PLAYLAB THEATRE

RISING

BY HANNAH BELANSZKY, MADELEINE BORDER
EMILY BURTON, LAUREN SHERRITT, SARAH WILSON

EDUCATION SUPPORT MATERIALS

Written and compiled by Stephanie Tudor

Rising

by Hannah Belanszky, Madeleine Border,
Emily Burton, Lauren Sherritt,
& Sarah Wilson

EDUCATION NOTES

Playlab Theatre

About the Show

SYNOPSIS

'Sea levels, displacements, poverty … who is listening?'

Facing imminent environmental, economic and social collapse, through rising sea levels, scarcity of food and fresh water, and open conflict between Government and Rebel forces, a remote island country is at a tipping point.

When a bomb explodes killing civilians and UN peacekeepers the pressure mounts for definitive action to solve this ecological and humanitarian crisis, but the competing visions of the Nation's future have no room for compromise. Among the widespread chaos, five individual stories of integrity, idealism, justice, compassion and hope emerge.

From five fabulous emerging female playwrights, *Rising* is an ambitious new work responding to the looming ecological crisis in an effort to find equality and balance.

AN EMERGING FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS COMMISSION

Rising is a Playlab Theatre commission providing a meaningful pathway for five emerging female playwrights to transition into professional practice, by developing and extending skills through the rigour of creating a work for the main stage. Led by award-winning playwright, Kathryn Marquet, *Rising* is a new Australian work generated from an eco-feminist premise and focusing on the gulf between socio-political rhetoric and deeper, active engagement with ecological crises, the systems that perpetuate this crises and the absence of the female voice from the process.

The playwrights participating in the commission are Hannah Belanszky, Madeleine Border, Emily Burton, Lauren Sherritt and Sarah Wilson.

ESTIMATED RUNNING TIME
1 hour 30 minutes

SUITABILITY
Grades 10 and 12.

WARNINGS
Coarse language, adult themes:

THEMES
Climate Change / Extinction
Colonialization
Aid /Lack Of / Unhelpful Aid to Third World Countries
Terrorism / Rebels / Radicalisation
Protest
Youth's Voice
Corrupt Government / Democracy / Capitalism
Foreign Aid
Media
Politics And Governance

Curriculum Links

DRAMATIC FORM AND STYLE
Theatre of a Social Comment
Contemporary Australian Drama

DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS
Linear
Tandem narrative
Fragmented narrative structure
Speech
Fragmented mood
Fluidity of space and time
Multiple characters
Didacticism
Juxtaposition
Intertextuality

Cast and Creatives

PLAYWRIGHTS	Hannah Belanszky, Madeleine Border, Emily Burton, Lauren Sherritt, Sarah Wilson
DIRECTOR	Kate Wild
DRAMATURG	Kathryn Marquet
DESIGNER	Ella Lincoln
LIGHTING DESIGN	Christine Felmingham
SOUND DESIGN	Anna Whittaker
ACTORS	Chenoa Deemal, Ling Cooper Tang, Steven Rooke

Playlab Theatre

Playlab Theatre seeks to challenge perspectives of Australian culture through Australian Theatre. Uniquely, Playlab Theatre does this through developing, publishing and producing new Australian Theatre with the playwright at the centre of the creative process

About the Writers

Hannah Belanszky is an emerging writer, actor and Yuwaalaraay woman based in Brisbane. Her focus is on telling Aboriginal stories and creating work that is bold, imaginative and female driven. Hannah's play *don't ask what the bird look like* was a finalist for the 2018-19 Queensland Premier's Drama Award and was commissioned by Queensland Theatre. She wrote and directed her cabaret *The Wives of Wolfgang* which was performed at Brisbane Powerhouse in 2017 and toured to Fringe World Perth and Adelaide Fringe in 2020 where it was awarded Best Cabaret at the Adelaide Fringe Weekly Awards. Her play *Shadow in a Dress* was developed through QPAC/Playlab Theatre's 'Sparks' program for First Nations writers and was programmed at La Boite HWY. Hannah has been commissioned by Playlab Theatre to co-write a new eco-feminist work, *Rising*, and by All Hallows' School to write a play for large youth cast. Hannah is also co-writer and performer in *Ghost Story*, a new work created by Kristen Maloney, which blends augmented reality with live performance and has been developed as part of the 2020 Metro Arts Creative Development program. As an actor, Hannah's credits include *Harrow* and roles in television commercials for Village Retirement, Humira, Dominos and Ascent Shoes.

Madeleine Border is a Brisbane based theatre maker, performer, and writer. She was one of Playlab Theatre's Young Playwright-in-Residence participants for 2019 and is currently involved in Playlab Theatre's 2020 Incubator program. She co-founded a theatre collective, Yours Sincerely, who created original works for FAST in 2018 with *Sometimes it's Hot like the Sun*, and *This Fantastic Plastic Planet* as part of Backbones Residency program in 2019. After finishing an undergraduate degree, majoring in Drama and Political Science, she finished her studies by completing a Masters of Writing, Editing and Publishing at the University of Queensland in 2019.

Emily Burton is an actress, theatre-maker, playwright and teaching artist. As an actress, her production credits include: *Storm Boy* (MTC/QT); *Single Asian Female* (Laboite Theatre Company/Belvior); *The Seagull*, *Oedipus Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *The Fledglings*, *Riley Valentine* (QT); *The Wider Earth* (QT/Sydney Festival/Dead Puppets Society); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (LaBoite Theatre Company); *A Tribute of Sorts* (QT/Monster's Appear/Laboite Theatre). Emily has performed nationally with numerous acclaimed Independent Theatre companies including Dead Puppets Society, Imaginary Theatre Company, Monster's Appear and Grin and Tonic Theatre Troupe. Major Awards include: Matilda Award for Best Actress in a Lead Role in *A Tribute of Sorts*; A recipient of Queensland Theatre Independents Resources Funding; and a proud participant in the Playlab Theatre's Incubator 2018 playwriting program. Throughout 2019, Emily was an Artist in Residence with LaBoite Theatre Company and was co-commissioned to develop a new work, *Motive* which was subsequently shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2020-2021. Recently, Emily received funding from the Arts Council Resilience Fund as well as an Arts Queensland stART Grant to develop her new play, *Gravy*. She has worked as a teaching artist across Australia and is passionate about bringing the arts to regional areas.

