



**BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY OF WA**

**The
Blue Room
Theatre**

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA PRESENTS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE BLUE ROOM THEATRE

PLAYTHINGS

WRITTEN AND
DIRECTED BY

SCOTT McARDLE

ORIGINALLY PRODUCED
AND PRESENTED BY

BY SECOND CHANCE THEATRE

1 – 8 MAY 2021 | STUDIO UNDERGROUND



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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.



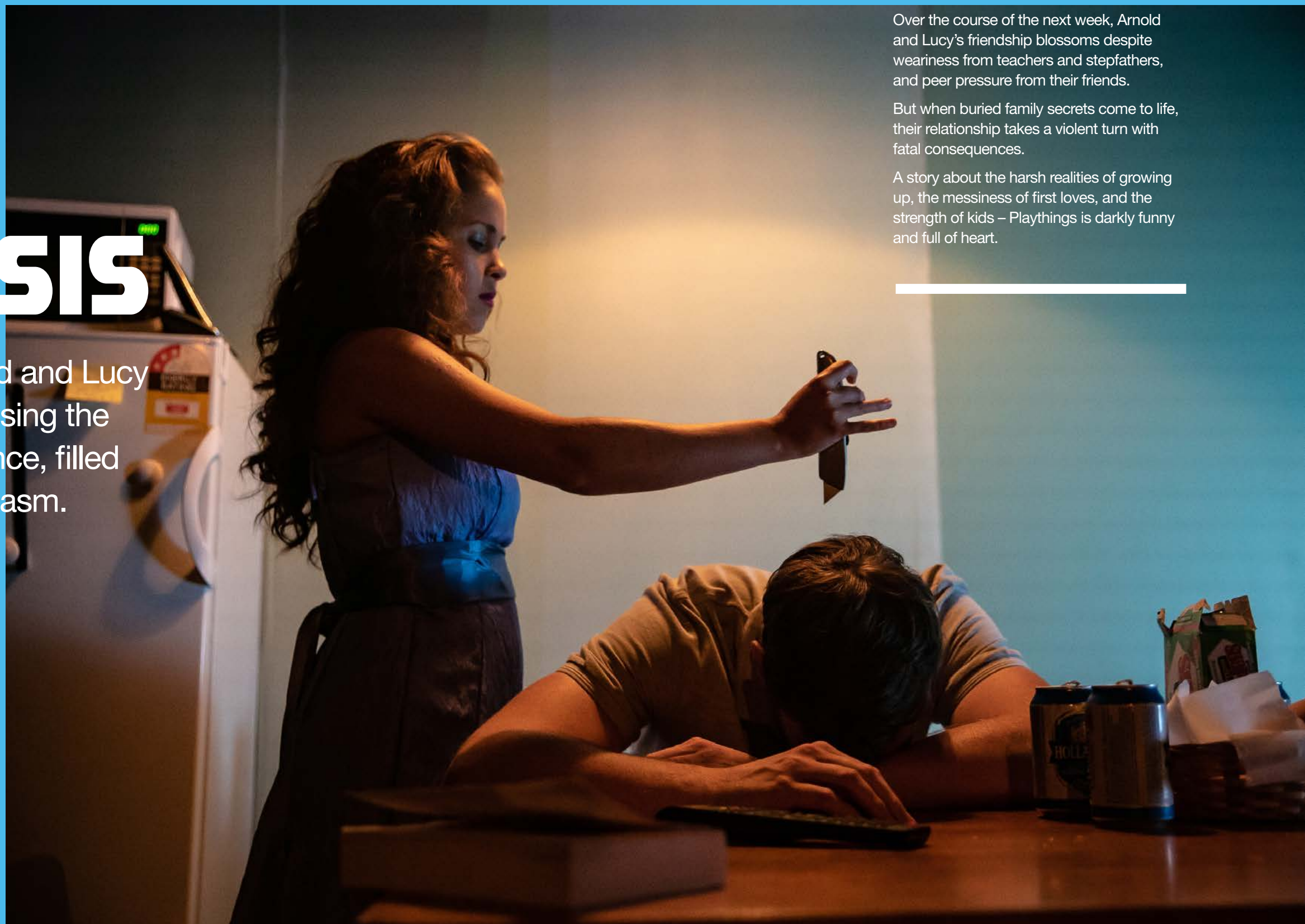
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SYNOPSIS

Playthings follows Arnold and Lucy – two 13-year-olds, crossing the threshold into adolescence, filled with hormones and sarcasm.



