

LA BOITE THEATRE COMPANY &  
BRISBANE FESTIVAL PRESENTS

# PRIZE FIGHTER

★ ★ BY FUTURE D. FIDEL ★ ★

..... PROGRAM .....

Presented by La Boite Theatre Company & Brisbane Festival  
5 - 26 September 2015 at the Roundhouse Theatre

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## CAST

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Luke, Ensemble

Rita, Nyota, Sofia, Ensemble

Kadogo, Tim, Ensemble

Moses, Matete, Jeff Wilkie, Ensemble

Isa

Aunty, Alaki, Old Man, Wayne Durain, Ensemble

Margi Brown-Ash

Sophia Emberson-Bain

Thuso Lekwape

Gideon Mzembe

Pacharo Mzembe

Kenneth Ransom



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## PRODUCTION TEAM

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Writer **Future D Fidel**

Director **Todd MacDonald**

Dramaturg **Chris Kohn**

Designer **Bill Haycock**

Lighting Designer **David Walters**

Composer/Sound Designer **Felix Cross**

Video Designer **optikal bloc**

Movement & Fight Director **Nigel Poulton**

Design Intern **Hahnie Goldfinch**

Lighting Design Secondment **Christine Felmingham**

Stage Manager **Heather O'Keeffe**

Assistant Stage Manager **Ariana O'Brien**

Rehearsal Photography **Dylan Evans**

Special thanks to **Emmanuel Otti, Brisbane Boxing,**  
**Coleman Tyre Company Wacol and Corporate Box Gym.**



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## WRITER'S NOTES

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Future D. Fidel

In the world that depends on technology, it is hard to miss breaking news on an 8.9 Magnitude Earthquake that kills 19 people or the news about a massacre of five people in the middle of Europe.

Surprisingly enough, if I asked you about one of the greatest mass killings in the world after WWII, I wouldn't be surprised if you said the war in Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan. The death toll in these three countries combined is recorded to be approximately 371,000 people since 2001 according to Watson Institute – Cost of War. This is not close to half the great genocide of Rwanda that claimed almost a million lives.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is well known for its richness in natural resources and minerals such as gold, diamond, coltan, petroleum to name a few. The commonly used out of these minerals is the coltan. Used in smartphones, TV, computers, laptops etc... DRC consists of 80 percent of the world's coltan. Therefore, these minerals are a blessing to those who use smartphones and all electronics...But it is a curse to the population of Congolese. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has reported a death toll of 5.4 million Congolese since 1996. That is a quarter of Australia's current population.

The results of war in Congo created hundreds of child soldiers and a high level of rapes of young and old woman.

*Prize Fighter* is a mythical story inspired by personal experiences of these wars that resonates around trauma from family loss and motivations from the Congo. The reason of the story is not to give you statistics but to outline the reality of what is not being shown, through the power of boxing. Defeating your opponent needs strategies but defeating your memories requires more than just that. Regardless of who or what your opponent is, everyone is a Prize Fighter.



