

Supporting New Ghosts Theatre Company through
National Theatre of Parramatta's True West Program

GIRL BAND

WORLD PREMIERE

By Katy Warner

Directed by Lucy Clements



**"Universally, women with personalities
are hated" - Billie Eilish**

EDUCATION RESOURCE

INDEX

SECTION 1 ABOUT THE PRODUCTION	
a	Title and synopsis
b	Complete Cast and Crew list with roles
c	Character descriptions
d	Playwrights note
SECTION 2 CURRICULUM LINKS	
SECTION 3 BEHIND THE SCENES	
a	Playwright Interview
b	Composer Interview
c	Costume and Set designer Interview
d	Costume and set sketches
SECTION 4 CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES	
a	Pre Performance Activities
b	Creative Writing Prompts
c	Drama Activities

INTRODUCTION

These teacher's notes have been designed to assist you with curriculum-based learning activities in relation to the performance of *Girl Band* by Katy Warner, directed by Lucy Clements, 2023, for New Ghosts Theatre Company and Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta. We hope the resource will assist your students to further enjoy and enhance their performing arts experience back in the classroom.

The activities are designed for students in years 9-12. NSW Board of Studies has been used as guides for planning them, however you should adapt each one to suit the stage of your class as well as the curriculum focus, and outcomes used in your school. Some websites are suggested within the resource, we recommend that you visit the sites and assess the suitability of the content for your particular school environment before using them.

SECTION 1 *ABOUT THE PRODUCTION*

B. CHARACTERS

BECKY

The group's choreographer, trainer and coach.

JADE

Terrible dancer. Socially awkward. Not sure how she got the gig but she got it and she'll never let it go.

STACEY

Great singer. Good heart. Probably not quite cut out for the pop star world.

SAMMY

Tough and smart and if she was a Spice Girl she would be Mel C.

MARY JANE

Attitude. Has the talent and drive to be something but she can't play by the rules. And there are a lot of rules in the girl band game.

KIKI

The new Dee Dee. The replacement.
The new kid. Super talented.

C. CAST AND CREATIVES



AMY HACK
Becky



LJ WILSON
MJ



JADE FUDA
Stacey



MEG CLARKE
Sammy



CHAYA OCAMPO
Jade



MADELINE MARIE DONA
Kiki

FEATURED EXTRAS:

Josephine Lee, Chloe Ho, Lily Moody, Rachel Thomas & Mollie Webb

C. CAST AND CREATIVES



KATY WARNER
Playwright



LUCY CLEMENTS
Director



EMMA WRIGHT
Producer



MARISSA GIANNONE
Producer



ZOE RINKEL
Composer



EMMA PATERSON
*Stage and Production
Manager*



MONIQUE LANGFORD
*Set and Costume
Designer*



KATE BALDWIN
Lighting Designer



SAM CHENG
Sound Designer



AMY HACK
Choreographer



SHY MAGSALIN
Intimacy Coordinator



ANDY FREEBORN
Music Director



KATE INGRAM
Assistant Set Builder



LILY MOODY
*Assistant Costume
Designer*



MICHELE GOULD
*Assistant Sound
Designer*



RACHEL THOMAS
Assistant Director



MOLLIE WEBB
Assistant Director



CHLOE HO
Assistant Producer



JOSEPHINE LEE
Assistant Producer

D. PLAYWRIGHTS NOTE

My sister and I auditioned for the first ever *Pop Stars*. The one that created Bardot. I didn't stand a chance but a little piece of me hoped that maybe, just maybe, my bright pink crop top and black (faux) leather pants could get me over the line. They did not. My sister got through to the next round. She sang a Britney Spears number. They invited her back the next day and the cameras followed us out of the convention centre hoping there would be a big scene. A massive fight. Maybe I'd cry, pull her hair, and maybe she'd slap my face. None of that happened. I was excited and happy for my sister. She was disappointed for me. That wasn't what the cameras wanted to see. That didn't make for good reality TV. My sister didn't make it through the next round. I often wondered if we'd caused a scene, if we'd created some kind of dramatic backstory, would she have made it a little further? Could she have become a member of Bardot? Would Sophie Monk have become a close family-friend?



I always wanted to be in a girl band. And so, I created my own in this play: *The Sensation Girls*. And I'm still not a member ...

I had originally thought *Girl Band* would be a bright, fun piece – all butterfly clips and low-rise jeans and maybe a Tamagotchi or two ... I thought it might be a bit of a time capsule. But I was wrong. *Girl Band* shines a light on how far we've come but, even more importantly, how far we've still got to go. How little things have actually changed in 30 years.

At its heart, *Girl Band* is a play about friendship, about humans supporting humans. It's about walking out of an audition, arm in arm with my sister, and being our true selves, supporting one another, despite what the cameras wanted us to do ...

Katy Warner

March 2023

SUPPORTING NEW GHOSTS THEATRE COMPANY THROUGH
NATIONAL THEATRE OF PARRAMATTA'S TRUE WEST PROGRAM

GIRL BAND

BY KATY WARNER

DIRECTED BY LUCY CLEMENTS

It's 1994 and powerhouse record label managers, Craig and Darren, have created the girl-band to end all girl-bands. They have been moulded, twisted, and worked to become the girls that everyone wants. The Sensation Girls. Problem is, The Sensation Girls don't know who they are anymore.

When unofficial leader DeeDee unexpectedly quits, things begin to unravel. The girls are getting older and bolder and they know what they want, what they really, really want.

