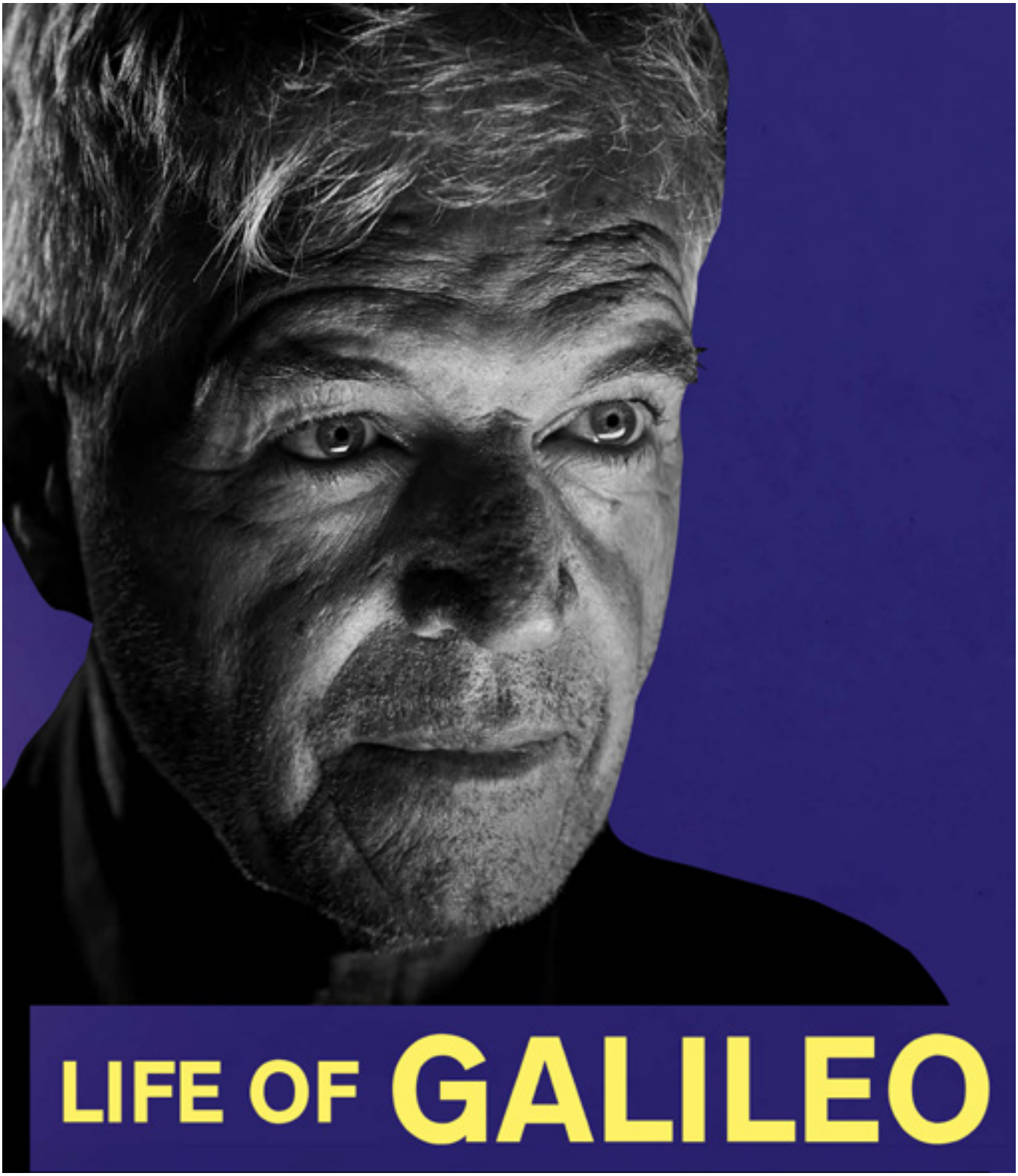


3 AUGUST - 15 SEPTEMBER 2019

LEARNING RESOURCES

BELVOIR

Belvoir presents
LIFE OF GALILEO

By **Bertolt Brecht**
Adapted by **Tom Wright**
Directed by **Eamon Flack**

This production of *Life of Galileo* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 7 August 2019.

