

ENRICHMENT GUIDE

LET'S RUN AWAY

Written and Performed
by Daniel MacIvor

Directed and Dramaturged
by Daniel Brooks
for reWork Productions




TOM HENDRY WAREHOUSE

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Let's Run Away

Enrichment Guide

Compiled by Ksenia Broda-Milian for Royal MTC

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The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1 territory, the lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

Arrive Early: Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask schools and other groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player /gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

Talking During the Performance: Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

Food/Drinks: Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre. We strive to be a scent-free environment and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If you leave the theatre during a performance, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

The Creators of *Let's Run Away*

Daniel MacIvor, Playwright and Performer



Daniel (he/him) is originally from Unama'ki/Cape Breton and currently divides his time between there and Tkaronto/Toronto. Daniel has written numerous award-winning theatre productions including *See Bob Run*, *Never Swim Alone* and *New Magic Valley Fun Town*, and he has received the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama, the Siminovitch Prize for Theatre, and an Obie Award and a GLAAD Award for his play *In On It*. In 2018 Daniel wrote the libretto for Rufus Wainwright's *Hadrian*, staged at the Canadian Opera Company. Also a screenwriter Daniel has written the films *Marion Bridge*, *Wilby Wonderful*, *Trigger* and *Weirdos* for which he won a Canadian Screen Award for best original screenplay. He runs reWork Productions with Marcie Januska.

Daniel Brooks, Director and Dramaturge



Daniel Brooks is a writer, director performer and teacher. His many works include a series of monologues created with Daniel MacIvor, multi-media work with Rick Miller, direction of work by John Mighton, Beckett, Sophocles, Ibsen, Chekhov and Goethe, and the musical *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Other original work includes his recent one man show *Other People*, *The Full Light of Day*, *The Noam Chomsky Lectures*, *Insomnia*, *The Eco Show*, *The Good Life*, *Bigger Than Jesus*, *Pokey Jones*, *Divisadero* and a series of plays created with Don McKellar and Tracy Wright (*The Augusta Company*). He was Artistic Director of *Necessary Angel* from 2003-2012. He has been the Barker Fairley Distinguished Visitor at U of T, associate artist at Soulpepper Theatre and *Buddies and Bad Times*. His many awards include the Siminovitch Prize for direction. His work has toured across Canada and around the world.

Notes from the Creators

One More – Daniel MacIvor

Some years ago I retired from doing this kind of work, solo shows. That was three shows ago and now here it is our seventh solo. Six years ago when we were winding down the run of our last - our 6th solo - Who Killed Spalding Gray? I approached Daniel Brooks and asked if he would be interested in doing one more. I always say "one more". I suppose I've been saying that since after we did our first show House in the late 80's – that one more was Here Lies Henry. The one more after that was Monster and then one more was Cul-de-sac - and that was the really "one more" one more where I retired from the form and we shut down da da kamera, the company that made them all. But then life changed and dreams crashed and I got sober and woke up in a strange new land and all I could imagine doing was going back to the thing I felt I knew best. The solo. Thankfully Brooks was on board for one more, and that became This Is What Happens Next – our "true story" solo of stories that weren't entirely true but close. And then one more was Who Killed Spalding Gray? and that's when something happened that had been coming for a long time – my heart opened up. Brooks had been pushing for that I think, all those years. It's probably what kept bringing me back to the form, because the ironic thing is, of all the kinds of work I've done, the solo is where I've felt the least alone. It takes a lot of people to prop one guy up on stage – their names are all here in the program. And there is something about being here in the room, alone with you, the audience, where all is acknowledged – the reality of the artifice, the truth of the game, the lie we all believe in – that feels like the point. And I don't just mean of theatre. But I'm not going to get precious and high-falutin -I've got in trouble doing that in program notes before. Since then I haven't really written notes, but this time it seemed fitting. And so I just want to thank all the people who's names are in this program and especially my brother Brooks for giving me permission all these years, for helping me to finally feel what I've always known. Here's to one more.

Our Method – Daniel Brooks

Daniel MacIvor and I began work on this play many years ago.

