



THE HEARTBREAK CHOIR

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.

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.

COVID-19 Arts Sustainability Fund
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Melbourne Theatre Company presents

AN MTC NEXT STAGE ORIGINAL

THE HEARTBREAK CHOIR

BY Aidan Fennessy

DIRECTED BY Peter Houghton

25 April—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.

This season of *The Heartbreak Choir* is dedicated to writer, director and friend of MTC Aidan Fennessy (1967–2020).

CAST

Barbara Maude Davey

Mack Carita Farrer Spencer

Aseni Ratidzo Mambo

Peter William McInnes

Savannah Emily Milledge

Totty Louise Siversen

Beau Julian Weeks

Standby Cover Alexandra Aldrich

Standby Cover Lachlan Beck

Standby Cover Andrew Blackman

Standby Cover Clare Chihambakwe

Standby Cover Margot Fenley

Standby Cover Mia Tuco

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

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

The Heartbreak Choir deals with content that some audience members might find distressing. If you or someone you know needs information or support, these organisations are there to help:

BEYOND BLUE Call 1300 22 4636 or visit beyondblue.org.au

LIFELINE Call 13 11 14 or visit lifeline.org.au

HEADSPACE Visit headspace.org.au

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS LINE Call 1800 806 292 or visit sacl.com.au

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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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

Rehearsal Photography Charlie Kinross

Production Photography Jeff Busby



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Emily Milledge and Director Peter Houghton

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Sing your heart out

After a two-year delay, it's finally time for playwright Aidan Fennessy's uplifting celebration of music, friendship and community to light up the stage. Director Peter Houghton reflects on the origins of the play, his friendship with Aidan and how even though we all will have our hearts broken, we can find solace in the fact that they are not breaking alone.

by Peter Houghton

sometimes wonder whether we'll look back on this period of history with a sense of nostalgia for the utter shambles we seem to have found ourselves in. It's a perplexing age that seems to be dominated by alternate versions of apocalypse interspersed with holidays by the beach and the discovery of new ways of cooking chicken. 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ...?' – perhaps it was ever thus. But amongst these grand disasters there are, as always, quiet tragedies and private torments. Singular stories that stand out for their particular horrors, and their often unsung protagonists. *The Heartbreak Choir* is such a story. And the playwright (and former Associate Director of Melbourne Theatre Company) Aidan Fennessy revelled in telling stories that let the unsung ... sing. He did this without trading on issues du jour or feigning an activism that can often reduce truthful detail to cliché. Instead he told it like it often is – messy, funny, sad, contradictory and everything in between. And his secret weapon as a writer was that he was an excellent judge of character, and he made the study of character his life.



Director Peter Houghton and Assistant Director Lyall Brooks

But as John Lennon said – life is (often) what happens to you when you're busy making other plans. In 2018, Aidan's play *The Architect* premiered at MTC. I was lucky enough to direct it. It's a play about a woman dying of cancer ... a comedy where everyone in the audience cries in the end. A few weeks before we started rehearsals, Aidan himself was diagnosed with cancer. Two years later, he was gone. He came and watched *The Architect* many times – he was going through a lot of course and it was a great joy and perhaps some solace to sit and quietly watch it with him. He wasn't a great one for talking about his feelings, but I knew he was beginning to contemplate the end of things and looking back on his life,




Carita Farrer Spencer, Ratidzo Mambo,
Louise Siversen and Maude Davey



Julian Weeks

the good, the bad and the ugly. His mother passed away during rehearsals ... the best of times, the worst of times. He thought a lot about family, his beautiful wife and children mainly, the future, the past. His heart was breaking, slowly and irrevocably. He was seeing beauty everywhere, especially in his own community choir, a loved pastime that buoyed him through many turbulent periods in his life. And then, he started to write a play. Aidan got to see the play read but never take the stage, and so our production will see the light of day without him. So what exactly has he left us? What kind of 'heartbreak' can we expect?

