

Nicholas Clark Management presents

The Gizmo

Written by Verity Laughton
Adapted from the novel by Paul Jennings
Published by Penguin Australia.

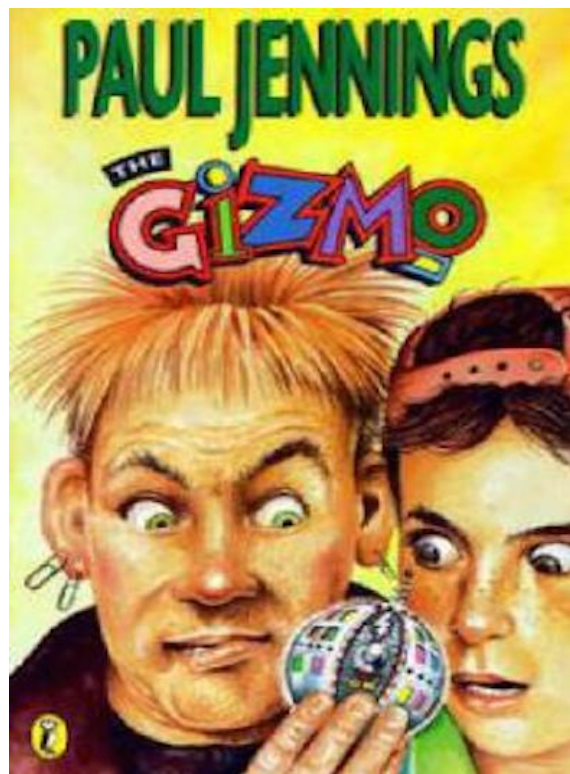


Educational Resource

August 2016

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Background to the Book

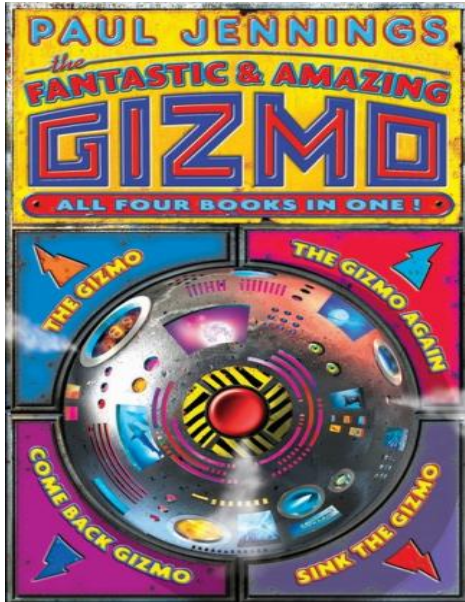
The Gizmo is first story in the Gizmo series by Paul Jennings. The four books in the series are

The Gizmo (1994)

The Gizmo Again (1995)

Come Back Gizmo (1996)

Sink The Gizmo (1997)



Background to the Play

This adaptation of **The Gizmo** by Paul Jennings for the stage was by Verity Laughton under commission from Riverina Theatre Company in 2003. After a subsequent drafting and workshop process the initial season of **The Gizmo** was performed in 2004, for a 15-show performance season in Wagga Wagga as a part of the Riverina Theatre Company's annual season. It was a critical and Box Office success for the company and the show was then developed for National Touring, which was scheduled for 2005. The original 32 venue national tour developed by Arts on Tour for Riverina Theatre Company was funded but then subsequently did not go ahead. The original creative team included director Nic Clark working on the adaptation with well-known performer Alex Papps as well as local newcomers Mark Grentell and Emelia Ryan. Nic Clark and Alex Papps worked together on 4 shows at Riverina Theatre Company over 2003/2004 after graduating together from the Western Australian Academy of the Performing Arts. Mark Grentell has since graduated from the NIDA directing course and is well known as the writer/director of the Australian film- Backyard Ashes.

The original show was designed by Kathryn Sproul, lighting design was by Domenic Ferlito and sound design by Damien Evans.

“...The Gizmo is laugh a minute fun but with a great message”
The Daily Advertiser,

“...great to see one of Paul Jennings’s most popular stories come to the stage” ***The Daily Advertiser***

This re-developed production with the new cast (Tim Lancaster, Felix Berger O’Neil and Michelle Brasier) is based on the original but has been modified for touring and produced by original director Nic Clark. Nic has worked with designer Adrienne Chisholm, Lighting Designer Jen Hector and Sound Designer James Wilkinson to re-fresh the technical aspects to the show.

