

SAVANNAH BAY

17-27 OCTOBER, 2019



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La Mama Theatre is on traditional land of the Kulin Nation. We give our respect to the Elders of this country and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present and future. We acknowledge all events take place on stolen lands and that sovereignty was never ceded.

We are grateful to all our philanthropic partners and donors, advocates, volunteers, audiences, artists and our entire community as we work towards the La Mama rebuild. Thank you!

La Mama is financially assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council – its arts funding and advisory body, the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, and the City of Melbourne through the Arts and Culture triennial funding program.



SAVANNAH BAY

Written by **Marguerite Duras**

Directed by **Laurence Strangio**

Performed by **Brenda Palmer** and **Annie Thorold**

Set design by **Laurence Strangio**

(within the set design by Bronwyn Pringle for *The Disappearing Trilogy*)

Costumes by **Brenda Palmer** and **Annie Thorold**

Lighting design by **Clare Springett**

Stage manager **Julian Adams**

Music *Les Mots d'Amour*, sung by **Edith Piaf**

Translation by **Howard Limoli**

Presented with support from **Alliance Française Melbourne**

Photography credit **Laurence Strangio** (Production Photos by **Jack Dixon Gunn**)

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

Memory (again)...

Duras' writing frequently revisits the past and how we remember it (*The Lover* is a prime example, and the voices in *India Song*...). With ***Savannah Bay*** she explores this faculty at its most fragile, through age, through confusion, through the distorting lens of a life in the theatre. The character 'Madeleine' embodies the certainty and instability of all we hold sure – the vagaries of possibility, the wavering of conviction. However the Young Woman who attends to Madeleine so devotedly is just as unsure – her past is just as precarious as it is founded on a love that seems more mythic than real. We must grow old, but we must also grow up and move on it seems. ***"Gone. Changed forever. Worldly."***

'Madeleine' was written to be played by the great French actress Madeleine Renaud when she was 88 years old – "the splendour of the age of the world" as Duras describes her. Renaud had played 'Claire' in the original production of Duras' *L'amante anglaise*. Our production began with a reading of the play back in 1996 (on the occasion of Duras' death) with Brenda Palmer, who informed me at the time that she was then too young to play the role, but that I had to promise to direct her in a production when the proper venerability of age had been attained. After these past 3 years working with Annie, that time has arrived. ***"Savannah Bay is you."***

L.S.

You don't know who you are, who you were, you know you have played, you don't know what you played, what you are playing, you know you have to play, you don't know what, you play.

Nor can you remember what your roles were, nor which of your children are alive or dead. Nor which are the locations, the settings, the capitals, or the continents where you cried out the passion of lovers. Only that the people in the audience have bought a ticket and that somebody owes them a performance.

You are the stage actress, the splendour of the age of the world, its crowning achievement, the glory of its last delivery. You have forgotten everything except Savannah, Savannah Bay.

Savannah Bay is you.

M.D.

A note on the design: *Savannah Bay* takes place in *"what might be a theatre"*. We are staging our production within the set design for *The Disappearing Trilogy*, which is designed by Bronwyn Pringle – a 'theatre' within the theatre. The conceptual design of this space is Bronwyn's and we are very grateful to her and to Suzie for graciously allowing us to inhabit it.

This production is dedicated to our parents, our grandparents, our loved ones...
those still present and those we miss.

MARGUERITE DURAS

(Writer)

Born in French Indochina, Marguerite Duras (1914-1996) was one of the most significant 20th century literary figures in France. The author of many novels, plays, essays and screenplays, she is best known outside France for her filmscript *Hiroshima, mon Amour* (filmed by Alain Resnais in 1959) and her best-selling memoir *The Lover* (1984). Other significant works include *The Sea Wall*, *Moderato Cantabile*, *India Song*, *The Vice Consul*, *The Ravishing of Lol V. Stein* and *Destroy, She Said*. A film-maker as well as author, her work is strongly inter-textual, merging elements of her life and memory across fiction and reality, interweaving narratives and characters from text to theatre to film.

"She's sincere and insincere at the same time, alarmed and calm. She speaks."

LAURENCE STRANGIO

(Director)

Laurence has a well-documented obsession with Marguerite Duras, directing and adapting several of her works since his initial production of *L'amante anglaise* in 1994 – these include *Two by Duras: The malady of death/The Atlantic man, Agatha* (all at La Mama Faraday Street), the *Duras: Desire & Destruction* double-bill (*The Lover* + *Destroy, She Said*) here in 2018, and *La douleur* (Malthouse Theatre, 2006). He also curated a *Celebrating Duras* season at La Mama in 2014 to mark the centenary of her birth, featuring a revival of *L'amante anglaise* – since restaged at fortyfivedownstairs in 2016/17 and a national tour this year – and a celebratory gathering entitled *Reading Duras: Theatre – Film – Text*.

As well as *The Lover*, his work with Brenda and Annie has embraced other texts (& other writers): *The Monument* (Colleen Wagner), *Uncle Vanya* (Chekhov) and *Eh Joe* (Beckett) with Brenda; and *Ellida* (Ibsen) and *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Charlotte Perkins Gilman) with Annie. Laurence has received two Green Room Awards for Outstanding Direction: *Portrait of [Dora]* (2000) and *Six characters in search of an author...* (2011).