The bad news is of course, that we'll all have our hearts broken one way or another, most of us several times over. The good news is, we're not alone. For a man highly resistant to corny Hollywood movies there was a huge softy lurking under Aidan's black clad and groovy Melbourne facade. He had an enormous heart to break – it took some doing. He chose for this journey into the bosom of a small town choir a cast of characters straight out of his life and familiar to all of us. People like us; silly, funny, irritating, charming and entirely human. And then he gave them a dilemma. Maintain the status quo? Or fight for what they think is right? And he put his money on the common decency of the average person in the street, assuming, correctly in my view, that when assaulted by something outrageous we very often find the best in ourselves. The alternative was something Aidan feared and dreaded – atomisation. A social fragmentation into tribes of self-interest that then eat each other for breakfast. In Aidan's choir of argumentative oddballs, he creates a ragged democracy which defies this dislocation and which in extremis, reminds itself what it's all about. It turns out, it's all about each other.



‘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.’



The Heartbreak Choir will make you laugh and cry and hopefully it'll make you join a choir. Because if your heart is breaking, the best thing you can do it seems is sing. And for any of you who have herded the cats of a loved collective hobby you'll recognise the joys and frustrations of doing the thing you love with a bunch of people who start off as strangers and end up friends. 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. Aidan saw the world as a choir that needed tuning, with enormous potential for harmony. But he also knew that to achieve that perfect blend, we need to start by listening very carefully to each other's songs. I'd like to thank Aidan, the cast and crew who share in the creation of this world premiere, and all the wonderful choirs who will grace our stage with their voices. ■

THE HEARTBREAK CHOIR
AN MTC NEXTSTAGE ORIGINAL

NEXT STAGE is a \$4.6 million program commissioning and developing new Australian works and playwrights that has set a new benchmark for play development in Australia.



NEXT STAGE is made possible thanks to the generous support from MTC's Playwrights Giving Circle Donors. Thank you for sharing our passion and commitment to Australian stories and Australian writers.

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Christine Brown Bequest, Allan Myers AC QC and Maria Myers AC,
Tony Burgess and Janine Burgess, Dr Andrew McAleice and Dr Richard Simmie,
Larry Kamener and Petra Kamener





Musical connections

Vicky Jacobs's role as Musical Director on *The Heartbreak Choir* has been unlike any other production she has worked on. By collaborating with the cast and creative team, from song choice to vocal coaching, she has seen the incredible benefits of music seep through the production – from togetherness and connectivity to the pure joy that only singing at the top of your lungs can bring.

Music,' wrote the late neurologist Oliver Sacks, 'can lift us out of depression or move us to tears – it is a remedy, a tonic, orange juice for the ear.' It has the power to 'move people ... bringing people together, producing a sense of collectivity and community.' In fact, this often unquantifiable capability of music – a quality that many music lovers have always known – was recently empirically confirmed by the scientific community. A 2022 review of 26 studies has found that singing, playing or listening to music can improve wellbeing and quality of life. The analysis, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open*, concluded that music may provide a clinically significant boost to mental health.

One person who knows this to be true is *The Heartbreak Choir's* Musical Director Vicky Jacobs. A vocal coach, pianist and founder and director of Glee Club Singing, Jacobs is committed to sharing the remarkable benefits of music and singing with everyone. She understands that although many people may have experienced playing music or singing in their early years, the busyness of adult life makes it difficult to fit music into their everyday. After meeting a lot of people with this predicament, Jacobs had a lightbulb moment. 'I thought maybe there's a different way to do a choir where people don't have to commit – where they can just rock up and we can learn some harmonies and sing all together, and then just leave again.' That was 17 years ago, and Jacobs has been running drop-in singalongs ever since.

As well as running Glee Club, Jacobs has worked as an associate musical director in theatre for the last decade, including *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* and *Come From Away*. She enjoys this work, but during the pandemic she discovered where her passion lies. 'I sort of had a realisation



Musical Director
Vicky Jacobs with Emily
Milledge, Director Peter
Houghton, Carita Farrer Spencer,
Ratidzo Mambo, Louise Siversen
and Maude Davey

that getting normal people to include singing in their lives and to feel good about that is an incredible gift you can give to them.'

