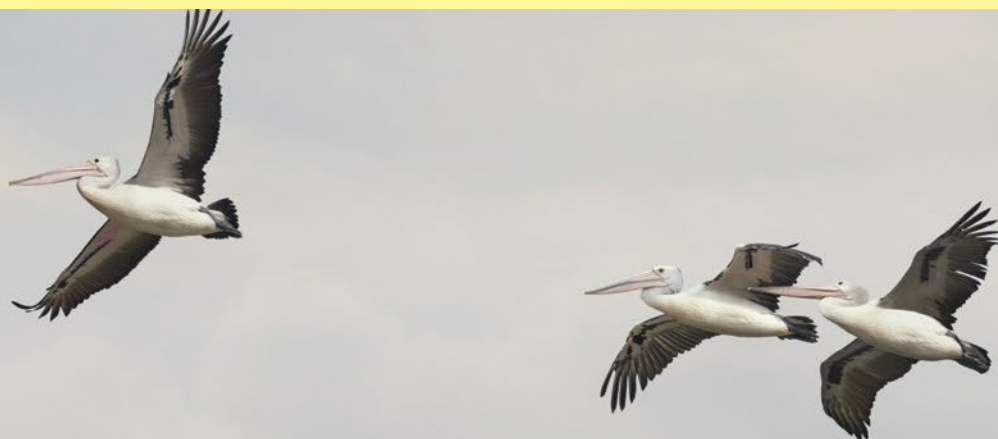


MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
— EDUCATION PACK —



STORM BOY

BY COLIN THIELE

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY TOM HOLLOWAY



17 JUNE — 20 JULY
SOUTHBANK THEATRE, THE SUMNER

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

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— WELCOME —



Southbank Theatre, *The Summer*. Photo by Benjamin Healley.

This heart-warming production of *Storm Boy* is the work of talented theatre-makers from across Australia. Creative artists from MTC, Queensland Theatre and Dead Puppet Society, together with the remarkable cast of actors and puppeteers, transport us to the stunning Coorong in South Australia, vividly evoking the remote coastal landscape in its isolation, harshness and beauty, replete with a menagerie of puppet creatures.

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 & CEO

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. We pay our respects to all of Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders, and to our shared future.

— ABOUT THE PLAY —

In a wild and remote area of coastline on South Australia's Coorong, Storm Boy and his reclusive father (Hideaway Tom) live in a shack, hidden away from the harsh realities of city life. After befriending a local First Peoples man (Fingerbone Bill), 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. In this production, three puppeteers operate a variety of puppet creatures, including Mr Percival, a pelican that Storm Boy befriends.



Read the show programme

Pick up your copy of the show programme at Southbank Theatre for \$2, or download it for free at mtc.com.au/backstage.



Emily Burton, Ellen Bailey and Drew Wilson on stage.

— CAST AND CREATIVES —



Ellen Bailey
Puppeteer



John Batchelor
Hideaway Tom



Tony Briggs
Fingerbone Bill



Emily Burton
Puppeteer



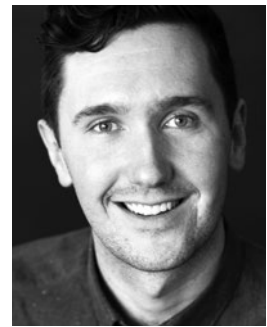
Conor Lowe
Storm Boy



Drew Wilson
Puppeteer



Sam Strong
Director



David Morton
Puppet Designer &
Associate Director



Anna Cordingley
Set & Costume Designer



Matt Scott
Lighting Designer



Darrin Verhagen
Composer &
Sound Designer



Justin Harrison
Projection Designer



Jean Goodwin
Voice Coach



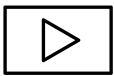
Tom Holloway
Playwright

— SETTING: THE COORONG —

Storm Boy lives with his father along the unspoilt and tranquil Coorong. The Coorong is located at the end of the River Murray in South Australia, where the river meets the Southern Ocean (near the Murray Mouth) and stretches around 200 kilometres to Kingston in the southeast of the state. The area's wetlands provide habitat for many local species as well as for migratory wading birds – many flying in from as far away as Alaska. The Coorong is an important breeding ground for pelicans, and thousands of Australian pelicans call the Coorong home, thanks to the area's abundance and diversity of fish.

The Traditional Owners, the Ngarrindjeri people, have lived in the area for many thousands of years. The Coorong remains an intrinsic part of their culture, spirituality and identity. The name Coorong comes from the Ngarrindjeri name 'kurangk', which means 'long, narrow neck'. The area used to be one of the most densely populated areas in Australia prior to colonisation.

Coorong National Park was established in 1966 and its lagoons are protected from the Southern Ocean by the sweeping sand dunes of the Young Husband Peninsula. The park provides habitat for nationally threatened species like the orange-bellied parrot, freckled duck, and southern bell frog.



Learn more about the Ngarrindjeri peoples

Visit ngarrindjeri.org.au to learn more about the Traditional Owners of the Coorong and watch videos about the arts and culture of this area's First Peoples.



Explore the Coorong online

Using Google Maps satellite view, explore the Coorong. Make notes about the landscape, colours, textures, geography. Pre-show, makes predictions about how this setting will be created on stage. Post-show, find images of the specific parts of the Coorong that remind you of the set design.



Research and present

In small groups, research one of the following topics related to the context of *Storm Boy*: The geography of the Coorong; Australian pelicans; the Ngarrindjeri peoples; or fishing in the Coorong. Present your research as a poster, a digital presentation such as Instagram stories or a PowerPoint.

