

STORM BOY

BY COLIN THIELE
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY TOM HOLLOWAY



Welcome



In 2016, our production of *Jasper Jones* captivated everybody who saw it – attracting audiences in droves and leaving only standing room available by the end of the season. It was one of those special shows with genuine cross-generational appeal.

Key to its appeal was the way it so vividly evoked rural Australia in its isolation, harshness and beauty, firmly embedding the landscape into the beloved coming-of-age story.

Storm Boy reunites the creative team behind Jasper Jones and welcomes Dead Puppet Society to the mix who, together with the remarkable cast of actors and puppeteers, transport us to the stunning Coorong in South Australia.

Under the direction of Sam Strong, this iconic Australian story is at once uplifting, mesmerising and deeply moving,

and without question another gem of a show to welcome a whole new cohort of young theatre-goers, while enchanting long-time theatre lovers just as much.

At MTC we make it a priority to introduce young people to theatre and the arts because we know first-hand the important role it plays. Productions like *Storm Boy*, along with our award-winning Education Program, connect thousands of young people every year with first-rate theatre and unique opportunities including enrichment programs, distance education resources, scholarships and workshops, all with the aim of fostering students' love and understanding of the creative industries.

We hope you enjoy this special production of Storm Boy.

Brett Sheehy AO

Artistic Director & CFO

Virginia Lovett

Executive Director & Co-CEO

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Peoples of the Boon Wurrung, the First Peoples of Country on which Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ stand, and we pay our respects to all of Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders, and to our shared future.

MTC is a department of the University of Melbourne.

MTC is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and by the State Government of Victoria through Creative Victoria.









MTC is a member of Live Performance Australia and the Australian Major Performing Arts Group.



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17 JUNE — 20 JULY, 2019
Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

About the Play

In a wild and remote area of coastline on South Australia's Coorong, Storm Boy and his reclusive father live in a shack, hidden away from the harsh realities of city life. After befriending a local First Peoples man, Storm Boy discovers three orphaned pelican chicks and decides to take them in. What follows is a remarkable journey of discovery that will change his life forever.

— Cast —

Ellen Bailey Puppeteer
John Batchelor Hideaway Tom
Tony Briggs Fingerbone Bill
Emily Burton Puppeteer
Conor Lowe Storm Boy
Drew Wilson Puppeteer

Creative Team

Director Sam Strong
Puppet Designer & Associate Director David Morton
Set & Costume Designer Anna Cordingley
Lighting Designer Matt Scott
Composer & Sound Designer Darrin Verhagen

Projection Designer Justin Harrison
Voice Coach Jean Goodwin
Cultural Consultant Major Moogy Sumner
Associate Set & Costume Designer Kris Bird
Puppet Fabricators David Morton, Jennifer
Livingstone, Indigo-Rose Redding, Matt Seery,
John Pierce, Holly Bryce (Secondment)
Stage Manager Whitney McNamara
Assistant Stage Manager Ben Cooper
Stage Management Secondment VCA
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Sound Design Secondment RMIT David McCarthy Rehearsal Photographer Deryk McAlpin Production Photographer Jeff Busby

For information regarding running time, please see a member of the Front of House team.

A co-production with Queensland Theatre in association with Dead Puppet Society







Storm Boy was originally commissioned, first produced and directed by John Sheedy at Sydney Theatre Company's Whaf† Theatre, by Sydney Theatre Company and Barking Gecko Theatre Company, 9 August—8 September 2013 with original cast including Trevor Jamieson, Peter O'Brien, Rory Potter, Shaka Cook, Michael Smith and Joshua Challenor. Storm Boy is presented by special arrangement with New Holland Publishing.







Conor Lowe, Director Sam Strong, Puppet Designer and Associate Director David Morton and John Batchelor

or Director Sam Strong, Storm Boy is a play that has the potential to attract a whole new generation of theatre lovers. 'We all remember the first show that we saw, whether we were taken by our parents, our grandparents, or by a friend. And I think this version of Storm Boy can be that formative theatrical experience that makes people fall in love with the stage for the rest of their lives.'