Lauren Sherritt is a playwright and director. Her plays *Sans Love* (2014) and *One Black Mark* (2015) were produced at Anywhere Theatre Festival, and her monologue *The Panel* was published in ATYP's *The Voices Project: Encore Edition*. In 2017, she wrote interactive digital story *Master of Time for Story City*, produced as part of celebrations to mark 50 Years of Landscape Architecture at QUT. Lauren has participated in Playlab Theatre's Incubator program, ATYP's Fresh Ink Mentoring Program and ATYP's National Studio.

Sarah Wilson is an emerging Brisbane based writer. She is currently studying a dual Arts/Science degree at the University of Queensland. Sarah was a member of QTC's Young Writers Group in 2016. She was a part of Queensland Theatre's Playwrights 18-26 Program in 2017, where she created her play *Recreational Mathematics*. In 2018 Sarah wrote and developed her latest work, *The Kmart Chronicles*, as part of Playlab Theatre's Incubator program. Sarah is also involved with student theatre at UQ as a writer, dramaturg, director, and stage manager, and had her short story, *First Do No Harm*, published as part of the Arts Alliance of Pine Rivers' 2014 anthology Alpha and Omega.

Curriculum Connections

The curriculum connections are provided based on the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) General Drama Senior Syllabus Drama (2019 v1.1).

The curriculum connections provided are based on the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) Drama General Senior Syllabus 2019: Syllabus (V1.1) for Queensland Year 11 and 12 students (see here for more information — https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/the-arts/ drama/syllabus) and the Australian Curriculum: The Arts / Drama

(see here for more information — australiancurriculum.edu.au/the-arts/drama). Where possible, definitions have been provided for state specific terminology to assist with application across senior courses of study in other Australian states.

GENERAL SENIOR SYLLABUS

UNIT 3 — CHALLENGE

"Students explore how drama can be used to challenge our understanding of humanity over time. Students investigate dramatic styles that are united by social commentary, and that question their world and advocate change. Students explore how dramatic form can be used to express philosophical and political viewpoints in action in society. Students apply, manipulate, structure and interpret the dramatic languages through dramatic contexts that include political, social, philosophical or economic frames. They engage with the purposes of educating, challenging, empowering and informing audiences. In this unit, students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required to make and respond to dramatic works that aspire to voice the difficult questions of human conscience and challenge our understanding of humanity." (Australia. Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority, 2019, p.34)

Inquiry questions

Unit 3: How can we use drama to challenge our understanding of humanity?

- How can drama help to educate, challenge and empower us to question society at this time and advocate change?
- How can we shape dramatic languages to communicate and challenge an understanding of humanity at this time?
- How can we make and respond to dramatic works to explore challenges and demands of the human experience? (Australia. Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority, 2019, p.35)

TAKEN FROM QCAA DRAMA 2019 V1.1 — GENERAL SENIOR SYLLABUS

Style and Form

Key theatrical styles, forms and their associated conventions which are evident throughout the play:

Theatre of a Social Comment: Breaking the fourth wall, short and episodic scenes, use of cinematic projections, generic role portrayal, gestus, contrasting and fragmented mood between scenes, multiple role-ing. Unpacking of modern issues of social, ethical, political concern in a dramatic fashion, communication of a political agenda or standpoint including a call to action.

Classroom Links

Style and Form

- Identify examples of conventions used in *Rising*?
- How does the use of these conventions heighten the play's narrative?
- Consider the use of time and place. What are their impacts on the production?
- Consider a convention that you thought has an unexpected use in the production. How was it used effectively? What impact did it have on your understanding of the meaning?
- Consider the range of perspectives that *Rising* draws upon. How does this change the audience's view of the social comments that the production makes?

Conventions

MULTI NARRATIVE / FRAGMENTED NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Multi narrative is when a play contains multiple character or storylines that are each running simultaneously. Each story is linked by a place, central character or event but they each have their own central protagonist and plot. Although this storytelling device is more commonly found in film it can be used in theatre to show different perspectives, how seemingly random people are connected or how one event has impacted multiple people who have never met or interacted. The production will jump between each narrative, sometime picking up right where we left the character or at other times travelling forward in time.

It is important to note that each narrative is just as important as the others.

SPEECH

A speech is a one person monologue, often presenting facing out towards the audience. The actor often presents a speech in role as a character, talking to a large group rather than directly addressing the audience. This differs from narration or monologue where the purpose of the dialogue is to convey plot points or internal thoughts. A speech still breaks the fourth wall and distances the audience.

FRAGMENTED MOOD

Fragmented mood is often used to distance the audience from the emotion of one character and have them instead focus on the issue or social comment being conveyed. This convention is often used by switching between scenes, time periods or events when there is a turning point or moment of heightened mood.

FLUIDITY OF PLACE AND TIME

Telling a story in multiple times and places requires fluid transitions between each time and place. This can be done through a character transformation, costume changes, or even through design elements such as changes in sets, lighting or mediatised elements. Fluidity of place and time is not only used in multinarrative pieces but also in non-linear productions. This serves to allow multiple perspectives to be told but can also be used to distance the audience.

