



geelong
arts
centre

OPEN UP

SUMMER STAGE GUIDE

Theatre, dance,
comedy, music & more

SHERIDAN HARBIDGE

stars as Geelong's Rebel
Rocker, Chrissy Amphlett

SEASON 2026 REVEALED

Worlds of stories, possibilities &
powerful women

geelong arts centre

tutti

at Geelong Arts Centre



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Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which Geelong Arts Centre stands, the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past, to Elders present and to emerging leaders, recognising their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community.

Written, developed, edited, and published by
Forte Magazine | Tammy Walters, Editor-in-Chief
Designed by
Nathan Mossop



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WORLD PREMIERES, VICTORIAN EXCLUSIVES, AND THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED

Geelong Arts Centre's Chief Executive Officer and Creative Director, Rhys Holden details the intricate threads that bind the state-of-the-art theatre's tapestry.



Welcome to the wonder of Geelong Arts Centre's *SEASON 2026* — a program bursting with ideas, and powerful storytelling. Curated under the thematic of *World's Open Up*, this season spans music, comedy, theatre, dance, performance art and more, creating a diverse offering from a centre that continues to expand Geelong's cultural footprint.

Working across a range of different programming strands, *SEASON 2026* is headlined by an ambitious Mainstage program which brings world-class performance to regional audiences, supported by boundary-pushing series REWIRE, Family Magic for the young, and Delightful Days & Matinees for the young-at-heart. Presented across Geelong Arts Centre's incredible new campus, the 2026 program leans into the vision of Australia's largest dedicated regional arts centre—championing thought-provoking, culturally resonant, and exciting original, adapted, and reimaged works at both national and local levels.



Rhys Holden explains, "We're trying to bring the best to Geelong Arts Centre — world class performances, world premieres, major award-winning productions, music, comedy but also profile incredible local music and theatre and a huge range of other shows performed across our venues. This year we decided to launch EVERYTHING to really show the breadth of our offering, because we're equally excited about acting royalty Noni Hazlehurst coming to Geelong as we are about our local artists like Connor Morrel, coming from Geelong.

Appointed CEO in June 2024, Holden champions Geelong Arts Centre as a key player on the national stage, calibre of programming not only strengthens Geelong's appeal as a touring destination but reinforces the region's significance within Australia's arts ecology.



Sabine Crompton-Ward, Chris Dyke, Tiana Lung.

Image by David Kelly 2024

SEASON 2026 embodies this influence. Radically reimagined classic works such as *Macbeth* and *The Glass Menagerie* sit side-by-side with new works such as ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's *Gunawarra Re-creation*, directed by First Nations leader Dr Rachael Maza AM.

Olivier Award-winning Australian playwright Suzie Miller makes two Victorian exclusive appearances in the Mainstage season. Her critically acclaimed production *RBG: Of Many, One* arrives in Geelong in a Victorian exclusive following sold-out runs across the country. Miller also debuts *Strong Is The New Pretty*, her AFLW chronicle, in a world premiere season.

SEASON 2026 is further headlined by stage and screen icon Noni Hazlehurst—Australian Film Institute Award-winner, ARIA Award-winner, Logie recipient, and Hall of Famer. After her standout performance in *Mother*, Hazlehurst reunites with playwright Daniel Keene for *The Lark*, a five-star production described as “utterly compelling” by *Limelight*.

Trailblazing comic Gillian Cosgriff joins the REWIRE program with *Life, Oh Life*, following her rise through beloved television comedy including *Get Krack!n*, *Spicks & Specks*, and *Thank God You're Here*. Also on the bill: powerhouse theatre duo Natalie O'Donnell and Simon Gleeson bring music and heart to the *Delightful Days & Matinees* program. Families will be treated to cherished favourites, with adaptations of Mem Fox & Judy Horacek's classic *Where Is The Green Sheep?* and the beloved *Room On The Broom*.

As Holden puts it: “We’re really proud to bring these world premieres to Geelong.” Yet the season also proudly celebrates local

identity. Some connections are obvious, others subtle, but each enriches the program's Geelong heart. A standout example is *Amplified: The Exquisite Rock and Rage of Chrissy Amphlett*, honouring the ferocious Divinyls frontwoman and Belmont High alum. It also continues the season's strong focus on powerful women.

The REWIRE series features *Good Man* from local favourite and Creative Engine artist Connor Morel, whose career has soared through national tours including *The Lord Of The Rings: A Musical Tale*, *Elvis: A Musical Revolution*, and *The Wedding Singer*, alongside his own internationally touring Geelong Arts Centre supported original work *A Lovely Day To Be Online*.

“
WE’RE REALLY
PROUD TO BRING
THESE WORLD
PREMIERES TO
GEELONG.
— RHYS HOLDEN ”

Neighbouring cultural powerhouse Back to Back Theatre joins the lineup with their new work *I AM IN A PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITNEY SPEARS*, a world premiere and Geelong Arts Centre exclusive. Their contribution connects beautifully with special *Lighting the Dark*, a return for Dancenorth Ensemble in collaboration with Chris Dyke. The work has earned national acclaim for Dyke's history-making achievement as the first Australian living with Down syndrome to direct a mainstage piece for a professional dance company.

This rich spread of stories and stagecraft underscores Geelong Arts Centre's role as a national leader in arts presentation while also welcoming audiences of all backgrounds, experiences, and curiosities.

“We want to build love, loyalty, and habit for attending arts experiences in our spaces and in our community,” Holden says. “A show like *Strong Is The New Pretty* is a gateway for AFL and AFLW enthusiasts to step into the theatre setting and it might spark the interest to see a show for the first time. *The Lark* may encourage those familiar with the renowned Noni Hazlehurst through her television personality to see her perform a powerful monologue.”

SEASON 2026 reinforces Geelong Arts Centre's commitment to elevating artists, dancers, musicians, comedians, and creatives of the region. Holden sees the Centre as a catalyst for long-term artistic pathways.

As he explains, “Geelong Arts Centre is part of the national conversation of arts and theatre-making. We have a thriving local arts scene and we're programming a diverse offering for audiences locally. Now it's about how we connect the dots between all the activities — the great breadth of arts and cultural activities. So how do we connect dots between a four-year-old ballet student who performed in our venue in their first ballet concert one night, and then the following week is Dancenorth performing a contemporary dance work. There's a beautiful thread that needs to exist between those two things and I think that's where we're going to see really great creative experiences for all.”

This is your cue to dive headfirst into the artistic and cultural kaleidoscope that is SEASON 2026 at Geelong Arts Centre.

See page 36 to discover
our membership packages
or visit geelongartscentre.org.au



Heather Mitchell in *RBG: Many, Of One*.
Photo: Prudence Upton



12 – 13
FEB

A GEELONG ARTS CENTRE
SUPPORTED PRODUCTION

AMPLIFIED: THE EXQUISITE ROCK AND RAGE OF CHRISSY AMPHLETT

Jacaranda Productions

Starring Sheridan Harbridge

A live-wire journey through the words and music of the Divinyls' Chrissy Amphlett — the rebel-queen of Australian rock, forged in the heart of Geelong.

"Amplified is cabaret at its most alive:
irreverent, haunting, and fiercely electric."
– Nothing Ever Happens in Brisbane, 2025.



19 – 20
MAR

FROM THE CREATORS
OF WAYFINDER

LIGHTING THE DARK

Dancenorth Australia

Experience the bold new work by Chris Dyke, a Kurna (Adelaide) based dancer and choreographer living with Down syndrome. *Lighting the Dark* is a profound celebration of human experience, a transcendent journey that traverses individual and universal truths in a dance to the very centre of what it means to be human.



6 – 9
MAY

VICTORIAN EXCLUSIVE
RETURNING AFTER A SELL-OUT SEASON!

RBG: OF MANY, ONE

Sydney Theatre Company

By Suzie Miller | Directed by Priscilla Jackman
With Heather Mitchell

After a triumphant premiere season in 2022, and a sold-out national tour in 2024, this smash hit comes to Geelong for a Victorian exclusive. The brilliant Heather Mitchell will be reviving her award-winning and critically acclaimed "virtuosic performance" (The Conversation) of the woman who changed the face of the American legal system: the indomitable Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



11 – 13
JUN

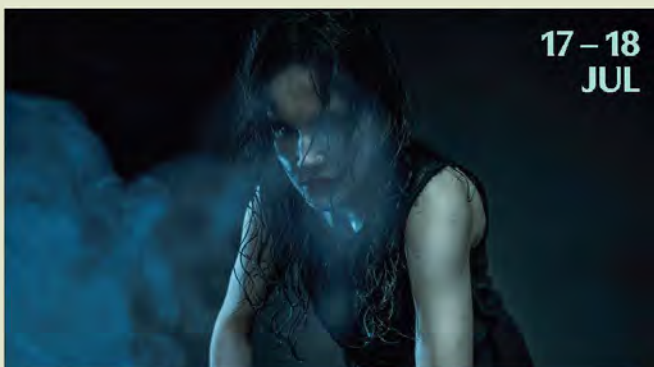
DIRECT FROM MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY'S
2026 SEASON

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Melbourne Theatre Company

By Tennessee Williams | Directed by Mark Wilson

For the first time in 20 years, Melbourne Theatre Company brings Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* back to the stage — a haunting, poetic masterpiece of love, illusion and longing. Starring celebrated stage and screen actor, Alison Whyte.



