Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness!

By Anthony Neilson

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KEY

AIM of exercise or section + Extension Exercises

Drama Exercises + English Exercises

Download and watch

Play online

EDWARD GANT’S AMAZING FEATS OF LONELINESS!
Sydney Theatre Company Education Resources 2011
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EDWARD GANT’S AMAZING FEATS OF LONELINESS

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ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about

ABOUT STCED
www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about

CREATIVE TEAM
Director – Sarah Goodes
Designer – Renee Mulder and Romance Was Born

CAST
Edward Gant – Paul Bishop
Madame Poulet – Emily Tomlins
Jack Dearlove – Bryan Probets
Nicholas Ludd – Lindsay Farris

THEMES
Loneliness
Melodrama
Magic Realism

"AVARICCI
Dear Christ in Heaven!!! Your face!! Your hideous, appalling face!!!
Act 1
Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness!"
SYNOPSIS

It is 1881, and the showman Edward Gant is giving his final performance. Tonight he and his troupe will bring you the most wonderous and bizarre stories of love and loneliness that the world has to offer.

Introducing his performers: the egg laying Madame Poulet, the poet reciting “Little” Nicky Ludd, and the loyal Sgt Jack Dearlove; he promises to touch our hearts and minds with their astonishing tales - terrible, extraordinary, and amazing.

We meet Sanzonetta, the pimple faced girl whose acne delivers pearls instead of pus. We learn of her exploitation at the hands of a greedy sister and of a husband who cruelly abandoned her for an Oyster.

Edgar, another lonely heart is brought before us. His fiancé died in his arms after a wasp sting and whose memory he cannot erase. Consumed with grief he travels to Nepal. There he meets Ranjeev the Uncomplicated who offers brain surgery to alleviate his suffering by removing the memory of his beloved Louisa.

Then things take an unexpected turn and Gant’s own story of lost love and feat of loneliness is revealed. Gant reassures his performers they will go on but he cannot. The show ends as he does - spectacularly.
HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

Anthony Neilson’s Theatre

Anthony Neilson is a Scottish born writer/director. In the 1990’s he along with writers such as Sarah Kane became a member of the British ‘in-yr-face theatre’ movement. They used the shock tactics of extreme – language obscenities, simulated violence and aggression - and took on controversial subject matter challenging audiences sensibilities with what were described as ‘vulgar’ and ‘in yer face’ provocations.

Although Neislon no longer formerly associates with the group his work continues to be controversial and boldly theatrical. He is an advocate of the spontaneous and that theatre should maintain a strong connection to real life. Magic Realism and Black Comedy are key stylistic features of his work. Neilson challenges the notion that the influences of popular culture don’t belong in the theatre. ‘Life is absurd, full of superstitions and flights of the imagination’. Why can’t theatre reflect that, he asks.

Neilson describes writing as a ‘pain in the ass’ most of the time but the ‘ability to turn a bad situation into something creative is very, very useful’. His character Edward Gant is also in a bad situation. Tonight is his last show and he wants to make the best of it. Tonight he promises his audience the experience of a lifetime.

Edward Gant derives its inspiration from the Victorian theatre with its passion for heightened displays of emotion, love of illusion and pantomime, the amusement hall, travelling circus and the freak show.

The Freak Show

The freak show became popular phenomena from the mid 1800s with its head Showman and ‘human curiosities’ (‘freaks’ or ‘exhibits’) touring the cities and towns of Europe and the United States. The popularity of the freak shows was consummate with industrialization, and a growing interest by the general public in science, adventure and the exotic. Freak shows continued up until the 1970’s before they were recognized to be exploitative and inhumane through the efforts of disability advocacy and human rights groups.
In the typical nineteenth century freak show the Showman would stand outside the entrance of the exhibition hall (tent, caravan, or theatre) ‘spieling to the crowd’. The job of the Showman was to get people to "step right up" and buy a ticket. The Showman was an expert orator who had mastered the art of persuasion. Using exaggeration and making false claims they told passersby of the wonders that awaited within for a small price.

