STATE THEATRE COMPANY SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND FLINDERS UNIVERSITY PRESENT

# Jasper Jones

BASED ON THE BOOK BY CRAIG SILVEY ADAPTED BY KATE MULVANY



Study with State



#### **SYNOPSIS**

Set in 1965, Jasper Jones is a coming-of-age story narrated by 13-year-old Charlie Bucktin and taking place in Corrigan, a fictional small town in Western Australia. Charlie begins to investigate and challenge the world he has grown up in after he is visited one night by town scapegoat Jasper Jones. With an Aboriginal mother and a white father, Jasper is labelled a "half-caste" and is blamed whenever anything goes wrong in Corrigan. He approaches Charlie for help after finding the body of local girl Laura Wishart. Together, Charlie and Jasper dispose of Laura's body and attempt to discover who murdered her.

For more, watch the trailer for the show online: statetheatrecompany.com.au/shows/jasper-jones

#### DUNSTAN PLAYHOUSE / 16 AUGUST - 7 SEPTEMBER, 2019

RUNNING TIME Approximately 170 minutes (including 20 minute interval).

#### SHOW WARNINGS

Contains coarse language, adult themes, racism, theatrical weapons, references to violence and sexual abuse, and depictions of suicide that may be triggering to some audience members.

Those affected by the themes in the production can seek support from: Lifeline: 13 11 44 Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

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## Creative team



Craig Silvey WRITER



ADAPTATION



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Nigel Levings LIGHTING DESIGNER



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Mark Heuer sound design associate



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Ruth Fallon



Jennifer Innes VOCAL COACH



Tiffany Lyndall-Knight VOCAL COACH



James Smith CHARLIE BUCKTIN



Elijah Valadian-Wilson JASPER JONES



Roy Phung JEFFREY LU



Rory Walker MAD JACK / MR BUCKTIN / CLARRY



Rachel Burke



Emma Beech WARWICK / MRS BUCKTIN



Jess Nash STAGE MANAGER



Laura Palombella ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

## Adaptor's note from Kate Mulvany

It's a rare gift as a writer to be given the chance to adapt one of the nation's best-loved books. A gift... and a fearsome challenge. Because everyone has their own 'favourite bit' of Jasper Jones that is seared into their memory like they actually lived it. 'I hope you got the cricket match in!' 'Please don't leave out the superheroes – Batman is best.' 'How are you gonna fit the entire town of Corrigan on a stage?!' My own 'favourite bits' shift and expand every single time I dip into the pages of the book *Jasper Jones*.

Pulling apart Craig Silvey's masterful text has been an incredible joy. Both Craig and I hail from country Western Australia. We carry the sense memory of towns like Corrigan in our bones. The incredible characters that blow in and out, like an afternoon southerly. The pillars and politics of those small-town communities. The melting pot of cultures that call these pastoral-industrial dustbowls home, and gift their stories to wide-eyed, eavesdropping, bookish scribblers like me, Craig... and Charlie Bucktin himself.

We can learn the ways of the world from these small communities, these contained universes. They are a petri dish of the bigger picture. The ails of society are often magnified in small towns, but so are the cures. The shared experience of a community, of listening to each others' stories with an open mind and empathetic ear, is what these towns can do best and what we can all do better.

I don't want to go into what Jasper Jones is trying to say as a play. It's saying everything or nothing, depending on what you choose to hear. But for me, adapting Jasper Jones has been like taking a wander through my own childhood – the good parts and the bad – and realising just how much, and how little, things have changed. How far we have come and how far we still have to go. In the words of Jasper Jones himself: "we gotta get brave."

THIS DIRECTOR'S NOTE WAS WRITTEN BY KATE MULVANY FOR INCLUSION IN THE SHOW PROGRAM FOR FOR JASPER JONES. PHOTO: HUGH STEWART.

## Director's note from Nescha Jelk

The Australian landscape serves as a crucial character in the story of Jasper Jones. It is the landscape that my ancestors invaded 200 years ago, killing 90% of the First Nations people of this land in only 10 years. It is the landscape onto which my ancestors have projected their fears and innate sense of not belonging; it is a landscape in which women's bodies have repeatedly been found lying beaten and brutalised; it is a landscape that we have refused to share with others, resulting in adults and children being locked away and forgotten in detention centres abroad, and it is a landscape that my people continually bend and will into a European resemblance with fences, green lawns and white-dominated neighbourhoods. But, most importantly of all, the landscape depicted in this play is Jasper's place.

By seeing this story through Charlie's eyes, Craig Silvey and Kate Mulvany allow us to see things as they are through the fresh lens of a 13 year old child. With him, we get to see the things that don't make sense, the things that aren't okay, and with him we get to wrestle with the big questions he has about guilt, atonement, responsibility and violence.

Like Charlie, white Australia has a lot of growing up to do. Growing up is painful. It requires asking difficult questions, having uncomfortable conversations, taking responsibility for your mistakes, learning to share what you have, and learning to admit when you are wrong. But without this process, Australia will never truly move past its violent history and we will never move forward as a united nation.

For too long, the Jasper Joneses and the Jeffrey Lus and the Laura Wisharts of Australia have been tapping on our window, waiting for us to listen. The question I keep struggling to understand is: what is stopping us from doing so, when the benefits of a united Australia that has reckoned with its past is so clear? Through Charlie, we get to reach for things to be better.

