



# 2021

ANNUAL REPORT





A person with short hair, wearing a purple button-down shirt over a white t-shirt and dark pants, is seen from the side. They are holding a professional video camera with a microphone. A black backpack is on their back. They are standing in front of a large, out-of-focus projection of a person's face and upper body, which is lit with a blue and purple light. The background is a solid dark blue.

## CONTENTS

2021 AT A GLANCE — **04**

CHAIR'S MESSAGE — **06**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE — **08**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE — **10**

2021 SEASON — **12**

2021 IN REVIEW — **28**

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021 — **48**

BOARD AND STAFF — **52**

PARTNERS — **53**

SUPPORTERS — **54**

SPECIAL THANKS — **57**

Sheridan Harbridge, *Stop Girl*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

## 2021 AT A GLANCE ...

66,069 ATTENDEES AT  
5 MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS

88

CALD AND

17

FIRST NATIONS  
ARTISTS

ACROSS MAINSTAGE  
AND CREATIVE  
DEVELOPMENT WORK

370

UNIQUE GIGS

(IN CREATIVE  
DEVELOPMENT AND ON  
THE MAIN STAGE)

89:60

F:M ACTORS,  
WRITERS AND  
CREATIVES

71,182

SOCIAL MEDIA  
FOLLOWERS

289,498

WEBSITE USERS

AND 1,449,371

PAGE VIEWS

150

CREATIVES

AND PERFORMERS EMPLOYED  
IN MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS

2 NEW AUSTRALIAN PLAYS  
AND WORLD PREMIERES  
MADE IT TO THE STAGE

\$2.4M

IN  
BOX OFFICE  
REVENUE

5346

SUBSCRIPTIONS

SOLD

5

MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS  
AND 3 25A PRODUCTIONS  
CANCELLED DUE TO  
THE COVID LOCKDOWN

5720

NEW SINGLE TICKET  
BUYERS IN 2020

446

WESTERN SYDNEY  
STUDENTS

IN WORKSHOPS AT THEIR  
SCHOOLS (PHYSICAL)

139

SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

(PHYSICAL AND ONLINE)

WITH 1997 PARTICIPANTS

(STUDENTS AND TEACHERS)

4970

KILOMETRES  
TRAVELLED BY

THE FANGIRLS SET  
(TO 4 CITIES  
OUTSIDE SYDNEY)

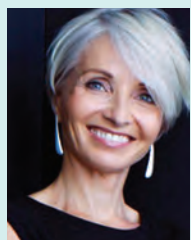
3156

STUDENTS  
AND TEACHERS  
WHO ATTENDED A  
SCHOOLS OR EVENING  
PERFORMANCE



## CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Sam Meers



When I wrote in my Annual Report message last year about the true grit required to get through the extended lockdown in 2020, little did we know that our newly energised theatre would again

come to a grinding halt as Sydney re-entered lockdown on 26 June 2021.

Like so many other cultural organisations across Australia and around the world, the loss of performance ticketing income for a second time dealt Belvoir a significant blow. Yet even though our beloved theatre was closed for 5 months, the extraordinary Belvoir team still managed to produce 5 exceptional and diverse mainstage productions, tour to an international arts festival and major cities, welcome 66,000 people to our shows (including over 3000 students and teachers), host 32 creative developments and provide 370 employment opportunities to artists.

We could not have done this without the outpouring of community affection and support from our donors, audiences and Government. My deepest thanks go to all those who rallied behind us with philanthropic gifts of all sizes. The response to our Artists at Work (Act 2) Annual Appeal helped us provide many artists with work during those long 5 months, and also served to boost the morale of our staff and artist community.

On behalf of the Board and the entire company, I thank our government funders for their ongoing investment in this year of need. Due to the substantial decline in our box office revenues, both the Federal Government's Ministry of the Arts and the NSW Government's Create NSW assisted us with much-needed funding through the Sustainability Fund and the NSW Performing Arts COVID Support and

Relaunch fund, respectively. The latter, in particular, was vital during those long lockdown months.

The combination of generous government assistance and donor support, robust cost controls, extremely strong box office between January to June, and the fact that ambitious, large-scale shows programmed in the second half of the year – with modest financial targets – were either cancelled or postponed, all led to a higher than anticipated year-end result of \$1.27 million. This will allow us to build much-needed reserves to assist Belvoir through the challenges of the current year, and also lay the foundations for a necessary future capital redevelopment.

Once again, the staff at Belvoir worked tirelessly in this challenging year – and often in new and innovative ways – to ensure as many of our brilliant productions made it to our stage. They are responsible for delivering the high standard of Belvoir's health policies and safety management that allowed audiences to return to the theatre. I thank each and every one of them for their tenacity and unwavering loyalty.

The Company could not have survived without the dedicated leadership of our co-CEOs, Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Sue Donnelly, both of whom took an active role in sector advocacy and safety control during the disruptions caused by the pandemic; it is their fearless vision that puts artists at its centre and has allowed Belvoir to deliver the successes articulated in this Annual Report, and I thank them sincerely on behalf of us all.

Sue Donnelly leaves her role as Executive Director this year with our deepest gratitude, and more than a tinge of sadness. Sue has made a remarkable contribution to Belvoir. Her drive, intellect and leadership has been pivotal to the



James Majoos and Karis Oka, *FANGIRLS*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

company's successes over the past 5 years, particularly in the delivery of our award-winning productions and in strengthening the company's stability, capacity and reputation in what has proven to be some of the most difficult times in the company's history – so we are thrilled we have been able to entice her to stay on to deliver a number of special projects.

Taking up Sue's role is our highly respected Deputy Executive Director, Aaron Beach, who has worked with Sue and Eamon to make Belvoir the company it is today. The breadth and depth of Aaron's experience across the industry, and the esteem in which he is held by colleagues, make him the ideal choice as our new Executive Director.

I am deeply indebted to our Board of Directors, and I thank them all for their invaluable support, informed perspectives and wise counsel in the challenging circumstances we faced this year. They are Patty Akopiantz (Deputy Chair); Michael Lynch AO; Alison Kitchen; Kate Champion; Jacob Nash; Johanna Featherstone; Raji Ambikarajah and Mark Warburton. We were very sad to see Stuart O'Brien step aside at year's end. Since joining the board, Stuart's infectious

energy and strategic nous has resulted in new plans for our theatre and warehouse, a rebranding exercise and enhanced audience development strategies. We are grateful to Stuart's company, Houston, for working on a highly successful fundraising campaign with Macquarie Bank for our No Barriers Education program led by our board observer, Mandy Yan.

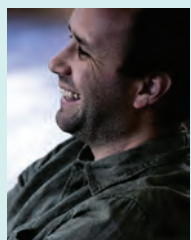
Finally – last, but very definitely not least – my thanks also to the Board of Belvoir St Theatre Ltd (aka Company A) for our close working relationship and their continuing belief in Belvoir's vision.

Whilst it has been inspiring to see Belvoir and the arts industry adapt to the constantly changing COVID-19 environment, the next year will continue to challenge our industry as we adapt to a 'COVID-normal' world that continues to bring uncertainty for our companies, performers, creatives, crews and audiences. However, we need the arts now more than ever to restore vibrancy and energy to our cities, and we remain optimistic that we will rebuild our industry in the year ahead. We will continue to justify your faith in us, and I ask that you continue to support us in these difficult times.

**SAM**

# ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

## Eamon Flack



On 29 May 2021, when most theatres around the world were in lockdown, we opened a production of *The Cherry Orchard* with 12 actors on stage. A bit like life at the cherry orchard, it felt like everything might

all be OK after all. Less than a month later, in the midst of rapid community transmission, we performed one Thursday night to a determined but small audience. Like the act 3 party in the play, we all feared but wanted not to believe that this would be our last hurrah.

The next morning the lockdown was announced for midnight. At 5pm the actors came in to gather their belongings and we met on stage to say goodbye. In that sense we had one last turn at the farewells of act 4, only this time for real. Mercifully we didn't leave the great Peter Carroll behind. As he left that evening he turned at the entrance and privately gave a little bow to the Belvoir stage. Then he left, and soon after the public health curtain came down. End of play.

Life imitates art all the time. Personally I think the meaning of life is to make theatre – though I understand if that's not the same for everyone... it has not been easy to make theatre these last few years. COVID of course is the big challenge. But COVID has also shone a black light on the concealed murder scene of the arts in Australia: a diminished cultural landscape with fewer companies and fewer organisations, a cultural landscape ruined by a decade or more of inadequate and outright bad arts policy, all at a time when the country has grown in size and complexity, and the world's categories of meaning and human relationships have been turned upside down. If life is to imitate art, there has to be art to begin with.

Having said that, astonishingly we managed to put on 6 shows in 2021, if you count the extended season of 2020's *My Brilliant Career* running into January. Most of them were new Australian works, and the rest if not new then treated as if they were (*A Room of One's Own* and *The Cherry Orchard*). This focus on the new is a determined part of our work at Belvoir, though it is easier said than done, both because the world is so ragged and unpredictable, and because it is always easier to enforce an old fantasy than accept a new reality. Russia's war on Ukraine is proof of that.

So, frankly, was my production of *The Cherry Orchard*: in straining to leap from the old fantasy of Chekhov's 1904 play into our own present reality, we dissatisfied many people who wanted one or the other, but not a production that was mid-leap like this one was. I have never felt so vulnerable as I did with that show, and yet, looking back, I think it was a very truthful production: caught mid-leap between the past and the future, full of possibility but yet to resolve the landing.

If this is a somewhat philosophical annual report from me, it's appropriate. A theatre company should be a space for reflection and confrontation, for questions and consolations. A place for the past to learn to become the future. *FANGIRLS*, on its return season, showed yet again that it's the future, and that show will be remembered forever by the hoards who loved it. Sally Sara's *Stop Girl* found its power in the idea that memory is not a literary trope or a momentary daydream, it's a living thing that we carry in our bodies, wherever we go, as witnesses, as asylum seekers, as friends, as audiences. *A Room of One's Own* is proof that a piece of written text from long ago can electrify the mind as though the intervening 90 years have never happened.

*The Boomkak Panto* proved that the best traditions have to change in order to survive.

In some ways the second lockdown was easier than the first, at least to the extent that we had been here before; in other ways it was more diabolical. On the upside, this time the public health orders allowed us to continue to rehearse, which we did for the first 5 weeks with *At What Cost?* But as we approached the beginning of rehearsals for the Rep Season the daily case numbers exploded beyond what we'd seen before, and we made the decision to stand down. We revived *Artists at Work* and continued the creative development programs we had begun in the first lockdown in 2020. Good luck and a vaccine program meant that, astonishingly, rehearsals for *The Boomkak Panto* began as scheduled, and 5 weeks later we re-opened after 5 months.

The shows we lost in that time were all new work, and all of them will return in the 2022 and 2023 seasons, with the exception of the shows in the *Festival of Everything*. This great little festival was our attempt to celebrate the performing arts after the impacts of the first lockdown. COVID had other ideas, but we hope we will return to that kind of festival-style programming in future.

I'd like to thank the staff of Belvoir. They are the company's first donors, and their commitment and passion are the company's greatest good fortune.

The Board, led by Sam Meers, has been a great support, and has continued to back the company's age-old instinct for risk and adventure, even through COVID.

The Artistic and Programming team (plus Vyv) are my hive-mind, thank you to all of you, welcome to Zainab Syed, and my thanks and respect to Louise Gough and Nathan Maynard whose time with us finished up in the course of last year.

Most of all my thanks and respect to the huge community of freelance artists and arts workers. It is a sort of absurdity, really, that the people who are most literally essential to the making of the art are the

ones with the least secure employment in our cultural sector. It has been an extremely difficult time for those people, and I hope I can say that Belvoir has done its utmost to support that community throughout COVID.

