

QPAC PRESENTS

Trophy Boys

A SOFT TREAD PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE MAYBE PILE

Written by **Emmanuelle Mattana**

Directed by **Marni Mount**

**Power.
Privilege.
High School
Debating.**

ST IMPERIUM
DIV. 1 INTERSCHOOL
DEBATING TEAM
2025

25-30 August | Cremorne Theatre, QPAC

Qpac
QUEENSLAND
PERFORMING
ARTS CENTRE



**SOFT
TREAD**

**the
maybe
pile**



QPAC rests on the lands of the Yuggera and Turrbal peoples. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this country and recognise their rich cultural heritage and enduring connection to the land, waters and skies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are this country's original storytellers, and it is our privilege to continue to share stories and be a place of gathering on this land that has been a meeting place for millennia.

The play you're about to see was also written, developed, and rehearsed on the land of the Wurundjeri and Woi Wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation and on the lands of the Boon Wurrung, Gadigal and Gumbaynggirr people. We pay our respects to their elders past and present, and extend that respect to all First Nations people here today.

First Nations communities have been singing songs and sharing stories on this country since time immemorial, and as story tellers we owe a special debt to their ancient and ongoing custodianship of this land and its song lines.

We stand in solidarity with the ongoing struggle for First Nations justice across the continent and the globe.

This was, is and always will be Aboriginal Land.

Content Warning

This show contains adult themes including coarse language, low level violence, homophobic and misogynistic slurs, sexually explicit content including references to sexual violence, underage sex and depictions of image-based abuse.

It also contains loud shouting, flashing lights, amplified sound effects and music and you will likely get a strong whiff of Lynx Africa aerosol deodorant at some point too.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you are more than welcome to leave the theatre, and if you wish to, return at any time.



Mental Health Support

The themes explored in *Trophy Boys* are sensitive and may hit close to home. If you require support, we encourage you to reach out to any of the following organisations:



BEYOND BLUE

beyondblue.org.au
1300 22 4636

LIFELINE

lifeline.org.au
13 11 14

KIDS HELPLINE

kidshelpline.com.au
1800 55 1800

1800RESPECT

1800respect.org.au
1800 737 732

MIND

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ENTERTAINMENT ASSIST

www.entertainmentassist.org.au

ARTS WELLBEING COLLECTIVE

www.artswellbeingcollective.com.au

MEAA EQUITY INDEPENDENT GUIDE

meaa.org/campaigns/entertainment-wellness

A Message from QPAC

Trophy Boys scorched its way into Australia's cultural life following short seasons in the very intimate confines of two of Melbourne's most iconic performance spaces: La Mama and 45 Downstairs. Everyone was talking about this urgent new show, fast becoming the hottest ticket in town, scooping up Green Room award nominations along the way and eventually winning the 2024 Sydney Theatre Award for Best New Work. It has recently made its American debut off-Broadway at the MCC Theatre. Praise be to Soft Tread and The Maybe Pile who have overseen its recent touring life after one reviewer hoped that the play not only tours to every school in the country "but becomes mandatory viewing for politicians and parliamentary bureaucrats."

Doubtless those politicians and parliamentary bureaucrats comprise hundreds of thousands of ex-high school debaters (I confess I am among their number) who carry the scarifying core teenage memory of their underperformance as *Second Speaker Negative on That Australia Should Close its Zoos* or *First Affirmative on That Homework Should Be Banned*. *Trophy Boys* brings that world screeching back, the familiarity of the preparation room, the palm cards, and the angst as well as the thrill of potential victory, the only place where winner-takes-all competition was possible outside a school sports arena.

Emanuelle Mattana's brilliance is of course much more than just a witty nostalgia trip; it's in their fearless understanding of privilege, the institutions that groom and in their forensic critique of gendered power. In an era where elite schools still shape this country's future leaders, this production both entertains and indicts.

Rachel Healy
QPAC Chief Executive

Writer's Note

As a competitive high school debater I spent a lot of time with the 'good boys'; the clever, morally-upstanding boys from elite private schools who were destined for the highest offices of power...

