



MTC EDUCATION TEACHERS' NOTES 2013

Beached

by Melissa Bubnic

22 Apr — 10 May 2013

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

Notes prepared by Meg Upton

BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE...

THE EXPERIENCE

In the theatre we share stories which differ from TV, DVD, film, books, magazines, podcasts and other media. In the theatre, stories are told by real people in real time before a live audience. Each performance of a play is different to any other as it is dependent upon the time, the actors, the technical equipment and, very importantly, the audience. You can't re-read a live theatre performance or copy it to see again and again. Each performance exists only once. The performance you will see of *Beached* will differ from the one performed before and the one performed after, which makes it special and unique. Your role as an audience ensures its uniqueness. As students of theatre, you are advised to carefully prepare to see the production so that you can capture that unique, one-off experience and be able to reflect on it in detail.

STORY

Arty is living a double life. In his head he is an explorer, a movie star, devilishly handsome. In his real life Arty is a blob, a beached whale, Jabba the Hutt in a housing commission flat. At 400kg and rising, he's a young man literally going nowhere.

With free life-saving surgery up for grabs, Arty and his devoted mum JoJo allow a film crew from *Shocking Fat Stories* to document his last desperate attempts to lose weight before the operation. Can Arty overcome his failings and live the ordinary life he's only ever imagined? Will physical transformation be his ticket to personal freedom? Using multimedia and animation, *Beached* is a dark satire about reality TV, love and the pain of not fitting in.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Petra Kalive
Set Designer	Andrew Bailey
Costume Designer	Kat Chan
Lighting Designer	Lisa Mibus
Sound Designer	Robert Jordan
Animator	Rebecca Hayes

THE CAST

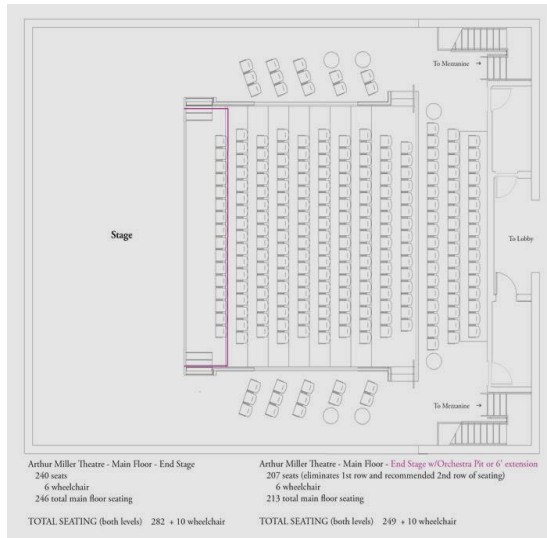
Arty	Damien Sunners
JoJo	Susie Dee
Louise	Fanny Hanusin
Producer/various	Anthony Ahern

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT:

Australian playwright, Melissa Bubnic, 28, wrote *Beached* after seeing so many TV shows about obesity. "I found it fascinating, especially this idea of someone being imprisoned in their own body and the relationship they sometimes have with their carer and the dependency that can be part of that relationship," she said. She explored the food industry, food addictions and the search for the fat gene, and attended meetings for people who had undergone gastric bypass surgery.

Read more at: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/stage/a-fat-cheque-for-the-lean-times-20110520-1ewhj.html>

THEATRE SPACE



Beached is being performed at Southbank Theatre, in the Lawler. This is a flexible studio performance space whereby the seating bank can be reconfigured to create a range of performance space/audience seating relationships.

In this production the configuration is 'end on' which means that the seating bank ends where the performance space begins [see diagram]. There is no raised stage, instead the seating bank is raked in order to provide appropriate sight lines for the audience.

SETTING

The setting and context for *Beached* is contemporary urban Australia. More specifically, the setting is the studio of reality television show, *Shocking Fat Stories*. Within the immediate setting of the television studio, the living room of Arty and his mother JoJo is recreated in the interests of good television. The contemporary Australian setting is evident in the writing – including language and cultural references, and the use of modern technology.

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

Beached is a new Australian play written by Melissa Bubnic. The play is scripted and is linear in structure, and written as a series of scenes that are quite episodic. The scenes vary in length, and present different perspectives or worlds; there is the television world, the world of Arty and the imaginative world that Arty desires. Some scenes are fast moving and serve the television world, others are longer and serve to convey Arty's lived world. The story takes place across approximately four years. The main action in the play occurs within approximately nine months - the countdown to Arty's gastric by-pass surgery. There is a coda or epilogue approximately three years later.

PRESHOW ACTIVITY:

Using the above end-on template, create a design for each of the following locations in the play:

- The television studio
- Arty & JoJo's living room
- The outside world

Consider set and prop items and how you may move them into the space.

Consider whether certain set and prop items may be TRANSFORMABLE.

CHARACTERS

The playwright describes the characters and roles in *Beached* as follows: *The play is to be performed by four actors. The four lead characters of Arty, JoJo, Louise and Producer are to be performed by four actors respectively. All other characters are to be divided among the ensemble.*

ARTY (ARTHUR ARTHUR), 18 years old and 400 kilograms
JOJO ARTHUR, his mother, mid-40s
LOUISE JELENIC, his Pathways-to-Work Officer, 39
PRODUCER, any age or gender
DOCUMENTARY VOICE OVER, a disembodied voice
AMY SCHLUSSER, Author and Commentator
FOOD INDUSTRY EXECUTIVE
KENNETH JONES, Super Morbidly Obese Person
DR FINKELSTEIN, Leading Gastroenterologist
LORRAINE, Gastric-Bypass Case Study
STEPHANIE, Gastric-Bypass Case Study
DAN RYER, Gastric-Bypass Case Study

Things to consider before the seeing the play:

In preparation for seeing the production of *Beached*, consider what you know about the following:

- What does the term **beached** mean to you?
- In what contexts have you heard it? What do you think it will mean in the context of the play?
- Link: *Beached* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cPs2SzShNc>
- What is your understanding of reality television shows – their intention, their audience?
- Read the following article <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/academics-say-fatbashing-doesnt-fly-20130405-2hc63.html> - what issues and ideas does it raise?
- How is body image conveyed in the media?
- How important is it to 'fit in'?
- What is 'gastric-bypass surgery'?
- What is satire? What is black comedy? What is irony?
- Why do you think we sometimes laugh at others' misfortunes?
- What might be the purpose of 'shocking' an audience?
- What do you think 'aesthetically disabled' might mean?

Watching the Performance

When you see the production, heighten your awareness of everything, watch and listen carefully. Give yourself time to get used to the style of the production. There may be aspects you haven't experienced before. If you have time at the end jot down:

- Things you saw – characters, set items, costumes, lighting states, props, actions, multimedia
- Things you heard – music, sound effects, lines of dialogue, words
- Things you felt – delighted, shocked, disturbed, amused, mystified, saddened, angry, curious
- The things to see, hear and feel can be transferred into a written response. You can apply them to the dramatic elements and theatrical conventions, and give direct examples from the production

Pre-show activity

We are exploring the idea of a reality television show being created there and then in front of the audience – director, Petra Kalive.

