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LA MAMA
PRESENTS

GRAND GESTURE

As a Part of Love Fest 2021



February 12 - 21, 2021



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La Mama Theatre is on traditional land of the people of the Kulin Nation. We give our respect to the Elders of these traditional lands and to all First Nations 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!

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Image by Sarah Walker

GRAND GESTURE

BY THE PEOPLE

Director / Devisors: **Katrina Cornwell & Morgan Rose**

Actor / Devisors: **Joel Beasley, Eamon Dunphy, Matilda Gibbs,**

Joe Kenny, Michelle McCowage, Finn McGrath,

Ruby Rawlings, & Katie Rowe

Stage Manager: **Brooke Simmonds**

Composer & Sound Designer: **Byron Scullin**

Lighting Designer: **Lisa Mibus**

Co-Producer: **Natasha Phillips**

CREATOR'S NOTES

In creating *Grand Gesture* in 2019 (as part of the VCA theatre making course) we began by looking at the traditional love narrative we all know so well and the effects it has on both a cultural and personal scale: How has it affected the world we live in, and how has it affected the people in the room making the work (8 twenty-something actors and 2 thirty-something directors). A couple of articles helped us make sense of these questions. Below is an excerpt from one on them.

Wood, Julia. (2001). The Normalization of Violence in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships: Women's Narratives of Love and Violence. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships. 18. 239-261. 10.1177/0265407501182005.

"Humans rely on narratives to make sense of their lives. The bedrock assumption of narrative approaches is that humans make sense of

BROOKE SIMMONDS is a Melbourne based Stage Manager who recently graduated the Victorian College of the Arts with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Design & Production). At VCA, Brooke has worked as both a Stage Manager and Sound Technician on multiple productions, including Stage Manager for 'The World That Was', Deputy Stage Manager for 'Wunderschon Stark', Audio Programmer and Operator for 'Our House' and 'F***ing A', as well as Assistant Stage Manager for both 'Mad Forest' and 'The Skin of Our Teeth'. Externally her credits include Stage Manager for 'The Hitmen' (Baker's Dozen Theatre Company), Assistant Stage Manager for both 'The Great Australian Play' (Montague Basement Theatre Company) and 'Punk Rock' (Patalog Theatre Company). In 2020 she also completed a Stage Management Secondment with Melbourne Theatre Company on 'Torch the Place'. Brooke is currently the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Frenetic Theatre.

LISA MIBUS is a Melbourne based Lighting Designer with a strong interest in the creation of new work. She co-devised *My Lovers Bones* (Brown Cabs Productions/Melbourne Festival) for which her lighting design received a Green Room Association Award. Lisa has designed for many varied independent, as well as mainstage productions, with credits including *Control*, *Pomona*, *Sweet Phoebe* (Red Stitch), *Oil Babies*, *Whale* (Darebin Speakeasy), *The Curtain* (45 Downstairs), *Redemption*, *Member* (La Mama), *Colour Correction* (Dancehouse), *Virgins & Cowboys* (Griffin Independent), *Boxman* (If Theatre), *Heart is a Wasteland*, *The Orchid and the Crow* (Malthouse Theatre), *Straight White Men*, *The Distance*, *Boy at the Edge of Everything*, *Music* (Melbourne Theatre Company).

BYRON SCULLIN The work of Melbourne practitioner Byron Scullin explores the technological representation and amplification of sound as well as its properties as a physical presence. Operating in an ambiguous space where sound transitions into noise, Scullin's sonic environments offer an experience of mass and multiplicity, often representing attempts to hear the unhearable. A prolific collaborator, Scullin has worked closely with audio-visual artist Robin Fox and video artist Daniel Crooks, as well as Australian composers Anthony Pateras, Marco Fusinato, and Oren Ambarchi. He's also helped realise sound for notable international artists including Bernard Parmegiani, Tony Conrad, and Steven O'Malley.