MTC's production of *Storm Boy*, in collaboration with Queensland Theatre (where Strong is Artistic Director), takes Tom Holloway's adaptation of Colin Thiele's renowned 1964 novel, and brings it to the mainstage in a way that is at once epic and intimate. 'The brief to the whole creative

team, was to bring the landscape and the animals of the Coorong – not just the hero pelicans but the whole menagerie – to life in a way that is uniquely theatrical,' Strong says. To do this, the Helpmann Awardwinning design team who so successfully made landscape a character in Jasper Jones teamed up with Dead Puppet Society (fresh from their Olivier Award nomination for The Wider Earth).

Leading the challenge of transporting South Australia's wild coastal wetland and its native inhabitants to the Sumner is Set and Costume Designer Anna Cordingley and Puppet Designer and Associate Director David Morton. '[The script] evokes endless space and a richness and spectacle of the Coorong, but equally



Puppeteer Emily Burton and Conor Lowe

'Any version of *Storm Boy* depends – moves or doesn't move an audience – on the basis of the relationship between Storm Boy and the pelicans.'

its loneliness,' Cordingley says. Creating both scale and detail is a challenge that excites her. 'It feels obvious,' she says, 'but the joyful danger and the excellent risk of theatre is that it alters in uncountable ways night after night. Each evening the work is unique, responsive and wholly depends upon its relationship with an audience. The medium of theatre is perfect for a work with as much heart and pathos as *Storm Boy*.'

In Holloway's adaptation, the theme of caring for each other co-exists with that of caring for our environment, Strong believes. However, the setting is as much a psychological and poetic landscape as a literal one, he says. 'If you were designing the perfect location for Storm Boy's coming of age – with its focus on relationships between fathers and sons and how men do or don't communicate – then the Coorong is the ideal place. I think there





(From top) John Batchelor; Puppeteers Ellen Bailey, Emily Burton and Drew Wilson; Puppet Designer and Associate Director David Morton; (opposite from top) Tony Briggs; Puppeteers Emily Burton, Ellen Bailey and Drew Wilson with Conor Lowe and Tony Briggs

are relatively few places in our modern world where you can feel genuinely alone, and be genuinely dwarfed by nature. That's absolutely true of the Coorong.'

'Any version of Storm Boy depends – moves or doesn't move an audience – on the basis of the relationship between Storm Boy and the pelicans,' Strong explains. 'One of the great gifts of using puppetry is that you can bring that relationship to life in a way that is even more human and more affecting than if you were using real animals. Puppets (and especially their puppeteers) can interact with actors in a controlled and focused way that real animals can't. At the very least they are a lot easier to work with and will upstage less than a live animal!'

The characters in *Storm Boy* are initially seen as displaced; outsiders seeking refuge from mainstream society and from people and their pasts. Single parent Hideaway Tom is trying his best to escape past trauma and provide a home for his son in their makeshift shack on the storm-thrashed beach. First Peoples man Fingerbone Bill is also in flight from something in his past. As the story develops, we learn how interwoven place is with these characters' sense of self; and the relationships that form between them. Themes of resilience, acceptance and loss are represented



Tony Briggs and Conor Lowe

through the landscape as much as the characters. 'It's a story that has captivated the imaginations of both young and old,' Strong says, 'because it speaks to a kind of archetypal human process of learning to let something go.'

For over half a century the story of Storm Boy and Mr. Percival has enthralled Australians of all ages, because of its sense of hope amidst loss. 'As a director there are works where you focus on moving your audience, and there are works where you focus on delighting them. There are also some rare works where you're able to do both, sometimes on the turn of a dime. Jasper Jones was one of them and Storm Boy is another. They're the shows that particularly excite me as a director because they give you the capacity to

both inspire and devastate an audience, to both break their hearts and mend them, at the same time.'

Above all else, Strong is excited about creating a theatrical experience that will instil a sense of wonder in a new generation of theatregoers. 'To be able to create those foundational theatrical experiences – with an exceptionally talented cast and creative team – is a gift. And it's a gift that we can't wait to share with audiences.'



