

ENLIGHTENMENT

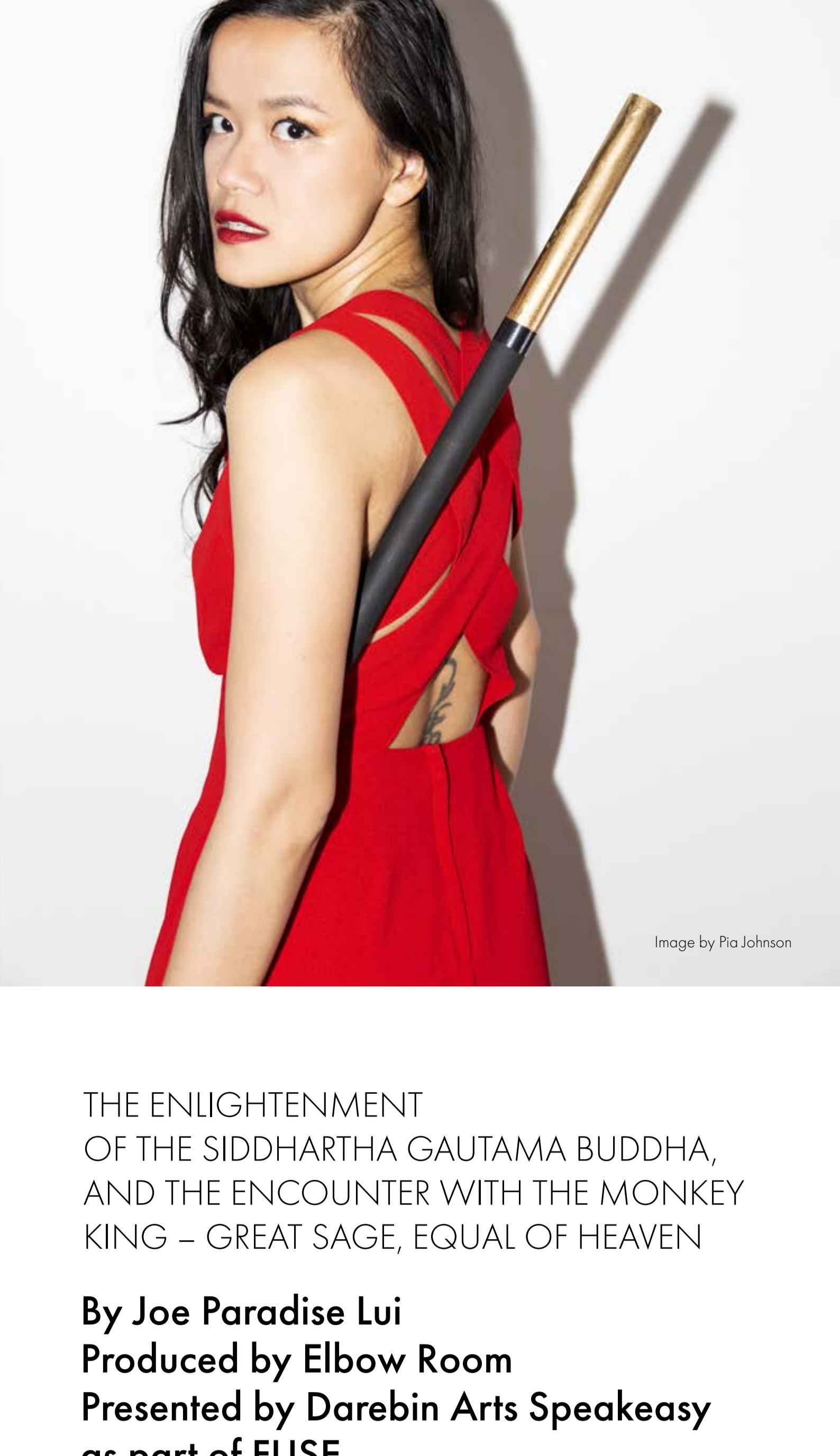


Image by Pia Johnson

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA BUDDHA, AND THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE MONKEY KING – GREAT SAGE, EQUAL OF HEAVEN

