



EDUCATION PACK - PART B

# HEARTH

by Fleur Murphy

**18 MAY - 17 JUNE 2022**

LA MAMA COURTHOUSE / RIVERLINKS WESTSIDE / GASWORKS THEATRE / KINGSTON ARTS CENTRE / BURRINJA CULTURAL CENTRE

[WWW.FLEURMURPHY.COM](http://WWW.FLEURMURPHY.COM)



## SEASON 2022

- **La Mama Courthouse, Carlton - [www.lamama.com.au](http://www.lamama.com.au)**
- **Riverlinks Westside Mooroopna/Shepparton - [www.riverlinksvenues.com.au](http://www.riverlinksvenues.com.au)**
- **Gasworks Arts Park, Albert Park - [www.gasworks.org.au](http://www.gasworks.org.au)**
- **Kingston Arts Centre Black Box, Moorabbin - [www.kingstonarts.com.au](http://www.kingstonarts.com.au)**
- **Burrinja Cultural Centre, Upwey - [www.burrinja.org.au](http://www.burrinja.org.au)**

Note: The duration of performance is 85 minutes followed by 15 minute Q&A.

Cover image by Cameron Grant.

## Information for teachers and schools:

**Script:** The script will be published as a high-quality softcover script by Lab Kelpie Press and will be available to purchase from February 2022 for \$15 through the website of playwright [Fleur Murphy](#). Free Educational Resources will be available to download from the same [website](#). Scripts will also be available to purchase at the box office at each performance.

The play is appropriate for older teenagers e.g. VCE as it reflects realistic aspects of Australian life and deals with complex issues in an honest yet sensitive manner. Set in the recent past (2009) it addresses themes that are current, familiar and engaging such as family relationships and adoption and the impact of bushfires.

Issues are addressed in a way that will promote interest, further discussion and debate. The play has the potential to open up conversations about families including topics such as adoption and keeping secrets. A particularly strong theme that reflects community standards is family loyalty and duty shown through a number of relationships and situation that occur in the play. There will be opportunities for students to consider the circumstances of others and to observe a set of family dynamics that may be unfamiliar to them.

Other themes in the play include living in a bushfire area and the differences between city and country life may foster further discussion and even motivate students to think about their own lives, culturally, socially and politically.

*Warning: There is limited swearing, a scene that describes explicit sexual ideas and brief general discussion about drugs and alcohol.*

### **If you are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping, support is available:**

Lifeline Bushfire Recovery line on 13HELP – 13 43 57 or visit [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or visit [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

## EDUCATION PACK - PART B

# HEARTH

by Fleur Murphy

NOTE:

This document is Part B of the Education Notes for HEARTH. Part A can be found [\*\*HERE\*\*](#). Both sections can be used together to assist you in answering questions about this production in preparation for your SAC and examination.



Image by Cameron Grant

## **CONTENTS:**

Part B of the Education notes has been created for you to use after you have seen the performance and in conjunction with Part A.

1. Synopsis - pg 7.
2. Cast & Creatives - pg 8.
3. Themes - pg 9.
4. Actors & Characters - pg 11.
5. Theatre Styles - pg 14.
6. Script Excerpts - pg 15.
7. Language - pg 17.
8. The Playwright - pg 18.
9. Elements of Theatre Composition - pg 21.
10. Direction - pg 23.
11. Set Design & Acting Space - pg 25.
12. Costume Design - pg 27.
13. Lighting Design - pg 28.
14. Sound Design - pg 29.
15. Actor-Audience Relationship - pg 31.
16. Revision Questions - pg 32.

**Notes prepared by Michele McNamara**  
**E: [mish.mcnamara@gmail.com](mailto:mish.mcnamara@gmail.com)**



# 1. Synopsis

It's the 7th of February 2009 - forever known in Australia's history as 'Black Saturday' - and John and Barb Robinson prepare to celebrate their youngest son Tom's 18th Birthday.

The arrival of Matthew, their eldest from the city, along with his girlfriend Abbey, kicks off the celebrations, but the simmering tension between the two brothers starts to build as the morning progresses.

Tom, due to start Uni in Melbourne, hopes that he can move in with Matthew. John and Barb are against Tom moving in with local 'troublemaker' Danny Miller, but Matthew believes it's best for Tom to be free from the stifling safety net of family so that he can start to find his own place in the world.

As the temperature rises outside, so do tensions within the home. During the celebrations it's revealed that Tom, along with Danny and his other mates have been in trouble with the police for lighting fires. In an outburst of anger and frustration Tom reveals a deep family secret - that he knows that his brother Matthew is adopted. Tom storms off, out into the heat. Unable to comprehend the shaky foundations of his past and the betrayal of his parents, a broken Matthew leaves the house too.

John, Barb and Abbey wonder about the boy's safety when they learn the wind has changed and the family home is now in the line of the approaching bushfire. Matthew returns and urges that they all have to evacuate now - that there's a fire already on the property. With little time to spare, John, Barb, Matthew and Abbey leave.

Tom's whereabouts are unknown until a few days later when he's arrested for suspicion of lighting the fire on his parent's property. The police enquiry starts to reveal that it was in fact Matthew who lit the fire, which started at the base of an old pine tree (a tree that Matthew had planted with John when he was little) in an impulsive moment full of pain and confusion following the reveal of his adoption.

