



# INSIDE WAA PA

Western Australian  
Academy of Performing Arts

Official newsletter of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University (Issue 47) March 2017



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# POWERING UP

## DACRE MONTGOMERY STARS IN HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER

On March 24, the new American superhero blockbuster *Power Rangers* opens in cinemas around the world. Leading the cast is Dacre Montgomery, just a year out of WAAPA's Acting course and already with a string of screen credits to his name.

Dacre stars alongside Bryan Cranston and Elizabeth Banks as Jason Lee Scott, the Red Ranger and the leader of the Power Rangers.

"It was an incredible experience working on such a major production," emails Dacre (pronounced 'Dayker') from his new base in Atlanta.

"There are so many different elements in putting a film together, and much like that process, I think an actor needs to know how to piece elements of their character's journey together whilst using their time most effectively. I learned how to successfully juggle it all - whether it be learning lines, training, learning fight choreography or making sure that you don't lose track of how lucky you are to be in the position you are in."

Since graduating from WAAPA in 2015, Dacre has also had roles in

Chris Peckover's 2016 horror comedy *Safe Neighbourhood*, starring Olivia DeJonge, Levi Miller and Ed Oxenbould, and appears in this year's March release *A Few Less Men*, the comedy sequel to *A Few Best Men*.

Dacre credits his WAAPA training with providing him with a strong work ethic that is proving invaluable when working on film sets. "I learned how to take direction, as well as navigate the long hours on set, the work load required, and working with other cast mates, directors and crew members."

He also believes that being surrounded by like-minded and passionate individuals at WAAPA gave him the freedom to experiment "without being confined by a fear of messing up".

Rolling from one big break to another, Dacre followed up his *Power Rangers* performance with a major role on the second season of the hit Netflix sci-fi drama series, *Stranger Things*, which began filming last November and continues through to the end of April.

In contrast to his Red Ranger character, Dacre plays Billy, a hyper-

confident, edgy character whose apparent charisma conceals a violent and unpredictable nature.

Showing the acting ability to convincingly go from hero-leader Jason to bad boy Billy all within a year is bound to wow the Hollywood pundits.

"It was a goal of mine to play contrasting characters in my career. I never expected I would get polar opposites like Jason and Billy."

"One interesting thing was finding their similarities - whether it be that elements of Jason are lurking deep under the thick hide that Billy creates for himself, or certain dark qualities of Jason are lying just beneath his surface - then tying the two together and learning what aspects of my own life I bring to both of them. I gain a lot of insight about myself through this process too."

While Dacre doesn't know what the future holds for him, it seems the rising star is looking forward to whatever Hollywood has to offer.

"It's been a wild ride so far and I'm looking forward to what's next!"



Far right: Dacre Montgomery as Jason in *Power Rangers* and production stills from the upcoming film.



# BROADWAY DEBUT

## ANNA BAMFORD STARS ON BROADWAY IN AN ALL-AUSTRALIAN PLAY

run in Sydney in 2015 before the 13-strong Australian ensemble cast moved the show to America in December last year. It will run until mid-March.

Adapted by Andrew Upton from Anton Chekhov's first play and directed by John Crowley (*Brooklyn*), *The Present* is set post-Perestroika in the mid-1990s at an old country house where friends gather to celebrate the birthday of the widow Anna Petrovna, played by Cate Blanchett.

Anna describes performing on the Great White Way as a mix of 'exhilaration, terror and joy'. She feels that having a year between productions has enriched the performances, with the connections and back-stories between the characters being deeper and more detailed in the New York season.

While the show has received mixed reviews on Broadway, Anna believes the audiences are appreciative.

"Maybe it took a bit for them to get around the whole Aussies playing Russians in 1993 with Australian accents in New York City but I think they both love it and find it funny and disturbing and confronting and heartbreaking in the same places.

"One of the themes in the play is about a coming of age and politically looking at where the country was and where it's going and where it could potentially go. I think where the United States was when we opened the play over here was a really interesting time and a lot of the lines rang true to America's political situation so I think they related to it and it resonated with them on that level a lot."

When *The Present* closes, Anna plans to base herself in Los Angeles for a while. "I'm open to working in Australia but also the States so I'll go back and forth as much as possible this year!"

Just four years after graduating from WAAPA, actress Anna Bamford has made it to Broadway.

Best known for her role as Miranda Beaumont on the hit Channel Ten television show *Wonderland*, Anna is performing in the Sydney Theatre Company's production of *The Present* at the Barrymore Theatre in New York.

Starring Cate Blanchett and Richard Roxburgh, *The Present* had a successful

# AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS FOR SUZIE

## SUZIE MATHERS WINS PRESTIGIOUS AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD

In January, musical theatre star Suzie Mathers was named Young Australian Achiever of the Year in the UK by the Australia Day Foundation.

