Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON

by Matt Cameron

Performance Notes for Educators

Prepared by Katie Stewart, Amy Bradney-George and Rebecca Smith
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Overview

The purpose of this document is to provide Queensland educators with information and resources for Queensland Theatre Company’s production of Ruby Moon. The activities and resources contained in this document are designed as the starting point for educators in developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Katie Stewart is seconded to Queensland Theatre Company from Education Queensland as an Education Liaison Officer.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON

by Matt Cameron

Artistic Team

Joseph Mitchell    Director
Simone Romaniuk    Designer
Ben Hughes        Lighting Designer
Brett Collery   Composer/Sound Designer
Melissa Agnew     Voice Coach
Niki-J Witt   Movement Consultant
Irene Bartlett  Singing Coach
Sophia Dalton  Stage Manager
Luke Campbell  Assistant Stage Manager
Amy Bradney-George  Dramaturgy Research Secondment

Cast

Damien Cassidy  Ray/ Sid/ Sonny Jim/ Professor
Georgina Symes  Sylvie/ Dulcie/ Veronica/ Dawn
Queensland Theatre Company

PATRON
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, AC
Governor of Queensland

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD
Dr Kate Foy (Chair)
Haydon Coles
Wendy Edmond
Penny Everingham
Jenny Galligan (State Government Representative)
Barbara Houlihan
Prof Ian O’Connor
Terry O’Dwyer
Simon Porter
Sally Vickery

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Michael Gow

GENERAL MANAGER
Libby Anstis

Executive Assistant:
Belinda Park

Artistic Development Manager: Delia O’Hara
Artistic Development Coordinator: Erica Fryberg
Associate Director: Jon Halpin
2008 Emerging Artists:
Tim Dashwood
Andrea Moor
Georgia Symes

Youth & Education Manager: Joseph Mitchell
Education Liaison Officer: Katie Stewart*
*on secondment from Education Queensland
Youth & Education Officer: Rebecca Smith

Finance Manager: Nicola Gregory
Assistant Accountant: Roxane Eden
Assistant Accountant: Robin Koski

Marketing Manager: Bronwyn Klepp
Marketing Coordinator: Fiona Skelton
Publicity & Communications Coordinator: Samara Kelly
Ticketing Systems & Services Coordinator: Dimity Vowles
Ticketing Officer: Maggie Holmes
Promotions: Jodie Gordon
Receptionist: Amanda Doellinger

Operations Manager: Kellie May
Operations Coordinator: Jenny Glover
Operations Officer: Roxanne Lorenz

Corporate Development Manager: Nikki Porter
Corporate Development Coordinator: Helen O’Rourke

Production Manager: Michael Kaempff
Technical Coordinator: Daniel Maddison
Senior Stage Manager: Peter Sutherland
Head of Workshop: Peter Sands
Company Carpenter/Head Mechanist: John Pierce
Apprentice Carpenter: Fred Lulifitz
Head of Wardrobe: Gayle MacGregor
Head Cutter: Madeline Taylor
Wardrobe Trainee: Isobel Hutton

FOUNDBING DIRECTOR
Alan Edwards, AM, MBE (1925 – 2003)

Queensland Theatre Company is a member of Live Performance Australia.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON

by Matt Cameron

How to Act at the Theatre (when you’re not on stage)

We recommend that you read through the following points so you get maximum entertainment value when you come along to one of Queensland Theatre Company’s productions.

➢ Be in your seat five minutes before the show starts
➢ Food and drinks are not permitted in the theatre
➢ Be respectful to other audience members
➢ TURN OFF all electrical devices before entering the theatre
➢ Save note taking and discussion for AFTER the show
➢ Feel free to laugh, cry and applaud
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON

by Matt Cameron

Synopsis

In picture-perfect Flaming Tree Grove, a little girl called Ruby sets off to visit her Grandma at the end of the cul-de-sac, but she never arrives. When a strange package appears on her parent’s doorstep, Ray and Sylvie Moon are prompted to interview the various quirky characters in their street.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS — Ruby Moon

Themes and Ideas

- Mystery
- The grieving process
- The missing child

Performance and Dramatic Elements

- Contemporary Australian drama
- Black comedy
- Multiple characters
- Fractured fairytale
- Brechtian techniques

Curriculum Connections

Ruby Moon is a contemporary fairytale that uses Brechtian and Absurdist elements to create an evocative piece of theatre. This is an excellent example of poetic and at times surreal theatre that will challenge and inspire drama classes exploring the possibilities of the form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ELO Advice

An exciting recent Australian work, Ruby Moon is suitable for Years 10 - 12. Depending on the theatre culture of the school, some Year 9 students would also engage with this work.

