

# Trophy Boys

Education Resource – VCE Theatre Studies



Gaby Seow as Scott, Leigh Lule as David,  
Emily Joy as Jared, Emmanuelle Mattana  
as Owen – 2022 La Mama Season, Photo  
by Ben Andrews

**Education Pack**

written by Keira Lyons for Arts Centre Melbourne

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CREATIVE VICTORIA



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## Acknowledgement of Country

The play you will see was written, developed, and rehearsed on the unceded lands of the Boon Wurrung, Gadigal and Gumbanynggirr people. We pay our respects to their elders past and present, and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

Arts Centre Melbourne acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which these performances will take place and this resource was

developed. We also acknowledge the neighbouring Kulin Nation groups, the Boonwurrung and Bunurong people, and pay our respects to elders, past and present.

ANALYSING AND EVALUATING THEATRE

# VCE Theatre Studies Clarification of Task





## Unit 3:

### Area of Study 3

### Analysing and evaluating theatre

In this area of study your job is to analyse and evaluate an interpretation of a script by a professional company. Your analysis and evaluation focuses on the relationship between the written script and its interpretation (of the contexts) on stage.

Your evaluation critiques the contributions that various theatre practitioners – such as the director, actors, or designers – have had on the interpretation.

This includes how effective their use of compositional elements has been in producing meaning for the audience.

You must also be able to discuss the impact of chosen theatre styles (explicit or implied in the written script) on the presentation of contexts to an audience.

#### Two Things To Be Aware Of:

1. You **MUST** directly reference the script if you are using this play for your Unit 3 Outcome.
2. Remember – this is **NOT** an analysis of the script. If English has taught you well, you'll want to jump on the script analysis train – this will not take you to your preferred destination!

This Outcome is about how practitioners have applied the skills of their production roles to bring that script to life on stage.

*Fran Sweeney-Nash as Jared – 2023 fortyfivedownstairs season,  
Photo by Ben Andrews*





## **Unit 4:**

### **Area of Study 3**

### **Analysing and evaluating a performance**

**In this area of study your focus is on the analysis and evaluation of the acting, direction and design in a production.**

You do not need to have read the script and you do not need to reference the script in this outcome (but reading it really does make your job easier!)

You must be able to discuss the theatrical style/s evident in the performance and your job is to analyse and evaluate how actor/s, director/s and designer/s applied their skills within the conventions of those styles, to create meaning for an audience.

What differentiates this outcome to the one in Unit 3, is that you are invested in the interrelationships between acting, direction and design in the performance.

Your main focus will be the characters in the play and how the actor/s interpreted them on stage. Building on from this you need to consider the contribution of the director/s and designer/s to this process.



PURE ANALYSIS

# Clarification of Key Skills



## What does it mean to analyse something?

You need to be able to demonstrate your understanding of how meaning was created by specific practitioners, through the application of particular tools and skills.

An analysis needs you to:

- Describe the skills, tool, design element or convention applied
- And to consider the meaning that resulted or was implied through that

A pure analysis question should feel considered. Thoughtful.

You don't need to have an opinion on whether what they were doing was powerful, effective, moving, intelligent, diminishing, neglectful, confusing etc...

You just need to be able to identify what they did, and what it created.

## The most impactful evaluation

To evaluate something means that you are now casting a value judgement onto those creative choices and their resultant meaning.

**How do we know if a choice was helpful or a hinderance?**

- The story will be enabled or upheaved
- There will be a sense of cohesion (that everything is steering the audience towards the singular outcome)
- OR you may feel confused about the intention (or contexts)
- A strong application of stylistic conventions will have an impact on our relationship to the characters or content (eg: Realism will make us feel, Political Theatre will make us think, the satirical device lets us laugh and judge.)

**The most important thing:**

JUSTIFY

JUSTIFY

JUSTIFY

The application of X, created meaning Y but its impact was Z because of the lack of A.

The BECAUSE is super important.



PRE-SHOW INFORMATION

# Trophy Boys

## By Emmanuelle Mattana



## The Team

### The Cast

Owen: Emmanuelle Mattana

Jared: Fran Sweeney-Nash

David: Leigh Lule

Scott: Gaby Seow

### The Creatives

Writer: Emmanuelle Mattana

Director: Marni Mount

Producer: Jo Dyer and Ben Andrews

Production Designers: Marni Mount,  
Ben Andrews, Emmanuelle Mattana

Lighting Designer: Katie Sfetkidis

Sound Design, Graphic Design,  
Photography & Marketing: Ben Andrews

Stage Manager: Caitie Murphy







## Synopsis

A queer black comedy and drag extravaganza about power, privilege and high school debating.

It is the biggest night of Melbourne's academic calendar, the Grand Final of the Year 12 Interschool Debating Tournament, and the all-boys team from the elite St Imperium college are ready to totally annihilate their sister school – until...

What begins as a **fierce satire** and drag extravaganza on power, privilege and the ego of Australia's next generation of politicians and powerbrokers, quickly turns sour when news that one of the boys has been anonymously accused of sexual assault enters the classroom.

More timely than ever, Trophy Boys uses **queering** as a playful and powerful tool to **interrogate** the well documented toxic masculinity, misogyny and homophobia of our 'elite' private boys schools.

## A Note on Context and Setting

The traditional structure of Australian high school debating involves two teams of four members, an affirmative and a negative, who take turns presenting three 6-8 minute speeches on a topic that they have received only an hour prior. This hour long period is known as 'prep', in which each team is housed in a separate room without access to the internet or any other resources.

The following [action] takes place in that 'prep' window.

Debating is purported to value logic, intelligence, and reason.

*Competitive debating takes argument's essential features and reimagines them as a game. For the purposes of this game, the emotional or relational aspects of argument are superfluous, and at the end there are winners. Everyone tacitly understands that it's not a real argument...*

*The most ambitious debaters go out of their way to absorb information about sexual violence, racial profiling, police brutality: issues many of them will never experience firsthand.*

*I did the same thing.*

*Did it make me more empathetic and self-aware? Or did it just continue to affirm the idea that if I were smart and competitive enough, I could speak for anyone I wanted?*

– Even if You Beat Me, Sally Rooney







## Content Warning

**Trophy Boys contains a number of adult themes and is not recommended for folks under the age of 15.**

The show includes coarse language, low level violence, homophobic and misogynistic slurs, sexually explicit content including references to sexual assault and harassment, underage sex and discussions of image-based abuse.

There will be loud shouting, flashing lights, amplified sound effects and music and you will likely get a strong whiff of Lynx Africa aerosol deodorant at some point too.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you are more than welcome to leave the theatre, and if you wish to, return at any time.

