

# TEMELE IN THE STATE OF THE STAT

BY DEBORAH FRANCES-WHITE 14 JUNE – 6 JULY HEATH LEDGER THEATRE





**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:

2 hours and 10 minutes (including interval)

#### **Content warnings:**

This production contains mature themes, coarse language, sexual references and depictions of drug and alcohol use.
Strobe lighting is also used.

#### Hero Image

Photography by Joel Barbitta, Design by Troy Barbitta

#### **Program Design**

Troy Barbitta

*Never Have I Ever*, by Deborah Frances-White was first presented at the Minerva Theatre, Chichester, on 1 September 2023.





# A NOTE FROM THE WRITER DEBORAH FRANCES-WHITE



I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN AUSTRALIA BUT LIVE IN THE UK AND WENT TO UNIVERSITY IN OXFORD IN THE LATE 90S. IN THOSE DAYS FEMINISM WASN'T A GOING CONCERN IN THE JUNIOR COMMON ROOM. Girl Power was all we had. Ladette culture meant that the shorthand for gender equality among students was matching a man, Snakebite and Black for Snakebite and Black, until you'd drunk him under the table. The mainstream conversations young people are having now in every pub, about body acceptance, representation and intersectionality were certainly not happening. I remember turning up to my first political protest and finding I was one of only twelve there. My aspirations of being part of a movement for social change withered on the vine.

Then, while studying Victorian playwrights, I read some letters between Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. Shaw was bemoaning the heavy censorship they had to labour under, because the Lord Chamberlain read every play that appeared on the British stage and red penned anything that might encourage immoral behaviour. This included the idea that a "fallen woman" might not end up punished in the gutter. What a terrible lesson for women watching! Wilde's response was that he hid his most subversive ideas in comedies of manners. He suggested that while Shaw's plays were constantly censored, his own politics were overlooked because the censor simply saw ladies and gentlemen guipping in drawing rooms and that familiarity made them blind to his disruptive storylines.





Wilde's play, A Woman of No Importance was penned and produced in 1893. Despite this, our hero, Mrs Arbuthnot, is not cast out by society, even though she has mothered an illegitimate baby and even gets the curtain line, guipping that the father of the child is "a man of no importance". In the same year, Shaw wrote Mrs Warren's Profession a much more overtly feminist work about a woman making her way in the world through sex work. The play criticised the system, not the woman - and it was banned. Its first official public performance was not till 1925, a full 32 years after it was written. Perhaps this is why Shaw once (allegedly) said, "If you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh or they'll kill you."

It was this story that made me really understand that comedy could be a truly political act. At the same time I was working with Keith Johnstone, who'd invented a school of improvisation I'd discovered in Australia, that included Theatre Sports. Keith had left the United Kingdom for Canada because that same Lord Chamberlain banned improvisation from the British stage because it was impossible to censor. It was illegal to perform it in theatres until 1968. The fear that things could be changed by story and satire was clearly real. What Keith taught me was, I suppose, was to ignore the Lord Chamberlain in my head, censoring out my ideas before the hit the page, let alone the stage. He taught me to trust my collaborators and say yes.

This meant that when Emma Butler, a young director, emailed me with a request for a script that she could develop for a workshop

at the legendary Almeida Theatre in London, I said yes without asking any further questions. Keith always told me that trying my hardest was not my best strategy. Instead of being overwhelmed by the task, I decided to remember that it's not called "a play" for nothing. It is a medieval word borrowed from the Dutch meaning "to dance, leap for joy, and rejoice'.

How could we get a play right if there was no rejoicing? Fortunately Emma was of the very same mind. She was also a scientist and explorer, excited to see what fizzed. Whenever anyone suggested something she'd say, "Let's try it!"

When I finally found a way to marry social change with comedy through The Guilty Feminist at the end of 2015, I realised that establishing that we don't have to perfect to be a force for meaningful change was the very thing that would give people the audacity to try. We need imperfect triers collecting and connecting, telling each other their stories in a way that makes it impossible not to listen and empathise. Play is the key to connection. I shall forever be grateful to Kate Champion for bringing Never Have I Ever to life in Perth, along with this spectacular, generous, fizzingly talented cast and glorious, committed crew of creatives. I feel so lucky to join this Western Australian circle of curious creation to present this play to you in a fresh new form. I hope you enjoy it or at least it causes an excellent argument in the bar afterwards.