Set and Costume Designer **Zoë Atkinson**
Lighting Designer **Paul Jackson**
Composer and Sound Designer **Jethro Woodward**
Stage Manager **Tanya Leach**
Assistant Stage Manager **Bronte Schuftan**
Directorial Secondment **Saro Lusty-Cavallari**

With
Ayeesha Ash
Peter Carroll
Colin Friels
Laura McDonald
Miranda Parker
Damien Ryan
Damien Strouthos
Vaishnavi Suryaprakash
Sonia Todd
Rajan Velu

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

CONTENTS

Cover Image / Daniel Boud 2019
Learning Resources compiled by Belvoir Education, July 2019
Rehearsal Photos / Brett Boardman 2019
Production Photos / Brett Boardman 2019

ABOUT BELVOIR

ONE BUILDING.
SIX HUNDRED PEOPLE.
THOUSANDS OF STORIES

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Sue Donnelly, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

BELVOIR EDUCATION

Our Education Program provides students and teachers with insights into the work of Belvoir and first hand experiences of the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our arts access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work.

Explore our education pages at **www.belvoir.com.au/education**

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Bertold Brecht
Writer

Tom Wright
Adpator

Eamon Flack
Director

Ayeesha Ash
Virginia

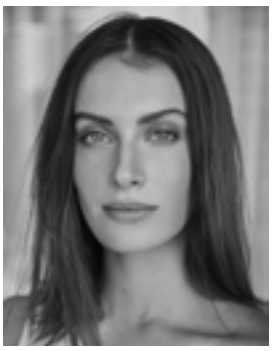
Zoë Atkinson
Set and Costume Designer

Peter Carroll
Barberini

Colin Friels
Galileo

Paul Jackson
Lighting Designer

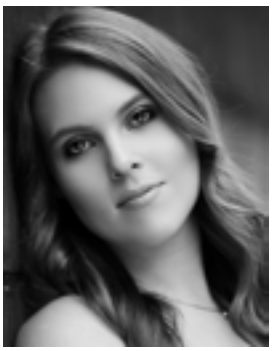
Tanya Leach
Stage Manager



Laura McDonald
Virginia

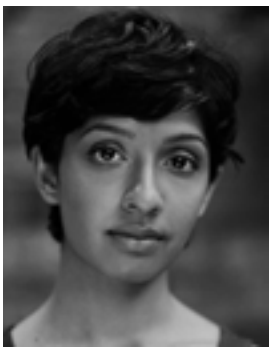
Miranda Parker
Grand Duchess

Damien Ryan
Maculi



Bronte Shuftan
Assistant Stage Manager

Damien Strouthos
Ludovico



Vaishnavi Suryaprakash
Andrea

Sonia Todd
Vice Chancellor

Rajan Velu
Fulganzio

Jethro Woodward
Composer and Sound Designer

ADAPTING LIFE OF GALILEO

INTERVIEW WITH TOM WRIGHT

How did the writing of your adaptation come about?
When the decision was made by Belvoir to do a production of *Life of Galileo*, Eamon [Flack], as the artistic director and the director of the production asked me to do an adaptation because I had done *[The Resistible Rise of] Arturo [Ui*, by Bertolt Brecht] recently. You have to be given permission by the Brecht estate to even embark on that endeavour, but I had a track record with them. They don't like the swapping of male and female roles necessarily, that song titles and songs aren't misrepresented, but fundamentally they understand the nature of adaptation. They will make allowances when a new version is placed in a position like this one, where we're trying to do it with nine performers. *Life of Galileo* is written for at least 14, and probably ideally you'd do it with 18. This is because Brecht's written a play which, appropriately for a play about a telescope, goes out and goes in. There are big scenes which feel like they need to represent society. There's a ball scene where the more people you get on stage the better and then there are two hander and three hander scenes, but I don't have enough actors at our disposal. When I did my adaptation I did it for nine. Straight away you have to do some condensing, and the Brecht estate is understanding of that.

My biggest task as an adaptor, as a theatre artist, is I'm not really there to try to put my spin on the play or do my interpretation, because I have to serve the script and I have to fulfill a very practical task. Most of what you do as an adaptor, as opposed to a translator, and I try to do both here, I sit with the German version and with translations. Most of your task is practical. A large part is working out [for example] if I have actor X playing one of the mathematicians in scene 4, is there enough time for a costume change for them to play a monk in the next scene. You do a lot of that where you make big scale charts and use colour coded pens and over. A lot of it feels like a mathematical exercise. There's that practical side of it.

The second side of it that every adaptor of a play has to ask is 'what tone do you want it to be', because it's very hard to translate and adapt tone. By tone I just mean the general feel, sometimes things are ironic in tone, or sometimes things are slightly comic, sometimes things are quite dry and they want to actually push the politics quite hard. In that case it's partly a question of listening to the tone in which the original play sat, back in the 1940s/50s. Part of it's listening to the director and the lead actor, in this case Colin Friels, seeing the kind of people they are and trying to serve their tone. That's sort of the starting point.