Suzie is best known for her role as Glinda the Good Witch in the Australian, Asian and London productions of *Wicked*, as well as playing the lead role in the ABBA mega musical, *Mamma Mia!*

Mathers has had a dream run since completing a Bachelor of Arts in Music Theatre at WAAPA in 2007.

Shortly after graduating she joined the original cast of *Wicked*. The following year she scored her first lead role when she was cast as Sophie Sheridan in the 10th Anniversary Australian tour of *Mamma Mia!* Her standout performance earned her a nomination for Best Newcomer at the 2009 Sydney Theatre Awards.

Mathers returned to the cast of *Wicked* to perform the lead role of Glinda in Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand and Manila before touring to sell-out shows in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. During



Suzie Mathers with fellow Australia Day Honours' winners Michael Lynagh and Sir Michael Parkinson CBE.

the Brisbane leg of the tour, she reached her milestone 500th performance as Glinda the Good Witch.

Last year Suzie made her West End debut, reprising the role of Glinda for the London production of *Wicked* at the Apollo Victoria Theatre. Mathers was also given the honour of leading the award-winning show through its 10th anniversary performance.

Australia Day Foundation Director, Dick Porter said: "Suzie is an outstanding, talented young Australian who has

accomplished great things in her short career. To win a starring role in a mega musical in London's West End is an outstanding achievement. We are delighted to recognise her success by awarding her the 2017 Young Australian Achiever of the Year in the UK."

Suzie was presented with her award by the Australian High Commissioner the Honourable Alexander Downer AC at Australia House.

Fellow WAAPA graduate Tim Minchin has been a previous winner of this award.



# TIRED LION ROARS

**F**or a band whose break-out hits include *I Don't Think You Like Me* and *Not My Friends*, Tired Lion are doing pretty well on the popularity front.

Made up of front-woman Sophie Hope, guitarist Matt Tanner, bassist Nick Vasey and drummer Ethan Darnell, a WAAPA Contemporary Music graduate, the Perth grunge band are fast becoming one of Australia's most promising rock acts.

Tired Lion's highly-anticipated debut album – ranked as one of *Rolling Stone's* 50 most anticipated albums of 2017 – is set to be released later this year. This comes off the back of a big 2016 that saw the band claim the 2016 WAM Award for Best Rock Act, sign to Island Records UK and tour Australia and Europe, including festival performances at Splendour in the Grass (Byron Bay, NSW), Hurricane (Germany), and 2000trees, Latitude and Glastonbury (UK).

All this just a year after the band took out the triple j 2015 Unearthed Artist of the Year Award, when they were described as: "Recalling the reckless abandon of Soho, the band capture the brutal frustration of young adulthood in a humbucked whitewash of guitars and drums and through singer Sophie Hope's poisonous lyrics."

Joining them in the studio as producers on the debut album are Violent Soho frontman Luke Boerdam and multi-WAM award-winning Perth producer and engineer Dave Parkin.

Boerdam and the band formed a bond last year when Tired Lion supported Violent Soho on their national Australian tour, alongside The Bronx and Luca Brasi.

Here Ethan Darnell talks to IW about the upcoming album, great band moments and life lessons:

**IW: What can your fans expect from your debut album?**

**Ethan:** I wish I could put a label or vibe on it but it's a tough one! We have really challenged ourselves and also learnt a lot about each other and the band dynamic in the process. I guess people can expect to hear honesty. I know lyrically Sophie has put a lot out there for the world to see and musically we have a real band vibe in terms of arrangements, so it's all kind of just come together naturally. It's a mould of all our influences.

**IW: What does Luke Boerdam bring to the band as producer and how did you manage to get him on board for this project?**

**Ethan:** Luke is great! I guess it all started with a passing comment that was made by someone at our label to Luke. Then sent him our demos of the album and he was keen. We spent a week with him a couple of months back, and we all just sat in the room and played the songs, and he told us things to change or try with a different vibe. The amount of comfort in the studio is something I have never experienced. We also have Dave Parkin engineering who is another incredibly talented human with great ideas. I just feel like it's one big pool of creativity.

**IW: Last year was a massive year for the band. What was the highlight?**

**Ethan:** Oh geezzz, that's a hard one. When I look back at everything on paper, it's so crazy and bizarre to me, but I guess when you're actually doing it, I feel as though it's a different part of your brain that processes the situation. I think Glastonbury was a huge one that was a surreal feeling and then coming back home to Australia and playing at Splendour in the Grass to a packed tent just felt incredible.

**IW: What did you enjoy most about being at WAAPA?**

**Ethan:** For me, I'd say being in an environment where music is number one. I was exposed to so many different

elements and having a huge network of lecturers there to help you is something you will never experience unless you are in that environment. Ric Eastman was a mentor who really helped me and I cannot thank the guy enough, he was also so inspiring to be around and it made studying all the better.

