



An Ensemble Theatre Production

BY GEOFFREY ATHERDEN

# BLACK COCKATOO



Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund  
— an Australian Government initiative.

This project has been assisted by the Australian  
Government through the Australia Council for the Arts,  
its arts funding and advisory body.



Ensemble Theatre acknowledges Australia's First Peoples as the customary custodians of the lands and waters on which we work and perform.

Our First Nations peoples practiced their cultures for thousands of years and their spirits live on in the stories we share. We would also like to acknowledge the Gunditjmara, Jardwadjali, and Wotjobaluk peoples whose ancestors inspired the story of BLACK COCKATOO. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT FROM THE BARENGI GADJIN LAND COUNCIL**

The first touring cricket team to tour England in 1868.

The First XI Aboriginal players are the original trailblazers for self-determination, putting on displays of traditional culture, showing resilience and creating pathways for all First Nation peoples.

Ensemble Theatre has the respect and admiration of the Board of Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation for their careful and respectful story of our ancestors who travelled to England in 1868.

Thank you to the Kennedy's descendants and families of Yanggendinyanyuk, also known as Dick-a-Dick, who shared their oral stories and commitment to creating BLACK COCKATOO.



### **CONTENT WARNING**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences are advised that this program and the show contain depictions of people who have died.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT **GEOFFREY ATHERDEN**

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In 1868, a team of Aboriginal cricketers travelled to England, the first team from anywhere in the world to play against the English in the home of cricket. **BLACK COCKATOO** is based on this little known piece of our history.

It's a story of triumph and tragedy, promises and betrayal, people smuggling (in the other direction) and it celebrates Australia's first Indigenous sporting hero, Unaarramin, known as Johnny Mullagh.

It's a great story and, I think, an important story, a part of the shared history between black and white Australia. It's also about the truth; about which truth we choose to tell and why we make that choice.

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**The 2022 tour of **BLACK COCKATOO** is dedicated to Neil Balnaves AO. Neil was a champion for the creative community and especially passionate about supporting First Nations artists and stories. His generous support of **BLACK COCKATOO** was instrumental to the development and success of this landmark Australian play.**

**Neil's vision to create a better Australia through education, medicine and the arts will continue through the philanthropic work of The Balnaves Foundation.**

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR **WESLEY ENOCH**

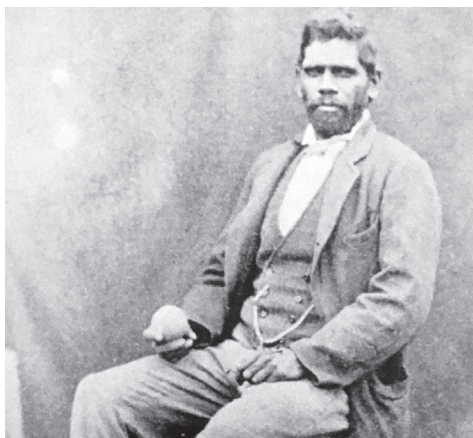
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Australian Cricket is full of characters and stories, some we know about but many we don't. Few would know about the first ever Australian team to tour to England; the fact that it was made up of 13 Aboriginal cricketers from Western Victoria, that one player died and was buried in London or that Johnny Mullagh was our first Australian sporting hero. Telling neglected stories is what theatre can do so well. Through the insightful and emotional renderings of characters we can get closer to the human endeavour.

The decision to have an all Indigenous cast, where the actors are playing all the roles including white English characters, is a way of owning the whole story and providing a commentary on the race politics. Actors switch seamlessly from being actors today, Aboriginal characters in 2018 and a range of characters in 1868. Time and place are fluid as we connect the past, present and future to tell this story.

We're excited about presenting **BLACK COCKATOO** and extend a huge thank you to everyone involved in the lengthy development process. Enjoy the show and the making of history.





Johnny 'Unaarrimin' Mullagh. Source: Harrow Discovery Centre

## SYNOPSIS

The play is set in three time periods, the distant past (1868 – 1869), the recent past (2018) and the present moment of the performance (now).

Over 150 years ago, 13 brave Aboriginal men in Western Victoria picked up their cricket bats and embarked on a treacherous voyage to England and into the unknown – all in the name of sport. Risking illness and persecution, Australia's first international cricket team – including Australia's first Indigenous sporting hero, Johnny 'Unaarrimin' Mullagh – amazed the English crowds with astonishing talent, personality and grit. They should have returned to Australia as celebrated heroes. Instead they came back to find the world they once knew was no longer there.

