



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

Blue

14 JAN - 29 JAN 2023



**LEARNING
RESOURCES**

Belvoir presents

BLUE

By **Thomas Weatherall**

Directed by **Deborah Brown**

This production of *Blue* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 18 January 2023.

Set & Costume Designer **Jacob Nash**

Set & Costume Designer **Cris Baldwin**

Lighting Designer **Chloe Ogilvie**

Associate Lighting Designer **Kelsey Lee**

Sound Designer and Composer **Will Hughes**

Video Designer **David Bergman**

Vocal Coach **Laura Farrell**

Vocal Coach **Amy Hume**

Dramaturg **Dom Mercer**

Dramaturgical Consultant **Kodie Bedford**

Stage Manager **Steph Storr**

Assistant Stage Manager **Sybilla Wajon**

Special thanks to: **Meg Clarke**

With

Thomas Weatherall as Mark (2023)

Callan Purcellas as Mark (2024 - Adelaide Festival)

FEATURING

Frances Rings Mother

Darius Williams John

Indigenous theatre at Belvoir is supported by **The Balnaves Foundation**.

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.

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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 Aaron Beach, 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 belvoir.com.au/education

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM



Thomas Weatherall
Writer



Deborah Brown
Director



Cris Baldwin
Set & Costume Designer



Kodie Bedford
Dramaturgical Consultant



David Bergman
Video Designer



Laura Farrell
Vocal Coach



Will Hughes
Sound Designer & Composer



Amy Hume
Vocal Coach



Kelsey Lee
Associate Lighting Designer



Dom Mercer
Dramaturg



Jacob Nash
Set & Costume Designer



Chloe Ogilvie
Lighting Designer



Steph Storr
Stage Manager



Sybilla Wajon
Assistant Stage Manager



Thomas Weatherall
Mark

WRITER'S NOTE

THOMAS WEATHERALL

When I was 17 and finishing my final year of high school, there was a period of time where I felt overwhelmingly depressed. I had felt similar before, but this was different. I couldn't articulate it to anyone in a concise or meaningful way and frankly I believe that was because I myself could not make sense of it. I attempted to talk about it, and for a young man who felt ill-equipped to do so, I thought I did a pretty good job. However, I lacked the literacy, or maybe vocabulary to truly describe what I was going through.

Since then I've experienced similar bouts of such feelings, but this particular one acted as a catalyst of sorts. In a search for healthy coping mechanisms and artistic outlets, I discovered a love that I never knew would become so fruitful and sacred to me: writing.

So began the process of "becoming a writer", something I believed was actually a practical quest. Was I supposed to read books I didn't enjoy, just for the sake of being well-read? Did I have to study literature at a tertiary level? Or did I need someone of a certain level of reliability and professionalism to say, "it's ok Tom, go write"? So I called my agent! This is a year or so later now, and while not a whole lot of actual writing has occurred, the determination to become one is real! My brilliant agent Lee-Anne, who I feel forever indebted to for helping me create the life I now have, answered the phone and very politely listened to me explain just how badly I wanted to create my own work. This was a very brief phone call, and one I don't think she would even remember. But I do, mainly for two reasons. (1.) Because she gifted me some of the most valuable encouragement I've ever received, and (2.) Because I was stung by a bee

on my big toe during said phone call. In response to my question of how I should begin this quest of "becoming a writer", Lee-Anne answered simply, "just start writing Tom". She said many more helpful and kind things in that conversation, but it was only those few words I needed to hear. So I did! That day to be exact!

I wasn't aware at the time I was writing a play, or even anything of substance for that matter, but for the next 4 years I would write, sometimes only a few sentences, sometimes pages at a time, that would ultimately accumulate into the play you are about to watch. (Thank you). Between night-fill shifts at Woolworths, and full-time drama school, break-ups and moving of apartments, then moving of towns, before and after full days of filming, on flights, trains and in the back seats of ubers, between considerable amounts of coffee, and very late sleepless nights that turned into very early mornings, I wrote *Blue*.

This play is not a cry for help, or an exercise of trauma, but more so an opening to a discourse that I truly believe so many people are in need of. *Blue* is, in its rawest form, a kind of



Thomas Weatherall

unprescribed therapy. Mark is not me, the story you are about to see is not my life, but more so a very personal fiction.

If nothing else, I hope this play makes you talk to your friends and family, love each other, set boundaries, read better books, swim in the ocean, and listen to music constantly! Life is very brief and terrifying. I'm trying to make the most of it and find the beauty in it. *Blue* has helped me do that, I hope it can help you do that too.

I would like to offer some particular thanks to the following...

A very deeply personal thanks to those closest to me; my Mum and family, Stevie and Henry, Hastie, and Jack, Sofia and Addy.

To Dom Mercer, for the unwavering support and care that he has shown both the work and me since the first four pages landed on his desk in 2020, thank you. Eamon Flack, Zainab Syed and Belvoir as a whole. The Balnaves Fellowship, for creating a platform for artists like me. Deborah Brown, and the entire team behind the first iteration of *Blue*.

To Lee-Anne Higgins, for that phone call, and for every other day of championing my career, along with the entire team at

United Management. Justine Goss and the team at Aurora Artists, for meeting me at the perfect time to assist in facilitating my journey as a writer.

To Dianne Talbot, Kirri Adams and Matt Scholten, 3 teachers who I believed shaped me into the artist I am today. To Ian Meadows, Ash Ricardo and their son, for being the first people to ever hear the script, and for providing such encouragement so early on.

Rodney Afif, Hannah Carroll Chapman, Rob Collins and Billie Pleffer who have all been integral figures in my creative journey, and Justine Clarke for being the best rehearsal neighbour!