- Discuss how a reality television show may be created in a theatre space
- Discuss how such a conceit or device may create a specific actor/audience relationship

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR AND CAST OF 'BEACHED'

Director	Petra Kalive
Arty	Damien Sunners
JoJo	Susie Dee
Louise	Fanny Hanusin
The Producer & various	Anthony Ahern

When the audience come and see *Beached* what type of world do they enter?

Petra: Well it's a reality television show so the world the audience is entering is essentially a television studio. The audience will see the different elements of the studio in that the floor is marked up with tape, and there are studio lights and cameras. We are exploring the idea of a reality television show being created there and then in front of the audience.

Damien: We talked about there being three worlds in this play. Firstly, there is the Producer's world, which is a reality television show. Then there is the real world, the life that Arty lives with his mum, JoJo and his connection with Louise, the Pathways to Work Officer. The third world is the one inside Arty's head, his dreams. The concept is that the audience will experience all three layers and all three worlds.

When I first read the play it appeared to be set in Britain. Have you located this production in Britain?

Petra: No. We've set the play in Australia. Melissa (Bubnic, the playwright) has Australian-ised it, or rather she has re-written aspects of it so that it is clearly set here.

Where in Australia do Arty and JoJo live?

Susie: Probably in the Western suburbs of somewhere like Melbourne or Sydney

Petra: If it was in Perth, it would be the Eastern suburbs of Perth.

Damien: I'm from South Australia so I imagine it is the Northern suburbs of Adelaide and I say that because the play suggests that the characters come from a lower socio-economic background. Having said that we, as a cast, imagine it being in the CBD because the Producer has actually re-produced our home inside the television studio. But our real world is in those suburbs

Susie: It is set in the margins, not in a wealthy part of town so, something like Melbourne's Western suburbs

Petra: Our research around the issues in the play has demonstrated that obesity is more prevalent in lower socio-economic communities. The reasons for that phenomenon are to do with not being able to afford fresh food, or not being able to afford the time and resources to prepare healthy food. For some people buying cheap, readily prepared food is easier and what they can afford but it is more detrimental to their health.

What is this play about? Whose stories are told? What are those stories?

Susie: I play the character of JoJo who is Arty's mother. Her story is about a woman, a single mother out in the suburbs who has been left alone with very little money. Her journey is about 'attachment' and being over protective. In *Beached*, JoJo's over dependency on Arty for love and meaning is taken to an extreme. She almost keeps Arty captive, constantly feeding him. I feel though that she is not necessarily conscious of what she is doing.

Damien: I play Arthur Arthur or Arty. All his life Arty has been overweight and now, at 18, he is morbidly obese, and he has had two heart attacks. He has decided that enough is enough and he and JoJo – probably in discussion with the doctors - get in touch with the reality television show, *Shocking Fat Stories*. Arty's journey then is about becoming a new person by preparing for and having gastric by-pass surgery. He meets Louise, a Pathways to Work officer, who is there to get Arty off a disability pension and get him back to work. Louise is important to the story for that reason but also because she is possibly the only woman apart from his mother whom he has met or spoken to in a very long time. It is quite easy for him to fall in love with her.

Fanny: I play Louise and she is the Pathways to Work Officer appointed to Arty. When the producer of *Shocking Fat Stories* says they are going to pay for the gastric by-pass surgery as part of the show, Louise is brought in to get Arty prepared for his new life. Across the course of the play Arty is always trying to please her and she is not used to this. For Louise, clients are generally resistant to change and always making excuses about why they can't change. As a person she is quite repressed and lonely so she responds to Arty being nice to her. At the same time she is quite torn because she recognizes that he is only 18 and she is almost 40. Louise senses that the attraction is quite unprofessional and she is confused by her feelings because Arty is also very fat or 'aesthetically disabled'.

Fanny, the character of Louise is quite similar to JoJo, both damaged women. Would you agree?

Fanny: Yes we have talked about the similarities but also about the fact that Louise and JoJo hate each other because they are competing for Arty's love and attention.

Damien: I think that Arty unlocks a lot of Louise's problems. He understands her and brings her good points out.

Fanny: Yes, I think she finds a connection but without necessarily knowing why.

And Anthony, would you talk about your character?

Anthony: In my role in the play as the Producer I have constructed this world of a reality television series, *Shocking Fat Stories*. My backstory is probably one where I have screened the contestants for the show, most likely favouring those from low socio-economic backgrounds. I've selected them to suit particular criteria and the demands of a major network. Although I'm in control of this particular world, I have to be mindful that I am pitching the final show of *Shocking Fat Stories* to people such as network bosses. My role as the Producer is to construct the reality in the play from scene to scene. I have to manipulate the other characters and get

footage on camera but the footage is what I want to see and what I think needs to make the final product. It's not necessarily what is happening in a natural way, it's what I want to see based on ratings. The Producer is constructing the drama, but I also think that the character functions to critique the process of reality television shows.

Anthony, would you tell me about the other characters in *Beached* that you play? How are they conveyed? What are their functions?

Anthony: To some extent we are working this out as we go (this is two weeks into rehearsals). Some of them are filmed and will appear during the performance on film. Some are me as the character of the Producer simply putting on a wig or a jacket to become that other character. In that case there is no intention to hide the change of character.

Petra: And the Producer is becoming these other characters because this is his world and he is imagining this is what the television show needs. He becomes a woman like Lorraine because he believes this is what the story needs now. The change of character is about the Producer's manipulation of the world. That's definitely one of the stories we are telling here. That reality television is one thing but the story behind the screen is another. It is as much the story of the hero, Arty, who is striving to achieve something, to be better than we are, to grow into something that is, ironically, larger than ourselves. I think that ultimately this is also a story about how we all need to be loved.

So, it sounds like there are flaws and fault lines in each of these characters, thrown together through the mechanism of the reality television genre. What other theatrical forms does the play use to present these characters' stories?

Petra: I think it is clear off the page that *Beached* is a satire and a black comedy and potentially a documentary drama. The indicators for this, for me, come straight from the writing - the cut-aways/interviews, 'expert opinions' (that are so ridiculous) clearly demonstrate the satirical nature of the work. The story also follows, very closely, many documentary or reality television dramatic structures. But the beauty of all of this is that by translating these structures and devices into theatre we are able to step back and critique reality television in a very particular way. When we watch these programs at home, we get tricked, sucked-in, it's much harder to be critical or to see it for what it is. The theatrical deconstruction of Reality TV, to expose or ridicule the watcher and point to our own addiction to this particular vice is by its very nature, satirical. And that's only one satirical lens for this production – there's also the nature of addiction, obesity, our desire to be needed, our demonization of the fat and socially disadvantaged.

Anthony: I think that all those things are present but at any given moment it isn't necessarily clear which style is prominent or obvious. We are discovering this as we go.

Do you think that *Beached* is meant to shock? Will it shock?

