



AN MTC NEXTSTAGE ORIGINAL

BERLIN

by Joanna Murray-Smith
directed by Iain Sinclair

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



New Australian plays have long been a feature of our annual seasons, bringing audiences fresh stories by our country's best writers. Through our NEXT STAGE Writers' Program, now in its fourth year, our commitment has continued to strengthen with greater investment and support for writers and their works.

Berlin by Joanna Murray-Smith is one of two NEXT STAGE Originals taking the stage in 2021, the other being *Jacky* by Declan Furber Gillick which premieres in October. They're each superb examples of the craft and unique talent of their authors and thrilling plays to boot.

In *Berlin*, Joanna transports us to the bustling German capital and unfurls a captivating tangle of love, history and moral dilemma. It's a brilliant new work that sees the return

of director Iain Sinclair after his stellar production of *A View from the Bridge* in 2019 and actor Michael Wahr following his acclaimed title role in *Shakespeare in Love*. We are also delighted to have Grace Cummings making her MTC debut in this world premiere and to have the expert talents of the creative team bringing this production to life.

To catch *Jacky* later in the year along with two other stunning new Australian plays – Virginia Gay’s joyful adaptation of *Cyrano* and Anthony Weigh’s imagining of life at Heide in *Sunday* – plus international hits and a Shakespeare classic, a subscription for our Act 2 program is your best bet. There has been a tremendous response to Act 2 since we announced the program in March and tickets are moving very quickly. To get the best prices and to ensure you don’t miss out, take a look at our package options at mtc.com.au and book yourself in for a remarkable season of theatre.

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

AN MTC NEXTSTAGE ORIGINAL

BERLIN

by Joanna Murray-Smith
directed by Iain Sinclair

17 April—22 May 2021

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

ABOUT THE PLAY

Tom is an Australian abroad. Charlotte, a Berliner through and through. After meeting in a bar, sparks fly between them and she invites him to spend the night at her place. As they navigate the ritual of seduction, their desire gives way to secrets that cannot be ignored and questions neither of them can answer. Does young love stand a chance against the suffocating reach of the past?

CAST

Charlotte Grace Cummings

Tom Michael Wahr

CREATIVE TEAM

Director Iain Sinclair

Set & Costume Designer Christina Smith

Lighting Designer Niklas Pajanti

Composer & Sound Designer Kelly Ryall

Voice & Dialect Coach Anna McCrossin-Owen

Assistant Director Alastair Clark

Intimacy Coordinator Michala Banas

Fight Choreographer Lyndall Grant

Movement Consultant Kirsty Reilly

Charlotte (Standby Cover) Myfanwy Hocking

Tom (Standby Cover) Liam Maguire

Stage Manager Whitney McNamara

Assistant Stage Manager Vivienne Poznanski

Production Photography Jeff Busby

Rehearsal Photography Charlie Kinross

This production contains coarse language, sexual references and mature themes.

Duration: approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. For further information regarding running time, please see a member of the Front of House team.

NEXTSTAGE

Commissioned through MTC's NEXT STAGE Writers' Program with the support of our Playwrights Giving Circle Donors, as well as The Ian Potter Foundation, Naomi Milgrom Foundation, The Myer Foundation, Malcolm Robertson Foundation and The University of Melbourne. Thank you for sharing our passion and commitment to Australian stories and Australian writers.

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Grace Cummings



LIVING
WITH THE
WEIGHT
OF HISTORY



Michael Wahr
and Grace Cummings

WRITER'S NOTE

Inspired by a family visit to Berlin, Joanna Murray-Smith's newest work is an MTC NEXT STAGE Original that asks difficult but vital questions.

Berlin is a small play about big ideas. In 2015, I visited Berlin with my husband and three children. I expected the children would find the deluge of cultural and tourist destinations in the city overwhelming. To my surprise, they were the ones lingering as I headed for the exits, overwhelmed by the claustrophobia of horror. My children are the grandchildren of an historian and a history teacher, so the past has always been a living presence for them. They are the children of a

writer and a journalist, so storytelling is a prominent feature of our life at home. But perhaps more importantly, their adored grandmother Nita arrived in Melbourne as a young Jewish refugee from Poland. Before long, almost everyone she had known in her township – from her teachers and friends to shopkeepers, neighbours and her own grandparents – had been slaughtered. The town was wiped off the map and eventually swallowed by Ukraine. As a teenager, it was daunting to imagine the eradication of nearly everyone who had populated my life. Through my mother, my children and I had a silent but profound connection to Berlin.

