Education Resource/Pack

lmage: Morgan Roberts

By Counterpilot

Compiled by Emma Churchland

counterpilot

Metro Arts

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About Counterpilot



Counterpilot is a collective of interdisciplinary artists directed by Nathan Sibthorpe, with Mike Willmett (sound designer), Christine Felmingham (technical designer), and a constellation of Australian artists, technicians and tinkerers.

Together, we create interactive performance works, activating audiences with new technology, rich design, and transmedia storytelling. Counterpilot seeks to transform the familiar, juxtaposing rich fictional worlds against a backdrop of the everyday.

By subverting real social circumstances, we co-opt our participants as authentic performers. In this way we are harnessing what we believe to be the most exciting thing about theatre - the live audience. Our works enable participants to observe themselves responding in real ways to hyper-real situations.

In 2017, Spectate was described as "a groundbreaking new production" (Absolute Theatre), a "psychedelic emotional experience" (4ZZZ), and "spectacularly clever on so many levels, in a way probably never seen before" (Blue Curtains Brisbane). The following year, Crunch Time premiered at Next Wave Festival 2018 in Melbourne and was described as "obviously brilliant" (The Age), a "feast for the eyes and ears" (My Melbourne Arts), and "just about flawlessly realised" (Stage Whispers). Crunch Time went on to receive the Lord Mayor's Award for Best New Australian Work at the 2018 Matilda Awards.

Counterpilot continues to produce interactive performance works that boldly experiment with new applications of technology. With interactive tools like geo-locative audio, SMS distribution networks, RFID voting systems, multi-layered video, and biometric sensors, Counterpilot seeks to put the audience at the centre of every performance experience – whether it be for physical journeys, experiential narrative, or heightened gameplay.

Find out more information at Counterpilot's Website: www.counterpilot.com.au/

OVERVIEW OF ADRIFT

RUN TIME

100 mins

SYNOPSIS

Set in an infinite ocean, our participants float in the unknowable spaces between each other. Following instructions in an immersive sound design, they are guided to find each other across tabletop miniatures.

Together they co-create detailed worlds by manipulating objects and filling in the blanks in each others' narratives. Tiny architecture reveals itself. Lights turn on, water emerges, and mechanical discoveries are made. Here, we share a series of fantastical true stories - of infatuated dolphins, lonely whales, and remote lighthouses.

ADRIFT explores feelings of isolation and our fraught relationship with nature in the face of a potential mass extinction event. Our real feelings of loneliness are evoked in the context of disconnected communities and the threat of irreparable change. We feel alone in a world that crumbles beneath us. Our relationship with nature is just as fraught as our relationships with each other.

CREATIVE TEAM

Created by Counterpilot

Co-Devised by Nathan Sibthorpe, Christine Felmingham, Mike Willmett, Toby Martin, Sarah Winter

Directed by Nathan Sibthorpe

Written by Nathan Sibthorpe & Toby Martin

Composition & Sound Design by Mike Willmett

Lighting Design by Christine Felmingham

Technical Design by Christine Felmingham, John Felmingham & Sam Black

Production Design by John Felmingham, Sarah Winter & Aimeé Pouzet

Software Design by Sam Black

Design Assistance by Ebony Webb, Damian Tatum & The Team

Dramaturgy by Ben Knapton

Performances by Toby Martin, Kate Wilson, Lucas Stibbard, Paige Poulier, Kate O'Sullivan

Associate Producer & Stage Manager - Milly Walker

Technical Coordination - Teegan Kranenburg

Assistant Director - Damian Tatum

Produced by Counterpilot & Metro Arts

For Metro Arts - Jo Thomas, Danielle Carney, Meg Hamilton, Nicholas Southey

WARNINGS

Language, Sex Scene with a dolphin, Existential Dread, Descriptions of Death and decaying bodies. This experience includes Flickering Lights, Sudden Blackouts and Startling Sound Effects.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

UNIT 1: Share

UNIT 3: Challenge

Purpose, Context and Text

To empower, to entertain, to educate, to challenge.

Dramatic, environmental, philosophical, sociological, historical, and cultural contexts.

Hybridity of storytelling through scripted and non-linear forms.

