

24 JAN—
22 FEB 2025

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

SOUTHBANK
THEATRE

A photograph of a group of men in Australian Rules football uniforms (black and white striped jerseys, black shorts, and black socks) performing a goalkick in a locker room. One player is in the air, kicking a red football. The scene is lit with warm, orange light, and the background shows a locker room with lockers and benches. A large white number '37' is overlaid on the image.

37

BY **NATHAN MAYNARD**
DIRECTED BY **ISAAC DRANDIC**

EDUCATION PACK – PART B

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Throughout these notes, look out for these icons for opportunities to learn more:



Activity



Discuss



Read



Video

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the support of the Department of Education, Victoria, through the Strategic Partnerships Program.



Department
of Education

Digital Education resources are generously supported by the Ian Potter Foundation



Melbourne Theatre Company's Education activity is generously supported by our Education Giving Circle Donors.

Editors Nick Tranter, Tilly Graovac, Emily Doyle
Graphic designer Sarah Ridgway-Cross
Production photographer Pia Johnson

Images in this pack feature the original 2024 Melbourne cast.

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, create and gather. We pay our respects to all First Nations people, their Elders past and present, and their enduring connections to Country, knowledge and stories. As a Company we remain committed to the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for voice, truth and treaty.

About the play



The cast of 37

The local footy team of this small coastal town have spent so long at the bottom of the ladder they might as well be welded to it. This year a new hope arrives: the Marngrook cousins. Named after the Aboriginal game that inspired AFL, they're match fit to bring home the team's first flag in forever. A little sweary and very sweaty, it hits just as hard with the laughs as it does its searing social commentary.

Set within the era of Adam Goodes's war cry – and named for the number he immortalised – 37 asks ten actors to throw themselves into this world of blood and sweat to get at the values that drive a national obsession. Community, identity, the price of winning and the meaning of a goal: they're all up for grabs.

Penning by **Nathan Maynard** – twice named Tasmanian Aboriginal Artist of the Year – and directed by **Isaac Drandic**, 37 is a reminder that honest conversations are more than a ball toss. It matters where you stand.

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

This production contains coarse language, mature themes, racially sensitive commentary, partial nudity, loud noises and the use of smoke, haze effects and organic dust effects. For detailed information about the production's content, visit our production content guide at mtc.com.au/production-content-guide.

DURATION

Approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes with no interval.



Read the programme

Explore the digital programme for this production to read about the cast and creative team, and see more photos from the rehearsal room: mtc.com.au/programmes

Co-producer

**QUEENSLAND
THEATRE**

Supported by MTC's 37 Giving Circle; Fitzpatrick Sykes Family Foundation, Angie & Colin Carter, Patricia Faulkner AO, Diane John, Larry & Petra Kamener, Marcia Langton AO & Craig Semple.

NEXTSTAGE

Commissioned through Melbourne Theatre Company's NEXT STAGE Writers' Program with the support of our Playwrights Giving Circle.

Cast and creatives



Syd Brisbane
The General



Mitchell Brotz
Gorby

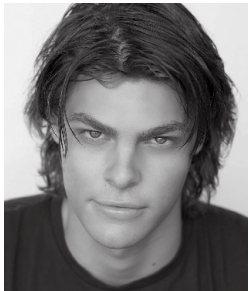


Samuel Buckley
Apples

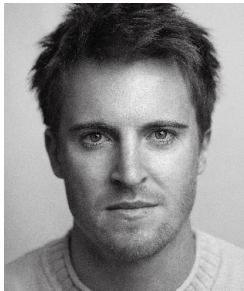


Read their bios

Explore the digital programme to read the biographies of the cast and creatives working on this production:
mtc.com.au/programmes



Blake Draper
Ant



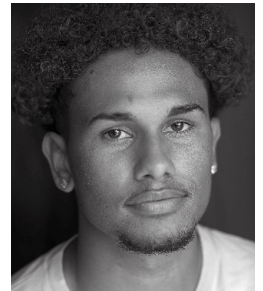
Thomas Larkin
GJ



Eddie Orton
Woodsy



Ben O'Toole
Joe



Ngali Shaw
Jayma



Anthony Standish
Dazza



Tibian Wyles
Sonny



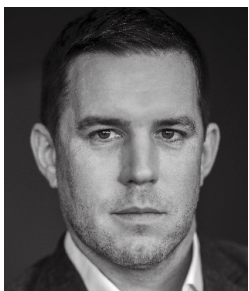
Nathan Maynard
Writer



Isaac Drandic
Director & Co-Choreographer



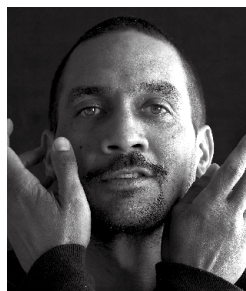
Dale Ferguson
Set & Costume Designer



Ben Hughes
Lighting Designer



James Henry
Composer & Sound Designer



Waangenga Blanco
Co-Choreographer



Matt Furlani
Voice & Text Coach



Kamarra Bell-Wykes
Assistant Director



Lyndall Grant
Fight Choreographer



Isabella Vadiveloo
Intimacy Coordinator

Acting

The cast of 37 each play one character by using their expressive skills (voice, movement, gesture and facial expression) and performance skills (focus, timing, energy and actor-audience relationship) in ways consistent with the performance styles of the production. In these Q&As, learn more about each character from the cast.



Ngali Shaw and Tibian Wyles

JAYMA PLAYED BY NGALI SHAW

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

Jayma is from a place called Mangana and his goal is to win, go to the coast league and win a championship for his dad, which his dad never got to do.

How do you embody your character?

I grew up doing a lot of dance – that was pretty much my whole childhood. I'm an entertainer, so I feel comfortable doing dance and choreography. When I see other boys in the group that aren't dancers, I see that they embody the same sort of thing that I do as a dancer – it's cool to see. But I think that thing is just confidence and seeing that world as you're doing it – you're not seeing the stage, not seeing the crowd – you're seeing this world form around you as you start dancing and you sort of create this thing in your head. I think I create this world that brings me into the dancing and the play, which is great because that starting dance shapes me into the play. By the first scene, I'm in the world, I don't really see the crowd and I don't notice the stage, I'm just really in it. The dance brings me in.