‘What suffering, what guilt, what fury is carried on in our DNA and for how long? Is love a viable weapon in fighting for freedom from history?’

While the children went off on their own to find the stadium where, during the 1936 Olympics, Hitler snubbed the great African American track-star Jesse Owens, I became obsessed by the Stolpersteine, the small shining plaques in the residential pavements marking the date and destiny of the Jews who had once lived at each address. What was it like, I wondered, to live in a city so engaged with its own historical crimes, its own human failing? Everywhere we went, history was as much of a presence as the moment we were in. A city

so vibrant, so beguilingly cultured, so full of young people from all over the world in seemingly permanent creative celebration, was punctuated at every turn by unambiguous shame.

Then and in subsequent visits, I applauded Germany for its determination to relentlessly examine its own soul. But I have also felt sympathy for the young, who I presumptuously imagine might struggle to find 'the lightness of being'. Should a line ever be drawn? I think I know the answer to that, especially with the recent rise of the Far Right. But surely if the past is so present, it must still collect a toll on our emotions? What suffering, what guilt, what fury is carried on in our DNA and for how long? Is love a viable weapon in fighting for freedom from history?

I owe a debt to my mother here, Nita Murray-Smith, whose stories ensured remembrance, at least in my family. She and my beloved relative Judy Kolt (the Melbourne-based author of the astonishing memoir *Tell it to the Squirrels*) have personified the power of resilience for me. They have embodied, with extraordinary vitality, the will to find and spread joy whilst carrying within them the weight of their own histories. They remain inspirations in their engagement with love, life, culture and children despite what they knew, what they saw and what they remembered.

And thanks, too, to Sam, Charlie and Lucie, who allowed me to experience Berlin through eyes other than my own.

Gratitude, as always, to all at MTC, for its ongoing faith in and support of its artists, to Brett for his excitement about the play, NEXT STAGE and its wonderful donors for its hugely generous support in the writing of the play and to Iain Sinclair,

Grace Cummings, Michael Wahr and the wonderful stage managers and designers, the set builders and costume makers and all the other talented folk who have brought this play to life.

Finally, thanks go to the intrepid and generous audiences who have, against the odds, come back to see living ideas in a living medium. On behalf of all the playwrights, directors and actors of the Australian stage, thank you.

Joanna

February 2021



Read more from the show's cast and creative team at mtc.com.au

The cast, creative and stage management team in rehearsal;
(below) Michael Wahr





Grace Cummings and Michael Wahr



Grace Cummings and Michael Wahr





‘What was it like to live in a city so engaged with its own historical crimes, its own human failing? Everywhere we went, history was as much of a presence as the moment we were in.’

— Joanna Murray-Smith



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CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



GRACE CUMMINGS — CHARLOTTE

Grace Cummings is a 2017 graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, where she was recipient of the Irene Mitchell Scholarship Award for excellence. Her credits include Rachel in *Prehistoric* (Elbow Room Theatre); Grusha in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (VCA); Lisa in *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* (VCA) and Masha in *Three Sisters* (VCA). Grace has devised and performed work with The DIG Collective. Grace is also a musician and songwriter; her second album will be released later in 2021. *Berlin* is her debut production for Melbourne Theatre Company.



MICHAEL WAHR — TOM

Michael is delighted to return to Melbourne Theatre Company following his debut performance with the company as Will Shakespeare in MTC's *Shakespeare in Love*. His recent theatre credits include: *Hamlet*, *Othello* (Bell Shakespeare); *Dracula* (shake & stir theatre co); *Warhorse* (National Theatre/Global Creatures); *Macbeth* (Essential Theatre); *Breaking, Laika and Wills* (She Said Theatre); *Hamlet*, *Wuthering Heights* (The Australian Shakespeare Company); *As You Like It* (Spark Theatre Company); *Così* (HIT Productions); *The Bridge* (La Mama/Random Acts Company); *Our Country's Good* (The Preferred Play Company). His television credits include a recurring role in the HBO Asia series *Grissle*, as well as *City Homicide* and *Neighbours*. Michael received a 2020 Green Room Award nomination for his role in *Shakespeare in Love*. A graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, Michael is a proud member of Equity (MEAA).



