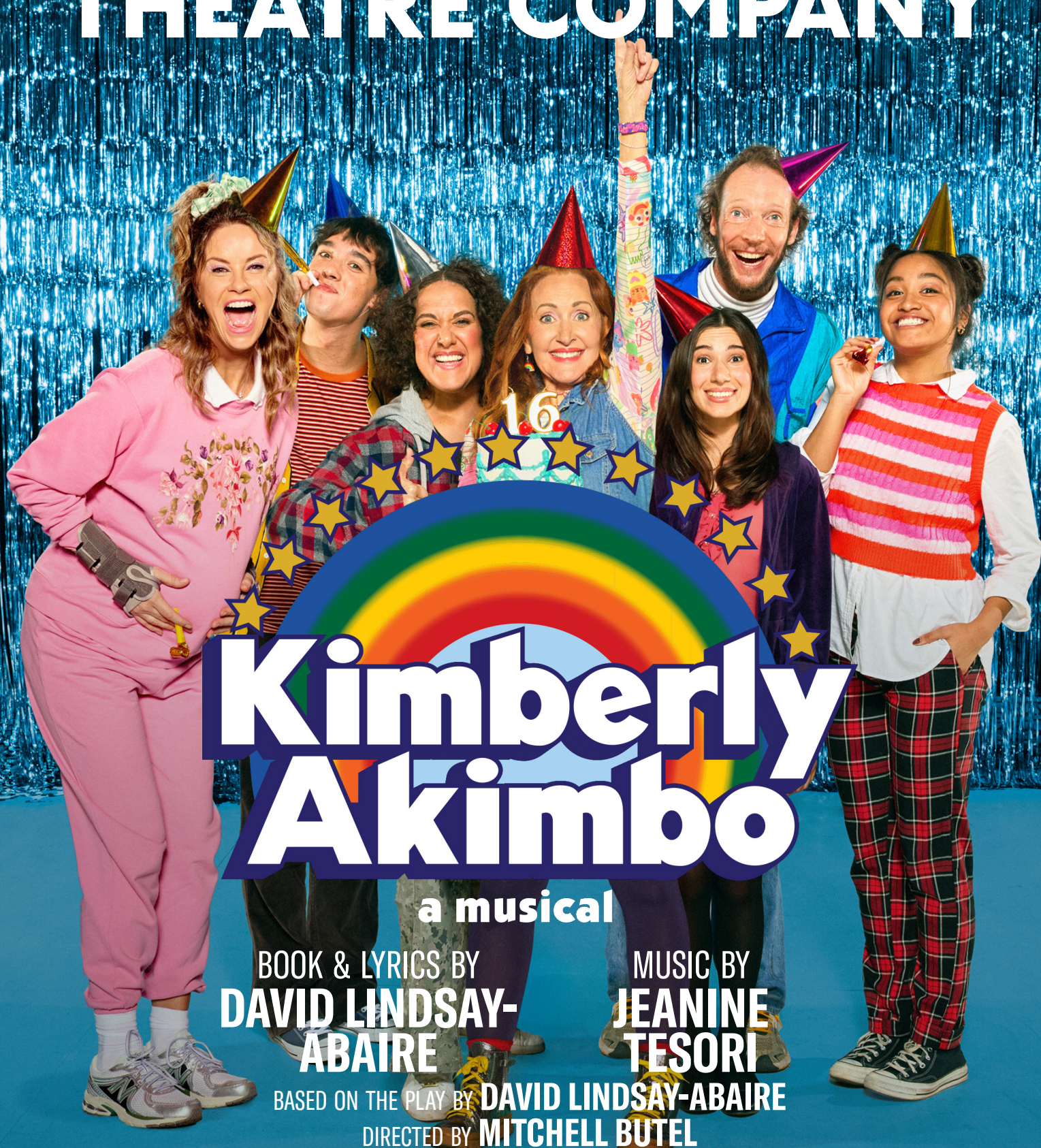


26 JUL —
30 AUG 2025

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

ARTS CENTRE
MELBOURNE



Kimberly Akimbo

a musical

BOOK & LYRICS BY
**DAVID LINDSAY-
ABAIRE**

MUSIC BY
**JEANINE
TESORI**

BASED ON THE PLAY BY **DAVID LINDSAY-ABAIRE**
DIRECTED BY **MITCHELL BUTEL**

LICENSED EXCLUSIVELY BY MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL (AUSTRALASIA)

EDUCATION PACK – PART A

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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

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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.

Melbourne Theatre Company

At Melbourne Theatre Company we believe theatre is for everyone. We are Melbourne's home of live storytelling, producing an annual season of plays created for and about the world today.



Southbank Theatre. Photo: Benjamin Healley

Beyond the stage, we run a range of initiatives that support artist development, champion new writing, invest in future audiences and address underrepresentation across the industry.

OUR VISION

To be recognised as one of the world's preeminent theatre companies, leading the cultural conversation and chosen as a favourite destination for Australians.

OUR PURPOSE

To share remarkable stories that enable people to better understand the world around them.

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: mtc.com.au/eduhub

About the show



Nathan O'Keefe, Marina Prior and Christie Whelan Browne in rehearsal

New Jersey, 1999: from a sea of teen angst, unrequited crushes and popularity contests bursts Kimberly, a musical heroine like no other. Equal parts teen comedy, heist caper and unlikely love story, her rollercoaster journey shows that the tempo of your own song is yours to set. Born with a genetic rarity that means she ages at four times the rate of everyone else, Kimberly is a teen in mid-life form and living on borrowed time. She can cope with her dropkick dad and narcissistic mum – can't spell 'dysfunction' without 'fun', right? But when her criminal aunt Debra shows up with a get-rich-quick scheme too good to be legal, Kimberly decides you're only young once.

Kimberly Akimbo: A Musical is the musical that took Broadway by storm. It won countless hearts and raked in five Tony awards including Best Musical, with music by Jeanine Tesori, the brilliant mind behind the critically acclaimed *Fun Home*. This Australian premiere directed by four-time Helpmann Award-winner Mitchell Butel and starring Marina Prior, Casey Donovan and Christie Whelan Browne brims with infectious energy and tunes that soar.

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

This production contains coarse language and mature themes. For detailed information about the production's content, visit our production content guide at mtc.com.au/production-content-guide.

DURATION

Approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

CO-PRODUCER



Hear from
the cast



Hear actors Marina Prior and Christie Whelan Browne discuss the themes of *Kimberly Akimbo* in this video.