Matthew is then faced with the ultimate decision when one of the police officers, a friend from his past, offers to make sure that the evidence they have against Tom is all that's put forward. Matthew is left to decide between letting his brother take the fall or confessing to his own actions.

Almost a year later we discover that Matthew is now in prison for his crime. He and Tom begin to rebuild their relationship while John and Barb try to rebuild their home.



Source: Canva



## 2. Cast & Creatives



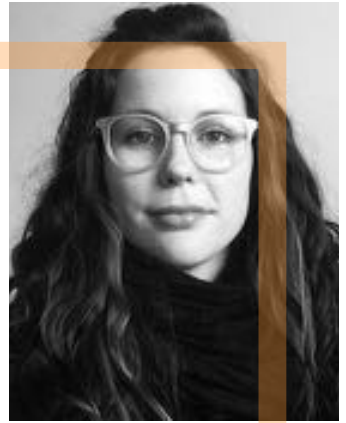
**Playwright**  
Fleur Murphy



**Director**  
Tom Royce-Hampton



**Producer**  
Fiona Stafford



**Set & Costume**  
Chantal Marks



**Lighting**  
Clare Springett



**Sound**  
Max Royce-Hampton



**'John'**  
Geoff Paine



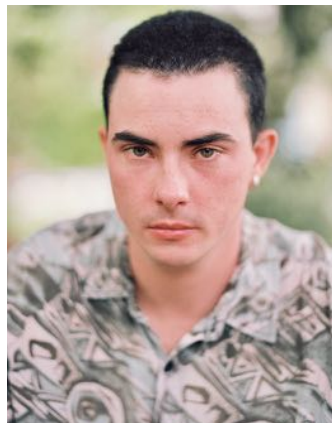
**'Barb'**  
Carole Patullo



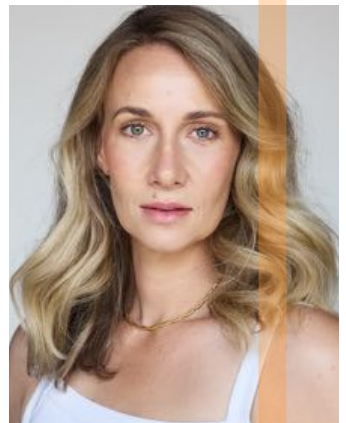
**'Matthew'**  
Martin Blum



**'Abbey'**  
Sonya Soares



**'Tom'**  
Kurt Pimblett

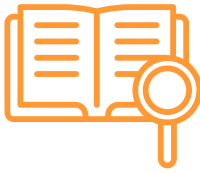


**'Voice'**  
Eleanor Webster

**Fight & Intimacy Director - Nigel Poulton**  
**Stage Manager - Kaite Head**  
**Assistant Stage Manager - Holly Anderson**

[Click here to read the team's bios](#)





### 3. Themes

#### **FAMILY LOYALTY & DUTY**

Loyalty is having a strong feeling of faithfulness to your family. Duty to your family is one step further; a commitment, an obligation, and a responsibility to ensure they are safe and well. As family is a strong theme in HEARTH we can look for signs in the script of both loyalty and duty in the actions of each of the family members. The characters in the play are complex and although they belong to one family the individuals each have their own personalities and motivations.



## **ACTIVITY: Unpacking the family unit**

To understand the family unit (John, Barb, Matthew and Tom) it is important to find evidence in the script that indicates significant moments for each character in terms of their place and function in the family. Make notes in your script where you find evidence to support this. Once you have identified examples answer the following questions:

- a). Analyse how the character of John demonstrated the theme of family loyalty and/or duty to family (Choose TWO examples).
- b). Analyse how the character of Barb demonstrated the theme of family loyalty and/or duty to one of her sons (Choose TWO examples).
- c). Analyse TWO significant moments in Matthew and Tom's relationship that demonstrate the theme of family loyalty and/or duty to one of her sons (Choose TWO examples).
- d). Does Tom always demonstrate loyalty or duty to his brother?
- e). Does Matthew always demonstrate loyalty or duty to his brother?

#### **COMMUNICATION**

Families in bushfire prone areas live with the real threat of coming face to face with a fire; an anxiety that is heightened every summer as temperatures soar above 40° Celsius. The family home can become a site of tension and relationships can be strained. Thinking about the family dynamics, consider why Murphy might have chosen to use this natural backdrop.



Image from rehearsals, May 2022



## ACTIVITY: Family dynamics

Returning to the observations you were asked to make in Part A, page 21, complete these questions individually and discuss them with your peers:

- Do all the members of the family have a voice? Does it appear that anyone feels that their voice does not count?
- Does Tom tell anyone about the peer pressure he is experiencing?
- What drives Tom to divulge the family secret?
- Once the family secret is divulged do members of the family talk about it or does the revelation create a wider gap in communication?
- How might a family be affected by keeping a significant secret?
- How might this ever-present threat impact on a family unit?

