

THE BLUE ROOM THEATRE and ELHAM ESHRAGHIAN-HAAKANSSON
present

a *love* letter
to the
NIGHTINGALE

8-26 OCTOBER



THE BLUE ROOM THEATRE

53 JAMES ST, NORTHBRIDGE
blueroom.org.au | BOX OFFICE 9227 7005

**The
Blue Room
Theatre**

2024 SEASON

We wish to acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation as the traditional owners of Boorloo. I acknowledge I create on their land. We wish to acknowledge and respect the living culture, and heritage of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the essential role they hold in story-telling, in community and in our understanding of nature, spirit and connection. We stand by trust, equality and unity, so we may build a just and safe world for all.

a *love* letter to the **NIGHTINGALE**

is a saga about love, an immersive world of cinematic and theatre magic merged with Persian mythology. This poetic epic brings you the tragic tale of the Nightingale and marks the theatrical debut of award-winning video artist **Elham Eshraghian-Haakansson**.

Somewhere within the lands of dreams and nightmares, this tale takes audiences across captivating landscapes. The Nightingale tells us of her tragedy. She is tethered to two faces; Rage and Reason. They speak. The theatre fills with an enchanting pulse of vivid film, light, sound, movement & spoken word. The legend unveils the mystery behind the Nightingale's broken melody. We witness the eruption, release, and flow of rebirth, pain and courage – an ode to those who hope for a better tomorrow.

CONTENT WARNINGS

Contains references to sexual and physical assault; staged fighting; coarse language; adult themes; partial nudity; and use of smoke/haze and strobe lighting.

Please be aware that this performance includes the use of Honeyrose herbal cigarettes, which are tobacco and nicotine-free. Ingredients and details at honeyrose.com.au.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

“These vessels that carry a sacred something. To understand and respond to these uncomfortable feelings of power/less/ness. I ask how resistance and collision manifest when you confront the experience of pain. It became a call to witness feminine pain and masculine empathy. Before I knew it, it became a script. A love letter to those that hope for a better tomorrow.”

ELHAM ESHRAGHIAN-HAAKANSSON
Director/Lead Artist



CAST & CREW

ELHAM ESHRAGHIAN-HAAKANSSON

DIRECTOR / LEAD ARTIST

Elham Eshraghian-Haakansson is an award-winning Iranian-Australian video artist, film director and emerging theatre director. Her arena of work centers itself within communal and collaborative social practice. Her research navigates inherited stories and post memory felt by displaced community through the poetics of the moving image. She invites viewers to become the 'witness' rather than the 'passive bystander', examining empathy in film poems, and immersive multi-media experiences facilitating a critical discussion surrounding empathy, custodianship, compassion, and social change.

Her work has exhibited nationally and internationally, receiving numerous prestigious art awards for her video installations such as the 2018 Dr. Harold Schenberg Art Prize, 2020 Invitation Art Prize, 2020 14th Arte Laguna Special Prize Award and the 2022 Ellen José Art Prize as well as a recipient for the inaugural Early-Career Creative and Performance Leadership Fellowship 2022 with the Forrest Research Foundation.

She co-wrote and directed her debut theatre play a love letter to the Nightingale (presented by the Blue Room Theatre 2024). More recently, her Virtual Reality (VR) artwork of the same name as her debut theatre work, a love letter to the Nightingale VR (2023) was selected as part of the BAFTA-Qualifying 2024 Aesthetica Short Film Festival in the UK.

Her artistic values prioritise agency, empathy and legacy advocating for community arts programs, as co-founder of the Second Generation Collective, (the collective having been selected for the VACS Major Commission with PICA and Creative Australia for 2025) which seeks to bridge intergenerational gaps, navigating trauma and communal care.

ASHKAAN HADI

ACTOR

Ashkaan Hadi, an emerging Iranian-Australian actor, starring as REASON. Known for his collaborative work in immersive soundscapes and multi-installation film, as well as his performance in the award-winning video art, face to face (2020).