**IW: How has your WAAPA training helped you to get to where you are today?**

**Ethan:** WAAPA helped prepare me for situations that I faced early in my musical career. I was shown the tools and how to use them so when I was faced with a situation it was much easier to deal with. In a broad sense, WAAPA ultimately kept me inspired and maybe without it. I might have lost interest in my instrument.

**IW: Any words of advice to all the young musicians out there?**

**Ethan:** I guess it's hard to give advice when you're still figuring it all out for yourself, but something I try to do is not compare my abilities with others. It's really easy to fall into that trap especially when studying but you must tell yourself that your abilities are different to everyone else's and as long as you're doing the best you can, that's all that matters. You should also put the majority of your energy into things you actually want to do.

After I left uni, I thought it was all about being a session musician and that's how I should earn a living. I convinced myself that's what I wanted. I started getting really burnt out on it, so I took some time off and realised I didn't want that at all. What I really enjoyed and loved was being a part of a band that writes songs together and hangs out. I put all my energy into that and started doing other things for money, and I found that to be the best thing for me.

So I guess my advice is just do the things you love, don't do it for any other reason.

# SYDNEY AWARD WINNERS

Two Acting graduates were among the award winners at the 2016 Sydney Theatre Awards, held on January 23 at Sydney's Seymour Centre.

2008 graduate Brent Hill won the award for Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Musical for his role as Seymour in the Hayes Theatre Company's *Little Shop of Horrors*, opposite Esther Hannaford as Audrey.

"Hill is perfect as the orphan looking for love... he's warm, charming and you root for him instantly. His clean, light baritone is perfect for Seymour," wrote Clive Paget in *Limelight Magazine*.

This recent accolade follows Brent's 2011 Green Room Award for Best Leading Actor for his role as Lonny in the Australian premiere production of *Rock of Ages*.

Fellow graduate Dean Bryant, who directed *Little Shop of Horrors*, picked up an award for Best Direction of a Musical.

*Little Shop of Horrors* premiered at Hayes Theatre in Sydney in February 2016 and was followed by seasons

in Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Perth.

Jonny Hawkins, who graduated two years ago, won Best Newcomer for his role in the Ensemble Theatre's production of *Relatively Speaking*, starring alongside Tracy Mann and David Whitney.

Jason Blake in the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote: "Hawkins, in his first mainstage production, is deftly hilarious as Greg, whom he plays with a winning blend of guilelessness and dogged curiosity."

WAAPA has a connection with another Sydney Theatre Awards win: Monkey Baa Theatre Company, which won Best Production for Children for *The Peasant Prince*, was formed in 1997 by co-creative directors Sandra Eldridge (1991 graduate), Tim McGarry (1987 graduate) and Eva Di Cesare.

Monkey Baa is one of Australia's premier touring theatre companies producing quality work for young people.



Photo by Jamie Williams

## ABORIGINAL GRADS AT FIRST PEOPLES FESTIVAL

Eight WAAPA graduates were invited to participate in the recent Yellamundie National First Peoples' Playwriting Festival held at Carriageworks in Sydney from 27-29 January.

This biennial festival provides a platform for emerging and established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playwrights, with Indigenous writers, dramaturges, directors and actors participating in two weeks of script development, followed by public play readings.

Since its inception in 2013, the festival has developed 12 new scripts from beginner and established playwrights from regional, remote and urban areas across Australia. Sixteen scripts in total have had public readings, with seven scripts selected for further creative development and three new works produced professionally.

The 2017 Yellamundie Festival was expanded to include international exchange and script readings with First Peoples from Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Turtle Island (Canada), with four new national and two international plays given readings.

One of the national plays chosen for the festival was written by WAAPA graduate Megan Wilding. *A Little Bit of Ash* tells the story of a young Aboriginal woman who comes to terms with the loss of her mother by receiving helpful and not so helpful advice from her friends. Megan's play was dramaturged by fellow WAAPA graduate Eva Mullailey, who also dramaturged another festival play, *The Weekend* by Henrietta Baird.

Of the 20 actors invited to the festival, seven were WAAPA graduates. 1999 graduate Kyle J. Morrison, Artistic Director of WA's Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, brought his skills as actor, director and dramaturge to the festival. He was joined by fellow graduate actors Megan Wilding, Phoebe Lea Grainer, Ian Michael, Abbie Lewis, Shari Sebbens and Bethany Cooper.

WAAPA Production & Design graduate Damien Oliver was the stage manager for the entire event.

From top: Brent Hill as Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*; Jonny Hawkins and Emma Palmer in *Relatively Speaking*.



Photo by Jeff Busby



Photo by Clare Hawley

# AN ABILITY TO CONNECT



Photo by Vincent Soyez

## BASS PLAYER LINDA OH CONTINUES TOURING THE WORLD WITH RENOWNED GUITARIST PAT METHENY

At the start of this year, 20 time Grammy-winning guitarist Pat Metheny announced that his year-long world tour, which began at the start of 2016, was being extended until the end of October this year.

