

NEVER DID ME ANY HARM

Devised by FORCE MAJEURE

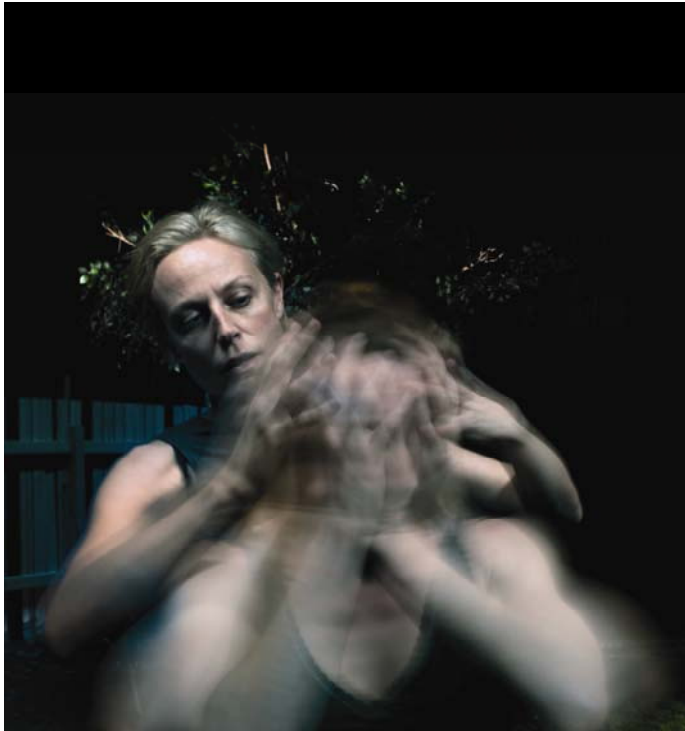


photo by Tim Richardson

PRE-PRODUCTION RESOURCES

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Education Resource written by Kerreen Ely-Harper and compiled by Education Coordinator Toni Murphy

KEY



AIM of exercise or section



Extension Exercises



Download and watch



Drama Exercises



English Exercises



Play online

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ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about

ABOUT STC ED

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about/us

ABOUT FORCE MAJEURE

www.forcemajeure.com.au/the-company/

CREATIVE TEAM

Director – Kate Champion

Set Designer & Lighting – Geoff Cobham

Composer and Sound Designer – Max Lyandvert

Dramaturg – Andrew Upton

Associate Director – Roz Hervey

Assistant Director – Geordie Brookman



CAST

Kristina Chan

Vincent Crowley

Marta Dusseldorp

Alan Flower

Sarah Jayne Howard

Kirstie McCracken

Heather Mitchell

Josh Mu

THEMES

Physical & Dance Theatre

Verbatim Theatre

Group Devised Theatre

Parenting

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Never Did Me Any Harm is a hybrid dance theatre work that explores the theme of parenting in contemporary Australian society. Inspired by Christos Tsiolkas's novel, *The Slap* (2009), the production aims to explore and represent a range of viewpoints on the role and responsibilities of being a parent, the mythologies surrounding parenting and address the question of why some people choose not to have children.

Drawing on real-life interviews with people from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds *Never Did Me Any Harm* interweaves multiple narrative threads of the recorded and spoken word, image text, music, physical and aural gesture and dance sequences to bring to dramatic life the contentious world of parenting.

The familiar suburban aussie backyard with grass, the shed and back fence is transformed through visual projections, music and sound design technologies into a strange place where the real and imagined interlock - where the desires, laments and fears of the parent are enacted.

Consider

Everyone is or has been a child, but not everyone becomes a parent.

Children do not give love they take it.

A parent must earn a child's love.

No-one owns a child.

Every child needs discipline.

Never *ever* hit a child.

It takes a village to raise a child.

A smack did me no good, but it never did me any harm either.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

Force Majeure takes its name from the Latin term ‘superior force’. Established in 2002 the Company is led by Artistic Director Kate Champion with Artistic Associates Geoff Cobham and Roz Hervey.

Committed to exploring the ordinary and everyday in contemporary performance *Force Majeure* aims to challenge and cut through the traditional siloing of the performing arts. Their work is multi-disciplined in form and draws on the traditions and conventions of dance, theatre, music performance, visual technologies and film to bring them into dynamic, new and often unpredictable relationship.

Force Majeure has produced and toured major stage works nationally and internationally. In 2011 they were awarded the Helpmann Award for Best Visual/Physical Theatre Production for *Not In A Million Years*.

