

**SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
CO  
EDUCATION**

**ON CUE**



**City of Gold**

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Cover: Meyne Wyatt. Photo: Rene Vaile

Compiled by Kelly Young

First Nations Consultant: Andrew Byrne

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Kelly Young is the Education Manager for Sydney Theatre Company. You can contact Kelly on [kyoung@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:kyoung@sydneytheatre.com.au)

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# ABOUT *ON CUE* & 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 school show will be accompanied by an *On Cue* e-publication which will feature 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 productions, please visit the STC Ed page on our website:

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

### Such resources include:

- Director documentaries
- Design sketchbooks

**STC acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which the Company gathers. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with whom we work and with whom we share stories.**

## 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 40 years later, that ethos still rings true.

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



Simone Detourbet and Mathew Cooper in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Joseph Mayers

## SUITABLE FOR

Students in Years 11–12

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### Drama Stage 6

- Individual Project: Monologue
- Dramatic Forms and Performance  
Styles: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre

## CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITY

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

## THEMES AND IDEAS

- Black deaths in custody
- Racism and stereotypes
- Identity, family and cultural connections

# CAST & CREATIVES

## City of Gold

BY MEYNE WYATT

DIRECTED BY SHARI SEBBENS

**MATEO BLACK**

MATHEW COOPER

**WHITMAN/ANDREWS**

ST JOHN COWCHER

**CARINA BLACK**

SIMONE DETOURBET

**CLIFFHANGER**

IAN MICHAEL

**DIRECTOR/SIMMONDS/ACTING  
COMMANDER**

MYLES POLLARD

**DAD**

TREVOR RYAN

**BREYTHE BLACK**

MEYNE WYATT

**DIRECTOR**

SHARI SEBBENS

**DESIGNER**

TYLER HILL

**DESIGN CONSULTANT**

ZOË ATKINSON

**LIGHTING DESIGNER**

VERITY HAMPSON

**COMPOSER AND SOUND DESIGNER**

RACHAEL DEASE

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

DALEY RANGI

**VIDEO DESIGNER**

MICHAEL CARMODY

**FIGHT CONSULTANT (SYDNEY)**

TIM DASHWOOD

**VOCAL COACH**

JULIA MOODY

**VOCAL COACH (SYDNEY)**

ANGELA NICA SULLEN

**LIGHTING ASSOCIATE**

JASMINE RIZK

**PRODUCTION MANAGER (PERTH)**

KATIE MOORE

**PRODUCTION MANAGER (SYDNEY)**

RYAN GARREFFA

**SENIOR SET BUILDER/HEAD**

**MECHANIST**

STEPHEN MATTHEWS

**STAGE MANAGER**

LIAM MURRAY

**ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER**

AYAH TAYEH

**BACKSTAGE WARDROBE**

**SUPERVISOR**

SIOBHAN NEALON

**LIGHTING OPERATOR**

DOUG NEIBLING

**SOUND OPERATOR**

ZAC SARIC

**REHEARSAL AND PRODUCTION**

**PHOTOGRAPHER**

DANIEL J GRANT

**PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER**

JOSEPH MAYERS

2 HOURS 10 MINS, INCLUDING INTERVAL

THIS PRODUCTION OPENED AT THE HEATH LEDGER THEATRE,  
PERTH ON 19 MARCH 2022



CO-PRODUCER

PRESENTING PARTNER

Allens ><  
Linklaters

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SYDNEY  
THEATRE  
CO

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE: SHARI SEBBENS

I'm not being cliché when I say that it is hard to find the words to talk about directing *City of Gold*. I could tell you about my journey with Meyne Wyatt's incredible and invaluable addition to the theatre canon, how he commands humour and heartache from all that bear witness to his dialogue that bursts forth, an unstoppable force, cementing him as one of this land's most exciting and evocative voices. I could talk about my time in the piece as an actor in 2019 and how *City of Gold* exploded on to the stage, bringing all the artistry, power, rage and grief we hold in ourselves as First Nations theatre-makers who so desperately want to believe in the power of theatre to change minds, if not the world. But all that talk means nothing right now for we find ourselves, as Black people, at the heart of this piece, in a nation that so clearly tells us time and again that we are not worthy. On our final day in the rehearsal room at Black Swan, a jury of 12 non-Indigenous people found Zachary Rolfe not guilty of all charges relating to the killing of Kumanjayi Walker. Another Aboriginal death in custody, another non-conviction, another family left to fight for justice in a country that refuses to deliver it.

If after watching *City of Gold* you can walk out of this theatre and find yourselves comfortable with the over-policing, the displacement and the ongoing persecution of Black people, comfortable with the hunting down, incarceration and killing of Black children in this colony, then I don't know what more we as artists can deliver that might awaken, enlighten or change your mind. But if one part of this tragedy elicits in you a desire for change, then what are you going to do about it?

# SYNOPSIS

Breythe Black is an actor on the up.

He's done a stint at Summer Bay, he's done the film festival circuit, and now he's been offered top billing in a 'prestigious' annual lamb ad. But beneath his happy-go-lucky demeanour, Breythe is getting increasingly sick of always being cast in the same roles, in the same stories, playing the same stereotypes.

During the shoot Breythe gets an urgent call to return home from the East Coast, to Kalgoorlie in regional WA. His father has passed, his mourning family – his rageful brother Mateo and his tirelessly optimistic sister Carina – is falling apart and his absence is becoming a source of simmering tension.

Soon, Breythe's two worlds are on a direct collision course and he must find a way to keep his sense of self, his integrity as an artist and as an Aboriginal man, and the fabric of his family, from unravelling.

**"If one part of this tragedy elicits in you a desire for change, then what are you going to do about it?"**

**SHARI SHEBBENS**



Trevor Ryan, Meyne Wyatt, Simone Detourbet, Ian Michael and Mathew Cooper in *City of Gold*. Photo: Joseph Mayers

# CHARACTER ANALYSIS



Meyne Wyatt and Simone Detourbet in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Daniel J Grant

## **BREYTHE BLACK**

A Wongatha/Wangkatha (Wongi) man. Breythe is a young actor who is trying for success in the entertainment industry. He is called from filming an Australia Day advertisement to be with his family after the death of his father. Upon his return to Kalgoorlie, Breythe struggles with his disconnection from family and lore. Exacerbated by the racism he encounters in his home town and pressured to provide a funeral for his father, Breythe gives in and completes the controversial advertisement.

