### 28 JUL - 2 SEP



## BY DEBRA OSWALD MR BAILEY'S MINDER DIRECTED BY DAMIEN RYAN

## WELCOME

I am always thrilled to give life to an Australian play with a brand new production. I read MR BAILEY'S MINDER last year and was struck by how beautiful Debra Oswald's writing is and how the themes of forgiving and healing, touches all of us. Art is one thing, but badly behaved artists are another and perhaps it takes someone struggling to be seen, to guide someone raging at the world; both blind to what they have in front of them. I am also thrilled director Damien Ryan is heading this beautiful cast, bringing Debra's gem of a play to the stage once more. Enjoy.

#### MARK KILMURRY

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

Desperate people, clinging to a cliff face, trying to make a family work – a family not just made of blood, but of necessity and random chance – a daughter, a carer, a local builder, and a visionary artist – and the ghosts of the wounded that surround and haunt them. This story by the brilliant Deb Oswald, is as much about love and finding justice in love, as it is about art or addiction or seeking retribution for hurt. It asks us how families – in all their myriad forms – negotiate the life-long challenge of loving each other. And the play asks us why and how, at the end of that process, so many of us wind up living with and dying in the hands of strangers.

Leo Bailey's art makes the ordinary extraordinary, bringing mysterious light to the unseen in his paintings while bringing mostly darkness to the real world he inhabits. How often does history record geniuses and visionaries who are revered for their work, their 'art', while being reviled for what they squander? So often great artists can see and feel beyond the rest of us while conversely being devoid of human empathy. Leo brings to mind Prometheus, chained to a rock face in the Caucasus mountains for daring to bring fire and creative spark to a human race whose hubris and vanity would approach that of the Gods. He is forced to endure the birds who come to tear out and destroy his liver every day, only for it to regrow and be destroyed again tomorrow. Suffering dementia, hailing down abuse and agony at the human race and the world, Leo shares Prometheus' loneliness, his terror and his emptiness, all of which are the price of his great gift. This domestic story, set in a tiny room, is vast in its scale of character and ideas.

The play, in its eighth day of rehearsal today, feels like it's very much about the transferral of power too. We've spoken a lot about authority and status and control, about debts and balance sheets between people. About how we belong and what belongs to us. And the shifting dynamic of the situation on stage – how to manage a dying parent's life; how a demented king divides his kingdom as he crawls toward death – is unfortunately one that most children and parents will go through eventually, though hopefully with less struggle than the stranded people in this ramshackle, precarious home.

The home itself, like Leo's skin and organs, is eating itself away, rotting. All protective layers are becoming porous – walls, floor, ceiling, paintwork, family, law, safety, security – and perhaps they have to. To rebuild, there is so much to be washed away, rinsed and cleansed first.

But the play is called MR BAILEY'S *MINDER* and at its core we are left to consider who that *Minder* truly is. Two remarkable women, of wildly different experience and accomplishment, are both battling the tension between loyal commitment and abject failure in the face of a huge responsibility. One is loyally enduring the days and nights at the rock face; the other has endured a lifetime of it yet has never physically walked away, despite long since burying her emotional connection to her father somewhere beneath the rocks to protect herself. In the end, what are we willing to forgive? Can anything rekindle love when the fire is out?

It is a beautiful play and a beautiful cast and creative team to work with. And it has been a joy and a privilege to have Deb Oswald with us in the room at times. Australian theatre should treasure such an artist.

DAMIEN RYAN

## WRITER'S NOTE

Revivals of Australian plays don't happen very often, so I'm thrilled MR BAILEY'S MINDER is in the Ensemble season. In the twenty years since it was written, I suspect some questions in the play have become even spikier: given that many great writers, artists and musicians have displayed ugly behaviour and damaged their loved ones, how do we make sense of that alongside the beautiful artwork they created? This play was also fuelled by some of my long-standing obsessions – shame, forgiveness, disarming acts of tenderness, the way parents can fail their children and how people might nurture each other in surrogate parent/child relationships. I'm not interested in writing about monsters. I want to write about characters who are like most of us: flawed, insecure people, trying to do our best, but often hurting each other as we flail about in confusion, and sometimes finding our way to loving connection.