The ‘human curiosities’ were presented as unique, or the best of their kind-the tallest, or the shortest, the only one, or one of a category never seen before. The Showman told about the great popularity of the exhibits and of the need to act quickly so as not to miss the chance of a lifetime.

Freak shows were advertised as morally uplifting and educational, not for mere amusement. The show was made up of the “true life stories and facts regarding”. The person received an identity that appealed to people's interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the bestial, and the exotic. Promoters of the shows told the audience the person on exhibit came from a mysterious part of the world ‘darkest Africa, the wilds of Borneo, a Turkish harem, an ancient Aztec kingdom’.

People were dressed to fit their story and instructed to behave accordingly. Prestigious titles such as "Captain," "Major," "General," "Prince," "King," "Princess," and "Queen" were given. Changing the birthplace was another technique of elevating status. Showmen sometimes told the public that the ‘freak’ was highly educated, spoke many languages, and had aristocratic hobbies such as writing poetry or painting. Having had an audience with royalty or person of high social ranking was also a common fabrication. The ‘human curiosity’ was in the same social circle as celebrities, not merely a scientific specimen. This elevated status also required dressing the part. People would be dressed in expensive jewelry, stylish clothes, top hats and tails, evening gowns, and furs.

Sometimes the Showman might work on the sympathies and compassion of the audience. They might tell the crowds how unhappy the person was, how the admission charge would help pay their expenses and relieve their suffering. But pity did not often coincide with the world of
amusement where people used their leisure time and spent their money to be entertained, not to confront human suffering.

References:

Interview with Anthony Neilson
National Theatre of Scotland MP3 download embedded in website
http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/default.asp?page=s272

**Consider**
The freak show exploited human misery for profit.

All audiences are voyeuristic.

Magic realism offers new perspectives on reality.

**Additional Resources**
Review of first production at the Drum Theatre, Plymouth 2002
http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2002/may/16/theatre.artsfeatures1

Headlong Production video excerpts
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2R2v6IgTNc

Reviews of the London Production 2009
http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/edward-gants-amazing-feats-of-loneliness-soho-theatre-london-1659830.html
Interview with Anthony Neilson *The Guardian*
http://www.guadian.co.uk/culture/2009/mar/03/anthony-neilson

In-Yer-Face Theatre Company
http://www.inyerface-theatre.com/az.html

*In-Yer-Face-Theatre* 2001 Aleks Siez

Victorian Freak Show historical overview
http://www.nfa.dept.shef.ac.uk/history/shows/freaks.html

*The Elephant Man* 1980 directed by David Lynch
Tells the story of Joseph Merrick who was rescued from a freak show.

*The Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture*
Nadja Durbach 2010 Recent study on the continuing popularity of freak shows in contemporary culture

Photographs by Diane Arbus – who photographed marginalised groups in US the 1950-60’s

Melodramatic Gestures – overview of typical conventions of melodrama acting
http://thecrushedtragedian.blogspot.com/2007/07/basic-melodramatic-stage-conventions.html
AIM: To introduce and understand how the Victorian freak show is employed as a narrative device in *Edward Gant* to explore the theme of loneliness.

**Loneliness**

*When* do you feel lonely?

*Describe* the feeling of loneliness.

*Find* an image that represents loneliness.

*Share & Discuss* the collected images with others. What are the common elements?

*Brainstorm* the causes of loneliness.

*Make* a body sculpture tableau on theme of loneliness.

**Freak Show**

*Research* the history of freak shows.

*Discuss* why they were popular.

*What* is the contemporary equivalent of the Victorian freak show?

*Consider* Reality TV shows like *The Biggest Loser, Conviction Kitchen, Big Brother* and infotainment/documentaries like *Bodyshock, Extraordinary People, Embarassing Bodies*.

*Discuss* the ethics of these shows.

**Reflection**

How much of these television program’s agenda is based on humiliation?

*Create* a character based on your study of loneliness.

*Write* a life story for your character.

