

**SYDNEY
THEATRE
CO
EDUCATION**

**PRE-SHOW
IN-THE-KNOW**



RBG: OF MANY, ONE

By Suzie Miller

Directed by Priscilla Jackman

With Heather Mitchell

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Image: Heather Mitchell. Photo: Rene Vaile.

Compiled by Kelly Young.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. You can contact the Education Team on **education@sydneytheatre.com.au**

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Sydney Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which the Company gathers. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work and with whom we share stories.

KEY INFORMATION

RBG: OF MANY, ONE

By Suzie Miller

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SUITABLE FOR

Years 9 - 12

CURRICULUM LINKS

- Drama Stage 5 & 6
- History Stage 5 (Depth Study)

THEMES & IDEAS

- Gender and Ambition
- Power and Justice
- American Identity

FORM & STYLE

- Non-linear narrative
- Dramatic Irony
- Realism
- Opera
- Monologue

CAST

Heather Mitchell

CREATIVES

Director Priscilla Jackman

Designer David Fleischer

Lighting Designer Alexander Berlage

Composer & Sound Designer Paul Charlier

Voice & Dialect Coach Jennifer White

Associate Sound Designer (Tour) Zac Saric

CONTENT

Mature themes, herbal cigarettes, complete theatrical blackout and flashing light effects.

APPROX. DURATION

1 hr 40 mins, no interval

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- How does actor Heather Mitchell create different characters using her performance skills?
- How does David Fleischer's design allow the audience to move across time and space?
- How do Realism and Opera work together to create a heightened experience for the audience?

PRESENTING PARTNER

Allens 



SYNOPSIS



It is the summer of 1993 and Ruth Bader Ginsburg is waiting for a life-changing phone call.

As the minutes tick by, Ruth recalls the incredible life that led to this moment: the loving support of her mother in her formative years, the moment she discovered opera, her ascent through the legal profession and the trials and triumphs she faced growing up as a working-class, Jewish woman in America.

Over the course of three historic conversations with three very different presidents, the story of this powerhouse of legal knowledge, political thought and moral conviction will unfold against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world.

This is the story of one incredible woman, her inspiring rise to the highest office in the American judiciary, the complex decisions she grappled with during that period and the numerous civil rights causes she defended. At the same time, this is a dioramic study of the power of the individual in society, and the changing attitudes toward representation and inclusion over the last 50 years.

PRE-TEACHING: CONTEXT

The following content and teaching strategies are designed to develop student understanding of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her context.

INDIVIDUAL CONTEXT

Born into a Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York in 1933, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the youngest of two sisters. Her elder sister, Marilyn, died of meningitis when Ruth was 6 years old. Ruth's mother Celia was diagnosed with cancer when Ruth began high school and died just before her graduation. After high school, Ruth attended Cornell University, followed by Harvard Law School and Columbia Law School. Marrying her husband Martin (Marty) in 1954 after graduating from Cornell, Ruth had two children, Jane, and James. During the late 1950s and early 1960s Ruth Bader Ginsburg struggled to find employment as a lawyer. During the 1970s, Bader Ginsburg became involved in the struggle for gender equality, working on high profile cases in which she focused on ending discrimination. In 1993, President Bill Clinton appointed her to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Her adult and professional life reached across the decades 1950s – 2020s, with her personal life and career reflecting the zeitgeist of each decade.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

1. Watch the clip below: RBG in Her Own Words
[youtube.com/watch?v=7lXhw0LKo-Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lXhw0LKo-Q)
2. As the clip progresses, make a class list of the ways that Ruth Bader Ginsburg defined herself. As a class discuss the reasons why such information might be important to know when watching a piece of theatre about RBG's life and achievements.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The political and social context of the USA changed enormously over RBG’s lifetime.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Activity 2

1. Break the class into groups and allocate a decade to each, from the 1930s to 2020. Research the following areas for the allocated decade and create a 60 second performance that summarises the key features of each decade. Areas to research include:
 - The American economy
 - The names and political persuasion of each President in each decade
 - Women’s rights
 - Racial equality
2. Working in groups, allocate 3 – 4 of the following terms from the script to each group. Find the definition of each term and present it to the class in a freeze frame.

Congress	Democrat	Chivalry	Dissent
Supreme Court	Right wing conservative	Jabots	House of Un-American activities
Oval Office	Constitution	Feminism	Checks and balances
Minyan	Democracy	McCarthyism	Separation of judiciary and executive (separation of powers)
Republican	Judge	Assent	

CULTURAL CONTEXT

The decades in which Ruth Bader Ginsburg was working in the field of law saw an enormous change in the cultural life of America.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Activity 3

1. Break the class into groups and allocate a decade to each, from the 1950s – 2020. In groups, research the cultural iconography of the decade, using images from popular culture, including film and music. Create a 60 second museum of images and sound to present to the class.
2. The clip below is the Saturday Night Live tribute to RBG, called The RBG Rap.
[youtube.com/watch?v=e6e_rGWbFqs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6e_rGWbFqs)
 As a class watch the clip and discuss the following questions;
 - How is RBG portrayed by Kate McKinnon?
 - What is the connection between Brooklyn, RBG and Rap Music?
 - Why does the image of Bader Ginsburg as Notorious RBG resonate so strongly with contemporary Americans?

REFERENCES

IMAGES

Production Photos courtesy of Daniel Boud

DIGITAL RESOURCES

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