

CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCE PART B



BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

BY ANDREW BOVELL

23 AUG – 14 SEP HEATH LEDGER THEATRE



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

BLACK SWAN'S CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCES ARE ALIGNED WITH THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM FOR DRAMA, ENGLISH AND LITERATURE. THESE RESOURCES ARE OFFERED IN TWO PARTS, DESIGNED TO ENHANCE THE VIEWING EXPERIENCE AND TO SUPPORT FURTHER EXPLORATION POST-SHOW.

Part A is to assist your excursion to the theatre by providing background information about the play, pre-show activities and research opportunities.

Part B includes production images, behind-the-scenes footage, and post-show analysis activities.

Icons to look out for within each pack include:



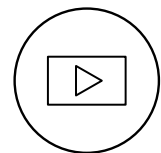
ACTIVITY



DISCUSSION



READING



VIDEO

Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA produced this Creative Learning Resource.

Compiled by Christie Sistrunk (Creative Learning Manager).

Cover image by Joel Barbitta.

Design by Troy Barbitta.

Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA acknowledges the Whadjuk Nyoongar people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live. We pay respects to all Aboriginal Elders and people and stand united towards a shared future.



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7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



CONTENT WARNINGS & CURRICULUM LINKS

CONTENT WARNINGS

Mature themes, sexual references and mild simulated violence

Detailed content warnings can be found [here](#).

CURRICULUM LINKS

Literature

Unit 3: Texts in Context

Unit 4: Interpreting Text

Drama

Unit 4: Presentational, Non-Realist

Drama





ABOUT BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA CREATES HIGH QUALITY THEATRICAL EXPERIENCES THAT CELEBRATE, CHALLENGE, AND INSPIRE OUR COLLECTIVE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

Founded in 1991, the Company has earned both critical and popular acclaim for its world premiere productions and highly distinctive reinterpretations of international theatre classics – all of which are infused with the unique culture of Western Australia. The Company is led by a Board of Directors, chaired by Francois Witbooi. Artistic Director is Kate Champion and Chief Executive Officer is Ian Booth.

State Theatre Centre Excursion Management Plan can be downloaded here.

[CLICK HERE](#)

OUR VISION

Connecting artists and audiences through the power of theatre to entertain, challenge and inspire.

OUR PURPOSE

To create exceptional, high-quality theatre that speaks to the world from our unique WA culture, landscape and moment in time.

OUR VALUES

Creativity. Creativity is essential to everything we do.

Connection. We collaborate to tell stories, nurture relationships and share knowledge, to maximise the impact and reach of our company.

Innovation. We are forward-thinking and responsive to the changing world around us, balancing responsibility with courage to make meaningful choices.

Quality. We engage a skilled and trusted team, prioritising diversity and respect, to deliver exceptional outcomes for our company and community.



THE ARTISTS

CAST



**ALEXANDRIA
STEFFENSEN**
SONJA, SARAH



CATHERINE MOORE
JANE, VALERIE



MATT EDGERTON
PETE, NICK, JOHN



LUKE HEWITT
LEON, NEIL

CREATIVES



ANDREW BOVELL
AUTHOR



HUMPHREY BOWER
DIRECTOR



FIONA BRUCE
SET & COSTUME
DESIGNER



MARK HASLAM
LIGHTING DESIGNER



ASH GIBSON GREIG
COMPOSER & SOUND
DESIGNER



BEHIND THE SCENES





SET DESIGN



Scene 1.3 & pg.10
Couples' House

- Bed flies out,
- 2 seat sofa on platform flies in

FIONA BRUCE'S SET DESIGN IS MINIMALIST YET HIGHLY PURPOSEFUL.

With the action moving fluidly across multiple locations, sometimes simultaneously, the design steers away from naturalistic realism. Instead, a pared-back aesthetic allows spaces to transform quickly and evoke mood rather than rely on literal representation.

All props and furniture are carefully chosen; each

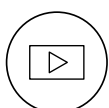
item serves a clear functional or symbolic purpose and is never incidental.

Importantly, every element of the design holds a relationship to the others. This interconnectedness reflects the play's themes of emotional entanglement, blurred boundaries, and hidden connections between characters. Just as the actors shift between roles, so too does the space shift meaning, inviting audiences to engage actively in constructing the world of the play.



Analyse Fiona Bruce's set design:

- Consider the selection of set items used. Describe how they support scene changes and differentiate locations.
- Why are items flown in during the production, what symbolic meaning do they carry, and what effect does this have on the audience?



Get a behind-the-scenes perspective with Set and Costume Designer Fiona Bruce, as she explains how design choices bring a production to life, including how entire sets can be 'flown in' using theatre rigging systems.