This is not just a story about cricket – this is story of strength, resistance, hope and possibility. When a group of young present-day activists sneak into the Wimmera Discovery Centre to expose the truth of what happened to Johnny and his team mates, a hidden legend of triumph and tragedy unfolds.

**RUNNING TIME APPROX. 100 MINS.  
NO INTERVAL**

BY GEOFFREY ATHERDEN

# BLACK COCKATOO

## CAST

**JOSEPH ALTHOUSE** (BRANDON/ENSEMBLE)  
**PHOEBE GRAINER** (TINA/LADY BARDWELL)  
**AARON MCGRATH** (JOHNNY MULLAGH)  
**MEMA MUNRO** (KIMBERLEY/ENSEMBLE)  
**KYLE SHILLING** (CURATOR)  
**COLIN SMITH** (ALEX/LAWRENCE)

## CREATIVES

**WESLEY ENOCH** DIRECTOR  
**UNCLE RICHARD KENNEDY**  
CULTURAL CONSULTANT  
**RICHARD ROBERTS**  
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER  
**TRENT SUIDGEEST** LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**STEVE FRANCIS**  
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER  
**JANE FITZGERALD** DRAMATURG  
**MICHELLE SVERDLOFF** STAGE MANAGER  
**FIONA LLOYD HARDING**  
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
**JASON THELWELL**  
TOURING PRODUCTION MANAGER  
**MADGE FLETCHER**  
TOURING COMPANY MANAGER  
**SARA KOLIJN** COSTUME SUPERVISOR

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Special thanks to the cast and creatives of the 2020 BLACK COCKATOO Sydney Season who helped bring the premiere of this inspirational story to the stage : Yolande Brown (Associate Director), Luke Carroll (Cast), Chenoa Deemal (Cast), Tim Gray (Sound Design Intern), Shiloh Jarrett (Associate Lighting Designer), Aaron McGrath (Cast) and Serene Yunupingu (Cast)

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Treaty (Paul Kelly / S. Kellaway / P Garrett / W. Marika / M. Mununggurr / C. Williams / G. Yunupingu / M. Yunupingu  
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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CULTURAL CONSULTANT **UNCLE RICHARD KENNEDY**

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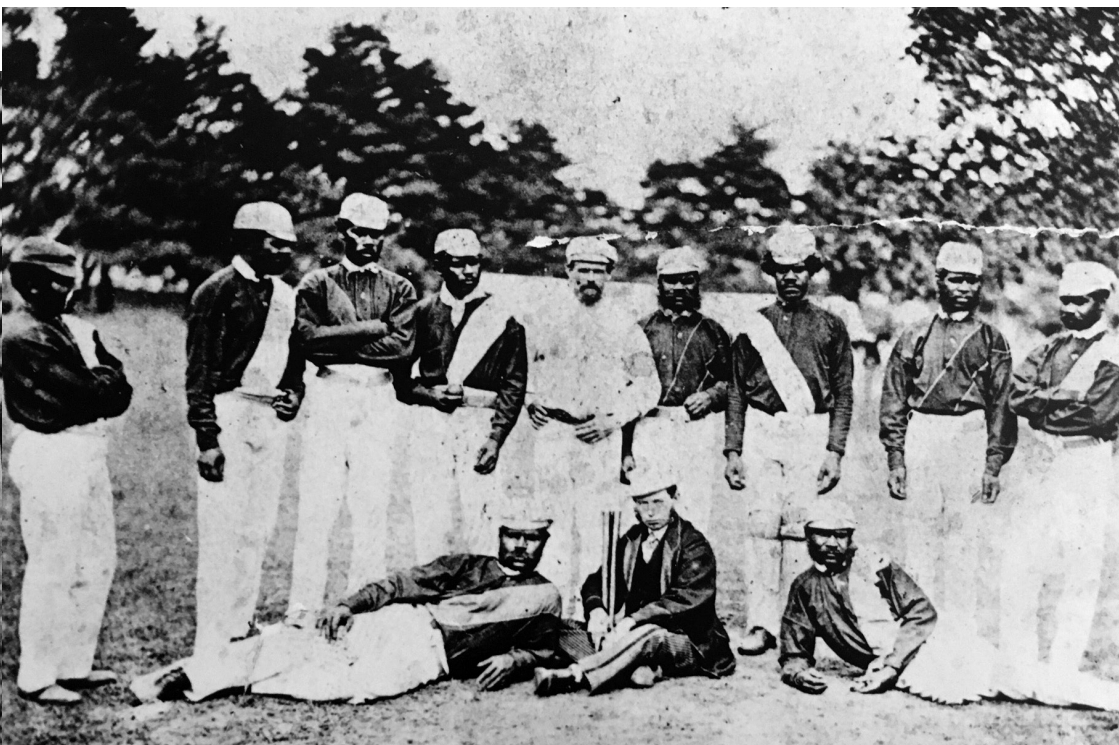
*Wotjobaluk traditional owner and great, great grandson of First XI team member Yanggendyinyanyuk (Dik-a-Dik)*

