

VARIATIONS

OR EXIT MUSIC BY JUSTIN NOTT



As Justin's heart breaks, so does his mind. Haunted by the memory of his first love's demise, and unable to see the emergence of a new one, he mines the debris of his world in search of hope.

A premiere production of a deeply personal play, 'Variations or Exit Music' takes the ending of three big loves and pries them open to understand what the hell happens to us when our other halves leave.

"Fifteen years ago, I had my first heartbreak and handled it cinematically, which is to say I didn't handle it well," says writer and director Justin Nott, Festival Director for Midsumma's new Get Bent Fest! "Seven years later, I felt that same pain return with the ending of my longest relationship yet. This time, however, I was living life as an expat in a foreign country. I was treading familiar war-torn territory, but now with a pen in hand. And so, 'Variations' coursed out of me. But what makes my breakups any different to yours? Why hear my story when we've all known loss of this kind? Maybe because it's something we do share."

As the title suggests, the play is a collection of variations on endings – the comings and goings of love for four queer men – and began life as Nott's necessary scribbles on trains, over wine, awake at 4am, or listening to music.

"During both breakups, I succumbed to incredible depression. The kind that skews reality to appear ugly, alien, and cold. The one constant saviour throughout was music. 'Variations' embraces song in its structure as the guiding light for these characters."

Production on 'Variations' was twice defeated by Covid, however Nott feels this has only served to imbue the play with greater resonance as a map for hope in solitude. "Throughout the last two years, we have shown fierce resilience in the face of loneliness, and Variations speaks to this. It's a hopeful play in this way."

Featuring a diverse and largely queer team - including actor and drag artist Lachlan Martin (aka Tilly Capulet), award-winning actor and theatremaker Matthew Connell (The Darkening Sky at Theatreworks), actor Yuchen Wang (SBS's 'Hungry Ghosts'), actor Kurt Pimblett (Red Stitch's 'Hir') and Green Room award winning composer Danni A. Esposito - 'Variations' tells a familiar story in a unique way, embracing poetics, queerness, and the exact magnitude of ache we can't possibly describe in words (although we try). It's not another queer tragedy or another coming out tale. It's just the beautiful story of four men opening themselves to love even when it seems impossible.

'This show is unimaginable and it is a blessed relief to see edgy independent theatre that provokes critical thinking and contains great production value' – Weekend Notes (on 'Human Error')

Written & Directed by Justin Nott

Set & Costume Designed by Eloise Kent

Sound Design by Edwin Cheah

Musical Composition by Danni A. Esposito

Creative Producer Nicole La Bianca

Dramaturge Bridget Mackey

Performed by Matthew Connell, Lachlan Martin, Kurt Pimblett & Yuchen Wang

Stage Manager Tom Backhaus

Intimacy Coordinator Isabella Vadiveloo

Publicity Cameron Lukey

Image by Skye Sobejko

SEASON	15 – 25 September 2022
TIMES	Wed 6.30pm Thu - Sat 7.30pm Sun 4pm
LIVESTREAM	Fri 16 September 7.30pm
VENUE	La Mama Courthouse 349 Drummond St, Carlton VIC 3053
LENGTH	Approx. 90 minutes
TICKETS	\$30 Adult \$20 Concession
BOOKINGS	03 9347 6948 www.lamama.com.au

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La Mama Theatre, 205 Faraday Street Carlton VIC 3053 Australia | info@lamama.com.au | +613 9347 6948 | www.lamama.com.au

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