### THE ENVIRONMENT: BUSHFIRES & CLIMATE CHANGE

The National Museum of Australia states:

*'The lasting damage of the Black Saturday bushfires has been the personal cost to individuals, families and communities. Loss of life and injury to family and friends, loss of homes and the memories they contained, the complete alteration of familiar landscapes and the sense of foreboding that such a disaster could happen again have affected people across the fire-ravaged region.'*

You may have been somewhere when you have endured high temperatures for days on end. If not, try to imagine how that might feel. Consider what it might be like for a family or a community to live with the threat of bushfire every year. Is it possible to see connections between living in a bushfire zone and keeping secrets as we see play out in *Hearth*? This reflection will be useful for analysing the ways themes are shown through the different production areas.



## ACTIVITY: Drawing the themes together

Write a short, descriptive reflection on this topic and share your thoughts with the class.



## 4. Actors & Characters



It is important to distinguish an ACTOR from the CHARACTER they are playing. If, for example you are asked to analyse a character, you will look at the character the playwright has presented in the script and how that character's purpose and motivation work with and support the narrative. On the other hand if you are asked to analyse an actor, you will look at the decisions that the actor and director have made to lift that character off the page and place them physically, mentally and emotionally on stage. This will relate to how they have employed expressive skills and understood their character's purpose, motivation etc. This is a significant distinction that will underpin your ability to analyse and evaluate actors and characters in your VCE studies.

### CHARACTER LIST:

**JOHN** – Aged early 60's. He's a builder by trade and recently retired. He had lived in the Kinglake area all his life.

**BARB** – Aged 60. Originally grew up in Seymour. She studied as a nurse but focused on being a stay-at-home mum once she had children. She is in the very early stages of undiagnosed dementia.



**MATTHEW** – Around 35 years old. The adopted son of John and Barb. He lives in Brighton with his girlfriend Abbey. He has acquired a PHD in Biotechnology and although his job isn't specified in the script, I imagine he might work as a cellular biologist.

**TOM** – Turning 18. The biological son of John and Barb. Wants to be a photographer. Is about to leave home to go to University in Melbourne.

**ABBEY** – Around 35 years old. Not from Australia. She came to Australia to attend University. She is a gallery assistant and lives with her boyfriend Matthew in Brighton.

**THE VOICE** – Around 35 years old. Police Officer, Senior Sergeant Lauren Reid. She has lived in Kinglake all her life.



Images from rehearsals, May 2022



## ACTIVITY: How can we see and describe a character

Make notes for each character under the headings in the left column. As you do this, remind yourself how each element works to demonstrate character. Hint: Do this simultaneously on the board as a whole class brainstorm and on your laptop where cells of the table can expand to fit as much information as you need.

	JOHN	BARB	TOM	MATTHEW	ABBEY	VOICE
Facial expression						
Voice						
Gesture						
Movement						
Stillness/ Silence						
Function/ Purpose						
Objective						
Motivation						
Status						
Traits						
Focus <i>More details in following section</i>						

## FOCUS

When we speak of focus in a performance we refer where the audience is being encouraged to put their attention. It can be done through dialogue, through design, particularly lighting design and through movement. An audience may be asked to focus on a character, a situation or a particular part of the stage. Focus can also be drawn through moments of silence which can be very powerful. Hearth takes advantage of the dramatic element of silence in a number of ways and at particular points of the script.



## ACTIVITY: How can we talk about focus?

There is an old concept: 'silence speaks volumes'. With that in mind:

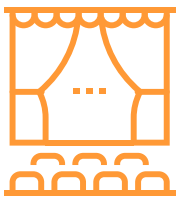
- What do you think happens for the characters in moments of silence?
- What do you think happens for an audience in moments of silence?
- Thinking about the cast and creatives, who do you think is responsible for presenting us with these moments of silence?
- Are there clues in the script that indicate moments of silence?
- Are you able draw a link between focus and silence? If so, give an example from the script.

Add your observations to the table on the previous page.

*Note: You will make a similar table for the Elements of Theatre Composition. You may like to use some examples of 'focus' when you discuss 'emphasis'..just keep it in mind.*



Production image by Cameron Grant



## 5. Theatre Styles

The theatre style of *Hearth* is eclectic; a mixture of styles often seen in contemporary plays.

Realism gives the impression of 'natural' life as we know it. It sounds and looks familiar to us even if we can see clearly that the kitchen table on stage is only there to give us an impression of 'real' life.

*Hearth* also contains scenes that are written as monologue which are designed to be addressed to the audience. Monologues are a way for a character to give the audience a sense of how they are feeling at that moment and therefore can communicate a measure of psychological insight. A lyrical monologue refers to words that have a musical quality. These words are often written as poetry, containing shorter lines that are deftly chosen by the playwright to get to the heart of the subject matter and the emotions behind that dramatic moment.



### ACTIVITY: Writing about style

Before you begin to analyse the play in terms of the conventions of realism and the use of lyrical monologue:

- Work as a class to come up with a concise description of realism.
- Discuss where you experienced realism in *Hearth*.
- Did the actors demonstrate the conventions of realism?
- Did you see realism in any of the design elements in the play?
- Identify the lyrical monologues in *Hearth*. Where do they take place? Find an example of where the expression becomes lyrical, or musical.
- Is there anything that is striking about the lyrical text? How does it differ from the realism in other scenes?

Working as a class provides you an opportunity to find the words you need to describe, discuss, analyse and evaluate theatre styles.

