

A NOTE FROM THE Artistic Director

With one foot in 2015 and the other foot in next year, this is my favourite time of the year.

Black Swan is bursting at the seams. Our small but mighty team is even busier than usual. We have just gone through an extensive process with the Black Swan Board to decide how to celebrate our 25th year. We have been busy choosing repertoire, auditioning actors (I must have seen over 100 auditions in the last 2 months), looking at graduating designers' work, dreaming up designs, writing copy and shooting photos with our wonderful collaborators, Dessein. And we are also continuing to focus on our remaining productions this year – finishing casting, building sets and rehearsing.

It's a very exciting time, but then we're never short on excitement here at Black Swan. You may have heard about an actor falling ill recently and having to pull out of *Blithe Spirit*. As they say, the show must go on! And go on it did, with actor Alison van Reeken stepping in at very short notice. State theatre companies, unlike the West End or Broadway, cannot afford to have understudies. "Dr Theatre", as we like to call him, usually helps a sick actor get through a show because of the adrenaline, but the opposite can also be true. Adrenaline rushes to the throat, which is why an opera singer with a cold can have

serious difficulties, and an actor with a sore throat has more to worry about than the rest of us.

I was very proud of the entire team for getting the production to opening night without losing a show. The professionalism of everyone involved really shone, and, as always, the Black Swan family pulled together to ensure we did not have to cancel a show.

That is just one example of the high calibre of actors and designers that we work with. We are focussing more and more, now and in the future, on nurturing and developing the talented people around us. Speaking of which, Trent Suidgeest - who Black Swan has nurtured since he graduated - is having great success with his work on the east coast. We are very proud of Trent's development as an artist. It's great that he is still finding the time to work with us.

With *The Red Balloon* we'll be working with some **very** new artists. Child actors aged 7 to 13 will be taking the Studio Underground stage by storm in this adaptation of the classic French story. We have worked a bit with children in the past, but this will be our first production for children and families. As a parent myself, I'm looking forward to bringing my son Orlando to the theatre. He, like

hundreds of other children, auditioned for the esteemed choreographer, Chrissie Parrott.

Our other two productions this year have talented, albeit older, casts – a mix of fresh faces and well-known favourites. For *Extinction*, Myles Pollard of *McLeod's Daughters* and *Home and Away* fame joins Black Swan stalwarts Matt Dyktynski (*Day One*, *A Hotel*, *Evening*), Sarah McNeill (*Shrine*) and newcomer Hannah Day.

Next to Normal, the musical that rounds off our year, was recently voted the top musical of the 21st century and is the most critically acclaimed musical since *Rent*. You can read more about the production and the cast on page 7.

While I am not directing another production for Black Swan in 2015, I hand the reins over to three fantastic and talented artists: Stuart Halusz, an Associate Director; Chrissie Parrott, an emerging director; and Adam Mitchell, a well-established director. Offering these opportunities not only benefits the directors, with professional experience and mentoring, but also benefits the company and the

artists involved, with new ideas and ways of doing things.

On the eve of our 25th birthday, we are looking ahead more than ever. I say this every year, and every year it is true – I can't wait to share with you our plans for next year! In addition to a fantastic year of theatre, we'll also have birthday celebrations to share.

I hope to see you at the theatre this spring!

Kate Cherry
Artistic Director



inside



3

Quoll drama



4

A Family Show



5

A Normal Musical



6

Access for All

Extinction **19 September – 4 October**

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

Rio Tinto Pre-show talk:
Thursday 24 September,
6.45pm (free)

Post-show Q&A: Thursday
1 October, after the 7.30pm
performance (free)



The Red Balloon **1– 17 October**

Rio Tinto Pre-show talk: Wednesday
14 October, 12.45pm (free)

Post-show Q&As: Wednesday
7 October, after the 10.30am
performance and Saturday
10 October, after the 5.00pm
performance (free)



Next to Normal **7– 22 November**

Subscriber Briefing:
Monday 2 November,
6.15pm (free)

**Rio Tinto Pre-show
talk:** Thursday 12
November, 6.45pm
(free)

Post-show Q&A:
Thursday 19 November,
after the 7.30pm
performance (free)



SAVE THE DATE!