Venue

Bille Brown Studio, Queensland Theatre Company

Season

8 – 16 May

Teacher Briefing

None
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Collected Handouts

The articles and activities here are designed as starting points for classroom experiences that can enhance the understanding and appreciation of the play your class is about to see.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON

by Matt Cameron

About the Playwright – Matt Cameron

- An award-winning contemporary Australian playwright and screenwriter based in Melbourne.

- Matt Cameron’s plays have been produced in Australia at Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Playbox, La Mama, Griffin Theatre Company and La Boite Theatre Company as well as various other theatres across the country.

- Several of his plays have been produced in the United Kingdom, including Footprints on Water, Tear from a Glass Eye and Ruby Moon.

- Ruby Moon has also been produced in Switzerland and Japan to critical acclaim.

- Most of Matt Cameron’s plays address social expectations and perceptions. For example, in Ruby Moon we see how grief can affect relationships through the episodic neighbourhood interviews, while in Mr Melancholy he uses the interaction of three hermits to explore social isolation.

- Matt Cameron incorporates absurdism and surrealism into most of his plays, and is sometimes labelled a ‘postmodern absurdist’ for his style. His use of different dramatic techniques allows for individual interpretation of his work, supporting the postmodern idea of the audience creating meaning.

- Matt Cameron has won a Wal Cherry Play of the Year Award for Tear from a Glass Eye, an Australian National Playwrights Centre New Dramatist Award for Mr Melancholy and a British Council International New Playwriting Award for Footprints on Water.

- After winning the Australian National Playwrights Centre New Dramatist Award, Matt Cameron worked with New York Stage & Film on a New York production of Mr Melancholy.

- As well as his theatre credits, Cameron has written for television shows including SeaChange, CrashBurn and Introducing Gary Petty which he also co-created and directed.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Director’s Insight – Joseph Mitchell

What do you find appealing about this play?

The first thing I find appealing about this play is the constructed world – the façade of post WWII suburbia peeled back to reveal the dark heart of human nature right on the doorstep of a typical middle-class Australian community. Often in the picaresque novel there is a sense of journey whereby the protagonist leaves their home environment and discovers a new world full of abnormalities. In Ruby Moon the structure is picaresque but the characters remain in the world in which they exist and to me, this emphasises that the challenges which we need to deal with are part of the here and now – they are part of us – they don’t exist somewhere else.

Secondly, I’m attracted to the recurring theme of loss in the play. We all deal with loss at various stages in life and in Ruby Moon, Matt Cameron has exposed loss as an all consuming emotion which can engulf us in an absurdly selfish and darkly comic way. All the characters have lost someone or something and are struggling with the grieving process associated with loss. This is the heart of the play and the starting point for discussions about the approach to performance with the actors.

What aspects of the play have influenced your directorial vision?

A starting point for the designer and I on this play was the relationship between external and internal worlds. The world in which Ray and Sylvie live is highly constructed by themselves. The soundscape in the text is a clear example of this. There are also lines of dialogue which express this blending of worlds, for example, when Dawn says: “It’s raining inside, Mr Moon. It’s raining inside me.” Subsequently we looked at ways to incorporate objects identified with interior and exterior spaces and blend them through the space.

Another area of influence was in the stage directions which indicate that a lot of the characters are looking outwards into a streetscape. The characters are often peering out of their window frames into the frames of other people in the street, so we incorporated a range of angled frames and looked for ways to block through these frames to emphasise the idea of looking out.

Finally, I should also mention the influence of the actual characters themselves. It is the various characters which make this play work so well and I wanted to ensure that we provided the actors with the most supportive environment (in terms of spatial dynamics) to allow for them to flesh out the full potential of the archetypes presented. These characters are larger than life. To ground them in a sense of normality would contradict why they exist in the first place – which is to escape the ‘normal’ world of Ray and Sylvie (which, of course, is a very tragic one). So it was important for me to ensure that we could land the right balance in terms of supporting the heightened aspects of the multiple characters and ensure that the performance style for this approach was supported by the design.

