

Ladies in Black



Photo: Ladies in Black - Naomi Price, Kate Cole, Lucy Maunder, Christen O'Leary.

Queensland Theatre Company's critically acclaimed, smash hit and Helpmann-Award winning musical *Ladies in Black* will tour nationally in early 2017, opening in Sydney on January 3 for its premiere season in the city in which the story is based.

From the adaptation of **Madeleine St John's** 1993 novel, *The Women in Black*, this acclaimed production has been brought to life by Australian screenwriter **Carolyn Burns** and internationally-acclaimed director **Simon Phillips** (*Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Love Never Dies*) with original music from legendary singer songwriter, **Tim Finn** OBE (*Split Enz*, *Crowded House*).

The world premiere of *Ladies in Black*, the stylish story of fashion, friendship and 1950s Australia took place in Brisbane in November 2015 with the frock-fest signalling a stunning and triumphant return of musical theatre for the company. Last month *Ladies in Black* won the coveted Helpmann Award for Best New Australian Work and was nominated for another five awards.

The show features over 20 original songs written by Tim Finn and a stunning range of some 30 custom-designed and created dresses and suits. The genesis of *Ladies in Black* actually happened at the Brisbane Airport – Tim Finn was famously looking for a book to read, bought *The Women in Black* and on reading it, was compelled to call Simon Phillips and plant the seed for a stage production. On the plane, he started writing the music. The rest is history.

Revisiting the role of Lisa, the young starry eyed school-leaver 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 in musical theatre. In this her first pivotal role, she has won acclaim and ovation.

The brilliant **Bobby Fox**, who wowed audiences playing Frankie Valli in the smash hit, *Jersey Boys*, returns as Rudi (otherwise known as the 'Continental') along with the multi-talented and award-winning artist **Carita Farrer Spencer** who will play Mrs Miles, and fellow Queensland graduate and music and stage star **Kathryn McIntyre** who will play Myra. Accomplished Melbourne-based actor **Greg Stone** (*Once*, *The Weir*, *The Glitch*) takes on the dual roles again as Mr Miles and Stefan, and joining him from the southern state **Kate**

Cole again takes to the stage as the characters Miss Cartwright and Joy.

New to the cast for the Australian tour is the leading lady of stage and screen **Natalie Gamsu** (*Strictly Ballroom*, *Mary Poppins*, *Dr Zhivago*, *Neighbours*) who will play the character of Magda, as well as Sydney-based **Madeleine Jones** who was nominated for a Helpmann Award in 2015 for her work in *Once*. She will play Patty.

Taking the role of Fay is leading singer and stage performer, **Ellen Simpson**, who was most recently seen as Renee Geyer on television screens in the blockbuster tele series, *Molly*.

Two cast members remain yet to be announced.

QTC Artistic Director **Sam Strong** said the national tour of *Ladies in Black* was the perfect reflection of Queensland Theatre Company and its commitment to create nationally acclaimed theatre.

"I'm thrilled to be launching the national tour of Ladies in Black. At QTC we couldn't be more proud of this joyous new Australian musical. In its first life, this beautiful show charmed audiences in Brisbane and Melbourne. We're delighted to be bringing it back to those cities where audiences couldn't get enough. We're also delighted to take the show to new cities, including Sydney where it is set, so it can weave its spell on thousands of new people."

The show embodies our new vision to lead from Queensland. Ladies in Black captures the future of the QTC and is a shining example of what we will be doing in years to come: combining the best artists from inside and outside Queensland, spotting the brightest new talent first, creating landmark new Australian stories, and launching world class world premieres in Brisbane. Stay tuned for even more about the future of theatre in Queensland when we launch our 2017 season on 12 September."

Akin to writing an entirely new album, the full musical score and lyrics for *Ladies in Black* is the creation of the highly acclaimed singer and songwriter, Tim Finn. Synonymous with legendary groups Split Enz and Crowded House, Tim was a major contributor to what is the Australian soundtrack of the 1980s and early 1990s. In 2009, he collaborated with playwright Matt Cameron on *Poor Boy* which premiered at MTC, directed by Simon Phillips (who he reunites with for *Ladies in Black*) and he is currently under commission by the Western Australian Opera, Victorian Opera and New Zealand Opera to write *Star Navigator*, which will tour Australia and New Zealand in 2016. On August 18 he opens *The Fiery Maze* at Malthouse Theatre, an onstage song cycle he created with poet Dorothy Parker. Tim is one of the key drivers behind *Ladies in Black* becoming a stage reality.

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.

Award-winning director Simon Phillips brings serious directorial revenue to the stage, having developed *Priscilla – Queen of the Desert* from a film script to a hit musical in Melbourne, Sydney, London, Toronto and Broadway. He successfully refashioned *Love Never Dies*, the sequel to *The Phantom of the Opera*, for The Really Useful Company, and is working on the musical version of *An Officer and a Gentleman* for a major international production. He adapted the *First Wives Club The Musical* for Chicago's Oriental Theatre in 2015 and in September this year directs the world premiere of *Dream Lover - The Bobby Darin Musical* starring David Campbell at the Sydney Lyric Theatre. The former Artistic Director of MTC (2000 – 2011) his director credits are both long and prestigious.

The Story:

With a dash of delicate comedy, *Ladies in Black* is a magical modern-day fairytale set in a stylish department

MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FESTIVAL 2017

store - F.G. Goode - in a city on the cusp of becoming cosmopolitan: Sydney is 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 unlucky Fay and the frustrated Patty; 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.

Director	Simon Phillips
Musical Director	David Young
Orchestrations	Guy Simpson
Designer	Gabriela Tylesova
Lighting Designer	David Walters
Cast	Natalie Gamsu, Bobby Fox, Kathryn McIntyre, Carita Farrer Spencer, Greg Stone, Kate Cole, Madeleine Jones, Ellen Simpson and Sarah Morrison.

Website

ladiesinblack.com.au #ladiesinblack2017

Sydney – Sydney Lyric Theatre

3 – 22 January 2017

Phone: 1300 795 267

ticketmaster.com.au or sydneyfestival.org.au

Brisbane – Playhouse, QPAC

28 January – 19 February 2017

Phone: 136 246

queenslandtheatre.co.au

Melbourne – Regent Theatre

25 February – 19 March 2017

Phone: 1300 111 011

ticketmaster.com.au

Canberra – Canberra Theatre Centre

27 March – 2 April 2017

Phone: (02) 6275 2700 or canberratheatrecentre.com.au

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