

A D E L A I D E F E S T I V A L 2026



AF26 DIGITAL DAYBILL

Whitefella Yella Tree

Dylan Van Den Berg / Griffin Theatre Company

Dates: Thu 12 – Sun 15 Mar

Venue: Space Theatre

Duration: 1hr 30mins, no interval

Credits

A Griffin Theatre Company Production

Playwright Dylan Van Den Berg

Co-Directors Declan Greene and Amy Sole

Designer Mason Browne

Lighting Co-Designers Kelsey Lee and Katie Sfetkidis

Composer and Sound Designer Steve Toulmin

With Joseph Althouse and Danny Howard

Images Brett Boardman

Acknowledgements

Whitefella Yella Tree was developed as part of Griffin Studio, an initiative of Griffin Theatre Company, with support from the Malcolm Robertson Foundation and Griffin Studio donors, and through Melbourne Theatre Company's Cybec Electric Play Reading Series. The premiere production was supported by Griffin Theatre Company's Production Partner program.

Whitefella Yella Tree was first produced by Griffin Theatre Company, 19 August – 23 September 2022 at the SBW Stables Theatre.

**GRIFFIN
THEATRE
COMPANY**



About the Show

A powerful story of first love in a dangerous world.

Under a lemon tree in the early 19th century, two teenage boys – Ty of the River Mob and Neddy of the Mountain Mob – meet, sparking a fragile friendship that blossoms into a heady romance.

As the English loom and the land is poised to be declared 'Australia', their love unfolds against a backdrop of seismic change.

Written by acclaimed Palawa playwright Dylan Van Den Berg and directed by Declan Greene and Amy Sole, this Griffin Theatre Company production features Pertame and Tiwi actor Joseph Althouse alongside Barrd, Yamatji, Noongar, Bunuba and Ngadjju actor Danny Howard.

A moving depiction of young queer love, *Whitefella Yella Tree* is "subtle, clever and straight to the heart" (ArtsHub).

A Message from the Writer

First love: voices breaking, words coming out in all the wrong ways, a mess of limbs and too-wet kisses, earnest declarations. Imagine two boys falling for the first time – the giddiness, the joy - in a context without shame. And then imagine that love threatened by invaders wanting to colonise their Country, their bodies, their love. That's the world of *Whitefella Yella Tree*.

It's often hard to pinpoint when the idea for a play comes to you. Usually, for me (mainly because I'm incredibly lazy), it percolates for a while before I have a sense that there might be something there. With *Whitefella Yella Tree*, that was not the case. The earliest notions of this work bubbled up angrily when I read a Tweet almost a decade ago. Anthony Mundine said that artistic depictions of queer Aboriginal folks are out of sync with 'our culture' - *forbidden*, in fact – and that the Ancestors would, be none too happy. I was fairly young at the time, had more than my fair share of internalised homophobia and was still figuring myself out in all sorts of ways. Since then, Mundine has gone on to say things which an older me can, on one level, take with the single grain of salt they deserve, but they still trigger memories of that disorienting encounter with the idea that queer identity was at odds with culture. The idea that non-First Nations people might cling onto Mundine's comments as though they carry some weight because he is an Aboriginal man also goaded me; a feeling that these ideas could gain traction in a world that already erases Blak queerness.

So, after years of procrastination (the one 'sport' in which I could be an Olympic contender), I started reading and asking around, gathering up stories, and was able to confirm what I already knew deep down in my gut – that our mobs, our cultures, were not heteronormative. Queerness existed. It was embraced and it was celebrated. In fact, homophobia, in the sense that we know it today, is a poison that invaded this country.

So, I've written this play in the hope that you might reflect on the rich and real detail of lives that were disrupted when those ships hit the shore. The queer love stories that never got to be written.

Dylan Van Den Berg
Playwright

About the Artists

Griffin Theatre Company

For nearly 50 years Griffin has been dedicated to the development and staging of Australian plays. They serve as one of the great engine rooms of Australian theatre—shaping and telling stories that reflect us, help us understand who we are, who we have been and who we want to become.

Griffin is synonymous with Australian theatre. They have premiered over 400 new Australian works since our inception in 1979. They have platformed some of the country's most courageous stories.

They have served as the launchpad for the nation's most prolific playwrights. Stories with humble Griffin beginnings have gone on to stages and screens nationwide and beyond—even to the West End and Broadway. As former Artistic Director Ros Horin once said "We are the theatre of first chances".

