

SLINGSBY

- Journey In Wonder -

Man Covets Bird

By Finegan Kruckemeyer

Directed by Andy Packer

STUDY GUIDE & ACTIVITY BOOK

Created by Hannah McCarthy Oliver

“I can’t believe the world has changed without telling me.”
The Man

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the magical and endearing world of **Man Covets Bird**.

This guide has been created for students 8 to 18 years old. It has been designed to help young audiences connect to the themes and concepts of this show. We start with pre-show, introductory activities, followed by post show responses. Please pick and choose what information and exercises you think are age appropriate for your class.

You can access the links included in this publication by going to the Slingsby Education page on our website:

<https://www.slingsby.net.au/education/>

Some other things to note:

- ~ The production contains lighting effects as well as haze and smoke.
- ~ Please do not write notes during the performance. (You will be seated amongst the action and very close to the actors!)
- ~ Please arrive at the performance space 15 minutes before the start time.
- ~ Please leave all distractions outside, including food and drink, and ensure any mobile phones are switched off. The duration of the show is 70 minutes followed a 15-minute Q&A.

I must take this opportunity to thank the creative team at Slingsby, particularly Stacey Baldwin for her contribution to these resources.

I hope you enjoy every minute of your **Man Covets Bird** experience.

Hannah

CURRICULUM LINKS

Students who participate in the **Man Covets Bird** experience may build their creativity, build empathy, use their imaginations, increase self-awareness, boost their vocabularies and literacy skills, be in a positive environment and improve cognitive thinking

Subject Areas

Subjects linked to listed activities and relevant content of the **Man Covets Bird** experience are:

The Arts, English, Health and PE, Technologies

General Capabilities

Covered by **Man Covets Bird** experience and activities:

Personal and Social Literacy
Critical and Creative Thinking
Information and Communication Technology
Ethical Understanding

SACE - Stage 1 and 2

Viewing and responding to **Man Covets Bird** covers the SACE requirements for the Stage 1 and 2 Drama Folio – REVIEW WRITING assessment tasks and ENGLISH - WRITTEN RESPONSE to a text/play.

ABOUT SLINGSBY

Established in 2007, Slingsby is a South Australian theatre company producing and touring original theatre that captivates, challenges and inspires international audiences of adults and young people aged 8 years and up. Slingsby has a core staff of four: Artistic Director Andy, General Manager/Producer Stacey Baldwin, Production Manager Van Locker and Associate Artist Georgia Stanley.

The company is acclaimed for its sophisticated aesthetic and complex emotional storytelling and regarded nationally and internationally for artistic excellence.

Slingsby is an art making company driven to make the best possible theatre through a staged development process. Each new production is conceived by **Andy Packer** then developed with leading Australian artists including Artistic Associates **Quincy Grant** (composer) and **Geoff Cobham** (designer/lighting) and a regular, broader ensemble including **Wendy Todd** (designer), **Christopher Petridis** (AV artist) and **Andy Ellis** (photographer, graphic designer, illustrator and visual artist).

The company invests in the creation of bold new work that will further the reputation of theatre as a relevant and enticing contemporary art form. Slingsby is committed to commissioning new theatrical writing that honestly explores universal trials of human experience, with a focus on coming of age and transformation stories. The goal is to inspire hope by giving audience members a rich and sophisticated live theatre experience that evokes a sense of renewed wonder for the world in which they live.

Slingsby define their audience demographic as a *village audience* drawn to the *village well*, the sustaining centre of a community, a place where all people can gather and be nourished. They see art and culture as essential for a cohesive, happy and robust society. Many contemporary social structures seek to separate humans into ever smaller and competing minority-groups. Slingsby eschews this, instead seeking to bind people together, using art, story and shared space to celebrate similarities and build connections.

Slingsby is named after a character in Edward Lear's short story "The Four Little People Who Went Round The World". Indeed, the company's adventures have taken it far. Slingsby's productions have been presented in over 100 venues across more than 80 cities and towns in 12 countries, earning the company a global reputation for excellence, evidenced by 15 international, national and local industry awards.

Slingsby had its premiere public season in January 2008 at the Adelaide Festival Centre and then in May 2008 performed a showcase season of *The Tragical Life of Cheeseboy* at the ASSITEJ World Youth Arts Festival & Congress in Adelaide. This immediately established Slingsby's reputation as a company producing outstanding work for young audiences and secured international touring from 2009 onwards.

Through 2019-2021 Slingsby will grow local, national and international audiences through the creation of new shows, touring of repertoire productions, prestigious collaborations, community engagement and education programs. Slingsby will focus on long-term intercultural collaborations, affording diverse stories, cultural sharing and expanded audiences.

CREATIVE CREDITS



Performer **Nathan O'Keefe**



Musicians **Quincy Grant, Anya Anastasia and Cameron Goodall**

Writer **Finegan Kruckemeyer**

Director **Andy Packer**

Composer **Quincy Grant**

Designer **Wendy Todd**

Lighting Design Realiser **Dave Green**

Initial Design Concept **Geoff Cobham**

Animation **People's Republic of Animation**

Image **Andy Ellis**

Production Manager **Van Locker**

Stage Manager/Technical Operator **Roland Partis**

Producer **Stacey Baldwin**

Education Consultant **Hannah McCarthy-Oliver**

"The magic which is Man Covets Bird cannot possibly be described in writing... If more theatre were like this, the world would be a magical place indeed." Australian Stage

PRE-SHOW INSIGHT



Man Covets Bird is inspired by the painting “Man Covets Bird” by John Lurie.

Synopsis

A boy wakes one day and finds he is a man. He can recognise the stranger in the mirror, but his parents, his town, they cannot. He finds a bird that cannot fly, and together they take off on an amazing adventure. In a city they come across, they begin to build a nest, a nest that is big enough for a man and a bird. But a city is a busy place and nest-building is a big job, and soon there are other things to do. This story, told through pearly prose, live music, melancholia and sunshine is about flying from nests, birdsong, the nature of man, wild things and growing up. Will the man achieve his dream and find what he is looking for?

Introductory Link

<https://vimeo.com/32603947>

MAIN CHARACTERS

The Narrator

The Man

The Bird

The Man's Parents

The People in the City, Factory and on the Train

THEMES

Self Enlightenment - Coming to a deep understanding of one's self and identity.

