

PRESS RELEASE – Embargoed until 5 November 8pm

## MERRIGONG THEATRE COMPANY UNVEILS UNMISSABLE 2025 SEASON

Merrigong Theatre Company proudly announces its 2025 season, with 11 Mainstage shows, including three blockbuster theatre events with strictly limited two-week seasons - this is their biggest season ever. Showcasing mainstage productions of local, national and international theatre, innovative new works in the MERRIGONGX Artists' Program, and vibrant family entertainment, Merrigong's 2025 season invites audiences to experience an unmissable year of theatre.

Opening the mainstage program in February, Bangarra Dance Theatre's *The Light Inside* will transport audiences with a visually stunning performance that was acclaimed in its 2024 premiere season at the Sydney Opera House (as part of double bill *Horizon*). Blending contemporary dance with rich storytelling, Bangarra's first mainstage cross-cultural collaborative work explores the depth of the human spirit, guiding audiences and ensemble in stories that honour their mother countries, calling them home.

Next up, following an extraordinary sold-out run at the Brisbane Festival in 2024, the smash-hit stage adaptation of the best-selling book, *Trent Dalton's Love Stories*, will begin its national tour here in Wollongong for a strictly limited two-week season. With no other NSW dates currently announced, this is a unique opportunity not only for Wollongong audiences, but for those from outside the region to come to Wollongong and see it before city audiences have the chance. Dalton's vignettes are lovingly adapted into a whirlwind production, merging candid performances from a stellar cast and cine-theatre that will make audiences fall in love all over again.

Following this in March, Hayes Theatre Co breathes new life into the much-loved Gilbert & Sullivan classic, *The Pirates of Penzance*, bringing its trademark wit and energy to the stage in a production that will charm audiences of all ages. In a performance feat that needs to be witnessed, this brand-new, boisterously joyful 'rewired and rebooted' adaptation is brought to life by four bold performers, playing dozens of roles, and the musical score on piano!

In April, Bell Shakespeare's *Henry 5* follows, delivering a gripping retelling of Shakespeare's iconic tale of power, politics, and war. The focus then shifts to the pressing issue of climate change with *Scenes from the Climate Era*, a bold production from Belvoir St Theatre that tackles the challenges and consequences of our changing world through a series of powerful and poignant scenes.

State Theatre Company South Australia and Sydney Theatre Company's outstanding production, *The Dictionary of Lost Words* comes to Wollongong in May for two weeks. The adaptation of Pip Williams' best-selling novel celebrates the power of love and language. Sydney Theatre Company and Canberra Theatre Centre's *Julia* visits as part of its national tour, a powerful political drama that explores the rise of Australia's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, in September.

July brings *Mr Red Light*, a heartwarming and humorous work from Nightsong, an award-winning New Zealand theatre company. *Mr Red Light* is absurdist humour at its most life-affirming, with its themes of fate, hope, and human connection.

Following this in August, the spicy hit of the 2024 MERRIGONGX Artists' Program, Josh Hinton's ***A Place in the Sultan's Kitchen (or How To Make the Perfect One-Pot Chicken Curry)***, transfers to the Merrigong mainstage, weaving together childhood memories and family folklore passed down through the generations, as Josh attempts to make his grandmother's chicken curry, live on stage.

Australia's foremost contemporary circus company, Circa brings a dose of high-energy spectacle with ***Duck Pond*** in October, an exuberant take on *Swan Lake* that pushes the limits of the art-form, with jaw-dropping acrobatics that keep you spellbound and on the edge of your seat. Closing out the mainstage season is Merrigong's own production ***The Seven*** by The Strangeways Ensemble in November, taking a witty approach to horror and conspiracy tropes to create an original, homegrown mystery that explores notions of visibility and the unknown.

MERRIGONGX Artists' Program goes from strength to strength, supporting a range of artists to create extraordinary new work. The full suite of artists being supported with creative development residencies will be announced in February, the four new works being presented to audiences for the first time include Kirli Saunders' ***Yhanda Djanbay (Go Slowly)***, a poetic journey through land, culture, and identity, inviting audiences to reflect and connect. In contrast, Lucy Heffernan's gig-theatre ***Dog People*** explores the nature of love, death, and dogs. ***Squatch Watch: LIVE*** by Vaugley Adjacent takes audiences on a wild, interactive adventure as they search for mythical creatures, while ***Public Access***, presented by The Corinthian Food Store, examines community and urban life in a unique and thought-provoking production (performed live in a public library).