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

Cast and creatives



**Marty Alix
Martin**



**Allycia Angeles
Delia**



**Casey Donovan
Debra**



**Alana Iannace
Teresa**



**Nathan O'Keefe
Buddy Levaco**



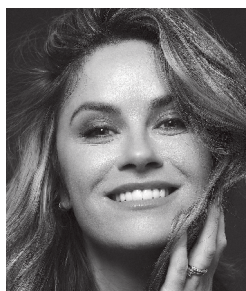
**Marina Prior
Kimberly Levaco**



**Jacob Rozario
Aaron**



**Darcy Wain
Seth**



**Christie Whelan Browne
Pattie Levaco**



**Millicent Sarre
Cover**



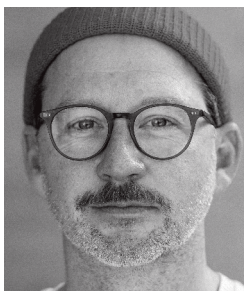
**Mitchell Butel
Director**



**Kym Purling
Musical Director**



**Amy Campbell
Choreographer**



**Jonathon Oxlade
Set Designer**



**Ailsa Paterson
Costume Designer**



Read their bios

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



Matt Scott
Lighting Designer



Andrew Poppleton
Sound Designer



Matt Byrne
Video Content Creator



Jennifer Innes
Accent Coach



Annabel Matheson
Intimacy Coordinator



Luke Carbon
Reed 1



Martin Corcoran
Reed 2



Tom Doublier
Drums



Darcy Gilkerson
Cello



Paul Jenkins
Reed 1



Patrick Schmidli
Bass



Aaron Syrjanen
Guitar

Andrew Patterson
Keys 2

Stage Manager
Bridget Samuel
Deputy Stage Manager
Annah Jacobs
Assistant Stage Manager
Bel Hughes

Context and setting



Darcy Wain and Marina Prior

KIMBERLY'S RARE GENETIC DISORDER

In this story, Kimberly Levaco is biologically 16 years old but physically appears much older, due to a genetic condition that causes premature aging. 'Kimberly lives with a one in every four million genetic condition,' says Director Mitchell Butel. 'Kimberly's condition is unnamed in the musical but it is similar to progeria, which sees its host ageing at four to five times the 'normal' human rate.'

Hutchinson-Gilford Progeria Syndrome (HGPS or Progeria) is an ultra-rare, fatal, 'rapid-aging' disease affecting approximately 1 in 18 million people (an estimated 400–450 children are currently living with progeria worldwide). Its name is derived from Greek and means 'prematurely old.' Children with Progeria are genetically predisposed to premature, progressive heart disease, leading to heart attack, stroke or heart failure. Modern treatment for Progeria has extended the average life expectancy to almost 20 years. Progeria is usually not inherited from parents, but results from a new genetic mutation.

Learn more at progeriaresearch.org.

SETTING

The script describes the setting for *Kimberly Akimbo* as: '1999, before most kids had cell phones. Somewhere in Bergen County, New Jersey'. In 1999, Bergen County was (and remains) the most populous county in New Jersey, a state already known for its diversity. The county borders New York City and is wealthier than most of the United States. Winter temperatures in Bergen County frequently drop to -12 to -15 degrees Celsius and snow is relatively common. There were more than 40 ice rinks in New Jersey in 1999, with several opening in the 90s. A blitz of televised ice-skating competitions and ice hockey games likely increased the popularity of ice rinks – particularly for teenagers. Speaking about the characters in *Kimberly Akimbo*, David Lindsay-Abaire (Book & Lyrics) said, 'their longing to be somewhere else isn't about New Jersey; it's about teenagers dreaming of a different life. Who doesn't want to escape where they're from?'

Sources: progeriaresearch.org; childrenshospital.org; *Bergen County Archives* on njmonthly.com; *Bergen County* on nj.gov; Sidel, R. (1995) *Boom Times At the Skating Rinks* on nytimes.com

'When we meet Kimberly, she is about to turn 16. She has a big heart and big dreams and is on the cusp of a big (and her first) love, but time is not on her side.'

MITCHELL BUTEL
DIRECTOR

'Kimberly is a 16-year-old girl who is trying to find her place in her new community ... at school and basically in the world.'

MARINA PRIOR

Glossary



Marty Alix, Jacob Rozario, Illana Iannace and Allycia Angeles

***Kimberly Akimbo* contains many references you may be unfamiliar with. This glossary aims to provide some additional context.**

Annie Liebovitz – An American portrait photographer best known for her portraits, particularly of celebrities. In ‘Make a Wish’, Kimberly dreams of being photographed by Liebovitz.

Barbara Bush – American activist and author, and the first lady of the United States from 1989 to 1993, as the wife of the 41st president of the United States, George H. W. Bush. She was known for her ‘unabashedly matronly look’ and ‘prematurely white hair’, which is why the sight of Kimberly dressed as a ‘grandma’ prompts Debra to compare her to Bush.

Bio – A biology class in an American high school. In the show, the abbreviation of the subject ‘bio’ is used.

Check (Cheque) – A written order instructing a bank to pay a specific amount of money from the account holder’s account to the person named on the cheque. It’s a piece of paper that people would often pay bills with via post. Debra hatches a plan to steal money through check fraud, explained in the song ‘How to Wash a Check’.

Chuck E. Cheese – An American entertainment and dining chain known for its arcade games, pizza and animatronic shows.

Coyote – A wild animal, also known as the American jackal, that is a species of canine native to North America. Debra tells Kimberly that she had a ‘run-in’ with a coyote while she was living in a tent.

Ding Dong – A chocolate cake packed with sweet, creamy filling, produced and distributed in the United States since the 1960s.

Game Boy – A handheld game console developed by Nintendo, popular in the United States in the 1990s. In the show, Kimberly blows on a Game Boy cartridge. This was a common, but ineffective, practice to try and get a game to work.

Gas station – Petrol station that sells fuel for cars.

Goober – A somewhat offensive term for someone perceived as stupid or foolish.

Graceland – A mansion located in Memphis, Tennessee, famous for being the former residence of Elvis Presley. It is now a museum and tourist attraction. Pattie mentions it as a potential road trip destination.

Green Card – An identity document that allows a foreign national to live and work permanently in the United States.

Hancock – A slang term for signature, stemming from American politician John Hancock's prominent signature on the United States Declaration of Independence. His signature was the largest on the document. Debra explains that forging the 'Hancock' on a cheque is part of her plan in the song 'How to Wash a Check'.

Haute Couture – Expensive, fashionable clothes produced by leading fashion houses. Debra exaggerates that her wedding dress was haute couture in the song 'Better'.

Heine – A slang term for the buttocks

Ho-Ho-Kus – A borough of Bergen County, a short distance from where the Levaco's now live.

IHOP – International House of Pancakes, known as IHOP, is a restaurant chain specialising in American breakfasts. In the 1990s there were hundreds of IHOPs across the United States. Seth mentions his brother crashed into an IHOP in Scene 9.

Jimmy Choos – Luxury shoes that Kimberly dreams of wearing in the song 'Make a Wish'.

Liberty Bell – An iconic symbol of American independence located in Philadelphia and popular destination for tourists.

Lodi – A borough in Bergen County, New Jersey, where the Levaco family have recently moved from.

Make-A-Wish – A charity that creates life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

Medea – *Medea* is a play by the ancient Greek playwright Euripides based on a myth. In the tragedy, Medea kills her children as revenge against her unfaithful husband. Kimberly says Pattie reminds her of Medea.

Mel Tormé – An American composer often associated with 'easy listening' music. Kimberly dreams of having a 'normal' dinner with her family, followed by his music and dessert, in the song 'Make a Wish'.

Montserrat – An island in the Caribbean Sea, nicknamed 'The Emerald Isle of the Caribbean'. In 'Make a Wish', Kimberly dreams of visiting on a holiday.

Newark Bay – A bay in New Jersey where the Passaic and Hackensack Rivers meet. It is home to the second busiest shipping container facility in the United States. In 'Make a Wish', Kimberly contrasts Newark Bay with more picturesque places she'd rather be.

Passaic – Debra sings about getting married in Passaic in the song 'Better'. Passaic is a commuter city in New Jersey that was recently ranked the '4th most miserable city' in the United States.

