

A PRODUCTION BY CHRISTINE HARRIS AND HIT PRODUCTIONS

A NEW PRODUCTION OF AUSTRALIA'S BELOVED MODERN CLASSIC

THE SAPPHIRES

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
TONY BRIGGS



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.





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INTRODUCTION TO STUDY KIT

The information contained in the Study Kit has not been compiled to criteria guidelines, but mostly to assist you with the broader understanding and knowledge of the play. It contains an interview with the director covering topics such as themes, language and design as well as information on the various professions within the theatre industry.

It is also important to remember that this production, like every production, continually develops and evolves during the rehearsal process and during the tour.

In 2019-2020, *The Sapphires* will tour for a total of 55 weeks taking in 138 venues (both traditional theatres & pop-up venues) and over 200 performances!

We hope you find this study kit helpful and interesting. We hope it helps answer some of your questions and frame new ones, opening up further vibrant discussion in your classroom and beyond.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION COMPANY TOURING THE SAPPHIRES

HIT Productions, under Christine Harris, has consistently produced high quality Australian drama for regional Australia, a part of Australia normally deprived of what Metropolitan Australia takes for granted. HIT Productions, in a very real sense, helps keep regional Australia in touch with the insights our best dramatists are offering about our national psyche, and as such should be strongly supported at a State and Federal Government level." **David Williamson A.O, 2016**

HIT Productions - Over one million patrons have seen a HIT show across 4900+ performances.

A combined total of well over 2500 Australian venue visits have been made involving 300+ different venues. Over one million kilometres traversed by HIT Productions across the length and breadth of Australia.

The company has successfully completed over 116 major theatre tours across 1200+ weeks of touring which has included some of the most extensive national tours ever staged in Australia, such as Jeanie Linders' *Menopause The Musical*® (2008-2012) which ran for 152.5 weeks across 276 venues and also toured to NZ; David Williamson's *The Club* (2007-08) which ran for 35 weeks across 80 venues; Williamson's *Let the Sunshine* (2012) which ran for 24 weeks across 59 venues, Jonathan Biggins' *Australia Day* (2015-16) which ran for 25 weeks to 59 venues and *Always...Patsy Cline* (2016-2018) which toured to 70 venues across 33 weeks. In 2019 HIT produced the ground-breaking 2019 tour of *The Sapphires* that, along with metropolitan and regional venues, performed free of charge on a pop-up stage at remote Aboriginal Communities across the country, bringing for the first time a full scale theatrical production to many locations. That tour will continue in 2022

Along with producing its quality theatre productions HIT has also tour coordinated some of Australia's most high profile music artists' shows including *Rumour Has It: Naomi Price as Adele*, *Luke Kennedy: His Voice* and musical theatre icon Geraldine Turner's *Turners Turn*. In 2017–2020 HIT will also tour Australia's 2017 Eurovision Song Contest entrant *Isaiah Firebrace Live* and his inspirational 'Beyond' workshops.

PRODUCER - Christine Harris - Managing Director of HIT Productions Pty Ltd

Christine is incredibly proud of the fact her productions have contributed more than \$40 million in turnover to the arts sector in Australia.

In 2018 Christine celebrated two major milestones. Her business celebrated its 25th year of business operation and her anniversary as a significant Australian producer and also the companies 100th tour.

An award-winning actress (*Carson's Law*), she was a regular on television screens in the 1980s and 1990s. It was her commitment to providing a platform for female actors that led to her initial move into theatre production with a season of *Duet for One* (1993) at the Victorian Arts Centre.

A Business Women's Hall of Fame Inductee, Christine's achievements have been reflected in the many business awards she has received including the: 1997 Telstra Victorian Entrepreneur of the Year Award; finalist for the Australian Entrepreneur of the Year Award; 1998 & 2000 finalist Telstra Business Women's Awards; 1998 Executive Woman of the Year Award.



GENERIC MEDIA RELEASE | THE SAPPHIRES

Produced by **Christine Harris and Australia's Premier Theatre Touring Company, HIT Productions**, the acclaimed musical play ***The Sapphires*** Written & Directed by **Tony Briggs** will tour across the length and the breadth of Australia from 2019/2022 reaching over 140+ locations. Featuring a talented young ensemble of first nation performers in all the Indigenous Australian roles as well as multicultural performers, Tony Briggs will direct his play for the first time and head a highly credentialed Indigenous Australian directing and design team.

2019 represented *The Sapphires*' first major Australian regional tour.

