

DEB

BY THOMAS WEATHERALL
STUDIO UNDERGROUND
23 MAY – 8 JUNE

CREATIVE LEARNING RESOURCE PART A



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:



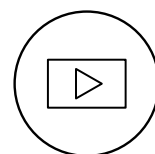
ACTIVITY



DISCUSSION



READING



VIDEO

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

Compiled by Christie Sistrunk (Creative Learning Manager).

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.



CONTENTS

1. CONTENT WARNINGS & CURRICULUM LINKS

2. ABOUT BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA

3. ARTISTS

4. SYNOPSIS

5. STYLE

6. THEMES

7. YOUTH HELP LINES AND SERVICES

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



CONTENT WARNINGS & CURRICULUM LINKS

CONTENT WARNINGS

This production contains strong themes of depression and suicide, and coarse language.

- **Mental Health:** Strong depiction/references to depression, death/terminal illness, and grief.
- **Substance Use:** References to substance use and cigarette smoking.

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

CURRICULUM LINKS

Literature

Unit 3: Texts in Context
Unit 4: Interpreting Text

Drama

Unit 3: Representational, 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



OWEN HASLUCK
MARK



TYREN MACLOU
UNDERSTUDY (MARK)

CREATIVES



THOMAS WEATHERALL
WRITER



IAN WILKES
DIRECTOR



CHERISH MARRINGTON
SET & COSTUME
DESIGNER



MATTHEW ERREN
LIGHTING DESIGNER



JARRED WALL
COMPOSER & SOUND
DESIGNER



SOPHIA MORGAN
STAGE MANAGER



DIVING INTO THE DEEP BLUE IN CONVERSATION WITH THOMAS WEATHERALL

THOMAS WEATHERALL IS QUICKLY BECOMING ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S BRIGHTEST YOUNG STARS. CURRENTLY STARRING AS MALAKAI MITCHELL – THE TEEN HEARTTHROB AND LOVE INTEREST IN NETFLIX'S SMASH HIT *HEARTBREAK HIGH* – WEATHERALL CATAPULTED TO NATIONAL FAME, EARNING BOTH AN AACTA AND A LOGIE AWARD ALONG THE WAY.

His journey in the arts began in the world of dance, with Weatherall initially setting his sights on a professional career in the industry. However, everything took a turn when he landed a role in the ABC series *Deadlock* during his first year out of high school. Reflecting on the unexpected shift, Weatherall says, "It was all entirely unplanned. I was never the most technical dancer, and looking back, I think what I enjoyed the most was the way in which you could communicate or express something through movement – the same way you can through writing and acting."

Following his role in *Deadlock*, Weatherall went on to appear in television shows such as *All My Friends Are Racist*, *RFDS*, and *Tropo*, before Netflix came knocking with a role in the reboot of the 1994 series *Heartbreak High*.

"I owe everything to that show really," says Weatherall.

"It's changed my life in both a professional and personal context in such an extreme way."

The show has been praised for its racial, gender, and neurodivergent representation, tackling important cultural and social issues, and has garnered extensive critical acclaim – including an International Emmy Award.

"Only when I'm away from the project do I really see just how profound that show has been – and I say that as only a very small part of it. We have a really wonderful, invested and vocal viewership, so getting to hear just how impactful that show has been continues to shock me."

Following the first season, Weatherall was gearing up for another milestone project in his career, the debut of his one-man play *Blue*, which he wrote and starred in. *Blue* premiered at Belvoir St. Theatre in 2023. It follows the story of Mark, a young man in his early 20s, and is told in a way that Weatherall describes as an almost "stream-of-consciousness confession" between Mark and the audience.

The audience meets Mark at a time in his life when he is navigating the challenges of growing up, grappling with grief, love, and his own mental well-being.

"I've always felt fairly ill-equipped to discuss such things in my own life, whereas in a script, or in character, it feels easier and more liberating. It was really a way to therapise myself. I think a lot of people can relate to that sensation. What is hard to discuss or handle in 'real life' they often explore through music, art, film, etc."

What began in 2019 as an exercise in self-expression through writing was never intended to be shared publicly. As time went on, *Blue* started to take form.

"I was out of home, studying at drama school and feeling a bit aimless. The four years of writing that followed was the first time I really in earnest tried to confront my mental health, my identity and some of the bigger questions/fears I was quite happy to ignore."