## Avenues of Support

The themes explored in Trophy Boys are sensitive and may hit close to home. If you require support, we encourage you to reach out to any of the following organisations:

### **Beyond Blue**

[Beyondblue.org.au](https://beyondblue.org.au)

1300 22 4636

### **Lifeline**

[Lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)

13 11 14

### **Kids Helpline**

[Kidshelpline.com.au](https://kidshelpline.com.au)

1800 55 1800

1800respect

[1800respect.org.au](https://1800respect.org.au)

1800 737 732

### **Mind**

[mindaustralia.org.au](https://mindaustralia.org.au)

1300 286 463

### **Entertainment Assist**

[entertainmentassist.org.au](https://entertainmentassist.org.au)

### **Meaa Equity Independent Guide**

[Meaa.org/Campaigns/Entertainment-Wellness](https://meaa.org/Campaigns/Entertainment-Wellness)

### **Arts Wellbeing Collective**

[artswellbeingcollective.com.au](https://artswellbeingcollective.com.au)



# Theatrical Styles

*The performances begin larger than life, in caricature and camp...*  
– from the synopsis of Trophy Boys







*Leigh Lule as David - 2023 fortyfivedownstairs season,  
Photo by Ben Andrews*

## Be Aware

This production slips in and out of various styles as it builds towards its intention. You will need to be really specific about the moment you are analysing / evaluating so that you can be accurate in your identification of the style and / or convention applied to create a particular meaning for the audience.

You do not ever need to be able to simply label one style (eg: Trophy Boys is a comedy) – theatre is actually much more

complex than that. You do want to be able to identify specific conventions that are being applied to assist in the creation of meaning.

Not all of the conventions listed on the following slides are applicable for Trophy Boys. You need to demonstrate your knowledge by choosing to speak only about the most relevant ones.



## Let's start with COMEDY

Firstly, there are many more accurate terms to describe the performance style of Trophy Boys than, comedy. But we are beginning with it, because almost all the styles associated with this play include humour and, therefore, conventions of comedy.

### Some useful terminology associated with this genre include:

#### Caricature:

Performers working to create a caricature will usually exaggerate some part of their character's appearance or personality, making it more noticeable than it might be in everyday life. The outcome of this is generally humorous leading to mockery or criticism of the character.

#### Stereotype:

The Oxford Language dictionary defines a stereotype as:

*...a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.*

As the world strives to become more inclusive, stereotypes have become increasingly problematic.

Comedy as a genre thrives on pushing boundaries and often walks a precarious line of 'political correctness'.

If stereotypes are going to be included in a narrative, the intention behind applying this tool needs to be interrogated.

Are they in there 'just for a laugh' OR are they being used as a means to reduce the weight of a serious topic, therefore making it more accessible to the audience?

#### General Conventions of Comedy

- Narratives that focus on the foibles or weaknesses of the character/s
- Characters presented in an amusing situation—often a familiar situation—that they have to resolve against all odds
- A script that usually culminates in a happy or satisfying ending
- Rhythm is particularly important when landing jokes or visual gags
- Amplification of everyday situations or character traits helps to craft a world that is familiar but places emphasis on the origin of the humour (such as stereotypes).



# Drag

**Before 'Drag' became a style unto itself, the history of theatre is full of men dressing up to take on women's roles on stage.**

This was more a practical necessity rather than an aesthetic choice. Simply, women were not allowed on stage but that didn't stop writers including female characters in their narratives. Perhaps it was around Shakespeare's time that the extra layer of meaning started to sneak into the cross-dressing roles but, on British stages in Vaudevillian acts and Pantomimes in the early 20th Century, the art of Drag really started to come to life as a theatrical performance device.

## **EXTENSION ACTIVITY:**

*...women were not allowed on stage...*

The art of Drag has a long political history as an artistic form used by communities to express their oppression.

You may wish to explore this further through research into the origins of Drag in the African American, Latin American and LGBTIQ+ communities.

*Drag is an expansive and diverse art form, and my description here focuses on the elements of drag that are most relevant to Trophy Boys. In my mind, drag is about the heightened or stylised performance of gender and gendered stereotypes. It is a deeply queer artform, both in its historical foundation in the queer community, and in its approach to making what is 'normal' strange. – Marni Mount, director of Trophy Boys*

## **Heightened performance of gender**

The intention behind this 'performance' or presentation of gender will be the key to how this style assists the narrative. Perhaps it's for comedic effect, perhaps it helps the audience view the material in a different way.

*The performances begin larger than life, in caricature and camp, and only as the story develops does an unsettling naturalism pervade the work. – from the synopsis of Trophy Boys.*

Fran Sweeney-Nash as Jared – 2023 fortyfivedownstairs season, Photo by Ben Andrews

*Drag is heightened performances of gender. So we take all the ideas that make characters in this world, which are always gendered ideas, and we twist them around, exaggerate them, invert expectations, and create something new in the mixing of seeming opposites."*  
– Sasha Velour





## Queering

Whilst there is such a style as 'Queer Theatre' – for the purposes of your outcome, understanding the term 'queering' or the verb, 'to queer', will actually serve you better.

The James Lindsay's page, linked here, discusses the many and various definitions of this term. At the heart of each, sits the intention to challenge or disrupt 'normativities' (or to reject "the normal and norms as a matter of principle").

This is done by queering 'the normal expectations' surrounding something.

*...as an activity... queering seeks to expose or otherwise uncover that our norms are, in fact, just limitations on a far broader set of possibilities... [if only we could shake] ourselves out of the stagnant patterns of thought... and constraining social expectations that keep us doing them.*

– James Lindsay

**In Trophy Boys, think about.....**how different it would be to watch actual, male identifying high school boys play out the story. How would that impact on genre? (comedy).

Society would say, *It's not ok for boys to say those kinds of things.* Tension between the Realism on stage and the audience would sky rocket.

BUT, the placement of a 'disruptive' element (gender) in between the story and the characters, distances us from our everyday behaviour and responses. It diffuses the tension and gives us permission to respond in an unconventional way: laugh, judge, question. And, so, the style of Drag, through queering our expectations, enables the issue to be raised and spoken about out of the cycle of its treatment in everyday life. Outside of the 'norm.'

*All characters are played by female, gender non-conforming and non-binary performers in drag.* – from the synopsis of Trophy Boys.

## Parody & Satire

The Australian Copyright Law defines Parody as “something that must borrow from, imitate, or appropriate a text, or other cultural product or practice, for the purpose of commenting, usually humorously, upon either it or something else.”

However, a Satire’s sole purpose is to be critical (often condemning) of its subject matter. This critique is pushed to such an extreme as to create a humorous / mocking relationship between the audience and the focus of the satire. A Satire may make use of parody, but it will be for the purpose of commenting on something larger.

You can see that both of these styles are concerned with the presentation of themes and issues in a narrative.

Trophy Boys is a satire that parodies the elite private boys schooling system in order to critique.

### **EXTENSION ACTIVITY:**

To further understand the complex politics of satire, take a dive into the term, ‘Punching Up’ [here](#).





## Dark Humour (Black Comedy)

***...the genre fulfils a simple human need: to laugh at things that scare us.***  
– BBC Maestro ([linked article](#))

This subversive style of comedy strives to make us laugh at content / issues we would usually consider quite serious in everyday life.

It treats serious and difficult content with an irreverence – cracking open conversations that we might find difficult to have by approaching the material in an unexpected (or, taboo) way.