JESSICA RUSSELL

PRODUCER

Jessica Russell is a director, producer, and maker based in Boorloo. She holds a Bachelor in Performing Arts from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and a Masters in Screen Studies (Directing & Cinematography) from the WA Screen Academy. In 2018, Jessica was invited to observe Ivo van Hove and the Internationaal Theater Amsterdam for their critically acclaimed work, Een Klein Leven.

Jessica was an inaugural participant in the Women in Film & Television Australia & CinefestOZ Writers Retreat, Video Designer on The Tempest (2021) and Audio Visual Designer on Prima Facie (2024) for Black Swan State Theatre Company. She has worked across ten independent productions at The Blue Room Theatre and produced MindCon for Mitch Harvey Company, presented by Co3 Contemporary Dance and IN CRIMSON, co-presented by Natalie Allen & The HotHouse Company. Jessica is also a teaching artist with AWESOME Arts, teaching cinematography and storytelling to primary students.

CARA FLAME

CO-WRITER

Cara Flame is a MIECAT trained arts therapist, acting coach and theatre maker based in Perth, Western Australia. She offers individual and group arts-based inquiry for people who yearn to inquire into themselves, their experiences, their values, and how they would prefer to be. She has worked in theatre and film, specialising in devisings hows and films with different groups in the community about things that are of interest them. Cara recently completed a professional doctorate on the subject of the therapeutic process of creating a theatre production.

DANNY AGHAIE

ACTOR

Danny Aghaie, an emerging Iranian-Australian actor, starring as RAGE. His diverse experience shines, from contemporary art film installations to supporting roles in commercial hits like Top Knot Detective (2016), Below (2019) and DraphT (2020).

DALEY RANGI

DIRECTING MENTOR

Daley Rangi is a shapeshifter, a Te Atiawa Maori artist at large. Joyfully unpredictable, they generate antidisciplinary works investigating injustice and speaking truth to power. They are neurodivergent, which infiltrates and informs their practice. Thus far, they have exhumed tall tales of ecological sovereignty, disability autonomy, contested history, ethical anthropophagy, queer adaptability, ideological virality, and many other manifestations ending with 'y', and beginning with "'why?'"

Daley has had two works shortlisted for the Griffin Award, Curiosity and Tetaraimaka-moana, with the former also shortlisted for the Patrick White Playwrights Award. They were the winner of the Midsumma Art Award in 2020, and the recipient of the Stephen Cummins Residency the same year, undertaken with Performance Space.

They worked as Assistant Director on City of Gold (Sydney Theatre Company/Black Swan State Theatre Company) and Fences (Sydney Theatre Company), and are currently under commission with Malthouse Theatre to write their exciting new theatrical work, Fever Pitch. They have developed new live performance works with Vitalstatistix at their national hothouse, Adhocracy, for the last three years in a row, and undertook a CultureLAB residency from Arts House to continue the development of their protest game, DISSENT. Daley's blistering solo performance work, Takatapui, has been performed at Sydney Opera House, Basement Theatre, and The Blue Room Theatre. Daley, like their practice, is inspired by ancestry and still searching for answers.

ASHTON NAMDAR

SOUND COMPOSER

Ashton Namdar is an emerging Iranian-Australian sound producer and artist. Having produced film scores, Ashton has trained experience in classical and electronic instruments, with a keen interest in creating a fusion between the two. He is currently creating his own EP album under YUNGBREADMAN and emerging in the theatrical scene for developing scores for the stage.

MATT ERREN

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Matthew Erren (He/Him) is an emerging Lighting Designer and Associate Lighting Designer, graduating from the West Australian Academy of Performing Art majoring in Lighting Design (2019), Matthew has spent his professional career designing for Theatre, Dance and Exhibitions. Matthew Erren was nominated for PAWA Outstanding Lighting Design for his work on Catch 22 (Amelia Sagrabb Projects, Blue Room Theatre)

Recently Matthew Erren has been Lighting Designer: 24 Hour Play Generator (WAYTco), Lighting Designer: Ignorance was Bliss (Enneagon Movement), Associate Lighting Designer: Brothers Wreck (Mark Howett, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company), Associate Lighting Designer: Dirty Birds (Paul Jackson, Black Swan State Theatre Company).