By Joe Paradise Lui
Produced by Elbow Room
Presented by Darebin Arts Speakeasy
as part of FUSE

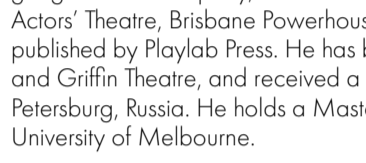
Main Hall, Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre
 10 - 20 March, 2021

The most important human being ever born. The most powerful creature ever to exist. Somewhere in our city, they're about to hook up. Sid's life is objectively perfect, but utterly empty. Meanwhile, Sage hustles every waking minute against encroaching poverty and desperation.

When they meet, and fall in love, it's gonna change the world; and threaten the destruction of the cosmic order. Singapore-born, Perth-based artist Joe Lui, re-imagines two characters from a towering story of his childhood – the young prince Siddhartha, and the magical Monkey from 'Journey to the West' – as young women in contemporary Australia.

This world premiere has been produced by Melbourne's Elbow Room, designed by Perth artist Cherish Marrington, and featuring illustrations by renowned artist and activist Badiucao, the subject of 'China's Artful Dissident'. Part romantic comedy, part crime saga, and part cosmic fever dream, 'Enlightenment' is a dark, hilarious and moving parable from one of Australia's true renegade artists.

Elbow Room and the City of Darebin acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land upon which this work is performed, and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was and always will be Wurundjeri land.



Joe Paradise Lui | Playwright/Lighting designer/ sound designer

Joe Paradise Lui is a submerging artist and undisputed winner of the 2013 Spirit of the Fringe Fringeworld award. Joe Lui is a founding member of Renegade Productions. Within its aegis he creates, writes, directs, designs and composes theatre and performance works. Their most recent work was *Death Troops*, created as part of the 2019 blue Room season.

Joe Lui is also a part of the professional and independent theatre industry in Perth as a director, writer, and a sound and lighting designer. His most recent directing work was *Unsung Heroes*, which was presented online as part of Black Swan State Theatre Company's 2020 season. His most recent design work was *The Sum of Us* by Yirra Yakin Theatre Company as part of Perth Festival.

Marcel Dorney | Director/Co-Artistic Director of ER

An award winning playwright and director, Marcel Dorney's work has been commissioned, developed and produced by QTC, Malhouse Theatre, Merrington Theatre Company, HatHouse Theatre, La Boite, Griffin Theatre, Red Stitch Actors' Theatre, Brisbane Powerhouse, Artlink, and the Next Wave Festival, and published by Playlab Press. He has been an affiliate writer with QTC, La Boite, and Griffin Theatre, and received a Lord Mayor's Fellowship to study in St Petersburg, Russia. He holds a Masters in Performance Creation from the University of Melbourne.

Marcel's play *Fractures* (QTC/HatHouse) received the 2010 Queensland Premier's Drama Award. Elbow Room's fifteen original works since 2008 include *We Get It* (Melbourne Theatre Company's NEON Festival, 2011), *Prehistoric* (Brisbane Festival 2014), and *After All This* (Brisbane Festival 2015). His awards include: Best Director and Best Ensemble (Ind.), 2011 Green Room Awards (After All This), 2012 Gold Matilda (Fractures), Best Writing, 2014 Green Room Awards, [Prehistoric]. Both *After All This* (2011) and *Prehistoric* (2014) were awarded Best Performance by Melbourne Fringe Festival. Screen credits include *Arenamed's* version of Tim Winton's 'Cockleshell' in the anthology *The Turning*, directed by Tony Ayres for Matchbox Pictures.



