

War Horse premiered at the National Theatre in London on 9 October 2007, before transferring in 2009 to the West End. The play drew in an extensive audience, breaking records as the highest weekly grossing play in the West End, and won numerous awards – including Olivier Awards, Evening Standard Theatre Awards and London Critics' Circle Theatre Awards. Similarly, the play's Broadway run was extended due to popular demand and critical success, and picked up five Tony awards in 2011. Since then, *War Horse* has appeared at theatres around the world and finally came to Johannesburg and Cape Town late 2014, to play to sold out houses and even had an extended run in Cape Town.

According to Waterhouse, 'the most important part of the *War Horse* success was RMB's partnership with Pieter Toerien. He had the access to *War Horse*, not us. When a partnership works and both sides win from the outset, it is amazing how much extra energy both put in...'

'That was the difference right from the start, the huge amount of discretionary energy that was generated by everyone. Everyone put in extra, nobody was greedy, everyone was giving to the collaboration, rather than taking, and everyone got something out. This made it a truly great event...'

'Even the cast members really partnered with us and gave it their all for every performance, and they received a standing ovation for every single show...'

After the performance at the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day, 11 November 2014, when the audience wore red poppies, members of the cast commented that the tour to South Africa brought it strongly home to them that *War Horse* is not just another play...'

Waterhouse recalls how Pieter Toerien was determined to 'bring Joey home to the average South African' with affordable ticket prices. The audience thanked him all along with sold out performances and an extended run at Artscape in Cape Town.

Tsogo Sun, Project Manager Jenni Carbonari, translated the generated hype/publicity of the production in an actual measurable P.R. value of just under R40 million, making it the second most successful theatre production in South Africa in terms of P.R. value.

Toerien personally took the risks and even paid for glitches like adapting the set to the bigger stage at Montecasino and adapting the plane to transport the bigger set. No small change to pay for such alterations, but he did it. Of course the 'homecoming' could not have happened without the sponsorship from Rand Merchant Bank, who took the opportunity of having a much bigger involvement



A drawing for Michael and Janice Fridjhon by their god-daughter Imogen, to thank them for tickets to *War Horse*

'To everyone at ASSITEJ we want to say thank you for one of the most inspiring experiences of 2014 – of any year, in fact. War Horse touched the lives of every child in that auditorium and they took home with them a memory that will stay with them forever.'

'None of our Red Hill (an informal settlement in the mountains behind Simon's Town) children had ever been near a theatre. Many of them will never go again. The age group we normally work with were too young to be included in this excursion and the much older boys who came (surprisingly ALL boys) will soon move out of our orbit and into other places and other lives. When they came to the workshop they slouched in, full of attitude. When they left the theatre their eyes were shining. When they received their evaluation forms, they actually read them carefully and attempted to give proper feedback and, although most of them ticked the maximum score for everything (I would have done too) there were some who thought about it – one even awarded a mere "2" for scenery (one wondered what he was comparing it to?). For us, as a reading organisation, the most heart-warming of all was the way they seized their books and immediately started reading them.'

'My grandfather was wounded at the Somme, shot through the lungs and left out there for four days because the stretcher bearers didn't think he stood a chance. On the fourth day, he heard one say: "This one's still alive! Let's give him a chance." He lived to be nearly 80 and father to my mother. Through War Horse, a thousand children experienced what it was like for him, understood the cruelties and horror of war, thought about what war means... what death means. For a generation brought up on cheap thrills and budget films, where death is a game, this is the ultimate lesson.'