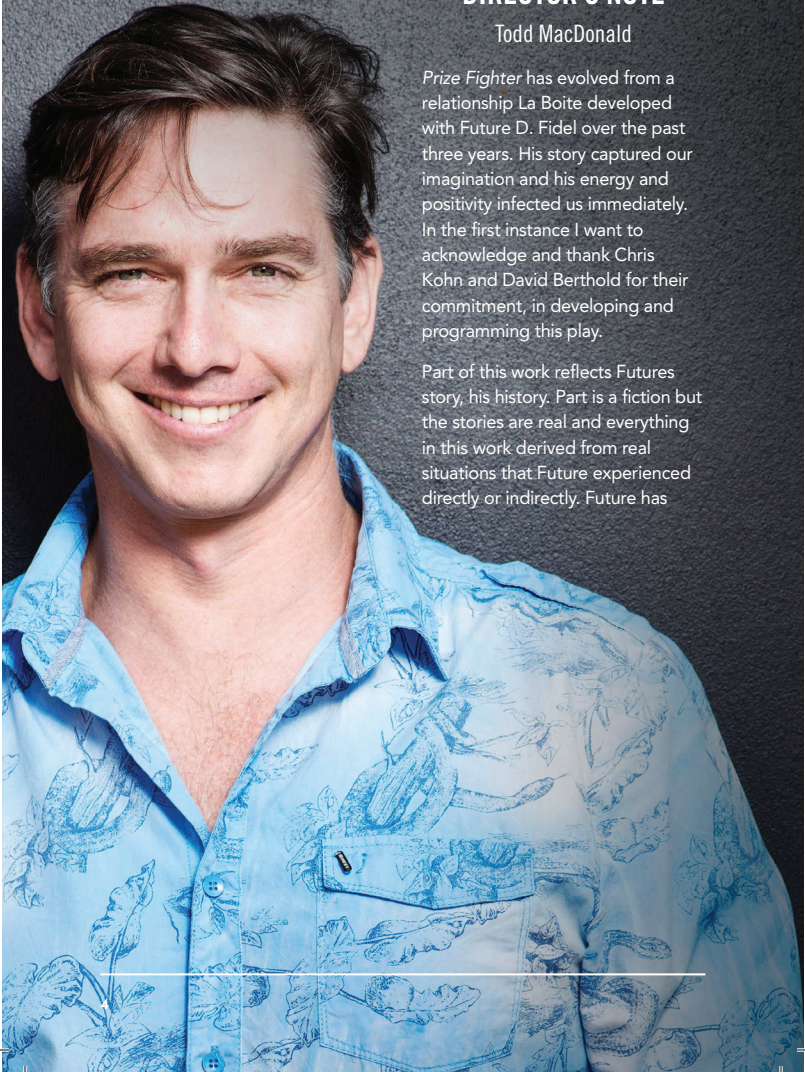
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## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Todd MacDonald

*Prize Fighter* has evolved from a relationship La Boite developed with Future D. Fidel over the past three years. His story captured our imagination and his energy and positivity infected us immediately. In the first instance I want to acknowledge and thank Chris Kohn and David Berthold for their commitment, in developing and programming this play.

Part of this work reflects Futures story, his history. Part is a fiction but the stories are real and everything in this work derived from real situations that Future experienced directly or indirectly. Future has



become a new Australian after fleeing the Congo as a teen and *Prize Fighter* is a new Australian story, a vital story that shares his journey and experiences and in so doing enriches our lives.

The idea of the "Prize Fighter" is aspirational – it is a place where talent, determination and purpose resolve into action and so is the perfect vehicle for such a profound story of hardship and self-realisation. Isa is the main character and we share his personal struggle and are implicated in his journey as we bear witness to his battle to overcome his opponent and his own demons. A battle that takes us from Australia to the Democratic Republic of Congo and back again.

The Congo has been ravaged by war since 1996. It is a complex and volatile conflict where the civilian population has suffered the most. This conflict is driven by the resources that Congo is rich with, in particular coltan.

Coltan is an ore from which tantalum and niobium derive. Both are vital in the production of many objects we hold as essential - mobile phones, computers and airbags. Tantalum is named after the mythical Greek character Tantalus -

and Niobe his daughter. The famed punishment of Tantalus by Zeus, for cannibalism and kin slaying, was to be eternally trapped under a fruit tree up to his waste in a pool of water, never being able to eat or drink either (thus tantalised) - temptation without satisfaction. This always struck me as a somewhat profound irony that the mineral that derives its name from this Greek myth is one that drives so much insatiable consumerist desire in our culture and directly contributes to the war and suffering in Congo.

In some ways Future is here living in our country because of that desire.

As La Boite Artistic Director I am delighted that Brisbane Festival has once again partnered with us to bring a new Australian work to our stage, and to showcase *Prize Fighter* as part of the extended Congolese program of the 2015 festival.

It has been a privilege to work on this production and with these artists. Facilitating this story has been profound and disturbing. However what I have gained most from it is the overwhelming sense of hope that Future exudes - I hope you are infected by it and affected by his story.



## FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF BRISBANE FESTIVAL

David Berthold

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The Democratic Republic of Congo is the size of Western Europe and sits in the heart of Africa.

It is a nation of untold riches.

Geologically, it's a freak. For over a hundred years, it's had the knack of coming up with exactly the right mineral at just the right time: copper for industrial expansion and bullets, uranium for the bombs that devastated Japan, coltan for smartphones and computers. And there was the rubber for the world's tyres, the harvesting of which involved the deaths of 10 million.

The Congo River contains more fresh water than any other river besides the Amazon. The rapids at its mouth have the greatest flow on the planet and, harnessed properly, could power all of Africa.

But has Congo seen benefit? No. It is, perhaps, the poorest nation on earth. Six million have died in its 'Great African War' – the biggest toll since WW2. The armies of nine nations and maybe 30 different rebel groups fight within its borders. Militia involve themselves in the exploitation of minerals, often at huge human cost. The UN calls the Congo 'the rape capital of the world.'

This is the background of Future's remarkable play.

In this year's Brisbane Festival, *Prize Fighter* sits in dialogue with three other works about the Congo. *Coup Fatal* brings 13 spirited musicians straight from Congo's capital, *Le Cargo* shares an intimate story of dance and home, while *Macbeth* thrills and chills with its setting among Congolese warlords.

Brisbane Festival is very proud to co-produce *Prize Fighter* with La Boite, with the support of the Brisbane Festival Commissioners. The story is one of international importance, but it's also part of Brisbane's emerging character. We live in a city with a very large African population, so in a very real way this story is now our own.



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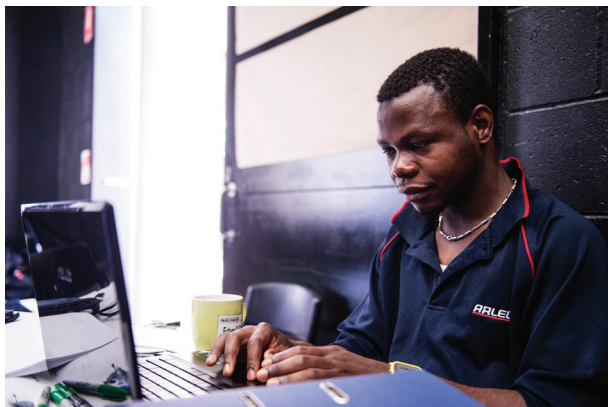
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## **Future D. Fidel**

### **Writer**

Future Destin was born in East of Congo. After the civil war in 1996, Future along with some of his family members were forced to flee to Tanzania. In 2001, Future found out that his mother was killed in Congo.

Future spent 8 years in a refugee camp called Nyarugusu. During this time, he was desperately searching for his sister. Future's sister contacted Red Cross and in 2004 they were re-united. In 2005, he joined a Kwatamaja (African) Dance Group in Australia and with this group, performed at Woodford Folk Festival and community functions etc. In 2007, Future and a group of young refugees formed the Fimbo Boys to sing and perform African modern dance. They performed at the World Refugee Day Community Festival (three years in a row). Since developing Fimbo Boys, one of his proudest achievements has been supporting many young people with a positive and empowering creative program. In 2011 Future developed and performed in *I am Here* at Brisbane Powerhouse, World Refugee Day Community Festival, Refugee Lantern Parade and Empire Theatre in Toowomba.



## Todd MacDonald

### Director

Currently Artistic Director and CEO of La Boite Theatre Company, Todd completed acting training at NIDA in 1994 and has worked extensively across the theatre, film, television and voice over industries. Todd was the Artistic Associate at Queensland Theatre Company from 2011-2014 and has worked as associate producer and company member with David Pledgers' company NYID, touring internationally. In 1999 he co-founded the award winning venue and production company The Store Room Theatre in Melbourne. He maintains a performance practice as a director, deviser and performer and recently developed a solo performance work *The Button Event* that premiered at the 2014 Brisbane Festival.

