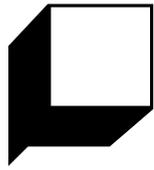




# HART EDUCATION RESOURCES



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# HART: CREDITS

## CREATIVES

Creator/Performer/Co-Writer: Ian Michael  
Co-Writer/Dramaturg: Seanna van Helten  
Director: Penny Harpham  
Set & Costume Designer: Chloe Greaves  
Composer/Sound Designer: Raya Slavin  
Lighting Designer: Katie Sfetkidis  
Video Designer: Michael Carmody

## CREW

Stage/Production/Touring Manager: Kate Brennan  
Producers: Seanna van Helten and Penny Harpham, for She Said Theatre

## PARTNERS

Regional Arts Victoria  
Auspicious Arts Projects

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*HART* has been adapted from the testimonies of four men: interviews with Hart and with Ian Michael were conducted by the authors; the testimonies of Sam Dinah and Paul Parfitt were originally told to the Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation. We wish to thank the Foundation for putting us in contact with Sam and Paul, and for permission to adapt their testimonies. Images featured in this production were sourced from National Library Australia, State Library of Victoria, State Library of Western Australia, and Gabi Briggs. Video sourced from *Couldn't Be Fairer* by Dennis O'Rourke, with permission from Tracy Spring.





## NOTES FOR TEACHERS

*HART* is a one-man verbatim theatre performance, adapted from testimonies provided to the Stolen Generation Testimonies Foundation, and from interviews conducted by creator Ian Michael and co-writer Seanna van Helten. Performed solely by Ian Michael, the production weaves together the real stories of four Noongar men spanning three generations who: Sam Dinah, Paul Parfitt, 'Hart' (who does not wish for his real name to be identified), and Ian himself. The men's stories span from the late 1930s to today, dispelling the assumption that the Stolen Generation is a thing of the past, something that happened long ago in the twentieth century. Sam recalls his upbringing shuttled from one institution to the next, and the loss of culture that marks him to this day as an "in-between kid...neither black, neither white"; Paul tells of growing up "too quick" following his separation from his mother, and the resentment that he misdirected at her; Hart's story demonstrates how irreparably his family was "depleted over time" following a series of government policy failures; Ian reflects on the silenced stories in his own family, trying to pinpoint "what was lost and how and when and why."

Students who attend the production will be able to analyse how the play deploys the conventions of verbatim theatre to convey real people's stories in an emotionally engaging and accessible way. A key feature of the production is how it captures multiple stories spanning several generations with just one performer, a simple yet hugely evocative set design of a circle of flour and a chair, and a projected video design. Aided by shifts in lighting and sound, the performer transforms between four personas to tell each character's story of separation from family, growing up, and finding ways to accept or reconcile with past events. Students will be able to analyse the performance's manipulation of the actor/audience relationship through non-naturalistic techniques such as monologue, story-telling and direct address, the use of humour as an element of surprise, juxtaposition of word and image to engage critical thinking, and how the production's design elements help convey the play's content and themes.

Students studying the playscript of *HART* will be able to explore in closer detail how the writers adapted the source material and arranged the selected text into a clear and effective dramatic structure. Some of the testimonies that were adapted in *HART* are freely available to be read or viewed online (<http://www.stolengenerationstestimonies.com>), which enables students to compare the original source material with the playscript, and analyse how the writers selected certain passages of text to structure the eventual play. In turn, students may be able to identify particular performance and or script/development ideas that may inform their own theatre practice.



# HART: BACKGROUND

## THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

Between 1910-1970, many Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families as a result of various government policies. Children taken from their parents were taught to reject their Indigenous heritage, and forced to adopt white culture. Their names were often changed, and they were forbidden to speak their traditional languages. Some children were adopted or fostered by white families, and many were placed in institutions where abuse and neglect were common. The generations of children removed under these policies became known as the Stolen Generations.

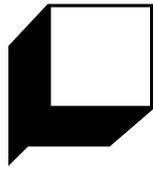
HART is a verbatim theatre performance about the Stolen Generations based on the real words and stories of four Indigenous men: Sam Dinah, Paul Parfitt, 'Hart' (who does not wish for his real name to be identified), and Ian Michael (HART's creator and performer). These men are from different generations, but they all come from Noongar boodja in Western Australia. In HART, they each share their lived experiences of Stolen Generation policies and their after-effects.