*Give* yourself a name with a title.
Consider
Physical Appearance
Body Language
Posture
Attitude
Mood
Internal thoughts & feelings
Special Skills/Talents

Devise & Present a freak show on the theme of Loneliness.

Consider
The Showman’s opening address to the audience.
AIM: To create and present a character based on the Victorian theatre style of melodrama.

**Research** Victorian Theatre – acting style, theatres, plays and playwrights, audience, costume and make-up, set and production design, advertising, and performance reviews.

**Define** the term melodrama.

**List** key stylistic elements of a melodramatic performance.

**Silent Movie**

**Brainstorm** the words conflict and attraction.

**Discuss** conflict and attraction in relationships – mother and daughter, trapeze instructor and student, customer and salesperson, sister and sister, father and son, husband and wife, actor and director...

**Devise** 3 physical gestures for conflict.

**Devise** 3 physical gestures for attraction.

**Devise** a silent scene in the style of melodrama between two characters based on the theme of conflict and attraction.

**Incorporate** the devised physical gestures into the scene.

**Present/Film** the scene.

**Reflection**

How do the gestures communicate the intentions of the characters?

Why is gesture significant in the performing of melodrama?

**Extensions:**

**Design/Make** a costume for your silent movie character.

**Design** the face make-up.

**Display** the designs as part of a ‘Victorian Theatre Exhibition’
When viewing the STC performance

How do the actors use gesture to communicate feelings and intentions?

How do the costume and make-up designs contribute to the actor’s performance of character?

“EDGAR
I would have you kill me.

Act 2
Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness!”
AIM: To understand and apply the conventions of magic realism in narrative fiction.

Magic Realism is a juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic. It is a hybrid genre drawing upon elements of expressionism and surrealism. Key features of Magic Realism are living dreams, sudden time shifts, and convoluted (often illogical) plotting. An element of surprise and shock is necessary in fracturing the division of reality from the non-real ‘as if by magic’ principle.

Research Magic Realism – in literature, films, art works

Pass the Story

Write on a large piece of paper the first line of your story.
Pass it onto the person next to you and write the next line.
Fold the paper over so the next person can only see the line written before them.
Continue writing one line per person and folding over the previous line.
Unfold and read the stories out aloud.
Discuss the stories – what was surprising, pleasing, confusing?

Extension

Nominate a theme – love, loneliness, cruelty
OR
Begin with an opening phrase – ‘Once Upon a Time’, ‘Little by little”, ‘Step right up’, ‘Ladies and Gentlemen”

Unexpected Turn

Choose a story based on real life – a newspaper article, a memory of something your saw or heard, something that happened to you or to someone you know.
Write a story based on this real life incident and add an unexpected turn that leads the characters to a new perspective, a new understanding of the world or themselves.

Consider

Sudden time shift
Sudden location change
Moment of revelation – when a new truth is discovered.

“GANT

Ladies and Gentlemen; as you can see, our performance has taken an unexpected turn.

Act 2
Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness!”

‘GANT’
Gant’s Gift of the Gab

AIM: To examine the play’s use of rhetoric and Gant’s role as orator.

Rhetoric (Greek rhetor ‘speaker in the assembly’)
Rhetoric is the practice of persuasive speech.

In Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats of Loneliness the ‘speaker’, has been replaced by the actor, and ‘the assembly’ has been transformed into the Sydney Theatre Company’s Wharf 1.

Edward Gant as the showman speaks to you now!

Behold the firmament’s most precious jewel around which does revolve all the bodies of the Heavens
Edward Gant

What does the phrase ‘gift of the gab’ mean?
Which characters in the play might be said to have the ‘gift of the gab’?

The Orator

Orator: 1. One who delivers an oration.
2. An eloquent and skilled public speaker

Since all the activity and ability of an orator falls into five divisions ...he must first hit upon what to say; then manage and marshal his discoveries, not merely in orderly fashion, but with a discriminating eye for the exact weight as it were of each argument; next go on to array them in the adornments of style; after that keep them guarded in his memory; and in the end deliver them with effect and charm.