Theatre credits include: *Prize Fighter* by Future Fidel (Dir- La Boite/ Brisbane Festival 2015), *Medea* Adapted by Suzie Miller (Dir-La Boite 2015), *The Mountaintop* (Dir-QTC 2014), *Kelly* by Matthew Ryan (Dir-QTC 2012/15), *The C Word* by David Burton and Claire Christian (Dir-Metro Arts), *The Button Event* devised with Bagryana Popov (Performer-QTC 2014), *Vanya at Avoca* by Chekhov devised by Bagryana Popov (Performer- Castlemaine Festival/La Mamma 2015), *Venus in Fur* (Performer-QTC 2013), *Bare Witness* (Performer – La Mama National Tour), *Progress and Melancholy* (Performer- 45downsatirs), *Blowback*, *Training Squad* and *Strangeland* by David Pledger (Performer- NYID).





## Margi Brown-Ash

### Luke, Ensemble

**La Boite Theatre:** Performer: *Wallflowering* (two seasons, tour), *No Strings Attached*, *Urban Dingoes* (nominated Matilda Award Best Actor), *HOME* (Gold Matilda Award Best Actor), *Wizard of Oz* (nom.

Matilda Award Best Actor); *Hedonism's Second Album* (Director).

**Other Credits:** Companies: Queensland Theatre Company: *Composing Venus*, *Oz Shorts*, *Australia Day* (Assis. Director), *HOME*. As Performer/Trainer/Company Member: *Murray River Performing Group*, *N.S.W. Theatre of the Deaf*, *The Good Room*, *Frank Theatre*, *nest ensemble*, *Danger Ensemble*, *Force of Circumstance*, *Phluxus2*.

**As Writer/Performer/Devisor:** *HOME*, *Eve*, *He Dreamed a Train*, *The Knowing of Mary Poppins*, *Joey the Mechanical Boy*, *lonalympus*, *Songs of the Hut*, *The Paratrooper Project*. **Awards:** Gold Matilda Awards: Best Female Performer *Knowing of Mary Poppins*; *HOME*, *Eve*; Blue Room Awards: Best Performer *Eve*; Best Play Members *Choice Eve*. Company in Residence, Metro Arts 2015; Work in Residence, Metro Arts 2013; 'Sweet' Program, Brisbane Powerhouse, 2014; Labrat, Playlab, 2012; Queensland Cultural Champion 2014. **Positions:** Founding Director: *4change coaching*. *Force of Circumstance Production Company*. *Psychotherapist*. *Supervisor*. *Theatre Coach*. Proud member Actors Equity since 1977.





## **Sophia Emberson-Bain** **Rita, Nyota, Sofia, Ensemble**

Sophia grew up in the British Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. She went to boarding school in England at the age of 6 years old before moving to Australia at 12 where she went to St Peters Lutheran College. In 2007, Sophia graduated from the Actors Conservatory and the Music Institute in Brisbane where she completed an Advanced Diploma in Stage and Screen and Jazz Improvisation respectively. She then went on to starting a Bachelor of Laws degrees at QUT. Whilst undertaking her law studies, Sophia worked on various theatrical, film and TV projects including, *San Andreas* (2015), *Neighbours* (2014), *Schapelle* telemovie (2013), *The School of the Arts* (2009) & *East of Everything* (2008). She has also featured in various commercials and modelling campaigns, such as Weis ice-cream. In 2014 Sophia was admitted to the legal profession in Queensland. She continues to juggle her acting and law where she works as a paralegal at a Migration Office assisting persons including refugees. We are excited for Sophia to be making her debut at La Boite.



## **Thuso Lekwape** **Kadogo, Tim, Ensemble**

South African born Thuso Lekwape is a recent graduate of NIDA, snaring his first acting engagement immediately after graduation with the Kriv Stenders directed television drama *The Principal*. This highly anticipated series will be seen later this year with Thuso in the major supporting role of 'Kenny'. He will then appear in the soon to be released feature *2:22*, an American-Australian thriller directed by Paul Currie and produced by Icon Productions. Thuso is the host of the children's television programme *Imagination Train* and has narrated several programmes for ABC Radio.

