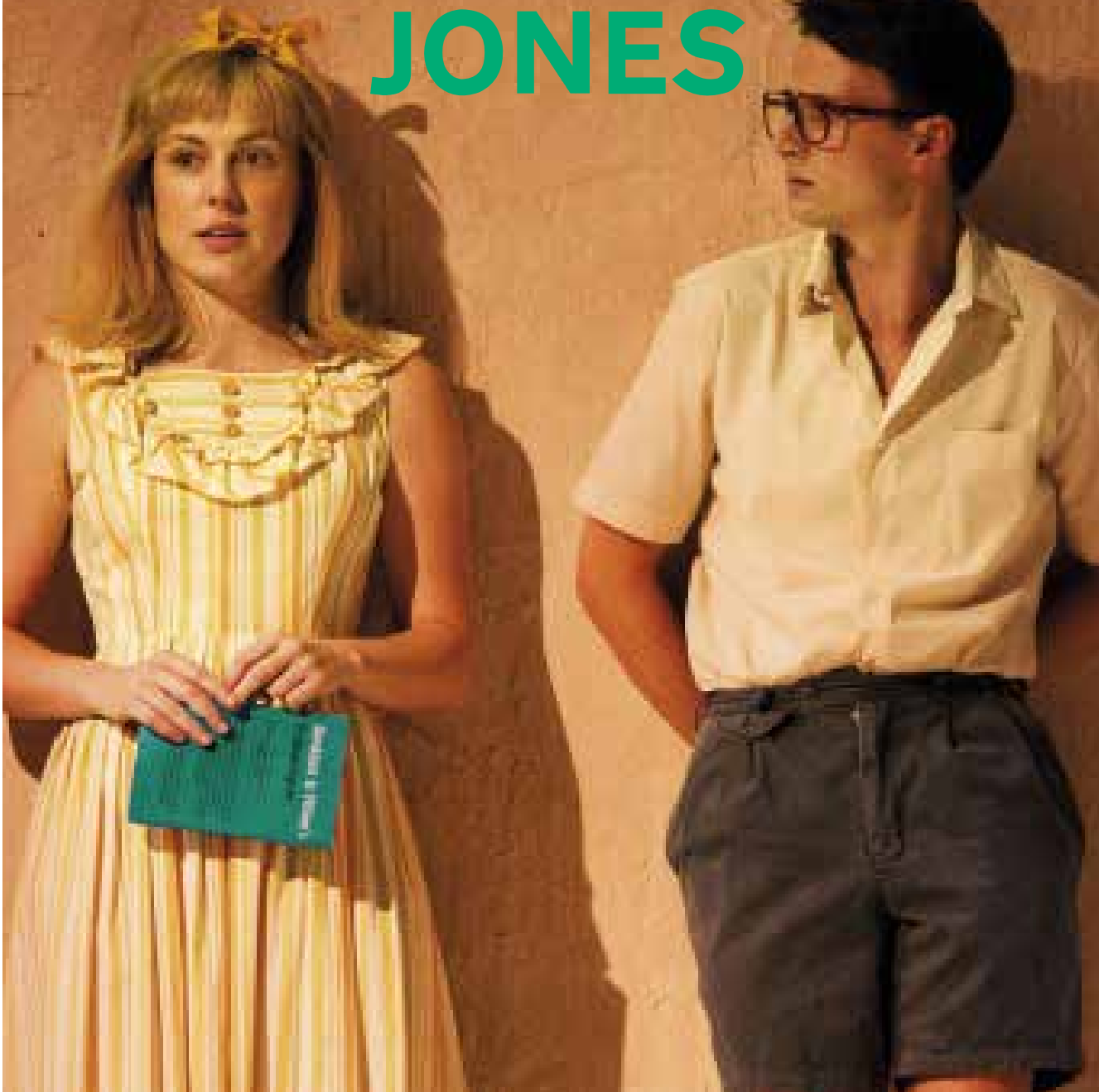


JASPER JONES



25 JANUARY - 19 FEBRUARY 2017

LEARNING RESOURCES

BELVOIR



Belvoir presents
JASPER JONES

Based on the novel by **CRAIG SILVEY**

Adapted by **KATE MULVANY**

Director **ANNE-LOUISE SARKS**

*This production of Jasper Jones opened at
Belvoir St Theatre on Thursday 26 January 2017.*

Set Designer **MICHAEL HANKIN**

Costume Designer **MEL PAGE**

Lighting Designer **MATT SCOTT**

Composer & Sound Designer **STEVE TOULMIN**

Fight Choreographer **SCOTT WITT**

Choreographer **SARA BLACK**

Indigenous Advisor **JADA ALBERTS**

Stage Manager **ISABELLA KERDIJK**

Assistant Stage Manager **JENNIFER PARSONAGE**

With

KATE BOX

TOM CONROY

STEVE LE MARQUAND

MATILDA RIDGWAY

GUY SIMON

CHARLES WU

*Jasper Jones was first produced by Barking Gecko
Theatre Company in 2014, directed by John Sheedy.*



Guy and Tom

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ABOUT BELVOIR



One building.

Six hundred people.

Thousands of stories.

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Brenna Hobson, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

Belvoir Education

Our Education Program provides students and teachers with insights into the work of Belvoir and first hand experiences of the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our arts access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work.

Explore our education pages at www.belvoir.com.au/education

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM



Craig Silvey
Author



Kate Mulvany
Adaptor



Anne-Louise Sarkis
Director



Jada Alberts
Indigenous Advisor



Sara Black
Choreographer



Kate Box
Mrs Bucktin/Warwick



Tom Conroy
Charlie Bucktin



Michael Hankin
Set Designer



Isabella Kerdijk
Stage Manager



Steve Le Marquand
Mr Bucktin/
Mad Jack Lionel



Mel Page
Costume Designer



Jennifer Parsonage
Assistant Stage
Manager



Matilda Ridgway
Laura Wishart/
Eliza Wishart



Matt Scott
Lighting Designer



Guy Simon
Jasper Jones



Charles Wu
Jeffrey Lu

ADAPTOR'S NOTE: KATE MULVANY



Kate Mulvany

It's a rare gift as a writer to be given the chance to adapt one of the nation's best-loved books. A gift... and a fearsome challenge. Because everyone has their own 'favourite bit' of *Jasper Jones* that is seared into their memory like they actually lived it.

'I hope you got the cricket match in!' 'Please don't leave out the superheroes - Batman is best.' 'How are you gonna fit the entire town of Corrigan on a stage?!'

My own 'favourite bits' shift and expand every single time I dip into the pages of the book *Jasper Jones*. Pulling apart Craig Silvey's masterful text has been an incredible joy. Both Craig and I hail from country Western Australia. We carry the sense memory of towns like Corrigan in our bones. The incredible characters that blow in and out, like an afternoon southerly. The pillars and politics of those small-town communities. The melting pot of cultures that call these pastoral-industrial dustbowls home, and gift their stories to wide-eyed, eavesdropping, bookish scribblers like me, Craig... and Charlie Bucktin himself.

We can learn the ways of the world from these small communities, these contained universes. They are a petri dish of the bigger picture. The ails of society are often magnified in small towns, but so are the cures. The shared experience of a community, of listening to each others' stories with an open mind and empathetic ear, is what these towns can do best and what we can all do better.

This generosity of communal spirit has become apparent in the rehearsal room too. The text being performed tonight is different to the one that premiered in Perth a couple of years ago. It's even different to what was performed at the last Belvoir season! Since then, *Jasper Jones* has had a season at the Melbourne Theatre Company too. With different creative teams comes shifting perspectives, so these have been carefully and lovingly weaved into each performance text. The 'favourite bits' remain, but more importantly, aspects of the text recalibrate with what is going on in our real world. Fearful political upheavals in the modern world may present themselves in a new line in the play. Or a line from Craig Silvey's book that may have not have been used in the play a few seasons ago is now introduced with potent new meaning.

