

BESSEN FAMILY ARTIST PROGRAM

2005–2015



**MALTHOUSE
THEATRE**



'I CANNOT
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WONDERFUL
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YOUNG AND
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THEATRE
ARTISTS'

– ALEX BEN MAYOR, 2006



DEBBIE DADON

Chair, BESEN FAMILY FOUNDATION

It is hard to believe that it is over ten years ago that we first began a dialogue with the then Artistic Director of Malthouse Theatre, Michael Kantor, about how we could really contribute in a transformational way to Melbourne's dynamic theatre scene. What was clear during these conversations was that in order to drive innovation and enable it to flourish, the independent arts sector needed the resources and opportunities of the mainstage theatre companies and that Malthouse Theatre's vision was to facilitate a point of connection between these two branches of theatre. Hence the Besen Family Artist Program was forged.

When we talk about emerging artists we refer to artists whose work is known and respected within their professional circles but not necessarily beyond it. The Besen Family Artist Program provides the opportunity for these mid-career and emerging artists to bridge the gap in their skills from making independent and mid-scale work, to working on larger scale mainstage productions with broader professional exposure.

The fantastic outcome of a program that has longevity is that it allows us to follow the careers of the artists that have been participants in the program and it is fabulous to see a number of these Besen Family Artist Program participants featured in this report.

One such artist is Samara Hersch who received a Besen Family Artist placement in 2014 and was then offered the position of Female Director in Residence at Malthouse Theatre in 2015.

Samara has since gone on to direct a number of productions and is passionate about making work that represents a diverse range of voices and perspectives. She has worked extensively with community group Access that supports young adults with intellectual disabilities, to create a range of theatre and film projects.

There are many other program participants whose careers we have taken delight in following but there is just not the time to talk about them all: Willoh Weiland, Cymberline Buhler, Clare Watson & Mark Pritchard to name just a few – all achieving great things in the mysterious world of theatre.

Just a few weeks ago I received a delightful letter of thanks from a 2016 program participant, Lara Kerestes, who worked alongside Matt Lutton on the fabulous production earlier this year of *Edward II*. Lara described her experience in the program as both life and career changing and it really is wonderful and so very rewarding for us to hear these stories of progress and achievement.

We are immensely proud of our relationship with Malthouse Theatre and it is an honour to have the opportunity to celebrate this milestone and showcase some of the real life success stories of the Besen Family Artist Program participants.



MATTHEW LUTTON

Artistic Director & Co-CEO
MALTHOUSE THEATRE

Thanks to the visionary support of the Besen Family Foundation, the Besen Family Artist Program has been in place at Malthouse Theatre since 2005, providing a rare and unique opportunity to more than 100 artists in the emerging stages of their careers.

SARAH NEAL

Executive Producer & Co-CEO
MALTHOUSE THEATRE

Over the past decade, The Besen Family Artist Program has nurtured a generation of theatre-makers, contributing immeasurably to Australia's arts and cultural sector. The Besen Family Artist Program is an outstanding example of the impact that can be achieved through long-term dedicated philanthropic partnerships within the arts.

The alumni featured in this report are merely a snapshot of the artists whose mainstage careers were shaped by their Besen Family Artist Program placement at Malthouse Theatre. Gaining invaluable early-career experience, these alumni have gone on to be leading voices in the Australian arts, pushing the boundaries of our cultural conversation and presenting work across Australian and international stages.

On behalf of a generation of artists and theatre-makers, we thank the Besen Family Foundation for your ongoing support through the Besen Family Artist Program. Thank you for supporting us at Malthouse Theatre to enable genuine, life-changing experiences for emerging artists.

