

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



This Island is our Ship

by Chris Thompson

EXTRACT

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Prologue: Ringing in the Audience

THE AUDIENCE arrives outside the Performance Space.

They are drawn to a gathering place by the sound of ringing bells

THE FEDERATION BELLS ARE RUNG

An ELDER of the Wurundjeri people welcomes the audience to this place by saying:

ELDER: Wominjeka Wurundjeri Balluk
 yearmenn koondee bik
 (welcome to the land of the Wurundjeri people)

She performs a smoking ceremony.

As it ends, THE TRAVELERS appear. Together they begin to hand out leaves from the Wurnn (the River White Gum) to each member of THE AUDIENCE. As they do, they welcome them in different languages... in each other's languages... Vietnamese speak Greek... Sudanese speak Filipino... Croatians speak Maltese... Germans speak Dinka... and so on...

THE FEDERATION BELLS RING OUT AGAIN.

THE BELLRINGERS and THE TRAVELERS lead THE AUDIENCE into the AUDITORIUM...

Scene 1: Bunjil

Inside, the space is empty except for the BAND and CHOIR who are set to one side.

A large projection area is central to the space.

The BUNJIL THEME plays as THE TRAVELERS lead the AUDIENCE to their seats.

BUNJIL THEME ***Instrumental***

As THE TRAVELERS gather on the empty stage in small groups, BUNJIL (The Great Eagle) flies onto stage, swooping and soaring...

PROJECTIONS		
<i>BUNJIL soaring in the skies</i>		<i>Pre-White Settlement Image</i>

THE TRAVELERS listen as an indigenous STORYTELLER steps forward...

STORYTELLER: This place has been created by a very special spiritual being that we know as Bunjil the Eagle. Whenever there's a fearsome time or a time of doubt... most times an eagle will fly or be visible... to help us know what's right... that is Bunjil... Bunjil created the land, the mountains, the rivers, the animals, the birds, the trees, all living and natural things... We're born from this land, we belong to the land, we take care of the land, we respect this land... There is a place on this land for everyone... everyone has a place... (*from Joy Murphy, Yarra Healing Stories)

As the story ends, BUNJIL continues to swoop and soar and dance. THE TRAVELERS and the CHOIR sing the BUNJIL CHANT...

BUNJIL CHANT ***Lyrics by Joy Murphy, Music by Ruth Schonheimer***

Bunjil – ahh!, Bunjil – ahh!
Aah – ess!, Ah – ess!, Ah – ess!
Aah – ess!, Aah – ess!, Ah – ess!

Scene 2: This Island is our Ship

BUNJIL flies to a high perch at the rear of the stage, from where he can see all things...

THE FEDERATION BELLS RING OUT AGAIN.

THE TRAVELERS and CHOIR sing THIS ISLAND IS OUR SHIP. As they sing, images are projected onto the screen.

THIS ISLAND IS OUR SHIP

Music by Jennie Swain

Lyrics by Chris Thompson & Jennie Swain

We come by sky
We come by sea
We come with hope
Our hope is fire
We come by sea

Land belongs to the sea
Sea belongs to the sun
Sun belongs to the sky
Sky belongs to the land

We come by sky
We come by sea
We come with hope
Our hope is fire
We come by sea

We belong to the homes we left behind
We belong to the homes we come to find
We belong to the homes we left behind
We belong to the homes we come to find

We belong to the journey
We belong to this song
We belong to the journey

We come by sky (we belong to the journey)
We come by sea (we belong to the journey)
We come with hope (we belong to the journey)
Our hope is fire
We come by sea (we belong to the journey)

This island is our ship
This island is our home
This island is our ship
This island is our home

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Land and Sea</i>	<i>Sea</i>	<i>Sun in the sky</i>

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Sun at Sunset</i>	<i>Native Grasslands</i>	<i>Old Gum Tree</i>

PROJECTIONS		
<i>River Bend</i>	<i>Bushfire</i>	<i>Sunset</i>

As the song finishes, THE TRAVELERS step forward, one by one to state where they come from. Some speak in English, some speak in other languages. They begin by speaking one at a time, but after a bit, the voices begin to overlap.

As they speak, an image of the Peters Projection Map of the World builds on the screen. (The Peters Projection Map shows countries accurately, according to their surface areas)

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Peters Projection Map Part 1</i>	<i>Peters Projection Map Part 2</i>	<i>Peters Projection Map Part 3</i>

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Peters Projection Map Part 4</i>	<i>Peters Projection Map Part 5</i>	<i>Peters Projection Map Part 6</i>

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Peters Projection Map Part 7</i>	<i>Peters Projection Map Part 8</i>	<i>Peters Projection Map Part 9</i>

STORYTELLER: I come from Australia

ONE: I come from... here...

TWO: I come from... there...

THREE: My family comes from...

And so it continues... building up an image of where in the world we all come from...

The images change, becoming images of migration, and then the local community.

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Migrant Woman on Ship</i>	<i>Migrant Family on Ship</i>	<i>Migrant Women & Children</i>

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Migrant Family, 1950's</i>	<i>Aerial View of Melbourne</i>	<i>City of Brimbank Locality Map</i>

PROJECTIONS		
<i>Maribyrnong River</i>		<i>Darling & Sons Building</i>

After they have all spoken, and the song has finished BECKY and KARLA step forward...

BECKY: We are all travelers on a journey.
We come to this island from many places.

KARLA: This island is our ship... we are all in the same boat.