



## Audio Description Pre-Show Notes: Mackenzie

Please note: This performance includes strobe lighting, haze, and loud noises, as well as coarse language, references to mental illness, drug references, and sexual references.

What if Macbeth was a 13 year old child star? And what if Lady Macbeth was her ruthless stage mum? Welcome to Mackenzie's world! Written by Yves Blake and directed by Virginia Gay, 'Mackenzie' is a camp and hilariously twisted reimaging of Shakespeare's cutthroat Scottish play.

### The Venue

Bell Shakespeare's world premiere season of 'Mackenzie' is staged in The Neilson Nutshell at Pier 2/3 in the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct.

The entrance to the venue is located mid-way down the heritage-listed finger wharf. A wide staircase and a lift lead up to an expansive foyer on the first floor, which has timber floorboards and a double-height ceiling of timber beams. Large glass windows on either side of the foyer look out to the surrounding harbour.

The Box Office Counter is located at the far end of the first-floor foyer, opposite the staircase and lift. At the top of the staircase and to the right is a Theatre Bar. A long hallway with its opening on the other side of the Theatre Bar leads to the entrance of the Neilson Nutshell Theatre. The entrance to the toilets is also located half-way down this hallway, on your right-hand side as you approach the theatre.

The Neilson Nutshell is an intimate "theatre in the round" performance space, seating about 250 people. It is a box-like room, 19 metres by 19 metres, with walls covered in large, dark-stained plywood panels and a black scaffolded ceiling hung with lights.

The performance space is adaptable, with moveable seating banks that can be arranged in different formations. Each seating bank has 5 tiered rows of folding seats with deep brown timber backs and golden yellow upholstery. Steps climb up either side of each seating bank.

For this performance, 3 seating banks line 3 of the theatre walls. They form an angular U-shape around the stage area, a large rectangular section of floor. The audience enter from

the back left corner of the space into the open end of the U formation, crossing through the stage area to reach the seating banks.

Throughout the show, actors enter and exit the stage area from all four corners of the theatre. Expect the drama to spill out from the stage area, like the emotions of a spoilt and angsty teen, as actors move up and down the seating bank steps and interact with the audience.

## The Set

Our treacherous tale unfolds in the high-stakes industry of children's television. The central setting is a TV studio between the years 2006 and 2013.

The floor is covered with polished black plywood panels, embedded with a layer of pink glitter that sparkles under the lights.

Centred in front of the wall at the back of the theatre is a free-standing set of steps, which faces the middle seating bank at the other end of the stage area. It is about 2 metres wide and 1 metre high. It is made from an aluminium frame with open black tread. 7 steps climb up to a flat platform at the top. Long horizontal strips of LED light span the gap just below each tread.

A row of colour-changing lightbulbs lines the back wall on the floor behind the steps, like the lightbulbs that border a Hollywood makeup mirror or Broadway theatre marquee. A parallel row of larger bulbs lines the ceiling above the steps.

This basic set remains in place during the show. As time passes in the story, a series of full-height banners are unfurled one after the other behind the steps, advertising a progression of TV shows. Photos of perky lead characters are printed large and vibrant over the silky material.

Other set pieces and props are brought in and out to represent different locations. The set pieces often incorporate backstage equipment, like wheeled road cases and soft box theatre lamps on wheeled tripods.

Some of the main set pieces are described below.

### Mackenzie's dressing room

A hot pink dressing table at the front right corner of the stage area. It is made from a road case fitted with a lightbulb-framed makeup mirror in the shape of a love heart. The lid of the

case is in two halves that unfold outward to create a horizontal, desk-sized surface with compartments full of makeup and cosmetics.

A round, fluffy pink ottoman seat can be wheeled in front of the dressing table.

#### A talk show set

2 boxy white armchairs on wheels. As host and guest sit in the chairs, crew members in black swivel them around, sometimes facing them toward each other, other times turning them outward to face the audience.

#### A red carpet event

A long strip of fluffy pink carpet is unrolled, creating a straight path from the centre of the stage area to the base of the steps.

To the left of the steps, a rope barrier hangs between 2 brass bollards to keep adoring crowds at bay.

#### Catering

A wheeled stove made from 2 small road cases stacked on top of each other. The bottom case is cube-shaped and open in the back, providing shelf storage for cooking equipment.