#### **Individual task: Analysing and evaluating the use of theatre style.**

HINT: Remind yourself the definition of allegory, metaphor and symbolism and consider the themes of *Hearth* that you discussed earlier. Perhaps you can draw them together as you answer the following questions.

- Analyse the elements of Realism that were seen in the presentation of *Hearth*.
- Evaluate how ONE theatre style was utilised in the play in performance.
- Evaluate how ONE actor worked within TWO theatre styles in the play in performance.
- Evaluate the effect of the different theatre styles on the creation of TWO different worlds within the play.
- Evaluate the presentation of the pine tree in the presentation of *Hearth*. Was the presentation as strong as the description in the script?
- Analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the metaphor of the threat of bush fire in *Hearth*.
- Analyse the symbolism within the set design and discuss how it relates to the themes of *Hearth*.



## ACTIVITY: Playing the scene

Allocate the roles of Barb, John, Abbey and Matthew. Read this scene aloud and try to decipher who you are talking to and who is answering you.

### SCENE 6

*The Robinson home, around 9.30am. A few balloons and streamers have been put up. Tom is playing a video game. Matthew and Abbey have arrived; Barb and John have greeted them at the door. The radio is still on in the background.*

BARB: My hair is a mess.

JOHN: Quick close the door -

ABBEY: Wish I'd bought my jacket -

BARB: I'm still in my olds. / These things...

ABBEY: I mean, I'm a winter person, but this is nippy.

BARB: You can borrow a cardi. We'll turn it down... or up?

ABBEY: Oh, I'll survive.

*Barb goes to adjust the aircon temperature.*

JOHN: It's nice to finally meet you.

ABBEY: This is a beautiful house.

JOHN: Thank you.

BARB: It was on 16! -

ABBEY: So much character -

BARB: I didn't know it could go so low.

MATTHEW: Dad built it.

ABBEY: Truly amazing. It's kind of got a rustic-gothic minimalist craftsman vibe.

JOHN: Built it in '68...

-

BARB: *(To Matthew)* You're looking well. You look well.

MATTHEW: Mum...

BARB: *(To Abbey)* You must be a good cook? / He's looking well...

ABBEY: God, no. I'm hopeless in the kitchen.

---

After the reading discuss:

- How does it feel to experience that scene yourself?
- Which lines are familiar to you and make you feel as though you are in a family gathering setting?



## ACTIVITY: Playing a contrasting scene

Nominate two students to play Tom and Matthew in this scene.

### SCENE 11

MATTHEW: What do / you do?

TOM: Whatta you do if you know something?

MATTHEW: Do something that breaks the world that you know.

TOM: That will erase -

MATTHEW: Tear down -

TOM: Crumble the foundations -

MATTHEW: The core of all you hold dear -

TOM: And expose, what?

MATTHEW: Expose... A fraud? -

TOM: A fuckin' fraud.

Do you know?

MATTHEW: I don't know what to do.

TOM: Do you know?

-

MATTHEW: I don't' know what to say.

---

Reflection: Write then share

- How would you describe this exchange between the brothers?
- Contrast and compare the two scenes.
- Would you say these scenes are 'low stakes' or 'high stakes' situations?







## 7. Language

### VERBAL & NON-VERBAL

In a play verbal communication is the words spoken by the characters, in other words the script. The script provides the verbal communication in the form of dialogue. The script will tell a character what to say but usually does not tell the actor how to say the words. To analyse non-verbal communication we need to consider the relationship between the script, the director and the actor. The actor, working with the director, creates the scenes where the communication is non-verbal and decisions are made as to how that character might react or respond at that moment. Non-verbal communication also occurs through design and we will address that in later sections of this booklet. The table below might help you identify the difference between the two forms.

Verbal language	Non-verbal language
Dialogue from scripts	Silence
Style (formal or colloquial)	Space (proximity to others)
Pace (measured or reactive)	Facial expressions
Tone (e.g. authoritative, casual, angry etc.)	Gestures (e.g. caring arm around shoulders)
Accent	Movement (e.g. he storms out of the room)



## ACTIVITY: Talking about language

As a class, **identify** and **add** any other features of verbal or non-verbal language to this table.

### Individual task:

- Analyse the verbal language of Barb and John and discuss how the actors used non-verbal language as well to convey the intended meanings of the script.
- Analyse the verbal language of Matthew and Tom and discuss how the actors used non-verbal language as well to convey the intended meanings of the script.



## 8. The Playwright



# ACTIVITY: Creating the world of the play

Read this excerpt from playwright Fleur Murphy where she talks about her personal connection to the country and home and complete the question that follows.

