

# Sista Girl

BY ELENA CARAPETIS & ALEXIS WEST



## STUDY GUIDE

BY KIMBERLEY MARTIN, YOUTH AND EDUCATION MANAGER © 2017

Duration approx. 1 hour (no interval)

Day With State performances followed  
by a 20 minute Q & A session

# State Ed

STATE THEATRE COMPANY  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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# Meet the Team

## CAST

Georgie Grey

Nadia Rossi

Nakisha Grey

Natasha Wanganeen

## CREATIVES

Writer

Elena Carapetis & Alexis West

Director

Kyle Morrison

Designer

Miranda Hampton

Lighting Designer

Rick Worringham

Sound Design

Andrew Howard

Dramaturg

Nicki Bloom

Stage Manager

Alex Hayley

Assistant Stage Manager

Alira McKenzie-Williams



# Overview

*A raucous and powerful look at our search for identity*

Two young women meet face to face for the first time across the bed of a dying man. Strangers to each other but bonded by blood and grief. Sisters. They break the cold silence of the hospital room to start a difficult conversation. About the past and secrets. About the women who were their mothers. And about why this man, their father, abandoned one family to make another. When the past is dying and can't say sorry, how do you move on?

*Sista Girl* is an exploration of the relationship between Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal Australians, via the story of two women who share a white father. Co-written by Elena Carapetis (*Gorgon*) and Alexis West (*Echoes .... of Knowing Home*) especially for the brilliant Natasha Wanganeen (*Rabbit Proof Fence, The Shadow King*) and Nadia Rossi (*The Memory of Water*), the play will speak directly to audiences about questions of identity, grief and the complex nature of family.



# Synopsis

## Prologue:

The two characters, Georgie (Nadia Rossi) and Nakisha (Natasha Wanganeen) move through their morning rituals preparing for the day ahead. It is January 26, present day.

## Part One: Travelling

Nakisha and Georgie set the scene of the society they live in. Each is travelling through their society making note of the people who surround them; Georgie on the bus and Nakisha in her car. As they continue to describe their route, they continue to profile the people nearby them and the situations they move through. By the way they describe their environs we learn more about their personalities, prejudices and can detect clues about their backgrounds.

They both stop for supplies in the IGA and their selections allow the audience to learn more still about their characters. Both characters have transactions with people they are intimidated by and their insecurities with their own identities are further highlighted.

They both receive an urgent phone call about a parent.

The monologue-style of delivery continues as the two girls reflect deeply on their identity, family history and DNA. We understand the struggles of both girls' in their exploration of how they belong in this country. While their histories are different, the parallels in struggle with identity are highlighted.

## Part Two: The Hospital

The two girls discover each other for the first time and their different reactions to their father's death are obvious. While Georgie knows who Nakisha is, the audience watches Nakisha discover she has a sister and we also see her realise that her father, who she has held in such high esteem, has a less-than-perfect past. Both characters learn more about each other and their intertwined histories. They start to consider the others' point of view a little more.

After viewing her father's body, Nakisha is discovered by Georgie in a desperate state in the hospital carpark. The girls are quite raw and a more honest confrontation between the two begins. This argument releases a build-up of tension from both characters and as the dispute augments, they question each other's identity, validity, history, culture and place in this world. Georgie and Nakisha are both desperate for information about their father's choices.

Despite stark differences, the girls' familial bond and curiosity about their relationship leads to a final scene of compassion where they compare culture, language and relate to each other. There is hope for reconciliation.

# Writers

## Elena Carapetis



Elena was born on Barnagarla land to Greek Cypriot migrant parents and now lives on Kaurna Country. She is the Resident Artist at State Theatre Company.

Since graduating from NIDA, Elena has worked extensively as an actor in film, television and theatre. Also a writer, Elena's first play *The Good Son* premiered with a sell-out season at the Bakehouse Theatre in 2015 and earned her an Adelaide Critics Circle Award. Her second play *Helen Back* was shortlisted for the 2012 Adelaide Festival Jill Blewett Award for Playwriting. In 2014 Elena directed second year actors in her own adaptation of *Euripides' The Bacchae* at the Adelaide College of the Arts. Elena was thrilled to be commissioned by State Theatre Company to write a play for their 2016 education program, *Gorgon*, which went on to win a Ruby Award. She is currently adapting *A Doll's House* for Geordie Brookman's upcoming production for State Theatre Company.

Elena Carapetis' credentials as a playwright came later in her career; she has long been an on-stage favourite at State Theatre Company, recently appearing in *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Machu Picchu*. Her other acting credits for State Theatre Company include *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Othello*, *Between Two Waves* our 2014 State Umbrella production, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Features of Blown Youth*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Hot Fudge*, *Central Park West*, and *The Things We Do For Love*.