The rehearsal room for any production of *Jasper Jones* always becomes a playground of memory and experience. Memories of childhood, memories of family, memories of Australian summers, of Indigenous elders and Vietnamese grandparents. Of ‘that time Mum and Dad stopped talking’ and the way ‘my childhood crush still makes my heart flutter when she likes my posts on Facebook’. It is such a treat to take on these lived memories from actors, directors, designers and infuse their energy into the play. I hope the foyer is buzzing afterwards with your own childhood tales of hitting a six in the backyard and the time you snuck into the haunted house on the edge of town. (Exaggerate away. It makes it more fun.)

I don’t want to go into what *Jasper Jones* is trying to say as a play. It’s saying everything or nothing, depending on what you choose to hear. But for me, adapting *Jasper Jones* has been like taking a wander through my own childhood – the good parts and the bad – and realising just how much, and how little, things have changed. How far we have come and how far we still have to go. In the words of Jasper Jones himself: we gotta get brave.

I’d like to thank all of the incredible casts, crews and audiences of *Jasper Jones* – Black Swan, MTC and Belvoir – for their faith in Australian storytelling; Anne-Louise Sarks for her gloriously driven curiosity, insight and care on the Belvoir production; John Sheedy for putting the book in my hands a few years back and giving me a gift that just keeps on giving; and Craig Silvey for not only giving us this wonderful Australian story, but allowing and encouraging me to put a little of myself into the play.



Kate and Tom in rehearsals for *Jasper Jones*. Kate performed the role of Mrs Bucktin in Belvoir’s original 2016 season of the play.

SYNOPSIS



Tom and Matilda

It's summer 1965 in a small, hot town in Western Australia, just days out from Christmas and the New Year. Overseas, war is raging in Vietnam, civil rights marches are on the streets, and women's liberation is stirring – but at home in Corrigan Charlie Bucktin dreams of writing the Great Australian Novel.

Act One: We are introduced to Charlie, 14 years old and bookish. He is reading under the light of his hurricane lamp one night when a figure appears in the dark and moves toward Charlie's window. Jasper Jones, 16, and constantly in trouble has come to Charlie's window. Jasper has stumbled upon a horrible crime and needs Charlie to prove his innocence as well as solve what happened to Laura Wishart.

Laura is found hanging from a tree, her face badly beaten. Jasper is certain that someone must have killed Laura and desperately needs Charlie's help. Charlie is reluctant – how can he be certain that it wasn't Jasper Jones that killed Laura – but when he hears of Jasper's great love for Laura he knows that he has to help clear his name. He's gotta get brave.

The audience is reminded of the Vietnam War, but for Jeffrey Lu the most important news is Doug Walters in his Ashes Test debut. Every now and then the local boys will let him pad up. Then they take bets on how many times he gets hit. Even the coach gets in on it.

Laura Wishart's younger sister, Eliza, and Charlie become closer and share a great love for books. Charlie dreams of faraway places and of being a writer living in New York City. However, for Charlie it is hard to shake the image of Laura Wishart's dead body. He wants answers but most of all he wishes he could see Jasper Jones again.

Act Two: Jasper Jones stealthily moves toward Charlie's window and taps lightly on the window. Jasper's face is bruised - the police are beginning to believe that he killed Laura and want know where they can find her body. Christmas has just passed, but Charlie tells us "everything and nothing happened in the past week". There is growing suspicion and tension amongst the townspeople and they are finding people to blame.

Tomorrow will be the last day of 1965 and Jasper and Charlie execute a plan to get Mad Jack Lionel to confess that he murdered young Laura Wishart. They know it's risky because the rumour in the town is that he has killed a young woman before. But when they confront Mad Jack Lionel they uncover a long forgotten secret. Mad Jack Lionel is actually Jasper's grandfather and the young woman killed was Jasper's mother Rosie. She was killed in a car accident when Mad Jack Lionel was driving her to hospital. Jasper was only a baby at the time.

Charlie discovers his mother with another man and confronts her. They speak meaningfully for the first time ever. She is leaving and Charlie seems to understand her reasons. Mrs Bucktin leaves, never to return. Eliza Wishart needs to confess something to Charlie. She walks him all the way to the site where Laura was hanged. Eliza knows what really happened and blames herself. She shows Charlie and Jasper Laura's suicide letter. It breaks Jasper's heart, they were meant to run away together. There is some solice found in knowing what really happened to Laura Wishart, but the truth doesn't make it any easier.

Charlie executes a cunning plan to steal five peaches from Mad Jack Lionel's tree (nobody knows that now Charlie has a friendship with Mad Jack and has been having dinner at his place every Sunday with Jasper Jones). Charlie sets the new town record for peaches stolen from the tree and cements a bully free year for himself and a chance for Jeffrey Lu to play in the town's upcoming crickt match.



Matilda, Guy and Tom

CONTEXT

Jasper Jones is set in the summer of 1965 in the small (fictional) West Australian town of Corrigan.

The 1960s were a decade of political and social upheaval in Australia. Young people challenged the traditional values of their parent's generation and actively protested against the decisions of the government, demonstrating against the Vietnam War, conscription and the nuclear industry. Women demanded equal rights and there were calls for racial equality and new consideration for the environment.

Indigenous Australians & Racial Inequality

Jasper Jones is a sensitive 16-year-old boy who has open, honest friendships with both Laura Wishart and Charlie Bucktin, but he is discriminated against by the people of Corrigan because he is indigenous.

JASPER: This town thinks I'm an animal, Charlie. They think I belong in a cage and now here's the perfect chance for them to do just that.

Act One, Scene Two

Australia has a dark history in its treatment of indigenous Australians. During the latter part of the 1960s more and more Australians were beginning to call for recognition of Aboriginal civil rights and in 1967, two years after the events that take place in the play, a referendum was carried which allowed Indigenous people to legally be counted as a part of the population. This was an important moment in the civil rights movement, but it wasn't until 1975 that the Whitlam Government's Racial Discrimination Act made it illegal to discriminate against a person on the grounds of a person's race or until 1992 that the High Court's Mabo decision overturned terra nullius. It wasn't until forty three years after Charlie Bucktin met Jasper Jones that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd issued a public notice of apology for the mistreatment of Australia's Indigenous people.

Women's Liberation and Divorce

In 1960s Australia, women were also discriminated against on the grounds of their sex and gender. Inequality in public and private spheres was profound. The contraceptive pill had been introduced in 1961 but it was only available to married women and some doctors refused to prescribe it at all. Divorce was legal, but until the Family Law Act was passed in 1975 women who wished to divorce their husbands had to prove specific grounds for divorce rather than simply citing irreconcilable differences. When Mrs Bucktin leaves Mr Bucktin because they don't love each other anymore she is making a choice that will be judged harshly in the eyes of Corrigan and the wider Australian community.

CHARLIE: Mum... do you even know how to play bridge?

MRS BUCKTIN: I've never played a game of bridge in my bloody life.

She laughs genuinely.

MRS BUCKTIN: You're a good man Charlie. I love you, my darling. Sorry.

Act Two, Scene Nine

The Vietnam War, Communism and Conscription

War had broken out between communist North Vietnam and democratic South Vietnam in 1959 so by the time we meet Charlie Bucktin the Vietnam War had been raging for six years. In 1965, in an effort to stop the spread of Communism, America and her allies began sending troops to Vietnam. Young Australian men were conscripted to serve in Vietnam under the Menzies government's National Service Scheme and Australians were divided over the issue of conscription and whether or not Australia should be involved in the war. In the 1960s thousands of people demonstrated, sometimes violently, against the government.