**Deborah Frances-White** 







# A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR KATE CHAMPION

# I'M OFTEN ASKED WHY I CHOOSE A PARTICULAR SCRIPT TO PROGRAM OR DIRECT - IT'S A GOOD QUESTION.

A very clear initial indicator of a strong candidate can be the simple and relatable experience of not being able to put the script down once I've started. This is often then followed by a sense of freshness and originality which you can almost smell coming off the page, accompanied by the satisfaction when my expectations of character and story-telling are delightfully thwarted. The next phase often involves an increased sense of pleasure when the story

is saturated in a cracking and confident wit. When I'm on a real roll I discover it has a vivid theatrical vision and a refreshing ability to articulate conflicting opinions on contentious contemporary issues. Before I know it my heart begins to beat faster and I'm in, hook, line and sinker, excitedly spreading the news like a love-struck teenager. Such was my experience reading Never Have I Ever by Deborah Frances-White.

Of course a play will stay on the page unless it's brought to life by a village of talented artists who share the same enthusiasm and drive to make the words of the writer become three dimensional. They join forces to bring to life the thrilling contest of ideas contained in the play and create a believable yet seemingly spontaneous reality - all through the magic of theatre.

Ultimately though - who doesn't love a dinner party gone wrong? It's one of the greatest pleasures of live performance to be able to witness a slow train crash of a relatable social situation play out before your eyes, leaving you questioning your own morals, allegiances and points of view on where you stand in today's divisive and unpredictable times.

Bon Appétit!



# CAST, CREATIVES AND CREW





## EMILY ROSE BRENNAN JACQ

Emily most recently appeared in the feature film *How To Please A Woman*, and on stage for Black Swan Theatre Company in *The Cherry Orchard*. Emily is a multidisciplinary artist, having graduated from the acting course at NIDA in 2005, completing her PhD in Fine Art in 2024.

As an actor, Emily has worked extensively in theatre and television across the nation. Notably, Emily toured Australia for Bell Shakespeare several times, and played lead roles in television series :30 Seconds for Foxtel, Underbelly:Razor for Channel 9 and The Legend of Gavin Tanner for ABC.

Emily has performed in multiple film and theatre productions in Western Australia including Tim Winton's *Dirt Music*, *Water* for Black Swan Theatre Company, *The Torrents* for Black Swan/Sydney Theatre Company, and television series' *The Gruen Transfer*, *Dafuq* and *Ashbeclee*.

Emily is a prolific voice over artist and the voice of some of Australia's leading television campaigns.



#### RATIDZO MAMBO ADAEGO

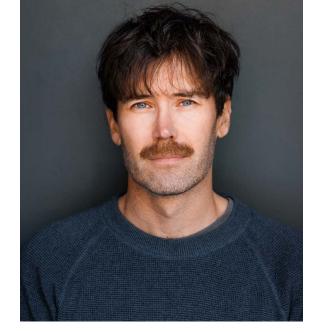
Ratidzo Mambo is an award-winning actor and voice artist.

For theatre, Ratidzo's work includes the critically-acclaimed Sunday (Sydney Theatre Company), The Heartbreak Choir, Cruel And Tender (Melbourne Theatre Company), The Trial Of Dorian Gray (Bitten By Productions), Prize Fighter (La Boite Theatre Company), The Lady And The Tyger (Short + Sweet L.A.), Left To Tell (Red Soil Theatre Company), Discrit Zimbabwe And Murder Trick (La Mama Theatre).

Feature Film credits include Escape From Pretoria, Cognitive, 10 Terrorists!, The Legend Maker, Picture Tank and Yellow Card.

Television credits include *Strife, The Gloaming,* Deadly Women, Flawed, Moms, Glee, Ecotopia, Neighbours, Exchange And Wicked Science.