## Alexis West

Alexis West has worked as a dancer, choreographer, performer, writer, poet, theatre and filmmaker over the past 20 years. As a Birri Gubba, Wakka Wakka, Kanak and Caucasian woman, Alexis is passionate about First Nation people's voices as well as the stories of people with disability and people from diverse backgrounds. She has worked as an artistic director, writer and facilitator for organisations including the Karrikarrinya Theatre Collective, Kurruru Youth Arts, SA Writers Centre, Spirit Festival, Our Mob, Art Gallery SA, and Adelaide Fringe.

Alexis has devised and directed new works for No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability since 2008, and worked as AD, co-writer and performer for State Theatre Company.



## INTERVIEW WITH ALEXIS & ELENA

**How did *Sista Girl* come to be? What inspired you, and how did you come to collaborate?**

*I had met Elena on several different occasions at various events around Adelaide. However before having even met Elena in the flesh I wanted to meet her, I knew I was destined to meet her and knew that we'd eventually meet and be friends. I was drawn to her on screen presence in Heartbreak High and experienced one of my first girl crush's a 'grush!' Someone, an other! A goddess! Someone for me aspire too, a woman of colour, farer than me but a lodestone in a frothing tumultuous visual of white on / screen . I haven't even shared my secret grush with Eli, too shy and a bit starstruck, so shiny she glows. But it was and still is Elena's passion for honesty, integrity, truth, reality and because if that diversity and acknowledgement of our many varied differences and yet our shared connections of being human that draws me to Elena, my sister.*

*Having been adopted out in what I've dubbed as the co-ersion era. I was born in 1972 a year when single mothers were 'co-ersed' to adopt their babies out because the child would be better off with a nuclear family. I am constantly, subconsciously looking to belong, to connect, to create family bonds with other humans. The effects of colonization on all of us, the effects of capitalism and the fast paced world we live in pulls us away from the human connections that we all so desperately need. We become isolated and disconnected. As a First Nations woman who spent the first 27 years of my life not knowing my mother, my blood connections. So in an attempt to belong I formed bonds with other 'sisters' many First Nations and many non-Aboriginal. This created sisterhood has helped me heal and grow. The concept of creating SISTA GIRL was a provocation from Elena that developed and grew through conversations and our own developing sisterhood to become the manifestation of the play. Having a First Nations woman and Italian Australian woman discovering their identity through the blood of their white Australian father parallels the many varied relationships that we have living in this country. We continually need to unpack our racist attitudes, biases and narrow minded way of thinking to shift our lens, widen our point of view in order to have empathy and understanding of the lives of others that have had the experience of being less than because they are black, brown, caramel... anything that is seen as not white. Having the opportunity to co-write with another non-white writer is such a gift, finally we get a voice and platform to create characters that are seen on the street, in our schools, cafes, parks, hospitals, blah blah blah... our everyday lives. Characters that are non-white. It inspires me to be working with Eli on a new work that examines the connections and lack of connection with one another and how we deal with our own internal*

*trauma and racist attitudes. It is these types of collaborations that will open up the journey of healing.*

Like many people I am aware of the disconnect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. I am curious to understand where this gap comes from – and I think it is a result of a systemic lack of education. Not on behalf of our First Nations people but on behalf of the rest of us. When I was at school we were taught very little about the history of Australia in relationship to Aboriginal people; it's as though we are being kept ignorant on purpose. Our history is terribly violent and dark and yet we seem intent on blocking out this section of our past. I don't think we can grow up as a country until we take responsibility for what happened to Aboriginal people after white settlement. The play is set on January 26, which is a day that divides our nation at the moment. I'm also interested in why some sections of our community feel they have ownership over Australian-ness above and beyond other cultural groups. My family has been in Australia for over 90 years, and yet I still feel like I am considered an outsider at times.

The metaphor we thought of which captures all of this is a divided family. This family consists of an Aboriginal person, a person descended from Italian immigration and an Anglo-Australian person. Two sisters share a white father, they live their lives under his influence. We wondered if we could have these characters start a difficult conversation about belonging, respect, privilege and empathy.

Alexis and I had met several times at different events in Adelaide and I was immediately drawn to her generous and joyous energy. She is an amazing writer and she has taught me so much about her experience as a proud Aboriginal woman. It is an honour to work with her.

**Can you tell us a little about your collaborative writing process? What are the best things about working together, and how do you work through the challenges?**

*It's been an amazing respectful process of sharing, listening, mapping, reciprocating and then creating. I write for the character Nakisha- played by Natasha Wanganeen and Elena writes for Georgie. When writing for scenes with dialogue we honor the characters voice and edit one another's work to remain true to the character. It can be a slow process but so very rewarding.*



*I feel the ancestors have brought us all together to create a work that is uniquely an Australian experience that resonates for any colonized country where whiteness is seen as rightness and diversity dismissed, disregarded and despised as an other.*

Our writing process has also been a wonderful metaphor for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships. My job when I am not writing is to listen to Alexis and honour her voice and her story. I am writing for one character, Georgie, and Alexis is writing for one character, Nakisha. We mapped the movement of the play and set writing tasks based on how these two women spend their time moving through January 26. We came up with a rich tapestry of monologues that weave and flow into the other. Whenever there is dialogue, the writer whose character is driving the discussion writes that section, with the other writer later editing the lines so that the voice is true to their character.