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HAS ALLOWED
ME TO WHOLE-
HEARTEDLY
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UNKNOWN.
THE GRIP OF
DISCOVERY...
A CURIOUS MIX
OF VERTIGO
AND DELIGHT’
—JUDE ANDERSON, 2007

Malthouse Theatre's Besen Family Artist Program is the product of inspiring, long-term support from the Besen Family Foundation. Since 2005, this unique program has addressed gaps in professional pathways for young and emerging artists by providing tangible workplace opportunities. The Besen Family Artist Program offers artists practical on-the-job placements combined with the chance to observe Australia's best makers at work on the mainstage. Through the Besen Family Artist Program, Malthouse Theatre partners with the Besen Family Foundation to grow the next generation of innovative theatre-makers and cultural practitioners.

Besen Family Artist Program participants are selected from an Australia-wide call-out, with the successful applicants eligible for a bursary at the equivalent of four weeks full-time employment. Participants are assigned a senior artist-mentor based on their artistic practice and skill set, undertaking a placement on a Malthouse Theatre mainstage production. To ensure this program is accessible for all emerging artists across Australia, travel disbursements are available to regional and interstate participants, and recipients with a disability are offered additional support to undertake the placement. The Besen Family Artist Program is unique in that it is the only program in Australia to provide emerging artists with the opportunity to undertake professional learning with dedicated financial support.

In 2014, recognising a gap in opportunities for emerging playwrights, Malthouse Theatre and the Besen Family Foundation expanded the Besen Family Artist Program to include the Besen Family Writers Development Program. This curated program allows writers to workshop their written material with other collaborating artists to develop works for mainstage theatres.

Through these initiatives, The Besen Family Artist Program has cultivated a new generation of ambitious theatre-makers. Over 100 artists were provided this transformational opportunity to learn and work alongside an experienced creative professional at a major performing arts company. Malthouse Theatre, Besen Family Artist Program alumni, and indeed the entire Australian arts sector, owe enormous gratitude to The Besen Family for their ongoing support of this program. As attested by the calibre of Besen Family Artist Program alumni in this report, the continued impact that this program has on the careers of Australia's best and brightest theatre-makers cannot be underestimated.

BESSEN
FAMILY
ARTIST
PROGRAM
PARTICI-
PANTS.