MR BUCKTIN suddenly reappears from behind the newspaper

MR BUCKTIN: It's heating up in South-East Asia. Poor buggers. Maybe we should drive into the city and go to one of those marches.

MRS BUCKTIN: Drive all that way to take a stroll with a bunch of hippies? You've gotta be bloody joking.

Act One, Scene Six

Because Jeffrey Lu family and his family are Vietnamese immigrants they also experience racial discrimination in Corrigan. In Act Two, Scene Eight the audience learns that Mr Lu has been attacked by four men from town and in Act One, Scene Two Charlie describes a vicious attack on Mrs Lu.

CHARLIE: At a meeting at the Miners' Hall last night, Mrs Findlay, the publican's wife, screamed at Jeffrey's mum. Told her to go back to where she came from. Then she pulled out a big chunk of Mrs Lam's hair. Apparently one of Mrs Findlay's sons got drafted. Everyone rushed to her after it happened... but no-one helped Mrs Lu.

Act One, Scene Two

The Immigration Restriction Act had been in place in Australia since 1901 and this act allowed for white British migrants to be preferenced above others, excluding people from Asia and the Pacific from migrating to Australia. For many people in Corrigan there would have been little understanding that migrant families such as the Lu family could actually enrich Australian culture.

JEFFREY: Charlie... my family in Vietnam got killed yesterday.

CHARLIE turns, stunned

CHARLIE: What?

JEFFREY: My aunt and uncle. Their village got bombed.

CHARLIE: Your family got blown up?

JEFFREY nods.

CHARLIE: Did your aunt and uncle have children?

JEFFREY: A boy and a girl. They're really little. They're okay. My dad has been on the phone all night trying to get them to come here and stay with us but it's hard to do that sort of thing.

Act One, Scene Seven

Literature and Popular Culture

There are many references to popular 1960s culture in the play and because Charlie and Eliza share a love of books, many references are literary. In Act One, Scene Four Eliza is clutching a copy of Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (published in 1960) and later she is reading Truman Capote's novella *Breakfast at Tiffanys* (published in 1958). At the time of the play the movie *Breakfast at Tiffanys* had been released (1961) and Audrey Hepburn was a huge movie star.

CHARLIE: What are you reading?

ELIZA: Breakfast at Tiffany's. Have you read it?

ELIZA: I've seen the film four times but I haven't read the book. My mum says I'm not allowed to, but that's too bad. I've already started. I wish I lived in Manhattan like Holly Golightly.

Act One, Scene Seven

There are also references to true crime stories that would have populated the newspapers and radio programs in Corrigan in 1965. When Eliza asks Charlie if he has heard about Gertrude Baniszewski, she is referring to murderer of a young girl named Sylvia Likens who was found dead on the 24th October 1965, just two months prior to Laura Wishart's own death.

When Charlie speaks about the infamous Nedlands Monster he is referring to a serial killer who had been committing violent murders in Perth around the time of the play.

CHARLIE: Last year in Perth, they hanged Eric Edgar Cooke - the Nedlands Monster. He went from house to house in the dark of night, snuck into people's sleep-outs, stabbed them, shot them, strangled the, and axed them.

Act One, Scene Five

REFERENCE WALL



The designers created this mood board in the Belvoir foyer to share with the audience. An image of the novel *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and a smiling photograph of the serial killer Edgar Allan Poe can be seen alongside examples of houses and clothing of the period.



Charles, Matilda and Anne-Louise in rehearsals for *Jasper Jones*. In the background you can see the extent of the designers' reference wall which existed temporarily in the Belvoir Rehearsal Room.

TIMELINE

1901 - The Immigration Restriction Act is introduced, allowing white British migrants to be preferred above others, effectively excluding people from Asia and the Pacific from migrating to Australia.

1905-1970 (approx.) - Many Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families as a result of various government policies. The generations of children removed under these policies became known as the Stolen Generations.

1939 - WW11 breaks out in Europe

1958 - Truman Capote writes *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

1959 - War breaks out between communist North Vietnam and democratic South Vietnam.

1961 - The film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is released

1961 - The contraceptive pill took Australia and the world by storm.

November 1964 - Eric Edgar Cooke is sentenced to death by hanging. Cooke is the last person to be hanged in the state of Western Australia

March 1965 - The first drawing of Australia's national service conscription lottery

April 1965 - Prime Minister Robert Menzies announces that an Australian combat force will be sent to South Vietnam in response to a request for military aid

February 1965 - Charles Perkins leads The Freedom Ride which travels through country NSW, protesting the racial discrimination against Aboriginal people

December 1965 - Cricketer Doug Walter makes his Ashes Test debut

December 1965 to January 1966 - The events in *Jasper Jones* take place

1967 - Australians voted overwhelmingly to amend the constitution to include Aboriginal people in the census and allow the Commonwealth to create laws for them.

1969 - American astronaut Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the moon

1970 - Feminist Germaine Greer became a household name with the publication of her book *The Female Eunuch*.

1972 The Newly elected Whitlam Government suspends the National Service Scheme.

1975 The Whitlam Government's Racial Discrimination Act makes it illegal to discriminate against a person based on the grounds of a person's race.

1975 The Family Law Act as passed which allows legal divorce on the grounds of irreconcilable differences.

1992 The High Court's Mabo decision rules in favour of Eddia Mabo and overturns terra nullius, which claimed Australia was a land belonging to no-one prior to British occupation.

2008 Kevin Rudd issues a public notice of apology for the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians and says sorry to the Stolen Generations.

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<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0139b.htm>

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ADAPTING JASPER JONES

Jasper Jones was first presented by Barking Gecko Theatre Company at Studio Underground, State Theatre Centre of WA, Perth, on 17 July 2014.

The play was adapted by award-winning playwright Kate Mulvany from the novel by Craig Silvey, first published in 2009. In her article *Keeping up with the Joneses from page to stage* (The Sydney Morning Herald, 6th January 2016) arts writer Elissa Blake interviewed Kate about adapting the novel. Elissa writes:

Silvey gave Mulvany a free hand when it came to expanding on some of the supporting characters he had written. “There were moments in the book where I wanted to delve deeper, especially with the female characters and their journeys,” Mulvany says, “Craig agreed that maybe he hadn’t gone deep enough, so he allowed me to go for it. It’s important to me that people know they are getting Craig’s book and also a Kate Mulvany play.”

Read the following three extracts. The first two come from different moments in Craig Silvey’s novel and the third is one scene from Act Two of Kate Mulvany’s script. Then answer the following questions.

1. How has the playwright dramatized Mrs Bucktin’s leaving?
2. What are the differences between the two scenes?
3. Why might the playwright have chosen to set the moment where Mrs Bucktin is caught with an other man ‘in the shadows’ rather than in a car?
4. *Jasper Jones*, the novel, is narrated by Charlie Bucktin. How does the playwright create this convention in the script? Where, in the script extract, does the audience get a sense of Charlie’s inner thoughts?
5. Consider the moment Charlie extracts himself from his mother’s grasp. In Excerpt One Charlie narrates, “...I take a step back, and I feel the balance between us shift.” Find this moment in the extract from the play. How does the playwright dramatise this ‘shift in balance’? How might a director contribute to showing this on stage?



In Act 2, Scene 9 Mrs Bucktin tells Charlie that she loves him but she is leaving the family.

