

# Blue

14 Jan – 29 Jan



Written by **Thomas Weatherall**  
Directed by **Deborah Brown**

In association with  
**Sydney Festival**

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



**BELVOIR ST  
THEATRE**



**Sydney  
Festival  
2023**



**Australia  
Council  
for the Arts**

# Blue

14 – 29 Jan

## CAST

**Thomas Weatherall** Mark

## FEATURING

**Frances Rings** Mother

**Darius Williams** John

## CREATIVES

Writer **Thomas Weatherall**

Director **Deborah Brown**

Set & Costume Designer

**Jacob Nash**

Set & Costume Designer

**Cris Baldwin**

Lighting Designer

**Chloe Ogilvie**

Sound Designer & Composer

**Wil Hughes**

Video Designer **David Bergman**

Vocal Coach **Laura Farrell**

Vocal Coach **Amy Hume**

Dramaturg **Dom Mercer**

Dramaturgical Consultant

**Kodie Bedford**

Associate Lighting Designer

**Kelsey Lee**

Stage Manager **Steph Storr**

Assistant Stage Manager **Sybilla**

**Wajon**

**Special thanks to:** Meg Clarke

## RUNNING TIME

1 hour & 20 minutes

(no interval)

## CONTENT WARNING

*Blue* includes references to suicide, the use of coarse language, theatrical haze and herbal cigarettes.

**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.**





# WRITER'S NOTE

THOMAS WEATHERALL

When I was 17 and finishing my final year of high school, there was a period of time where I felt overwhelmingly depressed. I had felt similar before, but this was different. I couldn't articulate it to anyone in a concise or meaningful way and frankly I believe that was because I myself could not make sense of it. I attempted to talk about it, and for a young man who felt ill-equipped to do so, I thought I did a pretty good job. However, I lacked the literacy, or maybe vocabulary to truly describe what I was going through.

Since then I've experienced similar bouts of such feelings, but this particular one acted as a catalyst of sorts. In a search for healthy coping mechanisms and artistic outlets, I discovered a love that I never knew would become so fruitful and sacred to me: writing.

So began the process of "becoming a writer", something I believed was actually a practical quest. Was I supposed to read books I didn't enjoy, just for the sake of being well-read? Did I

have to study literature at a tertiary level? Or did I need someone of a certain level of reliability and professionalism to say, "it's ok Tom, go write"? So I called my agent! This is a year or so later now, and while not a whole lot of actual writing has occurred, the determination to become one is real! My brilliant agent Lee-Anne, who I feel forever indebted to for helping me create the life I now have, answered the phone and very politely listened to me explain just how badly I wanted to create my own work. This was a very brief phone call, and one I don't think she would even remember. But I do, mainly for two reasons. (1.) Because she gifted me some of the most valuable encouragement I've ever received, and (2.) Because I was stung by a bee on my big toe during said phone call. In response to my question of how I should begin this quest of "becoming a writer", Lee-Anne answered simply, *"just start writing Tom"*. She said many more helpful and kind things in that conversation, but it was only those few words I needed to hear. So I did! That day to be exact!



I wasn't aware at the time I was writing a play, or even anything of substance for that matter, but for the next 4 years I would write, sometimes only a few sentences, sometimes pages at a time, that would ultimately accumulate into the play you are about to watch. (Thank you). Between night-fill shifts at Woolworths, and full-time drama school, break-ups and moving of apartments, then moving of towns, before and after full days of filming, on flights, trains and in the back seats of ubers, between considerable amounts of coffee, and very late sleepless nights that turned into very early mornings, I wrote *Blue*.

This play is not a cry for help, or an exercise of trauma, but more so an opening to a discourse that I truly believe so many people are in need of. *Blue* is, in its rawest form, a kind of unprescribed therapy. Mark is not me, the story you are about to see is not my life, but more so a very personal fiction.

If nothing else, I hope this play makes you talk to your friends and family, love each other, set boundaries, read better books, swim in the ocean, and listen to music constantly! Life is very brief and terrifying. I'm trying to make the most of it and find the beauty in it. *Blue* has helped me do that, I hope it can help you do that too.

I would like to offer some particular thanks to the following...

A very deeply personal thanks to those closest to me; my Mum and family, Stevie and Henry, Hastie, and Jack, Sofia and Addy.

To Dom Mercer, for the unwavering support and care that he has shown both the work and me since

the first four pages landed on his desk in 2020, thank you. Eamon Flack, Zainab Syed and Belvoir as a whole. The Balnaves Fellowship, for creating a platform for artists like me. Deborah Brown, and the entire team behind the first iteration of *Blue*.

