

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENTS

GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

GREEN PARK

BY ELIAS JAMIESON BROWN
5 FEBRUARY – 6 MARCH

DIRECTOR & DRAMATURG

DECLAN GREENE

DESIGNER

EMMA WHITE

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

DAVID BERGMAN

WRITING SECONDMENT

RIORDAN BERRY

STAGE MANAGER

ISABELLA KERDIJK

WITH

JOSEPH ALTHOUSE

STEVE LE MARQUAND



Supported by
Government partners



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.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I first presented *Green Park* at Melbourne Theatre Company for their Cybec Electric program. As the writing developed, a few people suggested I rename the play and set it in Victoria. They wanted it to be relevant to local audiences.

I was stubbornly protective but couldn't articulate why I felt this park was essential as the dramatic backdrop to Edden and Warren's story. Interviews with Queers and research spirals revealed an endlessly fascinating history. It's difficult now to think of another setting, fictional or existing, that lends itself to such loaded symbolism.

I already knew Green Park as the site of the Gay and Lesbian Holocaust Memorial, and the first AIDS Memorial Candlelight Rally. I learned it's the site where the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence gathered in 1984 to commemorate the men's public toilet after it was demolished—because it was operating as a kind of all-hours sex haunt.

In developing this play, we often spoke about the ghosts and tragedy that surround Warren and Edden; their meeting place is wedged between Old Darlinghurst Gaol, the Holocaust Museum and St Vincent's Hospital, which was one of the first health care facilities in Australia to treat AIDS patients.

In the past, it was a meeting place for closeted men and sex workers at a time when it was criminal to practice homosexuality. Now it continues as a meeting place for the homeless.

It's as though it's always been a kind of purgatory for people who feel rejected by society.

Rewriting this play to be performed as a site-specific work took a lot more time and development than Declan and I anticipated. But the nerd in me adores how firmly rooted this play is to its location, and I hope the audience leave with an affection for the real Green Park.

I will be eternally grateful to Declan and the Griffin team for supporting this work through its many iterations and of course, for premiering my first mainstream play.

Elias Jamieson Brown

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In the depths of Sydney's first COVID-19 lockdown, I was having a socially-distanced coffee with Simon Burke somewhere in Kings Cross. At this time, in April 2020, performing indoors in a conventional theatre seemed a million years away, so I was trying to come up with an idea for a show that Griffin could stage outdoors. After Simon had talked me down from some truly woeful ideas, we moved on, and I started telling him about the young writer Elias Jamieson Brown, and a brilliant play he'd written that touched on the complex history of Darlinghurst's Green Park. Simon offered: '*Could you do it in the real Green Park?*' I told him no — Elias's play was set in a Darlinghurst apartment. '*...But could you do it in the real Green Park?*'

I called Elias and suggested it would be very easy to relocate the setting of his play, requiring minimal interference to his script.

Six months later he had written a completely new play.

I can't say I don't feel bad for that other version of *Green Park*. It was a great play: just as funny and profound as all of Elias's work. But I'm also glad *Green Park* was rewritten. Not just because of its potential as a site-specific show, but because Elias had started writing *Green Park* in 2018, and now in 2021, the gay world which that early draft reflected has changed massively.

Griffin has a long and great history of staging works about contemporary gay experience. From the landmark devised work *Soft Targets*, to Tommy Murphy's *Strangers in Between*, to Alana Valentine's *Ladies Day*. But these were all written before the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Australia. The post-Marriage Equality gay world is quite a new place, and the real Green Park stands as an increasingly potent metaphor for it.

In Elias's play, Edden and Warren enter this park as two men who should, in 2021, be 'fine'. Edden is a brashly queer member of Gen Z. Warren is a maybe-straight-maybe-bi Gen X-er. Both of them are same-sex-attracted, both of them live in a country where such relationships are broadly accepted.

But neither Warren nor Edden are, in fact, 'fine'. They arrive in the park looking for quick sex, and find themselves tangled in decades of trauma. On one side: the ghost of a toilet block where men would meet for anonymous sex under threat of bashing. On the other side: a hospital where many of those same men died of AIDS. A decades-long history of queer lust, repression, violence—now half-forgotten beneath a veneer of polite gay gentrification. A Fitness First hasn't been built over it yet. But at some point it probably will be.

