

Education Resource

by Claire Wearne for Arts Centre Melbourne | Creative Learning



HEART IS A WASTELAND

By John Harvey





Contents

Performance description and synopsis	03
Director's note	04
Meet the creatives	05
About the theatre company	08
Before you arrive	09
Before the Show	11
Post-Performance Activities	20
Curriculum Links	29



Performance description and synopsis

Raye, a country-music star in the making, plays pub-to-pub along Australia's vast desert highways, trying to make a living in the hope of returning home to her son, Elvis. But when she meets Dan, another young wanderer at the cross-roads of life, a turbulent love affair unfurls over a four-day drive to Alice Springs.

Following a sell-out premiere season at Darwin Festival 2021, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's restaging of *Heart is a Wasteland* – directed by the company's multi-award winning Artistic Director Rachael Maza – brings John Harvey's humorous, raw and deeply heartfelt script to life.

With original music by Lydia Fairhall, exquisitely arranged by Gary Watling; freshly conceived sets and adventurous audio-visual design – this production brings Australia's stunning outback right to the forefront – matched by the vitality of its new young leads.

Heart is a Wasteland exposes a soul-warming battle of egos, recognising everyone's individual right to love.

Running time: 75 mins, no interval



Director's note

'Heart is a Wasteland is an uplifting tale, a journey toward healing.

The work operates on multiple levels, which is a sign of good writing by John Harvey. On one level It's a whirlwind romance of two complex people, who just happen to be blackfellas. They may not be good for each other, but they are just what the other needed. On another level - when we look at the cultural and social symbols and metaphors that John Harvey has woven throughout the text, in the dreamscapes, we see more accurately the trauma held by both characters.

We see they need release from their personal traumas - but what John has done so well - is allow the audience to discover that there is this other, much deeper trauma that more subtly acknowledges First Peoples generational trauma. There is an overhanging sense of loss – loss of country, loss of land, forced loss of culture, destroyed border markers, and everything else colonisation has separated us from.

You simply can't divorce those broader traumas from personal trauma. All of us who walk on this land are not free of the effects of colonisation and the devastating results of acting with 'no consent' on Peoples' that never ceded their original relationship with the land we are currently on.

Heart is a Wasteland is a beautifully nuanced, very human show. With all of its cultural complexity, it's about the human condition. It speaks universally to the kinds of complexity that we all experience. It's enjoyed by young people, by people who like music and storytelling, and in particular, people who are not afraid of the truth.'

Director Rachael Maza

A man with a beard and a small ponytail, wearing an orange high-visibility shirt with reflective silver stripes, stands in front of a wall covered in white graffiti. He is pointing his right hand towards the wall and holding a CD in his left hand. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

VIEWPOINT 1

Meet the creatives

Playwright:

JOHN HARVEY (SAIBAI ISLAND) – WRITER

John is a multifaceted producer, director and writer working in theatre and film. After two decades experience in the arts and community cultural development sector, he has turned his hand to playwriting, with outstanding results. The recent premier of John's new work, **The Return** at The Malthouse, was described as 'spellbinding' and 'masterfully written', and the original staging of **Heart is a Wasteland** was nominated for a Greenroom award. He has been a recipient of the Footscray Community Arts Centre Writer-In-Residence, and of the Malthouse Theatre Sidney Myer Fund Tower Residency, enabling him to create new theatre work. In the same year, he was a recipient of Creative Victoria Creators Fund. John's own experiences working on a petrol sniffing project with the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council in Central Australia informed the character of Dan's backstory in **Heart is a Wasteland**, and through his company Brown Cabs, John continues to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and creatives, bringing their stories to the stage and screen. These include Stephen Page's film **Sand** for the omnibus feature film **The Turning**, and Stephen's first feature film **Spear**. John is the former General Manager and Co-CEO of ILBIJERRI Theatre, has sat as a Peer Assessor for the Theatre Board and is a former member of the Community Cultural Development Board of the Australia Council.

Director:

DR RACHAEL MAZA AM (MERIAM/YIDINJI)

Rachael is widely known for her wealth of acting, directing, and dramaturgical experience across the Australian film, television and theatre industry and is the Artistic Director of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company. A Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) graduate, Rachael's outstanding performances have been acknowledged with a Green Room Award and a Sydney Theatre Critics Circle Award. Rachael currently sits on the board of ACMI, is a member of the Circus Oz Indigenous Advisory Panel, the Australian Opera Indigenous Advisory Panel and the Green Room Awards Theatre Company Panel.

Rachael's considerable contribution to the cultural landscape has been recognised through multiple awards, including the Touring Legend Drover Award, 2017, the Inaugural Alumni Graduate Award, Edith Cowan University (2019), and the Australia Council of the Arts Award for Theatre (2019), as well as an Honorary Doctorate of Performing Arts from Edith Cowan University (2019).

[Here](#) is a link to Rachael and John discussing their work on **Heart is a Wasteland**.

