



SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

by Hannah Moscovitch

Directed by Petra Kalive

Melbourne's HOME of **THEATRE**

MTC MELBOURNE
THEATRE
COMPANY

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.

WELCOME



A year to the day that our last mainstage production took to the stage, we are back with a stellar Australian premiere. So much has happened in the past 12 months and our COVID-normal world continues to have its challenges, but it is such a joy to see audiences and artists at Southbank Theatre once again.

The first of eight productions for the year (six more are coming in Act 2), *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* couldn't be timelier in its exploration of power, truth and desire. This incisive #MeToo-era work uses the archetypal student-teacher romance as its springboard for a captivating drama of contemporary gender politics, applicable to all facets of society.

MTC Associate Director Petra Kalive, the creative team and actors Dan Spielman and Izabella Yena have brought the piece to life with all the nuance and complexity it deserves, guaranteeing that it is a work which will stay with you long after the curtain comes down.

As the year at MTC gets into full swing, don't forget that all the details of our Act 2 program will be available from Tuesday 16 March. It's a season of six exceptional productions, and tickets will be highly sought-after; so as in previous years, a subscription will be the best way to secure your seats at the best prices.

We are so thrilled to have you back at the theatre. Thank you for joining us and supporting MTC.

Enjoy the show.



Brett Sheehy AO
Artistic Director & CEO



Virginia Lovett
Executive Director & Co-CEO

MTC is a department of the University of Melbourne.



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



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Melbourne Theatre Company presents

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

by Hannah Moscovitch

Directed by Petra Kalive

6 March – 1 April 2021

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

ABOUT THE PLAY

Jon is a prize-winning novelist who wants more out of life. His third marriage is going about as well as his first two, and he's stuck at university teaching creative writing to lazy undergraduates. He's a good teacher, but he believes there's really only one student worth his time. Annie is clever, imaginative, and a huge fan of Jon's work. One afternoon, Jon catches himself admiring Annie in her red coat, and soon it feels like their affair was destined from the start. But when the embers have cooled and the affair is over, who will control their narrative?

CAST

Jon Dan Spielman

Annie Izabella Yena

CREATIVES

Director Petra Kalive

Set & Costume Designer Marg Horwell

Lighting Designer Rachel Burke

Composer & Sound Designer Darius Kedros

Assistant Director Isabella Vadiveloo

Intimacy Coordinator Michala Banas

Movement Consultant Xanthe Beesley

Annie (Standby Cover) Myfanwy Hocking

Jon (Standby Cover) Liam Maguire

Stage Manager Lisette Drew

Assistant Stage Manager Julia Smith

Production Photography Jeff Busby

Rehearsal Photography Jacinta Keefe

This production contains frequent coarse language, sexual references, mature themes and the use of theatrical haze.

Duration: approximately 90 minutes without an interval. For further information regarding running time, please see a member of the Front of House team.

Media Partner



Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes was commissioned by Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, Canada, and is staged by arrangement with Ian Arnold, Catalyst TCM Inc, www.catalysttcm.com.

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THE
MELBOURNE
GIN COMPANY



CLASSIC GIN WITH A TWIST OF MELBOURNE

Dan Spielman
and Izabella Yena



BALANCE OF POWER



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

MTC Associate Director Petra Kalive reflects on how her team's approach to staging the show has changed over the last year.

We are in the midst of a revolution, reviewing and redressing the power imbalances that have embedded themselves in our culture. It is no wonder then, that a play like *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* finds its place on our stages. It explores the power dynamics between a professor (Jon) and his student (Annie) and the assumed and invisible lines that are crossed because of privilege, entitlement, celebrity and structural authority. What writer Hannah

Moscovitch masterfully navigates are the thresholds crossed in a sexual relationship.

The idea of 'threshold' is something that excited me as a director. I was keen to interrogate the space of possibility that Moscovitch opens up for us to explore. It has been powerful to metaphorically and literally explore thresholds in the rehearsal room, be they as entrances and exits, doors, gateways and character choices. The play as a site of threshold has been the most exciting and fruitful – an artificially constructed space where multiple ideas exist, collide and expose the subtle and sometimes invisible thresholds of power.

'Behind Moscovitch's explorations of power lies a wider conversation about how the imbalance of power between men and women pervades our lives and exists on a spectrum – from the most horrific sexual violence to the more pedestrian, shrugged off 'jokes.'

