

MEDIA RELEASE: Wednesday, 18 November 2020

## YOUNGSTERS RIDE A WAVE OF EMOTIONS

### CHILDREN OF THE SEA

By Jay Emmanuel  
WORLD PREMIERE

#### A PERTH FESTIVAL COMMISSION

Co-produced by Encounter and Performing Lines WA



Cr: Cam Campbell

Follow the hopeful but perilous journey of four unaccompanied children in a thrilling new stage play making its world premiere at **Perth Festival 2021**.

Inspired by true stories, *Children of the Sea* brings together a stellar team of extraordinary young performers and a vocal ensemble led by ARIA-Award-winning composer and choir-leader **Kavisha Mazzella** and Perth Festival Lab alumnus **Pavan Hari**.

A moving tribute to survival and resilience, *Children of the Sea* culminates writer-director **Jay Emmanuel's** two years of research and interviews with more than 60 survivors, border officials and human rights lawyers at detention centres around Australia.

Chilling, yet playful and funny, this sensitive and politically charged show puts children front and centre. Their voices and their stories create an uplifting theatrical experience.

Set on a boat bound for Australia, the characters take an emotional and epic theatrical voyage while struggling with ideas of home, identity and love. As they drift in Indo-Australian waters towards an uncertain future, they navigate the absurdities of the adult world and confront memories of lives left behind.

Performed in English, Urdu, Farsi, Kirundi and Congolese, *Children of the Sea* features Perth performers from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

'I travelled around Australia to listen to these stories of people who are living in limbo and to understand why we imprison and isolate people who're most desperate for freedom,' writer-director Jay Emmanuel says. 'It was a clear that this is a national tragedy that needed to become personal and perhaps theatre is the only place where we could have this conversation.'

'In 2021, we mark 20 years since the MV Tampa affair and this is a conversation that is long overdue as a nation. I wanted to create a show that will give an insight into the journey of the most vulnerable, hoping that it will change minds and heal hearts - so that we can journey across the pandemic of fear.'

*Children of the Sea* explores the paradoxes and confusions of a world dealing with an unprecedented flux of uprooted lives. The UN Refugee Agency reports 70.8 million people were forcibly displaced by conflict or persecution at the end of 2018. 52% of those were children.

Responding to one of the most pressing issues facing humanity, the play asks: How do children deal with fate and tragedy? What do children do to survive in the face of adversity? What gives them hope? How does loss and displacement morph childhood?

'To view the failings of the adult world through the eyes of a child is the central conceit of this wonderful new work,' **Perth Festival Artistic Director Iain Grandage** says.

'Having begun as a piece of verbatim theatre, *Children of the Sea* is steeped in authenticity, and captures the joy and expectation of asylum seeker children during their journey towards Australia. We know the truth of their destination, and through that, are asked to look at our collective failing as a society.'

Co-produced by Encounter, supported by See Subiaco.

*Children of the Sea* is supported by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, the WA Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and Playking Foundation.

**WHAT:** Children of the Sea

**WHERE:** Subiaco Arts Centre / Wandaraguttagurrup

**WHEN:** 10 – 13 Feb 7pm (also 2pm 13 Feb)

**HOW MUCH:** \$39

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

Click here for a [media kit](#) and [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 67 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 2020–23.