

The Master & Margarita

From 11 Nov



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

Adapted and
directed by
Eamon Flack

From the book by
Mikhail Bulgakov

The Master & Margarita

From 11 Nov

RUN TIME:

2 hours and 50 minutes
(incl. 20-minute interval)

WARNINGS

The Master & Margarita includes full nudity – and we do mean full! The production references suicide, uses strong language and contains adult themes.

This production also includes strobe lighting and haze.

CAST

Paula Arundell

Woland/Ensemble

Marco Chiappi

Pilate/Ensemble

Tom Conroy

Ivan/Matthew Levi/Ensemble

Gary Daley

Musician

Gareth Davies

Azzazelo/Ensemble

Amber McMahon

Korovyev/Ensemble

Josh Price

Behemoth/Ensemble

Matilda Ridgway

Narrator/Ensemble

Anna Samson

Margarita/Ensemble

Mark Leonard Winter

The Master/Ensemble

Jana Zvedeniuk

Yelena/Ensemble

CREATIVES

Adaptor & Director

Eamon Flack

Original Author

Mikhail Bulgakov

Dramaturg

Tom Wright

Objects & Costume Designer

Romanie Harper

Space & Lighting Designer

Nick Schlieper

Sound Designer & Composer

Stefan Gregory

Associate Sound Designer

Jess Dunn

Associate Composer

Hamed Sadeghi

Choreographer

Elle Evangelista

Intimacy Director

Chloë Dallimore

Fight/Movement Director

Nigel Poulton

Fight/Movement Associate

Tim Dashwood

Performance Guide

Emma Maye Gibson

Voice Coach Laura Farrell

Magic and Illusions Design

(Magic Inc) Adam Mada

Magic and Illusions

Associate (Magic Inc)

Harry Milas

Stage Manager

Luke McGettigan

Assistant Stage Manager

Madelaine Osborn

NIDA Stage Management

Secondment

Grace Sackman

View our website for the full list of credits.

Supported by

Creative Development Fund



Cover image by **Daniel Boud**

Production photography by
Brett Boardman

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.



A FEW THINGS THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL

TOM WRIGHT - DRAMATURG

Sympathy for the Devil

The Master and Margarita was forgotten for decades, until it finally emerged in the mid-1960s. When the first English translation was published, it had a massive impact. One of those who read it was Mick Jagger, who had been given a copy by Marianne Faithfull. As soon as he put it down, Woland's line *Please allow me to introduce myself* stuck in his mind. The resulting song became a classic of liberation and one of the anthems of a generation, a Satan's Ball of malevolence and disorder through time.

Arbat

A busy avenue in Moscow, famous in Bulgakov's time – and now – for its brightly-lit shops, surging crowds, and urbanity.

Faust

An ancient tale of a magician who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for wisdom and power. Bulgakov was a devotee of the opera version by Hector Berlioz. One of the key characters in the Faust legend is Margeurite (Margarita), who is loved and destroyed by Faust. The Margarita in Bulgakov is a radical re-imagining of the archetype. In *Faust* one of the names for the devil is 'Woland'.

Pontius Pilate

Roman procurator in the province of Judea, a key character in the Gospels, which are the only substantial sources for his life. In the Bible, Pilate attempts to wash his hands of responsibility for the death of Jesus, and asks the famous question, 'What is Truth?' In Bulgakov's imagination, Pilate becomes the symbol of the impossible contradictions of power, and the way the tyrant serves and destroys imagination.



Yelena Sergeevna Bulgakova

Bulgakov's beloved third wife. After Bulgakov's death in 1941, she kept the manuscript of *The Master and Margarita* hidden for decades, even when it was so dangerous as to endanger her life.

Azazello, Behemoth and Korovyev

Azazello was an ancient demon, associated with magic unguents, creams and cosmetics, and obsessed by swords and other weapons. Behemoth is a name also taken from ancient texts relating to a creature of monstrous size. In this case, a black cat as large as a human. Korovyev is a peculiarly Bulgakovian invention, based on an actor the Bulgakovs knew who was an inveterate liar, and characters in the novels of Dostoevsky

Patriarch's Ponds

A park in a fashionable part of Moscow, in the middle of which is a large set of ponds (now one big body of water). The patriarch for which it is named was an Orthodox prelate, but in Bulgakov it has other obvious ironies.

John the Baptist

In the Bible the one who came before, preparing the way for the coming of Jesus, a wild-looking man who immerses people in water and eventually loses his head. The name Ivan is the Russian form of John, and the imagery and action of the poet's chase early in *The Master and Margarita* constantly refers to the story of the Baptist.

Stalin

Tyrant, leader of the Soviet Union, a patriarchal Big Brother looming over the Bulgakovian world. Stalin's unexpected appreciation for Bulgakov's play *The Days of the Turbins* was probably what kept Bulgakov alive. Stalin was a passionate theatre enthusiast and a mass murderer.