## **CARINA BLACK**

A Wongatha/Wangkatha (Wongi) woman. Carina is the only sister in the Black family. She is strong and determined. Like her brother Mateo, she has spent much of her time caring for her ill father. After Dad's death, Carina leads the family as they plan for their father's funeral. Carina walks the delicate and complex line between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of being within herself, her family, and on a societal level. One of the key attributes of the character of Carina is her rage in the face of injustice, a trait often denied to Aboriginal women when represented in popular culture.



# CHARACTER ANALYSIS *(cont.)*



Mathew Cooper, Ian Michael and Trevor Ryan in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Daniel J Grant

## MATEO BLACK

A Wongatha/Wangkatha (Wongi) man. Gina Gubbi (Magic Man). Traditional Lore Man. The eldest of the Black siblings, Mateo is a married father of several children. Mateo and Breythe have different experiences of Aboriginal identity, particularly because Breythe appears to have more opportunities than Mateo. They clash over their experience of colonised Australia but the bond of brotherhood is strong between them.

## CLIFFHANGER

A Wongatha/Wangkatha (Wongi) man. Cousin/brother to the Black siblings. Cliffhanger (Clifford) has a hearing impairment and lives with epilepsy. He is a gentle, loving member of the family and he keeps the siblings united. Cliffhanger has an excellent sense of humour and positive outlook on life.

## DAD

A Wongatha/Wangkatha (Wongi) man. Father/Uncle to Mateo, Carina, Breythe and Cliffhanger. A strong and caring father and husband, Dad wants the best for his family. Dad has been the victim of horrific institutional, societal and individual acts of racism but remains strong in his spiritual and material connections to Country.

# PRE-TEACHING CITY OF GOLD

## COLONIAL AUSTRALIA: IMPERIALISM AND COLONISATION

To understand the anger expressed within *City of Gold*, it is important to understand imperialism and colonisation. Both of these forces are present in post-invasion Australia and continue to shape the society in which we live.

Imperialism is the way in which one country extends its power and control over another. This involves the use of military power, economic power and political power. Less commonly discussed is the control of knowledge and ideas as an expression of the imperial process (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012.)

***Colonisation is an imperialist strategy and is based on the theft of the land and its material wealth. Colonisation begins with the invading power overtaking the land of the invaded country. They establish ports and basic infrastructure to access and extract resources and capture developing markets. The colony that develops around the newly established economic infrastructure becomes the site for disseminating the invading country's culture (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).***

Invasion, genocide and settler/invader land acquisition are brutal and obvious colonial activities. The process of destroying culture is also part of the colonial process. It results in the fragmentation of Indigenous cultures, languages, history and relationships. It disconnects First Nations people from each other, language and their cultures in order to perpetuate colonial power and retain access to the invaded land. It is important to acknowledge that this process has been and continues to be strongly and actively resisted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012)

### Classroom Activities:

Use the links to the digital resources below to begin a conversation about imperialism and colonisation.

- Questions to be considered include:
  - What imperialist events can you identify in the clips?
  - How did the process of colonisation work as an imperialist strategy in Australia?
  - How might the fragmenting and silencing of Aboriginal perspectives into the twenty-first century be a colonial strategy to maintain white supremacy?
- The link below is from the National Museum and is information on the archaeological record of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their long connection to the land.  
[digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/evidence-first-peoples](https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/evidence-first-peoples)
- The National Museum also has a powerful record of the invasion.  
[digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/first-fleet-arrives-sydney-cove](https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/first-fleet-arrives-sydney-cove)
- The ABC has a great deal of information on the massacre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The link below outlines the scope of massacres.  
[abc.net.au/news/2018-07-27/map-of-indigenous-massacres-grows-to-include-more-sites/10040206?utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_web&utm\\_content=link&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_web](https://abc.net.au/news/2018-07-27/map-of-indigenous-massacres-grows-to-include-more-sites/10040206?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web)
- The link below discusses the impact of the colonial strategy of the Stolen Generation.  
[youtube.com/watch?v=CE7hCC09jv8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=CE7hCC09jv8)

# PRE-TEACHING *CITY OF GOLD*

## RESEARCHING KALGOORLIE

Before exploring the script, work in groups to research the Western Australian town of Kalgoorlie over the past 10 years. Include the importance of mining to the Australian economy and the racial tensions that exploded after the death of Elijah Doughty. Wyatt's play is, in part, a response to Elijah's death in Kalgoorlie. *The Guardian* article provided in the link below is an account of the criminal process that followed Elijah's death and the injustices faced by his family.

[theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/27/sentence-for-elijah-doughtys-killer-sparks-anger-was-justice-served](http://theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/27/sentence-for-elijah-doughtys-killer-sparks-anger-was-justice-served)

### Classroom Activity:

Students present a 90-second news report to the class of their findings. Part of this report should include a comment to the class about what it might have been like to grow up in Kalgoorlie as an Aboriginal person and why mining might be such a controversial activity.

**THE SCRIPT REFERENCES IN THIS RESOURCE ARE FROM THE CURRENCY PRESS EDITION OF *CITY OF GOLD* BY MEYNE WYATT. THIS SCRIPT CAN BE FOUND FOR PURCHASE ON THE CURRENCY PRESS WEBSITE.**

## CULTURAL SAFETY

*City of Gold* requires an understanding of the ugly nature of post-invasion Australian history, with particular reference to the contemporary process of maintaining the racist hegemony of imperial culture. This work is vital truth-telling about our history and it may be difficult for students. Cultural safety for First Nations students is paramount and should be considered carefully. The resources provided below should be evaluated in the context of the classroom that they will be used within. Links to such cultural safety protocols may be found in the list below:

- Resources below from Drama Australia will be invaluable for teachers and students.
  - [njdrama.scholasticahq.com/article/33562-it-s-got-to-be-a-journey-learning-to-teach-first-nations-content-and-concepts-in-the-australian-drama-classroom](http://njdrama.scholasticahq.com/article/33562-it-s-got-to-be-a-journey-learning-to-teach-first-nations-content-and-concepts-in-the-australian-drama-classroom)
  - [dramaaustralia.org.au/assets/files/ATSIguidelinesFinalSept07.pdf](http://dramaaustralia.org.au/assets/files/ATSIguidelinesFinalSept07.pdf)
- Well Mob  
[wellmob.org.au](http://wellmob.org.au)
- Dardi Munwurro  
[dardimunwurro.com.au/brother-to-brother](http://dardimunwurro.com.au/brother-to-brother)
- Babana  
[babana.org.au](http://babana.org.au)
- Beyond Blue  
[beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)
- Lifeline  
[lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)
- Headspace  
[headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

# THEMES & IDEAS

STC's production of *City of Gold* explores the ugly reality of racism and the complexities of modern Aboriginal identity through the lens of a contemporary Aboriginal family in the mining town of Kalgoorlie. The structure of the classroom activities takes the approach of the play, examining the relationship between the individual experiences of Aboriginal people and the ongoing structural racism founded at invasion and continued to the present day.

