

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

SPLINTER

BY HILARY BELL

SBW STABLES THEATRE

6 SEPTEMBER –
12 OCTOBER 2019

DIRECTOR

LEE LEWIS

DESIGNER

TOBHIAH STONE FELLER

LIGHTING DESIGNER

BENJAMIN BROCKMAN

SOUND DESIGNER & COMPOSER

ALYX DENNISON

VIDEO DESIGNER

MIC GRUCHY

STAGE MANAGER

REBECCA POULTER

WITH

LUCY BELL

SIMON GLEESON



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PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Splinter had its premiere in 2012 at Sydney Theatre Company, following a couple of intensive creative developments. It was a beautiful production co-directed by Sarah Goodes and puppeteer Alice Osborne, with guidance from dramaturge Polly Rowe. Originally commissioned as a work for children (!), it darkly bloomed into a kind of gothic thriller. I brought to the play two of my creative obsessions: fairy tales, and the Unreliable Narrator. My references spanned sources as diverse as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, folk tales about changelings, the Grimm Brothers' *The Wild Swans*, Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, and a memoir written by Ed Smart about his daughter Elizabeth's disappearance. I was also intrigued by the idea of starting a play with what appears to be an ending: the restitution of a missing child. I had always wondered, when thinking about such cases, what life could be like following such a traumatic event. Can it ever return to normal? Do the effects ever vanish? How does a parent relate to a child who's been through the unimaginable?

At the core of the play's story is doubt, and its corrosive nature. Once the splinter of doubt enters the eye/heart/mind of the father—like the glass splinter in *The Snow Queen*—he's lost. The infection spreads. His wife is repulsed by his doubt, meaning he must hide it, which only feeds it. And once he

can no longer resist it, and it takes hold, he must keep shifting the line in the sand in order to sustain his logic.

Splinter came to me pretty much whole. Unlike some other plays, where I've floundered, found myself becalmed, been filled with misgivings, I knew from the first instant what this play wanted to be. The final draft is not substantially different from my first outline. The writing work that followed was mostly a matter of putting flesh on the bones.

It's unusual for a contemporary Australian play to get a second life. I've never understood why this is so. Typically, we revive classics, we give new English and American plays a go, and we'll revisit a handful of older works from our own canon. But giving a new production to a recent play, even when it's been well received, rarely happens. A play takes a year of one's life to write, at the very least. Then, if it's lucky enough to get a production, that's four weeks of existence out in the world. And then it's over. It's a great investment of the writer's time and talents, of the originating producer's funds and energies, for a play to then vanish into thin air.

So, beyond the obvious pleasure at having a play programmed by Griffin, I feel a special joy and gratitude towards the Company for giving *Splinter* a second life. I'm sure all playwrights feel this way about their individual works, but with

Splinter, which consists of many open spaces and provocations, there is so much still to explore.

As times change, community attitudes shift and different echoes and highlights are revealed with each production. In the hands of new collaborators, a play becomes new again.

We acknowledge the importance of telling stories in order to understand ourselves as a culture—indeed, to create a culture. But perhaps it's worth thinking about the importance of *re-*telling stories. It's through constant

retelling that children come to grips with how the world works (ask any parent who's closed a book only to be greeted with 'Again!'). It's how we measure the change that happens so subtly around us, we don't otherwise notice it. It also speaks to the very thing that distinguishes playwriting from other forms of literature: it is there to be endlessly reclaimed and reinterpreted for an audience.

Hilary Bell

Writer

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Hilary Bell understands splinters. She writes at a level of detail and subtlety that is uncommon but often un-commented on. She has the power to take big ideas and slip them inside your head with a well-placed sigh, a strangely calibrated word, a uniquely tuned phrase, a killer half-sentence. She is able to detail the intimacy at the heart of all great love and violence. Her power is frightening. You wouldn't know it if you met her. You know it by sitting down late at night—possibly with a fortifying glass of something red close at hand—and reading her work. Humanity leaps off the page into voices that become moments that become stories that whisk you away to intense examinations of the human condition. Her nuance is addictive. I should know. I have been addicted to this play for years. It is a relief to put the words into the hands of great actors—if only to get the splinters out of my brain!

