

# **THE FROGS:**

**IN HELL THEY SING SHOW TUNES**

**ADAPTED BY ALEX KENDALL ROBSON,  
AFTER ARISTOPHANES**

**12 AUGUST - 6 SEPTEMBER 2025**

# THE FROGS

## CREATIVE TEAM

Director  
Set Designer  
Lighting Designer  
Costume Designer  
Sound Designer  
Music Director  
Assistant Director  
Choreographer

Alex Kendall Robson  
Tom Bannerman  
Holly Nesbitt  
Josh Carter  
David Wilson  
Zachary Aleksander  
Eddy O'Leary  
Dani Bainbridge

## CAST *(in order of appearance)*

Dionysus  
Xanthias  
Heracles  
Corpse/Euripides  
Charon  
Porter/The Frog  
Maid of Persephone/Landlady 1  
Landlady 2/Sappho  
Hades  
Aeschylus  
Cultist

Pat Mandziy  
Eddy O'Leary  
Axel Berecry  
Zachary Aleksander  
James Robin  
Max Fernandez  
Larissa Turton  
Meg Bennetts  
Nic Starte  
Sebastyen Filipinski  
Dani Bainbridge

## PRODUCTION TEAM & CREW

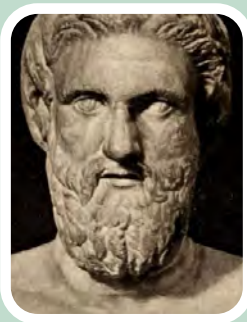
Production Coordinator  
Stage Manager/Operator  
ASMs  
Set Construction/Bump-in

Acting Technical Manager  
Production Photography

Gemma Greer  
Christopher Starnawski  
Heidi Nesbitt, Ruby Hawken  
Tom Bannerman  
Peter Gormley  
Owen Hirschfeld  
David Marshall-Martin  
Rodger Wishart  
Jay Murrin  
Bob Seary

Hero image: © Kurit afshen/Shutterstock

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.



## ARISTOPHANES, PLAYWRIGHT

Aristophanes (born c. 450 bce—died c.388 bce), an Athenian citizen belonging to the clan named Pandionis, but his actual birthplace is uncertain. Little is known about the life of Aristophanes, and most of the known facts are derived from references in his own plays.

Aristophanes is the greatest representative of ancient Greek comedy and the one whose works have been preserved in greatest quantity (he wrote around 40 plays). His work is representative of the Old Comedy—that is, of the phase of comic dramaturgy in which chorus, mime, and burlesque still played a considerable part and which was characterized by bold fantasy, merciless invective and outrageous satire, unabashedly licentious humour, and a marked freedom of political criticism.

Aristophanes' reputation has stood the test of time; his plays are still frequently published and produced in numerous translations, which attempt to convey the flavour of Aristophanes' puns, witticisms, and topical allusions. But it is not easy to say why his comedies still appeal to an audience more than two millennia after they were written. In the matter of plot construction, Aristophanes' comedies are often loosely put together, are full of strangely inconsequential episodes, and often degenerate at their end into a series of disconnected and boisterous episodes. Aristophanes' greatness lies in the wittiness of his dialogue; in his generally good-humoured, though occasionally malevolent satire; in the brilliance of his parody, especially when he mocks the controversial tragedian Euripides; in the ingenuity and inventiveness, not to say the laughable absurdity, of his comic scenes born of imaginative fantasy; in the peculiar charm of his choric songs, whose freshness can still be conveyed in languages other than Greek; and in the licentious frankness of many scenes and allusions in his comedies.

*The Frogs* was performed at the Lenaia, one of the Festivals of Dionysus in Athens, in 405 BC and received first place. It is a literary comedy. Dionysus, the god of drama, is concerned about the poor quality of present-day tragedy in Athens now that his recent favourite, Euripides, is dead. Dionysus disguises himself as the hero Heracles and goes down to Hades to bring Euripides back to the land of the living. However, as a result of a competition arranged between Euripides and his great predecessor Aeschylus, Dionysus is won over to the latter's cause and returns to earth with Aeschylus instead, as the one more likely to help Athens in its troubles. (For more on Athens' troubles look up the Peloponnesian War!)