JASPER JONES BY CRAIG SILVEY

EXCERPT ONE FROM THE NOVEL, PAGES 323 - 325

I'm watching this unfold right in front of me, but I feel removed from it.

I step back. My mother has awkwardly pulled her dress back on. The other man slinks back in the seat. The door yawns open, and I squeeze Eliza's hand.

'Charlie! What are you doing here? You shouldn't be here! What are you playing at? Did you follow me? You shouldn't be out here! Why aren't you at home?'

She's hysterical and aggressive. Yelling a mile a minute and waving her hands. I wonder how she has the gall to be furious. I can smell sour sweat and liquor from the car, and it disgusts me. My mother's chest is heaving. She's panicking and she's upset and she's drunk. She keeps shrieking her spitfire questions, just filling up this space with her stupid outrage.

The walls might be falling, but I feel calm. I really do. Even when she slams the door and grabs my arms and shakes me free of Eliza Wishart. and I notice that her cotton dress is on backwards, and how ugly and old she looks when her make-up is smudged.

She starts to pull me towards the car. Still yelling.

'You're coming home! You shouldn't be out here! Come on! Get in the car!'

I rip my hands from her grasp with an ease that surprises me. My shoulders are squared. I take a step back, and I feel the balance between us shift. I look away from her. I am so ashamed. Not only because she's drunk and barefoot, and not just because I've caught her fooling around with some fat old bastard while my dad is sitting at home, but because all of this unfolded in front of Eliza Wishart. She's seen it all. I want to cover this scene in a blanket, draw a curtain. I want to push our car into the water.

'No,' I say firmly.

'What did you say?'

'I said no.'

'How dare you! Don't you talk to me like that, Charles Bucktin. Get in the car! I'm taking you home. You shouldn't be out here.'

'And neither should you. This,' I point at the back seat of the car, 'this means I don't have to do what you say anymore.'

JASPER JONES BY CRAIG SILVEY

EXCERPT TWO FROM THE NOVEL, PAGES 370 - 372

She left that night. She packed her things and she drove out, our car fishtailing wildly down the street, our curious neighbours forming a loose guard of honour on their lawns. They heard it all unfold. And within hours, the whole town would know everything. In an instant she'd stripped her name of whatever careful varnish she'd glossed it with for so many years. In a single scene she'd revealed herself, ugly and loud and mean. And they heard it all.

She left that night, but not before she'd ranted and raged. Not before she'd picked a fight and, like always, didn't get one back. My father just let her go. It was like yelling at a statue. He let her scream and holler, let her beat at him and weep. He didn't give her comfort, nor did he give in to any anger.

She left, but not before she tore into my room, hoping I'd be there. She tipped things, stripped things, tore things. Threw and broke things. She found my father's manuscript on my desk and ripped it apart. Cast it across the room. She left, but not before finding my suitcase and unlatching it. The only time I've left it unlocked. She emptied its contents on my bed, sifted through those treasured sheets, searching in vain for her name. And she dragged that empty suitcase to her vanity table. She stole it from me, but she had nothing precious of her own to pack in it. She just shoved in her clothes, her jewellery, her perfumes. She snatched the keys from where they'd skittered after she'd thrown them at my father. And she announced her intentions with our front door open. She finally told my father what she thought. No more threadbare hints or poor metaphors. She finally said what she'd been meaning to say.

Of course, it came as no surprise to my father. He knew she was miserable here, he even knew the company she'd been keeping. He knew all her little secrets, the holes she'd dug for herself. I'm not sure when it was he realized. Perhaps he knew all along. Though I often wonder why he kept it to himself, why he let it go on. Perhaps he thought it made her happy. Or maybe it was easier for him to shrug and sweep it under the rug and pretend otherwise. Or maybe it was to save me the grief. Maybe he wanted to shelter me from the disruption and hurt. I don't know. Maybe he hoped she'd stop of her own volition. That she'd see sense and admit her wrongdoing and they'd mend back to new. Or maybe he still believed in commitment, the security of loyalty, so he stood firm even while she strayed away and made a cuckold of him.

JASPER JONES ADAPTED BY KATE MULVANY

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAY, ACT TWO, SCENE NINE

CHARLIE *speaks to us...*

1966. Happy New Year.

The sound of moaning climaxes with the exploding fireworks. CHARLIE makes his way warily toward the sound in the shadows. He watches wide-eyed for a moment, then...

Mum!

MRS BUCKETIN *disentangles from a STRANGER – his hat is low over his face.*

MRS BUCKETIN: Just give me a moment, Gus. I'll catch you up.

The man departs.

CHARLIE: What are you doing? Who's that?

MRS BUCKETIN: What are you doing?

CHARLIE: Who's that, Mum?

MRS BUCKETIN: You should be at the Miners Hall!

CHARLIE: Why aren't you?!

MRS BUCKETIN: You are coming home with me. You shouldn't be out here!

She grabs him roughly. CHARLIE pulls away.

CHARLIE: And neither should you. This... this means I don't have to do what you say anymore.

MRS BUCKETIN: Yes you do, young man. Get home now. I won't ask you again.

CHARLIE: You didn't ask. You never ask me anything.

MRS BUCKETIN: Charlie ---

CHARLIE: You dug this hole, Mum. You fill it in. I'm not going home tonight.

MRS BUCKETIN: Charlie!

A long moment.

Your father and I don't love each other anymore. We.. lost it somewhere. He's more in love with that bloody book than he is with me.

CHARLIE: What book?

MRS BUCKETIN: You think he's sitting in that nursery mourning his dead child? No. That's my job. He's writing a book.

CHARLIE: What about?

MRS BUCKETIN: Oh... the Great Australian Novel, Charlie.

CHARLIE: The Great Australian Novel? [To us] But that's what I'm writing [To his mother] What's it about?

MRS BUCKETIN *speaks numbly.*

MRS BUCKETIN: It's set in a town of never-ending fucking silence. Silence and space. Dead paddocks and

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dried-up dams and blasted mines and empty minds. Stinking men and bored women and incessant heat and filthy flies and fucking on sticky back seats. About a town that kills women Murders little girls. A town that even babies don't want to be born into. I reckon that's what it's about. Your father's Great Australian Novel. Maybe he's wrapping it all up with a happy ending? That'd be nice, hey? But you know what I reckon, Charlie? I reckon he hasn't written a damn word. Because that's his way. Silence and space.

CHARLIE: He saved Mr Lu the other night, Mum. After those blokes tore up the garden.

She smiles sadly.

MRS BUCKTIN: Did he? What a superhero, hey?

Silence.

CHARLIE: Get your friend to drive you home, Mum. We can talk tomorrow,

CHARLIE starts to walk away.

MRS BUCKTIN: Charlie...

CHARLIE turns.

I won't be here tomorrow. I'm leaving Corrigan.

CHARLIE: What?

MRS BUCKTIN: I'm going.

A beat.

Look after your dad for me.

A beat. CHARLIE nods.

CHARLIE: I will.

MRS BUCKTIN: And make sure he looks after you.

CHARLIE nods.

MRS BUCKTIN: One day you'll understand. About all this.

CHARLIE: I hope so.

A beat.

Mum... do you even know how to play bridge?

MRS BUCKTIN: I've never played a game of bridge in my bloody life.

She laughs genuinely.

You're a good man, Charlie. I love you, my darling. Sorry.

As she leave, she is singing the chorus of Normie Rowe's 'Que sera sera'.

Her voice is picked up by another as it fades away...

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story.