17 – 18
JUL

DIRECTED BY FIRST PEOPLES LEADER IN THE ARTS
DR RACHAEL MAZA AM

GUNAWARRA RE-CREATION

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company

By Isobel Morphy-Walsh

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company stands as one of Australia's most respected and dynamic voices in the performing arts. Murrin has returned to the watering hole. The same one Aunty Aggie used to take her to. Present and past collide. There she meets her old friend Gunawarra. The Black Swan. Gunawarra is a contemporary creation work based on Taun Wurrung (Taungurung) stories passed down.



12 – 15
AUG

STARRING
NONI HAZELHURST

THE LARK

Hey Dowling and Arts Centre Melbourne

A one-woman, powerful and moving meditation on life, death and change. Noni Hazlehurst, beloved star of stage and screen, returns to Geelong in her newest work written by Daniel Keene and directed by Matt Scholten.

★★★★★
- Limelight



8 – 17
OCT

A NEW PLAY BY SUZIE MILLER
2026 VICTORIAN EXCLUSIVE

STRONG IS THE NEW PRETTY

**Brisbane Festival, Sydney Theatre Company
and Trish Wadley Productions**

By Suzie Miller | Directed by Lee Lewis

The celebrated Australian playwright behind sell-out smash hit *RBG: Of Many, One* and international phenomena *Prima Facie* and *Inter Alia*, Suzie Miller turns her extraordinary talents to the birth of the AFLW in this Victorian exclusive – direct from the world premiere.



6 – 7
NOV

A CLASSIC
– NOT TO BE MISSED

MACBETH

Bell Shakespeare

By William Shakespeare | Directed by Peter Evans

Following a bloody battle, Macbeth and his comrade Banquo are met by three Weird Sisters who prophesy Macbeth will one day be king.

“Utterly compelling”
- Sydney Morning Herald



REINCARNATING GEELONG'S

REBEL ROCKER

IN A SCHOOL UNIFORM

PRIMA FACIE POWERHOUSE, SHERIDAN HARBRIDGE, SHINES AS THE ROCK ICON FROM GEELONG IN **AMPLIFIED: THE EXQUISITE ROCK AND RAGE OF CHRISSY AMPHLETT**

The world of rock never recovered after Chrissy Amphlett came charging in.

From being born and raised in Geelong to raising hell on the world stage, Chrissy Amphlett was a once-in-a-generation talent, underscored by her signature rock 'n' roll rasp, sexual prowess, and school uniform stage attire. As the ferocious frontwoman of Divinyls, Amphlett redefined the rock scene, standing with a class of women in music who challenged the male-dominated industry and blanket genre, including Joan Jett, Debbie Harry, Suzie Q, and Chrissie Hynde.

Formed in Sydney in 1980, Divinyls was uplifted by Amphlett and fellow founding and mainstay member, guitarist Mark McEntee in addition to a long list of rotating band members, originally consisting of Jeremy Paul on bass (1980–82), Richard Harvey on drums (1980–85) and Bjarne Ohlin on keyboards, guitar, and backing vocals (1980–86). The band saw instant success with their initial releases, the *Monkey Grip* soundtrack-origin singles 'Boys In Town' and 'Only Lonely' which would be packaged under EP Music from *Monkey Grip*. 'Boys In Town' shot to number eight on the national single charts and remains a defining song for Divinyls. The rest of the decade saw the band release *Desperate*, *What a Life!* and *Temperamental* seeing a slew of hits spreading the Divinyls wildfire including 'Science Fiction', 'Good Die Young' and 'Pleasure and Pain', respectively. The charts ate up the songs but it was Amphlett who was the talk of the town. Her slightly dishevelled look, her larger than life sound, her rebellious streak, her unabashed demeanor in interviews, and her audacious blend of sexuality and vulnerability all packaged in song form were the perfect cocktail for star status.

It was further cemented with the turn of the decade, as their self-titled collection, stylistically presented as *divINYLS*, came to light and 'I Touch Myself' became a global awakening. Shooting to number one in Australia, number four in the US and number ten in the UK, the track was met with both awe and controversy, particularly from the US radio and festival circuit. Adding to Amphlett's already fearless front, 'I Touch Myself' cemented Amphlett as an icon.

With a rich career leading the ARIA Hall of Fame inducted band and as a solo artist in the years to follow, Amphlett's image and performance package built her an enduring legacy in Australian music history – one that has been immortalised locally in central Geelong. Just a 2-minute walk from the Geelong Arts Centre just off of Little Malop

Street, a large-scale Chrissy Amphlett mural envelopes a two-storey building in Denny's Lane. Painted by Glen Smith, the mural is a dedication to the former Belmont High student and celebrated singer who lost her battle with breast cancer on 21 April 2013.

Adding to the recognition of Amphlett is the upcoming Geelong Arts Centre supported production of *Amplified: The Exquisite Rock and Rage of Chrissy Amphlett*. Presented as part of the 2026 Mainstage Season, *Amplified: The Exquisite Rock and Rage of Chrissy Amphlett* sees beloved performer and writer Sheridan Harbridge, known for *Prima Facie*, embody the frontwoman. Backed by an electrifying band, Harbridge tackles the hits of Amphlett and the Divinyls in a cabaret performance aimed at amplifying Amphlett's story and celebrated songbook.

With a credit list that boasts *A Model Murder* as presented at the 2024 Sydney Festival, co-writing credits for the acclaimed musical adaptation of *My Brilliant Career* for Melbourne Theatre Company, which won five Green Room Awards, including Best New Writing, and playing the star role of Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a RedLine Productions which saw her receive Best Actress at the Sydney Theatre Awards in 2024 for the second time, (the first being for her portrayal of Tessa in *Prima Facie*), Harbridge is a heavyweight in the Australian theatre scene.

Michael Cathcart of ABC Radio National offers a shining recommendation pertaining to Harbridge's chameleonic stage CV, saying, "Some theatre people constantly surprise you, popping up in the most unexpected places, and whose names alone can spur you to buy a ticket. Sheridan Harbridge is one such artist."

Amplified: The Exquisite Rock and Rage of Chrissy Amphlett is a co-created production between Harbridge and multi-award-winning director Sarah Goodes who is renowned for capturing exemplary women of Australia on stage. Her critically acclaimed *Julia* saw Justine Clarke transform into Australia's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, in a powerful true telling of Gillard's political rise. Enlisting the musical direction of compositional powerhouse, Glenn Moorhouse (*Li'l Elvis Jones* and *The Truckstoppers*, *American Idiot*, *Dubbo Championship Wrestling*), the musical scope for this *Amplified* production taps into Amphlett's energy and is unapologetically **big** and **bold**.

Combined the forces of theatre will take you on a kaleidoscopic tour of Chrissy Amphlett through the dual gaze of the adoring public and those closest to her – a tale that treads the fine line of pleasure and pain.

Amplified: The Exquisite Rock and Rage of Chrissy Amphlett hits Geelong Arts Centre on 12 - 13 February 2026

AMPLIFIED: THE EXQUISITE ROCK AND RAGE OF CHRISSY AMPHLETT

Jacaranda Productions

Written by Sheridan Harbridge
Co-created by Sheridan Harbridge,
Sarah Goodes and Glenn Moorhouse.

DATES & TIMES:

7:30pm, Thursday 12 February

7:30pm, Friday 13 February

VENUE:

The Story House

CREDITS:

Co- Creator, Writer & Performer

Sheridan Harbridge

Director & Co-Creator

Sarah Goodes

Co Creator, Musical Director

& Performer

Glenn Moorhouse

Lighting Designer

Paul Jackson

LX Associate

Spencer Herd

Creative Producer

Diana Glenn

Set & Costume Designer

Micheal Hankin

JAC
ARA
NDA

UMAC

Amplified: The Exquisite Rock and Rage of Chrissy Amphlett was first presented by the University of Melbourne Arts and Culture (UMAC), 11 – 13 June 2025 at the Union Theatre as part of *RISING*.



