

# SLINGSBY

- Journey In Wonder -



By **Erich Kästner**  
Adapted for the stage *by* **Nicki Bloom**  
Director **Andy Packer**

## STUDY GUIDE

Created by *Hannah McCarthy-Oliver*  
Design by *Andy Ellis*

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*Materials have been created to support older student audiences.*

# Welcome to the magical world of *Emil and the Detectives*!

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This guide has been created to help you connect to the themes and concepts of this show, give historical background, suggest classroom activities and assist with review writing.

Since its first publication in 1929, Emil's story has been very popular with adults and children alike. We hope you enjoy it also.

There are many other activities, support materials, links and worksheets in the Activity Book that complement those found in this guide. You can access and click on them all easily by going to this page at the Slingsby website: **[www.slingsby.net.au/eatd\\_education](http://www.slingsby.net.au/eatd_education)**

## **Some other things to note:**

- The production contains lighting effects as well as haze and smoke.
- We highly recommend that you 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 at least 30 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 50 minutes followed a 15 minutes Q&A.

I have enjoyed putting together all of these materials for you and I want to thank the Slingsby family for their contributions to this publication.

Slingsby's Emil and the Detectives is a great show and I hope you will enjoy every minute of your experience with us, including all the pre and postshow work.

**Hannah**

For more information – go to: **[www.slingsby.net.au/eatd\\_education](http://www.slingsby.net.au/eatd_education)**

## ABOUT SLINGSBY THEATRE COMPANY

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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 just two: Artistic Director Andy Packer and General Manager/Producer Stacey Baldwin.

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 artform. 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 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. In ten years Slingsby has toured its original productions to 70 venues in 44 cities and towns across Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, USA, Canada, UK, Scotland, Spain, Ireland and Norway, winning 14 industry awards along the way.

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.

In February-March 2016, Slingsby premiered its sixth production *The Young King*, an adaptation of a short story by Oscar Wilde, as part of the Adelaide Festival of Arts. The show has been nominated for multiple awards including a Helpmann. *The Young King* has since toured to Parramatta Riverside Theatres (September 2016) and will tour to Sydney Opera House in November 2017 and New Victory Theatre, New York in October 2017.

**Slingsby Vision**  
**Journey in Wonder**  
*We value wonder,  
empathy, excellence,  
collaboration, integrity.*

## CREATIVE CREDITS

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### On Stage

Elizabeth Hay *Performer*

Tim Overton *Performer*

### Off Stage

Access2Arts *Audio Description*

Amber Venner, Communication Republic *Interpreter*

Andy Ellis *Graphic Design*

Andy Packer *Director*

Andy Petrushevics *Animation Designer*

Angela de Palma *Properties and Scenic*

Brad Thomson *Venue fitout*

Brad Wilson *Venue fitout*

Chris Hill *Carpenter*

Chris Petridis *Technical Design*

Christie Anderson *Choir Director*

Emma Horwood *Choir Conductor*

Geoff Cobham *Lighting Design*

Hannah McCarthy-Oliver *Education Consultant*

Jane Goldney *Copywriter*

Kate Potter *Hughes PR*

Luku Kukuku *Animation Director*

Max Mackenzie *Technician*

Michelle Delaney *Properties and Scenic*

Nemo Frolich *Carpenter*

Nicki Bloom *Playwright*

Peta-Anne Louth *Bespoke, Front of House*

Pip Cody *Interpreter*

Quincy Grant *Composer & Sound Design*

Rebekah Cichero, *One Small Room Foyer Installation*

Roland Partis *Production Manager*

Sascha Budimski *Audio Editing*

Sean Ormsby *Crew*

Simon Hatcher *Hughes PR*

Sophie Edwards *Stage Manager*

Stacey Baldwin *General Manager & Producer*

Stu Nankivell *Lead Animator*

Tom Sutton *Crew*

Van Locker *Venue Manager*

Wendy Todd *Costume Design*

Young Adelaide Voices *Choir*

### Musicians

Mitch Berick *Clarinet*

Gareth Chin *Accordion*

Ashley Hribar *Piano*

Jarrad Payne *Percussion*

Dylan Woolcock *Guitar*

Belinda Gehlert *Violin*

Mikey Robertson *Violin*

Ewen Bramble *Cello*

Harley Gray *Double Bass*

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\*Please note: in the Slingsby production of *Emil and the Detectives*, Emil is intentionally portrayed as an androgynous, gender-less character. In these notes Emil is sometimes referred to as male, as per Kästner's original character in the book.

## EMIL'S SYNOPSIS – WRITTEN BY NICKI BLOOM

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I'm Emil.  
Emil Tischbein.  
I live in Newtown  
With my mum,  
Who works hard as a hairdresser to earn enough money for us both.  
My dad is dead.  
I don't have a brother or a sister.  
Friends?  
It's not that I don't like the other kids at school  
But  
Some of them can be mean, and I'd just rather be on my own, ok?  
It's the school holidays, which are my mum's busiest times  
And she trusts me with an important job.  
She has saved up her money to give to my grandmother  
Who lives in the city.  
So much money  
One hundred and fifty.  
And I'm in charge of delivering it.  
This will be my first time away from home by myself.  
Mum gives me a badge that used to belong to my dad  
And I use it to pin the money safely to the inside of my jacket pocket.  
Mum takes me to the train station where I board the train to the city.  
I wave to her as the train pulls away.  
In the carriage there's a man wearing a bowler hat  
Who seems friendly  
But he's also kind of strange.  
He says his name is Mr Grundeis.  
He offers me a cup of tea  
And I drink it  
But then I start to feel sick and before I know it –  
Everything starts to look weird and I can't stay awake anymore.  
When I wake up  
The train is at the big city station.  
The man in the bowler hat has left the carriage.  
My badge is still in place  
But when I check my jacket pocket  
There's nothing there.  
The money has gone.  
That man has taken it.  
I have to follow him.

## EMIL'S SYNOPSIS – WRITTEN BY NICKI BLOOM

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It's not easy keeping track of someone in a big city  
And I nearly lose him dozens of times.  
I think about going to the police, but –  
I can't.  
Because of something I did at home  
I don't want to talk about it.  
I don't know what to do  
I'm all alone in a city I don't know  
And I have no money  
But then  
A horn sounds in my ear  
And that's how I meet Gustav.  
I tell him what has happened and he offers to help.  
Gustav honks his horn again  
And all the kids in town come running  
We hatch a plan.  
We will all work together  
To track down the thief  
And get my mum's money back.  
It's not easy.  
There's a lot we have to learn together along the way.  
And in the end  
I learn the most important thing of all...

