

ON CUE

BLACK SWAN STATE
THEATRE COMPANY OF WA

NEWSLETTER
2022 SUMMER



BLACK SWAN
STATE THEATRE
COMPANY OF WA



Cyrano

WRITTEN BY
VIRGINIA GAY
AFTER EDMOND ROSTAND



The Bleeding
Tree

WRITTEN BY
ANGUS CERINI



Things I Know
To Be True

WRITTEN BY
ANDREW BOVELL



Jurrungu
Ngan-ga
[Straight Talk]

CREATED BY
MARRUGU



Dirty
Birds

WRITTEN BY
HAYLEY McELHINNEY &
MANDY McELHINNEY

WHATS INSIDE



MEET VIRGINIA GAY & ANDREW BOVELL



OUR NEW WORKSHOP



MEET THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM



WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE LIVE AND WORK ON WHADJUK BOODJAR,
THE LANDS OF THE NYOONGAR PEOPLE, AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO
ELDERS PAST, PRESENT, AND EMERGING.

WANT TO READ MORE?
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FROM KATE CHAMPION

MY LIFE IN THEATRE HAS BEEN A DECADES-LONG SEARCH FOR THE MOST STIMULATING AND ARRESTING WAYS TO TELL OUR STORIES. WHATEVER THE SUBJECT, STYLE OR TYPE OF SHOW, IF IT GRIPS MY IMAGINATION IN A WAY THAT EXCITES AND PROVOKES — THEN I'M ON BOARD.

Season 2023 has an abundance of WA talent in a wide range of theatrical experiences that do just that.

There's a fresh, contemporary, queer retelling of a classic that's a 'love letter to hope'. Joyous, witty and achingly romantic.

An independent Aboriginal production of a contemporary Australian work — already destined to become a classic — brought to the mainstage. Poetic, gothic and intensely relevant.

A tight-knit family's truth-telling revelations from one of WA's most acclaimed writers. Relatable, complicated and deeply suburban.

An unashamed challenge to what theatre can be from a globally celebrated dance theatre production. Compelling, visceral and unapologetically political.

And finally, a debut play by two acclaimed WA actors with a story that has lived in their imaginations for over twenty years. A poignant exploration into the darkest secrets of two inseparable sisters. Intriguing, humorous and original.

Every show is written and created by Australian artists at the peak of their powers. All bar one of our productions are Western Australian with the cream of local talent spanning generations.

Black Swan's history is full of bold theatrical endeavours, and unique

Western Australian perspectives. I am proud to have the opportunity to build on this history — a history like no other and an inspiration to all who follow.

Without choosing a theme for a season, inevitably one emerges.

This year, in many ways, is a bridge.

A bridge from then to now, classic to contemporary, independent to mainstage, interstate to WA, regional to metro.

A bridge from stability to embracing change, parent to child, sister to sister, marginalised to prominent, emerging to established.

A bridge from actor to writer, Ireland to Australia, local to universal — and from us to you.

I hope you enjoy.

Kate Champion
Artistic Director

GIVE THE GIFT OF THEATRE

BLACK SWAN GIFT VOUCHERS CAN BE CONVENIENTLY EMAILED TO A FAMILY MEMBER, FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE, POSTED IN A BEAUTIFUL GIFT WALLET OR PICKED UP FROM OUR TICKETING OFFICE.

Gift vouchers are valid for three years from the date of purchase and can be redeemed for tickets to any Black Swan production from as little as \$20.



2023 MEMBER PACKAGES

BECOME A BLACK SWAN MEMBER BY BOOKING TWO OR MORE SHOWS AT THE SAME TIME AND ENJOY A VARIETY OF BENEFITS. THIS INCLUDES THE ABILITY TO SWAP DATES WITH NO FUSS AND AT NO COST! SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE DETAILS.

5 PLAY BUNDLE

Buy all five plays and receive 20% off ticket prices. Save up to \$97!

2+ COMBO

Choose any combination of two or more plays and receive 15% off ticket prices.

BARGAIN HUNTER

Enjoy your favourite combination of plays with the added value of special discount prices to Previews and select in-season performances.

OPENING NIGHTS

This premium package is an exciting way to experience the electricity of an opening night performance and event.

MEET VIRGINIA GAY AND ANDREW BOVELL

IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2023, BLACK SWAN IN ASSOCIATION WITH PERTH FESTIVAL WILL PRESENT A MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY PRODUCTION OF *CYRANO* BY THE INIMITABLE AND TALENTED WAAPA GRADUATE, VIRGINIA GAY, AFTER EDMOND ROSTAND.

