

robot song

By Jolyon James

Commissioned and Produced by **Arena Theatre Company**.

First performed July 2018 at The Engine Room,
Capitol Theatre Bendigo.

"Miss Cummings, if we are *all* different does that make us *all* the same? That's a paradox! I love paradoxes."

Juniper May

Robot Song is a play with music, aimed at young people aged 8+, their families, care givers and friends.

It is important to note that the letter delivered to the lead character Juniper May by her classmates, is an actual letter given to a real child.

This play is written for them.

Setting: *A Theatre.*

Characters: *Juniper May.* An eleven year old girl. Juniper also plays the Principal Mr Scryber.

Dad 'Jase'. Juniper's father. Dad also plays Miss Cummings, Miss Hope, Classmates and Battletac (see below).

Mum 'Bridge'. Juniper's mother and onstage musical accompanist.

Battletac. A famous giant robot from the 1980's, performed and operated by *Dad*.

Gomi. A large industrial recycling bin, played by herself.

ACT ONE

A man [Juniper's Dad 'Jase'] wearing a head lamp, is tucked behind a workbench on the prompt-side wings of the stage. He nervously acknowledges the audience as they enter and repeatedly checks his watch. As the lights go down he carefully places a tall microphone downstage centre.

DAD

Hey hey, check one two, hey. *[To 'MUM' WHO IS SITTING AT A KEYBOARD OP]* HEY, I'm really not convinced this is a good idea.

MUM

Try and let it go. She needs to work things out for herself.

DAD

Okay.

The man rolls out a soft, green grassy looking rug in front of the microphone. This is Juniper's rug from her bedroom.

DAD

[To 'MUM' OFF STAGE] Alright Sweetheart, we're ready, let's go to blackout.

From upstage an orange warning light ignites. The sound of a large machine hums and whirs into life accompanied by epic sweeping electronic music. In a flash, a series of blinding flood lights snap on forming the shape of a giant humanoid robot. The figure slowly and cumbersomely begins to walk forward, its actual body hidden by the intensity of the light. As it reaches the microphone a sharp spotlight reveals it to be in fact a young girl, eleven year old Juniper May, she has a

series of torches strapped to her legs, arms and head. She stands for a moment, blinking uncomfortably under the bright light. As the music builds to a crescendo she raises her hands to her ears.

JUNIPER

Shut-up!

The stage goes quiet.

I know I'm not meant to say shut-up. Now I've said it twice. I used to say shuck up, S, H, U, C, K, because Mum couldn't stand me saying shut-up all the time but aaahhh that's three times. Not good, not good, not good. I'm just going to stand here for a minute. Breathe.

Juniper holds her breath and counts to three on her fingers.

Dr. Emma told me breathing can be useful?

I told Dr Emma, "That's a pretty *STUKID* thing to say Dr. Emma. I mean breathing??"

Mum doesn't really like me saying *stukid* either which is totally *stukid* because *stukid* is my own made up word. I should be the boss of that word not Mum.

I make up lots of words. Like *Squid*. It's what I call the kids at school. I know it's already a word. I use it because it's a combination of *stukid*-*kid* 'Squid' and also because squids are spineless invertebrates who resort to eating each other if they run out of food. I saw that on David Attenborough. Breathe.

Juniper holds her breath. Arms stretched.

You know, when you're a baby in your Mum's tummy,

actually I hate it how people say 'Mum's tummy', babies do not grow in your "Mummy's tummy" they would dissolve in all the acid and die. When you're in your Mum's uterus, that is the official word, you don't need to breathe. You float around totally not breathing *Dr. Emma*. Every single one of us has held our breath for nine whole months and it was probably the happiest, safest time of our lives. Breathe.

She takes another deep breath this time counting to ten.

It's not working. MUM!

MUM

Yes Juniper?

JUNIPER

I don't want to do this anymore the breathing thing doesn't work and I want to go home.

MUM V/O

That's totally fine Darling Heart you don't have to. We can stop this right now. Would you like your Dad or me to make an announcement?

JUNIPER

You do it. But don't tell them why.

The man from the workbench approaches to help her unstrap the torches. He is Junipers Dad.

MUM V/O

Okay.

She clears her throat.

Hello everyone thank you so much for coming to see this performance of 'Robot Song'. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances the show will be unable

to continue. Juniper feels incredibly sorry/

JUNIPER

/Sorry?

MUM V/O

Sorry?

JUNIPER

I never said I was sorry.

MUM V/O

Yes of course, I was just...

***Juniper's mother is uncertain how to
continue.***

Ummm... Juniper will not be performing/

JUNIPER

/Hang on Mum. Quit it Dad! Now that you said I don't have to do the show I feel heaps better. Because I feel better, I can do the show. That's a paradox. Mum tell the audience I'm going to do it.

MUM V/O

I think they heard you Darling Heart.

JUNIPER

Oh yeah. Let's do this.

[musical underscore]

***Lights up on Juniper standing at the
microphone.***

SONG WEIRD

HELLO EVERYONE

IT'S NICE THAT YOU COULD COME TO SEE ME

STRANGE THAT YOU WOULD COME TO SEE ME

BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHO ANY OF YOU ARE

YOU KNOW WHAT'S WEIRDER

CAN'T REALLY SEE YOU EITHER
THAT'S THE THING ABOUT THEATRE
YOU STAND AROUND JUST TALKING TO THE DARK
BLAH BLAH BLAH
BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH
AND NO ONE THINKS IT'S WEIRD

The house lights come up over the audience.

[SPOKEN] Oh that's better I can see you guys.

I'M TELLING YOU
IT'S WEIRD

[TO AN AUDIENCE MEMBER] Hi Miss Cummings. That's my art teacher. [SHE WAVES] Hi! I don't like art at school it's a bit basic, but I like you Miss Cummings you always smell nice.

I don't like theatre either, it's too 3D. Once a magician poked me in the eye with a chicken. Yep, theatre can do that. I prefer Youtube. I have my own channel.

YOUTUBE IS THE PLACE I CHOOSE
YOU CAN LOOSE YOURSELF FOR HOURS
EVERYONE DOES EVERYTHING
YOU CAN BUILD A CAT WITH A BALL OF STRING
YOU CAN FREAK YOUR DAD WITH A SEVERED LIMB
OR LEARN TO SING
I LOVE TO SING-IIIIIIINNNG AAAAAAAAH AAAAAAAH
AND NO ONE SAYS YOU'RE WEIRD
OR CALLS YOU STUPID FREAK - SORRY STUCKID
AND EVEN IF THEY DID
JUST USE YOUR FINGER PRESS DELETE
THEN IT'S GONE
THEY'RE ALL GONE

[SPOKEN] Yep, later haters. Dad wanted me to put in a bit about the internet actually being a very dangerous place and while deleting comments was a good start, it may represent an oversimplification of the whole bullying issue. I thought that would ruin the mood of the song, so I'm not going to do it.

