

**BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY**



**YOU KNOW WE
BELONG TOGETHER**
by Julia Hales with
Finn O'Branagáin and
Clare Watson



**BLACK
SWAN
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#blackswanSTC

COVER JULIA HALES: PHOTO CREDIT RICHARD JEFFERSON

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This Creative Learning Resource was written by Libby Klysz.

- Students of Year 11 & 12 Drama will notice connections to course content in Unit 4: Contemporary & Devised Drama; and Unit 2: Presentational, Non-realist Drama. In particular, there are links to Values, forces and drama practice, Drama conventions, and Design and technologies.
- Students studying Drama in Year 7-10 will note connections to both Making (Drama conventions, and forms and styles) and Responding strands, particularly those in Year 9 looking at multi-formed devised drama.
- Students of Year 12 English may wish to use this production to explore content in Unit 4, through analysis of purpose and style.
- English Literature students should think about how the show relate to Unit 3, looking at relationship between language, culture and identity in literary texts.

MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, CLARE WATSON

There is nothing more thrilling than the alchemy of theatre. Sitting in your seat and being invited into entire worlds created for you by brilliant artists. Thinking about who we are and the choices we make through the lens of a character realised by the extraordinary talent of an actor. The theatre invites our empathy and strengthens our compassion. The impossible becomes possible. And theatre can be ridiculously fun, the kind of fun that's infectious.

In curating the upcoming season, we began with the question – what should we be talking about right now, as citizens of Perth, as citizens of the world, as humans? Black Swan creates theatre that promises to be adventurous, ambitious, and highly entertaining, as well as asking those big questions.

As the next generation of artists, policy makers, theatre goers and engaged citizens, I invite students to join in the fun, and become part of the conversation.”



EDUCATION PROGRAM

Black Swan is committed to supporting educators in developing a lifelong love of theatre and inspiring audiences of the future. We are accessible to all school communities with selected performances at the State Theatre Centre, student and teacher workshops, quality teaching resources and in-school experiences that align with the curriculum. Heavily subsidised student priced tickets and school subscription packages are offered in addition to work experience, internships and student ambassador programs.

You Know We Belong Together and the Education Program is supported by

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PARTNER

PRODUCTION PARTNER

FOUNDATION PARTNERS



YOU KNOW WE BELONG TOGETHER CREDITS

Director: Clare Watson

Lead Artist: Julia Hales

Writer & Associate Director: Finn O'Branagáin

Set & Costume Designer: Tyler Hill

Lighting Designer: Joe Hooligan Lui

Sound Designer/Composer: Rachael Dease

Movement Director and Artist Support: Laura Boynes

Video Designer: Michael Carmody

Film Maker: Lincoln McKinnon

Cast: Julia Hales, Joshua Bott, Patrick Carter, Tina Fielding, Mark Junor, Melissa Junor, Lauren Marchbank

ABOUT BLACK SWAN

ARE WE PART OF THE HEART OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA? AND TO WHOM DO WE BELONG?

Our theatre has brought about countless moments of human connection – laughter, tears, and everything in between. After 27 years as our State's premier theatre company, we can't help but wonder if these moments have amounted to a greater sense of belonging. Have we, in part, helped you find 'Where the Heart Is'?

In a season where we are asking you to explore 'Where the Heart Is', it would be remiss of us not to ask ourselves the same question – to reflect upon the role we play in fostering creativity and bringing people together.

Our ambition, as Western Australia's state theatre company, lies on a scale far bigger than just the stage. We have a responsibility to our State that is like no other, to lead and advocate for our culture – to grow and to share our Western Australian identity.

In a place as vast as WA, we have the entirety of our State's story to tell, and we know the absolute importance of sharing it with both our own community and the world. We must hear and share all voices – together they make our image of Western Australian-ness whole. We seek to build a dynamic voice that matters, from a place of isolation.

Black Swan is a theatre company of national significance, creating exceptional theatre that nurtures Western Australian audiences and artists, and promotes our artists within the state, nationally and internationally.

Founded in 1991, Black Swan has earned both critical and popular acclaim for its world premiere productions and highly distinctive reinterpretations of international theatre classics – all of which are infused with the unique culture of Western Australia.



