

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

EDUCATION PACK – PART A

AN MTC NEXT STAGE ORIGINAL

# SLAP. BANG. KISS.

By **Dan Giovannoni**

Directed by **Katy Maudlin**

19 Apr—30 Apr 2022

Southbank Theatre, The Lawler

**MTC** MELBOURNE  
THEATRE  
COMPANY

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**Activity**



**Discussion**



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Notes prepared by Nick Tranter Design Helena Turinski Cover photography Brett Walker Creative development photography Tiffany Garvie

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Peoples of the Boon Wurrung, the First Peoples of Country on which Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ stand. We pay our respects to all of Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders, and to our shared future.



# About MTC



Sarah Fitzgerald, Conor Leach and Tsungirai Wachenuka

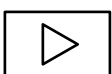
Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC) is Melbourne's home of live storytelling, producing an annual mainstage season of plays, and a suite of signature programs including the NEXT STAGE Writers' Program, MTC Education, First Peoples Young Artists Program, Cybec Electric play reading festival, and more artist access programs.

MTC is one of the major performing arts companies in Australia, and one of the largest theatre companies in the English-speaking world. Founded in 1953, MTC is also the oldest professional theatre company in Australia, and is a department of the University of Melbourne.

As Australia changed, MTC has changed with it. We like to think that we have frequently been at the forefront of Australian culture, introducing new ideas and new ways of looking at our lives, our society and the world; helping to explain a swiftly evolving landscape as we moved through it. Today, with Southbank Theatre as our performance home and our headquarters in Sturt Street, Southbank, MTC strives to present Melbourne audiences with the best drama from Australia and overseas to the highest standards.

**OUR MISSION** To create exceptional theatre, relevant to our times, for the broadest possible audience.

**OUR VISION** To be the leading theatre company in Australia, reflecting the changing world around us and enriching lives in the way only great theatre can.



## MTC HQ Virtual Tour

Walk the halls of MTC HQ in this virtual tour and explore the spaces where plays are rehearsed, sets are built, costumes are sewn and wigs are created one strand of hair at a time.

# Cast & creative team

## CAST

Sofia / As cast Sarah Fitzgerald  
Darby / As cast Conor Leach  
Immi / As cast Tsungirai Wachenuka

## CREATIVE TEAM

Director Katy Maudlin  
Set & Costume Designer Kate Davis  
Lighting Designer Amelia Lever-Davidson  
Composer & Sound Designer Ian Moorhead  
Stage Manager Jess Keepence  
Assistant Stage Manager Zsuzsa Gaynor Mihaly

## ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

This production contains coarse language, references to gun violence and homophobia, theatrical haze effects and dynamic sound. For detailed information about the production's content, visit our [production content guide](#).

## DURATION

Approximately 70 minutes, with no interval.



Sarah Fitzgerald, Tsungirai Wachenuka and Conor Leach

*SLAP. BANG. KISS.* deals with content that some audience members might find distressing. If you or someone you know needs information or support, these organisations are there to help:

**BEYOND BLUE** Call 1300 22 4636 or [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)  
**LIFELINE** Call 13 11 14 or [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

**HEADSPACE** [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)  
**QLIFE** [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

## NEXTSTAGE

*SLAP. BANG. KISS.* was commissioned through MTC's NEXT STAGE Writers' Program with the support of our Playwrights Giving Circle Donors, The Ian Potter Foundation, Naomi Milgrom Foundation, The Myer Foundation, Malcolm Robertson Foundation and The University of Melbourne.

This production of *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* was developed in 2019 and 2020 under the direction of Prue Clark and with the participation of Tahlee Fereday and Artemis Ioannides.



### Read the programme

Download the programme for this production to read about the cast and creative team, and see more photos from the rehearsal room.

# About the play

SLAP. A video of 16-year-old Immi hitting a security officer goes viral. BANG. Sofia's impassioned speech for the victims of a school shooting makes international news. KISS. In the car park of a small-town Woolies, people rally around Darby and Daniel as the boys lock lips in an attempt to set the world record for the longest kiss. *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* tracks three young people whose stories kickstart a series of events none of them could have anticipated, transforming them into global symbols of revolution. But when their stories go viral and the whole world is watching, what will they do next?



## Watch the trailer

Watch the trailer for *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* on the MTC YouTube channel and make predictions about the story and how it will be told on stage. What clues do you get from the actor's facial expressions? What clues do you get about the theatre style from the video's appearance? What clues do you get from the news footage within the trailer? Make a list of questions you have about the show.



## Sensitive content

Be aware that this production explores homophobia and contains references to gun violence. Prepare yourself by reading the script and discussing theatrical solutions to solving challenging moments on stage. Read the Context section of this Education Pack and discuss these events in a wider context.



# Context

## SYMBOLS OF PROTEST

*SLAP. BANG. KISS.* tracks three young people whose actions transform them into global symbols of revolution. Throughout history, such movements have often been synonymous with objects or gestures that gain symbolic significance. From yellow umbrellas to pink woolly hats, everyday items have become highly potent signals of dissent and solidarity.