We don't do enough second productions of Australian plays—Hilary will probably talk about how devastating that can be for the long-term existence of Australian playwrights. I see it from the point of view of industry habits that are short-changing our audiences. Not every Australian play on our stages

has to be new. There are some stories worth hearing again. Sometimes a new production will find a completely different way of realising the play that will connect with a whole new audience. It seems ridiculous to state such obvious thoughts. Yet we have got caught in the language of 'new' and 'first' and 'emerging' and 'world premiere.' We are missing out on creating new productions of plays we know are good, by writers who deserve to learn that the success of their play was not dependent on the success of that one prior production. New actors want the chance to play the roles, new designers want to reimagine the worlds, new directors always think they can do it better. Otherwise we would not have seen so many productions of Arthur Miller's plays!

In the last 20 years there have been so many fascinating Australian plays which have only had one production. It's time to look at our own bookshelf, maybe late at night, maybe with a glass at hand, and remember those plays and believe that if we would like to make them again, there may be an audience who would like to see them again. You tell me.

Lee Lewis



HILARY BELL
PLAYWRIGHT

As well as writing *Fortune* (1992) *Wolf Lullaby* (1996) and *The Falls* (2000), all for Griffin, Hilary's plays have been produced nationally by Belvoir, Black Swan State Theatre Company, Deckchair Theatre, La Boite, National Theatre of Parramatta, NORPA, Sydney Theatre Company, State Theatre Company SA, Darlinghurst Theatre Company and Vitalstatistik; in the US by Atlantic Theater and Steppenwolf; and in the UK by The National Theatre's Connections programme. These include *The Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Ruysch*, *Memmie Le Blanc*, *The Mysteries: Genesis* (with Lally Katz), *The Red Balloon*, *Splinter*, *Victim Sidekick Boyfriend Me*, *The White Divers of Broome*, and adaptations of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Moliere's *The Hypochondriac*, and Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors*. She was Associate Writer on Paul Capsis's *Angela's Kitchen*, which premiered at Griffin in 2010. Hilary has written libretti for opera and lyrics for song cycles and musicals—most recently *The Red Tree* (comp. Greta Gertler Gold). Awards include the Philip Parsons Award, the Jill Blewitt Playwrights Award, Bug'n'Bub Playwright Award (US), the Arealis Award, the Eric Kocher Playwright's Award (US), an Inscription Award, as well as a Helpmann and two AWGIES. Hilary is a graduate of the Juilliard Playwrights' Studio (US), NIDA, and AFTRS. She was the 2003-2004 Tennessee Williams Fellow in Creative Writing at the University of the South, Tennessee, and in 2013 was the Patrick White Playwriting Fellow at Sydney Theatre Company. She is also the creator, with artist Antonia Pesenti, of best-selling picture book *Alphabetical Sydney*.



LEE LEWIS
DIRECTOR

Lee is the Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company and one of Australia's leading directors. For Griffin she has directed: *The Bleeding Tree* (Best Director at the 2016 Helpmann Awards), *Prima Facie*, *The Almighty Sometimes*, *Kill Climate Deniers*, *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *The Homosexuals or 'Faggots'*, *Rice*, *Masquerade* (co-directed with Sam Strong), *Gloria*, *Emerald City*, *A Rabbit for Kim Jong-il*, *The Serpent's Table* (co-directed with Darren Yap), *Replay*, *Silent Disco*, *Smurf In Wonderland*, *The Bull*, *The Moon and the Coronet of Stars*, *The Call*, *A Hoax*, *The Nightwatchman*. Other directing credits include: for Griffin and Bell Shakespeare: *The Literati*, *The Misanthrope*; for Bell Shakespeare: *The School for Wives*, *Twelfth Night*; for Belvoir: *That Face*, *This Heaven*, *Half and Half*, *A Number*, *7 Blowjob*, *Ladybird*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *Darlinghurst Nights*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Gloria*, *Hay Fever* and David Williamson's *Rupert*, which toured to Washington DC as part of the World Stages International Arts Festival and to Sydney's Theatre Royal in 2014; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Mary Stuart*, *Honour*, *Love-Lies-Bleeding*, *ZEBRA!*; for Darwin Festival: *Highway of Lost Hearts*.