Black Swan's 2016 Season Launch
5 October

More information will be provided soon!

Live Broadcast Success

On Saturday 1 August, Black Swan broadcast our production of *Blithe Spirit* live from the State Theatre Centre in Perth to regional audiences across the state. It was our fifth broadcast in as many years. Our very first broadcast back in 2011 of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the first of its kind in Australia.

This year, over 11 regional venues and over 35 Community Resource Centres participated, for a total of over 1,100 patrons viewing the broadcast. These broadcasts continue to be an important part of our regional and community access initiative, enabling us to bring theatre productions to the regions that we are not able to tour. Thanks to Lotterywest for their support of our broadcasts for all these years!



Black Swan Snippets

NEW ARRIVALS

The Black Swan family is growing! Artistic Coordinator, Chantelle and her husband recently welcomed their second child, James. And Technical Manager, Alex and his wife welcomed their bundle of joy, Fleur. Congrats and best wishes to our newest additions!

AWESOME FEST

For the first time ever, Black Swan is producing a children's show, ***The Red Balloon***, which will be part of the annual Awesome Festival. We're excited to join up with the Awesome team and be part of this great family event!

CAST UPDATE

Our final production of 2015 is now fully cast. ***Next to Normal*** will feature the talents of Shannen Alyce, Rachael Beck, James Bell, Michael Cormick, Brendan Hanson and Joel Horwood, directed by Black Swan favourite Adam Mitchell.

GO GREEN

If you'd prefer to receive this newsletter by email, please let us know by contacting us on (08) 6212 9300 or information@bsstc.com.au.

EXTINCTION: There's an Animal in my Play

Hannie Rayson suspects she might have the power to bring a species back to life. Her latest play, *Extinction*, is about the ubiquitous Tiger Quoll. It is a cute looking (but savage) creature that is native to the western part of Victoria at Cape Otway, where the rainforest meets the Great Ocean Road.



"In the course of writing the play there had not been a sighting of a Tiger Quoll in about 25 years. When I pressed send on my second draft, I opened the paper and read on page five that there had just been a sighting," she said.

"It was so spooky and exciting. I was thrilled to bits. It was in someone's porch, climbing around and running off. They caught a picture on their phone."

Since then they have set up a project and there have been four sightings. As with other

endangered animals there is the dilemma about what can be done to save it from extinction. What an animal looks like can impact on public sentiment.

"You need to feel for them to lament their loss. I think they are quite sweet looking. Big eyes like possums. But they've got incredible sharp fangs. They are carnivorous. The fangs have evolved to rip flesh. You would not want it to bite you."

There are different types of quolls all over Australia. Some (friendlier varieties) are kept as pets.

In her play *Extinction* an executive from a coal mining company is driving when he hits a tiger quoll. The animal dies on the operating table at a wildlife sanctuary and the executive is inspired to do something to save the species. His company offers two million dollars to a regional University in a bid to help save it.

Hannie Rayson says this raises ethical issues about the implications of 'getting into bed with a coal company.'

Lest you suspect the play is entirely earnest in its subject matter, there is a healthy dose of sex, intrigue and corruption. The characters "are getting in and out of bed literally and allegorically."

Another 'fascinating' issue dealt with in the play is the viability of species that are endangered.

"An index has been developed about whether a creature is worth saving. If numbers in a species fall below 5,000 there might not be enough to survive a flood or natural disaster. It takes economic

rationalism too far. It's like saying will we save the Javan Rhino or the Sumatran Tiger."

Due to the rarity of the creature and its personality there will be no actual tiger quoll on stage.

"There have been no animals or children in my plays before. There may not be ever again."

There is an appearance of some bones of a specimen and she might be on the lookout for someone to donate their cat as a prop.

Instead there is the haunting beat of a heart throbbing away in the background.

