

DAREBIN ARTS



presents

OF FROGS

September 7 - 17

Sandra Fiona Long
& Ria Soemardjo
with Ron Reeves & Jeremy Dullard



Darebin
Arts

Of Frogs was created and is performed on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We have been deeply inspired by the waterways and land they have cared for for 3000 generations, and by the creatures who live there. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

OF FROGS

7 - 17 Sep 2022 (Australia Premiere)

Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre

Creative Team

Co-creator, vocalist/musician: **Ria Soemardjo**

Co-creator, writer/director: **Sandra Fiona Long**

Collaborators/Multi-instrumentalists: **Ron Reeves & Jeremy Dullard**

Lighting designer: **Emma Lockhart-Wilson**

Creative Producer: **Kath Papas Productions**

Production & Media Team

Stage Manager/Lighting operator: **Cole McKenna**

Promotional image: **Darren Gill**

Production image: **Gregory Lorenzutti**

Video documentation: **Cobie Orger**

Darebin Arts Speakeasy and Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre

Head of Programming: **Beau McCafferty**

Arts Programmer: **Stella Charls**

Marketing Supervisor: **April Erskine**

Publicity: **Jessica Bendall Publicity**

Production Supervisor: **Justin Charleson,**

Venue Technician: **Camille Bortz-Knight**

Ticketing Supervisor: **Chanelle Sheehan**

Presenter Services Supervisor: **Omar Crawford**

Our warm thanks to the following people and organisations, without whom this season would not have been possible:

FUSE Darebin; Gamelan DanAnda; Helen Soemardjo; Speak Percussion; The Staging Company; Carl Millard; Lillian and Aaron; Regional Arts Victoria - Sustaining Creative Workers Grants; NECCHI - East Coburg Neighbourhood house for supporting Ria's recent residency; AJ Bradford - Tendertrap Studios; Caro and Selene at Auspicious Arts Projects Inc.



**AUSPICIOUS
ARTS
PROJECTS**

**SPEAK
PERCUSSION**

Program Note

By Sandra Fiona Long & Ria Soemardjo

In 2020, we worked around lock downs to create an audio walk called *Swallow Walk* at Edwardes Lake as part of FUSE Darebin Festival. During the festival, a pause in lock down enabled us to incorporate live music with the audio walk over a few days with master musicians Jeremy Dullard, Ron Reeves, and others connected with Darebin based Gamelan studio Gamelan DanAnda, playing Jeremy's compositions on gongs and other instruments which rang out over the lake as people did the walk. On the heels of *Swallow Walk* we started as a team making **Of Frogs**, as part of Speak Percussions SD development series, exploring the sounds and rhythms of the Merri Creek, interpreting them into musical and text compositions, especially based in the interlocking rhythms of gamelan, exploring how instruments could interact with water. We researched our local waterways and the land as it used to be, which was full of springs and tributaries connected to the Merri and Darebin Creeks. These natural waterways were channelled into underground pipes to reduce water on the land surface as Europeans spread across this land, and in turn used as drains to channel storm water back into the rivers. These natural waterways were a breeding ground to many species of frogs and other creatures, now extinct or under threat. One little story which emerged from Sandra's past was that of a child who collected tadpoles, watched them turn into frogs, only to realise, as they leapt away, that there was no water where they could go in her back yard. We wanted to reflect on the natural desire a child feels to connect with nature, and the tragedy if there is no real guidance on how to look after it. Now it is illegal to remove tadpoles from their natural habitat, and this is why. Yet, connecting with nature is so important, and so is the renewal of nature, and listening is one way we can become aware of our environment and care for it. This inspired us to make a work which might invite the audience into connecting with nature through its sounds and rhythms interpreted into music. Working collaboratively with such skilled musicians to shape this work, and bringing it to life with Emma's delicate lighting with the generous support of Darebin Arts Speakeasy in conjunction with Kath Papas Productions has been exciting. We are so happy to perform this work in FUSE Darebin, 2 years on from *Swallow Walk*.

For several years Ria has studied and collaborated with percussionists - Jeremy Dullard (Balinese gamelan specialist) and Ron Reeves, both highly respected in Indonesian and Australian musical communities, as educators and performers. Individually they each share long term connections to various musical traditions in Java and Bali. One of the most fascinating elements of these traditions is 'kotekan' or rhythmic interlocking, shared by several different parts, that is very special to Javanese and Balinese gamelan. Listening to frogs such as the Pobblebunks along the Merri Creek, we felt that they may be the inventors of kotekan. They often seem to fall into the most beautiful and complex patterns. In creating *Of Frogs* these three musicians explored their own kotekan patterns with some of their favourite instruments from Jeremy's extraordinary Balinese Kebyar set, as well as a selection of found objects. The clay flutes and drums were made over the past year - some of Ria's first attempts at instrument making.

Jeremy founded Gamelan DanAnda, a community orchestra of Balinese traditional music based in Thornbury who perform regularly for the public and is open to all interested participants. If you are curious about learning to play Balinese gamelan, find out more at www.gamelan.com.au/

Biographies

Sandra Fiona Long | Co-creator, Writer

Sandra Fiona Long is a writer and director working across performance, sound, installation and visual works. Highlights include: writer/performer of solo *Pancake Opus* at La Mama, writer/performer *Birdcage Thursdays* for Big West Festival, fortyfivedownstairs and La Mama Mobile, writer of *Duets for Lovers and Dreamers* (Ross trust script development Award) at fortyfivedownstairs, co-creating two audio lead walks with composer Ria Soemardjo; *Swallow Walk*, Fuse Darebin 2020 and *Murmuring Walk* in Mount Macedon 2021 (also with Charlotte Roberts) and collaborating with Mainteater in Bandung creating multilingual performance works since 1997 including video work *What type Nymph was She?* 2022, streamed/hybrid works *Waktu adalah Temanku – Time it is my Friend* and *The Mud Goddess* in 2021, writer/director of *Hades Fading (Hades Memudar)* in Bandung and Melbourne for AsiaTOPA 2020, and Director of *Happy 1000 1000 Bahagia* (Fringe Innovation of Form Award 2000).

