■ *Opening Night* is adapted from a 1977 screenplay by John Cassavetes, the play was adapted by Carissa Licciardello. This production is directed by Carissa Licciardello and opened at Belvoir on Wednesday 2 March 2022.

■ *Opening Night* runs for approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes with no interval.

■ *Opening Night* is a metadrama (a play that features another play as part of its plot). The genre of the play is a psychological thriller. The action takes place over a few weeks during the rehearsal period for a play called *The Second Woman* which is being rehearsed and staged within the world of *Opening Night*. It is not always clear to the audience what is 'real' and what is 'theatre', or what is happening in the present day action of the play (*Opening Night*) and what is being staged within the world of the 'play' (*The Second Woman*).

■ *Opening Night* is set in a fictional theatre with the same footprint as Belvoir St Theatre, in the present day. The set incorporates the Belvoir stage as the set of the play *Opening Night* (where the action occurs mostly in Myrtle's apartment) or the set of *The Second Woman* (the play being rehearsed and performed in *Opening Night*).

■ There are six actors in *Opening Night*. The central character is Myrtle Gordon, an actress at the peak of her career who has been cast in the role of a lifetime as Virginia in *The Second Woman*. She is playing the role opposite her colleague and ex-partner Marty, who plays Maurice in *The Second Woman*. The other characters are Manny, the Director of *The Second Woman.* Sarah, the Playwright of *The Second Woman*, and the Costume Designer: Kelly. The sixth actor plays Nancy, who is introduced as a young fan of Myrtle, aged nineteen

■ Students should be prepared for some perplexity. At times reality is blurred between what is taking place in '*The Second Woman*', seen in both "rehearsal" and "performance" during the story, and what is happening in the world of the play *Opening Night.* In *Opening Night* the audience may also question if the events are happening in reality or if they are part of Myrtle's imagination.

■ [spoiler alert] The play references the death of a young person. After waiting for Myrtle after a rehearsal, a young fan runs across the road in the rain and is hit by a car. The incident happens off-stage, but there is a loud sound effect to indicate the collision.

■ The play contains instances of violence against women. In the play *The Second Woman* there is a choreographed moment where the character Maurice stage slaps Virginia. The context of the stage slap advocates *against* domestic violence within the scope of the play *Opening Night.* The actress, Myrtle, is uncomfortable with the sequence and after several repeats of the action she falls to the floor in distress. The director appears uncaring when the actress remains on the floor of the set.

■ A theme of *Opening Night* is about women aging and risk-taking in youth. One scene contains a line of dialogue which refers to a relationship between a young woman and an older man. The young woman boasts "*The night is when I go out. With men, older men with daughters my age. I was out with a guy named Frank once. He was fifty. Strong guy. He used to bite my lip and then he'd kiss it and be tender. He was a creep, but I was well-behaved with him.*"

■ The production includes a character changing from one costume to another. Myrtle changes from one costume to another on stage wearing a one-piece 'boy leg' shapewear garment.

■ Characters are seen drinking alcohol on stage and there is a display cabinet of spirits that is visible throughout the play. However, in one scene the character of Virginia (played by Myrtle) comments that the Scotch she is seen to be drinking is coloured water.

■ The production contains the use of herbal cigarettes, haze and notable strobe lighting. Characters are seen smoking onstage throughout the production.

■ Schools Performances are followed by a Question and Answer session with the cast. Let students know they can ask questions about aspects of the play that they don't fully understand afterwards.