Writing with someone else is process of generosity and yielding. It is always exciting to read what the other has written and if that provokes a flow on response. It does take longer than writing something on your own because if there are any plot or character ideas that arise, you need to check in with your writing partner to ensure this supports what she's writing. The other challenge is ensuring we are writing in the same style and finding a way to have our individual voices harmonise to create one play.

**You've written *Sista Girl* especially for Natasha Wanganeen and Nadia Rossi – why these particular actors?**

*Since I began writing for theatre it has been mostly a collaborative process. I love working with performers, hearing their voice, watching their movements and interactions and then manifesting the character whom they will be portraying. Geordie invited Natasha Wanganeen to be involved and thankfully she said yes. I'm so thrilled to be writing a character that is smart, sexy, sassy, strong, flawed and relatable to other women of colour. The character of Nakisha flips stereotypes and biases on its head.*

*It's been wonderful having the opportunity to work with both Nadia Rossi, Natasha and Elena. When we had our first workshop in the room with these powerful performers the magic they brought to our words sent tingles up my spine. The improvisation and how they find their characters voice has helped shape the characters journey.*

I always love writing for actors of diverse backgrounds because there is a plethora of untapped material you can use to create a rich world. Also, it is right for theatre to present many different voices and many different stories. It is exciting to know that kids will be sitting in the audience perhaps seeing someone from their backgrounds on stage for the first time ever. There is great power and comfort in that. It tells them their experience is just as valid as the next person's, and they are not invisible.

Nadia Rossi is an exceptional actor with great charisma. She has beautiful emotional depth and is hilarious. Nadia is also a theatre maker, so she understands the process of creating new work and brings great inventiveness, bravery and generosity to the rehearsal room floor. She and Natasha will be a formidable duo and I don't imagine anyone will be able to take their eyes off them even for a moment.

**And finally, *Sista Girl* is written for a Senior Secondary audience. What do you hope they will take away from the performance?**

*I hope that the audience will be left with hope to begin a path of empathy and understanding as we learn to listen and grow together.*

My hope is that *Sista Girl* will make the audience question what they think they know about Aboriginal people and help them become aware of their own prejudices. I'd also love the play to create a healthy curiosity in them about culture and identity. We won't have all the answers in how to bring our country together, but we would at the very least like to start a healthy, respectful dialogue.

# Director

## Kyle Morrison

Kyle J Morrison has been working in the theatre industry in Western Australia as an actor for 24 years, working for such theatre companies as Black Swan (*Waiting for Godot* 1993), Deckchair Theatre (*King For This Place* 1999, *Jimmy and Pat Meet The Queen* 2000 & *Wonderlands* 2007), Barking Gecko (*Amy's Monster* 2000 & *Own Worst Enemy* 2001) and Yirra Yaakin (*King Hit* 1999, *Booyi Koora Koora* 1999, *Djill Djitt* 2000, *Inside Out* 2001, *One Day in 67* 2004, *Warloo* 2005, *In The Nyitting Time* 2006, *Muttacar Sorry Business* 2001-2005). In 2008 Kyle was the assistant director on Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Romeo & Juliet*, *Female Of The Species*, written by Joanna Murray for Black Swan Theatre Company and *Yibbiyung* by Dallas Winmar for Company B Belvoir.



Productions directed by Kyle J Morrison for Yirra Yaakin include: *Muttacar Sorry Business* (2007- 2010), *In The Nyitting Time* (2008), *Good Lovin* (2009 - 2010), *Honey Spot* (2010), *Mother's Tongue* (2010) *Kaarla Kaatijin* (2010 - 2012), *The Cake Man* (2013), *King Hit* (2014), *The Fever and The Fret* (2015) and *So Long Suckers* (2016) which he also co-created. Kyle is currently the Artistic Director of Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

What agency is afforded to the women of our world, especially our women of colour and women of diverse ethnicity when male privilege is all pervasive?