Thank you to strong cappuccinos with two sugars, Lexapro, my red Toyota cap (now deceased), and the music of Harry Nilsson.

I have dedicated this play to my mother. *Blue* would not exist without her, and I most certainly would not be here today if I didn't have such a strong mum. Love you.

Thomas Weatherall

(*Mr Blue*)



Thomas Weatherall

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

DEBORAH BROWN

My first job when I first moved to Sydney was as an usher. I couldn't afford to pay my own way to see shows so my theatre diet was that of the musicals I tripped tickets for. One of the first times I made my own way to the theatre I attended a beautiful, intimate and evocative one man show, *The Journeys of William Yang*. A monologue presented in the Upstairs Theatre at Belvoir. That experience left a lasting impression, almost 20 years on.

The next year, I watched my own song man for close to 15 years of my career, David Page, perform *Page 8*, directed by Stephen Page. From his kitchen in Mt Gravatt to his iconic Tina Turner drag act bursting out of a closet, I remember experiencing pure joy. He too left a lasting impression.

Both men. Both drawing from Queensland landscape. Both vivid storytellers. Both presented upstairs at Belvoir St Theatre. Both physically alone on stage yet with the strong presence of family.

Upon reading Thomas Weatherall's, *Blue*, I immediately began visualizing the Upstairs space at Belvoir. His world

could easily translate anywhere, in any form, and having carried such warm memories of Yang and Page for all these years I could see *Blue* being birthed at Belvoir. My first read of the script I found myself sitting on the foot of my bed in my childhood home, after a day spending it with my own mother, after months of feeling isolated and disconnected, here was a writer that struck a chord with me, deep inside. *Blue* resonated not only as a script but also as a piece of music. It evoked the dancer in me and from that I knew I wanted a team that could ground themselves in the poetry on the page but also allow the audience to be in the mind of our lead character, Mark.

Thomas has crafted an exquisite take on coping with the dichotomy of love and grief and his depth in the rehearsal room matches his writing.

It's taking someone at their most vulnerable and opening up their thoughts and provocations in the form of a landscape. A calling to the coast line. A calling to a place that we often run to find calm but also forming a boundary that we may dare or dare not cross. With Mark, do we stand at



Deborah Brown

the shoreline? Or do we dive in and feel both the pain and the love, then resurface, changed?

I've experienced landscapes created by Jacob Nash first hand as performer and never felt alone on stage. Even when he's sculpted a space adhering to the vastness of *Country*, there is always a presence, a soul that watches over the performer, that keeps us safe and connected. Alongside Cris Baldwin, I have found the creative process echoing these same sentiments. "The Wave" set piece allows us to add another emotional layer reflecting Mark's head space, that of projection. A big thank you to Dave Bergman and team for creating such precious vignettes and to the beautiful artists, Darius Williams, Meg Clarke and my inspiration for many years, Frances Rings.

It is a great pleasure to have Chloe Ogilvie in the Belvoir space again, with associate Kelsey Lee to sculpt and caress an ever subtle shifting landscape at the heart of *Blue*.

Thomas has created a sensual world with his writing. On the page it's not only textured visually but aurally too. Wil Hughes's exploration between the textures of sounds that evoke youth, life and home as well as the varying measures of tides,

supports *Blue*'s sense of nostalgia.

I'd love to thank the Belvoir family for welcoming not only myself but also the creatives who have helped build the *Blue* world. The production team lead by Richard Whitehouse for bringing the conceptual wave to life, Stephanie Storr for grounding the room, Zainab Syed for your belief and drive, the artistic team, Dom Mercer for bringing light to this tender script, Kodie Bedford for your insight and spark and Eamon and Aaron for your guidance and care.

I hope *Blue* leaves a lasting impression on audiences just as many Belvoir works have left a lasting impression on me when celebrating the fabric of family and connection to those we love.



Deborah Brown

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

LETTER WRITING

"I get home and there's a letter from my mother waiting for me on the table...It's on yellow lined paper, the note. The words Dear Mark etched into the top fold in black ink."

Answer these questions:

1. What is a letter? Have you ever received a letter?
2. What are the features of a letter?
3. What can letters do that other forms of communication can't?

ACTIVITY ONE

Write a response to the following title:

Why is letter writing a beautiful thing?

ACTIVITY TWO

Write a letter to a friend or an anonymous pen pal

Sealed your letter in an envelope and 'deliver' to the recipient a few days after composition.

Then,

Write a letter to yourself

We encourage you to write deeply and personally about your thoughts, feelings and experiences. Seal the letter and open it at the end of the term (or perhaps at a significant juncture during the school year).

Answer these questions:

1. How did you feel when you got to open your letter? Was it different compared to the letter to yourself?
2. How did the length of time passing between writing and reading impact you?
3. What surprised you during this experience?
4. What has this letter writing process given you?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Answer these questions:

1. When we view the performance how does the act of letter writing help Mark?
2. How does the act of letter writing help the audience to understand Mark's struggles?
3. Did you notice any similarities between your experience of writing and Mark's?

EXTENDED METAPHOR

"When we swim in the ocean it's a kind of therapy. The journey of getting there, the smell of salt growing, the excitement of seeing the water first and the readiness to jump in the moment we arrive."

The ocean itself is kind of brilliant, it can be dangerous and...scary, but calming and healing?"

The sequence of events in the production of *Blue* is largely situated around the ocean and its role in the protagonist Mark's life. The ocean is used as a powerful metaphor to explore the emotional state of the character and to reflect many of the difficult concepts the play explores such as grief and loss.

ACTIVITY THREE

Create a list of all the features of the ocean

ACTIVITY FOUR

Create a list of adjectives to describe the ocean, eg; calm, tumultuous, violent.

