

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The brilliant world of neurodiverse artists showcased in brand new cabaret

A wild and rollicking cabaret curated, directed, and performed by Wollongong's only professional theatre company, The Strangeways Ensemble, will premiere at The Music Lounge this month in a new milestone for the company.

Featuring original and devised character and performance-based acts, plus special guest artists for each show including comedian **Madeleine Stewart** and renowned visual artist and author **Debra Keenahan**, *The Strangeways Cabaret* will take place over three days from 16 – 18 December.

The Strangeways Ensemble is Merrigong Theatre Company's permanent company, and consists of seven artists who are neurodiverse or living with disability. The Ensemble were last seen on the mainstage in 2020's hugely successful *Trash Talk*, which was also the first work by the group to tour outside of the Illawarra.

In what can be seen as a stylistic change for the company, their latest work can be best described as part game show, part vaudevillian caper.

"Cabaret provides a platform for the ensemble artists to manifest their own creativity and ideas," says Strangeways Ensemble Director Anne-Louise Rentell. *"Creating and performing this format, the Ensemble have more flexibility over what they create, allowing for more breathing space and room for risk-taking in both performance and subject matter."*

Throughout the development process, the Ensemble members have been paired with some of the country's premier cabaret talents as both mentors and collaborators to hone the acts and exchange ideas. This has given the Ensemble members access to new ways of working, new ideas and, it is hoped, new creative alignments for future projects.

MERRIGONG

SEASON 2021

"By centring artists who are neurodiverse or living with disability through an annual cabaret, we are increasing the visibility of the Ensemble, keeping them present as practicing artists within the cultural landscape of our region," said Anne-Louise.

Featuring two original songs written by Jordan Bowater and Malcolm Allison as well as monologues written by Ethan Arnold, Christian Taliaferro and Rachel Head, The Strangeways Ensemble are taking creative agency in all areas of the production and owning the stage in this inspiring and often surprising new work.

Creator and performer, Malcom Alison said of *The Strangeways Cabaret*, *"Audiences can really expect some surprises and it will be funny."*

"But we are contrasting that with some tender moments." added fellow Ensemble member Jordan Broadwater.

Tickets for The Strangeways Cabaret are available at www.merrigong.com.au.

- ENDS -

Creators and performers | **Malcolm Allison, Ethan Arnold, Jordan Bowater, Ethan Green, Rachel Head, Phillip Prentice and Christian Tagliaferro**

16 – 18 DECEMBER Thu 16 Dec, 8pm, Fri 17 Dec, 8pm, Sat 18 Dec, 2pm

LOCATION The Music Lounge, Wollongong Town Hall

TICKETS \$25 - \$30

Companion Cards accepted. A per transaction fee of \$6.95 applies for phone and online bookings. Under 30s tickets only available in person at the Box Office.

BOOKINGS <https://merrigong.com.au/shows/the-strangeways-cabaret/> or 02 4224 5999

Recommended for ages 16 +. Contains strong language and adult themes.

For more information contact:

MERRIGONG

SEASON 2021

Amandine Durrant - **M:** 0427 397 906 **E:** adurrant@merrigong.com.au

Edie Watt - **M:** 0422 050 691 **E:** ewatt@merrigong.com.au

Our company's name, 'Merrigong', reflects the Dharawal word for the Illawarra region's distinctive escarpment, a landmark of supreme cultural importance. The name serves as a constant reminder that our venues rest on unceded First Nations land. In all that we do, Merrigong Theatre Company seeks to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, and to show respect to all First Nations people who call our region home.