This production seeks to take *The Sapphires* on stage, further than ever before, both 'on the road' and 'off the road' during its national tours in 2019 – 2020(pre COVID stoppage)/2022 visiting every Australian state and one territory. This will be the most extensive regional tour ever for this play and first time it has been performed in remote areas.

'On the road', the production will be staged at multifarious theatre venues.

'Off the road', the show will be presented in a special 'Pop-Up' version provided free of charge to Indigenous Australian Communities and regional/remote areas of the country not serviced by a venue or where there are constraints for those people to attend that venue. The pop-up stage will be designed by acclaimed architect Philip Harris and Troppo Architects.

SYNOPSIS

The Sapphires is a heart-warming tale inspired by the true story of Tony Briggs' mother. Set in 1968 during landmark changes to Aboriginal rights, it tells the story of a singing group of four young Yorta Yorta women, discovered by a talent scout at St Kilda's Tiki Club. He convinces them to tour Vietnam to sing classic soul songs for the troops and it becomes a life-altering trip to the depths of war and back again. Whilst *The Sapphires* explores issues such as race, prejudice and pleas for acceptance, it is an energetic and engaging play that affirms life and the realisation of dreams.

HISTORY

The Sapphires directed by Wesley Enoch was first performed by the Melbourne Theatre Company in November 2004 and continued at Sydney's Company B in 2005. It was a smash hit success, taking out the 2005 Helpmann Awards for Best Play and Best New Australian Work. It was revived by Black Swan and Company B in 2010. The show ran at Deagu International Music Festival in 2010, in 2011 as part of the Adelaide Festival. The Sapphires performed for the first time internationally in March 2011 for a two-week London tour at the Barbican Centre. The Sapphires was released as a feature film in 2012 receiving wide popular and critical acclaim

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR/DIRECTOR

"I hope the audience will feel a fresh sense of connection to a story that has already successfully infiltrated the psyche of the Australian theatre and movie going public and get a sense of joy and understanding of who Aboriginal people are and walk away from *The Sapphires* with a smile on their faces. My hope is that they are offered a uniquely thrilling, up close and personal experience designed for people who want a fresh theatrical experience with a show that explores the power of love and family bonds in the middle of a senseless war."

Tony Briggs



2019 HISTORICAL PRODUCTION SHOTS





REVIEWS

"With plenty of laughter involved, The Sapphires included heaps of fun moments that audiences of all ages could enjoy. Starring Matilda Brown, Mindy Kwanten, Lorinda Merrypor and Ngaire Pigram as the quartet of Sapphires it was a fantastic show in which each woman had their moment to shine and express their character through song, as this is of course a musical at the end of the day. Written and directed by Tony Briggs, this tale brings to life a powerful and moving story that encapsulates the magic of storytelling through a myriad of soulful numbers.

With the live band bringing such an energetic and upbeat vibe to the show, it's safe to say that the musical direction was handled superbly by Nathaniel Andrew. Mike Smith as Dave Lovelace inspired plenty of laughs and this was due to the fact that he brought a dorky but honest aspect to the character. Each of the four women sang with such passion and emotion that it was truly something to witness, and most definitely worth seeing this show in person".

4ZZZ, Queensland

"This is (still) a cracking tale with plenty of drama and interest, and the music was brilliant. The leading four ladies are all super talented, with Mindy Kwanten as Cynthia and Ngaire Pigram as Gail belting out powerful room filling soul and Lorinda May Merrypor as Julie and Matilda Brown as Kay with sweeter, lighter voices. Together their harmonies soar and thanks to brilliant backing from a small band, they are a joy to listen to. Go see this for the magnificent music, fascinating story, and to support a group of brilliant First Nations talent".

Stage Whispers

VENUE FEEDBACK

We sold out two shows with many on the wait list. Our audiences loved every minute and our operations officer stated it has been her favourite show here over the past 11 years. Our local indigenous people the Wadawurrung welcomed the group and were blown away with the performances".

Rob McLeod, Manager Potato Shed, Drysdale VIC

I just wanted to let you know that The Sapphires was a huge hit in Griffith last night! We were almost sold out and had a very mixed crowd - which was great for us. The chemistry of the cast was wonderful and their voices were so powerful. Beautiful harmonies and great tunes – with some deadly dancing in between. It was a really, fun, feel good show that also touched on some really important issues. The huge crowd didn't want to leave but finally left with big smiles on their faces.

