

 LA MAMA



LA MAMA PRESENTS
**SPARE A THOUGHT
FOR JANA WENDT**

APRIL 8 - 26

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WRITERS NOTE:

This is a play about socio-economic inequality. It is being performed on traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woio-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, and was written on Pinechunga Land, but I didn't know that at the time of writing. I am still learning. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the great weight of our shared history and how it underpins privilege in the now. Sometimes overwhelm can lead to paralysis, or compartmentalisation. But I recognise we cannot keep compartmentalising the world around us if we wish to belong to it, understand it and make it more just. This is a play about socio-economic inequality in a cosmopolitan country where colonisation is ongoing. I am still learning. I pay my respects to storytellers and Elders past and present, and to all First Nations Peoples.

It is hard to remember exactly how I began writing this play, but I suspect 'Spare a Thought for Jana Wendt' emerged from lost hours doomscrolling climate news, realestate.com.au and the myschools website. It's a response to the ubiquitous claws of Airbnb versus the worsening drought of affordable housing. It's an expression of my most materialistic and altruistic selves, and all the versions that exist in between.

The main characters of this play are products of my inner critic, my wider circle, and my closest friends. They are fierce and flawed, funny and scathing, right and wrong. Representative of their time and context, they weave threads of real and imagined conversation from the vast Australian middle-class. But do they mean what they say?

Can they hear one another?

Ultimately, I think people generally are good, or at least want to be good, or at least want to be seen as good. In this play, I'm trying to untangle these contradictions in hopes the audience might look, laugh, or at the very least: spare a thought.

So, pour yourself a glass, put on DJ Shadow, and check your account balance while you lament the state of the world. Have a drink. Have a cracker.

Special thanks to the one and only Jana Wendt, who has lent her name in a demonstration of both her excellent humour and her creative sensibilities.

Nicola Watson

DIRECTORS NOTE:

When I first read this high-speed collision between the moral high ground and the comforts of the modern world I laughed out loud... and recognised myself. I was struck by its impatient circling of an argument no one can win, revealing just how ridiculous we look when we try. Nicola invites us to be a little less certain of our own virtue by amplifying our folly in comic stereo. I knew immediately I wanted to help usher this play into existence.

Anne Browning

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Writer: Nicola Watson

Director: Anne Browning

Performers: Alex Aldrich, Tess Masters,
Rebecca Bower & Rosie Traynor

Co-Producers: Nishka Varghese and Hazel Pigrum

Dramaturg: JoJo Zhou

Stage Manager: Lexie Jaensch

Set and Costume Designer: Bianca Pardo

Lighting Designer: Tom Vulcan

Sound Designer: Jack Burmeister

SPECIAL THANKS:

Erika Gofton, Caitlin Dullard, Caroline Craig, Chrissie Page, Christopher Clements, Claire Pardo, Claudia Mirabello, Emily Steel, Helen Magelaki, Ilona Nelson, Janice Muller, Jo Stone, Jonathon Ware, Kala Gare, La Mama Theatre, Mitchell Butel and the team at State Theatre Company of South Australia, Luke Excel, Margot Fenley, Max Morgan, Milo Hartill, Nescha Jelk, Nick Richardson, Peter Houghton, Rhona Svhila, Rhys Velasquez, Rufaro Zimbudzi, Shaun Miller, Tamanna Kaul, Wendy Bos, and of course, Jana Wendt.

This project has been generously supported by CreateSA, the Government of South Australia and the Independent Arts Foundation South Australia.





NICOLA WATSON
WRITER

Moving from Melbourne to regional SA four years ago, Nicola Watson is a treechanger, educator, songwriter and emerging playwright living in Penola on Pinechunga land. She writes about socio-economic inequality, status anxiety, and the sometimes slippery space between allyship and tokenism. Attending Melbourne University some decades ago, she almost failed the Bachelor of Creative Arts. Shortlisted for the 2023 Patrick White Playwright Award and SA Jill Blewett Literary Award, 'Spare A Thought for Jana Wendt' featured in a public reading by STCSA in their 2025 season of Great Australian Bites. This is her first play.