Community - A group of people who live within the same vicinity and who practice common ownership. They can also share interests and attitudes towards things.

Friendship - A relationship arising from shared experiences between two people, it is a connection and state of being.

Creativity- The use of imagination or original ideas to create something. It is the act of being inventive.

Adventure - An exciting experience, embarking on an unusual journey. Leaving one's comfort zone.

Connectivity - A relationship with the ability to emotionally link with one or more people.

Growing Up/Coming of Age - To grow toward or arrive at full stature or physical or mental maturity: to progress from childhood toward adulthood. Merriam-Webster Dictionary

STYLE

Magical Realism

A literary mode rather than a distinguishable genre, magical realism is characterized by two conflicting perspectives, one based on a so-called rational view of reality and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as prosaic reality. Magical realism differs from pure fantasy primarily because it is set in a normal, modern world with authentic descriptions of humans and society. It aims to seize the paradox of the union of opposites; for instance, it challenges binary oppositions like life and death and the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present. According to Angel Flores, magical realism involves the fusion of the real and the fantastic, or as he claims, "an amalgamation of realism and fantasy."

Source: author Lindsay Moore, Fall 1998 - Scholar Blogs

FINEGAN KRUCKEMEYER - PLAYWRIGHT

"Our fictional children are not allowed to face the hurdles and heartaches - the sadnesses - that their real-life contemporaries (so importantly) do... A tragic circumstance can in a narrative journey be quite the opposite of a negative: it can in fact be a call to arms." Kruckemeyer

Finegan has written 89 commissioned plays that have been performed on five continents and translated into 8 languages. He has received 35 awards (at least one each year since 2002) including the **2017 Mickey Miners Lifetime Achievement Award** (for services to international theatre for young audiences), the 2015 David Williamson Award for Excellence in Australian Playwriting, and an inaugural Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship.

This year 34 seasons (including six world premieres) are presented globally, with seasons in eight countries and six languages. In Germany, he is represented by Rowohlt Agency.

To date, Finegan's plays have had seasons in: 200+ international festivals; all Australian states/territories; eight US national tours; five UK national tours; and at the Sydney Opera House (six works), Scotland's Imagination Festival (four works), New York's Lincoln Center for the Arts (three works), DC's Kennedy Center for the Arts (three works), Ireland's Abbey Theatre (two works) and Shanghai's Malan Flower Theatre (two works).

As well as the Mickey Miners and David Williamson Awards, and Sidney Myer Fellowship, Finegan and his work have received six Australian Writers Guild (AWGIE) Awards, an honorary Tasmanian Theatre Award for Exceptional Writing, 2012 Helpmann Award for Children's Theatre, 2010 Rodney Seaborn Award, 2009 Mystate Young Tasmanian Artist Award, 2006 Jill Blewett Playwrights Award, and 2002 Colin Thiele Scholarship.

Finegan has been a keynote speaker at the Ubud Writer's Festival (Indonesia), the TYA USA National Conference, and the ITAYRN Conference (Argentina), among others. He has delivered papers or sat on panels at conferences/festivals in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Denmark, England, Indonesia, Scotland, Sweden and the US, with papers published.

He was one of 21 selected worldwide for the ASSITEJ *Next Generation* (young leaders in children's theatre), and has sat on the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board, Australian Script Centre board, Australian Writers Guild Playwrights Committee, and Arts Tasmania's *Assistance to Individuals*, *Tas Literary Awards* and *Artsbridge* panels. He is currently a board member of the *Story Island Project* board (promoting youth literacy and empowerment through storytelling with the state's most marginalised young people).

Finegan was born in Ireland and emigrated to Adelaide at eight. In 2004, he moved with his wife Essie to Hobart, Tasmania, from which he now writes for national/international companies. He is committed to making strong and respectful work for children, which acknowledges them as astute audience members outside the plays, and worthy subjects within. His son Moses was born in 2014.

Kruckemeyer's Inspiration for Man Covets Bird

In looking at the painting by US artist and actor John Lurie, also titled **Man Covets Bird**, Kruckemeyer wanted to find out what that story behind the image might be, so he came up with the idea of a boy who bursts into maturity so quickly that his community and his family don't recognise him. And more than that, he doesn't really recognise himself. He needs to go and find himself and does that with a small bird he meets. The bird can't fly so the two of them become companions in their quest to find out who they are and what they should do next. Packer further prompted Kruckemeyer with a Daniel Mason novel *A Far Country* about an unusual girl who is sent from the country into the factories of the city.

Website

<http://finegankruckemeyer.com/>

Interview with Kruckemeyer

<https://howlround.com/conversation-finegan-kruckemeyer>

Reader's story by Kruckemeyer

<http://readingforaustralia.blogspot.com/2013/11/a-readers-story-by-finegan-kruckemeyer.html>



Finegan Kruckemeyer

ANDY PACKER – DIRECTOR

“I wholeheartedly believe that great theatre is a communal, immersive, collaborative and transformative human experience. Since the emergence of human culture, people have gathered to share stories. This custom, of a community present in a single shared time and space experiencing a story, evolved into theatre. Our contemporary digital world offers a proliferation of ways to engage with stories, yet theatre continues to be the storytelling form that physically brings people together. I love that through theatre we can time travel, shape shift, live multiple lives, die, be born, be the size of a planet or as small as an atom. I love being in a room with a group of people, sharing in a story that is challenging, moving and memorable. I can’t think of anything I’d rather do.” Andy Packer

Andy is the founding Artistic Director of Slingsby and a director of theatre, music theatre and opera. He has also worked as creative producer of multidisciplinary arts programs, producer of large-scale events and festival director.

Andy is renowned for creating original live performance moments that are emotionally powerful and visually bold. His work across theatre for young audiences, opera, cabaret and symphonic concerts has pushed him to develop a distinctive theatrical form that is at once personal and epic.

Andy has directed productions, concerts and events for Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, State Opera of South Australia, State Theatre Company of South Australia, Adelaide Festival of Arts, Adelaide Fringe, Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide Chamber Singers, Australian String Quartet, Windmill Theatre, Urban Myth Theatre of Youth, Southern Youth Theatre Ensemble, Restless Dance, Tutti Ensemble and Rundle Mall Management Authority.