Hannie Rayson has big ambitions for the play. She's hoping *Extinction*, commissioned by the Manhattan Theatre Club, is every bit as successful as some of her other plays including *Hotel Sorrento* and *Inheritance*.

Article from Stage Whispers July/August 2015 issue.

Extinction is at the Heath Ledger Theatre from 19 September to 4 October. Tickets on sale now through Ticketek.

Fast Facts on Tiger Quolls

- The Tiger Quoll is the largest remaining carnivorous marsupial on the Australian mainland.
- They have pink noses, white spots all over their bodies (including their tails) and a tenacious personality.
- Kilogram for kilogram, the Tiger Quoll has the second strongest bite of any predatory mammal in the world, beaten only by Australia's Tasmanian Devil.
- Tiger Quolls give birth to joeys that are not much bigger than a grain of rice.
- They are found in a range of forest habitats, from rainforest to open woodland. They can cover considerable distances (more than 6km) overnight, and are largely nocturnal and solitary.
- Tiger Quolls are related to the now extinct Thylacine (Tasmanian Tiger). 2011 marks 75 years since the last known Tasmanian Tiger died at the Hobart Zoo.



The Red Balloon

As Black Swan's first-ever children's production, we are very excited to present *The Red Balloon* by Albert Lamorisse and adapted by Hilary Bell.

"More than any other children's film, *The Red Balloon* turns me into a kid again whenever I see it. [To] see *The Red Balloon* is to laugh, and cry, at the impossible joy of being a child again," wrote a critic – and we couldn't agree more.

Director Chrissie Parrott wrote a few words about this production, and what she hopes to give to audiences.

In this new adaptation for stage by the brilliant Hilary Bell, we see our story set in the run-down, post-war Ménilmontant neighbourhood of Paris, with some reworked underlying ideas. Hilary has coaxed out the existing peripheral animals into a scrawny gaggle of half-human, half-animal, ragged

storytellers who drive the story, as our main character, little Pascal, lives in his own fantasy.

Pascal sees the world through innocent, picture book eyes – buildings that literally come to life as they move around the stage to represent the very scary town bullies who are up to no good! Eyeballs peering from every window and from behind the painted backcloths, with puppets, slide projectors and 'old school' contraptions that pop up and out of the set to surprise the children in the audience, both young and old.

Hand in hand, enter this dark but beautiful place where the big, red balloon with a life of its own offers the presence

of a loving friend, a symbol of spirituality, friendship, love, and the knowledge that real magic exists in the world.

It is a tender, humorous story and full of poignant symbolism, addressing the power of creative imagination, transcendence and the joy that children make of companionship and friendship.

Thanks to Rio Tinto Black Swan Commissions for commissioning this production.

The Red Balloon is at the Studio Underground from 1 to 17 October. Tickets on sale now through Ticketek.



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Getting to Know: Jackson McDonald



Malcolm Shenton-Agar is the Chief Executive Officer at Jackson McDonald, a longstanding supporter of Black Swan. As the Production Partner of the upcoming *Extinction*, we chatted with Malcolm about his job, Perth and what Black Swan means to him.

Q. How would you explain your job to a stranger?

A. As the CEO at Jackson McDonald my role is all encompassing. I work with our partnership on the strategy and direction of the firm to help build on its successful 93 year history as well as the executive management of the support functions within the business to ensure they are working effectively and efficiently.

I am also very lucky to be able to meet with our clients and discuss the challenges that they are facing and understand their expectations of us in what is a very rapidly changing environment.

Q. Why do you think it is important to support the arts?

A. Personally I am a huge fan of the arts. I think it is fantastic to see important works of literature come alive on stage, particularly the different interpretations from directors and actors.

The arts are fundamental to our humanity. They inspire us and foster creativity, goodness, and beauty. Arts and cultural organisations deliver enormous value to our communities and can also deliver great value to the corporate world. At Jackson McDonald we see importance in supporting the arts not only because we see the significance in connecting with the broader community, but also because we think it is important to consciously build and forge meaningful links between the world of arts (such as Black Swan) and our corporate world.