## RACISM: INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIETAL/REGIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL

Racism has been defined in many different ways by scholars. Simply, racism is the process by which people are treated in a negative way because of perceived traits particular to their race, the country where they were born, their ethnic origin or their skin colour (Human Rights Commission).

Aboriginal feminist scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson has noted that the foundation of racism is the following:

*Whiteness is the invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, decision-making, subjectivity, nationalism, knowledge production and the law* (Moreton-Robinson p. 388).

When exploring racism in Australia through *City of Gold*, it is important to approach it through Meyne Wyatt's choice of theatrical style. The primary style of the script is Realism, which means that the audience is asked to respond to the experiences of the characters in a primarily empathetic or emotional manner. The fusion of Expressionism in Act 2, Scene 1 (Wyatt's opening monologue in Act 2) adds to the intensity of our experience of Breythe's inner world

## INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional racism is the result of the process of colonisation, grafting European institutions into an invaded country, replacing the law/lore of the Indigenous peoples with that of the invading power. Institutions are the organisations in society that citizens accept as those that have authority to exercise power over them in Australia. These institutions, including the judicial system, the church, health system, education system and police, are based on the law and

societal norms of Europe. One of the key aims of institutional racism is to ensure that stolen land is retained by the coloniser through supposedly legal means.

*City of Gold* explores the ways in which Breythe Black and his family experience such racism, particularly in the areas of the law, police and judicial system, public health and public housing.

### Classroom Activities:

1. As a class, read Act 1, Scene 11. As the extract is being read, write down as many examples of institutional racism as possible. Begin at the stage direction: *The darts come to a halt.* (Wyatt p. 38) and conclude at Mateo: *Here we go* (Wyatt p. 40).
2. Discuss the following:
  - How do each of the characters feel about the examples of institutional racism?
  - Begin with an exaggerated gestus of the feelings suggested.
  - How could that be transferred to the realistic acting style of the play?
  - How could the actors playing Breythe or Mateo show this feeling through physical or vocal gestures?
3. Write a list of the examples generated by the class. When noting these, allocate them to the character that generated them – either Mateo or Breythe.
4. Divide the class into two, with half of the class taking Breythe's perspective and the other, Mateo's. Consider each character's understanding of the examples of institutional racism facing Aboriginal people. Where does each character assign the blame? Is it consistent for each character? Why?
5. Discuss the reasons why each character might shift between blaming individuals and blaming institutions. How can we consider the institutional racism discussed by Mateo and Breythe as being a part of a broader colonial process of fragmenting relationships in order to control society?

# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

## INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

In Australia, Aboriginal people have experienced poor health outcomes since invasion. The reasons are complex and can be attributed to the introduction of poor Western food, destruction of traditional food gathering processes, destruction of traditional medicine, dispossession, poverty and racist attitudes in the medical profession.

The character of Cliffhanger embodies the lived experience of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. In 2018-19, an estimated 43% (290,400) of Indigenous Australians aged 7 and over were found to have hearing loss in one or both ears during the NATSIHS hearing test. The proportion was similar between men (43%) and women (42%), and increased with age (from 29% for 7-14 years to 82% for 55 years and over).

Source: Australian Government: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. [www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/indigenous-hearing-health](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/indigenous-hearing-health)

Middle ear disease (otitis media), is a common childhood infection that, left untreated, or not treated properly, can cause conductive hearing loss. Otitis media affects children early in life and is a persistent infection that is often asymptomatic. Access to treatment in regional and remote Aboriginal communities can be difficult, causing hearing loss from a young age. The result is reduced exposure to language, affecting their developmental outcomes and life trajectories.

Source: *Hearing and Justice: The Link Between Hearing Impairment in Early Childhood and Youth Offending in Aboriginal Children Living in the Northern Territory, Australia.* [healthandjusticejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40352-019-0097-6](http://healthandjusticejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40352-019-0097-6)

### Classroom Activities:

Stage the following extract from *City of Gold* at the same time as the activities for the Deaths in Custody activities. These can be found in the section below.

Breythe: *Yeah, must've seen him touch a beer maybe once or twice; no more than I can fit on my hand. Didn't smoke. And look at that: throat cancer. What are the chances?*

Carina: *Wasn't the cancer, was negligence. Three years he spent at the best goddam cancer clinic, on the other side of the continent, yet it took Kalgoorlie doctors less than a week to discover there was a hole in his oesophagus...Practically starved to death...He's only sixty - four...Was. Not used to that yet.*

Breythe: *That's young nowadays.*

Carina: *For a white person.*

Breythe: *What's the life expectancy for a blackfulla?*

Carina: *Sixty-seven. (Act 1, Scene 7, p. 30-31)*



Meyne Wyatt in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Joseph Mayers

# THEMES & IDEAS (cont.)



Meyne Wyatt, Ian Michael, Simone Detourbet and Mathew Cooper  
in *City of Gold*. Photo: Joseph Mayers

## INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND PUBLIC HOUSING

The Victorian Public Service Commission has characterised pre-invasion communities in the following way:

*Before colonisation Aboriginal people lived in small family groups linked into larger language groups with distinct territorial boundaries. These groups had complex kinship systems and rules for social interaction; they had roles relating to law, education, spiritual development and resource management; they had language, ceremonies, customs and traditions and extensive knowledge of their environment. In other words, Aboriginal cultures were strong and well developed, Aboriginal communities were self-determining, and Aboriginal children were nurtured and protected.*