*Prize Fighter* is Thuso's debut theatre performance and he is thrilled to join the cast from La Boite for the Brisbane Festival.





## **Gideon Mzembe** **Moses, Matete, Jeff Wilkie, Ensemble**

Gideon Mzembe was born in Zimbabwe with Malawian heritage and as a young child lived between both countries before arriving in Australia in 1993 as a political refugee - aged 6. Gideon attended Ipswich

Grammar School on a rugby scholarship which allowed him the opportunity of signing with various teams throughout the Queensland Rugby League & National Rugby League most notably *Toowoomba Clydesdales, Ipswich Jets, Northern Devils, Brisbane Broncos & Manly Sea Eagles*. In 2012, whilst signed to the *Northern Devils*, Gideon made the decision to walk away from rugby to make a stand for youth and education through the Run Of Awareness. Post the Run, Gideon completed an intensive acting program at the New York Film Academy (NYFA) whilst continuing his passion as a cert 3 & 4 fitness trainer. Gideon currently resides in the city of Brisbane as actor, model & personal trainer.





## Pacharo Mzembe

### Isa

Pacharo Mzembe was born in Zimbabwe with Malawian heritage and as a young child lived between both countries before arriving in Australia in 1993 as a political refugee – aged 5. Developing an interest in acting in his final years at high school, Pacharo was awarded a scholarship to attend the Australian Acting Academy. This led to Pacharo gaining entry into the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) at the age of 17. In 2010 the Sydney Morning Herald put Pacharo in the top ten actors in Australian theatre to watch. After the success of *Underbelly Razor* in 2011, Pacharo made the decision to suspend his acting career to make a stand for youth and education through the Run of Awareness in 2012. Pacharo resumed his acting career and in 2014 was awarded the African Australian Arts Excellence Award.





## **Kenneth Ransom**

**Aunty, Alaki, Old Man, Wayne Durain, Ensemble**

Kenneth Ransom began his professional acting career playing a teenage dissident in the long-running US television series, *Fame*. After a series of roles on US television shows, such as *A Different World*, *Equal Justice*, and *China Beach*, Kenneth focused on theatre, appearing at Shakespeare & Company in Massachusetts and The Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. After relocating to Australia, Kenneth appeared as Bradley in *The Secret Life of Us*, and in film played opposite Paul Hogan in *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles*. He has performed at Melbourne Theatre Company and Red Stitch Actors Theatre including Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*, Darren Lemming in *Take Me Out*, Mercer Stevens in *Boy Gets Girl* and Lucius Jackson in *Jesus Hopped the "A" Train*, for which he received a Green Room Award Nomination. Kenneth is currently working on US fantasy-action film, *Gods of Egypt*. Kenneth performs regularly for Black Swan State Theatre Company in Perth, productions include *The Sapphires*, *Twelfth Night*, *Boundary Street*, *Dinner*, *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *The Motherfucker with the Hat*, for which he received a Performing Arts WA nomination.



## Chris Kohn Dramaturg

Chris Kohn is a theatre director and dramaturg based in Geelong, Victoria. He was Artistic Director of Arena Theatre Company (2008-12) and La Boite Theatre Company (2014), as well as Stuck Pigs Squealing, an independent theatre company he co-founded in 2000 and which has produced several plays since, in Australia and New York. From 2012-14 he was Queensland's first Theatre Diversity Associate, working with La Boite, Metro Arts, QTC and BEMAC to devise strategies for the increased participation of culturally and linguistically diverse artists and audiences with these companies. He has directed for Malthouse Theatre, Company B Belvoir, Sydney Theatre Company, Chambermade Opera and Melbourne Workers Theatre. His work has been nominated for Helpmann Awards and he has received a Green Room Award and a New York International Fringe Festival Award for his direction. Chris has received the George Fairfax Memorial Award, the Malcolm Robertson Award, Ian Potter Cultural Trust and artist residencies at Les Couvent des Recollets in Paris and the State Library of Victoria. Chris was a Sidney Myer Fellow (2012-13). In 2016, he will direct Lally Katz' *Back at the Dojo* in a co-production between Stuck Pigs Squealing and Belvoir.





