

**SYDNEY
THEATRE
CO**
EDUCATION

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS
A SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
AND BARKING GECKO THEATRE COMPANY PRODUCTION

STORM BOY

BY COLIN THIELE
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE
BY TOM HOLLOWAY



ON CUE

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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 hbrown@sydneytheatre.com.au

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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 and conventions. 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.

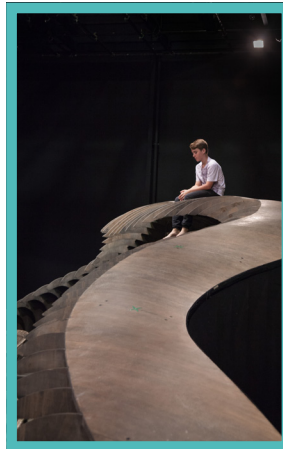
STC is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, by its arts funding and advisory body, and by the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW.

sydneytheatre.com.au

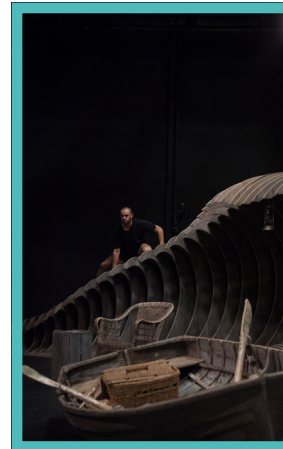
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



Otis Pavlovic and John Sheedy in rehearsal for STC and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Storm Boy*, 2015. Image: Hon Boey. ©



Kai Lewins in rehearsal for STC and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Storm Boy*, 2015. Image: Hon Boey. ©



Phil Dean Walford in rehearsal for STC and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Storm Boy*, 2015. Image: Hon Boey. ©

SUITABLE FOR

Students in Years 2 to 12

SUBJECTS

Literacy, English, Drama, HSIE

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STORM BOY

BY COLIN THIELE

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY TOM HOLLOWAY

FINGERBONE BILL
JIMI BANI

HIDEAWAY TOM
JULIAN GARNER

STORM BOY
KAI LEWINS

MR. PERCIVAL
ANTHONY MAYOR

STORM BOY
OTIS PAVLOVIC

STORM BOY
RORY POTTER

MR PONDER/MR PROUD
PHIL DEAN WALFORD

DIRECTOR
JOHN SHEEDY

SET, COSTUME & PUPPET DESIGNER
MICHAEL SCOTT-
MITCHELL

PUPPETRY DIRECTOR
PETER WILSON

LIGHTING DESIGNER
DAMIEN COOPER

SOUND DESIGNER
KINGSLEY REEVE

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
SCARLET MCGLYNN

PUPPETS CREATED BY
ANNIE FORBES
TIM DENTON
(ABOUTFACE PRODUCTIONS)
& STC PROPS

VOICE & TEXT COACH
NATASHA MCNAMARA

ASSISTANT TO THE DESIGNER
ELIZABETH GADSBY

PRODUCTION MANAGER
TERRI RICHARDS

STAGE MANAGER
SARAH SMITH

PUPPET MAINTENANCE
EMILY ADINOLFI

HEAD MECHANIST
DAVID TONGS

THEATRE TECHNICIAN
CAMERON MENZIES

CHAPERONES
KAY DRUMMOND
SALLY MANNING

REHEARSAL PHOTOGRAPHER
HON BOEY

PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER
BRETT BOARDMAN

THE PREMIERE PERFORMANCE OF
THIS PRODUCTION TOOK PLACE AT
WHARF I THEATRE ON 14 AUGUST 2013

1 HOURS 15 MINUTES, NO INTERVAL. THE CURRENT SEASON OF THIS PRODUCTION PREMIERED AT WHARF I THEATRE ON 25 APRIL 2015.

COMMISSIONING PATRON
GRETEL PACKER



Trade &
Investment
Arts NSW



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GECKO
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COMPANY

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

JOHN SHEEDY - DIRECTOR OF BARKING GECKO THEATRE COMPANY

Storm Boy had its world premiere on Sydney's harbour in 2013, a very fitting place for a pelican to make his stage debut. In 2015, Mr Percival lands back at the Wharf in a return season before spreading his wings on a national tour. He also brings with him some familiar faces and some new. We welcome Julian Garner in the role of Hideaway Tom and Jimi Bani as the charismatic Fingerbone Bill. Kai Lewins and Otis Pavlovic join original cast member Rory Potter sharing the role of Storm Boy and we welcome Anthony Mayor and Phil Dean Walford to the team.

There is a tremendous affection for *Storm Boy*; Colin Thiele created one of the great Australian stories, a story we grew up with, a story that connects us with a time and place. I remember reading the book in class, I remember seeing the film and we children and adults alike living and crying through it. Uniquely Australian, Mr Percival is one of the most famous characters in Australian literature. The friendship between Storm Boy and his beloved bird resonates on a level that is profoundly innocent and true. We embrace the loyalty of Mr Percival and we feel the tragedy of the loss.