Spend some time responding to one of the following prompts:

1. Imagine that the ocean is a place that holds memories. Compose a first person vignette where the protagonist dives into the ocean, exploring the underwater landscape as a metaphor for diving into their own memories of loss or grief. Consider how the movement of the water could also be used to show the changing emotional state of the character.

OR

2. Imagine you are seated on the beach on a quiet evening as the sun sets. Compose a first person vignette about how the colours of the sky reflect the emotions associated with loss or grief. Consider how you can use colour as a metaphor for the changing emotional state of the character.

Why is the ocean an effective metaphor to use when exploring the concepts of loss and grief?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Answer these questions:

1. When we view the performance, consider the way the ocean was used in the performance compared to your own writing?
2. In Australia, time spent by the ocean is a universal experience for many. During the performance do you feel you were able to better understand the experience of Mark through his metaphorical use of the ocean?

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 *Blue*
Costume reference images
Set model box

DESIGNERS

JACOB NASH & CRIS BALDWIN

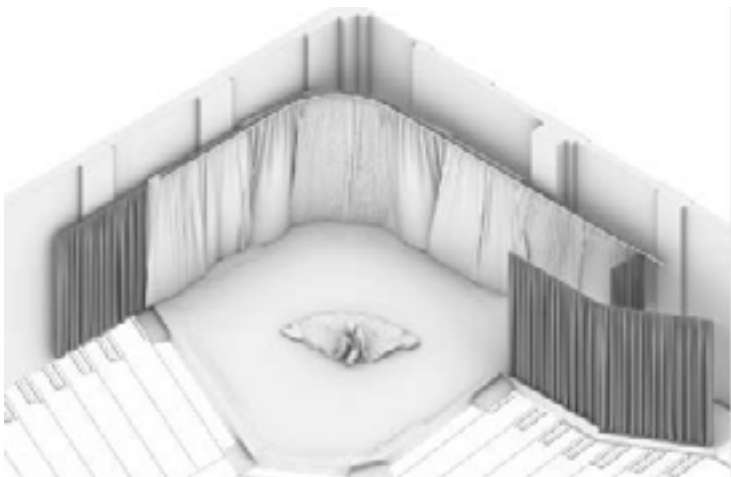
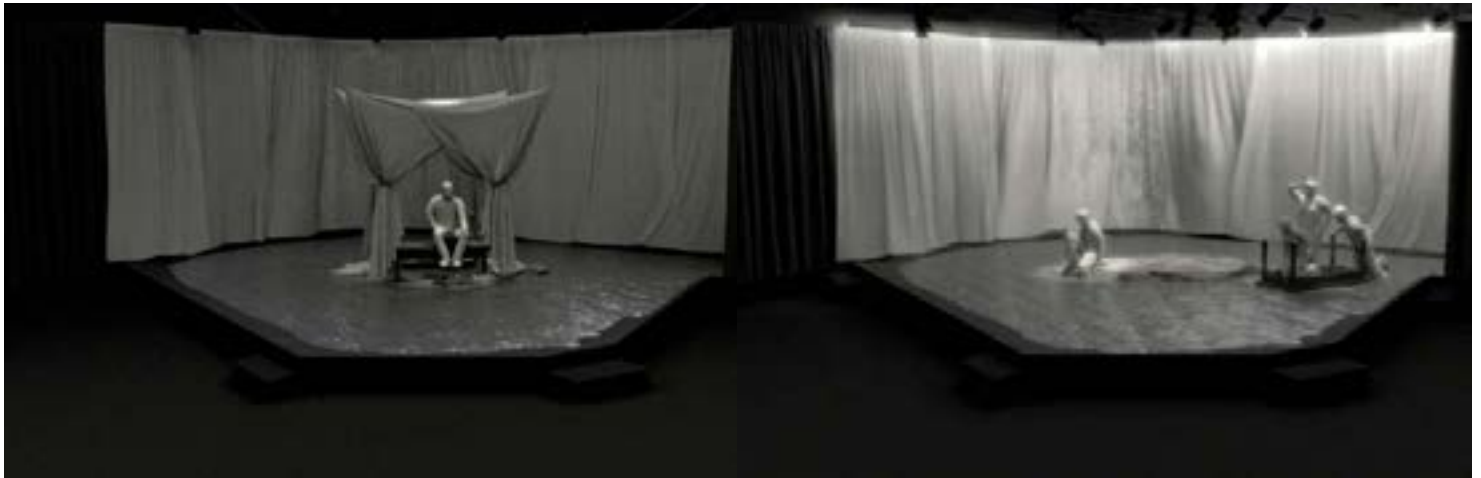
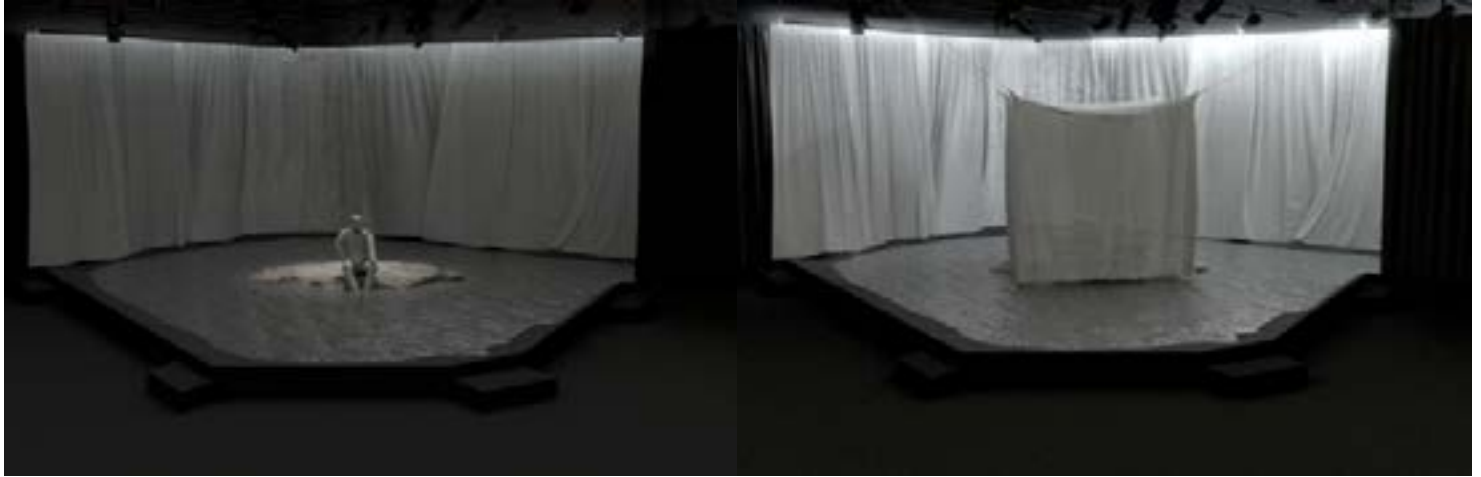


