

**NEW
THEATRE**

**THE
SILVER GULL
PLAY AWARD
2023**

MONDAY 23 OCTOBER 2023



THE SILVER GULL PLAY AWARD 2023

WELCOME TO THE SILVER GULL PLAY AWARD 2023

Louise Fischer, Artistic Director, New Theatre

Helen Tonkin, Artistic Associate, New Theatre

READINGS OF EXTRACTS FROM THE SHORTLISTED PLAYS

Directed by Tiffany Wong

Actors: Kate Bookallil, Alison Chambers, Lumka Coleman,

Barry French, Wern Mak, Joseph Tanti

WINNER OF THE SILVER GULL PLAY AWARD 2023 ANNOUNCED

2023 SHORTLISTED PLAYS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

Next To Godliness by Alastair Brown

Chicken In A Biscuit by Mary Rachel Brown and Jamie Oxenbould

Burning by Christopher Bryant

The Mews by Joanna Erskine

The Dragonfly by Simon Thomson

THE JUDGES

New Theatre's Play Assessors Panel (John Keightley, Michael Briggs, Annie Bilton, Sahn Millington, Douglas Cairns, Susan Jordan)

Joy Minter (Sponsor of The Silver Gull Play Award)

Louise Fischer (Artistic Director, New Theatre)

Helen Tonkin (Artistic Associate, New Theatre; Curator, The Silver Gull Play Award)

Saro Lusty Cavallari (Freelance director)

Patrick Howard (Freelance theatre-maker and Arts on Tour Program Manager)

Eloise Snape (Freelance actor/writer/producer)

Jeremy Waters (Freelance actor/producer and Artistic Director, Outhouse TC)

**THE SILVER GULL PLAY AWARD
IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY JOY MINTER**

Hero image: © Michael Tonkin

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the country on which we meet today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

THE SILVER GULL PLAY AWARD

The Silver Gull Play Award was established by Paul Gilchrist and Daniela Giorgi of subtluance theatre in 2015, with the generous sponsorship of Joy Minter, who continues her support to this day. After five years, New Theatre was thrilled to take over the administration of the award in 2020.

Open to playwrights over 18 years of age and resident in New South Wales, the award seeks to recognise unpublished, unproduced scripts of 60 minutes or more duration, that speak to New Theatre's ethos of 'Plays With a Passion'.

In the eight years of its history, many of the plays originally entered for the award have gone on to be realised in full productions both in Sydney and interstate. These include: *Superheroes* by Mark Rogers at Griffin, *Between The Streetlight and the Moon* by Melita Rowston at KXT, *The Block Universe* by Sam O' Sullivan at Old 505, *TickTickBoom* by Melissa Lee Speyer, produced by subtluance, and *This, This is Mine* by Duncan Ragg which was presented in Sydney and Melbourne as a site-specific event in apartments.

New Theatre's support of new writing goes beyond simply curating and hosting these awards. Over the past two years, we have mounted full production of five plays from previous years' competitions.

In January 2022, New Theatre produced two plays entered into the 2020 competition: *The Park* by Simon Thomson and *The Chocolate Roster* by Brooke Robinson; in July we produced the world premiere of the 2020 winner, *Gods and Little Fishes* by Jamie Oxenbould and Richard Sydenham; and in September, as part of the Sydney Fringe Festival, we produced the world premiere of the 2021 winner, *The Other End of the Afternoon* by Bokkie Robertson. In July 2023, we produced the world premiere of *Off the Record* by Chris Aronsten, which was shortlisted in 2021.

Helen Tonkin

Artistic Associate, New Theatre; Curator, The Silver Gull Play Award



Gods and Little Fishes. Photo: Bob Seary



ALISTAIR BROWN

Alastair spent four years studying acting at Flinders University Drama Centre before deciding, the moment that he graduated, that he'd rather be a writer instead. Since then he has written novels, stage plays, screenplays, reviews, and even a couple of songs. His short story *Remembrance In Skin* recently appeared in issue 150 of *Aurealis* magazine, he won a Best Writing award for his short play *Flat* in the Melbourne Short + Sweet play festival, and his comic book reviews appear on the YouTube channel *Kapow!* (which he also co-hosted for several years). Alastair lives in

Sydney, New South Wales with his wife, and several cats who have started to demand he include them in everything he writes.