When I first heard about this project I was immediately interested. The idea of having a shared narrative between two rarely heard female voices on our main stages is an idea we all should get used to. Elena Carapetis and Alexis West are the voices of an exciting future of more gender equality and culturally diverse theatre for our national audiences that will see our country grow. This is the world I want to hear more of, the stories of our women that have inherited 60000+ years of cultural and spiritual heritage and the trauma of our national history alongside the stories from our sisters that inherit the cultures and also the trauma of the women that immigrated here from war torn Europe. Words like reconciliation and recognition are just rhetoric without the human understanding of each other in the process. How can we grow together in a wider concept of nation without the honest conversation of who we are, where we come from and how we all feel about our national narrative. *Sista Girl* is the story of modern Australia that I want to hear, and working with such a strong team of skilled and generous artists gives me a confident image of our artistic future as a country. Developing the design ideas with Miranda Hampton and then materialising the world of

the characters with enigmatic actors Natasha Wanganeen and Nadia Rossi has been an absolute honour. I have learned a lot to say the least. *Sista Girl* is asking hard questions about culture, heritage, gender and family and ultimately; what is “success” in the constant struggle to balance these themes.

## INTERVIEW WITH KYLE

1. *What concepts did you originally find exciting when you heard about this project and how have they come into fruition in the final product?*

I was drawn to the idea of identity and how our heritage and ancestry is not always the key ingredient in shaping your self-image. The strong diverse female voice guiding this conversation is the side of Australia I really wanted to hear from. To shape the future narrative of this country we need to invest in as many authentic strong voices as we can find and Alexis West and Elena Carapetis are that and more.

2. *What was the biggest challenge in directing *Sista Girl* and how did you tackle this to have a successful outcome?*

As with all new works and premier seasons, it is sometimes hard to see how the over-all vision will pan out and if the work you are doing in the rehearsal room is what is needed in the final product. Also looking at a script with a lot of different locations and settings, it is always tricky to create a single set that will be able to travel with the characters and represent all the locations they visit. So working with set designer Miranda Hampton we were able to create a set that speaks for and represents the world without locking us down in a single location.

3. *What are the biggest take-homes you want your audiences to walk out of *Sista Girl* with and how, as director, did you ensure these concepts were embedded in this production?*

I want the audience to leave the theatre feeling like there is a permission or encouragement to have difficult conversations with people that they might not normally engage with. That having the conversation and asking difficult questions is how we learn from each other and grow in a more informed way.

# Designer

Miranda Hampton

Miranda Hampton is a designer and teaching artist who is passionate about bringing innovative work to people whose access to live performance is limited. Miranda is the writer, designer and producer of an interactive children's theatre production called *McNirt Hates Dirt*. The production won the Minter Ellison *Fringe and Beyond* award and *Best Live Children's Performance (week 3)* during its premiere season in the 2015 Adelaide Fringe. It will be performed during DreamBIG Children's Festival at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. In 2015, Miranda also designed her first opera for Co-Opera's production of *Così Fan Tutte*, which toured around Australia in 2015 and has recently finished designing Eugene Onegin for the company which is currently touring nationally. Miranda has worked extensively as a teaching artist and set designer, creating and running programs in both art and design in high schools. Miranda also works as an Arts and Community Development Officer in Local Government and has an Advanced Diploma in Design for Theatre, Film and Live Events from AC Arts.



## INTERVIEW WITH MIRANDA

1. *What were your first impressions when you read the script of *Sista Girl* and have any of these impressions made it into the final design?*

After my first read of *Sista Girl*, I remember feeling both relieved and excited, that this story, is a modern, urban, Australian Story. The contemporary story allows the audience to connect with the characters' time and place. While I was reading, I kept seeing textures that were distinctly urban; bus seats, cracked concrete pavement, tiles, well-kept lawns. The idea of highlighting these urban textures, has culminated in the final design.

2. *What were the most important elements of the set to you and why?*

As the designer of *Sista Girl*, it was important to me that the actors told their character's stories about culture and heritage and not the set. The words in *Sista Girl* are powerful and I wanted the audience to be able to consider ideas around identity, family and culture, without being forcefully steered in a particular direction by the design. The design alludes to an urban environment, drawing on elements that I myself, and modern audiences, can personally relate. I have sat on those bus seats on my way to school, walked those cracked pavements and bought my groceries in old, fading supermarkets with terrazzo floors. In this way, I felt that my creative contribution to this production was authentic.

As the play is very monologue based with only two characters, I was conscious to create a set that could provide energy and movement for the actors. The merry go round structure created a playground for the actors, which they could experiment with during rehearsal, to find dynamic ways to transition between scenes and locations. The structure is also reminiscent of childhood and its island-like reality, results in the actors being visible at all times as there is no "off-stage". This creates interesting opportunities to observe the characters in parallel. The merry go round also abstracts the physical locations, creating greater opportunity for audiences to meaningfully engage with what they are seeing, by employing their own creativity and imagination as they watch the performance.

