

**Central Queensland University, Australia**

**Susan Davis**

**EPIPHANY! A contemporary vaudevillian fairytale**

Abstract:

This show was developed through working with a group of young people and professional artist with the young actors having input into character creation drawing on concepts from circus, vaudeville and freak shows. Workshop content was then shaped into a script which to date has had two performance seasons. Working within a framework drawn from the old music hall style of theatre the script is shaped into twelve stand-alone acts that, in combination, tell a gripping tale.

Biographical note:

Susan Davis is a Senior Lecturer at CQ University, Noosa. She has been devising and writing scripts for more than 20 years, many in her prior professional life as a drama educator and Performing Arts Head of Department and more recently as co-director of a youth performance group 2Muse Productions. Sue has written curriculum and assessment materials for syllabus and assessment projects, has presented and published her work about using drama and new media at state, national and international level. Sue has extensive experience in managing arts-based community projects and events and devising scripts that extend the parameters of contemporary youth performance.

Keywords:

creative writing – theatre – fairytales – contemporary performance – vaudeville – gothic theatre

**Characters:**

- MC the MC of the show who is also a ‘half and half’ – and moves between the ‘real’ world and the mirror world
- QUEENIE D the young heroine, lives on the edge of the lives of others, has not yet found her voice
- BELLA B Queenie’s mother, a high flying performer
- AUNT ISSY Bella’s sister and Queenie’s aunt, a nasty step-mother type
- MAX Issy’s son (and Queenie’s cousin), an arrogant spoilt brat
- PAINBOY A young man who feels and takes on the pain of others and helps negotiate their way to the mirror world
- BEARDED BRIDE (B. Bride)
- FORTUNE TELLER (F. Teller)
- JOEY & MOEY Young Siamese Twins
- PAPPA CLOWNS Two clowns who look after the twins, they are made up as happy face and sad face clowns respectively.



Figs. 1 and 2. Promotional postcards for each of two staged performances of *Epiphany*.  
Photos by Alain Bouvier and Mary Eggleston

## The Prologue

*(Lights come up to reveal QUEENIE asleep on stage. A video montage is projected with an accompanying sound scape that gradually becomes more nightmarish)*

- VO:** *Mummy's little Angel, Mummy's little girl - Mummy's favourite girl in the whole wide world...*
- QUEENIE:** *(QUEENIE is asleep and dreaming of her mother. She talks in her sleep....)* Mummy, I want to come with you. Can I come with you?
- BELLA:** Queenie, when you miss me, look into this little globe - it is our secret fantastical world, a place where we can be together whenever you need me ...
- QUEENIE:** Please don't go, Bella ...
- BELLA:** Good night sweetheart, be good for Aunt Issy and play nicely with cousin Max.
- QUEENIE:** But – mum ... don't go! –
- BELLA:** It's just a few weeks, Queenie. I promise it will fly by – just like a beautiful trapeze artist! Kisses? Good girl.
- MC:** *(Whispering through dreamlike voice and beckoning her)* Queenie, there is a space beyond, a secret fantastical world, the door to which is revealed to only a few ...
- QUEENIE:** Mummy!? Don't go ...
- MC:** There is a place where you can escape to, Queenie...
- QUEENIE:** MUMMY!? Bella!
- Echo of MC:** ... a place where the unloved can escape to...

*(QUEENIE wakes up with a fright crying. MAX has snuck in and stands over her).*

- MAX:** Don't go! Don't go! Your mummy doesn't love you! Cry baby Queenie, says Mummy please don't leave me, *(chants)* cry baby Queenie, cry baby Queenie!
- QUEENIE:** Stop it, don't say that - get out of here, leave me alone!
- MAX:** *(As he runs out)* Muummmmyyyy, Mummy dearest, Queenie's being mean to me again. Make her stop it! Muuuuummmmy!
- ISSY:** *(In shadow)* Queenie D, you ungrateful child. I work my fingers to the bone looking after you while your mothers traipses round the

countryside, and this is the thanks I get. Don't worry Maxy, my precious ... extra chores for you Queenie D, and no more snivelling...

