

SYDNEY THEATRE
COMPANY

ON CUE



THE SHIRALEE

By D'Arcy Niland

Adapted for the Stage by Kate Mulvany

Directed by Jessica Arthur

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Image: Ziggy Resnick, Kate Mulvany, Josh McConville, Aaron Pederson. Photo: Derek Henderson.

Compiled by Kelly Young.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. You can contact the Education Team on **education@sydneytheatre.com.au**

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Sydney Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which the Company gathers. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work and with whom we share stories.

CAST AND CREATIVES

THE SHIRALEE

By D'Arcy Niland

Adapted for the Stage by Kate Mulvany

Directed by Jessica Arthur

CAST

Donny/Cheetham/Jack & Others

Stephen Anderson

Desmond/Ruby Razzle & Others

Paul Capsis

Matilda/Bella & Others

Lucia Mastrantone

Mac

Josh McConville

Marge/Grace & Others

Kate Mulvany

Beauty/Tommy & Others

Aaron Pedersen

Buster

Ziggy Resnick

Lily/Minny & Others

Catherine Vän-Davies

CREATIVES

Director

Jessica Arthur

Designer

Jeremy Allen

Lighting Designer

Trent Suidgeest

Composer & Sound Designer

Jessica Dunn

Assistant Director

Guy Simon

Dramaturg

Kip Williams

Cultural Advisor

Matthew Doyle

Fight & Safety Director

Tim Dashwood

Music Rehearsal Associate

Victoria Falconer

Intimacy Coordinator

Chloë Dallimore

Voice & Text Director

Charmian Gradwell

Swaggie of Happiness

Vinnie Pedersen

CREW

Production Manager

Alexandra Moon

Stage Manager

Tim Burns

Assistant Stage Manager

Sean Proude

Costume Coordinator

Sam Perkins

Hair Wig and Makeup

Supervisor

Lauren Proietti

Backstage Wardrobe Supervisor

Chris Harris

Dresser

Josh Carter

Wardrobe Day Maintenance

Catriona McCabe

Lighting Supervisor

Amy Robertson

Head Lighting Technician

Filip Wyker

Sound Supervisor

Hayley Forward

Sound Operator

Al Bremner

Staging Supervisor

Chris Fleming

Head Mechanist

Nathan Williams

Drafting

Andrew Powell

Props Supervisor

Jason Lowe

Scenic Art Supervisor

Ron Theissen

Set Construction Supervisor

Boaz Shemesh

Rehearsal Photographer

Prudence Upton

THIS PRODUCTION OPENED AT THE DRAMA THEATRE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE, SYDNEY ON 10 OCTOBER 2025



SYNOPSIS

Macauley is a rugged swagman who roams the rural roads of mid-century Australia, taking on odd jobs to survive.

Buster is Macauley's young daughter, living with her lonely mother Marge in a run-down home in Kings Cross, Sydney.

One fateful night, Mac is compelled to take Buster on the road with him, despite father and daughter barely knowing each other. Chased into the deep outback of New South Wales, Mac and Buster encounter characters and events that will change their lives forever as they wrestle with what it is to be each others' shiralee...



PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE: KATE MULVANY

G'day. Welcome...

After adapting Ruth Park's *Harp in the South* trilogy and *Playing Beatie Bow* for the Sydney Theatre Company, there was one more story I yearned to explore - *The Shiralee* by D'Arcy Niland, who was Ruth's husband.

Niland's extraordinarily dark and desolate novel pre-dated Cormac McCarthy's celebrated father-child pilgrimage *The Road* by 50 years. Niland's novel is a violent exploration of the Australian male psyche told through the lens of a swagman named Macauley who snatches his daughter Buster out of spite and concern and now finds himself stuck with this burden - his "shiralee".

Despite the horrific murk of Niland's book, most iterations have been rather golden in nature - they temper down Macauley's brutal view of the world and focus instead on what he teaches his daughter Buster in their time in the outback. But in this new stage adaptation, I wanted to shift the lens once again and return to the lurking violence of Niland's book and acknowledge what Buster teaches her father in their time on the road together.