SO HELLO EVERYONE
IT'S NICE THAT YOU WOULD COME TO SEE ME
IT'S WEIRD FOR YOU IT'S WEIRD FOR ME
I SUPPOSE AT LEAST IT MEANS WE'RE ALL THE SAME
AND MAYBE IT'S ALL TRUE
THAT MAYBE WE'RE ALL STRANGE
I'D LIKE TO THINK IT'S NOT JUST ME
IT'S NOT JUST YOU
BUT ALL JUST WE
BEING HERE
BEING HERE
BEING WEIRD

I wrote that song. I love writing, I pretty much write everything down. Words are like lego, you can build anything with them. Some words are special because they hide other words inside, all wrapped up in a present. Like the word 'breathe'. Inside 'breathe' is 'eat', which is weird because you can't eat and breathe at the same time, it is biologically impossible. Don't try it you *will* choke to death. I love that inside the word 'believe' is 'lie' or inside the word 'touch' is 'ouch' or if you just had an 's' to laughter you get 'slaughter'.

Juniper's Dad approaches the mic and reads the following descriptions of the show in an American movie trailer style voice. Mum plays the underscore to each one in different movie trailer styles.

DAD

Welcome to 'Robot Song' the touching true story about a girl who finds a robot in her recycling bin and together they connect through song.

JUNIPER

Dad, I don't like that one, what are the other ones?

DAD

Okay... They said she couldn't feel but what good is feeling without somebody to touch.

JUNIPER

No, that one sounds totally weird. It actually makes me feel sick.

DAD

How about this one. Juniper May is a little girl in a big big world but school is no playground when you don't have a friend to call your own...

JUNIPER

Stop! No! A. I don't want friends and B. You can't own them, that's called kidnapping so technically they wouldn't be your friends then would they?

DAD

Maybe you try.

JUNIPER

Hi... I'm not going to do the accent.
My name is Juniper May, I'm good at art, singing, writing, computers, Youtube and heaps of other things. One thing I really love are robots, I'm pretty much an expert. One thing I really hate is school, because a little while ago I received this letter.

Juniper's Dad flies a letter through the air towards her as if it were a bird of prey. The movement is accompanied by the distant ticking sound of toy bomb.

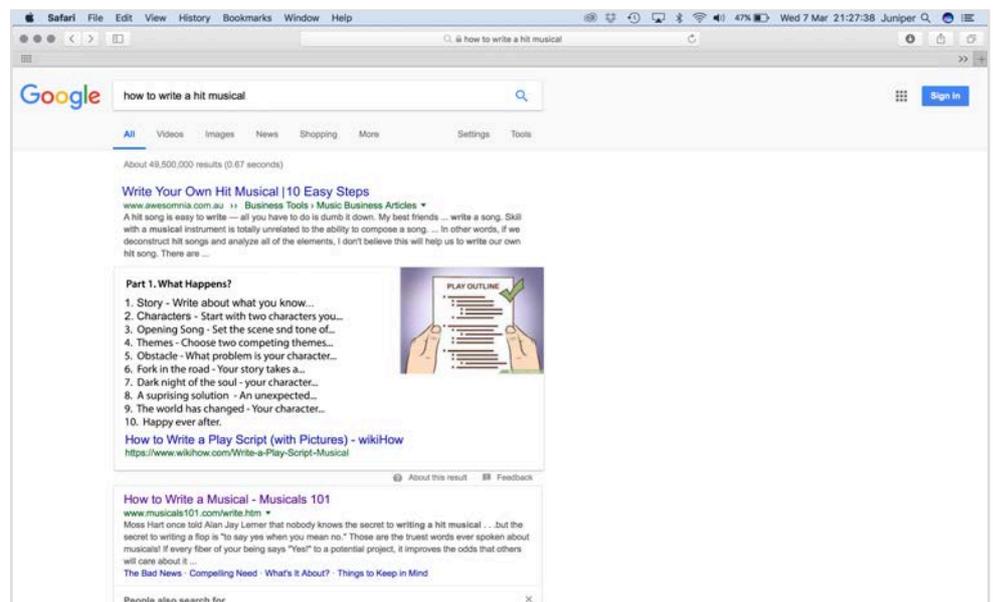
JUNIPER

SONG PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT [VERSION ONE]

PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN
A NOTE LIKE THIS WOULD ONLY EVER HURT A HUMAN BEING
I'M NOT A MACHINE

You would never give this letter to a robot, it doesn't make sense. I wish I could delete it but I know that even if I tore it up into the tiniest pieces, burnt it, the atoms would still exist floating in the air for everyone to breathe in. You should probably breathe Dad.

I've never written a show before. Luckily you can Google it.



Juniper's Dad wheels in a big whiteboard from the wings. From his laptop on the workbench, he projects the Google search results for "how to write a hit musical" from his laptop at the workbench onto the whiteboard.

JUNIPER

It's really easy. You have to have a story obviously and characters, me, an opening song, which we've done. Tick. Themes. Dad, do we need themes? It *is* a true story.

DAD

This is more your Mum's domain.

JUNIPER

Mum? Do I have a theme?

MUM

[PLAYS JUNIPERS MUSICAL THEME]

Ha. You are a walking, talking bundle of themes Darling Heart. You would never fit them all in. You can leave it blank.

JUNIPER

I just don't want anyone to get any nasty surprises. I do *not* like surprises. Is refusing to go to school a theme?

DAD

It's not really a theme it's more just really annoying.

JUNIPER

Is being annoying a theme? You're always telling me to stop being annoying. [TO THE AUDIENCE] Dad once said I was so annoying he wished he could pull his ears over his eyes, that way he wouldn't have to hear me or look at me ever again.

DAD

[TO THE AUDIENCE] Of course I was totally joking.

JUNIPER

[TO THE AUDIENCE] He wasn't.

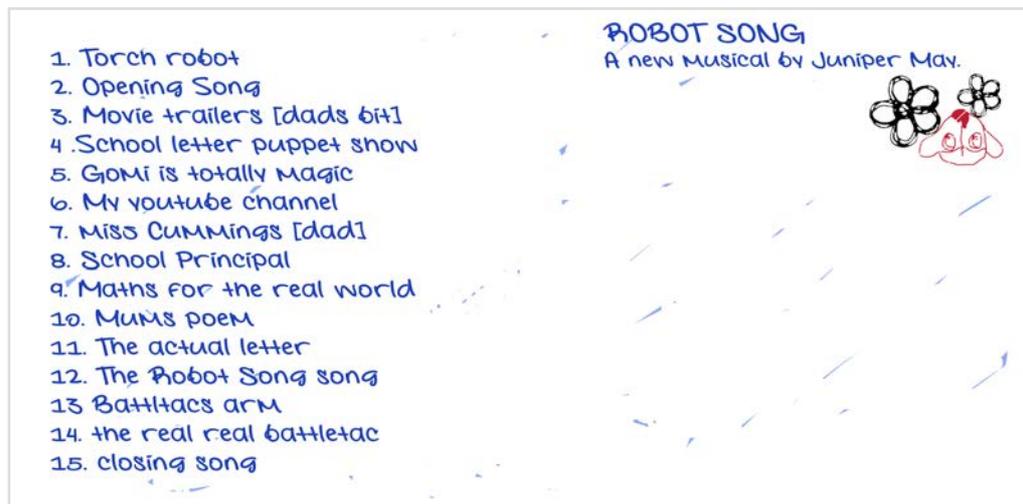
DAD

You're not annoying Pixels, never. Things are only annoying when they haven't found their proper place.

JUNIPER

I wish I knew where my proper place was because it's definitely not school. Dad, next slide.

Juniper moves to the whiteboard. We see a neat handwritten schematic of her entire show.



