

FILL UP ON LAUGHS, SONG AND DANCE WITH MOUTH-WATERING NEW CHILDREN'S MUSICAL *WOMBAT STEW*

The Judith Wright Centre presents a Garry Ginivan Attraction

WOMBAT STEW

A brand new musical for kids based on the book by Marcia K Vaughan and Pamela Lofts

Hundreds of Brisbane children are set to flock to the Judith Wright Centre this July to sink their teeth into the delectable new Australian musical *Wombat Stew*.

Adapted from the 1984 classic children's book and featuring a kooky cast of characters from the Australian outback, *Wombat Stew* tells the simple story of a cheeky dingo who tries to turn a naïve wombat into a big bubbling wombat stew.

"I thought it was a chance to create a very Australian piece, one that would look and sound familiar to the kids and their mums and dads, and give it a sense of humour that is uniquely ours," writer/director Gary Young said of his decision to adapt the popular story.

"If you could have seen me sitting at the laptop acting out all the animals as I wrote it, that was probably a show in itself... Fortunately no one could see that except my cat and she's a tough critic!"

Wombat Stew is the anticipated new collaboration between Young and celebrated Australian composer Paul Keelan, who have established themselves as a leading writing team in Australia having won the inaugural Pratt Prize for Music Theatre in 2002 (an Australian competition for writers of Music Theatre) and the Helpmann Award in 2007 for 'Best Original Score' for their work *Sideshow Alley*.

For Young, the opportunity to return to his childhood for *Wombat Stew* was too good to pass up.

"As a writer, there is nothing I love more than telling a story that is based in our own history. It gives the work a real truth and honesty," Young said.

"Working on *Wombat Stew*, I had a lot of flashbacks to when I was a kid in the country, sitting in the travelling theatre tent of 'Sorlies'. I remembered how much I loved those pantomimes that the actors did for us all around the countryside.

"I wanted to get a sense of that into this piece, so I created a travelling troupe who are on the move around Australia and we find them camped in the outback preparing to present *Wombat Stew* for their audience, the kids of Australia," he said.

"Tapping into that history, I also wanted to keep a sense of traditional pantomime alive and well, and it's great to see the kids respond to it in just the same way we did many years earlier."

Although *Wombat Stew* was first published more than 25 years ago, Young said its universal themes are still relevant to audiences of all ages.

"The story is about the good guys outwitting the bad guy in order to do a good deed and that doesn't go out of fashion. The moral that friends are to be valued and treated well is a lesson for us all, no matter what age we are."

Wombat Stew is brought to life on stage by a talented ensemble of six actors who use classic story-telling, mime, song, dance, and puppetry in this magical musical adventure.

"I guarantee a fun time, lots of laughs and plenty of songs," Young said. "Who could want more than that?"

Wombat Stew plays at the Judith Wright Centre Tuesday 20 – Friday 23 July 2010 for a strictly limited 9-show season.

**For further information, images and interview opportunities please contact
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JUDITH WRIGHT CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Date	Tuesday 20 – Friday 23 July 2010
Time	20 July 6pm 21 & 22 July 10am, 11:45am & 6pm 23 July 10am & 11:45am
Venue	Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts
Tickets	Children (under 15) \$12, Conc. \$15, Adult \$20, Family (2A+2C) \$60
Bookings	07 3872 9000 or judithwrightcentre.com

GARY YOUNG – WRITER/DIRECTOR

Gary wrote and directed the new Australian musical SIDESHOW ALLEY at the Playhouse QPAC to critical acclaim. Gary and composer Paul Keelan won the prestigious 2007 Helpmann Award for Best Original Score, Music and Lyrics for SIDESHOW ALLEY. Gary won the Aussie Theatre Award for his direction.

He was nominated for the 2006 Helpmann Award for his direction of the record breaking MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL, He directed FULLY COMMITTED starring Spencer McLaren, and staged Rhonda Burchmore's concert for the celebration of the 35th birthday of the Festival Theatre.

Gary was Associate Director for the original Australian/Asian production of MAMMA MIA, also the current 2010 production. He directed CAROUSEL starring David Campbell for The Production Company at the State Theatre, FUNNY GIRL with Caroline O'Conner, CALL ME MADAM starring Geraldine Turner, MAME starring Rhonda Burchmore, and recently THE BOYFRIEND.

He directed the new musical CRUSADE for the Edinburgh Festival and GUYS AND DOLLS at the Adelaide Festival Theatre. For the Canterbury Opera, NZ, he directed Stephen Sondheim's A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC teaming up with Geraldine Turner once again.

He has had a varied career as performer, writer and director and has worked all over the world in theatre, cabaret and television with the Mo award winning RITZ COMPANY. Theatre productions include SIDE BY SIDE BY SONDHEIM, STARTING HERE, STARTING NOW, SHOWBOAT, ANNIE GET YOUR GUN, JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR and LES MISERABLES.