Learn how Dead Puppet Society created the animals for Storm Boy at

mtc.com.au/backstage





Puppeteer

Ellen Bailey is an actor, dancer, physical theatre performer and teaching artist with extensive training in dance and movement both nationally and internationally. Storm Boy is her debut performance with Melbourne Theatre Company and Dead Puppet Society. Previous theatre credits include Much Ado About Nothing, Oedipus Doesn't Live Here Anymore, Macbeth (Queensland Theatre); Tender Napalm (LaBoite); Roadtrain (STC/ Zeal Theatre); A Secret Place (Zeal Theatre); Medea, The Forwards, Viral, The Magic Garden (Shock Therapy Productions); Hotelling (Not Yet It's Difficult); Fish Out of Water (Erth Visual & Physical Inc); Bustown (ATYP); Armistice (QPAC). Ellen's television credits include Harrow Season 2 and Home & Away. Film credits include Clubland and Bloody Hell. Ellen has been a featured dancer in music videos and has appeared in numerous short films - recently receiving Best Actor Award (Lavender, 2019) at Gold Coast Short Film Festival. Other awards include the Matilda Award for Best Indepenent Production for The Forwards and Viral. She is a proud and regular ensemble member with Shock Therapy Productions.



JOHN BATCHELOR

Hideaway Tom

John Batchelor is making his Melbourne Theatre Company debut in Storm Boy. Other theatre credits include The Way of the World, She Stoops to Conquer and Festen (Sydney Theatre Company); Managing Carmen, Millfire (On Giant Shoulders); Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream (Grin and Tonic Theatre Troupe), Bouncers and Sweet Phoebe (Someone); Managing Carmen, Christmas at Turkey Beach, Oz Shorts and Julius Caesar (Queensland Theatre); Troilus & Cressida, Antony & Cleopatra, Twelfth Night, Romeo & Juliet and Julius Caesar (Bell Shakespeare); The Misanthrope (Green Theatre Productions); The Dead Devils of Cockle Creek and Mr Melancholy (La Boite); and The Underpants (Belvoir: Company B). His television credits include Harrow, Reckoning, The Secret Daughter, Doctor Doctor, Brock, Mars 500, The Great Mint Swindle, Home & Away, Devil's Dust, Underbelly: Razor, Sea Patrol, All Saints, Stingers, Farscape, Water Rats, Bad Cop Bad Cop, Murder Call, The Wayne Manifesto, Fire and Time Trax. Film credits include The Whistleblower, Red Dog, Chasing Comets, Inspector Gadget 2, Man Thing, The Tenderhook, The Lotus Room and The Oblong Box. John won Matilda Awards in 1995 and 1997 and was nominated in 2013. He won a Queensland New Filmmakers

Award in 1998.



TONY BRIGGS
Fingerbone Bill

Tony Briggs has worked as an actor in theatre, film and television for many years. He appeared in MTC's 1998 production of Twelfth Night. Other stage credits include Black is the New White (STC); Which Way Home and Stolen (Ilbijerri Theatre Company); The Memory of Water, and The Female of the Species (STCSA); Jandamarra and Corrugation Road (Black Swan); Yanagai! Yanagai!, Fever and Who's Afraid of the Working Class? (Melbourne Workers Theatre); and The Sapphires (Belvoir). Some of Tony's television credits include Rake, Cleverman, Seven Types of Ambiguity, Nowhere Boys, The Slap and Wentworth. His film credits include Healing (dir: Craig Monahan); The Sapphires and The Diarn Diarns (dir: Wayne Blair); and Bran Nue Dae (dir: Rachael Perkins). Tony has received two Helpmann Awards for Best Play and Best New Australian Work, a Deadly Lifetime Achievement Award and two AWGIE Awards for Most Outstanding Script for his stage play The Sapphires. The feature film adaptation of The Sapphires won several awards at the 2013 AACTA awards including Best Film and Best Feature Film Adaptation.