Helen Tonkin, Literary Manager, New Theatre, 2025

Image: Uffizi Gallery, Florence

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

It may not shock you to learn that I do not read Classical Greek. I do, however, speak and read English fairly well – especially considering that I'm from Tamworth – so the play is written in that. You're welcome.

When approached to do this play, I came to it already intimately knowledgeable. A lifetime ago, my high school did a production of it, and – I'm sorry to have to brag – I was Dionysus. It was the first full-length play I ever did, and to say it was formative would be an understatement.

When adapting this play, I kept to the beats. Strictly speaking, there isn't much of a plot, so this was easy. I minimised the role of the main chorus of cultists – ironically not the eponymous frogs, who actually play a very small role in the original – and introduced a nebulous third chorus I named the Dispossessed. The original has several choral odes: these have been replaced with contemporary songs. The two biggest changes come at the end of the play. I found the contest itself between Euripides and Aeschylus fairly tedious, so I cut it to within an inch of its life and added a musical number. I also added a completely original scene at the end – no spoilers.

Should you pick up a more literal translation of the play, you won't find it greatly different in tone. A lot of contemporary references and meta-theatrical wank, plenty of dick jokes and a general sense of silliness. But the silliness is not mindless. When Aristophanes wrote this play, his home and world was in a perilous position. As his audience sat in the Theatre of Dionysus, if they looked behind them, they would see the Acropolis, their ancient natural fortress and home of the Parthenon and Temple of Nike, goddess of victory. If they looked off into the distance, beyond their walls, they would see the encampment of the Spartans besieging their city. Within a few months they would suffer a catastrophic naval defeat, the fall of Athens, the end of democracy, and effectively the end of the Golden Age of Greece.

An apocryphal story from this apocalypse comes from Plutarch, which stipulates that when the Spartans were considering whether or not to burn Athens to the ground, they were so moved by the works of the playwright Euripides that they stayed their hand. Maybe theatre can change the world, just a little bit.

Alex Kendall Robson, 2025





#### ALEX KENDALL ROBSON ADAPTOR & DIRECTOR

Alex is a freelance theatre maker, having completed a Bachelor of Theatre Studies and a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) at the University of New England. Winning an international scholarship, he studied Shakespeare at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. He is the founder of Sydney independent company Fingerless Theatre.

For New Theatre: *Homos, or Everyone in America*, *Bathhouse The Musical*.

Other credits include: devising two plays about the Bard and his work: *A Short Guide to Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare's Villains: Everyone But Iago*, the former appearing in the 2014 Sydney Fringe then touring the state; directing the queer musical *The Things I Could Never Tell Steven* (Sydney Fringe); directing several of his own adaptations, including *The Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol, *The Misanthrope* by Molière, *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth

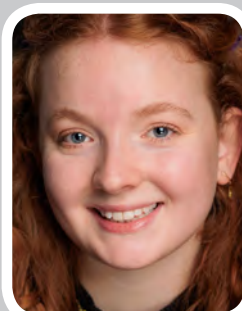
Grahame, *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, and *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens; directing an original-ish play of his own, *The Tale of the Great Emu War* (Sydney Fringe); and directing productions of *Ophelia Thinks Harder*, *Just a Short Break on a Hafgufa*, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night* (Fingerless Theatre), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Two Sticks Theatre), *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Felt Tip Theatre).



#### TOM BANNERMAN SET DESIGNER

Tom is a Sydney-based set-designer. His body-of-work is considerable, this being his 295th production in that capacity, 83 of which have been for New Theatre.