Ba Diu Cao | Illustrator/Animator

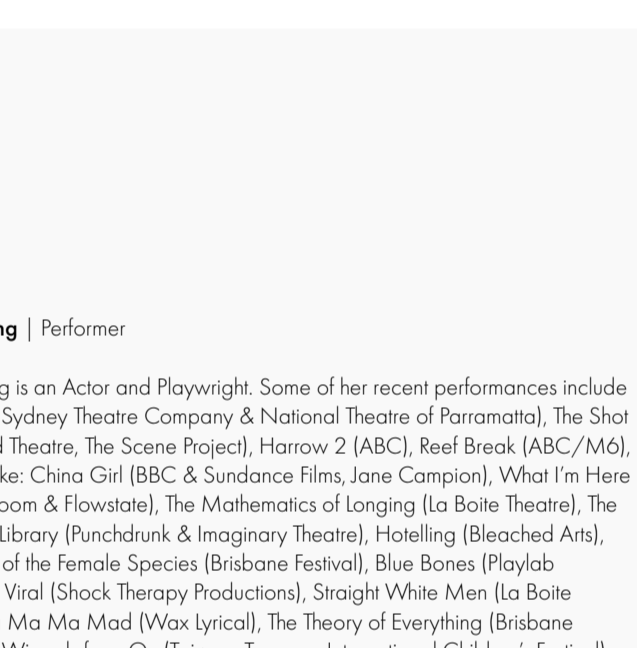
Badiucao is one of the most popular and prolific political artists from China, and he confronts a variety of social and political issues head on in his work. He got a nickname as China's Banksy due to keep his identity secret since the beginning of his art career. He uses his art to challenge the censorship and dictatorship in China via his Twitter account @badiucao. His work was used by Amnesty International, Freedom House, BBC, CNN and China Digital Times and exhibited in Australia America and Italy.



Cherish Marrington | Production Designer (set & costume)

Cherish Marrington is a visual artist and designer for the Theatre, graduating from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2013. Prior to her design studies as a Fine Arts graduate (Central Institute of Technology), she gained a strong public presence for her fine-line ink drawings exploring the 'ugly-beautiful' – an exploration of hybrid characters, theatrically placed within a surrealist universe.

Marrington regularly collaborates with artists of kindred spirit across Theatre and Film designing costume and sets for live productions ('I Am My Own Wife' with Black Swan Theatre Company), Australian short & feature films, many music videos, exhibiting of her own work nationally, and curating and hosting exhibitions of local talent through her Fine Art printing company, Chinoiserie Fine Art.



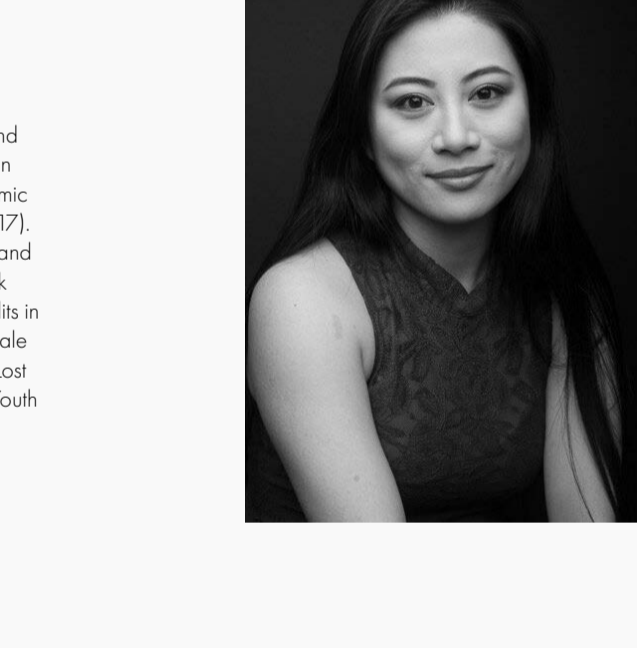
Jamie Lewis | Cultural Consultant

Jamie Lewis is a Singaporean-Australian artist, curator, dramaturg and facilitator, and is currently Executive Director at Next Wave. She creates experimental and contemporary intercultural work, facilitating participatory experiences on identity, place, and time, through autobiographical stories, conversation and food. She creates and curates site-responsive performances that engage audiences as participants, and communities as artists.

