

A NOTE FROM THE Artistic Director

We are coming into the final stretch of 2014 and yet we are busier than ever! As the weather fluctuates between gorgeous sunshine and biting wind, the Black Swan family are tucked away in our offices, production and wardrobe departments, rehearsal room and on stage. Spring is always an exciting time for us.

As I write this, *The Seagull* has just opened at the Heath Ledger Theatre, we are in rehearsals for *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, and we are busily planning our 2015 season and brochure.

I unfortunately cannot reveal anything about 2015 yet. You have no idea how hard it is to keep this secret each year! I'm dying to tell you all about it. I will say that next year is going to be a year of surprises with Black Swan entering new territory.

But there's much to do and see before we farewell 2014! So strap yourselves in for the remaining productions this year – they are sure to knock your socks off and have you in stitches with laughter.

The Seagull soared to new heights as a new adaptation by Australian playwright Hilary Bell. Adaptations are an important way to expose new audiences to classic works, especially those originally written in another language. Hilary breathed fresh life into the script, making it accessible to all. The cast did a fantastic job bringing the

characters – with all their facets and flaws – to life. And how gorgeous was that set?

We are not ones to rest on our laurels – we're now focusing on our remaining two mainstage productions of this year. *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* is deep into rehearsals, and I can honestly say I haven't laughed this much in a very long time. The cast are a hilarious bunch of talented actors and our Stage Manager Lisa spends a lot of time reminding us to stop laughing and get back to work!

Gasp! is our final production of 2014 and it's quite special. I approached Ben Elton a while back about doing a play together. Ben has been living in Fremantle for years and I have been itching to have his dry wit on our stage. He had been thinking for some time that his play *Gasp!* was becoming more and more relevant in the current climate of business, politics and society. He has revisited, revised and renamed it, and I can't wait to see it in its new form, *Gasp!*

As a co-production, Queensland Theatre Company Artistic Director Wesley Enoch will direct it and it will have a season in Brisbane after Perth.

Our relationships with other theatre and arts organisations are so important to our health as a theatre company and to remaining a valued and dynamic part of the national conversation. Sometimes it can be isolating out here in the West, but these relationships help us stay involved, stay current and share our vision and artists with the rest of Australia and the world.

We are happy to expand our relationships in 2015 with some exciting new partners – more to come on that soon!

Thank you for continuing this journey with us.

Kate Cherry
Artistic Director



inside



Ben Elton's *Gasp!*



A brief history of *Laughter*



Sundowner with Greta



High flying theatre

Laughter on the 23rd Floor 06 – 21 September

Subscriber Briefing: Monday 01 September, 6.15pm (free)

Rio Tinto Pre-show talk: Wednesday 17 September, 6.45pm (free)

Post Show Q&A: Thursday 18 September, following 7.30pm performance (free)

Closing Night Party: Sunday 21 September, following 5.00pm performance (\$40 through Ticketek)

Gasp! 25 October – 09 November

Subscriber Briefing: Monday 20 October, 6.15pm (free)

Rio Tinto Pre-show talk: Thursday 30 October, 6.45pm (free)

Post Show Q&A: Thursday 06 November, following 7.30pm performance (free)

Closing Night Party: Sunday 09 November, following 5.00pm performance (\$40 through Ticketek)

**SAVE THE DATE!**

2015 Season Launch Thursday 09 October – more information will be provided soon!

Casting Update

We may be frantically casting our 2015 shows, but we also have a few updates about our remaining 2014 season! *Gasp!* by Ben Elton, our co-production with Queensland Theatre Company, will have some familiar and some new faces, including Caroline Brazier, Damon Lockwood and Steven Rooke.



Caroline
Brazier



Damon
Lockwood



Steven
Rooke

Black Swan Snippets

WELCOME NEW STAFF

More new staff members have joined the Black Swan family over the past few weeks! We'd like to welcome Amber Craike, Philanthropy Officer.