He was Resident Director for the Australian productions of MISS SAIGON and LES MISERABLES for the Cameron Mackintosh Organization, THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, ASPECTS OF LOVE for the Really Useful Company, SCROOGE with Keith Michell at the Princess Theatre, TALES OF HOFFMANN and staged THE STUDENT PRINCE for the Victoria State Opera also THE MERRY WIDOW for the Melbourne City Opera He was Associate Director for the 10th Anniversary Productions of LES MISERABLES and MISS SAIGON and directed the Australian premiere of CRUSADE.

Original written work includes lyrics and book with co-writer and composer Tony Rees for TILLY, presented at the Buxton Musical Quest in Britain. Their project JEKYLL was staged at the Churchill Theatre, Britain and starred Dave Willets. He has also written several Theatre-In-Education pieces.

Current works with composer Paul Keelan include SHIP OF FOOLS, showcased at Chapel Off Chapel Theatre, A WOMAN'S EYES, BLACK WIDOW and TEA WITH OSCAR which was nominated for the Green Room Award for music and lyrics with two successful seasons at the Chapel Off Chapel Theatre.

Their musical SIDESHOW ALLEY won the National search for new work by Australian writers and composers, winning the inaugural Pratt Music Theatre Prize. It also won the 2007 Helpmann Award for them. Their current works include a musical based on the life of the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi – ARTEMISIA, their musical BIM BOM has been selected for development by the Pratt Music Theatre Prize 2008, and their children's theatre piece WOMBAT STEW tours this year.

Gary is currently working on a book THE LAST ERA OF CIVILITY and a play for radio SKYROCKETS AND CRAWLING THINGS.

Awards include The Arts Council Award for Direction, The Helpmann Award, Green Room nominations, The Mo Award, and The Aussie Theatre Award for Direction.

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JUDITH WRIGHT CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

PAUL KEELAN – ORIGINAL SCORE

Paul graduated from the Elder Conservatorium of Music (B.Mus, Dip Ed, A.Mus.A) with a degree in piano, clarinet and music education. He has performed widely in musicals, cabaret and concerts and as a soloist and is an experienced music educator, vocal coach and accompanist.

In May 2010, Paul was Musical Director for the new Australian children's musical WOMBAT STEW for which he wrote the score/arrangements. WOMBAT STEW will tour nationally for 10 months and he was MD for the Australian cast recording of the show.

Paul wrote the musical SIDESHOW ALLEY with collaborator Gary Young and was Musical Director for the Australian Premiere of the work at QPAC and the Australian cast recording. SIDESHOW ALLEY won the inaugural Pratt Prize for Musical Theatre and the Helpmann Award for Best Original Score in 2008.

He was Musical Director for the Australian and New Zealand productions of MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL and musical director for its extensive three-year regional tour and was Musical Director for the Australian cast recording of the show. He began his involvement in musicals as a performer in community theatre playing lead roles in productions of PIPPIN, GODSPELL, PIRATES OF PENZANCE, THE SECRET GARDEN, CITY OF ANGELS, GOTTA SING GOTTA DANCE, BARNUM and ASSASSINS and won the Victorian Theatre Guild award for Best Actor for INTO THE WOODS. He has directed productions of GODSPELL, OLIVER, ANNIE, VICTORIAN MUSIC THEATRE GUILD AWARDS and as Music Director productions of GODSPELL, ANNIE, THE SOUND OF MUSIC, THE MUSIC MAN and BUGSY MALONE to name a few. In 2009 he devised and directed the opening ceremony of THE QUIN AUDITORIUM.

Paul spent three years touring with the a cappella group The Phones, performing in major concert hall and comedy venues throughout Australia and recorded their debut album *Voices*. Professionally he has worked in musicals as a performer and musical director including CRUSADE and YOU OUGHTA BE IN PICTURES. He was resident singer/pianist at The Regent for 15 years.

Television appearances include THE BIG GIG, HEY HEY IT'S SATURDAY, MIDDAY WITH BERT NEWTON, MIDDAY WITH RAY MARTIN and ERNIE and DENISE to name a few.

With writer Gary Young he has composed music for SANTA BACK TO THE OUTBACK, JASON AND THE DRAGON (Direction and Music Direction – cast recording), SHIP OF FOOLS (Workshop – Music Direction and VCA production), A WOMAN'S EYES (Workshop – Music Direction), BLACK WIDOW (Workshop – VCA – Music Direction and Professional Workshop – Music Direction) and TEA WITH OSCAR as Producer, Performer and Musical Director which was also nominated for a Green Room Award and cast recording, ARTEMESIA (Pratt Prize shortlisted finalist - 2006) and SKYROCKETS AND CRAWLING THINGS, a play with music.

His current work is the 2008 Pratt Prize Commission for Musical Theatre, BIM BOM which will be workshopped in October by The Production Company. With Gary Young he formed Wing and a Prayer Productions.

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