



WAYSIDE BRIDE

- *Wayside Bride* is a new Australian play by Alana Valentine. Her previous works for Belvoir are *Barbara and the Camp Dogs* (co-written with Ursula Yovich), *Sugar House*, *Parramatta Girls* and *Run Rabbit Run*.
- The production is co-directed by Eamon Flack and Hannah Goodwin and premiered at Belvoir on Wednesday 13 April 2022. The production was rehearsed and performed in repertory with Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*.
- *Wayside Bride* runs for approximately 2 hours and 35 minutes, including a 20 minute interval.
- The Wayside Chapel is a charity that still operates today across Sydney. Reverend Ted Noffs opened Wayside Chapel in 1964 in Kings Cross as a place that welcomed people from all walks of life. The Wayside Chapel included a chapel, coffee shop, crisis centre, a theatre and the first office of the Foundation of Aboriginal Affairs.
- *Wayside Bride* is notionally set across two time periods - the present day and the 1970s, and incorporates stories that took place over the years. The action of the play is set at a time when Ted Noffs was running the Wayside Chapel and was first charged with heresy by the Council of the Methodist Church.
- The action of the play takes place in various locations in Kings Cross, Sydney. Most of the play is set in or outside the Wayside Chapel which sometimes transforms into a nearby bar - 'Quarter Deck' and backstage at a club - 'Striporama'.
- The style of the production is naturalistic with elements of magic realism. Co-Director, Eamon Flack describes the style as "*Verbatim meets Dorothy in Wizard of Oz*". The character of the playwright, 'Alana' is used as a theatrical device. 'Alana' observes and interacts with people from the past from the perspective of the present day; prompts characters to recount stories of their weddings in various times and places, and sometimes acts as a fly-on-the-wall, precipitating scene of verbatim dialogue from the past.
- There are ten actors who play 29 characters in total. Most actors play multiple characters throughout the play, indicated through costumes and wigs. Two actors, Brandon McClelland and Sacha Horler play one central character, Ted and Margaret Noffs respectively, throughout most of the play. The only actor who does not play multiple roles is Emily Goddard who plays the character of 'Alana', the playwright. While 'Alana' is observing the past (1970s) she takes the place of her mother at the time, Janice. Present-day Janice is played by Sacha Horler. Some characters mentioned or portrayed in the production are real people, including the Reverend Bill Crews; Paul, the son of reverend Marilyn Stacy and the Reverend Jon Owen.
- The play contains discussions about faith and religion. Ted Noffs was a Methodist, and in the 1970s the church hierarchy considered his teachings (including on women preaching and an humanist approach to homosexuality) to be 'in variance with the sermons of John Wesley'. The play makes mention of a pamphlet published by Ted Noffs which contains the line 'the beginning of faith is doubt'.
- The play contains some coarse language and sexual references, including conversations about pre-marital sex and working in the adult industry. In one scene a sex worker, Dusty, recounts her time in the Cross as an erotic dancer. The actor appears in modest underwear and dresses onstage getting ready for work, she presents parts of her story provocatively, in one moment opening her legs to 'flash' her underwear to the audience. She tells the audience of her experiences in the Cross, sharing "a lot of the girls, they're stupid, for \$50, they'll give them a blow job and have sex with them".
- The play contains references to drugs and alcohol. In one scene a married couple describe their Wayside wedding while drinking a bottle of sparkling wine, they appear jovial but intoxicated. In another scene, sex worker Dusty, describes her wedding reception at Iguana Bar where there was a "Ecstasy, Cocaine. Alcohol. Marijuana" the anecdote continues to reveal that she and her friend Sharna used and suffered from heroin addiction during their lives, she tells the audience in one instance they overdosed but someone "narcaned me and brought me back to life", and that Sharna had a brain haemorrhage.
- The play contains references to the Stolen Generation, themes of abandonment and losing a child. During the play a homeless character recounts losing her newborn and the distress of not being able to bury him due to restrictions of the church at the time. In one scene a character in distress shares that she was taken from her family when she was very young but told that her parents abandoned her.
- The production includes haze and smoke, and bright lights within the set that flare at moments throughout the play.