

THE WIDER EARTH

Education Notes



 **Dead Puppet Society**

The activities have been included to be used in your classroom both before and after the show. They are practical and written activities that you can use and adapt for your students. If you have any questions about the notes, please feel free to email Stephanie Tudor: steff.tudor@gmail.com

ABOUT THE SHOW

Before Darwin changed the world, one voyage changed his life.

The award-winning drama *The Wider Earth* tells the story of the rebellious young Charles Darwin.

Join the twenty-two year old Darwin on HMS Beagle's daring voyage to the far side of the world and discover the gripping story behind one of the most important discoveries in history.

An ensemble cast, remarkable puppetry, cinematic projections and an original score by Lior and Tony Buchen all combine to bring to life uncharted landscapes and incredible creatures in this highly ambitious digital recording of this critically acclaimed theatrical event.

Running time

1 hour and 45 minutes

Suitability

Grades 9– 12

Warnings

This play contains mature themes, references to suicide.

Key Concepts

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| • Family | • Identity | • Adventure |
| • Religion | • Freedom | • Exploration |
| • Faith | • Spirituality | • Transformation |
| • Environment | • Discovery | • Courage |
| • Religion vs science | • Perseverance | • Resilience |
| • Journey | • Fate | • Personal growth |

Curriculum Links

DRAMATIC FORM AND STYLE

Contemporary Theatre

Design Led Theatre

Visual Theatre including puppetry

Cinematic Theatre

DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| • Hybridity | • Motif | • Soundscape |
| • Heightened Physicality | • Puppetry | • Movement sequence |
| • Poetic image | • Montage | • Flashback |
| • Ensemble movement | • Narration | • Stylised movement |
| • Fragmentation | • Voice over | • Projected image |

CAST AND CREATIVES

Character List

Charles Darwin – A young man.

Reverend John Henslow – His professor and mentor. A botanist.

Adam Sedgwick – A geologist from Cambridge.

Robert Darwin – His father.

Emma Wedgwood – His cousin. Later his wife.

Robert FitzRoy – The Captain of the Beagle.

John Wickham – The first officer of the Beagle.

Jemmy Button – A hostage from Tierra del Fuego, returning as a missionary.

Richard Matthews – Another missionary.

John Herschel – A naturalist and philosopher.

Creative Team

Director and Co-Designer David Morton

Creative Producer Nicholas Paine

Co-Designer Aaron Barton

Composers Lior & Tony Buchen

Sound Designer Tony Brumpton

Associate Sound Designer Brady Watkins

Projection Designer Justin Harrison

Lighting Designer Christine Felmingham

Original Lighting Designer David Walters

Associate Director Matt Seery

Cast

Charles Darwin Tom Conroy

Emma Wedgwood Frances Berry

Robert FitzRoy Anthony Standish

John Wickham Alex Kaan

Jemmy Button Jaime Ureta

Richard Matthews and Robert Darwin Kevin Spink

John Henslow and John Herschel Barbara Lowing

Puppeteer Liesel Zink

Robert Coleby (voiceover).





CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

The curriculum connections are provided based on the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) General Drama Senior Syllabus Drama (2019 v1.1).

GENERAL SENIOR SYLLABUS

Unit 1: Share, Unit 3: Challenge and Unit 4: Transform

- How can *The Wider Earth* be used to tell the story of Charles Darwin and The Beagle to share and examine understandings of identity and exploration?
- Using contemporary theatre forms and conventions, how can Dead Puppet Society explore the story of Charles Darwin to entertain and engage a modern audience?
- How does *The Wider Earth* challenge societies understanding of faith and science?

ACARA

Year 9 and 10 Band Descriptors V9

By the end of Year 10, students analyse how and why the elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions are manipulated in drama they create, perform and/or experience. They evaluate how drama in a range of styles and/or from a range of contexts communicates ideas, perspectives and/or meaning. They evaluate how drama is used to celebrate and challenge perspectives of Australian identity.

Students work individually and/or collaboratively to shape and manipulate use of the elements of drama, conventions and/or dramatic structures to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning. They use performance skills relevant to style and/or form to sustain belief, roles and characters in performances of improvised, devised and/or scripted drama for audiences.

https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/drama/year-9_year-10?view=quick&detailed-content-descriptions=0&hide-ccp=0&hide-gc=0&side-by-side=1&strands-start-index=0

These teacher resources provide learning experiences in response to *The Wider Earth* itself, and building off the conventions and techniques used to create this visual theatre piece. In doing so there are learning experiences that address the content descriptors identified below.

EXPLORING AND RESPONDING

- **AC9ADR10E01** Investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts
 - Considering how Dead Puppet Society has integrated multiple forms and styles, as well as their relevant conventions to convey dramatic meaning.
 - What historical influences have impacted on *The Wider Earth*?
 - How does *The Wider Earth* challenge societies understanding of faith and science?
 - Developing practices and skills
- **AC9ADR10D01** develop performance skills and/or techniques to manipulate elements of drama and/or use conventions to communicate the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions
 - Consider how Darwin's views change throughout the performance. How is this communicated through his characterisation?
- **AC9ADR10D02** reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action
 - How has the production effectively manipulated Visual Theatre conventions to create aesthetic effect?

CREATING AND MAKING

- **AC9ADR10C01** improvise and devise drama, and interpret scripted drama, using elements of drama and conventions to shape and manipulate dramatic action and convey intended ideas, perspectives and/or meaning

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

INITIAL QUESTIONS

- What do you know about Charles Darwin?
- What do you know about Visual Theatre?
- Charles Darwin set sail on The Beagle in 1835. Why do you think this is a story we still are interested in?
- Dead Puppet Society specialises in visual theatre. David Morton characterises “Visual theatre evokes a different kind of emotional response than realism or other text-based theatre. It awakens all of the senses, and asks for a different sort of imaginative engagement, because it’s not just concerned with characters and a story but with building an entire world, which is why we really love it.” What does that statement make you think about?
- What excites you about seeing this production?

READ AND RESEARCH

If you want to explore Darwin’s story and his voyage these websites are a great place to start. Read the following articles to find out some background information Charles Darwin.