In the role of RAYE LANG:

MONICA JASMINE KARO (GUNAI/GUNDITJMARA)

Monica Jasmine Karo is a Melbourne based poet, actor, singer-songwriter, emerging playwright, and an MC also known as **MpathSoul**. Having studied a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre at the Victorian College of the Arts, she is continuously expanding on her artistry. Monica has been performing in Naarm for 10 years, and her soulful voice highlights her Gunai, Gunditjmara and European heritage. She infuses fiery spoken-word poetry with her music and her work has been described as "connected to earth and spirit, portraying important messages of womxn's wisdom". In 2021, Monica performed alongside **Allara, Bumpy, Alice Skye, Ensemble Dutala** and friends, for the opening of the **Yaluk-ut Weelam Ngargee Festival** and the opening of **Yirramboi Festival**. Monica is a passionate young artist, currently working on her original play **Mother's Country** as a part of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's BlackWrights program.

In the role of DAN MILLER:

ARI MAZA LONG - (MERIAM/YIDINJI)

Ari Maza Long graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art in 2021 and a month later was on stage in Belvoir's production of **At What Cost?** Born and raised in the arts world, Ari began learning from an early age about the power of storytelling through performance. He starred in his first public production at the age of five in the performance of **The Bridge** by The Torch Theatre Company, and the following year in **Riverland** by Windmill Theatre Company. After completing high school, he performed in **Gonzo**, at Malthouse Theatre with St Martins Youth Theatre Company. Ari completed the Certificate IV of Aboriginal Performance at WAAPA and was then accepted into NIDA. Whilst at NIDA, Ari performed in **Perfect Stranger** directed by Kate Champion and **God's Country** directed by Liza-Mare Syron.

Songwriter:**LYDIA FAIRHALL-
(WORIMI)- SONG WRITER**

Lydia Fairhall is a highly versatile and creative arts practitioner. Fierce passion and determination drive her work as a performer, producer, writer and director within First Nations arts landscape. She has programmed and produced countless shows, for the likes of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, Brown Cabs, Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Footscray Community Arts Centre and more, as well as taking titles such as *Jack Charles V. the Crown* to international audiences. As a recipient of both the Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship and the Australia Council for the Arts Fellowship, Lydia has honed her insights into sustainable performing arts business models. Former Executive Producer/Co-CEO of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, Lydia continues her relationship with the company in various capacities, including as the songwriter whose music gives the character 'Raye' such depth and beauty.

Musical Director & Arrangements:**GARY WATLING (WIRADJURI) –
PERFORMER**

Gary Watling graduated from Southern Cross University with a Bachelor of Contemporary Music (Performance). Relocating to Melbourne, he completed a Bachelor of Music Performance (Honours) at the Victorian College of Arts. He then completed his Masters in both Music (Performance Teaching) and Teaching (Secondary). Gary has studied with some of Australia's foremost guitarist and musicians. As an in-demand sessional musician, he has performed and recorded with some of Australia's leading and upcoming artists. Gary has also embraced jazz as an improvising medium through his ensemble *The Gary Watling Quartet* and is a member of the country and western swing group, *The Flaming Mongrels*.

AV Design: Sean Bacon

Lighting Design: Niklas Pajanti

Sound Design: James Henry





About the theatre company

Happy birthday, ILBIJERRI! Arts Centre Melbourne is so proud to be celebrating your 30th year of creating ground-breaking, diverse and innovative work by presenting this season of *Heart is a Wasteland*. This piece exemplifies ILBIJERRI's commitment to making work which speaks to the truth of this country. This raw, passionate and gritty performance brings the brilliance and sophistication of bold black voices to our Arts Centre audience, facilitating the work of Australia's longest running First Nations theatre company.

ILBIJERRI's work empowers and enlightens audiences, urges discussion, and brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices into the foreground of the national agenda. ILBIJERRI (pronounced 'il BIDGE er ree) is a Woiwurrung word meaning 'coming together for ceremony'. The company was born from Community and remains grounded in telling the stories of what it

means to be First Nations in Australia today. Since 2010, the company has garnered multiple awards and presented across Australia, North America, Europe, New Zealand and Japan.

There is a growing hunger for ILBIJERRI's work across Australia and around the world. They are committed to developing meaningful relationships with audiences through sharing stories they are uniquely placed to tell.

ILBIJERRI works to reclaim First Nations ways of working within the Australian arts sector, through programs and projects grounded in deep listening with, and for Community and Country. They are committed to a leadership role around best practice in cultural consciousness of First Peoples and ways of being. ILBIJERRI plays a crucial role in the future of First Nations performing arts ecology, at home and overseas.



SUPPORT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF HEART IS A WASTELAND

Before you arrive

Prepare for the performance by equipping yourself with the following contextual information and talking points. Here is the [link](#) to the promo clip advertising Heart is a Wasteland for you to share before reading about the characters and their context.

Character Bios

Raye Lang

Raye is a fierce, young First Nations Australian musician, touring solo through Central Australia, playing her wistful and longing tunes for meagre audiences in one backwater pub at a time. Raye uses her music for both self-expression and salvation; her song lyrics meander through landscapes of love, loss and longing. When off-stage, Raye is flirtatious and self-assured, initially appearing to be bulletproof, but through her pithy and direct dialogue, the audience learns about Raye's fractured past, her frustrated attempts at making her mark in the music scene, and the perhaps incompatible desire she holds to regain permanent custody of her 10-year-old son Elvis, who lives in Alice Springs with her estranged mum. Irreverent, bold and courageous, Raye is a hopeful and strong-willed character, who relentlessly drives Dan to a higher level of personal accountability.