Get ready for dancing, Lisa 'Left Eye' Lopes inspired rap, low-rise jeans, and a hell of a lot of mess.

SECTION 2 CURRICULUM LINKS

DRAMA

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Stage 5	Contemporary Australian Theatre, Women in Theatre, Elements of production in performance.	Performing	<p>5.2.2 selects and uses performance spaces, theatre conventions and production elements appropriate to purpose and audience</p> <p>5.2.3 employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning.</p>
		Appreciating	<p>5.3.1 responds to, reflects on and evaluates elements of drama, dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques and theatrical conventions</p> <p>5.3.2 analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama</p> <p>5.3.3 analyses and evaluates the contribution of individuals and groups to processes and performances in drama using relevant drama concepts and terminology.</p>

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Stage 6- Preliminary	<p>Theatrical Traditions and Performance Styles: Contemporary Australian Theatre, Women in Theatre</p> <p>Elements of production in performance.</p>	<p>Appreciating</p>	<p>P1.2 explores ideas and situations, expressing them imaginatively in dramatic form</p> <p>P2.6 appreciates the variety of styles, structures and techniques that can be used in making and shaping a performance</p> <p>P1.3 demonstrates performance skills appropriate to a variety of styles and media</p> <p>P3.1 critically appraises and evaluates, both orally and in writing, personal performances and the performances of others</p> <p>P3.2 understands the variety of influences that have impacted upon drama and theatre performance styles, structures and techniques</p> <p>P3.4 appreciates the contribution that drama and theatre make to Australian and other societies by raising awareness and expressing ideas about issues of interest.</p>
Stage 6 HSC	<p>Contemporary Australian Theatre*, The Voice of Women in Theatre* (*topic relevance – not a prescribed text)</p>	<p>Making</p> <p>Performing</p> <p>Critically Studying</p>	<p>H1.3 uses knowledge and experience of dramatic and theatrical forms, styles and theories to inform and enhance individual and group devised works</p> <p>H2.2 uses dramatic and theatrical elements effectively to engage an audience</p> <p>H2.4 appreciates the dynamics of drama as a performing art</p> <p>H3.1 critically applies understanding of the cultural, historical and political contexts that have influenced specific drama and theatre practitioners, styles and movements</p> <p>H3.3 demonstrates understanding of the actor-audience relationship in various dramatic and theatrical styles and movements</p> <p>H3.5 appreciates the role of the audience in various dramatic and theatrical styles and movements</p>

ENGLISH

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Stage 5	<p>Text type: Drama, Texts written about intercultural experiences</p> <p>A wide range of cultural, social and gender perspectives, popular and youth cultures.</p>	<p>Objective A: communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing</p> <p>Objective B: use language to shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context</p> <p>Objective C: think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical</p> <p>Objective D: express themselves and their relationships with others and their world</p>	<p>EN5-1A: A student responds to and composes increasingly sophisticated and sustained texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure</p> <p>EN4-3B: A student uses and describes language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts</p> <p>EN5-5C: A student thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and increasingly complex ideas and arguments to respond to and compose texts in a range of contexts</p> <p>EN5-7D: A student understands and evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds</p> <p>EN5-8D: A student questions, challenges and evaluates cultural assumptions in texts and their effects on meaning</p>

ENGLISH STANDARD

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Year 12	Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences (related text);	Objective A: communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing	EN12-1 independently responds to and composes complex texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure EN12-2 uses, evaluates and justifies processes, skills and knowledge required to effectively respond to and compose texts in different modes, media and technologies
		Objective B: use language to shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context	EN12-3 analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts and justifies their appropriateness for purpose, audience and context and explains effects on meaning
		Objective C: think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical	EN12-5 thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively, analytically and discerningly to respond to and compose texts that include considered and detailed information, ideas and arguments EN12-6 investigates and explains the relationships between texts
		Objective D: express themselves and their relationships with others and their world	EN12-7 explains and evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds EN12-8 explains and assesses cultural assumptions in texts and their effects on meaning

ENGLISH ADVANCED

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Year 11	Module A: Narratives that Shape our World	Objective A: communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing	EA11-1 responds to, composes and evaluates complex texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Year 11 cont.			EA11-2 uses and evaluates processes, skills and knowledge required to effectively respond to and compose texts in different modes, media and technologies
		Objective C: think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical	EAL11-5 thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically to respond to, evaluate and compose texts that synthesise complex information, ideas and arguments EAL11-6 investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts EAL11-7 evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued
		Objective D: express themselves and their relationships with others and their world	
Year 12	Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences (related text)	Objective A: communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing	EA12-1 independently responds to, composes and evaluates a range of complex texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure EA12-2 uses, evaluates and justifies processes, skills and knowledge required to effectively respond to and compose texts in different modes, media and technologies
		Objective B: use language to shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context	EA12-3 critically analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts justifying appropriateness for specific purposes, audiences and contexts and evaluates their effects on meaning
		Objective C: think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical	EA12-5 thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively, critically and discerningly to respond to, evaluate and compose texts that synthesise complex information, ideas and arguments EA12-6 investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts

ENGLISH EAL/D

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Year 12	Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences (related text);	Objective A: communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing	EAL12-1A responds to, composes and evaluates a range of complex and sustained texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure EAL12-2 uses, evaluates and justifies processes, skills and knowledge necessary for responding to and composing a wide range of texts in different med
		Objective C: think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical	EAL12-5 thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically to respond to, represent and evaluate complex ideas, information and arguments in a wide range of texts EAL12-6 investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts
		Objective D: express themselves and their relationships with others and their world	EAL12-7 integrates understanding of the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds EAL12-8 analyses and evaluates cultural references and perspectives in texts and examines their effects on meaning

MUSIC

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Stage 4	Contexts: Popular Music, Theatre Music	Listening	4.7 demonstrates an understanding of musical concepts through listening, observing, responding, discriminating, analysing, discussing and recording musical ideas 4.8 demonstrates an understanding of musical concepts through aural identification and discussion of the features of a range of repertoire

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Stage 4 cont.		Value and Appreciate	4.11 demonstrates an appreciation, tolerance and respect for the aesthetic value of music as an artform
Stage 5	Contexts: Popular Music, Theatre Music	Listening	5.7 demonstrates an understanding of musical concepts through the analysis, comparison, and critical discussion of music from different stylistic, social, cultural and historical contexts
		Value and Appreciate	5.11 demonstrates an appreciation, tolerance and respect for the aesthetic value of music as an artform

MUSIC 1

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Stage 6- Preliminary	Contexts: Popular Music, Theatre Music	develop knowledge and skills about the concepts of music and of music as an art form through performance, composition, musicology and aural activities in a variety of cultural and historical contexts to develop the skills to evaluate music critically	P4 recognises and identifies the concepts of music and discusses their use in a variety of musical styles P5 comments on and constructively discusses performances and compositions P6 observes and discusses concepts of music in works representative of the topics studied
Stage 6- HSC	Contexts: Popular Music, Theatre Music	develop knowledge and skills about the concepts of music and of music as an art form through performance, composition, musicology and aural activities in a variety of cultural and historical contexts to develop the skills to evaluate music critically	H4 articulates an aural understanding of musical concepts and their relationships in a wide variety of musical styles H5 critically evaluates and discusses performances and compositions H6 critically evaluates and discusses the use of the concepts of music in works representative of the topics studied and through wide listening

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

STAGE	CONTENT	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
Stage 6 – Preliminary	The Social and Cultural World; Personal and Social Identity	social and cultural concepts and their application personal, social and cultural identity and interactions within societies and cultures continuity and change, personal and social futures	<p>P1 identifies and applies social and cultural concepts</p> <p>P3 identifies and describes relationships and interactions within and between social and cultural groups</p> <p>P5 explains continuity and change and their implications for societies and cultures</p>
Stage 6 – HSC	Social and Cultural Continuity and Change; Social Inclusion and Exclusion	social and cultural concepts and their application personal, social and cultural identity and interactions within societies and cultures continuity and change, personal and social futures	<p>H1 evaluates and effectively applies social and cultural concepts</p> <p>H3 analyses relationships and interactions within and between social and cultural groups</p> <p>H5 analyses continuity and change and their influence on personal and social futures</p>

SECTION 3 *BEHIND THE SCENES*



A. PLAYWRIGHT INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH KATY WARNER

How long did it take you to write *Girl Band*?

I had to go through my old files and emails to find the answer to this question. It feels like a long time and then, of course, with COVID lockdowns thrown in there what even is time anymore? I first pitched *Girl Band* to director Lucy Clements in June 2019. I wrote the first scene for a 'scratch night' showing in July 2019. This was a special night in which *New Ghosts* was presenting scenes from the 4 plays that were to be performed as part of the *Ignite Collective* in 2020. Obviously, a pandemic changed those plans. It meant I got a little longer to keep developing, refining and rewriting the play. I am still doing some rewrites now and will probably do some tweaks and make some changes during rehearsals ... So, to answer the question ... the play has been 4 years in the making!

What is your writing process?

I usually write a full, first draft before handing over the writing to the director and actors. *Girl Band* was a little different in that I sent Lucy a pitch and then wrote the first ten pages for the scratch night. But, from there, the process was a lot of solo writing time – just getting that first, full draft out and onto the page. This was the

draft that was used in the first development with actors and Lucy. In the development (over Zoom) I heard the play read aloud for the first time. It was a chance for the creatives to offer feedback – places in the script they were confused or wanted more information, questions over the themes or issues or characters, that sort of thing. It was also a chance to talk and have conversations which are always helpful in rewriting. It was in this session we discovered that we needed songs – that this shouldn't just be 'hinted' at but fully explored. I mean, they are a girl band, aren't they? And so, in the next version, I wrote lyrics for songs and asked my dear friend and talented musician /singer / composer Zoe Rinkel if she would be interested in writing the music.

Writing the lyrics was a new experience for me. I listened to a lot of obscure, didn't-quite-make-it girl bands from the early 90s for a bit of inspiration, as well as the girl and boy bands we all know and love (or hate). I would sing the songs into my phone and send Zoe my horrible version (so she could get a sense of what I was trying to do with those lyrics) and then she would turn it into something amazing.

I was very fortunate to work with talented, generous and smart people in development sessions who helped push me towards what is *Girl Band* is now. The process of writing can be a little lonely at times, so it is always a treat to get in the room with the creatives and actually make the play work. To get feedback and questions, to be challenged, that all helps in the process of writing a play.

Who is your favourite *Girl Band*?