Cicero De oratore 1.xxxi
Cicero’s five divisions for good oratory:

**Invention** – relevant and appropriate choice of words and ideas

**Arrangement** – organization of the material into sound form

**Style** – appropriate manner for the occasion

**Memory** – ability to memorize the speech

**Delivery** – voice and articulation techniques for making the speech

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**List** famous orators from history.

**Examine** a speech by a famous orator. For example, Barack Obama’s Election Victory speech “Yes, we can”, on winning the 2008 Presidential election.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHbw3n0ElM&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHbw3n0ElM&feature=relmfu)

**Consider**

- Use of Language
- Structure of speech & arrangement of ideas
- Tone
- Pace & Rhythm
- Volume
- Articulation & Diction

- Emotion
- Body Language
- Eye Contact
- Relationship to the Audience
- Delivery Style

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**List** the qualities of a good orator.

**What** is Gant’s role and function as the orator in *Amazing Feats of Loneliness*?

**Describe** Gant’s oratory style with reference to Cicero’s ‘five divisions’ checklist.

**Imagine** the play without Gant as the head showman.

**Voice & the Actor**

‘in drama the actors now count for more than the poets,
so it is in the contests of public life, owing to the defects
of our political institutions’

*Aristotle, Rhetoric*
Discuss this quote with reference to your understanding of the function and role of the actor in society.

In Greek theatre a good actor and a good voice were synonymous. The voice of the actor should encapsulate the range of human emotions and reflect the human condition. Acting and music were practiced as integrated art forms of sound.

Define your understanding of a ‘good voice’.

Debate the merits of a politician having a good voice for public office.

Post – Performance Reflection

How do the actors use their voices to create character and to distinguish between different characters when playing multiple roles?

Describe Gant’s voice.

Examine Gant’s opening address to the audience below.

Read the speech for sense and meaning.

What is the story he is telling?

What devices is Gant using to persuade his audience to stay and listen?

GANT

Ladies and Gentleman,
as some of you may know,
my name – is Edward Gant;
Prodigy, Soldier, Traveller, Poet
but always and ever
a Showman.
As such, it has been my mission
to bring you the most wonderous and
bizarre that the world has to offer.
But what I bring you now is no mere Freak Show.
You will gasp, yes, gasp, and you will marvel
And you will see your share of grotesquerie.

But the deformities on show this evening
Are not the deformities of the frame,
But those of the heart and mind.

I have scoured every continent to find these
most astonishing testaments.
Alas, I cannot put before you the subjects themselves
but I will – with the help of my players – attempt
to represent their tales to you as truly as time
and talent will allow.

So without further ado, I present
For your astonishment,
the Extraordinary! The Terrible!
The AMAZING FEATS OF LONELINESS!!

Read the speech aloud for perfect articulation and diction.
Exaggerate the sounds.
Be precise.

Read the speech again to express various emotions.
Explore different emotions – joy, fear, anger, sorrow.

Read the speech as expressive of a dominant personality.
Explore different attitudes and personality traits – timidity, laziness, stupidity, and arrogance.
What effect does personality have upon articulation and the tone of voice?

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Read the speech for situation – as if a secret being communicated to a friend, a public statement for a huge crowd.

What other changes can you make besides volume in these contrasting situations?

Extension

Compare and contrast Gant’s opening and closing addresses to the audience.

References:

Public and Performance In The Greek Theatre, Peter D Arnott
The Actor At Work, Robert Benedetti
Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, J. A. Cuddon
AIM: To examine Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats of Loneliness’ blending of melodrama, black comedy and magic realism.

Melodrama (Greek ‘song drama’)
The origins of melodrama coincide with the development of opera in the late sixteenth century. Opera began as an attempt to revive classical Greek and Roman tragedy. Combining music and drama became a distinguishing feature of ‘melody-drama’.

Key features of melodrama:
- Song & Music
- Spectacle
- Sensationalism
- Violence

- Extravagant emotional displays
- Extremes of character – evil V’s good, hero V’s villain
- Elaborate dialogue

Discuss the use of music, song and poetry in the production.
How do the songs and poems contribute to eliciting an emotional response in the characters?
The audience?