HOUSE TOUR

The House on The Lake, which premiered in the Studio Underground this year as part of the Black Swan Lab, is going on tour! Subject to funding, this psychological thriller will be seen across WA and maybe nationally. We hope to announce the tour details soon. Stay tuned!

SPECIAL DEALS

Don't forget that Black Swan subscribers are entitled to great discounts to other performing arts companies and Black Swan sponsor companies! A list was sent with your theatre tickets or you can view the list of benefits on our website at www.bsstc.com.au/subscriptions/subscriber-discounts.

BLACK SWAN BRIDGE

A group of Black Swan subscribers are heading overseas to play in an international bridge championship – and their team name is Black Swan! Great to see Black Swan enthusiasts represent around the world. Chookas to the bridge group!

Need to exchange your tickets?

As a Black Swan subscriber you have access to many perks, and one of the most important ones is the ability to change your mind about the dates you've chosen to attend performances.

We understand that life happens and plans can change. To make the ticket exchange process as smooth and efficient as possible for all, here are a few pointers from Black Swan's Ticketing & Admin Officer:

- 1 Call Black Swan on (08) 6212 9300 and say you are a subscriber and you would like to exchange your tickets for a new date. We can tell you which dates have plenty of available seats, but we cannot hold seats for you so we are unable to guarantee which seats you will receive.
- 2 Post your original tickets to PO Box 337, Northbridge WA 6865 – make sure you include a note that states your name, your address, a contact phone number and the new performance date you would like to attend.
- 3 Then just await your new tickets in the post! If there are any issues with the date you've chosen, we will give you a call.

Please make sure you've given us sufficient turnaround time to receive your original tickets and then post out the new tickets. If it's less than 4 working days it might be best to bring your tickets into the office rather than post them. Please follow these steps to ensure a quick turnaround for your exchange.

BEN ELTON: Comedic Genius



Ben Elton still has the ability to surprise, says Gabi Mills, as the creative whirlwind responsible for the birth of cutting edge 80's stand-up in the UK, *Blackadder*, *The Young Ones* and 14 bestsellers rejigs one of his early plays and places it firmly in Australia's here and now.

"I've got a restless imagination," says Ben Elton, long-time resident of Fremantle and self-confessed fan of musical theatre, "and I've got an ongoing passion to commit my thoughts to paper." That's something of an understatement if you take even a cursory stroll through Elton's curriculum vitae.

However, like most of the things that come out of the mouth of the man who used to be from Auntie, nothing is said without a laser-sharp wit, his super-charged brain processing, analysing and reacting to everything he encounters.

This is a man who doesn't mince his words, and yet so many of those words, arranged in the right order, sometimes funny, sometimes provoking, have defined his working life.

And when Black Swan's Kate Cherry approached him and offered him the chance to create a play for his home state's theatre, Elton didn't need to be asked twice.

"When Kate said to me that they'd love to have a play from me, I didn't really have a new idea for one but had thought for a while that *Gasping* was becoming more relevant. I thought it was just a wonderful chance to revisit that work."

Written in 1989, *Gasping* – now *Gasp!* – imagined a world where big business spotted a new opportunity to make a lot of money from a previously free resource – air.

"It's a comedy which imagines a world where the air we breathe has to be harvested, mined and marketed just like food and fuel and all the other finite natural resources of our planet. Because let's face it, the fact that air remains the one single necessity of life which is still free, and consumed equally by rich and poor alike is just a bit of luck really. If somebody could sell it they would."

However, as *Gasping* was written back in 1989, during a period of Elton's life where he had just met his future wife, Sophie Gare, and was embarking on his Australian odyssey, splitting time between the UK and Freo, on closer inspection the language was in need of tweaking.

"The premise is the same now as it was originally, a full on farce – it's just the comedic language that's changed," says Elton. "It came out at the time when it was the height of the yuppies, all 'ok yah' and references which dated it. Now it's much more Aussie with two big muscular mining guys and a new love interest character too."

