

ON CUE

BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY OF WA



INSIDE



OKLAHOMA! ENTER THE WILD WEST



UNSUNG HEROES WRAP



YORK CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

NOTE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Kaya, we have missed you! We gather in the theatre to have a great night out and to be entertained. We also gather in the theatre because in sharing stories, we learn more about ourselves. At the heart of it, we gather because we are a community. We gather in the theatre because as humans, we need to connect and because we care about each other.

This year, we have been asked to demonstrate our care in a different way and so our theatres have been quiet. During this time, I have held onto the memory of closing night of the great WA classic *Cloudstreet* – it was March 15, the final day of the before times – we all knew that this would be the last time we'd gather for some time. And as the final moment of the play rang out – we witnessed and felt the stunning coup-de-theatre moment that was a torrent of water falling from the sky to envelop Fish Lamb – the audience leapt to their feet in a standing ovation and the cast took their final curtain call. The energy in that room was the most electrifying experience I've had in a theatre in my adult life. I'm so grateful that I was there.

And so, you can imagine what it might feel like to return to the theatre soon. We are fortunate here in WA to be able to share live theatre experiences again this year and I couldn't imagine a more appropriate way to return than in glorious song with the lyrics "Oh what a beautiful morning, oh what a beautiful day". We can't wait to welcome you back and to gather once again with Richard Carroll's production of *Oklahoma!* Black Swan has always presented old plays in new ways and this production of the Rogers and Hammerstein classic adds to this oeuvre – it's cheeky, witty, subversive and ridiculously fun.

While the auditorium has been empty, we have kept creating. We've been working with actors and creatives almost every day of lockdown, including four weeks of creative development of *The Cherry Orchard* via zoom – Chekhov's comedy is built on dislocation, disconnection and maudlin musings on mortality – it worked! We gathered in the rehearsal room for creative development of *York* and shared the first public reading on Ballardong country in the York Town Hall.

We enjoyed a video and design workshop for Van Badham's stage adaptation of Orwell's *Animal Farm*. We live streamed Adam Mitchell's production of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* to celebrate Ray Lawler's 99th birthday. We delivered digital workshops – across schools and businesses – thank you to all of the artists who shared their passion and expertise. And our talented workshop team have been building and creating for the new WA Museum Boola Bardip.

During this time, *Unsung Heroes* enjoyed its world premiere. These exquisite solo performances are an absolute celebration of local talent and Western Australian stories. Thank you to all involved – directors Emily McLean and Joe Paradise Lui et al – for your dedication, innovation and heartfelt storytelling and for transforming live-performance into a film experience of exceptional quality. Thank you also to our audience who joined us from home to watch and to join in our post show discussions online. Our human need to connect and create has found a way!

Clare Watson
Artistic Director



INTRODUCING FUNNY GIRL

Thanks to the support of the Malcolm Robertson Foundation and City of Perth, Black Swan is pleased to announce a new playwright development program, 'Funny Girl'. The program will commission and encourage female stand-up comedians to write new comedic theatre scripts for the company to stage in future years. Our inaugural playwright is well known actor, comedian and ABC presenter Andrea Gibbs. She has commenced work on *Barracking for the Umpire*, with dramaturgical input from our Literary Director Polly Low. 'Funny Girl' will run for the next three years 2020 to 2022 and will enable the creation of new comedic theatre work that is timely, relevant and humorous.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



2021 Season Launch
Save the date – 9 Nov, Octagon Theatre



Oklahoma!
28 Nov – 20 Dec, Heath Ledger Theatre stage



State Theatre Centre of WA
10th Birthday – 27 Jan 2021

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF WA PRESENTS RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S OKLAHOMA!

MUSIC BY RICHARD RODGERS | BOOK & LYRICS BY OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II
BASED ON THE PLAY “GREEN GROW THE LILACS” BY LYNN RIGGS
ORIGINAL DANCES BY AGNES DE MILLE

Note from director Richard Carroll

The Oklahoma territory in 1906, lay beyond the western reaches of the federated United States. A land of shotgun rides, shotgun weddings, and shotgun justice. No local government, no electricity, no motor cars.

Tensions simmer between the cowmen, who have long worked the territory, and the increasing number of eastern farmers staking new claims to land which disrupts the cowmen's trade. As the territory prepares to become an official state of the Union, the attractions and complications of shifting identity seem to seep into the dirt and throw many of the characters off-balance.