Fortuitously, Jacobs's role as Musical Director for *The Heartbreak Choir* is a little different to the other shows she has worked on. Music belongs in this play, yet it is in no way a musical. 'It's a play with some songs in it. The songs don't propel character or tell story. They exist as songs within the world these characters are living in.' To Jacobs, they are there to 'celebrate singing, for the sake of singing.'

As the story centres on a community choir, working with the cast during rehearsals has mirrored how Jacobs would run sessions with her singalong choirs. 'Some of the cast have done lots of singing, and some of them haven't done much at all. And I sort of love that because that's how community choirs are.' What's more, Jacobs has very much been involved in choosing the songs the choir will sing in the play, whereas usually when working on a production the music is set in stone. 'When Aidan wrote the play, he included songs in the script to give us an idea. I was lucky enough to have a little bit of time with Aidan, where he said, these are the songs and this is what they do. So it was about going through and finding the songs that work in that same way, and that our cast would love singing and that would speak to the audience.'

This collaborative approach to the music and singing allows *The Heartbreak Choir* to genuinely capture the magic of choirs. 'I think the cast are all going to join a choir at the end of this, because we've had so much fun playing around with the music – the music is a bit loose, a bit free and a bit fun.' Jacobs hopes this resonates with the audience as well. 'I hope the audience go away remembering that singing doesn't have

to be perfect for it to be valuable. And that having music and art as part of your day-to-day life is an enriching thing and something that connects us with the world around us and connects us with the people around us.'

As Aidan Fennessy wrote when setting the scene at the beginning of the play's script, 'The reason for the choir to exist is about wanting culture and beauty. It is about finding joy. But it is mostly about finding a connection that isn't transactional and isn't sport. In short, they do it for love.'



Explore videos and interviews with the cast at mtc.com.au



Louise Siverson and Maude Davey

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Cast & creative team



MAUDE DAVEY — BARBARA

Maude Davey trained as an actor at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and has worked as an actor, director and writer for more than 25 years, with her primary focus being the creation of new work. She has worked extensively in variety, as a member of Finucane & Smith's *Glory Box/*

Burlesque Hour ensemble and she directed the acclaimed *Gender Euphoria*, presented by Melbourne Festival 2019. In 2019 she appeared in *Anthem* for Arts Centre Melbourne at the Melbourne, Sydney and Perth Festivals. She has also been the Artistic Director of Vitalstatistix Theatre Company in Adelaide and Melbourne Workers Theatre. Her directing credits include Clare Barron's *Dance Nation* (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre); *KillJoy* (Laserbeanz Productions) and *Fish* (Rollercoaster Ensemble). TV appearances include *Sisters*, *Offspring*, *Tangle*, *Summer Heights High*, *Five Bedrooms*, *The Newsreader* and films include *My Year Without Sex*, *Noise* and *Ride Like A Girl*. She won a Green Room Award for Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role and was nominated for a Helpmann Award for her work in *Melancholia* (Malthouse Theatre) by Declan Greene in 2018. She received her Masters in Writing for Performance from VCA in 2016. She is currently undertaking a PhD at La Trobe University.



CARITA FARRER SPENCER — MACK

Carita Farrer Spencer graduated from Queensland University of Technology in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts (Acting) before receiving a Brisbane Lord Mayor's Performing Arts Fellowship to study singing and theatre in New York. Prior work with Melbourne Theatre Company

includes *Ladies in Black* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*, both directed by theatre tyrant Simon Phillips. Other theatre highlights include *The Venetian Twins*, *Proof*, *A Conversation* (Queensland Theatre); *The Messiah* (HotHouse Theatre); *Speaking In Tongues*, *The Popular Mechanicals*, *The John Wayne Principle* and *A Paper House* (La Boite Theatre). TV credits include *Ms Fisher's Modern Murder Mystery* (AcornTV); *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (ABC) and *Australia By Numbers: 'Rockhampton 470'* (SBS writer/director). Carita is known for her hilarious cabaret shows including *Larry & The Dame* (a double bill with herself) having travelled to venues and festivals all around Australia. Carita is also a visual artist collected both nationally and internationally.