I can't really choose one! It depends on my mood. I could not choose just one which is probably why I wanted to write a play about my very own *Girl Band* – I just love them. I never, ever would have admitted that until recently. That sort of music was considered a 'guilty pleasure' but now I say, stuff it, if it brings you joy, who the heck cares? My favourite girl bands include *Destiny's Child*, *En Vogue*, *Spice Girls*, *All Saints*, *TLC*, *Bananarama*, *The Bangles* and, fast forwarding to today, *Black Pink*.

What is the first play you saw in the theatre and what impact did it have on you?

I have this vague memory of my Aunty and Uncle taking me and my sister to see a play (I think, or I could easily be converging two memories here) when I was about six – I think it was musical version of *Hansel and Gretel* but I don't really remember about the show itself. What

I do remember is the feeling; when the house lights went down and how everyone just suddenly went quiet and turned their attention to the stage. I felt like I was holding my breath in anticipation. Maybe I was. I was scared but I knew my sister and my aunty and uncle were right there beside me. So I was safe. There was an excitement mixed in with the scared feeling. That was the biggest impact that first experience had on me. That feeling. And perhaps that is what I have always been trying to capture ever since. This could be why I am so drawn to making theatre and writing plays – to create that shared experience for audiences in a live theatre space.

What advice would you give on being a playwright?

Surround yourself with good, honest, creative people whose opinions and feedback you value. Playwriting can be lonely but the act of making theatre is so collaborative – it is important to open to that when you write, to share your words, the world and characters, with others who will only make it so much better than you ever could have imagined. Don't be too precious. Learn to share.

I love this Amy Poehler quote, and keep it close (especially during creative developments and rehearsals):

“As you navigate through the rest of your life, be open to collaboration. Other people and other people's ideas are often better than your own. Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life.”



B. COMPOSER INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH ZOE RINKEL

Can you tell us about what you do as a composer on *Girl Band*?

My role is to write, create and record the music for the performance.

What is your process?

Katy Warner provided me with lyrics, reference tracks and voice notes of her singing to give me a picture of what she wanted for the songs in *Girl Band*. Katy also sent me the script, so I had a really good picture of what the show is about. With all of that in mind, I did a deep dive into 90s pop music, listening to things like song structure, the kinds of sounds and effects that were commonly used, and anything else that gave the songs a real 90s flavour. I also researched what instruments were commonly used in pop music during this time period. I knew that I didn't want the songs to be super serious, that I could play around with some of the key identifiers of "the 90s sound". Once I'd done all my research, I started writing the songs using music software Ableton Live. I always start by making a beat, then add bass and synth/MIDI instruments. I play around with different effects as I go, such as delays and filters. The final step is to record the vocals. Along the

way I would send draft songs to Katy so she could give me feedback and make sure I was on the right track to achieve her vision. All of this work is done from my home studio setup, which is actually pretty basic - you don't need a lot of gear to start making music!

What excites you about this production?

I love that this production has a really funny side to it, but it also asks some hard questions. I'm looking forward to seeing it with an audience and feel their reactions to it.

What have you been listening to for inspiration?

Girl bands! My playlists include Spice Girls, Atomic Kitten, TLC, B*Witched, All Saints, En Vogue, Destiny's Child, and other groups and solo artists like S Club 7, Shakira, Chistina Aguilera and Britney Spears.

What advice would you give on being a composer?

Make it fun. That's really my general life advice, if you can find the places in the work that bring you joy or make you laugh, it'll be a better process overall and you'll end up with a better result. That was quite easy with this show - 90s pop music can be pretty silly! The other really important thing is to remember that you will make a lot of mistakes and that is just part of the process. It doesn't mean you're doing a bad job, it takes a few tries to get it right.

Who is your favourite Girl Band?

My favourite girl bands from the 90s are TLC and All Saints. At the time they were popular, their style, image and sound were more what I was personally into! I love the energy of Spice Girls and what they represent, and I think the work they produced has stood the test of time really well. For me though, TLC and All Saints just have that cool factor that I found really intriguing and their music style was more in line with my tastes.

“I DID A DEEP DIVE INTO 90S POP MUSIC,

listening to things like song structure, the kinds of sounds and effects that were commonly used, and anything else that gave the songs a real 90s flavour. I also researched what instruments were commonly used in pop music during this time period. ”



C. COSTUME AND SET DESIGNER INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH MONIQUE LANGFORD

What advice would you give on being a costume / set designer?

My best advice would be to give it a go! In my opinion the best place to start is in community and/or student theatre. There's lots of people around to support you, and these productions often offer great value. With community theatre in particular, there are often resources attached to these companies so you're not starting from scratch. It's also a great place to meet people with your passions in common, which is super valuable!

What is your creative process?

My creative process begins upon receiving a script from a director or producer. Part of this first read-through is determining the scope of the job considering the terms outlined by the director or producer, and the other part is deciding my interest creatively. After agreeing to the production, myself and the director will have copious meetings determining the mood, style and practical elements of the production. It is important that these conversations are also visual: I provide the director with countless reference images to communicate what we are thinking. My creative process is quite immersive

in the sense that I like to listen to music and podcasts relevant to the time setting or topic, stick reference images on my studio wall, watch films that I feel are connected to the show and read books that evoke a similar mood. This culminates in a Preliminary Design Presentation, where I present to the production team the concept so far in the form of image mood boards, as well as any lists and documents containing practical information such as how many costumes, when they are changed, or how the set may change throughout the show. It is important here to also include a proposed budget. The next step is collating those references into costume drawings, and for the set: sketches, a 3D model and floorplans. These are then presented in the Final Design Presentation.