Lead artist Julia Hales, photo credit Toni Wilkinson

SYNOPSIS & BACKGROUND

A CALL FOR INCLUSION AND ACCEPTANCE, THROUGH ACKNOWLEDGING DIVERSE TALENT, DELIVERS AN INTENSE EMOTIONAL IMPACT.

You Know We Belong Together is a live documentary on stage presented by lead artist, Julia Hales.

Julia presents her life and ambitions to the audiences: her extensive acting training and

It may not be obvious, because the artists don't brag about it, but the premiere of *You Know We Belong Together* was a landmark moment for disability arts, advocacy and the theatre industry more generally. Never before had a show, in a major international festival, and in a major theatre company's subscription season, *anywhere in the world*, been led by an artist with Down syndrome. Several such shows have featured the work of artists with Down syndrome – but never before in a leading artistic role. With the talented, passionate and skilled Julia Hales literally centre-stage, co-writing and creating, the show was an embodiment of the well-known mantra in disability arts, "nothing about us without us."

Chris Kohn
Coordinator, Master of Directing for Performance,
Victorian College of the Arts; Faculty of Fine Arts
and Music; University of Melbourne

experience, being single at aged 38, and living with Down syndrome. Interwoven with stories and metaphors from her beloved *Home and Away*, Julia's wish was 'to make a show to help remind non-disabled people that people with Down syndrome are complex and emotional people, like them. That they also have regular desires like love and acceptance'.

Throughout the show we learn about Julia's background and family, and explore the nature of love. Utilising video and live interactions with others, Julia ponders the meaning of love and how to pursue it. The audience is also granted an insight into what it's like today living with Down syndrome, parenting children with Down syndrome, and how these have changed in recent history. We also meet a number of Julia's friends and colleagues, all working as professional artists and also living with Down syndrome.

Julia poses the question of representation in the arts, and strives towards the ultimate dream of having a full time character on long running Australian soap opera *Home and Away* that lives with Downs syndrome.

Director Clare Watson says "While this is a play about Down syndrome that calls with no uncertainty for inclusivity, understanding and better representation of disability on screen, it is also a completely universal story about love, about loss, about family and about friendships".

Check out this exclusive access to the team behind the scenes. The cast and creatives share their insights and processes with you in these sweet videos, featuring artistic director Clare Watson, lead artist Julia Hales, writer Finn O’Branagáin, creatives Lighting Designer Joe Hooligan Lui, Sound Designer and Composer Rachael Dease, Video Designer Michael Designer, and Movement Director Laura Boynes. Please see links below.



[Video One: Favourite Parts](#)



[Video Two: Inclusion – Down Syndrome](#)



[Video Three: Visual Design](#)



[Video Four: Music and Sound](#)



[Video Five: Home and Away](#)



[Video Six: What is the show about?](#)



[Video Seven: Creating the Show](#)



Lead artist Julia Hales and performer Tina Fielding, photo credit Toni Wilkinson

THEMES

Love

This show started as a digital art project, with Julia Hales interviewing people about what love was, and its importance. *You Know We Belong Together* follows this theme through the inclusion of some of these videos, and Julia's own search for romantic love.



What insights about love are offered by the video respondents?

The history of Down syndrome

People living with Down syndrome have been treated very differently over the past decades- ranging from being locked up in asylums, to living independently in the community. Julia also explores the representation of Downs Syndrome in art works over time, including television.



What are your thoughts about differently abled people being represented in theatre?

Acceptance

You Know We Belong Together has a constant refrain of acceptance of people who may be different to one another. Julia directly pleads with the audience for understanding of the Down syndrome community.



What other plays have you seen or read that deal with this theme? Why is it such a recurrent idea in theatre?

MORE INFO?

