

state ed

Jesikah

by Phillip Kavanagh



**STATE SA
THEATRE
COMPANY**

duration approx: **1 hour** (*no interval*)
suitable for *Years 9 - 12*
DWS performance followed by a 20 - 30 min Q&A session

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PLAYWRIGHT

Phillip Kavanagh

Phillip Kavanagh is a playwright and dramaturg from Adelaide. He completed a Bachelor of Creative Arts (First Class Honours) and a Master of Arts in Creative Writing at Flinders University, as well as a Graduate Diploma of Dramatic Art (Playwriting) at NIDA. His works include *Which Time* (Airplay on ABC Radio National), *Replay* (NIDA), *Heart of Glass* (TRS' Bondi Feast), *Plain Jane* (Urban Myth), *Ecobots* (Buzz Dance Theatre) and *Little Borders*. In 2013, he undertook an Australia Council JUMP Mentorship with playwright and screenwriter Andrew Bovell, to develop a new work, *Deluge*, with Flinders University Drama Centre acting students. *Deluge* marked Phillip's third collaboration with Nescha Jelk. Phillip was dramaturg on a new short contemporary ballet for WA Ballet, *Epic Fail*, with choreographer Lucas Jervies, which premiered at the 2014 Perth International Arts Festival. He also worked with Jervies as the playwright on *Ecobots*, a devised dance theatre work with Buzz Dance Theatre, which premiered in March 2014 at the Perth Town Hall. Phillip was the 2011 recipient of the Colin Thiele Creative Writing Scholarship, and is a current recipient of an Australia Council Art Start grant. He has been shortlisted for the Philip Parsons Emerging Playwrights Fellowship, and was awarded the 2011 Patrick White Playwrights' Award; the 2011 STCSA Flinders University Young Playwrights Award; and the 2014 Jill Blewett Playwright's Award, which provides a new commission with STCSA.

Playwright's Rationale

Australians like to pride ourselves on our egalitarianism. The notion that all Australians have the capacity to achieve wealth and success regardless of their background finds sympathies with the sentiments of many Americans. Alain de Botton, in his book, *Status Anxiety* explains that, Americans were encouraged to refuse the cards life dealt them, and to instead aspire beyond their given station in life. While this aspirational lifestyle has many positive virtues, it also had some strong negative repercussions once this idea began to take hold.

As de Botton states, a perceived meritocracy creates a world in which, "*even poor citizens compare themselves with rich ones and hope that they too can follow in their footsteps.*" And the means to at least appear wealthier is easy with easy access to credit and home loans, despite no guarantee that repayments would be met.

A study conducted by psychologists S. Mark Young and Drew Pinsky into narcissism and celebrity, found the highest level of narcissism was found in Reality TV stars. "*Reality television has provided an outlet for narcissistic individuals, many with limited abilities, to believe that they can succeed in the entertainment industry. This desire to enter the industry may be fuelled by the types of fantasy feelings of success, power and glory that narcissists seem to exhibit.*"

'Reality' shows such as *Big Brother* and later *Pop Idol*—showcased ordinary people as potential media stars. This new band of celebrities appeared to 'make it big', not only becoming wealthy but, more importantly, transformed into celebrity stardom without drawing on education, entrepreneurial skills or even any obvious talent.

Reality TV, both imported and homegrown, has dominated the Australian airwaves since the first series of Australian *Big Brother* aired in 2001. Since then, these shows have spawned a whole generation of 'celebrities'. One of the subgenres of Reality TV is the "dramality" or "docusoap" popularised by shows such as; *The Shire*, *Laguna Beach*, *Real Housewives of Melbourne*, *Beverley Hills* etc. These shows blend

drama and reality by putting their 'stars' into structured situations and "soft scripting" their scenes. Despite this, they are presented as real people simply living their lives in front of cameras.

Unfortunately reality TV cast members who lack any discernible skills or talent are cast adrift when they're voted off, when their series ends or when their show is cancelled. Having gotten used to celebrity, they attempt to maintain it, but when you're famous for being famous, how can this be achieved? Their options are limited and fairly undesirable.

This notion of self-branding expands beyond celebrities. As Twenge and Campbell note in *The Narcissism Epidemic*, self-promotion is now seen as necessary to keep up with the Jones'. If everyone else is bigging themselves up in job interviews and college applications, to not follow suit is to admit defeat. They also state that the Internet has given rise to an intense emphasis on self-promotion, noting *"the competition on the web to get noticed, and one way to 'win' this competition is through narcissistic self-promotion."*

YouTube takes the honour for doing the most to promote the idea that anyone can—and should—be famous. YouTube promises the chance to be plucked overnight from obscurity into mega-stardom. Justin Bieber started out posting videos of himself singing on the site, and has gone on to be one of the biggest stars of his generation. Young Aussie singers Cody Simpson and Jordan Jansen have also been signed to major record labels after starting out singing on YouTube. As Twenge and Campbell note, *"YouTube has done more than democratise entertainment—it has given millions of people the opportunity to the seek attention and fame that they crave. Anyone with a computer and an internet connection can gain some amount of fame. You can review a book on Amazon.com, write a blog entry, comment on a blog, put up a website, or film yourself doing something stupid, violent, funny, or pornographic."*

These more sinister uploads are a worrying trend, as school beatings are increasingly uploaded onto YouTube, and adult sites are being used to upload self-made pornographic videos. Anything to get noticed. Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech gunman, took a break during his shooting spree to post a pre-prepared media package to various news outlets. Filming themselves as they prepared for their school massacre, the Columbine shooters debated which director would film their story—Spielberg or Tarantino.

Or the case of Rebecca Black. Desperate to become a famous singer, she convinced her parents to pay \$4,000 to a company who offered parents and their children a music package, to help make them the next big thing. They would record a single, direct the young "singer" in a music video, and release the clip online. Rebecca Black's song *Friday* became a viral YouTube success viewed over 47 million times. But Black was famous as a viral joke, with the song being hailed as the worst song of all time, and leading to endless parody videos. She received hate mail and endless cyber bullying.

Only a very few people actually achieve enduring fame. Yet the new meritocracy of celebrity promises otherwise. In this age of narcissistic individualism, children are raised on the mantra 'I Am Special'. But let's briefly deconstruct this phrase. The Macquarie dictionary defines "special" as *"distinguished or different from what is ordinary or usual."* If everyone is special, then, the word loses all meaning.

DIRECTOR

Nescha Jelk

Nescha is an Artistic Associate at the State Theatre Company of South Australia. She graduated from the Flinders Drama Centre directing course in 2010 with First Class Honours and a University Medal. In 2010 she won Helpmann Academy's Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Award for being a top graduate from their partner schools.

Since graduating, she has directed *Alice and Peter Grow Up* (Milk Theatre Collective), *Hamlet* (The Actor's Folio), *Sepia* (RiAus) which was awarded the 2012 Adelaide Fringe Tour Ready Award, and *Random* (State Theatre Company). Nescha has also been the Assistant Director on State Theatre Company's *Vere*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Seagull*.



Nescha has worked extensively as an assistant director for numerous companies including State Theatre Company, Eleventh Hour, Brink Productions, Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare Company and Sydney Theatre Company.

In 2014 Nescha will be directing Phillip Kavanagh's *Jesikah* and William Shakespeare's *Othello* for the State Theatre Company.

Director's Notes

Through questioning the huge pressures we both place on ourselves to succeed, Phillip and I realised we are both fascinated, and affected by the human fear of being insignificant.