To listen to Emil's Synopsis, please go to  
<https://soundcloud.com/slingsbytheatre/emil>

## MAIN CHARACTERS IN EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

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*\*Please note: in Slingsby's show, some of these characters are referenced but are more prominent in Kästner's original story.*

**Emil Tischbein** – A brave, intelligent, strong minded 10+ year old who lives with his mother and who is sent

via train to the city to stay with grandmother, aunt and cousin. Money entrusted to Emil is stolen and it becomes a joint mission to get it back. (In Kästner's story Emil is a boy... in Slingsby's version gender is never referenced.)

**Emil's Mother** – Is the sole breadwinner in the family as her husband died approximately 5 years earlier. She is hard working, loving and sensible. She must be a good mother as Emil turns out to be an outstanding member of the community in the end.

**Grundeis** – The man in the bowler hat who is a con man. He meets Emil on the train and steals Emil's money. Grundeis bamboozles Emil with nonsense and jokes.

**Gustav** – A local boy in the city who helps Emil and assembles approximately 24 children to help Emil retrieve the money. He owns a car horn that helps in the capture of Grundeis. He is an adventurer.

**Pony** – Is Emil's younger cousin. She lives in the city and rides a bike. Pony is Emil's younger cousin. Pony is helpful, encouraging, positive and has clever ideas. Pony in German means a hairstyle with a fringe.

**Big Tuesday** – One of the detectives who was given the job of making the phone call when required during the "sting" on Grundeis. He wasn't too keen about doing it but is dedicated and executes his task diligently.

**The Other Detectives** – Free Range Children... "children in the spirit of encouraging them to function independently and with little parental supervision, in accordance of their age of development and with a reasonable acceptance of realistic personal risks."

**Emil's Grandmother** – Sensible and loving. Her final insight "Never send cash – always use postal service." Leaves the audience with wise advice.

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*Other characters mentioned in Slingsby's version; Crumb, The Professor, Freddie and Trout.*

## THEMES

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**Rights of Passage** – Emil faces up to all challenges and deals with every problem that comes along the way. By the end of the story, Emil is no longer a wide-eyed innocent. Emil learns several lessons which include: you can't believe everything that strangers tell you.

**Morality** – Is it right to steal something back from the person who stole it from you?

**People Power** – When the young detectives work together, Grundeis is brought to justice and Emil's situation goes from desperation to celebration and reward.

**Freedom** – Emil's detective friends appear free from adult supervision. They are responsible for themselves. How many children 8-10 years of age do you know who travel on public transport or venture around the city by themselves?

**Friendship** – When Emil is lost and alone in the city, it is new friends who lead Emil to feel connected. Emil confronts challenges with their help and support.

**Leadership** – Emil is required to lead his gang on a quest to capture Grundeis, despite feeling scared and apprehensive. Emil needs to be brave, to step up and be a leader.

**Courage** – Despite being in a foreign environment, alone and frightened, Emil shows great courage. Emil stands up for what is right and it pays off.

**Teamwork** – Emil and his new found friends work together to achieve a successful outcome. If they hadn't worked as a team, Emil would never have got the stolen money back.

## WHO WAS ERICH KÄSTNER?

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Erich Kästner was born on the 23rd February 1899 in Dresden Germany. He was a novelist, satirist and poet. He studied to become a teacher and journalist. Kästner's children's books are famous for their sense of humour and respect for children. *Emil and the Detectives* is his most popular story and has been translated into over 59 languages. It was his only book to avoid Nazi censorship. Kästner printed many of his works in Switzerland because of this issue.

After World War II, Kästner edited the magazine *Die Neue Zeitung* of Munich and also created a children's newspaper. From 1952 to 1962 he undertook the role of president for the German branch of P.E.N., an organisation of international writers.

He died in Munich, West Germany on the 29th July 1974 aged 75.

### His Signature



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Erich\\_Kästner\\_signature.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Erich_Kästner_signature.svg)

## 1929 – HISTORICAL RELEVANCE

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Emil and the Detectives was written in 1929. Slingsby's show is not set in any specific location, however time is referenced by the sound effects of war. The 1920s was an era that sat between the two world wars. (1914-1918 WWI and 1939-1945 WWII) The 1920s was mostly a time of prosperity and rejuvenation. Unfortunately, the New York Stock exchange crashed in 1929 and this led to the Great Depression, a time when many people lost their jobs and lived a life of poverty.

*"Depression: A time of low economic activity, distinguished from a recession by being prolonged and sustained, characterized by continuing falls in output, high and rising unemployment and companies burdened with unsold stocks because demand is low."*

Edna Carew, The Language of Money

In Australia there was a fall in export sales and prices, a fall in overseas loans resulting in the minimisation of capital spending by governments and a drop in the construction of residential housing. At this time in Australia, banks controlled the monetary policies and the country sought out loans from other countries to build new investments. When the banks refused overdrafts, the government started to sell off gold reserves.

Germany's economy suffered huge financial losses at this time. Their economy was mostly built upon foreign capital and dependent on foreign trade. When their overseas loans became due in an instant, their economy crashed. German workers were laid off, banks closed, families could not afford essential household items. They were thrown into poverty and were desperate for a way out. They needed someone to lead them out of their financial desolation. Adolf Hitler used this to his advantage and rose to power quickly, playing on the people's disillusionment and desperation. The Germans were tired. They were miserable. And they were suffering.

<http://www.websterworld.com/websterworld/aust/1/1929213.html> - Time line  
Australian History

\*\* Original location of Kästner's novel – Germany – Slingsby's – Anywhere.

Time is referenced however by the sounds of war and visuals.

### Andy Packer - Director



#### **How and why did Slingsby decide to tell this story?**

Slingsby is particularly interested in bringing 'coming of age' or 'getting of wisdom' stories to the stage. We find that these stories often have the power of being immediately relatable to our multigenerational audience (aged 8+ including adults attending on their own and in groups) as well as being philosophical enough to be open to infinite interpretation.

When I read Erich Kästner's *Emil and the Detectives* I was excited by the way Kästner presents a world filled with good people and flawed people. Even though this is a story for children he is presenting a complex world where happiness and sadness coexist. This really struck a chord with what we are trying to explore with Slingsby's work. To show that there is darkness in the world – but that this darkness serves to make the light moments even brighter and more wonderful.

#### **In creating *Emil and the Detectives*, what were your main intentions?**

I really want the audience to connect with the complexity of Emil's situation. To feel for a character who is out of their depth. Emil is doing everything possible to keep everyone happy. We all feel like this at times. We want to find a way to solve our problems and to make those that we love happy. What Emil discovers is that sometimes when things go wrong, it is okay to ask for help.

We want our audience to identify with this idea. What makes a town a town? It is not the buildings and places and structures, it is the people.

#### **What experience do you hope for your audiences to have?**

I am always wanting the audience to be moved emotionally by our productions. I want *Emil and the Detectives* to be fun with lots of laughs but also for people to possibly feel the sadness and perhaps shed a small tear. When we are moved to tears by a piece of theatre it means we are watching something important.