This idea found its way into the design quite early on; a world in a state of transition, a space of potential – where the traditional structure that would normally hold a story of this

kind has fallen down or is yet to be built. Had you come to see the show when it was first slated in May last year, Set & Costume Designer Marg Horwell, Lighting Designer Rachel Burke and I would have had you in the Fairfax, in a much more traditional university lecture set-up. At that stage we were keen to use the architecture of the Fairfax to make the audience feel like they were in a lecture with our author and teacher, Jon Macklem.

But COVID hit and we were moved into the larger Sumner Theatre and we all felt it was wrong to pick up the set and put it down in this new space. The relationship with the audience was different in this larger space and, while attempting to rework her existing design, Marg noticed the already-built set pieces leaning up against the walls and saw a different way of the play existing. When she floated the idea with me, I immediately saw the possibilities that this new, less structured space offered ... and here we are.

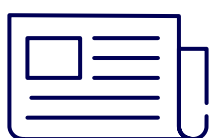
Movement and finding the physical language of a work is always important to me, but particularly so in this work where so much of what occurs between Jon and Annie exists in the unspoken. We have spent much of our rehearsal exploring not only physical intimacy but the physical terrain of this work – how this lives in the spaces between actors and in the actors' bodies. It has been rich and dynamic work, led by Movement Consultant Xanthe Beesley, and it has enabled us to remain playful, available and gentle in a rehearsal room that could have become very cerebral and bogged down in the trauma spectrum in which this play exists. The work has also added a richness and nuance to the

actors' movement, both in their physical responsiveness and the way they physically engage in the world of the play.

Behind Moscovitch's explorations of power lies a wider conversation about how the imbalance of power between men and women pervades our lives, and exists on a spectrum – from the most horrific sexual violence to the more pedestrian, seemingly shrugged off 'jokes'. The brilliance of Moscovitch is that she places this work towards the latter end of the spectrum, in the middle classes, right next door. The challenge in the work is to look in our own (suburban) backyards for the power imbalance that we unconsciously prop up. My challenge is that, like the design, we take down the walls and exist in this state of threshold for a time. Who knows – a whole new structure may be built, and we all might feel, as Annie finally states, 'better now'.



Director Petra Kalive



Read more from Petra Kalive, and the show's cast and creative team, at [mtc.com.au](https://www.mtc.com.au)

Izabella Yena;
(below) Izabella Yena,
Director Petra Kalive,
Dan Spielman and
Assistant Director
Isabella Vadiveloo





