state ed

Machu Picchu

by Sue Smith

By Robyn Brookes © 2016

DURATION APPROX: *2 hours & 20 mins (including interval)*
SUITABLE FOR: *Years 9 - 12*
DWS performance followed by a 20 - 30 min Q&A session

NOTE: *Frequent coarse language & sexual references*

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Cast & Creatives

Director	Geordie Brookman
Set & Costume Designer	Jonathon Oxlade
Lighting Designer	Nigel Levings
Composer	Alan John
Sound Designer	Andrew Howard
Assistant Director	Yasmin Gurreeboo

Kim/Nurse/Jen/Backup Singer/Guilt	Elena Carapetis
Paul	Darren Gilshenan
Marty/Elvis	Luke Joslin
Lucy/Pain/Backup Singer	Annabel Matheson
Gabby/Middle Toe	Lisa McCune
Lou	Renato Musolino

Writer

SUE SMITH
Sue is a multi-award winning screenwriter, playwright and script editor. Sue was Playwriting Australia's playwright in residence at Sydney Theatre Company in 2012. Her credits include ABC telemovie *MABO* (also screened SFF), winning an AWGIE and Queensland Literary Award, ABC miniseries *Bastard Boys* (won AFI Award for Best Screenplay in Television), feature film *Peaches* (nominated AWGIE Award) and SBS miniseries *RAN*, which Sue co-wrote with John Alsop and Alice Addison, receiving another AFI Award for Best Screenplay in Television. For State Theatre Company, Sue wrote *Kryptonite* (a co-production with Sydney Theatre Company), and the adaptation of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, our 2013 Adelaide Festival production.

Other credits include telemovies *Temptation* and *The Road From Coorain*, and, in partnership with John Alsop, ABC series *Bordertown*, and miniseries *The Leaving of Liverpool* (won AFI Award for Best Screenplay in Television) and *Brides of Christ*. Her first stage play *Thrall* was produced by Tamarama Rock Surfers in 2006 and *In the Violet Time* was showcased at the National Play Festival 2008. Sue's professional theatre debut, *Strange Attractor*, received a very successful premiere at the Griffin Theatre in 2009. Sue also wrote the libretto for *Rembrandt's Wife*, which premiered at the Victorian Opera, for which she won the 2010 AWGIE award for Music Theatre.

A NOTE FROM PLAYWRIGHT SUE SMITH

Date posted: 27 Aug 2015 Author: Sue Smith

A month before my play *Kryptonite* began rehearsals in 2014, I was diagnosed with non Hodgkin's lymphoma. *Machu Picchu* is the play I wrote as the result of that experience.

This play is not about cancer – it's nothing whatever to do with it. But it is, I hope, about what I discovered from having it. When you're dealing with a potentially life-threatening situation, you think about a lot of things. Things that often don't get a look in in your often lucky, affluent busy busy life. In fact, in that life you can forget that that luck, affluence, health and happiness can be finite. Indeed, you often forget that the life itself is finite. I did. I also came to understand something new: facing the possibility of death is one thing, but facing a life that is suddenly and shockingly compromised requires an entirely different type of courage altogether. It's that courage that I wanted to learn about, and that courage that I wanted the play to celebrate. Ordinary courage. Ordinary resilience.

One of the wise people I sought out during the cancer experience said to me, *"some people are afraid of death; some are afraid of life; some are afraid of both".* I'm still thinking about that, and wondering which of the three categories I belong to. I sought out lots of wise people during the experience – psychotherapists, pain and illness counsellors, Buddhist meditators. And then: I sought out people who are living with long term pain, illness and disability. I listened to their stories – often hilariously funny

stories – about how they go about their lives, how they celebrate what once they took for granted, and how they now know what they never knew before: what is really important.

'Mindfulness' and 'listening to your body' have become the current buzzwords of Western consumerism. They're no longer confined to Glebe massage shops and hippie flea markets, but have spread into the mainstream. Naturally, therefore, they have become marketing and money-making opportunities, as is always the case whenever a concept moves from the periphery to the centre. And yet, is it really possible for a week or two at an expensive health farm to change our lives? This play is an attempt to bite into this hugely slippery topic. And how better to do that than a love story. A love story between mind and body; self and other; illness and health; hope and despair; comedy and tragedy; between Gabby and Paul.

Machu Picchu is about people like me, and my friends – livers of comfortable middle class lives. It is both a grand love story, and a deeply ordinary one, as most love stories are. It's about two pretty individual, often very funny people who have loved each other for decades and who – in a single instant – are confronted with a shocking and visceral event that will shake the very essence of how they see themselves, their love, their future and the very meaning of their lives. The story looks at Paul and Gabby, at their best friends, and at their daughter in a 'before and after' way. What their life was, what it is now … and what it might become …

And so, it's about the profound … well, silliness … of ordinary middle class Australian lives and a deeply ordinary middle class Australian marriage. It's about the sticky and viscous details of a long marriage – the misfires, the agony and wonder of childbirth, the hypochondria, the clashing career trajectories, the missed opportunities, the five days gaining a "complete mind body spirit integration" at the ridiculously expensive health spa – the ordinary hilarity of being human. The love. Always the love. And the testing of that love. And, staring that test in the face, Paul and Gabby discover many things they never knew before …

I believe that we are all capable of greatness. Some of us paint the Sistine Chapel. Others of us find our greatness in the ways in which we confront the challenges life throws us. We find greatness in merely surviving, fulfillment in repainting the original vision of our lives with a new, more resilient, more profound vision. This play, I hope, honours the work of that repainting. And it concludes where it should: with a kind of quiet joy. As Paul himself says, *"the worst thing has happened – and I'm still here."*

For myself? I am blessed that my chemo treatment brought back my health and allowed me to get this play written and out there. That it allowed me to work once again with my friends at STC and STCSA. And to collaborate – now for the third time – with the gifted and humane Geordie Brookman.
– Sue Smith (August 2015)

Synopsis

It is night time and Paul and Gabby, a married engineering couple, are chatting to each other as they drive. Paul, the more neurotic of the pair, discusses the poet Dante and how he anxious he is about his middle toe. Gabby, more frivolous and carefree, who is driving, responds to her husband's profound ponderings more playfully, when a sudden tragedy transpires leaving Paul paralysed and Gabby physically unscathed.