The Shiralee you are about to experience is the story of a child courageously challenging the norms expected of them. This play explores, from Buster's unique perspective, what it is to walk through the world as a girl surrounded by violence. Buster may only be a mere speck in the vast Australian landscape, but she is endlessly curious, funny and wise, and has her own giant world of ideas growing inside her own mind and heart. It is also the story of Mac, who was forced to become an adult before his time, and now must learn to accept the broken child within. And it is the story of community - the friendships that can and should be celebrated in this incredible ancient country we are so lucky to call home.

In this play, I have also woven in aspects of my own childhood with my father Danny - a silently raging Vietnam War veteran road worker - who would often take me "out bush" with him in rural Western Australia. These trips could see us rescue a joey from its dead mother's pouch, stumble across a country wedding, and witness a brutal bar fight in the same day, before curling up in a ute tray as the sun set over the west coast. These magical and malevolent trips have stayed with me always, so it's little wonder that the story of Buster and Mac and everyone they meet is so close to my heart. So this one's for you, Dad.

I am so honoured to bring this retelling of D'Arcy Niland's book to the stage, as well as return as an actor to the STC boards after 17 years. I hope *The Shiralee* will have everyone, no matter who they are, rejoicing their inner Buster and reaching out to any lost Macs and realising that some burdens can also save you.

My gratitude to the astoundingly brilliant team of creative swaggies who have brought this adaptation to life, especially Jess Arthur. We have walked, run, danced and sang the long dusty road together to bring this to you, and we're so glad you've joined us on the road.

Use yer boots. Enjoy.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: JESSICA ARTHUR

Mac doesn't want to ask for help. He has found a way to wade through life without burdening others or being a burden himself. In fact, he prides himself on it. Mac's fears, vulnerabilities and shame ripple beneath the surface of *The Shiralee* by D'Arcy Niland. These fears rupture, before being tidily buried away beneath the tough exterior of a man trying to ignore his violent upbringing.

Buster is an accidental truth-teller of Mac's tenderness, jarring with how he presents himself to the world. This play is a love story between Buster and her dad - inspired by the bush poets, caretakers and 'wanderous loners' that speckle the land. Her innocence and imagination unveils the gentle truths of the land and its people, through her we witness the heart of community and the ways of mutual care in a tough and lonely world.

Kate's adaptation illuminates the joys of difference, the individual note in the chorus of community. Kate's empathetic instincts lead to our discovery that we hold the capacity to change in spite of and through the pain of our stories. This play doesn't shy away from the darkness and violence of our nation's past - to see our histories is to see ourselves.

The design of this play reflects the gruff patriarchy of the early colony, its rough and upending edges are the play's foundations. The woolshed floor incubated this early colony flung to distant shores and left to become itself. One corner of the floor is lifted to create a ridge, the beginning of an upending of the built structure and an acknowledgment that the land sits underneath as the true foundation.

As a team, we have aimed to breathe life into this gritty tale of an Australia that was fading away even then. Reflecting the joy, sorrow, vulnerability and humour that has given this country its heart. New works require trust, patience and hard work from cast and creatives and this team has been nothing but committed to giving this work everything.



Ziggy Resnick & Jessica Arthur

CURRICULUM LINKS

DRAMA

Stage 5

- Scripted Drama
- The Elements of Production
- Australian Drama and Theatre

Stage 6

- Dramatic Forms, Styles and Conventions
- The Elements of Production
- Australian Drama and Theatre

ENGLISH

Stage 5

- Appropriation of a classic text
- Core Textual Concepts: Genre, Code and Convention, Perspective, Point of View, Literary Value, Context, Character

Stage 6

- Preliminary English Extension 1, 'Texts, Culture and Value'

SUITABLE FOR

Years 9 - 12

THEMES & IDEAS

- Gender and Class
- Australian Identity
- Family Relationships

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Macauley

“35 years old. A swagman, boxer, husband and father.”