RATIDZO MAMBO — ASENI

Ratidzo Mambo was recently named as a 2020 Rising Star by the Casting Guild of Australia. Some of Ratidzo's theatre credits include *Cruel and Tender* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *The Prize Fighter* (La Boite Theatre Company), which won the 2019 Matilda Award for Best Ensemble and was nominated for a 2019 Helpmann and 2019 Green Room Award for Best Production; *The Trail of Dorian Gray* (Bittenby Productions). Her TV credits include *The Gloaming* (Stan and Disney/ABC), *GLEE* (FOX); *Wicked Science 2* (Jonathan Shiff Productions/Network Ten) and *Neighbours* (Network 10). Her film credits include *Escape From Pretoria* (Arclight Films); *10 Terrorists* (The Picture Tank) and *The Legend Maker* (Ian Pringle Films). She trained at 16th Street Actors Studio, VCA and Baron Brown Meisner Studio. She was the winner of the 2016 Best Actor Award for the Hollywood Short + Sweet Theatre Festival, the 2018 16th Street Actors Studios Larry Moss Scholarship and is a 2017 Heath Ledger Scholarship finalist.



WILLIAM MCINNES — PETER

William McInnes is one of the most accomplished and popular actors in Australia. He has previously performed on stage with Melbourne Theatre Company in *An Ideal Husband*, *The Last Man Standing*, *The Waiting Room*, *The Effect*, *Ray's Tempest*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Art*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Private Lives*. His other theatre credits include *Don Juan* and *Pride and Prejudice* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Equus* (Perth Theatre Company); *Nearer the Gods* (Queensland Theatre); *My Fair Lady* (Opera Australia) and *33 Variations* (Cameron Lukey & Neil Gooding Productions). William was most recently seen in *The Newsreader* for ABC. His other TV credits include *Total Control*, *Rake*, *Deep Water*, *The Time of Our Lives*, *The Shark Net*, *My Brother Jack*, *Blue Heelers*, *Stepfather of the Bride*, *East West 101*, *SeaChange*, *Curtain*, *Dangerous Remedy* and *Hello Birdy*. William's feature film credits include *Unfinished Sky* and *Look Both Ways*. William has received numerous awards for his work including an AACTA Award for *The Newsreader*, a FCCA Award and AFI Award for *Unfinished Sky*, a FCCA Award for *Look Both Ways* and a Silver Logie Award for *My Brother Jack* and *SeaChange*. William is an award-winning author having published 13 books, his latest, *Christmas Tales*, was published October 2020.



Maude Davey



Julian Weeks, Assistant Director
Lyll Brooks and William McInnes



Carita Farrer Spencer with members
of the cast and creative team



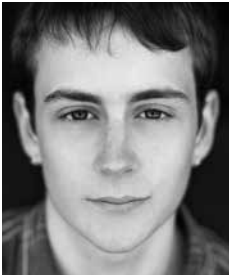
EMILY MILLEDGE — SAVANNAH

Emily Milledge returns to the Melbourne Theatre Company stage following her 2018 performance of Adele in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, directed by Leticia Cáceres. She has also performed in *The Story of O* for MTC Neon. Previous theatre credits include *Feather in The Web* (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre); the lead role of Girl in the 2019 Australian Premiere of David Bowie and Enda Walsh's musical *Lazarus* (The Production Company); *Therese Raquin* (Dirty Pretty Theatre); *Joan* (Theatre Works); *Antigone* (Malthouse Theatre); Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (Belvoir); *La Cage Aux Folles* (The Production Company); and *The Good Person of Szechuan* (Malthouse Theatre/Beijing and Shanghai Festivals), under the direction of acclaimed Chinese Director Meng Jinghui. On screen, Emily was most recently in the Tony Ayres' Production *Fires* (ABC). Other screen appearances include *Ms Fisher's Modern Murder Mysteries*, James Newitt's feature debut *I Go Further Under*, and the short *Vesna, Goodbye*.



