

18 SEP – 14 OCT

ENS
THEATRE
MBE
FOR EVERYONE



IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT LADY?

BY DEBRA OSWALD | DIRECTED BY LEE LEWIS

WELCOME

I am so pleased we can present Debra Oswald's wonderful take on being a writer and diving into an arts scene that is not necessarily all roses. Having just witnessed the great response to MR BAILEY'S MINDER, we know Debra is an extraordinary writer with a gift for creating complex yet relatable characters on our stages. This insight into the growing pains of being a top creator of fabulous stories is a treasure to behold. We are thrilled too that Lee Lewis is back to direct following the success of the play at Griffin Theatre Company a few years ago. With an exceptional creative team and a remarkable story unfolding, who could ask for more. Enjoy.

MARK KILMURRY
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

WRITER'S NOTE

I was an enthusiastic audience member at 'Story Club', the regular storytelling nights at Giant Dwarf in Redfern. When I was invited to be one of the storytellers myself, I was dizzy with nerves until the moment I stumbled onto the stage. I discovered that the direct connection with an audience was exhilarating. In fact, the immediate, unfiltered transaction of live storytelling felt like rocket fuel.

I've been around a while – making a living as a writer for over 40 years – and I wondered if the perspective of a bruised old dame might be of interest to people. So, I wrote this show as my late-onset stage debut. My aim is to be embarrassingly candid about myself, sometimes amusing, honest about the highs and lows of being an Australian writer, and hopefully to extract wisdom from the Ensemble audience about what I should do next.

I must thank the wonderful Lee Lewis for supporting and shaping this project from the start – first at The Stables and now at Ensemble. I'm grateful to Imogen Gardam, Frankie Greene and helpful Griffin folk. I'm hugely grateful to Mark Kilmurry and everyone at the Ensemble for giving this lady another chance to yabber with an audience.

Thanks to Zoe Norton Lodge, Ben Jenkins, Anthony Blair, Michael Wynne, and Hannie Rayson for inspiration and enthusiasm. Thanks to Michael Lucas for use of his voice. Thanks to Currency Press for the play script covers and for their very existence. Thanks to Richard Glover for – well, everything.

DEBRA OSWALD



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Sometimes I think we forget that playwrights are real humans. We credit actors with their cleverness of the words they say; we credit directors with the ideas put on the stage and playwrights often remain unimagined beings. Sometimes they like it that way. But sometimes, one of these creatures is willing to step out of the shadows and remind us that it all starts with a person sitting in front of a blank screen or sheet of paper with imagination, compassion, experience, observation and sheer force of will to create something out of nothing that possibly will speak to the moment we are in now and beyond.

This is one of those sometimes. Debra Oswald created every moment of MR BAILEY'S MINDER that you recently enjoyed. Yes, the director, the designers and the actors built on those moments to create the production, but without her, no story here. And now she is stepping out of the shadows of the story to share with us all a glimpse into the life of a professional writer. It is generous and brave, touching and slightly scary, for her and us too. Sometimes it's easier not to think about the mind and life of real creators.

Apart from the fact that this writer is so lovely, it has been a joy working with Deb over the last years as she talks about a life as a writer. It is extraordinary where a gift for words will take you in the world. And in a time when there is so much emphasis on STEM in our schools, I want to say to everyone who loves language, please celebrate with me, in this story of a writer, the importance of a love of language with all its power to articulate the peculiarities of life. Australia would be a less wonderful place without the writing of Debra Oswald. Please encourage the next generations of little Debs to write.

LEE LEWIS



SYNOPSIS

Debra Oswald fell in love with theatre aged eleven. But did it love her back? How do you cope with rejection and success and then more rejection? How does a child hypochondriac, with a blundering romantic history learn to cope with the demands of writing in showbiz? Will the success of OFFSPRING change things or is the writer's lot one huge stumble from disaster to disaster? Debra needs to move on... can the audience help her to decide what to do next?

