

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENTS

GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

SUPERHEROES

BY MARK ROGERS

REGINALD THEATRE, SEYMOUR CENTRE
25 SEPTEMBER – 24 OCTOBER

DIRECTOR

SHARI SEBBENS

DRAMATURG

DECLAN GREENE

DESIGNER

RENÉE MULDER

LIGHTING DESIGNER

VERITY HAMPSON

**COMPOSER &
SOUND DESIGNER**

DAVID BERGMAN

**ASSOCIATE COMPOSER
& SOUND DESIGNER**

ALYX DENNISON

STAGE MANAGER

KHYM SCOTT

WITH

GEMMA BIRD

MATHESON

CLAIRE LOVERING

ALEKS MIKIC

With thanks to the
development cast

Christian Byers

Brenna Harding

Nikita Waldron



Supported by
Government partners



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PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

In late 2017, my partner Ash and I were getting ready for the arrival of our first child. I was shitting myself. I was thinking a lot about responsibility, about what it means to bring a child into the world right now. I was thinking BIG thoughts about the direction of the world, and also really practical thoughts about day care and car seats and sleep. Then in late November, I saw some footage of an ex-theatre and TV director turned General for the Bosnian-Croatian forces committing suicide during his trial for war crimes at The Hague. Somehow all of this got rolled in together to form the first draft of *Superheroes*.

It's a play about two women—Emily and Jana—one in Thirroul, NSW, and the other in Mostar, Bosnia. It asks if there is a connection between an inability to take responsibility for our actions on a personal level, and a larger failure of responsibility on an international scale. What I wanted to know was: what does it take to change your mind? What does it mean to take responsibility for your actions?

Rehearsing this play in 2020 has amplified those questions. We are faced with a crisis that demands we measure our own desires against the needs of everyone else. It demands that we take responsibility, not just for our own actions, but for the wellbeing of others as well. To do so—to really do so—we must change. The structure of our society must change. This is not a COVID play (thank f*ck!), but I hope that it somehow echoes the challenges we're dealing with today.

I also want to say something about theatre. I have missed it. I have missed its smell. Its rules and rituals. The way it makes me think. The way words bend and twist in the air of it. The stupefying power of an actor in front of an audience. The first shard of light in the dark. The stupid exit signs that spoil complete blackouts. The crackle of laughter in an audience. I've even missed the overpriced drinks. But while I'm very happy to be back, I know there are many who aren't back yet. To the freelance artists shamefully abandoned by the government's JobKeeper/JobSeeker provisions—I miss you most of all. I urge our industry, audiences and the broader community to fight for the support of these vital, vulnerable arts workers.

I'm extraordinarily stoked and grateful to heaps of people for their help with this work. To Shari, Declan and the team at Griffin for their support and faith. To Christian Byers, Brenna Harding and Nikita Waldron for their keen development brains. To my friends Hannah Goodwin, Liv Satchell and Harriet Gillies for reading early drafts of scenes and telling me to make it funnier. To Sanja Simic and Jenni Medway for shaping me as a writer and asking me hard questions. To Jelena Sajinovic for her keen insights into Mostar and the legacy of the war within the war. And, of course, to Ash Ray who is responsible for all the best bits in all my plays. Just ask her.

Thanks heaps.

Mark Rogers

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I first came across *Superheroes* in 2019 when it won the Patrick White Playwrights Award and was pulled into the poetry, sophistication and thrill of the piece. Profoundly generous, Mark Rogers is the type of playwright a first-time director could only dream of. Unrelenting in the interrogation of his vision, he will follow a character's thread to its deepest colour, inviting them to pull at their own snags as we, the audience, watch them unravel the world before us.

As *Superheroes* started calling into question the fragile connective tissue of community and responsibility almost two years ago, nobody knew what a flicker of hope this play would become for so many artists and creatives within the space of a few months. Blessed with a writer and dramaturg dream team, a cast of incredibly generous actors who'd not been able to open their *Kindness* season, unlimited Zoom hours and three weird and wonderful weeks of online development for what is a very offline practice; we inched ever closer to the thing we love doing most whilst never feeling further removed from it – from you. Thank you for bringing us back.

Shari Sebbens



MARK ROGERS
PLAYWRIGHT

Mark is a multi-award-winning playwright and theatremaker.

