



**the
street**



breaking the castle

written and performed by peter cook



About

“Do you value yourself?”

A powerful work embracing human complexity *Breaking The Castle* traverses addiction, recovery and finding a way of being. Inspired by true events in the life of the playwright *Breaking The Castle* asks three questions. How do we make a place for ourselves in this world? How does a man deal with overcoming trauma? How does Australia deal with trauma?

Dave is dealing with serious mental health and substance abuse issues arising from past trauma and the knife's edge existence he lives as a jobbing actor. Moving between past, present and future, and told with “a bucket load of laughs” the work is a portrait of a man who lives unaware of how his untreated trauma is affecting his present. Who through the love of a friend, finds himself in a rehabilitation centre in the mountains of Thailand taking on his demons. The play explores how our childhood affects us as adults, the nature of reality, the need for a fulfilling vocation, grief, loss, love, family, and is ultimately an uplifting story of redemption.

Through the story of one man the work illuminates the broader struggles of those who live on the edges, and the inequalities in the addiction and recovery cycle in Australia. It highlights the need for men to allow themselves to be vulnerable and seek help when they need it, and it celebrates the ability of the human spirit to prevail through the darkest of journeys.


In its writing, performance and production, this is an ode to the theatre and underscores the importance the arts play in overcoming tragedy. It is a comedy-drama about a human being human, the light and the dark, and resonates with audiences from all backgrounds. This was evident in its premiere season.

“Holy crap Canberra! You have two more days to see this incredible play by Peter Cook. Honestly. It’s mind blowing.”

**– Ginger Gorman,
the investigative journalist with heart**

team

Writer and
Performer
Peter Cook
Director
Caroline Stacey
Dramaturg
**Shelly Higgs/
Caroline Stacey**
Design
Imogen Keen
Sound Design
Kimmo
Vennonen
Lighting Design
Gerry Corcoran
Produced by
**The Street
Theatre**

A man with a beard and messy hair, wearing a dark green jacket and dark pants, stands on a stage. He is looking down at a small, open book he is holding in his hands. The stage floor is dark and appears to be covered in debris, including several bottles (one of which is clearly a bottle of alcohol), a glass, and some crumpled paper. The background is a dark, textured wall. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong light source from the left casting a shadow on the wall behind him.

“A work of empathy”
— *New Territory*

Key Audiences

Theatre Lovers. This ambitious new Australian work is a compelling, visceral and life-affirming story about finding a way to be in this world.

Introducing an exciting new voice in Australian theatre writing for now and speaking to issues rarely seen on Australian stages, it is for audiences who want work that is relevant, socially engaged, emotional and that asks them to think.

It features a virtuosic performance authenticated by life experience, and imaginative direction, production, sound and lighting design.

Recovery Community. An unflinching, raw and real representation of life as an addict it provides a compelling insight into class and cultural factors embedded in addiction and recovery. Its premiere season attracted many people from the recovery community, including family members and friends of those affected by addiction.

Men's groups. A no holds barred look at men's mental health it has enormous appeal to men's groups with its profound distillation of men going through tough or lonely times. For friends and family of addicts it highlights the importance of not giving up on those we love.

Mental Health professionals and organisations. It offers insight in what people who are suffering from addiction and mental health issues deal with. And with a focus on connection and support in life the mental health and well-being themes resonate with both men and women, and it is important that it is marketed to both as many women brought their partners to the work.

Schools. Suitable for years 11 and 12. Young people are invited into the immediacy and shared experience of theatre and the work can be used as a learning tool to explore mental health and addiction. It will resonate with teachers and counsellors.

General Public. The play is, as one review stated, "unique to the theatre" and "transformative". The breadth of the subject matter and form had audiences exclaiming "if theatre was always like this I would go [more often]". It could attract a new audience of theatre goers.

