

MTC EDUCATION TEACHERS' NOTES 2014



Yellow Moon

by David Greig

2 - 16 May 2014

Southbank Theatre, The Lawler

Notes prepared by Meg Upton

MTC MELBOURNE
THEATRE
COMPANY

ABOUT THESE EDUCATION NOTES

These notes are intended to support both the in-theatre season of *Yellow Moon* and the regional schools' tour. MTC and Regional Arts Victoria are aware that not all audiences will be VCE Drama audiences. As such, these notes provide some activities and suggested curriculum links to AusVELS, The Arts, Drama, Level 9 and 10. There is a strong focus on the VCE Drama Unit 3 task as well.

Teachers and students should note that the season at Southbank Theatre, The Lawler *will use lighting* as a stagecraft element. Lighting *will not be* used during the regional tour. The sound design, the set, and the costumes, however, will be consistent across the theatre season and the regional in-schools tour.

YELLOW MOON AND VCE DRAMA

VCE DRAMA - AREA OF STUDY 3: Analysing non-naturalistic performance

Many if not all students seeing *Yellow Moon* will be doing so for the purposes of analysing it as a 'non-naturalistic' performance, writing a SAC, then possibly revisiting it for the purposes of the end-of-year Drama Written Examination.

If this is the case then you do have a job to do. These notes are offered by way of assisting you to delve deeply into the performance you see and consider the following:

- The ways that characters are represented in the performance.
- Observe and analyse actors' use of performance and expressive skills.
- How the actor–audience relationship is created and manipulated
- The ways dramatic elements, conventions and stagecraft are used in the performance.

More specifically Outcome 3 outlines the Key Knowledge required to demonstrate the Key Skills

Key knowledge

- The ways in which non-naturalistic performance styles and conventions are used in performance
- The ways in which characters are represented in non-naturalistic performance through the actors' use of expressive skills
- The ways in which dramatic elements, conventions and stagecraft are manipulated to enhance non-naturalistic performance
- Drama terminology associated with performance styles, traditions, and practitioners from contemporary and cultural traditions relevant to non-naturalistic performance.

Key skills

- Analyse the representation of characters within a non-naturalistic performance
- Analyse and evaluate the manipulation of dramatic elements, conventions and stagecraft within a non-naturalistic performance
- Analyse non-naturalistic performance styles within a production
- Analyse and evaluate the use of expressive and performance skills in non-naturalistic performance
- Analyse and evaluate establishment and maintenance of the actor–audience relationship in a non-naturalistic performance
- Use drama terminology appropriately to analyse and evaluate a non-naturalistic performance.

Amidst the dreariness this could result in...use it as an opportunity to don your critical hat, really focus on the performance and consider how what you see, hear and feel will enable you to write an analysis and evaluation of the production. Chookas.

YELLOW MOON AND AUSVELS

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) have been aligned with the Australian Curriculum known as AusVELS. Teachers who wish to consider how the production references and is relevant to the Strands, the Domains and the Dimensions of AusVELS, please consider the following table.

Strand – Physical, Personal & Social Learning	Strand – Discipline Based Learning	Strand – Interdisciplinary Learning
Interpersonal Development - Building social relationships - Working in teams	The Arts – Drama - Creating and Making - Exploring and Responding	Communication - Listening, viewing, responding, presenting
Personal Learning - The individual learner - Managing personal learning	English - Reading and viewing, writing, listening and speaking	Design, Creativity & Technology - Designing, producing - Analysing and evaluating
		Thinking Processes - Creative thinking - Reflection and evaluation

The Australian Curriculum – General Capabilities:

Literacy, Numeracy, ICT, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding – these are useful terms to consider when exploring *Yellow Moon*. The pre-show and post-show activities and discussion will flag a link to the AusVELS either through a particular Strand, Discipline or General Capability



Daniela Farinacci, Naomi Rukavina, Luke Ryan, Mark Constable in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan

BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

This section of the education notes gives general background to teachers and students about what to expect: What is live theatre? What is the story of *Yellow Moon*? Who are the characters? Who are the actors and key creative team? What type of theatre performance is *Yellow Moon*?

THE EXPERIENCE

In the theatre we share stories that 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 *Yellow Moon* 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. The performance space you experience the show in will also ensure that. As students of drama and 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.

YELLOW MOON STORY/SYNOPSIS

Lee Macalinden is 17 years old. He lives with his mother Jenni and her boyfriend Billy. Leila Suleiman is a girl from the same school, a smart girl, a silent girl. One night, a chance meeting in the 24 hour superstore results in Lee inviting Leila to hang out with him. A tragic encounter, a moment of violence and Lee and Leila find themselves on the run. They flee in search of Lee's father who Lee believes lives in the north on a large estate. Rescued from near death on a mountainside by a local, Lee and Leila are given refuge by the estate keeper, Frank. During their time there they are forced to confront their past and what their future could be. *Yellow Moon* seamlessly flows from narration to poetry, from imagination to reality, from brutality to hope. Four actors, a bare stage, *Yellow Moon* is a captivating journey of self-discovery.

SETTING

Yellow Moon is a contemporary play. The original production of *Yellow Moon* is set in Scotland. This production, while not making use of Scottish accents, maintains the Scottish setting but the director believes the story could take place in any large town and any regional setting because the themes are universal. The locations in *Yellow Moon* are many; a flat on a council estate, a 24 hour superstore, a cemetery, a harbour, a train platform, a train, a mountainside, a large country estate, a cave, a forest.

CHARACTERS

Lee Macalinden – 17 years old, lives with his mother and her boyfriend Billy on a council estate. Lee is a 'bad boy', and is constantly in trouble. He is seeking a quick way to make money.

Leila Suleiman – 17 years old, her family were refugees from a war. They are educated and professional. Leila is considered a good girl but she is silent, never speaking.

Jenni Macalinden – Early 40s, Lee's mother. Her life since Lee's father left has been difficult and she shuts herself away to hide the pain

Billy - 45-50, Jenni's boyfriend, recently moved in. He wants to marry Jenni. He tries to be a father figure to Lee but faces challenges

Holly Malone - 25-30, a celebrity. She arrives at the Blackwaterside Estate with her entourage. She is lonely and seeks out Leila's company.

Frank - 40-45, the game-keeper at Blackwaterside Estate. An alcoholic. He accepts Lee and Leila as runaways and asks no questions.

CREATIVE TEAM

Leticia Cáceras - Director
The Sweats - Sound Design/Composition
Melanie Liertz - Set/Costume Designer
Lisa Mibus - Lighting Designer
Jessica Burns – Stage Manager

CAST

Mark Constable – Billy/Frank
Daniela Farinacci – Jenni/Holly
Naomi Rukavina - Leila
Luke Ryan – Lee

STYLE AND STRUCTURE OF *YELLOW MOON*

Yellow Moon is a poetic, scripted work that has a running time of approximately 75 minutes without an interval. It spans several months in the lives of the lead characters, Lee and Leila. We enter their lives at the Chapel Terrace Flats soon after Lee has been expelled from school and we leave them approximately three months later at Blackwaterside Estate in the Scottish Highlands.

Yellow Moon is highly *non-naturalistic*. Originally staged in the round, this production is staged in TRAVERSE with audience on two sides. There is minimal set, no properties, simple costuming and a sophisticated sound design (one that will be present in both the theatre season and on tour). Narration and story-telling are juxtaposed with intimate scenes. The multiple locations are created by the actors using the four simple set pieces, through the language of the play, and through the endowment of the space.

