



A La Boite and Belvoir co-production 17 April - 2 May 2015 at the Roundhouse Theatre

CAST —

Rabbit Benjamin Creek
Essie Ashleigh Cummings
Beth Belinda Jombwe
Sid Charles Wu

PRODUCTION TEAM -

Writer Julia-Rose Lewis
Director Kristine Landon-Smith
Composer & Sound Designer Kim Bowers
Set & Costume Designer Michael Hili
Lighting Designer Ben Hughes
Stage Manager Danielle Ironside
Fight Director Scott Witt
Dramaturg Anthea Williams

PRODUCTION PARTNER -



WRITER'S NOTE

Julia-Rose Lewis

I think first plays can be like volcanic eruptions.

I didn't know how to write a play when I started writing Samson. I'm not really sure I even do now. What I do know though, is that not knowing how to do something is a wonderful excuse to try.

What's your play about? is a terrifying question. If you're not a playwright, I don't blame you for all those times in a foyer, in a café, when we met over lunch etc. that you've asked me: So what's your play about Julia? But it's true... I find it truly unsettling. Whether it is a blessing or a curse, I still do not entirely know what Samson is about. It's been so many things: grief, a loss, a great love, growing up, goodbyes, guilt, unbridled joy, changes, laughter by a deathbed, driving on the highway with the windows down, the birth of a child and the loss of a friendship, faith and fate.

In the early process of writing this play I had a compulsion to include within it the details of every single remarkable or unusual thought I'd ever had about the universe. At some point, deep into writing, I realised how excessive that was, and the volcano needed to cool. That cooling process has involved many wonderful people. The perception that writers do all their work alone is a myth. For me anyway. As my first play, it has been 25 years in the making. During the last three of these Samson has been surrounded by some extraordinarily generous folk. As I'm sure many playwrights do, I have fallen somewhat in love with every single one of them: Jane, Tim, Kristine, Warren, Dani, Ashleigh, Belinda, Charles, Benji, Michael, Ben, Busty, Anthea, Maddy, Mum, Sara, Alicia, Isaac and so many more. Thank you.

How can we learn to take responsibility for ourselves, for our actions, as individuals and as a society? How can we learn to acknowledge what impact our beliefs, our dreams, our ignorance, is having on the lives of others and our world? Essie, Beth, Rabbit and Sid are deep in this struggle, as are we. In the space between all our differences, is an immense universe of similarity, a communion. I believe finding it is the key to something better. Like a drop in the ocean, I think Kristine and the cast have found it in this production, and I hope that you do too.

Love Julia



IN CONVERSATION

with director Kristine Landon-Smith

What is it about *Samson* that resonates with you and why were you interested in directing it?

I love the text – there's an authenticity about it which resonates with me. The writing springs from a deep understanding, knowledge and curiosity around four young people growing up in an edge suburb in Australia. There is a texture, nuance, truth and complexity to it, which is then reflected in extremely sharp and incisive dialogue. And you can feel this volcano underneath. Plays like these: they are a gift to a director and an actor.

My work is always very connected to the actor. So this play spoke to my own interests and my way of working with the actor, which I knew would interface well with the text.

Tell us about your process.

I look at the actor and the process of how the actor brings a particular text to their own personality, their own history. It's an intracultural practice which 'plays with culture' in the rehearsal room: It's a process which explores the complex multifarious identities that are present within our 21st Century rehearsal rooms.

Does *Samson* feel particularly Australian to you?

I do think it's very specific to

Australia. The themes are universal yet the detail is very particular to time and place: contemporary Australia with it's myriad of identities, which are always shifting and moving, never static and shaped over a very short history. It's a specific narrative with its own trajectory.

This production plays at La Boite in Brisbane then moves to the much more intimate space of Downstains Belvoir's 90 seat theatre. How will you produce Samson for two very different theatres and stages?

Michael Hili, the designer, and I worked on this together. Our first question was not how we might make a work that fits into both spaces but rather what is the setting, what is the texture, the atmosphere, the volcano underneath? What is the experience for the audience?

We knew that once we answered these questions the adaptation from space to space would be the easier part of our task. Our mise-en-scène is like an island: generating a feeling of familiarity and belonging yet with a pull of the temptation of the world beyond.

We hope you enjoy this new work by Julia-Rose Lewis and the textures that we have created from this wonderful source.

THE BELVOIR STORY

One building. Six hundred people. Thousands of stories.

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner-city Sydney.

Thirty years later, this space, known as Belvoir St Theatre, continues to be the home of one of Australia's most celebrated theatre companies -Belvoir. Under Artistic Director Ralph Myers and Executive Director Brenna Hobson, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring to major arts centres and festivals both nationally and internationally.

Both the Upstairs and Downstairs stages at Belvoir St Theatre have nurtured the talents of many renowned Australian artists: actors including Geoffrey Rush, Cate Blanchett, Toby Schmitz, Robyn Nevin, Deb Mailman and Richard Roxburgh; writers such as Tommy

Murphy, Rita Kalnejais, Lally Katz and Kate Mulvany; directors including Simon Stone, Anne-Louise Sarks, Benedict Andrews, Wesley Enoch, Rachael Maza and former Belvoir Artistic Director Neil Armfield.