3. *Which other creatives do you find yourself working with closely when considering and executing your set design and how does this affect your work? (just pick one if it's a long answer!)*

On this production, the creative that I have worked most closely with, is the director Kyle Morrison. At the start of design process, we met several times in person to share our stories and our personal responses to the script. As Kyle is based in Perth and I am in Adelaide, we then communicated regularly by phone, email and Skype to reach the final design. It's been a fantastic experience working with Kyle, he's a director who greatly values design and the important role it has to play, particularly in the early stages of the creative process. Through working together, we explored not only visual

concepts, but the ideas and the themes in the script which we felt were the most significant. There was a lot of trust involved, as the process for this production required me to be very honest with Kyle about my own experiences and ideas about identity (including my own), culture, racism, Australia Day, feminism and family. It was a highly collaborative process. Kyle welcomed my questions about Aboriginal culture, so that I could have a deeper understanding of the issues that the characters were facing. As *Sista Girl* is also a story about two women, we explored ideas around work and modern Australian society from a woman's perspective such as why a woman might consciously dress in a particular way at a particular event and concepts about feeling safe or unsafe in different public situations.

As creatives, we shared an appreciation of dance and physical movement, sculpture and installation; the result is our final design, an urban playground.



# Dramaturg

## Nicki Bloom

Nicki Bloom is an Adelaide-based writer and dramaturg. Her plays have been produced throughout Australia and internationally, and have won multiple awards.

Her plays include *Tender* (Belvoir, Griffin, Hothouse, Public Theater NYC) BLOODWOOD, THE SUN AND THE OTHER STARS, LAND & SEA, (Brink) A CATHEDRAL, LITTLE BIRD (STCSA, Adelaide Cabaret Festival, GPAC, Melbourne Arts Centre) and VALE (NIDA, STCSA).



She has also worked as an adaptor, creating new versions of Ibsen's GHOSTS, (STCSA) Shakespeare's ROMEO AND JULIET (STCSA) and Oscar Wilde's THE YOUNG KING. (Slingsby, Adelaide Festival). She acted as dramaturg on Elena Carapetis's GORGON, seen at STCSA is 2016.

Awards include the Adrian Consett Stephen Memorial Prize and the 2007 Inscription Chairman's Award (TENDER); the 2008 Patrick White Playwrights' Award and the 2009 Inscription Playwriting Award (BLOODWOOD); the 2012 Barbara Hanrahan Fellowship and the 2012 Patrick White Playwrights' Award (THE SUN AND THE OTHER STARS); the 2012 Jill Blewett Award (A CATHEDRAL) and the 2015 AWGIE for Best Writing for Music Theatre (LITTLE BIRD).

She has been twice nominated for Helpmann awards, in 2015 (Best New Australian Work, LITTLE BIRD and 2016 (Best Production Children's Theatre, THE YOUNG KING.)

Her plays are published by Currency Press and Phoenix Educational Press.

## INTERVIEW WITH NICKI

### *1 What is the most important part of your role as dramaturg?*

The most important part of my role as dramaturg is to ask the right questions of the writers, and to ask them at the right time. It's my role to try to provoke the writers into clarifying why they are writing what they're writing, and why they are writing it now.

### *2 Has Sista Girl been created in a different way to other scripts for which you have been a dramaturg?*

It is my first time working with co-writers, so that has absolutely been a different process. It is hard enough for one writer to resolve his or her own thinking in his or her own head to create a coherent, compelling, complex thesis for a play which is then

layered over with narrative, character, theme, language, history, internal logic etc etc...so multiply that by two writers, and then try to funnel those two writers' theses into one! Alexis and Elena have done a remarkable job of taking on the business of co-writing and have been open and genuine collaborators with one another.

*3 What has been the most satisfying moment of the development of this script?*

When the writers had a simultaneous 'aha!' moment which resulted in them conceiving of a mode of delivery for a portion of the play where theme and narrative and character all came together in a thrilling and genuinely theatrical structure. This would never have been discovered without the long hours of conversation, experimentation and failure behind it.





# Lighting Designer

Rick Worringham



Rick is a graduate of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Over the last twenty years, Rick has designed for almost every medium including theatre, music, dance, comedy, conference, exhibitions, and art installations. He recently finished a ten-year residency as Head of Lighting at the Theatre Royal Bath, UK, before relocating to South Australia in 2016.

Lighting design credits include: *Angel Bride*, *Angel Voices*, *Scarlet Angel* (Marion Bruce sculptures); *Living Proof*, *Three<sup>3</sup>* (Dirty:theatre); *A Christmas Carol*, *Treasure Island* (Frome Pantomime Company); *Cinderella* (Merlin Theatre Productions); *The Witches*, *Globatec Dance Project*, *The Grimm Brothers' Circus*, *Handel's Messiah* (Theatre Royal Bath); *Lion In Winter*, *Seasons Greetings* (Frome Drama Club); *Marshall UK Roadshow* (Marshall Amplification); *From Mice to Men* (Mercury Theatre); *Shakers* (On Cue Productions), *Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds* (First Cut Theatre), *SUBVerse* (OzAsia Festival).

