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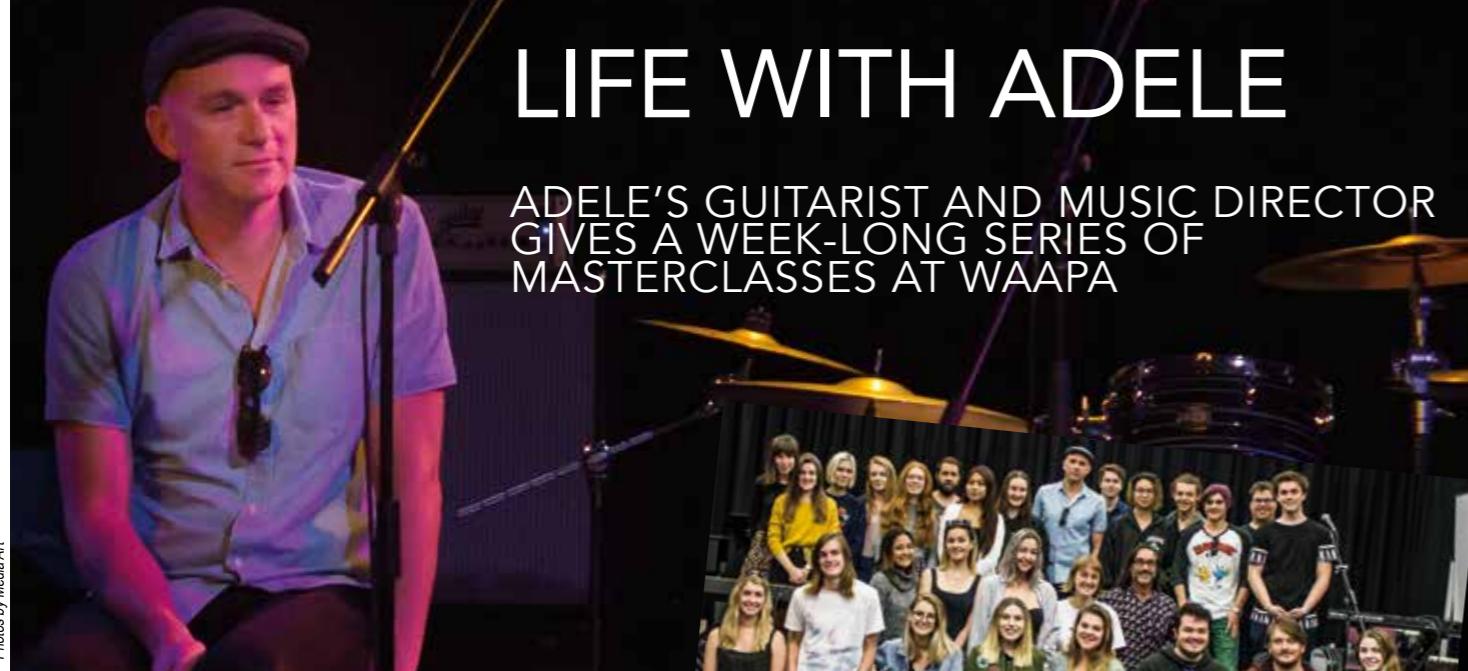
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WORLD MUSIC ADVENTURES

Ashley de Neef's jazz fusion project

TIM VAN DER KUIL
on the road with Adele
NELSON BAKER
stars in 'The Warriors'





LIFE WITH ADELE

ADELE'S GUITARIST AND MUSIC DIRECTOR GIVES A WEEK-LONG SERIES OF MASTERCLASSES AT WAAPA

Photos by Media Art

When Perth guitarist Tim Van Der Kuil arrived in London in 1996, he thought he would walk straight off the plane and into a record deal. After all, he'd done the hard yards, studying jazz for four years at WAAPA before moving to Sydney where he played in his own band and for other artists, including pop singer Jenny Morris.

So with the dream of making it big, Van De Kuil relocated to London – at the time, the hub of the Britpop explosion when bands such as Blur and Oasis were making their names. Van De Kuil couldn't wait to be a part of it.

It took three years before Van De Kuil's alternative rock group, The Vegastones, was signed to Richard Branson's V2 label. The band made an album, had a bit of low-key airplay, appeared as a support act for Duran Duran and spent around five years "doing the toilet tours around the UK".

"It didn't stick and things just dissolved," says Van De Kuil.

Although he'd vowed he'd never be a session guitarist, that was exactly the kind of work Van Der Kuil was offered when his band folded. Ironically, he was asked to play guitar on other musicians' records because Van Der Kuil had developed what he calls "an artist's mentality" – the ability to creatively collaborate with other musicians.

"I felt like I had a choice: do I go with what has opened up and is feeling like the path of least resistance or do I keep banging my head against the wall of wanting to be in a successful band?

"So I felt like this was a lesson in how to deviate, how to be fluid and flexible and understand that in music, it might not always be the path that you intended but if you're suited to it, you can make a decision to deviate from the path. Which I'm really glad I did, otherwise I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now."

What Tim Van Der Kuil is doing now is playing guitar and being music director for chartbusting

English songstress, Adele.

Eight years ago, Van Der Kuil was playing guitar with Sydney-born artist

Daniel Merriweather at the Shepherd's Bush Empire in London when Adele, who sang on on Merriweather's 2009 album *Love and War* on the track 'Water and a Flame', turned up backstage.

The 48-year-old recalls that, in true Adele fashion, she made everyone in the band a cup of tea.

A little over a year later, when Adele needed a second guitarist for the world tour of her record-breaking second album, 21, she instructed her management to track down "the Aussie from Merriweather's band".

Since joining Adele's touring line-up in November 2010, Van De Kuil has enjoyed the surreal pleasure of working with one of the best-selling recording artists in the world.

He says the impact of just who he is working with hits home most often when they are rehearsing. "When you're just hanging out in a dressingroom somewhere, going, 'Shall we just run this quickly?' and then you start playing and hear that voice coming back at you and you're like, 'Hang on, I'm the one playing guitar to that,' – it's kind of awesome."

Prior to his work with Adele, Van Der Kuil worked with a variety of different artists both live and in the studio, such as Adele, Sia, Taylor Swift, The Script, Robbie Williams and Mika.

Back in his early post-band days, Van Der Kuil became known among London music producers as the 'go-to' guitarist for recording and touring. Later this extended to being a music director for artists like Sia and Adele, a career move that Van Der Kuil traces directly back to his WAAPA jazz training.



"Doing the jazz course opened up my knowledge of harmony," he says. "What I got from the jazz course was an understanding of harmony and theory where it doesn't matter who I'm in a band with, I can communicate with them."

As a music director on tour, Van Der Kuil is responsible for such things as sourcing string players or choral backing in each destination, so being able to read a score is imperative.

"So I could end up with the world's most accomplished jazz pianist – which we actually do have in Adele's band – but we can talk on a level about music. Having trained in jazz music, which is harmonically advanced compared to pop music, I don't feel I've ever had to feel intimidated by anyone else's knowledge."

At the end of the *Adele Live 2016 World Tour*, Van Der Kuil spent a week at WAAPA giving masterclasses to the Contemporary, Music Artists and Jazz students. He then returned to Britain for Adele's four final live shows at Wembley Stadium in late June.

So, after a year and a half performing with Adele in countries all round the world, what was the highlight of the tour for Van Der Kuil?

"For me it was Perth, for me it was coming back and playing at Subi Oval," he laughs. "I used to go and watch football matches there so that was my highlight, that was the one that meant the most to me personally."