#### **What was your overall vision?**

Ultimately I want to bring together a group of people (our audience) and give them an experience that surprises, delights and moves them. Through this process I want them to feel connected to each other, to our company and to have developed greater empathy for themselves and the people around them. *Emil and the Detectives* is all about meeting people, becoming a community, being there to support each other. I hope that the experience of the production creates a microcosm of this experience.

**Andy Packer** – *Director*

*Continued...*

**In briefing your creative and technical team, what key requests did you make?**

With this production we want to make a show that can tour and be presented in a range of spaces from abandoned spaces, a 120 seat studio right up to a 500 seat proscenium arch theatre. We also want to build on the established aesthetic of Slingsby's previous work. This means we are creating a 'world worn' aesthetic that is of no particular time in history but perhaps is most inspired by the 1930s-1950s, along with more contemporary references. Our idea is that these are stories for all times.

This story was written between the world wars and so I also want there to be an echo of that in the design – there should be a memory of The Blitz in the look of the set items and costumes. This is represented by a suggestion of charred or burnt edges of things. This is to remind us that before the story, the characters experienced war and in the future they will also experience war. This reminds us that more than anything, we need each other and we need to know how to ask each other for help and to think collectively.

With previous Slingsby productions we have created a complete world that encloses the audience. This makes for a beautiful experience but is also very challenging to tour. For Emil and the Detectives I wanted to make a show that largely existed in a void but also had moment of exquisite detail. Much like in Kästner's book there are pages of text where you are being told the story and then the odd page with an illustration – where you are being shown the story or a moment. These illustrations also contain captions that tell you more about that moment. This is why we have created 'hyper-real' set items like the train, the café, the hotel. We are also inspired by silent movies. We are exploring how we can mix together beautiful spoken word with sections where the audience is observing the action rather than being told what is happening.

**What approach did you ask your actors to take in bringing this story to life?**

I look to work with actors that are playful and provide me with continually evolving interpretations on scenes and moments as we are building a new show. Once we have finished developing the show I want an actor to be able to maintain that performance – find a way to keep the emotion and intent of the scene intact. Most importantly I want the actors in Slingsby shows to be emotionally brave.

**What do you think are the key moments in Emil?**

There are many important moments in this story:

- Emil saying goodbye to home and leaving for the city
- Emil meeting the Man in the Bowler Hat
- Emil meeting the Detectives
- Emil learning to trust the Detectives
- Emil finding the courage to confront the Man in the Bowler Hat and demand justice
- Emil wanting to share in the reward
- Emil returning home to Newtown, changed.

**Andy Packer** - *Director*  
*Continued...*

**How would you describe the theatrical style of this production?**

This really is a hybrid of storytelling and non-verbal 'silent movie inspired' theatre. Really I'd just call it Slingsby's theatre. We don't set out with a specific style in mind. We are responding to the story and finding ways that feel genuine or authentic to convey the heart of that moment to the audience. To do this we use a range of techniques from narration, puppetry, shadow play, choreography, songs, audience involvement. We want to create a ritual out of storytelling. A ritual that includes and involves the audience.

**Do you have any favourite quotes from "Emil"?  
Why did you choose these?**

From Nicki Bloom's script I love the provocation "What makes a town a town? What makes it home?"

This is such a simple but powerful question for us to consider in a world that seems to want to divide and separate us. This line also speaks to the collective experience that I want our theatre to provide. To remind us that we are all in this together. We just need more opportunities to see and recognise the people around us.

**What lessons can we learn from Emil's journey?**

We can ask for help and people will be there for us. That whilst people can lead us to make a brave choice, to demand justice and can support us in that process, at the last moment we must find the courage within ourselves to act. This is a great lesson for all of us at any age.

Listen to Andy Packer speak about Emil and the Detectives here: <https://vimeo.com/221845321>

**Nicki Bloom** – *Playwright*



**What processes did you go through to bring Emil and the Detectives to life on the page?**

In the beginning, I read the novella between 20 and 30 times, taking notes and charting structural, thematic, tonal and character arcs. In December 2016 the whole cast and creative team spent 2 weeks together developing a shared way of approaching the project and exploring modes of storytelling, and from those experiences I was then able to begin crafting the script, a process which continued through the first rehearsal period in March 2017 and has continued throughout the subsequent rehearsal processes in dialogue with the work done by the cast and creative team.

**In creating Emil and the Detectives what were your main intentions?**

My aim was to create a playful, immersive and highly theatrical script that distilled the spirit and intentions of the original work while at the same time transformed it for a contemporary audience.

**What do you hope audiences experience and think about during and after watching “Emil and the Detectives”?**

I hope audiences experience a feeling of immersion in the world we’ve created and a feeling of identification with Emil. I hope audiences come away thinking about the importance and strength of community and the collective.

**What challenges did you face writing this show?**

The novella has a huge cast of characters but I was writing for only two actors. Trying to muster a sense of community and collective from two bodies and voices was a challenge, but I hope one that has been met.

**What have you learnt from this experience?**

I have learnt more about how to find and distill the key components (be they thematic, tonal, structural or based in character) of an existing text and use those to propel me through the transformation of the story into quite a different piece of work; one that remains faithful to the essence of the original, yet simultaneously transforms it into something quite new and different.

**What are some of your favourite quotes and moments from the show? Why have you chosen these?**

I enjoy the relationship between Emil and the Narrator as it changes and develops through the play. I have chosen this because I think it is a good example of how something from the original text has been retained yet transformed into something new. In the original novella the narration is mostly distanced third person, but occasionally the reader senses an involved and intimate narratorial voice, mostly appearing in the captions that accompany the illustrations to the book. I was interested in capturing that tone and transforming it for the stage into a narrator with a personal and active relationship to Emil.

**What led you to write plays?**

I always knew I was a writer, but I started writing plays almost by accident. One day I had an idea based on an image of a park bench with an eerie green light shining upon it at nighttime, then suddenly a woman appeared in the image, then a man, and then they started talking to one another and I wanted to find out what they were saying and the conversation that I wrote became a play rather than a portion of a story or the starting point of a poem. It’s sort of that simple.

**What do you enjoy about the process?**

The creation of something where there was previously nothing. That is the pure joy of the artist – creation.

**Elizabeth Hay** – *Performer*



**What role do you play in “Emil and the Detectives”?**

I play Emil!

**Who are they? What is/are their relationship(s) with other characters in the story?**

Emil is the central character in our story, and all of the other characters in the play are the people she meets along her journey. She knows a few of the characters at the start of the play, and as the story goes on, she meets lots of new friends. She meets some sinister and unfriendly characters too.

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

We got to do a lot of improvisation in the development of the play. This meant we could experiment with different scenarios and how we thought Emil might react, and how she acted around different types of people. We were also able to draw on the novel for information, as well as creating our own characters and stories to fill the world of ‘New Town’ and ‘The Big City’. We decided early on we didn’t want me as the actor to ‘act’ like a kid, by doing things like raising the pitch of my voice, or changing how I moved, but rather let the character and the text do the work.

