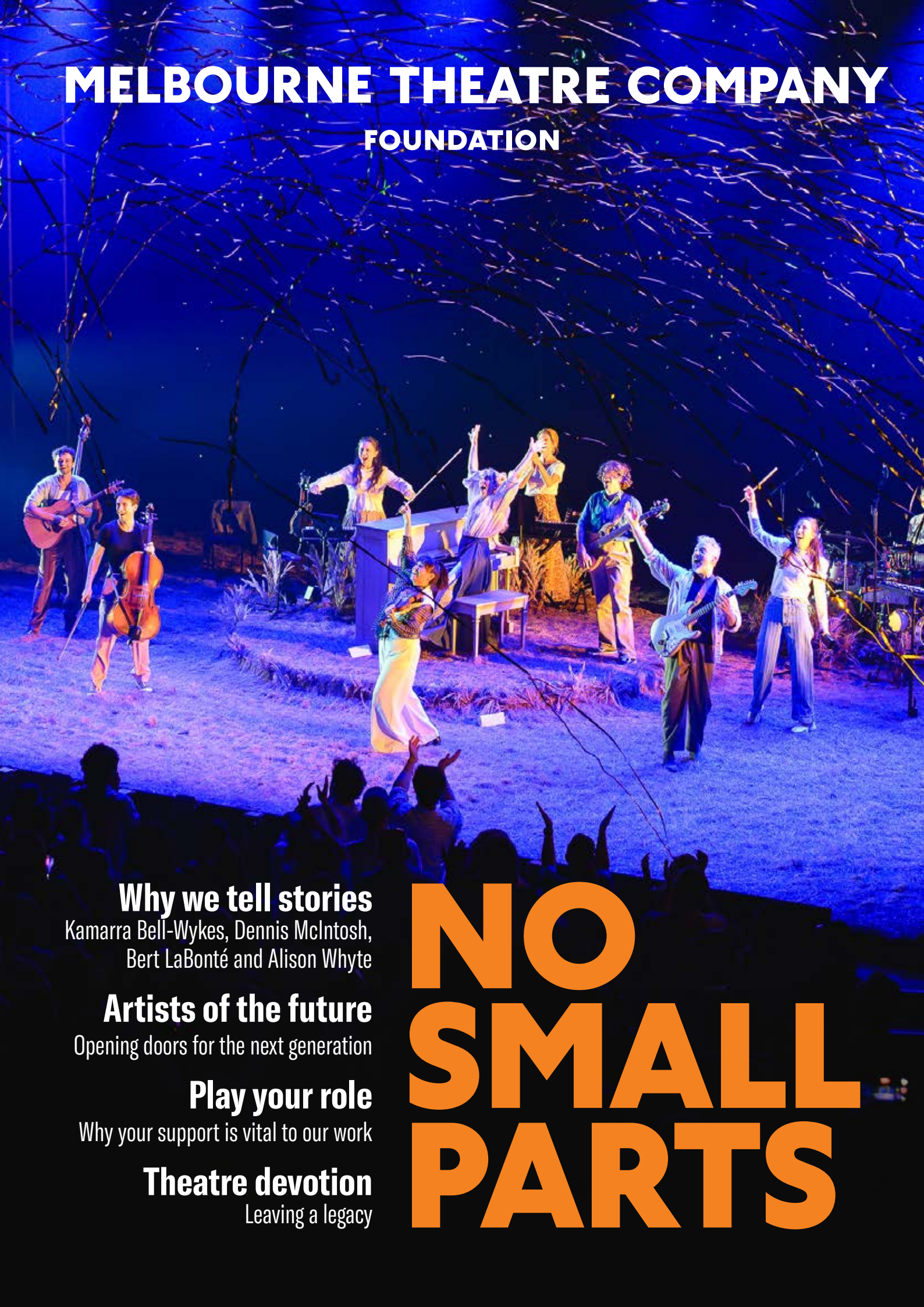


# MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY FOUNDATION



## **Why we tell stories**

Kamarra Bell-Wykes, Dennis McIntosh,  
Bert LaBonté and Alison Whyte

## **Artists of the future**

Opening doors for the next generation

## **Play your role**

Why your support is vital to our work

## **Theatre devotion**

Leaving a legacy

# NO SMALL PARTS



Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, create and gather.

We pay our respects to all First Nations people, their Elders past and present, and their enduring connections to Country, knowledge and stories. As a Company we remain committed to the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call for voice, truth and treaty.



recently to those who have given more than 40 years to this Company, every single role matters. The work we make is only possible because of all of us.

You'll meet some of the Season 2026 artists who are unwaveringly passionate about storytelling, and the emerging theatre-makers coming up through our programs – the next generation of people who will shape what Australian theatre becomes. You'll also hear from James Dipnall, who first walked through our doors as an usher decades ago and has since chosen to leave a gift in his Will.

And your part matters too. You're already someone who believes in what theatre can do – and right now, we need that belief to translate into action. With rising costs and challenging economic conditions putting pressure on every production and program, ticket sales alone cannot sustain the work this city deserves. Philanthropy is what keeps our education programs alive, fuels new Australian writing and ensures our stages stay open to everyone.