Raina Savage, Manager, Griffith Regional Theatre, Griffith NSW

Firstly, wow! What a fantastic night at The Sapphires at the MECC last night. Incredibly hard-working and super-talented performers with breathtaking vocals had audiences thrilled from start to finish. Close to a sell out in our 1090 seat venue, the show was an outstanding result for our venue.

Jemma Carey, Ass. Manager Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre, Mackay QLD

I am very happy to be able to let you know that Tuesday night's performance of The Sapphires at Capella Cultural Centre was a huge success and is one of the best musical productions I have had the pleasure of presenting and witnessing in a very long time during the forty plus years that I have worked in the entertainment industry.

The audience at Capella Cultural Centre all left the venue beaming from ear to ear and the feedback around town has been wonderful to hear people saying they wish they had made more effort to attend the performance.

Les Alberts, Manager, Capella Cultural Centre, Capella QLD



The Sapphires performance went really well. The highlight came at the end of the production when 2 of the original members of The Sapphires that were in the audience went up on the stage and sang with the cast. The production was well received by the 400+ audience in attendance.

Ken Cameron, Venue Manager, Riverlinks, Shepparton, VIC

It was a sold out show. The Community really got behind it and also all of the actors. Patrons response was that they loved everything about the production and appreciated the show being brought to regional Victoria. One of the highlights for the staff was the Welcome to Country which was organised with local Elder Peter Hood. The cast and crew alongside our back of house gathered together to share this special experience.

Kathleen Roberts, Manager, Latrobe PAC, Traralgon VIC

The show went really well. The audience were really charmed by the performers. We all feel like we witnessed some new talent on the rise. Thanks for a great production.

Carissa Campbell, Manager Civic Theatre, Wagga Wagga NSW

Audience (almost full-house) loved the show last night. Had several of our subscribers seek me out after the show to say how much they enjoyed it. Good energy in the cast. Harmonies, especially in the lovely indigenous song, were great! I think everyone was waiting for the blue sparkly dresses and when they came on, it was a bit of a WOW moment.

Jill Standfield, Operations Manager, QUT Gardens Theatre, Brisbane QLD

It was a lovely production – warm hearted and poignant- had patrons laughing and quiet in all the right moments. The singing was joyous and absolutely beautiful and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. The crew were great. We reached fantastic numbers for a play. We don't usually pull such extraordinary numbers!

Michelle Goff, Manager, Carnarvon Civic Centre, Carnarvon WA

The Sapphires was recently at our venue and we were very, very happy with the piece. We had a full house, which is quite unusual for a Wednesday and the audience response at the end was phenomenal. Thrilled with the show and happy to present it again in the future.

Guy Boyce, Artistic Director/CEO, Mandurah Performing Arts Centre, Mandurah WA

It was great to have such a big named production visit Roxby Downs. The Sapphires play shared a great story of regional Australia. It's rare that we have the opportunity to share such a big scale stage show with enthralling sets and It's something that we really enjoyed being able to offer to our community.

Cassie Weir, Roxbylink Auditorium, Roxby Downs SA

The Sapphires production was very well received and enjoyed by the audience. It was wonderful to see a very large cross section of the community enjoying a fantastic Australian story. Great performances with lovely singing."

Drew Dymond, Manager, Albany Entertainment Centre, Albany WA

The Sapphires has been the highest grossing production presented at The Bowers Theatre St Albans. The audience was full of praise for the show and in particular local indigenous community members who appreciated the contact with the cast. Overall a great experience in the power for good the arts can have in a community setting.

Richard Fitzgerald, Coordinator, Bowers Theatre, St. Albans VIC



THE SAPPHIRES – THE 2022 CAST

Matilda Brown as Kay

Tharawal Woman Matilda is a 2015 graduate of QUT; after graduating she made her professional debut as Ann in the Riverside Theatre's production of *Stolen*, directed by Vicki Van Hout. Other theatre credits include Jadah in *Winyanboga Yurringa* for Carriageworks; which then toured Victoria, *The Siren Project* development; with a public showing hosted at the Merrigong Theatre Company for The Society of Histrionic Happenings. Matilda's theatre credits at QUT include Varya in *The Cherry Orchard*, Lady Montague in *Romeo and Juliet*, Mrs Stanley in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, directed by Jennifer Flowers, Natalie Beyer in *The Coast of Utopia: Voyage*, which was directed by David Bell, and *Mrs Oxenham* in *The Hot I Baltimore* directed by Robert Benedetti.