The play shows the remarkable skills and abilities of a group of Indigenous people and how they displayed their culture to the world.

Many of the First XI team members were Wotjobaluk men and conversed in the Wergaia language - the language you will hear in **BLACK COCKATOO**. Indigenous language provides a powerful connection to culture and knowledge. Everything is connected through language; it represents life.

These cricketers demonstrated incredible versatility by adapting traditional ways of learning as well as embracing new environments, and putting their belief and trust in new people, to master skills in learning to play cricket as adults.

**BLACK COCKATOO** also explores the attitude towards Indigenous people at that time and how they coped with this treatment. The achievement of the First XI is one of the greatest in Australia's sporting history and it is not well known. Over recent times awareness has grown and the play will evoke even more discussion around this significant event.



The First Australian Cricket Team, Swansea, 1868. Source: Cricket Australia



## **GEOFFREY ATHERDEN**

### **PLAYWRIGHT**

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Geoffrey is best known for his multi award winning television comedy series **MOTHER AND SON**.

Other television work includes, **GRASS ROOTS** which received 7 AFI awards including two for Best Screenplay, and **BABAKIURIA**, which was given a United Nations Media Peace Award. A number of his plays have had successful seasons at the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney: **WARNING: EXPLICIT MATERIAL** (2011), **LIBERTY EQUALITY FRATERNITY** (2013) and **DEAR MUM AND DAD** (2015). A theatrical version of **MOTHER AND SON** played in Melbourne in 2014 and in Canberra and Brisbane in 2015 and will tour in regional Eastern Australia in 2022. His latest play, **BLACK COCKATOO**, was part of the 2020 Sydney Festival. In 2009, Geoffrey was made a Member of the Order of Australia.



## **WESLEY ENOCH**

### **DIRECTOR**

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Wesley Enoch has written and directed iconic Indigenous productions **THE 7 STAGES OF GRIEVING**,

**BLACK MEDEA** and **THE STORY OF THE MIRACLES AT COOKIE'S TABLE**.

He has directed productions of **THE SAPPHIRES**, **BLACK DIGGERS**, **I AM EORA**, **THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN**, **YIBIYUNG**, **PARRAMATTA GIRLS**, **BLACK COCKATOO** and **APPROPRIATE**. He was the Artistic Director of the Sydney Festival from 2017 to 2020 and was previously the Artistic Director at Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts and the Ilbijerri Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-operative. Wesley's other residencies include Resident Director at Sydney Theatre Company; Associate Artistic Director

at Belvoir Street Theatre; the 2002 Australia Council Cite Internationale des Arts Residency in Paris and the Australia Council Artistic Director for the Australian Delegation to the 2008 Festival of Pacific Arts. He was creative consultant, segment director and indigenous consultant for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. Wesley is currently serving as the QUT Indigenous Chair of Creative Industries.



## **UNCLE RICHARD KENNEDY**

### **CULTURAL CONSULTANT**

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Wutjupaluk. Married with 2 children and 4 grandchildren. Great, great grandson of

Yanggendinyanyuk [Dik-a-Dik]. Founding member and 1st chairperson of Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-Operative (1979). Founding member and player of Burrumbeet Cricket Club (1968-76 and 1979-80). Assisted with the Wutjupaluk Native Title claim from 1990 – 2005 as a family representative. Director on the board of Barengi Gadjin Land Council 2005-11 Vice chairperson in 2005 and Chairperson 2010-11. Assisted with family and relatives to reawakening of our language Wergaia in 2007-10. Consulted with the Mullagh - Wills Foundation to help promote the incredible achievements of the first cricket team from Australia to tour England in 1868.