There is one person I'd like to particularly thank: my co-CEO Sue Donnelly. Sue was the Acting General Manager in 2006 and on the panel that first hired me as the then Literary Manager. She has been a ferocious champion of Belvoir for decades now, and she happens to have been at the helm here at so many of the company's moments of crisis and transformation, from the redevelopment of the buildings in the noughties, to the hitherto impossible task of producing *Counting and Cracking*, to the state of emergency of COVID. She has been a friend and a guide and I've loved running this company with her.

Lockdowns are hell for live performance, but the enforced break from the production cycle did offer a chance to take stock. We were able to think a lot about how Belvoir and all our peer companies are established – as makers of art, as public institutions, as businesses, as products of government policy.

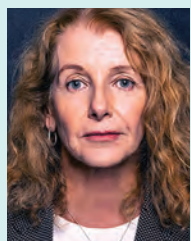
COVID aside we face profound challenges on all counts. Who do we make art with and for? How do we make and fund brilliant art, and not just add to the oversaturated market of content? Are the big-picture policy settings sustainable? These are old questions with new urgency, and Belvoir and all arts companies are looking for new answers to these questions. We found some ideas during lockdown, which we hope to begin to share in 2022 and beyond.

But the task of finding real answers to these questions is ultimately bigger than Belvoir. The future for Belvoir and all our theatre companies will and must be collaborative, public, and democratic. We will do our bit, joyfully and optimistically.

EAMON

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Sue Donnelly



It's strange to reflect on 2021 recalling how we started the year cautiously positive, watching COVID restrictions gradually lifted and then hitting our strides with sold out shows only to be pulled back by the Delta variant and a 5 month lockdown which for me seemed considerably longer than the 6 month lockdown in 2020.

It was a salient lesson for us. Expect the unexpected. Don't rely on old ways of doing things. Reimagine the impossible.

2021 started with the continuation of the beautiful *My Brilliant Career* from 2020, playing to increasingly larger houses throughout January. We then moved down the road to our old friend the Seymour Centre (where Belvoir relocated for 18 months during the 2005-06 theatre renovation) and remounted the fabulous *FANGIRLS* in the York Theatre. We were a bit nervous about the size of the York but that soon faded as hundreds of young fans turned up with signs, danced in their seats and sang along to the songs. It was truly joyous. We toured the show to more old friends, the Adelaide Festival, where the show again worked audiences and thence onto Canberra Theatre Centre, Illawarra Performing Arts Centre in Wollongong and a sell-out season at the Arts Centre Melbourne. As I write this we are preparing for another season of *FANGIRLS* at the Sydney Opera House in late July.

Sally Sara's *Stop Girl* surprised everyone with its power and intensity. It became the most talked about show in Sydney during March-April largely assisted by the many journos who came to support their talented colleague. The story prepared us somewhat for what followed in August - the devastating mass exodus

from Afghanistan as the Taliban once again took control.

A successful return season of the transcendental *A Room of One's Own* earned more acclaim for Anita Hegh's performance. And a fresh take on *The Cherry Orchard* introduced 7 new artists to the Belvoir stage and reflected on the inevitability of change. But before we could finish the season there was more change with a new lockdown, throwing us into remote working arrangements and a re-evaluation of the next 6 months.

I started baking cakes during the lockdown. One per week for 15 weeks. It provided a rhythm and a strange sense of purpose. I cooked on weekends as even though we weren't producing plays on stage, Belvoir continued to be very, very busy - frequently amending production dates, and then cancelling shows, as each week the lockdown extended; working on creative developments usually via Zoom where everything takes so much longer; putting all our education workshops online and extending them into school holidays to the delight of many exhausted parents; completing repairs and maintenance on our crumbling buildings; continually revising COVID plans; writing numerous grant applications and importantly keeping our superb staff engaged so that when we could reopen we were primed.

Fortunately in 2021 we didn't need to reduce staff numbers or hours, as we did in the previous year. A number of new staff commenced during the lockdown, and sadly a number of staff departed. Farewell parties happened remotely. COVID caused people to reflect on what was important to them; it's tough working in a theatre company when for 11 months of 2 years the theatre is closed. You miss the buzz of the first read. The thrill of opening nights. The climax of closing night. Hence I think it was both a shock and a delight when most of the Belvoir



Billy McPherson, Hamed Sadeghi and Zoe Terakes, *The Boomkak Panto*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

team finally returned to the warehouse in November. It was wonderful to connect in 3D and start making shows again.

Throughout the lockdown the support I received from the Belvoir board, our staff and also from other theatre and performing arts CEOs was what kept me going. A very positive aspect of COVID is the warm collegiality that developed between the companies. What started in 2020, consolidated over many Zoom meetings in 2021.

Ending the year with the hilarious *The Boomkak Panto*, we miraculously avoided any cancellations in that last week before Christmas as the Omicron variant took hold. We didn't expect that... or maybe we did. We couldn't believe our luck that we'd reached the finish post and ended the year on a high.

This is my final Executive Director's message as my valued colleague Aaron Beach has taken on the role from March 2022. Wonderfully it's been a seamless transition and I know Aaron

will skilfully guide Belvoir through its next stage. I'm now the Executive Producer working on various projects for Belvoir and will leave the company after we finish our UK tour of *Counting and Cracking*. This is a project I've been developing for more than 3 years and thought it was impossible once COVID hit. But we reimaged it. I'm delighted to be able to see it through.

The past 5 years have been a roller-coaster ride. Demanding but exhilarating. Many risks but so much accomplished. I'll miss the daily buzz and the many friends at Belvoir. It's a great testament to everyone involved (and there are many) as to what Belvoir has achieved over these 5 years. Huge thanks to all the true believers who come to our shows, our dedicated subscribers and donors, our talented and committed artists, the generous Belvoir staff and board, Create NSW and the Australia Council. And particularly to Sam, Eamon, Aaron and Vyvyan.

SUE





# 2021

## SEASON

**FANGIRLS**

**STOP GIRL**

**A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN**

**THE CHERRY ORCHARD**

**THE BOOMKAK PANTO**

**POSTPONED OR CANCELLED**

**MISS PEONY**

**AT WHAT COST?**

**FESTIVAL OF EVERYTHING**

**REP SEASON**

Virginia Gay, *The Boomkak Panto*. Photo by Brett Boardman.



# FANGIRLS

**30 JAN — 20 FEB**  
**SEYMOUR CENTRE**

Performances	<b>24</b>
Paid audience	<b>10,519</b>
Total audience	<b>11,666</b>
Box office income	<b>\$536,028.20</b>

**27 FEB — 14 MAR**  
**ADELAIDE FESTIVAL**  
**Ridley Centre**  
**Adelaide Showground**

Performances	<b>18</b>
Total audience	<b>6771</b>

**18 — 21 MAR**  
**WOLLONGONG**  
**Illawarra Performing Arts Centre**  
**IMB Theatre**

Performances	<b>6</b>
Total audience	<b>1848</b>

**24 — 28 MAR**  
**CANBERRA**  
**The Playhouse**  
**Canberra Theatre Centre**

Performances	<b>6</b>
Total audience	<b>2564</b>

**28 APR — 9 MAY**  
**MELBOURNE**  
**The Playhouse**  
**Arts Centre Melbourne**

Performances	<b>15</b>
Total audience	<b>8883</b>

Book, Music and Lyrics by **Yve Blake**  
Directed by **Paige Rattray**

Original Music Director/  
Vocal Arranger **Alice Chance**  
Music Producer/  
Sound Designer **David Muratore**  
Music Director/Vocal Arranger **Zara Stanton**  
Sound Designer **Michael Waters**  
Lighting Designer **Emma Valente**  
Lighting Realiser **Renae Kenward**  
Video Content Design  
& Production **Justin Harrison**  
Set, Video Content  
& Costume Designer **David Fleischer**  
Choreographer **Leonard Mickelo**  
Associate Choreographer **Sharon Millerchip**  
Dramaturg **Jonathan Ware**  
Associate Director **Carissa Licciardello**  
Stage Manager **Khym Scott**  
Assistant Stage Manager **Julia Orlando**  
Front Of House Engineer **Matthew Erskine**  
Head Electrician **Steve Hendy**  
Technical Coordinator **Tom Houghton**

With  
**AYDAN**  
**Danielle Barnes**  
**Chika Ikogwe**  
**Shubshri Kandiah**  
**Ayesha Madon**  
**James Majoos**  
**Sharon Millerchip**  
**Karis Oka**  
**Tomáš Kantor**  
**Shannen Alyce Quan**

Originally co-produced with **Queensland Theatre** and **Brisbane Festival**

In association with **Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP)**

★★★★★ "Like, literally, the most fun you'll have in the theatre this year!"

- LIMELIGHT

★★★★ "The magic of the show and Paige Rattray's production lies in celebrating rather than frowning upon the fizzing wonder of being hormonally out of control."

- THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Chika Ikogwe, Shubshri Kandiah and Karis Oka, *FANGIRLS*. Photo by Brett Boardman.





# STOP GIRL

20 MAR – 25 APR  
UPSTAIRS THEATRE

Performances	41
Paid audience	11,653
Total audience	12,932
Box office income	\$728,326.20

By **Sally Sara**  
Directed by **Anne-Louise Sarkis**  
Set Designer **Robert Cousins**  
Costume Designer **Mel Page**  
Lighting Designer **Paul Jackson**  
Composer/Sound Designer **Stefan Gregory**  
Associate Composer/  
Sound Designer **Hamed Sadeghi**  
Fight, Movement  
& Intimacy Coordinator **Nigel Poulton**  
Assistant Director **Hannah Goodwin**  
Stage Manager **Luke McGettigan**  
Video Deviser  
& Cinematographer **Jack Saltmiras**  
Video Content Creator  
and Systems **Susie Henderson**

With  
**Deborah Galanos**  
**Sheridan Harbridge**  
**Amber McMahon**  
**Mansoor Noor**  
**Toni Scanlan**

Recipient of the **Blake Beckett Trust - Female Playwrights & Female Directors Award**

Principal Partner **Ord Minnett**  
Supported by **The Group**

"Anne-Louise Sarkis directs a strong, unfussy production that foregrounds the strengths of Sara's work."

- LIMELIGHT

"Sara is one of Australia's finest journalists, and you can feel in it *Stop Girl's* rigour: the clarity of story; its distillation of truths into top-line events that progress thoughtfully over the course of the play."

- THE GUARDIAN



Sheridan Harbridge and Amber McMahon, *Stop Girl*. Photo by Brett Boardman.



Anita Hegh, *A Room of One's Own*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

## A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

6 MAY – 23 MAY  
UPSTAIRS THEATRE

Performances	20
Paid audience	5461
Total audience	6105
Box office income	\$312,350.50

Written by **Virginia Woolf**  
Adapted by **Carissa Licciardello & Tom Wright**

Directed by **Carissa Licciardello**  
Set & Costume Designer **David Fleischer**  
Lighting Designer **Kelsey Lee**  
Composer **Alice Chance**  
Sound Designer **Paul Charlier**  
Stage Manager **Luke McGettigan**  
Assistant Stage Manager **Ayah Tayeh**

With  
**Anita Hegh**  
**Ella Prince**

★★★★ "... nothing less than transcendental."

- SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

"A superb text for performance."