Before writing for others took over, a career in stand-up comedy beckoned but it was always writing where Elton's heart really lay. Despite becoming wildly popular as a fast-talking, shiny suit-wearing, anti-Thatcherite 'political' satirist on *Friday Night Live*, Elton disputes the fact that he was ever actually 'angry'.

"It was never about being angry," he says. "I'm not an angry person at all. One critic called me a Marxist during a review of *Gasping* and I wrote a response to him – the first and only time I've responded to a critic – saying that was utterly ridiculous. *Gasping* wasn't a political polemic – if anything, it's a morality play but above all it's a comedy, a farce."

Commissioned to write the first series of *Blackadder* at just 21, Elton was part of a brilliant pack of now household names who were all at the time carving a new niche in comedy, thanks to the launch of Channel 4's more modern approach to programming at the time and a golden period of creativity.

"It was just a time where a lot of us mutually benefitted and although I've never been especially reflective, looking back, to be commissioned to write a comedy for the BBC at 21, it was an extraordinary time."

At the height of Elton's British TV success, he found himself living in Fremantle with his new wife and picked up the pen again, this time writing his first novel *Stark*.

"I regret not calling it Fremantle," he says, smiling. "It's quite obviously Fremantle in the 1980s but I chose to call the town Stark instead."

However it was the lure of the greasepaint that always remained Elton's biggest dream, particularly within the often maligned genre of musical theatre.

"I just loved the whole idea of being amusing and witty," he said. "From a young age I wanted to be Noel Coward; I was much more interested in writing *Hayfever* than *Mother Courage*."

His dream finally came true in 2003 with *The Beautiful Game*, writing the lyrics for Andrew Lloyd-Webber's score, and then *We Will Rock You* with Queen, his talents reaching yet again new audiences.

However, Elton is aware that some markets – the US in particular – are still there to be conquered.

"My son, who was 11 at the time, said something to me which made me laugh. He said 'you and I have something in common. Neither of us has made it in America.'"

Perhaps that last frontier is now just around the corner as Elton's output once again steps up a gear. As well as *Gasp!* touring Australia, he's also working on a new commission for the BBC and is developing a movie too.

As his play originally conceived and written 25 years ago gets a modern makeover, Elton is once again prodding and provoking us all through the mastery of his comedic lingua franca in *Gasp!*.

"I'm a comic, a clown, with the wisdom of the fool," he says.

And in an era where clowns seem to be at work in other areas of our lives too, it's just as well we have Elton's 'foolish wisdom' shining a satirical light on the big topics which concern us all – just as he has always done.

Written by Gabi Mills. Read the full article in Marque Magazine.

Gasp! plays at the Heath Ledger Theatre from 25 October to 09 November.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF

Laughter on the 23rd Floor

Neil Simon wrote *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* in 1993 and based it on his real-life early career experience as a junior writer (along with his brother Danny) for *Your Show of Shows*, the weekly variety show in the early 1950's featuring Sid Caesar.

The work is a roman à clef, with the characters in the play based on Neil Simon's co-writers on *Your Show of Shows*, including the Sid Caesar-inspired Max Prince, the hypochondriac Ira (inspired by Mel Brooks although often attributed to Woody Allen), the dryly witty Kenny (inspired by Larry Gelbart and Carl Reiner), and the fussy Russian émigré Val (inspired by Mel Tolkin). Neil even puts himself in the play as the young newcomer Lucas, who maintains a running commentary on the writing, fighting, and wacky antics which take place in the writers' room.

According to Neil, Caesar's writers held their script sessions at various times on the eleventh and the twelfth floors of an NBC TV office building; he added those numbers together to put his fictional cast on the 23rd floor.

While being "pulverizingly funny," *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* also hints at the very real, and not as funny, matters of 1950's America (sexism, racism, the Communist witch hunts). But the characters are determined to keep the good times rolling, with hilarious gags and one-liners keeping the audience in stitches. As the character Kenny says, "Maybe we'll never have this much fun again in our entire lives."

