

Carol

BY ANDREA GIBBS

HEATH LEDGER THEATRE
22 NOV – 14 DEC



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Black Swan State Theatre Company of Western Australia acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live.

First Nations People have been telling stories on this country for many thousands of years, and we acknowledge their incredible contribution to the cultural and environmental landscape we reside in. In addition, we acknowledge and recognise all First Nations People with whom we work and whose lands we travel to in Western Australia. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present, and their ancestors that walked this country before them, as we stand united towards a shared future.

Total running time:

1 hour 30 mins (no interval)

Content warnings:

Contains coarse language, and use of theatrical haze.

Cover image

Cameron Grant

Photography

Daniel J Grant

Program Design

Troy Barbitta



Carol was originally commissioned by Black Swan in 2024 in with the support of the Malcolm Robertson Foundation.

Since 2004, the Malcolm Robertson Foundation has been a leading supporter of the development and presentation of new Australian work. Throughout his career, Malcolm generously shared his knowledge and craft by mentoring young and aspiring actors, playwrights and directors, and the support of the Malcolm Robertson Foundation continues this legacy here at Black Swan.



The Composition and Musical Direction in *Carol* have been made possible with the support of the Ungar Family Foundation.

Black Swan would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Chris & Tim Ungar for their visionary support of West Australian arts, in particular their commitment to emerging artists.



Black Swan thanks Beyond Bank for their support of this season of *Carol*.

Thank you to CircusWA for helping Santa to fly.

Black Swan also wishes to thank St John Cowcher, Paul Goddard, Brent Hill, Jo Morris, Clare Munday, Lainey O'Sullivan and Alicia Osyka, who all supported *Carol* during its development.



A NOTE FROM WRITER ANDREA GIBBS



I'VE LONG WANTED TO PUT A WOMAN IN HER SIXTIES ON STAGE AND HAVE HER SEEN, BECAUSE THESE ARE THE WOMEN WHO QUIETLY DISAPPEAR.

Women over fifty-five are the fastest-growing group of people without secure housing in Australia. You don't see them much, but they're there, sleeping in cars, staying quiet, trying not to be noticed.

Before I put pen to paper, I spoke with a bunch of women who'd lived this. Not one of them thought it would happen to them. The reasons were messy and overlapping: a death, rent hikes, bugger-all savings or super, casual work drying up, a marriage breakdown, bad luck. Usually two or three of those things hit at once, and that was that.

One thing they all had in common was how smart they were when it came to survival. One kept a high-vis shirt on the driver's seat so people would think she was a bloke. Another left two camping chairs outside her van so it looked like she had company. They knew which cricket club had the cleanest loos. They figured out how to survive quietly so no one would ask questions.

I wanted to tell the story of one of those women, someone who's done everything right, worked hard, raised a family, been nice not naughty, kept the wheels turning, and now has to figure out how to look after herself. Then I thought, right, let's throw in Christmas, just to make it interesting.

Christmas can be brutal. All that financial pressure, family expectation, and glittery nonsense. It's the perfect backdrop, a shiny celebration bumping up against a woman quietly coming undone. Something we all recognise, mixed with something that should scare the hell out of us, how easy it is for good, nice people to fall through the cracks.

Carol sits in the space between pride and survival, heartbreak and humour, light and dark. What I hope comes through is the strength, wit and sheer bloody resilience of these women, the smart, funny, quiet yet tough-as-nails women who refuse to disappear quietly. They just need someone to see them, even if it's Santa.

Big thanks to Black Swan for giving me another guernsey and backing me to write a second play. I wasn't sure I had another one in me after *Barracking for the Umpire*, but you've created a bit of a beast, I'm afraid. I can't stop, play number three's already on the way.

Huge thanks to Chris Isaacs and Hellie Turner, who invested in *Carol's* story as much as I did.

And to my mum, who once said, "No one ever thinks of me." She's not invisible to me. She's my best friend. I hope I've made her proud, because she's bloody brilliant.

If the last play was for Dad, this one's for her.