### Murphy writes...

*In late February of 2009 I drove up the Hume Highway, from Melbourne to my hometown of Mooropna, which is situated pretty much smack-bang in the centre of Victoria. My memory of that first drive post Black Saturday is the feeling of passing through multiple worlds. The landscape changed from outer suburban housing sprawl, to pockets of thirsty farmland, to the black, charred skeletons of trees that stood, broken, against a blue sky. As the months passed, the blackened skeletons started to sprout vibrant green shoots and leaves. Years later, driving up the Hume, if you look closely you can still see hiding amongst the regrowth, the black arms of dead trees. They reach up and out - reminding us that there is, was, trauma here; that the scars of that event are very much still part of the land and the community that lives there.*

*HEARTH, for me, truly is about home; as a literal structure, an ideal, as a question. What makes it – blood, love or law? And what breaks it?*

*Although HEARTH is set in the Kinglake area with a fictional family, there is so much more of my own upbringing and home-life seeded deep within the text. HEARTH is an interrogation of the delicate relationships within a family, all set against the backdrop of an undeniable force of nature – an approaching bushfire.*

*Kinglake is a small country town with a population of around 1500 and therefore growing up in a small country town myself, I can understand the ecology of a place like that even on an unconscious level. It's a feeling of being in a bit of a bubble, despite the expanse of sprawling land that surrounds you. You don't know many people, but you also know all of the people in your town. Your life-experience lens can feel extremely narrow. What you know can feel microscopic, particularly when compared with what's out there in the 'big, wide world'. The fear of what is beyond that bubble can be paralysing. Many things can threaten that bubble too – for HEARTH though, that threat is two things; – an unavoidable force of nature, an approaching bushfire – and, a family secret.*



Playwright, Fleur Murphy  
Image by Andrew Morley



Production image by Cameron Grant



## ACTIVITY: Forshadowing

A dramatic device used in *Hearth* is foreshadowing which is used to indicate a future event.

### **Small group task:**

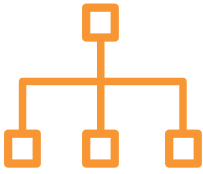
Identify moments when foreshadowing is used with the characters of Tom or Matthew. Was there a sense that the tension between them might lead to future strife? Share your thoughts with the class.

### **Individual task:**

- Evaluate how Murphy conveys this world through TWO different characters (Choose from Barb, John, Matthew or Tom).
- Analyse ways in which Murphy's experiences informed the design of *Hearth*.



Production image by Cameron Grant



## 9. Elements of Theatre Composition

ELEMENTS OF THEATRE (definitions taken from VCAA Theatre Studies Design 2019 – 2024)

<b>Cohesion</b>	<b>Motion</b>	<b>Rhythm</b>	<b>Emphasis</b>	<b>Contrast</b>	<b>Variation</b>
<p>Cohesion is the unity and balance of various aspects of the interpretation.</p> <p>Where or when did you notice cohesion?</p>	<p>Motion is the movement or implied movement of actors and design features in the theatre space.</p> <p>(Think position, pattern, arrangement, proportion and spatial flow)</p> <p>What did you notice about how the actors OR a part of the design moved or seemed to shift?</p>	<p>Rhythm is the pace, timing and tempo within the interpretation.</p> <p>When did you notice a rhythm in the play? Where some parts distinctly different in pace, timing or tempo?</p>	<p>Emphasis is the aspects of the interpretation are given a particular focus, importance or prominence.</p> <p>Think of examples where there was a focus on a certain aspect of the design OR certain character/s.</p>	<p>Contrast is the juxtaposition of seemingly different or opposing aspects or qualities within the interpretation.</p> <p>(Think light and shade, smooth and rocky...what other contrasting qualities can you think of?)</p> <p>Try to think of an example of contrast within the interpretation.</p>	<p>Variation is the changes to the dynamics of the interpretation.</p> <p>(Think tension, conflict, intensity, energy and use of the space – tight or open)</p> <p>Using the examples about try to identify some variations within the interpretation.</p>
<p>Your notes...</p>					



## ACTIVITY: Analysing the elements

### Whole group task:

Take some time to consider the above table. Using this tool you can keep track of any information related to the Elements of Theatre Composition so that you have them on hand to help you with your SAC and end of year examination.

### Individual task:

Analyse and evaluate the application of TWO elements of theatre composition in interpreting a script (remember to give detailed examples from the play in performance). Note: This question can be repeated using different elements revision purposes.



Production images by Cameron Grant





## 10. Direction

A theatre director has a key role in the production of a play. They study the script and research the subject matter before arriving at an interpretation of the script that will translate to the stage. In the production of *Hearth*, Tom Royce-Hampton was the artistic driver for the production team, collaborating with the playwright, designers and cast members throughout the process.

### **INTERVIEW WITH TOM ROYCE-HAMPTON:**

#### **How did you utilise the acting space?**

*The quick-fire movement from scene to scene in *Hearth* demands that the space is able to represent multiple environments, real and imagined, in a very short space of time. With that in mind, actors were asked to work in defined spaces throughout the course of the play, allowing for the perceived space to shrink and expand with each scene. You will note that while there is a designated space in the centre of the stage (which is where the scenes in the house take place) there are times when the actors explore the space outside this area, and other times when they occupy only a small part of the stage and move very little. In doing this we are attempting to let the audience's imagination fill in the image, rather than present everything and thereby create laborious scene changes which would work in counterpoint to the text.*

#### **When rehearsing dialogue for 'kitchen-sink' scenes what techniques did you use with the actors?**

*When building scenes in which interpersonal relationships sit at the core of the characters' interactions, there is much to be discussed regarding aspects of each of the characters and their histories - both individual and together. This discussion, in concert with an interrogation of the text (punctuation, choice of syntax and rhythmic beats), and analysis of the characters objectives and obstacles in each scene, helps the director and actors discover the function of the scene in the context of the story. This provides a framework by which to view the work and determine if a choice is supporting the narrative or not. If ever the scene feels like it is missing anything, the answer is often discovered by drilling down into an analysis of the text, or the characters given circumstances.*