Storyline

Two boys have to deal with consequences! Whilst at the local fair, Stephen is baited by his hero Floggitt into stealing. He steals the whirling, twirling illuminating Gizmo, that sends Stephen on an amazing adventure of self discovery. Finding it impossible to just simply get rid of the Gizmo by returning, burying or throwing on to a passing coal train, the Gizmo starts to exact its revenge by placing Stephen in several extra-ordinary situations! Stephen’s only friend is his pet mouse but even she is becoming elusive. Stephen finds himself in pantyhose and a wedding dress, dragged around town on the back of the mad horse-Tiffany, chased by the local sports star and lumped with the smelly tramp's coat. Oh the shame of it! A fun filled adventure for the whole family and school groups alike.

Three actors play 12 characters

Actor 1-Stephen

Actor 2-Floggitt, Stallholder 1 & 2, Tall Man, Tramp, Cassius Clayton, Tiffany-the Horse

Actor 3-Mouse, Guard, Mary Jones, Bikini Girl

Nicholas Clark Management (NCM) Producer

NCM is dedicated to making high quality Australian work that is highly theatrical and supports and develops the emotional intelligence of young people and family audiences. The Gizmo is a great example of a high quality work for young people with high quality production values and a depth of thinking.

NCM regular tours work to international markets. Recent tours include New Zealand, UK, China, Bahrain, Hong Kong, Malta and Singapore. (www.nicholasclarkmanagement.com)



Tim Lancaster and Michelle Brasier 2016

Paul Jennings

Writer of the Original Story



Paul Jennings is one of Australia's most prolific living writers having written over 100 stories and published over 70 books. His international book sales now total 8.9 million and have been translated into 18 languages. He has been voted "Favourite Author" over forty times by the children of Australia, winning every children's choice award. The top rating TV series Round the Twist and Driven Crazy are based on a selection of his Short stories such as Unseen! which won the 1999 Queensland Premier's Literary Award for Best Children's Book. In 1995 he was a made a Member of the Order of Australia.

Links

<http://www.pauljennings.com.au>

<https://www.facebook.com/Paul-Jennings-166977693313383/>

Verity Laughton

Writer/Adaptor



Verity Laughton's work has been produced nationally and internationally. Her 30+ professionally produced works include main-stage adult dramas, plays for radio, a promenade community event, a musical, adaptations, plays for child and family audiences, and for dance, puppets and theatre of image.

Awards include: AWGIE Community Theatre, 2004 (*The Lightkeeper*); Griffin Prize, 2001 (*Burning*); AWGIE Radio Drama, 2004 (*Fox*); Adelaide Critics' Circle Best New Australian Play, 1999 (*Carrying Light*); Inscription Award, 2009 (*The Ice Season*).

Recent Work: *The Nargun and the Stars* for the 2009 Sydney Festival and the 2009 Perth International Festival; *The Sweetest Thing* (nominated for the NSW Premier's Award 2012); and *A Crate of Souls* (2010). Current work includes *What Has Been Taken*, a work evolved through a recent Literature Board Fellowship, and a semi-verbatim play, *Long Tan*, about the major Australian battle of the Vietnam War in 1966.

She has also published poetry – she was runner up for the Blake Poetry Prize in 2011 and the Bruce Dawe Poetry Prize in 2014 – and prose for both adults and children, written for television and video and taught Creative Writing at community and tertiary levels.

Designers

Adrienne Chisholm Set and Costume

Originally trained as Graphic designer, Adrienne Later studied Theatre Design at the Victorian College of the Arts. Since then she has gone onto design Sets, Costumes and Puppets for such companies as Sydney theatre Company and Melbourne Theatre company, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Back to Back, Circus Oz, Danceworks, The Eleventh Hour, Playbox, Polyglot Puppet theatre, Gasworks, Lunchtime theatre, The Wiggles, The Keene/ Taylor Theatre Project, The Victorian Arts Centre, HIT Productions, Andrew Kay Productions, Yana Alana aka Sarah Ward, Red Stitch, The Victorian Arts Centre, Federation University of Ballarat Musical theatre Course, Art Play and The National Theatre to name a few. She has been nominated for many Green Room Awards and was a recipient for her Set Design for the Highly successful 'The Burlesque Hour'. Adrienne was also Parade and Float Designer for Melbourne's 2009 Moomba Procession.

Jen Hector Lighting

This year, Jenny designed the lighting for Sandra Parker's *Small Details*, *Aphids Howl* for FOLA, Chamber Made Opera's *Another Other and Funeral Party* for Dark MOFO. She also designed the set and lighting for the premier of Jacob Boehme's *Blood on the Dance Floor* and Jodee Mundy's *Imagined Touch*.

In 2015, Jenny travelled to Brighton Festival (UK) with Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey's Gauge); co-designed the set and lighting for Tim Darbyshire's *Stampede The Stampede* for Dance Massive 2015 and lit the premier of Jo Lloyd's *Confusion For Three* at Arts House. Jenny Hector has received two Green Room Awards, is a current member of the Green Room Awards Dance Panel.

