

MEDIA RELEASE: 15 November 2021

FATHER'S STORIES WEAVE A LIFELINE TO HIS KIDS

The Smallest Stage

By Kim Crotty

World Premiere season

Presented in association with Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre

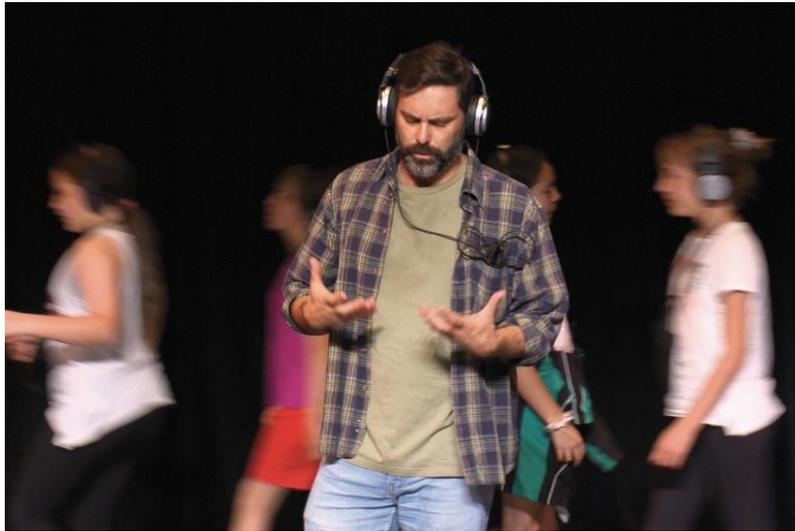


Image: Paul Verhagen

The Smallest Stage beautifully reveals how a father uses stories to reach beyond his prison walls to connect to his children – and invites parents to share the stage with their own 9-to-12-year-olds.

Part autobiography, part interactive stage experience, ***The Smallest Stage*** is a love story that explores how the truths we share with our children can lead to stronger relationships.

With a background as a technician at some of the UK's most iconic theatres, Western Australian writer and co-creator **Kim Crotty** has tapped into his own experience to craft a story of connection and creativity. His work with children and youth theatre companies gave him the foundation to build the concept of ***The Smallest Stage*** into a distinctive and powerful production.

Whilst serving a two-year sentence in Dartmoor prison for growing cannabis in the UK, Crotty discovered that ordinary means of communication with his two sons (then three and five) in Bristol were heartbreakingly ineffective.

Powerless to read bedtime stories himself and desperate to stay close to his sons, Crotty created fictional worlds to overcome the distance between them. He wrote and illustrated 47 children's stories from jail, before being deported back to WA and reunited with his boys.

Thoughtfully crafted for adults and children to share together, audiences have the option to sit back and enjoy *The Smallest Stage* or buy interactive tickets to take part with their favourite 9-12-year-olds.

This beautiful story has emerged from the heart of regional WA. Based in Manjimup, Crotty attended a 2019 Donnelly River artists retreat run by Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre with mentors including director **Matt Edgerton** and designer **Zoë Atkinson**, who are co-creatives on this production.

Crotty says he is grateful for the opportunity to share his story with the world. ‘This is a story about love that I hope will delight and inspire,’ he says. ‘Going from handwritten stories created inside Dartmoor prison for an audience of two, to a play for much larger audiences at BREC and Perth Festival, is something I would never have believed possible. Thank you!’

The Smallest Stage deals with uncomfortable truths and handles them with tenderness, interspersed with funny and colourful stories of the alternate superheroes that Kim created for his sons.

Perth Festival Artistic Director Iain Grandage says: ‘The Smallest Stage is an immensely moving and tender work. It explores the exquisite bond between child and parent and how that golden thread is maintained. With director Matt Edgerton’s team gently guiding participants through their headphones, you see this connection between parent and child played out on stage in this kaleidoscope of relationships. At the core is Kim Crotty’s own story, a very beautiful tale about the extent parents go to in order to maintain that connection.’