Relight credits include: *The Farm* (Strode Theatre); *Legal Fictions*, *Relatively Speaking*, *Therese Raquin* (Theatre Royal Bath Productions); *Dirty Kissing* (Box Clever); *The Firestarter*, *Hitting Dennis* (Big State Theatre Co); *Charley's Aunt* (Menier Chocolate Factory).

Rick has also designed for the Frome Festival, Bath Music Festival, Edinburgh Festival, The National Wedding Show, and Glastonbury Dance Festival.

He is a member of the Association of Lighting Designers.

## INTERVIEW WITH RICK

1. *What has been an exciting moment for you in your career as a lighting designer so far?*

Winning an award for Best Lighting Design - it was a while ago now, but it still gives me inspiration. It always feels good to get recognition for my contributions to a production.

2. *How does your lighting in Sista Girl give the audience additional information that enhances their understanding of the work?*

Most of the piece is very stylised, the dialogue is mainly internal, but during the moments where there is interaction with the 'outside' world, I have used certain lighting effects to try to bring this to life and support the script.

3. *What has been one of the challenges of this project and how have you overcome this?*

When lighting a show that has a 'real' set e.g., a house interior, garden, etc, there are fairly narrow parameters and rules to follow to mimic reality. The hardest part of lighting a show that does not have this kind of staging, is to create a design so that it fits with the feeling of the piece. I worked with the director and creative team to try and define a style to work with, and to decide where in the piece to put the focus of the lighting effects.

# Sound Designer

Andrew Howard

Andrew is Resident Sound Designer for the State Theatre Company.

For State Theatre Company, Andrew Howard's sound design credits include *Machu Picchu*, *This Is Where We Live*, *Kryptonite*, *Maggie Stone*, *Babyteeth*, *The Comedy of Errors* (head of audio), *Random*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *romeo&juliet*, *Knives in Hens* and *Attempts On Her Life*.



His other theatre credits as Sound Designer and/or Composer include *Despoiled Shore*, *Medeamaterial*, *Landscape with Argonauts*, *The War*, *Please Go Hop*, *Highway Rock 'n' Roll Disaster*, *Trouble On Planet Earth* and *Disappearance* (The Border Project), *One Long Night in The Land of Nod* and *The Homecoming* (Floogle), *The Birthday Party* and *Blackbird* (Flying Penguin Productions), *Boxing Day Test* (JungleBean), *The Little Green Tractor* (Patch Theatre) and *Helly's Magic Cup*, *Grug*, *Nyuntu Ngali*, *Fugitive*, *School Dance*, *Pinocchio* (co-production with State Theatre Company), *The Story Thieves* and *Girl Asleep* (Windmill Theatre).

1. *What kind of work do you do during the four-week rehearsal period and where do you work during this time? Why?*

During the rehearsal period I work closely with the director to discover what their overall vision for the play is. Once we have established that then I usually spend the first week in the rehearsal room from 10-6 each day gaining insight into where the actors are going with their characters and where the director is going with the blocking. Then I go and home and work in my studio for a few hours at night starting to sketch out musical concepts and melodic themes. I then pass these on to the director so they can listen and make sure we are on the right track. Once we have determined my musical ideas are on the right track I then start writing and recording a significant amount of material.

This recording I usually do throughout the entire second and third weeks of rehearsals. To generate enough material for the show and enough to be able to have extra if the director asks for more material.

In the fourth week of rehearsals I then spend the entire week in the rehearsal room building the aural environment for the show in show control software called QLab.

The breakdown of this varies from show to show depending on how each individual director likes to work. Some directors don't like introducing sound too early and others like having sound from day one. On *Sista Girl* I spent a lot of the first week in the rehearsal room playing music on a tenor ukulele and finding things that sit well under the actors dialogue. This is a very enjoyable way to work and makes for a deeper engagement with the work.

2. *How do you think sound design can enhance the concepts of a text using an example from Sista Girl?*

Sound design is a very important aspect of any play and if done well will not be overtly noticeable by audiences. I see sound design for theatre as an extra layer upon the floor which the actors walk on. It is there to support them and their characters moods and feelings and should never stick out unnecessarily. With *Sista Girl* and it's through lines of racial relationships I decided that a neutral instrument like a tenor ukulele was a good choice. This was to avoid distractions from the text. I did not want to be didactic by using traditional aboriginal instruments or Italian instruments and telling the audience what they should think. However, choices of chords between major, minor and diminished chords can give an aural cue about how perhaps they could feel.

3. *What do you see as an important concept in Sista Girl and how is this reflected throughout the production in the sound design?*

I think one of the most important concepts in *Sista Girl* is that one should never judge a person on the colour of their skin, their religion or their gender identification. I have tried to reflect this by using a culturally neutral instrument to underscore dialogue.

Other parts of the sound design are built not to illicit feelings but to give a location and tell us where we are.

# Cast

## NADIA ROSSI

Georgie

Nadia Rossi completed a Bachelor of Creative Arts (HONS) from Flinders University Drama Centre and is a founding member of award winning theatre company *isthisyours?*. Nadia's State Theatre Company theatre credits include *Three Sisters* and *The Memory of Water*.