- Charles Darwin: History’s most famous biologist <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/charles-darwin-most-famous-biologist.html>
- It is 185 years since Charles Darwin left Australia. What he saw reshaped the world’s view of history <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-15/185-years-since-charles-darwin-left-australia/13247432>
- Charles Darwin’s evolutionary revelation in Australia <https://theconversation.com/charles-darwins-evolutionary-revelation-in-australia-52282>
- Charles Darwin <https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/charles-darwin/104214964>
- Charles Darwin Teaching activities <https://www.twinkl.com.au/teaching-wiki/charles-darwin>

To get a quick overview of Charles Darwin’s theories and their impact on their world have a look at the following sites.

- What is Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution? - BBC World Service <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPpfz5X82SY>
- Darwin’s Theories <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urSNtaQKOak>
- Charles Darwin, Galapagos and “The Origin of Species” <https://www.galapagosislands.com/info/history/charles-darwin.html>
- Darwin in the Galapagos | Nat Geo Wild <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03YKT7ytJdE>

Read the following articles to find out some background information on Dead Puppet Society and the type of theatre they create.

- Visual Theatre with Dead Puppet Society <https://laboite.com.au/about/latest/visual-theatre-with-DPS>
- Dead Puppet Society <https://www.brisbanefestival.com.au/artists/dead-puppet-society>

See some behind the scenes footage and interviews with the cast and creatives.

- *The Wider Earth* - Behind the Scenes https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hay_R1HcuNQ
- *The Wider Earth* Behind the Scene National Theatre - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHeXmGRhwKU>
- *The Wider Earth* - Interview (AussieTheatre.com | Bobbi-Lea Dionysius) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFfVC5U1LW0>

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Watch the two trailers for *The Wider Earth*.

Wider Earth Trailer National Theatre - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAexuV5fls>

The Wider Earth Trailer Sydney - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeSWLbYQ7x0>

- What is your first impression from both trailers?
- What do you think the mood of the production will be?
- What are you intrigued by?
- Which is your favourite trailer and why?
- Predict what will happen.

PUPPETRY

Dead Puppet Society draws on multiple forms and styles to create its unique style of design-led theatre. One of these is Puppetry. Puppetry has been used in theatre since the 5th century BC in Ancient Greece. Puppetry can take many forms, but at its core is the process of animating inanimate performing objects to help tell a story.

To find out more about the history of puppetry head to : History of Puppetry <https://www.theaterseatstore.com/blog/history-of-puppetry>

Dead Puppet Society has created new methods for both creating and animating their puppets to be able to innovatively and creatively tell stories.

Consider the following statement from David Morton, “The use of puppetry expands the possibilities of the types of stories you can tell on stage. Think of it as the theatre’s answer to animation.”

Using this statement as a starting point, view some of Dead Puppet Society’s previous works with puppetry.

Storm Boy - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXVPkI97KR8>
Puppet Timelapse, *The Wider Earth* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smaNWSplfzU>
Ishmael <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqBQVqDcTlk>

Engage students in a discussion about David’s statement and the videos:

- Connect to what you know or have previously seen with puppetry.
- Challenge your perceptions of what you thought puppetry was.
- What questions or thoughts do you have about puppetry?

Have students watch the following two videos and then read ‘Elements of Manipulation’ to create a puppet.

Have students explore how to animate the puppet. Once they have created the puppet, students rehearse how the puppets move. Ensure they focus on working together so the movement of their puppet is unified and seems like one character, rather than a collection of independent parts. Ask them to experiment with movement and sound.

Once they have experimented with this, ask them to work with another puppet to create a short scene. Show some of these to the class. Ask them to think about what the relationship between the two puppets is? How do we know this? Ask students to experiment without relying on dialogue. In groups of four-six (using two puppets), devise a short



scene that moves through at least three emotional states to show what would happen when a brown paper puppet meets another brown paper puppet for the first time. Share and discuss.

Extension: Have each of the groups work through the same process, then ask them to move around the room. Play different songs and ask them to allow the mood of the song to affect the movement of the puppet. Throughout the exercise ask them to scroll through the different operation roles so that each student has a turn in each position.

Discuss

- What did you notice when you watched the puppets interact?
- How did the use of the puppets shift the dramatic focus?
- Without dialogue, what were you using to tell the story? How can this transfer into your own work as actors?
- What was challenging about using puppets?
- What was exciting about using puppets?

If puppetry, “expands the possibilities of the types of stories you can tell on stage,” predict how Dead Puppet Society will use puppetry to tell the story of Charles Darwin.

- What stories or moments can you tell with puppets that are hard to tell with actors onstage?

Extension: Experiment with the script excerpts using the puppets created by the students. What possibilities does this open up?

- How to Make a Puppet | How You Can Make It | National Theatre <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFEnZfS5IXQ>
- Gyre & Gimble Masterclass: Bringing a Puppet to Life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXT3gPef8zo>

For further resources you can engage with Dead Puppet Society’s Digital Workshops. These have been designed to provide meaningful arts experiences for students and educators. In this unique program, participants are guided through a series of exercises using common household/ classroom materials to gain skills in both design and performance that are fundamental to visual theatre practice. <https://vimeo.com/410467664>

ELEMENTS OF MANIPULATION

There are 5 key elements that need to be incorporated into the performance of a puppet object to generate the illusion needed for audience investment.

Focus

Identifies the physical point on the puppet object that both the operator and the audience understand to contain the primary sensory receptors of the character, particularly pertaining to its eyes or the source of its sight. The focus point must be located on a part of the puppet body that has the ability to move in relation to the rest of the body.

Breath

Identifies the gentle movement that must always be present in the puppet character to ensure that at no time it becomes a static inanimate object. This often takes the form of a pattern of breathing. If this approach is taken there are benefits to aligning the breathing of the puppet character with that of the operator/s as it can assist in unifying choices regarding the movement and actions of the puppet.

Gravity

Refers to the way in which the puppet is operated in order to mask the fact that it has an artificial body. It comes into play during moments where the puppet object can achieve tasks with more ease due to the fact that it is literally being carried by its operators and none of its movements are as a result of its own agency, such as the actions of sitting down, climbing stairs and common movements like walking. It identifies the need to understand and clarify the physical interactions between the puppet and its environment.