The playwright, David Greig describes the structure and style of the play as follows:

It is a series of 20 shortish scenes which are told in a variety of 'voices' or from a variety of points of view or in a range of narrative styles. The narrative feels quite linear despite the fact that the playwright has played around cleverly with the time frame(s) of the piece. The play journeys from the urban to the rural and to some extent that path is reflected in the pace of the playing: faster at the outset and tending to be slower as the action progresses. The play's structure is influenced by the ballad form of song in which a well-known and often-told story is narrated through a series of verses, some of which might repeat some of the story in slightly changed wordings and/or from different points of view – David Greig, Playwright

Source: http://citz.co.uk/images/fileuploads/Yellow_Moon_Resource_Pack.pdf

I wanted to stage a play which didn't rely on the design process as heavily as pretty much all my professional work in the past has. We wanted the audience to have an intimate relationship with the play and for the actors to be able to look individual audience members in the eye and to tell them a powerful story. Telling the story of 'Yellow Moon' in the round is intended to include every audience member and to allow them to share the experience with their peers – all of whom they can see in the room and across the circle – David Greig, Playwright

Source: http://citz.co.uk/images/fileuploads/Yellow_Moon_Resource_Pack.pdf



Daniela Farinacci, Naomi Rukavina, Mark Constable in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT – DAVID GREIG

David Greig was born in Edinburgh in 1969. He spent much of his childhood in Nigeria during the 1970s where his father worked in the construction industry. He returned to Edinburgh in 1980. Greig's first involvement with theatre was with Edinburgh Youth Theatre where he acted in a number of shows and in 1987 he went to Bristol University to study English and Drama. He co-founded Suspect Culture with two friends and began writing plays in 1990. Greig's first main stage production 'Europe' was produced by the Citizen's Theatre in Glasgow in 1993. Other plays include; *Timeless*, *Mainstream*, *Candide 2000*, *Casanova*, *Lament*, *8000m*, and his work has been produced by the Traverse Theatre, Plains Plough, Royal Shakespeare Company, Hampstead Theatre and The National Theatre of Scotland. From 2005-2007 he was the first Dramaturg of The National Theatre of Scotland

Despite the richness and variety of David Greig's work some persistent concerns and motifs are visible. A yearning for connection between characters, despite enormous personal, social, cultural and political distances between them; international and global links represented through travel, desire, fantasies of other cultures or people, great value placed on imagination, creativity and wonder.

Adapted from:

www.front-step.co.uk/biography/ and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Greig_\(dramatist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Greig_(dramatist))

Great article about the playwriting of David Greig

<http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIssue11/Fleming.html>

THE PERFORMANCE SPACE

Yellow Moon is being performed at Southbank Theatre, The Lawler and also going on tour to schools in regional Victoria. The performance you see may be quite different from the one that many other students will see. For instance, in the Lawler there will be theatre lighting and quite powerfully amplified sound. This will provide an added level of stagecraft to discuss in your analysis and evaluation of the non-naturalistic elements of *Yellow Moon*. However, in all performances, students will see the production in a **TRAVERSE** configuration

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

AusVELS:

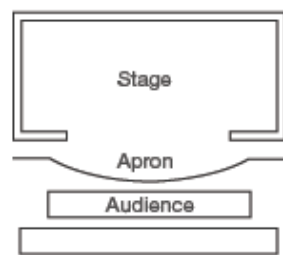
The Arts, Drama: Exploring and Responding

Design, Creativity and Technology: Designing and producing

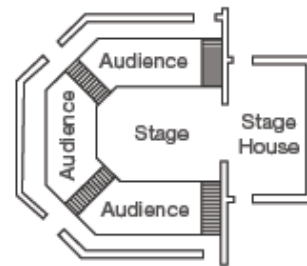
Exploring different playing spaces

Four types of stage

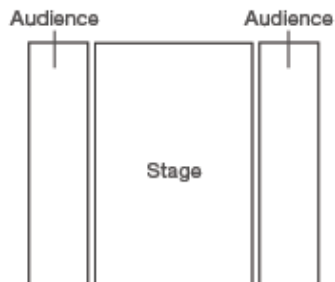
Proscenium arch



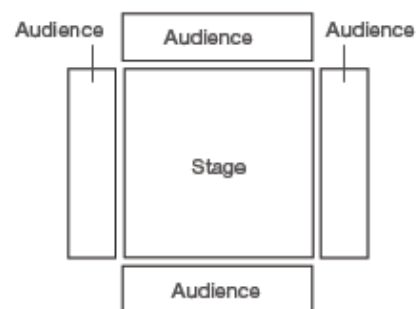
Thrust



Traverse



In the round



Yellow Moon is being performed in a TRAVERSE configuration.

Discuss the actor/audience and audience/relationship that this may create.

How might this relationship contribute to the non-naturalistic style of *Yellow Moon*?

Consider the other types of stages pictured above.

If *Yellow Moon* had to be re-staged in one of these spaces, what challenges would it offer?

What might be lost and what might be gained?



Mark Constable, Luke Ryan in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following information is provided in order to contextualise some of the ideas, images, concepts, and symbols that are present in the production of *Yellow Moon*. They are offered as beginning points to further research you may wish to do.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE STAG



The White Stag



Herne the Hunter



Scottish deer/elk

Because I'm Stag Lee. Stag, S.T.S. double G. Big and so hornee. Like Bambi's dad. I drive girls mad – Lee Macalinden, *Yellow Moon*

In *Yellow Moon* the deer and its male version, the stag, reoccur as images, symbols and as real creatures. What is the significance of the deer or the stag in Celtic mythology?

The Celts held deer as supernatural animals, "fairy cattle" that were herded and milked by a localised and benevolent fairy giantess (a bean sídhe) in each district, who could shift shape to that of a red deer; in the West Highlands, she selected the individual deer that would be slain in the next day's hunt. Cernunnos was a god in Celtic mythology that possessed two deer antlers on the top of his head. He was known as The Horned One or The Horned God despite having antlers and not horns. Cernunnos is also known as The Stag Lord, The Horned God of the Hunt, The Lord of the Forest, The Lord of the Hunt, The Lord of the Animals and Herne the Hunter

THE LEGEND OF HERNE THE HUNTER

For such an iconic figure, there is surprisingly little written evidence for Herne the Hunter before the 1840s. Shakespeare as the earliest source merely describes Herne the Hunter as "a spirit" and "sometime a keeper ... in Windsor forest" who is seen to "walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns" at midnight during winter-time. Two hundred years later in 1792 Samuel Ireland slightly expands on Shakespeare as follows: "The story of this Herne, who was keeper in the forest in the time of Elizabeth, runs thus: – That having committed some great offence, for which he feared to lose his situation and fall into disgrace, he was induced to hang himself on this tree."

William Ainsworth's romantic novel *Windsor Castle* which began serialisation in 1842 contains a fictionalised account of the origins of Herne the Hunter set during the reign of Richard II. This fabrication was popular with the Victorians, and has come down to the present day as being the legend.

THE WHITE STAG

The colour white has long been associated with purity; and in Celtic culture, the colour also represented the otherworld. In modern society, people have acted to protect the white stag as a vestige of beauty, and the hunting of the white stag has often met with anger, because of its rare and elusive nature. White can also mean a symbol of peace or a truce. For early man, the deer represented a valuable resource, providing nourishment, clothing and other accessories; and the deer may have played a role in totemic culture.

In works of fiction and in popular culture the white stag appears regularly. You may have read, played or seen film versions of the following:

- The white stag played an important role in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* novel. The white stag makes two appearances, distinct from each other: it pulls the reins of the White Witch, but is also responsible for leading the children out of Narnia. It has been suggested that this is a comment on the duality of good and evil. Also, anyone who catches a white stag will be granted wishes.
- The White Stag makes an appearance in *Harry Potter* as a Patronus Charm used by Harry Potter's future self to guide Harry. Harry's father is also known to use the same Patronus.
- The White Stag, known as Malorne, is a demi-god of nature in the *World of Warcraft* series of PC games.
- It appears before the moment, hero meets the Dryad in a PC game *Quest for Glory*
- The head of a stag is the emblem of the House of Baratheon in *Game of Thrones*

Adapted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_stag

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

(AusVELS: Critical and Creative thinking)

After reading the information about The White Stag, Herne the Hunter and the popular culture links discuss your understanding of 'mythology'.

