



Mister Tootles  
**Storychair**

information pack

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



Supported using public funding by  
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*'I have a storytelling chair at home, made out of yew wood washed up on beaches, and with a seat and a back woven in straw, made on Orkney up in Scotland. I sit on it often to do my dreamtime when I am weaving my stories, and I sit on it to read too, out loud sometimes. Comfortable enough to sit on for a long while, but not too comfortable that I fall asleep. It has become my favourite story chair. My very own Mister Tootles Storychair!'*

**Michael Morpurgo**

The Gentle Giant



*"I love stories and story telling, and in my experience just about all children do too! Could there ever be a more worthwhile aim than inspiring a child's imagination? Opening the door to a child's imagination is the beginning of just about everything."*

**Chris Wormell**

The Wild Girl

*"Libraries are places that their heart provide sharing and enjoyment which are the essence of Storytelling . St Barnabas Library is a natural focus for its community, a place where not only books come alive but people do though the sharing of imagination and learning together. The Storychair will provide the inspiration to all that creativity and stories never lose their capacity to excite and sustain ,bring individuals both young and old to share their lives together."*

**Paul Gobey**

Library Development Manager Children Services



## Interactive Story Installation

at St Barnabas Library, 2 French Road, Leicester LE5 4AH

Installation of a new permanent children's story experience to the children's section at St Barnabas Library

### Overview:

Children are invited to climb inside **Mister Tootles Storychair** and be transported to a magical woodland, a snowy mountainside, a small island in the middle of a silver lake, a mystical library. Mister Tootles Storychair tells stories of magic, being lost and the triumph of an outsider with stories from eight local, national and international authors including Michael Morpurgo, Chris Wormell and JM Barrie.

The Storychair invites children to enter a secret, underground, woodland world. Once inside, the child will trigger a range of sound effects that will enhance their imaginative response. Children will be able to interact with parts of the chair and release a story from the roots of the Baobab tree. Children will be able to choose from a range of stories. There are secret doors hidden within and once opened will reveal a miniature world of the story and will trigger the chair to tell that story.



Manya Benenson - St Barnabas Library Artist in Residence, and originator of the Storychair explains further

*"The Storychair emerged as a response to seeing large numbers of unaccompanied children - lost boys and girls - come into the library, particularly in school holidays, and stay for long periods of the day, without necessarily knowing what to do.*

*I realised that something that I had taken for granted in my own family, the part of every day when I snuggled up with a child in the same comfy chair and read them a story, probably wasn't available to many of the children.*

*I wanted to create something in the Library that would offer children this opportunity, whenever they wanted for as long or short a time as they wanted."*





Mister Tootles Storychair features 8 stories by local, national and international authors.

Michael Morpurgo - The Gentle Giant

Colin Thompson - How to Live Forever

Chris Wormell - The Wild Girl

Manya Benenson - Mister Tootles' Kiss

Jayne Williams - The Night the Books Came to Life

Andy Reeves - The Feather, The Flight and the Flame

J M Barrie - The Lost Boys

Peter Benenson - Ombjy-Bomgies

All the stories have been kindly donated by the authors in support of the project

There will be a special event to launch the Story Chair on the 30th January, to coincide with National Storytelling Week. The Storychair will also have potential to have a life after the initial stories and could have a new set of stories recorded and tour to other venues around the city.

**Project aims and objectives:**

- To create a multi-sensory experience of storytelling in the Library.
- To promote the value of listening to stories.
- To give children who may not be read to at home an opportunity to listen to stories in an immersive environment.
- To create a world that will enhance children's imagination.
- To instil confidence in others to come and read or tell stories in the Library.

Mister Tootles Storychair has been created as part of the Imaginative Spaces project a collaboration between The Spark and the Leicester Library Services, to bring stories to life and promote reading for pleasure. To find out more about The Storychair, Imaginative Spaces or for more information about The Spark visit [www.thesparkarts.co.uk](http://www.thesparkarts.co.uk)





## Creative Team

### **Creator**    **Manya Benenson**

Manya is a Theatre maker and practitioner who creates stories with children of all ages. Developing Mister Tootles Storychair is Manya's response to being Artist in Residence at St Barnabas Library as part of the Spark Arts for Children Imaginative Spaces project. She very much hopes it brings delight, sparks imagination and is threadbare before long.