The undercurrents of the story ponder issues around grief and masculinity. Storm Boy has lost his mother, Hideaway Tom has lost his wife, Fingerbone Bill has lost his community and the baby pelicans – all boys – have also lost their mother. It is also a meditation on the abandonment of civilisation and the loss of language; words are replaced with routine physical actions and silence becomes an emotional landscape that is both desperate and savage and achingly beautiful. *Storm Boy* goes beyond the poignancy of the friendship between a boy and a pelican in that there is also a wonderful bond forged between Storm Boy and the Indigenous Fingerbone Bill. An unexpected education of belonging, connection to the natural land, loss and of letting go. We experience an ancient art form of storytelling, and an almost Dreamtime story approach woven richly through the conceptualisation of this piece.

Tom Holloway, in this adaptation, has brought all of these elements to the stage. I have admired Holloway's work for many years and in this collaboration the very spirit of the story is stunningly ignited.

Thiele chose to set *Storm Boy* in one of the most isolated environments in the Australian landscape – the Coorong National Park, a string of saltwater lagoons, sweeping sand dunes and the wild southern ocean. This was no accident. In the words of Thiele, "It is an elemental region, a place of wind and water and vast skies, of stone and scrub. It is a place of glaring salt pans so intense that our brows pucker and our eyes wince. A place of winter storms and summer sun glades, of shorelines soft with sand and sibilant reeds,

and of limestone outcrops sharper than teeth." Michael Scott-Mitchell has encapsulated these elements in his design – a breathtaking work that truly honours the landscape that resonated so strongly with Thiele.

A huge thank you to Andrew, Cate, and all at the STC, for their support and incredible commitment to creating new partnerships and world class theatre.

For my own part, my vision is to introduce this classic Australian story to a new generation, to literally bring these beautiful characters to life, and for those who witnessed it the first time round, to fall in love with the story all over again.

Sydney Theatre Company and Barking Gecko Theatre Company (2015). Storm Boy Program. Wharf 1 Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company.



CHECK OUT OUR PELICAN COLOURING-IN COMPETITION
ON THE EDUCATION SECTION OF THE STC WEBSITE!