Declan Green

Director

Declan Green is Artistic Director of Griffin Theatre Company.

Declan's credits as director include: for Griffin Theatre Company: *Dogged*, *Green Park*, *Naturism*, *Sex Magick* (co-directed with Nicholas Brown), *The Lewis Trilogy*, *Whitefella Yella Tree* (co-directed with Amy Sole); Sydney Theatre Company: *Hamlet*, *Prince of Skidmark*; Griffin Theatre Company and Hayes Theatre Co: *Flat Earthers: The Musical*; Malthouse Theatre: *Wake in Fright*; Malthouse Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company: *Blackie Blackie Brown*; ZLMD Shakespeare Company: *Conviction*. As a playwright: *Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography*, *The Homosexuals*, or *'Faggots'*, *Melancholia*, *Pompeii L.A.* and *Moth*.

Declan co-founded queer experimental theatre company Sisters Grimm with Ash Flanders in 2006, and has directed and co-created all their productions to date, including: for Griffin Independent and Theatre Works: *Summertime in the Garden of Eden*; for Malthouse Theatre and Sydney Theatre Company: *Calpurnia Descending*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Lilith: The Jungle Girl*.

He was previously Resident Artist at Malthouse Theatre.

Amy Sole

Director

Amy is a proud Wiradjuri/Worimi director, playwright, dramaturg and advocate. They are Creative Associate at ILBIJERRI Theatre Company and a graduate of National Institute of Dramatic Art's Master of Fine Arts in Directing and Victorian College Of The Arts Master of Theatre in Playwriting. Directing credits include: Griffin Theatre Company: *Whitefella Yella Tree*; Griffin Theatre Company Co-Productions: for Sydney Theatre Company/Griffin Theatre Company: *Whitefella Yella Tree*; Other companies: for Belvoir 25A: *Forgetting Tim Minchin*; for Darlinghurst Theatre Company: *Benched*; for ILBIJERRI Theatre Company: *Scar Trees*; for ILBIJERRI/Melbourne Theatre Company: *Blak in the Room*; for ILBIJERRI/Melbourne Theatre Company: *Emu in the Sun*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *Robot Dog*.

Writing credits include: for ILBIJERRI/ADT: *Tracker*; for National Institute of Dramatic Art: *Burning*.

Collaborations include: for ILBIJERRI/Force Majeure: *Gurr Era Op*; for ILBIJERRI: *Big Name No Blankets*; for Melbourne Theatre Company: *The Black Woman of Gippsland*.

Dylan Van Den Berg

Writer

Dylan Van Den Berg is a Palawa writer and dramaturg from the northeast of lutruwita/Tasmania, with family connections to the Bass Strait Islands where his great-grandmother was born. He has held residencies at Sydney Theatre Company through the Emerging Writer's Group and Griffin Theatre Company through the year-long Griffin Studio initiative. Recent writing credits include: *Whitefella Yella Tree* (Griffin Theatre Company/Sydney Theatre Company/La Boite/Adelaide Festival); *Milk*; *The Chosen Vessel* (The Street Theatre); *Struthers* (National Institute of Dramatic Art); *Ngadjung* (Belco Arts); *The Camel* (FlickFlick City/Motley Bauhaus).

He trained as a dramaturg through ILBIJERRI's BlackWrights program, with recent credits including: *Mum Club*; *SISTREN*; *Nucleus* (Griffin Theatre Company); *Nan's Place* (ILBIJERRI Theatre Company); *Burning House* (Queensland Theatre); *A Better Tomorrow* (The Street Theatre). For screen,

Dylan has written extensively for *Play School* (ABC) and *Reef School* (ABC) and has joined writers' rooms for Blackfella Films, Wooden Horse, and Warner Bros.

For his writing, he has received the Griffin Award, two AWGIES, the David Williamson Prize, two NSW Premier's Literary Awards for Playwriting, the Victorian Premier's Award for Drama, and was shortlisted for the Bruntwood International Playwriting Prize.

He is currently under commission with Griffin Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company.

Dylan studied drama and Indonesian language at the ANU, and theatre at the State University of New York. Alongside his PhD studies on the Aboriginal Gothic, Dylan lectures at the University of Canberra, focussing on creative writing and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. He was formerly Literary Manager at Griffin Theatre Company.

His plays *Milk*, *Whitefella Yella Tree* and *The Chosen Vessel* are published by Currency Press.

