



**BELVOIR ST  
THEATRE**

# LOOKING FOR ALIBRANDI

1 OCT – 6 NOV

by **Vidya Rajan** based on the  
book by **Melina Marchetta**

Directed by  
**Stephen Nicolazzo**



# LOOKING FOR ALIBRANDI

1 OCT – 6 NOV

## RUNNING TIME

2 hours & 20 minutes (including 20 minute interval)

## CONTENT WARNING

*Looking for Alibrandi* contains coarse language, sexual references, the use of herbal cigarettes, haze and includes reference of suicide and allusion to domestic violence.

## CAST

**John Marc Desengano** as Jacobe Coote

**Ashley Lyons** as Michael

**Chanella Macri** as Josephine Alibrandi (Josie)

**Lucia Mastrantone** as Christina & Sera

**Hannah Monson** as Ivy & John Barton

**Jennifer Vuletic** as Nonna, Sister Bernadette & Margaret Throsby

## CREATIVES

Writer **Vidya Rajan**

Original Author **Melina Marchetta**

Director **Stephen Nicolazzo**

Set & Costume Designer **Kate Davis**

Lighting Designer **Katie Sfetkidis**

Composer & Sound Designer **Daniel Nixon**

Choreographer & Musician **Rosa Voto**

Musician **Renato Vacirca**

Vocal Coach **Matt Furlani**

Dialect Coach **Paulo Bongiovanni**

Cultural & Language Consultant **Lucia Mastrantone**

Stage Manager **Amelia Grindrod**

Assistant Stage Manager **Jessica Law**

*Looking for Alibrandi* is co-produced with **Malthouse Theatre**

Principal Partner **Ord Minnett**

Supported by **Copyright Agency Cultural Fund**

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we share our stories. We also pay our respect to the Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





# AUTHOR'S NOTE

MELINA MARCHETTA

I'm writing this on Wangal land, and I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, and pay my respect to their elders, past and present. It's never lost on me that I live on land owned by a people who have been storytellers for more than 40,000 years. I come from a family of storytellers. Aspects of *Looking for Alibrandi* are snippets of stories told to us on childhood journeys to my grandparents' home in the Burdekin up in North Queensland; or at weekly Sunday lunch with the entire Marchetta family in Sydney's inner-west. Stories of racism and of wartime internment, but most of all, stories of community and belonging, which is very much what *Looking for Alibrandi* is about.

This year marks the thirty-year anniversary of the novel, so I feel a great honour in having it adapted by Vidya Rajan and Stephen Nicolazzo. As a writer, I'm passionate about the longevity of my work and the way it's seen by audiences through time. The vision of other creators,

especially those who have worn the coat of being 'the other' at some time in their life, excites me. I've never wished for the play you'll be watching to be an exact replica of the novel I wrote in my parents' home all those decades ago. I want *Alibrandi* to breed and become its own entity through the talents and passion of other creatives such as Vidya and Stephen.

As a teenager, I felt like I didn't have an identity outside my extended family. It meant I questioned my worth a lot more than someone from the dominant culture who was constantly reassured by positive and warm representations of themselves in the media and in the arts.

So, I feel great joy in the knowledge that young people are sitting in the audience and watching this production, seeing aspects of their lives and culture. And their otherness.

It's a truly beautiful thing.



## WRITER'S NOTE

VIDYA RAJAN

I wasn't in Australia in the 90s, and so missed the huge Alibrandi moment at that time, and actually only read the novel a few years ago, when I chanced upon it at a bookstore. I could not put it down though, and finished it in a night, immediately electrified, and swept away by a real sense of recognition. I guess this isn't surprising—I was a young woman from a migrant background too, a first-generation South Asian Tamil one in my case, who like Josie had also grown up in modest suburbs and chafed against the excesses of culture while dreaming of a grander future.

In adapting the book over the last couple of years, this initial sense of resonance is something I revisited. It felt worthy of investigation, that this novel still felt fresh to someone like me, whose family went through a much later and completely different wave of migration to this country. For many newer settler migrants, Southern European

migrants might seem initially part of the fabric of 'Australia', but this was not always so, and there is much we can gain in finding solidarity and exchange across our stories. In my writing, I drew on echoes of similarity: rhythms of silence and speech, the intergenerational strength of women, feelings of alienation, internalised inferiority regarding the 'Anglo establishment', and the pressures of self-actualising while honouring the sacrifice of those who came before you.

