



THE
**Dream
Laboratory**

\$5

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essential
theatre 

Essential Theatre



This vibrant and robust company has been in operation for 20 years developing a reputation of delivering world class productions. We are one of Australia's longest standing independent theatre companies proudly based in Geelong.

19 years
in operation

204 artists
employed

58 creatives
employed (directors/designers/
fight choreographers)

88 locations
in 6 Australian states, New
Zealand & Scotland

458
performances
to date

26
productions
to date



Welcome!

How The Dream Laboratory came to be

Well what a time it has been - and - what ride it's been to get here! The Dream Laboratory has been a direct response to COVID; weirdly, it's one of the few silver linings from these past two years. It was imagined and has evolved over zoom, pivoted with each lockdown and blossomed in quite an unimaginable way. In mid 2020, when the arts industry was collapsing around us, we asked ourselves some hard questions "What would it look like if we could never perform to more than 20 people again? What if we could never tour Shakespeare in the Vines again?" And it was bloody hard to look inwardly and face the harsh reality COVID was presenting.

However, from this provocation, our passion and interest in immersive theatre evolved.

We have shaped and shifted with each lockdown - we have been forced to downscale, reduce cast numbers, change venues and shave budgets to ensure the viability of this project. We learned very quickly that now more than ever, we needed to work within realistic frameworks. We kept the spark alive, kept the creative juices flowing and those zoom calls and creative meetings got us through some of the darkest days.

As we stormed towards the end of 2021 we felt confident COVID was behind us but boy were we wrong! If you're reading this now then we haven't been forced to shut down. We have had cast members isolated with COVID and have called on our deputy stage manager Henry to step into the role of Puck for our first test audience which he did without batting an eyelid.

This week another ensemble member is out and we have the incredible Sean McGrath stepping in like a pro to make sure the show could go on. We are dancing a delicate dance right now to ensure we see this production through to it's closing week. Our amazing cast and crew are working in the strangest of times with nothing

but open hearts and a willingness to make it work and we are so grateful.

Amongst all of this, our extraordinary creative team have been working tirelessly to make this production a reality. They are some of the most incredible artists we have worked with and seeing their vision come to life has been breathtaking and it deserves to be seen.

So here we are in our new venue - many will remember the building as The Eureka Hotel. After years of being a bustling hotel, the space was left dormant and became reclaimed by pigeons. Yes, pigeons. Converting the site has been an enormous yet rewarding task - there have been weeks of scraping pigeon poop, cleaning walls and washing windows.

The process of reactivating this space involved a team of many willing hands!

That's enough from us - we do hope you enjoy being back at the theatre, and experiencing something outside the confines of your "four walls". It's so important that as a community we are reminded of the gift of theatre, and what it is like to share this collective experience - share the heartbeat - the gasp - because we don't have to experience everything alone, and that's the joy of the theatre - the communal experience.

Amanda and Sophie

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Thank you!

The old saying is true – it certainly takes a village!

We would like to take this opportunity to make some special thank you's.

Neil Sandwith my dad has been like a project manager and taken the challenge of transforming the venue head on – thanks for your tenacity, blood, sweat and tears dad!

Bill Votsarkis thank you for taking the gamble on our adventurous creative idea. When you said “I like good people doing good things for Geelong” I knew we could work together!

Bert LaBonté for your scraping of pigeon poo, your painting and your unwavering support

Bernadette Sandwith for your brilliant cleaning

Andrew Humphrey for your time and awesome carpentry abilities

Clair & Penny from Batman Management Group for always handling our requests with a smile

Jo Wealands for your sponsorship prowess

Marley Huxley for your generosity and support

Tim Fraatz for your supersonic cleaning advice & equipment

Amy Lehpamer for your cleaning assistance

Kate Ware from Buzz Pop Brands for going above and beyond

Alison & Georgia Vickers for the artwork on the exterior of the building – we love it

Phil Shaw for your time and excellent painting skills

Kris Kelly and the team at Paul Kelly Creative for your patience with our never ending requests and ongoing support of us!

Cam O'Keefe and Westend Geelong for embracing this adventure and joining in

Kay Uebergang for all of your creative admin and organisational expertise

Derek Ingles and Dulux Paints for your generosity and support

David Kambouris for collecting our set pieces from all over Melbourne and transporting them in style

Phil Shaw for your time, painting skills and carpentry expertise. You went above & beyond!