Dance Theatre, Physical Theatre

The term “physical theatre” became popular in the 1980’s and 1990’s to describe the work of companies such as Lloyd Newson’s DV8, Complicite, David Glass, Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, and Pina Bausch’s Tanztheater. These companies combined dance and movement to create predominantly non-text based performances.

There is a close relationship between devising and physical theatres. In physical and dance theatre the dancer and/or actor becomes a collaborator/creator compared to more traditional text based theatre where the actor is more of an interpreter than creator of text and character. Other significant international physical and dance theatre artists include Liz Aggiss, Jerome Bel, Ariane Mnouchkine, Dario Fo, Lev Dodin, Eugenio Barba, Anne Bogart, Jacques Lecoq, Monika Pagneux, Philippe Gaulier, Joan Littlewood, and Étienne Decroux. Companies like Frantic Assembly, Complicite, Theatre du Soleil, La Fura del Baus, DV8, and SITI Company continue to make edgy, thrilling and often controversial physical theatre. Physical theatre features the physicalizing of narrative based drama, whereas dance theatre is defined by its focus on movement and dance rather than linear narrative.

In Australia physical theatre is still relatively an outsider to mainstream theatre. Bangarra Dance Theatre is one of the most successful and long running dance theatre companies in Australia. One of the criticisms of physical theatre is its focus on the body at the expense of written language and spoken text. In a recent article on *Never Did Me Harm* the current arguments on hybrid forms of theatre that combine and intersect art forms were cited by leading figures in Australian theatre:

"The work of contemporary choreographers and the theatre they make is not that different to the theatre that might be made in a company like Malthouse or Belvoir . . . Text is not a necessary component of making good theatre."

Belvoir Theatre artistic director Ralph Myers

"I want theatre companies to be putting on plays . . . The idea of dance as something that supplants the theatre proper, I think, is utterly absurd. It is a dangerous trend to have a kind of progressivist theatre which is not particularly interested in the integrity of the dialogue."

Melbourne literary critic Peter Craven

"I think it's a healthy thing. It's just standard in Europe [where] the relationship between the different performing arts is taken for granted . . .

Blogger and critic Alison Croggon

Against the backdrop of debate around what constitutes legitimate theatre, Kate Champion defends her vision:

I would just say to the purists that they should have faith that pure theatre and pure dance will live on, it [dance theatre] is not a threat . . . I think that as an artist, it fuels creativity to go into the unknown and to push things.

References:

Mixed emotions as Kate Champion takes hybrid theatre further

The Australian, 31st December, 2011 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au>

Phillip Zarrilli, *Review of Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction*, J Keefe, S Murray, 2007. The Drama Review. 54:1 Spring 2010

Additional Resources



Never Did Me Any Harm

STC Production blog – includes interviews with cast, rehearsal notes,
<http://ndmah.posterous.com/>

Force Majeure website

<http://www.forcemajeure.com.au/>

Kate Champion

http://www.realtimedance.net/realtimedance/12_choreographers/kate_champion

Geoff Cobham

<http://www.forcemajeure.com.au/the-company/creative-team/geoff-cobham/>

Roz Hervey

<http://www.australiadancing.org/subjects/1021.html>

Book Text Source Materials

The Slap by Christos Tsoaliakos

The Contented Little Baby Book by Gina Ford

Bringing Up Boys by James Dobson

Fathering From the Fast Lane by Bruce Robinson

Your Body, Your Baby, Your Birth by Jenny Smith

Babylove by Robyn Barker

Your Defiant Teen by Dr Russell A. Barkley

Myth of Ability by John Mighton

Parenting Links



<http://www.letchildrenplay.com/2011/03/free-range-kids-meets-parent-question.html>

<http://www.cbc.ca/video/#/Shows/1221254309/ID=1391415696>

<http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/21/when-is-spanking-child-abuse/#more-41>

<http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/30/banning-hugs-at-school/#more-1139>

<http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/23/kicking-her-kids-out-of-the-car/#more-1885>

<http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/05/30/the-end-of-over-parenting/>



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIXlwYoOV9k>



George Carlin

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zu-AVqkYtg>

George Carlin parents and kids

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_ElXyZFX_w

Tim Minchin song on fat kids

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8fy34_tas-pas-une-clope_people