BESSEN FAMILY ARTIST PROGRAM, 2005-2015

2005 — 2006 — 2007 — 2008

ADAM GARDNIR
Design
The Odyssey

SAMUEL HALL
Sound Design
Woman-Bomb

SOPHIA HALL
Dramaturgy
*Playwriting Australia
Conference*

BONNIE WALSH
Stage Management
*The Ham Funeral / Journal
of the Plague Year*

ROCHELLE WHYTE
Direction
*The Ham Funeral / Journal
of the Plague Year*

AMANDA CARR
Wardrobe
Black

ALEX BEN MAYOR
Producing
Regional Connections

SARAH MCCUSKER
Direction
It Just Stopped

CLARE WATSON
Direction
Not Like Beckett

KATE SULAN
Dramaturgy
Autobiography of Red

LYNTON CARR
Sound Design / Operation
Sleeping Beauty

MATTHEW EMOND
Direction
Exit the King

JASON GLASS
Lighting Operation
Tartuffe

JONAH KLEIN
Producing
Coloured Girls

TODD MACDONALD
Direction
Sleeping Beauty

JESSE WILLIAMS
Production
Kin

PETER THWAITES
Sound Design / Operation
Coloured Girls

RICHARD VABRE
Lighting Design
Sleeping Beauty

Festival Packages

JADE ANDERSON
PENNY LARLEINS
JOY MITCHELL
CATHERINE RYAN

TIFFANY ABBOTT
Wardrobe
Looking Glass

CARL ANDERSON
Composition /
Sound Design
Kitten

ANNA LOEWENDAHL
Direction
Vamp

ANSUYA NATHAN
Direction
Venus and Adonis

DANNY PETTINGILL
Lighting Design
Kitten / Woyzeck

DANIEL SCHLUSSER
Dramaturgy
*Playwriting Australia
Conference*

WILLOH S WEILAND
Direction
Kitten

Festival Packages

BERNADETTE HALDANE
JILLIAN PEARCE
PUNCTUM
TERESA BELL

2009 — 2010 — 2011 — 2012

OLIVIA ALLEN
Direction
Wayzeck

ANGELA COLE
Lighting Design
Happy Days

JAY FAGAN
Production
Africa

BENJAMIN GRAETZ
Direction
One Night the Moon

STEPHEN NICOLAZZO
Direction
Vaudeville

GREG PRITCHARD
Direction
A Commercial Farce

DYLAN YOUNG
Composition
Optimism

Festival Packages

KIM CHALMERS
KAREN OSTENREID
IRIS WALSHE-HOWLING

KIM CHALMERS
Composition /
Sound Design
The Love Play

LIZA DENNIS
Acting
Intimacy

TOM DOIG
Acting
Elizabeth

CHLOE GREEVES
Wardrobe
The Threepenny Opera

SARAH JOHN
Direction
The Trial

HALCYON MACLEOD
Writing
Happiness

KATE SFETKIDIS
Lighting Design
Furious Mattress

CAMERON S. MENZIES
Direction
The Threepenny Opera

ANNE-LOUISE SARKS
Dramaturgy
Thyestes

ELOISA TRIPODI
Direction
Happiness

Fairfax Festival

PHOEBE ANDERSON
CAITLYN BARCLAY
JACINTA JONES
EMILY NOONAN
LAUREN REID
JOSH TAYLOR
ELOISA TRIPODI
JANETTE VALLENCE

CYMBELINE BUHLER
Direction
Happiness

ROSE CONNORS
DANCE
Lighting Design
Porn.Cake

HALLIE SHELLAM
Direction
Tis Pity She's a Whore

TRACEY RIGNEY
Writing
Asio Project

SAM ROUTLEDGE
Direction
Connected

PATRICK SCADDAN
Lighting Design
Happiness

JESSICA SMITHETT
Stage Management
Die Winterreise

Festival Packages

DAN CLANCEY
JAC GOODSMAN
CLAIRE GLENN
ANNA MACLEAN
SARAH NEVILLE

Writers Program
DAMIEN MILLAR
TRACEY RIGNEY
PETA BRADY
BENEDICT HARDIE
CAROLINE LEE
CHI VU
BERNI JANSSEN
CATHERINE RYAN

Things on Sunday

ALEXANDER GARDEN
JESSE MCVEITY
ANNIE HUI-HSIN HSIEH
NAOMI RUKAVINA
TIM POTTER

BRIDGET BALODIS
Direction
The Histrionic

CYMBELINE BUHLER
Direction
Big hArt secondment

ZOEY DAWSON
Direction
Pompeii, L.A.