Panera – Panera Bread is an American chain of bakery-café casual restaurants across the United States. In this production, this reference is replaced with restaurant chain Sizzler – a popular Australian restaurant chain in the 80s and 90s.

Paramus – A borough in central Bergen County, New Jersey. Paramus is a suburban 'bedroom community', meaning the majority of residents commute to and from New York City each day.

Pilgrim – A term used to describe people who lead relatively simple and humble lives as an act of religious devotion. In an American context, a pilgrim describes a person who travelled from Europe during the invasion and colonisation of the Americas in the 1600s. Pattie makes a reference to feeling like a pilgrim in Act 2 Scene 2.

Prom Queen – A person chosen, typically by student vote, to be crowned the 'winner' of a popularity vote at a high school formal. These formals are typically called 'proms' (short for promenade) in the United States. Pattie refers to herself as a former prom queen, but Buddy is quick to remind her that she never won the title.

Scout – An abbreviation of the American youth organisation Boy Scouts of American, founded in the early 20th century. To show her commitment to Kimberly, Debra says ‘Scout’s honor.’ This is a declaration used in the Scouts to show the speaker is telling the truth.

Six Flags Great Adventure – A theme park in New Jersey known for its rollercoasters and drive-through safari with live animals.

Solid Gold – An American music television program that debuted in 1980 and ran until 1988. Pattie dreamt of being on the show.

Springsteen – Bruce Springsteen is an American rock musician, nicknamed ‘the Boss’, who was born in New Jersey. New Jerseyans and generally big Springsteen fans and are proud that he hails from their state.

Waikīkī Beach – A famous beach on the south shore of Honolulu, the capital of the U.S. island state of Hawaii, located in the Pacific Ocean. In ‘How to Wash a Check’, Debra fantasises about using the money to fund a trip to this island beach destination.

Xerox – An American corporation known for its document management and digital printing products and services. It was the pioneer of the photocopier market and the term “xerox” is often used as a synonym for photocopying.

Yabba Dabba Doo! – The catchphrase used by Fred Flintstone in *The Flintstones*, an American animated sitcom from the 1960s. The phrase can express anger, surprise and/or excitement.

Zamboni – A brand name for an ice resurfacing machine, used to smooth and clean the surface of ice rinks.

Zit – A common term for pimple in the United States.



Marty Alix, Jacob Rozario, Allycia Angeles and Illana Iannace

Characters



KIMBERLY
Marina Prior

Kimberly is the protagonist of this story. She was born with a genetic rarity that means she ages at four times the rate she should.

Actor Marina Prior says: 'What drives her is a voracious desire to live ... to experience every adventure, big or small, that she can find in life.'



BUDDY
Nathan O'Keefe

Buddy is Kimberly's Dad who is often late and drinks too much.

Actor Nathan O'Keefe says: 'The weight of his failures presses down on him like a suffocating blanket – each day blending into the next in a hazy blur of desperation and denial.'



PATTIE
Christie Whelan Browne

Pattie is Kimberly's mum. She is heavily pregnant and hates when people lie. Actor Christie Whelan Browne says: 'She is quite stunted emotionally. She is driven by her new baby – it's giving her hope that things will be ok.'



DEBRA
Casey Donovan

Debra is Kimberly's aunty and prone to scheming and crime. Actor Casey Donovan says: 'What drives her is having a dream of getting out of her life living out of a garbage bag. And wanting a better life, wanting money so that she can have a life of her own.'



SETH **Darcy Wain**

Seth works at the ice-skating rink. He is in Kimberly's biology class and is not very popular at school. Actor Darcy Wain says: 'Seth knows who he is and isn't ashamed of it. He is not afraid to admit and stand up for what he believes in and as a result he can come off as blunt sometimes.'



AARON **Jacob Rozario**

Aaron is a teenager at Kimberly's school who often appears in scenes with Delia, Teresa and Martin. Aaron has a crush on Delia. Actor Jacob Rozario says: 'Aaron is an awkward sophomore. His friends in the Teen Quartet navigate their complicated crushes and if Delia is on board with a plan, so is Aaron.'



DELIA **Allycia Angeles**

Delia is a teenager at Kimberly's school who wants to have the best costume for the Show Choir. Delia often appears in scenes and sings with Aaron, Teresa and Martin in a group of four. She has a crush on Teresa. Actor Allycia Angeles says: 'Delia is a very fiery and fierce teenager who is passionate about her success in Show Choir and school.'



TERESA **Alana Iannace**

Teresa is a teenager at Kimberly's school who loves Show Choir. Teresa often appears in scenes and sings with Aaron, Delia and Martin in a group of four. She has a crush on Martin. Actor Alana Iannace says: 'At Teresa's core, she is a yearner. She yearns for the excitement of her future and a place where she can truly belong.'



MARTIN **Marty Alix**

Martin is a teenager at Kimberly's school and does a presentation in biology class with Aaron. Martin often appears in scenes and sings with Aaron, Delia and Teresa in a group of four. He has a crush on Aaron. Actor Marty Alix says: 'Martin is driven by the promise of a future outside of high school, he's excited to get out of New Jersey and for his life to begin.'

Theatre style



Musical Director Kym Purling

MUSICAL THEATRE

Musical theatre combines songs, dialogue, acting and dance, often with spectacular sets, costumes and lighting. In many ways musical theatre overlaps with opera, however, musicals put more emphasis on the spoken dialogue and operas are usually entirely sung. By their very nature, musicals are highly non-naturalistic, usually depicting a wide variety of locations, actors playing multiple roles, the conventions of song and dance accepted as 'normal behaviour', and solo songs used as a dramatic device to tell the audience about a character's thoughts and feelings (a soliloquy to music, in a way).

The music is pivotal in the storytelling because it brings the stories, themes and characters of the show to life. The music adds depth and dimension to these stories told by each character and allows the audience to feel the emotions expressed by each character.

KYM PURLING
MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Most Western musical theatre emerged in the 19th century, with many conventions and structural elements established by Gilbert and Sullivan (in Britain) and Harrigan and Hart (in the United States). *Kimberly Akimbo* is from American collaborators David Lindsay-Abaire and Jeanine Tesori who previously wrote *Fun Home* and *Shrek the Musical*.

Source: BBC (2022), *Musical Theatre* on [bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk)



Cohesion

Musical Director Kym Purling says the opening number of the show, 'Skater Planet', contains 'a very distinctive and memorable musical theme sung by a quartet of teens that reoccurs a handful of times throughout the show during scenes, some scene changes and musical transitions.'

Listen for this example of cohesion in the performance. You might like to listen to the Original Broadway Cast Recording on Spotify ahead of seeing this production.



Listen to 'Better'



Watch the video above and listen to the cast sing what Musical Director Kym Purling describes as 'the biggest number in the show with Debra belting out a bluesy rock number, with the cast singing gospel choir type backing vocals throughout.' Analyse how the conventions of musical theatre are demonstrated in this song.

Content warning: Contains coarse language

Directing



Mitchell Butel in rehearsal



Mitchell Butel

Mitchell Butel's Melbourne Theatre Company directing credits include *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill* (with State Theatre Company South Australia) and as an actor, *Disgraced*, *Tomfoolery*, *The Grenade*, *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, *Urinetown* and *Piaf*.