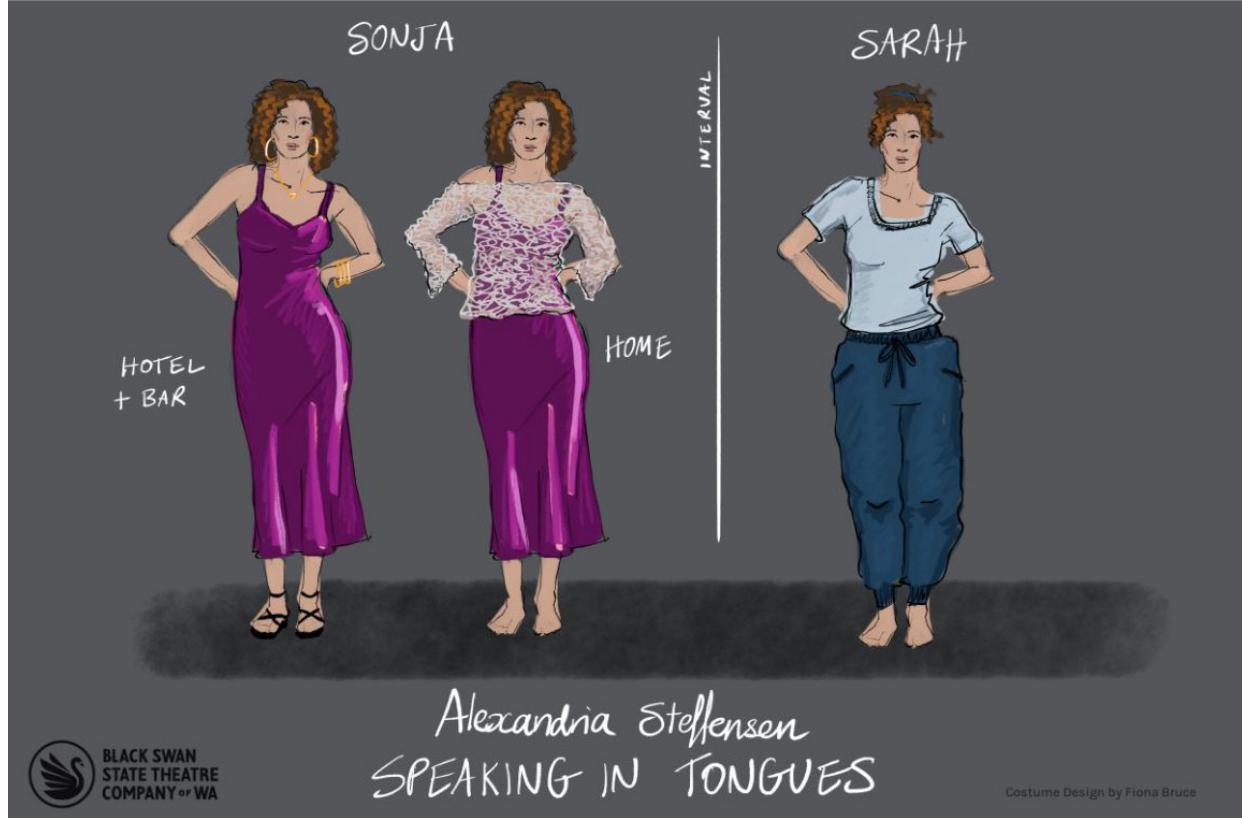
VIDEOGRAPHY, LIGHTING AND SOUND

- Describe how projection is used in the production. How does it help tell the story, show changes in time or place, or reflect what characters are feeling or thinking?
- How do sound and lighting work together to direct the audience's focus, and establish time, place and mood?