The top case is half the height of the bottom case with a slight overhang. It has a hinged oven door on the front, with a tea towel and oven mitt hanging from the handle. A large stock pot sits on top of the stove.

#### A music video set

A tall folding director's chair in the front left corner of the stage area, facing into the centre. It has a hot pink wooden frame with black canvas seat and back.

An open, doorway-shaped archway built with slender metal rods. The archway is wheeled around the stage on a short, narrow black platform. Across the top of the archway, 'MACKENZIE' is spelled out in capital letters using lightbulbs.

3 waist-height models of illuminated city skylines are moved around the set. The models have a slightly suggestive outline, with the middle skyscrapers erected to a taller height than the two shorter buildings either side.

## The Cast and Characters

The story is brought to life by a powerhouse ensemble cast of just six people. Most of the cast play multiple, rapidly-rotating roles to depict the swarming ecosystem of teen stardom.

The child stars at the TV studio are styled like Disney Channel characters from the mid-naughties to early-2010s – think eclectic, maximalist, and colourful, with bold accessories and layering.

In Mackenzie's world, hair is a symbol of power and status, and can tell us a lot about a character. The cast often switch between a variety of wigs and hair styles.

Throughout the show, members of the ensemble cast also don all black cargo pants, tank tops, hoodies, and dance sneakers to become the Crew, a group of anonymous stage hands slash backup dancers.

[Kimberly Hodgson \(she/her\) plays Mackenzie.](#)

Filipino-Australian actress Kimberly Hodgson is 5 foot 2 with an athletic build and light olive skin. She plays aspiring TV star Mackenzie.

When we first meet Mackenzie in 2006, she is an earnest and awkward 13-year-old. She is in costume as a daggy minor character on 'The Dahlia Show', with glasses and an orange bowl cut wig. She wears burgundy red Doc Martin boots, a light brown midi skirt with a subtle tartan print, and a brown zip-up hoodie with green and yellow stripes on the cuffs and hood.

13-year-old Mackenzie is eager to please and desperate to be noticed. She always puts on a big, toothy grin, so forced that it actually looks more like a grimace.

By 2011, 18-year-old Mackenzie has ditched the orange bowl cut and upgraded her style. Her long blonde hair is silky straight with a blunt front fringe. She wears preppy pop-star outfits in various shades of bright pink, usually encrusted with sequins, glitter, and rhinestones to give her and her accessories plenty of sparkle. Her signature look includes pleated mini-skirts with chunky belts, strappy camisoles, and heeled boots or stilettos.

Her forced smiles are now less grimace-like, although she still bares plenty of her pearly white teeth. She also pouts a lot. She has perfected her celebrity strut, flouncing about with attitude.

[Nikki Britton \(she/her\) plays Ruth.](#)

Nikki Britton is 5 foot 6 with a curvy build and white skin. She plays Mackenzie's pushy stage mum, Ruth by name but ruthless by nature.

When we first meet Ruth in 2006, she is 35 years old. Heavy foundation gives her face a slightly bronze sheen. Her long, bleach blonde hair flops in a messy bun on top of her head. It is in need of a touch up – dark brown regrowth is spreading from her roots.

She wears a light pink Juicy Couture tracksuit set, the word 'Juicy' spelled in sparkly silver rhinestones across both her bum and shoulder blades. She wears a white singlet under her pink velour hoodie, and white sneakers.

Ruth is a large, commanding presence. She has sharp, busy blue eyes, equal parts cunning and deranged.

[Ryan González \(they/them\) plays Beau and others.](#)

Non-binary, Hispanic-Australian actor Ryan González is 5 foot 9 with a toned build. They have tanned skin, dark curly hair to just below ear-length, and short dark stubble defining their jawline. They play Mackenzie's castmate and best friend, Beau (he/him).

When we meet 13-year-old Beau in 2006, he is in costume as a minor character on 'The Dahlia Show', a stereotypical nerd with round wire-framed glasses and hair combed slickly back in a middle part. He wears a red plaid button-up shirt under a light brown argyle sweater vest, both tucked into beige chino shorts. He has black sneakers and long grey socks hiked up to his knees.

Beau is a gentle soul who does not seem to fit in to the glossy, superficial world of kids' TV. He is shy and pensive, moving about awkwardly with shoulders hunched.