MARY RACHEL BROWN

Mary has an Associate Diploma in Performing Arts and is the recipient of the following national playwrighting awards: the Lysicrates Prize, the Rodney Seaborn Award, the Max Afford Award and the Griffin Award. Her latest work, *Rosieville*, was the runner-up in the 2021 Shane and Cathryn Brennan Prize, and was staged in September this year by Canberra Youth Theatre. Mary's most notable work is *The Dapto Chaser*, which was commissioned and developed by Merrigong and reproduced by Apocalypse Theatre. The play was screened at

Dendy Cinemas as part of Australian Theatre Live's program. Other works for the stage include *Betty Blokk Buster Reimagined* (contributing writer, Sydney Festival), *Dead Cat Bounce* (Griffin Theatre Company), *All My Sleep and Waking* and *Permission to Spin* (Apocalypse Theatre), *Inside Out* (Christine Dunstan Productions), and an adaptation of *Die Fledermaus* (Sydney Conservatorium of Music). Mary's TV credits include sketch writing for *The Elegant Gentleman's Guide to Knife Fighting* for ABC and several episodes of *Home and Away* for Channel 7. Mary is a proud member of The Australian Writers Guild and a supporter of WITS (Women in Theatre and Screen).

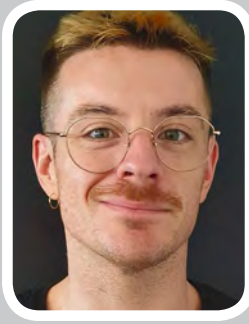


JAMIE OXENBOULD

Jamie has been an actor for over 30 years and has worked for most of the major theatre companies in Sydney. Recent theatre credits as an actor include *Family Values* (Griffin); *The Miser* (Bell Shakespeare); *The Literati* (Bell Shakespeare & Griffin); *Ernani*, *La Traviata* (Opera Australia); *Trevor* (Outhouse Theatre); *Eurydice*, *The Village Bike* (Old Fitz); *The Dapto Chaser* (Apocalypse Theatre); *Good Works*, *The Hypochondriac* (Darlinghurst Theatre); *Baby Doll*, *The Woman in Black*, *Chapter Two*, *Casanova*, *Fully Committed*, *Last of the*

Red Hot Lovers, *Neighbourhood Watch*, *Diary of an Olympic Cabbie*, *The Spear Carrier*, *When Dad Married Fury* (Ensemble Theatre) *The Tempest*, *Macbeth* (STC). Jamie's writing credits include *The Doug Mulray Show* (2MMM); *In Melbourne Tonight*; *The James O'Loughlin Show* (ABC TV); *Love Rules* (ScreenTime); *The Spear Carrier* (Ensemble Theatre), and his play *Gods and Little Fishes*, cowritten with Richard Sydenham, won the Silver Gull Play Award in 2020 and had its world premiere production at New Theatre in 2022, in which he also appeared.

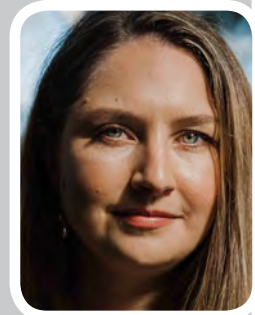
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VISIT OUR HISTORY WEBSITE:
<http://newtheatrehistory.org.au>**



CHRISTOPHER BRYANT

Dr Christopher Bryant is a Griffin Award-nominated playwright (*Home Invasion*, 2015), performer, and NIDA graduate (Master of Fine Arts - Writing for Performance, 2014). He has worked with a range of companies including fortyfivedownstairs, Malthouse Theatre, the State Library of Victoria, Wheeler Centre, ATYP, La Mama, and the Emerging Writers Festival. He has been shortlisted twice for the Silver Gull Play Award, for *Dishibition* (2018) and *Inside Out* (2022). Recent productions of his work include the “coup of pop culture [and] social satire” *Home Invasion* (The

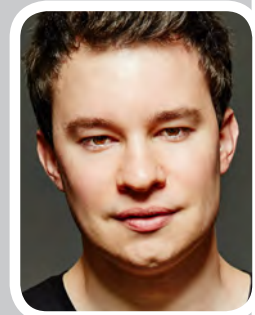
Buzz from Sydney, 2018), and the “brilliantly engrossing” *New Balance* (Suzy Goes See, 2023). He has had plays published through Play Lab and Australian Plays Transform, and is a current participant in Accessible Arts’ NEXT LEVEL Creative Mentorship program, working with Merrigong Theatre Company.