We believe that this is a wide-spread anxiety that is expounded by a number of oppressive and untrue beliefs in our society:

- That money, high achievement and power are the qualities that best measure our significance and value as human beings.
- That we are products that must be branded and marketed for others' approval.
- Opportunities are equal to all. In such a society we are expected to achieve our dreams, as long as we work hard enough. If we fail to achieve our dreams, it is a direct reflection of our lack of effort and not of any external factors (eg. inequality, bad luck).
- Reality television and YouTube tells us that anyone can be famous for just being themselves. We are no longer expected to excel at anything to be adored, or despised by millions.
- Fame is a version of immortality and almost everyone can have their 15 minutes.
- We can never have enough and should always be wanting for more.

These oppressive paradigms combined together create quite the cesspit, in which we place exorbitant amounts of pressure on ourselves to achieve extraordinary things. The weight of the failure of not becoming a child prodigy, astronaut, president, millionaire or Beyonce, falls heavily on our shoulders. And painful teenage years are when many of us first become acutely aware of our own shortcomings.

Phillip and I decided to imagine a situation where an ordinary teenage girl puts huge expectations on herself to be extraordinary.

For Jesikah, 15 out of 20 for a short story she's written isn't a sign of a solid effort. It is a sign of failure. It is an existential crisis. Because for her, what's the point of her existence if she doesn't receive the worldwide admiration and adoration that she so craves?

For Jesikah, this conflict is too terrifying to confront and narcissism is her antidote. Narcissism allows Jesikah to enclave herself in a fantasy world in which she is the center of her own universe.

Thank you for watching.



ACTORS

Kate Cheel

Kate has worked consistently in both theatre and film since graduating from Adelaide College of the Arts in 2011. While still in her final year of study, Kate made her professional debut with State Theatre Company SA in *Three Sisters*. She has since worked for the company in productions of *The Glass Menagerie* (ATG 'Curtain Call' Award Best Show – Drama) and *Hedda Gabler* (Helpmann Award Nominee – Best Play, ATG 'Curtain Call' Nominee – Best Female Performance). Kate has worked with Windmill Theatre on the Melbourne and Adelaide seasons of *Big Bad Wolf* and 2014 Adelaide season of *Fugitive*.



In 2013, Kate joined acclaimed UK theatre company Kneehigh in their Australian tour of *Brief Encounter*. Kate will work again with State Theatre Company in 2014 as the title role of *Jesikah*, a new work by award-winning playwright Phillip Kavanagh. Kate was awarded the 2012 Emerging Artist of the Year by the Adelaide Critics Circle and was the final recipient of the Adele Koh scholarship in 2013.

Interview with Kate

1. *Being a new script you've been part of the development process. How has being part of this developed helped;*

a) *With your character development?*

Being part of a project from the developmental stages has greatly informed my character development, as much as I have informed the development of the character. As we improvised and workshopped sections of the script, I had the fortune of direct conversation with the writer, Phillip, and we were able to build *Jesikah* together. I would interpret his writing, he would adjust or change parts as a result of my work, I would make new and different offers and he would re-draft again...and so on until we reached a fully-realised character that he, the director and myself felt happy with.

b) *With your connection to the story?*

Being part of the development, I feel so completely connected to the story and the ideas behind the creation of this work. We've had the luxury of lengthy and detailed discussion as a creative team to ensure we are all on board in telling the same story. Usually when you're working on an existing text, the creative team has to spend a lot of time exploring WHY the playwright wrote about this particular subject and then HOW best to communicate that for the audience. In this situation, we know WHY so can expend all the energy on the HOW – which I hope translates to a clear, detailed and strong piece of theatre.

2. *Where did you study acting and how has this helped in your own acting development?*

I studied the Advanced Diploma of Acting at the Adelaide College of the Arts. I really didn't know anything about acting until I started this course. The training provided me with not only the tools and technical skills required to act, but also the invaluable understanding of how to *think* and *live* like an actor; how to be curious, open, generous, unafraid of failure, persistent and brave. Being an actor requires constant learning and growth and my training taught me how to seek out ways to ALWAYS be developing.

3. *These characters are teenagers struggling with feelings of acceptance, acknowledgment, jealousy and fear. What advice would you give to your character?*

Learn to appreciate what you have and stop focusing on what you don't have.

4. Jesikah's blogging is like another character in the play and she uses a different persona for the camera, which develops during the play. How different is your approach to the on-line sections of the play, including staging?

Youtube vlogging* is kind of bizarre in that it's incredibly intimate – usually filmed in people's bedrooms and sharing quite personal information– but is then uploaded to an anonymous, global audience. There is definitely a 'style' to it, which we tried to reflect in the staging. Jesikah is very aware of her audience so her online persona transforms as her relationship with her 'fans' develops. You see her build in confidence and expertise as she becomes more practised.

[* vlogging – video blogging]

5. You've done a lot of research watching blogs on-line. What have you taken away from these that you can use in the play?

Working from youtube has been a brilliantly informative resource. You can witness the very transformation that Jesikah undergoes – from inexpert vlogger to very rehearsed, almost obsessive uploader. There are definitely certain manners – preening particularly – that I have taken from existing vloggers to help my characterisation of Jesikah. I have also realised that most vloggers just enjoy chatting to their audiences. They will share the most basic of details like why they ate cornflakes for breakfast and that is enough to warrant an upload. It becomes a lifestyle of sharing EVERYTHING online.

6. What do you think young audiences will take away from this production?

I hope young audiences can relate to the pressure Jesikah feels to become EXTRAORDINARY and realise that wanting to pursue something just because you enjoy it and it brings you joy is enough reason to do it; you don't have to be the best... you will NEVER be the best. If you embrace this realisation, you are liberated from those unfair expectations young people often place on themselves. I know I certainly did, and every so often I have to remind myself of this. Trophies are just bits of plastic. I could go buy one from the shop right now. They are no measure of your worth. I think it's also important to acknowledge that fame and external validation are shallow pursuits that ultimately don't really make you any happier or more fulfilled.

Elizabeth Hay

Elizabeth has been living and working in Adelaide since graduating from the Flinders Drama Centre. This is her first role with State Theatre Company. She has enjoyed being involved with many local, independent theatre companies during this time, most recently ActNow Theatre, where she is also a Board Member. Elizabeth has appeared in a number of television commercials, and worked on the second season of *Danger 5* for SBS, which will air later this year. Elizabeth is a proud member of Actors Equity, and is on the National Performer's Committee for MEAA.



1. Being a new script you've been part of the development process. How has being part of this developed helped;

a) with your character development?

It has meant that I have a really clear idea about who the characters are, because a lot of the stuff we found through improvisation during the development ended up in the play. There were a few things Phillip was unclear about in regard to the journey of the characters, and having Kate and I actually play things out through rather extended improvisations, really helped him I think.

b) with your connection to the story?

In addition to the many hours Phil and Nescha spent together on the script, Kate and I were in the room and participating in almost two weeks of development. Though we were getting new drafts of some scenes later than we usually would in the rehearsal process, we mostly felt very comfortable in the direction of the characters and the scene because of the extremely thorough discussion we had before the words were on the page. We even laughed at a lot of the ideas Nescha and Phil had talked about, that we had absorbed too, simply by being around the discussion. It skipped us ahead in terms of where we would usually be at in the rehearsal process.

2. Where did you study acting and how has this helped in your own acting development?

I studied at Flinders Drama Centre and finished in 2010. The acting course there is called a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Hons) which took four years to complete.