Andy was Creative Producer of Programming at Carclew Youth Arts 2003-2006, Creative Producer of Family Events for Adelaide Fringe Festival 2007-2008 and Creative Director of Come Out Festival 2011.

Andy is on the Board of International Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY), based in Philadelphia, USA. Packer’s

Inspiration for *Man Covets Bird*

“My original concept was to make a work based on an image and then fit in other ideas to weave a story together.”

Packer found his perfect image one day while leafing through a magazine called *The Believer*. He said “It’s a very simple sketch drawing of a man in a suit in a fairly bare room holding a bird. I was just curious as to who this man was and what his relationship to the bird was”.

EXCURSION PREPARATION

What is a play?

What is a theatre?

What is an Actor?

What is a Director?

In theatre, what does a designer do?

Have you been to see a live theatre show before? If yes, please list what shows you have seen.

In your own words, what do you think *Man Covets Bird* will be about?

What day, date and time are you going to see the show?

How are you getting to and from the performance venue?

There is some loud live music and bright special effects in this show. How do you feel about experiencing this?

What do you think makes a great audience member?

Why is it important to respect others?

POST-SHOW REFLECTION

Watch and reflect

<https://vimeo.com/41753587>

Chapters of the Story

1. The bit where the play begins

The audience is introduced to the protagonist who grows from a Baby... to a Boy... to a Teenager... to a Young Man... and a Nearly Man...

2. The next day

The nearly man has grown and his parents don't recognise him and things have changed between him and the girl he played with as a child. The man is looking for something and meets the bird for the first time.

3. The bit where he and the bird decide to take flight

The Man and the Bird come to an understanding and leave home.

4. The bit where he goes to the city

The Man and Bird meets the character of the city, where people are close but disconnected.

5. The bit where he works in the factory

The man started a job at the factory and learnt how and when to push a button. He spoke to a co-worker and got in big trouble for doing so.

6. The bit where a long time passes

The man has been working at the factory for 8 years. He had been collecting interesting bits and pieces of this and that... mostly litter to make a nest.

7. The bit where one house is replaced by another

The Man and bird moved out of their house, which keeps being cleaned by the company, and move into a small ice-cream van in a deserted lot.

8. The bit where the man and bird remember how to be happy

The Man was happy but he decided to see how the rest of the city was feeling.

9. The bit where happiness is shared

Instead of keeping his bird to himself, he shared it with others on the train. It started a spark that spread to everyone on board.

10. The bit where the man tried to find happiness at work

The Man made headphones with four earpieces and shared his bird's song with others in the factory. It changed his world forever.

11. The bit where the bird seems to outgrow the man

The bird had fully grown, made its goodbye and flew away.

12. The bit where the nest moves

The man writes to his parents. He fixes the ice-cream van and drove it out of the yard and played a recording of the bird's song through the speakers and everywhere he went, a flock of birds followed him. It made people smile.

13. The bit which is the end

The Man decided to say goodbye to the life that he knew starting with the factory and piped the bird's song through the machinery so all of the world could hear it. The Man's old friend bird returned to his finger. The bird's song settled upon all in the city and every human and bird, looked up into the song... and they were found.



Q&A

Nathan O’Keefe - Performer



What role(s) do you play in *Man Covets Bird*?

I play the role of the narrator in this play. That includes embodying some of the characters that the ‘Man’ visits along the way, but ultimately, I am the storyteller.

Who are they? What is their relationship with other characters in the story?

I am really just myself, but my main relationship is with the audience. I paint the pictures for those who have come to see the show, and then they colour them with their individual imaginations and experiences.

What process did you go through to bring your character(s) to life?

As a storyteller, you really have to be crystal clear on what it is that you are talking about. This means having clear images in my mind, to the slightest detail. This way, I can be specific with my interpretation, and the listeners can pick up on the smallest nuance of delivery on any given line to help guide them on the way.

Sometimes during rehearsal, with various characters for example, it helped to draw a physical picture of what I thought they might look like. Then I would adopt a voice to fit that image, and I’d flesh it out from there. This also helps to make sure the various characters are unique, and not blending into one another.

What are your character’s objectives?

Initially the ‘Man’ just wants to find himself. But as with everything, change pops up when you least expect it. We look at a quite a formative period of his life where wants and desires come and go, and he is left with trying to answer the ultimate question... what matters to me most of all. I could tell you his answer, but then there’d be no point in seeing the play.

What were some of the challenges you faced in bringing your roles to life?

Each production comes with its own challenges. The goal for me is usually personalisation. I really try to relate as much as I can to the material, emotionally, physically. This allows me to offer the audience not only the words that are being said, but the personal impact. The experience. I want the audience to trust me.

What do you like most about your main character? What did you learn about from them?

I love the characters capacity to learn. We never have all of the answers, no matter how old you are, or how much you think you know. I know it sounds corny, but it’s a great reminder that life is the greatest teacher, and we are forever students of that.

Can you quote/choose some of your favourite character(s) lines from the show?

I can’t choose an isolated line as my favourite, because it’s the whole journey that gives the most to me. Once the play begins, I’m not thinking of what to say next, or when the next line is coming. It becomes a conversation, a shared experience. I like to think of it as a cake. There may be lots of slices, but it’s the cake that I’m interested in.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

This is all I’ve ever wanted to be.

Cameron Goodall - Musician



When did you become a musician?

I feel fortunate that music was always a part of family life as I was growing up. I learnt piano and guitar from a very early age. My Dad played in bands and when I was nearly good enough, he started to include me in gigs. I learnt a lot just by playing and taking opportunities when they came up. I remember when I was eight, I had the chance to play bass for my brother's ACDC covers band. We never made it out of the garage and the bass was bigger than me but the music was simple enough and he had a friend who could play drums a bit and that was all we needed to feel like we were part of something special. That feeling has never gone away.

What is the purpose of music in *Man Covets Bird* and what challenges do musicians face accompanying a live show?