#### **What was your approach to stillness, silence and non-verbal movement?**

*There are distinct moments in the text of non-verbal dialogue. Playwright, Fleur Murphy has often signposted these with a "--" in the script, a moment where a character is saying something physically (with their body language or gesture) rather than vocally. Despite there being no verbal dialogue, it is important that the character continues to pursue an objective and therefore there is the need to discuss what this objective is and "what" a character is saying in these moments. Stillness, silence and non-verbal dialogue (movement) must be active, and grounded in the context of the scene and the character's given circumstances.*

#### **How did the projections enhance the scenic design of *Hearth*?**

*We are no longer using projection. As the scenic design evolved it was determined that this was no longer in support of themes of the text and instead sound design will be further utilised to evoke the sense of archived interviews.*



Director, Tom Royce-Hampton  
Image by Andrew Morley



Production image by Cameron Grant



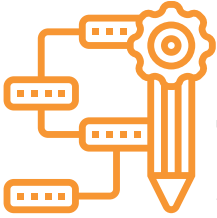
## ACTIVITY: The Director's eye

When you first read the script of *Hearth* you probably developed ideas about what you might see in the performance. It is now time to consider your response to what you **actually** saw on stage.

Given the change of set design, analyse the decisions made by the director regarding the use of the acting space.

- Evaluate the decision to eliminate projection from the production.
- Analyse ways in which the director manipulated the non-verbal language to convey the intended meanings of the script. (Consider what happened when nothing was said. What did you as an audience member learn at those times?)
- Analyse ways in which the director worked with the actors on the verbal language of the script. (Consider the family scenes when everyone was talking at once. Then consider those scenes where very little was said).
- Evaluate how the director worked with ONE design area (set, costume, sound or lighting) to create the atmosphere of the play.



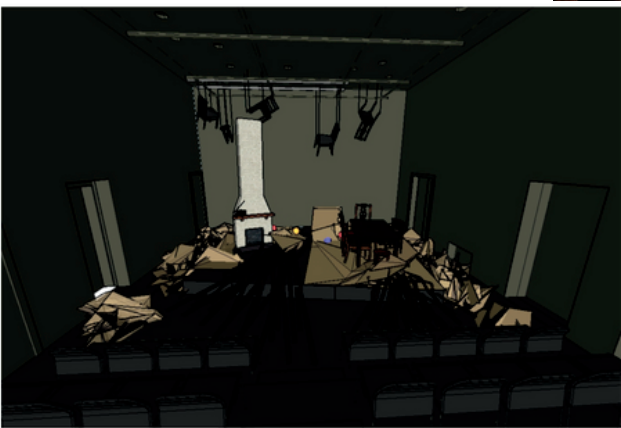


## 11. Set Design

The set of *Hearth* contained some realistic elements as well as some symbolic elements. While communicating non-verbal information about the production, the set design also creates an atmosphere for the audience. Look back through Part A (pg 27-30) of the notes to remind you about different aspects of the set design.

### EVOLUTION OF THE SET DESIGN

Below are images of how the set was realised for production. Note the differences. This gives you an understanding of how a concept can alter as it is put into practise.



Above: Set Design concept images  
by Chantal Marks

Right: Production images by Cameron Grant

As the set evolved, director Tom Royce-Hampton also made changes to the way the actors interacted with the set. He states:

*"The actors play an integral part in creating the changing environment of the set – from the initial Robinson home, to the rubble and remains of the house after the fire. At key moments throughout the play, the actors manipulate aspects of the set to convey this change. This is done by causing key parts of the set (the hanging paper 'columns' surrounding the outer area of the playing space) to either fall or be torn down. This device also creates an increasing amount of debris on the stage, thereby also fulfilling the function of alluding to the detritus that one might see in the aftermath of a bushfire. There was a deep interrogation of whether the actors inhabit their characters in these moments or whether they are simply performing a function on stage simply as an actor. Which do you think they are?"*



## ACTIVITY: Non-verbal communication through design

Analyse the set of *Hearth*.

- Describe the colours and materials that the designer has used? Do these colours and materials have an effect on the general atmosphere of the set?
- How did the actors interact with the set? Why do you think the director might have wanted them to be involved in this way?
- Discuss how the director's vision was realised through set design. (What worked for you and what response did you have to what was presented?)
- Was the acting space defined by set pieces or did the actors define the acting space?

### RESEARCH: Symbolic design

Analyse the symbolic elements of the set design for *Hearth*. To do this, search the internet for 'symbolic set design' + images. Find common features of symbolic set design and describe the elements of the set design for *Hearth* that are symbolic, offering suggestions on what they might mean. Keep these notes for later.