What challenges do you think you might encounter while directing this play?

A few of the challenges we will be dealing with include:

Keeping a two-hander dynamic
A 90 minute play with two actors needs a lot of attention in regards to the dynamics of movement. To have extended sequences of two actors talking directly to one another would result in a very insular, repetitive style of staging. From the outset, we worked hard to ensure that the spatial dynamics of this play required the two actors to work in a wide variety of arrangements which continually keep the image of the play shifting along with the characters themselves.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Multiple characters
Playing multiple characters can be one of the most fun and rewarding experiences for an actor, but it is also a real challenge. Both actors play four characters each on stage as well as several unseen characters (presented as voice overs). To achieve this, we have had to schedule the rehearsal process to allow for the actors to spend a good amount of time exploring each of the various characters they are playing. As a director, I will work with them closely to ensure that each of the characters use gesture, voice and space in unique ways so that there is a sense of real transformation between each character.

The balance of trusting the script and answering questions
The play raises a lot of questions, many of which are somewhat inconclusive in terms of absolute facts – i.e. what really happened to Ruby? Often for actors, it is very important to have a sense of truth to help guide the impulsive decisions they explore in rehearsal. With this play, the script requires the actors to let go of certain truths and go with the text – this can be a very hard thing for actors to do and so should be considered as a potential challenge in rehearsal – because we all want to know the answers. So, the big challenge in rehearsal here is to build trust among the actors to be comfortable with the idea of not knowing the absolute truth about some of the characters and narrative presented in this play.

Note: Picaresque — of, relating to, suggesting, or being a type of fiction dealing with the episodic adventures of a usually roguish protagonist
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON

by Matt Cameron

Designer’s Insight — Simone Romaniuk

How did the script influence the design for props, set and costumes?

The script sets the play in a house within a supposedly ordinary suburban neighbourhood. But as the play unfolds, it becomes clear that the two characters live in a strange and disturbing, nightmarish and surreal world, based around the disappearance of their little girl.

A major element of the set is a child’s drawing depicting a happy suburban neighbourhood. The space is completely surrounded by this drawing, indicating the extent to which the missing child, Ruby, has defined the lives of Ray and Sylvie. However to emphasise the dark and nightmarish atmosphere of the script, the artwork of the happy neighbourhood is black with white linework, as though the characters are continually reliving a night of searching the neighbourhood, something the script seems to hint they have done over and over before. Once they have entered it is not possible for Ray and Sylvie to leave this space.

The main playing space is delineated by a series of angular frames, defining the ‘rooms’ that Ray and Sylvie visit. They walk through frames that could also be walls, walk around, behind and talk through the frames. The abstract nature and use of the ‘rooms’ is significant, as the script does not make it clear whether the other houses and characters that Ray and Sylvie encounter are real or imaginary until the end. As in the script, the set aims to blur the boundaries between the interior and exterior worlds inhabited by these characters.

Lighting was also an important element in conveying the gothic atmosphere of the script. The world is dark literally and metaphorically, and the use of lamps and torches adds to the feeling that for Ray and Sylvie it is always night.

On a practical level, there were certain prop and costume elements that were vital to the script, such as the Ruby dolls, the Ruby mannequin and Sylvie’s Ruby dress.

What other elements (outside the script) inspired the set?

Other elements that inspired the set were films and photography that investigate a darker side of suburbia. Many artists look at this subject, and particularly relevant to Ruby Moon’s design were David Lynch films and the photography of Gregory Crewdson, Rosemary Laing, Zarina Bhimji and Adrian Paci, among others. These artists present ordinary objects and spaces in unusual and unexpected ways, playing with interior and exterior domestic spaces, and the viewer’s interpretation of what is real and what is an illusion.

Did the use of multiple characters influence the costumes? How?

The use of multiple characters was an important consideration in the costume design. The end of the play reveals the concept of Ray and Sylvie playing ‘dress ups’ and acting out the various characters in the neighbourhood. To convey this idea, Ray and Sylvie each wear a basic costume of very ordinary, drab clothing. They then put on or two items or accessories in a much more exaggerated style or colour, to convey the archetypal characters of the spinister (apron and headscarf), clown (wig, shoes and braces), singer (wig and feather trimmed peignoir), soldier (eye patch, army jacket and crutch), babysitter (school jumper) and inventor (white coat and goggles).
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Actor’s Insight — Damien Cassidy

What is your impression of the character of Ray?