EMILY BURTONPuppeteer

Emily Burton is an actress, theatre-maker, playwright and teaching artist. Production credits include Storm Boy (Melbourne Theatre Company debut); Single Asian Female (Belvoir/La Boite Theatre Company); The Seagull, Oedipus Doesn't Live Here Anymore, The Fledglings, Riley Valentine (Queensland Theatre); The Wider Earth (Queensland Theatre/Sydney Festival/Dead Puppet Society); A Midsummer Night's Dream (LaBoite Theatre Company); and A Tribute of Sorts (Monster's Appear). Emily has toured nationally with numerous acclaimed independent theatre groups including Dead Puppet Society, Imaginary Theatre Company, and Grin and Tonic Theatre Troupe. Her awards include a Matilda Award for Best Actress in a Lead Role in A Tribute of Sorts; a recipient of Queensland Theatre Independent Resources funding; and a proud participant in the Playlab Incubator playwriting program. Currently, Emily is an Artist in Residence with La Boite Theatre Company. She has worked as a teaching artist across Australia and is passionate about bringing the arts to regional areas.



CONOR LOWE Storm Boy

Conor Lowe is a 15-year-old boy who loves music, drama, sport and mucking about with his mates. He is honoured beyond words to have been given the opportunity to perform in his first show for Melbourne Theatre Company as Storm Boy. Recent credits include performing in Oliver as Oliver (ICW Productions), playing Noah in To The Sea (Impel Pictures), Lucas in Electricity (Makoa Productions) and being selected in a nationwide search to be the Junior Reporter for Channel 9's Today Show. Conor first caught the drama bug in 2016 when he joined Fusion Entertainment Group and has since had opportunities to perform in Melbourne, Sydney and Los Angeles. In January 2017 he represented Fusion at IMTA Los Angeles and won 17 awards across all categories. His favourite pastime is playing with his nieces, Lilly and Ava.



DREW WILSON
Puppeteer

Storm Boy is Drew Wilson's first production with Melbourne Theatre Company and Queensland Theatre. A graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, his theatre credits include Ghetto, Twelfth Night and O'Horo (VCA); War Horse (National Theatre and Global Creatures); The Riddle of Washpool Gully (Terrapin Puppet Company and Dead Puppet Society); The Island of Dr Moreau (Loudmouth Theatre Company); The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show and Alice in Wonderland (Michael Sieders Presents); and Notes from Underground (Sydney Chamber Opera). His film and television credits include Crownies (ABC); and the short films Legacy, Rare Books and When Sally Left Steve (Australian Film, Television and Radio School). After Storm Boy, Drew will be performing in Laser Beak Man (Dead Puppet Society) and he is currently writing the web series Part-Time Heroes, and a new puppetry work The Jilted Curse.



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TOM HOLLOWAY

Playwright

Tom Holloway is a multi-awardwinning playwright. His work has been staged extensively in Australia and internationally. His plays include: Double Indemnity (Melbourne Theatre Company, 2016); And No More Shall We Part, (2016 Williamstown Theatre Festival USA, starring Alfred Molina and Jane Kaczamarek, 2012 Edinburgh Fringe by Traverse Theatre); Forget Me Not (The Bush Theatre, UK, 2015, starring Eleanor Bron); Storm Boy (first produced by Barking Gecko Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company; Winner of the 2014 AWGIE Award for Theatre For Young People); And more than a dozen other national and international productions and multiple national awards. He was librettist for the opera South Pole (Bavarian State Opera, 2016/2017, Darmstadt Theatre, 2017) and shortlisted for Best New Opera at the 2016 International Opera Awards. Tom is currently under commission by Melbourne Theatre Company as part of the NEXT STAGE new writers' program. The Seymour Centre, Bavarian State Opera and Universal Pictures/ Paradise Pictures.



