

Embargoed 7.30pm 14.11.18 - TWO VERY DIFFERENT MUSICALS TOP THIS YEAR'S CONDA AWARDS NOMINATIONS

2018 CONDA AWARDS 40TH ANNUAL PRESENTATION OF THE CITY OF NEWCASTLE DRAMA AWARDS WESTS NEW LAMBTON
DECEMBER 1 2018 EMBARGOED UNTIL 7.30PM WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2018 More info: Ken Longworth, 0402 356 399 TWO VERY DIFFERENT MUSICALS TOP THIS YEAR'S CONDA AWARDS NOMINATIONS

THE musicals *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *A Mystery Musical* had very different natures, but both were so enjoyable that they had many audience members going to see them a second time. So it's not surprising that the City of Newcastle Drama Awards judging team gave both shows 13 nominations which include the Best Musical Production category. While they topped the nominations list, the quality and diversity of the 60 shows entered by theatre companies for awards consideration in the year from November 1, 2017, to October 31, 2018, is indicated by 44 of the shows receiving a total of 144 nominations in the 23 awards categories. And the 22 companies and six school and education teams that entered shows all received nominations. *The Drowsy Chaperone*, the first major show staged by new company High Street Productions, pays tribute to the musicals of the 1920s and early 1930s, with an old man seen playing a vinyl recording of the songs from a 1928 musical with that name and recalling how the songs were staged and the storyline that linked the songs. *A Mystery Musical*, presented by The Very Popular Theatre Company, had audience members swinging in their seats during the overture, when they realised that it was the theme from the popular television series *The Addams Family* and that the musical, which had that name, looked amusingly at characters and incidents in the show. A third popular musical, Opera Hunter's production of *The Sound of Music*, which is based on the real life story of the Von Trapp Family singers, one of the world's best-known concert groups in the era immediately preceding World War II, is also nominated in that category. As nominations in each category are restricted to eight shows or participants, the CONDA judges – Shane Bransdon, Michelle Gosper, Carl Gregory, Ken Longworth and Guil Noronha – found the choice of nominees to be challenging, given the quality of the works staged in the year. Eight productions are up for the Best Dramatic Production award. *Circle Mirror Transformation*, presented by Theatre on Bruncker and *The Lowbrow Outfit*, looks at the changing relationships of the participants in a six-week acting course, with the title drawn from three of the exercises in the course. *Stooged Theatre's Cock* had a young man who was increasingly unsure of his sexuality being attracted to a girl on his way to work, much to the concern of his gay male partner. *Constellations*, staged by Seated Ovation in association with Newcastle Theatre Company, looked at the different ways people could handle situations they found themselves in. *The Dark Room* (Stooged Theatre) showed the disparate problems three pairs of occupants of a room in a Northern Territory motel encountered. *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, staged by The Lowbrow Outfit, a very dark Irish comedy set in the 1990s when rebels were trying to force Britain to return control of Northern Ireland to the Irish republic, had audiences laughing loudly from beginning to end. Shakespeare's wartime comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing*, was set by Upstage Theatre in London in World War II, and presented in an outdoor parkland at Bolwarra, with the audience following a female nightwatch team to the different venues. Newcastle Theatre Company's *Peepshow* engagingly showed the interactions of the contrasting residents in four adjoining apartments. And *Year of the Rooster*, an engrossing darkly funny American comedy that was given its Australian premiere by Newcastle's Knock&Run theatre company, looked at the impact cock-fighting had on the residents of a small country town, with actors amusingly doubling as residents and roosters. Four very different works have been nominated in the Best New Play or Musical Written for a Newcastle Company category. *Dark Matter*, by Anna Kerrigan, which was staged by Aspire, a Hunter Catholic schools organisation, showed the very different impacts a lockdown in a high school had on students, teachers and cleaning staff, with engagingly diverse song and dance routines. *I Hope It's Not Raining in London*, by teenager Nicholas Thoroughgood, which shows changes to the relationship of the two young occupants of a flat after other people visit them, engagingly altered the sexes of the central characters at different performances, so that they were either two males, two females or a male and a female. *I Love Books*, by young and internationally acclaimed Newcastle magician Joe Howlett, which was put together to encourage school children to do what the title says, certainly accomplished that aim, with the mix of magic acts and comedy having the youngsters heading to libraries after they saw the play. And *Take Me to Neverland*, by Riley McLean, reworked the story of *Peter Pan* to put that ageless boy into realistic, but still amusing, situations. A new category, Best Under 18 Ensemble Acting, has been included in this year's CONDA Awards in recognition of the quality of the acting by young people in youth theatre or school productions entered in the awards. The eight nominated shows had large casts which worked well. They are: *Animal Farm* (Hunter School of the Performing Arts); *Annie* (Newcastle Grammar School); *Annie Kids* (High Street Productions); *Dark Matter* (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office); Disney's *Alice in Wonderland Jr* (Young People's Theatre); Disney's *The Little Mermaid Jr* (Hunter School of the Performing Arts); Disney's *The Little Mermaid Jr* (St Philip's Christian College); *Elf The Musical Jr* (Young People's Theatre). The awards night will climax with the presentation of the CONDA Inc Award for Outstanding Achievement and Contribution to Theatre. There are no nominations for this award. It will go to the person or group the CONDA judges believe made the most outstanding contribution to Newcastle theatre in 2018. The 2018 CONDA Awards will be presented in the Starlight Room auditorium at Wests New Lambton, on Saturday, December 1, at 7.30pm, in a show that will include song and dance numbers from popular musicals staged by Newcastle performers – and with a few surprises. Audience members will be seated at tables with 10 seats. Show tickets are

