

# THE SHOE HORN SONATA

by John Misto

Playreading



## Teacher's Notes

*Written by Anni Finsterer*

# ABOUT US

## Education at Riverside

Education is at the heart of our program at Riverside through the productions we create in house and the whole body of work we offer to students and teachers.

Our 2014 Secondary Program is bursting with exciting and inspiring ways to connect professional theatre-making with the English, Drama and Theatre studies curriculum's to provide an enjoyable way for students to gain real support for those key study areas.

But theatre should also inspire a love of live performance, spark imagination and creativity and enable young people living in today's complex society, to feel confident to express themselves, to feel empathy with other people and to develop key life skills. At Riverside we believe the beauty of live theatre is that it allows us to discover our place in society. Why? Because all the world's a stage.

## About our Teacher's Notes

These notes suggest practical activities to enhance student learning in the HSC English Standard and ESL topic area 'Experience through Language: Distinctly Visual'. They also provide students with reflections on professional practice surrounding the creation of contemporary Australian theatre.

The notes are designed to accompany the playreading of *The Shoe Horn Sonata* staged at Riverside Theatres, Parramatta, in March 2014, and have been written by the director Anni Finsterer in association with Riverside Theatres.

### ***The Shoe Horn Sonata*, by John Misto**

### **Playreading and Discussion, Directed by Anni Finsterer**

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the reading of Parramatta Riversides 2014 of The Shoe Horn Sonata. Thanks go out to John Misto, Camilla Rountree and Amy Matthews at Riverside for mounting this work and for having me along; to the actors Deborah Kennedy, Belinda Giblin and Drayton Morley and to you the teachers and students who will re awaken this work back in the room.

I feel really privileged to be working on such a rich and confronting text, a work which speaks to us of a time of great suffering and great courage and I can only thank John Misto for having the vision and grit to create a dramatic work that serves us in so many ways, reminding us of the experience of war, whilst asking us to also consider the complexity of the human condition, so beautifully rendered here when two women who have suffered so greatly together, tussle to find a way to relate to each other in peace time. What they endured was ruinous and unthinkable and yet it was endured courageously; with a humour and poise that enabled them to preserve their identity and a sense of personal governance that allowed individual effectiveness to emerge through the severest of circumstances.

### **Rewind to the back-story:**

The Australian Nurses, captured and incarcerated by the Japanese during World War 2 were tortured for 1,287 days as Prisoners of War. Those depicted in The Shoe Horn Sonata were totally unaware of the diabolical and defenceless position they were in when they were busily doing their jobs as Nurses and taking care of the wounded. They didn't know the British forces were gobsmackingly ill -prepared for the onslaught of the Japanese invasion, that the shore lines were not fortified, that the inadequate artillery they had in their possession was turned towards the air and not the sea, that the lights of Singapore illuminated the city allowing full vision for the bombers to do their invidious work. The Nurses on duty assumed that they would be allowed to contribute to the war effort by doing the essential job they had been trained for in caring for the wounded. One can only imagine their surprise when they evacuated to a ferry built for 12 with 300 others and then proceeded to sail on the South China Sea directly towards the Japanese destroyers. And this epoch was just the beginning of the horrendous tribulations that lay ahead for the girls in the Prisoner of war camps leading to their collective near death.

One month after the Japanese surrender, twenty-four surviving nurses left for Australian shores, marking the end of an ordeal unthinkable for those of us who have never had to endure war. Thank god for the thoughtfulness of the Australian war correspondent Hayden Lennard who began searching for the Nurses after the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945, asking the local villagers to help locate their camp.

The Shoe Horn Sonata, besides being a ripping yarn and a display of dramatic techniques that visually and aurally deliver a play of great theatrical effect, also unearths the inner world the Nurses created, which quite simply, fuelled their life-force. The music they made usurped the domineering effect of the war and the merits they practiced lifted their spirits and helped them survive; virtues of strength, friendship, loyalty and wise cracking humour. I can only hope that I too would have been able to harness at least one or two of these attributes if I were unfortunate enough to find myself in the same position of these extraordinary women.

Whilst many have said that this play was written for the Female Prisoners of War and their families, I believe that this is a play that was written for all of us. For we all have tough and sometimes insurmountable problems to deal with and although they may never come close to what these women endured and survived, the common question remains: how do we deal with difficult situations? What do we bring to the concept of Resilience, of strength, of maintaining grace under pressure? Of our ability to get back up after falling down, our capacity to cope, to bounce back; to adapt to adversity, trauma, tragedy, stress? And importantly, do we look to our family and community and seek out the friendship and the laughter to buoy us and sustain us? Do we recall others who have been down the same road as the one we're travelling? Maybe when we find ourselves at a low ebb, we might recall the fate of these remarkable women and call on their astonishing strength to not just survive, but to thrive.

Anni

*When we are no longer able to change a situation we are challenged to change ourselves.*

Victor Frankl

## AN INTRODUCTION to 'THE SHOE-HORN SONATA'

The Shoe-Horn Sonata is a powerful award-winning play based on the true events of two women who survived three and a half years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in the jungles of Sumatra during World War II. In 1942, a group of sixty-five Australian Army Nurses were evacuated from Malaya. When Singapore fell to the Japanese, the Nurses ship was bombed and sunk. Of the fifty-three survivors, twenty one were murdered and thirty two were taken prisoner.

Fifty years later, Sheila and Bridie are reunited to recall their experiences for a TV documentary. What they expect in coming together after many years apart is to relive their memories; the hardships, horrors and tenuous achievements, as well as the humor and daring that was necessary to their survival. What they did not expect was to uncover a devastating secret that both divided and haunted them for half a century.

John Misto's play incorporates an array of dramatic techniques, both visual and auditory, to bring to life the extraordinary experiences of extraordinary women; stories of survival, Australian/ British rivalry and of optimism. Underscoring the story telling is music of the era, conveying the joy, creativity and fortitude of desperate women in the camp and an array of photograph memorabilia that provides us with historical references and reminders of the horror of the experience.

The Shoe-Horn Sonata can be seen as a living memorial dedicated to the brave and often forgotten Australian female war heroes who endured torture and captivity. The play's longevity ensures their sacrifices will not be forgotten.

*'I do not have the power to build a memorial so I wrote a play instead.'*

John Misto

## About the Author

John Misto began his writing career as a documentary writer, who desired to write this particular story as a drama, driven by the robust stories that resulted from the survivor's fight for survival, the effect of trauma on their later lives, the traumatic consequences of long term suffering, the lack of commemorative tribute and the disappointing compensation for the trauma where each Nurse was sent thirty pounds (sixpence a day for each day of imprisonment.)

Rather than crafting a somber piece however, Misto created an amusing and musical text, elements which can be viewed as devices to avoid a tale of misery and futility and to demonstrate how the nurses overcame their seemingly impossible hardships. The contrast between the characters, the straitlaced British Sheila juxtaposed with the earthy Aussie, Bridie, provides much of the disparity and sparkle.

# **SECTION 1:**

## **THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

# AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

On 3 September 1939 Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Second World War. A million men and women from Australia served in the Second World War in campaigns against Germany Italy, the Mediterranean, North Africa and against Japan in south-east Asia and other parts of the Pacific. The Australian mainland came under direct attack for the first time, as Japanese aircraft bombed towns in north-west Australia and Japanese midget submarines attacked Sydney harbour.

On 7 May 1945 the German High Command authorised the signing of an unconditional surrender on all fronts: the war in Europe was over. The surrender was to take effect at midnight on 8–9 May 1945. On 14 August 1945 Japan acknowledged the Allied demand for surrender, which signaled, for Australia, the end of the Second World War.

*The Shoe-Horn Sonata* was inspired by the real-life experiences of Australian nurses taken prisoner during World War 2 by the Japanese Army after the fall of Singapore in 1942. The British, after 120 years of rule in Singapore had prepared to defend themselves from attack by pointing all heavy artillery towards the sea. When the Japanese Air Force launched an aggressive air assault, they were unable to counter the attack.

The following statistics resulted from this aggressive assault:

- 130,000 prisoners were taken, mostly non-combatant to bolster the Singapore stronghold.
- More than 16,000 of these troops were Aussies.
- One third of 27,000 Australians who died in World War 2 were Prisoners of the Japanese prison camps
- The women who died were not included in these statistics.
- One of the conditions of the surrender by the British surrender stated that civilian women and children would be protected.
- When women were moved from Muntok camp to Belalau, they were only provided with a small of food if they were able to work. To fall sick signaled certain death.
- From 1942 to the end of the war in August 1945, the Army Nurses lived in crude and at times desperate conditions.

- Twenty-four out of an original sixty-five Nurses were brought back to Australia in October, 1945. Many had drowned or been shot dead as they were being evacuated from Singapore when the Japanese forces moved in.
- While the war ended on 15 August 1945, the Japanese Army failed to disclose the existence of a Women's Prison Camp.
- On August 24, an Australian journalist discovered the camp. In the eleven days since the end of the war, unendurable hardship ensued where many more prisoners lost their lives.
- Fifty years after that war had ended, Australia had still not honoured the 800 women and children held at Muntok POW camp by producing a remembrance.

## WHO'S WHO?

On Page 79, the stage directions state that the faces of Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Mao appear accompanied by the following lyrics from 'Whispering Grass.'

*Why do you whisper green grass?*

*Why tell the trees what ain't so?*

*Whispering trees don't tell the trees*

*What the trees done need to know.*

The appearance of the Political leaders and opponents provide the audience with a context of World Wars and bring to life the many war time deals and transactions which may have been made to achieve National security but which compromised, affected and destroyed many lives.

The last two lines of the lyrics of the song are ironic and allude to the fact that the leaders on the screen have made political decisions and concealed certain information from the citizens it most affects.

### ***Sir Winston Churchill: 1874 – 1965***



The Prime Minister of The United Kingdom: from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955. Churchill was widely regarded as one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th Century. Churchill was also an officer in the British Army, a historian, a writer, and an artist. He is the only British Prime Minister to have received the Nobel Prize in Literature, and was the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States.