Collaborative model-making by Jake Nash & Cris Baldwin

SET DESIGN

INITIAL CONCEPT ART

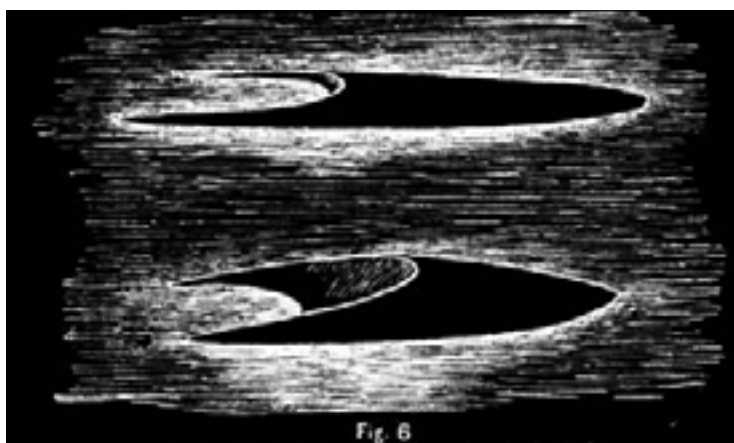
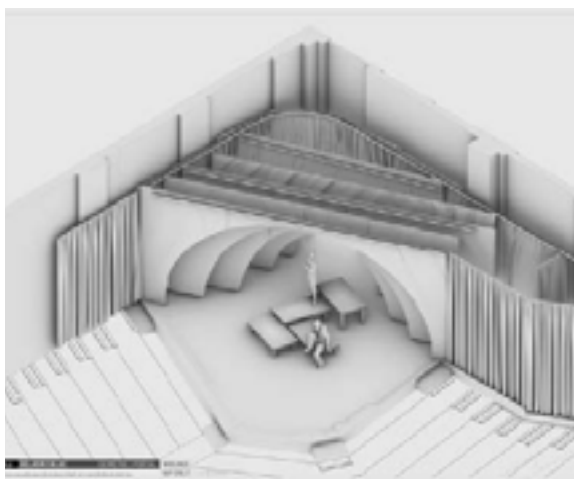
Early concept renders incorporating discussions and ideas around water, fluidity, isolation, and an ethereal, dreamlike 'lightness'.



Concept art modelled and rendered in Rhino3D by Cris Baldwin

INITIAL CONCEPT ART

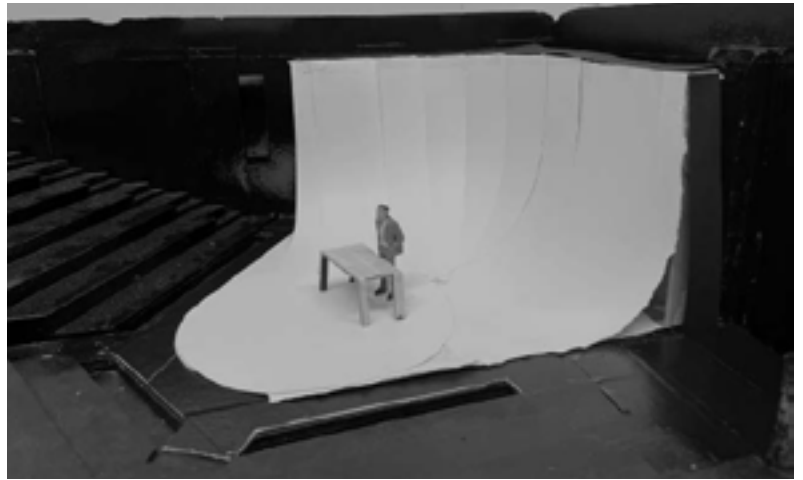
Early concept renders incorporating discussions and ideas around portals, layers, transparency, and a 'womb like' structure.



Concept art modelled and rendered in Rhino3D by Cris Baldwin

SKETCH MODEL

Sketch model made during our second creative development.
Early projection testing on what came to be called as 'the wave' structure



Collaborative model-making by Jake Nash & Cris Baldwin

STORYBOARDS

The sketch model was then progressed into a digital 3D model and storyboarded in Photoshop



Concept art modelled and rendered by Cris Baldwin

REFERENCE IMAGES - MATERIALS

Reference images are used by designers to communicate aesthetic concepts with the director or to the cast. These might communicate a moment in the play, or an overall texture or style.