Inset photo: Tim Van Der Kuil (centre back) with students from WAAPA's Music Artists course.

YOUNG GUNS FIRE UP MUSIC AWARDS

WAAPA MUSIC GRADUATES WIN ACCOLADES ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Photo by Bird's Basement



Photo by Castaway Photography

On May 15, Australia's jazz music community gathered at Melbourne's premier jazz club Bird's Basement to celebrate the 2017 Jazz Bell Awards.

Taking out the Bell Award for Young Australian Jazz Artist Of The Year presented by Fender Katsalidis Architects was 2015 WAAPA graduate, pianist Harry Mitchell.

The Bells are named in honour of the late great jazz pioneer Graeme Bell AO MBE, and recognise excellence in the performance, recording and presentation of jazz in Australia.

Mitchell has been playing piano since the age of 8 and jazz since the age of 13.

Earlier this year the up-and-coming pianist/composer released his self-titled debut album, which features the talents of tenor saxophonist Jamie Oehlers, drummer Daniel Susnjar, guitarist Jeremy Thomson and bass player Karl Florisson.

Mitchell was taught at WAAPA by Oehlers and Susnjar, both of whom are previous Bell Award winners. Oehlers, WAAPA's Head of Jazz, counts four Bells among his swag of national and international awards.

Peter Wockner in *Jazz and Beyond* wrote that: "... with Mitchell's self-titled debut containing six originals and one standard

with sidemen such as Jamie Oehlers and Daniel Susnjar, he seems to be playing and composing with advanced maturity way beyond his 22 years. Each piece has an utterly contemporary narrative defined by the talents of each band member and built on the tradition of post hard bop."

Mitchell plans to use the \$5,000 Bell prize money towards another recording project with the same musicians.

"Being able to perform with people of such a high calibre whilst at uni was a big part of what makes the WAAPA jazz course great," Mitchell says. "The lecturers at WAAPA are great teachers as well as players, which is not always the case for other courses."

"The visiting artist program is excellent too, but just as valuable is the students getting to play with the lecturers every week and seeing them play, who are all of an international standard. I remember at WAAPA I got to have lessons with Aaron Golberg and Walter Smith – those two lessons really shaped how I think about music."

Meanwhile at the 2017 WAM Song of the Year Awards in Perth, recent WAAPA Music Artists' graduate Sydnee Carter took out the coveted Grand Prize with her song *When We Were Young*.

WAM's CEO Mike Harris said, "I have seen Sydnee Carter grow as a performer over the past few years, and Sydnee's Grand Prize win is a deserved testament to her talent."

Being only 19 years old makes this feat even more impressive, yet Carter already boasts a string of early achievements to her name. On her CV already are previous Song Of The Year nominations, a stint on *X Factor*, a Telstra Road To Discovery grand finalist, showcases at Music Matters Live in Singapore, and a recent collaboration with Slumberjack storming up the charts.

Harry Mitchell, hot on the heels of his Bell Award, picked up his second award in one week for his song, *Ignacio*; Composition/Music Tech graduate Jake Steele, aka Tobacco Rat, won the electronic category for his wonky bass heavy club track, *Infra*; and homegrown indie-rock act Rag n' Bone – comprised of four Contemporary Music graduates, Kiera Alice Owen, Axel Carrington, Sara McPherson and Jamie Gallacher – took out the punk/hardcore category.

The annual WAM Song of the Year competition recognizes and promotes the original songwriting of WA musicians with over \$40,000 worth of prizes in 16 categories.

DA COSTA'S SPECIAL YEAR

A SMASH-HIT MULTI-MEDIA CONCERT, A NEW RECORDING LABEL AND THE LOAN OF A 1701 STRADIVARIUS VIOLIN – IT'S TURNING OUT TO BE A VERY BIG YEAR FOR ALEXANDRE DA COSTA



In January this year, world renowned violinist and WAAPA's Head of Strings Alexandre Da Costa was privileged to be awarded a decade-long loan of a precious 1701 Stradivarius violin.

"To have this violin – which is one of the best ones I've ever played – loaned to me for 10 years, that's one of the biggest prizes I could ever win in my career," says Da Costa. "It's an honour to play this violin and to have access to it for such a long period of time is really what makes it very special."

Previously, Da Costa has played on a 1730 Guarneri del Gesù violin and the 1727 Di Barbaro Stradivarius.

"Such incredible violins are not easy to come by and to convince people to put them in my hands for a long period of time is also not an easy task," explains the Montreal-born virtuoso. "In the past I've had various loans ranging from one to three years and even though the loans were usually renewed, there's always

the possibility of a loan finishing, so it's a constant pressure.

"This 10-year loan allows me to develop long-term projects in the knowledge I will have a great instrument to play for all the concerts, tours, recordings, videos, everything I need to do to blossom as an artist."

Da Costa, who is renowned for the peerless technique of his playing, describes the 1701 Stradivarius as a very powerful instrument. "It has this raw power that I'm looking for in a violin because it allows me to play in very big halls without having to press on the violin or squeeze the sound out. It's very comfortable for me to play this violin."

This, along with a recording of Tchaikovsky works – including the famous *Violin Concerto* – marks the beginning of a new partnership between Da Costa and the renowned classical music label.

In addition to the Stradivarius, Da Costa has a new black carbon fibre violin. It was this striking, futuristic-looking violin that he played in January this year at the North American ice hockey championships in Montreal, Canada between the Buffalo Sabres from New York and the

local side (and Da Costa's team), the Montreal Canadiens.

In place of the usual rockers and big-time crooners, Da Costa took to the strings in the pre-game ceremonies to perform the American and Canadian national anthems – making him the first violinist to play these live during a professional sports event. Ice hockey in Canada and the US can reach up to 5 million viewers per game.

While freezing ice rink is not an ideal venue in which to play a violin, Da Costa says he couldn't pass up the opportunity. "The violin doesn't necessarily react very well to that temperature but hey, who doesn't risk anything doesn't get anything so I was happy to do it and it was a fun experience that I will always remember."

"It's something to tell my kids," he laughs. "To say, daddy was the first on a hockey rink to ever play on a carbon fibre violin both national anthems from Canada and the US, it's kind of special."

Special seems to be Da Costa's touchstone this year, with his new show, *Stradivarius at the Opera*, premiering in Montreal in a series of sold-out shows in January.

The show will start its world-wide tour in Canada from November through to March 2018 before it heads to the US and Europe in 2019, with an Australasian tour slated for 2019-2020.

"It's not really a concert, it's a multi-media show," Da Costa explains. "We have extensive projections happening behind the musicians, we have the biggest and most complex lighting effects that I've seen so far in the classical music business, we have everything ranging from smoke and fog on the stage to lighting effects and costumes. It's going to shake up what we have in mind when we think of classical music concerts."

In addition, Da Costa recently released the CD of *Stradivarius at the Opera*, recorded with the Vienna Symphony and with Da Costa as conductor and soloist, on the Sony Classical label.

While Da Costa's ties to his native Canada and the northern hemisphere see him regularly travel across the world for performances, he is also in the process of increasing his concert schedule in Australia.

"It's a new territory for me, I didn't used to have Australia integrated in my concert circuit before but now it is."

Earlier this year Da Costa gave his first concert and masterclass tour on the east coast, taking in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, with more future national engagements booked.

This year's overseas concerts will see him perform in Canada, America, Mexico, Germany and Austria. A highlight is his return to the Vienna Symphony at the end of the year as a guest concertmaster for the 2018 New Year's Concert.

This touring schedule may sound exhausting but it is the norm for Da Costa and, as he sees it, an integral part of his commitment to WAAPA.