JOANNA MURRAY-SMITH — PLAYWRIGHT

Joanna Murray-Smith's plays have been produced and translated all over the world, in over two dozen languages, including on Broadway, the West End and at the Royal National Theatre in London. Joanna has worked across many forms, from plays to novels, journalism, opera libretti and screenplays. Her plays include *Three Little Words*, *Switzerland*, *Pennsylvania Avenue*, *True Minds*, *Songs for Nobodies*, *The Gift*, *Rockabye*, *The Female of the Species*, *Ninety*, *Bombshells* and *Flame* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *L'Appartement* (Queensland Theatre); *American Song* (Milwaukee Repertory); *Day One-A-Hotel-Evening* (Red Stitch); *Fury* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Rapture*, *Nightfall*, *Redemption*, *Love Child* and *Honour* (Malthouse Theatre). Joanna has also adapted *Hedda Gabler* (for the State Theatre Company of South Australia) and Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage* for Sir Trevor Nunn (Coventry/London).



IAIN SINCLAIR — DIRECTOR

Iain Sinclair holds a Master's degree from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and King's College London. For MTC he directed *The Beast* by Eddie Perfect, and Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. Other credits include *Mojo* by Jez Butterworth, *Blood Wedding* by Federico García Lorca, translation by Iain Sinclair, *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder (Sydney Theatre Company); *Brisbane* by Matthew Ryan (Queensland Theatre); *The Seed* by Kate Mulvany, *Killer Joe* by Tracey Letts, *Beyond the Neck* by Tom Holloway and *My Arm* by Tim Crouch (Belvoir); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Ensemble); *Grey Nomad* by Dan Lee (Australian Theatre Company Los Angeles); *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller (Eternity Theatre) and *Good Works* by Nick Enright (Eternity Theatre). He was director of dramaturgy for Playwriting Australia and chair of the NSW Premiers Literary Awards for playwriting. Sinclair is the recipient of a number of awards including the Stuart Wagstaff Award for Most Outstanding Direction and the 2020 Green Room Award for Best Direction. He is Head of Acting at 16th Street Actors Studio in Melbourne.



CHRISTINA SMITH —
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Christina Smith's work as a set and costume designer has been seen at Melbourne Theatre Company in shows including *A View from the Bridge*, *The Architect*, *Gloria*, *The Odd Couple*, *Elling*, *National Interest*, *The Seed*, *Clybourne Park*, *Rising Water*, *A Behanding in Spokane*, *Boston Marriage*, *The Swimming Club*, *Blackbird*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Clean House*, *Dumb Show*, *Things We Do For Love*, *The Daylight Atheist*, *Honour and Cloud Nine*; as costume designer on *Realism*, *Humble Boy*, *Proof*, *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *Three Days of Rain*; and as set designer on *Hay Fever* and *Boy Gets Girl*. Other companies she has designed for include Seattle Opera, Victorian Opera, Sydney Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, Belvoir, The Production Company, Opera Queensland and the Australian Ballet. Christina is a Green Room Award winner and APDG Award nominee. She also lectures in Performance Design at the VCA.



NIKLAS PAJANTI —
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Niklas Pajanti is an award-winning lighting designer whose practice ranges across contemporary art forms and performance styles including theatre, dance, opera, circus, musical theatre, comedy, events, exhibitions and public spaces. For Melbourne Theatre Company, his designs include: *Così*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Astroman*, *A Doll's House Part 2*, *Rupert*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Beast* and *Queen Lear*. Other theatre includes: *When the Rain Stops Falling*, *Spring Awakening*, *I Want to Dance Better at Parties* (Sydney Theatre Company); *One Night the Moon*, *Not Like Beckett* (Malthouse Theatre); *My Urrwai*, *Angels in America*, *Wild Duck*, *Babyteeth*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Pillowman* (Belvoir); *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The School for Wives* (Bell Shakespeare); *Sunday in the Park with George* (Victorian Opera). Exhibitions include *Wonderland*, *Game Masters*, *Star Voyager: Exploring Space on Screen* (ACMI); *Tim Burton The Exhibition* (MOMA); *Hollywood Costume* (V&A Museum). Niklas is the winner of two Green Room Awards.