Inquiry Questions

- How can we use drama to celebrate, document, empower and share understandings of the human experience?
- How can drama help to educate, challenge, and empower us to question society at this time and advocate for change?

Dramatic Forms and Styles

Storytelling

A re-telling of the stories of The 52hrtz whale, The Smalls Lighthouse Tragedy, and Margaret Lovatt's relationship with Peter the Dolphin is told through an interactive tabletop experience, activated through a guided experience, shared through headphones. Audience members are active participants in staging elements of each of the stories.

Themes

- Climate anxiety, the threat of mass extinction events
- Grief & Loss
- Loneliness (from a personal scale to a cosmic scale)
- Togetherness
- Story and the power of storytelling
- The space between people
- Peculiar intimacies

Elements of Drama

The Elements of Drama, according to QCAA Drama 2019 v1.1 Syllabus, are the building blocks of dramatic form and style. The Elements of Drama include character, contrast, dramatic focus, language, mood, movement, place, relationship, role, situation, space, symbol, tension, time.

Specific elements of drama feature in this experience that you may wish to discuss with your students:

Role

ADRIFT is a unique experience for Drama students in which each audience member becomes an active participant in the creation of the story by taking on specific tasks that bring the work into existence.

Character

Characters include "Guardian" who narrates the various stories, "Instructor" who provides the rules and directions, in order to navigate the work effectively, and "System" who is an automatic computer authority who does not contribute to the storytelling but exists during the compression and decompression of the experience. Other characters such as Lighthouse Keeper, Marine Biologist and Whale are also heard throughout the experience.

Symbol

Associations occur when something is used to represent something else to reinforce or extend dramatic meaning. Symbol is important in this experience as it helps participants navigate the space and cue their next step in the experience.

Language

Refers to the way that ideas and feelings are expressed dramatically. Language is the main element of drama manipulated in this experience as it not only conveys the three stories through spoken word that is prerecorded, but participants must closely follow instructions to visually bring these stories to life.

Mood

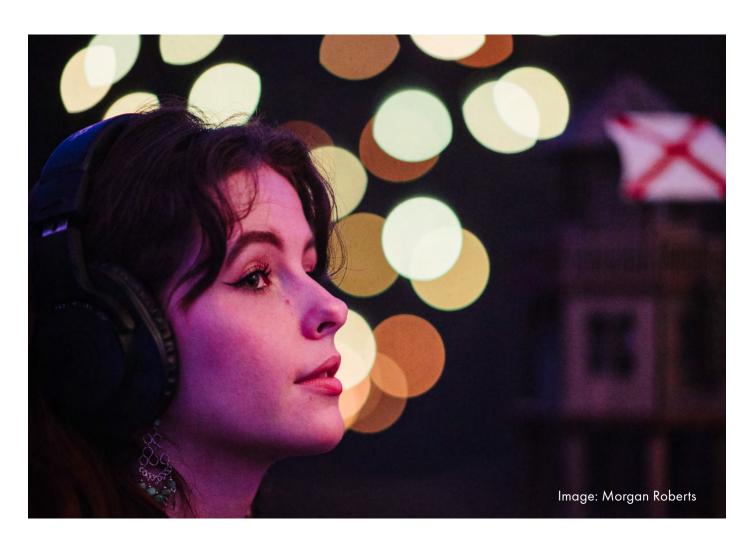
Refers to the atmosphere being created through the dramatic action. Mood is created through effective sound and lighting design to depict the tensions between Thomas Griffith and Thomas Howell, and the sexual nature of Margaret Lovatt and Peter the Dolphin's relationship.

Place

Describes the location and setting of the dramatic action. Place is shown through the tabletop experience as participants are asked to add elements to the lighthouse, as well as the dwelling that Margaret and Peter shared.

Time

Refers to the time or period in which the dramatic action is set. Time is scored by effective sound and lighting design, shifting the work from the late 1700s to the early 1960s.



1.0 COMPRESSION: How to Prepare Your Students

SYSTEM: Stand by for descent. I repeat. Stand by. You are here of your own accord.

To adequately prepare for this experience, please become familiar with the information below.