As you read the incredible stories ahead, I encourage you to consider what role you'd like to play. Every gift makes a real and immediate difference – the difference between an idea and a season, between a story being written and a story being shared with thousands of people. **Please consider making a gift to Melbourne Theatre Company today.**

Whether you're a long-time supporter or considering your first gift, you are part of what makes this company possible. Every small part adds up to something much larger than any of us could make alone. ■

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Anne-Louise Sarks  
CEO & Artistic Director

# WELCOME

By its very nature, making theatre is a collaborative act.

At Melbourne Theatre Company, we're reminded on the first day of rehearsals for any new play just how many people it takes to bring a production to life. As everyone in the building comes together to introduce themselves to the incoming cast and creative team, it's clear: there are no small parts.

This year, we want to celebrate the full picture of what it takes – and bring you inside it. In these pages, we're introducing you to some of the remarkable people helping to power your favourite productions. From the workshop to the sound studio, from those who joined us



The Company I began with as an audience member is vastly different to the one I am involved in today. The vision and ambition of the Company inspire me. It's deep investment in developing new Australian work, telling stories about us, that are relevant to us and our community at this moment in time. This feels vital and important. And the support the Company provides to all artists at various stages of their careers, as well as its investment in broad-reaching education and career-development programs to introduce younger generations to the magic and possibility of theatre, and ensuring theatre is accessible to more people. The Company does all this, as well as putting on shows that are of a world-class standard.

For my day job (often my day and night job!), I am a Mergers & Acquisitions partner at a commercial law firm. It is a role grounded in logic, structure and precision. It is not a creative job (at least not in the traditional sense).

I think that is why I am fascinated by the creative process. I am in awe of people's ability to create something that can affect you – emotionally, intellectually, soulfully. The ability to create something that can make you feel joy, sadness, anger, wonder. Just to make you feel. It is a special thing to be able to do. Melbourne Theatre Company is full of these special people.

My relationship with Melbourne Theatre Company began as a simple theatre-goer, just like many of you. During a period overseas, I found myself engaging much more actively with the arts and cultural life. When I came back to Melbourne, I challenged myself – if I did it while in another city, why didn't I do it in the city I call home? I love Melbourne, and everything I had been drawn to while overseas exists here under our very noses. And that prompted a simple question: how could I support the cultural life of this wonderful city in a meaningful way?

What drew me specifically to Melbourne Theatre Company initially was simply the quality of its theatre. Sure, some productions I liked more than others, but that's the beauty of theatre – different productions appeal in different ways to different people.

I am so proud of this Company and what it does. So, I decided some time ago that if I can't contribute creatively (and believe me, I can't contribute creatively!), I am fortunate enough to be in a position to contribute financially to play my part in supporting the Company to continue its investment in Australian theatre, for now and for the future.

As I step into the role of Chair of the Foundation Board this year, I do so with a strong belief in the power, and the need for, philanthropy as a way to ensure Australian theatre continues to meaningfully contribute to our community and culture. These are tough times for all organisations in the arts, and we should not take them for granted.

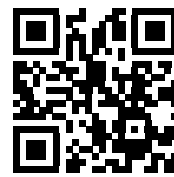
If you are a current donor, thank you, and please donate again (and think hard about donating more if you can!). And if you enjoy coming to the theatre, or value the contribution theatre makes to our culture and community, and haven't donated before, please consider making a tax-deductible donation and becoming more involved in our wonderful community.

**I hope you will join me in helping Melbourne Theatre Company continue its story by making a donation this end of financial year. And remember, there are no small parts... ■**

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Craig Semple  
Foundation Board Chair

# None of this happens without you.



Donate now to play your part.

Scan the QR code or go to [mtc.com.au/donate](https://mtc.com.au/donate)



# NO SMALL PARTS

**It takes a whole community of creative minds working as one to shape the stories on our stages.**

Meet some of our dedicated creators, whose work behind the scenes brings your favourite productions to life on stage.

Donate today to play your role in keeping theatre on our stages. Visit [mtc.com.au/donate](https://mtc.com.au/donate)

## **Marco Cher**

**Composer & Sound Designer**

**What does your job involve?**

It's my job to think about the sound of the production and compose, design or source any sonic elements. I work with the technical team on the sound system design, including props that make sound and special effect speakers. I also look at the actors' speech intelligibility when we start using microphones.

**What do you most enjoy about the work you do?**

Sound is my special area of expertise and I love the process of working out how to support a production through sound. There are always specific challenges to each production and I enjoy the process of responding to them. It's a bit like a game, a process that unfolds. There are often new discoveries and surprises along the way. When it comes to composition, every production is different and learning about different music and production techniques is always a something I look forward to.