Anthony: I certainly think it has the capacity to shock. When I first read the script I thought that for the age group it is pitched at it is quite shocking and I thought this was very exciting.

Petra: The fictitious reality television show is called *Shocking Fat Stories!*

Susie: I think there is enough poignancy and pathos within the play though to provide balance. Arty's three stories tend to invite empathy and sympathy.

VCE Drama students are studying a style called 'non-naturalism'. What do you think is non-naturalistic or non-realistic about *Beached*?

Anthony: There are so many elements you could say are non-naturalistic including the three different worlds, and how the different elements combine to create these three simultaneous worlds. The one thing that stands out for me though is the language. It isn't the type of language I have ever heard in a realistic situation, even with regard to television producers. The language is very heightened in this play and that also contributes to the 'shock' effect.

I'm interested in knowing how you are constructing the three worlds at any given time, the switching in and out. Is this achieved through stagecraft?

Damien: When we first began rehearsing we had to decide which world we were in at particular times. For instance for Arty there is the world of internal dreams, there is the world he is willing to share with others, then there is the world he is willing to tell someone else about. As an example we need to be clear about what reality we are in when JoJo and Arty are having a very private intimate conversation and someone suddenly says 'cut'. So the worlds are created through moments happening live, moments being pre-recorded, moments being edited. We had to decide what is the Producer's world and what might be Arty's real and then imagined world.

Petra: As a stagecraft device we are using screens at the back of the set to record things that are happening live. The conceit is that whatever is on the screens is to be included in the show later. The internal world of Arty's mind takes the audience into a completely different place. This world is produced by a tightly lit spot, then Arty's thoughts appear projected onto the large screen as an animation of his dreams. So there are major shifts in lighting or changes in the on screen images in order to signpost the different worlds.

Susie: At times the play feels very naturalistic even when the scenes are being played for the camera. But I also think that the playwright, Melissa Bubnic, is trying to look at the concept of 'what is real'? For instance is *Big Brother* real or is it a structured drama? While an audience is looking at what they think is a very natural scene being filmed, Melissa is questioning whether these scenes are even natural at all and hopefully the audience will question the reality television world.

Petra: Which ties in directly with the Producer and why he keeps playing all those roles, his attempts at manipulation, and in the end what reality actually is.

Susie: It is quite a complex play in that the real and fictitious worlds collide and it is also quite thought provoking.

Fanny: The blurring between reality and non-reality also occurs with the set changes. At those times we become the stage crew so there is no artifice, it's all exposed, so quite non-naturalistic.

So in terms of the overall design aesthetic, how might you describe it? How does it construct the overall world and the worlds-within-worlds?

Damien: Well this is a 'constructed' world and that is how I see the overall aesthetic. Within the set design we have flats that begin as the walls of Arty's bedroom but then open up to allow the world in. They're also used as green screens and projection screens, like in a television studio and, like a studio, the set is very constructed and manipulated.

Petra: Like the world of reality television, in this show everything is moveable and able to be re-shaped. We are constantly in a state of flux, and everything is able to be manipulated by the Producer.

The sound design for this production is by Robert Jordan. How does sound work in this production? What are the elements?

Petra: We are using the elements or soundtracks of reality television to create the sound design. All the music is emotional trigger music. It is opening sequence music, it is music called by the Producer. It's really manipulative music that exists in particular worlds when the Producer wants to control what is happening. When it is a real moment, when the Producer is absent, then there is no sound. So we have a really strong contrast between what the Producer is manipulating, what he is controlling and wanting to amp up emotionally, and the moments between, for instance, Arty and JoJo and Arty and Louise.

The costumes are designed by Kat Chan. How do they help create the world of the play?

Damien: Well obviously there is the fat suit. I can move in it but it really does feel like I have that weight on. I have to move in a very particular way, support myself, move bits of me out of the way so I can do things. It feels quite real in the world of the play.

Susie: When I think about my character, JoJo, the Producer and the production company have an image of how they want her to look. They've created a special costume for her so the audience can relate to or see her in a very particular way. They're trying to manipulate and change her façade through costume. While JoJo is trying to have some dignity, wanting to wear her pearls and lipstick for the camera, they are trying to 'bogan-ize' her and make her look larger than she is. It's quite sad.

Fanny: My costume is supposed to be 'ill-fitting'. I have a professional look, a two-piece suit which is practical and naturalistic and captures the Pathways to Work persona that Louise has.

Anthony, is your character, the Producer, seen?

Anthony: He's seen

Petra: And he's 'omnipresent'.

So the transitions into the other characters, are they realized before the audience or do they happen off stage?

Anthony: No, they happen in front of the audience. There is no attempt to hide them at all!

What about the animation/multi-media aspect of the production by Rebecca Hayes? How does that contribute to the world or worlds of *Beached*?

Petra: The animation is inspired very much by the type of television shows that Arty has been watching. His mother has controlled quite tightly what he has been allowed to watch, so the animation begins quite innocently, very simple and quite childlike. Over the course of the play the animation becomes more complex. Through the shifting animation we see the development of Arty and his journey through the play.

So when Arty is imagining where he might take Louise when they run away, is that a darker type of animation?

Damien: Yes, it is. We've played with what is in Arty's mind, what will be live and what will be recorded so that at times he is shut down and what is in his imagination will appear on screen. For instance there is the 'Gershwin musical' moment where Arty is expressing his feelings to Louise and that is played out through animation. At times Arty will talk about what is in his head live, to whoever is out there.

Something that I find interesting in this play is time and the way time is accelerated or paused and how the 'days before surgery' function in the production. Would you talk about time?

Petra: At present we have the 'days before surgery' sitting at the back of the set but that will shift. We will put the days on the small screens and have them automatically projected. They will serve as punctuation points to the action. Initially we considered having the number of days manipulated by the actors but that screen will now have the title of the reality television show, *Shocking Fat Stories*. The days will be projected at the beginning of every scene to mark how much time has lapsed.

Damien: It is very much a reality television show conceit to have this time indicator and it also reminds the audience where Arty is on his journey.

Susie: And it indicates a very linear structure

The last scene, how would you describe the way it fits in the overall play?

Petra: That scene is three years post surgery so the play leaps in time.

Damien: There is a lot of hope in the play and the final scene suggests this, even though it doesn't end how an audience might like. We were talking the other day about how Arty can't have both JoJo and Louise. When Louise comes into Arty's world he tends to shut his mother out. Then JoJo comes back into his world and Louise is shut out. Then it is three years on and...well we'll let the audience see the show!

Petra: Louise tends to exist in the constructed world, the reality television world.

Anthony: That's the thing that struck me. Potentially you could look at their romance as being something that has been thrust upon them. The moments they spend together have not come about through a natural relationship. There is considerable pressure and when that pressure is gone it makes sense that they would go their separate ways...or not.

