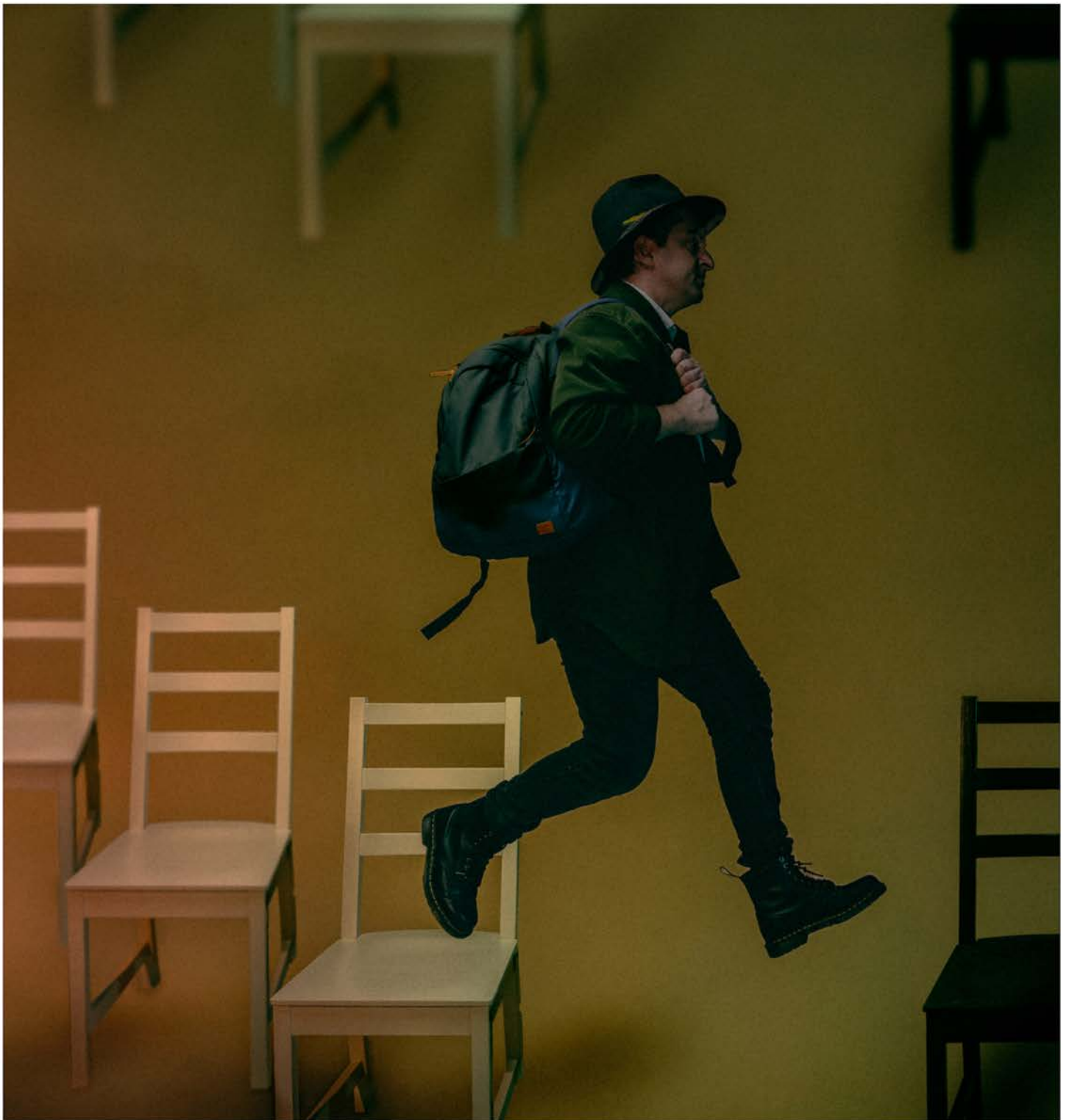


Education Notes

# CROSSING THE DIVIDE

 **SHOCK  
THERAPY  
ARTS**

Written, directed and performed by  
SAM FOSTER, HAYDEN JONES & BENJIN MAZA



[SHOCKTHERAPYARTS.COM](http://SHOCKTHERAPYARTS.COM)

---

# divide

noun:

- a division: a divide in the road.
- Physical Geography - the line or zone of higher ground between two adjacent streams or drainage basins.

verb:

- to separate into parts, groups, sections, etc.
  - to separate or part from something else; sunder; cut off.
  - to become divided or separated.
  - to share something with others.
-

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# ABOUT THE COMPANY

## SHOCK THERAPY ARTS

Shock Therapy Arts is a Not for Profit Social Enterprise, founded on the Gold Coast in January 2015 by Sam Foster and Hayden Jones.

Shock Therapy Arts has strategically established itself as a leading company in the delivery of high quality, relevant, multidisciplinary performance, and a leader in the Arts and Culture sector on the Gold Coast and in South East Queensland. The company aims to continue this growth to become a leading Arts Organisation Nationally and Internationally, and a Queensland cultural icon. In 2023, with the blessing of their mentor, Zeal Theatre, Shock Therapy expanded into New South Wales schools.

Company founders Sam Foster and Hayden Jones have a wealth of industry experience, artistic vision and enthusiasm that drives the ethos of the company. They have recruited a team of the arts industry's most experienced artists, designers, accountants, lawyers, strategic advisors, administrators and producers to help them achieve their vision to create Transformative Arts Experiences.