Chinese kid smoking

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShpCVzOsbQ>

God botherer childless man giving parenting advice

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hgVTskU9So&feature=related>

How to raise well-behaved children

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-wGMISuX_c&feature=related

(Lily Allen clip – a fear)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn18H3FKDV4&feature=related>

Dr Phil – kid slapping mother

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DJ5RKMjfg0&feature=related>

Mother driving w kid in steering wheel

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgLYZHN78Kk&feature=related>



Kid kicked in breakdance

<http://nymag.com/print/?/news/features/67024/>

Article on happiness in parents v/s non-parents etc

<http://www.parentswithattitude.com/>

<http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=12>

Physical & Dance Theatre Companies



Complicite

<http://www.complicite.org/flash/>

Theatre du Soleil



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5RXsjTU34M>

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DV8

<http://www.dv8.co.uk/>

Tanztheatre (see Win Wenders 3D film 'Pina')

<http://www.pina-bausch.de/en/dancetheatre/index.php>



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXpFD7gi8R0>

Bangarra Dance Theatre

<http://www.bangarra.com.au/>

SITI Company

<http://www.siti.org/>

Frantic Assembly <http://www.franticassembly.co.uk/learn/>

La Fura del Baus <http://www.lafura.com/web/eng/cursos.html>

Goat Island <http://www.learner.org/catalog/extras/wabios/goatland.html>



Never Did Me Any Harm Television program – where children experience life as their parents did when they were children.

<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/never-did-me-any-harm>

- ▶ **AIM: To introduce and examine the theme of parenting within the social and historical context represented in the production.**

Price & Rate

My mother would be the first to admit that smacking did me no good. But she would also say that it did me no harm. I ponder on that statement. It certainly affected our relationship, both in the short and the long term... I now have practically no affectionate ties with my parents and my family - fear has its price.

Jane & James Ritchie
Spare the Rod



Discuss & Debate this statement with reference to the price parents pay in the disciplining of children.

Rate your parent/s or guardian out of ten

Name 3 things your parent/s are doing well

Name 3 things your parent/s could improve on

Rate your behaviour toward your parent/s out of ten

Name 3 things you are doing well

Name 3 things you could improve on



Design, Conduct & Record Interviews on parenting.

Include a range of people to interview – different ages, cultural backgrounds, parents/non parents, children.

Questions to Consider

- What is good parenting?
 - Are children today given too much choice?
- Are kids today...
- Given too few boundaries or allowed too few risks?
 - Too protected from failure?
 - Sexualised too young?
 - How does a parent earn a child's love?
 - Does poor parenting result in problem behaviour in children?



Share & Discuss your findings with the class.

Drawing on your research interviews an or links provided in Additional Resources on Parenting
Write and/or Perform a short piece on parenting, entitled 'It Never Did Me No Harm'



+ Extension:

Write the piece from the parent's subjective point of view

Re-Write the piece from the child's subjective point of view



Laws & Rights

Research the International Convention of the Rights of the Child

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

List 5 Rights of the Child.

Reflection: Why do children need protection?

+ Extension:

Discuss & Debate 'The Rights of the Parent'

List 5 Rights of the Parent/s



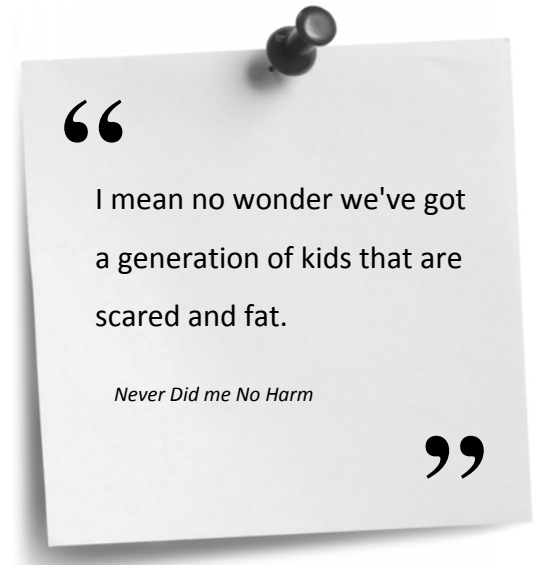
The Rule Book For Parents

You are an expert on parenting.

Write a 'Parent Rule Book'

Write a preface outlining your reasons for writing the rule book.

Dedicate the book - to a real life or fictional person, organization, etc.



- ▶ **AIM: To explore and develop skills in physical theatre making and performance.**

The dream is not just of a physical theatre but of an embodied theatre that combines the body, the imagination, the emotions and the voice.