LOUISE SIVERSEN — TOTTY

Louise Siversen has appeared in Melbourne Theatre Company productions including *Noises Off*, *True Minds*, *The Joy of Text*, *Art and Soul*, *All About My Mother*, *The Memory of Water* and *The Girl Who Saw Everything*. Other theatre credits include *Radical Acts Festival* (Theatre Works 2022); *Mums the Word: 2 Teenagers* (National Tour 2006–8); *Coming To My Senses, I Can't Even...* (Malthouse Theatre); *Barmaids* (Zootango Theatre Company) and *Wonderful Ward* (Melbourne International Comedy Festival). In August 2022 Louise and Peter Houghton will perform their new work *Underneath Mrs. Archer*. Louise's recent screen credits include *The Surrogate*, *Love Me* (Foxtel), *Rosehaven*, *The Gloaming*, *Celebration Nation* and *House Husbands* (2012–16). Louise has been nominated for numerous awards for stage and screen, most recently for the St Kilda Short Film Best Actor Award for *The Kingdom of Doug*.



JULIAN WEEKS — BEAU

Julian Weeks is thrilled to be making his professional theatrical debut in Melbourne Theatre Company's production of *The Heartbreak Choir*, playing the role of Beau. Julian discovered his love for stage performance at a young age whilst living in Thailand. In Melbourne he honed his skills over years of training with the Australian Boys Choir and the Adamson Theatre Company. He recently finished shooting as a series regular in *Savage River* (ABC), directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse, which is set to be aired in late 2022.



AIDAN FENNESSY — 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.

Ratidzo Mambo





PETER HOUGHTON — DIRECTOR

Peter Houghton is an actor, director and playwright. His recent appearances for Melbourne Theatre Company include *Three Little Words*, *His Girl Friday*, *The Joy of Text*, *The Colours*, *The Female of the Species*, *Birthrights*, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, *Misalliance* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*. His directing credits for MTC include *The Architect*, *The Odd Couple*, *Boy at the Edge of Everything*, *True Minds*, *Hinterland*, *The Recruit* and *Art and Soul*. His other stage work includes performances in *The Beast* (Ambassador Group); *The Trial and Travesties* (Sydney Theatre Company); *The Eskimo*, *Tartuffe*, *A View Of Concrete* and *Normal Suburban Planetary Meltdown* (Malthouse Theatre); *The Graduate* (Kay + McLean) among others. Peter directed *Footprints on Water* (Griffin Theatre); *Noises Off* (Marriner Group) and *Day One A Hotel Evening* (Black Swan). He has received Green Room Awards for Best Actor in *The Pitch* and for *Endgame* (Eleventh Hour Theatre), Best Play for *The Pitch* and Best Director for his body of work.



VICKY JACOBS — MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Vicky Jacobs has developed a reputation for her ability to get anyone singing at their best from Australia's top music theatre stars to the most nervous new singers. Vicky has worked as Associate Musical Director on *Moulin Rouge* (Global Creatures); *Come From Away* (Rodney Rigby and Junkyard Dog Productions); *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Michael Cassel Group); *Jersey Boys* (Dodger Theatricals, Rodney Rigby and TEG-Dainty); and *Singin' In The Rain* (TEG-Dainty). But most of all Vicky loves to get people singing. She is the founder and director of Glee Club Singing, running singalongs and choir events around Victoria and Tasmania. She composes and arranges choral music and is part of the team who developed Warm Me Up app - the top rating vocal warm up app for singers.