## **JOSEPH ALTHOUSE**

### **BRANDON/ENSEMBLE**

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Joseph 'Wunujaka' Althouse is a proud Tiwi/Arrernte man who lives and works on Gadigal Country. Joseph

graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art with a BFA in 2018, where he was fortunate enough to be involved in productions including **SALEM**, **THE CHANGELING**, **EX MACHINA** and **STAY**

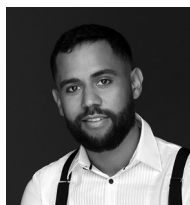
HAPPY KEEP SMILING. Upon completing his studies, Joseph was privileged to play in Redline Productions ANGELS IN AMERICA, where he won the Sydney Theatre Award for best male actor in a supporting role in an independent production, for his portrayal of Belize. Joseph's other theatre credits include: GREEN PARK (Griffin Theatre), LORD OF THE FLIES (STC) and BLACK COCKATOO (Ensemble/Sydney Festival). Television credits include ABC's BLACK COMEDY, PREPPERS & THE NGALKI DOCUMENTARY.



**PHOEBE GRAINER**  
TINA/LADY BARDWELL

I am a Kuku Djungan, Muluridji, Wakaman, Tagalaka, Kunjen, Warrgamay and Yindinji woman from

Far North Queensland. After completing a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Theatre at WAAPA and went on to study at NIDA, completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting). I have performed in SALT BUSH (Insite Arts), TWO HEARTS, SERPENT'S TEETH, DOING and RAINBOW'S END (Darlinghurst Theatre). I edited a new Sweatshop anthology called RACISM. My work has appeared in THE LIFTED BROW, SBS LIFE, RED ROOM POETRY and SWEATSHOP WOMEN. Recently I was a playwright in the Darlinghurst Theatre's NEXT IN LINE program, ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's BLACKWRIGHTS program and in Griffin Theatre's 2021 GRIFFIN STUDIO. I am currently working on my play BURNING HOUSE.



**AARON MCGRATH**  
JOHNNY MULLAGH

Aaron has become a regular on Australian screens both small and large. His feature film credits include Danger

Close, the title role in Jasper Jones and Around the Block. Aaron's television

credits include, The Code, Doctor Doctor, The Secret River, Redfern Now, The Doctor Blake Murder Mysteries, The Gods of Wheat Street, Wrong Kind of Black, Ready For This, My Place, Mystery Road, Black Comedy, KGB, Back To The Rafters, all 3 seasons of Glitch and most recently the comedy series Preppers.

Represented by T&E Management his other credits include short films Destiny In The Dirt, Jackey Jackey, Brown Lips and Miro, the 60 Minutes re-enactment of the Lindt Café siege, the Yellamundie Festival, National Play Festival and the Short Blacks Workshop.

Aaron is thrilled to be returning to the stage to reprise the role of Johnny Mullagh in Black Cockatoo.



**MEMA MUNRO**  
KIMBERLY/ENSEMBLE

Mema Munro was born and raised in Darwin in the Northern Territory. She is a proud First Nation's actor from the

Marriamiu clan located in the Daly River Region. Mema graduated from NIDA with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) in 2021. While at NIDA she had the privilege to work with Kate Champion on the production of PERFECT STRANGER and with Liza-Maree Syron and Nathan Maynard in her final student production, GOD'S COUNTRY. Mema is looking forward to telling empowering stories of First Nations on screen and stage and is excited to be part of BLACK COCKATOO.

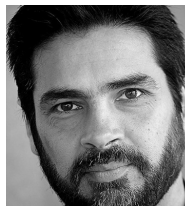




**KYLE SHILLING**  
CURATOR

Kyle is excited to be making his Ensemble Theatre debut. A Bundjalung man from northern NSW, he

studied dance at the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association and graduated with a Diploma in Professional Dance Performance. He started his professional career with Bangarra Dance Theatre in lore. Kyle toured Australia in 2018-19 in the critically-acclaimed world premiere production of *THE MAN WITH THE IRON NECK* (Legs on the Wall). Later this year Kyle goes on tour reprising his role in *SUNSHINE SUPER GIRL* (Performing Lines) based on the life of tennis legend, Evonne Goolagong Cawley, a highlight of last year's Sydney Festival.



