

Lady Day

at Emerson's
Bar & Grill

14 Sep – 15 Oct

By **Lanie Robertson**

Musical Arrangements by
Danny Holgate

The Tony
award-winning
tour-de-force
that's simply
unmissable.



**BELVOIR ST
THEATRE**

Director **Mitchell Butel**
Associate Director **Zahra Newman**

Co-produced with
Melbourne Theatre Company,
State Theatre Company of South Australia

Lady Day

at Emerson's
Bar & Grill
14 Sep – 15 Oct

By **Lanie Robertson**

Musical Arrangements by **Danny Holgate**

RUN TIME 1 hour 30 minutes (no interval)

WARNINGS

Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill includes adult themes, coarse language, herbal cigarettes, and includes references to sex, assault, racism, racial slurs and depiction of drug and alcohol use.

CAST

Zahra Newman Billie Holiday

Elenoa Rokobaro Alternate Performer | Billie Holiday

Kym Purling Jimmy Powers

Victor Rounds Double Bass

Calvin Welch Drums

CREATIVES

Writer **Lanie Robertson**

Musical Arranger **Danny Holgate**

Director **Mitchell Butel**

Associate Director **Zahra Newman**

Set and Costume Designer **Ailsa Paterson**

Lighting Designer **Govin Ruben**

Musical Director and Additional Arrangements **Kym Purling**

Sound Designer **Andrew Howard**

Voice and Dialogue Coach **Geraldine Cook-Dafner**

Voice and Dialogue Coach **Jennifer Innes**

Stage Manager **Bridget Samuel**

Assistant Stage Manager **Sean Proude**

Co-produced with

Melbourne Theatre Company

and **State Theatre Company**

South Australia

Principal partner **Ord Minnett**

Piano generously supplied by **Kawai**

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.

LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR & GRILL was first produced in New York by the Vineyard Theatre.

LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR & GRILL is produced by special arrangement with **THE GERSH AGENCY**, 41 Madison Avenue, 29th Floor, New York, NY 10010.

Front cover image by Dan Boud

Rehearsal photography by Sia Duff and Jessica Zeng

Zahra Newman



SONG CREDITS

Crazy She Calls Me

Written by Russell/Sigman
Published by Campbell
Connelly (Australia) Pty Ltd
By kind permission
Wise Music Group

Somebody's on My Mind

Written by Herzog/Holliday
Published by Campbell
Connelly (Australia) Pty Ltd
By kind permission Wise
Music Group

I Wonder Where Our Love has Gone

Written by Woodrow Johnson
Published by Campbell
Connelly (Australia) Pty Ltd
By kind permission Wise
Music Group

Deep Song

Written by: Cory/Cross
Universal Music Corp.
Administered by : Universal
Music Publishing Pty Ltd

Don't Explain

Written by: Herzog Jr /Holiday
Songs Of Universal, Inc
Administered by: Universal
Music Publishing Pty Ltd

Gimme A Pigfoot And Bottle Of Beer

Written by: Wilson
Universal Music Corp.
Administered by: Universal
Music Publishing Pty Ltd

God Bless The Child

Written by Herzog /Holiday
Publisher Warner/Chappell
Administered by APRA

Strange Fruit

Written by A Lewis
Publisher Warner/Chappell
Administered by APRA

What A Little Moonlight Can Do

Written by Harry Woods
Publisher Warner/Chappell
Administered by APRA

Foolin' Myself

Written by Lawrence/Tinturin
Administered by BMG

When A Woman Loves A Man

Written by Hanighen
/Jenkins/Mercer
Administered by BMG

Tain't Nobody's Business If I Do

Written by Everett Robbins
and Porter Grainer
© Clarence Williams
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Licenced by EMI Music
Publishing Australia Pty Ltd

Easy Living

Written by Leo Robin
and Ralph Rainger
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Licensed by Sony Music
Publishing (Australia) Pty Ltd

Baby Doll

Written by Smith/Wedman
Publisher Kobalt Music
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Mitchell Butel

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

MITCHELL BUTEL

What is it about some performers that captures a generation? And what is it about those who leave legacies long after they're gone?

Is it their look, their sound, the way they open our mind or heart, their craft, their innovation, the meaning or message they impart to us? Maybe it's all of those things.

There is perhaps no singer in the last century with as distinct and recognisable a voice as Billie Holiday. And few singers with as individual and idiosyncratic a musicianship.

Billie said: "If I'm going to sing like someone else, then I don't need to sing at all... You can't copy anybody and end with anything. If you copy, it means you're working without any real feeling."

And yet, her sound, her style, her process coalesced into a way of singing that has influenced many who have followed her.

To quote Frank Sinatra in 1958, a year before Holiday died and when this show is set: "With few exceptions, every major pop singer in the US during her generation has been touched in some way by her genius. It is Billie Holiday who was, and still remains, the greatest single musical influence on me. Lady Day is unquestionably the most important influence on American popular singing in the last twenty years."

She was prolific as a live performer and as a recording artist. She was provocative – her signature song Strange Fruit was a flashpoint cri de Coeur for the civil rights movement. And she was a worker – someone who was most at home on stage, collaborating with other musicians.

How lucky we are to have found other performers who are also so at home on stage to bring Billie's tale to life once more, led by Zahra Newman and Elenoa Rokobaro (at certain performances) – two phenomenally talented singing actors whose connection to Billie's spirit and sound is uncanny. Our luck continues in having one of the finest jazz pianists on the planet today, Kym Purling, musically directing the show and leading our

other wonderful musicians, Calvin Welch and Victor Rounds and in having a terrific creative team and crew to help realise our vision.

State Theatre Company South Australia is delighted to be co-producing this show with our friends at Belvoir St Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company. We are thrilled that audiences across the nation will get to experience the intimacy and impact of Lanie Robertson's artful deep dive into Billie's life and music over a late night performance at (the now gone but once popular) Emerson's Bar & Grill, in South Philadelphia.

The private and public challenges and battles of Billie Holiday's life have perhaps sometimes overshadowed the genius and uniqueness of her talent. As she noted in her autobiography "Lady Sings the Blues", it was a life of great love, pleasure and success but also one underscored by deep pain, poverty, prejudice and injustice. We hope this show shines a light on the fact that although her power as a musical storyteller

may been impacted, even sharpened by those experiences, her skill, humanity and artistry are the true legacies of her life.

As biographer Stuart Nicholson writes: "The polarities of art and life collided with such violence during the 44 years of singer Billie Holiday's life they became bonded into one immutable whole. Together they give force to the Billie Holiday legend, a legend that has grown with increasing definition since her death in 1959. Although a sense of sadness and waste provide the backdrop for her troubled yet colourful life, that life is ultimately redeemed by the joy, the passion and, in her final years, the pathos of her music. That she was able to achieve so much with the burdens she had to carry must surely be her ultimate triumph. Yet the essential truth about Billie Holiday is that she was a great artist, not because of her hedonistic and much publicised lifestyle, but in spite of it."

We hope you enjoy the moonlight our Billie is about to shine on you.



Elenoa Rokobaro and Kym Purling



Zahra Newman



Kym Purling and Zahra Newman



Elenoa Rokobaro



Kym Purling



Mitchell Butel



Sean Proude



Ailsa Paterson



Govin Ruben



Bridget Samuel



**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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