How will this life changing moment for Paul and Gabby leave them as they question their relationship, their tumultuous new way of life and divulge moments from their past?

Plot

Paul and Gabby are driving home from five days at Serenity Hill. Paul is discussing Dante and Gabby begins to think that he's having a mid-life crisis or that their marriage is in trouble. Before either can respond there is a horrifying crash.

Gabby runs onto stage, running late to give a lecture on Machu Picchu. She is on automatic pilot, delivering her well-worn lecture. As she talks about the foundations of the place, she begins to interject her thoughts about what has just happened, *"Three days ago I drove into a tree, and walked away."*

Back at the hospital, Paul has returned from surgery. Gabby and their friends Marty and Kim are visiting. Kim, still very much in shock, tries to explain the extent of Paul's injuries. Paul wakes up and tries to remember what happened. He begins singing a song from their Uni days and they all join in. Lucy, Paul and Gabby's daughter enters carrying a backpack and rushes over to hug Paul.

Flack-back to the Engineering Revue after party where Paul and Gabby meet for the first time. Sometime later, Paul and Gabby are at home discussing marriage, which resulted in Gabby proposing. She leaves, only to return saying there's a pony in the front yard with a sign around its neck, *"It says yes."*

At the hospital Paul is in a traction device. He is beginning to hear voices; that of his middle toe and another voice of pain. The nurse comes in.

The past. Gabby is in labour and Marty and Kim come in to celebrate. Kim tells them she's pregnant.

Some weeks have passed and Paul is in rehab, sitting up in bed. Gabby enters and tries to seduce Paul, however, it is awkward and Paul has a bowel accident. Kim and Marty turn up and Kim announces that they're trying IVF again. Paul, embarrassed by his accident, yells at them to get the nurse.

Gabby visits Lou, the psychiatrist from their week at Serenity Hill. She talks about how scared she is about what's happened and what's left of him, of them. Back in the hospital, Paul is left on a hoist while the nurse attends to an emergency. Lou enters and says to Paul, *"When, if you want to talk, call me."*

Paul is left alone and he hears another voice in his head, this time Elvis singing *Suspicious Minds.* Gabby is at home with a cold. Marty is visiting, checking up on her. They talk about IVF before Gabby opens up about how lonely she is. She cracks onto Marty, who politely declines.

Lucy is feeding Paul in the hospital as they talk about her love life. He has a series of violent spasms and then asks Lucy to help him to end his life. *"You sent me to uni to be a doctor, Dad. That's about saving people, remember, not killing them. You can't ask me this."*

INTERVAL

Kim is visiting Paul in hospital. He sends her off to get help, but tries to get drugs out of her bag. Gabby enters and is livid with Paul.

Back in the past where Gabby and Paul are trying to Skype, but Lucy keeps interrupting. This moment shows the frustration of being apart and not being able to communicate properly. Gabby picks Paul up

from the airport, fearing that something is changing in their marriage, she tells him that she's booked them into a retreat.

Serenity Hill. Gabby, Marty, Kim and Paul are all at the retreat. Lou is running the session. He has quite a pronounced stutter and the boys begin to make fun of him. Becoming more agitated, Kim blurts out that Paul wants to move to Burma full time. Back to the car drive home, ending in the crash.

Gabby is talking to Lou. She reveals that she feels guilty, that she loves Paul and that she doesn't want to be his carer.

Marty, Kim and Lucy surround Paul celebrating Lucy's birthday. Gabby walks in, having forgotten. Kim announces that she miscarried again, but that's she's given up trying. Gabby tells them all that she's going to Machu Picchu and says to Paul, *"You need to think about whether you plan to stay with me."*

Paul is having a session with Lou, talking about the voices that he hears. Paul thinks that he's going to lose Gabby and voices his concerns at being a cripple.

Gabby is at Machu Picchu and writes/talks to Paul about what she sees. As she talks, Paul instructs Lucy to draw. He realizes that he's asked her to draw the plans for Machu Picchu, feeling a connection to Gabby as she's there. His drawing begins to take over from Lucy's. Gabby and Paul face each other and begin to really talk and they both realise that they need each other.

The final scene is back at their house with Paul in the pool. They are together.

Director

GEORDIE BROOKMAN

Geordie is the Artistic Director and co-CEO of State Theatre Company. Since graduating from Flinders University Drama Centre in 2001 Geordie has directed work around Australia, the UK and Asia. His State Theatre Company directing credits include *Betrayal*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, Footfalls*, *Kryptonite* (Sydney Theatre Company & State Theatre Company), *The Importance of Being Earnest, Little Bird, The Seagull, Maggie Stone, Hedda Gabler, The Kreutzer Sonata, Speaking In Tongues, romeo&juliet, Ghosts, Attempts on Her Life, The Dumb Waiter, Ruby Moon* and *Hot Fudge*, *Toy Symphony* (Queensland Theatre Company & State Theatre Company), *Knives In Hens* (Malthouse & State Theatre Company), Other directing credits include *Spring Awakening: The Musical* (Sydney Theatre Company), *Baghdad Wedding* (Belvoir), *Metro Street* (Arts Asia Pacific, Power Arts, Daegu International Musicals Festival and State Theatre Company), *Mendelssohn's Dream* (Adelaide Symphony Orchestra & State Theatre Company), *The City* and *Tender* (nowyesnow), *Marathon, Morph, Disco Pigs* and *The Return* (Fresh Track), *Tiny Dynamite* (Griffin), *Macbeth* and *The Laramie Project* (AC Arts).

His productions have won or been nominated for Helpmann, Greenroom, Sydney Critics Circle, Adelaide Critics Circle and Curtain Call awards. He has also worked as a producer, dramaturg, teacher, event director and curator for organisations including the Adelaide Festival, The National Play Festival, University of Wollongong, Australian Theatre for Young People, Australian Fashion Week and Queensland Theatre Company.

INTERVIEW WITH ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – YASMIN GURREEBOO

What is exciting about working on a new Australian play?
Working on a play that has never been produced before is incredibly exciting. Knowing that these words have not been spoken and that this story, in this way, has not been told, is a unique experience. A lot of the work presented on our main stages is imported, so it is a rare opportunity to get to work on a new Australian play and I think it is so important that we continue to make Australian work, which is a reflection of, and/or a response to how we are living now in our context.

