



Photo by Dylan Evans

## DOLL – BABUSHKA

### PRESENTER INFORMATION

*Little  
Black  
Dress  
Creatives*

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## ABOUT THE SHOW

*What did Ken and Barbie do when you weren't looking?*

*Babushka present a cute and creepy cabaret all about our first childhood BFF, the doll. Utilising their range of talents the Babushka gals will nurse dolls, break dolls and become dolls in their typically surprising arrangements of everything from Regurgitator to Offenbach.*

*Prepare to be seduced, comforted, tickled and burped through a darkly comedic musical experience drawing from opera, 80s pop, nursery rhymes and rock'n'roll. Take stroll down the sinister side of memory lane and see the world through your Dolly's eyes: How do we use them to objectify, pacify, falsify and deny?*

*We yearn to be Barbie, cuddle our Cabbage Patch baby, stick pins in Voodoo dolls (but not in blow-up dolls), and sometimes we behave like dolls ourselves. Babushka beckons you into the Barbie Dreamhouse for a very grown-up play-date... Batteries sold separately.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creative/Co-Musical Director: Alicia Cush

Director: Caroline Dunphy

Designer: Penelope Challen

Lighting Designer: Andrew Meadows

Producer: Nuala Furtado

Performers: Alicia Cush, Bethan Ellsmore & Judy Hainsworth

Co-Musical Director/Accompanist: Luke Volker

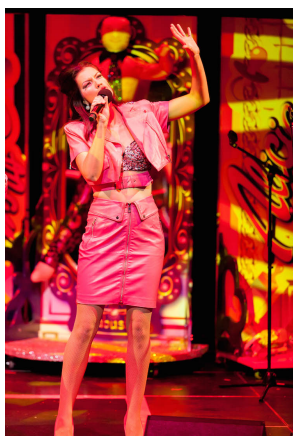
## ABOUT BABUSHKA

The dynamos of Babushka are your new favourite night out. Slinging musical innovations, quirky comedy and unapologetic sass, these chanteuses are a whole lot of Tina Fey meets Meow Meow with a pinch of Broad City and a dash of Tripod. Babushka is three drastically different divas that are flirtatious, cheeky and boast a set of unmatched pipes. Their unique arrangements, musical sketches and mash-ups have garnered acclaim from classical music nerds and indie rock buffs alike. The ladies of Babushka will lambast their audience with raunchy wit, sly humour and fabulous vocals leaving everyone wanting more.

Since premiering their wares at Queensland's own Woodford Folk Festival, Babushka has performed at Brisbane Festival, Queensland Cabaret Festival, Wonderland Festival, Brisbane Cabaret Festival, Adelaide Fringe Festival, Anywhere Festival, presented two seasons at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts and toured regional Queensland. In 2014, they also won Best Cabaret Act at the Grand Final of the Short & Sweet Cabaret Festival, Brisbane Powerhouse.

When not performing as part of their beloved Babushka, Alicia, Bethan and Judy are in-demand professional performers in their own right. As individuals, the girls have performed with Opera Queensland, OzOpera, Alpha Crucis Ensemble (The Southern Cross Soloists II), Sydney Theatre Company, La Boite Theatre Company, shake & stir theatre co, Women in Voice, Oscar Theatre Company, The Qld Conservatorium Opera Department, Operacus and The National Youth Choir of Australia.

## ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



**Alicia Cush** is a Brisbane-based operatic performer, theatre maker, musical director, arranger and independent producer. Currently, Alicia is an ensemble member of Opera Q, Fresh Ground Artist in Residence at The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts and is the co-founder and creative director of Little Black Dress Creatives, cabaret collective *Babushka* and operatic ensemble *Belladiva*. In 2009, Alicia completed her Master of Music Studies Opera Performance degree at The Queensland Conservatorium of Music, having performed the roles of Euridice in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Helena in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and receiving several prestigious competitions, including the Nickson Prize for Voice, The Dr Francesco Castellano Italian Operatic Award and The Linda Allen Postgraduate Prize. Alicia is currently developing two works with LBDC, *Doll* for the Fresh Ground program and *Aria moderna*; both works for major touring in 2016/17.