Even though it's a true story I've put in some songs, here, here and here, to give the show more emotional content. Google says that's important, plus you believe it more when people sing. Like... Dad give me a topic.

DAD

Ha! love this game! Your song topic is *School Kids*.

She sings the following as if ad-libbing.

JUNIPER

SONG SCHOOL KIDS

SCHOOL KIDS
CAN REALLY STINK
SO BAD I THINK I MIGHT ACTUALLY THROW UP.
THE CLASSROOM AFTER LUNCH
THAT'S WHEN YOU'RE MOST GROSS
IT'S THE TIME I HATE THE MOST.

DAD

[APPLAUDING] I totally felt that!

JUNIPER

I know right. We need more songs like that in the show. Dad and I write songs all the time because Dr. Emma says singing is way better than screaming. Dad! Let's do 'The Poo Song'.

DAD

Ohh, I don't think we should do that one Juniper, that's just a silly thing we do at home/

JUNIPER

/It's good for the show, it gives the audience valuable background information. It's a true story about Dad accidentally picking up one of *my* poos in his actual hand. I mean gold...

DAD

Well it's your show.

JUNIPER

Dad can you quickly make a poo? A fake one for the song. Now, everyone stand up. Put your arms in the air. Stretch. That's good. I have to do this every 15 minutes at school. If I don't the class can get very disruptive. Okay, I need you all to go OOOOOOH
AAAAHH. OOOH OOOH AAAHH. Great. Now I need one

volunteer, [SELECT AUDIENCE MEMBER] your job is to sing out the word 'POO!' when I point to you.

Juniper loops the sound with a mini loop station she has on stage. Dad grabs his electric guitar and plugs it in.

JUNIPER

SONG THE TRAGIC TRUE STORY OF THE HUGE POO AND THE TUPPERWARE CONTAINER

ONCE WHEN I WAS THREE
I DID A POO ON THE FLOOR IN THE LIVING ROOM
TRUE STORY

THEN, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO
SO I COVERED THE POO WITH SOME TUPPERWARE
COVERED THE POO AND JUST LEFT IT THERE

COVERED THE POO YEAH

COVERED THE POO WITH SOME TUPPERWARE AND LEFT IT
THERE
OOHHH YEAAAH

[SPOKEN] I just left it there. We have a really old house with an outside toilet. Mum and Dad are artists and have covered the walls with pictures of famous people from the olden days. You have to sit on the toilet with someone called Whitney Houston smiling at you while you do a wee, it's disgusting.
Dad, I need you to play the role of you for this bit?

DAD

Sure.

WHEN I GOT UP THAT NIGHT
AND SAW THE CONTAINER IN THE MOON LIGHT
I THOUGHT OH (OOH)
A ROTTEN AVOCADO (NO NO NO NO)

ON THE FLOOR UNDER TUPPERWARE
WHY IS IT THERE UNDER TUPPERWARE
WHY IS IT THERE
OOOH OOOH
COVERED IN HAIR AND JUST LYING THERE

JUNIPER / DAD

SO HE / I PICKED IT UP

DAD

I WISH I HADN'T

JUNIPER / DAD

HE / I JUST PICKED IT UP

DAD

I don't know if any of you have ever picked up a human poo before. No? It's sort of cold and heavy. Slightly slimy. It's the middle of the night and I'm standing in my pyjamas, holding what I thought was a rotten avocado but was in fact a large human poo in my bare hand/

JUNIPER

/My poo.

DAD

I couldn't drop it back on the carpet. I didn't want to put it in the Tupperware container, I mean I use them for my lunch. So I had to carry it all the way outside to the toilet [*MIMES DROPPING IT IN*]. I can still feel it in my hand. Kids, if there is any moral to this story it's this. A parent is someone who will love a child *even* if that child makes them carry their poo, in their hands to the outside toilet. Perhaps love them even more. [*TO JUNIPER*] That's a theme right there, write it down. Pretty amazing what love can do don't you think? Make you carry a poo. Now, just take a moment to think about all those

gross things you have made your parents do. Yeah?
Well, that's how much they love you.

MUM

I think we could probably move on Jase.

DAD

Sure. 2, 3, 4.

Juniper and her Dad finish the song with a huge flourish and get the audience clapping to the beat.

JUNIPER/DAD

MAKE YOU CARRY A POO
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN DO
MAKE YOU CARRY A POO
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN DO
MAKE YOU CARRY A POO
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN DO
MAKE YOU CARRY A POO
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN DO
DOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN

Juniper ad-libs the final phrase and points to the...

AUDIENCE MEMBER

POO!

JUNIPER

That feels so much better. We have all just sung a song about poo together, I told you theatre was weird.

DAD

Honestly, you never know what's going to happen living with Junee. Life is incredibly exciting.

He scans the whiteboard

What's up next Pixels?

JUNIPER

Dad calls me Pixels, it's very confusing. He also calls me...

Pixel Tricks

Pick up Sticks

Jupiter

Junee

You Beauty

You Ripper

Euripides

Pixar

Which is how we get to my current nickname/

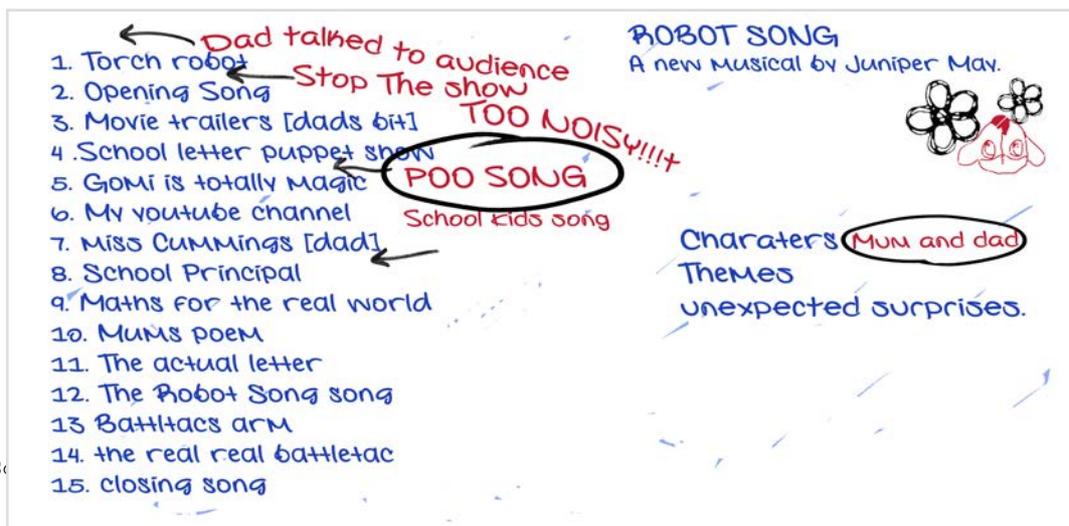
DAD

/Pixels, what comes next?

JUNIPER

Mum just calls me Darling Heart.

Juniper studies the whiteboard again. She attempts to squeeze in all the new content. Things are starting to get a bit messy.



Poo song, Whitney Houston, School kids, Dad. This is getting really confusing. We have gone totally off track.

DAD

You're doing beautifully. Keep going. What's next?

Juniper circles 'GOMI'!

JUNIPER

Gomi!