As an audience member, you might find this style difficult to watch. You might feel like, sometimes, this performance crosses a line. There is definitely an element of 'rebellion' in approaching characters and content in this way. Consequently, that might make some people feel empowered – being able to laugh at something that usually makes them feel threatened or uncomfortable. Or, it might make some people feel 'mean' or rude. OR, in the case of Trophy Boys, it might feel very exposing.

Consider how audience culture and demographic impacts on how well the intention is received. Pay attention to how it made you feel and talk to your peers about how it made them feel.

Consider how this kind of eclectic response serves the issues at the heart of the production. How interpreting the issues this way flips the power dynamic of society on its head and offers everyone involved in the issue an opportunity to view it from a different perspective.

Consider how effective it is to prompt such strong feelings in an audience – how does that help the production company achieve their intention?



# Camp

## Playful. Anti-serious. Exaggerated. Artificial.

*The hallmark of camp is the spirit of extravagance...*, – Susan Sontag.

The Oxford English Dictionary first recorded the term in 1909.

*...ostentatious, exaggerated, affected, theatrical; effeminate or homosexual; pertaining to, characteristic of, homosexuals...*

However, the world has come a long way since then and Camp has a much broader application now, independent of sexuality. Fabio Cleto (university lecturer and author) sees camp as, *...a subversion strategy for many marginalised identities.*

As a design aesthetic or performance style, we are looking for: over the top, has a sense of humour, isn't mainstream / something out of the ordinary, joyous.

It has also been referred to as 'Queer Parody.'

*Four teenage boys walk in, expensive blazers buttoned up, and boater hats on. These can't be the boys from the chanting. They're serious and refined. 'Intellectuals'. These are the future politicians. The good men. They're also camp as fuck.* – Stage Direction in Trophy Boys

Fran Sweeney-Nash as Jared and Gaby Seow as Scott - 2023 fortyfivedownstairs season, Photo by Ben Andrews







## Political Theatre

**Bertolt Brecht would say that all theatre is political – even the pieces that claim to be ‘just for entertainment.’**

Essentially, to classify a piece of theatre as ‘political’ in style, the intention of the piece needs to be deliberately ‘politically provocative’. This does not need to be on a loud / rebellious scale, but it might include things like:

- Working towards social change
- Striving to upheave a power structure
- Prompting questioning and / or interrogation of an institution or accepted way of living.

### Distancing Techniques

Realism appeals to an audience’s emotions and works to establish an intimate connection with them through familiarity, personal identification and allowing us to view private moments of a character’s life. You might say the audience is passive as they receive the story and feel it, without accountability.

Political Theatre often views the status quo (everyday life) as a problem. It aims to expose the problem AND to prompt us to consider how we might be able to change it.

Political Theatre requires us to be active participants in our engagement with the core concepts.

Employing distancing techniques enables the theatre makers to shape an audience’s experience. In order for a distancing technique to be effective, there needs to be a contrasting pull applied so we have something to be distanced from.

So, some distancing techniques are about reeling us in so we connect with a piece and some are about pushing us back slightly so we can see the issues clearly and think about them (OR get angry about them).

The end goal is to have the audience leave with the determination to change something.

### Examples

#### Application of music, song, dance

As infectious art forms, there’s nothing like a piece of music to amplify the energy in the space, create an instant connection and inject joy into the space.

It can pull us in.

BUT, if we have been engrossed in an intimate dramatic moment on stage, music and song (if it's a style other than a Musical) can push us back from the story, reminding us that we are in fact watching a play.

That the story is being crafted for us.

PROMPT: When you see the show, consider how this element functions – does it pull you in or distance you?

### **Upheaving the familiar**

Realism is reliant on us being able to relate to the material on stage. That means, the world functions in a way that 'makes sense' to us.

Political Theatre may employ the convention of 'making the familiar strange' through not meeting our expectations. This enables us to not take what we are watching for granted and to consider it in a new light.

### **PROMPT:**

When you watch the performance, think about how conventions of previously mentioned styles might function to upheave your familiarity.

*In Trophy Boys, the use of drag performs a few essential functions. First, it places this story of patriarchy, sexism, and sexual assault in the hands of those who are usually its victims. This inversion of patriarchal power dynamics is important to us both politically and personally and makes the play a less confronting experience for our audience. From the safety of knowing that these are characters being performed for their benefit and not real people on stage, our audience can instantly read that the play is satirising and not celebrating the characters behaviour. This sense of safe distance enhances the light comic tone of the beginning of the play and allows us to perform a kind of dramaturgical rug pull when the seriousness of the characters behaviour becomes apparent. We want the audience to question what it is they have been trivialising by laughing at it? What did they let these men get away with when they thought they were just boys?*

– Marni Mount





# Theatrical Realism

And, finally, we do need to touch on Realism since the performance distinctly slides into a much more 'sombre reality' at the end.

Characters rendered using conventions of Realism have:

- A history
- A complexity (psychological and emotional)
- Objectives
- Stakes
- Motivation
- Obstacles

Actors work with subtle and nuanced skills (facial expressions, gestures, charged stillness & silence) to develop characters and situations that are accessible in our everyday lives. Or, a 'norm', if you will. The audience finds familiarity on the stage, and some can identify with or relate to what they are watching.

**Remember: your job is to write objectively about how the style functions to create meaning and to create a certain relationship with the audience. You are not arguing about whether you believe the politics to be right or wrong!**

ANALYSE ACTING

# The Characters





# The Characters

Part of your job will be to analyse the acting choices made by performers to establish and develop a character. Below are the attributes of a character that you should be able to comment on.

- **Character traits**

Attributes of a personality

- **Status**

Is often complex and not fixed.  
Upbringing, era, gender, race etc.  
can all impact on this.

- **Objectives**

Things the character wants

- **Motivation**

What fuels the character to obtain their objectives

- **Obstacles**

Things that impede the obtainment of the objective

- **Action**

What the character does to strive for the objective / defeat the obstacle

- **Stakes**

What the character risks losing (or gaining) which leads to how badly they want the objective.



**Leigh Lule**  
– David

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## From The Script

David (17), generally the quietest of the boys and the quickest to shut them down/up. Somewhat of an enigma. He's a thinker, rather than a talker. But it's unclear whether the silence is coming from a place of introversion or arrogance. Or a regular place of being kind of an incel.

## Pre-Show Activity

Read through the script with a focus on David's character. You are looking to extract:

- Explicit information (things that are said about him)
- Implied information (things you sense about him or you detect from his choice of action)
- Telling actions – is there a moment or a statement that he makes that you think are fundamental to understanding his character.



**Emmanuelle Mattana**  
– Owen

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## From The Script

Owen (17), a dork who doesn't realise he's a dork – earnest, but self-important and a little bit too passionate about everything he does. Wants to be prime-minister and the voice of his generation... at the same time.

## Pre-Show Activity

Read through the script with a focus on Owen's character. You are looking to extract:

- Explicit information (things that are said about him)
- Implied information (things you sense about him or you detect from his choice of action)
- Telling actions – is there a moment or a statement that he makes that you think are fundamental to understanding his character.