Making his own living in these conditions is cowman Curly McLain. He has long held a torch for frontier girl Laurey Williams, a tough young woman who runs a farm with her even tougher Aunt Eller. Laurey has an eye for Curly too, but she's in no hurry to give up her freedom. She teases him by accepting an invitation to the Box Social from her hired hand, Jud Fry (who Curly

refers to as 'that bullet-coloured, growly man'). This flirtation seems harmless enough to Laurey – but Jud is lonely and disturbed, and their encounter sets off a chain of events that will end in death.

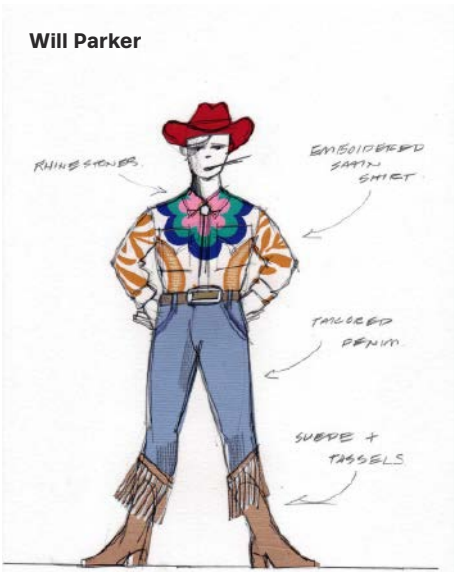
This staging of *Oklahoma!* features nine actors, directed by Richard Carroll (*Side Show, The Show Goes On*) whose production of *Calamity Jane* at Hayes Theatre Company enjoyed sold out seasons and won him a Sydney Theatre Award for Best Production of an Independent Musical, with seven nominations at the 2019 Green Room Awards including Best Production and Best Direction.

This production will force the musical out of the world of the canon and bring to life the characters of the show. As an audience member you will experience the Heath Ledger Theatre in a brand new way, sitting on the stage and in the round. The audience are in the world of these characters; you are invited to the Box Social barn dance.



Our Curly is played by actor Emily Havea (*Wentworth, Harrow, The Secrets She Keeps*) making the relationship between Laurey, Curly and Jud much more complicated and interesting. Richard Carroll says he has “watched Emily Havea be incredible and totally original in several plays and on television. I’m so excited to now be working with her on *Oklahoma!* Having a female actor play Curly brings so many new and fascinating complexities to the show, especially the complications and dangers of the ‘love triangle’ between Laurey, Curly and Jud. Emily is part of a dream cast and creative team, and I can’t wait to bring this version of *Oklahoma!* to the stage.”

Oklahoma! is presented by permission of ORiGiN™ Theatrical on behalf of R&H Theatricals, www.rnh.com.



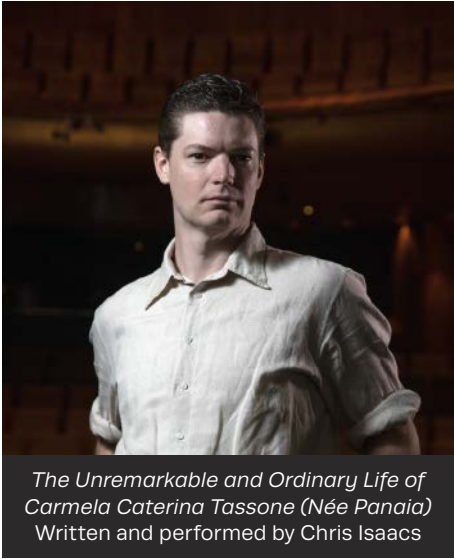
Costume renderings by Jonathon Oxlade
L-R: Ado Annie, The Band, Laurey Williams and Will Parker.

UNSUNG HEROES WRAP

Photos by Philip Gostelow

Unsung Heroes is a collection of tour-de-force performances that celebrate everyday Western Australians who have done extraordinary things. The world premiere was directed by Emily McLean and Joe Paradise Lui and re-imagined from the live stage experience into a series, filmed on stage for digital delivery.

Thank you to the team of extraordinary WA artists who brought these stories to our screens with such vitality and nuance. And thank you for joining us at the theatre from home.



Here are some of the online comments:

Loved it. It was fabulous to see Black Swan State Theatre Company producing work during COVID times employing WA creatives.

Very immersive, and just as emotionally connected as if I was at the theatre.