LIGHTING THE DARK

WITH A BRIGHT AND BOLD CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Introducing *Lighting the Dark* — a radiant creation by Chris Dyke, a performer, choreographer, and history-maker whose brilliance knows no bounds.

In 2024, Dyke became the first Australian living with Down syndrome to direct a main-stage work for a professional dance company — a milestone moment that redefined what inclusion and creativity can look like on stage. Dreamed up in 2021 and lovingly nurtured over three years with Dancenorth's Kyle Page and Amber Haines, *Lighting the Dark* finally made its breathtaking premiere at the Brisbane Festival in 2024.

Originally commissioned by Brisbane Festival with the support of the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, the Ian Potter Foundation, and Creative Australia, this ambitious work brings together a stellar ensemble of seven contemporary dancers: Chris Dyke, Sabine Crompton-Ward, Tiana Lung, Aleeya McFadyen-Rew, Jag Popham, Felix Sampson, and Michael Smith. Under

“
**GO ON A
JOURNEY
OF SIMPLE
DELIGHTS AND
CHILD-LIKE
INNOCENCE
AND FEEL
PART OF THE
FAMILY...**

— HELEN GRAMOTNEV,
BRISBANE STAGE

the choreographic guidance of Page and Haines, the company shines as one — a collective beam of energy, joy, and humanity.

Dyke's creative spirit lights every corner of this work. Inspired by icons like Banksy, David Bowie, and Freddie Mercury, he channels their fearless artistry into his own bold, love-soaked stage persona. Having started dancing at age 12 to find his confidence and voice, Dyke has blossomed into a performer who radiates joy, compassion, and courage — qualities that infuse every moment of *Lighting the Dark*.

And what a light it is.

Through sweeping choreography, heartfelt storytelling, and stunning stagecraft, *Lighting the Dark* explores what it means to be human — in all its messy, magnificent complexity. With ethereal sound design and composition by Anna Whitaker, additional lyrics and music by Felix Sampson, evocative set design by Andrew Treloar, and



In October of 2024, Geelong Arts Centre was hit by a cavalcade of colour with the immersive contemporary dance experience, *Wayfinder*. The ambitious artistic expression was a development from Townsville/Gurambilbarra-based dance company, Dancenorth Australia, known for pushing the boundaries of choreography and production to offer a visual feast for the audience. Backed by the lush soundscapes of three-time GRAMMY-nominated Australian music act Hiatus Kaiyote, *Wayfinder* wasn't just a performance — it was a sensory adventure that proved why Dancenorth continues to redefine the boundaries of dance and storytelling.

Now, the creative minds behind that dazzling triumph are returning to Geelong Arts Centre in *SEASON 2026* with something truly extraordinary — a brand new work that promises to capture hearts and light up imaginations.

Acknowledgements:

Lighting the Dark was commissioned by Brisbane Festival, and is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, and the Ian Potter Foundation. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.

Dancenorth Australia is assisted by both the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland. Dancenorth Australia is also supported by Townsville City Council.

atmospheric lighting by Chloe Ogilvie, the stage becomes a glowing gateway to emotion, connection, and self-discovery.

At its heart, *Lighting the Dark* is a love letter to creativity, collaboration, and community. It's the story of an artist who dared to dream, and the ensemble who helped that dream take flight. Together, they invite audiences into a luminous world where love, courage, and light lead the way.

Lighting the Dark takes to the Geelong Arts Centre stage on **Thursday 19** and **Friday 20 March 2026** — for two nights only.

Don't miss your chance to witness this shining, soul-stirring performance from one of Australia's most inspiring creative voices.

**Lighting The Dark shines on stage
on 19 - 20 March 2026**

LIGHTING THE DARK

Dancenorth Australia

DATES & TIMES:

7:30pm, Thursday 19 March

7:30pm, Friday 20 March

VENUE:

The Story House

CREDITS:

Direction

Chris Dyke

Performers/Choreographers

Chris Dyke, Sabine Crompton-Ward,

Tiana Lung, Aleeya McFadyen-Rew,

Jag Popham, Felix Sampson,

Michael Smith

Concept & Choreography

Chris Dyke, Amber Haines, Kyle Page

Composition & Sound Design

Anna Whitaker with Additional Lyrics

and Composition

by Felix Sampson

Design

Andrew Treloar

Lighting Design

Chloe Ogilvie



Queensland
Government

DANCENORTH
AUSTRALIA
BRISBANE
FESTIVAL



Australian Government



LIGHTING THE DARK



The Ian Potter
Foundation

THE JURY IS OUT



**RBG: OF MANY, ONE IS A MUST-
SEE PRODUCTION IN 2026**

THE AWARD WINNING PRODUCTION COMES TO VICTORIA!

“ONE OF THE ALL-TIME GREAT PERFORMANCES”

— THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

”

The gavel has dropped and the verdict is unanimous — *RBG: Of Many, One* is the must see production of 2026. From the stages of Arts Centre Melbourne, HOTA, Gold Coast, Riverside Parramatta and the world-famous Sydney Opera House to Geelong's own home of arts and entertainment, this powerhouse production continues its triumphant reign across Australia in 2026.

Hailed by *The Sydney Morning Herald* as “one of the all-time great performances,” *RBG: Of Many, One* has blazed through the theatre world since its 2022 debut — captivating audiences, sweeping awards, and selling out venues nationwide during its 2024 tour.

Front and centre is the incomparable Heather Mitchell — the star of *Spellbinder*, *Love Me*, and *The Great Gatsby* — embodying the legendary Ruth Bader Ginsburg with wit, warmth, and unwavering fire. Her portrayal has already earned her a Sydney Theatre Award for Best Performer, and with over 187 performances and 100,000 captivated audience members under her belt, she's ready to don the collar once more for a history-making encore.

RBG: Of Many, One invites you into the extraordinary world of the woman who forever reshaped the American legal landscape. Through sharp, conversational storytelling, audiences travel with Ruth from her curious, determined teenage years in New York — where she first questioned the gender gaps in her world — to her trailblazing 27-year tenure on the U.S. Supreme Court.

With grit, grace, and a legendary sense of justice, RBG became the first Jewish woman and only the second woman ever to sit on the Court. From standing tall through the Clinton, Obama, and Trump presidencies to her fearless fight for gender equality and reproductive rights, she proved time and again that one voice — when used boldly — can change the world.

Serving until her passing in 2020 at age 87, Ginsburg's legacy glows through her groundbreaking rulings and passionate dissents in landmark cases like *United States v. Virginia* (1996), *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999), and *Friends of the Earth v. Laidlaw Environmental Services* (2000). She was a force, a firebrand, and a feminist icon — and this production ensures her light continues to burn bright.

Written with razor-sharp brilliance by **Suzie Miller** — the Olivier Award-winning Australian playwright behind *Prima Facie* and Geelong Arts Centre exclusive *Strong Is The New Pretty* — *RBG: Of Many, One* captures the rhythm, intellect, and humanity of a woman who made history. Miller's storytelling is both intimate and expansive, celebrating RBG's defining victories, her fierce dissents, and the monumental cases that changed the course of justice.

Guiding this theatrical tour de force is visionary director Priscilla Jackman, whose work spans theatre, opera, and screen. Known for her boundary-pushing productions like *The Cost of Living*, *White Pearl*, and *The Appleton Ladies Potato Race*, Jackman brings a visual flair and emotional heartbeat that elevates RBG's story to soaring new heights.

In a Victorian exclusive, *RBG: Of Many, One* takes the stage at Geelong Arts Centre for a five-show season from Wednesday 6 May to Saturday 9 May 2026. Don't miss your chance to dive deeper into the production during a special post-show Q&A following the Friday 8 May performance.

This isn't just theatre — it's a celebration of courage, conviction, and one extraordinary woman's fight for equality. *RBG: Of Many, One* is a once-in-a-generation performance you'll be talking about long after the curtain falls.

RBG: Of Many, One
is showing 6 - 9 May 2026

RBG: OF MANY, ONE

A Sydney Theatre Company production

By Suzie Miller
Directed by Priscilla Jackman
With Heather Mitchell

DATES & TIMES:

7:30pm, Wednesday 6 May
7:30pm, Thursday 7 May
7:30pm, Friday 8 May
2:00pm, Saturday 9 May
7:30pm, Saturday 9 May

VENUE:

The Play House

CREDITS:

Written by
Suzie Miller
Director
Priscilla Jackman
Designer
David Fleischer
Lighting Designer
Alexander Berlage
Composer & Sound Designer
Paul Charlier

Cast

Ruth Bader Ginsburg:
Heather Mitchell

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY



Create NSW
Arts, Screen & Culture





LOOKING THROUGH TENNESSEE WILLIAMS



DIRECT FROM MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY 2026 SEASON

In 1945, Tennessee Williams went from inconspicuous to illustrious thanks to his first theatrical hit, memory play, *The Glass Menagerie*.

