



**BLACK  
COMEDY**

**MOTHERHOOD**

**WITTY**

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

# GHOSTING THE PARTY

BY MELISSA BUBNIC

6 MAY – 11 JUNE 2022 | SBW STABLES THEATRE

DIRECTOR **ANDREA JAMES**  
DESIGNER **ISABEL HUDSON**  
LIGHTING DESIGNER **VERITY HAMPSON**  
COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER **PHIL DOWNING**  
STAGE MANAGER **MADELAINE OSBORN**

WITH  
**BELINDA GIBLIN**  
**AMY HACK**  
**JILLIAN O'DOWD**

**GRIFFIN  
THEATRE  
COMPANY**

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# PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I'm scared of a premature death, dying young. And if I'm lucky enough to become old, I'm scared of my body and mind failing me... and not dying. Dying too soon and dying too late—both outcomes terrify me.

All my grandparents spent their final years in nursing homes suffering with dementia. You get to know the families of the other residents. And you almost always have the same conversation when you see them. Share war stories about your sick relative, bitch about the inadequacies of the nursing home, express guilt (for not doing more) and then helplessness (what more can anyone do?) and then agreeing that we'd all be better off dead than living like this.

I remember my mum telling me to 'shoot her in the head' if she ever got that bad. I know she didn't mean it literally. What my mum was saying is that she wants to avoid a bad end. I don't want to see my mum lose what makes her the person I know and love. And I don't want it to happen to me either.

But what is the alternative?

Maybe we'd be less scared of ageing if we had greater confidence that we would be well cared for. But the system repeatedly fails. There are the scandals of physical and sexual assaults that make national headlines, but also the hundreds of everyday incidents that are so routine they go unnoticed. Residents are forcibly restrained or isolated in locked rooms.

Chemical restraint—where drugs are given to control behaviour rather than treat medical symptoms—is widespread. Residents develop chronic nappy rash due to sitting in wet undergarments for too long. Residents go hungry because they require assistance with eating and there's not enough staff. Residents are unwashed and their teeth unbrushed for weeks at a time. And so on, and so on.

*Ghosting the Party* is about three generations of women coming to terms with what it means to grow older, and what it means to be a mother, a daughter. The play asks uncomfortable questions about ageing, death, and familial obligation. It offers no answers. I have none.

You will die. Most of us don't know how or when. I hope to die in my sleep, an old woman, in otherwise reasonable health, satisfied that I lived a good, full life. But we so rarely get what we want.

**Melissa Bubnic**  
**Playwright**

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# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*Ghosting the Party* is a very special play that can make you laugh-gasp-laugh on your first read. From the moment Melissa playfully lists all the horrible ways you could die, I was hooked. And of course, we all want to know what happens in the end. Or do we? While we spend so much time avoiding death, how wonderfully refreshing is it to deeply consider this notion with humorous and womanly intent.

This seemingly never-ending pandemic has brought into sharp and tragic relief the delicate balance between life and death and (especially so) the plight of our elders in aged care homes. In the meantime, NSW Parliament has been fiercely debating a Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill that is being stalled in the upper house for all the wrong reasons. Melissa's deeply, darkly funny *Ghosting the Party* is definitely a play for these delicate and troublesome times.

Just when you think you're about to hunker down to a conventional micro-domestic intergenerational tragic-comedy... Melissa catapults us into a philosophical universe that asks us to contemplate death and domesticity throughout the ages. *Ghosting the Party* has an effortless knack of bringing the political into the intimately personal, while highlighting our boundless and universal capacity for caring—in all of its messy, hilarious and domestic reality.

At the age of 54, my mother, Sofia James, smoked her last cigarette, drank a coffee and took an intentional drug overdose underneath a blooming bottle brush tree in the backyard of my childhood home. Inside, the house was spotless, the bills were paid and there were no dishes or clothes left to wash. I wish my mother didn't have to die alone. I wish that society gave her something to live for. That she didn't feel like she'd been left on the scrap heap.

I wonder if this is what *Ghosting the Party* has to offer us? For it is a play about living, as much as it is about death.

And, while life and death can be so very, very hard, it can also be very beautiful.

