

ON CUE

BLACK SWAN STATE
THEATRE COMPANY OF WA

2024 WINTER



BLACK SWAN
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COMPANY



GERMINATION OF *THE SEED*

WITH SISTERS TEGAN AND KATE MULVANY



FROM THE
PRIMA FACIE
REHEARSAL ROOM

HEAR FROM ACTOR SOPHIA FORREST



GET TO
KNOW

THE ACTORS IN
THE CHILDREN



TONY AWARD
NOMINATION FOR
BEST PLAY

BY LUCY KIRKWOOD

The Children

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BY KATE MULVANY

the seed

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HELLO FROM KATE

AS WE APPROACH THE NYOONGAR SEASON OF DJILBA, IT'S INCREDIBLE TO LOOK BACK AT WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR THIS YEAR WITH STILL SO MUCH MORE TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN THE COMING MONTHS.

As I write this, we have opened Suzie Miller's award-winning play *Prima Facie*. I have known and admired Suzie for many years, and I am thrilled to direct WA's first production of her now famous play. It has truly taken the world by storm and challenged legal systems globally to rethink the status quo. In the pages of this edition of *On Cue*, you'll hear directly from the talented Sophia Forrest, who has taken on the role of Tessa Ensler, as well as insights from our brilliant set and costume designers, Bruce McKinven and Lynn Ferguson. Their remarkable talents create the worlds in which our stories come to life. Our Associate Artist, Humphrey Bower, is teaming up again with Caroline Brazier – you might remember them both as

parents, Bob and Fran Price, in last year's *Things I Know to Be True*. This time, they're diving into the environmental drama *The Children*, with Nicola Bartlett rounding out the trio of stars. The play delves into the complexities of past friendships, and our shared responsibilities for future generations. Read on to discover what inspired writer, Lucy Kirkwood, to pen the piece. Under Mel Cantwell's direction, *The Children* promises to be something extraordinary and thought-provoking.

November brings a brand-new production of *The Seed*, the semi-autobiographical play by WA's own Kate Mulvany – one of Australia's favourite playwrights and actors. In a family affair you won't want to miss, Kate's younger sister, Tegan, takes on the role of Rose for the very first time, under the direction of Matt Edgerton.

We've got some fun photos to share from our *Barracking for the Umpire* regional tour, and you'll get to read about the perks of being a Black Swan Friend, plus much more. Enjoy and see you at the theatre.

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For more on Clayton Utz and the Arts
scan above.



IN REHEARSAL WITH SOPHIA FORREST



FIRST THING ON A MONDAY MORNING IS NOT USUALLY AN IDEAL TIME FOR A MEETING, BUT TODAY IS DIFFERENT.

We're meeting Sophia Forrest, downstairs at the State Theatre Centre, in Rehearsal Room 1 – the room that has been cooking up magic for the last three weeks while *Prima Facie* rehearsals are in full swing.

Soph's vocal warmups can be heard coming down the stairs before they even enter the room.

"Sorry, I'm just listening to Jean", they walk in with their phone up to their ear, playing pre-recorded warm-up exercises. They're referring to Jean Goodwin, the Voice Coach on the production.

"Are we getting coffee?"

We have 45 minutes before rehearsals officially begin and time doesn't allow for us to stroll Northbridge in search of caffeine.

Unfortunately for Soph, this left them to drink some sort of bright green health tonic they'd made but clearly were avoiding. The look on their face after the first sip suggests it tastes about as good as it looks... which isn't great.

"It's alright – I did it to myself," they joke.

With greetings and beverages sorted, we begin...

Sophia Forrest has had a dynamic career trajectory since graduating in 2016 from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), but their love for the arts was sparked well and truly before then.

"I really enjoyed doing drama in high school and had so much fun in class. But I could never get a role in any of the school productions because they were all musicals. So I was the lighting designer...that was my big starring role."

After high school, Soph found themselves tossing up studying psychology at university, or really giving acting a go. No surprises what choice was made.

Then the next few years were a bit of a whirlwind.

First, it was a film audition at the same time as WAAPA and NIDA auditions. A film they then booked before starting at the renowned Mount Lawley campus.

Then it was landing a role on hit Australian television series *Love Child* just one week after their final university showcase. A role that would land them a Logie nomination, no less.

And then work in the likes of *Aquaman*, *Ride Like a Girl*, *Bali 2002* and *Barons* followed.

But there were "gaps", as Soph puts it. Lulls; periods of little to no work.

The most recent gap? Just before *Prima* auditions, at a time where, they say, they hadn't done 'proper acting' for almost two years.

"...Now I'm in the most hardcore acting you can do."

It's true. A one-person show, that's now been seen on stages from the West End to Broadway, and countless stages around the world. A multi-Olivier Award-winning show, a Tony Award-winning show...

It's a lot.

But that's the beauty of making a brand-new production right here in WA – a production Soph never thought they'd actually be a part of.

"It genuinely took me about two weeks to get over the shock of it [getting cast] ...I wasn't prepared to get the role, because I was so confident I wouldn't."

The audition process had been a lengthy one. By the time Soph got the part at the end of last year, they had already done five full scenes from the show – a whopping third of the whole text – just from auditions.

A couple weeks ago, when they got to the rehearsal room at the end of May, they were already 'off book', having learnt all the lines. An impressive feat for a play with over 12,000 words in the script.

"I made that decision, with Kate, to try and learn as much of a base as possible.

"Kate and I spoke about it because that can be dangerous – you can get stuck in vocal habits and ways of delivering."

