

STATE THEATRE COMPANY & MALTHOUSE THEATRE PRESENT

Brothers Wreck

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JADA ALBERTS



Study Guide

COMPILED BY HANNAH MCCARTHY-OLIVER

**MALTHOUSE
THEATRE**

**STATE
THEATRE
COMPANY**
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The veil of silence comes out of a desire to protect yourself, a natural instinct that's been corrupted and stretched to a point where we don't like to look at dead people... it's a false premise that we're safer. These things don't go away if we don't speak about them or look at them.

- Jada Alberts

27 June - 14 July, 2018
Odeon Theatre

RUNNING TIME

Approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes (no interval).

Recommended for audiences aged 15+.

WARNING: Contains strong adult themes, sexual and drug references, coarse language, references to mental illness, self-harm and suicide.

Need to talk?

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

Beyondblue: 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

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SYNOPSIS

Sweltering in the heat of Darwin's dry season, a young twenty-something man, Ruben, makes a gruesome discovery. Joe, Ruben's best mate and cousin, has hung himself with a fishing net. Ruben is still paralysed with shock when Adele, a cousin who is like a sister to Ruben, enters the space. She questions why Ruben is behaving strangely... until she goes outside and sees the reason for his shock. She screams out for Jarrod, her boyfriend. From this moment, their lives are changed forever.

Six months pass and the whole family, who have been bombarded with tragedy, remain deeply traumatised and affected by these events – especially Ruben. We meet David, a counsellor who has been working tirelessly to help Ruben express himself in order to start the healing process. David doesn't have much luck getting through to him. It's not until Aunty Petra arrives that the negative path the family is on changes course. She is like a breath of fresh air set against the oppressive humidity and heat of the top end.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

- Ruben -** Early 20s, seemingly untouchable, impulsive, quick-witted and sometimes aggressive. Ruben thinks he's figured out the world and his place in it. His mum died when he was young so he was raised by one of his aunties, who is also Adele's mum. Ruben is deeply traumatised by the losses he has experienced in his life.
- Adele -** Mid-20s, Ruben's cousin, who is more like a sister and is often referred to in this way. Adele is dedicated, usually calm and very sure of herself. She has a tendency to worry. She is loving and fiercely loyal.
- Jarrold -** Mid-20s, Adele's boyfriend. Jarrod is cheeky, thoughtful and generally confident. He is good with his hands and loves to make or fix things, mostly engines. Jarrod is a good partner to Adele and is usually patient with Ruben and his behaviour.
- David -** Late 50s, Ruben's counsellor. David is a former teacher who has worked in the Darwin area for most of his life. He has experienced traumatic events in his own life. He is long-suffering and genuinely cares about helping Ruben.
- Petra -** 40s, the youngest of three sisters. Petra is aunt to Adele and Ruben. She is a jovial, likeable character who "tells it like it is". She is honest with Ruben, but doesn't take any nonsense. Petra is full of life and loves her family.

CAST & CREATIVES



Jada Alberts
PLAYWRIGHT & DIRECTOR



Dale Ferguson
SET & COSTUME
DESIGNER



Chris Petridis
LIGHTING DESIGNER



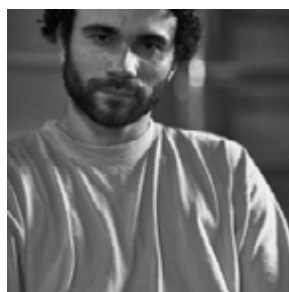
Kelly Ryall
COMPOSER & SOUND
DESIGNER



Dion Williams
RUBEN



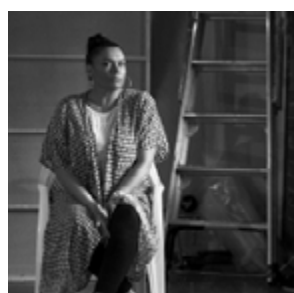
Leonie Whyman
ADELE



Nelson Baker
JARROD



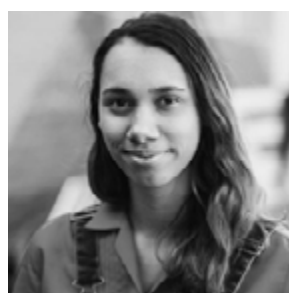
Trevor Jamieson
DAVID



Lisa Flangan
PETRA



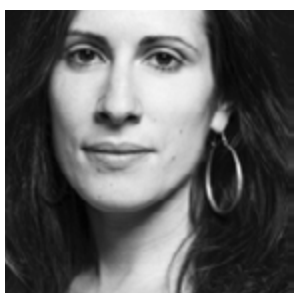
Josh Sherrin
STAGE MANAGER



**Alira McKenzie-
Williams**
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER



Suzanne Heywood
VOCAL COACH



Adena Jacobs
ASSOCIATE ARTIST

A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT & DIRECTOR

This play, in part, is a love letter to my family. A family (like all Indigenous families in this country) that has endured far more than they should have.

When I first began to write this play, I felt compelled to do something. People I loved were suffering. It is not often that Indigenous people aren't being tormented by something, but this was different. This time, people I loved had been witness to something devastating. The loss they felt was horrific and so traumatic, it would alter the course of their lives.

