



Broken River

When a mother's love is not enough

MEDIA RELEASE

Release Date: 25 July 2023



MELBOURNE FRINGE FESTIVAL

Show Title: BROKEN RIVER

Tagline: When A Mother's Love Is Not Enough

When a mother's love is not enough, yet she never quits attempting to dissolve her children's sibling rivalry. A chilling story about family, bloodlines, politics, and love. Virginia suffering from cancer and dementia, unforgivingly clings to her sense of humour, her memories, and her way of life. She's not giving up. She's a mother, a woman, and when she must be manipulative, calls upon her two boys, Chad and Michael enforcing demands and obligations through guilt and fear. Virginia is a matriarch, survivor of a harsh life, having fought her way through tough times for herself and her boys. She dreamt of a life with a wealthy man to take care of her every whim and care, but reality dealt a cold harsh blow. Her two boys must be able to work together to sort out their mother's Final Will and Testament. Virginia's daughter-in-law, Tracey had grand illusions of becoming a famous reality television star. Instead, she married Chad. What will extinguish the aggravating underflow of smouldering years of unspoken hatred between the three of them? What can tear down the walls and break through? Love is on trial.

Broken River is Darren Brealey's new full-length stage offering. Cosmic Players Theatre Company is excited to premiere Brealey's current theatrical drama in the 2023 Melbourne Fringe Festival at Gasworks Arts Park, Albert Park between Monday 16, and Thursday 19 October 2023. Directed by Elizabeth Way (*Shattered Reflection, Comfort Zone, Performing The Goat*), stars some of Melbourne's finest talent, Lily Johnson (*Calypso, Holding The Man, Julius Caser*), Joel King-Mayne (*JOY FM radio, Underbelly, Little Diva Rising*), James William (*I Was Right About Everything, Mysteries Parts 1 & 2, Julius Caesar*), Broken River promises to be a night you won't forget.

Drawing on inspiration from two true-life stories, Brealey has cultivated sombre characters in a contemporary story to deliver an addictive and hypnotising drama. There's always history - before Broken River, a little unknown one-act play called *Separating The Dust* gave birth to three characters named Chad, Michael, and Tracey. The one-act play brought much excitement to the Victorian Drama League One Act Play Festival by stimulating audiences with its drama, creating its own momentum.

Newspaper and radio stations were obsessed with the unassuming one-act play, additionally cultivating enough interest it was invited to perform ahead of the Shorter+Sweeter one-act play touring show, promoting their upcoming festival. *Separating The Dust* won two awards and several award nominations during the Victorian Drama League One Act Play Festival, including best production. A very positive experience was *Separating The Dust*, with a brilliant production gaining the interest of audiences and the media, alike.

"... *Separating The Dust* is a superbly written, powerful drama with several excellent performances." – Midland Express, Jeff Jones.

"... breathe life into a very challenging and confronting story of family tragedy, unravelling of a dysfunctional family." - The Guardian, Angela Crawford

Separating The Dust won two Awards and received several nominations in the following Victorian Drama League One Act Play Festivals:



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MEDIA RELEASE continued...

The Dandenong Ranges One Act Play Festival

Award Winner: Best Production

Award Nomination: Best Male Lead Actor for Stephen Mitchell and Aston Elliot

Anglesea One Act Play Festival

Award Winner: Best Male Lead Actor for Stephen Mitchell

Award Nomination: Best New Original Work

Award Nomination: Adjudicator Award

The Mount Players One Act Play Festival

Award Nomination: Best Male Lead Actor for Stephen Mitchell and Aston Elliot

South Gippsland One Act Play Festival (FAMDA)

Award Nomination: Best Male Lead Actor for Stephen Mitchel and Aston Elliot

SHOW DETAILS

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DATES: Monday 16 to Thursday 19 October 2023

TIMES: 7:30pm, Wed 18 + Thurs 19, 2:30pm (approx. 110 mins – full-length play)

VENUE: Gasworks Arts Park, 21 Graham Street, Albert Park

Full: \$40 / Concession: \$35 / Group Booking (min 6) \$32.50 p/p / Extra Applause \$55

TO BOOK TICKETS visit melbournefringe.com.au or call (03) 9660 9666

BROKEN RIVER website visit brokenriver.online for additional show details

PUBLICIST

For production media enquiries, please contact Darren Brealey

Darren Brealey

TEL: 0411 272 485

Email: brokenriver@darrenbrealey.co.uk

OR

For all media enquiries, please contact Melbourne Fringe Publicist Adam Valentine on adam@melbournefringe.com.au or (03) 9660 9600.