- Please ensure you and your students are carrying as little as possible. All watches, devices, bags, and jackets will be removed and stored in cloaking tubs.
- Bulky or dangly earrings and ear cuffs will also need to be removed.
- Each person will be given lanyards with a symbol and a letter.
- You will not interact with any characters in person, only hear them through your headphones. You must follow the
 instructions given to you to effectively engage with the experience.

It is important to note this work requires you to follow instructions through headphones, which need to be worn for the entire experience.

This experience is sensorially stimulating including dim lighting, flashing light, loud noises and moments of complete darkness. Participants will be asked to move through space and follow directions. Elements of water may be used in the performance - participants may be very slightly splashed but will not get noticeably wet. Participants may interact with strangers and be asked to contribute to the work using their own experiences and instincts.

Sounds include creaks, lurches and hisses of a submarine or a giant ship – the sounds of a system that is designed to take us deep into the ocean. The technical design uses binaural audio, which can simulate 3-dimensional soundscapes.

To introduce your students to the world of the work, the Instructor will say the following:

INSTRUCTOR: Right. I've got you.

Listen carefully.

There are no actors here. It's just you, and the people around you, doing your best to fill in the gaps and make sense of it all. We realise there are a lot of gaps. But we trust you. You're all we've got.

Don't worry, I'll be there to help.

Do your best to follow the instructions.

If by now you're starting to wonder whether you made a terrible mistake coming here, let me take a moment to reassure you.

There. Feel better about it all? Good.

You did this to yourself, remember. We all did...

Raise your right hand for me. Great. See?! You've got this.

Relax your arm. Everything is going to be okay.

Preshow Activity:

Share preparation information with students and read the Instructor's monologue. Generate discussion with your students regarding what they predict the experience will be like and what might be expected of them during the experience?

2.0 LONELINESS THROUGH TOGETHERNESS: Let's Explore The Work

GUARDIAN: As you float through the darkness, you think back on the world we left

behind.

The yesterdays, the past loves, the messes left untidied.

You think of all the people you used to know.

Before now.

Before it became just you,

buffeted by the waves and carried to who-knows-where.

This is a story about what it might feel like at the end of all this.

ADRIFT features three true stories. The links below offer an overview of each of these stories.

The 52 Hertz Whale:

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/13/loneliest-whale-in-the-world-search

The Smalls Lighthouse Tragedy:

https://jasonrobertsonline.com/the-smalls-lighthouse-tragedy/

Margaret Lovatt's Relationship With Peter the Dolphin:

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jun/08/the-dolphin-who-loved-me

What should you and your students expect to ponder whilst engaging in ADRIFT?

The thematic core of the work revolves around the nuanced concept of loneliness, but not merely on an individual level—rather, we delve into its cosmic dimensions. Consider the realisation that, amidst grappling with substantial existential threats, there exists no external force poised to intervene. It all comes down to us.

As we grow older, a certain revelation unfolds: the inherent fallibility of all individuals. Parents aren't infallible sages, and the purported experts don't wield omnipotent control. It's not always the brightest minds or the most adept individuals steering the course for everyone. This realisation, in turn, fosters a sense of collective isolation as a species—a contemplation of our relative insignificance in the grand scheme.

Yet, in this exploration of loneliness, an intriguing dynamic emerges—loneliness through togetherness. Acknowledging that others share this existential solitude becomes a collective source of resilience. It is akin to a communal coping mechanism, revealing the strength inherent in unity despite the vastness of our cosmic isolation.

What do we do with our loneliness?

"We're really into the idea that facing those massive existential threats, like climate anxiety, is way easier when you feel connected to something bigger than just yourself. It's like having a rich connection to a broader community makes navigating those big feelings way more manageable" - Nathan Sibthope, Director

To tackle the substantial challenges we're up against, it's crucial to deploy the power of story, meaning, and social connection—something that thrives uniquely among people. We must weave a collective narrative, finding shared meaning and fostering social bonds within our community. It's in believing collectively in our community that we can find a source of hope amid the challenges; tapping into that shared story and sense of connection to bolster our resilience in the face of these larger threats.



3.0 ACTIVATING THE SPACE BETWEEN PEOPLE: How Was The Work Created?

GUARDIAN: Life never will make much more sense.