Dan Miller

Dan is a young First Nations Australian miner, whose recent past impels him to avoid introspection and to disconnect from his community. Despite this determination to stay in the present, Dan is hounded by hellish, symbolic waking dreams, visions of destruction which leave him terrified and vulnerable. He is impulsive, young, and in awe of Raye's musical talents, so his responsibilities and commitments take a back seat when the chance to get to know Raye on a deeper level arises. Prone to jealousy, Dan loses control of himself after drinking too much at one of Raye's gigs, and he unleashes verbal abuse upon Raye, attacking her parenting ability and her enthusiastic approach towards sex. Motivated by shame, remorse and a desire to be understood, Dan confides in Raye, sharing the despair he struggles with, stemming from a tragic incident which occurred on his watch in his former role as a community youth worker.

Central Themes:

- » Forgiveness & Redemption
- » Commitment
- » Purpose
- » Spiritual malady

Topics for exploration:

- » The power and importance of self-expression
- » Aboriginal and First Nations Peoples' relationship with Country
- » Toxic masculinity
- » The music industry in Australia
- » Respectful relationships
- » PTSD

Experience the music of HIAW

Award-winning singer-songwriter Lydia Fairhall lends beauty, depth and power to the character of Raye through the inclusion of a carefully curated sample of her poignant and soulful collection of original work. Playwright John Harvey describes it as an honour to have forged his words with his partner in 'crime, love and life', Fairhall, whose lyrics 'help to bring a truth and resilience to the character of Raye'.

As Tigerlilly

[Tigerlilly](#)

Lydia Fairhall & the She Oaks

[Somebody's Daughter](#)

[Sign of the times](#)

As a solo, self-titled artist

[Always Raining](#)

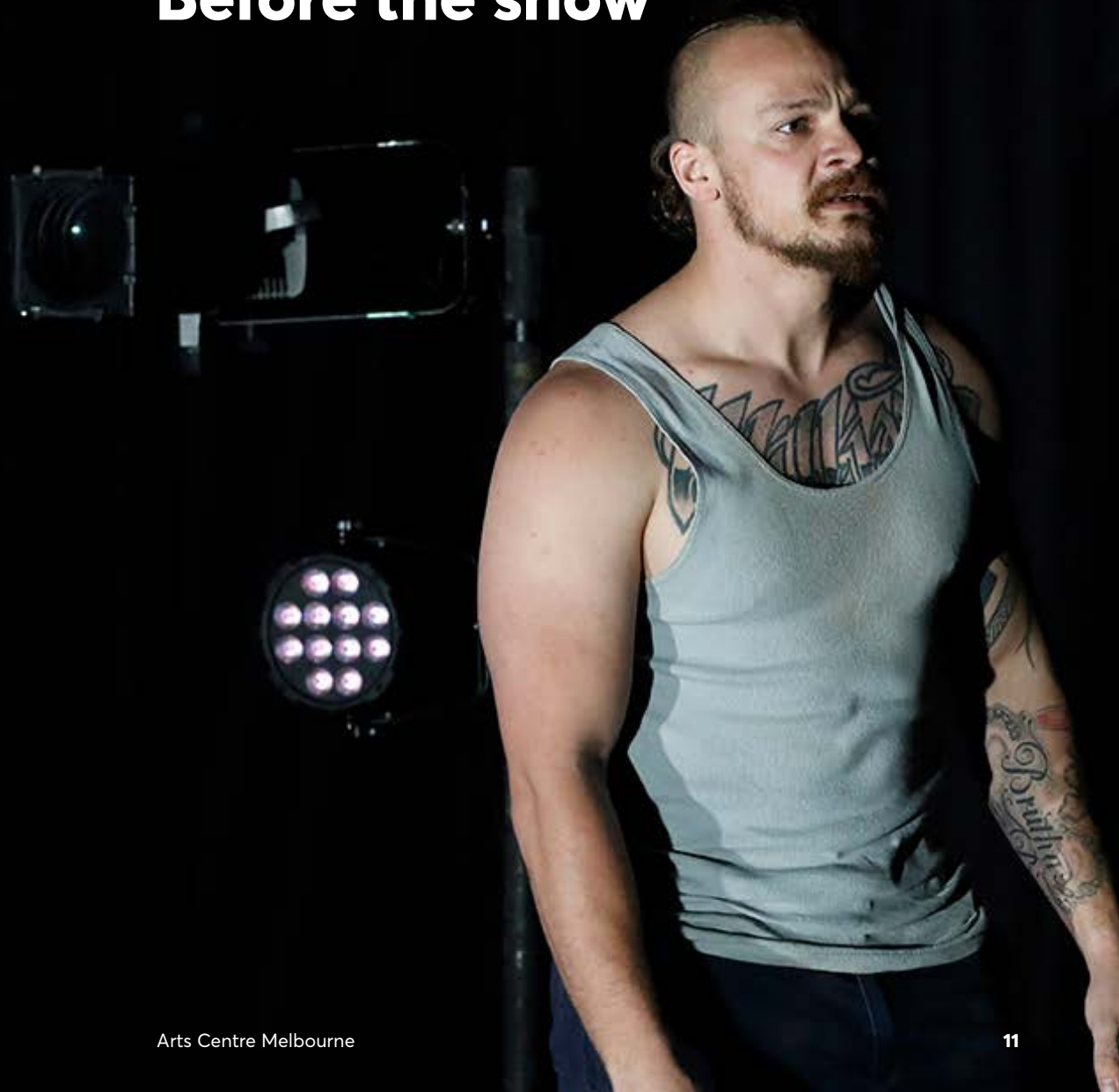
[Higher](#)

[Free](#)

[Lullaby](#)



Before the show





First Nations Acknowledgement of Country

Wominjeka to Arts Centre Melbourne.