SAM STRONG
Director

Sam Strong is the Artistic Director of Oueensland Theatre. Prior to that, he was Associate Artistic Director of Melbourne Theatre Company, Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company, Literary Associate at Belvoir, and Dramaturg in Residence at Red Stitch Actors Theatre, Sam has directed productions for all Australian state theatre companies. His Queensland Theatre credits include Hydra, Nearer the Gods, Twelfth Night and Once in Royal David's City. Other credits include Les Liaisons Dangereuses (Sydney Theatre Company): Masquerade (Sydney/ Melbourne Festivals); The Floating World, Between Two Waves, The Boys, and Speaking in Tongues (Griffin); and Red Sky Morning (Red Stitch). For MTC, Sam has directed Jasper Jones, Double Indemnity, The Weir, Endgame, The Sublime. The Speechmaker. Private Lives. The Crucible, Other Desert Cities and Madagascar. Sam has won the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Direction and received multiple nominations for Best Direction and Best Production at the Sydney Theatre Awards. Greenroom Awards, and Helpmann Awards.



DAVID MORTONPuppet Designer &
Associate Director

David Morton is a writer, director and designer, and the Creative Director of Dead Puppet Society (DPS). Over the last decade he has led DPS in the creation of large-scale visual theatre works developed with international teams for major theatre companies and festivals. The Wider Earth (DPS. Oueensland Theatre, Trish Wadlev Productions, Glass Half Full Productions) was conceived in residence at St Ann's Warehouse in New York City, and recently closed a six-month run in a custom built theatre in London's Natural History Museum, Laser Beak Man (DPS, La Boite, Brisbane Festival, PowerArts) was a collaboration with Tim Sharp developed at the New Victory Theater in NYC. Additional works include The Riddle of Washpool Gully (Terrapin, DPS); Argus (DPS, Lincoln Centre, Queensland Theatre, Brisbane Powerhouse): Trollop (Queensland Theatre); The Harbinger (DPS, La Boite, Critical Stages). David has been nominated for five Helpmann Awards and an Olivier Award. He holds a PhD from Oueensland University of Technology.



ANNA CORDINGLEYSet & Costume Designer

Anna Cordingley is an awardwinning set and costume designer for theatre, opera and dance whose designs have been seen by audiences throughout Australia, Europe, Britain and the United States. Designs include Abigail's Party, Jasper Jones, Death and the Maiden (MTC); Antony and Cleopatra, Richard III, Romeo & Juliet, Tartuffe, Phèdre, Macbeth, Julius Caesar (Bell Shakespeare); Masquerade (Griffin/STCSA); Lazarus, Dusty (The Production Company); Meow Meow's Little Mermaid, Meow Meow's Little Match Girl, The Bloody Chamber, A Golem Story, Happy Days (Malthouse); Don Giovanni (Opera Queensland); Aida (Opera Australia); Sunday in the Park With George (Victorian Opera), The Threepenny Opera (VO/STC/Malthouse); Richter/ Meinhof Opera, Black Arm Band (Melbourne Festival); An Act of Now, Connected (Chunky Move); and Human Interest Story (Lucy Guerin). Anna won a Helpmann Award for Best Set Design in 2017 and has two Green Room Awards for Best Design. Anna is a Lecturer in Design at The University of Melbourne (VCA) and Design Akademie Berlin.



MATT SCOTT Lighting Designer

Matt Scott has lit more than 60 MTC productions, including The Lady in the Van, The Architect, An Ideal Husband, Minnie & Liraz, Born Yesterday, The Odd Couple, Jasper Jones, Skylight, The Last Man Standing, The Weir, Jumpy, The Mountaintop, Elling, His Girl Friday, Red, Tribes, Clybourne Park, Next to Normal, Blackbird, and August: Osage County. His most recent other work includes The Dance of Death for Belvoir; The Pearlfishers for State Opera of South Australia; Oklahoma! and A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder for The Production Company; Madame Butterfly for Seattle Opera; Jasper Jones for Queensland Theatre and Madame Butterfly for Opera Australia. Matt has received and been nominated for numerous awards, including a 2016 Green Room Award for The Pearlfishers (Opera Australia), a 2005 Helpmann Award for his lighting on Urinetown (MTC) and a 2003 Helpmann Award for The Blue Room (MTC). Matt is a Lecturer in Lighting Design at the University of Melbourne (VCA).