I hope this work lets the audience have a deeply felt experience of this vital moment of migratory history. In turn, it's also a way to connect with and perhaps even to look anew at what, if anything, has changed now, and which stories get to be considered classic parts of this country's trajectory.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

STEPHEN NICOLAZZO

I walked up to Rita, a local Coburg nonna, as she was boiling tomatoes in her custom-made gallon drum and asked, whereabouts in Italy are you from? She responded with 'The part you no like'. I said, 'Are you Calabrese?' and she laughed hysterically. 'YES!' We shared this heritage, both our fathers' sides came from the same part of Italy. As she continued to stir and show an entire community group over the course of six hours what her passata day looked like, I kept chatting to her, wanting to know more. We learned that we were both half-Calabrese and half-Neapolitan, and that we both liked bossing people around. She called me the 'Napolitano' and I, like so many of the other participants, took heed to her hilarious demands and helped her make the passata.

The ritual of passata making was not a tradition in my family, but experiencing it as an adult brought tears to my eyes. I thought about my family history, how much I love the way Italians labour over food and speak with abandon. How they are always on the precipice of laughter or tears. It conjured memories of the women in my family, my Nonna Lina, Nonna Clara, Great Nonna Rosa, and mia Madre, Angelina. Strong, loving, defiant, and difficult humans who had influenced me with stories and idiosyncratic gestures and vocal ticks, who made me the passionate dramatic creature I am today. I thought of my father, playing Italian standards on his guitar and singing in a wedding band at Italian reception centres every weekend. Of listening to his band rehearse woggy classics and pop songs, not understanding the lyrics but always wanting to dance.

The act of observing another family's tradition of passata making somehow brought me emotionally closer to my own. This event, organised by a local community centre in Coburg distilled so much of what I wanted to bring to *Looking for Alibrandi* on stage—an emotional representation of family rituals, history, music, and storytelling. To share. It opened my heart up in a way I hadn't let myself do for a very long time, and that felt, as Josie so often says, 'emancipating'.

*Looking for Alibrandi* had always compelled me because it spoke so directly to the joy I experienced as a young kid growing up in the north-western suburbs of Thomastown, Lalor, and Reservoir, sitting in my Nonni's second kitchen in the garage eating pasta and having my first sip of wine. It also spoke to the conflict

that occurred as I grew older. I was scared to embrace my identity for fear of not being able to access an Anglo-centric world, I was embarrassed by custom, by smelling of salami or garlic, and growing hair on my chest just that little bit earlier than others. I was afraid to be a wog. Just like Josie. Always trying to assimilate to a culture other than my own. I would try out a British accent, strive for excellence in my studies to escape being a concreter, and shut out the traditions that had brought me such love as a young person. I wanted to escape the curse of being a wog. Josie was the first character I had ever read or seen on screen that understood what it was like. Her story made me proud to be a wog and I will thank Melina Marchetta for creating her every single day.



