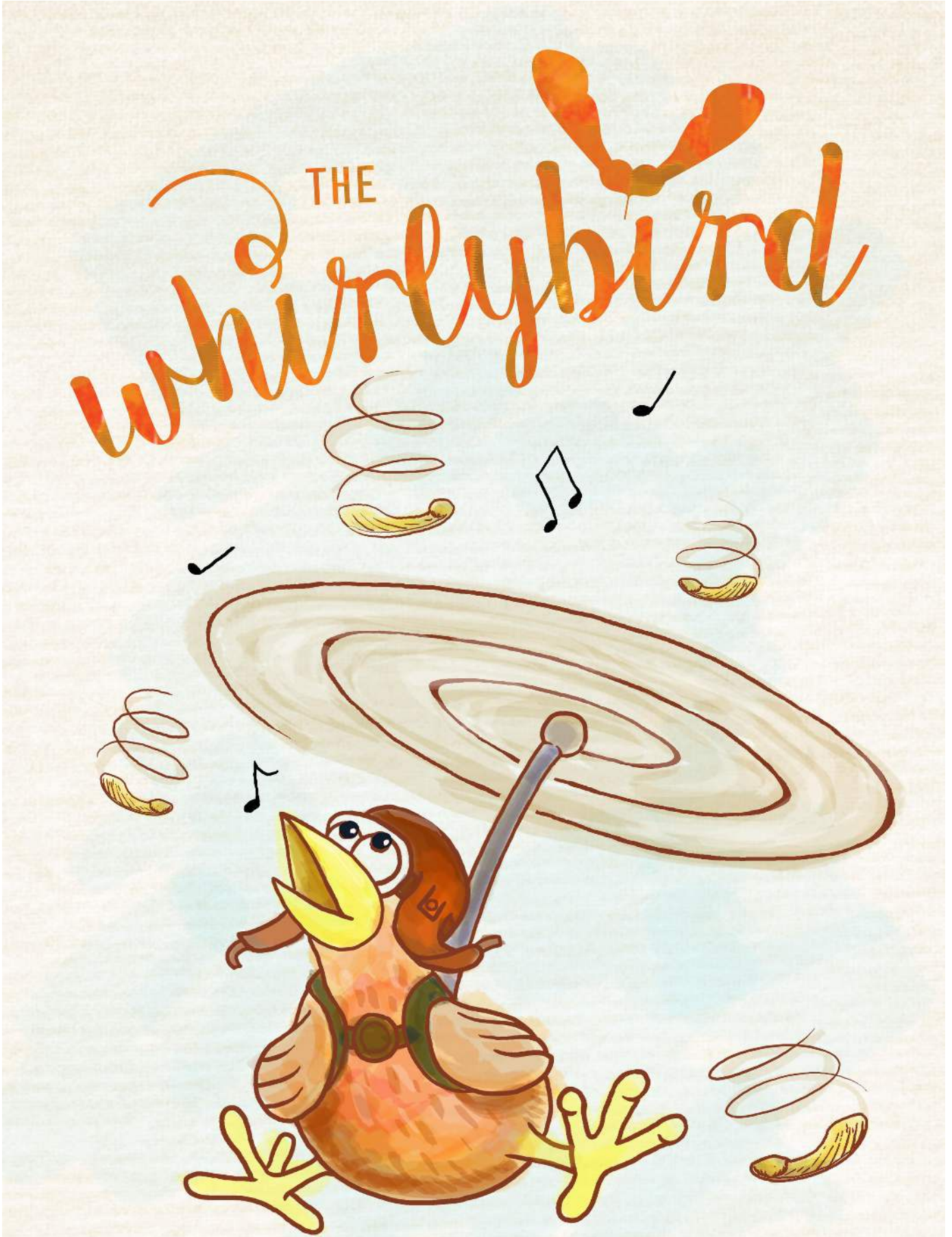


Project Report 2019-20



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# THE WHIRLYBIRD

## OVERVIEW

The Whirlybird is an uplifting theatre show for children aged 3-7, featuring movement, music, bird song, puppetry and lots of things that spin!

*In a cosy nest, two birds look skyward and get ready for their maiden flight. While flying comes easy for Bird, Whirlybird just can't get the hang of it. After many failed attempts, inspiration is found in a very special flying seed... A curious creature, ricketie-racketie on ground but in flight, a wildlife spectacle – a blizzard of wings, perfect elliptical twirls, a mass of orange and browns and a cacophony of sound!*

The Whirlybird is a funny, playful and moving piece of visual theatre about learning to fly, encouraging one another and finding joy and inspiration in nature. With a beautiful music score by award-winning composer Greg Sinclair and set and costume by Claire Halleran, The Whirlybird draws inspiration from the natural world to celebrate diversity and uniqueness and the wonder of flight.