# An interview with Nescha Jelk

## What is Jasper Jones? What are its key themes?

Jasper Jones starts with a 13-year-old boy called Charlie Bucktin in his sleepout room in a fictional town called Corrigan in Western Australia in 1965. Charlie is reading in the sleepout when Jasper Jones, who is the local outcast primarily due to the racism of the town, comes tapping on his window and asks for his help. This kicks off a whodunit story exploring racism in small-town Australia.

Jasper Jones is essentially a coming-of-age narrative. Through this framework, we're encouraged to look at that point where, as someone who is still growing up, you can choose to start asking those really hard life questions. You find yourself taking a fresh look at the world around you, seeing how things are and how they should be. Asking those questions can be really uncomfortable and can make you feel insecure as you start questioning the whole framework of society in Australia.

Craig Silvey, the writer of *Jasper Jones*, has this really great quote that basically says we can all become adults, but not all of us will grow up. To me, growing up means that you ask those tricky questions and have a look at the way the world around you really is, as opposed to sticking your head in the sand or living in a kind of fantasy world.

Craig extends these ideas to reflect on Australia as a nation. The 1960s, when the story is set, was a point where we had all these liberation movements and perhaps thought we had grown up. But he's asking, 'have we just become adults?' Because we have lot further to go before we truly grow up, even today.

NESCHA JELK IN THE REHEARSAL ROOM FOR JASPER JONES. PHOTOS: KATE PARDEY.



# What do you want the experience of *Jasper Jones* to be for the audience?

We see the story unfold through the eye of Charlie, who speaks to the audience throughout the play. I think young people instinctively notice things that aren't right or don't feel right, but we become way too used to those things. We learn to justify these things because questioning them makes us uncomfortable.

I hope seeing the story through Charlie's eyes helps the audience to get caught up in the questions he is posing and his journey of growing up. He's seeing his town, and Australia, for what it is, where things are and where they could be. I hope audiences feel included in this journey and that this results in helping all of us to question things and see them differently.

# How would you describe the role of a director in a theatre production?

The role of the director is really different depending on the director you ask, but for me the role of the director is the facilitator of the room. My job is to come in with the first direction - giving everyone the same goal, the same target in terms of what we want to explore, the conversations we want to open up with an audience and how we might want to do that as a starting point. Then it's about assembling the team of people you think would be best to help fulfil that task and getting them all in on that same page with you. From there, it's really just collaborating and hearing everyone thoughts but with the same goal were heading towards. So that, for me, is what the director's job is. There's a lot of steering, but a lot of listening as well – a lot of collaboration.

## A bit of background on Jasper Jones

Published in 2009, Craig Silvey's novel Jasper Jones was a public and critical success. As well as being shortlisted for numerous awards, the novel was the overall winner and fiction winner for the Indie Book of the Year (2009), joint-winner in the fiction category of the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards (2009), the Australian Book Industry Awards Book of the Year and Literary Fiction of the Year (2010), and the University of Canberra's Book of the Year (2013).

The novel has been translated into multiple languages and has been well-received internationally. It was selected by the American Library Association as Best Fiction for Young Adults in their 2012 list.

Kate Mulvany's theatre adaptation of *Jasper Jones* was first brought to the stage by Barking Gecko Theatre Company in Perth in 2014. It has since been produced by Belvoir St Theatre (2016), Melbourne Theatre Company (2016), Queensland Theatre Company (2018) and now State Theatre Company South Australia (2019).

The film adaptation of the novel was released in 2017. The screenplay was written by Craig Silvey and Shaun Grant, and the film was directed by Rachel Perkins. It stars Toni Collette as Mrs Bucktin, Levi Miller as Charlie, Aaron L. McGrath as Jasper, Hugo Weaving as Mad Jack Lionel, Angourie Rice as Eliza and Dan Wyllie as Mr Bucktin.

"We gotta find out who did this, Charlie. We gotta find out who killed Laura."

- Jasper Jones

CRAIG SILVEY. PHOTO: SUPPLIED.



CAST AND CREATIVES FROM *JASPER JONES* IN THE STATE THEATRE COMPANY REHEARSAL ROOM. PHOTO: KATE PARDEY.

## What next?

Our "What next?" sections include questions and activities based on previous pages. These can be used for individual reflection or as class exercises.

The play of *Jasper Jones* uses direct address, meaning the main character, Charlie Bucktin, sometimes speaks directly to the audience. What function do you think this style serves? Does it help the audience to connect with or understand the action? How did it make you feel? Discuss in pairs or small groups.

Research the term *bildungsroman*. How do you think this term might apply to the story of *Jasper Jones*? Write down your response, using examples and quotes to make your point.

## Supporting materials

#### Video interviews with Nescha Jelk

Links to these resources are under the Jasper Jones drop-down menu at: statetheatrecompany.com.au/education-program

WITH ELIJAH VALADIAN-WILSON (JASPER) + JAMES SMITH (CHARLIE)

## How would you describe Jasper Jones?

Elijah Valadian-Wilson: It's a coming-of-age story for one of the main characters, Charlie, whose growing up doesn't get to actually experience that until he comes into contact with Jasper Jones.

James Smith: It's not just a coming-of-age for Charlie, either. It's set at a time of great change in Australia, in 1965, and it's about a group of young people who are still forming their ideas about the world. It's about coming of age, as a country, as a town, and as individuals as the characters are realising what the world is all about, with all of its positives and negatives.

### Who are Charlie and Jasper?

Elijah: Jasper is a stoic character. He hasn't been given a lot of opportunities. He doesn't have a lot of help, except for Charlie. He is a very knowing character, he knows the world he's living in, he knows it's not going to be easy at all for him and he has to do whatever he has to do to survive.