I also want to add that for me, working on a new play, comes with a greater sense of responsibility in endeavoring to portray what the writer intends, as opposed to when working on a classic work, where you are more often than not, trying to find a new way to do it in order for it to resonate with contemporary audiences.

How crucial is it to have the playwright in the room during development and then rehearsals?
I wouldn't say that it is crucial to have the playwright in the room during rehearsals, but it is essential during the development of the play. How often a playwright is in the room, will be largely dependent on the working relationship between the director and the playwright. Sue Smith and Geordie Brookman have a fantastic relationship and I have thoroughly enjoyed the times that Sue has been in the rehearsal room with us. It has been useful having Sue on hand to clarify any character intentions and for any script edits that are needed.

Portraying spinal cord injury onstage would I imagine, restrict the blocking. What is the directing approach to deal with this?
Geordie's direction and Darren's portrayal is as truthful as possible to the presentation of someone with a C6 incomplete spinal cord injury (SCI.) However, at times, we have had to take a little poetic license with what the character Paul would be able to do at certain points after his accident. An example of this, is that someone with a SCI would actually be laid down initially after the accident and surgery, whereas that doesn't work on stage to have one of the lead characters lying flat for a large part of the show as the audience wouldn't be able to see him, so we have to change this slightly and have the actor sit up.

What do you think is the essential theme to the play and why?
Ultimately, this play is a love story but I think it highlights how disconnected we have become in our capitalist society. I think the overarching question is what is more important - career/ambition or people (relationships)?

What is the role of an assistant director and how does this supplement the director's role?
My role is to support the director in any way that I can so that they can achieve their artistic vision for the work. The role will vary depending on which director you assist. An assistant director will normally undertake the research for the play, work on scenes if the director asks them to, and look after the show during the season by giving notes to the actors.

For *Machu Picchu*, apart from the research and arranging meetings with specialists, Geordie also asked me to focus on keeping a list of any blocking that would need to be changed when the show moved from Sydney to Adelaide as the theatre spaces are very different, and track any changes/edits in the script and liaise with Sue about these when she's wasn't in the rehearsal room.

What is your role in terms of research for the play and why is this necessary?
Research is a vital component for any production, particularly when we are working in areas that the cast and creatives have no direct experience. Research allows us to present the characters and the world of the play as truthfully as possible.

For *Machu Picchu* significant research about spinal cord injury (SCI) was undertaken which involved visits to the Hampstead rehabilitation Centre; spending time with C6 quadriplegics, a nurse from Paraquad SA attending rehearsals and regular communication with specialist in SCI. As the majority of the characters in the play are engineers, the cast had a Q&A session with the head of engineering from Adelaide University.

Actor Profile

LISA McCUNE - Gabby
Lisa McCune is one of Australia's most popular and successful screen and theatre actors, earning an impressive collection of awards, including four Gold Logies for Most Popular Personality on Australian television.

Lisa's most recent stage credits include the Opera Australia and Gordon Frost Organisation productions of *The King and I* (Anna Leonowens) and *South Pacific* both breaking box office records at the Sydney Opera House. For the Melbourne Theatre Company, Lisa has appeared in Stephen Sandheim's *Little Night Music* and *Into The Woods, Urinetown, The 25th Annual Putman Spelling Bee,* and Sarah Ruh;'s *Dead Man's Cell Phone.*

Her commercial theatre credits include Gordon Frost's hugely successful tour of *The Sound of Music* in 2000 as Maria Von Trapp, *Guys and Dolls* (Ambassador Theatre Group) and *Cabaret* (Img) for which Lisa won a Green Room Award for her portrayal of Sally Bowles.

Lisa became a household name on Australian Television when she starred on *Blue Heelers* for The Seven Network. During her time on the scenes, Lisa also starred as Mary Abacus in Bryce Courtney's *The Potato Factory.* Other screen credits include five series of *Sea Patrol* for the Nine Network and *Blood Brothers* directed by Peter Andrikidis. For Network Ten, *Tripping Over* and *Reef Doctors* and on the ABC, Lisa has appeared in *MDA*, *Rake, Hell Has Harbour Views, It's a Date* and most recently, the operatic drama *The Divorce.*

DARREN GILSHENAN - Paul
After graduating from NIDA in '88, Darren began his career in Musicals before spending 10 years with The Bell Shakespeare. This is his first production for State Theatre Company. Sketch comedy followed with three years on Full Frontal, followed by some great TV series'; *Chandon Pictures, Derrick, A Moody Christmas, The Moodys, Top of the Lake, The Elegant Gentleman's Guide to Knife Fighting, Rake 3, Janet King, The Killing Field, Old School, Devils Playground, Maximum Choppage* and *No Activity*.

Film credits include; *Save Your legs, The Outlaw Michael Howe, the AACTA nominated Liebermans in the Sky*, and *Women He's Undressed*, which is currently nominated for Best Feature Length Documentary at the 5th AACTAs.

Theatre credits include *Strictly Ballroom the Musical* directed by Baz Luhrmann; *Absent Friends (Ensemble);* Arthur in *Mother and Son* alongside Noelene Brown and Piggsy in a festival version of *Monkey - Journey to the West*; *Elling, Don Parties On* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Fool's Island, Loot, The White Guard, Our Town, The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *Tot Mom* (Sydney Theatre Company). Darren has won a Best Actor Helpmann Award for *The Servant of Two Masters,* Equity Ensemble Awards for *The Moody's* and *A Moody Christmas*, and been nominated for Green Room, Sydney Critics and Glugg Awards.

Why Lisa McCune's new 'grown-up' role has many parallels with her life

March 6, 2016 by Elissa Blake
Sydney Morning Herald

Lisa McCune is returning to a dramatic stage role after 10 years of television and musical theatre work, which included playing Anna in *The King and I* and the vivacious Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific*. McCune says she is relishing the opportunity to step into a more "grown-up" role provided to her by Sue Smith's new play, *Machu Picchu*, at Sydney Theatre Company.