How did you work with the cast and creative team to develop the Grand Final scene at the play's conclusion?

We came up with that final sequence by taking AFL moves and transferring them into contemporary dance. Our co-choreographer, Waangenga Blanco, has danced for Bangarra – he's a professional, he literally does contemporary dance, he's an amazing choreographer. We all worked together collectively for a couple of weeks, picking out AFL moves and just making up stuff. With the last dance, me and Tibbs duo, Tibbs brings some of what he's learned from where he's from and his Aboriginal dance. And I bring some of the stuff that I learned from where I'm from. We bring those two worlds together, along with Waangenga's world, and we created this masterpiece. Every time I do it, even if I'm marking it, it just feels so powerful and strong and different – it sort of turns me into a whole other character in the play. Throughout the story, I'm a bit sort of kid-ish, I'm fun and funny, and then you can see through that dance how I sort of mature. Stepping into that adult life, just through that dance, and then making that last decision.



Ngali Shaw



Discuss performance style

What connections can you make between Ngali Shaw's comments about dance and the performance styles of this production?

'We came up with that final sequence by taking AFL moves and transferring them into contemporary dance.'

NGALI SHAW



Tibian Wyles



Tibian Wyles

SONNY PLAYED BY TIBIAN WYLES

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

Sonny changes throughout the show, which is interesting. He becomes the protector of Jayma, and his culture and family. Throughout the show he gets trapped into the peer pressure of the culture of the footy club, sacrificing his own values for his family.

How do you embody your character?

I embody Sonny through his physicality. At the start, he's really tense in this show – he's tense in a lot of stuff that he does. It's kind of that older cousin, protector role – being the tough guy and a bit standoffish to the boys. And then as he gets comfortable within the club, he starts to relax and he's a bit more fluid in his movements and more connected in the way he moves on the football field as well.

He finds a fluidity within his body, but also a lot more with the people around him, in terms of who he gets closer to. He gets closer to a lot of the boys, especially Gorby, throughout the show.

Then finally, Sonny finds a way to connect the tenseness and fluidity where it's more staunch.

How did you work with the cast and creative team to develop the Grand Final scene at the play's conclusion?

I'd say the most focused is when we're doing the physical movements of things, like the fight scene. For me, the most focused I've ever been is in a lot of the physical sequences with other actors. I need to be like on point, otherwise something could go wrong.

In terms of the acting and in scenes, I have to stay focused because there's so many people on stage – you have to be aware of everyone and know who's speaking next.

Sometimes as actors we have a set choreography within the scenes, but sometimes someone might want to do something a bit different. Not a lot, but it might change just a little bit, that might need you to react in a different way. I'm staying focused for those moments. As actors, we love those small changes within a scene – all acting is reacting to people. As actors, you live for those moments when someone tries something different. It keeps you on your toes and it makes it exciting to react.



Discuss focus

Discuss how Tibian Wyles uses the performance skill of focus in the fight scene.



Discuss expressive skills

How does Tibian Wyles use movement and gesture to portray Sonny?

'Throughout the show he gets trapped into the peer pressure of the culture of the footy club, sacrificing his own values for his family.'

TIBIAN WYLES



Ngali Shaw and Ben O'Toole



Ben O'Toole

'For Joe specifically, his desire to win a premiership flag is constantly being weighed up against his responsibility to do the right thing – the right thing by his mates, the team and his family.'

BEN O'TOOLE

JOE PLAYED BY BEN O'TOOLE

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

Joe is the captain of the Currawongs. He's been playing for the same club for 25 years and has never won a premiership flag. He is the most handsome man in the entire town of Cutting Cove and his wife Lily is the luckiest woman on earth, obviously. He's an honest man, with a respectable moral compass, and takes his role as captain quite seriously. However, he has one major flaw: his desire to win a premiership – Joe is the type of man that is fiercely loyal, provided you don't stand in his way.

How do you embody your character?

One of the main things I tried to focus on when tackling this role is his physical appearance; his stature. He needs to look like a player that has been taking the game seriously for nearly 25 years. That kind of build is lean and strong, so a lot of weightlifting and cardio. Joe is also from a small country town and has never really left. This town and this team are his world, so I like to broaden his Australian accent a little, try to make him sound a little more rural to really plant him in this time and this place.

How do design elements like costumes, props and the set impact your performance? What helps and how?

Our show is quite modest when it comes to props and set, and our costuming is quite minimal, but it does help. Mainly the training scenes when we see our lads in their own clothes. Those conversations with the designers really helped deepen our understanding of the character. For example, Joe wears an old NASA shirt that is about three sizes too big in the first training scene. This tells me that he is very much a father that dresses for comfort. He is not concerned about his image. He wears crocs when not in training shoes. He is a creature of comfort, which says a little about his age and station in life. He is no longer posturing like a young hot-blooded male.



Ben O'Toole



Discuss context

How does Joe's behaviour communicate the themes of the play and relate to the play's context?



Discuss tension

Discuss how Ben O'Toole manipulates the dramatic element of tension in his performance.

Do you consciously experiment with/manipulate tension in your performance? How so?

Absolutely. It's to be found everywhere in a show like this. Physical tension is an obvious one, considering how physical the show is. Something as simple as holding your breath can subconsciously encourage an audience to follow suit and therefore lean a little more forward in their seat. Emotional and psychological tension are present the entire time as well. For Joe specifically, his desire to win a premierships flag is constantly being weighed up against his responsibility to do the right thing – the right thing by his mates, the team and his family. This is the main source of conflict within Joe, and he ultimately lets his desire win over his responsibility, something he pays for dearly.

What is a big idea in this play, in relation to your character?

A big idea, or theme, within this play (specifically pertaining to my character, Joe) is: 'Where you stand matters'. Joe welcomes Jayma and Sonny into the team and his home with open arms whilst the going is good, and the lads are playing unbelievable football. However, the moment dissension raises its ugly head within the team's ranks, Joe's true colours shine. He turns his back on Jayma and Sonny when they need him most. He would argue he did it for the team. He would argue that he isn't racist. He would argue until he's blue in the face, but deep down, when push came to shove, Joe did not stand with his brothers when they needed him most, but instead, shunned them. Not only does where you stand matter, but when you stand matters. You cannot only be an ally when it suits you.



