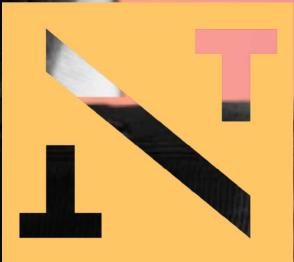


STAGE KISS

BY SARAH RUHL

18 MAR - 11 APR

2026





CREATIVES

Director **Alice Livingstone**
Set Designer **Merle Leuschner**
Lighting Designer **Holly Nesbitt**
Costume Designer **Bianca De Nicola**
Sound Designer **Alice Livingstone**
Intimacy Coordinator **Sonya Kerr**
Dialect Coach **Benjamin Purser**
Fight Choreographer **Diego Retamales**

CAST

Kevin/reader/understudy/doctor/butler/pimp **Frank Shanahan**
Director **Nicholas Papademetriou**
She/Ada Wilcox **Emma Delle-Vedove**
He/Johnny Lowell **Jason Spindlow**
Husband/Harrison **Lynden Jones**
Millie/maid/Angela **Nicola Denton**
Millicent/Laurie **Victoria Fowler**

PRODUCTION TEAM & CREW

Stage Manager **Maddie Tran**
Props Coordinator **Emily Saint-Smith**
Operator **Ricci Costa**
Technicians **Jay Murrin, Ron Abuhalaiqa, Marc Monnet-Demarbre, Theo Tilly**
Set Construction Crew **David Marshall-Martin, Tom Bannerman, Rodger Wishart, Robert Sterry**

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.

Running time: 2 hours and 25 minutes including one interval of 20 minutes.

Please note: this production contains theatrical haze, gunshot, strong language, drug references, simulated violence, intimate scenes and adult themes.

PLAYWRIGHT NOTES

Sarah Ruhl (born 1974)

American Playwright, Poet, Essayist

Ruhl had intended to become a poet, but after she studied under Paula Vogel at Brown University, she switched to playwriting. Her first play was *The Dog Play*, written in 1995 for one of Vogel's classes. She has won multiple, prestigious playwriting awards and was a Pulitzer finalist for *The Clean House* (New Theatre, 2017) and *In The Next Room, or The Vibrator Play* (New Theatre, 2025) which also received a Tony Award nomination for Best Play. Other plays include *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *STAGE KISS* and *Euridice* which she adapted as a libretto for an opera, staged at the Los Angeles Opera and Metropolitan Opera. She currently teaches at the David Geffen School of Drama at Yale University and lives in Brooklyn with her family.

Extracts from interviews with Sarah Ruhl:-

Most plays I've written have some kissing in them. And when I come to work, sit behind a table, and watch people kiss for a job, knowing that the actors have also come to work, and are now kissing for a job... well, over the years, I've thought: how strange. And so I wanted to write a play about the phenomenon of kissing on stage.

The indefinable slipping point between the actuality of the kiss and the illusion of the kiss reminds me of the actuality of love and the stories we tell ourselves about love. The ordinariness of a long and stable relationship is non-narrative by nature, whereas the combustible romance has extraordinary narrative power over us. Our imaginations want a romance, our practical natures want a marriage. So what to do? How to live?

On the play within a play:-

I've always had a great love for the 1930's. And one question I had was whether that heightened language of the '30s was any more fake a way to talk about love than the way we talk about love in our contemporary dialogue.

In a way this play is a love note to all the actors I've ever worked with—to their bravery, their silliness; I wrote this play because I dearly love each and every one of you, and I thank you.

Helen Tonkin Literary Manager

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real." Iris Murdoch.

Sarah Ruhl's *STAGE KISS* is a love letter to theatre and romance, and she dedicates it: "For actors. For first loves." Essentially, the play explores the difference between reality and fantasy, between real life and imagination, the extraordinary headiness of 'being in love' and the all-consuming nature of 'first love'. It also breaks open the mystery of theatre, how a production is made, while satirising in a fond way different genres, from 1930s melodrama to edgy 1970s urban grit.

The play was written a decade ago, before the now-common practice of intimacy coaching came into the industry. Prior to that, scenes involving kissing, touching, or depiction of sexual acts, were simply worked out by the director and actors. For the most part, this was fine, but it demanded a great deal of trust and could give rise to misunderstandings, exploitation, or worse. If Sarah Ruhl were writing it today, I think she would put an additional character in that rehearsal room: the intimacy director.

