

# THE GREAT WAR

SONGS & STORIES OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR



John Thompson (Warhorse, Cloudstreet) presents  
an evening of songs, images and stories  
of The Great War.

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## COMPANY PROFILE

John Thompson has featured on the Australian and UK folk scenes for over thirty years. With Nicole Murray as cloudstreet, he has released 7 albums, the latest, *The Land Of Bright Gold* being a collection of Anglo-Australian traditional songs. John has toured both around Australia and internationally full-time since 2003. In 2013, John performed the role of Song Man with the Australian production of the National Theatre of Great Britain's *War Horse*.

John is an experienced presenter of concerts and workshops. He has extensive experience working in schools both with cloudstreet and also with Irish music shows presented through Musica Viva.

## ABOUT THE SHOW

### SHOW SYNOPSIS

2014 marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. *The Great War* marks this centenary by showcasing some of the music of this period.

Through the songs and images of both war and the homefront, *The Great War* aims recreate this period for a contemporary audience. Projected images form the background to a narrative of the war's chronology and in particular, the Australian experience of the war.

Between 1914 and 1918, the War saw conflict on an unprecedented scale sweep the globe. Young men and women from across the world left their homes and were swept up in the fighting. Technology was used as never before with the Victorian advances in transport, communication and war-making put to work. The complex politics of Europe became embodied in bloody battles, the stagnation of the trenches, and the death-dealing power of new machines.

The First World War also was the first "mass-media" war, with global communications sharing experiences across national and cultural boundaries.

The music of the period served to unite the participants in the war, both military and civilian. Through popular song and parody, they found expression of their longing for a return to peace and of their reactions to the strange experiences which overwhelmed so many societies.

First performed in November, 2013, *The Great War* has been developed as a touring production for both concert presentation and as a tailored show for schools.

While largely a one-man show, *The Great War* is augmented with other musicians as required for particular arrangements of individual songs.

## PERFORMANCE SPECIFICS

### DURATION

*The Great War* can be performed as a single 80 minute presentation, or divided into two halves of around 45 minutes, with a 20-minute interval.

### SUITABLE VENUES

The show is designed as a theatre presentation. Ideally a proscenium arch or similar setting should be used. The show can be presented in more informal settings but is not suitable for outdoor performance. Digital projection is a central part of the performance and so the venue needs to be able to accommodate this.

### MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES PER WEEK

4 performances (negotiable)

### MINIMUM BREAK BETWEEN PERFORMANCES

90 minutes

### TOURING PERSONNEL

The touring party consists of 3 people.

Name	Role
John Thompson	Principal performer
Emma Nixon	Performer
Nicole Murray	Technical/performer

### PERFORMANCE HISTORY

The debut performance of *The Great War* was in the Sandgate Town Hall on 10 November, 2013. Following further development, the show will be performed in Trinity Hall at Fortitude Valley on ANZAC Day, 2014.

## **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

### OVERVIEW

The inclusion of many of the popular songs of the war years provides an opportunity for the audience to participate in the singing of familiar choruses. This involvement is an integral part of creating an atmosphere of community and solidarity reminiscent of the “war-time spirit” of the 1914-1918 conflict. At the debut performance of *The Great War*, as the opening music was played, (*God Save The King* performed by Dame Nellie Melba) the audience stood throughout without prompting.

The songs of the First World War include many parodies written by soldiers in the trenches, as well as songs that retain a degree of contemporary resonance. A workshop on the use of parody to reflect current issues can be conducted to both expose participants to this song-writing form but also to enable them to develop their own songs, reflecting contemporary issues through the use of melodies familiar to them from their own musical experiences.

### DESCRIPTION / DETAILS

The workshop would require only a space for presentation and writing materials.

### COST

A one-off fee of \$500 would be charged for each workshop.

### TARGET AUDIENCE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The workshop would be suitable for either school presentation or to the wider community.