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Broken River image



Cosmic Players Theatre Company image

Darren Brealey
playwright

Darren Brealey Playwright image



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CAST

ACTOR NAME: Linda Cookson

Pronoun: She/Her

Agent Name: Ian Nisbet Talent Management

Agent Contact: ian@intm.com.au

CHARACTER: Virginia Morris

Linda Cookson is a mastery of telling stories and creating characters, having learned from some of the old-school stalwarts, in Australia and United Kingdom. Cookson is a graduate of The Journey (Actors' Centre Australia – Patron: Hugh Jackman), under the tutelage of Mr Dean Carey, and Sydney's, The Ensemble Theatre under Hayes Gordon AO OBE (1920-1999). Cookson trained at the Pineapple Dance Studios, Soho (London) to study in dance and flamenco. Cookson undertakes horse riding, artistic roller skating, and trains in classical piano. Cookson also trained in film and television at the International Film and Television School under the watchful eye of Mr Craig McMahon and various other tutors, and currently studies singing at Ian Nisbet vocal coaching (Ian Nisbet Talent Management).



Cookson's most recent credits includes: Coral in Michael Gow's, *Away* produced by Theatre Works (dir. Steven Mitchell Wright), Brigid in *Exiles* for Bloomsday (dir. Carl Whiteside), and Radical Arts Festival - Theatre Works. Prior to this year's busy performance schedule, Cookson performed at Gasworks Arts Park as Sandra in *The Boys*, and Nance in *Domestic Warfare* (both dir. Lucy Klendo); and at The Butterfly Club as Mrs Bouncer in *Box And Cox* (dir. Jake McNamarra), and in the cabaret in *White Hat Hackers* (dir. Ella Filla).

Cookson's Screen Credits include Sheila in *Preacher* (dir. Johnathon Watson), Singing Lady in *The Fires* (A.B.C. television) (dir. Michael Rymer), and Joan in Brian Patto's, *Snowblind*. Cookson also keeps busy with corporate film work including Visual Eyes productions, Sense Advertising, and Visual Domain. And when Cookson is not too busy in the creative industries, she works at Lantern Ghost Tours as a tour guide.

Cookson is looking forward to coming on this Journey with you and to working with Darren Brealey and the team. She says, "I could tell from the onset, in the writing of the audition piece this will be a wonderful project to work on."





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CAST

ACTOR NAME: James William

Pronoun: He/Him

Agent Name: Now Actors

Agent Contact: (03) 9421 6984

CHARACTER: Chad Morris

James William is an actor born and based in Melbourne. Having studied creative writing at the University of Melbourne, William trained full-time at the National Theatre Drama School. William's passion for the performing arts, cinema and storytelling inspires him to delve into other interests such as sport, music, and language.

After graduating from The National Theatre Drama School, he exceeded with an advanced diploma, furthered the development of his process, he continued studying at The Liminal Space focusing on scene study for additional understanding of the inner and outer workings of character.

William's smooth baritone voice is an additional attribute to add to this young man's exceptional talents. He believes in the joy of singing as well as telling stories through song, connecting with the audience through a deeper relationship directly to their souls, akin to the oral tradition.

Every actor needs to have balance throughout their life and William is no exception with a passion for Australian football and test cricket. A supporter of the Hawthorn Football Club, he has been a member for over twenty years. William attributes his love of the club to his mother, who also fuelled his love for The Rolling Stones.

Most recently, his roles have included the one-man play, *I Was Right About Everything* from John Patrick Shanley's *Rogues' Gallery* (dir. Callum O'Mara), Noah in the site-specific *Mysteries Parts 1 & 2* (dir. Harry Haynes), and Caesar/Octavius in *Julius Caesar* (dir. Harry Haynes).

As well as an actor, singer, and avid football supporter, William is a brilliant poet. William strongly believes in the power of theatre to show audiences not just themselves, but the lives of others.





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CAST

ACTOR NAME: Joel King-Mayne

Pronoun: He/Him

Agent Name: JR Management

Agent Contact: ash@jr-management.com.au

CHARACTER: Michael Morris

Joel King-Mayne is a trained actor, writer, producer, radio presenter, and voice-over artist. King-Mayne currently co-hosts his national radio show JOY WEEKLY every Wednesday evening on Joy Media 94.9.

Entertaining has always been one of King-Mayne's big passions; he has been acting and performing from a very young age, having had the good fortune and privilege to study and work with some of the industry's most well-respected, highly acclaimed professionals and creatives here in Australia, London, and the United States of America.

King-Mayne's experience as an actor, writer, and producer in productions across Television, Film, Commercials, and Theatre, most recently playing Jeremy Ballard in *Little Diva Rising*.

King-Mayne's other Television and Film credits include *Neighbours*, *Underbelly*, *Housemate Wanted*, *The Pacific*, *The Jammed*, and *My Brother Jack*. Having grown up treading the boards on stage, his theatre credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Crave*, *Waiting For Magnus*, and *What If*.