Ben O'Toole and Syd Brisbane



Syd Brisbane

THE GENERAL PLAYED BY SYD BRISBANE

What drives him?

A PREMIERSHIP. Nothing else matters until that is achieved; he feels his life is a failure.

How do you embody your character?

Every part of the body is taut. The chest is tight, shoulders pulled back. Weight on balls of feet ready to go, to change direction. He is very wound up so can explode vocally at any moment. Because of the vocal level required, to protect my voice for the rigors of an eight-show week I use the lat muscles [in the back] to support these outbursts and put the voice in a slightly higher register, which gives it a bit of twang. I use this vocal set up whenever I have to use big volume commands during matches. The voice is very Australian, really leaning into the Aussie accent without it ever becoming cartoon. Facial expression and gesture is driven by the emotional truth of each scene, i.e. it comes from within organically, not put on from the outside as you can do in some theatrical styles.

How do design elements impact your performance? What helps & how?

Costume: We swap between training gear, which helps with ease of movement for my character to be able to move quickly and easily in the 'taps beyond the knee' game played with Jayma, and match day/official clothes. I wear zip-up boots with a slight heel which are slightly dressy but also help with a sense of swagger. Black dress pants are matched with a polo shirt which is one size too small to accentuate muscle and fitness. Later on, we add a leather jacket, which is also on the small side, to give clean lines and add to the 'tightness' of the character.

Set: The walls have been brought in to shrink the size of the stage and bring us, as performers, closer to the audience. This creates a more intimate experience in such a large theatre as the Sumner. The benches, hooks and bags all help evoke the sense of a footy locker room. Having the bird totem high above us on the back wall reminds us of the significance of this work and the responsibility we have as storytellers to honour this work.



Discuss expressive skills

Discuss how Syd Brisbane manipulates movement, gesture, voice and facial expression in his performance.

'The voice is very Australian, really leaning into the Aussie accent without it ever becoming cartoon.'

SYD BRISBANE



Syd Brisbane

Props: Footballs are such a great way to show our skills with handball, the ease and familiarity of handling. It really puts your character into the game mindset. The medal which The General wears throughout the show is a reminder of what drives him, and as an actor you can feel it against your skin all show – not only the moments when the character displays it, which are always key moments in the story for my character.

Do you consciously experiment with/manipulate rhythm in your performance? How so?

Yes, absolutely. If there is a moment that we want to highlight with a pause, we will take all the gaps leading up to this moment out, i.e. all actors in that scene will be right on cue so that when the pause happens it has extra weight or value. This requires great listening teamwork and ensemble complicité so it's not just rushing through the text.

Also, during a performance you are very aware of the different audience response to the work, so you may vary the pace to get them more onside. Emotional scenes can vary significantly night to night. You have an overall blueprint/template, but you might take a slightly different journey to the end point in terms of pauses/timing.

What is the big idea in this play in relation to your character?

My word is my bond, but only where it suits me. The General is willing to break the contract to achieve his ambition. He believes mateship and trust is still a one-way street and Aboriginal people are only commodities to be used for white ambition. The General paints himself as a man of great leadership and understanding, a true friend to his Blak brothers, and yet when the line-in-the-sand moment comes, he's not willing to do the honourable thing.

The General thinks that as long as First Nations people can help us, White Australia, get what WE want, that's fine. He'll pay lip service to cultural understanding and education but as soon as it's going to cost him something, he pulls out the rug.



Discuss tension

Discuss how Syd Brisbane manipulates the dramatic element of rhythm in his performance.



Discuss themes

Discuss what role The General plays in exploring the big ideas of the play.

'He is very wound up so he can explode vocally at any moment.'

SYD BRISBANE



Eddie Orton and Tibian Wyles



Eddie Orton

WOODSY PLAYED BY EDDIE ORTON

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

I play the character of Woodsy in 37. He's what people call in the play a 'seventh generation Cove Boy,' meaning his family has been living in Cutting Cove for a very long time. His family owns a substantial farm where the team does some of their pre-season training. He's been a part of the football club since he was a child and is a key member of the team because of his skill, but also because of the money his family injects into the club. What drives Woodsy is a sense of injustice. He is used to the football club being a place of banter and jokes that to some would be too far, but to him and his teammates is all just fun and what we do in Australia. When he is reprimanded for his racial slur in the Bonding Time scene, he is forced to either change or be kicked out of the club. Woodsy sucks this up, but the moment Adam Goodes does the 'war dance' during Indigenous Round, he feels a great sense of injustice. Why can Adam Goodes throw a spear at white people in the crowd? Why can he attack us? When people call Woodsy racist, he would ask, why can't everyone just take a joke?

How do you embody your character?

This is an interesting question. I came in day one of rehearsal last year with some big acting choices. Hunched shoulders, some facial tics and a rough Australian accent. Eventually Isaac Drandic (the director) said to me, 'it's far scarier and more insidious if you're just yourself, if you speak in your voice. If you do the thick Aussie accent, it could look like a stereotype and the audience will judge the character instantly.' It's very enticing to want to do a lot when you play a character, especially a character that is very distant from yourself, but sometimes it is more powerful to trust the writing and just exist. In this show, I'm just being me honestly, but obviously doing and saying things that are the polar opposite to me. That hopefully creates a character that is more truthful.



Creating characters



Ngali Shaw and Eddie Orton

Hear some of the cast discuss how they use expressive skills to bring their characters to life in this video at mtc.com.au/eduhub

'It's very enticing to want to do a lot when you play a character, especially a character that is very distant from yourself, but sometimes it is more powerful to trust the writing and just exist.'

EDDIE ORTON



The cast of 37



Discuss conflict

Discuss how Eddie Orton manipulates the dramatic elements of conflict and tension in his performance.



Discuss themes

Discuss the themes Eddie Orton refers to in this Q&A and identify lines from the play that explore these.

'What drives Woodsy is a sense of injustice.'

EDDIE ORTON

How do design elements like costume, props and the set impact your performance? What helps and how?

For 37, the main costume item that informed so much of my character was the watch I wear. It's a high-tech digital watch with all the bells and whistles. When I put this on, I really felt like Woodsy. The watch just screamed 'rich farm boy who went to private school who also takes footy training way too seriously'. We were fortunate with our set in that we had the flooring down from day one of rehearsal, so we had ample time to get accustomed to it and let it inform our work early on.

