

Di and Viv and Rose

by Amelia
Bullmore

MTC MELBOURNE
THEATRE
COMPANY

Welcome



We are thrilled to be presenting Victorian audiences with the Australian premiere of Amelia Bullmore's acclaimed play, *Di and Viv and Rose*. Led by award-winning director and great friend Marion Potts, this heart-warming tale of enduring friendship stars three of the most accomplished women on stage and screen: Nadine Garner, Belinda McClory and Mandy McElhinney.

At MTC we champion women working in all areas of the sector and are proud to run an industry-leading Women in Theatre Program. Since its inception in 2014 we have supported 32 women across a range of disciplines from directing to dramaturgy and stage management. With support from Donors in our Women in Theatre Giving Circle, the annual program provides participants with career development opportunities, mentors within the industry and a chance to learn about the inner workings of a major performing arts organisation. It is a fantastic program dedicated to supporting local talent and promoting women in the industry.

With such immense talent attached to this production it is little wonder that *Di and Viv and Rose* was among the most subscribed plays in our 2017 season. Its houses filled up in a flash, and with our Season 2018 announcement on Monday 28 August it is a timely reminder that being a Subscriber is the best way to lock in great seats at an exclusive price before they go on sale to the public.

Whether you're new to the Company or already among our wonderful community of Subscribers, take this insider trading tip – get your Season 2018 subscriptions in quickly, as next year is going to be a cracker and you won't want to miss a moment.

Virginia Lovett
Executive Director

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Peoples of the Boon Wurrung, the Traditional Owners of the land on which Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ stand, and we pay our respects to Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors past and present, and to our shared future.

MTC is a department of the University of Melbourne.



MTC is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and by the State Government of Victoria through Creative Victoria.



MTC is a member of Live Performance Australia and the Australian Major Performing Arts Group.



MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

DI AND VIV AND ROSE

by Amelia Bullmore

12 AUGUST – 16 SEPTEMBER

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

— Cast —

Di Nadine Garner
Viv Belinda McClory
Rose Mandy McElhinney

— Production —

Director Marion Potts
Set & Costume Designer Dale Ferguson
Lighting Designer Paul Jackson
Composer & Sound Designer Kelly Ryall

Voice & Dialect Coach Geraldine Cook-Dafner
Assistant Director Stephen Nicolazzo
Set Designer Secondment Matthew McLaughlin
Lighting Secondment Rachel Rui Qian Lee
Stage Manager Christine Bennett
Assistant Stage Manager (Rehearsals and
Performance Season) Benjamin Cooper
Assistant Stage Manager (Performance Season)
Millie Mullinar
Rehearsal Photographer Deryk McAlpin
Production Photographer Jeff Busby

— About the play —

From different classes, from different places, with different experiences and expectations, Di, Viv and Rose would never have crossed paths if they hadn't shared a flat all those years ago at uni. For a while, the laughs bound them together. But surely time, which delivers triumph, disaster and change so unpredictably, will slowly draw these three friends apart?

This performance runs for approximately 2 hours, including a 20 minute interval.

Production Partner

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AIRPORT

Di and Viv and Rose was first presented in London at the Hampstead Downstairs in 2011 and subsequently revived at the Hampstead's Main Stage in 2013. It was produced by CMP and Hampstead Theatre at the Vaudeville Theatre, London on the 22nd January 2015. Copyright agents for Amelia Bullmore www.unitedagents.co.uk
Di and Viv and Rose is published by Methuen Drama

Cover photo: Jo Duck

Time shifting

In conversation with Director Marion Potts

What was it about *Di and Viv and Rose* that made you want to direct this play for MTC?

Well, firstly, it passes the Bechdel test. That is, there is more than one scene in the play that involves two women, who aren't speaking about a man ... it's a perspective on the world that we don't often experience in the theatre. It sheds a different kind of light on friendship, opportunity, maturity, human values – subjects that affect us all.

This is a really layered piece of theatre tackling several weighty themes that are powerful, but ultimately common storylines in our lives. Were there any themes in this narrative that really stood out to you above the rest?

They are very powerful and the genius of the play is that these don't make for a heavy, unforgiving night in the theatre. There is real talent in a playwright who is able to hold the gaze of these themes uncompromisingly, but in a way that harnesses our hope rather than our despair. And who gives us lots to laugh at along the way. No one theme resonated for me more than another, because they're sublimated by the characters going about the business of living. They're a function of what happens to these women – so at no time do you feel the playwright's thematic agenda, or didacticism. If anything, the characters' responses and the way they navigate the events feel to me like a greater focus – resilience is a bigger theme.

