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INSIDE WAAPA

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Bell Award

PLUS
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and much more





Photos by Hayley Miro

SPEEDBALL WINS BELL

A jazz ensemble of WAAPA graduates has taken out this year's prestigious Australian Jazz Bell Award for Best Australian Jazz Song of the Year.

Speedball, made up of trumpeter Mat Jodrell, saxophonist Carl Mackey, pianist Grant Windsor, bassist Sam Anning and drummer Daniel Susnjar, won for the Jodrell-composed tune, *Judgement Day*.

The 2018 Bell Awards ceremony was held on May 14 at Bird's Basement in Melbourne. Established in 2003 and named in honour of the late great jazz pioneer Graeme Bell AO MBE, the 'Bells' – as they are affectionately known – recognise and encourage excellence in jazz in Australia.

Speedball formed in 2000 and since then their signature brand of no-holds-barred, high intensity performances has earned them a reputation as one of the country's most exciting jazz ensembles.

No strangers to international success, the band members have performed with heavyweights such as Ron Carter, Herbie Hancock, Joe Lovano, Chick Corea, Terence Blanchard, Miguel Zenon, Jose James, Gregory Porter, and Kenny Werner.

The combined accolades of the group's members are extensive, including a Clifford Brown/Stan Getz fellow, an APRA Professional Development Award, Bell Awards, ARIA nominations, National Jazz Awards, James Morrison Scholarship recipients, and MCA Freedman Fellowship finalists.

They have taught on the faculties of the world's finest music institutions, including the prestigious Juilliard School of Music, University of Miami, Monash University and, of course, WAAPA at ECU.

In 2017 Speedball released their highly anticipated debut album, *We Have Moved*. To launch the release, the group played to sell-out crowds at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival, Morrison's Jazz Club and the Sydney Con International Jazz Festival.

Carl Mackey, Speedball's sax player, talked to IW after the band's Bell win:

IW: How was Speedball formed?

CM: Mat Jodrell and myself returned from a tour to New Orleans in 2000 with a specific objective in mind. To form a group of our own playing music for the people that was energetic and passionate. The repertoire had to fit a certain criteria. It had to be either hard swinging, tearing the walls down, groovy as all hell or simply beautiful. Preferably a combination of these factors. No throw away tunes! We organised a hit at my then studio in Fremantle to trial a lineup and after a couple of tweaks we settled on what could be the only lineup that could deliver what we were aiming for. Everyone shares an immense passion for the music and a strong desire to express that through their playing. We were all studying at WAAPA and our connection and friendships were formed and solidified there. Speedball was born there.

IW: How does winning a Bell Award impact on the group going forward?

CM: It is very nice to be acknowledged by the industry, and in the company of some of the country's finest contributing artists. This award will assist us in funding the production of our next album and help to bolster our profile in the Australian scene.

IW: You are all now based in Melbourne except for Daniel Susnjar, who is in Perth. How do you manage that?

CM: It's not ideal, obviously. It means that we don't get to play whenever we'd like to. That being said, we remain appreciative of the moments when we do get to come together. It has meant that we have had to go out of our way to create opportunities to play. It's not as bad as having the band strewn across the globe as it was just a few years back. The group shares what we feel is a rare connectivity and maybe not being able to have it whenever we want it helps to keep the spark highly energised.

IW: What's next for Speedball?

CM: We are about to embark on a national tour in September this year. We will be touring extensively on the east coast and are finally going to make our return to Perth, launching our album *We Have Moved* at The Ellington on September 28 and 29. This will be our first outing in Perth in 10 years! We can't wait!!

From left: Sam Anning, Mat Jodrell, Daniel Susnjar, Carl Mackey and Grant Windsor

DANCERS SCORE TOP HONOURS

WAAPA DANCE CELEBRATES RECENT STUDENT AND GRADUATE SUCCESSSES

Five WAAPA dance students took out top awards at the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) WA's Festival of Dance, held from May 31 to June 4 at John Curtin College of the Arts in Fremantle.

More than 400 young dancers from ballet schools across Perth competed in the festival, which is a springboard for WA's aspiring and pre-professional dancers. The festival finished with a gala performance on the final evening on WA Day.

The festival's adjudicators were an inspirational line-up of some of the state's most celebrated dance professionals: West Australian Ballet (WAB) Artistic Director, Aurélien Scannella; Madeleine Eastoe, former principal dancer with The Australian Ballet; Melissa Boniface, current soloist with WAB; Jacinta Ross Ehlers, former WAB dancer; Craig Lord-Sole, WAB's ballet master; and WAAPA's Head of Dance, Sue Peacock.

WAAPA dance student Penelope Rojas-Antonuccio was the recipient of the Lynley Wilson Artistic Scholarship. Katarina Gajic won the Linley Wilson RAD Scholarship, with second place being awarded to Portia Secker. The prize for the Best Senior Female Dancer was awarded to Sara Ouwendyk while Alex Diedler took out the Best Senior Male Dancer award.

The gala on June 4 was hosted by WAAPA alumna and WAB dancer Carina Roberts, and featured a guest performance of WAB's *Les Indomptés*, danced by Ludovico Di Ubaldo and fellow WAAPA graduate Liam Green.

Carina Roberts and Liam Green, both of whom are previous award winners at RAD

festivals, have recently been promoted to the rank of demi-soloist with WAB.

"These promotions reward Liam and Carina for their hard work and commitment during their time at West Australian Ballet," says WAB Artistic Director, Aurélien Scannella. "They have both grown as artists, improving their stage presence and ballet technique"

In his graduating year at WAAPA, Green won the Linley Wilson Scholarship at the 2013 RAD Festival before being invited to join WAB full time as a Young Artist in 2014.

The young dancer received high praise for his role as George in 2017's *The Great Gatsby*, with *The West Australian* writing: "Green proved again he is one to watch, with a performance both macho and sensual". More recently, he shone in the role of Gurn in *La Sylphide*.

"I'm very grateful for all opportunities the West Australian Ballet has given me over the last five years," says Green. "I'm excited to continue this work in my new role as a demi-soloist, and will strive to improve and grow throughout my time with the company."

Roberts, whose parents were both WAB dancers in the late 1980s and early 1990s, performed her first principal role with the company in 2015's *Coppelia*, followed by the lead role of Clara in *The Nutcracker*.

