

I Feel Fine



SYMPOSIUM

The Anthropocene is (arguably) the new geological epoch: this current moment in time where (some) humans have become the dominant force on the planet, radically altering land, ocean and atmospheric conditions. The term encapsulates issues ranging from climate crisis to mass extinction.

[artist book can be accessed online](#)

public service announcement
www.psatheatre.com/church

"We Drove Here in Cars"

—
*You've been saved by the bell
Ushered in from the bar
We gather together
We drove here in cars*

*Though the mountains are falling
Though the coral is bleaching
Though the amazon's burning
We drove here in cars*

***You've been saved by the bell
Ushered in from the bar
We gather together
We drove here in cars***

*We, the eco-anxious
All have buckets in our showers
We recycle our jars
**But we drove here in cars
We drove here
We drove here in cars***

"We Are God"

—
*We are God
We are the people
We are human
(But) We are God*

*Open your heart to the herd
We are all sheep and shepherd
We say **YES** and in one voice
We are God - we have no choice*

*Anthro (pocene)
Anthro (piece of shit)
Homo (sapien)
Homo (piece of shit)*

***We are God (Open your heart to the herd)
We are the people (We are all sheep and shepherd)
We are human (We say YES and in one voice)
(But) We are God (We are God - we have no choice)***

*Anthro (pocene)
Anthro (piece of shit)
Homo (sapien)
Homo (piece of shit)*

Responsorial Psalm

The response is:

*Everyday I see the same
white bellied sea eagle
on the same part of the
same bridge*

(Easy, right?)

Creed

This space is for pilgrims caught in the complex
bind of loving and hating their fellow humans.

We feel guilt and anxiety and shame.

We believe these feelings are complex,
and we do not glorify nor condemn.

We accept.

We encourage the herd to come with their shame.

We believe that the Anthropocene is the slow and
ironic discovery that we are God.

That to be God comes with responsibility.

That we are failing in our responsibility.

That being God isn't as great as it sounds.

That ultimately the climate does not
care for this fiction.

We are caught in the binary between
despair and hope.

We hold these contradictory ideas and
sit in the space between.

I Feel Fine.

Creative Team

Writer & Director

Zachary Sheridan

Producer

Erin Lockyer

Choir

Jacob & Isaac Diamond

Members of the Church

Amelia Burke

Kylie Bywaters

Simone Detourbet

Occasional Member

of the Church

Jackson Peele

Dramaturge

Reneé Newman

Architect

Jessee Lee Johns

Lighting Designer

& Stage Manager

Jasmine Lifford

Projection Designer

& Collaborator

Zal Kanga-Parabia

Costume Designer

& Set Consultant

Kaitlin Brindley

Big Dog*

Elise Wilson

Propaganda

Zoe Hollyoak

Graphic Designer

Tim Meakins

Collaborator

Elizabeth Bills

Mentors

Tim Watts & Shaun Nannup

Two things triggered this work. Firstly, the idea of the Anthropocene is staggering to me. To name an entire geological era after one species is mind-blowing. The second was the phrase “preaching to the choir.” That phrase has never sat well with me and I never knew why until I read Rebecca Solnit’s article of the same name for *Harpers Magazine*.

“The phrase *preaching to the choir* properly means hectoring your listeners with arguments they already agree with, and it’s a common sin of radicals... The phrase implies that political work should be primarily evangelical, even missionary, that the task is to go out and convert the heathens, that talking to those with whom we agree achieves nothing... (But) is there no purpose in getting preached to, in gathering with your compatriots? Why else do we go to church but to sing, to pray a little, to ease our souls, to see our friends, and to hear the sermon?”

In fact, the preacher never actually preaches to the choir. They preach to the congregation.

The article, which I read in 2017 after Alexa Taylor’s recommendation, sat in the back of my mind and one day it bubbled to the surface in the context of the Anthropocene. Then the work began.

*Assistant Director

Writers note

This is a world for the eco-anxious. That is the purpose of this (fictional) church.