Female friendship is at the core of this work. What attracted you to these characters and why do you think their link to each other is so moving?

Female friendship is often mythologised. Women have needed to represent positive images of themselves, so understandably it's been depicted as indestructible and unequivocally positive. This friendship is not perfect. The strength of the friendship isn't due to its solidity, so much as its flexibility – its ability to bend and move with the gale forces that hit it. It survives despite these and because of the three individuals involved, because of their complementarity, rather than their commonality. Having said that, removing one element from the equation puts it at real risk. This is what is moving.

What are you hoping to bring out of your cast in this production?

They are all meaty characters individually but they also need to function as an ensemble, as a group. It's a delicate balance to assert your own characters' presence on stage but also to be there for your colleagues, to allow them to assert their needs and respond accordingly. Listening is as important as speaking in this play. And they are nothing without each other.







Viv's character is determined to seize the career opportunities open to her generation, which she says weren't open to the group of women who came before her. You've played a major role, leading by example, for women working in theatre – does this play have a feminist message to convey, and if so, what is it?

The play isn't black and white and it's perhaps the sophistication of the playwright's own brand of feminism that makes it so: it reveals the complexity of its characters, but also the complex repercussions of their choices. Viv does seize the career opportunities at hand, but she also cuts herself off from any intimate relationship. Rose's decision is true to herself, but it entails huge sacrifices. All they are doing is following their heart and listening to their instincts, but somehow that's a bigger deal for women, it's a harder road. As for Di, what happens to her is simply the result of being a woman. So if there is a message, and it certainly aligns with my own beliefs, it's that the answer is not to stop doing, or to short-change your own agency; it's to keep making choices, while working on

those systemic things that will make their consequences more equitable, and to support each other until they are.

There are some really challenging staging elements in this production, for example the quick scene transitions and spanning three decades with the same three actors. Do challenges like this compel you further as a director?

Those sorts of creative challenges are always great to sink your teeth into. In the end, these come back to what attracts us to theatre as a medium: how theatre's unique features can be marshalled to tell this story in a way that no other medium can. Cinema and television have changed the way we relate to the narrative form, and theatre has responded to this, not by digging in, but by embracing it as a new creative challenge.



Go online to see the full gallery of *Di and Viv and Rose* production and rehearsal images.
mtc.com.au/backstage



*Nadine Garner, Belinda McClory and Mandy McElhinney;
(right) Belinda McClory, Mandy McElhinney and Nadine Garner*



Nadine Garner



*Mandy McElhinney, Belinda McClory, Director Marion Potts,
Stage Manager Christine Bennett and Nadine Garner*

It's a play

Fiona Gruber chats to Amelia Bullmore about friendship, luck and the craft of playwriting in the latest episode of our MTC Talks Podcast.



Listen to the full conversation at mtc.com.au/MTCTalks or subscribe to MTC Talks via iTunes or on SoundCloud.

Amelia Bullmore is sitting in her airy London kitchen, reminiscing about university.

'I met people I'd never met before, experienced events I never would have been part of,' she says. She also experienced the sort of intense friendships she portrays in *Di and Viv and Rose*.

'I wanted to write a play about friendship and I wondered if I could catch what it's like to know and love people for a long time, in an hour and a half,' she says.

It takes the lives of three young women who move in together, and follows them across the decades as they enter the adult world of careers and relationships and the dramas and traumas that life throws at them.

There's an enchantment to the first friends we make when we're away from home and in the early throes of adulthood, she continues. Life seems limitless and full of possibility, but there's also no knowing how your life will unfold.

'I'm fascinated by luck,' says Bullmore; 'we are at its mercy; for all that we think we can determine things, we are horribly at its mercy, even down to the fact of whether you're made of rubber and glass. So even if the same things happen to you as to somebody else, it won't impact in the same way.'

The women are very different; there's happy-go-lucky Rose, who loves life and is, in Bullmore's words, 'merrily promiscuous'. There's Viv, who's a girl with a plan. 'Sometimes actresses who play her don't like her but I love her,' she says.

And then there's Di, who's grounded, happy in her own skin and who can stretch out and find common ground with the other two, women who, without her, might never have

found anything in common. 'It's Di who pulls them together,' she explains.

Alongside her acting career, Bullmore is

well known for her TV writing; has she ever been tempted to adapt it for the screen? I ask.