Shock Therapy Arts have won multiple industry awards, have published assorted scripts, and have been programmed by major festivals and venues nationally and internationally.

### FOR ALL ENQUIRIES AND BOOKINGS:

[education@shocktherapyarts.com](mailto:education@shocktherapyarts.com)

[www.shocktherapyarts.com](http://www.shocktherapyarts.com)

## AWARD WINS

### MATILDA AWARDS

#### Best Independent Production

- THE FORWARDS
- VIRAL
- THE PILLOWMAN

#### Best Director

Sam Foster  
- THE PILLOWMAN

#### Best Supporting Actor

Tama Matheson  
- THE PILLOWMAN

## AWARD NOMINATIONS

### MATILDA AWARDS

#### Best Actor

Zachary Boulton and Sarah McLeod  
- FUEL  
Sam Foster and Ellen Bailey  
- THE FORWARDS  
Sam Foster  
- VIRAL

#### Best New Australian Work

- UNDERTOW  
- VIRAL

#### Best Independent Production

- UNDERTOW

#### Best Sound Design

Guy Webster  
- UNDERTOW

#### Best Audio Visual Design

Nathan Sibthorpe  
- VIRAL

# MEET THE CREATORS



**Sam Foster**

**– WRITER, DIRECTOR, PERFORMER**

Sam is a performer and theatre maker. He is an award-winning Actor, Director, Writer, Producer, Stunt Performer and Stunt Rigger as well as being a Physical Theatre Performer, Movement Director and workshop facilitator. He is the co-owner and co-founder of Shock Therapy Arts.

Sam works in theatre, film and large-scale events and has worked for a number of companies and festivals throughout his career. His career has taken him to New York, London, Namibia, South Africa, Denmark, Norway and India as well as all over Australia.



**Hayden Jones**

**– WRITER, CO-CREATOR, PERFORMER**

Hayden is a performer and contemporary performance maker, working across a range of forms including theatre, installation, immersive experiences and cross art-form collaborations. He has worked as an Actor, Director, Writer, Producer and workshop facilitator, for some of Australia's most recognised and innovative arts organisations. He is a co-founder of Shock Therapy Arts.

Hayden also has an extensive background working in Youth Theatre, Children's Theatre and Theatre-in-Education, writing and directing shows for young people, and touring nation-wide performing and teaching workshops.



**Benjin Maza**  
**- WRITER, CO-CREATOR, PERFORMER**

Benjin Maza is a proud First Nations actor, dancer, writer and musician. He has worked for a number of companies including; Queensland Theatre, La Boite, Karul Projects, BlakDance, Grin & Tonic, Dead Puppet Society, Excelsior and Elements Collective.

Benjin has performed as a part of the Brisbane Festival's Street Serenades, Quandamooka Festival, NAIDOC, Brisbane Powerhouse's 21st Birthday, QPAC's Green Jam Yonder Festival, NRL All Stars, 2018 Commonwealth Games, Byron Bay Blues Festival, Woodford Folk Festival and the Rugby Union World Cup 2022.

Crossing The Divide is Benjin's Shock Therapy Arts debut.



**DOBBY**  
**- COMPOSITION AND AUDIO DESIGN**

Rhyan Clapham (DOBBY) is a Hip Hop artist and drummer, with a Bachelor of Music and an Indigenous Studies Honours (focusing on Aboriginal Hip Hop music). As a rapper, drummer, composer and producer, he brings a dynamic and powerful energy to his live shows delivering an experience like no other. Proudly identifying as a Filipino and Aboriginal musician, DOBBY's roots run deep in the Muruwari and Ngemba lands of Weilmoringle and Brewarrina, NSW. He has performed at a variety of events such as BIG SOUND Festival, The Plot Festival, and at numerous NAIDOC celebrations across Australia.

# WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Education is at the coal-face of what we do at Shock Therapy Arts and where we see the greatest potential for impact. In addition to aligning our shows with the syllabus, we take a holistic approach to education, incorporating wellbeing, relationships, and complex global, social and personal issues into our shows. Whether it's through the themes and narrative, or the skill and technique in theatre making, a performance can ignite a fire in a student that changes their life or make them never want to watch a play again. We take this responsibility seriously and aim to make the experience a memorable one that will stay with the audience long after the show ends.

It has always been our mission to provide schools with performances that are dynamic and stylistically interesting and challenge, inspire and entertain students. Making and performing these shows also push us as artists to work to the peak of our ability to handcraft each and every product that we offer to schools, because every audience deserves our very best.



Theatre has a unique ability to impact people in two main ways; through the power of narrative and through the power of live performance. The combination of these two factors makes theatre memorable and participatory... well at least it should if you get it right!

Stories stay with people, they live on in your memory, and this memory is strengthened by the experience of seeing actors bring this story to life in real time, right in front of you as they “become” the protagonists and antagonists of the narrative. Now more than ever, live theatre seems to be able to connect with people in a way that other forms of storytelling can't. As we move further into the digital age and the form of storytelling is constantly changing, the impact of and need for live performance seems to be more apparent and urgent than ever.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shock Therapy Arts would like to thank everyone who in some way supported or contributed to this work. We would like to acknowledge the City of Gold Coast for being our major sponsor, and the Queensland Government for supporting the work through Arts Queensland.