As a director, it is always a privilege to direct a premiere of a new work, but I am doubly grateful for the opportunity

to also work with Elias as Dramaturg of his play. Whatever we define as ‘truth’ in 2021, he has an innate and precious gift for it—bringing Warren and Edden to life in all their glorious mess with the tiniest, most striking details. Even in 2021, it is still rare to see queer characters of this depth and complexity on the Australian stage.

...Or patch of grass, as it were.

Declan Greene

BIOGRAPHIES



ELIAS JAMIESON BROWN

PLAYWRIGHT

Elias is a Master of Writing for Performance graduate from Victorian College of the Arts (2017). He is a recipient of the Jim Marks Scholarship from the University of Melbourne. His work has been supported by the Playking Foundation, Creative Victoria's VicArts Grant, and Critical Mass at Brunswick Mechanics Institute.

He has presented new writing at MTC's Cybec Electric, Red Stitch Actors' Theatre's *PLAYlist*, for Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP), Periscope Productions, Apocalypse Theatre, and the Old 505 Theatre. He has been shortlisted for the Next Stage Residency at MTC, the National Script Workshop at Playwriting Australia, and the Silver Gull Playwriting Award. He is an alumnus of the Fresh Ink National Mentorship program and the National Studio at ATYP.

Elias directed two sold-out seasons of Chloe Moss's *This Wide Night* at The Burrow, Fitzroy, and executive produced and co-wrote the feature film *Ambrosia*, winner of the Special Jury Prize at the Gulf of Naples Independent Film Festival and Best Cinematography at the Harrisburg-Hershey Film Festival.



DECLAN GREENE

DIRECTOR & DRAMATURG

Declan is the Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company, and works as a playwright, dramaturg and director. 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*.

As a playwright, his work includes *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *The Homosexuals*, or "Faggots", *Melancholia*, *Moth*, and *Pompeii L.A.* Declan 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 previously Resident Artist at Malthouse Theatre.



EMMA WHITE
DESIGNER

Emma White is a set and costume designer for stage and screen. Emma is a graduate of NIDA's MFA Design course and has a BFA in Sculpture from UNSW Art and Design. In 2019, Emma was nominated for an APDG Award for Best Emerging Designer for Live Performance and was selected for APDG's Mentor program. Since graduating, Emma has worked regularly as a design assistant to Elizabeth Gadsby alongside working in the costume department at Belvoir St Theatre. Emma's theatre credits include: as Set and Costume Designer: for Belvoir 25A: *Kasama Kita*; for Bondi Feast: *The Knife*; for The Blue Room Theatre/Sotto: *You've Got Mail*; for Milk Crate Theatre: *Natural Order*; for National Theatre of Parramatta/Sydney Festival: *Boom*; for NIDA: *Stay Happy Keep Smiling*, *Venus in Fur*; for the Old 505: *Homesick*; for the Old 505/Sotto: *Safe*; for Q Theatre: *Daisy Moon Was Born This Way*; for Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Chorus*; as Associate Designer: for Hayes Theatre Co.: *American Psycho*; for Sport for Jove: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*; as Assistant Designer: for National Theatre (UK): *Nine Night*; for Shakespeare's Globe: *Richard II*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Lord of the Flies*.



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*, *Superheroes*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Maggie Stone*; for NIDA: *Another Country*, *SALEM*; for Seymour Centre: *Made to Measure*; as Sound and Video Designer: for Soft Tread Enterprises: *The Gospel According to Paul*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *A Cheery Soul*, *The Wharf Revue* (2009-2019); 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*; as Video Designer: for Bangarra: *Knowledge Ground*; for Monkey Baa: *The Peasant Prince*, *Possum Magic*; for Sydney Chamber Opera: *Breaking Glass*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *The Effect*, *The Hanging*, *The Long Way Home*, *Muriel's Wedding the Musical*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. David was the Technical Director for *Griffin Lock-In* in 2020. David trained at NIDA and teaches for their graduate and postgraduate courses.