**Bethan Ellsmore** is an extraordinarily diverse performer who is as equally at home singing a virtuosic coloratura aria as she is belting out a Broadway hit. Bethan has recently completed her Master of Music Studies in Jazz Voice at the Queensland Conservatorium. Recent accolades include her debut solo cabaret, *Queen of the Night*, at Queensland Cabaret Festival, featured vocalist in *Operacus* at Wonderland Festival, creative in Babushka's *Doll* at the Judith Wright Centre and feature artist in the iconic *Women in Voice* 2014. Previous theatrical roles include La Ciesca in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, La Fee (cover) in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Cosette in *Les Misérables*, Lady Jacqueline Carston in *Me and My Girl*, the title role in *Alice* in *Wonderland* and *Naomi* in *48 Shades of Brown*. Bethan has also been a

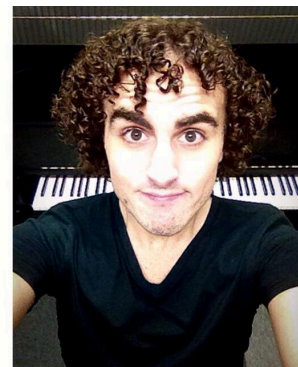


featured soloist for Oscar Theatre Company, Underground Opera, Sounding Out Composers' Collective, Ignatian's Showstoppers and Songbirds. Bethan is also a founding co-founder of Little Black Dress Creatives and a Fresh Ground artist in residence at the Judith Wright Centre for Contemporary Arts.



**Judy Hainsworth** is one of Brisbane's most dynamic, versatile performers and is in constant demand as an actor and singer. In 2014, she featured in La Boite's Independents production *Machina* and *Revolt Rhymes and Dirty Beasts* for shake & stir/La Boite. She also debuted her new cabaret work *#FirstWorldWhiteGirls* in sell-out seasons at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts and The Butterfly Club. In the previous year, Judy appeared in *Connect Four* (Metro Arts), *The Oasis* (2High Festival), and *Recall*. She spent 2011 touring nationally with shake & stir's *Statespeare* and in 2013 appeared in the Brisbane return season. Other credits include *Handle with Care* (Joymas Creative), *Under the Covers with the Duvets*, *The Narcissist* (STC/La Boite), *Holy Guacamole* (The Good Room), *The Reunion* (Metro Arts Independents), *James and the Giant Peach*, *Little Women*, *Into the Woods* and *The Best of Broadway* (Harvest Rain). Judy is currently on a national Australian tour with shake & stir.

Since moving to Brisbane in 2008, **Luke Volker** has been highly sought after as a musical director, vocal arranger, orchestrator and accompanist for a number of musical and theatrical performances in and around Brisbane. He received his Bachelor of Music (with Distinction) from the Queensland University of Technology, where he also studied drama and acting. Luke has trained in music direction at the multiple-Tony award®-winning Goodspeed Theatre (USA), and holds a Master of Music Studies in Composition and Conducting from the Queensland Conservatorium. He has directed performance and audition workshops for various schools and institutions around Brisbane, and frequently provides tuition in voice, music theory, orchestration and conducting. As a pianist, Luke has been official accompanist for the Queensland Vocal Competition, the Australian Musical Theatre Workshop, and the International Congress of Voice Teachers, as well as playing for masterclasses with international artists Kristin Chenoweth and Jason Robert Brown. Theatrical credits include: *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Avenue Q*; *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Brisbane Arts Theatre); *Little Women* (Ignatians Musical Society); *Songs For A New World* (Phoenix Ensemble); *Miss Saigon*; *The World Goes 'Round* (Queensland Conservatorium); *Nobody Does It Like Me* (Brisbane Cabaret Festival); [title of show] (Oscar Theatre Company).



**PERFORMANCE SPECIFICS**

DURATION

Option 1: 60 mins (no interval)  
 Option 2: 90 mins (Act 1 – 45mins, Interval – 20 mins, Act 2 – 35mins)

TOURING PERSONNEL

The touring party consists of 6 people

Name	Role
Alicia Cush	Performer
Bethan Ellsmore	Performer
Judy Hainsworth	Performer
Luke Volker	Pianist/Musical Director
Andrew Snook	Audio Technician
TBC	Tour Manager/Stage Manager

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Year	Venue	Number of performances
2015 (May)	Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts	6

## **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

### OVERVIEW

Community engagement opportunities associated with this touring work will involve two different workshops, directed at members of our target audience/demographic. These workshops will focus on improving the vocal skills and vocal music appreciation of locals, in a format and with experienced professionals that is not normally accessible. It is hoped that these activities will build a stronger relationship between artist and audience and encourage the audience to become more invested with the artists and work.

