



November 12, 2015

One week until the official world premiere of *Ladies in Black*

The official world premiere of *Ladies in Black*, the stylish story of fashion, friendship and 1950s Australia will take place on Thursday evening, November 19, with the frock-fest signalling a stunning and triumphant return of musical theatre for the company.

From the adaptation of **Madeleine St John's** 1993 novel, *The Women in Black*, this new production is brought to life by screenwriter **Carolyn Burns** and internationally-acclaimed director **Simon Phillips** (*Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Love Never Dies*) with original music and lyrics from acclaimed singer songwriter, **Tim Finn** OBE (*Split Enz*, *Crowded House*). The production was made possible through support from the *Queensland Government* through *Arts Queensland* and support from sponsors *Virgin Australia* and *Griffith University*.

When the official opening night of *Ladies in Black* takes place this Thursday, audiences will witness a star-studded cast perform over 20 original songs written by music leader **Tim Finn**, under the guiding eye of a world class director. Opening Night is the culmination of years of planning and a very intense 18 months of work at the Queensland Theatre Company.

Ladies in Black also features a stunning range of some 30 custom-designed and created dresses and suits, representing one of the biggest wardrobe projects for the company since 1999. There are three full stage revolves in the show, 400 lighting cues, a six piece band on stage at all times, and more than 60 costume changes.

The production is already confirmed to open the Melbourne Theatre Company's (MTC) Season 2016 in January next year, another coup for QTC.

Gowns... Glamour ... Growing up - with a dash of delicate comedy, *Ladies in Black* is a modern-day fairytale set in a stylish department store - F.G. Goodes - in a city on the cusp of becoming cosmopolitan and crossing the threshold between the stuffy repression of the 1950s and the glorious liberation of the 1960s. Donning a distinguished black dress, the bright-eyed, bookish school leaver Lisa is about to join the ranks on the sales floor of the city's most prestigious department store – temporarily, of course. Her domineering dad intends to railroad her into a career as a secretary, but Lisa has grander schemes in mind.

In that summer of innocence, a world of possibilities opens up as she befriends the colourful denizens of the women's frocks department – there's Patty, embroiled in her marital strife; the lovelorn and unlucky Fay; and the exotic, compelling European refugee, Magda, mysterious mistress of the model gowns, who takes Lisa under her wing. From the Christmas rush to the chaos of the sales, these women stand shoulder to padded shoulder and together learn lessons in life, love and longing – and at the end, it's not just the fancy frocks that are forever altered.

The multi-award winning stage powerhouse **Christen O'Leary** reunites with Brisbane's first lady of voice in **Naomi Price** (after their success in *Gloria* last year), joining the brilliant **Bobby Fox**, who won critical acclaim playing Frankie Valli in the smash hit, *Jersey Boys*, along with seasoned performer **Andrew Broadbent** who shines in so many roles (*South Pacific*, *Love Never Dies*, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and more).

The multi-talented and award-winning artist and QUT Alumni **Carita Farrer Spencer** brings her considerable talent back to Brisbane for the production, with fellow Queensland graduate and music and stage performer **Kathryn**



McIntyre joining her. The accomplished actor **Greg Stone** will make the trip to Brisbane from Melbourne for the season, after critical acclaim in the MTC production *The Weir* and onscreen in ABC's *The Glitch*.

Playing both Miss Jacobs and Mrs Crown is famed Australian actress **Deidre Rubenstein** (winner AFI Best Actress), known for a dramatic body of work both on stage and on screen. One of Australia's leading ladies of musical theatre in **Lucy Maunder** also stars. Lucy created the role of Lara opposite Anthony Warlow in the world première of *Doctor Zhivago*, and received Helpmann and Sydney Theatre Award nominations for Best Actress in a Musical as a result.

Playing the role of Lisa is Queensland-born rising star, **Sarah Morrison**. Sarah studied Opera at the Queensland Conservatorium after high school, and then moved to Victoria to follow her first love, musical theatre, and is thrilled to be performing for the first time at the Playhouse in her hometown.

Screenwriter **Carolyn Burns** wrote her first book, the comedy-thriller for children, *The Retrievers* in New Zealand, with her first play *Objection Overruled* performed throughout that country. Now based in Australia, she has since written four plays, including adapting both *Haxby's Circus* and *High Society* for the stage, and is in demand as a dramaturg and script editor.

Queensland Theatre Company in association with Queensland Performing Arts Centre presents the world premiere season of *Ladies in Black*

Book by Carolyn Burns, based on Madeleine St John's novel, *The Women in Black*

Music and Lyrics by Tim Finn, OBE

Additional lyrics written by Simon Phillips and Carolyn Burns.

14 November to 6 December at Playhouse, QPAC

Director: Simon Phillips

Musical Director: Isaac Hayward **Orchestrations:** Guy Simpson

Designer: Gabriela Tylesova

Lighting Designer: David Walters

Cast Includes: Andrew Broadbent, Kate Cole, Carita Farrer Spencer, Bobby Fox, Kathryn McIntyre, Lucy Maunder, Sarah Morrison, Christen O'Leary, Naomi Price, Deidre Rubenstein and Greg Stone.

Tickets are available at queenslandtheatre.com.au or by calling 136 246



Ladies in Black is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.