JOANNA ERSKINE

Joanna is an award-winning playwright, creative producer, teacher and arts education specialist. A graduate of NIDA, Joanna is a two-time winner of the Silver Gull Play Award, for *People Will Think You Don’t Love Me* (2016) and *Field of Vision* (2019), a Lysicrates Prize finalist, for *Illumination* (2023), and the founder and director of Storytellers Festival a showcase and celebration of unproduced Australian writing, held annually in association with Kings Cross Theatre KXT). Other plays include *K.I.J.E.* (Old Fitzroy Theatre), *AIR* (Old 505 Theatre), and *Rosaline*

(KXT). A former high school teacher, Joanna is passionate about writing for, and working with, young audiences and has written extensively for Bell Shakespeare, Camp Quality and Poetry In Action. Her popular monologue *BOOT* is performed by Year 12 students each year. It was originally produced by ATYP, published by Currency Press and commissioned for film, screening at film festivals internationally. She is the Head of Education at Bell Shakespeare, where she has worked in education for 15+ years.



SIMON THOMSON

Simon is an award-winning writer, director and actor. His writing engages real-world issues through the lens of dark comedy, surrealism and magical realism. Having been born in Mauritius and lived in India and Papua New Guinea, Simon is interested in stories that transcend parochial Anglo-centric myths of rural Australia and are more representative of Australian metropolitan and multicultural cities. Simon explores themes of social injustice, the foibles of relationships and mental health. He has written three full length plays, two of which

have been produced and performed around Sydney and is currently writing a crime thriller TV series about vampires in Sydney and a play about online ‘Incel’ culture. Simon has a BA with Honors in Drama and Film from the Australian National University, an Advanced Diploma in Acting from Sydney Theatre School and has just completed a Masters of Writing for Performance at NIDA. His second play, *The Park* was shortlisted for the Silver Gull Play Award in 2020 and had its world premiere production at New Theatre in January 2021.

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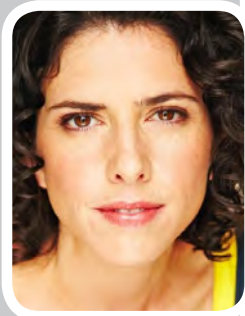
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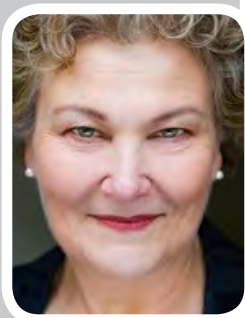
TIFFANY WONG DIRECTOR

Tiffany is a theatre-maker with a disability working across Gadigal and Wurundjeri lands. She is an Australian-born Chinese artist, with Singaporean and Malaysian heritage. For Slanted Theatre, she has directed *Boom, Three Fat Virgins Unassembled* (KXT bAKEHOUSE), *Short Blanket* (Meraki Arts Bar), *Lady Precious Stream* (The Flying Nun at Brand X), *Ching Chong Chinaman*. She was Assistant Director on *Top Coat* (Sydney Theatre Company) and *Iphigenia in Splott* (New Ghosts TC), and Directorial Assistant on *Murder for Two* (Hayes TC) and *Things Hidden Since The Foundation of the World* (National Theatre of Parramatta). Tiffany's acting credits include: *Romeo & Juliet* (Australian Shakespeare Company), *Two Worlds, One Heart* (Your Side), *Animal Farm* (New Theatre). Film includes *Five Blind Dates* (Amazon Prime & Goalpost Pictures). She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Performance Studies, Music, Chinese Studies) from The University of Sydney. Tiffany is the Artistic Director of Slanted Theatre, which aims to showcase and support Asian Australian theatre-makers and storytelling. In three years, Slanted has worked with over 100 Asian Australian artists. She is a proud member of Actors Equity.



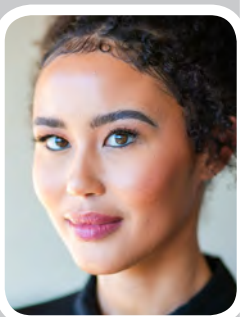
KATE BOOKALLIL ACTOR

Kate graduated with a BA in performance from UWS, and theatre highlights include; *The Village Bike* and *Everybody* (Cross Pollinate), *Nell Gwynn* (New Theatre), *Maggie Stone* (Darlinghurst Theatre Company), *Seed Bomb* (Subtenuance), *Frida Kahlo: Viva La Vida* (Theatre Excentrique), *Son of Byblos* (25A), *In This Light* (Ca Va Productions), *Violins of Hope* (Moira Blumenthal Productions) and *Cate Fucking Blanchett* (Karolina Ristevski). Kate has appeared in television shows such as *Review With Miles Barlow*, *The Let Down*, *Australian Gangster*, *Home and Away* and *Between Two Worlds*. Kate has been a proud member of MEAA since 2000.