Objectives – Improve the individual vocal skills of young, amateur and community singers to strengthen the local music community, including involvement in choirs, musical societies and school groups.

All workshop facilitators are tertiary-trained to a Masters level and have the following areas of expertise:

Alicia Cush: Classical/Opera/Ensemble singing

Bethan Ellsmore: Musical theatre/Contemporary/Jazz

Judy Hainsworth: Musical Theatre/Acting/Performance Skills

Luke Volker: Musical Theatre/Ensemble Singing

### WORKSHOP #1 - DESCRIPTION / DETAILS

#### **Advanced Vocal Masterclass – The Art of Auditioning**

This 2-hour workshop/masterclass will help demystify what can be a daunting process – the audition; professional and amateur theatre productions, vocal examinations, performances and entry into tertiary institutions. Run by musical director/performer Alicia Cush and performer Bethan Ellsmore, this workshop will give young singers the techniques to deal with the most challenging musical audition, providing a basic introduction to audition techniques and preparation. This will be followed by an interactive masterclass, where each student will give a mock audition and receive constructive musical and performance feedback; from style and interpretation, repertoire choice, movement and introductions to singing technique and musical accuracy.

Participants should expect to learn adequate knowledge and skills to better prepare for any style of audition and gain important performance experience and confidence in front of a mock panel and live audience.

Participants are required to provide sheet music or high quality backing track for the pianist to play at the masterclass (this may be required in advance).

Requirements: Piano or keyboard if available (this can be provided by the company)

Note: Local pianist/accompanist may be hired in each area

#### COST

\$390.00 total for the presenter OR

\$40.00 per participant (minimum 10 singers)

#### TARGET AUDIENCE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Secondary school age students, young adults, amateur singers

Experienced singers (not suitable for absolute beginners)

The target audience will be reached through specific promotion to local schools, music schools and music societies.

### WORKSHOP #2 - DESCRIPTION / DETAILS

#### **Hitting the High Notes - Introduction to basic singing technique for the amateur singer**

This 2-hour workshop explores the most mysterious instrument of all; the voice. Learn the fundamental elements of vocal technique through group exercises in an informative and practical, but relaxed group environment. Participants will learn elements of postural alignment, breathing technique, basic physiology, vowel shapes, resonance, range and more, as taught in leading tertiary institutions.

Run by musical director/performer Alicia Cush and performer Bethan Ellsmore, this workshop will give young singers basic general knowledge, vocal health tips, introductory technical exercises and the confidence to further explore the possibilities of their voices.

The workshop is ideal for choral groups, school and community ensembles, and would be greatly suited to be conducted during a regular rehearsal time. The information presented is also greatly suitable and appropriate for music/choral teachers and conductors as professional development.

Participants are not required to provide anything and will be supplied with any music learned. Each session will conclude with question time for specific requests and technical questions.

Requirements: Piano or keyboard if available (this can be provided by the company)

Note: Local pianist/accompanist may be hired in each area

#### COST

\$390 total for the presenter OR

\$40 per participant for small groups (minimum 10 participants)

#### TARGET AUDIENCE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Primary school age students, Secondary school age students, young adults, amateur singers, choral groups (Singers in primary school age bracket to only participate in a young voices workshop – not suitable to mix with older participants)

Suitable for beginner to intermediate singers

The target audience will be reached through specific promotion to local schools, music schools and music societies.