### **Adolf Hitler: 1889- 1945**



Adolf Hitler ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945. He called himself Führer (Leader). Hitler believed that Germans were born to rule over other peoples and that there was no place in society for Jewish people, leading to World War 2 and the Holocaust where millions of Jews and Gypsies were killed. Hitler was responsible for some of the most horrifying crimes committed in human history. His detestation of Jewish people resulted in their extermination from Germany and forcing them into concentration camps where 6 million Jews, gypsies and the handicapped were killed during the war.

By early 1945, Germany's military situation was on the verge of total collapse and in full retreat, leaving no front line to defend against bombardment by Soviet artillery. Hitler, presiding over a rapidly disintegrating Third Reich committed suicide by gunshot on 30 April 1945. His wife, Eva Braun committed suicide with him by ingesting poison.

### **Benito Mussolini: 1883-1945**



Benito Mussolini was a politician, journalist, and leader of the Fascist Party, ruling the country from 1922 until 1943. In 1925, he dropped all pretense of democracy and set up a dictatorship. Mussolini was a key figure in the creation of fascism; moving from Socialism to this new political movement - 'fascism' over the course of his lifetime. In 1932 Mussolini wrote for the Italian Encyclopedia on the definition of fascism. In part he explains:

*"Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State....."*

Mussolini carried out an extensive public works program and reduced unemployment, making him very popular with the people. Influenced by Hitler, Mussolini instituted discrimination policies against the Jews in Italy. In 1940, Italy invaded Greece with some initial success.

With Italy's resources stretched to capacity, many Italians believed the alliance with Germany would improve the situation but Hitler's declaration of war forced Italy into war and exposed weaknesses in its military. On June 4, 1944, Allied forces marched in to take control of Italy. Mussolini attempted to escape to Switzerland, but was captured by the Italian underground on April 27, 1945 to be executed the following day; his body hung on display in a Milan plaza. The Italian masses greeted Mussolini's death without regret. Mussolini had promised his people Roman glory, but his megalomania bought them only war and misery

### **Joseph Stalin: 1878-1953**



Joseph Stalin was the dictator of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from 1929 to 1953. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union was transformed from a peasant society into an industrial and military superpower. Stalin ruled by terror and millions of his own citizens died during his brutal reign. Born into poverty, Stalin became involved in revolutionary politics, as well as criminal activities, as a young man. After Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) died, Stalin outmaneuvered his rivals for control of the party. Once in power, he collectivised farming and had potential enemies executed or sent to forced labor camps. Stalin aligned with the United States and Britain in World War II; his tense relationship with the West known as the Cold War (1946-1991).

Stalin suffered a major stroke on March 1st 1953 but treatment was delayed from reaching him as a direct result of his actions over the previous decades. He slowly died, apparently in agony, finally expiring on March 5th of a brain hemorrhage. After his death, the Soviets initiated a de-Stalinization process.

### **Mao Tse-tung: 1893- 1976**



Born on December 26, 1893, in Shaoshan, Hunan Province, China, Mao Tse-tung was a communist, revolutionary, politician and socio-political theorist who served as chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1959, and led the Chinese Communist Party from 1935 until his death. In this position he converted China into a socialist state with industry and business nationalised under state ownership and socialist reforms implemented in all areas of society. Mao's "Great Leap Forward" was designed to modernize and industrialize the country; however agricultural problems deteriorated due to his policies and led to widespread famine. The Cultural Revolution, a program designed to weed out counter-revolutionary elements in Chinese society, continued until his death and had disastrous consequences.

Supporters praise Mao for modernizing China and building it into a world power, through promoting the status of women, improving education and health care, providing universal housing and raising life expectancy. China's population almost doubled during the period of Mao's leadership, from around 550 to over 900 million and Maoists hold him in high regard as a political strategist, military mastermind, statesman, poet and visionary, who has inspired many worldwide revolutionary movements. In contrast, critics see him as a dictator who oversaw human rights abuses, causing the deaths of 40–70 million people through hard labor, starvation, and executions.

## FURTHER INSPIRATION FOR WRITING THE PLAY

Misto's play is inspired by the famous account of Australian Army Nursing experiences in the diary of Betty Jeffrey (of the Australian Army Nursing Service), published as *White Coolies* in 1954 (reprinted 1999, Angus and Robertson.)

Reading this book as a teenager, Misto said he could not forget it and many years later, set about researching his play by interviewing many of the survivors. From these many accounts, the characters of Bridie and Sheila were constructed and the events they describe occurring between 1942 and 1995. Every incident they depict is factual and the symbol of the play, the shoe-horn was real.

*"One group of twenty two Nurses reached the north west of Banka Island and surrender to the Japanese. On the 16 February, they were ordered into the sea and machine gunned and bayoneted to death by Japanese soldiers. Only one nurse survived, Sister Vivien Bullwinkle."*

From: "The Massacre of Parit Sulong" by Gilbert Mant referring to the sinking of Vyner Brooke.

*"One purpose of this play is to show the injustices done to the memory of the nurses, and of the thousands of other women and children who suffered with them."*

John Misto: Author's Note.

This forgotten epoch of Australian history both bewildered and frustrated Misto and drove him to write this important play, the subject of which details the horrific conditions of the Women's POW camps, five decades of Governmental silence about the Women's incarceration, the cruelty of the Japanese, the unresponsiveness and treachery of the women by the Allied Forces, the insufficient compensation for the women in the years following, the violation of the international rules of war, the bombing of ships jam-packed with women and children, the shooting of Australian nurses and soldiers, now perceived as a 'war crime'. Finally, the play exists as a disturbing reminder of the heartlessness of war as evidenced by the fact that the captors withheld essential medical supplies provided by the Red Cross, leaving them to lie fallow outside camp boundaries when women and children lay expiring inside, resulting in malnutrition, chronic illness and death.

The Shoe-Horn Sonata has been performed throughout Australia and in London. It won both the NSW Premier's Literary Award and the Australia Remembers National Play Competition - the largest playwriting prize existing in Australia. In 1995, Misto donated this prize to the Australian Nurses' National Memorial Fund.

## Inter-textual References

### FILM:

Paradise Road, written and directed by Bruce Beresford, 1997.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119859/>

### NOVELS:

*White Coolies* by Betty Jeffrey.

*White Coolies* – an account by Betty Jeffrey which formed the basis for the movie Paradise Road, written and directed by Bruce Beresford and released in 1997. *White Coolies* is a personal record kept by a Nursing sister Betty Jeffrey, during more than three years of imprisonment that followed. This is a remarkable story of deprivation and survival amidst the severest of conditions. This book is a tribute to the women's enduring spirit and to their resourceful and entertaining attempts to make their lot more tolerable; to their comradeship through the suffering and anguish and is an illustration of their incredible endurance and strength in the face of adversity. Further research into kept records unearthed other recordings for the BBC by an English woman called Norah Chambers. Norah was with a terrific singer and became Chief organizer of a vocal orchestra in the prison camp, as parts for various instruments in an orchestra, scribed by Margaret Dryburgh, an interned missionary teacher.

*One Man's War* by Stan Arneil

*One Man's War* is a diarized account of Australian soldiers living as prisoners of the Japanese, including their laborious work on the infamous Thai-Burma railroad. From Sydney, Stan was 21 when he began his diary.

## ARTICLES:

- World War 2. People's War: An archive of Memories

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/47/a8563647.shtml>

- The Australian War Memorial

<http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/stolenyears/ww2/japan/nurses/>

- Behind the Wire

<http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/behindwire/found.html>

- Margaret Dryburgh: Lyricist Of The Captive's Hymn

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Dryburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Dryburgh)

- Encyclopaedia: Women POW's in Sumatra

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-2591309983/women-pows-sumatra-19421945.html>

- The History of Australian Prisoners of War

[http://www.dva.gov.au/commems\\_oawg/commemorations/education/Documents/1POW\\_P01913.pdf](http://www.dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/commemorations/education/Documents/1POW_P01913.pdf)

# **SECTION 2:**

## **CLOSE STUDY OF THE TEXT**

# 'DISTINCTLY VISUAL'- A STUDY OF VISUAL IMAGERY

Distinctly visual elements in characterisation: Misto allows the responders to identify the characters through their place of origin, stage directions and body language. Sheila is English and presents as formal and prim, with gloves and correct posture. Bridie, the Australian, presents as less formal, laid back, using the Aussie colloquial language to embody her Australian heritage. She is also represented as taller and wider than Sheila.



## FOCUS QUESTION

1. *Describe the purpose of the visual imagery.*

The photographs are included to produce an archive of image research for the making of a television documentary, led by the unseen presenter-interviewer, Rick. They are used throughout the play to reinforce the concepts and to convey a sense of actuality of historical events. Ships burning in Singapore harbour, the Japanese invasion, the emaciation of the prisoners of war; these images remind us that this work of fiction is based on real and horrifying events.

Other images appear on screen to comment on or highlight the dialogue and stage action. These include:

- The liberated male P.O.W.s
- The nurses arriving in Singapore from Belalau
- Contrasting images of the prosperous, imposing city of Singapore before it's fall, juxtaposed with the bombed, burning city.
- Crowds of people celebrating when the war is declared over, in Martin Place, Sydney.

## Visual Imagery used within Scenes

Note: As the images are both visual and imagined in the mind of the responder, I have referred to such images as 'visualisation.'

### ACT ONE

#### Scene 1

##### IMAGES

Darkness and the voice –Bridie takes a kowtow bow. This lingers until she is released by a soldiers command conveying high/low status positions, control, and power.

The on-air sign tells us about the public nature of the broadcast.

The imagined shoe horn establishes this recurring motif

The images of the nurses disembarking in Singapore reveal the hope and enthusiasm of the nurses before the Japanese take over juxtaposed with images of Singapore - prewar and prosperous.

The sign "Don't listen to rumor" – superiority, naivety of the British.

#### Scene 2

##### IMAGES

The Motel room, showing the common space these two women will occupy.