"I am an international violinist and I've been travelling for as long as I can remember," he says. "For me it's important to remain an active soloist as I think an important part of my worth to WAAPA lies in being an inspiration as a performer to my students and to the school in general."

It's been two years since Da Costa moved from Montreal to Perth to take over the role of Head of Strings at WAAPA. Together with his WAAPA colleagues, his goal has been to build one of the strongest string programs in the Asia-Pacific region.

As part of this, Da Costa has initiated an annual program that allows the best of WAAPA's classical music students to spend their mid-year break in Canada performing and touring with Montreal's Orchestre de la Francophonie.

"I now have wonderful responsibilities at WAAPA, I'm doing everything I can for the institution and for my students and I think it's bearing fruit," says Da Costa. "This year a lot of incredibly talented students joined our department, the level is going up very significantly and this can be assessed through the quality of the concerts. So the formula is really working."



Alexandre Da Costa's new release on Sony Classical



Photo by GRACE: A Storytelling Company

A WINNING BEAT

ACTING GRADUATE JOSH WAKELY PICKS UP AN EMMY FOR HIS ANIMATED CHILDREN'S TELEVISION SERIES

The Seven/Netflix produced series *Beat Bugs*, created by WAAPA Acting graduate turned director, screenwriter and producer Josh Wakely, has won a 2017 Daytime Creative Emmy.

The 44th Daytime Creative Arts Emmy Awards ceremony, which honours the crafts behind American daytime television programming, was held in Pasadena, California on April 28.

The animated children's television series, based on the catalogue of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, won Outstanding Writing in a Preschool Animated Program for Wakely, Cleon Prineas and Joshua Mapleton.

"With *Beat Bugs* we started with the greatest songwriting of all time and, with a team of extraordinary writers, we tried to do it justice," said Wakely recently in his acceptance speech.

This is the latest gong for Wakely and his team. *Beat Bugs* has also won an AACTA Award for Best Children's Television Series, and an Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE for Best Writing in an Animation for Wakely's own episode 'Yellow Submarine.' The series has been nominated for five Emmy Awards, including Outstanding Writing in a Preschool Animated Program and Wakely has been nominated for Outstanding Directing in a Preschool Animated Program.

The company's first two seasons of *Beat Bugs*, which interweave iconic Beatles songs sung by current artists with compelling narratives for preschoolers, aired in more than 190 countries via Netflix (Channel 7 in Australia).

With music produced by Silverchair's Daniel Johns, *Beat Bugs* showcases a star vocal cast of the world's most popular and acclaimed artists, including P!nk, Sia, Jennifer Hudson, Rod Stewart, Eddie Vedder and Robbie Williams.

Three years on from securing the rights for The Beatles songs, Wakely is now carving something of a niche in music catalogue-inspired series.

In addition to *The Beatles* catalogue, Wakely's production company, Grace, has secured the exclusive rights to the music publishing catalogues of Motown and Bob Dylan, and is producing animated children's series based on them.

For his new Netflix series drawing on the Motown catalogue, Wakely has signed up Smokey Robinson as Executive Music Producer.

The untitled Motown project revolves around the adventures of a shy eight-year-old boy named Ben with an extraordinary artistic ability to bring street-art to life. Ben and his family live in the imaginary city of Motown, based on Detroit and its rich musical heritage.

Wakely, who now splits his time between Los Angeles and Sydney (his animations are crafted out of a studio in Sydney's Artarmon) is yet to announce who will be collaborating on the new series, but he has revealed that audiences can look forward to hearing some well-loved tracks.

"There are some huge names that we have [on board]," he explained in a recent interview. "It's so great to have the blessing of people like Smokey Robinson, and The Temptations and Stevie Wonder."

"Having been raised on the music of Motown, I am very grateful to have been entrusted with these songs as I draw inspiration from the stories and characters found within them."

"Considering the talent we have on board paired with the Netflix global platform, our goal is to create something extraordinary that can be enjoyed across generations."

WORLD MUSIC ADVENTURES

A JAZZ/WEST AFRICAN FUSION BAND IS THE CREATIVE BRAINCHILD OF BASS PLAYER ASHLEY DE NEEF



West of the World, the debut album from Australian bassist/composer Ashley de Neef and his world music band, brings together eight musicians from five different countries to create a unique musical blend of tradition and innovation.

West of the World is a collaboration between traditional West-African musicians from the small African country of Burkina Faso and jazz musicians from Australia, Europe and America.

The eight musicians involved in the project, who speak four different languages, met in Toulouse, France to rehearse and record the music in four days.

"We all had to learn to communicate across our language barriers very quickly in order to make the album possible," says the B Mus (Honours) Jazz Performance graduate.

De Neef says he didn't have any real interest in world music until a fellow student at WAAPA introduced him to the music of Ghana. Another student then recommended a drumming tour to West Africa with the Australian group, African Drumming, which De Neef signed up for. De Neef describes that 2013 trip, which took him to Ghana and the small African country of Burkina Faso, as

'life changing' because it was there that De Neef met the musicians in the band Burkina Azza.

"I fell in love with the sound and intensity of Burkina Azza's music and the idea for a collaboration was born."

West of the World is the stunning result, pairing West-African instruments such as the balafon, djembe and kora with jazz instruments like double bass, trumpet and saxophone. In addition to De Neef and the musicians of Burkina Azza, the album features Sam Priven from the USA – who was an exchange student at WAAPA – on alto saxophone, Mirko Cisilino from Italy on trumpet and Marco Quarantotto from Croatia on drums.

De Neef, who moved to London in 2015, has documented the creation and development of the band in his world-music podcast *The Roving Sounds Radio Show*, which details the production of the album from conception to recording.

With half the band living in Burkina Faso, and the rest of the members residing in London, Italy and America, getting together for gigs is problematic at best. De Neef is in the process of arranging shows next

year in France, Belgium and Switzerland but "everything is dependent on getting the African guys to Europe as they only come once a year or so." De Neef would also love to bring the band to Australia, but says it is a matter of finding the right performances opportunities to suit the project.

De Neef believes *West of the World* was the result of the skills and connections he made during his student years.

"The most important thing I learned from my time at WAAPA was that playing music is all about communication: between you and your band mates, and between the performers and the audience. I really value the fact that my time at WAAPA not only taught me how to be better at my instrument, but also how to communicate with all different types of people in a very genuine way."

"I became really aware of this lesson in making this album with musicians who didn't speak English. Our verbal communication was pretty weak, but that didn't affect our musical interaction."

De Neef plans to base himself in London for the foreseeable future, with a view to pursuing other collaborative projects similar to his *West of the World* experience with different cultures.

"I'm really into Armenian and Georgian music at the moment, so hopefully I can make something happen over there in the near future!"

"My fondest memories of being at WAAPA are of playing music till 2 or 3 am with my classmates. Sometimes working together on concepts we were taught in class, other times writing our own stuff or just playing for fun. I think the atmosphere at WAAPA is really unique in that you're surrounded by so many high level students and staff who are as dedicated to their craft as you are, and this really pushes you to keep growing."

To listen to *West of the World*, go to <https://rovingsounds.bandcamp.com/>

BREAKOUT ROLE FOR BAKER

After graduating from WAAPA last year, Nelson Baker immediately landed a lead role in the ABC's new television comedy-drama series, *The Warriors*, which premiered on April 12.

Filmed in Melbourne, *The Warriors* explores the elite world of professional AFL through the eyes of recruits and established players living in a share house. The eight-part series was created by Tony Briggs (*The Sapphires*) and Robert Connolly (*Paper Planes*, *Barracuda*).