**ISABELLA KERDIJK**

STAGE MANAGER

Isabella graduated from the production course at the National Institute of Dramatic Art in 2008. She has worked as a stage manager and assistant stage manager on many shows, including: for Griffin: *And No More Shall We Part*, *Replay*, *The Smallest Hour*, *This Year's Ashes*, *Ugly Mugs*, *Wicked Sisters*; for Belvoir: *An Enemy of the People*, *The Dog/The Cat*, *The Drover's Wife*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Fangirls*, *Girl Asleep*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *HIR*, *Jasper Jones*, *Kill the Messenger*, *Mother, Mother Courage and Her Children*, *My Name is Jimi*, *Stories I Want to Tell You In Person* (National Tour), *The Sugar House*, *Thyestes* (European Tours), *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Circus Oz: *Cranked Up*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Fourplay*, *Ride*, *Silent Night*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Rainman*, *The Ruby Sunrise*; for Legs on the Wall: *Bubble*; for LWAA: *The Mousetrap* (Australia/New Zealand Tours); for Spiegelworld: *Empire*. Isabella has worked as production coordinator on *Carmen* (Opera Australia on Sydney Harbour) and production manager/stage manager for *Puppetry of the Penis* (A-List Entertainment). She has also worked on various festivals, including The Garden of Unearthly Delights, Sydney Festival and the Woodford Folk Festival.

**JOSEPH ALTHOUSE**

EDDEN

Joseph 'Wunujaka' Althouse is a proud Tiwi/Arrernte man who lives and works on Gadigal Country. Joseph graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art with a BFA in 2018, where he was fortunate enough to be involved in productions including *The Changeling*, *Ex Machina*, *Salem* and *Stay Happy Keep Smiling*.

Upon completing his studies, Joseph was privileged to play in Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz's production of *Angels in America*, where he won the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Male Actor in a Supporting Role in an independent production, for his portrayal of Belize. Joseph's other credits include: for Ensemble Theatre/Sydney Festival: *Black Cockatoo*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Lord of the Flies*; and on screen: for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation: *Black Comedy*. Joseph is delighted to make his Griffin debut in *Green Park*.



STEVE LE MARQUAND

WARREN

Steve's stage credits include: for Griffin: *Borderlines: The Return*, *Songket*, *Ugly Mugs*; for Belvoir: *An Enemy of the People*, *Buried Child*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Jasper Jones*, *Paul*, *The Spook*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Waiting for Godot*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Gaybies*; for Melbourne Theatre Company/Sydney Theatre Company: *Don's Party*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Holy Day*, *Gallipoli*, *The Serpent's Teeth*, *Tales From The Vienna Woods*, *The War of the Roses*. Steve also co-wrote, produced, directed and starred in the stage adaptation of *He Died With a Felafel in His Hand*. Steve's film credits include *A Few Best Men*, *Beneath Hill 60* (for which he earned a Film Critics Circle of Australia nomination for Best Supporting Actor), *Book Week*, *Broke*, *Escape and Evasion*, *June Again*, *Kill Me Three Times*, *Kokoda*, *Last Train to Freo* (for which he earned AFI and FCCA nominations for Best Lead Actor), *Locusts*, *Lost Things*, *Men's Group*, *Mullet*, *No Appointment Necessary*, *One Eyed Girl*, *Razzle Dazzle*, *Red Dog: True Blue*, *South Pacific*, *Terminus*, *Two Hands* and *Vertical Limit*. TV credits include: for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation: *G.P.*, *Janet King*, *Laid*, *Les Norton*, *Old School*, *Police Rescue*, *Rake*, *Riot*, *Wildside*; for Foxtel: *Wentworth*; for The Movie Network: *Small Time Gangster* (for which he earned an ASTRA nomination for Most Outstanding Actor); for Network 10: *Big Sky*; for Nine Network: *Farscape*, *Murder Call*, *Sea Patrol*, *Underbelly: Razor*, *Water Rats*, *Young Lions*; for Seven Network: *All Saints*, *Blue Heelers*, *Blue Murder: Killer Cop*, *Catching Milat*, *Home & Away*; and for Sky One: *Crash Palace*. He also won Best Actor at Tropfest in 1996 for his own short film *Cliché*.