James: Charlie is really different to Jasper. Jasper knows the world he lives in; Charlie doesn't. Whether it's right or wrong, Charlie really does rely on Jasper a lot for help processing this horrible thing they've experienced, and also the world in general. He looks to Jasper all the time, as an older kid, but also as someone he can tell just gets it. I guess lots of the story from Charlie's perspective is about learning.

## Could you talk a bit about these positive and negative aspects of Australian life portrayed in the story? How does the play balance moments of lightness and darkness?

Elijah: To me a positive aspect is that it shows you can always find something or someone out there to help you on your way. With Jasper, that thing or person is Charlie. The negatives are related to the time it's set in – it was a time of growth, but there are a lot of people in the town that haven't grown at all.

James: I've found that when you mention Jasper Jones people light up – it gives them a warm feeling. I think I understand that because there's an element of nostalgia in it. Those types of stories are popular at the moment, as well. There's obviously lots of links in Jasper Jones to the story of To Kill a Mockingbird, which is also about young people solving stuff within themselves and within their town. There are also modern day examples of those stories, like Stranger Things, that make people feel nostalgic. Jasper Jones fits right into that set of stories and I suppose that's where people's warm feelings come from. It's a good story, it's a good Australian story. When you actually sit down and watch or read it, it's far more complicated than that. There are a lot of stale attitudes, a lot of disappointment, people just letting other people down. But there is hope, as well. Like Elijah said, it shows that there are opportunities to find people in this world to help you.

# What do you want the experience of *Jasper Jones* to be for an audience?

Elijah: It's a heartwarming story, but it's also very raw. We want to try to get the people in the audience to feel the kind of reality it was back then – it wasn't all sunshine and rainbows.

James: Not only for them to realise what it was like back then, but the similarities between then and now. That era that the play and the book uses is just another way, another lens, through which to look at our own times. I want people to still maintain that warmth that they feel when they hear *Jasper Jones*, but I also want them to see its rawness.



## Cast Q&A WITH RACHEL BURKE (ELIZA/LAURA WISHART)

What is Jasper Jones? What do you want the experience of the play to be for an audience? Jasper Jones has a really beautiful way of looking at Australian culture and the things that we don't like looking at, and it does it both in a gentle and a confronting way.

I feel like watching or reading *Jasper Jones* is kind of like the experience of picking up a rock in the garden. You lift that rock up and there's all this stuff underneath that you weren't expecting. The space beneath is heaving and slimy and there's bugs crawling around. You can choose to drop it, turn away from it and be afraid of it. Or you can look closer at it or grapple with it. I think that's what Jasper Jones as a story does. It asks the audience to really look at our culture - both the culture that we've received and the culture that we choose to accept. The story invites you in and then takes you to a place of deep reflection on how we oppress or repress culture, both within ourselves and as a country.

The story of *Jasper Jones* is beautiful, but there are also insidious and ugly aspects. It kind of looks you straight in the eye, I think, and that's what I really love about the work.

#### Who is Eliza? How do you approach playing a younger character?

I haven't been a teenager for a while, but it's been thrilling and painful and hilarious returning to that feeling of being a teenager. In terms of becoming Eliza, I've been thinking a lot about how I felt at that age, the things that I felt empowered by, the things that made me feel really small, and the things that I really held onto as a teenager. I think when you're at that age you can really feel like you're much bigger than yourself, but you also don't really have any agency. In lots of ways you're incapable of lots of things – you can't drive, you don't have your own space, things like that. It's this really big wrestle with when you're really starting to come out into the world but you're really still finding your feet. You can see all of that reflected in the character of Eliza as she struggles to come to terms with what has happened to Laura.

PHOTO: KATE PARDEY.



#### Who is Jeffrey Lu?

Jeffrey is the best friend of Charlie and they're both kind of outcasts in their community. Jeffrey is a first generation Vietnamese Australian growing up in a small town that isn't used to having people who aren't white Australians. His character helps to lighten the mood of the play and he's involved in some of its funniest moments.

#### How do you go about building a character?

It really depends on the play, the style and the character. This play is quite naturalistic, except for the fact that I'm playing a 14-year-old boy. Outside of this role, there's a vampire character I play for my sketch comedy show and for that I use the style of Bela Lugosi, very over-the-top acting, to bring out the comedy of the character. It all depends on the style of the play, and then maybe using the words or themes to give you some inspiration.

#### What do you want the experience of Jasper Jones to be for the audience?

I hope people will be able to put themselves into someone else's shoes who has come from another country trying to have a better life in Australia. No one likes to be pointed out to be different, regardless of race or ability or anything else.

## How do you think the play, and the character of Jeffrey in particular, will connect with audiences?

I think the audience is going to know more about what it's like for either Indigenous Australians or Asian people, or anyone who has migrated to Australia. Every generation that is a first generation that comes to Australia feels whatever the cultural ties are, or how people get treated when they first come... It's kind of like the first day of school, you get checked out. Hopefully, people are going to learn what that experience is like.

## Action choregraphy AN INTERVIEW WITH RUTH FALLON

#### What is the role of an action choreographer in a theatre production?

I would say my role fits into two main parts. First and foremost, my job is to bring the director's vision to life. Second, to do it in a way that makes the actors feel safe, confident and happy in what they are doing.