But Kate fully trusted their process.

"It's been brilliant working with Kate," Soph says.

"Someone asked me the other day, they were like, 'How's rehearsals going?' and I was like, 'Oh I'm dying – but it's okay, Kate's doing CPR'."

Despite the obvious emotional toll and intensity of carrying the performance alone, Soph assures us there are often moments of laughter and banter amongst the team – necessary moments to break the inescapable tension.

"It definitely is emotionally very taxing, and the content can be incredibly triggering. I'm hopeful that rehearsals have been the hardest time because you're working certain traumatic pieces in isolation for hours on end."

But what about performing eight shows a week? How does one leave that weight behind every night?

"I'm hopeful that when I'm getting into the run of the shows, having the payoff of telling the story in its entirety, and the incredibly powerful call to action at the end of it, will help shed that."

Plus, there's also the support of family and friends, and the healing powers of good self-care and skincare routines, of course.

"Sheet masks! Fixes everything, *surely!*?"

We laugh and congratulate them on finally finishing the wretched green tonic they'd been struggling through this whole time.

Then the conversation inevitably turns to the heaviness of the play once we ask Soph what they hope this performance can do to drive change.

"Lack of justice and the flaws in the legal system shine through in this production.

"Despite various trauma responses inhibiting the strength of [Tessa's] evidence, she is as methodical and practical in submitting this case and running it to the best of her ability. And it's not enough. Because the threshold of proof just sets victims of sexual assault up for failure.

"Hopefully we'll start to see a more nuanced approach to sexual assault trials; the way we brief jurors."

They mention that Suzie is bringing 12 judges along on Opening Night, and a semi-comedic, semi-real look of panic falls on their face.

Hey, no pressure.

Soph continues, "What would be the biggest win for me, would be to see a shift in WA's consent laws surrounding intoxication, and intoxication being factored into your ability to give consent."

They're referring to the fact that WA is one of the only jurisdictions in Australia that does not acknowledge how intoxication affects the ability of a person to consent to sexual acts in its Criminal Code.

It's unfathomable.

"As it points out in the show: 1 in 3 women experience sexual assault, and I would say that's an incredibly conservative statistic."

We're living in a time right now, five years after this show originally played in Sydney, where the story is still just as poignant. The play continues to be timely, no matter what year it's set in.

There's still so much work to be done.

As the conversation turns back to acting and creating character, Soph gestures to a stack of folded papers they've

been leaning on this whole time, revealing them to be a bunch of butchers' papers. Pages of writing. 30 pages to be exact.

"Pages of ramblings that cover each scene. Kind of like, different thoughts and feelings of Tessa's."

The pages are completely full of words.

"I do this for pretty much every character – if there's enough depth to them.

"*Love Child* I filled an entire journal."

Soph played a teenage girl in the TV series... so that's a lot of emotions to unpack.

Going deep into character is a gift that you get in theatre as there is the time to go deep. According to Soph, it is the best place to train and grow. And getting to do it once more with *Black Swan* is a bit of a full circle moment, after they starred in their first professional theatre gig with the Company in *Let the Right One In* (2017).

"Black Swan has given me the most insane career opportunities so far. *Let the Right One In* was unbelievably fun and the most physically demanding role I've ever done."

Then *Prima*.

"This will always be the career-defining moment for me, because there's no other character, experience, and breadth of space, like this.

"This is without a doubt, the highlight of my career."

As people start to arrive for rehearsals, we ask Soph if there's anything else they'd like to say before we go.

They have one thing.

You may have noticed throughout this piece that Soph uses the pronouns they/them.

"It was one of the reasons I thought I'll never be cast as this. I have decided to live my life openly as a non-binary person and living my authentic self was more important than any casting bracket. And in my head, I was like, *you're not going to cast me as a cisgender, heterosexual woman, because I am an openly queer, non-binary person.*"

But Kate saw Soph as the chameleon artist that they are. As an actor that can be beyond their face value.

"I am incredibly grateful to Kate and *Black Swan* for giving me this opportunity.

"I'm so grateful – as I'm so proud to be born a woman – to tell such a strong, female story."

And we cannot wait to see them do so.

***Prima Facie* by Suzie Miller is playing at the Heath Ledger Theatre until 21 July.**





EXPLORING THE SET DESIGN OF *PRIMA FACIE* WITH BRUCE MCKINVEN

FOR A PLAY, THE SCRIPT IS ALWAYS THE STARTING POINT FOR A DISCUSSION AROUND THE DESIGN. I WILL GENERALLY READ THE SCRIPT TWO OR THREE TIMES BEFORE MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR.



The first read is about not interpreting too much yet; instead trying to absorb the intentions of the words, including the stage directions. The following reads are more about dreaming, ignoring the specifics of the stage directions, and allowing the play to take me to places and ideas that may not always be in the words.

I try to go to the first meeting with the Director with a design idea, sometimes vague sometimes fairly solidified in my mind. Likewise, the Director will sometimes bring an idea to that first meeting, or part of an idea, an image, or will be quite open to the ideas I'm finding and happy to discuss where this could lead us.

In terms of research for the production of *Prima Facie*, I really responded to the 'game' of law that the script talks about – a separate world to life with its own rules. I looked at artists Anish Kapoor, Giorgio de Chirico, Escher, and in particular Daniel Buren's *Les Deux Plateaux* at the Palais Royal in Paris. Columns featured in my research, and Buren's work set up the idea of columns as a playground – a game board almost.