## Bill Haycock Designer

Born in Brisbane, Bill graduated from the National Institute of Dramatic Art in 1978. Since then he has designed over 150 plays, ballets, dance pieces, visual theatre events, operas, exhibitions and installations for many of Australia's most innovative companies, directors and choreographers. He was Resident Designer for Queensland Ballet from 1984 to 1987. In 1985 he was awarded the Loudon Sainthill Memorial Scholarship.

One of Bill's largest and most challenging commissions was the co-creation and design, with David Bell, of *The Flame of Freedom* which was staged in the presence of the Prime Minister, at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre and televised live by ABC-TV around Australia. He has designed extensively for the Queensland Theatre Company, La Boite and many productions and co-productions for QPAC as well as designing for the Hong Kong Ballet, The Australian Ballet, EDC, Opera Queensland, and works for the Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and HK Arts Festivals.

He was the Head of Design at the HK Academy for Performing Arts 2005-11, returning to freelance in Australia. Some highlights since returning include *Cabaret* (ZenZenZo/Dare Productions/QPAC) *The End of the Rainbow* (QPAC/QTC), *Gloria* (QTC), *Candide* (OQ) and *When Time Stops* and *7 Deadly Sins* (EDC).





## David Walters

### Lighting Designer

For the past 35 years David Walters has worked as a professional Lighting Designer in Iceland and Australia. His work experience spans lighting designs for opera, theatre, ballet, dance, puppetry, circus, son-et-lumieres, exhibitions, major events and architectural and landscape installations. In 1986 David returned to Australia to take up a position as Resident Lighting Designer with the Queensland Theatre Company. Since 1990, as a freelance designer, he has worked extensively throughout Australia and designed for the Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, State Theatre Company of South Australia, Handspan, Playbox, La Boite, Rock 'n' Roll Circus, Nimrod, Company B, Expressions, Queensland Ballet, Australian Ballet, Opera Queensland, The Powerhouse, QPAC, Zen Zen Zo and Bell Shakespeare Company. Throughout his professional career David has maintained close ties with Iceland where he has worked for the National Theatre, the National Opera and the Reykjavik City Theatre. His designs have also toured internationally to Europe, Asia and the United States. In addition he has lectured in lighting design at several universities and was recently appointed an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Queensland University of Technology





## Felix Cross

### Composer/Sound Designer

Composer, director, playwright. From 1996 - 2015 he was the Artistic Director of Nitro/Black Theatre Co-op in England for whom he wrote, composed and directed many national and international productions including *Slamdunk*; *Passports to the Promised Land*; *The Wedding Dance*. He also produced *Nitrobeat*, a series of ground-breaking annual festivals as well as *A Nitro at the Opera* with the Royal Opera House.

Other works in England include: *Blues For Railton*, *Mass Carib* - Albany Empire/South Bank Centre (first commercial no1 tour of a black British musical); *Glory!* (script, music & lyrics: winner 1988 LWT Plays on Stage award); *Integration Octet* – Aldeburgh, Royal Festival Hall; many national and international touring plays for: National Theatre, Out Of Joint; *Tamasha*; *Major Road*; Nottingham Playhouse, Chichester Festival Theatre, Tricycle, Gate Theatre, Southwark Playhouse, Palace Theatre Westcliffe-on-Sea and Hampstead Theatre; regular music for BBC radio and World Service drama; plays directed for several theatres as well as for BBC Radio drama. Works in Australia include *Convicts Opera* - Sydney Theatre Company/Out of Joint; *The Prophet* – BYDS; *Here* – Glen St Theatre; *Between Us* – ATYP. In 2012 he was awarded an MBE for services to Musical Theatre.