It has been crucial with my acting development because it has given me many tools and techniques to give my best performance both on screen and on stage. I am constantly grateful for the training I had because when I am struggling with something, there is something I can fall back on to achieve what needs to be achieved to continue the story or character through line, whether it's a more emotional tool, or even just a physical technique.

It also exposed me to many artists active in the industry, and though I have done lots of learning since I graduated, I felt really ready to enter the industry equipped with as much knowledge as I could.

3. These characters are teenagers struggling with feelings of acceptance, acknowledgment, jealousy and fear. What advice would you give to your character?

I'd tell her, Denise that it won't last forever! We have had to do a lot of reminiscing about what it was like for us when we were teenagers. These feelings don't disappear completely when you are an adult, but there is something about being that age which makes everything worse! We have had to remind ourselves why Jesikah and Denise are even friends, and we have had to find redeeming features of their friendship in order to make it believable and real. I think this is another thing that happens at school - you find yourself around people that you might not choose to be around otherwise, but you happen to sit next to each other on the first day and become 'best friends'.

I'd also probably tell Denise to stop selling herself short and find new friends, but that's easier said than done!

4. You need to flit from character to character. How do you mentally prepare this, considering how quickly the changes are and therefore the limited costume change?

The key to this for me has been making certain each character is as fully developed as they would have been had I only been playing one. Nescha and I have worked hard together to find what makes each character different, so that it is clear when there is a shift. We have focused on the physical differences and vocal characteristics in particular. There are also quite extreme differences in the kinds of relationship each character has with Jesikah, and because all the scenes are with her, it makes it a bit more clear in negotiating the shifts.

We spent a long time improvising with each character in different situations - for example, Denise and Jesikah had a sleepover, Mum and Jesikah went shopping, Miss H took a drama class. This process really clarifies things for both Nescha and I. Improvisations make it easier for me to really own the character, which in turn makes it easier to switch between them. It has certainly been a challenge, and I was very worried about it, but Nescha kept reassuring me I wasn't alone and we'll find it together. And we did, I think! I had to remember that it takes time as well - I was very impatient in wanting to get all three right straight away.

5. You've done a lot of research watching blogs on-line. What have you taken away from these that you can use in the play?

I had no idea there was such a phenomenon out there before starting the development! Having no touchstone into that world, I think most of us were taken by surprise that some of these people were so famous just for having sat in front of their computer and created a vlog about nothing in particular. It gave me a sense of how it might be possible for Jesikah to think she could actually have a million views, because people do get that many. It also made me realise how hard Denise would have to work to make Jesikah think she had a big following.

6. What do you think young audiences will take away from this production?

I hope that audiences will be able to connect with Jesikah and Denise both, and realise that even though sometimes people do bad things, it doesn't necessarily mean they are bad people. Even Jesikah, who commits a heinous act at the end, has been influenced by many different people and circumstances. She is a product of her environment, and she truly believes in what she is doing.

I'd also encourage young audiences to maintain self awareness and question things about their environment. This generation is the first to have grown up with technology so deeply integrated into their lives, and though I don't strictly think this is a bad thing, I think it's important for us to keep ourselves in check, and remember what is happening in the real world. There is a pretty strong anti-bullying message in the play, so on that I hope audiences continue to try and stand up to bullies, as hard as it is, and be true to yourself.

CHARACTERS

Jesikah

Is a teenage girl about 15 years old. She is an average student, but dreams of being a writer, actor or musician. She begins the play as a normal teenager hanging out her best friend, Denise. She is not a popular student and is upset when her friend, Steph leaves the band. Jesikah is on the cusp of transitioning from girl into young adulthood. She tries to be alternative, but is really quite mainstream.

Jesikah begins her YouTube vlogs initially as a way of being noticed, or becoming popular. Soon we realise that Jesikah is self-absorbed, ignores Denise and is able to manipulate Denise, her mother, her school principal and teacher, Miss H. As the play progresses she becomes increasingly confident on-line, developing her on-line persona and using increasing technology and production values, however her self absorption and manipulation of others escalates to a point where she harms herself and others.

Denise

Is Jesikah's best friend. She is a better student than Jesikah, consistently getting higher scores in class. She isn't very confident and lives in Jesikah's shadow. Denise tries to keep Jesikah happy, which makes it easy for Jesikah to manipulate her. Initially Denise responds to Jesikah's blogs to make Jesikah feel better about herself,

"When you first started making the videos, I felt bad that you had no views but your own, so I watched too. But you seemed to really want someone to talk to, so I created an account as DemonToaster and commented on your video. And you got so excited that I had to keep doing it."

Denise blames herself for Jesikah's self-harming, believing that if she didn't take Jesikah's role in the play it wouldn't have happened. She is genuinely concerned for Jesikah and wants to help, but gets tired of Jesikah's constant need for validation.

As Denise became more isolated from Jesikah she shows her disappointment through her reactions to Jesikah's blog. *"I snapped.... I said all those really nasty thing to you, and I'm so so sorry if that contributed to what you did to yourself."*

Mother

Jesikah's mother wants her daughter to experience and enjoy her teenager years. There is no mention of Jesikah's dad, so it is possible that she's trying to make up for this by being more of a friend to Jesikah, by enjoying her music, trying to say the 'lingo' and wanting her to party and enjoy herself.

When Jesikah's mother finds her in the bathroom she is distraught, *"How could you – What is going on? Are you unhappy?... What's happening? Help me out here. Help me understand what is happening with you."*

Jesikah easily manipulates her mother into getting Miss H suspended and her mother feels so guilty about Jesikah's unhappiness that she's willing to pay big money for Jesikah's head shots.

Teacher (Miss H)

Miss H is Denise and Jesikah's teacher at school. She auditions the girls for *Macbeth* and gives Jesikah the role of Banquo when she really wanted Macbeth. Jesikah makes up a story about Miss H's taunting her over getting the smaller role.

Miss H knows that Jesikah is manipulative and that she isn't the best actor for the role, or the best writer, but she gives into Jesikah's 'black mail' demands so that she can return to school. *"There are kids in your year who are genuinely struggling. Who I try so hard to help. To make sure they get through high school alive. And sometimes they don't. How dare you."*

SYNOPSIS

Jesikah follows the rise and fall of its eponymous character; as her online notoriety burgeons, Jesikah's real life starts to become alarmingly unstitched. Supported by her sometimes less than helpful 'BFF' Denise, Jesikah goes to increasingly extreme lengths to convert internet celebrity into real life adoration. But in the world wide web things are not always what they seem....



PLOT

The play starts with Jesikah's latest video blog before switching back to her very first video blog (vlog*), where she is awkward and unsure of what she's doing.

We cross to the school yard where Jesikah is complaining about the mark she received for her story about gangsters. Her friend, Denise however gets full marks for her story and Jesikah isn't happy. She thinks she could be a writer and in the next scene reads part of her story for her online viewers.

Denise and Jesikah plot their musical debut at a party when Denise lets it slip that their friend Steph has left the band. We hear part of the song on Jesikah's video and then see the girls rehearsing the song. At the party another band has jumped up and is playing an uncomplimentary song about Jesikah. Jesikah is so upset about the song, losing her musical debut and the fact that her friends are laughing at her that she forces Denise to leave the party with her. At home her mum drills her about the 'gig'. She's obviously very proud of Jesikah, but doesn't know what has happened.