Sources: Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (2014), *We Are Ngarrindjeri* on ngarrindjeri.org.au; South Australian Department for Environment and Water (2018), *6 things you might not know about the Coorong* on environment.sa.gov.au; National Parks South Australia (2018), *Coorong National Park* on parks.sa.gov.au.



Drew Wilson, Ellen Bailey, Emily Burton, Conor Lowe and Tony Briggs on stage.

— CHARACTERS —

STORM BOY

A young boy of about ten years old who lives with his father in the Coorong. Storm Boy likes living by the beach, but his father says nobody can know they live there. Storm Boy has an affinity with animals and nature, and he begs his father to let him care for three orphaned pelicans.

HIDEAWAY TOM

Tom is Storm Boy's father, and he is very protective of his son. Tom is a fisherman who has chosen to live in a remote section of the Coorong following his wife's death. Tom tells his son not to go out of sight of the lookout post. Tom is initially very suspicious of Fingerbone Bill.

FINGERBONE BILL

Bill is a Ngarrindjeri man who lives on the Coorong, having also chosen to retreat from society. Bill likes to tell jokes, and becomes Storm Boy and Tom's friend. He gives Storm Boy his nickname, noting that he keeps seeing him after a storm. Bill teaches Storm Boy about the land and animals who live in the Coorong, and takes it upon himself to scare off the hunters in the sanctuary.

MR PERCIVAL, MR PROUD AND MR PONDER

Storm Boy names the three orphaned pelicans that he rescues and raises. In this production, the pelicans are puppets created by a company called Dead Puppet Society, which are brought to life by three puppeteers. Mr Percival becomes Storm Boy's favourite pelican, and does courageous things.



John Batchelor, Conor Lowe and Tony Briggs on stage.

— MEET STORM BOY —

Conor Lowe, who plays Storm Boy, discusses the rehearsal process, working with puppets, and how he inhabits his character.



Conor Lowe (Storm Boy)

'A lot of the story is about my relationship with our pelicans, so a lot of my gestures and movements are directed at teaching my pelicans how to behave, to fetch, and even to eat. It has been great having our creative team help me convey those gestures to the puppets to help the audience believe I'm feeding and teaching actual pelicans.'

Conor says that at the beginning of the play, his character lives a simple life with his dad; he does chores, they fish and he loves to treasure hunt. However meeting Fingerbone Bill and the baby pelicans provides a whole new experience that he dives right into and, as the story progresses, and as his relationship with his dad changes.



Conor Lowe (Storm Boy)

'I get to experience a whole range of emotions and feelings throughout the story. He starts out as the child, but he soon grows to be a carer, a friend, and a teacher. It is clear he has grown a lot since the opening scene.'

Watching and listening to the cast and crew work to bring the script to life has been a real highlight for Conor from the of rehearsals. He's been impressed by the effort that goes into the interaction between characters, puppets, and also that of the whole set in bringing the story to the stage.



Meet Storm Boy

Read the extended Q&A with Conor Lowe at mtc.com.au/backstage.



Conor Lowe on stage.

— DIRECTION —



Sam Strong in rehearsal.

Director Sam Strong's vision for *Storm Boy* was to bring the landscape and the animals of the Coorong – not just the hero pelicans but also the whole menagerie – to life in a uniquely theatrical way. His creative team includes designers working in the areas of costume, set, sound, projection and puppetry to achieve this vision. Under Sam's direction, the cast and creative team had just four weeks in the rehearsal room to learn their lines, discover and refine the blocking, and develop their characters.



Sam Strong (Director)

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

Sam describes the Coorong as 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. He also says the Coorong is unique in the isolation and awe it inspires in visitors by its wild natural beauty in both flora and fauna.



Sam Strong (Director)

'[*Storm Boy*] is a story that has captivated the imaginations of both young and old, because it speaks to a kind of archetypal human process of learning to let something go. 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. *Storm Boy* gives you the capacity to both inspire and devastate and audience, to both break their hearts and mend them, at the same time.'



Be the director

Recall a scene from the play where actors and/or puppeteers used non-verbal skills to tell the story. Discuss how facial expressions, gestures and movement told the story effectively. In small groups, assign a director to recreate this scene. The director should ensure we can see the performers' faces (unless facing upstage is a deliberate choice), and that actions are focused and clear.



Hear more from Sam Strong

Hear director Sam Strong speak about *Storm Boy* on [youtube.com/melbtheatreco](https://www.youtube.com/melbtheatreco).



'break their hearts and mend them'

Discuss Sam's comment above about this play's capacity to both inspire and devastate an audience. How did you feel when watching the performance? Which moments inspired you, and which made you feel sad? Discuss how the director manipulated your emotions through the storytelling.



Tony Briggs, Conor Lowe and Emily Burton on stage.

— COSTUME DESIGN —



Anna Cordingley

Anna Cordingley has designed the costumes for *Storm Boy*, including those worn by the puppeteers. Anna's design process starts several months before the production is set to open, and begins with research. Anna gathers provocation images and references that will inform her creative concept, and she annotates these with notes about what she finds interesting, or ideas she has about how it might inform her design. These images are sometimes photographs of real places, close-ups of textures, patterns and details, and might also include artworks that spark an idea. Anna says, 'only when that research is formatted, can I pick up a pencil and start to sketch.'



Anna Cordingley (Set & Costume Designer)

'[The script] evokes endless space and a richness and spectacle of the Coorong, but equally its loneliness... The wind when it carries gritty sand across the beach and you need to shut your eyes to protect them...The sharpness of the needle grass along that coast line and how the clusters follow the crests of dunes and lunettes.'