*(Lights out on ISSY. PAINBOY is walking through a strong windstorm – trying to reach QUEENIE D.)*

**PAINBOY:** Queenie's loneliness drew me to her, (to MC) she longs for her mother, but Bella's just too busy...

## **ACT 1**

**MC:** Act 1 – In which you, our transient friends, are welcome to join our magical night's entertainment! Tonight I will share with you some joys and hidden shames, will you do the same for me? Here we embrace the freaks, the unconventional, the unwelcome. We have found a place where the unloved can escape to. Through enduring the extreme, we have found moments of epiphany. Tonight we will take you to this place, where you will witness moments of magic and despair!

There is a space beyond, a secret fantastical world, the door to which is revealed to only a few. Come now my sweeties, my freakies, my transient friends, as I introduce you to the sad and unfortunate, from times past and present, now captured as one. Unleash your secret freak and prepare for the show!

*(FORTUNE TELLER & BEARDED BRIDE make their way through the crowd selling tickets, both calling out to the audience...)*

**B. BRIDE:** Get your tickets here!

**F. TELLER:** Get them now! Bella's back in town.

**B. BRIDE:** That's right - high wire aerialist, the great Bella B is unveiling her dangerous new act!

**F. TELLER:** VERY dangerous new act. Take my word for it.

**MC:** *(News reel style voice)* There has been great excitement in the city this week as crowds have gathered to welcome back the great Bella B. After an absence of some months from our stages, it is clear to all that Miss Bella remains a performer of immense beauty and talent. A high wire aerialist, a chanteuse and exotic dancer, she is equally at home on the stage, in the air or in front of the photographer's lens. This week Bella signed autographs as fans queued to buy tickets for the Christmas

Spectacular, to be staged at the Majestic Theatre. Tickets are bound to sell out soon, with rumours spreading about Bella's new act. You simply don't want to miss it. *(Breaks out of this mode to share the following secret)*

You know ... as a performer Bella was quite extraordinary, as a mother she was loving ... but rather ordinary. Some year ago she had given birth to one sickly child, Queenie D ... but abandoned by a feckless partner, it wasn't long before Bella was back on stage, and a visit from her mother became as common and special to Queenie as that of the Christmas Fairy.

*(BELLA rushes past QUEENIE who wants a hug from her mother. BELLA takes off her jacket and leaves it hanging, she hands QUEENIE her beret).*

**BELLA:** Stay here and watch me Queenie. Wish me luck! *(BELLA blows a token kiss – and rushes off stage.)*

**MC:** And now announcing our headline act, the beautiful and brilliant, the great Bella B!

*(Clapping and fanfare)*

*(Video montage from of BELLA on trapeze, during the following monologue, she slips and falls and the trapeze is left swinging)*

**QUEENIE:** I was standing in the wings. She looked so beautiful as she swung out and swung back, swung out and swung ... *(Offstage SCREAM!!! Frantic footsteps, lights dimmed then brightened, dramatic music and anguished whispers).* I tried to look out into the auditorium, but all I could see were the footlights and people running for the exit.

*(Sound of people running, someone calls "SHE'S DEAD")*

**QUEENIE:** I didn't know what to do, so I came back here ... To her dressing room ...

*(QUEENIE looks at herself in the mirror for a while. She reaches out and traces the outline of her face.)*

**QUEENIE:** Who is this girl in the mirror? Queenie D, just a child you see, I can't now see a future, what will become of me? Bella ...

*(She holds back tears as she starts to pick up her mother's things, puts on her mother's jacket and the cap and picks up the snow globe. MAX sneaks in behind her and starts to tease QUEENIE.)*

**MAX:** She's gone for good this time... and now my Mother's in charge. You'll have to do every single thing she says... and every little thing I say too. In fact, I want that snow globe.

**QUEENIE:** It was a gift from my mother, you can't have it.

**MAX:** You want to bet. Mummmmmmyyyyyyy!

**QUEENIE:** Don't do this to me Max. I don't deserve this! *(she looks into the mirror and pleads)*. Somebody help me, please!