MULTIPLE CHARACTERS

Actors play more than one role switching between them. This can be done as a symbol, conveying that the actor is telling the story of multiple characters who the same event or issue has had an impact on, to remind the audience that the actor is a storyteller in that moment, serving to alienate the audience and have them focus on the message or statement being made, or simply from a practical point of view. When actors change between characters they need to deliberately change their voice, gesture, stance and facial expressions to allow the audience to distinguish between Roles. They also need to ensure the transitions between roles is clear. Symbolic prop and/or costume item can assist here.

DIDACTICISM

The political or social message that the creative team aims to communicate to the audience with the purpose of encouraging them to think about and act on. Epic theatre often has a call to action for the audience. Dramatic action offers a debate with arguments for the audience – this can occur through the use of narrative events or through dialogue itself. Didacticism is achieved through the manipulation of other Epic Theatre conventions.

Classroom Links

Conventions

- What conventions stood out to you as an audience member?
- Consider what would have been different without the layering of these conventions, how would this have changed your understanding of the production and its message?
- Only three actors played multiple characters, what did they do to change quickly between each character?
- Did the use of a fragmented narrative structure change the way you viewed the production?
- What effect does the productions inclusion of these conventions have on the creation of dramatic meaning?
- How did actors convey a change in time and place?
- How did the designer and director change time and place?
- Did the use of the minimal set tell the story clearly enough?
- What other conventions of Theatre of a Social Comment could be included? How would this contribute to the dramatic meaning?

Activities and Resources

INITIAL QUESTIONS

- What does the title make you think the play is going to be about?
- Look up the definition for the word rising. Consider the different definitions, what are the differences and similarities?
- Thinking about the definitions, when have you had to rise?
- Theatre of a Social Comment looks to comment on society and the decisions we make, and provoke audience to consider or change their behaviour. Can you think of a play or movie that you have seen that has done this for you? What was the impact?
- Why is it important to create theatre that educates, challenges and empowers the audience?
- Ian Lawson, Artistic Director of Playlab Theatre, commented on real life events that have inspired the writers and creatives on the project to create this work. What real life events do you think might be related to the idea of rising? How might the influence of real world events impact the story being told?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss these statements. Encourage students to consider both sides of the argument.

- Giving money is the best way to help people who live in less fortunate countries.
- The government always has the interests of all citizens in mind.
- Getting paid less than you deserve for a job is better than not having a job.
- You should be able to say anything about anyone, any group of people without being punished for it.
- Protesting what you disagree with is a positive way to make a change.
- If nothing changes, nothing changes.

After You See The Play

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you believe was the key message of the play?
- How where the changes in time and place communicated?
- Try to recall the plot. What stages led to the eventual climax?
- Recall the moments of strong emotional connection. What led to these moments? Consider acting techniques as well as plot and design elements.
- What do you believe is the best aspect of Rising?
- How does the staging contribute to the production? Discuss the use of minimalistic props and use of symbolic set.
- Consider the fact that this is a new work that Playlab Theatre has created. Why do you think this is the case? Why is this an important story to tell?
- The play deals with a lot of important and confronting issues and themes layered with humour. Why do you think this is the case? How did this technique engage you as an audience member?
- There are multiple narratives throughout the production. Which engaged you the most and why? This may be a connection to the characters, the emotions or the social and political statements that were made.
- Describe three moments in the performance where you felt strongly about a particular issue or ideal. Why was this the case?
- Consider that each different narrative was written by a different playwright. How did the director and the actors make it seem like one story and create one cohesive world?

CHARACTER MAP

When talking about relationships we talk about the relationship between two characters but also between the environment and ideas. What are the different ideas presented in the play and how are these shown? Create a character map and map not only their relationship to each other but the key themes and ideas presented within the work.

TIMELINE

Create a timeline of the play noting the different narratives. Consider where the different stories intersect and the characters that may have met. This is useful to do directly after viewing the performance, so students understand the narrative and nature of the work. This can also help later when constructing a response or critique. Consider the experiences within the play that define each characters' journey (some of these occur before the start of the play or offstage), the comments on political or social issues throughout the production and how their actions demonstrate their belief systems or their understanding of their situation at that time.

Compare the chronological timeline of each character to the timeline of the play. How does this structure impact our understanding of the world the play is set. Also, think about the comment that each character, each narrative is making and then the comment the play is making all together.

Extension

As a class identify 5 key moments from the production. Break students up into smaller groups and assign them each a key moment.

1. Have students recreate this moment as series of freeze frames with no dialogue. The movements should be strong and your emotions evident to effectively convey this to the audience.
2. Students are then to add two words per freeze frame. These can be spoke to the other characters or direct address to the audience.
3. Add additional dialogue so the scene is complete.

OR

2. Have them consider this a gallery walk through a museum. Have them add a title to each of these freeze frames to direct dramatic focus.
3. When presenting these, one actor must step out of the freeze frame and explain the title and the image, as if they were a tour guide explaining a painting.
4. Have students extend on this by turning each freeze frame into an abstract representation of that moment, focusing on the mood or character emotions portrayed, rather than the plot. Students can bring these moments to life in a movement sequence.

CREATING THE SETTING

Ask students to list the different settings for each scene and describe each one. They can start by referencing the set from the production, but challenge them to go further than this and consider what wasn't shown onstage and what else they imagine would be present.

Have students complete a series of "Postcard" tableaus to create the setting of different scenes.

Discuss what the students have included or what they have left out.

Create a whole class image of the island itself. Discuss the island's significance. What does it represent to the community as a whole and to each character?

Select a character from the production and discuss their relationship to the island. Consider how they feel at the start of the production and then at the end.

Have students sum this up as an action. i.e suffocating, protecting

Ask them to use the space, specifically spatial relationships and movement to metaphorically show this character's relationship to the island. How do you show the island suffocating or protecting? Students can start by creating a freeze frame, then add movement, sound and key words or phrase.

Repeat the same activity for each character.

You can then do this for the characters at the end of the play. Consider extending students by asking them to join the two movement pieces together.