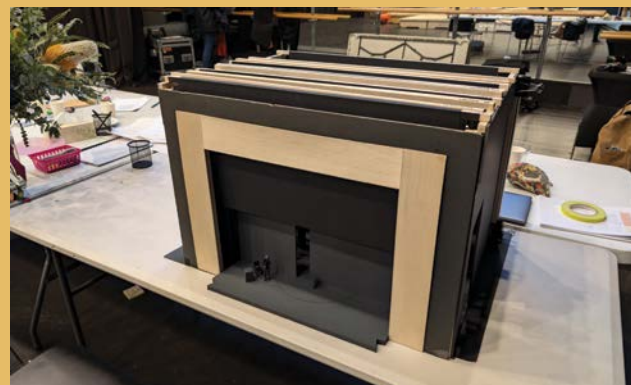
I also had a strong image when I first read the script of the character entering far upstage in the theatre and having to take a very long walk to the front of the stage – a metaphor for the arduous journey this woman has had to endure through this men's game of law.

The Heath Ledger Theatre is a large theatre for a one person play. This aspect of the production is a real consideration and challenge for the design; to find a way to build a space one person can inhabit on their own, and for them to feel comfortable and supported as opposed to abandoned in a vast open space. The slender

architecture of the columns and the negative space between greatly assists in creating an environment that both nestles the character and embraces the magnitude of this alternate life.

The world of *Prima Facie* is one of law, of centuries of customs; a male-dominated world, represented in the chessboard of columns, devoid of character. But it responds to the shifting perspectives of the character; from presenting a shadowy world of confidence and power, to a closed-down world where time has stopped and her life is turned upside down, to a new way of looking at the game board with a reinvigorated sense of power and purpose.

I tend to work on more than one project at a time – sometimes up to six or seven concurrently – from festivals, to dance, to theatre. The ability to manage this is partly in my genes and partly in decades of learning. Every show has complexity and detail, and a Designer is responsible for making decisions around every single item on stage, no matter how small. Some productions have numerous props, some have hundreds of costumes. Each item of clothing, every button or zip, prop or set piece, has numerous considerations, from actor use, director intention, blocking, budget implications, availability etc. In some ways, juggling more than one show, really isn't much different to keeping all the details of a single show in your head, it's just details for more than one show.



WARDROBE SECRETS WITH COSTUME DESIGNER LYNN FERGUSON

CLOTHING PROVIDES THE VISUAL CODING THAT MARK OUT OUR PERSONAL IDENTITY. GARMENTS CAN REFLECT OUR SELF-EXPRESSION, PROFESSIONAL STATUS, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OR AFFILIATE US TO A GROUP.



After reading the *Prima Facie* script the key drivers in making design decisions for me were Tessa's acute awareness of her working-class background, alongside certain script indicators that Kate Champion and I felt supported and moved the narrative along.

We first encounter Tessa as the highly successful barrister. Wearing the 'Gloss of the legal life', she is one of the elites. She has distinguished herself professionally and presents as part of the legal set. I wanted her clothing to be bold at this moment to make a statement, which led me to design a sharp, tailored trouser suit in a distinctive pinstripe wool. In court we see Tessa wearing the barrister gown which carries a long tradition in solemnity. The gown provides a certain anonymity outside the court and reinforces the idea of impartiality, it emphasises the law as the most important factor in the court above any sole person.

Throughout the play Tessa is reminded of her roots. On her first day at law school, she is marked out by her clothing; she recalls the good-looking guy who "takes in her outfit...It's obvious I'm not from where he's from." Tessa has more than just the academic and gender hurdles to jump, she also has the class barrier. She excels and assimilates to the extent that her colleagues think she received a privileged education, at which she jokes "I can do private school better than the private school girls." There are visual threads in the narrative that pull Tessa back to her working-class origin; like the hot pink 100% polyester shirt, a gift from her mother that is so obviously inappropriate for her profession.



There is a shift from Tessa's professional suit for the date with Damo. We move to a relaxed casual look. A softly flared sand washed silk shift dress, cut on the bias with a draped cowl back. I have used a deep red colour for the dress that signifies wealth and ambition but also serves as a metaphor as a red flag warning. After Tessa is assaulted, we use another key indicator from the script and cover her up in a jumper. This winter garment is hot and itchy, and emphasises that she is distressed, confused and undone.

Finally, when Tessa finds herself on the other side of the law appearing as a witness in court, her costume refers back to the script again. The statement suit has gone, and Tessa wears an unassuming classic suit, probably from earlier in her career, 'something from her wardrobe'. She describes herself as without her 'armour', meaning the loss of the barrister gown, which is a stark contrast to the Tessa we have seen at the beginning of the play.





IN CONVERSATION ABOUT *THE CHILDREN* BY LUCY KIRKWOOD



LUCY KIRKWOOD IS AN ACCLAIMED BRITISH PLAYWRIGHT AND SCREENWRITER, PERHAPS BEST KNOWN FOR *CHIMERICA*, A PLAY WHICH EXPLORES THE AFTERMATH OF THE TIANANMEN SQUARE PROTESTS.

Chimerica premiered at the Almeida Theatre in 2013, winning Best New Play at the Olivier Awards. Her versatility extends to television, where she contributed to the popular series *Skins* and adapted *Chimerica* for Channel 4. More recently, she wrote the book and lyrics for the National Theatre's musical adaptation of Roald Dahl's *Witches* in 2023. Kirkwood's ability to tackle complex societal issues with depth and nuance is evident in her work, and this is particularly showcased in *The Children*.