Merlynn Tong | Performer

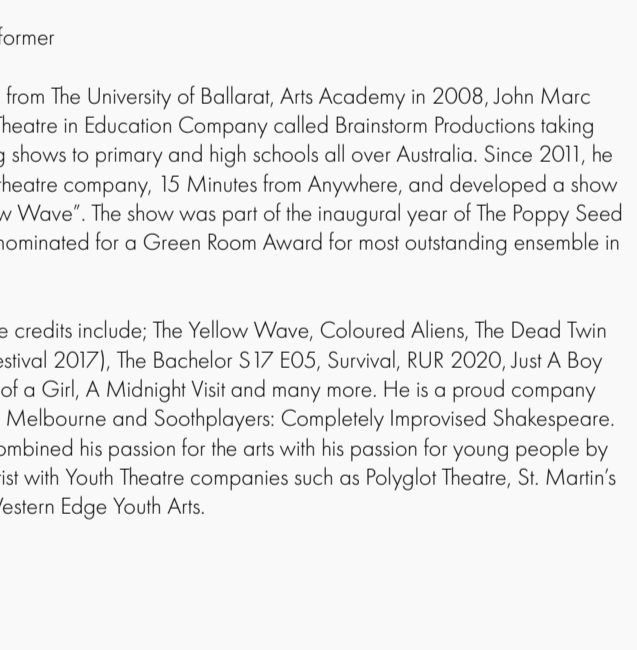
Merlynn Tong is an Actor and Playwright. Some of her recent performances include *White Pearl* (Sydney Theatre Company & National Theatre of Parramatta), *The Shot* (Queensland Theatre, The Scene Project), *Harrow 2* (ABC), *Reef Break* (ABC/M6), *Top of the Lake: China Girl* (BBC & Sundance Films, Jane Campion), *What I'm Here For* (Elbow Room & Flowstate), *The Mathematics of Longing* (La Boite Theatre), *The Last Landing Library* (Punchdrunk & Imaginary Theatre), *Hotelling* (Bleached Arts), *Bitch: Origin of the Female Species* (Brisbane Festival), *Blue Bones* (Playlab Productions), *Viral* (Shock Therapy Productions), *Straight White Men* (La Boite Theatre), *Ma Ma Ma Ma Mad* (Wax lyrical), *The Theory of Everything* (Brisbane Festival), *The Wizards from Oz* (Taiwan, Taoyuan International Children's Festival) and *Hot Brown Honey* (Judith Wright Centre).

Merlynn is currently a NEXT STAGE writer-in-residence at Melbourne Theatre Company. Some of her playwrighting credits include *Golden Blood* (Melbourne Theatre Company / Griffin Theatre Company), *Antigone* (adaptation for Queensland Theatre), *Good Girl* (Queensland Theatre), *Blue Bones* (Playlab) and *SKIN* (Dear Australia, Playwriting Australia). Her one-woman-show, *Blue Bones*, has won 6 Matilda Awards including the Lord Mayor Award for Best New Australian Work, Best Mainstage Production and Best Female Actor in a Leading Role. She is also the prize recipient of Screen Queensland's Screen to Stage pitch, *The First 10 Pages 2.0*.



Alice Qin | Performer

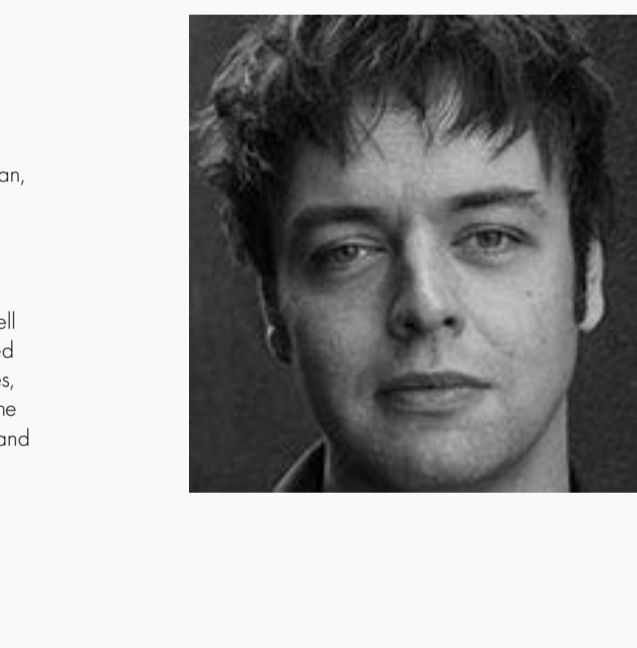
Alice Qin is a Melbourne based actor, theatremaker, educator, and occasional Dinosaur puppeteer (Erth Visual Physical/Melbourne Zoo 2019). She was the associate director on *Golden Shield* (MTC 2019) and she was a participant in the MTC CAAP directing initiative. Her Australian acting credits include *Mad As A Cute Snake* (Theatre Works 2019), *Atomic* (Malhouse Theatre 2018/2019), *Little Emperors* (Malhouse Theatre 2017). She was previously based in New York, where she worked as an actor and an associate physical acting teacher at the Stella Adler Studio New York, under the tutelage of Joan Evans. (Where she also trained). Theatre credits in New York include *It's already Dark?* (Herald Clurman Ensemble/tondole Theatre, New York 2013), *Romeo and Juliet/Richard II/love's Labour's Lost* (Hamlet Isn't Dead 2015). She is a current teaching artist at St. Martin's Youth Arts Centre, and House of Muchness.