Making and playing music for theatre is very different to playing music for a recording or for a live music audience. We need to practice and then play correctly all of the bits of music that have been written in the right way at the right time, but we are also part of the visual story-telling that is going on. I think to an extent we, the musicians, represent the community that the central character is from. I see us as people who have been through the coming of age transition that he is going through, and that we can support him like an older brother or an aunty or a parent might. Obviously, we play the music but I think it is also important that we are a simply being there for him and sometimes

stepping in to help and guide him through his experience.

In *Man Covets Bird* we have to be aware that our main function is to help tell the story. We need to work together with the other performers to help set the tone of the piece, to support and sometimes lead its momentum. We are also there to help the audience make the imaginative leaps that the story requires, like bringing the bird to life in their imagination for example. Music can really drive a scene along, or help it slow down and inform its emotional impact on the audience. It can mark the beginning and end of chapters in a story. AND in *Man Covets Bird* there is a sequence of songs that form part of the structure of the piece, so we need to know when to really take the reigns with those. Doing all these things with a live audience means you have to concentrate on technical things like cues to start and stop, but more importantly we have to have an intuition for the emotional temperature of the room. You need to be able to respond to that, to bring sensitive as well as bold so that the performance is as meaningful as possible for that particular audience, on that particular day, in that particular theatre, in a brand new yet familiar moment that will never be repeated. Live theatre!

What is one of your favourite scenes from the show? Why is this so?

The story-telling in this show is very intimate and there is a real tenderness in the way the theatre space is shared with the audience. This means I get to see their reactions. That's not always the case when you perform. I really do love seeing the joy in their faces in the funny scenes, the shared sorrow in the sad bits and I especially love performing the scene on the train because mixed in with the happy and the sad stuff is a kind of wonder that is uniquely. Slingsby and accessible to all, young and old.

When you were a child what did you want to be when you grew up?

I think maybe I wanted to be all kinds of grown-ups, which is probably why I became a performer: I can imagine I'm anything!

Anya Anastasia - Musician



When did you become a musician?

I'm very lucky I grew up around musical instruments, because my Dad was a musician. When I was in primary school I learned the violin and penny whistle and loved playing traditional Celtic tunes. After school once a week I used to learn Scottish fiddle tunes from my friend's grandfather. Then when I went to high school, I kept practising my violin but also took lessons in guitar and piano. It took a few years after high school for me to realise I wanted to become a professional musician and performer. I was very interested in singing and writing songs, so I started learning to use my voice, and improved my piano and ukulele skills so I could accompany myself. Now I do a huge variety of different things to make a living, all in the performing arts. There's never a dull moment!

What challenges do musicians accompanying a live show face?

It's very exciting playing music for a live theatre show but you have to be on your toes, often watching the actors and performers for visual cues. This means you have to be very confident in knowing the songs and be connected and attentive to the other members of your band too. You need to feel comfortable playing the parts on your instrument because you have to be watching your fellow musicians to work together to accompany what's happening on stage, taking cues from each other- so there's no time to look at your hands or notated music!

What is the purpose of music and the musicians in Man Covets Bird?

Music has a very special evocative power. It is a beautiful thing to hear a well-told story, but as soon as you add music (especially such exquisite and dynamic compositions as are in Man Covets Bird) the emotional journey becomes all the more powerful and transportive. Put more simply; the music helps you connect to the feelings and emotions within the story. The atmosphere set by the tone of the music helps to create the essence of that beautiful other world this show transports us to.

What is one of your favourite scenes from this show? Why is this so?

I love the scene when the man shares the music of the bird with the other nearby factory workers using his special headphones. I also love the scene where they're on the train and they all start talking about each of their birds. Both of these moments are very special because the first one is about reaching out and taking a risk to make connections with the people around you and the next is the marvelous effect this can have as the silence shatters and people realise some of their "sameness". This is the difference between people who all happen to live in the same place, and a community.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

First, I wanted to be a politician or an investigative journalist. I wanted to be able to make a difference to the world and do my best toward making sure everyone had a fair go in life. By the time I got to uni I wanted to be a literary great, a novelist telling stories that connected people with little intricate details of what it is to be human and what connects us all. I realised that telling stories in theatre and music can have a powerful and profound impact on people and their lives too, and because I also write my own shows, and am part of special shows like this, I have the freedom to do my research and my reading, and go on to say what I want about the world in the form of music and theatre. But who knows, maybe I will still do some of those other things I dreamed of! I'm 30, I hope I still have time for a few more careers as well as this one!

Quincy Grant - Musician



How would you describe your composition/sound design for *Man Covets Bird*?

This play uses a live three piece band with a singer, so the music is very immediate and dramatic. There are a number of songs that describe the journey of the Man, and work as a 'chorus' that watches and comments on the Man's progress. In the band we use keyboard, accordion, clarinet, guitar, mandolin, glockenspiel, bass and mandicello - so there are quite a variety of sounds and styles of music throughout the play. Added to this are some other sound design elements that are all pre-recorded: the sounds of the city, of a factory, of trains, wind, etc. We use the music and sound effects to evoke a very quirky and strange world.

What processes did you go through to create" it?

Andy and I worked on early ideas with Finnegan, the playwright, and then he wrote the script and also lyrical ideas for the songs. I wrote much of the music while on the move in Europe. Several things like *Over the Mountains and Over the Rooftops* were written in an attic overlooking the roofs of the ancient city of Salzburg, in Austria. One melody, the main Theme, came to me when I was in a museum in a German town called Jena: the museum had models of the town representing many hundreds of years of its existence and the tune just seemed to be right for the moment of universality it represents at the end of the play. One other song I stole from my youngest daughter

who has always liked making up her own tunes - she was three at the time.

What challenges did you face?

It is a lot of music for a play like this - the music is almost continuous throughout. And some of it is quite weird and difficult, so it was quite a challenge for our little band to learn it all.

What do you hope the audience experiences whilst listening to your composition?

I hope they will experience the music alongside the other elements of the work: the text and the design, that then gives the audience a strong and vivid emotional experience, and perhaps some things they can take into their own lives to help them survive the ups and downs that life brings.

Did you take inspiration for your composition from elsewhere?

Not anywhere specifically with this music.

What are your favourite moments from the show?

I love the moment when the Man is on the train and shows the other passengers the Bird. And we love performing the songs.

When you were a child, what did you want to do when you grew up?

I wanted to be an inventor and builder when I was small - and that is basically what I've grown up to become

Wendy Todd - Designer



Please describe the design concepts for *Man Covets Bird*?