For her role as Tinkerbell in the 2017 production of *Peter Pan*, Roberts was nominated for Most Outstanding Dancer in *Dance Australia*.

"The radiant Carina Roberts as Tinkerbell was superb – eloquent, light-footed and gleefully spiteful," stated *The Australian*.

Roberts' promotion to demi-soloist follows her performance as The Sylph in *La Sylphide*.

"I'm absolutely thrilled and humbled to have been promoted to demi-soloist," says Roberts, who took out the Pre-professional Prize in the 2014 RAD Festival of Dance. "I can't wait to have many more opportunities to perform more roles for the people of Perth alongside my fellow WAAPA graduate Liam Green."

While Roberts and Green are looking forward to their promotion at WAB, another WAAPA graduate is leaving the company to take up an exciting overseas appointment.

After a decade with WAB, demi-soloist Meg Parry is moving to Canada to continue her career with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal.

A 2007 WAAPA graduate, Parry joined WAB as a Young Artist in 2008, later being promoted to corps de ballet and then to demi-soloist in 2014.

Parry has danced roles such as Tinkerbell in *Peter Pan*, the Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Swanhilda in *Coppelia*, and recently Nancy in *La Sylphide*. She has also had a large impact offstage, becoming a very popular teacher of the company's Adult Classes.

"WAAPA gave me so many new skills with such a variety of teachers over the three years, as well as support to discover exactly who I was as an artist," she says. "WAAPA keeps you grounded and strong and ready to tackle the tricky performing arts world and I couldn't be more grateful!"

WAAPA congratulates all these exceptional dancers on their successes.



Clockwise from left: Portia Secker, Katarina Gajic, Alex Diedler, Sara Ouwendyk and Penelope Rojas-Antonuccio

Photo by Stephen Heath



RISING TO THE OCCASION

WAAPA's Jazz students gain invaluable experience performing with American jazz legends

WAAPA was delighted to welcome the Grammy Award nominated Rodriguez Brothers to the Academy in April for a series of masterclasses and concerts.

The visit was made possible thanks to the generosity of Perth-based philanthropists, Brigid and Ronald W. Woss AM of the Woss Group of Companies.

"Their interactions with the students were valuable on so many levels, not the least being that the students experience playing with musicians of the highest calibre, something that is not so easily come by," says WAAPA Jazz Lecturer Chris Tarr. "These interactions can be transformational for individual students, as well as a whole lot of fun."

Co-led by pianist Robert and trumpeter Michael, the Rodriguez Brothers are renowned for their inventive compositions and inimitable Latin jazz style.

Individually, the brothers have worked with Wynton Marsalis, Eddie Palmieri, Quincy Jones, and Harry Connick Jr, among many other legendary jazz musicians.

Together, they have released several acclaimed records, including their latest effort, *Impromptu*, which was nominated for the 2016 Grammy Award in the Best Latin Jazz Album category.

"Working with the Rodriguez Brothers was a great learning experience," says 3rd Year saxophone student Maximilian Wickham. "Their music is quite complicated, but they play it in a way that sounds almost effortless and really grooves."

"I learnt a lot from the challenge of having to perform difficult music to a high standard alongside such incredible

musicians. I think we all had to rise to the occasion, and as a result we all developed a lot from the experience."

1st Year jazz trumpeter James Chapman agrees: "They are both exceptional musicians, however I was even more impressed by the generous way they shared their knowledge in rehearsals, workshops and displaying their ideas in their performances."

"I attended both their jazz and trumpet workshops and I could not have asked for better advice that will certainly help me throughout my musical career."



Inset photo from left: ECU Vice Chancellor Steve Chapman, Brigid and Ron W. Woss with Robert and Michael Rodriguez
Photo by James Kilian

Photo by Kathy Whealley



VISITING VOCAL COACH

British vocal coach Mary King was a visiting guest artist at WAAPA from May to June, thanks to the generous support of leading international commercial law firm, Allens.

King has been sharing her expertise with students across five WAAPA courses: Classical Music, Contemporary Music, Jazz, Music Theatre and Aboriginal Performance.

A mezzo soprano, King has had a long career as an opera and concert singer, performing with the world's leading orchestras and opera companies. Her repertoire ranges from Beethoven and Berio, to Sondheim.

She has had extensive associations with the English National Opera and Southbank Centre, and is now vocal talent consultant with Glyndebourne Opera. King teaches at the Royal Academy of Music and is a voice coach on numerous West End productions.

Recent creative projects have ranged from conducting *Carmina Burana* in Zimbabwe to training the cast of *The Suppliant Women* for the Actor's Touring Company/Young Vic.

King is known from both TV (*Operatunity*; *Musicality*; *Cardiff Singer of the World*) and radio. She has written a series of coaching books for Boosey and Hawkes and *The Singer's Handbook* published by Faber Music.

In addition to her schedule of masterclasses and workshops at WAAPA, King directed the Classical Vocal students in *From Music Hall to Cabaret*, performed from May 31 to June 2 in The Edith Spiegeltent, and ran the day-long public choral event, *Come and Sing with Mary King!*

She was also guest speaker at an Allens' boardroom lunch, regaling the partners and associates with entertaining stories from her life and work.

"I love coming to WAAPA," says King. "Perth's big blue skies are a joy after my native, all-too-frequently-grey London."

"I find the students – across all departments – are warm, welcoming, open-hearted and industrious... and did I mention the huge range of talent? What a pleasure."

Production photos of 'From Music Hall to Cabaret'; Inset photo Mary King
Photos by Stephen Heath



PIANO VIRTUOSO INSPIRES STUDENTS

Hobgood's visit to WAAPA included individual and group piano lessons, workshops with the student jazz pianists and jazz vocalists, ensemble workshops and a masterclass.

While in Perth, Hobgood also played repertoire from his critically acclaimed trio recording, *Honor Thy Fathers*

at the Ellington Jazz Club. He performed with two WAAPA alumni: the award-winning Sam Anning on bass and WAAPA Lecturer Chris Tarr on drums.

WAAPA Jazz Lecturer Tom O'Halloran says hosting Laurence Hobgood at WAAPA was an inspirational experience.

"Laurence was able to connect with the students on a deep artistic level and focus on

their inner muse and reason for pursuing a musical life.

"He challenged us to dig deep into the fundamentals of our jazz craft: time and rhythm, and shared with us his personal practice methods and philosophies. An invaluable experience indeed."