Naarm, the land on which the Fairfax Theatre and Arts Centre Melbourne sit, has long been a place of gathering, storytelling, song, ceremony, celebration and commemoration for First Nations people. The People of the Kulin Nations have gathered on the site for thousands of years and continue to do so today. We pay our respects to Elders – past, present and future.

Vocabulary

Totem

A totem is a natural object, plant or animal that is inherited by members of a clan or family as their spiritual emblem. Totems define peoples' roles and responsibilities, and their relationships with each other and creation.

Source: [Australians Together](#)

Songlines

Songlines have been a central feature of First Nations cultures for over 60,000 years. Songlines carry laws and stories that First Nations people live by. Songlines trace astronomy and geographical elements from ancient stories and describe how these things have helped shape the landscape as it is now. They were first used by First Nations people as a form of communication across the continent and a way of mapping Country. In his quarterly essay *A Rightful Place*, Noel Pearson compares Songlines to *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad*, and the *Book of Genesis*. He refers to Songlines as Australia's very own *Book of Genesis*.

Source: [Common Ground](#)

Sis

Sis'- the shortened version of 'sister' is a term used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to establish familiarity and respect, and also to define the boundaries of a relationship as platonic.

Source: [Deadly Story](#)

Contextual Information

21st Century Songlines

'Songlines are the walking routes that crossed the country, linking important sites and locations. Before colonisation, they were maintained by regular use, burning off and clearing. The term 'Songline' describes the features and directions of travel that were included in a song that had to be sung and memorised for the traveller to know the route to their destination. Certain Songlines were referred to as 'Dreaming Pathways' because of the tracks forged by Creator Spirits during the Dreaming. These special Songlines have specific ancestral stories attached to them.'

Source: [Deadly Story](#)

'Songlines are passed from elder to elder over thousands of years. Many of the routes shared through Songlines, are now modern highways and roads across Australia. The famous route across the Nullarbor between Perth and Adelaide came from Songlines, as did the highway between the Kimberleys and Darwin.'

Source: [Common Ground](#)

'Black stage – in the darkness we hear a soundscape of distorted electronic sounds...a dial radio trying to tune into a frequency (old school style) / distorted two-way radios / bits of broken conversation / the matter / the invisible noise that fills our air spaces in this new technological world...the 21st century Songlines. We tune into one song line...'

Heart is a Wasteland- John Harvey- Draft script, 2017

This opening stage direction of *Heart is a Wasteland* positions its audience in a distinctly modern Australia, but with acknowledgement of the age-old social, spiritual, and logistical infrastructure of the First Nations Songlines traversing this vast landscape. Director Rachael Maza was particularly engaged with this idea of '21st century Songlines'. She says *'in the soundscape, we hear it's distinctly going through these worlds and one of those worlds is Raye singing, another is Dan in the pub, we get a splinter of that world, and a splinter of this world... all the worlds are existing at the same time, and it's like you're dialling through them... John Harvey's cultural reference of the songlines that have existed for ever, are now manifesting in this century in this way.'* Right here, in

this dusty, outback pub, the audience are given a glimpse into John Harvey's '21st century Songlines'. We are linked, across time and place, with Raye and Dan: two characters in dire need of all that traditional First Nations Songlines provide. These world-weary wanderers cry out for connection and belonging. For communication, direction, focus, security and meaning. We dial in for the precise splinter of time that their tempestuous connection occurs; we witness as they drive each closer other to reconnect with their own true paths through a higher level of self-awareness, and ultimately, healing.

Contextual Information

Maralinga

The show opens with the closing number of Raye's set at Roxby Downs Tavern, South Australia, and closes with her final song on stage in Darwin, Northern Territory. We accompany Raye and Dan on their road trip right up Central Australia, stopping in at countless pubs, drop toilets and roadside pitstops alongside this tempestuous duo. Many of these locations remain nameless, but when Raye names one iconic Australian town, Maralinga, audience members familiar with the horrific history of this town brace themselves...

In 1952 Robert Menzies, Australia's then prime minister, agreed to the British Government using three remote Australian sites for atomic testing. Most of this testing occurred at Maralinga, the area traditionally owned by the Maralinga-Tjarutja people in the remote Western areas of South Australia. The traditional owners are the Anangu peoples, of the remote western areas of South Australia, also known as Maralinga Tjarutja. Prior to commencing these disastrous tests, neither the British or Australian government consulted with or effectively communicated with these traditional owners.