The quartet that Metheny assembled for this tour includes his long-time associate, Mexican-born drummer Antonio Sánchez, who composed the percussion-driven score for 2015's Academy Award-winning film *Birdman*.

The other two are both considered standout musicians on the international music scene: multi-award winning British pianist Gwilym Simcock and the Malaysian-born, Australian-raised and WAAPA-trained bassist Linda Oh.

Metheny describes how he came to choose Linda as his new bass player: "I love to follow who the new players are around town and I go out often to check out what everyone is doing.

"The first time I heard Linda, she immediately went to the top of my list of candidates. She has everything I'm always looking for; great time, great notes and a lot of imagination.

"But the most important thing I am always searching for in any musician is an elusive and hard to describe quality that embodies a certain communicative ability to connect - not just to the other musicians, but to the audience as well. Linda has that. When we got together, she was so easy to play with."

Born in Malaysia to parents of Chinese descent, Linda was raised in Perth where

she began playing piano, bassoon and at fifteen played electric bass in a high school jazz band. By 2005, she had graduated from WAAPA with first-class honours.

Moving to New York in 2006 on a full scholarship to study at the Manhattan School of Music, Linda completed her Masters two years later, studying with Jay Anderson, John Riley, Phil Markowitz, Dave Liebman and Rodney Jones.

For the next decade her name featured heavily on the jazz world's rising star lists, picking up the ASCAP Young Jazz Composer's award in 2008 and the 2010 Bell Award for Young Australian Artist of the Year, among many other honours.

Linda is extremely active on the New York scene, leading her own band and playing with many of the major musicians in the community, including heavyweights like Lee Konitz, Dave Douglas, Joe Lovano, Kenny Barron, John Scofield and Steve Coleman among others.

She now teaches the precollege division at the Manhattan School of Music and is involved in jazz videoconference masterclasses for high schools around America. She was also involved in creating a series of lessons for the BassGuru app for iPad and iPhone.

She has released three albums as a leader: her 2009 self-released debut trio album, *Entry* was followed in 2012 by the quartet album *Initial Here*, and in 2013 she released *Sun Pictures* – named after the oldest outdoor picture gardens in operation in Broome in WA –

which was recorded live at WKCR studios in New York.

A prolific composer, Linda has written for large and small ensembles as well as for short films.

"No matter how demanding or tricky a bassline, ostinato, or passage might be, she is able to play it with extreme fluidity, meaning I never hear any 'stress' or 'stiffness' when she plays," said drummer and bandleader E.J. Strickland in a recent interview. "And whether she is playing the role of an accompanist or soloist, she seems like she's able to execute whatever comes to her mind perfectly. A lot of musicians have great ideas in their head but aren't necessarily able to execute those ideas on their instrument because they don't have the technique to do so. Not with her, though."

Still in his early 20s, jazz pianist Jamie Francis is one of the young guns of the US jazz world. Two years ago he invited Oh to play in his eponymous trio at the Brooklyn Museum.

"In my mind, she is the epitome of the perfect bass player," he has said. "She can read anything, amazing composer, the nicest person, great soloist, and has great instincts. She can play a piece of music the first time and sound like she wrote it."

As part of the world tour with the legendary Pat Metheny, Linda has played at some of the world's top jazz venues, including gigs at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, the Copenhagen Jazz Festival in Denmark and the Kongsberg Jazz Festival in Norway.

# PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP

## WAAPA FORMS A THREE-YEAR PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP WITH AN INNOVATIVE PERTH ORCHESTRA

In December last year, WAAPA signed a memorandum of understanding with the Perth Symphony Orchestra (PSO) to become performance partners, marking the start of a strategic partnership that promises to bring significant benefits to both organisations.

Numerous WAAPA alumni have been engaged by PSO since its inception five years ago. The PSO's Executive Director, Bourby Webster, and Chief Conductor, Jessica Gethin, both currently teach at WAAPA and Jessica is also a WAAPA graduate.

"We have a core value of showcasing outstanding WA talent, and many of our orchestra members are WAAPA alumni," says Webster. "We engage a range of talent from across all genres and WAAPA has a track record of producing leading musicians across classical, jazz and contemporary music streams. Closer collaboration with WAAPA aligns perfectly with our desire to deliver outstanding orchestral concerts that are exciting, diverse and draw on emerging talent as well as WA's leading professional musicians."

As well as working with both WAAPA graduates and current teaching staff, PSO is keen to offer students unique opportunities such as performing orchestral works by student composers or inviting

students to perform as a soloist with the orchestra.

The MOU, which commenced on 1 December 2016, is initially for a three-year term. The agreement outlines a commitment by both organisations to explore collaborations across all activities; offer outstanding current students opportunities to perform at a professional level; championing each other as leading performance organisations in WA; sharing each other's events and productions; and exploring ways to innovate, create and promote excellence in music.