**Fran Sweeney-Nash**  
– Jared

### From The Script

Jared (18), very tall, very hot. He might be smart, he might not be. Who knows, he's too charismatic for anyone to figure that out. He's ostensibly a jock, but the sort of muso/poet/thinker/soft-boy jock that girls flock to. He loves his mum.

### Pre-Show Activity

Read through the script with a focus on Jared's character. You are looking to extract:

- Explicit information (things that are said about him)
- Implied information (things you sense about him or you detect from his choice of action)
- Telling actions – is there a moment or a statement that he makes that you think are fundamental to understanding his character.



**Gaby Seow**  
– Scott

### From The Script

Scott (18) Jared's right hand man. They're best bros and share a similar swagger, only Scott's is less convincing. Scott wants to be Jared. He wants to be with Jared. #nohomo. But he's failing at both and trying way too hard to cover it up. He's prone to put a foot wrong.

And everyone notices.

### Pre-Show Activity

Read through the script with a focus on Scott's character. You are looking to extract:

- Explicit information (things that are said about him)
- Implied information (things you sense about him or you detect from his choice of action)
- Telling actions – is there a moment or a statement that he makes that you think are fundamental to understanding his character.

When we talk about masculinity being a performance, especially the specific brand pushed upon private school boys, it is important to ask who this performance serves, and why it exists? In fact, who does it actively harm? Certainly women, but moreover it harms men, denying them the opportunity to be the full, complex, emotional, expressive beings they are. It feels a near universal experience for people with young boys in their lives, to watch them grow from sensitive, curious, gentle toddlers and kids into teenagers who feel like in order to survive the high school pecking order they must succumb to the pressures to become tough, unfeeling and unrelenting.

– Emmanuelle Mattana



NATURAL ACTORS

# Production Roles Essential Language





## Acting

Playful. Anti-serious.  
Exaggerated. Artificial.

*Drag makes explicit the 'performance' of gender. It recognises that gender is not necessarily innate, but a series of learned behaviours, cues, and expressions that are shaped by society's expectations and roles. They're not fixed, though often we assume they are, and don't stop to interrogate them further. Having non cis-male bodies inhabit codes of masculinity, it draws attention to the way in which that masculinity is a construction and a performance, and the ways society pressures young men into taking on this performance.*

– Emmanuelle Mattana

### The Actor's Craft – Terminology

\*\* All of which will be informed by theatrical style

- Movement (including stillness)
- Physicality (body language)
- Facial Expression
- Gesture
- Focus
- Voice
  - Timbre (includes accent)
  - Pace
  - Pitch
  - Dynamic
  - Acceleration / deceleration
  - Silence

If asked a question about 'non-verbal language', all except for the actor's voice may be referenced.







## Activity

When asked to describe the physicality of their character, Emmanuelle Mattana (Owen) described the following:

*Owen moves at right angles. Everything in his body is tense. There is no curvature, only sharpness. His movements are quick, staccato, as though anxiety and adrenaline is coursing through him.*

This is a beautiful use of design language to capture a character's physical contexts.

Now it's your job to analyse what layers of meaning these choices give to the character.

What do we understand about Owen through:

- the specificity of angled gesture?
- the durational tension?
- the lack of organic curve (which could be referred to as a stiff, upright posture)?

Did you observe any contrasting change in the end, when the stakes were highest for him but the theatrical style slipped from performative to representational? Did Mattana sustain that physical tension or did you detect a shift as Owen presented his closing remarks? Discuss.



# The Director's Responsibility





## The Director's Responsibility

It can be hard, sometimes, to know whether creative decisions on stage have been made by a performer or the director.

For the purpose of clarity, consider the following decisions as belonging to the director:

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Creative Vision (**cohesion**)

---

Use of space  
(**movement** / pictures / image building)

---

Tension and timing (**rhythm**)

---

Focus of a scene (**emphasis**)

---

Relationship with the audience  
(application of **style**)

---



## Elements of Theatre Composition Activity

Navigating the shift in tone was a vital part of our approach to staging the play, and we realised it with both performance and design choices. **While there are glimpses of the darker themes in the play early in the text, they are mostly treated with a light and comic tone.** The big shift begins at the revelation of the Guardian article on page 13-14. It is at this moment that the atmosphere in the room begins to change.

**At this point in the show a very slow but significant lighting change begins which drains the warmth from the stage** (in our 2023 season, this shift happened over a full 15 minutes). From this point on, the performances gradually retreat from any sense of self-awareness on the part of the actors, so that by the end of the play they are fully immersed in the characters, earnestly pursuing their goals, rather than emphasising the satirical elements of their role. **This gradual change accelerates at key moments**, initially when Scott accuses Jared of coercing his girlfriend (p.26), then when Jared accuses Scott of coercing a girl (p.27), when Scott reveals that David has been collecting and distributing nude photographs of girls without their consent (p.28), and finally when David accuses Owen of sexual assault (p.29).

– Marni Mount, Director, Trophy Boys

Mount's description is an excellent example of how compositional elements are applied by practitioners to craft an intended outcome.

She explicitly references how the shift in theatrical style removed emphasis from the, earlier, satirical depiction, thus altering the way the audience related to the characters.

Read through Mount's quote again, paying particular attention to the parts in bold. What compositional elements are being applied in those moments?





**R**

**Rhythm**

Pace  
Timing  
Tempo  
Regularity  
Pattern

**E**

**Emphasis**

Focus  
Importance  
Prominence  
Weight  
Stress

**M**

**Motion**

Position  
Pattern  
Proportion  
Arrangement  
Spatial flow

**V**

**Variation**

Tension  
Conflict  
Energy  
Use of space  
Upheaval

**C**

**Cohesion**

Unity  
Balance  
Connectedness  
Interrelated  
Belonging

**C**

**Contrast**

Juxtaposition  
Opposing aspects  
Opposing qualities  
Distance difference

**REM V. Co. Co.**

## The Language of Design

When describing the work designers have done, analysis of the following aspects will help you demonstrate your understanding of how design can shape meaning or add sub-text.

Terms bolded are also considered to be Elements of Theatre Composition.

