



Letters to Lindy

By Alana Valentine

Directed by melissa merchant

"The dingo's got my baby
and that's where it begins"

september 2025

7.30pm 12, 13, 19, 20, 25, 26 & 27

5.00pm 14 & 21



MELVILLE
THEATRE
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Director's Notes

I first became interested in verbatim and documentary drama almost accidentally. In early 2020, I visited a friend in Pulaski Tennessee and it was only on the drive from the airport that I learned Pulaski was the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Although this was not something the small town was proud of, in the 1980s the KKK decided to return to their “spiritual home” to protest the first Martin Luther King Day. After a few years of such protests, locals developed a unique way of dealing with their history. They started closing all businesses every time one of these groups applied for a permit to march. This story was recorded by David Alford and turned into *Boycott: Pulaski Tennessee and the Legacy of the Ku Klux Klan*. I ended up getting the rights to the script and staged it in 2021 with students at Murdoch University. Following this, I started looking for Australian verbatim or documentary drama scripts I could explore. When I found *Letters to Lindy* by Alana Valentine, I knew this would be my next project. This is a complex story and Valentine has chosen to tell it in a complex way – through the more than 20,000 letters sent to Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton since Azaria’s death and with a cast of four performers. From a director’s perspective, it’s a tricky script – how do you ensure you honour the memory and contributions of those who are represented? How do you depict real people, many of whom are still alive? Something that was particularly important was representing the voices of Indigenous Australians. I wanted to ensure we didn’t misrepresent the cultural backgrounds of the cast, whilst at the same time not erasing voices that were so important to the Lindy and Azaria story. Casting was critical for this production and I am privileged to have a cast that not only understands the nuances and complexities of this story, but who are also committed to telling it in an authentic and genuine way. Ultimately, what has surprised me with this script, and this cast, is the light that can be found in the darkest of places. If nothing else, I hope this production encourages you to think critically about what you see and read. I want to thank my wonderful cast and crew for being so willing to play with this script, my friend from Pulaski who showed me the power of this kind of theatre, my husband Murray for his support, Melville for choosing this play for their 2025 season, and you for coming along to see it. I hope that the show makes you feel, makes you laugh, and makes you think.

Director's Biography

Melissa Merchant has been involved with community theatre in Perth for over twenty-five years and has had the opportunity to act and direct with many different companies, in a wide variety of productions. Some of her favourites include *Richard III* (director, GRADS), *Don's Party* (director, Murdoch University), *When Dad Married Fury* (actor, Garrick), *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night* (actor and producer, ShakesBeer), *The Last of the Red Hot Lovers* (actor, Old Mill), *Picasso's Women* (actor, Harbour Theatre and Blak Yak), *Hamlet* (director, GRADS), *Popcorn* (director, Blak Yak), *Long Gone Lone Cowgirls* (actor, Melville). Melissa is also a Senior Lecturer in English & Theatre and Associate Dean Learning & Teaching in the School of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences at Murdoch University. She is lucky to be able to direct and work with passionate and engaged students. Buy her a drink and she'll tell you all about Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, the topic of her PhD thesis.



Please be aware, this production includes strong language, references to death and depiction of violence. It also includes a short strobe sequence in the first act.

Cast

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton
Figure 1
Figure 2
Figure 3

Maree Grayden
Ellin Sears
Laura Mercer
Kate O’Sullivan

Production Team

Director
Production Manager
Stage Manager
Lighting Operator
Lighting Design
Set Design and Construction
Set Painting
Committee Liaison
Costumes
Production Photography
Publicity
Poster
Dramaturgy

Melissa Merchant
Michael McAllan
Emma Woolnough
Emily Prosser
Lars Jensen
Michael McAllan & Melissa Merchant
Barbara Lovell & Laura Mercer
Clare Talbot
Melissa Merchant & cast
Michael McAllan
Curtain Call Creatives
Tiffany Banner
Jasper Prestage

