

COMPANY B PRESENTS



Julie Hamilton [photo Julian Watt]

RUN RABBIT RUN

BY ALANA VALENTINE

**DIRECTED BY
KATE GAUL**

TEACHER'S NOTES

The Company B production of *Run Rabbit Run* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on
Wednesday 7 January 2004

Post-Performance Activities

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Name the two characters which were of most interest to you. Why do you think you were interested in their story? Name three things you learnt about these characters.
- 2) In your own words, write a brief summary of the story of the South Sydney Rabbitohs ousting and subsequent reinstatement to the Premiere League.
- 3) Did any of the characters change over the course of the play?
- 4) Who was Jimmy La Hood? What values did this character hold?
- 5) Who was Nicholas Pappas? Why did he decide to take up the fight for Souths?
- 6) At the beginning of the play Danny Munk says, "It's a pity Souths don't realise change is necessary." What does he mean by that?
- 7) From what you learnt in the play - why were Souths 'behind the pack' in 'all aspects of the selection criteria' to stay in the Premiere League?
- 8) Read the following piece of dialogue given by Denis Fitzgerald.

'There's just – sure it's a sport but so many sports are big business, if you look at tennis and golf and British soccer and American football, basketball. I mean oh, you just can't – cannot run anything on emotion, um, and at the end of the day it's usually the stronger or strongest financial teams or entities, companies, that – that – that still survive and so you just – you just can't have a competition based on emotion.'

What are some examples you can think of where sport has become a business? What about in your local area?

Describe in your own words what Denis Fitzgerald means when he says, '... you just can't have a competition based on emotion.'

- 9) Where did the name Rabbitohs come from? Why are the team colours red and green?
- 10) What does Mark Courtney's character tell us about the nature of 'fandom'? Why does he love South Sydney so much? Do you remember some of the other reasons expressed by the characters in Run Rabbit Run for their deep feeling for Souths? Can they always put their finger on it?
- 11) Read the following speech given by Noelene Piggins in Act One. Describe in your own words the emotion she is expressing.

'I was born and bred in Alexandria. I went through school with George but I didn't follow South Sydney because of George. George had nothing to do with Souths being

my football team. A lot of people think – Because I married George, um, so – that was my father's and my uncle's and my family's football team. I – I'm – I – I like everything that I – that – that everything that's – that I've had in my life, I treasure that. I wouldn't change it. And that's what Souths means that that's – you know I wouldn't like someone to – to take my child. I mean I can't lose a child and replace that. I mean (pause) they thought that South Sydney people would just follow Eastern Suburbs, because they – (pause) you know they had money and that – that was close on our boundaries and – and so go and follow another team or merge with a club and follow a merged club. I mean –

But you can't. Because they – because – because – you know once you lose something, it's gone. I'm just saying, once something dies, it's gone. I don't lose a – I lost my father, I can't just say somebody – call somebody else dad.

Like – why were we the targeted club. Why were we the targeted club. Why were we the only club that Super League didn't speak to? To ask us to go and play in another competition? How did – well – well that's – that's – that's what made it so – so – so – that's what hurt us so much.'

12) Explain in your own words why Super League was created? What is your understanding of the 'theory' behind it? What does the character George Piggins think the ARL clubs should have done to stop Super League? (He felt the clubs should have stuck together and stuck it out and then Super League wouldn't have got off the ground.)

13) Read the two levels the clubs were assessed on as reported in The Daily Telegraph.

'The clubs were assessed at two levels. ... The first level, called the basic criteria, examined playing facilities, administration, solvency, and development. The second level, called the selection criteria, rated the clubs on crowd support, competition results, sponsorship and finances. The exceptions to the overall process were Brisbane, New Zealand and Auckland. The rules included that any club which merged before the deadline would not be included in the criteria scoring.'

Do you remember, from watching the show or from the news at the time, where Souths lost a lot of points in the selection criteria? (Finances)

Where did Souths finish in the criteria ranking results? (They finished 17th – last position)

14) Which, if any, parts of the story moved you? Do you remember laughing at any point in the play? What made you laugh?

Now, after you have seen the play, what scene sticks in your head most strongly? Why do you think this is?

