

Created By:
Adrianne Jones & Clint Bolster



Betty, Booff & Joan

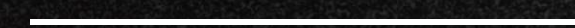
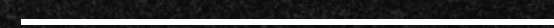
Betty, Booff & Joan

A Learning Resource



This unique, beautiful, and delightfully curious performance is a celebration of storytelling, laughter, ageing, memory, and the unexpected ways we find family. Through comedy, imagination, and play, it invites audiences to delight in life's small moments and the stories that connect us across generations.

www.clintbolster.com/bettybooffandjoan



Performers and Creators



Clint Bolster

Owner, Co-Writer, Co-Director,
Creative Producer & Performer

CLINT BOLSTER is a Clown, Physical Actor, Creative Producer and Teaching Artist based in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. With over 23 years of professional experience, Clint has dedicated his career to proudly creating original theatrical works and training artists across multiple disciplines. His original creations —HIGH TEA with BOOFF, BOLSTER & LEE: The Knock Em Downs, The Lost Balloon, Betty, Booff & Joan, and The Bubble Canteen—alongside ensemble projects such as The Mask Family, Manoeuvre, and Homunculus Theatre, are programmed widely across Australia, New Zealand, and Asia. These works feature prominently at major arts festivals and in community, cultural, and educational settings, having reached a live global audience in the millions.

Clint has performed extensively throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan—including over 900 solo shows in Japanese at Universal Studios Japan, Osaka. He has toured over 500 primary and secondary schools across Australia. Most recently, he performed in the 2025 & 2023 Spain & Australian Tours of Slava's Snow Show and was accepted into the Cirque du Soleil database of Clowns. As a dedicated Teaching Artist, Clint has delivered training and masterclasses for actor training institutions and universities worldwide, including the Queensland University of Technology (QLD) - (8 Years), Griffith University (QLD), Drama Australia (AUS), Pontio University Wales (UK), and Shakespeare4All (Hong Kong), to name a few.

A proud Queensland member and mentor for the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, Clint also serves as a Board Member for Indel-Ability Arts and is the Creative Director for Blue Roo Theatre Company. His extensive touring and producing credits include collaborations with Queensland Theatre Company, Brisbane Festival, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Woodford Folk Festival (20 Years), Cairns Festival, NAFA Townsville, Cluster Arts Global, Awesome Festival, and Live Nation, among many others.