DANIEL LAMMIN
Direction
On the Misconception of Oedipus

PRIYA NAMANA
Design
Wild Surmise

2013 — 2014 — 2015

NICOLA ANDREWS
Lighting Design
The Bloody Chamber

COURTNEY BROAD
Set Construction
Malthouse Workshop
Disability / Regional

RACHAEL DEASE
Sound Design /
Composition
The Bloody Chamber

TANYA DICKSON
Direction
Dance of Death

JULIA KNIBS
Lighting Design
Hate

MELANIE LIERTZ
Costume Design
The Dragon

MARK PRITCHARD
Dramaturgy
General Dramaturgy

MEDINA SUMOVIC
Direction
Hate

Writers Program
KIM HO
NAKKIAH LUI
BRIDGET PRICE
LOURIS VAN DE GREER

DAN GIOVANNONI
Dramaturgy
Various Productions

SAMARA HERSCH
Direction
Various

EVAN LAWSON
Composition
The Riders

AMELIA LEVER-DAVIDSON
Lighting Design
Night on Bald Mountain

EUGYEENE TEH
Set and Costume Design
The Good Person
of Szechuan / The Riders

Writers Program

JESSICA BELLAMY
EMILIE COLLYER
MICHELE LEE
DAN LEE

AMELIA EVANS
Dramaturgy
Love and Information

EMMA MCMANUS
Direction
Timeshare

LUCY O'BRIEN
Sound Design /
Composition
Timeshare

MARK WILSON
Direction
I Am a Miracle

SOPHIE WOODWARD
Set and Costume Design
Antigone

Writers Program

MORGAN ROSE ALDRICH
KAMARRA BELL-WYKES
TANIA CANAS
HIROKI KOBAYASHI
RACHEL PERKS

2005



ADAM GARDNIR

DESIGN, *THE ODESSY*

In 2005, Malthouse Theatre's new Artistic Director, Michael Kantor, unlocked a bold, international vision for theatre in Melbourne. His double bill of *Journal of a Plague Year* and *The Ham Funeral*, quickly followed by the Melbourne Festival epic *The Odyssey*, still all ring loud in my ears, eyes, brain and heart. They were influential works when opportunity seemed to abound around Melbourne, with The Storeroom, Theatreworks and Art Centre Melbourne's Blackbox all stimulating an outstanding independent theatre scene. As a recent VCA graduate, it was a rousing time.

Receiving one of the first Besen Family Artist Program placements was a surprising thrill. It was Executive Producer Stephen Armstrong who informed me of the honour and the opportunity to work on those genre-breaking Kantor productions as an observing designer. Anna Tregloan's scenic design and Zoe Atkinson's costume designs won their respective Helpmann Awards that year for *The Odyssey*, a rare feat in the nationally-focussed celebration. Assisting Anna and

Zoe was both an immense joy and a very steep learning curve. The authenticity of that experience propelled me into the industry and onto Malthouse Theatre's books as a designer in my own right almost immediately. I was lucky enough to continue collaborating at and around Malthouse Theatre for many years including designing Matt Lutton's first three 'East Coast' productions.

This follow-through is perhaps what the Besen Family Artist Program placement bestowed upon me the most. The capacity for Malthouse Theatre to invite emerging practitioners into the company, to then collaborate with esteemed artists on professional productions with public presentations is exemplary. There really is no other program like it in Australia. I am now the Producer of Performing Arts at Brisbane Powerhouse, and due to the Besen Family Artist Program placement, I am part of a privileged generation of artists who will always call Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre their creative home.

2006



AMANDA CARR

WARDROBE, *BLACK*

In 2006, I received a Besen Family Artist Program placement to work in costume manufacture for *Black*, with Anna Tregloan as designer at Malthouse Theatre. At the time, it was unusual to shift a placement into costume manufacture rather than costume design. I worked closely with Anna to realise her established ideas and provide options for undecided items. This experience also enabled me to liaise with Claire Lamb, the Head of Wardrobe in 2006, and the various departments involved in production at the theatre. I became more aware of performance logistics, working within budget restrictions and delegation of tasks. Previously, my experience lay in the manufacture of individual items and some costume maintenance without detailed knowledge of supervisory skills required to manage a wardrobe department.

Following my time on *Black*, I continued to manufacture costumes and couture as a freelance dressmaker and coordinated

costumes for small productions at Ilbjerri, The Production Company, and made to measure business Stylesummation.

In June of 2008, I accepted the role of Head of Wardrobe at Malthouse Theatre, a position I held for nearly six years. Since my departure from Malthouse Theatre, I have continued to work in supervisory positions with multiple national companies. Most recently of which, I established and toured with the Bell Shakespeare production of *Othello* and coordinated the return season of *North By Northwest*, by Kay & McLean Productions.

I am forever grateful for my opportunity to experience life within a wardrobe department in 2006. It gave birth to long-standing relationships within the industry and kick started my career in theatre. I see this time as that in which my career trajectory shifted from wholly manufacture to that of a full and eclectic supervisory form.