## What sort of work have you been doing with the cast and creatives for this production of Jasper Jones?

My work with Jasper Jones has been a broad mix of action direction and choreography. Working with [director] Nescha Jelk and with the cast to find ways to express their story physically during certain moments in the script. I like to make things as collaborative possible. I like to really understand where the director is coming from and what the cast see and feel in their characters. This serves as somewhat of a roadmap, which tells me where to take things and how far to push the actors. I like people to feel challenged in their work, and encourage them to work toward better and better outcomes throughout their rehearsal process. While action looking good is incredibly important, I know how important it is for actors to feel good about what they are doing. To relax and make yourself vulnerable, show after show, is really hard without trust and safety. At the end of the day, it's a team process, and having wonderful creatives like I've had on *Jasper Jones* makes projects a dream to work on.

#### How did you get involved in action choreography?

It was a weird evolution really! I went to the Adelaide Centre for the Arts and trained as an actor for three years. Around the same time, I started training martial arts and stage/ screen combat as an extra skill. Over time, I fell in love with the martial arts as much as the creative arts, and slowly found myself being booked for work in both fields.

In recent years, the action choreography has picked up significantly. I think in today's climate we are searching more and more for a better conversation around consent in the creative arts, in this style of work.

## Exploring the characters

#### **CHARLIE BUCKTIN**

Charlie is the 13-year-old protagonist and narrator of *Jasper Jones*. With frequent asides to the audience, Charlie provides background information and personal insights that help audience members to connect with the play.

At the beginning of the story, Charlie is somewhat ignorant of the secrets and racist traditions present in the small town of Corrigan. He is also shown to be insecure and fearful of many things. Despite his fear, Charlie is curious about the world around him – he reads and finds out about other places and people, and he writes to help explain the world around him. His bookish nature sets him at odds with many of the other boys his age who value athletic ability over knowledge. He is also shown to have a strong imagination, as seen in the dream sequence with Eliza.

Over the course of the play, he gains courage and greater insights into Corrigan's workings and secrets. While Charlie realises he may never fully overcome all of his fears, by the end of the play he has learned to face them.

#### **JASPER JONES**

At about 15 or 16 years old, Jasper has had to grow up far more quickly than Charlie. Jasper's father is a drunk who does not look after Jasper; his mother died when he was young, but he does not know the circumstances of her death when the play begins. His father's neglect and Jasper's own mixed race background mean he has been exposed to the dark side of the Corrigan community from a young age.

He is often the town scapegoat and when he discovers Laura's body, Jasper knows he will be blamed for her death. Jasper shows stoicism and bravery in the way he copes with the situation; despite the fact that he was close to Laura, it is Jasper who takes care of her body while Charlie, who did not really know her, turns away. He displays a strong sense of justice as he fights to find out who killed Laura and confronts Mad Jack Lionel.



LEFT TO RIGHT: CHARLIE BUCKTIN, JASPER JONES & LAURA WISHART. DRAWINGS BY ANTHONY NOCERA FOR STATE THEATRE COMPANY.

#### MAD JACK LIONEL

Rumours about the reclusive Mad Jack Lionel are rife amongst the children and young people of Corrigan. It's said that he killed a woman. The kids are all afraid of him and the greatest act of courage one can commit is stealing a peach off Mad Jack's tree. Jasper blames Mad Jack for Laura's death. The rumours about him are later proven to be a warped version of the truth. He did, in fact, kill a woman, but it was in a car crash; an accident, not murder.

Upon confronting him about Laura's death, Jasper learns that Mad Jack is his paternal grandfather and the woman killed in the car crash was Jasper's mother, Rosie. Mad Jack had not approved of the marriage of Jasper's parents, due to Rosie's race. He later accepts Rosie and was driving her to the hospital when the fatal car crash occurred. Jasper's father never told Jasper about Mad Jack.

After this revelation, Charlie begins to see Mad Jack in a new light and they form a kind of friendship.

#### ELIZA WISHART

Eliza is the younger sister of Laura Wishart and is 13 years old. Like Charlie, she has an avid imagination and enjoys reading. After seeing the movie Breakfast at Tiffany's, she hopes to one day move to New York. She is witty and Charlie often feels nervous around her. She has a secret that she eventually confides in Charlie.

#### LAURA WISHART

While the audience never meets Laura, many other characters talk about her during the play. At 15 years old, Laura was a similar age to Jasper and the pair had a very close friendship. They had made a pact to leave Corrigan and promised they would not leave one another behind.

#### JEFFREY LU

Despite the racism Jeffrey faces due to his Vietnamese background, he is a hugely optimistic character, rarely letting the taunts and actions of school bullies and townsfolk get him down. At 12 years old, Jeffrey is slightly younger than Charlie and Eliza but is in their grade at school. He and Charlie often taunt one another in a friendly way, with Jeffrey often using vulgar language or swear words. He is a talented cricket player who skill and dedication eventually win him grudging praise from the Corrigan community.

#### **MR BUCKTIN**

Charlie's dad, Wesley, is a quiet, intelligent man who says little to his family, but seems to care for Charlie a great deal. Charlie is suspicious of what his father gets up to in the spare room, but later finds out he is trying to write the great Australian novel. Mr Bucktin displays courage and a sense of justice when he breaks up a physical fight between Mr Lu and four drunk men. He is shown to be generally progressive in his thinking towards the Vietnam War and issues of racism.