3rd Year Jazz piano student Jonathan McIlwraith says his lesson with Hobgood "really helped me understand the life of an international jazz pianist and the engineering behind piano technique."

"I'm so grateful to have attended Laurence's workshops, they were inspiring," says 3rd Year Jazz vocal student Daisy Fanning.

"They opened me up to a new perspective on being a singer and a musician, and gave me great ideas for rehearsing, arranging and practice."



SO FAR, SO GREAT

Two WAAPA graduates win Melbourne's top performing arts awards



From left: Gillian Cosgriff and Amelia Lever-Davidson with their Green Room Awards - Photograph by Gregory Lorenzutti and Frank Cecconi for the Green Room Awards 2018

WAAPA graduates Gillian Cosgriff and Amelia Lever-Davidson were among the winners of the 2018 Green Room Awards, held on April 9 at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne.

The ceremony, now in its 35th year, recognises the best in live performance on Melbourne's stages.

Comedian, singer, songwriter and pianist Gillian Cosgriff was named Best Cabaret Artist, and won Best Writing for her show *8 Songs In 8 Weeks*, performed at The Butterfly Club as part of last year's Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

Amelia Lever-Davidson won Best Lighting Design in the Independent Theatre category for *Looking Glass*, a New Working Group production in association with fortyfivedownstairs.

In its review of *Looking Glass*, *The Australian* declared that "Amelia Lever-Davidson's lighting is a show in itself."

This is the second Green Room Award for the 2006 WAAPA graduate, following a win in 2015 for her body of work.

Cosgriff, who graduated from WAAPA's Music Theatre course in 2010, previously won a Green

Room Award in 2013 for Best Original Songs for her show, *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things*. She also picked up the Best Cabaret Award at that year's Melbourne Fringe.

8 Songs In 8 Weeks was praised by reviewer Steve Bennett as "a formidable showcase for this brilliant cabaret performer's considerable skills".

Last year Cosgriff marked her London debut with her touring show *To the Moon & Back*, which she also took to the Edinburgh Fringe.

"Performing at the Edinburgh Fringe is a real highlight – it's exhausting and can be overwhelming but I do feel that that month of festival shows is like a boot camp that makes you into a better performer," she says.

Her most recent offering, *So Far So Good*, was performed at this year's Melbourne International Comedy Festival and directed by fellow WAAPA graduate Virginia Gay (*All Saints, Winners and Losers*).

"Virginia and I have been friends for years – we were introduced by the wonderful James Millar," says Cosgriff. Millar, a 2003 WAAPA graduate, played Miss Trunchbull in the 2015 Australian premiere season of *Matilda the Musical*.

"Last year Virginia and I were in [WAAPA graduate] Eddie Perfect's new play *Vivid White* at Melbourne Theatre Company. I cornered her in the dressing room and begged her to direct my show and it totally worked."

In a career that's going from strength to strength, Cosgriff cites performing in *Vivid White* as a highlight.

"I've loved Eddie Perfect's work for a long time so getting to work with him and see how a new Australian musical is put together was so exciting."

The rest of the year is shaping up to be just as stimulating, with Cosgriff touring her solo show, composing music for *Neon Tiger*, a play by Julia-Rose Lewis which opens at Brisbane's La Boite Theatre in October, and writing an opera/cabaret called *Lorelei* with Casey Bennetto (Keating) and Julian Langdon for Victorian Opera, to be performed at the Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre in November.

Like Cosgriff, lighting designer Amelia Lever-Davidson is now based in Melbourne, where she has racked up numerous theatre credits with companies such as Malthouse Theatre, Theatreworks, Red Stitch, Dancehouse and MTC Neon. ▷

The 2006 WAAPA graduate has also completed a postgraduate diploma at the Victorian College of the Arts and a Lighting Engineering and Design program at RMIT.

Her work experience includes a placement in London with multi award-winning lighting designers Paule Constable and Jon Clark on *Angels in America* (National Theatre London), *Seventeen* (Lyric Hammersmith) and *The Winter's Tale* (English National Opera).

She has also undertaken mentorships with Paul Jackson, The Rabble, and an international placement with Dewey Dell at the Venice Biennale.

Lever-Davidson says she fell into lighting design by accident at high school, when she was asked to take on the role for a school production. Luckily for her, she was encouraged by her teachers to look beyond the technical aspects to the creative possibilities of lighting.

She continued her creative journey at WAAPA, where the wide diversity of experience lighting for opera, musicals, dance and theatre gave her the opportunity "to try everything, and see what fitted".

"I am fascinated by the potential of light, and its effect on visual perception of space and form," she says. "For me, lighting design is just as much about shadow as it is about light. Lighting design isn't just making decisions around what is lit, but also the choice around what remains unseen."

"A mentor once described lighting design to me as being most similar in role to that of a film editor – as lighting designers we are central to establishing rhythm, supporting structure, and a creating visual tone."

Lever-Davidson describes how she loves working collaboratively with other theatre artists, and solving the creative challenges that arise with each production.

"I enjoy the power and immediacy of live performance, and like to integrate lighting as part of a work rather than just as a practicality; where lighting can be the catalyst for the work, not simply a way to present it."

After being lighting designer on Daniel Schlusser's *They Divided the Sky* at Belvoir Street Theatre in June, Lever-Davidson will collaborate again with Schlusser in September on *Trustees* for Malthouse Theatre. She will also work on the premieres of two new Australian plays at Darebin Arts, *Contest* by Emilie Collyer and *Moral Panic* by Rachel Perks. In October her lighting design for the Red Stitch Actors Theatre show *desert, 6.29pm* will be performed at Wuzhen Festival in China.



COMING FULL CIRCLE

MUSIC THEATRE GRADUATE STARS IN HIT SHOW – AGAIN

When *Mamma Mia! The Musical* enjoyed its first Australian run in 2001, a 22-year-old WAAPA graduate named Natalie O'Donnell played the central character's daughter, Sophie Sheridan.

Now, nearly 20 years later, O'Donnell is back on stage in a new production of the hugely popular ABBA musical, this time in the lead role of Donna, Sophie's mother.

"It really does feel like a new show for me," said O'Donnell in a recent interview. "It's been a beautiful full circle."

After opening at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney, the current production is now playing at the Crown Theatre in Perth – the home town of O'Donnell's alma mater.