\$39.50 and include a programme with photos of the year's shows. Tickets can be bought at Wests, or by phone 4935 1200, or online:

www.proticket.com.au. As this is the 40th year of the CONDA Awards, the presentation night will include events which look at the people involved in judging and trophy recipients. There will be video interviews and the musical numbers staged during the show will be drawn from memorable musicals in the four decades. And the printed program will also have features on the 40 years of the awards. The awards night will be the end of the involvement in the CONDAs by judge Shane Branson. He is stepping down because his occupation will have him spending long periods overseas in 2019. He will be replaced as a judge by Anna Lambert, who has had very diverse roles in Newcastle theatre. She started acting classes at Young People's Theatre at the age of 9, and, while she was initially hesitant about joining, her parents encouraged her to "at least try it for one year". Anna hasn't looked back since. Anna is very active in Newcastle theatre and has acted with a number of different companies. Her roles have included Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible* (2017), Leaf Coneybear in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (2016), *The Cat in the Hat in Seussical: The Musical* (2015), Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* (2012), and many more. She is passionate about all areas of theatre and has tried her hand at directing, writing, stage management, lighting operation and stage crew. She most recently co-directed this year Opera Hunter's production of *The Sound of Music* and was the assistant director for *The History Boys* at Young People's Theatre. She was also a part of the team that created *Tamagotchi... the musical?!*, and wrote its book. Anna is thrilled to be joining the team of talented judges and looking forward to seeing what the wonderful artists of Newcastle have to offer and meeting those that make this community's theatre so fantastic.

CONDA Nominations, 2018

Best Dramatic Production *Circle Mirror Transformation*, Theatre on Brunner and *The Lowbrow Outfit* *Cock*, Stooged Theatre *Constellations*, Newcastle Theatre Company and *Seated Ovation* *The Dark Room*, Stooged Theatre *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Lowbrow Outfit* *Much Ado About Nothing*, Upstage Theatre *Peepshow*, Newcastle Theatre Company *Year of the Rooster*, *Knock&Run*

Best Musical Production *The Drowsy Chaperone*, High Street Productions *A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family"*, The Very Popular Theatre Company *The Sound of Music*, Opera Hunter

Best Special Theatrical Event *The Best of the Best*, Theatre on Brunner | *Love Books*, JD's World of Magic *The One*, *Tantrum Youth Arts* *Tramp Steamer Tramp*, David Baker and *The Smokin' Chops*

Best New Play or Musical Written for a Newcastle Company *Dark Matter*, by Anna Kerrigan (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office) | *I Hope It's Not Raining in London*, by Nicholas Thoroughgood (Bearfoot Theatre) | *Love Books*, by Joel Howlett (JD's World of Magic) *Take Me to Neverland*, by Riley McLean (Bearfoot Theatre)

Excellence by a Male Actor in a Leading Role in a Drama or Comedy James Chapman, *Year of the Rooster* (*Knock&Run*) Drew Holmes, *Cock* (Stooged Theatre) Mathew Lee, *The Dark Room* (Stooged Theatre) Oliver MacFadyen, *Ugly Mugs* (GNaW Theatre) Cooper McDonald, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (The Lowbrow Outfit) Lindsay McDonald, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (The Lowbrow Outfit) Phil McGrath, *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Theatre on Brunner and The Lowbrow Outfit) Rory Pollock, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Hunter Drama)