KELLY RYALL —
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Kelly is an award-winning composer, musician and sound designer for stage and screen. Stage highlights include *A View from the Bridge*, *Working with Children*, *Di and Viv and Rose*, *Hay Fever*, *Three Little Words*, *Double Indemnity*, *Rupert*, *The Crucible* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Triple X*, *Boys Will Be Boys*, *The Trial* (with Malthouse Theatre) (Sydney Theatre Company); *Hedda*, *Scenes from a Marriage* (Queensland Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, *Tartuffe*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* (Bell Shakespeare); *Edward II*, *The Shadow King* (Malthouse Theatre); *The House on the Lake*, *Emerald City*, *The Boys*, *The Floating World*, *Dreams in White* (Griffin Theatre Company); *Title and Deed*, *Nora*, *Hedda Gabler* (Belvoir); *Pomona* (Red Stitch); *Animal* (Theatre Works); *The Bacchae* (Fraught Outfit). For dance, Kelly has composed music for renowned choreographers including Kyle Page, Danielle Micich, Daniel Riley, Lucy Guerin, Nicola Gunn, Sandra Parker, Paula Ley and KAGE. Kelly is winner of four Green Room Awards and a Melbourne International Arts Festival Award.



ANNA McCROSSIN-OWEN —
VOICE & DIALECT COACH

Anna McCrossin-Owen's MTC credits include *Photograph 51*, *Heisenberg*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Gloria*, *Rock'n'Roll*, *Spelling Bee* and *Cyrano De Bergerac*. Her film credits include dialect coaching Emily Mortimer in *RELIC*, Helen Mirren and cast in *Winchester*, and Margot Robbie, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Chris Pine in *Z for Zachariah*. Her TV credits include *The Crown* (Australian accent advisor), *Mr. Inbetween*, *Glitch*, *The Family Law* series 1-3, and *The Kettering Incident*. Anna teaches Spoken Voice at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). Studies include University of Queensland (BA), VCA (Acting) and Victorian Music Theatre (Voice); she is an Associate of Trinity College London and the Australian Music Examinations Board. She consults to business and trains video news journalists. Anna has been honoured by the Victorian Green Room Association for Outstanding Contribution to the Melbourne Stage.



ALASTAIR CLARK —
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Alastair Clark is a theatre and opera director from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Berlin* is his Melbourne Theatre Company debut. Productions as assistant director include: *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* and *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream (Sydney Theatre Company); *Die Prinzessin auf der Erbse* (Victorian Opera); *Doctor Zhivago: The Musical* (Broadway); *Writing for Performance* (NIDA). Productions as director include: *Ironbound* (Kings Cross Theatre); *Rough Draft #37: Meat Eaters* (Sydney Theatre Company); *The Second Hurricane* (Victorian Opera); *Antigone* (NIDA); *Spring Awakening* (Chapel off Chapel). Alastair has undertaken directing secondments on *Le nozze di Figaro* (Opera Australia) and *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Belvoir). He is a graduate of NIDA (MFA) and The University of Melbourne (BA). He was a member of the 2016 Almeida Resident Directors Programme.



MICHALA BANAS —
INTIMACY COORDINATOR

Michala Banas is a multi-award winning actor with over 35 years 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*, *Emerald City* and *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*. Michala has also coordinated on *Faust* (Opera Australia), *Black Ties* (Ilbijerri 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 *Berlin*, and is extremely proud that MTC has embraced the engagement of intimacy coordination so wholeheartedly.



**Michael Wahr
and Grace Cummings**

ADDITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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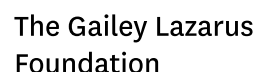
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SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

By Hannah Moscovitch

Directed by Petra Kalive

Streaming from 14 April

In this Australian premiere production, Dan Spielman and Izabella Yena embody Hannah Moscovitch's whip-smart #MeToo-era take on the archetypal student-teacher romance.



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By Joanna Murray-Smith

Directed by Iain Sinclair

Coming Soon

Joanna Murray-Smith's riveting MTC NEXT STAGE commission is a romantic thriller that pits the devastating shadow of history against the dazzling promise of true love, starring Grace Cummings and Michael Wahr.

To view these productions visit
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