WATCH video of Julia Hales' keynote speech "Together We Belong" at Meeting Place 2018



<https://bit.ly/2VW21PI>



EASY TO READ article about the genesis of the show

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-22/home-and-away-dream-becomes-reality-for-julia-hales/9461632>



LISTEN to Julia, Clare, and outgoing Perth Festival artistic director Wendy Martin chat about what inspired the show

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/the-stage-show/the-hub-on-stage-26-february-2018/9471560>



Performer Lauren Marchbank and lead artist
Julia Hales, photo credit Toni Wilkinson

THE CREATOR

"I was very clear what I wanted to do. I wanted to change the world to make it better and to make a difference."



Julia Hales (1980-) began development as a performing artist with DADAA in 1997 and since then her work has included dance, theatre and screen. She is a dedicated performer who is focused on building a repertoire of works referencing universal themes of identity, fame and love.



*Lead artist Julia Hales, photo credit
Toni Wilkinson*

Julia has worked across a variety of settings and has experienced accelerated professional development since participation in Australia Council's SYNC Leadership program in 2015/16. During this period, she was cast as one of the *Traders* in *blackmarket*, pvi's performance work as part of PIAF 2016. Following this, Julia worked with DADAA's digital program to begin researching with other people with Down syndrome to find out what love meant to them.

The resulting short film provided new opportunities for Julia with Perth Festival and Black Swan State Theatre Company. Her co-devised work, *You Know We Belong Together* was very well received earlier this year as part of Perth Festival in collaboration with Black Swan and DADAA.

Julia is currently working for DADAA as research coordinator for the Experience Collider project. She is also working on two new project developments.

Julia recently joined the 40U40 2019 alumni as part of the WA Business Awards.

DADAA



What is DADAA? Can you find information about this?

www.dadaa.org.au

You Know We Belong Together is a live documentary on stage presented by lead artist, Julia Hales. Julia and I were introduced late last year by Perth Festival artistic director Wendy Martin. It turns out that Wendy is quite the matchmaker; we hit it off instantly. Julia had already been researching and developing a work about finding love – some of her research interviews feature in *You Know We Belong Together*.

In our first meeting, Julia told me about her years of acting experience with DADAA, her training at WAAPA, her love of *Home and Away* and her wish 'to make a show to help remind non-disabled people that people with Down syndrome are complex and emotional people, like them. That they also have regular desires like love and acceptance'. She was about to commence work with co-writer Finn O'Branagáin.



Down syndrome is a chromosomal condition that occurs at conception. It's also called Trisomy 21. Typically, our chromosomes pair up – like a whole series of microscopic love stories. Trisomy 21 occurs when the Chromosome 21 pair is joined by a third to become a threesome. So, Julia and all of the wonderful artists that join her on stage – Lauren, Josh, Tina, Melissa, Mark and Pat – have one more Chromosome 21 to most of the audience. At a biological level, these artists have something extra. And Julia and her ensemble have certainly brought something extra to our process of creating this production – it has been one of the most invigorating and inspiring creative environments I've ever had the pleasure of working in.

While this is a play about Down syndrome that calls with no uncertainty for inclusivity, understanding and better representation of disability on screen, it is also a completely universal story about love, about loss, about family and about friendships. You're about to make some new friends. We're glad you're here because you know that we belong together. Enjoy the show.

This play is dedicated to Carol Hales.

ACTIVITIES: PRESHOW

CLOSER EACH DAY. HOME AND AWAY



WATCH the three minute video interviewing Julia Hales about her love of *Home and Away*
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1717377798301669>



Home and Away is a popular Australian soap opera that features heavily in *You Know We Belong Together*. It has been running on air for 30 years, and is the most awarded television show in Australian history. Filmed in Sydney, it follows the lives of the residents in the fictional Summer Bay.

The official website is here <https://homeandaway.7plus.com.au/>



Australian soap operas have reflected the changes in our society for forty years. Watch a four minute video on their cultural impact here.


<https://dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/281/>

In 2019 the ABC aired the first episodes of *The Heights*, which set out to be a radically inclusive Australian soap opera with a hugely diverse cast. The actors and characters on the show have a wide variety of ethnic, social and ability backgrounds (including Black Swan State Theatre Company's first nations performer Shari Sebbens).

Read an article about the impact of inclusivity in casting here.