What I did with this particular production of *Life of Galileo* is I did the full play, and I mean the full play including both the 1940s version, the one in Switzerland, the 1950s one that was put on in Germany, and the one in between that was put on in America. All three are quite different and they're all by Brecht. They're all translated differently because one of them was in English and two of them were in German. I did almost every scene. Then you work out the ones you don't want. For instance in some versions of the play there's a scene which involves some singers after interval singing a ballad, but frankly we just didn't have the time and we didn't have the cast size to do that scene. It wasn't that I disliked the scene it's just that we simply couldn't do that.

There's also a scene in some versions of the play which is about Galileo walking down

the street at a time of plague. That's one of the great things about doing a Brecht play as opposed to adapting an Ibsen or a Chekhov or an Arthur Miller, his plays are made up of individually component units that can be organised to a certain extent independently of each other.

One way of thinking of *Life of Galileo* is as a play, but another way of thinking of it is as a sequence of short plays on a theme, and that theme is Galileo. I'm not saying that you can do them in any order you want, they're clearly written in a chronology, and in an order, and although you could swap one or two around, fundamentally you have to follow Brecht's 'schemata'... it's partly dramaturgical and it's partly literary. By dramaturgical I mean the practicalities of what we can do, and literary in terms of trying to serve how that play speaks to 2019 as opposed to 1953.

How much of that process has been collaborative with [the director] Eamon?
In terms of the actual business of adapting the script, Eamon gave me a couple of notes, and I mean a couple – two notes. One where he said he thought a particular word was too contemporary. I remember him saying, "oh actually I think that word will just stand out", and he was right. The second note that he gave me was, where the character of Andrea, played by Vaishnavi Suryaprakash in our production, was confronting Galileo about his failure to stand up for his beliefs, and Eamon said that he felt like my version didn't confront Galileo enough. That was because I was following the original translation, and in the original German the character of Andrea is quite sarcastic and ironic at that point, whereas Eamon likes characters to actually confront. He said "can you make her a bit more confrontational". The rest of the collaborative thing doesn't start until we get onto the floor with the actors in the rehearsal room. The adaptation didn't get a huge amount of feedback, but Brecht is a brilliant, brilliant writer, he is very easy to adapt and he is clearly a masterful theatre writer. Once you get into his head you can feel the way he imagines the play working. There's no one way, but there are ways for it to work and that makes it easy.

What do you see as the key themes of the play, and how do they relate to a modern audience?
There are a lot of binaries, argument systems, in the play. For instance the difference between 'what is truth' and 'what are facts' is a big one. Another one is the gap between 'what something costs' and 'what its value is', that's the second big theme. The third big theme is 'the idea of the hero', what is heroic behaviour. In the play, Galileo is set up as if he is almost a guru, he is a teacher. Certainly the young people around him see him as someone who is standing up for science, and working hard to abolish an old system of thought which has become oppressive. But when The Inquisition comes, the church's thought police come and threaten him and show the instruments of torture they'll use on him, he crumbles and he recants. He says 'actually everything I've said was wrong', and the young people, particularly his student Andrea, are very upset and very let down by his failure to behave like a hero. By the end of the play you've come to question actually what is the heroic course, what is true heroic behaviour.

They're three big themes, and they all clearly relate to 2019 Australia and the 2019 Western world, because we're living in an age of carbon emissions in the atmosphere and extraordinary levels of sea temperature rising in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions. It's pretty well documented across the board from a wide range of sciences that we're going through a period of profound climate change, and if that's the case then why are we not adjusting our behaviour accordingly?

[I think] one of the main reasons why is that there are vested interests sometimes against the analysis of scientific data. Here you have one of the great plays about the way power resists scientific data and resists change because it feels threatened by it. It's not directly a play about climate change and yet if you do the *Life of Galileo* in 2019 it can only be about that because that's one of our biggest debates. It's a play about the Barrier Reef, it's a play about what happens with our emissions into the atmosphere, rising sea levels, but it's also a play about anything else where you see Power, capital P power, resisting change that comes from beneath.

One of the great lines in the play, and you hear this a great deal at the moment in our newspapers and our media cycle, is "there are facts and they'd exist even if human beings don't exist, and then there's truth, and that's the facts that human beings can cope with". That feels to me like a very useful line which is probably taking place in the boardrooms of every fossil fuel company and every media organisation in the western world.