**Andrea James**  
**Director**

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# BIOGRAPHIES



## MELISSA BUBNIC

WRITER

Melissa Bubnic is a writer for stage and screen. In 2011, Melissa completed a Masters in Writing for Performance at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her play *Beached* premiered at Melbourne Theatre Company and was staged at Griffin in 2013. *Beached* won the 2010 Patrick White Award from Sydney Theatre Company and was nominated for a Green Room Award in 2013. Melissa's play *Hedda*—an adaptation of *Hedda Gabler*—premiered at Queensland Theatre to universal acclaim in 2018. *Boys Will Be Boys*, starring Danielle Cormack and directed by Paige Rattray, was commissioned and premiered by Sydney Theatre Company in 2015 and has since been produced at London's Bush Theatre and Auckland's Silo Theatre Company. Her play, *Stop. Rewind* (directed by Anne Browning) premiered at Red Stitch Theatre in Melbourne in 2010 and toured Australia in 2012. Melissa's television credits include: for Disney Plus: *Nautilus*; for Sky Max: *A Town Called Malice*; and for Stan: *Two Hands*. She also has original projects in development with UK production companies Who's On First, New Pictures, Playground/BBC, Scott Free/Endeavor Content, and Carnival Films, and she is currently working on Australian projects with Hopscotch Features and Fremantle. Melissa won the Channel 4 Sonia Friedman Production Award for Best Play for *Monkey Work, Baboon Chop. Ghosting the Party* won The Lysicrates Prize in 2017.



## ANDREA JAMES

DIRECTOR

Andrea is a Yorta Yorta/Gunaikurnai theatremaker and is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts. She was Artistic Director of Melbourne Workers Theatre from 2001–2008, where she is best known for her play *Yanagai! Yanagai!*. The play premiered at Playbox in 2004, was remounted in 2006 and toured to the UK. Andrea was the Aboriginal Arts Development Officer at Blacktown Arts Centre from 2010–2012 and was the Aboriginal Producer at Carriageworks from 2012–2016 before launching a career as a freelance theatremaker. She was recipient of British Council's Accelerate Program for Aboriginal Art Leaders in 2013 and was awarded the Create NSW Aboriginal Arts Fellowship in 2018. Andrea wrote and directed *Winyanboga Yurringa* at Carriageworks and Geelong Performing Arts Centre in 2016, and the play was remounted at Belvoir in 2019. Andrea's play *Sunshine Super Girl*, about Wiradjuri tennis star Evonne Goolagong-Cawley, premiered in Griffith in 2020, enjoyed a season at the 2021 Sydney Festival, and will embark on an extensive national tour in 2022. Her play *Dogged* was written with collaborator Catherine Ryan and premiered at Griffin in 2021. Andrea's current role as Griffin's Associate Artist complements her freelance practice as a playwright, director and dramaturg, where she continues to specialise in instigating and encouraging new First Nations plays with emerging and established artists nationwide.

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**ISABEL HUDSON**  
DESIGNER

Isabel is an award-winning set and costume designer. Isabel's design credits for the stage include: for Belvoir: *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Belvoir 25A: *Jess & Joe Forever*, *Tuesday*; for Bontom in association with Sydney Opera House, Edinburgh Festival, and a season in St Petersburg: *Chamber Pot Opera*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*; for Hayes Theatre Co: *Razorhurst*, *She Loves Me*, *The View Upstairs* (for which she received a Sydney Theatre Award nomination for Best Set Design of an Independent Production); for KXT bAKEHOUSE: *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*, *She Rode Horses Like the Stock Exchange*, *The Walworth Farce*, *You Got Older*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Torch the Place*; for NIDA: *Mr Burns*; for Outhouse Theatre Company in association with KXT bAKEHOUSE: *Dry Land* (for which she received a Sydney Theatre Award nomination for Best Set Design of an Independent Production); for Pinchgut Opera: *Farnace*; for Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Eurydice*, *King of Pigs*; for Seymour Centre: *Blackrock*, *The Shifting Heart*; and for Sydney Festival 2021/Rising 2022: *Maureen: Harbinger of Death*. Isabel's set design credits include: for Hayes Theatre Co: *American Psycho*, *Cry-Baby*, *Young Frankenstein*. Isabel has won Sydney Theatre Awards for Best Set Design of an Independent Production two years in a row—for the musicals *American Psycho* and *Cry-Baby* at Hayes Theatre Co, which went on to tour to Sydney Opera House. Isabel is the Australian Set Associate for *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* (Global Creatures) and was recently awarded the Kristian Fredrikson Scholarship for Design. Isabel holds a Bachelor of Design from NIDA and a Bachelor of Arts (Screen and Sound) from the University of New South Wales.



