

DAREBIN ARTS SPEAKEASY

PRESENTS

PEACE MONGERS

THE PEOPLE



Darebin
Arts

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SUPPORTING LOCAL ART

CR SUSANNE NEWTON
DAREBIN MAYOR

Darebin Arts Speakeasy is an award-winning year long program that supports innovative new works presented by small and medium arts organisations, companies and independent artists. The program spans dance, circus, theatre and multi-disciplinary work that speaks to issues that matter to the community and celebrates cultural diversity.

Darebin has long been home to artists and creatives. Over the last 11 years, Speakeasy has provided opportunities to some incredibly talented people, many of them local to Darebin.

Since 2013, Speakeasy has supported over 1,500 artists to create over 150 original works presented to roughly 80,000 patrons, receiving 45 creative industry awards and a further 125 nominations. The program will bring Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre and Darebin Arts Centre to life with thrilling artistic presentations.

Congratulations to everyone involved in making this year's program a wonderful success! I can't wait to enjoy these incredible performances with you.

CREATOR'S MESSAGES

FROM KATRINA CORNWELL

Peacemongers started with a group of artists sharing how we have all been impacted by bigoted ways of thinking and systems that discriminate. And, at the same time, each of us contributes to such systems despite our good intentions. It's easier to push away, ignore or denounce ideas that are personally uncomfortable and challenge our sense of self. How do we sit in the discomfort of paradox and engage with perspectives that are at odds with our own, without dismissing them as stupid or evil? *Peacemongers* offers some experiences in this direction: food is good, conversation is good, music is good, doing something together is good. Being inclusive takes time, compromise, and being okay with detours. The process is the point.

FROM SONYA SUARES

The process of collaborating on this work, of coming together to iterate and explore and refine and extend over a period of years, has been an unmitigated joy. We had space to dive deep into questions at the heart of the play - questions around kindness, or sustaining hope, or what constitutes peace, or the extent to which peace is even meaningful without justice. Questions that reverberate both in our personal lives, and in the macro, geopolitical traumas unfolding around us. The curiosity and vulnerability, clarity and courage involved in turning this complex, crunchy set of ideas into a piece of theatre has been

FROM THE *PEACEMONGERS'* TEAM

extraordinary to witness/ be part of.

FROM İBRAHİM HALAÇOĞLU

I don't have big things to say but I'd like to tell you about a close friend of mine who is not a friend any more. The short story is we grew up to be different people and drifted apart. But what really happened was the enlarging distance between us came to be occupied by their wellness obsession, annoying social media presence, and the conspiracy theories they believed in. They now embodied the epitome of a way of existence I have always avoided. I am very happy they are not in my life any more.

When an interviewer asked Sandra Hüller how she prepared for the famous argument scene in *Anatomy of a Fall* she responded "I learned the lines". A very simple and effective method indeed.

If you asked me what my simple method for *Peacemongers* was I would say "I wondered if I could still have love for that friend from a distance".

CREATOR'S MESSAGES

FROM THE *PEACEMONGERS'* TEAM

FROM ZACHARY PIDD

It's hard not to slip into hyperbole when describing *Peacemongers*, both because of my enthusiasm for every member of the team and the sheer mountain of material we generated over the years. Developments don't often get a chance to live and breathe for so long and time, I think, became an integral ingredient in the bubbling stew we were hunched over. We had room to plant seeds then revisit them down the track to see what had bloomed. It was quite an extraordinary experience to have the opportunity to treat a project like a communal garden. *Peacemongers* to me refers to oversaturation. Uncomfortable conversations are rarely had in an hour, and to put a time limit on interpersonal growth feels antithetical to our survival. We hope that this work implies, in an hour or so, a larger time frame that began before and should continue after.

FROM KATE HOOD

As a disabled artist, it is my daily grind to stand on the edge of the cliff, contemplating the abyss of 'normality'. Sometimes I'm sure that if I try making change from inside, I will fall and keep falling, and be unable to change anything...that my desire for an inclusive, accessible world is hopeless. But there are other times when I just know I'm going to fly, because there is a random

meeting of other diverse flyers along the way - folk I work and play with joyfully, because they value lived experience in their hearts.

Peacemongers explores the nature of everyone's personal abyss, from the points of view of a bunch of fringe-dwellers who all seek to make a better world. It asks questions, and after a lot of to-and-fro, finds one or two answers.

Maybe.

It invites everyone in to share food, music, laughter, and even a teeny bit of wise contemplation.

FROM MIA BOONEN

It's easy for us, and for art, to look at the world and go "Wow, that's so messed up and broken!" It's harder for us to admit that fixing it isn't easy, and even harder again to actually try. I love that this work is about making the decision to try. It's about the company we keep in the trying, and about all the things we can learn from each other when we have the time.