Gesture

As in humans, gesture refers to the culturally loaded shapes and movements made with the body that are an external physicalisation of the internal emotional state of the puppet. The idea of gesture also captures the movements with which a puppet plays out its actions.

Intelligence

The intelligence (or kinaesthetic intelligence) of the puppet identifies what occurs when all of these elements work together in the creation of a full illusion of life. It doesn't require that all elements be at play in every moment but rather that there is an intelligence behind their orchestration that results in the inanimate body of the puppet embodying the physical characteristics of a living body.

These are pragmatic elements that are present regardless of the thematic content of the scene in which the puppet is performing and serve as useful guidelines in the building and refining of puppet-based scenes.

VISUAL THEATRE PROCESSES

Puppetry is one component of many that make up the conventions of visual theatre.

The following approach can be used when students are devising, writing their own script or translating an existing text or story. Puppetry is one convention that can be used in this style of work, but it does not exclusively require it.

The key to unlocking a successful visual theatre making style, is to help students find success in the freedom and imagination the form allows. Offering simple transformative props and design elements will help in streamlining their offers and ideas.

The principles of puppetry, (focus, breath and gravity covered in part one), also translate directly across to the way in which Dead Puppet Society build the flow and shape of scenes. When beginning the scaffolding of visual theatre skills development, we begin with the ensemble and the activation of the physical body to create shapes, sequences and architecture. It is through this open and free form play that students unknowingly create the backbone of their staging and choreography.

Ensemble Performance

- Establish the focus of the ensemble through milling and seeding focus activities. The game Stop Go Jump Clap is one entry point.
- Introduce a physical shape making layer. This can start as simple shapes or images and then add building physical architecture in small groups.
- Insist on 5 and 10 second building times and encourage showing rather than talking about ideas.
- Encourage physical choices that harness the use of repetition and mirrored physical offers
- Introduce abstract concepts, locking mechanisms, obstacle courses, giant animal faces, that students must make.
- Introduce small-scale architecture eg. A bridge, and elevator shaft, a lighthouse.
- Introduce and demonstrate negative space- lines do not need to touch for an audience to see the shape.
- Invite movement into the shapes eg. Doors and windows that open and close, aeroplanes that can be buffeted by the wind.

Note: as the shapes/architecture get more and more sophisticated, showing the short images to each other as a class is a great way to build a shared language for the ensemble.

Design Elements

- Introduce a series of design elements that elevate the use of the physical body and repeat the above process.
- Wooden planks, poles, umbrellas, brown paper pieces, newspaper, pieces of cloth are great elements to begin with.

Note: if there is a work you are using as stimulus, this is a great opportunity to throw out specific architecture provocations that are referenced in these stories, eg boats, walls, fireplaces, lamp posts.

Ensemble Performance 20-25 minutes

Ask students to find their own space filling the room up and with enough room to spin around them all. Ask students to walk around the space in neutral, taking notice of their breath and the space around them. Play Stop, Go, Jump, Clap and add in "change of direction" if the group is clumping too much.

Once you feel their awareness of each other sinking in, and their listening skills sharpening, introduce the physical shape making layer: eg in groups of 3, build a lighthouse, a park bench, a door etc in 10 seconds.



Note: The list of provocations you give them to build using their bodies and negative space and movement can be tailored to fit with the world of their existing text or improvised on the spot.

Give them progressively more difficult things to build, introducing small scale techniques as well. Ask them to assess what is working for them? Draw their attention to the speed of making in 10 seconds, and to the instantaneous way an image can be created and destroyed on stage.

Physical shape list:

- Plane
- Table
- Park Bench
- Telephone Box
- Clock
- Lamp post
- Window
- Door
- Abstract locking mechanism

If there is time you can ask them to create a machine all together, but this is an added bonus and not always necessary.

Creating from Visual Stimulus

Discuss different types of stimulus for theatrical work can be written words, but also visual.

Break students into groups with each group given a visual stimulus to respond to. Without speaking, each student writes down an individual response (can be words, a few sentences, perhaps a quote/poem/lyrics). Students are to do this without analysing or stopping – stream of consciousness. (see appendix for images)

Play music through this section and give out the following prompts to students, giving time for them to respond.

- I can see ... I can hear ... I can smell. ...
- Every day something happens here ...
- Every night something happens here ...
- What is the most distinct feature in this place ...
- As far as the eye can see there is ...
- When I look up I see ...

After writing, each student shares their ideas in the group to consider what ideas are really celebrated, interesting or different.

As a group, get students to write down the common or agreed upon ideas that stood out to the group. What objects were imagined in the world? Write a list of these things down the side.

Write down three adjectives that the group can decide on to describe the mood (dark, eerie, joyful, peaceful).

From this stimulus, each group creates three still images that respond to this place and are to use the three adjectives as the starting point.

Teacher to revise stage geography with class and the different ways space can be manipulated on stage. Explicitly teach the technique of a Freeze Frame and how and why it used in performances. Why is it useful to start devising from a freeze frame?

For those groups who need an extension, bring in architecture and ask them to incorporate the architecture in the room in their freeze frames.

Teacher to encourage both literal and abstract representations (teacher may need to revise abstract with students).

Discuss an entrance, and transitions between each freeze frame and an exit and then start layering in movement. Remind students to draw on the visual theatre conventions they explored in the previous exercise.

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE

Place becomes very important in *The Wider Earth*, with the different places having major impact on not only Darwin's discovery but the way the characters behave and their character journey.

Have students look at the list of locations featured in *The Wider Earth* and have them brainstorm

- What they know about these locations?
- What are your impression is of the location and its surrounds?
- What imagery do each of these places evoke?
- How do you think a location can shape a person?
- Who do you think would live here?

LOCATIONS

THE MOUNT – the Darwin estate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

MAER HALL – the Wedgewood estate, Maer, Staffordshire.

THE ADMIRALTY BUILDING – Whitehall, London.

HENSLOW'S ROOMS – Cambridge.

THE NAVAL DOCKS – Plymouth.

HMS BEAGLE – a survey ship.

A DENSE RAINFOREST – the Amazon, Brazil.

A GRASSY PLAIN – the Pampas, Argentina.

A KELP FOREST – the Southern Ocean.

A BLEAK SHORELINE – Tierra del Fuego, Chile.

A MOUNTAIN RANGE – The Andes, Chile.