The Broome-raised indigenous actor, 23, who plays Zane, the number five draft pick, stars alongside Lisa McCune, John Howard and Vince Colosimo.

Baker says working with the Aussie actor veterans was "an honour". He describes how kind McCune was to him, how Howard gave him advice on learning lines, and how Colosimo inspired the novice indigenous actors.

In 2015, Baker was accepted into WAAPA's Aboriginal Theatre course, which was both challenging and a revelation for the young aspiring actor.

"The fact that 22 other indigenous men and women from all over Australia came together from all different lands and tribes in one

room to put in the hard work and sweat to not only tell a story but to tell our story – our history and culture. I learnt more at uni about myself and my people's history than I have anywhere else."

At the end of that year, Baker wanted to go home to Broome to "rest and relax and go back to my old life for a bit".

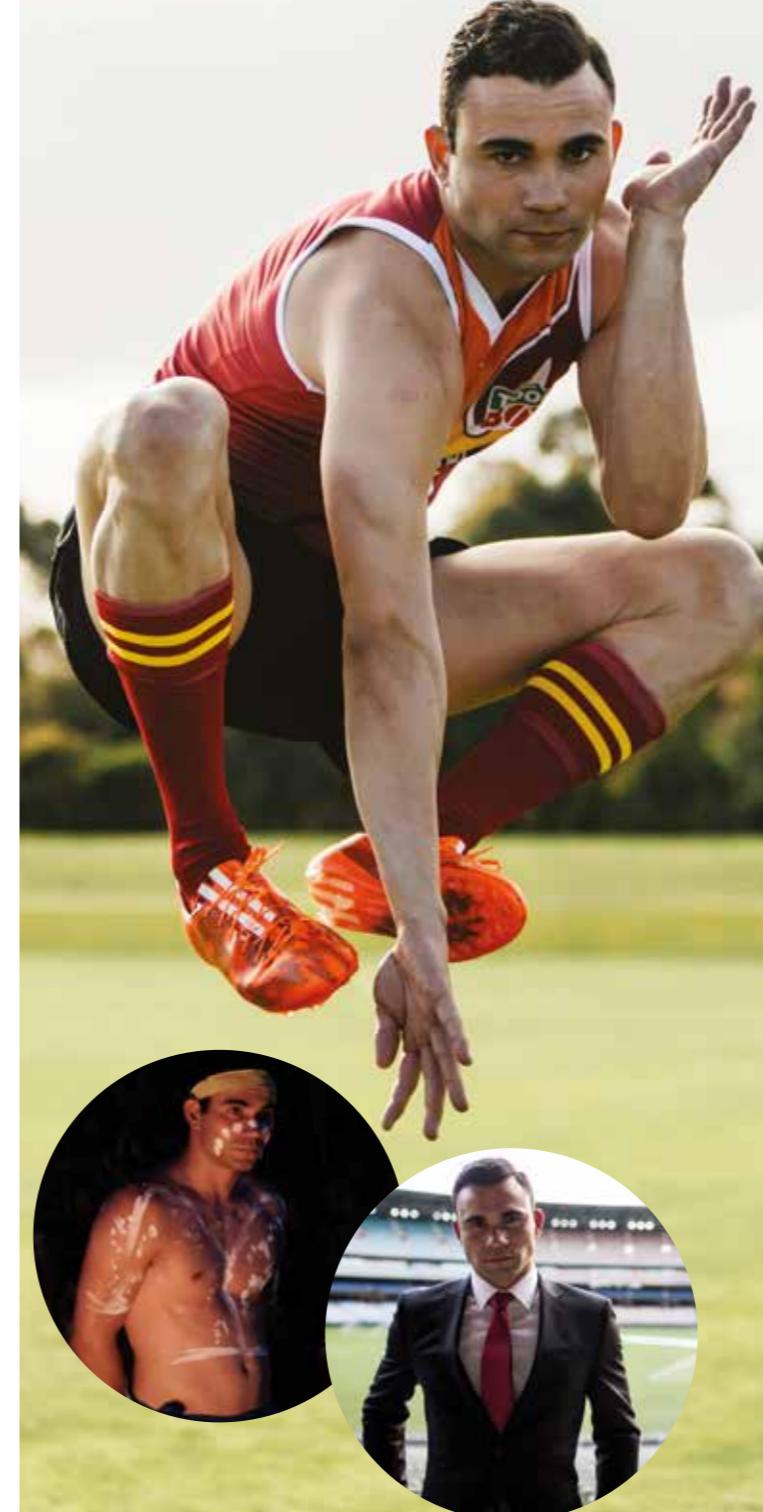
"But it wasn't the same when I went home. Life changed. I changed. And all of a sudden I had this drive to be in the industry."

Although the Aboriginal Theatre course offers a unit of study in film acting, Baker felt he needed more on-camera training before he launched his acting career. So he auditioned for WAAPA's Screen Performance course and was accepted.

"So I went back for another year at uni to a place where it was not at all easy but I felt I belonged."

"The main tool that both courses gave me was confidence, knowing what you're doing on set and with yourself in your acting," says Baker. "Everything the courses offer, from learning how to read a script to knowing how everything works, helped me so much. It gave me such a strong platform to work from and I felt more than ready to take on this great role in *The Warriors*."

Photos courtesy of ABC's "The Warriors"



EXPLORE SHORT COURSES

Whether you are a beginner or a professional there is a WAAPA short course for you. Taught by industry experts, these weekend, week night and school holiday workshops offer practical tuition in the areas of acting, screen performance, music, singing, dancing and music theatre.

WAAPA's Explore Short Courses are a great way to get a taste of what WAAPA has to offer, allowing you to finetune your skills or learn some new ones. The courses are run all year round, and are aimed at everyone from school students and young adults to professionals.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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TOSCA BRINGS TENOR HOME

AFTER A DECADE SINGING IN THE OPERA HOUSES OF EUROPE, PAUL O'NEILL RETURNS TO AUSTRALIA



When tenor Paul O'Neill was invited by the West Australian Opera to sing the role of Mario Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at His Majesty's Theatre this April, he took it as a sign. After 12 years living abroad, with the last decade based in Berlin, he and his wife Aleisha decided the time was right to bring their brood of four young children back to their home town of Perth.

"It's nice to be back," laughs the WAAPA graduate. "It sounds a bit cheesy but I did enjoy singing *Tosca* in Perth. It was a fantastic production, the singers were great and it was just wonderful to be home actually."

O'Neill describes how he was surprisingly affected by the curtain call at the end of *Tosca*. "The applause was different, it was warmer, it felt more special than some of the bigger houses in Germany that I've sung in."

O'Neill starred alongside Antoinette Halloran and Teddy Tahu Rhodes in the WA Opera's remount of the 2015 Stuart Maunder-directed New Zealand production.

The critics were glowing in their praise for both the production and its lead singers.

Paul Hopwood in *The Australian* wrote, "Puccini gives some of the most glorious music of the opera to the painter Cavaradossi. Tenor Paul O'Neill revelled in the opportunity, his intensely focused tone extending easily to the top of his range. The signature aria *E lucevan le stelle* was perhaps the most memorably beautiful moment of the entire evening." William Yeoman in *The West Australian* described how "... tenor O'Neill's superlative technique enables him to extract every ounce of nuance from words and music with complete authority".

O'Neill has had a dream run since his WAAPA days. In 2004 he was a finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Awards, the Australian Singing Competition's Opera Awards and the Mathy Awards. While a Young Artist at West Australian Opera in 2005, he was awarded Opera Foundation Australia's Covent Garden National Opera Studio Scholarship – at the time the largest opera scholarship in Australia – which allowed him to live and study in London for a year. This was followed by a further year of training at the Cardiff International Academy of Voice with leading international tenor and operatic vocal teacher, Dennis O'Neill CBE. In November 2007 O'Neill moved to Germany to join the prestigious Staatsoper Berlin.