The role of Cynthia is to be confirmed.

Lorinda May Merrypor as Julie & Dance Captain

Darumbal Woman Lorinda is an Australian musical theatre performer originally from Rockhampton, QLD. In 2016, Lorinda graduated from the Griffith University Queensland Conservatorium with a Bachelor of Musical Theatre. While studying, she performed in several concerts, cabarets and theatre productions, including the role of Mimi Marquez in *Rent*. Lorinda has performed in a wide array of amateur productions in her hometown playing roles such as Nancy in *Oliver*, Little Inez in *Hairspray* and Dorothy Brock in *42nd Street*. After graduating from the conservatorium, Lorinda made her professional debut as a cast member of the Australian premier of the Broadway award-winning musical, *American Idiot*. She was then cast in the Australian National tour of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Lorinda is grateful for the opportunities she has had to be able to do what she loves every day and is thrilled to be a part of *The Sapphires*.

Jade Lomas-Ronan as Gail

Gamilaroi & Torres Strait Islander woman Jade studied at The Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts (ACPA) between 2014-2017 where she received a Diploma of Film Television and Theatre as well as a Certificate IV in Performing Arts and an Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts. During her years at ACPA and since she has performed in various stage roles, tvcs & voice overs. She is very excited to have been given the opportunity to play the role of Gail in the current touring production.

Oliver Wenn as Dave & Resident Director

Oliver is a 2005 NIDA Acting Graduate. He is both an actor and entrepreneur having previously played Dave Lovelace in the Black Swan / Belvoir Theatre tour of *The Sapphires* from 2010 -11. Oliver has a range of experience running various enterprises, from production to development of new work as well as his day to day commitments as founder and Director of The HubStudio a post-graduate training company in both Perth & Sydney. Oliver has appeared in various commercial work over the years; his most recent credits include two feature films yet to be released *Escape & Evasion* with Bronte Pictures, and *I Met A Girl* starring Brenton Thwaites & Joel Jackson. Previously Oliver has appeared in *Packed To The Rafters*, *Home & Away*, *Rake*, *Top Of The Lake: China Girl* & *Peter Allen : Not The Boy Next Door* and has appeared in funded SBS Short Film *Tribunal*. He is thrilled to be back playing Dave and honoured to be part of HIT Productions tour of such an important story.

Tibian Wyles as Jimmy

Tibian is a descendant from the Girramay and Kalkadoon tribes from North Queensland. He is a graduating Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Acting at The (ACPA) the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts in Brisbane. He appeared in *Black Diggers* written by Tom Wright and directed by Wesley Enoch, which Premiered at the 2014 Sydney Festival and toured onward to a sold out season at Queensland Theatre Company as part of the Brisbane Festival. Tibian most recently appeared in Legs on the Wall's production *The Man with the Iron Neck*



written by Ursula Yovich and directed by Josh Bond and Gavin Robbins which premiered at Brisbane Festival 2018 then toured major festivals around the country in 2019, Sydney Festival, Darwin Festival and Adelaide Festival. He is also an Ambassador for DigiYouth Arts working with Indigenous students, working with them to present the play *Glad Tomorrow*. Tibian is a member of international dance group 'DJUKI MALA' (Chooky Dancers), he has travelled across Europe and Asia performing contemporary dance, comedy mixed with Traditional Aboriginal culture.

Anthony Lim as Joe

Anthony is an Australian actor born and raised in Melbourne. The majority of Anthony's training is derived from Deakin University where he has undertaken a study of the fine arts (theatre & film). To further enhance his skills, he has also studied under Shaun Goss (NIDA) and Maria Efthymiopoulos (2 Divas). He has appeared on Robert Connolly's *Barracuda* (2016), Neil Triffett's *EMO The Musical* (2016) and Emma Freeman's *Glitch* (2019). Anthony is excited to be making his theatrical debut in Tony Briggs' *The Sapphires* as Vietnamese boy, Joe.

Don Battee as Robby

As a voice actor Don Battee has performed as Vector in *The Path of Neo*, popular Xbox *Enter The Matrix*, The Animatrix many short films, the Victoria educational story book of *Lion King*, the Light Knight production of *The Farm Kids* as well as the international tour of *And 1 Mixtape Series*, *Things You Shouldn't Know*, and more. Don has also created and delivered many voice types of corporate, industrial, radio and television. Some of his clients have included Channel V Australia, IBM Think World Technology, Reebok, Nike, Superset Tennis, Campbells Soup, Subway, MacDonalds, The Australian Discovery Channel, Main Event, Warner Bros, Columbia Pictures, Puma, Adidas and many, many more. Don is also an acclaimed actor, writer and producer. Some of his major on-screen acting credits include Australian movie *The Sapphires*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, *Enter The Matrix*, *Peter Pan* and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.



