
SYNOPSIS

PROJECT SUMMARY

Melburnalia No. 2 – the companion piece to White Whale Theatre’s acclaimed 2007 production *Melburnalia* – exhibits five new interlinked works about Melbourne by outstanding local writers. Once again, the writers were commissioned by White Whale Theatre in 2008 to produce a 20-minute piece about a specific slice of life in a Melbourne suburb. Each writer chose an area which relates to them personally and brought a distinctive style and voice to their piece. The works all feature a single linking element – Melbourne’s tramways – which binds their diverse works together (the 2007 linking element was ‘laneways’). Themes that the *Melburnalia No 2* writers have brought out in this season include ‘home’, ‘history’ and ‘time’. Their plays reveal the secret lives of five suburbs; unpack the cultural layers of the city; and illuminate stories which both confirm and confront our social and geographical stereotypes.

White Whale Theatre is a Green Room Award 2008 nominated company that is run entirely by under 27-year-old theatre makers. It has boldly created these pioneering works in order to foster new local writing; create roles for actors of diverse cultural background; and celebrate and challenge the city we live in. The 2009 season of *Melburnalia No 2* is supported by the City of Melbourne.

2007 *Melburnalia* writers

Tee O’Neil (Ringwood)
Ross Mueller (CBD)
Lally Katz (Kew)
Kate Holden (St Kilda)
Alice Pung (Footscray)

2009 *Melburnalia No. 2* writers

Andrea James (‘Birrarung’)
Hoa Pham (Maribyrnong)
Danny Katz (Caulfield)
Kit Lazaroo (Preston)
Aidan Fennessy (Mentone)

SCRIPT SUMMARY

THE FOREVER ZONE

Andrea James

As a Yorta Yorta playwright and director Andrea took this opportunity to write against the colonial grain. To reflect indigenous peoples’ prior and on-going ownership of the land Melbourne stands on we have created the ‘suburb’ of ‘**Birrarung**’, meaning *river of mists* (or the Yarra). Andrea’s play is set on the Melbourne tramway system (a modern river of transportation) and in the secret chambers of Flinders Street Station (by the side of the Yarra). In her comic and poignant magical-realist piece an ancient Aboriginal warrior in a possum skin cloak is confronted by a motley crew of ticket inspectors on a tram. Back at their headquarters he whisks them away on a magical journey through the dusty old ballroom above the terminus and into the forever zone.

I COULD BE YOU

Hoa Pham

Hoa is an emerging Vietnamese-Australian novelist and playwright who has drawn on her youth in the Western suburbs in writing about **Maribyrnong**. Recent events regarding asylum seekers show that the issue of ‘unlawful’ immigration is never far from Australian headlines. Hoa’s piece shows how close this issue is to home with her piece focused on three exiles tucked away in the immigration detention centre at the heart of Maribyrnong, one of Melbourne’s most ordinary suburbs. A criminal offender, an international student and an old Polish woman wait together in the Centre – as time passes, isolation sets in and reality warps they lose themselves in poetic visions of home and history.

MOTHERFATHERS

Danny Katz

Novelist/columnist Danny’s distinctive comic style is beloved by *The Age* readers across Melbourne who won’t be disappointed by his bittersweet and hilarious take on modern parenting in his home suburb – the unevenly affluent **Caulfield**. Three bourgeois young couples meet for New Years Eve drinks in an impressive North Caulfield home (complete with new granite bench-top). Carried away by wine, joints and a mysterious pack of New Age tarot cards, they carouse until the stress and tension underneath their social gleam starts to break through. The group is transported to a crazed state when Manoj, an exhausted father from the wrong side of Caulfield, makes a shocking confession that exposes the cracks in friendship and family.

DARLING DARLING DARLING

Kit Lazaroo

Kit Lazaroo is renowned as one of Melbourne’s premiere playwrights with her highly idiosyncratic absurdist, magical-realist and historical-literary style. In her piece she shines a light through the past to illuminate her home suburb of **Preston** – formerly known as ‘Porktown’ for its plethora of pig farms, abattoirs and meat wholesalers. Four characters from Preston’s past strive to hold their grip on this rapidly gentrifying suburb – a kindly nineteenth century pig farmer, a socially unkempt mother in search of her lost children, a fastidious old European immigrant and a voracious blood-sucking twenty-first century real estate agent who can smell a good price. Puppetry and prose abound in this fascinating and funny piece that reveals the accumulated layers of love and loss as the city rolls relentlessly on.

SONG #1

Aidan Fennessy

Outstanding playwright, director and dramaturg Aidan returns to his childhood roots for this unique piece about **Mentone**. Taking Dylan Thomas' *Under Milkwood* as its stylistic guide, Song #1 is a vocal work that creates a symphony showing the many sides and sounds of the iconic white-bread coastal suburb. A clever, heart-warming and deeply familiar piece, it is also boldly experimental and will serve as the finale to *Melburnlia No 2*. The familiar sounds of Mentone past and present will wash like the waves of Port Phillip Bay over the audience: a footy team yells, a doctor consoles, a community drama group earnestly rehearses, hoons hoon, neighbours clash, priests intone, kids ask for Mum and an old lady waits for her lost love to return.