



MOTOR-MOUTH LOVES SUCK-FACE: AN APOCALYPTIC MUSICAL

EDUCATION RESOURCE – PART 1



Music, Lyrics and Book by Anthony Crowley
La Mama Courthouse Season, July 2018

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Shut up and listen. In exactly one minute and fifty-three seconds a solar flare will strike the earth - setting off a chain reaction incinerating every living creature on the face of the planet. But that's not important right now - what's important is this. No, not the all singing, all dancing Zombie - THIS, this precious moment just before the end, because if you can understand this, if by some miracle clarity wedges its sweet toe through the dark door of apathy, then maybe, just maybe there's hope for us all in this knee deep, existential sludge-pile we so loosely refer to as LIFE.– Blasko Tupper

AND SO THE PLAY BEGINS...

What are we to make of a world at the beginning of its end, one inhabited by zombies created by voodoo hypnosis? This is Part 1 of a larger resource which aims to offer you an introduction to the world of the play, its style, structure, contexts, story and characters. Beginning with background information and then offering a range of discussion, analysis and evaluative questions, the resource often directly addresses the requirements of VCE Theatre Studies Unit 4, Outcome 3: Performance Analysis. The overall resource does not intend to be a definitive interpretation of the production but rather, a way in. The creators of the work and this resource encourage you to trust your own interpretative decisions, supporting them with evidence from the show, and considering how an original Australian musical comedy contributes to understanding contemporary theatre form.

ADDRESSING THE VCE THEATRE STUDIES UNIT 4, OUTCOME 3

Yes, unfortunately - or fortunately - you need to analyse and evaluate a story of zombies and the end of the world in order to address this outcome. Further, there are some rules. The VCAA Theatre Studies Design, Unit 4 requires you to demonstrate the following key skills:

Key skills

- Analyse the character/s in the production including status, motivation and characteristics
- Analyse and evaluate interpretation by actor/s of a playscript in performance, including the acting skills used by actor/s to realise character/s, the use of focus and the acting space and the interrelationships between acting, direction and design
- Analyse the use of language to convey the intended meanings of the play
- Analyse and evaluate the establishment and maintenance of the actor–audience relationship
- Analyse the ways that actor/s work within the theatrical style/s utilised in the production
- Use theatre terminology and expression appropriately



ABOUT MOTOR MOUTH LOVES SUCKFACE

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer/Director/Composer	-	Anthony Crowley
Choreographer	-	Elenor Smith Adams
Costume Design & Assistant Director	-	Siena Stone
Lighting Design	-	Jason Bovaird
Set Design	-	Anthony Crowley
Musical Director	-	Ana Mitsikas
Stage Manager	-	Hayley Fox
Repetiteur	-	Amanda Caletti
Band Leader	-	Caleb Garfinkel

CHARACTERS

Motor-mouth	-	Brenton Gardiner
Suck-face	-	Eliza Grundy
Zombie Boy	-	Patrick Schnur
Blasko Tupper	-	Sophie Smyth
Penelope Tupper	-	Danielle Matthews
Christopher Tupper	-	Mark Jones
Sarah Hope	-	Sophie Jackson
Zack Stellar	-	Elias Jabbour
Hugo Dude	-	Luke Wilson
Tank Ramone	-	Chaya Ocampo
Tiffany Flake	-	Megan Scolyer-Gray
Hilary Stuckle	-	Isabella Ferrer

PERFORMER

SETTING

The time is now.

A mansion in an affluent Australian suburb.

A public school in a poor Australian suburb.

A cosmic wormhole.

CREATING MOTOR MOUTH LOVES SUCKFACE

The script of *Motor-mouth Loves Suck-face* has been in development since 2007 when it began as a play for young people. The first draft of the script was written after several weeks investigating the issues facing young people – and the challenges that were compelling to them which included climate change, activism, agency to manifest change, injustice and love and relationships that give meaning to life.

In 2015 the work was adapted into a first draft musical, which was work-shopped by Federation University Students as part of their second year studies. In 2016 a workshop production was staged at Chapel off Chapel to gain audience insight and feedback – as well as dramaturgical feedback from industry professionals and theatre artists specialising in work for young people. A final version of the script has been created for the production at La Mama Courthouse in July 2018.

QUESTION: What does this overview suggest are the themes of *Motor-mouth Loves Suck-face*?

