

Bits and Pieces was originally written as four monologues under the title of ***Four Little Kittens***. The starting point for the work came after researching material about women who choose to leave their children and more specifically after reading about Joy Hester and her decision to leave her son Sweeney. However the work is not about Hester nor her son, but more generally an examination of the subject matter from four points of view. The play was originally written as four separate monologues that could be performed in any order creating a variety of audience responses and reactions to the subject matter. The work explores four different responses to this situation from four different characters.

Bits and Pieces comprises of four monologues - ***Beaten, Stayed, Left and Fixed*** which explore the psychological, emotional and sociological dimensions of a woman's decision to leave her husband and child.

Joy has chosen to leave her husband and her child. Her husband is stunned, her mother sanctimonious and her sister disbelieving. The four monologues are delivered from the perspective of the leaver (***Left***), her mother (***Stayed***), her husband (***Beaten***) and her sister (***Fixed***).

Together, the four pieces of work explore the topic of woman who leave, not in an obvious sense, but through reflections and confessions of their own behaviour. All the characters are affected by Joy's leaving and it is this act that forces them to examine their own actions and reactions, thus offering a much broader examination of the subject of leaving, more complex characterisation, and a more complex story line than if all characters were just purely dissecting directly Joy's act of leaving.

Women who choose to leave their children when exiting from a relationship are still viewed in our society as lacking natural maternal instincts. My aim with this piece of theatre is to explore this issue and create a new piece of work which is innovative and accessible yet at the same time confronting and thought provoking.

"The absentee mother is guilty of no more than the unusual, but because she has done the unusual (or simply finds herself placed in an unusual position) in an area of life our society treats as sacred, society responds to her as though she has committed a mortal sin or a capital crime. Because she is a product of a system that perceives her maternal status in this way, she herself believes to varying degrees that she is guilty of a wrong". Patricia Paskowicz, *Absentee Mothers*, 1982.

Left was the first of the four monologues written and was a prize in the Glen Eira National Short Play Award (judged by Peta Murray) and was then publicly read at the 2004 North American Playwrights Conference, *The Last Frontier*, in Alaska. Rebecca attended this conference with the assistance of an Ian Potter Cultural Trust Grant.

Left was first performed, by the playwright, for the performance event ***Room – four different plays, in four different rooms, performed four times in one evening***. ***Room*** took place at the Continental Guest House, Hepburn Springs.

The first full reading of ***Four Little Kittens*** took place in 2004 at the Words in Winter writers festival in Daylesford. The reading was held at the Farmers Arms Hotel in Daylesford with actors Michael Treloar, Joy Mitchell, Mari Lourey and Lisa Male and was directed by Maryanne Lynch.

This notion of leaving and parenting has been a reoccurring theme in my body of work over the past five years. In 1999 I explored aspects of these themes in my work ***Coming Clean*** which looked at different parenting styles and decision making processes used when parenting. The theme of leaving occurred again later that year when I wrote the community

theatre play ***Calling All Angels*** which explored a young woman's journey as she moved from the family home and experimented with new life styles. In 1998 I wrote the two-woman show ***Big Night In*** which explored a woman's inability to leave a dysfunctional relationship. My play ***If I Should Die Before I Wake*** explored this theme in terms of a dying mother and her middle aged intellectually disabled daughter.

Writers Note: "I'm interested in the way in which people and families function, or don't, depending on the circumstances and events that arise. I believe that the effect of family is the one thing that all people have in common, regardless of whether it is a positive or negative effect, we all come from some source, some form of family, and this has an enduring effect upon the way we choose to live."