

**SYDNEY
THEATRE
CO
EDUCATION**

**PRE-SHOW
IN-THE-KNOW**



DRACULA

BY BRAM STOKER

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY KIP WILLIAMS

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Image: Zahra Newman. Photo: Rene Vaile

Compiled by Sophia Small.

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.

KEY INFORMATION

DRACULA

BY BRAM STOKER

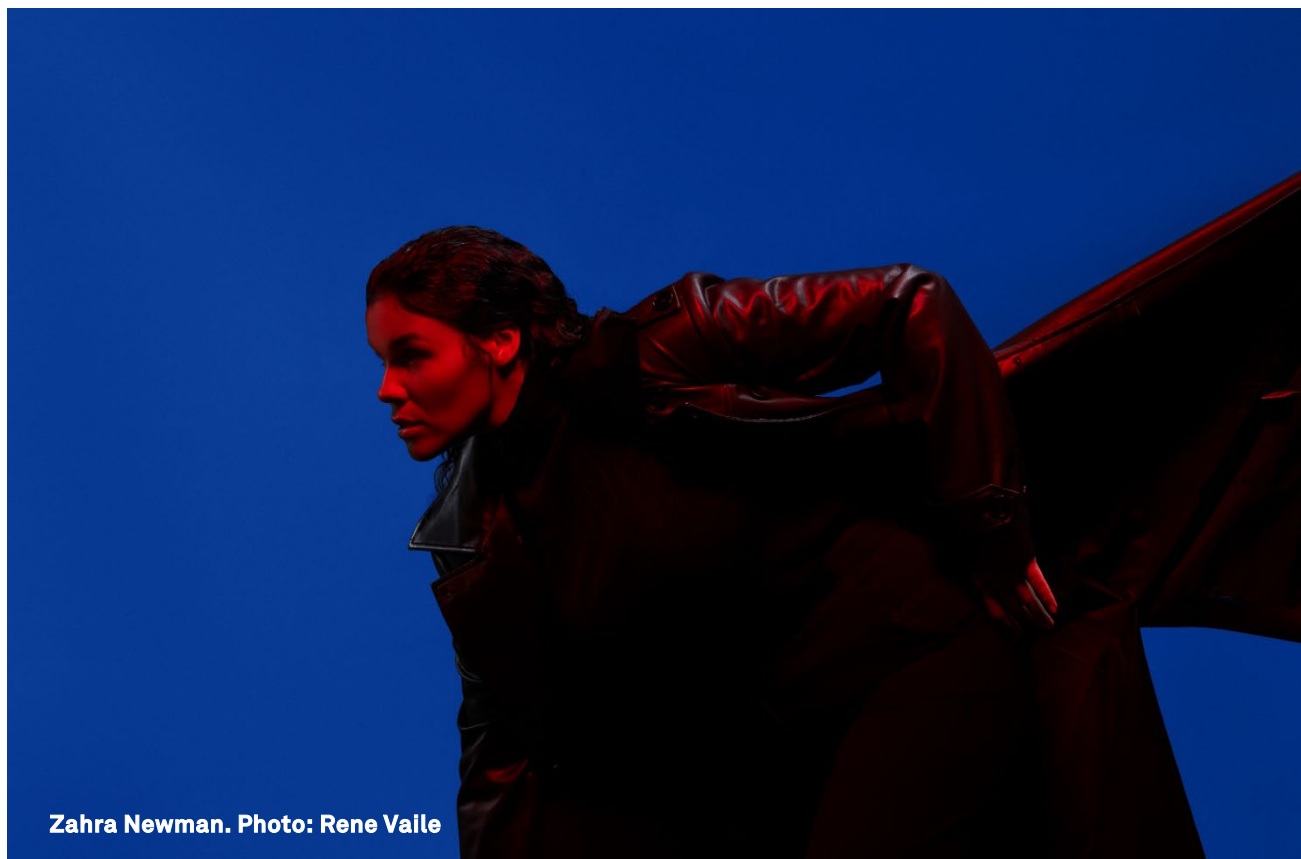
ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY KIP WILLIAMS