**COLIN SMITH**  
ALEX/LAWRENCE

Colin is a proud Jagera man from the Brisbane area. He was a Core member with the Queensland

Shakespeare Ensemble between 2007-2019, a Matilda Award winner in the Best Lead Male Actor category for his work in 2017's *AN OCTOROON*, and a nominee in the Best Supporting Male Actor category for 2015's *THE ODD COUPLE*, both by Queensland Theatre. His other theatre credits include: Queensland Theatre - *BLACK DIGGERS*, *TWELFTH NIGHT*, *NEARER THE GODS*, and *OUR TOWN*; La Boite Theatre Company - *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* and *FROM DARKNESS*. He is a member of the MEAA's Equity Diversity Committee.



## **RICHARD ROBERTS** SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

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Richard is an award-winning designer and educator. His body of work spans theatre,

ballet, opera, musical theatre, and film, across Australia and internationally. Richard has created designs for: The Australian Ballet, West Australian Ballet, Queensland Ballet, Louisville Ballet, Opera Australia, Seattle Opera, Houston Opera, Victorian Opera, West Australian Opera, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Black Swan State Theatre Company, State Theatre Company of South Australia, Queensland Theatre, Gordon Frost Organization, Belvoir Theatre, and many others. Richard is currently Head of Design at the Victorian College of the Arts. He has held positions as Head of Design at WAAPA, Head of Production at VCA and Head of Design at Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts.

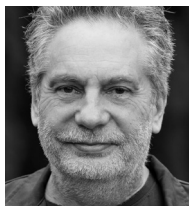


## **TRENT SUIDGEEST** LIGHTING DESIGNER

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Trent Suidgeest's lighting designs includes Global Creatures/Sydney Theatre Company's

MURIEL'S WEDDING THE MUSICAL, Opera Australia's SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE – THE OPERA [THE EIGHTH WONDER], and CARMEN and multi-Helpmann Award-winning opera THE RABBITS. Other work includes APPROPRIATE, ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST (STC), CALAMITY JANE (Hayes Theatre) OKLAHOMA (Black Swan Theatre Company), FIRST LOVE IS THE REVOLUTION and PRIMA FACIE (Griffin), BETTY BLOKK BUSTER REIMAGINED (Sydney Festival) and 44 SEX ACTS IN ONE WEEK. Renowned for his talent for musicals, Trent's acclaimed work includes YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, THE BOY FROM OZ, STRICTLY BALLROOM, THE VIEW UPSTAIRS and RENT. [trentsuidgeest.com](http://trentsuidgeest.com)



**STEVE FRANCIS**  
COMPOSER/SOUND  
DESIGNER

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As composer or sound designer, Steve has worked on many productions for

Australia's leading theatre companies including Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare, Belvoir, Queensland Theatre, SA State Theatre, Griffin Theatre and Ensemble Theatre. He has also composed music for Bangarra Dance Theatre. Steve has won two Helpmann Awards for Best Original Score (WALKABOUT, 2002 and BELONG, 2011) and also best new Australian work (2002 and 2018). He has also been nominated three times in the Helpmann sound design category. He has won two Sydney Theatre Awards for Best Music or Sound.



**JANE FITZGERALD**  
DRAMATURG

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Jane is Resident Dramaturg at Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) and was previously Literary

Manager at Ensemble (shared role). Recent productions as Dramaturg include KILLING KATIE, FULLY COMMITTED and THE APPLETON LADIES' POTATO RACE (Ensemble), The Big Dry (Ensemble/ATYP), Lights in the Park, CUSP, April Aardvark, Bathory BEGINS AND INTERSECTION: ARRIVAL (ATYP), LOST BOYS (Merrigong) and Mrock (ATYP/STC). For STC she has been Literary Manager, Artistic Associate and administrator of the Patrick White Playwrights' Award as well as a dramaturg on new writers' programs and on mainstage productions. She has worked as a script reader for the Royal Court, London and worked for 15 years as a mentor with Year 12 students on HSC creative writing projects.



**MICHELLE SVERDLOFF**  
STAGE MANAGER

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Michelle is an experienced stage manager, company manager and administrator with a

background in new work and touring. She holds a Bachelor of Communication (Theatre/Media) from Charles Sturt University and is currently undertaking a Masters of Business (Arts and Cultural Management) through Deakin University. Michelle has worked for a variety of companies including; Opera Australia, Bell Shakespeare, Griffin Theatre Company, Seymour Centre, CDP Theatre Producers and Punchdrunk Theatre. She has also worked in the Sydney independent sector as a producer and stage manager, collaborating with a variety of artists. Michelle is a proud member of the MEAA.



