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LA BOITE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

PALE BLUE DOT

BY KATHRYN MARQUET

19 JULY - 9 AUGUST

PALE BLUE DOT EDUCATION NOTES

Prepared by Zoe Cobon in consultation with Annette Box President of Drama Queensland
Endorsed by Drama Queensland



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Education to inspire ideas

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LA BOITE THEATRE COMPANY

La Boite's mission is to produce and present exhilarating theatre that is alive to the present, extends and inspires artists, and invigorates the hearts and minds of audiences.

PALE BLUE DOT

SYNOPSIS

*"Two possibilities exist: either we are alone in the universe or we are not.
Both are equally terrifying."
– Arthur C. Clarke*

Insurance fraud investigator Joel Pinkerton doesn't believe in aliens. So when his company introduced UFO alien abduction insurance as a publicity stunt a few years ago, he never gave it much thought. Until now.

When Joel is called to investigate the possible alien abduction of 16-year-old schoolgirl Storm, he finds himself drawn into intergalactic intrigue and conspiracy theories. What happened to Storm during those 24 hours? And how did she wake up in an empty field 200km from home?

As Joel gets sucked up in the vortex, he begins to feel increasingly alienated from his wife Holly and newborn baby girl Chloe, who is exhibiting some odd behaviours of her own.

THE CHARACTERS



Hugh
Parker

Joel

An unhappy insurance detective, late- 30s. He has a wife, Holly and a new born child Chloe.



Lucy
Goleby

Holly

Joel's wife, in her early to mid-30s and stays at home during the day to take care of her daughter. She is like any new mother, struggling with her husband, sleep deprivation and weight issues.

Louise

A once off attendee of the 'Darling Downs Outreach to the Stars' club.



Ashlee
Lollback

Storm

Greta's daughter, born in Australia aged 17. She is a school student who finds it difficult to make friends. Storm falls for Joel when he is assigned to her Mum's insurance claim regarding her disappearance.

Greta

A German immigrant 50+ who has taken out Alien Abduction Insurance Cover. She is a strong and confrontational character with a dark sense of humour.

Deidre Spinnaker

Head of the 'Darling Downs Outreach to the Stars' club. She considers herself a star seed and ufologist. Deidre is an alien fanatic and runs monthly meetings to talk about the latest alien abductions and news.



Caroline
Kennison

SEASON INFORMATION

Playwright **Kathryn Marquet**

Director **Michael Futcher**

Designer **Josh McIntosh**

Lighting Designer **Jason Glenwright**

Composer and Sound Designer **Gordon Hamilton**

Projection Designers **optikal bloc**

with **Lucy Goleby, Caroline Kennison, Ashlee Lollback & Hugh Parker**

19 JULY - 9 AUGUST

JULY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19 (6:30pm)
21 (6:30pm)	22 (6:30pm)	23 (7:30pm)	24 (7:30pm)	25 (7:30pm)	26 (7:30pm)
28	29 (11am & 6:30pm)	30 (6:30pm)	31 (11am & 7:30pm)		

AUGUST

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 (7:30pm)	2 (7:30pm)
4	5 (11am & 6:30pm)	6 (6:30pm)	7 (11am & 7:30pm)	8 (7:30pm)	9 (2pm & 7:30pm)
11	12	13	14	15	16
18	19	20	21	22	23
25	26	27	28	29	30



Preview



Opening Night

Limited VIP Tickets available



Meet the Artists

Please Note there are no performances of Pale Blue Dot on any Sunday.

Matinees every Tuesday and Thursday at 11am (excluding Tuesday 22 and Thursday 24 July)

Tuesday and Wednesday 6:30pm

Thursday, Friday and Saturday 7:30pm

Students: \$25

Teacher/s: One complimentary teacher ticket with every 10 students

Teacher Preview **Saturday 19 July 6:30pm***

Meet the Artist **Wednesday 30 July 6:30pm**

Duration **2 hours and 10 minutes including a 20 minute interval**

SHOW WARNINGS

(to be revised closer to the performance)

- Frequent coarse language
- Sexual references
- Supernatural themes

PLEASE NOTE:

If your students would like to take notes during the performance please sit in the back rows as note taking can disrupt the performers.

**THE PALE BLUE DOT
SCRIPT WILL BE
AVAILABLE FOR
PURCHASE FROM
WEDNESDAY 23 JULY.**

*Can only be booked in conjunction with a confirmed school booking. Subject to availability. Maximum of 2 tickets per school.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (DRAMA)

CORE SUBJECT MATTER

PURPOSE

To challenge, to entertain and to chronicle/document

Themes

- Reality vs Imagination
- Aliens and UFOs
- Fidelity
- Faith and Religion
- Family
- Growing Up
- Alienation

CONTEXT

Philosophical, Personal and Geographical

Philosophical

Are we alone in the universe?

Further Information:

There Might Be Life on Mars (from 2mins 18 seconds)

https://www.ted.com/playlists/are_we_alone_in_the_universe

ET is (Probably) Out There – get ready

https://www.ted.com/playlists/are_we_alone_in_the_universe

Is Our Universe the Only Universe?

https://www.ted.com/talks/brian_greene_why_is_our_universe_fine_tuned_for_life

Personal

Individual beliefs regarding faith, religion and the concept of life on other planets.

Further Information:

What Does the Bible Say about Aliens or UFOs?

<http://www.revelation.co/2008/10/14/do-aliens-exist-what-does-the-bible-say-about-ufos/>

Extra-terrestrial Life: What Does the Bible Say?

<http://www.ucg.org/doctrinal-beliefs/extraterrestrial-life-what-does-bible-say/>

Did God Create Life on Other Planets?

<http://creation.com/did-god-create-life-on-other-planets>

Geographical

The play is set in the town of Toowoomba, Queensland which has a high record of UFO sightings.

Further Information:

Astronomer fails to shine light on Queens Park UFO mystery

<http://www.thechronicle.com.au/news/does-toowoomba-photographer-have-proof-ufos-are-ou/1790026/>