The Original concept was developed by Geoff Cobham. I took the design from this principle, a Rotunda in the Park. In a community, the gathering of people together in a public used to be in a place such as a rotunda. The early 1900's was also the aesthetic for the show. Music was played in a rotunda as does the band in our show.

What is the purpose of the set in *Man Covets Bird*?

The present gathering, i.e. the audience of today, is gathering at the rotunda, having a picnic on the grass. It draws the audience into the realm of being together for a common purpose, a shared experience. The Set gives a framework. It evokes a certain presence, which assists to bring the audience along with the story. A kind of reality and grittiness that gives authenticity to the story. Objects in their own way can help the audience to remember moments, or they relate to certain colours. One of the major keys to the original season is the whole floor is covered with real grass and the audience sit on picnic rugs as though they are in the park... Smell of fresh grass inside is very, very obvious.

What process did you go through to bring the set to the stage?

I began with much discussion between Andy Packer, Director and Geoff Cobham, Design Concept. From there, I researched styles of architecture in the 1930's and 1940's. There is a distinct look for that era of industrial architecture. I made a scale model of the Rotunda. This model greatly assisted in the development of the building of the Set. It also helps to

realise those other scenes and how they can be brought to life.

What do you hope to visually communicate to your audience with your designs for *Man Covets Bird*?

There is a simultaneous moment of reality and fantasy before your eyes. There are objects that we recognise but they are designed in a way that you can't exactly tell when they existed or where they existed. You can feel they are real but they but they exist in some timeless place. I try to evoke sensations of memory, often from a bygone era but somehow of the present. It is all about keeping the audience engaged and connected.

What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

There are a number of other "scenes" in the script that are not a rotunda but a train, a house, a factory. I had to find ways to redefine the Rotunda to be viewed as another place. The main feature here is the factory. By setting it into the floor of the rotunda, maintains these important scenes at front and centre of the stage, where all the audience can concentrate their focus. The sense of travel is achieved by moving around the audience and situating the character's home at the very rear of the audience. Around the performance space there are 5 park benches. Next to one of them is a rubbish bin. No other set piece was used to convey the home of the character. The train station likewise was a park bench with 2 fluoro lights above it, which flickered when depicting the station. Simplicity and a single element can evoke a whole location.

What are some of the props you had to source or create for this show? Why did you source or create them as you did?

This show has many props, set pieces, which assist in conveying the story. Two of my favourites are the large 3 wheeled tricycle, the Mr Whippy Ice Cream van. Painted in the pink and cream colours of a Mr Whippy Van. I also love the flower beds which are either side of the rotunda with a flourish of spring flowers. Some of these are even a character in the Factory!! Many of the props are found objects. The beauty of these is they carry a living history, somewhere once is someone's garden or laundry, a part of another life lived.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

When I was about 11, I wanted to be a Marine Biologist. Then when I was 14, the movie Jaws came

out and that put me off swimming in the ocean for quite a few years!!!



QUOTES FROM MAN COVETS BIRD

“Because they start to realise that there are a great many people doing this and it would only take one person to slide across from the usual place they sit on the train, and lean in to you and whisper into your ear... this is all a bit funny isn't it”.

“For this man to be found, it is simple enough. He was found not from the ground... he was found from above”

“I can't believe the world has changed without telling me.
But I have found a friend now.
Maybe that was the point of all of this.
We will leave together and go somewhere that is ours.”

“A city enjoys being a city. And celebrates this,
By saying who in the city is doing very well and who is very happy
Who has a nice car and who can buy the best Christmas presents.
It sings songs about these people, and writes signs congratulating these people
And makes lots of other people go:
“I can't wait to visit there. I think that will be the best visiting place”.

“What a city doesn't like doing (and it's not right or wrong or mean or nice – it's just the truth),
is talk about the people who wake up every day living in a very small part of that city, maybe a tiny small room
with just a table and a thin bed, maybe like this bed, and they have to go off every day to a giant factory that is so
big it doesn't really have time to check if they are feeling happy -sorry it's just very busy...”

“He was given a badge with a picture of his face on it. This was funny, because he already had a perfectly fine
face that he carried around with him.”

“Hello”, he said, “Are you happy? Do you like this job? What are your hobbies? Do you also have a bird?”

“That day will come when seasons end, and we are done with nest building”

“I am coming home now. And they knew it was so and they smiled”

“The things were un-important, it was what the man and bird did with them that mattered”

“Why are you sharing that with us?” asked the bald man.

“Because I like it. And it makes me happy. And I thought it might do the same for you.”

“Until everybody, human and bird, looking up into the song... they were found.”

FINDING YOURSELF

In **Man Covets Bird** the man is constantly looking to make connections with others and work out where he belongs in life. Through this process, he finds himself. Here's some things you could do to find your own balance;

- ~ Focus your attention on those things you can control
- ~ Spend time in nature.
- ~ Be true to yourself
- ~ Mind What you Eat
- ~ Exercise on a regular basis
- ~ Do Good Deeds
- ~ Be assertive
- ~ Meditate
- ~ Avoid trying to change others

All the accomplishments in the world can't replace inner peace.

There's something peaceful about spending time among the birds and the trees.

Few things are more disconcerting than living a life you weren't meant to live.

Decide for yourself and live the life you were meant to live.

Life is a story...it's never too late to start telling yours.

Source: Stacy Brookman

<https://medium.com/real-life-resilience/strategies-to-find-your-balance-and-inner-peace-28531c07bb44>

OBJECT TRANSFORMATION

Popularised by Polish theatre practitioner Jerzy Grotowski in the 1970s, the transformation of props into other objects is an effective technique. Audience members are asked to use their imaginations and watch the physical cues from the actor to determine what it is.

In **Man Covets Bird**, the narrator, Nathan O'Keefe often uses objects to help tell the story. Sometimes the objects become things that they weren't made for. For example, his jacket becomes a baby being rocked to sleep.