I imagine, for some Australians, it may be second nature to think that tragedy won't happen to you. But this is not something Indigenous Australians have the luxury to dream. I realised one day, as every Indigenous child does, that the white world I knew had stuck a target on my back. That it was only a matter of time before I succumbed to that which this country had prepared for me—the destruction of my mind and my body. The destruction of my culture. Every day since that moment, I have tried to rally against that doom. To learn how not to live in fear.

Indigenous Australians live daily with the sickly effects of that devastating force, most commonly known as colonisation. Its effects are ever-present and all around us. You may have the luxury of not seeing it all the time. We do not. Let me make no mistake. The effects are absolutely evident in the rate at which Indigenous Australians take their own lives. In some parts of Australia, those rates are the highest in the world, up to 20 times the national average. I couldn't watch people I love become statistics. When devastation was at our door again, I had to do something. I was in fear again. This time, I feared the depression would spread.

When the moment came, I sat across from my cousin and I could say nothing. I mumbled and stared at the floor. I found it impossible to say anything. I remember the echo of institutions I'd found myself in as a young, impressionable teenager—somewhat alone—well... they taught me to say nothing. They encouraged me to say nothing. I watched as the trauma of suicide and grief threatened to pull at the threads of my tight knit family, and truthfully, I was terrified. So I began to write what would later become this play. I wrote because I thought my family needed me. The deeper the play took me, the more I realised that it was, in fact, I who needed them.

Part way through, I realised that I'd forgotten something. My mothers, my grandmothers, my great grandmothers had taught it to me, but somehow I'd forgotten: all we have is each other. Our integrity, our legacy, and our very survival depend on one another. This has to be true of our two cultures. Black Australia has lived with intergenerational trauma and inequality for so long. We have talked about it, pleaded so often our voices are hoarse. What will it take for Australia to rally around us? What will it take for Indigenous Australians to be heard?

I'd like to thank the extraordinary team of individuals that helped put this work together. I feel very lucky to get to work with, and to learn from, such incredibly talented humans. In particular, to the cast—Lisa, Trevor, Dion, Leonie and Nelson—watching you work and helping you find these characters over the last few weeks has been a great, great pleasure. Thank you for your patience, your courage and your dedication. I'm very, very proud of what we've made together.

Jada Alberts

Q & A

WITH LEONIE WHYMAN - ADELE



PHOTO: TIM GREY

Who is your character and what is their relationship with other characters in the story?

Adele is Ruben's sister, Jarrod's girlfriend, Aunty Petra's niece, and she is a strong woman.

What process have you gone through to bring your character to life?

After reading the whole script, I established what Adele is doing in each scene and why she is doing it. This gives me a good insight into learning who she is.

What are your character's objectives?

To make sure everyone is safe and okay. She puts everyone else before herself.

What have been some of the challenges you have faced in bringing your role to life thus far?

The overall feel and story of the play have been very confronting. It has a dark storyline... but I manage.

What do you like most about your character and what have you learnt about them?

I love that Adele is a strong female in the play and won't take no for an answer. She has taught me to find and use my own strength.

Do you have any favourite parts of the show?

One of my favourite scenes would be scene 10, when the whole family have an intervention with Ruben. Adele, in this scene, is "slamming" Ruben, but it is coming from a loving place. *"You are my business dickhead. If something happens to you. I'm f*\$^ed."*

What is it that you engage with most in the story of *Brothers Wreck*?

I love seeing all of Ruben's vulnerable sides, when he's alone or with Aunty Petra. It shows that he is not as strong as he thinks he is and it's okay to show weakness.

Q & A

WITH LISA FLANAGAN - PETRA



PHOTO: TIM GREY

Who is your character and what is their relationship with other characters in the story?

Aunty Petra, the youngest of three sisters. I am the aunty of the main characters in this story.

What process have you gone through to bring your character to life?

My body is my instrument – warm ups, connecting with my character physically and vocally, allows me to find my character’s emotional state.

What are your character’s objectives?

Petra is there to help her family deal with the grief that is there from the loss of Joe to her sister Isobel who is in hospital.

What have been some of the challenges you have faced in bringing your role to life thus far?

There haven’t been any challenges, as I’m the rock and spine of my own family in Adelaide. So I completely relate to Petra.

What do you like most about your character and what have you learnt about them?

I love that Petra is so full of life. She is a breath of fresh air for the young ones. She is their rock, as I am for my family.

Do you have any favourite lines from the show?

“I don’t want you going to jail, Ruben.” Petra doesn’t want another life to be lost.

What is it that you engage with most in the story of *Brothers Wreck*?

Death, loss, grief, confusion, love, life, family.

Q & A

WITH TREVOR JAMIESON - DAVID



PHOTO: TIM GREY

Who is your character and what is their relationship with other characters in the story?

David is a counsellor to Ruben and his family.

What process have you gone through to bring your character to life?

Every actor has their own process. Mine is... I reflect on some of my family members, from real life to on stage life.

What are your character's objectives?

My character tries to engage with people who've lost someone, help make others' lives better, especially if they are survivors of suicide.

What have been some of the challenges you have faced in bringing your role to life thus far?

Just recently, I lost a family member to suicide, so I have experienced the reality of this experience.

What do you like most about your character and what have you learnt about them?

I guess I can relate very closely to the role. I, too, play that role in my community in sharing the same issues. It's very close to my heart.

Do you have any favourite lines from the show?