Lucy is top of all her classes and Arnold is bullied daily. She has a calendar full of extra-curricular activities and he watches six hours of TV a night.

The two sneak off one afternoon, trudging deep into the bush on the edge of the suburb and when they emerge, they're forever changed by the darkness they encounter out there.

Over the course of the next week, Arnold and Lucy's friendship blossoms despite weariness from teachers and stepfathers, and peer pressure from their friends.

But when buried family secrets come to life, their relationship takes a violent turn with fatal consequences.

A story about the harsh realities of growing up, the messiness of first loves, and the strength of kids – *Playthings* is darkly funny and full of heart.



A NOTE FROM THE WRITER AND DIRECTOR **SCOTT MCARDLE**

It is a rare joy to
revisit an old story
with fresh eyes.

Playthings began life in 2017, a tiny nugget of an idea in Barking Gecko Theatre Company's writer's group. The opportunity to develop it and stage it arose at The Blue Room Theatre and, because of that initial season, it has now been given a second life with Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA.

But if I was being honest, this story began 17 years ago. *Playthings* is a semi-autobiographical work of fiction ripped from the suburban wasteland of Western Australia (south of the river, sorry!). It's about sneaking out, rebelling against your parents, English assignments, grunge, schoolyard fights, first loves, and great music tastes.

But more importantly, it's about mental illness.

There is a popular myth that circulates between parents and around schools: children are resilient.

This myth goes hand-in-hand with how we handle mental illness which remains, to this day, a taboo. Trauma and abuse have long lasting and impactful effects on the development and brain chemistry of children.

To admit that would be to accept the mental illnesses that develop as a result.

To admit that would be to seek psychiatric and psychological help for children.

To admit that would be to medicate.

We're still not cool with that as a society, and the damage is doubled because of it.

Playthings tries to strip back the taboo of mental illness in young people, not the most uplifting endeavour, but it does so unpretentiously (I think) and inclusively. It doesn't try to preach or lecture or claim to have the answers, it just reminds us of the pain that many people carry and that beautiful universal truth: you don't have to do it alone.

Thank you to Black Swan and The Blue Room for the opportunity to return to this story and for investing in local stories of hope and healing.



A CONVERSATION WITH SCOTT

Playthings was originally produced with Second Chance Theatre at The Blue Room Theatre and took out the Members' Choice award. What is your process in re-visiting the script?

To me, a work of art is never perfect and, if you're lucky, it's never finished either – it continues to grow alongside you. Usually that process only occurs in your mind but if you're fortunate enough to be able to remount or restage a work, you get to revisit it and make the changes it needs.

The core of *Playthings* really touched a lot of people so I've worked hard to preserve that, while refining and changing about 50% of the dialogue. The conversations and characters are a lot richer and the focus of the work is laser sharp now.

How does this version differ from the original production? Do you think it's important to be constantly evolving a piece of theatre?

My favourite part of writing for theatre is how you can keep evolving a piece as you grow as a person. You can't do that for film – once it's shot and released, you never go back and make it again. It's been two years since I wrote *Playthings* and a lot has changed for me in that time, especially in my understanding of my childhood. Alongside that, you learn immensely from your first season – from your actors, from your audience.

This version keeps everything we love about the story at its core and drills deeper into the characters – there's been a lot of dialogue changes, a lot of subtleties have been added, and even a brand new song! It really is a rare joy in WA to get to remount a work – it's my responsibility (and joy) to make it an even richer experience the second time round.



What do you like about the characters in this play?

I've worked really hard to create four characters that are vividly real on the page (imbued with even more detail by the four tremendous performances from our actors) and I really love how fleshed out they are. They all feel multi-dimensional and as though they're not just bound to the pages of the play. At the end of the play there's still a lot of questions about what happens next and what these characters will do but that's part of what's satisfying about it, I think.



You have mentioned in relation to *Playthings*, that “Kids are vulnerable and not resilient. They’re good at hiding things and there are signs to watch out for”. Do you feel this work is more relevant now than it ever has been as over 75% of mental health problems occur before the age of 25?