DRAMATIC FORMS AND STYLES

- Australian Drama
- Realism
- Verbatim Theatre
- Cinematic Theatre

ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

- Character
- Language
- Place
- Situation
- Relationship
- Symbol

SKILLS OF DRAMA

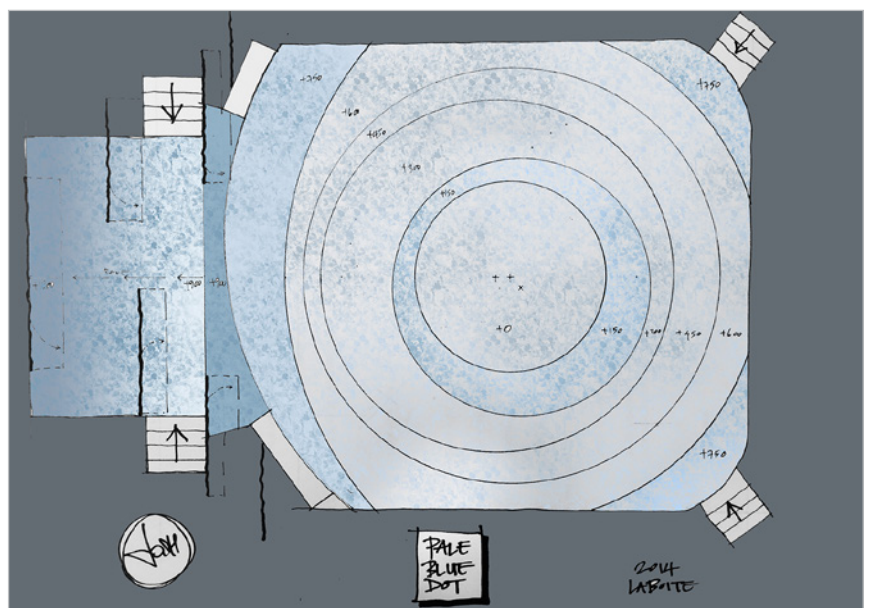
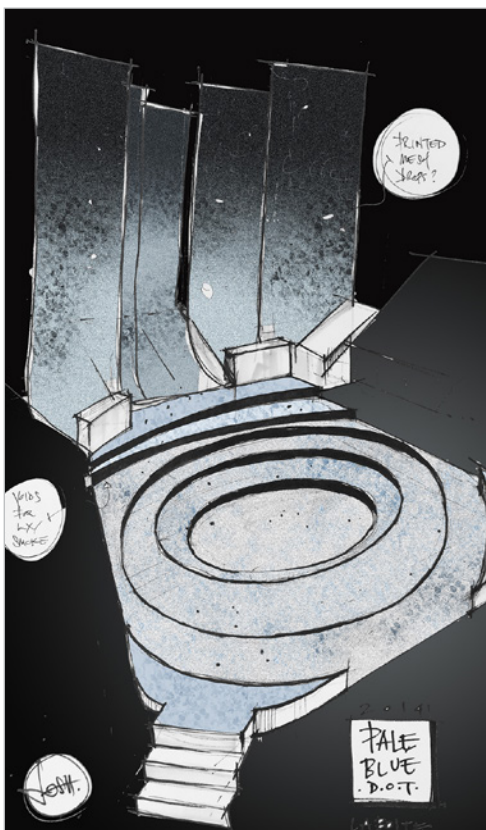
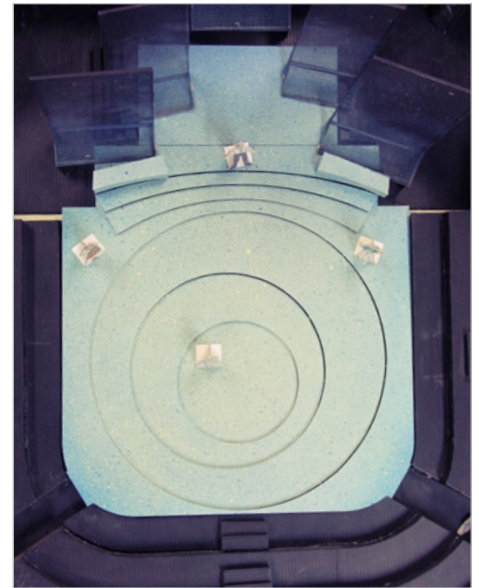
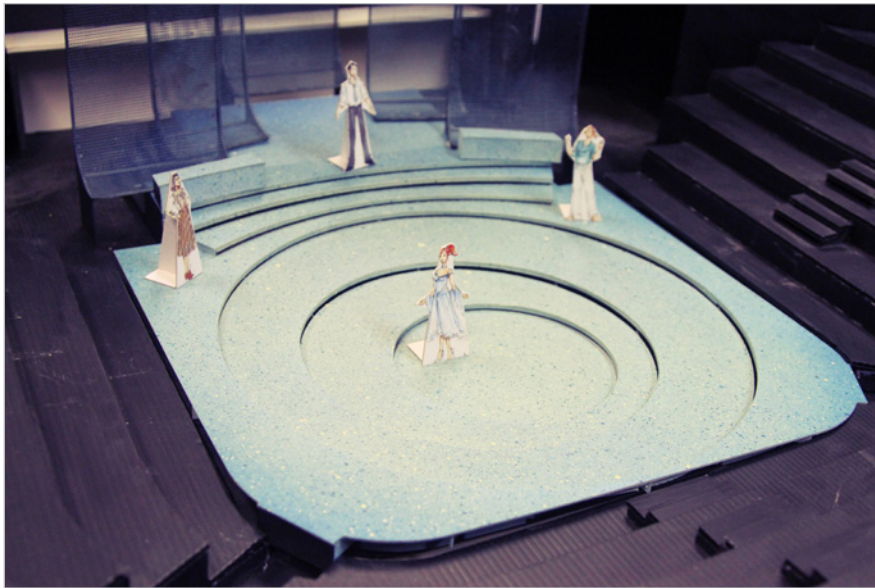
- Devising
- Directing
- Applying Stage Craft
- Scriptwriting
- Acting
- Working as an Ensemble
- Critiquing

CONVENTIONS

- Comedy
- Monologue
- Direct Address
- Realism
- Flashback

THE DESIGN - THE SET

"The set is based on diagrams of our solar system, comparisons of planets and suns, paths of orbits." – Josh McIntosh Pale Blue Dot Designer



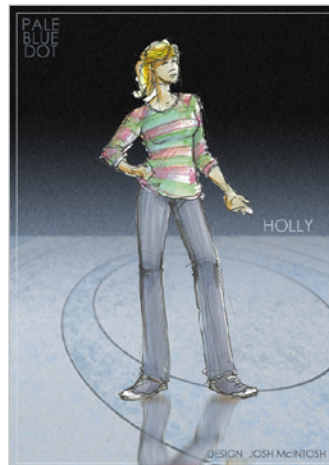
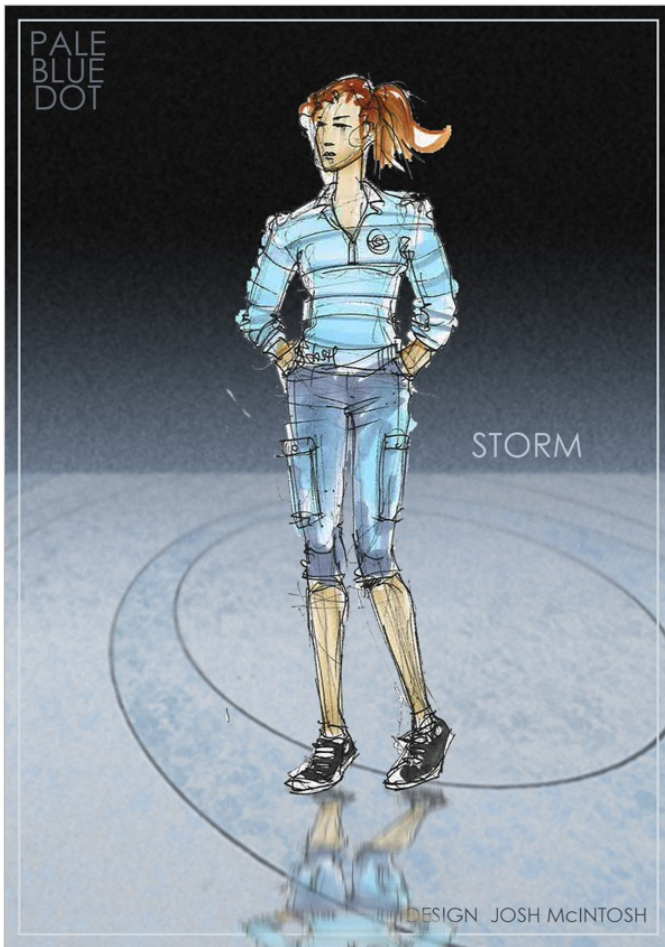
RELATED ACTIVITY:

See page 7 and discuss how the design has changed from page to stage.

Design Sketches by Josh McIntosh | Photography by Zoe Cobon

THE DESIGN - THE COSTUMES

"Understanding and acknowledging the characters and their world is central to understanding the purpose and reason for a play. A good design encourages an audience to connect with the characters and their story." – Josh McIntosh, Pale Blue Dot Designer



RELATED ACTIVITY:

See page 6 and ask your students to design their own character costumes.

SUGGESTED PRE PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

1 PRESENTING - NEWS REPORT

After reading the articles included in the Education Notes, prepare a news report in a small group about an alien abduction. Include at least two central characters and be creative in the way you develop dramatic tension and meaning.

2 PRESENTING - WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

In pairs, students are given a stimulus card. This card has the details of two stories, one is true and the other one false. The pair then creates two improvisations based on the stimulus cards and presents them to the class. After each performance, the teacher asks members of the audience which story they believe to be true and the other false. How did they come to that conclusion and what evidence was provided to help them make that decision?

3 RESPONDING - ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Based on your understanding of Realism, in a group brainstorm a list of conventions you would expect to see used on stage and how? In your group, choose one convention and create a short scene that explicitly demonstrates the use of the convention.

4 FORMING - DESIGNING A COSTUME

From what you know about the play so far, choose one character and design a costume for them. Include pictures or sketches that inspired you and discuss your specific 'vision' and the purpose of your choices. Reading the included script excerpts on page 12-15 and character descriptions on page 1 may assist you in designing your costume.

5 PRESENTING - SCRIPT EXCERPTS FROM PALE BLUE DOT

Using the script excerpts included in the Education Notes on page 12-15, in small groups rehearse and present one scene.

6 FORMING - WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

Whilst listening to the podcast *The Dark Side of Earth*, ask students to write down the elements or conventions used that made the stories engaging. As a group, discuss the students' responses.

Extension: In small groups ask students to devise a concept of how they would portray one of the stories on stage keeping in mind the Elements of Drama and the conventions used to create an engaging story. As a group, the students are to pitch their concept to the class.

7 FORMING - CHARACTER LIST

In the interview with playwright Kathryn Marquet (page 18), she explains how writing 50 traits about each character helps her to gain an in depth understanding of the characters. Ask you students to individually select a character and complete their own list. Elements in this list may include information about where they are from, what they are afraid of and unique quirks.

SUGGESTED POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

1 RESPONDING - THEMES

Brainstorm what themes were evident in the production and how they were portrayed. Did one specific convention aid this, or were many in play? Write down specific examples. You may choose to use Worksheet #1 on page 10 to guide your answers.

2 PRESENTING - IN CHARACTER IMPROVISATION

In small groups students are to use the knowledge gained about each of the characters from viewing the performance and improvise varying contexts and situations given to them by the teacher. After each improvisation discuss the students' choices.

3 RESPONDING - CHARACTER PERSPECTIVES

As a class discuss each character in detail, paying particular attention to their perspectives on extra-terrestrial life. What clues did the play give you to support your answer?

4 RESPONDING - CINEMATIC THEATRE

Individually write a 100-200 word response that analyses how Cinematic Theatre was evident in the live production of *Pale Blue Dot* and how it aided the creation of the Dramatic Meaning. Use specific examples from the production to support your answer.

5 FORMING - REVISION OF CHARACTER LIST

After viewing the production refer back to the list you wrote that details 50 traits about your selected character. Reflect on this and discuss if there is anything you would change and why? What did the production tell us about each of the characters and is there anything you can add?

6 RESPONDING - HOW DID THE PRODUCTION ENGAGE US?

In small groups ask students to brainstorm what sections of the *Pale Blue Dot* were the most engaging. Then ask them to detail what conventions and elements of drama were used to achieve this?

7 PRESENTING - HOT SEAT

Individually or in small groups ask students to choose a character from *Pale Blue Dot* that the class can hot seat. Ask the characters questions that are specifically related to the play to gain a better insight into their reasoning behind their actions and emotions.

8 RESPONDING - DIARY ENTRY

After seeing *Pale Blue Dot*, ask your students to individually choose a character and write a 100-200 word diary entry from their perspective. The entry must include details about how the character felt at the end of the play and what this means for their future.

9 RESPONDING - HOW HAS THE DESIGN CHANGED?

Josh McIntosh's original drawings of the set design have been included in the design section on page 4. As a class or in small groups discuss the transition of the initial drawings from page to stage.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT TASKS

FORMING PRACTICAL - DIRECTING A PUBLISHED PLAYSRIPT EXCERPT

After reading *Pale Blue Dot* by Kathryn Marquet, you are to select and then direct one script excerpt. Your scene must highlight one of the themes or contextual aspects of the play.

You will have 20 minutes to work with a group of actors to demonstrate your concept. These actors will be made up from a randomly selected group of students in your class. You must also submit a written Directorial Vision Statement that highlights the purpose of your choices.

IN DOING THIS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER:

- The Elements of Drama (Character, Language, Place, Situation, Tension, Contrast, Mood, Relationships, Space, Time, Dramatic Focus, Movement, Role and Symbol)
- Skills of Drama (Directing, applying stagecraft, movement and voice)
- Your directorial choices and how they contribute to the dramatic meaning

SUPPORTING MATERIAL:

- Directorial Vision Statement (200 words)
- Annotated script
- List of props
- Outline of set

FORMING NON PRACTICAL - SCRIPT WRITING

After viewing *Pale Blue Dot* by Kathryn Marquet you are to create and write an additional scene that extends the dramatic action. To accompany your script, you must write a response that justifies where in the script your scene would be positioned and how it would enhance the dramatic meaning of the play.