SONG THE JOY THAT RUBBISH BRINGS

CHUCKA CHUCK IT OUT DON'T CHUCK IT OUT
CHUCKA CHUCK IT OUT DON'T CHUCK IT OUT

ALL THOSE BUSTED BITS OF THINGS
THAT PEOPLE CAN'T BE BOTHERED FIXING
ALL THOSE BIKES AND TOYS AND SPRINGS
OH THE FUN THAT RUBBISH BRINGS

[DAD] OH THE FUN THAT RUBBISH BRINGS

MY BIN IS FULL OF MAGIC THINGS.

Juniper's Dad hauls a giant industrial recycling bin onto the stage. She is old and dirty, painted with a large friendly Manga face and covered with years of children's drawings and graffiti. Toys and books are scattered on and around her.

Gomi is clearly loved.

This is Gomi my bin. It's okay, don't be shy. She is

originally from my parents art studio but she's part of the family now. So she lives in the garden at the back of our house with Treesy, my peppercorn tree, obviously I couldn't bring him in. I have played on, in and around Gomi since I was born. She's been ancient castles, airplanes, elephants, but the best thing about her is she's magic. Whenever I'm stressed, I just open her up and she's always got something amazing for me.

Juniper climbs up and dives head first into Gomi. She pulls out Mario, a homemade lion hand puppet.

This is Mario, "Superfantastic", that's pretty much all he says these days. He appeared inside Gomi in 2009 around the same time I had to change kindergartens. Mario knew all about the new Kinder, told me that it had a special spot with a green grass rug exactly like my one, he's good like that.

DAD

[As Mario]Caio!

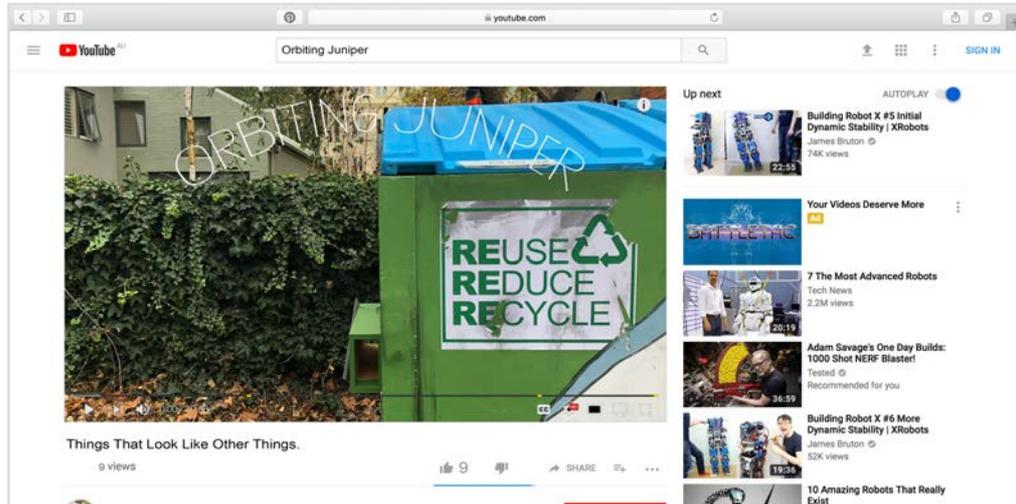
Juniper pulls out Lizzy, a strange antique dolls head.

Oh hi Lizzy, how did you get in here? She's weird but I like her. Hey Lizzy! I just realised inside 'weird' is 'we', I should write that down. [Dad sniggers] Not that kind of wee.

Juniper pulls out a handmade Star Wars robot toy.

Ohhhh this was the best. This is BB8 from Episode Seven: 'The Bin Awakens!' He appeared when I missed

out on Katrina Templeton's Star Wars party two years ago. He's really cool because he's just made out of three mixing bowls from Ikea. I did a whole Youtube episode on it. [SHE MAKES BB8 NOISES] In fact heaps of my Youtube episodes come from Gomi.[To BB8] Watch this.



Juniper performs a series of her Youtube episodes live to the audience using the whiteboard to project the content.

JUNIPER

MUSIC ORBITING JUNIPER THEME MUSIC

Welcome to Orbiting Juniper Episode One: 'Things That Look Like Other Things'. Here is a picture of a bird poo that looks like a human skull.



A picture of a bird poo skull appears.

I see human skulls everywhere.

MUSIC ORBITING JUNIPER THEME MUSIC

Welcome to Orbiting Juniper Episode Four: 'How to fix your Mums white silk blouse after you accidentally put red marker pen on it while doing an unrelated activity'. This is the blouse.

Pic 1. A wide-shot of a white blouse.



Pic 2. A close-up of a red pen mark on the blouse.

This is the mark.



My solution ...

Pic 3. The final picture shows the blouse covered in hundreds of additional red marks.



I call it *Red Ant Dancing*. Mum called it the second worst thing I had done that morning. She must keep a list.

MUSIC ORBITING JUNIPER THEME MUSIC

Welcome to Orbiting Juniper Episode Thirteen: 'Battletac in 3D'. This one was very popular, Miss Cummings even let me do it for the class. [To AN AUDIENCE MEMBER] Miss Cummings, Dad is going to play the role of you for this bit? Dad!

Juniper is suddenly in front of her class.

DAD [AS MISS CUMMINGS]

Alright everyone, listen in. Just hold your questions for a moment Peter, Stephanie if you need to go to the toilet just go, quickly.

JUNIPER

DAD!

DAD [AS MISS CUMMINGS]

Now more than ever the world needs us all to be different, to think differently, not just *Banksy* and all those artists we've been studying but all of us. Being different is your superpower. Gemma, I saw you doing gymnastics at recess yesterday. I was thinking, how does your brain work out where your feet go? Wow. And Jacob when you talk to me about Minecraft, it's like another language, I love it, all those Creepers and Jeepers and Peepers. And suddenly I'm thinking, what does the combination of Minecraft and gymnastics look like? [LONG PAUSE] I don't know but I'd love to see it, here, in my classroom, that special place where different happens. So, to kick off our *Different* presentations Juniper, are you ready?

JUNIPER

Miss Cummings if we are *all* different does that make us *all* the same?

DAD [AS MISS CUMMINGS]

Oh I see what you mean, yes! That may be another one of your clever paradoxes Juniper, write that down. What have you got for us today?

JUNIPER

Is it okay if I breathe?

DAD [AS MISS CUMMINGS]

Take all the air you need!

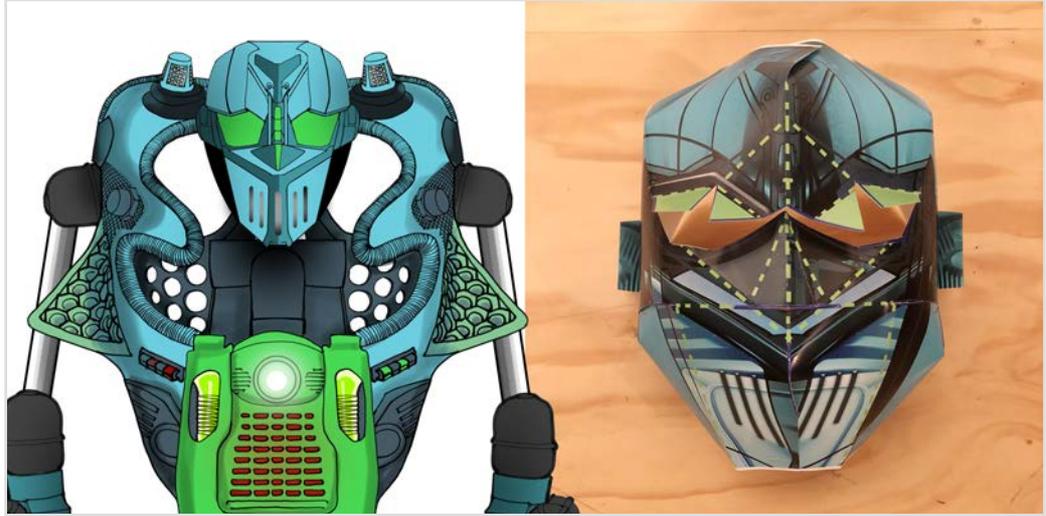
Juniper stretches.