Bridie, carrying the suitcase is juxtaposed with Sheila's delicate hands in gloves.

Bridie "exploring the bar area" - she's fond of alcohol.

The relationship is further revealed: Sheila looking at Bridie with 'surprising intensity' on p. 26

The shared moment of the suitcase lift and the memory of the brutish soldiers: rapport is established.

##### VISUALISATION

"The best view in Melbourne" showing an absence of awareness with the lifestyle of the wealthy.

Pulling out pages of the Bible for cigarette papers – using what you will to survive.

The zeros flying over Singapore, signaling Japanese military power.

The Vyner Brooke, carrying 300 people – the overcrowding and the risk that was taken. Watching the city burn whilst they 'threw their wives and children onto anything that would float'

### **Scene 3**

#### IMAGES

Innocent women and children being evacuated reveals the British have not the arms or man power to fight the Japanese.

Pictures of Singapore contrast with the Japanese flag and the overwhelming power of the Japanese

Images of the Japanese Leaders taking Singapore from the British

### **Scene 4**

#### IMAGES

The peaceable nature of the initial journey for Sheila (p. 30)

The searchlight of the Japanese

Description of the evacuation (p. 31) conjuring the frenetic event.

Bridie's description (p.33) of the injured victims in life jackets highlights the poor preparation for evacuation.

Bridie and Sheila in the water: the start of their banter and rapport.

The singing signals camaraderie and the strategies they will employ later to survive (foreshadowing) (p.34) Imagined: The Shoe horn – a significant symbol.

The simulated "pieces to camera" from Bridie and Sheila indicate their increasing familiarity with each other and the interview as well as a sense of humour about the loin cloth – we see humour as a survival technique.

### **Scene 5**

The Bolero and the Shoe Horn

#### IMAGES

Photographs of nurses – queue for food.

Photograph of 'terrifying' Japanese warrior represents Japanese cruelty and violence.

Aural technique: Young Bridie, beaten, juxtaposed with the joy of the women, highlighting their resilience and unity

#### VISUALISATION

The murdered women of Radji Beach emphasises the brutality of the Japanese and reminds us that Bridie and Sheila were lucky to survive.

The realities and brutalities of the Japanese actions are now intensifying and increase the dramatic tension.

The conditions of the camp revealed with a complete lack of privacy for women: using leaves for toilet paper and sanitary wear (p. 42) – and shows a distinction of values and privacy between Bridie and Sheila.

Lavender Street – Images of prostitutes and the seedy side of war.

The blood soaked rag – a symbol of being ‘saved’ from having to give over sexually to the Japanese.

The Bolero Choir (p. 46) – The Resilience of the women in direct contrast to earlier scenes.

## **Scene 6**

### **IMAGES**

Tobacco Tin (p. 49) reveals the selfless sacrifice offered by Sheila

The Shoe Horn (p. 50) the shame felt by Sheila – (Yet undisclosed)

Photograph of women –the physical deterioration and degradation.

### **VISUALISATION**

Young Sheila and her kindheartedness to Bridie (p.49)

Young Sheila singing for Japanese soldiers, showing a mental state and foreshadowing the later revelation.

## **Scene 7**

### **IMAGES**

Photos of POWs links past history to present context.

Visualisation: A caramel being sucked every day, showing the severe hunger and deprivation.

The singing of Christmas Carols, evoked by the soundtrack –the determination of the male POWs to maintain traditions and provide joy to female prisoners.

## **Scene 8**

### **IMAGES**

The Shoe Horn.

Spotlights at the end of the scene highlight the separation between Sheila and Bridie.

## VISUALISATION

Sheila reminiscing happily, when drinking.

The soundtrack of young Sheila begging the Japanese shows the sacrifice made by Sheila for Bridie.

## ACT TWO

### Scene 9

#### IMAGES

Giant photograph of women bowing to Japanese soldiers:

The subjugation of the women by the Japanese.

The image of John Curtin: troubled by the concept of prisoners of war, indicating government knowledge of POWs.

The image of male POWs remind us that most of the images we see of POW's are male POWs, not females.

### Scene 10

The adversities and wicked treatment of women are vividly represented by the women in this visualisation of the nurse hanging over the side of the boat cleaning the bedpans. Here we imagine the immense strength, resilience and courage of these women.

The descriptions of grave digging conjures the notion of death and reminds us that death lingers closely.

#### IMAGES

The photo of the male POWs reminds us that photos of female POWs were forbidden revealing a government cover-up.

Visualisation: Sheila being haunted by the memory of Lipstick Larry.

### Scene 11

#### IMAGES

The postcard evokes fond memories of home, the idea of home as a vital psychological support for POWs.

## VISUALISATION

Singing pieces for instruments, providing a link back to their childhood music and solace.

The fields of unmarked graves; deaths unmarked and unrecognized highlights Misto's need to create the play - to compose a memorial for their legacy.

### **Scene 12**

#### VISUALISATION

Bridie's fear of Japanese people

Chatswood – Bridie's world: western society; a modern city, a middle class life juxtaposes her current reality.

### **Scene 13**

#### IMAGES

Hiroshima Bombing - juxtaposed with the late war deaths in Belalau.

Post-war celebrations suggesting the celebratory tone of the era. Detailed stage directions inform us of the accord that has been formed from Sheila's sacrifice for Bridie.

Australian nurses post-Belalau – the miracle of the survival.

#### VISUALISATION

The Japanese destroy evidence: the diaries to prove the atrocities.

The British burning the diaries, as proof of the shame they felt at having women captured and tortured.

A Japanese brass band playing the Blue Danube waltz brings humour and pathos to the end of the war experience.

### **Scene 14**

#### IMAGES

Renewed unity exhibited non verbally:

Sheila reaching for the suitcase.

Bridie giving Sheila her address (lifelong friendship)

Sheila handing back the shoe horn.

Dancing to Strauss

A Renewal of life

A restoration of friendship

## THE BRECHIAN INFLUENCE

The 'Alienation Effect' was first developed by Bertold Brecht in the 1920's and 30's. It is a technique used to estrange the audience and force them to question the social realities of the situations being presented by breaking the illusion created by conventional plays of the time. Brecht believed that the 'suspension of disbelief' created by realistic drama with manipulative plots and heightened emotion was a form of 'escapism' and did not challenge the audience. Rather than feel a deep connection to the characters Brecht believed that an emotional distance should be maintained. It is only when this happens, that the audience can effectively critique and evaluate the struggle between the characters and understand the social realities of the narrative.

In *The Shoehorn Sonata*, the visual and aural elements as well as the reportage incited by Rick and provided by Bridie and Sheila, commentate or narrate events as a form of alienating the audience from the confronting truths the survivors reflect upon such as the brutalities of War, the power dynamics, the appalling conditions and the floggings of women left to die on the forced marches.

The effect for an audience is a greater opportunity to think critically about the given circumstances and to question the political and historical context informing the text.

# STRUCTURE AND SETTING

## **The Structure of the Play: Form**

*The Shoe-Horn Sonata* is divided into Two Acts:

Act 1: Scenes 1 - 8.

Act 2: Scenes 9 – 14.

The major climax of the play occurs in a traditional style; before the end of Act One, where a degree of suspense is resolved whilst leaving the audience curious as to the focus of Act Two.

Stage directions are used deliberately in *The Shoehorn Sonata*, more so than in many other plays. These directions tend to be very detailed, and the instructions to the actors are precise. Misto has invested within these directions much by way of the intended moods and feelings he has in mind for the characters and their revelations. Even the tone and delivery of the lines are specified, and we are given a clear indication of the emotions the composer wishes us to respond to. Directions such as ‘fondly’, ‘slightly surprised’, ‘disapprovingly’, ‘very calm’, ‘ironic smile’ and ‘casually, trying to make light of it’ provide direction for the actors so as to build the dramatic tension and suspense for the audience in the way Misto intended.

In addition, Misto takes the rather unusual step of using his script to comment and give his opinion as the horrors of the war are revealed. At the conclusion of Act 1 Scene 1 for example, Misto’s interpretive comments confirm the playwright’s passion for his subject: “The refugees are sailing towards a Japanese fleet ... a 1941 sign in Singapore that read ‘don’t listen to rumour’. Misto adds, ‘if only they had...’.

## **Setting**

The action cuts between two settings: a television studio and a Melbourne motel room where the central characters are staying after not having seen each other since the end of the war.

Misto uses the interaction between the two settings to provide us with a historical documentation of war. The more public aspects of the women’s revelations occur during the studio interviews, where recollections of the past are presented. A resolution is reached cathartically in the last interview.

The more personal disclosures and the evidence of camaraderie take place within the motel room where the tensions between them appear in their casual conversations and are eventually resolved.

# CHARACTER

## The Function of Rick, the Unseen Narrator

The character of Rick, the unseen narrator, serves the purpose of providing a structure or spine in the play as well as driving the dramatic flow. Rick's questions further the action, provide details of the women's experiences, driving the women towards a confrontation with memories and issues from their past. The male voice of Rick adds variety to the sound texture of the play. It is also a male and dominant voice, echoing the aural memory of the Prison Guards in the camp.

## Key Scenes and Development of Character

The fabric of this play is based on the variances in character between Bridie and Sheila, including age, appearance, disposition, experiences, expression, use of language, values, motivations, outlook physical expression, and communication style. The differences in the characters is resolved towards the close of the play when it is revealed that they have each faced trauma and in communicating, they each move towards resolution.

## ACT ONE

The **opening scene**, with Bridie demonstrating the deep, subservient bow, the *kowtow*, demanded of the prisoners by their Japanese guards during *tenko*, transports the audience into the past action.

Now in the present, Rick poses questions as music and images from the war period appear behind Bridie, establishing the element of the filming of a television documentary as Bridie is asked to arouse the events from fifty years ago. This scene establishes Bridie, and introduces the given circumstances: the recollection and re-living of memories of the years of imprisonment. This section also reveals the grave dangers the prisoners faced; over-crowded ships moving towards an enemy fleet, the fear of rape and the lack of preparedness of the British stronghold in Singapore for the offensive.