TOBHIYAH STONE FELLER

DESIGNER

Graduating from NIDA in 2005, Tobhiyah works as a designer across interior, architecture, installation and theatre projects. She's also a Lecturer in Design and Creative Practices subjects at NIDA. Set & Costume Design credits include: for Griffin: *Replay*; for Griffin Independent: *Lighten Up*; for ATYP: *Bustown, Desiree*

Din and the Red Forest, The Laramie Project, This Territory; for B Sharp: *A View of Concrete*; for Bell Shakespeare Education: *Macbeth*; for Blacktown Arts Centre: *My Name is SUD*; for Ensemble: *Blue/Orange, Clybourne Park, e-baby, Good People, My Zinc Bed/Blood Bank* (for which her multi-purpose set design won the Installation Design Category at the 2016 Australian Interior Design Awards), *Sorting Out Rachel*; for Merrigong Theatre Company: *Camarilla*; for Musica Viva: *Da Vinci's Apprentice*; for NSW Public Schools Drama Company: *Bassett, The Elephant Man, Fugee*; for Performing Lines: *Variant*; for Riverside Theatres: *Parramatta Girls*; for Siren Theatre Co.: *Human Resources*; for Sydney Conservatorium of Music: *Daisy Bates at Ooldea, Orphée Aux Enfers*; and for Tamarama Rock Surfers: *Anna Robi and the House of Dogs*. In 2014, Tobhiyah was awarded Highly Commended Emerging Designer for Stage at the Australian Production Design Guild Awards. This year, *Flowstate*, a multi-arts outdoor performance venue for which she was a lead designer was awarded The Great Place Award by QLD Planning Institute of Australia. Tobhiyah is an active member of Australian Production Design Guild and is the Live Performance Coordinator for the MENTORAPDG program.



BENJAMIN BROCKMAN

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Ben is an award-winning Lighting Designer who works both nationally and internationally. Lighting Design credits include: for Griffin: *Diving for Pearls, Replay*, 2016 & 2018 Season Launches; for Apocalypse Theatre Company: *Angels in America Parts I & II, Metamorphoses*; for Bontom: *Chamber Pot Opera* (Adelaide,

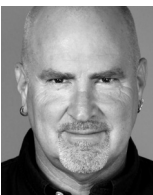
Edinburgh and Sydney Fringe Festivals); for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Broken, Detroit, The Motherfucker with the Hat, Tinder Box, Torch Song Trilogy*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Baby Doll, The Big Dry, Neville's Island, The Plant, Tribes*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *Razorhurst*; for KXT bAKEHOUSE: *Dresden, Jatinga, The Laden Table, Straight, Visiting Hours*; for Legs on the Wall: *Cat's Cradle, The Raft* (Development); for Mad March Hare: *Belleville, Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo, Dark Vanilla Jungle, Eurydice, Shivered, You Got Older*; for National Theatre of Parramatta: *Girl in the Machine, The Girl/The Woman*; for Shaun Parker & Company: *King*; for Squabbalogic: *Good Omens The Musical, Grey Gardens The Musical, Herringbone, Mystery Musical, Man of La Mancha*; for Spark Youth Theatre: *Political Children*; and for Unhappen: *Animal/People, Awkward Conversations with Animals I Have Fucked, Cough, Mr. Kolpert*. Ben's portfolio and upcoming productions can be found at: www.benbrockman.com