"This is the first role where I feel a lot of parallels with my own life now that I'm in my 40s," says McCune, who recently turned 45. *"You strive so hard to do certain things and when you get there, or you don't get there ... well, you have a life to look back on. I'm in a part of my life where I'm reflecting on the good and the bad. As an actor, I've often played the soubrette or the young woman who has all her life ahead of her. So this feels like a very grown-up role for me."*

In *Machu Picchu*, McCune is Gabby, a happily married, middle-aged engineer. Her life with husband Paul has been full of love, optimism and the daily stresses of work and parenthood. That is, until a catastrophic event shakes the foundations of their relationship and forces the couple to reassess how they live their lives.

"The play is a great love story," McCune says. *"But it also goes a lot deeper. It's about love and all the sh** that happens in a life."*

McCune says the role has affected her personally. *"I find bits of my dialogue coming out in my everyday life. One line is: 'Do you ever stop to feel the hot water on the back of your neck?' And Sue is right. Do we truly stop to notice that our kids are only going to be this age for a little while? Why am I rushing through my day to get to the end? It's so important to stop and notice things."*

McCune says she was drawn to *Machu Picchu* for two reasons: the chance to work with a writer on a new Australian play, and to play opposite Darren Gilshenan.

"Darren is a very creative and physical actor and I like that very much. He brings a sense of wonderment to his work and the ability to be direct. He's a great actor to study. I always think if you work with actors who are better than you, something is bound to rub off."

Gilshenan says the play is a drama but it also contains a lot of awkward comedy and silliness. *"The play takes you on a helluva ride with a lot of surprises. It will make people realise how bloody lucky they are and hopefully, maybe for a couple of days, not take things for granted and be in the moment."*

Characters

Gabby
Is an engineer in her mid-forties and married to Paul. She has been with Paul since she was a student in her twenties. She is messy and disorganised, often wearing odd shoes, but she likes knowing that everything is in place in life. Her proposal to Paul is evidence of this; *"Because I want to get on with stuff. Pay off the HECS. Get our careers moving. Organise having kids. Stop worrying about pregnancy and AIDS. And if we're married…well it gets one decision ticked off and out of the way."*
She has to confront her guilt after what happened and the reality of having to be a carer, particularly to someone who doesn't want to live.

Paul
Is an engineer in his mid-forties and married to Gabby. Meeting her in his twenties, he wanted to work in the field building sewage systems for Cambodian villages, something he's only achieved later in his career. He is scared of the 'unknown' worrying about what might happen, instead of living, or taking risks. Although he is in love with Gabby, he has become increasingly restless with the normal mundaneness of their lives and wants to move to Burma for 6 months to do more, not really considering Gabby's feelings.

Kim
Is married to Marty and good friend to Gabby and Paul. She has been desperate to have a baby, having five miscarriages and three rounds of IVF, with little success. Kim is a hypochondriac and carries with her all sorts of medications and, at often in-opportune moments, she is self-absorbed, talking about herself instead of facing the situation she's in. She feels that Gabby and Paul have had the perfect life and she's jealous of that as she's deeply unhappy, longing to fill the void within her.

Marty
Is married to Kim and good friend to Gabby and Paul. He is the comedian of the group, trying to lighten things with humour. He's scared of the IVF process and doesn't know how to reach Kim and her disappointment with not being able to have a baby. He loves his wife, but her quest to have a baby has driven a wedge in their relationship and he's not sure how to get it back.

Lou
Is a psychiatrist. We first meet him when the two couples are on retreat at Serenity Hill. Marty and Paul make fun of the place and of Lou, who has a stutter. Paul tells him, *"I'm sure you mean well, but to be honest you're a self-aggrandising w**nker with a Pollyanna complex."*
Gabby turns to Lou when she doesn't know where else to turn. She tells him of her fears and desire of going to Machu Picchu. Gabby hopes that Lou can help Paul put his anger and feelings into words.

Lucy
Is Gabby and Paul's daughter. She is a doctor, who returns to the hospital from her travels when she hears of her father's injury. Even though she understands his condition, she is devastated by what's happened to him. She is closer to Paul than to Gabby, spending her hospital breaks with him, talking about her love life and helping him to draw Machu Picchu.
Lucy vents her anger onto her mother when Gabby decides to go away, *"How can you be so wasteful? I thought it's too hard to live up to what you've got…..And now you're just going to chuck it away? All those years. All that love."* She blames her parents for being too perfect in their love for her lack of meaningful relationships.

Themes

"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself." - Rumi

LOVE
Paul and Gabby have an amazing love story of over twenty years. Their friend Kim says, *"An amazing love story that everyone's jealous of."* They met as engineering students at University. Throughout the play there are flashbacks of their time together, which help show their deep love for one another.

However, the car accident changes more than just Paul's ability to function. Gabby tells the physiatrist, Lou, *" I don't know what's left of him. I don't know what's left of us."* Understandably in this situation, Paul becomes angry, selfish and self-loathing to the point of wanting to end it all. Gabby tries to remain positive, but becomes increasingly unable to cope, *"You need to think about whether you plan to stay alive. And if you do, whether you plan to stay with me. And I'll do the same."* The only way she knows how to keep loving, is to leave and find herself.

Throughout the play, Paul is trying to remember what he was going to tell Gabby before the crash. He finally works it out, *"Gab. Don't die. Don't leave me. Don't ever leave me. Without you the world will be an eternal desert of ash."* They find a connection when Gabby is gone and they both realise their love for each other is eternal.

GUILT
Gabby has sessions with Lou to help with her guilt; *"Guilt. Every instant of every day. How much I love Paul. How much I hate myself."* She feels guilty about the accident, and that her dreams of visiting Machu Picchu are superficial, unlike Paul, who wanted to change conditions for people in third world countries. The worst feeling though, is that she can't make the big sacrifice of giving up her life for Paul. *"I can't be his carer. I don't want to be his carer. I love Paul more than life and I think I have to leave him."*

Paul also talks about guilt. He kept returning to Burma because he was guilty about not doing enough, *"My life is perfect and I feel guilty and so I must. I do good works therefore I am."*

SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS
Several of the characters are trying to find happiness. Paul uses a quote from Dante's poem "*In the middle of my life I found myself in a dark wood,"* trying to explain that he's feeling lost. Instead of spending more time with his wife he thinks that he needs to spend more time in Burma, as if helping others will make him happy. He tells his daughter, Lucy, *"I lost the plot and I don't know where. I thought I had it worked out – good job, good husband, good father. Strategy in place to deal with the inevitable mid-life crisis. I wanted more."*

Kim is also trying to find happiness, which she believes centres around having a child. She has been through many miscarriages and failed IVF attempts, putting off her life and placing a strain on her marriage, *"He just doesn't get it. Oh he tries to get it. Bless him, he tries. But he just doesn't feel the ache. So he says why can't we just enjoy our life the way it is. But all I want is what everyone else has."* She finally gives up after her last miscarriage and decides to enjoy life as it is. This is a real moment of letting go, in every sense, as she swears for the first time.

