

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENTS

DIVING FOR PEARLS
BY KATHERINE THOMSON

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GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENTS

DIVING FOR PEARLS

KATHERINE THOMSON

8 SEPTEMBER – 28 OCTOBER

Director Darren Yap

Set & Costume Designer James Browne

Lighting Designer Benjamin Brockman

Composition & Sound Design Max Lambert &
Roger Lock

Stage Manager Cara Woods

With Michelle Doake, Jack Finsterer, Steve
Rodgers, Ebony Vagulans, Ursula Yovich

SBW STABLES THEATRE
8 SEPTEMBER – 28 OCTOBER

We'd like to thank the City of Wollongong
Brass Band and Conductor Robert Read.

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Griffin acknowledges the generosity of the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation in allowing it the use of the SBW Stables Theatre rent free, less outgoings, since 1986.

THE AUDIENCE WANTS TO WORRY

In the last decade of the twentieth century it is not easy to explain why there should be so much drama in the world and so little of any consequence on the stage. Perhaps some playwrights offer light relief in troubled times, whilst others, overwhelmed by the magnitude of events, choose silence. Meanwhile, the audience that seeks engagement in the public debate turns to television, the docu-drama, rap music or the stand-up comic. The theatre is rarely where one goes to hear the news in Australia in the 1980s and 90s.

Diving for Pearls is an exception. It is a courageous and thrilling attempt to unite public issues and private concerns. The play captures the nineties with the same cunning that the *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *The Shifting Heart* and *Don's Party* captured their respective periods. *Diving for Pearls* is a precious contribution to a noble tradition of dramatic writing in Australia.

Long before the play's first production in Melbourne, Katherine Thomson and the director, Ros Horin, asked me to join them as the dramaturg. I was immediately attracted by the subject matter of the play and the authenticity of the treatment. I felt that the writer knew this world and described it with authority.

Whenever I assess a new work, my first consideration is—necessity. Is this a story that needs to be told? Is there an audience that needs to hear it? My next concern is the element of anxiety—does the theme touch upon a common anxiety? Whether one loves or hates the films *Fatal Attraction* and *Home Alone* it is clear that the former touches a male anxiety and the latter plays upon the parental fear of leaving a child in danger. A classic example is the Olivier film *Henry V*. In 1944, that was the story that needed to be told. It reflected the anxiety of the time. Anxiety can also generate a strong narrative through the skilful combination of hope and fear. We should hope he gets the girl, but fear he won't. We should hope the cop catches the criminal, but fear she won't. My emphasis on the anxiety principle is based upon my observation that people go to the movies and the theatre, not—as they might claim—for a good time, but actually because they want to worry. This applies equally to John Cleese comedies and Jacobean tragedies. It applies to creation

myths, fairytales and bedtime stories. The audience wants anxiety.

Diving for Pearls is a story that needs to be told. The play addresses our current fears and insecurities. We are all afraid of the economic recession, the changing world, getting older and being alone. *Diving for Pearls* offers a wonderful group of characters. We identify with their hopes and fears as they set out on their respective journeys through the play. We hope that Barbara will make it; we fear that she won't.

Katherine Thomson is a wonderful craftsperson. She is a natural dramatist and a writer of memorable dialogue. Her work is informed by a generosity of spirit and an unsentimental respect for the dignity of ordinary people.

As her dramaturg my principle function was to act as a sounding board: to reinforce her confidence and to encourage her to trust her own voice.

With such a talented writer it would seem reasonable to question the value of the dramaturg. In the case of *Diving for Pearls* I am tempted to confess that the dramaturg was as many people already suspect—just the German word for job creation. But in these terrible times who could complain about any job creation scheme?

Paul Thompson

Australian Film, Television and Radio School, 1992

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I remember watching Adam Cook's production of *Diving for Pearls* in 1995 with Nick Enright. It had such a profound effect on me, and on Nick. I remember Nick being very moved by Katherine's writing.

Diving for Pearls is set in the recession of the late 1980s. Many men and women lost their jobs and these circumstances haven't changed. Manufacturing is still cheaper in Asia, and companies are still closing down. The middle-aged person is being replaced by a 21-year-old with a degree. The cashier is being replaced by a scanner. What do you do with people who can't keep up? What kind of community are we if we don't look after our weakest links?