Performers and Creators



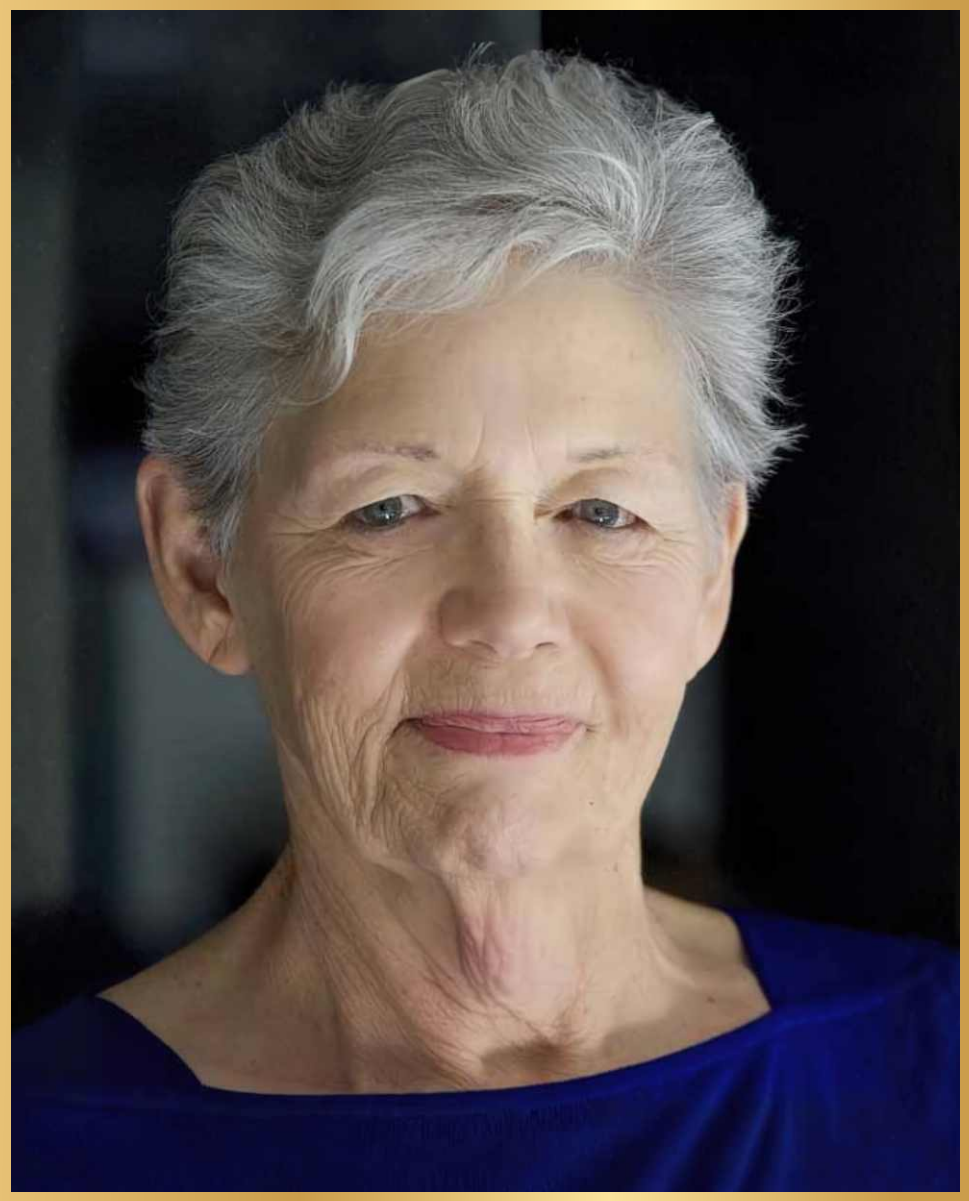
Barbara Lowing

Co-Writer and
Performer

Barbara Lowing is one of Queensland's most respected and versatile theatre artists. As the first Queensland graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) — an achievement she remains immensely proud of — Barbara has built a remarkable career spanning over three decades, performing and creating across Australia and internationally. She has worked with many of the nation's leading theatre companies, including Queensland Theatre Company, Playlab Theatre, JUTE Theatre Company, Brisbane Powerhouse, Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, State Theatre Company of South Australia, La Boite Theatre Company, The Empire Theatre, Griffin Theatre Company, Shake & Stir Theatre Company, Belloo Creative, Camerata – Queensland Chamber Orchestra, Dead Puppet Society, and the Queensland Arts Council. Her extensive collaborations with independent companies have also contributed to some of the country's most powerful and original new works. Barbara has helped create more than 60 new Australian theatre productions, many of which have gone on to achieve mainstage success. As a director and educator, she has worked with The University of Southern Queensland, Expressions Dance Company, the Aboriginal Centre for the Performirigorts (ACPA), and Queensland University of Technology, nurturing the next generation of performers with her trademark warmth and rigor.

A skilled voice artist, Barbara's narration work includes award-winning documentaries such as *The Lost Years*, *The Disorderly Warriors*, and *of Dogs and Gods* (Gulliver Media), the latter earning accolades including Best Documentary at the Montana International Documentary Film Festival. Her outstanding contributions to Australian theatre have been recognised with multiple awards: a Matilda Award for Best Actress (2007), two MEAA/Equity Awards for *Away*, a Goldie Award for Best Commercial Voice-Over Artist (Queensland), the Gold Matilda Award (2013) for her performances in *The China Incident*, *Tequila Mockingbird*, and *Motherland*, and the Groundling Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Female Actress. Barbara's television credits include *Mako Mermaids*, *Secrets and Lies*, *Medivac*, *Hero's 2*, *Stringers*, *The Family Law*, and *Harrow*. A proud Equity/MEAA member since 1987, Barbara continues to inspire audiences and artists alike with her dedication to excellence, her passion for authentic storytelling, and her unwavering belief in the transformative power of theatre.