What has inspired you for the set and costume designs?

The set and costume designs for Girl Band are inspired by many things. Part of this is a lived experience of growing up being a dancer myself - this has informed so much of the costume design, but also the set as I spent years in many dance studios of various quality! There are plenty of podcasts out there that dive into the topic of girl and boy bands, both how they have shaped

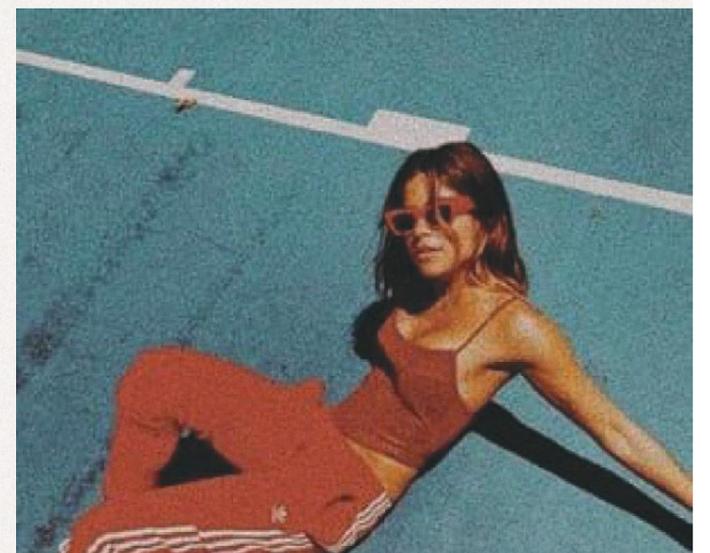
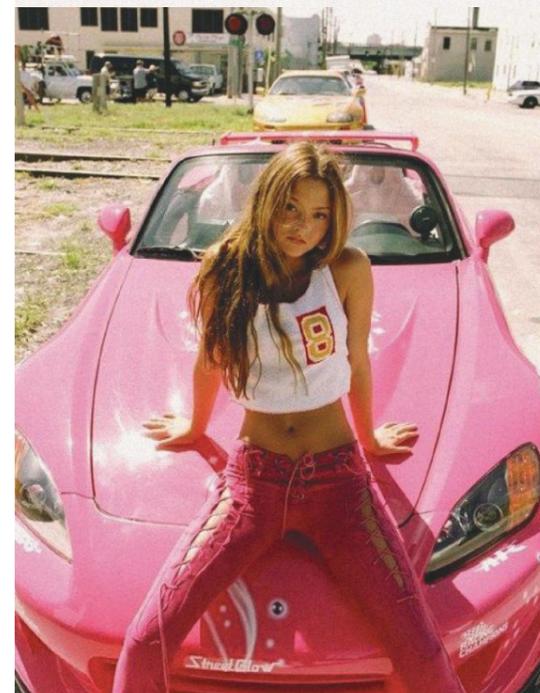
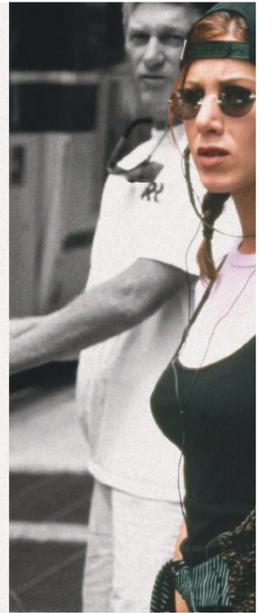
pop music but also the commodification of both the bands and its members, and the puppet masters that controlled their every move. This is so much of what Girl Band is about, and it's fascinating to understand the internal politics of these bands and the producers to inform particularly the costumes. 'Boy Bands' by American Hysteria explores and explains this excellently.

Naturally, the fashion of the 90s and the rise of girl bands such as the Spice Girls and TLC during this time

have informed many of the styles you will see on stage. I am interested in the contrast between the brightly coloured costumes that these band members wear for publicity and performances, and the grimmer reality behind closed doors.

Who is your favourite Girl Band?

Tough question but it has to be the Spice Girls! They have a special place in my heart as my friends and I used to dress up as them when we were younger. Iconic.