ALYX DENNISON

SOUND DESIGNER & COMPOSER

Alyx Dennison is a Sydney-based singer, composer and sound artist. She was one half of the critically-acclaimed duo *kyū* alongside Freya Berkhout, and played festivals including The Great Escape (UK), Homebake, Meredith Musical Festival, Mona Foma Festival, and SXSW (US) before releasing their first studio album in 2010 through Popfrenzy/Inertia. In 2011, they were awarded the Qantas Spirit of Youth Award and disbanded on a high with the release of their second album in 2012. In 2015, Alyx released her solo debut album with Popfrenzy/Caroline, which she toured nationally, as well as supporting Deradoorian (Dirty Projectors), Juana Molina (Argentina) and LAMB (UK). As lead vocalist and instrumentalist, Alyx's performance credits include: for the Biennale of Sydney: *Composition for Mouths*; for Big hART: *SKATE*; for Liveworks: *Invisible, As Music, The Other Tempo, Rhetorical Chorus*; for Sydney Contemporary: *Bravi Brava Brave*; for Shaun Parker Company: *Am I* (Tour). As Composer, Alyx's credits include: for All About Women Festival/ Giant Dwarf: *Story Club Solo: Zoe Norton Lodge*; for Dance Massive: *CO_EX_EN*; for Dirty Feet/Dance Bites: *Double Beat*; for Next Wave Festival: *mi:wi*; and as Record Producer, credits include: for Bonniesongs: *Energetic Mind* (Smallpond UK); for Pheno: *Dragon Year* (Electric Ear Records); as well as current work on albums for Jessica O'Donoghue and Julia Johnson. Alyx is also a music educator, and has worked as a mentor for Campbelltown Arts Centre/Bree van Reyks's *Massive Band*; at Liverpool Girls' High School; and for *Wandering Books*, a music outreach program for refugee students in primary schools across Western Sydney. Alyx is currently developing her second solo release with the support of Campbelltown Arts Centre. She studied composition at VCA.



MIC GRUCHY

VIDEO DESIGNER

Mic works across stage, screen and video art and is a pioneer of video design for theatre. Mic's theatre credits include: for Griffin: *The Feather in the Web, King Tide, The Serpent's Table, Yasukichi Murakami – Through a Distant Lens*; for Brisbane Festival: *Freeze Frame*; for Merrigong Theatre Company: *Lost Boys*; for Monkey Baa: *Thai-riffic*; for Opera Australia: *Aida, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Girl of the Golden West*; for Perth Festival: *A Flowering Tree, My Bicycle Loves You*; for Performing Lines: *Wrong Skin*; and for Sydney Festival: *I Am Eora, My Bicycle Loves You, Puncture*. International credits include: for the Australian Chamber Orchestra at the Barbican in London: *The Reef*; for Jermyn St. Theatre, in London's West End: *Letter to Larry*; and for Satu Bulan/Performing Lines/Browns Mart Arts, touring across Indonesia and Australia: *Age of Bones*. Mic teaches Digital Media Design and Vision Technologies Production at NIDA and has lectured in media at Uni of NSW and Uni of Wollongong. Mic's video artworks have been included in

collections such as MOMA in New York, as well as the Sydney Opera House, Sydney Olympic Park and the Biennale of Sydney. He was awarded an Australia Council Established Artist's Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Practice in 2012.