**ISSY:** Hurry up Maxy, we won't have long till the managers turn up to collect her things! Right little man. You gather shoes, costumes, and anything you find down below. I'm after her jewels, photographs and any money she left hidden in here. As her nearest and dearest sister I am certain Bella would have wanted me to be custodian of all her gorgeous things. *(Glaring at QUEENIE.)* Oh, it's you.

**MAX:** I mean it's not as if crybaby Queenie should get everything. That's not fair.

**ISSY:** Such a pale, untalented imitation of her mother.

**Both:** Such a disappointment.

**ISSY:** She'll have to earn her keep, or it'll be off to the poorhouse for her.

*(She turns to face QUEENIE - who has disappeared SFX)*

Did you hear that Queenie D? ... Where did she go?

**MAX:** She was right here. She must be hiding somewhere. Come here you little mongrel. Cousin Maxy won't hurt you.

**ISSY:** Much ... Where is she Max? Is she down there? Quick, grab her!

**MAX:** She was here, she was, but now ... she's gone?

*(ISSY and MAX continue to search... They freeze)*

## ACT 2



Figs. 3, 4 and 5. Entering the world beyond, Queenie D, The twins 'world'. Photos by Julia Dawson.

**MC:** There is a world beyond ... a secret fantastical world ...

*(Music as scene transitions into the mirror world. Imagery of snowstorm and the snowflakes projected onto umbrellas with mirror people movement piece. Umbrellas are lifted to reveal QUEENIE in the mirror world.)*

**PAINBOY:** Queenie D. Welcome. We thought you might make it here one day.

*(QUEENIE shrinks away in alarm. The CLOWNS approach her.)*

**QUEENIE:** Who are you?

*(The clowns make sad, then happy face and mime giving her flowers etc)*

**QUEENIE:** Thank you. *(Turns to others)* How do you know my name?

**PAINBOY:** We've been watching you Queenie. We see it all from our world beyond the mirror.

**F. TELLER:** So welcome to our world ...

**TWINS:** ... our home. *(They look at each other and smile)*

**B. BRIDE:** Now yours if you will.

**QUEENIE:** What world is this exactly? Do I know you?  
**F.TELLER:** You're in the world of far beyond.  
**QUEENIE:** But how did I get here – did I just come through that mirror?  
**PAINBOY:** I could feel your pain Queenie  
**F. TELLER:** And I could see your tears  
**B. BRIDE:** I could sense a presence  
**TWINS:** And we shared your fears  
**F. TELLER:** Life was amix  
**PAINBOY:** ... and we knew you were near.  
**B. BRIDE:** You wished, the mirror answered  
**F. TELLER:** You were meant to come here.  
**QUEENIE:** So did I just come through that mirror?  
**PAINBOY:** Yes Queenie. It was an act of magic, born of wishing and despair,  
**MC:** In a moment of Epiphany, you vanished into air.  
**QUEENIE:** So, am I dead then?  
**MOEY :** *(As they pinch her on either side)* Doesn't feel like it?  
**JOEY:** Does it?  
**QUEENIE:** Ouch! Am I going to grow tall, shrink small, wake up and it's all a dream?

*(They pull her hair, tickle her and make it clear she is alive.)*

**JOEY:** Nope, it's real  
**MOEY:** Or unreal, banana peel, tag, you're up.  
**TWINS:** Bet you can't catch us. *(They run away)*  
**QUEENIE:** So ... They are ... stuck together?  
**F. TELLER:** Forever.  
**PAINBOY:** Joey and Moey have been with us since they were babes. There they were freaks, here they are just children.  
**QUEENIE:** And the clowns?  
**B. BRIDE:** ... look after them as if they were their own.  
**F. TELLER:** Here it's different, but that's what we love.  
**PAINBOY:** Nothing can hurt as much as it did.



**F. TELLER & B. BRIDE:** We will watch out for you.

**QUEENIE:** But ... can I leave, is it forever?

**B. BRIDE:** You're here for now Queenie, and now is the only moment you really live in. Don't worry about forever, or tomorrow. It will come soon enough.

**MC:** So there you have it my friends. You now know our secret, and we trust you'll hold it dear. You have entered into our world – home of the lost and unfortunate, the scared and the scarred. Queenie is so sweet, at home with our friendly freaks!

