



GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

PONY

BY ELOISE SNAPE

12 MAY – 17 JUNE 2023 | SBW STABLES THEATRE

**GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY**

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SYDNEY

This production of *Pony* was supported through a residency at Theatre and Performance Studies, the University of Sydney.

CAST & CREATIVES

Director **Anthea Williams**

Production Designer **Isabel Hudson**

Lighting Designer **Verity Hampson**

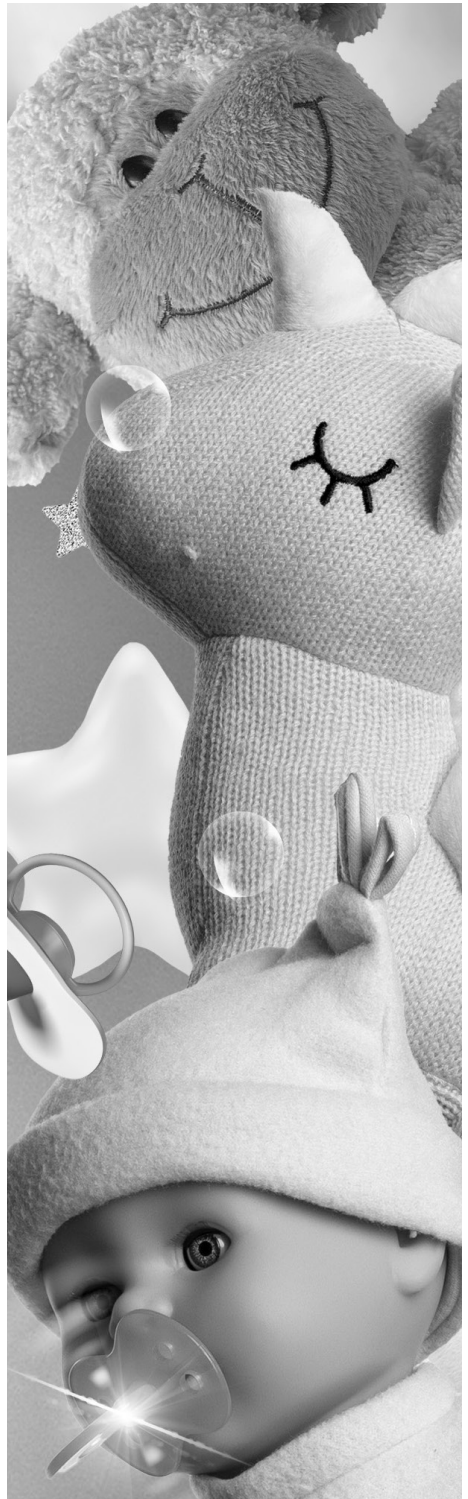
Composer & Sound Designer **Me-Lee Hay**

Stage Manager **Jen Jackson**

With

Briallen Clarke

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

During one of the final developments of this play, in a room at Griffin with **Anthea Williams** and **Julian Larnach**, after much discussion and dancing with the whiteboard, we realised that *Pony* is really, at its core, a story about the impossibility of the journey to becoming a mother. *Impossible* feels like a bit of a hectic word to use, but when you break it down, it's a pretty good description.

Labour is exceptionally demanding, physically and mentally—it is literally life-threatening, and the expectations on this generation of parents are intense. We are expected to grow humans in our bodies, raise them without screwing them up, continue to hold down successful, meaningful careers and relationships, all while keeping our mental health intact and presenting to the world as though we are really, really enjoying ourselves. Surely this is kind of... impossible? And yet every day around the world, babies are born. Throw a pandemic in the mix and well—it's wild. The irony is that the pandemic, while of course devastating and difficult (that goes without saying), wasn't nearly as weird as what was happening to my body while I was pregnant.

This was the original seed of the idea that this play was born from (sorry, sorry—birth puns). I started to write in the final weeks of my own pregnancy and then my thoughts spiralled into a story once my beautiful daughter Winnie was born. In the midst of lockdowns, exhaustion and anxiety, I didn't have much of a filter, so my ideas felt honest and raw. I was in shock in those early weeks of motherhood—which of course everyone

tells you to prepare for, but again, that is *impossible*. I tried to sell a version of 'I'm totally fine' to those around me—to my closest friends and family—even to those who were going through the exact same thing. Why couldn't I be honest about my experience? Maybe this play is my attempt to do that.

My hope is that I have written a story that is relatable. A deeply flawed character who is human and real. And that I've represented a variety of experiences and ideas around the often treacherous, difficult, but ultimately hopeful experience that is the journey to becoming a parent. I hope audiences are able to laugh—properly laugh—as Hazel navigates her fears. Her fear of change, her fear of not knowing herself anymore, her fear of losing herself completely.