Create a costume mood board

Based on your knowledge of the characters, create a costume mood board (like a collage) of clothing items, accessories, patterns, colours and fabric that might inform a costume design for your own production of *Storm Boy*. Think carefully about the action that takes place in the play, and if your costume will be functional.

Anna's costumes are set in an 'ambiguous epoch', which means the sense of when in time this story is taking place is deliberately unclear. There are almost no references to a specific decade in fashion, so that the costumes look simultaneously contemporary and classic. Anna's designs also create the sense of being by the sea: the colours in the costumes are muted, as though they are sun-soaked and faded, and Storm Boy's hair will look as though it is full of salt and might stand up on its own.



Anna Cordingley (Set & Costume Designer)

'Much like the scenic landscape, the costumes in *Storm Boy* are anything but new. The garments should feel like they are one of maybe only two sets of clothes owned by Storm Boy and Hideaway Tom, which they wear and launder until they're absolutely threadbare. My design for Storm Boy suggests he's a bright little spark with lots of attitude, he's just wearing hand-me-downs from his dad - hefty boots for clambering around, and many layers because it's so windy at the Coorong. The layers also allow us to explore different weather conditions from scene to scene, because this text unfolds across possibly eight months.'

Anna has chosen to costume the puppeteers in equally contemporary and unremarkable street wear, created from mostly found and sourced garments (as opposed to originals created by the Wardrobe department) which have been distressed and broken down by the scenic art department.



Analyse the costume designs

Look closely at the costume designs on the next page and read the notes that Anna has made. Discuss how the costumes communicate character and help tell the story.



Create your own costume designs

Based on your knowledge of a character, design your own costume for an actor in *Storm Boy*. Alternatively, create a design for the puppeteers, and annotate your design to explain your choices. Think about colour, texture, pattern, shape, layers and line. You might like to download a costume design template to get you started with a body shape.

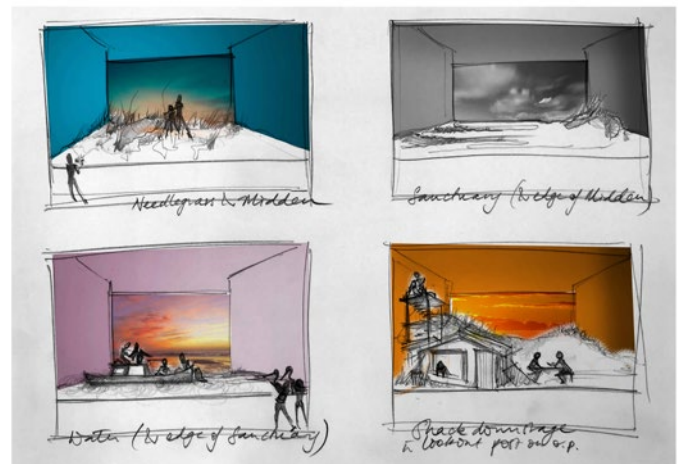
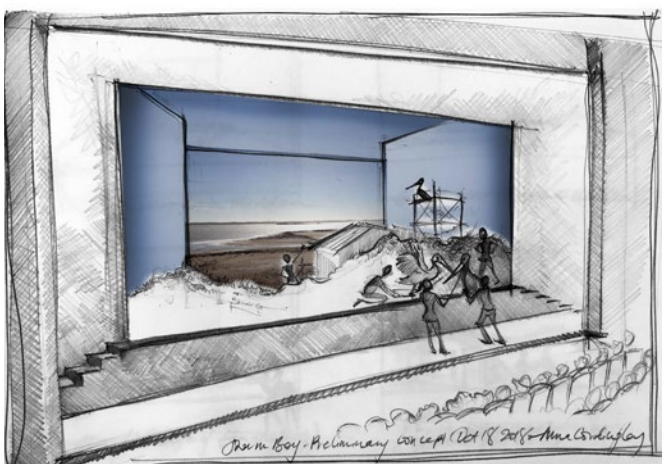
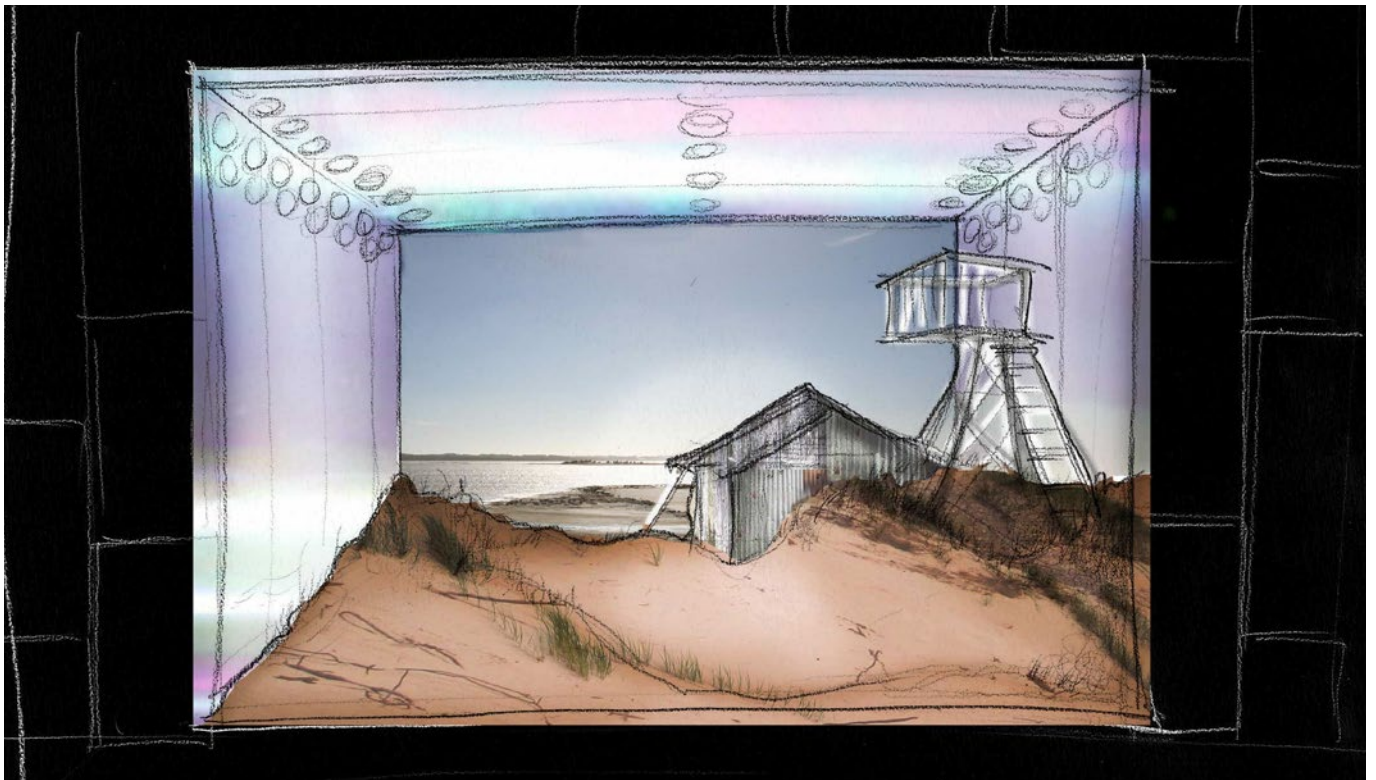
— SET DESIGN —