**What is your character’s Super Objective / Motivation?**

Emil simply wants to get the money her mother gave her to her Grandma! She is lucky enough to have the detectives to help her do that.

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

It was challenging to not do a stereotype ‘child’, but keep Emil fairly neutral and completely truthful. We wanted the character of Emil to appeal to everyone in one way or another – children and adults alike. Emil isn’t perfect, and she is not meant to be. She has struggles and makes mistakes like every other child or adult in the world, and it is important for us to recognise that.

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

I like Emil’s resilience and vulnerability. She accepts the help of strangers very quickly, because she realises that without them, she won’t get her money back, and the man in the bowler hat will get away with it. She has a good sense of justice, and intuitively knows right from wrong, and what matters.

**What is different about this show to others you have performed in?**

Usually, an actor is given a script full of lines to say at the beginning of rehearsals. Not only was the play NOT a play to begin with, we also were aiming to have as little text as possible! We will have to rely on our bodies and expression to tell the story, which is quite different to most plays, and also a great challenge as a performer.

**Elizabeth Hay** – *Performer*

*Continued...*

**Why did you become an actor?**

I became an actor because I don't really have any interest in doing anything else! Many actors will say something similar, and I think the reason for that is that the pull to this job is undeniable, and it has to be, because it's not always an easy career to pursue. But it's the best job in the world.

**What do you love the most about being on stage?**

I love making an agreement with the audience in each performance, all of us knowing that we are entering into a unique experience where anything could happen, and anything could go wrong. I love the live-ness of it! I love that each audience member will have a different experience, and each person's experience is valid and important and interesting.

**How would you describe yourself at about the age of 8-10 years old?**

I remember feeling quite shy most of the time. I was very nervous about doing the wrong thing (just like Emil), and tried my best at everything. Unlike Emil, I had a little sister to boss around and play with. We did lots of dancing and singing, and made up heaps of different games together. I had a big imagination.

**If you could give your younger self a message, what would it be?**

Don't worry so much!

**Tim Overton** – *Performer*



**What roles do you play in “Emil and the Detectives”?**

I play a few roles in Emil and the Detectives, all the characters other than Emil who is being played by Elizabeth Hay. Some of my favourites are Emil’s Mother, Gustav and The Man in the Bowler Hat.

**Who are they? What are their relationships with other characters in the story?**

Emil’s mother sends Emil on an adventure to the big city at the beginning of the story, is very loving and supportive but encourages Emil to be independent. Gustav is a friend that Emil meets along the way, he is tough and brash, and doesn’t mind a fight every now and then. The Man in the Bowler Hat is a mysterious figure that seems to cause Emil a lot of trouble, we don’t know very much about him at all.

**What processes did you go through to bring your characters to life?**

One thing we did while investigating these characters was to write a series of lists of likes and dislikes we imagine they might have. We would right down things like:

*5 Things I’m Scared Of.*

*5 Things That Delight Me.*

*I’m happiest when...*

*My dream holiday is...*

These things help us to understand the way the character thinks and feels in different situations and that helps us to know how to act like them.

**What are your character’s Super Objectives? – Motivation?**

Gustav - To have good friends and good fun. The Man in the Bowler Hat - This is a hard one because his motivations are unknown, it probably has to do with having lots of money...

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

One big challenge when playing a lot of different roles is to give enough attention to each role with not very much time. I wouldn’t want to make any of the characters boring or two-dimensional. I want to be able to figure out who each one is, but there isn’t always time for that. Another challenge has been making The Man in the Bowler Hat believable but not too creepy. The things that he does are very bad, but he still has to be interesting to watch on stage.

**What do you like most about your characters? What did you learn about them?**

I like that Emil’s mother is a strong, independent woman who sets a great example for Emil. I like that Gustav is funny and brave and doesn’t mind being wrong sometimes. I like that The Man in the Bowler Hat has some very peculiar habits, that’s fun to act.

**What is different about this show to others you have performed in?**

This show is very different other shows in its form, being able to tell the story directly to the audience and include them in the action. I love being able to share the story with everyone so directly. It’s also a very simple show in some ways and that makes a nice change to others I have performed.

**Can you quote/choose some of your characters’ lines from the show which you like?**

I love speaking to the audience as the narrator of the play and finding a balance between what needs to be said and what can just be acted out, especially when it comes to the emotions of the main character Emil. Sometimes it’s great to hear someone tell you how they’re feeling, sometime’s it’s great just to see it.

**Tim Overton** – *Performer*  
*Continued...*

**Why did you become an actor?**

I did drama classes in primary school and high school and loved it so much that I wanted to do it as my job. After I graduated from high school I went to study acting full time at Adelaide College of the Arts for 3 years.

**What do you love the most about being on stage?**

I love the connection to an audience. Being able to share ideas and thoughts and questions and provocations with people in the theatre and have them respond to you in person. My favourite theatre can only exist with an audience there.

**How would you describe yourself at about the age of 8-10 years old?**

I was a very nervous and quiet child. I didn't like being the centre of attention and was often scared of doing the wrong thing. As I grew up I learned to be more brave and talk to people, but when I was younger I preferred to spend time on my own.

**If you could give your younger self a message, what would it be?**

I would say, "Relax and just be yourself."

### Wendy Todd – Designer



#### **What inspired you to become a designer?**

I was studying Visual Arts and I was encouraged by a colleague at the time to consider Theatre Design. I am a team player and it's important to understand that theatre is the result of many people working together.

#### **What do you enjoy most about bringing a show to life?**

Seeing the text on the page breathing, literally. The actors making sense of words, which tell us about ourselves.

#### **Please describe the set for Emil?**

The concept behind the Design is taken from the way the book has intermittent images which describe a little more of the situation that is not in the text itself. So each scene has a Set piece that comes on and then goes off. We don't have a continuous physical image before us. Each piece arrives, performs for that scene and then departs. Some scene will be void of actual Set as the story does not need to be encumbered with an actual piece of Set. The storytelling drives the decisions for the Set pieces.

#### **What inspired these designs?**

Andy and I talked about some artists which we thought were a good inspiration in style and colour palette for the show. The main inspiration is John Brack. His works of people in the city may echo with Emil, who may experience the overwhelming numbers of people, the city life of that era. Other relevant artists for me are Charles Blackman and Joy Hester. Their works of children and people's faces are helpful when thinking about the Detectives. Each item has its own inspiration. The train is based on the Australian train "Spirit of Progress". The hotel is based on a European hotel. The town is inspired by the city lights at a distance, where only the lights are seen.