AN ARCHIPELAGO – The Galapagos Islands.

A CREEK – Hobart, Australia.

A CORAL LAGOON – Keeling Island.

A COTTAGE – Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa.

Discuss what students have brainstormed.

Considering the vast number of places as well as their obvious different discuss, how do you think the design elements will capture this onstage?

Provide students with a list of the locations for *The Wider Earth*. Show students the map below to highlight the distance between each location and how varied they must be.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Voyage_of_the_Beagle-de.svg

Ask them to create two of these creating a strong sense of place. Once they have their two locations, which can be a freeze frame or short piece. Encourage them to draw upon the techniques from the visual theatre activities above. (see page 6 and 7)

Present scenes to class. Engage in a discussion: How did we create a sense of place? What meaning did each group give to the different places.

Challenge students to then add a transition between the two locations. Discuss:

- What are some different ways of transitioning between different time and place?
- How can we transition our characters by using the movement, gesture, props, or set rather than traditional method of transition.
- Consider some of these very traditional methods: Black out of lights, change of lighting states – crossfade of lights, spotlight etc, curtains opening and closing, changing of set, props etc. by stage hands.

Brainstorm alternatives with the class for example

- A narrator addresses the audience whilst other performers set up, change costume etc.
- Actors change costume in front of the audience
- Snap transitions, in which all performers change position / character instantaneously
- Cross fade transitions, in which performers transform their physical shapes and positions using slow and controlled movements to transform from one character to another
- Use of music and sound to assist with transition.

Have them transition between the two using one of the methods above.

Extension: After watching *The Wider Earth* revisit this activity discussing how the production used transitions to enhance the narrative. Ask students to think about what was used to assist in moving from one time and place to another. Discuss how these moments were shaped using conventions and elements of drama. For example, you may want to discuss the use of the pigeons taking flight as Darwin decided to leave or the use of the tree of life on the panoramic cyclorama.



DIRECT ADDRESS AND THE NARRATOR

The Wider Earth is told through voice overs from Darwin's journal. Lead students in a discussion about their understanding of direct address and narration as conventions. How are they different and where is there an overlap? Then use the following task to have students explore what shifts when we see a production that relies heavily on narration and direct address.

In groups of 3-4 have the group improvise an everyday scene. Ensure that the interactions convey the characters' relationship with each other.

Perform the scenes and discuss direct address with the students

- When would this be used?
- Why would it be used?
- How does it impact / enhance the dramatic action?
- Focus on the different purposes of direct address; what are the actors trying to do to the audience? Are they trying to explain their actions? Are they confiding in the audience? Are they trying to scheme with the audience? Are they simply telling the audience what is occurring?

Repeat the scene but have one of the characters have moments where they address the audience. Ask them to consider

- Who breaks out of the scene to address the audience and at what moments does this occur?
- What do the rest of the actors do? Does the action continue? Does everything go into slow motion? Does everyone else freeze? Do they acknowledge the direct address as it occurs?
- Do the actors look at the audience or are they watching the actions of the scene?
- When addressing the audience, are they still in character? Are they emotionally attached or detached to the scene?
- How does it impact / enhance the dramatic action?
- Focus on the different purposes of direct address; what are the actors trying to do to the audience? Are they trying to explain their actions? Are they confiding in the audience? Are they trying to scheme with the audience? Are they simply telling the audience what is occurring?

Show the new scenes and discuss, what has changed? How do you view or understand the characters and events differently than you did before? Are the characters reliable to unreliable narrators?

Extension: *The Wider Earth* uses voice overs and reflections from Charles Darwin to help tell his story. Students can use this website, which is written in character as Charles Darwin, as stimulus to create scenes with Darwin as a narrator. Ask them to consider which reflections would best suit being paired with dramatic action and ensure they come back to the purpose of adding direct address or narration.

- Charles Darwin Explains How He Ended Up On The Voyage Of The Beagle <https://www.quasarex.com/blog/charles-darwin-galapagos-voyage-beagle>

After watching the production consider how the voice over and narration in *The Wider Earth* is used. Discuss how it

- Shapes your understanding of Darwin as a character
- Conveys key concepts
- Reinforces how Darwin feels
- Directs the audience on what to think or feel.

Working with script excerpts

NATURE'S CATHEDRAL

Charles enters the Amazon rainforest. He catches a butterfly.

He climbs up a buttress to look above the canopy.

He disturbs a swarm of butterflies.

He interacts with an iguana.

He settles down with his journal to take notes.

Night falls.

Fireflies come out.

His journal begins to glow.

DARWIN (V/O)

I had never seen a sight which exceeded the sublimity of this primeval forest, undefaced by the hand of man. It was a cathedral filled with the productions of the God of nature, where death and decay prevail.

A storm breaks. Charles revels in it.

Read the excerpt from *The Wider Earth* included above. Discuss the key ideas presented in the excerpt. How could you convey this onstage? Discuss the name of the scene, *Nature Cathedral*. What imagery does this provoke? What deeper meaning is the name conveying?

Break students into groups to workshop this excerpt. They should focus on creating a strong sense of mood and clearly portraying role. Encourage them to extend the stage directions. Remind them that this moment is called *Nature's Cathedral* and that what they do should represent that. Don't let them rush the scene, encourage them to play with extended movement, tempo and timing.

Show some to the class. Pick a group and workshop this with the class adding further movement techniques and intensifying the tension created.

Afterwards have students write down answers to the following:

- What does this moment look like?
- What sense of place is created?
- What does Darwin do in each moment?
- How did he end up here?
- What does it feel like?
- Write down 5 words that you associate with this moment.

Alternatively – Students could work in groups of four, with one person in role as director/ sound designer. This student can help shape the outside action, and use the sound bank to insert key sound effects into the scene to shape mood and further establish place.

Show these and discuss what students have created. If students pieces are based in realism, challenge them to use the Visual Theatre techniques or Puppetry techniques explored earlier. (see page 6 and 7)

Ask them to consider the use of the following movement devices to move away from realism.

- Entrances and Exits
- Formation
- Travelling Steps and Floor Patterns
- Levels
- Motif and Symbolic Gestures and Actions
- Repetition
- Pedestrian Movements
- Unison, Accumulation and Canon

Extension: Use the second excerpt from *The Wider Earth* to create a new piece.