Drawing from partially autobiographical material, *The Glass Menagerie* would change the course of modern theatre. It became both Williams' first successful play and a classic production that has been adapted and readapted countless times through multiple means such as film, television, radio, and, of course, stage, including multiple Broadway revivals. *The Glass Menagerie* perched itself as one of the most celebrated plays of all time. It established Williams as one of the most highly regarded playwrights in America, with the play enduring eighty years later.

Now, Melbourne Theatre Company tackle the beloved Broadway title under their 2026 Season, bringing it directly down the M1 to Geelong audiences.

The winner of the New York Drama Crit-

“
**IN MEMORY,
EVERYTHING
SEEMS TO
HAPPEN TO
MUSIC.**

- TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

”

ics' Circle Award for 'Best Play' in 1945 and recipient of the first-ever Tony Award for Best Play revival, *The Glass Menagerie* is a recall narrative through the memory of Tom Wingfield as he recollects living with his histrionic mother, faded Southern belle of middle age, Amanda Wingfield in her pursuit to find her mentally fragile daughter, Laura Wingfield, a suitor. The narrative is centred around a dinner where Tom invites work acquaintance Jim O'Connor for dinner, and the line between illusion and reality blurs. The family dynamics through the memory transfer tell of Tom's yearning for freedom whilst teetering between obligation and escape. A rework of one of Williams' short stories *Portrait of a Girl in Glass*, *The Glass Menagerie* is a gripping and heartbreaking dialogue-driven drama that will leave you spellbound.

In the leading role as Amanda Wingfield is celebrated stage and screen actress Alison Whyte (*Death of a Salesman*, *Satisfaction* (2007), *Breaking News* (1994) and *The Dressmaker* (2015)). Whyte captures

the desperation masked as hopefulness of Wingfield in trying to control the future whilst gripping onto her past.

This adaptation profits from the poetic and poignant direction of Melbourne Theatre Company Associate Artist, Mark Wilson. Having trained at VCA (Performance Creation, Directing) and Monash (Performing Arts), with further study under Philippe Gaulier, Wilson is a Melbourne-based maker, performer, dramaturg and director who is also an International Fellow of Shakespeare's Globe in London.

Wilson is no stranger to taking on classic adaptations, regularly directing Shakespeare through a modern lens. His radical retellings of the literary great came threefold with *Unsex Me* - which toured Fringe Festivals for five years - *Richard II* with Olivia Monticciolo, and *Anti-Hamlet* which earned him a nomination for writing, direction and production at the Greenroom Awards. Wilson's works span plays and performance art with his catalogue also boasting a directorial credit for the 2021 YIRRAMBOI Festival entry *Bighouse Dreaming* by Declan Furber Gillick, Brian Lipson collaborations for *The History of the Damnable Life* and *Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus* (Fringe, ACM); Alice Will Caroline's *Doors Shut* (Fringe/Temperance Hall); and Triage Live Art Collective. Wilson further contributed directorially to the Melbourne Theatre Company Sydney Festival co-presentation *Jacky*; the premiere season earned impressive reviews with ArtsHub giving it five stars and labelling it "Incredibly special", whilst The Guardian noted it as being "thoughtful and furious".

With his progressive directorial stylings, and with a powerhouse lead in Alison Whyte, their adaptation of *The Glass Menagerie* is a sharp interpretation of a timeless masterpiece and one that will be an instant sell-out in the Geelong Arts Centre calendar. It takes over The Play House for a season of four shows from **Thursday 11 June** and runs until **Saturday 13 June 2026**.

Shatter your pre-conceptions - *The Glass Menagerie* is bound to blow you away!

The Glass Menagerie runs 11 - 13 June 2026

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

A Melbourne Theatre Company production

by Tennessee Williams
Directed by Mark Wilson

DATES & TIMES:

7:00pm, Thursday 11 June

7:00pm, Friday 12 June

1:30pm, Saturday 13 June

7:00pm, Saturday 13 June

VENUE:

The Play House

CREDITS:

Director

Mark Wilson

Composer & Sound Designer

Marco Cher-Gibard

Cast

Amanda Wingfield:

Alison Whyte

Tom Wingfield:

Tim Draxl

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY



Melbourne Theatre Company is a department of the University of Melbourne and is supported by Creative Australia and Creative Victoria



PAST AND PRESENT COLLIDE IN THIS CREATION OF A NEW FIRST PEOPLES STORIES FOR THE STAGE

DIRECTED BY FIRST NATIONS LEADER IN THE ARTS, DR RACHAEL MAZA AM COMES A BREATHTAKING CONTEMPORARY THEATRE EXPERIENCE FROM TAUN WURRUNG COUNTRY

Step inside a story that hums with spirit, strength, and song. This season, Geelong Arts Centre opens its stage to *Gunawarra re-creation* — a spellbinding work of contemporary theatre that breathes new life into the entrusted stories of the Taun Wurrung (Taungurung) people.

From the visionary mind and heart of Isabel Morphy-Walsh, this powerful Mainstage production is more than theatre — it's a transfer of ancestral energy, woven with care, pride, and deep cultural memory.

Murron has returned to the watering hole. The same one Aunty Aggie used to take her to. Present and past collide.

There she meets her old friend **Gunawarra. The Black Swan.**

A proud Nirim Baluk woman of the Taun Wurrung people, Morphy-Walsh is a true multidisciplinary force — a weaver, a curator, a performer, an activist, an educator, and above all, a storyteller. Her art is an invitation: to witness, to feel, and to walk

gently within the world of First Nations lore. Through each performance, she opens a space where tradition meets transformation, and ancient voices rise anew.

Her lifelong work centres on the heartbeat of community and culture, drawing threads between past and present, and reminding us of Country's enduring wisdom. From her debut production *Gunga-na Dhum Nganin-ju* (*The stories we hold tightly*) — a heartfelt family collaboration showcased at the 2013 Yirramboi Festival — Morphy-Walsh has built a body of work that celebrates love, lineage, and the strength that comes from sharing story.

For *Gunawarra re-creation*, Morphy-Walsh's powerful vision finds its perfect match in director Rachael Maza, one of Australia's most respected and dynamic First Nations voices in the arts. Best known as the Artistic Director and Co-CEO of ILBIJERRI Theatre Company, Maza brings a guiding hand of care and courage, shaping this work with her trademark blend of integrity and emotional truth.

“
**GUNAWARRA RE-
CREATION SERVES
AS A POWERFUL
REMINDER OF THE
IMPORTANCE OF
EMBRACING ONE'S
WHOLE SELF IN
THE HEALING
PROCESS.**

**- DORCAS MAPHEKELA,
ARTSHUB**

”



At its heart, *Gunawarra Re-creation* is an act of reclamation and renewal — a story of Blak women healing, surviving, and creating amidst pain and power. It does not shy away from truth: themes of rape, sexual assault, violence, forced removal, and genocide are confronted with raw honesty and deep respect. But through that darkness, light emerges — the light of creation, of courage, of continued storytelling.

This deeply resonant work connects directly with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company's mission: to amplify sovereign voices through bold, moving, and unapologetically Blak performance. As Australia's longest-running First Peoples theatre company, ILBIJERRI has transformed stages across the country with acclaimed works like *Blood On The Dance Floor*, *Viral* (2018), *Which Way Home*, and *7 Deadly Gins*.

Premiering in 2024 at Southbank Theatre, The Lawler, *Gunawarra Re-creation* marked a defining chapter in Maza's extraordinary career — a fitting high note before she steps down after an awe-inspiring eighteen-year

tenure with ILBIJERRI. Her legacy? A generation of empowered First Nations storytellers and a repertoire that forever changed Australia's cultural landscape.

Now, Geelong audiences have the rare chance to experience this transformative work up close. The Geelong Arts Centre season of *Gunawarra Re-creation* is brief but unmissable — with just three performances only, beginning **Friday 17 July 2026**, featuring both matinee and evening sessions, and closing with a special post-show Q&A on **Saturday 18 July**.

Gunawarra Re-creation is a celebration of story, survival, and spirit — a theatre experience that reaches deep into the soul and reminds us of the enduring power of connection. Don't miss this unforgettable moment on the Geelong stage.

Gunawarra re-creation
runs 17 - 18 July 2026

GUNAWARRA RE-CREATION

ILBIJERRI Theatre Company

by Isobel Morphy-Walsh

DATES & TIMES:

7:30pm, Friday 17 July

2:00pm, Saturday 18 July

7:30pm, Saturday 18 July

VENUE:

The Story House

CREDITS:

Cast

Melodie Reynolds-Diarra,
Carly Sheppard, Hannah
Morphy-Walsh, and
Kristel-Lee Kickett.