Wrinkled Tyvek



Crinkled Tyvek



Water



AV: Synthetic Reflection

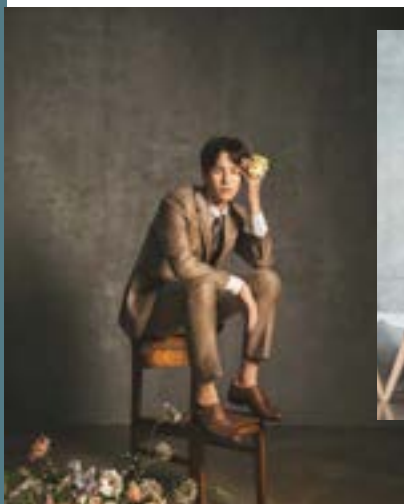
Reference images collected by Jacob Nash and Cris Baldwin

REFERENCE IMAGES - OBJECTS

Chair

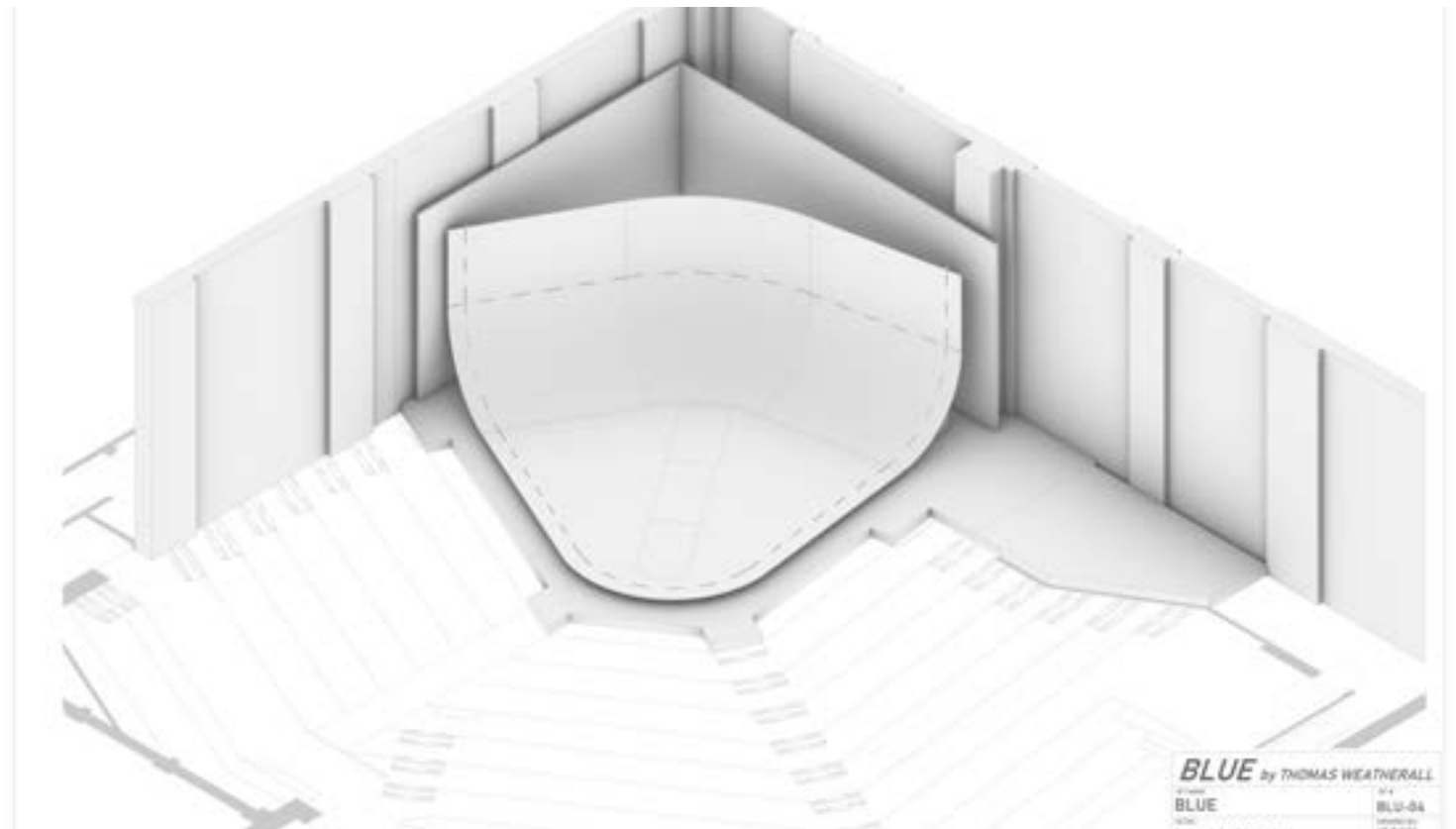


Flowers

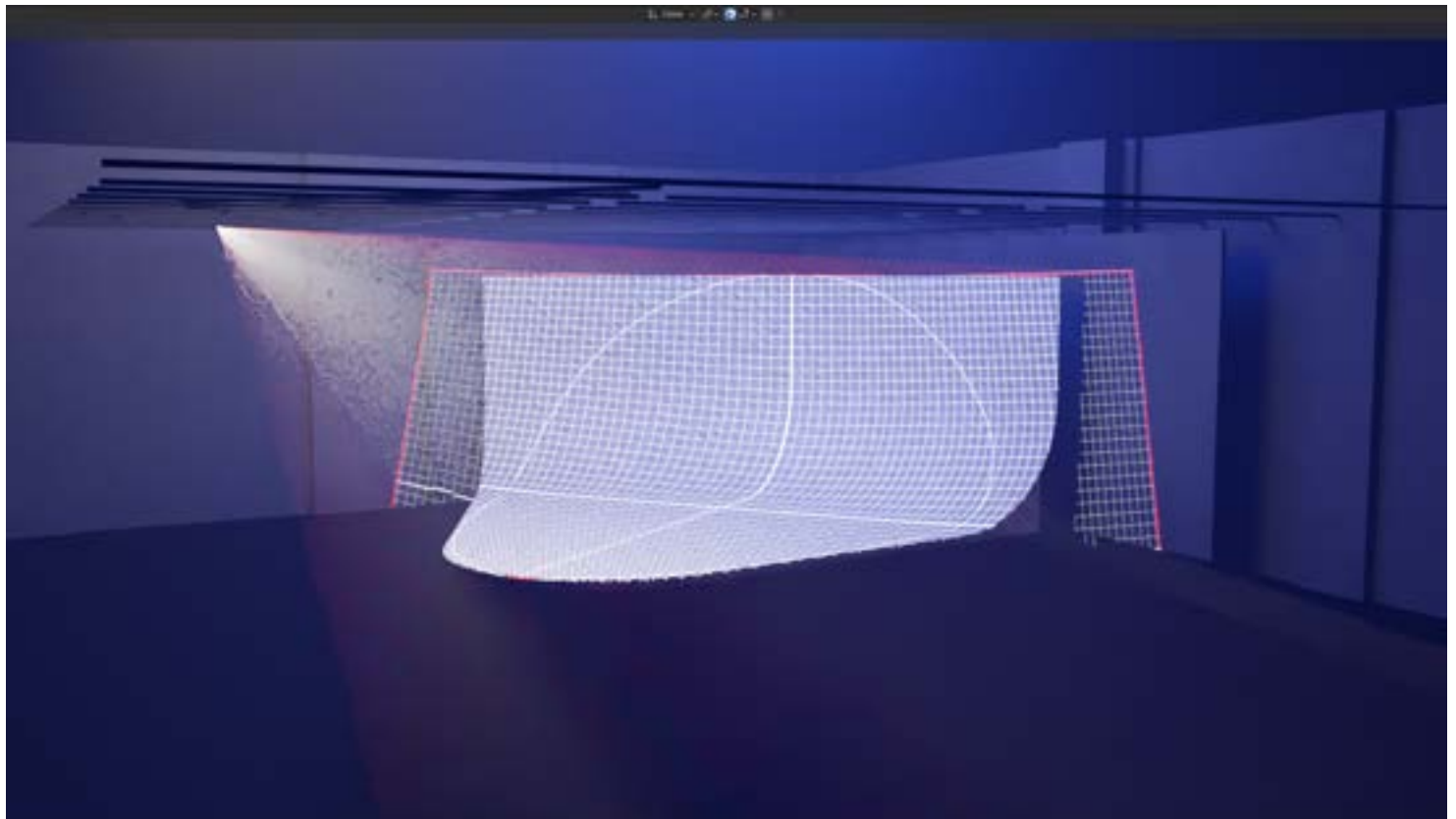


Examples of reference images collected by Jacob Nash and Cris Baldwin

MODEL BOX DESIGNS



Blue Digital Model Box - by Cris Baldwin

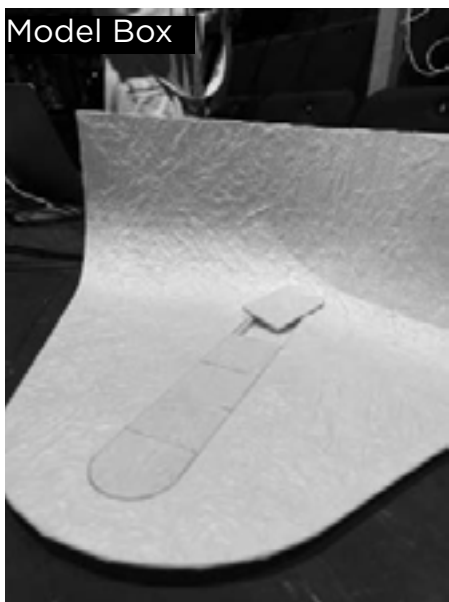


Final Design: Blue Model Box with projection - by Jacob Nash and Cris Baldwin

SET BUILD

Process shots of 'the wave' construction, test-build in the Belvoir workshop, textured scenic application, and model at 1:25