Our first title was 7, because that is all we knew about the show – that it was the seventh solo show we would create together.

Our work began in Banff in November of 2017. We worked in a studio at the Banff Centre, with a large window looking out at the mountains. Daniel sat in a chair, with a microphone in hand (for some reason we were attracted to the microphone, perhaps because it created a kind of artifice, or theatricality, where none existed). He talked and talked, and I listened and listened. I wrote down what he said, or at least what I thought interesting, editing, and perhaps changing some details along the way. Then I would tell Daniel what he said – another kind of editing process. Daniel would listen to me and then he would write down what I said he said, which became another editing process. We did this for days, talking and listening, and some of the content for what would become this play was born.

Some time later we worked in Toronto, and the title of the play became Good, and then A Good Week. Our work method (if it can be called a method) did not change. We would talk about ideas, perhaps analyze the latest stories told by Daniel, or I might suggest he further pursue a line of thought or character, we would laugh a lot and complain and enjoy each other, except when we didn't, for the reasons people don't enjoy each other, mostly fear. Material developed, became more focused, some ideas didn't last, and by the end of our work in Toronto, we had a new title: *The Extraordinary Pickle and Tru*. That title didn't last very long either.

Our next work session was in Guysborough, Nova Scotia. We had the beginnings of the structure of the play you will see today. As structure forms, so do doubts, and fears mount – that we are on the wrong track, that we've missed something, misunderstood the material, the moment, the reason for doing theatre. As often happens, we, the creators of the show, were paralysed and fearful. At one point Daniel, standing on the stage, handed me his notebook with a phrase circled – "Let's run away." I said "good title." That became the title, and some solid information for Daniel to use as he continued to develop the story of *Let's Run Away*.

I am often mystified as to how we do our work. I wonder if it's all chance, if we have any method at all. How did we arrive at *Let's Run Away*?

Recently I was on the phone with Daniel – we talk on the phone most days – and I was telling him about a very disturbing dream I had. I was aware of how silent he was as he listened to me, even over the phone I felt the depth of his listening, the stillness of his ears, his receptiveness, his love. He listened deeply. It struck me that the foundation of our method is deep listening.

Questions to consider before the show

Before the Show

- What are your expectations of your experience coming into the theatre?
- What kind of expectations do you have of the production based on the marketing materials you've seen?

Important note: reWork Productions prefers audience members going into this play without further research about what you are going to see. The following sections, including additional context and further discussion questions, would be best explored after seeing the show.

If you are concerned about potential triggers for yourself or a group you are bringing, insight is provided on the next page. Thank you for honouring the company's wishes to the best of your abilities!

Character

Peter: an unhoused man who “sees the world differently.” He tries to tell us his story.

Content Overview

This section may contain spoilers.

Strong language; mature themes including discussion of drug use and overdose; violent death of an animal; parental abandonment; some discussion of sexuality.

Plot Summary

This section contains minor spoilers.

Peter is trying to tell us his story. He has lived “a colourful life”, not that he’s bragging about it. It’s just the way it is when you’ve been abandoned as a child (twice) and you end up living under a bridge or in a motel with a circus carney. So now Peter is putting on a show, using his most treasured possessions as props and an unpublished memoir as a kind of script. He’s not necessarily a major player in the memoir – definitely not the main character – but he doesn’t mind improvising.

Speaking directly to the audience, Peter weaves through the events in the memoir, out of order and punctuated by his editorializing, all the while directing the theatre technicians to execute his vision of the performance. It goes through his mother’s privileged background, her time driving for the Sex Pistols, her summer affair with the rowing instructor that resulted in Peter’s birth, her leaving him, coming back and leaving him again, and her opinions on his life. Peter gives us more context to the glimpses of her she mentions: his feelings and the real story behind a baseball game, his roommates, Throughout, Peter explores her words and the few souvenirs left to him: a necklace, audiobook recording, and cherished bass guitar.

