

SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
CO  
EDUCATION



SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS  
A SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY AND MALTHOUSE THEATRE PRODUCTION  
**LOVE AND INFORMATION**  
BY CARYL CHURCHILL

**ON CUE**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT ON CUE AND STC	2
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	3
CAST AND CREATIVES	4
ABOUT THE PLAY	5
NARRATIVE STRUCTURE	7
DRAMATIC FORM	8
SET DESIGN	9
THEMES AND IDEAS	10
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND DRAMATIC MEANING	11
BIBLIOGRAPHY	13

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Compiled by Hannah Brown.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Hannah Brown is the Education Projects Officers for the Sydney Theatre Company. You can contact Hannah on

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# ABOUT *ON CUE* AND STC

## ABOUT ON CUE

STC Ed has a suite of resources located on our website to enrich and strengthen teaching and learning surrounding the plays in the STC season. Each show will be accompanied by an On Cue e-publication which will feature all the essential information for teachers and students, such as curriculum links, information about the playwright, synopsis, character analysis, thematic analysis and suggested learning experiences. For more in-depth digital resources surrounding the **ELEMENTS OF DRAMA, DRAMATIC FORMS, STYLES, CONVENTIONS** and **TECHNIQUES**, visit the STC Ed page on our website.

### Such resources include:

- videos
- design sketchbooks
- worksheets
- posters

## ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

In 1980, STC's first Artistic Director Richard Wherrett defined STC's mission as to provide "first class theatrical entertainment for the people of Sydney – theatre that is grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun."

Almost 35 years later, under the leadership of Artistic Director Andrew Upton, that ethos still rings true.

STC offers a diverse program of distinctive theatre of vision and scale at its harbourside home venue, The Wharf; Sydney Theatre at Walsh Bay; and Sydney Opera House, as its resident theatre company.

STC has a proud heritage as a creative hub and incubator for Australian theatre and theatre makers, developing and producing eclectic Australian works, interpretations of classic repertoire and great international writing. STC strives to create theatre experiences that reflect Sydney's distinctive personality and engage audiences.

Strongly committed to engagement in the community, STC's Education and Communities programs aim to inspire theatre appreciation and participation not only in theatres but also in schools, community halls; wherever people get together. STC offers an innovative School Drama™ program; partners with groups in metropolitan Sydney, regional centres and rural

areas; and reaches beyond NSW with touring productions throughout Australia. Through these partnerships and initiatives, STC plays a part in ensuring a creative, forward-thinking and sociable future by engaging with young people, students and teachers.

The theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists have been launched and fostered at STC, including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne, Benedict Andrews and Cate Blanchett.

STC often collaborates with international artists and companies and, in recent years, the company's international profile has grown significantly with productions touring extensively to great acclaim.

STC is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, by its arts funding and advisory body, and by the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW.

[sydneytheatre.com.au](http://sydneytheatre.com.au)

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



Zahra Newman in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©



Alison Whyte and Ursula Yovich in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©



Anita Hegh, Alison Whyte and Anthony Taufa in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©

## SUITABLE FOR

- Stage 5 and 6

## SUBJECTS

- Drama
- English

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS  
A SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY AND MALTHOUSE THEATRE PRODUCTION

# LOVE AND INFORMATION

BY CARYL CHURCHILL

CAST

MARCO CHIAPPI  
HARRY GREENWOOD  
GLENN HAZELDINE  
ANITA HEGH  
ZAHRA NEWMAN  
ANTHONY TAUFA  
ALISON WHYTE  
URSULA YOVICH

DIRECTOR

KIP WILLIAMS

DESIGNER

DAVID FLEISCHER

LIGHTING DESIGNER

PAUL JACKSON

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

THE SWEATS

DRAMATURG

MARK PRITCHARD

PRODUCTION MANAGER  
(MALTHOUSE THEATRE)

DAVID MILLER

PRODUCTION MANAGER (STC)

CHRIS MERCER

STAGE MANAGER

LISA OSBORN

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

ROXZAN BOWES

SOUND OPERATOR

LUKE DAVIS

VENUE TECHNICIAN

PHILIP PATTERSON

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER

PIA JOHNSON

1 HOUR 35 MINUTES,  
NO INTERVAL

THE SYDNEY SEASON OF THIS PRODUCTION PREMIERED AT WHARF I THEATRE ON 11 JULY 2015.

