

MEDIA RELEASE: 15 November 2021

COMFORTING DELIGHT FROM ONE OF THE DISPLACED

JALI

By Oliver Twist



Image: Kiera Chevell

‘Twist is a star ... and he knows when to make us laugh and when to make us sit in feeling.’
— Sydney Morning Herald

Rwandan-born writer and actor **Oliver Twist** dives into his experiences as a refugee and unpacks what his life looks like now in his darkly comedic performance of **JALI**.

This one-man show is as delicately told as it is captivating as Twist uses his exceptional and charismatic storytelling abilities to reflect on his personal journey through humour.

JALI premiered in early 2021 to rave reviews and a sold-out season with the Griffin Theatre Company in Sydney and will perform at the **State Theatre Centre of WA**'s Studio Underground.

Fleeing the Rwandan civil war at the age of four, Twist spent his childhood in Malawi – first in a refugee camp, and later in the city where his mother and father started a small convenience store.

After acceptance into Australia as refugees, the family arrived in Ipswich, Queensland, in 2014 to begin a new life. Quickly discovering his natural talent for comedy, Twist became a national finalist at the RAW Comedy Competition in 2017, inspiring a move to Sydney. Within a week of arriving, he finished writing his one-man biographical show.

Brimming with generosity and unexpected humour, Twist's autobiographical monologue shines a light into the darkness.

Oliver Twist says: 'My intention with *Jali* has been to share an experience of being disoriented. Many things contributed to that: being a refugee and feeling homesick. I have experienced a kind of discrimination that makes you question your identity and makes you feel illegitimate. And from these experiences I found humour and tragedy within, which I have written into my first ever theatre work and found a personal sense of certainty in doing so. It's a work that shakes and eases you at the same time and I can't wait to share it with audiences.'

Perth Festival Artistic Director Iain Grandage says: 'In a Festival about the ocean it is imperative to tell stories of those crossing our borders to seek safety, as *Oliver*'s brilliant play does. The joy inside *Oliver* is palpable, despite the darkness of various chapters of his story.'

JALI is a vibrant and emotional journey that uses personal anecdotes and comedy to prove there is light at the end of the tunnel.

WHAT: JALI

WHERE: Studio Underground / Yandilup / Northbridge

WHEN: Wed 16, Thu 17, Fri 18, Sat 19 Feb at 7.30pm, Sun 20 Feb at 5.30pm

HOW MUCH: \$39

BOOKINGS AND FESTIVAL INFO: perthfestival.com.au

Click [here](#) for images. For further information, interviews or images please contact:

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Perth Festival acknowledges the Noongar people who continue to practise their values, language, beliefs and knowledge on their kwobidak boodjar. They remain the spiritual and cultural birdiyangara of this place and we honour and respect their caretakers and custodians and the vital role Noongar people play for our community and our Festival to flourish.

ABOUT PERTH FESTIVAL

Founded in 1953 by The University of Western Australia, Perth Festival is the longest running international arts festival in Australia and Western Australia's premier cultural event. The Festival has developed a worldwide reputation for excellence in its international program, the presentation of new works and the highest quality artistic experiences for its audience. For nearly 70 years, the Festival has welcomed to Perth some of the world's greatest living artists and now connects with hundreds of thousands of people each year. Iain Grandage is the Artistic Director 2020–24.

CREDITS

Director Oliver Twist

Production Manager Leila Maraun

Lighting & Set Designer Morgan Moroney

Stage Manager Khym Scott

OLIVER TWIST

Comedian / Playwright / Actor

Rwandan-born Aussie Oliver Twist is a comic, playwright and actor who makes his own opportunities after a childhood watching his parents do the same.

After fleeing the Rwandan civil war at the age of four, Oliver spent his childhood in Malawi, first in a refugee camp, and later in the city where his mother and father started a small convenience store. After acceptance into the Australian government's refugee intake, the family arrived in Ipswich in 2014 to begin a new life.

Then eighteen, Oliver already knew he was funny, and now he was in a country where comedy clubs and open mic sessions allowed him to prove it. He started taking the stage in Queensland, becoming a regular at the Sit Down Comedy Club in Brisbane and Based Comedy on the Gold Coast.

In 2017 he entered the RAW Comedy competition, and made it to the national finals in Melbourne. That was the year he decided to make the move to Sydney, and to begin telling stories in a new way. Within a week of his arrival he had written the one-man play JALI (meaning historian or storyteller), telling the tale of his family's journey.

After going through development with the Griffin Theatre Company, Jali premiered in early 2021 to rave reviews and an entirely sold-out season and will tour in 2022.

As a comic, Twist has been chosen as support for the likes of Kevin Hart, Wil Anderson, Tiffany Haddish and Becky Lucas. He's a regular at the Sydney Comedy Store and has performed on the Sydney Comedy Festival Gala and on the festival's roadshow. Most recently, Oliver had a sell-out series of his new show, GRIOT, at the Darwin Festival.