- THE AUSTRALIAN



Peter Carroll and Mandela Mathia, *The Cherry Orchard*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

## THE CHERRY ORCHARD

29 MAY – 27 JUN  
UPSTAIRS THEATRE

Performances	26
Paid audience	6284
Total audience	7350
Box office income	\$367,734.10

Written by **Anton Chekhov**  
Directed by **Eamon Flack**

Set & Costume Designer **Romanie Harper**  
Lighting Designer **Nick Schlieper**  
Composer & Sound Designer **Stefan Gregory**  
Choreographer **Elle Evangelista**  
Fight & Movement Director **Nigel Poulton**  
Voice Coach **Danielle Roffe**  
Stage Manager **Khym Scott**  
Assistant Stage Manager **Jessie Byrne**

With  
**Peter Carroll**  
**Priscilla Doueihy**  
**Nadie Kammallaweera**  
**Kirsty Marillier**  
**Lucia Mastrantone**  
**Mandela Mathia**  
**Sarah Meacham**  
**Josh Price**  
**Pamela Rabe**  
**Keith Robinson**  
**Jack Scott**  
**Charles Wu**

Supported by **The Chair's Circle**

"Nothing illustrates Chekhov's theme of inevitable change better than Flack's cast, all of them wonderful."

- LIMELIGHT





Michelle Law, *Miss Peony*. Photo by Daniel Boud.

## MISS PEONY

Postponed to 2023

Written by **Michelle Law**  
Directed by **Courtney Stewart**

Set & Costume Designer **Jonathan Hindmarsh**  
Lighting Designer **Trent Suidgeest**  
Composer **Dr Nicholas Ng**  
Sound Designer **Julian Starr**  
Choreographer **Kristina Chan**  
Assistant Director **Nicole Pingon**  
Surtitler & Mandarin Translator **Dr Jing Han**  
Cantonese Translator **Sylvia Xu**  
Fight Director **Nigel Poulton**  
Intimacy Coordinator **Chloë Dallimore**  
Stage Manager **Lillian Hannah U**  
Assistant Stage Manager **Bronte MacInnes**

With  
**Gabrielle Chan**  
**Jing-Xuan Chan**  
**Kaeng Chan**  
**Mabel Li**  
**Christy Tran**  
**Charles Wu**  
**Shirong Wu**

Supported by the **Creative Development Fund** and **Nelson Meers Foundation**

Developed in partnership with **Belvoir** and **Playwriting Australia**

In collaboration with **Queensland Performing Arts Centre** and **Arts Centre Melbourne**



Luke Carroll, *At What Cost?*. Photo by Daniel Boud.

## AT WHAT COST?

Postponed to 2022

Written by **Nathan Maynard**  
Directed by **Isaac Drandic**

Set Designer **Jacob Nash**  
Costume Designer **Keerthi Subramanyam**  
Lighting Designer **Chloe Ogilvie**  
Composer **Brendon Boney**  
Sound Designer **David Bergman**  
Stage Manager **Luke Mcgettigan**  
Assistant Stage Manager **Brooke Kiss**

With  
**Luke Carroll**  
**Sandy Greenwood**  
**Alex Malone**  
**Guy Simon**

Indigenous Theatre at Belvoir supported by  
**The Balnaves Foundation**

# FESTIVAL OF EVERYTHING

**HANNAH REILLY**  
— DIRECT EYE CONTACT

**CURTAINS**

**44 SEX ACTS IN ONE WEEK**

**LINGALAYAM DANCE COMPANY**  
— KURUNTOKAI

**THE STAND-UP SHOW**

**ZOË COOMBS MARR**  
— AGONY! MISERY!

**JUDITH LUCY**  
— TURNS OUT, I'M FINE

**EDDIE PERFECT**  
— INTROSPECTIVE

## HANNAH REILLY — DIRECT EYE CONTACT

Producer **Emma Diaz**  
Musical Director **Andrew Bruce**  
Dramaturg **Samantha Young**

With **Hannah Reilly**  
Accompanied by **Andrew Bruce**

In association with **Aya Productions**

## CURTAINS

Book by **Rupert Holmes**  
Music by **John Kander**  
Lyrics by **Fred Ebb**  
Original book and concept by **Peter Stone**  
Additional lyrics by **John Kander**  
and **Rupert Holmes**

Producer **Michelle Guthrie**  
Director **Richard Carroll**  
Choreographer **Cameron Mitchell**

In association with **Neglected Musicals**  
By arrangement with **Origin Theatrical**  
On behalf of **Theatrical Rights Worldwide,**  
**New York**

## 44 SEX ACTS IN ONE WEEK

Presented by **Moonshine & Tits**  
Written by **David Finnigan**  
Directed by **Sheridan Harbridge**

Producer **Rebecca Massey**  
and **Sheridan Harbridge**  
Composer/Music Director **Steve Toulmin**  
Associate Director **Kip Chapman**  
Lighting Designer **Trent Suidgeest**

With  
**Sheridan Harbridge**  
**Priscilla Doueihy**  
**Rebecca Massey**  
**Keith Robinson**  
**Michael Whalley**

Developed with the support of  
**Belvoir Up Late** through the  
**Artists At Work Residency Program**

## EDDIE PERFECT — INTROSPECTIVE

With **Eddie Perfect**  
Produced by **Token Events**

## LINGALAYAM DANCE COMPANY — KURUNTOKAI

By **Lingalayam Dance Company**

Concept & Choreography **Anandavalli**  
Composer/Arranger  
**Bhagavatalu Seetarama Sarma**  
Video Artist **Iqbal Barkat**  
Lighting Designer **Neil Simpson**  
Costume designed by **Anandavalli**  
Costumes executed by  
**D.K. Dance Costume Tailors**  
Rehearsal Assistant **Brindha Srinivasan**

With  
**Abi Singham**  
**Asha Mistry Kaushik**  
**Gayathrie Isaac**  
**Shalini Parthiban**  
**Vaishnavi Sothirajah**  
(**Lingalayam Dance Company**)

Guest Dancers  
**Seran Sribalan**  
**Aruthy Kumanan**

Nattuvangam (cymbals) **Anandavalli**  
Vocals **Aruna Parthiban**  
Violin **Kiran Mudigonda**  
Mridangam (percussion) **Janakan Raj**  
Flute **Venkatesh Sritharan**

## THE STAND-UP SHOW

With  
**Bec Charlwood**  
**Lizzy Hoo**  
**Dilruk Jayasinha**  
**David Woodhead**

Produced by **Token Events**

## ZOË COOMBS MARR — AGONY! MISERY!

By **Zoë Coombs Marr**  
Produced by **Token Events**

## JUDITH LUCY — TURNS OUT, I'M FINE

By **Judith Lucy**  
Produced by **Token Events**

Photo by Daniel Boud. Rebecca Massey.

CANCELLED







Sacha Horler and Angeline Penrith. Photo by Daniel Boud.

## REP SEASON

### WAYSIDE BRIDE

AND

### LIGHT SHINING IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Postponed to 2022

*Wayside Bride* written by **Alana Valentine**  
*Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*  
 written by **Caryl Churchill**  
 Co-Director **Eamon Flack**  
 Co-Director **Hannah Goodwin**

Costume Designer **Ella Butler**  
 Set Designer **Michael Hankin**  
 Design Associate **Nell Ferguson**  
 Lighting Designer **Damien Cooper**  
 Sound Designer, Composer and  
 Musician **Alyx Dennison**  
 Choreographer **Elle Evangelista**  
 Vocal Coach **Danielle Roffe**  
 Assistant Stage Manager **Erin Shaw**

With  
**Arkia Ashraf**  
**Maggie Blinco**  
**Marco Chiappi**  
**Emily Goddard**  
**Sandy Greenwood**  
**Sacha Horler**  
**Rebecca Massey**  
**Brandon McClelland**  
**Angeline Penrith**

*WaysideBride* was commissioned and  
 developed by **Belvoir** with the assistance of  
**Wayside Chapel, the Noffs Foundation, the**  
**City of Sydney** and **Griffin Theatre Company**



Toby Truslove, Mary Soudi, Rob Johnson, Billy McPherson, Zoe Terakes, Deborah Galanos and Virginia Gay, *The Boomkak Panto*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

## THE BOOMKAK PANTO

20 NOV – 23 DEC  
 UPSTAIRS THEATRE

Performances	35
Paid audience	7093
Total audience	7950
Box office income	\$421,538.28

Written and Co-Directed by **Virginia Gay**  
 Co-Directed by **Richard Carroll**

Set & Costume Designer **Michael Hankin**  
 Lighting Designer **Jasmine Rizk**  
 Assistant Designer **Cris Baldwin**  
 Assistant Designer **Keerthi Subramanyam**  
 Composer **Eddie Perfect**  
 Sound Designer **Kellie-Anne Kimber**  
 Music Director **Zara Stanton**  
 Choreographer **Elle Evangelista**  
 Intimacy Coordinator **Chloë Dallimore**  
 Scenic Artist **Russell Carey**  
 Stage Manager **Luke McGettigan**  
 Assistant Stage Manager **Ayah Tayeh**  
 Assistant Stage Manager **Bradley Barrack**

With  
**Deborah Galanos**  
**Virginia Gay**  
**Rob Johnson**  
**Billy McPherson**  
**Hamed Sadeghi**  
**Mary Soudi**  
**Zoe Terakes**  
**Toby Truslove**

★★★★ *"The Boomkak Panto strikes the  
 perfect balance of humility, relevance and all-  
 singing, all-dancing ridiculous fun to see out  
 the year that was 2021 and turn the campy of  
 Christmas up to eleven."*

- TIMEOUT

# 25A

**25A, housed in our intimate Downstairs Theatre, is an exciting program of low-cost, independent theatre making and emerging theatrical talent. The 25A challenge is to produce the most essential theatre while celebrating acting, story and community.**

## SON OF BYBLOS

13 — 31 JUL

Presented by **Brave New Word Theatre Company**

By **James Elazzi**

Directed by **Anna Jahjah**

Producers **Luke Holmes**

and **Joy Minter**

Assistant Director **Antony Makhoulf**

Set and Costume **Olivia Aday**

Lighting Designer **Sophie Pekbilimli**

Stage Manager **Charlotte Breene**

Marketing **Margaret Thanos**

With

**Violette Ayad**

**Kate Bookallil**

**Simon Elrahi**

**Deborah Galanos**

**Mansoor Noor**



Antony Makhoulf. Photo by David Hooley.

## DESTROY, SHE SAID

10 — 22 AUG

Presented by **FERVOUR**

Based on the novel by

**Marguerite Duras**

Directed by **Claudia Osborne**

Producer **Imogen Gardam**

Costume and Set Designers

**Grace Deacon and Kelsey Lee**

Lighting Designer **Kelsey Lee**

Sound Designer **Angus Mills**

Dramaturg **Thomas De Angelis**

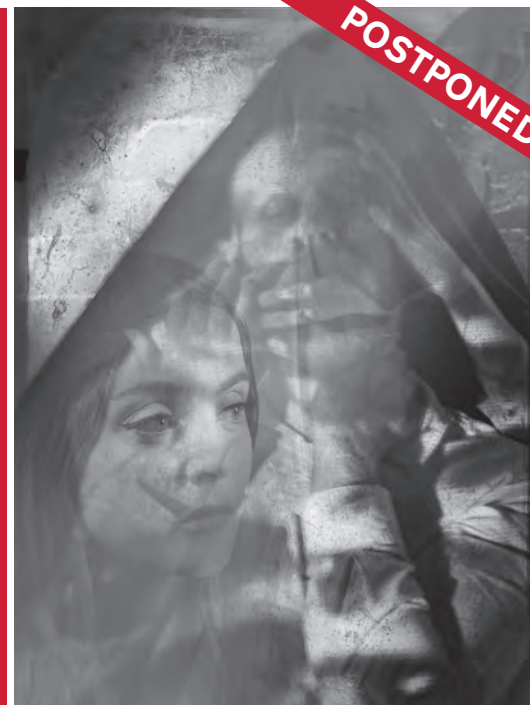
With

**Joseph Althouse**

**Adriane Daff**

**Josh Price**

**Grace Victoria**



Adriane Daff and Josh Price. Photo by Phil Erbacher.