Ratidzo's awards include, 'Best Supporting Actress Award' for 'Cognitive' at The 2023 Houston International Film Festival, 'Best Actress' Casting Guild of Australia's 'Rising Star' Award, Matilda Award Winner for 'Best Ensemble' (*The Prize Fighter*) and 'Best Actor' Winner for the Hollywood Short + Sweet Theatre Festival (*The Lady and the Tyger*). Ratidzo also earned a Green Room Award nomination for 'Best Actor' (*The Heartbreak Choir*). Additionally, Ratidzo was awarded the 2018 16th Street Actors Studios Larry Moss Scholarship and was a Heath Ledger Scholarship finalist.

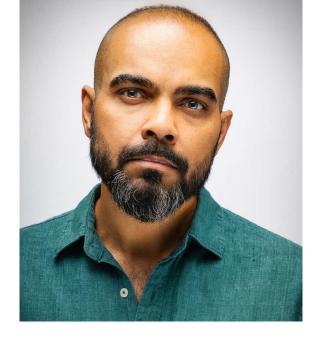


#### WILL O'MAHONY TOBIN

Will O'Mahony is an actor, writer and director practicing on Noongar country in Perth, Western Australia. Acting credits include: August: Osage County, Things I Know To Be True; Oil; The Tempest; Assassins; Hir; Angels In America, Part One; Glengarry Glen Ross; Flood; Twelfth Night; Pool (no water); and The Dark Room—all for Black Swan State Theatre Company.

Will has written six plays, with both *Tonsils+Tweezers* (2016) and *Coma Land* (2017) receiving mainstage presentation with BSSTC. His other presented works include *Great White* (2013), *The Mars Project* (2015), and *Minneapolis*, which was shortlisted for the Griffin Award in 2018.

Will also teaches acting and playwriting at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. He has twice won the Performing Arts of WA Best Supporting Actor Award for his work on Assassins (2018) and Red (2011); and his plays Great White (2014) and Coma Land (2017) have both been awarded the PAWA for Best New Work.



#### DEEP SROA KAS

Deep Sroa is an exciting emerging talent who recently graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Acting) from WAAPA. Deep won WAAPA's 2024 Vice Chancellor's Shakespeare Award for Most Outstanding Actor. He also won the 2023 SDTAWA Best Poetry Performance.

Notable roles during his time at WAAPA include King Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, Hugh Darcy in *Harp in the South*, and Bobby Burgess in *Beautiful Burnout*. Deep is making his professional theatre debut in *Never Have I Ever* for Black Swan Theatre Company's 2025 season.

Outside of acting, Deep is also a passionate singer and poet.





### DEBORAH FRANCES-WHITE WRITER

Deborah Frances-White is an award-winning writer and comedian, best known for her hit podcast The Guilty Feminist. The show has been recorded live around the world at venues including The Royal Albert Hall, The London Palladium, The Sydney Opera House and The Wellington Arena. Her book, The Guilty Feminist, is published by Virago Press at Hachette and is a Sunday Times Best Seller. Her second book Six Conversations We're Scared To Have will also be published by Virago in 2025. Her BBC Radio 4 show, Deborah Frances-White Rolls The Dice, won The Writers' Guild Award for Best Radio Comedy. She wrote the independent feature film, Say My Name and her next movie, The Wishboard, is in preproduction with Redwave Films. She is also currently writing the animated feature film, BAD FAIRES, for Warner Brothers, with Locksmith Animation.

Deborah's television credits as a comedian include *QI, Would I Lie To You?, Have I Got News To You, Mock The Week* and *Question Time*. She is a sought-after corporate speaker through her company The Spontaneity Shop and specialises in presence & presenting and diversity & inclusion. Deborah is an official ambassador for Choose Love and Amnesty International.

Her play *Never Have I Ever* had its world premiere at Chichester Festival Theatre in the United Kingdom and she is currently developing another play for the theatre.



### KATE CHAMPION DIRECTOR

Kate has decades of experience working in theatre, dance-theatre, opera, musical-theatre, film and circus – in genres ranging from devised original work, new Australian plays, classics, comedy, multi-art form work, interactive and physical theatre. For Black Swan she has directed the critically acclaimed *Things I Know to Be True, Dirty Birds, The Pool* and *Prima Facie*.