The Guy Fawkes mask gained popularity as a symbol of defiance against the government in the name of civil rights during the Occupy movement in 2011–12. The international movement expressed opposition to social and economic inequality by camping in high-profile political or financial sites like New York’s Wall Street, Berlin’s Reichstag and Sydney’s Martin Place. The Guy Fawkes mask is worn by the protagonist in *V for Vendetta*, a 2005 film adaptation of a 1980s graphic novel about an anonymous anti-fascist bent on destroying an unmerciful police state (the real Guy Fawkes was behind the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605 to assassinate the English king). These days the mask is associated with both the extreme left and extreme right; it has also concealed the faces of anti-vaxxers in Trafalgar Square, and was seen among the mob of Donald Trump supporters who stormed the United States Capitol in January 2021.

Yellow umbrellas became a pro-democracy symbol during the Hong Kong protests of 2014. The sea of yellow in the streets was visually striking, but the umbrellas were also part of a revolutionary toolkit, providing a barrier against pepper spray, reducing the impact of rubber bullets and concealing the faces of demonstrators from security cameras. The official response was to reclassify the umbrella as a weapon and prevent Chinese e-commerce sites such as Taobao and AliExpress selling them to customers in Hong Kong.

In 2017, the Pussyhat movement began as a protest against the vulgar comments Donald Trump made about the freedom he felt to grab women’s genitals. On 21 January 2017, the day after Trump’s inauguration as US President, around 4 million women worldwide registered their dissent by taking to the streets in the distinctive pink headgear knitted from a pattern distributed online by artist Krista Suh. The hat continues to be a symbol of support and solidarity for women’s rights and political resistance.

In 2020, protestors in Bangkok started bringing rubber ducks to anti-government protests. The ducks were brandished as mascots and worn as headgear, and large inflatable pool toy ducks served as shields against the purple-dye water cannon. The ducks reduced the Royal Thai Army’s state-sponsored violence to a postmodern spectacle in the media, highlighting the excessive military force by invoking carnival games.

In 2021, opponents of the military coup in Myanmar began using the three-finger salute, popularised in the *Hunger Games* series, as a symbol of protest. In the film, the salute is a symbol of a people struggling against a totalitarian dictatorship. The symbol was also used widely in Bangkok in 2014 in response to the military coup d’état (which occurred at a time when one of the *Hunger Games* films was playing in cinemas).

More recently, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, displaying sunflowers has become one of the many ways the world is showing solidarity for the Ukrainian people. The symbol gained global attention in late February 2022 when a news outlet shared a video on Twitter showing a Ukrainian woman in Henychesk giving sunflower seeds to Russian soldiers, telling them to put the seeds in their pockets so the flowers will grow where they die. Sunflowers are ubiquitous in Ukraine (Ukraine is the largest exporter of sunflower oil in the world), but the flowers have been used a symbol of peace before. In June 1996 US, Russian and Ukrainian defense ministers planted sunflowers in a ceremony at southern Ukraine’s Pervomaysk missile base to celebrate Ukraine giving up nuclear weapons.

In *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* the famous cartoon mouse on Immi’s t-shirt becomes a symbol of protest for her supporters.

## YOUNG ACTIVISTS

The characters in *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* are not unlike the many young activists who have gained global attention. Prominent young people include climate activist Greta Thunberg, education activist Malala Yousafzai and gun control advocate X González, but the collective voice of young participants in the School Strike 4 Climate has also been heard across the globe.

Malala Yousafzai was born in Pakistan in 1997. When the Taliban took control of her village in 2008, the extremists banned girls from going to school. In 2012, after speaking out against the regime, a masked gunman boarded her school bus and shot her in the head. Miraculously, Malala survived, and she continues to advocate for young women’s access to education. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020, and graduated from Oxford University in 2020.

X González survived a mass school shooting on 14 February 2018 at Stoneman Douglas High in Florida, US, in which 17 were killed and 17 more were wounded. González and other survivors of the shooting organised the March For Our Lives movement, which led to events such as the March For Our Lives rally in Washington, DC, and more than 800 associated events around the world. González became the face of the movement, notably for their incredible moment of silence at the Washington, DC, rally.



González read the names the murdered Parkland victims and observed several minutes of silence in a speech that covered the same time of the gunman’s attack: six minutes and twenty seconds.

Greta Thunberg became well-known in 2018 when, at age 15, she protested outside the Swedish parliament. Thunberg held a sign saying ‘School Strike for Climate’ to pressure the government to meet carbon emissions targets. She inspired thousands of young people across the world to organise their own strikes. In 2019, Thunberg sailed across the Atlantic on a yacht to attend a UN climate conference in New York. Delivering what is probably her most famous speech, she angrily told world leaders they were not doing enough. Thunberg was named *Time* magazine’s Person of the Year in December 2019.

Ahed Tamimi is a Palestinian activist from the village of Nabi Salih in the occupied West Bank in Palestine, best known for appearances in images and videos in which she confronts Israeli soldiers. Tamimi’s advocates consider her a freedom fighter for Palestine, comparing her to Malala Yousafzai, while her detractors argue she is manipulated by political parents and has been taught to engage with violence. In December 2017, Tamimi (then 16 years old) was detained by Israeli authorities for hitting a soldier. The incident was filmed and went viral, attracting international interest and debate. Tamimi was sentenced to eight months in prison after agreeing to a plea bargain and released on 29 July 2018.