Joseph Althouse

Performer

Joseph 'Wunujaka' Althouse is a proud Pertame and Tiwi man who lives and works on Gadigal Country. **Acting credits** include: **Griffin Theatre Company:** *Green Park*, *Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Other companies:** for Bell Shakespeare: *The Comedy of Errors* (National Tour); for Ensemble Theatre: *Black Cockatoo*; for Hayes Theatre Company: *The Lucky Country*; for Redline Theatre Company: *Amadeus*, *Angels in America*; for Sydney Theatre Company: *Lord of the Flies*, *The Visitors*.

Screen credits include: for ABC: *Bad Ancestors*, *Black Comedy*, *Mother and Son*, *Preppers*.

Joseph received the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Male Actor in a Supporting Role in an Independent Production for *Angels in America*. As a young, queer Indigenous artist, he is committed to using his voice to help shape a national identity that is inclusive and representative of who we are.

Danny Howard

Performer

Born in Broome, WA, Danny grew up in his father's country, Barrd Country, in the far north of the Kimberley. He has First Nations ties across the west of the continent, including the Barrd, Noongar, Yamatji, Bunuba and Ngadju Nations. Family, Country, culture and sea remain central to his life and practice.

Acting credits include: **Griffin Theatre Company:** *Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Other companies:** for Belvoir Street Theatre: *Jacky*.

Training credits include: for National Institute of Dramatic Art: *A Month in the Country*, *First Love Is the Revolution*, *Our Lady of 121st Street*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Good Hope*, *Twelve Angry Men*.

Danny completed WAAPA's Aboriginal Theatre course before training at National Institute of Dramatic Art. He is committed to expanding and representing his First Nations heritage through the arts and hopes to be a role model for future generations.

Steve Toulmin

Composer/Sound Designer

Griffin Theatre Company: *A Hoax*, *Beached*, *Dogged*, *Feather in the Web*, *Gloria*, *Kill Climate Deniers*, *The Bleeding Tree*, *The Homosexuals*, *Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Belvoir St Theatre:** *20 Questions*, *Barbara and the Camp Dogs*, *Blue Wizard*, *HIR*, *Is This Thing On?*, *Ivanov*, *Jasper Jones*, *La Traviata*, *Scorched*, *The Blind Giant Is Dancing*, *The Rover*, *The Seed*; **Bell Shakespeare:** *Othello*, *Richard III*; **Ensemble Theatre:** *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *Great Falls*, *Liberty Equality Fraternity*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; **Independent:** *Arlington*, *Chatter*, *Me Pregnant*, *Queen of Wolves*, *Rommy*; **La Boite Theatre:** *Attack of the Attacking Attackers*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Tender Napalm*; **Malthouse Theatre:** *Testament of Mary*; **Queensland Theatre:** *Switzerland*, *That Face*; **Sydney Festival:** *44 Sex Acts in One Week*, *All the Sex I've Ever Had*, *Maureen*; **Sydney Theatre Company:** *A Flea in Her Ear*, *Black Is The New White*, *Blackie Black Brown*, *Edward Gant's Amazing Feats of Loneliness*, *Little Mercy*, *Power Plays*.

Film: *My God Shaped Hole*. **Advertising:** Australia Post, Brisbane Racing Club, Common Ground, Oaks, Stella, Uncle Tobys.

Daniel Herten

Associate Composer & Sound Designer, Touring Sound Realiser

Griffin Theatre Company: *Flat Earthers: The Musical, Green Park, PONY, Sex Magick, SISTREN, The Lewis Trilogy, Wherever She Wanders, Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Belvoir Theatre Company:** *Furious Mattress, Grief Is the Thing With Feathers, Miss Peony, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*; **Bell Shakespeare:** *Twelfth Night*; **Clockfire Theatre Company:** *Plenty of Fish in the Sea*; **Darlinghurst Theatre Company:** *Let the Right One In*; **Ensemble Theatre Company:** *The Half-Life of Marie Curie*; **ERTH:** *ARC, Shark Dive*; **Essential Workers:** *Collapsible*; **Hayes Theatre Company:** *Murder for Two, Ride the Cyclone, The Pirates of Penzance*; **National Theatre of Parramatta:** *FADE*; **Performance Space:** *Follies of God*; **Red Line Productions:** *Hand to God, The Chairs*; **Rising Festival:** *Set Piece*; **Sport for Jove:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; **Sydney Festival:** *William Yang: Milestone*; **Sydney Theatre Company:** *Circle Mirror Transformation, Rules for Living, The Picture of Dorian Gray*; **Tinderbox Productions:** *Black Box: The Musical*.

