

HotHouse
THEATRE

HotHouse Theatre in association with Write Around the Murray
presents a Griffin Theatre Company production

swim

By ELLEN VAN NEERVEN

10-14
SEPT



hothousetheatre.com.au

CREATIVE VICTORIA

NSW
GOVERNMENT

Wodonga
CITY OF WODONGA VIC

Albury City

WRITE
AROUND
THE
MURRAY

GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

CAST & CREATIVES

Director Andrea James
Movement Director Kirk Page
Designer Romanie Harper
Lighting Designer Karen Norris
Composer & Sound Designer Brendon Boney
Video Designer Samuel James
Lighting and Video Realiser Sammy Read
Cultural Consultant Aunty Jenny Fraser
Cultural Consultant Lann Levinge
Cultural Consultant Aunty Maria van Neerven
Gender & Inclusivity Consultant Bayley Turner
Stage Manager Eleanor Weller-Brown
Production Manager Pip Haupt
With Sandy Greenwood, Dani Sib
Workshop Dramaturg Bryan Andy
Workshop Choreographer Yolande Brown
Workshop Performer Hannah Donnelly

SPECIAL THANKS

BlakDance - Merindah Donnelly, Kate Eltham, Tom Pritchard, Olivia Adam
BLEACH* Festival - Rosie Dennis & Claire Carlin
HotHouse Theatre - Karla Conway, Beck Palmer, Tiffany Ward
Queensland Performing Arts Centre - Brad Chatfield & Hannah Scanlon
Yugambah Museum- Aunty Pat
Abbie Stott / Ali Murphy Oates / Anne & Steve Carlin / Bee Cruse / Callie Rowbuck / Oalara Williams / Aunty Erica Eurell / Greg Murphy Scenery / Justine Dillon / Lily Shearer/ Liza-Mare Syron / Miimi & Jiinda / Moreblessing Maturure / Dr Paula Abood/ Sally Quade/ Dr Sandy O'Sullivan"

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HotHouse
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swim has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body and supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and by the NSW Government through Create NSW. This project was first developed by Moogahlin Performing Arts through the Yellamundie Festival 2019. Script development continued in 2020 by Moogahlin Performing Arts, with the support of the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Sydney. Creative developments have received generous support from Malcolm Robertson Foundation, Robert Dick and Erin Shiel and Home of the Arts (HOTA). swim has been developed with support from BlakDance and continued support from Queensland Performing Arts Centre.



PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Jingeri Jimbelung. It is my cultural obligation to acknowledge the lands, skies and waterways this work has taken shape on, and pay my deepest respect to the traditional owners and recognising that sovereignty was never ceded.

Like many of my ideas, this work came from being with my body in water. *swim* had its very early beginnings while I was on a residency at Campbelltown Arts Centre on Dharawal Land in 2017. Experiencing writer's block, I took solace in the local pool. From there, the work was selected for Moogahlin Performing Arts' Yellamundie Festival in 2019 where I first worked with director **Andrea James**.

swim is a commentary on Australian swimming, the sovereignty of water and the strength of culture and family in keeping us safe. When we examine the sites of surf beaches and public swimming pools on stolen land—we can question who feels safe here. To Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, water is life—yet since colonisation, a legacy of aqua nullius has set to erase the reciprocal connections between people and waterways, with extreme consequences, such as the disaster in the Murray-Darling Basin. The Crown has the powers to control the flow and use of water in almost all states and territories in so-called Australia. As much as *swim* speaks on a national level, I took a lot of inspiration from how these complexities play out in the specific

locale of Yugambeh Country. We had the pleasure to spend time as a creative team there on two separate occasions.

When I swim, I feel well, connected and proud. Yet swimming also has a complex legacy of exclusion and shame. I set out to write about what swimming means, on a personal and political level. The story we tell is one that honours and celebrates SBLGBTIQA+ people—especially our Blak siblings. I felt it important to let E's voice be heard at a time where transphobia and queerphobia has been simmering fuelled by hostile coverage by the right-wing press. As Blak queer and trans folk, we feel an intense responsibility to honour and support both our Elders and the younger generation.