ANNE BROWNING
DIRECTOR

Anne Browning is an award winning theatre maker and actor and graduate of The Victorian College of the Arts. She was co-artistic director of the WA Youth Theatre Company which staged the first adaptation of the work of Tim Winton's Lockie Leonard Human Torpedo. Anne directed The Water Carriers, Australia the Show and The Colours for Melbourne Theatre Company and The Pitch with Peter Houghton for La Mama, Malthouse Theatre and on tour in Australia and the UK. As an actor she's performed in The China Incident for La Mama and Malthouse Theatre, The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney for Malthouse Theatre and Queensland Theatre and The Woman in the Window for Melbourne Theatre Company as well as numerous independent productions. Anne was Production Coordinator at Alice Miller School in Macedon where directed and adapted And Then There Were None, The Man from Mukinupin, The Threepenny Opera, What Rhymes with Cars and Girls, Sweet Charity, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth and wrote and directed the half hour film Rabbit Hole. Anne recently adapted the musical Mary Poppins from the PL Travers books with a soundtrack drawing on the styles of funk, rock, soul and disco.



JOJO ZHOU
DRAMATURG

JoJo Zhou (she/they) is a writer, dramaturg and narrative lead across many mediums. For live performance, their work has been produced across Sydney, Melbourne, and regional NSW. She is an independent dramaturg and creative support across both games and performance, and an assessor for some of Australia's major theatre companies, having studied a Master of Fine Arts (Writing for Performance) at NIDA. She was selected as a participant for Malthouse Theatre Company's 'Artist Development Program, APT's Developing the Dramaturg Program' and a member of Screen Australia's inaugural 'Future Leaders Delegation'. She is the Head of Narrative at Massive Monster, and a tutor and guest speaker on anything to do with writing.



BIANCA PARDO
SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

Bianca is a passionate Naarm/Melbourne based designer and maker. She has worked in set and costume design roles on West Gate, Mother Play, A Streetcar Named Desire (Melbourne Theatre Company); What's Yours (Red Stitch); Tarzan (JTC); RED (Little Life Productions); En Masse (Rawcus); Guys and Dolls, Passing Strange (Antipodes); Ngarngk: Giver of Life (La Mama/YIRRAMBOI). She was thrilled to be nominated for Green Room Awards for her Tarzan and Guys and Dolls designs.



LEXIE JAENSCH
STAGE MANAGER

Lexie is a Melbourne/Naarm-based stage manager who completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Production) at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2023. Notable stage management credits include 'Back To Te Maunga' (Antipodes Theatre Company), 'MJ: The Musical' (Michael Cassel Group), 'Lord of the Rings: A Musical Tale' (GWB Entertainment), 'The Beep Test' (Neylon & Peele), 'Follies' (Victorian Opera) and 'Groundhog Day The Musical' (GWB Entertainment). VCA credits include 'Little Women' (dir. Theresa Borg) and 'Heathers: The Musical' (dir. Alister Smith).



JACK BURMEISTER
SOUND DESIGNER

Jack Burmeister is a Melbourne based Sound Designer and Composer whose work sits at the intersection of theatre, film, and audio storytelling. His practice centres sound and music as dramaturgical forces; shaping narrative and audience experience rather than merely supporting it. He has been nominated for a Green Room Award for Outstanding Sound Design for *The Roof is Caving In* (dir. Belle Hansen) and was a graduate from the VCA in Interactive Composition.



TOM VULCAN
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Tom is a set and lighting designer who has a keen interest in the manipulation of space and creation of bold aesthetics. He enjoys working across all genres of live performance. He graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2023 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Production) where his work was recognised with the 2022 Lionel Gell Foundation scholarship for excellence.



NISHKA VARGHESE
CO-PRODUCER

Nishka Varghese is a Stage and Production Manager with over seven years of experience in student and community theatre. She is Co-President of the University of Melbourne Music Theatre Association and Co-runs Wayfarers Australia, a choral and theatre organisation that tours internationally. Most recently, the company completed a tour of Eastern Australia and New Zealand. Her recent credits include Shrek (UMMTA), Little Shop of Horrors (RMIT Redacts), Vox Humana (Wayfarers Australia), Into The Woods (UMMTA), Othello (MUSC).