Drawing upon your pre-production research notes on melodrama and magic realism
Select three moments in the play that reflect a use of melodrama.
Select three moments of magic realism that occur in the production.

Choose a moment in the play you would describe as black comedy.
‘Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats of Loneliness’ deals with serious issues in a highly theatrical and entertaining manner.

**Discuss** this statement with reference to the principles of ‘In-yer-face’ theatre to engage audiences through shock tactics.

**Extreme Characters**

**Choose** two contrasting characters from the play. For example, the sisters Campanetti and Sanzonetta Tutti, Edgar Thomas Dawn and Ranjeev the Uncomplicated, Nicholas Ludd and the Bear.

**List** the individual characters qualities – note similarities and differences between the two characters.

**Consider**

- Physical Appearance
- Behaviour & Attitude
- Voice
- Costume & Make-up
- Emotional Display
- Dialogue

**Spectacle & Elaborate Dialogue**

Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats of Loneliness revels in Victorian Theatre spectacle, and emotional excess accompanied by elaborate dialogue.

**Read** the scene excerpt below aloud in pairs.

**What** do you notice about the character’s use of language and emotional tone?

**Describe** the writing style.

**Consider**

- Stage Directions
- Punctuation
- Dramatic Irony
- Word Usage – use of repetition and sound form
THE SOUND OF THUNDER: SMOKE BILLOWS ONTO THE STAGE
A FIGURE IN A CLOAK DRIFTS ON. IT IS GANT

GANT: Nicholas Ludd!!

LUDD: Who are you?

GANT: I am the Phantom of the Dry! I appear to thespians whose lines have escaped them; I live a whole lifetime in those seconds of helplessness and pass, like a butterfly, when they end!

LUDD: Have you come to me with my lines, Phantom?

GANT: Have I Dan; I bring instead a lesson.

LUDD: What good is a lesson to me now, when the audience is hanging on my words?

GANT: The only thing this audience will be hanging is you, my friend, for your crimes against poetry!!

PAUSE

LUDD: I think they would rather my poems than your whimsy. Wouldn’t you, Ladies and Gentlemen?

Rehearse the scene
Add extreme character traits
Pay attention to gesture, voice, emotion, and physical appearance
Perform the scene
Direct your audience to respond to Ludd’s question – who do they prefer, Ludd or Gant?
Extension

Drawing on the your character study of loneliness from pre-production notes

Write & Present a dialogue scene in the style of the scene excerpt.

Have your character of loneliness interact with a contrasting character – a villain, a hero, a long lost love.

References: Dictionary Of Literary Terms And Literary Theory J A Cuddon
AIM: To develop skills in performing and evaluating character performance in Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness.

Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness is a world of extremes where there are unequal divisions in society and the disadvantaged and vulnerable are open to being exploited and mistreated.

Who was your favourite character in the play? Give three reasons why you liked this character.
Which character didn’t you like? Why?
What was your selected characters’ dramatic purpose?
Consider the play’s intention to draw attention to human cruelty and suffering.

Style & Performance
You cannot act a style; true style results only from doing the specific job at hand in the manner demanded by the form of the play.

Robert Benedetti

Discuss this quote with reference to the acting styles employed in the production.
How does the style of performance complement the dramatic form of the play?

Believability & Character
Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness is not a realistic play, the expression of character is heightened and the story does not attempt to represent everyday real life.

How believable were the characters?
Does believability rely on the character being ‘true to life’?
How important is it for the actor to understand their character’s dramatic purpose?

Explore believability & character in performance in this scene excerpt.
Edgar Thomas Dawn & Louisa von Kettelmein-Kurstein Frond are in love but their relationship is abruptly ended with Louisa’s untimely death.

Read the scene in pairs.

EDGAR: I’m asking for your hand –

PAUSE

LOUISA: In marriage?

EDGAR: In marriage, yes; my sweetheart, my darling, my sunshine and showers.