IMPORTANT LINK:

The following link takes you to creator Anthony Crowley's website and some further visual resources
<http://www.ancrowleycreates.com/motormouthlovesuckface/>

SYNOPSIS

Motor-mouth loves Suck-face - but right now Suck-face is more concerned with losing her virginity before the end of the world. Which is understandable. Everyday there's a new apocalypse to choose from - global warming, terrorism, ebola. If that wasn't bad enough - Trump is in the Whitehouse, their beloved science teacher is dead, the last polar bear on the planet is about to drown - and a solar flare is on the way to incinerate the planet. Enter mysterious new girl - Blasko Tupper - only daughter of devoted parents and international spies Penelope and Christopher. Blasko is weird. Blasko is lonely. Blasko has their science teacher's brain in a jar and wants to escape with it through a cosmic wormhole linking this dimension with the next. Highly intelligent, handy with a chainsaw - and thoroughly skilled in the dark arts - Blasko embarks on a rebellious mission. Step one: Drug her parents and lock them up. Step two: Invite her new friends to 'the party to end all parties' and kidnap them. Step three: Blow everyone up and transport their consciousness through the wormhole. Which seems like a perfectly reasonable plan - until Penelope and Christopher escape - and kick-start a zombie apocalypse. As the bodies pile up, Blasko has no choice but to confront her mother and father. Meanwhile the fate of the next dimension rests on the shoulders of Motor-mouth and Suck-face - armed only with their passion for each other, a totem tennis pole and a brain in a jar. But where there's love there's hope.

STRUCTURE - Two Acts: Act One – 14 scenes, Act Two – 13 scenes

STYLE – PART ONE

Amongst other descriptors, Anthony Crowley describes *Motor-mouth loves Suck-face* as a musical comedy. What are the conventions of musicals or musical theatre? Musical theatre is a form of theatrical performance in which the content is conveyed through song and dialogue, dance and acting and scenic arts. Musical theatre is a genre that has been around since the 18th Century. However the combining of song and drama has existed since the ancient Greeks.

Within the modern version of the genre there are a range of recognised styles of songs that create, develop and enhance characters, as well as drive the narrative. Here are some examples.

CHARACTER SONGS

'I am' songs: Because musicals are by nature 'presentational' characters may introduce themselves directly to the audience through 'I am' songs. 'I am' songs can also allow characters to express feely how they are feeling at that moment, for example Maria's 'I feel Pretty' in *West Side Story*, and sometimes characters discover something about themselves in an 'I am' song. Besides defining oneself and providing moments of self-revelation through these types of songs, characters may also assert themselves against a challenge.

'I want' songs: Where 'I am' songs describe a present state, 'I want' songs suggest a course of action for the future. Characters often express their goals and dreams through these types of songs. For example, in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye dreams of wealth in 'If I were a rich man'. Some characters may also use these songs to say what they 'don't want'.

Reprises: Often a song will occur again in the musical as a 'reprise' which can be used effectively to reveal how a character has developed during the story. An effective reprise which functions dramatically reveals the development of character since the *last* time it was sung. The lyrics may reflect a change in the character's attitude or self-awareness, or they may indicate a change in situation. There are three songs reprised in MMLSF

Emotional climax songs: When characters reach a point in the drama where they can't help but explode with feelings or love or success or simply the joy of live, music serves to amplify these emotions to a level above mere words. Emotional climax songs are exuberant, cathartic, celebratory and infectious, allowing the audience to share the character's passion and excitement.

SONGS THAT TELL THE STORY

Exposition songs: Because songs take up time reserved for dialogue in the play, musicals must move quickly to establish the dramatic situation, introduce the main characters, and give audiences some reason to care about them. Exposition songs inform an audience what has happened and what may have brought the characters to this point in the action. They may also preview the themes of the story.

Conflict songs: At the heart of every drama lies conflict. Some of the most interesting and exciting songs in Musical Theatre involve conflict, when characters struggle.

Narration songs: Narration songs describe events that we otherwise may not see, what has happened off stage for instance.

Summary songs: Similar to narration songs, summary songs compress lengthy amounts of time into one song.

SONGS WITH SPECIAL FUNCTIONS

Comment songs: A character not in the dramatic scene may step to one side and sing about events on stage.

Musical metaphors: These songs take advantage of the unique qualities of musical theatre to portray a situation in presentational, non-literal fashion.

Cameo songs: Cameo songs feature a minor character in a memorable number, someone who otherwise might be forgotten. A good cameo song defines a minor character quickly and effectively as well as giving a performer in a small role time in the spotlight

Parodies: These rely on an audience's familiarity with music that is not in the show they are watching but is used to evoke an appropriate mood. For example some of the songs in MMLSF parody such styles as hoedown and rock opera.