DARRIN VERHAGENSound Designer & Composer

Darrin Verhagen is a freelance sound designer, composer and installation artist. His MTC productions include Jasper Jones, I Call My Brothers, Menagerie, Madagascar, Grace, The Birthday Party, Godzone, The Memory of Water and The Dumb Show. He has worked for Sydney Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, Queensland Theatre, Daniel Schlusser, Chamber Made Opera, Bell Shakespeare, Griffin Theatre Company & Moira Finucane; in dance, with Chunky Move, Australian Dance Theatre, Lucy Guerin, Sue Healey, Expressions Dance Company, and Antony Hamilton; As a founding member of the (((20hz))) collective, his recent installations have been exhibited at Scienceworks, White Night, NGV, Experimenta, Melbourne Music Week, Science Week and Geelong After Dark. He has won three Green Room Awards and his score for Boys in the Trees was nominated for Best Soundtrack by both AACTA and the Film Critics Circle. Darrin is a senior lecturer in the RMIT Digital Media program, and runs the Audiokinetic Experiments Lab, researching multisensory experience.



JUSTIN HARRISON
Projection Designer

Justin Harrison is a freelance video artist, sound designer, composer, and film and television technician. This is his Melbourne Theatre Company debut. In theatre, he has previously worked with Queensland Theatre, Sydney Festival, Dead Puppet Society, La Boite Theatre Company, Brisbane Festival, The Grin and Tonic Theatre Troupe and Metro Arts, and toured with Cirque du Soleil. In film and television, he has worked for Warner Brothers, 20th Century Fox, Disney Channel, ESPN, Fox Sports, Discovery Channel, SkyUK, Harpo, Animal Planet, TLC and every national TV broadcaster, with over 450 film, television, and advertising production credits. His work has been viewed and awarded at both the national and international level.



JEAN GOODWIN

Voice Coach

Jean Goodwin is a dialect coach, actor and lecturer in voice at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). Jean is also the Associate Dialect Coach at Red Stitch Actors' Theatre. Previously Jean has worked as a lecturer in voice and speech at the Victorian College of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music (VCA). Recent dialect work includes Arbus & West (Melbourne Theatre Company); 2018/19 tour of North by Northwest (Kay & McLean Productions); Suddenly Last Summer, Lovesong, The Antipodes, HIR and INCOGNITO (Red Stitch Actors Theatre); and Venus in Fur (Lightening Jar Theatre). Recent acting credits include lead roles in Much Ado About Nothing and The Pied Piper of Hamelin Town (Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Opera House); Twelfth Night (Essential Theatre). Jean is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music (VCA). She has a Bachelor of Dramatic Art, Acting (2012) and a Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours, Voice and Dialect Research (2017).



DEAD PUPPET SOCIETY

Dead Puppet Society is a visual theatre and design company working across Australia and New York City. Their most recent production Laser Beak Man (with Brisbane Festival and La Boite in association with PowerArts) premiered in 2017 following a two year residency at The New Victory Theater in NYC and will tour nationally in 2019/20. Initially developed at St. Ann's Warehouse and Lincoln Centre, The Wider Earth premiered with Queensland Theatre in 2016 and transferred to the Sydney Opera House for Sydney Festival in 2018. The production recently had a six-month season at the Natural History Museum in London (with Trish Wadley Productions and Glass Half Full Productions) and was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best Entertainment and Family. Prior to this, the Society created a suite of works with various companies in Brisbane before undertaking mentorship with Handspring Puppet Company (War Horse) in South Africa in 2013 and breaking into the international touring market with their critically acclaimed work Argus (Lincoln Center, Kravis Center Florida, Australian National Tour). Previous works include The Harbinger (La Boite Theatre Company Australian National Tour), The Timely Death of Victory Blott (Metro Arts) and Little Grey Wolf (Brisbane Festival and Adelaide Fringe).

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Written and Directed by Joanna Murray-Smith



Melbourne Theatre Company

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Three Little Words by Joanna Murray-Smith, 2017



Ladies in Black, book by Carolyn Burns, music and lyrics by Tim Finn, based on Madeleine st John's novel, The Women in Black.



Neighbourhood Watch by Lally Katz, 2014