Ray is an average suburban guy. When the play opens, he is being bounced around an unending carousel of grief, displacement and guilt. He’s the scared kid on a theme park ride. Where the play leaves him is far less clear and far more interesting.

Considering the characters that you play in Ruby Moon, which one do you find the most interesting, and why?

I find Sid the most interesting. As children, we all stare around our rooms and wonder at the unseen lives of our toys. For me, Sid is a guy who never stopped doing this. He’s timeless, at once the defeated hero, the unconquerable victim and the oh-so-sad clown.

What challenges have you faced in rehearsal, particularly playing multiple characters?

For me, multi-character work of this kind, with this schedule, requires two things: boldness and flexibility. You need to bring a range of contrasting physical shapes and tempos into the room, same with the vocal qualities. Early on, be prepared to delete and reload game. But when you think you’re onto something—even if initially it seems too obvious or clichéd—stick to your guns and build on what truth you’ve found.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

**RUBY MOON**
by Matt Cameron

---

**Actor’s Insight — Georgina Symes**

**What is your impression of the character of Sylvie?**

Sylvie is a woman devastated and tormented by the past. This is due to the mystery of her daughter Ruby's disappearance. Sylvie is alienated and isolated from the world around her. She no longer works as a librarian at the school and does not want to face the world outside. Endless questions plague her consciousness. She wrestles both with herself and those in the outside world, hoping to find a logical explanation for her devastating loss. Doubt, paranoia, guilt and suspicion have taken over Sylvie. She no longer trusts or feels safe in her world. Neither the neighbours in the street or her own husband Ray. Joy and happiness have vanished as Sylvie has had to shut down emotionally to cope with the pain.

There is an unquenchable desire to investigate, uncover and mine for clues. She has become a detective. "Someone" in the street may hold the key to unlocking the mystery. All the neighbours in Flaming Tree Grove are potential suspects. So she does not ever feel relief or the ability to let go or move on. Sadly, she is especially disconnected from her husband Ray. As the years have passed memory has faded, and the lines between truth and fiction have blurred. But Ruby's ghostly memory continues to haunt. Therefore Sylvie is always unsettled.

**Considering the characters that you play in Ruby Moon, which one do you find the most interesting, and why?**

I have just started exploring the character of Dawn. She is unique. It is hard to discern her exact age. She acts sometimes like a 5-year-old, sometimes like a girl of 15. She is incredibly insecure and vulnerable. She hides her face from the world, believing that a mistake was made when she was created. She is someone I feel I want to take care of. To help her believe in and accept herself. Dawn is also a creative dreamer. Physically she seems to move at times like an unsocialised animal. Using parts of the set as her playground.

**What challenges have you faced in rehearsal, particularly playing multiple characters?**

It is always frustrating at the beginning of the rehearsal process having to hold a script in your hand! It does get in the way. Especially as one of the most exciting ways of transforming into other characters is through the physical. We are working quite fast, so it does force you to trust your intuition! I have found that Ruby Moon flows very differently to other shows I have done. This is due to the constant change in objective as I become a new character with a new point of view. But the starting points are of course the facts that are in the script. For example Dulcie— a spinster, or Veronica— a singer. We have a wonderful creative team to help us bring these characters to life. So we can see in the design sketches what they will be wearing, what props they use etc. This helps me understand how the character might move in the space around them. What physical limitations due to costume or prop or the amount of space to work in. For example, Veronica is wearing a long dress, therefore this will change the way I can move in the space.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Interview with Matt Cameron
© Playbox Education 2004

What was your initial inspiration in writing the play Ruby Moon?

To some degree I was inspired by headlines in the newspapers. Sadly those sorts of headlines are a constant, but for some reason there may have been a number of them at the time which sparked me. A missing child is a universal tragedy with a primal impact. It arouses such potent emotions in the people that it immediately affects, and then beyond that, to communities. I can read a story from the other side of the world concerning a missing child and it still has a powerful emotional effect, so empathy is not just about proximity. The challenge with Ruby Moon has been finding a way of writing a play that told a fictional story about a missing child that was distinctive because in some ways it is familiar territory.

The characters in your play are quite archetypal. Was this deliberate?

