

queensland theatre company presents

# THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING) BY WILL ENO

## Teachers' Notes

Prepared by Katie Stewart  
With thanks to Erica Fryberg (Queensland Theatre Company)

The purpose of this document is to provide Queensland educators with information and resources for Queensland Theatre Company's production of *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*. The activities and resources contained in this document are designed as the starting point for educators in developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Katie Stewart is seconded to Queensland Theatre Company from Education Queensland as an Education Liaison Officer.



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Produced by Queensland Theatre Company and Education Queensland.

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# **THOM PAIN**

**(BASED ON  
NOTHING)**

**BY WILL ENO**

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## Synopsis — *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*

Thom Pain has an itch to scratch, and with your help he might just find it.

But first, he needs to share a few things with you, like the time his girlfriend woke up one morning and decided ... oh, but he'll get back to you about that one ...

With nothing but a suit and stories, Thom is an everyman trying to make sense of the world, and his place in it.

Will Eno's underground hit (Edinburgh, London, New York) has been described as 'stand up existentialism', and it gurgles with the grim humour and pain of life.

## Artistic Team

Jason Klarwein	Thom Pain
Jon Halpin	Director
John McIntosh	Design Consultant
Jason Glenwright*	Lighting Designer
Phil Slade	Composer
Travis Dowling	Assistant Director
Nicola Keene	Stage Manager
Chris Horne	Assistant Stage Manager

## Production Staff

Scott Klupfel	Head Electrician
Niki J Witt	Movement Consultant
Shaun Caulfield	Scenic Artist
Tony Brumpton*	Sound Consultant
Michael Green	Wig/Hair Stylist
Peter Scabissi	Supernumery
Jesse Harris	Supernumery
Michael Mortimore	Supernumery
Russell Cockerill	Supernumery

\*Tony Brumpton and Jason Glenwright are part of Queensland Theatre Company's 2010 Emerging Artist Program, proudly sponsored by Brisbane Airport Corporation.

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## Curriculum Connections

### THOM PAIN (based on nothing)

by Will Eno  
15 March – 10 April

#### Themes and Ideas

- Love and loss
- Questioning reality
- Loneliness
- Self-loathing

#### Performance and Dramatic Elements

- Black comedy
- Contemporary western drama
- One-person performance
- Elements of Invisible Theatre
- Subverts the idea of the nature of theatre

*Thom Pain (based on nothing)* is a stand up comedy-style performance and character study of one ordinary man facing an audience with a wicked attitude and a broken heart. In a wry monologue Thom Pain muses on childhood, yearning, disappointment and loss, cataloguing the eternal agonies of the human condition, with both cynicism and humour.

R – 70 minutes (no interval)

L – Frequent strong coarse language

V – None

S – References to sex

ELO – Year 11 and 12 students studying drama will find this play engaging. It will support their studies in monologues and characterisation.

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## About the Playwright: Will Eno

Will lives in New York. He is a Fellow of the Edward F Albee Foundation. He was a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University, where he taught playwriting. His play *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* won all the major awards at the 2004 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The play ran for a year in New York and was a finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize in Drama. His collection of short plays *OH, THE HUMANITY* was produced at the Flea Theater in 2007, starring Marisa Tomei. His plays are published by Oberon Books, in London, and by TCG in the United States. His new play *MIDDLETOWN* will premiere in New York in 2010. An adaptation of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, titled *Gnit*, is also currently being scheduled for production in 2010.



# THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING) BY WILL ENO

## Director's Insight — Jon Halpin

**What is it about the play *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* that appeals to you?**

Many things. I've never done a one person show before so that was appealing. It also fascinated me from the first time I read it. I wasn't even sure it was a play on my first read, but it clearly is. The caustic humour of the piece was also a big plus for me but overall, I think the theme of everyday fear that the play explores is an issue I connect with. We're constantly being told to look out for this or that, buy security, insure against disaster, avoid illness, be alert – not alarmed. This play asks us to accept that life, with all of its warts, is full of pitfalls, agonies and anguish. It also asks us to remember just how remarkable it is to be alive and what a gift life is. I love that paradox.