Laughter on the 23rd Floor plays at the Heath Ledger Theatre from 06 – 21 September.



PLAY YOUR PART, LEAVE A LEGACY

For Black Swan to continue to bring the magic of locally produced live theatre to Western Australians, we need to grow our ability to produce wonderful theatre in all aspects of stage, set and production. Government funding allocated to the Company only covers about 40% of the total cost of producing quality theatre. Black Swan must rely on the generosity of the people of Western Australia, through ticket sales, donations and sponsorship, to cover the remainder of our costs. It is private giving and sponsorship which allows us to improve the quality of our productions, run education programs and provide new opportunities and mentoring to develop local artists, designers and directors.

To play your part, consider donating to Black Swan or joining Black Swan's Legacy Leaders and help lead the way to ensure the Western Australian theatre industry remains sustainable for generations to come. By joining the Legacy Leaders you will become part of a special group of donors leading the future of Black Swan.

Your bequest will cement a legacy in your memory and will mark a meaningful bond with theatre and belief in Western Australian art and culture. Give a gift that is truly enduring and ensure that younger Western Australians are able to experience the thrill of stage performance in future!

For more information, please contact Andree McIntyre on 0417 187 025 or andree@bsstc.com.au.

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Regional Stories Take Flight

Black Swan has a commitment to telling West Australian stories and to bringing new stories from page to stage. We recently completed a project in Carnarvon where we worked with the community to create a play around a local story.

We are now heading to Kalgoorlie for a project with Kalgoorlie-Boulder theatre group Stage Left. The four year relationship between Black Swan and Stage Left aims to facilitate high quality performing arts experiences for the community of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, and to provide skills building opportunities for Stage Left members with professional artists.

This particular project brings Stage Left together with playwright Nathaniel Moncrieff. Nathaniel, who was once part of Black Swan's Emerging Writers Group, has written the play *The Burning*, based on a non-fiction novel about the Kalgoorlie-Boulder race riots of 1934, written by Nathaniel's father Rod Moncrieff.

The story is based on a historical moment for the region, when the town's inhabitants turned on one another during a series of violent, destructive race riots.

Stage Left and Black Swan are working together to bring this play to life. The creative development will see award-winning director Adam Mitchell, who often directs for Black Swan, visiting Kalgoorlie to work with Moncrieff and Stage Left on this script.

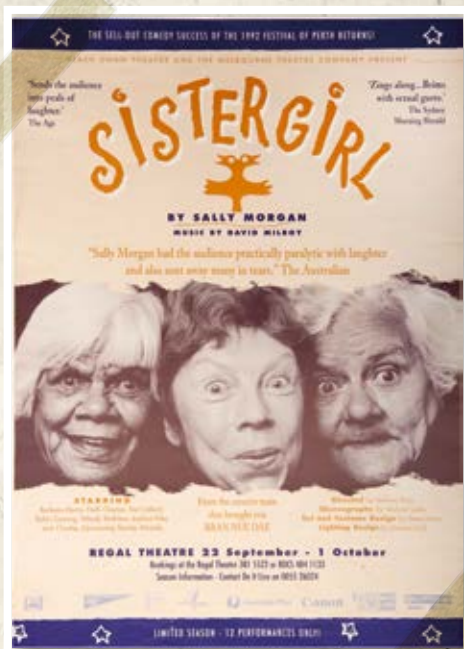
The second creative development will occur over the National Regional Arts Conference in October, culminating in an emotive and ground-breaking script reading.

This project has been funded by Regional Development Australia Goldfields-Esperance and in partnership with Artgold as part of the Hyperlocal Showcase developed to curate and support three home-grown Kalgoorlie-Boulder arts projects for the National Regional Arts Conference.