The script must demonstrate your understanding of the relationships between characters and the plot. It must also reveal something about the characters not already exposed in the play. Be sure to maintain the integrity of the characters and their use of language.

You must also carefully consider how you incorporate the Elements of Drama to create Dramatic Meaning and Tension.

YOUR SCRIPT MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Purposeful manipulation of the Elements of Drama (Character, Language, Place, Situation, Tension, Contrast, Mood, Relationship, Space, Time, Dramatic Focus, Movement, Role and Symbol)
- Stage directions to justify action and vocal delivery
- Correct formatting in keeping with the scripting conventions utilised in the original text
- Two 150-300 word responses that justify where in the script your scene would be positioned and why it should be included in the text

PRESENTING - STAGE ACTING

In small groups, select two excerpts from *Pale Blue Dot* that explore contrasting roles or themes. Present them in way that incorporates the use of Cinematic Theatre to make the roles or themes apparent. Give consideration to innovative and creative ways to link the two extracts to assist in revealing the chosen themes and contexts.

CONTEXTS:

- Philosophical
- Personal
- Geographical

IN DOING THIS YOU MUST CONSIDER:

- The Elements of Drama (Character, Language, Place, Situation, Tension, Contrast, Mood, Relationship, Space, Time, Dramatic Focus, Movement, Role and Symbol)
- Skills of Drama (Applying Stagecraft, movement and voice)
- Costumes, sound, props and lighting
- Cinematic Theatre

RESPONDING - EXTENDED WRITTEN RESPONSE

Kathryn Marquet's play *Pale Blue Dot* is a production which fuses both traditional and contemporary forms of storytelling and conventions to create dramatic meaning.

After viewing the production, your task is to evaluate how Michael Futchler merged traditional and contemporary forms of storytelling. State how this enhanced the dramatic meaning for a modern audience. In your response you must discuss in detail specific examples from the production to justify your evaluation.

Your response will take the form of a logical and cohesive essay. You must use appropriate drama terminology throughout.

RESPONDING - EXTENDED WRITTEN RESPONSE

*"Two possibilities exist: either we are alone in the universe or we are not.
Both are equally terrifying."*

The above quote stated by Arthur C. Clarke frames and drives the purpose and central theme of Kathryn Marquet's play *Pale Blue Dot*.

After viewing *Pale Blue Dot* at La Boite Theatre Company you are to select two scenes from the play and analyse how the director has successfully conveyed the playwright's intended meaning.

Your response to the task question will be in the form of a logical and cohesive essay and you must use appropriate drama terminology throughout. Use a **minimum** of two specific examples from the production to support your argument.

WORKSHEET # 1

TASK:

After viewing the live production of *Pale Blue Dot*, you are to complete the below worksheet to highlight what themes were evident in the production and how they were portrayed. The first one has already been completed for you as an example. Please note that a theme can be portrayed in a number of ways.

List of the Themes Evident	Specific example of how it was portrayed	Conventions Used	Elements of Drama
1. Reality verses imagination	This theme is evident when Storm initially re-counts her story to Joel during the interview in order to determine the likeness of alien abduction. It is unclear if Storm actually saw her Dad in the shadows or if it was just her imagination.	- Flash back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Character - Place - Situation - Time - Symbol
2.			
3.			
4.			

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

"Mission control, we have a UFO pacing our position. Request instructions."
– Astronaut Cady Coleman, NASA Mission STS-73, 1995.

Throughout history, humans have asked the same philosophical questions: where do we come from? Why are we here? What is going to happen to us? It is in our nature to search for explanations for our existence. Our fear of being alone and defenceless against the creeping dark seems absolute. We're all looking for a saviour, a rescuer, a *father* - someone who is up there, *somewhere*, in the cosmos, watching over us. People have different means of answering these questions: there are many thousands of religions the world over. I'm interested in our aloneness - our alienation - both from each other and together, as a species, and it is this aspect that I wanted to explore in *Pale Blue Dot*.

I became interested in the subculture of ufology a few years ago when a new group of friends introduced me to the various ideologies surrounding crop circles, abductions and conspiracy theories, and mysterious lights in the night sky. Ufology seemed to provide a sense of security against the creeping dark for people who had renounced traditional notions of God and religion. The thought that there was someone up there looking over Earth and its inhabitants was comforting, even if the *someone* was not altogether benevolent.

Throughout history, we've carried with us a sense - or, dare I say, hope - that the apocalypse will arrive shortly, whether it be floods, famine, nuclear war, or climate change. Contemporary life provides new challenges, and perhaps we've replaced witches, Succubus, and Incubus with Greys, Nordics, and Reptilians. Or, perhaps there really is something - *someone* - out there, watching over us, ready to step in if we cross an uncertain line as caretakers of our host planet...and, as the ice caps melt and the fossil fuels continue to burn, there's certainly some comfort in that.

Are we really alone in the Universe?



Image by Dylan Evans

PALE BLUE DOT SCRIPT EXCERPTS

Please be aware that the following script excerpts include infrequent mild coarse language.

SCRIPT EXCERPT 1 - ACT 1, SCENE 3

Joel takes out his iPhone and begins to record the conversation.

Joel: The time is now 5:41pm. This is a record of interview between Joel Pinkerton, representing Chives' Insurance Propriety Limited and Mrs – Greta – Kautz, regarding insurance claim number Foxtrot 285 Lima Tango Victor. Mrs Kautz, for the sake of voice identification, could you please state your full name?

Greta: Greta Barbara Kautz.

Joel: Thank you. Your date of birth?

Greta: I'm old.

Joel: I appreciate that. Your exact date of birth, please?

Greta: 20 April '63

Joel: Thank you. Before we begin the interview today, do you require an interpreter to be present during the interview?

Greta: I have perfect English.

Joel: Can you read and write English?

Greta: I have perfect English.

Joel: I need you to answer the questions, 'yes', or, 'no'. Can you read and write English?

Greta: Yes, Mr Pinkerton. Perfectly. I have been to university.

Joel: Thank-you. Now, can you please tell me why you decided to take out the insurance policy for your daughter with Chives' Insurance?

Greta: My daughter – Storm – she has been taken.

Beat.

Joel: You mean, she-

Greta: She has been taken. She has been missing for hours before I have got her back.

Joel: She was taken by whom?

Greta: -

Joel: You mean she was – taken hostage?

Greta: In a way.

Joel: How do you know she was – taken?

Greta: My husband has been taken, also. But, he has never been returned.

Joel: Can you be more specific?

Greta: In what way?

Joel: Well...what do you mean by, "Taken"?

Greta: My husband, he has flown aeroplanes. One day he has disappeared.

Joel: A plane crash?

Greta: Nein. Not a plane crash.

Joel: Mrs Kautz, I'm not trying to be insensitive about your husband's death, but –

Greta: He's not dead.

