

MIDSUMMA FESTIVAL PRESENTS

PROMISCUOUS /CITIES

Written by Lachlan Philpott

January 19th-24th 2023

Directed by Alyson Campbell
Presented by Woof Theatre Co.

Lachlan Philpott's 'promiscuous/cities', heralded as 'without doubt one of the greatest playwrights this country has produced' (TimeOut).

They've written endless songs about this city.
Can you feel the street's pulse, how it rushes through your veins
like a drug?
He's in trouble, she's falling in love, they're cheating, she's
trapped and he's alone.
But keep moving since we mustn't fall behind.
Stay connected- don't want to miss out.

promiscuous/cities encompasses a night in a big city where each
of us is frantically maintaining the myth of ourselves we've
created. Yet underneath the vision of ourselves that we peddle
on social media - like! - there is an aching distance between us.

Playwright Lachlan Philpott asks: How can we know a city when
we don't even know ourselves?

ALYSON CAMPBELL



@promiscuocities

ABOUT THE WRITER

LACHLAN PHILPOTT



Lachlan Philpott is an award-winning Sydney based writer, teacher and dramaturg.

Lachlan's plays have been performed across Australia and internationally including at: Sydney Theatre Company; Malthouse Theatre; Griffin Theatre; La Comedie Francaise; La Crie, The Traverse Theatre; Edinburgh Festival; The American Conservatory Theatre; Crowded Fire Theater; Kansas State University; The Lark, New York; The Mac, Belfast; The National Theatre of Croatia; Troisieme Bureau, Grenoble; Red Stitch; Merrigong Theatre Company; Sydney's Mardi Gras Festival; Midsumma Melbourne; Melbourne Festival; Hothouse Theatre; and Australian Theatre for Young People.

His plays include: BISON, BUSTOWN, CAKE DADDY, CATAPULT, COLDER, IN 3D, LAKE DISAPPOINTMENT, LITTLE EMPERORS, LOST BOYS, MICHAEL SWORDFISH, M. ROCK, THE PINAPPLE WAR, PROMISCUOUS/CITIES, SILENT DISCO, THE CHOSEN, TRUCK STOP, WALTER, and THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY.

Lachlan is under commission to adapt his plays M. ROCK, SILENT DISCO and THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY for the screen. Lachlan is also under commission to write several new plays and is developing a new music theatre work, THE RISE AND FALL OF ST GEORGE, with composer Paul Mac which was performed in concert version at Hamer Hall in 2020.

He has won three Australian Writers Guild Awards (AWGIE Awards) for his plays as well as numerous other awards and fellowships including Australian Writers Guild Awards for Best Play for Young Audiences for MICHAEL SWORDFISH and for TRUCK STOP. Lachlan won multiple awards for SILENT DISCO including the Australian Writers Guild Award for Best Stage Play, the Griffin Award for Outstanding New Australian play, and the GAP Competition Aurora Theatre Co. USA. COLDER won the R.E. Ross Trust Award. In 2018, he was nominated for an Australian Writers Guild Award for PROMISCUOUS/CITIES. His latest play, LOST BOYS is nominated for the 2019 AWGIE Awards. Lachlan has received four NSW Premier's Literary Award nominations, most recently for LOST BOYS.

Lachlan was awarded an Australia Council Cultural Leadership grant to study new play development models in the United States, United Kingdom and Ireland. He was the inaugural Australian Professional Playwright Fulbright Scholar 2014-15; and was awarded an Australia Council Keesing Literature Residency in Paris 2016-17 working with La Comedie Francaise and Maison Antoine Vitez. Lachlan undertook a second residency in Paris in 2018 supported by The Australia Council to continue work with French translator Gisele Joly.

He has worked extensively as a teacher, mentor and dramaturg at theatre companies, schools and tertiary institutions around the world. He was dramaturg on HOME COUNTRY for Urban theatre Projects and Sydney Festival. Recent teaching residencies include at: American Conservatory Theatre, Lycee Charlemagne, Paris, Edinburgh University and The Victorian College of the Arts.