Writer

Isobel Morphy-Walsh
(Nirim Baluk)

Director

Dr Rachael Maza AM
(Yidinji, Meriam)

Producer

Joel Te Teira
(Māori - Ngāti Maniapoto)

Set Designer

Dann Barber

Set and Costume Design

Secondment

Emma Salmon and Stone Turner

Lighting Designer

Katie Sfetkidis

Sound Designer

James Henry
(Yuwaalaraay, Gamilaraay,
Yorta Yorta and Yuin)

Sound Design Secondment

Todd J. Bennett

Dramaturg

Jules Orcullo

Design Associate

Emma Holgate

IL
BIJ
ERRI
THEATRE COMPANY

THE LARK



Noni Hazlehurst is a generational name in Australia — a presence woven through the childhoods, households and cultural memories of millions. Millennials grew up with her warm, generous voice on *Play School*, singing, dancing, and sparking imagination onscreen. Their parents knew her as a trusted guide on *Better Homes and Gardens*, or recognised her early acting brilliance in *Ride on Stranger*, *Monkey Grip*, and *The Sullivans*. And of course, in more recent years, Australian audiences have embraced her in *A Place To Call Home*, *City Homicide*, *The Letdown*, *The End*, and the hit film *Ladies in Black*.

But while her screen work made her a household name, Hazlehurst's stage career has been equally defining. From *The Man from Mukinupin* and *Hamlet* to *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, her theatrical presence has long moved audiences. In 2015/16 she stunned the nation with her one-woman performance in Daniel Keene's *Mother*, earning two Helpmann Award nominations and the 2018 Matilda Award for Best Female Actor in a Leading Role. Now, following that celebrated collaboration, Hazlehurst returns to Keene's pen for *The Lark*.

In Conversation with beloved Australian star of television, cinema and stage,

Noni Hazlehurst

Fresh from its world premiere at Arts Centre Melbourne, Hazlehurst is enjoying a brief moment of calm before launching into what promises to be a major 2026 touring season.

"[The shows] went really well and audiences were very attentive and responsive and it got lots of lovely feedback," she says. "I'm having a little break now — the calm before and after the storm. I have to keep doing it in my head and in my house every day to keep my memory."

In this new work, Hazlehurst embodies Rose Grey, a woman struggling to say her final goodbye to the small inner-city pub she has called home all her life. The Lark — now derelict, closed for six months, and marked for demolition amid suburban gentrification — is more than a pub; it is Rose's childhood shelter, her family's haven, and a vessel for decades of memories absorbed into its very walls. Faced with inevitable change, Rose stands firmly in place, her heart tethered to a past she can no longer keep.

On its surface, *The Lark* is a tender ode to Australian pub culture. Beneath that, Keene's elegant, quietly devastating writing reveals a much deeper story — one about stagnation and sentimentality, the terror of change, and the ache of realising too late that the past can hold us more tightly than we ever intended.

"Identity and change of identity are at the core of this," Hazlehurst explains. "Rose says 'The people around here change. They had different lives — easier lives — you know. The money came into town and the cities became a Mecca', and it's funny, Covid sort of changed that again when these great inner cities became ghettos because no one could go out (but we won't talk about that!). It's about change and evolution whether we like evolution or not. There's nothing surer than the fact that evolution will occur. It's about the past and about loss and what's important."

It's also about regret — the kind that sits quietly, then strikes. "Rose's greatest tragedy is that she realises at the end of her life that she could have made different choices and I think that's something that a lot of people would relate to — the what if and if onlys."

For Hazlehurst, the real drawcard lies in Keene's profound understanding of character. Like *Mother*, *The Lark* presents a richly layered, deeply human woman — flawed, funny, bruised, complex, and achingly real.

"Keene's writing is so richly and beautifully crafted. There are certain things that happen to Rose that resonate for me and are things that I know happen to other people. Everyone is very complex, everyone's had a very complex lived experience of some sort. His writing creates a character and then that's my job to flesh out that complexity and show it in a true and authentic way."

Keene wrote the role of Rose Grey specifically for Hazlehurst, a gesture she treats with deep gratitude.

"I'm very free with my emotions and I think Daniel knows that. He's quite a doer himself, he has a very funny side and he loves a good laugh but he also has obviously a very serious side. I think he knows he can trust me and that's something I honour. I think the reason it all exists is because I have a very deep understanding of where Daniel is coming from being very close friends for the last 10 years. In fact we shared a house with his partner and I shared a house for five years. He puts this world out and gives me the freedom to explore. Again I feel like it's another great gift."

“
**TO HAVE A
RENOWNED,
ACCLAIMED
PLAYWRIGHT
WRITING FOR YOU
— I MEAN IT'S
REMARKABLE AND
I NEVER TAKE IT
FOR GRANTED.**
”

That emotional trust is further strengthened by director Matt Scholten, whose stripped-back approach allows Hazlehurst to command the stage for the full 75 minutes — an uninterrupted monologue that pins audiences to their seats.

"I love a challenge and it's better than sitting in a dressing room waiting for your cue in the story," she laughs.

It's no surprise Hazlehurst is drawn to stories that demand emotional fearlessness. Her legacy in Australian children's television sits comfortably alongside her passion for darker, more complex storytelling.

"*Play School* was very much a part-time thing that I did for 24 years and I've never tried to get away from it. I'm still actively involved in advocacy for preschool children, always have been. I just look for something that's going to challenge me and that I think is a story worth telling... I've certainly always been a storyteller. We all have these dark souls but not many people get to explore them."

With *The Lark*, Hazlehurst once again steps into that creative space — illuminating the tender, painful, beautiful terrain of a woman at a crossroads, and inviting audiences to examine the "what ifs" and "if onlys" of their own lives.

The Lark will be showing in Geelong Arts Centre's The Story House from Wednesday 12 August through to Saturday 15 August 2026.

THE LARK

Hey Dowling and
Arts Centre Melbourne

DATES & TIMES:

Wednesday 12 Aug, 7:30pm

Thursday 13 Aug, 2:00pm

Thursday 13 Aug, 7:30pm

Friday 14 Aug, 7:30pm

Saturday 15 Aug, 2:00pm

Saturday 15 Aug, 7:30pm

VENUE:

The Story House

CREDITS:

Rose Grey

Noni Hazlehurst

Creative Team

Writer

Daniel Keene

Director

Matt Scholten

Sound Designer

Darius Kedros

Lighting Designer

Richard Vabre

Set, Props & Costume Designer

Emily Barrie

Production Manager

Nate Evers

Stage Manager

Vivienne Poznanski

Hey Dowling Producers

John Glenn & Peta Spuring-Brown



HeyDowling



BRISBANE FESTIVAL, SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
& TRISH WADLEY PRODUCTIONS PRESENT

A NEW PLAY BY SUZIE MILLER

STRONG IS THE NEW PRETTY

DIRECTED BY
LEE LEWIS

Strong Is The New Pretty brings grit, glory, and girl-power to the Mainstage.

If there's one name being shouted globally and echoing through the halls, foyers, and rehearsal rooms of Geelong Arts Centre's SEASON 2026, it's Suzie Miller — storyteller, game-changer, and all-round theatrical force of nature. Known for crafting bold, female-centred narratives and shining a light on the complexities tucked inside personal stories of power and injustice, Miller will make two entries into the Mainstage program in Season 2026 with her newest knockout work, *Strong Is The New Pretty*.

And this time, she's trading the courtroom for the football field.

Coming fresh off the heels of her highly anticipated May 2026 run of *RBG: Of Many, One* — the riveting portrait of the Supreme Court icon that captivated audiences — Miller will arrive back at Geelong Arts Centre with a burst of energy and a brand-new playbook. The internationally acclaimed playwright, librettist, screenwriter, and lawyer behind *Prima Facie* (which recently wrapped filming with Cynthia Erivo in the starring role) and the Rosamund Pike-led legal drama *Inter Alia* is dropping her gavel and grabbing a Sherrin.

Because this story? It's not just about footy. It's about the women who changed the game forever.

Back in 2010, an official report into the state of Australian Rules Football dared to dream of a national women's league. It was a bold idea — exciting, overdue, and met with plenty of skepticism. But dreams have a

funny way of becoming unstoppable when enough people believe in them. Fast forward seven relentless, passionate, sweat-drenched years, and the AFLW burst onto the national stage, rewriting the rulebook and igniting a movement.

In *Strong Is The New Pretty*, Miller unpacks the untold story of that transformation — from pipe dream to powerhouse — with her signature warmth, insight, and razor-sharp docudrama style. This is the story behind the story: the hurdles, the heart, the heroes, and the hope that built a league the sporting world could no longer ignore.

