

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Blood Orange

by Noëlle Janaczewska

EXTRACT

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The cast and crew from the community version of *Blood Orange*, November, 1992.
(Photo: Ellen Comiskey)

Blood Orange (Schools Touring Show) is written to be performed in four languages: Vietnamese, Arabic, Italian and English. Because of the difficulties involved in typesetting and printing Arabic and Vietnamese, the script, as it appears here, is all in English. Sections which are performed in another language appear here in English in italics, with the language in which they are performed indicated in brackets afterwards.

Blood Orange (Community Show) was originally produced by Death Defying Theatre. Workshops with young women of non-English speaking backgrounds in Auburn and Fairfield were facilitated by Death Defying Theatre artists. Noëlle Janaczewska wrote *Blood Orange* (Community Show) for performance by those young women. Twenty women performed and another ten designed and did technical work for the three week season. At the end of 1992, Death Defying Theatre commissioned Noëlle Janaczewska to write another version of *Blood Orange* for performance by three actors in schools and community venues. This version is the result of that commission.

This version of *Blood Orange*, written to be performed by three actors, explores the same issues of body, health and identity, as *Blood Orange* (Community Show), but the structure and aspects of the content have been changed somewhat. In this version, a loose narrative replaces the concert-like form of the community show. The structure is provided by three characters, Kim, Nadya and Tessa, meeting to plan a birthday celebration for an absent fourth friend, Krystyna. Into this structure are slotted some of the re-worked pieces from the community version of *Blood Orange*. Issues that were not dealt with in any detail in the community show, like eating behaviour disorders and HIV/AIDS, are raised and discussed in this version.

There are no specific set or staging requirements, and the only prop is a terracotta bowl of fruit. This bowl needs to include oranges, at least one of which should be a blood orange — either a real one, or one injected with red food dye. The costumes should be ordinary clothes that are easy to move in. They should not look like theatrical costumes.

Blood Orange (Schools Touring Show) was first produced by Death Defying Theatre. It opened on 5 March 1993 at the Pact Youth Theatre in Erskville, NSW.

[Scene One]

[A terracotta bowl of fruit, including oranges, is placed on stage. The three performers play a game with the oranges as they chant the opening rhymes. This is lively and fast-moving.]

TESSA: Two four six eight
How are we going to celebrate?
[Throws orange to KIM]

KIM: Krystyna's birthday
Just a week away
[Throws orange to NADYA]

NADYA: One, two
What shall we do?
[*Throws orange to KIM*]

KIM: Party?

[*The orange is caught each time a performer makes a suggestion.*]

NADYA: Movies?

TESSA: Band?

KIM: Theatre?

TESSA: Club?

NADYA: Dance Party?

TESSA: Fancy dress party?

KIM: Cook a special meal?

NADYA: A harbour cruise?

TESSA: Somewhere we've never been?

NADYA: Something we've never done?

KIM: A surprise?

ALL: Yes!

[*The game ends.*]

NADYA: [*Taking a piece of fruit and offering the bowl to KIM and TESSA*] So, how are we going to surprise Krystyna?

KIM: [*Taking a piece of fruit.*] Restaurant?

TESSA: [*Refusing any fruit.*] No!

NADYA: What about a beach party?

KIM: Mmm... What d'you think, Tess?

TESSA: You never know what the weather'll be like —

NADYA: It's summer; It'll be fine —

TESSA: It gets really crowded at this time of year —

NADYA: So what?

TESSA: Everyone stares at you —

NADYA: So! Stare back.

TESSA: Sunbaking's not good for you — skin cancer 'n' all that —

NADYA: We'll take loads of sunblock!

TESSA: Look, Nadya, I don't think the beach is a good idea! OK? [*Silence.*] I don't feel comfortable at the beach. *I always feel people are looking at me* [*Italian*] — thinking how fat I am; noticing great tufts of hair sticking out the bottom of my cozzie. So I stay away from the beach — *and swimming* [*Italian*] — even though I used to really enjoy it.

KIM: What about when you were at school?

TESSA: I always got excused from swimming. Said I had my periods.

KIM: What — every week?

TESSA: Yeah. The swimming teacher was a man and got really embarrassed when girls said they had their periods, so he never asked me why I was continually bleeding!

NADYA: I used to do that too. *My Mum wouldn't let me shave* [*Arabic*]. When we went to the beach everyone else would be lying there in their cozzies and there I'd be in jeans and top — sweating like mad — *dying to go for a swim* [*Arabic*] — but too embarrassed to wear a cozzie. But then, I went to the beach one day and there were this group of women there — quite a bit older than me. Anyway, I noticed that some of them had hair under their arms, and on their legs and along their bikini lines. But they weren't bothered by it; they were having a great time. *So I realised that there were a lot of women like me, and that you didn't have to be hairless to go to the beach and have a good time!* [*Arabic*] — you just had to feel OK about yourself!

[*Scene Two*]

[*This is a rhythm piece for all three performers.*]

GIRL 1: Hair!

GIRL 2: Lets talk about hair. Why not?

GIRL 3: Hair?

GIRL 1: Is hair fair?

GIRL 2: *Hair.* [*Italian*]

GIRL 1: *Hair. Know what I mean?* [*Arabic*]

GIRL 2: My not fair hair. It's not fair that I've got all this hair ...

GIRL 1: Black hair that shows

GIRL 2: That grows

GIRL 1: In places

GIRL 2: And spaces

GIRL 1: I'd like it not to be.

GIRL 2: Pull it out!

GIRL 3: Shave it off!

GIRL 1: Bleach it blonde!

GIRL 2: Wax it off.

GIRL 1: Sugar it off like Mum used to do. It's true. She did. Take five tablespoons of sugar.

GIRL 3: Is brown best?