Excellence by a Female Actor in a Leading Role in a Drama or Comedy Elise Bialek, *Cock* (Stooged Theatre) Helen Comber, *Lost in Yonkers* (Maitland Repertory Theatre) Emily Daly, *Constellations* (Newcastle Theatre Company and Seated Ovation) Leanne Guihot, *Relative Values* (Newcastle Theatre Company)

Jan Hunt, *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Theatre on Brunner and The Lowbrow Outfit) Elise Martin, *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Theatre on Brunner and The Lowbrow Outfit) Claire Thomas, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* (Newcastle Theatre Company) Allison Van Gaal, *Peepshow* (Newcastle Theatre Company)

Excellence by a Male Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical Drew Holmes, *A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family"* (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Rory Pollock, *Disney's Aladdin Jr* (Hunter Drama) Theo Rule, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (High Street Productions) Tyran Stig, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (High Street Productions)

Excellence by a Female Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical Rachel Davies, *The Sound of Music* (Opera Hunter) Bec Kynaston, *We Will Rock You* (Metropolitan Players) Maisie Owens, *A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family"* (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Rachelle Schmidt Adnum, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (High Street Productions) Rachelle Schmidt Adnum, *A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family"* (The Very Popular Theatre Company)

Excellence by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role Matt Heys, *Ajax in Iraq* (*Knock&Run*) Phil McGrath, *A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family"* (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Alex Simpson, *All's Well That Ends Well* (Maitland Repertory Theatre) Michael Smythe, *Kiss Me Like You Mean It* (Maitland Repertory Theatre) Steve Wilson, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (The Lowbrow Outfit) Steve Wilson, *Ugly Mugs* (GNaW Theatre)

Excellence by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role Maria Bardakos, *Kiss Me Like You Mean It* (Maitland Repertory Theatre) Jamahla Barron, *Lost in Yonkers* (Maitland Repertory Theatre) Katy Carruthers, *Playhouse Creatures* (Newcastle Theatre Company) Katy Carruthers, *Ugly Mugs* (GNaW Theatre) Charlotte De Wit, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (The Lowbrow Outfit) Janet Gillam, *Summer of the 17th Doll* (Newcastle Theatre Company) Karen Lantry, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Upstage Theatre) Stephanie Priest, *Year of the Rooster* (*Knock&Run*)

Excellence by a Male Actor Under 18 Jack Andrew, *A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family"* (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Oliver Crawford, *Dark Matter* (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office) Tim Davies, *Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr* (St Philip's Christian College) Ned Keogh, *The Venetian Twins* (St Francis Xavier's College) Will Parker, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (The Lowbrow Outfit) Will Parker, *Year of the Rooster* (*Knock&Run*) Tom Rodgers, *Take Me to Neverland* (Bearfoot Theatre) Riley Warner, *Dark Matter* (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office)

Excellence by a Female Actor Under 18 Caitlin Collins, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (Belmont Christian College) Emily Poliszuk, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (Belmont Christian College) Bridget Ponman, *Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr* (Hunter School of the Performing Arts) Zoe Walker, *The Drowsy Chaperone* (High Street Productions) Jordan Warner, *Little Women* (Young People's Theatre and Lindsay Street Players)

Best Ensemble Acting *Cock*, Stooged Theatre *The Drowsy Chaperone*, High Street Productions | *I Hope It's Not Raining in London*, Bearfoot Theatre *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, The Lowbrow Outfit *A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family"* (The Very Popular Theatre Company) *Peepshow*, Newcastle Theatre Company *The Sound of Music*, Hunter Opera *Year of the Rooster*, *Knock&Run*

Best Under 18 Ensemble Acting *Animal Farm*, Hunter School of the Performing Arts *Annie*, Newcastle Grammar School *Annie Kids*, High Street Productions *Dark Matter*, Aspire: Catholic Schools Office *Disney's Alice in Wonderland Jr*, Young People's Theatre *Disney's*