Nadezhda Mandelstam, Osip Mandelstam, Isaac Babel

Great Jewish Ukrainian-Russian writers of Bulgakov's generation. Osip died of exposure in a prison camp. Isaac was summarily shot in 1940, a year before Bulgakov's death. Nadezhda survived into old age and wrote the classic *Hope Against Hope*.



DIRECTOR & ADAPTOR'S NOTE

EAMON FLACK

This is the story of a book and its magical ability to outwit and outlive dogma, authoritarianism, repression and fear.

Thoughts and feelings are infectious. We live in a pandemic of fears, stupidities, lies, theories, beliefs, stories, images - some useful and benevolent, some destructive - either way, a lot of them. Forces of every sort - brands, political movements, ideologies - are doing whatever they can to get into our neurons. A lot of what we think are our own thoughts aren't ours any more than your last bout of Covid was yours. We're losing our minds.

This show is an attempt to discover how we might free ourselves of this mental pandemic. We've infected ourselves with a novel that was itself an attempt to find freedom from an all-powerful mental pandemic. *The Master and Margarita* is a vaccine.

The Master and Margarita is about an infected society. Bulgakov was writing at a time when the all-powerful virus of Stalinism had taken over Russia. No one was immune, but some people - artists, yes, but also scientists, teachers, engineers, ordinary people - tried to find some kind of immunity. Many were killed for trying, and many were killed who weren't even trying, just to make a point. Bulgakov was a target: in the words of an officially-sanctioned critic, "This Bulgakovism must be crushed." Banned from the stage, terrified for his life, maddened by the insanity around him, and repeatedly on the verge of losing his mind, he spent a decade writing, secretly, in a series of small apartments, a fabulous theatre of the imagination, in the form of a novel.

"True literature can exist only when it is created, not by diligent and reliable officials, but by madmen, hermits, heretics, dreamers, rebels

and skeptics.” Yvgeny Zamyatin, writer, Bulgakov’s billiards partner, exiled from the Soviet Union in 1931.

Terror is not the only way you can crush the spirit and mind of a society. For example, garden-variety government neglect of the arts can do a very good job of it, ceding the field to all-consuming, all-possessing neo-liberal capitalism, that merciless and ubiquitous strain of modern ideology that dominates our economies, our social structures, our physical environment, our climate, our health systems, our relationship to our bodies, our mental health, our family structures...

“It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.” Slavoj Zizek or Frederic Jameson, depending on who you ask.

Imagination is a kind of resistance. It is the last refuge. Whatever happens we have to make sure it’s possible to keep dreaming, writing, witnessing, imagining.

We’re not pretending imagination alone is the answer. It can be the problem. Trump’s virulent fantasising clearly works on the imagination. Trump is basically a sort of hypnotist and his reality is basically imaginary. Imagination without *truth* is a kind of insanity.

Joy and play are important too. In the midst of all this 21st century shittiness, silliness can be a strong antidote. Imagination lives in our bodies as much as our minds. You can’t always argue with a mental pandemic, sometimes you just have to possess your body with something else.

Theatricality, dance, play are ways to inoculate.

Like Bulgakov’s novel, this show was made in unusual circumstances. We began work in an actual pandemic, during the dark days of the shutdown of 2020. All we had was ourselves, this empty theatre, and the book. The idea was to imagine a way to do this wild fantasia with nothing but those few elements. As time has passed we have added a revolve and not a small number of costumes and props, but the central idea remains the same: to summon this fabulous story out of thin air, to speak the spell of this book out loud, and to put its curse on totalitarianisms and certainties of all kinds, big and small.

This show has been made collaboratively, and many different people have been part of the work over the years; they have all left their mark on it, and this belongs to all of us. We dedicate the show to the memory of our friend Bardiya McKinnon, who was part of the first workshops.

Bulgakov died without knowing if his novel would ever see the light of day. But he persisted in writing it right up until his death. His novel wishes - and fulfils - its own future: it outlives death, folds itself into time, outwits an entire ideological regime, and might, who knows, turn up one day on stage in a faraway theatre almost a century later.

