

This performance is part of
Mermaids on the Mersey

a series of events produced by
The University of Liverpool, in collaboration with
The Walker Art Gallery, for

Being Human: A Festival of the Humanities, 2016



The Leverhulme Trust

Follow us and our events at:

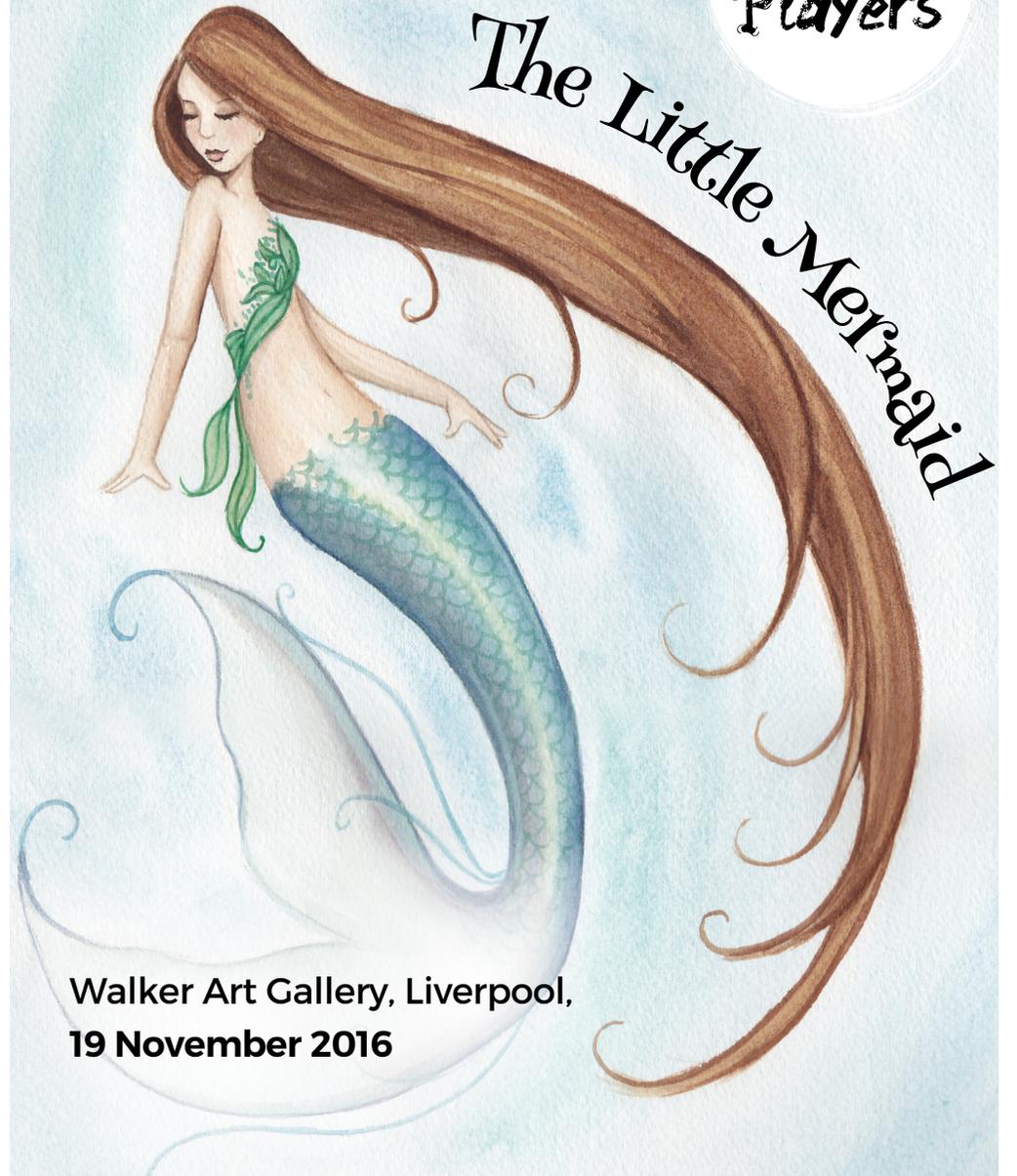
@LivUniPlayers

@LivUniPlayers



The Liverpool
Players

The Little Mermaid



Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool,
19 November 2016

LIFE CHANGING
World Shaping

The Little Mermaid

Cast and Crew

Story adapted from Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*

Narrated by Madelaine Smart

Produced by Sarah Peverley

Original Music Composed and Produced by Alex Cottrell

Costumes and Props – The Liverpool Players

Programme Design – Kirsty Smith

Cover Image – © Camille Grimshaw (All Rights Reserved)

Sponsors and Thanks

Sincere thanks go to the following groups and individuals for making *Mermaids on the Mersey* possible: the Being Human Festival organisers and sponsors (The School of Advanced Study, University of London, The Arts and Humanities Research Council, and The British Academy); staff at The Walker Gallery, especially Christina Waugh; and the following groups at The University of Liverpool: The Friends of the University; the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies; the School of the Arts; and the Being Human Working Group, especially Chris Williams and Claire Taylor.

Professor Peverley also acknowledges the assistance of The Leverhulme Trust. Elements of *Mermaids on the Mersey* are underpinned by her work on *Mermaids of the British Isles*, a project funded by a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship.

The Little Mermaid

About *The Little Mermaid*

First published in 1837, Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* has captured the hearts of generations of children and adults for almost two hundred years. Telling the story of a young mermaid who falls in love with a human prince, trading her voice for a pair of legs so that she can be with him, *The Little Mermaid* confronts a range of universal themes that speak to us across the ages. In charting the heroine's tragic attempt to negotiate the cultural and physical differences that separate her from the prince, the story explores the transformative power of love and self-sacrifice with breathtaking immediacy.

Nowadays, most people experience the little mermaid's story solely through Walt Disney's *The Little Mermaid* ((1989). Yet this much-loved animation alters Andersen's original ending. Disney's Ariel achieves her 'happy ever after' with Prince Erik after regaining her voice and defeating Ursula, the sea witch, whereas Andersen's nameless sea-maid dies, voiceless, the morning after her prince marries another. Her true identity remains unknown to him, and her ambition of winning his heart and gaining an immortal soul through his love remains unfulfilled. After dissolving into sea foam, she transforms into a Daughter of the Air and is given a final chance to obtain an immortal soul after three hundred years of service with the Daughters. Aimed at encouraging children to behave, Andersen closes his tale with a cautionary tone: good children reduce the mermaid's term of service as a Daughter of the Air, but wicked children increase her time away from the joys of heaven. It is a tale of hope and hopelessness, fear and fearlessness.

Our adaptation aims to capture the essence of Andersen's fairytale, while updating it for a twenty-first century audience. Our little mermaid, Auria, retains the courage and strength of Andersen's heroine, yet when the tangles of earthly love fail to unravel the way she had hoped, it is her passion for exploration and her love for all things of the earth that brings about her second chance for happiness. We hope that Auria's fascination with the human world and her desire to remember all the things she has experienced – good and bad – will encourage spectators to pause and look at the wonders of planet earth and what it means to be human with new 'mermaid' eyes.