JUNIPER

Today I'm going to show you how to build this Battletac Robot Mask. It's extremely easy, Dad and I designed it together on his computer. He's an artist but he's best doing *my* ideas. If you get stuck you can check it out on Youtube. The address is on the

back.

She holds up the A3 Battletac mask template.



JUNIPER

You only need six cuts and ten staples.

DAD [AS MISS CUMMINGS]

So, who is this Battletac?

JUNIPER

He is an amazing Japanese Robot from a TV series way back in the 1980's before most people were even born. Dad has them all on these big old video cassettes, he doesn't let anyone touch them except me.

Juniper carefully pulls out the Battletac video cassette from her bag.

There were only ever ten episodes because Battletac mysteriously shut down and no-one could get him started again. Dad said he was just thrown away as junk. Can you believe it? I've always wondered what happened to him. Dad and I watch every episode over and over looking for clues. Sometimes we even write our own scripts.

While she builds the mask Juniper sings the 1980's Battletac Theme Song. An animation of The Battletac Title Sequence plays on the whiteboard.

SONG BATTLETAC THEME SONG

*ALONG A DUSTY ROAD
WALK YOUR MEMORIES AND FEARS
AND THE SHADOWS THAT THEY CAST
HIDE THE PAST BENEATH THE YEARS
A LONELY FIGURE ROAMS
BOUND BY SECRETS MADE OF STEEL
IT'S HIM IT'S HIM
HE'S REAL
THE HEART THAT CANNOT FEEL*

JUNIPER

Challenge completed.

Juniper completes the mask and places it over her face. Behind her, Miss Cummings classroom dissolves and we hear the sound of children leaving school. Juniper is waiting at the bus stop still wearing the mask. There is a long pause.



SCHOOL KIDS V/O

Hey Robot.

JUNIPER

[Juniper reacts as if pushed by the student]Grow up!

As Juniper bends down to look in her school bag she discovers her Dad's Battletac VHS tape has been completely destroyed. It is clearly deliberate. Devastated, she runs home, hiding her bag and the broken tape under Gomi. Her Dad enters.

DAD

Hey Little Rickshaw, how was school today?

JUNIPER

Dad, since I was little you've always told me Battletac was real?

DAD

He is.

JUNIPER

But the class didn't know about him. Not even Belinda Rathdowne and she's done a K-Mart ad.

DAD

Impressive.

JUNIPER

They don't believe Gomi's magic powers are real either. [TO HERSELF] Inside 'believe' is 'lie'.

DAD

Do any of them have a giant bin best friend in their backyard?

JUNIPER

I don't think so.

DAD

Then what would they know? What is real anyway?

JUNIPER

Umm, pretty much everything, except for things that are made up.

DAD

Everything is made up Pixels, even the real things.

JUNIPER

I don't know what that means.

DAD

Tell me. What colour is the sky?

JUNIPER

That's a dumb question, blue.

DAD

What colour is the sky to a dog?

JUNIPER

I know you're trying to trick me, dogs don't see colour. Anyway, I don't even like dogs.

DAD

What colour is the sky to Treesy or at night or to an astronaut floating in space?

JUNIPER

Maybe you should ask her.

DAD

Juniper the sky is never just blue. There are so many different skies depending on who or what or where you are, you literally get to choose whichever one you want. Nothing is ever what it seems.

JUNIPER

You want me to choose the colour of the sky?

DAD

Yep, any colour you want.

JUNIPER

You're so annoying.

DAD

Thank you!

JUNIPER

What colour is your sky then?

DAD

Good question. Today my sky is the colour of your Mum's smile when we found out we were going to have a baby girl. Oh, how did your presentation go with Miss Cummings today, I bet she loved it?

Juniper pulls out the destroyed Battletac VHS tape.

DAD

What?? I never said you could take these to school Junnee. They're wrecked.

JUNIPER

I had to, otherwise no-one would have believed me.

DAD

I can't replace these Junee. Who did this?

Juniper, upset, shakes her head and withdraws to the very top of Gomi.

[TO AUDIENCE] Being a parent is like falling off a cliff and building wings as you go down. I think someone said that once.

But then you realise the only thing more terrifying than hitting the ground is, there *is* no ground *and* no cliff, you're just falling.

[TO JUNIPER] Juneee! I'm not cross Juneee!

[TO AUDIENCE] But you know, if there's no cliff and no ground, who's to say you're falling? Maybe you're actually flying.

He has an idea. Time jumps forward.

Pixels, have you had a look in Gomi lately, she's been making some very strange noises.

JUNIPER

No?

Juniper quickly opens Gomi's lid.

JUNIPER

Wow. DAD, she's done it again!!!

She pulls out an incredible handmade pterodactyl. It is remarkably similar to the one in the animated Battletac Title Sequence which Juniper previously shared in class.

JUNIPER

Dad! There's a giant pterodactyl inside her!

DAD

Oh no! That's what that noise was. They're really dangerous Little Rickshaw! Keep it away from your veggie patch, you've put a lot of effort into those zucchinis.

JUNIPER

Dad, it's you isn't it. You made this.

Juniper looks at her Dad suspiciously.

DAD

What? Pterodactyls are like 150 million years old. Not even your Mum was born then.

JUNIPER

I love you Gomi.

Juniper plays with the dinosaur and flies it around the audience. She swoops down over her Dad and draws him into the game. He puts on the paper Battletac mask from the earlier scene and grabs two mechanical toy robot arms out of Gomi.

DAD [AS BATTLETAC]

You cannot fly through here Terrorshoe. These people live in peace.

JUNIPER [AS TERRORSHOE]

Your love of humans is your weakness Battletac. It will cost you your life.

DAD [AS BATTLETAC]

I have no life without humans Terrorshoe. My weakness is my strength.

They battle. It is epic and highly choreographed.

JUNIPER [AS TERRORSHOE]

I will finish you!

DAD [AS BATTLETAC]

Never!

Battletac triumphantly plucks out the heart of Terrashoe who dies in a dramatic death scene. Finally, they fall to the ground, both laughing and exhausted.

JUNIPER

[TENTATIVELY] Dad, can I stay home from school? It feels like a bad day.

DAD

If you say it then it will be.

JUNIPER

Then it will be cause I have.

And it was. So I was right.

"Hey Robot"

Always right.

It was the worst.

It was the letter.

Yep the letter.

DAD/JUNIPER

It was bad.

DAD

[*TO THE AUDIENCE*] For this bit the role of the Principal, Mr Scryber, will be played by Juniper.