Eamon Flack

Director and Adaptor



Paula Arundell, Eamon Flack, Tom Conroy,
Matilda Ridgway & Josh Price



Paula Arundell, Mark Leonard Winter,
Matilda Ridgway, Marco Chiappi & Tom Conroy



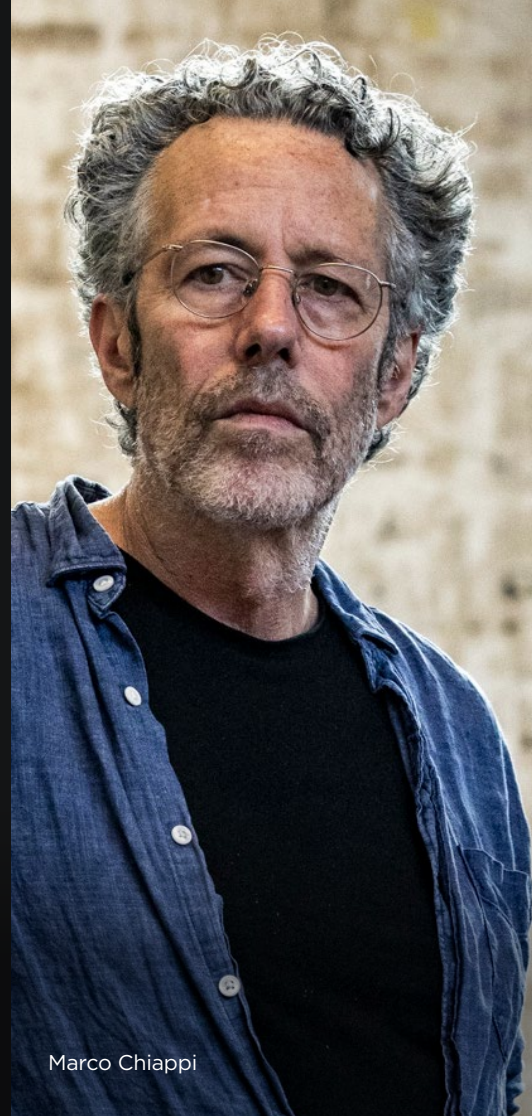
Tom Conroy, Matilda Ridgway & Josh Price



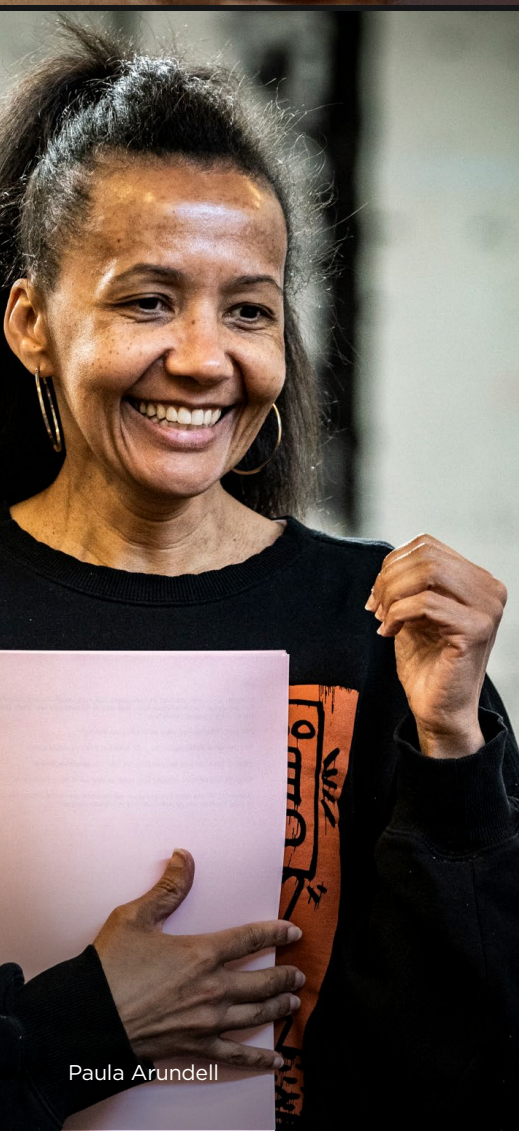
Tom Conroy



Jana Zvedeniuk



Marco Chiappi



Paula Arundell



Gareth Davies



Amber McMahon



Mark Leonard Winter



Anna Samson



Josh Price



Matilda Ridgway



Mark Leonard Winter



Anna Samson



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

2024 SEASON

TIDDAS

12 – 28 Jan

The comedy smash of the Brisbane Festival, for a three-week Sydney season.

TINY BEAUTIFUL THINGS

1 Feb – 3 Mar

A tiny, beautiful, and life-affirming play based on the book by Cheryl Strayed.

HOLDING THE MAN

9 Mar – 14 Apr

The love story which defined a generation, and a classic of the Australian stage, in a brand new production.

LOSE TO WIN

25 Apr – 19 May

An extraordinary journey from South Sudan to the Belvoir stage.

NAYIKA A DANCING GIRL

30 Apr – 19 May

A virtuosic solo performance mixing storytelling, live music, and Bharatanatyam dance.

NEVER CLOSER

25 May – 16 Jun

An astonishing debut play in a production direct from our Downstairs Theatre.

COUNTING AND CRACKING

28 Jun – 21 Jul

The internationally-acclaimed epic returns to Sydney, this time at Carriageworks.

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

17 Aug – 22 Sep

The hit adaptation of the hit book in a brand new, very Belvoir production.

WELL-BEHAVED WOMEN

28 Sep – 3 Nov

A musical feast celebrating the women who refused to behave.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

9 Nov – 15 Dec

One of the monumental plays of the 21st century, up close and personal.



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