Do you consciously experiment with/manipulate conflict in your performance? How so?

With this character, I wouldn't say I have to manipulate the conflict, because what I say and do is already so incendiary. What I do experiment with every night is the level that I hit these conflict moments with. Through listening to my fellow actors and responding to what they give me each night, moments change. Sometimes the same moment could be charged and full of visible tension one night and completely relaxed the next. With any moment on stage, it's all about listening and responding.

What is a big idea in this play, in relation to your character?

In relation to my character, a big idea this play explores is how quickly seeds of hate and division can grow in young white men. When Woodsy is pushed into a corner, he chooses not to change, and his views devolve into bigotry and hate. Woodsy believes that Adam Goodes speaking up and throwing a spear is him declaring war on White Australia, when in fact it's a First Nations man fighting for equality. And when a privileged, wealthy white man faces something akin to equality, they feel like they're losing something.



Thomas Larkin



Thomas Larkin



Discuss expressive skills

Discuss how Thomas Larkin manipulates voice and movement in his performance.

‘To embody GJ, I first dig into the text, noting everything said about or to him.’

THOMAS LARKIN

GJ PLAYED BY THOMAS LARKIN

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

GJ (short for General Junior) is one of the youngest players in the Currawong Cove football team and the son of the coach, the General. Their relationship is fraught. The General never empowers or supports GJ, either publicly or privately. Whether it's tough love or genuine disappointment, GJ never seems to get the validation he craves. This lack of affirmation drives GJ to desperately seek his father's approval throughout most of the play, influencing his decisions and emotional journey throughout the play.

How do you embody your character?

To embody GJ, I first dig into the text, noting everything said about or to him. This gives me clues about how others perceive him and how he sees himself. GJ's physicality is crucial, as this play is incredibly physical. I do a lot of lifting and moving, so warming up my body thoroughly is essential. Similarly, warming up my voice is critical, as there's shouting, chanting, and emotionally heightened scenes that demand vocal strength and clarity. GJ's movements and gestures reflect his inner conflict, and I use this to build his youthful, often uncertain energy.

How do design elements like costumes, props, and the set impact your performance?

Costumes and props inform so much about character. For GJ, small details like whether his footy socks are pulled all the way up or casually scrunched down help show how much pride or frustration he feels toward the team. Props like the team football and set elements like the locker room shape the world GJ lives in and how he interacts with others. These tangible elements ground the performance and help immerse both the actor and audience in the story.



The cast of 37



Discuss conflict

Discuss how Thomas Larkin manipulates the dramatic elements of conflict in his performance.

‘The strained relationship between GJ and the General reflects a universal theme of seeking parental approval.’

THOMAS LARKIN

Do you consciously experiment with/manipulate conflict in your performance? How so?

Absolutely. I approach scenes by exploring opposite choices to keep the work fresh and to discover interesting dynamics. For example, I might try playing a moment of conflict with surprising calmness or unexpected anger to see how it shifts the energy of the scene. I believe great acting comes from great choices, and experimenting is key to finding the most compelling ones after working collaboratively with the cast and creative team.

What is a big idea in this play, in relation to your character?

The complex and often unspoken tension between fathers and sons is a big idea in 37. The strained relationship between GJ and the General reflects a universal theme of seeking parental approval. Many people will relate to the push-and-pull dynamic of wanting to please a parent while grappling with disappointment or unmet expectations. It's a powerful and deeply emotional thread to explore.



Tibian Wyles, Syd Brisbane and Mitchell Brotz



Mitchell Brotz

GORBY PLAYED BY MITCHELL BROTZ

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

Gorby is a naive, well-meaning person who has been known to say some off-colour things, never out of hate, but purely ignorance. Gorby has found a place in this football team, which allows him to be a part of something that he, on his own, would never be able to achieve. The butt of some players' jokes, he is nevertheless thrilled to be able to play with some players that he looks up to.

How do you embody your character?

With Gorby, I try to capture an immature, slightly dim character. Vocally, my voice fluctuates greatly, with a higher range when Gorby is feeling attacked or over excitable. Gorby has no poker face, so what is going on inside will very likely be seen on stage. Gorby is clearly the least fit member of the team but tries his absolute best to offer help in some way – the sort of player that will receive a coach's award for effort, but never a best and fairest.

Do you consciously experiment with/manipulate conflict in your performance? How so?

Vocally I create contrast with the fluctuations, and some of the humour with Gorby comes from creating this contrast. Sometimes I'll be so over the top with some of Gorby's lines (with yelling or manic movements) and sometimes I'll deliver them with subtlety, which can help move away from being a bit one note and add dimension and depth to character. Sometimes it can also just be far funnier to underplay a moment.

What is a big idea in this play, in relation to your character?

Gorby is someone who could very easily be manipulated into believing hateful things by someone like a Woodsy. Will Gorby continue to ask questions and try his best to gain a better understanding of something that he's clearly in the deep end about, or will he shut down and believe what he is told by others with biased and hateful perspectives? This is very much an idea that is explored in the play for Gorby, and indeed a lot of the other characters in their own ways. Thinking about what may have happened before, and after, the play takes place can help explore this idea and inform the way the character is played.



Discuss voice

Discuss how Mitchell Brotz manipulates voice in his performance.



Discuss contrast

Discuss how Mitchell Brotz manipulates the dramatic element of contrast in his performance.

'Gorby has no poker face, so what is going on inside will very likely be seen on stage.'

MITCHELL BROTZ



Samuel Buckley (middle)



Samuel Buckley



Discuss expressive skills

Discuss how Samuel Buckley manipulates movement and gesture in his performance.

‘His intelligence comes with arrogance and an ego to fill a room.’

SAMUEL BUCKLEY

APPLES PLAYED BY SAMUEL BUCKLEY

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

Apples comes from a wealthy family of abalone divers and as a result had access to a wealth of opportunity and education. He is a great champion of people and their rights but fails to be the person who can stand up for others when it means he may lose something. His intelligence comes with arrogance and an ego to fill a room. In a space of loud and rough men, Apples uses humour and performance to come out on top – and stay there. For Apples, he really is the best apple in the apple cart!

How do you embody your character?

He is the best looking, the smartest, the wisest person around – and everyone knows it – that’s how he moves. When someone questions him, they’re the idiot. I work with this in mind and it keeps me moving around the space as though he owns it. His family has put a lot of money into the club. It is Apples’s stage.