Training: National Institute of Dramatic Art.

Mason Browne

Designer

Mason Browne is a designer and a descendant of the Dharug people, living and working on Dharug and Gundungurra Country in the Blue Mountains.

Griffin Theatre Company: *Sex Magick, Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Australian Theatre for Young People:** *The Deb*; **Dancing Giant Productions:** *Eternityland*; **Hayes Theatre:** *American Psycho, Cry Baby, Darlinghurst Nights, Jekyll & Hyde, Young Frankenstein*; **Joshua Robson Productions:** *In the Heights*; **Neil Gooding Productions:** *Leap*; **New Theatre:** *Summer Rain*; **Reginald Theatre:** *The Importance of Being Earnest*; **Sydney Theatre Company:** *Debut, Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Tantrum Theatre:** *Powerforce Live, Riot!, Savage Naked Love*; **The Theatre Division:** *Ruthless!*; **Throw Catch Collective:** *Escalate*.

Awards include Best Costume Design at the 2019 Sydney Theatre Awards for *American Psycho*. Other work includes serving as Curator and Creative Producer for Dark Mofo 2023's *Night Mass*. Training: National Institute of Dramatic Art. Pronouns: they/them.

Kelsey Lee

Lighting Co-Designer

Griffin Theatre Company: *Sex Magick, The Lewis Trilogy, Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Sydney Theatre Company:** *4000 Miles*; **Australian Theatre for Young People:** *April Aardvark*; **Australian Chamber Orchestra:** *There's a Sea in My Bedroom, Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*; **Belvoir 25A:** *An Ox Stand on My Tongue, Destroy, She Said*; **Belvoir St Theatre:** *A Room of One's Own, At What Cost?, Big Girls Don't Cry, Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Well-Behaved Women*; **Bell Shakespeare:** *The Comedy of Errors*; **Blue Film:** *Long Story Short*; **Ensemble Theatre:** *A Letter for Molly, Killing Katie, Masterclass, Switzerland, The Memory of Water*; **Fervour:** *Life Is a Dream*; **Force Majeure:** *Gurr Era Op*; **Green Door Theatre Company:** *Good Dog, If We Got Some More Cocaine I Could Show You How I Love You, SISTREN*; **Hayes Theatre Co:** *Catch Me If You Can, Tell Me on a Sunday*; **Melbourne Theatre Company:** *Destin*; **Marrugeku:** *Cut the Sky, Mutiara*; **Michelle Guthrie Presents:** *Tell Me on a Sunday*; National Institute of Dramatic Art: *Lulu: A Modern Sex Tragedy*; **NTofP:** *A Practical Guide to Self Defence, Nothing, Queen Fatima*; **re:group collective:** *Autotune*; **Sydney Dance Company:** *Silence & Rapture, Somos*; **Tinderbox Productions:** *Black Box: The Musical*.

Awards include the Sydney Theatre Award for Best Set Design for *Destroy, She Said*. Training: National Institute of Dramatic Art. Pronouns: she/her.

Kaite Sfetkidis

Lighting Co-Designer

Sydney Theatre Company: *Calpurnia Descending*; **Ilbjerri Theatre:** *Blak in the Room*; **Joel Bray Dance:** *Considerable Sexual License, Daddy, Garabari, Monolith*; **Malthouse:** *Homo*; **Melbourne Theatre Company:** *Abigail's Party, Touching the Void*.

Awards include the 2025 Green Room Award for Outstanding Lighting Design in Theatre Companies (Body of Work – *Blak in the Room / Homo Pentecostus*) and the 2005 Green Room Award for Outstanding Lighting Design in Theatre Companies (*Meme Girls*).

Andrea James

Dramaturg

Yorta Yorta/Gunaikurnai

Griffin Theatre Company: *Dogged* (with Catherine Ryan), *Ghosting the Party*, *Jailbaby*, *Nucleus*, *swim*; **Sydney Theatre Company:** *Whitefella Yella Tree* (as Dramaturg); **Arthur Productions:** *Bright World* (with Elise Hearst); **Ilbijerri Theatre Company:** *Big Name, No Blankets* (in consultation with Sammy and Anyupa Butcher), *Coranderrk: We Will Show the Country* (with Giordano Nanni); **Jute Theatre:** *Bukal*; **Melbourne Theatre Company:** *The Black Woman of Gippsland*; **Melbourne Workers Theatre:** *Magpie*, *Non Parlo Di Salo*, *The Call*, *Yanagai! Yanagai!*; **Moogahlin Performing Arts:** *Winyanboga Yurringa*; **Moogahlin Performing Arts & Belvoir:** *Winyanboga Yurringa*; **Performing Lines:** *Sunshine Super Girl*; **Urban Theatre Projects:** *Home*.

