

MEDIA RELEASE: Wednesday, 18 November 2020

PARENT AND CHILD AN OCEAN APART

Whale Fall

The Kabuki Drop

WORLD PREMIERE

Presented in association with Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts



Cr. Emma McEvoy

A family must bridge a sea of change and affirmation in a compelling new Australian play that sees the evocative image of a whale slowly sinking to the ocean floor through the eyes of a child.

Whale Fall, written by **Ian Sinclair** and directed by **Melissa Cantwell**, features a team of extraordinary cast and creatives who identify with and support the trans and gender diverse community.

Winner of the **Malcolm Robertson Award** for this work, Sinclair submerges audiences in a poetic reimagining of the classic Australian seaside drama (think *Hotel Sorrento* or *Away*) to tell a story of environmental, social, and physical change for our troubled times.

Nadine returns to her beachside home, and the family she abandoned, to reconnect with her daughter. Now oceans apart, Nadine must navigate her ex-husband's anger at her departure and learn to accept and support her now son Caleb, with his desire to begin medically affirming his gender.

A deeply personal and poetic story, *Whale Fall* is a slow-burning family drama about second chances and unconditional love, charting transition across generations, family dynamics, the human body and our ecological future.

Inspired by an essay by Perth-born international author **Rebecca Giggs**, the play takes its name from a story Caleb recounts to the audience in which a dying whale undergoes a process known as a 'whale fall'. As it slowly descends to the seafloor over several months, its body forms a new biodiverse, deep-sea ecosystem along the way.

This beautiful and powerful theatre work at the **PICA Performance Space** is part of Perth Festival's rich interconnected programming stream in which Giggs also appears in the **Literature & Ideas Program** and the famous blue whale skeleton at the **WA Museum Boola Bardip** is a spectacular backdrop for the **One and Many** chamber music series inside the museum.

Teddy Loveny, from **TransFolk of WA**, is a Community Consultant for *Whale Fall* and says the work is sensitive and understanding of the trans lived experience. 'It will provide a launchpad for conversations about trans issues in the broader community.'

Director Mel Cantwell says, '*Whale Fall* is a striking and insightful new West Australian play with the power and elegance of a classic. It manages to be both of-the-moment and timeless, capturing who we are today with all the humanity, compassion and honesty that our times demand.'

PICA Director Amy Barrett-Lennard says, 'PICA is thrilled to unveil *Whale Fall*, after years of development through our commissioning program. It comes at a time when WA has resurfaced and audiences are seeking stories that foster new understanding and greater connection.'

Perth Festival Artistic director Iain Grandage says: 'Iain Sinclair has written a very beautiful play and Mel Cantwell and the Kabuki Drop creative team are exceptional theatre-makers. And it is a thrill for Perth Festival to partner with PICA in the presentation of this significant new work, one we know will be a rich and rewarding experience for audiences.'

Whale Fall is supported by the City of Perth, PICA's Art Commission and the WA Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

WHAT: Whale Fall

WHERE: [PICA](#) Performance Space / Yandilup / Northbridge

WHEN: 17 Feb – 20 Feb, 23 Feb - 27 Feb, 90 minutes, recommended ages 12+

HOW MUCH: Standard \$45 | Preview \$35 | Concession/f-t student \$25 | Schools (bookings 10+) \$25

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.

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.