In these notes we are going to look at *Jasper Jones*:

- Costume design renderings and references
- Set design and construction
- Properties design and construction

COSTUME DESIGNS: REFERENCES AND RENDERINGS

The costumes for Belvoir's production of *Jasper Jones* were designed by Mel Page. Mel worked closely with *Jasper Jones* director Anne-Louise Sarkis and set designer Michael Hankin to realise her designs for the show. Belvoir Head of Costume, Judy Tanner assisted Mel with sourcing the costumes and many of Mel's designs had to be constructed by Judy from scratch.

In addition to working from Kate Mulvany's script, Craig Silvey's novel provided Mel with rich descriptions of characters and colours which she found really useful in creating the theatrical palette for *Jasper Jones*.

I feel like this show had quite a strong colour palette, it felt airy to me and that seemed important. I spoke a lot with Kate (Mulvany) who knew the location quite well. Everything felt kind of dusty there and also harsh, bright. The style of the play is very theatrical and I think that allows you to have a more theatrical palette.

Mel Page

Although the play is set in 1965, Mel had to consider the impact that the regional location would have on the type of clothing that characters would own.

One of the main things that Anne-Louise and I spoke about was that the book and the play is set in the sixties, but that since its set in a small town we really wanted it to feel a bit fifties, like they were just a little bit behind. Because you know, fashion takes a little while to catch up and that felt really important.

Mel Page

Consider Mr Bucktin buying a pair of flares. Flares only became popular in the mid sixties so Mr Bucktin would have been looking very modern in a small Australian town where fashion takes a while to catch up.

CHARLIE: My father finished his book. I'm halfway through reading it and it's pretty good. He's also gotten rid of his comb-over and is wearing a pretty impressive beard. And the other day he brought a pair of flares!

Act Two, Scene Eleven

Mel imagined that Eliza would be more contemporary with her fashion choices, and that her favourite actress Audrey Hepburn would be a fashion role model, but that Mrs Bucktin, who was from an older generation, would be dressing in clothes that were a bit more 'stuck' in the 1950s. Mel sourced a great wealth of Women's Weekly magazines from the 1950s and 1960s through online libraries and these became an important reference for her designs.

When I was looking for costume references of the time I looked at a lot of old Women's Weekly magazines because that's what Mrs Bucktin would have been reading and that's where she would have got a lot of the patterns that she made her dresses from. In my mind anyway that's what she did! That was very common then...

Mel Page



Women's Weekly magazines were an important reference for costume designer Mel Page, when she began designing the costumes for Mrs Bucktin. Mel accessed the archival images of these magazines through an online library.

The majority of dresses Mrs Bucktin wears on stage were constructed by Belvoir's Head of Costume, Judy Tanner. Judy worked closely with Mel to realise Mel's costume designs.

Mel Page created some costume renderings to communicate her ideas to the Anne-Louise and the production team. These early renderings can be seen here on the right.



Mel Page and director Anne-Louise Sarkis both felt that the character of Eliza would be more contemporary with her fashion choices. The dress that Eliza wears in the fantasy dance scene was constructed by Belvoir's Head of Costume, Judy Tanner from Mel's original design.



Mrs Bucktin costume rendering by Mel Page.



Kate Mulvany wears Mel Page's design on stage.



Mrs Bucktin costume rendering by Mel Page.



Kate Mulvany wears Mel Page's design on stage.



Charlie Bucktin costume rendering by Mel Page.



Tom Conroy wears Mel Page's design on stage.



Jeffrey Lu costume rendering by Mel Page.



Charles Wu wears Mel Page's design on stage.



Eliza Wishart costume rendering by Mel Page.



Matilda Ridgway wears Mel Page's design on stage.



Mad Jack Lionel costume rendering by Mel Page.



Steve Rodgers wears Mel Page's design on stage.

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

SET DESIGN AND MODEL BOX

The set was designed by Michael Hankin. We caught up with Michael and asked him a few questions about his process. The transcript from our interview with Michael is below.

I think we have to start with the most obvious question and that is, did you come to Kate's play having read Craig Silvey's novel, or did you read the novel first? And what role did each of these texts play in your design process?

I read the play first and was so thrilled by all the challenges and all the wonderful images that Kate (Mulvany) had included, images that had stemmed from Craig Silvey's novel (which I read afterwards). Kate had made great offers in her script such as the grove looked like *this* and Mad Jack's house looked like *this*. Of course reading the book is quite different in that it isn't theatrical, it is far more descriptive and obviously my job as a set designer is to realise a lot of the visuals of the show and to be aware that this is a theatre production and that theatre has its own language. Novels are often more floral and verbose but a set for a theatre production needs to work as a piece of live performance so that mainly involves scene changes. Obviously in a book you just turn the page and you're in a new location but in theatre scene changes are the biggest challenge for a set designer. Scene changes are how the story skips along and this story really just skips from scene to scene and what is so great about the novel and the play is that it is really about Corrigan, this fictional town, and the play is comparing and contrasting people's homes, like Charlie's home compared to Jeffrey's home compared to Jasper's home, which is really the grove. Long scene changes would mean the audience would not be able to connect the dots as well between those locations so it was really important to keep it all fluid and to be able to skip along between all of those locations.

So that leads into the next question which is about Corrigan. We know that the play is set in Western Australia in the 1960s but because the town of Corrigan is actually fictional, how did you begin to consider what the town of Corrigan, and your set design of Corrigan, would look like?

Well, I've never been to Western Australia before, and this isn't uncommon because as a set designer you're often asked to create a landscape of something you've never seen before. It might be 1830s Russia, it might be a spaceship... so as Corrigan is based on a few real suburbs of Western Australia I started to speaking to Kate (who is from Perth) and Anne-Louise Sarks, the director, about what places like Geraldton and Collie and other suburbs in Western Australia look like. Then I started to Google search them and then walk along the street of Google Street View, and I did that for maybe a day, I just walked down the streets of towns in Western Australia to get a sense of the layout of these suburbs and you know that's the wonderful thing about technology, that you can do that. The other thing I was researching was real houses from the 1960s and of course if this is a middle class family living in the 1960s that means their house is actually more like a 1950s or 1940s design, being the socioeconomic demographic that these characters are. Meaning their house wouldn't have been flash and modern. So I was taking screen grabs of real fibro houses and real sleep outs where Charlie may have lived and also getting a sense of the trees and the dirt there, and the shrubs. I was also getting a sense of what colour is the sky, what colour is the dirt what kind of greenery appears in these towns and something that became obvious to me really quickly is that this is a town built in the middle of nature, it's not like these are houses with trees planted around them, it's the opposite. So what became apparent to us with the set design was that it had to reflect that nature and the sky was bigger than the town and these houses were sort of dotted in the landscape.

It's wonderful hearing you explain your process. We have been talking about how, and you've just touched on this, but how the houses don't look particularly new (even for the 1960s) and we were interested in how you pictured the community of Corrigan and how this influenced the houses that you designed.

The first thing I thought of with the houses was that they would be all bleached out, that the sun is so hot in Corrigan that it has bleached out all of the colour. There are no blue houses and no pink houses because they have all bleached out down to cream and they are all kind of dirty. These houses have been hit by

the dust and the corrosion of the air and I guess the extended metaphor there is that, you know, there is this corrosion going on with race relations within the play, and I guess that's why I put so much rust in the houses. There is a lot of rusted corrugated iron and rusted iron work on the front door. This bleached out environment just amplifies the idea of race I think because this is a town of predominantly white people and Jeffrey and Jasper are both 'other' to the people of that town.

Also, in these towns everything is so hot and it hasn't rained for years, so probably nothing has been cleaned on these houses in a very long time!

We did wonder how you came to design the set's colour palette. There seems to be quite a strong theatrical palette to the show and we wondered if this is a conscious decision for you or if it is artistic intuition...