Kate was the founding artistic director of Force Majeure, an influential dance theatre company based in Sydney, premiering five original main stage works for major festivals and touring regionally, nationally, and internationally. Several of Force Majeure's works were awarded multiple Helpmann and Australian Dance Awards.

Kate works extensively on large-scale projects, and for major theatre companies as well as in the small to-medium and independent theatre scene. Kate had a 26-year career as a performer and dancer with companies both nationally and internationally and created two acclaimed solo shows.





## RACHEL MCMURRAY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Rachel McMurray is a theatre director and writer based in Boorloo/Perth. Previously, Rachel worked in the UK as a freelance director and Artist Director of Fine Comb Theatre from 2013 – 2022.

Theatre Directing credits include: Shadow of Doubt (The Blue Room Theatre); Three Sisters (WAAPA); Courier (The Blue Room Theatre); I'm With Her (Wesley College); The Project (WAYTCo at Blue Room Theatre); Antigone (Performance Centre, Staffordshire); Perspective (Hope Studios); Aleiah's Adventures (Z-Arts Manchester and Tour); No Such Thing As Ordinary (Royal Exchange Theatre); Ink (ALRA North); Creep; Sexpectations and The Good Hope (53Two Manchester); Woyzeck (Performance Centre, Staffordshire); I Would Walk at Night (Fine Comb Theatre, Online); Not Yours, Mine (Hope Studios, Oldham Coliseum Theatre); There's a Fly in My Room (Halifax Square Chapel); Lost & Found (The Lowry Theatre Studio); Matchsticks (53Two, Theatre Arrlechino, The Kings Arms); Discernment (The Lowry Theatre); Fat Penguins and Chubby Polar Bears (The Adelphi Studio and Theatre Arrelchino)

Assistant Directing credits include: *The*Pool (Black Swan Theatre in association with
Perth Festival); *Beryl* (Oldham Coliseum
Theatre); *Aladdin* (Oldham Coliseum Theatre)



#### BRYAN WOLTJEN SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Bryan Woltjen is a 1999 graduate of the W.A. Academy of Performing Arts and has collaborated with live performance makers across Australia and internationally. In 2008, he undertook a series of residencies in India, researching traditional puppetry and developing new work.

Between 2010 and 2019, Woltjen was based in London, designing sets, puppetry, and costumes across the U.K. and Europe. He is a three-time recipient of the Performing Arts W.A. award for Best Set Design, most recently for his 2024 work on *Same Time Next Week*, for The Blue Room Theatre, Nick Pages-Oliver, and Scott McArdle.

Woltjen lectures and facilitates Set & Costume Design training at WAAPA and currently serves on the steering committee for ScenoLab, a national body representing scenographers. He also co-runs South Side Life Drawing, a life-drawing community in Walyalup (Freo).

His previous work with Black Swan Theatre Company includes X-Stacy, Striptease, Mountain Language, Accidental Death of an Anarchist, The Lady Aoi, The Messiah, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Far Away, Cyrano de Bergerac, The Web, Ninety, When the Rain Stops Falling, The Motherfucker with the Hat, Blithe Spirit, and Extinction.





#### **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.



#### RACHEAL DEASE COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Dease's artistic practice encompasses art music, dance and theatre scoring, installation and songwriting. While her own music projects have garnered critical acclaim and multiple awards, Dease is a quintessential and in-demand collaborator creating large and small scale works across many genres. Classically trained, with roots in the art rock/ pop world, and with a knowledge of sound design and production, Dease creates music and sound that supports, enhances, elevates, and extends.