Lachlan was Artistic Director and CEO of Playwriting Australia and Program Manager of Australian Theatre for Young People's Emerging Writers' Program. He has been writer in residence at: Keesing Studio at The International Cite des Arts Paris, The American Conservatory Theatre San Francisco, Griffin Theatre Company, The Playwrights Foundation San Francisco, Newington College Sydney, Red Stitch Melbourne, and was part of The Traverse Fifty at the Traverse, Edinburgh. Lachlan was Chair of the Australian Writer's Guild Playwrights' Committee between 2012 and 2015. His work is published by Currency and PlayLab in Australia and Oberon in the United Kingdom.

DIRECTORS NOTE

ALYSON CAMPBELL

In *promiscuous/cities*, Lachlan Philpott composes a symphony of a single night in San Francisco – utopian dream destination of queers and misfits.

Lachlan has made a work for a large cast, orchestrating multiple narrative lines and conveying in electrifying symbiosis how the thoughts and words of these people and indeed the people themselves dance around and between each other.

The themes come tumbling out in rich polyphony, but are crystal clear: above all the losses of gentrification, the chasm between the rich and the poor in cities like San Francisco, lost neighbourhoods, lost histories, lost corner shops, lost lesbian bars, while at the same time this is replaced by a rapid-fire onslaught of social media filling our visual frames, our mobile screens, the sonic world around us. The relentless monosyllables of social media's like, love, share, heart punctuate all the lives in the urban world we encounter, producing a constant, parallel rhythm that is the underlying soundtrack and heartbeat of this city, fissling in the air as the characters move through it. This is a world brought into being by verbal language but, along with the meanings those words carry, is an affective dramaturgy that relies utterly on timing. In *promiscuous/cities* the language comes in waves, pauses and then flows again; the last thing you would want to do onstage is tie it down.

In a way, of course, the central protagonist of *promiscuous/cities* is the city itself, and it's no coincidence that so much of our contemporary culture, including social media, emerges from the tech giants of San Francisco and Silicon Valley that have produced such a gulf between the digitally literate and those that literacy leaves behind. At the same time, San Francisco also stands as a mythical placeholder for any major city in the world.

It is so strange, but also so strangely fitting, to be staging the Australian premiere of this sparkling Australian play in Covid times – and in the performing arts we're under no illusions that we are still in Covid times. This is our third attempt to get this production in front of an audience: it was produced initially with the majority of the cast as their graduating show at VCA last year in a lockdown that meant we had exemption to be on campus to make the show – but for no public audience. We then tried to do it for Midsumma last year but: Omicron. So now, despite rehearsing with many absences from Covid and the financial realities of making independent, profit-share theatre with a large cast, I am writing in the hope that you will see thirteen wonderful performers, including four new to the show, in front of you and that somehow we have managed to bring this exciting play to the Australian public at last!

Despite all the challenges, the cast and team have worked furiously, creatively, diligently and with passion to realise a shared vision. I cannot thank them enough for their commitment to such a fiendishly complex play and putting their trust in me in what must, at times, have seemed a strange process.

DRAMATURG'S NOTES

META COHEN

What is so compelling about Lachlan Philpott's writing is its resistance to letting us sit in one place for too long. In *promiscuous/cities*, lives and moments are layered on top of one another in beautiful – and sometimes messy – simultaneity. They collide, and sometimes in the collision find surprising harmonies and resonances in duets, trios and quartets. This play has a remarkable ability to conjure a scene or mood in very few words, and bring us out again just as quickly. This gives *promiscuous/cities* a sense of fluidity that we might recognise as queer, where boundaries between moments, places and identities suddenly seem less rigid and we see glimpses of other possibilities or ways of being. It allows us, too, to encounter the queer memories of San Francisco – a place long known as 'the gay capital of America' – and interrogate the mythology behind it, even as we celebrate it.