JUNIPER

Mr Scryber has this heavy, curved, crystal paperweight with some child's artwork trapped underneath. When I stare into it, I can see him upside-down like he's hanging from the ceiling. He's normally nice to me but today I notice that inside 'Scryber' is 'cry'. That's not good.



Mr Scryber's office is projected onto the whiteboard. With the assistance of her Dad, Juniper puts on an oversized suit jacket.

JUNIPER [AS PRINCIPAL]

I completely understand Mr Williams. Juniper is a lovely problem problem problem smart problem problem girl and no-one should receive a letter like this. But Problem problem problem are you aware that she pushed another child off their chair over some video cassette tape? We have a duty of care to problem problem protect our other students. And to be frank Juniper's outbursts are becoming a problem.

DAD

Her outbursts? Have you read this letter? She's not eating, she's not sleeping. They wrote in this letter that she should have never been born.

Juniper exits the Principal's office and the scene dissolves. Her Dad slowly and deliberately folds up the letter and follows her. At home, Juniper has retreated to Gomi, she's not coming down.

Please come inside Pixels, we're having cheese toasties and Kinder Surprises for dinner, your favourite. I can bring it out here if you want?

Mum

POEM PETAL

[musical underscore]

We always wanted a girl
Then there you were
Curled like a petal

In my arms
So perfect
Such a serious face
Always serious places to be
Showing me things I couldn't see.

I thought I would know everything about you
Know you inside and out
You came from deep inside of me
But Juniper May you were and are
Our perfect little mystery.

***Juniper remains perched on top of Gomi trying
to work out the following maths equation.***

JUNIPER

Welcome to Orbiting Juniper Episode Twenty Three:
'Maths for the Real World'. I haven't been back to
school for eleven days. I've worked out that you only
go to school for 40 weeks in a year which is a total
of 280 days. If you minus the time I've already done
and the weekends and public holidays it brings it
down to just 123 days. Also, I see Dr. Emma every
month which takes off another 12. I only have to wait
here another 111 days then it's the Christmas
holidays. I can do that. There's only six years of
high school left after that.

***Dad stands in front of the whiteboard
perplexed. As he scans it with his finger, he
arrives at 'The Actual Letter'.***



DAD

Junee is it time to talk about school and the letter?
 Your Mum and I are not sure how to help you.

Juniper takes a deep breath. We hear a ticking sound of a clock.

JUNIPER

Okay.

DAD / MUM V/O

What have you got on today, Art?
 Put your shoes on Juniper.
 Where's your satchel?
 Got your lunch?
 Shoes Juniper shoes!
 Please get in the car Darling.
 Please get in the car.
 Out of the car.
 Out of the car.
 Please get in the car.

Juniper and her Dad role play the following scene using miniature toys and objects gathered from around the base of Gomi.

Juniper chooses a Rubik's cube to represent the school; her Mum becomes a small vintage tin motorcycle with sidecar; Sarah the nurse is a lamp; and Miss Hope is a fake cactus. Juniper has chosen a vintage wind-up tin robot as herself.

Later, Janine Baxhall and Susan Pritchard appear as a pair of Barbie Dolls one has a pink cast on their arm as if it has been broken.

JUNIPER

Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school

Mum usually drops me at school. She's got this special power to get the five minute parking bay outside the front door. This morning we had to go around the block ten times before it worked but eventually we got it.

Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school

The school is old but last year they put a new entrance on it. Horrible loud colours like a play centre.

Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school

Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school

Inside the front door is the sickbay, there's a nurse there, Sarah, she lets me stay until the bell rings. Sometimes she gets me to help a kindergartener who's fallen over or something. Those guys really have trouble staying upright. I don't think I could be a nurse, I think it would be really annoying.

Bell rings.

Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school

Before we go into class you're meant to give Miss Hope some crazy high-five. I don't like it. Her hands are always sticky with this stinky hand cream. Even though she smiles at me, I'm sure she's cross that I don't do it.

Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school
Don't want to go to school

My desk is at the back of the class in front of an old cupboard that has no door. I like to lean my chair back until I'm right inside. It's quiet and smells woody, like the olden days. There are pictures

drawn inside in biro, I imagine it's an ancient cave.

Long silence.

DAD [AS MISS HOPE]

Juniper stop leaning on your chair!

JUNIPER

Don't want to go to school

There are these two *Squids* who sit in front of me. Janine Baxhall and Susan Pritchard. Their Mums are cousins or something weird. Mum made me go on a play date with them in Year Two. She had to pick me up early. Two days ago I pushed Susan Pritchard off her chair, now she has a bright pink cast on her arm that looks like plastic cake icing. It has writing all over it and love hearts. Why are they smiling at me today? I find smiles very confusing.

DAD [AS BARBIE CLASSMATES]

Hey Robot!

JUNIPER

They hand me a letter, an envelope. It looks like a party invitation. I don't really go to parties anymore.

SONG PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT

PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT

AND I KNOW THEY'RE BEING UNKIND

PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT

YEP, I HEAR IT ALL THE TIME

I THINK IT'S JUST BECAUSE I'M SMART
AND LOVE TO PULL MACHINES APART
BUT REALLY I DON'T MIND

PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT
'CAUSE I'M HAPPY ON MY OWN
PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT
SAY I'M DISTANT, SAY I'M COLD

BUT THEY DON'T KNOW HOW COOL THEY ARE
IMPOSSIBLE TO FOOL THEY ARE
WITH ACCESS TO 100,000 HARD DRIVES AT ONE TIME

PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT
I THINK SO WHAT?
THAT'S JUST FINE

PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT
BUT IT'S STRANGE THEY THINK I AM
WHEN THEY SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT
WHAT THEY'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND

IS THOUGH I MAY NOT OFTEN CRY
OR EVER LOOK YOU IN THE EYE
I FEEL

[SPOKEN] They're smiling at me. Why? [she looks in her
notebook] Inside danger is anger

I FEEL EVERYTHING YOU SAY AND DO
I PROBABLY FEEL IT MORE THAN YOU
LIKE WHEN YOU FILLED MY LUNCH WITH SOIL OR
DIPPED MY PENCILS IN THE TOILET OR

TOLD ME THAT THE BUS HAD GONE
AND I GOT LOST WHILE WALKING HOME
OR WHEN YOU HID MY IPAD AND IT TOOK ALL DAY TO FIND IT
OR THE NOTE THAT SAID 'WE ALL HATE YOU'
AND EVERYBODY SIGNED IT.

*She opens the envelope and reads out the list
of signatures from the letter.*

Signed:

Janine Baxhall
Susan Pritchard
Neil Lyra
Peter Nugent
Vernon Arthur
Rebecca Thompson
Justin Thompson
Jacqui Topaz Smith
Alfie Masters
Linley Chan
Troy Oakfield
Maisy Taylor
Suzie Tomasseti
Anthony Gazira
Nigel Wannacott
Grant Harridan
Rachael Stanaza
Mathew Pigot

I SOMETIMES WISH I WERE A ROBOT
JUST MAYBE I'M OKAY BUT YOU'RE NOT
OH HOW I'D LOVE TO BE A ROBOT
BUT I'M NOT
SO PLEASE JUST GROW UP
PEOPLE SAY I'M LIKE A ROBOT
THAT'S JUST FINE.

That's just fine that's just fine that's just fine
that's just fine that's just fine that's just fine
that's just fine that's just fine that's just fine
that's just fine that's just fine that's just fine
that's just fine that's just fine that's just fine.