Source: *Communities List | Indigenous Government Organisation*. [vpsc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/aboriginal-cultural-capability-toolkit/aboriginal-culture-history](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/html-resources/aboriginal-cultural-capability-toolkit/aboriginal-culture-history)

Aboriginal communities were irrevocably changed by British invasion. Their survival reflects the resilience of First Nations

people who have fought to retain their family, community and language groups in the face of genocide, land grabbing, massacre, assimilation and racism. Regional and remote communities, such as Kalgoorlie in *City of Gold*, can be the end result of the vacuum left by the end of the missions established by church and government. First Nations communities are now complex sites that can be made up of disparate family and language groups that may be in conflict, exacerbated by the complexities of lived colonial experience (Watt 2018, p.36-37 and p. 39-40). Supported by the relevant state and territory governments, regional and remote communities are often centred around the council building, the local shop from which food is purchased, school and medical clinic. Houses are built and serviced by the government but are chronically underfunded, under resourced and inherently Western in their design. The link below provides some information about Australia's Aboriginal communities including where they are, population size, the traditional ownership of land and the languages spoken. Source: [indigenous.gov.au/communities/list-view](https://indigenous.gov.au/communities/list-view)

# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

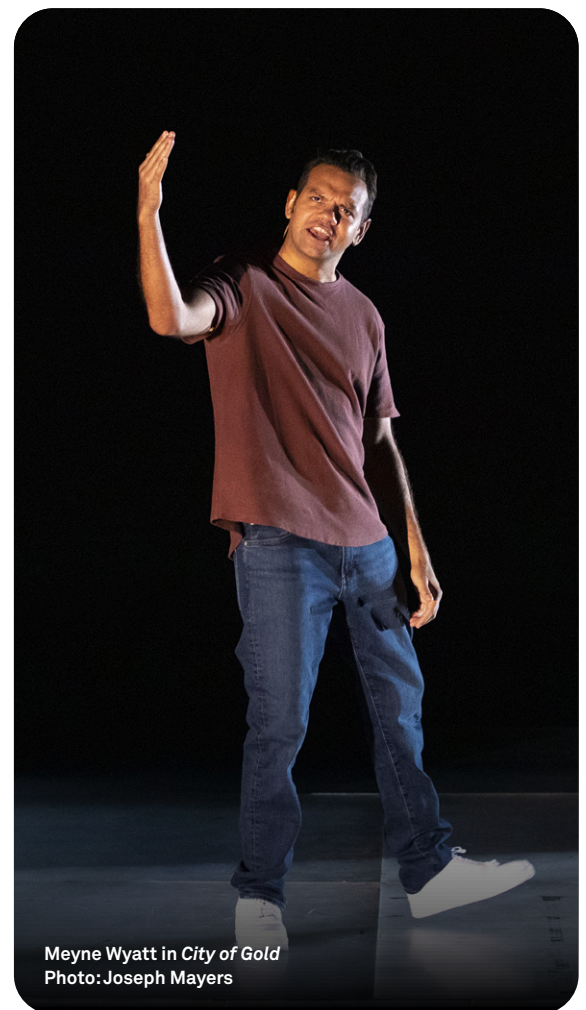
Aboriginal communities and public housing have been characterised by the media as places of dysfunction, disorder and distress, but the reports regularly fail to address the ugly truth of the way that they have come into being. *City of Gold* makes the racist approach to community life clear by noting, through the dialogue of Mateo and Breythe Black, the institutional, regional/societal and individual acts of racism experienced by the First Nations people who live there.

*City of Gold* also examines the complexity created by the interest of mining companies, who see the communities as barriers in their quest to access mineral wealth. This mercenary approach of mining companies to the land has been clearly demonstrated in the actions of Rio Tinto, who have destroyed sacred sites in the Pilbarra in the quest for profit.

## Classroom Activities:

1. The image of the set on the previous page, designed by Tyler Hill, shows an abstracted version of a typical, public housing Kalgoorlie home, built by the Western Australian Government for the Aboriginal people of the region.
  - Write a class list of adjectives describing Tyler Hill's set.
  - Group adjectives together into areas such as colour, size, relationship to props, relationship to actors and relationship to the Land.
  - Generate a class paragraph describing Hill's set.
2. The provision of public housing for First Nations Australians is a contentious and complex one, discussed by Breythe and Mateo in Act 1, Scene 11, p. 37-41.
  - In groups, divide the script extract into five sections and give one page to each group.
  - Make a list of the criticisms of Aboriginal housing noted on the page that they have been allocated to work on. Place each of these criticisms under the headings of institutional/regional/individual, remembering that some criticisms might fall under all three headings.
  - At the completion of this process, create a new page called "How does this benefit non-Indigenous people"? Make a list of the ways that the criticisms found in their script might benefit non-Indigenous people.
  - Go into role as a group of journalists who have discovered the criticisms made by Mateo and Breythe

Black are correct. In role, present a TV Current Affairs report that outlines their criticisms, and the resulting benefits for mining companies, governments (national/state and local) and other non-Indigenous people. Include suggestions for change.



# THEMES & IDEAS (cont.)

## **INSTITUTIONAL RACISM: POLICE BRUTALITY AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY**

One of the main themes of *City of Gold* is the institutional racism within parts of the Australian police force. As an institution that was originally imported from Great Britain, based on Western notions of justice and an imperial imperative to ensure white control of the land, state-based policing has been the focus of criticism from First Nations people. The impact of this institutional racism can be seen in the play's exploration of the impact of this racism in the regional town of Kalgoorlie and the individual characters within the play.

Please use the activities on the next page in Societal/ Regional Racism on Police Brutality.



St John Cowcher and Simone Detourbet in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Joseph Mayers



# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

## SOCIETAL/REGIONAL RACISM

Societal/regional racism is context-specific, generated by the systemic racism found in institutions and heightened by contextual pressures found within a particular area. In *City of Gold*, we see the conflict over mining, poverty and racial privilege spilling into the harsh police response – both institutional and individual – to local protests. In the play, the Kalgoorlie Police, working with reinforcements from the Western Australian government (Act 1, Scene 4, p. 10) and supported by vigilante behaviours from individuals, work together to ensure the continued dominance of colonial power.

