

AWAY

BY MICHAEL GOW
DIRECTED BY DANIEL EVANS



EDUCATION NOTES

LA BOITE



La Boite Theatre Company is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its funding and advisory body.



Australian Government
RISE Fund

La Boite is a recipient of the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government initiative.



Queensland
Government

La Boite Theatre Company is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

AWAY

“We don’t look back and we don’t look forward. We have this boy and we won’t have him for long. And whatever he does, that will have to be enough.”

– Harry, Act 4 Scene 1

Against the idyllic backdrop of the hot Australian Summer, through the upheavals of the late 1960’s, three families depart from the normalcy of their lives only to be confronted by the changing world around them – loss, grief, love and belonging.

Tom, son to Harry and Vic, is dying. His impending fate is kept secret by his family hoping to spare themselves and those around him from their inevitable grief. Meg, his high school friend and burgeoning crush, navigates the struggle of being a teenager just as her parents similarly wrestle with their place in the shifting fabric of society. And lastly, the slow erosion of Roy and Coral’s marriage after the loss of their son in the Vietnam War weighs heavily over the Christmas holiday break. Each of these characters are eager to escape, only to find themselves confronted by the very things they wanted to leave behind.

It is no wonder that *Away* by Michael Gow is a greatly cherished, quintessential Australian play with such enduring and achingly familiar themes. From young love and family tradition through to untimely death and the long shadow of war, *Away* remains pertinent

The nostalgia of *Away* plays an important part of guiding us through this heartfelt and almost magical journey - conjured through retro décor and chic fashion, getaways reminiscent of Gow’s own family holidays to the Gold Coast, and the earnest nature of amateur and school productions.

In La Boite’s 96 years, this is the second time *Away* will be performed at The Roundhouse Theatre, and just as in 1997, this story will showcase the breadth of Queensland’s talent both onstage and off. directed by Daniel Evans, this production of *Away* will be a memorable trip to the theatre!



AWAY

DATES

25 OCT - 13 NOV

RUN TIME

120 MINUTES



CAST

Billy Fogarty
Bryan Probets
Christen O'Leary
Emily Burton
Giema Contini
Kevin Spink
Ngoc Phan
Reagan Mannix
Roxanne McDonald
Sean Dow
Will Carseldine

CREATIVES

Director Daniel Evans
Set & Costume Design Sarah Winter
Lighting Design Ben Hughes
Sound Design Brady Watkins
Choreographer & Movement Coordinator Liesel Zink
Stage Manager Anika Vilée

SUITABLE FOR

Senior General Drama Grade 11
Senior General English Grades 11 - 12
General Drama Grades 8 - 10

WARNINGS

Adult Themes
Sexual References

SHOW OVERVIEW

THEMES

Australian Identity
Coming of Age
Life and Death
Grief
Family and Tradition
Society and Class
Nature

FORM, STYLE & CONVENTIONS

Realism
Magical Realism
Australian Theatre

CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT LINKS

Drama

Unit Two: Reflect *Grade 11*

Assessments

- Directorial Vision
- Practice-led Projects
- Extended Response

Key Ideas

- inform
- empathise
- chronicle
- document
- lived experience
- human condition

English *QCAA Prescribed Text*

Unit Three and Four:

Stimulus for conversations about concepts and issues in a play text and/or live performance, and for creative and critical responses to a literary text.

COGNITIVE VERBS

Knowledge Retrieval and Comprehension	Analytical Processes	Knowledge Utilisation
Define	Compare	Comment
Document	Critique	Create
Identify	Determine	Develop
Implement	Differentiate	Devise
Recall	Discriminate	Discuss/Explore
Recognise	Distinguish	Evaluate
Sketch	Infer/Extrapolate	Express

PRE-SHOW

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY ONE

Class Discussion

Themes and Ideas. Traditions and Reality.

Our lives are infused and informed by traditions – some of these are linked to our cultural identities, and others are personal or familial rituals that become meaningful parts of our lives. In *Away*, the annual tradition of the family holiday is a central theme, with the habits and expectations of the characters being built on this. Reflecting upon yourself, or delving into a study of a character you have been researching, think of traditions that are important and meaningful. These could range in scale from special occasions to things done everyday. What do these rituals tell us about this person? What would happen if these traditions were interrupted or changed entirely?