Discuss what this is saying about the character's journey.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEATRE:

Students are to identify the ideas or references from the production that they think are drawn from real life. In small groups, they are to research and investigate relating events, people, places and issues further and to use this to create a didactic statement that challenges a political or social view. Using their research, including interviews, statistics and images, they are to start brainstorming ways to convey this idea to an audience.

Encourage students to draw on a range of conventions to help them communicate their message to an audience.

ASKING QUESTIONS

In her interview Kathryn Marquet said " … it's important, I think, to ask questions, but not necessarily to give answers. If you can answer the question the play raises, then why is it worth an audience's time?"

Brainstorm the questions that the play leaves you with.

Compare these with a partner. Add to your mind map.

Finally create a class brainstorm.

After this, have a look through these questions and see what answers you have as a class. What are the unanswerable questions? What answers differ from person to person?

This initial brainstorm could be completed as a connect, extend, challenge activity. See https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/connect-extend-challenge

CONCEPT DOCUMENT

After viewing *Rising*, take a key moment that impacted you and use it as inspiration for a new performance manipulating the convention present within that key moment.

Consider Kathryn Marquet's comment, "Write about what drives you mad, what keeps you up at night. If you don't care, the audience isn't going to either."

In 3 minutes, brainstorm all the things that drive you mad / keep you up at night. After you have a list go through the list and highlight commonalities. Do you see any trends emerging? If not think about what stands out on the list?

Alternatively, swap you list with someone else and highlight key ideas that stand out to you from their list.

Use the ideas to create a piece of theatre that:

- Works to educate, challenge and empower the audience to encourage them to question the society that we live in and continue to advocate for change
- Explores the challenges and demands of being human
- Exposes difficult truths and questions

Consider how you may explore this issue in a new context.

- An outline of the theme / issue to explore
- Brainstorm dramatic conventions you could use
- The dramatic meaning you want to convey to your audience.

Use this information to create a storyboard that conveys your concept.

Workshop these.

Elements of Drama Discussion

ROLE RELATIONSHIP CHARACTER	• Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience? • How would you describe each character? How are their characters portrayed through the voice and movement of the actors? • The characters are often faced with other characters who disagree with their views or beliefs. How did these disagreements change their relationship? How was this conveyed? • How do the three actors embody a variety of roles over the course of the play? What is different in the physicality or vocals of each character and what does this convey about the values, attitudes and beliefs?
TENSION	• What were some of the key examples of tension during the production? • Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience? • How did the tension engage you? • What were you invested in? • How did the use of tandem narrative's build tension throughout the production? • Consider the tension of relationship between the visitors to the island and the locals. How does this shift throughout the play? • Describe moments of tension of task. • Tension of relationship is present throughout the play. What are the most obvious examples of this? Why does the tension develop?
FOCUS	• Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience? • How did the focus change between moments between the different narratives? What happened onstage to facilitate this change? • How were design elements used to change the dramatic focus?
TIME	• When do you think the play is set? Provide specific example to support these ideas. • The play is linear but is told from multiple perspectives. What impact does this have on the audience's understanding of the characters and the narrative?
PLACE	• The set design creates a metaphorical landscape rather than any of the specific locations. How was this communicated onstage? • How were the different places differentiated onstage? • The island the play is set on, could be an island. How did this impact your understanding of the production? Did you conjure a specific location in your mind?
SPACE	• Analyse the different ways that the stage was used throughout the production. • How did the use of the space help to convey the different settings and locations? • How did the lighting enhance the different use of the space?
MOVEMENT	• Consider how symbolic movement is used to convey feelings and shape mood? • How did each actor manipulate their body language and movement to portray multiple characters? • How was movement contrasted by stillness? What effect did this have?

LANGUAGE	• How were words used to create power? • Consider the way that different characters described the island or what was occurring. What was different about their use of language? How did this impact your understanding of the character and their beliefs? • What was the subtext behind some of the memorable lines? • How was language used to shape character? Consider the three different characters and compare how the language differed for each.
CONTRAST	• Describe two contrasting moments in Rising. How were these moments created through sound, lighting, voice and movement? • The scenes and the ideas portrayed in each sometimes directly contrast each other. As an audience member, how did this make you feel? • How did the contrast of the scenes help you understand the dramatic meaning? • What were the contrasts between the characters? How was this communicated to the audience through the design elements as well as through the acting techniques? • Analyse the ways in which contrast is used throughout the play in relation to the range of moods; between humour and fear.
MOOD	• Discuss the impact of the sound design and music used to create specific moods. Use specific moments of dramatic action from the show and discuss how they made the audience feel. • Consider how they would've been different if different artistic choices were made, such as alternative lighting or sound, or use of set. • The mood shifts throughout the play. List all the changes of mood throughout the production. • Consider the mood at the start of the play. How does this contrast with the end of the play? • How did you feel when you realised what was happening with the island? What performance techniques and skills of the actors were utilised to make you feel this way? You could consider this same question for the moment when K is revealing what she knows and when the baby is being born. How did these moods contrast with the ministers' speech? • Consider the abrupt shifts in mood. When did these occur? What do you think was the purpose?
SYMBOL	• Discuss the impact of the title of the play as a symbol. How did this impact your understanding of the production and the narrative? • What other symbolic references where there throughout the production?

Script Excerpt 1

MICHAEL What's that got to do with it?

TAIZE Then it wasn't built just for the people.

MICHAEL It was built to save the island from fucking flooding. That sounds like for the people to me.

TAIZE What rate were you paying?

MICHAEL Fuck, it's not like it was slave labour. A good one.

TAIZE A good rate for here or for where you're from?

MICHAEL For where we are. It was a very good wage for this country.

TAIZE But not for your workers back home?

MICHAEL I didn't design the pay scale. Everyone seemed happy.