No, she says, it's vitally important to see the actors as they play the women getting older, on a stage. 'I've been asked to do it on TV, I've been asked to do it as a film, I've been asked to do it for radio and I've said no every time; a tiny part is "I've done that, I've written it, it's over", but most of it is, "it's a play, it's a play it's a play."'

**'I've been asked to do it on TV,
I've been asked to do it as a film, I've
been asked to do it for radio and
I've said no every time ... it's a play.'**

Amelia Bullmore

Playwright



Amelia studied Drama at Manchester University. She started out as an actor and began writing professionally in 1994. She continues to do both.

Her first play, *Mammals*, directed by Anna Mackmin, had an extended sell-out run at The Bush in 2005 and went on a national tour in 2006. The play was staged in Los Angeles in 2009. *Mammals* was shortlisted for the What's On Stage Best New Comedy award and co-won the Susan Smith Blackburn Award. Her adaptation of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, also directed by Anna Mackmin, had a sell-out run at The Gate in 2007 and has since been produced at The Citizens Theatre, Glasgow. Her and Mackmin collaborated again for the Old Vic's 24 Hour Plays in 2009.

Her recent work includes the play *Di And Viv And Rose*, originally produced at the

Hampstead before transferring to the West End. The play has since been performed in Israel, Poland, Germany and New York.

For television, Amelia has written episodes of *This Life*, (Writers Guild Best Television Drama), *Attachments* and *Scott and Bailey*. She also devised and co-wrote a series of ten-minute films, *Black Cab*. She was a Dennis Potter Award finalist in 2000 for her television screenplay *The Middle*.

Amelia's radio writing includes four series of *Craven*, *Cash Flow* (part of the *From Fact to Fiction* series) and BBC's Afternoon Plays *The Middle*, *Family Tree*, *Looking for Mr King* and *The Bat Man*.

Amelia currently has three TV projects in development and a new monologue, *Anyway*, will be performed by Niamh Cusack at the Old Vic this year.

VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

LOOK AHEAD

The Victorian College of the Arts prepares dedicated young performing artists for future careers in theatre performance, directing, writing and production, and is proud to see its graduates succeed all over the world. We wish Belinda McClory (VCA alumna 1989) and the MTC cast and crew the best for their season of *Di and Viv and Rose*.

We are now accepting 2018 applications for the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting, Theatre, and Production. Applications close 28 September. Applications for masters programs in Dramaturgy, Writing for Performance, Directing for Performance, and Design for Performance close 31 October.

Find out more, vca.unimelb.edu.au

IMAGE: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, presented by Acting Company 2017 and Production students.
PHOTO BY: Lachlan Woods.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Cast & Creative Team



NADINE GARNER

Di

Nadine Garner returns to Melbourne Theatre Company having previously appeared in *The Distance*, *The Weir*, *Private Lives*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Balcony*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Cosi*, *A Day in the Life of Joe Egg*. Her other stage credits include *Zebra!* and *Life After George* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Miss Julie* (Perth Theatre Company); *Solstice* (State Theatre Company of South Australia); *Amadeus* (Griffin Theatre); *Bird's Eye View* (Old Fitzroy Theatre & The Tap Gallery); *Cabaret* (IMG Entertainment); *Three Sisters* (20/20 Theatre); *Popcorn* (Picture This Production); *The Taming of the Shrew* (EHJ Productions); *Elsinore* (Five Dollar Theatre Co); *The School For Wives* (Australian Nouveau Theatre); *Bad Boy Johnny & The Prophets of Doom* (Comedy Theatre); and *Romeo & Juliet* (Elston Hocking & Woods). Her film work includes *The Book Of Revelation*, *Razzle Dazzle*, *The Wedding Party*, *Fresh Air*, *Metal Skin*, *Mull*, *Bushfire Moon* and *The Still Point*. On television Nadine has appeared in *The Doctor Blake Mysteries Series 1-5*, *Boys from the Bush*, *Class Act*, *It's a Date*, *City Homicide Series*, *Blue Water High*, *Through My Eyes*, *Stingers*, *Secret Life of Us*.