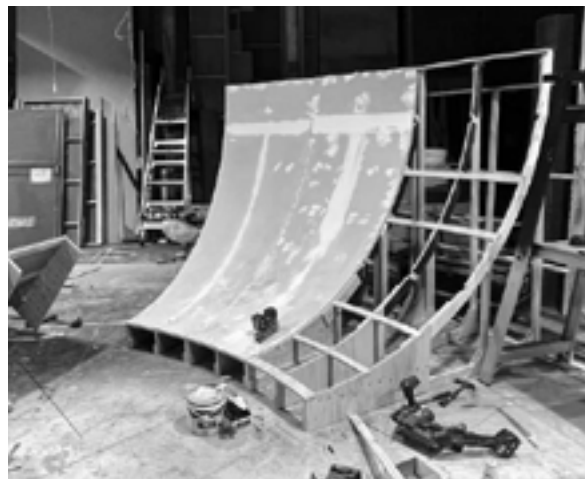
Model Box



Construction in the theatre



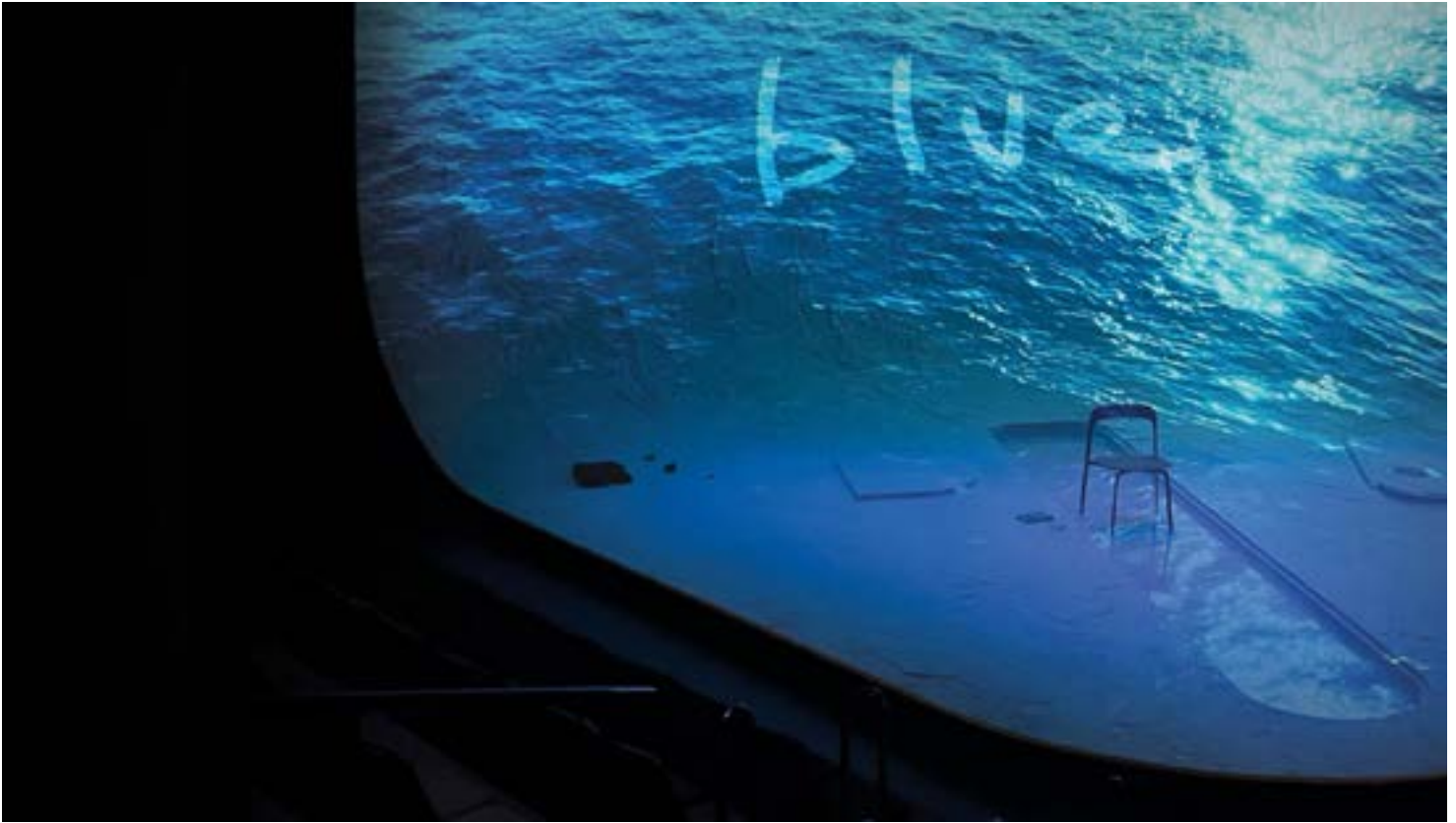
Belvoir Workshop



Construction in the theatre



FINAL DESIGN



Model Box of Blue by Jacob Nash and Cris Baldwin



The set of Blue by Jacob Nash and Cris Baldwin

Questions to consider after seeing this production

1. What are 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 are set pieces used to change the space? What impact does this have?
5. How has the designer used stage space, texture, colour and composition to enhance dramatic meaning?
6. How did the use of projection contribute to the overall design of the show? Why?

COSTUME DESIGN

MARK REFERENCES



JACKET: bomber with collar
 SHIRT: white / cream camp collar short sleeve
 SINGLET: white jersey singlet, ribbing neck & armholes
 PANTS: charcoal straight leg chino, modern
 SHOES: navy desert chukka