The Children premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 2016, before opening on Broadway in December of the same year, receiving critical acclaim and winning the Best Play award at the 2018 Writers' Guild Awards (UK), along with a nomination for Best Play at the Tony Awards.

Brimming with wit, intensity and power, the play takes place over the course of one evening and follows married couple Robin and Hazel alongside ex-colleague Rose as they confront their past and grapple with the weight of their actions. As they navigate their intertwined histories, the play delves into profound questions surrounding generational legacies and our collective responsibility for the world we inhabit.

Where did the first seed for *The Children* come from?

I had been trying to find a form for a long time to write about climate change in a way that was emotionally rather than intellectually driven. What is important and theatrical to me is not the facts of climate change – we all know the facts now, and most of the average left leaning theatre audience will believe in them too. What is interesting is this: if we know the facts, why are we failing so catastrophically to change our behaviours? Well, for one thing, it's because those changes are enormous and frightening and demand that we give up things we have all come to feel we are entitled to. The scale of such a change can only feel like a death of sorts, and as Hazel says [in *The Children*], who would consciously want to move towards their own death? Capitalism has instilled a set of desires in us that are very difficult to de-program. I wanted to write something that didn't harangue or nag an audience, but was generous, honest and unsentimental about how difficult it will be to make the changes that we need to, about how overwhelming that might feel – an awakening perhaps, but a terrifying one. The idea you can do nothing because the disaster is already too large is an infantilising one (one of the many reasons for the title), and the play is about three people growing up into active agents. And of course, the way in which they do that was very much inspired by what happened at Fukushima. When I heard about the heroism of the retired workforce returning to the plant to help with the clean-up, lots of different and long gestating ideas started to finally come together for me.

This play has a strong message of generational responsibility. Is this something you feel passionately about?

I do, but my hope is that audiences will not feel that the play is about a single generation – it is not a satire on baby-boomers, it's about all of us – in 35 years I will be Hazel's age and I am certain that the next generations will be asking the same questions of me as mine ask of hers.

You've woven politics into many of your works. Do you set out to create theatre that challenges its audience, or does this happen organically for you?

To write a play takes a long time. This means that whatever I chose to write about has to sustain my interest for at least a couple of years, sometimes much longer. So I find myself drawn to writing about things where the roots of the emotions and ideas go deep and the branches go high. This isn't consciously political, it's just about what holds me. Hopefully if something can hold me for three years it will hold an audience for two hours. And I do believe that most theatre is an inherently political act because it demands we step outside of ourselves and imagine others. And it demands that we do that communally.

Sexual politics and the power of sex are central to this narrative. Can you tell us about this as a narrative choice?

An answer of two halves: (1) the play is an attempt to look at a crisis of desire on a political level – Hazel's line, 'I don't know how to want less' is perhaps the most crucial line in the play. Capitalism depends on growth. Our entire economic system depends on us wanting more and more, on boundless desire – and if we continue to pursue those desires, they will destroy us. And I wanted this ache of desires that couldn't be fulfilled, or which in being fulfilled would simply cause more pain, and no satisfaction, to pulse between the characters too. So that's what's burning in Rose, this irresolvable desire. And we watch her battle and to some extent subdue it. (2) In some sense it wasn't a choice at all, the moment I started writing, and I knew Rose had been hit in the face, it was clear to me that Rose was in Hazel's territory and that she had been in her territory before. Often writing is intuitive not conscious. Those women told me sex was important to them through bloody noses and passive aggression.

Source: "Excerpt from a feature by Sarah Corridon with Lucy Kirkwood, ahead of Melbourne Theatre Company and Sydney Theatre Company's 2018 co-production of *The Children*."



A DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

DIRECTOR, MEL CANTWELL, NOTES THAT THE PLAY IS FUNDAMENTALLY ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY.

"It looks at humanity from a macro atomic level to the biggest moral questions of today," she says. Cantwell finds the play remarkable in addressing issues like climate change and planetary sustainability without being preachy. "It's rooted in humanity, its rooted in familiarity, and it's just about all of us in our daily lives and the way we are

carrying on as though everything is normal. Within that, Lucy Kirkwood suddenly presents us with the future."

Mel is eager to start work on the show and is "...looking forward to keeping a lid on the powder keg of the work with three dynamic performers and an incredible design team on this really profound work with the power to change people."



GET TO KNOW THE CAST OF *THE CHILDREN*

HUMPHREY BOWER (ROBIN) AND NICOLA BARTLETT (HAZEL) PLAY RETIRED NUCLEAR PHYSICISTS, WHO ARE LIVING A QUIET EXISTENCE IN THEIR ISOLATED COTTAGE BY THE COAST.



The world outside is in chaos after a nuclear disaster. It's all yogurt, composting and yoga, until an old friend Rose (played by Caroline Brazier) arrives, testing their friendship and bringing with her a past Robin and Hazel had tried to leave behind.



NICOLA BARTLETT

Describe your favourite way to celebrate? Being among trees, laughter, good food, music, maybe dancing.

What song always get you up on the dance floor? Eurythmics – *Would I Lie to You?*; Talking Heads – *Life During Wartime*; Blur – *Coffee and TV*; Al Green – *Full of Fire*.

Who would you like to work with in the Performing Arts world? I am about to work with a truly Dream Team on *The Children*. But hey, if I'm dreaming, Ruth Wilson or Hugo Weaving, or Emma Stone and Yorgos Lanthimos.