That's just not something we can have.

But we can tell better stories.

The Creative Development Process - Nathan Sibthorpe

We use a collaborative devised process that is iterative, intuitive, and often emerges as we go. We first began development as part of a Bundanon residency where we spent ten days living together, working in a studio space surrounded by nature. We shared personal stories, discussed what there is left to say about climate change, and pursued impulsive tangents of research. The work slowly emerged from a tangled web of things we were interested in - both in terms of content, ideas, research, and in terms of form, experience, ways in which strangers could encounter each other.



We believe that performance, in its various forms, excels in navigating this uncharted territory, tackling aspects of human experience that often go unexplored by others. It's in these shared moments of storytelling and interaction that we believe the true potency of connection and understanding lies, providing a unique lens through which to explore and grapple with the complexities of the human experience.

This is precisely why we turn to theatre. For us, theatre isn't just a stage or a script; it's the dynamic exchange that happens between active participants in our creative process. We find the real magic in the potential within the spaces connecting people. Ever wondered about the parts of ourselves that remain elusive to others? Those aspects we can never fully fathom or access? That's the puzzle we aim to "poke" at in our work. Unravelling these mysteries influences how we engage in our civic life.

Our Creative Process begins with several exercises that underpin the work. Below are these exercises that you might like to use with your own students when devising their own performance concepts.

ACTIVITY

10 Things / Hybrid Brainstorming

This activity
is used at the
start of creative
development and
serves as both an
introduction and
a way to make
sure you and your
students are on the
same page.

INSTRUCTIONS

Begin by introducing the concept of 10 things to your students. Emphasise the importance of combining individual efforts to create a more comprehensive understanding of the work you are creating.

Encourage students that when making a list of ten things, the first few might feel easy but it can be a stretch to keep adding to the list - this stretch is where the interesting challenge lies, forcing ourselves to think further and extend on the immediate instincts.

Things that Interest You About...

Instruct each student to create a list of ten things that personally interest them about a given topic. This can be a literary work, historical event, scientific concept, etc.

Things You Want [This] to Achieve

Encourage students to think critically about the objectives of the work. What do they hope to gain or learn from creating this work? Each student should compile a list of ten goals or desired outcomes.

Key Images or Moments You Can Imagine in This Work

Prompt students to visualise the content and identify key images or moments that come to mind. A moment could be something someone does, says, notices, an image that's created, a shift in the space or the design. This exercise helps in understanding the subject matter on a deeper level. Request ten entries per student.

Questions You Have About the Work So Far

Foster curiosity by encouraging students to generate questions about the work. These questions will serve as a foundation for further exploration. Each student should compile a list of ten questions. During development, some questions about the work might be answerable early in the process (ie. How many performers do we need? Does the audience move between spaces?) but other questions might be intentionally left unanswered for an audience (ie. Does isolation have a productive part to play in our lives?)

Things We Could Do Next

Prompt students to brainstorm ideas for future actions or activities related to the topic. This encourages forward-thinking and active participation. How do we continue making this work? Do we need to write something, build something, draw something, improvise, research, film, design, test, source, compose, etc. Each student should contribute ten suggestions.

Collaboration and Categorisation

Gather the lists from each student and facilitate a collaborative session where students combine their individual entries and categorise them based on themes or topics. Use this process to create a collective understanding of what the work is. It can be useful to find visual ways of mapping these in the room.

Research and Tell a Story

This endeavour serves as a mechanism for content generation and provides an opportunity for the exploration and discussion of a diverse array of narratives that have the potential to inspire or influence the work.

Introduction

Introduce the concept of deep dive research and its role in cultivating a comprehensive understanding of diverse topics. Emphasise the importance of storytelling as a means of sharing acquired knowledge.

Topic Selection

Each student selects a different starting point from a list you will compile. For ADRIFT, the following list was provided: ghost ships, lighthouse incidents, deep-sea divers, people who got stranded on islands, or people lost at sea. Encourage students to choose a topic that aligns with their interests.