"Maybe it never does. Go, I mean, it hasn't for me." [Which means] that suicide still stays in the family circle and no one is to blame, and we are always seeking resolution. Grief can be slow.

What is it that you engage with most in the story of *Brothers Wreck*?

People have started to realise that the experiences of trauma are generational. Now important follow-up conversations regarding mental health and the like are happening, which is good.

DESIGN NOTES



PHOTO: TIM GREY

The set evokes a psychological space inside Ruben's mind.

The doors on the stage represent Ruben closing himself off to the world outside. He does not want to engage with living and has disassociated himself from reality. As the story progresses, and Ruben slowly starts to be open to healing, the doors also start to open to let the air in again. All doors open in one direction from left to right. This motion through the space represents air passing through.

The heat of Darwin has influenced the look of the sets and costumes. Besides the Darwin setting, however, the set does not represent a particular location, time or era. It is visually cold and oppressive, and the colour palate of the design is neutral (white and light grey).

There is no colour on stage until towards the end where Petra wears a pink-coloured top. It is her character that "brings colour" to the others' lives. The bright colour represents that she is a catalyst for the change in Ruben's mind.

Besides Petra's top, the costumes are generally naturalistic and loose-fitting. They visually inform the audience of the character's personalities. There are not many costume changes.

The visuals of this play are stripped back to their bare bones. Minimal furniture is utilised and includes, a couple of chairs, a table, couch and TV. The minimalistic nature of the set allows the space and the performers to "do the talking".

The traumatising effects of the suicide is stifling, a lot like the humidity of Darwin. As the air clears, the set depicts the pressure releasing.

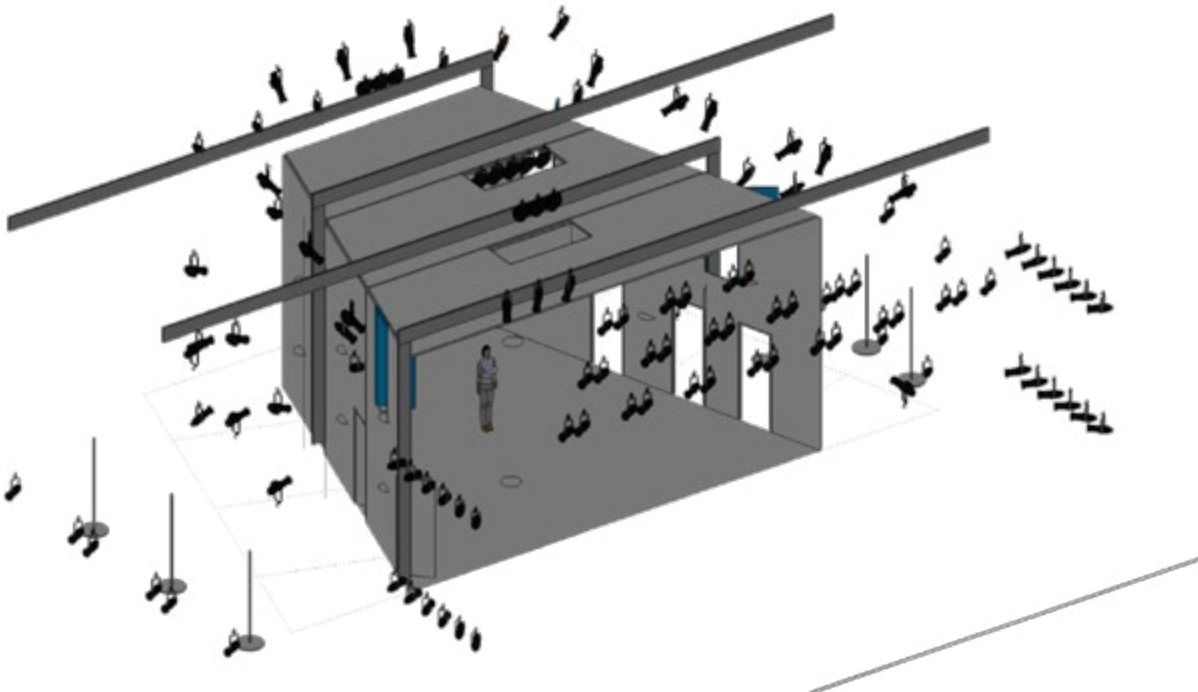
NOTES ON LIGHTING

WITH CHRIS PETRIDIS - LIGHTING DESIGNER

- On this show, I started with a lighting sketch, where I throw down all the angles, lamps and ideas onto a blank document before putting it into the theatre.
- The designs in this show are less literal and more of an emotional storytelling.
- I like to work with the set designer as much as possible.
- *Brothers Wreck* has a strong and challenging design.
- The set is a full box: not many lighting angles can be used.
- There is a roof over the top of the set. This limits overhead lighting.
- The set is slightly translucent so lights are able to be focussed through the walls.
- I use the whole set like a cyclorama.
- This show has been performed before and the design was realistic. This staging is the complete opposite. It is a psychological space and I haven't created "realistic" lighting.
- The types of lights used in *Brothers Wreck* are standard profiles and fresnels, as well as Source Four Lustrs, which are the theatre standard and the best of the best for LED profiles.