John Marc | Performer

Upon graduating from The University of Ballarat, Arts Academy in 2008, John Marc performed for a Theatre in Education Company called Brainstorm Productions taking thought provoking shows to primary and high schools all over Australia. Since 2011, he has worked with theatre company, 15 Minutes from Anywhere, and developed a show called "The Yellow Wave". The show was part of the inaugural year of The Poppy Seed festival and was nominated for a Green Room Award for the most outstanding ensemble in 2015.

John Marc's stage credits include: *The Yellow Wave*, *Coloured Aliens*, *The Dead Twin* (George Town Festival 2017), *The Bachelor S/P F/O/S*, *Survival*, *RUR*, 2020, *Just A Boy Standing in Front of a Girl*, *A Midnight Visit* and many more. He is a proud company member of *Impira*, Melbourne and *Scotchplayers*: *Completely Improvised Shakespeare*. John Marc has combined his passion for the arts with his passion for young people by working as an artist with Youth Theatre companies such as *Polyglot Theatre*, *St. Martin's Youth Arts* and *Western Edge Youth Arts*.



Conor Gallacher | Performer

Conor Gallacher is a Melbourne based actor, voice artist, writer, musician, and emcee.

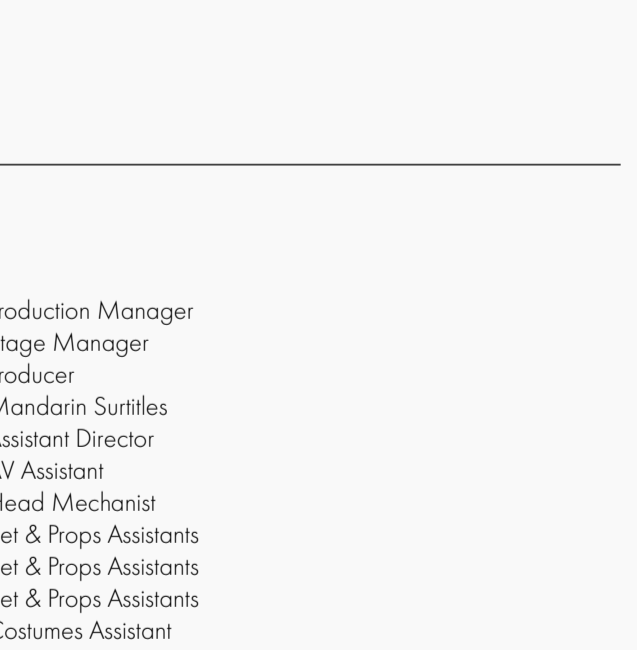
His stage credits include multiple productions, with or at the Melbourne Theatre Company, The Malhouse Theatre, MKA, Powerhouse Theatre (BRIS), Geelong Performing Arts, La Mama, Darebin Speakeasy, as well as many other interstate and rural performance venues. He has appeared on the ABC, and Channel 7. He has also appeared in several web series, some of which are internationally award winning. As a voice over artist he has worked with Lexus, Holden, 7/11, Simmonds homes, Jim's Mowing and many others.



