

## Content Advisories

# DEAR SON

Letters and reflections from First Nations fathers and sons

Based on the book by Thomas Mayo

Adapted by Isaac Drandic and John Harvey

Directed by Isaac Drandic

This information contains warnings and spoilers and is subject to change without notice.

### Content Advisory

This production contains culturally sensitive stories and may contain images of those who have passed. It contains mild coarse language and the use of theatrical haze.

### Age Suitability

Recommended for audiences aged 14+.

### About the Show

Together with his own heartfelt prose and poetry, author and editor Thomas Mayo, a Kaurareg Aboriginal and Kalkalgal, Erubamle Torres Strait Islander man, invited 12 contributors to write a letter to their son or father, bringing together a range of perspectives that offered a celebration of First Nations masculinity.

Featuring letters from Stan Grant, Troy Cassar-Daley, John Liddle, Charlie King, Joe Williams, Yessie Mosby, Joel Bayliss, Daniel James, Jack Latimore, Daniel Morrison, Tim Sculthorpe and Blak Douglas, what resulted was a gentle, honest and loving book for families to share around the world.

Now, renowned First Nations theatre makers Isaac Drandic (*37, Dear Brother*) and John Harvey (*Spear, Black Ties*) transform these letters into a world premiere page to stage adaptation, starring leading First Nations actors **Jimi Bani** (*Othello, My Name is Jimi*), **Waangenga Blanco** (*37, Patyegarang*), **Trevor Jamieson** (*The Secret River, Storm Boy*), **Kirk Page** (*Black Diggers, Redfern Now*) and **Aaron Pedersen** (*Cost of Living, Mystery Road*).

Through story and song, *Dear Son* is a landmark Australian work that honours the rich traditions and wisdoms of fathers passed down through generations, whilst exploring the challenges faced by First Nations men today. In this hand-penned message of resilience and joy for our First Nations future, witness the importance of family, the power of culture and the enduring strength of the human spirit.

*Dear Son* is deeply moving, simply unmissable theatre that speaks straight to the heart and reminds you: **there is no shame in love, in softness, in being seen.**

### Key Themes

- **Fatherhood and Masculinity:** Exploration of what it means to be a father and a man, challenging toxic masculinity. Diverse expressions of Indigenous fatherhood.
- **Intergenerational Trauma and Healing:** Addressing the inherited pain of colonization, Stolen Generations, racism, and the struggle for healing through cultural continuity.
- **Cultural Identity and Connection to Country:** Celebrating First Nations heritage, language, and cultural practices as sources of strength.
- **Truth-telling and Vulnerability:** The courage to share personal truths through letters, breaking cycles of silence, and how to model emotional openness.
- **Legacy and Guidance:** What fathers wish to leave behind for their sons—wisdom, culture, and unconditional love.

## SPOILER SHEET

Below is the Scene Breakdown Spoiler Sheet. Please note some changes to technical elements of the production may be subject to change.

**IF YOU DO NOT WANT THE PLOT OF THE SHOW TO BE SPOILED – DO NOT READ AHEAD.**

This play is an episodic collection of stories; retellings of real letters written by real Indigenous Dads to their fathers and sons. These are retold by a cast of five men who embody these storytellers, their reflections and memories.

These men meet at a 'cook haus,' a traditional place of gathering, sharing of food and time together – a familiar setting for these men. Their costumes are simple and realistic. Their storytelling is punctuated by projection, theatrical lighting and sound,

Scene by Scene

ACT I – Letters of Longing

Scene 1: He Tried to Take My Hand

Men gather at a traditional public space called the *Cook Haus* after a storm where a MAN struggles to write a letter to his son, remembering a painful moment when he rejected affection. The men support him, leading to reflections on fatherhood, missed chances, and personal failings.

#### Scene 2: Dreams of My Childhood

A MAN recalls growing up without his father and his vow to break that cycle. He sings “*Some Days*” by Troy Cassar-Daley, celebrating his commitment to love, family, and partnership.

#### Scene 3: I Think of You, My Sons

A MAN shares cultural memories and rites of passage, drawing on his Islander heritage. The metaphor of the arrowhead bird, *Yathai kuik*, illustrates leadership and responsibility among siblings and future generations.

#### Scene 4: Scars of Survival

A MAN confronts his father’s mortality and trauma. Despite the scars from colonisation, boxing, and emotional suppression, his father’s legacy lives on through the survival of Wiradjuri language and culture.

#### Scene 5: Shorts and Thongs

A MAN recounts a wild, emotionally charged road trip to say goodbye to his Uncle. The journey veers into dark comedy (a mistaken home invasion) and heartfelt reflection about time, connection, and father-son bonds.

#### Scene 6: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told

A MAN remembers his father’s epic bike ride across Australia and how he fell in love with an Aboriginal woman. It’s a whimsical yet tender story about legacy, love, and admiration.

#### Scene 7: Letters on the Tree

The men reflect on the purpose of the letters: transforming the clay of the past into a future gift. They attach their letters to a symbolic “ever-listening” tree and sing “*Windradyne*” by Troy Cassar-Daley – the story of a Wiradjuri warrior.

---

### ACT II – Letters of Loss

#### Scene 8: Perhaps in Heaven

A MAN reflects on his father’s life, his blue eyes, their complicated relationship, and a powerful scene with a metallic-green station wagon. Affection was taboo, but love was evident. He hangs his letter on the tree.

#### Scene 9: The Talk

A MAN comes out as gay to his son. To his surprise, his son accepts it without issue. This unlocks a deep honesty among the group and opens space for broader discussions of identity and self-love.

#### Scene 10: Keep Loving Mate

A MAN, a former NRL player and boxer, recounts his battle with alcoholism and the loss of his family. He stages a brutal metaphorical boxing match with his inner demons, eventually rising from the mat to pursue healing and love.

#### Scene 11: Somehow the Sun Was Off Centre

A MAN washes his father's feet in death, recalls a defiant Mabo-related incident at a footy game, and a tree that embodied his father's spirit. The story blends humour and grief with reverence.

#### Scene 12: A Single Image

A MAN speaks of losing his mother while holding his baby. He reflects on systemic racism, abuse at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, the Northern Territory Intervention, and how media images dehumanise Blak fathers. A powerful indictment of how stereotypes injure families.

#### Scene 13: It Spread Like Wildfire

A deeply emotional testimony of Stolen Generations trauma, cultural survival, and resistance through the viral *#IndigenousDads* campaign—a defiant reclaiming of identity and fatherhood in the face of vilification. Real social media posts and photographs are projected across the entire stage signifying the scale and spread of this powerful moment.

---

### ACT III – Letters of Love

#### Scene 14: Heart of the Community

The men share their real names and hopes for their children. Jimi Bani, Waangenga Blanco, Trevor Jamieson, Kirk Page and Aaron Pedersen deliver moving declarations. They speak of language, connection, blended families, and the strength of their legacies.

END.