Associate Professor Liz Tynan, the author of *Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story*, states in 1957, First Nations people were actually still living directly within the sites deemed appropriate for testing. Tynan says the Milpuddie family – consisting of Charlie, Edie, two kids and their dogs, camped on the crater left by a nuclear fission bomb soon after it had been detonated. Tynan explains British service personnel 'tested [the family] for radioactivity and the geiger counters did detect [it], particularly on the young boy Henry... They were given showers, [and] clothes... and then [they were] taken off down south to a mission.' Their dogs were shot in front of them. Edie was pregnant at the time; she later lost her child.

Under the command of Colonel R. Durand from the Australian Army, the Maralinga Range Support Unit was formed, with 450 Australian and British personnel. In total, over 210 trials took place, with some of the bombs creating mushroom clouds of over 47,000 feet high, with radioactive fallout spreading as far as Townsville. Two of the trials at Maralinga involved dispersing plutonium-239 around the site; this dangerous carcinogen can

be absorbed by humans and animals through breathing, ingestion or breaks in the skin, and has a half-life of more than 24,000 years. The nuclear testings lead to widespread dispersion of radioactive material in the local environment. The Anangu people who lived the area called it "puyu" or "black mist".

During this lengthy period of environmental desecration, First Nations Australians, UK servicemen, Australian soldiers, and other civilians were all exposed to devastating radiation. Illnesses reportedly included cancer, blood diseases, eye problems, skin rashes, blindness, vomiting, which are all symptoms of radioactive poisoning. In addition to these immediate dangers of nuclear fallout in the area, the Indigenous community would endure the long-term hazards of poisoned land and water for more than 30 years.

Most of the defiled Maralinga-Tjarutja land was handed back to traditional owners in 2009 after the implementation of rehabilitation works costing the Australian Government \$108 million. The British Government contributed £20 million. In response to the 1985 Royal Commission into the tests, the Australian Government paid the Maralinga-Tjarutja people just \$13.5 million dollars in compensation.

Truth-telling

Heart is a Wasteland was written at a point in our national history shaped by the groundswell of support for the process of truth-telling to begin in earnest. The themes and characters in the script echo the importance of reflection, accountability, and healing, on personal, political and environmental levels. First Nations Australians have long called for a sweeping and rigorous process of truth-telling about the irrevocable, devastating, and ongoing impacts of white colonists upon traditional owners of the land. Laying out the facts around the corrupt foundations of the Australia we all now reside in, forces us to face uncomfortable realities of conflict and dispossession, but also enables us to acknowledge the resilience and power of First Nations Australians.

Source: [Reconciliation.au](https://reconciliation.au)

Source: [Antar](#)



Setting

We tune into Raye's tour when she is in Roxby Downs, South Australia, but she has a long road ahead... The journey to Darwin is over 2,600 km north, through arid deserts; Dan shows his concern in the following exchange.

DAN ...Where to next?

RAYE Coober Pedy. Make my way up to Alice Springs, then onto Katherine and finish up in Darwin.

DAN That's a long drive.

RAYE Yeah

DAN You doing it on your own?

RAYE Yeah.

DAN Wow. Ok. Do you feel safe?

RAYE What? Like, right now?

DAN No.

RAYE What are you – some kind of outback murderer?

DAN Nah, nah sorry. That came out bad. I just mean, like driving in the outback on your own.

RAYE Yeah. Why? Shouldn't I?

DAN No, yeah. I mean you should. It's just that some women, you know, wouldn't feel safe.



1 Activity: Investigate

To comprehend the magnitude of the harsh, isolated journey Raye is undertaking, head to [this link](#) and plot out the destinations listed in the dialogue above and calculate the total distance of this trip.

1 Activity: Synthesize & Suggest

The playwright's decision to set the road trip in Central Australia shapes our understanding of the characters in a number of ways. Imagine if John Harvey had written Raye's road-trip as up the east coast of Australia, stopping in small beach towns? In small groups, discuss how this change of setting might alter your reading of the characters and the narrative? What if Harvey had written Raye's tour as flight based, from capital city to capital city? Again, in small groups, discuss how this would influence your reading of the characters and the narrative.

As a class, discuss how this setting might shape the audience's perception of the characters':

- » Cultural identity
- » Financial status
- » Personality types



2 Activity: Describe & Distinguish

What does Raye's blasé demeanour about her impending road trip indicate about her character? What does Dan's response indicate about his view of women and his role as a man? Setting up a large piece of poster paper for either character on the walls of the classroom, make note of adjectives to describe your impressions of both characters in the early stages of the play.

3 Activity: Select & Describe

Sharing your star-struck moment

The narrative of *Heart is a Wasteland* is established through monologue, dialogue and lyrics. Each of these shifting forms redefines the actor-audience relationship. By allowing us to see Raye perform her own music, the audience develops a unique and intimate connection with her character, perhaps more so than with Dan's. Dan is also taken by Raye's vocal talents; he describes her voice as '*amazing- a mix of Tracey Chapman, Slim Dusty and Ani DiFranco*'. In partners, describe a moment when you have been struck by the talent of a performer. Describe what was it they could do, and how did you feel as a result?

Process- Intimacy Coaching

The appointment of the 'intimacy coach' is a relatively recent development in rehearsal rooms across the world. An intimacy coach empowers directors and performers by working with them to create intimate or triggering scenes through respectful and consensual rehearsal processes. It is important to remember that rehearsal rooms and stages are workplaces, and that everyone has the right to feel safe at work.