"With *Strong Is The New Pretty*, it's about seizing on a moment in Australia where an incredible template of challenging a system brought about extraordinary change through the actions of women doing it their way from within," explains Miller.

Reuniting with her *Prima Facie* dream team, Miller is again teaming up with director Lee Lewis and star Sheridan Harbridge, who lead a powerhouse cast of eight performers including Lucy Bell and Amy Ingram. Together, they form a theatre ensemble with the chemistry of a well-oiled midfield and the fire of a team charging toward finals.

Add in the atmospheric brilliance of lighting designer Paul Jackson, and the charged compositions of Clemence Williams, and you've got a production that hums with adrenaline, camaraderie, and colour.

This is theatre written in mud, sweat, and belief. It's not just about a sport — it's about a revolution.

From its earliest sparks to its game-changing debut, *Strong Is The New Pretty* captures the grit of the field, the pulse of community, and the roar of crowds wrapped in team-coloured scarves. True to Miller's storytelling magic, the play digs into the deeper layers — the injustices confronted, the strength revealed, and the fierce resilience of women pushing forward with unapologetic ambition.

Geelong Arts Centre is marked as the only Victorian spot to show the work in 2026 before it heads off to Sydney.

With ten shows across seven jam-packed days, *Strong Is The New Pretty* charges out of the change rooms on **Thursday 8 October** and plays until the final siren on **Saturday 17 October**.

Strong Is The New Pretty
plays 8 - 17 October 2026

STRONG IS THE NEW PRETTY

By Suzie Miller
Directed by Lee Lewis

A Brisbane Festival, Sydney
Theatre Company and
Trish Wadley Productions
co-production

DATES & TIMES:

Thursday 8 Oct, 7:00pm
Friday 9 Oct, 7:00pm
Saturday 10 Oct, 1:30pm
Saturday 10 Oct, 7:00pm
Wednesday 14 Oct, 1:30pm
Wednesday 14 Oct, 7:00pm
Thursday 15 Oct, 7:00pm
Friday 16 Oct, 7:00pm
Saturday 17 Oct, 1:30pm
Saturday 17 Oct, 7:00pm

VENUE:

The Play House

CREDITS:

Lighting Designer
Paul Jackson
Composer
Clemence Williams
Video Designer
Craig Wilkinson

Cast

Lucy Bell,
Sheridan Harbridge,
Amy Ingram

Originally commissioned by Trish Wadley Productions.

This project has been assisted by the Australian
Government through Creative Australia,
its principal arts investment and advisory body.

SYDNEY THEATRE
COMPANY

BRISBANE
FESTIVAL



TRISH
WADLEY
PRODUCTIONS



SPOTLIGHT WITH SUZIE MILLER

By now, you've probably gathered that Suzie Miller is no ordinary playwright — she's a firecracker of a storyteller, a fearless champion of women's voices, and a creative force powering much of Geelong Arts Centre's Season 2026. From the iconic Ruth Bader Ginsburg in *RBG: Of Many, One* to the high-energy heart of the AFLW in *Strong Is The New Pretty*, Miller has a knack for turning powerful women's stories into unmissable theatre. Now, she's pulling back the curtain on her process and the evolution of these standout works.

1. What first sparked the idea for *Strong Is The New Pretty*?

Strong Is The New Pretty was sparked by the advent of the AFLW. I'm very close friends with Sam Mostyn and at the time she was a commissioner of the AFL, the only female commissioner, and she kept raising the idea of a women's league.

I was born and raised in Melbourne, absolutely saturated in AFL culture, but to me as a young girl, the fact that it was only boys playing and only boys umpiring, meant that I felt it excluded both who I was and my experiences.

The introduction of women playing football, which I recognise now was all over the country, but below the surface and certainly not visible, was brought to my attention by the advent of the AFLW. I interviewed many people who had been trying for generations to introduce women's footy, including the inaugural players of AFLW, and Sam Mostyn. These were the initiators and wise women of AFLW, and they worked hard together to bring a women's league into existence. Women might have been playing AFL for generations in communities or home spun teams, yet they had never really been acknowledged, organised into a visible sporting league, or professionalised.

2. You've spoken often about women being excluded from spaces. How did your experiences help shape this story?

I was highly aware as a young girl that women were excluded from spaces and even worse than that, their voices were not heard loudly. This wasn't only in sport, but in every aspect of life. I was a science kid at school and there were very few opportunities for young girls to take science classes or to engage with science communities. These days, thank goodness, STEM subjects are very much frequented by girls, and girls are encouraged to participate when it comes to sport. I do remember when my school introduced softball, not baseball, as a potential new sport, and we only had one softball mitt. When that softball mitt arrived, it was laid out in a glass cabinet and we all lined up to parade through the office of the school to admire it. I remember the sacredness of that one mitt.

Years later, when my boy was at school, I recognised how many baseball and softball mitts there were just floating around in trunks for boys to use... But I do remember I wanted to be in the spaces that boys were in, I wanted to have a voice and have a platform, and I didn't understand why I wasn't allowed to have that.

3. Your plays place women's voices at the centre.

How do you navigate the balance between activism and artistry and your storytelling?

I think it's interesting that it's considered activism to place women's voices at the centre, because I'm a woman, I'm a writer, so I write what I know, which is understanding what it's like to be silenced in a world that doesn't appreciate what you have to offer. I struggled for a long time in this country trying to develop a voice that in some ways was dismissed as not a 'storytelling' voice because it was so significantly female led, yet now is seen globally as a concept of storytelling that is valid and having its own force.

I write not specifically for activism (despite being highly political myself), I write because storytelling to me is a powerful way of illustrating where contemporary values and alignments are not working, and how people and humanity suffer as a consequence of that. I don't think as a writer you can create a story for a purpose, you can only tell stories, and entertain with a sense of what conversation you want to have with the world.

4. *Strong Is The New Pretty* reunites you with Lee Lewis after the global success of *Prima Facie*. What makes this creative partnership so powerful for you?

Lee Lewis is at the absolute top of her game as a theater director. She's an extraordinary leader, extraordinarily generous and is inspired in her understanding of the creativity involved in making new plays. Her dramaturgy is sharp, clarified and completely engaged with the style and the thematics of the writing. I met Lee Lewis early in my career, was always amazed by her work and when we came together and created *Prima Facie* with Sheridan Harbridge, I realised that working with her was an absolute gift.

5. What excites you most about seeing the play brought to the stage for the first time?

Just to see that many women on stage - with a woman playwright and a woman director and a woman producer coming together and dreaming of bringing an Australian story to the Nation. Our dream is to play in many towns in every state and take it overseas.

I love the idea that we can bring a whole bunch of women's voices together, create something magnificent and run it right. It's basically my love letter to Australia and the way Australia has this concept of a fair go, but often that fair go didn't extend to women or to people of colour or to people othered in society. I feel that in Australia in recent times, the concept of the 'fair go' is more a mantra than a reality - and I wanted to show that the concept needs to modernise and be held onto as a vital element of Australian culture that defines us.

6. What do you hope audiences experience in the theater as they watch *Strong Is The New Pretty* unfold?

The delight in watching how something came into being out of nothing and how that idea of the fair go was actually believed in by a bunch of women who decided the time was now and they weren't going to settle for second best, they were not going to just take the crumbs off the side of the table. They were going to stand strong. Now they had a woman commissioner right at the top level of the AFL. They had all these women of wisdom who'd been advocating for years. They had so many passionate, athletic and gifted women and they came together to say it's not good enough just to say we can have something on the side and laugh us off as an anomaly.

Women have as much right to be in the league playing professionally as the men do. And I hope people come away inspired, excited, thrilled that now there are little girls growing up today who don't even know a time when women didn't play professional AFL. To me, that is extraordinary.

BELL SHAKESPEARE

Returns to Geelong with a Dark Twist: *Macbeth* Promises Power, Madness & Thunder

Geelong, get ready — Bell Shakespeare is back, and this time they bring *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's blood-drenched tragedy of ambition and moral collapse, as a reimagining to the Geelong Arts Centre Mainstage for Season 2026. This isn't just a reunion after their recent *Romeo & Juliet* run for Season 2025: it's a bold, visceral statement. Where *Romeo & Juliet* was heart-break and youthful passion, *Macbeth* is razor-sharp, intense, and dangerously alive.

Directed by the fearless Peter Evans, this production plunges into the dark heart of power. After a brutal battle, Macbeth, played by Anthony Taufa, and his comrade Banquo are confronted by three Weird Sisters who prophesize that Macbeth will one day be king. The prophecy takes root, and when he tells his wife, Lady Macbeth — embodied by the formidable Matilda Ridgway — their shared hunger for power, certainty, and posterity leads them down a murderous path. But once the blood is spilled, their certainty unravels, and the very pulse of their souls begins to crack.