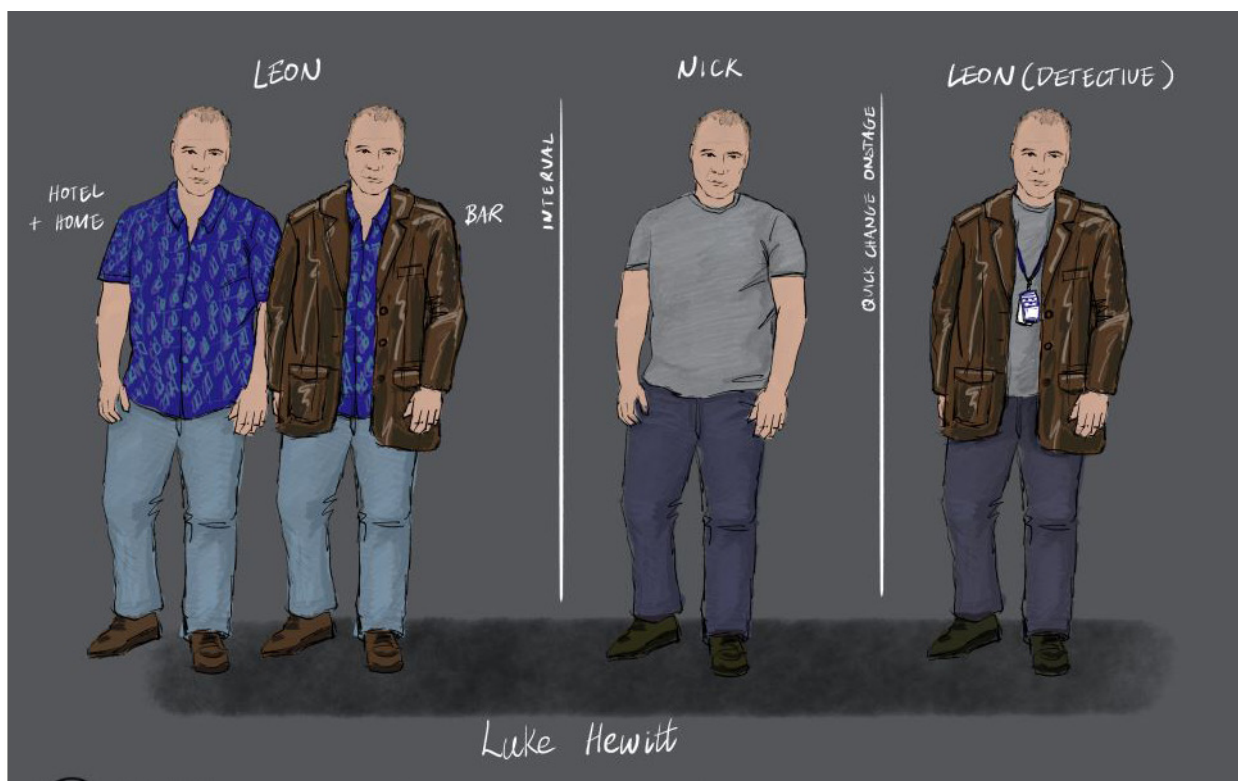
Part 2
The Dream

- Landscape imagery a combination of front and rear projection
- Sarah flies out
- Phone booth flies out TBC
- Valerie exits via auditorium steps TBC



CHARACTER AND COSTUME

- Actors play multiple roles—how do costume, movement, and voice help distinguish between characters and support these transitions?





POST SHOW ACTIVITIES



THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Ask students to think about the themes of connection, trust, betrayal, and communication in *Speaking in Tongues*. Start with a class or small group discussion using the question:

- What keeps long-term relationships strong, and how does the play show these ideas?
- Further discussion prompts may include, for example, how trust breaks down between characters and why it is vital for long-term relationships, as well as the role communication plays in maintaining or weakening those relationships.



NON-LINEAR STORYTELLING

Speaking in Tongues gives students the chance to explore key aspects of contemporary theatre, such as non-linear storytelling, symbolic and abstract staging, ensemble work and role-doubling.

The following discussion prompts will help students think more deeply about these elements.

- A woman's shoe is a recurring motif that serves both a symbolic and narrative function. Can you think of other images used in this way? Provide examples.
- At what moments is the overlapping dialogue most effective or powerful, and why?
- What choices do the actors make to help the overlapping dialogue feel clear, meaningful, or emotionally engaging?
- How does the use of overlapping dialogue affect your connection to the characters or the tension in a scene?



ESSAY / REVIEW

Encourage students to include specific examples from the production to support their observations and reflections.

1. Summary

Briefly describe what the play was about and the main ideas it explored.

2. Themes

What themes stood out to you? How were these themes presented through the story and characters?

3. Performance

How did the actors bring their characters to life? Consider their use of voice, movement, and how they embodied multiple roles.

4. Staging and Design

How did the set, lighting, sound, and projections support the story? Did any design elements catch your attention or add meaning?

5. Structure and Style

How did the play's fragmented or overlapping scenes affect your understanding or experience of the story?

6. Emotional Impact

How did the production make you feel? Were there moments that surprised or moved you?

7. Personal Reflection

What did you learn or think about after watching the play? Would you recommend it to others?

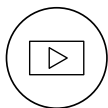




EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Comparative study

The movie *Lantana* (2001), directed by Ray Lawrence and written by Andrew Bovell, is a powerful adaptation of Bovell's stage play *Speaking in Tongues*. While both works share core themes and characters, they differ in structure, tone, and style, offering rich material for comparative study.



WATCH THE MOVIE



Prime Video Store
To rent or buy



Apple TV Store
To rent or buy



After viewing the film, guide students in exploring how ideas shift between stage and screen, and how dramatic and cinematic techniques influence meaning.

Structure & Form

- How does the structure of *Speaking in Tongues* differ from *Lantana*?
- Why do you think Bovell changed the structure for film?



Characterisation

- How are Leon, Sonja, and Valerie portrayed differently in the play and the film?
- What effect does having four actors play multiple roles in the play have on the audience?

Techniques and Style

- What theatrical techniques stand out in the play?
- How do film techniques (camera, sound, editing, etc.) shape meaning in *Lantana*?

Themes and Symbols

- What role does the lantana bush play in the film, and is there an equivalent symbol in the play?



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Black Swan State Theatre Company

PO Box 337, Northbridge, WA 6865

T (08) 6212 9300

E learn@blackswantheatre.com.au

W blackswantheatre.com.au