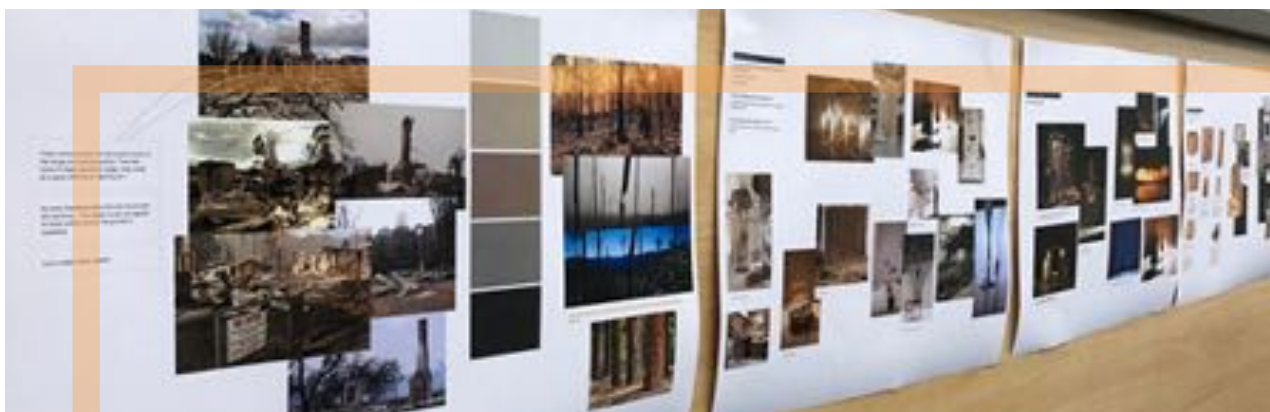


Image of mood & concept images from Chantal Marks' design presentation, May 2022



## 12. Costume Design

The choice of costumes gives the audience non-verbal cues about the character and the world of the play. To analyse costume design, as for any design area, it is necessary to find the words to 1) describe what you saw, 2) how the decisions about the costumes made you feel and 3) how the choices were related to the context of the play. We will divide up these activities:



### ACTIVITY: Costume 1, 2 & 3

#### ACTIVITY: Divide and Conquer (1)

Divide up the characters in *Hearth* between students in the class and come up with concise descriptions of their costume. Share the information with your peers and then make your own notes that concisely describe the costumes of each character.

#### ACTIVITY: Analyse how the world of *Hearth* is shown through costume design (2 & 3)

Using the descriptions you created above, now consider what the costumes communicated to the audience. You can choose to do this for TWO characters and later, when revising, you could prepare TWO more.



Production image by Cameron Grant



## 13. Lighting Design

Lighting designers are multi-skilled as their work involves both scientific and artistic challenges. Lighting design involves telling a story by helping audiences know what and where to put their focus. Lighting design is more than physically lighting a stage so people can see the play. Design has the ability to build atmosphere, elicit emotions and create drama. Springett collaborated with other members of the creative team to create the lighting design for *Hearth*.

While digital planning is possible, the finer points of the lighting design are often the last piece of the production. This is because it cannot be fully executed until the whole team, set and costumes are installed and tested in the theatre during the production bump-in and technical and dress rehearsals. Discuss with your peers who in the team may have had collaborative relationships with lighting designer, Springett.



Production image by Cameron Grant

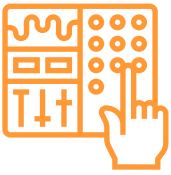
The following may help you describe the lighting in *Hearth*:

- Colour temperature is a measure of the 'warmth' or 'coolness' of light sources or colours. In terms of analysis this can relate to the atmosphere on stage or the tension between characters. A warm lighting state is often used in realistic scenes and a cool state can help with the atmosphere of more dramatic scenes.
- Lights can be specific e.g. a spot or a downlight with hard edges or a sharp focus or they can provide a general wash of light over the playing area.
- Light effects can be produced by a gobo; a thin metal plate etched to produce a design and then projected by a profile spotlight. Again, these can be specifically focused or can provide a general wash, often on the floor area giving the effect of a textured surface.
- Haze which is often confused with 'smoke' on stage can maximise the effects of lighting and helps the audience see the beams of light.



### ACTIVITY: Describe lighting design

Analyse how the lighting design in *Hearth* worked with the set and acting space.



## 14. Sound Design & Theatre Technology

### SOUND DESIGN

Sound design and various theatre technologies are a means of communicating information non-verbally, yet incredibly effectively. The aspects of design create atmosphere and help an audience enter into the environment where the characters exist.

Describing an atmosphere can be extremely challenging. It helps to first identify what was physically happening e.g. recorded sound, live sound, projection etc. and then link that with the emotions you felt. Sound designer, Max Royce-Hampton describes how he feels and approaches creating the music and sonic elements for *Hearth*:

#### From Max Royce-Hampton...

*"Playwright Fleur Murphy establishes two disparate environments in the play; the family home and the clearing.*

*In discussions with the director regarding the sound quality of *The Clearing*, it was decided that we would attempt to discover a light, almost mystical approach. Somewhere between the feeling one might have when finding themselves deep in nature or the moments between waking life and sleep. To achieve this there was a conscious effort to create a bed of sound that in its expression gave the quality of space and movement, and focusing on higher frequency sounds.*

*By contrast, for the home, as someone who grew up in a family for whom the consistent sound of the radio was an everyday companion, it was natural to draw on this as a point of reference. There is a comfort in the consistent voice of the radio and what it brings to an otherwise empty household. With Barb and John on the brink of becoming empty nesters, and the given circumstances of the fire and the need for content updates, the radio was the perfect choice for a home environment and a subtle signifier of the changing environments and events to come.*