Reflecting on his early days in Perth, the 38-year-old singer considers it a bonus that he began his career in Australia's most isolated city. "One of the best things I got, not just from WAAPA but from WA, was the chance to perform. We are so isolated here, as opposed to say Sydney or Melbourne, but that provides so many opportunities to actually learn the craft and sing. So when I hit 24, I was ready to perform, I felt I had a lot more experience in performing than I might have had if I was living in a bigger city."

Since then, from his base in Berlin, O'Neill has sung in operas and concerts throughout Europe and England. Among his many roles he has played Don José in *Carmen* at Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Laca in *Jenufa* and Janek in Janacek's *The Diary Of One Who Disappeared* at Opéra de Lille; Il Duca di Mantova in *Rigoletto* for Opera Holland Park in London, Opera Australia in Sydney and Staatstheater Karlsruhe; the title role of Gounod's *Faust* at Theater Hagen; and Augustin Moser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at Staatsoper Berlin, under the baton of Daniel Barenboim.

Before leaving Germany, O'Neill performed the title role in *Faust* at Theater Münster and Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Theater Magdeburg.

Singing the role of Radames in *Aida* at the Opernfestspiele St. Margarethen was a highlight for the tenor. In a huge outdoor event, the famous Verdi opera was performed in an old Roman quarry to a 5,000-strong audience.

Above: Paul O'Neill as Cavaradossi in West Australian Opera's "Tosca".
Photo by James Rogers

CANADIAN DIRECTOR AT WAAPA

PROFESSOR PEGGY SHANNON FROM TORONTO'S RYERSON UNIVERSITY DIRECTS WAR-TIME CLASSIC



Peggy Shannon (far right) directs WAAPA's 3rd Year Actors in "The Diary of Anne Frank"
Photo by Media Art

In April this year, thanks to the generous support of the Minderoo Foundation, director Peggy Shannon was a visiting artist at WAAPA for the 3rd Year Acting production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Professor Shannon is Chair of the School of Performance at Ryerson University in Toronto. In July last year, while with a group of her Canadian students at the Hydrama Performing Arts Festival, Shannon met WAAPA's Associate Dean of Performance Andrew Lewis, who was accompanying 19 WAAPA students to the festival to perform *Coriolanus*.

Out of this chance meeting Shannon has now directed at WAAPA and Andrew Lewis will travel to Toronto in November to direct a holiday pantomime.

Shannon said she felt privileged to direct *The Diary of Anne Frank*, with the WAAPA season marking the 70th anniversary of the book's publication.

"The play was brought to life beautifully by ten extraordinary actors and a team of wonderful production and design students," said Shannon. "Each and every single day was an honour to enter the rehearsal room. We laughed together, cried together, and witnessed the tremendous strength of character and spirit of those amazing and heroic characters."

Shannon described how the Jewish family of one of the student actors helped the cast prepare for the play by inviting them over for a Shabbat dinner.

"They talked about the symbolism of the different aspects of the Shabbat dinner," Shannon said.

The two Jewish actors also helped their fellow cast mates with the prayers in the play, because Shannon wanted them to be spoken in Hebrew rather than English.

"Working with the WAAPA students has been a delight. They are talented, well-trained young artists who are clearly heading for long and prosperous careers.

"At WAAPA I have enjoyed being in the middle of a humming beehive, swarming with talent, enthusiasm, potential, and curiosity. Everywhere I looked I saw amazing energy and extraordinary artistry. The hallways, studios, performance venues and even the grassy areas outside are simply alive with energy – the energy of artists thriving in their element."



WAAPA was privileged to host a masterclass presented by Angela Hewitt, one of the world's leading pianists, who was in Perth as part of her Musica Viva Australian recital tour. Pictured with Angela Hewitt are the two WAAPA students who participated in the public masterclass, Hannah Th'ng and George Carolin-Urkovich.
Photo by Media Art



SOPHIE STARS IN KINKY BOOTS

Described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as "the best musical to hit town in years", *Kinky Boots* opened in Sydney in April after a six-month season in Melbourne.

Winner of six Tony Awards, three Olivier Awards and a Grammy, *Kinky Boots* features music and lyrics by pop icon Cyndi Lauper, a book by four-time Tony Award-winner Harvey Fierstein, and direction and choreography by two-time Tony Award-winner Jerry Mitchell.

Based on the 2005 British film of the same name starring Joel Edgerton and Chiwetel Ejiofor, *Kinky Boots* tells the story of Charlie, a young man who is inspired to revamp the family shoe business by Lola, a drag performer.

Starring alongside Toby Francis and West End performer Callum Francis in the lead roles is 2011 Music Theatre graduate Sophie Wright, who plays Lauren, Charlie's love interest.

"Sophie Wright is a knockout as Lauren, who works at the factory and falls for Charlie, finding all the comedy in her song *The History of Wrong Guys*," wrote Jo Litton in her review in *Limelight Magazine*.

After leaving WAAPA, Wright toured for two years in the Australasian tour

of *Wicked* as Elphaba's understudy before performing in Hugh Jackman's arena spectacular, *Broadway To Oz*. Since then she has appeared in *Song Contest - The Almost Eurovision Experience*, *Avenue Q* and *Follies in Concert*. Lauren has also appeared in the Australian feature films, *Is This The Real World* and *Evil Comes Knocking*.

"I loved being in *Wicked* as it is such an epic show, however singing and dancing with Hugh Jackman was pretty special!" says Wright.

Wright believes that being at WAAPA taught her to be confident about her abilities as a performer.

"Being in an industry which can be quite challenging and difficult at times, and being confident in who I am, not only as a performer, but in myself is something I definitely started learning at WAAPA. Remembering that we are all individual and we all bring something special and new to the table is so important."

So it seems perfectly apt that Wright is now making her mark in a fun, uplifting musical about acceptance and being true to yourself. After its Sydney season, *Kinky Boots* opens at Brisbane's Lyric Theatre in August.

Above: Sophie Wright as Lauren in "Kinky Boots"

NEW COHEN CD

In May-June, WAAPA alumnus and 2015 Freedman Fellowship winner Tal Cohen toured Australia to launch his new CD, *Gentle Giants*, with performances at the Perth, Melbourne and Sydney International jazz festivals.

Performing with Cohen was acclaimed American saxophonist Greg Osby; WAAPA Senior Jazz Lecturer and long-term collaborator, saxophonist Jamie Oehlers; bass player and WAAPA graduate Sam Anning; and drummer Tim Firth.

Cohen, who graduated from WAAPA in 2008 with a Masters in Jazz Performance, has been described by Grammy-Award winning jazz saxophonist Joe Lovano as "among the best of a very few young inspired pianists I've encountered in my travels."

Now based in the US, Cohen's unique piano style owes its roots to the Jewish folk songs and classical music he played in his formative years growing up in Gedera, Israel.

In 2014 Cohen won the Barry Harris Piano Competition in the US and in 2015 took out Australia's prestigious Freedman Fellowship Award. That same year he completed a two-year Masters degree at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music, under the mentorship of Martin Bejerano.

He has become a regular performer with iconic jazz figures such as Terence Blanchard and Robert Hurst and continues to tour the world performing his unique brand of improvised music.

Cohen used the prize money from the Freedman Jazz Fellowship to record *Gentle Giants* in New York.