About Source Four Lustrs:

etcconnect.com/Products/Lighting-Fixtures/Source-Four-LED-Series-2/Source-Four-LED-Series-2-Lustr

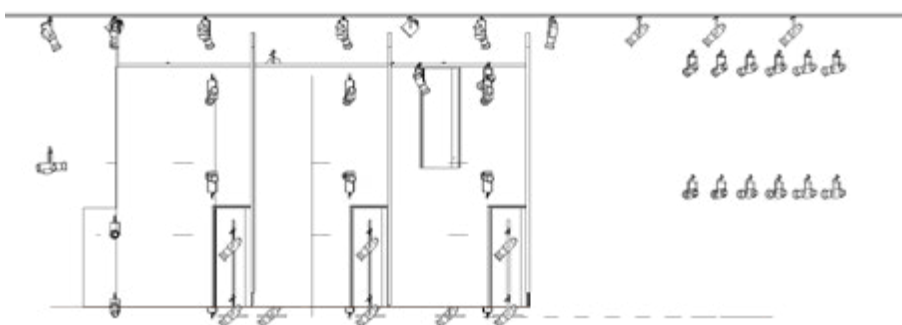
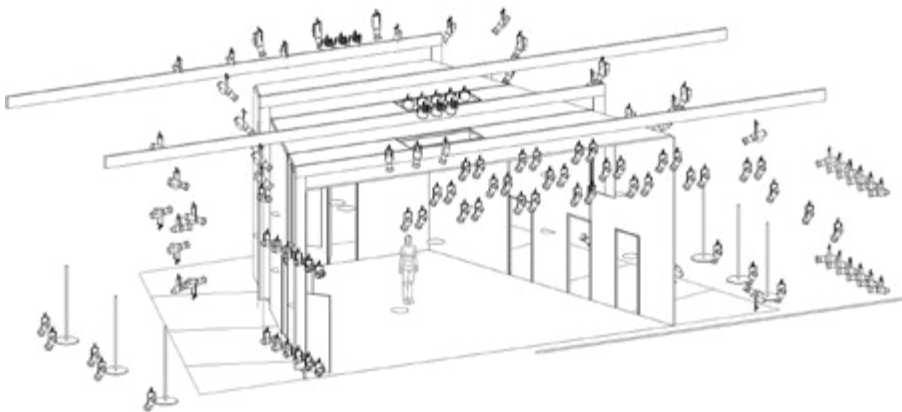


LIGHTING PLOT COURTESY OF CHRIS PETRIDIS

NOTES ON LIGHTING (CONT.)

WITH CHRIS PETRIDIS - LIGHTING DESIGNER

- Normally lighting designers can use a flood light, but because there is no “masking” with dark curtains, etc - walls we used the Lustrs. These are very expensive, sophisticated lights.
- My aim was to get as much light into “the box” as possible.
- The lighting colour scheme is warm-based, with not a lot of cool required. Other lighting is based around the heavier blues and ambers, as overhead.
- The lighting design is “nothing radical”.
- Towards the end of the show the Lustrs project lavenders, pastels etc.
- The emotions of the characters lead the lighting design. Time and location were irrelevant.
- Whilst working on *In The Club* [another 2018 show from State Theatre Company], I was thinking that one day I would like to do a set where all the walls are translucent... I was inspired by the LED bars from *In the Club*. Creating the lighting design for that show prepared me for the aesthetics of *Brothers Wreck*.
- The set works in harmony with the lighting due to its translucency.
- Having lived in the tropics, Darwin has influenced what I am trying to do: the thickness in the air, the humidity, its location close to the equator. We let off a big haze at the beginning of the show and let it dissipate... The haze is thick and claustrophobic, but dissipates as Ruben slowly moves towards healing.



LIGHTING PLOTS COURTESY OF CHRIS PETRIDIS

Q & A

WITH KELLY RYALL - COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER



How would you describe your sound design and composition for *Brothers Wreck*?

The music for the work sits in a psychological space, playing to the way the main character hears the world. Through the experience of trauma the world becomes heightened and senses more acute, which allows me to play with world in a non-naturalistic way. The music sits somewhere between immersive soundscape and layered musical harmonies.

What processes did you go through to create it?

I have been in conversation with Jada [Alberts, the playwright and director] months before rehearsal started gathering our aural tonal palate. We sent each other musical inspirations and then slowly narrowed them down to rhythms, textures and tones we both agreed on. From there, I started to make musical sketches that exist in that same world. I broke these sketches into instruments and then improvised with them during rehearsed scenes, with the aim of allowing the performers and text to lead the dynamic of the music. From there, I picked the best moments and refined them into tracks which will end up in the final version of the show.

What outside influences have inspired your final works?

I have spent a lot of time imagining the aural and physical density of the air in Darwin, the location where the play is set. As a tropical city, there is always sound – whether that is from insects or the weather – and due to the humidity the air is always quite thick. I took these qualities and tried re-imagine them as musical-scapes, using extreme high and low frequencies and aural motion.

What challenges did you face in creating it?

The challenge is always to create music that doesn't lead. Making sure the music allows the actors to dive in and out of various emotional states without signposting it. This is why I spend a lot of time in the rehearsal room, making sure the music sits inside the work not outside it.

What do you hope the audience thinks and feels (experiences) whilst listening to your composition?

I hope they feel transported to the physical and psychological places the work travels to.

What is it that you engage with most in the story of *Brothers Wreck*?