#### **What is the purpose of the set?**

To assist the story-telling. The set should never be in the way of that. Creating a sense of place and time, or in this case, timelessness. There will be an element of an era around 1930s - 1950s. The story was written in 1929 so an aesthetic around that time. Also, though it was written and set in Germany, we propose to have a sense of "Australianess" to it.

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

Use scale models to make sure the ideas were in the appropriate proportions. Scale working drawings for a carpenter to build the items. I do all the Art Finishing on the Set and Props.

#### **What do you hope to "visually communicate" to your audience with your designs for Emil?**

An experience that the audience can identify with. Something they will relate to so that they have a sense that this story could be their own.

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

Sight lines are large part of my world. If the audience cannot see, then we need to fix that. The sight lines of the train are the most challenging as the imagery through the train window is important to see. It is inside the train and the actors are then sitting in front of the window so we have to ensure this is not a problem.

#### **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?**

Part of the Slingsby design ethic has always been using things that are existing items and finding a new life for them: the suitcase for Emil and all the trinkets Emil has in it, the suitcase of the Man in the Bowler Hat and how things come out of that, the items discovered on the train. The smaller scale version of Emil, Mother and the Detectives are derived from the discoveries in the Creative Development.

#### **If you could go back in time to when you were a child, what message would you give yourself?**

Enjoy the things you have. Don't let others determine what you want. Take every chance you get, whether you think you know what that is or not.

### Quincy Grant – *Composer and Sound Designer*



#### **How and why has creating music become “what you do”?**

I played music from a young age (I’m from a farming background so I was self taught) and was always making things: crafts, woodwork, etc, and I had a vivid imagination and an independent spirit. Becoming a composer and a musician was a perfect manifestation for me.

#### **What processes did you go through to create the music and soundscape for *Emil and the Detectives*?**

We began with the story and then, in a process we call *Paths Less Travelled*, all came together for two weeks to explore the type of show that we wanted to make with the original story just being a starting point. That’s when we will look at form, style and influences, and experiment with ideas. Out of this I developed ideas for the type of music for the piece: it would have a cabaret and gypsy jazz style for the fun and exciting moments, with tense orchestral music to bring out the dramatic and epic elements of the show.

So I start writing sketches on the piano, and once I have many pieces of music I work in the rehearsals with the director and actors to find what bits work best, and where they work best. Next I develop the pieces we’ve chosen – lengthen them, write the songs and lyrics, and try them out with the director and actors. Then I orchestrate the pieces: write out lines for the many instruments we use. Then it is off to the recording studio with a large group of musicians to record all the pieces. After mixing and adapting all the music the tracks are ready to be lined up, alongside all the sound effects, in a program called *Qlab* so they can be triggered by the stage manager for in the rehearsals and, finally, the performances.

#### **What challenges did you face?**

This sort of ambitious score takes lots and lots and lots of work to complete!

#### **What do you hope the audience thinks and feels whilst listening to your music?**

I hope that Emil’s emotions, of joy, of loss, of fear and foreboding, of excitement and happiness will be felt by the audience with the aid of the music.

#### **Did you take inspiration for your score from elsewhere?**

The score is influenced by cabaret music, and gypsy jazz (such as Django Rheinhardt), by the music of Bernard Hermann (who wrote for Alfred Hitchcock’s thrillers), and composers such as Dmitri Shostakovich.

#### **How would you describe the overall effects of the sound design you have created?**

The sound design helps in the telling of the story: it assists in evoking the world: it’s difficult to have a horse on stage but easy to have a horse whinny; difficult to have a tram but easy to have tram sounds, etc.

#### **What advice would you give to young people who would like to write and create music for theatre?**

Be prepared to work hard. Enjoy working and creating music by yourself, as that is how you will be doing the bulk of your work. Be happy in your music making.

#### **How would you describe yourself when you were 8-10 years old?**

Clever, imaginative and up for having a go at anything.

#### **If you could give that young child a message, what would it be?**

Keep going, do everything, and life is going to change: so be prepared!

**Geoff Cobham** – *Lighting Designer*



**What processes did you go through to create your lighting design?**

I work very closely with Andy the director and Wendy the set designer to develop ideas for the lighting. The cast also have input as we all spend time together in a process called Creative Development. During this time we explore all aspects of how the play might be presented and everyone has input to all areas of the production; the boundaries between our roles are very fluid. I then take these ideas and create a storyboard of the lighting.

**What types of lights did you use for “Emil and the Detectives”?**

There is a large range of types of lights used in Emil. We use tiny incandescent bulbs from model train sets, torches, theatre lights, and radio controlled battery operated LED colour change lights.

**What was their purpose?**

At time of writing this is not all set in stone, but: the tiny bulbs are used to create an abstract 3D city that surrounds the actors at the beginning of the show. And the radio controlled LEDs are used inside umbrellas as wash lights to provide the general lighting to the city scenes. Lots of other lights are hidden in the train carriage to light the actors.

**Where did the inspiration come from for each choice?**

The tiny bulbs are a reflection of the synapses firing inside our brain as we make connections and ideas.

The lights are chosen for both their function and flexibility. The radio controlled LEDs are useful for many applications as the performers can carry them around without the restriction of cables. This allows us to get the light where we need it, lighting the action, without having to light up the whole space.

**How would you describe yourself when you were 8-10 years old?**

Undiscovered inventor, quietly working away in my lab (backyard and cubby), building things that still don't have a purpose.

**If you could give that young child a message, what would it be?**

Don't drink the meat milkshake your mum made you try to make you grow taller!

### Luku Kuku – *Animation Design*

#### **Please describe the look and feel of the animations/projections you created for “Emil and The Detectives”**

The look and feel of the animated content for “Emil and the Detectives” is made in a collage style, and heavily influenced by Dada art. In particular the aesthetic is a visual tribute to the unusual and reactionary art which exploded out of Europe in the post WW1 period. Andy, Stu and I drew upon the art of Max Ernst, Hugo Ball, Otto Dix and John Brack as inspirations.

#### **Please take us through the process of how you arrived at the final imagery**

The process went through three stages. Firstly, a very simple animation with pencil sketches and very little detail was created to check the timings necessary to fit in with the actors. Secondly, characters and backdrops were created using digital collage techniques, to create the surreal people, animals and landscapes required for the story (this part is super fun!). Thirdly, the characters and sets are brought together and given movement and animation, making sure to fit the timings from the first stage, as well as allowing the Director and the rest of the team the opportunity to change elements to fit the visuals to the overall look of the show more closely.

#### **What is the purpose of these projections?**

The animated visuals in the show help to create the illusion of Emil’s journey to the big city – a voyage of great excitement but also some trepidation for someone who has never been to such a large and baffling place. Using animation to show the train’s voyage allows us to show both the beautiful and intimidating aspects of this trip (as well as the kooky craziness of Emil’s dreamscape!).

