

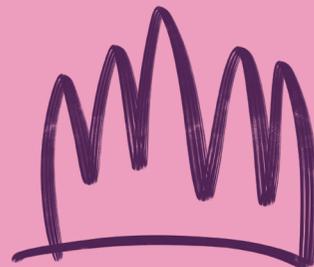
PRELIM INARY NOTES

Presented by La Boite Young Artists Company Ensemble
16-19 August 2019 (Term Three, Week 5)

**THE FINAL
DAYS OF
BEDLAM**

By David Burton

LB LA BOITE
THEATRE COMPANY



V1.0

**YOUR VOICES.
YOUR STORIES.
YOUR THEATRE.**

La Boite holds a unique place in the hearts and minds of artists and audiences in Queensland. For more than 90 years, La Boite has represented the adventurous and alternative. There has always been a strong focus on the development of new work and artists, and today is no different.

The stories, ideas and voices of our city and country are many and varied and as such La Boite seeks to represent and engage in this beautiful and rich diversity; the diversity of form, ideas, ethnicity, gender – of identity.

Theatre has the capacity to embrace difference in so many ways. La Boite push the boundaries of form by collaborating with some extraordinary partners to stretch theatrical, physical and musical boundaries. La Boite plays with contemporary circus, visual theatre, opera and cabaret, classical text, the theatrical and extraordinary international talents. This varied menu aims to enliven and inspire our existing audiences and draw new audiences to share in the La Boite experience – the experience and magic of live performance in our unique Roundhouse Theatre.

ABOUT
LA BOITE



IT'S THE FINAL DAYS OF SCHOOL... EVER

PLAY OVER — VIEW



SYNOPSIS

Audiences are thrust into a fictional version of today where school is no longer compulsory. A group of students at Bedlam High contemplate what this means for them and what they want next. Do they even want to go to school? Should they start their own school? What do they want to learn? What will the world be like without school? The only thing that's certain is these last few days are complete bedlam.

The Final Days of Bedlam is a play designed for the classroom, to ponder the role of the classroom and what learning means.

Written specially with grades 9–10 students in mind and performed by the La Boite Young Artists Company Ensemble.

CAST AND CREATIVES

DIRECTOR David Burton

DESIGN Claire Christian

PERFORMED BY The 2019 Young Artists Company Ensemble

ESTIMATED RUNNING TIME

65 minutes

RECOMENDED FOR

Created specifically with grades 7-10 in mind but suitable for all high school students.

WARNINGS

Conversations about political issues, faith and dying.

SUBJECT MATTER

Given the versatility of the script, it is up to the students and teacher to make clear decisions about what themes and they want to emphasise or explore. Once an ensemble has settled on a

theme, you might want to explore how that theme can be emphasised through the performance.

Some of the more obvious themes that the play could explore are: Freedom of choice, The role of education in forming young citizens, Private and public schooling, Bullying/excluding your peers from your community, Secrets, Anxiety, fear and panic, The lives of young people with disabilities, Illness, Love & hope in desperate times.

Depending on how the ensemble chooses to cast the show, the role of gender and power could also be a theme to explore.

The role of the silent child is designed to present a clear opportunity for an ensemble to add or create meaning. Who is the silent child? When are they present or absent? If you choose to perform 'The Silence Speaks' scene, what themes or symbols are important to convey? (*There's also no reason to suggest why there can't be multiple silent children.*)

PURPOSE

To challenge, provoke, empower and entertain

CONTEXT

Cultural, Political, Sociological

Real: Theatre for young people – written for young people, performed by young people for young people.

FORM, STYLE & CURRICULUM LINKS

Contemporary Realism, Ensemble Piece, Collage Drama, Physical Theatre, Monologues

WRITER'S VISION WITH DAVID BURTON

DRA —MATIC MEANING



WHY DID YOU WRITE THE FINAL DAYS OF BEDLAM? WHAT WERE YOU CURIOUS ABOUT EXPLORING?

The big hook for me was: it's the last day of school EVER. From there, I worked backwards – how would we get there? I thought it was a fun idea, but the deeper I dug the darker the world became. When you start to take away a society's right to free education, you're in a pretty bleak place.

I'm always interested in teenager's authentic point of view. As an adolescent, I took education very seriously – probably too seriously. As an adult, I regret not relaxing a bit more and going easy on myself. But I've never forgotten a conversation I had with an old school peer years ago at a reunion. I'd despised him in school because he was constantly disruptive. As adults, we swapped regrets. He wished he'd been a serious student like me, I longed to be a charismatic larrikin like him. I became interested in the idea of how different students perceive the school environment – for some its a reprieve, for others a chance to entertain, for more an annoying break from video games. If it was to all disappear tomorrow, what would students feel like they lost?