It's a production branded as "Utterly compelling" from the Sydney Morning Herald, whilst The Australian Financial Review rave saying "dynamite source material and this production certainly ignited it."

Anthony Taufa is an indomitable presence in the role, drawing from his previous credits under the Bell Shakespeare banner in *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Comedy of Errors*, as well as work for Sydney Theatre Company in *Saint Joan*, *Cloud Nine*, *How to Rule the World*, *A Cheery Soul*, and *Black is the New White*. He's a NIDA graduate, and his layered intensity brings gravitas and vulnerability to Macbeth's journey.

Matching Taufa's emotional weight is Matilda Ridgway as Lady Macbeth. Ridgway is no stranger to Shakespeare and contemporary theatre: her credits include *Romeo & Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV*, and *The Players with Bell Shakespeare*. She's also an award-winning actor, theatre maker, and educator, with

roles for Ensemble Theatre (Proof, Seminar, Brooklyn Boy, Ruby Sunrise) as well as credits in TV and film — including *Bump*, *Hiding*, and *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*. Her Lady Macbeth promises to be commanding, emotionally fierce, and deeply human.

Their performance will be elevated by the transportive talents of the technical crew. Designer Anna Tregloan sculpts a world that's both real and haunted — a setting where political ambition and supernatural dread collide. Meanwhile, composer and sound designer Max Lyandvert crafts a soundscape that's as ruthless as the play itself, layering thunderous rumble, haunted whispers, and the pounding heartbeat of guilt.

Bell Shakespeare's return to Geelong is more than just a stop on tour — it's a homecoming. Their 2025 *Romeo & Juliet* struck a chord with the community, and now they return with something richer, darker, more searing. This *Macbeth* is part of their ambitious 2026 national season, alongside a politically charged *Julius Caesar* and a cheeky world premiere called *Mackenzie* by Yve Blake, signaling a company that lives in both the timeless and the fresh.

Founded in 1990 by John Bell, Bell Shakespeare is Australia's premier Shakespeare company, tackling his rich literary and play catalogue with modern placement. They're revered for making Shakespeare's language feel urgent, personal, and wildly alive. Over decades, Bell Shakespeare has won hearts with their touring productions, education programs, and commitment to bringing classic texts into contemporary dialogue.

“
**I FEEL NOW
THE FUTURE IN
THE INSTANT**
- ACT 1, SCENE 5
”

So why does *Macbeth* in Geelong matter? Because it's a story about ambition, guilt, and the terrifying cost of power — themes that are forever relevant. Performed by actors at the top of their game in a production that pulses with dread and beauty, this *Macbeth* offers Geelong audiences a theatrical ride into the very marrow of Shakespeare's darkest tragedy.

Part of *Macbeth*'s enduring power comes from Shakespeare's own writing. It's fast-paced but brutal. It's lyrical—but merciless. There are witches, murder, prophecy, and guilt... all distilled into a tale that doesn't just unfold; it detonates. That's why even centuries after it was written, *Macbeth* remains one of his most performed and most discussed plays. In a time when questions of power and morality feel more urgent than ever, this play resonates perhaps more fiercely now than in any generation.

When the curtain rises at the Geelong Arts Centre in November 2026, expect theatre that unsettles, electrifies, and lingers. Expect whispers in the dark, drum-like footsteps, and a descent into madness that is as mesmerising as it is brutal.

DATES & TIMES:
Friday 6 Nov, 7:00pm
Saturday 7 Nov, 1:30pm
Saturday 7 Nov, 7:00pm

VENUE: The Play House

CAST CREDITS:

Anthony Taufa, Matilda Ridgway.
Written by William Shakespeare.
Directed by Peter Evans.
Designed by Anna Tregloan.
Sound and Composition by Max Lyandvert

BELL SHAKESPEARE



RE WI RE

**Geelong's Playground
for the Bold, the Bizarre,
and the Brilliant on Stage**



If you're the kind of theatregoer who craves the strange, the salacious, or the deliciously off-centre, then REWIRE is your new artistic playground. As the irreverent, electric undercurrent of Geelong Arts Centre's Season 2026, REWIRE is where boundaries blur, rules are joyfully broken, and live performance becomes a nightly experiment in boldness. It's theatre that sparkles, sweats, and sometimes even stings — and that's exactly the point.

The season kicks off with **Good Man**, from Geelong's own Connor Morel. In a heartfelt musical packed with humour, Morel tells the story of meeting his father for the very first time — during his first-ever live gig, no less — with a live band alongside him. Equal parts charming, chaotic, and deeply personal, this Geelong run proves that sometimes the most disarming stories are the ones we tell about ourselves. The work follows Morel's Creative Engine-supported *A Lovely Day To Be Online*, and if that's anything to go by, audiences are in for a warm, witty whirlwind.

From the confessional to the transcendent, REWIRE then dives into **Temple of Desire**, a lush dance-theatre work from Karma Dance Inc. that glows at the intersection of spirituality and sensuality. This visually hypnotic piece conjures an imaginary sanctum shaped by classical and contemporary Indian dance, pushing into alternative histories and liberated futures while acknowledging culture, colonisation, and identity with breathtaking beauty. It's the kind of performance that feels like stepping into someone's dream — vivid, evocative, and hard to leave behind.

Of course, REWIRE wouldn't be REWIRE without a little pop-culture pandemonium, and Back to Back Theatre delivers exactly that with their world premiere **I AM IN A PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITNEY SPEARS**. In true Back to Back fashion, the work questions the possibilities of theatre itself as it follows Simon — Australia's number one Britney fan — who hatches an elaborate plan to protect his idol from imagined threats. It's odd, funny, unsettling, and

strangely tender, like digging through the fan-mail drawer of someone you're not entirely sure you should trust. And naturally, you can't look away.

After Britney comes belly laughs, courtesy of the award-winning Gillian Cosgriff in **Life, Oh Life**. Blending songs, stand-up, and the occasional bout of voluntary audience participation, Cosgriff brings her glittering comedic instincts to a performance that pings between silliness and sincerity with effortless charm. As a regular on *Thank God You're Here*, she's no stranger to controlled chaos — which makes her a perfect fit for REWIRE's anything-can-happen energy.

The season deepens again with **Swallow**, a poignant contemporary dance work from Wiradjuri artist Joel Bray. This Green Room-nominated piece explores the intimate ritual of discovering one's totem, weaving Bray's lived experience as a fair-skinned Indigenous man and a gay man into a tender journey alongside the Welcome Swallow, or Yirribin. It's personal yet universal, delicate yet powerful — a meditation on identity that lingers long after the final movement.

Rounding out the season is the live cine-theatre experiment **POV** by Re:group, where 11-year-old filmmaker Bub recruits two adult actors — unrehearsed and unsuspecting — to re-enact her memories surrounding her family's breakdown. With each night unfolding differently, audiences get to witness raw creativity in motion, shaped by a child's determination to uncover her own truth. It's messy, heartfelt, and exhilarating: exactly what REWIRE does best.

Together, these works form a season that is daring, dizzying, and deliciously alive. REWIRE isn't just a program — it's an experience that invites you to plunge head-first into the imaginative unknown. If you're ready to have your expectations unravelled and rewired, this is your invitation.

The program is further uplifted by the REWIRE +After Party, with Friday and Saturday nights stepping into hazy nightlife territory with a bar and DJ.



REWIRE

CHALLENGE EVERYTHING—
ART THAT OPENS UP
BOLD, DARING AND
UNCONVENTIONAL WORLDS



13 – 14
MAR

WORLD PREMIERE
A GEELONG ARTS CENTRE EXCLUSIVE

GOOD MAN

Connor Morel

An unflinching new rock monologue that fuses blistering original songs with comedic, intimate storytelling. Performed by Geelong's own, Connor Morel.



18
APR

TEMPLE OF DESIRE

Karma Dance Inc.

A visually stunning dance-theatre spectacular at the edge of where spirituality and sensuality meet.



8 – 9
MAY

WORLD PREMIERE
A GEELONG ARTS CENTRE EXCLUSIVE

I AM IN A PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITNEY SPEARS

Back to Back Theatre

This new work sees Simon Laherty, Australia's number one Britney fan, create an elaborate plan to catch the culprits who threaten his celebrity crush.



10 – 11
JUL

LIFE, OH LIFE

Gillian Cosgriff

Gillian Cosgriff's unique blend of songs, stand-up and entirely voluntary occasional audience participation.



28 – 29
AUG

A GEELONG ARTS CENTRE
SUPPORTED PRODUCTION

SWALLOW

Joel Bray Dance

A contemporary dance work by Wiradjuri artist Joel Bray about the intimate ritual of discovering your totem.