How do design elements like costumes, props, and the set impact your performance?

For the role, my hair is cut and dyed blonde, and I wear fake tattoos for a month. I would go home from the show and see Apples in the mirror – he followed me everywhere! People in public would ask me about my tattoos! All of this gets you out of your own head and connected to the character. Why does he dye his hair? Why does he have such cheap shoes? How many drinks deep was he when the Currawong was tattooed on his stomach? All of these questions you get to answer as the actor and build the story behind Apples. Not all of these questions I ask myself can be specifically read by the audience, but it gives me a relationship with Apples, so I can really feel and understand his decisions. On a very basic level (I have never been a footy boy) wearing footy guernseys and the whole kit transports you straight to the field. And I mean, come on, it’s awesome running through a banner every night – you really feel it!



Samuel Buckley (far left)

What is a big idea in this play, in relation to your character?

Who pays the price? The team is asked a question – will they stand up against racism and lose the flag, or are they going to sacrifice these two boys for the sake of glory? Apples appears to be an ally and safe place for Sonny and Jayma, but ultimately, he fails them. All throughout, Apples is vocal against the racist remarks and stands as a person who we can look up to for holding his morals. Apples even names it – *'it's wrong, its f*ckin' wrong'* – in the boardroom, but when push comes to shove, he abandons Sonny and Jayma and plays the game. For him, he is unable to pay the price and instead chooses to put this out of his mind, so that he can be the victor at the expense of Sonny and Jayma. This is another big idea – saying nothing is racist. Apples chooses himself over what is right and puts into question everything else he says throughout the play. His intellect and political correctness are fluff to the fact that he can't truly stand up against racism. It's all empty words in the end.



Discuss costume

Discuss how costume elements help communicate the character of Apples.



Discuss themes

Discuss the notion of 'who pays the price' and how it is explored in the play.

'For the role, my hair is cut and dyed blonde, and I wear fake tattoos for a month.'

SAMUEL BUCKLEY



Anthony Standish (far right)



Anthony Standish

DAZZA PLAYED BY ANTHONY STANDISH

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

Dazza is a board member, trainer and player. He takes pride in the club, loves footy and loves trying to be one of the boys. He lusts for power and one day hopes to take over from the general and be the head coach.

How do design elements like costumes, props, and the set impact your performance?

Costume helps me a lot to embody character. His clothes are ill-fitting, which influence the way he walks and holds himself, and that physicality affects how he sounds, but the main thing is the ensemble of actors – it makes it easy to embody the character when you have the support of such a strong cast.

Props are such a gift for me. I love finding how many props I can use in a scene. Sometimes it ends up being too much, but it's easier to let go of props than to add more. In rehearsals, I had a few offers with certain props that then had to be cut because it takes away from the scene or is too distracting, but it's great to have the permission to play and experiment with props.



Discuss costume

Discuss how costume elements impact the way Anthony Standish manipulates his expressive skills to communicate the character of Dazza.

'Costume helps me a lot to embody character. His clothes are ill-fitting, which influence the way he walks and holds himself.'

ANTHONY STANDISH

ANT PLAYED BY BLAKE DRAPER

Tell us about your character in a nutshell. What drives them?

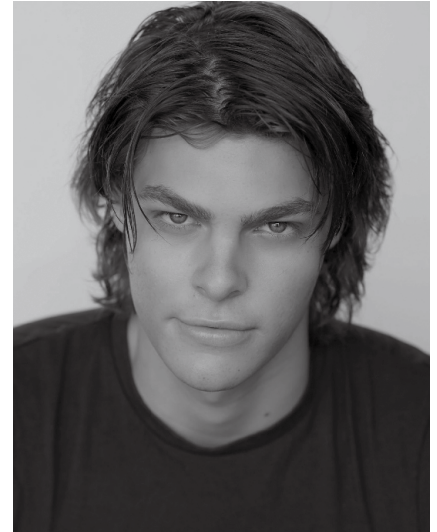
There is a distinctive physicality for Ant, which comes through in the way he composes himself. There's an accentuated swagger to him, almost leaning into the caricature of how some other characters may view him. This confident and knowing facade also comes as a sort of self-defence mechanism. Judging by the treatment of Jayma and Sonny, it's pretty safe to assume that Ant was the team racial punching bag for quite some time, the remnants of this can be seen in the instances of discrimination against his Italian heritage. There's a slight break in how he presents himself when this occurs, especially in the scenes where he is called a 'wog', or towards the end of the play when he turns a blind eye to racist acts directed at Jayma and Sonny, always retreating silently, rather than standing up.

How do design elements like costumes, props, and the set impact your performance?

I think costumes, props and sets certainly have an impact on performance, but in a secondary sense. The character should always come from the internal, from what's printed in the script, and the work that comes from that is the core. The tangible elements all come to fruition as a way of assisting the character as outlined on the page, but there is something to be said about the way body and mind can be transformed, especially from costume. When you inhabit the clothes a character wears, it becomes real. You start to consider why they chose to wear what they wear, how it makes them feel (how you feel as a performer wearing it). It's the way the character has decided to present themselves to the world and it's imperative to embrace it and see how your instinct responds to it. I find this particularly alive in the football scenes. The kit represents a sort of battle armour, ready to go to war. The body responds to this accordingly – it's more brutish, energised, powerful. This is significantly reduced in scenes when Ant is lounging about in baggy tracksuit pants and oversized hoodies. The internal, though the core, is always impacted by the external – it's up to the performer to allow that in to create the full representation of the character.

What is a big idea in this play, in relation to your character?

The big idea for me, and in my opinion the heart of 37, is the idea that it's important where you stand. Ant is a character that has faced his fair share of discrimination, and the residue of this is present in the play. It's interesting to see that when the two newcomers join the team, and the racism is now directed towards them, Ant can either decide to stand up or let it slide. In an almost Stockholm syndrome-type of way, he takes the side of his former persecutors, Woodsy and Dazza. He believes that if he sides with them, the heat will be off him and he can be at peace. Though he may be safe from further persecution, this approach leads him to compromising his integrity and morals. He sees two characters in a position of pain, not too dissimilar from him, and he values his safety over their wellbeing.