Huge thanks to the Creative team; Rhyan “DOBBY” Clapham (sound designer and composer), Wes Bluff (audio), Mark Kennedy (set build), and our latest addition to the ‘Shock Family’, Benjin Maza , who came on board as a playwright, actor, musician and cultural advisor.

Thanks also to: Jorge Serra and Cinnamon Smith (photography); Saffron Jensen (graphic design); Stefo Nantsou, Rachael Maza, Shari Irwin, Michelle Watkins, Thomas E.S Kelly, Zac Boulton, Merlynn Tong, Sarah McLeod and everyone who attended the development showing for your valuable feedback on the script and performance. We would also like to thank the board of Shock Therapy Arts Ltd consisting of Paul Bishop (Chair), Andrew Larder (Secretary) Inke Loos (Director) and Vyvienne Abla (Director).

Love and gratitude to our family and friends for the years of knowledge, inspiration and support you continue to give us.

*Shock Therapy Arts acknowledges the Traditional Custodians  
of the land on which we present our work.*

*We pay our deep respects to the Elders past, present and emerging,  
and recognise their connection to land, waterways and sky.*

*We respect their cultural heritage and beliefs.*

*We acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia as the first artists,  
the first storytellers, the first communities and  
the first creators of culture.*



# ABOUT THE SHOW

WRITTEN BY	LENGTH	THEMES	PERFORMANCE STYLES	SUITABILITY
Sam Foster, Hayden Jones and Benjin Maza	55mins	Australian History, First Nations Perspectives, Colonialism, Power and Class, Division, Identity, Politics, Mateship, Indigenous Voice, Aboriginal Culture, Racism & Reconcilliation, Relationships, Empathy, Bystander Effect	Contemporary Theatre, Magic Realism, Epic Theatre, Theatre of Social Comment, Documentary Drama, Physical Theatre, Monologue, Expressionism, Non- Linear Structure, Episodic Structure, Flashbacks / Flashforwards, Multiple Role Playing, Mime, Live Music	Years 7-12

# CURRICULUM LINKS

## QCAA

### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PERSPECTIVES

#### GENERAL DRAMA

Unit 1: Share

Unit 2: Reflect

Unit 3: Challenge

IA-1, IA-2

#### GENERAL MODERN HISTORY

##### Unit 1: Ideas in the Modern World

Topic 1: Australian Frontier Wars, 1788–1930s

##### Unit 2: Movements in the Modern World

Topic 1: Australian Indigenous rights  
movement since 1967

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

### THE ARTS

Drama / Music

### HPE

Relationships

### HISTORY

Deep Time History of Australia

Making and Transforming the Australian  
Nation

# CURRICULUM LINKS (CONTINUED)

## **DRAMA IN PRACTICE & ARTS IN PRACTICE**

### **GENERAL CAPABILITIES:**

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal & Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Literacy

### **STYLE/Form:**

- Theatre for Young People
- Physical Theatre
- Forum Theatre
- Brechtian / Epic Theatre
- Australian Theatre
- Contemporary Theatre

### **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING:**

#### *Elements of Drama*

- Role, character and relationships
- Voice and movement
- Focus
- Tension
- Space and time
- Language, ideas and dramatic action
- Audience

### **DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS:**

- Direct address
- Magic realism
- Narration
- Monologue
- Multiple role playing
- Mime
- Live music
- Slow motion
- Flashbacks / flashforwards
- Cinematic component

### **PURPOSE:**

- To challenge
- To educate
- To empower
- To inform

## **QCAA 21st CENTURY SKILLS**

### *Critical thinking*

- analytical thinking
- problem-solving
- decision-making
- reasoning
- reflecting and evaluating
- intellectual flexibility

### *Creative thinking*

- innovation
- initiative and enterprise
- curiosity and imagination
- creativity
- generating and applying new ideas
- identifying alternatives
- seeing or making new links

### *Communication*

- effective oral and written communication
- using language, symbols and texts
- communicating ideas effectively with diverse audiences

### *Collaboration and teamwork*

- relating to others (interacting with others)
- recognising and using diverse perspectives
- participating and contributing
- community connections

### *Personal and social skills*

- adaptability/flexibility
- management (self, career, time, planning and organising)
- character (resilience, mindfulness, open- and fair-mindedness, self-awareness)
- leadership
- citizenship
- cultural awareness
- ethical (and moral) understanding

([https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior/snr\\_syll\\_redev\\_21st\\_century\\_skills\\_preparing\\_students.pdf](https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior/snr_syll_redev_21st_century_skills_preparing_students.pdf))

# CAST

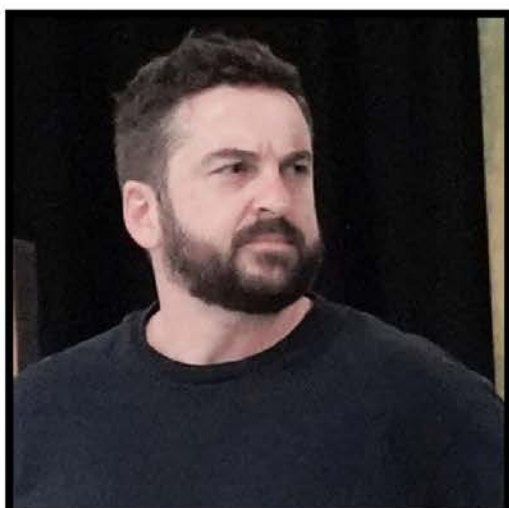
*CROSSING THE DIVIDE* was first performed at Ferny Grove State High School on 4th March 2024.



