

**New Theatre acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the country on which our theatre is located, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.**

**We pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.**

## Seasons Greetings

Thank you to all our members, volunteers, donors, supporters and friends who contributed in so many ways to our 2023 productions. We wish you a wonderful Christmas holiday and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year for more New Theatre adventures.



## Another opening, another show

As we approach the end of the year, we'd like to thank all the artists, crews, staff and support teams who have contributed their time and talent to our 2023 productions. Here are some pics from the shows that have graced our stage since our last Spotty:



Left: *Off the Record*  
by Chris Aronsten  
(Dir: Jess Davis)



Right: *A Very Expensive Poison*  
by Lucy Prebble  
(Dir: Margaret Thanos)



Left: *Banging Denmark* by Van Badham (Dir: Madeleine Withington)  
Above centre: *Loot* by Joe Orton (Dir: Johann Walraven)  
Above right: *The Ballad of Maria Marten* by Beth Flintoff (Dir: Louise Fischer)

**Performing, Challenging, Developing,  
Entertaining, Inspiring, Encouraging local  
artists and audiences**



@NewTheatreSydney



@newtheatresydney

## 2024 Season Launch

On Monday 27 November we were delighted to host a full house for the launch of our 2024 season. This is the first time since the beginning of the Covid years that we have been able to announce a full 12-month season. And what an exciting season it is: comedy, drama, classics, two Sydney premieres, two Australian premieres - something for everyone. Here are the plays we are looking forward to presenting in 2024:

- *Homos, or Everyone in America* by Jordan Seavey
- *Atlantis* by Lally Katz
- *The Front Page* by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur
- *Ink* by James Graham
- *Sunset Strip* by Suzie Miller
- *Hangmen* by Martin McDonagh
- *Wife* by Samuel Adamson
- *Shakespeare in Love* based on the screenplay by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard

For further details, keep an eye on our website [newtheatre.org.org](http://newtheatre.org.org) and, if you are interested in performing in any of these plays, keep an eye out for the audition notices. If you are interested in being a part of a production or construction/bump-in team, contact Theatre Manager, Gemma Greer, at [manager@newtheatre.org.au](mailto:manager@newtheatre.org.au).

## Thanks Tom

Tom Bannerman is one of the busiest and most talented set designers in Australia and New Theatre is incredibly lucky that Tom has chosen to volunteer his time, not only to design dozens of wonderful sets for us over the past 40+ years, but to mentor and support other designers of NT shows especially young designers at the beginning of their careers. Tom has also constructed numerous sets and assisted on the bump-in and bump-out of many more.

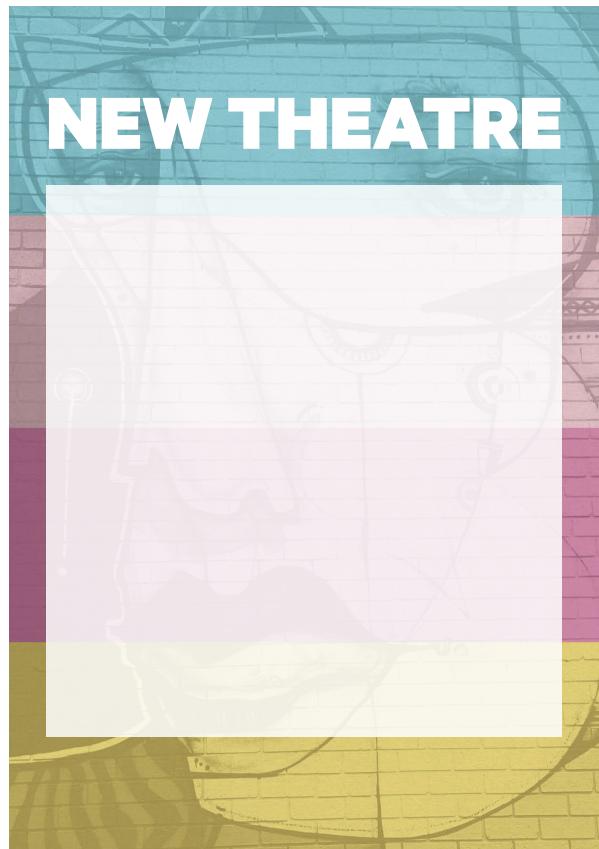
In recent years, Tom also took on the New Theatre committee role of Workshop Co-Ordinator, ensuring that the workshop, the hub of NT set building was always well stocked, that equipment was in working order and that new designers were supervised or trained in appropriate use of workshop facilities.