CAST

DEBRA OSWALD

CREATIVES

Director
LEE LEWIS

Associate Director
NELL RANNEY

Set & Costume Designer
JEREMY ALLEN

Lighting Designer
MATT COX

Sound Designer
JESSICA DUNN

Video Realiser
DANIEL HERTEN

Stage Manager
BRONTE SCHUFTAN

Costume Supervisor
RENATA BESLIK

RUNNING TIME
80 MINS (NO INTERVAL)
REC. AGES 14+
STRONG LANGUAGE

IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT LADY? was first produced by Griffin Theatre Company, 13 – 24 April 2021 at the SBW Stables Theatre.

Original lighting designer for the Griffin production Benjamin Brockman

Ensemble Theatre proudly acknowledges the Cammeraiagal people of the Eora nation as customary owners of the land on which we work and share our stories. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Rehearsal images by Prudence Upton



DEBRA OSWALD
PLAYWRIGHT/CAST

Debra Oswald is a playwright, screenwriter and novelist, a two-time winner of the NSW Premier's Literary Award and creator/head

writer of the TV series OFFSPRING. After the recent season of MR BAILEY'S MINDER, Debra is now returning to the Ensemble Theatre with her one woman show, IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT LADY? first produced at Griffin Theatre in 2021. Her stage plays have been performed around the world, including GARY'S HOUSE and MR BAILEY'S MINDER. Debra has also written four plays for young audiences – DAGS, SKATE, STORIES IN THE DARK and HOUSE ON FIRE. Her television credits include award-winning episodes of POLICE RESCUE, SWEET AND SOUR and BANANAS IN PYJAMAS. Debra has written three Aussie Bite books, six children's novels and three adult novels – USEFUL, THE WHOLE BRIGHT YEAR and THE FAMILY DOCTOR (2021).



LEE LEWIS
DIRECTOR

Queensland Theatre: TINY BEAUTIFUL THINGS, FAMILY VALUES, FIRST CASUALTY, BERNHARDT/HAMLET, RETURN TO THE DIRT, PRIMA FACIE, OUR TOWN, MOUTHPIECE, RICE.

OTHER CREDITS: Griffin Theatre Company: PRIMA FACIE, FAMILY VALUES, FIRST LOVE IS THE REVOLUTION, IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT LADY?, THE ALMIGHTY SOMETIMES, KILL CLIMATE DENIERS, EIGHT GIGABYTES OF HARDCORE PORNOGRAPHY, THE HOMOSEXUALS OR 'FAGGOTS', RICE, MASQUERADE, GLORIA, THE BLEEDING TREE, EMERALD CITY, A RABBIT FOR KIM JONG-IL, THE SERPENT'S TABLE, REPLAY, SILENT DISCO, SMURF IN WANDERLAND, THE BULL, THE MOON AND THE CORONET OF STARS, THE CALL, A HOAX, THE NIGHTWATCHMAN, THE LITERATI, THE MISANTHROPE (with Bell Shakespeare); Sydney Theatre Company:

MARY STUART, HONOUR, LOVE-LIES-BLEEDING, ZEBRA!; Melbourne Theatre Company: GLORIA, HAYFEVER, RUPERT; Belvoir: THAT FACE, THIS HEAVEN, HALF AND HALF, A NUMBER, 7 BLOWJOBS, LADYBIRD; Bell Shakespeare: THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES, TWELFTH NIGHT; Australian Theatre for Young People: BATTLEFIELDS, CITIZENSHIP; Darwin Festival: HIGHWAY OF LOST HEARTS; WAAPA: AS YOU LIKE IT; NIDA: AFTER DINNER, BIG LOVE, THE WINTER'S TALE; The Hayes Theatre Company: DARLINGHURST NIGHTS. Positions: Artistic Director, Queensland Theatre; Artistic Director and CEO, Griffin Theatre Company; Richard Wherrett Fellow, Sydney Theatre Company. Awards: Helpmann Awards — Best Play, Best Director THE BLEEDING TREE; Green Room Awards — Best Ensemble, Best Production, Best Director THE BLEEDING TREE.



