

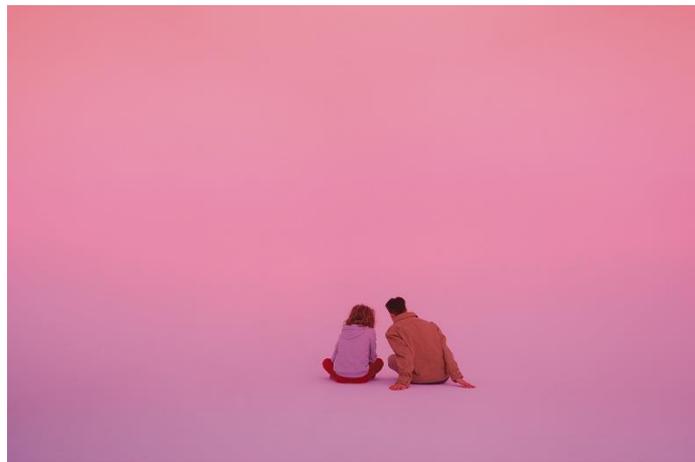
MEDIA RELEASE: 15 November 2021

**INTIMATE CONVERSATIONS BARE OUR BOUNDARIES**

**Body of Knowledge**

Samara Hersch & Company

**Presented in association with PICA – Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts  
& WA Youth Theatre Company**



*Image: Pier Carthew*

Audiences are invited to take part in ***Body of Knowledge***, an intimate cross-generational look at the body, age and change by acclaimed Australian theatre-maker **Samara Hersch** with the **WA Youth Theatre Company**.

*Body of Knowledge* is a surprising, challenging and tender exploration on how we pay attention (or not) to our own and others' bodies co-existing across generations.

Teenagers in their bedrooms around Perth call into the theatre on mobile phones to ask questions of adult audience members gathered around a table on the stage.

These conversation topics, raised at a physical distance and across generations, ask questions of embodiment and disembodiment. The relationship between teacher and the student, the adult and the child, the performer and the audience, begins to shift and entangle.

Questions of boundaries – pleasure, intimacy, shame and sexuality – are exposed without judgement. Laments on grief, consent, ageing and death are revealed conversationally between strangers.

Artist **Samara Hersch** is excited to share the experience with WA audiences for the first time.

‘More and more I see that conversation has the potential to transform ways of thinking, being and attempting to understand each other, across distance and age. Having met some of the teenagers at WAYTCO I am thrilled to be working with them and sharing their insights and profound questions for you, the audience and the world at large,’ she says.

**Perth Festival Artistic Director Iain Grandage** says it is a joy to welcome Samara Hersch, as an Australian artist of international standing, to work alongside the young actors of the WA Youth Theatre Company, whose recent successes include *Rest, Body Rights* and 2021 Festival hit *BESIDE*.

‘From the moment the phone rings in front of you in the theatre, you are drawn little by little into a tender confessional unpacking of how a teenager feels about themselves and the world,’ he says. ‘It’s a sophisticated and beautiful work that builds worlds of imagination and reveals ways to maintain stories and connections between the generations.’

**Amy Barrett-Lennard**, Director at PICA: ‘We are thrilled to bring Samara Hersch to Perth for this WA Premiere and share in her generous practice that combines forms of participation and community. *Body of Knowledge* will sure to be one of 2022’s talking points, as you enter a room with strangers and leave as friends... and with some surprises along the way!’

*Body of Knowledge* is an intimate two-way theatre experience at the **Perth Institute of Contemporary Art** that sets us in motion to rethink the many ways in which knowledge is produced, acquired and shared in the modern world.

**WHAT:** Body of Knowledge

**WHERE:** PICA Performance Space / Yandilup / Northbridge

**WHEN:** Wed 23 Feb 7pm, Thu 24 – Sat 26 Feb 6 & 9pm

**HOW MUCH:** \$50

**BOOKINGS AND FESTIVAL INFO:** [perthfestival.com.au](http://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.

## BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

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## CREDITS

**Lead Artist** Samara Hersch

**Dramaturg** Maria Rößler

**Creative Technologist** Fred Rodrigues and Tilman Robinson

**Artistic Associate** Cassandra Fumi

**Set Designer** Belle Santos

**Lighting Designer** Jen Hector

**Producer** Freya Waterson

**Artistic Advisor** Mette Ingvarsten and Edit Kaldor

And a team of extraordinary young people from across Western Australia

## SAMARA HERSCH

Samara Hersch is an artist and director whose practice explores the intersection of contemporary performance and community engagement. She recently completed her Masters at Das Theatre in Amsterdam. Her current research is an exploration into public acts of intimacy through imagining new artistic frames for non-professional performers and audiences to inhabit.