### ACT 3

**MC:** Act 3, a comedy routine revealing unexpectedly heart-rending tales of childhood

**SAD CLOWN (SC):** She had a bad childhood. Who didn't?

**HAPPY CLOWN (HC):** Well I didn't.

**S. CLOWN:** Oh really?

**H. CLOWN:** Yes really.

**S. CLOWN:** I beg to differ.

**H. CLOWN:** About your mother?

**S. CLOWN:** Yes, your mother.

**H. CLOWN:** My mother?

**S. CLOWN:** Well, not my mother.

**H. CLOWN:** Well, how about that time your mother locked you in the cupboard and threw away the key?

**S. CLOWN:** Well luckily my father found it and let me out. A mere oversight on her behalf. What about that time when your mother went on the great Australian tour and left you 5 miles from Gundagai?

**H. CLOWN:** Brilliant move, well I then walked 500 miles, arrived home safe and sound and I've never been fitter. An of kindness on her behalf. What about the time your mother sold you to the gypsies so she could take up tap dancing classes?

**S. CLOWN:** Best years of my life – learnt all the tricks of the trade while tied under that caravan.

**BOTH:** Childhood!

**S. CLOWN:** Yes those were the days.

**H. CLOWN:** Learning how to escape and fend for yourself.

**S. CLOWN:** Building a bullet-proof shield (literally) and laughing in the face of verbal abuse.

**H. CLOWN:** Loving the isolation.

**S. CLOWN:** And the loneliness.

**BOTH:** Ahhhh, luxury.

**H. CLOWN:** So she's just like us hey?

**S. CLOWN:** Just like us.

**H. CLOWN:** Can we keep her? Please, pretty please!

**S. CLOWN:** Don't you think we've got enough on our hands with the twins.

**H. CLOWN:** But she's so cute, come on, can we, pretty please, pretty please. I'll clean up after her, cross my heart and hope to die.

**S. CLOWN:** Oh, all right. I'll go find another cardboard box then.

*(Lights up on the Siamese twins, asleep as if inside a rather confined 'box'.)*

#### **ACT 4**

**MC:** Act 4, in which we encounter a very special set of twins, a physical oddity or new friends for Queenie D?

*(The twins wake up, and do a joint 'box mime', they find the lid and push it open, as they get out of the box, they indicate that it has been ripped.)*

**MOEY:** Oh, no, we've ripped the box.

**JOEY:** I love that box, do you think we can fix it?

**MOEY:** It's too small for us now.

**JOEY:** But it's our box. We've had it ever since we were babies.

**MOEY:** We can get a bigger one. Or maybe we could even get a real bed

**JOEY:** I love box.

**MOEY:** Come on, let's go play.

*(QUEENIE has been watching them from the side and now approaches them)*

**QUEENIE:** Can I play too?

- MOEY:** Yes (*Same time as...*)
- JOEY:** I don't know ...
- QUEENIE:** No, I don't want to spoil things.
- JOEY:** You won't. We've never had to share with anyone else ... But we can try.
- MOEY:** Do you have a brother?
- JOEY:** Or a sister?
- QUEENIE:** No, it's just me.
- JOEY:** That's great. You're lucky to be able to do whatever you like.
- MOEY:** Sometimes I'd like to be alone. Just to see what it's like... but of course I love my bro (*he playfully punches JOEY*).
- JOEY:** Do you have a mother and a father?
- QUEENIE:** I did ... my mother is ...
- JOEY:** Our real parents left us at an orphanage in a cardboard box.
- MOEY:** As the sun rose that morning in the sky, the light shone through the crack onto the silver balloon. We could see our faces in it.
- JOEY:** We were very sad.
- MOEY:** Yes, we even cried. (*They put on a big crying act*) Just a little.
- JOEY:** And then suddenly... we were here, with new parents, and a brand new box.
- JOEY:** Come with us Queenie and explore our world.

## ACT 5

- MC:** Act 5, in which Queenie discovers a world of possibilities

*(Music/movement, montage of different backgrounds starting with realistic ones and then becoming more fantastic.)*

- QUEENIE:** (*She looks around amazed*) Where are we?
- Twins:** Surprise ... do you like it here?
- QUEENIE:** It's amazing ... Where are we?
- JOEY:** This is our world Queenie.
- MOEY:** Once you get beyond the reflection, your world can be whatever you imagine.