LIFE
Entwined with the search for happiness, is the theme of living. Paul always worried about the worst things that could happen; he never rode the pony in fear of breaking something and he was scared of heights and he took extra mosquito nets to Burma so he wouldn't get Dengue fever. It suddenly feels very ironic now that he can't walk. Lou tells him, *"Sometimes an accident, or a cancer diagnosis, or the death of someone you love can give you a new vision of how to live. You can either embrace that vision. Or not."*

Paul nearly gives up on everything, even himself; *"I can't live like this. I don't want to live like this. I don't want Gab to live like this,"* asking his daughter to help end his life. With the help of Gabby, Lucy, his friends and Lou he begins to see that he can be more again. The healing process begins as he draws the designs to Machu Picchu with his daughter.

Gabby realises that work got in the way of life, they obsessed about the small things and forgot to pay attention, "*Intelligent people and we forgot how to pay attention."* She goes to Machu Picchu on a whim, even though she hasn't trained for the long walk and atmosphere, but because she's always wanted to go, she decides that if she doesn't do it, she never will.

Sue Smith wrote this play after being diagnosed with cancer, *"I wanted to know what my body might have been trying to say to me. I still don't know the full story, but I think part of the answer lies in paying attention – because we don't. We're all too busy with stress and the hurry, hurry, hurry. The subtleties of what's going on in your spirit and your body are lost in the hurly burly of life. So I wanted to find a way to write about that. How can we imagine a new way of living?*"

LOSS OF FUNCTION & INTIMACY
Paul has become a C6 quad. With this spinal cord injury he has head and neck movement, but has lost the function of his limbs. *"Once he's out of intensive care and the spinal shock settles, he might get something in his shoulders, his arms maybe."* There is also the possibility of autonomic dysreflexia, "*the nerve communication from below the level of injury is stalled by the injury…signal prevented from reaching the brain…any disturbance below injury level can cause a massive buildup of blood pressure...causing aneurysm, stroke and even death."*

For Paul his life has changed completely. No longer can he feed or go to the toilet himself, pick his nose, walk or write. The frustrations of this manifest throughout the play. The play also talks about loss of sexual function and how this affects his manliness and his intimacy with his wife. Gabby tries to show that she's still interested sexually and brings a vibrator to the hospital, *"I want to show you that I still desire you."* They talk about how sex will be a different and new experience, Paul jokes about it, Lucy talks in medical terms and eventually Paul's inner voice reveals that he's scared of losing Gabby, *"You can't even make love. Why would she stay? Why would any woman stay?"* This loss of intimacy is a very real fear for many people facing injuries of this extent.

Metaphor

MACHU PICCHU
Machu Picchu is highlighted in many ways through the story of Gabby and Paul. They both went into engineering because of the design of Machu Picchu, but neither of them ever visited the place, blaming HECS debts, work and money. Gabby gives a lecture on Machu Picchu, explaining that the foundations are its secret to its longevity, *"It is built for eternity. Unlike just about everything else you and I will ever touch."* This idea of a strong foundation, relates to their love.

When Gabby realises that she can't take much more, particularly as Paul is talking about ending his life, she decides that it's time to face her fear and visit Machu Picchu. She booked in a hurry and didn't train for the physical feat of walking there, which she regrets once she's there. However, after feeling scared and alone, she begins to feel sacred and blessed.

Paul gets Lucy to draw the foundations from Machu Picchu. He needed the basic foundations to do that, and realises that he has these, *"Brain. Check. Eyes. Check. So let's work on the hands. The fingers won't work, so let's talk to the muscles in the shoulder, in your arms, your wrists. And the nerves that talk to them."* Gradually he sees Machu Picchu and Lucy draws his vision, before he is able to begin drawing himself. As he draws, he discovers his and Gabby's foundation is strong and if they can build on that, they can make it together.

SUSPICIOUS MINDS (ELVIS)
Paul begins to hear voices in his mind. Each one of these voices helps the audience to understand his inner thoughts and feelings, often in a metaphoric way. One of these voices is Elvis singing *Suspicious Minds.* These lyrics relate to how Paul's feeling and the fear of losing what he has.

We're caught in a trap
I can't walk out
Because I love you too much baby
Why can't you see
What you're doing to me
When you don't believe a word I say

We can't go on together
With Suspicious Minds
And we can't build our dreams
On suspicious minds

So if an old friend I know
Stopped to say hello
Would I still see suspicion in your eyes?
Here we go again
Asking where I've been
You can't see these tears are real
I'm crying

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Interesting Reading

MACHU PICCHU
(Meaning: Machu – old Picchu – peak)

Machu Picchu is located in the Cusco Region, Peru, 2430m above sea level. It is situated on a mountain ridge between the Huayna Picchu and Machu Picchu mountains. It was built at the height of the Inca Empire around 1450, as a Royal Estate for the Incas emperor, Pachacuti (1438-1472). However, it was abandoned over a century later after the Spanish arrival. Speculation remains on how the inhabitants died. The common theory is the outbreak of smallpox. The Spanish never found the site, so it was not plundered or destroyed, unlike other sites they explored.

Machu Picchu was re-discovered in 1911 by the American historian Hiram Bingham. He and his team excavated an estimated 40,000 artifacts from the site, which they took back to Yale, including; mummies, ceramics, silver statues, jewelry and bones. (An agreement has recently been made to return the majority of these items to Peru.) In 1964, Gene Savoy did further exploration of the ruins and revealed the full extent of the site.

In 1981, Peru declared Machu Picchu a 'Historical Sanctuary,' and in 1983 it became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2007 it was voted one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Over 30% of Machu Picchu had been restored, with many of the outlying buildings reconstructed to give a better idea of the original structures. Restoration continues today. Many tourists take the 2-5 day high-altitude trek on the Inca Trail to visit Machu Picchu.