PAUSE

LOUISA: I have no words.

EDGAR: You need only one.

LOUISA: And you don’t mind about my ....?

SHE LOOKS DOWN AT HERSELF

EDGAR: I wouldn’t have them any other way.

SHE SUDDENLY EMBRACES HIM

LOUISA: Edgar, my love! I do, I will. Yes!

   My love.
EDGAR: I think I have never been happier than now. And it seems all nature does agree!

LOUISA: Ow!

SHE TOUCHES HER NECK.

Discuss
Why is Louisa’s death significant in Edgar’s character journey?
What is Louisa’s dramatic purpose? Edgar’s?
What is the dramatic purpose of the scene in the context of the whole play?
How does this scene contribute to the theme of loneliness in the play?

How will you approach this scene as an actor?
How will you achieve believability without compromising the plays heightened and extreme performance style?
Note the stage directions - how will you play these?

Rehearse the scene in style of
- silent movie
- opera
- television soap opera
- realistic drama

Decide & Perform the scene in the style you feel is most appropriate to the play’s form and the believability of your character.

Discuss & Evaluate the different versions and stylistic choices made by the performers.

Reference: The Actor At Work, Robert Benedetti
AIM: To understand and appreciate how the costume and production design elements contribute to the creation of the imaginary world of the play.

Romance Was Born costume designers Alan Sales and Anna Plunket are inspired by stories. Developing themes and ideas from stories they feel a connection with, the dynamic design duo have created controversial and uncompromising works.

Their 2010 Fashion Week collection ‘Renaissance Dinosaur’ was inspired by Dinosaurs, Galileo and the Renaissance.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NM1nQXKqfXo

And more recently at the Rosemount Australian Fashion week, 2011, The Oracle was based on the animation film The Never Ending Story.

http://stcblog.posterous.com/busy-bees

‘The aim of the theatre costume designer is to breathe life into the characters’.

Discuss this statement with reference to Romance Was Born’s approach to costume design for Gant’s Amazing Feats of Loneliness.

List the key features of your favourite character costume from the production.

How well integrated are the costume designs with the production design? Do the costume design elements appear cohesive or random?

Select a favourite moment in the performance where you felt all the design and production elements were working together.

SANZONETTA
You could not love one as ugly as I, signor

Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness
Consider

Lighting Staging
Sound & Music Set

Design Brief

Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats Of Loneliness is concerned with opposites and the injustices of life’s imbalances between the loved and unloved, rich and poor, fortunate and the unfortunate. Take your inspiration from Romance Was Born. Be bold, brave and willing to give birth to new ideas!

Brainstorm the theme of love – write down, draw or collect images, words, objects associated with love.

Brainstorm the theme of loneliness.

Interplay between the contrary themes of love and loneliness.

Design costumes for two characters in the style of Romance Was Born, based on the theme of love and loneliness.

Choose a story you like – a film, image, song, book, poem, fairytale, real life news story.

Brainstorm for key themes, words, images, sounds, objects and textures associated with your story.

Storyboard the story in five frames.

Who are your characters – animate or inanimate?

Where is your story set?

When is your story taking place?

Explore opposites in the story.

Consider how you might represent conflict, opposition and differences between characters.

Select a key idea or image for your main character.

Create a collage to capture that key idea – use found objects, magazines, draw, cut out colours, shapes, textures, images.
Design a stage costume for your character based on your key idea research.

Consider

Shapes Line Fabric
Symbols Colour

Basics – functional and able to be worn by the actor in performance

Display your costume design.

Discuss & Compare designs.

For more information on Romance Is Born:

Alan Sales & Anna Plunkett

http://www.ahigherlearning.com.au/content_common/pg-luke-sales-romance-was-born.seo

ROMANCE WAS BORN.