I'm indebted to the Griffin Theatre and the original director/dramaturg Christopher Hurrell for helping me shape the play. In the years since, I've daydreamed about a fresh production (the way playwrights do) and I used to imagine John Gaden as Leo. Now... dream come true. I'm enormously grateful to Mark Kilmurry, everyone at the Ensemble, the wonderful Damien Ryan and this terrific cast and creative team, for bringing the story to life again.

#### **DEBRA OSWALD**

## **SYNOPSIS**

Leo has been ravaged by years of alcohol abuse, self-loathing and indulgent misbehaviour, and now needs round-the-clock care. Enter Therese, fresh out of prison and down to her last option, who takes up the challenge as Leo's carer. Therese is determined to succeed – even if it means going head-to-head with Mr Bailey.

Debra Oswald paints a poignant and funny portrait of what it takes to forgive and to let go. Bristling with sharp humour and beautiful complexities, MR BAILEY'S MINDER is a bold reminder that underneath the brittle veneer, there are rich layers of human experience to unearth and discover.

#### CAST

JOHN GADEN AO LEO RACHEL GORDON MARGO ALBERT MWANGI KARL/GAVIN CLAUDIA WARE THERESE

#### CREATIVES

Director DAMIEN RYAN

## Assistant Director **MARGARET THANOS**

Set & Costume Designer **SOHAM APTE** 

Lighting Designer MORGAN MORONEY

Composer & Sound Designer **DARYL WALLIS** 

Intimacy, Movement & Fight Director **SCOTT WITT** 

Stage Manager
LAUREN TULLOH

Costume Supervisor **RENATA BESLIK** 

Costume Art Finisher
SASHA WISNIOWSKI

#### **RUNNING TIME**

2 HRS 20 MINS (WITH INTERVAL) **REC. AGES 14+** CONTAINS STRONG LANGUAGE, STROBE LIGHTING, THEATRICAL HAZE, ADULT THEMES, & THEMES OF ADDICTION & MENTAL HEALTH





Ensemble Theatre proudly acknowledges the Cammeraigal 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.



#### DEBRA OSWALD PLAYWRIGHT

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. 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). She performed her one woman show, IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT LADY? at the Griffin Theatre in 2021, with a return season at the Ensemble Theatre in 2023.



#### **DAMIEN RYAN** DIRECTOR

Recent directing credits: A CHRISTMAS CAROL, Ensemble Theatre; AS YOU LIKE IT, TAMING OF THE SHREW, Queensland Theatre;

THE FATHER, Sydney Theatre Company/ Melbourne Theatre Company; HAMLET, HENRY V, HENRY 4, Parts 1 And 2 (with John Bell), ROMEO AND JULIET, Bell Shakespeare. LOOK BACK IN ANGER, Old Fitz. Damien is Founder/Artistic Director of Sport for Jove Theatre, now in its 14th year, for which he has PERICLES (Bell Shakespeare) and KING LEAR directed over 40 productions, including the acclaimed feature film VENUS & ADONIS. He has won multiple Green Room, Sydney Theatre and Glug awards and has been acting with Australia's major companies for over 25 years in over 60 productions. Damien's award-winning adaptations of ANTIGONE and CYRANO are published by Currency Press with his new play VENUS AND ADONIS to be published in 2023. He has been a proud MEAA member for 28 years.

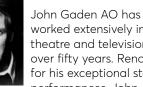


#### MARGARET THANOS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Margaret Thanos is an award-winning Cypriot-Australian director and performer, based across London and Sydney. In 2022,

Margaret directed the Australian premiere of LABYRINTH at Flight Path and the world premiere of A GRAIN OF SAND at KXT, both to rave reviews. She is the co-artistic director of Meraki Arts Bar on Oxford Street and her debut short THROUGH THE WINDOW THEY CAME is currently in post-production. Margaret is one of Plan International's advocates and her production company Queen Hades works to find the intersections between activism and art. Margaret is one of the 2023 recipients of Ensemble's Sandra Bates Director's Award.