It has been an utter delight to work on this script both as a dramaturg and sound designer, which seems fitting for a text that works so sonically and musically; where words are used almost as much for their rhythms as for their meaning. It is as much a play to be spoken as a piece of music to be orchestrated. A work that relies so heavily on rhythm is a considerable challenge – it is a delicate balance that even one misplaced 'like' can topple! But this creative team has embraced the text's complexity with true musicianship.

promiscuous/cities is a text that has it all – not only it is formally innovative, but its content resonates with our current moment. What better time for a play that so articulately explores connection and loneliness, making us think about how to navigate the constantly shifting landscapes, places and moments we find ourselves in?

PRODUCTION TEAM



Jess Lu
(They/Them)

Producer

From Bundjalung to Naarm, Jess is a Malay-Chinese/Australian actor, producer and director educated at the Victorian College of the Arts. In 2021 Jess co-directed the short film *Even the Dinosaurs Were Young* (writ. & dir. Meg Taranto and Ivy Crago) and is looking forward to directing more in the future.

Jess seeks the weird, wonderful and fantastical. They love nature, and cold water swimming. Jess is keenly interested in consuming and making Queer art for all communities. They're excited for the future of theatre and screen in Australia, and have been immersed in as many aspects as possible, including producing the Midsumma 2023 season of *promiscuous/cities* written by Lachlan Philpott (dir. Alyson Campbell).



Oliver Tapp
(He/Him)

Production Manager

Oliver never thought that a childhood spent in the Scouts and the Army Cadets would lead him to be production managing a piece of queer theatre for Midsumma, but this is where the universe has led him. Oliver is an emerging artist in Melbourne, and is deeply committed to championing the development of young artists. He is a teacher at Lisa-Marie Parker Kid's Division, where he facilitates the drama classes. Oliver firmly believes in the power of theatre to ignite social discourse and provide a space for growth and healing. As such, he is excited to be championing queer stories, and creating works that reflect our diverse culture. This is Oliver's first foray into production management.

PRODUCTION TEAM



Sunny Youngsmith
(They/Them)

Stage Manager

Sunny Youngsmith is a non-binary artist based in Naarm. They graduated in 2019 with a BFA (Acting) from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). VCA credits include Girl Student in *Mad Forest* (dir. Sean Mee), MIHA in *DFTLX* (dir. Alyson Campbell), Beatrice in *A View From The Bridge* (dir. John Kachoyan), and Murderer in *Macbeth* (dir. Michael Kantor). They wrote, directed, produced and performed *Terms & Conditions* (Melbourne Fringe Festival 2016, Midsumma 2021) and *Nobody Tips the Postman* (Melbourne International Comedy Festival 2016). Sunny's screen credits include TVC *7Eleven Australia: Redeem* (2020, dir. Danny Cohen), and web-series *Frank's Patch* (dir. Patrick Whelan and Tyrie Aspinall).

Sunny Stage Managed world premiere *'How to be a Person When the World is Ending'* (Breath and Bones Theater Co. Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Melbourne Fringe Festival 2022), Assistant Stage Managed *We Are Lightning!* (Arts House, 2017), and was a guest artist on *10 Minute Dance Parties* (The Arts Centre Melbourne, 2020), and *Infinity Dance Jam* (Melbourne Fringe Festival, 2018). They are currently working on their drag persona Shameless Steel who will make their debut in 2023 with influences from circus arts, pole dancing and cabaret.



Tayla Abbott
(She/They)

MARKETING

Tayla is a queer actor, writer and director based in Naarm/Melbourne. She's a graduate from both the Victorian College of the Arts (BFA Acting) and the University of Queensland (Marketing and Communications).

Tayla made her directorial debut as Assistant Director for *Our Father* (dir. By meg Taranto), was a key collaborator for *Quiddity* (dir. Ryan Henry) and is currently writing two Queer coming of age feature films. She has recently started working as Production Assistant on both film sets and for independent theatre and can't wait to continue working for many sectors in the industry.

CREATIVE TEAM



ALYSON CAMPBELL
(She/Her)

DIRECTOR

Alyson Campbell is a freelance director and dramaturg whose work spans a broad range of companies and venues in Australia, the UK and the US over the last 30 years: from the Los Angeles Theatre Center, through Fringe, independent and community theatre, to making forum theatre with secondary students.