Q. What's top of your essential things to do in Perth?

A. Obviously to visit the State Theatre Centre and see a Black Swan production is top of my list. We are also lucky to have some great restaurants. Western Australia has some fantastic wine so the occasional trip down to Margaret River to visit the vineyards is a must.

Q. Do you have a favourite Black Swan production?

A. If I was to pick a production for this year to date then I would have to say *Blithe Spirit*. I thought the performance was tremendous and really brought the words to life.

Q. What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

A. The best piece of advice was given to me by a mentor many years ago. He said "always come to a meeting prepared, having done as much thinking about the issue(s) as is reasonably possible beforehand". This has stood me in good stead as both a lawyer and in executive management. I have always been solution focused and this advice has meant that meetings are spent on useful outcomes rather than unfocused discussion.

Next to Normal

Another first for Black Swan in 2015 is our production of *Next to Normal*, a rock musical with book and lyrics by Brian Yorkey and music by Tom Kitt.

This musical is about a mother who struggles with worsening bipolar disorder and the effect that her illness and the attempts to alleviate it have on her family. It delves into issues like grief, suicide, drug abuse, ethics in modern psychiatry and the underbelly of suburban life.

Next to Normal received several workshop performances before it debuted Off-Broadway in 2008, winning the Outer Critics' Circle Award for Outstanding Score and receiving nominations for Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Score.

The musical opened on Broadway in April 2009. It was nominated for 11 Tony Awards in 2009 and won

three: Best Original Score, Best Orchestration and Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical. It also won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, becoming just the eighth musical in history to receive the honour. The previous musical to win the Pulitzer was *Rent*, in 1996, which was also directed by Michael Greif. In awarding the prize to Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey, the Pulitzer Board called the show "a powerful rock musical that grapples with mental illness in a suburban family and expands the scope of subject matter for musicals."

Since its Broadway debut, *Next to Normal* has been presented around the world, from Scandinavia to Japan

to Peru to Germany to Israel, and beyond. We are very excited to present the Western Australian premiere.

Director Adam Mitchell will bring this award-winning musical to life on the Heath Ledger Theatre stage. Award-winning Australian stage and television singer-actress, Rachael Beck joins a talented cast including Shannen Alyce, James Bell, Michael Cormick, Brendan Hanson and Joel Horwood.



Next to Normal will enthrall Perth audiences from 7 to 22 November 2015. Tickets on sale through Ticketek.

Source: Wikipedia

Access for All

Black Swan actively engages with our community and is committed to developing our programs and services to help increase our accessibility to everyone in the community. Through the State Theatre Centre we offer services for vision, hearing or mobility impaired patrons.

VISION

Audio Description Service

An Audio Description Service for blind or vision impaired patrons is offered for all of our mainstage productions, on particular dates. Patrons arrive early to collect the equipment from the venue and be seated. The AD service starts 10 minutes prior to performance commencement so that the set and other elements can be described or sections of the programme can be read to patrons.

HEARING

Assisted Hearing System

The State Theatre Centre has been equipped with a Sennheiser Infra Red Assisted Hearing System in both the Heath Ledger Theatre and the Studio Underground, to assist those who are hard of hearing, wear hearing aids, or anyone who would like the sound on stage amplified. The system has two

types of receivers: an "in ear" headset for people without hearing aids, and an "induction" necklace for people with hearing aids. These can be used at any performance, and the equipment can be collected from the box office.

Captioned Performances

Patrons with hearing impairments can attend a performance where captions of the play script are displayed on a screen or personal handheld iPad. All Black Swan mainstage productions have captioned performances on particular dates.

MOBILITY

The State Theatre Centre is accessible to patrons with impaired mobility. The Heath Ledger Theatre and Studio Underground are accessible via lifts and both theatres have wheelchair seating available. Wheelchair accessible toilets are available on every level.

ASSISTANCE ANIMALS

Guide dogs or any animals trained to assist people with disabilities are welcome inside all areas of the State Theatre Centre. To ensure appropriate seating is allocated, make sure you inform us before arriving at the theatre.