## MARKETING

### MARKETING SUMMARY

Target audience: 18-35yrs; 35-60 yrs; 60+yrs

Specific demographics:

- Cabaret lovers
- Community choristers
- Singing Hobbyists
- Classical Music/Opera lovers

Marketing Notes/Unique Selling Points:

- Diversity of appeal in audience – the demographic is varied
- Great curiosity in the work, due to crossover nature
- Crossover nature of the work makes the opera genre more accessible – removal of the 'fourth' wall

Successful Past Marketing

- Working with local councils for pop-up performances
- Live on-air performances
- Strong images for local print
- Workshops with community groups and school age students

### MARKETING MATERIALS

1. Poster, flyer and postcard artwork is ready for print and distribution
2. Broadcast quality footage of the work is available – 1min and 5min trailer

### CONTENT WARNINGS / AUDIENCES TO AVOID

Course language, adult themes

### Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts Brochure

**DOLL**  
**BABUSHKA**

WHAT DID KEN AND BARBIE DO WHEN YOU WEREN'T LOOKING?

Prepare to be seduced, comforted and tickled when Babushka (*I Can Keep A Secret*) beckons you into their musical dreamhouse for a very grown-up play-date in this darkly comedic new cabaret production.

Swinging like a ragdoll between cute and creepy, the Babushka gals will nurse dolls, break dolls and become dolls with their original arrangements of everything from Regurgitator to Offenbach.

*Batteries sold separately.*

*"Powerful, soaring voices combined with humour and charm."*  
Adelaide Theatre Guide

**MAY**  
**WED 20 - SAT 23**

**CABARET**

Time 7:30pm  
Tickets \$38 - \$25

Image credit: Dylan Evans Photography

Presented by Judith Wright Centre  
Produced by Little Black Dress Creatives

Babushka has been supported by the Judith Wright Centre's Fresh Ground artist-in-residence program, made possible through Arts Queensland.

**FRESH GROUND**

Little Black Dress Creatives

JWOCA Promotional Postcard



JUDITH WRIGHT CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

# Doll

What did Ken and Barbie do when you weren't looking?

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Rentals sold separately.

"Powerful, soaring voices combined with humour and charm"  
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MAY  
WED 20 - SAT 23

CABARET

Presented by Judith Wright Centre  
Produced by Little Black Dress Creatives

Director: Caroline Durphy  
Designer: Penelope Challen  
Producer: Natalia Furtado  
Creators/Performers: Alicia Cush, Bethan Ellimore and Judy Hainsworth  
Co-Musical Directors: Alicia Cush and Luke Völker

Little Black Dress Creatives has been supported by the Judith Wright Centre's Fresh Ground program, made possible through Arts Queensland

FRESH GROUND

Little Black Dress Creatives

BOOKINGS judithwrightcentre.com | 07 3872 9000  
420 Brunswick St (opp Barwick St), Fortitude Valley

Queensland Government The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts is Queensland Government initiative operated by Arts Queensland.

Photo: David Hearn Photography

MEDIA

Scenstr - May

**12** scenstr. the arts

## DOLL: BABUSHKA'S GROWN-UP PLAYDATE

WORDS: KATE ATKINSON  
PHOTO: RENEE CABARET

**BABUSHKA SHOWCASE THEIR COMEDIC CABARET 'DOLL' IN A BID TO TACKLE SOME COMMON THEMES FOR WOMEN THROUGHOUT THE AGES.**

COMEDICAL DIRECTOR, CO-CREATOR, PERFORMER AND POLY POCKET with pipes, Alicia Cush stars alongside Bethan Ellimore and Judy Hainsworth as they nurse dolls, break dolls and become dolls in their cut-out-closet-cabaret, lending audiences to see the world through a doll's eyes. From Cabbage Patch Dolls to Barbies to Polly Pockets, 'Doll' dissects the relationship we have with dolls and how that reflects some bigger issues among women. "We explore that full gamut between nostalgia and sentimentality of our first best friend through to how women view themselves today," explains Alicia. Throughout 'Doll' there are many themes and concepts explored through comedy, song and dance. "We had quite a bit more time to play with this orphan troupe of dolls that we got to flesh out all the really interesting themes and concepts to do with dolls. You know, we've got consumerism, materialism and a big dash of feminism - we get to explore those issues much more deeply through our comedy writing." Babushka is a small independent production company which fuses opera, jazz and pop with vocal acrobatics, rich musical arrangements, precise a cappella singing, a whole lot of sass and competing story-telling. But 'Doll' is Babushka's biggest and boldest show yet. "It's a really unique arrangement. This is our biggest and best show to date. With the support of Fresh Ground we are allowed to work with some really awesome, new creatives in Brisbane including [Director] Caroline Durphy and [Designer] Penelope Challen as designer. Being able to work at the touch with people and lose touch with yourself, it's a constant battle to keep finding yourself in all of the chaos." Alicia hopes that all women can relate to 'Doll', but in her characters case in particular, she hopes that working mothers can relate to "that idea of trying to keep it all together and keep up the facade that everything is OK when it actually isn't underneath." Alicia hopes that audiences take away a huge amount of sentimentality while reminiscing on their childhood experiences. "I hope they take away a huge amount of sentimentality. It's not all about feminist issues. It's our real relationships that we had with dolls as children. I hope they walk away singing some tunes and laughing at the absurdity of dolls."