Mark's theatre credits include: for Brisbane Festival: *Under the Radar: Soothsayers*; for Merrigong Theatre Company: *Tom William Mitchell*; for Novelty UK: *Target Audience*; for the Old 505 Theatre: *Plastic*; for PACT and AC Arts Adelaide: *Gobbledygook*; for

Tamarama Rock Surfers and Bondi Feast: *The Buck*; for Tamarama Rock Surfers and the Old Fitzroy Theatre: *Blood Pressure* (published by PlayLab). In 2019, he won both the Griffin Award and Sydney Theatre Company's Patrick White Award for *Superheroes*, which was also shortlisted for Stuckemarkt at Theatretreffern as part of the Berlin Festspiele. Mark has produced celebrated work with some of Australia's most innovative independent companies, including Woodcourt Art Theatre, Bodysnatchers and re:group. His work on projects with the performance collective Applespiel since 2008 includes seasons at major theatres nationally and internationally. He holds a PhD from the University of Wollongong, where he works as a lecturer in theatre and performance.



SHARI SEBBENS
DIRECTOR

Shari is a Bardi, Jabirr Jabirr person born and raised on Larrakia Country, now blessed to live on Gadigal Land. Shari is the Richard Wherrett Fellow at the Sydney Theatre Company. *Superheroes* will mark her directorial debut. Shari's theatre credits as an actor include: for Griffin: *The Bleeding Tree, Return to Earth*; for Griffin

and Queensland Theatre: *City Of Gold*; for Griffin and La Boite: *A Hoax*; for Belvoir: *Back At The Dojo, Radiance*; for Black Swan State Theatre Company: *Our Town*; for Darwin Festival: *Wulamanyuwi and the Seven Pamanui*; for Darwin Theatre Company: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; for Darwin Festival and Malthouse Theatre: *Shadow King*; for Queensland Theatre: *An Octoroon*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *A Cheery Soul, The Battle of Waterloo, Black is the New White*. Shari's film credits include: *Australia Day, The Darkside, The Sapphires, Teenage Kicks, Thor: Ragnarok, Top End Wedding*. Her television credits include: for ABC: *8MMM Aboriginal Radio, Black Comedy, The Gods of Wheat Street, The Heights, The Letdown, Redfern Now* (for which she was awarded the Logie Award – Graham Kennedy Award for Most Outstanding New Talent), *Soul Mates, Ta Da!*; and for SBS: *A Chance Affair*. Shari trained in Aboriginal Theatre at WAAPA and graduated from NIDA with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting).



DECLAN GREENE

DRAMATURG

Declan is the Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company, and works as a playwright, dramaturg and director. He has collaborated as a dramaturg with writers including Nakkiah Lui, Zoey Dawson, Maxine Beneba Clarke, and Future D. Fidel. As a playwright, his work includes *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *The*

Homosexuals, or *Faggots*, *Melancholia*, *Moth*, and *Pompeii L.A.* As a director, his credits include: for Malthouse Theatre: *Wake in Fright*; for Malthouse Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company: *Blackie Blackie Brown*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark*; for ZLMD Shakespeare Company: *Conviction*. He co-founded queer experimental theatre company Sisters Grimm with Ash Flanders in 2006, and has directed and co-created all their productions to date, including: for Griffin Independent and Theatre Works: *Summertime in the Garden of Eden*; for Malthouse Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company: *Calpurnia Descending*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Lilith: The Jungle Girl*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Little Mercy*. He was Resident Artist at Malthouse Theatre between 2016 and 2019.



RENÉE MULDER

DESIGNER

Renée is an award-winning set and costume designer. Her theatre design credits include: for Griffin: *The Bleeding Tree*, *The Boys*, *Prima Facie*; for Griffin Independent: *The Pigeons*; for Griffin and La Boite: *A Hoax*; for Griffin and Queensland Theatre: *Rice*; for Bell Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*; for La Boite: *As You Like It*, *I Love*