Watch *Natures Cathedral* from *The Wider Earth* (timecode 35:20-39:00) and discuss the sequence. Have student initially compare what they did to what the production did. What conventions did the production draw upon? Did this create a different meaning to what they shaped? After this class discussion have students answer the following questions individually or in small groups.

- How is mood created in the beginning of this sequence?
- What shifts in mood take place? Provide evidence of dramatic action to support your ideas.
- What do you think Darwin experiences in this sequence? How does this impact him? Discuss gestures and movement techniques.
- So much is shown with no dialogue. Why do you think this sequence is so moving with only the voice over?
- How does music contribute to the mood and shaping of the meaning?
- How does the voice over contribute to your understanding of the dramatic meaning?
- How is place created? What impact on the audience does this create?
- What is Darwin's relationship with the place and the animals within it?

Extension: Complete the same activity above with a second excerpt.

THE WAR OF NATURE

The fossil begins to breathe.

DARWIN (V/O)

No fact in the long history of the world is so startling as the wide and repeated exterminations of its inhabitants.

It begins to walk through a primeval landscape.

DARWIN (V/O)

Yet so profound is our ignorance, and so high our presumption, that we marvel when we hear of the extinction of a creature; and as we do not see the cause, we invent cataclysms, and great floods, to desolate the whole world; incredible tales to explain all that we do not understand, where imagination rises to fill our wonder.

Water slowly begins to flood the landscape and the glyptodon drowns.

A shoal of fish swims through the fossil.

DARWIN (V/O)

What a struggle must have gone on during long centuries between the several kinds of trees and plants, what war between insect and insect, between insects, and snails, and all other animals, between birds, and fish, and beasts of prey. All striving to survive. All feeding on one other. All locked in a waltz of death.

The fish are herded through the kelp forest by sharks.

DARWIN (V/O)

We view the face of nature with gladness, yet battle within battle must be continually recurring.

The sharks begin to make passes at the fish.

DARWIN (V/O)

Nothing is easier to admit in words than the truth of the universal struggle for survival, nor more difficult, at least I have found it so, than to constantly bear this cruelty in mind.

Back on the Beagle, Charles closes his glowing journal.

Time code - 49:20 – 50:58

POST- SHOW ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you believe was the key message of the play?
- How did the actors communicate changes in scene and action?
- Try to recall the plot. What stages led to the eventual climax?
- Recall the moments of strong emotional connection. What led to these moments? Consider acting techniques as well as plot and design elements.
- What do you believe is the best aspect of *The Wider Earth*?
- How does the staging contribute to the production? Discuss the use of props, set, use of symbolic staging, and use of AV.
- Why do you think the set constantly moves? What does this communicate to the audience?
- What did the use of the maps and the tree of life communicate to the audience? What do you think these could be symbolic of?
- How did the voice unfold above and behind the stage to illustrate maps and routes, thoughts and ideas, while a voiceover delivers passages from Darwin's journal as narration.
- Consider the use of the projections and how these transform through the production. How did this impact you as an audience member?
- Why is this an important story to tell?
- Darwin is first introduced through the voice over. What is your impression of Darwin from this? Is this impression support or contrasted by Darwin onstage? What makes you think this?
- What is your impression of Darwin in the end?
- What forms or styles really stood out to you? How were these effectively manipulated?
- What choices were made to ensure this story continues to remain relevant?
- How did the integration of movement sequences, music and puppetry enhance the telling of this story?
- "Visual theatre evokes a different kind of emotional response than realism or other text-based theatre. It awakens all of the senses, and asks for a different sort of imaginative engagement, because it's not just concerned with characters and a story but with building an entire world, which is why we really love it." David Morton. Consider this quote and argue if you think this is true of *The Wider Earth*.
- What sections surprised or captivated you?
- What were some non-naturalistic devices in the play?
- What does the play question? What questions does it leave unanswered?

KEY MOMENTS

As a class identify 5 key moments from the production. Break students up into smaller groups and assign them each a key moment.

1. Have students recreate this moment as series of freeze frames with no dialogue. The movements should be strong and your emotions evident to effectively convey this to the audience.
2. Students are then to add two words per freeze frame. These can be spoke to the other characters or direct address to the audience.
3. Add additional dialogue so the scene is complete.

OR

2. Have students recreate this moment as series of freeze frames with no dialogue. The movements should be strong and your emotions evident to effectively convey this to the audience.
3. Have them consider each image to be hung in a gallery. Have them add a title to each of these freeze frames to direct dramatic focus.
4. When presenting these, one actor must step out of the freeze frame and explain the title and the image, as if they were a tour guide explaining a painting.
5. Have students extend on this by turning each freeze frame into an abstract representation of that moment, focusing on the mood or character emotions portrayed, rather than the plot. Students can bring these moments to life in a movement sequence.

UNPACKING KEY QUOTES

Place the following quotes from *The Wider Earth* on paper and place them around the room. Have students walk around the room in silence and examine the quotes. After 5 minutes give the students the option to add thoughts, reflections or questions to at least three of the posters. They can respond to the quote itself, what it reminds them of or what it makes them think or, the quote in relation to the play, when and where they think it was said and what it means to the characters. They can do this anonymously.