LIVING IN A SATIRICAL WORLD

Interview with *Beached* director Petra Kalive by Paul Galloway, Melbourne Theatre Company

'I think teenagers live in satire,' says director Petra Kalive. 'It's the way they occupy the space in the world they live in. They're always standing outside themselves; they have that ability to take an ironic stance. They are completely hip to irony and comedy, especially black humour. They get all that completely.'

Written by Melissa Bubnic, *Beached* is for an audience who like that satisfying Swiftian kick of exaggeration. The central character is Arty, a teenager trapped in a massive body, grossly Rabelaisian in its obesity. He's a couch potato who has outgrown the couch. (In fact, one of the exaggerated design ideas for the show is that he *is the couch*, an immobile mountain of plump upholstery.) Imprisoned in his body, his mind runs free in fantasies of lithe and muscular adventure. Meanwhile, the reality television series *Shocking Fat Stories* plans to make his tragedy into light entertainment for the tut-tutting masses.

'Obviously, Melissa has written a play about our obsession with fat and our demonization of fat people,' Kalive says. 'But it's a strong satirical take on that. The satire allows an audience to put themselves at arms length, so they can reflect on their own behaviour and attitudes when it comes to how we treat those who have an addiction to food.'

Another key aspect of young people's lives is their blasé acceptance of modern technological life. As Kalive reminds me, every new-fangled invention from Facebook to the iPhone is old hat to them, around for as long as they can remember. Worrisome innovations, such as reality television, are a mundane aspect of the contemporary teenager's moral universe. This is where satire becomes valuable, because it questions the commonplace.

Fighting fire with fire, Kalive will send up our media-saturated world by saturating her production with multi-media. Working with the set designer Andrew Bailey, Kalive plans to involve the live action with filmed sections, pre-recorded inserts, video screens and puppetry.

'The play exists in three worlds,' Kalive explains. 'We've got Arty's home life, we've got the world of Arty's mind as he imagines an alternate reality, and we've got the world constructed by reality television. To tell the story, we will flip between media and realities. What I'm envisaging at this point is that Arty's imaginary world is animated. The world of reality television and the manipulation that that involves will be projected on screens, and this will contrast with the actual reality of Arty's life. The idea is that modern reality is layered, and the production design will expose those layers, to show how artificial much of it is.'

Kalive, who is still a jobbing actor and came to directing out of creating her own independent theatre projects, doesn't think that directing a show for youth is any different from any other directing gig. 'I don't think there is any need to make allowances for young people, no', she says. 'I'm just going to make a really good piece of theatre with the expectation that they will follow. As with any other piece of theatre, whether we are adults or are children, some things we miss, some things we get. It is the

impression that stays with us having seen the whole piece that matters, I think. It's never a good thing to pander. I expect a lot of them, and I hope they come expecting a lot of me.'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – REALITY TELEVISION

Beached uses the conceit of a reality television show 'Shocking Fat Stories!' as a vehicle for Arty's story. An excellent overview of the structure and format of reality television shows can be found here: <http://darrenarcher.name/ftv/PDF's/Reality%20Television.pdf>

The following extracts, links and Youtube clips invite you to explore the phenomenon of reality television even further. Consider why people participate in it and why audiences watch it.

EXTRACT FROM:

'The Effects of Reality Television on Weight Bias: an Examination of The Biggest Loser'

Future research may also be pursued in understanding the impact of watching the show on the self-esteem, mood, and body image of obese individuals, or the differential impact of reality television show programming of obesity vs. other prime time fictitious portrayals of obese individuals.

This investigation takes a needed first step in examining how weight-loss reality shows affect weight bias and has implications for interventions to reduce weight bias. This investigation suggests that even television shows in which overt bias towards obese individuals is not portrayed may inadvertently increase dislike of these individuals and fuel perceptions that weight is highly controllable. Viewing this form of entertainment would appear to come at a cost to people who are obese by fuelling weight stigma in general. Given the popularity of this show, these effects could have a considerable impact on the millions of its viewers.

Read more at:

<http://thebiomechanics.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Biggest-loser-article-weight-bias.pdf>

EXTRACT FROM:

'An Old-Fashioned Date Can't Beat a Night Out - Debating Reality TV'

What are the pros and cons of Reality Television shows? Here are some extracts that debate the issue

Mr. Ewalt, in the rebuttal round, said that reality shows reinforce harmful stereotypes. He also noted that despite the genre's name, they are actually anti-reality; those on the shows and those who aspire to be on them adopt made-for-the-camera mannerisms and mind-sets. "It creates this pressure for people to behave inauthentically," he said.

Mr. Jotwani, though, contended that reality shows have the power to burst stereotypes as well as reinforce them, citing Susan Boyle, the homely singer who became a star after a performance on "Britain's Got Talent." "That's something that only happens on reality TV," he said. And Mr. Bagwell suggested that there's no proof that people at large act idiotically, criminally or

whatever because they see that behavior on television. "Crazy people will do crazy things with or without reality TV," he said.

Read more at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/arts/television/reality-tv-debate-critics-notebook.html?_r=0

MORE LINKS FOR REALITY TELEVISION



Excerpt from The Biggest Loser Australia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kF9S3a7oGjY>



Why are Reality TV Shows So Popular? – An excerpt of a talk by Bill Guttentag

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAnAoM96wxE>



Reality TV @ 10 – Long-form discussion about the ethics and techniques of Reality TV. Aired in 2010 on Canadian program 'The Agenda with Steve Paikin'.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwPtVuCSH9A>

Why Reality TV Is Good For Us – Time Magazine article addressing some of the criticisms of reality television.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,421047-2,00.html>

The Schadenfreude of Reality TV

<http://brainworldmagazine.com/the-reality-of-reality-tv-can-viewing-bad-behavior-on-the-small-screen-affect-the-way-we-treat-each-other/>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - CELEBRITY CULTURE

Who, *OK*, and *Famous* are just some of the celebrity magazines stacking the shelves at supermarket checkouts. What is the fascination with celebrities? In *Beached*, the concept of celebrity is explored. Here are some links to articles and Youtube clips to provide a background.

Article about the rise of Celebrity Culture, written a decade ago.

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/199505/the-culture-celebrity>

Celebrity Culture and the American Dream

Using examples from the first celebrity fan magazines of 1911 to the present, Celebrity Culture and the American Dream considers how major economic and historical factors shaped the nature of celebrity culture as we know it today. The website explains how and why Hollywood celebrities can help shape our understanding of American society, the changing nature of the American Dream, and the relationship between class and culture.

Link: <http://celebritycultureandtheamericandream.wordpress.com/>



The Business of the Kardashians

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=144vKkRboeo>

Ensemble Performance – creating a non naturalistic performance piece

In this activity you will be exploring the concept of **reality television** – you may want to watch a few episodes of such shows as The Amazing Race, My Kitchen Rules, The Farmer Wants a Wife and even The Biggest Loser.