Actors

Michelle Brasier



Felix Berger O'Neil



Tim Lancaster



Michelle Brasier

Michelle is a Melbourne-based singer, actor and comedian. Michelle studied music theatre at both VCA and BAPA and has just returned from a successful season of her solo show *Space Tortoise* (Frontier Comedy) at Edinburgh Fringe as part of Gilded Balloon's 2016 program. Michelle has appeared recently in *California Dreaming Australian Tour* (JTM), *The Carole King Songbook Tour* (JTM), *Aunty Donna's 1999* (Screen Australia), *The Lizard of Oz* (Crow Crow Productions), BBC Scotland's *Edinburgh Extras* and as Aysha in *Children of Eden* (Melbourne Recital Centre / Magnormos). Michelle is also a contributor to arts magazine *Maggie Journal*.

Felix Berger-O'Neil

Felix graduated from the National Theatre Drama School in 2014. Followed by a summer spent working with the Australian Shakespeare Company's 2014/2015 production of *As You Like It*, where he secured the role of Orlando. Felix continued working with the Australian Shakespeare Company in their education performances for schools, covering such plays as *Henry IV part I*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Felix then had the opportunity to work with the Melbourne Theatre Company, performing in *The Boy at the Edge of Everything* (4 Greenroom Award nominations). This year Felix had his debut performance for La Mama Theatre in *Othello on Trial*. Felix is now very excited to be performing in one of his favourite childhood stories, *The Gizmo*, under the direction of Nic Clark.

Tim Lancaster

Tim has always been a country boy at heart, having been born and raised in Wodonga in North East Victoria, so he is extremely excited to be bringing this wonderful show to some beautiful regional centres! In 2015 Tim graduated from Charles Sturt University with a Bachelor of Arts (Acting for Screen & Stage) and has since relocated to Melbourne, where he has performed in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival as Leonardo de Emu and Big Red Kangaroo in 'The Lizard of Oz' (Crow Crow Productions). Along with the MICF, Tim recently performed in the Australian premiere of 'Titanic the Musical' (StageArt) as Charles Lightoller. He can't wait to bring his 10 or so characters to life in 'The Gizmo', and hope you have as much fun watching as he has had working on it!"

These activities provide suggestions only and teachers are strongly encouraged to adapt or alter suggestions to suit their schools and individual classrooms. Each group of activities should be completed together, however the order of activities within the notes can be altered.

ACTIVITY 1

Theatre Etiquette

There are two groups of people at the theatre, the audience and the performers. Each group has a certain role to play and has certain behavior expected of them. Before you attend the show you may like to:

- Discuss what audience and performer mean
- Talk about the behavior expected from the audience and from the performers.
- Pre-Show Activity

Give students an A3 piece of paper, fold it in half. On one side draw themselves as an audience member, on the other side draw themselves as a performer. Call out various behaviours (ideas listed below) and ask students to put the behavior either in the “Audience” or the “Performer” column on their paper to represent good theatre etiquette.

They may like to suggest some ideas of their own! Hint: Some behaviours will be appropriate for both Audience and Performer.

- Does not chit chat
- Sits still
- Goes to the toilet before the show
- Is ready on time
- Faces the audience
- Keeps their eyes on the stage
- Is nice and quiet
- Doesn't eat or drink during the show
- Claps at the end

ACTIVITY 2

• Creating the Show

The play is adapted from a well known book by Paul Jennings. Creating and performing a play is different from reading a book. A play has live performers, set and costume, lighting and sound. The development of this production went through many phases.

1. An adaptor or playwright (Verity Laughton) was selected. Some writers create novels, some create plays and some create films.
2. The play that was created was then explored in a workshop with actors in a rehearsal room. This is where scenes and ideas in the play are tested to see if the dialogue works and if the scenes are in the right order to tell the story.
3. After the workshop, the playwright would then go back and re-write, edit or change some of the scenes to improve the script.
4. The next stage is the production development stage. At this point the director auditions the performers, works with designers (set and costume, lighting and sound) to come up with the ideas of what the show is going to look and sound like.
5. The rehearsal phase is where all the performers and the director start to create the show in the rehearsal room. They read the script together and then get up on the floor and work out how to best tell the story. They might explore several different ways to deliver a scene but then decide on what they think is the best way, that has the most impact and helps the audience understand or appreciate the story.
6. The production phase combines the rehearsal of the show with the set, costumes, lighting and sound.
7. The final stage is the performance. This is where everything that has been done in all the previous stages is finally presented to the audience.

Activities

1. Discuss some other well know books that have made into plays or films (Matilda, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Harry Potter etc)
2. Make a list in small groups and see which ones are the most common.

3. Paul Jennings has written many books. Focus week/s on books by Paul Jennings for everyone to read. Which books by Paul Jennings would also make good plays or films? The TV series Round the Twist (4 series) uses stories by Paul Jennings and would be good to view as a class prior to seeing the show.