**'DOLL' PLAYS THE JUDITH WRIGHT CENTRE, 20-23 MAY.**

"WE EXPLORE THAT FULL GAMUT IN BETWEEN NOSTALGIA AND SENTIMENTALITY OF YOUR FIRST BEST FRIEND THROUGH TO HOW WOMEN VIEW THEMSELVES TODAY."

**b**ENTERTAINED

# Cute but creepy cabaret

Doll is bold, blindingly colourful and a little batty, writes Majella McMahon

The beauties and brains behind the show are Babushka, a trio of local ladies consisting of Alicia Cosh, Bethan Ellsmore and Judy Hainsworth. These three talented, stylish and side-splittingly hilarious women have created a collection of skits and songs that will ensure you never look at dolls the same way again.

From cuddling Cabbage Patch babies and behaving like Bratz, to sticking pins in voodoo dolls, this show will make you ask the uncomfortable questions. How do we use dolls to objectify, pacify, falsify and deny? And what do Ken and Barbie do when you aren't looking?

The Babushka gals will be on stage, singing their hearts out, with influences ranging from Regurgitator to Offenbach. Don't expect them to stay true to a single character as they all flit and flutter between roles, performing as a variety of different characters and bringing into play themes like body image, feminism, materialism and consumerism.

Alicia chatted to us about the show, describing it as "a quirky romp into the world

of dolls, from Barbies to blow-up dolls, set to a soundtrack of '90s pop, nursery rhymes, opera and rock'n'roll."

Her role? "I am Day-to-Night CEO Alicia Dolly, letting all young girls around the world know that you CAN have it all - a wonderful husband (Kenneth), the Dreamhouse, a pink corvette, a professional career AND two and a half children! I'm practically perfect, but sometimes I need a Valium-laced martini and a lie down during the twins' nap. Accessories included: laptop, nappy bag and a bottle of Sav Blanc."

The show sits on the side of unconventional, and because of this, may scare some potential doll-lovers away. But Alicia is quick to point out that "this show is the perfect girls' night out for those ladies who love to revel in the nostalgia of all things 'dolly' from their childhood ... and maybe learn a little too much information about dolls for adults (wink wink)."

The set has been modelled on the plastic symbol of domestic bliss the girls loved in their youth. "It has been inspired by the



plastic and fantastic overkill that is the iconic Dreamhouse," Alicia confirms. "And, of course, our costumes are modelled on the ever-stylish and most popular fashion doll in the world - Barbie! There will be power dressing, a splash of Bratz and a 'meringue' Princess dress like no other. Disclaimer - we do not have Barbie's 39-18-33 measurements which means, unlike Barbie, we can actually walk upright and enjoy a good burger for lunch."

Her favourite moment in the show is the Andrew Sisters-like take on Destiny's Child's Survivor, where they reveal some real-life dolly fan and friends. "All we can say is that if your dolly was your first BFF, we'd hate to know

what you did to your enemies!"

The girls picked up more than their fair share of Barbie trivia as they put the show together; trivia that Alicia is thrilled to be able to share with someone. "Did you know that Barbie first went to the moon four years before Neil Armstrong," she marvels, "and ran for President six times since the '90s? All in a pair of stilettos and not a hair out of place."

This is a show that delivers everything you won't expect - and all in neon bright colours, with a splash of sass and a whole lot of excellent singing.

Doll will be staged at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts from 20 to 23 May. Visit [www.judithwrightcentre.com](http://www.judithwrightcentre.com) or phone 07 3872 9000.