(*Characters of The Shiralee*)

Mulvaney’s stage directions in Act I Sc. 1 describe Macauley as “a man of 35, built like a cenotaph. He had ridges on his forehead like a row of sleepers, a brassy look, and a wide hat that put evening on his face while the rest of him was in sunshine. His hands were huge”.

Macauley, or Mac, is an itinerant worker who has spent his life roaming rural NSW, picking up work where he can. The audience first sees Macauley boxing in an itinerant boxing ring, locating him as a man who has used violence to make his way in the world. He is a man of his time, with set views about the importance of hard work, the weakness of human emotion, the different roles of men and women, and the place of children. Mac values his independence above all else.



Costume design for Macauley
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©

Buster

“Macauley’s 10-year-old daughter”

(*Characters of The Shiralee*)

Buster is the daughter of Macauley and Marge. She is a lively girl, with an infectious sense of curiosity about the world around her. She is loving, intelligent and independent.

Jessica Arthur, Director of *The Shiralee*, calls her the “heart of the show”, opening the world for her father Macauley through his emotional and spiritual development.



Costume design for Buster
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©

Marge

“Macauley’s wife. Buster’s mother. 25 and 35 years of age.”

(Characters of The Shiralee)

Marge is a country girl who meets Mac when he arrives in her local town of Grafton for a boxing match in 1945. She is described as having bobbed hair and “sulky red lips”. She, like Mac, is keen to see more the world, and follows Mac to Sydney, where they marry and have their only child, Buster.

Marge spends a great deal of time on her own after the conception and birth of Buster, after Mac resumes his itinerant working life. Marge struggles to find connection and support, turning to alcohol and Donny, her lover, to meet her physical and emotional needs.



**Costume design for Marge
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©**

Lily

“Ex-lover of Macauley. Country girl. 19 and 29 years of age.”

(Characters of The Shiralee)

Lily is a country girl who manages her father’s farm on the outskirts of Grafton. She is in love with Mac and is expecting his child but leaves him when he refuses to change his lifestyle to support her and their unborn child.



**Costume design for Lily
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©**

Tommy Goorianawa

“Aboriginal man. Ex-opal miner.”

(Characters of The Shiralee)

Playwright Kate Mulvaney’s stage directions in Act I Sc. 7 describe Tommy as “an Aboriginal man. He wears dark 1950s sunglasses and holds a magnifying glass as he sits by a well”. Mulvaney’s quote from the novel says,

“He sat on a kerosene tin outside his humpy in the same town. He was long and thin and he talked with all men on all subjects. The townspeople would turn up with gifts for him and say thank you. He wore a silk-lined overcoat all the time, for his bones were cold in summer and colder in winter. The man wore a rag cap covered in patches, and his eyes were not eyes. They were slivers of jelly, dull, opaque and grey as oysters”.

(The Shiralee)



Costume design for Tommy
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©

Desmond

“Bush poet. Swaggie on a bike. Between 50 and 70. But ageless.”

(Characters of The Shiralee)

Mulvaney, in her stage directions of Act I Sc. 8 writes,

“... a man on a bike appears, laden with an assortment of life’s collections. There is an empty side cart attached to his bicycle. The man wears a three-piece suit and a polka-dot kerchief around his neck.”