John Marc Desengano  
and Chanella Macri

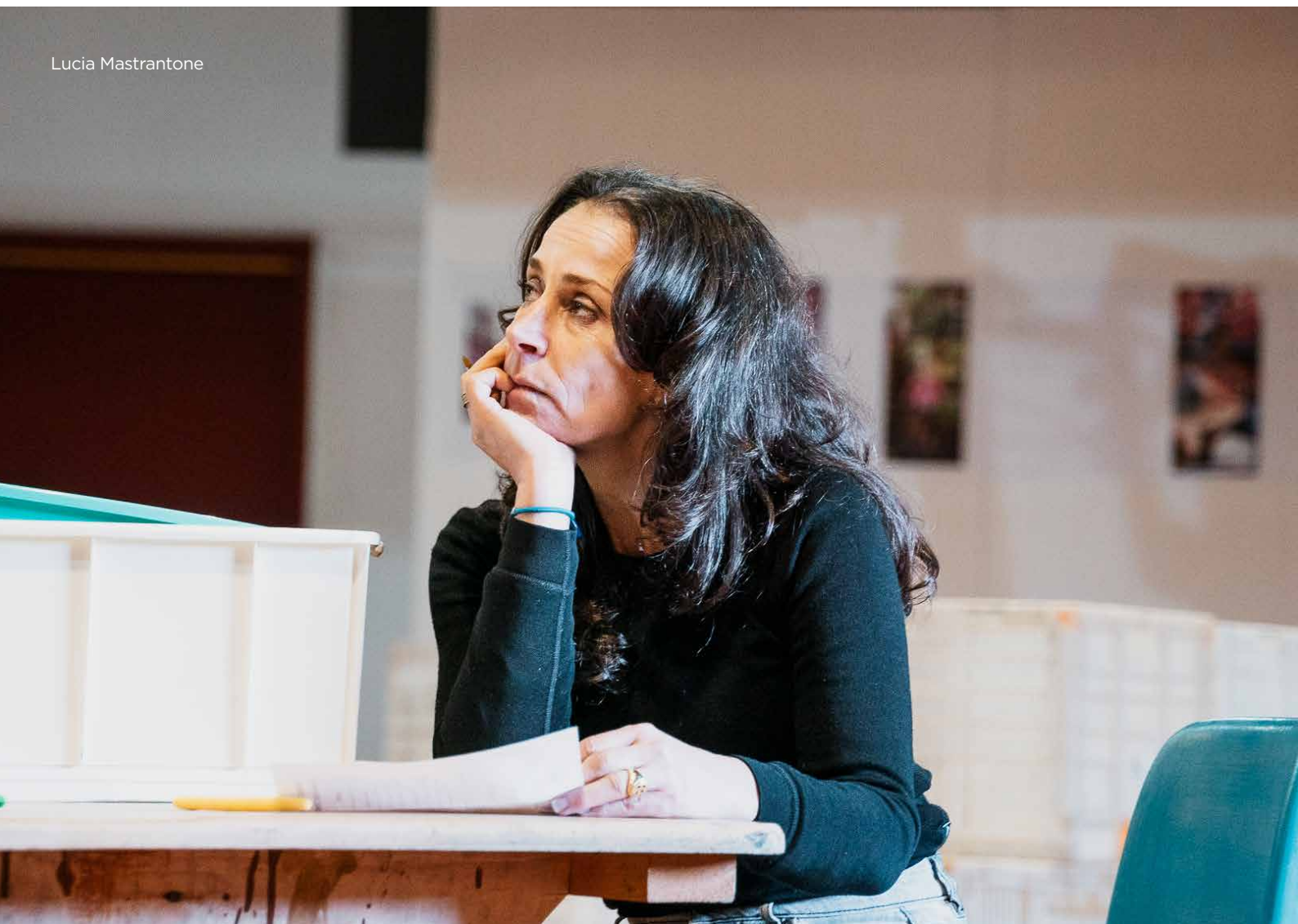


Hannah Monson

John Marc Desengano

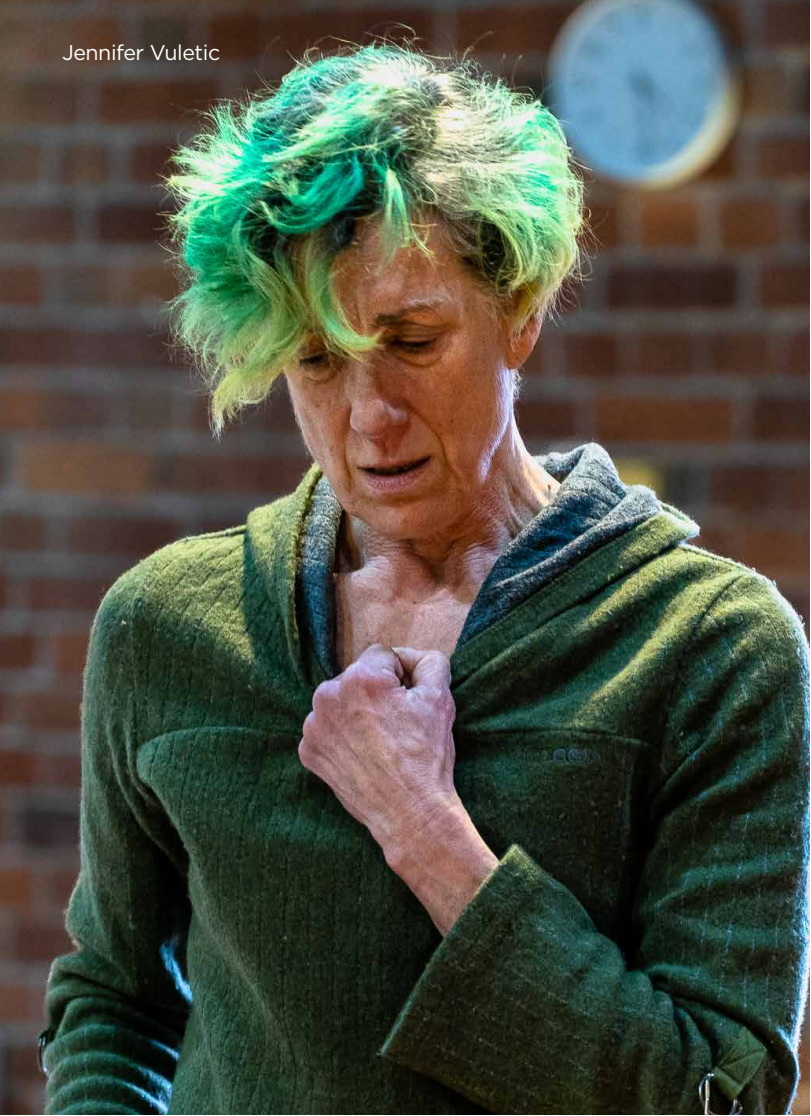


Lucia Mastrantone





Jennifer Vuletic



Ashley Lyons



Chanella Macri





Stephen Nicolazzo



Harry Dowling, Lucia Mastrantone,  
Ashley Lyons, Hannah Monson

# 2023

# SUBSCRIBER

# NIGHT

Book tickets to the final preview performance of each show

Be amongst the first in Sydney to see each play (at a cheaper price) and celebrate with a free drink post-show!\*

\*Subscribers only

# 30-DOWN

Lovers of theatre who are 30 years or under can secure some nicely discounted seats for 2023.

30-Down ticket pricing applies to any mid-week and Saturday matinee shows.

**PLUS+++**

Book for the final preview performance of any 2023 mainstage production and join our Associates for a pre-show chat.





**BELVOIR ST  
THEATRE**

**2023 SEASON**



**4-PLAY SEASON TICKETS  
STARTING FROM \$172\***

**\*30-DOWN mid-week matinee**

# BELVOIR PARTNERS

## PATRON

The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC,  
Governor of New South Wales

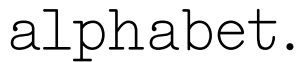
## GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



## MAJOR PARTNERS



## MEDIA PARTNERS



## ASSOCIATE PARTNERS



## YOUTH & EDUCATION PARTNER



## PRODUCTION PARTNERS



## ACCOMMODATION PARTNERS



## EVENT PARTNERS



## WELLNESS PARTNERS



If your business would like to partner with Belvoir, please email us at [development@belvoir.com.au](mailto:development@belvoir.com.au) or call 02 8396 6250