But the very nature of the endeavour - turning argument into sport while believing yourself the smartest in any room - required you fervently argue things you didn't know enough about or even necessarily believe. Logic was a game, something to be won or lost, and words and arguments were things you could twist at your own whim. If you were articulate and commanding enough you could speak over anyone, or for anyone.

It was no wonder this ethos seeped so dangerously into other parts of these boys' lives.

Even as a teenager I recognised a deep and frightening wound here - both in the harm these boys perpetrated as well as in the fabric of the very power that they would soon inherit - that I couldn't quite articulate...

So I quit debating and ran away to become an artist and hang out with other queer weirdos who helped me imagine a braver, more radical future.

Trophy Boys is for my teenage self.

Gender is learnt, which means it is also taught. No more so than to those young men I knew from debate. With this brand of masculinity inhabited on stage by non-dis male bodies, my hope is that it can be revealed for what it truly is - a comical, absurd and ultimately disturbing performance.

It is also a performance that hurts our boys and men. As bell hooks explains, "the first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence toward women. Instead patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves."

May this show be an invitation; if we can put this on, what can you take off? Gender is a scam but it is also a gift. Drag is radical joy and liberation. The binary hurts us all in different but interconnected ways, as does the systemic effort to deny the existence and rights of queer, trans and gender-nonconforming citizens. Thank you for joining us in the theatre and in the world.

Emmanuelle Mattana



Director's Note

I first read a 15-page draft of the play that would become *Trophy Boys* in September 2021. I knew instantly that it was going to be brilliant, and that I would do anything to be a part of making it happen. The closed room. The impossible task set for a cast of absurd and instantly recognisable characters. The drag. The twist. It was all there. And it brilliantly lampooned a world that is deeply familiar to me — that of competitive debating.

Much like the wealthy private schools that dominate it, debating is at the same time both deeply serious and incredibly silly. Two teams are each locked in a room, given a topic, and told they have one hour to prepare to debate that topic from a randomly allocated side. No one really believes in what they're arguing, many don't even understand, but every speaker manages to offer vehement protestation, "informed" analysis, and absolute conviction. They are often also wearing brightly coloured jackets. As flamboyant and trivial as this world seems, it is the crucible in which many of our most influential lawyers, politicians, and powerbrokers come of age, and in many ways, it teaches them their craft. It is a cloistered world, but the power it wields requires that we look into its darkest corners and see what's hiding there.

I knew that this world was also deeply familiar to Emmanuelle, having met her at a prestigious model UN debating competition when she was still a high school student. At the time, I was a wide-eyed undergraduate student facilitating the event, and I could not have imagined the creative reunion we would have making this show years later.

Emmanuelle's play is a masterful interrogation of the ways that entitlement, abuse, and absolution are tied up with one another. Her command of pace, tone, and language reel an audience in, making them laugh with glee at one moment, and gulp in horror at the next.

I hope this play makes you laugh, and I hope it makes you angry. We can only change things when we see them for what they truly are. I hope that when you see this play, it makes you want to change things.

Marni Mount

The Boys



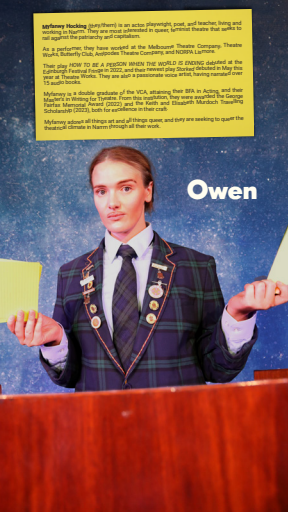
Myfanwy Hocking (they/them) is an actor, playwright, poet, and teacher, living and working in Narm. They are most interested in queer, feminist theatre that seeks to rail against the patriarchy and capitalism.

As a performer, they have worked at the Melbourne Theatre Company, Theatre Works, Butterfly Club, Aspidochelone Theatre Company, and NOSPA Lyamons.

Their play *HOW TO BE A PERSON WHEN THE WORLD IS ENDING* debuted at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2022, and their newest play *Storked* debuted in May this year at Theatre Works. They are also a passionate voice artist, having narrated over 15 audio books.