THE SAPPHIRES – THE CREATIVE TEAM

Playwright & Director- Tony Briggs

Tony is a Yorta Yorta/Wurundjeri (Woiwurrung) theatre & film creative (Director, Producer, Writer and Actor). He is the creator and writer of the stage and screen version of *The Sapphires*, the latter premiering at the Cannes Film Festival 2012. The film won two AWGIE awards and 11 of 12 AACTA awards in 2013. The stage version of *The Sapphires* enjoyed sell-out seasons at the MTC and Belvoir, winning two Helpmann Awards. Tony is also the co-originator, executive producer and writer of the eight part TV series *The Warriors*. As an actor of over 20 years he holds many credits to his name including feature roles in *Cleverman* (2015), *Broken Shore* (2013), *Redfern Now* (2012) and *The Slap* (2010). Tony's directorial debut for stage was for the Melbourne Theatre Company production of *Astroman* in 2018, and he has recently completed a short film supported by ABC television and Screen Australia, Indigenous departments as part of 'the short blacks' initiative. Tony has acted in roles for many of Australia's premier theatre companies. Tony will be appearing in two MTC productions in 2019; *Storm Boy* (with Queensland Theatre) and *Black is the New White* (with STC). This touring version of *The Sapphires* will be the first time Tony has directed his award winning story.

Set & LX Designer – Mark Howett

Mark is an award-winning director and designer for theatre and film. Mark designed many productions that have toured in Australia and overseas. *Cloudstreet*, which Howett won the Robert Helpmann Award for Lighting Design 2002, toured to Brooklyn Academy of Music, National Theatre London and The Kennedy Centre, and nationally in Australia. In 2003 Mark designed the international tour of *Crying Baby* for Stalker Theatre Company. Howett designed the lighting for Bangarra's production *Rites*, that toured to New York's City Centre in 1999 and the Paris Opera House. West End Credits include *Evita* (2014), *Cabaret* (2012), *Three Days in May* (2011), *A Country Girl* (2010), *Dreamboats and Petticoats* (2009) and *A Daughter is a Daughter* (2009).

Musical Director – Nathaniel Andrew

Nathaniel is a performer and teacher specialising in bass guitar, guitar and performance techniques and has worked across many levels of formal education at universities and vocational education institutions as a lecturer, private instructor and program director. He has held the role of Head of Music at the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts (ACPA) whilst maintaining a busy performance schedule nationally and internationally. Nathaniel holds a Bachelor of Music (with Distinction) from Central Queensland University and a Master of Music from University of Cincinnati. Nathaniel is a proud Yorta Yorta and South Sea Islander Man.

Choreographer – Leonard Mickelo

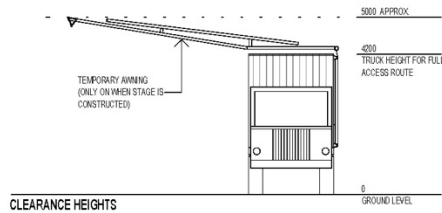
Leonard is a Kulalli and Bidjara Man from Central QLD. His foster mum embraced his passion to dance at the age of 10. He trained under the direction of Fiona Mc Ivor and Sandra Breen. In 2006, Leonard joined Bangarra Dance Theatre. He danced with the company for 12 years, touring internationally to America, Canada, most of Europe and Asia. As an Indigenous Ambassador he feels it's important to share and learn the traditional culture of this country. He loves to engage the next generation with their culture through dance. Leonard played the role of Jimmy in the musical *Priscilla 2018*. Leonard's hero is his foster mum, who opened his heart to dance.