Deep Dive Research

Instruct students to conduct thorough research on their chosen topic. Utilise a variety of sources, such as articles, books, documentaries, and firsthand accounts. Students should take detailed notes, focusing on key events, historical context, and any intriguing anecdotes related to their topic.

Storytelling Preparation

Students prepare a captivating and informative storytelling presentation based on their research. Encourage the incorporation of visuals, maps, or artifacts to enhance the storytelling experience.

Group Presentation

Each student takes turns presenting their researched topic to the rest of the group. Encourage an interactive session where students can ask questions and discuss connections between the different topics.

Reflection and Discussion

Facilitate a reflection session where students discuss the insights gained from the various presentations. Explore connections between different topics and encourage discussions on overarching themes.

Stream of Consciousness

This resource can be utilised at any juncture within the devising process, serving as a tool for both content generation and reflective practices.

Set a timer for 10 minutes.

Students begin their writing, choosing either "This work is about..." or "At the beginning of this work..." as their starting point.

Encourage continuous, unbroken writing without self-editing. The goal is to explore thoughts freely.

Document Sharing

After the writing session, students paste their stream of consciousness text into a shared document. Ensure each participant labels their contribution for clarity.

Reading Aloud

Students take turns reading their contributions 'as-is' from the shared document. Maintain a respectful and open-minded atmosphere during the reading.

Highlighting Key Words or Phrases

Following each reading, students collaboratively highlight key words or phrases that stand out to them. Focus on the richness of language, vivid imagery, or recurring themes.

Group Discussion

Engage in a group discussion about the highlighted elements. Explore connections between student's thoughts.

Encourage students to share their interpretations and reactions

Rapid Prototyping

These exercises are versatile in their application, facilitating the generation of concepts for set design, dialogue, and staging choices.

Rapid prototyping is akin to making a quick draft or model of something you want to create before making the final version. It is a method that lets us try out our ideas and see if they will work without using up too much time or materials.

Here are the steps to do rapid prototyping:

Define your goal

Understand what you want to achieve with your prototype. This could be testing a new product idea, improving an existing design, or solving a problem.

Brainstorm ideas

Think of different ways to approach your goal. You can do this alone or with a team. The more ideas, the better!

Choose the best idea

Pick the most promising idea from your brainstorming session. Consider factors like feasibility, cost, and potential impact.

Create a basic prototype

Build a simple version of your idea using whatever materials or tools you have available. This could be sketching it on paper, creating a digital mockup, or even using everyday objects to represent your concept.

Test your prototype

Try out your prototype to see how well it works. Pay attention to what is good about it and what needs improvement.

Gather feedback

Ask others to test your prototype and give you their thoughts. Take notes on what they like and don't like.

Iterate and improve

Based on the feedback you receive, make changes to your prototype to address any issues or suggestions. This might involve refining the design or adding features

Repeat

Keep iterating on your prototype until you are satisfied with the results. Each iteration should bring you closer to your final goal.

Here are some suggestions as to how this can be used in generating new performance and design concepts

Cardboard Set:

Transform cardboard boxes into a scene (e.g., forest, spaceship) using markers and tape.

Voice Memo Scene:

Record a spoken tour of the design you have created. Use instructions to prompt the listener to pick up or move objects around to help facilitate a particular encounter with what you have made. Use the recording as an opportunity for them to encounter your rapid prototype in their own moment, without you influencing them in-person.

Monologue Writing:

Prompt students to write a short monologue for a character that might exist in the design they have created, allowing only five minutes of writing time. There is no pressure for this monologue to be good but allow students to generate as much material as possible. Repeat this process to generate as much material as possible to strengthen the world of their story. Share and discuss diverse experiences and writing styles.

Storyboarding

This exercise proves advantageous for continuous supplementation throughout the course of creative development.

Introduction

Introduce the concept of storyboarding as a versatile tool for devising performances in the classroom. Emphasise that it's not just about outlining the whole show but also about breaking down scenes into smaller, more manageable components.

Scene Deconstruction

Encourage students to select a scene or segment from their devised work. Prompt them to identify beats, key ideas, and specific gestures within the chosen scene.

Collaborative Mapping

Provide students with a large wall space or use the floor for collaborative mapping. Instruct students to physically arrange cards or visuals representing beats, ideas, and gestures, creating a visual storyboard.