#### **MRS BUCKTIN**

Charlie mum, Ruth, is an resentful, frustrated woman who is still mourning the loss of the daughter she miscarried. Mrs Bucktin is from the city and hates life in the small town of Corrigan. She is quite hard on Charlie. He later finds out that she has been having an extramarital affair. Shortly after Charlie's discovery, Mrs Bucktin leaves Corrigan.

#### What next?

Pick a character from Jasper Jones. What are the key differences between the chosen character and the other characters in the story? List their physical features, their emotions and what they are aiming for in the story. Come up with ideas about their speech, posture, mannerisms and gestures.

What do you think the character most wants to say in the play, but struggles to express? For example, Mrs Bucktin's grief over the daughter she miscarried or Jasper's sadness over the death of Laura. Write a diary entry from the point of view of your chosen character, expressing those things they have been bottling up. Keep in mind the kind of language they use - any slang, nicknames, etc.

Perform the diary entry as a monologue. Remember to keep the list of their physical characteristics, emotions and other mannerisms in mind in your performance.

### Supporting materials

#### Video interviews with cast An illustrated guide to Jasper Jones

Links to these resources are under the Jasper Jones drop-down menu at: statetheatrecompany.com.au/education-program



#### How would you describe the design for Jasper Jones?

My design style for Jasper Jones is magical realism. The visual elements are clearly based on the Australian landscape and focus on the power of that natural landscape in stark contrast to the impermanence and smallness of the town. We have naturalistic elements, such as trees, but they have been stylised and desaturated to give a sense of gothic Australia.

It is important for me that Jasper's grove is the heart of the design. The grove is therefore ever-present, as is the memory of Laura's Wishart's hanging body once it has been discovered. This is the heart of the story and the origin of the mystery as it unfolds.

I am trying to create a feeling of the majestic awe found in the Australian bush, but also a sense of eeriness. The gum forest needs to feel as if it unfolds to infinity beyond the tiny town of Corrigan. It is at times ominous, a sinister backdrop to the town.

#### How does the design connect with the themes of the show?

The design connects to the theme of the tension between white Australia and the Australian natural landscape. There is uneasiness in the juxtaposition of white settlement and the bush. The ghost gum forest echoes and repeats the image of Laura's white nightdress, and is a reflection of the exploration of innocence and coming of age. The imposing presence of the embankment and forest is connected to the idea of guilt as an ever-present burden.

### "Jasper appeared. Out of nowhere. He just slipped through the wattle like he was returning home..."

- Eliza Wishart



#### What kinds of techniques or processes did you use to create the design for this show?

The design evolved as we explored imagery of the Australian bush and the importance of that landscape became increasingly resonant for the play. There is a stylisation in the visual representation of the houses in the town, allowing a speed of transitions and a sense of impermanence of the manmade elements.

We talked a lot about embracing the theatrical conventions of the text – the direct address narration from Charlie and the stylised journeying through the environment were important factors in deciding on the shape of the world we created.

The textures in the design are very layered and varied and became very important in the refinement of the design elements. We draw on the idea of peeling bark, which could also reflect a domestic peeling of paint or wallpaper, and a sense of fallen detritus becoming the texture for the ground. The exposed tree roots of the embankment also suggest the clinging of a wet nightdress to a body and echo the image of Laura being lowered into the dam. The shock of the yellow 'wattle', shrouding the grove, is an important contrast to the gothic feel of the colour palette for the rest of the natural environment.

We have drawn on some technical elements to quickly transform the lower stage area into the dam – we are using hidden jets to quickly pump low sitting fog into this zone so that we can give a sense of the body of water, which dissipates quickly as we move into the next scene.

The design allows for very interesting and stylised lighting, the trees are very favourable to side light, and much of the time-of-day storytelling will be achieved through changes in light.

## Costume design

The costumes for *Jasper Jones* are naturalistic, meaning they reflect the time and setting of the play – small-town Australia in the mid-1960s.

DESIGN DRAWINGS: AILSA PATERSON.







While the term 'magic realism' usually refers to fiction, it's can also be applied to the set design of *Jasper Jones*. Magic realism, also called magical realism or fabulism, presents a realistic world setting and adds elements of fantasy.

Much of the design in *Jasper Jones* is realistic – the design elements indicating Charlie's sleepout with its louvered windows, the entry of the Lu family's home, the landscape and trees, and the costuming. But there are also strong elements of fantasy – the ghostly nature of the trees, the use of only partial set pieces indicating place and, most significantly, the fairy lights used in the sheets of 'wattle', which are made of yellow pom poms.

By mixing elements of realism and fantasy, the design of *Jasper Jones* echoes the way many young people see the world – as full of possibility and magic, but also of danger and the unknown.

"I've never been so scared as I am right now, but I follow Jasper on. Branches and shrubs snap back at me. The river disappears then reappears again. The paperbarks and floodgums look like they want to snatch us up..."

- Charlie Bucktin



THE CAST OF JASPER JONES. PHOTO: MATT BYRNE.

### What next?

After watching the play, what are the elements of the set design that stood out to you most? Why? How did they connect with the themes of the story? Discuss your responses in small groups or write them down. Be specific about how and when the different elements you noticed were used and think about whether they changed over the course of the play.

For those who have read the book of *Jasper Jones*, think about the following questions: How does Craig Silvey portray the Australian landscape in the book? What about the small town of Corrigan, its streets and homes, etc.? How does Ailsa Paterson's design differ from the book? Do these differences help to enhance the themes or do you feel she's missed something?