The performance is like the sermon on a Sunday. However, just like how many religions have pilgrimages and missions, etc. it felt important that this work exist beyond the four walls of the theatre space. In this respect, the church offers several services including our dank zines for eco-anxious teens series (for a more hopeful terror) and propaganda posters (scattered around Perth); our postcards for the planet (thanks to Centre for Stories for housing our little postbox); and our emblems to cope with eco-anxiety card deck. These elements aim to encourage different avenues of engagement for the work's themes and ideas... All serving to cope with eco-anxiety; all also available online.

Aside from Solnit & the Anthropocene, there have been a multitude of influences in the making of this work: Chantal Bilodeau and Una Chaudhuri and their writings on climate change dramaturgy; Yuval Noah Harari's brilliant *Sapiens*; John Greene's *Anthropocene Reviewed* podcast; the photography of Edward Burtynsky; Donna Haraway; the *Synergies* documentary from Dr. Noel Nannup & Professor Stephen Hopper; Julian Rosefeldt's *In the Land of Drought*; the writings of Professor Peter Newman; Greta Thunberg; Extinction Rebellion; all the young people who filled out our survey for the eco-anxious (with some of their answers used directly in the "if the world was ending" scene).

And yeah, I guess an acknowledgment of my Catholic upbringing is also required.

Then there are all the other voices that have assisted along the way. The ones who have helped face-to-face. I would like to thank WT McRae & Lindsey Buller Maliekel for their insight into meaningful audience engagement; Grace Chow for their time in collaborator sessions; Nicolee Fox for their rad photos of Erin; Stephanie Somerville for being a legend; Cecile Vuailat & Propel Youth Arts WA, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Sam Longley, Libby Klysz & Lazy Susan's Comedy Den for helping out with rehearsal space, Claudia Mancini & Centre for Stories, and Paper Mountain for their support; and The Blue Room Theatre for existing - for being the only place like it.

Of course, I would also like to thank the team. They're the best.

Finally, to the congregation. Thank you for coming. Thank you for your time and attention in this crazy world we live in.

I hope you enjoy the service. And I hope you think about it afterward.

-
Zachary Sheridan

Dramaturge's note

My take on dramaturgy is inspired by practitioners such as 'new dramaturgy' pioneer of the Flemish new wave Marianne van Kerkhoven. This school of thought suggests that dramaturgy is beyond the structuring of words, but rather asks meaning-full questions that support, interrupt and disrupt the form, content and context of a piece. The logic of the work needs to not only involve a bridge between image, concept and action but also question what is the place of the work in the wider world and how the work operates as a cultural text or sign system. I worked with Zach on the big questions - ecological crisis, existential threat, value systems - and how all this could potentially engage in a conversation between art and activism. I encouraged him to think about more than the performance and how as artists we all can activate action in some capacity. The zines, the postcards, this artist catalogue documenting the process, the interviews/survey, the play readings, the regular 'family' newsletters to the team, the workshop with Uncle Shaun Nannup, was born. We spoke of finding ways to balance satire with

hope, silence with dialogue, abstraction with realism. From here there were more questions and more maps and puzzles and drawings and scripts and songs. In the final instance, in the weeks of Global Climate Strikes and threats of mass extinction, I am incredibly proud of Zach and the team for not only making a new performance work but also working incredibly hard to think outside the black box to ask the big questions - what is my role in making the future I want to see?

-
Dr. René Newman

Zachary Sheridan is a theatre maker from Adelaide. A graduate of WAAPA's Bachelor of Performing Arts, Zach received the inaugural Belinda Dunbar Award for top student of the cohort. Zach has written *Head Case* (shortlisted for the New Plot Award, 2017), *The Cockburn Incident* (2018 Adelaide Fringe Tour Ready Award), *GRACE* (2019 Fringe World Weekly Theatre Award), *Cookies and Cream*, *UEVOLITUB* (Winner of "Best Play" at WAYTCo's 24 Hour Play Generator, 2019), and *The Dead* (recipient of the 2019 Flinders University Young Playwrights' Award). Other credits include *Solo Stage: Moments of Being*, *The Secret Project: Dispatch* (WAAPA, 2017), *Improvement Club* and *Stay With Us* (The Last Great Hunt, 2018).