Her recent body of work focuses on critical trans-generational dialogue with an enquiry into conversation as performance. These works include: *Body of Knowledge*, a work that invites teenagers to host conversations with adults regarding questions they have about the body and body politic (presented at BUDA, Belgium 2020, SICK! Festival, Manchester 2019, Liveworks Festival, Sydney 2019, Spielart Festival Munich 2019); *Sex and Death* an intimate encounter led by performers in their seventies (Festival of Live Art, Arts House 2016, Victorian Seniors' Festival 2016, Modestraat, Amsterdam 2019), *Dybbuks*— a feminist conversation with the dead (Chamber Made 2018) *For the Time Being* a remote, inter-generational encounter (Auawirleben Festival, Bern 2020, Kammerspiele, Munich 2020, Far Fabrique, Nyon 2020, West Kowloon, Hong Kong 2021).

Some of these works have recently been adapted to remote experiences in response to the pandemic; (*Sex and Death and the Internet*, commissioned by Darwin Festival and Sydney Festival through the Major Festivals Initiative in 2020 and *Body of Knowledge – At Home*, co-commissioned by Zurich Theater Spektakel and Kampnagel Sommerfestival, 2020). *Body of Knowledge- At Home* was selected for Impulse Theatre Festival, Germany (2021) and has been presented at Theatre Practice, Singapore, Schwankhalle, Bremen and Brut, Vienna.

Samara regularly collaborates with artist Lara Thoms. Together they engage youth activists to explore the performance of alternate histories. Their work subverts notions of adults as experts, foregrounding the voices of young people in the retelling of national stories and identities. Their work, *We All Know What's Happening* (Arts House, Melbourne 2017, Campbeltown Arts Centre, 2018, Vitalstatistix, Adelaide 2019, Noorderzon Festival, Netherlands 2019 and Theater Spektakel, Zurich 2019) won the ZKB Jury Prize and Audience Prize at Theater Spektakel, 2019 and the Green Room Award for Best Contemporary and Experimental Performance in 2017. They are currently creating a new work together called *Please Stand* that explores the rituals, mythology and politics of National Anthems from around the world.

Samara was mentored by Bruce Gladwin, from *Back to Back Theatre Co.* through the JUMP Mentorship Program (2012) and later worked as a show director on their production of *Super Discount* (Sydney Theatre Co. and Malthouse Theatre 2013). Samara was the Female Director in Residence at Malthouse Theatre (2013). She was a recipient of the British Council *Realise Your Dream Award* (2010) and the *Keith and Elisabeth Murdoch Travel Fellowship* (2015).

Samara is currently an artist in residence at Theatre Rotterdam and is part of the EU Network; *ACT*; Art Climate Transition.

Samara acknowledges that her practice has been developed and presented on the lands of the Kulin Nation whose sovereignty has never been ceded and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

### **PICA**

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA) is one of Australia's leading centres for the development and presentation of contemporary art. Housed in a striking heritage building in the heart of Perth, Western Australia, PICA is the city's focal point for those wishing to experience the best of Australian and international visual, performance and interdisciplinary art. PICA is both a producing and presenting institution that runs a year-round program of exhibitions, seasons in contemporary dance, theatre and performance and a range of interdisciplinary projects.

### **WA YOUTH THEATRE COMPANY**

Multi-award-winning and industry respected, WA Youth Theatre Company (WAYTCO) is an arts organisation that transforms lives. Through theatre and the creative process, young Western Australians gain skills, attributes and insights into themselves and the world. The impact is lifelong.

Leadership, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, resilience and initiative are all learned through the creation and performance of Company works. Championing youth voice and diversity, WAYTCO professionally guides and enables members to tell their stories. Fresh and bold, staged with attention to excellence, our shows have dazzled WA audiences for nearly 40 years. Our 2019 site-specific work, REST, became the most awarded Fringe World show ever!