The men's stories span from the late 1930s to today, dispelling the assumption that the Stolen Generation is a thing of the past, something that happened long ago in the twentieth century. For Sam, Paul, Hart, and Ian – as for many Indigenous people – the policies of child removal have left a legacy of trauma and loss that continues to affect Indigenous communities, families and individuals today.

## CHARACTERS:

### SAM

Sam was born around 1939-1940, and belongs to the Najumooning tribe, from south-western Western Australia. Sam was born at Moore River Native Settlement, before being moved on to Carrolup and then Roelands Mission. As Sam recalls his upbringing being shuttled from one institution to the next, he explains the loss of culture that marks him to this day as an "in-between kid...neither black, neither white." Sam believes in sharing his story so that the younger Aboriginal generation can appreciate "what we have experienced, and take hold of the opportunities that are being offered to them today."



# **HART: BACKGROUND**

## **CHARACTERS (CONTINUED)**

### **PAUL**

Paul was born in 1951 in Narrogin, before he was taken away from his mother to live at Wandering Mission when he was three years old. Paul tells of growing up “too quick” following his separation from his mother, and the resentment that he misdirected at her before realising that it wasn’t her fault: “I don’t blame her for what happened. It wasn’t her fault; it was the fault of the Government of the day.”

### **HART**

Hart was born in 1963 in Narrogin, and grew up in a “little mud brick hut” in Williams before moving to Collie with his family as a young boy. After his beloved father passed away, Hart and his siblings were fostered out to different families as wards of the state: “We weren’t able to maintain that loving and caring family environment that everyone else gets to have. Ours was... depleted, over time.”

### **IAN**

Ian was born in 1989 in Darwin, before growing up in Bunbury and then Collie. Throughout HART, Ian shares his experiences growing up in Western Australia, dreaming of becoming a performer but having predominantly white cultural influences around him. Ian also reflects on the silenced stories in his own family history, trying to pinpoint “what was lost and how and when and why.”



# NOONGAR GLOSSARY

Noongar means 'a person of the south-west of Western Australia,' or the name for the 'original inhabitants of the south-west of Western Australia,' one of the largest Aboriginal cultural blocks in Australia.

Noongar are made up of fourteen different language groups (which may be spelt in different ways): Amangu, Yued/Yuat, Whadjuk/Wajuk, Binjareb/Pinjarup, Wardandi, Balardong/ Ballardong, Nyakinyaki, Wilman, Ganeang, Bibulmun/Piblemen, Mineng, Goreng and Wudjari and Njunga. Each of these language groups correlates with different geographic areas with ecological distinctions.

Here are some of the Noongar words used in *HART*:

**bardee** - grubs (found in kooroop) grass tree

**boodja** - country

**djilgi** - freshwater prawn

**karda** - goanna

**kaya / kiya** - hello, hey

**wadjela** - white person (slang)

**wandjoo wandjoo** - welcome

Source:

<https://www.noongarculture.org.au/glossary/noongar-word-list/>



## VERBATIM THEATRE

Verbatim theatre is a form of non-fiction or documentary theatre which is based on the spoken words of real people. Verbatim theatre is usually created from the transcription of interviews with people who are connected to a common event or subject. Characters in a verbatim play often represent a specific, real person. They may be identifiable, or their name and characteristics may be changed. Actors in verbatim plays might attempt to mimic their counterparts exactly, or decide to represent them less literally. Some well-known examples of verbatim theatre include *The Laramie Project* (2000), which is about residents of a US town coming to terms with the murder of a gay university student called Matthew Shepard. The Australian verbatim play *Aftershocks* (1991) is about the aftermath of the 1989 Newcastle earthquake. Australian playwrights Alana Valentine and Roslyn Oades have used verbatim theatre to tell the stories of people living in training schools, boxing clubs, Cronulla following the Cronulla riots, eighteen-year-olds at Schoolies and eighty-year-olds in nursing homes.

*HART* is based on interviews with real people connected to the common subject of the Stolen Generations. The interviews with Sam Dinah and Paul Parfitt were originally conducted by the Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, while interviews with Hart and with Ian were conducted by *HART*'s creator/performer Ian Michael and co-writer Seanna van Helten. The transcribed testimonies of all four men were then edited and adapted into the performance text.