Erin Lockyer is a Perth based producer, connecting artists' work with audiences. Erin has produced and collaborated on *The Inconsequential Lives of Little Fish* (Frieda, Sam & Friends, 2018), *Penthouse* (Lazy Yarns, 2018), and *GRACE* (public service announcement, 2019) at The Blue Room Theatre. Erin is currently working as the producer for *I Feel Fine* (public service announcement) and *Playthings* (Second Chance Theatre) as part of The Blue Room Theatre's 2019 Development Season.

Alt-folk oddity **Jacob Diamond** sings bold songs about love and death. After years in Perth's songwriting underground, Diamond has recently emerged as one of the foremost singer-songwriters in the west, furnished with huge melodies and incisive lyrics. His work has earned him first prize in The Big Splash band competition and WAM awards for best folk act and best male vocalist. Diamond is also seen regularly on the national touring circuit playing guitar and singing for art-pop powerhouse Methyl Ethel and beloved WA singer-songwriter Stella Donnelly.

Isaac Diamond is an emerging theatre maker and actor from Perth, Western Australia. His passion for devising and performing in evocative and nuanced work was enriched during his time at WAAPA, where he completed his Bachelor of Performing Arts, majoring in Performance Making. Upon graduation Isaac was awarded the 'Performer Extraordinaire' and 'First Class Collaborator' awards and in 2018 Isaac was honoured to receive the Stephen Stone award for Best Performance at the Blue Room Theatre. Recently Isaac has appeared in shows all over Perth with: *Cloud Nine* (WAYTCo), *The Night Zoo* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre) *Penthouse* (Lazy Yarns) and *Front* (SLATE Theatre).

Amelia Burke is a Perth based theatre-maker and passionate environmentalist. She is a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Performing Arts in Performance Making course at WAAPA. In her final year, she directed *Cookies and Cream*, which was presented as part of TILT. She was also recognised as the stand-out director of her cohort, receiving the 'Director in the Making' award. Outside of WAAPA, Amelia co-created and produced *Miss Westralia*, a new Australian musical that had a sell out season at The Blue Room Theatre in 2019. Amelia is a proud member of *I Feel Fine: Church of the Anthropocene*.

Kylie Bywaters began her full-time training at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in 2015, graduating in 2017, and has been involved in various productions and roles with WAAPA and a collective of theatre companies since her studies began. Upon graduation, Kylie received the 2017 "Performer Extraordinaire" award for performer excellence during her time at WAAPA. Her most recent performances include *Floor Thirteen* (The Blue Room Theatre), *Hiro* (Blue Room), *Threshold* (The Blue Room Theatre), *The Night Zoo* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre), *DisSolution* (Tempest Theatre), *String Symphony* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre).

Simone Detourbet is a Perth based creative, originally from Darwin. She moved to Perth to attend the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts where she completed the Aboriginal Theatre Course in 2015 and the Screen Performance Course in 2016. Since then she has worked as an actor (*Conversations with the Dead*, 2017; *Less Light*, 2018; *GRACE*, 2019) and directed (*Let me Finish*, 2018/19). In 2018, Simone attended a development program in Los Angeles, was a key creative on a documentary project filmed in Rwanda, and was also participant in the 2018 Screen Diversity Showcase.

Jackson Peele is a passionate performer, writer, composer and director who is in his final year at WAAPA (Music Theatre). He directed and co-wrote the musical *Kate, Gus & The Other Kids* with writing partner Conor Neylon this year. Their mini-musical *The Beep Test*, was the recipient of the 2019 Julie Michael Cabaret Award. Acting highlights at WAAPA include Doug in *Strictly Ballroom*, *Lonny in Rock of Ages*, and *Daddy in Sweet Charity*. He is relishing the opportunity to tickle the guitar strings and be onstage in *I Feel Fine*.

Renée Newman has been an actor, writer, director and producer for nearly twenty years. Her performance interests/credits include: producer and performer on *Those who fall in love like anchors dropped upon the ocean floor* 2014; 2015; 2016; *Sleeping Beauty* 2016; director *Public Space* 2013; creator, director and writer for *Seeking Basic Needs and Other Tales of Excess* in 2018 for PICA and Fringe World; writer, performer and producer *Virgie* 2011; 2012. She is a researcher and lecturer at WAAPA and holds a PhD from Murdoch University.