In **Scene Two** we are introduced to Sheila and the major conflict of the play, where Misto sets up some of the issues that will arise between the Australian Bridie and the former English girl Sheila. Sheila's arrival at the motel from Perth introduces the audience to the fact that the women have been estranged for many decades, as each seeks out basic information about personal details; marriage and children.

Status and suspense are introduced when Sheila does not reciprocate Bridie's exclamation of delight "Gee it's good to see you," and the audience is left wondering as to why until the end of Act One.

The physical language between the two described on Page 26 indicates underlying tension and yet the scene ends with their re-enactment of an old ritual (The lifting of the suitcase as they used to lift the coffins of the dead: to the cries of *Ichi, ni, san---Ya-ta!*), demonstrating that their connection lies in their traumatic shared experiences. Act One continues with the shared memories of Bridie and Sheila reflecting those of the audience, through the use of dramatic techniques.

**Scene Three:** The audience is reminded of how young Sheila was when she was taken prisoner. The voice of a teenage girl sings part of '*Jerusalem*', the stirring and visionary song with words by English poet William Blake, and the mature Sheila joins in. The song returns later when Bridie and Sheila sing it together.

We also learn in Scene three that Bridie exhibits a protective manner when they first meet drifting in the sea after being shipwrecked. Her perception is that Sheila is "another stuck-up Pom", and strikes her with her shoehorn to keep her awake. Sheila's bias is then revealed, having been taught prejudice towards the Irish by her mother and indeed is the label she plants on Bridie, the Sydney nurse from Chatswood with an Irish surname.

**Scene Five:** Further differences between the two surface in the description of the "officers' club" set up by the Japanese. But by the end of this scene they are recalling the choir and the orchestra of women's voices set up by Miss Dryburgh.

**Scene Six** sees a more spirited pair in a conga line singing the parodies of well-known songs they'd used to taunt their captors and keep their spirits up before their differing attitudes and tension again emerge as revelations increase about the deteriorating conditions for the prisoners and the unrelenting deaths, particularly in the Belalau camp.

At the end of the Act, Sheila returns the Shoehorn, she claimed she had sold for quinine to save Bridie's life but in fact she traded sex for medicine with the enemy. Sheila experiences a crushing realization when she extracts from Bridie, the suggestion through silence, that she would not have done the same for her.

*“All these years I’ve told myself that you’d have done the same for me. [Calmly] I was wrong, though, wasn’t I?”*

## **ACT TWO**

**Act Two opens** in the recording studio, as Bridie and Sheila report the appalling conditions in the death camp of Belalau where the warning from Prison guards that no prisoners would survive the war was declared, building suspense as to how this could have been possible for both our characters. Soon it becomes clear that in the years since the war ended, Sheila has led a quiet life as a librarian in Perth and has not been able to sustain a sexual relationship; nor felt able to return to Britain or to face remaining with her family in Singapore. She discloses that she drinks and experiences nightmarish recollections about Lipstick Larry. Bridie however, had been happily married for years to an Australian soldier who had flirted with her at Christmas behind the wire and is now widowed and childless.

**Scene Twelve:** Bridie’s tells of an event where, when surrounded by a group of Japanese tourists in David Jones Food Hall, she runs away with a tin of shortbread and later pleads guilty in court to shoplifting. “I still lie awake cringing with shame,” she tells Sheila. She could not explain the truth to the court or to family and friends. The effect of this event on Sheila surprises Bridie who decides that peace can only be attained if the truth is faced publically.

*“There are probably thousands of survivors like us, still trapped in the war, too ashamed to tell anyone.”*

**Scene Thirteen:** It is Bridie who reveals the truth of Sheila’s courageousness and self-sacrifice when she recounts how they were rescued, after which she asks Sheila to clarify her shoplifting arrest. The tensions between the two now slowly dissolve as all confidences have been expressed. The scene ends with the assertion Bridie has been waiting five decades for:

*“And I’d do it all over again if I had to....’cause Bridie’s my friend...”*

Friendship has been restored, the Shoe-Horn returned to its rightful owner, plans made for a Christmas reunion, and the dance they had promised each other in the camp ensues as *The Blue Danube, music of joy and triumph and survival,* plays.

# MOTIFS

## **The Shoehorn**

The dominant motif throughout the play is the shoe-horn, its symbolic meaning changing as the play progresses. We first hear of it at the beginning of the play, when Bridie speaks of it as a gift from her father before her work begins overseas as an army nurse. In this context, the shoehorn represents the memory of home, family, and a life of peace back home.

It later becomes a life-saver when Bridie and Sheila's ship sinks, forcing them to drift at sea. Bridie uses it to keep Sheila awake to prevent her from drowning. Here it is a symbol of salvation, the shoehorn inferring the quality of the friendship the women forge during their captivity.

The shoehorn is then used as a metronome, providing the rhythm for the women to sing to. Its use here gives the women spiritual solace as they transcend the depravity of their circumstances momentarily.

The shoehorn's most poignant reference is that of its symbolic meaning for Sheila in the shame and anguish she feels, and has felt since the war. Here we learn that Bridie has guilelessly believed that Sheila traded the shoehorn with the Japanese guards in exchange for quinine to cure Bridie's cerebral malaria. The climactic scene at the end of Act 1 relies on the shoehorn, and the revelation of Sheila's sacrifice for Bridie.

As the play draws to a close, the shoehorn once again becomes a positive symbol, signifying a reassertion of the friendship between the women and a healing agent for the pain they have suffered since the war. Ultimately, it comes to symbolise, as indeed their dancing together reflects, a resolution and authentic end to the psychological ordeal the war created.

## **The Chop Bone**

Act 1, Scene 5: Sheila reveals that she still carries with her an old chop bone that she and Bridie would share during their captivity. This old dry bone carries great value to the women- symbolising both the cruelty of their shared history and the doggedness of their spirit to sustain them.

### **The Tobacco Tin**

The old tobacco tin contained a solitary caramel, which the women would take out and look at, before replacing it. This small luxury conveys a sense of the severe scarcity of food as well as inferring the robust will and determination they have cultivated by being able to deny themselves and to keep the caramel.

# THEMES

## **Redemption** (*re•demp•tion*) noun

Definition:

1. an act of redeeming or atoning for a fault or mistake, or the state of being redeemed.
2. Deliverance; rescue.
3. Theology. Deliverance from sin; salvation.
4. Atonement for guilt.
5. Repurchase, as of something sold.

The most noteworthy application of the concept of redemption to the action of the play is Sheila's revelation and subsequent release from the shame of exchanging her virginity for quinine to save Sheila's life. Sheila's integrity is restored and she is better able to move on from the long years of harbouring this painful memory.

It is also significant that Bridie's moral rigidity is relaxed upon realizing that Sheila is an equal survivor to herself, proven by her sacrifice for the quinine. Her perspective of Sheila shifts to a more realistic light and proves to be Bridie's redemption.

## **The Restorative Effect of Communication and Truth**

The Shoe-Horn Sonata presents us with many confronting events the characters have hidden for half a century, the main secret being Sheila giving of herself sexually in exchange for medicine to save Bridie's life.

Bridie hides her terror of the guards, which becomes clear when she recounts the event where she ran from the shop when surrounded by the innocuous Japanese-speaking tourists.

Emotionally, the memories have worn the characters down in different ways and meeting again allows them to reveal and face the trauma of their captivity and to change or alter some of the unhelpful attitudes, which has threatened to engulf them. Communicating to each other the information the characters have formerly suppressed has a flow on effect, allowing disclosure to Rick and the world beyond, through the television documentary.

This sharing informs the ending of the piece, where a 'sonata' (a musical piece for two instruments,) is replayed as a testament to their time in captivity. The Sonata, at this point in the play, conveys a sense that the pair's musical duo operates not just at the literal level but also the metaphoric. Now we sense that the two women, in facing the harsh realities of their past, have permitted a freedom to live their lives in a greater state of peace.

### **Mateship and Resourcefulness**

The Shoe-Horn Sonata suggests that Sheila and Bridie supported each other through the most testing of times and in doing so, survived where many of their colleagues did not. Sharing 1,287 days in captivity resulted in the women knowing each other deeply as revealed when their narratives interlock and their retelling overlaps. In this way, in an underpinning of the title of the play, the women's stories often resemble a sonata, reminding us that the women were as a sonata in the camp and are again once more in this, their moment of retelling.

Along with the sacrifice for Bridie on Sheila's part, the girls were able to apply their knowledge of well-being to maintain reasonable health without any medical stores.

Research and anecdotal evidence from the memoirs of Australian prisoners-of-war suggests that Australians generally experienced a higher rate of survival than other nationalities taken by the Japanese. Suppositions as to why this is the case firstly presents mateship as the reason; the sense of shared pain, 'having your mate's back' (protection), belonging, communicating sufferings and therefore relieving the sense of aloneness within that suffering.

Secondly, Australians generally exhibited an optimistic, resourceful 'can-do' attitude, when tackling difficult tasks. Other nationalities considered Aussies to be practical, useful and independent and easily dismissed the authorities as the people to initiate action.

### **Power**

The concept of Power is exercised in several ways in the play. The foundation of the prison camp rests on the low status of the subservient women prisoners juxtaposed with the high status position of the male guards and the way in which they controlled and humiliated the women.

We are reminded of the power structure with the introduction of Rick and the sense of authority he projects, dictating and interrupting so as to produce what he believes to be good television.

The third manifestation of the power paradigm exists between the women as they initially battle for ascendancy, contradicting each other and holding firm to personal barriers to keep the other at bay. The status shifts with Sheila's wartime secret is revealed, an event which resolves this power relationship and sees balance restored.

Power struggles are evident in the play with the documented images of war, telling of the real and devastating effect of the abuse of power on Australian men and women during this terrible war.