Graduating with Honours from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, she won the inaugural Martin Sims Award at Fringe World, the Melbourne Fringe Music Award and received critical acclaim at New York Fringe Festival for her contemporary song cycle City of Shadows. Composition and sound design for theatre includes Osage: August County (Belvoir Theatre / Black Swan State Theatre Company) the Helpmann Award-nominated It's Dark Outside (The Last Great Hunt), City of Gold (Sydney Theatre Company/BSSTC), The Bleeding Tree (Blue Room Theatre/BSSTC) and Mary Stuart (Perth Festival). Installation includes Vespers (Fremantle Biennale) Black Mass (PICA) Winter Feast 2018-2025 (Dark Mofo), Museum of Water (Perth Festival), and Like Embracing Ice (Fremantle Arts Centre). Dease was awarded the 2017 Department of Culture and The Arts Performing Arts Fellowship, has won the Performing Arts WA Award for Best Music and/ or Sound Design for Dirty Birds, The Bleeding Tree and Let The Right One In and has been a Besen Fellow at Malthouse Theatre. Residencies include Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Proximity Festival, Lumen Studios Italy and The Arctic Circle.

In 2020 Dease was Prelude Composer In Residence at Gallop House, Western Australia where she wrote her first solo album Hymns for End Times which was performed with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra in February 2021 for Perth Festival. In 2022 she presented her collaboration with Maxine Doyle and Es Devlin on Here Not Here for Gothenburg Opera Dance Company and in 2023 presented Salamander her third collaboration with Doyle and Devlin for Brisbane Festival with Australasian Dance Collective.



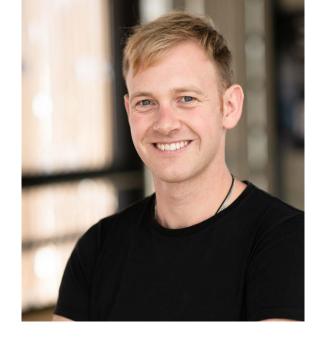


# LUZITA FEREDAY VOICE & DIALECT COACH

Luzita is a voice and dialect coach with 30 years' experience across film, TV and theatre. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), a postgraduate Diploma from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) and a Master of Arts (Performing Arts) from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) Edith Cowan University (ECU).

Luzita has worked as voice and dialect coach on: BALI 2002 (Stan/9 Network) Mary Stuart (Performing Arts/PIAF) Hecate (Yirra Yaakin), The Seed, Things I Know to be True, Once, The Tempest, Oklahoma, Unsung Heroes, The Torrents, Water, In the Next Room, HIR, I Am My Own Wife, Angels in America, Extinction, Blithe Spirit, A Perfect Specimen, Glengarry Glen Ross, Dinner, The Damned (Black Swan State Theatre). Jasper Jones, Driving into Walls, ONEFIVEZEROSEVEN, Fully Sikh (Barking Gecko), Mimma The Musical (Orana Productions), Sydney II, The Children, You & I (Theatre 180) Annie The Musical (Gordon Frost) The Wolves, Grounded, An Almost Perfect Thing, Joey: The Mechanical Boy (Blue Room).

Luzita has worked as Lecturer in Voice at WAAPA since 2010, teaching into the Bachelor of Arts (Acting) and Bachelor of Arts (Music Theatre). She also provides communication skills training to corporate clients and community groups. Her research and interest in the Australian voice has led to her being interviewed for an ABC National online article, a segment on Channel 7's Sunrise, ABC Radio Sydney, Hobart, Perth and ABC TV News Perth.



#### LIAM MURRAY STAGE MANAGER

Liam Murray (he/him) is a Stage Manager who works extensively both 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 Prima Facie, Dirty Birds, City of Gold (Black Swan State Theatre Company/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 (Melbourne Theatre Company/ Queensland Theatre), Blak in the Room (Melbourne Theatre Company/Ilbijerri Theatre Company), 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, Roald Dahl's The Twits (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre); Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Henry V, Othello (Pop Up Globe New Zealand); and Xanadu, High Society (Hayes Theatre Company). As Deputy Stage Manager selected credits include; Carmen (On Cockatoo Island) and Madama Butterfly (Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour) (Opera Australia).





