



LOSE TO WIN

- *Lose to Win* is a new Australian play written and performed by Mandela Mathia. The play tells the story of Mandela's life, from his birth in war-torn South Sudan to his life as an actor in Sydney, in the present day.
- *Lose to Win* was first produced by Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz Theatre in October 2022.
- This production of *Lose to Win* premiered at Belvoir St Theatre on Saturday 27th April 2024. This production is directed by Jess Arthurs.
- *Lose to Win* runs for approximately 75 minutes with no interval.
- *Lose to Win* is a narrated life story, which takes place over thirty years in South Sudan, Sudan, Egypt, and Australia.
- *Lose to Win* is performed by Mandela Mathia, Mandela is accompanied on stage by musician Yacou Mbaye. Mandela addresses the audience directly during the performance, telling his life story. The tone is warm and personable, and at times emotional. At times Mandela draws the audience into the story by posing questions. The production contains some interaction with the audience from both performer Mandela Mathia and musician Yacou Mbaye.
- The play contains one act. The play is a continuous spoken narrative, at times incorporating music and movement. Performer Mandela Mathia and musician Yacou Mbaye are on stage throughout the show.
- The set is an open, semi-circular space, painted in a deep yellow hue. A woven textual feature hangs upstage. The action of the play takes place both in front and behind the feature. Different locations are at times represented by prop pieces, including a pile of suitcases.
- *Lose to Win* explores themes of resilience, perseverance, and hope. Students may be emotionally impacted by hearing some of the stories and experiences from Mandela's life.
- The production refers to the death of a parent and the ensuing absence of a father figure. In *Lose to Win*, Mandela refers to the loss of three parents – of a father to war, a mother to drowning when crossing a river in search of food and to the death of his second mother due to illness later in life. The production refers to the grief experienced by Mandela's mother when she learns of her husband's death.
- *Lose to Win* contains references to war, weapons, bullets, bombing and famine.
- During the production, Mandela says 'I'm going to tell you how Sudan came to be'. As Mandela describes the history of Sudan and South Sudan, he mentions colonisation, religious differences, violence, the formation of the rebel group SPLM (Sudanese People's Liberation Movement) and tribal conflict.
- Mandela shares with the audience his experiences as a child moving from South Sudan to Sudan for safety, and then to Egypt, to apply for refugee status in the US, Canada, or Australia. The production refers to the interview process with Australian immigration officials and the time spent in limbo, not knowing whether the application for refuge will be successful.
- *Lose to Win* contains stories of jobs Mandela worked as an 11-year-old boy living in Egypt. On one occasion, when working polishing shoes, Mandela tells of how a boy carrying a knife chased him through the streets to warn him off his 'patch'.
- The production contains one reference to viewing porn sites in the context of a 12-year-old boy discovering the internet, and being shown sites by another 12 year-old boy. The experience is portrayed as negative and not appropriate.
- *Lose to Win* contains a sequence in which Mandela represents, through movement and word, the story of a confrontation he and his cousin had with a gang of young people, while living in Egypt. Mandela narrates how during the fight he '*went down to cover my cousin from a machete that was about to hit his head, I ended up getting sliced on the neck.*' The wound turns out to be superficial and Mandela indicates to the audience that he is OK.
- *Lose to Win* contains references to religion, including Christianity and being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit

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- *Lose to Win* contains reference to the illegal distilling of alcohol and subsequent police brutality. This brutality is narrated and not depicted.
- The production highlights experiences of racism. Towards the end of the production Mandela speaks about the negative impact of comments made by then Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Peter Dutton about young Sudanese people.
- *Lose to Win* contains the use of coloured strobe lighting and theatrical haze.
- *Lose to Win* contains some 'in' jokes about the Australian theatre industry. Students would benefit from being familiar with the following Australian actors: Sam Neill, Nicole Kidman, and Charles Wu (who has performed in many Belvoir productions, most recently *Miss Peony*); as well as the American actors Forest Whitaker and Angela Bassett. Mandela also refers to two previous Belvoir productions he has performed in – *Sami in Paradise* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Colloquial references are also made to William Shakespeare (Willy Spear), Arthur THE MAN Miller and Chekhov.
- Some students may need to be briefed about theatre etiquette. Please turn mobile phones off completely and refrain from eating in the theatre. Students need to know that the performance is live and that the actors see and hear them in the audience. We encourage laughter and natural reactions. Taking notes shouldn't happen during performances. Schools shows are followed by a Question and Answer session with the cast. Students will have a chance to ask question about anything they don't fully understand afterwards.
- 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.

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