**How is it different, as a director, working with one actor as opposed to a whole cast of actors?**

You only have one performer to focus on, that's different. Since this play uses no set design to speak of, there's not much else to look at other than the performance. It's probably even more important than usual to make sure there is an implicit trust between the pair of you, as the outcome of the play hinges on how you work together. The communication is of course a bit different. Usually, you're making sure that everyone in the cast are in agreement as to where the show is headed. In this case, as long as Jason and I agree, we have consensus.

**As a director, what is a basic outline of your process, when developing your 'vision' for a play that you are directing?**

It's hard to answer this specifically as there are many factors, including instinct. In this case, I asked my self why Thom is doing this show. I believe Thom has somehow rented the space and is putting on the show in order to share with an audience, and also to understand his own past actions – particularly the break up of his relationship. I think he has put himself in the most terrifying situation imaginable, at least for anyone who has ever acted in a play. A) It's a one person play. B) He doesn't really know what he's going to say or do. He has a rough outline of what he's going to talk about, but doesn't have a script. And C) There should be nowhere for him to hide – hence no set!

Once I understood these things, I was certain of my design concept – no design.

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## Actor's Insight — Jason Klarwein

### What kind of preparation do you go through to get into character?

I usually take the feeling I get from reading the script and try and match it with my thoughts on the piece. Then, I test it out on the floor. If it doesn't feel right, I go back and try it differently. I then start to put on some of the costume and see if that influences the way I move or think. I keep delving into facets of the character until I get excited or comfortable.

### What appeals to you about the character of Thom Pain?

I like his worldliness and his ability to perceive moments/thoughts/feelings. His black humorous observations on life make me giggle. And I love the fact that he is a human being who wants to change.



### What challenges have you faced in rehearsal and how have you overcome them?

Well the mammoth task of line learning was probably the first hurdle. It's just a lot of homework and repetition. There are times in rehearsals that I can feel, as an actor, not 'very good' or sluggish. In this case, I push through, breathe then revisit the problem later with fresh eyes.

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## Article — On Being Human: Will Eno and Thom Pain

Will Eno visits Australia for the first time, and will be here for the opening night of Queensland Theatre Company's production of *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*. He is spending three weeks of his international tour with us as part of the Company's Writing Program. Will took some time out of his busy preparations to answer a few questions for us about his play, the character of Thom and himself.

- *You're coming to Australia for a few months, and will be here in time for the opening of this production. Have you been to Australia before? What are your expectations of this trip and is there anything in particular you want to do during your time here?*

I have not been to Australia before. My expectations are high. Honestly, every person I've spoken to who has been to Australia has been absolutely rapturous about it. And, no kidding, I don't think I've ever met an Australian I didn't like. (So watch out! Who's going to be the first?) As for things that I want to do, I'm sorry that I'll just be missing the Australian Open when I get there. But I'm bringing my tennis racquet, so I'm hoping to play some. And I talked a bit with Jason Klarwein (performing in *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*) about maybe going to see some rugby, in its more vicious and unadulterated form. And some horse racing would be great, if there's any going on. And, I could go on and on. I certainly want to get out of the cities for a good bit. Some rugged sun-beaten land and some coral reefs, some of the animals, any of that. Also, crazily, there's a rock band from the US called Pavement, and they'll be starting a reunion tour in Australia, right around the time that I'm there. They were always a favourite. So I'm hoping to see one of those shows. I just wrote a little article about the band for a magazine called *Relix*. One of the guys in the band is getting married to an Australian woman and is moving to Melbourne next year some time. Another one of the guys is a handicapper or something, in horse racing, and, although he lives in Chicago, he says he's watching and betting on Australian horse races almost every night. I have a guide book that I need to look through, because I really do want to see as much as I can.

