



BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY OF WA

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA PRESENTS

ANIMAL FARM

WRITTEN BY
VAN BADHAM

2 OCTOBER -
24 OCTOBER 2021

HEATH LEDGER
THEATRE



PRINCIPAL PARTNER



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



TOTAL RUNNING TIME:
100 MINUTES (NO INTERVAL).



Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation who are the traditional custodians of country on which State Theatre Centre stands. We pay our respects to all First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders. It is a privilege to be together on Nyoongar country.

PLEASE WATCH

our special 30th Birthday
Welcome to Country by
Dr Richard Walley OAM.



CLICK HERE TO WATCH

Content Warning:

Adult themes, coarse language, haze, strobe effects, graphic images, flashing lights, loud noise, stage firearm, references to war/slavery/poverty/animal abuse and animal hanging.

Recommended Age 15+



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SYNOPSIS

WRITTEN BY VAN BADHAM,
THIS HIGH-OCTANE
ADAPTATION OF THE CLASSIC
NOVELLA TAKES GEORGE
ORWELL'S 1944 ALLEGORY OF
POLITICS AND PROPAGANDA
AND COMBINES IT WITH THE
TECHNOLOGY OF TODAY AND
THE TURBULENCE OF THE
24-HOUR NEWS CYCLE.



Lead by the dream of Old Major, a prize-winning boar, the animals of Manor Farm set about creating a utopian society of equality, free from human dominance. Old Major's vision is initially met with enthusiasm by the masses and leads the farm to prosper. However, it's not long before Napoleon the pig, disrupts the peace and assumes the power, and quickly loyalties are divided, promises betrayed and mayhem ensues.

While the characters and plot adhere to Orwell's seminal allegory of anti-Stalinist satire, this adaptation is infused with modern technology and contemporary political references – we're going to make Animal Farm great!



ANIMAL FARM

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

EMILY MCLEAN



EMILY MCLEAN

Animal Farm is a cry for the oppressed. It is about power. It is a warning to us and our leaders – once you take even one apple, then commandments need to change. Once you value your work over another's, nothing can be equal. Van Badham's adaptation moves the story into a technological world. The pigs use the greatest propaganda tool ever invented - the internet - and they're great at it. The one valued hierarchy in the novel – intelligence - has been dismantled and becomes nuanced. There is a beautiful anarchy in the script. An anarchy of mediums and of their pace, and an anarchy of the emotional spaces the story exists in and moves between. We have leant into this.

Originally programmed for 2020, an urgency sat behind the show as the world's horror at Trump's behaviour grew. In 2021, that urgency is replaced with universality. It lands across time and space on every leader who has abused their position, and every person who lives under the rule of these leaders. In the rehearsal room, we watched the Taliban reclaim Afghanistan and felt the horror of the Afghani citizens. We looked at the conformity of the faces and bodies in North Korean military parades, and the architecture that despots had built and lived in while citizens starved. We looked at our leaders, and any leaders, who manipulate a rule while those they govern live by that rule.

Van has been brilliantly open, enthusiastic, and so very smart through this process. The script asks a lot creatively of every person working on it. These demands are themselves a generous and trusting act. Her willingness to collaborate has been incredible. Her staunch alliance with the working class gives this play its beautiful heart and glittering intelligence. Our collaboration has been done via technology and across our beautiful continent. We are so sad that she is not able to be here in person.

The cast of three play all of the characters. They have been outrageous fun, fierce explorers and have brought such truth, beauty and grace to the show, no matter which wig they wore.

The creative team have leant so far into the madness, and our conversations have been surreal (what does a duck engineering a windmill wear?). The worlds they have created move between extreme emotional and performative styles. Their skill in creating a space where all of these modes exist with strength is breathtaking.

Our stage manager and assistant stage manager have had an outrageous world to run, and they have brought wisdom and fun to every step of the storytelling.

I will leave you with three quotes that guided me through the process:

"...the need to assert ordinariness against power, decency against history, scepticism against authority, moral anxiety against political deceit, true prose over propaganda." Malcolm Bradbury

"...revolutions only effect a radical improvement when the masses are alert and know how to chuck out their leaders as soon as the latter have done their job." George Orwell

"...all of my kindness gets taken for weakness." 'FourFiveSeconds' by Rihanna, Kanye West & Paul McCartney



ANIMAL FARM

AN INTERVIEW WITH WRITER

VAN BADHAM



VAN BADHAM

What kind of night can Black Swan audiences expect at Animal Farm?