Yes, I work on instinct a lot when it comes to colour. When it comes to 'what does a washing basket in 1965 look like?' then I need to research that more. But when it comes to colour, and feeling and texture, then that is quite an instinctive process for me.

I was also heavily inspired by Australian painters like Russell Drysdale and Fred Williams who give a real sense of wide, open skies and houses and trees just dotted on hills. The skies are always bleached out, warm, you know almost a canvas colour.

And I was inspired by ghost gums which are that bleached out, creamy colour and ghost gums are what the tree is loosely based on. Really it is the amalgamation of many trees because obviously in the play it's in the cricket pitch and we use it as Mad Jack's peach tree and also it sort of lives next to the houses in Jeffrey and Charlie's world. But I was inspired by the idea of ghost gums because of you know - ghosts - this is sort of a ghost story and also a whodunit and I wanted to amplify that.

It's so great talking to you Michael! If you could speak a little bit about the scene changes and how you approached those that would be fantastic. You mentioned that they are challenging for a set designer. So obviously, for the fluidity of the story telling, the scene changes in this play had to be not only quick but also meaningful, as in when something changes on stage it has to have a little bit of meaning to it and for it to progress the narrative forward, to advance the story telling along. So this might mean seeing Mad Jack and Jasper at the end of the play move a house together and see them interact, or it might be seeing our Assistant Stage Manager Jen dressed as this other character we have come up with called Maureen... we might see Maureen go and pick a peach before she runs off stage, because we always wanted to inject those scene changes with a bit of storytelling to help the story skip along and to support the beats of the play.

In terms of locations in the play that we had to transition between, obviously there are lots of different locations! There is Charlie's house which has a front door and then there is his sleepout out the back and there is a kitchen and there is a nursery that they speak of, so that's all Charlie's world. But then there is Jeffrey's house which has the Queen Elizabeth rose garden out the front. There's also the cricket field and there's the grove where Eliza has been pushed into the dam. But then I would say the other location is just roads - as in they are constantly walking from one place to the other and they are constantly having conversations on the road and that is really hard theatrically. It's quite hard to give a sense of characters walking long distances in Corrigan when your stage is only a few meters wide. So that was one of the biggest nuts to crack in this show, how to give a sense that things are moving and one way of doing that was having the actors walking up the aisles of the audience or literally playing a game of cricket over the length of audience and then walking from one side of the auditorium to the other... but another way that we conjured up the sense of changing locations was by having the house move from left to right which gave the sense that we had moved, that we weren't in the same spot that we were in a minute ago. And sometimes that is really important. It was really important that we knew Charlie had left his house and was being naughty, and that Jeffrey was grounded and that Jasper had travelled to come to Charlie's window and you could only conjure those feelings if the house had moved in at least some small way.

So yes, that was the biggest nut to crack but then the other thing was creating a sense that all of the houses of Corrigan are represented by Charlie's house and that these were all one and the same thing, which also amplifies the idea that everyone in Corrigan has the same attitudes.

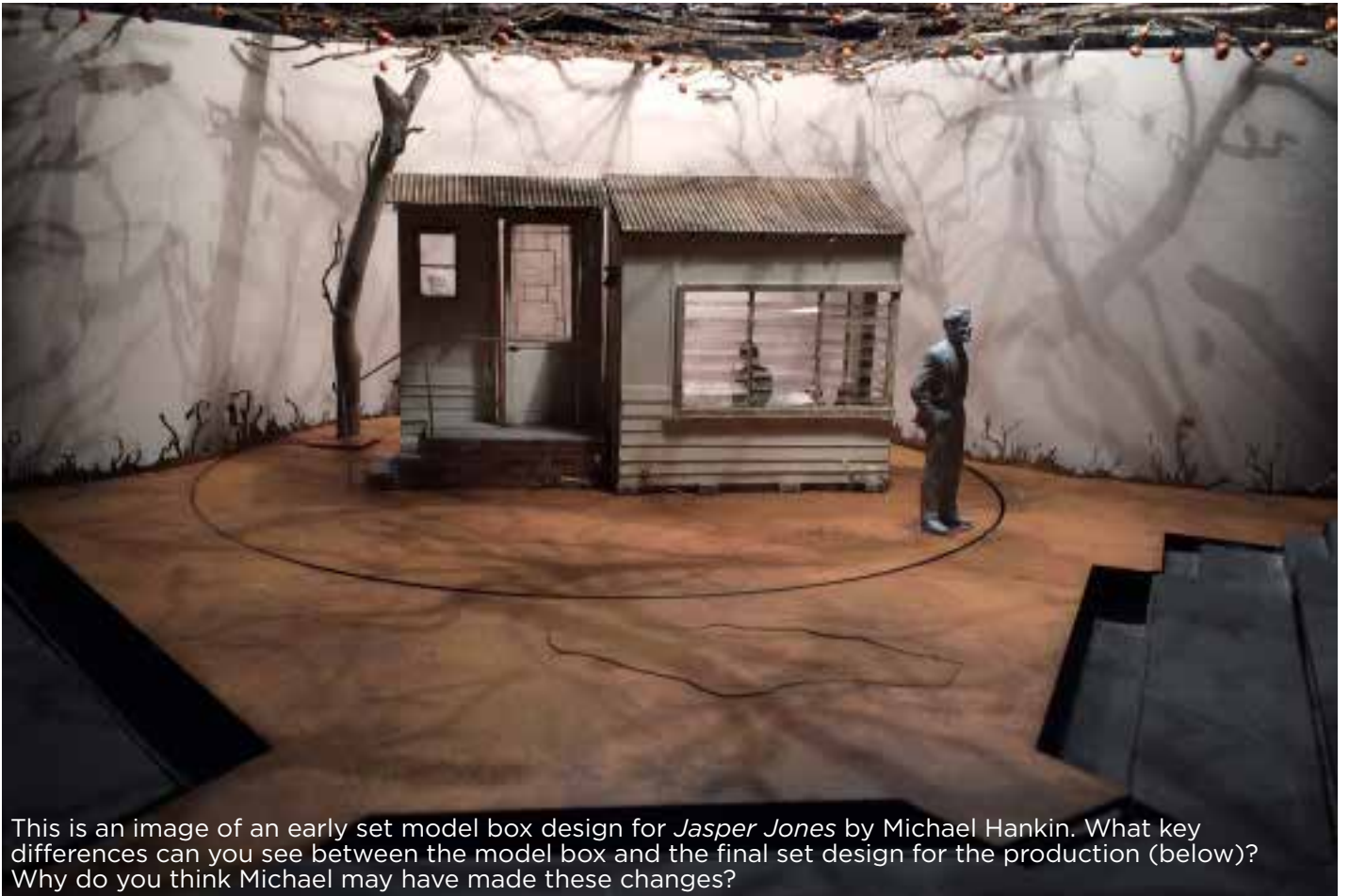
And so when we came up with that concept it all became really clear. We created Charlie's house by having a front door and the sleepout where Charlie has his window and he reads books. We also created a sense of the nursery by lighting Mr Bucktin upstage so the audience can just catch a glimpse of him through the house. We changed the breakfast scene (originally set in the kitchen) to be outside and we

gave Mrs Bucktin a washing basket to give a sense that she had just come back from the washing line. This also helped give the audience that sense of the dirt again because it meant that Mrs Bucktin could be shaking the towels as though they are washed but then a whole dust storm has come through and they have got dirty again! We created a bit of a narrative there about Charlie having been attacked by a wasp and then having to run outside and that's how we got him outside so they could have this conversation with his parents, otherwise how do you get him outside so quickly – for the narrative? Then we came up with this minimalist idea that having the Queen Elizabeth roses in front of the door was enough to say that this is now Jeffrey's house. And for Mad Jack's house, spinning the door around and it just becoming this old fly screen door was enough. We also played the house upstage and the boys downstage in Mad Jack's scenes, to make the house look smaller, so it could sort of look like this haunted house on the hill.