Dann Barber would like to thank **Nicola Stavar, Tom Barber, Janne & Bro Barber & Patrick Wills**

Alex Aldrich would like to thank **Keith Aldrich, Judith Aldrich & Josh White**

Lisa Mibus would like to thank **Deryk McAlpin, Michael Taylor & Andy Taylor**

Essential Theatre would like to thank everyone that contributed to our #20for20 campaign. This support is driving us into our 20th year with confidence. A special mention to Polly Shaw & Annette Herd for their regular donations. And to Jenny & Jock Jeffries for their significant donation to The Dream Laboratory in a time where funding was lacking.

The Dream Laboratory began in July 2020 thanks to the support from Creative Victoria's Sustaining Creatives Initiative and from Geelong Arts Centre's Creative Engine

The original creative team included Alexandra Aldrich, Amanda LaBonté, Sophie Lampel, Mark Wilson, Dann Barber, Clemmie Williams & Tim Hulsman



Venue Makeover



Creative Team

Co-Director - Alister Smith

Co-Director - Mark Wilson

Set & Costume Design - Dann Barber

Set & Costume Design - Alexandra Aldrich

Lighting Design - Lisa Mibus

Sound Design/Composer - Daniella Esposito

Assistant Designer - Savanna Wegman

Marketing - Kate Ware at Buzz Pop Brands

Production Artwork - Paul Kelly Creative

Promotional Photography - Deryk McAlpin

Production Photography - Pia Johnson

Production Team

Stage Manager - Jess Keepence

Production Manager - Nathan Santamaria

Production Manager - Cecily Rabey

Assistant Stage Manager/Crew - Amy Smith

Crew - Henry de Oleveira

Front of House Managers -

Una Mc Alinden and James Edwards

Ensemble

Iopu Auva'a

Briony Farrell

Amanda LaBonté

Sophie Lampel

Cecilia Low

Lachlan Martin

Tim Paige

Director's Notes

Shakespeare uses dreams as a theme and convention throughout his entire body of work as a device for characters to explore their subconscious, their identity and to find answers to problems that are plaguing them. They then return to the waking world transformed.

We wanted to expand on this and explore the vertical psychology of character in this experience, giving audiences a completely different way of interacting with the Shakespeare's work. As a collective we wanted to explore the protagonist of Hermia within this dream environment. She is the perfect vehicle to explore the themes of A Midsummer Night's Dream within an abstract space.

SUPPORTING
LOCAL ARTISTS
IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF NEW WORK

CREATIVE ENGINE

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Image Credit: Perfect Pairing
By Xavier McGettigan ft. Attitude Dance Company
2021 Creative Engine Jump Start Grant Recipient

Photo by: Sandy Gray



Geelong Arts Centre's



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with
mark
& milly
the
morning
crew



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Supported by



Alexandra Aldrich (she/her)



A two-time Green Room Award nominee for Best Actress, Alexandra completed her Bachelor of Dramatic Art: Acting at NIDA in 2011. She has an extensive stage career both here in Australia and overseas. Alex has worked with Essential Theatre on Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar and Enter Ophelia. While completing a Bachelor of Creative Arts at Melbourne University, Alexandra co-founded the Melbourne University Shakespeare Company, and is currently Artistic Director of Melbourne Cabaret group Night Creatures.

Iopu Auva'a (he/him)



Iopu is a graduate of the Arts Academy at the University of Ballarat studying Acting. He has also trained at 16th Street and The Screen Practice. He recently was in the ensemble and played the role of Bane in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child. Other theatre credits include Orsino in Twelfth Night, Delray in Memphis, Harpo in The Color Purple, Hud in Hair and the ensemble in Dreamgirls. He also recently wrote, co-directed and was in the self-titled short film IOPU which was part of the XR program at the Melbourne International Film Festival.

Dann Barber (he/him)



Dann's work spans costumes and set design across plays, musicals and operas. A graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), his work is influenced by his study of drawing and fine art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). 2021 saw Dann design the set and costume for 'The Mermaids' at La Mama, the set for 'Rent the Musical' (Sugary Rum Productions / LPD Productions) at the Sydney Opera House and the Set and costumes for 'Chess the Musical' (Storyboard Entertainment) at the Regent Theatre. Based in Melbourne, Dann's work has also been featured further north at the Hayes Theatre, Griffin Theatre, Queensland Theatre Company, The Brisbane Festival, and La Boite Theatre Company. Dann has been the associate costume designer for Gabriela Tylesova for 'Sleeping Beauty' (Australian Ballet) and most recently 'Shakespeare in Love' (Melbourne Theatre Company). He is a regular lecturer at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and the Melbourne University.