GIRL BAND



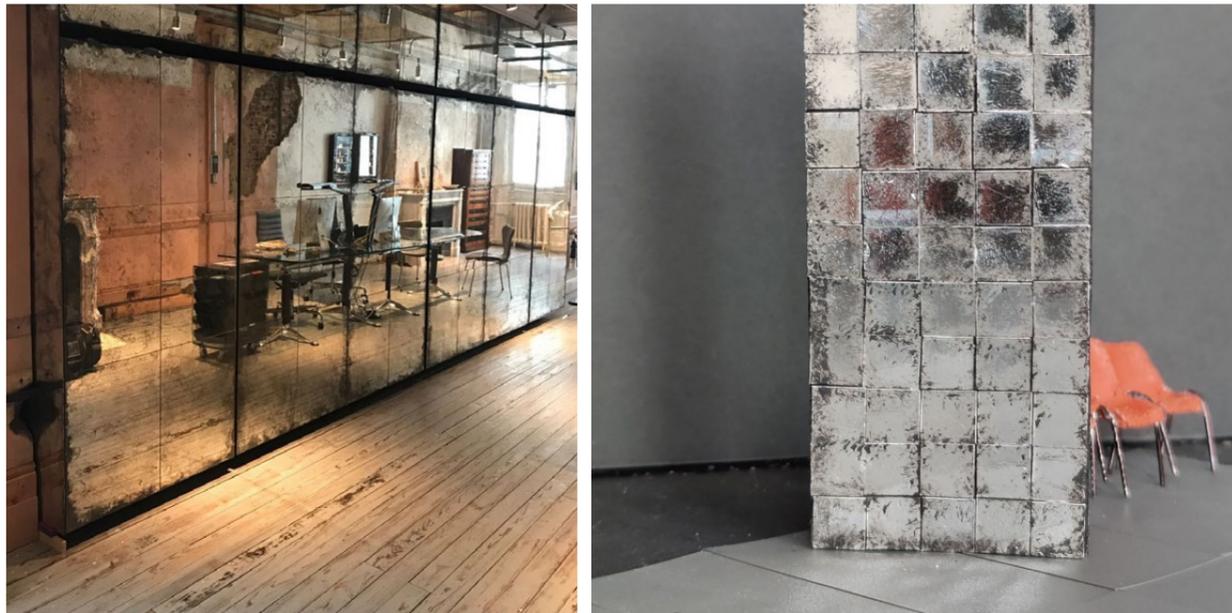
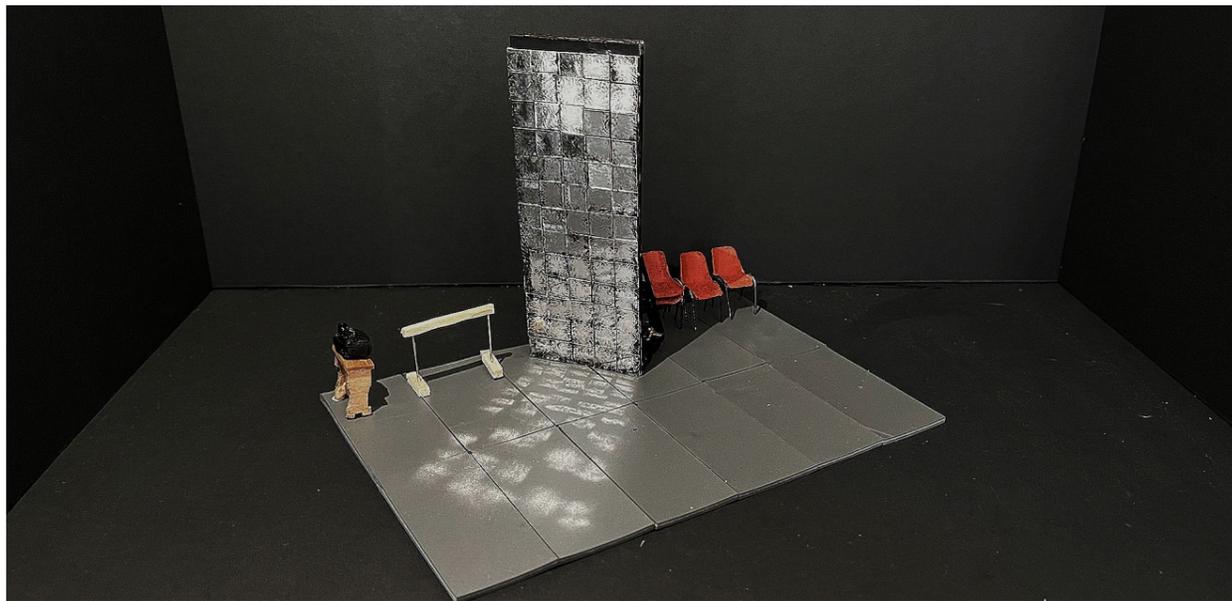
COSTUME DESIGN
COSTUME #2 - SHOWCASE



GIRL BAND_DESIGN FINAL_MONIQUE LANGFORD_14.4.23

'SASSY'





SECTION 4
*CLASSROOM
ACTIVITIES*

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

WHAT ARE WE SEEING?

Prepare students for the performance they are about to see with background to the show and company who created it.

A blurb or **summary of the show** can be shared with students:

“Universally, women with personalities are hated” – Billie Eilish

Created by powerhouse record label managers, Craig and Darren, this is the girl-band to end all girl-bands. They have moulded, twisted, and worked these girls to become the girls everyone wants. The Sensation Girls.

Problem is, The Sensation Girls don't know who they are anymore.

When unofficial leader DeeDee unexpectedly quits, things begin to unravel. The girls are getting older and bolder and they know what they want, what they really, really want.

Get ready for dancing, Lisa 'Left Eye' Lopes inspired rap, low-rise jeans, and a hell of a lot of mess.

Discuss or respond in journals:

- Billie Eilish is quoted at the top of the blurb. Why do you think it has been included in the description of the show? What might it tell us about the play we are about to see?
- What do you think Billie Eilish means by this statement? Do you agree / disagree with her? Why?
- Can you identify all the 90s references in this blurb? What are they? Are there any you need to find out more about.
- What do you expect from this show? Consider style, form, characters.

The company producing this work is **New Ghosts**. Read the company's biography:

Our vision: A world where theatre is reimagined and audiences are inspired.

Our mission: To bring new stories to the stage with a focus on women-driven and Australian works.

Our values: Empathy, inclusion and originality

New Ghosts Theatre Company was founded in Perth in 2015 by Artistic Director Lucy Clements. The name “New Ghosts” comes from the philosophy that our concept of space is influenced by the events we have seen take place within them. In each space we activate, New Ghosts Theatre Company would acknowledge the history of story telling and performance that came before us there, while being dedicated to creating new stories and experiences.