**Sam Foster**  
– ACTOR

***Characters portrayed:***

- Braydon (student)
- Vlad (eco-lodge host)
- Gregory Blaxland (explorer)
- Samuel (convict)



**Hayden Jones**  
– ACTOR

***Characters portrayed:***

- Max (student)
- Mrs Dampier (teacher)
- William Lawson (explorer)
- Robert (convict)



**Benjin Maza**  
– ACTOR

***Characters portrayed:***

- Liam (student)
- Lionel (tour guide)
- Summer (exchange student)
- William Wentworth (explorer)
- James (convict)

# SYNOPSIS



A high school history class, sets out on a two-day trek across the Great Dividing Range, learning about the expedition by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson. As the group travel through the Blue Mountains, their guide Lionel draws their attention to what is often left out of the history books. They learn about some of the earliest interactions between Indigenous people and the colonial explorers, revealing some of this nation's difficult truths. As the trip continues, Liam, a scholarship student from the Torres Strait, starts to feel uncomfortable, constantly having to declare or defend his experience as a First Nations person to his classmates.

Tensions mount when Liam's friend Max refuses to see how European settlement created anything but a positive pathway to progress for a newly forming nation. Tempers flare around the camp fire and Liam becomes lost – in time and place - as he's suddenly staring down the barrel of a shot-gun held by an equally startled and confused Gregory Blaxland.

The physical landscape of the Great Dividing Range serves as an allegory for the pertinent issues that Australia is grappling with and the divide between various parts of our society. *CROSSING THE DIVIDE* asks the question, "Can we find a path to a more unified Australia, or is the distance too vast to cross and will we always be divided?"



# THEMES

## COLONIALISM

Colonialism, a pervasive historical force that spanned centuries, was marked by the expansion and domination of European powers over vast regions of Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas. This imperialistic endeavour was driven by economic interests, geopolitical rivalries, and a perceived cultural superiority. The consequences of colonialism were profound and enduring, as it left an indelible mark on the colonised societies. Economically, colonial powers extracted resources, often exploiting local labor and disrupting existing economic systems. Socially, the imposition of foreign rule led to profound cultural clashes, eroding indigenous traditions and imposing European norms. Despite its historical significance, colonialism remains a contentious and complex subject, prompting ongoing dialogue about reparations, historical accountability, and the importance of acknowledging the lasting impact on the global landscape.

Colonialism in Australia traces back to the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, marking the beginning of British settlement and profound changes for the continent's Indigenous inhabitants. European colonisation resulted in the dispossession of Indigenous lands, cultural disruption, and the introduction of diseases that devastated communities. The imposition of British law and governance, coupled with policies of assimilation, marginalised and oppressed Indigenous Australians. The discourse around Australian colonialism underscores the importance of recognising the complexities and consequences of this historical period in shaping the nation's identity and its ongoing commitment to addressing the impact on Indigenous communities.

Current Indigenous perspectives on colonialism in Australia reflect a complex narrative of historical trauma, resilience, and ongoing challenges. Many Indigenous communities emphasize the enduring impact of dispossession, cultural disruption, and intergenerational trauma caused by colonial policies. The scars of colonialism persist in the form of economic disparities, political instability, and cultural hybridity. While efforts towards reconciliation are underway, contemporary Indigenous perspectives highlight the need for genuine dialogue, inclusion, and policies that empower Indigenous communities to shape their own future, fostering a more equitable and respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

[HTTPS://PLATO.STANFORD.EDU/ENTRIES/COLONIALISM/](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/)  
[HTTP://WWW.WORKINGWITHINDIGENOUSAUSTRALIANS.INFO/CONTENT/HISTORY\\_3\\_COLONISATION.HTML](http://www.workingwithindigenoustralian.info/content/history_3_colonisation.html)

### POWER AND CLASS

Power and class dynamics in Australia, as in any society, are complex and influenced by various factors such as economic, social, and political structures. The country has traditionally been characterised by a class system that influences access to resources, opportunities, and influence. The historical legacy of colonisation has also contributed to disparities in power and class, with Indigenous communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantages. Key aspects relating to the theme of power and class are:

- *Economic Inequality*: distribution of wealth and access to resources contributes significantly to the class divide. High-income earners often have more opportunities for education, healthcare, and a better quality of life.
- *Social Class*: Australia's class structure included distinct categories such as working class, middle class, and upper class. Education, occupation, and income play crucial roles in determining social class.
- *Political Power*: Politics in Australia is concentrated in the hands of elected officials and political parties, with the influence of interest groups, lobbyists, and corporate entities shaping policy decisions.
- *Indigenous Disparities*: Australia has a significant Indigenous population, and historical and ongoing issues such as dispossession, discrimination, and socio-economic disadvantage contribute to disparities in power and class between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Efforts to address these issues include policies aimed at reconciliation and closing the gap in health, education, and employment outcomes.
- *Education*: Access to quality education can perpetuate or challenge class divisions. While Australia has a strong education system, socio-economic factors can impact the opportunities available to individuals. Those from wealthier backgrounds may have greater access to private schools and tertiary education, potentially reinforcing social class divides.

Dynamics of power and class are continually evolving, influenced by social, economic, and political changes. Policies, public discourse, and social movements can also shape the landscape of power and class relations in Australia.