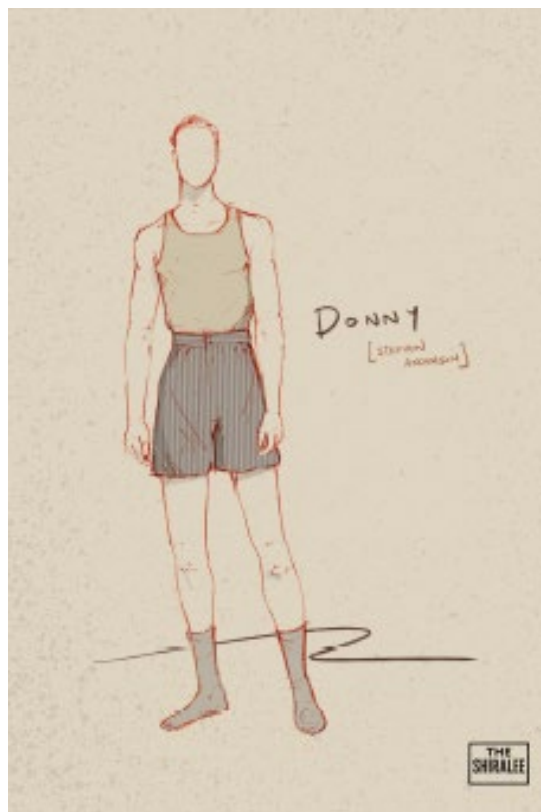
Desmond, like Mac and the others on the road, is a fiercely independent outsider, choosing to spend his life free of the constraints of a conservative Australia. He is unusual in his approach to life on the road, finding the lyrical beauty in his experiences. Desmond, despite Mac’s desire to keep his distance from him, is a true friend, offering support to Mac and Buster at their most difficult times.



Costume design for Desmond
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©

Donny

“Marge’s lover. In his 30s”
(*Characters of The Shiralee*)



Costume design for Donny
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©

Matilda

“A swag woman in her 40s”
(*Characters of The Shiralee*)



Costume design for Matilda
Jeremy Allen 2025 ©

FORM, STYLE AND CONVENTION

Form

The narrative form of *The Shiralee* reflects the fusion of theatrical forms and styles, including Realism and Cabaret. The narrative is nonlinear and episodic, moving between time and space of pre and post war NSW. The effect of this choice by the playwright encourages the audience to reflect on the forces that shaped Australia and in particular, traditional masculinity. The meta-theatricality of the world of the travelling boxing ring, and the use of the cabaret singer interrupts the narrative to comment on the action and draws the attention of the audience to the issues and concerns being explored on stage.

Meta-Theatricality

The Shiralee, through its fusion of cabaret and the world of the travelling box ring, draws the attention of the audience to its own theatricality, offering a comment on the relationship between the characters' inner and outer worlds. For the character of Macauley, the boxing ring and the cabaret singer offers the audience an insight into the societal structures that contain and limit him including the traditional celebration of violence and the sharp division of emotions into the world of women.

Style

Realism

Realism is the recreation of real life on the stage, appropriate to the context and characters developed in the script. This applies to the way in which actors strive for authenticity in their performances and the ways in which designers use the Elements of Production. The Realism of the Elements of Production in *The Shiralee* are heightened, which means that the design elements are distilled and exaggerated to move beyond the experience of “real life” amplification of the emotional experience for the audience.

Cabaret

Cabaret is a European theatrical tradition that combines small acts that might feature music, song, dance, poetry and drama. These acts are discrete and are usually performed in small space such as a bar, restaurant, or pub. Cabaret often presents radical political work and is highly theatrical. In the case of *The Shiralee*, the meta-theatricality of cabaret allows the narrative to offer a comment on itself.

THEMES AND IDEAS

Gender and Class

The intersection of gender and class are explored in *The Shiralee* and manifest themselves in different ways throughout the production.

The Shiralee explores how Macauley, a representative of working-class masculinity, struggles to find his way in post-WWII rural Australia. This construction of Macauley's masculinity is tough, self-reliant and hardworking. Generated in the nation-building period of the late 18th Century in the lead up to Federation, this type of masculinity was part of the political and social narrative, designed to co-opt these qualities to ensure that the narrative of ownership of stolen land was celebrated by white settlers.

In general, working-class jobs usually involve manual labour, or routine tasks and are usually characterised physical effort, being paid hourly or a wage and having limited decision-making power when at work. Macauley experiences all of this in *The Shiralee*, with incredibly hard physical labour, low pay and with minimal input into the way that his work was constructed. In the 1950s, paid work of the type that Macauley undertakes, is increasingly unstable, unreliable and poorly paid, as the shift in the Australian economy moved toward the new, middle class, respectable, anti-union and entrepreneurial values of the Menzies era.