In 2019, a young Sudanese woman became a symbol of feminist resistance against dictator Omar Al-Bashir who, since 2010, has faced charges of genocide and crimes against humanity from the International Criminal Court. What started as demonstrations about the increasing cost of living in Sudan escalated into a revolution, culminating in Omar Al-Bashir being deposed after 8 months of protests. A viral photo of the unnamed woman shows her in a white thobe (outer garment) symbolic of the identity of a working woman, and women’s rights. Lana Haroun, who posted the image to social media, said ‘She was trying to give everyone hope and positive energy and she did it.’

Bundjalung woman Nessa Turnbull-Roberts was forcibly removed from her family as a child, the same year Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave his ‘sorry’ speech. Since that day, she has fought to abolish the current system that sees a significant over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and Indigenous deaths in custody. In 2019, at age 22, she was awarded the 2019 Australia’s Young Person’s Human Rights Medal for her efforts. Turnbull-Roberts says her experience with out-of-home-care drives her activism for Indigenous issues like the continued forced removal of Indigenous children, and disproportionate Indigenous imprisonment and suicide rates.

## THE LONGEST KISS

In *SLAP. BANG. KISS*, Darby attempts to set the world record for the longest kiss with his crush Daniel. The current record of 58 hours, 35 minutes and 58 seconds was set in 2013, but the title was previously achieved by Thai same-sex couple Nontawat Jaroengsorinsinpose and Thanakorn Sittiamthong who kissed for 50 hours, 25 minutes and 1 second in 2012. The rules stipulated that couples had to be touching each other at all times and to stay within a one metre square box, and a referee had to accompany them to the bathroom to ensure they didn’t part. Another notable record of 32 hours, 30 minutes and 45 seconds was set in 2010 by Matty Daley and Bobby Canciello, two students at the College of New Jersey, US. Daley and Canciello’s kiss (which was recorded for Guinness judges to review at a later date) was devised as a way to promote awareness about gay rights and raise money for the Trevor Project, a suicide hotline for LGBTQ teens.

SOURCES: Matthew Sweet (2021) *How everyday objects become powerful protest symbols* on [afr.com](http://afr.com); Tessa Wong (2021) *Hunger Games salute: The symbol of protest against Asia’s military regimes* on [bbc.com](http://bbc.com); Caleb Quinley (2021) *Three-finger salute: Hunger Games symbol adopted by Myanmar protesters* on [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com); Olivia B. Waxman (2022) *What to Know About the Meaning of Sunflowers in Ukraine* on [time.com](http://time.com); Malala Yousafzai (2022) *Malala’s story* on [malala.org](http://malala.org); Chris Perkins (2021) *‘Call me X’: Survivor of Parkland shooting has picked out a new name* on [sun-sentinel.com](http://sun-sentinel.com); Daniel Kraemer (2021) *Greta Thunberg: Who is the climate campaigner and what are her aims?* on [bbc.com](http://bbc.com); ABC News (2019) *The moment a Sudanese protester became a symbol of feminist resistance against Omar Al-Bashir* on [abc.net.au](http://abc.net.au); BBC News (2018) *Ahed Tamimi, Palestinian viral slap video teenager, freed in Israel* on [bbc.com](http://bbc.com); Harriet Sherwood (2018) *Palestinian 16-year-old Ahed Tamimi is the latest child victim of Israel’s occupation* on [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com); Joe Curnow & Anjali Helferty (2019) *A year of resistance: How youth protests shaped the discussion on climate change* on [theconversation.com](http://theconversation.com); Jessica Wang (2019) *The year Kevin Rudd gave his ‘sorry’ speech, 11-year-old Vanessa was removed from her parents* on [mamamia.com](http://mamamia.com); Madeleine Keck (2021) *10 Indigenous Australian Activists Working to ‘Close the Gap’ That You Should Follow* on [globalcitizen.org](http://globalcitizen.org); Guinness World Records (2015) *Valentine’s Day: Ten of the most romantic world records* on [guinnessworldrecords.com](http://guinnessworldrecords.com); Tara Kelly (2012) *World’s Longest Kiss: Gay Couple Breaks Record With 50 Hour Valentine’s Day Smooch* on [huffpost.com](http://huffpost.com); Erin Duffy (2010) *To raise awareness, TCNJ students may have set kissing record* on [nj.com/mercer](http://nj.com/mercer)



### Collect stimuli

Collect images, quotes and key words from your own research in response to the information above and create a collage of stimuli. What jumps out to you as interesting, or having particular dramatic potential?



### Young activists

Choose one of the activists described above, or research another, and discuss how you’d embody this character with expressive skills and performance skills.

# Characters

## IMMI

16-year-old Immi lives in a place with curfews and peacekeepers where she feels oppressed. A video of her hitting a security officer goes viral.

## SOFIA

Sofia is a high school student whose afternoon class is interrupted by an active shooter. Her impassioned speech for the victims of the school shooting makes international news.

## DARBY

Darby is a high school student from a town in the middle of nowhere. He is attempting to set the world record for the longest kiss, with the boy he has a crush on, in a supermarket car park.