Living in the country it was much more convenient for me and I did enjoy what I saw – very innovative.

It was wonderful. Our family watched together, made possible by the platforms available. Even my 10 year old son watched, which wouldn't have happened otherwise.

Barb has a special talent and was so supportive, her ability to allow my character to shine through and her passion made this a safe place to put it out there. Georgia Prideaux





SINGAPORE AIRLINES

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CREATIVE LEARNING

Unsung Heroes, a digital festival of Western Australian stories, was also popular with educators and students. During Term 3, 120 Year 11 and 12 drama students from seven metropolitan schools worked with the writers and cast in a series of original solo performance (OSP) workshops, in preparation for their final year exams.

The students were very engaged throughout the workshop which was organically designed to best suit their needs. The students loved the activities so much that they wanted to continue trying them out again the next day. The improvement I've seen in their work over the course of one day was phenomenal. Mararo gave them a different perspective on their ideas and suggested tips to help them create and engage with this huge task. Many thanks to Black Swan for running this initiative – I hope it continues post-Covid! **Septimus Roe Anglican Community School.**

The students and I did some research on Effie Fellows, and we too, couldn't believe she didn't/doesn't have a Wikipedia page. Black Swan has achieved its mission: we now know about this Unsung Hero! I can't

wait to look at the other performances and stories behind the stories. **Mater Dei College.**

The workshop was very successful! The students really benefitted from Caitlin's performance and teaching experience. Her advice was practical, specific and applicable. **St Stephens School, this workshop was sponsored by City of Joondalup.**

ATAR students explored the art of writing with Chris Isaacs through a series of dynamic and engaging activities. They now have the skills to create boldly, knowing that it's ok to be 'lost' and come up against 'dead ends'. They have learnt that there is no such thing as a 'perfect idea'– you just need to be willing to explore the possibilities of an idea. **Newman College.**



IN CONVERSATION WITH MICHELA FINI

Philanthropy Focus Q&A with White Swan Michela Fini. Why become a donor?

Black Swan congratulates the White Swans Private Giving Circle on their ten-year anniversary in 2020. We thank them sincerely for their generous support and friendship shown to the company. We met with Michela Fini, one of the original White Swan notaries, to ask her about this dedicated circle of friends and her love for the arts.

First of all, congratulations on ten years with the White Swans Giving Circle! Did you ever imagine that you would be sitting here celebrating ten years with the White Swans and what does this mean to you?

It's just wonderful that people remain engaged and supportive of the arts in a very enjoyable way.

What was the original drive for starting the White Swans Giving Circle? Who started the circle of friends and how did it grow?

It was a casual start – it just happened through a friend, Linda Savage, organising one ladies' fundraising night at her house. The following year, Linda asked for assistance. I suggested in order to make the group enduring, it would be beneficial to invite couples. I enlisted two girlfriends – Sallie–Anne Manford and Sandy Honey, with the idea to form a Giving Circle. We know each other very well, so although we're different people, we complement each other – their collaboration to date has been enormous.

You and Adrian are strong supporters of arts and culture. Why do you feel it is important to ensure that the arts are appreciated by future generations?

Arts are necessary to the layers of a city; a healthy city has a healthy arts scene. With Western Australia experiencing a loss of our young people to opportunities interstate and overseas (pre–Covid times) we still need to pursue a vibrant, engaging and diverse arts culture. Plus, I'm selfish...I don't want my kids going away! (Despite the fact one is in Melbourne and one is in Sydney).

What was your first introduction to theatre?

When I was a young nine-year-old child I was introduced to theatre through my family in Italy. My mother was a theatre subscriber to the Eliseo in Rome. She would take me along to the theatre when my father couldn't go. My mother also attended with a group of friends. It was always such a pleasant social occasion, going to a play followed by an engaging dinner.

What is your favourite production of all time?

I think my favourite play would be Jean Genet's play *The Maids* presented by Sydney Theatre Company, starring Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert. To watch those two incredible iconic actresses was fascinating. Petite Isabelle Huppert was astonishing and playful in her role as was Cate Blanchett's mesmerising



Image LR: Sandy Honey, Sallie–Anne Manford, Michela Fini, Marcus Canning

performance. And I found it so interesting to have two actresses of their calibre coming from such a diverse background and acting styles in the play.

And what has been your favourite Black Swan production?