TAIZE They were happy just to have jobs. Why didn't you pay what you can clearly afford?

MICHAEL That would get people used to something unrealistic.

TAIZE All those people may as well have been working in a sweatshop.

MICHAEL Come on.

TAIZE Your company capitalised off our crisis.

MICHAEL Was I supposed to work for free?

TAIZE How can we rise up when debt weighs us down?

MICHAEL At the end of the day, the levee had to be built and that's that.

TAIZE So why couldn't a local company have been given the opportunity and kept the profits on the island?

MICHAEL Wait, why am I being interrogated here? Your government wanted this. If the levee wasn't built soon, and properly, this island would've gone under water.

TAIZE I know. I've already lost my home. My family moved here because our island was inundated. I'm one of thousands of displaced people now on this island.

MICHAEL You understand the urgency, then.

TAIZE It was urgent when our elders couldn't predict the weather anymore. It was urgent when our beaches were getting smaller. It was urgent when we were losing sacred sites because the tides were getting worse each year. Homes around her were flooding, but my grandmother refused to leave. She didn't want to lose her land. She hoped it would get better. I told her it wouldn't.

MICHAEL It's lucky you could all get here safely at least.

TAIZE She died broken hearted.

MICHAEL I'm so sorry. Thankfully, you could come here. We're doing everything we can to stop it happening again.

TAIZE Are you really? We noticed the waters rising for years. We asked the world for help, we asked for a plan, but your politicians literally laughed at us. All we got were last minute emergency measures, sandbags, a sea wall. They were too late. You weren't ready to hear it. We could've dealt with this before it became a catastrophe.

MICHAEL takes his phone out again.

MICHAEL The service here is fucking awful. We need updates on what's going on out there. For you, this is probably just another day, but in my country, we get text messages even when there's just a fucking thunderstorm coming. I don't know why I expected first world conditions in a third world country.

TAIZE We're not third world. We're not developing. We're still recovering from the theft of our resources hundreds of years ago. You're rich and we're poor because empires plundered everything we had. Countries like yours stole all our wealth.

MICHAEL I was just saying I'd feel better if people could know where I am.

TAIZE Is this how you justify all the money you've made? That you've had to slum it while you're here?

MICHAEL No. I worked for it.

TAIZE You're part of the reason these divides continue. You've told yourself you're saving the day and now you actually believe it. You're only keeping things the same. Your levee isn't going to miraculously solve everything!

MICHAEL At least it's something. We're trying to help. Who else is doing anything positive here?

TAIZE The people!

MICHAEL Oh god, you're kidding. Them? Yeah, it sounds real productive out there.

TAIZE You have no idea about what's really happening here. You're blind or you've been completely indoctrinated into a point of view where you can't possibly see the truth.

MICHAEL I'm going off what I can see and hear. ***[Pointing outside]*** That isn't helpful. I'd hoped by now we could've fixed this. I hoped we could reign this behaviour in.

TAIZE We're the ones fighting for this country. Not you.

Beat.

MICHAEL You're a fucking terrorist.

Classroom Links

Directing

Imagine you are directing *Rising* and use the script excerpt to create a vision for the production. Consider:

- The conventions used in the productions
- What message / idea you want to convey to the audience and how you will achieve this.
- Block your scene with other students, however, experiment with objectives, motivations and subtext for the characters. Which one more closely matches your initial vision and interpretation, and why?
- Consider the conventions and styles you would use to convey this piece. What are the differences in having a different actor play each role, rather than switching between them? Experiment with a range of conventions.

Script Excerpt 2

MINISTER Okay, please, please, stay calm. What I CAN tell you, is that a bomb has been detonated on the other end of the esplanade at the Levee. Local intelligence sources suggest that this was an act of violence from the terrorists plaguing this country in an attempt to further create chaos and civil unrest. To undermine democracy further, to dismantle everything we have achieved. This is undoubtedly an act of hostility towards the leadership here, our Government's participation in the region and our systems. Actions are being made to extinguish the immediate threat of these terrorists. My Prime Minister has sent this statement: ***[she begins to read from a sheet of paper]*** 'Our government utterly condemns the heinous attacks that have been undertaken on innocent people. Not only are they an attack on individuals and their families, but they are an attack on liberty. Free peoples all around the world will stand together to defend freedom, to defend our liberties and to stand against the evil terror that seeks to assault us'. ***[she looks up]*** Can I just say that these events are vicious and malicious … and … a terrible thing. Can I just say that the law will bring justice to those that threaten communities. Their anti-democratic sentiment will not sway us. We are here to support this community. And that support looks like the building we are in. The IEA. Yes, Joe, you've had your hand up for some time, ***[she feins a smile]*** thank you for being patient. It's GREAT to see you by the way. ***[pause]*** *"is it possible this attack was in response to my government's refusal to commit to international biodiversity reduction agreements?"* I really don't think now is the right time or place for that question Joe, I've already touched on our climate plans. But... fine, i'll address it. As I've said before, and as I will continue to say, we haven't pledged because we are all about technologies, not targets, that will 'fill in the gaps' between renewables. The sun doesn't always shine. The wind doesn't always blow. ***[She looks off into the distance and seems to remember something]*** Did you know that rainforest birds can mimic the sound of chainsaws? ***[she points to someone in the audience]*** Did you know that Wally? That doesn't mean that they ARE chainsaws, does it? So no. We aren't making pledges for the sake of it. We are not birds.

Script Excerpt 3

LAURA is packing up, collecting her notes and materials. K pursues her intently.

LAURA I don't need to explain anything to you.

K By doing that interview, you are helping the wrong side.

LAURA ***[K is in her way]*** Excuse me.

K You are giving the wrong person a voice and adding fuel to the fire.

LAURA This interview will generate awareness of the issues in this country.

K That man *created* half the issues in this country. The only thing it will generate is more suffering. Please, don't go.