Myfanwy is a double graduate of the VCA, attaining their BFA in Acting, and their Master's in Writing for Theatre. From this institution, they were awarded the George Fairfax Memorial Award (2022) and the Keith and Elizabeth Murdoch Travelling Scholarship (2023), both for excellence in their craft.

Myfanwy adores all things art and all things queer, and they are seeking to queer the theatrical climate in Narm through all their work.



Owen

Leigh Lole (she/they) is a Ugandan-Australian actress, writer, and theatre maker based in Naam. She joined Western Edge Arts in 2018, writing and performing theatre works as a member of the 'Sub-30 Collective'. As a company lead artist, she also devises and delivers drama workshops for young people throughout Melbourne's Western suburbs. Leigh has also carried out creative facilitation in collaboration with RAWCUS, Art Centre Melbourne's New Writers Collective and guest lectured at Melbourne University.

Recent stage credits include *SUB30: Now This* (2022), *PONTIFEX* (2022) and *Trophy Boys* (2022/2023/2024). She was also the assistant-director of Liv Satchell's *My bleeding girls lie* (2021), as well as Satchell's anthology, *The Grief Trilogy* (2023).

Leigh was a producer-in-residence at Next Wave, where she curated community-focused events and founded the digital publication, Ubuntu Magazine. She is the co-creator, writer and performer of upcoming web-series *CEERS*, which has received developmental support from SIGNAL, Screen Australia, SBS' Digital Originals, and ABC Mew's *Pitch-O-Rama*. Leigh was also a writer for ABC ME's *Turn Up The Volume* (2022), and is currently in development for Netflix's *Heartbreak High* (Season 3, 2024).

David



Gaby Seow (she/her) is an actor, writer and maker. She co-wrote, starred in, and co-produced the web series *Celebration Nation* (Screen Australia, Google /Youtube) which was nominated for an AACTA Award (2022) and was part of the official selection for the Melbourne Webfest (2022). Gaby can be seen most recently in *Aunty Donna's Coffee Cafe* (ABC), and other credits include *Young Rock* (NBC), *Get Krackin* (ABC) and feature film *Late Night with the Devil* (2023).

Scott



Fran Sweeney-Nash (They/Them) is a queer actor, writer and theatre maker living and working predominantly on Wurundjeri and Bunurong country. They value community engaged practices, queer dramaturgies and non-hierarchical processes of collaboration. They have appeared on the VCE drama and theatre studies playlist twice (Cactus and Trophy Boys) and have been nominated for a Green Room award (Trophy Boys, Best Production). Recent works include *This is a Self-Portrait* (Testing Grounds), *nowhere gradually* (Science Gallery Melbourne), *Cactus* (La Mama), *Trophy Boys* (fortyfreedownstairs), *The Peach Blossom Fan* (VCA), *WORMS* (MUSE Festival), *Seven Seconds* (MUSE Festival) and *Land* (St Martins Youth Arts Centre).

Jared



Lighting Designer

Katie Sfetikidis (she/her) is a multidisciplinary artist living and working on lands of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people. Her practice is focused on exploring the history of politics and the role of the artist in civic life. Drawing on methodologies and concepts rooted in histories of social practice and performance art, her arts research projects are often long form,

spanning many years and frequently involve social engagement including: speaking with the community and participating in varied social activities. Working with institutions both inside and outside the art world Katie's projects often lead to numerous and varied outcomes including exhibitions, discursive public events, artist books, performance lectures, drawings and installation.

Notable projects include; **PRESENT/MEMORY: Women's COVID-19 Time Capsule** (2020-2022); **The Feminist Poster Project** (2020-2021); **Dear Minister** (2019) and **The Mayor Project** (2018). In 2020 Katie was appointed the Feminist Emissary for the Queen Victoria Women's Centre where she created the Women's Covid-19 Time Capsule. She is currently undertaking a research project **We the People**; an arts research project that explores the idea of legacy within activism and interrogates why the act of public demonstration is still important, currently being supported by Creative Victoria and Platform Arts, Geelong.