Phelim McDermott

Physical Subtext

One of the features of naturalistic theatre is language and spoken dialogue. In non-naturalistic theatre the body speaks through physical movement, action and gesture. In Physical theatre subtext - what is not said - is often more important than what is.

Subtext Duet



Write a 2 minute dialogue between 2 characters – parent and child, two parents, one parent and one non-parent.

Perform the scene without dialogue.

By taking away the dialogue what images, feelings, thoughts came up?

What did you notice about the characters?

What happens to the body when words cannot be said?

Repeat the scene focusing on the character's physical movements in communicating feelings and thoughts.

Solo Performance

Frantic Assembly is one of the world's leading physical theatre companies. They presented their production *Stockholm* in association with the STC in 2010. The following solo & group devising exercises are adapted from their movement training improvisations.

Frantic Assembly's Hot Hands



Write a naturalistic monologue on theme of parenting where a person sits in a chair.

Explore lots of naturalistic hand movements - resting on your elbows, on thighs, folding arms, clasping hands etc.

“

One of my favourite people
in the world just turned
three.

Never Did Me No Harm

”

Repeat the monologue

Every time during the performance when the hands or arms rest you receive a painful jolt of electricity that moves you suddenly out of the rest position.

It may be a tiny or extreme pain.

But you do *not* want anyone to notice.

You must give the impression everything is ok.

What effect does this have on the monologue?

Is the character less or more sincere?

Is there something *not* being said by the character? What could it be?



Film the monologue to see if there is any choreography that has potential.

Watch the play back.

Note the best bits.



Extension:

Taking the best bits of choreography

Develop this into a scripted and choreographed performance for presentation.



Group Performance

Form two groups – one group are parents, the other children.

Each group devise 8 – 10 movements/gestures exploring different aspects of the parent-child relationship. The group must do their movements in unison.

Form two parallel lines, facing each other but leaving some space between both groups.

Move toward the other group enacting your movements.

Explore variations – timing, use of space, direction (forward, backwards, sideways, zig zag, circles), in unison, random, to a beat or specific count.

Add moments of sudden stopping, stillness.

Allow for duets, solos, trios and different numbers of performers to move at any one time.

Add music track

Add vocal sounds

Add words



Extension:

Swap roles – parent group becomes child group.

Pre-performance Reflection:

How is meaning created in the performance through the use of physical movement, dance and gesture?

Reference:

Frantic Assembly <http://www.franticassembly.co.uk/resources/>

- ▶ **AIM: To understand, develop and apply skills in verbatim theatre techniques.**

The verbatim immediately puts it in a voice and tone that we understand.

Vincent Crowley.



Force Majeure conducted extensive interviews on the issues of family and childhood and incorporates the actual words of people into the script.

Discuss performer, Vincent Crowley's comments on the use of verbatim to put into 'voice and tone' what will be meaningful and understood by an audience.



Drawing on your research interviews and/or URL's on the theme of parenting, What stories emerged?

Create a short scene with 2-4 people based on one of the stories.

Transcribe selected interviews that you are interested into developing into the piece

Highlight key words, repeated words, common themes and ideas, text that surprises you

Use actual words, phrases and lines of dialogue from the transcriptions

Include these in the scene.

Set a location – café, waiting room, train station, dinner table

Add a music track – the music might be background music like in a film, or a song that one person sings, or listens to.

Perform the scene.



Extension:

Replace lines of the text with physical movement/dance sequence
OR

Add physical movement/dance to accompany spoken text.

Pre-Performance Reflection:

How is meaning conveyed through spoken language?

Give 3 examples where the words were the focus in the performance.

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AIM: To create and critique the performance reviews of *Never Did Me Any Harm*.



Log onto the STC's *Never Did Me Any Harm* Production blog <http://ndmah.posterous.com/>

Read the tweets from audience members

Write a tweet in no more than 140 characters expressing your opinion of the production.