He continues, "There wasn't any pressure, I could simply write this as an exercise, and if I didn't want to share it, I wouldn't."

Now, *Blue* is heading to Perth in Black Swan's brand-new production, with Owen Hasluck cast in the role of Mark, under the direction of Ian Wilkes. Hasluck will be only the third person to perform the role, following Callan Purcell at Adelaide Festival last year and Weatherall in all other iterations of the production.

It's a moving and highly relatable piece of theatre - with audiences finding connection with Mark and his story, regardless of their age, gender, or background. Of the protagonist, Weatherall explains that he's not a worldly, all-knowing entity, but rather a representation of one individual, handling some big issues in their life. It's his hope that Perth audiences are able to connect with that, or see a bit of themselves in Mark, in the same way that previous audiences have.

"It's been truly the highlight of my career, getting to talk to people after these shows, and hearing how the work connected to them."

"I still have emails saved from people who felt the show highlighted their experiences or spoke to them. It's deeply personal work, and while not autobiographical, a lot of the mental health stuff is rooted deep within me. Getting to talk to people about that, young men, their parents, people who have experienced loss because of such issues, has really changed my life."

He continues, "Similarly, I've loved talking to audiences post-show who disagree with Mark, or wish he had done something different, and almost asking why he didn't. Those sorts of discourses are the ultimate compliment, because it means the work made the audience think, and open themselves up to a conversation that can be continued into their own personal circles."

Reflecting on his time performing the role, Weatherall says the balancing act of being both the writer and the sole cast member was difficult.

"I wish it wasn't, but it was. I think I've gotten better

at the juggling act, but at 22, with such a personal story, it's hard to separate yourself. But once you're in the thick of tech and the season itself, Writer-Tom just disappears. Some of the team used to joke that Writer-Tom and Actor-Tom weren't talking to each other - and that's honestly how it felt."

Now 24 years old, Actor-Tom has recently been filming the third and final season of *Heartbreak High*, while Writer-Tom says he's looking forward to what's next.

"Dom Mercer, who was instrumental in getting this work up at Belvoir, deduced my writing the best anyone ever has; I write what I'm terrified of. So, there are a few more grand, all-consuming fears and ideas that have been percolating ever since the first performance of *Blue*. I've got a bit of downtime, and a few exciting projects nearing release, so I'm keen to see where it all leads. Hopefully a lot more writing, and perhaps some directing one day."

With such an impressive start in the industry from both the performance and creative perspectives, we asked Weatherall if he had any advice for others looking to make a start in the arts - whether they're an actor, writer, or just trying to find their creative path.

"Watch everything, not just the things you like. Read! Get a library card so you can do it on the cheap. And go for walks. Walks always help!"

"There's no right or wrong way to start in this career, the best thing to do is just start."

"When I decided to write *Blue*, I was 19. I called my brilliant agent and asked her for advice. She told me to "just start writing". And it really is that simple. I began writing *Blue* that day and didn't look back. Start small."

From something that started small, to a fully-fledged play performed to packed theatres across the country, soon to be in Perth. We're so glad Thomas Weatherall decided to "just start writing".



GET TO KNOW

OWEN HASLUCK, WHO WILL BE MAKING HIS DEBUT WITH THE COMPANY AS MARK IN THOMAS WEATHERALL'S ONE-MAN SHOW

What excites you most about performing in *Blue*?

There are so many things to be excited about! I'm excited to tackle such a beautiful piece of work that confronts so many topics that I myself, and I'm sure many others, find hard to articulate. I'm excited to meet the team and get working on it, I'm excited to be in the room. I'm excited to see what I can bring to the play. I'm excited to perform on my home country. I am just excited!

What were your highlights at NIDA?

I enjoyed my entire three years there, but the highlight is, and always will be, the absolutely amazing and fantastically brilliant friends I have made through the journey. I'm so proud to know them all and to have shared a beautiful three years with them.

Who was your top artist in your 2024 Spotify wrapped?

To anyone who knows me personally this is no surprise, but my top artist was The Weeknd. But closely behind was Childish Gambino who dropped a brilliant album last year that I love. These two do music in a way that I love, where the artistry is just as important as the music, they make music they want to do, and I love that!