## OTHER CHARACTERS

These include a journalist, Darby's friend Jasmine, Daniel (who Darby kisses), Sofia's mum, peacekeepers, students and many more characters. See the playwright's note on doubling at the front of the script.



### Transformation of character

Discuss ways in which the actors might transform from their central character into the supporting characters during the production.



### What's said about them

Read the script and extract every comment made by each main character about themselves, and by other characters about them. For example, in Part 5, Augie says of Sofia, 'She looks like she's ready for battle.'

Sarah Fitzgerald, Conor Leach and Tsungirai Wachenuka





# Playwright



Dan Giovannoni

Learn more about Dan Giovannoni's writing process in this Q&A.

**What's the origin story of *SLAP. BANG. KISS.*? How did you start to write it?**

I'd been thinking about some of the myths we are told about teenagers – that they're apathetic, apolitical, disinterested. The teenagers I meet are engaged, curious, angry and keen to be listened to. And actually they're everywhere: taking the microphone at climate strikes, suing the federal government over their failure to ensure a safe future for young people, sharing themselves authentically with friends and family. I wanted to write something that rejected the idea of a teenager as simply a smelly grump sulking in their bedroom. While the stories in *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* are ultimately works of fiction, they reference the real world and take as their starting point the same idea – that young people are shaped by the world around them, but are also capable of doing the shaping.

**How would you describe the style of your writing in *SLAP. BANG. KISS.*? Does it lend itself to a particular style of performance that you prefer?**

I don't choose a performance style before I write, or really have a preferred one. I let the play tell me what it needs. With this play it seemed to me that the best way for us to hear the characters' stories was for them to tell us directly. I'm quite fond of art that celebrates language – I came of age as a playwright watching and reading the work of artists like Angus Cerini and Patricia Cornelius, whose use of language still inspires me. I love fast language, musical language, storytelling, and I knew that *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* was going to be a fast-moving and expansive story, and so the style kind of evolved around that.

**How would you describe your writing process for this play?**

There were a few things I knew pretty early on that guided the writing process. I knew the characters – I knew it was about someone who stood up to a figure of authority, someone who survived a school shooting, and someone who wanted to set the world record for the longest kiss. I read lots – I read about real-life examples of each of those scenarios. I read about social movements started by young people, I read about events that went viral on social media, and how that happened, how small moments captured peoples' attention. I talked to young people a lot, putting some early material in front of teenagers who offered their advice and feedback, and we had great roundtable conversations about the ideas in the play. And I re-wrote lots, with drafts guided by my dramaturgs at MTC (Chris Mead and Jenni Medway), the Education team and the production's director at the time, Prue Clark.



Dan Giovannoni. Photo: Melanie Sheridan

**SLAP. BANG. KISS.** had a development week before the first lockdown, early in March 2020. As the playwright, what did you do during the development week?

Write! Learn! Panic! I met with (then) director Prue several times before the 2020 development, and we made a little plan of the things we wanted to achieve in the week – she wanted to see a rough draft of what the whole play looked like with the actors using Kate’s beautiful design as a kind of playground, so she could understand better how it might be staged; I wanted to write a new draft of the whole play, working scene by scene to make sure all the elements I was playing with were interrogated and re-drafted. During the week, I would bring in new versions of scenes most days, and we’d read them, talk about the changes I’d made and what we missed from the old versions. Then the actors would play with the text on the set, and I’d go home at night and do some more writing. Development weeks are so useful – I really relish that kind of forensic analysis of the text.

After the initial developments in 2019 and 2020, the **SLAP. BANG. KISS.** team returned to MTC HQ in February this year for further creative development. How did it feel coming back to work on the play with new director Katy Maudlin and two new cast members?

Like everything work-related in the last two years, there was lots of sadness at losing the thing that was – the original team stitched so much of themselves into the fabric of the play and I am so grateful for their work. But there was a really thrilling energy for this new thing, too. I have always wanted to work with Katy, and our new cast members brought great new questions and perspectives.

Do you like to insert challenges for the production team into your script? Leave things open to interpretation by a director? Or try to be specific with stage directions?

A bit of both. I don’t go out of my way to insert challenges, but I also don’t shy away from a difficult-to-realise moment or image. I’ve never written anything that hasn’t been staged in some way – but maybe that speaks more to theatre’s capacity to invent and transform, as well as my collaborators’ ability to make difficult things happen in creative ways. There are not many stage directions in **SLAP. BANG. KISS.** It’s the most open text I’ve written – there are lots of locations, dozens of characters. It’s a bit of an offer, I suppose, or a challenge, to a creative team, to create a space that can be transformed over and over. The world needs to be a big city, a suburban high school, a country town, a train, a street, a thousands-strong march, a cupboard; the actors need to be teenagers, parents, government officials, senior citizens. In that way, writing it felt like a bit of an experiment – how can I carry my audience through this story cleanly without compromising the vision I had for the way I wanted the story to be told?



Hope is a key theme in a lot of your work, particularly this play. How does *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* speak to our rapidly changing world?