A lesson you wished you had learnt sooner? To quote Mary Oliver – “*Things take the time they take. Don't worry. How many roads did St Augustine follow before he became St Augustine?*”

Who were your childhood heroes? Patrick Troughton as Dr Who. David McCallum as Illya Kuryakin in *The Man from Uncle*.

What was your first job? A Christmas holiday job at Dainty Lady Handbags earning \$15.00 per week, dusting down glass shelves daily and cutting sheets of cotton wool in the basement storeroom. The following Christmas I worked in The Shirt Shop in London Court. The jobs were polar opposites, and I was as ill-equipped as a teenager to deal with either role.

How do you keep fit? Walking my dog and slogging it at the gym.

What are your favourite comfort TV shows? British crime or Nordic noir.

Is there a topic you wish people would talk more about? Generally, there seems to be so much talk, but not so much listening.

Are there any tips you'd like to share about sustainability/recycling? Umm...not really. It's hardly rocket science; it's just about taking responsibility for what you buy and how you dispose of it.



HUMPHREY BOWER

Describe your favourite way to celebrate? A quiet dinner with a few friends. I'm not one for big parties or gatherings. I had great plans for my 60th birthday but ended up spending it with one of my daughters cooking me dinner at her house, which was perfect.

What song always get you up on the dance floor? *Unfinished Sympathy* by Massive Attack. To be honest, it might not get me up on the dance floor, but possibly up on my feet and swaying gently, or at least tapping my toes. I've never been much of a dancer except for a few years in my teens (alcohol and disco helped).

Who would you like to work with in the Performing Arts world? Caroline Brazier in every show (this will be our third in as many years). Mel Cantwell (this will be the third time I've worked with her too). Nicola Bartlett (we've never worked together before, but we've known each other for twenty years, and our kids were at Primary School together, so it's long overdue).

A lesson you wished you had learnt sooner? Use it or lose it (see later answer to 'How do you keep fit?')

Who were your childhood heroes? My older brother and his friends. I used to sit on the floor outside his bedroom door listening to Pink Floyd (this was in the early 70s). I was twelve years younger than him, but I was in love with all his girlfriends.

What was your first job? Working in a classical music record store. I spent far too much of my earnings on records, and far too much time talking to patrons about recommended recordings that weren't necessarily on the shelves. They fired me at the end of a three-month probation period because they said I wasn't suited to retail.

How do you keep fit? I don't; at least not currently. (See earlier answer to 'A lesson you wished you had learnt sooner?') However, I enjoy walking, swimming, stretching, and the occasional yoga class.

What are your favourite comfort TV shows? *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*; *The West Wing*. I watched the former with my daughters when they were growing up, and recently started watching the latter again with my girlfriend, who'd never seen it before. As you might be able to tell, I no longer own a TV, and don't subscribe to Netflix.

Is there a topic you wish people would talk more about? I wish people would talk less about everything.

Are there any tips you'd like to share about sustainability/recycling? Repairing instead of replacing when possible.



CAROLINE BRAZIER

Describe your favourite way to celebrate? I feel that the best way to celebrate anything is to share it. And champagne. Of course.

What song always get you up on the dance floor? *Walking in Memphis* by Marc Cohn.

Who would you like to work with in the Performing Arts world? I wouldn't want to be that prescriptive – my favourite collaborators have not necessarily been artists who were on my wish-list, but rather, artists who have inspired me with their depth, wit, talent, dedication, sense of play, and generosity. I would like to work with anyone with a huge heart and a curious mind.

A lesson you wished you had learnt sooner? Whole-heartedness. Don't hold back. Dare to love what you do. Don't be ironic about it. Go all in. Love fiercely. If you don't love and care about what you do, utterly, it won't know where to find you when it needs to. Have a thick skin and an open heart. A tricky combination to be sure, but one worth cultivating.

Who were your childhood heroes? Keanu Reeves. Paul Weller. Lou Reed. He-man. And I very badly wanted to marry John Travolta from *Grease* when I was 8.

What was your first job? I think my first job was working in my stepmother's haberdashery on Thursday nights. I made five dollars an hour and saved it up to buy pirate tapes in Bali on a family holiday.

How do you keep fit? I lift weights and walk. A lot. To very little avail.

What are your favourite comfort TV shows? I have an enduring soft spot for *Friday Night Lights*. I have watched the pilot at least 10 times, and it is, in my opinion, exquisite. It's a guaranteed sob. I have also seen *Normal People* countless times. And *The Office* (UK) is perfection.

Is there a topic you wish people would talk more about? Love. The great addiction of our time is making others wrong. Identifying the enemy. Outrage and moral righteousness. It's a crap vibe, and it's a trick. We are all the same at the end of the day. Less of that nonsense, more love.

Are there any tips you'd like to share about sustainability/recycling? The recycling goes in the yellow bin.

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HEAR FROM KATE MULVANY ABOUT HER SEMI-AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PLAY *THE SEED*.

KATE MULVANY OAM IS AN AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT, SCREENWRITER AND ACTOR. BORN IN GERALDTON, KATE DISCOVERED HER VOCATION EARLY IN LIFE.

She has gone on to win huge acclaim as an actor and writer in Australia. She recently starred alongside Al Pacino in the Amazon series *Hunters*, and has been seen in the hit TV series *The Twelve*, *The Clearing*, and the feature film *Elvis* by Baz Luhrmann.

Kate, in her own words:

The Seed was initially a commission from Company B Belvoir in Sydney in 2004, after my play *Story Time* won the Philip Parsons Award. I had to pitch a new idea to them to develop into a play.