ANUPOLL-SOCIAL-CLASS-SEPT-2015\_0.PDF  
[HTTPS://SOCIALIST-ALLIANCE.ORG/CLASS/SOCIAL-CLASSES-AND-CLASS-STRUGGLE-AUSTRALIA](https://socialist-alliance.org/class/social-classes-and-class-struggle-australia)

# RACISM AND RECONCILIATION

In Australia, the complex history of racism and reconciliation is marked by efforts to address the deep-seated inequalities and injustices faced by Indigenous peoples. For centuries, Indigenous Australians have endured systemic discrimination, dispossession, and marginalisation, resulting in a stark socio-economic gap. The nation has grappled with the painful legacy of colonisation, recognising the need for reconciliation to forge a united and inclusive society. Over the years, there have been significant steps towards acknowledgment and redress, including formal apologies, constitutional recognition processes, and initiatives to close the gap in health, education, and employment outcomes. However, challenges persist, and the ongoing dialogue around racism underscores the importance of continued efforts to dismantle discriminatory structures and foster genuine understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. True reconciliation in Australia requires a commitment to truth-telling, cultural respect, and equitable policies to pave the way for a harmonious and inclusive future.

1 in 5 people living in Australia was a target of racial discrimination, which is around 4.6 million people. 2 in 5 people living in Australia has been a target of verbal racial abuse. Being treated less respectfully is the most common form of racism. Nearly half of all Australian residents from a culturally and linguistically diverse background have experienced racism at some time in their life.

<https://alltogethernow.org.au/racism/racism-in-australia>

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/what-is-reconciliation>

*National Congress of Australia's First Peoples Position Paper: National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy June 2012*



# TIMELINE

## KEY POLITICAL INDIGENOUS MOMENTS SINCE COLONISATION

**BRITISH COLONISATION BEGINS**  
the start of a challenging period for Indigenous Australians with dispossession, cultural disruption, and violence

1788

**Constitutional referendum**  
grants Indigenous Australians citizenship rights and allows the federal government to legislate for them

1967

**Mabo decision** recognizes native title, a pivotal legal moment acknowledging Indigenous land rights in Australian law

1992

**National Apology to the Stolen Generations** by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acknowledges historical wrongs and seeks reconciliation

2008

**Black Lives Matter protests** in Australia amplify calls for justice, highlighting ongoing issues of police brutality and systemic racism against Indigenous Australians

2020

**Day of Mourning** protests on Australia Day challenge the celebration of colonization

1938

**Tent Embassy established** in Canberra as a symbol of Indigenous protest and land rights, highlighting the need for political recognition

1972

**Northern Territory Intervention**, criticized for its impact on Indigenous communities, raises concerns about paternalistic policies

2007

**Uluru Statement from the Heart** calls for a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous Voice to Parliament, advocating for Indigenous representation in decision-making

2017

**Voice to Parliament** a referendum proposing constitutional recognition and empowerment of an Indigenous. The proposal was rejected nationally and by a majority in every state

2023



# STYLISTIC INFLUENCES

Shock Therapy Arts often take an eclectic approach to their style of theatre, drawing on a range of theatrical influences to create work that feels inventive and contemporary. Below are some of the main stylistic influences found in *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*.

## Epic Theatre



BERTOLT BRECHT - FLICKR

**“We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.”**

**– Bertolt Brecht**

The term Epic Theatre was coined by 20th Century theatre practitioner Erwin Piscator. It became an ideological and stylistic approach to theatre and gave rise to several practitioners such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold and, most famously, Bertolt Brecht. Epic Theatre uses a range of conventions including narrative, montage, disjointed and non-linear episodes, metaphor, multiple role playing and stepping in and out of character, music and song, signs and captions and many more. Epic Theatre productions will often reveal elements of the staging process itself. The actors' characterisation and the use of set and props are designed to reinforce an idea rather than reality.

The productions that Shock Therapy Arts present are a direct response to current events and provide social commentary on themes and topics that can sometimes be avoided. The use of narration, montage, minimal set and costume, multiple characters, breaking the fourth wall, tableaux, song and music draws on the styles and techniques that became a feature of Brecht's work.

### QUESTIONS

- What Epic conventions were used in *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*?
- Did you think they used the conventions effectively?
- Did the use of the minimal set tell the story clearly enough?
- Which other Epic conventions do you think could work well in the show? How could they be included?

# Physical Theatre



ACTORS, CO-WRITERS AND CO-DIRECTORS SAM FOSTER, HAYDEN JONES AND BENJIN MAZA.

PHOTO BY MICHELLE WATKINS

Physical theatre bases the storytelling through physical movement rather than words and dialogue. The dramatic action can incorporate dance, acrobatics, mime, tableaux, stage fighting, actions, gestures and movement to communicate a story. A physical language is developed by the group of performers and the performance is often created through improvisation around certain themes and set tasks. This 'physical language' is then crafted into a structured series of movements that help to convey the story.

Physical theatre can also include characterisation. Each character has their own unique movement quality, their own tempo, rhythm, weight, size, etc. The actor must use their physicality to create the character they are portraying. The actors in the Shock Therapy company play multiple characters in their shows. In *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*, the script requires the performers to shift and change rapidly from one character to the next. This requires the actors to have a high level of physical awareness and control.