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR ADAM MITCHELL

THERE'S SOMETHING QUIETLY SPECIAL ABOUT *CAROL*.

Andrea Gibbs has written a play full of heart and humour, one that sneaks up on you with its honesty. It's familiar and intimate, yet still manages to surprise in the most unexpected ways.

Working on *Carol* has been a real thrill. From our first conversations, I could tell this piece had something unique, an honesty in the writing that doesn't shout for attention, it just draws you in. That's Andrea's gift. Her generosity in letting us explore and interpret her work has been wonderful, and I'm so grateful for her trust and openness (particularly with music) throughout this process.

At the centre of this production is the incredible Sally-Anne Upton. Sally-Anne brings warmth, intelligence, and real emotional depth to the role, finding the truth in every line and the humour in every pause. It's been a privilege to work with her and watch her artistry up close.

To the wider company – our cast, creatives, crew, and everyone who's had a hand in bringing *Carol* to life (even our workshop team, who allowed us to dress them as elves and put them mercilessly onstage) – thank you. This has been one of those rare processes where every rehearsal felt like a funny, slightly messy Christmas miracle. Theatre, at its best, is built on generosity (and just a little madness), and this production is a great example of that.

Carol might be a small story of sorts – it follows a year in one woman's life, set across a few locations, exploring a handful of moments, but it speaks to something much bigger: the way we connect, the things we carry, and the quiet courage it takes to navigate life's twists and turns. I hope you leave the theatre feeling the warmth, humour, and giddy joy that have been at the heart of our process.

Enjoy the show.

a.



A NOTE FROM THE SET & COSTUME DESIGNER BRUCE MCKINVEN



CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT NOSTALGIA. IT'S A DAY THAT MARKS OUR DREAMS FROM YOUNGER YEARS, OUR REGRETS OF DAYS GONE AND OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE — THE PRESENTS YOU ALWAYS WANTED AS KIDS, LOVED ONES NO LONGER WITH US, A TOAST WITH FRIENDS, AND PERHAPS WATER PISTOL FIGHT WITH YOUR BROTHERS.

So many emotions mixed up into the memories and expectations of one day.

The design for *Carol* is not about a beautiful minimally decorated modern Christmas tree. This design is about the chaos and clash of all our Christmases, past present and future. This design is a decades old plastic Christmas tree, stored in the same dusty broken box above the cupboard in the garage, a tree completely covered with decorations gathered randomly over the decades, from Mum and Dad's first Christmas in the house, to the decorations hand made in preschool that probably should have been replaced many moons ago, to the tinsel too thin to be in vogue now and looking ratty from years of shedding their thin slivers of mirror.

This is the aftermath of a hot Australian morning, after handing out gifts where you can't move for the mountains of clashing.

It's a smashed together collage of Christmas wrapping papers, heavily imbued with a sense of nostalgia in both the décor and theatrical conventions.



CAST, CREATIVES AND CREW

CAST

Bruce Denny

Rob, Lenny & Others

Isaac Diamond

Dean, Greg & Others

Ruby Henaway

Jamie, Hood & Others

Mark Storen

Santa

Sally-Anne Upton

Carol

Jackson Harper Griggs

Musical Director

Jackson Harper Griggs

Musical Director &
Composer

Bruce McKinven

Set & Costume Designer

Lucy Birkinshaw

Lighting Designer

Tim Collins

Sound Designer

Nastassja Norwood

Fight Director

Lani Robinson

WAAPA Design Secondment

Declan Barber

Production Head of Sound

Jordan Lee

Head Elf

Rhys Healy

Elf & Followspot Operator

Matt Erren

Lighting Programmer &
Supervisor

Gus O'Keeffe

Mechanist

CREATIVES

Andrea Gibbs

Writer

Adam Mitchell

Director

CREW

Liam Murray

Stage Manager

Shannen Moulton

Assistant Stage Manager

STCWA CREW

Brian Weller

Staging Supervisor

James Gant

Fly Supervisor

Megan Coles

Audio Supervisor





BRUCE DENNY ROB, LENNY & OTHERS

Bruce Denny is a West Australian actor, director and writer for stage and screen. Previous theatre acting credits include *Thirst* (2025) Yirra Yaakin, *Woolah* (2023) Yirra Yaakin, *Conversations with a Fish* (2022) The Blue Room, *Vignettes* (2022) Yirra Yaakin, *The Sum of Us* (2021) Yirra Yaakin and Perth Festival.