- Brainstorm ideas about the pros and cons of reality television shows
- Create a made up reality television show title
- Create three scenes that depict (a) selecting contestants (b) a dramatic/shocking episode (c) the media story that follows this
- Theatrical conventions – transformation of character, place and object, stillness and silence,
- music, exaggerated moment, voice over, narration, pathos
- Consider how you might incorporate Twitter or other social media as a non-naturalistic device
- Perform your pieces and then reflect on the role that reality television plays in our society

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – SATIRE & BLACK COMEDY

SATIRE

The VCAA define ‘satire’ as:

The use of wit and comedy to attack, denounce or deride a target. Satire exposes or questions the presence of vice, folly, abuse or pretence. It can be achieved through the manipulation of a parable or other comedic theatrical conventions. The satirist laughs at, punishes or questions a target and/or an audience. The target may be an individual or a system.

Here are some online examples of how satire can work:



The Chaser’s War on Everything – ABC Satire - ‘Cracked Pepper’

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCFRbcSmvCc>



The Hollowmen – ABC Political Satire – ‘The Crackdown’

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EgqSilnn7s>

BLACK COMEDY

Black humour is humour that makes light of what are usually serious subjects such as death and even taboo subjects such as, in the case of *Beached*, **obesity**. The following links provide very visual examples of how black comedy can work to comment on the human condition.



Black Books – BBC black comedy – ‘Maddy’s first day’

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa3Dz6xSQfg>



Monty Python and The Holy Grail – Film – ‘The Black Knight’

<http://www.ultimate-guitar.com/>



Monty Python – The Meaning of Life - Film – ‘Mr Creosote’

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdJcWvxEULQ>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION – DOCUDRAMA

In theatre, **docudrama** is a documentary-style genre that features dramatized re-enactments of actual historical events. It may contain actual testimony or memoir from people actually involved in events (often called ‘verbatim’), or comment from historians and ‘experts’. Australian plays such as *Embers* by Campion Decent theatrically documents people’s experiences of bush fires in Eastern Victoria in 2003, and *Aftershocks* by Paul Brown and the Workers Cultural Action Committee is based on taped interviews and theatricalises the Newcastle earthquake of 1989. *The Laramie Project* and *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later* by Tectonic Theatre Project are based on the murder of a young man in Laramie, Wyoming in 1998 (link: <http://www.laramieproject.org/>).

In the core elements of its story a docudrama strives to adhere to known historical facts, while allowing a greater or lesser degree of dramatic license in peripheral details, and where there are gaps in the historical record. Docudrama producers sometimes choose to film or record their reconstructed events in the actual locations in which the historical events occurred. *Beached* uses some of the devices of docudrama – ‘real’ testimony and ‘expert’ testimony to camera, as well as commentary – but is more like a ‘mockumentary’. It is a fictitious story but it could be real. Arty and JoJo as characters could really exist, as could Louise, the Producer and the various other characters in the play. *Beached* uses the devices of docudrama mentioned above, all within the frame of a fake reality television show. See below for an interview with the cast and director Petra Kalive in which she comments on style.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - DRAMATIC IRONY

In **dramatic irony**, the author/playwright causes a character to speak or act in error because they are ignorant of a truth of which the audience *is* aware. In other words, the audience knows the character is making a mistake, even as the character is making it. A play famous for conveying dramatic irony is *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles.



Dramatic Irony - Ted Talks - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZFYuX84n1U>

AFTER SEEING THE PERFORMANCE...

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

The following questions and discussion points focus specifically on *Drama Unit 3, Outcome 3 - Analysing Non-naturalistic Performance*. The Outcome requires students to respond to a live production from the Playlist, firstly as a written SAC, and then later as part of the Drama Written Examination in November.

The world of the play

When you first entered the theatre, what world did you feel you were entering?

- What aspects of the theatre space indicated a particular world?
- What did you begin to imagine or predict? What were you curious about?
- What was initially very familiar? What felt strange? Why?
- At what point do we as an audience enter the characters' world?
- At what point do we exit the world of the play?
- How would you evaluate the way these two points in the story were conveyed?
- Were they clear? Did you want a different beginning or ending? Why?

Melissa Bubnic's *Beached* is a new Australian play. Originally set in Britain, both the playwright and the production teams have now set the play in Australia.

- What is Australian about *Beached*?
- Consider language, cultural references, the types of characters represented
- Does the story transcend locality and culture or is it uniquely Australian? Why?

Firstly, there is the Producer's world, which is a reality television show. Then there is the real world, the life that Arty lives with his mum JoJo and his connection with Louise, the Pathways to Work Officer. The third world is the one inside Arty's head, his dreams – Damien Sunner, 'Arty'.

- Create a table with the headings of the three worlds
- Under each heading list the qualities of each world – this could include set items, sounds, characters, aspects of theatrical styles, lighting, the actor/audience relationship

The blurring between reality and non-reality also occurs with the set changes – Fanny Hanusin, 'Louise'.

- How clearly was each world defined?
- Which world seemed most real? Why?
- Did the worlds blur together at times? How? To what effect?
- How did the blurring contribute to the non-naturalism?

It's set in the margins, not in a wealthy part of town – Susie Dee, 'JoJo'.

- From having seen the production, do you get a sense that this may be true?
- What indicators are there? Is this important to the story? The themes? Why/Why not?

In *Beached*, JoJo and Arty use a type of baby language between themselves. Some of the terms they use are *Moon, bot-bot, deady-bones*, and *Art-Art*.

- How does this use of language contribute to the world or worlds of the play?
- Which world does it belong to? What function does this language have?

Structure and narrative

The story also follows, very closely, many documentary or reality television dramatic structures. But the beauty of all of this is that by translating these structures and devices into theatre we are able to step back and critique reality television in a very particular way – Petra Kalive, director.

- Which of the following reality television structural devices are evident in *Beached*? Real life participants, unscripted performances, voice-over narration, cut aways, observation, voyeurism, audience participation, media events?
- How is the reality television structure critiqued in *Beached*?

The ‘days before surgery’...indicate a very linear structure – Susie Dee, ‘JoJo’.

- Comment on the linear aspects of the production
- How does the mechanism of ‘days before surgery’ indicate the linear nature of the production?
- How does this mechanism contribute to the non-naturalism?

The days will be projected at the beginning of every scene to mark how much time has lapsed – Petra Kalive, director.

- The play is 90 minutes in length but covers nearly four years in Arty’s life. Does the non-naturalistic theatrical convention of Disjointed time relate to *Beached*? Why/why not?
- If the time isn’t disjointed, how might you describe it?

Beached is structured as one act with many scenes and a ‘coda’ or ‘epilogue’.

- Discuss how the scenes could be considered to be episodes in Arty’s story
- What is a coda or epilogue? What function does it serve in this play?
- How does the inclusion of a coda or epilogue contribute to the non-naturalistic style of *Beached*?

In some ways *Beached* could be considered to contain a play-within-a-play.

- Do you agree? What is the main play? What could be the play-within that play?

Theatrical styles

Beached is considered to be ‘non-naturalistic’ in style. This section explores what aspects of the production are non-naturalistic, and what conventions of more specific theatrical styles are present.

