

PERSEVERANCE STREET
THEATRE COMPANY

PIRATES, COWBOYS AND ALIENS

A play about *play*
By Sofia Abbey

EDUCATION
RESOURCES



| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The *Pirates, Cowboys and Aliens* story first began on the lands of the Gubbi Gubbi, Waka Waka and Butchulla peoples.

Perseverance Street Theatre Company and our touring partners respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded lands and waters, as well as the Owners and Custodians of the various lands on which this story is told.

We pay our respects to First Nations Elders, past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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PRODUCTION DETAILS



Pirates, Cowboys and Aliens was first produced in 2023 by Perseverance Street Theatre Company in Gympie. Originally written by Sofia Abbey and Jonas White, the play has since undergone further development under the authorship of Sofia Abbey.

The 2025 regional tour of this work (23 - 30 August 2025) was delivered as a part of JUTE Theatre Company's DARTS (*Driving and Activating the Regional Theatre Sector*) initiative. This tour was hosted by Nanango Theatre Company (Nanango), BridgeWorx (Bundaberg), Riverside Christian College (Maryborough) and D.I.V.E. Theatre Collective (Nambour).

CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR

Sharon Hogan

PLAYWRIGHT

Sofia Abbey

SOUND DESIGN

Alex Harvey

LIGHTING DESIGN

Jonas White

ANIMATION

Evie Lanzon and
Jazmyn Produces

TOURING ARTISTS

Cast

JUDE

Abby Bowyer

KIERAN

Fletcher Colfs

Crew

TOUR & STAGE MANAGER

Jonas White



PRODUCED BY

PERSEVERANCE STREET
THEATRE COMPANY

A PROJECT BY

JUTE THEATRE COMPANY

HOSTED BY



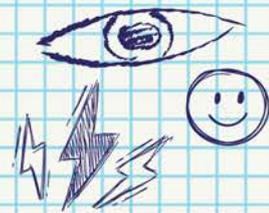
RIVERSIDE
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE



SUPPORTED BY



JUTE Theatre Company's DARTS initiative is delivered with the support of the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland. DARTS is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body. This tour was made possible by the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund, provided through Regional Arts Australia, administered in Queensland by Flying Arts Alliance.



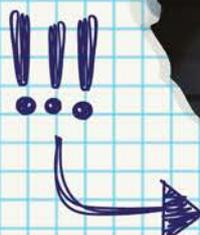
SHOW SYNOPSIS

When fifteen-year-old Kieran begrudgingly begins a school assignment on childhood memories, he doesn't expect to find himself tangled in the imagination of Jude—a nine-year-old whirlwind armed with a rake and a fierce love for a forgotten playground.

With demolition day for the old playground looming, Kieran and Jude must battle bureaucracy, bullies, and the odds stacked against them to save the only place where *anything* still feels possible.

Set in a small regional town, *Pirates, Cowboys and Aliens* is a heartwarming and hilarious play about unlikely friendships, the strange magic of old playgrounds, and the stubborn brilliance of children who refuse to grow up.

Full of pirate fights, alien attacks, and cowboy showdowns, this is a tale for anyone who has ever built a cubby, launched a pretend spaceship, or needed a friend but just didn't know it yet. It is a celebration of imagination and resilience, told through regional voices who still believe in play.



7,482
+ 346

7,828



41-56

718

CONTENT ADVICE



AUDIENCE

Suitable for ages 8 and above

THEMES

Creativity and Play, The Importance of Friendship, Childhood and Memory, Responsibility and Growing Up

Further information about the themes can be found in the artist interviews on pages 4 - 6.

TONE

Comedic, Whimsical, Joyful, Mysterious

STYLE

Magical Realism, Australian Gothic Theatre, Multimedia Storytelling

CONTENT ADVICE

Over time, it is revealed that JUDE is the spirit of a child who passed away by drowning. Her accidental death is never depicted, described in detail, or indeed discussed by the main characters, but the fact of JUDE's passing is acknowledged in the final moments of the play.

This subject matter is treated with care and sensitivity to allow audiences of all ages to safely engage with the work.

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

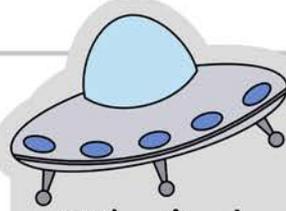
- 1 How was the passing of time across the 14 days of the narrative signalled to the audience?
- 2 How was the set (specifically the fort) used? What meaning did it support?
- 3 How was dramatic tension enhanced throughout the production?
- 4 How was the audience invited to accept the magical elements of the play?
- 5 Could this story have been set elsewhere & still explore the same themes (childhood, maturity, responsibility)?



