

MEDIA RELEASE: 15 November 2021

ACCLAIMED PLAY TELLS HOME TRUTHS

City of Gold

By Meyne Wyatt

Presented by Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA and Sydney Theatre Company



Image: Joseph Mayers

Personal, provocative and breathtakingly brilliant, **Meyne Wyatt**'s much-lauded debut play ***City of Gold*** is coming home to Western Australia as part of **Perth Festival 2022**.

City of Gold makes its WA premiere in a co-production by **Black Swan State Theatre Company of WA** and **Sydney Theatre Company** after critically acclaimed seasons in Brisbane and Sydney, and an explosive four minutes of television on *Q&A*.

Wyatt, a proud Wongutha-Yamatji actor and playwright, puts family centre stage in this semi-autobiographical story fuelled with frustration and an unflinching honesty about growing up black in Kalgoorlie. Touching on grief, identity and rage, the play is vital viewing for all Australians.

Breythe is never just an actor. Always an Indigenous actor. Always in the black show, the black play. Put him in that Australia Day lamb ad. Get that 'authenticity'. That's what the people want. Give them what they want. Get that big payday. Even if it draws criticism from your community.

But a messenger bird comes for him. His father is dead. Head home. Back to Kal to grieve. Back to his family shattered by pain and violence that won't be laid to rest.

With razor-sharp dialogue matched by a powerhouse cast, *City of Gold* exposes the wilful amnesia of our nation, urgently questioning injustice and racism in Australia today to ask: have things changed?

Director **Shari Sebbens** performed alongside Wyatt in the original Griffin Theatre season and is thrilled to be joining this new production as director in Wyatt's home state.

'I had the immense honour of working on *City of Gold* as an actor when it first played sold-out seasons in both Brisbane and Sydney, and I can't help but be excited about having the opportunity to direct and witness, what from the inside, felt like one of the most biting pieces of theatre I'd ever had the privilege of being a part of,' she says.

'It's a show that keeps the audience working, wondering where you will land once the lights go down on Meyne Wyatt's thrilling and clever dialogue. This show cuts right to the core of Meyne's lived experience as a young Black man in Australia. It is unrelenting and honest, and it will remind you of the power of theatre to impact hearts and minds long after you've left your seat.'

'Meyne's extraordinary debut play *City of Gold* is an immensely powerful work,' **Perth Festival Artistic Director Iain Grandage** says. 'We are honoured to have him come home to Western Australia and for the Festival to present this story of him growing up in Kalgoorlie.'

Wyatt, whose credits include *The Sapphires*, *Redfern Now* and *Mystery Road*, came to national attention in 2020 when he performed a passionate monologue from *City of Gold* on ABC's Q&A.

WHAT: City of Gold

WHERE: Heath Ledger Theatre / Yandilup / Northbridge

WHEN: Fri 4 - Sat 26 Mar

HOW MUCH: \$35 - \$110

BOOKINGS AND FESTIVAL INFO: perthfestival.com.au

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

Stephen Bevis

+61 8 6488 8618 / 0448 927 281

sbevis@perthfestival.com.au

Irene Jarzabek

+61 8 6212 9300 / 0419 192 140

irene@bsstc.com.au

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.

CITY OF GOLD

City of Gold is unflinching truth-telling that questions the wilful amnesia of a nation stained by racism and injustice. After critically acclaimed productions in Brisbane and Sydney, and an explosive four minutes of television on Q&A, this semi-autobiographical story written by and starring proud Wongutha Yamatji man, Meyne Wyatt (*The Sapphires, Redfern Now, Mystery Road*) is coming home to WA in a new co-production with Sydney Theatre Company. Breythe is never just an actor. Always an Indigenous actor. Always in the black show, the black play. Put him in that Australia Day lamb ad. Get that 'authenticity'. That's what the people want. Give them what they want. Get that big payday. Even if it draws criticism from your community. But a messenger bird comes for him. His father is dead. Head home. Back to Kal to grieve. Back to his family shattered by pain and violence that won't be laid to rest. Wyatt's sharp and breathtaking dialogue will stay with you long after you leave and is matched only by his powerhouse performance. "This show cuts right to the core of Meyne's lived experience as a young Black man in Australia. It is unrelenting and honest." Director Shari Sebbens