The Smallest Stage can also be seen at Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre on Fri 11 – Sat 19 Feb. Visit bunburyentertainment.com for details.

WHAT: The Smallest Stage

WHERE: Studio Underground / Yandilup / Northbridge

WHEN: Wed 23, Thu 24, Fri 25, Sat 26 Feb 6.30pm. Sun 27 Feb 5pm.

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.

THE SMALLEST STAGE

The Smallest Stage is the heartfelt autobiographical story of love between a parent and child by Manjimup writer Kim Crotty.

Whilst serving a two-year sentence in Dartmoor prison for growing cannabis, Kim discovered that ordinary means of communication with his two sons (then three and five) were heartbreakingly ineffective.

Desperate to maintain his relationship with them and powerless in his real world, he created fictional worlds to overcome the divide that separated them. He wrote and illustrated 47 children's stories for his sons, before being deported back to Australia and reunited with them.

The Smallest Stage is a thoughtfully crafted story for all theatre lovers. It explores how some children learn the hard way that parents don't always get things right, and that even in the most unlikely of places, love, creativity and a handful of felt-tips can overcome the mistakes that divide us. A story for parents and children nine and over to share, *The Smallest Stage* deals with uncomfortable truths – but handles them with tenderness, interspersed with funny and colourful stories of the alternate superheroes that Kim created for his sons.

Buy an audience ticket or get involved and buy an interactive ticket so you and your nine to 12-year-old can be part of the show.

A note for parents: The show contains carefully handled but honest references to adult themes including drugs, family violence and imprisonment. It also contains references to cake decorating, competitive racing slugs of improbable size and the extraordinary ways we can tell our children how much we love them.

DLGSC & DPIRD This project has been assisted by the Government of Western Australia. OZCO This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.

ARTISTIC & PRODUCTION CREDITS

Writer, Lead artist & Co-creator Kim Crotty

Director & Co-creator Matt Edgerton

Designer & Co-creator Zoë Atkinson

Performer & Co-creator Ben Mortley

Lighting Designer Paul Parkes

Sound Designer & Composer David Richardson

Animation Steven Aiton, Zoë Atkinson, Otto Crotty, Arlen Crotty, Matty Zmitko

Production Manager Alan Burke

Producer Fiona de Garis

Stage Manager Courteney Cooper

Associate Producer Siobhan Maiden

Animation Workshop Facilitator Steven Aiton

BUNBURY REGIONAL ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre (BREC) is the much loved and multi-award-winning performing arts centre and conference venue serving Bunbury and Australia's South West since 1990. BREC's story is unusual. Driven by a community committee, funds were raised and the building constructed within 18 months. Thirty years on BREC plays a critical part in lighting up the South West with creativity, culture and connection, enriching lives and helping build the community we all want to live in. Hosting upwards of 250 performances and arthouse cinema screenings a year, BREC collaborates with local artists and touring companies, offers children their first experiences with the arts and creates relationships between artists and audiences.

KIM CROTTY

Kim is a former theatre stage technician who worked at several venues in the UK, including the Lyric in Hammersmith, the Bristol Old Vic and the Salisbury Playhouse. As studio technician at the Playhouse he developed a love for children's theatre receiving touring performances in the Salzberg Studio. He also worked with Stage-65, the youth theatre company at the Playhouse, to develop works including *The Little Prince* and *Oliver* before becoming head of the stage department. He left the theatre world in 2010 to pursue a career in commercial cannabis production, for which he received a two year prison term. Whilst serving his sentence in HMP Dartmoor, he wrote and illustrated 47 children's stories for his young sons, before being deported back to his native Western Australia in 2012. He currently works part time as a disabilities support worker and lives with his two sons in Manjimup. He studies English literature and creative writing online at Macquarie University and still writes short stories for his sons.