For scenes like the cricket pitch and the grove we just moved the houses off to the side and the audience could always see them there and that was part of the language of the theatre making. We want the audience to feel like all the tools that we had to make this play are currently sitting in the room. You've got six actors and you've got these two houses and a tree and with that information we are going to keep the storytelling moving. It's almost as simple as drawing a circle in the sand, or telling a story around a bonfire... it's as simple as saying 'these are our tools and we are going to be telling you a story'.... for example, it was a really conscious decision to paint the existing walls of the theatre that dirty cream colour because it created an honesty about the production, that there weren't any tricks, that we didn't have any pyrotechnics or large theatrical set changes. Even the lighting was really simple. And that's part of the reason that we painted the walls cream. Once we paint our brick walls cream we are asking our audience to imagine that this is the sky and so rather than just painting a sky the set can create more imagination in the mind's eye. It's also not a clean cream that you would paint on your walls at home it's also a bit dusty – it's a bit tainted.

Finally Michael, you designed the set of *Jasper Jones* for Belvoir's premier 2016 production of this play which was staged here last year. What has been the biggest challenge for you in remounting the show one year later?

The biggest challenge this time is the tree, in that the show is touring and has to bump in to each venue in a very short amount of time, so the tree has to unlock in parts and then go back together like an IKEA flat pack. So it was quite a sophisticated prop build for production, whereas the last build was out of real tree branches!



This is an image of an early set model box design for *Jasper Jones* by Michael Hankin. What key differences can you see between the model box and the final set design for the production (below)? Why do you think Michael may have made these changes?



Charles Wu sits on the finished set of *Jasper Jones*.



Model box detail (front view of house)



Model box detail (side view of house)



Model box detail (rear view of house)

BUMP IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Belvoir's Head of Production Sally Withnell was responsible for planning for and overseeing the bump in of *Jasper Jones* into Belvoir's Upstairs Theatre. She took some photographs of the process - from construction of the tree in Belvoir's workshop to its installation into the theatre and a lighting focus on and around its branches.



PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

PROPERTIES AND PROP CONSTRUCTION

Prop extraction is the process of reading through a script and identifying all props required to tell the story of the play. They are then logged to be sourced or created. Some props can be sourced and purchased, but if that is not possible then Belvoir's Production Coordinator, Eliza Maunsell creates the prop from scratch.

ACTIVITY: CREATING PROP NEWSPAPERS FOR JASPER JONES

- 1. Read Act 1, Scene 6 of *Jasper Jones*.**
- 2. Consider how the newspaper is used in the scene.**
 - a. Who is reading the newspaper?
 - b. Is the newspaper read on stage during this scene? If not, how else is it used? Where is it placed?
 - c. What pages of the newspaper will be visible in this scene?
 - d. Are there any references to the content of the newspaper? If so, what are these?
- 3. The front page of a newspaper needs to feature the date.**
 - a. Is the date referred to directly in Act 1, Scene 6? If so, what is it? If not, you will need to refer to the entire play for clues. In Act 1, Scene 4 Jeffrey tells us it is 1965 'What day is it? Are you joking? It's Dougie Walters' debut Charlie! First Ashes test of 1965!' but the date can be narrowed down further. For example, during Act 1, Scene 6 Mrs Bucktin refers to the 'heat' and a few scenes later (Act 1, Scene 9) Charlie talks about Christmas saying 'I even forgot about Christmas until Mum shoved a plate of cold turkey into my room'. These references all assisted Eliza in identifying the date for the newspaper to be created for Act 1, Scene 6.
 - b. Once you have determined the date for your newspaper, this information must be included on your masthead.
- 4. In creating the masthead consider what type of newspaper the character would read.**
 - a. What newspapers were available in the time and place the play is set?
 - b. Consider the community and the household that this character lives in. Would they be reading a tabloid, a broadsheet, a local or national publication?
- 5. You will now need to research what your newspaper should look like.** Eliza recommends accessing TROVE a web-based search engine organised by the National Library of Australia. TROVE can be used to locate Australian historical archives such as, books, images, newspapers and maps. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>
- 5. Once you have found a newspaper that suits your requirements you can begin to create a collage of stories and headlines from your particular week in history by copying the design and stories.** Take notice of the font used by the paper during that period in history as well as the kind of advertisements you see throughout. For example, Eliza considered that the audience may be able to see the headlines and the ads from the seating bank so she chose to place a Christmas advertisement on the front of her newspaper. She also featured a sports story on the front of her newspaper that was historically accurate.

Eliza searches for historically accurate photos using Google Images. She selects photos that have the best clarity and fits in the allocated space. Designing these pages takes a keen eye and lots of patience!

EXTRACT FROM ACT ONE, SCENE SIX OF JASPER JONES BY KATE MULVANY

SCENE SIX

The sound of crickets becomes the nasal thrum of a single wasp.

Charlie opens his eyes.

Gasps.

He tumbles out of bed and screams as he swats at the wasp wildly.

He runs out of his sleepout, smack bang into his mother who is sorting through washing.

His father reads a newspaper silently.

Charlie stands awkwardly in front of his parents, wearing only his singlet and shorts.

MRS BUCKTIN: Charlie, we don't wander willy nilly half naked around the house.

CHARLIE: I... I'm just a bit hot today.

MRS BUCKTIN: Of course you're hot. It's Corrigan. It's always bloody hot.

She peers at his legs.

When did you get those?

Charlie is mortified.

CHARLIE: What?

MRS BUCKTIN: Those hairs. Sprouting like pea shoots!

CHARLIE: Mum!

MRS BUCKTIN: How far up do they go? Jesus. You lot. Like bloody yaks.

Charlie is mortified.

Mr Bucktin remains reading the paper. Mrs Bucktin waits for a retort. Nothing.

Back to Charlie...

Go and get dressed please.

CHARLIE: Mum -

MRS BUCKTIN: Go and put some clothes on. Now.

CHARLIE: There's... There's a wasp in my room.

MRS BUCKTIN: So?

CHARLIE: It's angry.

MRS BUCKTIN: Really? As angry as me?

CHARLIE: I'm...not sure.

MRS BUCKTIN: Go. And put. Some clothes on.

Charlie looks worried. He turns to us.

CHARLIE: When my mother puts full stops between her words you know she's in a bad mood. But there's nothing that scares me more than insects. And I know that wasp is waiting for me in my room. Building its nest. Establishing an army. Wasps are mean buggers.

A beat. Charlie looks fearfully toward his bedroom.

Mr Bucktin leans across to a basket of laundry, fishes out a t-shirt and pants and hands them to his son, ruffling his hair. Charlie hurriedly puts on the clothes. Mr Bucktin hides back behind the paper.

MRS BUCKTIN: Charlie, if you're going to Jeffrey's today, I'd like you to stay on the street where I can see you, please.

CHARLIE: Why?

MRS BUCKTIN: Because I said so, that's why.

CHARLIE: How can that possibly be a reason?

MRS BUCKTIN: I'm your mother. I don't need a reason.

CHARLIE: That doesn't even make sense!

MRS BUCKTIN: Do. As you're bloody. Told.

Mrs Bucktin glares at Charlie.
Charlie turns to us again.

CHARLIE: My mum's glare could make Errol Flynn flaccid.

Mr Bucktin suddenly reappears from behind the newspaper.

MR BUCKTIN: It's heating up in South East Asia. Poor buggers. Maybe we should drive to the city and go to one of the marches.