Ria Soemardjo | Co-creator, vocalist/musician

Ria Soemardjo is a Melbourne based musician with a passion for collaborations across a diverse range of genres and artforms. Her distinct, haunting vocal style reflects her Australian/Javanese cultural heritage. Her creative process is often shaped by her life-long fascination with Balinese & Javanese cultural traditions. Ria has created & performed music for a wide range of independent contemporary dance & theatre projects in Australia & Asia. Her compositions & live music performances for dance works have received Green Room nominations – including *Enfold* (2016) & *Opal Vapour* (2013). In 2019 she worked Sandra Fiona Long & Bandung Mainteater company to create music & vocal scores for *Hades Fading* - opening in Bandung in 2019, & 2020 AsiaTOPA Festival. Ria's most recent works reflect her deep interest in developing powerful contemporary performance/rituals, in response to urban sites. She has studied the Javanese vocal repertoire, performing as solo vocalist with gamelan ensembles around Australia. www.riavoice.com

Jeremy Dullard | Collaborator / Multi-instrumentalist

Jeremy Dullard is a Melbourne musician and educator experienced in a wide range of percussion instruments, techniques and styles. After completing university studies in Music Improvisation he developed an undeniable passion for researching, performing, and teaching Balinese traditional music. Jeremy's obsession with this music led him to establish Gamelan DanAnda, a Thornbury-based not-for-profit community orchestra, of which he is the Musical Director. Open to public membership, all ages and abilities, Gamelan DanAnda is dedicated to increasing awareness of the unique features of Balinese Gamelan music, for audiences to enjoy, performers to understand, and composers to be inspired. Beyond the focus on Balinese traditional artforms GDA also strives to create a platform for facilitating respectful contemporary endeavours, including a current collaboration project with award-winning hip-hop producer Joelistics, generously supported through a grant from the City of Darebin.

Biographies (cont)

Ron Reeves | Collaborator / Multi-instrumentalist

Ron Reeves is a percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, collaborator, educator and composer. He has performed throughout Australia as well as in Asia, Europe and North America, sharing the stage with a very diverse group of people including Australian Symphony, Opera and Ballet Orchestras, Iva Davies, William Barton, Bill Cobham, Trilok Gurtu, Okuta Percussion, Hossam Ramzy, AC/PVC, Jugala Group (Indonesia), the Karnataka College of Percussion (India), Lebe Olarinjo Masqueraders (Nigeria) and many more. Ron has maintained strong ties with Indonesia since 1977, studying traditional music and collaborating with many respected Indonesian traditional, pop and jazz musicians. In Melbourne Ron is a member of Gamelan DanAnda. In 2016 a terbang (frame drum) research trip with Ria Soemardjo to Banyuwangi (East Java), informed their collaborations in The Echoes Project, Mapping Melbourne Festival 2017/2018. In 2021 he was Musical Director for the online Bandung-Melbourne performance project 'Time It Is My Friend', directed by Sandra Fiona Long.

Emma Lockhart-Wilson | Lighting Design

Emma is a creative artist based in lighting and spatial design for performance. She works collaboratively with performance makers to create visually and spatially cohesive work and enjoys developing unique lighting elements for use within set, costume and props. Emma has a strong interest in work that engages with performer bodies and designed elements as interactive, particularly when framed by a queer and feminist lens. Emma has designed lighting for companies including Australian Theatre for Young People, Monkey Baa, Applespiel, PACT Centre for Emerging Artists, DeQunicy Co. and Version 1.0 and in 2019 completed a design internship with The Rabble. Emma is currently undertaking a Master of Fine Arts at the VCA, University of Melbourne, researching design practices in the field of queer/feminist performance in Australia.

Cole McKenna | Stage Manager & Lighting Operator

Cole is studying a Diploma of Live Production and Technical Services at RMIT. Cole loves being involved in all aspects of theatre. Most recently stage managing 'Birthday Book of Storms' at La Mama. Cole has a background as a performer, acting in Picked Last for Sport's 'The Broken Mill' as part of the 2021 Cabaret Festival, and in 'The Winter's Tale' in Asia Topa 2020. He also had plenty of opportunities to design, direct, and write in his time at La Trobe Student Theatre.

Kath Papas Productions | Creative Producer

Established by Kath Papas in 2009, Kath Papas Productions (KPP) collaborates with contemporary performing artists and companies to realise and mobilise work. Kath, as creative producer, is joined by Taka Takiguchi as associate producer, and together, they bring their Australian and non-Australian perspectives and experiences to a practice deliberately grounded in the Asia-Pacific region. KPP's current collaborators include Yumi Umiumare, Sandra Fiona Long, Ria Soemardjo, Jessica Wilson, Miku Performing Arts and collaborators, and Outer Urban Projects. KPP has produced numerous tours, collaborations and co-productions in Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, China and Korea, as well as nationally and regionally. <https://kathpapas.net>