At the time, I had just returned from a trip to Nottingham with my Vietnam Veteran Dad, Danny, to meet his family - a ragtag bunch of miscreant Merry Men!

Around the same time, I was also discovering that my ongoing medical issues were suspected to have come from Dad's exposure to dioxin in the Vietnam War.

I could see my father battling so many demons, whilst also having to deal with my own burgeoning anger that my body had side effects from a war that ended before I was even born.

So, I decided to pitch that to Belvoir.

At the time, it was the only story I had that was truly burning a hole in my soul. And thankfully, they said yes.

Writing *The Seed* involved several years of gently interrogating my father in order to tell his/our/your story. It was tough stuff, and long overdue. But he went with it the whole way, and I'm so grateful to him, and my entire family, for allowing me to share this story, not just at Belvoir, but around the world.

Now, *The Seed* is returning to the land it was lived on, and I am so thrilled.

There are so many references to my hometown of Geraldton

in the play - the crayfishing scenes on the Indian Ocean are some of my favourite moments of the piece, and they take on a special resonance when you know the audience have swum in that water, have felt the salt on their skin, have smelled the seaweed!

That said, with this 2024 production, West Australian audiences will see an updated version of *The Seed*. The issues at the heart of this play are in a continual state of flux due to the political edge of the piece, so I tweak accordingly.

And heartbreakingly, the scourge of chemical warfare is something that has been inflicted again and again in international conflicts, and so I make dramaturgical shifts to *The Seed* to echo that; to remind the audience it is an ongoing legacy, and the family at the heart of the story are just one of many, many families around the world.

My own family were in the audience the last time *The Seed* was staged in Perth, in 2009 at the Playhouse Theatre. Now, 15 years later, my sister Tegan is stepping into the role, and it feels so wonderful.

And also sad.

I wish my beautiful little sister didn't have such an insight into the effects of chemical warfare as she does, but that's our legacy.

Funnily enough, I didn't write Tegan into the original script as a character because I wanted to protect her from it all - she was still so young at the time. But after years now of watching Tegan onstage, I'm so proud to pass the character of Rose onto her.

Tegan knows more than anyone what this play is about - she is Rose as much as I was. She embodies the story fully with her own experience.

Teegs also started in comedy, and that is such an important element of this play. It's got funny bones and so does she. I reckon she's gonna smash it outta the park.

Since writing and first staging this play, we've seen very few positive shifts in society's understanding and support for war veterans and their families - both socially, and politically.

In terms of the Vietnam War, I think most people still don't know what "Agent Orange" is. What "dioxin" encompasses. What "PTSD" really, truly means. How long the legacy of war actually lasts...

"Tegan knows more than anyone what this play is about - she is Rose as much as I was. She embodies the story fully with her own experience."

Paradoxically, I think politicians and governments do know, yet choose not to acknowledge.

However, I am heartened by the stories I have heard and connections I have made after productions of *The Seed* around the world. I have found a community of friends and allies - from Geraldton to Hanoi to Washington - who are part of this dioxin puzzle, and it makes me so relieved we are in conversation.

That's where the positive comes from. I no longer feel so alone in it all.

But of course, there is more that can be done.

The best way to support any survivors and their loved ones is to engage in an open and transparent dialogue, personally and politically.

In the case of dioxin, so many people are seen as statistics and numbers, instead of names and stories. And so, people stop talking because they feel invisible, or the system of assistance becomes too labyrinthine.

We need our governments to check in regularly on where this toxic legacy is leading, and to make their services accessible and welcoming.

Also, and perhaps most importantly, we need to recognise that too much power is given to the companies that create these monstrous chemicals in the first place. They are almost impenetrable and have a vice-like grip on the information at hand, and so we find ourselves in a David and Goliath situation.

But the more people that talk about it, that share their stories, that interrogate the behemoth, the stronger our slingshot is.

On a more personal level, reach out to anyone who may need it. Don't be afraid to ask gentle questions about someone's experience. Silence can be just as toxic as any chemical.

And when you see the show, I hope you hold each other closer and recognise that a war doesn't end on the battlefield - the repercussions are ever-unfurling - and often invisible.

We must take heed of that before entering battle and continue to question our governments on their reasons for fighting and the methods of warfare used.

Humanity first.

I also hope audiences see the distinct humour that comes from hardship. These sorts of stories don't have to be told in hushed, earnest tones. They are complicated and wry and challenging and funny and surprising.

It's ok to laugh, as long as we also listen.

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF WA

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Inc had its origins in 1979 when the Vietnam Veterans Action Association was formed as a result of the perception that Agent Orange and other chemicals used during the Vietnam War was causing problems for veterans and veterans' children. Since then, it has become a strong national organisation with branches in each state. The Western Australian Branch home is at Anzac Cottage, 38 Kalgoorlie St, Mt Hawthorn. The cottage is used to hold meetings, conduct welfare and advocacy work along with other functions, including a Sunset Service on ANZAC Day. The VVAA Motto is "Honour the Dead but Fight like Hell for the Living".

The Vietnam Memorial Pavilion in Kings Park, is the original Chapel from Karrakatta Cemetery, relocated and erected by VVAA WA members and helpers, dedicated on the 1st October 1989.

Support for Vietnam Veterans, their families, former and serving members of the Australian Defence Force is available from; Open Arms Counselling Service, 1800 011 046. Safe Zone Support, 1800 142 072. Department of Veterans Affairs, 133 254. Soldier On, 1300 620 380.