**“In many ways Cook’s play answers
the question – why theatre?”
– *Canberra City News***



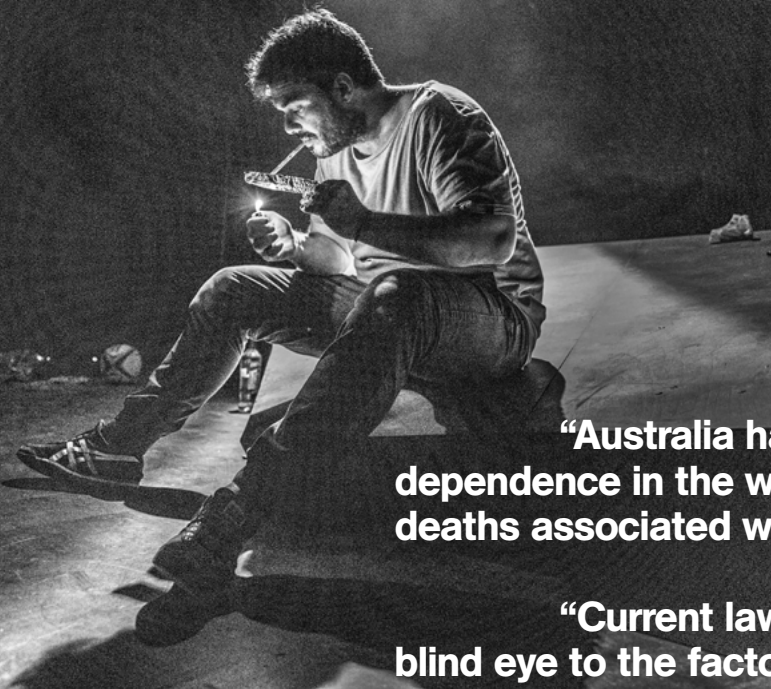
Selling Points

- It's regularly compared to UK theatrical sensation Fleabag – a darker, grittier male version
- Current and topical
- Covers a breadth of experiences and emotions in human existence – and is accessible to all
- A new Australian work by an exciting new voice in Australian theatre
- An unflinching true story written and performed by the author
- A theatre experience that supports audiences to enter themes of addiction, trauma, and recovery safely
- A play that captures the sensations and experiences attached to using ice exploring methamphetamine addiction in Australia in a new way
- A solo work created to travel and connect with communities around Australia
- A quality production, critically acclaimed with great reviews
- A compelling performance
- Metatheatrical in form, dark, edgy, and funny

**“A tour de force performance...
it never flags during its entire ninety-
minute duration”
– *Arts Review***



Part of the national conversation: Ice use and men's mental health



“Australia has the highest rate of amphetamine dependence in the world and ... the highest rate of all-cause deaths associated with amphetamine dependence.”

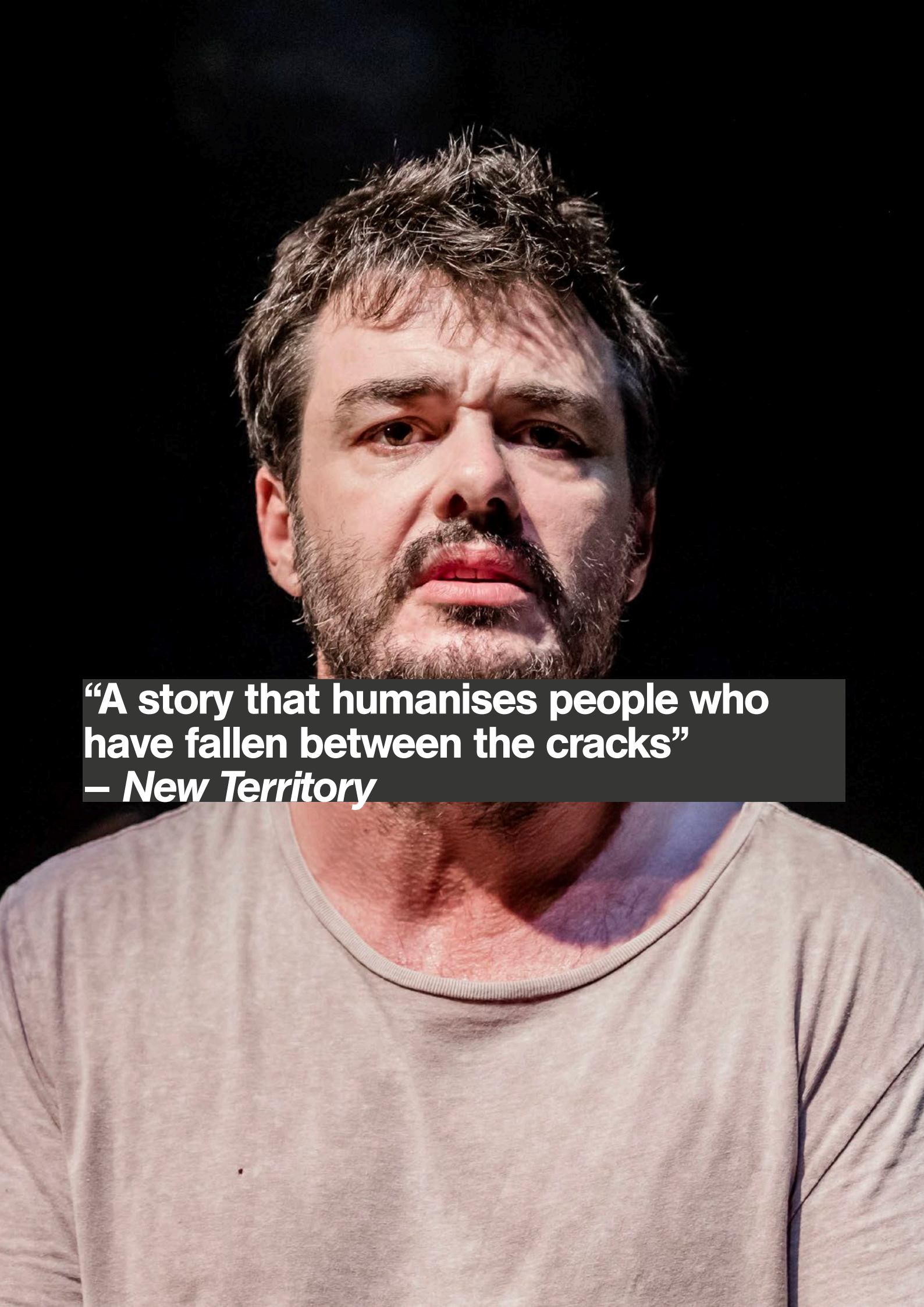
“Current laws allow us tacit permission to turn a blind eye to the factors driving most problematic drug use. These include childhood abuse, domestic violence and mental illness”.

