SYDNEY THEATRE CO
EDUCATION

Pre-Show In-The-Know

The 7 Stages of Grieving

BY WESLEY ENOCH AND DEBORAH MAILMAN
DIRECTED BY SHARI SEBBENS

CURRICULUM LINKS

Drama Stages 5 and 6

Links to HSC Drama Topics: Contemporary Australian Theatre Practice; Improvisation, Playbuilding and Acting; and Elements of Production in Performance

Links to HSC Drama Individual Project: Monologues.

Stage 5, Dramatic Forms and Performance Styles: Aboriginal Performance/ Scripted Drama

PLOT SYNOPSIS

One woman reflects on community, dispossession, resistance and pride. Told by a single compelling narrator, this piece weaves together cultural knowledge, memories, and personal experiences to share a powerful story of Aboriginal Australia. A collection of vignettes that examines the timelessness of the Dreaming, the horrors of invasion, the trials of reconciliation, and police brutality, as well as the importance of kinship, speaking truth to power and the joy of telling your story your way. The result is an engaging, moving and ultimately empowering recognition of the loss of identity and Country, the will to fight back, and a poem that blends Indigenous and Western styles of storytelling. On its premiere in 1995, this play was a radical act of First Nations theatremaking. Now, 26 years later, *The 7 Stages of Grieving* continues to ask vital and stirring questions of the way we tell stories and how we remember the past.

CAST AND CHARACTERS

Elaine Crombie – the WOMAN

STYLES

- Contemporary Indigenous Theatre
- Monodrama
- Political Theatre
- Vignette
- Direct Address
- Transformation of Character

RUNNING TIME

1 hour, no interval

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

- How is sound design and music used to create mood and atmosphere?
- Symbolism of the midden shells in the set design
- Moments where the 'fourth wall' (the imaginary wall between the stage and the audience) is broken

Attending Theatre

Students attending a Schools Day performance at Sydney Theatre Company © Hon Boey

Is this your first time to a theatre to see a play? What is theatre etiquette? When you are in a theatre seeing a play, you can see the actors, they are performing right before your eyes…and they can see you! During a play, actors use a great amount of focus to stay in character, to build and maintain their character's emotions and characteristics and to perform the play with intricate detail. They need to remember their lines, remember their cues and ensure that they execute the blocking perfectly, often having to coordinate movements, actions and dialogue with technical aspects of the performance, such as sound and lighting. Sitting in a theatre watching a live show is very different to going to the movies – it's usually a lot quieter and you have to be careful not to make noise. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't laugh (where appropriate) and clap (where appropriate). Some plays may ask for the audience to participate, to respond verbally to moments in the show. There is a fine line between responding verbally when asked and responding verbally when not asked.

It is respectful of the audience and actor to follow a few protocols while watching a play, and we call this theatre etiquette:

- Turn off your mobile phones – don't just put it on silent. The light of your mobile phone can be very distracting for an actor on stage. Don't send messages or check social media during a performance. You don't need it, so put it away!
- You cannot film or photograph a performance – but you won't do this as your phone will be turned off!
- No eating in the theatre – the sound of munching and chewing is annoying to the people around you. Eat before the play.
- Don't talk during the show – a quiet whisper to your neighbour or an audible reaction to something that happens during the performance is fine, but keep your conversations to after the show.

In this performance, the actor Elaine will break the fourth wall during the play and seek a response from the audience. Respond when she asks – don't over do it – have respect for the fact that Elaine is on stage by herself for over an hour.
But…enjoy the play! You will laugh, you may cry, you might sing-a-long to a song, and you will applaud!