What was your writing process for adapting this play? What was your entry point into it?
I try not to get too analytical about this. The process is straightforward, I sit down with the German text, and I transliterate (write a word using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet or language) it for myself. My German isn't great, I'm not a great German reader, but if I go slowly I can actually follow it. I underline in red everything that I don't think I'm fully understanding, and then I sit down with two existing translations, one of which was done by Brecht himself in collaboration with someone else, another one which is a pure translation, and I see how they've solved those problems. Then I amend my literal translation, and I put it aside.

I sit down and put up on a piece of butcher's paper a list of the scenes and who needs to be in them for my purposes and in this case I actually sat down with my notes back with the German translation next to it. Looked at what it was, and then looked at the original, put it away and then wrote the page, look at the original, write the page etc.

It's laborious, but once you get going it doesn't take too long. When that's finished, you tidy up the language, because a lot of it is in bad English. You tidy up some of the exchanges because people just don't talk like that, and before you know it you've actually started doing work.

Then you compare it to what some of the other translations have done, because quite often whilst you would never choose their choice of words, they have interesting solutions. The other thing was that because I knew the way in which Belvoir were doing it, I knew we couldn't have the scenes finish on quite the same beat, as some of the other English language versions did. These scenes needed a concluding line, a quite clear full stop line so it's quite clear where a scene ends. I had to go back and rework that.

The early part of that process is translative and the second part of that process is adaptive.

When do you consider an adaptation complete?
Well, the implicit answer is that it's never complete. I suppose if you take by analogy an adaptation coming from nature, creatures are always in the process of adapting to their environments, but that's a bit sort of indulgent. Really an adaptation is complete when the script has reached a point in rehearsal where the actors and everybody have had to agree that 'we're going to say this'. So at a certain point, say in the last week of rehearsals before

you go into the theatre, the time for changing is over. The stage manager needs to call [the show] off a script, the prompt copy - which is the copy of the script in the rehearsal room that the senior stage manager keeps - becomes the completed adaptation at that point.

What tips or advice would you give a young person trying to learn the skill of writing and adapting?
I think the best thing to do is start really simply - go through a play that you love and rewrite it word for word, speech for speech, but in the way you like to use language. If you like to write poetically and freely go ahead. You say you like Beckett plays but you find his language harsh and difficult, rewrite them, and rewrite his thoughts, and rewrite the characters' thoughts and see what happens. Just do it as an exercise, rewrite Shakespeare in your own words and see what you learn about yourself as a writer.

The best thing to do and one of the best things about being an adaptor of texts is that you don't have to invent structure, what you have to invent is context and, to a certain extent, you have to invent that tone I was talking about before, but you don't have to invent structure. Being a playwright is hard, because you have to invent the entire shape of the thing, whereas if I come to adapt *Life of Galileo* I have the scenes in front of me. I know that so-and-so comes on at this point, I know that the next scene is going to involve the Grand Duchess. You're dealing with the way language works within a pre-ordained structure, and as a result many is the great playwright through history who has learnt how to write really well as a playwright by starting out as an adaptor. Because when you write to someone else's structure, the understanding of structure, how to write within a three act structure, how to work within a five act structure, how to differentiate between a dialogue scene and a group scene, that goes in almost subconsciously through adapting other people's work. It's a really good exercise if you want to write for the stage in any form, to just pick up something, including someone else's translation and just start at the beginning.

Say you like Chekhov, just go through one scene, a particular scene you like, and change every verb and noun in it. Just change every verb and noun, even keep the sentence structure of someone else's translation, and see what it does. And I can guarantee if you love theatre you'll straight away say, 'that's good', 'that's not so good', and then before you know it you're on the adaptive journey.

THE DIRECTOR: EAMON FLACK

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Brecht wrote his first version of *Life of Galileo* in exile in Denmark in 1938, in the course of an acquaintance with the great Danish physicist Niels Bohr; it premiered in Switzerland in the middle of the war. A second, English version was written in Los Angeles after the war, in collaboration with the film and stage star Charles Laughton; it closed not long after it opened in 1947. In October that year Brecht was hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee; the next day he returned to Europe, where a third version premiered at Cologne in 1955. Between the first two versions, the Second World War annihilated half the world until Germany was crushed and America dropped two atomic bombs on Japan. Between the second and third versions, Brecht fled America and hitched his wagon to the Communist regime in East Germany.