Originally created as a platform to showcase Lucy's own play, Fracture, New Ghosts Theatre Company would soon grow to be much larger. Relocated herself and the company to Sydney in 2016, Lucy expanded her passion and expertise for directing new Australian work when she worked with local playwrights Sam O'Sullivan and Katy Warner, which resulted in their two new plays, The Wind in the Underground and Paper Doll respectively. Lucy kept her ties with Perth, bringing both shows back to Perth's FRINGEWORLD festival, where they performed to sold-out audiences.

As Lucy continued to direct more local and international plays, she noticed a trend in the audition room. On average, Lucy would see four women for every one man in auditions, despite having less roles to offer them. To address this, she founded the IGNITE Collective – a women-led, inclusive collective of theatre makers from across the nation, formed with the mission of putting new women-driven stories on Australian stages.

To date, NGTC has presented four Australian and seven World Premiere plays – five of which were through the IGNITE Collective – which have played on stages across Perth, Sydney and Darwin. Together, these productions have showcased over 100 Australian theatre makers, and created 30 new stage roles for young female performers.

Discuss or respond in journals:

- What sort of work might you expect from New Ghosts Theatre Company?
- Consider the name, New Ghosts. What does it mean to you?
- Why do you think an initiative like the IGNITE Collective can bring to theatre?

Predictions and Possibilities:

- The show is called: Girl Band – what do you think it might be about?
- What do you think you will see? Hear? Feel?
- Anything you are looking forward to, or hoping to see ...

THE 1990S – WHAT WAS GOING ON?

Girl Band is set in the early 1990s. It can be easy for people to assume that some of the things we take for granted now were not commonplace in this era. And not just text messaging or social media or Google. But movements and advances for equality for women. We need to remember, as we watch the play, that many of the women who have stepped forward during the #MeToo movement were speaking up about abuse they'd experienced in the 1990s. When people question, why did it take them so long to say anything, perhaps it is worth remembering how different things were then.

Explore and research the 1990s. What was happening in this decade? What are the similarities and differences between then and now? What were the big cultural, political, and social moments and events?

Older students may like to read the following article from The Washington Post. It is an American perspective but speaks to some of these issues more broadly:

#MeToo is undoing the devil's bargain of the 1990s by Anne M. Blaschke, The Washington Post, 7 December 2017.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/12/07/metoo-is-undoing-the-devils-bargain-of-the-1990s/>

After reading the article, prompt students to discuss their thoughts and opinions on the reading. What did they find surprising or challenging about the piece?

THE 1990S – MUSIC, FASHION AND CULTURE

Playwright Katy Warner lived through the 90s but still did research into the era to help her understand what was happening, culturally at this time. Students would not have lived through this era, so may benefit from some fun, immersive 90s research to help get them into the 'zone'.

- Split students into small groups. Each group will be given a topic from the 90s to research, create a mood board or slide-show, and report their findings back to the group. Topics include: Music, fashion, pop culture moments, film and television, Australia in the 90s.
- Ask students to interview someone from their family who lived through the 90s – what was it like to be a teenager or young adult in this era? How does it compare to being a teenager or young adult in 2023?
- Ask students to create a playlist of 90s music.

GIRL POWER

The most well-known girl band from the 1990s was the Spice Girls, who were defined by their slogan "Girl Power". Research what "Girl Power" meant in the 1990s. What was their impact? Is it still relevant today?

In *Girl Band*, the band members have on-stage personas assigned to them, which don't reflect their personal identities at all. If you were creating a stage persona for yourself, who would they be? Think about what makes you unique and create a character for yourself. You can also try the opposite - create a character that is the complete opposite of everything you believe in and see as central to your identity.

CREATIVE WRITING PROMPTS

A POSTCARD FROM DEEDEE

DeeDee is a character in the play who we never see, who we never hear from directly. But many of the other characters speak about her. What do you remember them saying about DeeDee? Do you think they reliable? What sort of person do you think DeeDee is?

Write a postcard (or letter) from London from the point of view of DeeDee. Which of the Sensation Girls would she write to? What would she want them to know?

GIRL BAND / BOY BAND

In the play, the Sensation Girls have to answer question sent in from a teen magazine. The questions are very cliched and don't really allow the women to express their true selves. They are commodities, part of a brand.

Find some images of girl and boy bands that have at least three members.

For the purposes of this activity, forget everything you might know about this group. For example, if you are using an image of Destiny's Child forget everything you know about Beyonce, Kelly and Michelle. Create a new name for the group. Create new names for the members of the group.

Create a series of questions that a teen magazine might ask this group. Answer those questions as the characters from your new, fictional girl / boy band.

THEY SAY I'M ...

Sammy writes her own poetry and lyrics, and Kiki helps the other Sensation Girls see the worth in their own words. Together, they start writing their own song. The prompt they use is 'They say I'm ...' and then each women fills in the line with the stuff other people say about them, things that are considered 'wrong' about them or the stuff they feel they need to hide.

Using this as inspiration for your own stream of conscious writing. Set the timer for 5 minutes and don't stop writing. Each line should start with the words 'They say I'm ...'

You may only write a short sentence – for example, 'They say I'm a nerd' – or a long, flowing sentence which takes you somewhere unexpected. Just don't stop writing for five minutes.

Once the five minutes is up, re-read your words. Choose your favourite parts, refine them.

Share some of your words with a partner or small group. Turn it into a group poem or song which could be performed for the class.