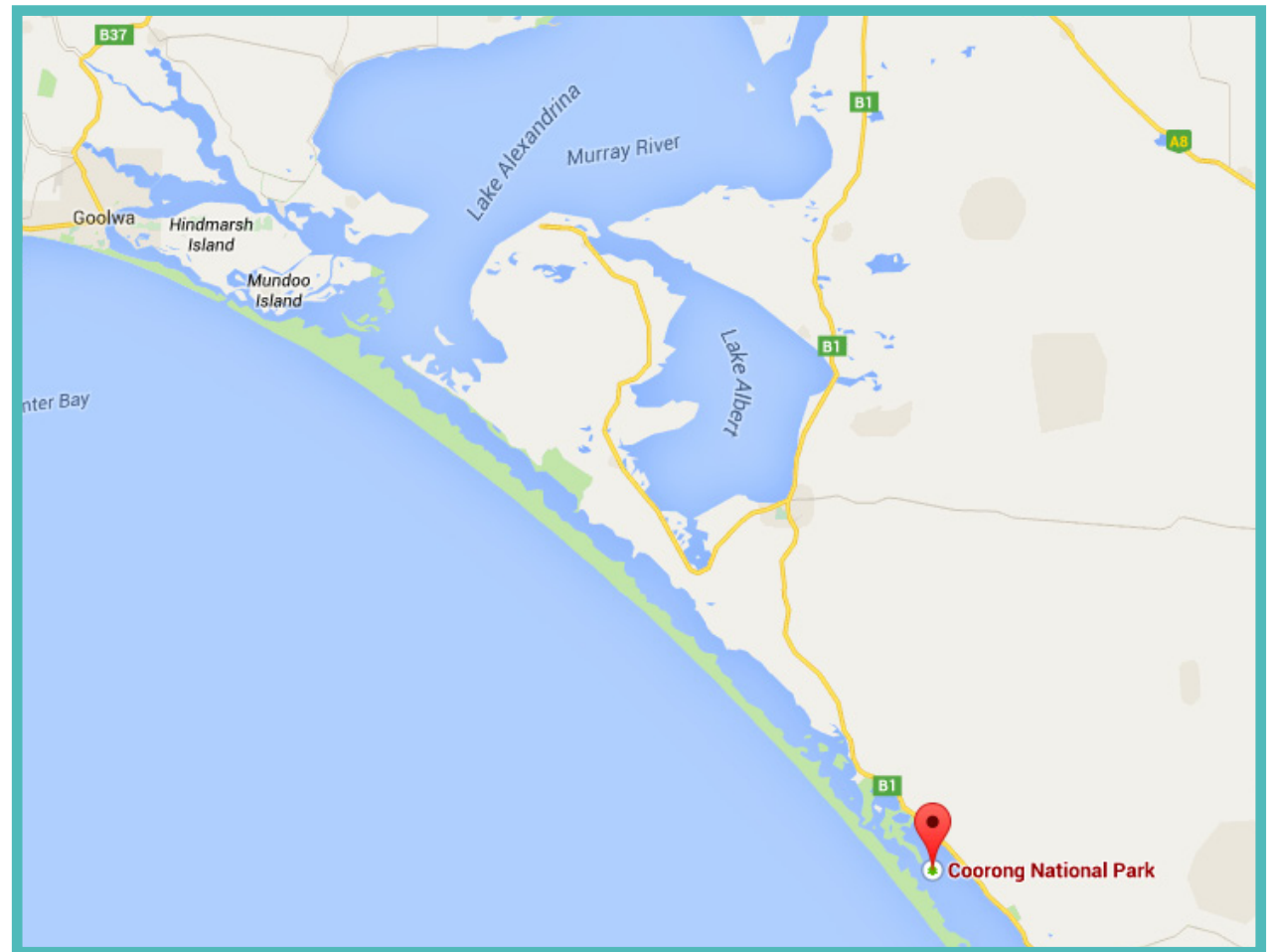
CONTEXT

STORM BOY AND THE COORONG

Storm Boy lives between the Coorong and the mouth of the Murray River on the Ninety Mile Beach in South Australia. The Coorong is one of the most isolated regions of Australia. The closest town is Goolwa. Storm Boy lives there with his father, Hideaway Tom, who moved to the wooden humpy hut nestled in the sand hills after Storm Boy's mother passed away. The only other person in the region is Fingerbone Bill, an Indigenous man who also lives in a humpy by the shore. A humpy is the name given to a small wooden hut with a corrugated iron roof. At first, Hideaway Tom was afraid Storm Boy would get lost, so he erected a large wooden pole high up on a sand hill as a landmark for Storm Boy to find his way home.



CHECK OUT OUR PRE-SHOW IN-THE-KNOW FACT SHEET
FOR ESSENTIAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SHOW



Source: <https://www.google.com.au/maps/place/Coorong+National+Park/@-35.6422315,139.2599487,10z/data=!4m2!3m1!1sox6ab42a6b3d68abd:oxfo3365545ba5foo>

ABOUT THE PLAY

A RETURN SEASON FOR A CHERISHED CHILDHOOD FAVOURITE

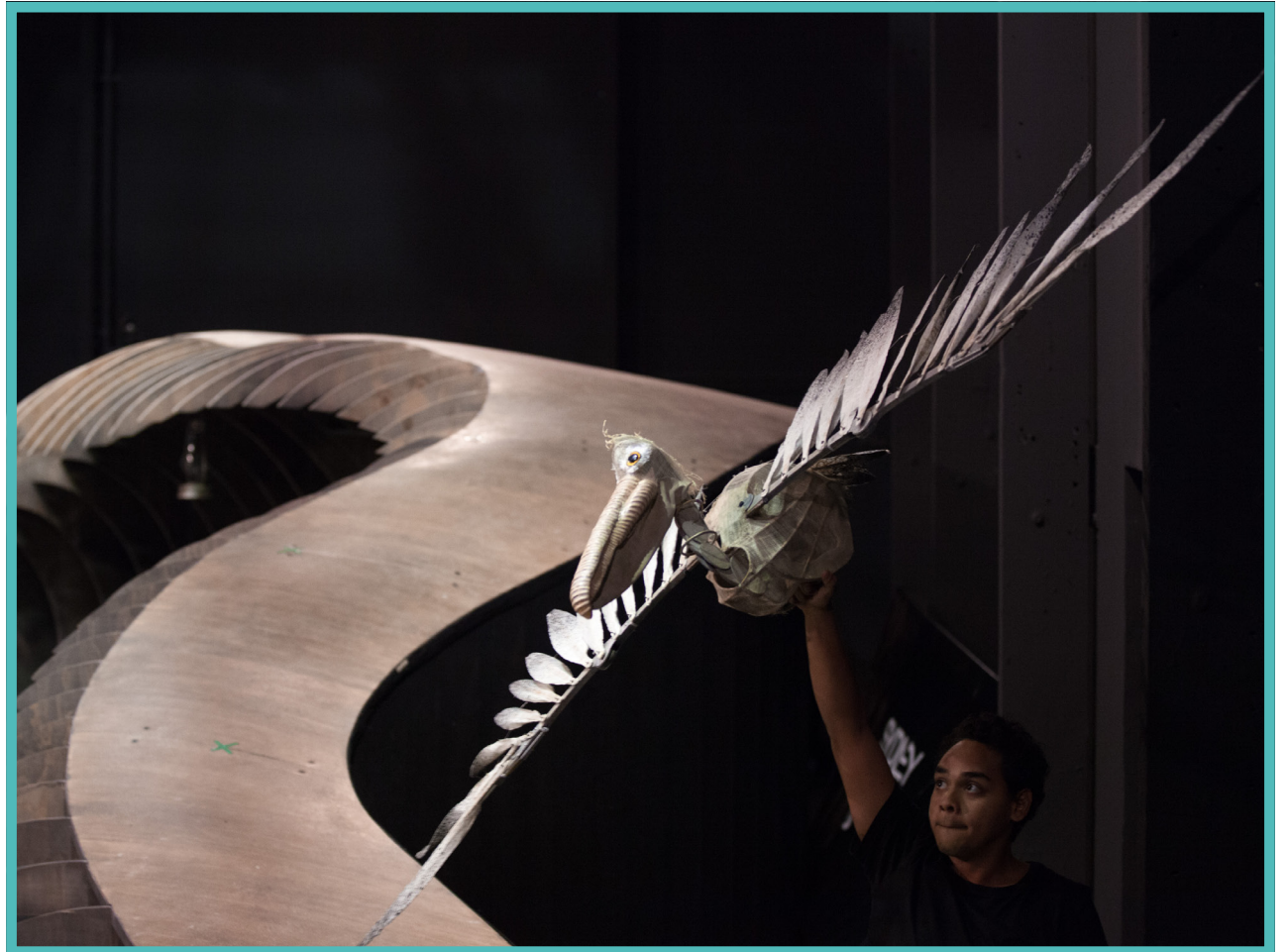
A runaway hit in 2013, this collaboration with Perth's Barking Gecko Theatre Company is a vivid stage adaptation of Colin Thiele's much-loved story. In 2015, it's back for a very limited encore season.