Jessee Lee Johns was born in 1980 in Perth, where he lives and works. After completing a Bachelors Degree at Curtin in 2000, he had a rather lengthy sabbatical from the practice of art, to the point where he's pretty certain those credentials have long since expired. His practice is rooted in a DIY philosophy of lowered standards and tactical ignorance that has generated a list of impressive sounding achievements. Unfortunately, we can't really get into a discussion of said achievements here - the producer has stipulated that the bio be 100 words long, and that limit is to be strictly.

While completing her studies at WAAPA, **Jasmine Lifford** has had many opportunities to develop her skills in lighting design. Whilst at WAAPA, Jasmine has worked with acclaimed directors such as Emily McLean for *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Jasmine's first professional work, *See You Next Tuesday*, premiered at The Blue Room Theatre and was directed by Alexa Taylor.

Zal Kanga-Parabia is an artist with a passion for community engagement, diversity, science communication and storytelling. He was born in Sydney and moved to India at a young age, later to Perth. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Physics from Edith Cowan University. He currently coordinates the Assembly Project at The Blue Room Theatre, was the Creative Coordinator for the KickstART Festival, 2018, and was a finalist for Western Australian of the Year 2018 for his work with young people.

Kaitlin Brindley is a set and costume designer passionate about the world of theatre. She graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts with a Bachelor of Performing Arts majoring in Design in 2017. Kaitlin is excited to pursue opportunities to work collaboratively with other theatre makers. She is enthusiastic about creating work that holds relevance to a modern day audience and using the platform of theatre to make comment on contemporary issues. Kaitlin was the recipient of the 2017 David Hough Award for Outstanding Achievement in Design.

Elise Wilson is an emerging performer and theatre-maker. Since graduating WAAPA in 2018, Elise has performed in *GRACE* at The Blue Room Theatre; she has toured *Cookies and Cream* to Adelaide Fringe; she has been developing her new work *Supertongues and Supertasters* as part of a Fremantle Arts Centre Residency, which received mentorship and a development reading at The Blue Room Theatre's Winter Nights Program; she wrote *Floor Thirteen* as part of The Blue Room Theatre's 2019 Season; she performed in *The Wolves* at The Blue Room Theatre; and she joined The Big Hoo Haa ensemble to perform comedy improv.

Zoe Hollyoak is the Artistic Director of The Cutting Room Floor, an independent and collaborative theatre company in Perth. Zoe graduated from Performance Making at WAAPA in 2015. Her most recent devising and performance credits include: *Jumping the Shark Fantastic* (PICA, 2017), *Ecosexual Bathhouse* (PICA, 2017). She has written four plays, two of which have toured nationally: *Poly* (2013), *All the Single Ladies* (2014), *I Can Breathe Underwater* (2015), and *The War on Food* (2016). Zoe is known for creating *Home Open*, a series of short performances that take place in a strange's home. Zoe has worked with Perth Theatre Company, The Blue Room Theatre, Country Arts WA and Perth Theatre Trust in marketing and publicity positions.

Elizabeth Bills is an emerging professional artist from Boorlo (Perth) with a Bachelor of Arts from UWA. Her curatorial practice is rooted in accessibility to enable a more egalitarian approach to experiencing art. Working across multiple mediums including sculpture, installation and performance, Elizabeth's art practice documents her phenomenal experience of the world and her emotional responses to it. In her current work, she explores her socialisation in the mores, values, myths and contradictions of contemporary Australian society.



**The
Blue Room
Theatre**



The Blue Room Theatre is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, and is supported by the State Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. Our development season is supported by the City of Perth. I Feel Fine (Church of the Anthropocene) development and process is proudly sponsored by Healthway, promoting the Drug Aware message and Propel Youth Arts WA.

This program is printed on 100% recycled paper. Also, a donation has been made to Trillion Trees Australia to offset the paper cost for printing programs.