Questions to consider after the show

- In [this article](#) and [interview](#) (7:00) Maclvor states that he loves when his expectations and judgements are subverted by theatre, and he strives to do so in his own work. What kind of expectations and judgements did you have when Peter began speaking? How were your assumptions of the overall theatre experience as well as the character challenged in the course of the show – or, what are you now questioning?
- In [an interview](#) (starting at 6:14), Maclvor states that while not everyone has experienced the extremes that Peter has, that almost all people can connect to some sense of abandonment by situations, government, emotionally, intellectually. What kind of abandonment beyond the obvious leaving of his mother did Peter experience? How did you connect with Peter through this lens?
- Maclvor says that this show is very dependent on his relationship with the audience: “because I have to be so vulnerable in this show, you the audience are creating the performance based on how you’re engaging.” How did you notice yourself and the rest of the audience reacting? How did Peter respond?

The Story of the Show

Let's Run Away is the 7th solo show collaboration between Maclvor and Brooks in their 30-year creative partnership. In their process, Maclvor talks out loud to explore ideas. Brooks records and repeats the ideas back, and then Maclvor writes down the parts that resonate. He says that certain elements “emerge from the rambling...[and] assemble themselves into a story” (On Paper Books). Maclvor is adamant though that just because he’s the writer, it doesn’t mean that the work could happen without Brooks, who takes all the ideas that are flowing in that stream of consciousness and holds them into a manageable space. Maclvor refers to him as the “container” for the thoughts that “[explode] from my imagination” (Knecht).

When the creative process began, Maclvor didn’t know that this was the story they would explore. “The thing decides it wants to be told,” he says (Classical FM). Maclvor calls himself an “intuitive structuralist” – that he needs the title and some form of structure before the work will reveal itself. Early on, it felt like there were 2 “voices,” the mother and the son. Maclvor was even experimenting with puppets at some points. Once *Let's Run Away* and the idea that Maclvor would play one character through the whole show was decided, the story began to take shape. The voice of the second character became the memoir that is read by Peter, inserting his perspective. Maclvor also stresses that theatre is active, and action is central to his process, carrying more than the idea – “the impulse to performance comes first, and the story supports it” (On Paper Books).

The development began in a residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity, and Brooks and Maclvor also continued to build the show in several other residencies

across the country. At the end of each, they would present the show as though it was a finished product, which affected the attitude with which MacIvor and Brooks approached the presentation, and also seemed to impact the audience response. (On Paper Books.)

Let's Run Away was completed in 2019 and published by Playwrights Canada Press. It was performed in Toronto and Calgary before the COVID-19 pandemic, and MacIvor hopes to revisit the idea of a tour for the show, including a stop in his home province of Nova Scotia.

Related Resource Links: You can read and listen to Daniel MacIvor expand on the points here by exploring the cited interviews: hear him [discuss *Let's Run Away* on Classical FM](#) (8:30); [watch a video conversation](#) and reading to launch the published script at On Paper Books (47:11) and read about the creative process and working in theatre in [Peter Knegt's article for CBC](#). You can also [hear more about MacIvor's life and work in The Sunday Edition](#) radio program (29:19).

Context and Related Resources

To the Lighthouse

A novel by Virginia Woolf published in 1927, *To the Lighthouse* is separated into three sections. Each is made up of stream-of-consciousness narration from various characters. The story begins just before World War I, when a family of ten go to their summer home west of Scotland, where there is a lighthouse across the bay. Time passes slowly and in detail in the first section, more quickly in the second section over ten years as war breaks out in Europe and the family stops vacationing at the summer house, and more slowly with shifting viewpoints again in the third section when the surviving members of the family return to journey to the lighthouse. Sparknotes lists the key themes as the transience of life (passage of time, mortality); art as a means of preservation; and the subjective nature of reality. All of these, as well as the idea of a changeable narrator and speaking in stream-of-consciousness, can also be linked to *Let's Run Away*.

Homelessness in Canada

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines the term as “the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it” (Gaetz). However, every person experiencing homelessness has a unique experience, and different groups of people are affected in different ways (Homeless Hub). People may be unhoused for many different reasons, including structural factors, poverty, shortage of affordable, safe, and stable housing, system failures, personal circumstances, and relational problems. The shelter system is North America’s primary response, and some may lack services and skills needed to accommodate older adults, people with disabilities, LGBTQ2+ people, or those using substances or experiencing mental health distress (Woolley). A person may feel safer or freer unhoused than housed – as Peter says, he “prefers outdoors.”