<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/feb/20/your-new-neighbours-why-australias-latest-soap-the-heights-tells-a-different-story>

 Working in small groups, devise three short scenes that each have two characters, and that explore family and social relationships in modern Australia.


Can you now create scenes in which the character pairings mix and match? How do these characters' lives overlap?

These scenes could be developed and even filmed to start your own soap opera.

 Write or draw a description of the place in your real community that everyone hangs out in. Is it a café, or a beach, or a pool? What is it that draws people to it?

 Compile a list of current *Home and Away* characters and categorise them into character archetypes: villains, heroes and heroines, victims, wise mentors, allies, clowns.

Do the characters of *Neighbours* fit these headings too?

 Are these archetypes helpful in representing communities? There is a startling account of female archetypes found in film and television here to stimulate your thinking around this:

<https://www.overthinkingit.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Overthinking-It-Female-Character-Flowchart.png>



Lead artist Julia Hales and performer Patrick Carter, image credit Toni Wilkinson

Soap operas are often linked to an old form of theatre called Melodrama. These were plays that featured two dimensional characters, very dramatic storylines and over the top acting. Is this a fair assessment of soap operas today?

Watch this fun clip of The Muppets attempting a melodrama



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gw-W48n06Lw>

There are some good activities to explore these ideas further here:



<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/creative-arts/nested-content/drama/kascastage4and5resources/melodrama-stock-characters>



The BBC produced a two-part radio documentary called *Soap Operas: Art Imitating Life*. It is a fascinating listen into the profound ways these shows and society have influenced each other.



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00qpj7g>



Cast and audience participants, image credit Toni Wilkinson

ACTIVITIES: POSTSHOW

DIVERSE REPRESENTATION IN THE ARTS



WATCH this TED talk by Karen Gaffney explaining her thoughts on redefining the way we view people living with Down syndrome. A good one to watch alongside the keynote speech Julia Hales gave (look under the themes heading of this pack to find it)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwxjoBQdn0s&vl=en>



Diverse representation in the arts is a huge issue in the world right now.

Can you think of three good reasons why this might be?

Why do you think it has been difficult for people from minority backgrounds and cultures to be represented onstage?

What effect would increased representation have on audiences?



Some great READS here:

<https://www.artshub.com.au/education/news-article/features/professional-development/andrea-simpson/the-future-of-aesthetic-use-of-access-in-art-255747>

and

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-30/performers-with-disability-state-of-access-australia-arts/9710572>



or have a WATCH of this cool Shakespeare project in the UK:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Acj70jNexf4>

"I saw *Forrest Gump*. I know Tom Hanks was really good but it is really sad they didn't have a man with intellectual disability playing that part.

I've seen other movies throughout my life that had the same problem and when I first saw a movie with a character with a disability played by an actor with a disability I was really surprised.

I was so used to seeing actors without disabilities playing disabled characters and this movie made me think, 'well of course we can be in a movie like that'."

Julia Hales

BACK
TO
BACK
THEATRE

Back to Back Theatre (based in Geelong) is a global leader in this area. Check out their pioneering work!

<https://backtobacktheatre.com/>

TALK THE TALK: VERBATIM THEATRE

You Know We Belong Together is an example of contemporary verbatim theatre.



Verbatim theatre is created from real conversations and interviews on a particular topic. The playwright then weaves the conversations together to make a dramatic script. The use of real dialogue can help audiences feel more closely connected to the characters and stories they are watching.

Verbatim theatre has a long tradition. It is associated with the form of Docudrama. It's a good way of exploring political and social issues - often through the stories of the marginalised or unheard. Like the work of Brecht (*check out his Epic Theatre*), audiences of Verbatim theatre are active witnesses to the stories presented to them.

In its strictest form, verbatim theatre-makers use real people's words exclusively, and take this testimony from recorded interviews. However, the form is more malleable than this, and writers have frequently combined interview material with invented scenes, or used reported and remembered speech rather than recorded testimony.