Outside of performing, King-Mayne's other passions include storytelling. Through his business *In Your Words - A Legacy of Love* and Podcast, *The Other Joel Podcast*, he is giving individuals a platform to have their stories voiced and recorded - creating a memory to last a lifetime.

King-Mayne is really excited about getting the opportunity to bring Darren Brealey's character of 'Michael' to life under the guidance of Director, Elizabeth Way in the new play 'Broken River'.





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CAST

ACTOR NAME: Lily Johnson

Pronoun: She/Her

Agent Name: Boyne Management

Agent Contact: boyne.management@gmail.com

CHARACTER: Tracey Hamilton

Lily Johnson is a graduate of The National Theatre Drama School, graduating with an Advanced Diploma in Acting. Johnson also trained at 16th Street, NIDA, and Bayside Actors Studio.

Johnson enjoyed the opportunity to study Mike Alfreds and Michael Chekhov techniques and were greatly influenced by directors such as Peter Blackburn, Robert Meldrum, Robyn Arthur, Katie Cawthorne, and Danielle Carter.

Johnson's acting credits include Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*, Clytemnestra in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Pearl in *Summer of 17th Doll*, and Billy in *Shit*, and Sally Banner in *Chapel Perilous*. Johnson's recent work includes Actor 1 in *Holding the Man* at Chapel off Chapel with Taylor Made Productions, Courty in *Heads or Tails*, and Shantelle in *Bad Habits* by DramaKing Theatre company at the MC Showroom.

Johnson's work in film and Television includes Alex in ABC's *Social Media Me*, Season 2, she appeared in *Morman Yankees Spirit of the Game*, and she will be seen as Tennis Barbie in *Blondes* short film, to be released in August, 2023.

Johnson recently stepped out into presenting work as well, and you can also find her hosting screenings with Cineverse Film Fest in Melbourne.

This will be Johnson's first time performing one of Darren Brealey's plays. She is very excited to bring his work to life and be in Melbourne's 2023 Fringe Festival.





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CREATIVE TEAM

CREATIVE: Elizabeth Way

Pronoun: She/Her

TITLE: Director



Elizabeth Way (Penny) was a late bloomer into the Theatre Scene. This wonderful journey commenced where she trained at university and private institutions as an actor for six years covering all aspects and forms of theatre including direction, choreography, technical and arts administration.

During this time, Way immersed herself into acting, movement, music, percussion, and writing creating theatre to pique all senses, to enrich the audience experience whether that be good or bad or indifferent! To further this, Way formed a theatre company used as a forum to perform original works (in-progress and completed) and, scripted text. Way honed her skills to create and develop working processes to enhance individual and group dynamics. Way also always found time to give back to the community by running drama/music/movement workshops.



To offset Way's love of theatre, radio was a second best. Producing and presenting a one-and-a-half-hour theatre, performance art and dance program to allow her to delve into the audience experience and learn techniques, to encourage, and critique.

Returning home to Melbourne via Tasmania, Way acting credits with Australian Shakespeare Company, *King Lear* – Cordelia and The Fool, projects for the many fringe festivals including plays by Darren Brealey: *The Meeting Place* – Sheryl, *Disturbing Mavis* – Mavis, *Champagne Ladies*- Darlene, and acting/directing *Performing the Goat* *Country Relations* – Mollie, *The Chicks* – Sheryl, *Shattered Reflection* – Christine and directed *Comfort Zone* as well as TV character skits and some film but Way always came back to the stage.

Way auditioned for Darren Brealey's *The Meeting Place* and the rest, as we say, is history. Collaboration with Darren Brealey and his plays was a source of excitement, enjoyment and enrichment as a person and actor/director/producer. This strong friendship was tested when Darren decided to leave our shores for the UK where my theatre involvement went into a hiatus and moved focus in different directions.

Now the band is back together again, and Broken River was one of eight plays I was presented with. I have chosen well and am looking forward to this challenge.



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CREATIVE TEAM

CREATIVE: Darren Brealey

<http://www.darrenbrealey.co.uk/>

Pronoun: He/Him

TITLE: Playwright / Producer

Darren Brealey's debut launch into writing and producing for the theatre came in the guise of his first full-length play, *The Meeting Place* as part of the 1996 Melbourne Fringe Festival. New York Broadway choreographer and actor, Matt West was the sole financial supporter.

The Meeting Place was a critical and public success with Ralph McLean, radio station 3RRR critiquing as: "The Meeting Place was a simple even old-fashioned story of family and loss. I rarely cry in the theatre - at least for emotional reasons - but there I was enjoying some new talent. And I was bawling, with the joy of it and of the magic of a good yarn well put, the tears running down my cheeks like a bloody baby." The play was selected by the Board and Staff of the Melbourne Fringe and Awards Judges, awarding it a Special Recommendation Award.