Anna Cordingley has also designed the set for this production of *Storm Boy*. Anna says there's nothing quite like the Coorong. It's a wild expanse of coast, with the ocean roaring on one side, and swamp-like lakes inland brimming with bird life. The play unfolds entirely in the Coorong, but we travel between Storm Boy and Hideaway Tom's home, nestled in the dunes, and other locations. The fishing takes place in the swampy plains, the look of which was inspired by Pelican Point in the Coorong.



Anna Cordingley (Set & Costume Designer)

'The set is a five-metre by nine-metre ground area that's framed in an architectural product – a cuboid that hovers above this space in brushed aluminium – so we have a kind of forensic naturalism on the ground that the actors and puppeteers can clamber around, which is surrounded by a very abstract, minimal environment. The natural environment stops very sharply. Upstage of this world is a big cyclorama – a projection surface – that augments the world in front, e.g. the sunrise, or the ocean waves lapping. This behaves as a light source too, and we're hoping the brushed aluminium will pick up that light and carry it around.'



Set renderings by Anna Cordingley.

Anna's set model for the production evolved about four months after the initial drawings, with a lot of technical drawings happening in between to ensure the concept would function in the theatre. The team arrived at a staging solution with a large smoother downstage that can fly in from above to mask scene changes behind it. There is also tarket flooring on top of the stage deck that's shiny enough to read as water when the sand dune trucks are out of sight.



Set model by Anna Cordingley.



Anna Cordingley (Set & Costume Designer)

'You'll also see apertures high up in the set for the lighting designer to use. I've made it very hard for any lighting to punch through because I've put a ceiling and walls in the space, so we agreed upon these as a solution.'

Anna also provides treatments for the Scenic Art team to guide their work when painting the set. The world of *Storm Boy* is aged, worn-down, and nothing is new. Anna annotates these treatments with notes about how much weight set pieces might need to hold, when she wants something to contrast the texture of another element, and specific colour references to evoke things like rust.



Set treatments by Anna Cordingley.

— PUPPETRY —

Alongside the cast of *Storm Boy* are another trio of performers who bring a menagerie of creatures to life on stage: Ellen Bailey, Emily Burton and Drew Wilson are the puppeteers who give life to the Coorong's penguins, snakes, fish and, of course, pelicans. These intricate animal puppets created by Dead Puppet Society are the brainchild of David Morton, Puppet Designer and Associate Director of *Storm Boy*.

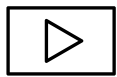
DESIGNING THE PUPPETS

When Dead Puppet Society design puppets, they consider the puppeteers in a number of ways. Other than their functionality, and how they fit within the rest of world, the way that the puppets and their operators engage with each other is one of the most important aspects of their construction.



David Morton (Puppet Designer & Associate Director)

'We try to make each of the mechanisms adjustable so that they can be tailored to fit the individual performers. There are various elastic tendons and returns so that the tension can be tweaked to make the movements more relaxed or give them more resistance. There is a process for tuning the puppets that the operators go through each day, which is similar to a musician tuning an instrument before a performance so that they are in peak condition.'



Building the puppets

Watch a video of the puppets being built, and hear more about the construction process with insights from David Morton and Nicholas Paine of Dead Puppet Society. To watch the video, visit [youtube.com/melbtheatreco](https://www.youtube.com/melbtheatreco).



Detail of Dead Puppet Society's Mr Percival puppet.