For Windmill Theatre, she has toured extensively both nationally and internationally with *Plop!*, *Cat* and *The Green Sheep*. For The Border Project; *I Am Not An Animal*. For *isthisyours?*; *Make Me Honest Make Me Wedding Cake* (Adelaide Festival Centre inSPACE Development Award, Adelaide Fringe 2009), *Best We Forget* and *You Wanna Talk About It* (Melbourne Fringe Tour Ready Award 2014). Film Credits include *The Swimming Lesson* and *Drive By*. Future works include *Angelique* with *isthisyours?*, presented by Insite Arts and The Adelaide Festival Centre.



## NATASHA WANGANEEN

Nakisha Gray

Natasha emerged as an actress, at the tender age of 14, with her wonderful portrayal of Nina, the dormitory boss in *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002). A number of roles in film and television roles followed including *Australian Rules* (2002), *Jessica* (2004) and *Through My Eyes* (2004).

An Award-winning AFI actor, Natasha's State Theatre Company credits include *The Secret River* in the 2017 Adelaide Festival, one of the highlights of her career. Not only was this a powerful story that needs to be told, but a role which will challenge Natasha in a way that is rarely presented.

In recent years, Natasha has developed a strong presence on stage with roles in numerous significant pioneering productions, such as the world premier of *Cloudstreet* (State Opera of South Australia), the premier and subsequent tours of *Shadow King*, including a season at The Barbican Theatre in London (Malthouse Theatre Company), and tours with Darwin Festival's Production of *Wulamanyuwi*. Notably, during this period, Natasha was also cast in the television production of *The Secret River*, *The Estimator* (Queensland Theatre Company) and *Troupers* (Sydney Theatre Company).

Most recently, Natasha has recently completed the production of *Cargo*, a feature film due for release in 2017.

The year ahead holds many wonderful opportunities for Natasha touring with another run of *Shadow King* and another film ahead.



# Crew

## STAGE MANAGER

Alex Hayley



Alex studied at the Adelaide Centre for The Arts, graduating in 2013 with an Advanced Diploma in Technical Production and Stage Management.

For State Theatre Company her stage management credits include *The Red Cross Letter's* and Samuel Beckett's *Eh Joe*.

Her assistant stage management credits include *Things I Know To Be True*, *Volpone*, *Othello*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Little Bird*, the 2013 remount of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* for State Theatre Company.

Windmill Theatre assistant stage management credits include *Rumpelstiltskin* (with State Theatre Company) *School Dance*, *Girl Asleep* and State Theatre co-production *Pinocchio*, including a season on 42nd streets New Victory Theatre in New York City.

Alex also has stage and assistant stage management credits with Tiny Bricks, La Soirée, Griffin Theatre, Adelaide Festival, Australia's Performing Arts Market, BBC UK, Adelaide Cabaret Festival, OzAsia Festival, Adelaide Fringe Festival.

### 1. What do you see as your three most important tasks as a stage manager and why?

Ensuring that all cast members feel safe, heard and valued while working within a show. Certain shows can have difficult or triggering themes for individuals, so maintaining a safe working environment is essential.

Keeping the rehearsal room moving along on a productive track and that the balance between fun and work is maintained.

Listening and being open is another important task / quality that a stage manager needs to possess. Artists need to feel comfortable to come to you with any personal or professional issues that sometimes can arise while in a rehearsal or show season capacity.

### 2. How do you think collaboration between different parts of the *Sista Girl* company can help or hinder the final product of performance?

The collaboration process on *Sista Girl* has been incredibly rewarding to the authenticity and depth of the work. All narratives played out on stage are derived from real life experiences / challenges that all cast and creatives have faced.

## ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

### Alira McKenzie-Williams

Alira McKenzie-Williams is a trainee for the State Theatre Company. She began her training in Stage Management during January of 2016. Alira was attending Adelaide collage of the Art studying live production and Services Cert III throughout January to June of 2016. Throughout June 2016 to June 2017 Alira has been working full time at the State theatre Company and she will commence her studies at AC Arts in a live production and services Cert IV from June 2017.



Alira McKenzie-Williams Assistant Stage Management credits include *39 Steps*, *Tartuffe* and *Sista Girl*. Alira's Chaperone credits include *The Secret River*. Alira Has also assisted with the following productions *The Events*, *Machu Picchu*, *Things I know to be true*, *Gorgon*, *Straight White Men* and has also assisted with the State Theatre Company's 2016 Summer School Workshop.



# Themes & Devices

## Family

Family is part of everyone's identity. Large, small, close, unknown, missing or frustrating, everyone came from family at one point. The impact of these relationships, or lack of, can be enormous in someone's identity and their understanding of their world and the people in it.