When considering the need for such processes, sex scenes and scenes containing nudity may first spring to mind; however, intimacy coaches also advise on instilling appropriate boundaries and practices during fight scenes and when verbal abuse and other scenes where tension is evident in a script, as these aspects of a performance may also be triggering for the creative team. In light of the recent #metoo movement and after revelations around infamous film producer Harvey Weinstein's exploitation of his own power and influence in the film industry to gain sexual satisfaction from aspiring female performers, the intimacy coach is now in high demand, and is their consultancy is considered standard professional practice.

[Here](#) is an article about the rise of this vital role in modern performing arts practice.

Both actors performing in *Heart is a Wasteland* undertook intimacy coaching during their studies at the Victorian College of the Arts and the National Institute for Dramatic Arts, and ILBIJERRI consulted an intimacy coach in the creation of this work.

4 Activity: Identify & Justify

When you are watching this performance, can you identify which key moments of tension may have been particularly important for the team to ensure that a consensual, respectful working arrangements were made between the members of the team as part of the rehearsal process? Discuss this as a class directly after the performance, justifying your suggestions.



Post Performance Activities



Theatrical Styles

Heart is a Wasteland is eclectic in style. It is a fantastic example of Contemporary Indigenous Theatre, as defined in 'Teaching First Nations content and concepts in the Drama classroom':

'Contemporary Indigenous Theatre is produced by First Nations artists for First Nations and non-indigenous audiences. While it may incorporate or reference traditional songs, dances, music and stories, it is just as likely to tell contemporary stories through contemporary performance practices and cutting-edge theatre technologies.'

Conventions of Cabaret, Musical Theatre, also combine with aspects of Realism and Theatre of Cruelty in this interpretation of Harvey's script.

1 Activity: Classify & Compete

Set the class up for a game of 'Last Man Standing' by dividing into two large groups and standing these groups in two lines opposite each other. Then, starting at one end of Team A, the first student needs to choose a moment in the show, articulate which theatrical style was evident in it, by identifying one convention of this style evident in this moment. If they are correct, this student remains standing and they handball this job over to a competitor from Team B, who does the same thing, selecting a different moment. Any student who cannot provide evidence linked correctly to a style must sit down. The winning team is whichever one has the last competitor standing at the end of the 'Style-off'.

Production Roles/Areas

When exploring the theatrical possibilities for this staging of this script, Director Rachael Maza, says *'We all agreed that AV felt right, something about the vastness, the landscape, the dreamscapes... AV has to be the language.'* Audio-visual designer, Sean Bacon, initially intended to project footage he had recorded driving through the locations which Raye and Dan explore. After having made the trip himself, and recorded the footage, the creative team felt that projecting this literal imagery was not working, and Sean drew the resulting cartoon-like imagery by hand. Rachael says the impact was brilliantly transformative in creating a cohesive aesthetic: *'Suddenly, [the show] had the feeling of a kids' story book, that innocence and naivety lifts it and gives the show another layer of depth to what is [otherwise] two people talking very literally...'*

2 Activity: Synthesise & Create

As a whole class, list on poster paper which images you can recall and what location they were suggesting. Then, as individuals, select a moment from the performance where projections weren't used, and draw your own suggested imagery for this moment. Your image must echo Sean's naïve, hand drawn aesthetic, and compliment the action occurring in the script.

2 Activity: Classify & Evaluate

Nik Pajanti created a stark, harsh lighting design, featuring coloured LEDs and drawing upon his signature tool of side lighting. When referring to the style she was aiming to evoke, Rachael Maza says: *'Through lighting we are able to hint at the parallel journey within the play that is happening on the subconscious/spiritual level. Just under the surface lies the unresolved, the tormented, the dark energy of our two characters who are both stuck and in need of healing. The lighting enables us to slide from one world to the next.'* Using evaluative terminology, write an evaluative paragraph about the interrelationship between the lighting design, the evident theatrical styles and the mood, then share these with the whole class.

Character Motivations

4 Activity: Examine and Identify

Even though Raye and Dan have things in common, and they clearly connect, they both have very different reasons for behaving in the ways they do. We call these driving factors 'motivations' and it is important to explore a character's motivations to fully understand them.

A

Read through the questions of identity on the right, considering them from the perspective of both characters. In partners, select and answer three questions per character.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| » Where do I come from? | » What would my favourite movie be, and why? |
| » Where am I going? | » Who loves me more than anyone else? |
| » Where do I belong? | » What would I do with my last day on earth? |
| » What do I need? | » What is my 'love language'? |
| » How do I want others to view me? | » If my house was about to be flooded, what would I save? |
| » How do I want to live my life? | » When was the first time I was let down and by who? |
| » How do I feel about myself? | » What is in this relationship for me? |
| » Who is my role model? | » What would I choose as my last meal on earth and who would I have it with? |
| » What is my 'emotional baggage'? | |

Character Motivations continued

B

Pick a colour pen to represent Dan, and one to represent Raye. Using their designated colours, circle all the motivators which are important to both characters and their identity in the play. Next, number the three most important for each character:

Fear	Relationships	Desire
Understanding	Spirituality	Denial
Gender expression	Love	Escapism
Family	Morals	Belonging
Greed	Comfort	Security
Money	Status	Power
Culture	Emotion	Truth



Character Motivations continued

Dan's verbal outburst towards Raye in Scene 10 of *Hearts is a wasteland* is representative of a man struggling with the oppressive impact of toxic masculinity. Let's read the following script excerpt:

SCENE 10 – SATURDAY NIGHT – KULGERA ROADHOUSE – WRONGSIDE OF THE ROAD

DAN has been watching RAYE perform her set. He's been drinking and getting jealous at the attention RAYE'S been getting. RAYE is pulling DAN out of the pub mid-fight.