In a 2016 report, it was estimated that at least 235 000 Canadians are unhoused in a given year, but the actual number may be higher. Homeless Hub provides a rough estimate that on any given night in Canada, 35 000 people are experiencing homelessness. This includes people in emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, unsheltered, and in temporary institutional accommodation. But there may be as many as 50 000 “hidden homeless” people who don’t come into contact with emergency shelters and are “couch surfing,” temporarily staying with a friend or relative with no immediate prospect of permanent housing – like Peter with his social worker and her boyfriend. In summer 2020, advocates were already saying that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent housing price increases would increase housing insecurity and lead to higher numbers of unhoused individuals (Habib).

Related Resource Links: [On the Way Home](#) is a podcast bringing together the voices and issues involved in ending homelessness in Canada; [Homeless Hub](#) hosts many articles as well as [resources for teachers](#) on the topic; watch [An Animated Guide to Complex Social Challenges](#) to understand another approach to ending homelessness; read Main Street Project’s [snapshot on homelessness](#) in Winnipeg 2018 and learn about the [2022 Street Census](#).

The Foster Care System

In Canada, children in foster care are placed under protection of a legal guardian and are the legal responsibility of the government (Tweddle 5). The intent of foster care is to provide youth with a safe family setting in times of crisis (Children's Aid Society). Some, like Peter, experience a mix of homes as well as time spent in a group home, a care facility housing several youth. Not every child's experience is the same, but multiple placements can interfere with creating the nurturing bonds that are critical to development. Consistent, effective support systems (and treatment as needed) are important to stability throughout life, and without them foster children are more at risk. A foster care history is linked to homelessness. Research highlights that over 40% of youth experiencing homelessness in Canada have been involved with child welfare services. It's important to note that in Canada, Indigenous Peoples are overrepresented in the child welfare system and among those experiencing homelessness – a legacy of colonialism, poverty, and racism (Homeless Hub).

Speaking to Maclean's magazine, former foster children recall their foster parents as "nice people" who did their best, but that there was a feeling of being an outsider. This feeling has emotional and tangible consequences that can affect you as an adult – not having a support system to call for help for big decisions or even small issues.

Foster care can result in children being reunified with their families, adoption, or in children remaining in the system long-term until they "age out." Here in Manitoba and in Ontario where *Let's Run Away* is set, children "age out" of the foster system when they turn 18. At that point, many provinces offer certain provisions like topped-up welfare cheques, ongoing meetings with workers, or support for education or therapy, but these supports dissolve when youth reach age 21. New initiatives, such as the Never Too Late for Family program, aim to combat this lack of support for older youth and match them with forever families (Treleaven).

Foster care is not a guaranteed negative outcome. Positive experiences during care are critical to youth's well-being, healthy development, and future after leaving the system. The same opportunities and support systems are needed for youth in foster care as all other youth to ensure their well-being (Homeless Hub).

Related Resource Links: Read more details about [life after foster care in Canada](#) from Maclean's; read about [Cierra Simon's calls for change](#) in the foster care system; find support and resources as a youth in/from care or learn how to be an ally as an adult from [Voices: Manitoba's Youth in Care Network](#).

Glossary

Anatomy of Criticism – 1957 work by Northrup Frye that attempts to formulate a view of the scope, theory, principles and techniques of literary criticism. Frye was a Canadian educator and critic, “one of the most important literary theorists of the 20th century.”

Datsun – A Japanese car company today owned by Nissan. The Datsun 240Z was a sports car that became a success all over the world.

Errant – straying from the proper course or standards

Giddy – Dizzy; lightheartedly silly

The Hero with a Thousand Faces – a 1949 work by Joseph Campbell that blended contemporary psychology with comparative mythology. It explores the Hero’s Journey, “universal motif of adventure and transformation that runs through all of humanity’s mythic traditions” and the Cosmogonic Cycle, stories of world creation and dissolution echoing across world cultures and time.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull – A “sleeper hit” book by Richard Bach, first published in 1970. It is a novella about a seagull learning about life and flight,

with the theme of self-perfection.