Blake Draper



Discuss costume

Discuss how production areas assist Blake Draper to portray his character on stage.

'The big idea for me, and in my opinion the heart of 37, is the idea that it's important where you stand.'

BLAKE DRAPER

Composition and sound design



Composer & Sound Designer James Henry in rehearsal
Photo: Josh Scott

Learn more about music and sounds in 37 in this Q&A with Composer & Sound Designer James Henry.

What's your role as Composer & Sound Designer? How does music/sound contribute to the storytelling in this work?

The lines often blur between sound design and composition, particularly when one person is responsible for both roles. Different shows demand a different balance between these disciplines. In 37, I primarily see my role as a composer. However, there are moments – such as working with speaker placement, signal sends, and sound levels – where I step into the role of sound designer.

The show was previously performed at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) with the same director, so many decisions about where sound and music would be placed, as well as their overall character, had already been established. From my perspective, I wanted to further refine the contrasting worlds of the White football club and the traditional Aboriginal Marngrook worlds. My aim was to preserve their distinctiveness while also making them more complementary during the football matches where the two intersect.

What kinds of instruments/sounds have you used in this show?

Isaac Drandic, the director, wanted to represent traditional football culture through the club anthems. To achieve this, I limited my sound palette to brass and percussion – particularly the snare drum – to evoke a military vibe. These elements allowed me to create bold, rhythmic textures while also incorporating subtle, atmospheric underscoring. For the Aboriginal world, I used voice as texture alongside clapsticks to ground the sound design in cultural authenticity.

During the football matches, I found a neutral sonic territory that bridged these worlds using taiko drums and other natural drum loops and samples. At the end of the play, I introduced organic-sounding pads to complement the emotional tone of the scene and evoke a sense of spirituality. Currawong calls were also included to further tie the soundscape to the team.



Composer & Sound Designer
James Henry



Discuss application of symbol

Discuss how sound is used symbolically to represent traditional football culture and spirituality.



Discuss currawongs

Discuss the interrelationship between sound design and set design in regards to currawongs.

‘During the football matches, I found a neutral sonic territory that bridged these worlds using taiko drums and other natural drum loops and samples.’

JAMES HENRY
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Tell us about the music and sound in the opening moments of the show.

The opening of the show was designed to evoke the spiritual world as much as possible. I combined pads and vocals, recording the cast to create most of the vocal textures. This approach felt like a meaningful way to incorporate their spirit into the sound design. It was inspired by the set design idea where the cast and crew added their handprints to an image of a currawong in the change room.

Through choreography and direction, distinct contrasts were established between pre-match, during the match and post-match. I emphasised this through tight beginnings and endings in the football match music. Isaac played a key role in shaping these decisions, including the balance of the siren and whistle sounds. Finding the right levels for these elements was crucial to ensure they had impact without overwhelming the audience.



The cast of 37

Do you consciously use music/sound to manipulate mood? If so, can you give an example?

Tempo played a significant role in setting the mood of each scene and intensifying the action. Even within the same tempo, rhythmic choices shaped the scene's dynamics. For instance, in a particular football match, Jayma was isolated on the field while the rest of the team operated like a well-oiled military unit. To reflect this, I used strong percussion when the team was the focus and reduced it when Jayma took centre stage. Using QLab, I carefully balanced unity and contrast through devamping [a technique used in sound design to allow performers to follow the timing of music] to make the scene cohesive yet distinctive in its moments.

Do you consciously use music/sound to manipulate tension? If so, can you give an example?

Tension in the show was often achieved through non-rhythmic moments. Brass and snare provided understated underscoring, where their timbres created tension without being overtly musical. Syncopation in the football match rhythms added energy and subtle tension, while dissonance and atonality were sparingly employed to heighten drama. I was mindful not to make the manipulation too obvious to the audience, often using long fades to ease sounds into the mix. This approach ensured the audience could feel the atmosphere before consciously noticing the sound, with fade durations and levels carefully calibrated to achieve the desired effect.



Discuss mood

Discuss how James Henry manipulates the dramatic element of mood with his composition and sound design.



Discuss tension

Discuss how James Henry manipulates the dramatic element of tension with his composition and sound design.



Video trailer

Watch the video trailer for 37 and listen for excerpts of the music from the production at mtc.com.au/eduhub

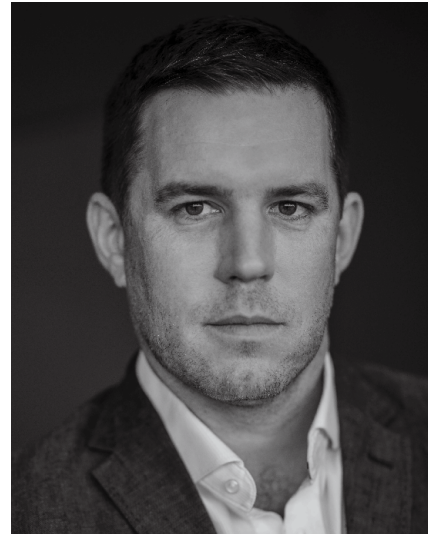
'The opening of the show was designed to evoke the spiritual world as much as possible. I combined pads and vocals, recording the cast to create most of the vocal textures.'

JAMES HENRY
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Lighting design



Tibian Wyles



Lighting Designer Ben Hughes

Learn more about lighting in 37 in this Q&A with Lighting Designer Ben Hughes.

What's your role as Lighting Designer? How does lighting contribute to the storytelling in this work?

Obviously a lighting designer is responsible for the lighting of a production, that's there from the title, but it's not just that. As a member of the creative team, which is led by the director, there is a responsibility to help get the work to the best level it can be. Direction, design, dramaturgy – all these interact and play off each other, so I feel you can't effectively design the lighting for a work without interacting and collaborating with each of the other disciplines.

In a practical sense, lighting contributes to the storytelling by helping us locate time and place, and by guiding an audience through where to look at any moment.

What kinds of lighting fixtures have you used in this show?

37 uses a range of different lighting fixtures. The overhead rig on the floating pipe grid consists of ETC Source4 tungsten profiles and about 15 small moving head LED wash units. Outside of that, there are some LED colour-changing profiles in higher and lower sidelight positions, an assortment of other LED profiles used for scenic highlights, and a few Mac Encore spot moving lights in front-of-house positions. Upstage of the main set wall there are various Mac Encore Wash fixtures used to create the different backlight shadows through the set openings.