Special Thanks

Melville City Council for their support
Murdoch University for providing rehearsals spaces
Tim Brain for the use of the Nexus
Alan Gill for providing support with music
Joy Sears for the AC jackets and one walker
Ray and Kristy Oldfield for support with the set and props
Chris McRae for the loan of his Geelong scarf
Stephen Clarke for the loan of his Collingwood scarf
The Prosser family for the loan of their Welsh scarf

Music in this production:

If You’re Happy and You Know it (tune), original creator unknown
Waltzing Matilda (tune), originally by Christina MacPherson (music)
and A.B. Paterson (lyrics)
All Through the Night (tune), original creator unknown
Acknowledgement of Country by Dylan Collard, Wadjak and
Balardong Noongar man and founder of Kalyakoortl



Cast Biographies

Maree Grayden - Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton

“The dingo’s got my baby . . . and that’s where it begins.”

With a lengthy and varied background within the Arts, Maree has worked as a performer, director, producer, drama educator, and Head of The Arts. Maree has appeared on stage most recently with Maverick Theatre (*Park Bench Series- The Flat, It’s All Greek To Me II*), Tempest Theatre (*Macbethish, The Maids*), Graduate Dramatic Society (*Broken Glass*), Old Mill Theatre (*The Glass Menagerie, Beast and The Beauty, Dinner With Friends, Away*), Stirling Theatre (*The Real Thing*), KADS (*The Flat*) Groovy Boots Theatre (*Dimboola, The Reindeer Monologues*) and for Melville Theatre (*Don’s Party*) way back in 2011.

Maree is very grateful for the opportunity to perform under the direction of Melissa Merchant, within the vision of the creative team, and alongside her talented fellow cast members. She is looking forward to sharing the Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton’s story, telling her truth, and challenging some narratives of the past.



Laura Mercer - Figure 2

“I find that the name Azaria does not mean and never has meant ‘sacrifice in the wilderness’.”

Laura has enjoyed being involved in Community Theatre since she studied Theatre Arts at high school. She has mostly been connected to Melville Theatre in one way or another since 2001 when she first played Bubba in *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. More recently she has performed in *Jumpy* (2017), *Plaza Suites* (2023), *Quiz* (2023) and *Sweet Road* (2024). She also enjoys backstage roles and was Stage Manager for *Female of the Species* (2023), *Sweet Road* (2024) and *What If If Only* (2025).

Laura was only 4 and living in South Africa when Azaria was taken by a dingo so working on this play has been a real eye-opener. She has enjoyed having the opportunity to work with a talented bunch of people she has never had the pleasure to work with before and has relished the creative challenge of playing many different characters in the one play.



Kate O'Sullivan - Figure 3

"The outside of the rear of the nappy was facing upwards, and the napkin still contained a certain amount of filler."

Kate is a Perth-based performer and science communicator, with experience in Canberra and Sydney. She trained in improvisation at Improv Theatre Sydney and musical improvisation at iO Chicago in 2019.

Recent stage credits include Miss Frizzle in *Murder on the Magic School Bus* (State of Play, Studio Underground), *Emilie La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* (Anatomical Heart Productions), and Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (Marloo Theatre), earning a Best Actress nomination at the ITA Finley Awards.

Kate is also the founder of Theatre Reviews Perth and debuted her solo show *All The Best Roles Are Written For Men* in 2023.



Ellin Sears - Figure 1

"As I write from the perspective of an outer Western suburban neurotic housewife suffering from severe melancholy and verging on insanity, I don't get many takers."

Ellin began her formal acting training at the age of 12 as part of the North Lake Children's Theatre Troupe but she officially got her start as a performer at the tender age of 4 at the Valerie Heston School of Dance.

She is the face of Kreepy Krauly's Pool Professor adverts and was a featured extra in Season Two of ABC's *The Heights* (2020). Stage highlights include *Cruisin' The Musical* (2007), Second Chance Theatre's *Frankenstein* (2016), Blak Yak Theatre's *One Night, One Day* (2018), *Whisper White* (2020) with The Strawboat Collective, and *Pride & Prejudice* (2023) at The Old Mill Theatre.