"WAAPA was far enough away that we could fail and I think, for a drama school, that's really important," she said.

"We had some amazing guest lecturers come over but we didn't have any association with agents or people from the industry coming to watch our third year shows or second year shows. You can be pushed to your boundaries and then if you fail dismally on stage in front of the audience then it's not the end of your career ... and therefore it makes you braver."

"That's one thing about studying there that I'm really grateful for."

There's another important reason why O'Donnell is grateful for her time at WAAPA: it was where she met her future husband, Simon Gleeson.

Just weeks before graduating, they both landed roles in the 1998 Australian tour of *Les Miserables*. Gleeson recently finished a long stint playing Jean Valjean in the 25th anniversary production of *Les Miserables* – a role which earned him rave reviews.

Mamma Mia! showcases the talents of a number of other WAAPA graduates: Stephen Mahy, who played Brad in 2015's *The Rocky Horror Show*, plays Sophie's fiancé, Sky; Phillip Lowe, who played Keith Potger in *Georgy Girl - The Seekers Musical*, plays Sophie's possible father, British banker Harry Bright; Jessica di Costa plays Sophie's close friend and bridesmaid, Lisa; Du Toit Bredenkamp, Matt Edwards and Lisa Sontag are ensemble members; and Clay Roberts is a swing.

Mamma Mia! The Musical opens in Melbourne in July and Adelaide in October.

Natalie O'Donnell (centre) as Donna in *Mamma Mia!*
Photos by James D Morgan





Photo by David Clark



GAME CHANGER

STAGE MANAGER AMELIA TRENAMAN SCORES AT COMMONWEALTH GAMES

The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games held earlier this year in April might have been 12 days of exciting sporting action but for Amelia Trenaman, it was four months of intense work.

The 2016 Stage Management graduate was Deputy Venue Logistics Manager for the Gold Coast Hockey Centre.

“Being at the Games is the best experience you could ever get, the atmosphere is absolutely electric and to be in a sporting stadium where there’s world-class sport playing and you know you’ve been part of creating that stadium, it’s pretty amazing – but I don’t think I’ve ever been so tired in my life!” laughs the 21-year-old.

Working as part of a team of three, the job entailed managing sports equipment, crew members and furniture coming to and from the Hockey Centre.

“Pretty much anything that came on site on a truck, from hockey goals and spin bikes to chairs and tables, we knew what was on the truck, when it was unloaded, where it was going on site, who it was allocated to... and then in pack up, we did the same backwards,” explains Trenaman.

“The best thing about being there was the team you get to work with, you get to build these great relationships and you come away with amazing friendships and awesome contacts, I now have friends who live all over the world.”

For Trenaman, working on the Commonwealth Games caps off nearly 18 months of travelling the country on a range of stage management work experiences.

At the end of her time at WAAPA, the new graduate scored a six-week internship on the Sydney Lord Mayoral New Year’s Eve Party. Held on the northern broadwalk of the Sydney Opera House, Trenaman happily discovered that her internship gave her access to the most amazing view of the internationally renowned firework display.

She returned to Perth for a stint on Fringe World, then travelled to Adelaide for a production internship on the Adelaide Festival’s outdoor club site. From there she headed east for a secondment with Melbourne Theatre Company on *Three Little Words* by Joanna Murray-Smith. While in Melbourne, she was offered a job in Sydney as Event Coordinator on a conference for 2,000 people at the Opera House.

Trenaman landed back in Perth to assistant stage manage two shows for Black Swan State Theatre Company, *Switzerland* and *I Am My Own Wife*.

A year after her first internship, Trenaman was asked to return to the Sydney New Year’s Eve event, this time as a paid employee. Half way through that gig, she got a call from the Commonwealth Games’ Logistics Team.

Trenaman says that having to organize her first internship while still at WAAPA was an invaluable experience.

“You realise how much work you have to put in to get the opportunities to be taken seriously – you’re just a very small fish in a very big pond.”

She describes being at WAAPA as ‘really hard work’ but believes it is this intense training that makes the students job-ready on graduation.

“Pushing to achieve the best and put on these amazing productions is what stretches you because you put in the hard yards. Then when you walk out into the industry and someone says ‘We need you to do a 12-hour day in production week’, you’re like ‘I know how to do that, that’s easy’.

“It also definitely gives you the ability to build and manage relationships because you learn how to deal with people every single day of the year. The relationships are the things that get you the jobs.”

It’s been a busy 18 months for Trenaman since graduating and she’s happy now to be back in Perth for a bit of down-time before her next big adventure.

“You think, ‘I’m just a little tiny cog in a big machine’ and you are, but then you get to see and do awesome things and you realize why you do it.”

SHIFTING AUSTRALIAN STORIES

Safe Harbour star revels in changing expectations

“WAAPA is the best school in the country, hands down, there I said it,” says actor Hazem Shammass.

The 2001 graduate believes that ‘something magical’ happens in the isolation on the west coast when budding actors are allowed to explore their creativity and craft.

“Somehow you develop not only great skills to support your continuing madness but a precious sense of self and a quiet confidence that only your time in isolation can give you,” he says.

“Ultimately your real armour, and all you’ve got once you’re out and trying to forge a career in this nutty industry, is yourself and a sense and connection to who you are and what you’re capable of. I think that’s the best preparation WAAPA gives for professional life.”

Since his WAAPA days, Shammass has performed on stage with companies such as Bell Shakespeare, Belvoir St Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company and the State Theatre Company of South Australia, and on screen in memorable performances such as drug king pin Bill Bayeh in 2010’s *Underbelly: The Golden Mile*.

Shammass recently starred alongside fellow WAAPA graduate Ewen Leslie in the four-part SBS drama series, *Safe Harbour*, which screened in March. A month later, Shammass was performing on stage in his home town of Sydney in *Sami in Paradise* at Belvoir St Theatre.

Shammass believes that dramas like *Safe Harbour* are changing the kind of stories Australians are telling.

“*Safe Harbour* presents us with a new Australian family with complexities that we often brush over on our stages and screens,” says the Palestinian-born actor, who emigrated to Australia with his family in the mid-70s when he was 9 months old.

“The two families in *Safe Harbour* are Australian in the broadest sense – something we don’t allow ourselves to recognise enough, not in our stories, not in our casting.”



“The game changer for me will be when they start casting guys like me with strange names to play the father of an Australian family who doesn’t have to explain his brownness.”