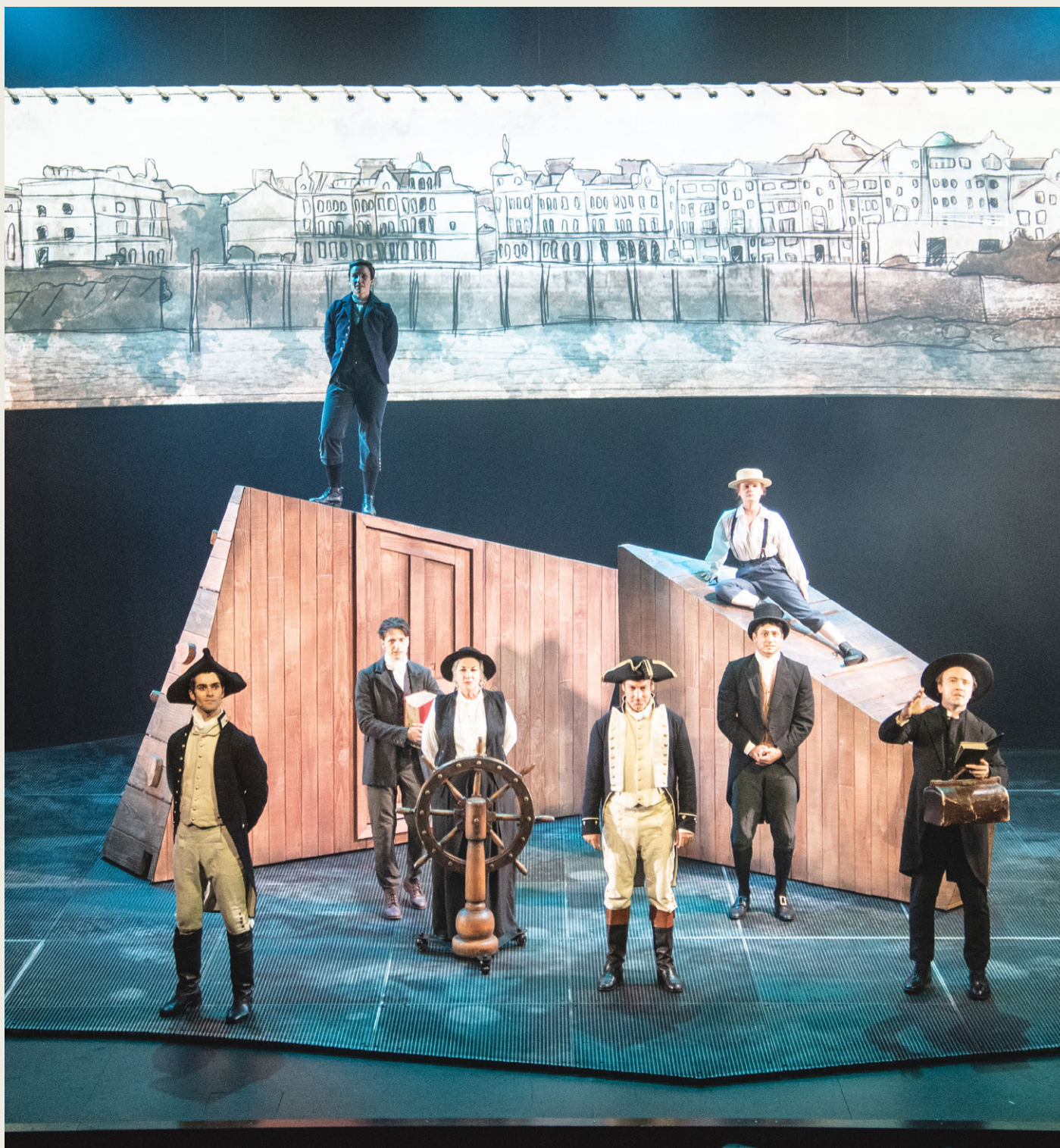
After students have done this, get them into groups and distribute the quotes. They are to read what has been written and reflect on that as well as the quote. Have students rotate around the room so they respond to at least 3-4 quotes.

After this is complete gather the class back together and have students report back on the last quote they examined, summarising the reflections. Write these on the board to identify the similarities and difference between the reflections. You should also be able to use these to create a list of key concepts from the production.

- Send a young man who knows nothing and there's no telling what he might find.
- One hand has worked throughout the whole universe.
- Small things can change the world.
- Have faith in the truth of what you have found.
- If we have all come from the same tree – are we all reduced to savages?
- The hand of nature and the hand of God are the same thing
- Send a man who knows nothing and there's no telling what he may find
- All that was true is fading away.
- So much beauty for so little reason.
- Man should know his place in the order of things.
- Am I brave or am I mad?
- You can make a difference without even leaving home.
- The world is ever more wonderful for the parts that make it whole.

KEY CONCEPTS

Using the list created in the activity above, or from brainstorming a list as a class, engage students in a discussion about the key themes and concepts explored throughout the production. Ask students which themes were most obvious and what their interpretation of them was. Link this to the manipulation of the dramatic elements and the dramatic meaning.



Extension: Ask students to answer the question “What is at the heart of *The Wider Earth*?” After discussing their responses look at the responses from the creatives to this same question. Ask students to compare and contrast all of the answers to find the similarities and differences. Link these back to the key concepts and ideas.

CHARACTER MAP

Create a “map” of the main characters. This is useful to do directly after viewing the performance, so students understand the narrative and nature of the work. This can also help later when constructing a response or critique. Consider the experiences within the play that define the characters’ journey, the status shifts through the production and how their actions demonstrate their belief systems.

TIMELINE

Have students create a timeline of the key events and time periods from the play or use the timeline of the journey of The Beagle found here <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/darwin/a-trip-around-the-world/a-five-year-journey>. Discuss the impact of the play spanning such a long time and traveling to multiple locations. How does this change our understanding of the characters and their journey?

ELEMENTS OF DRAMA DISCUSSION

ROLE RELATIONSHIP CHARACTER

- Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience?
- How would you describe each character? How are their characters portrayed through the voice and movement of the actors?
- How would you describe some of the key characters? (Purpose, Attitude and Status)
- What key relationships were present? How would you describe them?
- Who does Darwin have the strongest relationships with? How is this conveyed through dramatic action?
- What are Darwin's motivations in going on this journey? How does this shift throughout the production?
- Who has the higher status throughout the production? When does this power balance shift?
- Darwin's belief system changes throughout the production and sometimes contrasts other characters' belief systems, how is this exemplified through their actions and thoughts?
- How is role and relationship conveyed through the movement sequences?
- How is Darwin's relationships with the animals (puppets) conveyed?

TENSION

- What were some of the key examples of tension during the production?
- Choose a specific moment of dramatic action that exemplifies one of the characters. How? Why? What dramatic meaning did this communicate to the audience?
- How did the tension engage you?
- What were you invested in?
- How did the music and use of projections impact the development of tension?
- How did the movement sequences develop tension?
- Describe how tension was manipulated when time and place was quickly shifted, what impact did this have on the audience?
- How does the production develop tension, even when you know how the story ends?