I am so thankful for the incredible brains that have created this story with me. Having never written a play before, it's clear that I needed them. I'm thankful to **Frieda Lee** and **Adrienne Patterson**—who encouraged me to pursue the idea when I was right in the thick of what felt like a newborn baby had given me a lobotomy. To Julian Larnach for your positivity and guiding me through the playwriting process while throwing in what I reckon are some of the funniest jokes in the play. To Declan and the Griffin folk for taking a chance on me as a writer and for working insanely hard in one of the toughest industries through one of the toughest times. To the magnificent **Brialen Clarke**—my mate Bri. I still pinch myself daily that you said yes to bringing this to life. What a magical experience to do this with you. And to

Anthea Williams, who has developed *Pony* with me from the beginning. Your heart is beating behind this story. You know how important you are—your unwavering faith in me and Hazel is the reason this play has found a home and I truly believe your genius is unmatched.

And finally to those who I would not be alive without: thank you to my Mum, my Dad, my husband Sam, my cat Terrence and of course, my daughter Winnie, who *Pony* is dedicated to.

The fear that I would lose myself didn't become a reality. In fact, when you came along, the opposite happened.

Eloise Snape
Playwright

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Elo and I started working on *Pony* during the first lockdown via Zoom. I'd taken over the care of my folks, so often Elo had baby Winnie cooing in the background, while I had elderly parents wandering in asking what was for dinner and how to get 'that *Crown* show' back on the TV. This is the everyday care that so often falls to women as we lead our multiplicitous lives.

Eloise is one of the most generous people you could meet, and this generosity extends to sharing her personal and emotional life. Eloise and I discussed everything from the day to day of how to get a coffee during a pandemic to our physical and mental health, including our sex lives (sorry Sam and Tim), and how we'd made, or tried to make, decisions around having children.

Then slowly we'd segue into the heart of who this woman Hazel is, and what she is dealing with. We slowly came to see *Pony* as a coming-of-middle-age story. What to do when you desperately want to be young and free, but if you don't move into the next phase of your life, you might never have the chance to. Also, no matter what you decide about children, you can't stop your parents and grandparents from getting older—time is a great villain.

Eloise is one of these glorious people who can find joy always, yet she feels everything. You can make her laugh and cry with a single sentence. As much as anything, this is where Hazel comes from. She's a woman who wants to suck the marrow out of life, even if she's having a mental breakdown at the same time.

But where Hazel can be lacking in insight, Elo has laser vision.

So as I walk into rehearsals with a brilliant team, for a fabulous theatre company and with the wonderful **Brialen Clarke** about to shine in the role of Hazel, I am thinking about all of these facets that put together a meaningful life. How do we suck all the gritty, human joy out of this life? How do we face the light while making sure we feel it, and face it all? How do we grow into the next version of ourselves while looking after those we love?

Anthea Williams
Director

BIOGRAPHIES



ELOISE SNAPE

PLAYWRIGHT

Eloise is an award-winning writer, actor, producer and voice artist. She completed a Bachelor of Media in Writing at Macquarie University and received a scholarship to study in London. She also attended Actors Centre Australia and holds an Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts majoring in Acting. Eloise has worked extensively as an actor in theatre and she works consistently on screen, most recently in *Colin from Accounts* for CBS/Binge and *Voice Activated*. As a producer, she has worked with her own independent theatre company, MopHead Productions, as well as Ensemble Theatre and Griffin Theatre Company. She is currently a Creative Producer with Critical Stages. Eloise's debut work as a writer, *Pony*, was shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2022/23, the Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award 2021, the Patrick White Playwright's Award 2022 and the Griffin Award 2022.



ANTHEA WILLIAMS

DIRECTOR

Anthea Williams is an award-winning theatre director and an emerging film director. She is a Churchill Fellow and develops both theatre and screen writing. Anthea's directing credits include: for Griffin/Sydney Festival: *Since Ali Died*; for Belvoir: *Cinderella*, *Forget Me Not*, *Hir*, *Kill the Messenger*, *Old Man*, *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Black Cat National/UK Tours: *Mother's Ruin*; for the Bush Theatre (UK): *50 Ways to Leave Your Lover*, *suddenlossofdignity.com*, *The Great British Country Fete*, *Two Cigarettes*, *Turf*; for Carriageworks: *Sleeplessness*; for the Court (Aotearoa/New Zealand): *The Pink Hammer*; for National Theatre of Parramatta: *Flight Paths*, *Things I Could Never Tell Steven*; for NIDA: *#KillAllMen*, *Love and Information*, *The Colby Sisters of Pittsburgh*, *Pennsylvania*; for Red Line Productions at the Old Fitz: *The Humans*; and for UTP: *M'ap Boulé*. From 2011 – 2017, Anthea was Literary Manager then Associate Director – New Work at Belvoir. From 2007 – 2011, she was Associate Director – bushfutures at London's Bush Theatre. Anthea's short film *Safety Net* was part of the official selection for the Sydney Film Festival, Slamdance Festival and was shortlisted for Whānau Marama—the New Zealand International Film Festival's Best Short Award.