Next up for the Sydney-based actor is a Malthouse Theatre show in August. With his second child due at the same time, Shammass says he will be ‘embracing the chaos’.

When asked what would be the one role he would love to play, Shammass laughs. “Let me play all of them!”

Then he adds: “I reckon the role that doesn’t require me to pretend I’m ‘not from here’, that utilises my own voice and my particular version of Australianness.”

“I’d like to play the next Australian everyman who skips us into the even deeper waters of our modern Australian story.”

AMERICAN HONOUR FOR BASSIST

Linda May Han Oh has won Bassist of the Year at the 2018 Jazz Journalists Association Jazz Awards in America.

Oh, who completed her Masters at the Manhattan School of Music in 2008, won a Bell Award for Young Australian Artist of the Year in 2010.

Based in New York, the WAAPA jazz graduate has released four albums, with

her latest being last year’s Walk Against Wind. She was a recipient of a 2016 Jerome Foundation Fellowship and is currently a member of Pat Metheny’s quartet project.

Thanks to the Minderoo Foundation Visiting Artists program, Oh and her husband, pianist and composer Fabian Almazan, will be visiting artists at WAAPA in September.



Photo by Vincent Soyez



A LIFE RETOLD

A theatre director's research brings a forgotten author's story to life

As part of her WAAPA Master of Arts research, director Susie Conte wrote and performed a one-woman play, *Sparrow*, for Tempest Theatre Company at the Subiaco Arts Centre in May.

Based on the life of West Australian writer and nurse Mollie Skinner, Conte crafted her play from archival material and Skinner's autobiography, *The Fifth Sparrow*.

Born in Perth in 1876, Skinner was scarred by a cleft lip and afflicted for years with bouts of blindness caused by an ulcerated cornea. Later, with her vision restored, she went on to write poetry and novels.

She came to wider public attention when she met D.H. Lawrence, who stayed at her guesthouse in Darlington. Together they collaborated on *The Boy in the Bush*, and Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* was based on Skinner's brother Jack.

Research into Mollie Skinner began as a 'happy accident' according to Conte who was investigating D.H. Lawrence's visit to Perth when she came across Skinner's story.

"Mollie Skinner was part of the Fellowship of Australian Writers and the Women's Liberation Movement and a contemporary of people like Edith Cowan, Katherine Susannah Prichard and Mary Durack but her impact on the literary life of Perth seems to have been forgotten," she said.

"I wonder if she might have been more famous if she had encouragement and had not been poor?" asks Conte. "I'm retelling her story and saying your circumstances don't define you."

In his review of *Sparrow*, David Zampatti wrote that "Conte gives an unheroic performance that pays respect to her subject and her concerns – the place of women in the world, the nature of love and its lack, the impulse to art... *Sparrow* is a well-constructed and enlightening window into people and times that have faded from memory. It's good to have this chance to see them again."

ECU is committed to research that has strong social, economic, environmental and cultural impact.



Photo by James Kilian

Charlotte Otton (second from left) in *Let Me Finish*

CAREER STARTER

BPA graduate's progression to professional artist

In March, the Fremantle Arts Centre (FAC) was host to the winner of the inaugural WAAPA FAC Residency Prize, Charlotte Otton.

Otton, who graduated from WAAPA's Bachelor of Performing Arts (BPA) course last year, developed her piece, *Let Me Finish*, over a four-week rehearsal period.

Joining her on the residency was Izzy McDonald, director and co-founder of new Perth theatre company Rorschach Beast, and fellow BPA graduates Samantha Nerida, Phoebe Sullivan and Adrienne Patterson.

"*Let Me Finish* is the exploration of what it's like to be a socialised female and all that comes with that; taking up space, the presence and impression of men and the beast that is sexuality," says Otton.

The residency culminated in a showing followed by feedback, which Otton says provided her with "a nice moment of assuredness that this is important theatre to be making."

"I'm proud of the work we've created. There's urgency and importance for it to be shared with audiences."

Otton, whose background is in comedy, improvisation and classical singing, says that WAAPA's BPA course completely altered her artistic aspirations.

"What shifted for me the most in those three years was understanding the vigour and determination it takes to be a paid working artist and the need to stop categorising my art as a 'hobby'," she says.

The BPA course, which trains students to work as independent artists, is the only one of its kind in Australia. Students study devising, directing, writing, movement, acting, voice, technical theatre, puppetry, site-specific work, arts management and more ... or as Otton says, 'you get your feet wet in all facets of the arts'.

"However the best part of being at WAAPA is having the access and privilege of being taught by some incredible teachers, being surrounded by creativity day in and day out and having the space to fail," she says. "I'm really fortunate to have had the opportunity to move over from Sydney, and WAAPA definitely helped me lay foundations here in Perth and grow as an artist."

"The course is only six years old, but already the arts industry in Australia is benefitting from some very clever, creative young theatre makers. Makers that I am extremely proud to be in the WAAPA BPA alumni pool with."

As one of these clever, creative young theatre makers herself, Otton has hit the ground running in her first year as a professional artist. Following her FAC residency, she performed in *Hive Mind* with Rorschach Beast at the Blue Room Theatre in May; worked with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and the WA Symphony Orchestra in their collaborative production of *Carnival of the Animals* in June; and is currently writing a new cabaret with the PVI Collective and PICA.

For Otton, art is definitely no longer a hobby.

FROM NEW YORK TO THE BAY

Jazz singer returns home for down south gig

New-York based vocalist Nerissa Campbell returned to WA and her home region of the South West for this year's Jazz by the Bay festival.

Jazz by the Bay was held over the June long weekend at venues throughout Busselton, Dunsborough and Margaret River.

The 1998 WAAPA graduate, who has been living in New York since 2001, has strong connections to the area: she once called Bunbury home and has family in Busselton.

Campbell performs regularly in New York, and at festivals and clubs throughout Europe, USA, Canada and Australia, including the Perth International Arts Festival.

She is a long-term member of New York's Gamelan Dharma Swara, a Balinese music and dance ensemble, and has also been the feature vocalist in post-metal band, A Storm of Light.

She has released four albums under her own label, Crooked Mouth Music, with the most recent 2016's *After the Magic*.

"There's such a plethora of talent in New York, and everyone is always doing such

creative and interesting things across all creative platforms, and professionally in other fields also – it inspires me no end," says Campbell.