*(Other characters come on – mix of physical representations and imagery, different lines and imagery such as ...)*

**TWINS:** In our world – there’s an endless supply of fairyfloss and candycanes.

**F. TELLER:** In my world – I soar on the wings of angels and butterflies.

**PAINBOY:** In my world – beauty is transformed from human pain.

**B. BRIDE:** In my world – gentle waters caress my soul.

**QUEENIE:** So you can really create your own beautiful world?

**JOEY:** What would be in yours Queenie?

**QUEENIE:** In my world ... there would be a beautiful golden theatre ... with red velvet curtains, and a hire wire trapeze. A ... a woman and a child. A mother who holds me tight. A hug that goes on forever... and ... and ... *(the others have moved in around her and comfort her)*.

**PAINBOY:** It’s all right Queenie. We all longed for a perfect past when we first came here.

**B. BRIDE:** We understand. Stay with us Queenie D. We’ll be your family now.

**JOEY & MOEY:** *(break the somber mood)* Candy cane anyone?



Figs. 6, 7 and 8. Aunt Issy, The MC, Bearded Bride and Queenie. Photos by Julia Dawson

## **ACT 6 – Max’s dilemma**

*(PAINBOY appears beyond the mirror screen, feeling approaching agonies)*

**MC:** Act 6 – Another child ... demands, desertion and dilemma.

- MAX:** *(He is sitting in front of the mirror)* Muuuuummmmy! I WANNA CANDY CANE.
- ISSY:** You want what?
- MAX:** A candy cane ... I really WANNA A CANDY CANE. Now!
- ISSY:** Well we don't have any candy canes. And we won't until you take some of Bella's junk down to the pawnshop to get some more cash.
- MAX:** Why do I have to do it?
- ISSY:** Well, now that Queenie's gone ... who else is going to do it? I'm too busy trying to keep house and hearth together ... and you are not making things any easier you spoilt brat.
- MAX:** Well whose fault is that? Well?
- ISSY:** I'm thinking of making a return to the stage.
- MAX:** You're what?
- ISSY:** Capitalise on this renewed interest in my sister. You know I was a rather talented performer in my day.
- MAX:** At the freak show.
- ISSY:** I had a novelty act, yes ... but no need to be cruel.
- MAX:** But you're past it ... no-one would pay to see you now.
- ISSY:** Is that what you think? What would you know.
- MAX:** I know you're an old has been. The ugly sister, the second best, the down and out, weird, wired, washed-up ... *(stops as he realises she's packing to leave him)* But you're my mummy wummy and I love you so. Mummy ... Mummmmyyy ... Mummmmy. *(Hugs her leg as she starts to move off)* Where are you going?
- ISSY:** I have an appointment ... I have a ticket ... I have a life. Bye, bye.
- MAX:** But when will you be back? What about my candy cane? Who'll tuck me into beddy byes and sing me nighty nights?
- ISSY:** That was Queenie's job ... time to man up my boy. I'm off to join the circus. Have a nice life. *(ISSY leaves)*
- MAX:** *(Looking in mirror)* How could she do this to me. I don't deserve this. I'm just a kid you see, what will become of me. Mummy! MUUUMMMY?
- DON'T GO!!!!

*(Sfx –MAX's vanishes behind the mirror)*

## ACT 7

**MC:** And now my friends – Act 7 – where you are welcome to share a little more of our lives and loves.

**B. BRIDE:** Here in the world beyond we wile away the hours by creating shows to share with a privileged few. You may be wondering how we all came to be here. Can we trust you, can we expose our deepest, darkest secrets to you now?

*(They sing)*

**MC:** Most people grow up Jack or Jill  
Dick, Dora, Pam or Pete  
With breasts or balls  
With beard or curls  
Not both or half of each.

**B. BRIDE:** I had long hair, but shaved my chin  
So sweet, and quite petite  
But mum and dad  
Felt weighed by shame  
And hid me from the street.