## HORSES

26 AUG — 5 SEP

Presented by **KUNST**

Based on the novel

*They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*

by **Horace McCoy**

Directed by **Tait De Lorenzo**

Producer **Zoë Hollyoak**

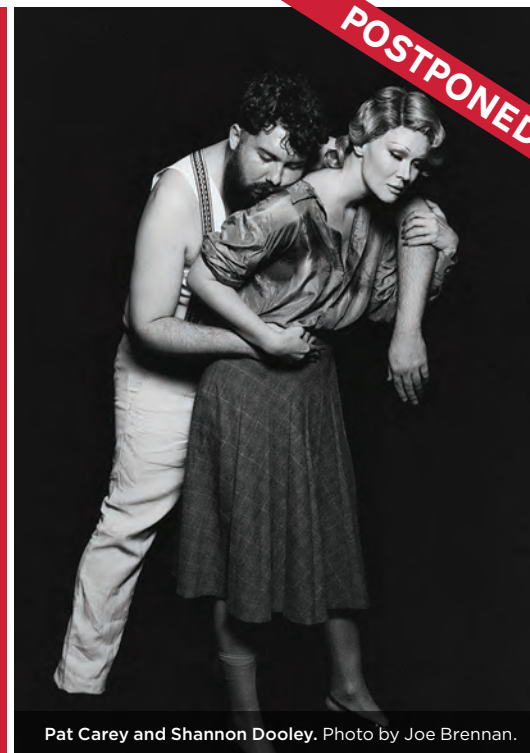
Dramaturg **Ian Sinclair**

Costume Designer **Angela Doherty**

Design Assistant **Haruka Sato**

Lighting Designer **Ben Brockman**

Video Designer **Lucca Barone-Peters**



Pat Carey and Shannon Dooley. Photo by Joe Brennan.





Peter Carroll, Pamela Rabe and Keith Robinson,  
*The Cherry Orchard*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

## 2021 IN REVIEW

Based in an old factory on Gadigal land, Sydney, Belvoir is one of Australia's most celebrated and beloved theatre companies. Since 1984, when a group of 600 theatre-lovers came together to buy a theatre and save it from becoming an apartment block, Belvoir has been at the forefront of Australian storytelling for the stage. Each year the company presents an annual season of shows for this now-iconic corner stage. New work and new stories sit at the centre of Belvoir's programming, alongside a mix of reinvented classics and international writing, and a foundational commitment to Indigenous stories. In short, Belvoir is about theatrical invention, an open society, and faith in humanity.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Sue Donnelly, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising theatre-makers. Belvoir has nurtured the talents of artists including Cate Blanchett, Simon Stone, Leah Purcell, Benedict Andrews, Tommy Murphy, Kate Mulvany, Geoffrey Rush, Anne-Louise Sarkis, Wesley Enoch, S. Shaktidharan, and former Artistic Director Neil Armfield. Landmark productions include *Counting and Cracking*, *The Wild Duck*, *FANGIRLS*, *Cloudstreet*, *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*, *The Drover's Wife*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Angels in America*, *Keating!*, *The Sapphires*, and many, many more. Belvoir regularly tours nationally and internationally.

Belvoir receives government support for its activities from the Federal Government through the Australia Council and the state government through Create NSW.

### OUR VISION

**Fearless theatre that brings everyone together.**

### MISSION

**Belvoir shares old and new stories that entertain and challenge us, connecting us to humanity and the complexity of society.**

### GOALS

- 1. Create exceptional theatre**
- 2. Inspire, excite and grow our audiences**
- 3. Invest in diverse talent and people**
- 4. Be a strong and sustainable company**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the elders past and present.**



# MAKING EXCEPTIONAL THEATRE

## CREATING NEW AND CLASSIC WORK IN ORIGINAL WAYS

We started 2021 positively with a return season of our popular musical **FANGIRLS**. Due to COVID capacity restrictions we performed in the Seymour Centre's York Theatre (our first production there since *The Sapphires* in 2010) followed by a national tour to Melbourne, Canberra, Wollongong and Adelaide.

Sally Sara's award-winning first play **Stop Girl** went through a process of extensive creative development and brought her unique and incisive journalism to life. Audiences loved this show and it was sold out in the last weeks. Working with Sally was a great example of Belvoir's commitment to engaging with all kinds of stories and storytellers, and supporting them to the stage and our audiences.

In contrast to the new work, Artistic Director Eamon Flack adapted Chekhov's classic **The Cherry Orchard** for our stage. A perfect show for the year we had just lived through, it was a beautiful and celebratory production offering a new commentary on a world confronted with change. We were particularly pleased to offer 7 of the cast their debut at Belvoir, ensuring a mix of some of the brightest emerging talent alongside Belvoir stalwarts Peter Carroll, Pamela Rabe and Keith Robinson.

Similarly, the return season of Virginia Woolf's **A Room of One's Own**, adapted and directed by Carissa Licciardello, benefited from its second presentation (after a short one in 2020). It was a wise, witty, passionate, incisive story of women writers and the rooms in which they write, and was embraced by our audiences, some of whom attended a second time.

After what felt like an even longer COVID lockdown than 2020, Virginia Gay's triple-threat commission **The Boomkak Panto** was a gift for our audiences, synthesising

Virginia's unique voice and humour with Eddie Perfect's flair for harmony and puns in the songs. It was a celebration of community and an offer of joy at the end of a difficult year.

While in 2020 we commissioned 7 new works, in 2021 we concentrated more on creative developments and readings and commissioned 5 new plays (including a co-commission with Australian Plays Transform). Once again many of our **creative developments went online** when the lockdown started, coinciding with a planned program of creative developments for the second half of the year. In all there were 32 creative developments during the year (largely funded through philanthropic support) which employed 211 artists – a significant increase on our pre-COVID creative development slate. Some of these were for productions programmed for 2022, including *Opening Night*, *Tell Me I'm Here*, *Looking for Alibrandi*, and the 2 shows in our Rep Season: *Wayside Bride*, and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*. Other creative developments included commissioned works from 2020 or earlier.

Belvoir is committed to ensuring only fully developed new work from diverse artists reaches our stage. We've found this process often requires more intensive creative development compared to earlier years.

## ENGAGING WITH THE BEST ARTISTS AND COMPANIES

Work also began with Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre on an adaptation and co-production of the definitive novel of Australia as an immigrant nation **Looking for Alibrandi** which will showcase a mix of well-known and emerging artists.

The extended lockdown required video conferencing to work on the production, with an in-person development in Melbourne at the end of 2021.



Toby Truslove, Hamed Sadeghi, Mary Soudi, Virginia Gay, Billy McPherson and Zoe Terakes, *The Boomkak Panto*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

A successful digital creative development was carried out for a new work currently titled *Of Stubborn Songs*. It is a solo work written to be performed by Vaishnavi Suryaparakash (from *Counting and Cracking*) and will include a significant Bharatanatyam dance element. The project is led by Nithya Nagarajan and Olivia Satchell. The project is being funded in part by Arthouse in Melbourne with a view to having a season there as well. Further development work will continue in 2022.

Once again COVID affected our planned production of *Miss Peony* first programmed for 2020. Due to the time lag, some of the original actors were not available and extensive auditions were held to find the best Australian Chinese ensemble. The production had been bumped into our theatre when the lockdown was announced in late June and we optimistically kept it *in situ* for another couple of weeks hoping that it would be possible to run the show. As the production is co-produced with





Anita Hegh, *A Room of One's Own*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

Arts Centre Melbourne and Queensland Performing Arts Centre, and they have different programming timelines, we have committed to a national tour in 2023.

In an exciting new **collaboration with the Australian Chamber Orchestra** for their *Beethoven & Bridgetower* concerts, Belvoir director Eamon Flack and actor Angela Nica Sullen worked with the orchestra on a 'renaming' concert of Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* to honour the original dedication to George Bridgetower, an accomplished violinist of African descent and a kindred spirit to Beethoven. A second collaboration with the orchestra, *Baroque Revelry* involving Belvoir director Carissa Licciardello and 4 actors, was fully rehearsed but cancelled due to the lockdown.

Negotiations ensued with international presenters about a future remount and presentation of our award-winning production *Counting and Cracking*. This has been under discussion for 3 years and we anticipate a positive outcome in 2022.

We take our role as a steward for the next generation of theatre makers very seriously. Unfortunately the **25A Program** (usually 7 shows by independent companies presented in the Downstairs Theatre) fell victim to COVID – both due to audience number restrictions in the first half of the year, and the full lockdown from the end of June.

#### OPENING UP THE REPERTOIRE OF STORIES

For many years, but with a stronger emphasis since 2017, Belvoir has been endeavoring to reflect broader Australian society from the page to the stage. The remount of *FANGIRLS* included new and diverse musical theatre artists who were selected from a casting process with our partner the Australian Theatre for Young People.

The lockdown did allow for us to extend our creative developments and commissions. In addition to the aforementioned *Of Stubborn Songs*, *Looking for Alibrandi* and *Miss Peony*, works were commissioned by

Vivian Pham, James Elazzi, and Maeve Marsden (a graduate of our Writers Lab program), each addressing an under-represented area of Australian life and culture.

Working with Co-Curious, Belvoir continued to support a quartet of writers from Western Sydney on a multi-writer project *Wealth for Toil*. This is both a capacity-building and prospective programming work focusing on the experiences of People of Colour in Western Sydney.

Our commitment to **First Nations work** saw our continuing involvement with Balnaves Fellows Nathan Maynard (2020), Jorjia Gillis (2021) and Thomas Weatherall (2022), all of whom received creative developments on their commissions. Unfortunately, Nathan's work *At What Cost?* was unable to be performed in 2021 due to the lockdown, but was subsequently staged in the first part of the 2022 season. The production had a full rehearsal period in 2021 prior to the show's postponement. Following the rehearsals, to capitalise on Nathan's presence with us at the time, we organised a week of creative development on his new play *Flush* written as part of his Balnaves Fellowship. This also provided much-needed additional work to actors who otherwise would not have had it.

In September and October we collaborated with PYT Fairfield and the Afghan Community on Art for Afghanistan. In response to the tragic events in Afghanistan, we created a series of short video reflections that celebrated 5 Afghan artists, their art, their stories, and their favourite poetry. Curated by Bibi Goul Mossavi, those artists included Elyas Alavi (painting and poetry), Jalal Nazari (calligraphy), Arefa Hassani ('thread painting' and embroidery), Lemah Orya (ceramic sculptures) and Bibi Goul Mossavi (beading). Each artist auctioned a piece of their work to raise much needed funds for Action Aid, together we raised \$5500.

# INSPIRING AND GROWING OUR AUDIENCES

## SHARING OUR WORK

With a wide range of ticket pricing including discounts for students, under-30s and other concession holders as well as low-cost previews and our Unwaged Program, Belvoir aims to **reduce the financial barrier** many people face when considering going to the theatre.

Five performances across the year were also audio-described or closed-captioned for people with access requirements. And Belvoir continued its partnership with ticket platform TodayTix to reach a wider audience.