English, 2024



Marco Cher

### What are you most proud of from your time working with the Company?

One of my favourite collaborations was on *English*, where I worked with Hamed Sadeghi. It was fascinating to learn more about Iranian music and we worked really well as a team. I think that sound played a really strong part in the show's success. It was also the first time I worked closely with a set designer to influence the acoustics of a set. We used tiling on the floor to recreate what is a very common floor surface I'd observed travelling in Iran over a decade ago. We put just a bit of sand on the floor too. These things may seem so subtle, but it all adds up to creating an authentic story through sound.

### Why do you believe making theatre is important?

As the nature of culture has shifted toward video and streaming, I love theatre more and more for its form. There are many ways to tell a good story, but theatre feels special for how it tells stories and its relationships to experience, labour and craft. There is nothing like it. ■



Martina Murray and Anne-Louise Sarks



Martina Murray (3rd from left) – *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Kids Cast 1990

## Martina Murray

### Executive Producer & Deputy CEO

#### How long have you worked for Melbourne Theatre Company?

I've had a long and rather winding relationship with Melbourne Theatre Company. It has been a 36-year association that has seen me come and go, wear many hats and, in many ways, grow up alongside the Company. My first experience was in 1990, when I was a child performer in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, directed by Roger Hodgman. Years later I returned as a Victorian College of the Arts student on secondment in Stage Management, which led to freelance stage management work and later short-term roles across the organisation. One of those contracts proved a turning point when I joined the Company as Assistant to Artistic Director Simon Phillips. From there I moved into producing.

#### What does your job involve?

At its heart, my current role is about turning artistic ambition into reality. There's a real balance in the role: part creative thought partner, part facilitator, part steward – always holding artistic ambition and organisational responsibility in equilibrium.

#### What are you most proud of from your time working with the Company?

I love seeing imagination take flight. Watching an idea evolve into a production, shaped by the craft and collaboration of many hands, and then witnessing an audience respond in real time never loses its magic. I am proud of the way the Company has continued

to evolve while holding fast to its purpose. COVID was an extraordinary test for the sector. Witnessing the resilience of our artists and staff, and the ways we maintained connection with audiences, continues to inspire me as we navigate its lasting impact.

#### Do you have a favourite memory of your time working with the Company?

Hundreds. Thousands. It feels almost impossible to choose just one.

Seeing the first audience member arrive back at the theatre after the extended COVID lockdown is one that stays with me. It was a quiet but powerful reminder of how much the act of gathering matters. There is also the electricity of sitting in a rehearsal room for the first run of a new play.

As an Assistant Stage Manager, spending far too long searching for the perfect prop suitcase and the satisfaction of finally finding it. Watching Simon Phillips ride a roller-coaster again and again to capture the right season brochure image. Touring the Broadway production of *I Am My Own Wife* to Albury Wodonga via the Sydney Opera House. Welcoming the National Theatre's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Being there for the professional debuts of artists such as now CEO & Artistic Director Anne-Louise Sarks, and performers Alison Bell, Zahra Newman and Nikki Shiels. And the privilege of working alongside some of the country's most extraordinary minds and makers, including those we have sadly since lost. ■



Alison Crawford

**‘Together, we transform an empty space into believable places where craftsmanship meets storytelling.’**

Alison Crawford



Bloom, 2023

## Alison Crawford Scenic Artist

### What does your job involve?

As one of the scenic artists here, my role is to paint and texture sets, backdrops and props. The Scenic Art team plays a collaborative role working closely with the designer to match the original concepts they have in mind.

We use a lot of ‘trickery’ with faux finishes of wood, concrete or marble on much lighter or more cost-effective materials for the stage. It’s a mix of artistic painting and construction-style building to achieve a desired result.

### What are you most proud of from your time working with the Company?

I was challenged by the designer of *Bloom*, Dann Barber, to paint portraits of the cast members. One was a portrait of Evelyn Krape, and another featured Frankie J Holden and John Waters, all in the style of Alice Neel. It was a great pleasure to do this kind of work, which could have so easily been printed or generated by AI these days. I appreciated the respect given to our profession – allowing us to showcase the skills we have gained from our many years of experience.

### Why do you believe making theatre is important?

Theatre holds a unique importance for a scenic artist because it transforms visual design into a living, breathing world that audiences can physically share. It’s a collaboration of actors, lighting, sound and costumes. Together, we transform an empty space into believable places where craftsmanship meets storytelling. ■



Oriana Papa

## Oriana Papa Resident Stage Manager

### How long have you worked for Melbourne Theatre Company?

I started working full-time with Melbourne Theatre Company in February 2025.

However, I did work experience with the Stage Management department when I was in year 12 in 2012. It was my first time getting to observe the rehearsal process in a professional setting. This spurred on my love for theatre and encouraged me to continue to study and work professionally in the industry.

### What does your job involve?

As a Stage Manager on a production, I facilitate rehearsals by creating weekly schedules, preparing the rehearsal room each day, supporting the cast and crew, and maintaining show documentation. I also assist in communicating information between the creative team and the technical departments.

Once the production is in season, I am responsible for maintaining the performance and calling the show, including lighting, fly, automation and crew cues, as well as operating sound cues.