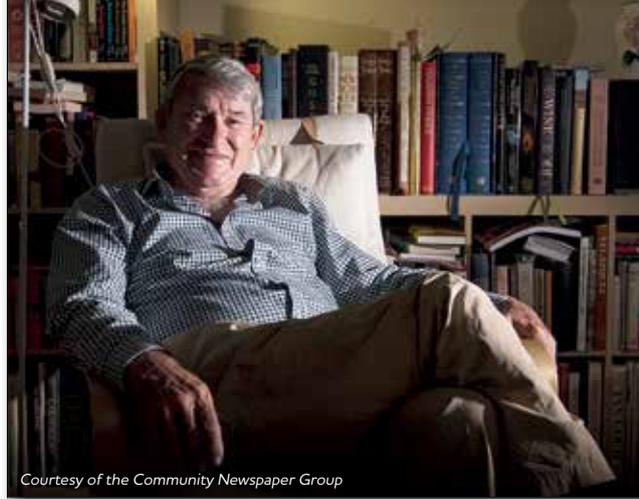
Director of WAAPA, Professor Julie Warn, welcomes this new partnership. "This memorandum of understanding is very exciting for us, it opens up further performance opportunities to our music students as well as exposing them to some of WA's best professional players."

Late year's PSO performances showcased WAAPA staff and students including Head of Contemporary Music/keyboard player Mike Eastman, Senior Lecturer in Jazz/saxophonist Jamie Oehlers, guitar lecturer Ray Walker, composer Rachael Dease, film composer Kevin Penkin, soprano Amy Manford, vocalists Helen Shanahan and Sophie Foster, viola player Kathyrn McKay, guitarist Rick Webster and bass guitarist Josh Dyson.

WAAPA Contemporary Music graduate, Sophie Foster (centre) performing with PSO



Richard Jefferson Photography



Courtesy of the Community Newspaper Group

## ARTS PASSION RECOGNISED

### DAVID HOUGH'S LIFELONG PASSION FOR THE ARTS WAS RECOGNISED IN AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS

David Hough, who played an integral role in establishing WAAPA, was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Australia Day Honours List for his service to the performing arts.

Hough has enjoyed a long and diverse career as an historian, journalist, theatre critic, performer, teacher, writer and academic. In June 1981, Hough was appointed to WAAPA as a speech and drama lecturer, where he helped get the first courses up and running.

He was also involved in setting up the ECU Art Collection, which now holds more than 3000 pieces, including paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculptures and ceramics. WAAPA staff and students get to appreciate this important collection on a daily basis, with the works of well-known theatre designers gracing the Academy's walls.

Hough continues his long association with WAAPA through an annual prize in his name, the David Hough Award for Outstanding Design.

"While it is the Hugh Jackmans and the Lucy Duracks who get the most attention, behind the curtain there are WAAPA graduates who are making their mark in the industry as stage managers, lighting technicians and designers," he said in a recent interview.

Hough has worked as a freelance non-fiction writer since he left school.

Hough was shortlisted for a WA Premier's Book Award in 2004 for his book, *A Dream of Passion: The Centennial History of His Majesty's Theatre*.

His 2009 book, *Boans for Service: The Story of the Department Store 1895-1986*, sold 6000 copies.

# TRUSTING TO CRAZY POSSIBILITIES

OUT OF A FRIENDSHIP FORGED A DECADE AND A HALF AGO AT WAAPA, TWO WOMEN HAVE JOINED FORCES TO SHARE THEIR ARTISTIC PASSIONS



Mirrah Foulkes

An Australian short film, shown in the Perth International Arts Festival's February film program before Kristen Stewart's new feature *Personal Shopper*, is the award-winning outcome of a collaboration between two WAAPA graduates.

*Trespass*, which won Best Australian Short Film at the 2016 Melbourne International Film Festival, was written and directed by Mirrah Foulkes and produced by Alex White.

The jury statement that accompanied the award reads: "Mirrah Foulkes has made a beautiful and moving film that resonates deeply, one that seamlessly combines moments of levity and darkness with maturity and elegance. Watching *Trespass* is a deceptively emotional experience."

Mirrah and Alex both graduated from WAAPA in 2003, but from different courses. Mirrah trained as an actor, Alex was in the dance program. They crossed paths because Alex's boyfriend-now-husband, Eden Falk, was in Mirrah's acting cohort. Since then, they have remained close friends and more recently, film collaborators.

After graduating, Mirrah pursued her acting career, working in theatre, television and film. She spent two years playing paramedic Jo Mathieson on



Alex White

the Network 7 series *All Saints*, a role which earned her a 2010 Logie Award nomination for Best New Female Talent. She appeared in Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake*, Channel 10's *Secrets and Lies*, SBS's *The Principal* and in the films *Animal Kingdom* and *Sleeping Beauty*, among many others. For her role in *The Turning: Small Mercies*, she was nominated for a 2014 Australian Academy of Cinema Television Arts Award (AACTA) Award for Best Supporting Actress.