The indicators for [reality television] for me, come straight from the writing - the cut-aways/interviews, ‘expert opinions’ (that are so ridiculous) clearly demonstrate the satirical nature of the work – Petra Kalive, director.

- As mentioned above, real life participants, unscripted performances, voice-over narration, cut-aways, observation, voyeurism, audience participation, media events are some of the recognized conventions or structural devices of reality television shows
- Now that you have experienced the show, discuss whether each of these conventions were present and list specific examples
- How did these conventions contribute to the overall non-naturalistic style of the production? Why aren’t they ‘naturalistic’?

Satire: ...to expose or ridicule the watcher and point to our own addiction to this particular vice is by its very nature, satirical – Petra Kalive, director.

- Consider how the following aspects of the production contributed to the satire, or were themselves satirical:
 - The 'expert opinions', particularly by Dr. Finkelstein
 - The stakes for Arty - is the Producer right? Is this Arty's absolutely last chance?
 - The name of the reality television show, *Shocking Fat Stories*. What is this satirizing?
 - The success stories of gastro bypass patients
 - The world inside Arty's head
- How do these moments expose or ridicule particular ideas that are present in the play?
- Does the satire in *Beached* actually provide a point of self-reflection for the audience? Does it expose the audience's addiction to reality television shows?

Beached may also be considered to be a 'black comedy'.

- What is black comedy? How can something be both black and comic?
- What did you laugh at when you saw the performance?
- Did it feel awkward or politically incorrect to laugh?
- Did moments of the production shock you? What? Why?
- Discuss and record some specific moments in the production where black comedy was evident. Consider what the moment in the story/performance was, which characters were involved, what stagecraft was at play
- How do these moments of black comedy in *Beached* contribute to the overall non-naturalistic style of the production?

It isn't the type of language I have ever heard in a realistic situation, even with regard to television producers. The language is very heightened in this play – Anthony Ahern, 'Producer'.

- Do you agree with this comment?
- Consider the character of the Producer in *Beached*. How does this character use language and particular expressions in a heightened manner?
- Consider Dr. Finkelstein's description of operating - is this heightened?
- When Arty narrates his imagined world, are there aspects of the language that you felt were heightened? Why? Why not?

I think there is enough poignancy and pathos within the play though to provide balance. Arty's three stories tend to invite empathy and sympathy...At times the play feels very naturalistic even when the scenes are being played for the camera – Susie Dee, 'JoJo'.

- Identify three moments when you felt poignancy and pathos were present – what elements, conventions or stagecraft were being manipulated in order to create this feeling?
- Do you agree with Susie Dee that 'at times the play feels very naturalistic'?
- Discuss, describe and give examples of naturalistic moments in the production – when were these moments, between which characters, how did the use of expressive skills contribute to these moments of naturalism?

The blurring between reality and non-reality also occurs with the set changes. At those times we become the stage crew so there is no artifice, it's all exposed, so quite non-naturalistic – Fanny Hanusin, 'Louise'.

- At times the performers do indeed become crew - manipulating the set truck is a key example. Consider how the performers achieved this - did they transform character, did they drop role, go into neutral?
- What is artifice? How can it be applied in the theatre?
- Identify some moments within the production where this lack of artifice occurred and discuss how it contributed to the non-naturalistic style of the production.

Discuss whether you feel that Brecht's concept of the 'alienation' effect was present in *Beached*. If so:

- When was it present?
- How was it constructed within the scene/moment?
- What point or comment was it making?
- How did these moments construct and then deconstruct the actor/audience relationship?

Characters and Expressive skills

There are four main characters in *Beached* and then several on-screen and on-stage cameos played by the actor who plays The Producer. As you discuss, analyse and evaluate the characters, something to consider is concepts of stereotype and caricature, and reality and unreality.

The character of Arthur Arthur or Arty, is present on stage throughout the performance until he leaves to have his gastric bypass surgery. The actor, Damien Sunners comments on his Arty costume: *...I can move in it but it really does feel like I have that weight on. I have to move in a very particular way, support myself, move bits of me out of the way so I can do things. It feels quite real in the world of the play.*

- How would you describe the character of Arty? Is he believable? Exaggerated?
- How did you feel about Arty? Did this feeling change? Why?
- Encased in the 'fat suit', how does the actor, Damien Sunners, use his expressive skills to portray Arty?
- What challenges and opportunities does the costume offer to an actor?
- Do you agree with the actor that the fat suit is real within the world of the play?
- How does the suit contribute to the non-naturalistic style of the production?

In Beached, JoJo's over dependency on Arty for love and meaning is taken to an extreme. She almost keeps Arty captive, constantly feeding him – Susie Dee, 'JoJo'.

- How would you describe the character of JoJo?
- Consider how the actor, Susie Dee, creates the character of JoJo
- How does she manipulate the expressive skills of voice, gesture, movement and facial expression: when she is with Arty; when she is eavesdropping; with Louise; when the Producer is threatening her; in her 'to camera' monologues?
- How do you feel about the character of JoJo? Do these feelings/responses shift throughout the play? Why?
- Do you agree that JoJo 'almost keeps Arty captive'? Why would she do this?

- In what ways does the character of JoJo contribute to the non-naturalistic style of the play?

Louise senses that the attraction is quite unprofessional and she is confused by her feelings because Arty is also very fat or 'aesthetically disabled' – Fanny Hanusin, 'Louise'.

- How would you describe the character of Louise?
- What is her first reaction to Arty? Why does this change?
- How does the actor, Fanny Hanusin, create a professional persona for Louise?
- Discuss the moment when Louise loses it and rages at JoJo. How does the actor manipulate her expressive skills in this moment?
- Would you describe Louise as a stereotype or a caricature? Why?

My role as the Producer is to construct the reality in the play from scene to scene. I have to manipulate the other characters and get footage on camera but the footage is what I want to see and what I think needs to make the final product – Anthony Ahern, 'Producer'.

- In the production of *Beached*, the Producer is both a character and a function
- Describe the character of the Producer. What are his qualities, dreams, hopes?
- How does the actor, Anthony Ahern, convey these qualities?
- How does he manipulate his expressive skills to, especially, return to the Producer each time?
- What is the function of the Producer in the overall play?

The Producer is constructing the drama, but I also think that the character functions to critique the process of reality television shows – Anthony Ahern, 'Producer'.

- Do you agree with the comment?
- How does the Producer 'critique the process of reality television shows'?
- Consider what he says, how he uses space, how he is constantly present
- How does this particular character contribute to the non-naturalistic style of the play?

The change of character is about the Producer's manipulation of the world. That's definitely one of the stories we are telling here – Petra Kalive, director.

The Producer portrays all of the other roles required for *Shocking Fat Stories*. Use the list of characters provided earlier in these notes and under each character's name:

- Comment on how the actor used his voice, accent, facial expression and gesture in a way that was distinctive for each character
- Do you agree with the director's comment above that the Producer is using these different roles to manipulate the world of the reality television show?

