

AN MTC NEXT STAGE ORIGINAL

THE HEARTBREAK CHOIR

BY
Aidan Fennessy

DIRECTED BY
Peter Houghton



Education Mini-Pack

25 Apr — 28 May 2022

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

ABOUT THE PLAY

In the old CFA hall on the outskirts of town, a small group of locals come together to sing, and to connect. Aseni, Barbara, Mack, Savannah and Totty have splintered from their original choir on a matter of principle and are intent on forging their own path. With their latest recruit Peter along for the ride, they have a new name, a space to rehearse in and a public debut booked. All they need now is to right the wrongs of the past ... and to find a song that pairs perfectly with the local winery's Sangiovese.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Aidan Fennessy was a writer, director and dramaturg. His plays have been produced by Melbourne Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre Company, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Griffin, HotHouse Theatre, Playbox and White Whale Theatre, among others. For MTC, Aidan wrote *The Architect* and *What Rhymes With Cars and Girls*, and was former Associate Director and a member of the 2012 Programming Team. His Company directing credits include *National Interest* (which he also wrote), *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *The Joy of Text*, *Boston Marriage*, *Ruby Moon* (MTC Education), *Godzone* and *Things We Do for Love*. His other directing credits include *The Glory* and *Oleanna* (HotHouse Theatre); *A Mile in Her Shadow* (Store Room Theatre Workshop); *A Pilot Version of Something to Die For* (Store Room Theatre Workshop) and *A Commercial Farce* (Malthouse), among others. Aidan was a founding member of Chameleon Theatre, a member of the Artistic Directorate of HotHouse Theatre, and Artistic Director of the Store Room Theatre Workshop. His play *Chilling and Killing My Annabel Lee* won the Wal Cherry Award and was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award.

CAST

Barbara Maude Davey
Mack Carita Farrer Spencer
Aseni Ratidzo Mambo
Peter William McInnes

Savannah Emily Milledge
Totty Louise Siverson
Beau Julian Weeks

CREATIVE TEAM

Director Peter Houghton
Musical Director Vicky Jacobs
Set & Costume Designer Christina Smith
Lighting Designer Matt Scott
Composer & Sound Designer J. David Franzke
Assistant Director Lyall Brooks
Assistant Lighting Designer Rachel Lee

Stage Manager Christine Bennett
Assistant Stage Manager Lisette Drew
Assistant Stage Manager Stacey Brown
Choir Chaperones/Accompanists Vicky Jacobs, Trevor Jones, Katie Pryce
Promotional Photography Jo Duck

GENRE

Contemporary drama

DURATION

2 hours and 10 minutes, including a 20-minute interval

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

This production contains coarse language, mature themes, references to sexual assault and references to suicide. For detailed information, please visit mtc.com.au/production-content-guide.



Turn the page for activities and discussions.

BEFORE THE SHOW



Think about the title of the play and discuss what might have brought the people in this choir together. Read the **About the Play** section overleaf and make predictions about the story.



See the cast and creative team in rehearsal, and hear from the team about the characters and story, in the **rehearsal video**.



Read the **Director's Notes** by Peter Houghton. He says 'the play is a living tribute to the power of friendship, an affirmation of community, and a poke in the eye for deceit and arrogance.' Discuss how these themes might be explored on stage.



Read the attendance information and take note of the content warnings. Discuss where people can go for help when they feel distressed. What challenges might the characters be facing, and what role might the choir play in assisting them?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES



Discuss how tension and climax were manipulated in the production. How were layers of each character slowly revealed through the writing and performance?

Discuss the design for this production, and the level of realism in components like the heater, muffins, kitchenette and car headlights. What else did you notice?

What was your emotional response to the final song? Recall moments from the play that resonated with you, made you tense or made you laugh. Think about how the acting, direction and design made you feel that way. Have other people in the class chosen the same moments?



Write a monologue from the perspective of an unseen character in the play (e.g. someone from the High Plains Choir).

The **script** is available to purchase. Choose a monologue from the play to rehearse and present in your own way.



Read the article **Musical connections** on the MTC website to discover more about how music and singing work within the play, with insights from Musical Director Vicky Jacobs.

Download the **show programme** to see rehearsal photos and read more about the cast and creative team.

Learn more about the rehearsal process and the characters in this play by reading the interviews with the cast.



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MTC Education

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Yalukitj 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.



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CREATIVE VICTORIA



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