Performers and Creators



Penny Everingham

Co-writer & Performer

With a career spanning over five decades, Penny Everingham is one of Queensland's most respected and enduring performing artists. Her body of work reflects a lifetime dedicated to theatre, puppetry, film, and arts education, marked by artistry, generosity, and a deep commitment to storytelling in all its forms. Penny has performed in more than twenty major productions with Queensland Theatre Company, including *Once in a Royal David's City*, *Pygmalion*, *The Crucible*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Julius Caesar*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *After the Ball*, *Oedipus the King*, *The Venetian Twins*, *Phedra*, and *The Tragedy of King Richard III* (in collaboration with Bell Shakespeare). Her stage career also includes acclaimed performances with La Boite Theatre (*The White Earth*, *Walking by Apple Tree Creek*), *Force Majeure* (*The Age I'm In*), *Creative Regions* (*It All Begins with Love*), and numerous projects with QPAC, Melbourne Theatre Company, New Theatre, Tivoli, and *Gyre and Debacle*. As a puppeteer and creative leader, Penny served as Assistant Artistic Director of the Marionette Theatre of Australia and was instrumental in developing national puppetry training programs through the Australia Council for the Arts. For the Queensland Marionette Theatre Company, she has been a head puppeteer, director, puppet maker, and artistic adviser, as well as creating original works and leading workshops across schools, universities, and community settings. Her handcrafted puppets have featured in numerous film and television productions, and she continues to inspire generations of artists in the craft. Her screen credits include *Crocodile Dundee in LA*, *Hoges*, *The Real Macaw*, *The Wilde Girls*, *Nim's Island*, *Sunny Boy*, *Ring of Endless Light*, and episodes of *Heartbeat*, *Jeopardy II*, *Medivac*, and *Blithe Spirit*. Penny's contributions extend beyond the stage and screen. She has served on the Board of Queensland Theatre Company (8 years), currently sits on the Board of Metro Arts, is a committee member of the Actors' Benevolent Fund, and is a founding member of the Forgetting of Wisdom Collective, a group of working senior artists dedicated to creative renewal through intergenerational collaboration. Penny Everingham's career stands as a testament to artistic excellence, mentorship, and enduring passion for the transformative power of performance.

Curriculum Connections, Senior Secondary (Years 10–12): ● English ● Essential English (Applied) ● Drama ● The Arts (v9.0 Drama)

Purpose of Learning resource

This unique, beautiful, and deeply curious performance is a celebration of storytelling, comedy, ageing, & the many ways that family can be imagined, created, and experienced. In honour of the spirit and artistry of Betty, Booff & Joan, this resource explores three key ideas at the heart of the work:

- Storytelling through the contemporary clown – How we can share our own stories with honesty, imagination, vulnerability, & joy.
- What makes a family? An exploration of belonging, connection, care, and the many forms that family can take.
- Comedy and the art of clowning – How humour, play, and different clown traditions help

Step 1

Next Step Which Brings Us To The Performance : The Contemporary Clown

Many modern clowns are less about makeup and costumes and more about:

- Authenticity
- Connection with the audience
- Vulnerability
- Playfulness
- The willingness to fail publicly
- The evocative use of personal storytelling

Contemporary Clowning and Storytelling (Contemporary clowning often asks):

"What happens when a performer honestly shares their joy, confusion, mistakes, and discoveries with an audience?"

The characters in **Betty, Booff and Joan** tell stories and share their lives with us, gently, absurdly, and delightfully.

Through humour, imagination, and play, they invite us to see the world differently and to celebrate the ordinary moments that make us who we are.

As contemporary storytellers, we can do the same. Every person has stories worth telling. Some are funny, some are surprising, some are meaningful, and some are still unfolding.

Through storytelling, we can celebrate our experiences, our identities, our communities, and our hopes for the future.



Shaping Question

How can we use storytelling, humour, and imagination to celebrate our own lives and the lives of others?

Monologue Creation: Telling Our Stories

Invite students to explore their own stories through reflection, discussion, writing, and performance.



The Rhythm of Storytelling

Explore How Stories Have Shape, Rhythm, and Pace.

- How does a story begin?
- How do we create curiosity?
- Where does the tension or surprise occur?
- When do we slow down to focus on an important detail?

Discovering Your Story

Students May Respond to One or More of The Following Prompts:

- What is your favourite story and why has it stayed with you?
- Do you have a favourite story about yourself?
- What is a story you recently read, watched, or heard that you would love to retell?
- What is a memorable story from your childhood?
- What is a family story that has been told many times?
- What is a moment in your life that seemed ordinary at the time but feels important now?
- What is a mistake, misunderstanding, or unexpected event that became a good story?
- What story do you hope people might talk about you in the future?