MARK JACKET



OPTION 1
 Dark brown bomber jacket with ribbed collar and cuffs

LORE



OPTION 2
 Dark brown bomber jacket with ribbed collar and cuffs

LORE

MARK SINGLET



OPTION 1
 White jersey singlet with ribbed collar and armholes

LORE



OPTION 2
 White jersey singlet with ribbed collar and armholes

LORE



OPTION 3
 White jersey singlet with ribbed collar and armholes

LORE



OPTION 4
 White jersey singlet with ribbed collar and armholes

LORE

MARK PANTS



OPTION 1
 Charcoal straight leg chinos

LORE



OPTION 2
 Charcoal straight leg chinos

LORE

Option 1: Charcoal straight leg chinos
 Option 2: Charcoal straight leg chinos

MARK SHOES



OPTION 1
 Navy desert chukka boots

LORE



OPTION 2
 Navy desert chukka boots

LORE

FINAL DESIGN

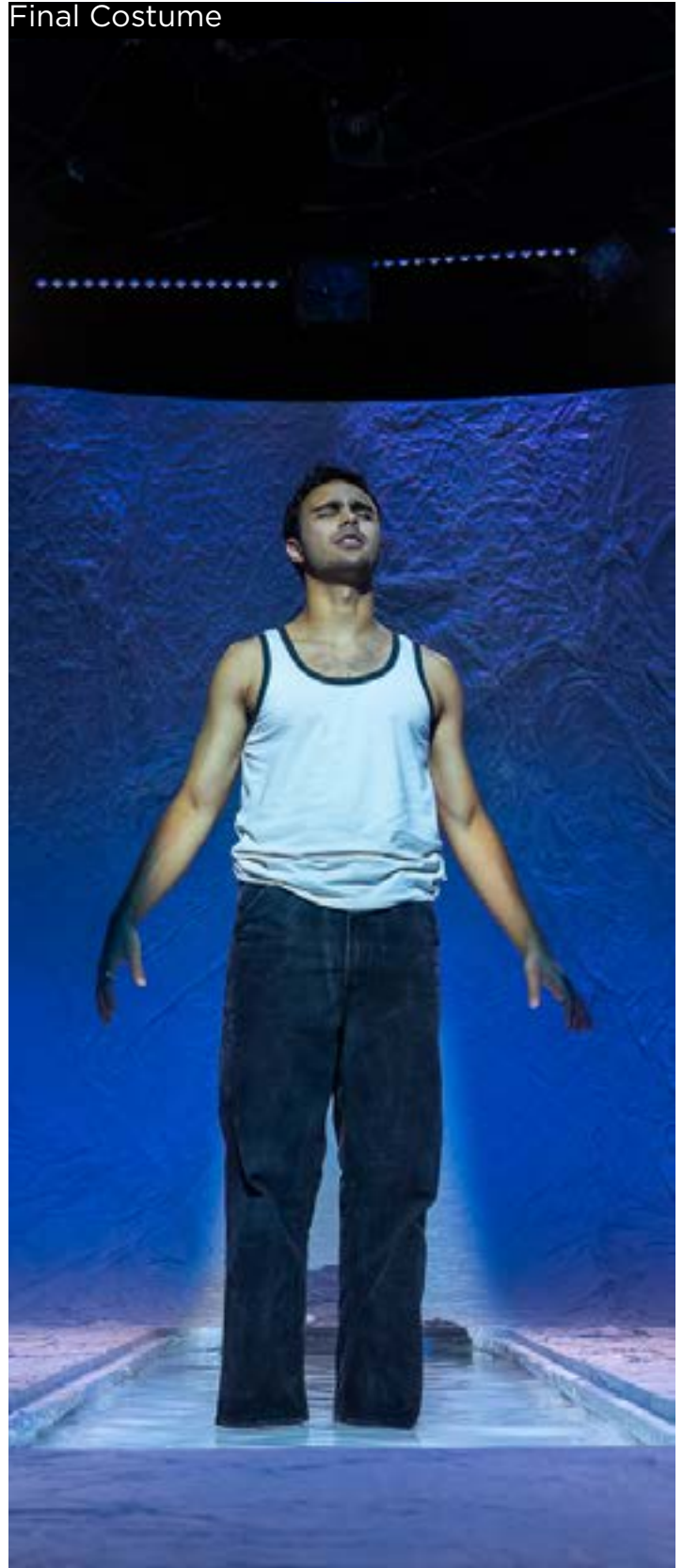
"Mark's (Thomas Weatherall) costuming posed a number of challenges in their simplicity as he never left the stage, spent a considerable amount of time in the water, and a single chair was the only furniture on-stage." - Cris Baldwin

Previews, final testing



Thomas Weatherall, Costume design by Jacob Nash and Cris Baldwin

Final Costume



REHEARSING BLUE

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

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Thomas Weatherall

1. What do you think is happening in this scene? Give reasons for your answer
2. What evidence is there that this is a rehearsal?



Deborah Brown, Steph Storr, Thomas Weatherall, Chloe Oglivie

1. Describe what you see in the photo above
2. What do you think is happening? Give reasons for your answer.



Thomas Weatherall, Deborah Brown

1. Describe what you see in the photo above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment?



Thomas Weatherall

1. Describe what you see in the picture above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment? Give reasons for your answers

POST SHOW DISCUSSION

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Thomas Weatherall

How did the performance make you feel?



Thomas Weatherall

Were there any surprises or unexpected elements?



Thomas Weatherall

What aspects of the show resonated with you? Can you distil this into one phrase or word?



Thomas Weatherall

How did the performer's use of storytelling, body language, or expressions impact your response to the performance?

Were there any moments where you felt a strong emotional connection?



Thomas Weatherall

WATCH & LISTEN



Interview with Writer & Actor Thomas Weatherall

Recorded at Belvoir's 2023 Season Launch.

[WATCH NOW](#)



The Project

Interview with Thomas Weatherall

[WATCH NOW](#)

ARTICLES & REVIEWS

An impressive debut by a talented young artist who writes and performs with a freshness and vulnerability.

- Sydney Morning Herald, 19 Jan 2023

[READ MORE](#)

Breathtaking visual transformations that move us beyond the capacity of words.

- Suzy Goes See

[READ THE REVIEW](#)



BLUE | Reviews

Find out what critics are saying about Thomas Weatherall's deeply moving solo performance, BLUE and enjoy a sneak peek of the production! There are very limited seats left for the final week of this mesmerising meditation on love, life and grief.

[WATCH NOW](#)



CONTACT EDUCATION

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Belvoir Education would like to thank Cris Baldwin, Ren Kenward and Jen Coupland for their support creating these resources.

If *Blue* has raised any concerns for you following the performance, Lifeline offers a 24 hour counselling service and can be reached at 13 11 14. Additional information can be found on their website, www.lifeline.org.au. Other services which may be of assistance include mental health advocacy organisation, Beyond Blue (www.beyondblue.org.au, 1300 224 636), and youth mental health foundation, Headspace (www.headspace.org.au). You may also consider speaking to a trusted source or engaging your local GP.