

Hello! I'm Ksenia Broda-Milian, the Education and Enrichment manager at Royal MTC, and this is the audio introduction to *A Number* by Caryl Churchill at the Tom Hendry Warehouse. This introduction covers some visual aspects of the play. Another track lists the cast and creative team. This introduction takes 6 minutes.

This production of *A Number* is one hour long. The scenes are portrayed in a realistic style, but the set holds futuristic surprises as technology takes over in the transitions.

The play takes place in the room of a home. The front of the stage is delineated by a curved step – as though the front of the stage is half a petri dish. This floor is hardwood. Twice in the show a character steps down into this area when he is lost in his own thoughts, and in the final scene it becomes a backyard. Taking a step up from this area, you would be on a plush grey carpeted floor. The edge of this carpet has a hidden LED strip which can light up and change colour in those “inner thought” scenes as well as transitions. Two walls slant backwards from the front opening of the stage towards the centre back, but their corners don't meet each other; they leave an open void leading to blackness behind that centre point. The walls have mellow green wainscoting and pale yellow wallpaper that is patterned with vertical strands of DNA. Close to the back of each wall are curved arch doorways, one on the left, and one on the right. There is one more step up between the doors. Inside these doorways are a row of LED lights that are off during the scenes, but glow brightly during the transitions. The panels of wallpaper also glow and change colour at these points.

Furniture on the stage is sparse. The front area of the stage is bare. Stepping up onto the carpeted area, there is a daybed on the left – a light green bench with thin mattress and pillows, and a blanket folded across its back. In the centre is a small wooden dining table with two chairs, and a chandelier hanging above. Further to the right is a wooden upholstered chair with a footstool, and finally at the rightmost edge of the stage is a bar cart stocked with glasses and bottles of alcohol. At the back of the stage, next to the left doorway, is an empty wooden chair. This chair symbolizes the character of the deceased mother; a soft warm light appears on it when she is mentioned.

*A Number* features two actors: Victor Ertmanis is a white man with gray hair, mustache, and short beard. He plays Salter, a man in his sixties. Salter wears a light blue shirt, burnt-orange vest, and a deep red jacket with elbow patches, along with tall white socks and plaid slippers. As the play goes on, he grapples with his past decisions, and the life that he's built is eroded. Echoing this, he sheds clothing during each scene transition: between scene 1 and 2 he removes his jacket and tosses it on the table; between 2 and 3 he loses his vest, exposing his suspenders; between 3 and 4 he doffs his outer layer to reveal a white undershirt and blue boxers with sheep on them; and before the last scene, overcome with emotion, he throws the pillows off the daybed and discovers his late wife's lavender bathrobe. He puts this on and wears it in the final scene.

Rodrigo Beilfuss plays the other characters in the show. He is taller than Victor, with medium-toned skin, dark hair with a lot of body, and he also sports a mustache. In scenes 1 and 3, he plays 35-year-old Bernard 2, the son that Salter raised to adulthood, who has just discovered he shares his DNA with a number of clones. In scenes 2 and 4, he plays the source of that DNA, a forty-year-old also called Bernard. In the last scene, he plays one of the clones, Michael Black. Bernard in scenes 1 and 3 is dressed similarly to Salter, in a light yellow dress shirt and light blue jacket with elbow pads, along with jeans. In scenes 2 and 4 as the other Bernard, his figure is more menacing in a knee-length black coat and red ball cap that casts a shadow over his face. In the final scene, Michael Black wears bright blue pants and a soft rusty red cardigan, calling back to Salter's earlier costume.

The characters are never referred to by name in the show. Between each scene is a musical interlude which can help you track which scene is next.

These transitions mark the passing of time, but also are lit in an otherworldly manner, bringing in bright fluorescent colours that call to mind the artificial, technological space of a laboratory. After the audience lights go down, the stage flickers to life, with pulsing lights below pieces of furniture, the curved stage edge lit in lime green, and bright green walls and doorframes. Small points of light swirl over the lowest parts of the floor, like

cells flowing around in a dish. When our actors have entered, we find them mid-conversation, snapping to a naturally-lit morning for scene 1.

Scene 2 takes place in the evening. It is in this scene, when Bernard 1 remembers nightmares as a child, that Salter steps down and is lit only by a tight spotlight – his son's words come to him as though in a memory. In the transition, Salter contemplates breaking his sobriety by taking a glass from the bar cart, which he ultimately returns.

Scene 3 takes place during the day, with Bernard 2 stepping down to deliver a monologue about genetics as swirling shapes of light spin around him, before returning to the natural world.

It is in the transition to scene 4 that Salter removes most of his clothes and lays down on the daybed – as he remembers more about raising his sons who once slept there, he gets closer to this piece of furniture. He is awakened in scene 4 in the dead of night. In this scene, as Salter is forced to confront more specifics by his son, the lighting narrows in on the table where they sit, as though they are in an interrogator's spotlight. You may hear glasses clinking as Bernard 1 pours them both a glass of Jameson to drink. After Bernard 1 leaves, Salter is drawn back to the daybed and throws the pillows and mattress off it, exposing the long-forgotten lavender robe that had belonged to his wife. He puts on the robe and her chair glows, pulling him to sit there by the door, until the arrival of Michael Black. Together, they move the bedframe, now exposed as a bench, into the front area of the stage where it is surrounded by sunlight and leafy shadows. They play out the final scene together on the bench, ending with Salter collapsed in Michael's arms.

Regardless of the world being built around it, the core of this play and story is the dialogue and interplay between the two actors. Thanks for listening, and we hope that you enjoy the show.