For New Theatre: previously this year, he was set designer for *Fighting*, *In the Next Room*, or *The Vibrator Play* and the associate set-designer for *The Flea*. Other recent productions here include *Ink*, *The Ballad of Maria Marten*, *Chimerica*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Pygmalion*, *My Night with Reg*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *Marat/Sade*, *That Eye/The Sky*, *When the Rain Stops Falling* and *Jerusalem*. For other theatres: *Isolde & Tristan* (Sport for Jove/Old Fitz), *Stories from the Violins of Hope* (Moir Blumenthal Productions/Bondi Pavilion), *The Wasps*, *Just Macbeth!* and *Tales of the Wild Bush* (NSW Public Schools Drama Co, The Studio, NIDA), *Eight Gigabytes of Pornography* and *Mark Colvin's Kidney* (Drill Hall, Mullumbimby), and *Endgame* (Civic Playhouse, Newcastle.)



#### HOLLY NESBITT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Holly is an emerging lighting designer from NIDA, who has worked professionally in the industry for just over a year.

For New Theatre: *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Hir*.

Most recently, Holly flew to Adelaide to be Lighting Designer for a musical in the Fringe festival. She has lit productions for the Sydney Opera House, MandyLights, The Parks Theatre and Qtopia, and is looking forward to further work at Qtopia in the coming months.



#### JOSH CARTER COSTUME DESIGNER

Josh has worked in many areas of costume and wardrobe since graduating with a Diploma of Costume for Performance from Ultimo TAFE in 2014.

For New Theatre: Debut.

Josh has been a custom costume designer and maker for performers including Trevor Ashley and Courtney Act. Previous theatre credits include *Twelfth Night: Or What you Will* (Fingerless Theatre) and *The Tale of the Great Emu War* (Sydney Fringe).

Josh has recently completed tours through Australia and Asia with *Miss Saigon* (Opera Australia/GWB Entertainment) and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (GWB Entertainment), and spent many years working with Opera Australia in the costume and wardrobe departments.



#### DAVID WILSON SOUND DESIGNER

David is a dedicated theatre technician who began his journey onstage during high school in Armidale before transitioning into audiovisual work in 2016. Since then, he has worked consistently in the AV industry, currently working full-time in the AV department at one of Sydney's largest venues. Alongside his day job, David remains actively involved in Sydney's independent theatre scene.

For New Theatre: *Homos, or Everyone in America*.

David has worked on various productions for Fingerless Theatre Company over the years, most recently *Ophelia Thinks Harder* (KXT).

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**ZACHARY ALEKSANDER MUSIC DIRECTOR/CORPSE/EURIPIDES**

Zach is an actor, musician, director and producer. They hold a Bachelor of Music Theatre from the Australian Institute of Music.

For New Theatre: Debut..

Zach directed/produced/appeared in *HAIR* (ZAP/Factory Theatre), assistant directed *Iolanthe* (The Governor's Centre/Art House Wyong/GPAC), musically directed and appeared in *Ophelia Thinks Harder*, *The Government Inspector* and *Twelfth Night* (Fingerless Theatre), and has written/directed four musical revues in their capacity as a university lecturer of acting & music theatre (AMPA).

Actor/musician credits for theatre include: *Into the Woods* (AIM), *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (Sqabbalogic), *The Hello Girls*, *HMS Pinafore* NSW tour (Hayes Theatre Co); *The Wind*

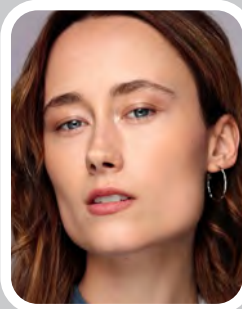
*in the Willows* (Australian Shakespeare Co); *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *The Wild Party* (Little Triangle/Seymour Centre); *Heathers* (TMOOC); and *The Colour Orange* (Sydney Comedy Festival). Zach is currently working on Kate Gaul's upcoming production of *Cowboys* (Siren Theatre Co).

**EDDY O'LEARY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/XANTHIAS**

Eddy is an actor who graduated from Sydney Acting School in 2016. This production is his debut as an assistant director on a theatre project.

For New Theatre: *Homos*; *Or Everyone in America*.

Other credits include *Twelfth Night: Or What You Will* (Fingerless Theatre), the short film *Lonesome* (Breathless Films) and the upcoming feature *Play Dirty* (Amazon). He also starred in the AACTA nominated web series *Bad Ancestors* (Purple Carrot Entertainment).

