

- *Miss Peony* is a new Australian comedy written by Michelle Law. It opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 12 July 2023. This production is directed by Courtney Stewart.
- *Miss Peony* runs for approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes including one interval.
- *Miss Peony* is set in Sydney, Australia in the present day and takes place over a couple of weeks during the 'Miss Peony Chinese-Australia beauty pageant'. The play contains two acts. Act One takes place in the lead up to the pageant, Act Two takes place during the competition's final show night. Much of Act Two is set during the pageant within the play, the audience are also the studio-audience for the pageant.
- There are six actors in *Miss Peony*. Each actor plays one main character. The central character is Lily, a 26-year-old Chinese-Australian. Lily promises her Por Por (maternal grandmother) – Adeline, that she will win the 'Miss Peony Chinese-Australian Beauty Pageant'. When she enters she meets three other contestants – Marcy, Joy and Sabrina, and the pageant's producer – Zhen Hua. These four actors also double as other minor characters in some scenes.
- The play is in the style of magical realism. Lily is haunted by Adeline who appears as a ghost in limbo; Adeline cannot crossover to the afterlife unless Lily fulfills her promise. The ghost is represented by an actor, with occasional supernatural production elements.
- *Miss Peony* is a trilingual play. The dialogue is performed in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. Subtitles are played concurrently with the dialogue in simplified and traditional Chinese and English - displayed in the centre of the stage, above the actors. [Take a look at the Learning Resources for more information.](#)
- The play explores themes of community, culture, and lateral racism. Characters are seen to be hypercritical of how one another present or express their identity and whether someone is considered 'Chinese enough' to be respected in the Chinese-Australian community. Characters refer to one another or themselves using terms that could be considered derogatory such as 'f.o.b.' (fresh off boat) and 'Banana'. Some characters use 'ABC', short for Australian Born Chinese.
- The play includes references to sexual harassment and intimidation. **[spoiler warning]** In one scene a character exclaims that one of the older male sponsors of the pageant followed them *"into toilet. Pull out penis, tell me to touch"*. Later, Adeline shares that the pageants have a history of sexual harassment, but the contestants would tolerate it. Initially there is some debate about whether contestants should speak up or endure the behaviour, ultimately the play positions the incident, and harassment, as unacceptable.
- The play contains occasional sexual references. In one scene Adeline states in Cantonese that her hospice nurses would *"complain about their husbands demanding sex straight after childbirth while they plumped my pillows"* and she was tired of hearing about *"uncircumcised penis looking like a sad snail"*. In another scene two characters sneak behind a rack of clothes and are heard moaning and exclaiming *"right there, that's good"* in Mandarin, before they are interrupted by another character. At the end of the play two other characters kiss, when the male presenting character stands he adjusts his trousers alluding towards being aroused by the kiss before walking offstage embarrassed.
- The play includes references to high beauty standards and fatphobia. A young character admits to having preventative Botox, and there are suggestions to needing augmenting surgery or liposuction to meet Asian-Australian beauty standards. In one scene a character identifies that one of the entry criteria is based on whether you are *"fat or not fat"*.
- The play includes occasional strong or crass language. Including a character assisting another to *"fix their camel toe"* covering their one-piece bathing suit with hairspray.
- This production contains the use of herbal cigarettes, vaping, and theatrical smoke. Adeline is said to have died of lung cancer. She continues to smoke as a ghost but discourages Lily from smoking throughout the play. This production contains occasional references to alcohol. Some characters are seen briefly drinking in celebration, the youngest character appears to be intoxicated.
- This production contains flashing lights and strobe lighting during the pageant scenes in Act Two. *Please contact Belvoir Education if you need specific details on the use of strobe lighting.*
- Some students may need to be briefed about theatre etiquette. Students need to know that the performance is live and that the actors see and hear them in the audience. Please turn mobile phones off completely, refrain from eating in the theatre and do not take notes during the performance.

Schools performance tickets are not sent out beforehand, please collect your tickets from the Box Office in the foyer of the theatre upon arrival on the day.