The immersion in the tragedy of the story and the amazing family bonds that allow for redemption.

SETTING, STYLE & EXPLANATIONS

Setting

A location in Darwin – the audience cannot tell if it's indoors or outdoors. Time is not clear, but the costumes indicate that it is set in the present day. There are a multitude of screen doors that could lead anywhere. The space reflects and evokes the mental state and processes of the characters on stage – primarily those of the protagonist, Ruben.

Acting Style: Realism

The theatre of Realism investigated and portrayed real people in everyday situations, dealing with common problems. It was, and is, a theatre that takes an unflinching look at the way things really are in the world. Writers of realist theatre in their works desire to present life as it really happens to people. Their intention is to illuminate humankind's struggles and concerns in a straightforward way.

Source: enotes.com/homework-help/what-were-main-features-theatre-realism-339642

What are Salty Plums?

Salty plums are made from dried prunes, cured with a sugary, salty liquorice mixture. They originate from China, but in Japan a similar variety is known as *umeboshi*.

More: abc.net.au/local/videos/2012/06/01/3516374.htm

Green Tree Frogs

The green tree frog is a protected species in the Northern Territory. It is one of Australia's most recognised and loved frogs.

It is larger than most frogs as it grows up to 10cm long and it can live up to 16 years in captivity.

The green tree frog usually has bright green skin, though this can be dulled depending on the environment. It has a white belly, gold eyes and sometimes white spots on its back.

The frog's skin produces a fluid that is believed to be antibacterial and antiviral which may help in medicine.

The green tree frog makes a "brawk-brawk" call.

Source: nt.gov.au/environment/animals/wildlife-in-nt/green-tree-frog

SETTING, STYLE & EXPLANATIONS

Explaining “The Front Yard Challenge”

Joe, Jarrod and Ruben found a tinny (a little aluminium boat) in a dump. It had lots of holes which they patched up. Joe found an old motor. The boat sat on the front lawn for a long amount of time not going anywhere and they called it “The Front Yard Challenge”.

Explaining “Brothers Wreck”

The boys went fishing all the time. “All day and all night if they could. They found this spot on the harbour with three sunken ships all in a clump. ‘Brothers Wreck’ they called it.” – Adele, *Brothers Wreck*

WEATHER IN THE TOP END

The Top End of the Northern Territory has two distinct seasons, the ‘wet’ and the ‘dry’.

Wet season (November – April)

The wet season in Darwin is characterised by high humidity, monsoonal rains and storms. Average temperatures range from 24.7 - 32 °C (76.5 - 89.6°F), and humidity can push past 80 per cent. The average annual rainfall is 1727.3 mm (68 inches) and January is the wettest month. Despite this, January and February is considered by many as the most beautiful time of year in the Top End. Sunny days and afternoon storms refresh the landscape, and animals and plants flourish. October to December is the season of spectacular lightning storms, an event eagerly awaited by locals who watch the show from beachside restaurants and bars.

Dry season (May – October)

The dry season, from May until October, is characterised by warm, dry sunny days and cool nights. Temperatures typically range from 21.6– 31.8°C (70.9 - 89.2°F), and humidity levels are much lower: around 60 – 65 per cent. Relatively cool weather arrives in May, and until July, nights are crisp with temperatures ranging from 17 - 23 °C (62.6 - 73.4°F).

Source: australia.com/en-us/facts-and-planning/weather-in-australia/weather-in-darwin.html

LARRAKIA PEOPLE

The following has been used with permission from the Larrakia Nation.

What area is Larrakia Land?

The Larrakia people are the traditional owners of the Darwin region. Our country runs from Cox peninsula in the west to Gunn Point in the north, Adelaide River in the east and down to the Manton Dam area southwards.

Larrakia History

The Larrakia had a vibrant traditional society based on our close relationship with the sea and trade with neighbouring groups such as the Tiwi, Wagait and Wulna. These groups shared ceremonies, songlines and intermarried.

When the first settlers arrived in the Darwin area, the Larrakia provided them with food. Despite conflict and marginalisation, from the beginning the Larrakia participated in the cultural life of the early settlement, and lived in and around the city, before we were moved out to camps further away from the city. Many popular sites around Darwin also hold specific meaning for Larrakia people, such as Stokes Hill, Mindil Beach, Rapid Creek and Casuarina Beach.

Larrakia Land Claim

The Larrakia have the longest running land claim in the Northern Territory, the Kenbi Land Claim. The court found in favour of us, but there has been no transfer of land ownership. Larrakia's native title rights were controversially rejected in 2006. Despite receiving no legal recognition of continued connection to country, the Larrakia people continue to care for our land and water. We continue to preserve our stories and culture, making sure they are passed on to the next generation.

Larrakia People Today

Today, we are a vibrant Aboriginal nation numbering around 2,000 people. Larrakia are broadly recognised for their strengths in performance, music and art. Many Larrakia have achieved mainstream success as doctors, lawyers, sportsmen and hold senior positions in government and other organisations.

Larrakia feel particularly strongly about our role as Traditional Owners for the Territory's capital, looking after visitors to our country. We continue to be active in the political sphere, but we are also diplomatic, willing to work with people to achieve the best outcome even from a position of disadvantage. We aim to foster partnerships according to the cultural protocols, which we ask you to understand and respect.