I'm so lucky that Lee asked me to direct *Diving for Pearls*. It's been my wish to direct this play for such a long time. Thank you Ursula, Stevie, Michelle, Ebony and Jack for inspiring and challenging me to go further. Thank you James, Ben, Max, Roger and Cara. You have all been my rock. And as a team you have all made this production an imaginative world for the characters to inhabit and the audience to experience.

In the end, the hard thing this play says to me is: if you don't change you will be changed. Remember and cherish the past, but don't live in it. We have to move forward. As I get older, I find that a harsh reality.

Darren Yap
Director



Katherine Thomson

Playwright

Katherine's playwriting credits include: *Barmaids, Diving for Pearls, Fragments of Hong Kong, Harbour, Kayak, King Tide, Mavis Goes to Timor, Navigating, This Hospital is My Country, Tonight We Anchor in Twofold Bay*. Her screenwriting credits include: for telemovies: *Blackjack, Halifax FP, House of Hancock* (which received the 2015 AWGIE for Original Telemovie), *Schapelle*; for series: *Australia: The Story of Us, Australia on Trial, East West 101, Fallen Angels, GP, Grass Roots, Killing Time, Satisfaction, Snowy, Wildside*. Katherine has been the script producer on award-winning series *A Place To Call Home* and the Australian co-writer of *Answered by Fire*, which won her the 2006 Gold AWGIE. Her credits as a writer for documentary include: documentary series *Darwin's Brave New World*; and two feature documentaries directed by Gillian Armstrong: *Unfolding Florence—The Many Lives of Florence Broadhurst* (which won the 2006 Queensland Premier's Literary Award), and *Women He's Undressed*. In 2006 Katherine was awarded the Australian National Playwrights Centre Award for her substantial contribution to the Australian theatre industry. Katherine has undertaken writers' residencies in Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur, has participated as an invited delegate to the International Women's Playwright Conferences in Jakarta, Bali and India, and has been a guest speaker at various writers' festivals including Darwin, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Hong Kong.



Darren Yap

Director

Darren's directing credits for Griffin include: *Ladies Day*, *The Serpent's Table* (with Lee Lewis, presented by Performance 4a and Sydney Festival at Carriageworks). His other directing credits include: the world premiere of *The Great Wall: One Woman's Journey* for Glowsticks Productions in Singapore; for Hayes Theatre: *Miracle City*; for Louise Withers and Associates: *A Murder is Announced*; for Merrigong Theatre Company: *Letters to Lindy*. In October 2017, Darren will direct *Miracle City* for The Studio at Sydney Opera House. He was Associate Director on *King Kong* for Global Creatures, and on *Miss Saigon* for Cameron Mackintosh (West End, Tokyo, Korea, Holland and Australia). Darren's large-scale events include: Chinese New Year Parade (City of Sydney), Spongebob Parade Pants (Nickelodeon), Segment Director of the Closing Ceremony of the 15th Asian Games in Qatar, and Artistic Festival Consultant for the opening of the National Gallery of Singapore's celebrations.



James Browne

Set & Costume Designer

James' credits as set and costume designer for Griffin include: *Beached*, *Ladies Day*. Other theatre credits include: for Hayes Theatre: *Cabaret*, *Dogfight*; for Monkey Baa Theatre Company: *Pete the Sheep*; for Regal Theatre: *Certified Male*; for Seymour Centre: *Fat Swan*; for Sydney Opera House: *Just for Laughs*; for Theatre Royal: *Side by Side*; for Reg Livermore: *Turns*. He is currently set and costume designer for *Ghost the Musical* in Tokyo. James' recent work includes set design for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and set and costume design for *Velvet*. Previous costume design work includes: for Carriageworks and Sydney Dance Company: *New Breed*; for Opera Australia: *Aida* (Associate Designer) and Stuart Maunder's *Shout!* Previous event design work includes: Love Cooking Festival (London); Jamie Oliver's live stadium show; Netball World Cup opening ceremony; and Pacha Sydney.