The production was developed in collaboration with Platform Arts Centre and children at Buchlyvie Nursery in Glasgow, with support from Creative Scotland. From March 2019 into spring 2020, The Whirlybird delivered a tour running for over a year, including two Glasgow Nurseries and Schools tours, a Puppet Animation Festival tour in 2019 to venues across Scotland, a Scottish Theatres Autumn Tour & UK Theatres Spring Tour, plus an Aberdeen Nursery & Schools Tour in 2020. Venues and festivals visited included: Eastwood Park Theatre, The Barn, North Edinburgh Arts, Dundee Rep Theatre, Edinburgh Festival Theatre, The Brunton, The Pagoda, Platform, Howden Park Centre, Aberdeen Performing Arts Music Hall, Swallow Theatre, The Children's Wood, Puppet Animation Festival, Lochwinnoch Family Festival and Glasgow Canal Festival.

**In total, the 2019 and 2020 tours:**



### 1.1 Short Film

Eco Drama produced a short trailer with Sandy Butler about The Whirlybird, which can be viewed on the vimeo link below.

<https://vimeo.com/325258217>



“ A delightful show... slips from hilarity to pathos with ease, and keeps the children transfixed. With a colourful, autumnal set festooned with pine cones, a birdhouse, feathers and toadstool and gorgeous wee puppets, it is sure to fly further afield, soar, and keep going. ”



Lorna Irvine, The List



# PUPIL FEEDBACK - QUALITATIVE DATA

**"I went to watch the whirlybird, and it was awesome! I wish I could go again. The acting and puppetry was great, and the story was heart lifting. It is for all ages! At the end, we got to play with the props! I loved it. I recommend watching the whirlybird, for it is a memorable experience that I will remember in years time. The music was very good!"**

**"It made me feel good, I was happy."**

**"I told my granny about the show."**

**"I liked the bird puppets."**



**"My favourite was the colours and the swirly ribbons."**

**"I liked the flying seeds."**

**"I had a smiley face!"**

**"I felt good inside."**

**"I learned, making friendships with animals is possible."**

**"Be kind to the birds outside, we can feed the birds."**

**"I learned to never give up... Friendship is amazing."**

**"Keep trying... and never give up."**

**"I left happy when he flew... I felt good inside."**

**"They were flapping their wings", "to show you how to dance like a bird",**



**"Its hard to fly' 'the birds were friends to each other."**

**"I learned bird language."**

**"I liked when they were flying."**



# PUPIL FEEDBACK - QUANTITATIVE DATA

Presented below is the quantitative feedback from the evaluation forms, carried out after the performances. It was harder to carry out this type of evaluation at theatres and venues and so the data mainly charts feedback from school and nursery performances.

**Did you like meeting Bird & Whirlybird?**

**88% selected YES**

**The performance was lots of fun**

**75% selected YES**

**I felt excited**

**87% selected YES**

**I enjoyed the music**

**90% selected YES**

**I enjoyed the movement & dancing**

**87% selected YES**

**It is fun to play outside in nature**

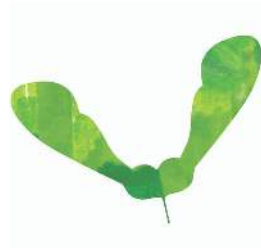
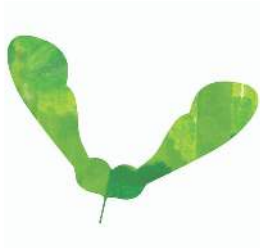
**89% selected YES**

**I learned that it is nice to help friends**

**73% selected YES**

**I'd like to go and watch birds outside**

**86% selected YES**





## AUDIENCE FEEDBACK & REVIEWS

**"After watching Eco Drama's excellent Whirlybird, we went in search of more birds!"** Cat, Audience Member, Lochwinnoch Arts Festival

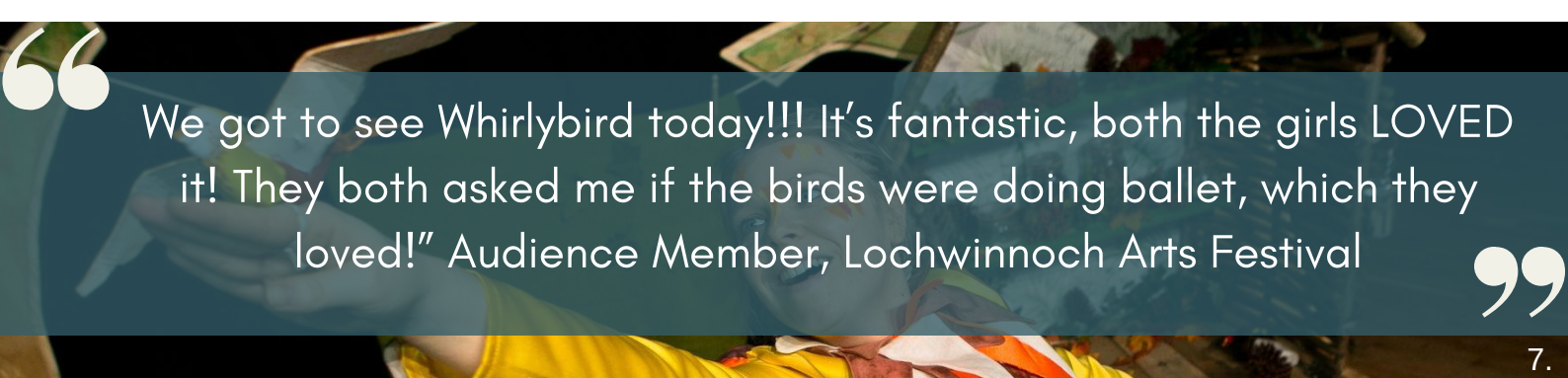
**"Lovely, lyrical, inspiring, thought provoking. Beautiful music and movement. ★★★★★"** Audience member, Dundee Rep