Works include *The Trouble with Harry*, *Colder*, *Catapult*, *GL RY*, *Cake Daddy*. Alyson is a Professor in Theatre at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, where her research, artistic practice as a director, teaching and activism converge around gender and sexuality, particularly queer performance and dramaturgies and contemporary representations of HIV and AIDS. She now likes to write about feral pedagogies and is passionate about Feral Queer Camping.



META COHEN
(They/She)

SOUND DESIGNER

Meta Cohen is a composer, sound designer and dramaturg with work spanning music, theatre and interdisciplinary art. Meta's music has been performed in diverse venues ranging from London Synagogues to the Sydney Opera House. Recently, Meta was a commissioned composer on the first queer classical album in Australia's history (Spectrum: Divisi Chamber Singers), and her *Sim Shalom* was the first piece of music by a non-male composer ever to be performed in an orthodox synagogue in the UK. Meta's new queer song cycle *a love is a love is a love*, commissioned by ABC Classic, will be released in 2023. In theatre work, Meta is interested in the intersection of theatricality and sound, specialising in sonic dramaturgy and musical thinking in theatre making. Recently, Meta worked on the UK/European premiere of *promiscuous/cities* as part of the British Council's UK/Australia season in London. Meta is a resident dramaturg in the Theatre Works: She Writes Collective and a represented artist at the Australian Music Centre. They are especially passionate about bringing queer, interdisciplinary and sound-driven work to the stage.

CREATIVE TEAM



CASEY CORLESS
(He/Him)

COSTUME

Over the past decade, Casey's stage designs have been seen in venues ranging from Arts Centre Melbourne to a former convent; extending to fashion runways, music videos and television commercials. His costume designs for the VCA's production of *promiscuous/cities* were nominated at last year's Australian Production Design Guild Awards.

Other recent designs include *The Mentor* and *How To Be A Person When The World Is Ending* (Theatreworks), *The Lighthouse* (BK Opera/Brunswick Mechanics), and *If We Got Some More Cocaine ...* (Arts House Meat Market), in addition to productions for fortyfive downstairs, SheSaid, St Martins, Dancehouse, Union House Theatre, Riot Stage, The Smith Company, Darebin Speakeasy, Theatreworks and La Mama.

In 2022, Casey assisted Kate Davis on *Looking For Alibrandi* (Malthouse Theatre) and *YES* (The Rabble), and he has previously assisted designers Richard Roberts, Christina Smith, Zoë Atkinson and Adam Gardnir at most major Australian theatre and opera companies. Casey completed undergraduate and masters degrees in theatre design at the VCA, where he was awarded the Trina Parker Scholarship, and now sessionally lectures for the School of Production.



**EMMA
LOCKHART -WILSON**
(She/Her)

LIGHTING

Emma Lockhart-Wilson is a creative artist based in lighting and spatial design for performance. Emma has a strong interest in work that engages with performer bodies and designed elements as interactive, particularly when framed by a queer and feminist lens. Emma has designed lighting for companies including Australian Theatre for Young People, Monkey Baa, Applespiel, PACT Centre for Emerging Artists, DeQuincy Co. and Version 1.0 and in 2019 completed a design internship with The Rabble. Emma is currently a PHD candidate at the VCA, University of Melbourne, researching affective scenographies in queer feminist performance in Australia.

CREATIVE TEAM



LEON SALOM
(He/Him)

SET DESIGNER

Since training as a set and costume designer for live performance, Leon has maintained an active and diverse practice designing for stage and screen. He is passionate about collaborations with theatre and film makers in the creation of new work where design plays a key dramaturgical role.

Leon's designs for film and television have been presented across Australia and internationally including Melbourne International Festival of the Arts, Melbourne International Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Seattle International Film Festival and BFI London Film Festival. Most recently the TV series *More Than This* (2022) which he Production Designed was officially selected for the 2022 Chicago International Children's Film Festival and was awarded Best Live Action TV by both the youth and professional juries. Over the last 20 years, he has also held lecturing positions teaching design for stage and screen at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne where he is currently Senior Lecturer in Design.