Joel: Planes crash all the time and the debris can't be located, but we know that the plane has crashed because there is no other explanation.

Greta: There's not?

Joel: No. I don't think there is.

Greta: Ah.

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SCRIPT EXCERPT 2 - ACT 1, SCENE 8

Chloe starts screaming from offstage. Joel and Holly stand staring at each other, waiting for the other one to volunteer to get her. Holly sighs dramatically.

Joel: /I'll – get- her.

Joel exits.

Holly: TRY TO SETTLE HER AGAIN!

Joel: I'LL DO MY BEST.

Joel enters, cradling Chloe. Chloe screams.

Holly: Didn't want to settle, then?

Joel: Holly.

Holly: What?

Joel: -

Holly: What?

Joel: When I came in, she was – on the floor – under the rocking chair.

Holly: No, she wasn't.

Joel: I swear to God. She was asleep on the floor like a cat.

Holly: How did she get there?

Joel: You tell me.

Holly: I don't know. Jesus.

Chloe is still screaming, unable to settle in Joel's arms.

Give her to me.

Joel hands Chloe over. She settles.

Come here baby. Mummy's got you.

Joel: You didn't leave her there?

Holly: Why would I leave my child on the floor?

Joel: I don't know.

Holly: Oh, baby. Baby. Sh. It's alright. Mummy's got you. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Joel: You've been really tired. Maybe you just did it by accident.

Holly: That's the most retarded thing I've ever heard.

Joel: I'm just trying to come up with an explanation.

Holly: Did you put her on the floor?

Joel: I just walked in the door. I haven't been in there.

Holly: Of course you haven't. Why would you want to go in and see your child?

Joel: I'm not trying to - maybe we should get you some help. Mum's always willing to –

Holly: I swear to God, Joel, if you leave me by myself with that woman you are going to wake to find a very pointy object pressing against your chest in the middle of the night and you are not going to like it.

Joel: It doesn't have to be my mum. What about your mum?

Holly: I'd rather be sodomised by an angry sasquatch.

Joel: That's lovely, Holly. Lovely images.

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SCRIPT EXCERPT 3 - ACT 2, SCENE 4

Joel: Ah. You said you had some new information for me?

Greta: Ja. Where is it?

Greta pulls out a pile of papers.

Here.

She thrusts them at Joel.

Joel: What's this?

Greta: The DNA report. Do you want wine?

Joel: Ah. No. Thanks.

Greta: I hope you don't mind if I do?

Joel: Ah.

Greta: Make a note of it.

Greta pours herself a wine.

I have read this – this is the proof, Mr Pinkerton. Evidence. The hair.

Joel: Oh. The hair.

Greta: Yes. See. It has been blonde, Mr Pinkerton.

Joel: Yes.

Greta: But, it has belonged to a person who has been living in remote Mongolia.

Joel: Uh-huh?

Greta: The person – the hair – it has been extinct for 2000 years.

Joel: I'm sorry?

Greta: The person that belonged to this hair, Mr Pinkerton, had blonde hair, lived in Mongolia, and should have been alive 2000 years ago.

Joel: Okay. I might need to –

Storm: What she's trying to say is that the genetic sequence of the DNA found in the hair is thought to be extinct. So, the hair's from an extinct person, which is weird.

Joel: And, this is the hair that was found on your body, Storm?

Storm: Yes.

Greta: Ja.

Joel: Wow. That's certainly interesting.

Greta: Proof.

Joel: Mrs Kautz-

Greta: It's proof.

Joel: It's not –

Greta: How many 2000 year old blonde Mongolian men do you know, Mr Pinkerton?

Joel: Look, I'll read the report and I'll show it to Denis. But, the fact remains that it's still a human hair.

Greta: That is a matter of fucking opinion.

Joel: I'm sorry. I am. I'll do my best.

Greta: I don't know what we have to do, Mr Pinkerton, to get you to listen to us, believe us. If this is not proof, then what is?

Joel: It doesn't matter what I believe and it doesn't matter how odd things appear to be. It's not concrete evidence.

Greta: We have an extinct hair. Storm has told you what she saw. I have given you the hospital report – strange triangular burns, cuts, bruises.

Joel: I need to ask you Storm, is there anything – anything you can remember from the period of missing time you had – maybe something you've remembered since we last spoke?

Storm: No.

Joel: The smallest thing could be of use.

Storm: I can't remember anything.

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SCRIPT EXCERPT 4 - ACT 2, SCENE 9

He turns to find Storm standing in the room, barefoot.

Joel: Jesus.

Storm: Hey.

Joel: How did you get into my house? The door was locked.

Storm: -

Joel: Jesus.

Beat.

Joel: You- you need to get out of here. This is not good. Where are your shoes?

Storm: I had another fight with mum.

Joel: So?

Storm: Baldo's dead.

Joel: Your dog?

Storm: I can't go home.

Joel: You must have some friends you can stay with?

Storm: -

Joel: That just can't be true.

Storm: People don't get me. Except you. Can I please stay?

Joel: No Storm, you can't.

Joel tries to usher her out the door. Storm kisses him.

AN INTERVIEW WITH...

MICHAEL FUTCHER — DIRECTOR

As the director, what are your main responsibilities and how do you manage these?

Overall, the director's job is to guide the entire production, from the beginning of the process to opening night and to inspire the creative and technical team to produce their best work. Initially the director's main job is to study and conceptualise the script. Conceptualising essentially means formulating a reading of the text which honours the writer's intentions, and incorporating any directorial ideas which emerge. Then, in consultation with the team of creatives (designer, composer, lighting designer and possibly AV designer), a visual and audio world for the play is created. These discussions will begin as broad-ranging brainstorming sessions and will become more and more specific as the process heats up. Before rehearsals, the director is also responsible for casting the play, and conducting any auditions which are required. Usually in the professional theatre, the rehearsal period is four weeks, so it is essential that the director manages the available time efficiently. I like to have the play roughly shaped by the end of the second week, to allow another two weeks to detail and finesse the play. It is very important that the actors are given sufficient runs before the first preview to enable them to feel comfortable with the show, and to facilitate smooth running of the performance technically. Also, towards the end of the fourth week, the director will usually meet with composer, lighting designer and stage manager to do a "paper plot" of the show, where all the cues are worked out – this saves a great deal of time in the technical rehearsal.



What relevance do you think *Pale Blue Dot* has to audiences in 2014?

I think there are very few people alive who haven't asked at some point – are we alone in the universe? The play deals with the obvious extra-terrestrial sense of this question, but also with the more human aspect of it: of people being isolated from their true selves and each other by the stresses of the modern world. Amidst the backdrop of alien abductions and disappearances, each character in the play is wrestling with a psychological alienation of their own: Joel and Holly's new baby is like an alien presence into their lives, spinning them both into fraught emotional territory, and away from their "normal" selves and each other; Storm is stigmatised and alienated by her schoolmates for being different; and Greta's life is now dislocated and isolated because of the disappearance of her husband. These very real human elements are extremely relevant for today's audiences and the sparky humour of Kathryn's writing transforms these ideas into vivid, engaging and highly entertaining storytelling.