"WAAPA is a pretty special place to learn – it is intense, and being in WA, obviously very isolated but that isolation is a strength in a way, I believe it makes people strive harder during their development."

"I was really surprised after I left WAAPA and went to New York how well prepared I was for that city. The foundation of education and performance skills I gained was invaluable, and I have to add, were often impressive to others."

At her Jazz by the Bay gig, Campbell was joined on her solo show *The Breakout Lights* by fellow WAAPA graduate, percussionist Daniel Susnjar.

"Daniel and I were in the same year at WAAPA, so we've been playing together for over 20 years," explains Campbell. "He played



on my first album *Paint Me Orange*, and whenever we happen to be in the same city I'll nab him for a gig! I enjoy performing with him a lot – there's something about playing with old friends who know your sensibilities and musical personality that is extremely rewarding!"

Campbell will tour *The Breakout Lights* to Europe and the US later this year. She will continue performing with her band, developing her solo material and has a large-scale project in the pipeline. She has also been taking classes in film scoring and music production classes, providing a new direction for her music.

ANZAC DAY FIRST

Aboriginal Theatre graduate helps instigate cultural event



Photo by Jessica Gately

A group of Maori and Aboriginal dancers made history at this year's Anzac Day commemorations in Perth, when they joined forces to perform together for the first time.

The performance took place at 7am following the Anzac Day dawn service at Kings Park.

The haka, an ancient Maori war dance, and the corroboree, a traditional Aboriginal dance, have never been performed in unison before.

The idea for combining the two traditional ceremonies came after footage of the original inaugural Anzac Day Haka for Life last year went viral, racking up millions of views.

Noongar man Ash Penfold, who completed WAAPA's Aboriginal Performance course in 2010 and ECU's Bachelor of Communications in 2016, helped to rally Aboriginal dancers for the performance by taking to social media earlier this year.

The group he formed, Corroboree for Life, joined with Haka for Life to put on the performance.

Penfold said he wanted Aboriginal people to come together for a positive, joyful occasion.

"I noticed that a lot of the gatherings I went to were funerals," he said. "That's what drove me to speak up. I was just over seeing my people and my mob at funerals and that's the only time we come together as one."

Hundreds of people of all ages took part in the performance to raise awareness about mental health. While honouring the Anzacs, the ceremony also aimed to help raise awareness of men's mental health and suicide prevention.

"It was such a moving, inspiring and powerful event that I had the privilege to help create," said Penfold.

"I looked at the huge crowd surrounding us, people were so moved by the energy and spirit of the ceremony that they were crying... It was in that moment I realised we had created something unique and magical."

"We created history, two ancient cultures came together to stand for what is possible – I could not ask for anything more."

AWARD NOD FOR LINK



WAAPA's dance company lives up to its name

LINK Dance Company, with Tracksuit (DADAA) and Co3 Youth, has been nominated for a 2018 Australian Dance Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dance for last year's collaborative dance piece, *Inventories of Bodies in Movement (IBM)*.

Directed by French choreographer Christine Fricker and performed at the Fremantle Arts Centre in October 2017, *IBM* saw a total of 70 artists from the three Perth companies collaborate for the first time.

The Award winners will be announced on Saturday 8 September in a ceremony at the Brisbane Powerhouse.

More collaboration was on display in LINK's first season for the year, *Differently Equal*.

Visiting artist Xiao Xiang Rong from Beijing Normal University (BNU) choreographed his

piece *The Wall* on 12 visiting BNU dance students as part of this performance season.

The visit by the Chinese dance students and three of their lecturers is the latest in a series of collaborative undertakings between WAAPA and BNU, initiated in 2012 by WAAPA Head of Dance Nanette Hassall and formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two universities. A further MOU was formally signed by both institutions on this current visit.

While at WAAPA, the Chinese dancers also took classes with LINK and WAAPA's undergraduate dance students.

"I am very excited to welcome again the very fine dancers from BNU and to continue our learning around the differences and similarities in our cultures," says Michael Whaites, LINK Artistic Director. "I am also looking forward to ongoing discussions

around future in-depth collaborations between the two institutions."

WAAPA also welcomed international guest artist, New York-based choreographer Ori Flomin creating new works for both the undergraduate and LINK dance seasons.

Flomin left his native Israel at 22 to carve out a dynamic career in New York City as dancer. Since then, his choreographic and teaching work has taken him to many high-profile companies, schools and festivals around the world.

Adelaide-born Tobiah Booth-Remmers, who has been building his career in Europe through training, teaching and running residencies across Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Sweden and Norway, completed the trio of guest choreographers for the *Equally Different* dance season.

Clockwise from top: Xiao Xiang Rong's *The Wall*; Ori Flomin's *Mangos, earrings and a glimpse of hope*; Tobiah Booth-Remmers' *The Wedding*

A CHOREOGRAPHER'S VIEW

VISITING ARTIST ORI FLOMIN REFLECTS ON HIS TIME AT WAAPA



Photo by Christophe Canato

New York-based dancer and choreographer Ori Flomin was a visiting artist at WAAPA from March to May, working with the WAAPA students on pieces in the undergraduate dance season, *Rise*, and the graduate LINK Dance Company season, *Differently Equal*.

"From my first day at WAAPA I was really impressed with the level of the students, and they were so enthusiastic and eager to work with me," says Flomin, who has choreographed works at universities and colleges around the world.

Flomin is often required to choreograph on large numbers of students in teaching institutions – something he originally found challenging but has embraced over time.

His largest choreographic work, created in 2008 for the 15th anniversary of a dance school in Austria, was an hour-long performance using 120 students.

"The focus of the school for the whole month was about me making the piece so I was like a conductor over this great creation," laughs Flomin.

"When they performed it, it was so powerful. The energy of seeing the piece build and finish with this grand finale of 120 people on

stage, it felt as close to doing a rock concert or choreographing the Olympics."

Another defining career moment for Flomin was in 2005 when he was selected to be part of a five-week exchange between three American and two Japanese artists. The project enabled the five artists to spend time together in both America and Japan, sharing ideas and learning from each other. Flomin describes it as an enriching experience that helped broaden his creative processes.

His piece for WAAPA's undergraduate dance season, *Together, together*, was originally choreographed on the graduating dance school at New York University. Flomin describes how guiding the WAAPA dancers through a similar creation process resulted in slight variances and changes, giving the piece with 'a little bit of flavour from the current cast'.