**VERITY HAMPSON**  
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Verity is a multi-award-winning lighting and projection designer who has designed over 130 productions, working with some of Australia's leading directors and choreographers. For theatre, Verity's designs include: for Griffin: *A Strategic Plan*, *And No More Shall We Part*, *Angela's Kitchen*, *Beached*, *Dealing With Clair*, *Dogged*, *Orange Thrower*, *The Bleeding Tree*, *The Boys*, *The Bull*, *The Moon and the Coronet of Stars*, *The Floating World*, *Superheroes*, *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 Salvador 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 CAAP/Sydney Festival: *Double Delicious*; for Dancenorth: *Dungarri Nya Nya Ngarri Bi Nya*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Baby Doll*, *Fully Committed*; for Hayes Theatre Co: *Lizzie*; for Malthouse Theatre: *Wake in Fright*; for Queensland Theatre: *Death of a Salesman*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *7 Stages of Grieving*, *Blackie Blackie Brown*, *Grand Horizons*, *Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark*, *Home*, *I'm Darling*, *Machinal*, *Little Mercy*. Verity is a recipient of the Mike Walsh Fellowship; three Sydney Theatre Awards; a Green Room Award; and an APDG Award for Best Lighting Design.

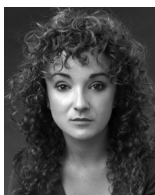
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## PHIL DOWNING

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Phil has been performing and recording music for over 20 years, and was first engaged to produce soundtracks for theatre through experimentation with original musical inventions. Phil's credits include: for Alice Osbourne/Performance Space: *Falling*; for Branch Nebula: *Artwork, Crush, High Performance Packing Tape, STOP-GO*; for Erth: *Murder*; for Moogahlin Performing Arts: *Rainbow's End, The Visitors, This Fella My Memory, Winyanboga Yurringa*; for My Darling Patricia: *Posts in the Paddock, The Piper*; for Side Pony Productions: *The Irresistible*; and for Vicky Van Hout: *Long Grass, Plenty Serious Talk Talk, Stolen*. Phil continues composing using various music recording/editing tools, creating sounds from found objects or manipulation of surroundings and the natural environment.



## MADELAINE OSBORN

STAGE MANAGER

Madelaine is a theatremaker living and working primarily on Gadigal land as a stage manager, performer and producer. In 2015, she graduated from Charles Sturt University's B. Communication: Theatre/Media course with Distinction and was the 2015 recipient of the Blair Milan Memorial Scholarship. In 2015, she co-founded theatre collective Bite Productions as their resident producer and production manager. As stage manager, Madelaine's theatre credits include: for Griffin: Batch Festival, *Is There Something Wrong With That Lady?*; for Black Birds/Griffin: *Exhale*; for Australian Theatre for Young People: *Follow Me Home* (Riverside Theatres 2019 Season and 2021 Tour), *INTERSECTION: Arrival*; for Bondi Feast: *MARS: An Interplanetary Cabaret*; and as assistant stage manager: for Performing Lines: *Sunshine Super Girl* (Development and Tour). Additional producing credits include: for Little Eggs/KXT bAKEHOUSE: *Symphonie Fantastique*; for sandpaperplane/Old 505: *Pit*. Madelaine is particularly passionate about creating new Australian work that is accessible and empowering to minority groups and communities that may not regularly be exposed to theatre and performance art. She is delighted to be returning to the SBW Stables Theatre this year.

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## **AMY HACK**

SUZIE

Amy Hack is a graduate of Actors Centre Australia, Atlantic Theatre Company (NYC), and Patrick Studios Australia's dance and professional development course. Amy's theatre credits include: for Griffin: *A is for Apple*, *First Love is the Revolution* (for which she received a Sydney Theatre Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor), *Shabbat Dinner*; for Bell Shakespeare (The Players): *Romeo & Juliet*; for Hayes Theatre Co: *American Psycho*, *Caroline, or Change* (for which she received a Sydney Theatre Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor), *Cry-Baby*, *Young Frankenstein*; for One Eyed Man Productions: *Spamalot* (National Tour); for KXT bAKEHOUSE: *Wrath*; for Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Amongst Ruins*; for La Mama Theatre: *Intoxication*; for SheShakespeare: *As You Like It*. Amy's film and television credits include: *After the Verdict*, *The Secret She Keeps*, *Amazing Grace*, *Brock, Hyde & Seek*, and the independent films *Infinite Shades of Grey*, *Equivocal Resolve*, *Periphery* and *Orgy*. Amy is a proud resident actor with the Ignite Collective and has worked as movement director & choreographer on various music videos for artists including Belinda Woods and Don the Toga.