Belvoir actively engages with audiences who see themselves reflected in the diverse stories told on our unique corner stage. Stories that resonate with young, feminist and queer audiences (*FANGIRLS*, *A Room of One's Own*, *The Boomkak Panto*), the Chinese-Australian diaspora (*Miss Peony*) and First Nations communities (*At What Cost?*) sit alongside and intersect with stories of mental health (*Stop Girl*) and stories that interrogate society, identity and religion (*The Cherry Orchard*, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Wayside Bride*). Regrettably, 4 of these plays were postponed to subsequent years due to the COVID lockdown.

In presenting *Stop Girl*, we worked with the Afghan charity Mahboba's Promise to promote the work they do in Afghanistan for women and girls. Little did we know at the time how that country would be pulled apart by the Taliban's takeover only a few months later. The charity also organised for their members and other Afghan people to attend the show.

A new type of programming in 2021 was *Belvoir's Festival of Everything*. With 7 productions from stand-up comedy to Sri Lankan story and dance, to resurrected musicals and burlesque radio plays, the festival was aimed at a younger and diverse audience, with a low \$35 ticket

price and a late-night performance time. The festival, however, fell victim to the COVID lockdown and did not make it to the stage.

**Briefings and Q&A sessions** offer our audiences the chance to get close to the performers and creatives of a show and to ask questions in a supported environment. Due to the lockdown, only 2 plays had their scheduled Q&A session, ably hosted by our Artistic Associate Tom Wright.

Belvoir also produces behind the scenes videos and cast Instagram takeovers to help reduce barriers and connect with our audience outside the theatre.

## TOURING

In 2021 we continued to extend Belvoir's footprint beyond Surry Hills with a hugely successful **national tour of FANGIRLS** presented at the Seymour Centre, Arts Centre Melbourne, Canberra Theatre Centre, Merrigong Theatre, Wollongong, and Adelaide Festival.

*FANGIRLS* represented our fourth recent invitation to present Belvoir work at the Adelaide Festival following *Thyestes* (2018), *Counting and Cracking* (2019), and *Dance Nation* (2020)

Invitations to present our work at major festivals and arts centres around the country demonstrate the impact of our work beyond the initial season at Belvoir. Whether a particular show may be able to tour is something that is frequently discussed in our programming decisions. For a company the size of Belvoir it makes both artistic and business sense to prolong the life of a production – either through touring or a return season – to which we have invested so much work and resources.

Through the *FANGIRLS* return and subsequent national tour, an additional 31,731 people saw a Belvoir work in 2021.

## INCREASING OUR AUDIENCES

In 2021 we trialled the launch of our season in 2 parts to give our audiences more security, given the frequent COVID-related cancellations the previous year. Announced on 11 November 2020, Part 1 of the season had a strong response initially with 4,100 subscriptions within the first 2 months. However this response was quick to lose momentum with only an additional 800 subscribers in the months following, coinciding with the growing concern about the Delta strain. Part 2 saw an uptake of 439 subscriptions, with more people choosing to book individual plays from the shorter season. Having 2 launches within a 6-month period was a challenge across all our departments, exacerbated by the launch of the 2022 Season in October. Unfortunately, due to the lockdown from late June, we were only able to present *The Boomkak Panto* from the Part 2 Season. Many audience development strategies including the planned community engagement and multiple-language campaign around *Miss Peony* were once again put on hold.

Belvoir's communications became very streamlined in 2021, partly due to COVID and the frequent change of Public Health Orders. Pre-show emails were sent to ticket buyers advising what to expect upon arrival, COVID safety procedures and how to enhance their theatre experience with pre-show dining at Belvoir's partner establishments. Post-show surveys were distributed to track audience sentiment on the show and to inform ticket buyers of the next Belvoir show. Individual feedback was responded to as appropriate.

Our reach across **social media** grew at 5% across the year. All engagement was tracked, direct messages actioned and public conversations monitored by our marketing and customer service teams.

Email communication was segmented with tailored messaging and careful scheduling, and email engagement rates recorded and reported. Exclusive discounts and special offers included with subscriber-only emails increase engagement rates, provide

a subscriber benefit and share exposure with colleague organisations.

One of the NSW government's responses to the COVID fallout was the introduction of **Dine & Discover vouchers** for all residents over 18 years. Audiences were quick to redeem them when first offered but unfortunately our database provider, Tessitura, was unable to provide an online solution for redeeming the Discover vouchers for ticket sales. This caused considerable congestion on our phone lines, frustrating many patrons, and was further complicated by expiring voucher codes. In particular *Stop Girl* attracted many vouchers which also helped to spread the word about the show. In total, \$68,374 of Discover vouchers were redeemed from 1865 orders from the launch of the voucher program in March. The Dine vouchers used at the bar were a simpler transaction, with \$2916 redeemed on food sales.

## ADVOCACY

Belvoir's Executive Director Sue Donnelly continued to work with theatre colleagues around the country as well as the CEOs of Sydney-based performing arts companies to advocate for government support during lockdown and coordinate **COVID-safe practices** throughout the performing arts sector. The NSW government was extremely supportive in assisting companies with a lost ticket income subsidy through their COVID Support and Relaunch program.

Towards the end of the year when the government announced the lifting of COVID restrictions, 12 Sydney-based theatre companies including Belvoir issued a joint statement about the impact of the pandemic on the performing arts industry, the ongoing risk presented by COVID and a joint decision to maintain COVID-safe policies that meet or exceed the conditions set out in Public Health Orders. This included extending QR codes, vaccination certificate checks and mask wearing in the theatres. Despite some resistance from a few patrons these additional safety precautions proved prescient when the Omicron





Amber McMahon and Sheridan Harbridge, *Stop Girl*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

variant started to spread throughout the community. Our returning patrons and artists felt reassured by the continued precautions and consistency across theatre venues.

As a member of CAST (Confederation of State Theatres), Belvoir worked on a renegotiation of the Theatre Industry Agreement with the Australian Writers Guild, as well as an MOU with the tertiary education sector which provides actor training. Both projects continue into 2022.

Belvoir continued to engage with various industry research projects throughout 2021 including the Live Performance Australia 2020 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Report, Creative Partnerships Art Support Research and the Audience Outlook Monitor Survey conducted by Patternmakers on behalf of the Australia Council and 6 state government arts departments. These reports provide invaluable data for industry and government alike, as well as being advocacy tools in the COVID recovery phase.

Sue Donnelly was re-elected onto the executive council of the industry body Live Performance Australia which has advocated on behalf of the sector during the pandemic.

## IMPROVING OUR BRAND RECOGNITION

Alongside the 2022 season launch last October, Belvoir launched **a new website**.

The previous website was over 10 years old and no longer suitable for a constantly evolving digital landscape. The new site is focused on easier wayfinding for ticket sales, donations, and telling the Belvoir story. It is responsive and image-led thus elevating the user experience and Belvoir brand. The website handled the surge of season launch traffic without concern and continues to be refined while in use. There was a 31% increase in the number of users, compared to 2020, and a 48% increase in page views. As the most important tool in Belvoir's audience-facing communications strategy, we will continue to update and improve the website in line with the shifting digital landscape.

Once again, **our partners stood by us** even when closed doors meant we couldn't deliver all the usual benefits of a Belvoir partnership. Fittingly, we welcomed new Health and Hygiene Partners, Leif (whose fragrant hand washes, lotions and sanitisers are enjoyed by our audiences and staff daily) and Sydney Physio Solutions, who are invaluable in supporting our artists, staff and patrons with massages and physiotherapy.

We crossed our fingers and hoped our local restaurant partners would survive another lockdown along with us. We were happy to see them pull through including our newest event partner, Don Giovanni Pizza Bar, which opened its doors a mere 2 months before lockdown.

The COVID pause gave us the **opportunity to review partnerships** that were no longer aligned with the Belvoir brand and strengthen or develop partnerships that were. We welcomed our new principal partner Ord Minnett and gin partner Poor Toms. In a year of uncertainty and with our doors closed for long periods, our sincere thanks to major partners such as EY, Baker McKenzie and Houston Group who provided continued support as we navigated the complexity of such a fractured year.

As always, we are most grateful to our professional partners (some of whom have been with Belvoir longer than most staff), whose generous in-kind support allows us to invest in our creative work for the enjoyment of all.

## ENRICHING THE AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Print-at-home tickets were implemented as part of our 2021 subscriptions, with incremental success over the year as the Belvoir audience adjusted to a new paperless system. The launch of this new software not only allows our audience to present **paperless tickets** but also provides Belvoir with insights into theatre attendance. Learning from audience feedback, the ticketing department adapted and implemented strategies to streamline the transition.

Working with our web developer DEVQUOLL we redesigned the 'select your own seat' map display on our website to better represent Belvoir's particular corner stage, as well as allowing for other seating configurations in the future. The more accurate display of the Upstairs Theatre's layout makes the user's online purchase pathway much easier.

We had 21 people volunteer throughout the year to support our front of house team. Our friendly **Belvoir volunteers** were an integral part of the logistics of managing the various COVID restrictions imposed throughout the year, helping to keep audiences safe and generally being a welcoming presence as patrons arrived.

To ensure accessibility for all communities, Belvoir offered discounted tickets to the African-Australian youth community, arts industry workers, students, artists, and Indigenous communities.

Belvoir's **Artist Ticket Program** has continued to grow since its inception in 2018. A total of 538 discounted tickets were purchased in 2021, of which 41% were for *FANGIRLS*. *FANGIRLS* was also the favourite production for our reduced-price 30 Down tickets: of the 2387 tickets purchased across both subscriptions and single tickets, 42% of those were for *FANGIRLS*, generating just under \$64,000 of the production's total income.

Our tiered ticketing structure also offered reduced price tickets to seniors, with 8792 tickets purchased across the 5 performances. Some 36% of these were for *Stop Girl* making up \$257,500 of the income.

Despite COVID cancellations 2 dedicated Unwaged performances were held in 2021 – *Stop Girl* and *The Cherry Orchard* – with 363 tickets provided across the 2 performances. Tickets were provided free of charge to eligible patrons, as well as members of community groups and networks including Wayside Chapel Bondi Beach, Harry Jensen Community Centre Millers Point, Cana Communities, Stride Mental Health Services, Surry Hills Community Connect and Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre. The Unwaged Program has been operating since 1984 and remains a key strategy in ensuring that all people, regardless of their personal circumstances, have access to quality live theatre.

Belvoir is a big supporter of the Actors' Benevolent Fund both through donations made by subscribers when they purchase tickets and the annual October fundraiser. Overall Belvoir raised around \$4000 for the fund in 2021.

We also provided free tickets worth over \$2000, hospitality and promotional support to a wide range of community organisations.

## WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

*I've never seen a play or performance in person especially one with lots of singing, loud music and dancing ... [it] was one of the best experiences of my life.*

**STUDENT, Canley Vale High School, after attending FANGIRLS**

*One student told me (the next day) she cried when she got home she was so happy.*

**TEACHER, Maitland High School, after attending FANGIRLS**

*Words couldn't describe how amazing this play was. I was either laughing, smiling or had a shocked face. This couldn't have been better.*

**STUDENT, after attending FANGIRLS**

2021 began with an extraordinary 2151 high school students and their teachers attending FANGIRLS across its season at the Seymour Centre. Over 500 young people attended each of 3 dedicated schools performances – they were truly like rock concerts. Many schools had brought their students to the show in 2019, and students came prepared with their own fan signs. There was so much joy in the houses and much elation from teachers at being able to take students on excursions again. Writer Yve Blake continued to inspire students with the story of creating FANGIRLS told at each post-show Q&A session and school groups brought extra energy to general public evening performances.

Schools also attended performances of *Stop Girl*, *A Room of One's Own* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Overall, **3156** students

and teachers attended a Belvoir production in 2021 as part of a schools booking.