Emily Tomlins | Performer/Co-Artistic Director of ER

Emily is co-founder and co-artistic director of the award winning independent theatre company Elbow Room. She has worked as an actor, collaborator and director with various companies and festivals including *Elbow Room*, *Polyglot*, the voice in my hands, *The Good Room*, *Musica Viva*, *STC*, *OT*, *La Boite*, *SA*, *STC*, *Malhouse*, *Terrapin Puppet Theatre*, *MTC*, *Neon*, *Melbourne*, *Darwin* and *Perth* Festivals, *Fabricated Rooms*, *Poppysed* and *Flight Festivals*, *Everybody Dance*, *Restaged Histories Project*, *Bell Shakespeare*, *Four Larks*, *Daniel Schlusser Ensemble* and *The Hayloft Project*.

Emily was the recipient of the 2005 Matilda Award for Best Emerging Artist and was part of QT's Emerging Artist Ensemble in 2006. In 2017 Emily was awarded a Sidney Myer Fellowship.



- Rose Pidd
 - Finn Carter
 - Adelaide Fisher
 - Kevin Chian
 - Samad Shiraz
 - Hardik Mehta
 - Alby Logan
 - Hana Kuhlmann
 - Sasha Vulling
 - Max Bowyer
 - Stephanie Lourantos
 - Sarah Cheng
 - Lou Wall
- Production Manager
 - Stage Manager
 - Producer
 - Mandarin Surtitles
 - Assistant Director
 - AV Assistant
 - Head Mechanist
 - Set & Props Assistants
 - Set & Props Assistants
 - Set & Props Assistants
 - Costumes Assistant
 - Social Media Manager
 - Trailer Videographer

Special thanks to:

Catherine O'Donoghue, Esther Anagnostis, Erin Milne, Ian Pidd, Samantha Butterworth, Tahlia Azaria, Xiaoran Ma, Dean Carmel, Lou Wall, Devika Bilimoria, Takeshi Kondo, Kieran Ruffles, Vidya Rajan, Colleen Sutherland, Eryn Jean Norvill, Natasha Soman-daram, Sue Giles, Finn's grandparents Alan and Linda Draeger, Polyglot Theatre, the Victorian College of the Arts, Beau McCafferty, Nick Coulson, Claudine Edwards, Fran Heffernan and the team at Darebin Arts & the staff of Northcote Town Hall.

Directors Note:

There's a scrap of ancient wisdom I picked up somewhere: a director's greatest gift to a production is their ignorance.

Like much Ancient Wisdom, this one isn't just wrong; if it's right, it's because it also includes its opposite.

As Elbow Room, Emily and I and our collaborators have made a dozen works in the rehearsal room, all of which started with what we didn't know. The difficulty, always, in each case, has been learning how to use our ignorance to invok our curiosity, rather than hiding it behind the mask of Professional Expertise, where it can - and regularly does - do terrible damage.

It's safe to say, though, that I've never been as far removed from knowing *What I'm Doing* as when I walked for the first time, in 2017, into a room with Joe Lui, Merlynn Tong, Jamie Lewis, and Badiucao.

I owe these four an immense debt. We live in a culture that privileges my voice, my aspirations, and my life over theirs, in great part by loudly insisting that it doesn't. The trust that they placed in Emily and I that week - to speak openly about struggles we hadn't dared to imagine - will remain one of the honours of my life.

No-one talked about 'Enlightenment' that week. But without it, I would never have been able to grasp the contours of how much I will never know about the several universes in which Joe has done battle, and Emily, Sam, Adelaide and I would never have been able to assemble this extraordinary team of artists; because I would not have trusted me, as Joe has done, to respond to what I believe I heard the first time I read this play, and which I've never stepped hearing since.

There's a sound a spirit makes when it finally gets a grip on what's been holding it down, and starts to push back. What's its laughter, tears, a holler, a whisper - and it's all of these, and more - it's rarely soothing, because it's also the sound of something breaking.

Thank you for coming along.



Merlynn rehearsing
 Image by Sarah Cheng