Opening this door created a lot of other opportunities for scenes. Themes of inclusion and exclusion, safety, bullying and friendship all quickly appeared.

WHAT DOES THE PLAY MEAN TO YOU?

The play is designed to be mean only about 20% of anything to anybody. All the scenes are kind of suggestions of a direction and a structure. I wanted to give students and teachers a playground to bump around in that had high stakes and lots of opportunities. For me, the play is a launch pad for some (hopefully) great drama lessons.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES TAKE AWAY WITH THEM?

Whatever the performers choose to emphasise. For some performances, that might be the importance of community, for others it might be the rights of disabled students. But broadly speaking, I hope audiences walk away with an appreciation of the education system: its absurdities and profundities.

WHAT ARE THE PARTS IN THE PERFORMANCE ARE YOU EXCITED TO SEE BROUGHT TO LIFE IN THE PRODUCTION?

The role of the silent child is the most open invitation I think I've ever written. I think it could be a huge turning point for teachers and students to imbue the play with their own meaning. I'm excited to see where they take it.

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS SCRIPT BY DAVID BURTON

This script has been designed to be performed by young teenagers, most likely within a classroom environment. The show requires a cast of at least seven, but could be performed by a larger ensemble of fifteen or more. (For that matter, with some imagination and creative edits, the show could be performed by fewer than seven.)

All roles are gender neutral.

The scenes are written so that they may be performed in almost any particular order (except for those scenes with numbers). Entire scenes may be removed. The order that is presented in this document is just a suggestion. In fact, if you were to perform every single scene in this show, I daresay it may overstay it's welcome.

DRA
—MATIC
MEANING

SCENE GUIDE

WRITTEN BY

DAVID BURTON

DRA —MATIC MEANING



Below is a full list of the provided scenes and story blocks, with ideas for performance.

HOW WE GOT TO NOW

This is a scene designed for exposition. It's the most obvious choice to begin the play (but not necessarily the most interesting). The dialogue here is to be broken up between the ensemble, who are acting like a chorus. Some lines may be presented as newsreaders, some as concerned parents, some as students.

Experiment with what lines might be presented with the entire ensemble saying them in unison. Or multiple people might repeat certain words.

This might be an opportunity to add an audio visual or design component.

This script was written in 2018, so the references to Australian politicians might be out-dated. Feel free to update.

THE PERFECT SCHOOL

This is an advertisement. It may be filmed or presented on stage.

THE NEW CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

The first scene is for a group of seven, although it can be made for a smaller group with some creativity: Smithy and JJ could become one role (delete JJ's lines or give them to Smithy), and Bee and Pod could become one role (again, delete Bee's lines or give them to Pod). The silent child may be present for this scene. There's no reason why these characters can't appear again in other scenes, just re-named.

The second scene in this story is for far fewer people and a couple of characters only. This scene could be removed without interfering with the first scene. The silent child re-emerges at the end of this scene and plays a potentially important role.

SECRETS & SPIES

This is a short story for three people, spread over three scenes. All three scenes can be performed in sequence, or broken up throughout a larger piece (as they are in this document). You may choose to perform just the first scene, or just the first two, or all three together.

THE START OF BEDLAM

This is originally written as a monologue. A student gives an oral presentation in class. This oral may belong to a character we've already met, or a new character. The character may be addressing an audience with no one else on stage. They could also have a full class and teacher to present to. They may have AV accompaniment, or even some kind of physicalized symbolic representation of themes.

DON'T PANIC

These are two scenes with a time jump in between them, designed for three actors. It's possible to perform either scene without the other, but they're probably easier for an audience to digest as a pair. There's an opportunity in these scenes for the actors to devise a 'team chant'.

IN THE NURSES' OFFICE

This is three scenes designed to be performed by two people (although this is another example where the silent child could be present). These three scenes could flow one after another. You could choose to perform just the first scene, or the first two.

THIS'LL BE ON THE EXAM

A large ensemble or choral piece, like 'How We Got To Now'. This is a scene where cast aren't playing young people – they're playing teachers.

continued ...

SCENE GUIDE

WRITTEN BY

DAVID BURTON

DRA —MATIC MEANING

RESULTS

A single scene between three people.