- *Your biography mentions you taught playwriting at Princeton. How do you "teach" playwriting?*

I had a great teacher named Gordon Lish, with whom I studied fiction. Having had a great teacher, a truly original and down-to-his-bones teacher, I am humble enough to not speak too loudly on the matter of teaching. But, that said, I also, by reason of having had this great teacher, feel an enormous debt to him, one that can really only be paid back by my sharing what I learned with other students. It is a long discussion, the one about whether you can teach a person to be a writer. None of us was born knowing how to speak, so that suggests to me that it can be taught, at least partly. But what is certain is that there are habits and styles of being and thinking that you can develop, encourage, and reinforce in a person. And I think, with writing anyway, a crucial thing is just helping people feel that great things are possible, letting them know that the sky really and truly is the limit, and that the only thing that is standing in their way is themselves and a couple or three ancient rules. Or maybe 7 to 20 ancient rules. It's not that simple and, in a crazy way, it is that simple. Writing is mainly work and discipline and desire. A big part of teaching is gearing someone up for all that, getting them revved up and worked into a lather for all the very quiet and contemplative and even boring times they are going to have. Howling was the first sound we all made. Then we were taught to speak. Writing is just another phase of communication, along that continuum, and is maybe even just some combination of the earlier two.

- *What forms of playwriting do you experiment with in *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*? What would you describe as the play's genre?*

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I try to keep all sorts of things in mind while I'm writing but, with *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, I wasn't really worrying about experimenting with different forms of playwriting. It felt more, almost, maybe, as if I were experimenting with forms of being a person. So, it was more a matter of trying to be an experimental person while I was writing, rather than writing an experimental play. Certainly, yeah, I had the normal forms of the one-person play in my sights, as something I wanted to avoid. I've always found them, one-person plays, really static and sometimes even entirely non-dramatic. "I was born in 1857," and so on. You hear about change, rather than seeing it. Or you hear about the dawning of some awareness, rather than seeing anything dawn. And I knew I didn't want to do any of that. The other thing I knew was that I wanted to make the audience somehow important to the whole proceedings. I wanted the pressure of their presence to somehow inform the drama, one way or the other. Another way to answer the original question, maybe, is to say that you are always somehow experimenting with all forms of playwriting. For instance, there was a time, way back, when plays all tended to have choruses in them. You could just say, "Well, we don't use those anymore." Or, looking at it a different way, you could say we've just been in a phase, the last three hundred years or so, wherein we are experimenting with NOT using the chorus. As for the genre, I don't know. I guess I just think of it as a play. Or, to be honest, more of a "thing," I guess. "An animal that takes place in time," I don't know.

- *You've been quoted as saying that you think **Thom Pain (based on nothing)** is "10 or 20 times more optimistic than most things around". How is the play optimistic?*

I don't know where I got those numbers from. Maybe I should downgrade it to "7 to 9 times more optimistic." I guess I just feel that the play does not shy away from life nor from large feelings nor from — and this may be a big claim to make, but — reality. And in that very action, that movement towards those things, into those difficult things, toward reality, I think there is an implicit statement that it is worthwhile to do this, there is something in life that is very worth having, and entirely worth the cost of getting. In the words of TS Eliot, the cost was "not less than everything."

- *Do you regard yourself as an optimist?*

I do, although I was doing some research a few years ago and discovered that all of my ancestors are dead. So, you know, within certain limits, I'd say I was pretty optimistic.

- *Do you intend audiences to like the character of Thom?*

I do, but when I was eleven, I intended to jump my bike over an old lawnmower and I didn't make it and I broke my arm. Like all of us, I have things I've intended. Some work out, some don't, but it shouldn't stop you from trying, or from intending. "Grudging admiration," would be great too, if people didn't like him. "Deep hatred," even, would have to be all right, though it would surprise me a little, as he is trying to be good and to be meaningful and useful.