CHRISTINA SMITH — SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Christina Smith's work as Set and Costume Designer has been seen at MTC for the last 20 years, with shows including *Berlin*, *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 *Hayfever* and *Boy Gets Girl*. Other companies she has designed for include Seattle Opera, NZ Opera, Victorian Opera, Sydney Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre and Belvoir. She is a lecturer in Design for Live Performance at the Victorian College of the Arts.



MATT SCOTT — LIGHTING DESIGNER

Matt Scott has lit more than sixty Melbourne Theatre Company productions, including *Fun Home*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Storm Boy*, *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 Sydney season of *Fun Home* (MTC/Sydney Theatre Company); *The Dance of Death* (Belvoir); *The Pearlfishers* (State Opera of South Australia); *Oklahoma!* and *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (The Production Company); *Madame Butterfly* (Seattle Opera); *Jasper Jones* (Queensland Theatre) and *Madame Butterfly* (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 Melbourne University (VCA).

Julian Weeks, Ratidzo Mambo, Emily Milledge and Louise Siversen





J. DAVID FRANZKE —
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

J. David Franzke has composed and designed sound for numerous Melbourne Theatre Company productions including *The Architect*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Beast*, *Australia Day*, *The Joy of Text*, *The Grenade* and *August: Osage County*. He has also designed sound and composed for *Because the Night*, *Cloudstreet*, *Melancholia* and *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Malthouse Theatre); *Away* (Sydney Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre); *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* and *Venus and Adonis* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Come Away with Me to the End of the World*, *Song*, *Intimacy* and *Holiday* (Ranters Theatre). He has won four Greenroom Awards for Composition and Sound Design for *Melancholia*, *Away*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Pompeii L.A.*



