



## **ATAR course examination, 2022**

# **DRAMA**

## **Text booklet**

## **Section One**

The Text booklet must be handed in with your Question/Answer booklet.

**Drama text**

*Black Cockatoo* written by Geoffery Atherden, was first produced by Ensemble Theatre in association with 2020 Sydney Festival and published by Playlab, 2020.

**Contextual information**

This play was inspired by the true story of legendary First Nations cricketer Unnaramin (also known as Johnny Mullagh) and Australia’s first ever international sporting team. This is not only a story about cricket; but of strength, resistance, hope and possibility.

Over 150 years ago, 13 brave Aboriginal men in Western Victoria picked up their cricket bats and embarked on a treacherous voyage to England. Risking illness and persecution, Australia’s first international cricket team played in front of many English crowds. They should have returned to Australia as celebrated heroes. They did not.

When a group of young activists sneak into the Wimmera Discovery Centre to expose the truth of what happened to Johnny and his teammates, a hidden legend of triumph and tragedy unfolds.

The play is non-linear in structure and is set in three time periods, which it frequently transitions between. This script uses the conventions of ‘enters’ and ‘exits’ even though the intention of the Director may be for the cast to remain on stage.

**Characters & Setting**

It is important to note that the ensemble cast will all play multiple characters, for example the same actor will play Tina and Lady Lydia Bardwell, although one actor only will play Johnny Mullagh.

**Characters according to time and setting**

**Distant Past (1868), York cathedral\*, England**

JOHNNY MULLAGH: Jardawadjali man from Western Victoria, 27  
 LADY LYDIA BARDWELL: an English woman of the upper classes, late 30s

*\*A cathedral is a Christian church building.*

**Recent past (2018), Wimmera Discovery Centre, Victoria**

TINA: activist, student. Presently a lawyer with thoughts about a career in politics. A cricket fan  
 KIMBERLY: classmate of Tina in an Indigenous History and Politics course  
 ALEX: activist and classmate of the other characters  
 BRANDON: activist and classmate of the other characters

**Present time, Museum storage space**

CURATOR:\*\* interacts with the audience watching the play. The curator also moves between times and settings.

*\*\*A curator is someone who exhibits and protects objects of historical importance.*

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**Script excerpt 1: Museum storage space (Present time)**

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*While the audience is entering and taking their seats, the CURATOR, wearing white cotton gloves, is on stage, looking through boxes until he finds each of the three objects detailed below. Each one is unwrapped carefully. During this, the CURATOR may chat to the audience and reassure them that the play hasn't started yet and that he is just getting a few things ready.*

*House lights down.*

CURATOR: Right, we're about to get going. But before I do, I want to acknowledge that we're here on Cammeragal land. The Cammeragal people were part of the Eora nation, and the Eora nation stretches from the Hawksbury River to the north, the Nepean River to the west, the Georges River to the south and our beautiful coastline here in Sydney. And we pay our respects to their elders past and present. In addition, our story concerns people from three tribes in Victoria, three different tribes but connected through song lines, and they are the Watjabaluk, Gunditjimara and Jardawadjali people and we pay our respects to them and to their elders past and present. *(A pause for a moment of respect).*

And now I need to ask for some help from you, the audience. We have a number of valuable objects, valuable things here and I'm going to ask you to help me to look after them during the performance. For example, this boomerang is believed to be one that went to England in 1868.

*He retrieves the boomerang and approaches a member of the audience.*

Would you mind looking after this? Have you ever thrown one of these and made it fly? Don't try. It's on loan from a private collection and at the end of the run, we've promised to get it back in good condition.

*The CURATOR retrieves the next object, a prayer book.*

This is an English prayer book from the Victorian era, probably printed in about 1860, roughly. Can I ask you to hold this for me? Thank you.

*The final object is Johnny Mullagh's 1868 cap with the boomerang and bat emblem.*

And this is very special, this is one of the actual caps worn by one of the members of the 1868 Aboriginal team that went to play cricket in England. You? Don't put it on. Just hold it. Thank you.

*The CURATOR returns to centre stage.*

Thank you everyone for looking after these. It's a big help. You see, we're expecting a bit of trouble.

*Offstage, the sound of glass being broken. The CURATOR reacts to the sound and exits quickly. Lights down to as dark as possible. The sound of more breaking glass and a window or door being forced open.*

**See next page**

**Script excerpt 2: Wimmera Discovery Centre (2018)**

*Sounds of footsteps on broken glass. ALEX, TINA and BRANDON enter, using their phone torches. They're dressed in ordinary day clothes appropriate for a cool, country night.*

TINA: I didn't know we were going to smash our way in.

ALEX: We said we were gonna break in. How do you break in without breaking something?

TINA: You look for an open window?

*The sound of knocking on the front door causes everyone to turn to look in the same direction.*

BRANDON: Through the front door. See, that's what I wanted to do. Boom!

*TINA makes a call into her phone.*

TINA: Kim, no, round the back. Round the back. We're in. *(She ends the call).*

BRANDON: I'll get her.

*BRANDON exits to get KIMBERLY. ALEX locates a switch and turns on the storeroom lights. Phone torches are turned off. Offstage sounds of difficult entry.*

KIMBERLY: *(offstage)* God, what a mess. Who did this?

BRANDON: *(offstage)* Alex.