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ● When do we speed up? | ● Changes in pace |
| ● How does the story end? | ● Physical gesture |
| ▪ Students can experiment with: | ● Facial expression |
| ● Repetition ● Pauses | ● Direct audience address |

Finding the Clown

Encourage Students to Think About The Qualities of The Contemporary Clown:

Students should be encouraged to embrace imperfections, tangents, mistakes, and unexpected discoveries as part of the storytelling process.

- Curiosity
- Honesty
- Playfulness

- Wonder
- Vulnerability
- Resilience

ASK:

- What makes this story uniquely yours?
- Where is the humour?
- Where is the surprise?

- What did you learn?
- How might you invite an audience into the experience?

Future Casting: Stories Yet to Be Written

Not All Stories Come From The Past. Invite Students to Imagine Stories From Their Future:

- Who do you hope to become?
- What adventures might await you?
- What challenges might you overcome?

- What would your future self-thank you for?
- What story are you writing right now?

Students can create a short monologue that combines memory, imagination, and aspiration.

Performance Reflection

Following The Performance, Invite Students To Consider:

- What stories connected most strongly with the audience?
- Why do personal stories often feel universal?
- How can humour help us tell truthful stories?
- What does storytelling reveal about who we are?

Concluding Reflection

Every life is a collection of stories. Through theatre and storytelling, we can honour our past, celebrate our present, and imagine our future.

Like the characters in Betty, Booff, and Joan we can discover that even the smallest moments, when shared with honesty, imagination, and joy can become extraordinary.

Step 2 | What Makes a Family?

The characters in Betty, Booff & Joan share stories about families in all their glory, complexity, humour, and uniqueness. Their stories remind us that families come in many forms and that there is no single way to be a family. This learning experience invites students to reflect on belonging, connection, care, and the people who support us throughout our lives.

Teacher Note

Family can be a sensitive topic for some students. Teachers are encouraged to approach this work with care and flexibility, allowing students to share only what they feel comfortable sharing.

Students should never feel required to disclose personal or family information. Consider broadening discussions to include communities of care, friendships, mentors, neighbours, cultural groups, and other significant relationships.

Shaping Question

*What Makes a Family? Exploring The Idea
Invite Students to Discuss:*

- What does the word family mean to you?
- What are some different kinds of families?
- What qualities help people feel like they belong?
- Is family always defined by biology?
- Can friends become family?
- Who are the people who support, encourage, and care for us?
- How do families change over time?



Reflection Activity: Circles of Care

Students Create a “Circle of Care” Map.

In the centre, students place themselves. Around them they may include people, groups, pets, places, or communities that make them feel supported, safe, valued, or connected. *Examples might include:*

- Parents, carers, grandparents, or siblings
- Extended family members
- Friends
- Teachers or coaches
- Neighbours
- Community groups
- Sporting teams
- Cultural groups
- Elders
- Pets

Students may choose to share aspects of their map or keep it private.



Storytelling Activity: A Moment of Connection

Invite Students to Think of a Time When They Felt:

- Supported
- Welcomed
- Included
- Understood
- Loved
- Encouraged

Students create a short story, monologue, or scene inspired by this moment. The focus should be on the feeling of connection rather than on revealing personal details.

Creative Exploration: Imagining Family

Students Work In Small Groups to Create a Short Scene Exploring One of The Following Ideas:

- A family gathering
- An unexpected friendship
- A community coming together
- Looking after someone
- Welcoming a new person into a group
- A future family in 50 years' time

Encourage students to think creatively about what family might look like and how people create belonging.

Reflection

Following The Activities, Students Might Consider:

- What qualities appeared across different family stories?
- What helps people feel connected?
- How can communities create belonging?
- What did you learn about the many ways people experience family?

Key Thought

Families may look different from one another, but many are built upon the same foundations: care, connection, support, responsibility, and love. Through stories, we can celebrate the diverse ways people create belonging and find their place in the world.



Extending the Conversation

Many artists, writers, and storytellers have explored the idea that family is larger than biology alone. In her novel Still Life, Sarah Winman celebrates the families we find and create throughout our lives, riendships that endure, communities that support us, and the people who choose to stand beside us through moments of joy, uncertainty, and change.

Like the characters in Betty, Booff & Joan, Winman's characters remind us that belonging is often built through acts of kindness, care, laughter, storytelling, and shared experience. As you reflect on your own Circle of Care, consider:

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|---|--|
| ● Who are the people who help you feel seen and valued? | ● How do stories help us connect with one another? |
| ● What communities help you feel that you belong? | ● In what ways can friendship become family? |

Perhaps family is not only about who we are related to, but also about who we choose to care for, who cares for us, and the stories we share together.