It was almost instinctive. Once I was dealing with fairytale motifs, and with archetypes so much a part of fairytale story telling, the characters just emerged and evolved naturally. When we started to examine and deconstruct them, it became evident that these archetypes are actually almost covering key forces in our society: religion, science, art, military etc. I don't remember the selection of the characters as being conscious, but it was probably about trying to make them universal. And so, like in all my plays, they're generic characters, but specifically generic. Part of it might have happened through trying to make this street, Flaming Tree Grove, emblematic of all urban and suburban streets. Of course obviously it can't capture the complexity of every realm, but it was an attempt to address a wide spectrum within the context of a very small little cul-de-sac in an unknown suburb.

One of the striking things about the play is how it touches on the notion of ‘community’ and affects of Ruby’s disappearance on that community. Do you have a sense that a community exists in this street?

I think so, although it seems a decimated community at its heart. It feels like there were always secrets in this street and part of the journey for the parents is realising that here were secrets and that they, perhaps in their innocence and naivety, weren’t aware of them. It seems their daughter Ruby, had these little hidden pockets of experiences involving the other inhabitants of the street and the parents lived in ignorant bliss.

In writing this play I ended up drawing a little map of the street so that I knew who lived next to who, where the church was, where the school was, where the little laneway at the back of the church between the houses was and all those intricacies. I didn’t envisage my own childhood neighbourhood. It was a more classic and iconic picture in my mind. What the drawing gave me was a layout, a geography, and that helped me realise how close these people all were together in terms of distance, but with realms of space between them on other levels. That’s the paradox of the suburbs. In the suburbs people live in incredibly close proximity, but often have no idea about each other. Growing up, I didn’t really know that many neighbours in the street. I thought I knew them. I knew their names, some practical details of their lives, but who really knows what’s going on behind our neighbours’ curtains?

Were there any practical themes or concepts you wished to highlight in the play Ruby Moon?

On some level, although it’s probably obscure, I felt the play was about the prevailing fear of our times. I was trying to get beyond the fear of losing a child and actually look at the nature of that unease, that disease, that lurks and hovers in the world that we live in at the moment. In this country at the time of writing the play there was a climate of fear being sold to us by our government. They claimed their actions were about easing and removing that fear, but I think they were nurturing it, feeding it. It’s the classic ploy of
corrupt power, to convince us that we are in peril and then offer themselves as our only protection from it. So I was quite interested in trying to explore notions of anxiety, doubt, loss and barely suppressed terror. To me anyway, it feels like the pervasive fear and mistrust that exists in Flaming Tree Grove is something of a microcosm of where Australia was at that time, perhaps even still, or again in the future. Like an ache in our collective soul we haven’t yet worked out how to heal.

How would you describe the style of your play?

Gothic, absurd, nightmarish, surreal. I make a conscious effort in writing plays to make them theatrical and abstract. I think there are playwrights who do naturalism brilliantly, so I leave that territory to them. However, I think playwrights who don’t do naturalism well are responsible for boring theatre. So if I can’t write great naturalism then I would rather not write it at all. Ruby Moon is written, therefore, in the style that I favour which is a type of heightened naturalism. It is very much predicated on universal human emotions, but isn’t directly about topical events or actual places, but hopefully evokes them.

The way I write plays all comes back to when I was first taught at school about the metaphor and the simile. I remember the teacher saying a simile is where one thing is said to be ‘like’ another, whereas a metaphor is where one thing is said to ‘be’ another. My imagination was instantly drawn to the metaphor. The idea is that hopefully there is room in the play for an audience to associate what they see on stage – however strange – with their own lives. To give them room to imagine and make connections and find a truth from it that is specific to them.

What do you see as being the role of playwrights in our society?

I think it’s about demanding our own relevance. I have no belief that playwrights are intrinsically important and that they should be listened to. That privilege needs to be earned and demanded by the quality of the work. To me, playwriting is about telling stories in a way that is distinctive from other story telling forms. It’s about making the theatre a place people feel compelled to go to in order to hear a story told in a way they could not find in a book or on television or in film. So I see the role of the playwright as being one of trying to tell stories distinctively and using all the virtues of the theatre to do it. Beyond that I think the role of the playwright is to challenge the homogenisation of thought. I write for television as well and in writing for television there are so many more people putting their fingers into the pie. Often the result is diluted and diminished. So, the theatre to me is still this pure, idiosyncratic world where you can actually tell the story as you would like to tell it.

Does the playwright’s role create a potentially powerful opportunity?