## **BELINDA GIBLIN**

GRACE

Belinda is one of Australia's most distinguished stage and screen actors. Her theatre credits include: for Griffin: *Family Values*, *Love Child* (which she also produced), *The Turquoise Elephant*, *Wicked Sisters*; for Adrian Bohm: *The Vagina Monologues*; for Apocalypse Theatre Company and Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Doubt* (for which she was nominated for a Sydney Theatre Award); for Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *Happy Days* (for which she was nominated for a Sydney Theatre Award); for Christine Dunstan Productions: *The Shoehorn Sonata*; for Christine Dunstan Productions and Company B: *Scam*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Daylight Saving*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Absurd Person Singular*, *Dark Voyager*, *Noises Off*; for Gary Penny Productions: *Steaming*; for Marian Street Theatre: *Canaries Sometimes Sing*, *Henceforward*, *How the Other Half Lives*, *Social Climbers*, *Things We Do For Love*; for Melbourne Theatre Company, Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz, Strange Duck Productions and Sydney Opera House: *Blonde Poison* (for which she was nominated for a Sydney Theatre Award); for Outhouse Theatre: *John* (for which she was nominated for a Sydney Theatre Award); for Perth Theatre Company: *Same Time Another Year*; for Playbox Theatre: *Quadruphenia*, *The World is Made of Glass*; for Queensland Theatre: *Blithe Spirit*; for Sport for Jove: *Ear to the Edge of Time*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Away*. Belinda's film credits include: *A Stitch in Time*, *The Box*, *Demolition*, *The Empty Beach*, *Endplay*, *On the Edge of the Bed*, *Peterson*, *Say You Want Me* (for which she won a Sammy Award) and an award-winning short film *Stille Nacht*. In 2021, she featured as Elizabeth 1 in the Sport for Jove/Soap Productions film: *Venus and Adonis*. Her television credits include: for ABC: *MDA*; for Network Ten: *The Box*, *Heartbreak High*; for Nine Network: *Good Guys Bad Guys*, *The Sullivans*; and for Seven Network: *A Country Practice*, *Home and Away*, *Skyways*, *Sons and Daughters*.

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## JILLIAN O'DOWD

DOROTHY

Jillian is a Kiwi-born, Bachelor of Dramatic Arts NIDA graduate of 1996. Jilly's voice credits include: for ABC Illawarra Radio: *PIP!*; for ABC Kids: *Guess How Much I Love You*; and for Trackdown Studios: *Nate is Late*. Jilly has performed roles for Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare, Sydney Theatre Company, and internationally for TNT British Theatre and Traffic of the Stage (UK). Other theatre credits include: for The Comedy Co. (UK); *Dinnerladies*; for The ARTSLAB: *Safety Nets*; for First Night Productions: *The Witches of Eastwick*; and *Hugh Jackman: The Boy from Oz* (National Arena Tour). Jillian's TV credits include: for ABC: *Come in Spinner, Love is a Four Letter Word, Rake*; for ITV (UK): *Cold Feet*; for Nine Network: *The Girl From Tomorrow, Water Rats*; for Seven Network: *A Country Practice, All Saints, Home and Away, Sixpack*; and the recent Arena media web series *The Five Minute Call*. Her film credits include: *Dead Letter Office, Diana Clone, The Flood, Small Claims, The Three Stooges* and *Walking on Water*. Jilly was a training and development consultant, director, and teacher at the London School of Dramatic Art and is the Education Director for TPAC. Jilly plays drums and sings with singer-songwriter Baxter Stone, and also directs and produces their music videos and *Sweet Beats 'n' Blues* events. Jilly is in creative development with poet/artist Greer Taylor for a multimedia event, *Veiling: grief and delight*. Jilly appreciates being a part of telling Melissa's bold new Australian story on Gadigal country for Griffin.

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