CREATOR'S MESSAGES

FROM THE
PEACEMONGERS' TEAM

FROM SAMUEL GASKIN

The process of making *Peacemongers* has encouraged me to think deeply about my own ways of handling conflict in its varying forms. Hidden biases that still linger in all of us no matter how committed we are to being the “BEST” version of ourselves we can be. It's also filled my cup to create with such brilliant hearts and minds in the room over such a long period of time. I hope it encourages others to think deeply and open their hearts also. I truly believe it's what the world needs more of.

FROM MORGAN ROSE

I want to be a good person, but I don't really know how. Attempts to seal my identity to the side of good are constant: put the trash in the right bin, stay calm, share the good posts, donate \$30 to the cause, don't buy that...But, the world is a confusing place. It's hard to untangle what exactly constitutes good and what constitutes bad. I dizzy myself trying to figure it out: Should I accept the assholes or should I denounce them? I was sure if I spun hard enough I would arrive at a simple answer. And

so I began *Peacemongers* in 2020 fairly deluded. I'm not fucking with you when I say I thought we had a chance of succeeding in designing a utopia. You're less deluded than me, I'm sure, so you likely know that's not possible. Utopia is a myth. As is the concept of a 'good person'. The world's a necessary mess. What I've emerged 4 years later with, is a step towards accepting the chaos. Progress is not going to be simple. Or quick. Or even make much sense. We will never reach the goal. But we keep trying regardless. And the trying is like falling in love. It destroys your nerves, but it's just so worth it.

ABOUT

DINNER, THEATRE AND DISAGREEMENT

The People make theatre that is formally experimental, politically current, and personal. An amorphous consortium headed by Morgan Rose and Katrina Cornwell, The People work with whoever is interested, and whoever has something to say. *Peacemongers* has been created through years long collaboration with artists Sonya Soares, Samuel Gaskin, Kate Hood, İbrahim Halaçoğlu, and Zachary Pidd.

Tonight they invite you to dinner and a show. The show is about bigotry and polarisation. They've made it a musical to lighten the mood. Dinner will be hearty and simple, served by our good friends at Moon Rabbit.

Peacemongers is a real-life attempt at utopia. It's documentary theatre at its most absurd, and an act of rebellious and delusional hope. Witness a group of ordinary people who set out to write a play about an ideal society, one in which bigotry doesn't exist. What started as an exercise in rehearsal, spirals into a years-long endeavour.

Let us welcome you to dinner and the final stage of this quixotic undertaking, in which this unconventional company of artists attempts to answer the question: What do we do with people we disagree with?

Running time: approx. 90mins, no interval. Show warnings: mild language and adult themes.

CREATIVE TEAM

Director & co-creator: **Katrina Cornwell**

Writer & co-creator: **Morgan Rose**

Performers & co-creators: **Samuel Gaskin, Kate Hood, İbrahim Halaçoğlu, Sonya Soares, Mia Boonan and Zachary Pidd**

Performer: **Mia Boonen**

Producer: **Flick**

Musical Director: **Zachary Pidd**

Set and Costume Design: **Nathan Burmeister**

Sound and AV Design: **Justin Gardam**

Lighting Design: **Rachel Lee**

Assistant Director: **Meg Taranto**

Composition: **Zachary Pidd with İbrahim Halaçoğlu, Sonya Soares and Samuel Gaskin**

Production Stage Manager: **Kelly Wilson**

Assistant Stage Manager: **Ella Curtis-Webster**

Image by: **Pia Johnson**

The People would like to thank the following supporters for their contributions to this project:

The City of Melbourne & Boyd Residency; The University of Melbourne; Fringe Common Rooms; TNA and the Victorian Independent Producers Initiative; Kate Hood; Melbourne Public Humanities Initiative; Auspicious Arts Projects Inc.; St Martin's Youth Theatre; Belle, Steven, and Di at Theatreworks; Malthouse; Polyglot; Harry Dowling; Katie Rowe; Emilie Collyer; Mark Wilson; Vivian Nguyen; Anna Louey; Mia Guglielmi; Dale Thorburn; Geoff Williams; Jean Tong; Guy Webster; Joe Lui; and Sam Nix



Peacemongers was developed with support from the Victorian Independent Producers Initiative, the City of Melbourne, Fringe Common Rooms and the Victorian College of the Arts.

THE PEOPLE

Self-professed pop-culture fanatics, The People are fascinated by the collision of theatricality, mass-media and everyday life. Their work is shaped inextricably by the people involved and as such is always changing: it is formally experimental, personal, politically current, relatable and deeply moving.