#### KIRA FEENEY STAGE MANAGER – SEASON

Kira Feeney is a pakana Stage Manager who grew up on Wathawurrung land in Victoria with a passion for the performing arts. They moved to Boorloo (Perth) in 2021 to complete the Aboriginal Performance course at WAAPA and then went on to complete their Advanced Diploma of Stage Management in 2023. She has since worked in stage management teams with companies such as Yirra Yaakin & Ten Days on The Island and has recently returned from stage managing the *Big Name*, *No Blankets* tour with Ilbijerri. Kira is excited to be working with Black Swan to bring *Never Have I Ever* to the stage.



#### ESTELLE GOMERSALL ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Estelle is an emerging Stage Manager and a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), where she completed a Bachelor of Performing Arts. During her time at WAAPA, she contributed to a range of productions, including Assassins (2022), Footloose (2023), Head Over Heels (2024), and Nora: A Doll's House (2024).

Since graduating, Estelle has continued to build her experience, recently stage managing productions at the Old Fitz Theatre. She is excited to take the next step in her career with her first role at Black Swan State Theatre Company on Never Have I Ever.







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Anita & James Clayton Jan & Bryan Rodgers Dr Heather Rogers

A special thank you to Edward & Ida's, Casa Casa Casa, Bar Love and Shadow Wine bar for supplying wine bottles as props for this production.

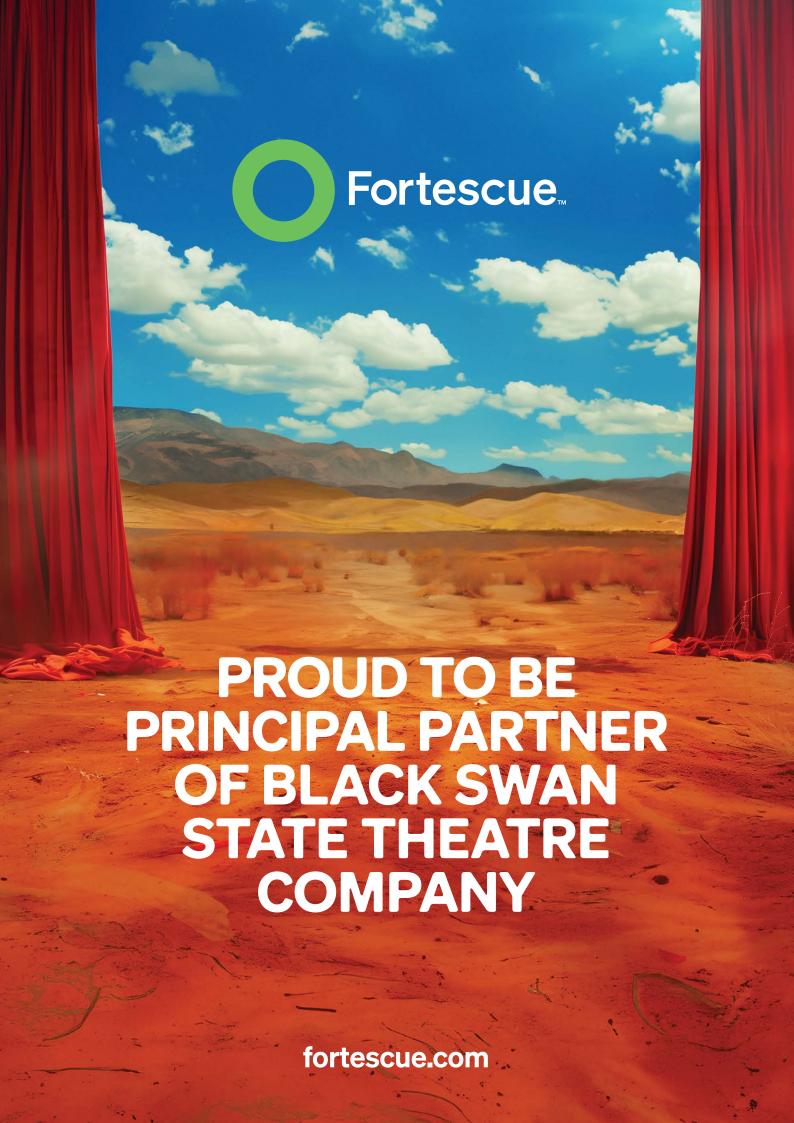
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