You've assembled a strong cast for *Pale Blue Dot*. How do you go about casting a show like this?

Two of the actors (Caroline Kennison and Hugh Parker) were pre-cast, that is chosen specifically because they were right for the role. They were both already well-known to me as experienced and talented actors, therefore they didn't need to be auditioned. The other two actors, Lucy Goleby and Ashlee Lollback, auditioned for the roles of Holly and Storm respectively and both impressed me greatly with their veracity and imaginative acting choices. When a director wishes to audition for a play, usually the first step is for the casting director of the company (or in La Boite's case, the Program Manager) to contact the top acting agencies in the area with a role description and requests for their suggestions of the most suitable actors on their books. The Casting Director then liaises with the director and a short-list is compiled, along with any other actors known to them both who could be suitable for the roles. The selected actors are then slotted in at intervals of about half-an-hour each, and usually present to the director a piece from the play, which the director works on with them. For "*Pale Blue Dot*" I auditioned 8 actors.

What do you think we can learn from the characters in *Pale Blue Dot*?

At the beginning of the play, the central character, Joel, as a cynical, opinionated, left-brained insurance assessor, is sure of his place in the world and how he perceives it. Upon meeting Storm, his world-view comes into question and he is forced to entertain a different way of perceiving life, the universe and what is important to him. What can we learn from Joel? Perhaps the value of keeping an open mind about all things and seeing things from someone else's perspective. In the Holly/Joel relationship we can also see the value of battling through emotional trauma and minor betrayals to discover what is truly important.

How will *Pale Blue Dot* appeal to school students?

A great deal, I think. For a start it's very funny and the characters are bravely written so that they are always edgy and fascinating to watch. Then there's the obvious alien abduction element which I think school students are always interested in, as well as a thread of mystery which I hope will provoke some robust discussion afterwards.

What elements of the play informed your artistic decisions?

The play doesn't make any definitive statements about whether or not we are alone in the universe, but it asks lots of questions. I think the key to presenting this play is to maintain a type of positive ambiguity throughout so that the audience may read into it what it will. The way the ambiguity operates in the script is in the interplay of both naturalistic scenes and dream-like sequences throughout. These dream sequences offer the team of creatives some interesting opportunities to explore what is going on in the unconscious/extra-terrestrial realm of the play, and as I write, these ideas are slowly and excitingly developing. AV will be a big part of representing this element.

How do you like to organise your rehearsal room? Is there any particular routine you stick to and why?

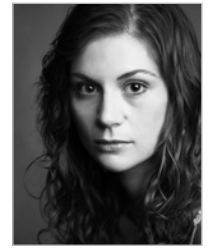
On day 1 it is important to set the tone positively and to get the entire company inspired and enthusiastic about the project. I don't believe in making long speeches pontificating about my view of the play on day 1. Instead I do a reading of the play and after a design presentation to the cast, I chair an open discussion about the play with the actors. I think it is vital that the actors feel as if they have a creative input at all times and don't feel like they are having to conform to a pre-ordained plan plotted out by the director. The first week is always exploratory and involves a lot of discussion and questioning about the characters' motivations and intentions. I provoke the actors to be specific about the way they view their characters and in a new play, sometimes small adjustments will be made to the script at this point. Week 2 is about beginning to develop the physical shape of the play in more detail, as well as refining the discoveries made in week 1. Week 3 is usually a transition week as the actors usually begin to struggle with scripts down, and begin to fly emotionally in their roles. At this point, I have to carefully balance my need to give detailed direction with allowing the actors time and space to inhabit the roles for themselves. Constant interventions by the director, while sometimes necessary, can also be frustrating for an actor who needs to run sections to get their rhythms and emotional territory worked out. Week 4 is generally about working problematic sections and running the play so that the actors begin to truly take ownership of the production.



Image by Dylan Evans

KATHRYN MARQUET — PLAYWRIGHT

How does it feel to be a young female Australian whose play is about to be featured in a Mainhouse Season?



It's exciting and terrifying and I'm enjoying the ride. I'm lucky to have this opportunity. There's limited spaces for new Australian work on the mainstage in Australia, which is a shame. We're seeing a lot of re-workings of classics, rather than original plays. I hope the play will have a future life beyond this production, but we will have to see what the future holds. I'm grateful to La Boite and David Berthold for believing in my play and in me. I love this play and I hope the audience will too!

What lead you to write *Pale Blue Dot* and where did you source your inspiration from?

I was performing in a show for Brisbane festival in 2012 with Elbow Room Productions called *After All This*. Part of the work was about the Heaven's Gate cult in California that committed mass suicide. When I was researching, I found out that they had taken out 'Alien Abduction Insurance' before committing suicide. I'd never heard of this and I was very intrigued, so I looked into it further. Turns out there's a number of companies in the UK and USA that offer this insurance policy as a bit of a joke.

When I've been between acting and writing jobs, I've typed out insurance detective reports. As I was typing, I started thinking about what it would be like for an insurance detective to investigate a possible alien abduction case and I guess the story started developing from there.

Do you have a particular interest in aliens and alien abductions yourself?

Most of my writing tends to explore how belief or faith in something greater than ourselves, whether that be 'God' in a religious sense or a more secular sense, has a role in people's lives and in one way or another, is a tool that we humans use to make our condition more tolerable. I'm interested in what gets us through this difficult life, what makes us cope with our fear of the dark. I think everyone believes in something, even if it's chaos.

I remember the first time a friend showed me a video of crop circles. He stood there excitedly, waiting for my response, saying, "See? See?" and my response was, "Well, that's very interesting, certainly, but I'm just not sure." But I started looking at things on YouTube and the net. And, my fascination has always been not so much with the aliens, but with the people who believe this stuff and their motivations for doing that. And, after all the research I've done, I can't tell you one way or another about the existence of alien life. I find the whole subculture fascinating.

As a non-German speaker, what encouraged you to include a German speaking character?

One of the themes of *Pale Blue Dot* is alienation and the way in which human beings struggle in communicating with each other. We have all this technology that deals with our fear of the unknown, of the dark. Nowadays, we can be online talking to someone 24 hours a day, but we seem to feel more isolated and alone than ever. I'm interested in that. I wanted to alienate the character of Joel as much as I could, and by putting him in a stranger's house where he doesn't understand the language seemed an ideal way to do that. It also helps explain the psychology of the character of Greta, and to a lesser extent, Storm. Both characters feel like outsiders.

Do you have a favourite character, and why?

That's like picking a favourite child! If I had to say, it would probably be Holly. I think she probably has some of the funniest lines. She's lost and she doesn't know what to do, so she makes a series of misguided attempts to try and fix herself that ends up pushing Joel further away from her. I guess she's like most people: trying her best to be a good person, but not always succeeding.