NELL RANNEY
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Nell Ranney is a director and producer of original and multi-disciplinary theatre. Most recently she co-created and directed MAUREEN:

HARBINGER OF DEATH with Jonny Hawkins (Edinburgh, Adelaide, Melbourne Rising, Darwin and Sydney Festivals) and she is currently leading the development of GRLZ by Victoria Haralabidou (supported by Create NSW & the Australia Council for the Arts). Nell directed the Sydney premieres of TUESDAY by Louris van de Geer (25A Belvoir) and SHE RODE HORSES LIKE THE STOCK EXCHANGE by Amelia Roper (KXT). In 2018 she was appointed the Baylis Assistant Director at the Old Vic Theatre in London for the development and premiere of SYLVIA (Old Vic/ZooNation) by Kate Prince, a hip-hop soul and funk musical about the life of Sylvia Pankhurst. Previously Nell has worked for The Garden of Unearthly Delights as Program Manager and Belvoir as Artistic Associate.





JEREMY ALLEN
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Jeremy Allen is a graduate of the NIDA Bachelor of Dramatic Arts in Design and holds a Bachelor of Architectural Studies

from the University of South Australia. His recent designs include: for Sydney Theatre Company, FENCES, THE GOAT OR, WHO IS SYLVIA? set (with State Theatre Company of South Australia), WHITE PEARL (co-produced by National Theatre of Parramatta; for State Theatre Company of South Australia, THE NORMAL HEART; for Griffin Theatre Company, ORANGE THROWER; for The Hayes Theatre Co., MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG set; for Red Line Productions, CLEANSED and ANGELS IN AMERICA set, 4:48 PSYCHOSIS, for Pinchgut Opera, GIUSTINO, ORONTEA, THE LOVES OF APOLLO AND DAFNE set; for Sydney Chamber Opera, FUMEBLIND ORACLE, THE DIARY OF ONE WHO DISAPPEARED.



MATT COX
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Since arriving in Sydney in 2003, Matt has designed numerous theatre productions including Bangarra Dance Theatre:

WARU JOURNEY OF THE SMALL TURTLE, DUBBOO, ONE'S COUNTRY, OUR LAND PEOPLE STORIES, BLAK, BELONG. The Hayes Theatre Company: SHE LOVES ME. for Ensemble Theatre: BENEFACTORS, A CHRISTMAS CAROL, BOXING DAY BBQ, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, A BROADCAST COUP, THE CARETAKER, NEARER THE GODS, DIPLOMACY, MURDER ON THE WIRELESS. Bell Shakespeare: THE MISER, HAMLET, ROMEO AND JULIET. Monkey Baa: EDWARD THE EMU, POSSUM MAGIC, THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER, DIARY OF A WOMBAT. STC: WHARF REVUE 2020, 2019, 2018, and RUBY MOON. William Zappa: THE ILIAD OUT LOUD. Sport for Jove: THE LIBERTINE, OTHELLO, ANTIGONE,

THE RIVER AT THE END OF THE ROAD, THE TEMPEST. Red Line Productions: THIS MUCH IS TRUE, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE. Sydney Festival: THE FAMOUS SPIEGELTENT, THE AURORA SPIEGELTENT, as well as for Carriageworks, Siren Theatre Co, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Musica Viva and the Sydney Chamber Opera.



JESSICA DUNN
SOUND DESIGNER

Jessica is a Composer, Sound Designer and performing musician. Recent theatre credits include: as Sound Designer for ON THE BEACH

(STC); as Composer for BEETLE (Legs on the Wall); as Composer and Sound Designer for CAMP (Siren Theatre Co.), CHALKFACE (STC/State Theatre SA), PHOTOGRAPH 51 (Ensemble Theatre) BLAQUE SHOWGIRLS, A IS FOR APPLE (Griffin), TRESTLE (Legs on the Wall), GIRL IN A SCHOOL UNIFORM WALKS INTO A BAR (KXT Bakehouse), and THE MARES (Tasmanian Theatre Company/10 Days on the Island); as Sound Programmer for JULIUS CAESAR and THE TEMPEST (STC); as Associate Sound Designer for WONNANGATTA (STC), RANDOM (Belvoir) and COUNTING AND CRACKING (Belvoir); as Composer's Assistant for HARP IN THE SOUTH PARTS I & II (STC); as Performing Musical Director for the 2017 and 2019 seasons of BARBARA AND THE CAMP DOGS (Belvoir); as bassist for SIX The Musical (LWA). Jessica is also Artistic Director of Sirens Big Band, who was awarded the 2020 APRA Arts Music Award for Best Performance for their work on BRIDGE OF DREAMS.