- *Thom as a character seems full of contradictions: deceptive, yet truthful; fearless, yet doubting; optimistic, yet sinister; loveable, yet irritating. Do you intend, in your drawing of the character, a realistic representation of a person, or have you taken aspects of humanity and exaggerated them within Thom for dramatic effect?*

I think he's within the parameters of the plausibly human. So I'd say he was a "realistic representation." Which, when you think of those two words, is, in effect, to say that he is a false falseness. Which would make him true, I think, philosophically speaking, or linguistically speaking. Anyway, just my opinion, but, yeah, I think he could probably exist, and probably does exist in some form, and even probably in some much uglier and worse forms. But, as for Thom, hey, he never killed anyone. He's just had some normal experiences on earth and has maybe drawn some extreme

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conclusions. You know what; I take back any quibbling on this point: he is absolutely a representation of a person. Which, getting philosophical again, is all a real person is.

➤ *Is the character Thom Pain a reliable narrator?*

I think so, but, really, what else am I going to say? And am I, in answering the question, a reliable narrator of my own response? A cousin of mine came to see the play in New York and I had dinner with him a couple nights later. He said, about the play, and about Thom, “At first, I didn’t trust the guy. And then, at the end, I totally trusted the guy.” That was one of my favourite things that a cousin of mine said. Just because it showed trust to be a dynamic thing, an earned and earnable thing. Something that develops because of the character’s continued scrupulosity, if that’s a word, with respect to his efforts to tell his story precisely and honestly, including even his own doubts about the story. Trust should not come into being just because, say, a character walks out on stage with a police uniform on, and we all say, “Aha, that one must be the trustable one.” I think, a lot of the time, we call a narrator a reliable narrator mainly because they’re boring. They haven’t said anything that has the glistening energy of a well-told lie, they haven’t said anything that isn’t immediately continuous with our own understanding of things, so we say, “Hey, this guy is really reliable.” As for the actual matter and content of the play, there isn’t anything in there that I haven’t at one time, or two times, or many more, felt. So, again, I’d say that Thom’s reliable, but, again, what else would I say?

➤ *Where do you see the play sits in relation to works by, for example, Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, Harold Pinter, Eugene Ionesco, Sam Shepard, Heiner Muller?*

The only way I would ever put myself in that group is alphabetically, where I would come in third. Or, if we’re going by first name, last.

➤ *What advice would you give an audience member about to attend the play?*

Oh, I don’t think anyone needs any advice. But I guess, just, “Sit down.” “Turn your phone off.” Something like that? Or, maybe, “Make sure you leave after it’s over, because they’re probably going to lock up the place.” Honestly, I really appreciate the opportunity, and I should probably take advantage of it, but I think everyone’ll be fine, everyone’s going to be great. There’s only one big word in the play, but since I didn’t know what it meant, the definition is also in the play, about three seconds later. So that shouldn’t be a worry. I guess the things I would say would be the same advice we could all give each other about anything in life, about living itself: try to be open, try to listen, try to care, try to be yourself, try not to judge too quickly or too harshly. Oh, wait, how about this? It’s not advice, it’s really just a request, or a hope, but, here’s the deal: I was really trying to be a good person when I wrote the thing, so it would be so great if you tried to be a good person watching it.

➤ *What do you hope Queensland Theatre Company audiences will take away from the experience of seeing **Thom Pain (based on nothing)**?*

Good things, you know. I hope, good things. Maybe, and this would be wonderful, maybe people will just take away a kind of heightened or energized version of all the things they walked in with. Unless they walked in with bad things. In which case, I’d hope they felt the bad things less, and were more appreciative of the good things. I’d hope (and here I’m really just letting go with my highest hopes) that everyone felt they were a part of a really crazy and beautiful and rare thing. That thing being not the play, but life on earth as a human being. Special, I guess — I hope people leave feeling special.