Some are me as the character of the Producer simply putting on a wig or a jacket to become that other character. In that case there is no intention to hide the change of character – Anthony Ahern, 'Producer'.

- How do you respond to this comment?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the way the Producer becomes each different character.
- Would you describe these characters as 'stereotypes' or 'caricatures'? Why?

Did you, as an audience member, sometimes forget that the characters are all being filmed and scrutinized?

- Consider the presence of the Producer
- Were you aware of his presence all the time?
- Were there times when you 'forgot' he was there? Why?

Use of stagecraft

In this section, the focus is on the use of specific stagecraft elements. The first aspect to consider is how stagecraft is used to create the three different worlds – the show, Arty and JoJo's world, and the world inside Arty's head.

The internal world of Arty's mind takes the audience into a completely different place. This world is produced by a tightly-lit spot, then Arty's thoughts appear projected onto the large screen as an animation of his dreams. So there are major shifts in lighting or changes in the on screen images in order to signpost the different worlds – Petra Kalive, director

- Carefully analyse these comments by the director. Did you see some of the aspects that the director talks about?
- Discuss how the world of the television show *Shocking Fat Stories* was created using stagecraft
- How is the playing space used to help create the different worlds?
- Is it divided up into specific areas? Do the different spaces merge and blur?

Set

A major part of the set design is the central raised truck that mainly locates us in Arty and JoJo's living room:

- How is this truck manipulated throughout the production?
- What other places does it become?
- How does this set item contribute to the non-naturalistic style of the production?

As a stagecraft device we are using screens at the back of the set to record things that are happening live. The conceit is that whatever is on the screens is to be included in the show later – Petra Kalive, director.

- Discuss the use of screens in this production
- What different functions do they have at different times?
- Are there times when characters are both real and on screen?
- How do they assist in creating the different worlds in the play?
- How do the screens contribute to the non-naturalistic style?

The couch and large ottoman are central to the set.

- How do they function in the play?
- What do they add to the narrative?
- How might a couch be symbolic in this play?

Part of the set includes a countdown to Arty's operation.

- Discuss how the countdown was conveyed to the audience
- Was it incorporated into the set? Was it digital? Was it manipulated by the 'crew'?

- The director has described this as having a ‘punctuating effect’, what do you think its function was?
- How does its presence contribute to the non-naturalistic style of *Beached*?

JoJo states emphatically to the Producer: “This is my house and I like to keep my house clean.”

- Is it her house? Has her house been recreated for the play?
- This is the conceit and conundrum that the play offers up. What do you believe? How does this conundrum contribute to the non-naturalism?

Properties:

In this production, consider how the properties function and how they might act symbolically.

- Compile a list of the props that were used in the performance; eg. the walking frame, Arty’s new lifestyle book, etc.
- What specific props would you associate with each of the different characters?
- There are several scenes where food is present and eaten – how does the property of food act symbolically in the production?

Sound/Music

All the music is emotional trigger music – Petra Kalive, director.

- Do you agree with this comment?
- For instance how does ‘Eye of the Tiger’ create an emotional trigger?
- How does the Gershwin music that accompanies Arty’s imagined life with Louise create an ‘emotional trigger’?
- For instance, Louise can suddenly hear Arty’s world and his dream bleeds into their here and now life. How does this contribute to the non-naturalism?

The Voiceover in *Beached* is a disembodied voice.

- Consider whether this is a stagecraft element or a character
- If it is an element of the sound design, comment on how it contributes to the mood, theatrical style and the world of the play
- If you consider it a character, discuss and evaluate the function of the voiceover in the production.

So we have a really strong contrast between what the Producer is manipulating, what he is controlling and wanting to amp up emotionally, and the moments between – Petra Kalive, director.

- In the interview, the director talks about the way sound and music are designed to manipulate the audience. Recall when moments are silent, when moments use sound, when they use music
- How does sound function to create the different worlds of the play?

Lighting

There are some obvious lighting choices in *Beached*. One is the television studio lighting.

- Discuss how this form of lighting functions in the production
- Discuss how the studio lighting acts symbolically in the production – what meanings does it have? What themes does it link to?

Beached is a theatrical performance. A function of lighting in theatre is to light the actors and the set. The lighting also contributes to the creation of mood, atmosphere, time, and location.

- Beyond the studio lighting, what other lighting choices did you notice?
- Were these practical theatrical choices?
- Did you notice if the lighting in the more naturalistic moments acted more symbolically?
- How did lighting contribute to the non-naturalistic style of *Beached*?

Costume, make-up, hair

While JoJo is trying to have some dignity, wanting to wear her pearls and lipstick for the camera, they are trying to 'bogan-ize' her and make her look larger than she is – Susie Dee, 'JoJo'.

- There are several layers of meaning here. There is the costume design itself, then there is the costume design as intended by the Producer
- Do you agree with Susie Dee's statement about her appearance being manipulated?
- How do the costume, make-up and hair choices enhance or construct the character of JoJo? Evaluate their effectiveness
- What is the significance of the pearls and lipstick for JoJo? Are they symbolic?

My costume is supposed to be 'ill-fitting'. I have a professional look, a two-piece suit which is practical and naturalistic and captures the Pathways to Work persona that Louise has – Fanny Hanusin, 'Louise'.

- Do you agree that Louise's costume is 'practical and naturalistic'?
- Evaluate how the costume captures her character
- How does this type of costume work within the non-naturalistic world of the play?
- Does it sit in contrast to the more non-naturalistic elements? What purpose does it serve?

The Producer dons several costumes throughout the play, both on screen and within the real time of the play. Costume, makeup and hair are deliberate choices.

- Wigs, costumes, moustaches and hats are all part of the choices. Discuss, analyse and evaluate how these choices establish each of the characters that the Producer plays
- How do these choices contribute to the non-naturalistic style of the production?
- Are these costume choices satirical? What further meaning do they have within the world of the play?

Animation

Much of Arty's inner world is created through animation. Within his real world, he may suddenly stop talking. His imaginary world dominates and is captured on screen through animation.

The animation is inspired very much by the type of television shows that Arty has been watching – Petra Kalive, director.

- Consider the first animation of Arty and his sidekick Pedro as heroes. What television shows does this evoke?
- Consider classic television shows such as The Lone Ranger and his sidekick Tonto, Batman and his sidekick Robin, Roger Ramjet and his sidekicks the Eagle Squadron

- Why would a teenager know about *Murder She Wrote*, a television series that features a female amateur detective and her sidekick?
- How does the animation in *Beached* capture this type of aesthetic?

Through the shifting animation we see the development of Arty and his journey through the play – Petra Kalive, director.

- The animation tends to shift and become darker, more serious perhaps as the play progresses. How does this progression allow the audience to understand Arty's journey?
- How does the animation contribute to the non-naturalistic style of the production?

Theatrical conventions

As a class you have probably discussed and identified many of the following theatrical conventions:

- Caricature and stereotype
- Exaggeration (character, movement, language)
- Episodic structure
- Pathos
- Stillness and silence
- Transformation of place
- Compressed/accelerated time
- Heightened language
- Multiple perspectives/narratives/worlds
- Montage
- Direct address
- The Brechtian convention of 'alienation'

Discuss, analyse and evaluate these and other theatrical conventions present in *Beached*.