#### **Did you take inspiration from other sources?**

Train voyages are always an inspiring, exciting adventure – and even more so when they are in a faraway land or a new place. As a passenger, we have the opportunity to see hundreds of snippets of places as we zoom across the landscape, all for only a moment. And upon arrival, we can see all sorts of people rushing around, carrying on their daily business. There are more tales happening in these places and faces than we can ever hope to know, which gives all the more opportunities to imagine those stories for ourselves.

#### **What are you hoping the audience will experience witnessing the projected imagery on stage?**

Hopefully the audience will feel the same awe, excitement and confusion that Emil is feeling on this voyage when they see the surreal people and places on the other side of the railway carriage’s window. Also, they will hopefully feel the incredible power of Unicorns!

#### **What challenges did you face bringing your designs to the stage?**

The greatest challenge with animation is that it can never truly be finished. This was such an enjoyable world to inhabit and create, that Andy, Stu and I could have tinkered and tweaked and added to it forever. Once you start adding people, creatures and features to a made up place, sometimes it can be very difficult to stop and decide that the world is complete.

#### **How would you describe yourself when you were 8-10 years old?**

I think I lived in a faraway land most of the time, so probably not that much has changed in that regard, hahaha. Books, comics, music, cartoons and drawing were as magical to me then as they are now.

#### **If you could give that young child a message, what would it be?**

“Good news, buddy – you end up with a really silly job!! (Bad news, though – no jet packs yet, sorry...)”

*Ailsa Paterson – Costume Design***Where did the inspiration come from for each key design choice in the costuming of the two actors?**

We found inspiration in a number of places. Firstly the paintings of John Brack and Charles Blackman, with their very controlled colour palettes and pops of unexpected, lurid tones like orange or yellow ochre. We liked the idea that our base palette could be restricted to these murkier, sepia tones, and then we provide a character-specific burst of colour for Emil and the Bowler Hat Man. We also had a muse for the character of Emil. Audrey is a lover of the book and an incredibly stylish and creative young person. We got to meet with Audrey and talk about Emil and then Audrey created a parade of their own clothing as inspiration for our costuming. We are exploring the idea that the gender of Emil is unimportant – the character is obviously a boy in the book, played by a woman in our show, but we are showing that the hero can be thought of in either way. The costume choices reflect this – the outfit is gender neutral.

**What is the purpose of these costumes?**

The costumes are designed so that our cast members can move swiftly from being narrators to being Emil and the Bowler Hat Man. We are not setting the play in a particular time or place and the costumes are designed to be reminiscent of 1940s Germany but with contemporary references and an eclectic overall aesthetic. The two actors have a base costume for their narrator roles consisting of pants, shirts and braces. They will add their character specific elements over this base to transform into Emil and Bowler Hat Man. The costumes are designed to create a cohesive world with the set, so that the audience is immersed in a stylised visual landscape.

**What processes did you go through to create the costume designs?**

The first step in the design process was reading the book and meeting with our incredible director Andy to hear about his initial ideas for the play. From there I started to look at visual references that would inform my designs. These included the paintings of Brack and Blackman, plus a whole heap of images gathered from art books, fashion shoots, magazines, and many other sources. We then had a chance to meet with our muse, Audrey, and get their insight into the character and Audrey's own style world. Andy and I met again to look at the images and talk through what felt right for the piece and why. From there I started to sketch some ideas for the costumes and the final designs started to emerge. I then created A3 painted images of my designs.



### Ailsa Paterson – Costume Design

*Continued...*

#### **What challenges were you presented with in creating the costumes?**

There were a few challenges presented by these costumes. The first was to make them believable characters, so the look isn't too 'costume-y' and therefore distancing for the audience. The play is very intimate and the audience is close, so there is a level of detail that is extremely important. There is a big challenge in presenting Emil as female, and expecting the audience to accept and forget about gender identity.

#### **How would you describe yourself when you were 8-10 years old?**

When I was 8-10 years old I was skinny, freckled, creative and energetic. I would make elaborate costumes for myself and my sister. I was also a bookworm.

#### **If you could give that young child a message, what would it be?**

Don't worry so much about what other people think.



## QUOTES FROM EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

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### **Narrator**

What makes a town a town, Emil?  
What makes it home?

### **Narrator**

Emil has to try really hard to be good.  
And would hate to ever let her down.

### **Emil**

I wish my father was standing beside me.

### **Grundeis**

You're in for some big surprises.  
Ever seen buildings a hundred stories high?  
You will in the city.  
They fasten the roofs to the sky so the buildings don't blow away.  
If you haven't got any money you can go to the bank  
And get five hundred in exchange for your brain.  
Of course you can't live long without your brain  
Only a day or two.

### **Emil**

Tuesday  
What's the password?

### **Audience member**

Password Emil.

### **Emil**

Thank you.

If all the kings and all their armies  
Send us far away,  
Then in the world we'll put our trust  
And take whatever comes our way.  
So blessings and a faithful heart, to dream by.

### **The Children/Detectives**

We will not forsake you, and  
We, will not mistake our role,  
You will not fall alone,  
Just give a call and we will all be there  
Soon.

## INTERESTING INFORMATION

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### **Book Burnings in Nazi Germany**

“On May 10, 1933 student groups at universities across Germany carried out a series of book burnings of works that the students and leading Nazi party members associated with an “un-German spirit.” Enthusiastic crowds witnessed the burning of books by Brecht, Einstein, Freud, Mann and Remarque, among many other well-known intellectuals, scientists and cultural figures, many of whom were Jewish. The largest of these book bonfires occurred in Berlin, where an estimated 40,000 people gathered to hear a speech by the propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, in which he pronounced that “Jewish intellectualism is dead” and endorsed the students’ “right to clean up the debris of the past.” The burnings were condemned by the international community, particularly in America. Writers, poets, artists, doctors and other intellectuals held their own counter demonstrations.

“Such barbarity was just the beginning, however. One can see in retrospect how the book burnings and other steps to remove “Jewish influence” from German institutions foreshadowed much more catastrophic Nazi plans for the Jews of Europe. Eerily, among the books consigned to the flames in 1933 were the works of the nineteenth century Jewish poet Heinrich Heine, who in 1822 penned the prophetic words, “Where they burn books, they will, in the end, burn human beings too.”