### **Designer**    **Sue Pyecroft**

Sue is a creative theatre practitioner of over twenty years experience and has her own company called Dark Horse Puppetry. Sue co founded Bamboozle Theatre Company in 1994 and continues to work with this company as a theatre designer and puppeteer. Sue has particularly enjoyed this project with the challenge to engage and stimulate a child's learning and imagination through creating an interactive storytelling tree.

### **Construction**    **Gary Carter**      **Construction Assistant**    **Jake Parker**

### **Sound**      **Cormac Faulkner**

“The Story Chair was a unique opportunity to create sound works specifically for children, that are intimate, inspiring and exciting. I had a lot of fun creating the sound worlds for each story and working with a talented production team in a remarkable library. I hope the chair remains at St. Barnabas Library for a long time and plenty of adventurous children get to climb inside.”

### **Read by**    **Hema Acharya (Gudjurati), Paul Gobey,** **Andy Reeves and Manya Benenson**

## Authors

### **Manya Benenson**    **Mister Tootles' Kiss**

What ever happened to the Lost Boys when they came back to the real world of grown ups? Mister Tootles finds comfort in the Library, surrounded by stories in the children's area, but what is his mysterious object he carries with him at all times and why doesn't he want anyone to see it?

### **Jayne Williams - The Night the Books Came to Life'**

Jayne Williams is a Derby based writer who has been creating and sharing stories since the late 90's. She was a Writer on the first year of Artist in Residencies with The Spark Arts for Children and is delighted to be invited to contribute her story for Mr Tootles. *'The Night the Books Came to Life'* is about a boy and a girl, a brother and sister, who sneak into a library to see what happens when the lights go out.

### **Andy Reeves - The Feather, the Flight and the Flame**

Andy has been writing for children and young people's theatre projects for over 20 years. Highlights have included 'The Last Balloon', 'Adventures in Dystopia' and youth theatre adaptations of 'Elektra', 'Macbeth' and 'Dr Faustus'. For 18 years Andy was Artistic Director of Speakeasy Theatre Company, bringing participatory arts projects to a huge range of young people and communities across the Midlands. Andy was The Spark artist in residence at Southfields Library in 2014-15 and St Matthews Library 2015-16. 'The Feather, the Flight and the Flame' is a new version of the famous Russian tale 'The Firebird'.





## Creative Team - Authors continued

### **J M Barrie** *The Lost Boys*

The adventures of the Lost boys and Peter Pan in the fantasy setting of Neverland. The boys dwell in an underground house, which they enter through trees with holes in the trunks. Tink tells the boys that Peter wants them to shoot the bird, and Tootles obediently shoots Wendy with an arrow. She falls to the ground, an arrow in her chest.

### **Peter Benenson** - *Ombjy-Bomgies*

Peter wrote this story for Manya when she was 6 years old and sent it in instalments in the post over a year. A wild and whacky story of make-believe creatures hiding in the woods. Finding it and editing it for the Storychair took Manya straight back in time, she is very glad that she can share with others a story from her childhood and she knows her dad would be too.

### **Chris Wormell** - *The Wild Girl*

Leicester City Council 'Our Best Book' nominee. Chris is an illustrator and author he has published some 14 illustrated books and acted as illustrator of others' work on at least 18 more. His books have won the Graphics Prize at the Bologna International Children's Book Fair and the New York Times Book Review Best Illustrated Children's Book Award.

### **Michael Morpurgo** - *The Gentle Giant*

Former Children's Laureate. Author of War Horse, Private Peaceful, Kensuke's Kingdom

### **Colin Thompson** - *How to Live Forever*


Writer and illustrator of children's books. He has had over 70 works published and also draws pictures for jigsaw puzzles. In 2004, Colin was awarded the Aurealis Award in the children's long fiction category for How to Live Forever.


## Contact Us

If you would like to know more about Mister Tootles Storychair, The Spark Arts for Children or our work in libraries please call 0116 261 6893 or [admin@thesparkarts.co.uk](mailto:admin@thesparkarts.co.uk)



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