Film and TV credits include *We bury the dead*, *Sparkles*, *The Heights*, *Paper Planes*, *Cloud Street*, *Bran Nue Dae*.

Other works as a director include *Dating Black* (Yirra Yaakin) and *Kangaroo Stew* (Blue Room). Bruce also wrote the successful play *Operation Boomerang* for Yirra Yaakin.

Other passions include working with communities to tell their stories, most recently through Community Networks Place Names Project in which Bruce worked with the Elders for the City of Melville and Bayswater.

Bruce has a love of working on contemporary Australian stories and has also worked with regional artists to help bring their stories to the stage.

Bruce is looking forward to being on stage for Black Swan Theatre Company in *Carol* by Andrea Gibbs.



ISAAC DIAMOND DEAN, GREG & OTHERS

Isaac is a theatre maker, actor and musician from Boorloo, Perth. He graduated from WAAPA in 2017, where he completed his Bachelor of Performing Arts, majoring in Performance Making. Recently Isaac has appeared in shows and theatres all over Perth and Australia with: *Cloud Nine* (WAYTCO), *The Twits* (SPPT), *House* (Barking Gecko), *York* (Black Swan State Theatre Company) and *The Lighthouse Girl Saga* (Theatre180). You may have seen him in an episode of ABC's *The Heights*, *FAME* at the Crown Casino or *Logue Lake* at Perth Festival. In 2018 Isaac was honoured to receive the Stephen Stone award for Best Performance at the Blue Room Theatre awards. Most recently Isaac has been nominated for Outstanding Actor in a Leading Role at the PAWA's for his work in *House* and *Pull the Pin* and has won for Best Ensemble in *Logue Lake*.



RUBY HENAWAY JAMIE, HOOD & OTHERS

Ruby is an Indigenous and South Sea Islander actor born and raised in Brisbane.

She graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in 2023 where she completed a Bachelor of Arts in Acting.

Here, Ruby worked under the direction of Adam Mitchell in her final show of drama school in the guise of a 60-year-old Cockney 'Grandma Chance' in *Wise Children*.

Ruby appeared in Sydney's Old Fitz Theatre production of *The Lonesome West* (2024) in the role of 'Girleen Kelleher' and in 2025, she performed in Sport For Jove's 10 hour play *The Players Kings* in various roles including Henry V's 'Chorus', 'Joan of Arc', and 'Lady Anne Neville', amongst many others.

Ruby is delighted to be making her Black Swan State Theatre Company debut in *Carol*.



MARK STOREN SANTA

Mark Storen is a Boorloo (Perth) based performer, educator and theatre maker with an interest in creating accessible and inclusive performance experiences in regional communities and places.

A founding Member of Whiskey & Boots who make Headphone Verbatim performance work that examines the challenges and contradictions of the human condition, Mark recently worked on their shows, *The Quadrangle* (2025) a co-production with Barking Gecko Arts (Winner Melbourne tour ready award) performed at Perth Fringe and Awesome Festival (2025). *Mama Stitch*, which has toured extensively throughout WA including Midland for Perth Festival (2021). Whiskey & Boots were the recipients of the 2022 Pinnacle Award for WA producer of the year.

Other recent works by Whiskey & Boots include *For The Best* a co-production with Jeffrey Jay Fowler and TLGH, *The One* (2017-19) by Jeffrey Jay Fowler (winner of three Fringe World Awards 2017), and *Benjamin & Me* (2015) nominated for best performance at the Blue Room Awards.

During his time in Perth, Mark has worked with Barking Gecko Theatre Company (BGA), Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Perth Theatre Company, Deckchair and Black Swan State Theatre Company.