Why do you think that Lee Macalinden wants to be called 'Stag Lee'?

Discuss how the mythology of the Stag and Lee wanting to find his father may be linked.

GAME KEEPING

In *Yellow Moon* Lee and Leila travel north to find Lee's dad, Dan who has taken up as a game keeper. A **gamekeeper** (often abbreviated to **keeper**) is a person who manages an area of countryside to make sure there is enough game for shooting, or fish for angling, and who actively manages areas of woodland, moorland, waterway or farmland for the benefit of game birds, deer, fish and wildlife in general.

Typically, a gamekeeper is employed by a landowner, and often in the UK by a country estate, to prevent poaching, to rear and release game birds such as common Pheasants and French partridge, eradicate pests, encourage and manage wild red grouse, and to control predators such as weasels, to manage habitats to suit game, and to monitor the health of the game.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamekeeper>

And Leila and Lee learn keeping fast. Frank shows them how to coppice the wood. They learn which tree's which. How to lay a path. Strip an engine. Build a fire. Shoot a fox. Tell the weather – from Yellow Moon.

THE CULT OF CELEBRITY

Every Friday night Leila Suleiman goes down to the all-night superstore where she reads the celebrity magazines...Leila loves the celebrity magazines...She loves the names of them...Closer. Heat. You. Now. More...For a little while on a Friday night Leila Suleiman doesn't live with us any more, she lives in a blurry universe of beaches and red carpets and handbag shops on Rodeo Drive - from Yellow Moon

Yellow Moon explores the cult of the celebrity life style from a number of perspectives, and includes the presence of a celebrity, Holly Malone. The following links will take you to articles on 'celebrity' which, although written in 2007 and 2009 are worth a read.

In our culture, celebrity news often takes the headlines above world events. We build them up as modern gods, and tear them down when they show us they are all too human. They make an easy object of obsession, as celebrities are ubiquitous. And the paparazzi have helped this craze by blurring the line between private citizens and public persona. When Princess Diana died, it was in a high speed getaway to escape reporter/stalkers. French courts ruled that photographers were not responsible for her death, but it clearly drives home the point: Our obsession with the rich and famous has a cost on us, and on them.

Read more at: <http://thecelebritycafe.com/features/24315.html>

The cult of celebrity is not new, but it is increasing in its scope and effect. At one time, people wanted simply to gawp at the famous, and possibly dress like them. Now, many take their moral and political opinions from them.

Read more at: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/a-world-trivialised-by-the-cult-of-celebrity/2007/05/25/1179601670745.html>

There are even celebrity magazines for kids: <http://www.bopandtigerbeat.com/2014/03/145992/>

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

(AusVELS: The Arts, Drama – Exploring and Responding)

Why do you think Leila loves celebrity magazines and celebrity lifestyles?

What does the extract from the script above suggest?

Conduct your own research around 'the cult of celebrity', particularly with regard to 'fallen' celebrities eg Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan etc

(AusVELS: The Arts, Visual Arts – Creating and Making; Critical and Creative thinking)

Invent your own celebrity magazine including a name, front cover, six scintillating celebrity gossip stories that readers will find inside!

THE BALLAD OF STAG O LEE

Police officer how can it be

You can arrest everybody

But cruel Stagger Lee,

That bad man, O cruel Stagger Lee

- Mississippi John Hurt, *Stack O Lee Blues*

The historical "Stagger Lee" was Lee Shelton, an African-American pimp living in St. Louis, Missouri in the late 19th century. He was nicknamed "Stag Lee" or "Stack Lee", with a variety of explanations being given for the moniker: he was given the nickname because he 'went "stag"', meaning he was without friends; he took the nickname from a well-known riverboat captain called "Stack Lee"; or, according to John and Alan Lomax, he took the name from a riverboat owned by the Lee family of Memphis called the *Stack Lee*, which was known for its on-board prostitution. He was well known locally as one of the "Macks", a group of pimps who demanded attention through their flashy clothing and appearance. In addition to these activities, he was evidently politically active as the captain of a black "Four Hundred Club", a political and social club with a dubious reputation.

On Christmas night in 1895, Shelton and his acquaintance William "Billy" Lyons were drinking in the Bill Curtis Saloon. Lyons was also a member of St. Louis' underworld, and may have been a political and business rival to Shelton. Eventually, the two men got into a dispute, during which Lyons took Shelton's Stetson hat. Subsequently, Shelton shot Lyons, recovered his hat, and left. Lyons died of his injuries, and Shelton was charged, tried and convicted of the murder in 1897. He was pardoned in 1909, but returned to prison in 1911 for assault and robbery, and died in incarceration in 1912.

The crime quickly entered into American folklore and became the subject of song as well as folktales and toasts. The song's title comes from Shelton's nickname, "Stag Lee" or "Stack Lee". The name was quickly corrupted in the folk tradition; early versions were called "Stack-a-Lee" and "Stacker Lee"; "Stagolee" and "Stagger Lee" also became common.

Like any great myth, the true origins of this event are shrouded. We must delve beyond recorded history. The history of the song tells many stories. It is an anthem of the dispossessed. It expresses fear of the scary black man, the evolution of modern music, culture theft from black to white, hero worship of the outlaw, the origins of a legendary character and the writing of a Myth. No other song has so transcended its humble beginnings and been re-invented in so many genres, in so many media and by so many artists.

<http://www.staggerlee.com/sl/directory/5.html> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stagger_Lee

BALLADS

In all traditions most ballads are **narrative** in nature, with a self-contained story, often concise and rely on imagery, rather than description, which can be tragic, historical, romantic or comic.

The **blues ballad** has been seen as a fusion of Anglo-American and Afro-American styles of music from the 19th century. Blues ballads tend to deal with active protagonists, often anti-heroes, resisting adversity and authority, but frequently lacking a strong narrative and emphasising character instead. They were often accompanied by banjo and guitar which followed the blues musical format.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

(AusVELS: The Arts, Drama – Exploring and Responding)

The sub-title of *Yellow Moon* is *The Ballad of Leila and Lee*.

Drawing on the description of the traditional and the blues ballad above, discuss why the playwright, David Greig, may have used this sub-title.

What qualities of the 'ballad' were present in the performance of *Yellow Moon*?

FURTHER LINKS

Yellow Moon Fight scene: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0-IE5IVuos>

Yellow Moon Swimming scene: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MKS84J7PUk>

Yellow Moon Heart scene: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNT-M5jbrL8>

Review: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/aug/13/theatre.edinburghfestival2007>



Naomi Rukavina, Daniela Farinacci in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan

INTERVIEW WITH THE CAST AND DIRECTOR OF *YELLOW MOON*

Leticia Cáceras	Director
Mark Constable	Billy/Frank
Daniela Farinacci	Jenni/Holly
Naomi Rukavina	Leila
Luke Ryan	Lee

When audiences come and see *Yellow Moon* what type of world are they invited to enter into?

Naomi:

I believe a very contemporary and current world, one that the youth of 'right now' from wherever can identify with. That's the aim. I think *Yellow Moon* is a play that young people can look at and from whatever world they come from, and whatever challenges they face, they can feel that they aren't alone.

Leticia:

It's a very theatrical world. We were doing a run of the play just before and I noticed the scale of the space, the way the performers were interacting and their commitment to conjuring and imagining places and spaces and weather. They completely take us there with nothing. The magic of theatre!

Daniela:

It's a hard world. It's a world where things are tough and no one's particularly privileged.

The play is originally set in Scotland. Has that original setting been maintained for this production? Where else could *Yellow Moon* be set?