– Dan Howard
Commissioner for The Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug ‘Ice’

Breaking the Castle is a raw and honest portrayal of one man's descent into the hell of Ice addiction. Ice is a drug that is used across Australia and in all population demographics.

The play mirrors the above comments of the Commissioner as it explores how childhood trauma and mental illness play a key role in addiction, especially Ice addiction.

Breaking the Castle is a commentary on the problematic nature of recovery and rehabilitation in Australia and the existing barriers to rehabilitation treatment.

A close-up portrait of a man with a beard and intense expression. He has dark, slightly messy hair and a full beard. His eyes are looking directly at the camera with a serious, almost somber expression. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his face and deep shadows, particularly under his chin and around his eyes. He is wearing a light-colored, possibly grey, t-shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

**“A story that humanises people who
have fallen between the cracks”
– *New Territory***

Audience and Community engagement



Peter is available to hold post show Q&A's with audiences about the topics raised in the show.

Peter has over ten year's experience in theatre in education and is able to offer workshops to school students and young theatre practitioners in theatre-making.

Peter has extensive experience working in Aboriginal communities and was the Head of the Theatre Department at the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts (Brisbane) and can deliver acting and theatre workshops to young Aboriginal people.

Peter is interested in engaging with at-risk youth delivering workshops.

Peter is interested in engaging with men's and mental health groups.

Resources

Extensive marketing collateral including:

Videos used from the original Street marketing campaign

High quality Production Stills

Behind The Scenes Trailers and interviews with key artists

Press releases

Excerpts from previous reviews

Posters and flyers

Archived interviews from Peter to draw upon

[View Trailer \(20min\)](#)



[View Trailer \(5min\)](#)



21 “An overwhelming, visceral experience”
– Stage Whispers



Praise

“For the first time in years, that took me out of the theatre’ ,was my companion’s verdict. This was an incredibly powerful work that was a privilege to see”.

– *Stage Whispers*

“An incisive text about addiction drawn from real life was heightened by stunning design elements. Director Caroline Stacey has shaped a performance facilitated by Imogen Keen’s deceptively simple yet highly evocative set, Kimmo Vennonen’s visceral sound design and Gerry Corcoran’s striking lighting design. Breaking the Castle has the power to transform through its writing, acting, design and relationship with its audience”.

– *Canberra City News*

“His experience is not depicted as being so unique that it could have only happened to him; rather, his is the tale of just another person trying to make a place for themselves in this world. It humanises those who are often ignored and encourages a philosophy of compassion – a laudable achievement for any creative work”.

– *New Territory*

“Peter Cook’s play about addiction and recovery, ‘Breaking the Castle’, succeeds because of the quality of the writing, the extraordinary performance of Peter Cook himself and the strong production by the director, Caroline Stacey, and the team at The Street”.

– *Canberra Critics Circle*



Reviews

Canberra City News:

<https://citynews.com.au/2020/plays-energy-and-acting-has-the-power-to-transform/>

Canberra Critics Art Circle

http://ccc-canberracriticscircle.blogspot.com/2020/03/breaking-castle_5.html

New Territory, Adventures in Arts Writing

<https://newterritory.com.au/2020/03/10/breaking-the-castle/>

Stage Whispers

<http://www.stagewhispers.com.au/reviews/breaking-castle>

Rock City Jester

<https://www.rockcityjester.com/post/review-breaking-the-castle>

Interviews

with Peter

Arts Hub

<https://performing.artshub.com.au/news-article/features/performing-arts/richard-watts/acting-and-addiction-new-play-explores-sectors-wellbeing-challenges-259859>

Canberra Radio Interview – Sound File

<https://soundcloud.com/peter-cook-843024121/interview-canberra-radio-breaking-the-castle>

Canberra Living Arts Radio Interview – Sound File

<https://soundcloud.com/peter-cook-843024121/peter-cook-breaking-the-castle-canberra-living-arts-interview>

Rock City Jester

<https://www.rockcityjester.com/post/a-raw-and-redemptive-play-about-the-struggles-of-life>

Overview

Artform

Theatre, solo theatre

Audience

Recommended for ages 15+
Contains coarse language, drug references
and mature themes

Duration

90 Minutes (no interval)
Minimum stage
9m wide by 4m deep

Previous season

The Street, Canberra 2020

Acknowledgements

ACT Government

Contact information

Dean Ellis – deane@thestreet.org.au
Caroline Stacey - artistic@thestreet.org.au

The street theatre

+ 61 6247 1519
street@thestreet.org.au
www.thestreet.org.au

6247 1223
thestreet.org.au
15 Childers St
Canberra City
@thestreetcbr

Supported by