I have enjoyed many productions over the years. Personally, one of the stand outs was *Other Desert Cities* – the dialogue was incisive and the set magnificent. I also enjoyed

Venus in Fur at the Studio Underground.

We know you are a busy person. When you are not supporting Black Swan and the arts, what do you spend time doing?

I like a casual night at the movies, a favourite is Somerville. I like also to spend time down south with family and friends. Of course I'm involved with other philanthropic projects, organisations and medical research organisations in WA.

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH PLAYWRIGHT AND PERFORMER CHRIS ISAACS

Chris Isaacs is a Black Swan Artist in Residence (Supported by The McCusker Charitable Foundation and Simon Lee Foundation).

What keeps you inspired when you're writing plays?

Usually it's the idea itself. There's a point where as a writer I'm not in charge of what I'm writing, and I have to listen to what the play is trying to say. Stephen King has a saying which is 'The Book is Boss'. I think this is very apt. Most of the time I don't know what the play is trying to say, but when I sit back, look at it, and listen carefully it becomes apparent to me. The best thing about being a playwright is the medium is particularly collaborative. And when I begin to share the writing with directors and actors and designers there's always a new spurt of inspiration. I find a lot of passion in writing for particular actors, or once the team has been assembled. In short, the people I get to work with inspire me.

***Unsung Heroes* was presented by Black Swan Home Theatre in 2020. You wrote and performed *The Unremarkable and Ordinary Life of Carmela Caterina Tassone (Née Panaia)*. Who did you write this for and why?**

I wrote it for the audience. It's always for the audience. There's different sub groups in this general term, but ultimately we're in the business of communicating something to people, and if we're not doing it for them, as a service to them, then we're missing something pretty vital. The story itself was personal to me, being Caterina is my mother's mother, but I wanted the

story to relate to a broader community.

In its initial stages I spent time trying to see how telling this single life would help us better understand what it is that we define heroism by – what a heroic life actually is. For Caterina it was in the constant determinism of little achievements, one step after the other kind of thing. Serendipitously it felt like all the *Unsung Heroes* scripts did a similar thing – asked us to re-imagine what a hero can be.

York has been in development during 2020. What is your favourite memory from rehearsal?

Oh I don't know. It's been a really wonderful experience working with Ian Michael so closely as co-writers. I think sitting and talking with Elders on Ballardong country was a pivotal moment not just for the work, but for me personally.

Do you have a particular favourite line or scene from *York*?

Again that's really hard to say. Favourite lines change daily. There's a point where someone says 'Shut up dickweed' and it always makes me laugh.

As an Artist in Residence, what are you currently working on?

As an artist in residence I've been in conversations around what the 2021 season will look like at Black Swan. Currently I'm helping put together some of the language to go in the 2021 brochure. We're also beginning conversations around a potential draft 2022 season and programs the company can run next year to assist artists in WA.



Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA exists to create brave and playful conversations.

For you, about you, with you.

To donate visit **bsstc.com.au**

SPOTLIGHT ON BLACK SWAN ARTIST

Meet Scott McArdle



Kaya! I'm Scott and 2020 has been my first year as a Teaching Artist for Black Swan – and what a year it's been. My specialties lie in Directing and Lighting Design, which I've been doing freelance for almost a decade now. Some of you may also know me from The Blue Room Theatre where I run the Box Office.

During COVID-19, my lighting workshops moved online to Zoom – I really admire Black Swan's quick transition to the digital (both with workshops and *Unsung Heroes*). We work in a live medium usually, but I think we've all learned that, to survive and keep creating, we need to adapt. As of a few weeks ago though, I'm back in the classroom and taking students through practical workshops in their school theatres.

I've been a casual lecturer and tutor at Murdoch and WAAPA for a few years so I'm no stranger to teaching. I love sharing my passion for the arts with young people who have such boundless energy and optimism – it's creatively rejuvenating.

Students loved this workshop. They fully understood it and are interested in learning more. Taking notes was optional and it was great because one of my girls in the class wrote three pages, and she has recently been disengaged in school. They looked at Scott's past work and answered questions about the most important job of a lighting designer.

Teacher's Quote
Yule Brook College (Yr7-9)

If you are interested in booking our teaching artists email: **christie@bsstc.com.au**

If you would like to book or find out more online: **www.bsstc.com.au/education/workshops/**

A DECADE OF SUPPORT

It's time to celebrate and to acknowledge an important partner in Black Swan's journey over the past 10 years. **Step forward KPMG and take a bow!!** Over the past decade the generosity and partnership support of KPMG has been critical to the telling of Western Australian stories and bringing world class theatre to our state.