Benjamin Brockman

Lighting Designer

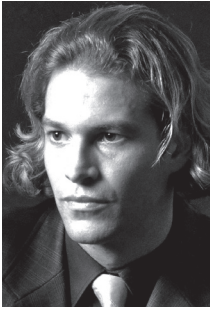
Benjamin's lighting design credits for Griffin include: *Replay*; for Griffin Independent & Stories Like These: *Music*. His other lighting credits include: for Bakehouse Theatre Company: *Jatinga, The Laden Table*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Detroit, Tinderbox*; for Ensemble: *Big Dry, Neville's Island, The Plant, Tribes*; for The Kings Collective: *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*; for Loudmouth Theatre Company: *Those Who Fall in Love Like Anchors Dropped On The Ocean Floor* (for which he also did production design); for Mad March Hare Theatre Company: *Bengal Tiger, Dark Vanilla Jungle*; for MEI Entertainment: *Smurfs Live On Stage* (World Tour); for New Theatre: *When the Rain Stops Falling*; for Old 505: *River*; for Outhouse Theatre Company: *The Aliens*; for Red Line Productions: *Masterclass*; for Squabbalagic: *Grey Gardens the Musical, Mystery Musical, Man of La Mancha*; for Supply Evolution: *Bring It On the Musical*; for Tamarama Rock Surfers: *Animal/People*. His production design credits include *Wittenberg* (Old Fitz).



Max Lambert

Composition & Sound Designer

Max's previous credits for Griffin include: *Ladies Day*. His credits as a composer include work for Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, Sydney Dance Company and Australian Ballet. Recording album credits include: Kate Ceberano, Wendy Matthews, Grace Knight, Vince Jones, Renee Geyer, Paul Kelly, Iva Davies and Icehouse. Max's film credits include: George Miller's *Happy Feet*; Gillian Armstrong's *The Last Days of Chez Nous*. His musical theatre credits include David Atkins' *Hot Shoe Shuffle*. Max's musical directorship credits include Opening and Closing Ceremonies of Sydney 2000 Olympic Games; 2002 Commonwealth Games (Manchester); 2006 Asian Games (Doha, Qatar). His musical supervisor credits include: ARIA award-winning production *The Boy From Oz, Hairspray, Fame, King Kong* and *Strictly Ballroom the Musical*. The revival of Max's musical *Miracle City* (co-written with Nick Enright) was a runaway success at Hayes Theatre in 2014. Most recently Max worked on *I Love You Now* for Darlinghurst Theatre Company. This is Max's sixth collaboration with Roger Lock.



Roger Lock

Composition & Sound Designer

Roger Lock's previous credits with Griffin include: *Ladies Day*. Roger attended Mozarteum University of Salzburg, studying guitar, composition and music technology. During this period he played in Austria, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Spain, Hungary and Taiwan, and was also very active as a recording artist. Since returning to Australia in 2009, Roger has worked as a freelance producer, composer and instrumentalist and has taught similar subjects at universities. In 2012 he released the debut album with his band Roger Vs. The Man. This is his sixth collaboration with Max Lambert.



Cara Woods

Stage Manager

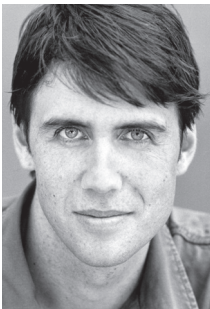
Cara's previous credits with Griffin include: *Ladies Day*. Other recent credits include: for Australian Theatre for Young People: *Political Children*; for Kings Cross Theatre: *Leaves*; for Impulse Theatre Company: *The Shoe-Horn Sonata*; for Michael Sieders: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show*; for Two Peas: *Drift*. Cara attended the Actors College of Theatre and Television where she studied an Advanced Diploma of Stage Management and has since worked on various theatre shows as a stage manager and production manager.



Michelle Doake

Marj

This is Michelle's first production with Griffin. Her notable theatre credits include: for Bell Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Macbeth, Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, The Winter's Tale* (1997, 2014); for Ensemble Theatre: *Absent Friends, Birthrights, Camp, Cruise Control, Japes, Warning: Explicit Material*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *A Little Night Music*; for Marian Street Theatre: *Crimes Of The Heart, Mrs Warren's Profession, Separation, Talking Heads*; for Playbox: *Falling From Grace*; for Perth Theatre Company: *Stories From Suburban Road, The Corporal's Wife*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *After Dinner, Arcadia, Dead White Males, The Wharf Revue, The Wonderful World of Dissocia*. Other productions include: *The Hansard Monologues, The Hatpin, Meeting Mozart, The One Day of the Year*. Film and TV credits include: *All Saints, At Home With Julia, Backberner, Corridors Of Power, Oscar And Lucinda, Puberty Blues, The Cooks, Tricky Business, Doctor Doctor*. Michelle has voiced for animated series including: *Deadly, Enyo, Gasp, Gloria's House, K-Force, Seaside Hotel, Zigby*. She is regularly heard on *Media Watch* (ABC TV). She is a recipient of the Gloria Payton/Gloria Dawn Fellowship, which enabled her to study internationally at RADA and HB Studio. Michelle has received two Sydney Theatre Awards for her performances in *Arcadia* and *The Hatpin*. She was nominated for a Helpmann Award in 2016. She is a graduate of NIDA.