JAY EMMANUAL

DRAMATURGY

Jay Emmanuel is a theatre-maker, writer, director, creative producer and community advocate. He is committed to community development using participatory theatre making processes, actively engaging the CACD space to facilitate expression for communities to tell their stories. Engagement with moral dilemmas around race, identity, gender, sexuality, social exclusion has enabled communities, especially young people from migrant, refugee and queer communities to speak up in often hostile environments.

In the past, he has worked with Theatre du Soleil (France), Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Perth Festival Lab, Perth Winter Arts Festival (WA) and with internationally renowned director Ariane Mnouchkine.

In October 2016, he founded St George's Dance and Theatre program and has produced several well-received works including; Helpmann Award-nominated *A Migrant's Son*, Fringe award-winning work *Syncope*, *Biryani* (Perth Winter Arts Festival), a solo show *MAA*, and *In Between* (Encounter), *To Tell Tales* (KickstART Festival) and co-produced *In Situ* (Strut Dance Co) and *Proximity* Festival.

In 2019, he was shortlisted for WA Young Person of the Year award and Woodside Best Emerging Arts Award in 2016. He is a graduate of the two-year program at Ecole Jacques Lecoq. In 2020, Jay founded Encounter, WA's new Theatre Company that champions stories from diverse cultures. Featuring a professional ensemble of emerging and established culturally diverse performers, it stages unique productions of excellence while exploring innovative and collaborative ways of making new theatre works.

REBECCA RIGGS-BENNETT

SOUND FACILITATOR

Rebecca Riggs-Bennett (she/they) is a Boorloo-based artist and composer-sound designer working with sound to create immersive, participatory experiences. Through live art, installations, and spoken narratives, Rebecca explores entangled histories and human experiences. Projects include *so once you were here they had you* (commissioned by Fremantle Biennale 2023), *Our Sandman* (Cool Change Contemporary 2019) and *my sandman* (Crack Theatre Festival 2017).

Her composed designs have contributed to works including *Punkaliyarra* (BighART/Perth Festival 2023), *Time Reveals The Unseen* (MOD. Adelaide 2022), *Nocturna* (The Kabuki Drop 2021) *Habitats & Homes* (10 Nights In Port Festival 2021), *Playthings* (Black Swan State Theatre Company 2021), and *Whale Fall* (The Kabuki Drop/Perth Festival 2021).

HAYLEY NIEL

STAGE MANAGER

Hayley Neil is an emerging creative in the Performing Arts and Film industry. She has completed her Bachelor of Arts in Stage Management at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA), and Bachelor of Arts in Screen Arts at Curtin University. During her studies at WAAPA she worked on the productions *Footloose*, *Godspell*, *Assassins*, and at Curtin University films *Kia Kaha* and *Road Dogs*. She is a national and international award-winning Producer for the film *Road Dogs* which debuted in film festivals from 2018 - 2020. Professionally Hayley has worked on *Prima Facie* (Black Swan State Theatre Company), *Promises & Wild Beasts* (Mama Kin Spender), *Macbeth* (WAAPA), *The Pool* (Black Swan State Theatre Company).



ASHA KIANI

ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR,
PERFORMANCE CONSULTANT

Asha Kiani (she/her) is a performer, theatre maker, storyteller, musician and Teacher. Born and raised by her Indian father and Irish mother on Wardandi Nyungar country, she draws inspiration from the diverse threads that weave her identity. Asha has been involved in story telling projects with The Centre for Stories and Perth Festival and, in 2019 devised and performed in Saga Sisterhood, a transformative performance project for South Asian women. In January 2020, Asha wrote and performed her debut solo piece Drift which explored grief and loss and received the audience vote for Best of (The Blue Room Theatre, 600 Seconds, Perth Fringe World Festival).