Jesikah is rehearsing her audition for the school's play, *Macbeth*. Denise is helping her, but doesn't get an opportunity to go over her own lines. After her audition, Jesikah vlogs herself acting. A few days later, her teacher, Miss H finds Jesikah in the school yard and tells her that she didn't get the part of Macbeth, but the smaller part of Banquo and that Denise got the part of Macbeth. Jesikah is so jealous of Denise that she avoids talking to her.

Jesikah's Mum finds Jesikah in the bathroom with blood on her arm after cutting herself. Her mum interrogates her and Jesikah makes up a story about the drama teacher to get her suspended from school. Jesikah then goes to Miss H's house to bargain for the role of Macbeth for dropping the story. *"Maybe you weren't horrible to me. Maybe I should go in to school tomorrow and tell the principal that I was confused. That you were only ever nice to me. That what I did had nothing to do with you... What do you think?"* Miss H has no choice but to concede to Jesikah's demands, so that she can return to teaching.

Jesikah makes up with Denise now that she has the role of Macbeth. She convinces Denise to talk Steph into re-joining the band, even suggesting that she pay Steph out of her own money.

The ending builds with vlogs in between scenes with Denise, Miss H and her mother as she builds towards the performance of Macbeth and her band. Eventually Denise tells Jesikah that she's created accounts to follow Jesikah's vlogs. At first it was innocent, trying to make Jesikah feel good about herself, but as it continued she started saying nasty things and kept adding more and more followers. Jesikah's anger turns to rage and she beats up Denise before posting the final vlog.

✚ **Vlog** – A **video blog** can be shortened to **vlog**. A blog for which the medium is video and is a form of web television. Vlogs are popular on YouTube.

THEMES

MANIPULATION

Jesikah is a great manipulator, *"I guess my biggest talent would have to be steering conversations to go exactly where I want."*

She manipulates her mother when explaining why she cut her arm, getting her to talk to the Principal and remove Miss H, and paying for head shots she can't afford. She manipulates her friend Denise, getting her to pay Steph to re-join the band. She also plays on Denise's concern for her, by making her feel guilty about her cutting herself, *"You weren't conscious of how your actions would affect me. You didn't know what I was going through. So stop beating yourself up. All right."*

Knowing the true story of what happened, she manipulates Miss H into giving her the role of Macbeth. Miss H knows the type of character that Jesikah is, but she has no choice, giving into Jesikah to get her job back.

BULLYING

The play explores the issue of bullying, both in real life and online. The character of Jesikah makes her friend Denise use her own money to get their friend to play in the band, but she also suggests blackmail Steph. Jesikah also belittles Denise's work, her acting talent, her friendship loyalty and blames her when she doesn't get the role of Macbeth.

Whilst Denise wants to be her friend and creates online personas to help Jesikah feel popular, she slowly begins being nasty. *"I snapped.... I said all those really nasty thing to you, and I'm so so sorry if that contributed to what you did to yourself. "*

Jesikah also attacks one of her online responders (Who is really Denise); *"You know what, Open SeeSaw? I think you're a sad pathetic little man sitting at home...I have seen into the deepest darkest pits of the human soul and you are nothing. You are a sad little loser..."*

Ultimately as the play builds, Jesikah loses control and bashes Denise, the ultimate act of bullying that turns into violence.

AFRAID OF BEING ORDINARY

Jesikah desires to be extraordinary. Not really knowing which direction she wants to take, she focuses on jobs such as a writer, an actor and a musician as this will bring her fame and adulation. Even doing the vlogs for her is creating a persona of being different, of being extraordinary enough to watch, particularly as her vlogs get increasingly more banal. She gets increasingly more involved as more followers are watching and she is hoping the final vlog catapults her into popular territory.

PRESSURE TO ACHIEVE

"You can achieve anything you want if you put your mind to it." We have heard that several times in our lives and it becomes engrained in our belief system. Does this mean it's our own fault if we don't achieve those things, or we haven't worked hard enough? Does it mean that we're lazy, untalented, unskilled, unpretty?

At school we put pressure on ourselves to achieve top marks, get the lead in the play, or the solo, or be the most popular student. Jesikah puts high demands on herself and is constantly disappointed when she doesn't succeed to this level. Miss H says, *"There are kids in your year who are genuinely struggling. Who I try so hard to help. To make sure they get through high school alive."*

SOCIAL MEDIA

Jesikah by Phillip Kavanagh explores the evolving dynamic of self-made celebrities who take advantage of various social media outlets to enjoy their 15 minutes of fame. This play also delves into the dangerously narcissistic ideology which this dynamic invokes; the concept of *me*. The idea that oneself is the centre of the universe: to be watched, followed, liked and subscribed to on a minute-by-minute basis. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are key stakeholders in turning anyone with a computer or a smart-phone into an online publisher. People are more openly sharing the most intimate aspects of their private lives along with the most mundane recounts of everyday life. These social media sites are vehicles for people to market, promote and publish their biggest commodity- themselves.

The 'selfie' – a photograph taken of oneself and uploaded online, epitomises this shift towards egocentric behaviour with a quest for online validation through likes, comments, follows and subscribers. Psychologists Twenge & Campbell have labelled this dynamic the '*narcissism epidemic*' which has come about since the evolution of social media and reality television and developed a fixed obsession amongst teens with getting famous.

Jesikah uses YouTube in attempts to popularise her image and talents, creating a channel of videos to show off her skills, talents and everyday life. Jesikah thrives on the attention, comments, subscriptions and views on her videos. The narcissistic tendencies we see in Jesikah's character also illustrate the dangerous need for constant validation from others to prosper feelings of self-worth. A key element to the function of YouTube is the views count and the comment option, this offers broadcasters a sense of the presence or absence of viewers.

During Jesikah's decline in mental health we can see the correlation between this and the comments passed by viewers of her video. In the final scene, a climactic moment is when Denise reveals she singlehandedly orchestrated Jesikah's entire network of 'fans' to boost the number of views on her videos. Jesikah resents this action and the threatening reality that nobody, besides Denise, was watching her. Jesikah declines into an aggressive outrage as her narcissistic, grandiose delusions come crashing down around her. Jesikah's aspirations to become a YouTube born super-star have been crushed. This is not a rare case, but rather a scarily on point observation of the current cultural psyche where everyone is trying to be 'discovered' and launch into fame and fortune.

NARCISSIM

Jesikah's personality displays characteristics of narcissism;

- Bragging
- Blaming others for their shortcomings
- Focusing on physical appearance
- Valuing material goods that display status
- Using big gestures
- Constantly turning conversation back to themselves
- Manipulating and cheating to get ahead
- Surrounding themselves with people who look up to them (such as a "posse" or entourage)
- Jumping at opportunities to garner attention and fame

Narcissism is a term that originated with Narcissus in Greek mythology who fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water. Narcissism basically means that a person is totally absorbed in self. The extreme narcissist is the centre of his own universe and that people are things to be used.

Narcissists like Jesikah are good manipulators and are able to use people to get what they want. Jesikah desires fames, fortune and popularity and isn't afraid to step on anyone who gets in her way.

INTERESTING READING

Vlog

A video blog or video log, is a form of blog for which the medium is video, and is a form of web television. Vlog entries often combine embedded video, or a video link with supporting text, images, and other metadata.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_blog)

Meritocracy

1. People whose progress is based on ability and talent rather than on class privilege or wealth.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com>)

Aristocracy

1. Any class of persons holding exceptional rank and privileges, especially the hereditary nobility.

3. Any class or group considered to be superior, as through education, ability, wealth, or social prestige.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com>)

Egalitarian

1. A belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs

2. A social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people

(www.thefreedictionary.com)

EGALITARIAN AUSTRALIA

Australia has a fiercely egalitarian culture, where everyone strives for equality at any cost, be it on the basis of race, socioeconomic level, gender or even sexual preference.