THE PREMIERE PERFORMANCE OF THIS PRODUCTION TOOK PLACE AT THE MERLYN THEATRE, THE COOPERS MALTHOUSE, MELBOURNE, ON 16 JUNE 2015.

FIRST PERFORMED AT THE ROYAL COURT JERWOOD THEATRE DOWNSTAIRS, SLOANE SQUARE, LONDON ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2012.

PRODUCTION PATRONS

KIM WILLIAMS AM  
AND CATHERINE DOVEY

**MALTHOUSE  
THEATRE**



**SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
CO**

# ABOUT THE PLAY



Ursula Yovich and Harry Greenwood in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©

## LOVE AND INFORMATION BY CARYL CHURCHILL

A child cannot feel pain. A man has a secret. A woman wants an affair. A scientist dissects a brain. Someone tells the police. Another puts an elephant on the stairs.

In a series of tantalising vignettes, over 100 vibrant characters search for meaning in their lives. Through sex, death, feeling, thinking, taxidermy and karaoke they discover each other. Within their intimate whispers, philosophical exchanges and life-changing revelations, we see ourselves and the people we love.

Caryl Churchill is one of the world's foremost living playwrights. Since the 1950s, she has maintained inventiveness and a currency that remain unmatched.

Our Wharf 1 Theatre has played host to Churchill's work several times – from *Serious Money* and *Top Girls* to *Far Away* and *Seven Jewish Children*.

In *Love and Information*, her signature wit and profound intuition reveal a kaleidoscope of human connections.

Guided by STC Resident Director Kip Williams, the gifted cast, including Marco Chiappi, Glenn Hazeldine, Anita Hegh, Zahra Newman, Anthony Taufa and Ursula Yovich, Alison Whyte, use their chameleonic talents to explore this unique and evocative snapshot of our modern era.

# ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT AND DIRECTOR

## CARYL AND KIP

It is fitting that Kip Williams is directing a Caryl Churchill production, as both artists are avid innovators of the contemporary stage. Over the past 30 years, Churchill has consistently pushed the boundaries of what plays are and can be as written by playwrights. While Williams challenges how theatre can be directed, designed and structured as well as the actor/audience relationship.

Churchill is described by German playwright Marius Von Mayenburg as having “changed the language of theatre”. He goes on to say that “...only the greats deserve that accolade – Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Brecht, Beckett – a roll call to which we could easily add Churchill” (de Angelis, 2012). In many respects, Churchill’s plays can be described as ‘anti-plays’ as they defy traditional conventions of theatre in terms of narrative structure and character. It is the mixture of unique theatricality and ethical issues that allow her plays to be timeless. Churchill herself once said that plays “...are about finding a broader way of looking [...] playwrights don’t give answers, they ask questions” (Sydney Theatre Company Program, 2015). Despite its timelessness, Churchill’s writing is always a direct response to societal issues of the time. In the case of *Top Girls*, the play was a response to Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative UK government.

As a playwright, Churchill is well known for including unconventional ‘gimmicks’ in her writing, such as non-human characters like goblins, shape-shifters and clones. In her work *Top Girls*, the first act consists of a dinner party with notable females from history, including Pope Joan of Arc and Lady Nijo, a 13th century Japanese concubine.

Churchill’s unique playwriting techniques were developed during her involvement in the 1970s and 1980s with the alternative Joint Stock Theatre Company in England. The company pioneered a collaborative workshop-based method for text creation.

As co-resident director at Sydney Theatre Company, Kip Williams has consistently used contemporary and unconventional production techniques in the direction of his plays. Williams’ direction has changed audiences’ understanding of how meaning can be manipulated in a theatre performance. This has often been achieved by utilising various techniques to make audiences more aware of their presence and role as audience members in the theatre.

For example, Williams’ *Macbeth* in 2014 reversed traditional expectations of theatre. The audience were seated on the stage, while the actors performed in the auditorium. Female actors played male roles and seasoned actors played children. Conventions such as multiple role, transitions using props and mask were also used. In 2015, Williams directed Tennessee Williams’ *Suddenly Last Summer*. The first act of the play was performed behind a white projection screen spanning the width of the stage. The dramatic action was then projected onto the screen using live feed from steady-cams. This choice once again echoed a major theme in the play – the binary experience of watching and being watched.

Both Williams and Churchill are and will continue to be innovators of the contemporary stage by challenging audiences’ perceptions of theatre and experimenting with theatrical conventions.