Leticia:

It's a problematic question. The play is set in Scotland and we haven't changed any of the locations. Because we live here, in Australia, I don't want to put any further barriers on the work. I want the audience to be connecting strongly to the characters and not be thinking, 'Oh, can I follow this accent?' The play hasn't been written in Scottish vernacular so it's not a problem if we don't use accents. Like Naomi said, it's set 'now' and its contemporary so it's an imagined Scotland.

Daniela:

Of course we refer to place names that won't be familiar but you could superimpose other suburbs or towns onto them. I think the play allows the audience to do that. It's not so specific. We've changed a few small words to make the meaning clearer. For instance instead of saying 'pants' we say 'undies', just small references like that.

Leticia:

It's like we've frayed the edges of the specifics of location so that it can be either/or.

Daniela:

With such a short rehearsal period and because it is such dense writing, if we chose to go with Scottish accents, the whole process would be about finding those accents and just getting that right. We don't need that distraction in a text that is rich with themes and ideas.

Leticia:

Yellow Moon is a very different work to something like *Random* which was written in Jamaican patois and you had to commit to it in order to differentiate the various characters, and it was quite specific to that family. *Yellow Moon* isn't like that so we are comfortable using our own accents.

What are your thoughts about this play with regard to its style – is it a tragedy, is it a thriller, a drama, a love story – is it all of these?

Luke:

I think *Yellow Moon* is a love story and in parts it is also a thriller. There are definitely tragic elements within it, but the ending is quite hopeful. If you think about Greek tragedy and how that is structured, in this play there is still the catharsis and the subsequent hope that comes from that for Lee and Leila. It is Lee and Leila's story, and it is a love story for them. For Leila there is real cause for hope and for Lee there is possibility of hope and that life will change. I feel they may end up together.

Daniela:

And for Lee there is the hope that he won't follow in the footsteps of his father and continue the cycle, rather that he will break that cycle. We don't know though, possibly he won't.

That is possibly a question to the audience and to the students seeing the show: What do you think happens next? What does the play suggest? Turning to you now Mark, in considering your character Frank, is he a tragic character?

Mark:

I don't look upon Frank as a tragic character. I think you just need to see the world through his eyes. If you are outside the play and looking in I suppose you could say the tragedy for Frank is that he ran away from his responsibilities. He attempts to redeem himself in the end. He could have kicked Lee and Leila off the land but he didn't. He lets them stay, he teaches them skills, and how to survive. In the end he turns Lee in to the police. It's like Frank is giving his son a chance by getting him to face his responsibilities, unlike he did. When he says, 'I'm going to lose you Lee... again. This time I am not going to get you back'. That is his tragedy.

Frank made so many mistakes. He killed his mate, he ran away from, Jenni, the woman he loved, and his five year old son. Now he drinks and drinks and drinks just so he can hide the pain. He's cut himself off from the world and from people. So in that sense, to answer the original question, perhaps Frank is a tragic figure. Certainly there are things in his life that have had tragic consequences. In the script Frank says, 'This isn't a story, it's a fuck up, Lee'. He blames himself for everything that has happened in the note he leaves behind.

Could we talk about language and how language works in this play? Daniela mentioned before that the language presents certain challenges.

Daniela:

The challenge is the narration. The bulk of what I speak in this play is narration, third person narration. It is very different to a more traditional dialogue piece so it is harder to learn. It is quite lyrical at times, poetical in its description. It is quite beautiful.

Leticia:

Obviously in this setting you are breaking down the fourth wall. So the relationship that the actor has with the audience is different. We are currently considering; when do we talk to the audience and when do we talk to each other? When are we commenting, when are we quoting? There are so many different layers with this material and that's what makes it hard. It constantly shifts. Sometimes you are creating pictures and sometimes that takes a minute and sometimes that takes time.

Daniela:

When are the narrators ahead of the action, when are they behind it, when are they discovering it at exactly the same time. So it is really exciting. It turns 'on a dime'.

Does *Yellow Moon* comment on, critique, present, or judge the contemporary world?

Luke:

It doesn't overtly critique but I feel there is a subtle commentary. Society has let Lee down. He isn't living in a social vacuum, he is from a disadvantaged background, he lives on an estate, he doesn't attend school, he seems to have no prospects and he makes certain choices as result of that.

Leticia:

Class is such a prominent thing in this play. You are constantly in that context and that's what makes it a critique of society.

Luke:

In the play Lee says to Leila that she want's someone better than him. I think he finds it hard to believe in any other possibilities because that is what life is for everyone he knows and everyone he grows up with. There's jail or a basic job. I don't think the social critique is overt but Greig is showing us reasons for why things are as they are.

Mark:

I think the commentary is also about the futility of dreams. There's a certain nihilistic view of the world. The boy dreams of his father, he creates a whole world around his father but his father is nothing like that. They all dream of something but none of it is true.

And Holly seems to be living the dream...

Mark:

Which we discover is empty and a pretence.

Daniela:

In a way they are all dreaming of escape.

Mark:

The play is very much about escape. The characters all dream of escaping their present lives.

Leticia:

At the same time it is about visibility. These are characters that are on the fringes and they are all invisible or they deliberately silence themselves because they don't think they are of worth or worth speaking to. But what they truly want is to be acknowledged, for their pain to be acknowledged and for their worth to be acknowledged. They want recognition.

Naomi:

This play poses so many questions. Here we are, considering this one question and speaking over each other to answer it. Why does Lee behave the way he does? Why is he choosing a path of petty crime? Is it because of his father? Is that the only example he has had? Why does Holly Malone dream of escape? What is a celebrity life? Why does Leila not speak? It poses so many questions. That is what is great about this play and considering what comment it is making.

Mark:

The characters also all have something to hide and they are all scarred. Whether it's the physical scars that Leila and Holly reveal or the emotional scars that Frank and Lee feel. Lee's mother, Jenni, hides in her room behind a bottle of gin and an old cassette tape. She hides from the world and she hides from her son.

Luke:

Lee is also hiding behind masculine bravado. I think the play is also a critique of masculinity and the male ego, at least the accepted entrenched version. *Yellow Moon* shows that version to be quite flawed.

Naomi:

These characters are essentially very human.

Do you think the characters in *Yellow Moon* are likeable?

Naomi:

They are very relatable. They are imperfect, and they are realistic. Everyone breaks and stuffs things up. They are complex.

Luke:

They all demonstrate moments of human tenderness.

Daniela:

They all come from a hard existence and they don't have the privileges that many of us are used to. Their lives are restricted without the same potential but they each have moments when we see them trying to do the right thing. Frank's beautiful monologue, three pages of text that is so heart breaking. But it's inside his head and in the end all he can say to Lee is something about his hat. He is incapable of finding the right words in the moment. So, some of these characters live in a less educated world, and it's a world where men are less able to express emotion.

Naomi:

We never know what is happening in someone's life so we can't judge. All the things that Frank has in his monologue about love and compassion and distress are hidden from Lee. Frank is incapable of saying them. He says them to us but he doesn't say them to his son.

One of the reasons that *Yellow Moon* has been selected for the VCE Playlists is because it is 'non-naturalistic'. Students will be examining what is 'non-naturalistic' about the performance, the traverse configuration, how locations and places are created, how narration weaves in and out, and the impact of the stagecraft including acting.

Naomi:

It is very stagecraft rich, especially in a traverse playing space. While one side of the audience will miss something in one moment, they will gain something in another moment. The brain is beautiful as in what your imagination can construct. It does more than we can create short of being cinematic. In those tiny moments you miss your imagination goes into overdrive and fills in all the gaps. I think non-naturalistic theatre is the richest kind of theatre. Like when you read a book and you create the entire universe in your head. With this show we give a framework and then ask everyone's imagination to take over. I love working in this type of theatre. We have four prop/set items. The rest we create with our bodies, our words and the space.