"Yes, that's when she appears, just when you think you've forgotten her. ... One mustn't suffer."

BRENDA PALMER

(Madeleine)

Brenda likes nothing better than trying to fathom under Laurence's direction the sometimes unfathomable Marguerite Duras – firstly *L'Amante Anglaise*, then *The Atlantic Man* and *The Lover* (with Annie Thorold, twice!) and now ***Savannah Bay*** – and at her theatre of choice, La Mama.

She happily remembers other shows: *Eh Joe* by Beckett (La Mama 50th Birthday Mini-Fest), *Uncle Vanya* (fortyfivedownstairs) ... and ... and ... but like Madeleine: ***"There my memory is clear, luminous, at least I think there my memory is clear..."***

But she does know that she is keen that you all see her and other hard working Melbourne actors in a film called *Judy and Punch*, when it is released in November.

ANNIE THOROLD

(The Young Woman)

Annie Thorold fell for Marguerite Duras' writing when she met Brenda and Laurence, with their Duras passion, for the initial development of *The Lover* in 2016. Annie was doing an internship at La Mama Theatre, as a dramaturgical associate for and performer in the Explorations season of *The Lover*, as a part of her Bachelor of Performance (The Australian Institute of Music, Sydney).

Then, in the Duras: *Desire & Destruction* double-bill in March 2018, *The Lover* had a full season together with *Destroy, She Said* in which Annie played Alissa (both directed by Laurence). Last year Annie and Brenda decided that they needed to do *Savannah Bay*, with Laurence as director, whilst they were still both acting and living in Melbourne (...perhaps their last play together).

Earlier this year Annie debuted as a solo-performer with *The Yellow Wallpaper*, which she adapted and devised (together with director Laurence Strangio) for the VCE Drama Playlist at La Mama Theatre. At the beginning of the year she played her first lead in a feature film, *Song Without Words* (by Bramwell Noah). Annie most recently performed in *Facing Medea* (dir. Jenny Kemp) here on this stage.

"People might have thought I was playing different roles, but in fact, I played nothing else, the whole time I was playing the White Rock".

CLAIRE SPRINGETT

(Lighting Design)

Clare is currently the resident LD for Red Stitch. In 2014, she was nominated for a Green Room Award for lighting design on *Eurydice* (Red Stitch). Clare was one of the 2018 Women in Theatre Participants at MTC. And she is currently part of the Core Design stream through the 2019 WIT program, working with Matt Scott on Shakespeare In Love as the Associate Lighting Designer.

Red Stitch Designs: *Oil* (Ella Hickson, Ella Caldwell) (Coming soon), *Dance Nation* (Maude Davey), *Love Song* (Denny Lawrence), *The Antipodes* (Ella Caldwell), *The Way Out* (Penny Harpham), *Rules for Living* (Kim Farrant), *The River* (John Kachoyan), *You Got Older* (Brett Cousins), *The Village Bike* (Ngaire Dawn Fair), *LOVE, LOVE, LOVE* (Denny Lawrence), *Wet House* (Brett Cousins), *Jumpers for Goalposts* (Tom Healey), *Eurydice* (Luke Kerridge), *Bellville* (Denny Lawrence), *4000 Miles* (Mark Pritchard), *Midsummer (A Play with Songs)* (John Kachoyan). **Freelance Designs:** *Night Mother* (Briony Dunn/Iron Lung), *My Wife Peggy* (Gavin Roach), *Shakespeare In Love* (Lighting Associate) – Simon Phillips/MTC, *Midsummer Mendelssohn* – Flinders Quartet – Richard Piper, *Gloria* – Lee Lewis/Melbourne Theatre Company, *The Tempest* – Dayna Tinline, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Francis Greenslade/AP Studios, *True West* – Alice Darling, *I Carry Your Heart* – Paige Marshall

'It comes with the speed of light. It disappears with the speed of light. There's no time for words.'

JULIAN ADAMS

(Stage Manager)

Julian is an honours graduate of La Trobe University's Bachelor of Arts, having also completed a diploma of Live Theatre Services with Melbourne Polytechnic. A jack-of-all-trades and self-confessed theatre addict, Julian is always looking for a new opportunity to challenge his skills.

His recent successes include stage management for *Tchekov at The House of Special Purpose* (La Mama 2019), *Monash in Love and War* (Chapel Off Chapel, 2018), Sound and Lighting Design for *Creatures Lost* (Fringe 2019) *Creatures of The Deep* (Fringe 2018, Sustainability Festival 2019), *Bipolar Bear* (Fringe, 2016), and acting as Medvedenko in *The Seagull* (2018, LTU), Samson 2 in *ManDogMan* (MonsterFest 2017) and Gloucester in *King Lear* (2017, LTU). He thanks you for your patronage and hopes you enjoy the show.

"One might as well try predicting happiness."

"Les Mots d'Amour"

(lyrics: Michel Rivgauche, music: Charles Dumont)

It is crazy how I can love you
How I can love you sometimes
Sometimes, I'd like to shout

For I have never loved
Have never loved like that
That I can swear to you

If you ever went away
Went away and left me
Left me forever

It's certain I would die
That I would die of love
My love, my love ...

It is crazy what he used to say to me
As pretty words of love
And how he used to say them

But he has not killed himself
For in spite of my love
It is him who left me

Without saying a word
There were so many words
There were too many ...

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