

National Theatre adapts Mark Haddon's *Curious Incident*

By Kev Geoghegan

Entertainment reporter, BBC News

Published 6 August 2012



The main character Christopher (Luke Treadaway, left) has a form of autism

The National Theatre has produced the first stage adaptation of Mark Haddon's best-selling novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

A mysterious tale of a murdered dog, narrated by an introspective 15-year-old maths genius with a form of autism, the 2003 book *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is not exactly an easy sell to theatre audiences.

Yet the book's author Mark Haddon says the book has been ripe for adaptation for some time.

"About two and a half years ago, we realised that we were getting a lot of requests for stage adaptations including, bizarrely, musical adaptations of the book.

"Some seemed to work, some were obviously rubbish and some were just fishing. We realised we were in a position to sit down and see who would we like to do it."

So, Haddon handed over his book, which won the Whitbread Book of the Year, to Simon Stephens - a rising star of British theatre who has tackled difficult subjects like sex trafficking in *Three Kingdoms* and a high-school massacre used to question society's drive for academic success in *Punk Rock*.

"Simon says he fell in love with the book and you can't adapt a book unless you really love it," says Haddon. "One of Simon's great hopes is that whatever else people take away from it they will realise that he and the cast are in love with the book."

Stephens brought on board Marianne Elliott, director of the National's multi-award winning adaptation of War Horse.

Luke Treadaway, who - alongside twin brother Harry is one of the UK's most exciting young actors - takes on the central role of Christopher Boone with Spooks actress Nicola Walker as mum Judy and Paul Ritter as his father Ed.

The cast also includes veteran actress Una Stubbs as Christopher's elderly neighbour Mrs Alexander and Niamh Cusack as his teacher.

The sparse set, by renowned designer Bunny Christie, takes on its own character in the play. Seemingly a series of simple geometric squares, it pulses with energy, boosted by lighting and projections of numbers and stars, reflecting Christopher's fascination with mathematics and order.

Physical theatre company [Frantic Assembly](#) worked on the choreography of several key scenes.

Early reviews of the adaptation have been positive - [in the Guardian](#), Michael Billington said: "Though I found myself resisting occasional touches of self-conscious cuteness and sentimentality in Marianne Elliott's production, I readily acknowledge the whole thing is done with enormous flair."