I was thrilled that Artistic Director Louise Fischer asked me to direct the third of Sarah Ruhl's plays to be produced by New Theatre (after *The Clean House* in 2017 and *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play* last year) as I've been a fan of her writing for many years. I think she is one of America's finest contemporary playwrights, inventive and incisive, and I love her wit and her profound understanding of the human condition.

I've been blessed with a wonderful cast and creative team. We've spent a lovely couple of months exploring this play and I hope that you enjoy what we've created.



BIOGRAPHIES



ALICE LIVINGSTONE DIRECTOR/SOUND DESIGNER

Alice is a Sydney-based actor, voice artist and director. She is a graduate of The Drama Studio (Sydney) and holds a B. Ed from Melbourne State College and an MA in Theatre Studies from UNSW.

As Actor for New Theatre: *Chimerica, Once in Royal David's City, August: Osage County, The Clean House, Hay Fever, Entertaining Mr Sloane, Equus, Into the Woods, The Beauty Queen of Leenane, Assassins, A Cheery Soul, and Only Heaven Knows.*

As Director for New Theatre: *My Night With Reg, The HIV Monologues, The Elements of an Offence, The Little Dog Laughed, The Heidi Chronicles, The Real Thing, Privates on Parade, Top Girls, A Couple of Poor, Polish-Speaking Romanians, The Weir, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, In Angel Gear and Once in a While the Odd Thing Happens and Jumpers for Goalposts.*

Alice has worked as an actor for many companies in Sydney, regional NSW and Queensland. in a career spanning over 35 years. Highlights include *A Delicate Balance* (SCTC/Chippen St), *Dinner* (Focus Theatre/Griffin Stablemates), *A Doll's House* (STC), and *The Libertine* (Sport for Jove/Darlinghurst Theatre).

Alice was co-founder of independent company Focus Theatre, producing plays for Seymour Centre, Darlinghurst Theatre, Feast Festival (Adelaide), Griffin Stablemates and Belvoir/B Sharp. Her film and TV work includes *The Unlisted, Granny, Devil's Playground* and *Rake*, and she is soon to start filming the webseries *Kaboom!*

Alice is repped by Smith and Macdonald Creative Management.



MERLE LEUSCHNER SET DESIGNER

Merle is a designer with a multidisciplinary background and over four years of professional experience in the design field. She studied Industrial Design and completed a master's degree, developing a practice that spans furniture, graphic and even medical design. This diverse training informs her hands-on, solution-focused approach to theatre design.

Merle has created and led two of her own productions and assisted many others. Her work is driven by colour and collaboration, resulting in stage and costume designs that are practical, playful, and deeply connected to performance.

As Stage Designer: *The Artificial Silk Girl* (Schleswig-Holstein State Theatre).

As Stage and Costume Designer: *Things I Know to be True* (Schleswig-Holstein State Theatre).



HOLLY NESBITT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Holly graduated from the NIDA in 2023 and has since worked across a number of Sydney venues including the Sydney Opera House, New Theatre and Flight Path Theatre. Her work aims to transport audiences into the world of each play, using light to evoke atmosphere, emotion and dynamic visual storytelling.

As Lighting Designer: *We Aren't Kids Anymore* (Little Big Theatre Co); *The Frogs* (New Theatre); *Traffic Light Party* (Jezebel Productions); *As You Like It* (Fingerless Theatre Co, Flight Path Theatre).

STAGE KISS is Holly's fourth production as Lighting Designer at New Theatre.



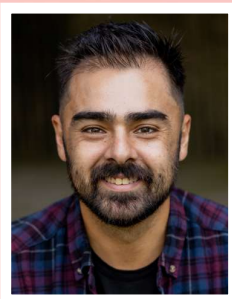
BIANCA DE NICOLA COSTUME DESIGNER

Bianca is an emerging costume designer and maker currently undertaking a Diploma of Live Production in Costume. She enjoys exploring character, storytelling and atmosphere through costume, and particularly values collaborating with directors and performers to bring characters to life on stage.

Alongside her theatre practice, Bianca's creative work has also been recognised in the wearable art community. She was a winner at the Sydney Wearable Art Gala 2025 (Enmore Theatre) with her piece *Under Divine Vigil*, which is currently exhibited at the Museum of Wearable Art in Huonville, Tasmania.