Engineering on Machu Picchu
Built at the height of the Inca Empire, Machu Picchu features spectacular workmanship with polished dry-stone walls of quarried granite stone. The building technique called ashlar was used, in which blocks of stone are cut so precisely as to fit together without mortar. This technique reduces the effects of earthquakes saving the buildings from collapse. It is also estimated that 60% of construction was done underground, including deep building foundations and crushed rock for drainage.

It is an incredible feat of civil engineering, particularly as the building was done without draft animals, iron tools, or the wheel. Mystery still surrounds how the stones were moved up steep terrain and through dense bush.

In the 1990s American husband and wife team, Kenneth and Ruth Wright and Peruvian archaeologist Alfredo Valencia Zegarra brought attention to the site's engineering features. They revealed the site's water sources, collection and distribution systems, canals and fountains, and drainage and irrigation solutions; which created the water supply for the royal residence, temple, houses and terraced fields.

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DANTE ALIGHEIERI (1265-1321)
Dante was an Italian poet and philosopher best known for the epic poem, *The Divine Comedy.* At 12 years old, it was arranged that Dante would marry Gemma Donati, the daughter of a family friend, but Dante was in love with another woman called Beatrice. Dante's love for Beatrice was from afar and unrequited. Beatrice died unexpectedly in 1290. Five years later Dante published Vita Nuova (*The New Life*), which details his tragic love for Beatrice.

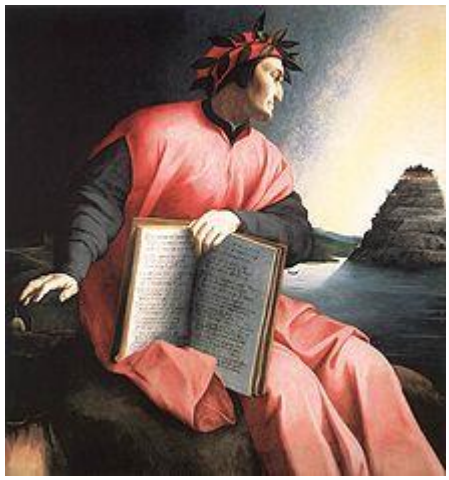
Dante began to immerse himself in the study of philosophy and the Florentine political scene. In 1302 he fell out of favour and was exiled for life by the political faction in power at the time. In his exile, Dante travelled and wrote, conceiving the poem, *The Divine Comedy*. By 1314, Dante had completed the *Inferno*, the segment of *The Divine Comedy* set in hell, and completed the rest shortly before his death in 1321.

The Divine Comedy
Is an epic poem by Dante which comprises sections representing the three tiers of the Christian afterlife: purgatory, heaven and hell to the path of righteousness. This poem was considered the greatest work of literature composed in Italian.

The poem is written from the poet's perspective and follows Dante's journey through the three Christian. The Roman poet Virgil guides Dante through hell (*Inferno*) and purgatory (*Purgatorio*), while Beatrice guides him through heaven (*Paradiso*). The journey lasts from the night before Good Friday to the Wednesday after Easter in the spring of 1300.

Inferno – Through this section, Dante and Virgil stop along the way to speak with an array of sinners with each circle of hell reserved for those who have committed specific sins. Dante spares no artistic expense at creating the punishing landscape. For instance, those guilty of treachery are buried in ice up to their chins, Satan is buried to the waist in ice, weeping from his six eyes.

Purgatorio - Virgil leads Dante in a climb up the Mount of Purgatory, through seven levels of suffering and spiritual growth (seven deadly sins), before reaching the earthly paradise at the top. The poet's journey here represents the Christian life, in which Dante must learn to reject the earthly paradise he sees, for the heavenly one that awaits.



Paradiso - Dante's beloved, Beatrice, represents divine enlightenment, as Dante is lead through nine levels of the heavens to true paradise, where God resides. Along the way, Dante encounters those who on earth were giants of intellectualism, faith, justice and love, such as Thomas Aquinas, King Solomon and Dante's own great-great-grandfather. In the final sphere, Dante comes face to face with God himself, who is represented as three concentric circles, which in turn represent the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The journey ends here with true heroic and spiritual fulfillment.

SPINAL CORD INJURY

The spine is one of the most important parts of the body, giving you structure and support. It enables you to stand and move freely, supports your head and the spinal cord. The spinal cord is an extension of the brain and runs from the neck to the lower back, with millions of nerve fibers transmitting information to and from the limbs, trunk and organs of the body.

A spinal cord injury happens if pressure is applied to the spinal cord, and/or the blood and oxygen supply to the cord is disrupted. Once it is damaged, it cannot be repaired. It is a traumatic and devastating experience for the individual and their family and friends.

There are two main types of spinal cord injury:

Quadriplegia or Tetraplegia

- A neck injury, resulting in the partial or complete paralysis of the upper and lower portion of the body.

Paraplegia

- A back injury, resulting in the partial or complete paralysis of the lower portion of the body.

The damage may be complete or incomplete.

- Incomplete injury - can result in movement and sensation abnormalities
- Complete injury – usually means total loss of movement and sensation, permanent paralysis

Spinal Injuries Fact

- Around 12,000 people in Australia today have a spinal cord injury
- 350 – 400 new cases are recorded each year
- 46% are transport-related injuries – 51% of these were motor vehicle occupants, 49% were unprotected road users, and 79% were motorcyclists.
- Other causes are falls and water related accidents.
- Men account for 80% of spinal cord injuries with more than half in the 15-34 year age group.
- In 2012-2013, 52% of spinal cord injuries resulted in quadriplegia.

Spinal injury can affect; airways, bladder, bowel, bones, stiffening of joints, reduced sexual function, skin sores and tears, spasticity where muscles contract or spasm and the body's ability to regulate body temperature.

ENGINEERING
An engineer applies scientific knowledge, mathematics, and ingenuity to develop solutions for technical, societal and commercial problems. They design materials, structures, and systems while considering the limitations imposed by practicality, regulation, safety, and cost.

Most engineers specialise in one or more engineering disciplines. Some examples;
- Civil engineering - structural and transportation engineering, including roads, bridges, dams and buildings.
- Materials engineering - ceramic, metallurgical, and polymer engineering.
- Electrical engineering - design of electrical systems and circuitry.

