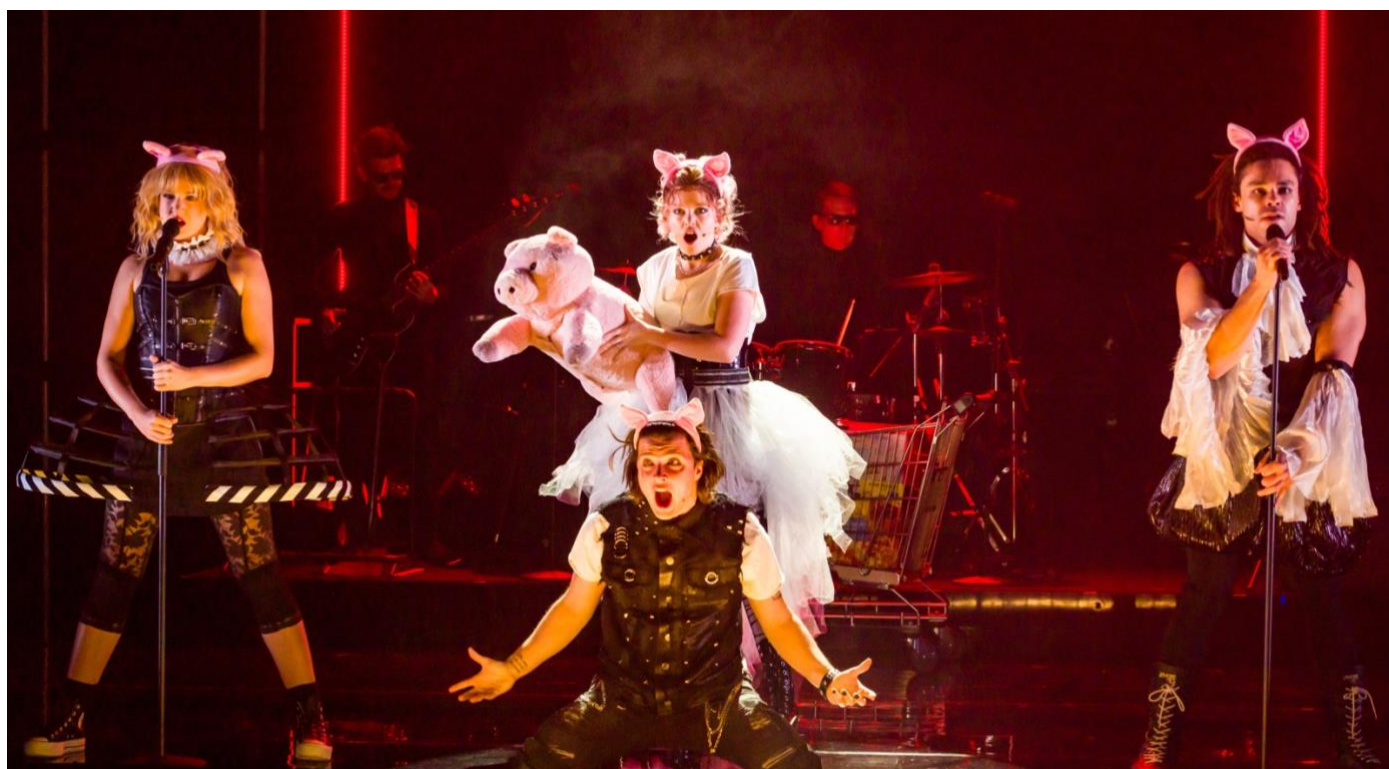


MEDIA RELEASE

KATE MILLER-HEIDKE'S *BANANALAND* OPENS IN PARRAMATTA

Wednesday 3 January



BANANALAND

BANANALAND, the new smash-hit comedy from the exceptional musical minds of **Keir Nuttall** and **Kate Miller-Heidke** arrives in Western Sydney tonight ahead of the official opening of Sydney Festival 2024 later this week. Running from 3-14 January at Riverside Theatres, the Parramatta exclusive blends razor sharp satire, catchy original songs and stellar performances in a celebration of the glorious and sometimes complicated pursuit of making art.

Opening hot off its World Premiere in Brisbane in September of last year, *BANANALAND* arrives in Sydney with bonafide pre-festival buzz and a slew of rave reviews to its name. The musical comedy follows the story of Australia's least-loved punk rockers, Kitty Litter, and their unexpected rise to fame when one of the band's protest anthems becomes a hit with the unlikeliest of listenerships – kids! With a runaway smash on their hands, the members of Kitty Litter must decide if they can rebrand as children's entertainers and make good on their newfound success without compromising their artistic integrity.