## TAKE YOUR CUE

- What other Churchill plays have you seen or read? How did they experiment with theatrical conventions?
- What other plays directed by Kip Williams have you seen? How were your expectations changed or challenged while watching the play/s?
- Is a play still a play if it defies traditional conventions of narrative, character and production techniques? Why/why not?

# NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

According to Elaine Aston, a professor of contemporary performance at Lancaster University, Churchill's writing is "not just a question of politics, but a politics of style". All of Churchill's plays are written as episodic or non-linear narratives, as she consistently looks to find new forms to express her ideas. *Love and Information* has an episodic narrative, meaning that each scene exists individually, without any clear relationship to the scenes before or after.

*Love and Information* is written in seven sections, each consisting of seven scenes, with the final section having eight scenes. Churchill stipulates that the sections must be played in order, however the scenes within those sections can be played in any order the director chooses. However, in the seventh section there is a scene that is stipulated as the 'final scene'. Within the play, there are also ten scenes titled 'Depression Scenes', and Churchill requires the director to incorporate at least one of these scenes within the play. At the end of the script there is an addendum of 16 scenes entitled 'Random' that can be incorporated throughout the seven sections. As the director, Williams has chosen to use all ten 'Depression Scenes'. The myriad of options for performing this play means that every production will have between 51 and 76 scenes and no production will ever be the same. Williams has chosen a total of 70 scenes for the STC production.



Anthony Taufa, Alison Whyte and Anita Hegh in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©



Zahra Newman and Anita Hegh in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©



Anita Hegh, Alison Whyte and Zahra Newman in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©



# DRAMATIC FORM

Dramatic Form is the way Dramatic Action is structured, organised and shaped. In *Love and Information* each scene is simply given a title and has no indication of place, time or characters. Churchill leaves the context of each scene to be decided by the directors and the actors.

An example of the contextless dialogue is below:

## FLASHBACK

Breathe

Ah ah ah

Just breathe

Ah ah

I've got you, it's all right

Ah

All right.

Thank you. Sorry. I keep seeing... I can see... I can't stop seeing...

I wish I could stop it for you.

Short of smacking in my skull.

They say time, you may be able to forget, even if it's a long time.

Once it's in there. Once you know that stuff.

This Dramatic Form gives the director a large amount of artistic freedom and is consistent with Churchill's reputation for writing plays that challenge traditional playwriting conventions. Kip Williams began the first day of rehearsals without roles being allocated to the actors. As a way of exploring the contextual possibilities of the scenes, Williams pulled names out of a hat to decide who would read the different scenes. This was continued for the entire first week and allowed the cast to explore the possibilities of roles, relationships, situations, place and time. When these Elements of Drama change, so too does the Dramatic Meaning. A dialogue between an elderly man and woman has a very different meaning to the same dialogue played between

### TAKE YOUR CUE

- How did the episodic narrative structure make you feel?
- What effect does the play's structure have on the creation of Dramatic Meaning?
- Why is *Love and Information* considered an important play in the contemporary theatrical landscape?

two young girls. *Love and Information* encompasses over 100 roles played by eight actors. The convention of multiple role/transformational acting brings each of the roles to life, using variations in vocal dynamics, movement, body language and facial expression.

The micro-dramas also challenge an actor's ability to develop character. Some scenes have characters that are two-dimensional and present a viewpoint or neutral conversation; while other characters have been given back-stories. No matter how long or short the scene, there is always a motivation and something at stake in the scene which drives the micro-drama forward.

# SET DESIGN



Ursula Yovich and Harry Greenwood in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©

The vast amount of contexts in *Love and Information* requires an adaptable set. The set of STC's production of *Love and Information* is designed by David Fleischer and features white modular blocks that are moved into different configurations to give an indication of place, aiding the Dramatic Action in each scene. The basic set allows the audience to use their imagination to bring the given circumstances to life.

Andrew Fuhrmann, a reviewer for *The Crikey Daily Review*, described the set as a "...white walled laboratory" where the audience are observers studying life in "...successive, mutant forms" (Fuhrmann, 2015).

Minimal props have also been used in the scenes to create context. In various moments of the play, the props provide subtle symbolism and give the audience clues to an overarching Dramatic Meaning of the play.

## TAKE YOUR CUE

- How did the episodic narrative structure make you feel?
- What effect does the play's structure have on the creation of Dramatic Meaning?
- Why is *Love and Information* considered an important play in the contemporary theatrical landscape?