### Classroom Activities:

The tense relationship between the police and the Aboriginal community in Kalgoorlie is the audience's first experience of the fractured relationships in the mining town.

1. Read the stage directions at the beginning of Act 1. Scene 4. Create a freeze frame of the stage directions as a class. If possible, use costumes for the actors to highlight the institutional power that comes with a uniform.

*Press Conference. ACTING COMMANDER (AC) and CARINA are standing behind a podium in a somewhat united front. AC is midway through answering questions. Lights flash, rapid-fire questions are hurled from REPORTERS as CARINA stands behind him with a vacant look.*

2. Analyse the proxemics of the image using the following questions:
  - Does the image suggest a "somewhat united front"? How?
  - How does the placement of Carina suggest that the image is not completely united? Or, in fact, equal?
  - Why might the police want Carina at the press conference?
3. Play Act 1, Scene 4 from the beginning to the stage direction *The attention is on CARINA.* (p. 10) . Discuss the questions below:
  - What are the protesters angry about?
  - Make a list of the words that the AC and reporters use to describe the events that have occurred over the previous evening. What sort of words are they?
  - What happens when Carina is asked a question?
  - How might these two moments be a metaphor for institutional racism?
  - Working in groups, rewrite the AC's recount of the events in Kalgoorlie to reflect the truth of what might have happened the previous evening. Present these to the class as a statement from the AC to rectify his previous statement to the press.



St John Cowcher, Ian Michael  
and Myles Pollard in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Joseph Mayers

# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

## INDIVIDUAL RACISM

Wyatt's script is full of examples of racism demonstrated by individuals toward Aboriginal people. Sometimes deliberate, sometimes thoughtless, Wyatt shows the audience the impact of this type of racism on Aboriginal people. These examples are directly related to institutional and regional racism. Wyatt's play demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between acts of individual racism and institutional racism. That is, the racist acts of individuals are part of the way in which colonial power continues to receive, reinforce and exert its control over society.

### Classroom Activities:

The following extracts are examples of racism at an individual level.

VOICEMAIL: [Voiceover] *Carina Black! ...How many dead boongs would it take to fill all the mineshafts in Kalgoorlie?...You and ALL your brothers will die in this town if you don't keep your big fucking mouth shut.*  
(Act 1, Scene 7, p. 21)

MATEO: *What? The fuck is it, Cliffhanger?... Show me... Give it to me!*

(Mateo pushes Cliffhanger).

*Give it to me.*

(Pushes again).

*Give it to me.*

(Pushes again).

*Give it to me!*

(And again. CLIFFHANGER holds up the flyer. MATEO grabs it out of his hand and grips him)... *Justice is served. Cleaning the streets. One Abo at a time!*  
(Act 1, Scene 10 p. 35)

MATEO: *In Kalgoorlie, white people in four – wheel drives run blackfullas over. Kids even...*

BREYTHE: *I remember when they used to chase us.*  
(Act 1, Scene 11, p. 41)

Mum's house. In the dark, a beaten down CLIFFHANGER stumbles in. Slumps into a chair. Breathing heavy. Starts to cough. The coughing increases. He has a minor fit. Carina comes in.

CARINA: *Who's that?...Clifford! Clifford! You right?...You*

*ok? You're ok. You're ok. Take it easy. Take it easy...Just breathe. Breathe...* (Act 1, Scene 12, p. 43)

Breythe's monologue is a powerful indicator of the Aboriginal experience of individual racism in colonised Australia.

The following are very brief extracts from this monologue. Alternatively, the link to Wyatt's performance of part of his monologue on the ABC's Q&A is available here.

[youtube.com/watch?v=sZg2u3lGawM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZg2u3lGawM)

Dialogue from the Wyatt's monologue includes:

- *The tracker, the drinker, the thief*
- *Gonna chase you down the ditch with my baseball bat, skinhead shit; when I was 14 years old and that's the shit I actually prefer. At least then I know where muthafuckas stand*
- *Security guard following me around the shop, asking to search my bag*
- *Hailing a cab and watch it slow down, to look at my face and drive off...more than once, twice on any occasion"*
- *They want you to be their kind of black...all charming and charismatic and shit*  
(Act 2, Scene1, p. 52-54)

1. In groups, create freeze frames that represent a selection of extracts provided above. As these are presented to the class, find adjectives to describe what has been created and note them for discussion.
2. Working in groups, half of the class create freeze frames of three adjectives, using levels and proxemics to embody the experience of racism. The other half are to create freeze frames that represent the institutional power that reinforces the power of the racist individual.
3. Place two images together and analyse them using the following questions;
  - What are the differences between each image? For example, levels, proxemics, mood/atmosphere, status.
  - What occurs for the audience when the two images are placed together in the performance space?
  - What is the impact of racist behaviour on individuals who experience it?
  - What can you tell about the reciprocal relationship between racist individuals and institutions from these images?

# THEMES & IDEAS (cont.)

## MAKING CONNECTIONS: INSTITUTIONAL, REGIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL RACISM

The final scene of *City of Gold* shows the audience the lethal combination of institutional, regional and individual racism.

Use Act 2, Scene 8 to determine the key moments when institutional, regional and individual racism intertwine to escalate the situation. Create freeze frames of these moments and present them.

Groups to share freeze frames. As each performs their freeze frames, members of the audience to enter the frame and change it to prevent the disaster that is about to occur.

### Discuss:

- What could have been done differently in each moment?
- How effective would this change have been in diverting Breythe's death?
- What other solutions might have been available?

### Written Response:

Based on the NSW Stage 6 Drama Syllabus: Australian Drama and Theatre, write an extended response to the statement and question below:

- A. To what extent does the *City of Gold* stage this vision of Australia?

*'Australian society is based on the creation and perpetuation of outsiders'.*



Mathew Cooper and Meyne Wyatt in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Joseph Mayers

# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

## CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL IDENTITY

When exploring identity in Australia in *City of Gold*, it is important to view it through Wyatt's choice of Theatrical Style. The primary style of the script is Realism, which means that the audience is asked to respond to the experiences of the characters in a primarily empathetic or emotional manner. When fused with the Theatrical Style of Expressionism in Act 2, Scene 1, Wyatt adds to the intensity of our experience of Breythe's inner world and the devastating impact of racism and colonisation on his identity.

