



# THREE LITTLE WORDS

by Joanna Murray-Smith

## Education Mini-Pack

18 APRIL – 27 MAY

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

### About the Play

Bonnie and Annie and their best friends, Tess and Curtis, have both been together for twenty years. The cosy world of coupledom has insulated them all from the challenges of a complicated world. But at an anniversary dinner Tess and Curtis casually drop a bombshell – they have decided to split up. There's no way to predict or control the devastation that follows.

### About the Playwright

Joanna Murray-Smith is a Melbourne based playwright, novelist and screenwriter. Her works at Melbourne Theatre Company include *Switzerland*, *Pennsylvania Avenue*, *Songs for Nobodies*, *True Minds*, *Rockabye* and *Ninety*. Joanna's play *Honour*, written in 1995, remains her most successful work to date and has been produced in over two dozen countries. Many of her plays have appeared all over the world, including on Broadway, the West End and at the Royal National Theatre in London. Joanna has won two Victorian Premier's Literary Awards for her dramas *Honour* and *Rapture*. Her 2004 play *Bombshells* won the Fringe Fest Award at Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the London Theatregoers Choice Award the following year. Joanna collaborates with director Sarah Goodes for the world premiere of *Three Little Words*, following their critically and publically acclaimed season of *Switzerland* last year.

### Cast

**Annie** Kate Atkinson

**Curtis** Peter Houghton

**Tess** Catherine McClements

**Bonnie** Katherine Tonkin

### Production

**Director** Sarah Goodes

**Set & Costume Designer** Michael Hankin

**Lighting Designer** Paul Jackson

**Composer & Sound Designer** Kelly Ryall

**Assistant Director** Elsie Edgerton-Till

**Fight Choreographer** Nigel Poulton

**Tap Choreographer** Nathan Pinnell

**Dramaturgy Consultant** Brent Hazelton

**Stage Manager** Julia Smith

**Assistant Stage Manager** Benjamin Cooper

**Stage Management Secondment** Amelia Trenaman

### Genre

Contemporary comedy drama

### Running Time

Approximately 1hr 40min. No interval.

### Attendance Information

Contains coarse language



Turn the page for activities,  
and discussions.

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## Before the show



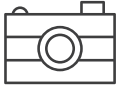
Read about the prolific playwright Joanna Murray-Smith, and why she says “we all want to lead more than one life” at [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)

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One in three marriages end in “I don’t”, and the same-sex marriage debate is a constant presence in the media. What does the word “marriage” mean in Australian society today?

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See the *Three Little Words* team prepare for the show in our rehearsal gallery at [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)

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## Post-show Activities



Many plays throughout history, from *Medea* to *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolf?*, have examined relationships and marriage. What does *Three Little Words* offer to a contemporary audience? Read more about the history of love on stage at [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)

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- Have a class discussion based on this quote from the play, and discuss the symbolism of the dolls.  
BONNIE: Everyone has moments of doubt. It’s natural. But it passes.  
CURTIS: Maybe it shouldn’t pass. Maybe the doubt is like a lantern guiding us towards something important.
  - How was the Tantalus (decanter) prop used on stage? Investigate the Greek mythological character of the same name. Is this prop symbolic?
  - Describe each of the four main characters in your own words. What archetypes do they remind you of? What would be their Myers–Briggs personality type? Read more from the actors about their characters at [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)
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- Draw diagrams to show as many of the different stage configurations used in *Three Little Words* as you can remember. Annotate your diagrams to show how set design and direction were used to create various locations.
  - Compare and contrast *Three Little Words* with *A Doll’s House* and/or *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen.
  - Write a prologue for the play with dialogue between Tess and Curtis as they prepare for the dinner party and their announcement.
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- Think about the set and costume design by Michael Hankin. How did these stagecraft elements support the play’s themes? Look at the production photos in our online gallery at [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)
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