RAYE *What's going on?*
DAN *Nothin'.*
RAYE *What was that all about?*
DAN *Nothin'.*
RAYE *Listen, come here.*
...
Hey, hey, don't do anything stupid.
DAN *I don't care. Why should I care. Fuck them, who the fuck are they!?*
RAYE *C'mon. Let's go.*
DAN *Whose side are you on?*
RAYE *What?*
DAN *And you're ashamed of me. Ashamed, I'm fucking shameful*
...
You're always judging me. I'm not good enough that's what they're saying in there?
RAYE *I don't care what anyone thinks.*
DAN *You care, of course you do. I could see the way you were looking at him.*
RAYE *Looking at who?*
DAN *You flirting. With him.*
RAYE *I was performing.*
DAN *Don't bullshit me*
....
You do this all the time.
RAYE *What's that supposed to mean?*
DAN *You're a slut.*
RAYE *Fuck you.*
DAN *Well you fucked me on the first night.*

Raye and Dan had sex the night they met, and subsequently, Dan uses the word 'slut' to describe Raye. Dan is in an existing sexual relationship when he sleeps with Raye, who is single. Dan doesn't view his own sexual actions through the same derogatory lens he views Raye's. This blatant hypocrisy is evidence of a gender bias informed by destructive social expectations around how people identified as male or female should behave.

As indicated in the stage directions at the start of Scene 10, Raye had just dragged Dan away from a physical fight he'd started with three men in the pub because he felt insecure. When Dan feels threatened by the attention she is receiving whilst she is performing, he responds with verbal abuse. He then goes on to undermine her parenting decisions, suggesting that Raye 'should be with [Elvis],' rather than working as a touring musician.

D

Individually, read through the following article, and then identify three examples of toxic masculinity evident in Dan's thinking or behaviour:

<https://www.shape.com/lifestyle/what-is-toxic-masculinity>



Symbolism

3 Activity: Research

Script Analysis

The moment when Dan and Raye hit a crow whilst driving through the night can be read as deeply significant, especially when analysed with insight into First Nations Australian people's totemic belief system. Totems are more than just a symbol; they represent the sense of responsibility communities and individuals have towards the land, by connecting personal identity with the natural world. First Nations Australians have a spiritual responsibility for personal totems and, therefore, avoid killing them.

The crow is also particularly significant in Dreamtime stories and can indicate a deep spiritual connection, which should not be ignored. Crows can be interpreted as:

- » Harbingers of change
- » Allies to those who have had difficult childhoods
- » Communicators between the living and the dead
- » Cheeky tricksters
- » Cultural heroes

In order to deeply analyse the following script excerpt, first go to this [link](#).

As a class or individually, please read Aspects 1 & 4, focussing on the animistic and totemic spirituality of many First Nations Australian peoples.

2

Activity: Examine

Now, read through the following script excerpt with a separate student playing each character and another reading the stage directions.

RAYE gets out of the car to investigate.

RAYE Poor thing...

DAN What is it? It's a crow... It's still alive.

RAYE What happened?

DAN It just came out of nowhere.

RAYE It doesn't look good. Give me your shirt.

DAN What?

RAYE I'll try and pick it up.

DAN reluctantly takes off his shirt.

RAYE steps toward the injured crow in DAN'S shirt.

DAN Holy shit.

RAYE C'mon – come here. It's alright.
Go and grab the tyre lever off the back seat.

DAN walks off to retrieve the crowbar.

RAYE It looks sick.

DAN We just hit it.

RAYE I don't mean that, I mean like it was sick.

DAN You shouldn't touch it.

RAYE We can't leave it here, like this. It's not right.

DAN Is it your totem?

RAYE No.

DAN Then it's none of our business. We should go.

RAYE They're such powerful spiritual creatures. Aren't they?...

DAN looks at the crow, he looks at RAYE. He can't do it, he can't kill the crow. RAYE waits for a response, there's none. She looks up to see a paralysed DAN. She looks back down at the crow.

RAYE Give it to me.

She takes the crowbar from his hand and smashes the crow. It's brutal, but swift.

DAN Oh fuck.

She continues. And then takes the shirt and steel bar and hands it to DAN.

DAN We could have let nature decide.

RAYE We are nature.

Fade to black.

1 Activity: Analyse

A

Distinguish: What do Dan and Raye's contrasting reactions to the injured crow say about their different connections to Country and spirituality at this point in the play? Discuss as a whole class.

B

Evaluate: Consider the way this moment was staged using transformation between prop and costume elements, combined with key expressive skills. Write a single paragraph using clear and consistent evaluative language to describe whether or not you felt this moment was successful.

C

Discuss: Watch the following clip exploring the significance and meaning of totems to Wiradjuri people:

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/our-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-community/kinship-module/learning-module/totems.html>

Does your family or your people have a totem? If so, what is it, and what does it represent? The fourth totem is your individual totem, and it is assigned by elders; if you were assigned a totem, what do you think it would be and why? Discuss this with a partner.