Henry de Oliveira (he/him)



Henry is an Actor and Theatremaker based in Melbourne. Henry graduated from Federation University's Arts Academy in 2021 with a Bachelor of Performing Arts. During his time at Federation University, Henry performed in adaptations of Three Sisters (Vershinin), A Midsummer Night's Dream (Oberon), and The 'Sparagus Garden (Moneylacks), as well as co-devising and performing the original production Exquisite Corpse with director Laura Burzacott. Henry has also worked as a roaming, interactive performer with RMIT University and The Ballarat International Foto Biennale.

Daniella Esposito (they/them)



Daniella is a gender-queer sound designer and composer from Naarm/Melbourne, currently studying a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Production) at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). They specialise in sound design and composition for theatre, immersive works and film. Daniella's credits include sound design and composition for Malthouse Theatre's 2020 Season Launch; Hydra (Double Water Sign Theatre); Guerilla Sabbath (Midsumma Festival); Cactus (La Mama Theatre); Punk Rock (Patalog Theatre); Slut (The Burrow); Treats (Fever103 Theatre); Land (Three Fates Theatre Company); Never Said Motel (Writers Festival, OK Motels); Adam (Midsumma Festival); Tram Lights Up (Bighouse Arts); Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA - In School, Artist In Residency). Daniella completed secondments on Home, I'm Darling (MTC) and Because The Night (Malthouse Theatre). As an advocate for the arts, Daniella is driven to champion gender equity in technical design fields.

Briony Farrell (she/her)



Briony completed her Masters in Classical Acting at The Royal Central School of Speech, in London throughout 2019. During her time overseas, she performed the role of Innogen in Cymbeline and Dunyasha in The Cherry Orchard. In 2020, she performed as a Witch in our Australia wide tour of Macbeth. This year she co-created and presented a new work for children exploring climate anxiety, with the ArtPlay New Ideas Lab called Polypropylene Dreams. She is an artist with Polyglot Theatre and has a BFA in Acting from the Victorian College of the Arts.

Jess Keepence

 (she/her)

Jess is a freelance Stage Manager and a graduate of Victorian College of the Arts. She has worked on many productions/ projects including: Heart is a Wasteland and Jack Charles Vs The Crown (Ilbjerri Theatre Company); Emerald City, Heisenberg, Arbus & West, Hay Fever, Macbeth, The Odd Couple, Jasper Jones, Miss Julie and Buyer and Cellar (Melbourne Theatre Company); Blackie Blackie Brown and Good Muslim Boy (Malthouse Theatre); Glass, Song for a Weary Throat and Catalogue (Rawcus); At the Illusionist's Table (Scott Silven/Melbourne International Arts Festival); My Dearworthy Darling and Room of Regret (THE RABBLE). She has also worked on events such as Melbourne International Arts Festival, Woodford Folk Festival and Castlemaine State Festival.

Amanda LaBonté

 (she/her)

Amanda has been working as an actor and theatre producer for over twenty years. She is a highly skilled theatre practitioner. As an actor she has worked with numerous Australian theatre companies & television studios, and most recently spent the last two years starring in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child at The Princess Theatre, Melbourne. The core of Amanda's producing work has been with the creation, development and management of Essential Theatre. Highlights include touring our production of Julius Caesar to Edinburgh, and the build of The Dream Laboratory. Amanda studied at The School of Physical Theatre, London and graduated with Honors at The University of Ballarat (Performing Arts).

Sophie Lampel (she/her)



Sophie holds a BA from The University of Ballarat (Performing Arts) and is an International Fellow of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre London. She works as an actor, theatre producer and pilates instructor. Her main producing work is the creation, development and management of Essential Theatre. Most recently the company collaborated with Three Birds Theatre on their new work Enter Ophelia which had a sell-out season at La Mama in early 2018 and toured regional Victoria in early 2019. Performance highlights with Essential Theatre include Antony (Julius Caesar), Nurse (Romeo & Juliet), Leonata/Dogberry (Much Ado About Nothing), Viola (Twelfth Night) & the Dromio Twins (The Comedy of Errors) to name a few.