However, Australia has developed a 'Tall Poppy Syndrome' where individuals who are richer, more successful, more famous than ordinary people attract envy and hostility. The *Penguin Book of Australian Slang* describes a 'tall poppy' as a "very important or influential person, or person with status, often held in contempt by others who try to bring about this person's downfall or ruin."

EGALITARIAN AMERICA

The American Dream, first described in the 1940s, is a set of ideals in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, and an upward social mobility achieved through hard work. In the definition of the American Dream by James Truslow Adams in 1931, "*Life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or circumstances of birth.*"

The idea of the American Dream is rooted in the United States Declaration of Independence which proclaims that, "*All men are created equal*" and that they are, "*endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights,*" including, "*Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.*"

Essentially it suggests that anyone in the US can succeed through hard work and has the potential to lead a happy, successful life. Someone who manages to achieve his or her version is often said to be '*living the dream.*'

MACBETH COMPARISON

Jesikah and Denise audition for the school play, *Macbeth*. However, Jesikah gets passed over for the starring role of Macbeth and is devastated, particularly when the role is given to her friend, Denise. This is the catalyst for Jesikah's downward spiral, turning on both Denise and her teacher.

Macbeth is one of the great tragedy themed plays by William Shakespeare. The main themes include ambition, fate, deception and treachery. The main theme of *Macbeth*—the destruction wrought when ambition goes unchecked—is similar to the ambition of *Jesikah*. Macbeth is not naturally inclined to commit evil deeds, yet he deeply desires power and advancement. He kills Duncan against his better judgment and afterward stewes in guilt and paranoia. Toward the end of the play he descends into a kind of frantic, boastful madness.

Jesikah beings as a normal teenager, however her drive for fame, attention and adulation end with her descending into a kind of madness when she attacks her friend and puts it online.

ALAIN DE BOTTON (BORN 1969)

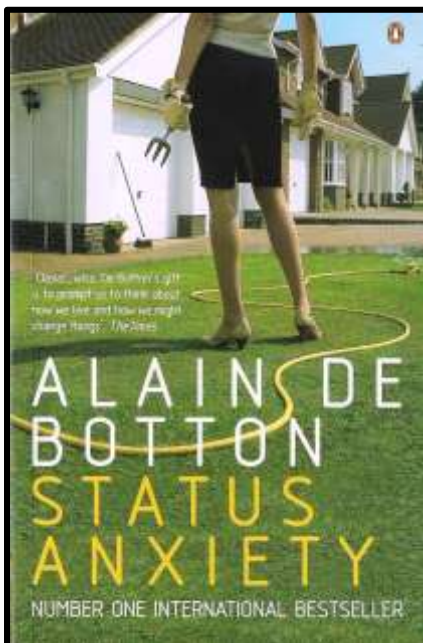
Is a Swiss/British writer, philosopher, television presenter and entrepreneur. His books and television programmes discuss various contemporary subjects and themes, emphasizing philosophy's relevance to everyday life. At 23, he published *Essays In Love* (1993), which went on to sell two million copies. Other bestsellers include *How Proust Can Change Your Life* (1997), *Status Anxiety* (2004) and *The Architecture Of Happiness* (2006). In August 2008, he was a founding member of a new educational establishment in London called *The School of Life*.



In his work, *Status Anxiety* he examines an almost universal anxiety: what others think of us; about whether we're judged a success or a failure, a winner or a loser. He also discusses the desire of people to "climb the social ladder" and the anxieties that result from focussing on how one is perceived by others. De Botton claims that chronic anxiety about status is an inevitable side effect of any democratic, ostensibly egalitarian society.

Status Anxiety – Alain de Botton

(Transcribed from youtube clip – www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoShQEhl1ek)



Status Anxiety refers to moments of everyday life for example; a party you're not invited to, or someone getting a job over you. Have you ever heard, "Every time a friend of mine succeeds a small part of me dies?"

Status anxiety is a worry about our standing in the world, whether we're going up or down, or whether we're winners or losers. We care about our status for a simple reason: because most people tend to be nice to us according to the amount of status we have. If they hear we've been promoted, there'll be a little more energy in their smile. If we are sacked, they'll pretend not to have seen us.

Ultimately, we worry about having no status because we're not good at remaining confident about ourselves if other people don't like or respect us. Our 'ego' or self-conception could be pictured as a leaking balloon, forever requiring external love to remain inflated and vulnerable to the smallest pinpricks of neglect. We rely on signs of respect from the world to feel acceptable to ourselves.

Status anxiety is destructive as it convinces people that if their status improves, their worries will vanish. Status anxiety has become worse than ever, because the possibilities for achievement (sexual, financial, professional) seem to be greater than ever. There are so many more things we expect if we're

not to judge ourselves as "losers" and we are constantly surrounded by stories of people who have made it.

For most of history low expectations were viewed as both normal and wise. Only a very few ever aspired to wealth and fulfilment. It remains highly unlikely in today's society that we will ever reach the pinnacle of society. But, it no longer feels unlikely; depending on the magazines one reads, it can in fact seem absurd that one hasn't already managed to have it all.

The attentions of others matter to us because we are afflicted by an uncertainty as to our own value, so we tend to allow others' appraisals to play a determining role in how we see ourselves. Our sense of identity is held captive by the judgements of those we live among.

We are tempted to believe that certain achievements and possessions will give us enduring satisfaction. Below are some of the terms de Botton uses;

- **People 'snobs'** – any method of judging another human being by one or two things about them which defines their character. For example, career snobbery – 'What do you do?' People can either be pleased and interested or wander off.
- **Search for luxury** – giving gifts to make friends. We're a greedy materialistic society and we've invested emotional meanings into material objects.
- **Status** is not something you should inherit, but create yourself. Anyone can become anything. Nothing is holding you back, the sky's the limit. The number of self-help books – is huge, how you can transform your status and become anything. However, not everyone can be extraordinary; we're setting people up for a fall.
- **Feeling of envy** – we don't envy everyone, but someone who has a bigger car or house. We tell ourselves that we are equal, why does this person have more than me?
- **Meritocracy** -A society where if you have genuine talent, will, power and energy, you should be able to succeed. The flip side of this is, if you believe that those at the top deserve success because they worked hard therefore, those at the bottom deserve their failure, and they are responsible for what occurs to them. Tabloid newspapers are full of people who've messed up their lives, cheated on their partners, lost job or money and it's celebrated in a tough and very open way.
- **Martyrs** – someone who holds onto their own value and views (eg. Jesus or Socrates) – independent of what other people are thinking.

Overall, don't listen so much to other people, look at how other people are thinking, or see what's going on in their minds before getting upset. Free yourself from some of the pressure of worrying what people think.

How much weight should we give to other's opinions of us? In the dark ages you would challenge someone to a duel in the pursuit of honour and status. In Western tradition, what matters is truth - keep that distinction at the forefront of your mind and not be worried about opinion.

To help free yourself reflect on the nature of death. Death refocuses your priorities and decides which things are important and what is unimportant.