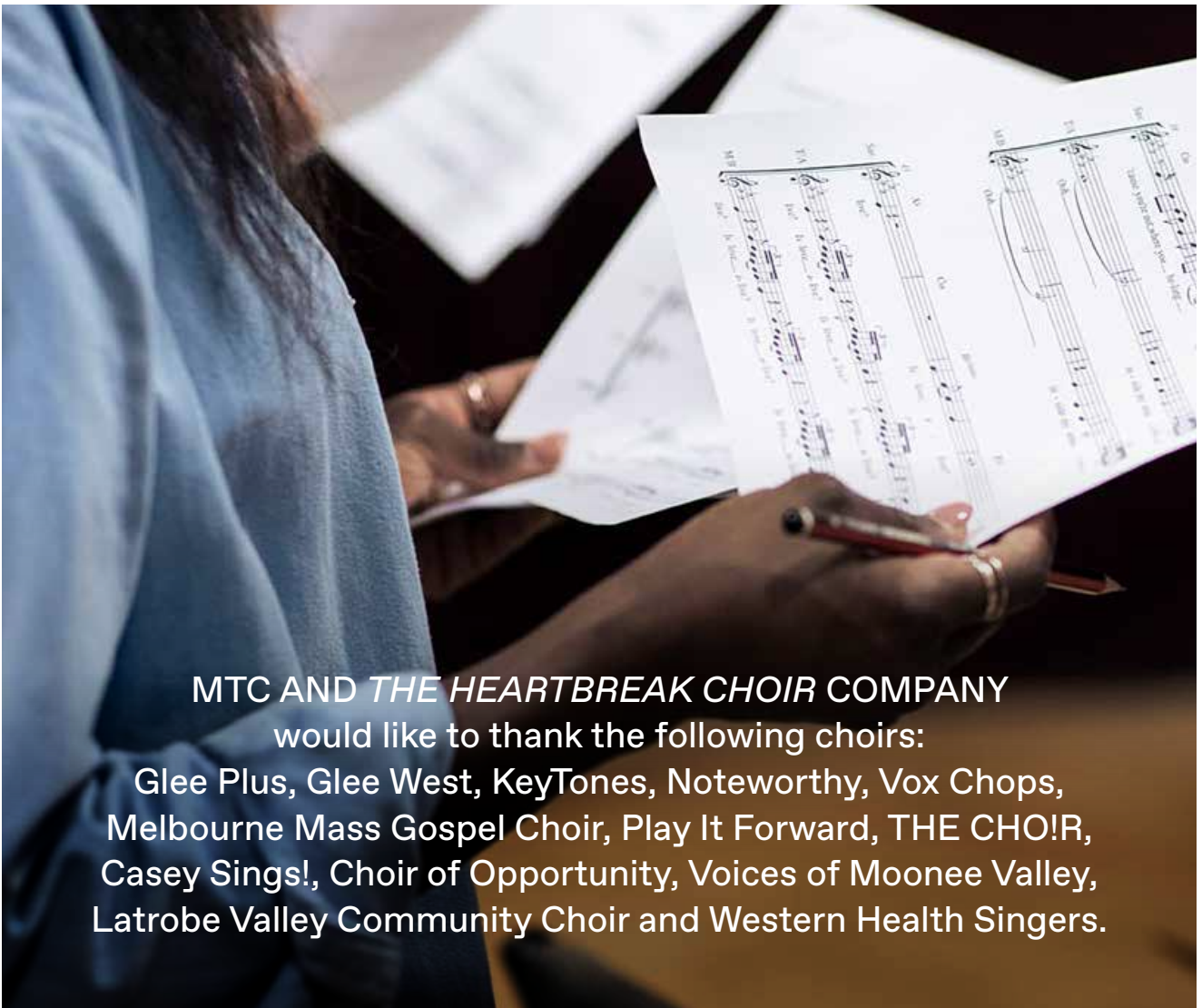
LYALL BROOKS — ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Lyall Brooks is an award-winning actor, theatre director, producer, teaching artist and founding artistic director of new Australian writing theatre company, Lab Kelpie. Lyall has directed *Become The One*, *Refined* and *Alone Outside* (Lab Kelpie); as well as assistant directing for Petra Kalive's *Oil Babies* (Lab Kelpie); and Patricia Cornelius' *Big Heart* (Theatre Works Associate Artist). His professional acting credits include *The Heretic* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *North by Northwest* (Kay & McLean); *Penelope* and *The Pride* (Red Stitch Actors' Theatre); *Sunday in the Park with George* (Victorian Opera); *Savages* (fortyfivedownstairs); and *Broken*, *Spencer* and *A Prudent Man* (Lab Kelpie). Screen appearances include *The Very Excellent Mr Dundee*, *The Leftovers*, and *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. As a voice artist he has starred in international animations *SheZow*, *Kuu-Kuu Harajuku*, *Flea-Bitten!* and the Emmy-nominated *Get Ace*. He has received four Green Room nominations across mainstage, independent and music theatre.



RACHEL LEE — ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Rachel Lee is a Singaporean-Chinese lighting designer and artist based in Naarm. This is her Melbourne Theatre Company debut. Her works reflect her interest in exploring and interrogating the social ecosystem of her cultures. As an artist, Rachel is concerned with the politics of spaces and challenges that notion in the visual spaces she creates. She also works primarily with new writing. Rachel designs across several companies and festivals including Malthouse Theatre, Stephanie Lake Company, Red Stitch Actors' Theatre, Western Edge Youth Arts, AsiaTOPA, RISING, Brighton Festival, Adelaide Festival, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Yirramboi, Midsumma, Fringe Circuits and Melbourne International Comedy Festival. She co-produced and designed award-winning 落叶归根 (Luò yè guī gēn) *Getting Home* (Melbourne Fringe). She was awarded the Green Room Award for Best Production. Rachel was part of the 2020 Besen Family Artist Program and 2019 MTC Women in Theatre Program.



MTC AND *THE HEARTBREAK CHOIR COMPANY*

would like to thank the following choirs:

Glee Plus, Glee West, KeyTones, Noteworthy, Vox Chops, Melbourne Mass Gospel Choir, Play It Forward, THE CHO!R, Casey Sings!, Choir of Opportunity, Voices of Moonee Valley, Latrobe Valley Community Choir and Western Health Singers.

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