This quote is my paraphrasing of a magnificent book *The Boy Who Was Raised As A Dog* – it became a core research text while writing *Playthings* and is an enlightening and frank look at early childhood trauma and abuse. It makes the excellent case that all children across all history and all generations are vulnerable in their youth – that they absorb and internalise everything that happens to them. It’s pretty bloody late for us to be having this realisation as a society - it means we have a lot of work to do when it comes to how

we educate kids and responsibility when it comes to raising them. If we look at issues of crime, substance abuse, and mental illness in young people and adolescents, there are trends that show that these behaviours don’t just come from nowhere – they grow from circumstance.

A lot of the research I’ve read is a bit iffy on whether the mental health of the masses is getting worse in the 21st Century – one thing they’re clear on is that we’re getting much, much better at diagnosing and treating it. Our youth have always been susceptible, vulnerable, and great at hiding the symptoms – often due to negative or dismissive reactions from ill-equipped adults – our job now is to continue to de-stigmatise talking about mental illness and educate ourselves so that we can give the care we wished we’d received when we were kids.



CAST

DANIEL BUCKLE

Arnold

ST JOHN COWCHER

Rhys

SIOBHAN DOW-HALL

Miss Richards

COURTNEY HENRI

Lucy

CREATIVES

WRITER & DIRECTOR

Scott McArdle

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Sara Chirichilli

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Kristie Smith

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Rebecca Riggs-Bennett

CHOREOGRAPHER

Shannon Rogers

DRAMATURG

Alexa Taylor

DRAMATURGICAL SUPPORT

Polly Low

CREW

ASSISTANT PRODUCER

Erin Lockyer

STAGE MANAGER

Georgia Smith

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Isabella Taylor

Casserole in red container.
Home late.
Left you a present on the
table, found them in Dad's things.
Love Mum x



BIOGRAPHIES



WRITER & DIRECTOR SCOTT MCARDLE

Scott is a Perth-based writer, director, and lighting designer. He is currently shooting a short film, *Work From Home*, and is writing a feature film adaptation of his award-winning play, *Playthings*.

Playthings won the 2019 Blue Room Theatre Member's Choice award, and the Performing Arts WA award for Best Supporting Actor (St John Cowcher). It was nominated for Best Production, Best Performer, Best Director, and Best Writing.

His play *Laika: A Staged Radio Play* won the 2017 Performing Arts WA award for Best Independent Production, and the Blue Room Theatre Member's Choice and Judge's Choice awards.

Scott's previous work includes *Hail Satan* (Murdoch University), *Josephine!* (The Blue Room Theatre & Second Chance Theatre), *Chicken Rock* (Murdoch University), *The Room Downstairs* (Murdoch University), *Between Solar Systems* (The Blue Room Theatre & Second Chance Theatre), *Frankenstein*, and *Coincidences At The End Of Time* (The Perth Theatre Trust & Second Chance Theatre).



CREATIVES SARA CHIRICHILLI SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Sara graduated from WAAPA in 2010, receiving the prestigious David Hough Award for Best Student Designer. Sara became the 2011 assistant designer in Deckchair Theatres Emerging Artist Program.

In 2012, Sara designed set and costume for *The Book of Death* at The Blue Room Theatre, and was a design assistant for Shakespeare in the Park's productions of *The Tempest*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and co-designer for *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In 2014, Sara designed the set and costumes for *The Mikado* and the set for *The Sound of Music* at the Regal Theatre.

Most recently, Sara designed for *Between Solar Systems*, *PORTO*, *Tamagotchi Reset*, and *Laika* at The Blue Room Theatre. She also worked with Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company on *Cracked* and *Ice Land* at Subiaco Arts Centre, the latter of which was nominated for Best Costume Design at the PAWA Awards.



CREATIVES KRISTIE SMITH LIGHTING DESIGNER

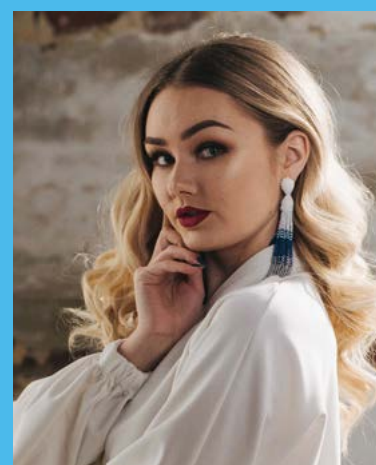
Kristie is an emerging lighting designer for theatre, musical theatre and dance proudly based on Whadjuk Boodja. She graduated from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts with a Bachelor of Performing Arts majoring in Lighting Design in 2017.