**“ Was lucky to see a wee preview of this - wonderful. The wee one loved it too! So funny and moving. Audience member, Platform ”**

**"The show was really lovely. My children, my wife and I all really enjoyed it. The weekend was very successful and we were very pleased with the production and the sales. Thanks for bringing the show."** Ben Torrie, Director of Programming & Creative Projects, Aberdeen Performing Arts

**"This is all about bringing everyday nature centre-stage - before climate change robs tots of the real thing."** Mary Brennan, The Herald

**"The Whirlybird offers a joyful celebration of the richness of nature, of a kind that becomes more useful and relevant, with every passing day."** Joyce McMillan, The Scotsman



**“ We got to see Whirlybird today!!! It's fantastic, both the girls LOVED it! They both asked me if the birds were doing ballet, which they loved!”** Audience Member, Lochwinnoch Arts Festival ”



# TEACHER FEEDBACK

Do you think the performance was a high quality theatre experience for the children?  
**100% Selected YES**

What did you think about the suitability of this show in relation to your children's age?  
**67% selected EXCELLENT and 28% GOOD**

How well did the themes in this performance link with the Curriculum and your Eco Schools/ Outdoor Learning work?  
**61% EXCELLENT, 28% GOOD**

Did the performance generate discussion in the classroom?  
**100% SELECTED YES**

**“Excellent. It helped build their creative thinking watching the actors pretend to sing as birds and use their imagination to bring the story alive.”** Teacher, Lourdes Primary

**“Absolutely fantastic, informative and visually inspiring.”** Langa Street Nursery

**“We all really enjoyed the show. It was innovative and got the children thinking.”** Aultmore Park Primary

**“We all enjoyed the show, very therapeutic to watch. We loved observing the children following the thread of the story through their facial expressions and laughter.”**  
Glasgow Gaelic Nursery

**“Children have been interested in seeds/planting/bird watching when outdoors. The show modelled kind behaviour, moral of ‘keep trying’ and being willing to ‘have a go’.”**  
Glenwood Nursery

**“All the children were fully engaged and participated at the end by asking relevant questions. Also back in the classroom the children talked about the performance and made little birds with feathers and sticks, pretending they could fly.”** Riverbank Primary



**“Some children need to become more resilient therefore the message was very fitting (Never Give Up).”** Riverbank Primary



## POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

The Whirlybird performance lasts for 35 minutes, and afterwards the cast offer the following post-show activities and follow-up, depending on the venue and type of audience.

**Stay & Play:** After the show, the cast lead a short Q&A and Stay & Play session, inviting children to come on to the stage and have a shot at twirling some sycamore seeds, spinning ribbons and looking closer at some of the props and puppets on set. This is relaxed and informal, with music from the production playing in the background.

**Whirly Play Workshop:** For venues that would like a more formalised post-show workshop, the company deliver a workshop titled 'Whirly Play' - a play-based workshop exploring the wonderful world of birds and flight. Children explore how birds move through games, movement and music, and try out some whirly puppetry and seed spinning. The workshop includes a packet of bird seed and flight themed craft activity for each child to take home.

**Classroom Activity Pack:** Eco Drama designed this resource to complement The Whirlybird theatre production and with nursery leaders and P1-3 teachers in mind. It contains lots of ideas and creative activities to enhance children's experience of the show and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, emotional intelligence, confidence and creativity. The activities also fit well with many cross-curricular areas and topics, including birds, wildlife, outdoor learning and Eco Schools topics. The activities can be delivered with children before and after the performance, either in the classroom or outside in the playground, all designed to deepen and enhance the theatre experience.





### **Creative Team**

Director/Devisor: Emily Reid

Performers/Devisors: Caroline Mathison and Beth Kovarik

Set & Costume Designer: Claire Halleran

Composer: Greg Sinclair

Dramaturg: Katrina Caldwell

Stage Manager: Camilla O'Neill

Artwork: Lindsay Scott and Ben Cormack

*With thanks to Emma Clifton for costume making and Roy Mohan Shearer of Zero One for the puppetry mechanics.*



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[www.ecodrama.co.uk](http://www.ecodrama.co.uk)

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