Izabella Yena;
(above) Dan Spielman
and Director Petra Kalive



Izabella Yena and Dan Spielman

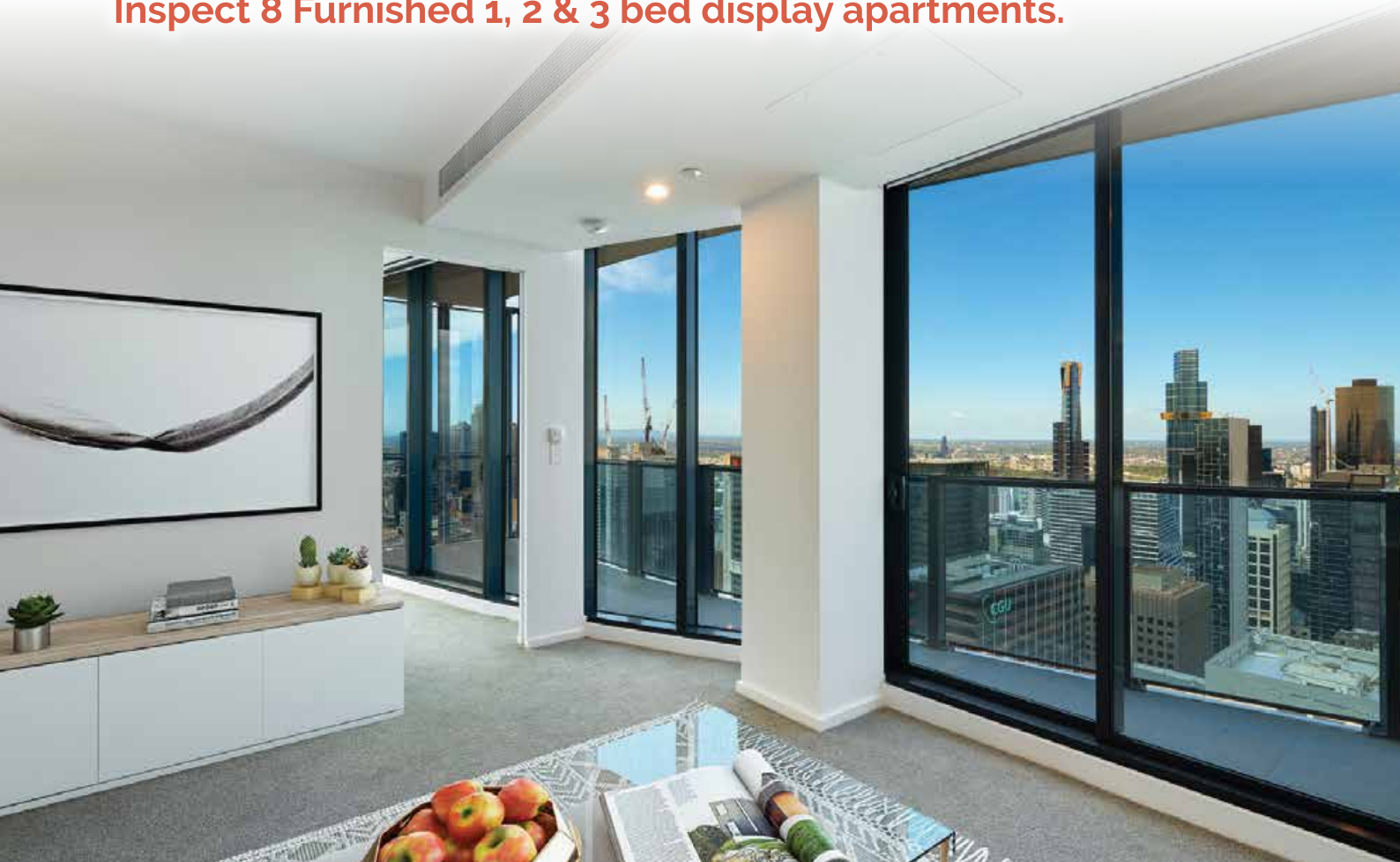


‘Movement and finding the physical language of a work is always important to me, but particularly so in this work where so much of what occurs between Jon and Annie exists in the unspoken.’

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CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



DAN SPIELMAN — JON

Dan Spielman has previously appeared in *Photograph 51*, *Macbeth* and *The Seagull* for Melbourne Theatre Company. Dan's other theatre credits include *The Blind Giant is Dancing* (Belvoir); *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, *The Lost Echo*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Attempts on Her Life* (Sydney Theatre Company); *A Golem Story*, *Knives in Hens*, *The Ham Funeral*, *The Journal of the Plague Year* (Malthouse); *Macbeth* (Bell Shakespeare); *Ivanov* (Eager Seamstress); and over a dozen productions with Keene/Taylor Theatre Project. Dan will next be seen on screen in *New Gold Mountain* and was recently seen in *The End*, *Stateless* and *Secret Bridesmaids' Business*. His other television work includes *Reckoning*, *Sisters*, *The Code*, *Deep Water*, *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, *Offspring*, *Mary Bryant*, *The Secret Life of Us*, *Wildside* and *Raw FM*. Dan's feature film credits include *The Hunter*, *Tom White* and *One Perfect Day*.



IZABELLA YENA — ANNIE

Izabella Yena's Melbourne Theatre Company credits include the 2020 production of the Olivier Award-winning comedy *Home, I'm Darling*, directed by Sarah Goodes; *The Violent Outburst that Drew Me to You* (part of the 2019 Education Program); and creative developments for *SLAP. BANG. KISS.* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. A 2016 VCA graduate, Izabella's previous theatre credits include *Lifetime Guarantee* and *Kerosene* (Theatre Works); a Helpmann Award-winning national tour of *Hello, Goodbye & Happy Birthday* (Performing Lines); *Atomic* creative development (Malthouse Theatre); *2.20am* (Anvil Productions); and a stage reading of *Thigh Gap* (La Mama). Izabella played the role of Shirin Abbas in the feature film *Miss Fisher and the Crypt of Tears*, directed by Tony Tilse. She was a 2017/18 Malthouse Theatre Vanguard Cohort and Ambassador; a 2016 VCA Patricia Kennedy Award winner; a 2016 Melbourne Fringe Best Performance nominee; and a recipient of the 2015 Pratt Bursaries Scholarship.