Most of the acting light for the show is from the high side, with some of the night scenes lit predominately from a low side angle.

Could you tell us about the lighting in the opening moments of the show?

The opening moments start in a dark, moody, dreamlike place, with sharp angles and some more saturated colour. As the scene builds and starts to transition towards The General's opening monologue, the intensity builds and the colour moves towards a cold white. The whole sequence takes the audience on a journey.



Theatre terminology

Identify theatre terminology you might use when analysing the lighting design in this production.

'Most of the acting light for the show is from the high side, with some of the night scenes lit predominately from a low side angle.'

BEN HUGHES
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Do you consciously use lighting to manipulate mood? If so, can you give an example?

Absolutely – lighting is one of the elements that can manipulate mood and I consciously use it to do so. An example might be the long and slow fade that makes the space both colder and gives a feeling of sharpness, which occurs in the lead-in to the Sonny and Woodsy altercation. The audience shouldn't consciously notice it's happening, but by slowly manipulating the space, the intention is the pressure of the scene is accented.



The cast of 37

Do you consciously use lighting to manipulate climax? If so, can you give an example?

Climax could be many things – is it an end point? A revelation? The climax of a moment which needs to be accented before the play moves on?

I would hesitate to say that I manipulate climax as such, but there are definitely moments where climactic points are accented or highlighted. An example might be Jayma's mark in the final moments of the play. The mark is accented with backlight as a physical moment, and then there is another shift as the siren sounds to concentrate the audience on Jayma while we wait for him to make his decision.



The cast of 37



Discuss climax

Discuss how Ben Hughes manipulates the dramatic element of climax with his lighting design.



Discuss mood

Discuss how Ben Hughes manipulates the dramatic element of mood with his lighting design.

'Lighting is one of the elements that can manipulate mood and I consciously use it to do so.'

**BEN HUGHES
LIGHTING DESIGNER**



Costume design

The costumes for 37 were designed by Dale Ferguson.

There are a number of looks throughout the show, including monochromatic shorts, singlets and t-shirts (Prologue: Marngrook Beginnings), matching Cutting Cove Currawongs polo shirts (Scene 1: Season launch), a colourful assortment of training gear (Scene 3: Voices boys), adding layers of hoodies, flannel shirts and jumpers (Scene 5: Moo!), game-day guernseys in two team colours (Scene 9: The last game of the regular season) and specifically Jayma's Indigenous round Sydney Swans jumper with Adam Goodes' number 37 (Scene 13: 37).

Dale Ferguson designed a CCFC logo for the Cutting Cove Football Club uniforms, which also appears on the lectern in Scene 1.



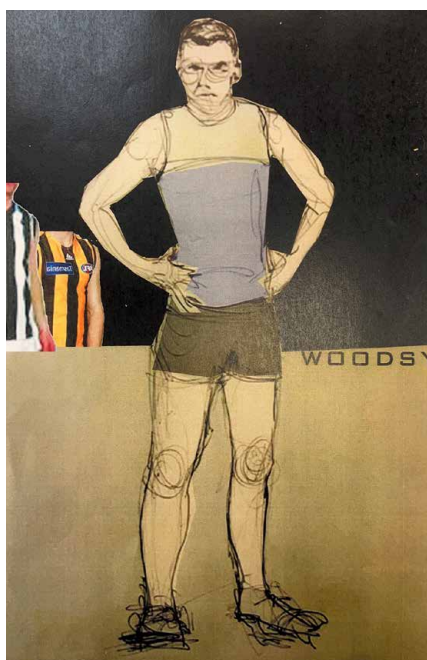
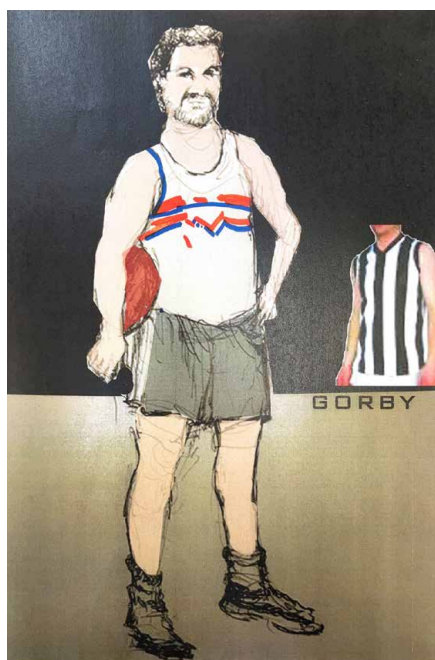
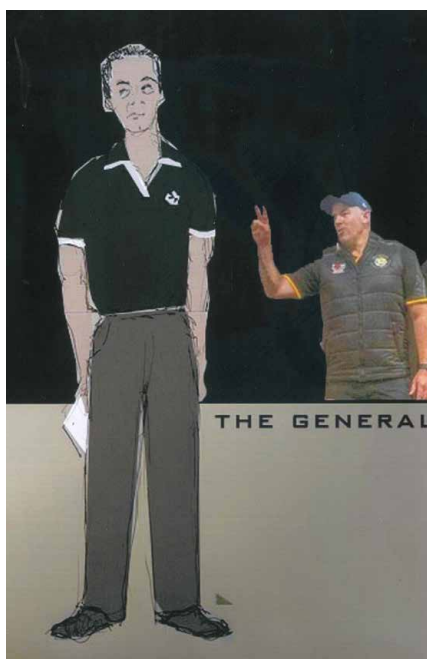
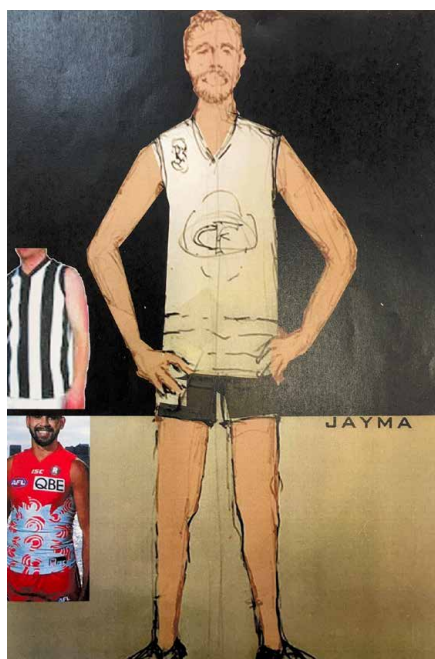
Analyse colour palette

Compare and contrast how colour is used in the costume design between different scenes and how it manipulates the dramatic element of mood.