Heralded by Crikey as "full of heart and soul", Tom Holloway's writing honours the spare, unadorned style of the original, while John Sheedy's sensitive direction brings the characters, whether human or pelican, springing to life.

Storm Boy's evocation of a far-away windy beach and bittersweet message about growing up has enthralled children and adults alike for decades. Whether you missed out on tickets to its first season or want to introduce a new generation of children to the story, this is your chance to savour the wonder, sadness and hope of this home-grown classic.



PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEARNING EXPERIENCES
AVAILABLE ON THE EDUCATION SECTION OF THE STC
WEBSITE!



Anthony Mayor in rehearsal for STC and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Storm Boy*, 2015. Image: Hon Boey. ©

SYNOPSIS

After a big storm, Storm Boy is eager to go out onto the beach and discover treasures that have washed up onto the shore. Storm Boy excitedly rushes out the door to check on a nest of penguins. As he sits talking to the penguins, he is approached by an Indigenous man named Fingerbone Bill. Fingerbone Bill is carrying an old rifle, called a blunderbuss. Storm Boy is wary of Fingerbone Bill, as his father warned him not to talk to strangers because they are living on the beach in secret. Fingerbone Bill explains that he is not going to harm Storm Boy or his father, and that he also takes pride in protecting the birds in the Coorong. Fingerbone Bill explains to Storm Boy that his people have been coming to that stretch of beach "...since the sun first came up..." (pg. 9). A tiger snake appears and Fingerbone Bill fires his gun at the snake and kills it. In that moment, Hideaway Tom races up to Storm Boy, petrified that Fingerbone Bill might have harmed him. However, Storm Boy explains that Fingerbone Bill saved him from the snake. Hideaway Tom and Storm Boy walk away, leaving Fingerbone Bill holding the snake.

Later, Fingerbone Bill offers Hideaway Tom some crayfish as a way of making peace between them. Fingerbone Bill invites Storm Boy to go and look at the pelicans feeding their young in the sanctuary. At first Storm Boy is not allowed, however after much begging, Hideaway Tom wearily gives him permission to go with Fingerbone Bill. Hideaway Tom asks Fingerbone Bill to join them for dinner afterwards.

In the sanctuary, Storm Boy and Fingerbone Bill discover a pelican nest of three tiny baby pelicans whose parents have been shot by hunters. The hunters are permitted to shoot ducks, however they often hunt other birds for fun. Storm Boy insists on taking the three birds home in his jumper to look after them. Fingerbone Bill tells Storm Boy that it is the way of nature for birds to die and he must not be upset if his dad doesn't want him to keep them. When Storm Boy returns home, he finds Hideaway Tom unwilling to take in the three baby pelicans. However, Hideaway Tom changes his mind on the condition that Storm Boy releases them to the wild when they are old enough to look after themselves. Fingerbone Bill encourages Storm Boy to look at the pelicans not as three birds, but as an indication of what makes humans, animals and the land all the same – "Stop thinking about them as three little babies all on their own and see their place in the world. See what makes us all the same" (pg. 33). He leads Storm Boy theatrically around the stage with Storm Boy. Their movement around the space portrays the passing of time. As they move the baby pelican puppets are replaced by three adult pelicans – Mr. Proud, Mr. Ponder and Mr. Percival.

