

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Silver Seafarers

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by Suzanne Spinner

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EXTRACT

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SILVER SEAFARERS

CAST:-----

CREW of 6 teenagers plus two adult skippers

WATCH I - Miranda, Isabel and Martin with Jimbo

WATCH II- Tim, Frankie and Rolo with Maddie

THE CREW -----

- 1. MIRANDA - The Celestial Navigator, vegetarian, New Age type, knows without learning
- 2. TIM - The Weatherman, the charismatic leader. Always knows where the wind is
- 3. ISABEL- The Joker, who keeps Miranda awake during watches, sings a lot
- 4. MARTIN - The Panic Merchant, quiet , inscrutable the one who hyperventilates
- 5. FRANKIE - Romantic, poetic, worries out loud, gets seasick
- 6. ROLO - The Food fanatic, the video maker who eats the chocolate rations

The couple FRANKIE and TIM

THE SKIPPERS-----

MADELEINE MADDIE NEWMAN- calm and practical, panics quietly, loves sailing and wants everyone else to enjoy it as much as she does.

JAMES JIMBO NEWMAN - The Boss, shouter , gruff with a sea quote for every occasion, always concerned about the state of his boat

THE BOAT/ THE MIDJANGA

They are on The Boat, The Midjanga all the time  
The Boat refers to a platform stage construction or in the case of the first production, a template of an archetypical boat shape marked out in salt on the floor of The Maritime Museum.

## SILVER SEAFARERS \_\_\_\_\_

## THE OFF BOAT CAST -----

## THE VIRTUAL MARITIME MUSEUM

Museum Guide

ABC Radio Commentator

The Spice Trader

Darwin Old Salt

John Lort Stokes

James Wickham

Philip Parker King

Lte Mathew Flinders

William Westhall, artist on The Investigator

Pobossa - Macassan Captain

The Anthropologist

The VOC(Dutch East Indie Co.) Official

\* Japanese Pearl Diver

\* Malay Tender

\* Torres Strait Islander Shell opener

\* Greek Master Pearler

Ian Fairweather

Captain Robert Gurrie RAN Naval Patrol

Nameless Vietnamese Boat people

Two intrepid Tiwi picture goers

Balinese Fisherman

\*\* Larrakia man out fishing

## AMBON

Ambonese Official

Lord Mayor of Ambon

Lord Mayor of Darwin

ALSO a group of Singers and Puppeteers/ Dancers  
but these could be roles shared between them.

NOTE- in the first production

\* These characters were replaced by a video sequence on  
the history of pearling

\*\* This character was replaced by a video interview with  
a Larrakia Elder

THE VIRTUAL MARITIME MUSEUM-----

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THE AUDIENCE FOR THE PLAY ARE ALL MILLING AROUND OUTSIDE  
AMONGST THE BOATS, SOME ARE STILL BUYING TICKETS FOR THE  
EVENINGS PERFORMANCE, WHEN SUDDENLY A SEARCHLIGHT IS  
TURNED ONTO AN INDONESIAN FISHING BOAT AND A LOUD VOICE  
BOOMS OUT

MEGAPHONE VOICE FROM NAVY PATROL BOAT .

CAPT. GURRIE-

This is Captain Gurrie of the Australian Navy, commander  
of HMAS BUFFALO. Are you the captain?

VAGUE NONCOMPREHENDING RESPONSE

DO- YOU-Know- Where-YOU-ARE?

SHAKE OF HEADS

We do. You are well past the Ashmore Reef and fifty  
kilometres inside Australia's territorial waters.  
My men have been observing you for some hours. We have  
seen you bring up nets of fish and we have reason to  
believe you have been catching shark in gillnets.  
Gillnets are illegal. Do you have anything to say?

MORE INDICATIONS OF NON COMPREHENSION.

We are placing your boat under arrest . We shall escort  
you back to Darwin. Your boat will be confiscated.  
You will be detained. You will have to go to court.  
Do you understand what I am saying?

MORE INCOMPREHENSION

You will turn around now- we are going to Darwin.

CAPTAIN BEGINS INDICATING BY GESTURES THAT THEY ARE TO  
TURN AND FOLLOW HIM. THEY FINALLY INDICATE THEY  
UNDERSTAND HIM.

You will all follow me. The police will meet us in  
Darwin. The fishing's over.

THE CAPTAIN MARSHALLS THE AUDIENCE AND LEADS THEM INTO  
THE MARITIME MUSEUM AND HANDS THEM (THE AUDIENCE) OVER TO  
THE MUSEUM GUIDE

ANNOUNCER : Welcome to The Virtual Maritime Museum

MUSEUM GUIDE- Thank you Captain and Good Evening  
Everyone. I am pleased to see so many of you have booked  
for this evening's tour of the Maritime Boatshed. Now  
just follow me through these doors.  
These boats may look solid and shipshape but they are  
surprisingly fragile, you need only ask our conservators.  
So please don't touch the boats!