# THEMES AND IDEAS

CARYL CHURCHILL'S *LOVE AND INFORMATION* IS A REFLECTION OF LIFE, WHICH SHE BELIEVES IS ESSENTIALLY A DOUBLE HELIX OF LOVE AND INFORMATION. THROUGHOUT THE 76 SCENES OF THE PLAY, MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT LOVE AND INFORMATION BECOME APPARENT. BELOW IS AN OUTLINE OF THE MAIN THEMES AND IDEAS PRESENT IN THE PLAY.

## LOVE

Most of the scenes in *Love and Information* are duologues, occurring between two characters and portraying an insight into their relationship. The duologues also reveal the human need for connection and how information and technology impact upon these connections.

## INFORMATION

The acquisition of information is essential to life and living. *Love and Information* prompts the audience to think about the types of information we come into contact with on a daily basis, including gossip, secrets, data and facts, as well as the subject matter of information such as personal, historical, scientific, etc. The various scenes also pose the question of whether information has currency and if some pieces of information are more valuable than others. Over the past twenty years, the way information is distributed has changed immensely and now extends to a wide range of technology, including mobile phones, email, the Internet and social media.

## TAKE YOUR CUE

- What information do we desire? What information do we fear?
- How can information affect love? How can love affect information?
- Does information have currency? What type of information is more important than other types of information?
- How are we positively and negatively affected by information provided to us through technology?
- What specific scenes in the play made the above questions apparent to the audience?
- Do you believe we are bombarded with information in the 21st century? How can this change?

# THEMES AND IDEAS (CONT.)



Alison Whyte and Anthony Taufa in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©

## RITUAL

*Love and Information* also reflects on the rituals of life. A ritual is an action or event that is repeated regularly or at a certain time as a ceremony. Various ritualistic moments are interspersed throughout the narrative, allowing the audience to reflect on life and how it is 'performed.'

## TAKE YOUR CUE:

- Which scenes in the play are rituals of everyday life?
- Why are rituals important to individuals and society?
- How do rituals relate to love and information?
- Do you agree with Caryl Churchill that life is made up of love and information, shaped by ritual? Is there another element that is just as pivotal to our existence?

## TAKE YOUR CUE

- Which scenes in the play are rituals of everyday life?
- Why are rituals important to individuals and society?
- How do rituals relate to love and information?
- Do you agree with Caryl Churchill that life is made up of love and information, shaped by ritual? Is there another element that is just as pivotal to our existence?

# AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND DRAMATIC MEANING



Glenn Hazeldine and Ursula Yovich in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©



Anita Hegh in Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre's production of *Love and Information*, 2015. Image: Pia Johnson. ©

Maintaining audience engagement throughout an episodic narrative can be challenging, as the traditional story arc of rising action leading to a climax and the resolution of a problem is not present. Williams describes his approach to *Love and Information* as creating a crescendo by treating the play like a symphony, where he is the composer. A through-line of themes and ideas are discovered by the audience as the play unfolds, creating a sense of cohesion across the 76 micro-dramas. Audience engagement therefore derives from allowing audience members to discover how the puzzle fits together to create an overall meaning. Like Samuel Beckett, Churchill does not speak publicly about her plays nor take interviews (Lawson, 2012). Instead, she prefers the audience to discover the meaning for themselves - as Kip Williams says, "Caryl likes to make her audience work". The variances in rhythm, from scenes that are as long as a sneeze to scenes that last five minutes, also provide contrasts that assist in audience engagement.

Like Brechtian plays, *Love and Information* creates a sense of Alienation, where the audience are unable to engage with a story or character journey as the play moves from scene to scene. This Alienation causes the audience to be aware of watching a play and think more closely about the meaning of the play.

## TAKE YOUR CUE

- Which scenes did you engage with as an audience member most and why?
- Which scenes made you particularly aware that you were watching a play? Why do you think this was?
- Which scenes did you find yourself most trying to solve the puzzle of meaning? What was it about these particular scenes that really got you thinking?
- Is there a scene that can be considered as the climax of the play (or the Crescendo as described by Kip Williams)?

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Fuhrmann, A. (2015) *Love and Information Review* (Malthouse, Melbourne). Retrieved from <http://dailyreview.crikey.com.au/love-and-information-review-malthouse-melbourne/25481>

Lawson, M. (2012, October 3) Caryl Churchill, by the people who know her best. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/oct/03/caryl-churchill-collaborators-interview>

# OTHER RESOURCES

- Check out our online Magazine for videos of scenes from the play and a podcase of Director Kip Williams on Radio National
- Pre-Show In-the-Know handout for fast facts and what to look for in the performance.