BARRACKING FOR THE UMPIRE TOUR DIARY

OUR *BARRACKING FOR THE UMPIRE* REGIONAL TOUR TRAVELLED OVER 6,520 KILOMETRES TO EIGHT REGIONAL TOWNS FROM 11 MAY TO 15 JUNE.

The team facilitated Q&As, workshops and community engagement activities around the performances. Donnybrook locals were bussed to Arts Margaret River and the Old Fellas Football League (OFFL) from Kojonup, travelled to Albany Entertainment Centre to attend the production. Thank you to the cast and crew for the travel photos.





6 WEEKS. 25 INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS.
320 PARTICIPANTS

Image: Actor Ian Wilkes with Clontarf students (Karratha).



Image: Ebony McGuire and Ian Wilkes with Follow the Dream students (Hedland).

In conjunction with our tour of *Barracking for the Umpire*, with the generous support of the Australian Government's RISE fund, our Principal Partner Fortescue, City of Karratha and regional partners and venues, we have recently connected with youth, teachers and community groups across the Pilbara, Midwest, and Southwest. The cast and crew enjoyed being Welcomed to Country, hosting panel discussions and post-show Q&As as well as attending local community events.

The Cast and writer Andrea Gibbs have inspired youth across the regions, facilitating interactive workshops, and discussions. Clontarf and Follow the Dream students enjoyed yarning with Ian Wilkes and Ebony McGuire about their creative journey and creative processes.

"It was great to hear Ian mention to students that he was part of the Follow the Dream program when he was in high school. it was terrific for our students to see a real-life role model!"

"It was great to hear Ian mention to students that he was part of the Follow the Dream program when he was in high school. it was terrific for our students to see a real-life role model!"

Funding from The Aboriginal Benefits Foundation, allowed families in Karratha, Hedland, Broome, Albany and Esperance to enjoy attending the production, which for many was their first live theatre experience.

"All students walked away from the matinee performance saying how much they enjoyed it, as this was the first 'play or performance' some of our students had ever seen! Thank you so much for organising all of this. It was a unique experience for so many of our students, and one they will remember for a long time."

BACKSTAGE LEARNING

STAGE MANAGER, IZZY TAYLOR, AND THE PRODUCTION TEAM PROVIDED UNIQUE ACCESS TO OBSERVE BACKSTAGE PROCESSES DURING PERFORMANCES OF *BARRACKING FOR THE UMPIRE*.

"As a theatre lover considering a career in theatre, this experience gave me the opportunity to talk with industry insiders and observe how a professional production is run from backstage. It was truly invaluable. The production team were very patient with my questions and generously shared a lot of useful information with me. Thanks Black Swan for arranging this."

Image: Pitter Pat Productions Member and Karratha Senior High School students with Stage Manager Izzy Taylor.



WORKPLACE LEARNING (PERTH)

TRANSITIONING FROM SCHOOL TO FURTHER STUDIES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN BE DAUNTING, ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY CAREER PATHWAYS THAT STUDENTS MAY NOT BE AWARE OF.

Black Swan is currently hosting two work placements, providing access to first-hand experience of the multiple departments and processes within our company.

To learn more email learn@blackswantheatre.com.au



MEET NATHAN

Hi, I'm from the Kimberley and my tribe are the Gija and Yamatji people from Northern WA, and I am a work placement student at Black Swan, which has really deepened my appreciation for all the hardworking departments within the company.

When did your interest in theatre begin?

I've always enjoyed creative pursuits, but it wasn't until the TV series *Mystery Road* started filming in Kununurra, and eventually studying Drama in Broome, that I realised acting may be a pathway for me.

What are you working on at the moment?

I recently finished my school production of *Shakespeare in Love*. It was a long and tiring process, but I loved every moment and am so happy with the outcome. I'm nervous and excited for my next and final play at John Curtin College of the Arts toward the end of the year *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* set in Ireland, I'm just hoping I can nail the accent.

What are your aspirations?

I aspire to attend WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and/or NAISDA (National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association) where I can continue to hone my craft and embark on a career as a performer. My dream is to travel the world, meet amazing people and share culture, knowledge, and stories with other cultures around the globe.



MEET CALISTA

My name is Calista and I'm a Year 11 student at Darling Range Sports College. I'm really enjoying my work placement at Black Swan. Not only is it fun, but I am learning about so many elements unseen by audiences by observing rehearsals, tech runs and even marketing events and filming.

What do you like about the arts?

My experience with drama and acting has been nothing, if not amazing. It helped a lot with my social skills and public speaking, along with self-confidence. I'm currently in a school production which is a series of vignettes where I play multiple characters who have depth and are emotionally challenging. This has put me outside of my comfort zone but also shown me my range as an actor, which I want to develop more. Acting is something I want to make a career out of.

What performances have you really enjoyed?

My favourite performances I've seen are *Chicago* at Crown Theatre and Black Swan's productions of *The Glass Menagerie*, *Barracking for The Umpire*, and *The Pool*.



FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

UNLOCKING YOUR EXCLUSIVE PERKS WITH BLACK SWAN

As a Friend of Black Swan, not only do you get to enjoy our fantastic productions, but you're also the first to hear about Black Swan news, have priority booking, and receive behind-the-scenes access. And that's just the beginning! Your membership comes with a host of exclusive perks designed to enhance your experience both inside and outside the theatre. Let us guide you to some of Perth's best spots for great theatre, food, drinks, and even a comfortable bed at the end of the night!