It's gonna be like watching CNN, if the hosts during a political crisis were all stand-up comedians but also pigs and cows and you've just had twenty coffees and are trapped in a runaway train. Strap in!

Originally Animal Farm was going to be presented just before the US Elections in 2020. What is its relevance in 2021?

The relevance of this play is even greater in 2021, given that on the 6th of January a lot of would-be pigs and cows tried to storm the Capitol building in Washington. I don't think everyone realises how close the Trump years brought us to actual fascism.

You are a playwright, novelist, commentator, critic, and activist. What is your favourite medium for story telling?

Clearly, I love all of them, hence running around like a farce character trying to meet increasingly impossible deadlines. The great thing about writing across platforms is that some stories are better told through different media. Journalism is where facts go. The theatre is where you can speculate wildly. Mixing these two up makes for bad theatre and/or dysfunctional democracies.

You have said that this play is 'an algorithm of political madness for the YouTube Generation'. What role does digital media play in the script?

Digital media is the most effective platform for the dissemination of propaganda in world history. Of course the pigs are all over it. In Orwell's original, the pigs had slogans. In the play, they have their own YouTube channels.

When and how was your interest in the arts first sparked? Who nurtured your passion?

My dad was a club manager, so I grew up in clubland with loud carpet and "colourful gaming identities" and club acts and annual Christmas pantomimes. As a kid I was entranced by the stories shared by my parents about the larger than-life people that they met as well as by the transformations of ordinary things into extraordinary ones by the lighting and sound and costumes of the performances that I got to see. At my Nanna's house, there was a very theatrical pair of red curtains that separated the loungeroom from the hallway and I was always forcing my cousins into costumes made of tablecloths and old neckties and creating skits to perform there. My parents encouraged it all because they found it very funny. I came from a family where no one had ever had an arts career (or a university education) so I really stumbled through the first few decades of my own career like a bit of a hapless rube but Mum and Dad found it all very amusing so I just kept doing it.

Where do you find inspiration? Who are your biggest influences?

I stumble on to inspiration – sometimes it's a newspaper article I can't stop thinking about, or a personal story I've been told that has affected me deeply, or sometimes there's something from my own life that I'm trying to gain a new perspective around. The ideas tend to percolate in the back of my head until someone offers me a writing job and the appropriate idea screams out "this one's for me!" and then I run with whatever the idea needs to meet the brief.

My biggest influence is my own taste. The great thing about no longer being a young writer and therefore feeling obliged to say yes to every job that comes along is being able to choose projects to do that I'd personally want to be the audience for. If you're not enthusiastic about your own projects, no one else is going to be enthusiastic about them either. So I'm influenced by space lizards and talking pigs and internet conspiracy cults and 1990s post-punk share housing and Spanish farces and this bizarre Trumpian political era the west barely survived and beach party movies. That's this week. Next week it might be something different.

What's playful and brave about this work?

Talking pigs, man. Still funny after all these years.



ANIMAL FARM

CAST, CREATIVES & CREW





CAST

ANDREA GIBBS

Stage characters:

Old Major
Snowball
Clover
Pilkington
Dog

Video Characters:

Human Interviewer
Old Major
Man in Suit
Snowball
Lucky Rooster VO
Press Person 2 VO
A cow
Harsh VO
Farm Reporter VO
A horse VO
Brenda the Chicken
Pilkington

MEGAN WILDING

Stage characters:

Squealer
Moses
Frederick
Benjamin
Whymper

Video Characters:

A sheep
Rod
Well-Dressed Woman aka
"Sheila"
Squealer
Minimus
A duck
Proud Pigeon VO
Press Person 3 VO
Rhonda the Chicken
Historian VO
Frederick

ALISON VAN REEKEN

Stage characters:

Mr Jones
Mollie
Hardball, aka "Leigh"
Napoleon
Muriel
Dog

Video Characters:

Hardball, aka "Leigh"
Napoleon
A chicken
Suzy
Mr Jones
Mollie
Press Person VO 1
A sheep
Rachael the Chicken
News Reporter VO

CREATIVES

WRITER

Van Badham

DIRECTOR

Emily McLean

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Fiona Bruce

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Karen Cook

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Rachael Dease

VIDEO DESIGNER

Michael Carmody

DRAMATURG

Polly Low

CREW

STAGE MANAGER

Megan Fitzgerald

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Georgia Smith



ANIMAL FARM

BIOGRAPHIES





ANDREA GIBBS / PERFORMER

Andrea is the co-founder and creative producer of *Barefaced Stories* – Australia's longest-running program of refreshingly honest, bold, and brutally frank live storytelling. She is an actor, audio mixer, and the presenter of ABC Radio's Weekends program which broadcasts Australia-wide every Sunday.

In 2005, she won Triple J's Raw Comedy Stand-up State Final and was selected for The Comedy Zone produced by Melbourne International Comedy Festival in 2006. She is a core member of premiere improv-comedy ensemble The Big HOO-HAA! and has performed at Loose Moose (Canada) and The Women in Comedy Festival (Boston).

She has been a guest speaker at TEDxPerth and Marieke Hardy's Women of Letters.

Billed as a 'revelation' by The Australian newspaper in the lead role of *8 Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography* by Declan Greene (Griffin Theatre SYD), other recent performances include *Is This Thing On?* by Zoe Coombs-Marr at The Blue Room Theatre (Best Performance 2016), *The Mars Project* by Wil O'Mahoney (Best Supporting PAWA), and Ben Elton's feature film *Three Summers* alongside Magda Szubanski. Originally hailing from Donnybrook, Western Australia, Andrea is a jill of all trades and has been described as 'the quintessential cousin from the country' (*The West*).



ALISON VAN REEKEN / PERFORMER

Alison is a graduate of Curtin University and WAAPA. She works regularly with BSSTC and most recent shows include *York*, *Unsung Heroes*, *The Next Room/The Vibrator Play*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Let the Right One In*, *Tartuffe* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. She is co-producer of Red Ryder Productions and in 2016 performed solo show *Grounded*, and in 2019 acted in *The Wolves* for them at The Blue Room Theatre. *The Wolves* went on to win Best Production at the 2019 Blue Room Awards.

Alison regularly works with writers on new Australian work in productions such as *Dust* for BSSTC and *Toast* for Maiden Voyage, or in developments such as the Fresh Ink program with ATYP and Barking Gecko, or the BSSTC Emerging Writers Program. She has worked with writers such as Sam Nerida, Joe Lui, Liz Newell, Chris Isaacs and Ian Michael. She has also been a participant in the National Playwrights Conference.

Awards include wins at Equity Guild Awards for Best Supporting Actor in 2006 and Best Actor in 2011, and PAWA Awards in 2015 Best Supporting Actor, 2016 Best Actor, and 2017 Best Supporting Actor.





MEGAN WILDING / PERFORMER

Megan Wilding, a proud Gamilaroi woman, has established a reputation as a prolifically talented actor, writer and director. Since graduating from WAAPA, Megan has appeared in leading roles in *Banging Denmark* and *Blackie Blackie Brown* for the Sydney Theatre Company and *The Rover* for Belvoir St Theatre. Her television credits include *Sheilas*, *The Edge of The Bush* and *The Other Guy*. Winner of the 2017 Balnaves Foundation Indigenous Playwright's Award, Megan also wrote and directed the acclaimed *A Little Piece of Ash* which was produced by the Jackrabbit Theatre Company at Kings Cross Theatre (KXT). Megan recently won the 2021 Griffin Award for her play *Game, Set, Match*.





VAN BADHAM / WRITER

Van Badham is the award-winning writer of more than 30 internationally-produced plays for stage and radio. She began a weekly column for *The Guardian* in 2013 and appears regularly on television and radio in her role as a commentator, critic and activist.