### **United States Holocaust Museum**

<https://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-thecollections/bibliography/1933-book-burnings>

### **Book Burning in Berlin**

<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/trbookburn.htm>

### **How the Nazis “Ruined” Kastner’s Career**

“Nearly 80 years ago, Nazi supporters burned German author Erich Kästner’s work as (they deemed it to be) smut. Unlike other condemned writers, he showed up to watch, and refused to leave the country during WWII. But he paid a price for this, ultimately giving in to self-censorship from which he never truly recovered.” Georg Diez

### **Full Article**

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/nazi-book-burninganniversary-erich-kaestner-and-the-nazis-a-894845.html>  
(Please note this article contains adult themes and content)

### **A Tour Around Berlin in 1929**

Watch - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtoRYmKRwIE>

### **Events in Australia - 1929**

<http://www.websterworld.com/websterworld/aust/1/1929213.html> - Time line Australian History

## TROPES

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<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Literature/EmilAndTheDetectives>

- An Aesop: Parodied by the grandma: “Never send cash — always use postal service.”
- The Artful Dodger: Gustav
- Author Tract: There are many poor people in the world suffering. The world is unfair, And That’s Terrible.
- Chekhov’s Gun: Emil used a pin to make the bank notes stick in his pocket. When “Grundeis” wants to exchange the three notes in a bank, Emil remembers Just in Time that the notes have pinholes.
- Con Man: What “Grundeis” probably is.
- Creator Cameo: Kästner later appears in the story to write an article about the boys. And also had a minor role in one movie.
- Day of the Week Name: Dienstag (Tuesday)
- Disappeared Dad: Emil’s. Just like Erich Kästner’s, BTW.
  - Not quite. Although Erich Kästner was much closer to his mother, his father was very much alive at the time the book was first published.
  - Emil is twelve years old in the story, the book was published in 1929, so it is quite likely that the character’s father died in World War I, although this is never stated.
- Felony Misdemeanor: Emil participated in a prank in his hometown. For the record: They put an old hat on a monument of some famous guy, and Emil had to paint the monument’s nose red, and add a moustache. After this, he has a bad conscience and becomes afraid of policemen. That’s why he doesn’t dare to tell the police.
- Film of the Book: Several. The script of the 1931 film was written by a then-unknown Billy Wilder.
- The Flapper: Pony is a girl version. She wears a fringe haircut (=“Pony” in German) which was the fashion at this time, and a little hat (=Hütchen). And she is quite outspoken (not to say: bratty), especially for her time, and challenges Emil to a fight. (Being a Nice Guy who Wouldn’t Hit a Girl, and several pounds heavier than her, he declines of course.)
- Free-Range Children: Probably nowadays not many people would send a boy to a metropolis to deliver a month’s wage of money.

<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Literature/EmilAndTheDetectives>

- Getting Crap Past the Radar: Might be the case: “I thought there was someone playing hide-and-seek with himself!” Also later in the book: “Maybe he [=the villain] is looking under his bed to check whether there’s someone playing Skat with himself.”
- I Have Many Names: Grundeis / Müller / Kießling.
- Kid Detective: Emil and the titular - well, detectives.
- Momma’s Boy: Emil himself doesn’t like it if people call him this.
- Mustache Vandalism: Emil is reluctant to approach the police and instead uses the help of other children. The reason is that a few weeks earlier he painted a beard and mustache on a statue, so he’s afraid the police won’t believe him.
- Narrative Profanity Filter: “And then, Petzold said a very bad word and left.” It fits in with the moralistic tone of the book.
- Nice Hat: “Grundeis” wears a bowler hat.
- Only Known by Their Nickname: Pony Hütchen.
- The Roaring ‘20s
- Screw the Money, I Have Rules!: The boys get an offer to make advertising for several firms, after becoming famous, but decide against it.
- Smart People Wear Glasses: The “professor”, one of the boys.
- Tall Tale: “Grundeis” makes fun of Emil, telling the unexperienced small-city-boy that people in Berlin sometimes leave their brain at the bank, to get a loan.

Sourced directly from [www.tvtropes.org](http://www.tvtropes.org)

## DESIGN AND VISUAL INFLUENCES

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### Imagery and symbols used in Slingsby's *Emil and the Detectives*.

Hairdryer  
Windmills  
Taxi  
Tram  
Horn  
Torch  
Cardboard cut-outs – Buildings  
Trains  
Suitcase  
Newspaper  
Bowler Hat  
Unicorn  
Clock  
Bird Call  
Phone  
Fire (Human Connectivity)  
Shadows  
Bank

**Colour Palette** - Green and Red tones

**Locations** – Newtown and the city

**Hyperrealism** is a genre of painting and sculpture resembling a highresolution photograph.

Hyperrealism is considered an advancement of Photorealism by the methods used to create the resulting paintings or sculptures. The term is primarily applied to an independent art movement and art style in the United States and Europe that has developed since the early 1970s.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperrealism\\_\(visual\\_arts\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperrealism_(visual_arts))

#### More information:

<https://escapeintolife.wordpress.com/what-ishyperrealism/>

**Alfred Hitchcock** KBE (13 August 1899 – 29 April 1980) was an English film director and producer, at times referred to as “The Master of Suspense”. He pioneered many elements of the suspense and psychological thriller genres. He had a successful career in British cinema with both silent films and early talkies and became renowned as England’s best director. Hitchcock moved to Hollywood in 1939, and became a US citizen in 1955. Hitchcock became a highly visible public figure through interviews, movie trailers, cameo appearances in his own films, and the ten years in which he hosted the television programme *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1965). He also fashioned for himself a recognisable directorial style. Hitchcock’s stylistic trademarks include the use of camera movement that mimics a person’s gaze, forcing viewers to engage in a form of voyeurism. In addition, he framed shots to maximise anxiety, fear, or empathy, and used innovative forms of film editing. His work often features fugitives on the run alongside “icy blonde” female characters. In 1978, film critic John Russell Taylor described Hitchcock as “the most universally recognizable person in the world”, and “a straightforward middle-class Englishman who just happened to be an artistic genius”.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred\\_Hitchcock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Hitchcock)

### **Charles Blackman** – *Australian Artist*

Charles Blackman is one of the most significant figurative painters in Australian art. Primarily a self taught artist who was born in Sydney in 1928, Blackman spent his childhood in Queensland and returned to New South Wales to work at the Sydney Sun newspaper at thirteen. He moved to Melbourne in 1952 and was met with acclaim when exhibiting his Schoolgirl paintings.

As Ken McGregor states “Blackman is a complete romantic. His work has been described as poetic and probes the delicate world of human relationships. His arts speaks tenderly of grief, guilt, loss and persecution and the joy of dreams and memories. He explores the gesture of affection and empathy, and his wealth of images have included the dreamlike and melancholy paintings of women and flowers, children absorbed in daydreams, the serene White Cat Gardens and beach scenes.

#### For more information and images go to:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Blackman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Blackman)

### **John Brack – Australian Artist**

John Brack's work was an art of ideas that aimed to speak directly to the viewer. It was grounded in the everyday but communicated through a distinctive and highly personal language incorporating complex visuals underpinned by a deep knowledge of the history of art. More than any other artist of his generation, John Brack was a painter of modern Australian life. Unlike his contemporaries, Brack painted neither myth nor history and when he focused on the landscape, it was the sprawl of suburbia that caught his attention rather than the ubiquitous Australian bush.