One morning, the three grown birds make a mess inside the humpy and Hideaway Tom concludes that the time has come for the birds to be released back into the wild. Hideaway Tom and Fingerbone Bill explain to Storm Boy that it is time for the birds to be let go. Together they head off to the boat and release each bird, one by one, into the sanctuary.

Storm Boy misses his pelican friends very much. One cold morning, he wakes to find Mr. Percival perched on top of the lookout pole. When Storm Boy calls Mr. Percival's name, Mr. Percival spreads his wings and flies down to see him. Hideaway Tom reminds Storm Boy that Mr. Percival is a wild bird and that they can't afford to feed him all the time. Hideaway Tom adds that if Mr. Percival wants to fish with them, he is more than welcome. He just has to stay away from the fishing nets – and Hideaway Tom's bum!

Mr. Percival has become a very clever pelican, playing cards and fetch with a tennis ball. Fingerbone Bill tells Storm Boy that Mr. Percival has been attacking nasty hunters in the sanctuary and that Storm Boy should tell Mr. Percival to be careful of the hunters. That night, a violent storm rolls in and Storm Boy wakes to Hideaway Tom's voice telling him that a tugboat has run aground. When day breaks, on the horizon they see four men on the ship in desperate need of help. However, the waves are too rough and getting a line out to save them is impossible. Storm Boy realises that Mr. Percival could carry a line out to the ship. He takes a sinker, ties it and gives it to Mr. Percival to carry out to the boat. However, Mr. Percival doesn't understand and time and time again takes the line out, only to drop it in the sea. On the tenth try, he drops the line across the ship. The captain of the ship ties the line to a coil of rope and gestures to Hideaway Tom and Fingerbone Bill to start pulling. All the sailors are rescued from the sinking ship, thanks to Mr. Percival, and spend the night in the humpy.

SYNOPSIS (Cont.)



Julian Garner in rehearsal for STC and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Storm Boy*, 2015. Image: Hon Boey. ©

Hideaway Tom tells Storm Boy that when the captain and his crew left, they offered to honor Mr. Percival by paying for his stuffed body to be displayed in a museum when he eventually passes away. Storm Boy refuses the offer, saying that Mr. Percival would hate to be kept in a box. Fingerbone Bill returns from the town with a feast of food and they begin to set the table. The four of them eat cake and other delicious food. Fingerbone Bill prompts Hideaway Tom to tell Storm Boy about the other offer the sailors made – to pay for Storm Boy to go to boarding school in Adelaide by way of thanks for saving their lives. Storm Boy is upset at the thought of being sent to Adelaide and runs away to find Mr. Percival.

As gunshots are heard in the distance, Storm Boy calls and calls for Mr. Percival. Storm Boy sees something in the distance and begins to run towards it. Storm Boy returns to the humpy with the bloody body of Mr. Percival in his arms. His favorite pelican has been shot by the hunters. Storm Boy holds a bandage to Mr. Percival's wound as his breathing becomes heavier and heavier, until finally Mr. Percival passes away.

They decide to bury him beside the lookout pole. Fingerbone Bill tells Storm Boy to think about how everything changes over time and “nothing stops long enough for you to be able to hold it” (pg. 84). Storm Boy agrees, acknowledges that change can be a good thing and tells his father and Fingerbone Bill that he will accept the offer to go to boarding school in the city. Fingerbone Bill reassures Storm Boy that wherever he goes, he can see Mr. Percival because “...birds like Mr. Percival...They never really die” (pg. 85).

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

STORM BOY

Storm Boy is a young boy who is about 10 years old. He lives with his father in a humpy in the Coorong in South Australia. Storm Boy was given his name after a group of men saw Storm Boy wandering the beach during a storm. The men raced to the closest town to send for help. When they arrived, the townspeople reassured them that the boy lived on the beach with his father and there was nothing to worry about. From that day on, he was known as Storm Boy.

During the day, Storm Boy helps his father fish on their boat. The fish are then taken into town and sold. With this money, they buy the small amount of supplies they need to survive, including food, fishing gear and gasoline for their lantern. They live a simple and comfortable life and are happy with each other's company.

Storm Boy is a smart and compassionate boy who has a strong connection to the land on which he has grown up and the animals who inhabit the land. He believes that all animals should be cared for and treats them as his friends, talking to them and watching over them, particularly after wild storms. Storm Boy misses his mother and imparts the kindness and care she would have shown him as a parent by caring for the animals around him.

HIDEAWAY TOM

Feeling sad and lonely, Hideaway Tom brought Storm Boy with him to live in the humpy after his wife passed away. Hideaway Tom was given his name by the townspeople because of his reclusive life, hidden amongst the sand hills of Ninety Mile Beach. He is living in the humpy in secret and does not want anyone to disturb the quiet and austere life he has created. Hideaway Tom always reminds Storm Boy not to talk to people on the beach, out of fear they will be forced to move. Hideaway Tom is also fiercely protective of Storm Boy, as his son is all he has left in the world. This is demonstrated when Fingerbone Bill first talks to Storm Boy and Hideaway Tom becomes angry, refusing to let Storm Boy spend time with his new friend. However, once Hideaway Tom realises Fingerbone Bill is not a threat, they become close companions.