Activity

- ~ Individually choose an object/prop.
- ~ Sit on the floor with crossed legs.
- ~ Slowly pick up your prop as if it is the most precious item in the whole world.
- ~ Look at it. Move it around in your hands.
- ~ Stand up.
- ~ Move around the room with your prop and use it for what it was made for. Eg a ball, bounce and throw it. A stick making fire, toasting marshmallows etc.
- ~ Then turn it into something that it's not.
- ~ (The ball could become a crystal ball or a telephone... the stick could become a bat or a sword)
- ~ Turn your object into at least 4 things.
- ~ Once completed, get into groups of three or four.
 - You are to choose a children's story and work out how to tell it within 1 to 2 minutes, using only your objects as devices.
 - ALL objects must be used at least once.
 - Rehearse your story for 30 minutes then perform.

MUSIC AS A STORYTELLING DEVICE

In **Man Covets Bird**, music weaves and surrounds the performance, evoking emotions and atmospheres to match the story being told. The musicians sometimes take over the narrative through song. Just like films, music in theatre can change an audience's perception.

Activity 1

~ Watch this clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rn9V0cN4NWs>

Question: How can music change a film?

Activity 2

- ~ Find the *Music Listening* table on page 32.
- ~ You will see a table that has 12 rows and 7 headings.
- ~ Your teacher will have sourced 12 different and distinct pieces of music and will play them for approximately 1-2 minutes to the class.
- ~ Find a quiet place in the room where you can't be distracted by anyone else and commence.
- ~ Write down what the music is giving to your imagination... ERA (past present future), TIME (of day), SETTING (location), CHARACTERS (who is in the setting), COLOURS (what colours can you see – eg black darkness or yellow light, silver etc) EMOTIONS (what does it make you feel?)
- ~ When completed share your responses with a partner.

Activity 3

- ~ In groups of approximately 4, you are to write your own story/script where each actor has 3-4 lines maximum each. Keep in mind you will need to learn these by heart. There are no other rules, except the locations must be in either a forest, an island, a desert or on a mountain. Once you have blocked and rehearsed your skit, find 3 different types of music that will become your soundtrack(s). You could use tracks from the Music Listening Exercise. You need to perform your skit exactly the same way, 3 times, using a different track each time.

WORKSHEETS

1. MAN COVETS BIRD - GUIDED RESPONSE

On entering the “Slingsby Space”, what did you see and do?

What was *Man Covets Bird* about? (PLOT)

What did the performance space look like?

Describe the music you heard.

How did the musicians contribute to the story?

What did the costumes look like?

Can you remember who the characters were? Please name them.

How did Slingsby’s *Man Covets Bird* make you feel? (Can be a number of emotions.)

Was there anything you didn't understand or enjoy? (You could ask your teacher to explain it to you OR you could write us an email and we'll answer your questions.)

Did you have a favourite part? YES/NO What was it?

What did you like about the show overall?

What did you learn from your experience of Slingsby's *Man Covets Bird*?

What do you think is the difference between watching TV and going to a live theatre performance?

Describe what happened at the end of *Man Covets Bird*?

2. MY BEST FRIEND... A BIRD...

What are the qualities you look for in a best friend?

Draw a picture of a bird while that represent the qualities of an ideal friend.

3. DESIGN YOUR OWN MACHINE

Instructions for The Man in the Factory:

When you see a light, push the button

When you don't see a light, don't push the button

But have your finger ready for when you next see the light.

If you could invent a machine, what would it make or do?

Draw that machine in the space below.

4. WHAT IS YOUR SONG?

It was when the man shared his bird and song with others that his world started to change. If you could share with the world the song of your heart, what would it be? Write whatever words come into your mind in the space below.

After your finish this exercise, you might like to find a pre-existing song that you think captures something about yourself. Think of the reasons it represents you and share it with the class.

5. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP

Draw pictures of yourself when you are 21 Years Old, 45 Years Old and 80 Years Old. Also include a description of the types of things you want to be doing at these ages.

NAME _____

Me At 21 Years

Me At 45 Years

Me at 80 Years

6. MUSIC LISTENING EXERCISE

(Instructions for this activity is on page 25)

Track	Era	Time	Setting	Characters	Colours	Emotions
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

7. DRAW YOUR MEMORIES OF MAN COVETS BIRD

In class, close your eyes and sit in silence for at least a minute and try to remember everything you can about your experience of **Man Covets Bird**. As soon as you open your eyes, try to **DRAW** your memories.

RECYCLING

“There is not an object on the ground that is unusable. Never saw some refuse that the bird felt was refusable.” Narrator

- ~ What is recycling?
- ~ What are the benefits?
- ~ What types of materials can be recycled?
- ~ What does biodegradable mean?
- ~ What are some ways that you could recycle at home?

Activity

Make a piece of art out of recycled materials.

After you have finished, describe what your art is and how you made it in the space below.

**You could also create something purposeful or useful from recycled materials? For example, a pencil cup or a plate, or a nest for a bird and a human to share... or just a bird.

EXCERPTS FROM A REVIEW BY JANE HOWARD

Australian Stage Online - 2010

“As soon as you step into the Space Theatre for *Man Covets Bird*, you are transported into another world, much the same as the theatre has done itself. Gone are the chairs and rows you would expect from a theatre, instead, the ground is covered in real grass, and the audience is invited to take their shoes off and take a seat on the picnic blankets or in the 1950s lawn chairs behind. As soon as they step in to the theatre the audience is invited to look into a shoe-box theatre to see the train to catch to the show, and actor Nathan O’Keefe walks around talking to the audience and instigating competitions as to who can make a block of ice melt the fastest (for the record: I was beaten by a very talented young ice-melter at the picnic blanket next to me). With the original concept by director Andy Packer, Finegan Kruckemeyer has penned a beautiful and poetic script; the journey of one person from nearly-a-man to a man, and what his life brings as he moves to the city, with only his bird for a friend. While the world and the city the man lives in can be sad and lonely, he still manages to find joy, and he discovers how to spread that joy to the sad and lonely people in the city. Narrated and acted by O’Keefe, the story is also interlaced with songs composed by Quincy Grant and performed live by a three-piece band. The interplay between the dialogue and the songs is beautiful, each working to support one another and lift the production to high heights. It is a delight to watch O’Keefe going from narration to acting the roles of the different characters the man meets in his life; characters which become so clearly etched it is as if they were truly in the theatre. The imagination in the play is incredible: the main focus of the set (designed by Wendy Todd after initial concept by Geoff Cobham) is a simple and visually stunning rotunda, with park benches and flowers expanding the garden of the stage, and yet with the descriptions of Kruckemeyer, lighting of David Green and large-scale animations from the People’s Republic of Animation, the city and the people which populate it come to life. The magic which is *Man Covets Bird* cannot possibly be described in writing. It is a show that truly needs to be seen by everyone. Leaving the theatre, I was privy to a child telling her mother, “When I catch the train home, I’m going to talk to everyone on it.” It is theatre like the work *Slingsby* produces which makes us all imagine a better and happier world. If more theatre were like this, the world would be a magical place indeed.”