Describing one of his core motivations, Brack said: *What I paint most is what interests me most, that is, people; the Human Condition, in particular the effect on appearance of environment and behaviour ... A large part of the motive ... is the desire to understand, and if possible, to illuminate.*

<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/johnbrack/>

### **Free Range Children**

Free Range Parenting is the concept of raising children in the spirit of encouraging them to function independently and with little parental supervision, in accordance of their age of development and with a reasonable acceptance of realistic personal risks. This idea was popularised by paediatrician Benjamin Spock. - Wikipedia

*"Eighty percent of the reason being a kid sucks is you can't drive. You can't just zoom across town whenever you feel like it, you've got to wait for Mom or Dad to get home, or save up your allowance for cab fare, or latch onto the back of a garbage truck. Your ability to participate in adult-level adventures is thus severely limited."*

[http://www.cracked.com/article\\_16694\\_6-horrible-lessons-hollywood-lovesto-teach-kids.html](http://www.cracked.com/article_16694_6-horrible-lessons-hollywood-lovesto-teach-kids.html)

### **Watch This... A new approach to raising kids: no school, discipline or bedtimes.**

How do you feel about the concepts raised here?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFgVgRvmSeM>

*"The bottom line for me is that whatever gets our 21st-century, housebound kids safely outdoors and active for appreciably more than 7 minutes a day is a good thing."*  
- Barbara J King

### **What Makes a Town a Community?**

It is not the buildings or physical layout of a town that makes it a community... It is the people... the relationships... their shared vision... their support for one another... and their ability to work to live, not live to work.

<https://patch.com/new-york/harrison/what-makes-a-town-a-community>

How can we improve our own towns or suburbs?  
How can we improve our city? How can we make the world a better place?

## CONTENT IDEAS FOR REVIEWS ON EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

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- What was your initial response to the pre-show experience?
- Summarise the overall experience of *Emil and the Detectives* using descriptive language.
- What was unique about *Emil and the Detectives* compared to other shows?
- What was the plot?
- What themes were explored in *Emil and the Detectives*?
- 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?
- What was the historical context of *Emil and the Detectives*?
- Evaluate the cast'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 *Emil and the Detectives* and who said them.
- Describe and evaluate the sets, lighting, costumes, music and any other technical elements used in *Emil and the Detectives*.
- What were some key moments in *Emil and the Detectives* and how did the audience react?
- What was the overall audience reaction to *Emil and the Detectives*?
- What might have they been thinking about or considering after leaving the theatre?
- Come up with one statement to summarise Slingsby's *Emil and the Detectives*.

### 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](http://www.slingsby.net.au/wpcontent/uploads/2016/01/Slingsby_Study_Guide_The_Young_King_February_15.pdf)  
(Go to Review Section)

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

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### Design Process

Brainstorm as many adjectives as you can to describe Slingsby's *Emil and the Detectives*. 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 receive?

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 *Emil and the Detectives* poster, billboard or program cover.

### Front of House

Slingsby's *Emil and the Detectives* includes a wonderful "Front of House" experience. Following the design process above, can you create your own for this performance or another show?

### Film

Using the process above, design (create a storyboard) and film a 1 minute trailer or advertisement for your own production of *Emil and the Detectives*.

### Set and Costumes

Following the process above, design your own set and costumes for the scene where Emil is travelling on the train or sitting with his new friends around the fire.

### Animation

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

### Writing

Write a 1-2 minute monologue for Emil 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 Emil's story... It should be approximately one page in length.

### 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.

**OR** In groups of 3 or 4, work together to create your own abridged version of *Emil and the Detectives*. 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.

## CREATE YOUR OWN SLINGSBY INSPIRED SHOW

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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 titled "Slingsby: a Starting Point" and take notes on the imagery and sounds whilst viewing the links listed.

Choose a children's 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 THEATRE COMPANY

“Journey in Wonder”

Compiled by **Hannah McCarthy-Oliver**

Tales of shadows and sunshine for young and old.... Founded in 2007 and based in Adelaide, South Australia, Slingsby presents emotionally challenging and engaging storytelling in rich live theatrical realms. Original productions are crafted to challenge and inspire audiences from 8 to 108 years old. 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. Now well-established as a leading international company, Slingsby has toured to 70 venues in 44 cities across ten countries, and counting. Slingsby’s stories are told through images and music, as much as they are through words. The company’s work acknowledges the sunshine and shadows of human experience and ultimately reminds us all of the potential joy, infinite possibility and wonder of the universe. Led by Andy Packer (Artistic Director) and Stacey Baldwin (General Manager/Producer), the company’s productions are conceived by Andy and developed in collaboration with Artistic Associates Quincy Grant (composer), Wendy Todd and Geoff Cobham (designers) alongside teams of artists from a range of artistic disciplines.

*“If more theatre were like this, the world would be a magical place indeed...”*

*“It is theatre like the work Slingsby produces which makes us all imagine a better and happier world.”*

**Australian Stage Online** (March 2010)

## SLINGSBY'S CREATIVE MANIFESTO

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Our first “Paths Less Travelled” R&D was undertaken in 2015 by Quincy Grant (composer), Geoff Cobham (Set and Lighting Designer), Wendy Todd (Set and Costume Designer), Matt Crook (Actor) and Nicola Keene (Stage Manager) under the leadership of Andy Packer (Artistic Director). We adopted an Open Space process to commence the R&D with the creative team responding to the provocation: How can we make theatre the most desirable social act? From this day-long process the creative team established the following list of ‘conditions’ for the theatre that we want to create together.

### **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 – *Andy Packer***

1. Story Choice – Coming of Age/Getting of Wisdom stories
2. Integration of text/music/image to convey the story
3. Putting the audience inside the frame of the story
4. Using song as an opportunity to hold a moment and as emotional extrapolation
5. Changing of scale, miniaturising moments
6. Narration – moving from first person to third person as a way of being both inside the story and reporting on it
7. 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)

### More Observations

- 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 imaginations 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.

### Slingsby Links

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

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

<https://vimeo.com/slingsby>

### Quote from Artistic Director Andy Packer

"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."

## THE SLINGSBY CREATIVE PROCESS

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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 feed back 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. Perfection is ephemeral, if not an illusion.

## MORE RESPONSES TO SLINGSBY'S WORK

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*"A marvel of exquisite theatre-craft"*

– **The Herald Scotland** 2009

*"Slingsby has created another truly magical, moving, all-encompassing world"*

– **The Adelaide Advertiser** 2010

*"Visually and aurally transfixing"*

– **New York Post** 2011

*"Curiously but wonderfully elating"*

– **The Australian** 2013

*"A beautiful jewel in the Adelaide Festival crown"*

– **Limelight** 2016

*"The world is a better place for having a company like Slingsby in it"*

– **Aspire Magazine** 2016

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Teachers may photocopy and distribute these resources to their students.