ALISON CHAMBERS ACTOR

Alison studied at the Sydney Acting School when it was a thing. She is co-founder of Joining the Dots Theatre Company (JTDTC). Alison's recent stage projects for them include *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Relativity* (Riverside Theatre and Chippen St), and *Babette's Feast*. Other theatre includes: *A Delicate Balance* (Chippen St), *The Chapel Perilous* (New Theatre), *Hell Hole: A Love Story*, *Rabbit Hole*, *W;t*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Vintage footage of Alison can be found in *A Country Practice*, *Home and Away*, *All Saints*, *Water Rats* and *CNN* along with many forgettable commercials (and a couple of truly unforgettable ones).



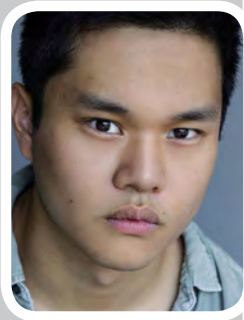
LUMKA COLEMAN ACTOR

Lumka is an Afro-Aussie who originates from Johannesburg, South Africa. She currently lives on unceded Wangal land and is a proud alumna of Atlantic Acting School Conservatory (2019). During her time at Atlantic her credits included: Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of our Teeth* and *Freefalling* by Aurine Squire. Most recently her work has included: *Goodbye Smile*, a spoken word voice over in collaboration with NYC-based musician Antoine Amay (2020), and the short films *Antique Heroes*, written and directed by Caroline McQuade (2021) and *Lovely Place*, written and directed by Jessica DiCosta (2023). She has been a proud member of MEAA since 2015.



BARRY FRENCH ACTOR

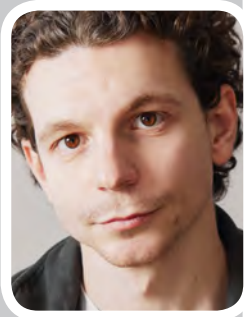
Barry has a BA (Dramatic Art) majoring in Set Design and Acting. He has been involved with many projects at New Theatre, as actor (*Equus*, *Journey's End*, *The Weir*, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*), set designer (*Badjelly The Witch*) and director (*Take Me Out* and *Marat Sade*). He also worked with Sport for Jove over several years with favourite productions being *As You Like It* and *Cyrano de Bergerac* (also contributing to the design), amongst many others. Most recently, he appeared in *Stories from the Violins of Hope* for Moira Blumenthal Productions.



WERN MAK ACTOR

Wern is a second generation Malaysian actor and writer. He trained at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) in 2021.

Recent credits include: 'John Laurens/Philip Hamilton' in *Hamilton* (Michael Cassel Group), 'Yong' in *Yong* (Monkey Baa Theatre Company), *Our Blood Runs in the Street* (Chopt Logic)



JOSEPH TANTI ACTOR

Originally hailing from Western Australia, Joseph is an actor and theatre maker who has most recently appeared in *Jellyfish* (New Theatre), *Short Blanket* (Slanted Theatre Company), *Poetry in Action's* 2022 Aus and NZ tour and is currently producing *Brilliant Traces* at Flow Studios.



The Other End of the Afternoon. Photo: Troy Kent

WHO'S WHO AT NEW THEATRE 2023

STAFF

THEATRE MANAGER &
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Gemma Greer

PUBLICIST
Alice Livingstone

TECHNICAL MANAGER
Mehran Mortezaei

FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGERS
Eddy S Dharmadji (Coordinator)
Harlee Timms
Marica Fumanti
Robyn Arthur

PLAY ASSESSORS

John Keightley (Coordinator)
Annie Bilton
Michael Briggs
Doug Cairns
Susan Jordan
Sahn Millington
Raymond Patman (Administrator)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESIDENT
Rosane McNamara

VICE PRESIDENT
Elizabeth Ivory

TREASURER
Michael Pedersen

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Louise Fischer

ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE
Helen Tonkin

WARDROBE COORDINATOR & LICENSEE
Dr David Marshall-Martin JP

PREMISES MANAGER
Ole Borch

SECRETARY (EX-OFFICIO)
Gemma Greer

EMERITUS THEATRE CAT
'Mouse'



Off the Record. Photo: Bob Seary