CAST



TAYLA ABBOTT (SHE/THEY)

AS KATELYN/CHERRY

Tayla is a recent graduate from the VCA (Acting). They have lead acting credits in *The Winters Tale* (dir. Petra Kalive), *Machinal* (dir. Daniela Farrinacci), *Cloud 9* (dir. Maud Davey) and *promiscuous/cities* (dir. Alyson Campbell). She's recently worked on *La Brea S2* (Peacock TV), done voice over work for *Whale Song – Audio Play* (dir. Frazer Shepherdson) and made their directorial debut as Assistant Director of *Our Father* (dir. Meg Taranto).



MIELA ANICH (SHE/HER)

AS FRAN/SYBIL

Miela is a Melbourne-based actor and graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts. In 2022, Miela toured with Ilbijerri Theatre Company to Swan Hill and Mildura as part of the Social Impact Project - *The Score* (dir. Kamarra Bell-Wykes), and performed in the Melbourne Fringe season of *How To Be A Person When The World Is Ending* (dir. Meg Dunn) by Myf Hocking.



ENDRICO BOTHA (HE/HIM)

AS JACK/ DWAYNE

Endrico Botha is a South African actor who graduated with a Bachelor of Acting from The Victorian College of The Arts in 2021. His credits include: Zach in *No Exemptions* (dir. Susie Dee), Guilt in *GABAN* (dir. Budi Miller), Prosecutor in *Machinal* (dir. Daniela Farinacci), and Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale* (dir. by Petra Kalive).

CAST



HUGO GUTTERIDGE (HE/THEY)

AS WILL/JAKE

Hugo is an actor and theatre maker based in Naarm/Melbourne and a graduate from Acting Company 2021 at the VCA. Hugo has worked and performed in the productions of *City of Lost Souls* (dir. Maryanne Lynch), *The Chat* (dir. James Brennan) at Sydney Festival, the Green Room award-winning play *Shadow Piece* (dir. Antoinette Tracey/September Barker) and *This is Life* (dir. Lachlan Seal).



NICOLA INGRAM (SHE/HER)

AS J/CAIN

Nic is a Palawa and Wiradjuri actor, singer and writer. A recent Alumni from the Victorian College of the Arts (2021) Nic has performed in roles such as Joni in *FILL FILL FILL FILL FILL FILL FILL FILL* (dir. John Kachoyan), alongside touring with ILLBIJERRI's Social Impact Program (2022). Currently she is developing an original work to be presented at Yirramboi and Dark Mofo in 2023.



JAMES IRONSIDE (HE/HIM)

AS POWERS/BILL

James is a Melbourne based actor, represented by TCM agency. A graduate from the Victorian Collage of the Arts (Acting). His credits include Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* (dir. Sarah Cathcart), George H. Jones in *Machinal* (dir. Daniela Farinacci), Harry Bagley/Gerry in *Cloud 9* (dir. Maude Davey) and the Australian Debut of *promiscuous/cities* (dir. Alyson Campbell).

CAST



GUY KNOWLER (HE/HIM)

AS RENALDO/JASON

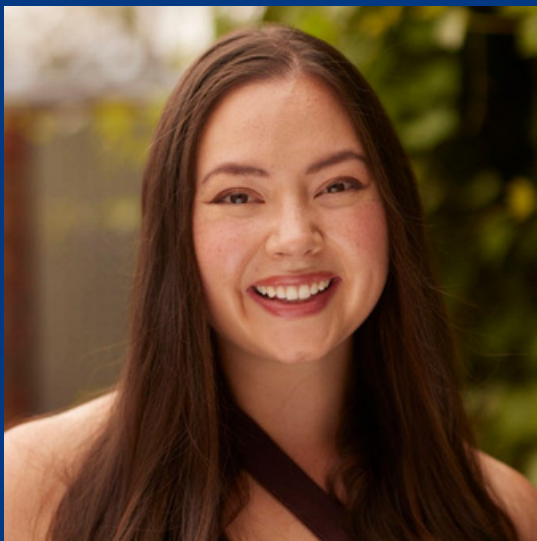
Guy is a Naarm/Melbourne based actor and theatre-maker. Guy's recent credits include Fabian/The Sea Captain in *Twelfth Night* (dir. Sarah Cathcart), Ray in *Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill* (dir. John Kachoyan), Massacre in the original Australian work *GABAN* (dir. Budi Miller) and Coach in *Underdog* (dir. Maddy Lee).