# BELVOIR SUPPORTERS

We are deeply grateful to our community for supporting us through the good times and the bad. From game-changing gifts to topping up your ticket purchase price, your faith in us has made all the difference. Thank you.

Learn more about supporting Belvoir at [belvoir.com.au/support](http://belvoir.com.au/support)

---

## TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS



ORANGES & SARDINES

Andrew Cameron Family Foundation  
Copyright Agency  
Cultural Fund

Doc Ross Family Foundation  
Gandevia Foundation  
The Greatorex Fund

Macquarie Group Foundation  
The Neilson Foundation  
The Wales Family Foundation

---

## CHAIR'S CIRCLE

Patty Akopiantz & Justin Punch  
Sophie & Stephen Allen  
The Balnaves Foundation  
Guido Belgiorno-Nettis AM &  
Michelle Belgiorno-Nettis  
Anne Britton  
Jillian Broadbent AC  
Andrew Cameron AM &  
Cathy Cameron  
David Gonski AC &  
Assoc. Prof. Orli Wargon OAM

Fee & David Hancock  
Alison Kitchen  
Ian Learmonth & Julia Pincus  
Helen Lynch AM & Helen Bauer  
Nelson Meers AO & Carole Meers  
Sam Meers AO  
Kerr Neilson  
Stuart & Kate O'Brien  
Cathie & Paul Oppenheim  
Dan & Jackie Phillips  
Andrew Price

Andrew Roberts  
Sherry-Hogan Foundation  
Peter & Victoria Shorthouse  
Rob Thomas AO  
The WeirAnderson Foundation  
Wiggs Foundation  
Kim Williams AM & Catherine Dovey  
Rosie Williams & John Grill AO  
Cathy Yuncken

---

## VISIONARY DONORS

Aldus Group  
Bob & Chris Ernst  
Marion Heathcote & Brian Burfitt  
Libby Higgin & Dr Gae Anderson  
Kimberley & Angus Holden

Houston Group  
Ingrid Kaiser  
Lazberger Family Fund  
Ross Littlewood & Alexandra Curtin  
Simon Mordant AM &  
Catriona Mordant AM

Robert & Vanessa Morgan  
Sally White  
Shemara Wikramanayake & Ed  
Gilmartin