*The objective in building the sound design has been to create a sparse, eerie environment for the actors to dwell in, a constantly evolving and tense environment combining natural and highly processed sonic elements. This sound world aims to evoke a meeting of the mind (memory and dream) and the physical, through the application of introspective timbres and subtle layering techniques. The sound design draws on an exploration of natural sounds, effected organic sounds mixed with that of air movement and space... lots of space. There is a looming presence of fire used throughout, however this is mixed to be predominantly ambiguous and subtle, only coming to the fore at key moments. Sounds of wind and bird calls and an array of organic textures have been represented and abstracted through various techniques, while lower frequencies have been used to suggest the slow persistent growth of the Australian bushland."*



Image supplied

## THEATRE TECHNOLOGY: PROJECTION

Often times, as a theatre work evolves, there are changes in focus that affect design decisions. With *Hearth*, the concept was to use projection to create the appearance of a pine tree.

As the scenic design of *Hearth* evolved (see SET DESIGN section above) it was determined that projection was no longer in support of themes of the text. This led to a new focus on sound design which actually allowed more context to be given without the need for projection. Additionally sound is further utilised to evoke the sense of archived interviews with "The Voice" in the play.



## ACTIVITY: Design - bringing it all together

Transfer your thoughts and ideas about SET, COSTUME, SOUND, LIGHTING design as well as into a table. Using a table helps you organise your work and you can cut and paste from previous tasks. You can also edit or add as you go. This will also be very helpful as you revise for your end of year examination.

Analyse the design of HEARTH	Looking at the design in Education Pack Part A, what did you <i>expect</i> to see/hear?	What <i>did</i> you see/hear?	How did it make you feel?	Did it help you understand the context of the play?
Set Design				
Lighting Design				
Costume Design				
Sound Design				

### Questions:

- Choose ONE design area and compare the initial vision to what was realised on stage.
- Choose ONE design role and analyse the interrelationships they developed with others in the production team to realise the play on stage.



## 15. Actor-Audience Relationship

Audiences are not all the same. For example, the audience who sees *Hearth* in the city will likely have different experiences depending upon how much they have travelled around the state of Victoria. If members of the audience have only ever lived in the city it may feel very foreign to see life in a country town. If they have had a vacation in a regional area or travelled by car or train into rural areas they may already have a sense of how country life is different to city life.

Audiences in regional areas will likely view this work through a different lens; a strikingly familiar scenario of existing with one foot in the bush and the other as part of a regional community; one who remains vigilant to impending fire and flood and bands together in times of need yet is not without the same pressures in terms of relationships, tension and the consequences of family secrets behind closed doors.



### ACTIVITY: Communicating through performance

#### Discussion

- Analyse ways the director enabled the audience to construct meaning through the use of space. (Consider the ways the director arranged the actors on stage at different points in the play.)
- As an audience member were you able to understand the transition between the family scenes and the scenes in the clearing? What were the ways in which this was achieved? (E.g. use of lighting, sound, acting space etc.?)

#### Individual activity

- Analyse how TWO actors used their acting and performance skills to convey their character in the play.
- Analyse and evaluate the establishment and maintenance of actor–audience relationships (choose TWO actors and give TWO different examples).





## 16. Revision Questions

***These can be used to revise for your end of year examination.***

1. Analyse how ONE actor conveyed their character's objectives and motivations in the performance?
2. Choose a specific dramatic moment in *Hearth*. Describe it in one sentence. Analyse how ONE actor used acting skills in this specific moment to interpret either the verbal or non-verbal language of the play?
3. Analyse and evaluate how the use of ONE theatre style worked with the element of motion in your selected production.
4. Evaluate how ONE actor worked with ONE design area to show variation in their character.
5. Analyse how the director developed cohesion through the use of TWO design areas.
6. Identify an objective and motivation for ONE character in the play. Analyse how ONE moment in the script might have demonstrated their objective and motivation.
7. Analyse how ONE actor used ONE acting skill to realise the status of their character during one specific moment in the play? (Hint: specify scene at the beginning).
8. How did ONE directorial decision contribute to the realisation of a particular scene (Hint: specify scene at the beginning).
9. Analyse how acting and design were interrelated in one scene (Hint: specify the scene at the beginning).
10. Choose ONE production role and analyse the application of that role in developing the written script for performance.
11. Evaluate how the set designer contributed to the effective use of acting space.
12. Analyse and evaluate ways in which the contexts of a written script were interpreted creatively and imaginatively through design.
13. Analyse the ways ONE designer worked with the theatre styles utilised in the production.

*Note: These questions can be repeated using different actors, characters, design areas or elements of theatre composition.*





**Hearth Education Consultant**

Michele McNamara

BA (Drama), Dip. Education, Grad Dip Creative Arts (Drama), MA (Drama)

Artistic Director Illumi-Nation Theatre

<https://illuminationtheatre.org/>

A VCE Theatre, Dance and Drama specialist, Michele has prepared these notes to support teachers and students. You may choose to do some or all of the activities and vary them to suit your personal circumstances. Further support to prepare for the end of year examinations is available by contacting Michele direct on [mish.mcnamara@gmail.com](mailto:mish.mcnamara@gmail.com)