### What do you enjoy most about the work you do?

I love getting to hear an audience’s reactions to a show. Whether it made them reflect, feel emotional, cry from laughter or connect with the message of the performance.

### What are you most proud of from your time working with the Company?

I loved being a part of bringing *Dying: A Memoir* to the stage. It was such an important story that needed to be told. Every night you could feel how emotional and engaged the audience were and you understood this production was prompting people to reflect on a topic that is normally taboo and uncomfortable.

### Do you have a favourite memory of your time working with the Company?

Hosting tactile tours is my favourite experience. Designed for patrons with blindness or low vision, these tours invite patrons to explore the stage and touch the props, set and costumes before the performance. I love that we make theatre accessible for everyone and that we create these opportunities to give back to our community, so that everyone feels comfortable and can enjoy live theatre. I always have the best conversations with patrons during these tours, and it makes my day seeing how much they appreciate and enjoy being there. ■





Jacob Battista

## Jacob Battista

### Production Design Coordinator

#### How long have you worked for Melbourne Theatre Company?

About 10 years. I started as a casual CAD (Computer-Aided Design) drafter for a few years and moved into a full-time role about seven years ago.

#### What does your job involve?

I am part of the design process from the first ideas through to opening night. I support set designers as they develop concepts, offering company-specific knowledge and practical feedback. Once designs are approved, I turn them into detailed build drawings for our workshops, covering sets, props, finishes, and layouts, and I work closely with the builders and makers to realise the design as faithfully as possible to the designer's vision.

#### What might people be surprised to learn about your work?

Almost everything that appears on stage passes across my desk at some point. Not just sets and props, but also backstage layouts, quick-change booths, prop tables, speaker locations, and other hidden infrastructure that makes a show run smoothly. By bump-in, we know exactly where everything needs to go.

#### Has there ever been a problem you have had to solve quickly before a performance?

Nothing is ever a problem, just a search for a better solution. Recently we had glass wall sconces on moving set pieces that were at risk of being knocked. I quickly 3D modelled replacement shades and printed them overnight so that by morning the fragile glass had been swapped for lightweight plastic versions that were safe for the choreography.

#### Why do you believe making theatre is important?

Theatre is storytelling. In my role I help tell stories visually, while actors tell them through performance, writers through words, and creative teams through imagination. Storytelling helps us understand each other, see beyond our own experiences, and engage with the world in a deeper way. ■



As You Like It, 2021



Geoff McGregor

## Geoff McGregor

### Props Supervisor

#### How long have you worked for Melbourne Theatre Company?

43 years. The first Melbourne Theatre Company show I ever worked on was *On Our Selection* in 1982.

#### What does your job involve?

Taking the vision of the set designer and director and making it a reality.

I make the props required for our plays and maintain and repair current props in the theatre during a show's run. I'll also work on new plays in the rehearsal rooms and bump shows in and out of the theatre.

#### What do you most enjoy about the work you do?

Making the actors' lives easier. If an actor needs to use an item that is normally quite heavy, I can create a lightweight replica so it's easier to handle and puts less strain on them – especially as they have to handle it seven shows a week.

Audience members have rung me up enquiring about where we got a certain prop from and I say 'we made it' and they're always so surprised. I take that as a big compliment.

I love the variety of the work we do. You don't know what you're going to

be making and when. There are always changes that come out of rehearsals, where the script changes or scenes are cut, so we have to be pretty adaptable and work on our feet.

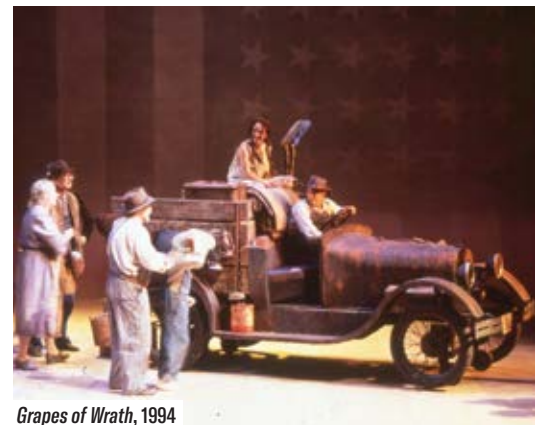
#### What are you most proud of from your time working with the Company?

The set piece we made for *As You Like It* was pretty spectacular. It was six by eight metres and needed to be built strong enough for the actors to walk on. We constructed the set pieces by carving polystyrene with a saw, then covering it with synthetic grass. It was a big job, but a beautiful result.

We also made a replica car for *Grapes of Wrath*. A car collector was kind enough to bring in a real car of the same make and model so we could use that for reference. When we were finished making the replica, the collector came to pick his car up and he couldn't tell the difference between the real car and the replica!

#### Why do you believe making theatre is important?

Theatre is important for our audiences. They're why we do it. People love our shows and the detail we put into them and that makes my job worthwhile. ■



Grapes of Wrath, 1994

**'Nothing is ever a problem, just a search for a better solution.'**

Jacob Battista





**With the cost of making theatre rising, your support is more crucial than ever to keep theatre on our stages, now and into the future.**

# NOTHING HAPPENS WITHOUT YOU

My Brilliant Career, 2026

Learn how philanthropic support helps us fulfill our commitment to sharing stories that reflect the diversity of the human experience.