WARMING-UP AND PREPARING FOR REHEARSAL

Detailed warm-ups are an important part of the puppeteers' preparation for each day of rehearsal. A physio helped the team isolate specific muscle groups by teaching them tailored exercises, which focused on their shoulders, wrists and core. These warm-ups help prevent any injuries. One fun exercise that the physio gave the entire cast was to crawl like Spiderman over the sand dunes. The pelican puppets are quite heavy, but these exercises ensure the puppeteers are equipped to perform eight times a week.



Drew Wilson (Puppeteer)

'Every puppet is different, and manipulating them requires the activation of muscles that we generally don't use in day-to-day life. Just using the puppets is often enough to get those muscles working, but extra exercises to strengthen them can be helpful in making operating the puppets easier.'

REHEARSING WITH THE PUPPETS

There are a number of different rehearsal stages when working with puppets, because they have to be taught to live and breathe before they can start to contribute to a scene like the other actors.



David Morton (Puppet Designer & Associate Director)

'Our rehearsals start with basic training in how the mechanisms work, and from there we move into creating a basic palette of behaviours and reactions...Slowly the puppets move from being objects manipulated by performers into creatures with believable movements and behaviours that have active thought patterns.'

Early in rehearsals, the puppeteers used their own bodies to represent the puppet characters and explore how they interact with the other characters. Once those discoveries were made, the team focused on the process needed to execute those moves with the puppets. Once all of these pragmatic considerations are solved, the puppet characters can perform in the scenes in the same way as the other actors, constantly listening and reacting to the action around them.



Drew Wilson, Emily Burton, Conor Lowe and Ellen Bailey in rehearsal.

BRINGING THE PUPPETS TO LIFE

A starting point for building the physical language of each puppet was finding the basic energy, rhythm and pace of each animal. For example, penguins have light, quick, playful qualities, so the puppeteers found a basic language for these movements within their own bodies, and then transferred that into the puppet using the movable mechanisms. Dead Puppet Society have some key principles of puppet manipulation that relate to focus, breath and gravity.



David Morton (Puppet Designer & Associate Director)

‘Focus relates to where the creature is looking, and it’s what creates the illusion of awareness and intelligence. Breath refers to the micro movements in the puppet that keep it alive when the staging dictates that it must otherwise be still. A still puppet is a dead one, so these movements (e.g. rise and fall of a chest, the flickers of wings) keep the illusion of life strong until next large movement. And finally, we talk a lot about gravity, which is concerned with the realistic way that the puppet creature interacts with its surroundings. In its simplest sense, this is about how we make sure that the puppets feels like the right weight for the creature it’s portraying, and that it doesn’t appear to float.’



Drew Wilson (Puppeteer)

‘It sounds naff, but as a puppeteer, I breathe with the puppet. Its thoughts, its actions, its rhythms all come from breath.’

Things get more complicated when working with creatures that fly — in addition to maintaining their gravity, the puppeteers also have to make sure that the movements of the pelicans’ wings gives a realistic impression that they’re overcoming gravity.



Ellen Bailey (Puppeteer)

‘Thoughts are also important. Like acting, your thoughts and intentions have to be clear so that your actions in the scene are clear. My thoughts become the thoughts of the puppet and therefore drive every movement it makes in relationship to the other puppets, the actors on stage, or its environment.’



Create your own puppets

Create your own puppets, inspired by the puppets you saw on stage. Experiment with using found materials in your house, like plastic cups, chopsticks, string and paper. Watch videos of pelicans walking and flying, and try to identify the key movements that you want to replicate with a puppet.



Drew Wilson, Ellen Bailey, Conor Lowe and Emily Burton on stage.

CHALLENGES IN PUPPETRY

One challenge the puppeteers identified in rehearsal was not to make the pelicans too 'human' in scenes when they interact with the actors.



Emily Burton (Puppeteer)

'It's very easy to start reacting to the lines and the words that the actors are saying, rather than just responding to sound and environment as wild pelicans would. Physically, moving in similar rhythms as pelicans helps us as puppeteers to bring the pelicans to life. We try to refrain from too much facial expression. If we do too much with our faces it can distract away from the focus of the puppets for the audience.'



Drew Wilson, Ellen Bailey, Conor Lowe, Emily Burton and John Batchelor on stage.



Bringing the puppets to life

Visit [youtube.com/melbtheatreco](https://www.youtube.com/melbtheatreco) to watch a video of the puppeteers bringing the pelicans to life in rehearsal and on stage!



Discuss the puppets

Discuss the dramatic effect of incorporating puppets in this production. How did you feel when watching the play? Were you aware of the puppeteers? Think about what David Morton says on page 15 regarding focus, breath and gravity – did you see these elements in the performance.

— LIGHTING DESIGN —



Matt Scott



Matt Scott (Lighting Designer)

Learn more about Matt Scott's lighting design for *Storm Boy* in this Q&A.

What is the world of this play that you're creating through light? The big ideas/themes supported by the design?

'I am attempting to capture the light quality of the natural environment that is the setting for this play and juxtapose that with the artificial frame that contains that setting. This frame is there to suggest the infinite sense of space of the natural environment, so whilst the function of the light is to pick out the characters in space it should also help enhance this infinite effect. Some of the light sources are also partially visible to the audience which also contributes to the overall theatricality of the framing of the world on stage.'

What are some examples of lighting fixtures/technology you're using in your design?

'The set has a number of apertures built into the top of the side walls to allow light into the box. The fixtures I am using in these positions are ETC Source Four LED profiles that allow me to subtly change the tone and colour of the light throughout the piece. Each fixture contains a 7 colour LED engine as its light source giving me the ability to mix an infinite number of colours to sculpt the objects within the space – quite a revolutionary piece of kit really.'