Fresh from a celebrated Melbourne season, Virginia flips Cyrano's gender into a wonderful love story that spins the original text into hilariously-delirious contemporary language that is loud, funny and achingly romantic.

Black Swan then welcomes back one of Australia's most celebrated writers for the stage and screen - Andrew Bovell (*When the Rain Stops Falling*, *Lantana*) with *Things I Know To Be True*, a wonderful, compassionate play about one year in the life of an Australian family. It's about love in its many forms.

Q & A "A NOSE BY ANY OTHER NAME" WITH VIRGINIA GAY.

"The stories that we tell have enormous importance... I don't think entertainment and fighting for something more are mutually exclusive; if you can do them both at once, then that is the sweet spot."
Virginia Gay

While locked down in 2020, actor Virginia Gay wrote the human connection she was yearning for in an adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* that transforms the title role into a psychological exploration of self-doubt, internalised hate and queer bodies. And, desperate for a happy ending in real life, she wrote one into the play while also filling it with music and laughter, and a powerful sense of connection and community – between the actors and the audience.

The script is a very self-aware celebration of live theatre, and live audiences, that taps into something deep that people have been missing. It's a powerful reaction to 2020/21, from a creative point of view.

I love that that's how it reads for you because that's exactly what it felt like to me. I pitched it to Sarah Goodes just before the apocalypse started. And during those first couple of weeks, as the whole world was changing, we continued talking about it and I could see how even more resonant it was becoming.

Can you elaborate?

I was in Los Angeles for the first six months of the apocalypse, and Melbourne was doing its very intensive lockdown. In both places you had to keep yourself isolated as much as possible. I'd also just had my heart broken in America so I was existing in this extraordinary suspended state of hyper-longing: I had a broken heart and to connect with people during that time seemed so important and

yet it was also the thing that was most rife with danger.

As I was writing, I realised this is the situation *Cyrano* finds herself in, this is the way she thinks about herself: 'Connecting with me will somehow destroy you; there's something rancid about me, so you can't touch me. But I want, I need to connect. I also want you to be happy. How can I facilitate this but not corrode you with my love.'

As I got months into having not touched another living human being, this sentence came to me. This sentence, which I had up on my wall, was: how do you reach for something that you know you cannot touch? That sense of suspension is what the entirety of 2020/21 felt like; that's what lockdown felt like, that's what the relationship between Cyrano and Roxanne felt like. So I talked a lot with Sarah about how we evoke that feeling of hyper-longing and the recognition that connection is the most important thing but, for a series of reasons, cannot be acted upon.

You mentioned that you pitched the play just before the pandemic began, so it wasn't the initial inspiration. Can you elaborate on what was?

Number one is that I saw James McAvoy's *Cyrano*. It was the last piece of theatre that I saw in England before the apocalypse started. He did it without a nose – and we're also doing it without a nose – and when there's no nose, what you see so transparently is someone who has decided that they are unworthy of love. You see their self-doubt, and their self-hate.

So I got about a scene and a half in and I realised I had to play this role. This is a story that is so familiar to my teenage self, to my early 20s, when I thought I was saving people from the horror. But I also remember thinking that this is the story of a queer body; this is the story of a body that at some point has been made to feel and think 'there's something about me that is

not good enough for you.' It's that idea of there being something about these bodies that somebody has told us won't satisfy you, and we've internalised that language.

This is an excerpt by Melanie Sheridan. Read the full interview at mtc.com.au

Q & A WITH ANDREW BOVELL.

Why did you decide to write *Things I Know To Be True*?

The State Theatre Company of SA and the UK's Frantic Assembly approached me to write a new play. We did a workshop with a group of actors and among a number of broad themes we found ourselves exploring our own relationships with our families. I find myself returning to the theme of family in a lot of my work. I've always been interested in the push and pull of love and expectation within families. It provides a complex and rich terrain for dramatic exploration. You grow up wanting to escape your family and when you do you spend the rest of your life looking for a way back.

Did you draw inspiration from your own childhood/life?

I was at an interesting point in my life. My mother had passed away and my youngest child had just moved out of home to begin study in another city. He was the last of my children to leave home. Both of these are significant events in a person's life. The passing death of a parent and the emergence into the world of a child. They are both farewells of a different kind. It was naturally a time when I was reflecting on my role as both a son and a father.