## ABORIGINAL IDENTITY IN *CITY OF GOLD*

When teaching *City of Gold*, an understanding of Aboriginal identity prior to invasion is particularly important, noting that there is not a single, unified Aboriginal identity, but rather smaller, local identities based on clan groups and Country. It is possible to say, however, that Aboriginal identity is grounded in deep relationship with the land, the spiritual world of ancestral beings and ancestors, and collective-focused kinship systems (Moreton-Robinson, 2006). In essence, this complex, sophisticated and ancient process of defining one's identity is grounded in the land and the spiritual realm (Moreton-Robinson, 2006).

The invasion of Australia by the British and their introduction of Western ways of thinking has meant that Aboriginal identity has undergone a process of colonisation. According to Tuhiwai Smith (2012), the understanding of one's identity has been colonised within "the heads" of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, fragmenting and destabilising Aboriginal identity – both individual and collective (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). This colonisation of thought has occurred in many ways throughout the colonial history of Australia and includes land loss, the Stolen Generation, language loss, Western education and missionary activity.

Wyatt's script captures the impact of a colonised identity in his play through the relationships between the sibling/cousins in the Black family. Their dialogue exposes the fault lines in the fragmented sense of self each character experiences as a result of their experiences in colonial Australia.

### Classroom Activity 1:

- A. Recreate or replicate the soundscape used in the opening moments of STC's production of *City of Gold*, up to but not including the ringing of the mobile phone. Students sit in a circle and listen to the soundscape.
- B. As a class, discuss:
  - What do you see? What do you hear?
  - What is the identity represented in this moment?
  - Is there anything unusual about this identity?
- C. Staying in the circle, recreate or replicate the soundscape used in the opening moments and include the sound of the mobile phone.
  - What does the ring of the mobile phone represent?
  - What does the audience realise at this moment?
- D. Using Act 1, Scene 1, make a class list of each moment that the character of the Director explains Aboriginal culture to the character of Breythe.
  - How often is the Director correct in his knowledge?
  - What impact might this have on the character of Breythe and his sense of identity?

### Classroom Activity 2:

- A. Act 1, Scene 6 is a dream/memory in which the characters of Breythe, Mateo, Cliffhanger and Dad are hunting. In groups of four, students choose an extract to rehearse and perform for the class that contains some pre-contact Aboriginal culture. Questions to consider after this performance might include:
  - Identify the reasons why the group chose this extract.
  - What were the examples of traditional identity?
  - Why were these chosen?
  - Is there a connection between your choices and Wyatt's Australian Lamb Ad? What might these be? Why might non-Aboriginal people need to rethink this?
- B. Ask one group to rehearse Dad's monologue and perform it at the end of the other extracts. Questions to consider after this performance might include:
  - Summarise the meaning of what Dad is saying to the boys at that moment?

# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

- Why would Dad be so passionate about Breythe eating the kangaroo? What reasons does he give?
- Refer to the quote from Tuhiwai Smith (2012) about the process of colonisation being in "the heads" of Aboriginal people, infiltrating ideas, knowledge and understanding. What is Dad trying to say to his nephew/sons about who they are?

## **MEDIA, SUCCESS AND ABORIGINAL IDENTITY**

*City of Gold* makes a very strong statement about the way that Aboriginal identity is represented in the media. The play opens with a bleakly comedic scene that exposes the racist perspectives of the media and the ways in which this influences the rest of Australia. As the narrative progresses, the influence of the media in creating negative stereotypes is clearly linked to the harmful relationship between those images and institutional, regional and individual expressions of racism. These stereotypes include:

- Act 1, Scene 4: Riots and Protests
- Act 1, Scene 11: Aboriginal homelessness and displacement
- Act 1, Scene 11: Representations of drunkenness.
- Act 1, Scene 11: Representations of criminality
- Act 2, Scene 2: Representations of "stereotypical" Aboriginal culture (eg. Didgeridoo)
- Act 2, Scene 2: Representations of Aboriginal behaviour (eg. *But they want you to be their kind of Black. That tall, non-threatening Black man*)

The character of Breythe is particularly important in the exploration of contemporary Aboriginal identity in *City of Gold*. An attractive, talented and successful actor, Breythe is faced with the challenges of compromise, racism and media stereotypes in his quest to succeed in an industry dominated by white, patriarchal, capitalist values. The script explores the complexities of his pursuit of success, the barriers to Aboriginal achievement and the impact on Aboriginal people and their families.

Breythe lives with the contradictory faces of racism. Negative narratives and false beliefs about First Nations peoples are oppressive racist practices that constrain and limit Aboriginal peoples and are designed to limit achievement in

wider society. The examples below are racist, didactic societal narratives found in *City of Gold*. For example:

- Success attributed to his Aboriginality/success limited by the roles offered to him because of his origins.
- Success is important to achieve for an Aboriginal person/failure of an individual is the failure of all Aboriginal people.
- Success for an Aboriginal person "proves" that society is not racist/failure of an Aboriginal person is a failure of all Aboriginal people.
- Success should bring monetary success/success should not be seen in one's lifestyle or flaunted in front of anyone.
- Success is an avenue for challenging racism/success must be palatable for white people.

*City of Gold* also explores these challenges within the Aboriginal community, as experienced by the Black family. Breythe feels the pull of the Aboriginal lore and family, along with the pressure of having to compromise the work he takes to support his family. Additionally, Breythe's focus on his work leads him away from the family for extended periods of time, and the script of *City of Gold* highlights the contrast of various familial attitudes toward both his success and long periods of absence.