D

Create: Consider the reoccurring image of a white crow in Dan's visions and research the cultural significance of albino creatures in First Nations cultures around the world. Create an A4 poster exploring the significance of an Australian animal which is important to First Nations Australians. You may choose which totem to explore; please include an annotated visual image.



Articles

Review: artsreview.com.au

Previous stagings:

smh.com.au

timeout.com

Teaching First Nations Content guide:

ilbijerri.com.au

Petrol sniffing:

menzies.edu.au

Truth telling

reconciliation.org.au

antar.org.au

Respectful Relationships:

fuse.education.vic.gov.au

Maralinga:

aso.gov.au

Songlines:

deadlystory.com





Curriculum Links

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM General Capabilities		
Creative and critical thinking capability	Questions and possibilities Challenge previously held assumptions and create new links, proposals, and artefacts by investigating ideas that provoke shifts in perspectives and cross boundaries to generate ideas and solutions.	Achievement standard Demonstrate a willingness to shift their perspective when generating ideas, resulting in new ways of perceiving solutions.
Intercultural capability	Cultural practices Analyse the complex and dynamic interrelationships between and within cultures in a range of contexts and the impact of these interrelationships on their own and other's cultural practices.	Critically analyse the complex and dynamic interrelationship between and within cultures and the challenges and benefits of living in an interconnected and culturally diverse world.
Personal and social capability	Social awareness and management Relationships and diversity Analyse how divergent values and beliefs contribute to different perspectives on social issues. Acknowledge the importance of empathy and the acceptance of di-versity for a cohesive community and reflect on the effectiveness of strategies for being respectful of diversity and human rights.	Students analyse the effects of actions that repress human rights and limit the expression of diverse views.



LEVEL 10 - SCOPE AND SEQUENCE (EQUAL TO YEAR 10)		
Subject	Area of study	Achievement standard
Drama	Respond and interpret Analyse a range of drama from contemporary and past times, including the drama of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to explore differing viewpoints and develop understanding of drama practice across local, national, and international contexts.	Use experiences of drama practices from different cultures, places, and times to evaluate drama.
Music	Respond and interpret Analyse a range of music from contemporary and past times, including the music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to explore differing viewpoints, enrich their music making, and develop understanding of music practice in local, national, and international contexts.	Use understanding of music making in different cultures, times, and places to inform and shape their interpretations, performances, and compositions.
English	Literature and context Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social, and cultural contexts Responding to literature Expressing preferences and evaluating texts → Evaluate the social, moral, and ethical positions represented in texts. Examining literature Language devices in literary texts → Compare and evaluate how 'voice' as a literary device can be used in a range of different types of texts such as poetry to evoke particular emotional responses.	Evaluate how text structures can be used in innovative ways by different authors. Explain how the choice of language features, images and vocabulary contribute to the development of individual style.



Drama	Introducing performance styles Area of study 4 Analysing a professional drama performance. Outcome 4 Analyse the presentation of ideas, stories, and characters in a drama performance by professional or other drama practitioners.	Australian identity* Area of study 4 Analysing an Australian drama performance Outcome 4 Analyse and evaluate a performance of a drama work by Australian practitioners. Use appropriate drama terminology to explain, analyse and evaluate how the use of dramatic elements, conventions, performance styles, production areas, expressive skills, performance skills, and the actor – audience relationship may be manipulated to communicate meaning in performance. <i>*An Australian work might:</i> » Be written, adapted, or devised by Australian writers or theatre makers » Reflect aspects of Australian identity, for example the voice of Australia's first peoples...
Theatre studies		Modern theatre styles and conventions Area of study 3 Analysing and evaluating a theatre production. Outcome 3 Analysis and evaluation of a professional theatre production of a script. Study the nature of theatre production analysis and evaluation, including the application of acting, direction and design and their effect on an audience.



English vce literature

Approaches to literature

Area of study 2

Ideas and concerns in texts. Investigate the ideas and concerns raised in texts and the ways social and cultural contexts are represented.

Outcome 2

Analyse the ways in which a selected text reflects or comments on the ideas and concerns of individuals and particular groups in society.

Context and connections

Area of study 1

The text, the reader, and their contexts

Focus on the interrelationships between the text, readers, and their social and cultural contexts. Students reflect upon their own backgrounds and experience in developing responses to texts from a past era and/or another culture. Identify the language and the representations in the text that reflect the period or culture, its ideas, and concepts. Analyse language closely, recognising that words have historical and cultural import.

Outcome 1

Analyse and respond critically and creatively to the ways a text from a past era and/or a different culture reflect or comment on the ideas and concerns of individuals and groups

Imagery: Monica Jasmine Karo and Dion Williams in *Heart is a Wasteland*. Imagery by Fiona Morrison, Aaron Walker and Dean Arcuri.

© Arts Centre Melbourne 2022. All rights reserved. This education resource may be reproduced for educational purposes only.

Text and images may not be reproduced, edited or re-used for any other purpose without permission of Arts Centre Melbourne and relevant copyright owners.

If you have any queries, please contact:
researchservice@artscentremelbourne.com.au