Melbourne Theatre Company is proud to have presented extraordinary works of theatre on our stages for over 70 years.

This year's Philanthropy Magazine celebrates the people who make these works possible. It takes hundreds of highly skilled professionals across writing, performing, costumes, props, sets, lighting and staging – drawing on deep knowledge and extensive experience – to shape every performance.

**It also takes you. You play an important role in bringing each Melbourne Theatre Company show to life on stage.**

By making a donation to Melbourne Theatre Company you help to sustain and grow our work – both on and off the stage. Your support underpins the

creative development process from the very first spark of an idea through to the final curtain call. You enable the space for experimentation, the security to take artistic risks and the resources to both showcase established artists and nurture the next generation of theatre-makers.

Right now – like many other arts organisations – we're doing it tough. We're facing a defining moment – not just for the Company, but for the future of the arts in Australia.

The rising cost of producing high-quality theatre, combined with tough economic conditions, is placing significant pressure on our industry. And ticket sales alone only cover half the cost of creating the extraordinary works you see on stage. At the current rate, we cannot sustain our

artistic ambition or community impact. As the costs of running a world-class theatre company continue to rise exponentially, donations are vital to our ongoing growth and success. Support from donations is no longer 'additional', it is essential.

Behind every production is an extraordinary investment of time, skill and care – and your donations help make that investment possible.

If you've ever felt goosebumps as the lights dimmed, gasped at an unexpected moment, laughed freely, cried openly, or sat in stillness long after the final line – you are already part of our story. If a moment on stage has changed your mind, stirred your sense of justice, or stayed with you long after you left the theatre – you are one of the reasons we exist.





37, 2024



The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, 2006



Bloom, 2023



**Ticket sales only  
cover half the cost  
of creating the works  
you see on stage**

**Behind every production is  
an extraordinary investment  
of time, skill and care – and  
your donations help make that  
investment possible.**



The Odd Couple, 2016



Home, I'm Darling, 2020

Your reactions, your conversations, your willingness to be transformed – these are the reasons we do what we do. You are what makes this Company special, and what drives us to keep creating bold, courageous stories. ■

**With your generosity and belief in our work, together we can step boldly into a future full of endless possibilities.**



Donate today to play your role in keeping theatre on our stages. Visit [mtc.com.au/donate](https://mtc.com.au/donate)



Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill, 2023

## The rising costs of producing theatre



UTILITIES

↑ 42%



BUILDING MATERIALS

↑ 35%



EQUIPMENT UPKEEP

↑ 11%

Cost comparison from 2019 to 2025

From iconic roles to world premieres, artists in our 2026 season reflect on the responsibility and privilege of bringing stories to life.

Donné Ngabo



# WHY WE TELL STORIES



## **Bert LaBonté** Director, *Retrograde*

Sidney Poitier is one of the reasons I'm in the industry in the first place. Everyone gravitated towards his work – not just because of what he represented, but because he was such a fine actor. To tell even a small piece of his story in *Retrograde* is an honour.

There's a responsibility that comes with directing a play making its Australian debut. The play has had extraordinary success overseas, and it's important to honour that integrity while also allowing our version to be its own. I've never been interested in recreating what's come before. I tend not to watch or look at photographs of previous productions because I want to build the picture myself with my creative team. The play is so damn good that it doesn't need much dressing up. There's pressure, of course, but it's the kind that comes with excitement, especially knowing this is the first time Australian audiences will experience it.

We saw so many phenomenal actors for the role of Sidney Poitier, but when Donné

Ngabo walked into the room, there was something undeniable: the presence, the face, the way he carried himself. He'd already adapted the accent, and within moments I knew we had our Sidney. I don't think I've ever been more excited about casting someone. Alongside him, Alan Dale returns to the stage after nearly 20 years, and we have Josh McConville, who is such a legend and brilliant actor. I can't wait to put it together.

Melbourne Theatre Company has been central to my career as an actor and director. The Company has shown me consistent faith over the years. I will always be grateful for that. Theatre matters because it creates space for conversation – ones that might be difficult to have in real life – away from the noise of endless scrolling. We may not be surgeons, but the work playwrights and performers and theatre makers do is vital. Theatre stretches minds, especially young ones, and helps ensure we don't lose our humanity. ■





## Kamarra Bell-Wykes

Writer and Director, *Before I Forget*

I lived this story. It comes from my life, and from my mother – a beautiful woman, a mother and nana, and a well-known Aboriginal linguist and academic. She sowed the seeds for language reclamation work that continues today. She also had early-onset dementia.