Mark:

Working in traverse places a strong physical demand on you as a performer. If you are facing one way, that audience is hearing it and the other side is seeing it physically from behind. It imposes upon the performer the need to find clarity in the words and in the physical rendering of the moment. Rather than a completely naturalistic approach where you can be a mere talking head, in this production in any moment you are constantly thinking; what is the physical shape I am creating so that everyone around me is seeing that shape? When you aren't in the scene that is taking place what are you doing? I've been thinking a lot about what I am doing while I am just standing in the corner. Am I facing diagonally,

am I looking straight ahead or down? What is the audience reading from that actor doing that in that moment? All forms of theatre demand those choices, but traverse theatre particularly.

Daniela:

There is also a sense that we need to keep moving. We traverse many landscapes and the time shifts really quickly so the configuration really assists that. You can't stay stationary for too long unless you are literally not in that scene which doesn't happen very often.

And you never leave the space do you? You don't go 'off stage'?

Daniela:

We never leave the space. What I was referring to before about the language and the detail in the language, the actors can remain very still doing very little in the space but this allows the words to come to the fore. The description of moments can be enough. Miming isn't really necessary. We tried doing lots of miming in week one and we got rid of that very quickly.

Leticia:

Stylistically, it looks like we are doing a kind of short hand all the time. We keep asking; what's the quickest way we can find that will get us into that moment? There's a lot of description in certain scenes. For instance when Leila gets a magazines and some razors and she goes into the toilet and then...we can't mime all of that and nor do we want to. We have to find one or two iconic moments and movements that capture it and the rest the audience can listen to and fill in the gaps. That is quite satisfying stylistically. There is a simplicity and fluidity to it that hopefully won't allow it to get bogged down.

Luke:

It's highly theatrical as a play but it's also highly filmic. It shifts scenes and locations rapidly. You are constantly moving with the characters. The description and narration drives it; from the superstore, the toilet, the cemetery, back to the superstore, back at the estate, at the train station. I don't know if it is deliberate or not but I feel that there is a lot of filmic concepts being used and referenced; *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Days of Heaven*, *Badlands*, and even *Thelma and Louise*. I was also thinking about *Trainspotting* those moments where the texts says, 'Meet Billy Logan', very much in that style although I'm not sure whether David Greig has been deliberate here. The audience will experience four actors with four objects in a space but ideally in their imaginations they are going to be seeing a film streaming. Getting the clarity in the images that the texts suggest is important.

Daniela:

We haven't added in the sound yet and I believe that is going to be significant and will provide a very rich layer.

How is the set design, those four benches contributing to the direction and style of the work?

Daniela:

They contribute every step of the way, and it's really helpful. Again sometimes the set pieces just gesture to the meaning or the moment or the place. It really helps us as performers, so we don't feel alone in an empty space

Leticia:

They can symbolise things so powerfully. If you turn them upside down they suddenly become dead animals. At other times they are tree branches or a train carriage. The design has been really helpful in allowing this.

Daniela:

We ask this of the audience right from the top of the show. We shift something, then the four performers endow it with words and action or interaction and the audience pick up on that pretty quickly. That's the style of the show; now it's this...okay...and now it's that.

Mark:

The design is also a practical decision on behalf of the designer, Melanie Liertz. *Yellow Moon* is touring so it needs to be created in such a way that will allow it to be performed in a number of different spaces. With a text such as this you don't want to over burden it with things that will just get in the way. We want the audience to be free to use their imagination. We suggest this and that and the audience is willing to say: yes I believe you are on a train, yes I believe you are in the highlands, yes I believe you in the snow. If you over complicate it you lose that. A simple beanie can completely change you. If your coat gets done up you are a different character.

Leticia:

There is a broader political point to be made here. There is a perception for some people that things just can't change, that people can't change. When you watch actors changing in front of you, that can be a powerful political message for young audiences. There is the possibility for things to change and that leads to hope.

INTERVIEW WITH THE SWEATS, PETE GOODWIN, SOUND DESIGNER FOR *YELLOW MOON*

Pete without giving away too many secrets, what are some of the ideas you have been working on with regard to sound design for *Yellow Moon*?

Well the big influence has been the blues music references in the work and that has been the jumping off point. I spoke with the director, Leticia Cáceras, quite a bit about this in the planning stage. We talked about the work as being similar to a film, a little like a Tarantino film. So we licenced lots of songs and I began to merge them within the sound design. I chose about ten blues tracks and then I sourced some ambient electronica that I have sourced from a band called Boards of Canada, an electronic band that are actually from Scotland. They are amazing! So it kind of flows between the blues and ambient electronic and it just fits together.

Normally I write full music pieces and then that fits together with the production. This has been made more like a computer game, or a DJ set, then it's a whole bunch of little pieces that then blend together and move in and out of each other, are then mixed and morph into something else. So the sound is a continuous soundscape in that regard.

When the sound comes into the rehearsal room does it cue the actors or do they cue it?

The beauty of QLab (<http://figure53.com/qlab>) is that while I have all these separate pieces and the first cue goes for a while, but then it becomes a lot more muted until the SM hits the next cue button. The next one grows out of that previous cue so that the sound is fluid and evolving. So the actors will do their work and the sound and music will keep up with them.

At present the licencing for particular music is still awaiting approval by APRA, is that correct?

Apparently there won't be a problem. We are using some that come directly from the script. There is a piece in the middle by the Chantels "Maybe" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lePTH1PWzAs>) and we are using that one but I didn't love the "Stack O Lee Blues" (<http://www.ultimate-guitar.com>) as much. We're actually thinking about a Neville Brothers track that is actually called 'Yellow Moon' which is a lot more up-beat (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O87iUDZGDKs>).

One of the things that VCE students need to consider is how sound and composition can or will create mood, atmosphere, build tension and build the narrative. Do any of these words ring true for you with regard to what you are creating?

I've created the design so that you can play the score from beginning to end so that it sounds like the play through the sound. It sounds like the play even if you didn't have the words.

So you have designed the sound around the way you see the play. What is it about this play that has struck you? What are some of the ideas that you have responded to?

I did a lot of research around Scotland and watched movies about Scotland such as *Train Spotting* and *Morven Callar*, which has a strong electronic sound track and reminds me of one of Angela Betzien's plays (Australian playwright - *Children of the Black Skirt, Hoods, War Crimes*). I think *War Crimes* was quite influenced by *Yellow Moon* and I work with Leticia a lot and we have a kind of shorthand with regard to designing sound for her work.

Would you say that *Yellow Moon* is a challenging play for young people?

I think it is more challenging for their teachers than for the young people who will be seeing it. I think young people will love it. It's pretty truthful. It's action packed. It's a road movie. It's got violence, it's got sex, it has it all.

From a technical point of view, what sort of programs do you use to create the sound?

I use Ableton Live (<https://www.ableton.com/en/trial/?gclid=CKWJnr367rOCFRADvAodOnEAKQ>) as a sound design program which you can also use for DJ-ing. With all the songs that I have drawn on, I have duplicated the song three times so you have...not sure I can explain this easily...you have the low, mids and high of the song and if you play them together you have the song. For the purpose of this design you can play. You can take out all the highs and you have bass, and you can take out all the bass and have the treble. QLab is great for allowing the sound design to respond to the work.

In keeping with the idea of Rough Theatre, I sourced everything from the internet in order to get the more degraded, lo-fi kind of sound that I wanted. This is something that kids in Scotland would do. That would be their access. I did that rather than going out and buying CDs. I felt this reflected the more Rough Theatre approach that the playwright, David Greig, may have envisioned. I personally think that it's interesting that young people may get online and check out the programs and see how the sound design works. I did consider how to include the *A-Ha* video in this sound design (<http://vimeo.com/70103415>)

What about sound effects, the diegetic sound that is present for the characters in the play?