Dramatic elements

Discuss, analyse and evaluate how each of the following dramatic elements were present in *Beached* through the use of acting, direction and stagecraft:

- Climax – when, for whom?
- Contrast – between characters, worlds, scenes
- Conflict – inner conflict, inter conflict, meta conflict
- Tension – dramatic, comic, tragic
- Timing – real, compressed, disjointed
- Focus – for the characters, for the actors, for the audience
- Mood – establishment of, juxtaposition
- Rhythm – in language, in structure, within scenes
- Sound – effect, music, composition
- Space – actor/audience relationship, establishment of, endowment of
- Symbol – word, gesture, stagecraft, sound

Discuss how each of these elements were present and manipulated to create the production.

THEMES

There's also the nature of **addiction, obesity, our desire to be needed, our demonization of the fat and socially disadvantaged** – Petra Kalive, director.

- Do you agree that these are present in *Beached*?
- How do the narrative, the characters and the stagecraft explore each of these themes?

How does the theme of **manipulation** manifest in *Beached*?

- What is manipulated? How is it manipulated? Do you feel manipulated?

What other themes are present in *Beached*? How are they represented in the play?

POST SHOW ACTIVITY

The following script excerpts are offered to students and teachers by way of exploring the structure, narrative and style of the play, *Beached*. In this activity students are asked to choose one of the excerpts and create a performed response.

- How could each excerpt prompt a devised performance?
- What theatrical styles could be applied?
- How might a small ensemble of 4 or 5 use the script as a beginning point?
- What playmaking techniques could be used to develop the ensemble performance?
- What themes, metaphors and symbols are explored in each excerpt?
- Rehearse then perform the devised pieces
- Discuss, analyse and evaluate the use of non-naturalism in each performance

SCRIPT EXERCERPTS

Script Excerpt One

(Page 1)

Shocking Fat Stories theme music plays

Voice over This is the home of Arthur Arthur

Producer Cut to

Enormous young man in a muumuu wheezing with the effort of trying to force his wedged frame through the door

Voice over At 18 years old and weighing 400 kilograms, Arthur is the world's heaviest teenager.

Arty: It's not like something I tried for, y'know, but...it's kinda nice being in the books for something. Otherwise I'm no special piggy.

He tries to laugh as though this was a joke

But I hear there's a kid coming along in Houston who's only 15 and already like 350 kilos, so, y'know, the competition's out there.

Beat

No that I'm competing but...y'know.

Voice Over: His weight has reached critical proportions but for now everyday life goes on as normal.

Arty: I walk up, have breakfast, and then I might watch some telly or read, and y'know, have lunch and more telly –

JoJo Or scrabble

Arty: Or scrabble, and...I don't really do much.

JoJo I never beat him at scrabble do I Moon? He's got a real good vocabulary, like knows all these word's don't you love?
Arty: This is what I call frosting coz she's laying it on real thick now.
JoJo I know every mum thinks her baby is the best but you look at some kids and think, I don't care if your mum does reckon you're the bees-knees, I know a gimped up little monkey when I see one. But seriously my Art-Art's got a gift with words.

Script Excerpt Two **(Page 6)**

Arty: In the life Arty's living in his head he is
An explorer
Intrepid
He likes the word intrepid
His body is hard and brown and lean
He has facial hair
A sexy, roguish beard coz you don't have to shave in the Amazon
And he's with his sidekick Pedro
He and Pedro have been together for ages, doing this kind of thing, not shaving and being sexy without trying, sleeping under the stars and caving down underwater rivers systems that lead to the Lost City of Z and encounters with an ancient warrior tribe guarding pyramids and gold and stuff
And when Arty looks at Pedro
He has an intensity, a real shocking intensity that says, 'I know who I am and I'm a man and I matter'
And Pedro respects and loves Arty and they've been friends so long they forgot where they met (some bar in Rio drunk on cachaça over a poker game that got dangerous when Señor Gangster Thug refused to accept he was beat and he wore a wide brimmed hat
A white hat of course
And a white suit
Coz that's what gangster thugs wear in Rio)
And in this life that Arty's living in his head
He smiles the brilliant white teeth smile of the movie star

Script Excerpt Three **(Page 6)**

Louise enters to meet Arty for the first time. She is shocked by his appearance

Arty: It's Mrs Jelenic isn't it?
Pause.
Um...hello.
Louise still cannot speak.
Thanks for coming – I know you don't normally do house calls but it's a bit hard for me to get about with um, well y'know, so thankyou Mrs –
Louise: It's Ms.
Louise gingerly puts out her hand.
Arty: You don't have to touch me, that's okay.
Relieved, Louise retracts her hand.
Louise: It's good to meet you Mr. Arthur...Arthur. You have the same first name and surname. That's...unusual.
Arty: Mum went to school with a boy called Saad Saad and the kids called him Sad Sad.

Beat.

Louise: Okay. Arthur, I'm here to –
Arty pulls a seat out for Louise with his moving stick.
Oh...thank you. Now Arthur we have a lot to –

Arty: Would you like a cuppa tea? We got coffee too I think. And low-fat milk.

Louise: That's good. The low-fat milk.

Arty: So you'd like a cuppa milk?

Louise: No it's good that *you* have low-fat milk.

Arty: Mum can't tolerate lactose. Or Chihuahuas.
Arty laughs.
Louise doesn't.

Producer: Cut to
JoJo eavesdropping

Louise: Do you know why I'm here?

Arty: You wanna get me work so Mum and me can't have disability any more.

Louise: That's not quite what the letter said.

Arty: But that's what it means. Could we offer you a Tim-Tam?

Louise: I fear Tim Tams are the problem Arthur.

Arty: You're absolutely right. I prefer chocolate teddy bears myself.
Arty laughs.
Louise doesn't.

Louise: Are you happy Arthur?
Beat.

PRODUCTION IMAGES

All Photos by Jeff Busby



Set Design by Andrew Bailey. Pictured: Damien Sunners



Pictured: Anthony Ahern, Susie Dee and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Anthony Ahern and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Fanny Hanusin, Damien Sunners, Susie Dee and Anthony Ahern



Pictured: Damien Sunners, Anthony Ahern and Susie Dee



Pictured: Susie Dee, Damien Sunners and Anthony Ahern



Pictured: Damien Sunners and Anthony Ahern



Pictured: Anthony Ahern and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Anthony Ahern and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Fanny Hanusin and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Fanny Hanusin and Susie Dee



Pictured: Fanny Hanusin and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Fanny Hanusin and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Susie Dee and Damien Sunners



Pictured: Fanny Hanusin, Damien Sunners and Anthony Ahern



Pictured: Fanny Hanusin, Damien Sunners and Anthony Ahern



Pictured: Damien Sunners

Beached Teachers' Notes

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