*Still manage to fly QANTAS, sittin' up with your fancy  
Air Force Ones you got in LA, drinking your pooncie  
wannabe craft beers...* (Act 1, Scene 8, p. 28)

### **Classroom Activities:**

1. Act 1, Scene 1: Look at the Design Sketchbook for the opening of *City of Gold*. What costume choices have been made by Tyler Hill for this moment? Make a list of the visual stereotypes that Hill has incorporated into the audience's first impression of Breythe Black. How might these stereotypes, generated by Western media, exacerbate racism?
2. Working in groups, analyse Act 1, Scene 1 for all of the examples of casual racism faced by Breythe Black. Using these examples as dialogue, put together a scene in which members of the group speaking these lines to Breythe and other members of the group are translating the subtext of the dialogue. For example:

# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

Director: *I want you to feel comfortable with me, brother.*

Subtext: *I want you to feel ok about doing something that you think is offensive so that I can get my job done. And, if I use the word 'brother' I think that I am creating a bond with you based on a stereotypical understanding of the way that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people talk to each other.*

3. Perform these scenes and discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think the audience laughs in this scene when they first see it?
  - How has Director Shari Sebbens created a parody of both First Nations people and non-First Nations people in the scene? How has she inverted racist parodies to reflect badly on non-Indigenous people?
- Now that you have analysed it, do you think it is as funny?
  - Why might the playwright have started with a comedic take on this type of behaviour?
  - Why has the playwright begun Act 2 with the nightmare version of Act 1, Scene 1?
  - How did Sebbens and the Design Team use the Elements of Production to comment on Act 1, Scene 1?



Myles Pollard in *City of Gold*  
Photo: Joseph Mayers

# THEMES & IDEAS *(cont.)*

## FAMILY AND IDENTITY

*City of Gold* is about the Black family, after the death of Dad. Much like any family drama based in the theatrical style of Realism, the playwright and director explore the family dynamics after a catastrophic change. Realism has been chosen by the playwright as a key theatrical style, much like many Contemporary Indigenous Plays, including the work of Jack Davis, who sought to politicise Australian family life by presenting it from the perspective of an Aboriginal family.

The conventions of Realism, including the suspension of disbelief and the creation of the Fourth Wall, aim to create and sustain the audience's empathetic connection to the characters. Davis realised that this emotional connection to the world of the play could be used to generate change in an audience. Wyatt, working with a fusion of Realism, comedy, Aboriginal representations of time and space, and storytelling, allows the audience to engage with the characters, empathise with their conflicts and ultimately, grieve the loss of Breythe Black at the hands of racist institutions.

The wider kinship system that is part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity is also embedded within the play, and its fragmentation by British invasion is also sadly apparent. The inclusion of the character, Cliffhanger, cousin/brother of Mateo, Breythe and Carina exemplifies Aboriginal concepts of immediate family, which extends to cousins, aunts and uncles.

### Classroom Activities:

Brainstorm the occurrences in *City of Gold* when the spirit world intersects with the physical world. This could include dreams or communication with nature/kin. Look at the design images of *City of Gold*. How do the designers represent a sense of this spiritual connection in a way for all audience members to understand?

### Written Response (choose one):

Based on the NSW Stage 6 Drama Syllabus: Australian Drama and Theatre, write an extended response to the question below:

- A. To what extent does the *City of Gold* challenge this vision of Australia?

*'Australian identity is created through absence and silence!'*

- B. To what extent does the *City of Gold* reinforce this vision of Australia?

*'In Australia, all identities are not created equal!'*

# LANGUAGE GLOSSARY

In Australia there are more than 250 Indigenous languages including 250 dialects. Each language is specific to a particular place and people. Wangkatha, otherwise written Wongatha, Wongutha, Wankatja, Wongi or Wangai, is a language and the identify of eight Aboriginal Australian peoples of the Eastern Goldfields region. Below is a language glossary for words contained within the play *City of Gold*.

## Understanding the word "murrnda wiardu"

**murrnda** = money

**wiardu** = nothing

**murrnda** (money) + **wiardu** (nothing) = broke

<b>balu</b>	he, she, them	<b>muma</b>	evil spirit
<b>batha</b>	wild/angry	<b>munjong</b>	fool/idiot
<b>binna</b>	ear	<b>munkurpba</b>	three
<b>boodi</b>	police	<b>murrnda wiardu</b>	money + nothing = broke
<b>dithi</b>	child	<b>nadoo</b>	sad
<b>garnbi</b>	good, sweet, nice	<b>ngago</b>	Breythe the black
<b>gatda buwa</b>	head + hit	<b>nglay</b>	exclamation: joking! just kidding!
<b>gina gudbi</b>	feather foot medicine man	<b>ngunthu</b>	mother
<b>googa</b>	meat	<b>nhangatha</b>	now
<b>goolbit</b>	grey/black kangaroo	<b>noodba</b>	"i don't know"
<b>goona</b>	shit	<b>nunefah</b>	little one
<b>goonda</b>	shame	<b>nunyis</b>	pubic hairs
<b>goorta</b>	brother	<b>tjintirr-tjintirr</b>	willy wagtail (bird)
<b>guddayulla</b>	head + nothing = mad/stupid	<b>wadi</b>	hunting/throwing stick
<b>guggeri</b>	drunk	<b>wandi</b>	no
<b>gurri</b>	partner	<b>warta</b>	tree
<b>guthu</b>	one	<b>wati</b>	man
<b>gutthara</b>	two	<b>wiardu</b>	nothing
<b>gwarda</b>	wait/"wait there"	<b>winyarn</b>	exclamation (like "poor thing!")
<b>inni</b>	isn't it	<b>witu witu</b>	hard(er), strong, forceful, heavy
<b>kalkula</b>	kalgoorlie, karlkurla, meaning "silky pear", a local plant	<b>wongatha wanti ba</b>	people + don't do that
<b>loongu</b>	ear + nothing = deaf	<b>wongi</b>	people/mob
<b>marlu</b>	kangaroo	<b>yabu</b>	grinding stone or rock
<b>mayi</b>	food	<b>yulda</b>	cold
<b>mob</b>	family/tribal group	<b>yuwa</b>	yes/agreement

With thanks to Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA Creative Learning Resource.  
Source: Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA Education Resource



# FORM, STYLE & CONVENTIONS

*City of Gold*, by Meyne Wyatt, was first produced in 2019 as a co-production between Queensland Theatre and Griffin Theatre Company. Before the class begins this exploration, it is important for the students to understand the theatrical forms, styles and conventions that have been used to create meaning for the audience.

## REALISM

Realism aims to recreate the experience of real life on the stage using all available theatrical elements, including acting, the elements of production and the narrative. The ultimate aim of Realism is to create an empathetic, emotional response in the audience as they follow the journey of the character through to a resolution.

