**Date:** 12 February 2018

**Publication:** CanaryWharfKids.com

**Section:** Entertainment
**URL:** <https://www.canarywharfkids.com/single-post/2018/02/12/Children-to-experience-and-learn-about-inclusion-and-tolerance-in-John-Hegley%E2%80%99s-new-show-this-week-at-HalfMoon-Theatre>

**Children to experience and learn about inclusion and tolerance in John Hegley’s new show this week at Half Moon Theatre.**

*February 12, 208*

Leading UK Poet John Hegley talks to Canary Wharf Kids about what he hopes children will take away from his new show *“All Hail the Snail (and other creatures)”,* launching at Half Moon Theatre this Thursday 15th until Saturday 17th February .

He also shares useful advice for children who would like to develop their creative writing and for their parents to support them.

**Could you tell me more about the show and what the main themes are?**

In the first instance the objective is to get children delight in a theatrical experience, involve them and get them to realise they can be active participants too: from an action and from an emotional perspective.

The show is made of various little scenarios about tolerance and inclusion, in which unexpected characters with strange habits or odd personalities join in. As the audience gets to discover them, children learn that because somebody is different from them doesn’t mean they cannot have a valuable benevolence.

It’s really about the celebration of the other.

It’s serious issues coming in a light-hearted fashion.

**What would you like the children to take away from it?**

I hope the children will learn to celebrate theatre, celebrate the other and celebrate themselves!

**How did  you write and produce the show?**

*All Hail the Snail (and other creatures)* is made of new stories and others that are part of my older repertoire but with a different focus.

It’s a great luxury to be able to work with the [Half Moon Theatre](https://www.halfmoon.org.uk/?post_type=events&p=16645) and to have a dedicated children production company behind me! The show has been created to celebrate the 35th birthday of [Apples and Snakes](http://applesandsnakes.org/) an important poetry organisation; we have similar ethos and I find them very inspiring to work with.

It’s been many years since I’ve had the opportunity to produce a show like this and it’s made me focus on what can be done in terms of the presentation and what it would give to the audience.

**When did you know creative writing was your thing?**

I did show some talent at a pretty young age but I didn’t get actively engaged in it until later, which is the reason why I am currently involved in creative writing courses for children with the [ARVON Foundation](https://www.arvon.org/). We work with children for five days and over that time their writing really develops.

My own creative writing didn’t come out until I was at university so I wish I had experienced this kind of opportunity myself as a child!  Before that, creative writing hadn’t been “pulled” out of me. And that’s what you can do with these courses. We also visit schools and seeing what one can really get out of a child is quite an amazing thing.

Once a ten year old child from one of the schools we visited said to me: “This is a once in a lifetime experience.” It seems that the children appreciate it too!

**When and where was your first performance of your own work?**

It was a poem about witches, I was ten years old. I performed it in the classroom and the child who sat next to me said: “It sounds like a real poem, Miss”, to which the teacher replied: “It *Is* a real poem”. That was the moment I realised I could do this and I was good at it.

For a child, hearing these words from a peer (and the approval of the teacher of course) can be transformative, plant a seed that will remain and hopefully will have the chance to be nurtured.

That said, I realised I had an ability but it was never brought into central focus until I had a very good sixth form teacher who saw it and brought it to the fore.

**What advice would you give to children aspiring to pursue a career in creative writing**?

First of all read. Read before you write. Read variedly. Try and find new authors, ask people who they like to read. In terms of writing there are many exercises one can do. Ask your teachers. What can they recommend for you to expand your writing? Can they get poets to come into the school?

Try and be active, make the opportunities yourself. Play with words. Let the words take you for a walk!

**What advice would you give to their parents?**

When I work with children I always get them to draw. Generally drawing is more accessible than language and it’s important for them to be in a playful mode.

Read to your children, find different books, play word games. Do the writing exercises with your child.

**What’s your favourite thing about your work?**

Reading is part of my work. What a joyous thing that is!

Half Moon Presents

John Hegley: All Hail the Snail (and other creatures)

Thursday 15 February | 11am & 2pm

Friday 16 February | 11am

Saturday 17 February | 11am & 2pm

Ages 7+| 60 minutes