Cecilia Low (she/her)



Cecilia is an actor/performer of stage and screen. She also produces independent films, and when inspiration and the gods of time align she devises her own cross platform experiences. She spent her early professional years in shows like CHICAGO, The Lion King, and RENT. More recently she can be seen on our TV screens in Clickbait, Wentworth, The Newsreader, and Jack Irish. Cecilia believes Immersive Theatre is such an exciting medium to create in, having collaborated and performed in immersive interactive work POONA by Roshelle Fong and Keziah Warner for the Next Wave Festival, and her own works They Say She's Different for the Adelaide Cabaret Festival, and GOLD in London for the Dali anniversary celebrations. She is honoured to be a part of this one-of-a-kind experience that is The Dream Laboratory.

Lachlan Martin

 (he/they)

Originally from Adelaide, Green Room Award nominee Lachlan Martin has been involved with the Australian arts scene since graduating from Federation University, Arts Academy. Lachlan is also known as his drag alter ego Tilly Capulet and is the driving force behind Mausoleum, an online event celebrating the diverse works of Melbourne drag artists. Lachlan took home the Standout Actor of the Year Award at the 2019 Sydney Fringe for his work in the critically acclaimed Party Snake. He has performed in the Australian national tours of The Bodyguard, Georgie Girl and has been directed by Baz Luhrmann in the musical adaptation of Strictly Ballroom. This is Lachlan's fourth time working for Essential Theatre, adding to his work in Romeo & Juliet (Nurse), A Midsummer Night's Dream (Oberon) and Much Ado About Nothing (Don John/Dogberry). Additional theatre credits include Macbeth (Macbeth), The Winter's Tale (Leontes), The Merry Wives of Windsor (Fenton), Mindgame, Calamity Jane, Killing Game, A View of Concrete and Festen. You can follow Lachlan on social media - @lachielove & @tillycapulet

Lisa Mibus

 (she/her)

Lisa is a Melbourne based Lighting Designer with a strong interest in the creation of new work. She co-devised My Lovers Bones (Brown Cabs Productions/Melbourne Festival) for which her lighting design received a Green Room Association Award. Lisa has designed for many varied independent, as well as mainstage productions, with credits including Grand Gesture (The People/LaMama), Control, Pomona, Sweet Phoebe (Red Stitch), Archimedes War, Oil Babies, Whale (Darebin Speakeasy), The Curtain (45 Downstairs), Redemption, Member (LaMama), Colour Correction (Dancehouse), Virgins & Cowboys (Griffin Independent), Heart is a Wasteland, Normal Suburban Planetary Meltdown, The Orchid and the Crow (Malthouse Theatre), Straight White Men, The Distance, Boy at the Edge of Everything, Music (Melbourne Theatre Company).

Tim Paige

 (he/him)

Tim studied acting and voice at the Victorian College of the Arts and Tasmanian Conservatorium, respectively. His theatre credits include Macbeth and Comedy of Errors (Pop Up Globe); Much Ado About Nothing, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth and Twelfth Night (Essential Theatre); Himmelweg (The Smith Co); Absurd Person Singular (Mofo Theatre Co). Musical Theatre; Pacific Overtures and Company (Watch This) His directorial credits include assistant director As You Like It (Melbourne Theatre Company); assistant director of Pop-up Globe's Melbourne season; resident director for Pop-up Globe, Sydney; associate director for Bar'd Work, Sydney/Melbourne. Tim is an International Fellow of Shakespeare's Globe and a proud union member (MEAA).

Cecily Rabey

 (she/her)

Cecily relocated to Melbourne in 2018 and is a graduate from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. This is her first production with Essential Theatre. Cecily has worked nationally and internationally as a Stage Manager and Production Manager. Selected credits include: Because The Night (Malthouse Theatre), Cerita Anak (Polyglot Theatre), Wake In Fright (Malthouse Theatre), Daddy (Arts House), FLIGHT (Darkfield, Realscape Productions), Angelo (Little Angel Theatre), Lost Lending Library (Punchdrunk), Running Wild (UK Tour).

Nathan Santamaria (he/him)



Nathan is an audio engineer, sound designer and production manager, working across many genres of music and live performance. His involvement with music has seen him work with some of the world's best musicians and artists including Daryl Braithwaite, Red Hot Chili Peppers and George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic. Nathan's recent theatre credits include Audio Technician for Moulin Rouge! The Musical (Global Creatures), Technical Operator for Das Rheingold (Melbourne Opera), Sound Operator for The Gospel According To Jesus, Queen Of Heaven (Ben Anderson with Midsumma Festival), Sound Designer for Every Second (Wit Inc), Production Manager and Sound Designer for The Boy, George (One Eyed Man Productions) and Sound Design Intern for A View From The Bridge (Melbourne Theatre Company). In 2016, Nathan started his own technical production company, SAVI Studios, and in 2019 he graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Production).

