



Education Guide: The Sunshine Club

Show: The Sunshine Club

Written and directed by Wesley Enoch
Music by John Rodgers
Produced by HIT Productions

Suitability: Age Guide: 14+ years
This show contains theatrical haze and mature themes including a reference to abortion.

Duration: 2 hours 20 minutes (includes interval)

Synopsis: Heralded as a *"brilliant new landmark in Australian musicals"* (The Australian), The Sunshine Club is written and directed by proud Noonuccal Nuugi man Wesley Enoch AM, an acclaimed creative force in Australian Theatre.

This energetic and engaging musical play has a variety of music styles, with 28 songs composed by the esteemed John Rodgers.

It tells the story of Frank Doyle, an Aboriginal serviceman who has come home from World War II to find that although the wider world may have changed, attitudes back home in Brisbane are just the same.

Filled with a defiant energy and ambition for a better life, Frank starts The Sunshine Club, a place where black and white can meet and, most importantly, dance.

Here, he hopes for a future where he can dance in step with Rose, the girl next door, the girl of his dreams...who is white. Inter-racial relationships in the 1940's were highly problematic due to racism, mandated government attitudes toward Aboriginal people that saw the 'legal' enforcement of what is now known as the stolen generations and the fact that the Frank Doyle character, who had fought for his country in a world war, was not formally considered a citizen or able to vote until the 1960s.

It is a socially relevant work, at a time of heightened social discourse on Indigenous Affairs, as Australia looks towards 'incorporating' the Indigenous Voice to Parliament by 2024.

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Theme/Learning Objectives

This musical play offers insights into First Nations race relations as they were in the 1940s, when there were hopes that after (again) having Indigenous Service men and Women fight in a world war, there would be a greater level of acceptance in the broader community. For studies into Australian history, First Nations Peoples, Military History, social and societal 'evolution' in Australia and as a backdrop to study into the upcoming Voice to Parliament debate and referendum, The Sunshine Club offers students 14+ years a dramatization that gives voice to relevant attitudes and issues.

The production also offers opportunities for Arts based studies relating to Australian Musical Theatre; The telling of First Nations Stories is contemporary culture (musical theatre).

[Wesley Enoch talks about The Sunshine Club](#)

Video Transcript

Hello, my name is Wesley Enoch and I am the writer of The Sunshine Club. I initially wrote this as a way of bringing people together, especially in the reconciliation movement, this notion of black and white dancing together and the stories of our history, especially post World War II, and so for me this idea of seeing this play is about celebrating that idea of coming together, of literally dancing, and in this post COVID world - or living with COVID world - it'll be even more important to see that cultural bonds can be formed by gathering together as groups and dealing with social issues together.

I'm very excited about directing Sunshine Club again twenty years on and this idea of how plays can keep talking to their audiences year after year in some ways creating classic stories through music theatre; it's both an invitation for the audience to sit together - black and white - and also the way of celebrating more indigenous writing and more indigenous stories. For me, I think The Sunshine Club is a great celebration of our history but also, through our history, talking about the situation that we are twenty years ago when I first wrote it, but also now when we need to focus a lot more on how we work together and how reconciliation is possible to the future.

First Nations: Political History

As either a unit that shows the journey toward 2024's Voice to Parliament the following links provide information about historical events that saw voting rights, citizenship, and milestone in recognition.

Educational Links

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) 'The right to vote'

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/right-vote>

National Museum of Australia (Digital Classroom) 'Our Vote=our future'

<https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/indigenous-australians-granted-right-vote>

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The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) The Mabo Case

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/mabo-case>

The Uluru Statement (The Statement)

<https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/>

First Nations People: Military service

Unless required by the government of the day, Aboriginal people could not enlist in the armed forces until post World War 2. Finally in 1949, after many examples of extraordinary heroism, and a short return to the ban on enlistment straight after WW2, First Nations People were allowed to enlist. They still were often banned at RSL Clubs (except for ANZAC Day) but this step was a small one forward on the march to the right to vote (1962) and the recognition in the constitution and citizenship (1967). Below is a list of links to articles and information that forms potential study units, articles for discussion and additional information.

Educational Links

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
"Serving their country"

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/serving-their-country>

Australian War Memorial 'Indigenous defence service'

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/indigenous>

Australian Government: ANZAC Portal "Indigenous Australians in service during World War 2"

<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/world-war-ii-1939-1945/resources/indigenous-australians-service-during-world-war-ii>