As a result of his wife's death, Hideaway Tom is fearful of change, which is why he lives by the Coorong – an isolated place away from society. At first, Hideaway Tom does not tell Storm Boy about the offer of going to boarding school as he is afraid of losing another person close to him.

FINGERBONE BILL

Fingerbone Bill is an Indigenous man who also lives in a humpy by the beach. Fingerbone Bill came to live on the Coorong after leaving his wife and family behind, believing he was not a good father or husband and they were better off without him. During the course of the play, Fingerbone Bill becomes a role model and second father figure to Storm Boy by offering him knowledge and guidance.

Fingerbone Bill's people were the first people to walk the sand of the Ninety Mile Beach and he has a strong connection to the land and nature. Fingerbone Bill is a practical man who believes that everything has its place and time on earth and once that time is up, they live on in spirit through the elements of the earth – the wind, the sand and the sky. This is seen when he discovers the three baby pelicans with Storm Boy. Fingerbone Bill says that the birds should be left for nature to take its course, however Storm Boy insists on saving them.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS (Cont.)

MR. PERCIVAL

Storm Boy found Mr. Percival and his two brothers, Mr. Proud and Mr. Ponder, in the sanctuary after their parents were killed by hunters. Mr. Percival was the weakest of the three birds and was nursed back to health by Storm Boy. When Mr. Percival is released into the wild he is quick to fly away, which makes Storm Boy sad. However, he soon returns, finding the lookout pole that Hideaway Tom built as a signal of their home. From this day on, Mr. Percival reveals himself to be a very clever pelican, accompanying Hideaway Tom and Storm Boy on fishing trips and learning to play fetch like a dog.

However, Mr. Percival's greatest strength becomes his downfall – as he flies over to warn the birds in the sanctuary about the hunters, he is shot. Although his death brings great sadness to Storm Boy, Mr. Percival also gives Storm Boy and Hideaway Tom the ability to accept change and his death acts as a catalyst for Storm Boy to decide to attend school.



Image: Hon Boey. ©

THEMES AND IDEAS

ANIMAL PROTECTION AND LAND CONSERVATION

Storm Boy is set in South Australia in a region affectionately called 'The Coorong'. The Coorong includes the Coorong National Park and a lagoon ecosystem of international significance, comprised of Lake Alexandrina, Lake Albert and The Coorong. The lagoons are at the mouth to the Murray River that leads on to Ninety Mile Beach.

The area is an important breeding area for birds and wildlife that migrate to the region during drought. The Coorong has been listed as a 'Wetland of International Importance for Waterfowl Habitat' under the Ramsar Convention. Most notably, the site is an important breeding area for pelicans and other birds including ducks, swans, cormorants and terns, who migrate to the area from around the world (and as far as the Arctic Circle!).

The past fifty years have seen gross human misuse of the area, resulting in damage to the Coorong as a sanctuary and national park. Barriers were placed further upstream in the Murray River, affecting the amount of water reaching the lagoons. The barriers do not have fish gates installed, limiting the flow of fish into the area. The rare and endangered birdlife also sadly attract hunters to the sanctuary, resulting in birds and wildlife being intentionally killed – "They're here for the ducks. Shoot them and take them off for dinner, but... The thing that gets me is sometimes they just have a go at the other birds for fun" (pg. 26).

Hideaway Tom, Storm Boy and Fingerbone Bill are conservationists for the area, as they respect and value the sanctuary and its place in the world, working to ensure The Coorong remains untouched. Their appreciation for the land is encapsulated in Fingerbone Bill's line "This place... It's fragile. Everything is so fragile round here, don't you reckon? Like it could all shatter at the faintest touch" (pg. 26).



Rory Potter in rehearsal for STC and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Storm Boy*, 2015. Image: Hon Boey. ©

It may therefore seem surprising that Fingerbone Bill carries a gun himself. However, the blunderbuss (an old pirate's gun) is used by Fingerbone Bill to scare hunters who come in to the sanctuary. Instead of firing bullets, he fills the gun with salt and fires it. Mr. Percival is also a conservationist. When Mr. Percival hears the hunters' gunshots, he flies to the sanctuary and swoops down on the hunters to prevent them from shooting the other birds. However, it is Mr. Percival's desire to protect the other birds that sadly leads to his death.

THEMES AND IDEAS (Cont.)