POP UP STAGE

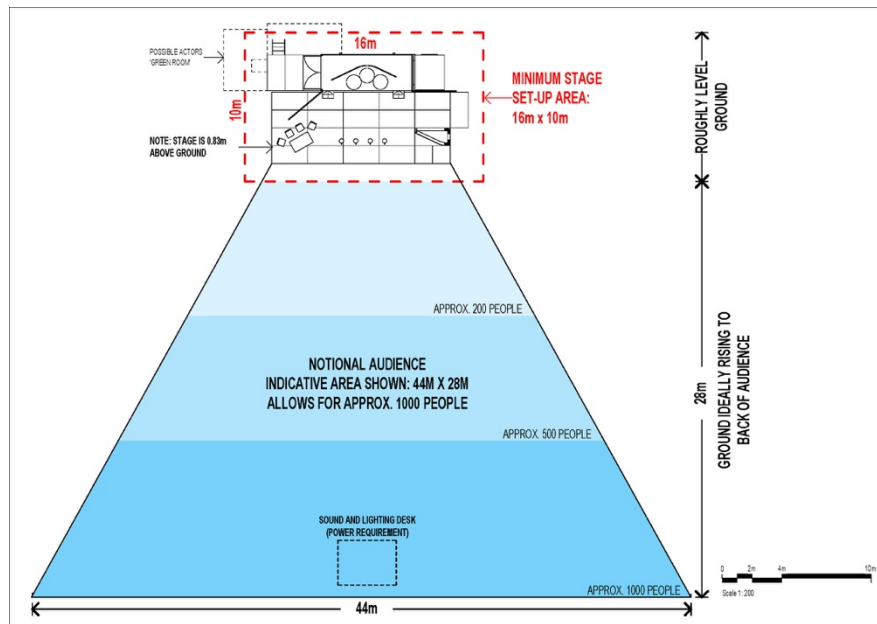
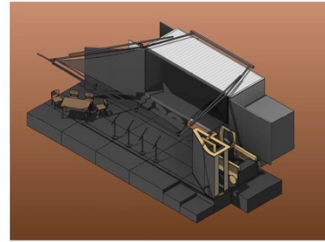
This touring production of *The Sapphires* has broken new ground by taking to show to remote Aboriginal communities where the performance will take place on a purpose built pop-up stage.

The pop-up design is by Philip Harris of Troppo Architects, a multi-award winning company committed to Ecologically Sustainable Development – environmentally responsible architecture - and are the first (and currently only) Australian recipients of the Locus Foundation Global Award for Sustainable Architecture. Nationally and internationally recognised, Troppo Architects first commenced practice in Darwin in 1980 and have applied their regionally responsive approach to projects across Australia. Many of these projects are carried out within and for Aboriginal Communities in some of the most remote corners of Australia. International work includes projects in Africa, PNG and Vanuatu.



THINGS TO CONSIDER IN ARRANGING YOUR SITE:

1. TRUCK ACCESS ROUTE IN, INCL. FOR TRUCK TURNING CIRCLE, REVERSING SPACE + CLEARANCE FOR:
 - POWER LINES
 - OVERHANGING TREES
2. WIND PROTECTION FOR STAGE AND AUDIENCE
3. ORIENTATION FOR AUDIENCE AWAY FROM SUN FOR DAYTIME SHOWS
4. FIRM AND LEVEL GROUND SURFACE FOR STAGE SET-UP AREA
5. POWER LOCATION AND CAPACITY
6. NIGHT-TIME LIGHTING FOR AUDIENCE MOVING IN & OUT
7. TOILET ACCESS FOR ACTORS AND CREW
8. GREEN ROOM SET-UP & SECURITY
9. COMMUNITY SAFETY / SITE & STAGE SECURITY





THE SAPPHIRES POP UP STAGE



Bit of chaos in awning truss land! Burning the midnight oil was certainly on the agenda.....



Sail & front screen fabric arrived for tomorrow's test. You'll get a good lighting effect off the sail



Our pop up truck begins construction. Light weight and easy to move around the stage for our actors.



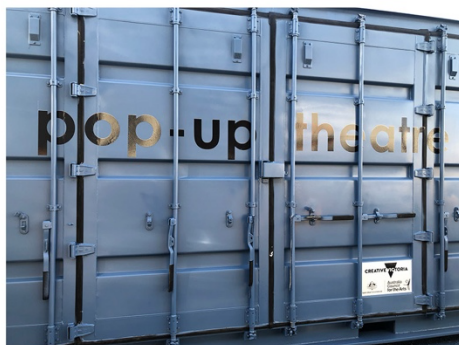
Tropo finally nailed the 3-person lift. Just polishing the ease of putting in the locking nuts....



Curtain rail under construction.



Set to load after a mammoth week! Tropo and Oscar Building in Horsham have nailed this ground-breaking design.



AND READY TO ROLL!!



FURTHER DISCUSSION MATERIAL

Suggested relevant links, publications, and readings for further exploration regarding the topics and issues raised in the play.