Alister Smith (he/him)



Alister is a Multi-Green Room nominated Theatre Director and a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (Theatre Directing) and The Arts Academy Ballarat (Company 2004 - Music Theatre Performance). The founder and Artistic Director of The Smith Company & The Actor Workshop, he works extensively with performing arts students within the University sector working with the Victorian College of the Arts, Federation University (formerly The Arts Academy) the National Theatre Drama School and The Queensland Conservatorium. Most recently Alister was the director of the International tour of the hit musical The Wedding Singer (DVE Enterprise) which is currently playing around the country. His creative highlights include: Bring It On: The Musical (Australian Première - David Venn); Heathers! (Federation University); The Drowsy Chaperone (VCA Music Theatre); The Boys (VCA); Much Ado About Nothing (VCA); Chicago (Federation University); Les Miserables (The QLD Conservatory); The Mystery Of Edwin Drood (Federation University); Wicked (Footlight Productions); Project: Hysteria (TBC Theatre Company); Femme Fatale (Melbourne Fringe 2015); URINETOWN! The Musical (VCA Music Theatre); Slavs! (the National Theatre Drama School); Pacific Overtures (Watch This Theatre Company & Manila Street Productions); Penelope (Red Stitch Actors Theatre); Himmelweg (The Smith Co); Behind Closed Doors (Red Stitch Actors Theatre); Tribes (The Melbourne Theatre Company); Hose (MKA Theatre of New Writing); John Patrick Shanley's Doubt (VCA); The Threepenny Opera (The Smith Co). For more info on Alister's work visit www.thealistersmithcompany.com

Amy Smith (she/her)



Amy Smith is a Melbourne based stage manager, and a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Design and Production) course specialising in Stage Management at the University of Melbourne, VCAMCM. Amy has completed a Stage Management internship with the Australian Production of Moulin Rouge! The Musical and has worked across several productions at the VCA in both stage management and production management roles. Her VCA credits include 'Dead Serious.' (Theatre Co. 2021 Devised Works), 'Cloud 9' (directed by Maude Davey, 2021), 'The Cripple of Inishmaan' (directed by Georgina Naidu, 2020) and 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood' (directed by Jason Langley, 2020).

Savanna Wegman (she/her)



Savanna is an emerging director, designer and writer based in Naarm (Melbourne). She is Co-Director of the STRANGEkit Performance Collective and is interested in exploring contemporary devised forms and theatrical structures. Her work spans across digital, live and hybrid mediums. Recent projects include: Set/Costume Design Secondment 'The Mermaid' (La Mama), AudioVisual Production Designer 'WE ARE AIR' (Melbourne Fringe), Malthouse Assistant Stage Management internship 'My Dearworthy Darling' (THE RABBLE), Co-Director 'UnderEden WALKMAN *Explorers Edition*' and 'HOLESPO@CE' (STRANGEkit). Savanna collaborated on immersive productions 'Do Not Collect \$200' and 'End Transmission' (Monash Uni Student Theatre) and has recently completed her Bachelor of Arts at Monash University's Centre for Theatre and Performance.

Mark Wilson

(he/him)



Mark is a Melbourne-based theatre maker, director, actor, writer, and dramaturg. He trained at the VCA and Monash, has studied with Philippe Gaulier in Paris, and is an International Fellow of Shakespeare's Globe in London. He recently directed the twenty-fifth anniversary production of Michael Gow's *Sweet Phoebe*, the Dutch premiere of Emma Hall's *World Problems*, and the premiere season of Declan Furber Gillick's *Bighouse Dreaming* (Best Performance at Melbourne Fringe; nominated for 6 Greenroom Awards; Brisbane Festival; Darwin Festival). Recent performance work has been in *Right Now* at Red Stitch and *Bottomless* by Dan Lee at fortyfivedownstairs. He has assisted/been attached to Julian Meyrick, Richard Murphet, John Bell and Matt Lutton, and was a Dramaturgy Intern at MTC with Chris Mead. He regularly directs, performs and teaches Shakespeare, and in 2016 he completed his trilogy of radical Shakespeare adaptations: *Unsex Me*, *Richard II* (with Olivia Monticciolo, Melbourne Fringe/Brisbane Festival) and *Anti-Hamlet* (nominated for 4 Greenroom awards including Production, Writing and Direction).

We hope you enjoyed

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