What processes did you go through to develop your characters?

My characters live very strongly in my head. To make them live, I find inspiration through photographs and artworks and songs as well. I make a list of 50 things about each character, just information about them (where they're from, what they're afraid of etc). I think you have to understand what drives a character before you can write them. What's their greatest hope? Their darkest fear? And, that should all tie into the narrative. Everything has to come back to the dramatic question, which, in *Pale Blue Dot's* case is: are we all alone in the universe? For various reasons, all of the characters in this play feel alienated and disconnected from the people around them.

What would be the one piece of advice you would give to aspiring playwrights?

Just one? How about a few...read lots and lots of plays. See heaps of theatre. Engage in other playwrights' creative developments and creative projects as much as you can. Drama is different to other types of writing, it requires an understanding of rhythm and structure, psychology and conflict. Most importantly, learn how to collaborate, writing drama is not a solo venture. You have to be open to listening and compromising.

What kind of research did you complete to enable you to write *Pale Blue Dot*?

Heaps! I watched as many YouTube videos and documentaries on aliens abductions as I could find. I read many books, talked to people and made copious notes. I did a lot of research before I even knew what the story was going to be, I found it enabled me to be open to the details. I also met with a number of German speakers who helped me translate the German.

HUGH PARKER — ACTOR (JOEL)

As an actor, how do you prepare for a stage performance?

Do you have a special warm up exercise for example?

The rehearsal process is the biggest element, naturally. I do a lot of reading and research before any production. I do tend to warm my voice, stretch and try to be as 'switched on' for the day as possible. However, like Joel, I have a very young child at home, so being switched on can be a battle.



What technique/s do you use to memorise your lines?

I trained in Stanislavski's Method. Specifically through the work of Uta Hagen. My acting teachers never wanted me to 'learn my lines'. Through this system, actors are encouraged to work hard on the text to find out why their character does something at any given point. You must also understand the relationship that you have with everything around you – people, place, objects etc. In this way, you have a strong connection to the text and the lines become part of your work to answer why you are doing something. The lines sink in as a result of this.

Before you walk on stage what runs through your mind?

Remembering to control my breathing.

What is your favourite character building exercise?

I'm big on text analysis. Questioning everything at every turn. I find out what my character is about by finding out what they do and their own reaction to things that happen to them and around them. A piece of clothing or an object (prop) can help too.

What do you expect the rehearsals to be like for *Pale Blue Dot*?

Thorough, emotionally intense and fun. I know the director and writer well, and I've worked with a couple of the cast before too. I expect a lot of laughter.

What is your favourite thing about the character Joel? Has he surprised you in anyway?

His vulnerability when we meet him, and his desire to change. I look forward to discovering any surprises as we rehearse.

LUCY GOLEBY — ACTOR (HOLLY)

As an actor, how do you prepare for a stage performance?

Do you have a special warm up exercise for example?

Warm ups usually involve a lot of silly face-pulling, bizarre noises and stretching. Most important for me is really getting my breath flowing and so I spend a lot of time opening my intercostal muscles (between your ribs) so my lungs can work at full capacity. I also spend quite a bit of time in a headstand or handstand, because they engage your core muscles for good breath and get the sound flowing without restriction. Plus it's fun to be upside down. It reminds me to be childlike and playful onstage.



What technique/s do you use to memorise your lines?

I think one of the most important things about learning lines is finding the playwright's rhythm along with their words. So I usually learn lines on a treadmill and really run the rhythm of the text into my body, one syllable per step, paying particular attention to punctuation. And I do that for the whole script, not just my own lines, because I want to hear the character's whole world, not just what they say.

Before you walk on stage what runs through your mind?

Usually something like, "Whatever I've forgotten or am about to forget, it's too late to back out now!"

What is your favourite character building exercise?

I do like to live a little as my character, without getting too method about it! But I'll read books she'd read, listen to music she'd like, that sort of thing. In a recent show I played a cultural linguistic archaeologist, so I spent a lot of time watching documentaries about anthropology, reading about archaeological sites and discoveries and researching the way language builds culture. I think it's about finding out how this character see the world and why.

What do you expect the rehearsals to be like for *Pale Blue Dot*?

I'm really excited to get into rehearsal. I love working on new plays - it's an absolute privilege to be part of the creation of a whole new world and to share that with a new audience. Kathryn has written such a beautiful, open play and it's a gift to actors to be able to discuss the work with the playwright. I loved Michael's gentle passion at the auditions and I can't wait to meet the rest of the cast! Rehearsal is really the heart of theatre, as it's the hotbed of collaboration.

What is your favourite thing about the character Holly? Has she surprised you in anyway?

I love Holly's honesty. She's not having a great time but she's brave enough to say so and to ask Joel to do the same, even if that causes friction and hostility. She's complex and contradictory and flawed and wonderfully human and real. I'm sure she has many surprises. Even after the show is over, I have a feeling she'll be one of those characters that wakes me up with another little idea!



Image by Dylan Evans

JOSH MCINTOSH — DESIGNER

What are your responsibilities as the designer?

The production Designer is responsible for the overall "look" of the production. This means actively designing sets, costumes and props to help tell the story. This means a fair bit of interpretation of the themes and concerns of the story and its characters, so digging in under the surface level of the play.



Tell us about your process for designing *Pale Blue Dot*. Where did you start?

First thing is to read the script - get to know the show. I usually like to do this a few times before chatting to the director - who is responsible for the overall vision. Then it's about deciding what is physically needed to tell the story in conjunction with conveying the moods and atmospheres of the piece. Underlying all of those concepts are the REASONS for the play. Not so much it's story, but what is it trying to tell us about life, relationships and so on. I start to try to reduce all those different elements into something that is visual and tangible. Then there comes the technical process of fitting shapes into a theatre and making sure it's actually an achievable build that will serve as a play-space to tell the story.

When the audience first walks into the theatre, what is the feeling you want to invoke? How did you achieve this?

One of being a voyeur to the story to unfold, but possibly a watcher who is non-human - maybe even supernatural! This is a story that deals with some metaphysical issues and questions our place in the universe. I'm trying to place the audience in a position that is not in a stationary, fixed or even literal space in the universe.

What was your inspiration for the design of *Pale Blue Dot*?

Its very title! The set is based on diagrams of our solar system, comparisons of planets and suns and paths of orbits. Also, the ripple effects of our actions: within relationships and families, within communities and society and the effects of our behaviours on a global scale. The notion of alienation is also key to this story and I wanted to place these characters in a world where they were under the microscope and in moments of intense isolation from others around them.

What elements do you have to consider when creating 'the look' of a play?