BLACK SWAN

Black Swan Theatre Company of WA is a leader in creating connections that empower and uplift multiple voices. Black Swan exists to create brave and playful conversation. For you. About you. With you. They provide an annual program of inclusive and accessible theatre productions, commissions and learning experiences, live and on-line, for the people of Perth, across the state of Western Australia, and increasingly nationally and internationally.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

One of the world's largest not-for-profit theatre producers, Sydney Theatre Company is at the heart of Australia's cultural landscape. It owes its world class creative pedigree to a history of ground-breaking productions. Since 1978, the company has produced work that is – in the words of founding Artistic Director Richard Wherrett – "grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun". A paradox as playful as our city. We are proud that over the years Sydney Theatre Company has produced work with some of

Australia's – and the world's – most exciting performers, writers, directors and creative teams; and that we continue to invest in the artistic legends of the future.

CREDITS

Director Shari Sebbens

Assistant Director Daley Rangit

Cast Mathew Cooper, St John Cowcher, Simone Detourbet, Ian Michael, Myles Pollard, Meyne Wyatt

Set & Costume Designer Tyler Hill

SHARI SEBBENS - Director

Shari is a Bardi, Jabirr Jabirr person and one of Sydney Theatre Company's Resident Artists. The production of *The 7 Stages of Grieving* marked Shari's directorial debut with STC. In 2020 Shari directed *Superheroes* for Griffin Theatre and this year she directed *Seven Methods of Killing Kylie Jenner* at Darlinghurst Theatre Company. Her credits as an actor include: Sydney Theatre Company: *A Cheery Soul*, *Black is The New White*, *The Bleeding Tree*, *Battle of Waterloo*. Other Theatre: Belvoir: *Back at the Dojo*, *Radiance*. Griffin Theatre Company: *City of Gold*, *The Bleeding Tree*, *Hoax*. QT: *An Octaroon*. Black Swan: *Our Town*. Her film credits include *The Sapphires*, *Top End Wedding*, *Australia Day*, *Teenage Kicks*, *The Darkside*. Her TV credits include *Black Comedy*, *Redfern Now*, *The Gods of Wheat Street*, *The Heights*, *Little J & Big Cuz*. She is currently Sydney Theatre Company's Richard Wherrett Fellow. Her awards include; 2013 Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Newcomer (*Redfern Now*), 2020 Sydney Theatre Award for Best Female Actor in a Supporting Role in a Mainstage Production (*City of Gold*). Shari studied at NIDA and WAAPA.

MEYNE WYATT – Writer and Performer

Meyne Wyatt is an award winning Wongutha-Yamatji performer, writer and director.

Meyne's first short film, which he wrote and will direct, is produced by Bunya Productions and supported by Screen Australia. He is currently developing his smash hit debut play *City of Gold* for television with Bunya Productions. This year, Meyne wrote a one-hour episode for Season 1 of Fremantle/Netflix's reboot of *Heartbreak High* shooting soon; and is currently working in many writing teams for television projects, from drama to comedy. In addition, Meyne is under commission by Sydney Theatre Company to write a new play. In 2020, Meyne was awarded the Packing Room Prize in the Archibald Prize, the most prestigious award for visual art in Australia, for his self-portrait.

Meyne's debut play *City of Gold*, which he also starred in, had a stunning world premiere at Queensland Theatre and transferred to Griffin Theatre Company where it sold out. *City of Gold* has been described as a howl of rage at the inequality, injustice and wilful ignorance of this country's 21st century. It is an urgent play for our times from a vital and exciting new voice. It was shortlisted for the 2020 Victorian Premier's Prize for Drama and was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Award. At the Sydney Theatre Awards, as well as the *City of Gold* being nominated for Best New Australian Work, Wyatt won Best Male Actor in a

Leading Role and Shari Sebbens won Best Female Actor in a Supporting Role for their performances. *City of Gold* is published by Currency Press.