## optikal bloc

### Video Designer

**Theatre:** As video designer: The Arts Centre Gold Coast: *Miss Saigon*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*; Empire Theatres: *April's Fool*; Queensland Theatre Company: *Country Song*, *Gasp!*, *The Mountaintop*; La Boite Theatre Company: *Pale Blue Dot*; Opera Queensland: *Candide*; *La Bohème* (projection realisation), *FIZZI*, *Dirty Apple*; Polytoxic: *The Long-Toothed Devil* (in development); shake & stir theatre co: *Wuthering Heights*, *1984*, *Chop Logic*, *Terrortorial*, *The Macbeths*; Queensland Music Festival: *One Hundred & One Years*; Anna McGahan/Melanie Wild/Metro Arts: *He's Seeing Other People Now*; The Good Room/Metro Arts: *I Should Have Drunk More Champagne*; HHO Events for the Canberra Centenary: *Seven Sisters Songline*. **Events:** As video designer: G20 Cultural Celebrations - Colour Me Brisbane: Queens Place. As national technical managers: Ben & Jerry's Openair Cinemas. **Film:** As Editor: *Blood Hollow*, *Tender (QPIIX)*. **Television:** Endemol Australia / Nine Network: *Big Brother* (2013 – 2014). **Awards:** Gold Matilda Award (2014) for body of work; Silver Matilda Award (2014) Best Technical Design (video) for *Pale Blue Dot*; Del Arte Chart (2014) for *Pale Blue Dot*; Matilda Award nomination (2012) Best Design (video) for *1984*.







## **Nigel Poulton** **Movement & Fight Director**

Nigel is an award winning fight director, weapon and movement specialist and actor. He has worked internationally over the last 9 years with expertise in kinesthetic movement processes, edged weapons and combat systems, classical, historical and theatrical swordplay. A practitioner of Vsevolod Meyerhold's Theatrical Biomechanics system, Nigel has trained intensively with the system's current custodian Gennadi Bogdanov. He is a registered Instructor, Fight Director and past President of the Society of Australian Fight Directors Inc, a Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors and has been certified with the British Academy of Dramatic Combat.

Choreography credits include The Metropolitan Opera (2009 – 2014), the New York City Ballet (2007 – 2015), Sydney Theatre Company, the Bell Shakespeare Company (Company Fight Director since 2003), Washington Opera Company, Opera Australia, Circus Oz, Melbourne Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre Company, Belvoir Street, La Boite Theatre (Brisbane), Playbox Theatre (Melbourne), and Kooemba Jdarra (Brisbane).

Film work includes *Pirates of the Caribbean V* (Disney), *Deadline Gallipoli* (Full Clip Productions/Matchbox Pictures), *The Bourne Legacy* (Bourne Film Productions), *The Water Diviner* (Fear of God Productions/Hopscotch Features), *Vikings* (KRU Studios) and *Winters Tale* (Warner Brothers Studios), *The Good Wife* (Scott Free Productions), *Person of Interest* (Kilter Films), *Jack Reacher* (Paramount Pictures), *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO), *Salt* (Columbia Pictures), *Sopranos – 1997 Season* (HBO), *The Ministers*, (Collective), *30 Rock* (Broadway Video) and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (Wolf Films).

In 2012 Nigel was the recipient of the Melbourne Green Room Award for outstanding contribution to the Melbourne stage, and has gratefully received grants from the Australia Council for the Arts and Queensland Arts Council in 2005 and 2008.



## Heather O'Keeffe

### Stage Manager

Since graduating from QUT's Bachelor of Fine Arts (Technical Production) in 2013, Heather has enjoyed working on many La Boite productions including *Medea* as Stage Manager and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Pale Blue Dot* and *Cosi* as Assistant Stage Manager. Her other recent stage management credits include *The Landmine is Me* for Queensland Theatre Company and *Jingle* for Company 27.

As Assistant Stage Management, Heather has worked with a variety of Brisbane companies including; Brisbane Baroque Festival; *Faramondo*, Queensland Ballet; *The Nutcracker*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Coppelia* and *Coppelia G20 Riverstage*, Opera Queensland; *The Perfect American*, *G20 Cultural event*, Shake & Stir Theatre Co; *Wuthering Heights*, and Queensland Theatre Company; *Orbit*, *Theatre Residency Week*. As a Secondment, she worked on Opera Australia's *Partenope & Ring Cycle*, and QTC's *End of the Rainbow*.



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