Discuss character clothes

Discuss how costumes help communicate character in a particular scene.



Costume renders by Dale Ferguson



MARNGROOK

Bunurong/Gadigal artist Ngairee Anderson made a **Marngrook** for this production of 37. She began the practice after attending Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association seven years ago.

‘My journey to find my songlines has been an emotional one and with the help of wonderful community at our nearest Aboriginal gathering place in Hastings, I have grown within myself and embraced my culture more than ever,’ she says.

‘I started [making Marngrooks] at our bubup’s (children’s) group and for my own children. I was then offered a couple of contracts from a beautiful friend and fellow artist Emily Webbers of Wurruck Yambo and the rest they say is history.’

Anderson sources possum skin from New Zealand as possums are a protected species in Australia, then uses imitation sinew or thread to sew it into the shape of a ball.

‘Traditionally they were just made into an oval shape almost like a football and stuffed with balsa rocks, shells, stringybark and ash,’ she explains.

‘As with any culture, it is important to keep the stories and traditions alive ... We are 60,000-plus-year-old culture. We are awakening languages and awakening traditions that we thought were long gone. By teaching our sons and daughters their culture we ensure that they keep our songlines going strong and raising future elders.’

‘By teaching our sons and daughters their culture we ensure they keep our songlines going strong ...’

NGAIREE ANDERSON
BUNURONG/GADIGAL ARTIST

FOOTY PARAPHERNALIA

The world of 37 is filled with items typically found on footy fields and locker rooms, including **footballs** (red and yellow), **drink bottles** (mismatched with characters’ names on them) and **caddies**, a variety of **backpacks**, a blocking pad, and a **net storage basket** for the footballs.



The cast of 37



Identify props

For each of the props mentioned, identify when you saw it onstage and how it helped establish setting, was used symbolically, communicated character or contributed to the storytelling.

CONSUMABLE PROPS

Consumable props are items that need to be replenished for each performance. The **beer cans** are in fact 'sleeves' of beer cans that slip over sparkling water.

The **run-through banner** is made from crepe paper, and is set in place by stage managers dressed as football fans. Enough banners were made to last the entire season.



The run-through banner



Beer can sleeves over sparkling water cans

OTHER PROPS

Other props complete the theatrical world of 37, including a lectern, benches, milk crates, camping stools, yoga mat, esky, towels, medal, whistle, fabric bag with bottle caps, raffle tickets and tin, clipboard and a NAIDOC Week Thank You card.

The meat tray, featured in Scene 12: Spearing a cheer squad, includes fake sausages (homemade gak in a twist balloon), steaks and chops (made from polystyrene).



Fake meat tray

Make-up

Following Scene 16, when Sonny punches Woodsy, actor Eddie Orton uses a 'bruise palette' of make-up to apply his theatrical bruise offstage before appearing in Scene 19 with a black eye.



Bruise palette

STEP 1

Apply purple under the eye – to the top of the cheekbone.

STEP 2

Apply dark red below the bottom eyelid.

STEP 3

Apply dark blue under the eye near the outside corner and cheekbone and blend slightly towards underneath the centre of the eye.

STEP 4

Apply yellow around the bottom edge of the bruise.

STEP 5

Blend the layers from the eye out to the yellow.

Analysis questions

The following questions are intended to help you analyse how **37** was interpreted onstage through the lens of VCE Drama.

The cast of **37**



PRODUCTION AREAS

Costume

- Consider moments when you saw actors change costume quickly onstage. Discuss how a practical aspect of the costume design was used to realise the dramatic potential of the script.
- Analyse how the Cutting Cove uniforms enhanced the dramatic potential of the script in a specific scene.

Lighting

- Discuss how lighting was used to transform time and place in Scene 5: Moo!
- Analyse how lighting is used to manipulate mood in two contrasting moments from the performance, using theatre terminology from the lighting designer's Q&A.

Props

- Analyse how props are used to transform time and place in Scene 7: Bonding time.
- Consider the interrelationship between props and climax in the grand final scene.

Set pieces

- Describe how the currawong murals and the line of hooks are examples of application of symbol in the set design.
- Discuss the interrelationship between set design and performance styles.

Sound design

- Using terminology from the Composer & Sound Designer's Q&A, discuss how different instruments were used to manipulate mood?
- Analyse how contrast was used in the Prologue music.

Make-up

- How was make-up (Woodsy's black eye) used to enhance the dramatic potential of the script?



Flashcards

Refresh your memory of the definitions with our flashcards for dramatic elements, performance skills, expressive skills and production areas at mtc.com.au/eduhub.

Remember to always consult VCAA documents when preparing for VCE exams.



The cast of 37

EXPRESSIVE SKILLS

Voice

- Analyse how Syd Brisbane manipulated voice to embody The General in Scene 1: Season launch.
- Describe how Ngali Shaw manipulated his voice in two contrasting scenes.

Movement

- Analyse how Tibian Wyles manipulated movement to enhance the dramatic potential of the script in the prologue.
- Describe the movements used by the cast in the football training scenes.

Gesture

- Describe how gesture was manipulated by one actor in Scene 12: Spearing a cheer squad.
- Analyse how one actor manipulated gesture in a moment of tension.

Facial expressions

- Look through the production photos in this pack and compare and contrast two moments that demonstrate one actor's use of facial expression.



The cast of 37

PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Focus

- Analyse one actor's use of focus to sustain character. Think about a climactic moment in the play and discuss how focus contributes to the actor-audience relationship.

Timing

- How did timing regulate the pace of the performance? Discuss the interrelationship between sound design, movement and timing in Scene 9: Last game of the season.

Energy

- Analyse how energy was used to manipulate tension and climax in Scene 7: Bonding time.

Actor-audience relationship

- Reflect on a moment when you felt a connection to a character and describe what the performer was doing to make you feel this way.



Analyse scenes

Explore key scenes from the production in the post-show resource at mtc.com.au/eduhub

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY



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