I am grateful to the artists involved in each development for first holding space for the story and all supporters. Thanks so much to everyone from Griffin Theatre Company. It is a privilege to have my first work for the stage with a theatre company that champions exciting and vital new work. I also thank the entire creative team and the cast—the 'swim team'. Special thanks to director Andrea James who kept the interest and passion in the project alive since Yellamundie. To my family of blood and water—bugalwan—I am so grateful.

EvN
(they/them/theirs)
Mununjali Yugambeh writer

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I first had the privilege of working on **Ellen van Neerven's** *swim* when it was presented as a reading at Moogahlin Performing Arts' Yellamundie Festival in 2019. A huge admirer of Ellen's work, I was (and still am) floored by Ellen's culturally and politically connected writing that cuts to the chase in the most resonant way. Ellen is ahead of their time and we are playing catch up. Ellen is also wickedly funny.

From the get go, Ellen's play *swim* made an impression. For months and years after the reading at Yellamundie, people were asking me about "that play". Ellen and I kept yarning and we eventually found a safe and good home to bring the play to stage readiness. As the play gently evolved, the story and characters blossomed into fullness.

Little did I know, Ellen was quietly brewing another literary work—the ambitiously poetic and personal memoir *Personal Score* that is an exploration of Identity Sport and Politics from a Blak Gender Queer lens. In many ways, *swim* is the performance arm of Ellen's deeper thinking around sport, competition and gender fluidity on and in sovereign lands and waters.

Who can forget those vivid images at the Moree swimming pool in 1965 on Gamilaraay land—and the bigoted backlash that took place—when Charlie Perkins dared to lead a group of young Blak kids as they dive bombed their way into a basic human right. The local pool—that most Australians enjoy and take for granted—can be a very dangerous place if you're Blak; and that danger is multiplied ten-fold

when you're Blak and Gender Queer.

Ellen's play *swim* offers an antidote to the colonial clash of one of Australia's most revered sites—the municipal swimming pool. Ellen's exquisite poetry and fluid storytelling challenges this colonial battleground through an ultimate celebration of Blak Gender Queer resilience and the most sacred of elements on Country—water.

Connecting to and experiencing Yugambeh lands and waters has been an absolutely essential part of the project. Thank you to **Aunty Maria van Neerven, Aunty Jenny Fraser** and **Lann Levinge** who welcomed and guided us onto Country with great generosity and wisdom.

I also give credit to our performers, **Dani Sib** and **Sandy Greenwood**. Thank you for bringing your realness, courage and vulnerability to your roles to honor Ellen's story. For them, this isn't an act—it's a part of their everyday.

Ellen asks us to immerse ourselves fully into their world—to see and recognize danger when it occurs and to understand that bigotry, transphobia and hatred threatens lives (physically and spiritually) and to do something about it. We are asked to recognize our power and privilege and to give ground.

swim shows us that love, family and cultural connection is the elixir of life.

swim is a gift to Australia.
A healing. A bath.

Andrea James
Director

BIOGRAPHIES



ELLEN VAN NEERVEN

PLAYWRIGHT, (THEY / THEM)

Ellen van Neerven is an award-winning writer of Mununjali Yugambeh and Dutch heritage. They have authored two poetry collections, *Throat* and *Comfort Food*, one work of fiction, *Heat and Light*, and a memoir called *Personal Score*. *Throat* won three categories at the 2021 NSW Premiers Literary Awards including Book of the Year, the Kenneth Slessor Prize and the Multicultural Award.



ANDREA JAMES

DIRECTOR, (SHE / HER)

Andrea is a Yorta Yorta/Gunaikurnai award-winning theatremaker and Associate Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company. Andrea's directing credits for Griffin include *Ghosting the Party* by Melissa Bubic and *Jailbaby* by Suzie Miller. As Playwright and Director, Andrea has written and directed productions including: for Belvoir St Theatre and Geelong Performing Arts Centre: *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Melbourne Workers Theatre with Playbox Theatre Company: *Yanagai! Yanagai!*, which went on to tour internationally to the UK; for Moogahlin Performing Arts: *Winyanboga Yurringa*; and for Performing Lines: *Sunshine Super Girl*, which then had an extensive national tour. Andrea's co-writing credits include: for Griffin: *Dogged*, with Catherine Ryan; for Sydney Festival: *Big Name No Blankets*, with Sammy and Anyupa Butcher about the life and times of Aboriginal rock legends *The Warumpi Band*.