- Shape and form
- Scale
- Tone
- Colour
- Texture
- Line/direction
- Pattern/ **Rhythm**
- Focus/ **emphasis**
- **Motion**
- Balance/Harmony
- **Variation**
- Unity / **Cohesion**
- Detail
- **Contrast**





### Variables of shape and form

Two-dimensional or flat	Three-dimensional or sculptural
Geometric (order, man-made, masculine)	Organic (free, natural, feminine)
Angular (dynamic)	Rounded (gentle, fluid)
Sharp (precise)	Fuzzy / blurred (ambiguous)
Hard	Soft
Heavy (strong)	Light (fragile / delicate)
Simple	Complex
Orderly, neat	Disorderly, tangled
Vertical (forceful, having stature)	Horizontal (peaceful, landscape)

### Dynamic scale for texture

Smooth (refined)	Rough (crude)
New, slick	Coarse, distressed / broken down
even	Uneven, crumpled

### Line / Direction

straight	curved
divergent	convergent
angled	tangled
thick	thin

### Variations in a colour palette

Intense, saturated, undiluted	Pastel, unsaturated, diluted, neutral
Tone, high value (mixed with white)	Tone, low value (mixed with black)
warm	cool
Discordant, complementary, opposite	Harmonious, analogous

### The dynamic scale of Balance

balanced	imbalanced
equal	unequal
similar	different
symmetrical	asymmetrical

### The spectrum of scale

Large = dominating, powerful, eccentric, abundant	Small = discrete, weak, contained
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## Costume Design Activity 1

On the previous slide you'll find a variety of different design tools that can be applied for any number of intentions. Choose three and analyse how they have been used in the design of the costumes to create:

Given Circumstances

---

Contexts of character

---

Cohesion with aspects of theatrical style(s)

---





## Costume Design Activity 2

**The Costume Designer doesn't just create the visual image. They are also responsible for guidance on how each character might wear that costume to further illuminate character or contexts. Look through this resource and find two different examples of costume styling.**

Describe the way that they each wore their uniform (costume).  
Even consider details such as how high (or not) the sleeves were rolled.

---

What indications of character can you see in these choices?

---

How is variation contributing to the group dynamics?

---

Consider 'tone' and how the blazer mutes the uniform. What impact does the weight of the colour have on how we feel when we watch each character?

---

*Well, I don't like to call drag 'wearing women's clothes'. If you look around this room," and he gestures around the hotel lobby, "she's wearing a shirt with jeans, that one's wearing jeans and a T-shirt, right? So women don't really dress like us. We are wearing clothes that are hyperfeminine, that represent our culture's synthetic idea of femininity."*  
– RuPaul



## Make-up Activity

There are plenty of realistic looking moustaches for stage out there on the market (just type 'real human hair stage moustaches into your search engine and click on images!)

In *Trophy Boys*, the design of the school boys' facial hair could be referred to as 'low-fi,' perhaps even 'irreverent.' It's a very specific and deliberate choice. Imagine you were the one responsible for this decision. Justify your design choice through referencing:

How it supports the theatrical styles implied in the script

---

Impacts on the way the audience perceive the characters

---



## Set Design

From an interview with Ben Andrews  
(Co-Production Design)

**KL:** I notice, from the last two Melbourne seasons of the show, that there is an incorporation / embracing of the actual architecture of each space, into the set, making the space more of a 'found space' than a stage. Consequently, you were working in quite different feeling spaces (La Mama's more 'stately' walls compared to fortyfivedownstairs' water-stained painted brick).

How much of a role does the building / space that you perform in contribute to the show?

**Ben:** This show could really work in almost any space. In debating you were slotted into the strangest of rooms for your hour of prep – and as there was often a lot of small groups to accommodate, you might have been in an air-conditioned classroom attached to the library, a basketball court or a portable near the oval that time forgot. You might have had Latin verbs stuck all over on the walls, or 'Explorers' posters downplaying the atrocities of European colonisation, or indeed photos of inspirational women in a humanities classroom.

*Leigh Lule as David and Gaby Seow as Scott – 2022 La Mama season,  
Photo by Ben Andrews*





## Tech Specs for Trophy Boys

When a show tours to different venues, they send out a document that specifies their technical needs. Below are the Trophy Boys specifications for set. Depending on where you see the show, pay particular attention to how they have adapted their design to work in with the theatre.

### Set

1. 8 x Fluorescent Light boxes\*
2. 6 x sturdy school desks (600x1200mm)
3. 6 x sturdy chairs
4. 1 x whiteboard on wheels
5. 1 x pipe riser cladding (containing wall punch)
6. 14 x female leaders (framed photos)
7. "48m<sup>2</sup> Carpet tiles to demarcate the classroom space."

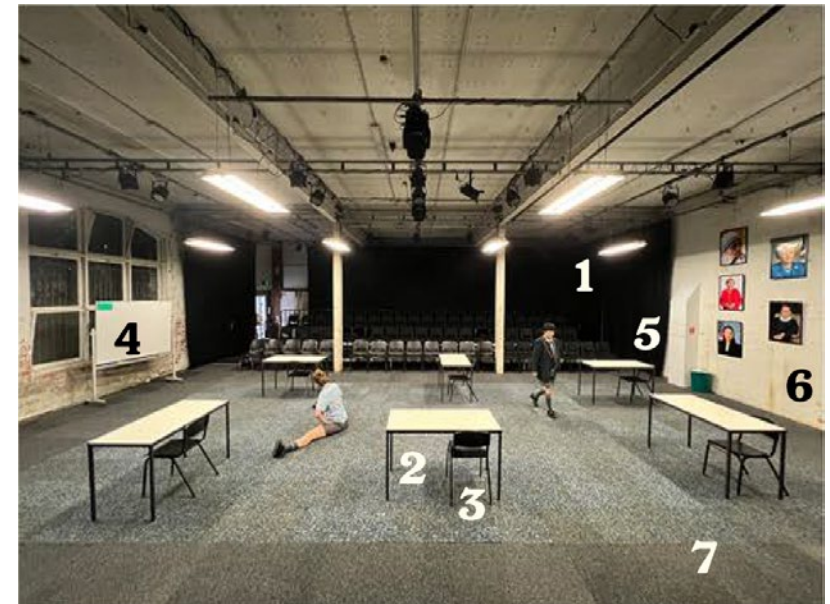
\*only used at fortyfivedownstairs

It is possible for the show to be scaled depending on the size/ orientation of the performance space.

If the space cannot facilitate a wall to hang photos, it is possible they can be hung from the grid.

The wall punch is a 'stunt' where Scott (Gaby Seow) vents his frustration and anger by punching through some drywall. We constructed a fake fire pump riser with a replaceable section of wall made from 10mm polystyrene.

\*\*The floor tiles also add immensely to selling the essence of a classroom. We will need to know the dimensions of the playing space to quote the amount needed properly.



## Set Design Activity

Return to the pages on theatrical style. Identify which stylistic conventions the set design is upholding and analyse how that may be helpful to the telling of this story.