Adelaide Now

<https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/man-covets-bird/news-story/691a770d5aa6edebb2cae36d85de8d48>

Sydney Morning Herald

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/theatre/man-covets-bird-20120812-242pg.html>

REVIEW WRITING

Content Ideas for a *Man Covets Bird* Review

- ~ What was your initial response to the pre-show experience?
- ~ In one paragraph summarise the overall experience of **Man Covets Bird** using descriptive language.
- ~ What was unique about **Man Covets Bird** compared to other shows?
- ~ What was the plot?
- ~ What themes were explored in **Man Covets Bird**
- ~ What were the director's intentions? What evidence could you see in the show that reinforced these?
- ~ Describe the blocking/stage movement.
- ~ What was the playwright's intention?
- ~ Evaluate the O'Keefe's performance overall then choose individuals and write about their character portrayals. Describe how they brought their characters to life, their relationships with the audience, energy levels, physical and vocal expression, focus and character interpretation... did they do all of this successfully?
- ~ List any direct quotes from **Man Covets Bird** and who said them.
- ~ Describe and evaluate the sets, lighting, costumes, music and any other technical elements used in **Man Covets Bird**
- ~ What were some key moments in **Man Covets Bird** and how did the audience react?
- ~ What was the overall audience reaction to **Man Covets Bird**?
- ~ What might have they been thinking about or considering after leaving the theatre?
- ~ Come up with one statement to summarise Slingsby's **Man Covets Bird**.

Some more tips

- ~ Drama reviews must be written in past tense. The show you saw is over!
- ~ Throughout your review, write the show title in italics or underline.
- ~ Write as if the person reading your review has never seen the show.
- ~ Ensure that the spelling of all names and theatrical terminology is correct.
- ~ When writing about specific designers/directors/actors etc, you should write their full name the first time you mention them, and then when you reference them again you should only use their last name. For example: Director of the show, Andy Packer successfully led his actors and creative team to create an experience for the audience which was moving, visually spectacular and emotionally charged. Packer's choices in the blocking for his actors also.
- ~ Ask someone else to read through your review and seek their feedback, particularly, whether they understand everything you have written.
- ~ Avoid using the words I or You. Instead write from the perspective of "the audience".
- ~ Look at these links: <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/web/drama/stage-2/supportmaterials/assessment-task-exemplars-student-responses> (Choose task 2)
- ~ http://www.slingsby.net.au/wpcontent/uploads/2016/01/Slingsby_Study_Guide_The_Young_King_February_15.pdf (Go to Review Section)

DESIGN ACTIVITY IDEAS

- ~ Brainstorm as many adjectives as you can to describe Slingsby's **Man Covets Bird**. Research all you can. Make notes.
- ~ What colours come to mind when reflecting on this production?
- ~ Make a list of all the themes and symbols.
- ~ Who is the audience for this show?
- ~ What message(s) did Slingsby want its audience to think about?
- ~ Collect a number of images which incorporate/symbolise all of the above and stick them into a Visual Diary. Sketch out or list your ideas. Stick these in.
- ~ Work towards a final product and let all of the above inform your designs.
- ~ Everything included should be there for a reason.

Publicity

Follow the design process above and create your own **Man Covets Bird** poster, billboard, program cover. OR create a storyboard and a 1 minute trailer/film or advertisement for your own production of **Man Covets Bird**.

Set and Costumes

Following the process above, design your own set and costumes for the scene where The Man is travelling on the train or in the factory.

Animation

Using the visuals from **Man Covets Bird** as inspiration, create a short animation summarising The Man's story, or choose another play and make an animation to highlight a moment within it.

Writing

Write a 1-2 minute monologue for The Man or another character in the show. They could reflect on their experiences and voice their thoughts on the events in the story.

OR

Either individually or in pairs, write the next chapter of the The Man and Bird's story. It should be approximately one page in length.

OR

Create a news report – either presented live, on radio or written reporting the events surrounding the story of The Man and the Bird.

Presenting

When the previous task(s) are completed you could;

- ~ Illustrate your story, read it to the class, get into groups of three or four and “act it out” – (rehearse and perform), make a short film or animation, design the costumes or a set for it, create a front cover or devise a dance/drama performance.
- ~ In groups of 3 or 4, work together to create your own abridged version of **Man Covets Bird**. The performance length should be no more than 1-2 minutes. Your aim is to re-tell the story in this time. Rehearse then perform to the class.

Finding Meaning

What do you think these quotes mean?

“Great fire can follow a small spark” - Dante

“Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.” - Anne Frank

“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”
Nelson Mandela

How do these concepts link to those in **Man Covets Bird**?

CREATE YOUR OWN SLINGSBY INSPIRED PERFORMANCE

In groups of two to four members you are to create your own show using Slingsby's techniques and philosophies as your inspiration.

You are to form your own theatre company and each member of the group is to take on a practitioner's role such as the director, actor or a designer. Please note all members of the group may appear on stage.

Process

Read through the notes on the next few pages and take notes on the imagery and sounds whilst viewing the links listed.

Choose a story that you would like to tell. Tales from folklore and classics are a good place to start.

Using Slingsby's techniques as your guide, create a shared (written) vision for your production. Primarily this will be a group devised and workshopped piece rather than purely working from a script.

After you have chosen your individual roles you are to create a document for the members of your company, briefing them on your own ideas and concepts. What you wish to achieve and how?

As soon as possible, plan out your meeting times and schedules.

Storyboard the plot and action.

Individually, keep a display diary recording all of your discoveries and design concepts. Stick in pictures, research, sketches etc.

You may use other performers in your show but the "leads" should be members of your group.

