

The Australian community theatre premier production.  
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# Chalkface

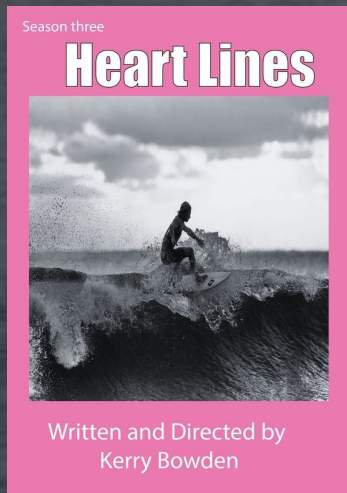
By  
Angela Betzien

**MAY 2025**

Directed by Vanessa Jensen



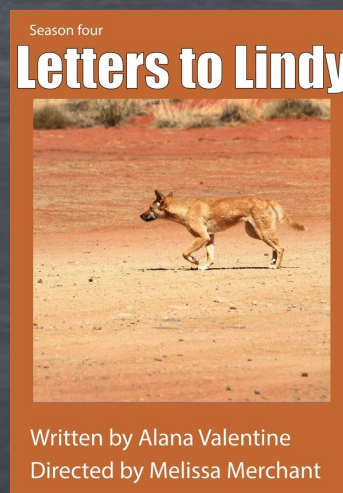
## Remaining seasons in 2025



### Season 3

*Heart Lines* centres around the lives of two youths involved in a heart transplant; one the heart donor, the other the heart recipient. The play explores the undefined, almost spiritual connectivity between heart recipient and donor.

July 11 to 26



### Season 4

A mother accused of murdering her child, her claim – that the baby was taken by a dingo – denied and discredited by zealous police and a flawed legal system. The media circus, the rumours, the nation's prejudices laid bare. And in the eye of the storm: Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton.

September 12 to 27



### Season 5

An elderly couple await the arrival of an audience to hear the old man's last message to posterity, but only empty chairs accumulate on stage. Feeling confident that his message will be conveyed by an orator he has hired, the old man and his wife commit a double suicide.

November 21 to December 6

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## Membership

Becoming a member of the club not only means supporting a local community group, but gives you many other benefits:

- 1 x special member priced ticket to each show in that year
- MTC newsletters
- eligibility to vote at the AGM
- eligibility to stand for committee at the next AGM
- invitations to MTC social events



Individual Membership  
\$10

Family Membership  
(up to 4 family members)  
\$20



*Melville Theatre Company would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, the traditional custodians of this land we meet on, who have been sharing stories here for many thousands of years.*



# Director's Notes

A few years back I was sent a review of the first production of *Chalkface* by the State Theatre Company South Australia/Sydney Theatre Company in 2022, saying they thought it might interest me.

I am the granddaughter of two teachers and two headmasters, the daughter of two teachers, the niece of two teachers, the sister/sister-in-law of two EAs and the sister/wife of two theatre managers in private schools. Education is in my blood and has made up most of my life; as a school student myself for 12 years, a university student for 5 and then a teacher for the past 30 odd years.

It did interest me. It made me laugh and it made me think.

Whilst *Chalkface* is a comedy and populated with large stereotypical characters who do and say some very silly things, it also has depth. It has a message. Teaching is a hard profession, and it is getting harder. Testing, paperwork, data and bureaucracy often eclipse the very essence of our job; teaching. Statistics show that teachers are leaving the profession in droves, burnt out and disillusioned. But those who are still in a classroom are there because for them it is a vocation. A love.

Playwright Angela Betzien has described *Chalkface* as a “love letter to teachers”, and that is what I hope the audience take away from the show. Teaching is hard, and it is underappreciated, especially by governments and the bureaucrats, but those who dedicate their lives to it are superheroes!

*Chalkface* also interested me as it is new, and has not been performed in community theatre before, it is Australian, which I like and four of the six characters are female, with the two lead roles being strong parts for women. Plus there were a few “challenges” in the staging and props departments and that is always fun!