15) What the reaction of the South Sydney supporters to the decision to throw their team out of the Premiere League? Do you remember what Jimmy La Hood tells us of his father's response to the news?

16) What does Norm Lipson mean when he says, 'If you think one individual can't make a difference you've never been to bed with a mozzie flying around.'

17) Who inspired George to take up the fight against News Limited when the Board decided the case would be too expensive to pursue?

18) Do you remember what really annoyed Nicholas Pappas about the reasons people gave him for not taking the case? (They were saying you just can't win/it's Murdoch/forget it/they're too big)

19) Read the following lines spoken by Nicholas Pappas. Can you explain in your own words the essence of the court case against News Limited?

'The essence of our court case was this. Section 45 of the Trade Practices Act says that if you and I are in competition and you're servicing a market, and I'm servicing a market ... we might be servicing parts of the same market, and then we merge. We can't then say that we will exclude certain parts of the market. We're only going to supply that part of the market. So that part that's left is left without supply.

The teams are providing the service to us. We give them a competition and they give us Rugby League Services back. So that's what the case is about. Section 45 says you can't do that because you're boycotting effectively a portion of the market, that is left stranded. And that's exactly what we said the reduction to 14 teams did.'

20) Why was Norm worried on the morning of the first rally? Were his fears realised?

21) Why do you think there were flags from other clubs (Parramatta, Easts, Manly and Balmain) at a rally to save Souths?

22) The next day where did the story of the rally appear in the rugby league paper, The Daily Telegraph? Why do you think it wasn't front page news?

23) After Eileen lost her job and her son she started working as a volunteer at Souths. Why did she like working there? Why do you think she had a such a great feeling about being a volunteer?

24) What sorts of things did Marcia and Barbara do to raise money for the Souths fightback campaign? If you had to raise money to save your local sporting club what sorts of things would you do?

25) During the first court case George Piggins explains,

'...we was asked to pass what became known as a 'fertility test'. We ... look basically we'd shown them a plan for the Rabbitohs entire operation for the next five years. We said we could raise \$20 million in sponsorship. Prove that you can raise half that amount says Finn[the judge]. And get it to me in writing.'

Souths scraped together 5 million. Do you remember how they got the last 3 million? Why did this cause a stir?

26) After Souths lost the first court case Andrew Denton says,

‘I remember what really struck in my core was his words, ‘the case was not sufficiently fortuitous’ (pause) and ah I wrote an article to the Herald after that (pause) which was ah, which said you know, this is you know, forgive us for being angry but ah, you know, in a city where (pause) John Laws walks free because he’s too famous to be jailed, and where you know in a country where Christopher Skase ah can’t be brought back to justice, and Alan Bond pays one cent in every hundred dollars ah, why is it that Souths’ case is not sufficiently fortuitous.’

Describe in your own words the values being expressed by Denton in this speech. Have you read or seen any other Australian plays where similar values have been expressed?

27) Read the following letter written and read by author and television and presenter Caroline Jones.

‘Dear Lachlan, it might help if I explain a few things about Australians, so you can understand why people are saying they hope you rot in hell... They say we’re still not sure what our identity is, but try taking it away from us and you’ll soon find out because suddenly it becomes very clear what it is to be unaustralian. I’m sorry to go against what your father taught you, Lachlan, but there are some things that money can’t buy, though it surprises me to say it. When you do a thing that make Australian men cry, you know you’re on the wrong track. And the way we see it, what’s the point of being the richest kid in the world if people like George Piggins say you’re a mongrel. It’s a terrible thing to be called. All the best for your future. Caroline.’

To whom is this letter addressed? What do you think she means when she writes, ‘...They say we’re still not sure what our identity is, but try taking it away from us and you’ll soon find out because suddenly it becomes very clear what it is to be unaustralian...’

Brainstorm some ideas about what it is to be ‘Australian’. What do you understand people to mean when they say something is ‘unaustralian’?

What values and/or actions held or taken by the characters in Run Rabbit Run fit in with your idea of what it is to be ‘Australian’? What values and/or actions held or taken by characters fit in with your idea of what it is to be ‘unaustralian’?

28) Read the following dialogue delivered by the character Robert Taylor, Souths Juniors Referee.