#### JOHN GADEN AO LEO



worked extensively in film, theatre and television for over fifty years. Renowned for his exceptional stage performances, John

appeared in the 2018/19 seasons of DIPLOMACY and THE RASPUTIN AFFAIR at the Ensemble. Career highlights include THE WILD DUCK and CLOUDSTREET National and International Tours (Belvoir), DO NOT GO GENTLE, SAINT JOAN, ORLANDO, MACBETH, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD, and COPENHAGEN (STC), STRAIGHT WHITE MEN, OTHER DESERT CITIES (MTC), (STCSA). Other celebrated performances include DEMOCRACY, THE LOST ECHO and THE UNEXPECTED MAN winning Helpmann Awards and TRAVESTIES, KOLD KOMFORT KAFFE and GALILEO winning Sydney Critics Circle Awards.





















#### RACHEL GORDON MARGO



Since graduating from NIDA, Rachel has worked extensively in film, television and theatre. Her theatre credits include THE ALMIGHTY SOMETIMES

(Queensland Theatre Company), CONCUSSION, DON JUAN and THE REAL THING (Sydney Theatre Company), JASPER JONES (Melbourne Theatre Company); KING LEAR and MACBETH (Bell Shakespeare); DAYLIGHT SAVING (Darlinghurst Theatre Company); BETWEEN TWO WAVES (Griffin Theatre Company); BOSTON MARRIAGE, LET THE SUNSHINE and NINETY (Melbourne and Queensland Theatre Companies); THE NORMAN CONQUESTS, ODD MAN OUT, MANAGING CARMEN and WIT (Ensemble Theatre). Rachel's film credits include ANGEL OF MINE and THUNDERSTRUCK. Television credits include QUEEN OF OZ. THE TWELVE. SECRET DAUGHTER, THE MOODY'S, A MOODY CHRISTMAS, HOME & AWAY, NEIGHBOURS, BLUE HEELERS and ALL SAINTS.

#### ALBERT MWANGI KARL/ GAVIN

Albert stars as series regular, Rowan, in the television series, TOM SWIFT, that airs on The CW in the US and Paramount+ internationally.

He also can be seen opposite Eric Bana and Mia Wasikowski in the Robert Connolly directed feature film, BLUEBACK. Whilst in his final year of drama school he was cast in the recurring guest role, Mr Hanover, in the hit Stan television series, BUMP, where he starred for the first two seasons. Albert graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) from NIDA in 2020.

#### CLAUDIA WARE THERESE



Claudia is a full-time graduate from WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts). Most recently Claudia wrapped on the NBC series LA BREA in

the role of Maya. Since graduating Claudia has performed regularly with Sport for Jove Theatre Company, performing in their productions of THE TEMPEST, MEASURE FOR MEASURE, SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS, MACBETH & A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM. Claudia took on the role of Shelly in the Darlinghurst Theatre production of GOD OF ISAAC. Claudia also starred in QTC's production of

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, in the role of Bianca Minola.



#### **SOHAM APTE** SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Soham Apte (he/him) is a multi-disciplinary artist and designer creating work on unceded Gadigal land. He graduated from NIDA, where

he studied Design for Performance (BFA, 2022). He is passionate about designing for films, music videos, and theatre. Most recently, Soham designed the set & costume for CONSENT by Nina Raine at the Seymour Centre, dir: Craig Baldwin, as well as PORPOISE POOL by Jojo Zhou at 25A Belvior, dir: Eve Beck. Soham has been working professionally designing for theatre and film since 2022, and is excited for what's to come.