Highlights include *A Drunken Cabaret* (2009) New York International Fringe Festival *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* by Nassim Soleimanpour (2014 PTC) and *Bindjareb, Pinjarra* at The Sydney Opera House Studio (2015).

Mark has just returned from an artistic residency exploring and creating approaches to arts practice in Champagne France. (Chateau d'Orquevaux 2025)



CAST



SALLY-ANNE UPTON CAROL

Sally-Anne Upton is a dynamic Australian/British actress whose career spans theatre, screen, and stand-up comedy. She's best known for her unforgettable performance as Juicy Lucy in the award winning *Wentworth* (2015–2018) and for her ongoing role as the hilarious Vera Punt in *Neighbours*. Sally-Anne also appeared in *Savage River*, and stars in the highly anticipated horror feature *Bring Her Back* (2025), directed by Danny and Michael Philippou and co-starring Sally Hawkins and Billy Barratt.

Her stage credits include *Fiddler on the Roof* with Topol, *South Pacific*, and a national tour of *Mary Poppins*. She earned a Green Room Award nomination for *Oliver!* She made her Shakespearean debut with the Melbourne Theatre Company in *Measure for Measure* and was invited to perform in MTC's 50th Anniversary production of *The Visit*, alongside Zoe Caldwell.

Sal's comedy career spans Australia and the Edinburgh Festival, while her rich vocals—likened to Ella Fitzgerald—have charmed audiences across genres. In 2019, she won Best Actress at Hollywood Dreams for *Legends*.

Sally-Anne has devoted 27 years as a long-serving volunteer with the Victorian Actors' Benevolent Trust, a charity supporting cast and crew in need. You can learn more about the WA charity here: <https://www.artistreliefwa.org.au>

She is also an Ambassador for ANZGOG / Women Can, helping to raise vital funds for gynaecological cancer research across Australia and New Zealand: <https://www.womencan.org.au/donate>

She dedicates her performance in *Carol* to her late parents, Lilian and George, whose love, encouragement and guidance continue to light her path.

Sally-Anne is proudly represented by Ian White Management.

P.S: There's even a fire truck named after her!





ANDREA GIBBS WRITER

Hailing from Donnybrook, Andrea Gibbs has been called the “quintessential cousin from the country” (The West). An actor, comedian, broadcaster and the creative force behind *Barefaced Stories* – Australia’s longest-running platform for raw, real storytelling – Andrea has spent over a decade proving that life’s messes make the best yarns.

From 2016 to 2024 she charmed listeners nationwide as presenter of *Weekends* on ABC Radio, known for her warmth, wit and down-to-earth style.

On stage, Andrea was hailed as a “revelation” (The Australian) in *8 Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography* (Griffin / Perth Theatre Company), and has performed at the Boston Women in Comedy Festival, TEDxPerth, Melbourne Comedy Festival and *Women of Letters*. Screen credits include *Three Summers* (dir. Ben Elton), *How to Please a Woman* (dir. Renée Webster) and the Auntie Donna webseries *Hug the Sun*.

Andrea’s debut play *Barracking for the Umpire* (2022) with Black Swan State Theatre Company explored concussion in AFL. The play was published by Playlab, won Best New Work at the 2023 Performing Arts WA Awards, toured WA, and was selected for the Australian Theatre Festival in New York. It is now being adapted into a feature film. *Carol* marks her second play with Black Swan.



ADAM MITCHELL DIRECTOR

Adam is an award-winning stage director known for his inventive Theatre, Music Theatre and Opera productions. He was the Associate and Resident Director at Black Swan State Theatre Company and has directed more than twenty productions for the company. Highlights include; *When the Rain Stops Falling* and *Next to Normal*. Most recently he directed; *Dead Man Walking Freeze Frame Opera*, *The Snow Barking Gecko Arts*, *Classic Adventures* (WASO), *The Wedding Singer* (WAAPA), *The Hypotheticals for The Last Great Hunt*, and *Oil* at Black Swan. He regularly directs for The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), has worked with The National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), West Australian Opera, Victoria College of the Arts, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Playwriting Australia, Sydney and Melbourne Theatre Companies, Barking Gecko Arts, Freeze Frame Opera, The Australian Theatre for Young People and is the Artistic Director of The Performing Arts Perspectives and The Perth Playwriting Festival. He is a 40under40 Award winner and has received Equity Guild, Blue Room Theatre, and PAWA Awards, as well as the Martin Sims and The West Australian Arts Editor Awards.