What have you been watching lately?

I've been on a bit of a horror/thriller kick lately. Lots of different styles telling some very, very impactful stories that need to be told. The one that stuck with me the most is *Longlegs*; it's not for everyone but I loved how it asked me to suspend my disbelief, and when the movie finished it stuck with me.

Where is your favourite place on earth?

My favourite place on earth is when my mum goes out to photograph the night sky, to go with her out in the middle of nowhere in WA and do nothing. It's such a beautiful and wonderful thing to appreciate the beauty of life with the person who has given you so many opportunities to live an amazing life, so I take every chance I can.

Who are your three ideal dinner party guests?

I feel like it's got to be a fun dinner right, so I'd want people who I think would just absolutely be a blast to have dinner with. Firstly, Steve Irwin. I don't think I need to explain why; the man's a national treasure and I love him still. Secondly, Jim Carrey. That man is my childhood, and I'd love to meet him and pick his brain a little. Finally, Robin Williams. An amazing man and a wonderful soul with so much to give and I would've loved to have the opportunity to meet him. But in an ideal world I think these three would be a blast. The conversation would be rich, but also hilarious, and who knows, maybe Steve would've pulled a snake or something out of nowhere.

Do you have an interesting pastime?

I wouldn't say it's the most interesting pastime, but I play soccer, I was big on it growing up and I still play! I'm a huge soccer fan so whenever I get the chance to play, I take it.

Who are performers you admire?

Honestly, I admire every performer. What we do is unique and amazing, but it's also tough and challenging and I admire every single person I've watched or performed with, that has gotten up and put themselves out there in front of an audience.

But if I were to say I admire one single person, it is Jim Carrey. He was my childhood, and it's not even just the comedy, even in movies such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* he gave a performance that stuck with me. I wouldn't be the artist I am today without his effect on me.



SYNOPSIS

GETTING OLDER IS INEVITABLE, BUT GROWING UP TAKES COURAGE

The journey to adulthood can feel overwhelming especially when you are caught between the weight of the past and the uncertainty of the future.

When Mark moves out for the first time, his mother stays connected through letters, checking in, sharing thoughts, and offering support. Writing has always been their way of

processing emotions, a bond they hold close.

Moving beyond the shadow of childhood trauma, Mark's life begins to take shape with a blossoming romance with his flatmate Elly and pursuing studies in writing – until a letter arrives and changes everything.

Written by Kamilaroi writer and Heartbreak High star Thomas Weatherall, *Blue* is a deeply moving story of family, memory, and the challenges of early adulthood.



"Things aren't getting worse than this, I need to get this out of my system."

T.Weatherall, ABC interview.

Learn more about the writer and the play's journey from diary entries to a "highly personal fiction," with universal themes that resonate across generations.

Read full article.



STYLE

***BLUE* IS A SOLO PLAY THAT SEAMLESSLY BLENDS POETIC LANGUAGE WITH NATURALISM, OFFERING A GLIMPSE INTO THE PROTAGONIST'S INNER WORLD, WHERE REALITY AND MEMORY INTERTWINE.**

The play's non-linear structure, rich in symbolism and metaphor, mirrors the fragmentation of grief. Physicality and movement serve as directorial choices to enhance audience engagement, fostering an intimate connection that draws viewers into the protagonist's emotional landscape.

With a minimalist set, the production keeps the focus on the protagonist's journey, deepening the audience's connection to the play's themes and internal struggles.



THEMES & METAPHORS

LOSS, LOVE & HEALING

“WHEN I WAS 9, MY MOTHER THOUGHT I WAS ‘DIFFERENT’, AND NOT DIFFERENT IN A SPECIAL, WONDROUS, JOYOUS KIND OF WAY. DIFFERENT AS IN LIKE – WHY DO I FEEL SICK WHEN I LOOK AT MY SON? – AND DON’T GET ME WRONG MY MOTHER IS LOVELY AND IT WASN’T DISGUST OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT, IT WAS LIKE SHE FELT BAD FOR ME. LIKE SHE DIDN’T DO ENOUGH. THAT SHE LET ME DOWN. THE WAY SHE WOULD LOOK AT ME, SORROWFUL AND ... HOLLOW.” (MARK SC4.)