HANNAH MOSCOVITCH — PLAYWRIGHT

Hannah Moscovitch is an acclaimed Canadian playwright, TV writer and librettist whose work has been widely produced in Canada as well as around the world. Hannah has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Trillium Book Award, the Nova Scotia Masterworks Award, both The Scotsman Fringe First and The Herald Angel Award at the Edinburgh Festival, and the prestigious Windham-Campbell Prize administered by Yale University. She has been nominated for the international Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, New York City's Drama Desk Award, as well as Canada's Siminovitch Prize and Governor General's Award (twice each). Past stage work includes her theatre-rock concert hybrid *Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story*, co-created with Christian Barry and Ben Caplan, which has been touring internationally since 2017, and won the 2019 BankSA Adelaide Fringe Pick in Australia. Hannah is a Playwright-in-Residence at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre.



PETRA KALIVE — DIRECTOR

Petra Kalive is Associate Director at Melbourne Theatre Company and has previously directed *Hungry Ghosts* and *Melbourne Talam* (Green Room Award-nominated Best Director) for the Company, as well as *Pandora* for MTC NOW. She has also worked for Sydney Theatre Company, Arena Theatre Company, Complete Works Theatre Company, St Martins Youth Arts Centre, Monash University Centre for Theatre and Performance, La Trobe Performing Arts Department and the Victorian College of the Arts. Recent directorial credits include: *Taxithi* (fortyfivedownstairs – Green Room Award-nominated Best Director); *Oil Babies*, which she also wrote (Lab Kelpie – shortlisted for the NSW Premier Literary Awards); and *My Brilliant Career*, a musical adaptation by Dean Bryant and Mathew Frank of the Miles Franklin novel (Monash University). Petra was Artistic Director of Union House Theatre from 2014-2019.



MARG HORWELL —
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Marg Horwell is a multi-award-winning set and costume designer. She has designed for *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Lilith: The Jungle Girl* (with Sisters Grimm), *Birdland*, *I Call My Brothers*, *Peddling*, *Cock*, *Constellations*, *Marlin*, *The Dream Life of Butterflies*, *The Water Carriers*, *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *How to Rule the World*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Melancholia*, *Bliss*, *Caravan*, *Blasted*, *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again*, *The Testament of Mary*, *The Real and Imagined History of the Elephant Man*, *I Am a Miracle*, *The Good Person of Szechuan*, *The Homosexuals or 'Faggots'* (Malthouse Theatre); *Salomé* (English National Opera); *Avalanche* (The Barbican); *Unsere Kleine Stadt* (Theater Basel); *Anthem* (Performing Lines); *Lorelei* (Victorian Opera); *Leviathan* (Circa); *Shit, Love, Big Heart, Savages* (Dee & Cornelius). Awards: 2005, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2019 Green Room Awards, 2013 Sydney Theatre Awards.



RACHEL BURKE — **LIGHTING DESIGNER**

Rachel Burke has an extensive and highly awarded body of work over three decades for mainstage companies, independent theatre and architectural lighting design, both nationally and internationally. Selected Theatre Design for MTC: *The House of Bernada Alba*, *The Father* (with STC), *Melbourne Talam*, *Buyer and Cellar*, *Cock*, *Solomon and Marion*, *Marlin* (with Arena Theatre Company), *True Minds*, *Constellations*, *The Man from Mukinupin* (with Belvoir), *Coup D'Etat*, *True West*. Other theatre design: *Cinderella*, *Swan Lake* – Stephen Baynes, *Dark Lullaby*, *Ballet Imperial*, *Unspoken Dialogues*, *Molto Vivace* (The Australian Ballet); *Walking into the Bigness*, *Black Medea* and *Parramatta Girls* (Malthouse/Belvoir); *Cargo*, *Woman Bomb*, *Moth* (Malthouse/Arena). Recent critically acclaimed work includes *SHIT* (Dee & Cornelius); *Facing Medea* (La Mama/Jenny Kemp); *The Ghetto Cabaret* (fortyfivedownstairs/Kadimah Yiddish Theatre) and *Balit Liwurruk: Strong Girl* (St Martins Theatre). Her awards include nine Green Room Awards for Excellence in Theatre Lighting Design, 2005, 2010 and 2019 IES Victorian and National Awards of Lighting Excellence; and Helpmann Award nominations in 2005 and 2015.