There are lots of sound effects, there's water, there's fire, there's record crackles, gun-shots, crickets at night times, land rovers. After having put in the music I am now putting in the sound effects and filing out the collage. It's a good mix of stuff and I can't wait.

Some of music that Pete has considered in his design

Song	Artist/band
<i>Stack O Lee</i>	<i>Mississippi John Hurt</i>
<i>Black Betty</i>	<i>Leadbelly</i>
<i>Uritual</i>	<i>Boards of Canada</i>
<i>Devid Got My Woman</i>	<i>Skip James</i>
<i>Trust in Me</i>	<i>Etta James</i>
<i>Take On Me</i>	<i>A-Ha</i>
<i>White Cyclosa</i>	<i>Boards of Canada</i>
<i>Mean Ol' Train</i>	<i>Papa Lightfoot</i>
<i>Collapse</i>	<i>Boards of Canada</i>

If Trouble was Money
Another Man Done Gone
Maybe
Wade In The Water
Telepath
Spoonful
Yellow Moon

Albert Collins
Odetta
The Chantels
Ella Jenkins
Boards of Canada
Howlin' Wolf
The Neville Brothers



Mark Constable in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan

ANALYSIS, EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

The following section focuses on VCE Drama Unit 3, Outcome 3. It is designed to support post-show discussion about the performance for the purposes of preparing and writing a response.

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

The world of the play is that world which is represented on stage through language, dramatic elements, theatrical conventions, styles and stagecraft. When you first entered the Lawler, or the performance space at school, what type of world was evident to you?

- What suggested the world? What did you see? Hear? Feel?
- What aspects made you curious? What seemed familiar? Unfamiliar?
- Did you feel immediately it was a 'non-naturalistic' world? Why?

A very contemporary world – Naomi Rukavina, performer and *It's a very theatrical world* – Leticia Cáceras, director

- What is contemporary about *Yellow Moon*?
- What clues are there in the language and the stagecraft?
- What does the director, Leticia Cáceras, mean by a 'theatrical world'? How can a world be theatrical?
- What was realistic about the world represented in *Yellow Moon*?

The play is set in Scotland and we haven't changed any of the locations. Because we live here, in Australia, I don't want to put any further barriers on the work. I want the audience to be connecting strongly to the characters and not be thinking, 'Oh, can I follow this accent?' The play hasn't been written in Scottish vernacular so it's not a problem if we don't use accents - Leticia Cáceras, director

- The director discusses several ideas in this quote.
- Firstly, the original context for the production is Scotland. What was evident in the performance that we were in Scotland?
- Did you feel the performance needed accents? Why?
- Do you agree that having accent may have added a barrier for the audience?
- Could the world of *Yellow Moon* exist in Australia? Where in Australia?

LANGUAGE

Performer Daniela Farinacci describes the language of the play as *...a text that is rich with themes and ideas*.

- How did you respond to the language in the play? Did it illuminate any themes and ideas?
- Did you recognise any; Poetry? Rap? Story telling? Narration? Dialogue? Song? Description?

The challenge is the narration. The bulk of what I speak in this play is narration, third person narration – Daniela Farinacci, performer

- You could argue that the way the language is structured constructs a very **non-naturalistic** piece of theatre even on the page – would you agree?
- Carefully examine the way Leila Suleiman is represented in the play through language; when she is spoken about, when we hear her thoughts spoken aloud, when she actually speaks, when the character of Leila narrates, when the actor playing Leila narrates.
- How does this representation of Leila contribute to the non-naturalism in *Yellow Moon*?

STRUCTURE & THEATRICAL STYLES

It is a series of 20 shortish scenes which are told in a variety of 'voices' or from a variety of points of view or in a range of narrative styles – David Greig, playwright

- Discuss this comment by the playwright in some detail.
- Consider what it is saying in terms of theatrical styles. What conventions of which theatrical styles are suggested?
- There are a few scenes in the play that are not interrupted by narration; the dance between Lee and Leila, and the final scene in the play are two that come to mind. What others?
- Why do you think the playwright made the decision to allow some scenes to exist in real time and others to be interrupted, narrated, and commented on?
- How does the structure of the play contribute to the non-naturalistic style?

We wanted the audience to have an intimate relationship with the play and for the actors to be able to look individual audience members in the eye and to tell them a powerful story – David Greig, playwright

- Analyse the actor-audience relationships constructed in *Yellow Moon*.

- When was it intimate? When was distance created? Was this an individual experience for each audience member ie dependent on where they were sitting?
- Did you feel that the actors did 'look you in the eye'?
- Did you feel challenged or confronted by the establishment of certain actor-audience relationships? Why?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the shifting actor-audience relationships in contributing to the non-naturalistic styles in the production

Obviously in this setting you are breaking down the fourth wall. So the relationship that the actor has with the audience is different – Leticia Cáceras, director

- Discuss this comment. How did you know there was no 'fourth wall'? What impact did it have on the actor-audience relationship?
- Did you feel that there were ever moments or scenes when a *fourth wall* could be present? Where we were looking in on the action and the characters were in their own world?

The traverse playing space is a key feature of this production of *Yellow Moon*. Performer, Naomi Rukavina says, *While one side of the audience will miss something in one moment, they will gain something in another moment. The brain is beautiful as is what your imagination can construct, more than we can create short of being cinematic.*

- As an audience member in a traverse configuration what delighted you, what frustrated you, what satisfied you?
- Do you agree that such staging asks the audience to use their imagination more often?

When you aren't in the scene that is taking place what are you doing? I've been thinking a lot about what I am doing while I am just standing in the corner. Am I facing diagonally, am I looking straight ahead or down? What is the audience reading from that actor doing that in that moment? – Mark Constable, performer

- As an audience we are often drawn to who is speaking or moving in the space.
- Where were your eyes predominantly drawn?
- Did you ever notice the actors just standing in the corner?
- Analyse and evaluate the convention of having all the performers in the space for the duration of the production
- How did this decision enhance the non-naturalism?

It's highly theatrical as a play but it's also highly filmic. It shifts scenes and locations rapidly. You are constantly moving with the characters. The description and narration drives it – Luke Ryan, performer

- Do you agree that *Yellow Moon* feels quite filmic? Could you imagine it as an actual film?
- Stylistically do you feel the pace and rhythm and the constant shifting enhanced the non-naturalism of the production?
- Did you ever feel left behind? Did you need to 'read back over' certain scenes sometimes?
- How did the sound and music work to contribute to the sense of a 'film'?

I think Yellow Moon is definitely a love story and in parts it is also a thriller. There are definitely tragic elements within it, but the ending is quite hopeful – Luke Ryan, performer. Consider more specific theatrical styles in *Yellow Moon*

- It is a love story? What are the conventions of love stories?
- It is a thriller? What conventions are evident?
- Is it a tragedy? What conventions did you see? Whose tragedy is it?
- Does the ending offer hope? For whom?

I felt this reflected the more Rough Theatre approach that the playwright, David Greig, may have envisioned – Pete Goodwin, sound composer

Greig's own critical writings on his theatre, which he characterises as 'Rough Theatre': 'to expose and explore what lies beneath, and to go beyond conceptual or imaginative default settings in order to produce some new experience of reality.' - <http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIssue11/Fleming.html>

- Discuss the meaning of the term 'rough theatre' as it is talked about above
- What conventions of 'rough theatre' were evident in *Yellow Moon*?

Midnight. We're shaking. We don't know what to do. What are we going to do? Let's just stand for a bit. Let's take Billy's wallet out of his inside jacket pocket. Let's pick up the knife. Let's just go – Yellow Moon.
This is the narrative for the moment after Lee stabs Billy.

- Recall and describe how this scene/moment was staged
- Who narrated, who acted, who watched?