– [*Alain de Botton, Status Anxiety*](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is becoming more than just a part a teenager's world, it is their world. Teens are spending more and more time online, usually on a social media platform like Facebook or Twitter, and their online life is not just on their computers, with most teens now have smart phones where they are can be on social media networks all day. They are constantly texting, tweeting, and posting pictures.

What impact does this hyper-connected social media life have on teenagers? The impact can be both negative and positive.

SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS

- There are **1.4 billion** users of Facebook around the world.
- **98%** of 18-24 year olds already use social media.
- **58%** of social media users are women.
- **154** - The average number of online friends an Australian has.
- **14** - The average number of 'real life' friends the average Australian has.
- **22** – The average number of hours we spend on social media every week
- **69%** – Of us who log on several times a day.
- **80%** - Australians are online

Social media can be a wonderful tool, helping us source information and communicate with friends around the world and is a part of our everyday lives. We tweet, blog, update and upload regularly.

YOUTUBE FAME

Many people are using YouTube to upload videos of themselves, with some videos becoming famous and attracting hundreds of thousands of views. Many videos of simple things such as the singing of a popular song or a comedy routine can achieve YouTube fame, but the desire for such fame has led to dangerous undertakings and incidents, such as dangerous stunts and the making of fight videos.

One incident involved a teen from Ontario, who was set on fire by a fourteen-year-old accomplice. He suffered from third degree burns. Or where a violent street gang began holding public fights in New York City to earn YouTube fame. This has led to their fights becoming an organized event to which hundreds of people attend.

SOCIAL MEDIA & CELEBRITY ARTICLE

How social media has changed what it means to be a celebrity

By Kate Knibbs — April 15, 2013

Even in the 1990s, the line between fame and obscurity was easy to find, when you were generally famous for being an actor or a sports star, a politician or a pundit. There were many paths to renown, but they all involved networking, going through agents, and “getting a big break.”

But the rules have been changing, and social media and the rise of smartphone culture have substantially altered how celebrities are treated and how people gain the vast platform of fame. The old rules don't work. 'Breakdowns' aren't concealed by publicists; they're obsessively documented on the Internet. In the 90s, President Clinton got caught in a sex scandal due to audiotapes and DNA evidence. In 2011, Congressman Anthony Weiner's ignominious “Weinergate” embarrassment unfolded on Twitter. But the lives of celebrities don't just fall apart on the Internet – sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can also catapult people to levels of fame they'd otherwise never reach.

For instance, Justin Bieber is often called the first YouTube superstar, and accurately so: The teen dream got his start by posting videos. And Bieber's devoted Beliebers are all the more ardent about their coiffed, swagged out pint-size R&B star because he's such an active Twitter user. They have a direct entrance to his attention.

Megan Amram, now a well-known television writer for *Parks and Recreation*, broke into screenwriting by way of Twitter. After graduating from Harvard in 2010, she started a Twitter account that was funny enough to get over 90,000 followers, which led to paid writing jobs. She now has almost 350,000 followers.

Average people sell their iPhone-snapped pictures, spread stories and photos about famous people. This means celebrities can get photographed anywhere, anytime. Sites like Twitter and Instagram allow celebrities a direct line to their fans, so they can circumvent the paparazzi by getting ahead of the gossip. And even celebrities who appear more or less totally blasé about paparazzi, like Rihanna, use Instagram as a self-promotional tool and a way to save face.

So social media and a constantly connected culture have prompted three substantial changes to celebrity: Platforms like Twitter give normal people an opportunity to gain fame, and they also give closely monitored celebrities an opportunity to connect with fans and air their grievances. And our share-everything culture means that average citizens will likely continue to supplant traditional paparazzi. This means it's easier than ever to become famous, but more of a hassle to retain your privacy once you become the subject of scrutiny.

But the idea that tweets and selfies can make you famous just reinforces the narcissistic element of social media. People are living their lives as though they're already famous, since it's easier to indulge in digital navel-gazing if you tell yourself everyone wants to know about the minutiae of your life.

<http://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/celebrity-social-media-anger/>

SOCIAL MEDIA & SELF HARM IN TEENS

The increase in social-networking sites for teens has been accompanied by an increase in cyber-bullying and self-harm in teens. Schoolyard bullying used to end at the end of the school day, but cyber-bullying can be 24/7, following children into their homes and bedrooms.

Self-image support group *The Butterfly Foundation* reports an increase in self-harm by 25% last year (2013) which can be, at least in part, attributed to the use of social media.

Teenagers look to social networks as a kind of identity, where they create and manipulate their own mini-world and double life. People can control their online persona and disconnect themselves, behaving differently online in ways they would never act in real-life.

Social networking sites such as; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and Tumblr offer ways of connecting with people who they may never encounter in their daily lives. This anonymity has allowed for 'phishing' and bullying of people they've never met, which can lead to self-harm, anxiety and depression.

Self harm is intentionally harming oneself, often with the objective of alleviating suffering. Cutting is most common among adolescent, Caucasian females from intact middle-to-upper-class families. The reasons why people cut themselves are unclear, but include impulsivity, distraction from personal pain, feeling in control and peer pressure.

[IF YOU NEED TO SEEK HELP PLEASE CONTACT LIFELINE ON 13 11 14
OR KIDS HELP LINE ON 1800 55 1800.](#)

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a clinically diagnosed personality disorder characterised by extreme manifestations of selfishness, arrogance and egocentrism.

Narcissists are overconfident, self-obsessed, feel that they are entitled to special treatment, need praise, and are often isolated from the community. Therefore they don't form deep relationships and they take advantage of others in order to advance their self-interest. They can be harmful to themselves and others.

According to Twenge and Campbell, "*narcissists thrive on social networking sites*", and "*social networking sites reinforce narcissists in an endless loop.*"

Current research indicates that the increase in social media and public networking sites is leading to an unprecedented increase in narcissistic tendencies within our society, particularly in teens. Social media offers them opportunities to gain the fame and recognition they crave, however, they often receive criticism and cyber-bullying as a result. Not many of these teenagers are resilient in rejecting this form of criticism and therefore have difficulty learning from their mistakes. Promoting 'the self' in order to create the image that one is popular and important is fundamental to the structure and purpose of social media.

Researchers Twenge and Campbell give an example;

Many children in the US are given a wide range of choices about their interests and activities. Parents emphasize how special their children are, and this emphasis on being special evolves into a sense of entitlement. This attitude is reinforced in school by teachers who set out to make each student feel outstanding. The sense of feeling special, outstanding, exceptional, and entitled without actually earning these labels is exacerbated by self-promoting Internet and social network sites. As a result these attitudes have become common in our contemporary life."

People who are desperate for attention have access to a huge potential audience on the Web. Anyone with a computer and an Internet connection can gain some amount of fame. This new technology has done more than democratize entertainment—it has given millions of people the opportunity to seek the attention and fame that they crave

SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Gina Rinehart

(2013) AUSTRALIA'S richest person, Gina Rinehart, has issued a stern rebuke to those jealous of the wealthy: "*If you're jealous of those with more money, don't just sit there and complain. Do something to make more money yourself - spend less time drinking or smoking and socialising, and more time working. Become one of those people who work hard, invest and build, and at the same time create employment and opportunities for others.*"

In the past, she has also said, "*Success never comes along, but through stern determination, perseverance and God's grace. A successful person is one who works hard but smartly.*"

NARCISSIM AND FAME

The following are excerpts from articles on Narcissism and fame.