FOCUS

- How did the focus change between moments between the different time periods and locations? What happened onstage to facilitate this change?
- How did the lighting, projection and set design create dramatic focus?
- How was focus manipulated to convey both big epic moments and intimate moments?
- How does the use of puppetry shift dramatic focus?
- Think about the moments onstage where dramatic focus shifted. What happened onstage to facilitate this change?

TIME

- When was it written?
- When is the play set?
- How would changing the time impact the plays dramatic meaning?

- The production spans a long time period, how was this conveyed onstage?
- How is time manipulated throughout the production? Think about a moment where tempo was sped up or slowed down.
- How was the passing of time shown?

PLACE

- Where did the play take place? How was the space transformed throughout the performance?
- How are the multiple locations shown onstage?
- Consider moments when place was shown literally or symbolically. How did these moments differ? What was the impact on the audience?
- How was space used to drive narrative and tension?
- How did the actors work with the projections to shape dramatic action?
- How was the set and use of projections used to convey place?

SPACE

- Analyse the different ways that the stage was used throughout the production.
- How did the use of the space help to convey the different settings and locations? Think about the use of levels on the set as well as the larger space.
- How did the lighting and projections enhance the different use of the space?
- How did the movement of the set impact the manipulation of space?
- Consider the use of movement sequences and space between the actors and ensemble. How was the manipulated to convey character and relationship?
- Think of a moment when there was an extreme use of space. How did this impact your understanding of that moment?

MOVEMENT

- Consider how relationships in the play are communicated through body language and movement. Consider how you can show a relationship without "explaining" it.
- Was the movement symbolic in anyway?
- What movement was repeated in the movement sequences? Why do you think this was the case? What impact did it have on your understanding of the dramatic meaning?
- How was movement contrasted by stillness? What effect did this have?
- The puppets don't speak so their personality is most created through movement. List the different puppets and how they each move. What does this movement convey?

LANGUAGE

- How were words used to create power?
- What was the subtext behind some of the memorable lines?
- How was language used to shape character? Consider the different ways each character speaks / uses language.
- Consider the way the voice over speaks, compared to the rest of the characters. How does this impact your understanding of the meaning?
- How does the use of narration impact the production?

CONTRAST

- Describe two contrasting moments in *The Wider Earth*. How were these moments created through sound, lighting, voice and movement?
- Analyse the ways in which contrast is used throughout the play in relation to the range of moods.
- How was contrast manipulated through the design elements?
- How was contrast used to switch from humour to more serious moments?
- What other elements of contrast did you see throughout the production?
- Contrast Darwin at the start of the production to the end. How does his character change throughout? Refer specifically to how this is conveyed through acting and voice techniques.
- How is contrast used in the various locations they visit?

MOOD

- Discuss the impact of the sound design and music used to create specific moods. Use specific moments of dramatic action from the show and discuss how they made the audience feel.
- Consider how they would've been different if different artistic choices were made, such as alternative lighting or sound.
- How would you describe the mood when Darwin is in the rainforest. How was this mood created? Contrast this mood with that of the volcano. What did these two moods communicate?
- Consider the mood at the start of the play. How does this contrast with the end of the play?
- How did you feel when Mathews goes overboard? What performance techniques and skills of the actors were utilised to make you feel this way?
- Consider the inclusion of the voice over. How would the mood of the play be different if this wasn't included?
- How do the movement sequences, combined with music work together to create mood?
- Describe the mood in Act 1. How does this shift in Act 2?

SYMBOL

- Discuss the impact of the symbolic nature of the set. How did this impact your understanding of the production and the narrative?
- The set continually moves and revolves. Consider what this is symbolic of and how this impacts your understanding of Darwin's journey.
- Consider the use of puppets. When were these used as symbols? What did they represent?
- There are strong symbolic references used in the AV, for example the tree of life. What moments stood out to you? How did impact your understanding of the characters?
- How was movement used symbolically?



THOUGHTS FROM THE CREATIVES

Science and Religion in Harmony

'Some things you will think of yourself... some things God will put into your mind.' The Odyssey by Homer

Playwright David Morton aims for religion and science to exist in harmony inside the world of the play. *The Wider Earth* is not a didactic play that positions science and religion against each other. Rather, the story presents well-rounded characters and views about both theories of evolution which lead us to see how they continue to co-exist in the world today. The Beagle itself is a symbol of this co-existence as the occupants onboard the ship together navigate the Earth while believing in the different schools of thought with Darwin alongside Christian missionaries Richard Matthews and Jemmy Button who begin the voyage by leading the men in prayer. Morton's dialogue similarly allows the temperate co-existence of the two with lines such as "it was like a Cathedral for the God of nature" when describing Bahia.

The Set

The Wider Earth is set on an end-on stage inside the Jerwood Gallery. In the centre of this stage is a large revolve that turns to signify changes in time and place in moments of transition throughout the story. The revolve is made from wood and features several peaks and small landings which allow the actors to climb up and over it giving the illusion of rocky, mountainous terrain, rainforests and shorelines. In the middle of the mountain are two stairs. Co-designers Aaron Barton and David Morton have designed the revolve so that it can land on either mountain side or ship side. Mountain side is used at the beginning of the show when Charles returns to Shrewsbury and when he is in Cambridge. Later it is used to portray the myriad of different landscapes Darwin traverses as he researches his theories, including, The Pampas, Tierra del Fuego and the Amazon. The ship side, which includes a door up-stage centre, is used for Cambridge, Darwin's family home and the inside of The Beagle. When Darwin visits Emma at her family home, a miniature house lit from the inside is placed by an ensemble member on top of the mountain, giving the idea of a house out in the distance on the moors. Props used to set the mise-en-scene include tables, buckets and a steering wheel inside The Beagle. When inside The Beagle a member of the ensemble is perched above the stage on the mountain and gently swings a lantern back and forth depicting the rocking of the ship across the ocean. The earthy coloured tones of the set create a natural aesthetic that both complements the story and serves a functional purpose of a clean surface for projections and lighting to land on.