**DANI BAINBRIDGE CHOREOGRAPHER/CULTIST**

Dani is a Sydney-based actor, musician and choreographer holding a Master of Music Performance (Academy of Music and Performing Arts), Bachelor of Music Theatre (Australian Institute of Music) and Cert IV in Dance (Noosa Professional Dance Academy).

For New Theatre: Debut.

As an actor/musician, live performance credits include: *Chicago* (AIM), *Fame* (Birdie Productions), *La Belle Rose* (Magician's Cabaret), *HAIR* (ZAP/Factory Theatre), *Forever Gold: the Ultimate ABBA Show* QLD tour (Concept Touring), *Lola Scott* at Newtown Festival (Lola Scott), as well as many cabaret and corporate events around Sydney with *La La Lounge* and *Pistachio Entertainment*.

Dani choreographed *HAIR* (ZAP/Factory Theatre), and has choreographed/directed a number of musical revues whilst teaching tertiary music theatre (AMPA).

Dani has appeared onscreen in *Last King of the Cross* (Helium Pictures), *The Artful Dodger S2* and *Reckoning* (Sony Pictures), *NCIS Sydney* (Paramount+), *The Only One* (Deeper Water Films), *I Am Woman* (Goalpost Pictures), *Riot* (ABC), the music videos for *Loveless* (Lola Scott) and *Secrets* (Written By Wolves) and a number of TVCs.

**MEG BENNETTS LANDLAY 2/SAPPHO**

Meg is an honours graduate of the University of Wollongong's performance course, and has also studied Shakespearean acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

For New Theatre: *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

Meg was a recipient of the inaugural Katie Lees Fellowship at Flight Path Theatre, through which she developed, wrote and performed her acclaimed one-woman show *Losing It*. Other recent credits include *Three Sisters* (Virginia Plain/Flight Path), *Augusta* (subtlenance), *Much Ado About Nothin'* (Bar'd Work), *Twelfth Night* (Fingerless Theatre), *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (By Chicks) (Sydney Fringe), *Macbeth* (SheShakespeare), and various Theatre in Education shows for the Australian Shakespeare Company. Meg can also be seen in The Playwrought Project's upcoming

production of *Taming of the Shrew* at Sydney Theatre Company's Wharf 2 in September.

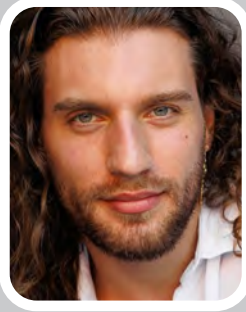
Meg is represented by Rebecca Lean, Lean Artists Collective.

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#### AXEL BERECRY HERACLES

Axel is a Sydney based actor and writer who grew up in the foothills of Adelaide, South Australia. There he Graduated at AC Arts with a diploma of performing arts majoring in acting.

For New Theatre: *Homos, or Everyone in America*.

Axel works daily as a performer with Cheeky Tunes, delivering educational music, dance and storytelling programs to children under five years of age. Other recent theatre credits include *The Shifting Heart* (Liverpool Community Centre). Alongside bringing his short film *Lovebirds* to life next month, he will also be debuting his original play *HOSPO* at the Red Rattler in October.

Axel is represented by Gary Jones International Management.



#### MAX FERNANDEZ PORTER/THE FROG

Max has been performing in theatre for over ten years and is currently completing a Bachelor of Musical Theatre at The Sydney Conservatorium of Music at University of Sydney.

For New Theatre: Debut.

Other theatre credits include *Jersey Boys* (Engadine Musical Society), *They're Playing Our Song* (Bankstown Theatre Company), *Alice By Heart* (Muse), *Carousel* (Sydney Musical and Opera Society) and *Georgy Girl* (Miranda Musical Theatre Company).

Max has performed in arenas such as Qudos Bank Arena, WIN Entertainment Centre and Ken Rosewall Arena as a featured vocalist in large scale productions such as *Schools Spectacular*, *Southern Stars* (for which he was nominated for a CAT Award for Best Variety Performance

by an Individual), and *Pulse Alive*. Max has also performed two original cabarets at Claire's Kitchen At le Salon. Max is represented by Les Solomon at Lambert House Enterprises.