She started writing and directing short films as a way to keep busy between acting jobs.

"I really didn't expect to enjoy it as much as I did and it felt really nice to have creative control over something as a whole rather than just my performance," Mirrah says. "I actually met my boyfriend [writer/director David Michôd] on the first job I did after WAAPA and he really encouraged me to write and direct so I guess that was the beginning of it."

In 2013, Mirrah's short film *Dumpy Goes to the Big Smoke* won the prize for Best Director at the Sydney Film Festival and was nominated for two AACTA Awards.

Alex in the meantime had undergone what she calls the 'natural transition' from dancer to film producer, fuelled by her strong interest in cinema – she started

making dance films when she was at WAAPA – and her love of working with actors. She set up her own production company, WhiteFalk Films and since 2009 has been working with one of Australia's greatest producers, Jan Chapman.

"Being a producer takes a lot of discipline so I feel very fortunate to have had that quality instilled in me from my dance background," says Alex.

"It can be a demanding job and the rewards take a long time but it is also very creative and collaborative. When you find yourself working with like-minded people who are all giving 100 per cent to the project, it is very exciting. I also love telling stories, I was always interested in choreography so producing is an opportunity to tell the world the stories that interest me."

In 2014 Mirrah approached Alex to produce her short film, *Florence Has Left the Building*.

"Mirrah is an extremely talented director with a very unique voice and clear vision," say Alex. "It's every producer's dream to find someone as special as her to work with."

The chemistry between the two women behind the camera was matched by that on screen and *Florence Has Left the Building*, starring Jackie Weaver, Eden Falk and Justin Rosniak, won the 2015 AACTA Award for Best Short Fiction Film.

With *Trespass* also receiving critical acclaim, Mirrah and Alex are now setting their sights on their next big venture: their first feature film.

They have teamed up with Jan Chapman and acclaimed filmmaker Jane Campion, who are set to executive produce their drama-thriller *Runaway*, based on a short story by Canadian writer Alice Munro. The project, which is still in the early stages of development, has received funding from Screen Australia as part of the Gender Matters program.

"I have worked with Jan for nearly eight years and Mirrah was directed by Jane in *Top of the Lake*," says Alex of their long-standing relationship with Chapman and Campion. "But that doesn't take away from how incredible it is to have them as mentors on our feature." ➤

# FESTIVAL SPECIALIST JOINS WAAPA

"We recently had dinner the four of us and at one point I had an out of body experience thinking how lucky we are to have these amazing women nurturing our work and careers."

In addition to *Runaway*, Mirrah has a number of other projects on the go: she is developing a feature with Vice Films in America which she describes as "kind of a crazy, fabricated origin story about Punch and Judy" and is also working with Carver Films on a contemporary black comedy television show about aging and death.

"I really love writing and directing but I find it hard work, acting is where I feel the most at home, it's where I find the most joy," she says of juggling her different skills.

"It's tough though because the really great acting jobs can be few and far between and working as an actor on something your heart is not in can be such a punish.

"I found that great roles, especially for women and more so as I got older, were rare and I would much rather be making my own work than spending my time acting on jobs I didn't like.

"Now I feel like there's a lot less pressure to take jobs that don't inspire me because there's always work to be done on my own projects."

As the only female member of the Australian film-making collective Blue-Tongue Films, which includes David Michôd, Kieran Darcy-Smith, Luke Doolan, Joel Edgerton, Nash Edgerton and Spencer Susser, Mirrah has a strong network of support for her film work.

Another strong network comes from her WAAPA days, which she sees as a formative period in her life that has produced enduring friendships. "I still feel as though I have this really strong, wonderful WAAPA community around me even if I don't see some of those people for a long time."

Asked what advice she would give to current WAAPA students, Mirrah offers:

"Try not to have any expectations about what life will hold for you when you graduate. I think if you can leave yourself open to all the crazy possibilities of where your life might head it will be so much easier and more fun. The training will never be wasted or lost and what you've learnt about your classmates and human beings in general will be the most valuable lesson."

These 'crazy possibilities' – plus a lot of hard work – have seen the careers of Mirrah Foulkes and Alex White transform into something unexpected and exciting.



## AN ARTS MANAGEMENT GRADUATE RETURNS TO PERTH TO SHARE HER SKILLS

A decade after she graduated from WAAPA's Arts Management course, event management specialist Ali McLean has returned to her alma mater to share her expertise with the current crop of students.

Experienced in large-scale event management and promotion, Ali has been the principal event producer for a large variety of major events in the festival, concert, sport, community and cultural event sector in Australia and the UK.

In particular, Ali is passionate about the festival industry. Her most recent position as Head of Festivals at award-winning UK music promotion company DHP Family saw her manage a large portfolio of music and art festivals, with a focus on new festival product and commercial development.