COMPANION CARD

We recognise the Companion Card for all of our productions. Companion cardholders will not be required to pay for the cost of tickets for their carer. Please let Black Swan or Ticketek know you possess a companion card when booking your tickets.

It's always a good idea to inform us at the time of booking or before you arrive at the venue, if you require any assistance or services.

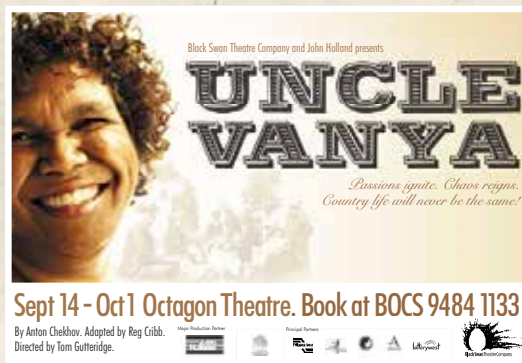
To read more about these offerings, please visit the 'Plan Your Visit' section on Black Swan's website.

From the Archives

A quick look at past Black Swan productions

Uncle Vanya, 2005

Black Swan presented the world premiere of *Uncle Vanya* at the Octagon Theatre in September 2005. Originally written by Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, this production was an adaptation in a "new and paradoxically Australian light" by Australian playwright Reg Cribb and directed by Black Swan's Artistic Director at the time, Tom Gutteridge.



If the last digit of your street or lot number is 1, Wednesday and Saturday are your watering days.

For an easier way to remember your two watering days each week, visit watercorporation.com.au/wateringdays

Blithe Spirit: a ghostly classic



"Coward's sharp script is held together with equally sharp acting from a unified cast. The overall entertainment value of the production is enormous..." THE AUSTRALIAN

"It's crackling and witty from the start. If you are considering going to see *Blithe Spirit*, ask the stars...all signs will point to yes!" THE AUSTRALIA TIMES

"It's a witty, quirky, effervescent production. One flustered husband, two feisty feuding wives from opposite astral planes, and a specter of mischief crackling the air – all make for brilliant, timeless theatre." THE STARFISH

"Director Fowler and his cast demonstrate how a work can stay fresh and compelling from one generation to the next. Coward's sly wit shines through ... *Blithe Spirit* provides light-hearted, intelligent entertainment on several levels." ARTSHUB

Astral Arts Panel

WITH THE LOCAL LARRIKINS

In June the Local Larrikins donor circle hosted an Arts Panel with some of the cast and crew from *Blithe Spirit*. The Larrikins and other Black Swan donors had the pleasure of hearing from Director Jeffrey Jay Fowler as well as actors Adam Booth and Roz Hammond. Black Swan's Associate Director, Stuart Halusz facilitated the Q&A as the director and cast gave insights into what excited them about the play, how they prepare for the production and most importantly – if they have ever had any astral experiences!

The Local Larrikins is an initiative founded by Janet Holmes à Court AC, aiming to engage young Western Australians with theatre and bring Western Australian artists, creatives and stories to Black Swan audiences each year. In 2015, the Local Larrikins have supported Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit*, which featured a Western Australian cast and crew and was the Black Swan mainstage production debut for Associate Director, Jeffrey Jay Fowler. It was great to see so many WA creatives and artists working together to create magic onstage.

If you are interested in learning more about the Local Larrikins or becoming a donor please contact Philanthropy Manager, Andree McIntyre at andree@bsstc.com.au.



Above right: *Blithe Spirit* Arts Panel.

Right: Garrod Keightley, Peter Hammond and Ann Hammond.

Blithe Spirit Opening Night in the Heath Ledger Theatre

Rick & Tessa Crabb

Marice Melchers, Leia Garner,
Rose Loeffem, Regan Bembridge

Natalie Jenkins, Minister John Day

Leilah Diong, Olivia Diong, Cynthia Griffin,
Jim Adamos, John Pintabona KHS

Adriane Daff, Ben Elton

Jan Alcock, Dale Alcock, Lawrie
Tremaine, Karen Tremaine

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