What does the rehearsal process look like for a lighting designer?

'It is helpful for me to attend as many run throughs of the whole piece as possible. Often complete runs don't occur till quite late in the rehearsal phase so I keep my eye on the schedule and attend whenever I can see sections run together. This will often happen at the end of a rehearsal session so I have become quite adept at quietly entering and exiting the rehearsal room so as to not disturb the workflow of others. Getting a sense of how the piece is choreographed in space as it comes together and hearing how the sound elements are being fed into rehearsals is really vital for the lighting designer for working the development of the piece into the lighting design. The rehearsal phase will follow on from months of discussion with other members of the creative & production team but it is in rehearsal where all those discussions start to become a reality and this has a very big impact on the final execution of the lighting design.'



Conor Lowe on stage.

COMPOSITION AND SOUND DESIGN



Darrin Verhagen



Darrin Verhagen (Composer & Sound Designer)

Learn more about Darrin Verhagen's composition and sound design for *Storm Boy* in this Q&A from mid-way through the rehearsal process.

What is the world of this play that you're creating through sound?

'Part of sound's role is to establish the diegetic world of the play – essentially an authenticating agenda – so providing all of the noises you might expect from the environment and elements of action that you see. The more important world though is the emotional heart of the play. In this case, this involves finding musical themes that speak to innocence, joy, sadness, but also more abstract aesthetic states (such as beauty, majesty, scale, intimacy, and an almost spiritual connection to nature). There are times when music subtly opens up a window for an audience to more deeply experience whatever they were already feeling emotionally. This can be like a detached frame where permissions are gently granted through a looser composition or simple soundscape (think of a hand placed on a shoulder at a funeral which opens up all the emotions previously held in check). But then, there are other times when music's role is to actively generate emotions – to prescriptively push audiences into specific states. These are more musically-focused moments, drawing on an established "be sad" or "be happy" toolkit.

My endless fascination though is in a messier territory than those two extremes – where you might lay up something sonically pretty against something narratively tragic, or where something musically tender and beautiful becomes frail and endangered given the context. One of my favourite sequences in the play is at a key moment of loss when we shift into a beautiful First Nations' song by Eleanor Dixon accompanying [Projection Designer] Justin [Harrison]'s top-down drone footage of country. On one level, it underscores a large narrative shift into deep poignancy, whilst simultaneously feeling like a detached side-step shift into the spiritual heart of the land. Although neither of these ideas will be 'read' consciously in the audio-visual experience, they are 'felt' incredibly deeply, both individually – a heart-wrenching narrative moment with a powerfully beautiful connection to country – but also as a fusion, where that conflict has the capacity to hit an experiential flavour close to the sublime.'

What are some examples of diegetic sound you're using in your design?

'This was a question we were exploring early on – finding how we might represent something like a pelican sonically in the world we were crafting. Given the layers of pretend that exist in theatre, where it feels like the suspension of disbelief requires a greater level of imagination and generosity than film, there are various possibilities in how something might be materialised. With pelicans for example, on one end was a (Warner Brothers cartoon composer) Carl Stalling-esque metaphoric representation (using squawking bassoon noises) to musically represent the actual sound with a metaphoric musical gesture; at the other extreme was actual field recordings of the real birds. When the options were laid up against the puppets however, the first felt way too pantomime; whilst the second opened up a clear disjunct between the puppet and the real sound,

heightening the artificiality of the animal on stage. So we found vocalisations from the puppeteers worked the best to bring the visual gestural world into alignment with the soundscape.'

What kinds of sounds/instruments are you using in your composition and sound design?

'My early explorations when I was first opening up conversations about the musical landscape of the world involved ambient electric guitar textures – so a reflective but a gently contemporary language. But then I disappeared down a Nils Frahm-style felt-piano rabbit hole – so for now it's a mix of the two. In my mind it feels like the piano speaks to the characters/emotion of the play, whilst I think some of the guitar textures will bind with the video footage of the landscape.'



Drew Wilson, Conor Lowe, Ellen Bailey and Emily Burton on stage.

This is something that will become clearer as the rehearsals continue and as video footage is added into the mix. This tends to be part of the ongoing surprise of how sound works – where conceptual discussions at the outset of a production to delimit a particular sonic approach are often less useful than the intuitive exploration that follows in the development.’



Read the extended Q&A online

Hear more about what the rehearsal process for a composer/sound designer is like in the extended Q&A with Darrin Verhagen at mtc.com.au/backstage.



Conor Lowe, John Batchelor and Tony Briggs on stage.



A stormy soundscape

Work with a group to create a soundscape of a storm. Experiment with using your voices in unusual ways, and use objects to make sounds too. Try things like rolling frozen peas around in a pan, waving cardboard sheets, or blowing across a bottle. Record these (e.g. with Voice Memos on an iPhone, or a similar app) then use them as your sound design for a performance.



Freeze frames

Create a series of freeze frames, using your bodies and props, to depict Storm Boy’s home before, during and after the storm. You could use your storm sound design to enhance the scene.



Reflect on the show

Discuss how the storm sequences were depicted on stage and analyse how different design elements, particularly sound, lighting and projection, were used to evoke the storm. How did you feel? Evaluate the effectiveness of the creative team’s choices. What might you have done differently?

PROJECTION DESIGN



Justin Harrison



Justin Harrison (Projection Designer)

Learn more about Justin Harrison's projection design for *Storm Boy* in this Q&A.

What is the world of this play that you're creating through projections?