CELEBRITY NARCISSISM

Dr Peggy Drexler- 14 Dec 2013

Kanye West tweeted that he is, *"God's vessel, too busy writing history to read it; and is the voice of his generation."* He adds, *"That the greatest pain in his life is not to be able to see himself perform live."* Kanye clearly understands that in pursuit of center stage, narcissism sells.

Kurt Cobain said, *"I don't care what you think unless it's about me."*

Lindsey Lohan offered, *"Beauty, grace and confidence. I've learned to accept and appreciate what nature gave me."*

According to Dr. Drew Pinsky and Dr. Mark Young, in their book, *The Mirror Effect: How Celebrity Narcissism is Seducing America*, the excesses of celebrities are not only riveting, but they are infectious. With celebrity narcissism we hold the clicker. When we've had enough, we can simply move on to another distraction. It's entertainment we can consume or pass by.

However, vanity, exhibitionism and entitlement and the other hallmarks of narcissism are spreading to the population at large.

Narcissism is part of our lives. So what? What's wrong with self-esteem? But there is a simple difference between high self-esteem and narcissism. Those with high self-esteem use their confidence as a tool to forge relationships. True narcissists couldn't care less. They don't want relationships. They want an entourage.

Understand that, for a narcissist, you are part of a plan, and your worth depends on their ability to make you play a supporting role. Narcissists are notoriously susceptible to reinforcement of their own self-image.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peggy-drexler/what-we-can-learn-about-o_b_4445648.html

FAME

Benedict Carey – 22 Aug 2006

What's the formula for fame? Some write fictionalized memoirs. Others like Paris Hilton, become famous for, well, simply being famous. Surveys suggest that more than 40 percent of people believe they will eventually get their "15 minutes" and some. But being famous does not necessarily bring happiness.

Kaysar Ridhaa from UK's reality series *Big Bother* said, *"To be noticed, to be wanted, to be loved, to walk into a place and have others care about what you're doing, that's what people want, in my opinion. It's strange and twisted, because when that attention does come, the irony is you want more privacy."*

People with an overriding desire to be widely famous often desire social acceptance and a longing for the existential reassurance. Yet for all the dreamers, only one or two in 100 rate fame as their most coveted goal.

In a 1996 study 100 adults were surveyed asking about their aspirations, guiding principles, and values, as well as administering standard measures of psychological well-being.

The participants in the study who focused on goals tied to others' approval, like fame, reported significantly higher levels of distress than those interested primarily in self-acceptance and friendship.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/22/health/psychology/22fame.html?pagewanted=all>

What do you think kids want most in life today?

Petula Dvorak – 7 Feb 2013

Money? Marriage? Adventure? A cool job? Spiritual fulfillment? Nope.

Fame was the most important value for future goals. The top five values emphasized in television shows popular with children in 2007 were fame, achievement, popularity, image and financial success. Compared to 1997 the top five were community feeling, benevolence, image, tradition and self-acceptance.

This is, after all, the 'Look at Me' Generation. They grew up on Facebook and Twitter, far more hip to the potential of social networks.

They have *Survivor*, *Swamp People*, *Gypsy Sisters*, *Honey Boo Boo* – it's a nation of ordinary people who can get famous with no talent, no skill, and no achievement. All it takes is exposure – the more the better, apparently.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/02/07/2662192/todays-teens-seek-fame-via-cellphone.html>

SOCIAL MEDIA CAUSING ANXIETY

Larkin Callaghan – 7 Nov 2012

It is a familiar sight to see a group of teens bent over phones or gaming devices, checking in, tagging each other, posting pictures and commenting, and waiting impatiently for all their cyber friends to 'like' their work, or re-tweet their location, or post an accompanying video.

Teenagers today are some of the most enthusiastic users of social media sites like Facebook, and as an age group their Internet use is near universal—a full 95 percent of teens are now online.

This trend has provoked anxiety, raising a range of concerns, from sex predators to promoting a sedentary lifestyle. But just as teen internet use has risen in recent years, teen depression and psychopathology has risen five-fold since the early part of the 20th century.

In Dr. Jean Twenge's book, "The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement", rising rates of depression are partly the result of a culture that promotes the narcissism pulsing through social media usage.

"Americans, especially teenagers now rely so much on external and immediate gratification, social status and image, and the superficial gain they get from social media that they are forgoing values that contribute to a sound internal life," Dr Twenge says.

Those who focus on more materialistic and superficial lavishing of attention are in part doing so because they lack the self-esteem and efficacy to think that they can achieve something more significant and tangible. Narcissism and the rising but inaccurate levels of self-evaluation can ultimately lead to deeper disappointment in one's self and depression from alienation caused by increased self-involvement.

<http://the2x2project.org/the-declining-mental-health-of-millennials-is-depression-the-new-normal/>

DESIGNER

Olivia Zanchetta

Olivia graduated from the Live Design course at Adelaide College of the Arts in 2012. During her time there she had the opportunity to work with Australian Dance Theatre on their production of *Worldhood* in 2011, The Border Project on their production *I Am Not An Animal* for the 2012 Adelaide Festival, five.point.ones' Corey McMahon on three separate productions *Dark Earth*, *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*, and *Love and Money* and designed the 2012 Graduate production of Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* directed by Brink Productions' Chris Drummond. For State Theatre Company, Olivia was costume designer for *Maggie Stone*.



Since graduating, she has designed *Shakespeare On Love* for the South Australian Shakespeare Company, *Chance* for choreographer Lisa Griffiths, and *What Lies Within* for Lina Limosani. Olivia was also a recipient of a grant from the Helpmann Academy, which saw her attend the OISTAT (International Organisation of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians) World Stage Design Conference held in Cardiff, Wales in September 2013

SET & COSTUME DESIGN

The first considerations in the design were on the practical elements, including the regional tour, venue technical specifications and the time-frame of a 3 hour bump-in at each venue.

There also needed to be a projection surface for the YouTube videos that Jesikah makes. To create a variety of locations such as, a house, a party, the school and Jesikah's bedroom without copious set pieces, simple canvas strips have been designed as the surface and backdrop for the show. This helps in the fluidity of the play, so that the action can continue through, with minimal set and costume changes, and of course serves as clear projection surface.

The character of Jesikah is in a transition period from early teenage years into being 15 where she's starting to become more alternative. The use of pink on the canvas strips represents this transition from 'girlhood'.

Denise needs to be adaptable in her costuming as she changes quickly into the roles of Jesikah's mum and the teacher, Miss H. Denise is a 'follower' and doesn't stand out from the crowd, essentially blending into the background, so a similar shade of pink has been used in her costuming. Jesikah on the other hand wants to stand out. She wants to be the centre of attention and to her everyone else blends into the background, so a bold red has been the basis for her costume.

Olivia referenced the work of Artist Charlie White, who depicts teenage girls with sickly pink backgrounds, in a relatively serene environment, but with dark undertones. *Jesikah* is similar, starting in a sweet teenage world, but with darkness that creeps in, ending in blood red.

The projection comes from the front of the stage and is used to inform the lighting and is also used to make impressionistic moments throughout the piece. Using different camera techniques, including close ups, creating infinity within an image, filming from Jesikah's perspective and the live feeds all create interesting elements that are projected onto the canvas wall.

Sound was designed using snippets from current top 40 songs as a reference. Mashed together they are familiar sounding, but become more and more distorted as Jesikah's views become more distorted. This music helps to set the scene of a teenage girl experience. The music also helps to create an ambient vibe for each location.

The use of mediums such as; YouTube clips, sounds and lighting help influence the excitement and confusion within the play towards its ultimate climax.