There's lots to be scared about in the world. That might always have been the case, but right now this time on Earth feels particularly overwhelming. It's easy to feel small in a big world, and easy especially for young people to feel small, to feel ignored, to feel like they're inheriting a mess of broken systems and that they don't have a say in how to fix them. Hope is something you have to work at, I think, and I'm working at it myself. That's partly why I write for young people, I reckon – it pushes me to work against worry and fear and live with hope, to offer pathways to new thinking, to create a space where people can imagine themselves anew. I suppose I could have written a play about how horrible the world can be, how aggressive regimes squash people, how poor policy and weak governments fail their citizens, how fear can divide us – but I wanted this play to be an invitation to young people stepping into the world, an opportunity to see folks like them leading change, demanding their voices be heard.



### Your world

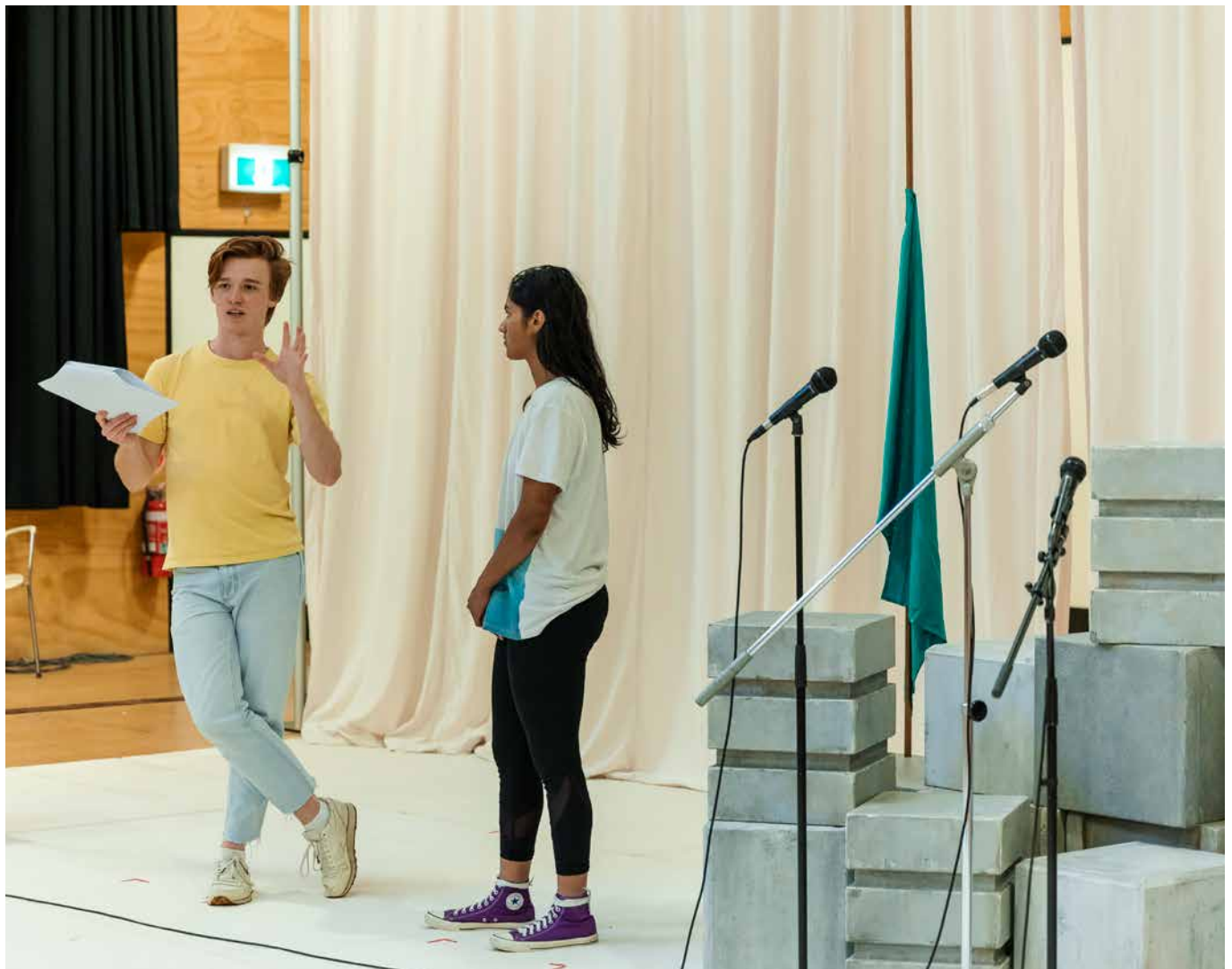
Discuss Giovannoni's comments about how the play relates to your world. He wrote this play pre-pandemic – what might have changed?



### Dramatic elements

Re-read Giovannoni's Q&A looking for clues about each of the dramatic elements. Annotate his responses with predictions you have about the production.

Conor Leach and Sarah Fitzgerald





# Directing



Katy Maudlin

Learn more about Katy Maudlin's approach to directing *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* in this Q&A.