MUSEUM GUIDE

We at the Museum are very proud of our Boat Collection. We owe its existence to the foresight and maverick collecting policy of our previous Director. He purchased many of these boats long before this magnificent building was even dreamt of..

For years many of these boats were stored in the cavernous space of the old Parap Cinema, others were exhibited in the grounds of the Museum. In those days you really could play pirates on the pearling lugger.

This evening's tour will introduce you to the many of our historical boats and the stories behind them.

Follow me to the next exhibit.

We are a modern museum. Not for us the dioramas, or antiquated models of the past. Take this first exhibit here- our pride and joy, the pearling lugger, VIVIENNE which was owned and operated by Paspaley Pearling and donated to this Museum in 1983.

VIDEO SEQUENCE : ON THE PEARLING LUGGER VIVIENNE -----

OLD STYLE PEARL DIVER IN SUIT HARD HAT AND HEAVY BOOTS. HE IS CONNECTED TO A BOAT WHICH WE CANNOT YET SEE BY HIS AIR LINE AND ANOTHER SIGNAL LINE. THE DIVER IS WALKING IN SLOW MOTION ON THE SEA BED COLLECTING PEARL SHELL - THE ROPE BAG AROUND HIS NECK IS NEARLY FULL. HE PUTS ONE LAST SHELL IN IT AND TUGS ON HIS MESSAGE LINE. HE TIES THE NECK BAG TO A ROPE AND IT IS HAULED UP THEN WE SEE A MAN ON THE LUGGER TIP OUT ON THE DECK A BAG OF SHELL AND THEN TIE THE EMPTY BAG ON THE LINE AND LOWER IT OVER THE SIDE. ANOTHER MAN IS SITTING NEARBY ON AN UPTURNED CRATE OPENING SHELL WITH A KNIFE. HE OPENS AND DISCARDS TWO OR THREE SHELLS, THEN CONCENTRATION, ANTICIPATION AND HE HOLDS ALOFT A PRIZE PEARL

SHELL-OPENER- You beauty, You little beauty!

THE OTHER CREWMAN RUSHES UP TO HIM

TENDER - Number One Pearl

OPENER- Boss, Boss

THE PEARLING MASTER RUSHES ON TO SEE WHAT THE COMMOTION IS ABOUT

OPENER- First Class, Boss.

MASTER- Number one alright. First class.

MUSEUM GUIDE-

Now Follow me and spread out along the railing-  
Over here on the right is our collection of Balinese fishing boats or JUKUNGS . They all sailed here from Bali in 1992 in The Great Jukung Race, which some of you may remember. You will note the Lanteen style sail which these days is usually made of rice bag plastic. Note also the big bamboo poles which give JUKUNGS their stability. As you can see its rig is very like a modern Windsurfer.

A STRAW-HATTED BALINESE FISHERMAN APPEARS WADING IN THE SEA NEAR THE JUKUNGS

BALINESE FISHERMAN- JUKUNG can ride the wave and surf over the reef to take us where the sweetest fish in the greatest number swim . We still catch fish in JUKUNG going from beach at SANUR every morning.

When we make our JUKUNG we always paint eye on the prow to show us the way through the sea. And we carve the head of GADJA MINA, half elephant, half fish to make the boat strong. The eyes look out and protect us from bad spirit and the capricious God of the Sea, we call DEWA BARUNA.

MUSEUM GUIDE-

The theme of a perilous journey to Darwin is featured in our next exhibit, the Vietnamese refugee boat THINH VUONG over here. Please follow me  
Boats like the THINH VUONG travelled over three thousand, five hundred kilometres from Vietnam to Darwin, navigating with only the aid of a school atlas.

THE SMALL WOODEN BOAT IS CROWDED WITH PEOPLE - MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN TATTERED CLOTHES - THEY ARE WAVING AT US BESEECHING AND IMPLORING US TO TAKE THEM IN, GIVE THEM A REFUGE.THE HORDES OF PEOPLE COULD BE MADE FROM PUPPETS MANIPULATED BY TWO PUPPETEERS WHO ALSO PROVIDE THE VOICES

REFUGEES	Food, Food, water, water
REFUGEE 1	We are going to Australia.
REFUGEE 2	Food, water, only rice and fish.
REFUGEE 1	Water all finish
REFUGEE 2	How far is Darwin?
REFUGEES	Food, water! Australia - how far? How far Australia?

THE ARNHEMLANDERS AND THE LIPA LIPA DUGOUT CANOE

MUSEUM GUIDE: This exhibit is a LIPA-LIPA or Dugout Canoe. LIPA-LIPAS were introduced to coastal Arnhemland Aborigines by the Macassans. This LIPA-LIPA was specially made at Maningrida for the Museum. The Macassans introduced axes with iron heads which were invaluable tools for making dug-out canoes. Tall straight Paperbark trees are most commonly chosen as canoe trees and The sails are woven by the women from Pandanus.