**MC:** As Baby B I loved my frocks  
For years I played the game  
Until the day  
The wet dreams came  
My breasts grew that same week.

*(Music transition to minor key)*

**B. BRIDE:** But came a day my parents left  
Death welcomed them but left me be  
A door swung wide,  
A mirror surprised  
A face quite lost, the bearded me.  
  
Out in the world I forged a life  
Was wild but lived and loved a lot  
I found a man  
I thought was grand  
On our wedding day found he was not.

*(Music return to major)*

**MC:** And while exploring both sides/ways  
Without disguise or shame  
Then Father Fred  
Dropped by for tea  
I won't now share the names.... he called me  
*(spoken)* or maybe I will...

*(Others call out and encourage her to do it)*

**MC:** Assbag, bampot, bitchass, cumbubble  
Dipshit, dyke and geek  
**B. BRIDE:** Fagboy, faghag, fagtard, gooch  
Homo, jerk and les...bian

*(during the next part other cast members pop their heads out from behind curtains etc to join in)*

**(OTHERS):** McFaggot, nutsack, peckerhead, poon  
Pennispuffer, polesmoker, poof  
**ALL:** Queerbait, queerhole  
Rimjob, skank  
Slutbag, twatwaffle, ... FREAK!!

*(MC shoos the others away)*

**MC:** And that's just a few of those that a girl/boy  
Decent person just like me  
Can repeat in  
Your good presence so  
It wasn't pleasant you can see.

*(Music transition to minor key)*

**B. BRIDE:** So sick at heart, dejected  
Then I acted  
Stood beside that lake

The water's silvered face reflects  
A liquid mirror to see my fate.

**MC:** My face I saw on that there floor  
The marble polished bright  
And with his screams  
Upon my ears  
I disappeared from sight...

**MC/B. BRIDE:** And that was how I came to be  
The boy/girl (bearded bride) here before you  
The floor/lake acquiesced my wish  
And then I fell ...right... through!

**MC:** Thank you my friends.

## ACT 8

**MC:** Act 8 And now for a slight change of tempo. Lights, mood music.  
Nice!

**BL:** As darkness falls and bedtime calls, my friends seek sleep's release.  
But the sweetest of dreams aren't quite what they seem, and slumber as  
elusive as peace.

*(Sounds of lullabies, sleeping sounds, which gradually turn into nightmarish sounds, imagery shows QUEENIE's nightmare, Bella falling and QUEENIE wakes up screaming. PAINBOY and B. BRIDE come and comfort her.)*

**QUEENIE:** Bella! Oh, Bella, why did you have to leave me?

**PAINBOY:** She didn't want to leave you Queenie.

**QUEENIE:** But I was such a disappointment to her ... everyone said so. I'm shy, I can't sing, I can't dance, I'll never do the trapeze – I'm scared of heights even. I have no talents, no gifts. How could I be Bella's daughter.

**B. BRIDE:** You're not just Bella's daughter ... you're Queenie D ...

**QUEENIE:** I'm just ...

**B. BRIDE:** ... not just a kid you see.

**QUEENIE:** What will become of me? *(takes out her snow globe)*

**B. BRIDE:** *(Takes the snowglobe from her and shakes it)* A place where gifts are realised... filled with the sweetest of dreams.



*(As B. BRIDE hugs QUEENIE and they return to sleep PAINBOY moves across the space, is struck by a shaft of pain as he begins to hear voices)*

## ACT 9

**BELLA's voice:** *(Recorded voice spoken in a dreamlike state)* Queenie, Queenie D. Where are you Queenie D?

**MC:** Can you hear that Ladies and Gentlemen? Sometimes our dreams and nightmares can reveal glimpses from beyond this realm... I have friends who possess the gift and can connect to spirits who are near.

**F. TELLER:** I have powers that allow me to see beyond these walls. The spirits hover close as they cross to the other side.

**B. BRIDE:** Others fear their presence and turn their face, but I welcome them. I sense their presence from a time before their death.

**F. TELLER:** Sometimes the spirits themselves need a word of comfort, assurance as they make their way. Tonight I sense one near. I can hear her whisper in my ear. She cries out for her child. I can feel her sorrow...