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## Article — Queensland Theatre Company's Emerging Artist Program

Since 2002, Queensland Theatre Company has provided talented theatre workers with the chance to work with the Company over an extended period, through our Emerging Artist Program. In 2005 Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) came on board to support the Program, “allowing artists to take flight and develop their skills and careers”, and we are most grateful to BAC for their continued support.

Artists come with a variety of skill sets and from a variety of backgrounds. During their year with Queensland Theatre Company each is given the opportunity to practice their craft and undertake professional development and training specifically tailored to their personal goals. In 2010 we're supporting an emerging actor, director, designer and sound designer.

The Emerging Artist Program also creates short-term opportunities for other professionals to gain valuable experience on individual productions as Creative Assistants. Each year we invite a number of Creative Assistants to work on productions as either Assistant Directors or Design Assistants. These roles are very much about observing the professional practice of the Director or Designer involved, and the way the Company puts on a show. In 2010 we are awarding four places for Creative Assistants on mainstage shows.

### Emerging and Emerging Artists

*Thom Pain (based on nothing)* features several Emerging Artists, past and present. Director Jon Halpin and actor Jason Klarwein were, in 2002, part of the first year the Emerging Artist Program was offered by Queensland Theatre Company. Jason Glenwright worked in 2009 as a Creative Assistant, and is one of this year's Emerging Artists. We asked the three of them to share their experiences as an Emerging Artist and how it has helped their careers.

### *How has the Emerging Artist Program helped progress your career?*

- Jon Halpin: Mainly it was the opportunities it provides to do the work and get your work shown.
- Jason Klarwein: In that year as an actor and director, we were showcased. So I did three shows as an actor-
- Jon Halpin: and I did three as a director
- Jason Klarwein: You gain experience and profile.
- Jon Halpin: Every show you do progresses you in some way. And having a year chock-a-block with work is a real hothouse to develop your craft and profile – which is important in the arts.
- Jason Klarwein: The relationships you make with the Company and with the artists who work with the Company are really important.
- Jon Halpin: In the first year what I learned, particularly through production meetings, was how different it was for a director working in a state theatre company than in the Fringe where you're more the producer and props finder and marketer and everything yourself. That was the real eye opener. Also, overall, learning how the Company works as a whole, was a big thing for me. A few illusions were

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dispelled. You think, on the outside, of the Company as impenetrable and incredibly resourced, and then when you're here you realise everything is incredibly finite, and everything has to be budgeted down to the cent – particularly here where it's a Statutory Authority. And just how accountable everyone is.

Jason Glenwright: But there's a much bigger base to look after you here. As a lighting designer I feel I've met head electricians, technical coordinators and managers that I can throw ideas to and seek advice from, and who can help create the effects of my dreams with. Here with a great team you can move forward on some of the great ideas that you aren't able to do by yourself sometimes in those small productions.

Jason Klarwein: In my year there were four actors in the program and we did three shows – two of which were in repertory, which was excellent experience. The day to day things we did were great too; we each got to choose stuff that we wanted to do. Everything from clowning, to stage combat, to practical aesthetics, to fitness training, to arts accounting, to Shakespeare, to puppetry – it was awesome.

Jason Glenwright: I've been on *The Little Dog Laughed* and *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* so far in my year as an Emerging Artist, and after that I'm not sure what's happening yet! At this stage, what I'm hoping is I can get as much from the program as possible, and ask for as much as possible. I hope I do get another design opportunity this year, perhaps in Education, or to work alongside another designer again and watch their processes. A lot of the learning comes from watching other designers at work and their techniques. I'm most looking forward to the mainstage productions; getting out there and lighting something, to see if what I do here is any different from what I do anywhere else – if it's any better or worse. Hopefully this year will push me along with what I do with lighting in the future.

***How is your experience as an Emerging Artist feeding into the production of Thom Pain (based on nothing)?***

Jason Klarwein: Because Jon and I were both emerging artists at the same time, we now have a dialogue and a relationship as actor and director, a short-hand of communication, which is good. We're more on the same page from the start.