Hands over her ears. Complete meltdown.

DAD / MUM V/O

Juniper breathe!
Give her space!
Breathe Juniper breathe!
We're here Darling Heart.

*Hundreds of copies of the letter fall onto
Juniper and cover the stage. Blackout.*

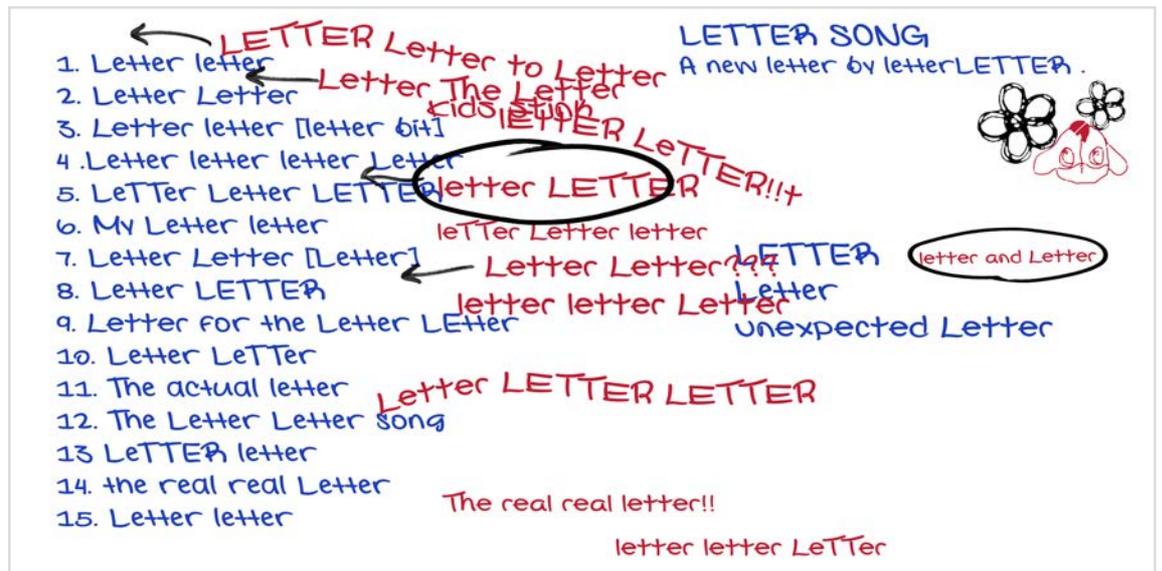
END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

*The lights have dimmed to a clinical blue. We
are inside Juniper's meltdown. She looks
around the stage a little dazed, confused by
all the letters.*

*Juniper looks to her whiteboard for help but
it has become strange and glitchy. A slide
appears in her handwriting but not one she*

recognises. All the words have been replaced with 'The Letter' written over and over again.



JUNIPER

That's not good.

Juniper picks up a letter from the stage.

SCHOOL KIDS V/O

Hey Robot!

She drops the letter. She tries to pick up another but each time "Hey Robot" taunts her louder and more aggressively. In a panic she attempts to clear them all off her rug.

SCHOOL KIDS V/O

Hey Robot! Hey Robot! Hey Robot! Hey Robot! Hey Robot!

JUNIPER

I'm not a stuckid robot!! Hello... anyone? Mum? Dad?
Are we under water? I can't really see you guys.
Breathe.

Gomi Gurgles.

Gomi?

Juniper slowly opens Gomi and is shocked to discover a giant robot arm inside. Even though it is old and battered it is the most incredible thing she has ever seen.

[TO THE AUDIENCE] Wow. Check this out!

She brings the arm close to the audience. As she examines it, a light flashes on, she is startled but intrigued. She finds a button and touches it, more lights whir and glow, a finger moves. WOW! The third time she touches it the whole arm springs to life, the fingers grab her hand. She screams and retreats to Gomi.

Oooooow. You are exactly why I don't like theatre.

Pause.

Wait a minute, I recognise you.

She creeps closer.

Battletac?

The arm goes crazy with delight.

BATTLETAC v/o [PERFORMED BY DAD HIDDEN BACKSTAGE]

[ROBOTIC VOICE] Welcome to 'Robot Song'. The amazing true story about an amazing robot who is amazing.

JUNIPER

I beg your pardon?

BATTLETAC v/o

One thing I really love is robots I'm pretty much an expert.

JUNIPER

Hang on, didn't I say that?

The whiteboard glitches repeatedly until an animation of Battletac appears. He's alive!

NOTE: This section employs the use of Adobe Character Animator software and is operated by the Dad character from backstage. Using this software, the animated Battletac is able to communicate live with Juniper and the audience.



BATTLETAC

Hello. Welcome to 'Robot Song'. The touching true story about me.

JUNIPER

No it's not! It's *my* touching true story not yours.

BATTLETAC

They said I couldn't feel but what good is feeling without...

Juniper covers Battletac's mouth with her hand, Battletac's robotic voice becomes muffled.

JUNIPER

[SHE RELEASES HER HAND] Of course you can't feel! You're just a cartoon. I think?

The house lights come up.

BATTLETAC

That's better, I can see you guys now.

JUNIPER

Umm, no you can't.

BATTLETAC

I can. There is a girl in the second row. She has hair.

JUNIPER

She has hair? They all have hair! Mostly.

BATTLETAC

[AD-LIB DEPENDING ON THE CHOSEN AUDIENCE MEMBER] and a yellow jumper. Hello. Hello. Hello.

JUNIPER

[TO THE AUDIENCE MEMBER] I think he means you.

BATTLETAC

Hello. [OFF THE AUDIENCE MEMBERS'S RESPONSE] You have a nice voice. I practice my voice. Do you like it? Do you like it? Do you like it? I practice my smile too. Do you like my smile?

JUNIPER

Stop!

BATTLETAC

You sound stressed. How can I help?

JUNIPER

I am stressed, I'm talking to a cartoon from 1983, I

just found this huge arm in Gomi, and I don't know what has happened to my show.

BATTLETAC

A touching true story/

JUNIPER

/Yes about me and you and this stupid letter.

She picks up a letter from the floor.

BATTLETAC

Let me see that.

She shows Battletac the letter.

BATTLETAC

[READING RAPIDLY] "Hey Robot,
This is an official school petition stating that you are a total freak. You sound like a robot, you act like a robot, you must be a robot. No-one wants you at this school. We wish you had never been born".
What a fantastic letter!

JUNIPER

I don't think so.

The letter is suddenly projected onto the whiteboard.

JUNIPER

Hey, how did you do that?

BATTLETAC

Does 'Hey Robot' mean 'Hey Juniper'?

JUNIPER

Yes. Wait, you know my name?

BATTLETAC

Of course. I've been following you on Youtube. My

favourite episodes are the ones about me.

Battletac reads from the letter.

BATTLETAC

"A total freak". What is a freak?

JUNIPER

[IRRITATED] I don't know, someone who is different??

BATTLETAC

Ah yes! Like Miss Cummings, she's a freak! She loves freaks. [TO THE AUDIENCE MEMBER] We all need to be freaks together Miss Cummings!

JUNIPER

You know Miss Cummings?