ACTIVITY 3

Analysing the Show

Pre-Performance

Themes:

Peer Pressure, Friendship,

*If students **have not** read the book*

1. Discuss the title 'The Gizmo'. Brainstorm what the play may be about. Identify the key themes: peer pressure and friendship. Compile a list of ideas to be used later for comparison post-performance.

*If students **have** read the book*

2. Discuss with students the key elements of the story they believe would be important for including in a theatre production of the book. 3. Consider expectations e.g. how much of the book could be portrayed, what special effects may be necessary etc.

*For **both** groups*

4. Look at examples of play scripts with students and consider how 'The Gizmo' may be represented as a script. Attempt to put some scene headings into order to have in mind when seeing the performance. (*These can be referred back to later*).

Performance

1. Elicit from students their past experiences of theatre performances.
2. Brainstorm with students the differences between 'drama' they would do in their classroom and the 'drama' that is viewed as theatre performance. Also consider the difference to what they think theatre performance is versus the television they may watch at home.
3. Discuss the link between theatre and storytelling – that live theatre provides another medium for telling a story. Brainstorm other ways that stories can be told (books, radio, television, face to face etc)

ACTIVITY 4

Post Performance

Peer Pressure and Friendship

1. Discuss with students the way in which Stephen experienced peer pressure during the play. As a group consider the different ways in which students can experience pressure from their peers/fellow students to do something e.g. verbally (direct or indirect), by an individual or group, online, text message, physical pressure.
2. Discuss the impact of the different types of peer pressure on students – are any better or worse than others?
3. Elicit from students the varying reactions by characters in ‘The Gizmo. Focus on Mouse (help, friendship) versus Floggitt (peer pressure, abandonment).
4. As a class, work on the synopsis of an imagined scene which outlines a conversation between Mouse and Floggitt in regard to Stephen experiencing peer pressure. The scene should focus on what they as Stephen’s friends could do so assist him. Focus questions could be used to guide the discussion: - In what ways is Stephen experiencing peer pressure? - What do they see Stephen doing about it? - How have they responded to Stephen so far?- Who could they talk to to help Stephen?
5. Develop a soundscape to accompany the synopsis. This soundscape could include scripted voice as well as sound effects. What could peer pressure sound like? Could it be a drum beat? Or the sound of a Gizmo? Explore making sound from found objects in the classroom. What does friendship sound like? Is it a warm sound? The sound of a heart beat? What sounds can we make with body percussion? Each piece should be recorded and be no more than 30 seconds long. The aim is for the sounds to bring the read synopsis alive.

The soundscape should include an introduction, building to a climax and resolution One group member to read the synopsis while the soundscape is presented by the others. In their groups, students to ‘perform’ their synopsis and soundscape for the class. At the conclusion of all

performances, students should reflect on the differences between interpretations and what this means for performance more generally

ACTIVITY 5

The Production

Costumes

Discuss with students the costumes used for the performance of 'The Gizmo'. Consider scene changes (transitions), use of props that formed part of the performance. Brainstorm a list of ideas regarding important aspects of the costume design e.g. how to assist in telling the story and how to facilitate the costume moving from one actor to another

Students to select a favourite scene from the performance. They need to consider any special or unusual effects required for that scene. Students are to design costumes for the selected scene. *(Encourage students to create their own and not reproduce those from the production).*

Students to be allocated a character from the play *(important to ensure all characters are included)*. Students are to design and make a mask that they feel represents the chosen character. Consideration should be given to choice of colour and line as well as decoration for each mask. Students to be encouraged to plan their mask as a design before constructing the original.

The Gizmo

Draw Your Own Gizmo. Take a blank sheet of paper and now draw a circle in the middle. The circle can be big or small. Use this as the starting point for you to draw your Gizmo. Choose your colours. Does it have patterns? Does it have buttons, lights or flashes?

ACTIVITY 6

Reviewing the show

Use the following framework to help you write your own review (critique). Write your ideas in note form.

Remember, the more specific details you give, the better!

- 1.State the name of the play, playwright, theatre group, venue, date, director. Briefly give the background of any relevant person and lead actor/s.
2. Brief outline of the plot (story) in enough detail for the reader to understand the story, but brief enough to avoid rambling. Briefly explain the initial reaction and impact upon the audience and/or reviewer.
- 3.State the actor's names (in order of importance or appearance) and the name of the character they played. Review the quality of each actor's performance
- 4.Explain the use of stage design throughout the performance. Did they play include any costume or set design and/or props? Was the stage space good or bad for the performers?
5. Did the play use any lighting, sound/music, or any other technical aspects which were worthy of mention?
6. Dramatic Structure—beginning, middle and end. Were some scenes more interesting than others?
- 7.Were there any messages, morals or themes presented to the audience?
- 8.What is your personal opinion about the play? Do you recommend people to see the play? Do you have any further comments to add to your review?