Step 3

Comedy and the art of clowning – How humour, play, and different clown traditions help us connect, communicate, and see the world anew.

Why Is Comedy Important?

Discussion prompts

- Why do people need to laugh?
- How can comedy help us understand difficult topics?
- Can comedy challenge unfairness, stereotypes, or authority?
- Why do many cultures use humour to tell stories?

Activity

Ask students to share a memorable comedic moment from a performance, film, television show, or real life and discuss why it was effective.

Why Is Comedy So Hard?

Discussion Prompts

- Why do some jokes work for one audience and not another?
- What is the difference between being funny and trying to be funny?
- Why is timing so important?

Activity

Present a simple scenario and have students perform it first dramatically, then comedically. Discuss what changed.

Key Ideas

- Builds connection and empathy.
- Helps audiences process complex emotions.
- Encourages critical thinking through satire and parody.
- Creates shared experiences and community.
- Makes challenging subjects more accessible.

Key Ideas

- Comedy relies on timing, rhythm, surprise, and audience response.
- Humour is subjective.
- Comedians must balance confidence with vulnerability.
- What seems spontaneous often requires significant rehearsal and refinement.



Comedy and the confidence to trial
Discussion prompts

- Why is risk-taking important in comedy?
- How do performers respond when something doesn't work?
- How can mistakes become opportunities?

Key Ideas

- Comedy often emerges through experimentation.
- Failure is part of the creative process.
- Improvisation builds adaptability and resilience.
- Performers need a safe environment to test ideas.

Activity

Conduct a rapid improvisation game where students must immediately accept and build on unexpected ideas ("Yes, and...").

Imitation
Discussion prompts

- Why do audiences find imitation amusing?
- What makes a good character observation?
- How can performers imitate respectfully rather than mockingly?

Key Ideas

- Comedy often begins with observation.
- Exaggeration can reveal truths about people and behaviour.
- Characterisation, physicality, voice, and gesture are powerful comedic tools.

Activity

Students observe everyday characters (teacher, athlete, sibling, bus driver, customer service worker) and create short character sketches based on physical and vocal traits.



Absurdity and Magical Realism

Discussion prompts

- What happens when something impossible is treated as completely normal?
- Why do audiences enjoy unexpected or illogical situations?
- How can fantasy reveal truths about real life?



Reflection - Shaping Question

"How do comedians use observation, risk-taking, imitation, and imagination to help us see the world differently?"

This question could tie the lesson together and encourage students to recognise comedy not simply as entertainment, but as a sophisticated theatrical form that relies on skill, creativity, and insight.

Key Ideas

- Absurdity disrupts audience expectations.
- Magical realism blends ordinary reality with extraordinary events.
- Both forms encourage imaginative thinking and creative storytelling.
- Comedy often comes from characters treating strange situations seriously.

Activity

Provide students with prompts such as:

- Everyone wakes up speaking in song lyrics.
- A student's shadow begins giving advice.
- A school locker contains an entire rainforest.
- Gravity stops working for one person but no one else.

Students create short scenes that treat these situations as ordinary.

Different Types of Clowns

Exploring different clown traditions can be a wonderful way for students to understand that clowning is much more than "being funny." Different clown styles have developed across cultures and historical periods, each with their own purpose, physicality, and relationship with the audience.

Whiteface Clown - The Traditional "Leader" Clown. *Characteristics*

- Elegant, skilled, confident, and often authoritative.
- Usually wears elaborate costumes and white makeup.
- Sets the rules and maintains order.

In Performance

- Often acts as the straight character against whom other clowns create chaos.
- Represents perfection, status, or authority.

Discussion Question

Why is it funny when someone tries to maintain control while everything around them falls apart?

Auguste Clown - The classic Comic Clown. *Characteristics*

- Mischievous, playful, impulsive, and often accident-prone.
- Frequently breaks rules or misunderstands instructions.
- Relies on physical comedy and unexpected solutions.

In Performance

- Creates problems and confusion.
- Challenges authority figures and established expectations.

Discussion Question

Why do audiences often sympathise with the character who gets things wrong?

Character Clown
A clown built around a specific personality or social type.
Characteristics

- Drawn from recognisable people or behaviours.
- Uses observation, exaggeration, and parody.
- Often reflects everyday human quirks and habits.