The final scene in *Yellow Moon* shifts considerably from the shorter, episodic nature of the rest of the play. It is one continuous scene that runs for approximately eight minutes. There is no narration.

- Discuss this choice by the writer. Did you actually notice?
- Does this choice impact upon the theatrical styles?
- Does it impact on the actor-audience relationship?
- Discuss the content and purpose of the scene
- Analyse and evaluate the use of space, rhythm, timing, use of sound, symbol, representation.



Daniela Farinacci, Luke Ryan in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan

CHARACTERISATION

Expressive skills – voice, gesture, movement, facial expression

Performance skills – focus, timing, energy, actor-audience relationship

In *Yellow Moon* four actors play six key characters, narrators and several minor roles as the story dictates (shop keepers, girls on the street, passengers on a train).

Two of the performers comment on the characters in the play as follows:

*They are very **relatable**. They are **imperfect**, and they are **realistic**. Everyone breaks and **stuffs things up**.*

*They are **complex** – Naomi and They all demonstrate **human tenderness** – Luke*

- Take each of the adjectives used in these descriptions and see if you can apply them to a character or characters in *Yellow Moon*
- Write down some examples from the performance where you feel the character demonstrated these qualities
- How did the actor use their expressive skills in demonstrating the quality?
- How did the actor use their performance skills?

I don't look upon Frank as a tragic character. I think you just need to see the world through his eyes. If you are outside the play and looking in I suppose you could say the tragedy for Frank is that he ran away from his responsibilities. He attempts to redeem himself in the end – Mark Constable, performer

- Consider this description of Frank by the actor, Mark Constable
- How did you feel about Frank? Empathy, sympathy, mistrust, dislike, regard?
- Did your feelings towards Frank change throughout the performance? Why?
- Choose a moment from the play – when he hands the heart to Leila, when he plays his music, when he imagines what he would say to Lee if he could – and discuss in detail how the actor used his expressive and performance skills effectively.

In the play Lee says to Leila that she wants someone better than him. I think he finds it hard to believe in any other possibilities for himself because that is what life is for everyone he knows and everyone he grows up with – Luke Ryan

- How did you feel about the character of Lee? Did this feeling change throughout the performance? Why?
- Describe the qualities of the character of Lee and discuss how the actor, Luke Ryan, used voice, movement, gesture and facial expression to capture some of these qualities
- 'Are you coming, or are you coming?' how is this phrase used by Lee throughout the play? To whom? To what effect? Does it take on different meanings at different times?

Leila Suleiman is called 'Silent Leila'.

- Discuss how Naomi Rukavina, who plays Leila, conveys the idea of 'silence'.
- How do the other performers assist in conveying Leila's silence?
- Why is she silent?
- When she does speak, who does she speak to?
- Why does she feel this is the right time to speak?
- Analyse the use of expressive and performance skills that the actor brings to this role
- In particular, discuss the darker feelings that Leila has and how these are conveyed

Working in traverse places a strong physical demand on you as a performer. If you are facing one way, that audience is hearing it and the other side is seeing physically from behind. It imposes upon the performer the need to find clarity in the words and in the physical rendering of the moment – Mark Constable, performer

- Discuss this comment by performer, Mark Constable.
- What did you notice about the demands the traverse acting space placed on the actors?
- Were there moments when you couldn't see character's faces? What impact did this have on the actor-audience relationship?
- How did being able to see audience on the other side impact on you?

Miming isn't really necessary. We tried doing lots of miming in week one and we got rid of that very quickly – Daniela Farinacci, performer

- Choose a moment from the performance where the actors mimed the actions eg at the super store, giving Leila the heart of the deer, breaking into the house etc.
- Evaluate the movements the actors used when they mimed
- Were there moments when you wanted more mime or less mime?
- Why do you think certain moments were chosen to be mimed? Were they **symbolic** or significant in any way?

There is also a sense that we need to keep moving. We traverse many landscapes and the time shifts really quickly so the configuration really assists that. You can't stay stationary for too long – Daniela Farinacci, performer

- Consider how the actors used the space to move from one moment to the next
- Analyse and evaluate the way the actors used **rhythm** and **timing** in *Yellow Moon*

Daniella Farinacci and Mark Constable play two different characters each. Daniella plays Lee's mum, Jenni, and the celebrity, Holly Malone. Mark plays Jenni's boyfriend, Billy Logan, and the keeper at Blackwaterside, Frank.

- Discuss and analyse whether the actors **transformed character** to create these different roles
- If they did transform, how did they use their expressive skills to transform?
- What physical and vocal **characteristics** did you identify as belonging to Jenni, and then to Holly?
- How did you feel about each of these characters? Why?
- How did Mark Constable create **contrast** between Billy Logan and Frank?
- How did you feel about the character of Frank?
- When he reveals his true identity does this shift the way you feel? Why?

The performers take on the roles of narrators and story tellers throughout the performance of *Yellow Moon*. They sometimes share narration, sometimes one performer narrates for a while.

- Were you always clear when performers were narrating and when they were a character 'in the moment'?
- Did you notice if certain performers narrated for particular characters? If so, what might be the significance of that?
- What devices did the performers use to move from narrating into playing a character?
- Select two moments/scenes from the production and analyse how the performers used expressive and performance skills and **space** to move in and out of narration

STAGECRAFT – SET, COSTUME, SOUND, LIGHTING

We have four prop/set items. The rest we create with our bodies, our words and the space – Naomi Rukavina, performer

- There are four carefully constructed benches used in this production of *Yellow Moon*.
- Discuss how the benches were **transformed** throughout the performance
- How were they transformed? What did they become?
- How did the performers **endow** the benches as new objects?

They can symbolise things so powerfully. If you turn them upside down they suddenly become dead animals. The design has been really helpful in allowing this – Leticia Cáceras, director

- There is a unique design element to the benches – the antlers of a stag
- Discuss the **symbolism** of this design element in the production
- What does it represent? Who might it represent?
- Discuss the final image of the benches – one single diagonal line with the antlers pointing to the sky – why do you think this is the only time the benches are configured in this way?
- What could this final image symbolise for Lee and Leila?

A simple beanie can completely change you. If your coat gets done up you are a different character – Mark Constable, performer

- Discuss how costume is used to represent characters in *Yellow Moon*
- Describe the costume that Lee Macalinden wears – what does it 'say' about him?
- Describe the costume that Leila Suleiman wears – what does it say about her?
- How does the use of a beanie and a coat being done up allow performer, Mark Constable, to transform character?

There are two pieces of costume that may be useful to discuss; Lee Macalinden's hat and Leila Suleiman's hijab

- Lee's hat with the picture of a stag features on a number of occasions in the play; when Billy Logan takes it, during the forest fire, when Lee tells Frank he knows he is his father, and at the very end of the play
- Discuss the symbolism of the hat – for Lee and in the greater story of the play
- The director has chosen to have the character of Leila wear a hijab. Discuss the purpose of Muslim women wearing hijab and then discuss the symbolism of its presence in the play.

SOUND AND COMPOSTION

Sound and composition are key stagecraft elements in *Yellow Moon*. They feature in both the in-theatre season and in the regional tour

Blues is a musical form and genre that originated in African-American communities in the "Deep South" of the United States around the end of the 19th century from spirituals, work songs, field hollers, shouts and chants, and rhymed simple narrative ballads. The blues form, ubiquitous in jazz, rhythm and blues and rock and roll, is characterized by specific chord progressions, of which the twelve-bar blues is the most common. The blue notes that, for expressive purposes are sung or played flattened or gradually bent (minor 3rd to major 3rd) in relation to the pitch of the major scale, are also an important part of the sound.