Merrigong's 2025 season also boasts a fantastic lineup for younger audiences. ***Ratburger***, adapted from the bestselling David Walliams novel, is a hilarious and heart-warming story packed with quirky characters and thrilling escapades. The magical ***Very Hungry Caterpillar Show*** brings Eric Carle's timeless story to life through beautiful puppetry and vibrant colours, while ***The Listies: 110% Ready*** promises laugh-out-loud comedy from Australia's favourite musical children's duo. Wrapping up the family program is ***Holiday Island*** by Ali Gordon, a whimsical and adventurous story that will transport kids to a tropical paradise filled with fun and surprises. Merrigong will also be hosting its ***Creativity Camps*** during the Autumn, Winter and Spring school holidays.

On this year's epic season, Merrigong Theatre Company's Artistic Director **Simon Hinton** said, "*2025 is Merrigong's biggest season yet. We are proud to give Wollongong audiences the opportunity to experience three blockbuster theatre events in **Trent Dalton's Love Stories**, Justine Clarke in **Julia**, and a brilliant stage adaptation of **The Dictionary of Lost Words**. We'll also celebrate the return to Wollongong of six of the nation's finest theatre companies, with exuberant, thought-provoking works; share two wonderful productions from local artists, and bring one international theatre gem here to the Illawarra. Our MERRIGONGX Artists' Program will present four new local artists' productions to audiences for the very first time, and of course, our youngest audience members will enjoy theatre made specially for them. Altogether this adds up to an unmissable year of theatre - one I'm excited to see along with our audience*".

More information about Merrigong Season 2025 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 2025 MAINSTAGE SEASON

<b>DATES</b>	<b>PRODUCTION</b>	<b>PRESENTED BY</b>
13 – 15 Feb	<i>The Light Inside</i>	Bangarra Dance Theatre
27 Feb – 8 March	<i>Trent Dalton's Love Stories</i>	Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Brisbane Festival
26 – 29 Mar	<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i>	Hayes Theatre Co in Association with The Art House Wyong
30 Apr – 3 May	<i>Henry 5</i>	Bell Shakespeare
14 – 17 May	<i>Scenes from the Climate Era</i>	Belvoir St Theatre
29 May – 7 Jun	<i>The Dictionary of Lost Words</i>	State Theatre Company South Australia and Sydney Theatre Company
2 – 5 Jul	<i>Mr Red Light</i>	Nightsong
20 – 23 Aug	<i>A Place in the Sultan's Kitchen (or How to Make the Perfect One-Pot Chicken Curry)</i>	Merrigong Theatre Company
3 – 13 Sep	<i>Julia</i>	Sydney Theatre Company and Canberra Theatre Centre
22 – 25 Oct	<i>Duck Pond</i>	Circa
21 – 29 Nov	<i>The Seven</i>	Merrigong Theatre Company

### MERRIGONGX 2025 SEASON

<b>DATES</b>	<b>PRODUCTION</b>	<b>PRESENTED BY</b>
20 – 22 Feb	<i>Yandha Djanbay (Go Slowly)</i>	Kirli Saunders
19 – 21 Jun	<i>Dog People</i>	Lucy Heffernan
25 – 27 Sep	<i>Squatch Watch: LIVE</i>	Vaugley Adjacent
Dates to be announced	<i>Public Access</i>	The Corinthian Food Store

## KIDS AND FAMILIES 2025 SEASON

DATES	PRODUCTION	PRESENTED BY
23 – 24 Apr	<i>David Walliams' Ratburger</i>	CDP Kids
6 May	<i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	CDP Kids
18 – 19 Jul	<i>The Listies – 110% Ready</i>	The Listies
8 – 9 Oct	<i>Holiday Island</i>	Ali Gordon
21 – 24 Apr 14 – 18 Jul 07 – 10 Oct	<i>Merrigong Creativity Camps</i>	Merrigong Theatre Company

- 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.