## Identity

The beliefs and understandings that are essential to a person at their core. The pieces of information that allow us to understand who we are and provide clues as to what paths we choose to explore within our lives. Identity is also a way we define others, in order to make sense of the world and our place in it.

## Loss/Death

The theme of loss is represented by death in *Sista Girl*. As a plot device, the loss of their father enables the women to come together to explore larger issues and themes. Death provides impetus for reflection and for exploration of big questions of identity, morals, meaning of life.

## Ritual

Ritual is a device humans use to make sense of their world. We use ritual for celebration, commiseration, interaction and many other circumstances. While the word 'ritual' often conjures images of pagan traditions with chanting and masks, the truth is that ritual can be as simple as a handshake, blowing out candles on a birthday cake or a set of morning habits as seen in the opening of *Sista Girl*. Storytelling and indeed theatre itself are forms of ritual; a formalised platform for celebrating and exploring humanity.

## Dispossession

Dispossession is the action of depriving people of land, property or other possessions. Since the arrival of white settlers who claimed Australia in the name of the King, First Nations Australians have experienced dispossession. This loss continues to resonate today in the lives of the descendants of those First Australians. Ironically, some people who came from other countries to settle here did so out of a need to find a new life, due to their own dispossession, particularly due to war. Therefore, Australia is a country with its original inhabitants dispossessed by immigrants who were seeking their own belonging, due to their own dispossession.

# Further Research

## CULTURAL AWARENESS

How to avoid cultural appropriation at Coachella:

[http://www.teenvogue.com/story/coachella-cultural-appropriation?mbid=social\\_facebook](http://www.teenvogue.com/story/coachella-cultural-appropriation?mbid=social_facebook)

Ali Cobby Eckermann why I can't forgive John Howard

<http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-20/why-i-cant-forgive-john-howard-ali-cobby-eckermann/8369674?pfmredir=sm>

Can Trauma be passed on through DNA?

<http://upliftconnect.com/intergenerational-trauma/>

GetUp! Vs Sovereign National Borders

[https://www.getup.org.au/campaigns/refugees/q-a-share/getup-vs-operation-sovereign-borders?t=QyBZWCEBy&utm\\_campaign=VIDEO%3A+GetUp+vs.+Operation+Sovereign+Borders&utm\\_content=15611&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=blast](https://www.getup.org.au/campaigns/refugees/q-a-share/getup-vs-operation-sovereign-borders?t=QyBZWCEBy&utm_campaign=VIDEO%3A+GetUp+vs.+Operation+Sovereign+Borders&utm_content=15611&utm_medium=email&utm_source=blast)

Empty Prams of the Stolen Generation

<https://omny.fm/shows/sydney-writers-festival/the-empty-pram-stories-of-the-stolen-generation>

Who is talking for us Aboriginal Women?

<https://croakey.org/who-is-talking-for-us-the-silencing-of-the-aboriginal-womans-voice-about-violence/>

## SOCIAL CONDITIONING

On patriarchy:

<http://www.filmsforaction.org/articles/understanding-patriarchy/>

White Fragility

<http://www.alternet.org/culture/why-white-people-freak-out-when-theyre-called-out-about-race>

<http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/10/13/10-things-you-should-know-about-white-privilege>

Allies Marginalizing people of colour

[http://mashable.com/2016/02/27/people-of-color-marginalization/#5\\_naJw.EZEq2](http://mashable.com/2016/02/27/people-of-color-marginalization/#5_naJw.EZEq2)

What Is Propaganda? Noam Chomsky on Media, Manipulation, and Democracy

<http://highexistence.com/wonder-terror-propaganda-modern-governments-misuse-media-manipulate-bewildered-herd/>

Australia is a nation of white privilege

<http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2015/11/17/comment-whether-youre-listening-or-not-australia-nation-white-privilege>

# Think about and Explore

## TAKE THE TEST:

What is Privilege?

[https://www.buzzfeed.com/dayshavedewi/what-is-privilege?utm\\_term=.guxRw8YRV#.og5J7GvJW](https://www.buzzfeed.com/dayshavedewi/what-is-privilege?utm_term=.guxRw8YRV#.og5J7GvJW)

## QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO EXPLORE:

- What does it mean to be an Australian and why are there degrees of ‘Australianness’?
- Why are we at war with ourselves about who we are and how does Social Conditioning influence this?
- Why does Australia Day divide our country rather than bringing it together?
- Australia is a country with immense potential; beauty, space, cultures, education and more; why do we not strive for a more excellent country? Why do we let our history prevent us from reaching this potential?
- Why is our history hidden from us? Is it from shame? From guilt?
- What rituals can be found in *Sista Girl*? What rituals can you find in your own life and what are the significance of these for you?
- How is the identity of Gary Gray explored? How does Nakisha/Georgie see herself compared to the way her sister sees her? Are either of them more correct than the other?