Van has had plays and musical theatre developed and produced across Australia, Europe, and North America. Her most recent Australian theatre productions include *Banging Denmark* for the Sydney Theatre Company at the Opera House, *The Bloody Chamber* for Malthouse, *The Bull, the Moon and the Coronet of Stars* for Griffin, Merrigong, and Hothouse, *Big Baby* for Terrapin, and *Late Night Story* at the Adelaide Fringe. Her commissioners here include MTC, Queensland Theatre, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Malthouse, Griffin, Merrigong, HotHouse, Terrapin, and the Tasmanian Theatre Company.

In Britain, Van was based as the writer-in-residence at LAMDA, London for two years. Her UK work has included collaborations with companies including the Royal Court Theatre, the Bush (for Paines Plough), Nabokov, the Battersea Arts Centre, Luxi, and Theatre503, as well as at the Edinburgh Fringe and on the touring circuit. Her plays have had professional productions across America, Canada, Iceland, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, and her international theatre commissions include *Swamplands* for the Wilma Theater in Philadelphia and *The Story of D-Star K* for the Bern Stadttheater in Switzerland. Van's radio commissions have been for the BBC World Service, Radio 4, and Radio 3 and her first screenplay, *We Come Home*, was developed with a grant from the Australian Writers' Guild. Van is a former Literary Manager of the Finborough Theatre London (2009-2011) and was Artistic Associate at the Malthouse Melbourne (2011-2013) before moving to her present position at *The Guardian*.



EMILY MCLEAN / DIRECTOR

Emily McLean is a WAAPA Directing graduate, a founding member of Red Ryder Productions and was a Black Swan Resident Artist in 2017 and 2019. Emily has worked for BSSTC, Perth Theatre Company, Deckchair, Red Ryder, WAAPA, Curtin, Maiden Voyage Theatre Company, and many of Perth's small independent companies. For Black Swan, she has directed the world premiere of both *Water* by Jane Bodie and *Dust* by Suzie Miller. Her most recent productions were *The Wolves* by Sarah DeLappe (Red Ryder, 2019), for which she won Best Director of an Independent Production at the PAWA awards, and *Unsung Heroes* (BSSTC, 2020) which was filmed during Perth's lockdown. Emily directed *Toast* by Liz Newell (Maiden Voyage, 2017) and *Grounded* by George Brandt (Red Ryder, 2016) at The Blue Room Theatre. In the last ten years she has directed the first production of eight new Australian scripts. Emily also occasionally works at The Centre for Stories running oral storytelling workshops.





FIONA BRUCE / SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Fiona's previous Black Swan State Theatre Company set and costume design credits include *Every Brilliant Thing* (2021), *Water* (2018), *The Seagull* (2014), *Dust* (2014), *Midsummer [A Play with Songs]* (2013), *Shrine* (costume 2013), *Shakespeare Shenanigans* (2013), *Boy Gets Girl* (2012), *Yellow Moon* (2010), and *The Shape of Things* (2010). In 2017, Fiona was part of Melbourne Theatre Company's *Women in Theatre* Program and the National Gallery of Victoria's 2017 *Art and Design Triennial* exhibition design team. She has also collaborated on several independent theatre productions and has won two Performing Arts WA Awards for set design. Fiona has a M. Communication Design (RMIT), and B.Arts from WAAPA and Curtin University.



KAREN COOK / LIGHTING DESIGNER

Karen has previously designed lighting for Black Swan's *Unsung Heroes*. Other lighting designs include *Cracked*, *Mother's Tongue*, and *Windmill Baby* (Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company), *Perpetual Wake*, *The Talk*, and *The Advisors* (The Last Great Hunt), *The Little Prince*, *Hachiko*, *Tales from Outer Suburbia*, and *Miss Lily's Fabulous Feather Boa* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre), *Actéon* (Lost & Found), *The Wolves* and *Grounded* (Red Ryder), and a plethora of independent theatre productions. Karen also works as a production, stage and tour manager, in Perth and touring regionally, nationally, and internationally. She trained at Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts: Adv. Dip. Lighting For Performance and at Curtin University: Bachelor of Arts, Communication and Cultural Studies.