There are a number of different settings in which the play takes place. List each of the different settings. How does the set design help the audience to understand the difference between these locations? How does the set design of these locations change throughout the play, if at all? What feeling does each setting evoke in the audience (e.g. comfort, fear, etc.)? Write down your responses then talk in pairs about the different things you may have noticed?

# Sound design

What is the role of a sound designer? How does this differ from the role of a composer? The role of a sound designer is twofold. These two parts are the technical design and the artistic design.

The technical design consists of choosing of all the speakers, microphones and all other equipment that will be used for a production. This includes doing technical drawings for where the speakers are in the theatre, measuring all cabling lengths, supplying the weight of any equipment that is flown, and all other speaker information data, such as where the speakers are pointing and their time relationship to other speakers within the system.

The artistic design is sourcing or creating sound effects, atmospheres, pads and drones that will be part of the aural environment, along with any music that is composed by a composer or licensed from a pre-existing source. The designer is responsible for the entire aural environment for a show.

The composer writes and records the music for a show and sometimes also creates the pads and drones as well.

#### How did you get into sound design and composition?

I got into sound design at university when I started a theatre company with a bunch of friends that were studying at the Flinders University Drama Centre. I was both composing and designing all of the shows we were doing and worked my way up over the years to my current position as Resident Sound Designer at State Theatre. I also worked as a sound engineer at the Adelaide Festival Centre for 12 years, which was incredibly helpful for the technical design aspect of being a sound designer.

With composing, I started playing music at a young age and played in bands. But I decided early on that I wanted to keep my hearing so I moved away from playing in rock bands and concentrated more on being part of a storytelling community.

## What processes or techniques do you use to create the sound design and to compose for a play?

In the first instance, I demo some tracks for the director until I find a vibe that they are happy with.

After that, I spend a few weeks in the studio writing and recording to try and have most if not all of the music ready to be slotted into the show from week one of rehearsals.

The rest of the artistic design comes after I have finished the technical design and have spent time with the script in the rehearsal room so I can start building a world in which the actors can inhabit.

On *Jasper Jones*, I have had an Associate Sound Designer, Mark Heuer, who has been an incredible asset to me in realising the artistic vision for the show.

## Have you drawn inspiration from any particular artists or ideas to create the sound design for Jasper Jones?

I have drawn on several artistic resources for inspiration for Jasper Jones, these being Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, Godspeed, You Black Emperor and The Dirty Three. Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross's film scores are a constant source of inspiration for me as I love to combine synthesisers and traditional instruments in a similar way.

#### How would you describe the sound design/composition for Jasper Jones?

The sound design for *Jasper Jones* is based around a rural Australian ambience aesthetic combined with music, which produces a sense of foreboding of both the human psyche and a brutal landscape.

## Diegetic & non-diegetic sound

The sound design for Jasper Jones features both diegetic and non-diegetic sound.

Diegetic sound is noise whose source is found on the stage or in the action of the play and is more naturalistic. There are a number of diegetic sound effects used in the play, particularly around water in Jasper's place.

Non-diagetic sound is added in and is not drawn from the action on stage - this is the case for the atmospheric music sound used throughout *Jasper Jones*, particularly the sequences with visions of Laura's body.

## Lighting design AN INTERVIEW WITH NIGEL LEVINGS

#### What is the role of a lighting designer?

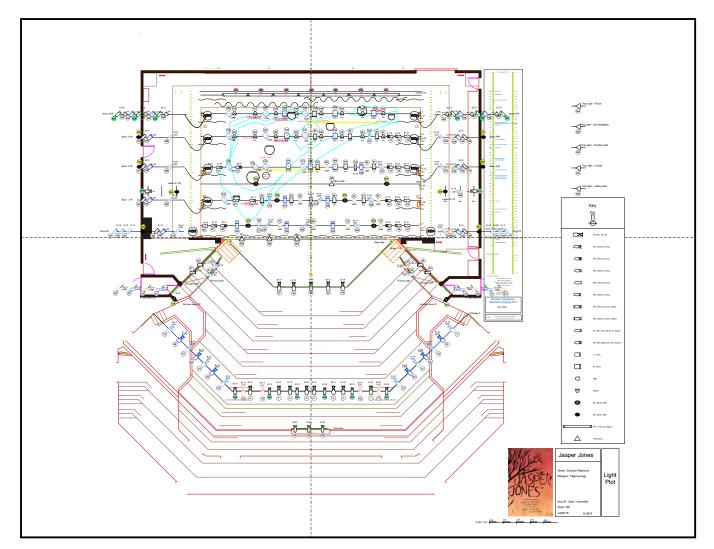
The primary role of the lighting designer is to make the actors visible in a dark theatre. Beyond that it is important to not make a liar out of the actor, so if the actor says, for example, 'what a nice evening it is', then the lighting designer must make the stage look in such a way that the audience can believe the actor. The lighting designer has to search the text closely to map in lighting terms such things as times of day. The lighting designer also searches for ways to make the lighting design trace and support the emotional arc of the play.

#### How would you describe the lighting design for Jasper Jones?

The lighting for Jasper Jones has to swiftly enable the transition from place to place. In a novel, the images of place are created in the reader's imagination; in a film, the real place and time of the setting can filmed; on the stage, we have to find the lighting images that trigger the audience's imagination so they can understand where we are at any one time.

#### How does the lighting design connect with the themes of the show?

The lighting controls how we see the actors. Are they lit in a warm or a cold way, is the lighting flat (straight in from the audience's angle of view) or sharp (at a strong angle across the audience's angle of view)? Is it bright or do we struggle to see them in the dark? Does the lighting capture the lyrical beauty of the bush that Jasper loves? Is it scary when they first see Mad Jack's house? Do we sense how things shift very serious when Charlie with Jasper dispose of the body?