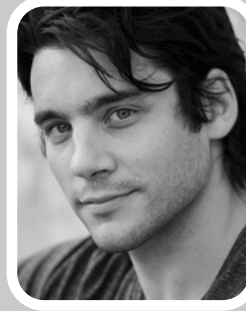
#### SEBASTYEN FILIPINSKI AESCHYLUS

Sebastyen is an emerging First Nations artist and recent graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), where he completed his Diploma of Stage and Screen Performance in 2024. In addition to his acting credentials, Sebastyen has a strong background in martial arts and has lived in almost every state and territory across Australia, both of which inform his creative practice.

For New Theatre: Debut.

Sebastyen has appeared in two immersive experiences produced by Netflix at Luna Park Sydney: *Stranger Things: The Experience* and *Squid Game: The Experience*, and will be seen in New Zealand's upcoming 48 Hour Film Festival.

Sebastyen is represented by Hennessy & Harman Management.



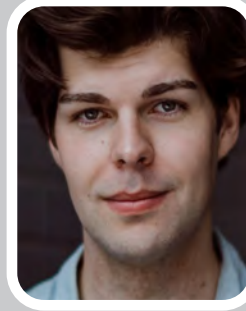
#### PAT MANDZIY DIONYSUS

Pat is an Australian/British actor who studied acting at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) 2020. Whilst still studying he started a successful Tiktok channel where he explored the realm of sketch comedy and educational material.

For New Theatre: Debut.

Other credits include: *Lunch with Bernays* (180 collectives, dir. Sam Spring), *Amadeus* (Festival of Emerging Artists, dir. Temuulen Jargalsaikhan), the Dungeons and Dragons miniseries *1 For All* (Deerstalker Pictures), being a recurring cast member on the Improvisational web series *Choose Your Own Misadventure*, and *Ophelia Thinks Harder* (Fingerless Theatre/KXT).

Pat is represented by RubyBlue Artists.



#### JAMES ROBIN CHARON

James is a versatile Sydney-based actor with a background in musical theatre, a Bachelor's Degree from the Academy of Film, Theatre and Television and over a decade of industry experience.

For New Theatre: Debut.

Recent stage credits include: *King Lear* (Such Stuff), *Journey's End* (Belvoir St), *Romeo and Juliet* (Point Break Drama Co.), *Cymbeline* and *Spring Awakening*.

James is represented by Jodie Morgan, Diversity Creative Management.

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#### NICHOLAS STARTE HADES

Nicholas holds a University of Sydney Bachelor of Arts, JCU Graduate Diploma of Psychology (Honours), and is a WAAPA Acting graduate as well as winner of the Sally Burton Award for performance in Shakespeare. He started his theatrical career performing and directing amateur theatre, musical theatre and circus performance through various university theatre groups.

For New Theatre: Debut.

His credits at WAPPA include: *Love and Money*, *Hamlet*, *Enron*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Swell Party* as well as short films *Dam Babies*, *Juliet* and *SLAA*. Nicholas made his professional debut in *Dust* (Black Swan State Theatre Company), has performed in various independent productions around Sydney, and at the Opera House in *Wonderful Town* (Squabbalagic). Screen appearances include a recurring

character on *The Ex PM* (ABC) and as a lead character in the independent feature film *Broken*.

Recently, he has been touring the country with CDP Theatre Producers in productions of *Billionaire Boy*, *The Midnight Gang*, *Room on the Broom*, and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, while also understudying *Guess How Much I Love You* and *The 13-story Treehouse*.

Nic is represented by Stacey Testro International.



#### LARISSA TURTON MAID OF PERSEPHONE/LANDLADY 1

After graduating from ACA in 2023, Larissa spent 2024 touring with Bell Shakespeare's Players ensemble, performing in *Shakespeare is Dead*, *Just Romeo & Juliet* and *Shakespeare: The Human Experience*.

For New Theatre: Debut.