Mum was incredibly intelligent and doing such important work in the academic space, so watching dementia take hold was profoundly tragic. It began with forgetting things, and over time it stole her function, her physical abilities, and eventually her independence. It was a long, drawn-out disease – nine years from diagnosis to her passing – painful and devastating, but also, at times, strangely funny because of what it does to people's brains and how they cope. I became my mum's power of attorney while raising my own children and living interstate. I went into it blind. I was grieving her while she was still alive, making impossible decisions about her care, carrying enormous guilt. No one really understands that experience unless they've lived it.

I started writing during lockdown, when my mum was in a home and I couldn't see her. Writing became part of my grieving and healing process – capturing moments, experiences, conversations. I was terrified to turn it into a play, because I'd lived it and it nearly destroyed me. But with time, and with creative developments and the support of Melbourne Theatre Company's NEXT STAGE Writers' Program, the work found its form.

By pulling some personal details back and allowing the characters to become their own people, the story became more honest, more universal, and safer for everyone involved. It became a story about the unrelenting legacy of love and strength between Aboriginal mothers and daughters, forgiveness, family and grief – and not only accepting but embracing death as part of life.

Now, when I work on the play, I feel like I'm with my mum again. I get to honour her language, her integrity and her legacy. *Before I Forget* is funny and sad, painful and healing. More than anything, it's about forgiveness: for ourselves, and for the people we love. ■



## Dennis McIntosh

Writer, *West Gate*

I've been close to the story of the West Gate Bridge collapse for most of my life. Even as a kid, it captured me. I didn't know the men who died, but my father was a boilermaker and those were the men I grew up around – working-class blokes, many of them migrants. We lived in Newport through those years, and I remember the rumours at primary school that the bridge was going to fall down. My father, D. F. McIntosh, mistakenly once received correspondence from a resident engineer warning that something was wrong with the bridge. Years later, I found those letters in the royal commission records. Reading them, it all came flooding back.

I began writing *West Gate* in 2013, and I nearly gave up more times than I can count. The story is enormously complex – technically, politically, emotionally – and the challenge was always how to make it live as a piece of theatre. I've spent much of my life working in construction and underground tunnelling and later researching those worlds through my academic work. That experience gave me a way in. I knew I could take an audience onto the bridge, into the work, into the lives of those men.

Speaking to survivors and families carried an enormous responsibility. Victor, whose father died when he was just weeks old, trusted me with his story, and I tried very hard to honour that. This isn't just history – it's lived memory, and it's sacred to many people.

I tell blue-collar stories because they're rarely told from the inside. I'm dogged. When I take something on, I don't give up. *West Gate* has taken years of persistence, research and listening. I always believed I could tell this story; I just had to work out how. ■



## Alison Whyte

Amanda Wingfield, *The Glass Menagerie*

Saying yes to *The Glass Menagerie* was easy. It's a Tennessee Williams play, it's an iconic role, and I get to work again with my dear colleague, [Director] Mark Wilson. Mark is an absolute joy in the rehearsal room – he has a brilliant, acute mind and brings humour and intelligence to everything he does. We've worked together in different capacities over the years, as director and as fellow actors, and it's always been a hell of a lot of fun.

It's a beautiful play – and there's a reason it's endured. It makes me laugh and it brings me to tears, and I hope that's what it does for Melbourne audiences too. Bringing a fresh production of such a well-loved classic is both an honour and an enormous pleasure.

Working on a classic feels different to a new play. I often liken it to childbirth – you gather strength from the generations who have gone before you. All those extraordinary women who have played this role are with you, and then you get to step into those shoes yourself. I've been lucky enough to experience that a few times with classics like *Death of a Salesman* and *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. Audiences know these characters; in some ways they're seeing an old friend again. It's never scary – it's a beautiful, shared experience.

Melbourne Theatre Company is where I launched my career. Straight out of VCA in 1990, I was lucky enough to step into what felt like an apprenticeship, working with extraordinary mentors like Bob Hornery, Pam Rabe and Roger Hodgman, who really taught me my craft. The Company holds a very special place in my heart and I always love coming back to work there.

Stories are essential to the human condition. There is nothing quite like the collective experience of live theatre – it's almost like church. Sharing a story together, in the same room, makes life worth living. ■



# SUPPORTING THE ARTISTS OF THE FUTURE

Youth Ambassadors

**Through programs that build skills and celebrate diverse voices, young artists are discovering their pathways into the industry.**

Career development programs give emerging artists mentorship, resources and creative freedom to take bold risks and turn early sparks into works that shift what the artform can be. Our Education & Families program offers high-quality, low-cost or free opportunities for students, teachers and families that help ensure the next generation of creative thinkers and storytellers is as diverse as the communities they represent.

Through our First Nations-led program, Deadly Creatives, we create dedicated spaces for young First Nations artists to refine their craft and create works that resonate with audiences. And ambitious commissioning and development pipelines through our NEXT STAGE Writers' Program give emerging writers a route from page to production, fostering the next generation of iconic Australian storytellers.

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To learn more about how you can support the extraordinary work of our education and career development initiatives, visit [mtc.com.au/key-initiatives](https://mtc.com.au/key-initiatives)

## Building a world for herself

At a young age Savanna Wegman fell in love with the idea of world building and composition. But she never believed creating the imagined worlds she saw through theatre and film could be her reality. 'I didn't realise it could be a job, where something tangible is created and exists to be lived in and embodied'.