Play to the strengths of your group.

Use rehearsal time to shape your performance.

Length of performance due date to be advised

SLINGSBY CREATIVE MANIFESTO

- ~ Our audience is a group of strangers who become a brotherhood/sisterhood.
- ~ Our audience members leave a memory of themselves in the space.
- ~ Every piece of theatre should be an island (where its unique culture and logic has evolved). • We value the experience as much as the story.
- ~ Making adults and children equal – finding the humanness in us all.
- ~ We should discover the story together (with the audience).
- ~ Embrace unpredictability.
- ~ Create a ceremonial journey of the experience.
- ~ Remember that contrived accidents keep it real.
- ~ Every performance is unique.
- ~ Our audience should start and end the show at home.

SLINGSBY TECHNIQUES

- ~ Story Choice – Coming of Age/Getting of Wisdom stories
- ~ Integration of text/music/image to convey the story
- ~ Putting the audience inside the frame of the story
- ~ Using song as an opportunity to hold a moment and as emotional extrapolation
- ~ Changing of scale, miniaturising moments
- ~ Narration – moving from first person to third person as a way of being both inside the story and reporting on it
- ~ The use of flame, torch light and shadow as a connection to the ancient ritual of fireside storytelling (Exposing darkness and bringing it into the light)

OTHER RECURRING SLINGSBY TECHNIQUES

- ~ Small casts tell large stories.
- ~ Theatrical Devices – puppets, shadows, light, props, projections (on to inanimate objects/surfaces).
- ~ Intimate audience size and layout.
- ~ Re-tell classic tales from the past or commission original works.
- ~ Audience involvement – pre, post and throughout performance.
- ~ Visuals often reminiscent of travelling carnivals and penny arcade devices.
- ~ Resonates with and captures the imagination of audiences aged 8 to 180.
- ~ Creates theatre that engages and empowers audiences, connecting to the child within.
- ~ References to the 1930's-1950's in design visuals, combined with modern technology.
- ~ Each moment on stage is meticulously curated and thought through.
- ~ Audience members feel connected and in a way, nurtured by the cast and crew. An intimate experience. • Theatrical devices and stage designs are individual pieces of art.
- ~ Directly involve the audience in post and pre-show activities and during the performance.
- ~ Majority of shows designed for touring.
- ~ High technical values.

RESOURCES

<http://www.slingsby.net.au>

<https://www.facebook.com/SlingsbyTheatre/>

<https://vimeo.com/slingsby>

THE SLINGSBY CREATIVE PROCESS - BY ANDY PACKER

Each new show has its own discoveries – we continue to explore new ways to work as a team and to refine our theatre making process. The starting point for a new Slingsby show is an image, an idea or a story that moves me. Something that I feel is epic enough to have a universal appeal across a wide age range. We need to find a story or an idea that has enough at risk for us to really care about and identify with the character in a high stakes way. Theatre is a compressed moment in time. For us to really engage with a story it must in some way address an anxiety deep within us. This is why coming of age stories are so potent for us. As humans we are constantly evolving into a new phase of our lives. Leaving part of our old selves behind and forging new ground.

Once I have selected a book, image or idea to adapt to the stage we bring together a team of artists to forge a loose idea into a new theatre production. The process for each of our seven productions has varied but for the last two shows (The Young King and Emil and the Detectives) we have commenced our development with a process we call Paths Less Travelled. This ‘theatre laboratory’ brings together our core team, Quincy Grant, Geoff Cobham and Wendy Todd along with one or more actors and sometimes a writer and other design collaborators. Through this process (two weeks) we experiment with the theatrical possibilities of the story or image. We really try to discover a new way to share this with an audience and dig into the philosophy of the piece. Through this we expect to find failure as well as success. This is where we can take real risks. The aim of this process is to push theatrical form and find new ways to share time and space with our audience.

In the final stages of this process we will often invite our Critical Appraisal Group to see the very early stages of this work in development. The Critical Appraisal Group is a small group of peers and individuals that we respect, and we’re confident in their ability to provide an outside eye to the development of each new show. This group will generally include a Board Director of Slingsby, a theatre maker, an educator and from time to time a young audience member. This group will see showings at various stages of the making of a new show and the final production – meeting with me at each stage to offer insights and feedback and to ask questions of me and for me to ask questions of them.

The next phase of development will often include commissioning a playwright to write a script informed by the initial idea, image or story along with the discoveries from the Paths Less Travelled process.

Following the first few drafts of the script we will undertake a second creative development with the cast – often involving a reading of the script to a young audience – to gauge their interest in the story and the language of the piece. This second stage development will always include Quincy Grant as composer, joining us in the room to contribute ideas and music as the piece develops. The through scoring is forged as the piece is being blocked.

There is then a constant dance and conversation between text, music and image as we make the work. This second stage of development can vary in duration between three days to two weeks – depending on budget, artist availability and how ambitious we are being with the form of the piece. Geoff Cobham and Wendy Todd (and other design creatives) are always welcome in the room during this phase and collaborate equally in a very open and integrated way. As a team we are all trying to find the best and most impactful and interesting way to stage each moment.

Where possible we try to bring production and design elements into the room as early as possible – with ideas being generated and refined throughout the process. This differs from some other processes where the design may be set before rehearsals begin.

The final rehearsal phase for our productions is when all of the elements come together. Refined design elements and Geoff Cobham's lighting are the final pieces to the puzzle. Quincy Grant will coordinate the recording of his score and the integration of that into show control. The last process is balancing all of these elements. Meticulous attention is given to balancing sound, image, text and live performance. This is when a new Slingsby show is born. The audience is the ultimate and most important ingredient. With each successive audience our understanding of the show grows, and we continue to refine the production after each performance. Even with *The Tragical Life of Cheeseboy*, which we have performed well over 250 times, we still refine moments following every performance. Perfectionism ephemeral, if not an illusion.

MAN COVETS BIRD AWARDS

- ~ Best New Work: Ruby Awards
- ~ Best Show (Comedy): Adelaide Theatre Guide Curtain Call Awards
- ~ Sunday Best Award: Sunday Mail
- ~ Top two places on 'Best Theatre of 2010': No Plain Jane review website

“this is all just a bit funny isn't it?”