In *HART*, all four characters are played by the one performer, so sometimes it is hard to tell which character is speaking when. But as Ian tells us during his performance, it is okay to be confused at some points during the performance. The Stolen Generations is a messy, confusing part of Australia's shared history, and the trauma and loss felt by the characters is shown to be shared and passed between the different generations.

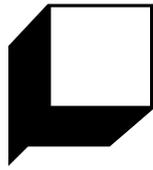


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Here is Paul's original testimony online at the Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation's website, alongside many other stories from the survivors of the Stolen Generations:

<http://www.stolengenerationstestimonies.com/paul-parfitt>

- **What parts of Paul's testimony do you recognise from the performance?**
- **How does Paul's story in the source material differ from how Paul's story is told in *HART*?**



## NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

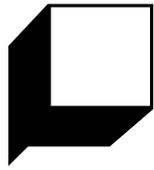
In 2014 my friend and collaborator Ian Michael approached me to work with him on a new play about the Stolen Generations. He had been reading testimonials from Stolen Generations' Testimonies Foundation, who interviewed over sixty survivors. Reading these testimonies together, it was impossible not to empathise with the vivid memories of loss and displacement that were caused by the systematic removal of Indigenous children into missions and foster care throughout the twentieth century. Ian thought the best way to communicate these stories was through the words of the survivors themselves, and so we contacted and sought permission from three Noongar men – Sam Dinah, Paul Parfitt and Hart\* – whose stories took us back to the early 1930s in Western Australia through to the 1980s, where Ian himself would later grow up. As we began working on the play, hundreds of WA Indigenous communities were threatened with forced closures; Adam Goodes was booed for performing a traditional dance after scoring a goal in the Indigenous round in the AFL; and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care released a report stating that since the government's National Apology in 2008, the number of Indigenous children in care has increased by 65%, with a staggering 35% of all Australian children in care coming from Indigenous families – despite the fact that Indigenous children comprise only 4.4 % of the national child population. HART is therefore an urgent exploration into our government's past and present policies and the devastating effects it continues to have on the Aboriginal families it aims to 'serve'. The Stolen Generation is not in the past, it is on-going, and its effects are still taking a toll on Indigenous families today. Therefore the fourth man interviewed in *HART* is Ian himself, reflecting on the "cycle of trauma" that has never stopped for his people.

I'd like to thank Sam, Paul and Hart for allowing us to share their stories of loss, trauma, and survival that have been largely denied or overlooked; Ian, for trusting us to work with him on *HART* and being brave enough to retell these stories night after night; the She Said team for confronting our country's past in the hope that we can work towards a more honest and just future; lastly I'd like to thank you – our audience – for listening to these silenced stories and ensuring that the history of thousands of Indigenous people is not forgotten. This play has been a process of understanding and healing for us as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike. We hope it can be for many other people around Australia, and the world, too.

– PENNY HARPHAM



Credit: Julie Zhu, Basement Theatre, Auckland, 2016



## PRODUCTION DESIGN

*HART* is designed by Chloe Greaves, who designed both the set and costume. The discussion about the production design commenced with creator/performer Ian Michael, director Penny Harpham, and Chloe. Ian, Penny, and Chloe wanted to create a space on stage that was welcoming and allowed Ian to speak directly to the audience. The design also had to be able to tour easily and adapt to lots of different types of theatres.

*HART* is a non-naturalistic play, with Ian performing multiple characters across multiple timelines, so it was important that the design supported this dramaturgy, and was not literal or naturalistic. *HART* is also a play about listening and understanding, so the design needed to allow audiences to use their imaginations to place themselves in the positions of the characters and ask themselves what would they do in their situation.

The final design is a simple ring of white flour around a black chair. The white circle encourages multiple interpretations, and audience members have differing ideas about what it symbolises. Throughout the performance, Ian uses both the flour and the chair as props to illustrate key moments in the characters' stories, transforming them from ordinary items into theatrical symbols with multiple, shifting meanings. The design is complemented by an audiovisual design by composer Raya Slavin and video designer Michael Carmody that uses documentary footage, images, and contemporary media soundbites to ground the stories in a real-life context.