ARTIST INTERVIEWS



Sofia Abbey
Playwright



What inspired you to write *Pirates, Cowboys and Aliens*?

I was inspired by the real experiences of children and families in regional communities, as well as my own memories of growing up with an active imagination. The play grew from conversations and stories about the importance of play spaces, the challenges of growing up, and the quiet battles kids face when no one's watching. I also wanted to explore how imagination is a tool for connection and healing.



How would you describe the style of the play?

This play is a blend of magical realism and naturalism, with moments of poetic and multimedia storytelling. It's playful and funny but also layered with emotional truth. Think Studio Ghibli meets *Bridge to Terabithia* — a mix of whimsy and heart.



If you had to pick, which moments would be your faves?

My favourite moments are the interludes — those short, quirky stories that come from real people's experiences. They're so fun and honest, and I love that they feel universal even though they're deeply personal. After the first production, several audience members told me, "I wrote a comic when I was a kid!" Those moments of shared memory are really special.



Why now? Why this story?

Childhood feels more pressured and more confined than ever. Spaces for play and imagination are disappearing, and young people are growing up fast in a complicated world. This play reminds us that creativity and play aren't luxuries — they're essential. It invites us all to slow down, remember what it's like to dream and connect, and recognise the power of imagination to help us through.

ARTIST INTERVIEWS

1. What informed your directorial vision for the work?

I wanted to emphasise the strong sense of place and space at the heart of this work. For this reason, I treated the playground as the 'third character' - a symbolic space representing joy, creativity, and childhood. Jude hugs the playground, speaks to it, and inspires Kieran to befriend it.



Sharon Hogan
Director

The play also includes interludes drawn from real childhood experiences, collected through interviews with residents in a regional town.

Ten people from a variety of backgrounds shared their stories, and common themes emerged - joy in creativity and the loss of play as people mature. It was important that we honoured these contributions in the final production.

2. How do the themes of childhood, memory, and growing up manifest in the work?

A key question posed by the play is: when does childhood transition into adulthood? For Kieran, who believes himself to be quite mature from the play's outset, his developing maturity actually becomes the most evident when he steps up to protect the playground, seeking the help of others to do so.

Though the audience doesn't realise this initially, we eventually learn that Jude is a spirit, inhabiting the playground to avoid confronting the events that led to her death. She resists responsibility, retreating into a world of make-believe.

Through games and their evolving friendship, Jude teaches Kieran to reconnect with the magic of play, while Kieran supports Jude to face her past and ultimately move on.

ARTIST INTERVIEWS

Interview with director Sharon Hogan (continued)

3. How have design and stylistic elements been used to establish the world of the play?

Jude's imagined world is represented visually through drawings and images projected onto the wall of her makeshift cubby beneath the playground. Just as the play draws on accounts of real childhood experiences from regional community members, so too are some of the projected drawings contributed by people from the region. The drawings were gathered from people of all ages - proof that we never really outgrow the need to play and create.

This play draws on stylistic conventions of magical realism and Australian Gothic theatre, with subtle supernatural elements and an emphasis on place. The soundscape, composed by Alex Harvey, builds tension and enhances the atmosphere, juxtaposing both joyful and haunting moments within the work.

Like most works in the Australian Gothic style, this production features an ordinary setting with extraordinary elements, privileging emotion over logic and blurring fantasy and reality. Through the use of heightened poetic language and visuals we've aimed to create a reality that balances the quiet and the exuberant; the mysterious, and the deeply personal. The result of this balancing act is a work that feels quite light, but which is ultimately grounded by a deeper symbolic core.

4. Who is this work for?

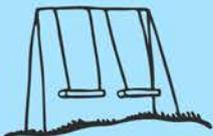
Pirates, Cowboys and Aliens has broad appeal, and is suitable for students in grades 4 all the way through to adult audiences. Just because a work can successfully appeal to young audiences doesn't mean it isn't artistically robust - there is so much depth both in the work's themes and its artistry, and we're confident audiences of all ages will find something they can connect with.

SCRIPT EXCERPTS

DATE DUE			
OCT 02			
JAN 20 1978			
FEB 1984			
AUGUST '89			

AB
790
2025

Pirates,
Cowboys
and
Aliens



INTERLUDE

I used to talk to trees. I don't know how old I would have been. Hmmm, maybe six or seven? I don't know how it started, maybe I saw something in a cartoon or read it in a book. You couldn't take me anywhere without me having a good old chat with a tree. My parents thought it was cute, they'd always just give each other side eyes and smile. Oh, I'm sure they thought it was weird, but they never stopped me. There was this one tree though, that I was especially fond of. It grew in our backyard. It was this tall, straight stringybark. His name was Captain Stringy Leaf the 3rd, but Stringy for short. I spent so much time with Stringy. We'd play for hours. It wasn't always fun and games though, we'd have some serious chats. We'd talk about his skin condition. I remember once I stole Mum's fancy night creams and wiped them all over Stringy, hoping his bark would grow back. I told him everything. And he told me everything. We were best friends.