THE LIGHTING DESIGN DRAFT FOR JASPER JONES IN THE DUNSTAN PLAYHOUSE. DESIGN: NIGEL LEVINGS.

#### What process or techniques do you use to create the lighting design for a play?

The lighting process starts with a close reading of the text in order to extract all the lighting requirements dictated by the written play.

Next there is a process whereby the lighting designer discusses with the director and the set designer how they plan to approach the play. You gather the information about the theatre space you are using, the equipment available, the budget if any for extra lighting equipment.

From all of this information, a drawing of the lighting rig is prepared. The lighting rig is a bit like an artist's palette - it is an array of options of lighting angles and colours that the lighting designer will use to create the individual lighting pictures. These are called cues, and the lighting designer will decide where each of these pictures or cues fits in the sequence of the play. The cues are set to move smoothly from one image to another. This process is polished and refined in the course of on-stage technical and dress rehearsals.



JAMES SMITH, EMMA BEECH AND RORY WALKER IN REHEARSALS FOR JASPER JONES. PHOTO: KATE PARDEY.

## What next?

Choose a type of design to focus on - set, costume, lighting or sound. Think about what sort of direction you might take with your design.

Would it reflect the original setting of 1960s small-town Australia? Or would you choose a different time or place to connect with the themes? Or something more abstract? How might you use elements to indicate location changes for different scenes?

Think about the feeling you are trying to create with your design. List how the elements you have chosen might reinforce this feeling. How might you change these elements as the play progresses?

Create a mood board for your design - focus on a particular scene if that is helpful. For set, costume and lighting design, find or draw images and diagrams related to your vision. For sound design, find sounds or songs to create the feel you are looking for.

In writing or in a presentation, explain why you have made these choices and how your design connects with the story and themes of Jasper Jones.

## Historical context

## The White Australia policy & Vietnamese immigration

Many people of non-European background were prevented from immigrating to Australia from the early to mid-20th Century. The term 'White Australia Policy' was used to encapsulate the many policies that historically prevented migration from non-European countries. The Australian government began dismantling many of these policies from 1949.

In 1966, Harold Holt's Liberal government changed the White Australia Policy to increase the ability of non-European migrants to move to Australia, including refugees of the Vietnam War. In 1973, Gough Whitlam's Labor government implemented amendments to prevent racial aspects of immigration law being enforced, ending the White Australia Policy. The Racial Discrimination Act of 1975 made the use of racial criteria for any official purpose illegal, including in the area of immigration.

Prior to 1975, there were fewer than 2,000 Vietnam-born people living in Australia.

#### What does this mean in Jasper Jones?

The Lus would have been one of very few Vietnamese families living in Australia in 1965. It is likely that even without the Vietnam War they would have been subject to racism, but its advent must have made this even more difficult. They are also feeling the effects of the war personally, as seen when their family members in Vietnam are killed.

The Lu family speaks Vietnamese at home and Mrs Lu speaks very little English. Mr Lu seems to seek acceptance from the Corrigan community, taking pride in the appearance of his home and garden. However, when he is beaten up and his garden is destroyed, Mr Lu appears to feel defeated.

As a second generation Australian, Jeffrey is caught between the culture his parents were born into and the one into which he was born.

## Australian involvement in the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War, known in Vietnam as the Resistance War Against America, was a conflict that took place in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia from 1 November 1955 to 30 April 1975. The war was officially fought between the communist North Vietnam, who was supported by the Soviet Union, China and other communist allies, and South Vietnam, who was supported by the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Thailand and other anti-communist allies.

Australia's involvement began in 1962 when advisors were sent to Vietnam. Almost 200 Australian military personnel were in Vietnam by the end of 1964. The Australian Government introduced conscription for compulsory military service for 20-year-old Australian males in November 1964. The conscription method was a lottery draw based on dates of birth. These young men were obligated to complete two years of full time, continuous service in the military. Australian combat troops were sent to Vietnam in 1965.

The conscription of young men drew opposition from Australian Army personnel and the broader community, and this opposition increased over time. However, many members of the community continued to support Australian involvement throughout the war.

The withdrawal of Australian combat personnel began in November 1970. Approximately 60,000 Australians served in the war, with 521 killed and over 3,000 wounded.

#### What does this mean in Jasper Jones?

Australian involvement in the Vietnam War would have been increasing at the time Jasper Jones is set in 1965. Even in a small town like Corrigan, there may have been 20-year-old men conscripted to serve.

It's difficult to know what the members of the town might have felt about the Vietnam War, but people in regional areas were mostly supportive of Australia's involvement.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, many Australians feared the spread of communism. This fear meant that public opinion in Australia strongly supported involvement in the Vietnam War.

Anti-war sentiment began to escalate in Australia in 1967, and in 1970 over 200,000 people took part in moratorium marches to protest the war. However, opinion polls taken at this time found that over half of the respondents said they supported the national service and slightly less than half said they did not want Australia to pull out of the Vietnam War.

It is likely, then, that in 1965 most of the Corrigan community would have supported Australia's participation in the war, despite the fact that local young men may have been conscripted.

Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War would also have heightened tension and contributed to the racism experienced by the Lu Family.