Under the DHP Family umbrella of live music festivals – which includes Splendour, Dot to Dot, Gathering and Everywhere, covering all genres from folk and indie to rock, metal, hard-core and all types of electronic music – she created and developed a 10,000 capacity music festival, No Tomorrow, with headliners Sam Smith and London Grammar. No Tomorrow was shortlisted for Best New Festival in the UK Festival Awards 2014 and Best Festival in the Live UK Business Awards 2015.

"DHP Family put on over 1200 concerts a year so there was always the opportunity to see live music, from tiny gigs with emerging acts to Ed Sheeran at Wembley Stadium," says Ali.

"The festival industry in the UK is wonderful and so creative. Being a part of the live music industry there where festival organisers produce amazing music and arts festivals and work positively together to create better conditions for the industry was a really positive experience."

Prior to her time at DHP, Ali was part of the Operational Readiness team at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and worked as a project manager with Ronin Event Services UK. She also has extensive experience in Australia as an event manager.

Ali has held an Advisory Board member position with the Association of Independent Festivals, the UK's leading non-profit trade association for independent festivals. She is also a Director on the Australian Board of Event Health Management.

Ali moved back to Perth last year and has since been working as a consultant in event management. She is also working on ideas for new festivals in WA.

She believes that WAAPA's Arts Management course gave her the perfect basis on which to build her career. "The combination of management and commerce subjects, all targeted towards creative industries, provides the ultimate foundation for a successful management level career in the creative industries."

Now as a sessional lecturer at WAAPA, Ali will be teaching others how to forge their own path in the world of arts management.

# DANCER SOARS ON HER GENÉE SUCCESS

In December last year, Bachelor of Arts (Dance) student Evelyn Roberts was one of four WAAPA dancers who traveled to Sydney to compete in the Genée International Ballet competition.

The WAAPA students joined 90 other young dancers who were chosen to compete in what is known simply as 'the Genée', one of the most prestigious ballet competitions in the world. This was the first time that WAAPA had been represented at the competition.

Evelyn was selected as one of the top twelve finalists, making the cut of the top eight female dancers in the competition.

She describes the experience of performing as a finalist on the Joan Sutherland stage at the Sydney Opera House as 'surreal'.

"It's very hard to express how much like a dream the whole experience was."

Out of that dream experience has come an invitation from the Artistic Director of the Australian Ballet, David McAllister AM, to spend a week in July on work experience with the acclaimed dance company.

Evelyn has also lined up a week's secondment with the Queensland Ballet Company and will attend the two-week ART of Ballet Summer Course 2017, held at the Zurich University of the Arts from 7-19 August.

"I can't wait to travel to Switzerland to participate in this summer school!" she says. "I have never travelled overseas before, so that in itself is exciting."

"Professionally though, I am really



Photo by Manevacts Photography

looking forward to being able to learn from the fantastic tutors, see what the European market is like, what the calibre of young professionals is and to meet many people that might help me work out the style or company I would like to work in and be best suited to."

Three of last year's graduates who have happily found companies they would like to work in are Anthony Rinaldi, Tanya Brown and Tia Hockey.

Anthony and Tanya, who both graduated with First Class Honours, have been offered contacts as Developing Artists with Perth contemporary company, Co3.

Tia has been invited to join the London-based Alexander Whitley Dance Company for their production of 8 Minutes, which will premiere on June 27-28 at Sadler's Wells. Whitley, a former choreographic affiliate of The Royal Ballet who has been commissioned by Rambert, BalletBoyz, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Candoco,

# EDITH ON THE MOVE



The Edith, WAAPA's new spiegelent, provided a stunning venue for the 2017 Fringe World, thanks to a new partnership between the Festival, ECU and WAAPA.

Boasting 700 or so events held across 150 venues, Fringe World is the state's largest arts festival and the third largest fringe festival in the world after Edinburgh and Adelaide.

The historic precinct of Perth's Cathedral Square was transformed by the Edith Spiegelent, which played host to the award-winning cabaret show, *La Soiree*.

The Edith is soon to be back on campus at ECU Mount Lawley, ready for an exciting year of WAAPA performances including:

- **Bebop!** This homage to Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonius Monk will be performed by WAAPA's talented Jazz students, 16 March.

- **Come and Sing With Mary King.** Amateur singers are invited to participate live on stage, singing choruses from the greatest musical theatre shows, 18 March.

- **A Dream Play.** Caryl Churchill's adaptation of Strindberg's 1901 expressionistic drama, 5-11 May.

- **Life is a Cabaret.** Join WAAPA's Classical Vocal students as they travel from the Weiner Republic to the gin joints of prohibition-era New York, 1-3 June.

- **The Threepenny Opera.** Bertolt Brecht's classic 'opera for beggars', 13-19 October.

- **Im Spiegel.** Immerse yourself in a new dance work choreographed by Sam Chester and performed by LINK Dance Company, 9-11 November.