### QUESTIONS

- What were some of the ways that Shock Therapy made *CROSSING THE DIVIDE* physical?
- Do you think the way the story was physicalized made it more interesting to watch?
- Choose one of the actors and select two of the characters they played. What and how did they change to create multiple roles?

# Documentary Drama



ACTORS, CO-WRITERS AND CO-DIRECTORS SAM FOSTER AND BENJIN MAZA.

PHOTO BY MICHELLE WATKINS

Documentary theatre uses factual information and documents (newspapers, reports, interviews, journals, correspondences, etc) as the impetus for drama. The story and the drama is based on real events and people. This can sometimes be linked with Verbatim Theatre, where the story is taken word-for-word from a pre-existing document.

The social commentary provided in *CROSSING THE DIVIDE* was inspired by the current news events in Australia, in particular the 2023 referendum. The *CROSSING THE DIVIDE* creators worked through podcasts, text books, news articles and journals to ensure historical references were accurate.

# Q&A WITH THE PLAYWRITERS

## **What was the inspiration for “*CROSSING THE DIVIDE*”?**

We felt compelled to dig into some of the aspects of Australia’s history that are perhaps not well known to many. The geography of the Great Dividing Range is the perfect allegory for the current divide in our nation and delving into the story of the first European crossing of the range and the early interactions between First Nations people and Europeans helps to us to understand how we got to our current situation. As with most things, knowledge and empathy are the keys to bring people together and make true progress.

## **What was your approach for writing and devising “*CROSSING THE DIVIDE*”? How was it similar or different to how you have written your previous works?**

This was the first time we had co-written with another artist on one of our shows, which naturally changed things as Benjin brought his own process to it. As always, we started with research and approached the content with a very open mind, ready to learn and listen, and let the truth and intention of the work guide our creative choices. In some ways it was the most challenging and delicate work we have had to write, and for that reason the script continued to evolve throughout the rehearsal process.

## **What do you hope audiences gain from watching this piece of work?**

We want to tell a good story that is relatable, makes you laugh, makes you feel and makes you think. We don’t want to preach or bludgeon anyone with “a message”. Our aim is always to examine things that are tricky to talk about and often avoided, but that as a society we need to contemplate in order to move forward.

## **Can you tell us about the First Nations perspective in *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*?**

The whitewashing of history as it has been taught in schools has largely excluded First Nations perspectives, along with many important and heroic First Nations figures. On the excursion in *Crossing the Divide*, our protagonist Liam, a young kid from the Torres Strait, navigates this harsh political terrain before our eyes. He struggles to reconcile the past and where and how he fits within the Australia of today, and his peers. Liam processes these complex thoughts and feelings with us, and we watch him start to transform through this experience.

## **How did you design the set and staging components? How does it benefit this production?**

We wanted a set that captured a feeling of the Blue Mountains in an abstract expressionist way, while having the functionality to help us change locations and characters quickly and efficiently. Having the flats on castor wheels allows us to create a range of compositions and effects and have access to props and costume elements without needing to leave the stage.

# PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

## THE YARNING CIRCLE

A yarning circle is a traditional Indigenous Australian practice, fostering open communication and cultural sharing. Participants sit in a circular arrangement, promoting equality, respect, and storytelling within a supportive community.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbITk8cDBjg>

Use this format for your group discussion

## QUESTIONS

- What do you know about *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*?
- What do you know about Shock Therapy Arts?
- What and where is the Great Dividing Range?
- What does the title make you think the play is going to be about?
- The play is performed by three actors playing multiple roles. What and how do you think they will be able to succeed in this?
- What assumptions / predictions can you make as to why the play is titled *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*?
- What are some words / themes you associate with the image below?  
Brainstorm ideas on post-its and put them on the board / wall.



# POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and give us valuable feedback on the show:

[Culture Counts Teachers and Students Survey](#)

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

Watch Stan Grant's Racism and the Australian Dream

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbITk8cDBjg>

## QUESTIONS

### *THE YARNING CIRCLE*

- What are the key messages of *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*?
- Which character made the greatest impact on you and why?
- Did the play end as you predicted? Why / why not?
- Tension is an incredibly important element in *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*. What were the climactic moments in the play? How and why did these moments affect you as an audience member?
- How did the staging and the props impact the production?
- How does *CROSSING THE DIVIDE* relate to the 'Australian Dream'?

# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY #1:

### STUDENT DEVISING EXERCISE FOR THEATRE FOR SOCIAL COMMENT

This exercise incorporates aspects of Augusto Boal's Image Theatre (Theatre of the Oppressed), Epic Theatre, and Improvisation. It does so in a structured and purposeful way, rather than going into improvising blind, which can be meandering and less productive. This exercise can work with individuals, pairs, or groups.

#### 1. Choose one of the headlines (see Page 27)

Group members discuss the headlines and decide on one. It might be one they know a little bit about or something that is not recognised by them.

#### 2. Decide on a 'story' (real or fictitious) related to that theme or issue and create a powerful, frozen tableau.

This is about finding a pivotal event or moment for the story or scene to centre around. It should be a moment of peak drama. This key event could be a personal experience, a story they have heard or inspired by recent events.

#### 3. Create a second tableau, showing what happened prior to the event.

This could be 30 seconds before, 5 days before or 5 years before. It's up to the group to decide what is most relevant, in the lead up to the key event. This image should clearly demonstrate the circumstances that lead to the first tableau (show the causal link).