Belvoir's position as one of Australia's most innovative and acclaimed theatre companies has been determined by such landmark productions as The Wild Duck, The Diary of a Madman, The Blind Giant is Dancing, The Book of Everything, Cloudstreet, Measure for Measure, Keating!, Parramatta Girls, Exit the King, The Alchemist, Hamlet, Waiting for Godot, The Sapphires, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Stuff Happens and Medea.

Belvoir receives government support for its activities from the federal government through the Major Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council and the state government through Arts NSW.

belvoir.com.au















Julia-Rose Lewis

Julia-Rose is the recipient of the 2014 Philip Parsons Fellowship for Samson, which she developed as Playwright-in-Residence with La Boite Theatre Company in 2013 and through Playwriting Australia's National Play Festival in 2014. Julia's play Between the Clouds

premieres this year for HotHouse Theatre Company, and her short film, *This Feral Life*, made its international premiere at Tampere Film Festival (Finland), following local screenings at Flickerfest 2015. Julia was mentored by Lally Katz through the Australia Council's JUMP Program in 2014 and Jane Bodie through ATYP's National Mentoring Program in 2013. Julia's work has appeared in productions and readings at Griffin, atyp, La Boite, Rock Surfers Theatre Co, Hothouse and Grin & Tonic. Julia is currently under commission by HotHouse Theatre Company, the Brisbane Powerhouse and Belvoir.



Kristine Landon-Smith Director

Kristine is a theatre practitioner, cultural entrepreneur and educator. She is currently a lecturer in acting at NIDA, having joined the institution in 2013. Her work at NIDA has included introducing a subject elective in Applied Theatre and introducing a new student-led project where

students make their own work in cross discipline cohorts. She was a founding member and Artistic Director of Tamasha for 22 years, one of Britain's leading middle-scale touring companies specialising in artist training, new writing and intracultural theatre practice. Her productions at Tamasha included East is East, The Arrival, The House of Bilquis Bibi and Women of the Dust. Prior to founding Tamasha, Kristine was a Senior Producer for BBC Radio Drama, and a freelance director and teacher. She is currently studying towards a research higher degree in the area of intracultural theatre practice through the University of East London.



Benjamin Creek

Benjamin was born in Cairns and raised in Coen, a small Aboriginal community in Far North Queensland. He graduated with an Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts in 2014 from the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts, Brisbane. Benjamin is passionate about

the performing arts, acting, dancing and sport. His goal is to be a role model for the younger generations of his community and encourage them to follow their dreams, to not be afraid of being different and to take a chance on life.



Ashleigh Cummings

Ashleigh's other stage credits include *Our Town* (Sydney Theatre Company). Her film roles include *Galore*, *Razzle Dazzle*, *Green Fire Envy* and the 2010 multiaward winning Australian feature *Tomorrow When the War Began*, where her performance earned her an AFI

nomination for Best Young Actor. Ashleigh's television work includes the series regular Dot in ABC TV's Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries and the lead role of Debbie Vickers in Channel Ten's Puberty Blues. Her other television work includes Underbelly: Razor, Dance Academy, Rescue Special Ops and Home and Away. In 2013 and 2015 Ashleigh was nominated for an AACTA Award for Best Lead Actress in a Television Drama for Puberty Blues and a Logie Award for Most Popular Actress for both Puberty Blues and Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries. For Galore she was nominated for Best Young Actor at the FCCA, and won Best Actress at the Festival des Antipodes in France.



Belinda Jombwe

Belinda completed a Bachelor of Arts in Performance Studies at the University of NSW. Her theatre credits include *War Horse* (National Theatre); My *Wonderful Day* (Ensemble Theatre); VX18504, Gossip (Australian Theatre for Young People); Kaleidoscope

(Carriageworks); Arabian Nights, Extracurricular and The Importance of Being Earnest Dragons (New Theatre). Her short film credits include Mary and Regret. Belinda was nominated for Best Newcomer at the 2012 Sydney Theatre Awards and Best Performing Female at the Glugs Awards for her performance in My Wonderful Day. Belinda is a proud Equity member.



Charles Wu

Charles grew up in Singapore and graduated from National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in 2014. Prior to NIDA he spent most of his time working in student theatre as an actor, director and sound designer, and also enjoyed a short stint as a stand-up comic. At NIDA

Charles performed in Kasimir & Karoline, Cymbeline, Wolf in the River and The False Servant. He has been playing guitar and singing since his youth. In 2014 Charles released his first album, 'La Salle', under the moniker Apartments. He hopes to infuse his personal brand of folk, electronica and noise into his work for the theatre. He is the co-Artistic Director of the Corinthian Food Store Collective, a theatre company founded this year.