#### MORGAN MORONEY LIGHTING DESIGNER

Morgan Moroney (he/him) is a lighting and video designer working across theatre, opera, dance and installation. Growing up on Kaurna

land, he currently lives and works primarily on Gadigal land. He brings a distinct multidisciplinary approach to his practice. with a particular fascination for integratedmedia live performance. Training: NIDA. Awards: APDG Emerging Designer for Live Performance Award 2021, NIDA X Storytelling Futures Grant 2022. Recent Lighting & Video Design: COLLAPSIBLE (essential workers), CAMP (Siren Theatre); Lighting Design: SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER and CLYDES (Ensemble) THE BARBER OF SEVILLE (Opera Australia), ANATOMY OF A SUICIDE (Sugary Rum); Video Design: A LETTER FOR MOLLY (Ensemble). Upcoming: GIRLS IN BOYS' CARS (NTofP) morganmoroney.com



#### DARYL WALLIS COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Daryl Wallis is a composer, sound designer, keyboard musician, vocal coach and musical director. He won

the 2013 Sydney Theatre Award for Best Score & Sound Design in a Mainstage Production with Elana Kats-Chernin for the Ensemble production of FRANKENSTEIN, and the Green Room award as musical director for THE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS. Current projects include the cabarets DISENCHANTED & CARMEN THE CABARET with Eliane Morel; the cabaret SONGS MY FRIENDS TAUGHT ME with Jacqui Dark; SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED with The Strangeways Ensemble; and THE HOUR OF LAND, a personal meditation and musical dialogue between Yosemite National Park and the Royal National Park in Sydney.



#### SCOTT WITT INTIMACY, MOVEMENT AND FIGHT DIRECTOR

Scott Witt is an awardwinning entertainment practitioner and educator. With a career spanning

almost 40 years he continuously works in stage, television, film, and the corporate sector. Scott's career embraces acting, writing, fight directing, directing, intimacy advocacy, designing movement, physical dramaturgy, slapstick, and clowning. His work in Australia has been seen all over the country. Performances Scott has directed have played throughout Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Europe and Hong Kong. During 2002 and 2003 he was the Intern and Associate Director for the Queensland Theatre under Michael Gow. In 2004 Scott completed a Master in Fine Arts at Creative Industries, QUT. Scott was the Artistic Director for the International Order of the Sword and the Pen from 2008 to 2019. He was the President of the Society of Australian Fight Directors Incorporated from 1996 to 2007, an Honorary Member of the British Academy of Dramatic Combat, Honorary Fight Director of Fight Directors, Canada, and an Honorary Fight Director of the Independent Fight Directors Guild of America. Scott is a proud platinum member of Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance since 1988.





#### **LAUREN TULLOH** STAGE MANAGER

Lauren is Ensemble's Resident Stage Manager and a NIDA graduate. For Ensemble Theatre: CLYDE'S, A BROADCAST

COUP, THE CARETAKER, THE ONE, A LETTER FOR MOLLY, KILLING KATIE, THE WOMAN IN BLACK, THE APPLETON LADIES' POTATO RACE (2021 regional tour), OUTDATED, THE LAST WIFE, THE LAST FIVE YEARS, MARJORIE PRIME, THE PLANT and BETRAYAL. For National Theatre of Parramatta: QUEEN FATIMA, THE THINGS I COULD NEVER TELL STEVEN and JESUS WANTS ME FOR A SUNBEAM (Belvoir season). For the Hayes Theatre Company: REWIRED: MUSICALS REIMAGINED, AMERICAN PSYCHO, HIGH FIDELITY, ASSASSINS, THE FANTASTICKS, VIOLET and CALAMITY JANE which toured to the Comedy Theatre Melbourne, Belvoir & regional areas.

#### **RENATA BESLIK** COSTUME DESIGNER

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

Ensemble Theatre with the most recent being BENEFACTORS. Other supervising credits includes twelve operas for Pinchgut Opera most recently being MEDÉE, DARKNESS (New Theatricals), FANGIRLS (Belvoir St), BETTY BLOKK-BUSTER 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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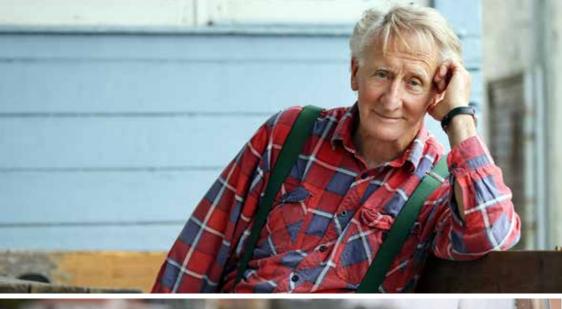
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