***Things I Know To Be True* has been described as a powerful family drama that takes place over the four seasons of the year. What was the significance of each season?**

The play is about the cycle of life, the

passing of time, change and renewal. The passing of the seasons provided a strong metaphor for its structure. In each season, summer, autumn, winter and spring, the focus shifts to each of the four adult children as they go through a significant transition in their life. It explores the impact these changes have on the parents Bob and Fran. As the children move toward more certainty about their own identity the parents are becoming less sure about who they are.

Will we recognise the characters in this play?

I hope so. I've tried to write about a very typical Australian suburban family as honestly as I can. They go through some big changes over the course of the year. It always amazes me just how much turmoil a family can go through and yet how strong they can remain. The family is very Australian and yet they have resonated just as strongly in productions in Spain, UK, Germany, the United States and South America. So there is something universally recognisable.

What's your favourite form of storytelling?

I write mainly for TV and film now but I will always return to writing for the theatre. On the stage I feel like I can write more freely and with more courage.

Are you excited for the play to be produced back in your home state?

It is the place I grew up in. It is the place that shaped me. The Wheatbelt, the Indian Ocean, the streets of North Cottesloe, UWA – they are the landscapes of my childhood and adolescence. I haven't lived in WA for forty years and yet I still feel Western Australian and my family goes back for eight generations there. And so yes, whenever I have a play produced in Perth, it is very significant for me.





WAAPA INTERN EADIE POCOCK

OVER THE LAST TEN WEEKS I HAVE BEEN ON SECONDMENT WITH BLACK SWAN AS A THIRD YEAR ARTS MANAGEMENT STUDENT FROM WAAPA.

At high school, I dreamt about going to WAAPA to study Music Theatre – and now ten years later, I’m graduating from something entirely different. After years of belting out showtunes in my bedroom and making up dance routines to *Chicago*, it turns out I didn’t enjoy performing as much as when I was doing it for fun. My love for Cuban Ballet and Salsa took me to the Caribbean, where I spent the better part of three years, because of Jamaican Dancehall.

I’ve worked at various departments at Black Swan: from finance

to philanthropy, marketing to production. My time was book-ended by two incredible productions. Firstly, I worked on the opening night of *The Glass Menagerie*, and in the last week I spent time with the cast and crew leading into the *Barracking for the Umpire* season. It’s been a privilege and a thrill to be behind the scenes at Black Swan and observe how performances are brought to life from an initial idea, through months (or years) of planning, and finally onto the stage. I still perform, and I don’t think I’ll ever lose the ability to whip out a time-step, but at the moment I’m enjoying exploring all the other sides of the performing arts.

A big thankyou to the whole Black Swan team. I can’t wait for Season 2023 to unfold.



BLACK SWAN IN COSSACK

OUR CREATIVE LEARNING MANAGER CHRISTIE SISTRUNK TRAVELLED TO COSSACK, A HISTORIC TOWN JUST OUTSIDE OF ROEBOURNE, TO FACILITATE INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING AS PART OF COSSACK FAMILY DAY.

This annual event, held in August, coincides with the Cossack Art

Awards, and is supported by our principal partner Fortescue and the City of Karratha. Christie used percussive instruments, visual story cards and picture books as aids to encourage children to create their own stories. These were inspired by the rich history of old-world Cossack, pearl diving and included time-travelling back to Galbraith General Store, built in 1890-91.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MEMBER BRIEFINGS

Cyrano
Wed 15 February, 6-7pm
Heath Ledger Theatre

Things I Know To Be True
Mon 22 May, 6-7pm
Heath Ledger Theatre

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS

THE ACTOR’S INSTRUMENT
Saturday 11 March | 10am – 12 pm

Deepen connection to voice and body to increase expression, access emotion and character.

SCENework INTENSIVE
Saturday 11 March | 1pm – 3pm

Explore the driving motivations and dynamics between character and situation through scene work with a professional theatre director.

FIND OUT MORE

To find out about our creative learning programs or to book a bespoke workshop, please contact Christie Sistrunk, Creative Learning Manager learn@blackswantheatre.com.au



OUR NEW WORKSHOP

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS RESIDING IN BELMONT, OUR WORKSHOP AND WARDROBE DEPARTMENT HAS MOVED TO A NEW FACILITY IN BASSENDEAN.

And we are loving the new space. The move took just over nine weeks, a total of 1,360 hours from ten staff

consisting of five full time and five casuals. Thirty large truck loads were stacked with scenery, workshop stock and machinery, plus costumes, props and accessories, with many other loads of small miscellaneous items. Five sea containers were also relocated, three of which were used inside the workshop to form the walls of a storage space for Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company.