Engineers may also specialise in one industry, such as motor vehicles, or in one type of technology, such as turbines or semiconductor materials.

Engineers without Borders
Is a member-based, community organisation that creates social value through engineering. Their philosophy is based on a community centered approach, using our engineering knowledge and resources to bridge self-identified gaps in access to community health, wellbeing and opportunity.

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION (IVF)
Is a procedure in which eggs from a woman's ovary are removed and fertilized with sperm in a laboratory procedure. The fertilized egg is returned to the woman's uterus. IVF is one of several assisted reproductive techniques used to help infertile couples to conceive a child.

IVF has been used successfully since 1978, when the first child to be conceived by this method was born in England. Over the past 20 years, thousands of couples have used this method of ART or similar procedures to conceive.

Set & Costume Designer

JONATHON OXLADE
Jonathon studied Illustration and Sculpture at the Queensland College of Art.

Jonathon has designed set and costumes for Windmill Theatre, The Queensland Theatre Company, Is This Yours?, Aphids, Circa, Arena Theatre Company, Polyglot, Bell Shakespeare, Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Polytoxic, Men Of Steel, The Real TV Project, Terrapin Puppet Theatre, The Escapists, The Border Project, State Theatre of South Australia, LaBoite Theatre. Venues and Festivals including the Sydney Opera House, Brisbane Festival, Melbourne Festival, Adelaide Festival and Fringe, The Malthouse, Performance Space and the Queensland Art Gallery. For State Theatre Company, his design credits include *Pinocchio* and *Volpone.* Jonathon has illustrated the Picture Book *The Empty City* for Hachette Livre/Lothian, the *Edie Amelia* series by Sophie Lee, was Festival Designer for the *2010 Out Of The Box* festival and is Currently the Resident Designer at Windmill Theatre. Jonathon recently worked as Production and Costume Designer on Windmill Theatre's first feature film *Girl Asleep.*

He received 2005 Matilda Awards; Best Designer for *A Christmas Carol* and Contribution to Queensland Theatre, and 2009 Matilda Award; Best Designer for *Attack of the Attacking Attackers*. 2010 Greenroom Award nominated for 'Goodbye Vaudeville Charlie Mudd' for Best Design, 2011 Ruby Award for 'School Dance'. Jonathon was nominated for a 2013 and 2014 Helpmann award, 'Best Scenic Design' for 'School Dance' and 'Pinocchio' along with a Greenroom nomination for 'Skeleton' and 'I Heart John McEnroe'

Jonathon was awarded the 'Lord Mayors Fellowship Grant' to attend the PRAGUE QUADRENNIEL of scenography and Theatre Architecture.

INTERVIEW WITH DESIGNER – Jonathon Oxlade

1. **There is a lot of medical machinery in this production. What kind of research have you done into what is necessary and then how do you overcome the issue of this being represented onstage, without overcrowding?**

When researching *Machu Picchu*, some of the team visited a rehabilitation centre in Adelaide. There we saw in action some of the apparatus that is needed to assist moving, cleaning and generally helping people with C6 injuries get mobile. A C6 injury is a quadriplegic injury, which usually means paralysis from the chest down. At the rehabilitation centre we meet patients with this injury, and nurses that assist them. Everyone was very welcoming and keen to talk about experiences, so we had a pretty solid base for what was included in the hospital room. Weighing up what is needed in the script and what is needed to 'sell' the hospital room was always tricky.

2. **What are the main challenges in the set design for this piece?**

This show has to tour to two very different theatres. One is a studio space which has audience on three sides of the set. The other is a traditional Proscenium Arch stage, which people sit in a raked auditorium front on. Making the set work for both of the spaces in Sydney and Adelaide was a challenge. Moving dimensions by millimetres to make sure the set sits well in each space, and that all of the audience can see, means some detailed and precise plans are needed.

3. **The projection elements towards the end of the piece are written into the stage directions. How seamlessly did the fit into your design?**

The projection idea is linked to the text in the script. Gabby and Paul are giving us information through the text, which we then translated this into a moving image. We worked with a projection artist to map the wall and floor, this helps us to make sure the art that we make will fit in the set. Hopefully it looks integrated into the space.

4. **Lighting seems to play an important role in your design. What is the process of working with the Lighting Designer and how can this relationship enhance your work and the atmosphere you're trying to create?**

Nigel, the Lighting Designer and I, spent a bit of time in rehearsals talking about my set materials and colour choices and his colour and look choices. This communication is fundamental to creating a cohesive look on stage. We also talked about where lights will be, if they are in the set or behind panels. Then with the builders, we find secret spots for the lights and build them into the set design/structure. Nigel and I also continue our discussion throughout the rehearsal process, about what things will feel like and the mood of scenes.

5. **Even though your design is ready for the beginning of rehearsals, there are often elements that change. Can you discuss why this happens and the challenges that it presents?**

Theatre is never really finished until opening night, and even then a show continues growing until the end of the season. I have toured shows for up to 2 years and the core of the show stays the same, but small things morph and better things replace them. That's the beauty of live art, unlike film, the pictures can be improved every time you re-visit the work. Even in rehearsals if we plan on using an effect or an element, it may get cut. Always being prepared is best.