Source: Spurrier, James. *The Integration of Music and Lyrics with the Book in the American Musical*. Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois U, 1979)



WATCH: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=39&v=TYBjZgPOkJM

SONGS IN MOTOR MOUTH LOVES SUCK FACE

ACT ONE SONGS

Rather Be A Zombie
My Polar Bear
Wormhole Baby
Reason To Live
Wormhole Baby [reprise]
Hand Over The Gun
Wanna Eat Your Brain
Su Pasta De Pescado
Welcome To My Party
Do Me, Do Me, Do Me, Do
To Get The Job Done
I Can See
Suck My Armageddon
You Don't Have To Worry

ACT TWO SONGS

I Eat Brains Therefore I Am
Gonna Save The World
The Other Me And You
Ah, Ah, Armageddon
I'm So Happy I Could Die
Heart Be A Radio
Ah, Ah Armageddon [Life Goes On]
I'm Not Like You
A Brain Made For Two
The B.F.F I Never Had [Bollywood Diversion]
Icky Love
Hand Over The Gun [Reprise]
In The Other Dimension

Questions:

How do the synopsis, character list and song titles provide an insight into the world of the musical?

What do you learn about the characters?

What do you learn about the theatrical styles?

What do you learn about the intended meaning of the story and the production?



STYLE – PART TWO

Motor-mouth loves Suck-face is innovative in form and breaks with the traditional narrative structure of popular musicals – by telling the story back - and forth – dropping ambiguous theatrical clues through time and space, for the audience to connect the dots. It is set in a **non-narrative** world where several realities can exist simultaneously – it drops in and out of internal psychological moments, action, and **breaking the fourth wall** – using music and rhythmic, **heightened dialogue** – to accentuate these shifts.

Thematically - it immerses a cast of recognisable characters into a lurid world that becomes a funny, imaginative **metaphor** – for the horror of the real world. The most obvious issue it raises is global warming and the environmental inheritance we're leaving young people – the characters are confronting Armageddon – within an already impending apocalypse called Global warming – but the show uses the context of climate change as a springboard to wider issues.

Theatrically - it employs a **Brechtian approach** to Zombies, teenage love, desire - and Armageddon – utilising **music, dance, comedy, heightened characters** - and ludicrous plot elements to depict a world that is imploding in a vortex of hypocrisy and cynicism. It explores the redemptive power - and cruelty - of love and desire - and musical comedy sex - **with humour and wit** that never becomes uncomfortable, or graphic - thanks to the language it employs, the fun it exudes, (the fact everyone keeps their clothes on) -- and the musical world in which it exists.

The text integrates spoken word with poetry and lyric – it utilises rhyme for visceral – comedic and dramatic effect. As the work has developed we have experimented with zombie movement and how to adapt this into dance – as well as exploring the awkwardness of teenage physicality - when you're not quite 'in' your body. We have developed a **physical language** based on our investigations.

The score balances musical comedy with modern pop – creating **irony** through **pastiche**. Where possible - performers double as musicians -- using this pastiche and groove to keep the vibe ironic, fun and ridiculous – at times shifting gear into ballads that yearn for meaning.

QUESTIONS:

In the description of the styles inherent in *Motor-mouth loves Suck-face* several terms have been bolded

As a class share the terms around and conduct some research about what they mean in terms of theatre performance – what might they look like, sound like, or feel like?

After seeing the production select a clear example from the performance that illustrates each of these terms

What other terms or references to style are mentioned in this description by the creator of the show?

Consider the IMAGES that are presented throughout this resource – do they suggest particular conventions of certain styles?



THEMES IN THE PRODUCTION

The lead character wants to find friends, to save her friends from the end of the world, to give her life meaning – and ultimately – to rebel against her parents. But it's not a typical "us versus them" scenario. For a start the parents are experts in Voodoo mind control, which makes them weird in a very likeable way. And the family unit is affirmed through love and humour – even if mum and dad are turning everyone into mindless zombies.

The play is about choices – about standing for something, even when you're not sure what that something is yet. By allowing the audience to laugh and groove – and revel in its silliness – Motor-mouth Loves Suck-face opens the door to an important - and - at times difficult conversation. But like a great dinner guest - it breaks the ice and enables that conversation to take place in the context of experimental musical comedy.

The musical is set in an urban city high school – it is crucial that the casting is culturally diverse and we pride ourselves on working with talented performers who reflect the diversity of Australia. The play doesn't limit us in our choices – it's about chemistry, connection and a cast that is a community of young people. The musical is a comedy about the end of the world – and through that journey, it affirms the idealism and integrity of young people and the hope they give us all. It's a work that's form allows it to be interpreted on several levels – on the surface it's about two geeks in love, trying to lose their virginity before the world implodes in a zombie apocalypse -- at a deeper level it's about yearning for a better world and overcoming the horrors we all have to process and move beyond, everyday - *Anthony Crowley, May 2018*

BEFORE SEEING THE SHOW

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING?

