PRESS RELEASE

MERRIGONG THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES 2027 SEASON

3rd November, 2026: Merrigong Theatre Company is delighted to unveil its 2027 season, a true celebration of the beauty of live performance, with eight stellar mainstage shows sourced from the very best productions across Australia and internationally.

Merrigong Theatre Company artistic director and CEO, Simon Hinton, said "*If you're anything like me, these days you often find yourself reeling from the onslaught of AI – from the relentless algorithm that feeds us a steady stream of the fake, a smorgasbord of concocted content intended to outrage, amaze, confuse and disorient us. In a world where it's increasingly difficult to know what or who is actually real, where are we supposed to turn? To the theatre, I say*.

"*Live performance offers us something else – a precious opportunity to gather with others and experience something that, for all its ability to conjure illusions, is undeniably real. That actor, singer, dancer on the stage is there in front of your very eyes. There is no CGI, no deepfakes, no algorithm, and also no pause or rewind button. This is happening right now, in this place, at this time, and if you're not in the room you will miss it*".

The 2027 Merrigong Theatre Company season will open with Sport for Jove's ***The Tempest.***The University of Wollongong's Kooloobong Oval will be transformed into a fantastical island of fairy lights and wonder for an exciting outdoor production. Beneath an open sky, audiences can pack a picnic, bring a rug and enjoy the performance from one of Australia's leading interpreters of Shakespeare.

March will see the mainstage debut season of ***Service,*** by Lachlan Grogan, the sell-out smash hit of the **MERRIGONGX** Artists' Program in 2026. Born out of Lachlan's own experience working in Illawarra's hospitality industry, ***Service*** is a dance-theatre comedy, diving headfirst into the controlled chaos of the restaurant world.

In a huge coup for Merrigong, Belvoir St Theatre and Kurinji will bring S. Shakthidharan and Eamon Flack's epic ***Counting and Cracking*** to Wollongong in May. Voted the best Australian play of the 21st Century, this landmark production has won major awards across the world, seven Helpmann awards, including Best Production and Best

Direction, and makes its exclusive final NSW season (and regional premiere) in Wollongong, ahead of it's London premiereand return to New York City for a season in Central Park..

In June, Ensemble Theatre will heat up the theatre with Peter Quilter's ***End of the Rainbow,*** the Tony and Olivier award-winning play featuring the iconic songs of Judy Garland, offering a dazzling and heartbreaking glimpse into the final chapter of the Hollywood star's remarkable life.

Following a critically acclaimed sell-out Brisbane premiere season, ***Little Shop of Horrors*** will hit Wollongong - bigger, bolder and hungrier than ever! Featuring an all-star cast and creative team of Australian musical theatre heavy-hitters, this revival of the cult sci-fi smash musical promises everything fans love about ***Little Shop of Horrors*** – deranged dentists, larger-than-life plants and an unforgettable night of musical mayhem that is not to be missed.

In August, the smash-hit cult production ***Phar Lap: The Electro-Swing Musical*** gallops into town. With a powerhouse creative team led by director Sheridan Harbridge (co-writer of *My Brilliant Career*) and bursting with pure escapism and exuberant energy, ***Phar Lap*** asks you to suspend your disbelief as an actor swaps his horseshoes for tap shoes to play one of Australia's most beloved icons. Not just another absurdist, electro-swing musical comedy about a thoroughbred racehorse, ***Phar Lap*** is a rags-to-riches story with a big heart.

From Aoteoroa / New Zealand's premier performing arts company, Auckland Theatre Company comes the epic tale ***Tiri: Te Araroa | Woman Far Walking***. Drawn from the original play *Woman Far Walking* by one of New Zealand's most distinguished, awarded and trailblazing Māori writers, Witi Ihimaera (Te Whānau a Kai, Ngāti Porou), this bilingual retelling, in English and te reo Māori, recounts the life of Tiri Mahana, a 187-year-old matriarch, from her birth at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi to present-day Aotearoa.

Rounding out the year, poetic storytelling and soaring acoustic music intertwine in a journey of love, loss and fate... Global fringe festival legends and insanely talented storytellers Wright & Grainger combine with musicians from Wollongong's Steel City Strings to bring us a healing, moving double-bill – ***Orpheus and Eurydice***. Yes, it's the Greek myth, but transformed and reworked into hair-raising spoken word poetry interspersed with glorious acoustic soul music. Wright & Grainger weave a world of dive bars, side streets, ancient gods and impossible, death-defying love.

In 2027, **MERRIGONGX** Artists' Program. present an exciting program of four new works pushing the boundaries of both genre and creativity. Featuring a stellar line up from some of the Illawarra's most exciting emerging creative minds, the season supports the development of artists and their work, while offering audiences the opportunity to be a part of the process, seeing the works before they hit stages across Australia in the future.

Merrigong's 2027 season also features a fantastic family program for young people and the young-at-heart, while Merrigong's unmissable **Creativity Camps** also return during the Autumn, Winter and Spring school holidays.

To build their ultimate year of theatre,audiences can choose 4 to 5 shows to unlock 20% off or 6 + shows to get 30% off.

More information about Merrigong Season 2027 will be made available at **https://merrigong.com.au/merrigong-season/**

MERRIGONG 2027 MAINSTAGE SEASON

DATES	PRODUCTION
17th to 27th February	Theatre Under the Stars - The Tempest (Kooloobong Oval, University of Wollongong)
17th to 20th March	Service
13th to 23rd May	Counting and Cracking
9th to 12th June	End of the Rainbow
28th July to 8th August	Little Shop of Horrors
11th to 21st August	Phar Lap
22nd to 25th September	Tiri: Te Araroa Woman Far Walking
13th to 16th October	Orpheus and Eurydice (Wollongong Town Hall)

MERRIGONGX 2027 SEASON

DATES	PRODUCTION
15th to 17th April	Asking for It by Lisa Maris McDonell
13th to 15th May	Killing Katy Perry (With Her Song) by Emma Price
3rd to 5th June	Hippocratic by Meg McMurray
26th to 28th August	Burrow by Amelia Harding

KIDS AND FAMILIES 2027 SEASON

DATES	PRODUCTION
23rd March	Where is the Green Sheep?
22nd to 23rd April	The Girl Who Glows
12th to 13th July	Velveteen Rabbit
6th to 7th October	Mr Snotbottom

- ENDS –

2027 season images 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.