As Designer and Maker in Sydney: *H.M.S. Pinafore* (Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Society of Sydney, Shore School) and *Commedia dell'arte Arlecchino / Leonard Bernstein's Trouble in Tahiti* (Eternity Playhouse).

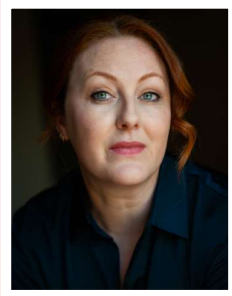
STAGE KISS is Bianca's New Theatre debut and continues her developing practice in costume design.



DIEGO RETAMALES FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER

Diego is a Chilean/Australian actor and fight choreographer based in Gadigal/Sydney with a B. Performance from Theatre Nepean's final graduating class in 2008.

As Fight Choreographer: *Hir*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *A Very Expensive Poison* (New Theatre); *Purpose* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* (Belvoir); *Furious Mattress*, *Workaholics* (25A); *Timon of Athens* (Sport for Jove); *Port*, *U.B.U*, *The Wasp* (KXT); *Taming of the Shrew* (Playwright Project) and *Pride and Prejudice* (Old Fitz).



SONYA KERR INTIMACY COORDINATOR

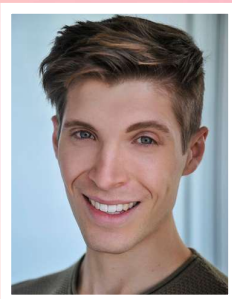
Sonya Kerr is an actor, voice over artist and intimacy director. She has worked extensively in Melbourne and Sydney, appearing in both stage and screen roles.

As Intimacy Director: *In The Next Room or The Vibrator Play*, *Banging Denmark*, *The Ballad of Maria Martin*, *Atlantis and Homos*, or *Everyone in America* (New Theatre); *Es & Flo* (Mi Todo Productions); *FOAM* (Qtopia); *Ophelia Thinks Harder* (Fingerless Theatre); *Much Ado* (Attractive, Not Model Attractive); *Ninety* (Actors Pulse Theatre) and short film *Cherry Pie*

(UTS).

As Actor: *Hangmen*, *August: Osage County*, *The Angry Brigade*, and *Next Lesson* (New Theatre); *The Taming of the Shrew* (Playwright Productions); *Dungeons & Dragons*; *The Twenty Sided Tavern* (Showpath Entertainment/David Carpenter); *The Government Inspector* (Fingerless Theatre); *The Sweet Science of Bruising*, *In Their Footsteps* (Theatre Travels); *Silenced* (Vox Theatre); *Seed Bomb*, *Shut Up and Drive*, *A Quiet Night in Rangoon*, *One Way Mirror* (Subtluance); *As You Like It*, *Macbeth* (SheShakespeare) and *The Auxiliary*, *Macbeth* (Phrankly Theatre - Melb).

Sonya has appeared in several short films including the award-winning *Vector*, which she also co-produced. She has also narrated many audiobooks and worked as an historical consultant on several projects.



BENJAMIN PURSER DIALECT COACH

Ben holds a PhB (Hons., First Class) from the Australian National University, a Diploma of Performing Arts from ED5International, and a Master of Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Sydney. He is currently undertaking a PhD in Linguistics at ANU. He is also a proud member of the Australian Linguistic Society, the Australian Voice Association, the Voice and Speech Trainer's Association, and Speech Pathology Australia. And is an accredited linguist (ALS) and a certified practicing speech pathologist (SPA).

As Dialect/Voice Coach: *The Flea*, *Wife*, *Ink*, *Atlantis*, *The Ballad of Maria Marten*, *All My Sons*, *Jumpers for Goalposts*, *Breaking the Code*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Neighbourhood Watch* (New Theatre); *Calamity Jane* (One Eyed Man Productions); *MRock* (ATYP); *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hayes Theatre Company); *Holiday Inn* (Hayes Theatre Company); *Fuccbois: Live in Concert* (Long Con Productions); *Chef* (Virginia Plain Theatre); *The Pass* (Fixed Foot Productions); *Přibor* (Charles Sturt University); *Steel Magnolias* (Lane Cove Theatre Company); *The Lies We Tell* (Bittersweet Productions); *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Moriarty*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, *Jane Eyre*, *Hayfever*, *Steel Magnolias*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Poirot's First Case*, *The Secret of Chimneys*, *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play* (Abridged), *Sherlock Holmes and the Death at Thor Bridge* (Genesian Theatre Company) and *Threads* (AFTRS).