Next came, *Three Shorts* produced at Melbourne's Workhouse Theatre. *Three Shorts* comprised of three self-contained plays: *Disturbing Mavis*, *The Stair* and *Champagne Ladies*. Critical and public reaction to the work was favourable, 'Champagne Ladies' singled out for particular praise: "With *Three Shorts*, Darren Brealey has written an eclectic mixture of observations that manage, somehow, to connect ... with the satirical *Champagne Ladies* definitely my favourite" (Stage Whispers Magazine). Additionally, *Disturbing Mavis* and *The Mechanics* were produced in Singapore as part of the Short+Sweet Singapore Festival; *Disturbing Mavis* winning the People's Choice Award in the Top 30 Week 1 section. *Spring* was produced in Malaysia as part of the Short+Sweet Malaysia Festival.

Brealey's next production, *Performing The Goat* containing four one-act plays: *Country Relations*, *A Couple Of S.N.A.Gs.*, *The Mechanics* and *The Chicks* was performed at the Melbourne Fringe Festival. The production was strong and gained positive audience reactions and critical comments: "Darren Brealey delivers four humorous and often terrifyingly accurate portrayals ... four short plays that capture colloquial Aussie stereotypes and presents them with hilarious accuracy" (Buzz Cuts).

Shattered Reflection, a full-length play opened at the Guild Theatre. *Shattered Reflection* is a most confronting and controversial piece of theatre tackling the serious problem of white-collar addiction to alcohol and drugs. Zachary Lurje, Arts Journalist wrote: "Writer, Darren Brealey, is to be



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commended for such well-drawn and developed characters. The strength of *Shattered Reflection* comes in these interesting characters that you can relate to" (Buzz Cuts).

Comfort Zone followed, co-written with playwright and friend, Stuart Pursell, its comical and diverse theatrical topics had strong audience appreciation, and the production received rave critical acclaim: "*Comfort Zone* has delivered a rare piece of new theatre that is hilariously self-referential and thematically bold" (BNews).

Separating The Dust, a poignant and controversial 45-minute one-act play competed in the Victorian Drama League One Act Play festivals, receiving three radio interviews (Fiona Banks, ABC Country Radio), three front page news articles, a swag of nominations at most festivals and winning two awards; Best Production at the 16th Dandenong Ranges One Act Play Festival and Best Male Actor at the Anglesea One Act Play Festival.



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CREATIVE TEAM

CREATIVE: Leane Maddren

Pronoun: She/Her

TITLE: Stage Manager

Leane Maddren has been involved in theatre, in various roles for over 40 years having started as Calamity Jane (in *Calamity Jane*) aged 14, alongside a very young Darren Brealey (approx. aged 11).

After many years as a performer in various amateur theatre companies, Maddren donned the 'blacks' to crew for a show, and never turned back, acting as crew, Assistant Stage Manager, and Stage Manager.

After her 9-year-old daughter saw a production of *Hairspray*, declaring she wanted to be on stage, Maddren once again found herself immersed in the musical theatre world, as both crew and mic technician, and taking over as Stage Manager for Panorama Theatre Company at Frankston Arts Centre.

Maddren's first foray as Production Manager was for *Annie* and has had nightmares about "little girls everywhere", ever since! Her only directorial credit to date is *Rock of Ages*, where everyone was thankfully over the age of 18.

Since this time, Maddren has been Production Manager on 7 major musicals and more often than not, Stage Manager as well. Along with various other crew and Stage Management positions with other companies over the past ten years.

2021 saw Maddren return to the stage after a 27-year hiatus as Daisy in *Keeping Up Appearances* with MLOC.

Maddren has been lucky over the years to share these experiences both on and off stage with her husband, siblings, and children, and is forever grateful for the lifelong friendships forged in the industry.





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CREATIVE TEAM

CREATIVE: Carol Ray

Pronoun: She/Her

TITLE: Costume and Props



Carol Ray started her theatre journey when her parents introduced her to theatre from a very young age, and she was hooked! Through both primary and secondary school (where Ray learned to sew), she played a variety of roles on stage.

Ray's first dalliance into costuming came in a production of *Salad Days* with Frankston Theatre Company (some 40 years ago). Ray not only played the lead role of Jane but had to create her own 6 costumes.

Since then, Ray has costumed many amateur theatrical and school productions, often designing costumes for entire shows. "It was during a production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*' at Dandenong when I first met Darren Brealey, some 19 years ago, and our friendship has blossomed, and even taken us overseas together".



Ray is thrilled to be able to help bring Brealey's vision of Broken River to the stage. "In my 'real' job of Primary Performing Arts teacher", Ray is currently designing and creating costumes for a *Star Wars* spoof.

"Needless to say, there's LOTS of sparkles, sequins and shiny fabric (every costumer's dream)". Ray is so lucky her passions for theatre and sewing can merge, enabling her to see her visions manifest themselves through the beauty of fabric and kaleidoscopes of textures and colours.