***How do you approach a work like Thom Pain (based on nothing) and what effect/s are you each aiming at in production?***

Jon Halpin: It's a bit tricky to talk about in that we haven't started rehearsals yet and I'm still working that out, but where I'm starting from is that this is a pretty unique one; I feel I'm playing second fiddle to the script, very much. Thom doesn't feel like he quite knows why he's there – he's turned up in the Bille Brown Studio but he hasn't quite articulated what he's doing – It's very much watching someone flounder and fall apart in front of your eyes, and making that experience for your audience funny, but also awkward and painful and embarrassing -

Jason Klarwein: And slightly terrifying -

Jon Halpin: What I'm looking to do is serve those moments as truly and as invisibly as I can.

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- Jason Glenwright: I think that's the key, technically as well.
- Jon Halpin: If anyone says "Gee the lighting was fantastic", or the set, or the costumes, then we've kind of failed.
- Jason Glenwright: It's about making those moments invisible, too.
- Jason Klarwein: For me, too, particularly since talking to Will, it's becoming about when to play the truth of the script and when to be hiding and creating the invisibility of the script.

***What advice would you give people who would like to join Queensland Theatre Company's Emerging Artist program?***

- Jon Halpin: Patience. Not just to be offered an Emerging Artist role, but generally in the early or middle stages of your career. You just have to keep learning and keep pushing yourself because eventually opportunities do arrive, but it's up to you to be in the position to take advantage of that opportunity and make the best of that opportunity, because they don't constantly come. It's also about not being backward about coming forward; get in touch with the Artistic Development Manager and say "I would like to be an assistant designer on this show", or "I want to work with this person".
- Jason Klarwein: You need to be proactive without being annoying. And yes, it's patience. It's a very difficult industry, and there'll be times when you don't work, and then you'll get a good six months – which is a good year. You need a Zen-like attitude. The thing I struggle with is either anxiety about not working; or anxiety about working. And trying not to be discouraged because you missed an opportunity that someone else receives. Sometimes it can be heartbreaking, but that's just what happens – you've got to develop a tough skin.
- Jason Glenwright: And do as much as you can do. Even if you're working for nothing.
- Jason Klarwein: And when you don't have kids or aren't married, while you're a young artist, that's the time to be doing it.
- Jason Glenwright: Brisbane has so many independent companies in the independent arts sector, which is a great opportunity to push your skills further.
- Jon Halpin: There's also been a gradual shift in the industry where funding bodies want artists to be more proactive about creating their own work. If there isn't anything available, then create a collective and put something on and get your work shown that way.

**2010 Emerging Artists**

**Tony Brumpton**, Sound Designer. During 2010 Tony is working on *The Little Dog Laughed*, *Fat Pig*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Hurry Up and Wait!*

**Jason Glenwright**, Lighting Designer. In 2010 Jason will work on *The Little Dog Laughed*, *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, Youth & Education and regional program initiatives.

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**Melanie Wild**, Director. Melanie is Assistant Director for the 2010 tour of *Toy Symphony*, *Let the Sunshine*, *Fat Pig* and assisting with dramaturgy for the 2010/11 Queensland Premier's Drama Award finalists development.

**Melanie Zanetti**, Actor. Melanie played Ellen in *The Little Dog Laughed* and will also perform multiple roles in *Grimm Tales* as well as gaining experience in other company programs such as The Works and the Queensland Premiere's Drama Awards.