NATASHA PHILLIPS is an independent Creative Producer based in Narm (Melbourne) and currently a producer with Performing Lines. She has been an indie producer since 2013 when she lived and worked in London with a focus on producing across multiple forms of contemporary experimental performance with a strong engagement with the Chinese speaking region. She is currently being mentored by Erin Milne (Bureau of Works) as part of the Victorian Independent Producers Initiative Mentorship Program and has produced for organisations such Arts House and ArtPlay. Natasha was most recently an Associate Producer at Arts Centre Melbourne between 2018-2020. Natasha has been a participant on the Australia Council Future Leaders Program (2017), the inaugural Women In Theatre Program at Melbourne Theatre Company (2016), the Emerging Cultural Leaders Program at Footscray Community Arts Centre (2015) and has been a recipient of an Australia Council career development grant and a Ian Potter Cultural Trust grant.

RUBY RAWLINGS is an actor, writer and performance maker. She tells stories that are inspired by big feelings and even bigger questions. This year Ruby is studying AUSLAN full-time in order to become an interpreter. She was a recipient of the Remote Creativity and Connection Grant from the University of Melbourne for soundscape spoken-word project 'Ruby's Room' and was also awarded Union House Theatre's Outstanding Comedy Act for her involvement in 'My Mum's Y2K Party'. She is the co-founder of Kindling Theatre Company, with whom she co-authored a community project in response to COVID-19, 'The Not Too Far Newsletter'. Ruby is passionate about connection through art as well as creating experiences that provoke public conversation.

JOEL BEASLEY is a contemporary artist, actor, and recent graduate of the Bachelor of Fine Arts Theatre at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). Joel is an inquisitive artist and practitioner with a keen dramaturgical eye, who walks a fine line between absurdity and reality in his candid and lively performances. His practice is playful and ever evolving. Joel approaches his work through a design-based process to find evocative, joyous characters and worlds. Joel's performance credits include 'Grand Gesture' at Melbourne Fringe Festival (dir. Morgan Rose-Aldrich and Katrina Cornwell, 2019) and Midsumma Festival's 'Leopard Print Loincloth' (dir. Dom Weintraub, 2020).

KATIE ROWE is an interdisciplinary performer/producer whose work combines physical theatre, text and audio composition to investigate the pressing issues of today. There is a deep feminist dramaturgy to her work, believing in non-hierarchical structures and feminist collaborative methodologies. Katie recently finished working on a major online theatre project titled 'Simulacrum,' which has since seen her develop a deep interest in body politics and gender construction. In addition to her own practice, Katie has performed at Melbourne Fringe Festival, ASIA TOPA, Melbourne Recital Centre, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Northcote Town Hall, Malthouse Theatre and has toured with Drama Victoria. Katie loved working on 'Grand Gesture' in 2019 and is thrilled that audiences have the chance to see this work again, after live theatre's highly anticipated return.

themselves through stories, or narratives... When we place ourselves within some narratives (and not others), we confer structure, sequence, and coherence on experiences that would otherwise be fragmentary and inchoate. In so doing, we create and recreate our identities and our lives.

Narratives are social in nature. Narratives are not strictly personal accounts, or stories; instead, they are decisively social, which is to say culturally constructed, sustained, reproduced, and sometimes altered... [The] social legitimation and reproduction of narratives imbues them with power and endurance.

Within western cultures, romance and gender narratives are imbricated, and they are pervasive. Children's fairy tales provide early tutelage in the central romance narrative in which Prince Charming rescues a damsel in distress (poisoned princess, unloved stepdaughter) and the two live happily ever after. The romance narrative is further bolstered through the media, including popular literature in which beautiful, but poor, women capture wealthy, worldly men and initially assertive heroines swoon demurely into the strong arms of handsome he-men. The romance narrative portrays women as needing to be rescued by men and, further, as needing men to be complete and fulfilled. This narrative is reiterated in soap operas, novels, television programs including news shows, films, [and] magazines (especially those aimed at women). As the media and other cultural institutions reproduce the gender and romance narratives, women and men learn the roles culture prescribes, or allows, for them. Women are taught to be accommodating and to seek and please men; men are taught to be dominating and to regard women as inferior."

Additionally, this article was useful, if you are interested in this line of inquiry:

Johnson, Kimberly & Holmes, Bjarne. (2009). Contradictory Messages: A Content Analysis of Hollywood-Produced Romantic Comedy Feature Films. Communication Quarterly. 57. 352-373. 10.1080/01463370903113632.