TASK:

Mapping A Story

In *Away*, the characters journey from their homes, schools and everyday lives to take a holiday somewhere else, thus allowing them to reflect on what they have left behind, who they are and who they wish to become. We know that our identities are informed by our location, and that certain locations can bring out different parts of who we are.

Design a map of two or more locations that you visit regularly.

- What aspects of who you are is brought out in each location?
- These might be dramatic or quite subtle, but what transformation occurs?
- **Write a short inner monologue about a character journeying from one of these locations to another and what they notice changing about themselves.**

ACTIVITY TWO

Class Discussion

Themes and Ideas. Fiction vs Reality.

Away opens with a school performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and ends with a reading of *King Lear*, both by William Shakespeare. Tom plays the role of Puck, a trickster character who journeys between the world of Fairies and Gods, and the world of humans at the whim of these entities. In *King Lear* he closes the play with the King's speech regarding the allocation of his kingdom as he prepares for death. Later on, we also find Tom and Coral performing a short play for their fellow holiday-makers about a lonely ghost and a mermaid turned into a human and learning how to walk. These performances within a performance creates another layer of meaning.

Discuss:

- What does the significance of a play within a play mean for a story? What does this mean for the characters of *Away*? What does this mean for the audience?
- Tom plays characters between two worlds, or between life and death. He also knows that he is dying in the real world and what effects this will have to those who love him. What do you think this might mean for Tom to perform such characters? What about for his friends and family who watches these?
- The slippage between reality and fiction can cause a number of interesting results. How do we see this manifest in *Away*?
- What other examples of a story within a story have you seen or heard of? How did this help your understanding of that narrative?

TASK:

Creating a Play within a Play.

Take a play or story that you have been exploring, or one that you really enjoy, and now imagine another performance taking place inside of this story – which characters would tell this story, and why? Outline a scene or moment in which this could take place. Intertextuality can help build greater meaning for an audience by including material that could inform, empathise, chronicle or reflect a part of who they are - choose wisely!

POST-SHOW

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY REFLECTION

Expectations

Australian Identity. Coming of Age. Society and Class.

Reflection is an important part of storytelling and representation. Before you see the show, write down what you think you might see and hear about the following:

Design

How will the design elements of set, sound, lighting, costume and props speak to the notion of Australian Identity? How will this help us understand the time and place (Gold Coast, Australia 1967) this story occurs in?

Tension

The narrative of *Away* is driven by a number of themes – one being that historical, political and cultural landscapes of Australia. How could these things be explored through something as simple as a family holiday?

Characters

This is a story about change. How do you think the following characters will transform - Teenagers, Adults, Parents, Outsiders, Traditionalists. What if these changes were positive or negative?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Director Daniel Evans has curated a [playlist](#) of songs that capture the spirit of the world of *Away*. Additionally you may wish to create a playlist of songs that speak to a specific time or place as part of your own directorial vision for a play.

Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is about love, trickery and a troupe of actors performing a play within a play – discover more at [The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust](#).

Lastly, the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia houses collections of important images and audio from our history, [take a look at some memorable highlights of the 1960's](#) including news, fashion and advertising!

ACTIVITY RESPONDING

Elements of Drama

Now that you've seen the show, use your knowledge and audience perspective to explore the following – recall an example of the Elements of Drama from the performance and note how it was used. We've provided a table of examples for you to fill in and some points to get you started.

Element of Drama	Example of Use
Characters Personal qualities, depth, histories, traits and intentions. This can also include the role of the character – their position in the larger structure of the narrative	<i>TOM is at the intersection of concepts such as Life and Death, Hurt and Healing, Family and Individuality, etc.</i>
Relationships The connections, interactions and reactions that the characters go through as the narrative progresses.	
Time Time of day, year, history or the future. Changes of time within scenes, between scenes and over the entire piece.	
Place Where the dramatic action takes place and the factors that help define these environments.	<i>Domestic vs Natural settings – school, home, the beach.</i>
Symbols Design elements, props and costume etc. that convey a deeper layer of meaning to the narrative and action onstage.	
Tensions Dramatic action can be created by the problems of achieving a certain task, making the right or wrong choice, stresses in relationships, the unexpected and mystery.	