Some of her most recent works include the lighting design for the WA Ballet's 2021 season of *Genesis*, *Beastalk* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre) written by Sam Longley, *In Case of Emergency* (Hayman Theatre Co.) written and directed by Jeffrey Jay Fowler, *Medusa* (Renegade Productions x Bow & Dagger) directed by Joe Lui and stage manager/operator/collaborator for The Last Great Hunt's Helpmann Award nominated production *Lé Nør [the rain]* for Perth Festival 2019. *Playthings* marks Kristie's design debut for Black Swan.



CREATIVES REBECCA RIGGS-BENNETT COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Rebecca is a theatrical sound artist, electronic music producer, composer, sound designer and emerging director based in Boorloo/Perth. Her practice is interdisciplinary, often socially engaged, and branches between performance, installation, and live music. Since studying electronic music and sound production at SAE Institute, Rebecca has presented projects, worked on projects, and taken up residencies/labs with many venues and festivals in WA as well as Arts House (VIC), SIGNAL Arts (VIC) Crack Theatre Festival (NSW) and Glastonbury Festival (UK). Credits include composer and sound designer for *Whale Fall* at Perth Festival (2021) and composer, sound designer and assistant director for *Body Rights* with WA Youth Theatre Company (2020). Rebecca's solo music project *Elsewhere/Rebecca* was recently nominated for a 2021 West Australian Music Award under Best Electronic Producer. She is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Performing Arts, majoring in Practice Transition, at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.



CREATIVES SHANNON ROGERS CHOREOGRAPHER

Shannon is an actor, dancer, singer and choreographer from Perth. After graduating from Murdoch University with a Bachelor in Theatre and Drama and a minor in Literature, she found herself a home in the Perth burlesque scene where all her stage training was put to use performing as her alter ego, Polly St. Pearl. Choreography credits include: *Sh*t We Like to Sing* (Broken Crayon Productions), *Hail Satan!* (NEXT Productions), *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* (Murdoch University) and *Be More Chill* (Phoenix Theatre). Though Shannon has worked with the incredible writer/director, Scott McArdle, this will be her first time working with Black Swan.



CREATIVES

ALEXA TAYLOR

DRAMATURG

Alexa is a dramaturg, director, and performance maker with a PhD in Performance and Creative Arts. Recent works include director of Finegan Kruckemeyer's *Love* (Eat Life Productions); director/dramaturg of *See You Next Tuesday* (Static Drive Co, Best Independent Production – PAWA Awards); writer/director of *Two Canaries* (Alexa Taylor Productions, Best Design – Blue Room Theatre Awards); and dramaturg for *Playthings* (Second Chance Theatre, Members Choice – Blue Room Theatre Awards), *Unrule* (Hey! Precious), *Text Roulette* (Finn O'Branagain), *Stories Staged* (The Blue Room Theatre and The Centre for Stories), and *Laika – A Staged Radio Play* (Second Chance Theatre, Best Independent Production – PAWA Awards, Members Choice – Blue Room Theatre Awards). Through Murdoch University, Alexa has worked on research projects exploring creativity and sense of place, new media dramaturgy, and theatre and politics. She has taught at tertiary institutions for many years, and is currently a lecturer in the Performance Making course at WAAPA.



CAST

SIOBHAN DOW-HALL

MISS RICHARDS

Siobhan graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts' (WAAPA) Acting course in 2009. She has starred in numerous independent films, as well as major productions including Foxtel's *Cloudstreet*, the Singaporean based HBO series *Serangoon Road*, and the WA thriller *The Reckoning*.

Recent theatre credits include *Cis and Barbiche*, *Project Xan*, and *A Doll's House*. In 2019 she was part of the premiere season of *Playthings*. In 2017 Siobhan completed her Masters degree at WAAPA, and as of 2021 is completing her PhD at Murdoch University.