CAST & CREW BIOS

MORGAN ROSE & KATRINA CORNWALL (THE PEOPLE)

The People unites the contrasting practices of visual theatre director Katrina Cornwell, contemporary American writer Morgan Rose, and the unique voices of the performers we collaborate with. Rose and Cornwell have been working together for 10 plus years. Together they have created a unique methodology that gives performers creative agency within the bold aesthetic of The People. Inspired by pop culture, verbatim conversation, and everything on the internet, The People make theatre for and about today. Their credits include *The Bachelor s17e05* (La Mama 2018) and *A Disorganised Zoom Reading of the Script from Contagion* (Melbourne Fringe 2020) which was nominated for an award.

EAMON DUNPHY is a theatre-maker and writer, passionate about collaborative based practice, comedy, poetry and the exploration of theatre and its role in contemporary Australia. A graduate of BFA Theatre from the VCA, his devising credits include 'Agamemnon' (dir. John Bolton), co-director of 'My Mums Y2k Party' (Melbourne University Law Revue, 2019), co-devisor/performer of 'The Cake' (MULR 2018) and 'Leopard Print Loincloth' (dir. Dominic Weintraub, Midsumma Festival 2020).

MATILDA GIBBS is a theatre maker, actor and performer originally from Chesham in the South-East of England and now based in Melbourne. As an instinctual and playful creator, she feels at home interrogating characters through physical and emotional specificity over stereotype. She is excited by comedy, tragedy, narrative and is committed to unearthing aspects of humanity many hide away from. A recent Theatre graduate from the Victorian College of the Arts, Matilda co-founded Frenzy Theatre Company, with several projects expected to take to the stages of Melbourne this year. Her devising credits include her Melbourne Fringe debut in *Grand Gesture* (dir. Katrina Cornwell and Morgan Rose), *Chow* (Festival Discord879), *Neighbourhood Watch* (Online Artists Relay), *Potty Pachanga* (Truth or Dare Festival) and her graduating VCA work *Baccarat* (Martin Myer Arena). Other performance credits include *The Cabin* at Northcote Town Hall (dir. Sarah Austin), *Powerpuff* (dir. Dianne Miranda) and *Kristen Smyth's Dogpark* (Discord879).

JOE KENNY has been studying Theatre for the past 5 years and recently graduated at the Victorian College of the Arts. He has a passion for all things film and television. Originally from Queensland, he enjoys sun & salt water (which is a roundabout way of saying he loves long walks on the beach). Joe tries to exercise often. Whether it's boxing, beach side runs, rock climbing or a little ocean swim here and there - so long as he's breaking a sweat he's happy. He is interested in learning new crafts and enjoys the process of discovering how something is done to perfection. He wants to be for Acting what Tony Hawk was to skating, or Michael Jordan to basketball, or Ali to boxing. In 2021, Joe hopes to save his money in the hopes of maybe going overseas if the pandemic allows. He hopes you enjoy the show.

FINN MCGRATH A recent BFA Theatre graduate from the Victorian College of the Arts, Finn has been involved in numerous successful fringe productions as both a performer and theatre-maker, as well as acted in numerous graduate films for VCA's Film & Television course. He's also taken part in the esteemed Melbourne University Law Revue sketch group for three years writing, performing and directing original material. He was the first place winner of the University of Melbourne Comedy Competition (2019) and his sold out shows in the Comedy Festival have won him Most Promising Live Act at the University's student arts festival Mudfest (2019) and Most Outstanding Show at the Union House Theatre Awards (2018, 2019).

MICHELLE MCCOWAGE is an actor, theatre maker and writer. Her practise is physically driven, multidisciplinary and non-conforming. In 2020 she graduated from The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) with First Class Honours from a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre). During her studies, she was the recipient of one of the universities most prestigious awards, the Pratt Bursary. Her devising credits at the VCA include: digital work 'Simulacrum' (mentored by Rinske Ginsberg), Melbourne Fringe season of 'Grand Gesture' (dir. Kat Cornwell & Morgan Aldrich), 'Agamemnon' (dir. John Bolton), 'It's all downhill from here' (mentored by Jason Maling) and 'Common Ground' (mentored by Roslyn Oades & David Williams). Michelle performed at Strawberry Fields Festival in 2019 and in Simone Forti's 'Huddle' at the NGV x MoMA exhibition in 2018. Prior to moving to Melbourne from Sydney, Michelle toured Australia wide with educational theatre troupe Bamboo Theatre and played the role of Daphne Morris in Season Four of 'A Place To Call Home'.