A love of kitsch Australian, crafty construction and fine tailoring help Australia’s sentimental favourites Romance Was Born to turn the dreaded cultural cringe on its head. Design duo Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales have an unstopable passion that permeates their designs and is vital to the garments construction, combining seamlessly with their technical pattern-making wizardry. Romance Was Born collections are irreverent and fun loving, fabric and colour combinations are what inspire their playful outfits where sparkle, texture and bold prints just sit together in a harmonious jamboree of style. The past three ranges have seen the design duo collaborate with celebrated Australian artists Del Kathryn Barton, giving Romance Was Born an exclusive treasure trove of digitally printed fabrics. Their finish aesthetic also includes a patchwork of craft work like appliqué, tie-dying or crochet; these are the fabulous hand detailed features that set their label apart from the flippant trends of the fashion madding crowd.

Luke and Anna met studying fashion at East Sydney Technical College. A few kill-filled party nights later and the creative pair became the best of friends, so a dream of starting a label together was formed – Romance Was Born. Fresh after graduating Anna and Luke were selected to attend The Fourth International Support Awards in Italy. On the other side of the world, they famously turned down intiminations with Galliano, their fashion fairy tale had another date with destiny. The drama and individuality behind the effervescent design work of Romance Was Born has seen them able to attract and dress the music industry’s finest show ponies; Anna and Luke approached Karen O of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs to dress her in a ‘one off’ creation for her 2003 Australian tour – a dazzling red full and lime glittery boots; Jim Henson style with cuddly of googly eyes. Since that brave approach Romance Was Born have gone on to dress an impressive array of performers – including Cyndi Lauper, Debbie Harry, Lily Allen, M.I.A and Aussie superstars The Veronicas. They were also commissioned to make costumes for the Melbourne band Arcadia in Heaven. The costumes featured in the band’s film clip, had elements of popetry and glows in the dark.

A stellar hit at last year’s Rosemount Australian Fashion Week, the Romance Was Born duo have always been stylish and editorial darlings, but their solo RAWF parade established the designers as supremely talented masters of style. The SS Renaissance Dinosaur collection was a blend of fashion and fantasy, a melding of prehistoric creatures with Elphesian shapes and styling. Set within an intense-filled hall at Hoggsmeade-like Sydney University, the show was as far-removed from Harry and Hermione as could possibly be, opened by Azzam Afridi model Alexandra Agoston O’Connor with her high-high gold boots and black mesh bodysuit embroidered with a spangly gold cross. The RWB signature fantasia creations emerged down the decorative runway with wildly colourful prints and sequins, tallow-length tails and thoroughfares and headpieces sparkling with elaborate jewels; it wasn’t just hype and couturny; this collection was wearable art.

Romance Was Born’s entirely Australian production adds another layer of integrity to their label. They insist on supporting the dwindling Australian manufacturing industry and in an industry renowned for compromise and cutting corners they never do. Their love of Australia has helped them remain honest to their brand’s distinctive style, our vibrant Australian characters and diverse landscape is a source of constant inspiration but there is nothing sappy or flagrantly about Romance Was Born. They are barbecue quoting clowns whose avant-garde use of fabric and colour is maintained only by the limits of their own imagination, which is boundless. First stop Australia, next stop... The Universe.

Age: 4 years old, the label that is!
City of origin Sunny Hills.
Favourite piece from your current collection? Fabric is music, we have wanted to do one for ages.
Your humble beginnings in the business of fashion? Working from each other’s lounge room.
Something we wouldn’t have heard about Romance Was Born? We both love Japan!
Age 13-years-old, the label that is!
Favourite piece from your current collection? Knitted kimonos, we have wanted to do one for ages.
Your humble beginnings in the business of fashion? Working from each other’s lounge room.
Something we wouldn’t have heard about Romance Was Born? We both love Japan!
Best praise from the media about Romance? Sarofinist aral Fashon pumalist Godfrey Deeny said our Spring Summer show 2010 was the best he had ever seen outside the major four.
Dream model for your garments? Alexandra Agoston. We met her in Paris two years ago and begged her to come to Australia, so the next year she opened our show for the Renaissance Dinosaur collection. As for Aussie models go, we have loved her since fashion school. Amazing!
Why should there be a Romance Was Born piece in every girl’s wardrobe? Because there’s something for everyone.

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