## MONOLOGUE

A monologue is a performance by one actor. It can be the performance of a long piece of dialogue within a play. Or, it can be a production that contains only one actor. *City of Gold* contains a long monologue, performed by the character of Breythe Black. The 'nightmarish quality' of the monologue, created through the expressionistic re-enactment of the Australia Day Lamb Advertisement, reveals his thoughts about his life, his identity, the personal impacts of racism and his relationship with his recently deceased father.

## CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS THEATRE

Contemporary Indigenous Theatre emerged as a powerful theatrical voice in the early 1990s, as a result of political agitation of the 1960s and 1970s, in which Aboriginal artists such as Jack Davis and Bob Maza began to write plays as a means of providing a voice for Aboriginal people. This, combined with First Nations responses to the Bicentennial in 1988, saw a fusion of theatrical forms, styles and conventions to challenge white theatre making and wider national narratives about invasion and colonisation. Characteristics can include:

- Past as present/non linear time/circularity of time
- Storytelling
- Autobiographical
- First Nations Languages

- Aboriginal characters/kinship/identity
- Land as spiritual and material centre
- Hybridisation of Western theatrical forms and styles
- Direct address
- Impact of the colonisation process on Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal authorship
- Aboriginal actors
- Dance and/or stylised movement
- Symbolic costume design
- Symbolic set design that highlights the importance of the land
- Song
- Soundscapes and traditional instruments
- Traditional cultural material. For example, ochre, smoke, ceremonial instruments

## FORM

Realism relies on a construction of the narrative that (primarily) moves in a linear manner. This means that for the most part, the narrative begins at the beginning, moves through a complication creating conflict, which is then resolved. Contemporary Indigenous Theatre, however, can include the past as present, non linear time and/or circularity of time. *City of Gold* appears to exist in a world of linear time but includes examples of dreamscapes that suggest that Breythe exists outside of this construct. The conclusion of the narrative should be evaluated for its unusual relationship with linearity and its powerful comment about the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people.

# THE ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION

## DIRECTOR'S VISION: SHARI SEBBENS

Director Shari Sebbens has a close relationship with *City of Gold*, having performed the role of Carina in the original production in 2019. As the director of STC's production, Shari's vision for the play can be characterised in her quote:

*My vision for the work is to explore the trapped and hopeless experience of Aboriginal people in Australia*  
(Shari Sebbens in conversation, May 2022)

Wyatt's script is a deep and gut-wrenching response to the experiences of being an Aboriginal man in Australia, which is characterised by racism, violence, disadvantage and disconnection, with his family his only source of connection to culture and land. Sebbens wanted to create a dangerous and oppressive feel to the production, engulfing the audience in the feeling of what is to live as an Aboriginal man in contemporary Australia.

## SET AND COSTUME DESIGN

Designer Tyler Hill worked with Director Shari Sebbens to create a set that feels oppressive and has undertones of violence. His work visually represents the experiences of the Black family, and by extension, Aboriginal people in Australia.

Set in the mining town of Kalgoorlie, also known as the 'Super Pit', Wyatt's depiction of his home town is one of environmental destruction and violence. Literally torn apart by the mining industry and metaphorically fractured by ugly racism and extremes of opportunity, Tyler Hill's design offers a bleak image of the connection between the theft and destruction of Country and the ugly racism experienced by Aboriginal people.

Contemporary Indigenous Theatre has reflected the connection to Country as the key to Aboriginal strength in the face of invasion. In recent iterations of Contemporary Indigenous Theatre, this connection has been characterised by the inclusion of red earth in the set. In STC's production of *City of Gold*, both the Director, Shari Sebbens and the Designer, Tyler Hill, have made the creative choice to exclude the red earth on the stage. This choice speaks to Aboriginal peoples disconnection from Country and the resulting alienation of First Nations people (Shari Sebbens and Tyler Hill in conversation, May 2022).

Tyler Hill's vision for his design was "visceral crime" (Tyler Hill in conversation, May 2022). Hill's choice to work within the theatrical style of abstracted Realism allowed the audience to connect emotionally with the experience of the Black family, whilst making meaningful connections between the different aspects of racism experienced by them. Hill has chosen to design a typical Kalgoorlie house, with the skeletal structure of the home, painted black, suggesting that the family and their connections have been disrupted and changed by the colonial experience. Tyler Hill notes that he has "shaken up the (family home) and put it back together" with the aim of distilling the essence of the family's experience (Tyler Hill in conversation, May 2022)

The Black family home has been designed in response to the rhythm and pace of Wyatt's writing. The script suggests constant motion – the leaving, returning and movement of the family. The energy of the writing resulted in Hill visualising a maze-like structure of the home into which the actors must negotiate on their entrance to the stage, keeping the family circling physically through their home. Additionally, the Black family home is sectioned and divided by flywire, so that the audience can theoretically see through the walls of the home. Designed to fade into upstage under certain lighting configurations, this aspect of the design can also be considered to symbolise the oppression that exists but is not seen by the majority of white Australia.

Wyatt's *City of Gold* is primarily a story about a family facing the ugly reality of life as Aboriginal people in contemporary Australia. Part of their experience is, as we have seen, the impact of institutional, regional and individual racism on their family. This racism extends to the minutiae of every day life, including the family's relationship with their home. The institutional disregard for the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their homes is reflected in the prefabricated, generic nature of public housing provided for Aboriginal people.

Designer Tyler Hill has created the Black family's experience of government housing. Their experience reflects the wider experiences of Aboriginal families, living in structures that are ill-suited to community and family life. The Black family home as a structure only, painted black and containing no personalised touches (Hill in conversation, May 2022). The

# THE ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION *(cont.)*

only colour on the stage is found on the props and costumes – the only elements actually selected and touched by the family. Symbolically, the audience understands that they are being offered "glimpses of what home was" (Hill in conversation, May 2022).

The costuming, also designed by Tyler Hill, reflects the Realism of the script and creates a visual representation of the complexities of each character, grounded in the reality of their lived experience. Hill's vision was to create a contrast between the character of Breythe Black and the rest of his family.

Looking at the image below, we note the subtle differences between Breythe and Mateo's costuming, suggestive of the broader opportunities available to Breythe. Hill's work relies on the element of contrast in which Breythe's costuming is new, expensive, fresh and urban. Mateo, Cliffhanger and Carina, in contrast, can be summarised as wearing well used, practical clothing, reflecting their environment and lifestyle.



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