HAZEL PIGRUM
CO-PRODUCER

Hazel Pigrum is a Naarm/Melbourne-based performer and producer working in live performance. Her practice spans text-based and devised theatre, movement improvisation and dance. Hazel is the Associate Producer, Performance for RISING 2026. She has worked on major touring musicals, tiny-budget indie theatre shows, and large-scale festival works. She has presented work at Melbourne Fringe Festival (2024), The University of Melbourne (2023 - 2024), Arts Centre Melbourne (2021), and The National Theatre (2019). Hazel was previously a member of The University of Melbourne's Theatre Board (2023) and a Melbourne Theatre Company Youth Ambassador (2020). Hazel has undertaken residencies with La Mama Theatre (2025) and Union House Theatre (2025). She was the recipient of the Louise Homphrey Prize for Excellence in Performance (Union House Theatre) in 2023 and the Long Tan Youth Leadership Award (ADF and the Australian Government) in 2019.)



REBECCA BOWER
PERFORMER

Rebecca Bower is an acclaimed Australian actress known for her versatile work across stage and screen. She is best recognised for her role as Jane in ABC's Spooky Files (Seasons 1–2) and her performance in the feature film *The Five Provocations*. She recently appeared in *The Platypus* at Brisbane Festival. A graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, she has toured with Bell Shakespeare and performed with Theatreworks, La Mama, and Red Stitch.



ALEX ALDRICH
PERFORMER

Two-time Green Room Award nominee for Best Actress, Alexandra's most recent stage credits include: The Trolley Witch, Cover: Ginny and Professor Umbridge in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (MCG); Olive in Summer of the 17th Doll (Dir. Petra Kalive); Cover: Woman, Miss Forsythe, Jenny and Letta in Death of A Salesman (GWB); Lady Macbeth in Macbeth , Capulet in Romeo and Juliet, Casca - Julius Caesar (Essential Theatre); Cover: Barbra, Tottie, Mack The Heartbreak Choir (Melbourne Theatre Company); Claire in The Maids (Belvoir 25A); Marquise de Merteuil in Dangerous Liaisons , Agatha in The Moors , Dracula in Dracula; King Herod in Salome (Dir. Stephen Nicolazzo); Georgette in The School For Wives (Bell Shakespeare); Player in Bambert's Book of Lost Stories (Barking Gecko) On television, she recently had guest roles in Preacher Season 4 (Frontier Productions) and Nine Network's True Story Season 2.

Alex also works as a Theatre Designer and Costume Maker, recently studying wooden puppet carving and building under internationally acclaimed Puppetmaster Berndt Obordlik. She is an Artist Support Worker, lecturer & teacher in Acting, Design and Theatre History, and is a co-director of independent cabaret theatre company 'Night Creatures'. Alex is a Graduate of NIDA (2011) and has a Bachelor of Creative Arts from University of Melbourne, where she co-founded the Melbourne University Shakespeare Company (MUSC).



TESS MASTERS
PERFORMER

A graduate of the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television, Tess lived and worked in the U.S for 30 years, and returned to Australia in 2021. Theatre includes: August: Osage County for MTC, Features of Blown Youth and St Kilda Tales for Ranters Theatre, Much Ado About Nothing for the Australian Shakespeare Company, Headlock and The Unicorn for La Mama, and The Comeuppance for Red Stitch (Green Room Award for Best Ensemble Cast).



ROSIE TRAYNOR
PERFORMER

Rosie has been in the industry for 40 years. A native Queenslander, Rosie studied acting at Uni of Southern Queensland, before moving to New York to study acting with Uta Hagen and Academy Award winner Sandy Dennis at HB Studio. Rosie also worked with Academy award winner Even Burstyn in her Melbourne masterclass. Rosie worked in Brisbane and Sydney in theatre, film and television. Projects included feature film Dark City directed by Alex Proyas, TV Series; Big Sky, Dolphin Cove, and Mission Impossible.



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La Mama Theatre is on the traditional lands of the peoples of the Kulin nation, and we give our respect to the Elders and to all First Nations people past, present and future. We acknowledge all events take place on stolen lands and that sovereignty was never ceded.

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We are grateful to all our philanthropic partners and donors, advocates, volunteers, audiences, artists and our entire community. Thank you!



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