2006



CLARE WATSON

DIRECTING, *NOT LIKE BECKETT*

In 2006 I was lucky enough to find myself in a room with Michael Kantor, who was directing Russell Dykstra in *Not Like Beckett*. It was an absolute blast. Michael works with such joy and vivacity. He creates an environment that is playful, trusting and full of laughter. It's been a decade since I watched Russell, dressed as a bunny, play the ukulele on a rotating replica of the *Yellow Peril* designed by Anna Cordingley in the Beckett Theatre, in a play about ownership and belonging. And nearly a full decade later I'm about to present my own work on the very same stage.

There has been study into what has restricted women from gaining equitable representation as leaders in the Arts, in particular as theatre directors. Women have a tendency to need to be invited in, apparently we're a bit like vampires in that way. This means, though, that there need to be official pathways and processes that we

can apply to in order to participate. For me, this was the great benefit of the Besen Family Artist Program placement.

The placement, essentially, invited me in and made me feel a sense of belonging and ownership within the building, within the team and within the industry. I was given the opportunity to watch a group of fabulous artists at work and, for me more importantly, the scale and nature of a major theatre company was partly demystified and certainly made more tantalising. The experience was informative, inspiring and validating.

I have since participated with artists and audiences of Malthouse Theatre for over a decade. That first invitation has blossomed into a deeply rewarding career as a director and as an Artistic Director, in which Michael's joy and playfulness have remained a touchstone.

2007



RICHARD VABRE

LIGHTING DESIGN, *SLEEPING BEAUTY*

I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to experience the Besen Family Artist Program in 2007 when I was seconded to Paul Jackson for the Malthouse Theatre production of *Sleeping Beauty*.

At the time I had been working professionally full-time as a Lighting Designer for three years, but I had never worked on a mainstage production, nor had I undertaken any training in the use of Computer Aided Design.

Being seconded to Paul gave me exposure in both areas. It was invaluable for my

career as an artist to be inside a large, mainstage production, to witness Paul's process from beginning to end, to glean an understanding of how to make a lighting design for such a large theatre, and to learn the drafting techniques so necessary to work as a professional lighting designer in the theatre industry.

I am grateful to the Besen Family Foundation and all the donors that have made this program a possibility.

2008



DANIEL SCHLUSSER

DRAMATURGY, *PLAYWRITING AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE*

In 2008, I was awarded a Besen Family placement to support my pathway toward being an artistic leader. The placement gave me the experience of having, quite literally, a seat at the table. Over two weeks in Brisbane, in auxiliary events around The National Play Festival, I participated in discussions with Artistic Directors from around the country. I was challenged to articulate state-of-nation ideas as well as observe how opinions are formed and programming decisions are arrived at. The experience was an insight into the challenges of leadership while the temporary responsibility that I was granted, to represent Malthouse Theatre in these discussions, was a provocation to expand my awareness and test the applicability of some of my ideas.

To the credit of Michael Kantor and Stephen Armstrong, they could see that my outlier status as an artist – while invaluable in developing a distinctive artistic and

technical approach to creating theatre – meant that I was naïve about, or even alienated from the mechanics of power: the who and the how of important decision-making at the upper echelons of the sector. In considering the subsequent success of the Daniel Schlusser Ensemble and my own individual journey, it is important to acknowledge that the Besen Family Artist Program placement was both timely and targeted support.

Australia remains a tricky place to call oneself an artist. Acts of philanthropic generosity are like little miracles of shared faith in the idea that nurturing bold, personal visions is vital for a vibrant and diverse culture.

2008



WILLOH WEILAND

DIRECTING, *KITTEN*

This opportunity was momentous for me as it allowed me to work with my mentor and art hero Jenny Kemp on her work *Kitten* which premiered at the Melbourne Festival in 2008. Jenny was one of my teachers at the Victorian College of the Arts and I was transfixed by her approach to the complex task of writing and directing her own work.

The opportunity to work with her was a one in which I was able to truly interrogate my own approach to creating performance and the particular feminist themes which continue to preoccupy me. It led to an on-going dialogue which continues to inspire me today.