This move was a huge team effort which commenced in early 2022 and involved the Board, management, production, wardrobe and other Black Swan departments. We now have a dedicated dust-free props and technical equipment storeroom and first-rate costume manufacturing workshop. The new facility is an

excellent upgrade with an open, clean space for all to enjoy and work in.

During this time, the workshop and wardrobe continued operating with builds for Black Swan productions, supporting the sector, and other commercial projects, in both the old and new premises.



OIL

SEE THE COSTUME AND SET RENDERINGS FOR OUR LAST PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR, THE EPIC STORY OF FAMILY AND EMPIRE — *OIL* BY ELLA HICKSON.

Oil season runs to 27 Nov. Tickets at blackswantheatre.com.au

CAST

Michael Abercromby, Violette Ayad, Will Bastow, Grace Chow, St John Cowcher, Polly Low, Tinashe Mangwana, Hayley McElhinney, Abbey Morgan, Will O'Mahony

CREATIVES

DIRECTOR Adam Mitchell
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Scott McArdle
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER Zoë Atkinson
LIGHTING DESIGNER Matt Marshall
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER Melanie Robinson
VOCAL COACH Jean Goodwin



MEET THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM



GEORGIA CLARK
HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

I have been with Black Swan for two years, relocating from the UAE, where I was working as Cultural Industries Trade Commissioner for the Embassy of Canada.

I have always worked in the arts, graduating from WAAPA in Theatre Arts and completing my degree in New York before returning in 2006 to work with Black Swan in their Hot Bed program. It is lovely to return to the Company in the capacity of business development many years on. I love my job and thrive at being a part of the creative industries, a landscape that is in constant change. The past two years have certainly been challenging in the arts, but there is nothing more rewarding than connecting art to audience and being part of a community. I am looking forward to 2023 and continuing the wonderful relationships with our patrons and the dedicated team we have in the Company.

FALLYN PETHERICK
DEVELOPMENT LIAISON OFFICER

I was born and raised in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory and have worked in the arts sector for over 20 years as both a performer and teacher. I am classically trained in ballet and received a Bachelor of Dance at AMPA in Sydney. After relocating to Perth I commenced studying a Master of Business (Arts and Cultural Management) with Deakin University.

I am extremely passionate about arts policy and developing homegrown artists, so joining Black Swan as part of the development team has been a wonderful opportunity. The past few years have been extremely challenging for the arts and yet we have persevered. Australia is full of talented artists who have a voice and being a part of an organisation that not only support artists to grow, but also brings to the stage human topics that need to be shared with our community is truly a wonderful thing for the future of the arts industry here in Australia.

VIRGINIA WITHERS
HEAD OF PHILANTHROPY

I graduated from Arts Management at WAAPA in 2006 and since then I have been fortunate to work across Australia, for Audi Australia as an Events and Sponsorship Manager and Sponsorship at the City of Perth.

I've been with the company since June, and it is a privilege to work every day with Black Swan's committed and dedicated donors. Philanthropy plays such an important role in enabling many of our programs to support emerging artists, commission new works and provide exceptional creative learning and regional touring opportunities.

We're honoured to have such a passionate community of donors, and it is wonderful to be able to celebrate with them and offer unique and memorable opportunities to become engaged with the Company.



BEYOND THE SIREN — COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

ON WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER, THE COMPANY HELD BEYOND THE SIREN PANEL DISCUSSION TO COMPLEMENT OUR SEASON OF BARRACKING FOR THE UMPIRE.

(Pictured above) Moderated by Sport Commissioner Dixie Marshall, our incredible guest panellists included Dr Gill Cowen, Gold Olympic medallist and West Coast AFLW Player Kellie Gibson, playwright Andrea Gibbs, AFL

Umpire Dean Margetts, and former West Coast Eagles player Rowen Powell. Discussion centred on head trauma, masculinity and its impact on decision making, long-term health, and the role of women in sport and the Australian Football League. We were pleased to partner with the West Australian Football Commission, Toby's Estate Coffee Roasters and HBF Health. Please visit our website and look out for further community conversations in 2023.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

BLACK SWAN WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR AMAZING NETWORK OF PASSIONATE DONORS WHOSE GENEROSITY HAS HELPED TO DELIVER THE MAGIC OF THEATRE TO WESTERN AUSTRALIANS THIS YEAR AND SUSTAIN THE COMPANY THROUGH THE CHALLENGING COVID-19 PERIOD.