After graduating from Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art as an actor, Meyne's performance in Lachlan Philpott's *Silent Disco* (Griffin Theatre Company) earned him an award for Best Newcomer at Sydney Theatre Awards. Other theatre performances have included *King Lear*, *Bloodland* (Sydney Theatre Company), *Peter Pan*, *Buried City* (Belvoir) and *Gloria* (Griffin Theatre Company).

Meyne's television credits include the tele-movie *The Broken Shore*, and *Redfern Now*, for which he earned nominations for Most Outstanding Newcomer at the 2014 Logie Awards and an AACTA Award for Best Lead Actor in a Television Drama. From 2014 to 2016, Meyne appeared in *Neighbours*, making history as the first Indigenous actor to join the main cast. Following this, Meyne appeared in *Black Comedy*, *The Leftovers* (HBO), the AACTA award winning series *Mystery Road*. *Les Norton* and *Preppers*. For film, Meyne has featured in *The Sapphires*, *The Turning* and *Strangerland* opposite Nicole Kidman and Hugo Weaving.

TYLER HILL – Set & Costume Designer

Tyler is a Designer for live performance, exhibition, and film, who recently designed *Whistleblower*, a Co-Commission by Last Great Hunt, Perth Festival, and the Major Festivals Initiative (MFI). He graduated from WAAPA (Set & Costume Design, 2016) and is an alumnus of the Black Swan Resident Artist Program (2018). In only five years Tyler has designed for Perth Festival, WA Opera, Black Swan, The Farm, Barking Gecko, DADAA, Lost & Found Opera, The Blue Room Theatre, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and WA Museum. His awards include the David Hough Award for Outstanding Achievement in Design (WAAPA, 2016) and two PAWA awards for Best Design (2018 & 2019). As Design Associate, Assistant and a Draftsperson, Tyler has worked with Theatre Designers Zoë Atkinson and Elizabeth Gadsby, as well as in art departments on feature films *The Furnace*, *Dirt Music* and *Otherlife*. Concurrently, Tyler is pursuing a Master of Architecture at the University of Western Australia.

DALEY RANGI – Associate Director

Daley Rangi is a Māori multidisciplinary artist generating the unpredictable. A proud advocate for bodily integrity and neurodiversity, they evade categorisation and invade the status quo; speaking truth to power and reorienting hierarchies. Through autodidactic research and eclectic practice, they share rousing stories which take many forms; poetry, plays, performance art, and beyond. Their formative work is *Lipstuck*, a vivid deconstruction of gender binaries, and has influenced their work platforming experiences of resilience in the face of adversity. They have unearthed complexities of disability ethics and ecological sovereignty in their plays *Curiosity* and *Tātaramaka-moana* (Beautiful Place by the Sea) both shortlisted for the Griffin Award, and the former for the Patrick White Playwrights Award. Other writing has been published by Australian Poetry, Cordite Poetry Review, and Centre for Stories, with their unflinching work *Takatāpui* appearing in Kill Your Darlings' New Australian Fiction Anthology. They are a member of the Artistic Directorate for experimental arts engine room, Next Wave. Daley is inspired by ancestry and fuelled by injustice.

MATTHEW COOPER - Performer

Mathew has been seen both on stage and screen, as well as working with school-aged children to devise and develop performance. Stage appearances include: *Boy Swallows Universe* for Queensland Theatre, *City of Gold* for Griffin Theatre, *Cracked* and *The Sum of Us* for Yirra Yaakin, *The Season* for Performing Lines, *Stolen* for National Theatre of Parramatta, *Lucky* for MTC/Neon, and the Belvoir Street Theatre/Ilbjerri Theatre Company co-production, *Coranderrk*. In 2015 Mathew shot his first feature film, *The Marshes*, a psychological horror film directed by Roger Scott. He has also appeared in numerous short films, including *Last Drinks at Frida's* for Magpie Pictures. Mathew played Damo in Blackfella Films' critically-acclaimed television series screened on ABC TV, *Redfern Now*, and more recently, he appeared in series three of *Janet King*, also for ABC TV. He graduated from WAAPA acting 2012.