*BRANDON enters with KIMBERLY. She's much more glamorously dressed.*

TINA: What are you wearing?

KIMBERLY: What's wrong?

ALEX: You do know this is a protest?

KIMBERLY: Yeah. I want to look glam for the photographers. When do they get here?

ALEX: Possibly in the morning when they open up and find us here.

KIMBERLY: We're here all night? *(She takes off her high heels).* I wish someone'd told me.

ALEX: Why don't we start by having a look around?

*TINA and ALEX exit to the rest of the exhibition. BRANDON gestures for KIMBERLY to follow as he exits.*

KIMBERLY: *(resigned, as she exits)* I hate cricket.

*Stage is empty. Maybe bring up some house lights.*

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**Script excerpt 3: York cathedral (1868)**

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*The CURATOR enters and crosses to the audience member who is holding the prayer book. He holds his hand out to ask for the prayer book. He takes it upstage. The CURATOR moves to a position next to the central entrance to the cathedral. JOHNNY MULLAGH enters. He's a bit hesitant about entering such a large and imposing cathedral. At the same time he is in an angry mood and he brings it in with him. He is dressed in his cricketing clothes from the tour, feet bare. He passes the CURATOR, who offers the prayer book to him. MULLAGH looks at it and takes it. He knows what it is but he isn't sure what he's supposed to do with it. MULLAGH crosses downstage. He looks up at the majestic height of the cathedral ceiling.*

CURATOR: It is July, 1868. The Queen is Queen Victoria and they say that the sun will never set on the British Empire. This is Unnaramin, known as Johnny Mullagh, a Jardawadjali man from the colony of Victoria, Australia, and he is here in England to play cricket.

MULLAGH: *(anger showing)* Today, I am not playing.

*MULLAGH looks up at the ceiling of the cathedral. LYDIA BARDWELL enters, well dressed with the carelessness of the very wealthy, in her late thirties. She is not at all intimidated by her surroundings.*

BARDWELL: Mister Mullagh. Well done.

*MULLAGH turns to see BARDWELL coming towards him holding a cricket programme from the match she just watched. He is a little surprised. A voice calls shhh. BARDWELL lowers her voice, but only a little.*

I mean it. You did very well back there *(she stops in front of him)*. I feel I should apologise for the rudeness of my countrymen, I really should.

*MULLAGH is uncertain what he should do with the prayer book.*

I am as rude as they are. I know who you are, of course, your name is in the programme, but you don't know who I am. Lydia Bardwell, although you can call me Lady Bardwell.

*MULLAGH is guarded, moves the prayer book from one hand to the other, reaches out with his free hand and takes BARDWELL's hand and shakes it. BARDWELL is a little surprised but has her hand shaken, much more vigorously than she's used to.*

Strong grip there, Mister Mullagh, I suppose that goes with holding the bat and so on *(they stop shaking hands)*. You behaved with great dignity, Mister Mullagh, in considerable contrast to the exceedingly ... well, simply unforgivable rudeness of the members of the club. These snobs calling themselves the gentlemen of York when plainly they are not.

*She stops. At this moment she's looking down at MULLAGH's feet and she's temporarily lost for words. And MULLAGH is wondering what is happening.*

BARDWELL: Your shoes.

MULLAGH: What shoes?

BARDWELL: You have nothing on your feet.

MULLAGH: I never wear shoes when I play.

BARDWELL: Not when you're playing.

MULLAGH: I can run much better. Faster.

BARDWELL: Ah. *(A fresh thought)*. It did seem to me that the least you deserve is a very nice luncheon, at least that was my hastily thought up plan ... if you would like to accompany me?

MULLAGH: Where are we going?

BARDWELL: To luncheon.

*MULLAGH seems to hesitate.*

Unless ... perhaps you would rather enjoy the architecture or perhaps after all that unpleasantness you would prefer to be on your own. If so, I do apologise.

*She waits to see what he will do. She gestures to him to go with her or ... ?*

MULLAGH: What sort of lunch?

BARDWELL: I'm sure Cook will be able to find something for us.

*MULLAGH isn't sure what to do with the prayer book. He puts it into a pocket.*

**Script excerpt 4: Outside York cathedral (1868)**

*Something to create the effect that we are now outside the cathedral. Gentle, English light.*

BARDWELL: The cathedral, how does it compare in your opinion?

*He has no idea what she's talking about.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Section 1

#### Contextual information

Adapted from: Ensemble Theatre. (2020). *Black Cockatoo*. Retrieved July, 2022, from <https://www.ensemble.com.au/shows/black-cockatoo/>

#### Characters according to time and setting

Adapted from: Atherden, G. J. (2020). *Black Cockatoo* [Playscript]. Retrieved July, 2022, from [https://apt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/files/PL/PDF\\_extract/B/294\\_PL\\_Black\\_Cockatoo\\_EXTRACT.pdf](https://apt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/files/PL/PDF_extract/B/294_PL_Black_Cockatoo_EXTRACT.pdf)

#### Script excerpts

Adapted from: Atherden, G. J. (2020). *Black Cockatoo* [Playscript]. Retrieved July, 2022, from [https://apt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/files/PL/PDF\\_extract/B/294\\_PL\\_Black\\_Cockatoo\\_EXTRACT.pdf](https://apt.org.au/wp-content/uploads/files/PL/PDF_extract/B/294_PL_Black_Cockatoo_EXTRACT.pdf)

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