Source: larrakia.com/about/the-larrakia-people

THEMES

Family

The bonds between the characters in *Brothers Wreck* are strong. They cause each other to feel stress and frustration, as well as providing support and love for one another. Despite everything, they are fiercely loyal and these family bonds end up leading Ruben from the darkness to the light. You do not always have to be related by blood to become someone's family.

Grief

Grief is a natural response you experience when you lose someone close to you. Grieving is a normal part of life. **There is no right way to grieve – everyone is different.** It can begin as soon as you become aware of a loss and can continue over the course of the first 12 months.

Adele and Ruben cope with losing their cousin to suicide in very different ways. Ruben has basically “lost the plot”, whereas Adele’s nurturing and strong spirited side kicks in. Despite being in the house when Joe’s demise was discovered, it is Adele who needs to look after Ruben.

Source: headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Resource-library/Young-people/Grief-web.pdf

Substance abuse

Ruben self medicates himself with alcohol to escape pain. He has issues with substance abuse.

Substance use disorders involve using too much alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, and are also known as substance abuse, substance dependence or addictions.

Around 1 in 20 Australians have an addiction or substance abuse problem.

Signs of substance use problems include when: someone loses control of their use of alcohol or drugs, the substance use becomes harmful - for example, causing medical problems, injuries, inability to work or damage to relationships, someone becomes dependent, meaning the user becomes tolerant of the effects of the substance, and experiences cravings or withdrawal symptoms when stopping.

Source: healthdirect.gov.au/substance-abuse

THEMES



PHOTO: TIM GREY

Mental illness

Mental illnesses are also called mental disorders. They are extremely common in the Australian population.

A recent survey showed that 1 in every 5 Australians suffered from a mental disorder in a given year, and almost half the population has suffered a mental disorder at some time in their life. The most common mental disorders are depression, anxiety and substance use disorders.

There are many different types of mental illness. They can range from mild disorders lasting only a few weeks through to severe illnesses that can be life-long and cause serious disability.

Mental illnesses can affect people's thoughts, mood, behaviour or the way they perceive the world around them. A mental illness causes distress and affects the person's ability to function at work, in relationships or in everyday tasks.

Mental illness can attract stigma and discrimination, which can be two of the biggest problems for a person with these disorders.

If you suffer from mental illness, you are not alone!

Sharing your struggles, thoughts and feelings with a trained professional is an intelligent, strong, sensible thing to do. Working things through with a counsellor or psychologist will help you to clear your mind, take the weight off your shoulders and assist you in working out strategies on how to deal with tough experiences. Sharing your dark thoughts and feelings takes away their power, and will bring you into the light.

Source: healthdirect.gov.au/mental-illness

THEMES

Trauma

The characters in *Brothers Wreck* have all experienced traumatic events.

A traumatic event is something that threatens your life or safety, or the lives of people around you. It is an experience that is stressful and has a significant impact on your emotional state.

A traumatic event might be a natural disaster such as a bushfire, flood or earthquake, or it might be as a result of a serious accident, a physical or sexual assault, losing someone close to you, or something else. Trauma can also be experienced across many repeated traumatic events (such as abuse, neglect or violence over time).

65% of Australians have experienced a traumatic event.

Trauma might be very different to anything you've experienced before and it can be hard to make sense of. Experiencing trauma might leave you with many questions about your safety and your control over your life. It can be especially difficult to deal with these feelings if you're also dealing with other changes in your life, like getting a job, managing relationships, or moving out of home.

Getting support after a traumatic experience can make a big difference to your recovery.

Source: headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Trauma-web.pdf

Suicide loss survivors

Ruben, Adele, Petra, Jarrod and David are all suicide survivors. A suicide survivor is one of the family and friends of someone who has died by suicide. This type of passing has been described as a "death like no other".

Death by suicide stuns with soul-crushing surprise, leaving family and friends not only grieving the unexpected death, but confused and lost by this haunting loss.

Estimates are that for every suicide, "there are seven to ten people intimately affected". This event is like an atom bomb going off in a family and the destruction is immeasurable. Family members often end up suffering from anxiety and depression themselves.

Source: psychologytoday.com/au/blog/two-takes-depression/201311/understanding-survivors-suicide-loss

THEMES



PHOTO: TIM GREY

Healing

Jada Alberts' script finishes with a message of hope - the family rally together and become a stepping stone on the path to Ruben's healing. If you hit rock bottom or your life seems to spiral out of control, breakthroughs can be made and healing can occur. When people come back from trauma, which takes time and work, they are mostly stronger and wiser. Sometimes a small emotional scar remains, but that is a reminder to value life and our blessings.

Healing (literally meaning "to make whole") is the process of the restoration of health from an unbalanced, diseased or damaged organism. The result of healing can be a cure to a health challenge, but one can heal without being cured.

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Healing

Recovering from mental illness includes not only getting better, but achieving a full and satisfying life. Many people affirm that their journey to recovery has not been a straight, steady road. Rather there are ups and downs, new discoveries and setbacks. Over time, it is possible to look back and see, despite the halting progress and discouragements, how far we have really come. Each time we reach such a milestone, we see that we have recovered a piece of our lives and we draw new strength from it. The journey to full recovery takes time, but positive changes can happen all along the way.