In 2011, 18-year-old Beau remains as gentle and down-to-earth as his younger self, but is now cooler and broodier. A long, straightened fringe is swept across his forehead, Zac Efron style. He sometimes flicks it out of the way and stares broodily into the distance.

He wears an indie-rock outfit, faded black skinny jeans and a black vest worn open over a white t-shirt, with a very thin purple scarf and matching purple Converse. He also accessorises with a white leather studded belt and one matching fingerless leather glove on his right hand.

Ryan González also plays several other characters including Minnie (she/her), the little sister of popular child star Dahlia. Minnie wears an eclectic, pop-punk inspired layered outfit: a cropped t-shirt under a pink denim jacket, light grey leggings under a grey and purple tartan mini-skirt, combat boots, and a light-coloured headband with a big bow to push her curls back from her face.

[Anusha Thomas \(she/her\) plays Dahlia and others.](#)

South Indian Australian actor Anusha Thomas is short with a petite build and medium deep brown skin. She plays the sweet and bubbly Dahlia, 13-year-old nepo baby and star of 'The Dahlia Show'.

Dahlia has perfect hair. It is dark brown, long and flowing, styled in a cascade of silky curls. She wears a headband with a dainty golden crown on it.

She wears a mini-skirt with layers of denim and pink floral-patterned fabric, and a camisole with pink satin, white lace, and a purple ribbon tied in a bow at the front. She has light brown slouchy suede boots with a flat heel.

Having shot to fame very early, Dahlia acts mature for her age. She has big wide eyes and an energetic personality, although there is insecurity hidden beneath this bubbly exterior.

Anusha Thomas plays various other roles. In 2006, she also plays a mean choreographer in a grey hip-hop style outfit, asymmetrical tank top tucked into baggy tracksuit pants tucked into combat boots. Her long silky hair is dyed burgundy red and she has a white hat that looks like a cross between a cap and a beanie.

In 2011, Anusha plays Mackenzie's meek young assistant, 'Jossandra'. She wears practical outfits of cargo pants, long-sleeved shirts layered under t-shirts, and Converse. Her brows are furrowed in a constantly worried expression, and she is always hunched over to make herself smaller. Her t-shirts give away a hint of her own personality – they all have pictures of birds printed on them.

Anusha also plays Beau's little sister Florence, wearing a bold, pop-punk inspired outfit: a denim vest worn open over a purple t-shirt, a red tartan skirt over red and black galaxy leggings, black suede boots, and a red fedora.

[Billie Palin \(she/her\) plays Gayle and others.](#)

Billie Palin is 5 foot 7 with a muscular build and fair skin. She plays Gayle, the TV studio's head of catering with a heart of gold.

Gayle is in her early to mid-40s. She is butch, with short dark hair styled in a soft shag mullet. She wears a navy blue sleeveless boiler suit and black Crocs. Her brown hemp apron is covered in carabiner clips, some of them holding kitchen utensils.

Gayle is laid back and friendly, always popping in with food for the stars and crew. She has a no-nonsense attitude and is unfazed by the fame and glamour around her.

Billie Palin plays several other characters, including the terrifying and profit-hungry Network Head (he/him). The Network Head is in his 60s and wears a black double-breasted pinstripe suit, his crisp white business shirt open at the collar with no tie. He is an imposing, intimidating figure with a constant scowl.

Jane Watt (she/her) plays the Producer and others.

Jane Watt is 5 foot 8 with a slender build and fair skin. She plays the TV studio's Producer (he/him).

The Producer wears a grey double-breasted suit, with his white business shirt unbuttoned at the collar with no tie. His short, sandy-coloured hair is slightly scruffy and sticks out from under a black cap.

The Producer carries a black clip board and is often found scurrying after the Network Head, trying to suck up to him. He is a skittish man, fuelled by nervous energy that often bursts out of him through jittery, twitching movements.

Jane Watt also plays other characters including Pickle (she/her), an eccentric hair and makeup artist who can predict the future. Pickle is about 70, with an unruly mop of grey curls and huge round spectacles that give her an owlish face. She is covered head to toe in leopard print: her silk pants and top, her long trench coat, her Converse, all of it is leopard print. Even her wheeled makeup case is covered with a leopard print design!