- The Sapphires: The Screenplay, by Keith Thompson and Tony Briggs. Adapted from the stage play and published in 2013 by Phoenix Education Australia.
 - The Sapphires, 2012 film based on the stage play starring Jessica Mauboy and Deborah Mailman. Distributed through Hopscotch Films.
 - Exploring some of the key events of 1968: <http://www.nostalgiacentral.com>
 - The 1967 Referendum and changing the Australian Constitution:
http://indigenousrights.net.au/civil_rights/the_referendum,_1957-67
 - Classroom tools for teachers, students and parents to entail knowledge and understanding of Australia's democratic heritage and traditions and the events around the 1967 referendum:
<http://civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce>
 - An overview of key events in the Vietnam War and useful classroom tools for examining inter-nation conflict: <http://www.anzacday.org.au/history>
 - A Guide to Australia's Stolen Generations:
<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/a-guide-to-australias-stolen-generations#axzz4oC3BfqHn>
 - The Sapphires: where are they now? 2012 article by Gary Nunn for National Geographic:
<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2012/09/the-sapphires-where-are-they-now/>
 - 2012 Interview with Tony Briggs: History of The Sapphires film and stage play, by Michael Boden for The Australian: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/tony-briggss-film-the-sapphires-is-as-good-as-gold/news-story/9a16062547272b1fe3d3a4ddcf7d2c47>
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THE ROLE OF THE PRODUCTION MANAGER

Duties

To manage production elements of the project including:

- quoting process once designs established
- appointing and managing communication with technical companies i.e. sound, lighting, set building
- establish schedules and ensuring they are adhered to.

To support and assist key personnel to achieve their aims

- e.g.: Director, Lighting/Set Designer
- plans costed and alternatives investigated
- ensure creatives have everything they need to perform their roles.

To provide financial planning and monitoring to project

- establish budgets and budget breakdowns
- consistently thoughtful of budgetary constraints
- regular monitoring and reporting of budget a progress to management.

To act as central information point for project.

To liaise with venues to co-ordinate production elements

- oversee all negotiations with venue
- provide venue with all relevant information
- manage bump-in directly.

To maintain documentation of project for future usage.

To supervise staffing levels and staff to achieve aims

- establish support personnel requirements and implement
- to ensure staff comply with vision and project aims.

To support Stage Management and production staff where needed.

To liaise with management regularly regarding forward planning for project.

A Production Manager's brief is basically to "make it happen", with of course keeping in mind all the factors that will affect the company and the show and keeping everybody happy at the same time.



THE ROLE OF THE STAGE MANAGER

Primarily the job of Stage Manager (SM) is made up of two parts.

Part one is to make sure rehearsals run efficiently and effectively. This means setting up the environment in which rehearsals take place, from marking up the space (approximating the set in the rehearsal room with tape on the floor) and collecting rehearsal props and furniture to co-ordinating costume fittings and publicity calls with the rehearsal schedule. During the rehearsal period I will be the link between the rehearsal room and the other departments for example publicity, marketing, the Lighting Set & Costume Designers.

During this time, I will also assemble the Prompt Copy which is the definitive record of the production. It contains contact sheets, props source lists, set and costume drawings, rehearsal schedules, production week schedule and it also contains my copy of the script which includes lighting and sound cues, script changes and blocking (a short hand form of recording actors moves). I will be using this script to 'call' the show.

Production Week starts when you 'bump-in' (putting everything into the theatre set, lights etc.) and ends with Opening Night. Part of this week I will spend in the theatre again to be the link to the rehearsal room as most of the people putting in the set etc. will not have seen a run of the show. During this week the set is completed, lights are focused, sound levels are set and plotting takes place. Plotting is when the Director and the Lighting Designer decide which lights will be up when and I record these 'lighting cues' in the Prompt Copy as I will be calling these cues to the Lighting Operator each night.

Part two is to make sure the show runs as the Director and Designer have set during Production Week. Which means making sure the set is as it should be, setting props, doing or co-ordinating any scene changes. I will also be communicating with Front of House staff to make sure the show starts at the right time, giving the actors calls (a countdown to the start of the show).

The SM is also the person who takes charge if there is an emergency. It is therefore advantageous for the SM to have First Aid knowledge.