As Mark’s story unfolds, we learn about the impact of grief on his mental health and how choices made, both good and bad, ripple through the lives of others, especially family.

In the play, Mark’s journey is marked by various coping strategies that help him manage the heavy emotional burden he carries.

Letter Writing: Connection and Expression

One of the key coping mechanisms Mark uses is letter writing, which serves as an emotional outlet for him and a way to stay connected with his mother, transcending the emotional and physical distance between them.

The Ocean: Release and Catharsis

The ocean symbolises Mark’s internal turmoil, offering a temporary release from his burdens. It serves as catharsis, allowing him to purge intense emotions in an environment larger than himself.

Music, Food, and Shared Experiences: Comfort and Connection

Mark’s relationship with his flatmate, Effy, offers another coping strategy centred around shared experiences.

Through their interactions with music, food, books, and reading, they create a space where they can support each other emotionally, reinforcing the importance of supportive relationships during difficult times.

“Our home was a warm and comfortable place, with more yard, garden, and trees than actual house. Always something new being planted, or dead being cut out. Music always playing, and at any time of day some amazing smell coming from the kitchen.” (Mark Sc5)



Reflect on your own ‘comfort zone.’ Where do you feel most at ease? Is it a place, a group of people, or something you do? Write about why that place or activity makes you feel comfortable and how it helps you feel safe or grounded in times of stress or change.



BREAKING THE SILENCE ON DEPRESSION

“THE FIRST TIME I WONDERED IF I WAS DEPRESSED, I WAS QUITE YOUNG, 12 OR 13 MAYBE. I KNOW WHAT DEPRESSION WAS, AND IT SOUNDED A LOT LIKE THESE FEELINGS I’VE KNOWN AND EXPERIENCED SINCE I WAS A KID, BUT I GUESS WE JUST DIDN’T TALK ABOUT IT. IT GOT WORSE AS I GOT OLDER.” (MARK SC6)

Depression is a serious condition that can affect anyone, regardless of age, background, or success and often stems from a mix of genetics and life experiences.

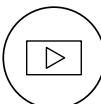
Many well-known figures, including Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson, Lady Gaga, Selena Gomez, Ryan Reynolds, and Prince Harry, have spoken openly about their struggles, helping to break the silence on mental illness.

“I found that with depression, one of the most important things you can realize is that you’re not alone.” Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson

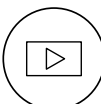
Lady Gaga’s *Born This Way Foundation* supports America’s Mental Health First Aid program for youth, a program she plans to bring to Australia.



Read Lady Gaga’s open letter about her lifetime struggle with anxiety and depression.



Play Lady Gaga and Prince William speak about the need for raising mental health issues to the wider community.



Play The Me You Can’t See. A docuseries co-created by Oprah Winfrey and Prince Harry is available to view on Apple TV. View the trailer [here](#).



The stigma of mental illness and the importance of speaking openly to others.

If you are a young person in Western Australia seeking support for mental health or depression, the following organisations and helplines are available to assist you:

- **Youth Focus:** Offers counselling and support services for young people dealing with depression and related issues. Visit their website to learn more and access services.
- **Beyond Blue:** Provides support for anxiety, depression, and suicide prevention. Reach them at **1300 22 4636**.

- **13YARN:** A dedicated crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Call **13 92 76**.
- **Kids Helpline:** A free, confidential service for young people aged 5 to 25. Available 24/7 at **1800 55 1800**.
- **Headspace:** Supports individuals aged 12 to 25 with mental health concerns. Contact them at **1800 650 890** or visit their website for online chat options.

Remember, reaching out is a vital step toward getting the help you need. These services are here to support you through challenging times.



BLUE & BLACK SWAN'S CREATIVE LEARNING PROGRAM IS PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY

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BLACK SWAN FUTURE FUND

Supported by Minderoo Foundation, generous philanthropists, and legacy gifts, Black Swan's Future Fund was established in 2017 to build a strong financial foundation to support growth and sustainability. The investment fund enables the delivery of works of exceptional quality, scale, and ambition. We thank those who have supported the Future Fund, in particular, we acknowledge the extraordinary generosity of Nicola and Andrew Forrest, and look forward to creating many more opportunities for our artists and audiences.

FUTURE FUND FOUNDING PARTNER





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