This journey started in 2010 when KPMG joined us as a Season Partner and then in 2014, became Associate Partners. Since 2016 the group has supported Black Swan as a Business Advisory Partner.

The most recent example of this support is KPMG's partnership sponsorship of the 2020 production of *Cloudstreet* – a story born of our city. Directed by Perth born-and-raised Matthew Lutton, with a cast of 12, including Bert LaBonté (*Book of Mormon*), Alison Whyte (*The Dress Maker*, *Seachange*) and Arielle Gray (*Picnic at Hanging Rock*).

After breaking box office records in Melbourne, this epic production opened at His Majesty's

Theatre on 21 February and received impressive reviews from Perth audiences.

Thanks to specific productions supported by KPMG from 2014 to 2020, more than 50,000 people have seen and enjoyed Black Swan shows. KPMG's ethos of "embracing the arts, enriching WA", aligns with Black Swan's purpose of creating brave and playful conversations for you, about you, and with you.

The support also enables Black Swan's values: ensuring art is at the centre of everything we do; walking together collaboratively, inclusively, and respectfully; being accountable to our audience, society, and the people we work with; and being curious, thinking deeply, and exploring before we act.

On behalf of Black Swan Board members, staff, artists and audiences, we thank KPMG for their support over the past 10 years and look forward to an exciting and theatre-filled partnership in the next decade.



Embracing the Arts, enriching WA

Storytelling is essential to creating an inspiring culture for everyone to embrace. That is why KPMG is proud to support the Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA.

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YORK CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Meet Shareena Clanton, actor in *York*.

What advice would you give to aspiring actors wanting to break into the industry?

I encourage you to pursue the path less travelled and do what gives you joy and peace. Pursue fearlessly what fuels your relationship to your own purpose and practice your craft as much as you can. Don't doubt your own power. You have the capacity and ability to succeed in what you put your mind to and know that nothing leads to nothing and something always leads to something.

So better to fail and do something than fail and do nothing at all. Success is not determined by your ability to win awards or gain notoriety; it's about the ability to shift and adapt in new ways and in various capacities. Disrupt the mainstream narrative and continue to make unapologetic space for you and others that are less seen and heard.

The inconsistency of work will be inevitable so I encourage you to write, nurture and develop skill sets that can feed directly into various positions, projects or open up your creativity in new spaces. Learn to write grants and ensure you are continuing to nurture yourself in this gruelling process. Self-care is key.

You were born in WA? What inspired you to study acting?

I was born and raised in Whadjuk Nyoongar Boodjar, Boorloo (Perth) and travelled to and from Wongatha country often in my youth. It was my love of truth telling and the ability to form a collective memory that charged my focus into understanding the craftsmanship of storytelling. Not just in the study of Western epistemologies was I able to garner the classical skills required in this profession, but also via a decolonial lens of First Nations theatre.

What intrigued you about this project, written by Ian Michael and Chris Isaacs? What have you most enjoyed and why?

Ian and I go back many years and discovered we were related whilst we were at WAAPA together. As my brother, it's an honour and privilege to be able to help bring this story to life and position what has been so silenced and subverted, until now. The parallel urgency of the social movement from Black Lives Matter has resonated deeply within this play, and brings to light the ongoing incarceration and mass criminalisation of First Nations youths and the way we frame First Nations peoples in the collective western narrative.

Bringing to the forefront black and First Nations stories and the judicial systems of racist policies that are still evidently in place, whilst in collaboration with non-First Nations creatives and artists, is hopefully redefining how we identify with and speak directly into our shared historic truths.

***York* was the fourth production scheduled for the company's 2020 season. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the production has been postponed. What happens in a creative development and what have been your learnings?**

It was such a gift to not just be creatively engaging in a rehearsal room but also to have the courageous conversations necessary to go deeper into the work and the heart of this story.

Some of the biggest learnings I have had is to sit deeper into the discomfort and lean into the unknowing, without a prerequisite to externally validate myself (ego) or justifying my own voice (internalised oppression) and that truth is not just powerful but magical in its roots and the key to clarity. To *djinany* (see), *nih* (listen) and *kaartdijin* (learn knowledge) to *boodjaree* (heartbeat of this country) are vital aspects of powerful stories and theatre making processes.