#### 2010 Creative Assistants

- Kat Henry – Assistant Director *The Little Dog Laughed*
- Travis Dowling – Assistant Director *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*
- Cienda McNamara - Assistant Director *Betrayal*
- Michelle Miall - Assistant Director *Grimm Tales*

*If you are interested in becoming a Queensland Theatre Company Emerging Artist in 2011, please review the information about the program on the Company's website and send your letter of application including CV to our Artistic Development Department.*

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## Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What kind of relationship do you think Thom had with the woman he describes?
- Who would you consider to be the target audience for this play and why?
- Describe the kind of man you think Thom Pain is using examples from the play to justify your answer.
- How important is the space, in terms of determining the level of intimacy between the audience and actor, taking into account the amount of interaction between them?
- What do you think the playwright Will Eno, was trying to say? Consider the 'type' of character Thom Pain is and his name and the title of the play.
- Make a list of themes presented in this play. Use examples from the production to justify your answers.
- How do you think *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* is relevant to a young audience?
- What is meant by the term, "to subvert the nature of theatre?" Discuss how *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* does this and use examples from Queensland Theatre Company's production.

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## Script Excerpt One

What if you only had one day to live? What would you do? That's easy. You'd be brave and true and reckless. You would love life and people with wild and new abandon. *(Brief pause)* What if you only had forty years? What would you do? If you're like me, — and no offence, but — you probably are, you wouldn't do anything. It's sad isn't it? This dead horse of a life we beat, all the wilder, all the harder, the deader it gets. *(again, in the preceding line, Thom Pain has shown too much of his own desperate view of life, and wants to undercut it, somehow, or try to be more positive about life)*. On the other hand, there are some nice shops in the area. I bought a candle-holder and a chair, today. I lost the candle-holder somewhere.

*(Pause. The following is announced exactly the same as when announced before.)*

Now I think would be a good time for the raffle. I hope you held on to your tick — no. Sorry, where was I? I was thinking about your life. Very distracting. Okay. Sorry. I bought a — Huh.

*(Brief pause.)*

Well, while we're waiting, So, a horse walks into a bar. The bar-tender says, "Why the long face?" And the horse says, "I'm dying of AIDS. And I guess I feel a little sorry for myself." So the bartender says, "My God, that's awful. I'm so sorry."

*(Brief pause.)*

I'm forgetting some part of it. But you get the point, you see the hilarity. It's funny because its true.

*(Brief pause.)*

What a nice crowd. I see no difference, really. In a world filled with difference, sickening disheartening difference, I see none. Between the you and the me. You all seem so wonderful and I seem so wonderful, and so I make no distinction, I see no separation, no unbridgeable distance between us, wonderful us. Or none worth remarking, since the thought of you disgusts me so much. The thought of you doesn't disgust me that much. In fact, you're all so wonderful, I'd like to take you home, leave you there, and then go somewhere else. No, seriously. The truth? I don't care either way. That's not true, I do care, either way.

I'm the type of person you might not hear from for some time, but then, suddenly, one day, bang, you never hear from me again.

We're all roughly this way, yeah? Roughly.

queensland theatre company presents

# THOM PAIN

(BASED ON  
NOTHING)

BY WILL ENO

## Classroom Activities

### FORMING and PRESENTING

Give each student a copy of the script excerpt on page 16.

Read through the excerpt as a class and identify the different ideas that the character has throughout the piece, using a pen to separate them. Briefly discuss what the character is saying and its meaning, but leave room for the students to continue to explore the piece, using their own interpretation.

Lead a discussion with the students that examines what they believe the overall theme/perspective/idea is of the play, in their opinion. Is it social, philosophical, political or perhaps personal?

Give the students time to block and direct their piece, applying their own interpretation.

After students rehearse the piece, they are to present it to the class. Lead another discussion with the students that examines the individuals' interpretation of the piece, directorial and character approach.

## Suggested Assessment

### RESPONDING

After watching Queensland Theatre Company's production of *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, students can write an analytical essay that discusses how the play subverts the idea of the nature of theatre. They can construct their response by using specific examples from the play, focusing on the dramatic elements of space role and tension, indentifying appropriate dramatic languages and discussing their meaning to reinforce their ideas.

Students can consider the following:

- How the play was directed, including set, costume, lighting and sound design choices
- How comedy was used to help tell Thom Pain's story
- Narrative, or lack of narrative

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