2010



TOM DOIG

ACTING, *ELIZABETH*

The 2010 Besen Family Artist Program placement came at an interesting, and in retrospect crucial, point in my career. Back in 2010, I still didn't feel like I had a "career" in the arts. I had done a lot of cool theatre/writing/media stuff, sure, but it didn't seem to add up to a coherent "career path" that I could follow. Instead, I had fashioned for myself a series of exciting and confusing "career cul-de-sacs", as part of a badly-planned and already-ailing "career subdivision". Getting mentored by the genius theatre-maker David Woods in 2010 started to change all this, although in ways I didn't expect. Watching David work, seeing how bloody hard he worked, as an actor and performer and deviser, I realised that I didn't actually have the training, or talent, or dedication, to make it as a full-time performer. If I wanted to be even one-tenth

as good a performer as David was, I'd have to work much, much harder at it – and I just didn't have the chops.

At the same time, however, I realised that there was something I was trained in, and good at, and willing to work insanely hard at: writing. Having David as a mentor through the Besen Family Artist Program, and then through an Australia Council Jump Mentorship, and then informally, I came to focus on storytelling and writing. Soon enough good things started to happen. In July 2010 I wrote an enthusiastic travel blog that eventually became a travel book: *Moron to Moron: two men, two bikes, one Mongolian misadventure*. In 2015 I wrote a second book, about the Hazelwood Mine fire: *The Coal Face*. This book won a little award, which was nice.

2010



CHLOE GREAVES

WARDROBE, *THE THREEPENNY OPERA*

In 2010 I received the Besen Family Artist Program placement as Costume Design Assistant to Anna Cordingly on *Threepenny Opera* directed by former Malthouse Theatre Artistic Director Michael Kantor.

It was an exciting production to be a part of. The thing I am most grateful for from my placement was meeting Cameron Menzies. Cameron was Assistant Director and we instantly hit it off, marking the beginning of a very fruitful artistic collaboration. Since then we have collaborated on seven productions, predominantly operas. My favourite and as a highlight my career so far was designing the set and costumes of *The Magic Pudding* for Victorian Opera, for which we brought to life Norman Lindsay's iconic Australian characters.

After completing my Besen Family Artist Program placement I was offered a position as Wardrobe Assistant in the Malthouse Theatre wardrobe department. During this time I worked under the talented Amanda Carr, a master costume-maker

and seamstress. This position also offered me the opportunity to observe, work with and learn from some of the country's best designers. Watching their process was incredibly inspiring and directly influenced and developed my own practices.

In addition to this I became part of the small but highly skilled Malthouse Theatre production department. These people are my theatre family and they are still the people I turn to for help and advice.

I am now a full time freelance set and costume designer. I have designed shows for companies including the Malthouse Theatre, MTC, Victorian Opera and Red Stitch. I have branched out to film and have had the opportunity to travel and work abroad including designing an opera for the Juilliard School in New York.

My practice continues to develop. I am excited for the next challenges to come. I will be forever grateful for that start and the experiences, knowledge and friendships I have gained.

2010



ANNE-LOUISE SARKS

DRAMATURGY, *THYESTES*

The Besen Family Artist Program placement was my first opportunity inside a theatre company. It changed everything. Most importantly it changed how I saw myself as an artist. There is no substitute for being in the room and the learning that comes with that time and space.

The Besen Family Artist Program placement allowed me insight into every aspect of making work at Malthouse Theatre and continues to be useful today as I move between companies as a freelance artist. If I hadn't had that opportunity I don't know if I'd have the career I have.

2011



CHI VU

WRITERS PROGRAM

I have to say that doing the Besen Family Artist Program in 2011 (which was coordinated by Maryanne Lynch and Raimondo Cortese), has immeasurably benefitted my playwriting career. As a result of working with Maryanne and Raimondo that week, I gained the confidence and drive to undertake the VCA's Master of Writing for Performance course (2013), and therefore I connected with the VCA network of artists and teachers.