THE SILENCE SPEAKS

As mentioned above, this is the scene most open to interpretation by the ensemble, and thus the most easily versatile to adopt to the themes or message the ensemble might want to convey. The scene includes suggestions of music, books extracts, or poems that may be useful reference points, but these are suggestions only.

A GENTLE OFFERING

This is a monologue. Again, like 'The Start of Bedlam', it may be from a character we've already met, or a stranger to us. They may perform to the audience, or we may see the object of their affection. How that person responds in the final lines is up to the ensemble. The speaker or the recipient of the monologue could be the silent child, or anyone else we've met previously.

THE FINAL BELL

A large ensemble or choral piece, designed to wrap up the show.

KEY RESEARCH POINTS

THINGS TO PONDER



BEDLAM DEFINITION

You might like to use this script sample of the definition of Bedlam, as a way to leaping point to create work that reflects chaos, pandemonium, madness or bedlam.

Star Bedlam comes from Bethlem, Europe's oldest psychiatric hospital, originally named St Mary Bethlehem. Bethlehem is the place of Jesus Christ's birth, who is the saviour for the old Christian religion. Bedlam is just the nickname for the hospital, which has been operating for well over 700 years. Over time, the word came to mean chaos, pandemonium or madness.

Our school, on the other hand, was built just ten years ago to deal with another population boom. I couldn't find any information on why someone chose to name the school after a psychiatric ward. Either it was ironic, or our founder didn't know the original meaning.

THE PERFECT SCHOOL

Get students to work on brainstorming the perfect school, what would it look like, how would it work? You could create monologues from the perspectives of students and teachers who attend these perfect schools, leading to scenes. You could also combine features from your students to create one super perfect school.

STEREOTYPES

Discuss stereotypes associated with:

- Private and Public Schools
- People who love Star Wars
- People who love Football
- Students on a scholarship
- Spies
- Parents
- Students with learning disabilities
- Winners and losers
- Hippies and Scientists

Use these stereotypes to create three dimensional characters. You could use these character questionnaire's as props for your students to create complex characters and then improvise, or write for them. Have these characters meet each other. Place them in different scenarios or situation's.

WRITER'S TOOLBOX CHARACTER QUESTIONNAIRES

<https://www.writingclasses.com/toolbox/character-questionnaire/proust>

POLITICAL ISSUES

Many issues are discussed or referenced in the script you might like to do some research and use these issues as pretexts to create other devised work.

- Water contamination / Drought
- Climate Change
- Vaccination
- Private and Public School Education
- The role of the internet
- Leadership Spills and Australian Politics
- The Bubonic Plague
- Money / Wealth / status
- Big corporations like Google, Uber, Elon Musk
- Privacy

KEY RESEARCH POINTS

THINGS TO PONDER



WHAT SUCKS ABOUT BEING A TEENAGER

Give your students this as a provocation and get them to write or devise work that reflects how they feel about growing up, school, expectations, parents, teachers etc.

THE SEVEN LEARNING STYLES

You might like to discuss the ways that different people learn, and see how your students identify. You might like to discuss the way that some subjects, schools, institutions or ways we work in the world favour specific learning types. You could use these learning types as character descriptions, or as movement provocations for physicalized pieces.

1. VISUAL (SPATIAL)

You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.

2. AURAL (AUDITORY-MUSICAL)

You prefer using sound and music.

3. VERBAL (LINGUISTIC)

You prefer using words, both in speech and writing.

4. PHYSICAL (KINESTHETIC)

You prefer using your body, hands and sense of touch.

5. LOGICAL (MATHEMATICAL)

You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems.

6. SOCIAL (INTERPERSONAL)

You prefer to learn in groups or with other people.

7. SOLITARY (INTRAPERSONAL)

You prefer to work alone and use self-study.

Resource: www.learning-styles-online.com/overview

INTERTEXTUALITY

The play encourages intertextuality as a way of reflecting what *The Silent Child* wants to say, what message they want to portray. Here are some of Dave Burton's example from the script that you might like to use as pretexts.

SONGS

- 'Losers' by The Weekend
- 'Another Brick In The Wall' by Pink Floyd
- 'Caught In The Crowd' by Kate Miller-Hiedke

POEMS

- 'The Summer Day' by Mary Oliver
- 'What Teachers Make' by Taylor Mali
- 'To This Day' by Shane Koyczan.

EXTRACTS

- *1984* by George Orwell
- *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury
- *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- A famous (or infamous) speech from a politician or leader



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