Positions include Associate Artistic Director at Griffin Theatre Company, Aboriginal Producer at Carriageworks, Aboriginal Arts Development Officer at Blacktown City Council, and Artistic Director at Melbourne Workers Theatre. Awards include the Mona Brand Award for Women Stage and Screen Writers and the 2024 National Theatre Award. Training: Victorian College Of The Arts. Pronouns: she/her.

Tyler Fitzpatrick

Stage Manager

Griffin Theatre Company: *Blaque Showgirls* (as Production Manager), *Jailbaby* (as Production Manager), *Pony* (as Production Manager), *The Lewis Trilogy* (as Stage Manager); **ATYP:** *April Aardvark*; **Belvoir 25A:** *Aurat Raj*, *Moon Rabbit Rising*, *Porpoise Pool*; **Blush Opera:** *Chop Chef*; **CAAP:** *The Bridal Lament*; **Campbelltown Arts Centre:** *Mirage*, *The Complication of Lyrebirds*, *The Other Side*; **GreenDoor Theatre Company:** *seven methods of killing kylie jenner*; **Legit Theatre Co:** *Misery Loves Company*; **Merrigong:** *As Luck Would Have It*, *Trash Talk*; **Milkcrate:** *Dust*; **NTofP:** *Nothing*; **NTofP/La Boite:** *Yoga Play*; **NTofP/Merrigong:** *A Practical Guide to Self Defence*; **Purple Tape Productions:** *Expiration Date*, *Party Girl*, *[YOUR NAME]* (as Lighting Designer); *Come Again*, *Expiration Date*, *Fledgling*, *Maa Ki Rasoi*, *Party Girl*, *Tape Over Festival*, *werkaholics*, *[YOUR NAME]* (as Producer); **Q Theatre:** *The Ugliest Duckling*; **QTopia:** *I Want It That Gay*, *Notes on a Scandal*; **Shopfront Arts CoOp:** all productions

2020–2025; **Sydney Theatre Company:** *Debut*; **Tinderbox Productions:** *Black Box: The Musical*.

Positions include CoFounder of Purple Tape Productions, Production and Operations Manager at Shopfront Arts CoOp (2020–2025), and Production Associate at Paperjam Partners (2021–2023). Other work includes Touring Stage Manager for the *Little Squirt* UK Tour 2025 and Development Stage Manager for *Garden of Sound* (VoxSteps). Awards include the 2022 Sydney Theatre Award for Best Lighting Design (Independent) for *Moon Rabbit Rising*. Training: University of Wollongong. Pronouns: she/her.

Bayley Turner

Intimacy Coordinator

Bayley (she/her) is a consultant on consent-based practice, inclusion, and intimacy coordination. She is also a performer and writer, who completed her Master's thesis on consent and preventing sexual violence in the creative workplace. She trained with Intimacy On Set and IDC Professionals.

Griffin Theatre Company: *Jailbaby*, *swim*, *The Lewis Trilogy*, *Whitefella Yella Tree*; **Apocalypse Theatre:** *Cleansed*; **Andrew Henry Presents:** *Hedwig & the Angry Inch*; **Darlinghurst Theatre Company:** *Let the Right One In*, *Natasha*, *Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*, *Overflow*; **fortyfivedownstairs:** *The Inheritance*; **Hamilton Australia / Michael Cassel Group:** *Hamilton*; **Malthouse Theatre:** *Truth*; **Melbourne Theatre Company:** *The Almighty Sometimes*; **Sydney Theatre Company:** *Sweat*; **Theatre Works:** *In the Club*, *Things I Know to Be True*; **Victorian College Of The Arts:** *Spring Awakening*.

Screen work as Intimacy Coordinator includes *Neighbours* (Fremantle Media), *Ladies in Black* (Bunya Productions) and multiple short films. As an actor, Bayley recently opened fortyfivedownstairs' 2025 season in *ThirtySix* (Bullet Heart Club), cowritten with Jo Clifford. She has presented widely on consent in the creative sector, including at Creative Toolkit 2024 and SXSW 2024–2025. Bayley is honoured to be part of trans storytelling and truth-telling and working with the next generation of artistic phenoms.