ST JOHN COWCHER - Performer

St John is an actor, theatre-maker and puppeteer. He works with many excellent companies including Black Swan, Barking Gecko Theatre, and The Last Great Hunt. He is an associate artist with Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Weeping Spoon Productions, Variegated Productions and The Big Hoo-Haa, and a proud Equity Australia member since 2015. Recent credits include; *Playthings* (Black Swan and The Blue Room Theatre), *Ragnarøkk*, *Frankie's* (Multi-PAWA & Blue Room Award Winner), *My Robot* (PAWA Award Winner), *Laika: A Staged Radio Play* (PAWA & Blue Room Award Winner), *Bambert's Book of Lost Stories* (Helpmann Award Winner), and *The Man and the Moon* (Martin Sims Nominee).

SIMONE DETOURBET – Performer

Simone Detourbet is Perth-based emerging actor, writer and director from Darwin. She is a Malak Malak (NT) and Gooniyandi (WA) woman and attended the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2015-16, completing the Aboriginal Theatre Course and the Screen Performance Course.

She has worked as an actor in *Conversations With the Dead* with Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company (2017), *Less Light* (2018), *Grace* (2019) and *I Feel Fine* (2019) and assistant director *Let Me Finish* (2018/19). Simone has participated in several artist residencies, recently the 2020 Perth Festival Lab and PLWA CALD residency. Since 2016, Simone has been developing film and theatre projects with various artists and as part of a creative team with Nicholas Harle, more recently working on various documentary projects.

IAN MICHAEL - Performer

Ian is a proud Wilman Noongar man. As Writer: Black Swan: *York*; Critical Stages/Paines Plough: *Another Day in the Colony*; She Said Theatre: *HART*. As Curator: Black Swan: Maali Festival. Artistic Associate: Black Swan (2021); Resident Artist: Black Swan (2018-2020); Besen Family Artist Program: Malthouse Theatre (2017). As Actor: Black Swan: *Cloudstreet*, *Our Town*, *Let the Right One In*; Malthouse Theatre: *Cloudstreet*, *Blak Cabaret*; Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company: *The Noongar Shakespeare Project*; She Said Theatre: *HART*; Ilbjerri Theatre Company: *Flashblaks*; Melbourne Theatre Company: *The Kid*. As Assistant Director: Sydney Theatre Company: *The 7 Stages of Grieving*,

The Picture of Dorian Gray, *Black Is The New White* (Directing Placement); Black Swan: *The Cherry Orchard*; Black Swan/Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company: *Skylab*. Awards: 2019 and 2017 Best Actor PAWA Awards (Nominated); 2019 CHASS Australia Prize for a Future Leader; 2019 Western Australian of the Year (Finalist); 2016 Best Emerging Artist Adelaide Fringe; 2016 Best Production (Independent) Green Room Awards (Nominated); 2013 and 2015 Most Outstanding Indigenous Performer Melbourne Fringe. Training: WAAPA.

MYLES POLLARD - Performer

Myles Pollard is perhaps best known for playing the lead role of Nick Ryan in the long running Nine Network's series *McLeod's Daughters* - voted Australia's most popular television series of all time. Myles leading television credits include *Underbelly*, *Sea Patrol*, *Packed to the Rafters*, *Home and Away*, *Mystery Road* and *The Heights*. Myles's feature film credits include: *Drift* opposite Sam Worthington, *XMen Origins: Wolverine* opposite Hugh Jackman, *Looking for Grace* opposite Richard Roxburgh and Odessa Young, *Jasper Jones* opposite Toni Collette and Hugo Weaving, *Love You Twice/The Gateway* opposite Jacqueline McKenzie, *Danger Close* opposite Travis Fimmel, and the upcoming film *Before Dawn*.