## Sunday Mail



## TESTIMONIALS

*"...lambasted the audience with raunchy wit, sly humour, sexy asides, and fabulous vocals..."* **Eric Scott - Absolute Theatre**

*"Babushka's "Doll" has all the ingredients of good cabaret: laughs, gasps and a show of genuine talent, and is definitely worth a visit."* - **Meredith Walker, Blue Curtains**

*"Babushka don't do things by halves. These girls go ga-ga for femme."* – **Jessica Bozoky, Scenestr**

*"A sassy and witty slice of cabaret, Babushka was a highly entertaining piece of theatre presenting extremely talented singers. They are woman, hear them roar."* - **Emilie Guillemain, XS Entertainment**

*"They have the voices of angels but with a demonic wit."* - **Gerard Mehan, Fiend Magazine**

## REVIEWS

### REVIEW #1 – Absolute Theatre, Eric Scott

The **Babushka** girls just want to have fun and, as crying, talking, sleeping, walking, living dolls at the Judith Wright centre last night they had heaps – and so did the audience which rewarded them with rapturous applause at the end. The clever script used dolls as a metaphor for life as a female from youth to age, with memories of favourite dolls, the nice dolls, the ugly dolls, dolls ancient and modern – and of course the life and times of the Barbie doll.

The theatre was decked out cabaret style with tables set in front of the tiered seating under a great lighting design by **Andrew Meadows**. This allowed the performers to wander among the guests and bring them into the action.

The three performers – the blonde **Judy Hainsworth**, the brunette **Alicia Cush** and the redhead **Bethan Ellsmore** – lambasted the audience with raunchy wit, sly humour, sexy asides, and fabulous vocals as they took us into the pink palace of the dream house. Judy Doll was a delicious pink-candy confection of a princess doll, complete with ringlets and a tiara as she stood in her still un-opened display box. Butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, well not at first anyway; she was different when she escaped her genteel prism and showed her true confused character – especially at party time with the male sex doll in full flight! Boy did that doll become truly emancipated. There was no need for emancipation for Bethan Doll, just a hangover cure for the party doll, who as well as singing with classical purity played a mean violin. The sexy, pink leather clad Alicia Doll, the power woman with kids and a job had no inhibitions as she wandered through the audience picking on innocent bystanders.

In front of **Penelope Challen's** clever girlie set that included mirrors and toilet bowls, with some terrific piano playing from **Luke Volker** they told stories of the inner lives of dolls, of children and dolls – and some home truths about Barbie and Ken. I am not giving away any secrets about those hilarious and sometimes highly rude tales - you have to see and hear them to fully appreciate them.

The trio created the entire show themselves and worked neatly as a team whether in the comedy routines or the vocals, which were just superb with Bethan Ellsmore and Alicia Cush's Conservatorium trained operatic voices hitting the high notes and Judy Hainsworth doing hard work underneath counterpointing with the beautiful harmonies. It was a unique and thrilling vocal combination that was joy to the ears as they sang doll associated songs that were at times funny, at times angry and at others, poignant.

The show still has a few raw edges, dialogue can be sharpened a little and for me the running time, which was advertised at 60 minutes but ran for more than 80, proved to be a couple of songs too long to my mind. The 60 minutes would have been perfect and left me asking for more.

But I'm sure the talented performers will fix any minor flaws before they embark on a full regional tour of Queensland next year, when they will be a big hit.

### REVIEW #2 – Blue Curtains, Meredith Walker

Fairy-light lit and adorned with dolly accessories, the Judith Wright Centre performance space is transformed to capture the essence of "Doll", bathed in pink and full of fun. As audience members enter this musical Barbie dreamhouse, they are tempted to see the world through a doll's eyes, for this is a show about all the dolls in our lives: the cute, creepy and crude, and our experiences in treasuring and torturing them.

The dolls' stories are both set to and punctuated by music, but not always through the song selection you may expect, with the night's playlist eclectically including opera, 80s pop, nursery rhymes and rock and roll. Indeed, the innovative fusion of styles is what always sets Babushka apart and, as usual, its combination of classic repertoire and creative contemporary context makes for an engaging and highly entertaining show. The original arrangements are everything and, as always, Babushka present songs in ways that allow for different lyric interpretation and appreciation, including a marvellous, mournful, unplugged rendition of 'Barbie Girl' from pristine, porcelain-skinned princess Judy Dolly (Judy Hainsworth), who has never really lived outside of the box of her fantasy world.