SCENE 2

Tuesday

Afternoon. The playground is unchanged aside from a rake with a face. KIERAN enters with a band-aid on his head. He approaches the playground, wary. He investigates the fortress. There is a loud bang. KIERAN jumps. JUDE appears, 9-years of age, dressed in retro fashion.

JUDE Haha!

KIERAN It's not funny. I could have seriously been injured. Looks

JUDE like you already were.

KIERAN touches his forehead.

KIERAN It's rude to stare.

JUDE stares.

Extremely rude.



JUDE Sorry.

KIERAN goes to his school bag. He pulls out the written component of the assignment and starts working on it. JUDE follows.

My name's Jude.

KIERAN -

JUDE What's your name?

KIERAN -

JUDE Why aren't you speaking?

KIERAN Go away please.

JUDE Why?

KIERAN I'm doing an assignment.

JUDE What's it about?

KIERAN groans.

KIERAN If I tell you, will you leave me alone?

JUDE Sure.

KIERAN It's a journalism assign-

JUDE What's that?

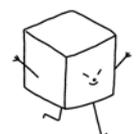
KIERAN It's like when you report the news.

JUDE Sounds boring.

KIERAN It is. Anyw-

JUDE Why do you take it then?

KIERAN Stop interrupting!



JUDE Sorry.

KIERAN I actually take Media, thinking we would just watch movies. Also it was the only elective that didn't clash with Modern History.

JUDE What's that?

KIERAN So for the assignment, we have to interview our grandparents but all mine are dead, so-

JUDE Do you want to play Aliens?

KIERAN No.

JUDE Why?

KIERAN Because I don't play Aliens. And you promised to leave me alone.

JUDE No I didn't.

KIERAN Yes you did.

JUDE No I didn't.

KIERAN Yes. You. Did.

JUDE No I didn't.

KIERAN Please, leave me alone.

JUDE Why?

KIERAN *[Under his breath]* Emma 2.0.

What do you want? Money? Food?

JUDE I want to play Alien Attack.

KIERAN -

JUDE You can be the boring human and I'm the alien.

KIERAN I don't know you.



JUDE I'm Jude. My favourite colour is red, I hate The Never Ending Story and I'm allergic to olives. My mum says they make my throat close up and my face starts to turn blue and my eyes go all big then they pop out of my head and then my brains explode.

And this is Mr Rake.

He's allergic to crocodiles.

KIERAN doesn't respond, focusing on his assignment. JUDE leaps into action, running towards the rake. She pretends the rake is a human girl. JUDE switches between the two, voicing the human man in **bold**. She voices the rake as a human girl in *italics*.

*What's that? **What's what?** Up there. In the sky. **I can't see anything.***

*Look! It's glowing. **You've been drinking too much whiskey.** It's getting closer. **Wha- Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!***

KIERAN Can you do that somewhere else?

JUDE I am Lord Zabakom of Planet %6\$%#. I am here to destroy your puny little planet. Ha ha ha.

JUDE tries to climb the fortress.

KIERAN I wouldn't do that if I were you. That thing's haunted.

JUDE No it's not.

KIERAN The council are bulldozing it down next weekend.

JUDE WHAT! The playground?

KIERAN points at the sign.



JUDE So that's what it says! *[to KIERAN]* But why? There's nothing wrong with it.

KIERAN snickers.

Yeah, she's a little rough around the edges but she's still sturdy.

KIERAN No one plays on it.

JUDE I do!

KIERAN thinks. JUDE hugs the playground.

JUDE I love the playground.

KIERAN -

JUDE We have to save it!

KIERAN / don't have to do anything.

JUDE But where will we play?

Car horn is heard.

KIERAN Finally.

JUDE What, what's your name?

KIERAN walks off.

INTERLUDE

Hmm? No, I don't talk to trees now. I stopped at around, I don't know, I must have been eleven. It was my birthday. A friend came over after school and we were playing outside. In the middle of our game, I started to talk to Stringy. I don't remember what I said. But I remember her face, all disgusted, hands on her hips. 'You can't talk to trees.' When I tried to explain that Stringy and I had a long friendship she shushed me and said 'No, seriously, you need to grow up.' The next day at school, she told everyone. They called me Tree Freak. I never spoke to a tree again.

END EXCERPT.



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WIDE BAY BURNETT AND
SUNSHINE COAST
REGIONAL QLD TOUR

23 – 30 AUGUST 2025

NANANGO BUNDABERG
MARYBOROUGH NAMBOUR