He has worked extensively for State Theatre Company South Australia, Sydney Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare, Griffin, Malthouse, Opera Australia, Sydney Chamber Opera, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Pinchgut Opera, The Production Company, The Hayes Theatre and for the Sydney, Adelaide and Perth Festivals on over 200 professional productions. Mitchell was Artistic Director and Co-CEO of State Theatre Company South Australia from 2019 to 2024 where his directing credits included *The Questions*, *Hibernation*, *Ripcord*, *Candide* (co-director, co-produced with State Opera South Australia), *Decameron 2.0* (co-director, co-produced with ActNow Theatre) and *Girls & Boys*.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When asked to write a Director's Note for his production of Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (in which I was lucky to perform), Barrie Kosky, feeling that he couldn't reduce O'Neill's masterwork to 400 words, merely listed all the adverbs in the script used by O'Neill to describe the manner in which various characters should utter their lines: "thunderingly ... passionately ... suddenly ... dramatically ... scornfully ... lovingly" and so on.

I think *Kimberly Akimbo* is such a perfectly written musical that I feel I have no words to match its zanily and movingly idiosyncratic brand of invention, surprise, tenderness, emotional richness and gobsmacking comedy. But a listing of some of composer Jeanine Tesori's musical directions at the top of each song gives you better words about where she and book writer and lyricist David Lindsay-Abaire might have been headed with their intentions and the variety of those intentions ...

Conversational	Beatles Swing	Crisp
Cheery	Aggressive	Allegro Con Gusto
Lyrical	Freely	Soaringly
Easy Groove	Front Porch Shuffle	Jersey House Band Rock

And my favourite musical direction ... *Unbearably Happy*, *Lightly Swung*



Discuss Directing

Which songs in the show do each of the musical directions listed here relate to? Reflect on how this connects to variation and cohesion across the show.

'When we meet Kimberly, she is about to turn 16. She has a big heart and big dreams and is on the cusp of a big (and her first) love, but time is not on her side.'

**MITCHELL BUTEL
DIRECTOR**

Working on this show has also been an unbearably happy experience. Happy because the rehearsal room and the theatre are filled with the most perfect cast I can imagine in these roles. Happy because we have had a brilliant creative team, crew and theatre companies who have gone the extra mile to deliver what is one of the largest and most complex musicals ever produced by State Theatre Company South Australia or Melbourne Theatre Company.

Happy to have had the generous and caring support of producing partner Sarah Rohrsheim and Wagnan Productions. Unbearable because I don't want it to end – I laughed like a drain and cried like a baby when I saw the original Tony Award-winning Broadway production of the show and creating our own new version with this team has revealed in more detail what a brilliant one-of-a-kind rough diamond of a work this is and how the most universally affecting and touching works often spring from the most niche and specific stories. It continues to make me laugh and cry.

Kimberly lives with a one in every four million genetic condition. Kimberly's condition is unnamed in the musical but it is similar to progeria, which sees its host ageing at four to five times the "normal" human rate. Our team has been honoured and delighted to meet with the very witty, thoughtful and entertaining legend that is Enzo Cornejo, a 13-year-old Adelaide boy living with progeria, and his family during our rehearsal process. We're so thankful to him for sharing his spirit with us and giving us a window into his world.

The show takes place in New Jersey in 1999. When we meet Kimberly, she is about to turn 16. She has a big heart and big dreams and is on the cusp of a big (and her first) love, but time is not on her side. Rare as her situation may be, she reflects all of us. We are all living on borrowed time to some degree. Once we are born, we are dying. The challenge is filling our days and our own big hearts with as much life and joy and love for others and ourselves as we can.

Kimberly takes on that challenge like a warrior. One of the sweetest, kindest and wisest warriors ever known. Kimberly meets a friend who is also on his own difficult journey. A "good kid" whose tools for coping centre around relishing the puzzles of life and bending our words and points of view to see the world anew. And when you're trying to live your big dreams and see the world anew in the midst of '90s New Jersey and families whose dreams didn't quite pan out the way they'd hoped, you may find yourself laughing and/or contributing to the swear jar more than you'd hoped! I hope your hearts are as full as Kimberly's by the end of this production and that, like a song in the show suggests, you get to live your "great adventure" with those you love and get to enjoy the ride along the way.



Discuss Directing

Reflect on Mitchell Butel's director's note and discuss what big ideas you think this musical will explore. How do you think the musical direction words might be manipulated on stage?

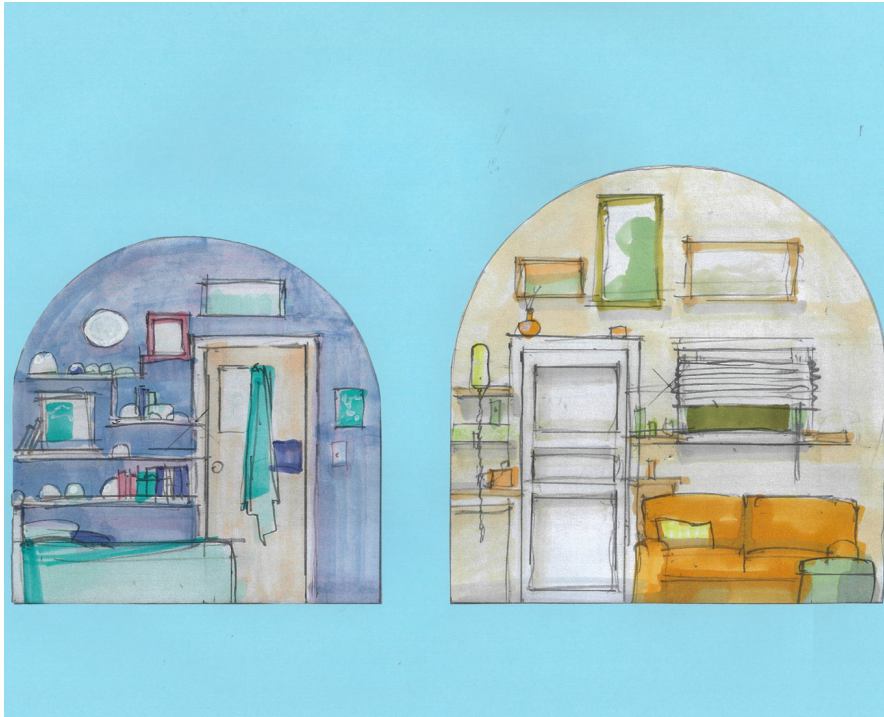
'Rare as her situation may be, [Kimberly] reflects all of us. We are all living on borrowed time to some degree.'

MITCHELL BUTEL
DIRECTOR

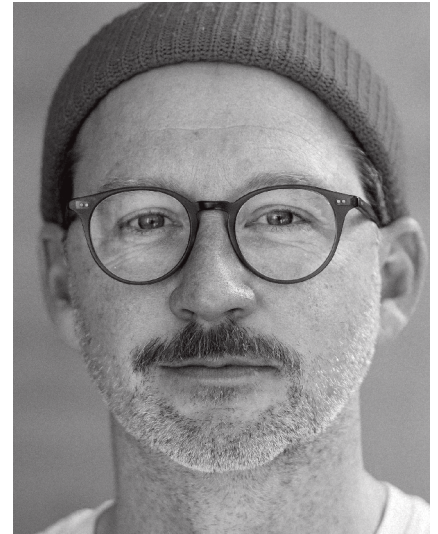


Mitchell Butel, Allycia Angeles and Alana Iannace in rehearsal

Set Design



Set renders by Jonathon Oxlade



Jonathon Oxlade

The set design for *Kimberly Akimbo* takes the audience to many locations including an ice-skating rink. In this Q&A, Set Designer Jonathon Oxlade explains how symbolism in the design enhances the storytelling.