There's a sweet overview of the form here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/may/08/michael-billington-verbatim-theatre>

Here's Finn O'Branagáin, the co-creator and playwright of the show:

Verbatim theatre normally takes place some time after the fact of the action. It is often compiled with extensive research and interviews and then pieced together, thread by thread – the writer becoming part detective, part storyteller, part compelling barrister for the subjects. It's then handed over to a director and actors to make it come alive – a representation of other people, another time – illuminating a case for the audience. Sometimes the subjects can be surprised by how they 'sound', their representation folded in amongst other storylines, facts and threads of interest creating a documentary of a self that they might not quite recognise.

Some of the magic of *You Know We Belong Together* – sorry, the magic of Julia Hales - is that I have been able to do all this with her – researching and conversing and piecing it together, with Julia as both subject and performer. Having Julia as the lead artist has meant that at all times she's in control of the documentation and presentation of her own story. Together with Clare Watson we've pressed forward with research lines of enquiry that interested us all, that strengthened Julia's arguments. Together we've poured over our transcribed conversations, piecing together, thread by thread, illuminating a portrait of a remarkable woman, a celebration of a community, a case for the audience towards love and belonging. A documentary of a life still unfolding, dreams being lived, a person that the audience can recognise as someone in control of her own self and own story. Watching Clare and Julia shaping it on stage, seeing it come alive with a room of professional artists with and without Down syndrome. It's been an honour to work with Clare and Julia in service of amplifying and articulating Julia's story and passions and introducing audiences to her and the cast of magnificent people in the production and in the Down syndrome community.



Choose three newspaper articles about one issue. Select anything that is a direct quote from a person, and use only those lines to create a short two minute performance. Think about using repetition and unison in voice and movement.



In pairs, tell each other a true story about the best birthday you've ever had. Observe your partner closely, and then perform the story back to them using the same mannerisms and vocal tones they did. How did it feel having your story told back to you? What responsibility do you have to someone's story? Did it feel like the story was still yours when you watched your partner deliver it?



Record your partner telling a story that happened to them on a topic of your choice (make sure you have their permission to record it). Use audio editing software such as Garage Bands or Audacity to clarify/ streamline the story. Try performing the story whilst listening to the recording on headphones. What's tricky about this? Does it offer more authenticity in performance?

Parramatta Girls by Alana Valentine is on the current set text list for Year 12 Drama, and students may also be familiar with *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman & Tectonic Theatre. These plays are a great starting point to investigating more verbatim texts.

They explore real life events and use interviews from people who were involved in the events as the sole source of dialogue.

Belvoir Theatre in Sydney have presented these plays, and have a fantastic collection of verbatim resources here:

<https://belvoir.com.au/education/resources/verbatim-theatre/>



Transcribe your audio and give it to another student to perform. What changes for an audience when an actor is presenting a memorised scripts as opposed to relaying what is heard on headphones?



Try your hand at writing a verbatim script based on an interview with two people about real events. What editing needs to happen? Where is the line between honouring the source material and crafting a structured piece of theatre? Then cast your play so that it can be read aloud in class.

Choose your own subject matter, or use some of the following suggestions that refer to topics discussed in *You Know We Belong Together*:

- Your parents' individual versions of how they met
- Two siblings discussing the arrival of a new baby in the family
- People who have been on TV in any capacity
- The effect of a someone dying in a family
- Not being heard in an important situation

MORE INFO?



Read this cool article about Australian playwright Alana Valentine's verbatim plays

<http://www.alanavalentine.com/media/australian-writers-guild-magazine.pdf>

And watch this behind the scenes look at theatre maker Roslyn Oades' headphone verbatim show *Hello, Goodbye and Happy Birthday*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpE1OQX8wnY>



How do you design a theatre show that is built around a television show set on the beach?
And includes a bunch of projected films?

How do you show multiple settings onstage?

What choices would you make if you were staging *You Know We Belong Together*?

What if you were using a found space: a non-traditional theatre? What would you need to consider?

Design team Tyler Hill, Joe Hooligan Lui, Rachael Dease and Michael Carmody had to work together to create a mixed media approach that worked in harmony.

In particular, film forms a huge role in this show, with the concept originally being part of a digital film project.