Absolutely. Sometimes the most dangerous aspects of ourselves are revealed in the theatre. Beyond that, in a more general sense, I strongly feel the role of the playwright is to move audiences, to deeply move them. Because, in the theatre, the audience is sharing the same space as the storytellers, there is greater potential for connection. The drama and emotions are happening then and there. We are all in the same room so it’s a waste if you’re not trying to work at the most extreme and powerful ends of the spectrum. There’s no point being timid in the theatre — it’s a wasted opportunity.

What would you like the audience to be thinking as they leave the theatre?

I never presume to dictate what they might think at the end of the performance. All I can do is take responsibility for what I want to convey. How they interpret that and how much it impacts upon them is out of my hands. I would, however, love the audience to feel like they’ve made a deep emotional connection and the fact that they might leave the theatre even thinking about the play is enough for me.
Brecht and Epic Theatre

Elements of Brecht’s epic theatre are found in contemporary plays as a means to generate social and political discussion or challenge elements of conventional theatre. In *Ruby Moon*, for example, multiple characters and an episodic structure help convey the psychological and emotional states of Ray and Sylvie. The chart below identifies how epic theatre can be used in contemporary plays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Brecht</th>
<th>Contemporary Plays</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple characters</strong></td>
<td>- Each character presents a different perspective, e.g. Azdak in <em>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</em> represents Marxist values when he plays the judge</td>
<td>- Each character presents a different perspective</td>
<td>- Brecht's <em>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</em> &lt;br&gt; - Cameron's <em>Ruby Moon</em> &lt;br&gt; - Caryl Churchill's <em>Cloud Nine</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Actors playing multiple characters alienate the audience</td>
<td>- Emphasises the psychological status of key characters e.g. Betty in <em>Cloud Nine</em> is played by a male to show gender constraints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Episodic structure</strong></td>
<td>- Scenes show how themes and issues affect different situations e.g. in <em>Mother Courage and Her Children</em> war financially benefits Mother Courage, but leads to the death of her daughter</td>
<td>- Portrays the characters’ different perspectives, e.g. in <em>Gary’s House</em> scenes are done from Gary and Christine’s perspectives</td>
<td>- Brecht's <em>Threepenny Opera</em>, <em>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</em>, <em>Mother Courage and Her Children</em> &lt;br&gt; - Cameron's <em>Ruby Moon</em> &lt;br&gt; - Debra Oswald's <em>Gary’s House</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Challenges linear narrative structure to alienate the audience</td>
<td>- Moves the plot forward, e.g. In <em>Ruby Moon</em> each scene gives another clue to follow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simple/non-realistic set</strong></td>
<td>- Alienates the audience by limiting suspension of disbelief e.g. signs, labels, visible lights and cables</td>
<td>- One set shows different locations in the play</td>
<td>- Brecht's <em>Mother Courage and Her Children</em> &lt;br&gt; - Cameron's <em>Ruby Moon</em> &lt;br&gt; - Enoch and Mailman’s <em>The Seven Stages of Grieving</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- One set shows different locations in the play</td>
<td>- Set is representative, not realistic, e.g. the ice in <em>The Seven Stages of Grieving</em> represents grief/crying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Set is representative, not realistic, e.g. the circular pattern Mother Courage travels in represents the cycle of war</td>
<td>- Set can be a metaphor for an emotional or psychological state (see above example)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What was Sylvie and Ray’s relationship at the start of the play? How did it transform throughout the performance?
- What relationships did Sylvie and Ray have with their neighbours?
- How do you think the neighbours perceived Sylvie and Ray?
- How was Ruby represented in the play? Why do you think Cameron made Ruby an absent character?
- Which of the characters did you like the most? Why?
- Do you think any of the characters were stereotypes? Why? Discuss how the characters added to the “fractured fairytale” quality of the play.
- What dramatic elements did the actors, Georgina Symes and Damien Cassidy, use to define each character they played?
- How did costume, props, set and lighting assist in defining the different characters?
- What themes were explored in the play? Discuss examples from the play which portray these themes.
- What was the mood of the play? What technical elements of the production do you think enhanced the mood and the story?
- Discuss the symbolism of the set design.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

**RUBY MOON**

by Matt Cameron

---

**Classroom Activities**

**Forming**

Hot seat characters from the play to find out what they think happened to Ruby. Students take turns being in the hot seat. They play Sylvie and Ray when they are questioning the character.