Impossible Tasks

An exercise in fostering creative problem-solving skills, enabling students to envision ambitious concepts while concurrently encouraging the identification and implementation of pragmatic solutions for effectively staging their grand ideas.

Introduction

Present the idea of "Impossible Tasks" as a thought-provoking research challenge in the context of performance and stagecraft. Emphasise that the goal is not to find a definitive answer but to stimulate creative thinking.

Pose the Challenge

Assign students or groups an "Impossible Task" related to a scene, theme, or element of their performance project. Examples could include portraying weightlessness, conveying the passage of time, or representing abstract concepts.

Research and Brainstorming

Encourage students to research various methods used in theatre, film, or other artistic mediums to address similar challenges. Facilitate brainstorming sessions where students explore unconventional and imaginative approaches.

Creative Solutions

Instruct students to devise a plan for tackling the "Impossible Task" on stage. Encourage the incorporation of elements like movement, sound, and visuals in their proposed solutions.

Presentation and Discussion

Have each group or student present their approach to the "Impossible Task." Facilitate a discussion on the diverse solutions, creative thinking, and the potential application of these ideas in other aspects of their performance.

Reflection for Performance Concepts

An activity designed to encourage thorough and thoughtful reflection on either a performance observed or their own performance concepts.

One of our key ideas in our manifesto is that good art should cause trouble. We think you should leave an arts experience with something having shifted, having moved, having been re-understood or reframed.

Allow students to reflect on a performance they have viewed, or one of their own performance concepts:

How has the performance you observed or created affected its audience? Discuss how the performance may have altered the audience's perspective, moved them emotionally, or prompted them to reconsider or reinterpret something.

REFERENCES & OTHER SOURCES OF INTEREST

Autoteatro Manifesto, by Rotozaza:

https://rotozaza.co.uk/autoteatro.html

The Deep Sea, Example of Surprising Storytelling:

https://neal.fun/deep-sea/

The End of Climate Art, think piece by playwright David Finnigan:

https://davidfinnigan.substack.com/p/the-end-of-climate-art

The History of Loneliness, New Yorker article by Jill Lepore:

https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/06/the-history-of-loneliness

The Last Breath, Documentary

Leaving Space at the Table, article by director Nathan Sibthorpe on rationale for interactivity:

https://thewritingplatform.com/2019/12/leaving-space-at-the-table/

The Lighthouse, Robert Eggers Film

Melancholia, Lars Von Trier Film

QCAA General Senior Syllabus (2019) Version 1.1:

https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/the-arts/drama/syllabus

Scripture for a Smoke Screen, video artwork by Amrita Hepi about the Dolphin House:

https://www.acmi.net.au/works/121852--scripture-for-a-smoke-screen-episode-1-dolphin-house/

Spotify playlist from development, compiled by the team and curated by Mike Willmett:

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5HVUWStxYKOzvAOwAl8kFJ?si=98n3x8wkSx6N-gpf8e1UDg

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- Prior to attending the performance, provide your students with a briefing on appropriate theatre etiquette.
 Emphasise that the experience is interactive and stress the importance of being patient and respectful at all times.
- With this in mind, students will not be able to use notebooks in this experience.
- · Photography and filming of the production is strictly prohibited due to copyright.
- Please ensure you and your students are carrying as little as possible. All watches, devices, bags, and jackets
 will be removed and stored in cloaking tubs.
- Please do not bring school bags into the foyer and theatre.
- Please arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the show starting. If you are running late please call Box Office on 07 3002 7100 and let them know.



ABOUT THE VENUE

Metro Arts is developing the future of Australian contemporary arts practice, now.

With a profound 43-year legacy, Metro Arts is at the forefront of nurturing Australian creative talent, serving as an incubator and launch pad for some of the country's finest artists.

Small but mighty, Metro Arts provides vital support and space for new ideas to flourish - encouraging independent artists to take risks and push the status quo.

Metro Arts is equipped with state-of-the-art galleries, artist studios and theatre facilities - all located within the thriving West Village precinct in West End.

LOCATION: Factory Lane, West Village, 97 Boundary Street, West End, QLD 4101.