Another 1000-plus students and their teachers were booked to see *Miss Peony* and *The Cherry Orchard* but unfortunately missed out due to cancelled performances arising from the COVID lockdown.

Students attending Belvoir productions in 2021 came from the full range of high schools – government and non-government, city and regional, from all parts of the state – Nyngan, Nowra, Armidale, Maitland, Port Macquarie, Evans Head, Scone, Tahmoor, Bowral, Gosford, Mittagong and Newcastle.

Belvoir continued to schedule dedicated schools performances of Belvoir productions, providing schools with the price point (\$24) and timeslot to allow greater access to our work. Programming 11:30am schools performances ensures schools who are unable to run evening excursions (due to distance from Surry Hills, or the socio-economic status or other aspect of their school community) have an option to attend during the school day.

The schools price was also made available for all 12 of our 1pm public matinee performances, giving schools another affordable option.

### FANGIRLS

- 2151 school students and teachers attended FANGIRLS across both evening and schools performances
- 170 students from the following high schools attended our schools performances free of charge through our No Barriers ticket access program: Chifley College Bidwill Campus, Plumpton, Holroyd, Thomas Reddall, Canley Vale, Maitland and West Wallsend.

### STOP GIRL

- 192 school students and teachers attended *Stop Girl* across both evening and schools performances. We had one dedicated 11:30am schools performance with 164 students and their teachers
- 67 students from Condell Park High and Leumeah High attended our schools performance free of charge through our No Barriers ticket access program.

### A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

- 408 school students and teachers attended *A Room of One's Own* across both evening and schools performances.
- One dedicated schools performance was watched by 311 students and their teachers, including 200 young women and gender-diverse students from 3 all-girls high schools comprising 64% of the audience.
- 32 students attended our schools performance free of charge through the No Barriers ticket access program.

*The production was wonderful – actors, production values, everything. The program is extremely valuable to our students because it provides opportunities that are out of reach for many of them. Its value to them is that it broadens their ideas, experiences and helps them feel valued and validated as intelligent capable young people.*

**TEACHER, Chifley College Senior Campus, after attending A Room of One's Own**

*I've never seen a play before this ... so having this as my first play is one I'll remember.*

**STUDENT, Chifley College Senior Campus, after attending A Room of One's Own**

### NO BARRIERS TICKET ACCESS

For those students unable to afford the \$24 ticket price, Belvoir's ticket access program – No Barriers – provides free tickets to schools performances. NSW public schools with a score of 125 or more on the Family, Occupation and Education Index for NSW public schools are invited to apply for tickets. Seventeen schools applied for this program in 2021.

Some key results:

- 342 students and teachers received a ticket to attend a Belvoir production free of charge
- Productions attended: FANGIRLS, *Stop Girl*, *A Room of One's Own* and *The Cherry Orchard*.

Participating high schools included Canley Vale, Chifley College Bidwill Campus, Chifley College Senior Campus, Condell Park, Evans, Holroyd, Leumeah, Liverpool Boys, Maitland, Plumpton, Shoalhaven, Thomas Reddall and West Wallsend.

*This program really helps to 'even the playing field'. Belvoir has provided experiences that my students learn so much from and will hold for the rest of their lives. You have inspired and motivated my students in the power of the arts. Thank you.*

**TEACHER, Canley Vale High School, after attending FANGIRLS**

### LIVE RECORDED PERFORMANCES

This year we introduced 2 recorded live performances into our suite of educational resources. Schools throughout Australia can now access recorded performances of *My Brilliant Career* and *A Room of One's Own*. Eighty students and 5 teachers viewed a recorded live performance in 2021. Schools pay to access the performances with priority schools receiving heavily subsidised access. Belvoir is now a content provider on DART Learning, an initiative



of the NSW Department of Education providing and coordinating virtual excursions.

Schools still continued to view archival recordings of a Belvoir production in person at Belvoir, with 45 students attending in 2021.

### BELVOIR'S WORKSHOP PROGRAM

In 2021 Belvoir once again offered an extensive workshop program for young people aged 10–18 years, run at Belvoir, in schools and online via Zoom. All workshops were delivered by industry professionals, and led participants in practical explorations of theatre making, performance techniques, design, writing and adapting scripts.

**In 2021, we delivered 139 workshops and forums for young people, both face-to-face in classrooms and at Belvoir, as well as via Zoom, with 1997 students and their teachers participating.**

Despite fewer workshops taking place in person at Belvoir in 2021, digital adaptation and the introduction of online forums and new workshop topics resulted in the delivery of more workshops in 2021 than in 2020. In 2021 we created 5 new workshops: *Finding Your Voice*, *Creating Comedy*, *The Mindful Performer*, *Drawing Costumes and Set Making* (for a younger audience).

### WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOOLS

Five workshops for schools were held in person at Belvoir before the lockdown, reaching 71 students and 4 teachers. Twelve workshops were held in person at schools, reaching 154 students and 12 teachers. From July–December 2021, all workshops were delivered digitally, with a further 343 students and 25 teachers participating in one of 32 workshops.

We offered digital forums for the first time, allowing students and teachers to learn from industry professionals in a short-format talk and Q&A session online.

Our HSC workshops remained popular in 2021, with our set design and model making workshop taking place in-person

at Belvoir in March. Digital delivery of our HSC costume design, performing monologues and playwriting workshops not only allowed them to continue in 2021, but provided greater access for regional students. HSC students participated from Candelo, Evans Head, Byron Bay, Bangor, Temora, Port Macquarie, Ewingsdale and Burraneer Bay, as well as the Blue Mountains.

In addition, Belvoir supported over 50 individual HSC students with requests for resources, including interviews and logos, for their individual projects.

### Western Sydney Workshops and Regional Workshops

Belvoir's commitment to access for all students, regardless of social advantage or geographical location, continued in 2021 through our No Barrier Workshops Access program, thanks to donor support. The program comprises our **Western Sydney Workshops** and our **Regional Workshops**.

We delivered 31 workshops (29 in person and 2 digital), reaching 476 students and 31 teachers at 17 different Western Sydney high schools in Bankstown, Bidwill, Blacktown, Bossley Park, Camden, Canley Vale, Emu Plains, Greystanes, Horningsea Park, Liverpool, Plumpton, Quakers Hill, Raby, St Clair and Wiley Park.

Workshops are free to qualifying government schools in Western Sydney.

*Bidwill is a low socio-economic area; when students have to pay for excursions they don't often run; if these free workshops weren't run maybe only one or two students would do a workshop at Belvoir in the city, instead of the 17 today.*

**TEACHER, Chifley College, Bidwill Campus**

*I learnt to leave my comfort zone.*

**STUDENT, Bankstown Girls High School**



Ella Prince, *A Room of One's Own*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

Regional schools received access to our workshops at a subsidised rate. In 2021 we delivered 24 workshops (13 digital and 11 in-person workshops), reaching 388 students and 26 teachers at schools in regional NSW from Albury, Armidale, the Central Coast, Grafton and Mudgee to Newcastle, Nowra, Oberon and Port Macquarie.

*This workshop was what I expected in the best way. It covered a lot of things I felt were important and that I could apply to my performance.*

**STUDENT, Armidale**

### Professional learning for teachers

A series of 4 professional learning seminars for teachers were held via Zoom in November and December 2021, providing teachers with access to industry professionals. Teachers could book one, or more, in the series. The digital platform allowed teachers in regional NSW to participate more easily. **Thirty-eight** teachers from 26 different high schools located throughout Sydney and NSW (including Cooma, Maitland, Macintyre, Orange, the Blue Mountains and Nowra) participated in seminars in Adapting and Directing, Promotional Design, Costume and Lighting Design.

*Thank you so much for delivering this exceptional Professional Development*

**TEACHER, Windsor High School**

### School holiday workshops

Our school holiday workshop program connects young people to Belvoir independently from their school, and in turn connects Belvoir to a new audience. In 2021, 269 young people aged 10–18 participated in one of 21 digital workshops over the school-holiday programs. Due in part to COVID lockdowns being in place over 2 school holiday periods, participants included young people from throughout regional NSW, interstate (Victoria, ACT and South Australia) and overseas (Papua New Guinea).

*My daughter loved every part of the workshop and I learnt how to really portray a character differently after asking questions about them and diving deeper into who the character actually is.*

**PARENT, after their daughter participated in a school holiday workshop**

### WORK EXPERIENCE AND YOUNG BELVOIR THEATRE CLUB

Our Work Experience Program and Young Belvoir Theatre Club were put on hold in 2021, returning in 2022.

# INVESTING IN TALENT AND PEOPLE

## PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDEPENDENT COMPANIES AND ARTISTS

The 25A Program was launched at the beginning of the year with shows cancelled due to the 2020 COVID lockdown. However, due to restrictions on theatre capacity in the first half of the year and the subsequent lockdown from 26 June, we were unable to present any of these shows. Some productions have been rescheduled in 2022 and some 25A shows that could not be programmed have gone on to a different life at other theatres.

To present a greater diversity of work and support individual artists and companies Belvoir programmed the *Festival of Everything* in 2021. The festival included 30 local and interstate artists or companies performing in a variety of theatre, cabaret, dance and comedy. Regrettably the festival was cancelled due to the lockdown but we hope to program such acts in different formats in the future.

Despite the challenges of COVID and the 5-month lockdown, Belvoir continued throughout the year providing COVID-safe workshop and development space to 12 independent companies for free or at reduced rates. Without such support these companies could not develop their work, some of which went on to appear at the Sydney Festival and other venues.

## DEVELOPING PATHWAYS FOR ARTISTS

One of the effects of the Omicron surge was the need to minimise the number of artists in the rehearsal room, resulting in some scaling back of both **assistant directorships** and 'observerships'. In 2022 we hope to return to providing more opportunities for emerging directors through our associates program.

In 2021 we had assistant directors in the rehearsals for *The Cherry Orchard* (Claudia Osborne) and *Miss Peony* (Nicole Pingon) and an associate director (choreography) in *The Cherry Orchard* (Elle Evangelista). The *At What Cost?* playwright, Nathan Maynard, was an associate director, partly in his community-representation role and partly as the (delayed) 2020 Balnaves Fellow. Our 2021 Andrew Cameron Fellow, Hannah Goodwin, was assistant director on *Stop Girl*. Outgoing 2020 Andrew Cameron Fellow, now Belvoir resident director, Carissa Licciardello, was assistant director on *FANGIRLS*.

Across the 5 shows presented and 4 shows rehearsed and postponed in 2021 we employed 18 directors and writers, 4 of whom made their mainstage or Belvoir debut: directors Courtney Stewart (*Miss Peony*) and Hannah Goodwin (*Wayside Bride*), and writers Sally Sara (*Stop Girl*) and Nathan Maynard (*At What Cost?*).

Sally Sara commented: *Belvoir gave the play a chance, after 8 other theatre companies turned it down. They treated my story with respect, but also the dramaturgical rigour required to bring it to the stage. Stop Girl went on to become one of Belvoir's bestselling productions and received 4 nominations in the Sydney Theatre Awards. The play also won the \$100,000 Blake Beckett Trust Award, which provided additional funding to the company.*

We employed 66 performers (57% female, 35% male and 8% other); 40% identified as White, 12% as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, 36% as People of Colour and 12% as First Nations. We employed 86 creatives (57% female and 43% male); 23% identified as People of Colour, 6% as First Nations and 71% as other.

An Equity and Justice Working Group comprising Board members, staff and



Nadie Kammallaweera and Kirsty Marillier, *The Cherry Orchard*. Photo by Brett Boardman.

associates was established to work on new processes from artistic conception to audience engagement and marketing, which better reflect our diverse society.