Kim Bowers
Composer & Sound Designer

Kim 'Busty Beatz' Bowers has been making music and theatre for over 20 years, as a musical director, composer and sound designer. As a sound designer and composer for theatre she has worked with Belvoir, Sydney Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare,

The Escapists, Flipside, Queensland Theatre Company, atyp and Powerhouse Youth Theatre. Her musical direction credits include the international hip hop theatre project East London/West Sydney (directed by UK pioneer Jonzi D) for Sydney Festival and Polytoxic's The Rat Trap. Kim is currently the resident musical director for the boylesque show Briefs. With her sister Candy B she is co-Artistic Director of the Black Honey Company, a production house and cultural consultancy team that collaborates with the arts, entertainment and community sectors to create fearless sticky performances for the international hip hop generation. Kim is currently in development for Twelve – a soul musical from the streets by Candy B and Busty Beatz, commissioned by Queensland Theatre Company.



Michael Hili Set & Costume Designer

Michael is a theatre-maker, illustrator and animator. He graduated from the NIDA design course in 2014. While at NIDA Michael created the set and costume design for *In the Blood*, and the costume design for *Wolf in the River*. Michael worked as associate designer to Gabriela

Tylesova for the 2015 adaptation of the Shaun Tan & John Marsden book *The Rabbits* (Barking Gecko Theatre Company/Opera Australia) and recently co-designed *Young and Jackson* (Steady Lads).



Ben Hughes Lighting Designer

Ben is a freelance lighting designer and an Associate Artistic Director of The Danger Ensemble. As a lighting designer Ben has over 100 credits including productions with Queensland Theatre Company (including the current national tours of *Black Diggers*

and Kelly), Sydney Theatre Company; Melbourne Theatre Company; La Boite Theatre Company; Queensland Ballet; Sydney Festival; Brisbane Festival; Expressions Dance Company; The Danger Ensemble; HotHouse Theatre; The Nest Ensemble; Zen Zen Zo Physical Theatre; JUTE Theatre; Stella Electrika; QPAC, QUT; Gold Coast Arts Centre; and Kooemba Jdarra. As associate lighting designer his work includes productions with Meryl Tankard; Barrie Kosky; Expressions Dance Company; Opera Queensland; Queensland Ballet; and Queensland Theatre Company. In 2013 Ben was Resident Lighting Designer and in 2011 and 2014 an Affiliate Artist with Queensland Theatre Company. He lectures in Lighting Design and Scenography at Queensland University of Technology, and in 2011 received the Groundling Award for Outstanding Contribution to Lighting Design.



Danielle Ironside Stage Manager

Dani graduated from Charles Sturt University in 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts in Design for Theatre and Television. Her stage management credits include Absent Friends, Cruise Control, Neighbourhood Watch, Seminar, Happiness, Managing Carmen, Skylight, The

Gingerbread Lady (Ensemble Theatre); 2015 Chinese New Year Concert (Hunan Orchestra of Chinese Music); Dmitry Sinkovsky Russian Baroque Violin (Australian Brandenburg Orchestra); The Shoe-Horn Sonata (Riverside Theatre); and A Secret Place (Australian Theatre for Young People). For television, Dani has worked on The Voice, The Voice – Kids and So You Think You Can Dance.



Anthea Williams
Dramaturg

Anthea is Belvoir's Associate Director – Literary. She trained at the Victorian College of the Arts (Directing) and UNSW. For Belvoir Anthea has directed Kill the Messenger, Cinderella, Forget Me Not and Old Man and has been dramaturg on a number of works including This Heaven and Small

and Tired. Prior to joining Belvoir in 2011 Anthea was Associate Director bushfutures at London's Bush Theatre, where her directing credits include Two Cigarettes, 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover, 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover at Christmas, Turf, suddenlossofdignity.com, and the musical The Great British Country Fete. Anthea's work toured Britain extensively, including to The Drum Theatre Plymouth, The Ustinov Bath, The Tobacco Factory Bristol, the Norwich Playhouse, North Wall Arts Centre Cambridge and the Latitude Festival. Anthea has also been the Co-Artistic Director of SmackBang Theatre Company and the producer of Massive Company, both in Auckland, NZ.



Scott Witt Fight Director

Scott has worked for 30 years as a writer/adaptor, fight director, movement consultant, actor, director and clown. As a fight director and movement consultant his theatre credits number well over 200 productions including Elektra / Orestes, Kill the Messenger, Radiance, A Christmas Carol, Hedda

Gabler, Oedipus Schmoedipus, Miss Julie, Angels in America, Peter Pan, Beautiful One Day, Medea, Private Lives, Death of a Salesman, Babyteeth, The Dark Room, Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, Gwen in Purgatory, That Face (Belvoir); Suddenly Last Summer, After Dinner, Noises Off, Waiting for Godot, Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead, The Fury, Secret River, Mariage Blanc, Signs of Life, Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Zebra, God of Carnage, True West, A Streetcar Named Desire and The Wonderful World of Dissocia (Sydney Theatre Company). Scott has been a proud member of MEAA since 1988, is the current AD of the International Order of the Sword & the Pen, and is a lecturer at the National Insitute of Dramatic Art.

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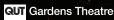
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