You, Bro, *Ruben Guthrie*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Arbus and West*, *Home*, *I'm Darling*; for Queensland Theatre: *An Octoroon*, *Fat Pig*, *Nearer the Gods*, *Sacre Bleu!*, *Triple X*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Actor on a Box: The Luck Child*, *Banging Denmark*, *Battle of Waterloo*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Black is the New White*, *Dance Better at Parties*, *Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark*, *In a Heart Beat*, *The Long Way Home*, *Mariage Blanc*, *Mrs Warren's Profession*, *Orlando*, *Perplex*, *The Splinter*, *The Torrents*; for Sydney Theatre Company and Queensland Theatre: *The Effect*; and for Theatre Forward: *The Sneeze*. As costume designer, her credits include: for Sydney Theatre Company: *Children of the Sun*, *Chimerica*, *Endgame*, *The Harp in the South Part One and Part Two*, *Saint Joan*, *Top Girls*; for Sydney Theatre Company and State Theatre Company of South Australia: *Vere (Faith)*. As set designer, her credits include: for Sydney Theatre Company and La Boite: *Edward Gant's Amazing Feats of Loneliness*. As associate designer, her credits include: for Sydney Theatre Company: *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Renée's film credits include, as co-production designer: *A Parachute Falling in Siberia*; as part of the armour art department: *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Renée was Sydney Theatre Company's Resident Designer from 2012-2014, and was a member of Queensland Theatre's National Artistic Team from 2016-2017. She is a graduate of NIDA and Queensland College of Art.

**VERITY HAMPSON**

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Verity is a lighting and projection designer with over ten years' experience, designing over 130 productions. Her theatre design credits include: for Griffin: *A Strategic Plan*, *And No More Shall We Part*, *Angela's Kitchen*, *Beached*, *The Bleeding Tree*, *The Boys*, *The Bull*, *The Moon and the Coronet of Stars*, *Dealing With Clair*, *The*

Floating World, *This Year's Ashes*, *The Turquoise Elephant*; for Griffin Independent: *The Brothers Size*, *The Cold Child*, *Crestfall*, *Family Stories: Belgrade*, *Live Acts On Stage*, *Music*, *The New Electric Ballroom*, *References to Salvadore Dali Make Me Hot*, *Way to Heaven*; for Griffin and Bell Shakespeare: *The Literati*; for Bell Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Julius Caesar*, *Titus Andronicus*; for Belvoir: *An Enemy of the People*, *The Drover's Wife*, *Faith Healer*, *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Ensemble: *Baby Doll*, *Fully Committed*; for Malthouse Theatre: *Wake in Fright*; for Queensland Theatre: *Death of a Salesman*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Blackie Blackie Brown*, *Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark*, *Machinal*, *Little Mercy*. Verity has won two Sydney Theatre Awards and a Green Room Award for Best Mainstage Lighting Design, as well as an APDG Award for Best Lighting Design. She is a NIDA graduate.

**DAVID BERGMAN**

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

David is a composer, sound and video designer and has been based in Sydney for over 10 years. His recent work includes:

as Composer & Sound Designer: for Griffin: *First Love is the Revolution*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Maggie Stone*;

for NIDA: *Another Country*, *SALEM*; for Seymour Centre: *Made to*

Measure; as Sound and Video Designer: for Sydney Theatre Company: *A Cheery Soul*, *The Wharf Revue* (2009-2019); for Soft Tread Enterprises: *The Gospel According to Paul*;

as Sound Designer: for ATYP: *Spring Awakening*; for Hayes

Theatre Company: *Catch Me If You Can*, *The Rise and Disguise of Elizabeth R*; for

Monkey Baa: *Josephine Wants to Dance*; as Co-Sound Designer: for Belvoir: *Packer*

and Sons; and as Video Designer: for Bangarra: *Knowledge Ground*; for Monkey Baa:

The Peasant Prince, *Possum Magic*; for Sydney Chamber Opera: *Breaking Glass*; for

Sydney Theatre Company: *The Effect*, *The Hanging*, *The Long Way Home*, *Muriel's*

Wedding the Musical. David was the Technical Director for *Griffin Lock-In* in 2020.

David trained at NIDA and teaches for their graduate and postgraduate courses.



ALYX DENNISON

ASSOCIATE COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

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: *Day for Night* (alongside Nick Wales, Ngaiire, Stereogamous and the Inner West Voices), *Invisible*, *As Music*, *The Other Tempo*, *Rhetorical Chorus*; for MUMA and Google: *Wet Matter*; for Sydney Contemporary: *Bravi Brava Brava*; for Shaun Parker Company: *Am I* (Tour). As Composer and Sound Designer, Alyx's credits include: for Griffin: *Splinter*; 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 MUMA: *The Door*; for Next Wave Festival: *mi:wi*; for Transit Dance Company: *ID*; as well as work on a new feature dance work and short film with Cass Eipper and the Australasian Dance Collective. As Record Producer, credits include: for Bonniesongs: *Energetic Mind* (Smallpond UK); for Pheno: *Dragon Year* (Electric Ear Records); as well as current work on an album with Jessica O'Donoghue. 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.