Other recent credits include: *The Lotto Line*, *Banana Phone* and *The Partygoers* (Studio 5 Productions). Prior to ACA, Larissa toured Türkiye from 2018-2020 with Istanbul-based theatre company Cloud Educational Theatre, performing in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Sherlock Holmes*. Other theatrical credits in Sydney include *KEATING! The Musical* and *Coming Out On Broadway*.

Larissa's screen appearances include lead roles in short films *Broken Record* (dir. Federico

Anderson) and *Without You* (dir. Jarred Fantom).

Larissa is represented by Storm Actors.



#### CHRISTOPHER STARNAWSKI STAGE MANAGER/OPERATOR

Christopher Starnawski has worked Stage Management for over 14 years.

For New Theatre: SM, *August: Osage County*.

Other shows include: *True West*, *The Queens Nanny* tour, *The Heartbreak Choir*, *Colder Than Here*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Ulster American*, *Midnight Murder At Hamlington Hall* (Ensemble Theatre); *Scenes From The Climate Era* and *Tiny Beautiful Things* (Belvoir St Theatre); *An Ox Stand On My Tongue* (Belvoir 25A); *Amadeus* (Red Line Productions & Sydney Opera House); *The Lovers* (Bell Shakespeare); *Losing It* (Megan Bennetts); *La Traviata* (Opera Australia); *The Player Kings*, *Venus & Adonis*, *Macbeth*, *Henry IV*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night* (Sport For Jove); *Jekyll & Hyde* (Hayes Theatre); *The 7 Deadly Sins* and *Mahagonny Songspiel*, *Hand To God*, *Happy Days* (Red Line Productions); *Angels In America* (Apocalypse Theatre Company); *Chef* (2022 & 2023), *Twelfth Night*, *The Cherry Orchard* (Virginia Plain Productions); *Chop Chef* (Blush Opera); *The Turn Of The Screw* (Tooth & Sinew); *Pride & Prejudice* (Dream Plane Productions); *POSH* (Queen Hades Productions), company managing *Much Ado About Nothing* (Bar'd Work); *Are You Pulling My Leg* (Arts On Tour).

Chris also venue manages KXT on Broadway, and was the Production Administrator at Belvoir St Theatre. He also works in film in both the camera and art departments, with notable features including *Head Above Water*, *Kairos*, *Ritual*, *Staying The Night*, *I'm Here Too*, *17 Minutes*, *Life After Man*, *Pseudomonas* and *Vector*. Short films include *Disarmed*, *Deep Pockets*, *Empty Hearts*, *An Eight Letter Word Starting With A*, *This Town Ain't Big Enough For The Both Of Us*, and music videos for the bands In Hearts Wake, Amalia and Rayn.









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# **THE LARAMIE PROJECT**

**BY MOISÉS KAUFMAN  
& THE MEMBERS OF  
TECTONIC THEATER PROJECT**

**7 OCTOBER - 1 NOVEMBER**



## **WHO'S WHO AT NEW THEATRE 2025**

### **STAFF**

**THEATRE MANAGER &  
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR**  
Gemma Greer

**PUBLICIST**  
Alice Livingstone

**TECHNICAL MANAGER**  
Mehran Mortezaei

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

**LICENSEE**  
Dr David Marshall-Martin JP

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

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**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Chad Traupmann

**TREASURER**  
Mathew Sigmund

**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**  
Louise Fischer

**ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE**  
Margaret Thanos

**LITERARY MANAGER**  
Helen Tonkin

**MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS COORDINATOR**  
Sahn Millington

**SECRETARY (EX-OFFICIO)**  
Gemma Greer

**EMERITUS THEATRE CAT**  
'Mouse'

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## SPECIAL THANKS FROM 'THE FROGS' TEAM

Maddy Withington (social media), Jade Fuda (costumes), Sonya Kerr (intimacy consultant), Lib Campbell, Shaw Cameron, Caity Cowan, Lars Emery and Alastair Brown (readers), Margaret Thanos (dramaturgy)..  
New Theatre Management Committee, staff and volunteers.

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- *Spotlight*, the regular members' newsletter

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