Rebuttal – to make a rebuttal is to contradict or oppose something.

Sabre – a fencing or duelling sword.

The Sex Pistols – A rock group who created the British punk movement of the 1970s. They were a symbol of the social and political turmoil in the UK. They had a “short, disastrous” US tour in 1978 (presumably where Peter’s mother would have met them) and then the group split.

Truman Capote – (1924-1984) An American novelist, playwright, and actor with “dual careers as a writer and celebrity socialite.” His work spanned genres from Southern Gothic to journalism and included *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. Several pieces are thought of as literary classics, and his works have been adapted for film and television. Later in his life he struggled with drugs and alcohol – in the late 1970s when he appears in *Let’s Run Away*, Capote was “in and out of drug rehabilitation clinics.”

Woozy – Mentally unclear or hazy; dizzy, dazed.

Mental Health Resources

For immediate help in a mental health crisis:

KLINIC Crisis Line: Winnipeg 204-786-8686; toll-free Manitoba 1-888-322-3019 24/7

Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line: 1-877-435-7170

Manitoba Farm, Rural, and Northern Support Services: 1-866-367-3276 24/7

Hope for Wellness Indigenous Peoples Helpline: 1-855-242-3310 24/7

Winnipeg Crisis Stabilization Unit: 204-940-3633 24/7

Winnipeg Mobile Crisis Service: 204-940-1781 24/7

Winnipeg Youth Mobile Crisis Team: 204-949-4777, 1-888-383-2776

Seneca Warm Line: 204-942-9276 (24/7)

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868 24/7

Manitoba regional contacts and mental health services by region -

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/mh/mh/crisis.html> Crisis and non-crisis services

KLINIC Community Health - <http://klinik.mb.ca>

Provides health care, counselling, and education as well as a crisis line for people of every age, background, ethnicity, gender identity, and socio-economic circumstance. Klinik's crisis line (number above) is open to people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. You do not have to be in crisis or suicidal to call Klinik; this can be a good place to start when trying to sort out a problem. Klinik can also refer you to other services or programs.

Hope for Wellness Helpline is available to all Indigenous people across Canada. Experienced and culturally competent counsellors are reachable by telephone and online chat 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Both telephone and online chat services are available in English and French. Telephone support is also available upon request in: Cree; Ojibway (Anishinaabemowin) and Inuktitut. <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support - www.reasonstolive.ca

A project of Klinik Community Health, this website has resources for getting help, helping someone else, and dealing with loss as well as running a crisis and support line.

Mental Health Education Resource Centre of Manitoba - <http://www.mherc.mb.ca>

A provincial resource promoting the exchange of knowledge including reducing mental illness stigma. Electronic resources, an online catalogue and free library, and links to various specialized services within Manitoba and across Canada.

MB Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services besides the 24/7 number above, offers free, confidential, non-judgemental counselling and resources for anyone living on a Manitoba farm or in a rural or northern community. Live chat and resources online at <https://supportline.ca>

Suicide Prevention, Education, Awareness, Knowledge - <http://www.speak-out.ca>

Material about depression and suicide for survivors and their loved ones. Not for those in immediate danger.

Wellness Together Canada - <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA> offers free and virtual support related to mental health and substance use for anyone in Canada, 24/7.

Mental Health America - <https://www.mhanational.org/live-b4stage4>
Information and tips on living a mentally healthy life, recovery *and support for yourself*, and others, and mental wellness tools.

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba - <http://www.adam.mb.ca>

Canadian Mental Health Association - <https://mbwpg.cmha.ca/?lang=2>

Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba - <http://www.mooddordersmanitoba.ca>
Support groups, resources, education, and other services.

Rainbow Resource Centre - <https://rainbowresourcecentre.org>
Serving Manitoba's Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two spirit, and queer + communities. Provides education, events, counselling, library, programming and events, and resources.

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