Brecht would deny it, but his Galileo is a sort of self-portrait: a forceful mind and driven personality; a refugee intellectual and an opportunist; an outspoken coward; a brave lush; a truth-teller and a liar; an original mind and a thief of other people's ideas (especially women's, in Brecht's case)... But in writing a self-portrait he also wrote a self-prophecy: like Galileo he would wander the world, struggling to find a place to work and live freely, finally settling for an almighty compromise as a bit of a useful idiot for a mindless ideological regime, hiding his real instincts inside his official work, still trying to outwit history.

This potted biography of the writer and his play explains something of why *Life of Galileo* is such a formidable piece of work: it knows what it's talking about. It knows about exile and cunning; it knows about truth and lies; it knows about compromise and ideology; it knows about the beauty and exhilaration of thought; it knows about the corruptibility of human knowledge; and it knows about the species' unique capacity for destruction.

***

Life of Galileo is a running argument about whether or not humans can be trusted with these big Sapiens brains of ours. Reason was supposed to be the answer to ideology and superstition. But reason, driven on by ideology and superstition, created the atomic bomb, the climate crisis, Chernobyl, ubiquitous financialisation, single-use plastics, Facebook algorithms, etc, etc, etc.

So is the species geared towards the intelligent betterment of the world? Or does science simply extend our capacity for power and destruction? Has everything we have discovered set us up for a more open, more just world? Or has it only laid the foundations for new categories of obscene wealth, extreme surveillance, political manipulation, unsustainable consumption?

But the play is not despairing. Brecht never is. His articulation of the problem is so bracing, so clear, at times electrifying. The world around the Brecht might have torn itself apart, but the play encodes a kind of ferocious belief in the splendour and possibility of human thought in spite of itself. No matter how awful the bigger picture, it is still possible - in fact the instinct is irrepressible - to see the truth of things and speak it.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE CONT'D

This bit is more of a personal view than a reading on the play, but what's been running through my mind as we've rehearsed is this:

It's easier today to live by a lie than by the truth. Money and power are easier to come by if you lie. Comfort is easier to come by if you let the lies stand. Lies are as normal as coffee. We're addicted to them. Two examples come to mind: the climate crisis, and the Federal election. Morrison offered us himself and "the promise of Australia" - a promise so empty of specific meaning that it is impossible to fail to fulfil it. But we all know what it's code for because as a country it's what we voted for*. It's code for the two great Australian lies, that everything will be as it always was, and that we can have it all. We just have to avoid the terrible sin of left-wing pessimism. We just have to remain quiet and optimistic. But any gardener knows that a moss-fern planted in direct sunlight won't survive through quiet optimism. It needs shade and water. The same is true of the planet: the climate will not be hoped out of crisis any more than it will be bullied, faked, prayed or bargained out of it. There is a basic element of reality that we are steadfastly refusing to take into account: the old world is broken, whether we like it or not. The old forces of progress (unequal and often violent as they were) have stalled. No amount of optimism will fix that. Optimism, like lounging on the couch, is a comforting modern habit: all will be well. But it won't be well because it already isn't. We are no longer on the old road of reason and progress. We are in the middle of a great war between delusion and reality. Between truth and lies. And the lies are winning. That's the truth. We're lounging on the couch while the house burns.

What will it take for us to fight against this? Where do we start? Brecht's answer is Galileo's: by cultivating a visceral sense of truth. Think of this play as a sort of seed-vault. If the world was blasted away and this play survived, you'd still have a source of what we mean by truth - the feel of it, the instinct for it, the hunger for it - not in an abstract way, but in action - in the mind, in thought; in the mouth, in speech; in the ear, in listening. And that's the thing we somehow need to cultivate. A greater appetite for the visceral shock of real living truth.

*Morison's win wasn't a miracle, it was an election. It wasn't God who did that, it was us.

SCENE BREAKDOWN

Scene 1 - Ptolemy's Universe
Padua.
February 1609.
Galileo's Study.
Galileo Galilei, a teacher of mathematics at Padua, sets out to prove Copernicus's new cosmogony.

Scene 2 - The Telescope
Padua.
April 1609.
Galileo acquires a new student and a new idea.

Scene 3 - The University
Padua.
May 1609.
His expenses mounting, Galileo's pleas for a salary increase fall on deaf ears.

Scene 4 - The Bells
Padua.
June 1609.
Galileo acquires the materials needed for his latest 'invention'.

Scene 5 - The Sponsor's Function
Padua.
November 1609.
Galileo presents the Venetian Republic with a new invention.