## MARKETING

### MARKETING COPY

*One line:* *The Great War: Songs & Stories of the First World War*

*Short:*

*The Great War* is a presentation of songs and stories of the war that helped shape a newly-federated Australia. Drawing on both the classic songs of the time and some of the more modern musical reflections of the era, this performance aims to recreate the atmosphere of the time for a contemporary audience. Through the songs and images of both war and the homefront, *The Great War* demonstrates the unifying power of shared musical experiences. Projected images form the background to a narrative of the war's chronology and in particular, the Australian experience of the war.

*Extended*

*The Great War: Songs and Stories of the First World War.* From the outback to Gallipoli, from the cities to the Somme, music was one of the great unifying forces of the 1914-1918 war. In *The Great War*, John Thompson (*War Horse, cloudstreet*) presents some of the classic songs and tales of the First World War, along with a collection of modern musical reflections on the conflict that helped shape a newly-federated Australia.

The development of the popular music of World War One paralleled the progress of the conflict itself. Songs, poems and stories have been chosen to reflect on the differing moods and experiences through the course of the war. Contemporary songs from the period are used, as well as modern compositions which tell some of these stories.

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### MEDIA QUOTES

“One of Queensland's foremost folk performers” - *The Courier-Mail*

“Powerful and passionate” - *Queensland Country Life*



### MARKETING MATERIALS

Flyers and posters are available, either in template or completed JPG format as required.

### TEACHER'S RESOURCES

A teacher's pack is in development.

## **PRODUCTION DETAILS**

### TECHNICAL SUMMARY

*The Great War* is a show with a straightforward presentation. A single microphone is centre stage, amplified guitar and concertina complement the voice. Piano accompaniment is used to fill out the sound of select numbers, with violin joining the lineup where appropriate. Amplification is used to reinforce the voice and instruments.

The music and stories of the show are accompanied by a photographic projection presentation providing subtle illustration and reinforcement of the themes being addressed.

The stage is dressed with flags and bunting. Simple furniture completes the scene.

### EXAMPLE SCHEDULE

4.00 pm	Bump – in/unload	60 mins
5.00 pm	PA/projection set-up	60 mins
6.00 pm	Sound-check	30 mins
6.30 pm	Down-time	30 mins
7.00 pm	House open	
7.30 pm	First set	45 mins
8.15 pm	Interval	25 mins
8.40 pm	Second set	45 mins
9.25 pm	End	
9.30 pm	Begin bump-out	60 mins
10.30 pm	Venue dark	

### CREW REQUIRED FROM VENUE

Sufficient venue staff are required to manage the audience (ushers, bar-staff where appropriate). Where venue sound, lighting or projection equipment is utilised, an operator is to be provided by the venue.

### STAGE

*The Great War* is suitable for a variety of stage sizes and settings.

The venue is to supply a small table and chair where possible. Two dressing



rooms with shower facilities are to be provided where possible.

### LIGHTING

Sufficient house lights for a fixed wash are required.

*The Great War* is able to supply lighting for smaller venues. For larger venues, the venue is to supply fixed stage wash lights.

### SOUND

*The Great War* uses a single vocal mic (Shure SM57 or equivalent) and a single DI. A line for keyboard or microphone for piano is also required. There is an element of recorded music to be included.

The company is able to provide a sound system for smaller venues (up to 100)

For larger venues, the venue is to supply sound. Where possible, the venue is to supply a piano.

### AV

The performance of *The Great War* involves digital projection of a mpeg file of black and white images.

The company is able to provide projection equipment (projection and screen) or alternatively utilise venue-provided equipment and screens.

### WARDROBE

The principal performer appears in period costume. The accompanist is appropriately dressed to suit the show. The company supplies all costume requirements.

2 dressing rooms with shower facilities are required where possible.

### FREIGHT NOTES

This production requires very little in the way of staging. All equipment, stage direction and instruments will travel with the company.

## **CONTACTS**

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