Credit: Julie Zhu, Basement Theatre, Auckland, 2016

# FURTHER RESOURCES



## WORKS ABOUT THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

*Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Book) by Doris Pilkington Garimara  
*Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Film), directed by Phillip Noyce  
*My Place* (Book) by Sally Morgan  
*Stolen* (Play) by Jane Harrison  
*Unna You Fullas* (Book) by Glenyse Ward

## INDIGENOUS PLAYS

*The 7 Stages of Grieving* by Deborah Mailman and Wesley Enoch  
*I Don't Wanna Play House* by Tammy Anderson  
*Which Way Home* by Katie Beckett  
*Brothers Wreck* by Jada Alberts

See also: BlakStage on AustralianPlays.org: <https://australianplays.org/blakstage>

## VERBATIM PLAYS

*Aftershocks* by Paul Brown et al  
*The August Moon* by Adam Grossetti  
*Gaybies* by Dean Bryant  
*Jack Charles V The Crown* by Jack Charles  
*The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman  
*Hello, Goodbye, and Happy Birthday* by Roslyn Oades  
*Stories of Love and Hate* by Roslyn Oades  
*Parramatta Girls* by Alana Valentine  
*Who Cares* by Michael Wynne



## PODCAST

*HART's* creator/performer/co-writer Ian Michael recently spoke to **Drama Victoria's The Aside Podcast** about how he and She Said created the work and what theatrical conventions and dramatic elements *HART* uses to enhance the non-naturalistic performance style (interview in three parts):

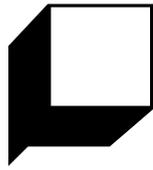
<https://soundcloud.com/asidepodcast/the-aside-playlist-interview-with-ian-michael-on-hart-part-1>



## VIDEO EXCERPT OF *HART*

<https://vimeo.com/258720200>

Recorded at The Blue Room Theatre, Perth, 2016 by Jamie Breen.



# ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

## HISTORY, RESEARCH AND COMPREHENSION

Find and research an Indigenous man or woman who is a member of the Stolen Generations. Use the following questions as a guide for your research, and include any other key facts or historical elements that you find.

- **What was the person's name, and when and where were they born?**
- **How did they respond to their experience of the Stolen Generations?**
- **How do you respond to the story of their life?**
- **What does this research tell you about the political and social climate of Australia?**
- **Does this change or affect your response to the production of *HART*?**

**Extension Activity:** Write a dramatic monologue from the perspective of this person, thinking about who the person is speaking to, and why. If you have access to the person's own words, you could use these to include verbatim sections of your monologue.

## CRITICAL THINKING AND DESIGN

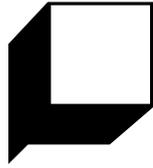
After viewing the performance, think about the set and costume design of *HART*, and answer the following questions.

- **What was your first impression of the set?**
- **What elements or features of the production design stand out?**
- **How do these elements or features of the production design support your understanding of the play?**
- **What mood do you think the designers were trying to create with this design?**

**Extension Activity:** Create your own design for a production of *HART*, thinking about the themes of the play that really stand out to you, using these questions as your 'design brief' or guide:

- **Which of the themes of *HART* would you highlight in your design?**
- **How does the actor use your set within the show? What costume would you give the actor to wear?**
- **What mood would you try to create?**

Write a statement or make a presentation to your class about the elements of your design, and why you chose to create the set and costumes this way. You may wish to use the original design of *HART* to compare and contrast your ideas.



# ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

## PERFORMANCE AND STAGECRAFT

*HART* is a non-naturalistic performance, and performer Ian Michael uses monologue and direct address performance styles to shift between multiple characters on stage, and to break the “fourth wall” between performance and audience.

- **How does the performer use expressive skills to communicate the four characters and enhance the non-naturalistic performance style?**
- **How are the dramatic elements of mood, rhythm and/or tension manipulated in non-naturalistic ways?**
- **How are the dramatic elements of contrast, conflict and climax manipulated in non-naturalistic ways?**
- **How are the dramatic elements of space, sound and symbol manipulated in non-naturalistic ways?**
- **How is stagecraft used in non-naturalistic ways in this performance?**

**Extension Activity:** Verbatim theatre is often based on interviews with real people about a single topic or event. Those people become the subjects or characters in the eventual theatre production. Think about a topic or event that is close to your life, and choose a few people who you could interview about that topic. They could be friends, family members, classmates, or another community you have contact with. After you have conducted your interviews, create a short piece of verbatim theatre based on your subject’s words. Consider:

- **What performance styles will you use to present your piece?**
- **How many characters are in your piece, and how many performers will you use to present those characters?**
- **What are the most important themes of your piece?**
- **What elements of performance and stagecraft will you use to communicate these themes?**