Scene 6 - Under The Stars
Padua.
January 1610.
Using the telescope, Galileo discovered celestial phenomena that confirm the Copernican system. Warned by his friend of the possible consequences of his research, Galileo proclaims his belief in human reason.

Scene 7 - The Grand Duchess
Florence.
1615.
Galileo has exchanged the Venetian Republic for the Court of Florence. His discoveries with the telescope are not believed by the court scholars.

Scene 8 - The Inquiry
Rome.
February 1616.
The Vatican research institute, the Collegium Romanum, confirms Galileo's findings.

Scene 9 - The Masked Reception
Rome.
March 1616.
But the Inquisition puts Copernicus's teachings on the Index.

Scene 10 - The Young Friar
Rome.
1617.
A conversation.

Scene 11- The Tutorial
Florence.
1625.
After keeping silent for eight years, Galileo is encouraged by the accession of a new pope, himself a scientist, to resume his researches into the forbidden area: the sunspots.

Scene 12 - Waiting
Florence.
1632.
The Inquisition summons the world-famous scientist to Rome.

Scene 13 - The Pope Is Robed
Rome.
June 18, 1633.
The new Pope Urbane VIII, a former mathematician, can no longer deny the requests of the Inquisition.

Scene 14 - The Inquisition
Rome.
June 22, 1633.
Before the Inquisition, on June 22nd 1633, Galileo recants his doctrine of the motion of the earth.

Scene 15 - House Arrest
Arcetri.
1637.
Galileo Galilei lives in a house in the country near Florence, a prisoner of the Inquisition till he dies. The 'Discorsi'

Scene 16 - The Border
The Border.
1637.
Galileo's book, the 'Discorsi' crosses the Italian frontier.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: "Ptolemy's Universe"- February 1609
Galileo, a prominent scientist and mathematician, has a conversation with one of his students, Andrea, about theories surrounding the universe and how he believes everything is in a constant state of rapid change. He explains Ptolemy's theory of the universe – where the earth is the centre and all other objects orbit us. He hypothesises that the sun might be the centre.

Scene 2: "The Telescope"- April 1609
Galileo meets Ludovico, a privileged young university student who suggests that he needs tutoring from Galileo. Ludovico tells Galileo about a new magnifying tube in the Netherlands, which we know as a 'telescope'.

Scene 3: "The University"- May 1609
Galileo meets with his boss, the Vice Chancellor of Padua University, to discuss a pay rise. Galileo wants to earn a sufficient income to allow him more time to pursue his hypotheses.

Scene 4: "The Bells"- June 1609
Galileo has another tutorial with Andrea. Andrea has purchased lenses on his behalf. Galileo shows Andrea how the telescope can show things that are very far away up close. Galileo tells his student that they need proof to confirm his theories of the universe.

Scene 5: "The Sponsor's Function"- November 1609
Galileo shows off his latest invention to the Venetian Republic, and tells the crowd how it could be used to make money

Scene 6: "Under the Stars"- January 1610.
Galileo uses the telescope and discovers the moons of Jupiter, and that the moon is not a light source, proving his theory. Warned by his friends of the possible consequences that could result from his research, Galileo states his belief in human reason.

Scene 7: "The Grand Duchess"- Florence 1615
(5 years later) Galileo has left the Venetian Republic for the Court of Florence. The court scholars do not believe his discoveries with the telescope and are more interested in traditions and long held beliefs.

Scene 8: "The Inquiry"- Rome February 1616
The Vatican research institute, the Collegium Romanium, confirms Galileo's findings to be true. The chief scientist also believes and confirms his theory to be true.

Scene 9: 'The Masked Receptionist"- Rome, March 1916
Galileo meets Barberini, a Vatican Cardinal, (who later becomes Pope Urban VIII). Barbarini challenges his theory. He says that Galileo needs to continue his research but consider his motivations and interests. The inquisition puts Copernicus' teaching on the index.

Scene 10: "The Young Friar"- Rome 1617
Galileo has a conversation with Fulgazio. A Catholic brother and mathematician. Fulgazio claims that faith gives people strength to continue and facts would remove their strength.

Scene 11: "The Tutorial"- Florence 1625
(8 years later) Galileo has been keeping his theories silent for about eight years, he is then encouraged by the ascension of a new pope, himself a scientist, to resume research into the forbidden research. His old mentee, Ludovicio and his daughter, Virginia are engaged.

Scene 12: "Waiting"- Florence 1632
(7 years later) The inquisition summons the world famous scientist to Rome.