Every donation, no matter what amount, is very gratefully received and helps us grow our artistic, regional and education programs.

Our Philanthropy program is so much more than the donations we receive. It provides meaningful connections with hundreds of like-minded people, who are passionate about creating inspiring theatre.

We celebrate our donors with unique and memorable opportunities to become involved with the Company. When you make a gift to Black Swan, you are invited to meet other supporters and engage with artists, performances, backstage tours, rehearsals, and events.

Donor Natasha Taylor has been supporting Black Swan since 2011 and says "a thriving local arts scene is so important for making Perth a great place to live. I'm very proud to support Black Swan and to play a small part in bringing WA stories and new talent to the stage. As well, being a donor provides you with unique behind-the-scenes opportunities to see how the productions come together."



Learn more and donate online at: blackswantheatre.com.au/support or call our team on 08 6212 9300. All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.



ONCE

“This is a five-star, 100%, phenomenal musical that will stay with you forever, and maybe even encourage you to jump up on the tabletops and let its music course through your veins!”
The Fourth Wall ★★★★★



9/10 “Once has very little action or plot. There are no flashy tap routines and not a sequin in sight. What it does have is heart, character development, warmth, hope, connection, honesty and a sense of belonging.” **Xpress Magazine**

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

“In this Western Australian version, the local cast and crew have done it justice, bringing the script to life with flawless acting and creative design work. It’s a well-rounded, amusing, and emotionally impactful production...”
The Au.Review ★★★★★
 “Beautifully delicate, the play unfolds with soft luminescence, embracing the timelessness of a story about family.”
ArtsHub ★★★★★



CONNECTED

“But quite apart from the freakiness, this was also an unexpectedly heart-warming experience. To witness all the grinning faces, these random strangers from all corners of the country, sitting in their living rooms on a Friday night, was strangely beautiful.” **Seesaw Magazine**

“Impressive is an understatement it was bedazzling, mind-bendingly awesome, and something I hope to see much more of in the future. Lawrence Leung was a delight to behold as he juggled tech issues, our minds and even Shakespeare all in the space of an hour!” **Pelican Magazine**

BARRACKING FOR THE UMPIRE



“Wonderfully directed by Clare Watson, the ensemble cast of seven, including Charaine’s ex-boyfriend Tom (Michael Abercromby) do a stellar job of bringing this highly entertaining yet heartbreaking story to life, with vivid imagery in its storytelling and an abundance of local Perth and Donnybrook references.”
The West Australian ★★★★★
 “Gibbs is a refreshing yet familiar voice in the Australian theatre landscape. Her debut play has a cracking script that is full of Aussie slang, yet poignant and beautiful.” **Limelight Magazine ★★★★★**

Tomorrow doesn't happen overnight

How you grow matters

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2022 PERFORMING ARTS AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to actor Luke Hewitt for winning Outstanding Performer in a Leading role for our production of *Every Brilliant Thing*, which opened in Karratha and had a successful season in the Studio Underground with performances following in Dampier, Wickham, Port Hedland, Narrogin, Harvey, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie, Esperance and Albany.

Warm cheers also to Ben Mortley for Outstanding Performer in

a Supporting Role in the World Premiere of *York*, also presented by Black Swan.

The PAWA awards were held on Monday 8 August to celebrate and recognise professional theatre, dance, musicals, opera and cabaret for 2022.

Hosted by Artist Relief Fund WA, we congratulate all nominees and winners.



Luke Hewitt & Ben Mortley

BLACK SWAN'S SOCIAL PAGES

If you see yourself on this page and would like the photo, email ijarzabek@blackswantheatre.com.au
For more social pics visit Black Swan's Facebook page. On Cue photo credits: Frances Andrijich, Daniel J Grant, Ben Green, Matt Jelonek, Miles Noel, Jessica Russell, Brett Walker, Jessica Wyld.



The Glass Menagerie Opening Night
Alexandra Welborn, Ben Elton



The Glass Menagerie Opening Night
Barry McGuire, Amanda Muggleton, Clare Watson



The Glass Menagerie Opening Night
Lorna Geraghty, Bella Broadway



The Glass Menagerie Corporate Night
Ian Booth, Trevor Hart, Hon. David Templeman MLA



The Glass Menagerie Corporate Night
Olivia Trembath, Geraldine Lankester



The Glass Menagerie Corporate Night
Suzanne Beecroft, Derek Gnauk, Alison Terry, Mimi Packer

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