For further information or bookings, go online to [waapa.ecu.edu.au](http://waapa.ecu.edu.au)



## SOPHIA JOINS 'LOVE CHILD'

Before she even finished her final year at WAAPA, recent Acting graduate Sophia Forrest had secured a three-year deal with Channel 9's powerhouse drama, *Love Child*.

Scouts from Channel 9 spotted Sophia on a trip to WAAPA last year. "We have all the scouts from the networks and agencies come over to look at our students' work," says Associate Dean of Performance, Andrew Lewis. "Sophia's talent was noticed by quite a few people."

Sophia had one important event to attend at the start of the year before she flew east to begin filming *Love Child*: her graduation ceremony. Held at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday 5 February, Sophia was given the honour of being the Student Speaker at the ECU graduation.

Photo by Paul Santlemann

# EXPLORING WORLD THEATRE

2017 is shaping up to be a very exciting year for WAAPA Bachelor of Performing Arts student, Alexander Beard.

In January, he and four other BPA students began 10 weeks of study at the Intercultural Theatre Institute (ITI) in Singapore, as part of a New Colombo Plan (NCP) Mobility tour.

At ITI, Alexander and fellow BPA students Nefeli Perdikouli, Riley Spadaro, Ravenna Bouckaert and Noemie Huttner-Koros undertook an immersive study of the traditional Japanese theatre form, Noh, with classes in acting, movement, Suzuki method, tai chi, yoga and cultural theory.

In July, Alexander will return to ITI, this time on a 2017 NCP Scholarship which he was awarded in November last year.

A Federal Government initiative, the NCP Scholarship Program provides the opportunity for undergraduate students from around Australia to undertake study and internships for up to a year in the Indo-Pacific region.

Worth up to \$75,000, the scholarship provides institution and language tuition fees, travel allowances, a monthly stipend, health and travel insurance and a case manager for advice and assistance.

Alexander travelled to Canberra to receive his award from Foreign Minister Julie Bishop. He was joined by two



From left: Rebecca Jensen, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Chloe Reinikka and Alexander Beard

other NCP scholarship winners from ECU, Bachelor of Arts Honours student Rebecca Jensen and Bachelor of Planning student Chloe Reinikka.

"You'd be hard-pressed to find a school more diverse than ITI, the students and teachers come from many different places and from all walks of life. So being there will deepen my understanding of the cultures that surround mine in Australia, and in the region we live in."

The first phase of Alexander's scholarship year will see him back at ITI for a further semester of performing arts training, this time with immersive study in the traditional Javanese theatrical dance performance, Wayang Wong. Alexander will also learn Mandarin and develop

a solo show with guidance from the Director of ITI, Thirunalan Sasitharan.

"I will perform this solo as part of the end-of-year BPA 3rd Year show *Tilt* at The Blue Room Theatre alongside my peers, before returning to ITI to learn from the esteemed researcher, educator and director, Phillip Zarilli," says Alexander.

This internship and directing secondment, which is the second phase of the scholarship, will run from December 2017 until March 2018.

By the end of his scholarship year, Alexander is hoping to have broadened his knowledge of the region's historical and cultural customs and gained a strong network of future collaborators.

## DANCE IN THE OUTBACK



Photo by Joanne Thieme

It's not easy growing up on a cattle station in the remote northwest of Queensland when you want to be a dancer. Amy Tinning knows just how tough it can be, driving for hours in the car with her mum to get to dance lessons and competitions.

Yet that commitment paid off in 2011 when Amy was accepted into WAAPA's Bachelor of Arts (Dance) course.

Three years later, she returned to her hometown of Julia Creek, 1642km northwest of Brisbane, and opened her own dance school to cater for children living in remote areas.

"Being at WAAPA was an intensive and physically demanding experience, however extremely rewarding," says Amy.

"The depth of knowledge I gained through the course has been asset in my

teaching career. The lecturers taught by example and gave me great insight into what being a great teacher and mentor is all about."

Today, Branches Performing Arts studio runs 14 ballet, tap, jazz and contemporary dance classes a week for 40 students.

"I've gained a wide following of students from rural and remote far North Queensland," says the 23-year-old dancer. "The school is based in Julia Creek, however through funding from Arts Queensland I have engaged in a number of projects teaching dance to students in neighbouring towns."

"The thing I love most about teaching is passing on the knowledge that has been given to me and inspiring creativity in young minds. Since I was six, I have gathered the experience that I now use to inspire children who are just like I was, coming from a rural background."

In addition to running her dance school, Amy has a full-time job as an executive assistant to the local shire council mayor.

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

A GLIMPSE OF WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ON STAGE AT WAAPA

Operal The Opera



Memory Bones



Poetry, Prose and Songs from the South



Rent



Match Maker



Verge



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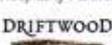
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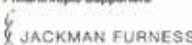
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