<p>CURRICULUM LINKS</p> <p>DRAMA</p> <p>Stage 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elements of Drama• Elements of Performance• Elements of Production <p>Stage 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvisation and Play building• Dramatic Forms• Performance Spaces and Conventions of Theatre <p>ENGLISH</p> <p>Stage 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriation of a classic text• Core Textual Concepts: Genre, Code and Convention, Perspective, Point of View, Literary Value, Context, Character <p>Stage 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preliminary English Extension 1, 'Texts, Culture and Value' <p>THEMES & IDEAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender and Sexuality• Race and National Identity• Fear and Desire• Technology and Progress	<p>FORM & STYLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monologue• Multidisciplinary Theatre• Gothic Horror <p>CAST AND CREATIVES</p> <p>Adapter & Director Kip Williams</p> <p>Designer Marg Horwell</p> <p>Lighting Designer Nick Schlieper</p> <p>Composer Clemence Williams</p> <p>Sound Designer Jessica Dunn</p> <p>Video Designer Craig Wilkinson</p> <p>Assistant Video Director Benjamin Sheen</p> <p>Video Editor Susie Henderson</p> <p>Associate Director Ian Michael</p> <p>Assistant Director Nicole Pingon</p> <p>With</p> <p>Zahra Newman</p> <p>APPROX. DURATION</p> <p>2 hrs, no interval</p> <p>CONTENT</p> <p>Adult themes and depictions of violence.</p> <p>SUITABLE FOR</p> <p>Years 10 - 12</p>
<p>THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does one actor create and sustain many different characters?• What elements of the original text have been preserved, and what has changed?• What is the production saying about the fears and anxieties of contemporary society?• What is the impact of multimedia on the adaptation of a classic text? How does this shape the meaning?	
<p>ASSOCIATE PARTNER</p> <p>   </p>	

SYNOPSIS

In a ruined castle, high in the Transylvanian wilderness, a mysterious presence is lurking. Is it man or beast? Angel or demon? For centuries, Count Dracula has held his remote corner of the world in a vice grip of terror.

But evil is on the move and the residents of Victorian London will soon fall under its bewitching, transformative spell.



PRE-TEACHING

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897, has never gone out of print. Presented as an archival collection of diary entries, letters, newspaper clippings, telegrams and other documents, this classic epistolary novel set in the late-Victorian era follows Jonathan Harker and his crew of vampire-hunters from Britain to Transylvania and back, as they seek to rid the world of the evil of vampirism. *Dracula* is often seen as the original vampire story – the novel that birthed an entire genre of gothic horror – but the *Dracula* we know and love grew out of a long history of folktales that the Irish writer spent years studying in the London library, carefully marking notes in the margins as he gathered inspiration for what would be the defining work of his lifetime.

CONTEXT

The late-Victorian era was characterised by change, and anxiety about how these changes would affect British society. Queen Victoria ruled for over 63 years, a stable reign far longer than any previous monarch. The Victorian age had seen significant expansion of the British Empire, as well as scientific, industrial, and technological developments. As the end of the century approached, fears about what was to come, as well as anxieties about foreign influence, the changing role of women in society, and the impact of the long-term colonisation of much of the world, spilled over into what became known as the fin-de-siecle novels, including *Dracula*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, among others. These gothic horrors used supernatural and monstrous ideas to reckon with what many feared was the dark side of this period of progress: the moral degeneration of society.

Stoker's *Dracula* has been appropriated hundreds of times, with new versions of the story gracing the page, the screen, and the stage every year. So, what is it about this story that still fascinates us, over 120 years later? Perhaps, as many critics argue, it is the vampire's ability to reflect the society on which he feeds. Modern adaptations from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to *What We Do in the Shadows* have shown time and again how this ageless vampire is a monster not confined to Victorian England, but one capable of reflecting anxieties about change, progress, and anything that destabilises the status quo, that are common of every era. "Dracula can't see his own reflection," writes Eric Nuzum, "because he reflects the culture around him. Ever since Bram Stoker penned *Dracula* in 1897, the vampire's image has been a work in progress."

What is it about this classic story that captures the interest of audiences across time and space?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Like all texts, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reflects the context in which it was composed, and this new adaptation by Kip Williams will reflect elements of our modern context: what are some important issues and anxieties in our contemporary society?
- What elements from the novel do you expect will stay the same, and what might change?
- What might be the challenges of adapting a classic novel for the stage?
- What are your experiences of the theatre? How is attending a theatrical performance different than attending a film, for example?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

In groups of 3-4, students research the key features of the Gothic genre (including setting, symbolism, characters, elements of the supernatural, and key texts) and create a visual collage or presentation.

Activity 2

In pairs, make a timeline of the key plot points in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and present these to the class in a series of freeze-frames.

Activity 3

Watch the clip below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uiyz3139tE&t=9s>

Students recount how *Dracula* became the world's most famous vampire.

Activity 4

As a class, discuss the enduring popularity of *Dracula* and the Vampire story.

Students make a list of the modern adaptations of *Dracula* they have seen to contribute to a class list. Students choose one contemporary adaptation of *Dracula* from the class list, and find out:

- What elements from the original text were preserved?
- What was changed for a modern audience?

Activity 5

This performance is the third in Kip Williams' Gothic trilogy of 'cine-theatre' that has seen him adapt Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

In pairs, students research:

- The composer, director Kip Williams
- 'Cine-theatre' and multidisciplinary theatre

Activity 6

In pairs, or small groups, students brainstorm ideas for a modern-day *Dracula*, set in Australia in 2024.

Each group writes a synopsis of their adaptation and presents a 60-second 'elevator pitch' of their idea to the class.

REFERENCES

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Butler, Erik (2002). "Writing and Vampiric Contagion in *Dracula*."; Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies 2.1.

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