‘The government attitude is this. You be good little darkies and we’ll look after you. Not letting us look after ourselves like we could if we’re given the opportunity. It won’t change in my lifetime. I don’t believe that it’ll ever change. Because the governments that they put into Parliament are so racist and biast ... they ought to look beyond what they’re seein. Ya You take the notification of ANZAC. What basically is ANZAC? They will recognize a war that our people went overseas for, but they won’t recognize the slaughter of the Aboriginal people within Australia itself. The many

wars on Aboriginal people, the rights taken away. That's why I never call myself an Australian. But I'll call myself a South Sydney supporter. Because it weren't till 1968 that we had recognition as an Australian, 1968 I was fourteen years old. So before that I weren't recognized as an Australian. But I was recognized as a Souths fan so I'll stick with them.'

Explain in your own words what Robert is saying here. What springs to your mind when you hear the word ANZAC? How important is the ANZAC story to the Australian identity? What is Robert saying here about the irony of the ANZAC story?

29) After the successful appeal, towards the end of the play, the character Peter Macourt says,

'Like all sport ... its emotional. And it's difficult to reconcile the emotional side of sport to the professional side of sport. And it's there. It's unambiguously there. But. It's difficult in professional sport. It's one of those imponderables. How do you separate emotion from sport, you know. You can't. And you certainly don't want to separate emotion from sport. That's what it is. But how do you reconcile that with the commercial professional sport ... which is about being the best, the most compelling, the most interesting, the most exciting rather than being the most traditional.'

Do you agree with what is being said here? Why or why not? Debate the issues raised in this piece of dialogue.

Thinking about the Performance

- 1) How would you describe the performance style of the actors in Run Rabbit Run? Is it naturalistic?
- 2) What is the effect of having the characters speak directly to the audience?
- 3) Which characters go on an emotional journey of change over the course of the play? How are they different at the end of the play?
- 4) Think about the physicality of the characters in Run Rabbit Run. Did any of the characters have physical characteristics which centrals to the way in which they were portrayed?
- 5) In Run Rabbit Run adult actors played children. How did they show they were playing children? Was this effective? Why or why not?
- 6) Director Kate Gaul says of Run Rabbit Run it '... isn't a story about a club, or politics, or even football.' Explain in your own words the themes the play explores. How are these themes realised in the production? Consider the play itself, the characters, the characterisation and the design of the show.

Further Activities

Creating characters: the Hot Seat

Place a chair in front of the class. Take turns at creating the character of a South Sydney fan on the hot seat. The audience asks questions of the person on the hot seat and the person on the hot seat answers as the character. Use the information you have learnt in the play and your own knowledge when asking and answering questions.

Creating Atmosphere: Soundscape

In small groups create a soundscape depicting a football match or a protest rally. One at a time, each person in the group contributes a sound to the soundscape. Sounds or repeated words can be used. For example, the first person may start with the sound of people walking to their seats; the next person may be the program seller shouting, "Programs, programs." Build the soundscape slowly. Once each person has contributed change the pace and volume of the soundscape. Try building it up to a crescendo. You could try doing a whole class soundscape. If working in small groups, have the rest of the class close their eyes while listening to each group perform their soundscape.

Creating Scenes: Improvisation

In pairs or small groups create consider what you understand it to mean when people say 'That's unaustralian'. Improvise a short scene in which something 'unaustralian' takes place.

Research

What has happened to the South Sydney football club since their historic reinstatement to the Premiere League. Find out what you can, or tell others what you already know, about what's been happening on and off the field in the past couple of years.