How important have the research and field trips to York and Northam been?

Being in Ballardong Nyoongar Boodjar and seeing *Bilya Koort Boodjar* (River Heart Land) was about understanding the interconnected threads of our own ancestral tapestry and the importance of telling the story proper ways without attaching a particular idea or goal to a superimposed "creative outcome".

That's not how our storytelling works. Incorporating various trips to country means you are not just challenging old paradigms of gathering information but ensuring our knowledge keepers are not exploited and deeper, meaningful conversations and connections are established. By *nyininy* (sitting) and *nih* (listening) with the *boordiyas* (Nyoongar leaders) about the land on which we stand in, on and speak language around, we ensure their voices are heard and the integrity of the work is maintained.

This is why Indigenous research methodologies are essential to informing new ways of thinking and doing in the arts spaces which have dominated much of the cultural landscapes with colonial infrastructure and understandings. To reframe and shift the settler narrative is to incorporate First Nation autonomy and implement correct cultural protocols as part of the blood memory and ancestral connectivity we are speaking into.

***York* spans over 200 years of real accounts from the area with all actors playing multiple roles. How have you and your cast members been exploring this in the creative development?**

The layers of this script are multifaceted and historically complex but interweaving these roles are a joy to uncover and something I will continue to relish peeling back well after the final curtain call.

There is something about this particular project that imprints in your *kaart* (mind), *koort* (heart) and *wirin* (spirit) that not just disrupts various colonial windows of comfort but confronts our own hearts and the relationship to the past with every breath into the present.

Photo credits Sam Harris and Dana Weeks



BEHIND THE SCENE PHOTOS

Photos by Matt Jelonek and Jessica Wyld

CLOUDSTREET



Clare Watson and Matthew Lutton



Linda Savage, Emily Crawford and Anna Casellas



Tim Winton and Cloudstreet cast and creatives

CHAIR'S DINNER



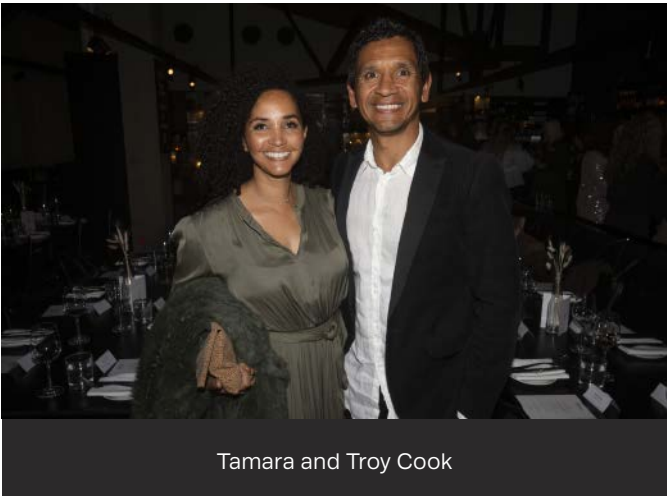
Ei Wai and Tanya Morris



Nicola Forrest, Clare Watson, Rick Heath, Elizabeth Gaines



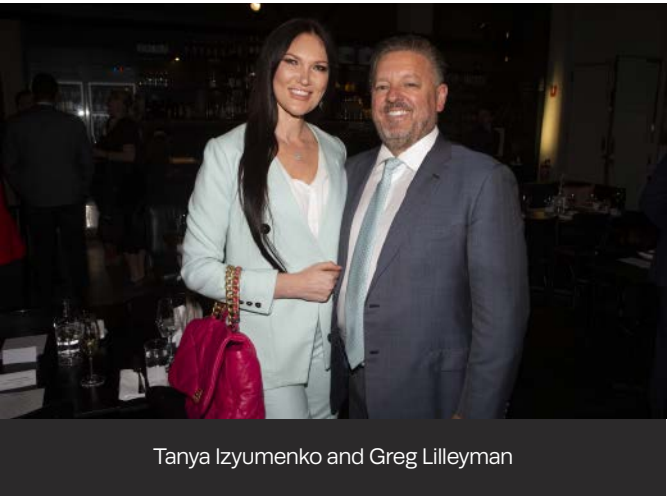
Ian Michael, Mimi Packer, Willy Packer



Tamara and Troy Cook



Andrew Hagger, Alison Terry, Matthew Woods



Tanya Izyumenko and Greg Lilleyman

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