A SELECTION OF PROFESSIONS RELATED TO THE ARTS

Actor

Actors portray roles in dramatic productions for theatre, film, radio and television. Work is sporadic and actors must cope with long periods of work or times when work is scarce. Actors require determination, imagination and initiative coupled with a desire for self-expression. A good memory will help success as well as a commitment to work and study. Daily work may include auditions, the studying of scripts, researching characters, costume fittings and constant voice and body training. An actor also needs to be multi-skilled and to branch into other areas such as voice-over work.

Writer

Authors can write for publication or performance. Work may be commissioned by a book or magazine publisher or theatre. Alternatively, work may be sold by the writer or an agent. The writer may find themselves choosing themes, researching and gathering background material, organising material and writing and rewriting work. Writers may re-write books for production, write original scripts, comedy sketches or text for musical works such as opera or musical comedy. Writers are observant and inquisitive of people and their environment.

Director

Involved in film, stage and television, directors oversee and control the specific aspects of production and have final responsibility for ensuring the production or performance occur on schedule. Directors study scripts, plan and arrange sets, sound effects and lighting, select and cast roles, direct and co-ordinate actors, add soundtrack and other effects. Directors essentially have creative ability, good communication skills and the ability to remain calm under pressure.

Producer

Theatre, Film and television producers plan and direct technical and artistic resources in their given production. They usually have extensive experience in the media industry, technical knowledge and proven entrepreneurial ability. Producers arrange finance, liaise with experts such as casting agents, writers and publicists, control all production facilities and staff, including the hiring of creative personnel, supervise editing (TV and film) and ensure quality. Producers require the ability to plan, organise and motivate. It is the Producer who maintains the “big picture” whilst ensuring all of the small details are not overlooked.

Production Assistant

Working in association with the Director and Producer, the role of the Production Assistant is to help the production run smoothly in any manner they can. A good P.A. will have great organisational skills, initiative, a healthy slice of enthusiasm, a keen eye for learning new things and secretarial skills would also be most beneficial. A happy, helpful P.A. will be the Director/Producer's dream and will enable them to concentrate on their own roles safe in the knowledge that things are being looked after.

Designer

Designers research, design and supervise the construction of sets and scenery, costumes and all the visual aids required in stage, film and television productions. They may produce freehand sketches, accurate scale models and plans and working drawings in consultation with the director of the production. Costume design and advice on other areas of technical production such as lighting and sound are in the stage designer's domain. Often work long and irregular hours. Designers need an above average artistic sense and the ability to combine practical and artistic skills.



THE ARTS TRAINING FACILITIES

Victorian College of the Arts - Dance, Acting, Directing, Producer, Musician, Stage Designer (phone – 03 9685 9300)

University of Melbourne - Musician (phone – 03 9344 5256)

Australian Ballet School – Dance (phone 03 9684 8600)

Deakin University - Dance, Acting, Arts Management, Musician (phone 03 9244 7255 – Faculty of Arts, Clayton)

Box Hill College of TAFE – Dance (phone 03 9286 9222)

The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) - Acting, Directing, Producer, Stage Designer (phone 02 9697 7600)

Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) - Acting, Directing, Producer, Stage Designer (phone 08 9370 6443)



THEATRE LANGUAGE/TERMS

SM	Stage Manager
ASM	Assistant Stage Manager - generally looks after props and costume maintenance and is always backstage helping the actors.
Bump-In	The period of time where the theatre is prepared for the actors - i.e. set, lighting and sound are installed, lighting plotted and all technical elements finally meet.
Bump-Out	Bump Out is the mad scramble to get everything out.
Front of House Staff	Staff hired to look after audience before seating for a show including Ushers, Box Office, etc.
Media Release	Information sent to all press to launch production and to generate media interest.
Prompt Copy	Also known as the “bible” of a production. The SM starts to assemble the prompt copy during pre-production (i.e. prior to commencement of rehearsals). At the end of a season, the prompt copy will contain not only a copy of the script, but all rehearsal and production schedules, all information relating to lighting, sound, set, props and costumes. It will also contain a theatre program, show poster and or flyer (if relevant) and a copy of the sound tape/disk. The prompt copy is kept on file should the company wish to remount the production at a future date.
Prompt Corner	Generally where the Stage Manager sits during the show. In most theatres this will be offstage left and downstage. Sometimes the SM will sit in the control booth with the Lighting and/or Sound Operators.
Stage Left/Right	These directions are from the actor’s perspective when they are facing the audience. An actor’s left is actually the audience’s right.
Upstage	Away from the audience.
Downstage	Towards the audience.