The Besen Family Artist Program helped introduce me to a world where performance-making and scriptwriting is unquestionably key to a society that values culture, debate and rigorous process.

Since that time, I've had two highly successful performance seasons at the Footscray Community Arts Centre (*The Dead Twin*, 2015; *Banh Chung installation-performance*, 2013). I am now writing two new playscripts: *Mermaid Terrorist* which has just been awarded Creative Victoria funding for a creative development, while my other script, *Coloured Aliens* was recently developed as part of Playwriting Australia and Performance 4A's Lotus program. I've also been sharing the skills I've gained with other culturally and linguistically diverse artists, especially in Melbourne's west.

2013



MARK PRITCHARD

DRAMATURGY (VARIOUS)

The impact of the Besen Family Artist Program on my career cannot be understated. In 2013 I was awarded a placement in dramaturgy, attaching me to a number of creative developments of new work with the mentorship of Artistic Associate Van Badham. I'd been directing plays and developing work with writers independently for three years since graduating from the VCA, and had been looking for the next phase in my professional development and a pathway to turn my practice into a career. The placement was perfectly timed, bringing me into a script workshop with Toby Schmitz and Artistic Director Marion Potts on *The Dragon*, a creative development with Roslyn Oades on *Hello Goodbye & Happy Birthday*, and let me work alongside Van Badham and see how the literary department operates on a day-to-day level.

Opportunities for emerging artists to work alongside experienced professionals are precious and for me, transformative. I learned first-hand how Malthouse Theatre develops formally innovative, ambitious work of scale, around the table or on the rehearsal room

floor, or in the literary office reading and assessing new scripts. Malthouse Theatre was then able to offer me work as an assistant director, as a script assessor, which led to my permanent role as the company's Resident Dramaturg. This position, which I've now held for three years, is a direct result of the experience and exposure I gained through the Program, and the relationships it developed between myself, a young artist, and the Malthouse Theatre team.

The Besen Family Artist Program is one of the most influential artist development programs run by a major company. It is very competitive, and gives successful applicants direct exposure to cutting edge professional practice. It speaks to Malthouse Theatre's ambition to challenge and invigorate the art form by fostering the next generation of artists through direct exposure and genuine mentorship from leading artists in the field. It's a pleasure and a privilege to now be able to continue the program as a member of Malthouse Theatre's Artistic Team.

2014



AMELIA LEVER-DAVIDSON

LIGHTING, *NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN*

As a female artist working in a largely male dominated field, I greatly benefited from the sustained attention and support offered through the Besen Family Artist Program.

The Program provided a profound professional development opportunity and has been integral to forming valuable professional networks, and an ongoing relationship with Malthouse Theatre and its associated artists.

I was encouraged to design a placement that best suited my artistic development, and was offered the opportunity to be mentored by one of my most admired practitioners, Lighting Designer Paul Jackson. The mentoring relationship that was established with Paul over the Program has been an invaluable connection. His wisdom, creativity and generosity were then, and continue to be, a source of inspiration.

The Program was a critical step in my practice to develop professionally as an artist and female leader. The Program assisted me to identify the opportunities and challenges ahead, and confirm my commitment to a career in theatre.

Since completing the Program, I have collaborated with a dynamic range of artists with my designs being presented nationally in festivals and venues including Arts House, 45 Downstairs, Carriageworks, ACMI, NEXT Wave, Dance Massive, Malthouse Helium Season and MTC's Neon Festival. Following the 2013 nominations for my designs for *Dropped* and *Foxfinder*, I was recently awarded the Green Room Award for my 2014 body of work.

In 2015, I was invited to design my first production for Malthouse Theatre, an opportunity made possible by the relationships I formed as part of the Besen Family Artist Program. This year, in 2016, I return to design *The Suitcase Series*.

