

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Merrigong Theatre Company Launches MERRIGONGX 2023 and a New Temporary Independent Artist Hub, 93 CROWN

Merrigong Theatre Company is thrilled to announce another exciting year of their annual artists' program, **MERRIGONGX**, showcasing the outstanding breadth of local talent and their bold new works. In 2023, the program will feature a line-up of four exciting productions on stage, as well as 17 works in development ranging across dance, theatre, music and more.

In 2023 during the refurbishment of the IPAC, Wollongong City Council has provided Merrigong with temporary space at **93 Crown Street** to house a dynamic artist space in the heart of the Wollongong CBD. With the availability of **93 Crown** for the first half of the year, **MERRIGONGX** will enhance their support which launched five years ago and has become the largest artists' programs in Australia, offering artists both a stage platform for their new works, and a dedicated space as they refine their craft and develop new outstanding works of theatre that reflect the amazing stories and communities Wollongong knows and loves.

Providing independent artists with the support of financial, technical, marketing, and artistic resources usually out of reach for them, **MERRIGONGX** allows for more daring creative risks in artistic practice.

Artistic Director and CEO of Merrigong Theatre Company, Simon Hinton said, "Our MERRIGONGX program goes from strength to strength each year, supporting artists to take creative risks, and championing local stories and community. This year we welcome 22 artists, busy working on developing new projects, and showcase the culmination of many years' hard work, with the public presentation of 4 new independent theatre works.

The temporary artist hub at 93 Crown Street, generously provided by Wollongong City Council during the refurbishment of IPAC, will open the door for more community and artist activities, such as drop-in sessions, small showings of new work, and a creative space to work on projects."

Kicking off the year in March, **MERRIGONGX** will stage the first of four productions, **ChaChi and the Sea of Tears**, by circus artist Neisha Murphy, which combines clowning and storytelling to present the action-packed show about facing your fears and finding light in the darkness – even in the biggest downpours.

March will also see the contemporary dance performance **Optimal Stopping**, by Proper Motion and La Infinita Compañía, bringing together two very different groups of dancers from opposite sides of the world, to meet and get to know each other as performers on stage. Five of Mexico's finest dancers along with local dancers from Wollongong will navigate space, choreography and relationships in real time in front of audiences.

Following a prolific inaugural 2022 season, **unCOILED eXposed** is back in October featuring three new pieces by local and NSW based choreographers as part of an experimental dance residency, all performed by the strikingly talented AUSTI. Dance and Physical Theatre (AUSTI.) company dancers.

Finally, in November, the subversive all-female ensemble featuring Cheryle Moore, Stephanie Hart and Lenny Ann Low, Frumpus present **Landed**, a new work about three shifty women, wordless but with plenty to say, who take an unnerving and rib-tickling excursion into silliness and power play.

This year MERRIGONGX will also present the development showing of Alana Valentine's (*Letters to Lindy*) **My Beautiful Man**, a deeply moving new play, featuring songs, based on the 2014 Lindt Cafe Siege and the lives impacted by the tragic loss of manager Tori Johnson.

More information about the MERRIGONGX 2023 Program and 93 Crown can be found at <https://merrigong.com.au/merrigongx/>.

#### MERRIGONGX PRODUCTIONS:

DATES	PRODUCTION	PRESENTED BY
2 – 4 Mar	<i>ChaChi and the Sea of Tears</i>	Neisha Murphy
30 Mar – 1 Apr	<i>Optimal Stopping</i>	Proper Motion and La Infinita Compañía
19 -21 Oct	<i>uNCOILEd eXposed</i>	AUSTI. Dance and Physical Theatre
2 – 4 Nov	<i>Landed</i>	Frumpus

#### DEVELOPMENT SHOWING:

DATES	PRODUCTION	PRESENTED BY
3 Jun	<i>My Beautiful Man</i>	Alana Valentine

#### SUPPORTED ARTISTS:

MERRIGONGX and 93 Crown will also be supporting a range of artists who will be developing works across dance, theatre, music and more. These include:

- Bonnie Curtis
- The Corinthian Food Store
- Lucy Heffernan
- Josh Hinton
- Vaguely Adjacent
- Kirli Saunders
- Ali Gordon
- Ali Jane Smith
- Karen Cummings & Benjamin Cauduro
- Lily Hayman & Joshua Lobb
- Malika Reese
- Bobby Aazami
- Susan Kennedy
- Tegan Ware
- Catherine McKinnon & Aunty Barbara Nicholson
- AUSTI. Dance and Physical Theatre
- Frumpus
- Emma Saunders
- Rose Maher
- Neisha Murphy
- Proper Motion
- Merrigong & South Coast Writers Centre Playwrights' Program

- ENDS -

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#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

Merrigong Theatre Company is a not-for-profit company that operates Wollongong’s premier performing arts venue, Illawarra Performing Arts Centre (IPAC) and the city’s key civic and community venue, Wollongong Town Hall.

The company’s name ‘Merrigong’ reflects the Dharawal word for the Illawarra region’s distinctive escarpment, a landmark of supreme cultural importance.

This name serves as a constant reminder that their venues rest on unceded First Nations land.

In all that they do, Merrigong Theatre Company seeks to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, seas and skies, and to show respect to all First Nations people who call the region home.