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS' CONNECTION TO THE LAND

The Coorong is a place of significance for the Ngarrindjeri peoples. 'Middens,' which are mounds of shells, have been found in the region, indicating Aboriginal campsites dating back thousands of years. A relationship with the land is part of Indigenous Australian identity, spirituality and history. Fingerbone Bill's presence in the story strengthens the theme of protecting country that belongs to Indigenous Australians. In a story set in one of Australia's most beautiful and isolated locations, Fingerbone Bill also reminds the audience that Indigenous Australians are the traditional custodians of the land on which we walk.

Fingerbone Bill introduces Storm Boy to the importance of looking after the land and its animals, while also teaching him about the natural cycle of life and death that exists for all living beings. This is shown when Fingerbone Bill tells Storm Boy to leave the baby pelicans for they will surely pass away. Fingerbone Bill also shares the history of the Coorong with Storm Boy, telling him about his people walking the beach – “You see we've been coming here as long as the pelicans have [...] It's ancient, this place. Since the sun first came up there's been a beach here and since the first morning the waves have crashed in to it and since the first day pelicans and ibis and ducks have nested here and ever since my people have been coming” (pg. 9).

When Mr. Percival dies, Fingerbone Bill reassures Storm Boy that his spirit can be carried wherever Storm Boy goes in the world –, “And in your heart you'll always see the shape of those two big wings in the storm clouds. The flying wings of white with trailing black edges, spread across the sky” (pg. 85).

PERCEPTIONS

The concept of looking at things from a different perspective features prominently in *Storm Boy*. It is through a renewed perception of life and living that the characters are able to make otherwise difficult decisions and accept one another.

For example, Storm Boy is encouraged by Fingerbone Bill to look after the baby pelicans by learning to “...see them for what they really are. Part of you. Part of everything” (pg. 33). Fingerbone Bill's words teach Storm Boy a valuable lesson about how to view nature and others. Fingerbone Bill tells Storm Boy to think of the grass, the sand, the waves, the birds and human beings as all having their special place in the world and being one and equal. “Don't think about the ocean being in front of you and the sand being under your feet and the grass growing in the dunes behind us. See it all together [...] And see their place in the world. See what makes us all the same” (pg. 33). This perspective helps Storm Boy when the time comes to release the pelicans back into the wild, as they are part of our greater world. Treating everything equally also highlights the cruelty of the hunters killing the birds for fun.

The idea of challenging perceptions and misperceptions is highlighted at the start of the play when Hideaway Tom tells Fingerbone Bill to stay away from them. Hideaway Tom judged Fingerbone Bill without knowing who he really is. However, once he sees the real Fingerbone Bill – a generous man full of wisdom – he appreciates him and welcomes him into their lives.

THEMES AND IDEAS (Cont.)

SAFETY AND CHANGE

The characters in *Storm Boy* cherish the safety and stasis that their life on the Coorong offers. Every day is the same, they go out fishing in the boat and comb the beach for treasures. As Fingerbone Bill says, “It’s safe. There’s something real safe in that, you know? Nothing has really changed here since the first sunrise of the first day” (pg. 9).

Storm Boy, his father and Fingerbone Bill all retreated to the Coorong after experiencing profound change and sadness in their lives. Hideaway Tom brought Storm Boy to live in the humpy after his mother passed away. Hideaway Tom says to Storm Boy, “When I brought us out here, I wasn’t in a good way. Things...Your mother...Well I was running away from things I reckon...” (pg. 84). Fingerbone Bill came to live by the beach believing he was not the husband and father his family needed him to be. Because of these life experiences, the characters are afraid of change and want to remain protected from the wider world, which is why they choose to live on the isolated coast. Hideaway Tom is adamant that the people in the nearby town should not know that he lives in the humpy, urging the sailors not to tell the townspeople. This secret helps protect the lifestyle he has created for Storm Boy and himself.

When the sailors offer Storm Boy the prospect of going to boarding school, Hideaway Tom refuses the idea as he has developed a fear of change. However, after Mr. Percival passes away, Storm Boy helps him realise that change can be a good thing, saying “Things...I reckon things change. Sometimes it’s sad. Sometimes it’s good. But either way, you gotta go with it. There’s no point trying to stop it. That’s what I reckon” (pg. 84). Storm Boy’s words help Hideaway Tom accept that going to boarding school is for the best and that change is an inevitable part of life.

CHILDHOOD

Most young people growing up in Australian in the 21st century, do so surrounded by material possessions and technology. Toys and games are technologically advanced and some children spend more time in front of a screen than they do playing outside. Storm Boy’s childhood is very different: he has very few material possessions but enjoys the freedom of growing up in an isolated coastal area, where he can run wild and explore the natural world. Storm Boy has little or no contact with other children so Mr. Percival becomes his best friend, playing catch and even cards with him!

When Storm Boy first finds the baby pelicans he wants to care for them in the way that his own mother was unable to do for him. By looking after the baby pelicans and nursing them back to health, Storm Boy learns about responsibility and valuing the environment. By the end of the play he realizes that the freedom of his early childhood is unsustainable and he must start taking the steps that will help him grow towards adulthood.