Blues as a genre is based on the blues form but possesses other characteristics such as lyrics, bass lines, and instruments. Blues sub-genres include country blues, such as Delta, Piedmont and Texas blues, and urban blues styles such as Chicago and West Coast blues. World War II marked the transition from acoustic to electric blues and the progressive opening of blues music to a wider audience, especially white listeners. In the 1960s and 1970s, a hybrid form called blues-rock evolved.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blues>

Stagger Lee Blues: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4scedJs6hC8>

Traditional blues: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4up4VP8zjyc&list=PLAE2316D7300EA8A3>

Well the big influence has been the blues music references in the work and that has been the jumping off point – Pete Goodwin, The Sweats

- Discuss how the ballad Stack O Lee or Stagger Lee Blues was used in the production
- What **mood** and atmosphere did it evoke?
- What is significant or important about having direct reference to ‘blues’ music in the play?
- Frank talks about loving ‘Black Music’ – why do you think he is drawn to this musical style?

Another clear reference is the music that Lee’s mother, Jenni, loves Norwegian synthpop band, A-ha. In particular the song ‘Take on me’ (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djV11Xbc914&feature=kp>)

- Discuss how this song is referenced and used throughout the production
- What does it represent for Jenni? For Billy Logan? For Frank?

There are lots of sound effects, there’s water, there’s fire, there’s record crackles, gun-shots, crickets at night times, land rovers - Pete Goodwin, The Sweats

- Discuss the use of specific sound effects in *Yellow Moon*
- How did they establish the world of the play, location, and time?
- How did sound effects enhance the theatrical styles in the play?

How does music and sound effect contribute to the narrative or story of *Yellow Moon*?

- How do these elements enhance or heighten the **meaning** of certain moments or scenes?
- How does sound and music function as **segue** or **transition** in the production?
- Consider the moment in the big house when Lee puts on an old record, The Chantels ‘Maybe’.
- How does music function in this scene?

LIGHTING

Lighting is used in the in-theatre season of *Yellow Moon* only. Theatrical lighting functions to light the playing space, to create location, time, mood, interior, exterior and reflect a particular aesthetic. Select three moments in the production where you felt that lighting created a very particular/potent visual expression.

- For each moment describe the angle, intensity, colour, and quality of the light
- Was the lighting in this moment naturalistic or non-naturalistic (bearing in mind that theatre lighting is artificial!)?
- Did the lighting in this moment have a deeper symbolic meaning? What could that be?
- How did the lighting enhance what was happening in the scene/moment? Did it create mood, atmosphere, location, time?



Luke Ryan, Daniela Farinacci, Mark Constable, Naomi Rukavina in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan



Luke Ryan in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 - Photo Daniel Coghlan

THEMES IN THE PLAY

The following excerpts from the script of *Yellow Moon* are presented to allow you to discuss some of the key themes and concerns of the play. As you read through each excerpt consider:

- How it may represent one of the key themes.
- If the theme or concern may be linked to a particular character or character's journey
- How the scene was created in the production by the performers

Excerpt One

Seven in the morning and we're waiting at the station.

Plastic bag.

Commuters all around us.

Can't stop shivering.

Maybe he's not going to come.

Apples. Pants. Toothpaste.

Maybe the whole thing never happened.

Razors.

Maybe Billy Logan has sucked the blood back up into himself, brushed the dust off his suit and gone off to work at the furniture shop just like normal.

Razors.

Maybe we don't exist.

We need razors.

Maybe we're not here.

We need magazines.

Maybe we're not in a story at all, maybe nobody's imagining what it's like to be us, maybe we're just standing in our stupid ugly shoes on Inverkeithing station platform with everybody looking at us thinking:
Stupid.

- *Leila, waiting for Lee at the station*

Excerpt 2

I stopped one day. I was sitting on the wall at school and Mr Hopeton passed me and he said, 'Everything all right, Leila?' And I looked at him, and he said it again: 'Everything all right?' And he smiled at me and I like Mr Hopeton so I thought, 'I don't know, is everything all right?' It seemed such a complicated question. I didn't know. I didn't answer and eventually he just said, 'Oh well. Good good.' And I realised – people hear what they want to hear, it doesn't matter what you say. So I just decided to stop. I stopped bothering.

- *Leila imagining what she might say to Lee*

Excerpt 3

My dad must have walked down these corridors.
He must have looked at those mad paintings,
he must have chosen them. He must have sat in
this chair looking at them. He must have sat
in this chair and looked out of that window at
that hill and he must have thought, this belongs
to me. This is me. Look at me. Look the fuck
at me. He must have sat here in this chair and
looked out of the window at that hill and he
must have thought about me.
He sat here and he thought about me.

- *Lee, inside the great house at Blackwaterside Estate*

Excerpt 4

Imagine you recognise the woman because she's famous
and you read about her every week in celebrity magazines.
Imagine she's called Holly.

Holly Malone.

And imagine Holly Malone is walking towards the door
of Blackwaterside Lodge with an entourage behind her
of her secretary, her personal assistant, her chef and her
bodyguard. The bodyguard opens the lodge door and
Holly steps inside. She turns and looks along the dark
corridor and she sees you. You stand still. You look at
each other. Your two worlds tremble on the edge of
stillness. And then, as silently as a thought, you're gone
and Holly thinks that she must have imagined a girl, or
perhaps that it was true what her manager said about
Blackwaterside, that it was haunted.

- *Leila and Holly, inside the great house at Blackwaterside Estate*

Excerpt 5

Holly Isn't this weird?
 Us being in this room together.
 Like two strangers in a reality show.
 If this was a reality show,
 You would be my friend.

 I wish this was a reality show.
 I wish he would come back to me.
 I wish they liked me.
 I wish I could sing.
 I wish.
 I wish I was you.
 I wish you were me.

- *Holly to Leila after they swim*

Excerpt 6

I have a picture of us sitting at the end of the day coloured red by the sunset. We're holding beer. Did Frank bring the beer? It was cold. He must have put it into the stream. We sit among the ash and smoke on two hot rocks by the stream and watch the sun go down.

Please please please let it always be like this.

Please let that be the end. The three of us on the soot-black rocks and in my head we're red, lit red by the red sunset and watching the loch shimmer red like molten metal.

Please let that be the end of the story.

Please.

- *Leila, after the fire, before the deluge*

Excerpt 7

Are you crying?

Stop crying, Lee.

What do you want me to say?

It's all right?

It's not all right.

It's completely not all right.

Should I hold you?

Hold on to you?

I'm going to lose you, Lee.

Again.

And this time I'll never get you back.

- *Frank imagining what he would say to Lee*

Excerpt 8

Lee Your voice, Silent Leila.

Leila What about it?

Lee It's beautiful.

Leila Put down the gun, Lee, please.

Beat.

Lee Are we still –

Leila Still what?

Lee You and me.

Leila Suppose so.

Lee I didn't know.

Leila If you want to –

Lee I want to –

- *Lee and Leila at the end*

POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

(AusVELS: The Arts, Drama – Making and Creating)

In the script of *Yellow Moon* there is no indication of which performer should speak which narrative parts.

- Using this idea as a beginning point divide into small groups or even pairs
- Have each group choose one of Excerpts 1,2,3,4 and 6 (double some so there are opportunities for comparison)
- Working as an ensemble, discuss the themes inherent in the excerpt and agree on its intended meaning
- Now consider how you will allocate the lines, whether you need a central character or characters and prepare an interpretation of the excerpt
- Make decisions about how you use space and how you explore the actor-audience relationship
- Present these to the class and discuss how the meaning was conveyed
- Compare the class's interpretation to those made in the performance you saw of *Yellow Moon*



Rehearsal room, *Yellow Moon*, MTC Headquarters, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan



MTC. YELLOW MOON (2014)

Luke Ryan, Naomi Rukavina in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan



MTC: YELLOW MOON (2014)

Luke Ryan, Daniela Farinacci, Leticia Cáceras, Mark Constable in *Yellow Moon*, 2014 – Photo Daniel Coghlan