In June 2020, Asha co-founded the Second Generation Collective with Artist Elham Eshraghian-Haakansson. Asha and Elham work with the children of migrants to Australia - the Second Generation- to collect, curate and give voice to their stories. In 2020, they worked with the local Iranian-Australian community, to curate stories of displacement, migration, home and identity via multi-modal art forms. Inspired by her work with this community, Asha wrote, directed and performed in *Áváreh* آواره & Found at The Blue Room Theatre (900s of Storytelling) in January 2021. In February 2021, Eshraghian-Haakansson and Kiani participated together in the 2021 Perth Festival Connect Lab which immerses a selection of emerging artists in the work and ideas of the festival.

'Asha has worked as a Teaching Artist for Barking Gecko Theatre Company and on the production team for *The Dirty Mother* by Michelle Hall (nominated Best Theatre, Melbourne Fringe 2020). She is also a member of Women of Music Production Perth (WOMPP) and is writing and producing her debut EP. Asha pursues the 'untold stories' around her and seeks to connect with audiences via authenticity, empathy, vulnerability and humour.

ELLIOTT NIEVES

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Elliott Nieves is an accomplished cinematographer and digital designer, skilled in cinematography, lighting, run-and-gun video capture, color grading, motion graphics, and digital design. As a dedicated member of the Australian Cinematographers Society (ACS) and a committee member, Elliott has been recognized with multiple Gold and Silver ACS Awards, with his work also entered into the national ACS Awards.

Known for collaborating with other creatives to bring their vision from script to screen, Elliott has recently contributed to a variety of projects, including TV commercials for notable brands like Western Power, Kleenheat, LotteryWest, RAC, and Watches of Switzerland. His diverse portfolio also includes music videos for international artists and emerging local talent, cinematography for fine artist Elham Eshraghian, numerous short films, and a wide range of corporate videos.

In addition to his professional work, Elliott shares his expertise by guest teaching filmmaking and camera skills at Curtin University. With a strong background in corporate environments, he has represented leading agencies such as Gatecrasher, Rhythm Films, Sandbox Productions, Hullabaloo, and Lush - The Content Agency, collaborating on projects for clients like RAC, Bankwest, Cancer Council WA, The Road Safety Commission, and Mineral Resources.



MYLES POLLARD

ACTING COACH

Myles Pollard has been working as an actor, writer, director, producer, teacher and communications facilitator for over two decades. He graduated as an actor from the National Institute of Dramatic Art with a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (Acting) in 1998 and from Edith Cowan University with a Bachelor Of Arts in Education (English/Drama) in 1994.

Myles has appeared as an actor in many Australian television series including Australia's most successful TV series McLeod's Daughters, Home and Away, Packed to the Rafters, Underbelly, Double Trouble, East West 101, All Saints, Rescue Special Ops, Mystery Road and Itch 2.

His feature film credits include Wolverine, Drift, The Turning, The War That Changed Us, Looking For Grace, Jasper Jones, the Gateway, Danger Close, How To Please a Woman, Before Dawn and Frank and Frank. His stage credits include, City Of Gold (STC), Sydney II – Lost and Found (Theatre 180), Extinction (Black Swan), The Winters Tale (Bell Shakespeare), A Mid Summer Night Dream (Black Swan), Boy Gets Girl (Black Swan), The Glass menagerie (Black Swan), End Of The Of The Rainbow (Ensemble), The True Story Of Butterfish (Brisbane Powerhouse) and Mistero Buffo (Belovoir).

ROUHA ALIZADEH

FILM NARRATOR

ARJANG PIRMORADY

ROUHA ALIZADEH

TRANSLATORS (FARSI)

ASHA KIANI

FILM ACTOR

MISHA NOORI

FILM ACTOR

VAFA KIANI

FILM ACTOR

ARAAN KOUSARI

CONSULTANT

JARRAD RUSSELL

VFX ARTIST

TRISHA SONI

PUBLICIST

Some of the imagery incorporates AI generative elements. Please visit www.elhameshraghian.com for further information on transparency, respect for intellectual property and ethics concerning the use of this process.

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