What's the world of this show and your set design?

Kimberly's world centres around her teenage life – her school, her family home and Skater Planet, the ice-skating rink where she meets her friends. We decided to ground our set in the ice-skating rink as it serves as a metaphor for her collection of snow domes, and her yearning for travel and wishes fulfilled.

What's a big challenge in designing this show that you've enjoyed solving?

It's been tricky rolling all of the various locations into one stage experience, but I feel we have created a fun solution by the image of the snow dome. The snow domes flip from Skater Planet into Kim's bedroom and her family's sitting room. Other smaller scenes enter downstage via the front entrances – benches outside the ice rink, a dining table and chairs, a car, and more.

This show has lots of moving parts. How do you think about rhythm in your work as a designer with regard to the storytelling?

My brain has to work a bit differently when working on a musical, things have to 'dance' on and off stage. A lot of time goes into thinking where and how things emerge and we have to find the room to store everything off stage as well! Sound and music are so important to the storytelling and give us clues as to how the set items interact with the performers.

Where have you drawn inspiration from to create your design?

We actually visited the local ice-skating rink! It is just around the corner from the State Theatre workshop and rehearsal room in Adelaide. It is basically a big shed with exposed conduit and pipes throughout, the holding space for some alpine magic. The outside of the building is powder blue, so this was a direct inspiration for our Skater Planet set.

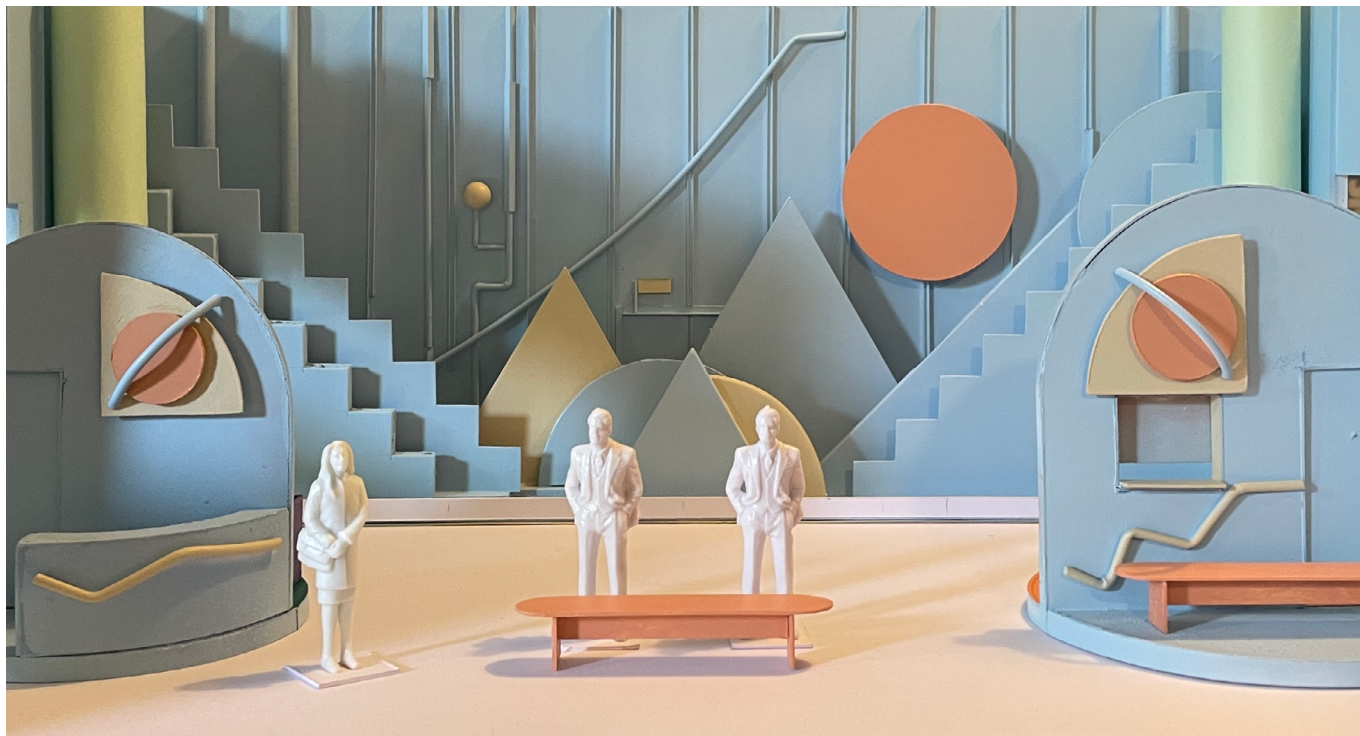


Application of symbol

Think about Jonathon's comments about application of symbol in the set design and identify where you can see snow domes or their shapes in the set renders in this pack. Make predictions about how snow might be used on stage in literal or metaphorical ways.

'Sound and music are so important to the storytelling and give us clues as to how the set items interact with the performers.'

JONATHAN OXLADE
SET DESIGNER



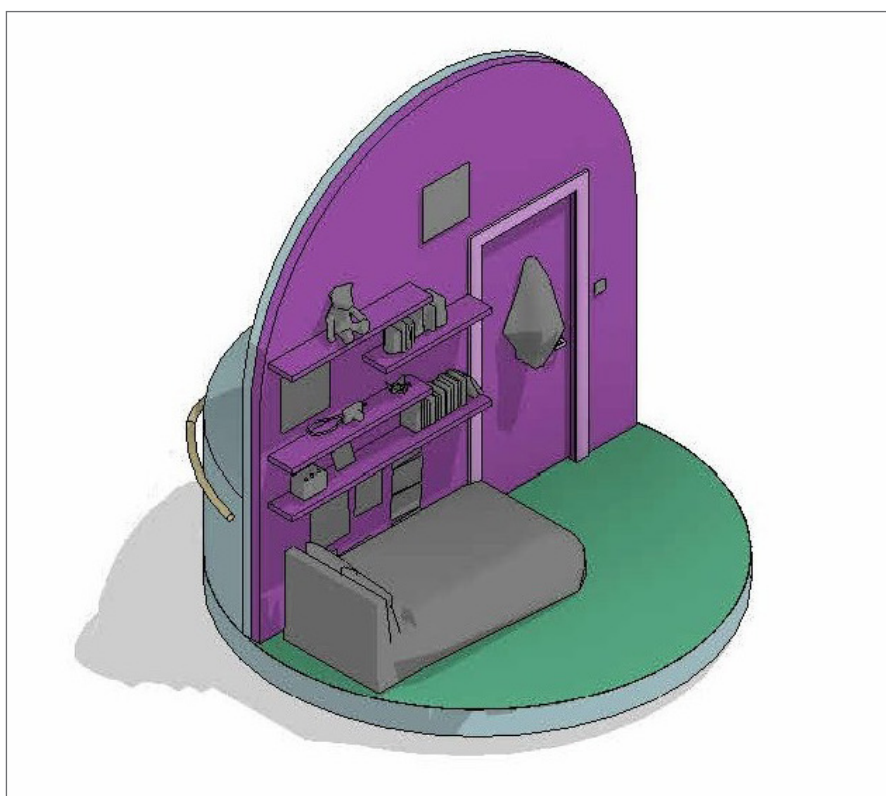
Set model by Jonathon Oxlade

Do you consciously manipulate cohesion in your design? How so?