Source: mentalhealthamerica.net/recovery-journey

Other excellent articles on trauma and healing:

lousehay.com/healing-ptsd-trauma-mind-body-anxiety

trauma-recovery.ca/recovery/phases-of-trauma-recovery

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH

Many of the issues outlined below are addressed in Jada Alberts' script for *Brothers Wreck*.

The following risk factors are interconnected, and a person with mental illness might show any number of them.

- **Widespread grief and loss.** This includes grief about the loss of culture, land, connection, and many more areas, often connected to the history of invasion.
- **Stolen children.** The impact of the past Stolen Generations and ongoing removal of children puts a lot of mental pressure on people, especially when government departments just follow procedures.
- **Unresolved trauma.** Trauma is a huge factor in Aboriginal health and an agent for many health conditions. If unresolved, trauma can debilitate a person and be passed on to the next generation.
- **Loss of identity & culture.** When Aboriginal people are separated from their culture and identity, for example when they don't live on their traditional homelands or don't know where they are coming from, they don't feel complete or search for who they are.
- **Discrimination and racism.** Discrimination based on race or culture, as well as racism, can have a huge impact on any person's mental health.
- **Few economic opportunities.** Due to other factors, many Aboriginal people are economically and socially disadvantaged. If you have to constantly worry about finance or how you are perceived by others, this worry contributes to mental illness.
- **Poor physical health.** Physical health problems contribute to the feeling of inadequacy and exclusion, and some people might stop socialising or exercising. 23% of Aboriginal people reported having both a mental health condition and one or more other long-term health conditions.
- **Incarceration.** Being imprisoned has a huge effect on people's mental health.
- **Culturally inappropriate treatment.** Especially the health area is prone to assess Aboriginal people with non-Aboriginal criteria, or expose them to culturally insensitive environments.
- **Violence.** Domestic violence, as well as violence in prisons, for example, contributes to poor mental health.
- **Substance abuse.** When Aboriginal people misuse substances to ease their inner pain, it can lead to follow-on issues, such as depression.

Source: creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/health/mental-health-and-aboriginal-people

QUOTES FROM BROTHERS WRECK

Ruben: *Everyone's some kinda dog out there. Got the sly dogs, the copper dogs, mad dogs, the stray dogs, the lums dogs, every kinda dog you can think of. I'm surprised you haven't been out there, picked yourself up a pup.*

Ruben: *The more money you got... the more you lose.*

Ruben: *Oh come on, I'm giving you that one, take it. So what have we covered so far? Got the Dad issues, check. Mum passed away, check. Aunty had to raise me, check. No father figure...*

David: *You wanna ignore the hole in your chest, hug your mob after funeral time and forget about it? Mob can't survive like that, you cant survive like that. We gotta talk to each other, as hard as it is, 'cause I guarantee you, that phone will ring and you'll have to say goodbye again. (Beat) You know how much we've lost. How far this thing has spread.*

David: *Why do you do that?*

Ruben: *Do what?*

David: *Turn this into a joke?*

Ruben: *(smiling) Coping mechanism, I guess.*

David: *Don't be a smart arse.*

Petra: *Sometimes in life you get to hide from things you don't wanna see, but there's no hidin from that accident. Even when I fly over I know exactly when I'm passin' that place, can feel it in my bones. Doesn't matter if I'm asleep or nothing, I'll wake up to feel that feeling.*

Jarrold: *(laughing) No, why? I'm too hardcore to say that word. Flower shop means the same thing, don't it?*

Adele: *(laughing) Say it because that's what it's friggin' called, it's a florist. A spade is a spade, a florist is a florist, a florist is not a flower shop. Say florist ya big shit, you're not a little boy.*

Adele: *Does it ever go away, the picture in your head?*

Jarrold: *Every \$#% day I hear it - what more could I have done? Did I do enough? What if I did more?*

THINK ABOUT & EXPLORE



PHOTO: TIM GREY

What did Petra mean when she said, “*Grief is a slippery little sucker with a mind of its own*”?

Compare and contrast the ways Adele, Ruben and Jarrod all responded to trauma and grief in different ways.

In what ways did the design elements of *Brothers Wreck* evoke a psychological space?

Ruben’s family were a fiercely loyal and tight knit bunch, despite driving each other crazy. Is there such a thing as a normal family? Discuss.

Research how weather affects the way people feel? In particular, humidity and heat.

In what ways did grief and traumatic experiences affect Ruben?

Why do you think the court order was put in place for Ruben to undertake approximately 10-12 counselling sessions?

Petra was like a breath of fresh air and the family member who was able to get Ruben to turn and emotional corner. Why do you think this was so?

“*...you are, cryin when she was happy and cryin when she was sad. Only way to get through this world, Del let it all hang out. Don’t you ever apologise for that.*” What did Petra mean by this statement?

THINK ABOUT & EXPLORE (CONT.)



PHOTO: TIM GREY

The statistics suggest that mental health issues are experienced in higher numbers by Indigenous Australians. Why do you think this is the case and what do you think the government can do to help alleviate this problem?

If you experience anxiety, depression or a feeling of hopelessness where you can no longer see the joy in life, what steps can you take to move towards healing?

What do you think Ruben meant by saying, “*The more money you got... the more you lose*”?

If you went through a traumatic experience, what are the steps you could take to help you to heal and put it behind you?

After viewing *Brothers Wreck*, what have you learnt about family values and bonds? How important was this to Ruben’s recovery?

