



## LIGHT SHINING IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

- *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* is a play by Caryl Churchill written in 1976.
- This production is co-directed by Eamon Flack and Hannah Goodwin and premiered at Belvoir on Wednesday 13 April 2022. The production was rehearsed and performed in repertory as part of a 'rep' season with Alana Valentine's *Wayside Bride*.
- *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* runs for approximately 2 hours without an interval.
- *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* is set during the early years of the English civil war in 1646-1650. The time period of the play is highlighted on stage on a light box and separated into 4 years and the detail that frames that year ending in the prophecy '1650 Christ on Earth'.
- The civil war is considered the conception of modern democracy and capitalism. While the English Civil War is the backdrop to the Caryl Churchill play audiences are presented with contemporary setting to draw the parallels to modern power structures and contemporary. ie Black Lives Matter, War in Ukraine. Churchill uses verbatim text from the time, including the Putnam debates - which were a series of committees discussing who should have the right to vote for parliamentary representatives. The setting intends to draw parallels to contemporary society, opposed to being historical re-enactment.
- The action of the play takes place in various locations in England, however the style of the production mirrors present day Australia.
- Some context of the civil war may enhance student's experience of this production. We recommend students read: Belvoir Guide to *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* before attending.
- The style of the production is contemporary, Brechtian with elements of naturalism. The structure of the play includes an overarching narrative following characters through the war interspersed with scenes capturing vignettes of poverty, injustice, community and politics. Characters sometimes change on stage or move and set up props blending together scenes.
- There are eight actors who all play multiple roles throughout the production, often symbolised through a change in costume or addition of a specific accessory such as a hat or arm band. In some scenes actors announce the name of their characters. Some characters appear in one scene only, while others are threaded through the play, such as the leveller Briggs, who is introduced before, during and after the war in different phases of his commitment to the cause.
- Faith, religion and power are themes of the play. Christianity is debated in the context of power and who has a right to preach and hold power. In some instances of the play the religion is positioned against the corrupt monarchy, in other instances religious institution is questioned, or debated in opposition to parliamentary law.
- The play contains crude language. In one scene a group of homeless people share their faith and believe themselves to be prophets. The prophesise whether it is justified to punish a thief who is in poverty. One prophet, Cobbe speaks as if possessed, she gestures with two fingers in the air, and chants "Damn the hellfire Presbyterian hypocrites that call a thief a sinner, rot them in hell's jail. They say Christ's wounds, wounds, wounds, wounds. Stick your fingers in. Christ's a-sehole. He had an a-sehole. Christ sh\*ts on you rich. Christ sh\*ts. Shitting pissing spewing puking f^king Jesus Christ. Jesus f^king -".
- The play contains references to abandonment and illness or death in childhood. In one scene a mother is distressed when pressured to leave her baby on the doorstep of an estate. Consoling the mother her friend encourages her to leave the baby, "You've got no milk. She's not even crying now, see. That's not good. You haven't had one, I'm telling you, she's dying". In another scene a butcher criticises his customers for their greed, stating "You cram yourselves with their children's meat. You cram yourselves with their dead children."
- The production contains alcohol consumption. Characters are seen drinking and in one scene a character is seen to be intoxicated.
- The production includes haze and smoke, strobe lighting for approximately one minute towards the end of the show and bright lights within the set that flare at moments throughout the play (not strobe).