LAURA This is an important interview not only for me, but also for Ryan and my publisher.

K I see. So it will get you a promotion?

LAURA That's not what I meant. It's not about me getting a promotion.

K But you will?

Beat.

LAURA He might be evil, but his status and connections will bring attention and awareness to this country in ways that other stories simply can't do. Sometimes you have to feed the devil. That's just the way it is.

K I don't believe that.

LAURA Well you haven't seen things from the inside, like I have. Anything good comes with compromise.

K I've seen enough to know that your publisher is probably owned by giant corporations. People who are only interested in stories that ensure their money keeps rolling in.

LAURA Sure. Yes. That's no secret. But that doesn't mean everything they publish is without value.

K By giving him a profile you strengthen his toxic agenda. You're humanising a monster and showing the world a lie.

LAURA That's very melodramatic.

K Oh, don't be so naive.

LAURA I am not being naive! I am an experienced journalist. I have won awards. I am standing here because of my excellence in the field.

K How many of your interviews have been with people like me? Or are they all politicians? CEOs? Influencers? Wealthy? Privileged?

LAURA I look at the human in front of me and I tell their story.

K So never then?

LAURA I'd be stupid not to consider the impact certain voices might have. That's not a crime, that's my job. I'm not ashamed of that. Besides, I share a whole *range* of stories and information through my social media.

K So a few hashtags and you've done your bit?

LAURA I have very carefully curated content that has a massive impact in generating awareness on all kinds of issues.

K Awareness. You keep saying *awareness* like that is the solution.

LAURA There is no Action without Awareness first.

K Is that a hashtag you've used?

Classroom Links

Performance

- In pairs read the scene aloud.
- Try out extreme possibilities as actors might do during rehearsals.
- Go through the scene twice, trying out two contrasting sets of desires/movement/intentions and share their work.
- How do the circumstances and surroundings affect what is being said? Does the audience pick up on different agendas or attitudes when the surroundings change?
- Layer in conventions. How does this change the meaning of the scene?

Meet the Director, Kate Wild

The play is set in multiple locations with a multitude of characters. How are you going to go about conveying this onstage?

With everything at our disposal! Our set design creates a metaphorical landscape rather than any of the specific locations, so we'll be using a combination of lighting and sound to transform the space and place each scene. We'll make small but significant changes to costume to signify a change of character, and of course the actors will make subtle shifts in voice and physicalisation. There will also be many additional clues — a significant prop, returning to established blocking or a clear physical relationship between characters. All these elements will subtly work together to help the audience orient themselves without us having to signal anything too overtly.

How will you approach the design process and is there a certain feeling you want to capture in the design?

Ella and I started by sharing images with each other and using them to establish a common language and approach to the design. We soon realised we needed a strong visual metaphor for the themes of the work as well as a "playground" set which would give us lots of different locations without being too specific to one.

The world of the play is on the point of collapse, and the action has a sense of "rising" crisis. I wanted the design to be a little more contemplative, so we went for a feeling of failure — of human hubris and ambition and greed, lying in ruin, a civilisation already broken. Crucially the design also needed to be able to transform, to offer an alternative vision — of something we may have lost but may also provide some hope for the future.

What do you see as the greatest challenge with this production?

Balancing the practical demands of the text and the need to help the audience navigate through the various locations and storylines, while allowing each of the writer's work to be fully realised and appreciated.

As a director, what is the most exciting aspect of working with a new play for its professional debut? What are the challenges?

Being a part of the process as the plays went from first draft to rehearsal draft has been really exciting. Being the very first director to direct a play — that's a first for me and an enormous honour. I think the challenge is to know when the script needs to change and when the production needs to keep faith to the playwright's instincts. And knowing that the script will continue to evolve right up till rehearsals and beyond — that demands flexibility but also keeps delivering surprises — which is fantastic.

The play is left very open. Do you have your own thoughts about what you would like the audience to take away?

I believe that positive change can only happen when people have a sense of hope. So, as well as a greater understanding of the enormous impact our choices and our government's choices have globally, I'd like the audience to take away a conviction that they as individuals can shape the future. It's about taking responsibility, but seeing that as an optimistic act.

Meet the Dramaturg, Kathryn Marquet

Can you explain what a Dramaturg does?

A dramaturge's job is to support a playwright whilst they develop their dramatic vision into a well-crafted script. The dramaturge supports the playwright through the many development processes and can act as a conduit between other creatives. They have a unique perspective to the playwright, as they can see the work through an independent lens and may be able to identify craft/theatrical/thematic issues as they arrive. They can see the wood for the trees, if you like, which can be difficult for a playwright to do, as they become so close to a work.

This is a unique process; can you explain how this has differed from a normal development?

The playwrights in this project were asked to respond to an identical set of given circumstances. So, instead of them responding simply to their own imagination and the needs of their own work, the world-building has been a collaborative process between myself, the playwrights, and Ian Lawson. It's been a responsive process, based on an initial briefing document that Ian and myself created, the ideas the playwrights themselves have offered up, and identifying what the work requires to achieve its philosophical vision. It's been an ongoing process, and a challenging one, but we hope that it will result in a challenging and complex jigsaw puzzle that will be highly satisfying for audiences. So, in many ways, my role is as a facilitator and mentor to the playwrights, as well as active dramaturgy, and looking deeply at how the five plays interact with each other in order to create a unified and meaningful work.

Ian Lawson asked you to be a part of this process, bringing you in early on in the conceptual phase to develop the initial brief for the playwrights. What did you contribute at this stage?

My background is as a playwright and I've a masters degree in playwriting from UQ, where I studied ecofeminism within a dramatic context. Ecofeminism, in a nutshell, is a wholistic environmental movement that identifies womens' unique connection to the earth and draws connections between the domination of women, and the exploitation of the earth. It argues that the patriarchal systems in place across most of the world must be dismantled in order to bring about ecological and human justice.