The context of the story combined with the mood of the story. How do the characters dress? What kind of world do they inhabit? What expectations or stereotypes might an audience have of that world or those characters? And will we work for or against those kinds of expectations? For me, those kinds of questions (and many more!) begin to create a sense of shape, colour, texture and line (basic elements of design!) that becomes formalised into a "look".

Are there any particular elements of the play that informed your artistic decisions?

Primarily, it was Storm's world that had the biggest impact on my design direction. Her "experiences" (real or imagined) and her fascination with things beyond our usual, tangible world were key.

What particular challenges does a show like *Pale Blue Dot* present the designer? How have you solved or overcome these?

Leaps in time and space are pretty normal for a play - that is moving from scene to scene and the passing of time. But *Pale Blue Dot* also features dream sequences, imaginings, memory sequences and a substantial elements of projected imagery. I instinctively avoided creating different "zones" or areas for different homes or situations. I was keen to have one abstract area that served all places - literal or metaphysical. In considering the projected areas, we quickly chose the floor as the main projection surface for the simple reason that the whole audience looks at the floor! There's no one ideal location for a vertical projection surface where we could successfully involve a character within the image. So the floor became an interesting surface to project on.

What are your favourite elements of design?

Colour and texture. They can exist without needing to be defined by shape or line, so I kind of treat colour and texture as the more emotional elements, while shape and line are the more technical elements. That's just my personal response though!!

How does design help a play communicate its message?

By creating a world that helps an audience enter into the spirit of the play - even if it is to be reminded that you're watching a play! Understanding and acknowledging the characters and their world is central to understanding the purpose and reason for a play. A good design encourages an audience to connect with the characters and their story.

Do you design for mediums other than theatre? If so, what, and how does it differ to theatre?

Designing for television has similar goals, but there are different needs for the technical processes of creating TV; props and costumes have to be more "clean" and realistic, costumes have to behave well on camera so care needs to be taken with colour and pattern choices, those sorts of things. That has implications on budget and time, and there's not always as much autonomy for a designer, as there are so many people who have a stake in design-related decisions...

What are the most rewarding things about your role in the production process?

Seeing words on a page be brought to life and doing that in combination with a group of people who somehow manage to find a common dialogue within the space of (usually) a few weeks!



Image by Dylan Evans

[THE] PALE BLUE DOT

"This narrow-angle color image of the Earth, dubbed 'Pale Blue Dot', is a part of the first ever 'portrait' of the solar system taken by Voyager 1. The spacecraft acquired a total of 60 frames for a mosaic of the solar system from a distance of more than 4 billion miles (6.4 billion kilometres) from Earth and about 32 degrees above the ecliptic. From Voyager's great distance Earth is a mere point of light, less than the size of a picture element even in the narrow-angle camera. Earth was a crescent only 0.12 pixel in size. Coincidentally, Earth lies right in the center of one of the scattered light rays resulting from taking the image so close to the sun. This blown-up image of the Earth was taken through three color filters -- violet, blue and green -- and recombined to produce the color image. The background features in the image are artifacts resulting from the magnification."

NASA, 2014, "Visible Earth".

<http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/view.php?id=52392> .



EXCERPT FROM CARL SAGAN'S BOOK 'PALE BLUE DOT'

"Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known."

Sagan, Carl. 1997. *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*. Ballantine Books.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

YouTube:

The Pale Blue Dot- Carl Sagan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=923jxZY2NPI>

Cosmos: A Personal Voyage – Carl Sagan (episodes 1-13)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIPShKs9Kr0&list=PLF8A93D75DEE8DAEB>

Toowoomba, QLD UFO

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dM9bzlvvODU>

UFO Mystery

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHCoNOCsW9M>

Articles:

Teen Captures Footage of Alien

<http://www.mydailynews.com.au/news/alien-tweed-ufo/718819/>

Mysterious Halo in Sky Spotted over Toowoomba

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/mysterious-halo-in-sky-sighted-in-toowoomba/story-e6freoof-1225868123682>

UFO Research Queensland

<http://www.uforq.asn.au/sightings/sightings2012.html>

UFO Sightings on the Sunshine Coast

<http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/photos/ufo-sightings-queensland/4793/#/2>

NASA's Voyager 1

http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/voyager/voyager20130912.html#.U5pPcHbDuZQ

NASA's Voyager 2

<http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/missions/details.php?id=5987>

Documentaries:

Oz Encounters: UFOs in Australia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckaBDqAJy44> (recommended)

Top UFO/Alien Documentaries

<http://www.educatinghumanity.com/2012/07/best-ufo-documentaries-all-full-version.html> (Full list)

TED

The Sound the Universe Makes

https://www.ted.com/talks/janna_levin_the_sound_the_universe_makes

The History of the World in 18 minutes

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_christian_big_history

Finding Planets around Other Stars

https://www.ted.com/talks/lucianne_walkowicz_finding_planets_around_other_stars

How We Found Hundreds of Potential Earth- Like Planets

https://www.ted.com/talks/dimitar_sasselov_how_we_found_hundreds_of_potential_earth_like_planets

What We Can Learn from Galaxies Far, Far Away

https://www.ted.com/talks/henry_lin_what_we_can_learn_from_galaxies_far_far_away

Podcasts

Space

<http://www.radiolab.org/story/91520-space/>

Dark Side of the Earth

<http://www.radiolab.org/story/242184-dark-side-earth/>

Photos

NASA- Gravity inspired Images

<http://www.theverge.com/2014/3/2/5463442/nasa-releases-gravity-inspired-photo-set-ahead-of-the-oscars>

NASA Images- Visible Earth

<http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/>

Websites

A Pale Blue Dot

<http://www.planetary.org/explore/space-topics/earth/pale-blue-dot.html>

FAQS

Will the tickets be sent to me in the post?

No, you will be able to collect your tickets from our Box Office which opens 1 hour prior to the scheduled start of the show.

Where can I park?

The best parking for La Boite is on the street around the University and Urban Village. We advise that you arrive earlier and to check the signs as most parking in Kelvin Grove is paid.

Can students bring their bags to the theatre?

We advise that all large bags and backpacks are left either on the bus or at school. La Boite does not have a designated cloak room to safely secure personal belongings.

Will there be a Meet the Artist talk post show?

The Meet the Artist (MTA) talk for Pale Blue Dot is Wednesday the 17th of September. There will be no other MTAs scheduled.

Where can my students receive additional information about the show?

The Education Notes, Show Program and the website.

When will I receive my Education Pack and what will be included?

The Education Packs are posted to the school prior to your attendance at the theatre. Generally the Education Packs contain a copy of the Education Notes, Nitty Gritty, Show Program, Show Poster and Show Flyers however are subject to availability.

Where can I get more information about school workshops and theatre tours?

The best place to get more information is our website. <http://laboite.com.au/cms/page.asp?ID=56>

LA BOITE AT THE ROUNDHOUSE THEATRE

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laboite.com.au

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 [@LaBoiteTheatre](https://twitter.com/LaBoiteTheatre)