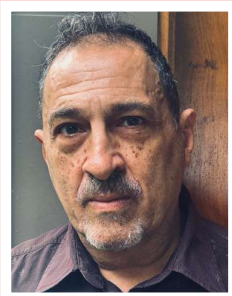
**FRANK SHANAHAN KEVIN/READER/UNDERSTUDY/DOCTOR/
BUTLER/PIMP**

Frank Shanahan is a recent Sydney transplant originally from Canberra. Since moving to the big smoke over a year ago, he has been studying at the Sydney Actors Studio in Redfern.

As Actor: *Romeo and Juliet* (Canberra Repertory Society); *Dogfight* (Dramatic Productions); *Bring It On: The Musical!* (Canberra Philharmonic); and *They're Ready for You* (Lights Canberra Action).

Among Frank's other notable achievements are selling Lady Gaga a pair of denim booty shorts and losing ten thousand dollars on national TV in spectacular fashion.

STAGE KISS is Frank's debut with New Theatre.



NICHOLAS PAPADEMETRIOU DIRECTOR

Nicholas graduated from WAAPA in 1984 and since then has worked extensively on stage and screen. His main love is for the theatre, and he has worked for all the major Australian theatre companies including STC, Belvoir, Ensemble, MTC, Black Swan and STCSA. He has also appeared in productions in London, New York, Athens, Cyprus and Edinburgh.

STAGE KISS is Nicholas' fifth production at New.



EMMA DELLE-VEDOVE SHE/ADA WILCOX

Emma Delle-Vedove is a Sydney-based actor, director and voice coach with more than 20 years' experience across theatre, film, radio and children's performance. She is the founder and Creative Director of Em's Entertainment, established in 2008, which creates engaging theatre productions and workshops designed especially for young audiences. Alongside her work in children's theatre, Emma has enjoyed a varied career collaborating with companies including Disney Theatrical Productions, Belvoir, Roadshow Productions, Mad March Hare, SheShakespeare, Tunks Productions, Ad Hoc Theatre, Shakespeare on the Green and Fixed Foot Productions.

Emma has had a long-standing relationship with New Theatre, performing with the company since 2007 and serving as Artistic Associate from 2013–2018.

New Theatre credits as Actor include *Jumpers for Goalposts*, *The Women*, *Jerusalem*, *Vernon God Little*, *Canary*, *The Witches*, *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *A Nasty Piece of Work*, *Art Is a Weapon* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

New Theatre credits as Director include Dir: *Wolf Lullaby* and *Jerusalem*, Assist. Dir: *The Heidi Chronicles* and *The Little Dog Laughed*.

When she's not on stage, Emma brings her love of storytelling to radio as the weekday lunchtime announcer on iHeartRadio's My88 FM.



JASON SPINDLOW HE/JOHNNY LOWELL

Jason has always had a passion for performing and entertaining audiences in any way he can. He has trained with NIDA (Acting Ensemble), Screenwise (Showreel Course), and Hills Drama Academy.

In recent years Jason has stepped into acting full-time, appearing in five productions over the past eighteen months with Opera Australia and The Australian Ballet as an actor. Alongside performing, he writes his own scripts and is directing an upcoming production with Castle Hill Players. Jason also works behind the camera as a cinematographer, sound and lighting operator on a range of short films, fan films and feature projects.

His film work includes *Mothers, Lovers and Others* by Davo Hardy, for which he was a contender for the 2026 AACTA Awards for Best Supporting Actor and won Best Cinematography at the Global Film Festival Awards in Los Angeles.

As Actor: *Cliffnotes of Insanity, Caravan* (Castle Hill Players); *Manon: The Sleeping Beauty* (The Australian Ballet); *The Marriage of Figaro, Cinderella, Così Fan Tutte* (Opera Australia); *Peter Pan the Musical* (Hills Musical Theatre Company) and *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory* (Dural Musical Society).

As Director: *Baskerville* (Castle Hill Players).

STAGE KISS is Jason's New Theatre debut.



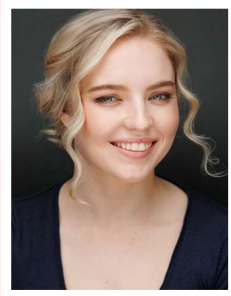
LYNDEN JONES HUSBAND/HARRISON

After an eight-year break from theatre to focus on starting a family, Lynden is delighted to return to New Theatre, where he last performed and where some of his most cherished performances took place. He is a graduate of the Ensemble Acting Studios.