The 2021 **Balnaves Fellow**, Jorjia Gillis worked one day a week with the company, moving to 2 days in the second half to ensure delivery of her draft play. And the 2022 Balnaves Fellow, Thomas Weatherall, was announced in December.

Intern opportunities were provided to 2 university students undertaking theatre studies. There were also 4 stage management students and a technical

student on work experience from NIDA. We also ran an event to discuss industry pathways and developing artist programs, coinciding with a preview of *The Cherry Orchard*, for 40 recent graduates from NIDA and the Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts, who had missed out on their end-of-year final Showcases due to COVID.

## BELVOIR STAFF

2021 saw the refinement of our internal producing model with seasonal and individualised production timelines



for every production in our mainstage season. This has allowed us to streamline and improve departmental interactions resulting in enhanced company-wide engagement with the work across the company. Importantly each Belvoir department is now able to understand not only their own, but also their colleagues' contribution, to Belvoir's artistic work. In the creation of new productions many people forget how integral to the success of each show are our marketing, development and customer service staff as well as artistic and production staff.

Belvoir's staffing structure is lean for its output and we had significant turnover during 2021 partly due to COVID and a reassessment of each person's priorities, and partly due to better paid jobs in the sector. A benchmarking salary study during the year revealed Belvoir's salaries to be lower than industry standard in Sydney. The board has resolved to address this over time.

In acknowledgement of the increased amount of work required to run a theatre company we introduced 4 new roles – producer, human resources manager (part-time), payroll officer (part-time) and technical coordinator. A review of existing roles resulted in:

- the CRM and Insights Manager being assigned to the Customer Service and Ticketing department
- an upgrade of the Box Office Coordinator position to Manager level, and
- the creation of a second Development Co-ordinator position which was filled internally.

There was also a review of production hours and a pilot program introduced to decrease production staff burnout. This will be ongoing in 2022.

The Artistic & Programming department was restructured with the introduction of a new producer position and 2 part-time resident directors being appointed from the beginning of 2022, both of whom are ex-Andrew Cameron Fellows.

More support and enhanced applicant

assessment was implemented in recruitment of staff, and our workers compensation processes were improved to provide more support in the rehabilitation of injured workers, prevention of injuries and to reduce insurance liability costs. Due to staff resignations the WHS Committee was reconstituted with some new members from across the company and the appointment of the Head of Finance and Operations as the new chair.

With the state government insurer icare, Belvoir continued a project to improve work, health and safety culture including:

- updating of risk management matrix, safe-work method statements, risk assessment documents and policies
- developing a WHS induction presentation and quiz for all new staff
- training of 7 staff as mental health first-aiders as part of this project.

These initiatives have had a positive impact on workplace culture and will continue in 2022.

The impact of COVID was minimised with:

- a vaccination policy (for which all staff were consulted before finalisation)
- COVID-safe processes and
- rapid antigen testing.

The majority of staff, except for those in production, worked from home during the lockdown. Our annual flu vaccination program also continued.

With productions disrupted this year staff took the opportunity to undertake training opportunities in cybersecurity, cross-cultural awareness, the Tessitura customer relationship management software, web development and programming, social media, and TAFE management training in mentoring, coaching and business skills.

Staff also upgraded their skills and renewed qualifications in rigging, dogging, operating a forklift and CPR.

## BECOMING STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE

Surprisingly Belvoir generated a significant surplus of \$1,277,981 in 2021, despite operating in a COVID environment. The surplus can be attributed to very strong box office results in the first 6 months, and because all productions with a planned deficit were programmed during the second half of the year when the lockdown occurred. In any given year Belvoir will program shows that will return a healthy surplus and others that are important to present but will not return strong revenue. Thus across the year some shows subsidise others. The combination of not staging the 'deficit' shows, NSW government support for loss of ticket income, and strong cost controls, augmented our end of year result.

The surplus will be allocated to company reserves to support Belvoir as we recover from audience declines and face an uncertain economic environment. It will provide us with security to continue programming exceptional theatre in 2022 and beyond, as well as support our planned capital redevelopment program.

The 2021 net result is a 54% increase above 2020 due to government funding by Create NSW, Job Keeper, Job Saver, support from fundraising and donations (Artists at Work Act 2, Education program appeal), and continued robust cost mitigation. In addition Belvoir was able to present 5 works (as well as a national tour and the extension of 2020's *My Brilliant Career* in January) before the lockdown in late June, and one work with reduced capacity when the restrictions eased in November.

Government grants are an important source of our income with core activities from government base funding amounting to 20% of revenue in 2021. Other government grant initiatives accounted for 23% of income and represent funding from Create NSW to subsidise lost tickets sales and the

Job Saver and Job Keeper grant initiatives to subsidise and retain staff. These are COVID related grants and will not continue. Although donations and sponsorships are historically a strong source of Belvoir income this fell by 34% in 2021 compared to 2020, but still contributed to 20% of the revenue.

Expenditure for 2021 was \$9,152,322 – 49% of this primarily for the administration of operations and 43% for production costs. This unusual outcome is the result of being closed for 5 months of the year when all staff positions were maintained but we were not spending on presenting productions.

Heading into 2022, Belvoir will continue to actively mitigate financial risk through robust management of financial operations by continually monitoring costs and seeking new ways to increase revenue streams.

Belvoir's main source of commercial income apart from box office and touring is through fees and venue hire. Box office and bar income were both down in 2021 compared to normal operating levels experienced in 2019, but increased by 73% in comparison to 2020 when we were closed for 6 months and on reduced capacity for 3 months. This increase in bar and box office income reflects the reopening of the theatre for longer periods with fewer COVID capacity restrictions and improved staffing efficiencies. Venue hire was also quite low in activity in 2021; this trend is expected to continue in 2022.

### FUNDRAISING

Philanthropic funding to Belvoir from individuals, trusts and foundations contributed just under \$2,170,000 in 2021 which was ahead of our significantly reduced forecast budget but not at a level we would anticipate in a 'normal' year.



Belvoir's 2021 Christmas party at Marrickville Bowling Club.

Given the continuing uncertainty for the performing arts, Belvoir's end of financial year appeal centred on the progression of our Artists at Work commitment which we started in 2020 to provide paid work for artists when theatres were closed. It was heartening to see the response from our supporters, with the appeal exceeding its target by 15% and the funds raised going to support a range of creative developments and performance opportunities in 2021 (including our special guest 'auditionees' who appeared in *The Boomkak Panto*).

Our Board observer, Mandy Yan, assisted by the video team at Houston Group, championed Belvoir's No Barriers Education Program during the Macquarie Foundation Week, and raised \$117,000 which was matched by Macquarie Group Foundation.

As we were refurbishing the theatre, we took the opportunity to upgrade our seats and offer supporters the opportunity to renew their plaques dating back to our last renovation in 2006. We also offered other patrons the opportunity to express their love of theatre with a new seat dedication. The response was extremely generous and the names of nearly 300 much-loved

people, plays and performers are now part of the fabric of our iconic Upstairs Theatre. This initiative raised just under \$500,000 to help maintain our historic venue and go towards our capital campaign.

Belvoir is very reliant on philanthropic support to realise our ambitions. We are grateful to every supporter who contributed what they could, from topping up their ticket purchase to donating their subscription, to investing in our programs.

### IMPROVING COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS

Our casual box office and front of house staff are on the frontline in delivering our commercial operations. We cross-trained the casuals in both front of house and box office duties promoting the idea of 'one team' and enhancing their skill sets. This assisted the team's understanding of end-to-end audience communication and experience, and improved efficiencies when managing the many cancellations, the extended lock down period and staff illness.

With our new gin partner Poor Toms and our existing wine partner Handpicked Wines we held a training day to upskill

our Front of House team on the range of beverages available as well as designing specific cocktails for individual productions. The theatre has also benefited from our new partnership with Leif, who provide the hand cream and soap now used in all our bathrooms.

### UPGRADING OUR FACILITIES

With our increasingly dilapidated buildings showing wear and tear, the 2021 lockdown proved a good time to significantly upgrade the facilities in the warehouse and theatre. In the Upstairs Theatre, before *Stop Girl* opened in March, all the seats (which were more than 15 years old and quite worn) were removed, reupholstered and reinstalled, resulting in an appreciably more comfortable theatre experience. Carpet was replaced throughout the theatre and the bannisters removed and powder coated. The front façade of the theatre was painted, as well as all internal public-facing and back-of-house walls. A noise cancelling structure was installed around the air-conditioning cooling tower to prevent noise complaints from our neighbours. The theatre's gutters were resealed and a trough installed inside to catch any errant leaks. Foyer and

greenroom lights have also been replaced with more environmentally friendly LEDs.

At the warehouse, the goods lift was repainted, as was the exterior red wall outside the main entrance, and the walls and doors of the storage area on the ground floor. The accessible-access chairlift has been repaired, once again.

These upgrades assist in maintaining our buildings but in the long term we need to do major renovations. A joint working group of board members of both our boards - Company B Ltd and Belvoir St Theatre Ltd - worked with TDK architects to develop plans for both Belvoir's buildings. Discussions were held with the NSW government, and an expression of interest for funding was submitted which has now proceeded to the preparation of a business case to support the capital redevelopment. If successful the redevelopment would most likely occur in 2024.



# CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021

## INTRODUCTION

This Corporate Governance Statement outlines Belvoir's governance practices against the Essential Governance Practice Principles monitored by the Australia Council for the Arts.

The Belvoir Board is committed to the principle that excellence in corporate governance is essential for the long-term performance and sustainability of Belvoir. Sustainability includes assessing the impact on a broad set of stakeholders including our artists, the sector more broadly, our staff, our partners and of course our audiences

## VISION AND MISSION

At the heart of Belvoir is our artistic work and our belief that high quality theatre should be available to all people regardless of their economic or social circumstances. The Board reviews its Vision, Mission and Goals (see page 33) each year at the Company's annual Strategic Planning day to ensure the Board's decision-making aligns with Belvoir's values.

## DELIVERING PERFORMANCE

The Company's governance framework is designed to provide the right structure and review processes to deliver our long-term strategy, and ensure systems are in place to review strategy, progress against key milestones and key performance indicators at Board meetings. The robustness of this framework assisted us in managing the challenges of COVID-19, during which time the Company's operations and revenues were impacted.

Roles and responsibilities between the board and management are clearly articulated through mechanisms like Board and Committee Charters as well as Executive role descriptions.

## The Board:

The Board operates under a **Board Charter**, which sets out the duties and responsibilities of the Board relating to strategy development, operations oversight, and risk and compliance monitoring. The Executive Director reports against the Company's Strategic Priorities at each Board meeting.

The Board's **sub-committees** – Finance, Audit & Risk, and Nominations & Governance – assist the Board in the execution of its responsibilities. Each committee has its own chair, charter and annual program, and usually meets a minimum of 4 times a year.

During each year, in the normal course the Board meets 6 times, with subcommittee meetings held in addition to this, and receives reports and presentations from all departments as well as the co-CEOs.

Directors hold an in camera session at each board meeting, without senior management present. In all other respects, senior executives are invited, where considered appropriate, to participate in Board meetings. They are also available to be contacted by directors between meetings.

The co-CEOs are members of the Board but do not attend the in camera session at the end of each Board meeting.

The Board is committed to an inclusive **board recruitment process**. In 2021, women held 54% of Belvoir's board positions (including Chair and Deputy Chair). Board members also reflect the Company's commitment to age, disability, cultural, marital, religious or cultural background and sexual orientation, with 15% of board members identifying as First Nations or culturally and linguistically diverse.

Board members are appointed for fixed **terms**, initially for 3 years with ability for

an extension of a further 3 years. All Board appointments are staggered to ensure there is continuity. All new directors are supported by a Board Induction Program, which includes provision of all key Company documents and an introduction program to key staff.