The Little Mermaid Jr, Hunter School of the Performing Arts Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr, St Philip's Christian College Elf The Musical Jr, Young People's Theatre Excellence by a Director (Drama or Comedy) Andrew Coates, Much Ado About Nothing (Upstage Theatre) Charlotte De Wit, Circle Mirror Transformation (Theatre on Brunner and The Lowbrow Outfit) Mathew Lee, Cock (Stooged Theatre) Cooper McDonald, The Lieutenant of Inishmore (The Lowbrow Outfit) Riley McLean, I Hope It's Not Raining in London (Bearfoot Theatre) Pearl Nunn, Peepshow (Newcastle Theatre Company) Allison Van Gaal, Year of the Rooster Jay Wood, Constellations (Newcastle Theatre Company and Seated Ovation) Excellence by a Director (Musical) Drew Holmes, Disney's Aladdin Jr (Hunter Drama) Anna Kerrigan, Dark Matter (Aspire - Catholic Schools Office) Anna Lambert and PJ Willis, The Sound of Music (Opera Hunter) Robert Stuart, The Drowsy Chaperone (High Street Productions) James Tolhurst, A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family" (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Excellence by a Musical Director or Vocal Director Mercia Buck, The Sound of Music (Opera Hunter) James Laundon, The Drowsy Chaperone (High Street Productions) Carrie Manen, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat (Theatre on Brunner and Novocastrian Players) Chris Vidler, We Will Rock You (Metropolitan Players) Daniel Wilson, Star Struck 2018 – Connect (New South Wales Department of Education) Excellence by a Choreographer Natalie Baker and Eva Marie Irwin, Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr (St Philip's Christian College) Natalie Baker, The Drowsy Chaperone (High Street Productions) Anna Borzestowski and Eva Marie Irwin, This is Christmas (The Grainery Theatre Company) Kirby Leigh Coker, We Will Rock You (Metropolitan Players) Annelise Stewart, Beauty and the Beast (Belmont Christian College) James Tolhurst, A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family" (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Lauren Wheatley, Dark Matter (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office) Rachel Wilson, Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr (Hunter School of the Performing Arts) Excellence in Costume Design Leilani Boughton, Disney's Alice in Wonderland Jr (Young People's Theatre) Sandra Earle, Tracey Rose Sparke and Jo Hathway, Much Ado About Nothing (Upstage Theatre) Jennifer Ellicot, Disney's Aladdin Jr (Hunter Drama) Kaswyn Hunt, A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family" (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Coralie Lewis, The Drowsy Chaperone (High Street Productions) Karen O'Neill, Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr (Hunter School of the Performing Arts) Michele Taylor, We Will Rock You (Metropolitan Players) Lauren Wheatley, Dark Matter (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office) Excellence in Hair, Make-up and Wigs Lyn Craney, hair and wigs, A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family" (The Very Popular Theatre Company) George Francis, The Drowsy Chaperone (High Street Productions) George Francis, We Will Rock You (Metropolitan Players) Lauren Wheatley, Dark Matter (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office) Kimberlee Wright, make-up, A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family" (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Excellence in Set and Props Design Chris Bird, Perfect Wedding (Theatre on Brunner) Michael Cooper, Rob Garred, and Jeff Jackson, The Drowsy Chaperone (High Street Productions) Lisa Little, Dark Matter (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office) Cooper McDonald and Donny McDonald, The Lieutenant of Inishmore (The Lowbrow Outfit) Daniel Stoddart and Marion Giles, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Hunter Drama) Daniel Stoddart, Disney's Aladdin Jr (Hunter Drama) Nicholas Thoroughgood, Disney's Alice in Wonderland Jr (Young People's Theatre) Amy Wilde, Peepshow (Newcastle Theatre Company) Excellence in Lighting and Audio Visual Design Lyndon Buckley, Ajax in Iraq (Knock&Run) Lyndon Buckley, Take Me To Neverland (Bearfoot Theatre) Michael Cooper, Disney's The Little Mermaid Jr (St Philip's Christian College) Michael Cooper, The Drowsy Chaperone (High Street Productions) Jacob Harwood, Disney's Aladdin Jr (Hunter Drama) Jacob Harwood, A Mystery Musical – "The Addams Family" (The Very Popular Theatre Company) Jacob Harwood, We Will Rock You (Metropolitan Players) Lachlan Thomas, Dark Matter (Aspire: Catholic Schools Office) Excellence in Sound Design Noel Grivas, Peepshow (Newcastle Theatre Company) Sebastian Winter, Constellations (Newcastle Theatre Company and Seated Ovation)

The City of Newcastle Drama Awards are presented by CONDA Inc 9

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