Lighting

Lighting throughout *The Wider Earth* is used in varying ways to portray realistic moments and moments of surreal discovery. When inside The Beagle and in England, the lighting is a white wash with a soft yellow tinge across the stage. This realistic lighting choice contrasts with the green and blue washes that cast over the stage as Darwin watches the animals in the places where The Beagle lands. A leaf gobo is used when Darwin makes his discoveries in the depths of jungles bringing texture to David Walters and Lee Curran's lighting design. Different types of lights are also used by the ensemble who take on the role of puppeteers. As Darwin writes in his journal about the cathedral of nature, the stage is a dark blue wash depicting night time. Darwin's journal glows gently from within up onto the actor's face as he writes his theories symbolising the light of knowledge he will bring to the world and the ensemble slowly move long carbon rods with tiny lights on the end of them to depict fireflies in the sky. The symbol of light

and knowledge occurs again when Darwin is bathed in light at the epiphany of discovering many fossils on top of the Andes as he realises that the ground must once have been under water and that earthquakes could raise rockpools out of the sea.

Sound

The show opens with a voice-over narration reciting how the Earth and all its beings were created according to the Holy Bible. This voice-over is layered with orchestral music consisting of a large variety of instruments including marimba, drums and strings co-composed by Lior and Tony Buchen. This style of music underscores the play and creates an inquisitive atmosphere of impending adventure and discovery. Throughout the play there are many moments where music portrays the atmosphere. When Darwin discovers the armadillo in The Pampas the up-beat rhythm of a marimba and drums are heard as the armadillo puppet scuttles along the stage to the delight of Darwin. This is just one example of how music is used to assist in the creation of place for the audience and reflect the spirit of the animal Darwin discovers. The music featured in each scene is named according to the dramatic action. The music that underscores Darwin telling Emma of the opportunity on The Beagle is entitled "A Chance at Freedom" and the music in the scene where Darwin enters the rainforest in Brazil full of butterflies, iguanas and tropical creatures is entitled "Nature's Cathedral." The sound design of the production is by Tony Brumpton. Diegetic sounds of the animals encountered by Darwin can also be heard including the song of a Southern Right Whale. In the scene where Tierra del Fuego is ravaged by fire, the diegetic sound of fire and flames can be heard.

Projection

A long throw projector is used throughout *The Wider Earth* to project images above the set onto a long, narrow screen that represents the ship's sail. The projection work and illustrations were created by Projection Designer, Justin Harrison. Using photos he took of each location and some photoshopped stock photos, Harrison then turned the photos into line drawings which are layers on top of the photos. Following this, photoshop and watercolour were integrated onto the images. These drawings are illustrated in the same style as The Beagle's artist – Conrad Martens. At other times, animated multi-media project realistic images of the locations such as the harbour of Tierra del Fuego or the Andes. The show opens with the projection of the Earth spinning before coming to a halt and zooming into the town of Shrewsbury, England denoting the action of the scene. This concept is used throughout the show where a map is projected and lines are drawn from place to place following the action of the story and The Beagles voyage. At the end of the play, the spinning Earth splits in two, signifying the two worlds of thought – science and religion. The projection of the world turning is a re-occurring motif in the play. As Darwin makes another discovery towards his theory the image of the spinning world is seen. This is a symbol of an ever-changing world and perhaps even a homage to Galileo who, like Darwin, fought to have his theory of the Earth as round believed in contradiction to the church. Multi-media is used towards the end of the play to visualise Darwin's discovery of The Tree of Life and the relationships between organism both living and extinct. This is projected up into the sky with points of light in the cosmos showing animals and Earth-like constellations. A cormorant soars through the air above it. Its wing becomes a peninsula. The ocean wears the wing down. The shrunken wing belongs to a cormorant that soars beneath the waves.



ASSESSMENT IDEAS

DRAMATIC CONCEPT

Task

Working as a theatre-maker you will view *The Wider Earth* to create your own piece that shares a story. After watching identify which of the dramatic languages used in the performance resonate with your personal artistic voice. This might be the performance's use of form, elements of drama, conventions, stagecraft and/or stylistic characteristics that will influence the development of their own original dramatic concept

- investigate relevant and appropriate topics for creating a piece that focuses on sharing of a story
- identify the intended purpose, context, dramatic form and stylistic characteristics for their original dramatic concept
- workshop ideas for dramatic action, experimenting with a variety of ways to manipulate elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions to make social comment
- rehearse and enact the concept to develop key moments of dramatic action
- photograph and/or film key moments of dramatic action that best capture the dramatic ideas
 - o documenting a statement of intent
 - describing the dramatic languages (form, elements of drama, conventions, stagecraft and/or stylistic characteristics) used in the professional live or recorded live performance that were drawn upon as inspiration for the original devised dramatic concept
 - outlining the story to be shared and why it is relevant, identifying the intended purpose and context, the dramatic form to be used to structure the work, and the stylistic characteristics to be communicated
 - analysis, evaluation and justification of how elements of drama, stagecraft and conventions have been manipulated to communicate a social comment through their intended purpose and context.

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Task 1

"It's more than just a reimagining of Darwin's iconic journey around the world, it's a coming-of-age story about science and faith, and how one doubting man with a questing heart set out to ask a question of Mother Nature and found the answer to everything," David Morton.

Argue a position connecting a concept explored in the quote above with key moments of dramatic action and meaning communicated in *The Wider Earth*. Refer to the convention of movement sequence in relation to the elements of relationship and character.

Task 2

Have students watch from 1:11:00 – 1:15:16 and practice paragraph writing by answering the following questions.

- The characters in this scene have differing beliefs. Examine this idea through analysis of character and tension.
- How is mood shaped within this scene? What does this mood communicate to the audience?
- How is contrast manipulated in this scene?



Creator: Arnie Chou | Credit: Photo by Arnie Chou

<https://www.google.com/imgres?q=amazon%20rainforest&imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fimages.pexels.com%2Fphotos%2F927414%2F-pexels-photo-927414.jpeg&imgrefurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pexels.com%2Fphoto%2Fscenic-view-of-rainforest-927414%2F&docid=LftQQ61bR3iXOM&tbnid=7lmn3aNf2rUzvM&vet=12ahUKEwjEpdLEgq6LAXV2zTgGHf0dFJgQM3oECGgQAA..i&w=4288&h=2848&hcb=2&ved=2ahUKEwjEpdLEgq6LAXV2zTgGHf0dFJgQM3oECGgQAA>



Creator: vitya_maly | Credit: Wallpapers for theme forest, fog, dawn, Brazil, Amazon

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APPENDIX



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