Betzien uses humour to get her message across making the rehearsal process a wonderful laugh for us all. I thank my talented cast for their commitment, effort and especially humour over the past three months.

I hope you enjoy us taking you to the Chalkface!

## Vanessa Jensen



Vanessa has been directing in Perth community theatre since 2006. Producing three plays at Old Mill Theatre; *The Venetian Twins* (2008), *Away* (2010) and *Amadeus* (2011) and fifteen at Melville Theatre; *Pride and Prejudice* (2007), *Three Tall Women* (2008), *Emma* (which she also dramatised, 2012), *Rabbit Hole* (2013), *Twelve Angry Men* (2014), *Love, Loss and What I Wore* (2015), *One Man, Two Guvnors* (2016), *Stop Kiss* (2017), *Mr Bailey's Minder* (2018), *Sense and Sensibility* (2019), *Old Love* (2020), *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play (abridged)* (2021), *Things I Know to Be True* (2022), *Quiz* (2023), *Sweet Road* (2024) and now *Chalkface*.

At the annual Independent Theatre Association Robert Finley Awards Vanessa has been nominated for Best Director eight times and feels honoured to have had four of her MTC productions named Best Play; *Rabbit Hole*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Mr Bailey's Minder* and *Things I Know To Be True*.

Whilst directing is her passion, Vanessa also enjoys stage managing, operating in the bio box, props and set dressing and volunteering in the bar and box office.

The people she meets, the friends she has made and the stories she has helped to bring to life are what keeps her involved in a hobby she began at the age of eight as a gosling wiggling her bottom at the audience in *Mother Goose* at Theatre 8 in Geraldton.



# Cast

in order of appearance...

Denise Hart - Louise Fishwick

Pat Novitsky - Natalie Burbage

Douglas Houston - Cameron Leese

Anna Park - Sophie Harvey-Lissienko

Cheryl Filch - Maree Stedul

Steve Budge - Christopher Hill

West Vale is a fictional Australian state primary school.

The action takes place in 2022 over the course of a school year.

Chalkface contains coarse language, adult themes, flashing lights and loud sound effects.

Chalkface runs for approximately  
110 minutes without an interval.

The bar is open before the show and for one hour after curtain.

# Crew

Stage Manager	Clare Talbot
Set Design	Vanessa Jensen
Set Construction	Lars Jensen, Peter Bloor and Joshua Sedgwick
assisted by	Ross Bertinshaw, Ryan Sedgwick, Michael Urwin, Dario Vallini, Sarah Christiner, Laura Mercer, Clare Talbot, Nat & Guy Burbage
Painting	Lars Jensen, Vanessa Jensen, Barbara Lovell, Ruhama Rowe, Clare Talbot
Lighting & Sound Design	Lars Jensen
Bio Box Operator	Vanessa Jensen
Costumes	Michelle Sharp
Poster	Lars Jensen
Program & FOH Photos	Vanessa Jensen
Publicity	Curtain Call Creatives
Front of House & Bar	MTC volunteers coordinated by Julia Calvert

## Special Thanks

Barbara Lovell for sharing the review that led to me staging this show, and for all the help in many different ways.

Lars Jensen – for everything! Darcy Jensen for support.

Naomi Woods for support with our soundscape.



## Louise Fishwick



Originally from Scotland, Louise is an award winning actor and playwright who has found her home in the Perth theatre scene. With a wealth of lived life experience injected into her roles, she brings a mix of comedy, tragedy and warmth to her characters. Louise recently starred in *Dead Man's Cell Phone* at KADS, *The York Realist* at Garrick Theatre, *Ring Ring* at Roxy Lane Theatre, *A Pot to Peace In* at the Short and Sweet festival and *Me Too the Musical* at Fringeworld.

She is excited to share the whole truth behind what it takes to be a teacher and to bring a bit of levity to this brilliantly written and directed dark comedy.