### **Writing History**

We have an official history of World War 2 and it does not include the female prisoners of war in Belalau. Within the body of this text, Misto has built in a device where the audience is asked to consider which material will be included and which excluded in the documentary and within this, Rick represents the patriarchal authority who will make the final assessment of recording past events. It's important to consider which aspects of the official war history with Japan are challenged in the text through the characters and what does this tell us about the process of historiography? The concept of omitting details of the truth from the re-telling of stories asks us to reflect not just what historiographers do but also what Shelia did by omitting the information about her losing her virginity with a soldier. This poignant reveal becomes an allegory in the play for the personal cost of the historical concealment of the Women who suffered so greatly.

Heroism (*her•o•ism*) noun

Definition:

1. Heroic conduct or behavior.
2. Heroic characteristics or qualities; courage.

The actions of the imprisoned women are twice described as being worthy of medals. During the difficult transportation to Belalau, the actions of a Nurse is re- told by Sheila who spent the whole time on the boat 'hanging off a six inch ledge, emptying out and rinsing bedpans' ... 'she kept saying that we weren't animals and she'd rather die than be treated like one.'

Bridie remarks later that Sheila engaging in sex with a soldier for the quinine was worthy of a medal...  
'they don't give medals for things like that but they should.'

### **Music as a Healing Agent**

healing (*hi:lɪŋ*)

noun

Definition:

1. the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again; "the gift of healing"

adjective: healing

2. tending to heal; therapeutic.

The 'Sonata,' referred to in the title of the play, alludes to the power of music to inspire, as proved by Scientists in recent times who have discovered that music has a powerful effect on people's lives than previously realized. Music is now seen as having healing properties as it employs both sides of the brain; the left side processing the emotional aspect of music and the right brain processing the logical and numerical aspect of music. Mood can be effectively communicated through music based on tempo, quality and message. That music sung by the POW elevated spirits (made clear from the title of the play) and tells us of the women's urge for creativity, community and resourcefulness in creating an 'orchestra' consisting of their voices and a Shoe-Horn. Bridie and Sheila show that they unconsciously need the helpful aspects of music to endure when others have fallen ill or died and do so by creating their own 'sonata.' They suggest that a seed of their resilience and sense of joy was discovered in remembering culture and ritual when recalling the surprise one Christmas when the Australian men visited and sang, from the outside of the barbed wire fence, "O, Come All Ye Faithful"; a gift returned in song by the women's choir.

Music is also represented as an act of defiance or rebellion at the opening of Act Two, when the women sing The Captives' Hymn, and as they go on to recall their horrendous months in captivity, they recall the parodies they sang in defiance of their captors:

*"One day I killed a Jap/Killed a Jap/I hit him on the head/ With a bloody lump of lead..."*

# TECHNIQUES

The **Visual, Vocal and Verbal** techniques this composer has constructed meaning.

These can be categorised as follows:

- Literary devices: Descriptive language, imagery, metaphors, similes, symbolism, personification, motifs, allusion, contrast, juxtaposition, parody and repetition.
- Visual devices: Stage directions, body language, photographic images and lighting.
- Aural: The use of Music, Voice and Sound



## FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. *Discuss as a class the various techniques composers use to convey meaning in their texts and in particular Shoehorn Sonata.*
2. *How does the relationship between what you see and what you hear about in Shoehorn Sonata add to the composer's objective of creating layers of meaning in the text?*
3. *How do the photographic images support the script and provide a changing focus for the audience?*
4. *Discuss how songs influence perceptions of time, emotions and the situations the characters find themselves in.*

## Music and Sound

The use of song and instrumental music has several purposes, describing:

- The emotional sub-text to many of the scenes
- The music's historical context; its past use in the camps.

Music is a motif and essential technique in this play, thereby earning its title *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*, taking on thematic significance as the women use music to lift their spirits and reinforce their mettle and unity during their internment. Many of the songs are used ironically to build tension whilst exposing the horrors experienced during captivity.

Music underpins many of the photographic images, at times to support memories, as well as transporting us back to the period.

For example:

1. Conclusion of Act 1 Scene 4: Jerusalem: the patriotic English song reaches a crescendo as images of the Japanese invasion appear on the upstage screens. The heroic song is strategically juxtaposed with images of absolute defeat, helping to communicate the vulnerability of the women in their imprisonment.

2. Act 1, Scene 5:

*SHEILA: fifty voices set us free*

*BRIDIE: fifty voices and a shoe-horn ...*

At this point, 'Bolero' plays, a one-movement orchestral piece by Maurice Ravel (1875–1937). This vigorous piece accompanies the text as the scene reaches its conclusion to produce a rousing exultant ending.

Other music:

*The Blue Danube Waltz*

*Danny Boy*

*Captives' Hymn: sung every Sunday by the women*

*Ravel's Bolero, sung by the voice orchestra and presented at camp concerts.*



## FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. *How is Music used in The Shoe-Horn Sonata?*
2. *What aural elements are there in the text?*
3. *In what way do they support the expressive material emerging from the memories of the characters?*
4. *What visual elements do they reinforce your understanding of?*
5. *How does the aural element help you to make sense of what you are witnessing?*
6. *Describe the music's purpose of providing irony to the situations the two women faced.*
7. *What are some examples of how of Music and Images are used?*

### Sound Effects and Recorded Dialogue

Atmospheric sound effects and recorded dialogue are used to good effect in enhancing the story, and developing the events as revealed by the women.

Some examples are:

Act 1 Scene 3: As the women discuss their meeting at sea, we hear 'the distant sound of lapping waves,' adding atmosphere and transporting us into the memories of the central characters.

Act 1 Scene 4: The recount of Bridie sewing the pin into Lipstick Larry's loincloth. Despite their mirth at the memory, we hear 'the ugly thumps of the young Bridie being punched and hit' and a voice-over of their younger selves in dialogue:

*SHEILA: [v/o] Bridie Bridie!*

*BRIDIE: [v/o, very calmly] It's all right, dear. Get back in line.*

This exchange communicates the status in the relationship - Bridie in the role of protector towards the fearful, anxious Sheila.

## Use of Voice Over

Voice-overs are used to enhance the tension as Sheila's story unfolds.

For example: Young Sheila sings '*Tomorrow Is A Lovely Day*' to create a dramatic irony, as we well know this is not the case for the young girl.

Voice Overs also move the play forward to the climactic moment at the end of Act One, when Sheila reveals the sexual favours she offered to save Bridie's life.

The young Sheila singing '*After the Ball*' offers a poignant juxtaposition as Bridie seemingly disowns the harsh facts of Sheila's actions.

Voice Overs resolve as a device at the end of Act 1 as the exposition of the play is complete. Act Two therefore deals with the confrontation of the issues raised.



### **FOCUS QUESTION**

1. *How do the elements you hear about but don't see contribute to your overall understanding of the text?*

## Dramatic Irony

This technique serves to heighten the audience's engagement with the play, and drives interest in how it plays out and how it is resolved as the audience are placed in a well-informed position in viewing this play, often aware of circumstances before the characters.

For example, the audience learn of Sheila trading sex for Bridie's life before the revelation at the end of Act 1.

Sheilas motivations then become clear: her caution, her defence of women who 'went with a jap', her unwillingness to discuss the saving of Bridies's life in detail, the hidden shoehorn and the lie that she traded it for quinine tablets when Bridie was sick with malaria.



## FOCUS QUESTION

1. *What is Dramatic Irony? How does this technique serve to heighten the audience's engagement with the play?*

### Lighting

At the beginning of the play the stage directions read: 'Darkness. Out of the silence comes the voice of Bridie'. And after the first line of dialogue, a spotlight suddenly illuminates Bridie. This use of light and dark creates atmosphere and focuses the audience's attention on both the character and what is being said in a compelling manner. As the lighting on stage gradually rises we become aware of an 'on air' sign - thus, the setting for much of the play, a television studio, is also firmly established in its first few moments.

The use of spotlights, linking the use of harsh lighting by the prison guards and the strong lighting of the television studio, is another effective dramatic technique used.

Spotlighting, blackouts and fade outs are all used for effect throughout the play. A counterpoint to the starkness of the opening scene can be found, interestingly enough, in the last scene of the play.

As Bridie and Sheila dance, symbolising their ultimate reconciliation and reaffirmation of friendship after all these years, the lights fade on them, yet a 'very bright spotlight' that highlights the shoehorn remains- at the last representing the women's triumph over the pain of the past.



## FOCUS QUESTION

1. *The text of *The Shoehorn Sonata* shows the significance of lightning as a device for creating atmosphere. How?*

## JUXTIPOSITIONS AND IRONIES IN KEY SCENES

In **SCENE 4**, the tension between Bridie and Sheila is contrasted with the sacrifice the women made for the same friendship in the face of the atrocities of the POW camp.

PAGE 37

*“BRIDIE deliberately ignores SHEILA’S rising anger. Indeed, she holds up some little motel coffee sachets and looks at them”*



### QUESTIONS

1. How does this stage direction aim to characterize the relationship between Bridie and Sheila?
2. Why does Bridie behave like this and what does it tell us about her character?

PAGE 38

*BRIDIE: it was the biggest debacle since the Greeks took Troy. And I bet you Troy there was some British general’s forbear saying [mimics cruelly] ‘What a smashing wooden horse! I say chaps, wheel her in!’*



### QUESTIONS

1. What does this parody tell us about Bridie?
2. What does it tell us about Bridie’s emotional life since her imprisonment?

PAGE 38

*BRIDIE: I got you through the war. Your empire didn’t give a damn. They left you to the Japs.*



### QUESTIONS

1. How does the above quote advance the tension in the play?
2. How does the verbal tension here compare to the tension conveyed previously in body language, tone, eye contact etc.?
3. What does this quote tell us about the Governments of the day and their response to the POW?