JESS LU (THEY/THEM)

AS JANNEY/BRIE

Jess is a 2021 Acting graduate of VCA. They've featured across the screens, including the *Make the Grade* music video (2021, dir. Domini Marshall), *Of an Age* (2022, dir. Goran Stolevski) and soon to be released *Bad Behaviour* (dir. Corrie Chen) on Stan. They've played Helen in *Machinal* (2020, dir. Daniela Farinacci). They're the lead in multiple award nominated short 'Snapshot' (2022, dir. Becki Bouchier), and feature in new biopic 'Better Man' (TBC, dir. Michael Gacey).



BRITTANY NG (SHE/HER)

AS JESSICA

Brittany is a half Chinese-Australian performer who is a graduate of both the Victorian College of the Arts (Acting) and the Australian Institute of Music (Musical Theatre). Her credits include Edward/Betty in *Cloud 9* (dir. Maude Davey), promiscuous/cities (dir. Alyson Campbell), Kate in *Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill, Fill* (dir. John Kachoyan) and Feste in *Twelfth Night* (dir. Sarah Cathcart).

CAST



MAXINE PALMERSON (SHE/THEY)

AS ALLIE/DORIS

Maxine is an actor and theatre maker from Naarm/Melbourne who recently completed her BFA in Theatre at the VCA. Their recent credits include her graduate work *Always* (2022, performer/deviser) and *In A Moment* (MUSE festival 2022, deviser). Max will also be co-devising and performing in an immersive work at The Motley Bauhaus in March 2023.



KURT PIMBLETT (HE/THEY)

AS WILL B

Kurt Pimblett is a queer artist and 2020 graduate of the VCA (BFA Acting). Kurt's recent stage work includes the role of Dem in *The Great Australian Play* (Montague Basement, 2022), Tom in *Hearth* (La Mama, 2022), Laertes in *Because The Night* (Malthouse, 2021), Harry in *Love You Bitch* (Stage Mom, 2020), and Max in Belvoir's award winning Australian premiere of *Hir* (2017). Kurt is currently in rehearsal for the role of Noah in *Code of Conduct* as a part of Midsumma 2023.



OLIVER TAPP (HE/HIM)

AS RICHARD

Oliver is an actor and physical performer based in Naarm/Melbourne. He has a lifetime of dance training, and is a 2017 graduate of Showfit and a 2020 graduate of the BFA (Acting) at the VCA. His stage credits include *Earthquakes in London* (dir. Sarah Goodes), *pool (no water)* (dir. Leticia Cáceres), and *Blackrock* (dir. Olivia Staaf). He is excited to finally be sharing this production of *promiscuous/cities* with the world.

CAST



LUCE WIRTHENSOHN (SHE/THEY)

AS DANCING GIRL/ BUTCH

Luce is an actor from Naarm & Mornington Peninsula. They love to work in queer and comedic theatre. They've studied at VCASS and completed their BFA in Theatre at VCA (2021). Their recent credits are:

Metamorphosis (writ. Mary Zimmerman), *Burial Rites* (dir. Christopher Button) and *Long Hanging Fruit* (devised by Theatre Company 21). She's had a ball working with this team!



THANKYOU'S

LACHLAN PHILPOTT (WRITER)

AMY HUME (VOICE)

SARAH VICKERY (MOVEMENT AND CHOREOGRAPHY)

ISABELLA VADIVELOO (INTIMACY)

AMELIA BURKE

JUDITH LATTA (CYBEC)

JUSTINE GOSS (AURORA ARTISTS)

DARIUS KEDROS

CHRIS MEAD

EMMA REDDING (DIRECTOR OF THE VCA)

DRAF DRAFFIN

ROBERT WALTON (MC FOR POST SHOW CHAT)

BEC ETHELL (MIRRORBALL)

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