'The work that I am doing is really three-fold - the first is the most literal, where I am simply extending the stage world that the actors and puppets inhabit, in a mostly naturalistic way. That means matching in with the beautiful set design, but extending that world further, and also giving a sense of the time of day, which the lighting design also helps with. This isn't necessarily real-time, as we have some scenes progressing through a couple of hours within minutes, but it's not presented in a time-lapse fashion. Everything in the world still moves at real speed, except the time of day.

The second aspect is the creation of magical moments, mostly to do with our puppets. They have to grow, they have to fly, we have to feel like our Storm Boy has spent hours and days with his pelicans, and we have to do it in a lyrical way.

The third aspect is almost purely technical (but we do try and fold in the first two styles), where we are giving a sense of the much wider world through projected video content, but using it to hide the fact that we're hurriedly changing the set behind the curtain. There's a few cute puppet-actor interaction moments, and a few beautiful landscape videos to watch. The show is really about the interplay of the minuscule and the massive, and we're using every medium at our disposal to show that.'

How do you create the media that is used in the projection design? What kind of equipment/software?

'The majority of the media for the show was filmed on location in The Coorong in South Australia. I was fortunate enough to be sent there as part of the show, so 95% of the imagery seen is from the actual place. There's a little bit of work done on changing colour palettes, adjusting the skies and time-of-day, making things a little more vibrant than they are etc., but it's a beautiful place and all I really had to do was point the camera at anything!

Everything was shot on a Sony A7Rii and a DJI Mavic Platinum. For post-production, I'm mostly working in Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premiere Pro and Adobe AfterEffects. There's some minor 3D work in the show, handled by Element 3D and Blender.'



Tony Briggs and Conor Lowe on stage.

What are some of the challenges you've enjoyed solving in your projection design?

'The main challenge was working out where everything is set - what can we see in the set backgrounds? Where is their shack located? Where's the Pelican Sanctuary in relation to their home? What time of day is this scene? - and then find those locations in The Coorong and capture them. The Coorong is a wild place, the weather turns on a dime so it was a bit of a scramble to get everything captured in time. Then it's a case of going through all that imagery and working out what suits our scene/characters the best.'

How do you work with the other Creatives to realise/execute your design?

'I'm working with the Darrin Verhagen (Composer & Sound Designer) a lot, we can create some really special moments when video and music work in harmony. There's also a lot of back and forth between the puppeteers and myself, making sure we can make the pelicans look as amazing as possible as they fly about the stage, and making sure they have a world to inhabit when we have to close down and change the set. Obviously there's a lot of early conversations between Anna Cordingley (Set & Costume Designer) early on about the style, location and presentation of these virtual sets as well. I'm also trying to match in with Matt Scott (Lighting Designer) so that our big moments time up really well, and we both present a unified vision of the world in terms of light and colour.'



Ellen Bailey, John Batchelor, Tony Briggs, Conor Lowe, Emily Burton and Drew Wilson on stage.



Create your own video design

Go to the beach, or somewhere with natural elements like sand, scrub or water and capture video footage (e.g. with your smartphone). Experiment with video that is up-close, distant, birds-eye-view, looking up, looking through grass, flying like a pelican, or exploring like Storm Boy. Choose a moment from *Storm Boy* to re-tell with video footage, and see how much you can show without dialogue.

— CAREERS AT MTC —



Many hands make a show

The production you've seen on stage is the product of many people's work over many months.

Read the list of jobs below, research what each role entails, and discuss what work they did on this production.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

Artistic Director & CEO
Brett Sheehy AO
Executive Director & Co-CEO
Virginia Lovett
Executive Assistant to the Artistic Director & CEO
Nick Doherty
Executive Administrator to the Executive Director & Co-CEO
Kathleen Higgs

ARTISTIC

Producer
Martina Murray
Associate Artistic Director
Sarah Goodes
Associate Director
Dean Bryant
Literary Director
Chris Mead
CASTING DIRECTOR
Janine Snape
CASTING ADMINISTRATOR
Carmen Lai
Company Manager/Assistant Producer
Stephen Moore
Deputy Company Manager
Leah Milburn-Clark

NEXT STAGE

Administrator
Karin Farrell
Literary Associate
Jennifer Medway

CATERING

Catering Manager
Andrea Purvis
Assistant Manager
Anita Lyovic
Café Staff
Bev Reinmuth

DEVELOPMENT

Director of Development
Rupert Sherwood
Events Manager
Mandy Jones
Annual Giving Manager
Chris Walters
Major Gifts Manager
Sophie Boardley
Philanthropy Coordinator
Patrick Crummy
Partnerships Manager
Syrie Payne
Partnerships Executive
Isabella Wren
Partnerships Coordinator
Alice Fitzgerald

EDUCATION

Head of Education & Families
Jeremy Rice
Community Outreach Manager
Karin Farrell

Education Coordinator

Nick Tranter

HUMAN RESOURCES

HR Administrator
Christine Verginis
EHS Coordinator
Liz Mundell

FINANCE

Finance Director
Liz Chappell
Finance Manager
Ness Harwood
IT & Systems Manager
Michael Schuettke
IT Support Officer
Darren Snowdon
Assistant Accountant Irene Budiono

Payroll Officer

Julia Godinho
Payments Officer
Lisa Maundrell

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing & Communications Director
Vanessa Rowsthorn
Marketing Manager
James Wright
Digital Manager
Daniel Coghlan
Marketing Campaign Manager