From the Archives

A quick look at past Black Swan productions



Sistergirl, 1992

First produced by Black Swan at the Dolphin Theatre for the Festival of Perth in 1992, *Sistergirl* was written by Sally Morgan and directed by Andrew Ross, Black Swan's Artistic Director at the time. It subsequently toured to Adelaide, Sydney, Canberra, Darwin, Melbourne and country Western Australia.

What Does It Mean?

There's plenty of weird phrases and superstitions in theatre. Things like never referring to *Macbeth* by name, only as "the Scottish play". Blue being unlucky to wear on stage (along with green and yellow). That a theatre should be closed one night a week, to give the ghosts of the theatre a chance to perform their own plays.

One of the most prominent superstitions is the idea of it being bad luck to wish "good luck" in theatre.

In many English speaking countries, the expression "break a leg" replaces the phrase "good luck". A popular theory on the origin of "break a leg" is that it stems from the days of Vaudeville when a performer was only paid if their act made it onto the stage, which mostly depended on audience size and participation. If you walked past the curtains, known as 'legs', therefore breaking the sightline of the 'legs', you were guaranteed a paycheck.

In Australia it is common to wish someone "Chookas" instead of "good luck". In the early 1900s chicken was regarded as a treat

and a full house meant that the performers would be able to afford a chicken meal. The cry "chook it is" was shortened to "chookas" and eventually used by performers to wish each other a successful show regardless of the number of people in the theatre.

In Portuguese and Spanish-speaking countries, it's common for the director and actors to gather on the stage before a performance, join hands and scream "Muita merda!" or "¡Mucha mierda!", which translates to "a lot of s**t!". This phrase reputedly stems from the fact that historically people would arrive at the theatre by horse-led carriage, and so if a lot of people came to the theatre it resulted in larger amounts of horse droppings. How lovely!



Thank You Subscribers!

Black Swan wouldn't be where we are without our faithful subscribers. We hosted a couple of events recently to thank our long-term subscribers for their continued support and to celebrate the journey we have shared together. At Kitchen Headquarters, Kate Cherry and Rick Hart both spoke about the importance of these relationships and Kate took us for a wonderful trip down memory lane while celebrity chef Josh Catalano wowed our tastebuds with his gourmet treats. At the Hyatt Regency, guests shared an intimate dinner with Janet Holmes á Court and Patricia Kailis AM OBE to celebrate some of our longest term subscribers.

Special thanks to our partners Kitchen Headquarters, Hyatt Regency, Kailis, Big Sky Entertainment, Liquid Library and Amelia Park Wines.



SUNDOWNER WITH Greta Scacchi



Black Swan donors recently had a special opportunity to rub shoulders with Emmy and AFI Award-winning and Golden Globe and BAFTA Award-nominated Greta Scacchi!

Hosted by the White Swans, a Black Swan private giving circle, the sundowner event provided donors with the opportunity to ask questions and hear insights into Greta's career and *The Seagull*. Held in the foyer of the State Theatre Centre, it was a delightful evening full of conversation!

KITCHEN HEADQUARTERS ARE RENOWNED WHEN IT COMES TO KITCHEN AND LAUNDRY APPLIANCES. DRIVEN BY RETAIL PIONEER, RICK HART, THE BEAUTY OF KITCHEN HEADQUARTERS' APPROACH IS THAT THEIR STAFF, SERVICE AND PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE ARE SECOND TO NONE.

Kitchen Headquarters regularly puts on cooking and appliance classes run by the best in the business, from brands such as AEG, Miele, Gaggenau, Ilve and many more. These classes help customers to make difficult decisions, and cover all manner of questions across environmental considerations, style, functions, and ways to achieve the best value for the best results.

Visit a Kitchen Headquarters showroom in Osborne Park, Joondalup and O'Connor, or visit www.kitchenhq.com.au.

KHQ
KITCHEN HEADQUARTERS



Staff Q&A: Jordan Nix

Our Black Swan Q&As series continues with Partnerships Coordinator and jack-of-all-trades, Jordan Nix. Jordan has been with Black Swan for a few years now in many different capacities, so we thought it was time to learn a bit more about him.