Nothing? Something? Everything? Do some research and find out. You will hear them spoken about in the production. They are either constructed for the purposes of the story, are real and/or are popular culture references.

ELECTRO MAGNETIC ANXIETY EXTRACTORS
C.I.A.
WORM HOLES
ATOMIC PARTICLES
ARMAGEDDON
DAVID BOWIE
SHINE ON YOU CRAZY DIAMOND – PINK FLOYD
HOUND DOG – ELVIS PRESLEY

MACARENA
ZOMBIES
VOO DOO
BFF
SOLAR FLARE
CAPTAIN KIRK
FEVER – KYLIE MINOGUE



QUESTIONS TO GET YOU THINKING BEFORE THE SHOW...

- How would you go about depicting zombies and violence on stage with a very limited budget?
- What kind of “tone” would you need to find depict the violence in a musical comedy?
- What examples can you find of theatre that utilises absurd idea to explore the human condition?
- What other examples of musical comedy can you find?
- How does a song in a musical help the actor move the drama forward?
- What other examples of comedy - theatre / television or film - can you find that deal with serious themes in a satirical way?
- If you found out the world was going to end in three hours - how would you spend that time?
- How might a play move back and forward in time - and not confuse the audience?
- How would you prepare for a character who is madly in love with another character - who doesn't share the same feelings?
- How could you physically embody a zombie - but not cause yourself physical injury or stress?
- What kind of movement could you invent for a zombie that can be adapted for both horror and comedy?
- What contemporary global issues create a sense of doom?
- How would you feel if you discovered a whole other version of you existed in a whole other dimension?

FURTHER RESOURCES AND LINKS TO PROVIDE CONTEXT

The following links provide further insight into the production through a series of podcast interviews with the creator Anthony Crowley, social media and video links.

BLASKO: IN THE NEXT DIMENSION THERE'S A WHOLE OTHER YOU
YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS IS VERY SMART
IT WORKS OUT WHAT TO DO
IT MERGES WITH YOUR OTHER BRAIN
THE KNOWLEDGE STARTS TO FLOW
YOUR OTHER BRAIN NOW KNOWS THINGS
THAT BEFORE IT DIDN'T KNOW

ZACK: You're saying we have to blow ourselves up 'before' Armageddon?

BLASKO: Correct.

TIFFANY: Hello! You don't line up for the Myer Stock-take sale then go buy K-Mart just before the doors open.

SUCK-FACE [Holding a balloon] What happens when the wormhole closes?

BLASKO: The solar flare strikes the earth and – [pops SUCK-FACE'S balloon].
Any more questions?

HILARY: Um.

HUGO: Well.

ZACK: Yeah.

MOTOR-MOUTH: How do we blow ourselves up?

BLASKO: Beside my pool there is a giant beach ball. Inside the giant beach ball is twenty kilos of plastic explosive.

MOTOR-MOUTH: That could destroy the whole house.

BLASKO: Incorrect. The pool will contain the blast. Whether you live or die is up to you.

HILARY: So we ARE going to burn to death.

BLASKO: No. Before you burn to death the beach ball explodes - your consciousness goes through the wormhole - pay attention.

HUGO: Wouldn't it be easier to swallow a pill.

BLASKO: According to my parents death must be INSTANTANEOUS!

HUGO: What about guns?

BLASKO: Are you trained in the use of firearms?

HUGO: I play 'Call Of Duty'.

BLASKO: Stick to the bomb. No poison, strangulation, drowning, electrocution or - accidental asphyxiation while choking on your own vomit.

SARAH: Right. So the world is going to end because your parents told you.

HILARY: Are they going to blow themselves up?

BLASKO: They are trained in the use of firearms - but I cannot permit them to travel through the wormhole. My parents are not like other parents.

Discussion. Confusion. Doubt.

SARAH: I'll do it!

ALL: [Improvised reaction]: What? / Are you nuts / You can't be serious / etc

BLASKO: You will come with me into the other dimension?

SARAH: Sure, why not.

[Singing] I JUST NEED TO SEE SOME PROOF
BEFORE I GO
WHERE'S THIS BEACH BALL BOMB
YOU'RE GONNA BLOW?

ALL: [Improvised agreement]: Yeah! / too right / prove it / etc.

BLASKO: I AGREE YOU NEED SUBSTANTIATION
SO HERE'S A SMALLER BOMB
I MADE FOR DEMONSTRATION

BLASKO detonates a bomb – the party shakes, everyone screams.