I'm trained as an illustrator, so my brain is always thinking about word and image, and how they can sit together peacefully or in tension. Manipulating cohesion is a great tool to create a discordant feeling, and can also be used to reveal new meanings beyond what is being heard. Illustrating or showing the words when you are hearing them can sometimes be double handling. Less is often more.

What's an example of symbolism in your design?

Kimberly collects snow domes filled with far off places, and displays them in her room. The sets that move around on stage are the same domed shapes as these trinkets. Hopefully the audience reads this symbolic link in the design.



Set design by Jonathon Oxlade. 3D render by Charles Whittington, Mold studios.



Discuss rhythm

Discuss the interrelationship between set design and rhythm in the set design. How might the set be used by the performers to vary rhythm?

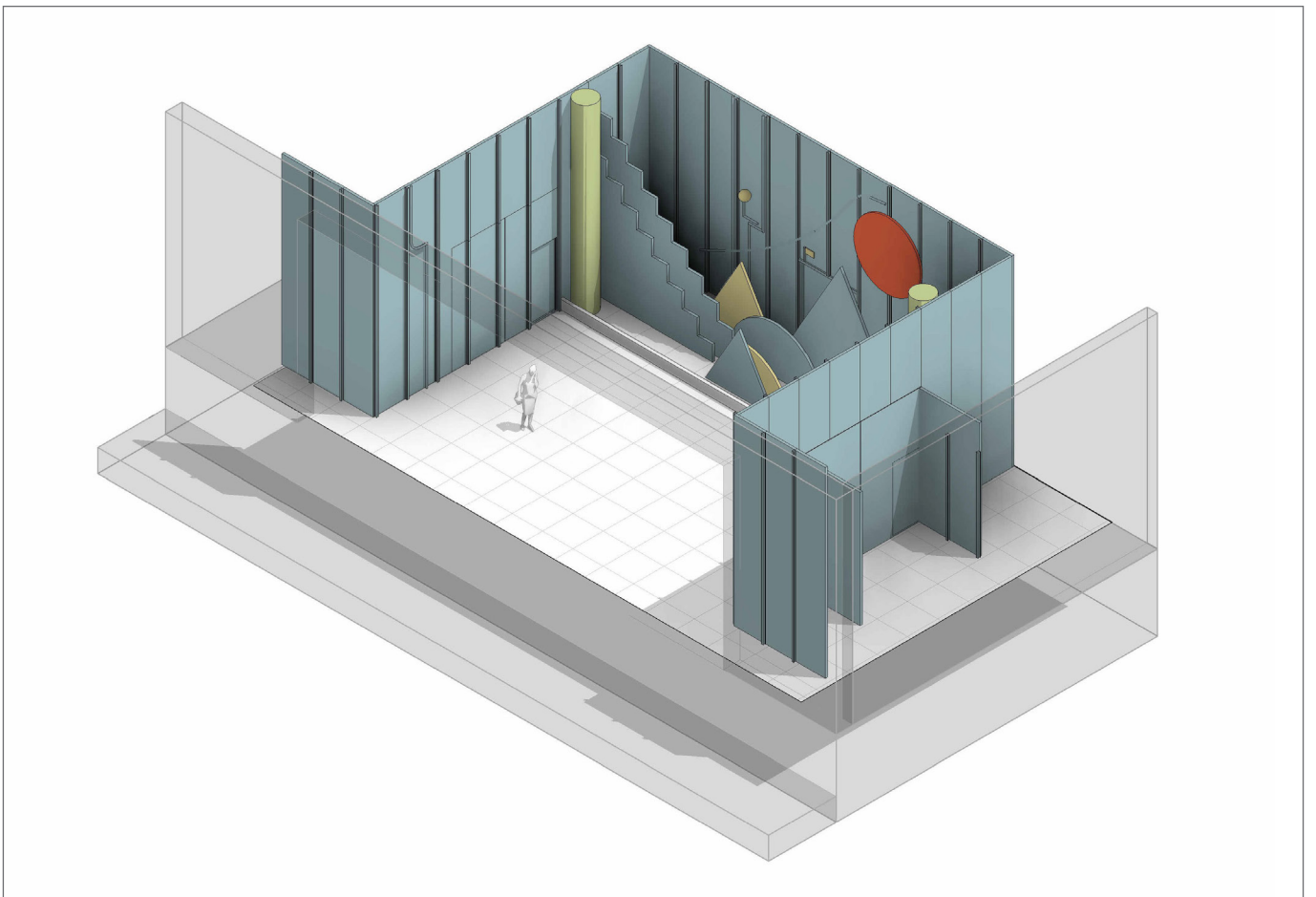


Contemporary theatre movements

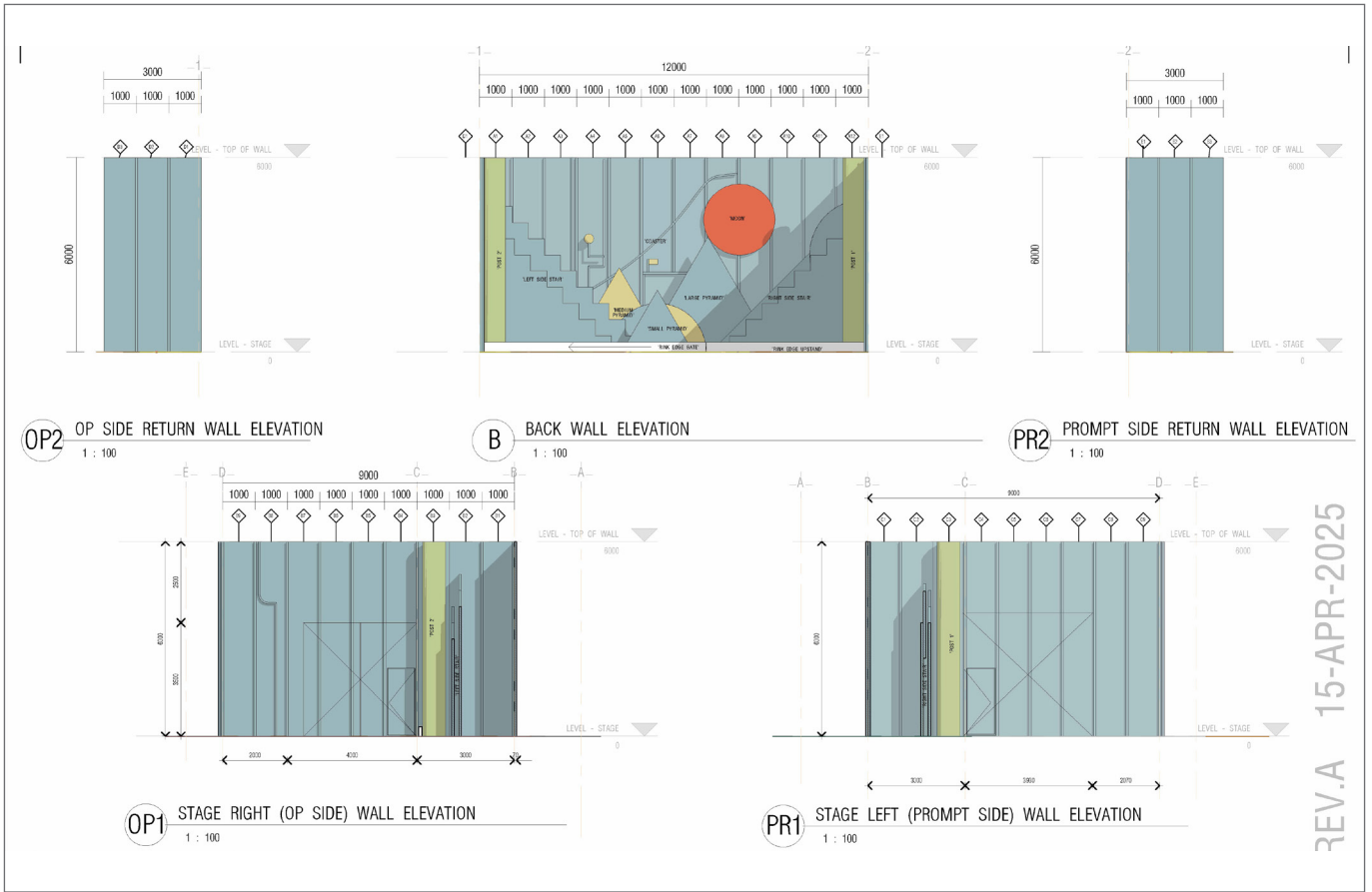
Discuss how the design and execution of the set demonstrates contemporary theatre movements.