KIRK PAGE

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR, (HE / HIM)

Kirk Page is a proud Munanjali artist with patriarchal connections from South East QLD of the Yugambeh nation and ancestral lineage connecting him to Badu Island in the Torres Straits. His matriarchal lineage is connected to Polish and German heritage migrant settlers. Kirk trained at NAISDA Dance College (National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association). Since 1995, he has performed on national mainstages and toured productions internationally. His practice and experience in the arts sector is interdisciplinary – spanning dance, acting, singing, directing, teaching, producing and writing over the past 28 years. He is currently based on Bundjalung Territories in the Northern Rivers Region of NSW.

BIOGRAPHIES



ROMANIE HARPER

DESIGNER, (SHE / HER)

Romanie Harper is an award-winning Set and Costume Designer based in Naarm/Melbourne. Recent design credits include: for Performing Lines: *Sunshine Super Girl*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Girls & Boys* and *The Violent Outburst That Drew Me To You*; for Rising Festival: *8/8/8: WORK*; for Belvoir St Theatre: *The Master and Margarita*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Packer and Sons*; for Malthouse Theatre: *Nosferatu*, *K-Box*, *Australian Realness*, *Trustees*, *Good Muslim Boy*, *Little Emperors* and *Turbine*; for Deep Soulful Sweats: *What Am I Supposed to Do?* and *Equinox*; for Arts House: *Hercules*, *Die! Die! Die! Old People Die!*, *We All Know What's Happening* and *Never Trust A Creative City*; for Darebin Speakeasy: *Slip*, *Conviction*, *Contest* and *Moral Panic*; for fortyfivedownstairs: *Runt* and *This Is Eden*; and for Daniel Schlusser Ensemble: *M+M*.



KAREN NORRIS

LIGHTING DESIGNER, (SHE / HER)

Karen Norris is a Lighting Designer for theatre, dance, and installations from Aotearoa of Moriuri Maori decent.

In Australia, Karen's recent theatre credits include: for Adelaide Festival: *Action Star*; for ATYP: *Sugarland*; for Belvoir St Theatre: *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*; for Carriageworks: *Sleeplessness*; for Ensemble Theatre: *The Appleton Ladies Potato Race* and *The Last Five Years*; for Moogahlin Performing Arts: *Broken Glass*, *Cutter & Coota*, *The Last Shot*, *Rainbows End*, *The Weekend* and *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for National Theatre of Parramatta: *Choir Boy*; for Performing Lines: *Sunshine Super Girl* and *TWO*; for Rising Festival: *Set Piece*; for Sydney Festival: 宿 (*Stay*); for Sydney Theatre Company: *The Visitors*; for Urban Theatre Projects: *Blak Box* and *M'ap Boulé*.

Karen's Australian and international dance credits include: for Atamira Dance Company NZ: *KOTAHI*; for Australian Ballet: *Dance X*; for Bangarra Dance Theatre: *The Dreaming*, *Dance Clan 202*, *Horizon*, *LORE*, *Skin*, *Terrain*, and *Yuldea*; for BlakDance and Karul Projects: *Silence*; for Jasmin Sheppard: *The Complications of Lyrebirds*; for Liz Lea Dance: *The Point* and *Red*; for Martin del Amo: *Champions* and *Songs Not To Dance To*; for Narelle Benjamin: *CELLA Germany* and *Hiding in Plain Sight*; for NAISDA: *Francis Rings*; for Rhiannon Newton: *Explicit Contents*; for Sue Healey: *On View*; for Vicki Van Hout: *plenty serious TALK TALK*.