REBECCA POULTER

STAGE MANAGER

Rebecca is a graduate of NIDA (Production). Her credits include: as Stage Manager: for Arts Centre Melbourne/Critical Stages: *Songs for the Fallen*; for ATYP: *A Town Named Warboy*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *The Mystery of Love and Sex*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Buyer and Cellar, Blue/Orange, Camp, Clybourne Park, Dream Home, Educating Rita, Luna Gale, The Good Doctor, Mothers and Sons, Relatively Speaking, Richard III, Two, Unqualified*; for Kay & McLean Productions/Sydney Opera House: *My First Time*; for Michael Sieders Presents/Adelaide Festival Centre/La Boite/Sydney Opera House: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show*; for Performing Lines: *Hello, Goodbye and Happy Birthday*; for Return Fire Productions/Comedy Theatre/QPAC/State Theatre Centre WA: *Senior Moments*; for Sydney Festival/Theatre of Image: *Brett and Wendy... A Love Story Bound by Art*; as well as various productions for Dead Puppet Society, The Hayloft Project, Milk Crate Theatre, MKA, Old 505, Q Theatre, Red Line Productions, Sport for Jove, Sydney Chamber Opera, Sydney Theatre Company, Tap Gallery, and TRS; as Assistant Stage Manager: for Belvoir: *Strange Interlude, Thyestes*; for Malthouse Theatre: *Blood Wedding*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Australia Day, Blood Wedding, The Comedy of Errors, Dance Better at Parties, True West, ZEBRA!*; for Sydney Dance Company: *CounterMove, Interplay* (International Tour); as Production Manager: for Adelaide Cabaret Festival/Chunky Move/KAGE: *Out of Earshot*; for CDP Theatre Producers: *The 91-Storey Treehouse*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Diplomacy* (Tour); for IPAC/Seymour Centre: *Cyrano De Bergerac*; for MTC Neon: *Dangerous Liaisons*; for Riverside Theatres/Sport for Jove/Seymour Centre: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo & Juliet, The Tempest*; as well as various productions for fortyfivedownstairs, Little Ones Theatre, and TheatreWorks; as Production Stage Manager: for Griffin: *Merciless Gods, Shining City, The Ugly One*; and as Technical Stage Manager: Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

**LUCY BELL**

WOMAN

Lucy has performed extensively on stage, including: for Griffin: *Dreams in White, Emerald City, The Falls, Speaking In Tongues, Wolf Lullaby*; for Bell Shakespeare: *The Duchess of Malfi, Pericles, Romeo and Juliet, Twelfth Night*; for Belvoir: *Blue Murder, Scenes from an Execution, Twelfth Night*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Marjorie Prime*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *For Julia*; for Performing Lines: *Through the Wire*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *As You Like It, The Cherry Orchard, Darling Oscar*. Film credits include *The Square and Ten Empty*, and most recently the award-winning short films *Second Best* and *Dots*. On television, Lucy has appeared in: for ABC: *Bastard Boys, Crownies, Dirt Game, Grass Roots, Magazine Wars, Rake, Wildside*; for the Comedy Channel: *30 Seconds*; for Nine Network: *Farscape, Here Come the Habibs, Love Child, Murder Call*; for Seven Network: *A Place to Call Home, All Saints, Catching Milat, City Homicide, Home & Away, My Husband My Killer*; and for Showcase: *Fighting Season*.

**SIMON GLEESON**

MAN

Simon's theatre credits include: for Cameron Macintosh Australia: *Les Misérables* – Australia; for Cameron Macintosh Ltd London: *Les Misérables* – London (West End); for Edinburgh Festival: *Certified Male*; for Gustave Stage Productions: *Love Never Dies*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *An Ideal Husband, Hay Fever; Rupert*; for New London Theatre: *Imagine This* (West End); for The Production Company: *Chess, Curtains, Oklahoma!*; for Royal National Theatre (UK): *Southwark Fair*; for Shaftesbury Theatre: *The Far Pavilions* (West End); for Sydney Theatre Company: *Harbour, The Republic of Myopia*; for Victorian Opera: *A Little Night Music*; for Wexford Festival (Ireland): *The Silver Lake, Three Sides*; and for Sadler's Wells Theatre: *Shoes* (UK). Simon's television credits in Australia include: for ABC: *SeaChange*; for Seven Network: *Blue Heelers, City Homicide, Neighbours*. In the UK he played the regular role of Sid in *EastEnders* (BBC 1) and was a member of the principal cast of *Kombat Opera* (BBC 2) directed by Monty Python member Terry Jones. Simon also played the role of Ken in the feature film *My Life in Ruins*. Simon was awarded the 2015 Helpmann Award for Best Male Actor in a Musical for his performance as Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*. He has received a further two Helpmann Award nominations and multiple Green Room Award and Sydney Theatre Award nominations for his work.