This year Tom stepped down from his committee position due to his busy lifestyle and other commitments. Despite this, he is still heavily involved with NT, having just designed *The Ballad of Maria Marten* and continuing to participate in construction and bumping in of sets.

Thanks Tom for your continuing dedication and contribution to New Theatre and for your wonderful friendship.

## How To Get Involved

As a New Theatre member/supporter, there are many ways you can join in the fun of getting a show on the boards. We always need people backstage, operating lights and sound, helping with costumes, props and set construction. And there are experienced members to train you if you've never done it before. If you'd like to try any of these activities, contact Theatre Manager, Gemma Greer, at [manager@newtheatre.org.au](mailto:manager@newtheatre.org.au) to get started.



Tom Bannerman assisting with the recent bump-in of *Loot*

## Silver Gull Award 2023

The Silver Gull Play Award competition for 2023 attracted many entries of an extremely high standard encompassing an exciting range of subjects that clearly demonstrated the breadth and depth of Australian playwriting.

The judging panel read, assessed and discussed each submission multiple times, unaware of the identity of the authors so as to ensure a determination made on merit, based solely on the quality of the writing. This resulted in a shortlist of the five following plays:

*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 winning entry, *Next to Godliness*, was announced at New Theatre on Monday 23 October with excerpts from each of the shortlisted plays presented to a large and appreciative audience. Congratulations to the shortlisted writers and to the actors and director Tiffany Wong for the splendid excerpt presentations.

We are especially grateful to Joy Minter, who sponsors the event and provides the prize money to encourage new work by Australian playwrights. Thanks also to the curator of the awards, New Theatre's Artistic Associate Helen Tonkin and the judging panel: Louise Fischer (Artistic Director, New Theatre), Helen Tonkin, New Theatre's Play Assessors panel (Annie Bilton, Michael Briggs, John Keightley, Doug Cairns, Susan



Helen Tonkin (top centre) with 2024's shortlisted playwrights and winner, Alastair Brown

Jordan, Sahn Millington), Saro Lusty Cavallari (freelance director), Joy Minter (sponsor of the award), Patrick Howard (freelance theatre-maker and Arts on Tour Program Manager), Eloise Snape (freelance actor/writer/producer, and Creative Producer, Critical Stages), and Jeremy Waters (freelance actor/producer and Artistic Director, Outhouse Theatre Company). Thank you for the hours you put into finding this year's winner.



Alastair Brown was announced as winner of the Silver Gull Award

## Members News

The following was posted on Facebook this week by the niece of longtime

New Theatre member, Frank Barnes: "Hi, I am letting the friends of Frank know that he has been in hospital since June, except for 2 weeks. He originally had a stroke and came home all fine. Then, unfortunately, he had a major fall that caused brain bleeding and other injuries. This was a traumatic brain injury and has left Frank with damage that has caused a type of dementia, which is related to his memory. His general knowledge is great but his memory of people and events, in some cases, has diminished for the last 20 years. His mobility has also been compromised. Today he has left Manning Base Hospital and is now at Estia Tuncurry as he cannot fully care for himself. The details are Address: 4 Bonventi Cl, Tuncurry NSW 2428 Phone: (02) 6554 7522. Some of you may have tried to contact him but his phone was not always charged at the hospital. The lovely staff at Estia are now making sure it is charged. Please stay in touch with Frank, as he does like hearing from people and seeing them too."



Frank Barnes with New Theatre mates

New Theatre has increasingly gained a reputation as the place for actors, directors, designers, and crew to come to for hands-on experience. This may be to put theory into practice, or to start their professional development in a supportive, nurturing team and production. Many people now come to us from NIDA, WAAPA and other training institutions because they recognize the opportunities we offer and the standard of work we produce. Showcasing your talent at the New Theatre can lead to amazing opportunities in the professional world, or it can be used to gain the experience of mounting your own independent shows. Here's what some of our "alumni" have been working on this year:

- Tristan Black (*One Man, Two Guvnors*) is appearing in *Alone it Stands* by John Breen, at the Ensemble Theatre, 25 Jan 2024 - 02 Mar 2024
- Naomi Belet (*The Ballad of Maria Marten*) and Kirsty Saville (*The Lovely Bones*) are appearing in *Sophia=(Wisdom): The Cliffs*, by Richard Foreman, at The New, 10 - 27 January 2024.
- Matt Abotomey (*Banging Denmark, A Very Expensive Poison*), Lib Campbell (*The Spook*), Tasha O'Brien (*A Very Expensive Poison*), Diego Retamales (*A Very Expensive Poison*) and Eleni Cassimatis (*Twelfth Night*) will be appearing in *I Hate People: Timon of Athens* directed by Margaret Thanos for Sport for Jove, at Everglades Garden Leura, 6-21 Jan, 2024.
- Alice Livingstone (director and actor in numerous NT productions) and Emma Louise (*Jumpers for Goalposts*) are appearing in the world premiere of *Mad for You* by David Allen, at The Sydney Acting Studio Feb 2- February 24.
- Ciaran O'Riordan (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*) continues his professional association with the innovative Come Ye Spirits Theatre Company with an exciting 2024 touring season of their 4-actor Shakespeare plays.
- Cassady Maddox-Booth (*The Lovely Bones*) has just finished a Screenwriting Masters at AFTRS.



**Propinquity: A Duet in Memoir** co-written by Dr Kathryn Pentecost and Liz Hall-Downs. In this thought-provoking "duet in memoir", the two writers tease out some of the bigger social themes of 1970s - 2020s, while reflecting on personal life journeys in the arts. The book is still in draft format but features a chapter called 'Reds Under the Beds', in which New Theatre is featured. New Theatre alumna Dr Kathryn Pentecost entered the New Theatre doors in 1979 as a talented 23-year-old set designer and writer. Her 12 years' experience at New Theatre unconsciously shaped the trajectory of her life. This short extract is from her draft chapter 'Reds Under the Beds',

*In 1979, I was initiated into Sydney's New Theatre in King St Newtown as a designer on a show called *And I Still Call Home Australia* directed by Ian Tasker... I am amazed at the creative freedom I experienced as well as the firm camaraderie. I was a very young person and yet I was offered the same respect as older people with much more life experience. None of my creative ideas were ever dismissed.... I remember being quite flabbergasted that every production meeting where I had to pitch (complete with model) my stage design (and/or poster design), there were no objections, and my ideas went through smoothly from approval to construction – helped perhaps because my sets were always on time and within budget.*

**From Inner West to Far West:** *Reedy River* in Broken Hill: New Theatre holds the performing rights to *Reedy River* and has staged "the Australian bush musical as warm as a handshake" more times than any other show. This year Lyn Collingwood and Wayne Richmond travelled to Broken Hill as director and musical director to join producer Deb Hunt in mounting a production there. It played to packed houses.

Curtain call. Not in shot is the drover's kelpie!



Above: Tristan Black  
Below: Matt Abotomey



Cassady Maddox Booth  
(on right)



TAKE 5 is five questions to key New Theatre creatives to unveil the doings of specialised fields within the theatre. This edition we shine our spotlight on two Directors, Lou Fischer and Margaret Thanos.

New Theatre has a fine history of nurturing directors and in particular female directors, especially in a time when women directors were rare. The first production directed by a woman was in 1932. Looking back over our history for just the past 25 years, women directors significantly outnumber male directors in New Theatre productions.



**Louise Fischer** is currently Artistic Director of New Theatre and has directed over 30 productions for New Theatre, Darlinghurst Theatre, Seymour Centre, Sidetrack Theatre, Riverside Theatre and PACT theatre.

She has an MA in Theatre Studies from UNSW and is also a singer, actor and plays the piano. This year she directed *The Ballad of Maria Marten* for the New.

**1. What aspects of a play inspire you to direct it?**  
It's always about the story. It's relevance, it's impact on me. Sometimes it's that intangible visceral thing of "I just have to do it".

**2. In your opinion, what are the key attributes of a successful director?**

God, how long is a piece of string? There are so many parts of being a director but I think the ability to collaborate and take the entire team on the journey where they are all invested and passionate about getting the work to the stage is important. Being true to and respecting the text is another one. Having a vision but not strangling the play with that vision, so you can let it involve (should this be evolve?) with the input of all involved.

**3. How do you handle professional criticism?**

I hide in a corner and suck my thumb. Seriously though, I consider if it's valid, and if so take it on board as a way of improving my future practice.

**4. Who do you look to for inspiration or mentorship?**

Everyone I work with and have worked with and those around me who aren't in the industry but have good insight.