DARIUS KEDROS —
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Darius Kedros is a sound designer, composer and music producer working across theatre, screen, immersive installation, virtual reality and audio. Darius's interest lies in the role of sound and music in transformative, immersive storytelling. Theatre works include *Hungry Ghosts* and *Melbourne Talam* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Big Heart* (Dee & Cornelius); and the Helpmann Award-winning *Mother* (If Theatre). Screen credits include scoring *The 51st State* (Momentum/Alliance Atlantis), and various documentaries and short films. Other works include *Bathing Beauties* and *Memorandum* (ABC Radio National); virtual reality experiences for Oculus, and MIFF Official Selection 2017; installation *Batmania* with sculptor Kathy Holowko (Federation Square); and the work-in-progress *Introduced Species* in collaboration with Roslyn Oades and Mark Coles Smith (Creative Victoria, City of Melbourne). Darius had a background as a recording artist and music producer for major and independent record labels before moving to Australia from the UK in 2013.



ISABELLA VADIVELOO —
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Isabella Vadiveloo is a Melbourne-based theatre maker with a strong interest in the development of new, form-pushing and politically engaged performance. She completed a Masters of Directing Live Performance at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2020. Isabella has directed and devised on shows including *Unsuckle* and *If Needed, Repeat* (La Mama Theatre); *The Ways I Kill Myself* (VCA); *Crash Pad* (The Butterfly Club); *Section 32* (Immerse Festival); and *At the End of the Alphabet at the Bottom of the Sea* (Crack Theatre Festival). She is a former member of The Dig Collective and was an associate artist with Teatro de los Sentidos during their 2016 Australian tour. As an artistic director and creative director, she has co-presented Mudfest for the University of Melbourne and the Small and Loud program for Arts Centre Melbourne.



MICHALA BANAS —
INTIMACY COORDINATOR

Michala Banas is a multi-award winning actor with over 35 years of professional experience as a performer on stage and screen. In early 2019, she travelled to the UK to train as an intimacy coordinator with Ita O'Brien, founder of Intimacy on Set. Since completing her training, Michala has been working extensively as an intimacy coordinator. Her MTC credits include *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Torch the Place*, *Home*, *I'm Darling* and *Emerald City*. Michala has also coordinated on *Faust* (Opera Australia), *Black Ties* (Ilbjerri Theatre Company) and on screen for *Wentworth* (Foxtel), *Clickbait* (Netflix) and *The Newsreader* (ABC). The role of intimacy coordinator is still fairly new to the industry here in Australia, and is proving to be instrumental to the safe and sometimes mishandled creation of intimate content. Michala is thrilled and honoured to be working on *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*, and is extremely proud that MTC has embraced the engagement of intimacy coordination so wholeheartedly.



XANTHE BEESLEY —
MOVEMENT CONSULTANT

Xanthe Beesley is a movement director and performance maker with a background in theatre and dance. She has worked with and taught for some of Australia's leading arts and cultural organisations including the Victorian College of the Arts, La Mama Theatre, Melbourne Fringe, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Queensland Performing Arts Centre and KITE Theatre – where she was resident movement artist. Her recent movement direction/theatre-making credits include *My Brilliant Career* (Monash University); *Oil Babies* (Lab Kelpie/Darebin Speakeasy); *things we should talk about*, *The Lonely Crowd*, *Ida* (Union House Theatre); *Ricercar* (Present Tense/Theatre Works); *Body Move Space* (Footscray Community Arts Centre) and as performer/collaborator *In Plan* (Michelle Heaven/Castlemaine State Festival). Xanthe holds a Master of Theatre Practice from the VCA and was a participant in the 2019 Women in Theatre program at Melbourne Theatre Company. She is currently the Artistic Director of Union House Theatre.

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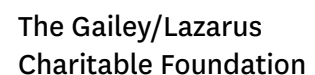
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