Savanna recently undertook a placement as Associate Set & Costume Designer in our Future Creatives program, gaining invaluable experience and insight into the process of developing productions for a large-scale theatre company.

'Working with both Marg Horwell [on *My Brilliant Career*] and Anna Cordingley [on *Much Ado About Nothing*] gave me incredible insight into how important it is to follow your instincts and how individual a designer's eye and approach to the process is. It has encouraged me to indulge in my own process and build it in my own way.'

'Being part of this program has opened so many doors, connections and learnings for me, and it's empowering to know that my cultural background and lived experience are truly valued in spaces that haven't always been accessible to people like me.' ■



**'It's empowering to know that my cultural background and lived experience are truly valued in spaces that haven't always been accessible to people like me.'**

Savanna Wegman



Savanna Wegman



Deadly Creatives



Liv Satchell



Amelie Claringbold

Amelie believes this opportunity has not only introduced her to the industry but showed her that she belonged in it.

'The Youth Ambassador program was truly life-changing. It completely opened my mind to what a career in the arts could look like. It allowed me to view theatre as a vast, collaborative ecosystem rather than a single pathway. That broader understanding was incredibly empowering, as it made me realise that I had a chance to pursue such careers.'

This year, Amelie will be starting a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre) at VCA – a dream come true that Amelie believes would have never been possible if not for the program.

'The Youth Ambassador program taught me that the arts are full of unexpected pathways and opportunities. So while I may have a plan, I'm stepping into this next phase with an open mind, ready to explore the possibilities the next three years bring!' ■

## Breaking down barriers

Growing up outside of a major city meant access to the arts and opportunities to engage with a large-scale theatre company felt unattainable for Amelie.

Thankfully, Amelie Claringbold found our Youth Ambassador program – a year-long extension program for year 11 students which offers insight into the world of professional theatre.

## Taking on the challenge

Liv Satchell always knew the arts was where her heart truly lay, but an interest in directing only came about after coming to it at university. What Liv loved about directing was the challenge:

'It's a puzzle. Your job as a director is to understand how the individual pieces of the play fit together and, once you do, what pieces you want to illuminate.'

Through the MinterEllison Future Directors Initiative, Liv had the opportunity to work as Assistant Director alongside Anne-Louise Sarks on our 2025 production of *The Removalists*. Liv believes the experience let her contribute to a major production in a way that has built her confidence and ambition.

'Although I'm familiar with directing new writing, I'd never worked on such an established play in professional practice. Getting the chance to work with Anne-Louise to do so at scale (by this I mean, illuminating it for every person in a 560-seat theatre) was a six-week-long pinch-me moment.' ■

**Your donations are a direct investment in the future of theatre and the artists and creatives who will shape it.**



We sat down with long-time supporter and Legacy Circle member, James Dipnall, to find out more about his connection to our work and his generous decision to leave a gift in his Will to Melbourne Theatre Company.

The Glass Menagerie, 1985

# A LEGACY OF THEATRE DEVOTION



James Dipnall

I started ushering for Melbourne Theatre Company in its final year at Russell Street Theatre. Since then, I've worked for many arts organisations across Melbourne, including Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne International Arts Festival, St Martins Youth Arts Centre and Kingston Arts.

The first show I saw at Melbourne Theatre Company was *The Glass Menagerie* on Saturday 8 June 1985 with Nancye Hayes (I still have the programme and ticket!). I loved it so much, I went back the following weekend to see it again and it's remained one of my favourite plays ever since. I've seen productions interstate and internationally over the past 40 years, and every viewing

takes me back to that joy of first discovering Tennessee Williams' beautiful masterpiece. I'm very much looking forward to seeing another interpretation on the Sumner stage this year!

There have been many excellent performances at Melbourne Theatre Company over the years, but *Death and the Maiden* with Helen Morse, Frank Gallacher and John Gaden in 1993 remains one of my favourites. The performances by the cast were overwhelming... I remember sitting in my seat after the play had ended, barely able to get up and leave the theatre. Years later, when Russell Street Theatre closed, the Front of House team were given the opportunity to choose a production photo of their choice from the archives. *Death and the Maiden* was mine, and that stunning black and white image from the show still hangs on my wall at home today.

Nothing beats the magic of live theatre and I know Melbourne Theatre Company will always conjure up something entertaining, challenging, interesting and transporting. I've been subscribing with the same group of friends for a number of years now and coming to the theatre together is a great opportunity to catch up and share the experience. There are so many stories to tell and re-tell, new journeys to discover and old classics to learn from.

I love that theatre brings a group of strangers together in a shared space to experience something unique that might change our perspective, teach us something, enable us to better connect

with people, or simply send us back out into the world with a smile on our faces.