**F. TELLER:** *(Tries to hear the name)* Queenie? Yes Queenie D ...that's it.

**QUEENIE:** My mother!! Bella!? Where is she, can I see her. Is she in heaven?

**F. TELLER:** Not yet here and not yet there. Wait .. be still while I try to reach her.

**QUEENIE:** Bella, Bella, can you hear me?

**B. BRIDE:** No Queenie, she can't hear you.

**QUEENIE:** Then where is she, can you talk to her?

**F. TELLER:** I could if she had passed Queenie, but ... I don't know that she has.

**QUEENIE:** What ... What do you mean? What's happening, where is she?

**B. BRIDE:** Your mother's soul is hovering Queenie, in the realm between dimensions. But ... her body ... may still be alive ... It's possible that ... she lives.

**QUEENIE:** She's alive? But I heard people cry out, say she was dead, I saw her fall.

**F. TELLER:** What you saw with your eyes was true, but not what they said. Her body is in pain and very weak, but it seems she is still alive Queenie. That I can tell you.

**QUEENIE:** So what should I do? Can I go back there? How can I get back to the other side?

**B. BRIDE:** None of us really know.

**F. TELLER:** Our lives are here. We have no desire to return to that place.

**QUEENIE:** But it must be possible. The mirrors?

**F. TELLER:** Not in the way you came, but maybe someday else.

**QUEENIE:** Who can tell me, please, there must be a way.

**B. BRIDE:** There is a way, but you must use your gift.

**QUEENIE:** What gift, I don't have any gifts.

**F. TELLER:** Is that what you think?

**BOTH:** *(Share lines)* All may ask, but some don't know, the way that you come, is not the way that you go, you can not return, the way that you came, the gift that you hold will show you the way.

## ACT 10

**MC:** Act 10, surprise faces and a surprise meeting.

*(The CLOWNS are making silly faces, with hands passing up and down in front of their faces. They close the twins eyes, then open them as they reveal ever more ridiculous faces.)*

**MOEY:** What about something scary.

**JOEY:** Scarier.

*(CLOWNS sneak off to play a trick on them and suddenly MAX's face should appear.)*

**MOEY & JOEY:** *(Both scream)* That's really scary

**MOEY:** Freaky

**JOEY:** You look just like Queenie's nasty cousin Max.

**MAX:** I am Queenie's nasty cousin Max. And who are you calling freaky?

*(MAX backs away, but PAINBOY comes in from the other side and corners him, he runs back and is trapped on all sides, he falls to the floor.)*

**JOEY:** So how did you get here?

**PAINBOY:** By some act of magic, born of wishing and despair...

**JOEY:** Not him too.

**MAX:** 'Fraid so ... My mother abandoned me.



Figs. 9, 10 and 11. The Fortune Teller, Painboy, Bella and Queenie. Photos by Julia Dawson.

**MC:** Act 11 – Featuring the most incredible feats of magic and epiphany.  
Prepare yourself now for the final act on our program.

*(PAINBOY, FORTUNE TELLER, CLOWNS, BEARDED BRIDE enter ...)*

**PAINBOY:** Tonight ... we are going to cross the line. Tonight is not only about illusion and entertainment. This is about realizing deepest desires ... lives will be changed. For some it will be a chance to make a choice. Whatever they truly desire, will come to be. Queenie are you ready.

*(QUEENIE comes on and holds up her snow globe... MAX runs in and snatches it)*

**MAX:** Queenie, stop.

*(Other characters start to move in on MAX and intimidate him)*

**QUEENIE:** What are you doing here Max.

**MAX:** *(He reluctantly hands the snowglobe back)* Sorry Queenie. Forgive and forget?

**QUEENIE:** I don't know Max... you and your mother.

**MAX:** Yes, and you and your perfect mother... Issy ran away and left me all alone. You're all I've got left Queenie.

**QUEENIE:** *(She starts to feel sorry for him)* There, there Max, here you can create a different world. But now... I must sacrifice my gift... Max... I need to save my mother.