JACKSON HARPER GRIGGS MUSICAL DIRECTOR & COMPOSER

Jackson Harper Griggs is a Perth-based composer, music director and musician working across theatre, cabaret, choral and orchestral performance. He is passionate about storytelling through music and bringing new Australian works to life.

Recent credits include *An Evening with Lucy Durack* (2025) regional WA tour, *Synthony V* (2025) with Perth Symphony Orchestra at RAC Arena, *Godspell* (2025) with Midnite Youth Theatre Company at Subiaco Arts Centre, *Pinocchio: A Christmas Pantomime* (2024) with Zealous Productions at the Regal Theatre and *Same Time Next Week* (2024) with Nick Pages-Oliver & Scott McArdle at The Blue Room Theatre. He can also be found spreading his love of choral singing, having recently returned from Dunsborough Songfest with Voiceworks and the Rossmoyne Community Singers.

Jackson graduated from WAAPA in 2015 with a Bachelor of Music (Composition and Music Technology) and a Certificate II in Musical Theatre. He was recently awarded three Performing Arts WA Awards for his work on *Same Time Next Week*.

Carol marks Jackson's first collaboration with Black Swan and he is thrilled to be presenting this incredible new Australian work.



BRUCE MCKINVEN SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Bruce is the Senior Production Designer for *Dark Mofo* Festival in Hobart designing most of the festival's major events including *Winter Feast* and *NightMass*. He is also Artistic Associate for Brisbane Powerhouse, designing a series of new outdoor event spaces for the performance venue and contributing to *Night Feast* and *Melt Festival* as a key creative.

Bruce has a 30-year career designing for theatre, arts festivals, dance and events across Australia, working with some of the nation's leading practitioners and companies, including Company B Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare, Adelaide Festival, Brisbane Festival, Perth Festival, Queensland Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, La Boite, Expressions Dance Company, Dance North, Queensland Ballet, Force Majeure, Australian Dance Theatre and Singapore Dance Theatre.

For Black Swan he has designed *Prima Facie* (Set), *The Children*, *Dirty Birds*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Let the Right One In*, *Switzerland*, *Clinton the Musical*, *Next to Normal*, *The White Divers of Broome* (Set), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.



LUCY BIRKINSHAW LIGHTING DESIGNER

Lucy Birkinshaw is an accomplished lighting designer and artist. Lucy's practice encompasses theatre, opera, music theatre, concert lighting, dance, film and television. She trained formally in both fine arts and lighting design for performance.

Lucy has designed for companies such as Black Swan State Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, Malthouse, Rone, Juluwarlu Group, Yirra Yaakin, Griffin Theatre, WA Ballet, Barking Gecko, Windmill Theatre, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Australian Opera, Melbourne Opera, Lyric Opera Melbourne, WAYTCO, Performing Lines, Sensorium, Perth International Arts Festival, Opera in the Park, and many others.

Lucy's recent designs include *Time: Rone* at AGWA, *Nothing Twice* with Robert Bondara, *Carnivale.6* with Raewyn Hill, *Mattering* with James O'Hara (WA Ballet), *The Whale & Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, *The Seed* with Black Swan and *Hairspray* with HAMA Productions. Lucy was nominated for Outstanding Lighting Design for three of these designs in the recent PAWA Awards.

Lucy enjoys collaborating with a diverse range of directors, choreographers, composers and artists. Lucy's distinctive approach to depth, contrast and beauty within her designs make her an identifiable theatre artist.