## Natalie Burbage



As a teacher with more than 25 years experience, Natalie has relished the challenge of bringing hardened educator Pat Novitsky to the Melville Theatre audiences and working alongside this talented team. Natalie is an alumni of Curtin's theatre course and, since her community theatre debut in 2009, has been involved in more than 50 productions. Most recently, she directed *What If If Only* and played Lena in *Escaped Alone* in Season 1 at MTC. Favourite on-stage roles include Fran, *Things I Know to be True* for which she was awarded the ITA Robert Finley award for Best Actress in a Play, Helene in

*Ghosts* (Melville Theatre Company); Tanya in *Mamma Mia* and Marion in *The Boy from Oz* (Koorliny Arts Centre). In 2019, Natalie won ITA Dramafest Best Actress for her role as Rose in *Kinetics* (MPAC). In 2016, she co-directed Disney's *The Little Mermaid* for Koorliny Arts Centre, a production that won four ITA Robert Finley Awards, including Best Musical and Best Director.

## Cameron Leese



Cameron initially trained at Swinburne University, Melbourne prior to relocating to London in 2010, where he undertook further training at the Sylvia Young Theatre School and worked within the UK Film and television industry. Since his stage debut in 2013 Cameron has performed for many of Perth's theatre groups.

In 2019 KADS awarded Cameron the Dorothy McCarthy Award for the Most Outstanding performance, for his lead role in *The Return* (aka *The Last Train to Freo*). In 2020 Cameron performed in GRADS', *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and sashayed across the stage as the camp & vivacious Emory in GRADS' production of the iconic *The Boys in the Band*. Cameron was awarded as the Best Supporting Actor by The Old Mill in 2024 for his performance as Howie in *Rabbit Hole*.



## Sophie Harvey-Lissienko



Sophie's passion for theatre began in high school, where she was actively involved in school productions and quickly fell in love with the world of performance. Now studying Literature and French at university, she is excited to be stepping into the world of community theatre for the first time. Since graduating, Sophie has been part of the West Australian Youth Theatre Company and is thrilled to be back on stage in this production. Later this year, she will be heading to London to study classical performance at LAMDA to further her training and gain valuable experience as an emerging performer.

## Maree Stedul



Maree is a high school drama teacher and is excited to represent a different aspect of the school life in this production. Maree first appeared on the Melville stage (their previous stage at Roy Edinger) in the one act play, *Fourteen* in 2020. Some highlights from Maree's years in theatre include *We Will Rock You* (Platinum Entertainment), *Footloose* (Art in Motion) and *Annie*. Outside of her passion for the arts, Maree loves spending time with family, travelling, and a good board game night!

## Christopher Hill



Christopher grew up in Fremantle and has been performing on stage since he was 12. He trained at John Curtin College of the Arts and went on to study a Bachelor of Arts in Performance at Curtin University. His theatre work has taken him across WA and Victoria, with roles in *Proof* (Mordialloc Theatre), *A Good Man* (Essendon Theatre), *Photograph 51* (Basin Theatre), and *Rabbit Hole* (Old Mill Theatre), which he also co-directed for Perth Fringe Festival.

On screen, Christopher has appeared in *Neighbours*, *The Twelve (Season 2)*, *Scrublands*, and *Holding the Man*, with film credits including *Restare Uniti*, which screened internationally and was selected for competition at the Cannes Film Festival.

*Chalkface* is his second production at Melville Theatre, following *Sweet Road* in 2024, and is a story that hits close to home as he works in student support at a Department of Education school.

Christopher is represented by PADWA Talent.



**Coming Next To Melville Theatre**

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# HEART LINES

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY KERRY BOWDEN

**AT ONLY NINETEEN YEARS OF  
AGE, NOAH WAS THE RECIPIENT  
OF A HEART TRANSPLANT.**

"Heart Lines explores the undefined almost spiritual bond between a heart recipient and his donor.

The emotions feel raw and untethered" - THE WEST AUSTRALIAN



BOOKINGS THROUGH TRYBOOKING

Melville Theatre Company,  
10 Almondbury Rd, Booragoon,  
entry off Davy Street.

**July 2025**

**11, 12**

**18, 19**

**24, 25, 26 @ 7:30pm**

**13, 20 @ 5pm**

Proudly  
supported  
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