

# SYD FEST 2020



Photo: Pia Jonsson

## ANTHEM

ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE AND PERFORMING LINES  
AUSTRALIA | WORLD PREMIERE SEASON



Photo: Sarah Walker

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**ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE AND PERFORMING LINES  
AUSTRALIA | WORLD PREMIERE SEASON**

ROSLYN PACKER THEATRE  
WALSH BAY  
15–19 JANUARY  
150 MINS

**Writers** Andrew Bovell, Patricia Cornelius,  
Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas & Irine Vela

**Director** Susie Dee

**Designer** Marg Horwell

**Lighting Designer** Paul Jackson

**Composer, Music Director and Sound Designer**  
Irine Vela

**Movement Consultant** Natalie Cursio

**Assistant Director** Sapidah Kian

**Aboriginal Cultural Dramaturg** Bryan Andy

**Creative Producer (2016–March 2019)** Daniel Clarke

**Cast** Maude Davey, Reef Ireland, Ruci Kaisila,  
Thuso Lekwape, Amanda Ma, Maria Mercedes,  
Tony Nikolakopoulos, Eryn Jean Norvill, Sahil Saluja,  
Osamah Sami, Eva Seymour, Carly Sheppard,  
Jenny M. Thomas, Dan Witton

**Production Team**

**Production Manager** Tony Harding

**Stage Manager** Meg Deyell

**Assistant Stage Manager** Cassandra Fumi

**Sound Engineer** Jim Atkins

**Lighting Design Associate** Trent Barclay

**Producer, Performing Lines** Annette Vieuxseux

## ABOUT THE SHOW

Twenty-one years ago, four playwrights and a composer came together to create *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*, a powerful, critically-acclaimed portrait of Australia in the Howard era. Now, six prime ministers later, writers Andrew Bovell, Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas and Irine Vela reunite to take the national pulse and ask if the advance of Australia is truly fair.

*Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* amplified the voices of ordinary people so we all could hear them. Now, *Anthem* turns up the volume on the everyday injustices we choose to ignore; colliding voices that may not always be in harmony but cannot be silenced.

## WRITERS' NOTE

We first came together in 1998 to create a work to mark the ten-year anniversary of Melbourne Workers Theatre. The company was not expected to last beyond its first project at the Jolimont Train Maintenance Yards, so there was truly something to celebrate. *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* told the story of a group of characters whose lives were impacted upon by the rise of economic rationalism. It caught the zeitgeist and articulated the shared anxieties of the end of the 20th century.

Twenty years later we have come together again to try and capture the mood of our times. As in the earlier work we sat around the table and thrashed out our ideas. We argued and yelled and laughed and when we got sick of the sound of our own voices we ventured out into the city. It was winter in Melbourne. It was bleak. The world seemed tough. We caught trains out to the end of the lines and into the city again and brought the stories of what we'd seen back into the room. Slowly, we began to build a picture of a city, a place, a country, a time of fractured identities, racial tensions and economic hardship.

Our play is set largely in the public domain, particularly on trains where our conflicting identities around class and race and gender and sexuality clash and compete for ascendancy, or simply for space and the right to be seen. What became apparent is that we are not one nation brought together by a single anthem. Our country is not "fair" in any meaning of the word as our Anthem proclaims. We are riven by difference and disagreement and the arguments around our national identity are acrimonious and dangerous. Our political leadership has failed to provide a vision that could unify us and instead, seems only to entrench our differences. The nation's a powder keg waiting to blow. "The Fire Next Time," says a character in the play quoting James Baldwin.

As in the earlier work, class remains our shared and urgent theme.

In *Uncensored* Andrew creates a chorus of commuters caught on the endless cycle of having to make ends meet. In *7-11*, *A Chemist Warehouse...* *A Love Story*, Melissa tells the story of two low paid workers who set out on a Bonnie and Clyde-like mission to take on capitalism. In *Terror*, Patricia tells the story of three women who face increasing economic uncertainty. Here, it is not only class that places these women in jeopardy but their gender. In *Brothers and Sisters*, Christos tells the story of a successful man returning to Australia from Europe, hoping to transform the lives of his three siblings who never escaped their tough upbringing. As in the earlier play, the individual stories are interwoven and held together by Irine's score, *Resistance*. She also riffs on some of Christos's characters, including an elderly Greek

woman on the train, reminding us that political struggle has a history and that those histories are a part of our ongoing national narrative.

In *Who's Afraid...* we softened the blow of its tough stories by finding moments of connection and intimacy between strangers, which reminded us of our shared humanity. *Anthem* is a tougher work. There are no moments of redemption or reassurance. It is unrelenting in the conclusions it draws. But it is a true account of what we found the state of things to be.

We'd like to thank Daniel Clarke for bringing us back together. We all said it probably couldn't be done. He didn't listen and just made sure that it did. And we'd like to thank Bryan Andy who has joined us as a sixth voice as dramaturg and consultant. He has provided a wise and encouraging presence throughout the process.

— Andrew Bovell, Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas and Irine Vela.

## THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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