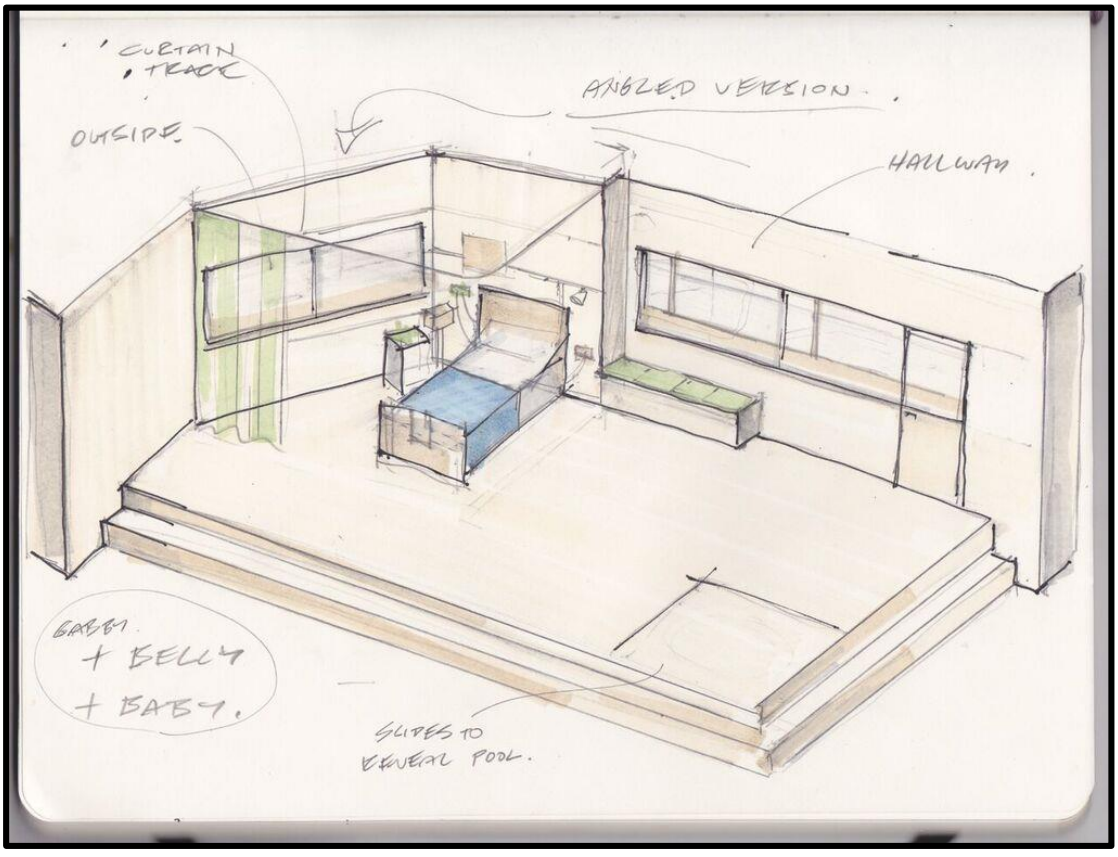
Set Design

The play, *Machu Picchu* goes back in forth in time, showing memories of Paul and Gabby's life together. Due to Paul's injury and the medical devices needed as part of the play, the space needed to represent many different locations, without removing all these for each scene change. However, it also needed to keep the theatricality, and not be stagnant in style. Therefore the challenge was to start with a base location over which, visual filters can be added to change the look for various scenes.

The main area of the stage is Paul's hospital room with two walls across the back. It is clean, simple and stark like a hospital and a curtain draws across to disguise the medical equipment behind. In front of this curtain is neutral space. In this space the house, car and retreat are all played out. There is also a small area downstage that opens up to reveal the backyard pool. The front of the stage will come out over the proscenium arch.

The walls at the back provide areas for Paul's hallucinations to take place. The lighting here becomes crucial, to creating opaque windows where we might see Elvis, his backing singers or pictures representing the voices in Paul's head.

The white walls also provide a great area to project onto. Towards the end of the play, Paul begins to visualise Machu Picchu and gets his daughter to draw the architectural plans for them. As she draws, these drawings begin to appear on the floor and then the walls. It starts simply with a few lines, before building into the structure of Machu Picchu. These change from being technical, to more emotional with splashes of colour eventually forming Paul's own image of himself, which represents his acceptance of what he has become.



Costume Design

The costumes are all contemporary splashed with pastels and warmer tones. Simple elements of the costumes become the base, with pieces that can be added during scene changes to create a different effect. Below are the sketchings of Paul's hospital gown and the shirt that he adds for the flash-back scenes. Gabby is conservative in her dress with a basic shirt and pants and practical shoes and a jacket when in Machu Picchu.

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Essay Questions

ENGLISH

1. Why do you think Machu Picchu was used throughout the play and how is it a metaphor for Paul and Gabby's life together?
2. *"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."* – Rumi. How do you think this quote relates to the play *Machu Picchu?*
3. When asked why we need to hear Australian stories, Sue Smith replied, *"It helps us understand who we are and our view of the world, and how it's different from anyone else's."* Discuss this statement in relation to Machu Picchu.
4. When Gabby is in Machu Picchu, she talks about a tiny little Chinese woman and a boy who got up and danced on the roof of the Andes while she was there. Why do you think this story is told?
5. The playwright, Sue Smith, uses the techniques of flashbacks to recall the past throughout *Machu Picchu.* Explain whether you think this is an effective technique by providing examples.
6. Discuss the fear of a life not lived that is presented in the play.
7. Compare and contrast the characters of Paul and Gabby with reference to their coping strategies.
8. In what ways is this play about guilt? Discuss with reference to certain characters and scenes.
9. Discuss the role of Kim and Marty and why they are essential to the narrative.
10. Describe Kim's character and the effect she has with her emotional outpourings. Why do these moments deepen the impact of the play?
11. Despite the emotional intensity of the play, there are moments of humour. What role does humour play in their piece and what it is purpose?
12. Look at the words to the song, *Suspicious Minds* and discuss them in reference to the play.

DRAMA

1. Why do you think the voices in Paul's head manifested themselves onstage? What was the purpose of this and how effective was its application?
2. How did the director, Geordie Brookman, convey the changing of time throughout *Machu Picchu.* Discuss.
3. Describe the importance of the projection at the end of the play. What does it represent?
4. How does the lighting delineate the scenes from the present to the past and what design techniques helped create the various moods throughout these scenes?
5. Think about the set design for the production. How was the set used effectively to:
    - Support the text?
    - Emphasise themes?
    - Draw focus to emotions?
    - Provide a space for the actor?

WRITING

1. Write a letter to your older self, telling them your dreams and aspirations for the future. Include places you want to visit, people you want to have in your life as well as your ambitions.
2. Contemplate a world where you can no longer walk. Write a poem, diary entry or a letter discussing the things you miss.

DESIGN

Create your own set design for the *Machu Picchu.* Think about the limitations involved with portraying Paul, who is mainly in a hospital bed for most of the show and the flashback scenes.

Tables

	production elements	performance elements
strengths		
impact on audiences		
weaknesses		

design role	technique	what did this contribute to the performance?
lighting	*one*	
	two	
	three	
music	*one*	
	two	
	three	

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