Ian brought me in and stated that he wanted to create an opportunity for emerging female playwrights who had come through our Incubator program, which I facilitate. He suggested a kind of jigsaw puzzle work, with each playwright contributing 20 minutes of connected content. He was keen to create a political and complex work that engaged with environmental destruction. We nutted out the details of the given circumstances, and how the world might be created, in order to plant the ground for the playwrights to write a series of ecofeminist works, guided by my knowledge in the field.

How did the development process begin?

Ian and I wrote a brief, stipulating key given circumstances (the island, the UN displacement camp, the rising sea waters, the political interference from foreign countries etc), but also practical guidelines such as the use of only three actors (two female and one male), the form the work sat in (realism), time and space restrictions, and some initial introductions into the ideology of ecofeminism. I then sat down with the playwrights and we began the process of discussing specific world building ideas, as well as starting to generate their own individual ideas about their plays. We met in collaboration for a number of months, and continued to develop these ideas.

Theatre of a Social Comment challenges our understanding of humanity and expresses views about society. How did you highlight the important messages and social comments in the play, while ensuring that the audience still feels that they are creating meaning and not being 'preached' to?

Firstly, it's about research. A playwright has to have expert knowledge of their field. They have to know more about their subject matter than most people sitting in the audience. They have to pose questions and ideas that the audience may not have thought of before, that challenge their moral or ethical or ideological assumptions. If a play is only as deep as a Facebook post or a cliche, then the audience will feel that they are not being challenged. Secondly, it's important, I think, to ask questions, but not necessarily to give answers.

If you can answer the question the play raises, then why is it worth an audience's time? In the moralistic lowlight, in the places where right and wrong are complex and difficult and not easily found, this is where the best plays sit, because they challenge their audience with questions and ask them to find their own answers. Thirdly, you have to let both sides of an argument speak, even if that might mean that you are 'giving voice' to opinions you don't agree with. You have to believe that the audience is smart and good, and trust that the play will guide them, but not dictate, the conclusions they might come to around a particular issue. Of course, in our current highly politicised climate, this is a scary thing, because any ambiguity may give cause for attack. I still believe, however, that we mustn't be afraid to shine a light in the dark, as long as it's done with research and honesty, in the search for what is right.

The play starts with a lot of characters reflecting on previous events. How did you create a world where the audience has that sense of what came before?

One of the best playwriting maxims is "jump in late. Get out early." I think that applies here. Most plays have an expositional back story that loads the guns of a play: something that's happened in the past comes back to haunt someone etc. When we were plotting the given circumstances, we knew that the history of this island — which could be any island on earth — was as important as the present in order to create a dramatic plot.

How much research do you do when working with a script like this? How do you use this to inform the work and the playwrights?

As much research as possible. The more you read, the more you understand the gaps in your understanding — the huge wealth of knowledge out there — and the more you can arm yourself with it. By understanding the issues at play, I can identify across the works where there are contradictions or ideas that don't quite sit within the ideology of the work. That being said, it's incredibly important for the playwrights to do their own research, and to take ownership of the subject matter, in order to create the kind of complexity I mentioned above.

The themes do explore incredibly difficult and challenging terrain at times. How do you successfully navigate such terrain without being superficial?

Again, it's about having an expert understanding of your field, and then applying that knowledge in a human, dramatic context. The old Stanislavsky adage comes to mind here: if I were in this situation, how would I behave? Playwrights have to make the imaginative leap between cerebral understanding of an issue and the often profoundly complicated human psychological processes that give rise to drama. If you understand your characters, if you dig deep into their hearts and find their unspoken fears and ambitions, then you won't be superficial because the work will be complex in terms of character, ideas, craft, and plotting.

For young people wanting to create theatre or start writing scripts what advice would you give them?

Write about what drives you mad, what keeps you up at night. If you don't care, the audience isn't going to either. Read as much as you can. Read plays, read novels, read film scripts, read poetry, read non-fiction works: history, science, philosophy. Watch and listen to strangers: go and sit in a courtroom, a cafe, an office. Travel. Arm yourself with knowledge. Broaden your mind. Learn your craft; learn about structure, and subtext, and form. Learn how to identify the best way to tell your story. And, most of all, write, write, write. The hardest thing about writing is actually confronting that blank page and filling it with words. Write what you want to write, in the way you want to write it, and you'll find your voice.

Meet Playlab Theatre's Artistic Director, Ian Lawson

You initiated the project. What were the ideas that lead to this work? Why did you think it was important to create a play with these ideas at the centre?

Rising is a work about Australia, our obligations, morals and our actions. There were several provocations that lead to the start of this work, over a number of years:

Australia's lack of action on climate change has dominated the past decade's political conversation and with the 2019 election again falling the way of the Coalition, the prospects of a change in policy direction seemed all but doomed for another 3 years at least. At that point a few things occurred to me; when the majority of the population wants more action on climate change and the elected party doesn't listen, is this a sign that our democracy is failing? And if so how? We live in an interconnected world now and so what is our responsibility to people outside of our country compared to our responsibility to those within? What, systems beyond our politics are keeping us on this pathway to environmental collapse? The urgency of action needed is only going to increase, so where should we focus our actions and anger? I can go on …

In 2015, then Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Immigration Minister Peter Dutton were caught joking about Pacific Islands going underwater due to rising sea levels. In 2019, the Morrison government succeeded in watering down the climate change response in the Pacific Island Forum's official communiqué mitigating any action from Australia, much to the disappointment of the Pacific nations. How can we let this stand in our name?

One of the roles of art in society is to question the status quo and in doing so challenge perspectives of issues and facilitate change. I have embedded this as part of Playlab Theatre's purpose and consequently the nature of the work that we generate and invest in.

Playlab Theatre commissioned *Rising*. Can you briefly outline the process undertaken by you and Playlab Theatre in order to create this work and ready it for the stage and publication?