The Shiralee explores the dignity of the labouring man, who clings to a sense of pride in his strength and work ethic, whilst juxtaposing the isolation and emotional and physical difficulties of his labour. The poverty that Macauley experiences as an itinerant worker severely limits the how he performs his ability to provide for his family – a gendered expectation of the period, in that conventional understandings of the role of the breadwinner was deeply valued for men at this time. Men such as Macauley, however, are unable to perform their masculinity in this way because they cannot provide in an expected economic manner as they are pushed to the outer limits of the post war economy.

This production also explores the experience of working-class women post-WWII Australia through the stories of Marge and Lily. Both are from the working classes like Macauley; however, their options are even more limited. They are dependent on men for their economic survival, whether it be their romantic partner or their father. Additionally, we see the difficulties of this dependence when children are added to the lived experience of women in the play. Marge is trapped by her gender, unable to leave her child and attempt to earn an income in the absence of Macauley. The existence of children, however much loved, is an obstacle to women's economic independence, as they are expected to always be the primary carer of their children, closing avenues for paid work. This double bind results in the social and sexual exploitation of both women and children, graphically explored in this production.

Discussion Question

Describe the set of *The Shiralee*. What role does the woolshed play in our understanding of Macauley and his class identity?



Australian Identity

The Shiralee is set on unceded Aboriginal land, with the action unfolding approximately 160 years after invasion. NSW, and by extension, Australia, has changed enormously in that time, with dispossession and genocide driving First Peoples from their land. Other than the character of Tommy Goorianawa, who symbolically provides the water that white people need and cannot find, *The Shiralee* unfolds in a barren landscape; dry, silent and largely empty of connection, joy and meaningful relationships. The absence of First Nations characters other than Tommy in the narrative is symbolic of the destruction of traditional ways of being. The foundation of the Western structures of power in the play including class, gender, heteronormativity and white privilege, therefore, are built on the fundamental violence and theft by British imperialism with disastrous consequences for Australia's First People, but also those who live on stolen land.

Macauley, as a "swagman", is emblematic of the viciousness of the colonial experience. His constant walking across the country, alone and isolated, highlights invader relationships with a land that was once so well cared for. His journey is a metaphor for colonial treatment of Australia, with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples trampling across Country with very little regard for the traditional owners. Further, the types of work they are seeking such as labouring,

fencing, farming and shearing, is based on a western understanding of land ownership and usage, which over the past 240 years has caused such destruction to Australia's fragile ecosystems.

The role of "swagman" is an example of a particular type of Australian masculinity - white, working class and itinerant - which was constructed as part of the cultural process of justifying invasion. The laconic, hardworking, tough and capable stereotype of the "swaggie" is held up as a hero because he faced the harsh Australian landscape. The notion of the hostile land of Australia supported the power structures that shaped, and continue to shape, Australia's national identity. The idea of a difficult, dangerous terrain in turn generated the notion of the strong pioneers, largely men, who were able to do battle with the land itself, rather than acknowledge the terrible truth of land clearing and genocide. These men were constructed as Australian heroes who, despite their shortcomings, were celebrated as overcame the difficulties of land they didn't understand, effectively silencing the truth of the process of land theft and genocide.

The absence of women in the narrative of "swagmen" in Australia reinforces the patriarchal foundations of Western colonial society, ensuring that traditional understandings of women were focused on their domestic lives and supported the economic privileges accorded to white men of all classes. The roles of Lily and Marge suggest that the only way forward is to, in Lily's case, take on the role of her father with the inbuilt economic benefits of inheriting stolen land. In Marge's case, the future is less clear. Having lost custody of her daughter and her societally sanctioned role as mother, her future appears uncertain. The production asks the audience to question how the position of women who, caught in strict gender and class roles, might be reimagined, alongside men such as Macauley who, having begun to open himself to qualities such as comfort and care, might make space for women to participate in society in a new way.