MRS BUCKTIN: Drive all that way to take a stroll with a bunch of hippies? You've gotta be bloody joking.

Mr Bucktin goes back to his paper.

CHARLIE: But Mum, you go to the city all the time.

MRS BUCKTIN: Excuse me, Lord Muck, I go to visit my family. I come from the city, not like the rest of you lot. When I go to the city, I'm going home. Don't you question my motives.

Mr Bucktin remains behind the newspaper. Charlie turns to us...

CHARLIE: My Dad, as ever, says nothing.

To his parents...

I'm going to Jeffrey's.

MRS BUCKTIN: Remember. Stay. On. The. Street.

Charlie grabs his satchel and walks out of the house.
To us...

CHARLIE: The only thing I hate more than Mum's temper is Dad's silence. I know he's smart. I know he's got all kinds of things happening up there in his brain. But every time he comes close to letting it out, she shuts the door on it. Silence.



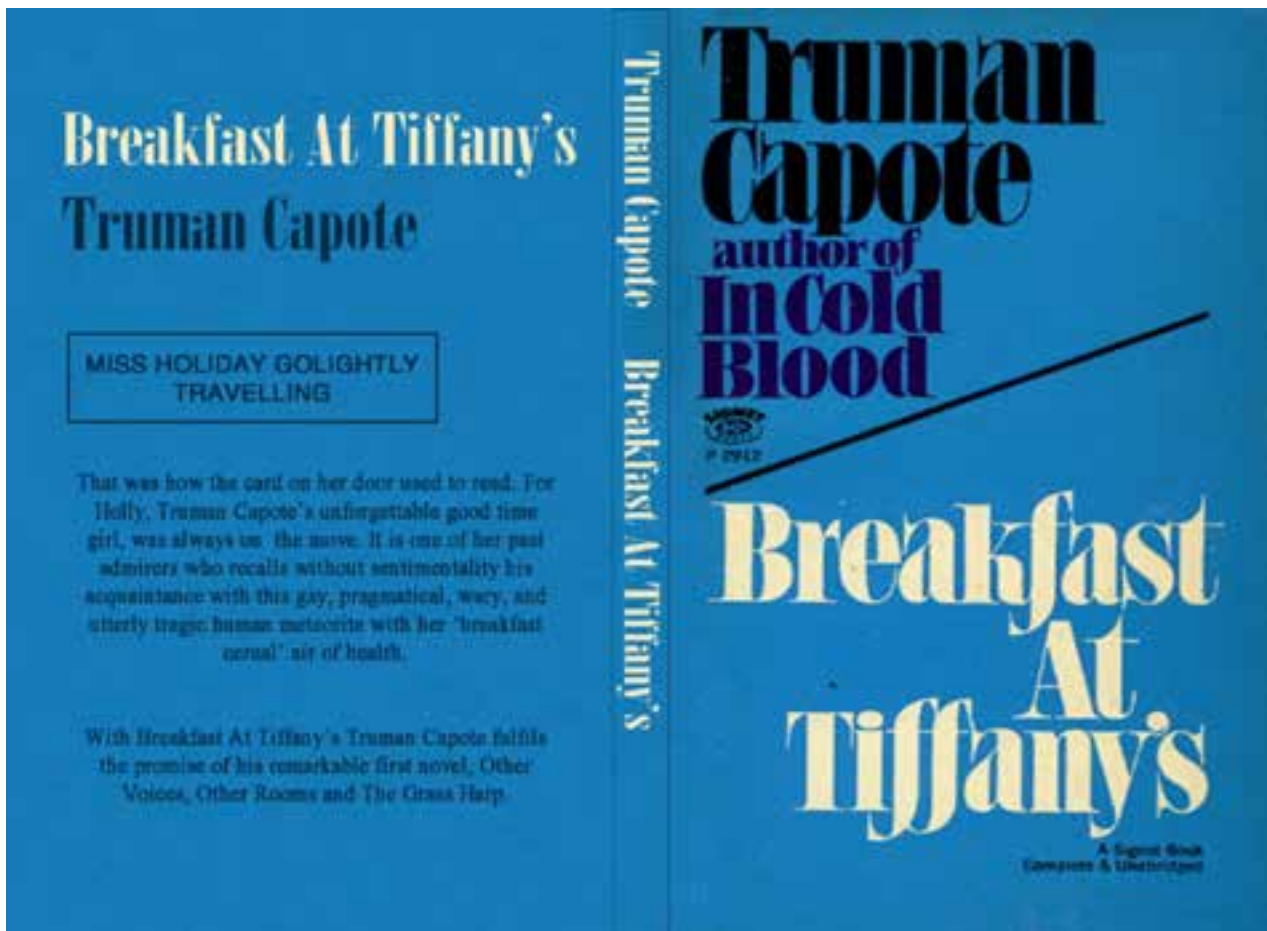
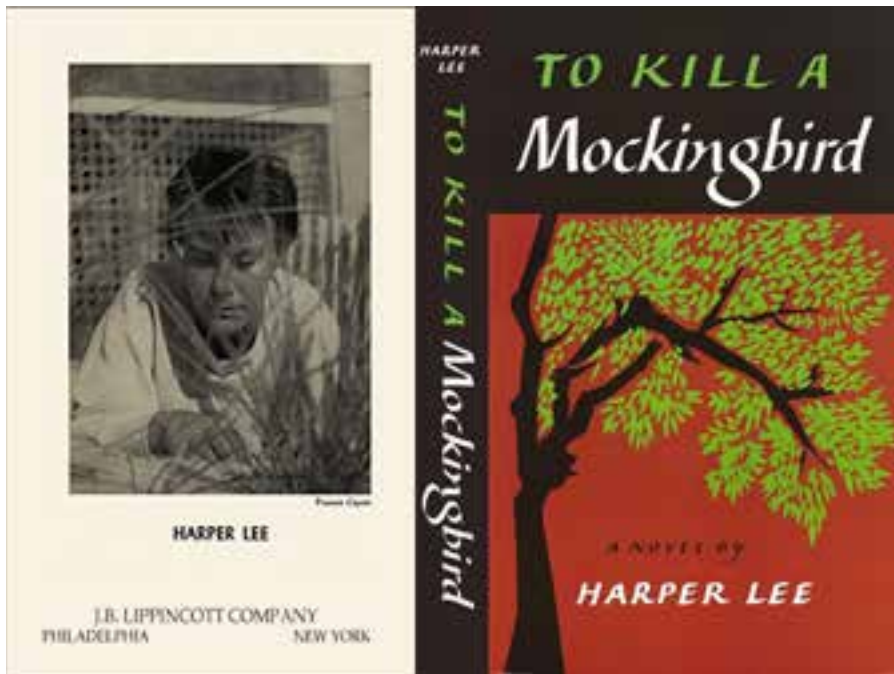
A copy of the prop newspaper Eliza created for Jasper Jones.



Mr Bucktin reads the prop newspaper on stage during Act One, Scene Six of Jasper Jones.

Eliza also constructed the prop books that are carried by the character of Eliza Wishart on stage. She sourced original (historically accurate) images of each book cover online using Google Image Search and then resized the size of the covers using Adobe Photoshop software. These covers were then printed, fitted and glued on to second hand books.

Why do you think Eliza made these prop books rather than simply using original copies of each book?



PODCAST



Step behind the scenes of *Jasper Jones* as author Craig Silvey, adaptor Kate Mulvany, director Anne-Louise Sarks and the young cast all weigh in on the making of this smash hit.

Produced for Belvoir by Zoe Ferguson

[Listen to the *Jasper Jones* podcast online here:](#)

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