Boxed up in original packaging, Judy Dolly initially dominates the stage, from a visual perspective, however, the show's focus is spread across a trio of toys, for there is also Alicia Doll (Alicia Crush) who is the manic, multitasking, overachiever mother, intent on starting a blog and eating more kale. And then there is international party girl Bethan Doll (Bethan



Ellsmore), who has a glitter habit and runs on booze rather than batteries. Her checkered past means that her original accessories are long lost or since pawned, but boy can she sing, with Ellsmore frequently flooring the entire audience with her soaring operatic vocals.

While each doll is given its solo songs and opportunities to shine, the most magnificent moments are where their talents combine. The harmonious voices of the three performers and co-creators blend beautifully, both in emotional ballad and when blasting out some Gunners, all the time accompanied on piano by the talented Luke Volker. And to hear the group present their namesake Kate Bush song is always a treat.

Despite its playful premise, this is a show far from PG descriptor as focus moves to Judy Doll's search for companionship c/o a blowup sex doll and also, what Barbie and Ken get up to behind closed doors. It is perhaps a little more 'talky' than necessary at times and takes a while to hit its stride, but when it does, with its audience involvement, the participation is minor and full of fun. And through all of its detours, there is no detraction from the show's ultimate feminist questioning of the fantastic world of plastic, its message about how 'it takes all types of dolls' and the realisation that perhaps Barbie is not that bad after all.

Babushka's "Doll" has all the ingredients of good cabaret: laughs, gasps and a show of genuine talent, and is definitely worth a visit. The fact that it is built upon such an imaginative premise is just an added bonus, guaranteed to get you, right in the childhood #inagoodway.

### **REVIEW #3 – Scenstr, Jessica Bozoky**

What's playing at the Judy? I'll tell you what's playing at the Judy guise and dolls.

Blonde locks, cat eyes and piercing pink, platformed princesses. Babushka's dolls were dressed to the nines and statuesque in the Dreamhouse. Seated around candle-lit tables under a fairy lantern chandelier, high heels, baby bottles and dolls in sexually provocative scenarios adorned the theatre.

With the twist of a key the music box opened and these Polly Pockets with pipes pampered the patrons with tune of the turmoil it takes to be a woman in a stereotyping society. Nursing dolls, breaking dolls and becoming dolls, the cute-but-creepy caricatured cabaret cast delved into which the roles women are typecast – as politically incorrect as can be. Glittered with opera, '80s pop, nursery rhymes and rock & roll, this smooth sail through Barbie's world is wrapped in plastic, and it's fantastic.

Asked to remember our favourite childhood doll the audience shared memories of their first best friend; from Cabbage Patch Kids to Barbies, Polly Pockets and Bratz dolls, there wasn't a woman who couldn't identify her first plastic pal. With an immediate personal connection, the quirky, cheeky and unapologetic performers and co-creators [Alicia Cush](#), Bethan Ellsmore and Judy Hainsworth began. Basing their roles on heightened versions of themselves, the dolls characteristics were brought to life in song, costume and strange, spirited stories.

Judy Doll is the princess of the pack, having never left her box this porcelain, preppy, pink, pristine perfectionist is the boss of the Dreamhouse. She survived the transition from a dutiful family of money to being picked out of a St Vinnies bin and sold on Ebay. But she doesn't have it all. Judy Doll is a sexually frustrated single on the look-out for Mr Dreamy. And as the fairytale goes, she found him by the end of the night in (the well-endowed) Roger, a blowup sex doll thrown from the back of the theatre onto the stage.

Have-It-All Alicia is the stupendously successful mother-of-two with a husband, a house and a corporate career. With a tight tummy, lavish legs, and tantalising tan, she practises yoga, eats plenty of kale, cooks for the family, volunteers for the P&C, works harder than all her colleagues and always picks the kids up on time. But at what cost? The constant battle to hold onto her identity is challenging. Finding the balance in the chaos is also what she enjoys, it's all or nothing for this high-flyer.