BANANALAND once again brings together the on and off stage creative talents behind *Muriel's Wedding The Musical*, with direction by **Simon Phillips** (*Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Ladies in Black*) and songs from **Kate Miller-Heidke** and her collaborator partner **Keir Nuttall**. Following recent stints with the US tour company of *Dear Evan*

Hansen and in the local production of the Alanis Morissette rock 'n' roll musical, *Jagged Little Pill*, Australian theatre superstar-on-the-rise **Max McKenna** will reprise their role as Kitty Litter's idealistic lead singer, Ruby.

The show also stars **Georgina Hopson** (Opera Australia's *Phantom of the Opera*), **Joe Kalou** (who was previously a member of the most recent cast of *Hi-5*) and **Maxwell Simon** (*Moulin Rouge! The Musical*) as Ruby's Kitty Litter bandmates and **Chris Ryan** (Melbourne Theatre Company's *As You Like It*) as the group's singular fan.

Inspired by Nuttall and Miller-Heidke's own experiences making music against the backdrop of Eurovision, ARIAs and pop charts, *BANANALAND* explores the often difficult balance between artistic intent and commercial success.

Sydney Festival Director Olivia Ansell said: "This brand-new all Australian musical comedy, written with a big dose of humour, pathos and heart by Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall is a source of great enthusiasm for anyone who's ever dared to dream. An exhilarating way to kick off Sydney Festival this summer – exclusively at Riverside Theatres, Parramatta."

Minister for the Arts, Jobs and Tourism John Graham said: "Sydney Festival embodies Sydney in summer. It's only fitting that one of the best arts and cultural festivals in the country is staging one of its feature productions at the Riverside Theatre in Parramatta – a reflection of the region's growing reputation as a dynamic hub for great arts experiences. Audiences are sure to be in for a treat with *BANANALAND*, a critically acclaimed local production."

Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Cr Eber said: "We're excited to be hosting one of the most anticipated events of the Sydney Festival in Parramatta. What better way to start 2024 than seeing a show backed by some of Australia's biggest names in music and theatre."

Year on year, Sydney Festival is committed to bringing some of the brightest and boldest talents to Western Sydney audiences. This time last January, Riverside Theatres was home to the unbelievable talents of *Afrique en Cirque* as part of the Festival's 2023 program, with a near sell-out run for the West African circus troupe.

Sydney Festival has plenty more on offer in Parramatta and surrounds for 2024, including the interactive family show, *Dinosaur World Live* which makes its Australian debut at Riverside Theatres later this month after selling out venues across the UK and USA. January at Riverside Theatres will also host *A'amar*, a sensory evening of food, poetry, song and storytelling from Melbourne-based Palestinian artist, activist and theatre-maker **Aseel Tayah**. And the *Multicultural Comedy Gala* returns, featuring appearances from **Nazeem Hussain** (*Legally Brown*); **George Kapiniaris** (*Fat Pizza*); **He Huang** (*Australia's Got Talent*); **Cameron Duggan** (*At Home Alone Together*); **Gavin Sempel** (*Black Comedy*); and triple j's **Amelia Navascues**.

Sydney Festival's beloved *Sydney Symphony Under the Stars* event will take over Parramatta Park once again with a soaring new program in *Pictures in the Sky*. The free outdoor concert event will feature the didgeridoo magic of **William Barton**, joined by **Aunty Delmae Barton** and **Véronique Serret**, and the transportive sitar playing of **Anoushka Shankar**, all in collaboration with **Sydney Symphony Orchestra** and guest conductor **Benjamin Northey**.

Sydney Festival presents
BANANALAND
By Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall
Directed by Simon Phillips

– ENDS –

NOTES TO EDITOR

- Sydney Festival runs 5-28 January 2024
- *BANANALAND* runs at Parramatta's Riverside Theatres from 3-14 January
- *BANANALAND* is written by Keir Nuttall with lyrics and music by Keir Nuttall and Kate Miller-Heidke and is directed by Simon Phillips
- *BANANALAND* is produced by Brisbane Festival and Queensland Performing Arts Centre

- Tickets for *BANANALAND* and all Sydney Festival shows are on sale now
- Visit sydneyfestival.org.au for more details and tickets and tickets

MEDIA KIT

Imagery, B-roll and media sheets available [here](#)

ABOUT SYDNEY FESTIVAL

Sydney Festival is one of Australia's largest international arts festivals, with a stellar reputation for bold, inventive and intelligent programming. Its vibrancy reflects the confidence, creativity and vigour of one of the world's most beautiful cities. Under the curation of Festival Director Olivia Ansell, the Festival's mission is to deliver an exhilarating summer of art, drawing stories from Sydney's 65,000-year history through to its contemporary zeitgeist. Sydney Festival stages the world's best artists whilst nurturing its homegrown talent; many of Australia's most memorable theatrical productions have stemmed from its premieres and commissions. The buzz of summer wouldn't be the same without the Festival's spectacular installations, immersive experiences and live events splashed across Sydney each January.