As Actor: *Ghost Stories* (SOH); *S-27* (SBW); *The Jungle* (Darlinghurst); *To Kill A Mockingbird, The Weir, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, August: Osage County* (New Theatre); *Scenes From An Execution, Osama The Hero* (Tooth & Sineu); *Joan Again* (subtlenance); *The Maintenance Room* (GKA); *Birthdays, Christmas & Other Family Disasters* (Newtown/Riverside); *We'll Always Have Wagga* (Newtown/Riverside/Wagga); *Godspell* (ESMS); *Push Up, Wolf Lullaby* and *A Day in The Death Of Joe Egg* (HGRT) and *Present Laughter* (Blue Mountains TC).

He toured NSW with *The Removalists, Pygmalion, Away* and *Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*.

As Actor for TV/film: *The PM's Daughter, Hiding, Rake, Tough Nuts, H&A, Cooks, All Saints, Wildside, Living Memory* and *Two Hands*.



NICOLA DENTON MILLIE/MAID/ANGELA

Nicola Denton is a Sydney-based actor, producer and writer who graduated from Actors' Centre Australia in 2020. As a creative, Nicola wrote, produced, directed and acted in the short film *Ophelia's Got a Gun*, winning Best Actress at the Inner West Film Festival and Best Screenwriter at the Toronto International Women Film Festival.

This year she produced *Split Ends* (Qtopia) and is currently producing and directing *Hold Up*, a proof-of-concept short film, as well as the podcast *An Actor Survives*.

As Actor: *Irina: Three Sisters* (Virginia Plain Theatre).

As Actor for film: *Beasts* and *Radiant Vermin* (Studio Sputnik).

STAGE KISS is Nicola's New Theatre debut.



VICTORIA FOWLER MILLICENT/LAURIE

Victoria is a Sydney-based actor originally from Townsville and a 2025 graduate of Actors Centre Australia (ACA). Prior to attending ACA, she trained with TheatreiNQ in North Queensland.

As Actor: *Top Girls*, *Angels in America*, *Women of Troy*, *Hamlet*, *Ivanov* and *Don's Party* (ACA); *The Tempest*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Blood of Kings*, *Othello* and *DNA* (TheatreiNQ).

STAGE KISS is Victoria's New Theatre debut.

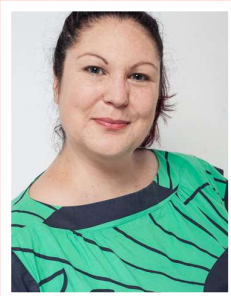




MADDIE TRAN STAGE MANAGER

Maddie Tran (Nu Anh Thi Tran) is a Sydney-based emerging creative practitioner working across theatre, film, and digital media. She holds a Bachelor of Performance and Theatre (Theatre Making Intensive) from the University of Wollongong and is currently completing a Master of Creative Industries at Macquarie University. Her work spans stage management, lighting design, filmmaking, and visual storytelling.

STAGE KISS is Maddie's New Theatre debut.



EMILY SAINT-SMITH PROPS COORDINATOR

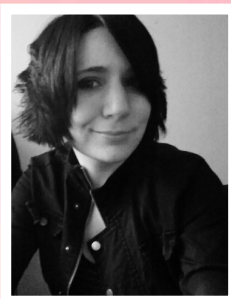
Emily Saint Smith is an actor, director, marketer, writer and props enthusiast! In 2025, her short play *Don't <Blank> the Messenger*, which she also directed and performed in, received the Crew Choice Award in the inaugural *Short + Sweet + Shakespeare* program.

As Director: *The Lady Vanishes* (Genesian Theatre).

As Assistant Director: *Steel Magnolias* (Genesian Theatre).

As Stage Manager: *Perfect Arrangement* (New Theatre).

STAGE Kiss is Emily's second production at New Theatre.



RICCI COSTA OPERATOR

Ricci studied theatre production at NIDA.

As Operator: *A Lie of the Mind*, *Stags and Hens*, *The Front Page*, *Hangmen*, *Jumpers for Goalposts*, *Chimerica*, *The Spook* and others (New Theatre); *The Maids* (That Theatre Company); *The Italian Comedy* (Something Wicked) and *The Various Methods of Escape* (Mon Sans Productions).



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BY BRIAN FRIEL**

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2026



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