"There's a section in the piece that is a structured improvisation," he explains. "It's fun for the dancers to do, they know where they start from and need to end up but in between, they have a choice to go somewhere else every time. So the configuration of the people in the space every night is different. That's kind of fun to bring to a new group and see what different choices people make."

Flomin, who prefers collaborating with composers rather than using recorded music for his new works, was delighted that WAAPA Honours student Asariah Felton composed original music for his LINK season piece.

"I love that there is that availability at WAAPA, there's this feeling of artistic creativity surrounding you."

"I teach at New York University in the middle of New York City, which is great but there's no campus, so if people go on a lunch break everyone just goes on their own. I like it here where everybody's sitting on the grass and there's a very 'homey' feeling to the campus, you really feel that it's an arts school.

"In New York all the faculty buildings are separate – there's the dance building and the theatre building is another few blocks away so you don't have much interaction.

"I love that when you are rehearsing at WAAPA, the Music Theatre students on their break start singing in the corridor or you hear trumpets playing, so you really feel like you're surrounded by the arts."

Above: Ori Flomin's *Mangos, earrings and a glimpse of hope* from the LINK Dance season *Differently Equal*



Photos by Christophe Canato

EDUCATIONAL SMARTS

WAAPA'S SHORT COURSES OFFER ARTS TRAINING TO WIDER COMMUNITY

As part of The Smith Family's art enrichment program SmArts, WAAPA welcomed 25 Year 10 students from Swan View Senior High School for three days of drama workshops in May.

Offered to arts-focused students in Years 8-11, SmArts is designed to raise students' educational aspirations and career knowledge of the arts industry through hands-on practice.

The SmArts programs have been shown

to boost not only students' creativity and skills but also their engagement in learning by increasing creative skills, self-confidence, social networks and knowledge of post-school options.

"My students were treated like professionals and I know they really felt like they were students at WAAPA," said Kate Rogers, Specialised Drama Program Coordinator at Swan View SHS.

"The activities were appropriately pitched – as the presenters uncovered the students' abilities, they modified and tailored the activities to push and challenge the kids.

"I know that this experience has really helped the students feel more comfortable with being in a university environment and also they feel that studying at WAAPA is definitely a possibility for them – it is a leg up that our kids really need."

This is the first of five courses for students from selected secondary schools that will run at WAAPA during 2018, with SmArts also supporting groups from Girrawheen Senior High School, Gilmore College, Kiara College and Balga SHS.

The Smith Family WA General Manager Ian Moore said the SmArts partnership with WAAPA gave students the chance to access arts opportunities that otherwise might not be available.

"Given the success of the inaugural SmArts program with WAAPA, our hope is that this will develop into a long term partnership that will benefit disadvantaged young people with an interest in creative arts," he said.

Students from Swan View Senior High School with (from centre left) Cassidy Dewar of The Smith Family, Kate Rogers of Swan View SHS, Prof. Julie Warn AM, Executive Dean of WAAPA and Dr Gabrielle Metcalf, Explore Short Course Coordinator



In addition to these courses, which have been specifically tailored for The Smith Family, WAAPA offers a range of short courses for school students, young adults, arts enthusiasts and professionals.

Explore Short Courses provide weekend, weeknight and school holiday workshops in the areas of acting, screen performance, singing, dancing and music theatre.

Courses range from a 10-week course in screen acting techniques on Saturday afternoons to after-school classes for dance students and weekly evening jazz classes for the over 50's. Ace Your WACE provides a free session of coaching to optimise WACE practical music exam results.

WAAPA's Winter School and Summer School programs offer a range of three day and week-long school holiday programs for primary and secondary students in acting, dance and music theatre.

For arts educators, WAAPA Connect offers a series of professional development workshops and masterclasses. Our world-class staff provide rigorous and specialised training for teachers of drama, music and dance.

For more information, please go to waapa.ecu.edu.au/explore



Photos by Donna Westenhour

BEST AT THE BARD

On June 5, WAAPA's 3rd Year actors took to the stage of the Roundhouse Theatre to compete in the annual Shakespeare Awards, presenting scenes and monologues from the Bard's most loved plays.

"Shakespeare provides the very best material to test an actor's talent and craft," says Associate Professor Andrew Lewis, Associate Dean at WAAPA. "To deliver classical text an actor must be aware of verse and prose, and be able to embody the world which the character inhabits."

Lewis describes how the complexity and intricacy of Shakespearean text requires a rigorous, detailed investigation by the actor.

"It is almost another language, yet it cannot be performed as such. It must fall on the ears of the audience with absolute clarity."

All students in 3rd Year Acting are invited to perform for the prizes, worth \$2,000 each, awarded to the best male and female actors.

This year Kian Pitman and Shannon Ryan were joint female winners while Luke William-Smith took out the award for the best male performance.

All three are generously donating their prize money towards fundraising for their cohort's graduating showcase at the end of the year. In addition to performing for interstate agents in Sydney and Melbourne, for the first time ever for WAAPA, these students will fly to Los Angeles to showcase their talents to American agents.

If you would like to donate to the 3rd Year Acting Showcase tour, please email Suzanne on s.de_silva@ecu.edu.au



From left: Shakespeare Award winners Kian Pitman, Luke William-Smith and Shannon Ryan

Photo by Stephen Heath

INTUITING DANCE AND MUSIC



In May, visiting guest artist Niv Marinberg gave a presentation at WAAPA based on his research work examining the intuitive correlations between music and movement.

Marinberg is the Rehearsal Director and Choreographic Assistant for Israeli dance and spectacle ensemble, L-E-V Dance Company.

He has also worked as an assistant choreographer with the Royal Danish Ballet, The Chilean National Ballet, Lucerne

Theatre, Israeli Opera House and Kibbutz Dance Company, assisting choreographers such as Michael Getman, Idan Sharabi, Roy Assaf, Noa Shadur and many others.

Currently undertaking a MA at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, Marinberg's research brings together the ideas of neuroscience, musicology, philosophy, ethics and dance. WAAPA staff and students from across all disciplines were fascinated by his presentation.

VALE JOHN COURT

It was with great sadness that WAAPA learned of the passing of John Court on 29 March 2018.