## What is the world of this play, in your own words?

The world of this play is fluid; we flow through a range of times and a range of places. At the heart of the story are three young people: Immi, who lives in a place with curfews and peacekeepers, Sofia, a high school shooting survivor and Darby, who is setting out to break the world record of longest kiss in a regional Woolworths car park. These three stories are woven together, with the characters sparking movements and setting their worlds alight. As the play progresses, it expands, and we meet the people surrounding our three initial protagonists, the people who are joining and rallying around these movements. Finally, the protest is over, there is an abandoned megaphone sitting on the ground, and new characters emerge, asking if they should grab this opportunity and use their voice to affect change.

## How would you describe the theatre style of this play, and how does that affect your directing choices?

*SLAP. BANG. KISS.* is a contemporary work that is pushing against more traditionally structured narratives. In total, the three actors play 38 characters. It is a fast-moving play, jumping from scene to scene quickly. Another interesting device that playwright Dan Giovanonni uses is the weaving between direct address and dialogue – he utilises these two modes of delivery quickly and seamlessly. This device helps us build big worlds quickly by adding information through monologue that we don't garner from the action. As a director, it is crucial to ensure the actors are playing to each mode, as each builds rhythm and story differently, which ultimately paves the way to the crescendo of the play.

## What examples of motifs or symbols are emerging in your production?

At the heart of this play are young people affecting change. It begins with the characters in a private and isolated space, and as the play progresses, their worlds explode outwards and become more civic focused. Dan has done this with the text, and we also echo this with the design. Set & Costume Designer Kate Davis creates several worlds, including the grid, which is very structured and pale; it can be restricting and feels very urban. There is the world of the publicness, which is a place of amplification and being heard – objects we use in this space are microphones and platforms. There is also the world of protest when the movement really begins to gather momentum – the significant objects in this act are these beautiful and bright flags. The many colours begin to transform the paleness of the set into a vibrant and saturated space. Lighting Designer Amelia Lever-Davidson also feeds into this visual expansion of the space.



### Are you consciously thinking about rhythm when directing this play?

This play is very rhythmic, both structurally and aurally. It is fast-paced, which means the moments of suspension are very potent. Composer and Sound Designer Ian Moorhead is supporting and helping push the rhythms of the work. This is very important in moments of transition and building to the story's apex. The play arrives at a place where hundreds of people are taking part in these particular events; the result is a heart-thumping cacophony. This is something I am acutely aware of creating with both the cast and the design.

### How are you planning to use the space that Kate Davis has designed? What opportunities does it present?

We were so lucky to have the set in the room for the development. This gave the cast and creative team a chance to explore and play in a way you don't often have the opportunity to. Also, from a director's perspective and building the production, it means an immediate opportunity to create images you know work by reducing variables that come when you are working with fill-in props or set pieces.

### Each actor plays several characters – how do you plan to help them differentiate these characters?

Dan writes characters incredibly distinctively; each has a way of speaking that just sound like them. A great example of this is Jasmine – she is bubbly, intelligent and vivacious. The lines Dan has written are quintessentially Jasmine. The tricky thing is holding the trajectory and arc of each character. This allows the cast to land in a new character without hugely shifting their voice or physicality. Nevertheless, the actors in this play must work hard, as they are moving incredibly quickly between characters and worlds.

### What is an example of an activity you used with the cast in the creative development week?

We did a lot of reverse engineering in the development week. An example of this was asking the cast to build three monuments out of the set pieces – the blocks and flags. Collectively, with everyone in the room, we decided which shape worked best and built the first major transition. We had the beginning and final shape of the set, so it was about putting the flesh on the bones. We did this through a physical improvisation as the transition relies on the cast reimagining the space by moving the blocks from the grid shape into our decided monument image.

Vivienne Poznanski (creative development stage manager), Katy Maudlin and Ian Moorhead



At this stage in the process, how are you collaborating with the other creatives, including the playwright?

All the creatives were present at some stage throughout the development. I structured the week focusing on the script for the first half of the week and more practical floor work for the second half. We forensically analysed the text during the table work and broke it up into beats, highlighting key events. Having the playwright there meant we could unpack moments with him and ask questions about the story or character. Dan made edits for logic or flow throughout this time, often because of discoveries made in the script work. Working with the design was more practical. Kate gave us an induction to the design elements at the start of the week, and we had a first draft for introducing the flags for her and Amelia Lever-Davidson to watch by the end of the week. Ian Moorhead was there regularly and inputting compositions into the work we were doing on the floor. The play has a very constant score, and having those compositions available to play with during development was a gift.

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### Director's vision

Annotate Maudlin's comments to highlight notes about theatre styles and dramatic elements.

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Katy Maudlin, Conor Leach and Sarah Fitzgerald





# Set & costume design



Kate Davis

The set and costumes have been designed by Kate Davis. Learn more in this Q&A with her.

## SET DESIGN

### What is the world of this play, in your own words?

The play is set in multiple locations and environments around the world that are deliberately ambiguous but familiar. The locations range from bedrooms to the street to schools to carparks. My design had to encompass all of these locations and also have the ability to change in form. The concrete blocks enable this.

### What were your inspirations and design references for the set?

My inspirations often come from abstract contemporary art, architecture and dreams. For this set design my inspirations were tombs and headstones, concrete anti-terror bollards, flags, the aesthetics of TV studios, and the colours and textures of protests. Rachel Whiteread is an incredible contemporary artist who was a major inspiration for this design. Her work speaks on multiple levels using simplistic forms that are familiar yet foreign and I wanted to reflect this feeling in the design.