Cohen cites playing in a duo with Greg Osby and with the Terence Blanchard Quintet as two of this highlights of his career so far.

"The other career highlight was playing at the Sydney Opera House for the Fellowship award, it's such an amazing venue," he says. "I played with my good friend and mentor Jamie Oehlers, who is also on my album."

"This album certainly would not have been possible without the Fellowship award. I cannot be thankful enough."



BEHIND THE SCENES

A SMALL LOCAL BUSINESS PROVIDES PROPS AND SCENERY-MAKING FOR PERTH THEATRES

By the time Robert Butler was 25, he had tried various jobs and uni courses but nothing had really stuck. He had a creative streak and the carpentry skills he'd learned from his father but was struggling to find a career path.

Then he heard about a friend's brother who, after graduating from WAAPA's Props and Scenery course, scored a job working as a mechanist with Cirque du Soleil in Macau, China. Theatre mechanists are responsible for all the stage scenery in a live production from the build to bump in to performance.

"That opened my eyes up to what was possible with that course," he says. "I thought, here's a way I can use my existing skills and develop my interest in theatre."

Butler was accepted into the Props and Scenery course in 2009 as a mature-age student. After graduating, he worked as a mechanist and flyman for Perth's big theatre venues including the State Theatre Centre, Crown Theatre, His Majesty's Theatre and the Regal Theatre. He also built sets for the design students he'd met at WAAPA.

"I like the creative aspect of it. Every time you do a job it's totally different. You're always using different materials, what you build is used in different ways in different shows so you have to build in different ways. So even when you're making the same thing, you've really got to think about how you put things together for different applications. So it really challenges you to think more broadly."

In 2013, with a steady stream of set construction and other projects coming in, Butler started his own small business. Since then, Onstage Arts has grown to the point where, for the last two years, Butler has employed at least one person full-time and uses contract workers – fellow WAAPA graduates who are set builders and scenic artists – in peak periods.

Onstage Arts has built sets and props for Barking Gecko Theatre Company, West Australian Opera, West Australian Ballet – most notably for the company's Quarry seasons and last year's *The Nutcracker* – Perth International Arts Festival and the Fringe World Festival, as well as numerous Perth high school productions.

One of his recent set builds was for Barking Gecko Theatre Company's *Bamber's Book of Lost Stories*, which was performed at the State Theatre Centre in April. This world premiere received rave reviews for its inventive interweaving of puppetry with live storytelling.

Following its successful Perth season, *Bamber's Book of Lost Stories* toured to Britain for the Edinburgh International Children's Festival.

Butler built the original set to be tourable, so it could be taken apart in smaller sections for easy transportation. When that set was sent to Edinburgh ahead of the performers, Butler was commissioned to build a smaller rehearsal set for the actors who were still in Perth to rehearse on. After Edinburgh, there are plans

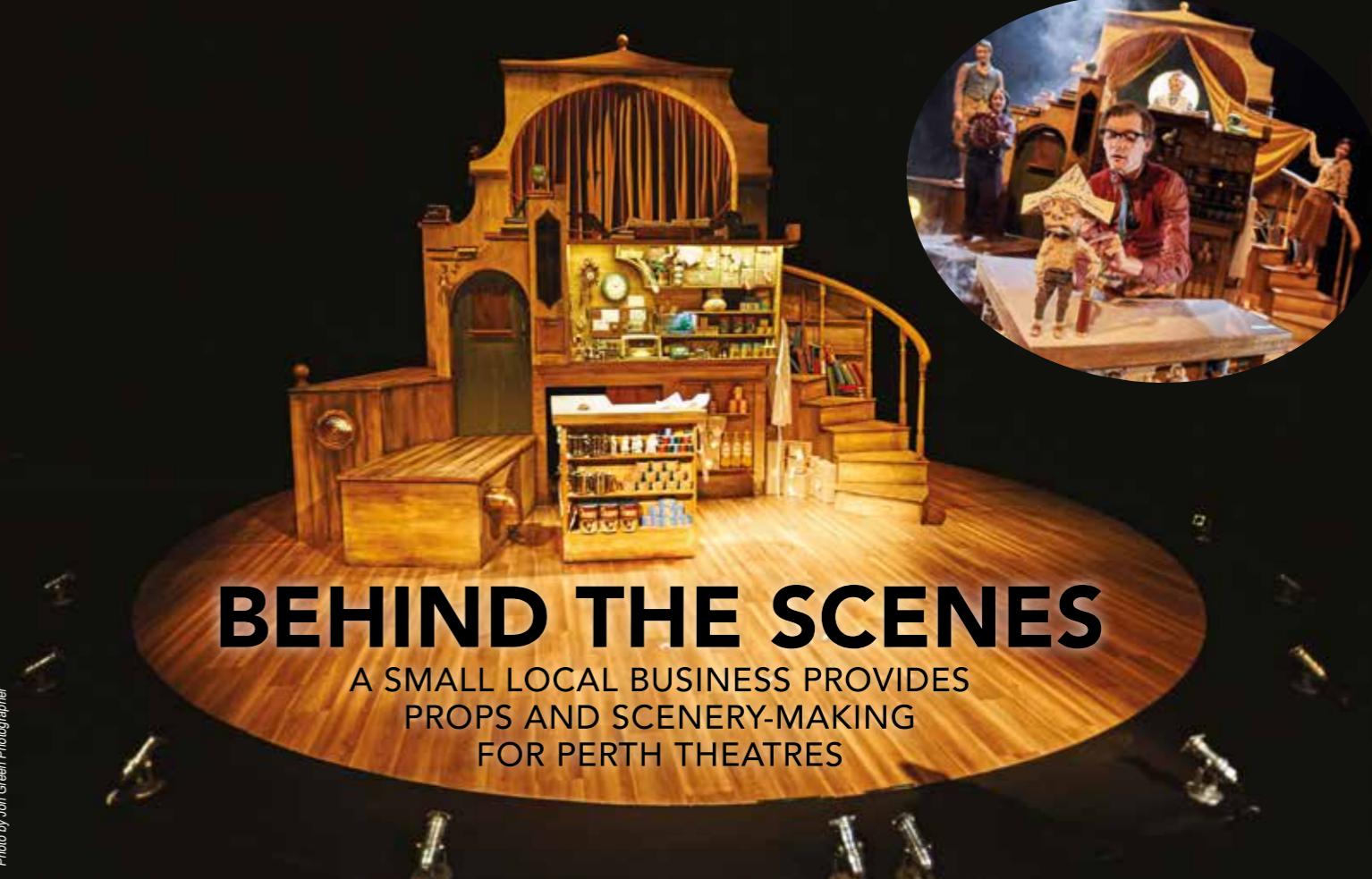
for the *Bamber's Book of Lost Stories* to tour to the east coast and New Zealand.

Butler describes how the set designs he works from can range from a hand-drawn sketch to a fully detailed plan, depending on the designer and production. Butler is responsible for building and painting the set, bumping the set into the theatre, and final paint touch-ups.

"Some designers provide a lot of detail and some give very little. How I build the set is left up to me, but we usually work together in terms of choosing the materials, deciding what's going to be best, price wise or touring wise or what will work best for the design, so it's a collaboration."

For the Scotch College production of *The Addams Family* last year, Butler worked with recent WAAPA graduate and "really great young designer", Tyler Hill. In May this year, Butler and Hill worked together again on Lost & Found Opera's *Trouble in Tahiti*, which was performed in a private house in the Perth suburb of City Beach. Onstage Arts built a seating bank for 50 people that was set up on the home's back patio.