Ebony Addinsall
Marketing Executive
Rebecca Lawrence

Lead Graphic Designer/Art Director

Emma Wagstaff
Graphic Designers
Helena Turinski
Victoria U

PR & Communications Manager

Rosie Shepherdson-Cullen
Publicist
Georgia Fox
Communications Content Producer

Sarah Corridon
Communications Coordinator

Jacqui Bartlett
Receptionist
David Zierk

PRODUCTION & TECHNICAL

Technical & Production Director
Adam J Howe

PRODUCTION

Senior Production Manager
Michele Preshaw
Production Manager
Damion Holling
James Lipari
Production Coordinator
Michaela Deacon

Marta Losiewicz
Props Buyer/ASM Swing
Jess Maguire
Production Administrator
Alyson Brown

TECHNICAL

Technical Manager Lighting & Sound
Kerry Saxby
Senior Production Technician
Allan Hirons

Production Technicians
Nick Wollan
Marcus Cook

Denis Irving Award
Mungo Trumble

Technical Manager – Staging
Andrew Bellchambers

CAD Drafting
Jacob Battista

Alexander Rothnie
Kris Bird

Staging Supervisor HQ
Nicholas Stace

PROPERTIES

Properties Supervisor
Geoff McGregor
Props Maker
Colin Penn

SCENIC ART

Scenic Art Supervisor
Shane Dunn
Scenic Artists
Tansy Elso
Colin Harman

WORKSHOP

Workshop Supervisor
Aldo Amenta
Deputy Workshop Supervisor

Andrew Weavers
Set Makers

Ken Best
Brian Easteal
Nick Gray
Philip de Mulder
Peter Rosa

WARDROBE

Wardrobe Manager
Keryn Ribbands
Wardrobe Staff

John Molloy
Jocelyn Creed
John Van Gastel
Lyn Molloy
Julie Renton

Costume Coordinator
Sophie Woodward
Costume Hire

Liz Symons
Costume Supervisor
Kate Seeley

Buyer
Joanne Paterson

Millinery
Phillip Rhodes

Wigs & Makeup

Jurga Celikiene
Wardrobe Maintenance
Stella Cadzow
Josephine Johnson
VCA Wardrobe Intern
Carmody Nicol

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Christine Bennett
Ben Cooper
Brittany Coombs
Lisette Drew
Jess Keepence
Whitney McNamara
Meg Richardson
Julia Smith
Pippa Wright

SOUTHBANK THEATRE

Theatre Operations Director

Mark D Wheeler
Building Services Manager

Adrian Aderhold
House Services Manager

James Cunningham
Production Services Manager

Frank Stoffels
Bar Manager

Claire Marsh
Lawler & Events

Technical Supervisor
Tom Brayshaw

Lighting Supervisor
Richard Gorr

Staging Supervisor
Grant Kennelly

Sound Supervisor
Terry McKibbin

Head Flyman
James Tucker

Stage & Technical Staff

Matthew Arthur
Trent Barclay

Sam Berkley
Simon Bond

Michael Burnell
John Carberry

Nathan Evers
Eugene Hallen

Kylie Hammond
Adam Hanley

Luke Hawley
Jake Hutchings

David Jenkins
Louis Kennedy

Robert Larsen
James Lipari

Marcus Macris
David Membery

Stephanie Morrell
James Paul

Will Patterson
Nathaniel Sy

Raff Watt
Max Wilkie
Michael Taylor

Michelle Thorne
Joy Weng

HOUSE & BAR SERVICES

House & Bar Supervisors
Paul Blenheim

Sarah Branton
Kasey Gambling

Paul Terrell
Drew Thomson

House & Bar Attendants

Faith Angaika
Stephanie Barham

Tanya Batt
Matt Bertram

Max Bowyer
Zak Brown

Michael Cutrupi
Leila Gerges

Rosie Howell
Kathryn Joy

Laura Lethlean
Will McRostie

Natasha Milton
Yasmin Mole

Daniel Moulds
Ernesto Munoz

Emma Palackic
Adam Rogers

Richard Saxby
Sophie Scott

Myles Tankle
Bella Vadiveloo

Rhian Wilson
Jamaica Zuanetti

TICKETING

Director of Ticketing Operations

Brenna Sotiropoulos
Subscriptions Supervisor

Jessie Phillips
Database Specialist

Ben Gu
Data Analyst

Megan Thomson
VIP Ticketing Officer

Michael Bingham
Education Ticketing Officer

Mellita Ilich
Box Office Supervisor

Kieran Gould-Downen
Box Office Attendants

Brent Davidson
Peter Dowd

Jean Lizza
Bridget Mackey

Ross MacPherson
Debra McDougall

Laura McIntosh
Daniel Scaffidi

Tain Stangret
Lee Threadgold

— ATTENDANCE INFORMATION —



Conor Lowe and Tony Briggs on stage.



When you visit Southbank Theatre, share your experience on Twitter and Instagram with the hashtag **#mtcStormBoy** and tag **@melbtheatreco**



Like MTC Education on Facebook for behind-the-scenes information about our Education Program and discover ways for you to get involved with MTC: **facebook.com/MTCEdu**

CONTENT

This production contains smoke effects, the sound of gunshots, strobe lighting and dynamic sound. Suitable for ages 11+. For detailed information, visit our website at **mtc.com.au/production-content-guide**.

To read more about visiting with school groups visit **mtc.com.au/education**.

DURATION

Approximately 90mins (no interval).

BOOKINGS

Email **schools@mtc.com.au** or phone 03 8688 0963.

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Email **education@mtc.com.au**
or phone 03 8688 0974