**FIONA LLOYD HARDING**  
ASSISTANT STAGE  
MANAGER

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Fiona (or Fi) is Sydney based Stage Manager. Beginning their creative

life at the age of 10 with the national youth circus company, Fi shifted interests to behind-the-scenes work after training as a performer for a number of years. Fiona enjoys working across performance styles including, Circus, Dance, immersive productions and, classical texts.

Fiona's recent work has included; The End of Winter (Siren Theatre Co and Griffin Theatre Company), HMS Pinafore (Siren Theatre Co and Sydney Festival), The Construct (Axis by Circus Monoxide and Quiet Riot), and JUST! (TRICKING, ANNOYING, STUPID, CRAZY, DISGUSTING, SHOCKING, DOOMED) Live on Stage! (Redline Productions).

**JASON THELWELL**  
TOURING PRODUCTION MANAGER

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Jason has been immersed in live theatre, events and touring since graduating from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts (Stage Management) in 2007. In the proceeding years he has worked with local, national and international organisations on many events and tours in Production and Technical Management roles.

Previous credits; Technical Director for Legs On The Wall, Production Manager for Marrugeku, Technical Manager for Carriageworks, Technical Manager for the Perth International Arts Festival, Site Manager for the Centennial ANZAC Commemoration and was involved with the delivery of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM 2011).

Jason is a Leo and enjoys eating out.



**MADGE FLETCHER**  
TOURING COMPANY  
MANAGER

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Madge worked as Tour Manager with Circus Oz for more than a decade and is presently

a proud company member. She has worked alongside Yolngu elders coordinating the Youth Forum at Garma in North East Arnhem Land for the last ten years. She has been a wrangler and advocate for artists, including Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Melbourne International Arts Festival, National Indigenous Music Awards, and the film HIGH GROUND.

"I feel extremely privileged to be working as Company/Tour Manager with BLACK COCKATOO - a show that tells an important story - one all Australians should know."



**SARA KOLIJN**  
COSTUME SUPERVISOR

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Sara Koliijn graduated from Auckland University of Technology in 2007. She has worked most

recently as the Head of Wardrobe at Bell Shakespeare on A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and HAMLET. She has also recently worked as well as a buyer for HEARTBREAK HIGH, and a costume assistant for BOOMKAK PANTO at Belvoir and I'M A CELEBRITY... GET ME OUT OF HERE! She worked at Opera Australia for 9 years supervising WHITELEY, EL VIAGGIO A REIMS, DIE MEISTERSINGER, and THE LOVE OF THREE ORANGES (amongst many, many others) and organised the 2017 OA GARAGE SALE. Other Supervising credits include THE POHUTAKAWA TREE for Auckland Theatre Company. Wardrobe Assistant credits include; KAREN O STOP THE VIRGINS for Vivid Festival, OLIVER! for Auckland Theatre Company. Design Credits include; Be Your Own Boss for Giant Dwarf Productions and The LEGEND OF AGNI for Bus Stop Films. Sara was Head Of Wardrobe on HAIR and THE UNBELIEVABLES as Sydney Opera House and AIDA ON THE BEACH for Opera Australia.





## 2022 TOUR DATES

Theatre Royal, Hobart | 10 – 11 Mar

Frankston Arts Centre | 15 Mar

Clocktower Centre,  
Moonee Ponds | 17 Mar

Bunjil Place, Narre Warren | 19 Mar

Geelong Arts Centre | 22 – 26 Mar

Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo | 29 Mar

Horsham Town Hall | 31 Mar

Harrow Discovery Centre | 2 April

Wangaratta Performing Arts &  
Convention Centre | 5 Apr

Logan Entertainment Centre | 7 Apr

Brisbane Powerhouse | 8 – 9 Apr

HOTA Home of the Arts,  
Surfers Paradise | 12 Apr

Mackay Entertainment &  
Convention Centre | 14 Apr

Pilbeam Theatre, Rockhampton | 20 Apr

Glasshouse, Port Macquarie | 23 Apr

Capitol Theatre, Tamworth | 26 Apr

Orange Civic Theatre | 28 Apr

Wagga Wagga Civic Theatre | 30 Apr

Griffith Regional Theatre | 3 May

Goulburn Performing Arts Centre | 5 May

Cessnock Performing Arts Centre | 7 May

Glen St Theatre, Belrose 11 – 15 May

The Art House, Wyong | 19 May

Civic Theatre, Newcastle | 21 – 22 May

Bathurst Memorial  
Entertainment Centre | 25 May

Zenith Theatre, Chatswood | 31 May