Ziggy Resnick, Paul Capsis & Josh McConville

The inclusion of the character of Desmond in this production of *The Shiralee* (and his reimagining by the playwright as a poet and queer person) provides glimmers of hope for the future of Australian masculinity. Aside from Buster, who represents the future, Desmond represents other ways of being a man in Australia. Still fiercely independent like Macauley, he is however, a challenge to the rigidity of the gender binary. From the moment the audience sees him wearing “a three-piece suit and a polka-dot kerchief around his neck” the audience understands him to be queer. His enjoyment of poetry, and most importantly, the quiet and caring support of Macauley and Buster, results in their ultimate reconnection at the end of the production. Desmond, like Buster and Tommy, offer Australia another way to be in the contemporary world, with the values and characteristics traditionally assigned to First Nations knowledges, women, children and queer people offering a sense of hope for the remainder of the twentieth century.

Discussion Question

Why are Tommy Goorianawa and Desmond such important characters in *The Shiralee*? What is the production trying to say about the experience of First Peoples and Queer Peoples in the mid-20th Century?

Family Relationships

The Shiralee questions constructions of, and the relationship between, masculinity and heteronormativity through the ways in which these systems of power manifest themselves the lived experience of the characters and their family relationships. *The Shiralee* presents images of deep disfunction and unhappiness for those who are caught up within a profoundly patriarchal social and cultural system.

The character of Buster is key to understanding the exploration of family relationships in *The Shiralee*. She embodies the possibility of joy and trust in a world of poverty and violence, challenging her father (and by extension the world around her) to see that even in such a brutal environment love and connection can flourish. Buster is a symbol of the future in which families can change if they are able to open themselves up to the possibility of difference.

The entrance of Buster into Macauley’s life and his sudden role as the primary caregiver challenges his understanding of what it means to be a man in a traditional family in post WWII Australia. The audience experiences Macauley’s understanding of family in a typically heteronormative manner at the beginning of the production. We see Macauley enacting his patriarchal privilege after a prolonged absence from his daughter’s life by violently abducting his daughter from the care of her mother, after finding Buster sedated by Marge and her lover, Donny. Buster’s immediate connection with her father and the freedom of the life that he introduces her to challenges Macauley’s understanding of and participation in strict heteronormative family structures. This causes him to question the shifts and changes in himself generated by their experience together on the road. The harsh boundaries Macauley sets for himself around feeling his emotions are challenged by the love of his child and her love for him. Whilst on the road, away from societal pressure to conform to constricting stereotypes, their relationship allows Macauley to question his understanding of himself and by extension his understanding of his own masculinity and his role in the family. By the end of the production, he has reimagined himself as tender and protective and is open to exploring a new way of fathering but also, perhaps, after making peace with Lily and Marge, being in an intimate relationship that may differ from those he had known previously.



The family dynamics in *The Shiralee* delve into the expectations that existed for men, women, and children at this time, asking the audience to evaluate and respond to limiting constructions of gender within the family. The constraints of such gender roles, when combined with working class poverty, result in limited emotional connections for all the characters. *The Shiralee* questions whether dignity, love and care can exist in a society based on patriarchal and heteronormative privilege and violence.

Discussion Questions

What do you imagine Macauley's life was like prior to the narrative of *The Shiralee*?

Why do you think this?

What might his future hold?

Why?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Reflection Questions

After viewing the performance, discuss as a class:

- How would you describe the atmosphere of *The Shiralee*?
Why would you describe it in this way?
- What did you notice about the colours and textures of the set design?
Why might these choices have been made by the creative team?
- How did the creative team create a space in which the audience could move quickly through time and space to ensure the maintenance of the tension between transitions?
- How did the inclusion of the cabaret singer comment on the action?
Why was this an important inclusion by the playwright?

Gender and Class

Activity 1

- Working in groups of 4 - 5, use a digital device to find images of working men in the early 1950s. These images could be of farm workers, construction workers, swagmen and soldiers. Each group should aim to find approximately 4 - 5 images.
- Working in the same groups, create 3 freeze frames of the physicality of these working men.
- Present them to the class.
- As a class, discuss what you noticed about these freeze frames.
What physicality, gesture and facial expression were common?
What mood was created as you performed?