SHEILA: *And then – one wonderful morning – Lipstick Larry comes strutting out into the tenko – wearing some of our handiwork beneath his baggy shorts*



### QUESTIONS

1. *What does the above light-hearted image of Larry contrast with and what effect does it wish create for the viewer?*
2. *What does this tell us about the women?*

*“Ya-ta!!”*

*Then BRIDIE and SHEILA drink. On the soundtrack we can still hear LIPSTICK LARRY beating BRIDIE. Blackout.*



### QUESTIONS

1. *What is the image of Sheila and Bridie drinking juxtaposed against and to what effect?*
2. *What does this juxtaposition suggest to us about memories of the past and the impact on the women’s lives and indeed, on our own our present lives?*

## SCENE 8

In this scene, the obvious tension in the relationship between Bridie and Sheila is contrasted with the sacrifice the women made for the same friendship in the face of the atrocities of the POW camp.

*“Remember how pretty we thought it was? The frangipani everywhere – their perfume used to make us sick ... [...] and those nights. Filled with screams.”*



### QUESTION

1. *What is Misto saying about the relationship between appearance and reality in the play?*

PAGE 58

*"... plenty of room in the graveyard for her"*



**QUESTION**

1. *Why does the Composer use direct speech here and to what effect?*

PAGE 58

*"Looking at the shoe-horn"*



**QUESTION**

1. *The Motif of the shoe horn is used throughout the text to symbolize...*

PAGE 60

SHEILA: *"[...] You can't tell the truth if you look away"*



**QUESTIONS**

1. *What does Sheila mean?*
2. *How do you think this quote might relate to something that has occurred in your life?*

**SCENE 14**

This is the final scene in which we see Sheila and Bridie finally begin to leave the war behind.



**DISCUSS**

1. *Discuss the differences in approaching trauma in 1942 compared to now.*
2. *Discuss the role / effect of friendship and communication on the aftermath of trauma.*

## **SECTION 3:**

# **DRAMATIC AND PRACTICAL EXPLORATION OF THE TEXT**

# THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

## INTRODUCTION

The Elements of Drama are a part of the compulsory content that makes up the NSW Drama Course, Years K-12. They are a useful tool for identifying the features that give drama unique shape and form.

Misto's text combines the Elements of Drama including the Human Context (mate-ship), Tension, Suspense, Surprise, Confrontation, Mood, Symbol and a final Resolution.

The Elements of Drama can be deconstructed in the following way:

**ROLE & CHARACTER** -The who

Plus the **SITUATION** - The what

Driven by **THE TENSION** - when the audience anticipates the outcome - pushing the drama towards the high point or climax.

Directed by the **FOCUS** - the central theme, issue or problem, made explicit by **PLACE & TIME** - the where?

Conveyed through the **DRAMATIC STRUCTURE** - the form & style.

Expressed by – **LANGUAGE, SOUND AND MOVEMENT** –

Indicating the status relationship, the urgency of the task leading to the **KEY MOMENTS** in the performance to build dramatic tension in the **SPACE**, communicating the relationships between characters and the environment while the **RHYTHM** manipulates timing through pace and tempo.

TO CREATE – **SYMBOL & ATMOSPHERE**, objects, signs, flags, settings, gestures and language used in drama to represent issues and themes and to help establish atmosphere, which together create **DRAMATIC MEANING** and – **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**.



## PRACTICAL TASK

*Warm up: Complete the following sentences in movement*

- *The tension was ...*
- *The rhythm was ...*
- *The actor's movement was ...*
- *The actor/audience relationship was ...*
- *The sound of the Chorus was ...*
- *The scenery was ...*
- *The hopeful themes ...*
- *The play's structure ...*
- *The characters spoke ...*

## THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA WORKSHOP

The following activities are based on the Elements of Drama. Whilst written for the Drama classroom they can be adapted as tools for understanding and comprehending the text in any subject.

### 1. The Human Context: Roles, Relationship, Situation and Tension

**Roles:** The role the character plays and how it serves the play as a whole.



#### QUESTIONS

1. *Describe the characters, their beliefs, attitudes, ideas, what motivates or challenges them.*
2. *What is their objective in the play? How does their status influence their behavior?*

**Relationships:** Relationships between characters and environment:



### DISCUSSION

1. *Discuss in small groups or as a whole class how the characters relate.*
2. *Discuss why characters feel and act the way they do. Every significant relationship should be addressed.*
3. *How does the character relate to their environment?*
4. *How does this give you insight into the characters?*

**Situation:** Choose a character from the text.



### QUESTIONS

1. *What Situation is the character in?*
2. *How does this situation determine the focus? Give a detailed response with strong evidence from the text.*

**Tension:** There are the four tensions: **Task. Mystery. Surprise. Relationship.**

Dramatic Tension is caused when there is a task, desire (objective) that one character wants and Obstacles are in the way of them achieving it.

Dramatic tension is resolved by achieving the victory (or completing the task.)

There are four major ways of creating and intensifying drama.

- a) The tension of the task
- b) The tension of relationships
- c) The tension of surprise
- d) The tension of mystery

- a) The problem of the task, which the characters must complete, creates the **tension of the task** and is resolved by – completing the task, achieving the goal or losing.
- b) The problem of relationships between the characters creates **the tension of relationships** resolved by managing the relationships.
- c) The problem of the characters not knowing what has transpired creates the **tension of surprise** resolved by circumstances unfolding.
- d) The problem of the characters not knowing what it all means creates **the tension of mystery** resolved by the action moving forward and everything becoming clear.



### DISCUSSION

1. *Discuss the ways in which the four tensions are utilised to create overall dramatic tension in the play.*



### PRACTICAL TASK

1. *Rehearse a movement sequence of the Soldiers interacting with the POW's to physically and vocally increase Dramatic tension.*

## 2. Focus

Focus directs attention to what is most significant and intensifies the dramatic meaning.

There are four related areas of focus:

The focus of the **scene, audience, character and actor**.

The focus of the **Scene**:



### **DISCUSSION**

1. *In small groups, choose a sequence of scenes and determine the focus or the significant moment of each scene.*

The focus of the **Audience**:

Choose a sequence of Scenes.



### **DISCUSSION**

1. *If you were to direct the attention of the audience, what or who would you focus on and how would you achieve this?*

The focus of the **Character**:



### **DISCUSSION**

1. To whom or what is the character directing their attention? Discuss as a whole class for each character.

The focus of the **Actor**:

In Act 1 there is a reference to the English assuming the enemy couldn't see properly because of their slanty eyes.



### **DISCUSSION**

1. *What other labels, biases and prejudices exist in the play?*
2. *Define the various modes of focus that must be used to execute this scene.*
3. *Discuss the ways in which actors sustain their internal concentration and belief in role.*



## PRACTICAL TASK

1. Refer to the text in Scene 12. Improvise a scene **before and after** the dialogue begins about the David Jones Food Hall experience.
2. Debrief by discussing how you created and maintained the focus of the scene, directing the attention of an imagined audience, the characters and within the actor.

### 3. Dramatic Imagery

Dramatic Imagery is the combining of elements such as words, sounds, movement and music in order to create a particular feeling or mood in the piece.



## QUESTIONS

1. Describe the language in *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*. Is it naturalistic or stylistic?
2. How is the story expressed?
3. How does the piece express movement ideas?
4. Is this important in the story of *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*? Why?
5. Go through the part of the story you believe most important or significant for one of the characters.
6. Choose the most important words and write a list.
7. Go through the same part of the story and pick out any images that are present.
8. What piece of music would work well with the mood of the sequence you have chosen?

### 4. Proxemics, Location & Setting

#### The Use of Space

The space and spatial design is manipulated to visually communicate relationships between characters and their environment.



## QUESTIONS

1. *What are the different locations the story uses?*
2. *Comment on the polarised use of space: The moments where characters are isolated versus the moments where a sense of community spirit is introduced.*

### Period: (time of day, season, year)



## RESEARCH

1. *Research the climate of Singapore. How did the climate affect the health or wellbeing of the POW's?*
2. *Discuss how to stage each of these examples to create a clear picture of the place and time the writer is trying to depict.*
3. *Starting from World War 1, discuss the use of time, in relation to the Shoe-horn. Refer to the use of time in the play's use of music.*

### Pace & Tempo:

Different characters have different tempos. The manipulation of timing through pace and tempo will determine the dramatic effect of the production.



## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. *When the pace of the story change?*
2. *How does this affect dramatic tension?*
3. *Report ideas back to the class.*

## 5. Mood, Symbols and Atmosphere

Mood and atmosphere is created by the combination of the human context, the space, time, language, movement and production values of the piece. (e.g., Lights, Sound, Costumes and Music.) They are used in drama to represent issues and themes and to establish atmosphere.

Symbols are objects or references to objects which have specific significance and meaning.



## QUESTIONS

1. What do the following represent?

- *The Shoe-horn*
- *Suitcases*
- *Slouch hats*
- *Woy Woy*
- *Chatswood*
- *Quinine*

2. Refer to the text:

*P.49. Sheila is shown a tobacco tin and claims to not remember giving it to Bridie for her Birthday in 1942. Stage directions tell us 'it's obvious she remembers'.*

- *Discuss these directives from the playwright. What is the message from the playwright here and what effect do you think it has on an audience?*
- *Why are Symbols and Mood so important to the story of *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*?*
- *Use evocative language to describe the effect of the music.*
- *Use evocative language to describe the effect of young Sheila's voice singing 'Tomorrow is a lovely day,' to a group of Japanese soldiers.*
- *Use evocative language to describe how Bridie feels when she thinks about a caramel. (Scene Seven.)*
- *Use evocative language to describe how Bridie feels when she thinks about the song, 'God Save the King' (Scene Eight)*
- *Discuss the use of the word 'Calmly' and how it is used in Scene Eight. What is the effect of the rhythm and repetition in this scene?*
- *Use evocative music and set it to the phrase: 'Why did you leave me?' (P.56)*
- *Play two different types of music of differing moods. Discuss as a class what part of the story you would set to each piece.*
- *Brainstorm how you would use each element of drama to create mood. Consider Lighting effects, sound effects, proxemics and so on.*

## Performance styles

A variety of performance styles are used to create dramatic meaning in *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*.