The Stage UK have been exploring the use of video in scenography recently, with articles about the resurgence, and the difficulties about it here:

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/2017/video-getting-bigger-part-theatre/>

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/2015/challenges-using-video-live-theatre/>

There are many theatre companies in the world that are exploring the use of film and projected video as part of their signature style, such as 1927. Maybe you saw their collaboration with practitioner Barrie Kosky in *The Magic Flute* at Perth Festival this year?



And this podcast series is all about theatrical design! Definitely worth a look and listen:

<https://in1podcast.com/>



Lead artist Julia Hales and family slide, photo credit Toni Wilkinson



In small groups, recreate three key moments from the show in tableaux form



Use the following framework to assist in writing your review.

Write your ideas in note form at first, then fill them out into full sentences. Each heading should be a new paragraph.

Remember, the more specific details and examples you give, the easier it is for your reader to get a sense of your ideas.

- State the name of the play, playwright, theatre group, venue, date, director. Briefly give the background of any relevant person and lead actor/s.
- Succinct outline of the dramatic action in enough detail for the reader to understand the story, but brief enough to avoid rambling. Briefly explain the initial reaction and impact upon the audience at the start of the show.
- State the performers' names and the characters they played. Review the quality of each artist's performance (you don't have to talk about them all, choose the most noteworthy ones)
- Explain the use of stage design or scenography throughout the performance. Did the play include any set design and/or props? Was the stage space good or bad for the performers?
- Did the play use any lighting, sound/music, costume design or any other technical aspects which were worthy of mention?
- Dramatic Structure – did it follow a linear narrative? Were some acts/scenes more interesting than others?
- Were there any messages, or themes presented to the audience?
- What is your personal opinion about the play? Do you recommend people to see the play? Do you have any further comments to add to your review?



Here are some excerpts from previous reviews of the play. Click on the links to see the full reviews.

<https://thewest.com.au/entertainment/piaf/joyous-experience-of-the-rarest-kind-ng-b88761088z>

"There is a wonderful warmth about YKWB. It envelops the audience, creating a shared, joyous experience of the rarest kind of theatre."

<http://performing.artshub.com.au/news-article/reviews/performing-arts/nerida-dickinson/review-you-know-we-belong-together-255317>

"A movingly sweet, sad, angry and joyful celebration of passion, determination and spirit."

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/mar/03/love-the-central-theme-in-disability-led-stage-production>

"It's a sweet, joyful and generous piece of theatre, more about love than anything else, and the opening night crowd rose in standing ovation before it had even finished."

<http://www.theatrepeople.com.au/you-know-we-belong-together/>

"You Know We Belong Together is a breath of fresh air; and as all good documentaries should, Julia Hales, Finn O'Branagáin and Clare Watson have added humour, passion, and heartbreak to give the audience a new understanding of a subject that has been misrepresented by society for far too long."

<https://www.outinperth.com/review-black-swans-you-know-we-belong-together/>

"As Julia Hales leads us into her world, we are treated to some hilarious moments, the show is filled with simple but deeply revealing lines of monologue. It builds to a climax that is both celebratory, but also likely to bring a tear to your eye."



Above: Melissa and Mark Junor.

Below: Cast and audience participants Photo credit Toni Wilkinson



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Black Swan's *You Know We Belong Together* is located in the Heath Ledger Theatre in State Theatre Centre of WA, and seating is reserved.

The State Theatre Centre of WA is located at 174 – 176 William St, Perth (cnr Roe St).

There are several City of Perth paid car parks nearby, or Perth Train Station is a three minute walk away.

There are pickup and drop off points on William St and Roe St.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

- Please make sure your mobile phone is switched off and stashed in your bag or pocket. Notifications and glowing screens are very distracting to both the audience and performers.
- Please don't eat during the performance. It's noisy and distracting for everyone.
- Please do clap and laugh and react like a human during the performance. Keep the chat until interval and after the show, though.
- Take heaps of selfies before and after the show. However, photos are not allowed to be taken during the show. Share your experience on social media! Post on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and tag:
@BlackSwanSTC
#blackswanstc
#YKWBT
#wheretheheartis
- Please make sure you're on time, with plenty of extra time to go to the toilet beforehand and to find your seats.



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