Activity 2

Using your understanding of working men in the 1950s generated by the production and the activity above, create two shapes that best represent the emotional landscapes of these men. As you develop your shapes discuss the reasons why you chose these shapes.

Activity 3

In these same groups, try to add either Marge or Lily to each of these shapes.

How does their presence change the shape? What impact does their entrance into this shape (this world) have on them? Why might this be the case?

How would you suggest that the shape can be changed to be inclusive of everyone?

Australian Identity

Activity 1

- a. As a class, choose four images from the photo gallery of *The Shiralee*:

The Shiralee Website – Gallery

- b. As a class, write down as many adjectives that describe a “typically Australian” understanding of Australian identity. Note these on the whiteboard.
- c. As a class, look at the adjectives that have been offered. What do you notice about what we chose? Make another list that organises the adjectives into categories.
These might include gender, class, settler/invader.
- d. Discuss: What stories did we subconsciously privilege?

Activity 2

The Shiralee was written in the early 1950s and presented what D’arcy Niland saw as typically Australian in his context.

In groups, devise an improvisation in which your group begins with this construction of Australian identity and slowly changes to an understanding of who Australia might be today. Consider how the devised work might acknowledge that both constructions of Australian identity occurred on stolen land.

Activity 3

The character of Desmond provides an alternative understanding of Australian masculinity in *The Shiralee*.

- a. In groups of 4 - 5 use the form of bush poetry to write a monologue from Desmond’s perspective that explores his experience in the Australia of the 1950s.
- b. Once this monologue has been written, choose an actor from the group to deliver the monologue as Desmond.
- c. Using the other actors, devise an embodied movement performance that occurs as the actor playing Desmond is delivering their monologue.
- d. Ask each group to perform for the class and discuss the work of each group using the following questions.
 - o What did you notice about the movement that supported the performance of Desmond’s Bush Poetry?
 - o How did the shapes created by the group support Desmond’s experiences in the 1950s?
 - o How did this look and sound differently to the activity in Gender and Class where you explored the physicality of working men?

Family Relationships

Activity 1

Since invasion, Australian society has held a very particular view about the ways in which family relationships should be structured.

- a. Create a freeze frame that captures this heteronormative ideal.
- b. Thinking about the structure of Macauley's family at the start of *The Shiralee*, adjust this shape to reflect the ways that it doesn't reflect this ideal.
- c. Discuss why this might be the case.

Activity 2

The character of Buster is an important one in *The Shiralee*. She is the catalyst for change in her family as the action progresses but is also a metaphor for looking forward to a new way of seeing family structures in Australia.

- a. Working in pairs, create a character profile for both Buster and Macauley at the start of *The Shiralee* using the following questions
 - o Who am I?
 - o Where am I? (What surrounds me?)
 - o What do I want?
 - o What am I doing to get what I want?
- b. Using the activity above, devise a small scene between the two characters in which they speak their inner truth to each other. Ask them to explain what they want and why they want it.
- c. After the class has explored the production, repeat the activities above, but this time focus on the conclusion of the play.
- d. Perform both, side by side, for the class. What do you notice about the changes in both Buster and Macauley? Why do you think this is the case?

SUPPORT RESOURCES

The Shiralee deals with content that some audience members might find distressing. Content warnings include: strong language, mature themes including violence, description of miscarriage, alcohol and drug addiction, theatrical blood, theatrical haze and dust effects, herbal cigarettes, flashing light effects, complete blackout.

If you or someone you know needs information or support, these organisations are there to help:

1800RESPECT

Call 1800 737 732 or visit <https://1800respect.org.au/>

24/7 support for people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence.

Kids Helpline

Call 1800 55 1800 or visit <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Australia's only free, confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

13 YARN

Call 13 92 76 or visit <https://www.13yarn.org.au/>

A confidential crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping.

NSW Domestic Violence Line

Call 1800 65 64 63

Provides counselling and referrals to women experiencing domestic violence.

Alcohol and Drug Information Service

Call 1800 250 015

This 24/7 support line provides free and confidential information and support for people who have concerns about their own, or someone else's alcohol and/or other drug use.

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