### QUESTION

1. Describe the various styles and what effect they have on creating engagement with the audience.

*Include the use of:*

- *The Interviewer: Rick*
- *Characterisation*
- *Voice Over*
- *Singing*
- *Recounts*

# MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

The following activities are based on Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences and are suitable for students of any subject.

## Introduction



### RESEARCH

1. *What are Gardner's Multiple Intelligences? In small groups, do research on these and come up with a list and explanation for each one.*
2. *Report your findings back to the class.*



### WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

*"Most teenagers do not expect to wake up and find themselves in a concentration camp. But this is exactly what happened to one hundred thousand school children in Asia, when the Japanese invaded their countries in 1942." John Misto*

1. *Discuss the above quote. In groups, respond to what this quote invokes in you. Use this quote as inspiration to make meaning and create a variety of responses using Multiple Intelligences.*
2. *Discuss the themes of Loyalty, Sacrifice, Reconciliation.*
3. *What do these themes mean to you and why? What do they evoke in you?*
4. *When have one or more of the themes directed or governed your life and how?*

## Intrapersonal



### WRITTEN ACTIVITY

1. *Explain how Misto uses photographs. What is his intention and what is the effect for an audience?*

2. Find three documentary photographs and for each, provide quotations from the accompanying scene, linking each image shown.
3. Write freely about “Shoe-Horn sonata” and its significance in the play. Include the use of humour employed by Misto to relieve the tension and give us an insight into the spiritedness of the Nurses.
4. Why is the aural element in the play so important? What does it contribute to the play? Find three songs and explain they’re relevance to the scene they’re featured in.
5. What are the main sources of conflict in this play, and how are they finally resolved?
6. In what sense is this a play about the triumph of the human spirit?
7. “I do not have the power to build a memorial. So I wrote a play instead.” How successful is this play as a memorial to the Australian nurses and other POW women?
8. Read each scene thoroughly. Choose three to focus on and provide a summary outlining the driving drama of the scene. Look for the action which propels the play along.
9. Write a list of the main themes of ‘The Shoe-horn Sonata’ and find one quotation for each from the play as an example of the way it has been presented by Misto. Note down one scene where this theme is clearly presented to the audience.
10. Survival is a popular theme in modern books and television shows. What qualities are needed for survival, according to this play?



### CREATIVE WRITING

1. You are asked to direct a scene of *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*. Outline your directorial approach, find images to use for the scene, block out your characters movements and make notes about the actor’s delivery and impact you would like an audience to have.
2. Create character profiles for Bridie and Sheila allowing one to two pages for each. Provide quotes, actions, body language as provided by the writer, to support your character outlines.
3. Develop a back story for either Sheila or Bridie, using facts from the play and your imagination to build a character of some dimension. How would your character experience significant moments from life?

4. *Make a diary entry as each character detailing your visit to Melbourne and the impact the meeting with your fellow Nurse and the documentary interview had on you.*
5. *Write a journal reflecting your impression of the play. Talk about the feelings it evoked in you and which characters you identified with and who you didn't. Give reasons why.*
6. *Imagine Bridie or Sheila have come to visit you in your house. What would they think of the way you live? Which aspects of your life do you think they would struggle to understand?*



### **SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES**

1. *Develop a scene that comes before the first written scene and present it to the class.*
2. *Develop a scene that follows the final scene. Where does the play now take you and why?*
3. *Create a character using voice over as a device, someone who works alongside Rick. What does this new non-visual character bring to the story?*
4. *Create a character that enters into one of the scenes. How does this character impact upon the scene? Is it a positive change or not? Why? What would change, why and how?*
5. *Take this last point further and discuss with the class how this new character may impact on the play as a whole.*



### **WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION**

1. *Discuss power and the abuse of power.*
2. *Find examples in your own life where maltreatment has influenced yours or someone else's fate.*
3. *Think about your community. Where is music used, how and why?*
4. *What are the social and political conditions you live with? What are the major concerns in politics? Why? Consider family dynamic, employment figures and financial status. Can you image a scenario in political life sparking a war? What would that be?*



## CREATIVE WRITING

1. *Construct a day in the life of a character contending with one of the social factors you have identified.*



## WATCH AND WRITE

Watch the Ryan's Great Uncle's You Tube extract here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZK--vJFZy70>

Answer the following questions:

1. *What is your personal response to the interview?*
2. *Explain how you respond to Uncle, his character, his laughter, his story telling.*
3. *Listen carefully at 7.20. What do you think about this story?*
4. *Imagine you know this British POW. What happened to him after the war? What kind of life did he lead? What stories did he have to tell those back home? What kind of person was he?*

Watch the You Tube clip of the Japanese taking Singapore here:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwMk5i6Vr\\_w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwMk5i6Vr_w)

Do the following activities:

1. *Listen carefully at 3.39. Imagine you are in the bank, inside the cage to negotiate the surrender with Colonel Percival and Yamashita. Write a scene where Yamashita tells Percival about the terms of surrender. What is his response?*
2. *Delve beyond the Yes or No responses he was only allowed to give into Percival's inner thoughts. Write his inner monologue.*

Watch the You Tube clip of an account of the reasons behind the offensive into Singapore here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDu4fwfqEKI>

Do the following activities:

1. *Imagine you are an English soldier writing a letter back home explaining what is occurring to you and your mates. Cite five reasons for the English downfall.*
2. *Explain what you believe to be the fate of Singapore now.*



### CREATIVE WRITING

1. *Write a letter to a friend explaining what has happened to you as a POW. Include your impression or opinion of your new surroundings, fellow prison mates and duties you've been assigned.*
2. *Write a journal on the dilemma faced by Sheila when having to save Bridie's life.*
3. *Write a short scene dealing with an issue you see as related to a character from the play but that has not been written about directly.*
4. *Choose a photograph from the play and analyse what dialogue it is shown with. Is there a contrast? Is it a metaphor? What does this device convey and how effective is it?*
5. *The experiences of the individual were of particular importance in the writing of The Shoe-Horn Sonata. In order to communicate this to an audience Misto employed strong and dramatic devices to reinforce the plight of the affected individuals. How did they create Misto's desired effect?*
6. *Imagine you are another actor telling your own story. Research a real story and write your own monologue.*



## WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. *The abuse of political power and the underlying moral degeneracy is a common theme in many stories. What is another novel, film or play you've seen exploring this issue?*
2. *Thinking about Discrimination, define the following terms:*
  - *Bias*
  - *Persecution*
  - *Vilification*
3. *What is the difference between these terms?*
4. *What is the impact of Bias, Persecution and Vilification on individuals? Where have you seen it manifest in your own community?*



## WATCH AND WRITE

View the movie – Paradise Road. Make notes as the movie is playing and then write about the following:

1. *Outline the nature of discrimination or bias explored in the film.*
2. *Explain how the social factors influence the development and perpetuation of discrimination.*
3. *Identify three strategies used by the women to overcome the discrimination.*
4. *Predict how successful these strategies would be in addressing other types of discrimination. What other ideas can you come up with?*
5. *Assess the characters in the film that resist the social pressure to discriminate. Examine the conflicts they face and how they overcome them.*
6. *Choose one of the words below or think of your own...*

**Honour, rebellion, yearning, humiliation, creativity, rules, community, sisterhood, honesty,**

**blood, freedom, target, vulnerable, justice, desert, racism, opposites**

*Brain-storm either a) images, b) situations or c) characters to do with that word.*



## WRITE

The Japanese played 'The Blue Danube' Waltz on trumpets to the Nurses towards the end of their incarceration.

1. *Create dialogue that precedes the moment where the Japanese made the decision to connect to the Nurses in this way. Have actors read your work.*
2. *Write a letter from Bridie's point of view explaining to Sheila how hurt she was by being abandoned or "left" by her. (P.56)*

## Interpersonal and Verbal Linguistic



### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. *Allot scenes to small groups. Each group is to act out the scene or a part thereof. Each group, in performing their scene must give a short introduction to explain where the scene and its relevance.*
2. *The audience then feedback their commentary:*
  - a. *What were the main concerns of the scene?*
  - b. *What character development was exhibited?*
  - c. *What theatrical elements were used?*
  - d. *What projected images would be used in a professional production?*
3. *Create a word cloud of the events which happen outside of the play. Reconstruct and re-enact the scenes we hear described.*

*Example: P.55: The Party Scene or the little boy who asked for an egg who then died the next day.*
4. *As no action is motiveless, play out a Scene focusing on inflection and movement implying status.*
5. *In groups of 3: Prosecution Lawyer, Survivor, Defense Lawyer. Imagine you are in a Court of Law where the Defense Lawyer has to defend one of the cruel Captors.*
  - a. *Prosecution Lawyer: Prepare your prosecution.*
  - b. *Survivor: Prepare your impact statement.*

*Spend some time preparing a script or an improvisation for the class.*

*Add on: Finish strongly in a freeze frame.*



## DISCUSSION

1. *Discuss with fellow students your own reaction to the messages the play gave you. What other concerns of the play also make an impact on you?*
2. *Survival is a common theme in books and TV shows. In small groups, discuss what qualities are needed for survival, according to this play?*
3. *Discuss the Status or pecking order of characters in a scene.*
4. *Choose one of the women as your character and critically analyse the performance styles, techniques and drama conventions used in a series of scenes.*



## WHOLE CLASS PRACTICAL TASKS

1. *Choose one of the women and brainstorm the people who might populate the world outside the play for this character; someone this character is related to, or knows. Have the characters talk to each other. Improvise. Physically extend every moment. Add sounds or words.*
2. *Hot seat: Choose a student to play Bridie and later, Sheila. Question 'Bridie' or 'Sheila', about their motivation to attend the interview with Rick, their reactions to the reunion, their feelings about their own past, and their feelings about how this meeting will affect their future. Use this as a starting point to construct your own questions. Record the question session and write down the improvisation as a monologue for performance.*