RACHAEL DEASE / COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Dease's artistic practice encompasses art music, film and theatre scoring, installation and songwriting. Graduating 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*. Her composition and sound design for theatre include the Helpmann Award-nominated *It's Dark Outside* (The Last Great Hunt) and *Sunset* (Strut Dance/ Maxine Doyle - Perth Festival 2019) amongst many others. Dease was awarded the Performing Arts WA award for Best Music for *Let The Right One In* (Black Swan State Theatre Company) 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. She is the 2020 Prelude Composer In Residence at Gallop House, Western Australia.



MICHAEL CARMODY / VIDEO DESIGNER

Michael is a video artist and theatre maker who has worked as a video designer with companies and organisations that include Melbourne Theatre Company, Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA, Live Nation, Perth Festival, Melbourne Festival, St Martins, She Said, Sport for Jove, Blue Room, GPAC and Malthouse Theatre. His other video work includes short documentaries, video art and video installations that have screened nationally and internationally with festivals and organisations that include Melbourne International Film Festival, Brisbane International Film Festival, Perth Revelation International Film Festival, Traverse Video Festival France, and White Night Melbourne.





POLLY LOW / DRAMATURG

Polly is Black Swan State Theatre Company's Literary Director.

Her credits as dramaturg with the company are numerous, her work feeding into many productions (for eg Suzie Miller's *Dust*, Tim Winton's *Rising Water*, Oriel Gray's *The Torrent*). Scripts she has dramaturged from concept to stage include Ian Michael and Chris Isaac's *York*, Hellie Turner's adaptation of *The Lighthouse Girl*, Hilary Bell's adaptation of *The Red Balloon*, Jane Bodie's *Water*, and Gita Be-zard's, Barbara Hostalek's, Chris Isaacs', Hellie Turner's and Mararo Wangai's *Unsung Heroes*.

Polly also works extensively as a freelance dramaturg. She has dramaturged plays by highly experienced playwrights, by those not quite so experienced, and by those just beginning their playwriting journeys. She has developed performance scripts with many community groups (including in Esperance, Shark Bay and Albany). Polly also helps to run the Yirra Yaarnz scriptwriting program and worked dramaturgically on the scripts *Banned* and *Cracked*, by Barbara Hostalek, which grew out of that program. Similarly, she is currently dramaturging Narelle Thorne's comedy, *Dating Black*, slated for production at Yirra Yaakin this year.





MEGAN FITZGERALD / STAGE MANAGER

Megan graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2010. Since graduating Megan has worked on an array of theatre shows and events. Megan's Freelance Theatre Credits include Western Sky Project's Regional Tour of *Miss Westralia*; Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's *Beanstalk*, *Miss Lily*, *The Numbat* and *String Symphony*; Fremantle Theatre Company's *The Other Place*; SoPopera Productions' *The Little Mermaid* and *A Chorus Line*; Force Majeure's *You animal, you*; Merrigong Theatre Company's *Dead Man Break*; Polyglot's National Tour of *Muckheap*; Belvoir Theatre's *Oedipus Schmeodipus*; Chunky Move/Malthouse's *127 Days* and Melbourne Theatre Company's *Happy Ending*. Megan's Freelance Event Credits include Sydney Festival, Soundwave Festival, Melbourne Festival, City of Melbourne NYE, U2's 360 Tour, Rob Thomas, Yours and Owls Festival, Psyfari Festival and Moomba Festival. Megan is passionate about teaching and held the position as lecturer in Stage Management at the University of Wollongong for several years.



GEORGIA SMITH / ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Georgia graduated from Curtin University with a BA in Performance Studies in 2015. Since 2014 she has regularly worked as a stage manager/tech operator. Black Swan credits include *Playthings* and *The Lighthouse Girl*. Her recent Blue Room Theatre highlights include 2019 Members' Choice winner *Playthings* (Second Chance Theatre) and Best Production winner *The Wolves* (Red Ryder Productions). Fringe World credits include Martin Sims award winners *Bus Boy* (Rorschach Beast, 2017) and *The Great Ridolphi* (The Last Great Hunt, 2016). She toured *Bus Boy* to Brighton Fringe in 2018 and *The Great Ridolphi*, along with *Fag/Stag* and *Bruce*, to Edinburgh Fringe in 2017; and regionally toured *Bali* (TLGH, 2018). In 2019 she worked as Assistant Stage Manager on the premier season of *Mimma: A Musical of War and Friendship* (Orana Productions).





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