You started your career at Black Swan as an intern. Since then you've worked in Philanthropy, Marketing, Ticketing and subscriptions, Education and now your current role in Partnerships. What has that journey been like?

You make me sound like a drifter! I've been so lucky to be able to transition through the Company from an intern into my role today. Part of that is showing a passion and dedication to the arts, the other is staying around long enough that they probably thought "time to give the guy a proper job!" It's been such a huge learning curve and it's given me a great appreciation for the way Black Swan operates and the importance of each department. We always use the term 'Black Swan family' and it's really true.

You studied Journalism as well as Acting at university. What drew you to theatre and to Black Swan?

I never knew a career in the arts like this existed growing up in the country. I remember being in Year 8 and my teacher saying "you're good at English, you should be a journalist" – and so I thought I'd give it a go. The internship at Black Swan was the

perfect way to blend together my writing background with a love of theatre. It was an instant attraction. I also dabble in the creative field with some playwriting in my spare time so Black Swan is a perfect fit for me.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I'm a huge music lover so most of my pay check goes to buying music! I love to put my headphones on and go for a huge walk around the city.

What is your favourite Black Swan production?

I absolutely loved *Other Desert Cities*. I think I saw it four times. It made me so proud to work for the Company. I also loved *Shrine* and *When The Rain Stops Falling*.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given and by who?

There's never a bad time to watch *The Golden Girls*. The person who gave me this advice was me.

NEW AND OLD: Classics and Contemporary Dramas Sit Side by Side

Our recent productions are great examples of our dedication to both classics and new works, to revisiting existing favourites and to creating new favourites. After all, powerful stories, exciting characters and moving words never go out of style. Thank you for your support of these productions and for making them such a success!

DUST: PERTH ON STAGE LIKE NEVER BEFORE

*"A fascinating patchwork of stories ...
Top-notch performances abound."*
STAGE WHISPERS

*"Terrific. Dust is one of the most enjoyable and
impressive new Australian plays Black Swan has
mounted in recent years, and well worth seeing."*
THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

*"Epic and clever ... The performances are
remarkable".*
OUT IN PERTH

*"Dust gets its...it gets what we care about,
what we are scared about...brings contemporary
issues to light in such a funny and endearing
play that is uniquely Perth."*
PERTH WALKABOUT



THE SEAGULL: A FRESH AND FUNNY RUSSIAN CLASSIC

*"Great outfits and set, love, sex, betrayal,
envy, death - this play has it all! MUST SEE!"*
ELLA, PATRON

*"A very good, light-hearted night at the
theatre. Chekhov would have been proud."*
INDEPENDENT THEATRE ASSOCIATION

*"The Seagull is an excellent opportunity to
be able to see a classic, often thought of as
tired and uninviting, in a new way. This is a
fresh, accessible and entertaining look at The
Seagull, a must see for regular theatregoers,
students and especially for those who think
that they don't like Chekhov."*
STAGE WHISPERS

*"So funny in many ways and so deep in
others, you could put the cast in today's
clothes and the message would be the same.
The ending just hit me. Brilliant production,
acting, set, costumes."*
SHARYN, PATRON



Dust Opening Night in the Heath Ledger TheatreAndrew Drayton, Alecia Benzie,
Fred and Angela ChaneyMarie Fitzpatrick, Alannah MacTiernan,
Lexi Murphy and Sue MurphyAlison Bannan, Helen Cook
and Susanne Vinn*The Seagull* Opening Night in the Heath Ledger TheatreAlan Cransburg, Rick Hart, Lisa Hart,
Stuart Halusz, Fiona Bruce and Jon NortierHilary Bell, Kate Cherry,
Raymond Omodei and Greta ScacchiRobyn Johnston, The Honourable
John Day and Nikki Day

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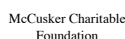
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Black Swan's Facebook page.