*...Our design wanted to instantly satisfy that feeling of 'returning to the classroom' and whatever that elicits for the individual audience member... we wanted people's own gut responses to do the heavy lifting for us: here we are in this room with these boys and we're all probably a bit uncomfortable and not sure what's going to happen next.*

– Ben Andrews



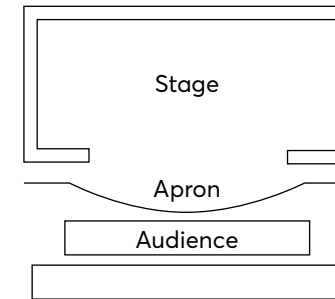


## Stage Configurations

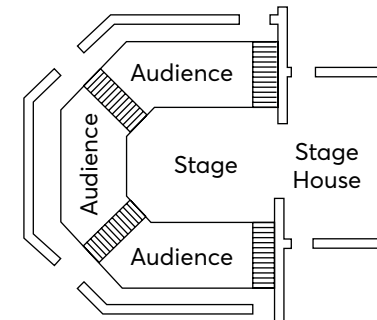
*I am very interested in how audience 'complicity' functions in this piece, and the way that spectators are turned into bystanders through the traverse staging. As the piece transforms from comedy to tragedy, I'm interested in how audiences feel directly implicated in the events that are unfolding. In what ways are they responsible? What behaviours did they laugh at that have revealed themselves to be dangerous? What did they let men get away with when they thought they were just harmless boys?*

– Emmanuelle Mattana

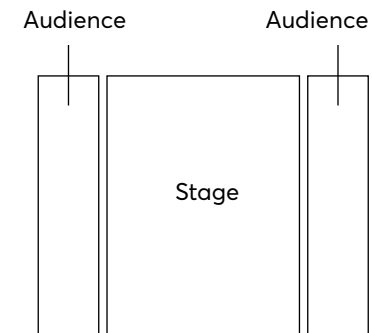
**Proscenium arch**



**Thrust**



**Traverse**





## Actor / Audience Relationship

Traverse seating is fascinating because you watch other audience members in much the same way as you watch the actual show. In that way, people's responses become a part of the performance. Not only are you watching other people, but you're also hyper conscious of the fact that you are being watched. It puts a spotlight on you as an audience member – how will people perceive you for your responses and what does that say about you?

[In conversation about the Traverse configuration]

...For example, one man spoke to us about how there was a joke towards the end of the show he was laughing at, but when he let his eyeline travel beyond the performer who made the joke, to a female audience member

*just behind him, he discovered that she was crying. It was a confronting wake up call which only made the politic and impact of the show more deeply felt.*

– Emmanuelle Mattana



## Stage Configuration Discussion

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What configuration was the stage in when you saw the performance?

---

What did you notice about how this set up impacted on your relationship to the performers?

---

What did you notice about the impact this set up had on your level of comfort with the rest of the audience? Exposed? Empowered? Trapped? Etc...

---

---

Discuss how this configuration helped bring certain theatrical styles to life?

---

What was it about the stage shape (and how the director used it) that enabled certain styles to flourish?

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## Lighting & Sound

*In that moment Marni describes with the discovery of the Guardian article we also built a wall of sound from the beginning of the play with a nearly imperceptible stuffy room tone, clock ticking, cleaners vacuuming in the distance, culminating in a crescendo of notification sound effects and a building low drone (coming from a hidden Bluetooth speaker under the closest desk for directionality) creating a final volume build before Owen drops his MacBook Pro on the floor, whereupon we killed all sound killed all sound effects resulting in the first silence... the audience hears since entering the space. The result was always incredibly powerful. You could hear a pin drop.*

– Ben Andrews



## From the Tech Specs

### Lighting

To simulate the hideous practical high school blinding brightness, we have 8 fluorescent tube light boxes that can be connected to hot power through a multi-switch power board (or into the grid bypassing the dimmer). These provide a general wash with a greenish tinge – this we offset with a general wash which begins neutral warm eventually graduating at the end of the show as a sickly blue as the tone shifts.

This is only interrupted by a dance sequence to the song 'Grind on Me' by Tricky Ricky where moving lights have 3 minutes to shine where we welcome any kind of non-naturalistic 'party' aesthetic to the song, otherwise LED washes at a deep pink and red pulsing on and off will suffice.

### Sound

Qlab workspace connected to separate L/R channels.

General 2 speaker PA is likely fine.

1 x USB rechargeable small Bluetooth speaker taped underneath one of the desks running constant 'black noise' for directional practical computer notification sounds.



## Diegetic and Non-Diegetic States

Any sound or light that appears on the stage and functions as a part of the world is referred to as diegetic. An example of diegetic sound would be the notification sound on the laptop, and the fluorescent light boxes are also diegetic.

Any sound or light that appears layered on top of the world (not coming from within the story, but helping to tell the story), is called non-diegetic. An example of non-diegetic lighting would be the colour draining out of the wash throughout the final sequence. It contributes to our understanding of the mood, but it is not coming from the lights in the room, or the action of the sun. They are imposing sub-text into the moment.





## What are your thoughts on....

### From the script:

*The boys find themselves sitting at desks around the room. Sheets of paper and pens are whipped out as the boys begin ferociously writing. It is caricaturised physical comedy, scribbling and scratching, lightbulb moments. This is a group of young men entirely consumed by the clever things they are writing from their big brains. There is an opportunity here for choreographed movement/music. A head scratch, a ballscratch, a larger than life dance number... It lasts at least a minute before –*

Consider diegetic and non-diegetic sound and lighting – which do you believe was at play in this montage sequence?





## From the script:

*The audience enter to a darkened stage. The theatre lit with flashing, pulsing, rainbow party lights. Doof-doof playing. Bass thumping. The sounds of a house party. Giggling, squealing, drunken conversations, someone throwing up behind a bush.*

*Ideally the audience begin partying themselves.*

*From amongst the rabble, we detect a barely audible chant, the conspiratorial whispers of a group of young men. 'Yeah the boys. Yeah the boys. Yeah the boys.' on repeat.*





## Describe the realisation of that pre-show moment

Would you consider this moment to be a prologue? Explain why, specifically identifying how it functions in terms of style and audience immersion.

How was lighting incorporated? Reference at least three design attributes and two elements of theatre composition.

Discuss what variation in volume (dynamic), rhythm and texture (layering) in the sound design each added to our experience of this soundscape.

*In terms of the context of the show, house parties are an important site of gendered violence within private school settings. But more than that, we wanted to make this show feel like a party. We always wanted to use comedy as a Trojan Horse to the gut punch of the serious discussion around sexual assault, and it was our intention to create a 'fun,' energetic space and tone at the top of the show.*

– Emmanuelle Mattana

## Further Reading

These were some of the texts that informed the writing. I'd recommend any of these for further study for students.

- Quarterly Essay: The Reckoning – Jess Hill
- Even if You Beat Me – Sally Rooney  
(this essay is freely accessible online, and brilliant)
- Boys will be Boys – Clementine Ford
- Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School – C.J. Pascoe
- Consent Laid Bare – Chanel Contos
- Who Gets to Be Smart – Bri Lee

If students enjoyed this play they might also enjoy:

- Posh by Laura Wade
- The Thanksgiving Play  
by Larissa Fasthorse



## Curriculum Links

For Unit 3 & 4 Theatre Studies, Trophy Boys is a prescribed play option for 2024. It can be used for Outcome 3 in EITHER unit (but not both). It will also appear on the end of year Written Exam.

Whilst Trophy Boys raises some important issues facing students today, it is important to note that this show contains a number of adult themes and is not recommended for folks under the age of 15. The show includes coarse language, low level violence, homophobic and misogynistic slurs, sexually explicit content including references to sexual assault and harassment, underage sex and discussions of image-based abuse. Teachers are advised to read the text in advance of taking their students, to help them prepare their classes for viewing.