## WRITE

1. *Write a reflection on how choices in the back story affect the behaviour of the character in the play.*
2. *Refer to the text P.64. What do you imagine happened to the brave Nurse mentioned here?*
3. *Write a story about the events that followed the trip on the cattle boat.*
4. *What do you think of her decision to be of use to others? Where else have you seen selflessness of this nature? What effect does this have on individuals and communities?*



## WHOLE CLASS PRACTICAL TASK

1. *Discuss the terms below. What images do we create in our mind when we hear these words?*
2. *Using students' shoes, create two circles representative of the two paradigms (world views/voices) of Japanese and the British/Australian. Students draw these key words and terms from a hat and place them in the appropriate circle.*

- *United*
- *Possession*
- *Us versus Them*
- *We*
- *Immediate family*
- *Created family*
- *Nationalism*
- *Belonging*
- *Ownership*
- *Human rights*
- *Uniformity*
- *Love of country*
- *Resourcefulness*
- *Entrapment*
- *Power*
- *Torture*
- *Identity*
- *Commemoration*
- *Forgotten*
- *Foreign*
- *All Prisoners must have culture (p.83)*
- *Voice is separate and singular*
- *Voice is communal*

*Reflect on this learning.*

3. *Write up a paragraph using evocative language to communicate your learning or discoveries.*
4. *Use one of the words or phrases to draw, create a poster for a play on the subject, and write a short music composition.*



## SPOTLIGHT ON SCENE 7

Scene 7 reinforces the wartime bonds of friendship between the two women. The story of their shared caramel allows an audience to ponder the extreme deprivation they endured, whilst at the same time, giving us insight into the resolve, hope and friendship that provided a foundation on which to build fortitude and strength.

**Synopsis:** Rick asks Bridie to comment on the conditions in the camp. Bridie explains how the women were weighed regularly and talks about the contents of a will she drew up at this time. She also mentions a caramel, which she and Sheila would suck on every Sunday night, saving it for as long as was possible.

She tells of an event of Christmas 1943, when, to the astonishment of the women, a group of male Australian POW's appeared at the barbed-wire fence, singing Christmas carols, who were then serenaded by the women. Interestingly, the Japanese did nothing to punish the prisoners. In a celebratory mood, Sheila and Bridie then decided to have a 'proper Christmas dinner', and finished off the caramel. A soldier who had winked at Bridie lingered on in Bridie's thoughts and when the war ended, they married.



## QUESTIONS

1. *Discuss the suffering of the women Misto describes in this scene. What effect does it have on an audience?*
2. *What does the caramel symbolise?*
3. *What does the male choir appearing from nowhere convey to an audience? How is this event significant for Bridie?*
4. *Discuss the desire to enact one's own rituals at this significant time of the year. What does this tell us about the men?*
5. *What does the reaction of the women tell us about them?*

## Bodily/ Kinaesthetic



### SMALL GROUP PRACTICAL TASK

Performing the Diary Entry

(P.71)

SHEILA: Every night when I fall asleep, Lipstick Larry's waiting. He calls to me and I go to him – and no one can change that.

1. *Perform a series of tableau's that tell of this event.*
2. *Consider the transitions between your frozen pictures using the Laban weights of Press, Slash, Wring, Punch, Glide, Float, Dab,*
3. *Map out the key moments in the play including:*
  - *Rising action*
  - *Moments of inner turmoil*
  - *Climax*
  - *Falling action.*

*Perform a sequence of still images or tableau's that tell us of this sequence.*

4. *Add Music: Walk around the room and when the music stops, you will hear a word from the text called out. Respond viscerally, creating an individual sculpture.*



### WHOLE CLASS PRACTICAL TASK

1. *Perform a series of movements using inspiration from the following list:*

**Fight, Hide, Voyage, Sickness, Pain, Mother, Hope Servitude, Rape, Force, Yearning, Taken, Lost, Seek, Love, Bonsai and Ya-ta.**

2. *Choose a quote from the play and as a group, create a pastiche of ideas and images. Use transitions to take you from one frozen tableau to the next while a Narrator steps out and delivers the line you have chosen.*

- 3.

4. Refer to the text on P.66. As a Chorus, create the aural and physical environment the text suggests: *The chanting, the jungle, squabbling over scraps, digging, illness, delighted Japanese soldiers. Perform as a sequence of movements while someone reads the text.*
5. Add: *Musical score.*



### **INDIVIDUAL PRACTICAL TASK**

1. Develop a movement sequence that depicts the dramatic action and main events in *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*.
2. Choose one of characters. Concentrate on body language to depict your character. How do they walk? From where do they lead? Explore a central theme, issue or subject through the use of short, self-contained scenes. Using stylised movement, soundscapes or tableaux, create a series of moments or short scenes of contrasting styles to represent your ideas.
3. Develop a series of moving images expressing 'A day in the Life' of a Prisoner of War.



### **PRACTICAL TASK IN PAIRS**

The Japanese played 'The Blue Danube' Waltz on trumpets to the Nurses towards the end of their incarceration.

1. *Create a movement piece which demonstrates this unusual event between the soldiers and the Nurses and this moment of connection.*

## Visual/ Spatial



### WRITE and DRAW

1. *Examine how the following issues are explored through the visual component in the text and how this creates meaning for the audience:*
  - *The rise of empire*
  - *Power*
  - *War*
  - *Attitudes to women*
  - *War and atrocities*
  - *Heroism*
  - *Truth*
  - *Resilience*
2. *Consider how form and language shape affect interpretation and shape meaning.*
3. *Locate a propaganda poster or advertisement that includes some written text.*
4. *Discuss purpose, audience, context, how particular groups are represented, whether or not the images are stereotyped, what the image conveys about the world in which it is from, how the image is constructed.*
5. *To change the purpose, audience and impact, add other images or manipulate the image, alter the language or delete aspects of the original.*
6. *Explain how the new image creates new meaning.*



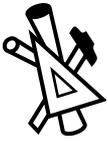
1. *Imagine you are a Public relations consultant who wants to promote an image to appeal to young people. Design an advertisement or poster and explain how the chosen elements of design and language help create your desired effect.*
2. *Imagine you are conducting a behaviour management training session to the Prisoners and their Captors. Create a model, diagram or picture to explain how biases or blinded thinking serve to limit our world-view, explaining how this behaviour has a negative impact on individuals and communities*
3. *Design a poster for a show based on the event described on page 64, called "The Bravest Act."*
4. *Imagine you are to produce a summary or report of a production of The Shoe-Horn Sonata where you have identified images, characters, symbols, setting, themes, irony, mood and atmosphere as well as cultural, political and social you consider to quintessentially Australian. If this were to be performed outside of Australia, what would audiences identify as Australian? If performed here, what do we, as Australian's, identify with? Record your experience.*



#### **SMALL GROUP TASK**

1. *Refer to the end of Scene nine: Discuss with others the concept of juxtaposition depicted where these deprived women are sent a message from Prime Minister Curtin to 'Keep Smiling'. Create a collage, drawing, painting or sketch of this concept.*
2. *Design a Collage/CD cover/ poster design using these words as inspiration.*
  - *The rise of empire*
  - *Power*
  - *War*
  - *Attitudes to women*
  - *War and atrocities*
  - *Heroism*
  - *Truth*
  - *Resilience*

3. *Discuss your design ideas for set, costume, sound and lighting. Trouble shoot in small groups all the problems and dilemmas you might encounter when staging The Shoe-Horn Sonata. Solve the problems in as many ways you can think of and present to the class.*



## DESIGN

1. *Develop a lighting design for the play. Present your ideas to the class and justify your choices.*
2. *Create a folder of images that strike you as related to the text. Design a poster and program using some of the images for the play.*

## Mathematical/ Logical



## RESEARCH

1. *Create a time line of the major turning points in the political relationship between the Allied Forces and Japan.*
2. *Research your own family history. How important is knowing your family's history and culture? Create a time line from as far back in your own time line as you can.*
3. *Create a time line of the events in the lives of both of the characters from the play.*



## WRITE

1. *Imagine the characters' in this play were male. How does this affect the story? How is the outcome different for that character? Give reasons for your hypothesis.*

## Musical/ Rhythmic



### SMALL GROUP TASKS

1. *In small groups, prepare a short scene using the dramatic convention of songs from the era used to convey memory, irony and hardship.*
2. *Create a piece of music called “50 Voices set us free.” (P.47) and /or “And while we sang there wasn’t a war.” (P.53)*
3. *Design a sound inventory of music and sound effects for the play. Include mood music for use before the play starts and for after the final curtain.*
4. *Find a piece of music you think depicts the dramatic action of the play. Write a justification for your choice. Bring it to class and discuss your reasons for your choice.*
5. *Compose a piece of music inspired by the concept of control. Consider how this concept is explored, firstly through Rick regulating the interview inciting a certain wariness in the women in the same way they were made cautious by the threats they lived under in the camps, and secondly, through the television controlling the responses given by the women just as they were controlled by the Japanese.*
6. *Use musical instruments to represent the three characters in the play and present a scene using the music to depict the Rick, Sheila and Bridie’s actions and intentions.*
7. *Create a piece of music called “One thousand, two hundred and eighty seven days.”*
8. *Create a word cloud to create a twenty second expressionistic play using sounds, words, movement and transformation devices to dramatise the following: What has just happened in one aspect of the story? Predict what will happen in the future. Include phrases reflecting your characters reaction to the situation.*
9. *Choose a scene from the play. Sequence in the correct order with one group’s scene following another. Create a sound scape depicting the mood of the scene. Now present the sound in the order of the play. Discuss each performance and choice made.*
10. *Choose rhyming words and phrases appropriate for a rap style song. Try having someone perform a scene from the play while the rap song is being performed. Discuss the mood of the rap and how it compares and contrasts with the atmosphere created by the spoken dialogue.*

11. On Page 79, the faces of Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Mao appear accompanied by the following lyrics from 'Whispering Grass.' Write a short composition to accompany the following lyrics:

*Why do you whisper green grass?*

*Why tell the trees what ain't so?*

*Whispering trees don't tell the trees*

*What the trees don't need to know.*