DANIEL HERTEN
VIDEO REALISER

Daniel Herten (He/Him) is a Video Designer, Sound Designer, Composer, and Creative Technologist working across theatre,

installation and interactive media. Daniel's



recent credits include: Composition & Sound Design Realiser of THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY (Sydney Theatre Company), Sound & Video Designer of LET THE RIGHT ONE IN (Darlinghurst Theatre Company), Sound Designer of SET PIECE (Rising Festival), Composer, Sound Designer & co-Video Designer of COLLAPSIBLE (Essential Workers), Composer & Sound Designer of FADE (NtoP), Sound Designer of MURDER FOR TWO (Hayes Theatre Co), Sound Designer of HAND TO GOD (Red Line Productions), Co-Creator of NOISE (Articulate497 Gallery).



BRONTE SCHUFTAN
STAGE MANAGER

Bronte works as a Sydney-based stage manager, and has a wide range of experience working on

mainstage & independent productions, musicals, professional touring shows, festivals, immersive theatre, & regional touring. Bronte's production credits include THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – National Tour 2022 & 2023 (Opera Australia), GRAND HORIZONS (Sydney Theatre Company), LIFE OF GALILEO (Belvoir), THE BIG TIME, A LETTER FOR MOLLY (Ensemble Theatre), GENTLEMEN PREFER BLONDES,

GODSPELL, LIZZIE, YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN (Hayes Theatre Co.), CRY BABY (LPD Productions & Sydney Opera House), & SENIOR MOMENTS (National Tour – Return Fire Productions). She has worked with Sydney Festival, Sport for Jove, and is also a published playwright.



RENATA BESLIK
COSTUME DESIGNER

Renata graduated from NIDA in 2007 with a bachelor in Costume Production. She has supervised costumes for twenty-nine shows at

Ensemble Theatre with the most recent being SUMMER OF HAROLD. Other supervising credits includes twelve operas for Pinchgut Opera most recently being MEDÉE, DARKNESS (New Theatricals), FANGIRLS (Belvoir St), BETTY BLOKKBUSTER RE-IMAGINED (Sydney Festival), HAMLET, HENRY V, THE WINTER'S TALE, MACBETH (Bell Shakespeare), THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR, STAY HAPPY KEEP SMILING, THE TEMPEST, WOYCECK, A LIE OF THE MIND, PORT, THE THREESOME (NIDA). Renata is also an accomplished costume maker and milliner for films like THE GREAT GATSBY.



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We would like to thank the following Estates for their generous donations:

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Estate of Margaret Stenhouse

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Thank you to the following people for bequests in their wills:

Mark Midwinter
Joe Sbarro
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Since 2016, Ensemble has commissioned 14 new Australian plays and premiered 16, with another 5 new productions to premiere by the end of 2023. We've commissioned playwrights such as Joanna Murray-Smith, Steve Rodgers, Hilary Bell, Melanie Tait, Geoffrey Atherden and Vanessa Bates to name but a few.

The Commissioners' Circle comprises a group of likeminded Ensemble supporters who are passionate about storytelling and supporting artists to create new work for our stage.

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A belief and passion for new Australian plays. To join this community, please contact Stephen Attfield, Philanthropy & Partnerships Manager, on **02 8918 3400** or email stephena@ensemble.com.au

IN RECENT YEARS UNDER THE ARTISTIC DIRECTORSHIP OF MARK KILMURRY, ENSEMBLE HAS CHAMPIONED ESTABLISHED, NEW AND EMERGING TALENT WITH A FOCUS ON DEVELOPING PLAYWRIGHTS WHO REFLECT CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY ON THE STAGE.

THE MEMORY OF WATER



BY SHELAGH STEPHENSON | DIRECTED BY RACHEL CHANT 20 OCT – 25 NOV

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