*Emmanuelle Mattana as Owen – 2022 La Mama Season,  
Photo by Ben Andrews*



# VCE Theatre Studies

Every Unit in the Theatre Studies Design contains an analysis / evaluation outcome in which students must engage with a professional company's interpretation of a script. Not every area of study requires students to reference the script in their outcome, but reading the script before viewing is a highly recommended activity. This is how students become comfortable in their own process – understanding that not everything that appears on the stage is explicit within the text.

Please note: Whilst Unit 1 is focused on styles predating 1920, Trophy Boys opens up the discussion regarding gender on stage and the tradition of drag from Grecian to Shakespeare, Vaudeville and Music Hall. Consequently, discussions regarding sensitivity to audience cultures are wonderfully accessible.

<b>Unit 1, Area of Study 3</b> Analysing A Play in Performance	<b>Outcome 3</b> Analyse a performance of a script.
<b>Unit 2, Area of Study 3</b> Analysing and Evaluating a Theatre Production	<b>Outcome 3</b> Analyse and evaluate a theatre production.
<b>Unit 3, Area of Study 3</b> Analysing and Evaluating Theatre	<b>Outcome 3</b> Analyse and evaluate the interpretation of a script in production to an audience.
<b>Unit 4, Area of Study 3</b> Analysing and Evaluating A Performance	<b>Outcome 3</b> Analyse and evaluate acting, direction and design in a production.



# VCE Theatre Studies: Performance Descriptors

THEATRE STUDIES					
SCHOOL-ASSESSED COURSEWORK					
Performance Descriptors					
Unit 4  Outcome 3  Analyse and evaluate acting, direction and design in a production.	DESCRIPTOR: typical performance in each range				
	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
	Little analysis of character/s in a production supports limited evaluation of interrelated decisions executed by actor/s, director/s and designer/s to interpret a script.	Some analysis of character/s in a production supports partial evaluation of interrelated decisions executed by actor/s, director/s and designer/s to interpret a script.	Satisfactory analysis of character/s in a production supports credible evaluation of interrelated decisions executed by actor/s, director/s and designer/s to interpret a script.	Detailed analysis of character/s in a production supports substantial evaluation of interrelated decisions executed by actor/s, director/s and designer/s to interpret a script.	Sophisticated analysis of character/s in a production supports insightful evaluation of interrelated decisions executed by actor/s, director/s and designer/s to interpret a script.
	Very limited analysis and evaluation of the way in which acting, direction and design interrelated to create meaning.	Some Obvious analysis and evaluation of the way in which acting, direction and design interrelated to create meaning.	Reasonable analysis and evaluation of the way in which acting, direction and design interrelated to create meaning, inclusive of how acting skills, focus, the acting space, verbal/non-verbal language and elements of theatre composition were applied.	Well-informed analysis and clear evaluation of the way in which acting, direction and design interrelated to create meaning, inclusive of how acting skills, focus, the acting space, verbal/non-verbal language and elements of theatre composition were applied.	Comprehensive analysis and complex evaluation of the way in which acting, direction and design interrelated to create meaning, inclusive of how acting skills, focus, the acting space, verbal/non-verbal language and elements of theatre composition were applied.
	Few references to the relationship between the theatrical styles and the work of the actors, directors and designers with inconsistent evaluative commentary on their individual and collaborative contribution towards the establishment and maintenance of the actor-audience relationship.	Disjointed analytical discussion investigating the relationship between the theatrical styles and the work of the actors, directors and designers with partially effective evaluative commentary on their individual and collaborative contribution towards the establishment and maintenance of the actor-audience relationship.	Adequate analytical discussion investigating the relationship between the theatrical styles and the work of the actors, directors and designers with relevant evaluative commentary on their individual and collaborative contribution towards the establishment and maintenance of the actor-audience relationship.	Perceptive analytical discussion investigating the relationship between the theatrical styles and the work of the actors, directors and designers with considered evaluative commentary on their individual and collaborative contribution towards the establishment and maintenance of the actor-audience relationship.	Thorough analytical discussion investigating the relationship between the theatrical styles and the work of the actors, directors and designers with significant evaluative commentary on their individual and collaborative contribution towards the establishment and maintenance of the actor-audience relationship.
	The response uses theatre terminology and expression in a limited manner.	The response uses theatre terminology and expression in a basic manner.	The response uses theatre terminology and expression in a sound manner.	The response uses theatre terminology and expression in a detailed manner.	The response uses theatre terminology and expression in a refined and concise manner.

KEY to marking scale based on the Outcome contributing 20 marks

Very Low 1–3	Low 4–7	Medium 8–12	High 13–17	Very High 18–20
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# VCE Theatre Studies: Performance Descriptors

THEATRE STUDIES					
SCHOOL-ASSESSED COURSEWORK					
Performance Descriptors					
Unit 3  Outcome 3  Analyse and evaluate the creative and imaginative interpretation of a written script in production to an audience.	DESCRIPTOR: typical performance in each range				
	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
	Limited analysis of the interpretation of the script and little evaluation of the impact decisions had on creating meaning for an audience.	Partial analysis of the interpretation of the script and some evaluation of the impact decisions had on creating meaning for an audience.	Sound analysis of the interpretation of the script and satisfactory evaluation of the impact decisions had on creating meaning for an audience, inclusive of choices made involving theatre technologies and elements of theatre composition.	Clear analysis of the interpretation of the script and substantial evaluation of the impact decisions had on creating meaning for an audience, inclusive of choices made involving theatre technologies and elements of theatre composition.	Astute analysis of the interpretation of the script and complex evaluation of the impact decisions had on creating meaning for an audience, inclusive of choices made involving theatre technologies and elements of theatre composition.
	Limited analysis and application of production roles, with limited evaluation of the use of theatre technologies and composition in production	Some analysis and application of production roles, with some evaluation of the use of theatre technologies and composition in production.	Appropriate analysis and application of production roles, with satisfactory evaluation of the use of theatre technologies and composition in production.	Detailed analysis and application of production roles, with competent evaluation of the use of theatre technologies and composition in production.	Comprehensive analysis and application of production roles, with insightful evaluation of the use of theatre technologies and composition in production.
	A very limited range of theatre terminology and expressions is used to describe how the script is interpreted.	<b>Partially accurate</b> theatre terminology and <b>restricted</b> analytical and evaluative language is used to describe how the script is interpreted.	Accurate theatre terminology and generally clear analytical and evaluative language is used to describe how the script is interpreted.	Proficient theatre terminology and perceptive analytical and evaluative language is used to describe how the script is interpreted.	<b>Precise</b> theatre terminology and <b>concise</b> analytical and evaluative language is used to describe how the script is interpreted.