Playlab Theatre's development programs have been refined over a decade to provide a pathway for playwrights and their work to reach the stage. We have in this time supported well over a hundred and fifty playwrights, but the opportunities for them to continue to develop outside of Playlab Theatre haven't increased. So, I decided that we needed to step up again and provide another step in the pathway to capitalise on the potential unlocked by our existing programs, by commissioning the most promising playwrights over the past 4 years.

Once we assessed past programs for interesting and promising playwrights, it occurred to us that they were mostly female and consequently we conceptualised a project that would be grounded in a female perspective (we selected five playwrights — the maximum we could see being manageable) and realised by an all female creative team.

After the decision was made to create a project to professionally and creatively develop these five emerging female playwrights, we defined a story brief and began a process that would see the playwright collaborate to define the story parameters, create five interlinked stories and develop it through dramaturgical meetings and workshops with actors, with at least 3 draft deliverable dates in the schedule. The refinement of the work is an ongoing process that will only stop when the production opens, however the nature and scope of the refinement narrows as the work moves along its timeline.

Having five playwrights write their own sections is a unique approach. Describe the thoughts behind this and final the structure of the work? How did you manage this and keep to a cohesive vision?

It was an early decision to interlink the five stories and not run them one after the other. Embracing the multi protagonist model and all the extra work it requires to make a cohesive whole, would create a better theatrical experience for an audience and focus on the thematic conversation of the work rather than seeming like a development exercise for the playwrights. Rising should and will feel like any other linear narrative to watch.

One of the keys to managing the whole story across five playwrights was working with the playwrights to provide a structure to develop to. This included determining and positioning key plot points that would exist across all the five works and breaking each story into beats/scenes, which include turning points and ending in a climax.

To ensure a coordinated evolution of the story, consistent and detailed Dramaturgical notes are central to the process. These notes have been conducted and delivered by Kathryn Marquet, with support from myself. As we have progressed, the controlling idea of the story and many of the specifics of the world of the play have required reframing and having a curated conversation with Kathryn has enabled the project to continually move forward.

There are multiple references throughout the play to the idea of rising, groups rising up against a political power, standing up for themselves, sea levels rising, rising above. What is the central idea in *Rising*?

The controlling idea of *Rising* has evolved through the course of the work's development, which has included group discussions and workshops to further define the given circumstances and determine characters, plot and thematic focus. Initially the idea was expressed utilising the eco-feminism focus the initial brief was grounded in to be something like "balance (ecological) will never be attained when there is an absence of the female voice". However, as the work has developed, questions about the lack of action in general have moved further forward in the conversation and in doing so the systems (democracy, media, politics, capitalism etc.) that are part of our inertia/lack of action have become the target of the work as they are ultimately the cause of where we are at — and those systems are ours. So the controlling idea has evolved into something like, "when the systems of our society block progress, balance can never be achieved". This leaves space for the examination of how and why the systems are failing to deliver progress and that the absence of the female voice is still addressed as implicit failure of the systems of our society.

Assessment Ideas

Extended Response

QUESTION 1

Consider the following image — https://pixabay.com/photos/time-clock-hour-minutes-hourglass-1485384/

Use the key convention of tandem narrative as well as two key elements of drama to argue a position about how the message in the image from the link conveys the urgency represented in the dramatic meaning communicated in *Rising*.

QUESTION 2

"The world of the play is on the point of collapse, and the action has a sense of "rising" crisis. … we went for a feeling of failure — of human hubris and ambition and greed, lying in ruin, a civilisation already broken." Kate Wild

Use the quote above to argue a position about how effectively *Rising* manipulates dramatic focus and mood, in conjunction with a key convention, to communicate dramatic meaning.

Concept Document

Working as a theatre-maker, you will view Playlab Theatre's production of *Rising*. Using this production as stimulus, you must identify a key convention of Theatre of Social Comment used in this production and devise an original dramatic concept that expresses a political view. In your original concept, you will argue the choices made to communicate dramatic action and meaning in relation to your chosen purpose and context through explanatory paragraphs and annotations of your storyboard.

Your dramatic concept must organise information under the following headings:

Analysis and evaluation (400 words)

- How was the convention manipulated to contribute to the communication of a political view?

My concept (800 words, 10 - 12 images)

Introductory paragraphs that

- identify a chosen purpose and context and synthesise your concept
- make specific reference to the originally chosen convention of Theatre Of Social Comment and other relevant conventions of this style

Develop a storyboard with annotations that document your dramatic ideas and

- highlight purpose and context and synthesise your concept
- make specific reference to the originally chosen convention of Theatre Of Social Comment and other relevant conventions of this style.
- argue how the dramatic languages have been used to communicate dramatic action and meaning

Online Resources

The Conversation's compiled articles about fake news — https://theconversation.com/au/topics/fake-news-33438

What is the Paris Agreement — https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement

Australia's Climate Change Strategies — https://www.industry.gov.au/strategies-for-the-future/australias-climate-change-strategies

Australia's Foreign Aid policy — https://info.australia.gov.au/about-government/international-relations/foreign-aid

Research into Australia's Foreign Aid policy — https://www.lowyinstitute.org/issues/australian-foreign-aid

Peter Dutton overheard joking about rising sea levels in Pacific Island nations — https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-11/dutton-overheard-joking-about-sea-levels-in-pacific-islands/6768324

Why is Australia a global leader in wildlife extinctions? — https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/why-is-australia-a-global-leader-in-wildlife-extinctions-20200717-p55cyd.html

Australia's Endangered Animals — https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/wildlife/wildlife-stories/australias-endangered-animals/

Visible Thinking Routines — https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/connect-extend-challenge

The UNs Refugee Agency — https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/refugees/

The UNs Refugee Agency. Information on their camps — https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/

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