Scene 13: "The Pope is Robbed"- Rome June 22, 1633

The new pope Urbane VIII, is convinced to let go of his commitment to science and allows the Inquisition to question Galileo.

Scene 14: "The Inquisition" – Rome June 22, 1633
Before the inquisition, Galileo recants his doctrine of the motion of the earth, giving up his entire theory of the earth, moon and sun.

Scene 15: "House Arrest"- Arcetri, 1637
Galileo lives under house arrest, in a house in the country of Florence, a prisoner of the Inquisition until his passing. Andrea comes back, upset and disappointed at the fact that Galileo was not the hero she thought he was. Galileo gives her a book of all his theories research and theories.

Scene 16: "The Border"- The Border, 1637.
Andrea is going to the Netherlands and takes Galileo's findings with her. It is illegal to take anti-religious information out of Italy at this time so she hides it in a wooden globe of the world and crosses with it over the Italian border.

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story.

In these notes we are going to look at *Life of Galileo*

Set model box
Costume renderings

SET DESIGN

Before a set is made for a production, a set designer creates a design for a model box built to the scale of the theatre. Usually this model box is exactly 25 times smaller than the real size of the theatre (1:25 scale). The purpose of this step in the design process is to give the creative and production team a chance to review the design before it is constructed. The model box provides specific information about texture, materials, look and detail of a set.

Set Model Box by Zoe Atkinson

In the model box above designer Zoe Atkinson indicates how the Belvoir stage will be transformed into theatre-in-the-round for this production.

DESIGNING LIFE OF GALILEO

DESIGNER INTERVIEW

How do you typically approach the task of designing a production?
It changes according to what the show is. If I was forced to be formulaic about it, there's probably about six approaches that I've found have worked for me in the past. But it really does depend. For example there's a particular process that works really well for things that are expressionist in nature, and there's another process that seems to work really well for opera. This is also the fourth work that I've done that Tom has written, either as an original work or as an adaptation. I find his work really challenging because the language often feels so complete in its own right, which I love. I love that it forces an economy of design because it's a great place to from which to start the process.

Do you think about design in terms of 'concept'?
I had some incredibly sage advice given to me years and years ago by a very famous designer called Josef Sveboda who initially had studied as an architect and then was the chief designer of the National Theatre of Prague for many years... He said, "this is the lesson that you really need to know... an Opera might have two and a half thousand words in it's libretto, you have to find the one word that you are going to design. That's your first task. It's to take it and distill it, not to be reductive, but to find out the one thing you are going to speak to in your language as a designer." And it's helpful if everyone on the production agrees on what that is.

So on Galileo, I think it's very clear that this is a story about the denial of science for the sake of propping up the powers that be. And that hasn't changed.

So if you hold that as a central theme - there is 'denial' there is 'truth', there's this question of who are we as a species – there's lots and lots of themes, but the more you can hone in on the one you want to tell with your language the better it is and the cleaner your design process becomes.

Zoe Atkinson during Production week

DESIGNER INTERVIEW CONT'D

That is the best I can say about what design seeks to do: It is a language in the same way that music and spoken word and dance and in the same way that we have hundreds of different languages and species. Our primary purpose is to tell a story. Not to decorate.

Do you prefer to work in costume and set together?
I've only very rarely done purely [one or the other]. Twice I've done just costume and maybe twice I've done just set. Part of that is that I tend to build a world first in quite pure terms. And then I populate it. And that's where costume comes in to it for me.

In the case of *[Life of] Galileo* it's very clear that what we're doing with the space is bringing the audience into the story in the same way that if we say 'a central theme of this play is the denial of science propping up the establishment that is' which is exactly what we a doing in this century, right now. What is our role as an audience to that? In our daily lives we are not an audience to the denial of science, we are part of that denial. So if you want to purely put that into a theatre and give an audience an understanding of that you put them on the stage.

That's why I think the idea of putting it in the round is a powerful one.

What can we expect from the Life of Galileo costuming?
The costuming holds a mirror up to us as much as putting the audience in the picture does, partially because it's contemporary costuming. We've talked a lot about contemporary reference points that absolutely draw similarities between the phenomenon of denial today and in Galileo's day.

There's a lot costuming. I think we've got over forty characters that we're attempting to illustrate through costume and a lot of quick changes. I think Colin's greatly relieved that he's the only one that doesn't have any changes to manage.

Also broadly speaking there's three palettes of costume in the production.

There's a layer of costume that creates a **soft focus landscape** that frames action between characters in front of it.

These are difficult terms because we've got a space in the round, so we don't have an upstage and downstage, but it's something that needs to feel like it oscillates somehow.