**5. What's the one piece of advice you'd give to fledgling directors?** Don't give up. Spread your net wide. Listen to older folk sometimes - we have good ideas. Make mistakes. Be kind to yourself and your team. Don't confuse vision with ruthless ambition where you run yourself and everyone into the ground.

**Margaret Thanos** is an award-winning Cypriot-Australian director and actor for theatre and film. She is also a singer and an activist with her own theatre company Queen Hades Productions. This year she directed *A Very Expensive Poison* for the New Theatre.



**1. What aspects of a play inspire you to direct it?**

Typically, at the moment, I tend to only direct large cast plays, size 10 upwards, but I'm really interested in plays that involve the surreal or magic realism. I also always direct plays that have some political angle or aspect to it. I feel very strongly that Theatre is made to speak to, and reflect, the world we live in.

**2. In your opinion, what are the key attributes of a successful director?** Making sure that my team members and cast have a positive environment while working on the show. A safe and positive environment is the key to a creative environment. Directing isn't a democracy, but it's not an autocracy. As a director, curating the best offers that are given in the room is important. Being unafraid to say you don't have all the answers. Also, I think having a vision is very important, I need to be able to visualize the play when I read it.

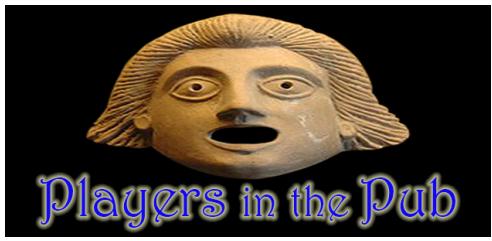
**3. How do you handle professional criticism?**

Reviews are a big part of being a Director, I take them with a grain of salt. Art is a subjective practice. There isn't a single reviewer or audience member that isn't going to bring their own life experiences or biases to productions they see. I do read reviews, as so much of my focus is on what the audiences are experiencing, saying online...but it's more important that you think the work you've done is good.

**4. Who do you look to for inspiration or mentorship?**

I'm very lucky to have lots of mentors here in Sydney. I've been an Assistant Director 9 times so far in my career, and feel very blessed to be able to watch people I think are the best. I also take trips away to experience culture from a different society, and that feeds back into my practice.

**5. What's the one piece of advice you'd give to fledgling directors?** Two things- just do it! So many people think about doing it, but don't- so just do it, you'll know if it speaks to you. Secondly, you don't have to know all the answers. Sometimes I'm in front of 30 people looking to me for the vision, answers, and I think the best thing a director can say is, let's work on this together.



Players in the Pub, which has been performing moved and costumed playreadings in Glebe hotels for almost 15 years, has found what we hope is a permanent home at The Harold, Forest Lodge (the manager is a strong supporter of the Arts). In 2023 the company staged a mix of the familiar (*The Importance of Being Earnest* directed by Nicholas Papademetriou, *Tartuffe* directed by Tricia Youlden, and *1984* directed by Annette van Roden); less familiar (*Morning Sacrifice* directed by Richard Cotter, and *Justice* directed by Sharron Skehan



Director Richard Cotter and the all-female cast



Director Nicholas Papademetriou (left) discusses the script with Alex Bryant-Smith and Julie Bettens

Entry to our shows is by donation, the takings split between New Theatre and local charities. This year contributions to the New paid for 15 new chairs for the actors' dressing room.

The Players team: Dereck Cameron, Lyn Collingwood, Ed Dharmadji, Jeannie Gee, Nicholas Gledhill, Elaine Hudson, Susan Jordan, Martin Kelly, Kim Knuckey, Cassady Maddox Booth, David McLaughlin, Jodine Muir and Sharron Skehan.

and Lyn Collingwood); Australian premieres of Edith Wharton's *The Shadow of a Doubt* directed by Ross Scott, and Elizabeth Robins' *Votes for Women!* directed by Elaine Hudson); and the world premiere of *A Saint for Our Times* written and directed by David McLaughlin. J M Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* which fell victim to COVID has been rescheduled for 19 December. Its director is Susan Jordan.

Three one-act plays by Pulitzer Prize winner Susan Glaspell, (directed by Jeannie Gee and Jodine Muir) are scheduled for February 2024 followed by David McLaughlin's production of J M Barrie's *Mary Rose* in March.



Director Annette van Roden and the cast



David McLaughlin, and Alyona Popova observed by Cassady Maddox Booth



Players in the Pub  
The Harold 21 November 2023