To Lee-Anne Higgins, for that phone call, and for every other day of championing my career, along with the entire team at United Management. Justine Goss and the team at Aurora Artists, for meeting me at the perfect time to assist in facilitating my journey as a writer.

To Dianne Talbot, Kirri Adams and Matt Scholten, 3 teachers who I believed shaped me into the artist I am today. To Ian Meadows, Ash Ricardo and their son, for being the first people to ever hear the script, and for providing such encouragement so early on.

Rodney Afif, Hannah Carroll Chapman, Rob Collins and Billie Pleffer who have all been integral figures in my creative journey, and Justine Clarke for being the best rehearsal neighbour!

Thank you to strong cappuccinos with two sugars, Lexapro, my red Toyota cap (*now deceased*), and the music of Harry Nilsson.

I have dedicated this play to my mother. *Blue* would not exist without her, and I most certainly would not be here today if I didn't have such a strong mum. Love you.

Thomas Weatherall  
( *Mr Blue* )



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

## DEBORAH BROWN

My first job when I first moved to Sydney was as an usher. I couldn't afford to pay my own way to see shows so my theatre diet was that of the musicals I tripped tickets for. One of the first times I made my own way to the theatre I attended a beautiful, intimate and evocative one man show, *The Journeys of William Yang*. A monologue presented in the Upstairs Theatre at Belvoir. That experience left a lasting impression, almost 20 years on.

The next year, I watched my own song man for close to 15 years of my career, David Page, perform *Page 8*, directed by Stephen Page. From his kitchen in Mt Gravatt to his iconic Tina Turner drag act bursting out of a closet, I remember experiencing pure joy. He too left a lasting impression.

Both men. Both drawing from Queensland landscape. Both vivid storytellers. Both presented upstairs at Belvoir St Theatre. Both physically alone on stage yet with the strong presence of family.

Upon reading Thomas Weatherall's, *Blue*, I immediately began visualizing the Upstairs

space at Belvoir. His world could easily translate anywhere, in any form, and having carried such warm memories of Yang and Page for all these years I could see *Blue* being birthed at Belvoir. My first read of the script I found myself sitting on the foot of my bed in my childhood home, after a day spending it with my own mother, after months of feeling isolated and disconnected, here was a writer that struck a chord with me, deep inside. *Blue* resonated not only as a script but also as a piece of music. It evoked the dancer in me and from that I knew I wanted a team that could ground themselves in the poetry on the page but also allow the audience to be in the mind of our lead character, Mark.

Thomas has crafted an exquisite take on coping with the dichotomy of love and grief and his depth in the rehearsal room matches his writing.

It's taking someone at their most vulnerable and opening up their thoughts and provocations in the form of a landscape. A calling to the coast line. A calling to a place that we often run to find calm but also forming a boundary that we may dare or dare not cross. With Mark, do we stand at

the shoreline? Or do we dive in and feel both the pain and the love, then resurface, changed?

I've experienced landscapes created by Jacob Nash first hand as performer and never felt alone on stage. Even when he's sculpted a space adhering to the vastness of Country, there is always a presence, a soul that watches over the performer, that keeps us safe and connected. Alongside Cris Baldwin, I have found the creative process echoing these same sentiments. "The Wave" set piece allows us to add another emotional layer reflecting Mark's head space, that of projection. A big thank you to Dave Bergman and team for creating such precious vignettes and to the beautiful artists, Darius Williams, Meg Clarke and my inspiration for many years, Frances Rings.

It is a great pleasure to have Chloe Ogilvie in the Belvoir space again, with associate Kelsey Lee to sculpt and caress an ever subtle shifting landscape at the heart of *Blue*.

Thomas has created a sensual world with his writing. On the page it's not only textured visually but aurally too. Wil Hughes's exploration between the textures of sounds that evoke youth, life and home as well as the varying measures of tides, supports *Blue's* sense of nostalgia.

I'd love to thank the Belvoir family for welcoming not only myself but also the creatives who have helped build the *Blue* world. The production team lead by Richard Whitehouse for bringing the conceptual wave to life, Stephanie Storr for grounding the room, Zainab Syed for your belief and drive, the artistic team, Dom Mercer for bringing light to this tender script, Kodie Bedford for your insight and spark and Eamon and Aaron for your guidance and care.

I hope *Blue* leaves a lasting impression on audiences just as many Belvoir works have left a lasting impression on me when celebrating the fabric of family and connection to those we love.





Chloe Ogilvie



Deborah Brown



Steph Storr

Sybilla Wajon



Thomas Weatherall & Deborah Brown







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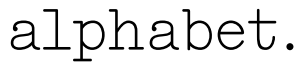
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