To ensure the optimum mix of directors, the Board, through the Nominations & Governance Committee, uses a **Skills Matrix** to identify the skills and experience needed. The Skills Matrix is annually reviewed to ensure that the Board has the appropriate mix of skills, gender, experience and knowledge to deliver on its Strategic Plan and to support the executive team. It is one of several important tools used when considering potential director candidates. All key areas in the Skills Matrix are well represented on the board.

The range of our directors' capabilities and experiences include theatre administration, performance, finance and accounting, business, human resources, entrepreneurship, strategy, brand identity and marketing and legal. Their skills and expertise are outlined in their biographies, published in the Annual Financial Report and on our website. We ensure we have 2 arts practitioners on the Board at all times.

The Board also regularly reviews the membership of its committees to ensure they continue to have a mix of skills and experience to support the Board and the company's strategy.

Non-executive directors are volunteers and receive no compensation for their work. Artists on the Board may receive payment from the Company for creative work (e.g. performing in a production).

The Chair sets the tone for all Board members, demonstrating effective leadership, modelling good board member practice and encouraging and developing a positive culture. Board members are encouraged to think independently and to ask questions at Board meetings. The Board also undertakes a regular review of its own performance.

## Management team:

The Executive Director reports to the Board under the Strategic Plan goals and all departmental reports are reviewed against Belvoir's strategic goals. Quarterly management accounts are presented at Board meetings, having first been reviewed at the Finance and Risk Committee. The Board ensures that expenditure aligns with strategic milestones, priorities and objectives. Prior approval of the Board is always secured for any material capital expenditure or significant variation from budgeted or forecast expenditure.

The co-CEOs have clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and report on them, and are assessed against them, annually. In addition, they report against the funding bodies' KPIs. Like all staff, there is an annual performance review of the co-CEOs which is conducted by the Chair and Deputy Chair.

All staff have formal job descriptions which are reviewed annually at their performance appraisals. Their job contracts outline the terms of their appointments, duties, rights and responsibilities and entitlements on termination. Base salary and any increments for all staff are determined by experience, skills, industry comparisons and financial health of the Company, whilst acknowledging that Belvoir is restricted in its ability to pay appropriate industry rates due to limitations on revenue. In 2021, the Board initiated a salary benchmarking study and resolved to increase salaries where possible. There was a reduction in work hours from 40 to 38 hours to reflect industry standards.

The Nominations and Governance Committee, reporting to the Board, approves remuneration arrangements for the Executive Director and the Artistic Director (each co-CEOs).

## SUPPORTING SYSTEMS

Effective **risk management** is fundamental to Belvoir's long-term sustainability and reputation. Our Risk Management

Framework articulates how Belvoir identifies, measures, monitors and optimises operational, artistic, staffing, funding, reputational and financial risks, and the amount and nature of risk we are willing to accept in the pursuit of our strategic and creative objectives. It embeds risk awareness into Belvoir's broader culture and decision making.

The Board ensures that the Company is guided by a robust policy framework, with the Nominations & Governance Committee overseeing the Policy Framework, and insurances being managed through the Audit & Risk Committee. The Risk Management Framework is reviewed regularly at both that committee and by the Board.

The Board has a **Conflict of Interest Policy** and maintains a register of interests. At the beginning of every board meeting, the Chair asks for members to declare any conflicts of interest.

The Company has appropriate **insurances** and reviews these every 3 years. In 2021, a major review of insurances resulted in significant budgetary savings.

Safe work spaces are provided and the **Work Place Health and Safety Committee** regularly inspects work spaces and reports to the Board.

Belvoir's **audit** is carried out by EY and managed by the Finance, Audit and Risk sub-committee of the Board.

## BEING ACCOUNTABLE

### Financial sustainability:

We are committed to the long-term financial sustainability of the company.

The company is compliant with all fiduciary, regulatory and legal obligations including compliance with ACNC governance standards of a charity.

In addition to the day-to-day management provided by the Company's Head of Operations and Finance, the Board's Finance, Audit & Risk Sub-committee meets regularly to:

- review the annual budget and monthly accounts and forecasts
- review all financial reports and statements in the statutory accounts, and recommend actions to the Board
- monitor and review the reliability of financial reporting
- monitor the Company's risk management and investment framework.

We have been committed to building Belvoir's reserves since 2018, and the Company now has over 20% reserves. Our strict controls over financial management gives the Board comfort that the Company has sufficient reserves to maintain solvency and guard against fraud and theft.

The Board has an extensive Delegations Policy which is reviewed regularly by the Nominations and Governance sub-committee.

### Workplace culture:

Belvoir is focused on creating **an ethical and responsible workplace culture** to drive the right behaviour and conduct within an organisation. To keep pace with community expectations, Belvoir is committed to monitoring that culture.

Belvoir is further committed to acting professionally, honestly, lawfully and with integrity so all stakeholders know they can trust us to do the right thing. Belvoir's **Code of Conduct** articulates these values, behaviours and expectations. It is supported by our employee policies and through the leadership of the Executive team. The code is signed by all board members, staff and contractors.

We work to ensure our workplace culture provides an avenue for our people to report suspected unethical, illegal or improper behaviour. Belvoir has an objective, independent and confidential process for reporting and investigating actual, suspected or anticipated improprieties. All disclosures are treated confidentially.

Belvoir is committed to fostering

**an inclusive and diverse workplace**, recognising that diversity covers both the visible and invisible differences that make the Company's employees unique, whether that be gender, age, ethnicity, disability and cultural background. The company's policy framework promotes this culture and we are working on the development of an Equity and Justice Statement.

Belvoir ensures fair and **open recruitment and selection practices** at all levels of the organisation. No form of workplace discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation is tolerated.

Belvoir values different ways of thinking, and everyone is encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences to deliver better business decisions and solutions. An inclusive and diverse workplace delivers better results for our employees, stakeholders, business partners and communities, both on and off the stage.

The Executive Director reports to the Board on all staffing matters. Belvoir has a suite of policies, which are consistent with other major theatre companies, that outline processes for Respectful Workplace, Reporting Unacceptable Behaviour, Grievance Resolution, and Disciplinary Procedures.

In 2021 Belvoir employed a part time Human Resources Manager to assist with the growing HR issues that have arisen over the past years. Prior to this the Executive Director managed all HR issues.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Belvoir recognises and respects the interests of our many stakeholders including donors, government, audiences, schools who participate in our education program, the independent theatre sector and our staff and artists. Whilst Belvoir's board is highly attuned to stakeholder engagement, equally it will not allow stakeholder expectations to affect artistic decision making unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

There are many forums and events throughout the year to engage with

stakeholders including the AGM, donor meetings and events. The Company also provides regular communications through its website and social media channels encouraging feedback from patrons, as well as formal and informal updates to donors and government. Belvoir produces a detailed Annual Report which is distributed to all stakeholders. Periodic updates for any major events are communicated through e-news and direct mail as appropriate.

The Executive Director, in consultation with the Chair, is responsible for communications with the funding agencies and other key income providers about any material changes in the organisation's circumstances. The Company's Development department works primarily with donors, sponsors and subscribers with potential for donations. Both the board and the co-CEOs are responsible for advocacy on behalf of the organisation.

## CONCLUSION

Belvoir takes seriously its responsibilities to all our stakeholders and place great importance on maintaining the highest standards of governance.

This Corporate Governance Statement is current as at publication date and has been approved by the Board.



**Sam Meers AO**  
CHAIR



# BOARD AND STAFF

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patty Akopiantz  
Raji Ambikarajah  
Kate Champion  
Sue Donnelly  
Johanna Featherstone  
Eamon Flack  
Alison Kitchen  
Michael Lynch CBE AO  
Samantha Meers AO  
Jacob Nash  
Stuart O'Brien  
Paul Oppenheim  
Mark Warburton

## EXECUTIVE

### Artistic Director

Eamon Flack

### Executive Director

Sue Donnelly

### Deputy Executive Director

Aaron Beach

**Office Manager/  
EA to Sue Donnelly and  
Eamon Flack**  
Vyvyan Nickels

## ARTISTIC & PROGRAMMING

### Artistic Associates

Dom Mercer  
Tom Wright

### Head of New Work

Louise Gough  
(until 5/2/2021)

### Producer

Zainab Syed  
(from 28/6/2021)

### Associate Artists

Shakthi Shakthidharan  
Kodie Bedford  
Hannah Goodwin (Andrew  
Cameron Fellow)  
Carissa Licciardello  
Jorjia Gillis (Balnaves Fellow  
from 8/2/2021)

### Artistic Manager

Carly Pickard  
(until 15/1/2021)

### Artistic Coordinator

Emily David  
(from 8/2/2021)

## EDUCATION

### Education Manager

Jane May

### Education Coordinator

Stevie Bryant

## FINANCE & OPERATIONS

### Head of Finance and Operations

Penny Scaiff  
(until 3/9/2021)  
Roula Zivlas  
(from 27/8/2021)

### Company Accountant

Susan Maeng

### Finance Administrator

Shyleja Paul

### Human Resources Manager

Jennifer McCleary  
(from 23/3/2021)

### CRM and Insights Manager

Jason Lee

## MARKETING

### Head of Marketing

Aishlinn McCarthy

### Content Coordinator

Jake Severino

### Marketing Administrator

Xu Yang Chua  
(from 8/2/2021)

## DEVELOPMENT

### Head of Development

Sarah Gilchrist  
(until 10/9/2021)  
Daria O'Neill  
(from 27/9/2021)

### Development Coordinator

Claire Lancaster  
(from 11/1/2021 until 6/8/2021)  
Liz Hobart  
(from 16/8/2021)

## PRODUCTION

### Head of Production

Elizabeth Jenkins  
(until 17/12/2021)

### Technical Manager

Richard Whitehouse

### Technical Coordinator

Joel Trotter  
(from 18/10/2021)

### Deputy Production Manager

Jeremy Page  
(from 25/1/2021 until 29/10/2021)

### Senior Venue Technician

Gayda De Mesa

### Resident Stage Manager

Luke McGettigan

### Construction Manager

Darran Whatley

## Costume Coordinator

Judy Tanner  
Lisa Mimmocchi  
(from 3/6/2021)

## Production Administrator

Millie Soul  
(maternity leave from 1/4/2021)  
Lachlan Steel  
(from 29/2/2021 until 29/10/2021)

## Mechanist

Calum Ross

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### Front of House Manager

Georgina Grisold

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Paris Change, Grace Chapple,  
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### Customer Experience and Ticketing Manager

Ollie Lee

### Ticketing Systems Administrator

Tanya Ginori-Cairns

### Customer Service Coordinator

Jacki Mison  
(until 29/11/2021, maternity  
leave from 4/1/2021)  
Emma Medbury

### Box Office Operations Coordinator

Gemma Clinch  
(from 1/2/2021)

### Box Office and Subscriptions Team

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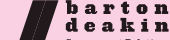
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**We also thank our Life Members, who have made outstanding contributions to Belvoir over more than thirty years. They have changed the course of the company and are now ingrained in its fabric.**

**Neil Armfield AO, Neil Balnaves AO, Andrew Cameron AM, David Gonski AC, Rachel Healy, Louise Herron AM, Sue Hill, Geoffrey Rush AC, Orli Wargon OAM and Chris Westwood.**

**We would also like to acknowledge Len Armfield, Brian Carey, Nick Enright, Ronald Falk, Jann Kohlman, Cajetan Mula and Geoffrey Scharer, who made a dramatic difference by remembering Belvoir in their Wills. We will always remember their generosity.**

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