TIM COLLINS SOUND DESIGNER

Tim Collins is an Australian sound designer, composer, and musician whose work bridges the worlds of performance, technology, and storytelling. Since 2001, he has cultivated a multifaceted career across theatre, festivals, concerts, studio production, musical theatre, and live broadcast—bringing a distinctive sonic sensitivity to every project he undertakes.

With a background that spans both the creative and technical dimensions of performance, Tim's artistry is grounded in collaboration and craft. His recent work as sound designer and composer credits include *Hoods* (2025) with Barking Gecko Arts and *The Pool* (2024) with Black Swan, and as sound designer include *Xenides The Musical* (2018), *Oklahoma!* (2020), and *The Tempest* (2021) with Black Swan, *Fully Sikh* (2019) with Black Swan and Barking Gecko Arts and *Black Brass* (2021) with Performing Lines WA. As Head of Audio for Black Swan, Tim has led major productions including *Next To Normal* (2015), *Clinton The Musical* (2016), *Xenides The Musical* (2018), *Our Town* (2019) and *The Torrents* (2019) with Sydney Theatre Co, and worked as a technician on productions of *Cyrano* (2023) with Melbourne Theatre Co, *Once* (2022) with Darlinghurst Theatre, and *Cloudstreet* (2020) and *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (2016) for Malthouse Theatre.

Beyond his practice, Tim is dedicated to arts education, sharing his experience as a mentor and guest lecturer at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) and Curtin University.

In 2022, his work on *Cicada* with Barking Gecko Arts earned him the Performing Arts WA Award for Outstanding Sound Design.



NASTASSJA NORWOOD FIGHT DIRECTOR

Nastassja Norwood is the owner of Stage Combat Perth, holding accreditation from the Society of Australian Fight Directors Inc.

Recent credits include *Never Have I Ever* (2025), *City of Gold* (2022) and *York* (2021) with Black Swan State Theatre Company, as well as *Romeo and Juliet* (2024) with WA Ballet and *Carmen* (2023) with WA Opera.

Nastassja graduated from WAAPA in 2013, with a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts in Contemporary Performance and Theatre Studies.

Nastassja is excited to create more for Black Swan and is looking forward to be a part of this incredible story.



LIAM MURRAY STAGE MANAGER

Liam Murray is a Stage Manager who works extensively nationally and internationally; primarily working in theatre, he also works in musical theatre, opera and dance. Since graduating from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), Liam has gone on to establish his career as a preeminent stage manager, working for a diverse range of companies and scales of production.

For Black Swan, his credits include Resident Stage Manager for the 2025 Season, Stage Manager for *Never Have I Ever*, *Prima Facie*, *Dirty Birds*, *City of Gold* (with Sydney Theatre Company), *Flood*, and Assistant Stage Manager for *As You Like It*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Day One*, *A Hotel*, *Evening* and *Death of a Salesman*. Other selected credits as Stage Manager include; *Calamity Jane* (Queensland Theatre); *37* (with Queensland Theatre), *Blak in the Room* (with Ilbjerri Theatre Company) and *Cost of Living* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Beneath the Music* (Performing Lines WA/Encounter); *The Barber of Seville* (Opera Australia); *Archives of Humanity* (Co3 Contemporary Dance); *The Carnival of the Animals*, *The Little Prince* and *Roald Dahl's The Twits* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Henry V* and *Othello* (Pop Up Globe New Zealand); and *Xanadu* and *High Society* (Hayes Theatre Company).



SHANNEN MOULTON ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Shannen is a WAAPA graduate from the Bachelor of Performing Arts, specialising in stage management.

She has previously worked with Black Swan State Theatre Company on *The Pool*, *Prima Facie* and *The Seed*.

She also stage managed the multiple PAWA award-winning: *Same Time Next Week* (Scott McArdle & Nick Pages-Oliver), and was touring stage manager for *FAG/STAG* (The Last Great Hunt) 2025 season.

Shannen's most recent work as Stage Manager includes: *Shadow of Doubt* (Fine Comb Theatre), *The 7 Stages of Grieving* (Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company), and *Speaking in Tongues* (Black Swan State Theatre Company).





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