The People was founded by visual director Katrina Cornwell and American born playwright Morgan Rose, who have a 13-year history of collaborative devising. Driven by a shared queer lens, The People deconstruct systems of power to expose the inner worlds of individuals, beckoning the audience to look within. The People make work with whoever is interested, whoever has something to say. In recent years they have presented a live episode of reality television on stage, *The Bachelor* S17E05, the award-nominated locked-down-extravaganza, *A Disorganised Zoom Reading of the Script from Contagion*, and a deconstruction of the romantic comedy, *Grand Gesture*.

MOON RABBIT

Moon Rabbit is an environmentally innovative social-enterprise café and catering service brought to you by not-for-profit organisation Bridge Darebin in Preston, which has been serving the Darebin community since 1982. We're reimagining hospitality by putting people and the planet first.

DAREBIN ARTS SPEAKEASY

Darebin Arts Speakeasy is Darebin City Council's award-winning year-round independent performance and development program that program partners with artists and organisations to generate thrilling artistic presentations for audiences and engage our diverse community. It aims to provide the highest quality experiences to audiences at the Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre and the Darebin Arts Centre.

Darebin Arts Speakeasy plays integral role in Australia's arts landscape. Since its inception in 2013, it has supported over **1,500 artists** to create **over 150 original works** presented to roughly **80,000 patrons**, receiving **45 creative industry awards** and a further **125 nominations**. Darebin Arts has backed many of the groundbreaking artists and companies that make Melbourne's art sector so iconic: RAWCUS, Ilbijerri Theatre Company, Bloomshed, The Hayloft Project, Little Ones Theatre, Stephanie Lake Company, Elbow Room, MKA, Double Water Sign, and lead artists like Joel Bray, Alisdair Macindoe, Michele Lee, Emilie Collyer, Anna Seymour, Stella Young and Sammy J.

ARTIST BIOS



KATRINA CORNWELL

Katrina is a director, performance maker and actor with a passion for collaboration and experimentation. She is co-artistic director of Rawcus and was co-founder of indie companies Riot Stage and The People.



MORGAN ROSE

Morgan was born in New Orleans, grew up in New Mexico, and currently lives in Melbourne. She's an internationally produced playwright, performance maker, and dramaturg. She's the co-artistic director of Rawcus.



SAMUEL GASKIN

Multi award winning Gaskin channels his own Māori and Nigerian roots to create and produce art that is both hard-hitting and powerful, while simultaneously striving to promote diversity and inclusion in the entertainment world.



ZACHARY PIDD

Zachary (Zak) is a performer, director and sound designer. They like to make theatre in groups, about big things. Preferably with loud music. They make weird pop music under the name Dogchild.



İBRAHİM HALAÇOĞLU

İbrahim is a Melbourne-based performer, theatremaker, and director from İstanbul. A VCA directing grad, and still a confused migrant, he loves molding real life into fiction and is always in search of new performative/narrative tools.



KATE HOOD

Kate is a passionate disability advocate and theatre-maker. She is Artistic Director of Raspberry Ripple Productions.



SONYA SUARES

Sonya is an actor, director, dramaturg and producer. She is also a passionate DEI advocate, championing artists from marginalised communities in large and small ways.



MIA BOONEN

Mia Boonen is a theatre-maker, advocate and educator raised in Naarm's western suburbs. Her practice is led by access and community. She is the CEO of Dramawerkz Theatre Inc., and a graduate from the VCA.



FLICK

Flick is a producer, creative, and devout homebody; most known for writing the staged lesbian sci-fi series *SLUNTIK™*.



KELLY WILSON

Kelly is a freelance stage manager and a staging technician at Arts Centre Melbourne. Her credits include *Climbers* (2023) for Fever103, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* for Red Stitch Actors Theatre.



JUSTIN GARDAM

Justin is a Green Room award-winning sound and video designer. He's a graduate of Monash University and Victorian College of the Arts. He has designed for Melbourne Theatre Company and Red Stitch Actors' Theatre.



NATHAN BURMEISTER

Nathan is a Green Room award-winning set and costume designer. Some recent works include *Paradise Lost* and *Animal Farm* with Bloomshed, *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* with Little Ones Theatre and *Loaded* with Malthouse.



RACHEL LEE

Rachel is a Green Room award-winning lighting designer and artist with a design-led practice based in Naarm and hometown Singapore. She is the co-creator of theatre collective MASHH (Mm And Something Happens Here).



MEG TARANTO

Meg (she/they) is a performer, writer, facilitator, imaginary friend and dramaturg working across stage and screen in Naarm. They are set alight by play, language, education, justice and storytelling as a vessel for all of them.



ELLA CURTIS- WEBSTER

Ella graduated from Deakin University with a Bachelor of Creative Arts, Drama. Ella has worked on several projects as an ASM, since graduating. As an emerging artist she is excited to work on *Peacemongers*.

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