MATT EDGERTON

Matt is an Australian theatre director with a diverse body of work including contemporary and classical shows across a range of forms, styles and scales, cross-cultural collaborations, work for children and theatre projects promoting social development. Previously for Perth Festival, Matt has directed *Black Brass* and *A Ghost In My Suitcase*, Co-Created *Le Nor* and appeared in *Plainsong*. Matt's work has toured around Australia, the US and Europe and won Glug, Helpmann, AWGIE and PAWA awards. Matt has held positions as Artistic Director of Barking Gecko and Resident Artist at Bell Shakespeare. He is a Churchill Fellow and proud member of Actors Equity.

ZOË ATKINSON

Zoë studied scenography at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts in Czech Republic, and the Institut Internationale de la Marionette in France. Since returning to Australia in 1997 she has worked nationally and internationally in opera, dance, theatre and the visual arts. Most recently she has co-created and designed the Perth Festival events *Home*, *Boorna Waanginy*, and Amy Sharrocks' *Museum of Water*, and designed Black Swan Theatre's *York*, Yirra Yaakin's *Hecate*, Performing Lines' *Black Brass*, Black Swan/Malthouse *Cloudstreet*, Malthouse Theatre/Victorian Opera's production of Tom Waits' *The Black Rider* (Helpmann nominated for Best Costume Design), Malthouse's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and Belvoir's *The Life of Galileo*. Zoë has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a Green Room for *The Splinter Group's Lawn* and a Helpmann for the Malthouse Theatre/Black Swan production *The Odyssey*. Zoë lives in Perth and is the mother of two boys.

BEN MORTLEY

Ben is a performer and film maker. His screen credits include the feature films *Dingo*, *Lantana*, *Drift*, *Pinch*, *The Gateway*, and award-winning performances in *Zelos*, and *The Decadent and the Depraved*. His television credits include *McLeod's Daughter's*, *Cloudstreet*, *Home & Away*, *A Place to Call Home*, and *Itch*. He has performed in theatres around Australia including works for Black Swan Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, Company B Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare Company, The Ensemble Theatre, Barking Gecko, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Griffin Theatre Company, & the Blue Room Theatre. Most recently, the short film *Carmentis*, in which he plays the lead, had its world premiere at Tribeca Film Festival, as well as winning best film awards at CinefestOZ Film Festival, the San José International Short Film Festival, and numerous awards at the St Kilda Film Festival including Best Actor. Ben is currently developing a TV series whilst also studying for his Master of Counselling.

ALAN BURKE

Originally from Ireland, Alan relocated to WA from Macau with his family to join BREC in 2017. With a professional career spanning over two decades working with the likes of Cirque Du Soleil, Sands Resorts China & Carnival Cruise Lines there really isn't much in the world of event production that Alan hasn't done. His career has taken him all over the globe working alongside industry leaders creating large scale festivals, arena rock shows and world class theatre productions.

PAUL PARKES

Paul has been working in the entertainment industry for the past 20 years. Specialising in Stage Lighting Paul has had extensive experience working in all aspects of live Theatre. After an accidental beginning in Theatre Paul has turned a part time job into a full time passion. Designing and operating live stage productions has been a challenging and rewarding career. "Lighting the stage for me is painting on air, the colour of the scene on stage only lasts a matter of moments but must leave a lasting impression in the mind of the audience". Paul has worked on hundreds of local and international shows. He has worked on large scale international productions as well as 'the back room of the local pub'. His work has taken him from Bunbury to Indonesia, China and all parts of Australia. He is now based back in Bunbury at the Entertainment Centre and continues to improve his skills and experiment with 'illuminating the black box'.

FIONA DE GARIS

In May 2018 Fiona de Garis joined the team at the Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre, where as Executive Director she continues to explore the transformative potential of art to change lives and build communities. Fiona is skilled in facilitation of the creative process and has worked extensively across performance genres, with a strong focus on developing new Australian work. From 2008 to 2018 Fiona was Senior Producer at Performing Lines WA, where she nurtured independent West Australian artists and their projects. Prior to that she enjoyed the diversity of fifteen years freelancing as a stage, company and event manager; working for many of Australia's leading performing arts organisations. A graduate of both UWA and the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Fiona regularly serves on peer panels and is currently on the Board of Cooina Primary School and PICA, and is Chair of CircuitWest.