### What symbols and themes have you built into your design?

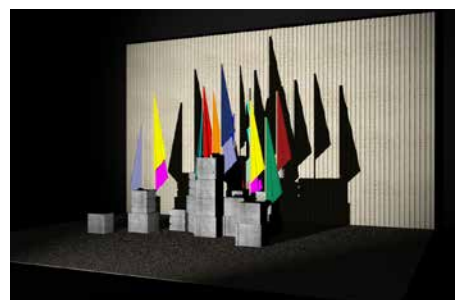
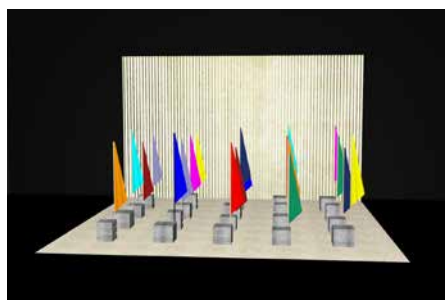
My designs are often multilayered in symbolism and meaning. The concrete blocks act as tombs as well as soap boxes and are also used to create a new monument, by the characters. They have many different representations and purposes. I have used the carpet to create a domestic space within an architectural landscape of concrete blocks – this allows us to give the feeling of both private and public. It also creates a ‘presentational’ space where these character’s stories are becoming viral.

### What are some practical considerations in your design?

The whole design is based on touring specifications and what is possible in this setting. This design is challenging as it is a requirement that it can be unloaded quickly with only two crew and fit into a 3 tonne truck but also have visual impact and design that can be transformed throughout the piece. Each design item, from the concrete blocks, carpet, flags and curtain, enable us to transform venues quickly and create a full design world.

### What has been the most exciting challenge for you to solve in this design?

A challenge has been how to create a mass of people with only three cast members, and a set that has to be able to tour! I have used the flags to help create a ‘crowd’ and to populate the space, and also objects like the blocks to help create a full architectural landscape that isn’t cumbersome and a full install build.



Set design renders by Kate Davis



## Design predictions

Based on the information above and the designer’s renders, discuss how the set may be used during the production. Think in particular about how actors will transform time and place by using the set. Make notes about application of symbol.



## Set model

Make a scale model of Kate Davis’s set design and experiment with different configurations. Use a torch to cast light on them and see the dramatic effect. Which configurations are dramatically interesting, and what do they convey symbolically? Think about how the set might be used in this production.

## COSTUME DESIGN

How would you describe the design language of your costumes?

Simple silhouettes that become almost invisible as the cast shift through characters.

Do you consciously think about contrast when designing these costumes?

I thought a lot about colour and contrast, amidst such a neutral coloured set. How the colours work together and against each other is very much a part of my design thinking.

The actors play several characters each. How do your costumes assist with this storytelling?

Keeping the costumes simple allows the audience to almost disregard them, and hopefully they don't speak too loudly for any particular character. The costumes are plain with no prints, no accessories and no real textures for this reason. They become a hint of a character rather than a detailed representation. The cast could be seen as just actors in plain clothing so they can transform through their bodies instead of their clothing.

What practical considerations do you have to be aware of with the costumes?

It's important to have duplicates for two show days and touring in general. They also need to be comfortable and the costumes need to be easy to move in for the cast to step up to the blocks constantly and move the blocks around the space.

Thinking of one character as an example, what do you want to communicate about them through your costume?

Sofia's costume had to have a sense of youth and strength. The khaki colour of the jumpsuit, speaks to the military, which felt like an interesting tension for that character. It also feels like a uniform, a structured silhouette. This jumpsuit is offset with bright purple old converse to add the youthful punkish vibe.

