

MILK CRATE THEATRE - PROFESSIONAL PRACTISING ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

Margot Politis, Artistic Director Milk Crate Theatre - Over 15 years of practice, Margot has become a recognised leader in NSW inclusive arts practice as a performer, choreographer, and deviser of new dance theatre. Margot spent 2009 - 2016 as the Accessibility Director at Shopfront Arts Co-op. She began her career performing with Restless Dance Theatre (SA) as a mentee to Kat Worth in 2004. As an independent practitioner, Margot has worked with Ausdance NSW, Accessible Arts NSW, Murmuration, Dirty Feet, The Song Room, Ever After Theatre, and Autism Spectrum Australia. In May 2015 she was artist in residence at Tasdance, Launceston, to provide skills development in inclusive practice for the company. In 2015, Margot established Self Help Arts, a collective of artists with lived experience of mental health support needs. Self Help Arts makes interdisciplinary and immersive performance work that explores social, medical and historical theories related to mental health, diagnoses, and recovery. Margot has spoken at many events about disability and mental health, including as a panelist at the MCA Mental Health Awareness Week forum, and has consulted on the development of Arts and Health policy for government and organisations.

Kay Armstrong - 2019 marks Kay's 30th year as a professional artist. She is an award winning choreographer, performer and visual artist. Kay was awarded the prestigious Robert Helpmann Scholarship in 2004 and the 2013 Dame Peggy Van Praagh Fellowship. Kay was predominantly a solo dance artist, creating and performing her solo works in festivals locally, nationally and overseas. Between 2007 - 2012 Kay devoted her career to the development of Sydney's emerging dance sector. She was the founder and Artistic Director of two youth companies, pulse8 (2007 - 2008) and youMove (2009 - 2012). She has most recently expanded her practice from dance to include visual arts, photography, digital art, video art, painting and drawing. She was a finalist for the 2017 Head On Photographic Awards, 2016, 2017 and 2018 Fishers Ghost Art Award, 2018 and 2019 Contemporary Art Awards, placed 8th in the 2018 Australian Photography Awards, and was selected for the Australian Centre for Photography 2019 Photostart exhibition. She currently works with Milk Crate Theatre and Beyond the Square, and in the past has worked with Sydney Street Choir, Murmuration, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Arts Gallery of NSW, Front Up, Sunnyfield, Catalyst Dance Residency and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

"Milk Crate Theatre weaves together a diverse community of people in a creative dialogue, which is about connection, development, and empowerment. I feel valued, and because they invest in the best of me, I am able to give my best in return. I have changed, I have changed others - it is a beautiful, fluid ongoing conversation that is grounded in Milk Crate's integrated and inclusive process."

Donna Abela - Donna has written over 50 stage and radio plays for audiences of all ages, and won prestigious national awards for her work. She has worked extensively with theatre companies, script development organisations, and individuals to develop new Australian plays, and to mentor new writers, often from culturally diverse backgrounds. Since 1991, Donna has taught script writing to tertiary students at Excelsia College, and more recently, at the University of Wollongong, and has run countless writing workshops and short courses for community groups, schools and theatre companies. Donna recently completed a thesis entitled *Dialogic Interplay: a Strategy for Representing Difference and Cultural Diversity on Stage* and was awarded a Doctor of Creative Arts from the University of Wollongong.

Graeme Rhodes - Graeme is a professional actor with 25 years experience in theatre, film and television. In 2017 he performed the one man show *Morgan Stern* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Before that he toured the show *Murder* for Erth Visual and Physical Inc to Sydney and Adelaide Festivals and Ten Days on the Island in Tasmania. For the STC he performed multiple roles in *Before/After* at Wharf 2. He has appeared in numerous TV productions, most recently *Tough Nuts* and *The Kangaroo Gang* for Foxtel and the BBC and *Home and Away* for Channel 7. As well as being a facilitating artist with Milk Crate Theatre, Graeme is a member of Milk Crate Theatre's Artistic Advisory Council and was one of the company's founding members.

"Milk Crate Theatre is a company that gives people who need it the opportunity to change their lives... I like being a part of that!"

James Brown - A Sydney based composer and Sound Designer whose process often involves creating music in synchronicity with the development of the project, creating a strong connection between the material and sound. Selected theatre include *Lake Disappointment* (Carriageworks), *Broken* (Darlinghurst Theatre), *The Lee Ellroy Show* (KVS, Brussels), and *We Was Them* (SOIT). He has composed dance scores for Victoria Hunt's *Tangi Wai* and *Copper Promises* and Kristina Chan's *A Faint Existence*, as well as contemporary scores for the Australia Ballet (Scope/Muse). James has also composed the score for the feature *A Brilliant Genocide* (Ebony Butler), *Bloodlinks* (William Yang), the miniseries *Top of the Lake* (Jane Campion) and in 2016 for the videogame *Fallout 4* (Bethesda). He holds a Visual Arts degree from Sydney College of Arts, and a Masters Degree in Acoustic Physics from Sydney Uni.

"I have really enjoyed working with Milk Crate Theatre and continue to do so as I've seen the power that can come from giving people a voice that are so rarely heard. This not only makes for really intriguing and important work, but also often provokes discussion into issues of homelessness and mental illness that need to be addressed in Australia."