Choose & Read one of the reviews that appears on the blog

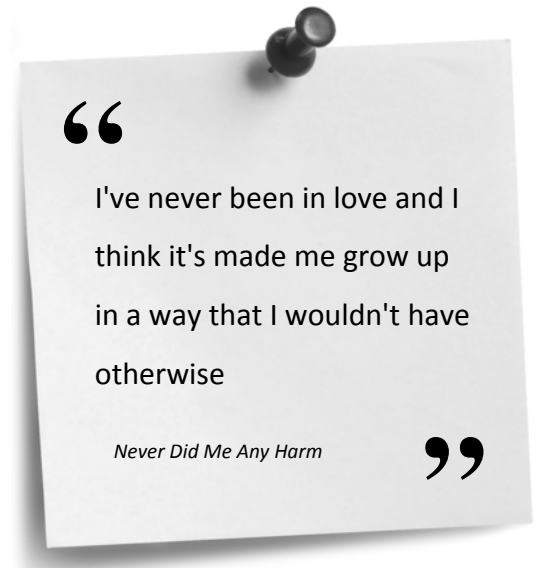
Follow the URL to read the full review

Do you agree with the reviewer? If so, why? If not, why not?



Drawing on your post –production analysis

Write a 'Letter to the Reviewer' in no more than 200 words expressing your views of the production.



Extension:

Write a critique of the *Never Did Me Any Harm* blog in no less than 250 words.

Consider

Layout

Use of texts – word, image, sound

Style

Target Audience

Navigation - level of ease or difficulty

What items in the blog were you drawn to?

Choose 3 items on the blog that contributed to your understanding of the devising, rehearsal and production process.

Support your response with specific examples and direct quotes from the blog site.

Reflection:

How effective is the STC and *Force Majeure's* use of social networking technologies like facebook, twitter and blogs as strategies to communicate with their audience prior and post production?

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AIM: To understand and appreciate the production’s use of theatrical and cross-art form techniques.

Springboard a springy board for jumping or diving from anything which serves as a starting –point, or from which one can launch ideas, projects, etc

Chambers English Dictionary

Kate Champion and her collaborators investigate a wide range of literary sources and while inspired by Tsiolkas’s novel *The Slap*, she points out, "We're definitely not doing *The Slap*, it's just the springboard."



Discuss your understanding of Kate Champion’s reference to the source text, *The Slap*, being a ‘springboard’ for the production.



STC Co-director Andrew Upton is the dramaturg for *Never Did Me Any Harm*

Research the role of the dramaturg.

http://ee.dramaturgy.co.uk/index.php/site/comments/what_does_a_dramaturg_do

List 3 main tasks of the dramaturg.

Never Did Me Any Harm brings together actors and dancers and artists from different disciplines and art forms.

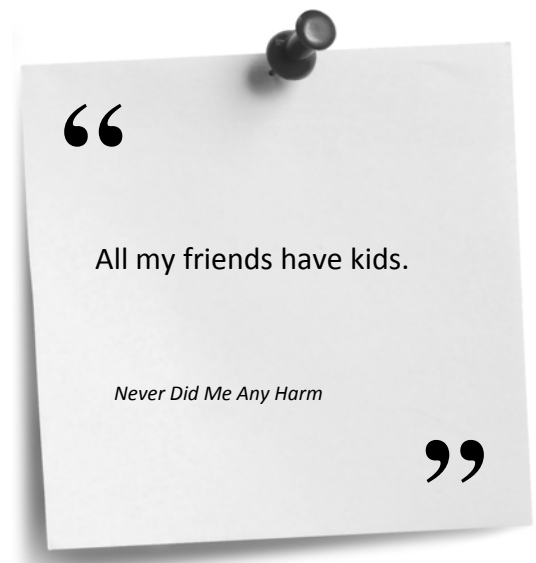
Read the program

OR

Check out the STC *Never Did Me Any Harm* blog

<http://ndmah.posterous.com/>

Make a list of all the artists in the production and their specific contribution to the project.



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+ Extension:
Form small groups.
You are forming a new physical (and or dance) theatre company in Australia.
Choose a name for your company that reflects your vision.
For example, *Force Majeure* means 'superior force'. How does this title reflect their vision and style of production?
Write a short statement outlining your vision about the kind of theatre you want to make and why.
What kind of artists and art forms will you bring together to make new works?
Choose a topic or theme you would want to explore as your first project.
Name key text/s (literary, visual, audio, object) that will become a springboard for developing further ideas.

Post-Performance Analysis

How would you describe the performance style?

How does the non-naturalistic movement work in the piece?

Imagine the piece if you took away the movement. How would it work as a piece of naturalistic theatre?

How did the use of video projections contribute to the storytelling?

How did the realistic depiction of a typical aussie backyard - grass, tree, shed, back fence work in combination with the productions more abstract elements?

What impact does the music have?

How did it effect the audience? You?