Rehearsing Run Rabbit Run

Photo A



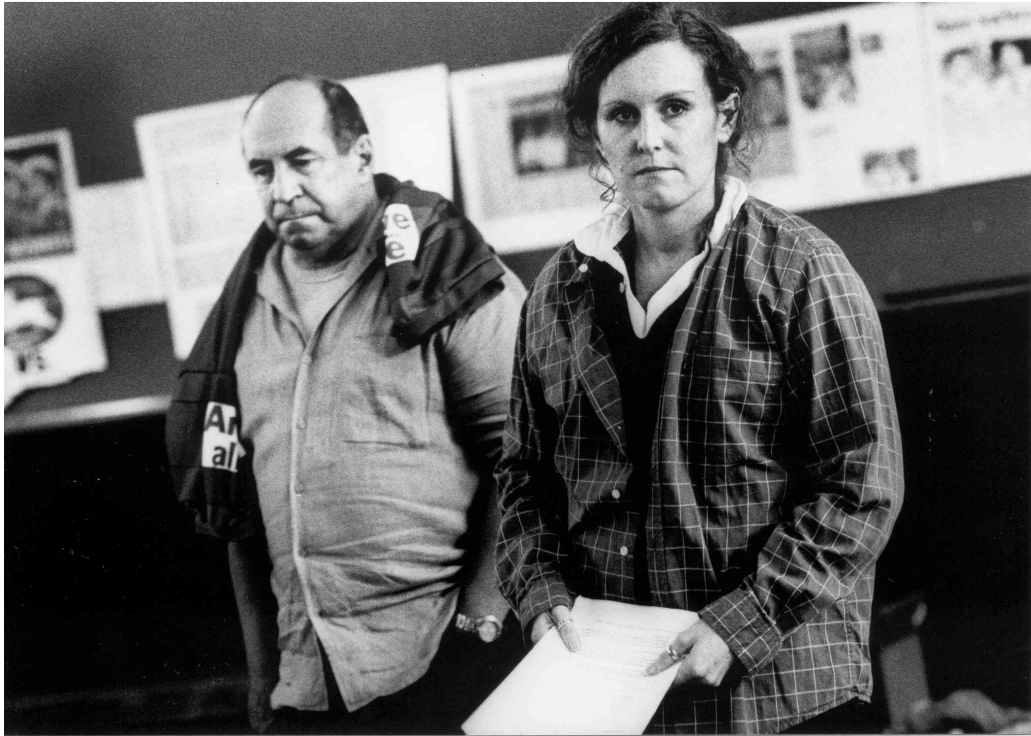
(Tyler Coppin, Josef Ber, Jody Kennedy. Photo Heidrun Löhr)

Photo B



(Wayne Blair. Photo Heidrun Löhr)

Photo C



(Roy Billing, Eliza Logan. Photo Heidrun Lohr)

Photo D



(Russel Kiefel, Julie Hamilton, Tyler Coppin, Josef Ber, Wayne Blair, Georgina Naidu, Jody Kennedy, Alex Sideratos. Photo Heidrun Lohr)

Questions for Discussion

Photo A

- 1) Describe what you see in the photo. How would you describe the expressions on the actors' faces?
- 2) What can you see in the background on the photo? What words can you discern? What mood is created by these words?
- 3) Where does the actors' focus seem to lie? What might their characters be doing?

Photo B

- 1) Describe what you see in the photo. What is the actor wearing? What does this suggest about his character?
- 2) Describe the gesture being made by the actor. Try it yourself. What is suggested by this gesture?
- 3) Take up the same position as the actor in the photograph. What might he be doing? Improvise a short scene that starts with a character standing in this position.

Photo C

- 1) Describe what you see in the photo.
- 2) What sort of mood are these actors conveying? How do they convey this mood? Consider their facial expression and body language.

Photo D

- 1) Describe what you see in the photo. Describe the expression on each actor's face.
- 2) What might the characters in this scene be doing? Give reasons for your answer.
- 3) Form a tableau in the same position as the actors in the photograph. Can you improvise two different scenes from this starting position? Make each one have a different mood about it. Make show your scenes explain the actors' expressions and gestures e.g. why is the woman in the back row covering her face?

The Set



(set design: Brian Thomson)

- 1) What was your first impression when you walked into the theatre?
- 2) How are the benches used to suggest different locations?
- 3) What colours strike you most?
- 4) Are the photographs and memorabilia used in the play/referred to in the play?
- 5) Does the set represent a particular place? Is this effective? Why or why not?

Production Photos



(Josef Ber, Wayne Blair, Julie Hamilton, Jody Kennedy, Eliza Logan, Russell Kiefel, Roy Billing, Georgina Naidu, Alex Sideratos, Tyler Coppin Photo: Heidrun Löhr)



(Roy Billing, Eliza Logan Photo: Heidrun Löhr)