Far from the young man searching for a career, nowadays Butler is able to pass on his expertise, giving WAAPA's current Props and Scenery students the opportunity to undertake their secondments at Onstage Arts.



SCHOLARSHIP FOR STAR WIND PLAYER

of Music and is now Professor of Bassoon at the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music.

Kuuskmann was a visiting guest artist at WAAPA in 2015. "He was really inspiring," says Natalya. "Last year I got back in contact with Martin and he encouraged me to apply for the Masters program, I sent in an audition tape and now I'm going to be studying with him. I'm so excited!"

"Martin is an amazing soloist so I want to begin making a focus on the solo aspects in my playing. I think I'm going to learn a lot from him that will help with auditions and give me the confidence to be a freelance musician."

"Christopher Dragon, who is assistant conductor of Colorado Symphony Orchestra, ex-WAAPA graduate, and Faith Court Orchestra conductor, also encouraged me to apply. I'm lucky to work with such great people through WAAPA, and I can't wait to see Colorado Symphony in action."

In addition to receiving full tuition and a stipend, Natalya will also have a graduate teaching assistantship at Lamont.



Bassoonist Natalya Czernicziw, who graduated with a Bachelor of Classical Music (Performance) degree last year, has been offered a scholarship to undertake a Masters degree at the University of Denver in Colorado.

Natalya has been invited to study with the Grammy-nominated bassoon virtuoso Martin Kuuskmann. The Estonian-born bassoonist trained and then taught at the Manhattan School

Natalya's musicianship extends well beyond a single instrument. She has played the violin since the age of five, and in primary school she played the clarinet and flute. It was only in Year 8 that she decided to pick up the bassoon.

"I think the bassoon is really beautiful, it's got so much character in the orchestra and in solo playing."

Natalya believes her intense training at WAAPA with "amazing lecturers" put her in a perfect position to be ready to grasp this opportunity.

"WAAPA is full of so many playing opportunities, I got to play in orchestra concerts, the opera, chamber music, so many projects," says Natalya. "I did a lot of playing! You don't really get those opportunities outside of university, you have to make them for yourself, which is not so easy."

Natalya will be leaving Perth in late August to begin her scholarship in September.

A PERFECT FIT

WAAPA GRADUATES PURSUE ARTS CAREERS IN SINGAPORE

Graduating from WAAPA in 2015, Amanda Lim's job opportunities since then are testament to the importance of the work experience in the Arts Management course.

In the summer of 2014, Lim interned in the marketing department of Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT). She followed this up in her final year at WAAPA with a secondment in the Programming and Education unit of Singapore's ArtScience Museum in Marina Bay Sands. At the end of her secondment, the museum offered her a full time position.

Then in September last year, Lim found herself back at SDT after being appointed the company's Education and Outreach/Artistic Administration Executive.

Born and raised in Singapore, Lim trained as a dancer before moving to Perth for three years to undertake her Arts Management degree so she is thrilled to be combining her two skills in her new job.

She describes the Arts Management course as "a perfect combination" of the arts and business, offering a balanced mix of practical and theoretical work.



Amanda Lim with dance students at Singapore Dance Theatre

"The Front of House practicum in my first two years at WAAPA taught me about what really goes on behind the scenes at a performance. Although FOH management isn't part of my current duties, that training has provided me with an understanding and expertise of how scheduling is done. Though it may sound easy, everything is a chain effect and can't function without one another."

"On the theoretical side, we also had a balance of arts related subjects such as Arts History, Arts in Contemporary Society and business subjects such as Finance, Management and Law."

Lim also appreciated gaining a deeper insight into how the industry works from the experienced industry professionals who visited WAAPA as guest lecturers.

Now at SDT, Lim is enjoying the diverse challenges of her role. Working closely with the company's Artistic Director, Mr Janek Schergen, she is responsible for creating term dates and scheduling rehearsals for the company's pre-professional students; organising annual

auditions; scheduling adult dance classes; going to various schools to conduct outreach programs; conducting behind the scenes tours at the company's premises; and ensuring the daily schedule for the artistic staff runs smoothly.

While Amanda Lim works behind the scenes at SDT, two other WAAPA graduates are performing onstage.

Cheah May Yen joined SDT in 2011 and was promoted to the position of First Artist in 2015. In her final year of dance at WAAPA, Yen was the recipient of the Dame Peggy van Praagh Award, the Finley Award and the Leinster Award for Dance.

WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER JACKSON USED IS MAKING HIS MARK ON THE PERTH INDEPENDENT THEATRE SCENE



Jessica Garside in "Jardi Tancat" by Nacho Duato, WAAPA 2015
Photo by Jon Green

Jessica Garside is a more recent addition to SDT, having started work with the company in March this year.

On graduating from WAAPA in 2015, Garside took out four dance awards before going on to complete her Masters in Dance at the Akademie des Tanzes in Mannheim, Germany. She

CREATIVE CONNECTION

In April, the original theatre piece *So You Think You're Charlie Smith* opened The Blue Room Theatre's April-July season. The play is the work of Perth independent theatre company, sandpaperplane, formed by Jackson Used and Ben Thomas in 2014.

So You Think You're Charlie Smith was co-written by the pair and directed by Used, who graduated from WAAPA's Bachelor of Performing Arts course in 2015.

This is the fourth production for the company, following their two 2017 Fringe World Festival shows, *43,000 Forks* and the experimental musical *Fairybread*, and their 2015 Fringe World Festival offering, the 45-minute black comedy *Wake & Bake*.

Used and Thomas founded sandpaperplane as a platform to make their own work.

"It started as an idea to create original, engaging and sometimes experimental work as a company," says Used. "But now it also focuses on developing the voices of young artists."

The two met while studying at UWA and working on University Dramatic Society productions before Used transferred to WAAPA, where he completed a Certificate II in Music Theatre before applying for the BPA course.

"I was very much at this point of trying to figure out what I liked, and what I wanted to do," he says. "The Performance Making course was really great for that, as a very practical way of playing with a bunch of different stuff while receiving mentoring from some really exciting creatives."

One of those creatives was Will O'Mahony who, along with Finn O'Branagain, mentored Used on *So You Think You're Charlie Smith*.

Top right: Jackson Used and Ben Thomas with production photo from "So You Think You're Charlie Smith".
Photo by Andrew Ritchie

Garside auditioned for SDT on her way home to Perth in August last year.

Garside believes that working with international choreographer Nils Christe and his partner Annegien Sneep, who were visiting guest artists in her final year at WAAPA, was instrumental in securing her position at SDT.

"They travel to Singapore every couple of years to work with the company and were able to put in a good word for me with the director - I think this definitely helped in keeping me at the top of his list when a contract became available."



Used also drew on his WAAPA connections for his cast, which featured 2016 graduates Hollie Hines, Phoebe Sullivan and James McMillan.

Another highlight of the BPA course for Used was the diversity of the course.

"I really loved being exposed to so many different ideas about performance and being given the opportunity to pursue the elements which really interested me. For example, I was always drawn to the idea of playwriting, but it was really within the BPA course that I developed my love for writing."

Used and Thomas always write together, at the same time, in the same room, on the same document.

"We found very early on that this approach gave us the ability to communicate our ideas to each other with more clarity, and to have a livelier collaborative process."

Used says that honesty is the key ingredient in the pair's ability to collaborate so well together.

"We're both fans of each other as writers, and really appreciate the ideas that each brings, but it also means we can stop in the middle of a scene and raise any concerns," he says. "The freedom to communicate what we're feeling in the moment is key to our process, and has so far really pushed us to develop our writing."