CHECK OUT OUR HANDOUT FEATURING THE ARTICLE *THE TABOO OF SADNESS* BY FINEGAN KRUCKEMEYER THE ARTICLE DISCUSSES PERFORMING SAD STORIES IN CHILDREN’S THEATRE.

THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

CHARACTER

Role and Character are two different elements. Role is one-dimensional and involves representing a point of view and identifying with a particular set of values and beliefs. Character is the complex personality and background of a character. A Character's complexity is portrayed through interaction and relationship with others and through voice and movement choices.

PLACE

The land and the elements of the earth have a strong presence in *Storm Boy* and bring a sense of magic to the realism of the play. Throughout the play we hear sounds of the ocean, while lighting gives the illusion of the sun at different times throughout the day.

ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is the feeling or mood that is created by, and emerges through, Dramatic Action. Atmosphere and Mood are closely linked to Tension. As the tension builds so does the Atmosphere. The creation of an effective atmosphere fosters audience engagement.

TAKE YOUR CUE

- How would you describe Hideaway Tom, Storm Boy and Fingerbone Bill? How are their characters portrayed through the voice and movement of the actors?
- Do you consider Mr. Percival to be a character even though he is not human? Why?/ Why not?
- What is Storm Boy's motivation in keeping the baby pelicans? What is Hideaway Tom's motivation in not wanting to keep the baby pelicans?

TAKE YOUR CUE

- What materials have been used to make the set? How does this contribute to the creation of place?
- Is the set realistic or symbolic? How is it used?
- What words would you use to describe the place where *Storm Boy* is set? How are different production elements such as lighting, sound and music used in the creation of place?

TAKE YOUR CUE

- Describe two contrasting moments of atmosphere in *Storm Boy*. How were these moments created through sound, lighting, voice and movement?
- How would you describe the atmosphere during the rescue of the sailors? How was this atmosphere created?
- How did you feel when Mr. Percival passed away? What performance techniques and skills of the actors were utilised to make you feel this way? If you didn't feel sad, why?

THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA (Cont.)

TENSION

Tension is the force that drives all drama and moves the Dramatic Action forward. Tension strengthens audience engagement as it motivates the audience to continue watching while influencing them to continue to question the ideas in the play.

TAKE YOUR CUE

- What is the overarching tension in the play? Is this tension resolved? How?
- At what moments in the play is the tension in the relationship between Hideaway Tom and Storm Boy evident? How is this tension resolved?
- The tension of surprise occurs in the unexpected return of Mr. Percival. What atmosphere was created through this tension?

DRAMATIC MEANING

Dramatic Meaning is created through the Elements of Drama that are interrelated and interdependent. Dramatic Meaning is what is communicated between the performers, the world of the play and the audience. Dramatic Meaning is always open to interpretation and there is never one set meaning in a production.

TAKE YOUR CUE

- Consider the themes of *Storm Boy*. Devise a Dramatic Meaning from these themes and share them with your class.
- What directorial and design choices have been made to portray this Dramatic Meaning? Think about the materials of the set.
- What lessons did the characters in the play learn through having Mr. Percival, Mr. Proud and Mr. Ponder in their lives?
- Even though the death of Mr. Percival was very sad, how did his death help the characters in the play?



Image: Hon Boey. ©

STYLE



Rory Potter in rehearsal for STC and Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Storm Boy*, 2015. Image: Hon Boey. ©

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Children's Theatre is a form of theatre that can be any style of theatre or comprised of an eclectic mixture of a range of styles and their governing conventions which work together to create Dramatic Meaning. In doing so, children as audience members are engaged, challenged, inspired and have their imagination ignited. Barking Gecko and STC's production of *Storm Boy* features the styles of Puppetry and stylised storytelling and movement. Each style brings with it governing conventions that also contribute to the production. Together they construct the form of Children's Theatre.

PUPPETRY

Puppetry is utilised in *Storm Boy* to portray the three pelicans. The pelicans are physically operated by actors/puppeteers on stage. The puppeteer is clearly visible to the audience, yet there is little definition between puppet and actor as they morph together on stage to portray the unified a pelican. In doing this, the actor is the character. The neutral facial expression of the actor when operating the pelican puppet also helps the audience to focus on the pelican puppet, almost disregarding the actor's presence.

HEIGHTENED REALISM

The Heightened Realism in *Storm Boy* is present through the stylised movement around the stage when Fingerbone Bill tells Storm Boy to see the baby pelicans for what they really are. The movement around the space of Storm Boy and Fingerbone Bill symbolises the passing of time and allows full grown pelican puppets to take the stage.

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OTHER RESOURCES

- Learning experiences for primary and secondary classes
- Pre-Show In-the-Know handout for fast facts and what to look for in the performance.
- Classroom poster and handout of the article *The Taboo of Sadness* by Finnegan Kruckemeyer
- A pelican colouring-in competition!