

BABYTEETH: What to Expect

- *Babyteeth* is a new play by Rita Kalnejais and this is the first production of this work. It was developed through a Belvoir commission and throughout its writing, discussed with director Eamon Flack.
- *Babyteeth* runs for approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes including one interval of 20 minutes. The first half runs for 1 hour and 5 minutes and the second half for 55 minutes.
- There is a cast of seven actors, all of whom play one character each.
- Three of the characters, Milla, Henry & Anna are from the same family. The other characters are Toby; their pregnant next door neighbour; Moses, the guy Milla meets on Central Station; Gidon, her Latvian violin teacher & Thuong – a seven year old boy whose path crosses many of the other characters.
- *Babyteeth* is set in the months before the death of Milla, a fourteen year old girl who is going through repeat treatment for cancer. Despite the seriousness of this situation throughout, the play is very funny in many parts and is likely to be appealing to students. It is also very thought-provoking and moving.
- The chronology of *Babyteeth* is circular. The very first scene is the morning of Milla's death but the audience doesn't realise this yet. You can decide whether to share this information with your students – later on this scene is repeated from a different perspective, and it continues beyond the moment that it ended at earlier.
- The play explores the way human beings cope with grief and deal with life. One character, Moses, is a drug dealer, who throughout the play uses all kinds of drugs including Milla's prescription drugs. (No details are given of any of the other kinds of drugs he may have used in the past or may still be using.) Milla's father Henry is discovered at one point (when Milla's disease is advancing) shooting up in his office. This is his self-medication for the more that is happening than he can cope with at the moment. Anna, her mother, is prone to anxiety and takes medication prescribed by Henry to alleviate it. The play doesn't present drugs as a solution. But it shows how characters can become dependent on these forms of support in unbearable situations.
- There are several scenes of semi-nudity – actors change on stage as the revolve turns and some of their underwear can be seen as they change. There is a scene in which Milla and Moses are shown lying in bed together, Moses is wearing only underpants and Milla is wearing a long t-shirt but bare legs. Underwear will be worn at all times during the schools performances.
- There is depiction of sexual activity in a few scenes, in one scene, Milla's parents Anna & Henry start to have (fully-clothed) sex in Henry's office – he is a therapist. They are interrupted by a phone call. Students won't see anything except some underwear that Anna briefly flashes to Henry at the moment when she initiates sex.
- There is reference to euthanasia – Milla is exhausted from the effects of the cancer and the treatment and at one point she asks Moses to smother her by holding a pillow over her face. He starts to do this but she fights back and he lets go, in spite of what she told him to do.
- After this moment, Milla and Moses have sex. She asked him if he would earlier but he was unable to due to drug after effects. They are under sheets and the lighting is dim at this point, it's a moving scene which needs to be understood in the context of Milla's awareness of her own lifespan.
- This production includes the use of frequent strong and offensive language, the effect of this is mostly comic.
- There is the onstage smoking of (herbal and non-toxic) cigarettes.
- Schools performance tickets are not sent out beforehand, we call schools up one by one – don't worry if you haven't received your tickets; phone our box office on 9699 3444 if you need to check your booking.
- Students need to be fully briefed about appropriate theatre etiquette before seeing the play. This includes turning mobile phones off completely for the whole performance and refraining from eating while in the theatre.
- Please remind students the performance is live and actors can see and hear them in the audience. Please remind students not to eat in the theatre, talk, whisper or comment. We encourage laughter and natural reactions. Taking notes distracts actors and should never happen during the performance.
- Schools performances are followed by a Question and Answer session with the cast. Please let your students know they'll have the chance to ask questions about anything they don't fully understand afterwards.