#### 4. Create a third tableau, showing what happened after the event.

Again, it is up to the students to decide what is most relevant or interesting. It could be immediately after the car crash, it could be the resulting court case, it could be 20 years into the future, showing the long term consequences, for example. Again, this should link to the initial tableau image. Perhaps all three images follow the journey of one central protagonist, or maybe it focuses on the lead up, impact and aftermath of an event on an entire town.

#### 5. Transition between the 3 tableaux.

Have the students cycle through the frozen images in chronological order. Start at the first frozen image (before the event), and then as an ensemble, transition to the second image (the event) together. Hold the image for a moment. Then transition to image 3 (after the event) together. Encourage students to be creative with how they transition. Eg. Use of space, change of pace, etc. If the three images are strong, they will tell a story.

# ACTIVITY #1 CONTINUED:

## STUDENT DEVISING EXERCISE FOR THEATRE FOR SOCIAL COMMENT

### 6. Start to fill in the gaps.

These 3 images form the basic structure of the performance. The students can then start at the first image, and improvise in live action and using dialogue, through to the second image, making sure they hit those frozen tableaux as their key moments.

This gives them markers to head towards, as their guide. How do they journey from one to the other? Have them do this several times, discussing with their group each time what worked and what didn't. Do this again from image 2 to image 3.

### 7. Celebrate the transitions

If the students require a transition from one scene to another, this is an opportunity to make the transition a slick and interesting feature, rather than the “bit we have to ignore”. Being inventive and economical with how the performers transition between time and space is one of our favourite parts of devising. This also introduces the Epic Theatre convention of breaking from character and celebrating the performer.

The principles of this exercise can be applied to creating one scene, or an entire full-length show, by breaking down each scene or section of the narrative into images first. After all, theatre is a visual medium and as they say, “a picture paints a thousand words”. Being conscious of those key visual moments can help to create an effective and memorable piece of theatre.





## **ACTIVITY #2:**

### **NEWS STORY**

Create and present a news story based on one or more of the headlines on the next page. Brainstorm the different characters, conventions and tropes of a news broadcast. Be inventive with how you can deliver intro music, jump time and location, deliver written headlines, still images, interview witnesses, and hear multiple perspectives from opinion panels.

## **ACTIVITY #3:**

### **LYRICS**

Create a dramatic movement to accompany the lyrics from the opening track of *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*. Include body percussion (and other instruments if available)

***United we stand, divided we fall  
I'm raising my hand,  
still coming up short  
they takin my land  
they takin my soul  
How we gonna find a way through it all?***

***I'm a LORE abiding citizen, L.O.R.E  
giving back to the land  
only take what we need  
how is this gonna end?  
what's our common ground?  
what have we lost and what will be found?***

***You talk about equality, I talk about equity,  
I talk about injustice  
and equal opportunity  
You blinded by your ignorance  
the power of your privilege  
You take away my innocence  
reaping upon the benefits***

***Tell me what your fighting for?  
Why you holding on so tightly for?***



# SCRIPT EXCERPTS

Read the script excerpts and act them out.

## SCENE 5 THE ECO LODGE

**VLAD:**

Ok, welcome to "Vlad's Pop Quiz". Question 1. True or False Great Dividing Range is longest mountain in single country.

**LIAM:**

True.

**VLAD:**

Correct. Where does it start in the north?

**LIAM:**

Torres Strait!

**VLAD:**

Correct again.

**MAX:**

*(mocking)* Torres Strait. He would know that.

**VLAD:**

And where it ends?

**MAX:**

The Grandpas.

**LIAM:**

Grampians, not Grandpas.

**VLAD:**

What year did first Europeans cross zee range?

**Max:**

1813.

*Beat.*

**VLAD:**

Do you think it's good?

**MAX:**

What, the food? Nah.

**VLAD:**

No. Colonisation.

**MAX:**

Oh, then yeah.

*(Liam clocks this and is surprised.)*

**VLAD:**

What about you? *(pointing at Liam)* You're Aborigine right? *(A brief pause, this word really sinks in for Liam.)* Do you think colonisation was good for your people? *(Liam looks around the class, feeling very exposed and vulnerable.)*

**LIAM:**

Ummm. It caused a lot of problems, that's for sure.

**VLAD:**

Yes, problems.

**MAX:**

What problems?

*Overhearing this Lionel jumps in.*

**LIONEL:**

Loss of our culture, spirituality, land...

**MAX:**

Here he goes.

**LIONEL:**

... THE GAPS, in health, education, opportunities.

**MAX:**

Opportunities? Liam has more opportunities than the rest of us. He's got a free education at one of the best schools in the state.

*(The group is looking at Liam for a response. Liam feels the tension but decides not to take the conversation further.)*

**VLAD:**

You get free education, like in Czechia?

**MRS DAMPIER:**

No, not exactly. Liam is a leader in his community Max, and earned his scholarship through his dedication to his music.

**LIONEL:**

Too right Shirley. These fancy schools don't hand out scholarships to anyone.

**MAX:**

Yeah, only if you tick the "right" boxes.

*(Liam gets up, washes his plate then exits. Everyone watches him exit. Brayden, Vlad, Mrs Dampier and Lionel throw a look at Max.)*

**MAX:**

What?