BIOGRAPHIES



BRENDON BONEY

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER, (HE / HIM)

Brendon Boney is a Wiradjuri/Gamilaroi man who grew up in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales and is now based on Darkinjung Country in Ettalong Beach on the Central Coast of New South Wales. Brendon's work as Sound Designer & Composer includes: for Bangarra Dance Theatre: *Horizon: The Light Inside* and *Kulka, Dance Clan*; for Belvoir St Theatre: *At What Cost?*, *Lose to Win*, *Winyanboga Yurringa*; for Ensemble Theatre: *A Letter for Molly*; for National Theatre of Parramatta/Riverside Theatres: *Choir Boy*; and for Sydney Theatre Company: *Fences*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Visitors*. Brendon's Design Associate credits include: for Sydney Theatre Company: *The 7 Stages of Grieving* and *The Tempest*. His television music credits include: for ABC1: *Gods of Wheat Street*; for Network 10: *Offspring*; for Seven Network: *Winners & Losers*; and for The Nine Network: *Underbelly Chopper*. As an actor and performer, his recent credits include: for ABC: *At Home Alone Together*; for Adelaide Festival: Stephen Page's *Baleen Moondjan*; for Bangarra Dance Theatre: *Wudjang: Not the Past*; and for Illbjerri Theatre: *Black Ties*. Brendon also provided the lead character Willie's singing voice in the feature film, *Bran Nue Dae* (2009).

Brendon is an established recording and performing artist and an APRA PDA winner. In the past decade, he has toured the world with the act Microwave Jenny. As a producer and songwriter Brendon's work has over a million streams across platforms Spotify and Apple Music.



SAMUEL JAMES

VIDEO DESIGNER, (HE / HIM)

Samuel James is a Filmmaker and Projection Designer living on Gundungarra and Dharug land, Blue Mountains. Over 30 years he has collaborated with performance companies with a focus on dance movement and digital projection. His work is often seen in festivals of various scales in Australia, and he has worked internationally in Europe, Canada, South Korea. He has developed work on international residencies in Norway, Czech Republic, Iceland, Finland, Banff, Calcutta and Berlin. He has been privileged to work with many Indigenous artists and companies taking the opportunity to develop understandings of sovereignty of country and applies this expanding image archive to collaborative works in theatrical, urban and natural environments. His videos incorporate drawings in which superimposed mark making is an unconscious response to spirit of place. He has an MFA from the UNSW School of Art and Design. shimmerpixel.blogspot.com

BIOGRAPHIES



BAYLEY TURNER

GENDER & INCLUSIVITY CONSULTANT, (SHE / HER)

Bayley Turner is the founder of Create Consent, consulting with creative production teams on consent-centred creative practices, intimacy coordination, policy and protocol documentation and facilitating bespoke workshops locally and internationally with theatre and film projects. In Australia, she has worked on productions including: for Griffin: *Jailbaby* and *The Lewis Trilogy*; for Apocalypse Theatre: *Cleansed*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Let the Right One In*, *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812* and *Overflow*; for fortyfive downstairs: *The Inheritance*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *The Almighty Sometimes*; and for Theatre Works: *In the Club*. She has also delivered workshops with Malthouse Theatre and various independent companies. Bayley completed her Master's thesis on consent in the creative workplace, conceived and led the organising of Consent Festival (Midsumma 2019), and has presented at various local and international conferences. In 2021, she received a MEAA scholarship to train with IDC Professionals, compounding her training with Intimacy on Set, and is currently the Intimacy Coordinator on the return season of Australian soap *Neighbours*. Bayley is also a writer, performer and theatremaker. create-consent.com



DANI SIB

E, (THEY / THEM)

Dani Sib is a proud Baad and Yawuru multidisciplinary artist from the Kimberley in Western Australia. They started playing guitar when they were 8 years old, singing at 12 years old, and now creates music that reflects their experiences of navigating life as a young First Nations person.

In 2018, Dani co-produced and presented *BBQ: Blak, Beautiful and Queer*, a music and performance night celebrating the deadly young queer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander folk. They also produced *Jirrmujina Liyan (Songs for Spirit)* that same year, through Darebin's AMPLIFY program, presenting a full lineup of First Nations musicians.

Dani made their performance debut as Marijuanna Annie in the *Bran Nue Dae* Musical Tour 2020. Dani is excited to be exploring the world of theatre further in Ellen van Neerven's *swim*.

BIOGRAPHIES



SANDY GREENWOOD

SAMENA, AUNTY, (TWO SPIRIT)

Sandy Greenwood is a Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti and Bundjalung Traditional Custodian raised (and living) on her ancestral homelands.