Lucy Watson - Lucy's work combines hand-crafted costumes, installations and soft sculptures, with performance informed by acting, clowning, dance and storytelling. She is interested in examining the expectations we humans have created of what 'humans' are, and how we have to behave, so we can feel safe thinking, being and expressing differently. Lucy is passionate about the role of art in community, and has been facilitating theatre-making classes and processes for a range of groups, styles and setting since 2012.

"Milk Crate Theatre makes a huge impact on people's lives. I've had many participants tell me it's kept them sane and connected through very hard times. Milk Crate Theatre helps people find their voice and strength, supporting and growing their expressions so they can positively impact the world around us with their experience and imagination."

Teik-Kim Pok - His live art has manifested in interactive-durational-public performances, these quasi-theatrical works Kino Klinik, where audiences enter a short-life-coaching session that is blended with film analysis and Karaoke Massage. On screen, he has appeared as the titular character in Alvin's Harmonious World of Opposites, a feature film by Platon Theodoris who won a Director's Choice Award at the Sydney Underground Film Festival in 2015.

His most recent stint has been with Playwriting Australia. Formerly a committee member of CAAP (Contemporary Asian Australian Performance) and with whom he collaborated on Lotus, an initiative focused on enabling the production of Asian-Australian theatremakers. He was a regular contributor to RealTime, one of Australia's leading contemporary performing arts journals for 25 years and has recently graduated from NIDA's inaugural MFA Cultural Leadership cohort.

Tim Hansen - Tim is a composer, sound designer and songwriter known for blending cabaret and theatrical idioms with contemporary concert music. His music is an expression of his longlong fascination with storytelling, by the grim fairy tales, ancient myths, or the simple, domestic everyday stories of the lives of those around him. His work draws from a dark but gleeful palette inspired by sources as diverse as Weimar cabaret, circus music, 20th century modernism, music theatre and post-minimalism.

Tim has worked extensively with music ensembles, cabaret groups and theatre companies around Australia and in the USA such as Synergy Percussion, Contemporaneous, JACK Quartet, Cadillac Moon Ensemble, and TRANSIT ensemble. He also regularly works with young people in the arts, and has worked with Canberra Youth Theatre, Australian Theatre for Young People and Shopfront Arts Co-op in Australia and the Lucy Moses School, Camp Broadway and The New Group in New York.

"I love Milk Crate Theatre because I believe that everyone deserves to have a space in our culture where they can tell their story and people will listen."

Felicity Nicol - is an award-winning Performance Director and Artistic Director from Sydney Australia. A graduate of the NIDA Director's Course, she has gone on to work with prominent artists from around the world, including Ontroerend Goed (BEL), Punchdrunk and Gecko Physical Theatre (UK), Illutron (DEN) and Mammalian Diving Reflex (CAN). Felicity also holds a particular interest in work with young people, and young queer people which has led her to working with Australian Theatre for Young People and Spark Youth Theatre (AUS), Mit Ohnes Alles (GER), The Torontonians (CAN) and Company3 (UK). Felicity's mission as an artist is to interrupt our assumptions about people, and the world, in order to shift the cultural lens towards those who need it most. With this in mind, she has created works for 10 Nodi Festival (IT), Ruhrtriennale (GER), HAVEN Festival (DEN) and Wiener Festwochen (AUT). Felicity is a recipient of an Australia Council for the Arts Grant, a Mike Wish Fellowship and a 2018 Sandra Bates Director's Award.

"I work with Milk Crate Theatre because they bring joy, laughter and light to the most vulnerable human beings. They bring representation to the invisible amongst us. As an artist, there is no better place to witness the positive effects art can have on people's lives. I am honoured and humbled to work with them."

Alison Bennet - Alison is a performer and director. As Artistic Director of Hurrah Hurrah she has directed, performed and produced Roomba Nation (the Old 505 Theatre), TRADE (Adelaide Fringe, Old 505 Theatre), The Seagull by Anton Chekov and Frenzy for Two by Eugene Ionesco (Residency with Woollahra Council). Recent credits include: Join The Dots (Sydney Festival, Japan Tour), The Magic Hat (Casula Powerhouse), film Zelos, TROUPE (UK, Bestival Music Festival), This is Not Mills and Noon (Glorious Thing Theatre Co.), Roadkill Confidential (Lies, Lies & Propaganda) and Macondo's Clothline (NIDA Independent). She has created works of theatre with ESL students at Langues-en-Scenes in Paris and has facilitated workshops in theatre making at ATYP, NIDA, Shopfront Arts Co-op, Casula Powerhouse, Jigsaw Arts (UK) and Organic Arts (UK). She has worked as a mentor with Spark Youth Theatre for young artists affected by mental health issues and with Milk Crate Theatre. She is a regular collaborator and performer on the Creative Play and Digital Education projects at the Sydney Opera House.

"I love working with Milk Crate Theatre because it's a place where things that we talk about a lot are really real. The community is real, human connection is real, the benefits of creating art are real and they're tangible. These things are often talked about but at Milk Crate they're not just ideas they're the engine of the place. It is truly an honour to work there."