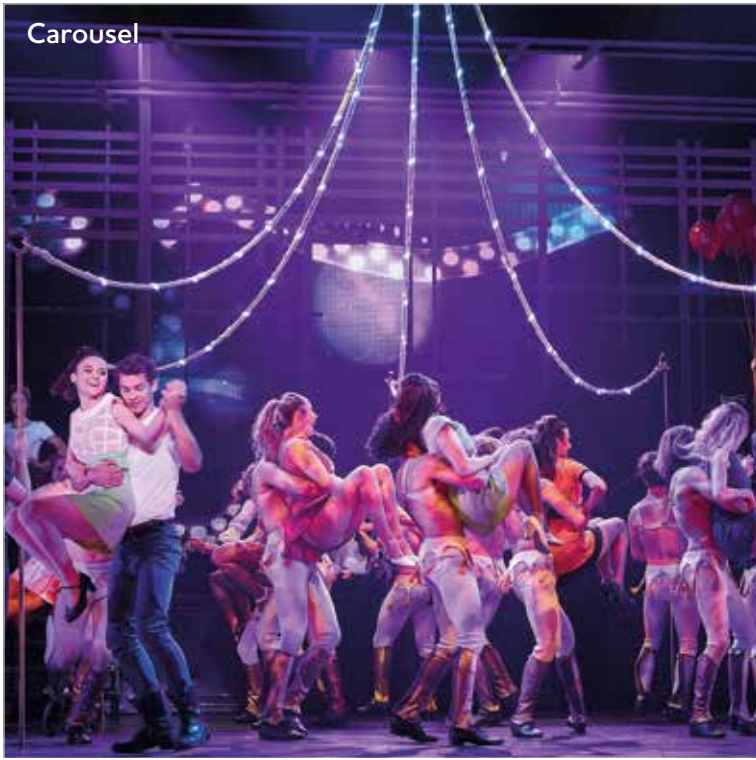
John, a successful businessman and prominent West Australian identity, was a generous, lifelong patron of the arts and an altruistic philanthropist across many fields of higher learning, research and artistic endeavour.

For over 20 years John and Helen Court have generously supported WAAPA's Classical Music program through annual prizes and scholarships.

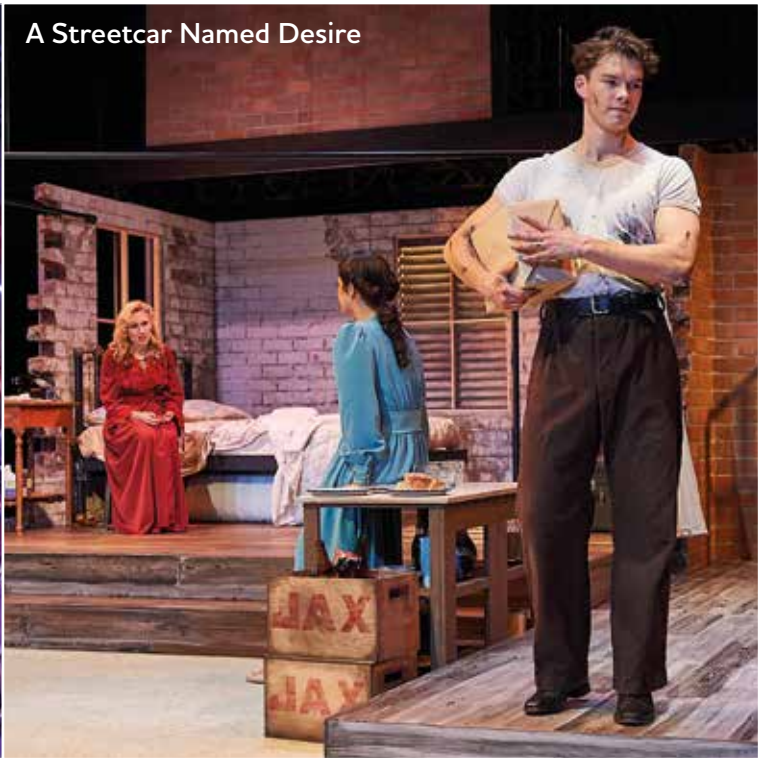
John's larger-than-life presence will be sorely missed in the corridors and Music Auditorium at WAAPA where John, Helen and friends and family members of the Courts would enjoy performances by the Faith Court Orchestra, named after John's mother, Faith, another great patron of the arts in WA.

The staff and students of WAAPA will always be grateful for John's benefaction, and his name will never be forgotten.





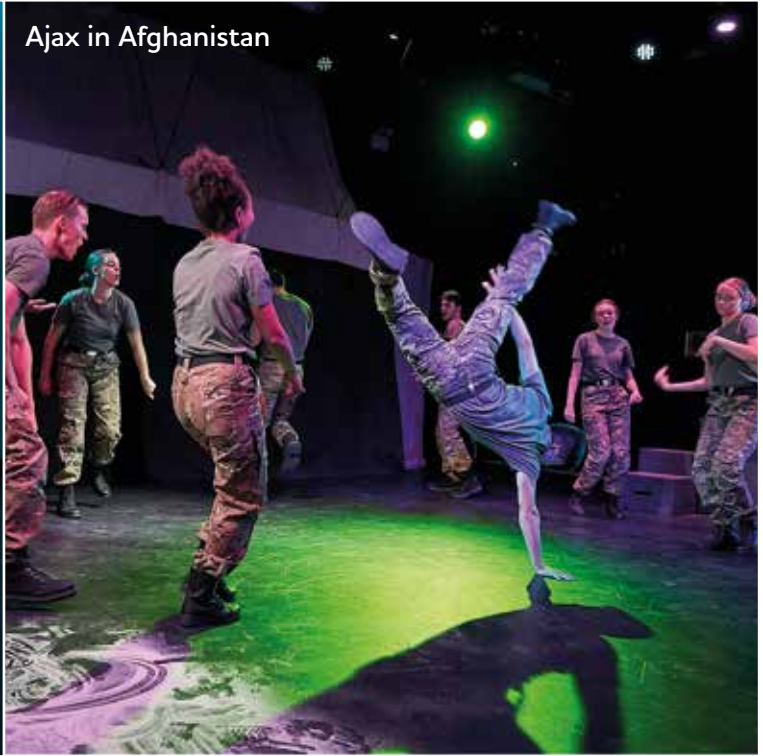
Carousel



A Streetcar Named Desire



Rise



Ajax in Afghanistan

ON STAGE AT WAAPA

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