Sandy holds a BA in Drama (Honours) from QUT and has trained at The Atlantic Acting School in New York City and The Groundlings in Los Angeles.

In Australia, Sandy has performed in leading theatre productions including: for Griffin: *Dogged*; for Belvoir St Theatre: *At What Cost?* (National Tour), *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and *Wayside Bride*; for Ilbijjerri Theatre Company: *Body Armour*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Stolen* and *Taboo*. Internationally, Sandy has performed for Seattle Children's Theatre Company in *Afternoon of the Elves*. Sandy's film and television credits include: for ABC: *The Messenger*; for Blossom Films: *The Last Anniversary*; for Omnilab Media, Ambience Entertainment, Film Victoria and Wales Creative IP Fund: *Killer Elite*; for Congaline Productions, EQ Media and Appleton Productions: *The Appleton Ladies Potato Race*.

As a playwright, Sandy wrote, produced, and performed her critically acclaimed one-woman show, *Matriarch* for which she won a Green Room Award for Best Actor and nominated for Best Writing in Independent Theatre. She is set to adapt *Matriarch* into a memoir with Echo Publishing.

Sandy recently produced and directed the environmental documentary film *Ngurra Muruy (Forest Camp)* and is the recipient of the 2024 NSW Environment Award for outstanding commitment and success in protecting Gumbaynggirr native forests and sacred sites.

ABOUT HOTHOUSE THEATRE

HotHouse Theatre incubates, makes and presents 100% Australian theatre, divergent in form and voice that speaks to our region and the nation. We invest in regional professional practice. We collaborate with artists locally and nationally to engage and inspire audiences. Through shared experiences, we stimulate the imagination of the region, inspiring insight into our humanity through creative interrogations, which reflect the world around us.

HotHouse Theatre has a rich and celebrated 25-year history of commissioning, nurturing, producing and presenting new, contemporary Australian theatre within a vibrant regional setting. Created from the Murray River Performance Group in 1997, HotHouse Theatre draws on 40 years of theatre making experience in regional Australia. Located in Albury Wodonga, we serve the audiences and artists of the VIC Border North East and NSW Border Regions.

A critical national incubator of distinctive Australian theatre, HotHouse's investment in artists, audiences and community engages locally and impacts nationally.

HOTHOUSE THEATRE STAFF

CEO | Terese Casu
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Business Manager | Madeleine Schnelle
Producer | Beck Palmer
Assoc. Producer-First Nations | Tiffany Ward
Communications | (acting) Janey Paton
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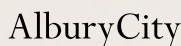
HotHouse Theatre recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this land.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands upon which HotHouse Theatre stands and pay our respect to the Ancestors, Elders and storytellers, who hold the memories, traditions and cultural knowledge of this place.

We recognise the historical impact of the past endures, and we embrace our responsibility to listen deeply, care for Country, and respect the resilience and wisdom of the world's oldest continuing culture, as we journey forward together.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HotHouse Theatre gratefully acknowledges the support of our Government Funders and Supporters.





Special Event

HotHouse Theatre in association with Write Around the Murray and La Trobe University present a special La Trobe Conversation:

In Conversation with Ellen van Neerven

Thursday 12 September 6.15pm

Ellen van Neerven (they/them) is an award-winning writer of Mununjali, Yugambah and Dutch heritage. They have authored two poetry collections, *Throat* and *Comfort Food*, one work of fiction, *Heat and Light*, and a memoir called *Personal Score*. *Throat* won three categories at the 2021 NSW Premiers Literary Awards including Book of the Year, the Kenneth Slessor Prize and the Multicultural Award.

swim is Ellen's debut work for the stage.

Join us at HotHouse Theatre for a fascinating pre-show, In Conversation event with *swim* Director Andrea James talking to Ellen van Neerven, as they delve into writing across form – poetry to fiction to playwriting, and unpacking themes in their new work – water sovereignty, gender identity, and the binding strength of culture and family. Stay on at HotHouse after the discussion, grab a drink and dive in, to experience this exclusive world premiere production for yourself.

In Conversation with Ellen van Neerven is free to attend,
but bookings are essential.

BOOK NOW!



SCAN TO BOOK

Swim EXHIBITION

6 - 21 September 2024



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Shop 2/44-46 Lincoln Causeway


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