LIPA-LIPAS or dugout canoes enabled coastal Aborigines to venture further out to sea to hunt dugong and turtle. Prior to the introduction of LIPA- LIPAS they were restricted to using paperbark canoes like the one other there, but these weere not as seaworthy and exposed the hunters to the risk of crocodile attacks. Arhenland Aborigines called the Maccassans, BALANDA or Hollander men, and BALANDA is today the name used for all white people.

NARRATOR: These Makassarmen come long, longtime ago in my grandfathers's grandfathers time, long time before you mob. They tell us about White People. They call him Balanda, Hollander men. Now we call your mob, Balanda. Makassarmen come first in their ships with sails, little ships with sails. Not big tallships like you mob

Makassarmen come up all along Arnhemland coast, all around they camp. round Yirrkala, Maningrida, Millingimbi way, out the islands Croker and Groote too. But Makassarmen went, when the wind changed, when MAMARIGA, South East Wind come up, they went off back to their own country. Everytime my people sad and cried. Old people sing songs and make things on the beach to bring them back. Next time, BARRA, North East Wind come up, they come back.

Makassarmen teach us smoke pipe and makes canoes like them cut from trees, with weaving sails, pandanus sails. Our women weavim sails. Lot of work weavin sails.Plenty good sails.

We make boats from canoe trees, callim LIPA LIPA. Plenty good for hunting turtle and dugong and they not sink like bark canoes, so crocodiles can't get you. This one paperbark log, chop him axe, make him proper shape.

MUSEUM GUIDE-

Please follow me to the next exhibit  
Now you have all no doubt had experiences of Touch  
Screens, well we have something more advanced, The Taste  
Screen.

SNAPS A LAPTOP LIKE CASE WHICH CONTAINS TWO SAMPLES OF  
WHITE CRYSTALS.

Come forward and taste these.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS HAVE A TASTE.

MUS/G        What is it?

AUD/M        Sugar

MUS/G        Yes , and this one ?

AUD/M        Salt.

MUSEUM GUIDE- Yes, and do you know, they were all that  
was found in that canoe down there.

GUIDE LEADS THEM TO ON A SMALL WOODEN CANOE DRAPED IN A  
RED SAIL.

MUSEUM GUIDE-

It is a GOLEKAN type of canoe made in East Java. It was  
discovered by a Darwin fisherman in the mangroves at  
Grose Island over on the Cox Penninsula. In it under a  
red sail was a dead man and the only supplies found with  
him were a jar of salt and a jar of sugar. It is  
understood that he had set off months before intending to  
sail to Australia. How he got here is a great mystery.  
Did he die at sea and drift here on the tide? The sea has  
many secrets and this is one of them.

KNOT KNOT NEVER NO MORE KNOTS-----

ANNOUNCER - The Trainees train and tie some knots

THE ENTIRE CAST OF YOUNG PEOPLE SITTING ALONG THE EDGE OF THE WALKWAY LEGS DANGLING OVER THE SIDE AS IF THEY ARE ON A PIER OR WHARF. THEY ARE ALL ENGAGED IN TYING CERTAIN SAILING KNOTS IN SMALL LENGTHS OF CORD. JIMBO, THE SKIPPER IS WALKING UP AND DOWN CHECKING THE PROFFICIENCY OF THEIR KNOTS AND BARKING ORDERS AT THEM. MADDIE IS ASSISTING IN THE DEMONSTRATION.

JIMBO - OK gang, let's go over them all again.

1st TRAINEE - Why do we have to tie these knots over and over again?

JIMBO - Because, I say so!

ISABEL - Is that a rope I see before me?

JIMBO - This is the standing part, this is the bitter end and this is the bight. Repeat - Standing part- Bitter End -Bight. Everyone with me ?

THEY ALL REPEAT HIS WORDS AND DEMONSTRATE WITH THE ROPE.

2nd TRAINEE - To the bitter end

JIMBO - Now the REEF KNOT or?

FRANKIE - SQUARE KNOT

MARTIN - Also known as the sailors knot

JIMBO - Yes, Why - you?

ROLO - You use it all the time

JIMBO - Yes, what for, what for?

3rd TRAINEE - Tying lines together...

ROLO - When you reef a sail...

JIMBO - Ye-ses. So Left over right and under then right over left and under and pull snug. OK Everybody make me a Reef Knot and be quick about it.

MIRANDA - That's all it is - See, easy peasy!

FRANKIE - This is right isn't it?

TIM - Yes

MARTIN - Mine looks right , but...

JIMBO - You just reversed what I did - do it again.