- In Performance**
- The know-it-all teacher.
 - The overly enthusiastic coach.
 - The nervous traveller.
 - The perfectionist organiser.

Discussion Question

What everyday behaviours become funny when exaggerated?

Tramp or Hobo Clown
Popularised by Performers such as Charlie Chaplin.

- Resilient, hopeful, and resourceful despite adversity.
- Often an outsider navigating a difficult world.
- Combines humour with pathos and emotion.

In Performance

Audiences laugh at the character's struggles while also caring about them.

Discussion Question

Why can comedy and sadness sometimes exist together?

Fool or Jester
One of The Oldest Clown Traditions.

- Speaks truth through humour.
- Questions authority and social conventions.
- Uses wit, observation, and clever wordplay.

In Performance

Often reveals truths others are afraid to say.

Discussion Question

Why can humour sometimes be a powerful way to challenge authority?



Bouffon

A more contemporary and provocative clown form.

Characteristics

- Uses satire, parody, and exaggeration.
- Often comments on social issues and power structures.
- Creates discomfort as well as laughter.



In Performance

Challenges audiences to think critically.

Discussion Question

Can comedy make us uncomfortable and still be valuable?

The Innocent Clown

Popular in children's theatre & contemporary clowning.

Characteristics

- Curious, open-hearted, and sincere.
- Sees the world with fresh eyes.
- Finds wonder in ordinary things.

In Performance

- Mistakes become discoveries.
- The audience delights in the clown's perspective.

Discussion Question

How does curiosity create comedy?

Practical Classroom Activity

Ask students to explore one of the following clown archetypes:

- The Expert (Whiteface)
- The Rule Breaker (Auguste)
- The Observer (Character Clown)
- The Outsider (Tramp)
- The Truth Teller (Fool)
- The Curious Explorer (Innocent Clown)

Students create a short scene where their clown is given a simple task—such as making a sandwich, catching a bus, or delivering a speech—and explore how their clown's unique perspective transforms the situation into comedy.

Other artworks that explore Circles Of Care

- The Two Fridas explores identity, connection, and different parts of self by Frida Khal.
- Norman Rockwell's community paintings, celebrating everyday relationships and belonging.
- Still Life a novel about chosen family and community by Sarah Winman.
- The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse about friendship, kindness, and support by Charlie Mackesy.
- The Dinner Party; community, remembrance, and collective care by Judy Chicago.

Shaping Question

"What can clowns teach us about being human?"

This question often leads students beyond comedy into discussions about failure, resilience, imagination, courage, and connection.



Artists whose work

Explicitly explores community, intergenerational relationships, and human connection:

- **Shaun Tan:** particularly *The Arrival*, which explores belonging, migration, family, and finding connection in unfamiliar places.
- **Marc Chagall:** whose dreamlike paintings blend memory, family, storytelling, and magical realism, resonating beautifully with the whimsical quality of clowning and Booff.
- **Tracey Emin:** whose autobiographical work explores memory, vulnerability, personal storytelling, and the courage of sharing one's life with others.
- **Ben Quilty:** whose portraits often explore empathy, care, resilience, and human experience.
- **Allen Bennetts** - Talking Heads
- **Pat Routledge:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOqgDmaYdqA&t=133s>
- **Maggie Smith:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nImI9Gfvtf8&t=589s>
- **Eileen Atkins:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrtEZBOs1H8&list=PLkPOOCsfEN-XNubtselP82-B4aPkZ_xxc&index=8
- **Kitty - Pat Routledge:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vNAbCxyxMA&t=4s>
- **Dame Edna:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1l6lzd59lZs&t=4361s>
- **Sandy Stone:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8eJyfB_Gi4&t=899s
- **Dame Early Years:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3veBnqezQo>
- **Lilly Tomlin - The Search For The Signs of The Universe:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKBIPieAc0k&list=PLoThIb0xsC1IDWVw10ZMe6rxjRwwsgg3s&index=5>
- **Barry Otto - Così:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PSa0xM5DKo
- **Teaser - Pawn Again Christian - Annie Lee:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JVXBmTThoo>
- **Exit The King - Geoffrey Rush Interview:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QRvT0SmvUk>
- **Exit The King - Geoffrey Rush Excerpts:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el66pyXs2io>



Conclusion

*"The people who shape our lives are not always the people we are born to.
Sometimes they are the people who listen to our stories, laugh with us, care for us,
and help us find our way."*