The role of those soft focus, landscape costumes is to give visual emphasis to the ones in front. They're quite sombre, they're group things. I'm starting to think of them as 'ensemble' costumes, that are bases that might have a bit of variation – the change of a tie, the addition of an earpiece, someone being able to hold a notepad and pencil. Whatever those things are, but they essentially don't change very much in their palette.

Then there's a layer of costume that I think speaks about authority and power, and relationships between power and disempowered. Where there's power that's held in the piece it glitters and it shines and it's shallow, which makes for another major palette in the costuming. There are costumes through this that I absolutely think of as truly **metallic** or truly glittered and spangled; full of overflowing pomp and ceremony, like the papal

costumes.

Then there's **costume as character** that gets quite nitty gritty. Whereas with the Grand Duchess I think what we're doing is creating a figure of power, rather than being particularly interested in who the duchess is as a person we just see her as a figure. Galileo is very different, he is absolutely full of character and character flaw and imperfection. His costume needs to be inhabited by what Colin [Friels – Galileo Galilei] brings to that character. So I'll be working very closely with him.

Miranda Parker, Peter Carroll

The set of Life of Galileo by Zoe Atkinson

Questions to consider after seeing this production

1. What is the key differences between the early model box design & the final set design?
2. Why might this change have taken place?
3. How many different locations were represented in the production?
4. How were the set pieces used to represent different locations?
5. How has the designer used stage space, texture, colour and composition to enhance dramatic meaning?

COSTUME DESIGN: RENDERINGS

Costume renderings for Life of Galileo by Zoe Atkinson

"Final renderings don't necessarily tell the best story. The drawings where I'm figuring things out I think are really, I find those sorts of drawings useful cause they talk more about a thought process as opposed to an illustration."

- Zoë Atkinson

Costume renderings for Life of Galileo by Zoe Atkinson

Costume renderings for Life of Galileo by Zoe Atkinson

REHEARSING LIFE OF GALILEO

Damien Strouthos, Rajan Velu, Colin Friels

1. Describe what you see in the picture above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment?
3. How do the actors' body language and facial expressions convey this?
4. Do you think the actor in the background is part of the scene? Why or why not?

Eamon Flack, Miranda Parker, Vaishnavi Suryaprakash, Peter Carroll

1. Who do you think the person is in the front of this picture?
2. What do you think are the most important elements in the relationship between a director and their cast?

Saro Lust-Callavari, Eamon Flack, Miranda Parker, Bronte Shuftan, Peter Carroll, Damien Strouthos, Vaishnavi Suryaprakash Damein Ryan, Sonia Todd

1. Describe what you see in the photo above.
2. What evidence is there that this is a rehearsal?

Peter Carroll, Damien Strouthos, Sonia Todd

1. Describe what you see in the picture above.
2. What do you think is happening in this scene? Where might this scene be taking place? Give reasons for your answer

POST SHOW DISCUSSION

How is the set and other production elements used to tell the story of the play?

Miranda Parker, Rejan Velu, Damien Strouthos, Damien Ryan, Laura McDonald, Colin Friels,

How is power represented in this production?

Colin Friels, Rajan Velu, Damien Strouthos

What was the impact on you as an audience member of this production being staged in the round?

Vaishnavi Suryaprakash, Laura McDonald, Miranda Parker, Colin Friels, Rajan Velu,

What moment in the production had the most impact on you? Why?

Colin Friels, Vaishnavi Suryaprakash

How does the production explore the themes of power and authority and knowledge?

Colin Friels

How did you feel at the end of the production?

Miranda Parker, Vaishnavi Suryaprakash

PODCAST

Director Eamon Flack, along with performers Colin Friels, Sonia Todd and Vaishnavi Suryaprakash discuss the flawed and brilliant figure that was Galileo Galilei, the nature of truth and lies, and the high stakes theatre of astronomical reinvention.

Podcast produced for Belvoir by Zoe Ferguson.

Listen to the ***Life of Galileo*** podcast online here:

https://omny.fm/shows/belvoir/life-of-galileo-backstage-podcast

CONTACT EDUCATION

JANE MAY, EDUCATION MANAGER

02 8396 6222
jane@belvoir.com.au

STEVIE BRYANT, EDUCATION COORDINATOR

02 8396 6241
stevie@belvoir.com.au

Belvoir Education would like to thank Tom Wright, Zoë Atkinson, Michael Kennedy, Stella Middleditch, Charlotte Newton and Paige Ahearn for their support creating these resources.