I am deeply grateful for the investment by the Besen Family in my professional development, and for the opportunities that have been foundational to my practice and the professional path ahead.

2014



SAMARA HERSCH

DIRECTION, *THE RIDERS* AND *ANTIGONE*

I received a Besen Family Artist Program placement in 2014 to work with Marion Potts on a new opera called *The Riders* and also on the creative development of a new adaptation of *Antigone*. Meeting and working with Marion was an amazing experience. She is a real advocate for supporting women's careers and I felt very encouraged and inspired by her. The following year I applied for and received the Female Director in Residence position at Malthouse Theatre, which has had a huge impact on my professional understanding of the theatre landscape as well as helping me to develop my creative networks and my confidence moving forward. That year I was an assistant director on the production of *Antigone*, which was a fascinating process working with a remarkable team including director Adena Jacobs and writer Jane Montgomery Griffiths.

As a result of both the Besen placement and the directing residency I have developed relationships with incredible artists that I am now collaborating with on new work. Malthouse Theatre have also supported me to develop an artist-curated event earlier this year exploring *The Dybbuk* – an iconic Yiddish story – as well as to spend three weeks in residence to creatively develop a new adaptation of this work.

I believe that the Besen Family Artist Program provided me with a highly valuable introduction to the Malthouse Theatre and helped demystify the inner workings of company life.

2015



HIROKI KOBAYASHI

WRITERS PROGRAM

Taking part in Malthouse Theatre's Besen Family Writers Program has been a highly generative experience in the development of my playwriting practice. From dynamic workshop discussions with fellow artists to individual dramaturgy sessions, it has been a multifaceted learning experience that has enabled me to rigorously explore, understand and advance my creative thinking and writing processes. The supportive environment has enabled me to push myself as a writer, gain greater confidence in my abilities and drive my artistic endeavours.

In addition to this, being an early career artist who is very much in the midst of discovering my own playwriting voice and navigating my artistic career path, it has been particularly

fruitful to be exposed to a range of new perspectives and ideas and consider my own work in the broader context of the theatre landscape. Whilst I have received some formal theatre based education through university studies, having an industry-led experience has helped make practical considerations about my pathways within the arts industry. I now look forward to taking the knowledge and skills I have gained to pursue further opportunities to create, develop and present my work in the future.

2015



MARK WILSON

DIRECTION, *I AM A MIRACLE*

In the middle of 2015 I was the directing placement on Declan Greene's *I Am A Miracle* directed by Matthew Lutton. Through the different stages of development, reading and hearing drafts, through rehearsal and on to production, it was a privilege to see these two very different artists navigate and negotiate, collaborate and compromise.

Having directed mostly small-scale works, it was glorious to watch the design elements come to fruition in a physically large and properly resourced environment. Watching Matt work with Paul Jackson on their ninth show together was a testament to long-term collaboration, while the dizzying addition of Marg Horwell was an example of the joy of working with new artists, and proof that passion and play can exist within any institutional context.

Watching Matt's rehearsal process with two very different actors – Melita Jurisic and Bert LaBonté – was a reminder that getting artists with different processes to work together is the primary task of rehearsal.

Throughout the placement it was made clear the different ways in which artistic processes were affected by the producing context around them. At its core, the work I've done independently and Matt's work on *I Am A Miracle* are very similar: working with artists and text in the rehearsal room. The placement gave me greater confidence in terms of working on projects of this scale, and has given great lessons in terms of timelines and the development of work within a mainstage context.

Ultimately, the placement was wonderful for the creation of new relationships and the deepening of existing ones: with Matt, with the other artists on the show, with the company's structure and operations. It is these relationships, and the lessons that have come with them, that continue to grow since the end of my time on *I Am A Miracle*.

THANK YOU TO OUR BESEN FAMILY ARTIST PROGRAM MENTORS

BESEN FAMILY ARTIST PROGRAM, 2005-2015

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