BLASKO: WELCOME TO MY PARTY

ALL: GONNA DIE

BLASKO: THE PARTY TO END ALL PARTIES

ALL: SAY GOODBYE!

SARAH: IF IT'S TRUE WE WOULD HAVE HEARD

ZACK: HER WHOLE CONCEPT IS ABSURD

BOTH: THE WORLD IS NOT ABOUT TO END, OKAY IT'S NOT

ALL: THE PART-AY TO END ALL PARTIES

BLASKO: Do not waste your time contacting the authorities. They will not respond until the bigger bomb is detonated.

HUGO: Hey dudes, my phone isn't working.

BLASKO: I am jamming all telecommunications until after Armageddon.

SUCK-FACE: She's right. I have no internet.

TIFFANY: It really is the end of the world.

ZACK: By now the whole street is calling the cops.

BLASKO: A reasonable assumption except for one small detail.

MOTOR-MOUTH: What small detail?

BLASKO: The whole street is currently on a plane to Venice after winning first prize in their school raffle.

TANK: You flew the whole street to Italy?

BLASKO: It's amazing what you can do with a little imagination and a bank account in Bermuda.

TIFFANY: Okay, that's it. No Instagram. No Selena. I am out of here.

BLASKO: DO NOT TRY TO ESCAPE
DO NOT FEED THE PARENTS
YOU MUST DECIDE IF I AM RIGHT OR I AM ERRANT

SARAH: What do mean... escape?

BLASKO: This morning I had an electric fence installed around the perimeter of this property. [To audience] I'm pretty sure I mentioned that part before. [To Sarah] It comes with its own generator.

A flash of light. A scream as someone tries to escape. Lights go out.

They hold up their smart-phones that no longer work. Little glowing ghosts swaying in the dark. MOTOR-MOUTH and SUCK-FACE sneak away.

BLASKO: LOOK NOW – SEE - AURORA AUSTRALIS
THE SOLAR FLARE IS COMING AND IT WON'T MISS
AT EXACTLY MIDNIGHT LIGHT WILL FILL THE SKY
THE WORMHOLE WILL APPEAR
THE POLAR BEAR WILL DIE
UNLESS WE ARE OBLITERATED
OUR END IS ALSO NIGH
A LIVING HELL TOO HORRIBLE TO MENTION
FOR ONLY CONSCIOUSNESS CAN PASS
INTO THE NEXT DIMENSION

QUESTIONS:

Use the script excerpt above to consider the following

What theatrical styles are suggested by the script? What specific conventions are suggested?

How do you imagine the performers may create this scene using expressive skills – voice, gesture, movement, facial expression?

What stage directions are there and how do they assist in 'directing' the actors – consider, focus, use of space, movement, action and interaction?

What stagecraft other than acting/direction is suggested – set, props, costume, lighting, sound?

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

Now that you have explored the script to see what clues it offers you re staging, acting and direction...

Distribute the script around your class – select characters, select a director/directors

Do a number of readings making any notes you feel are necessary for your characters

Extend into a moved reading – placing the scene in the space and considering blocking

Rehearse the scene a few times and make some choices

Present the work, perhaps film the work and discuss the choices offered by a) your current knowledge of the play and its world b) your exploration on the floor.

THEN...

Take this knowledge and exploration with you when you see the performance

Was the class imagining the same as the creative team?

Compare the character you played with the version in the production

FURTHER RESOURCES AND LINKS TO PROVIDE CONTEXT

The following links provide further insight into the production through a series of podcast interviews with the creator Anthony Crowley, social media and video links.

THE ASIDE PODCAST

<https://soundcloud.com/asidepodcast/the-aside-playlist-interview-with-anthony-crowley-on-motor-mouth-part-1?in=asidepodcast%2Fsets%2Fvce-theatre-studies-playlist>

<https://soundcloud.com/asidepodcast/the-aside-playlist-interview-with-anthony-crowley-on-motor-mouth-part-2?in=asidepodcast/sets/vce-theatre-studies-playlist>

<https://soundcloud.com/asidepodcast/the-aside-playlist-interview-with-anthony-crowley-on-motor-mouth-part-3?in=asidepodcast/sets/vce-theatre-studies-playlist>

FACEBOOK

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

INSTAGRAM

<https://www.instagram.com/motormouthlovessuckface/>

SONGWRITING – WRITER AT WORK

<https://www.facebook.com/motormouthlovessuckface/videos/1426067227420831/>

<https://www.facebook.com/motormouthlovessuckface/videos/1424531564241064/>

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