Research kinship in Indigenous spirituality.

What do you think Jada Alberts’ intentions were in writing and directing *Brothers Wreck*?

Research substance abuse. List all the reasons you can find as to why people turn to drugs and alcohol to self-medicate. What are the long-term effects of doing this?

DESIGN YOUR OWN PRODUCTION

Design process

- Brainstorm as many adjectives as you can to describe *Brothers Wreck*. Research all you can! Make notes.
- What colours come to mind when reflecting on this production?
- Make a list of all the themes and symbolism.
- Who is the audience for this show?
- What will your show make the audience think, feel and see?
- Collect a number of images which incorporate/symbolise all of the above and stick them into a visual diary. Sketch out or list your ideas. Stick these in.
- Work towards a final product and let all of the above inform your designs. Everything included should be there for a reason.

Publicity

Follow the design process above and create your own *Brothers Wreck* poster, billboard, program cover or public installation.

Front of House

Following the design process above, can you create your own front of house experience for *Brothers Wreck*?

Film

Using the process listed above, design (create a storyboard) and film a one minute trailer or advertisement for your own production of *Brothers Wreck*.

Set and costumes

Following the process above, design your own set and costumes for *Brothers Wreck*.

Writing

Write a 1-2 minute monologue for either Petra or Ruben. They could reflect on their experiences and voice their thoughts on the events in the story.

OR

Individually or in pairs, write the next chapter in Ruben's story. What happens to Ruben next? This should be approximately one page in length.

DRAMA REVIEW PREPARATION

- Summarise *Brothers Wreck* using descriptive language.
- What was unique about *Brothers Wreck* compared to other shows?
- What was the plot?
- What themes were explored in *Brothers Wreck*?
- What were the intentions of the playwright/director? What evidence could you see in the show that reinforced these?
- Describe the blocking/stage movement.
- What was the historical context and background of *Brothers Wreck*?
- Evaluate the cast's performance overall then choose individuals and write about their character portrayals. Describe how they brought their characters to life, their relationships with the audience, energy levels, physical and vocal expression, focus and character interpretation, etc. Did they do all of this successfully?
- List any direct quotes from *Brothers Wreck* and who said them.
- Describe and evaluate the sets, lighting, costumes, music and any other technical elements used in *Brothers Wreck*. Write at least three paragraphs on this.
- Write about a scene in detail, describing all the technical elements and how they all worked together to tell the story?
- How did these technical elements, as well as the acting and direction all work together to create the final experience for the audience?
- What were some key moments in *Brothers Wreck* and how did the audience react?
- What was the overall audience reaction to *Brothers Wreck*?
- What might have they been thinking about or considering after leaving the theatre?
- Come up with one statement to describe *Brothers Wreck*.
- Why was/wasn't this production successful?

An excellent guide on how to review and respond to theatre:
bbc.com/education/guides/zxs9xnb/revision

A video clip that clearly defines the purpose of lighting and how technical elements work together to tell a story: youtube.com/watch?v=wqMYsjHU5rU

USEFUL LINKS

Brothers Wreck

theatrepeople.com.au/brothers-wreck

stagewhispers.com.au/reviews/brothers-wreck

deadlyvibe.com.au/2014/05/belvoir-play-honest-look-grief-loss

bimaprojects.org.au/our-work/proppa-deadly

smh.com.au/entertainment/brothers-wreck-grips-audience-at-belvoir-20140529-zrrs2.html

theage.com.au/entertainment/rising-star-of-indigenous-storytelling-confronts-suicide-in-brothers-wreck-20180525-hl0kac.html

Themes

psychologytoday.com/au/blog/two-takes-depression/201311/understanding-survivors-suicide-loss

youtube.com/watch?v=RFDW9dkLkp4#action=share

telethonkids.org.au/our-research/early-environment/developmental-origins-of-child-health/aboriginal-maternal-health-and-child-development/working-together-second-edition

creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/health/mental-health-and-aboriginal-people

creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/health/mental-health-and-aboriginal-people#ixzz5FZece6VK

healthyplace.com/suicide/effects-of-suicide-on-family-members-loved-ones

abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0

psychology.org.au/for-the-public/Psychology-topics/Trauma

facebook.com/groups/145124732199129

Beyondblue

beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety-and-depression-checklist-k10

beyondblue.org.au/get-support/national-help-lines-and-websites

beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety-and-depression-checklist-k10

beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people

beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/suicide-prevention/support-and-recovery-strategies/support-after-a-suicide-attempt/finding-our-way-back

Lifeline

lifeline.org.au/static/uploads/files/suicide-prevention-wallet-card-wfaxbvfkhgng.pdf

lifeline.org.au/static/uploads/files/survivors-of-suicide-booklet-wfmrrknsvnce.pdf

lifeline.org.au/static/uploads/files/what-is-suicide-bereavement-wfyulynhoama.pdf

lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/lifeline-information/statistics-on-suicide-in-australia

Your mother would be so proud of you, boy. And me and your other mother, we proud as punch too.

- Petra, *Brothers Wreck*



PHOTO: TIM GREY

The only thing that can bring us out of those places is if we lean into each other and ask for help... It's about being bold and courageous when you're stuck.

- Jada Alberts

If you or anyone you know is feeling depressed, hopeless or anxious, there are people who want to help you.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

BeyondBlue: 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au