

Arena Theatre Company

presents

robot song

education pack

2023 edition



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Arena Theatre respectfully acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung people, and the Taungurung Peoples of the Kulin Nation, the first peoples of country on which Arena Theatre stands.

We pay our respects to all of Bendigo's First Peoples, their ancestors and elders.

Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded and we acknowledge that we continue to make art on what always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



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About Arena

Established in 1966, Arena is one of Australia's longest-running producers of theatre for young people. Arena's work has represented and reflected the changing lives and imaginations of young people.

From our home in Bendigo, Arena conducts its artistic research by collaborating with young people from all over the Central Goldfields region.

We know that our work has a powerful impact on children and young people because they tell us, their teachers tell us, their parents tell us, and academics who study our work tell us. Above all, we know our work has a powerful impact because we see it with our own eyes.

The world we share isn't a simple one. It can be a world of challenges, differences, injustices and contradictions. Through theatre, we are able to explore these topics in ways that are revealing, empowering and entertaining.

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About Robot Song

When eleven-year-old Juniper May receives a petition signed by her entire class stating that she is 'the most hated person in the school' her life is thrown into turmoil. She stops eating, refuses to return to school and her parents become increasingly desperate. Finally, her parents' resort to the only thing they have left, a giant singing robot.

Based on a true story, Robot Song illustrates the profound, transformative nature of creativity that when combined with unconditional love, becomes an unstoppable force. For Juniper, creativity opens doors into places she never knew existed allowing her, for the first time, to be defined on her own terms.

Robot Song is a deeply personal story. It shares an honest, intensely funny and often unconventional window into writer, director Jolyon James' experience parenting a child on the Autism Spectrum. The show poses, and attempts to answer the question 'how do we support, foster and celebrate difference in our children in the face of an increasingly rigid and homogenised world?'

Robot Song is a genuine family show. It is joyful and full of hope. It is for any child who has ever felt isolated and any parent who is desperate for tools to help. The show employs cutting edge digital technology, startling animatronics and a beautiful original musical score.

These notes have been designed to help prepare young people aged 8 – 12 years to see the Robot Song and then afterwards dive deeper into the ideas the show raises. Robot Song can be used as a provocation for any/all of the following Australian Curriculum areas:

- The Arts – drama, visual arts
- English
- Personal and social capability
- Critical and creative thinking



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Cast and Creatives



Jolyon James
Writer/Director/
Designer



Ashlea Pyke
Juniper



Phillip McInnes
Juniper's Dad



Nate Gilkes
Musician

Writer, Director and Designer

Jolyon James

Assistant Director

Sarah Branton

Dramaturg

Christian Leavesley

Composer/Musical Director

Nathan Gilkes

Assistant Musical Director

Ania Reynolds

Script Consultant

Anthony Crowley

Costume Design

Beth Sayer

Lighting Design

Paul Lim

Production Manager

Ben Van Dillen

Performed by

Ashlea Pyke

Phillip McInnes

Musician

Nate Gilkes

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Characters



JUNIPER MAY

An eleven year old girl, also known as Junee, Pixel and a heap of other names. Juniper also plays the Principal Mr Scryber.



DAD

Juniper's Dad, an artist. Dad also plays Miss Cummings, Miss Hope, the classmates and Battletac



THE MUSICIAN

Although in the video version the musician doesn't speak, he is playing all the music that brings Robot Song to life.

MUM

The character of Mum is never seen on stage but we hear her voice coming from backstage.

MISS CUMMINGS

Juniper's art teacher, played by Dad.

PRINCIPAL SCRYBER

Principal of Juniper's school, played by Juniper.

GOMI

A large industrial recycling bin. Gomi means rubbish in Japanese.

BATTLETAC

A famous giant robot from the 1980's, performed and operated by Dad.

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Discussion points

Original songs

- Weird
- The Tragic True Story of the Poo and the Tupperware
- Battletac Theme
- The Joy that Rubbish Brings
- People say I'm like a Robot
- If I Sing

Themes and ideas

- Recognising and celebrating difference
- Modern parenting
- Bullying
- The power of creativity
- Friendship
- Defining your own identity

A note on Autism

Whilst it is never stated in the show, Juniper May is on the Autism Spectrum.

The character has been developed based on Writer/ Director/Designer Jolyon James' own experience parenting a child on the Autism Spectrum and extensive research and consultation, particularly in regards to girls and women with Autism.

We hope this play encourages you and your students to celebrate difference in all its forms.



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Additional resources

- ⚙ Age specific education resources for both primary and secondary school students have been meticulously prepared and are available to download [HERE](#)
- ⚙ The Robot Song script is available on the link above
- ⚙ [Watch the Robot Song trailer](#)
- ⚙ [Watch the full show](#) (Password protected, email Arena Theatre Co for the password)

For further information or queries, contact Arena Theatre Company

e: info@arenatheatre.com.au

w: arenatheatre.com.au