As a 14-year-old-student, very early on in my theatre-going career, I wrote to the Company asking how to break into the industry. My letter was printed in the programme for Dario Fo's *Trumpets & Raspberries*, and my parents and I were invited to a performance and then backstage to meet the cast (which included such luminaries as the great Monica Maughan). We spent what seemed like hours talking and laughing in one of the cast member's dressing rooms until early the next morning – it was a night I'll never forget!

The Company has given me so much over the years and in so many ways: working for and with the Company in various roles and of course as an audience member over many decades. It is now a privilege to be in a position where I might be able to give a little back. ■

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**A career devoted to theatre and a gift to secure its future. Melbourne Theatre Company is immensely grateful to James, and our generous community of Legacy Circle Donors, whose contributions will help keep exceptional works of art on our stages for many years to come.**

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To learn more about leaving a gift to Melbourne Theatre Company in your Will, visit [mtc.com.au/leave-a-legacy](http://mtc.com.au/leave-a-legacy) or call Meaghan Donaldson, Annual Giving Manager, on 03 8688 0938 for a confidential chat.



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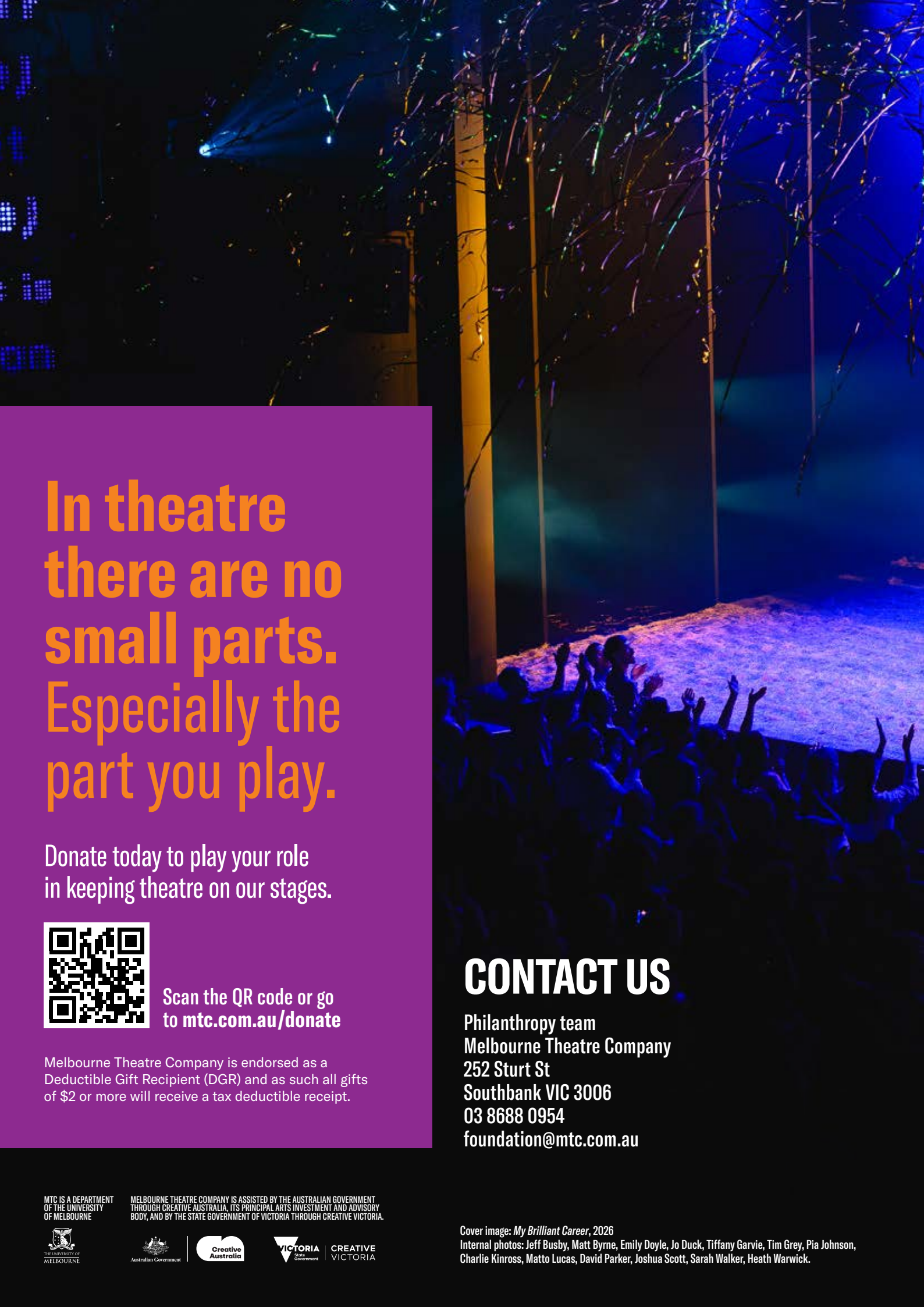
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Cover image: *My Brilliant Career*, 2026

Internal photos: Jeff Busby, Matt Byrne, Emily Doyle, Jo Duck, Tiffany Garvie, Tim Grey, Pia Johnson,  
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