## The Half-Caste Act & the Stolen Generations

The term 'half-caste' was commonly used in 19th and early 20th Century Australia to describe people who had one white parent and one Aboriginal parent. The term was used in legal documents, as well as in common cultural discourse.

The word 'caste' comes from the Latin word 'castus', meaning 'pure', and a Portuguese word derived from the Latin, 'casta', meaning 'race'. Therefore, the term can be seen as meaning 'half-pure' – those who were deemed half-castes were considered as being less worthy and good than wholly white people. It is a derogatory term and should not be used to describe anyone of a mixed race background.

In 1886, the name 'Half-Caste Act' was given to a series of government acts allowing the seizure of half-caste children and their forcible removal from their parents. The theory was that by removing these children they would be provided better homes and opportunities than the majority of the Aboriginal population. This process was based on an assumption of black inferiority and white superiority. Children were thought to have a better change of 'assimilating', meaning 'becoming like', and adapting to the white culture. They were taught to reject their Indigenous heritage.

The majority of 'half-caste' children were removed between approximately 1905 and 1967, coinciding with the White Australia Policy. However, some children were still being taken during the late 1960s and 1970s. These children, as well as other children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were forcibly removed by the government, are referred to as the Stolen Generations or Stolen Children.

#### What does this mean in Jasper Jones?

As the child of a white man and an Aboriginal woman, Jasper Jones is called a 'half-caste' by many in the town. This term was still in common usage in the mid-1960s and children of mixed race were often looked down upon.

Due to the town's racial assumptions about Aboriginal and mixed race people, Jasper is a convenient scapegoat, meaning he is often blamed for the crimes and misdeeds of others. Jasper is not one of the Stolen Generation: he has not been forcibly removed from his parents. His mother is dead, but his neglectful (white) father remains in Corrigan. Jasper seems to spend far more time in the bush than his father's home, but still seems to be in contact with him.

"This town thinks I'm an animal, Charlie. They think I belong in a cage and now here's the perfect chance for them to put me in one. And it'll get even worse once I'm in there. You know what they do to fellas like me in prison?"

- Jasper Jones



### Racism & ignorance

In 1960s Australia, non-white people were often subject to overt racism and this is clearly demonstrated in Jasper Jones. As discussed in the 'Exploring characters' section (pages 17-19) and the 'Historical context' section (pages 31-33), the Lu family and Jasper Jones are all subject to taunts, and even physical violence, because of their race. Both Jasper and Jeffrey are able to 'earn' the grudging respect of townsfolk because of their sporting abilities (Jasper in football, as briefly mentioned by Charlie, and Jeffrey in cricket). But this is a very shallow kind of respect, often quickly forgotten – both Jasper and Jeffrey continue to be called names and face discrimination - much like some of Australia's current Aboriginal sporting heroes!

The play suggests that racism is often paired with ignorance and a lack of understanding. Characters who seek knowledge and understanding, like Charlie and Mr Bucktin, are less likely to act in a discriminatory way towards others than most of the townsfolk. Many of the townsfolk have made assumptions about who Jasper and the Lu family are based on their race and cultural backgrounds. The audience is shown how far these assumptions are from the truth as they see Charlie interact with both Jeffrey and Jasper. Charlie does not hold the same assumptions about them and knows them as people rather than misinformed stereotypes.

"I wanted to explore a lot of things with this book, but one of my primary areas of consideration was the sloughing of innocence that is growing up, that moment where the bubble is burst and you're suddenly exposed to the real truth of things and the blind trust of childhood dissolves."

- Craig Silvey on Jasper Jones

## Growing up

Jasper Jones is essentially a coming-of-age narrative or *bildungsroman*. Over the course of the play, the audience watches Charlie mature as he deals with frightening situations and learns to face his fears.

Charlie, along with the other young characters, is forced to face very adult issues and experiences – death, racism, adultery, vandalism and physical violence. As the play progresses, we see Charlie move from shying away from these big concepts to facing them (see more on this in the 'Fear & courage' theme section below).

By the end of the play, Charlie demonstrates a greater understanding of the people around him and the personal issues they each face.

### Fear & courage

At the beginning of the play, Charlie is frightened of a lot of things – his mother's temper, his father's silences and secrets, following Jasper, buzzing insects, bullies like Warwick Trent, and more. The sight of Laura's dead body is a particular frightening one and haunts Charlie in the days following the discovery, as seen when he describes his body's reactions to his stress and the way his mind conjures Laura up when she's not there.

As the play progresses, Charlie's courage grows. While he does not overcome his fears, he learns to acknowledge them and face them. This shift can be seen in the way Charlie reacts to the discovery of Laura's body at the beginning of the play (turning away, asking Jasper to deal with it as much as possible) and the way he approaches the confrontation with Mad Jack Lionel (he is scared, but turns up to help Jasper anyway, even though he could have been spending that time with Eliza instead).

Charlie and Jeffrey's light-hearted discussion of superheroes also emphasises the themes of fear and courage. To Charlie, the greatest hero is Batman – he has more reason to be afraid of dangerous situations because he has no superpowers, but he chooses to face those situations anyway.

### What next?

Coming-of-age and growing up are central parts of *Jasper Jones*. In small groups, discuss moments where the characters can be seen to have 'grown up'. Are the teenage characters the only ones who grow up over the course of the play?

Secrey is another strong theme in *Jasper Jones* - almost every character has a secret. Choose a character. What secret or secrets do they have? Why are they hiding this from the other characters? What effect do you think the secret has on the character's relationships with others? Write down your responses using quotes and examples.