ISABEL HUDSON

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Isabel is an award-winning set and costume designer. Isabel's design credits for the stage include: for Griffin: *Ghosting the Party*; for Belvoir: *Blessed Union*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Belvoir 25A: *Jess & Joe Forever*, *Tuesday*; for Hayes Theatre Co: *Razorhust*, *The View Upstairs*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Torch the Place*; for New Theatricals: *Darkness*; for NIDA: *Mr Burns*; for Pinchgut Opera: *Farnace*; for Sydney Festival/Rising/Darwin Festival: *Maureen: Harbinger of Death*; and for Sydney

Theatre Company: *Hubris & Humiliation*. Isabel's set design credits include: for Hayes Theatre Co: *American Psycho*, *Cry-Baby*, *Young Frankenstein*. She was the costume designer and associate set designer for *The Mousetrap* (Crossroads Productions). Isabel has won the Sydney Theatre Award 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 the Sydney Opera House. Isabel also won the APDG Award for Best Set Design for *American Psycho*. Isabel is the Australian Set Associate for *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* Australia, Korea and Japan. She was recently awarded the Kristian Fredrikson Scholarship and the Thelma Louise Award. 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's lighting designs for theatre include: for Griffin: *A Strategic Plan*, *And No More Shall We Part*, *Angela's Kitchen*, *Beached*, *Dealing With Clair*, *Dogged*, *Ghosting the Party*, *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/Bell Shakespeare: *The Literati*; for Bell Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Julius Caesar*, *Titus Andronicus*; for Belvoir: *An Enemy of the People*, *The Blind Giant is Dancing*, *The Drover's Wife*, *Faith Healer*, *Ivanov*, *Sami in Paradise*, *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Black Swan/Sydney Theatre Company: *City of Gold*; for CAAP/Sydney Festival: *Double Delicious*; for Dancenorth: *Dungarri Nya Nya*; for Ensemble Theatre: *A Doll's House*, *Baby Doll*, *Fully Committed*, *The One*; 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*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Blackie Blackie Brown*, *Fences*, *Grand Horizons*, *Hamlet: Prince of Skidmark*, *Home*, *I'm Darling*, *Machinal*, *Little Mercy*. Verity is a recipient of the Mike Walsh Fellowship and has won three Sydney Theatre Awards, a Green Room Award and an APDG Award for Best Lighting Design.



ME-LEE HAY

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Me-Lee Hay composes for film, television, dance and theatre. A Malaysian born Chinese-Australian, she has had works shown across many platforms including Netflix, Australian commercial TV channels and at mainstream cinemas. Off screen, Me-Lee's credits as composer & sound designer include: for Monkey Baa Theatre: *Little*

Bozu and Kon Kon; for National Theatre of Parramatta: *Guards at the Taj*, *Launchpad*; for Sydney Dance Company PPy: *Elastic Stasis*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *To the Foreign Void and Back*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *White Pearl*. She has toured to the UK to work as composer, music director and musician on *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of World* for The Javaad Alipoor Company and National Theatre of Parramatta. She was composer and performing musician in Q Theatre's *Yellow Yellow Sometimes Blue*. Classically trained in piano and cello, Me-Lee is a graduate of the Australian Film

Television & Radio School (AFTRS), is an Associate Composer Representative of the Australian Music Centre and is the Vice President of the Australian Guild of Screen Composers. She is published by Gaga music.



JEN JACKSON

STAGE MANAGER

Jen Jackson (she/her) is a Korean-Australian stage manager, living and working on Gadigal land, with a particular passion for new Australian work and a commitment to diversity in theatre. After attending UNSW in a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Theatre & Performance, she continued her studies at NIDA with a degree in

Technical Theatre & Stage Management. Recent productions she has stage managed include: for Griffin: *Golden Blood* (黄金血液), *End Of.*; for Contemporary Asian Australian Performance: *Double Delicious*; for Kurinji/SATheCollective: *宿 (stay)*; and for National Theatre of Parramatta: *Nothing*. Recently, Jen was company manager for National Theatre of Parramatta's *Choir Boy* (Sydney WorldPride and NSW/ACT Tour). Jen hopes to help bring to life stories of all kinds that challenge, entertain, reflect, make us feel, think, and examine ourselves—the kind of stuff that made her fall in love with theatre in the first place.



BRIALLEN CLARKE

HAZEL

Briallen is an acting graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art. Television credits include: for ABC: *Fresh Blood*, *The Heights*; for Matchbox Pictures/Peacock: *Irreverent*; for Nine Network: *Doctor Doctor*; and for 7mate: *Australia's Sexiest Tradie*. On stage, Briallen originated the role of Joanie in the highly acclaimed world premiere of *Muriel's Wedding the Musical* for Global Creatures and Sydney Theatre

Company. Other credits include: for Griffin: *A Strategic Plan*, *Rapid Write: Hollywood Ending*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *All My Sons*, *The Lunch Hour*, *The Young Tycoons*; for Ensemble Theatre: *Clybourne Park*, *The Plant*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Hay Fever*; for Melbourne Arts Centre: *Dreamsong*; and for the Old Fitz: *Pork Stiletto*. Briallen also co-produced Australian Theatre for Young People's highly acclaimed production of *Stop Kiss*. Briallen is dedicating her performance in *Pony* to her late teacher and beloved theatre doyen, Kevin Jackson.