BELINDA McCLORY

Viv

Belinda McClory is a VCA graduate and has worked extensively in film, theatre and television. She has worked for all the major Australian theatre companies and has performed on stage in Paris, London and Vienna. She has performed with Melbourne Theatre Company in many productions and her most recent work includes *The Waiting Room*, *Queen Lear*, *The Ghost Writer*, *Boy Gets Girl*, *Frozen* and *Proof*. Other recent theatre credits include *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again*, *Edward II*, *Dance of Death*, *Pompeii L.A.* and *The Trial* (Malthouse Theatre); *Gross Und Klein*, *The City*, *Holy Day*, *Concussion*, *Emergency Sex* (Sydney Theatre Company); *Love Me Tender* (Griffin/Belvoir Street) and *Splendour* (Red Stitch). Belinda's screen work includes four series of *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*, the comedy web series *Little Acorns*, the Hollywood blockbuster *The Matrix* and Australian films *Redball*, *Mullet*, *Life*, *darklovestory* and *Acolytes*. Belinda also co-wrote and performed in the feature films *X* and *Turkey Shoot*. She will soon be seen in the second series of *Glitch* and the feature film *The Wheel*. She has been the recipient of both a Green Room and Helpmann Award for her theatre work.



MANDY McELHINNEY

Rose

For Melbourne Theatre Company Mandy McElhinney has appeared in *Life after George*; *Pride and Prejudice*; *The Hypocrite* and *Don's Party* (co-pro with STC). Other theatre credits include *Cinderella*, *Forget Me Not* (Belvoir); *Dreams in White* (Griffin Theatre Company); *In the Next Room (Or the Vibrator Play)*; *The Beauty of Queen Leenane*; Kafka's *Metamorphosis*; *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Great* (STC). Mandy is best known for her portrayal of the revered 'Matron Bolton' in four seasons of the Nine Network's *Love Child*. Television credits include *Hyde & Seek*, *House of Hancock*, *A Moody's Christmas*, *Comedy Inc*, *Bed of Roses*, *All Saints*, *The Alice*, *Stingers*, *Kath & Kim* and *Water Rats*. Feature film credits include *Ned Kelly* and *The Bank*. In 2012, Mandy received the AACTA Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Television Drama for her role in *Howzat: Kerry Packer's War*; as well a nomination for the Silver TV Week Logie for Most Outstanding Actress. She received a second nomination for the same award for her role in *Paper Giants: Magazine Wars*.

Cast & Creative Team



MARION POTTS

Director

Marion Potts returns to Melbourne Theatre Company after directing *Grace* in 2009. Her extensive directing credits include *The Riders*, *Ugly Mugs*, *The Dragon*, *Hate*, *Wild Surmise*, *Blood Wedding*, *Meow Meow's Little Match Girl* (and its London season), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *Sappho ... in 9 fragments*, all for Malthouse Theatre; *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Venus & Adonis* for Bell Shakespeare; *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, *Volpone*, *Don Juan*, *Life After George*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Crucible*, *Navigating*, *Closer*, *The Herbal Bed*, *Where are We Now?*, *The Cafe Latte Kid* for STC; *Constance Drinkwater* and *The Final Days of Somerset* for QT; *The Goat*, or *Who is Sylvia?* (for which she won a Helpmann Award), *A Number*, *Equus*, *The Torrents*, and *Gary's House* for STCSA; *The Story of the Miracles at Cookie's Table* and *Wonderlands* for Griffin Theatre Company. Marion was Resident Director at Sydney Theatre Company, Associate Artistic Director at Bell Shakespeare, and Artistic Director of Malthouse Theatre. She is currently the Director – Theatre for the Australia Council for the Arts.



DALE FERGUSON

Set & Costume Designer

Dale Ferguson's designs have been a regular feature of MTC productions, most recently in *Born Yesterday*, *Skylight*, *The Weir*, *The Speechmaker*, *Neighbourhood Watch*, *The Crucible*, *Top Girls*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, *Life Without Me*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *God of Carnage*, *August: Osage County*, *The 25th Annual Putman County Spelling Bee*, and *The History Boys*. Dale has worked for Australia's leading theatre companies, including *King Lear* (Bell Shakespeare), *Anything Goes* (Gordon Frost Organisation), *The Blind Giant is Dancing* (Belvoir), *Away* (Malthouse Theatre) and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Sydney Theatre Company). He recently returned from designing Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of *The Magic Flute*. Dale has received four Green Room Awards, most recently for *Night on Bald Mountain*, and the 2010 Helpmann Award for MTC's *August: Osage County*. His set and costume designs for Company B/Malthouse's production of *Exit the King* earned him Tony and Drama Desk Award nominations when the production transferred to Broadway in 2009.