DRAMA ACTIVITIES

STATUS

There is a clear hierarchy within the Sensation Girls. Discuss the status of the characters – who had high status, who had low. Did that status change during the show? When and how?

Playing with the status of characters in a scene can help create conflict, tension and dramatic action. It is always important to consider the status of your character in any given moment – notice when, where and how it changes.

- Students will pick a card at random (cards with numbers 1 to 5 on them). 1 is the lowest status, 5 is the highest.
- Without showing anyone else the number on the card, students move around the space in that status. Side coach students – encourage them to consider: how does the status level alter the quality of your movement, how much space do you take up, how do you hold your head / your gaze, think about gestures and facial expression ...
- Ask the class to guess the status of the performer.
- Ask students to take another number. In groups of five, they will enter the space in their status and try to position themselves in order, from lowest status (1) to highest status (5).

In pairs, students will improvise short scenes which play with changing status.

Scene: A and B have just been in a minor car accident, a little bingle in the carpark and both are to blame (equally) for the accident.

Play this scene with A and B both being low status characters. Who would they be? What might happen (or not happen) in this scene?

Replay this scene with A and B both being high status characters. Who would they be? What might happen (or not happen) in this scene?

Replay for the a third but this time, A starts with high status and B starts with low status. As the scene progresses, something is revealed / changes so A moves to low status and B takes a high status.

Discuss the differences in these scenes – what worked, what didn't? Why? How can we use status when devising and creating our own drama?

SUBTEXT

You would have noticed in Girl Band that the characters don't always just come out and say what they mean. They talk around things. They change the subject. They deflect. They ask questions instead of answering them.

There is a lot of subtext in the play – the things that characters believe or think but don't say. The meaning under the dialogue. Unspoken thoughts – the things they don't or just can't actually say.

Work with a partner to explore the idea of subtext. Try out the line with the different subtext.

Line: It's so good to see you.

Subtext:

- You are late! Why can't you ever be on time?
- No one wants you here.
- I have no idea who you are ...
- Please like me.

Line: I did all the laundry and made dinner.

Subtext:

- You are so lazy, I have to do everything around here.
- I am so bored with my life.
- I love you.
- I have so much work to do!

When working with a script, don't simply take what the character is saying at face value. Consider the context of the scene, the given circumstances, what you know of the character and their relationships. Could there be more to the line than you first thought?

Devise a scene with a partner in which you both really want to tell the other something important but can't for some reason – so you speak around it, change the topic, hint at it but don't directly say it.

PUBLIC SELF VS. PRIVATE SELF

In characters in Girl Band are, in a way, playing two roles. They are the Sensation Girl and they are the 'real' woman behind that role. Think back to the character of MJ. As a Sensation Girl she is 'smiley' and that is the persona she has to put on for the public. In the privacy of the rehearsal room, MJ is sarcastic and a little angry. Definitely not the sort of personality the record label want her to show to the fans. This may be an extreme example but we all have public and private versions of ourselves, to some degree!

We will use this idea as a starting point to devising drama.

In small groups set up a tableaux, and take on the traditional or even stereotypical roles of the characters we'd expect to see in:

- A class photo (perhaps a group photo of the graduating class of 2023)
- A family portrait
- A family sitting down to celebratory dinner
- A snapshot of friends on holiday together

Consider levels, positioning and proximity, body language and facial expression, use of space in setting up this frozen image – how can you make the relationships and characters clear in the way you compose or set up this image.

At some point, each character will 'come to life' to reveal a secret or story about themselves that provides us with some insight to their private self.

How does this change how we view the image? How could this be the starting point for a devised drama. What conflicts does this set up? Where to from this moment ...

ABOUT NATIONAL THEATRE OF PARRAMATTA

Riverside's National Theatre of Parramatta (NTofP) is creating and presenting transformative and inspirational professional theatre experiences that reflect the world around us and the diversity that is contemporary Australia.

Hence our tagline, *Putting the Nation on Stage*.

We commission, create, produce, present and tour work. We are equally committed to capacity building and nurturing talent by providing opportunities for theatre practitioners both on and off stage to develop their craft. We are creating communities, access, visibility and infrastructure that supports and builds capacity for performance in our region and beyond.

Our location and leadership makes us a natural hub for inclusivity. We play an important leadership role in the sector.

Producing theatre that resonates with our audiences is the core of our work.

ABOUT NEW GHOSTS THEATRE COMPANY

New Ghosts Theatre Company is an award-winning arts organisation who believe in exceptional, provocative and challenging storytelling to reimagine theatre for new audiences. We achieve this by championing new voices, empowering creatives, and developing and presenting new Australian stories through our IGNITE Collective - a women-led, inclusive collective of theatre makers from across the nation, formed with the mission of putting new women-driven stories on Australian stages.

INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS

We understand that for some of your students this may be their first experience with live theatre. To ensure that you and your students have the best theatre experience possible, please download and take them through this guide: Riverside's Guide to Theatre Etiquette [riversideparramatta.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Theatre-Etiquette-003.pdf](https://www.riversideparramatta.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Theatre-Etiquette-003.pdf)

Everything you need to know about getting here, facilities, eating and more to make your excursion to Riverside easy. Please download our guide here [riversideparramatta.com.au/category/education/](https://www.riversideparramatta.com.au/category/education/)

To request a hard copy of Riverside's current primary and/or secondary education brochure/s, please contact our Education Coordinator on 8839 3308 or e-mail education_riverside@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au

Images by Kathy Luu



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