Next up for Used is a Fresh Ink writing mentorship through the Australian Theatre for Young People and Barking Gecko Theatre Company, which sees him working with Will O'Mahony and a group of peers throughout 2017 to produce two short plays.

As for sandpaperplane, Used and Thomas are continuing to develop new work with a view to presenting a show later this year.

Garside is thrilled to be working with SDT, as the company has a wide and diverse range of repertoire – a rarity in the modern dance world.

"The company performs full length classical ballets, neoclassical works from the likes of George Balanchine and Edward Liaang, and modern pieces like Nils Christe's *Organ Concerto* – which is a part of this season's programming, so I'm very excited to work with them again!" says Garside. "I really wanted the opportunity to challenge myself with a range of different movement styles, so SDT seems like a perfect fit for me."

RESTORATIVE NOTES



SQUARE PIANO CONSERVATION SPECIALIST LUCY COAD SPENT A WEEK IN PERTH IN APRIL AS A GUEST OF WAAPA TO ASSESS THE STEWART SYMONDS PIANO COLLECTION

This rare collection of 140 historically-significant pianos was generously gifted to WAAPA by NSW collector Stewart Symonds in May last year. WAAPA's Professor Geoffrey Lancaster AM, composer, pianist and a leading expert on historically informed performance practice, facilitated the procurement of the collection.

Lucy Coad, whose workshop is located between Bristol and Bath in England, is considered to be the world's best square piano conservator. Here she tells IW about her time at WAAPA:

- How was your week in Perth?

I had a week looking at 140 pianos – I was seeing them when I blinked and dreaming about them at night! It was very intense but exciting work and we got through a lot of coffee!

The week was very well prepared in advance by Professor Geoffrey Lancaster;

photographers and removers were at hand to lift every piano out from the tight storage area so we could see them better and each one was inspected, catalogued and photographed. I was brought in to look at the structural condition of each piano and to see which ones were in original condition and which had been over-restored or neglected in the past and to generally comment on their condition. I've been specialising in restoring square pianos for the last 35 years – so I've seen quite a few to compare!

- What were your overall impressions of the Stewart Symonds Collection?

The collection has a wide range of early pianos spanning 100 years from the late 1760s onwards. It has examples of how the pianoforte developed in style, shape and size,

with all the different action types that evolved into what we use today. I was impressed by the wide range of countries that they come from, some very good French examples alongside the many English ones. There are also Spanish, German, Dutch, Austrian and American instruments.

- Did you discover any especially exciting finds?

Yes, several, and these have been put at the top of the list to inspect further next year. One stunning instrument by Mott has the most lavish inlay of brass on the casework, it's inspiring to see such superb craftsmanship. Other unusual instruments include a



lyraflugel, a dog kennel piano, two upright grands and a giraffe piano and I mustn't forget to mention there is one bentside spinet in the collection also, made in 1736.

- Was there a piano that stood out for you as being the number one candidate for restoration?

I was looking forward to seeing the 'First Fleet' piano made by Frederick Beck, that was on board the *Sirius* when it reached Australia in 1788, I think that it would be really exciting to make this playable again – what a history!

- Were there any surprises for you amongst the pianos?

A couple have been modernised along the way, which is in itself an interesting point that at some stages in their history they weren't considered fashionable or collectible and various attempts have been made to make them look more up to date. For instance one has had its compass extended by half an octave at a later date and one square cornered early piano has been turned to a round cornered one which was more fashionable in the 1820s onwards.

- What happens next?

I've been asked to come back again next year to give more detailed reports on those at the 'top of the list'. Then there will be decisions to be made about which ones go for restoration first and which to keep as they are. For instance some of the pianos are in a very original condition and this may be exciting for the collection to keep some back from repair so they can be studied by students from a historical perspective. There are very few pianos left untouched in piano collections – so the Stewart Symonds instruments could be unique if there is a mix of both playable and conserved instruments. This is a very exciting project to be involved in and I can't wait to be back again next year.

A MAN OF MANY TALENTS

WAAPA WELCOMES A NEW STAGE MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR

WAAPA's new Coordinator of Stage Management describes himself as a "multi-hatted theatre beast". Luke Cowling, who moved back to Perth at the start of this year after more than a decade in Sydney, brings 17 years of expertise as a stage manager, production manager, director, artistic director and producer to his new role at WAAPA.

"I have two ambitions in taking on this job," he says. "I'm really invested in training excellent, useful stage managers and bringing a new perspective to what that might mean out in the industry."

"On one level, stage management is about having a skill base but it's also about being engaged in the art form. That skill base can then transform itself in a whole variety of different ways, leading to producing or directing or running a company. From stage management there are possibilities to work in the arts in a much more broad and diverse way."

Cowling's own career has come full circle. He graduated from WAAPA's Stage Management course in 1999, after sharing a house with friends and fellow students Aaron Beach, recently Executive Director of Co3 Dance Company and now Deputy Executive Director/Head of Development at Belvoir, and Tim Minchin, whose training in the Contemporary Music course heralded the start of a 'multi-hatted' career in music.

Cowling says the organisational side of stage management was a perfect fit for him. Yet even back then Cowling was aware that what he describes as his 'left brain/right brain juggle' would take his career in unexpected directions.

So it was that during his four years as Production Manager for Black Swan State Theatre Company, when he oversaw regional, national and overseas tours, Cowling also dreamed up a youth theatre company for Black Swan, BSX-Theatre, and became its founding Artistic Director.

This was the start of a passion for youth theatre and an investment in emerging artists that has remained a constant throughout Cowling's career.

His stint at the helm of BSX-Theatre inspired Cowling to undertake NIDA's directing course in 2004. He then became Production Manager at the Australian Theatre



for Young People and Associate Artistic Director at the Tamarama Rock Surfers at the Old Fitzroy Theatre in Woolloomooloo.

The combination of these things led Cowling into producing for Playwriting Australia, World Interplay (the world's largest festival for young playwrights) and Critical Stages (touring independent theatre). In 2014, he took on the position of Associate Producer at Belvoir.

"A producer's job in the theatre is to have a broader overview of the production, tying all the creative, technical and marketing elements together. It's about making sure all of those concerns match up and are delivered so it's a bit of an umbrella job in that sense.

For me it was a natural bringing together of those things that I'd been balancing."

When asked to name the high points in his multi-faceted career, Cowling nominates three memorable times that take him from the start of this career to his most recent role as producer at Belvoir.

In 2002 he was Production Manager for Black Swan's *Career Highlights of the Mamu* by award-winning Pitjantjatjara actor Trevor Jamieson, which toured to the Hamburg Festival in Germany.

"It was the first time Trevor's family members had left their home town – which is in the desert eight hours out of Kalgoorlie

– let alone Perth or Australia and taking their important family story to the other side of the world was an amazing experience."

Last year Cowling toured as Associate Producer with the Belvoir team to five cities in India with Lally Katz's one-woman show, *Stories I Want to Tell You in Person*. Cowling describes the challenges of this tour, which included putting the show in venues that had no wiring, as "hilarious times... travelling all around India with a solo show from a white American/Australian girl and seeing the reactions to that in a country like India was really extraordinary."

Last but not least, he cites working as a producer at Belvoir with actors of the calibre of Leah Purcell, Barry Otto, Colin Friels, Judy Davis and Robyn Nevin – "the real legends of Australian theatre".

"Those sorts of extremes are really what has been excellent about the kind of work I've been doing. So coming back to WAAPA, I know from my own experience the different outcomes that this sort of training can have."

"This course has created many successful stage managers over the years so I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel but I think I can bring a new perspective to the training and what the possibilities are once you've graduated. I'm interested in unlocking those possibilities for the students."

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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



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