Jack Finsterer

Ron

Jack's theatre credits for Griffin include: *Don't Say The Words, Replay, The Emperor of Sydney, The Woman With Dog's Eyes*. Other theatre credits include: for Keene/Taylor Theatre Project: *Beneath Heaven, The Share*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Cyrano de Bergerac, Third World Blues, Titus Andronicus*; for Riverside Theatre: *Shellshock*; for Perth Theatre Company: *Miss Julie*; for Playbox Theatre: *Disturbing the Dust, Jungfrau*; for Elson Hocking & Woods: *Romeo & Juliet*; for Bell Shakespeare: *Coriolanus*. Jack's film credits include: *How to Change in 9 Weeks, Is This the Real World, Kokoda, Spider Walk*. His television work includes: *Blue Heelers, City Homicide, In and Under, Dangerous, Dream Life, McLeod's Daughters, Farscape, Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries, Mr & Mrs Murder, Neighbours, Rush, Sea Patrol, The Doctor Blake Mysteries, Winter*. Jack trained at Victorian College of the Arts.



Steve Rodgers

Den

Steve's credits for Griffin include: *Dreams in White*, *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography* (for which he received Sydney Theatre Award and Helpmann Award nominations), *A Rabbit for Kim Jong Il*. Other theatre credits include: for Belvoir: *A Christmas Carol*, *Cloudstreet*, *Jasper Jones*, *The Blind Giant Is Dancing*, *The Kiss*, *The Pillowman*, *Twelfth Night*; for Bell Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Diving for Pearls*, *Humble Boy*; for Pork Chop Productions: *Last Cab to Darwin*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Dance Better at Parties*, *Riflemind*, *Three Sisters*. Steve's credits for film include: *Bitter and Twisted*, *Children of the Revolution*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, *The Men's Group*, and the AACTA nominated features *Goldstone* and *The Daughter*. His television credits for the ABC include: *The Code* (which received an AACTA Award), *Pulse*, *Old School*, *In and Under*. Other television credits include: *Home and Away*, *The Letdown*, *Offspring*, *Terra Nova*. Steve writes for theatre, TV and film. He wrote and co-directed the play *Food*, which Belvoir and Force Majeure toured nationally in 2015. He is the inaugural winner of the Lysicrates Prize for playwriting for his adaptation of the Peter Goldsworthy novel, *Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam*, for which he's been commissioned to adapt into a feature film. Steve trained at Theatre Nepean at Western Sydney University.



Ebony Vagulans

Verge

This is Ebony's first production with Griffin. She was born and bred in Sydney to Tanzanian and Australian/Latvian parents. After working with ATYP on the Voices Project film *To Be* and excelling in drama at school, Ebony was accepted straight into NIDA at the age of 17. Her NIDA credits include: *Capriconia*, *#Killallmen*, *Scorched*, *Spring Awakening*, *The Roaring Girl*. Since graduating, Ebony has appeared on-screen as Jackie in *Doctor Doctor* Series 2 (Nine Network) and in *The Letdown* (ABC TV).



Ursula Yovich

Barbara

Ursula made her Griffin debut in Caleb Lewis' *Nailed* in 2005. Standout theatre credits include: for Adelaide Cabaret Festival and Sydney Theatre Company: *Cabaret: Magpie Blues*; for Belvoir and Melbourne Theatre Company: *The Sapphires*; for Brown Cab Productions and Malthouse Theatre: *Heart is a Wasteland*; for Deckchair Theatre Company: *The Magic Hour*; for Sydney Festival: *The Barefoot Divas*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Bloodland, Capricornia, Love and Information, Power Plays, The Golden Age, The Secret River*; for Sydney Theatre Company and Queensland Theatre: *The Sunshine Club*; for Queensland Theatre: *Mother Courage*; for Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company: *Waltzing the Wilarra*. Ursula was the recipient of the 2015 Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award, and the 2016 Balnaves Foundation Indigenous Playwrights' Award. She has won a Helpmann Award for Best Actress and received five Helpmann nominations.