

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Theatre thrills here. Merrigong Theatre Company invites audiences to "Come Together" for their 2024 Mainstage and MERRIGONGX Season.

Merrigong Theatre Company is thrilled to announce a new, exciting year of showcasing the outstanding breadth of local, national and international talent and bold works, with their 2024 Mainstage and MERRIGONGX seasons.

Fresh off the back of Sydney Festival, ***Send For Nellie*** graces the Bruce Gordon Theatre stage in February. 1931, Sydney. West-Indian Australian singer Nellie Small puts on a sleek top hat and tails at a little Oxford Street venue, and a legend of Australian vaudeville and cabaret is born. Written by Helpmann Award-winning playwright, and long-time Merrigong Theatre Company collaborator, Alana Valentine (*Dead Man Broke, Barbara and the Camp Dogs, Letters to Lindy*), ***Send For Nellie*** celebrates a ground-breaking, non-conformist path.

After a smash-hit premiere season in 2022, the luminous Heather Mitchell reprises her performance as Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the hotly anticipated national tour of Sydney Theatre Company's ***RBG: Of Many, One***, coming to Wollongong in April. On the heels of *Prima Facie* which took London's West End by storm, Olivier Award-winning Australian playwright Suzie Miller continues her interrogation of complex human stories, with this vibrant portrait of one of the most iconic women of our time.

Brimming with humour and pure entertainment, one of New Zealand's most successful theatrical exports, ***Wild Dogs Under My Skirt***, makes its way to Wollongong in April after touring across New Zealand, performing off-Broadway in New York, and snapping up awards since 2016. Adapted from Tusiata Avia's poetry collection, ***Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*** is a provocative examination and celebration of the lives of Samoan women.

Kay Proudlove once again collaborates with Merrigong Theatre Company to take her show ***Dear Diary*** to new levels in May, now part of a national tour after a successful MERRIGONGX debut in 2022. With wry humour and confessional stories, ***Dear Diary*** asks us to look at what we hold onto in our lives and when it's the right time to let them go, if ever.

Challenging, joyful and deeply affecting, Marrugeku's ***Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]*** is a dance, sound, and installation work coming to Wollongong in August. At the forefront of cultural expressive integrity, Marrugeku is an unparalleled presence in Australia today. Dedicated to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians working together, it has been co-created by Marrugeku with Yawuru leader Patrick Dodson, Kurdish-Iranian writer and former Manus Island detainee Behrouz Boochani, and Iranian-Australian scholar-activist Omid Tofighian,

For over 70 years, ***Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap*** has kept millions of people from every corner of the globe on the edge of their seats. Directed by Australian theatre royalty, Robyn Nevin, this acclaimed new production wowed audiences on a national tour in 2022. Now it's Wollongong's turn to indulge in the

classic crime caper that has cemented Agatha Christie as the queen of her genre. **Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap** will take to the IMB Theatre stage in September.

September also marks the national tour of Rajiv Joseph's **Guards at the Taj** after a return season at Riverside Theatres Parramatta. Featuring a heartbreakingly funny friendship put to the ultimate test and existential banter reminiscent of Beckett and Stoppard, **Guards at the Taj** mixes witty black comedy with the bloodiest deeds of Greek Tragedy.

Rounding out the Mainstage Season in October is **The Queen's Nanny**, written by Melanie Tait (*The Appleton Ladies' Potato Race*) and directed by Priscilla Jackman (STC's *RBG: of Many*, Opera Australia's *The Merchant of Venice*). Inspired by historical events, a royal scandal ignites a blistering fire between the steely Queen Mother and her children's doting nanny. The production comes to Wollongong direct from its world premiere season at Sydney's Ensemble Theatre.

MERRIGONGX will once again showcase the outstanding breadth of local talent and their bold new works. Beginning the season in August is Josh Hinton's **A Place in the Sultan's Kitchen or How To Make the Perfect One-Pot Chicken Curry**, weaving together childhood memories and family folklore passed down the generations, as Josh attempts to make his grandmother's chicken curry live on stage. Later that month is Nathan Harrison's **Birds of Tomorrow**, a playful and heartfelt look at the birds around us, and what they might sing when we're gone. Concluding the MERRIGONGX season is **The Cardinal Rules**, a nostalgic work of storytelling by Rose Maher, with Hurrah Hurrah, and a reckoning with an upbringing in the Australian Catholic Church circa 1990.

Simon Hinton, Artistic Director & CEO of Merrigong Theatre Company says, *"This year we are inviting you to "Come Together" to experience the thrill of live theatre. With so much going on in the world, we want to remind audiences what this really means, so in our season brochure we've asked members of our community to share what "Come Together" means to them (make sure you check it out). Put simply, for me, it is the thrill you get when you share great experiences with friends and loved ones. And there is a particular thrill that only comes from live performance. A live theatre show is a one-off moment in time that you share with an audience - no two performances are ever exactly the same, and that exact combination of audience members will never be together again either - it is a totally unique experience. And this year, we've selected a dynamic range of productions, with intriguing stories to enjoy, together, here in Wollongong."*

More information about the Merrigong 2024 Season can be found at <https://merrigong.com.au/merrigong-season/>

Merrigong is making Season Tickets more accessible than ever with simplified packages. Audiences can choose 4 to 5 shows to unlock 20% off or 6 + shows to get 30% off.

MERRIGONG 2024 MAINSTAGE SEASON

| DATES | PRODUCTION | PRESENTED BY |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 – 17 Feb | <i>Send For Nellie</i> | Send For Productions, Sydney Festival & The Art House Wyong |

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|-------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 – 6 Apr | <i>RBG: Of Many, One</i> | Sydney Theatre Company |
| 10 – 13 Apr | <i>Wild Dogs Under My Skirt</i> | Victor Rodger FCC Productions |
| 8 – 11 May | <i>Dear Diary</i> | Merrigong Theatre Company |
| 29 – 31 Aug | <i>Jurrungu Ngan-ga [Straight Talk]</i> | Marrugeku |
| 5 – 15 Sep | <i>Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap</i> | John Frost Crossroads Live and Shake & Stir Theatre Company |
| 19 – 21 Sep | <i>Guards at the Taj</i> | National Theatre of Parramatta (NTofP) |
| 16 – 19 Oct | <i>The Queen's Nanny</i> | Ensemble Theatre |

MERRIGONGX 2024 SEASON

| DATES | PRODUCTION | PRESENTED BY |
|----------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 8 – 10 Aug | <i>A Place in the Sultan's Kitchen</i> | Joshua Hinton |
| 22 – 24 Aug | <i>Birdsong of Tomorrow</i> | Nathan Harrison |
| 31 Oct – 2 Nov | <i>The Cardinal Rules</i> | Rose Maher with Hurrah Hurrah Productions |

- ENDS -

Images and video are available for download [here](#).

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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.