## SCRIPT EXCERPTS (CONTINUED)

### SCENE 10 THE GREAT DEBATE

*LIAM, BRAYDEN and MAX and sitting around the campfire after a long day of trekking sipping on hot chocolate.*

**MAX:**  
This place is giving me the creeps.

**LIAM:**  
This trek has been harder than I thought. Man, my knee is so sore.

**MAX:**  
Yeah, I miss my massage chair.

**BRAYDEN:**  
I miss my dad's fresh pasta. I'm gonna smash the biggest bowl of gnocchi when I get home.

**LIAM:**  
I miss my family aye, Mum and my brothers.

**BRAYDEN:**  
How long since you've been home?

**LIAM:**  
Going on four months. Barramundi season up there, Me and Dad would be fishing right now.

**MAX:**  
Why don't you go? Just fly back for a weekend.

**LIAM:**  
Ha. Yeah, I wish.

**MAX:**  
Yeah, it's tight at the moment. My sister was telling me that she started this new job and they lowballed her on the salary. \$98k a year. Unbelievable. She had to buy this 900 thousand dollar, one bedroom apartment in Manly. It's hard out there for low income earners.

**BRAYDEN:**  
Sorry to break it to you Max, your sister is not a "low income earner". Your whole family's loaded.

**MAX:**  
Maybe, but they've earned it. My family has worked very hard. They're not just lucky.

**BRAYDEN:**  
Well they might work hard, but there's still a fair bit of luck involved.

**MAX:**  
How so?

**BRAYDEN:**  
Your family's been wealthy for generations. My dad grew up in government housing and when my parents split he had to take a job in the mines in order to pay for me to go to this school. All our parents work hard Max, but not everyone starts from the same place.

**MAX:**  
Sure, but you all benefit from families like mine.

**BRAYDEN:**  
What do you mean?

**MAX:**  
The taxes and donations from people like my parents pays for public housing that your dad grew up in, and for scholarships like Liam's.

**LIAM:**  
I earned my scholarship, I applied for it like everyone else, no one handed it to me.

## SCRIPT EXCERPTS (CONTINUED)

### SCENE 10 THE GREAT DEBATE

CONTINUED

**MAX:**

But what I'm saying is, wealth brings opportunities. Not just for the wealthy. This is what I was getting at last night with colonisation. It's all well and good to crap on colonisation but if it wasn't for that your life would look completely different. You wouldn't be able to rely on music as a pathway that's for sure.

*Beat.*

**LIAM:**

Serious? Colonisation was designed to benefit one group of people, and they didn't look like me.

**MAX:**

And yet, miraculously, here you are getting a free education. You've gotta admit, it's been mostly positive for your people. You've got a house, running water, readily available food...

**LIAM:**

My people are stuck in your jails, sick with your diseases and dead at the hands of your system. Bruss, I've been to more funerals than weddings.

**MAX:**

Yes, but the government already said sorry for all of that.

**LIAM:**

That was for the Stolen Generation. Look, I'm not blaming you guys personally, but you can't act like it hasn't had an impact.

**BRAYDEN:**

True.

**MAX:**

Just get over it. It's boring.

**LIAM:**

You're damn right, it's boring, having this conversation over and over. How can we just get over it when you're talking about people that have lost everything, and been forced to assimilate. You need to have some compassion.

**MAX:**

You, and your people, need to stop blaming others for your problems and stop relying on handouts. Nothing is free in life.

**LIAM:**

That's rich coming from you, sitting there in your "privileged" massage chair with your flash new jet ski that Mummy and Daddy paid for. You wouldn't know hard work if it hit ya in the face.

**MAX:**

How about my fist hits you in the face?

**LIAM:**

Go'n then!

**MAX:**

At least my Dad has a real job.

**LIAM:**

At least my dad wants me around!

# INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

As co-writer of *CROSSING THE DIVIDE*, Benjin Maza has included in the script dialogue in two languages used in the Torres Strait Islands: Yumpla Tok, used across most of the Torres Straits, and Meriam Mir a dialect from the Eastern Torres Strait. The use of these languages is made on the authority of Benjin Maza's cultural and family connections to this part of the Torres Strait.

Besides the incorporation of these languages in scenes between the Torres Strait Islander characters ("Liam" and "Lionel", performed by Maza in the production) no protected Cultural Knowledge or Intellectual Property from First Nations people in the Torres Strait or elsewhere in Australia, is used in this production.

Events discussed in the play include the dispossession of the Wiradjuri, Dharug and Gundungurra people, and well known First Nations warriors/leaders who resisted the forces of colonisation. This theatrical retelling of about these people and events have been informed by accounts in the following resources, among others:

ABC News - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-17/curious-central-west-how-the-wiradjuri-survived-first-contact/10128822>

Australian National University. <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/windradyne-13251>

Blaxland, Gregory. *Journal of a Tour of Discovery Across The Blue Mountains, New South Wales in the Year 1813*. <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200411h.html>

Blue Mountains City Council – NSW Heritage Near Me Project, 6-foot Track.

Broome, Richard. *Australian Aboriginal History Podcast*.

Chatwin, Bruce. *The Songlines*. Pan Books Ltd, 1988.

Dampier, James. *Aussie History Podcast*.

Martin, Karen Lilian. *Please Knock Before You Enter*. Post Pressed, 2008.

Nunawading Military History Group. <https://u3anunawading.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MilitaryHistoryNews-28.pdf>

Pascoe, Bruce. *Dark Emu*. Magabala Books, 2014.

Spearim, Boe. *Frontier War Stories Podcast*.