Students devise a scene from the play using conventions of epic theatre. Discuss how Brechtian techniques help in our understanding of the play.

**Presenting**

Students perform an excerpt from the play using denial, anger, bargaining, depression or acceptance as the emotional basis. Discuss how the different emotions effect interpretation of the excerpt.

**Responding**

Students choose one of the following historical missing children cases to research online:

- Madeleine McCann— [http://netk.net.au/Madeleine/MadeleineLasp](http://netk.net.au/Madeleine/MadeleineLasp)

Respond to these resources and discuss how the parents were treated by the public and the authorities. How is their treatment similar or different to the way Sylvie and Ray were treated by their neighbours? Why?

**Responding, Forming and Presenting**

In groups of three, students devise and perform a scene between Sylvie, Ray and Ruby, before Ruby goes missing. Discuss how exploring the dynamics of the family before Ruby left could influence the actors’ character motivations.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Script Excerpt — One

SYLVIE: Is she often out this late?
SONNY JIM: She’s out of town. Nagging a relative.
SYLVIE: Do you want me to bring that washing in?
SONNY JIM: She’ll do it.
SYLVIE: When’s she due back?
SONNY JIM: Why all these questions?
SYLVIE: I’m sorry.
SONNY JIM takes out a little notebook.
SONNY JIM: Can I read you something?

She nods. He sits.

It’s called... Actually it’s better when I stand.

He stands and clears his throat.

It’s called ‘Mother’...
[Reading] ‘Shut up
Stop talking to me
Leave me alone
Will you
Get out of my room
I’m not in your womb
Anymore...
Shut up
Shut up
Shut up
Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!
..I love you.’

He closes the book. Silence.

It’s not published.

SYLVIE: It’s...
SONNY JIM: It’s a poem.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Script Excerpt — Two

RAY: Sorry to be calling this late.
DULCIE: I keep late hours. Often pop down to the church to practice the organ. Just sang her my favourite hymn. Always sends her off to sleep.
RAY: I can imagine... What’s it called?
DULCIE: ‘Kum bah yah’.
RAY: The parrot?
DULCIE: Her name’s Polly.
RAY: Oh, unusual...
DULCIE: My little gift from God.

She peers into the cage and does a parrot’s voice between barely moving lips. Initially this is disguised but the charade becomes apparent and is done without acknowledgement.

(As parrot) Aark, hallelujah. (As herself) Yes, Polly, hallelujah. (As parrot) Aark, hallelujah. (As herself) Yes, shush now. Go to sleep.

She leaves the cage and returns to RAY.

RAY realises that DULCIE is doing the parrot’s voice. She has stopped turning away to disguise it.

(As herself) Yes, Polly. Nigh night. I have to be careful not to say L-o-r-d or G-o-d or she’ll never drop off. (As parrot) Aark, hallelujah.

Silence.

RAY: You don’t suppose the bird can spell, Miss Doily?
DULCIE: Please Raymond, call me Dulcie. How is that poor wife of yours?
RAY: Much better.
DULCIE: Fragile creature. She must be a burden.
RAY: Getting stronger by the day.
DULCIE: I don’t know how she can bear the guilt.
RAY: Why do you say that?
DULCIE: I’m not a mother but one does fear for the little lambs left alone to stray. And when one considers certain elements in the neighbourhood. Types like Mr Craven across the way. G-o-d only knows what goes on in that house.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Assessment Ideas

FORMING TASK
Write a play based on a fairytale, which deals with an issue in contemporary Australian society.

PRESENTING TASK
In pairs students perform 2-3 excerpts from Ruby Moon playing multiple characters, considering the transformation from one character to the next.

OR

Students can present their forming task in small groups.

RESPONDING TASK
Write an essay discussing how the dramatic language of mood, space and role influenced the audience’s perceptions of the realities presented in the performance of Ruby Moon to create dramatic meaning.
Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Websites of Interest


http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/brecht.htm — Biography of Brecht

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_theater — Definition of Brecht’s epic theatre

http://www.surrealism.org/ — Definition of surrealism

http://www.answers.com/topic/fractured-fairy-tales-1 — Definition of fractured fairy tales

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BClbler-Ross_model — Definition of the Kubler-Ross Five Stages of Grief

Queensland Theatre Company presents

RUBY MOON
by Matt Cameron

Set Box Model

Front Elevation

Plain View