DINE, DRINK, AND DELIGHT

Perth offers a vibrant food and drink scene, and as a Friend of Black Swan, you can enjoy some of the best spots at a discount:



The Standard: Just around the corner from the State Theatre Centre, The Standard is a venue that goes far beyond its main dining room. Sprawling over three levels to offer elevated beauty The Standard offers low-pressure Asian-influenced food as well as handcrafted cocktails to accompany your dining experience. Friends get a 10% discount off your entire bill at any time. – Don't miss their Lazy Susan weekends every Sunday!!!



The Royal: Conveniently located near the theatre, just across Yagan Square, The Royal is a gastropub that welcomes you with open arms offering contemporary share plates and traditional counter meals, all given The Royal treatment. Enjoy a meal or drinks with a 10% discount on your total bill.

Willi's Wine Bar: Tucked within the historic Royal Hotel, Willi's brings nostalgic European charm with a nouveau edge to the corner of William and Willington Streets in the heart of Perth. Savour your favourite wines, dive into their cocktail menu, or enjoy dinner – and show your Friends card for a 10% discount off the entire bill.

Mechanics Institute Bar: Nestled amongst the heritage rooftops of Northbridge, Mechanic's Institute offers an escape from the everyday below. With al fresco roof deck seating and epic cocktails, Mechanics' is a small bar that's big on fun. Experience expertly crafted post show cocktails and enjoy 10% off your drinks bill.

STAY IN STYLE

Make your theatre outings even more special with exclusive hotel discounts:

Adina Hotels: Get 15% off the best available rates across Australia, perfect for a theatre night staycation.



The Alex Hotel: Enjoy 10% off room rates for a stylish and convenient stay in the heart of Northbridge after a night of theatre.



EXCLUSIVE ENTERTAINMENT DISCOUNTS

Your membership extends to a variety of cultural experiences:

Luna Cinema: Enjoy \$19 tickets to films at Luna Leederville, The Windsor, Luna on SX and Luna Outdoor, and a special rate of \$15 for National Theatre Live and Met Opera films, bringing the best of the stage to the screen.

The Blue Room Theatre: For over 35 years, The Blue Room has been Perth's beating heart of independent theatre, featuring both emerging talents and seasoned performers. Enjoy a 15% discount while you witness the birth of the next big hit!

The Best of Perth's Ballet, Opera and Music: Experience the grace of the WA Ballet, the power of WA Opera and let the WA Symphony Orchestra move you with a 10% discount on tickets.

EXCLUSIVE BLACK SWAN PERKS

We're getting closer to launching our 2025 Season, so be sure to renew your Friends membership for just \$50 to make sure you keep the awesome benefits you have enjoyed this year, including:

Exclusive Ticket Discounts: Friends get additional discounts on both subscription packages and single ticket sales.

Priority Booking: Be the first to secure your seats, including for our much-anticipated 2025 season launching in October 2024.

Free Ticket Exchanges: Life happens – exchange your tickets with ease and at no extra charge.

Exclusive Events: Join us for special Friends-only events, including an exciting backstage tour of the Heath Ledger Theatre and special Friends briefings for our mainstage shows.

Special Offers & Competitions: Keep an eye out for exclusive offers and the chance to win fantastic prizes.

On Cue Magazine & Insider Updates: Stay connected with our bi-annual magazine and insider news, crafted just for you – it must be good – you're reading it now!!!

SPECIAL COMPETITION: WIN LUNA MOVIE TICKETS



TO SHOW OUR APPRECIATION, WE'RE OFFERING FIVE DOUBLE PASSES TO SEE NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE'S MULTI AWARD-WINNING PRODUCTION OF NOËL COWARD'S PROVOCATIVE COMEDY *PRESENT LAUGHTER*, FEATURING ANDREW SCOTT (*VANYA, FLEABAG*), SCREENING 10-13 AUGUST.

Simply answer this question correctly:
In *The Seed* by Kate Mulvany, what is the name of the character who embarks on a journey to uncover the truth about her family's past?

Email your answer to competitions@blackswantheatre.com.au by July 31, with *Present Laughter* in the subject line and which date you would prefer to see the film. Winners will be selected at random from all correct entries.

Being a Black Swan Friend not only gives you special offers and deals, but helps you curate the perfect night out for you and your friends! Don't forget that you can use these offers all year round – not just when you come to see a Black Swan show!

Photo credits: Brett Boardman, Daniel J Grant, John Koh, Jess Russell, Phoebe Tempura, Simon Westlake.

RBC

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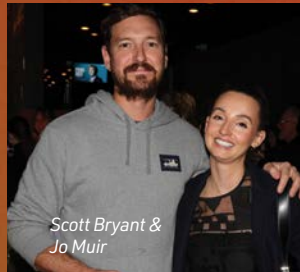
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PERFORMANCE IS SIMPLY MESMERISING."
THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

"A MASTERCLASS IN STAGECRAFT."
PERTH BROADWAY

"A TOUR DE FORCE IN STORYTELLING...A
TALE OF JOY, FULFILMENT, LOVE AND LIFE."
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Kate Champion



Scott Bryant &
Jo Muir



Tegan Mulvany &
Bobby Henry



Teresa Moore, Greg Street,
Nola Burns



Jeremy Smith &
Nathan Bennett

PRIMA FACIE



"GRIPPINGLY CONFRONTING THEATRE...
SOPHIA FORREST IS UTTERLY IMPRESSIVE."
THE WEST AUSTRALIAN



"EXHILARATING"
THE GUARDIAN

"BOLD, CHALLENGING AND ESSENTIAL VIEWING."
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Paige & Mark Barnaba,
Francois Witbooi



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