KHYM SCOTT

STAGE MANAGER

Khym has previously worked for Griffin Theatre Company as Stage Manager: *Family Values*, *First Love is the Revolution*, *City of Gold*, *Prima Facie*, *Good Cook*. *Friendly*. *Clean.*, *Kill Climate Deniers*, *Festival of New Writing*, *The Witches*, *Girl in Tan Boots*, *The Serpent's Table*; as Broadcast Director: *Griffin Lock-In*; *Griffin Award 2020*; and for Griffin/Bell Shakespeare: *The Misanthrope*. Other recent credits include: for Belvoir/Malthouse: *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*; for Belvoir: *The Dance of Death*, *Miss Julie*, *This Heaven*; for Contemporary Asian Australian Performance: *Double Delicious*, *Stories Then and Now*; for Sydney Festival: *Lady Rizo: Red, White and Indigo*; and for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. From 2013 to 2017, Khym was Assistant Stage Manager of The Australian Ballet, and toured with the company regionally, nationally, and internationally. Khym is a graduate of NIDA and The University of Sydney.



GEMMA BIRD MATHESON

EMILY

Gemma was one of the ten finalists for the 2018 Heath Ledger Scholarship and is both an actor and writer/creator. Gemma's theatre credits include: for She Said Theatre: *Fallen*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Orange Throwing (Rough Draft)*; for VCA: *Zone Four*. Gemma's film credits include: *The Drownsman*. Gemma's television

credits include: for ABC: *Bertram Poppingstock: Problem Solver, Content, Trip for Biscuits, Why Are You Like This?*; for Channel Seven: *Winners & Losers*; for Fremantle Media and Channel Eleven: *Neighbours*; for the Syfy Channel: *Childhood's End*. Gemma's web series credits include: as co-creator, co-writer, executive producer and performer: for ABC: *The Housemate*; as performer: *Deadhouse Dark, Double Date Night*. Gemma has trained at the Atlantic Theatre Company in New York, Armstrong Acting Studios in Toronto and NIDA's Young Actors Studio.



CLAIRE LOVERING

JANA

Claire graduated from WAAPA in 2010 and was awarded the Leslie Anderson Award and the Sally Burton Award that same year. Her theatre credits include: for Griffin: *The Feather in the Web*; for ATYP: *Mr Kolpert*; for Black Swan State Theatre Company: *The Damned Water Rising, Day One, A Hotel, Evening*; for Darlinghurst

Theatre Company: *Detroit*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; for Kay & McLean Productions: *The Graduate*; for the Old 505 Theatre: *River*; for Sport for Jove: *The Importance of Being Earnest*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Dinner, Top Girls*; for Queensland Theatre and Black Swan State Theatre Company: *Managing Carmen*; for WAAPA: *Arabian Nights, The Comedy of Errors, Joking Apart, The Threepenny Opera, Under Milk Wood*. Claire's film credits include: *San Andreas, Event Zero*. Her television credits include: for ABC/Netflix: *The Letdown*; for Nine Network: *Hyde & Seek, Bite Club*; for Network Ten: *Wonderland*. Claire's debut self-penned solo show *RIVER* won the Adelaide Fringe Weekly Award for Best Theatre and Sydney's Spectrum Now ANZ Blue Rooms Series for most promising emerging theatre talent. As a recipient of a 2015 Major Mike Walsh Fellowship, Claire travelled to New York to study method acting at the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in 2016.



ALEKS MIKIC

SIMON / DINO

Aleks is a WAAPA Acting graduate and co-founder of artist-run-initiative and gallery Flow Studios. His theatre credits include: for Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Are We Awake?*; for Sydney Opera House: *Ghost Stories*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Dinner*; for Zen Zen Zo: *Amadeus*, *The Tempest*. Aleks's film credits include: *Better Watch Out*, *Joe Cinque's Consolation*, *On It Goes*. Aleks's television credits include: for ABC: *100% Wolf*, *Diary of an Uber Driver*; for AMC: *Preacher*; for Channel 10: *Five Bedrooms*; for Foxtel: *Secret City*. Aleks is an artist of Serbian ancestry working as a filmmaker and musician on land rightfully belonging to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Aleks acknowledges with utmost respect the Indigenous Australian people as the lawful owners and custodians of this stolen land.