'Kimberly collects snow domes filled with far off places, and displays them in her room. The sets that move around on stage are the same domed shapes as these trinkets.'

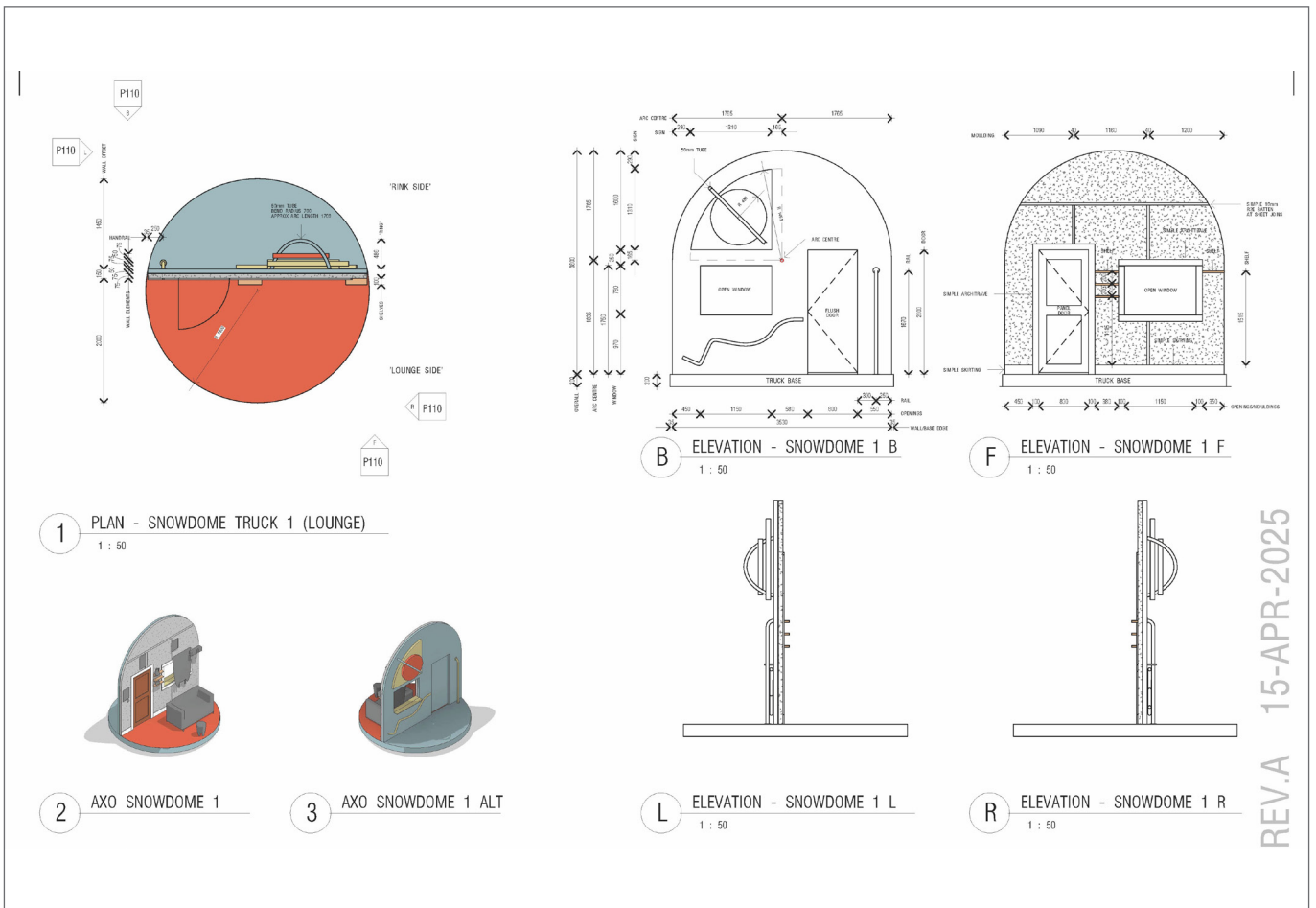
**JONATHON OXLADE
SET DESIGNER**



Set design by Jonathon Oxlade. 3D render by Charles Whittington, Mold studios.



REV.A 15-APR-2025



REV.A 15-APR-2025

Set design by Jonathon Oxlade. 3D renders by Charles Whittington, Mold studios.

Costume Design



Costume design by Ailsa Paterson



Ailsa Paterson



Application of symbol

Discuss Ailsa's comments about how Kimberly's youth and hope are shown symbolically through costume design. How else might these aspects of Kimberly be shown on stage?

'[Kimberly's] costume is designed to cover the parts of her body that would betray her condition.'

AILSA PATERSON
COSTUME DESIGNER

The costumes in *Kimberly Akimbo* are awash with colour and 90s nostalgia. In this Q&A, Costume Designer Ailsa Paterson explains the inspiration behind her designs and the practical considerations of rollerblading on stage.

What's the world of this show and your costume designs?

This show is set in Bergen County, New Jersey, in 1999. The narrative focuses on Kimberley's home life and her school life. The costume design needs to give a clear sense of the period, to reflect that these are not wealthy people and that the play takes place during winter, when the town is covered in snow. The set design has developed into a beautiful liminal space with a very controlled colour palette, so the costumes are deliberately full of colour, pattern and detail to contrast with the pale blue world surrounding them.

What's a big challenge in designing this show that you've enjoyed solving?

The character of Kimberly has created the biggest challenge for me in designing costumes for this show. Her illness is based on real conditions such as progeria, and there needs to be a sensitivity in portraying the effects of her disease. There is also a delicate balance between leaning into the youthfulness of her personal style while emphasising aspects of ageing. We have spent a lot of time playing with how grey to make her wig, as it's the key indicator of her accelerated ageing. Her costume is designed to cover the parts of her body that would betray her condition, for example she wears skivvies to hide her neck, wears fingerless gloves to hide her hands, and her pinafore is an A-line shape to skim her form.