Other performance highlights include working as a magician's assistant, and as an Interactor for Murdoch University's award-winning Simlab program. When she isn't onstage, Ellin works as an academic and educator in the performing arts, and spends most of the rest of her time chasing after her toddler.



The Lindy and Azaria Chamberlain Story

“There are three things that have divided this nation right down the centre. Conscription, Whitlam and Lindy Chamberlain.”

Following the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain at Uluru in August 1980, an initial coronial inquest in 1981 supported Lindy Chamberlain’s account that a dingo had taken her baby. However, this finding was overturned and a second inquest was held. In 1982, Lindy was charged with murder and her husband Michael with being an accessory after the fact. Relying heavily on disputed forensic evidence, the court convicted Lindy and sentenced her to life imprisonment. Michael received a suspended sentence.

Over the next several years, multiple appeals were lodged and dismissed. In 1986, a critical breakthrough came when a piece of Azaria’s clothing was found near Uluru, supporting Lindy’s original claim. She was released from prison, and in 1988 the convictions against both Lindy and Michael were quashed. Despite this, lingering doubts persisted until 2012, when a fourth coronial inquest formally confirmed that a dingo was responsible for Azaria’s death. This final ruling closed one of the most scrutinised legal cases in Australian history.

From Dramaturg Jasper Prestage

The court of public opinion is hard at work in the literally tens of thousands of letters and emails in the Lindy Chamberlain letter archive. By her own estimation, two out of three letters in the archive are sympathetic, or supportive. As you will hear, some are from strangers, some are from friends and a select few are from believing witnesses who were there at Uluru in the spring of 1980 - but no matter who it is writing, Lindy has always to re-live, in reading, the night in question and to look on a moment from which her entire life began and the accusations of a public who believes that “Mother always knows” but that for a mother to know in the moment that a dingo has her baby, on sight, is too perfect. Our play Letters to Lindy would not have been without the ongoing archive of letters kept by Lindy Chamberlain – letters sent by the public to her that included abuse, comfort, accusations and more mundane documents. This archive has been continuously kept by Lindy Chamberlain and now reside in the National Library of Australia in Canberra in large, acid free archive boxes. These letters make judge and jury of those so far outside of the case and one must consider how they weigh on the conscience and the self-perception of Lindy Chamberlain and what they say about public perception of the case and indeed on Lindy, her motherhood and her reputation on trial- a life spent in public a woman convicted and acquitted of infanticide, whose trial has never ended.

This program is being generously sponsored by

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MELVILLE THEATRE COMPANY

A community theatre company that has been running for over 40 years. Our first production was in 1983 and we have members that have been involved continuously since our first show, The Sound of Music.

As a theatre company, we are committed to putting on high quality shows and this has been recognised through many awards throughout the years.

We are run by a dedicated committee of volunteers and all aspects of our productions are put together by volunteers. We are lucky to have an exceptional group of members. Some bring professional theatre experience and some bring willingness to learn. All bring a huge amount of enthusiasm and we value each and every one of them.

If you enjoyed the show and would like to find out more about how to get involved, we would love to hear from you!

Become a member of MTC today!

Members receive:
Discount tickets to shows
Invitations to MTC events
The ability to get involved in shows!

Individual
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This theatre stands on Country where jarrah forests once grew, and where Yagan called his lookout and home.

We pay our respects to the Elders of this place and acknowledge their continuing connection with Country.

We acknowledge the Bibulmun People as the traditional custodians of this land where the koolbardi (magpie) sings and the biyara (banksia) grows.

The Noongar People have a rich history of coming together as a community to share through dance, stories and songs.

It is a privilege to gather, perform and reflect on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar.



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BY EUGÈNE IONESCO

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