**MAX:** *(Tries to grab the snow globe from her).* Is that the way to reach your mother? Give it to me, I want my Muuuuummmmmmyyyy!

*(At that moment as she lifts the snow globe and he grabs it too, they struggle between them and the mirror image on screen shatters, then there is silence).*

**BELLA:** Queenie?

*(BELLA comes into the mirror world, she is bandaged and possibly crippled.)*

- BELLA:** So this is where you are? I heard whispers from beyond. I had to find you Queenie. Something drew me to the mirror.
- QUEENIE:** Bella ... Mother ... I thought you were dead.
- BELLA:** I think I was for a time ... I still have visions of death walking beside me. But I fought him off Queenie and turned him away. For you ... I'm sorry Queenie. I can't give you back your childhood. I can only say I wanted to make the most of my life in the time that was given to me. I don't expect you to be my nursemaid. That's not why I'm here. I'm back now ... back for good.
- MAX:** *(Slow clap as he bitterly asks)* But what about me? Where's my mother?
- BELLA:** She did come back Max ... she's back on the stage, but she did come to find you.
- MAX:** Well of course she did ... she would, wouldn't she. I knew that. So where is she?
- MC:** Max, be still ... it is Queenie's moment now. She must decide whether to return to the other world or not. She now must decide her fate.
- QUEENIE:** I have a chance to change what was. I'm not going back to the life we had ... but I want to go back. Being here ... I've come to see myself for the very first time. I do have gifts, and I can see a future. I'm not like my mother, but I want to be with her. I want to find out who we can both be ... it will be a different life for us all ... but that's my decision.
- MC:** *(whispers)* Max ... you too must decide your fate. What will you sacrifice to go home?
- MAX:** Nothing ... I don't need your help, I'll find my own way home. *(Turns and runs off)* Muuuuummmmy – Mummy wummy, Issy Wissy ... I'm coming home!

*(QUEENIE hugs the mirror world people, then returns to BELLA, they stand together as the mirror starts spinning to signal their transition.)*

## ACT 12

- MC:** There is a space beyond, a secret fantastical world.
- PAINBOY:** The door to which is revealed to only a few.
- MC:** We invite you to imagine a world as you wish it to be. Realise your gifts, so others may see.

**PAINBOY:** Keep wishing and looking, what's next who can guess.

**MC:** When the mirror next beckons, would you say yes?

*(‘Does She Love Me’ song)*

## **THE END**

(Thank you to Mary Eggleston and the cast of *Epiphany* for their input and feedback throughout the development of this script. Enquiries regarding performance of this script should be directed to Dr Susan Davis via email at [s.davis@cqu.edu.au](mailto:s.davis@cqu.edu.au))

## Research statement

### *Research background*

While most performance texts published specifically for young people focus on teen issues including adaptations of existing books, *Epiphany* deals with contemporary youth issues but also connects young performers with Australian theatrical history by drawing on past popular performance forms – vaudeville, circus, burlesque, freakshows, music hall – while also referencing recent teen fantasy series that feature characters who encounter fantastic challenges.

### *Research contribution*

*Epiphany* repurposes a traditional theatrical form and fuses it with the contemporary. A predominant focus in youth theatre on physical theatrical forms such as circus / burlesque (Gattenhof 2006) has been joined with enduring teen literary themes of identity, agency and transitions (McCallum 1999). *Epiphany* enables the strengths and concerns of young performers to be realised through the creation of stand alone acts with their own theatrical focus, creating a form I call ‘contemporary vaudevillian fairytale’.

### *Research significance*

Two versions of the script have been performed. The first received positive reviews (Denver 2011). In 2012, a new production was mounted, funded through a Regional Arts and Development Fund grant, and featured in the Anywhere Theatre Festival program in Queensland.

## Works cited

Denver, S. 2011 'Epiphany – a gothic, vaudevillian fairytale', <http://2museproductions.org/reviews> (accessed 5 September 2012)

Gattenhof, S. 2006. *Drivers of change: Contemporary Australian theatre for young people*, City East, Qld: Drama Australia.

McCallum, R. 1999 *Ideologies of identity in adolescent fiction: The dialogic construction of subjectivity*, New York & London: Garland Publishing.