KEY to marking scale based on the Outcome contributing 25 marks

Very Low 1–5	Low 6–10	Medium 11–15	High 16–20	Very High 21–25
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# Capabilities

<b>Critical and Creative Thinking</b>	<p><b>Questions and Possibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspend judgements to allow new possibilities to emerge and investigate how this can broaden ideas and solutions</li> <li>• Challenge previously held assumptions and create new links, proposals and artefacts by investigating ideas that provoke shifts in perspectives and cross boundaries to generate ideas and solutions</li> </ul> <p><b>Reasoning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine how to identify and analyse suppressed premises and assumptions</li> <li>• Consider ambiguity and equivocation and how they affect the strength of arguments</li> </ul> <p><b>Meta-Cognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critically examine their own and others thinking processes and discuss factors that influence thinking, including cognitive biases</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical Capability</b>	<p><b>Understanding Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the connections and distinctions between and the relative value of concepts including fairness and equality, and respect and tolerance</li> <li>• Explore a range of ethical problems and examine the extent to which different positions are related to commonly held ethical concepts and principles, considering the influence of cultural norms, religion, world views and philosophical thought</li> <li>• Distinguish between the ethical and non-ethical dimensions of complex issues, including the distinction between ethical and legal issues</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision Making and Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss issues raised by thinking about consequences and duties, in approaches to decision-making and action, and arguments for and against these approaches</li> <li>• Investigate how different factors involved in ethical decision-making can be managed by people and groups</li> </ul>

# Capabilities

<b>Intercultural Capability</b>	<p><b>Cultural Practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse the complex and dynamic interrelationships between and within cultures in a range of contexts and the impact of these interrelationships on their own and others cultural practices</li> <li>• Analyse the ways in which intercultural relationships and experiences have contributed to the development of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and how they are manifested in various contexts</li> </ul> <p><b>Cultural Diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and analyse the challenges and benefits of living and working in an interconnected and culturally diverse world</li> <li>• Analyse the components of a cohesive society, and the challenges, benefits and consequences of maintaining or failing to maintain that cohesion</li> </ul>
<b>Personal and Social Capability</b>	<p><b>Self-Awareness and Management</b></p> <p><b>Recognition and expression of emotions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate emotional responses and the management of emotions in a range of contexts</li> </ul> <p><b>Development of resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop criteria to appraise personal qualities and use these to design strategies to plan for the future or address a challenge</li> <li>• Evaluate behaviours and protective factors that contribute to the development of confidence, adaptability and self-reflection</li> </ul> <p><b>Social Awareness and Management</b></p> <p><b>Relationships and diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse how divergent values and beliefs contribute to different perspectives on social issues</li> <li>• Acknowledge the importance of empathy and the acceptance of diversity for a cohesive community and reflect on the effectiveness of strategies for being respectful of diversity and human rights</li> <li>• Investigate personal, social and cultural factors that influence the ability to experience positive and respectful relationships and explore the rights and responsibilities of individuals in relationships</li> </ul>



**Depending on how you wish to engage with Trophy Boys, the script and production open the possibilities of addressing the following curriculum links for Year 10:**

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**Drama**

**Respond & Interpret**

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**English**

**Speaking and Listening**

**Reading and Viewing**

**Writing**

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**Civics and Citizenship**

**Citizenship, Diversity and Identity**

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**History**

**Historical Concepts and Skills**

**Historical Knowledge**

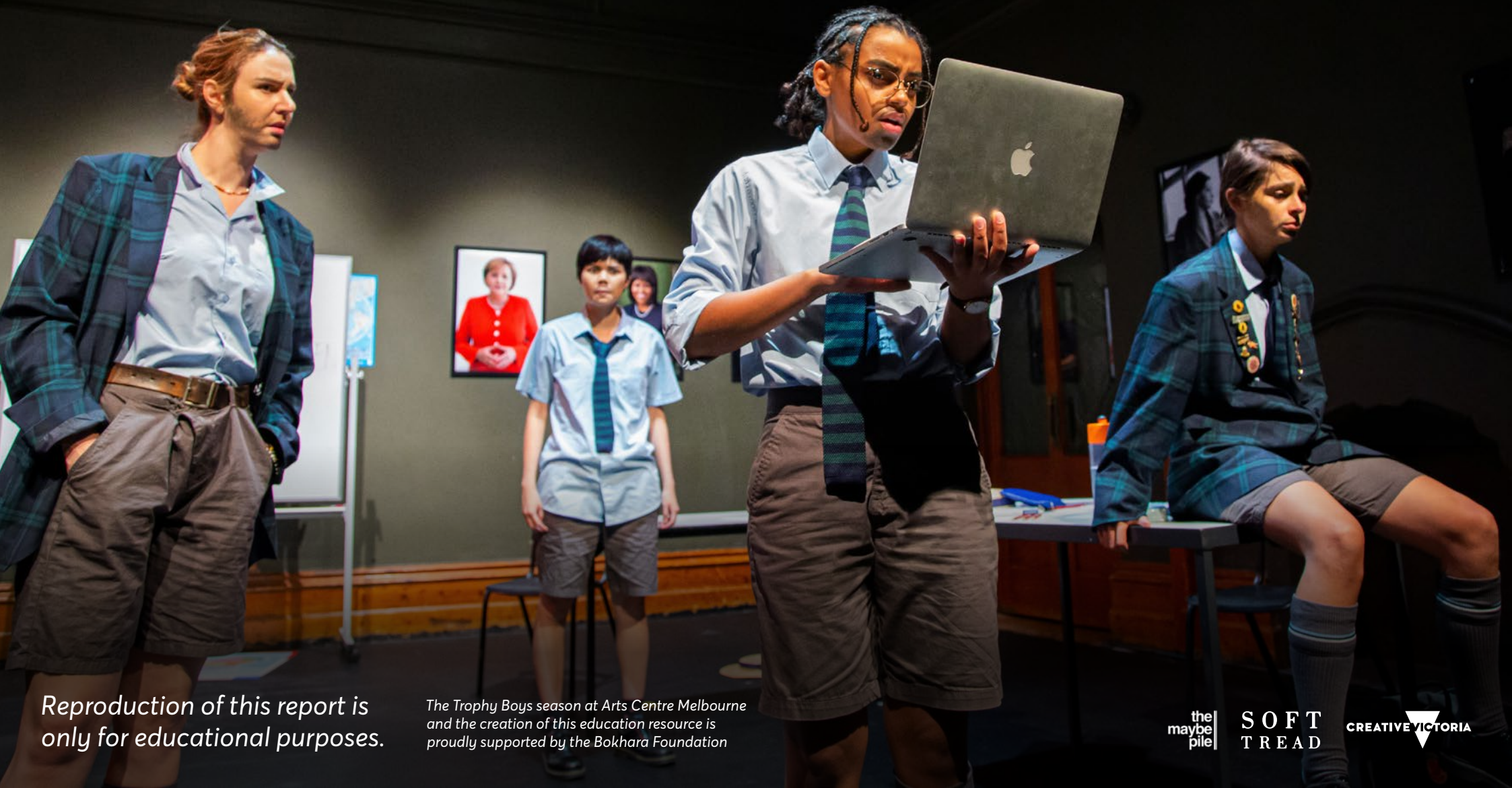
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KEY to marking scale based on the Outcome contributing 20 marks

Very Low 1–3	Low 4–7	Medium 8–12	High 13–17	Very High 18–20
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The Trophy Boys season at Arts Centre Melbourne  
and the creation of this education resource is  
proudly supported by the Bokhara Foundation