CAST

DANIEL BUCKLE

ARNOLD

Daniel is an actor of stage and screen, children's entertainer, and improviser with a Diploma of Screen Acting at the Film and Television Institute, and has been performing professionally since 2009. Buckle co-wrote and starred in *Fish in the Sea*, as well as *Two Bees*, as part of Bastard Theatre. He has been a member of *The Big HOO-HAA!* improvised comedy troupe since 2012, and a core cast member of *Improv DnD* (Bogan Shakespeare Productions), *Captain Spaceship* (Weeping Spoon Productions), *El Presidente Minisculo* (Masters of Hooey), as well as *Ramshackle and Kitsch*, and *Frankie's* (Variegated Productions).

Recent productions include 2019 *Playthings*, and *Laika: A Staged Radio Play* (Second Chance Theatre), and *An Ideal Host* (Robert Woods and Tyler Jacob Jones). Buckle has performed internationally in both *Bruce*, and *It's Dark Outside* (The Last Great Hunt, 2018-present).



CAST

COURTNEY HENRI

LUCY

Courtney graduated the Bachelor of Performing Arts degree at WAAPA in 2018, winning the TILT Award for her devised physical theatre piece *Girl and Thing*. Courtney recently completed a Diploma of Screen Acting.

Recent credits include: Finegan Kruckemeyer's *Love* (Eat Love Productions, 2020), The Blue Room Theatre and PAWA award winning *Playthings* (Second Chance Theatre, 2019), *Floor Thirteen* (Marshall Stay, 2019), and the Fringe World award winner *The Cockburn Incident* (Fringe World and KickStart Festival, 2018).



CAST

ST JOHN COWCHER

RHYS

St John is an actor, theatre-maker and puppeteer. He works with many excellent companies including Barking Gecko Theatre, Second Chance Theatre, Black Swan and The Last Great Hunt. He is an associate artist with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Weeping Spoon Productions, Variegated Productions and The Big Hoo-Haa, and a proud Equity Australia member since 2015.

Recent credits include; *Ragnarokkr*, *Playthings 2019* (PAWA & The Blue Room Award Winner), *Frankie's* (Multi-PAWA & The Blue Room Award Winner), *My Robot* (PAWA Award Winner), *Laika: A Staged Radio Play* (PAWA & The Blue Room Award Winner), *Bambert's Book of Lost Stories* (Helpmann Award Winner), and *The Man and the Moon* (Martin Sims Nominee).



**“PLAYTHINGS IS
DARKLY FUNNY AND
FULL OF HEART”**



CREW
ERIN LOCKYER
ASSISTANT PRODUCER

Erin is a Boorloo-based independent producer, connecting artists' work with audiences. Working with a collection of local theatre companies, Erin has fortified meaningful collaborations, advocating for sustainable and fulfilling projects. Some of Erin's recent projects include: *The Inconsequential Lives of Little Fish*, 2018; *Penthouse*, 2018 (Lazy Yarns); *Playthings*, 2019 (Second Chance Theatre); and *I Feel Fine*, 2019 (public service announcement).

Erin also works closely with Lazy Yarns as their resident producer and collaborator.



CREW
GEORGIA SMITH
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.

Her recent highlights from The Blue Room Theatre 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 *The Lighthouse Girl* (Black Swan State Theatre Company, 2018) and *Bali* (TLGH, 2018).



CREW
ISABELLA TAYLOR
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Isabella (they/them) is excited to join the team of *Playthings* for their first show with Black Swan. They are a graduate of WAAPA's BA of Performing Arts specialising in Stage Management, where their credits range stage and production management roles across productions such as *Strictly Ballroom* (2019), *Sweet Charity* (2019), and *Die Fledermaus* (2019). Their industry secondment was completed with the return season of *Billy Elliot* (2020) at the Regent Theatre in Melbourne.

Their professional portfolio includes Stage Manager for *The Little Mermaid* (2021), Freeze Frame Opera's Perth Festival performance of *Rusalka* adapted for a young audience, and Event Manager for the *Australian Event Awards* (2020), part of a 4-city broadcast across Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Sydney. They look forward to expanding their career in technical theatre and stage management in the future.





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We would like to thank the team at The Blue Room Theatre for their support and assistance. Thank you to Nostalgia Box Museum and guest speaker Claire Eaton.



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Although the arts have had to adapt during this time of upheaval, the role they play in igniting our imaginations has remained constant. We're proud sponsors of The Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA.

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