DESIGN JOURNAL

December, 2013

Before our creative development week, Nescha, Director and I met for brief discussions of the play. Having only read the play a few times before meeting, we spoke very generally. As the designer, my focus is to concentrate on what Nescha wants to achieve with the play. Often we won't know what the play is going to be at this point, and that's okay. The beauty of being able to create a show from the ground up is that it's a collaborative process and as a designer, you are allowed to take tips from what actors and other creatives, do and say.

A creative development is an opportunity for all involved to workshop a show and tighten a script. Decisive roles at this stage don't come into play because the main priority is to concentrate on creating a workable subject. For me, I take notes on themes, and any visual cues that might be given by the actors. We spent a lot of time doing character work, which involves improvisation and script analysis. I particularly like what comes to the actors naturally when they're asked to physically act out a scene- ultimately as a designer you must appreciate the actor and there are cues you can take from them which will give you ideas about costume. Elizabeth, who is playing Denise, Miss H, and Mum would fiddle with the hem of her shirt while playing Denise, and as Miss H she developed an attachment to a shawl.



The script does not have specific places named, so a starting point for me was to find locations such as Jesikah's bedroom, the school yard, etc.



JESIKAH Denise/Miss H costume reference



January, 2014

It was clear due to the text, that the world I needed to create was going to be one for Jesikah, and one that Jesikah could control.

Most of my work occurred post creative development. With a few small notes under my belt, it was time to make a set model and costumes. We knew already that we would face technical challenges due to the use of YouTube, and Nescha and I had agreed that projections were necessary. The other things for me to consider were the show needing to tour, which means it needs to fit into a small truck and also into several different venues- none of which are the same. Which this in mind, a designer needs to think of practicality first.

I knew what size space I had, and I wanted to use as much of that as possible. I wanted to be able to provide more than one space for projectors to be used on, so a wall and a floor was necessary to create a whole environment. The space was kept very bare on purpose- we knew that there were several locations and this is particularly true for contemporary works. The idea of pink space was thrown around during the creative development and the idea was very exciting for me.

I knew I wanted the girls to be dressed in school uniforms because it was important for the audience to relate to both Jesikah and Denise. Having such a highly stylised space gave me the opportunity to play with colour and adapt the colours of their clothing in a theatrical way. Denise in particular, I knew needed to blend into the background because that's the way Jesikah treats her as part of the furniture.

A designer does a series of two or three presentations. At this stage, you do a 'preliminary' or 'white card' presentation. The use of 'white card' refers to the set model being presented in white coloured card, and is the first opportunity you get to present your ideas to the group you will be working with, including; set construction, costume construction and stage management. Often designers will have picture references for set and costumes, and will know sizing of the set. It's the first opportunity you get to get everyone excited about your concept and to present your ideas.



February, 2014

After the white card presentation a designer must move onto finalising details of the design to present roughly a month later. For me, it was to finish painting the model and work on costume drawings for the show. To specifically choose what shade of pink was easy, because I knew that there's a certain type of pink that is sickly, and I wanted to be able to represent the underlying darkness of the play in that colour.

I arrived at the finish of the set during the painting of my 1:25 scale model, which was really mostly trial and error. I worked with different textures and finishes and eventually ended with an airbrush finish. I like this because of the airy, dream-like quality it gave the set.

There is no strict rule with costume drawings. I waver from production to production as to how I produce the drawings, often I hand draw with colour pencils and keep it very simple. On this show I used a combination of hand drawing and photoshop.





April, 2014

When rehearsals begin, so does the 'build' period for both set and costume. It is now time for the designer to act as liaison between the rehearsal room and workshop. It's a very collaborative period, one which I enjoy a lot. It involves a lot of running around and a lot of communicating which is crucial. Without a lot of time, dedication and collaboration, a designer won't be able to realise their design. You must manage your time between the rehearsal room, sourcing costumes with wardrobe and working with construction and your scenic artist to realise the final design.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

ENGLISH QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Jesikah felt the need to build an online profile?
2. The play switches between action and the vlogs. How different is the writing between the two styles?
3. In the end of the play, why does Jesikah attack Denise? What does this act illustrate about Jesikah's character?
4. What are the key themes explored in the play? Discuss using quotes and examples.
5. What kind of social commentary does the play provide about teens and social media?
6. What does *Jesikah* aim to teach the audience about 'mediated realities'*? How do alternate realities affect the character of Jesikah?
7. What message does the play portray about fame and celebrity? Discuss how this position is evident throughout the show.
8. Why is this play relevant for teenagers in today's society? What lessons are there to be learned from the downfall of Jesikah's character?
9. Why is the inter-textual reference to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* relevant to the play? Given the key themes in *Macbeth* are corrupting ambition, violence and tyranny and a key symbol is blood. Discuss the similarities with *Jesikah*.

NB*: *Mediated reality refers to the ability to add to, subtract information from, or otherwise manipulate one's perception of reality through the use of a wearable computer or hand-held device such as a smart phone.*

WRITING

For a teen audience, write a short story exploring the impact of narcissism and social media.

DEBATE

Debate the following statement;

"Teens should not be allowed to publish videos on Youtube"

DRAMA QUESTIONS

1. The set design is very simple allowing for videos to be projected. How well did you think the set design worked?
2. Most of the music references the 'Top 40' style of music. How effective is this in conveying the themes of the play? How did it continue to change throughout?
3. Discuss the use of Youtube projections in the production. How did this technique add to the development of the play? Discuss using example(s) from the show.
4. What is Jesikah's tragic flaw? Discuss how this affects her downfall throughout the play.
5. In the final scene, what is the significance of Jesikah's last video? What does this show to the audience about her character?

6. Analyse the characters in the play and discuss how they relate to the protagonist Jesikah.
7. Discuss the relevance of Jesikah's audition piece from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

*There we go.
 She should have died hereafter;
 There would have been a time for such a word.
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this pretty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time,
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.*

8. How does this piece from *Macbeth* add to our understanding of the play and the characters of Jesikah and Denise? Why do you think the playwright chose this excerpt?
9. What aspect of this production do you think a teen audience will relate best to? What techniques does the playwright use to help relate to the younger audience?
10. 'That's my clock. My mum bought it for me. I hate it... It's like... on the walls of the UN there'd be clocks with like London, New York, Berlin, Shanghai, Zurich and Jesikah's Bedroom. They all keep ticking and mine's just stuck at five past two.' Discuss this quote from Jesikah from Scene two. What does this show about her character? How does this demonstrate her perception of herself?
11. 'She grabs hold of Jesikah's arm. It's covered in blood.' What has happened in this scene? Discuss the significance of this scene in illustrating the key themes of the play.

DESIGN

Think about the characters of Jesikah and Denise and the costume design for each character.

Re-design their costumes depicting Jesikah and Denise as university students. How differently are their personalities reflected in their clothing?

WRITING

Write a duologue to follow the final scene between Jesikah and her mother. How does her mum react? Can Jesikah talk her way out of it?

OR

Create a monologue from Denise's point of view, explaining why she invented all of Jesikah's fans.

IMMEDIATE REACTIONS

| | production elements | performance elements |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| strengths | | |
| impact on audiences | | |
| weaknesses | | |

DESIGN ROLES

| design role | technique | What did this contribute to the performance? |
|-----------------|--------------|--|
| lighting | <i>one</i> | |
| | <i>two</i> | |
| | <i>three</i> | |
| music | <i>one</i> | |
| | <i>two</i> | |
| | <i>three</i> | |

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