PAUL JACKSON

Lighting Designer

Paul Jackson's recent lighting designs with Melbourne Theatre Company include *Three Little Words*, *Endgame*, *Miss Julie*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Ghost Writer*, *Ghosts*, *Frozen*, *The Speechmaker*, *Enlightenment*, *Madagascar* and *Private Lives*. He has worked as a lighting designer for the Australian Ballet, Royal New Zealand Ballet, West Australian Ballet, Victorian Opera, West Australian Opera, Sydney Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare, Playbox, Malthouse, Belvoir, BalletLab, Lucy Guerin Inc, World of Wearable Art New Zealand, La Mama, Chamber Made Opera, and many others. His work has featured in festivals in Asia, Europe and the United Kingdom, and he has lectured in design at the University of Melbourne, RMIT University and Victorian College of the Arts. Paul has received a number of Green Room Awards and nominations for Lighting Design, as well as a Sydney Theatre Award, an APDG Award and a 2012 Helpmann Award. Paul was named in the Bulletin's Smart 100 for 2004 and was the Gilbert Spottiswood Churchill Fellow for 2007. Paul was an Associate Artist at Malthouse Theatre from 2007 to 2013.

Cast & Creative Team



KELLY RYALL

Composer & Sound Designer

Kelly Ryall is an award-winning composer, musician and sound designer for theatre, dance and film. Kelly's recent work with Melbourne Theatre Company includes composition and sound design for *Three Little Words*, *Double Indemnity*, *Rupert*, *Peddling*, *The Crucible*, *On the Production of Monsters*, *Return to Earth*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *God of Carnage*, and *Savage River*. His other stage credits include *Title and Deed*, *Kill the Messenger*, *Cinderella*, *Nora*, and *Hedda Gabler* (Belvoir); *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, *Phedre*, *Henry IV*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *The School for Wives*, and *Tartuffe* (Bell Shakespeare); *Boys Will be Boys* and *The Trial* (Sydney Theatre Company); *The House on the Lake*, *Emerald City*, *The Boys* (Sydney Festival), *And No More Shall We Part*, *The Floating World*, *Dreams in White*, (Griffin Theatre Company); *Edward II*, *The Shadow King*, *Dance of Death*, *The Trial* with STC (Malthouse); *Piece for Person* and *Ghetto Blaster* with Nicola Gunn; *Animal* with Suzie Dee; and *Savages* at Fortyfivedownstairs. Kelly's first chamber opera *The Bacchae* premiered to critical acclaim at Melbourne Festival and toured to Dark MOFO.



GERALDINE COOK-DAFNER

Voice & Dialect Coach

Geraldine Cook-Dafner previously worked for Melbourne Theatre Company on *Melbourne Talam*, *John*, *The Odd Couple*, *Straight White Men*, *The Distance*, *Birdland*, *The Waiting Room*, *Top Girls*, *The Heretic*, *The Swimming Club*, *The 39 Steps*, *The History Boys*, *All My Sons*, *The Clean House*, *Boy Gets Girl*, *Take Me Out*, and *The Glass Menagerie*. Geraldine also works for independent theatre companies, Red Stitch and Hit Productions. She trained at Middlesex University, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and she is an Honorary Senior Fellow in the theatre department at the Faculty of the VCA and MCM, University of Melbourne. Geraldine also works as a voice consultant in film, ABC Radio, SBS Radio, and for local corporate and government bodies. Geraldine was previously Head of Voice, Head of School of Performing Arts and an Associate Dean at the Faculty of VCA and MCM, University of Melbourne.



STEPHEN NICOLAZZO

Assistant Director

Stephen Nicolazzo is a Melbourne-based theatre director and the Artistic Director of Little Ones Theatre. He studied at the University of Melbourne (Creative Arts, 2008) and NIDA (Directing, 2010). His directing credits include *Merciless Gods* (Little Ones/Darebin Arts/Griffin Theatre Company), *The Moors* (Red Stitch), *Playing to Win* (Arts Centre Melbourne), *The Happy Prince* (Little Ones/La Mama), *Dracula* (Little Ones/Theatre Works), *Meme Girls* (Malthouse), *Dangerous Liaisons* (Little Ones/MTC NEON, Darwin Festival/Brisbane Powerhouse/Theatre Works), *The House of Yes* (Little Ones/Theatre Works), *Special Victim* (Adelaide Cabaret Festival), *Salomé* (Little Ones/Malthouse Theatre Helium), *Psycho Beach Party* (Little Ones/Theatre Works/Midsumma Festival/Brisbane Festival), *sex.violence.blood.gore* (MKA). He has been nominated for two Green Room Awards for Best Direction.



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