BATTLETAC

Now more than ever the world needs us to be... 'different' and 'creative'. Isn't that right Miss Cummings? [TO JUNIPER] What model *Simulant* are you?

JUNIPER

I'm not a model anything.

BATTLETAC

But this letter says you are a robot?

JUNIPER

It's what the stukid *Squids* call me at school because I don't really act like them.

BATTLETAC

Do you like robots?

JUNIPER

Robots are awesome. Way better than humans. They are sooooo smart. They are strong and kind but not in a soft way. I love that they come in all shapes and sizes and no-one seems to mind.

BATTLETAC

Now I am beginning to understand this letter.
Robot = Awesome and Robot = Juniper.

*'Robot = Awesome' and 'Robot = Juniper'
magically appears as slides on the
whiteboard.*

BATTLETAC

"Hey Juniper,

This is an official school petition stating that you are awesome". [READING] Hmmm... "no-one wants you at this school?" Of course not, I don't know anyone who *WANTS* to be at school. It's just a place you are, before you find your proper place.

JUNIPER

My proper place? Wait, I don't like any of this!

Juniper looks at Battletac suspiciously.

You're trying to trick me. The letter doesn't mean this, does it? You just made that up.

BATTLETAC

Everything is made up. Even the real things.

JUNIPER

I don't know what that means! If I go back to school tomorrow they will still be horrible to me. You can't make this letter just disappear.

BATTLETAC

Why would you want it to disappear? This letter is proof.

JUNIPER

Proof of what?

BATTLETAC

Juniper, there will always be letters. If you weren't

smart, kind, strong, creative, - different, this letter would never exist. That's a paradox, I should write that down. Life is full of letters but you get to decide what colour they are.

JUNIPER

But what about the last bit of the letter. The bit about never being born? How do you change the colour of that??

BATTLETAC

I thought you'd love that bit the best. Didn't you say that was the "happiest safest time of your life"?

Long pause.

JUNIPER

Yes.

Juniper is finally beginning to understand. She slowly scans the letters scattered on the floor.

BATTLETAC

I told you it was a fantastic letter.

Juniper takes a deep breath and picks up a letter.

JUNIPER

Right. Today the colour of my sky is..

She unfolds the letter and carefully reads it out loud.

JUNIPER

"Hey Juniper,
This is an official school petition stating that you are awesome. You are different and creative, strong,

smart and kind. School is not your proper place and when you find your proper place you'll be flying.

The letter has completely transformed.

Juniper sings.

SCHOOL IS NOT YOUR PROPER PLACE
AND WHEN YOU FIND YOUR PROPER PLACE
YOU'LL BE FLYING

Magically, the new version of the letter appears on the whiteboard.

JUNIPER

YES!!

Juniper picks up other letters from the stage, they have all changed, she hands several to audience members as proof. Juniper joyfully flies the letter around the stage, around Gomi, her toys and the Battletac arm, then watches in awe as it disappears into the galaxy via an animation on the whiteboard.

BATTLETAC

I like the colour of that letter.

JUNIPER

You know, you really do sound like my Dad...?

Pause.

I don't suppose you have a Mum or Dad do you? I mean you were built not born.

BATTLETAC

Yes, that's right.

JUNIPER

You can totally share mine if you want. There's heaps of room inside Gomi, you could come and live with us. It's pretty cool, we sing and make art and do music.

BATTLETAC

I like the sound of that.

JUNIPER

I just realised inside the word 'music'...

Juniper writes the word 'music' on the whiteboard and circles the hidden word inside.

...is 'us'. That's pretty nice. Hey try this...

Juniper sings the word US.

Uuuuusssssss

BATTLETAC

UUUUUUUUSSSSSSSSSSS

JUNIPER

Nice, now sing Freeeeeeeeaaaaaak.

BATTLETAC

FREEEEEEEEAAAAAAK

JUNIPER

Hahahaha. Perfect now sing Belieeeeeeeve.

BATTLETAC

BELIEEEEEEEVE

They begin to sing together.

JUNIPER / BATTLETAC

FALL FLY

FALL FLY

FALLING FLYING FALLING FLYING

FALLING FLYING FALLING FLYING

JUNIPER

[TO THE AUDIENCE] You guys sing too.

FALLING FLYING FALLING FLYING

AAAAAAH AAAAAAH AAAAAAH

AAAAAAH AAAAAAH AAAAAAH

AAAAAAH AAAAAAH AAAAAAAAAAAAAH

AAAAAAH AAAAAAH AAAAAAH

AAAAAAH AAAAAAH AAAAAAH

AAAAAAH AAAAAAH AAAAAAAAAAAAAH

The song builds to a huge crescendo. Up-stage Gomi begins to glow and shake. The front panel pops open and dramatically a giant 3D Battletac is revealed. As the music peaks he stands proudly and sings.



JUNIPER

Everyone, this is Battletac. Battletac, this is everyone.

BATTLETAC

Hello Everyone. Thank you for coming to see my show.
A touching true story about me.

JUNIPER

And that's how a giant robot came to live at my
house.

*Juniper's Dad appears from behind Gomi and
joins Juniper downstage.*

Hey Dad.

DAD

Hey Robot.

Juniper smiles.

DAD

[TO THE AUDIENCE] Did you know this is really a show
about maths?

JUNIPER

Maths for the real world.

DAD

Yes! Different = Awesome which = all of you. We're
all different. So whether you have a giant bin best
friend or you love sports or you're great at art or
you have one Dad or three Mums, or you just like
sitting in the sun daydreaming about who you are or
what you want to be, it doesn't matter because the
world needs every single one of you. No-one else can
be you, not even come close. That's your super power.

JUNIPER

Mum, can you tell everyone that's the end of the
show, [SHE LOOKS TO THE WHITEBOARD] oh, except for the
final song.

MUM V/O

I think they heard you Daring Heart.

JUNIPER/DAD

SONG IF I SING

SOME OF US ARE BORN
SOME OF US ARE MADE
SOME OF US GET CAST INTO THE PARTS ALREADY PLAYED
SOME OF US JUST KNOW WE DON'T FIT IN
BUT ALL I'VE EVER WANTED WAS TO SING (TO SING TO SING)

IF YOU SING THEN YOU WILL FIND YOUR SONG
IF YOU SING THE WORLD WILL HUM ALONG
IT WILL BRING ME/YOU TO LIFE IF I SING

REPEAT CHORUS

LIFE IF I SING
LIFE IF I SING

AND YOU WILL FIND
THERE ARE COLOURS IN THE SKY YOU'VE NEVER SEEN
EVERYTHING IS BRIGHTER,
AND YOU'LL BREATHE A LITTLE LIGHTER
IT'S LIKE YOU'RE FLOATING AROUND INSIDE A DREAM

NO STRINGS

JUNIPER

Inside 'believe' is 'lie' and inside 'breathe' is
'eat' and inside 'danger' is 'anger' and inside
'touch' is 'ouch' and inside 'music' is 'us' and
maybe... just maybe, inside your recycling bin, is a
giant robot best friend.

Everybody. Stand Up. Stretch. And...

Breathe.

END

REPRISE THE POO SONG

THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN DO
MAKE YOU CARRY A POO
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN DO
MAKE YOU CARRY A POO

THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN
THAT'S WHAT LOVE CAN

*Juniper ad-libs the final phrase and points to the
original audience member/or get the whole audience to
shout...*

AUDIENCE MEMBER

POO!