ACTIVITY RESPONDING

Form, Style and Conventions

Using the table below, recall examples of styles and conventions from the show. What impact did they have on your experience of the narrative journey. Again, we have provided a table of examples for you to fill in and some points to think about.

Form, Style and Convention	Example of Use
<p>Realism A style of drama crafted to create believable representations of life; roles and character in Realism drama draw on real-life or life-like motivations.</p> <p>Conventions Fourth Wall, three-dimensional characterisations, subtext and inner-life/psychologically motivated actions, objective and super-objective, 'magic-if' and given circumstances.</p>	<p><i>Characters were driven by real-life motivations such as CORAL grieving the loss of her son to the Vietnam War.</i></p>
<p>Magical Realism Genre or style incorporating fantastic or imaginary elements and often unsettling images or events depicted in a sharply detailed, realistic manner.</p> <p>Conventions Supernatural intrusions, surreal transformations, breaking out of realist actions, fluidity of space, time and characterisation.</p>	

POST-SHOW

CLASSROOM TASKS

TASK:

Space

As you have seen, the set for *Away* draws upon many unique design and architectural elements to portray an array of real and 'unreal' spaces such as domestic spaces like homes and school, natural spaces such as the beach, some that become magical or challenging to a "realistic" version of these locations.

Using your own memory of a location, design a set that could portray that place specifically, while also being able to effectively become other spaces connected to that memory.

TASK:

Creating your own Directorial Vision

A Directorial Vision is an essential step in the process of realising a performance onstage. It is typically a short presentation or document that can include notes on the design, themes and characterisations of a performance using words, images, sounds and video to help communicate your ideas.

Using your design of a location from your memory above, begin to design a vision for a performance that is connected to that place. What can you share that will capture the spirit of that place, the atmosphere of what occurs there, or what could happen? What elements will be real, and which parts might be surreal? If you are exploring a specific text you may wish to transplant that narrative into this location – how would this reframe that narrative? How can you articulate what the audience will see in regards to action or design, or feel according to themes being in a new time or place?

Find an example to use from each of the following:

- A still image
- A key word or motif
- A song that is connected to that time or place
- A song that is disconnected from that time or place
- A sound or image that helps drive a character to act a certain way
- A collection of words that describe the mood of a place or time
- An artefact from that time or place that holds significance to the characters or narrative.

TASK:

Remframing *AWAY*

Many of the elements of this production will be deeply familiar to those members of your friends and family who lived during the 1960-70's, and unfamiliar to you – this does not mean the story or themes are any less impactful. But taking what you are familiar with, what could you change to make *Away* reflect your sense of here and now. Consider the following:

- Setting – what would help signify the schools, suburbs and holiday spots that you are familiar with now?
- Themes – what political, economic, social and moral aspects of the contemporary world would be present in this revisioning?
- Characters – what might they be motivated by, or expect from the events of the original narrative set here and now?
- Dramatic Meaning – with this text being immersed into a new context, what purpose does this pose now to audiences? What would this reframing seek to speak to and why?

CONNECTING WITH FURTHER RESOURCES

Away contains deep discussion regarding loss, mental health, family difficulty and sexual health. It is important to know that there is always help and information, whether it be from family, friends or communities, but also through confidential professional counselling helplines and programs:

Headspace

The National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds

[Discover More](#)

Reach Out

Reach Out has dedicated information regarding grief for young people.

[Discover More](#)

Lifeline Australia

A 24/7 crisis support helpline

13 11 14

[Discover More](#)

CONTACT US

SCHOOL BOOKINGS ENQUIRIES

Visit laboite.com.au/education
or contact our team via
schoolbookings@laboite.com.au
or 3007 8600.

CURRICULUM & WORKSHOP ENQUIRIES

Visit laboite.com.au/education
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LABOITE.COM.AU



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