Party Doll Bethan is the crazy cat of the clan, she's a rule-breaker, a risk-taker and a party-maker. With her piercing pink hair, '90s rocker style and colourful vocabulary, this rebel always has a drink in hand and spends long nights out on the town – which more often than not end in promiscuity. She doesn't let a man tie her down (except the Japanese Mafia leader she accidentally married one night – but we'll just put that to one side), she's happy doing her own thing. Seeking a coin-operated boy to please her at her say-so and be tucked away when it all gets too much, this go-getter is self-confident, self-made and self-loving.

There's a whole lotta schoolyard catcalling, finger pointing, judgemental stares, nasty slurs and back stabbing – and not just at the audience. Babushka don't do things by halves, these girls go ga-ga for femme. Maternity, feminism, body image, materialism and consumerism – 'Doll' has it all. From frigid to sluts, pretentious preps to simple Susies, couch surfers to gym junkies, business bending babes to travel-bug-bitten wanderlusts – stereotypes are covered in-full.

Exploring every orifice, every accessory and every accusation, 'Doll' asks tricky questions – how do we use dolls to objectify, pacify, falsify and deny? Answer: it doesn't matter! They're plastic play-things, much like the toy trucks and blow-up hammers we give little boys. Barbie didn't let Ken hold her back, and women shouldn't let society hold them back.

So what did Ken and Barbie do when you weren't looking? Whatever the hell they wanted, that's their business, not yours.

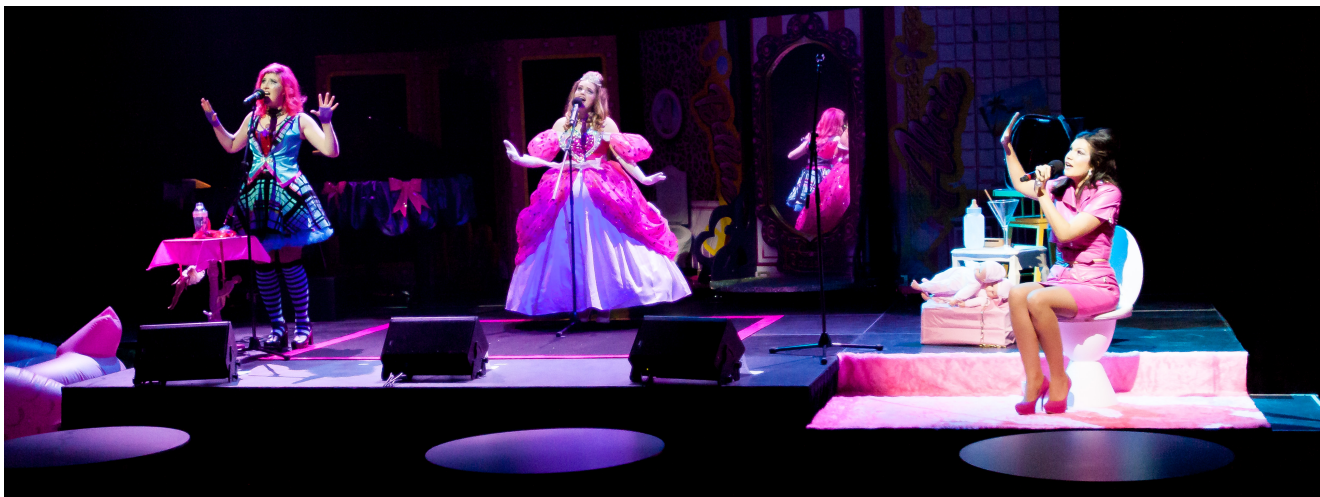
**WEBLINKS**

Website: [www.littleblackdresscreatives.com](http://www.littleblackdresscreatives.com)  
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**SUPPLEMENTARY HERO IMAGES**



PRODUCTION IMAGES SHEET



## **PRODUCTION DETAILS**

### GENERAL NOTES

- The following points list the optimum requirements for the work, however Little Black Dress Creatives is open to working with presenters in managing these requirements; details and variations can be negotiated during the contract phase.
- The touring company will consist of:
  - 4 x Performer
  - 2 x Crew

### TECHNICAL SUMMARY

To be provided

## **CONTACTS**

All artistic, programming, publicity and technical enquiries to:

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