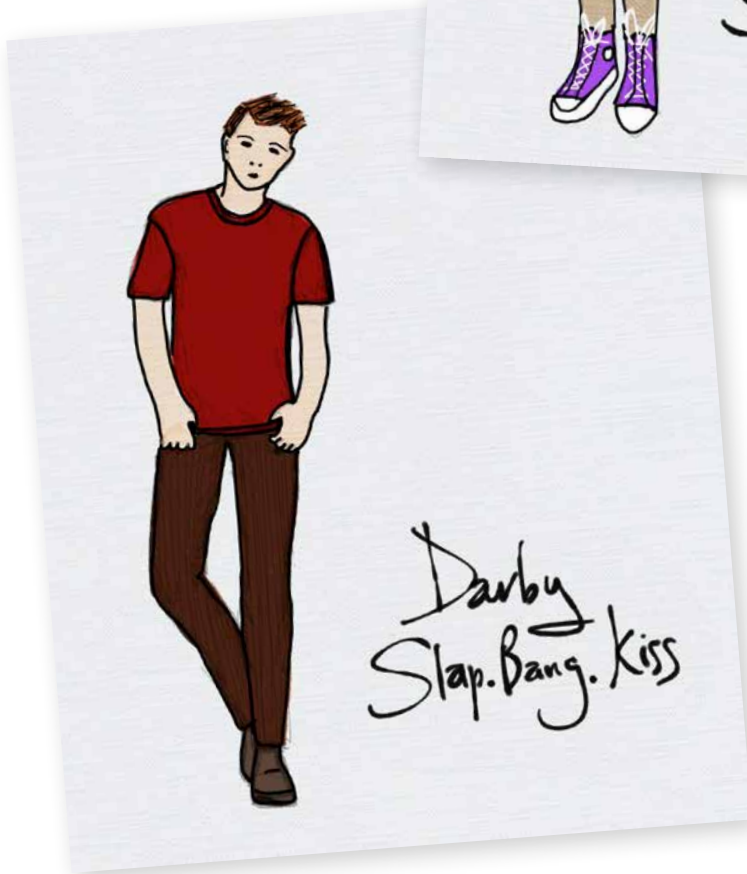
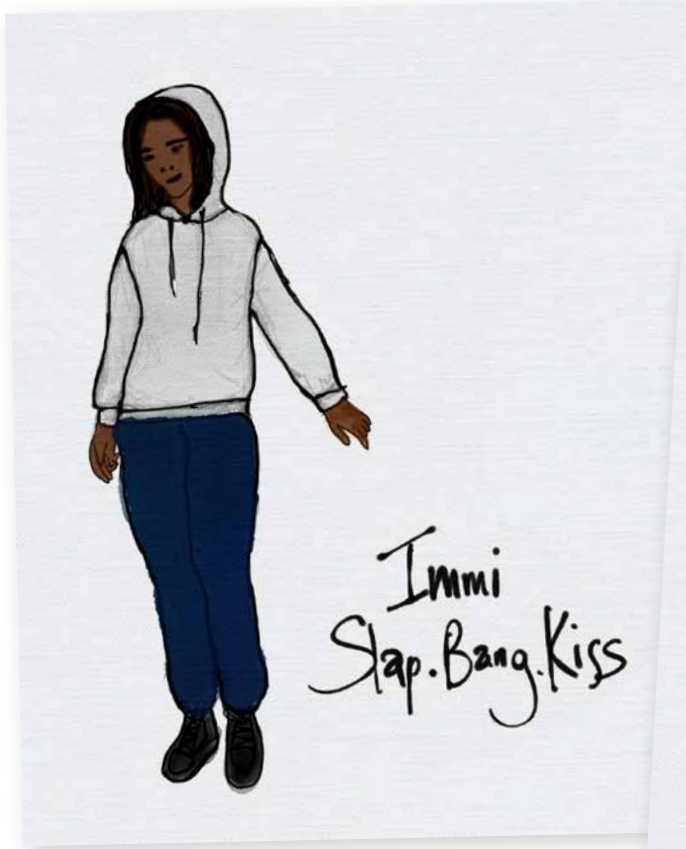


### Design predictions

Based on the information above and the designer's renders, discuss how the costumes will enhance the storytelling and characterisation. Make notes about application of symbol.

Tsungirai Wachenuka







# Dramatic elements

The following questions, provocations and ideas are intended to help you experience and analyse *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* through the lens of VCE Drama.

## CLIMAX

- Based on your understanding of the three main story threads, what might be a climactic moment for each?
- If there's one big climactic moment towards the end of the play, do you think it will be for a particular story, or something that unites them all?

## CONFLICT

- Conflict generally occurs when a character cannot achieve an objective due to an obstacle. What might be the obstacle for each of the main characters?
- Conflict may be internal or external. Make a prediction for both for each character.

## CONTRAST

- Think about the three contrasting settings of each storyline. Consider how these places will be created with the set.
- Think about contrasting performance styles that might exist within the production. For example, Director Katy Maudlin speaks about how the two modes of direct address and dialogue are woven together seamlessly.

## MOOD

- What do you expect to be the overall feeling or emotion this play will evoke?
- Make a prediction about how production areas will contribute to the mood in each of the three stories.

## RHYTHM

- If you're able to read the script before watching the production, make predictions about how the actors will interpret the interruptions, and moments of unison, in the text.
- Make predictions about the overall rhythm of the play, based on your knowledge of the content and style.

## SOUND

- The dramatic element of sound is created live, by the actor, in the performance. Make predictions about how each actor might make sound in their story.
- How might a moment of silence be used dramatically? Recall from the Context section how X González used silence in their speech.

## SPACE

- How might the actor-audience relationship be manipulated in this production? Think about the performance area and how it might be used.
- What opportunities can you see in the set design for manipulating levels, proximity and depth?

## TENSION

- Tension is the suspense that holds an audience's attention as the play unfolds. Predict some moments when tension may be manipulated.
- The release of tension may have a dramatic or comic effect – make a prediction for each.



### Download Part B

After you've seen *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* download Part B of this Education Pack to read more from the cast and creative team, see photos from the production, and respond to analysis questions.

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## WATCH THE TRAILER

Watch the video trailer for this production, and make predictions about how the story will be told on stage, at [mtc.com.au](http://mtc.com.au)



## MEET THE CAST

Read Q&As with the cast and learn more about each actor's approach to the characters at [mtc.com.au](http://mtc.com.au)

## BUY THE SCRIPT

To purchase a copy of *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* by multi-award-winning playwright Dan Giovannoni, email [schools@mtc.com.au](mailto:schools@mtc.com.au)