What's an example of symbolism in your design?

Kimberley's costumes have embroidered flower motifs and she wears colourful 90s butterfly clips in her hair – these are a symbol of youth, hope, renewal and evolution to counter the sadness of her indefinite future.

What are some practical considerations you have to think about with the costumes?

There are several practical considerations to consider in the costume design. In addition to safety equipment for the roller blading scenes, which needs to be concealed beneath costumes, the quick changes determine which fastenings we choose and how garments are constructed. The transition into the *Dreamgirls* costumes for the Teen Quartet (Aaron, Delia, Teresa and Martin) is relatively quick, so we look at how to underdress aspects of the costume for Aaron and Martin throughout Act 2. The speed of the changes between scripted changes in time (for example, one day, then the next) means that I create a 'base' costume for each character and make the significant changes top half only. This speeds up the transitions and makes the actors self-sufficient during these costume changes. Durability is also a consideration in terms of the stage action and length of the season. We have some wonderful op shop finds but if they won't last or the fabric isn't suitably tough, then we would look at recreating those finds so that we can double them.

This show has lots of costumes! How do you think about cohesion and contrast in your work as a designer with regard to the storytelling?

Cohesion and contrast are essential to the storytelling and to the detail of the costume palette. The Teen Quartet tend to travel as a pack, and I have spent a lot of time creating charts per scene to make sure that there is a spectrum of colour and pattern without doubling up on key colours. Each character essentially has a capsule wardrobe in their key colours and fashion style, and there are rapid changes per scripted day to show the progression of time.

Where have you drawn inspiration from to create your design?

The late 90s are a wonderful moment in fashion history. We have looked at a lot of American TV show and pop references from the time, looking at key fashion moments that suit particular characters. Teen magazines have been a good reference for high school fashion inspiration.



Contemporary theatre elements

Discuss how the design and execution of the costumes demonstrates contemporary theatre movements. Which costumes do you think could be purchased and from where? Which ones might need to be made by the Costume department?

'Cohesion and contrast are essential to the storytelling and to the detail of the costume palette.'

AILSA PATERSON
COSTUME DESIGNER



Costume designs by Ailsa Paterson







Costume designs by Ailsa Paterson

Elements of theatre composition

The following questions are intended to help you consider how *Kimberly Akimbo* might be interpreted on stage through the lens of VCE Theatre Studies. Refresh your memory of the definitions with our elements of theatre composition flashcards at mtc.com.au/eduhub.



Download Part B

After you've seen the show, 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.



Darcy Wain, Marina Prior, Christie Whelan Browne and Nathan O'Keefe in rehearsal

Cohesion

- How might musical motifs and themes be repeated throughout the performance to create cohesion?
- What role might colour play in cohesion among the costume designs?

Motion

- You may have noticed the cast wearing 'ice-skating' rollerblades in the rehearsal photos. How might this impact the manipulation of motion on stage?

Rhythm

- How might rhythms shift in the production? Map out the show with scenes and songs and make predictions about how rhythm might be manipulated.

Emphasis

- Based on your knowledge of the script and story, which aspects might be given a particular focus, importance or prominence?

Contrast

- Where can you already identify contrast between characters?
- After listening to some of the songs in the show, where can you hear contrast?

Variation

- How might the stage picture vary with moving set pieces during the show?
- Based on your knowledge of the characters and their interrelationships, how might conflict and tension vary during the show?

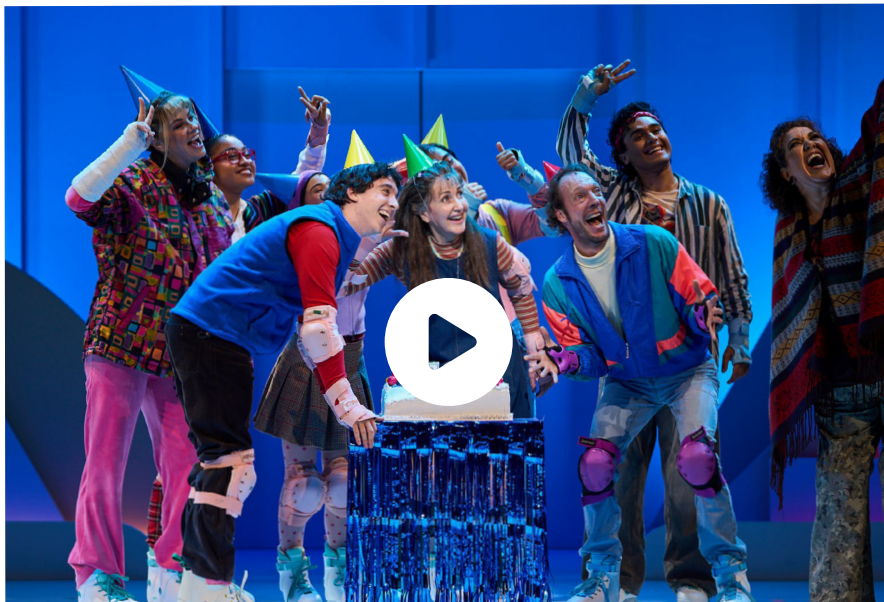
Learn more



Watch 'Make a Wish'

Hear Marina Prior sing 'Make a Wish' ahead of seeing *Kimberly Akimbo* on stage.

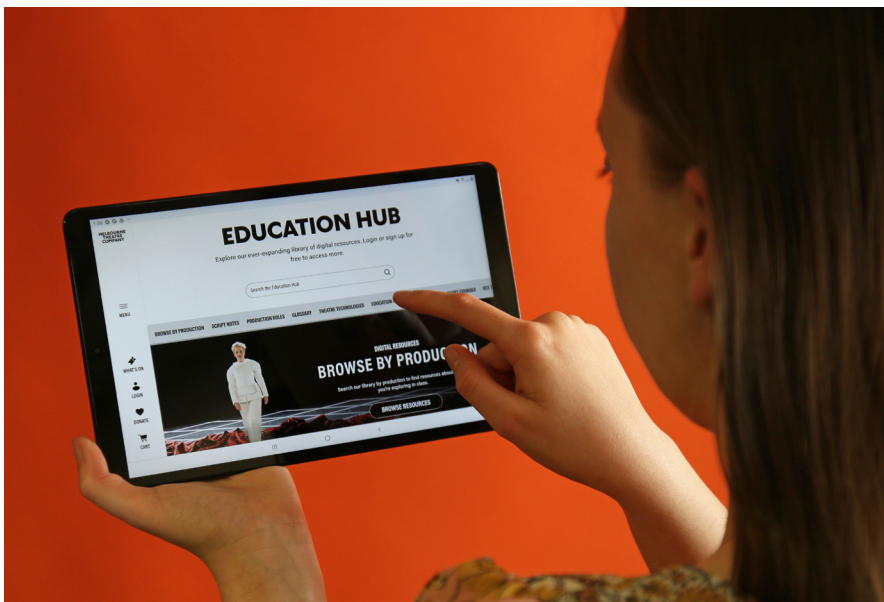
Watch the video at mtc.com.au



Watch the trailer

Watch the video trailer for *Kimberly Akimbo* and make predictions about how the team will bring this story to life onstage.

Watch the video at mtc.com.au



Explore the Education Hub

Explore a glossary of theatre terminology, VCE flash cards, short courses and much more in our online library of digital resources.

Learn more at mtc.com.au/eduhub