Stage Manager

Genevieve Davidson (she/her) Genevieve graduated with a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Production and Design) from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2017. Since graduating she has worked and toured across Australia and New Zealand in a variety of roles. She has also travelled to the UK to work as a Production Assistant for the UK tour of *The Crucible*.

Genevieve's credits include **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS** The Twenty Sided Tavern (GNG Productions/Sydney Opera House), **Werewolf** (Melbourne Fringe/Arts Centre Melbourne), **Personal** (Jodie Mundy Collaborations/Critical Stages), **Yentl** (Kadimah Yiddish Theatre), **The 39 Steps** (Hearth Theatre), **The Guffalo's Child** (CDP), **HR** (Black Swan State Theatre Company), **Lovely Miss** (Riot Stage), and many more.



Producer

Jo Dyer (she/her) is a writer and literary curator, and producer of film and theatre. Through her production company Soft Tread Enterprises, she has created and presented theatre projects across Australia, Europe, the US and India in venues including the Sydney Opera House, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the National Centre for Performing Arts in Mumbai and the legendary Tropicana in Las Vegas. She has held significant roles in the Australian cultural industry, including as Director of Adelaide Writers' Week, CEO of Sydney Writers' Festival, General Manager of Bangarra Dance Theatre and Executive Producer of Sydney Theatre Company. Jo is also a two-time AACTA nominee for Best Film for her debut film, *Lucy Miles* (Michael James Rowland) (2007) and *Girl Asleep* (Rosemary Myers) (2016).

Her films have screened in cinemas and at Festivals and won awards worldwide, most notably at the Berlin International Film Festival. Jo is a regular contributor to the *Chaser's The Shot* and her first book, *Burning Down the House: Deconstructing Modern Politics*, was published in 2022.



Producer

Ben Andrews (he/they) is an independent theatre producer and creator based in Melbourne with a diverse skill set in technical and creative disciplines having studied Screen (Film + Television) at RMIT, Graphic Design at TGDG, dabbling in Sound and Lighting Design at RADA and Guildhall School of Music and Drama, while continuing to perform and later studying at the 16th St Actors Studio.

Ben is passionate about developing artists and stories, working extensively with emerging artists. He created this is NOT a film festival, a popular non-competitive short film event that highlighted local storytelling talent to enthusiastic audiences and featured content by many now well established and successful film and TV creatives. Ben's company **The Maybe Film** continues to focus on supporting emerging artists and stories and is an incubator for bold new works. Recent successes include *Trophy Boys* which he has been producing since its debut season in 2022. Earlier in the year he produced the critically acclaimed Australian premiere of Sam Goldblum's *Boys on the Verge of Fear*. Ben is a frequent contributor to other theatre companies in various capacities including performance, sound design, photography, prop construction, and graphic design/marketing.



Competitive debating takes argument's essential features and reimagines them as a game. For the purposes of this game, the emotional or relational aspects of argument are superfluous, and at the end there are winners.

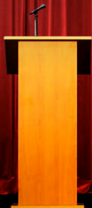
Everyone tacitly understands that it's not a real argument...

The most ambitious debaters go out of their way to absorb information about sexual violence, racial profiling, police brutality: issues many of them will never experience firsthand.

I did the same thing.

Did it make me more empathetic and self-aware? Or did it just continue to affirm the idea that if I were smart and competitive enough, I could speak for anyone I wanted?

Even if You Beat Me - Sally Rooney



Trophy Boys

Writer Emmanuelle Mattana

Director Marni Mount

Producers Jo Dyer - *Soft Tread Enterprises*, Ben Andrews - *The Maybe Pile*

Stage Manager Genevieve Davidson

Lighting Design Katie Sfetkidis

Sound Design Ben Andrews

Production Design by Marni Mount, Ben Andrews, Emmanuelle Mattana

Technical Director Marcus Kelson

Graphic Design, Marketing + Show Photography Ben Andrews

Owen Myfanwy Hocking **David Leigh Lule**

Scott Gaby Seow Jared Fran Sweeney-Nash

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Katie Rowe, Remy Pritchard, Bec Cecil.



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THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

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who help us engage broadly across the state and
continue enriching lives through performing arts.

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