11 – 12
SEP

POV

re:group performance
collective

A kid with a camera. Two adults. No rehearsal. A dramatic cine-theatre experience.



CREATIVE SPARKS FLY

Bron Batten and Keziah Warner Supercharge Geelong's Creative Engine

At Geelong Arts Centre, creativity isn't simply encouraged—it's supercharged. It's fuelled, finessed, and set loose with intention.

This is the ethos of Creative Engine, the Centre's ambitious development program that has become something of a launchpad for artists who dare to think expansively. This year, the program's Associate Artist initiative hands two remarkable creators the keys to this artistic powerhouse, offering more than \$40,000 in funding each, along with studio access, mentorship, and tailored support that together form a rare and enviable opportunity.

Into this dynamic, possibility-rich environment stride Bron Batten and Keziah Warner, two artists whose careers are marked by bold instincts, rigorous craft, and a refreshing refusal to play creatively small. Each brings a distinct flavour of invention, and together they infuse the program with a delicious sense of anticipation.

Batten arrives with a career forged on stages across the world—from Melbourne to Berlin, Edinburgh to Chicago—where she has built a reputation for work that is equal parts humorous, intimate, and disarmingly courageous.

Her new Creative Engine project, *The Natural Order*, feels like a quintessential Batten creation: conceptually daring, emotionally charged, and gleefully unpredictable. In the work, she performs alongside a child actor playing her eight-year-old self, attempting to gently, desperately—perhaps even absurdly—dissuade her younger self from pursuing a life in the arts. The premise alone carries a spark: a collision of past and present selves, seriousness and play, cynicism and hope. It's the kind of idea that promises equal parts laughter and existential ache.

Batten speaks candidly about what this opportunity means, acknowledging that the structure and resources “will literally sustain my ability to keep being an artist.”

In an industry where artists often operate on sheer willpower and caffeine, this support isn't just helpful—it's transformative. Creative Engine becomes, in her hands, not just a program but a lifeline for possibility.

Warner brings a complementary spark: razor-sharp writing, rich emotional intelligence, and a knack for crafting stories that linger long af-

ter the curtain falls. With premieres at Malthouse and Red Stitch and recognition from major national playwriting awards, her work balances precision with heart.

Her Associate Artist project, *Desire Lines*, unfolds in the unlikelyst of romantic settings—Geelong train station—where a long-time V/Line train driver and a newly divorced coach driver fall into a slow-burning, funny, and unexpectedly tender connection. It's a love story sketched in cigarette breaks, shared timetables, and fleeting moments of courage. Warner has a gift for elevating the everyday, and here she turns an ordinary transit hub into a stage for emotional discovery.

For Warner, the residency is more than a chance to write uninterrupted; it is an opportunity to embed herself in a creative community and to uplift other artists through mentorship. She describes the program as “such a rare and incredible opportunity,” recognising the profound value of a funded, dedicated writing role in a sector where such support is almost mythic.

Together, Batten and Warner bring a bold, generative energy to Creative Engine—a program already renowned for its impact. Since 2019, the initiative has supported 963 Victorian artists, developed 133 projects, delivered 82 grants, and contributed over \$1.2 million in development support.

These aren't just numbers; they represent a region-wide creative surge, nurtured through deliberate investment and genuine belief in what artists can achieve.

CEO and Creative Director Rhys Holden captures the spirit of the program as one that empowers artists to “create exciting new projects” while enriching the wider creative ecosystem.

With Batten and Warner now shaping the year ahead, that ecosystem feels especially charged—alive with new provocations, new narratives, and the irresistible hum of artistic risk-taking.

By investing boldly, Geelong Arts Centre signals a clear message: when artists are trusted, resourced, and emboldened, extraordinary things happen. And with these two vibrant, genre-bending creators now at its centre, the future of Creative Engine doesn't just look bright—it crackles with potential.

Geelong Arts Centre's Creative Engine is proudly supported by Major Artistic Partner, Deakin University, Ian Potter Foundation, and Innovation Partner, Costa Asset Management.

Further info: geelongartscentre.org.au/creative-engine/



COFFEE BREAK AT TUTTI

with Back To Back Theatre ensemble member, Simon Laherty, and Artistic Director & Co-CEO, Bruce Gladwin.

It's 9:30am on a Thursday and Tutti — Geelong Arts Centre's beloved café — has settled into its post-coffee-rush calm. Into this soft hum stroll precinct neighbours and Back to Back Theatre icons Simon Laherty and Bruce Gladwin, sneaking in a quick chat before plunging into another day of high-voltage rehearsals. The vibe is relaxed, but the driving force behind their latest work is running very, very hot.

For more than 30 years, Back to Back Theatre has been one of Australia's most daring, decorated, and deliciously unpredictable companies — a Geelong-born trailblazer powered by an ensemble of actors with disabilities who continue to reshape what contemporary performance can be. Under the artistic guidance of Gladwin and Co-CEO and Executive Producer Tanya Bennett, the company has toured the globe, collected major awards, and earned international acclaim. And at the centre of many of these creations is long-time ensemble member Simon Laherty, who joined the company in 2003 and remains one of its most magnetic, joyfully distinctive collaborators.

Now, Back to Back returns home with a brand-new world premiere at Geelong Arts Centre: *I AM IN A PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITNEY SPEARS*, starring Laherty as Australia's self-proclaimed number-one Britney fan on a wild mission to protect his pop princess. The show gleefully dances on the line between reality and fantasy — which makes sense, given that the initial spark came straight from Laherty's imagination.

"I came up with the story three years ago," he explains. "It's about me wanting to be with Britney to get rid of all of the publicity and all of the negativity from her life and the conservatorship. There's singing and dancing — but not her music."

Laherty, whose two-decade career with the company includes major touring works such as *small metal objects*, *Ganesh Versus The Third Reich*, *Food Court*, and *The Shadow Whose Prey The Hunter Becomes*, developed and self-directed the piece as part of Back to Back's ensemble-led solo series. But this isn't just fandom — it's a deep dive into connection.

"Simon has a very strong interest in Britney Spears — he's her number one fan — and he has led this process," Gladwin says. "The project actually began pre-Covid, but a lot of the devising happened during lockdowns online. The script is built from improvisations where Luke Ryan, the other performer, would role-play Britney, and Simon would play himself."

Out of those sessions grew an entire imagined scenario: "In the material, Simon invites Britney to come to Geelong to stay with him in his spare room in Wandana Heights," Gladwin continues. "It's an active, rich fantasy about a reality where Simon and Britney can be together in one place."

However, this is no simple pop-star love letter. In classic Back to Back fashion, the work digs deeper — and darker — than it first appears.

"The performance itself is quite comic," Gladwin notes. "We're not realising Britney through costumes or sequins. It's just Luke playing the text in the style similar to that of John Clarke and Bryan Dawe doing their interviews."

The humour, however, is the doorway into something far more complex.

“IT'S A META-THEATRICAL WORK — A MYSTERY THE AUDIENCE HAS TO UNPACK — BRUCE GLADWIN”

"It's a story about Simon and Luke putting on a show about Britney Spears, but it's also a story about espionage, where the audience is being trapped. Simon has a theory that many of Britney's problems come from over-obsessive fans, and he's capturing evidence of this in his work. It's a projected fantasy — and a critique — of parasocial relationships."

Laherty's Britney obsession isn't just a character detail; it becomes the lens through

which the show examines the bizarre, sometimes harmful machinery of modern celebrity worship. The piece explores the distortions, attachments, and imagined intimacies that fandom culture creates — and the unintended damage it can cause.

And yet, after all the twists, interrogations and unmaskings, one thing remains hilariously, stubbornly unchanged.

"Simon has an encyclopedic knowledge of Britney Spears — he's read her recent biography four or five times," Gladwin says.

"More than once," Laherty clarifies. "Maybe about 100 times."

Gladwin laughs. "He has interviews, videos, everything you can imagine. It's been a deep dive into research."

But even after dissecting the culture of fandom and laying bare how messy and intrusive it can be, Laherty's devotion stands firm.

"I still like her no matter what," he says — not defensively, but like it's the simplest truth in the world.

In the end, that's the delicious paradox of the show: a piece that critiques obsession, unpacks harmful attachment, and still embraces the earnest, unshakeable glow of one man's pop-star admiration.

It's just one of the groundbreaking works under the Back to Back Production schedule heading to Geelong Arts Centre in 2026. Laherty will also feature in the ACMI Touring Exhibition *CHARGE! Agincourt* by Back to Back Theatre. The Back to Back ensemble bring a fresh cinematic interpretation to Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Named after the play's pivotal battle, *Agincourt* is the latest in the company's expansive body of screen-based works. Back to Back Theatre continue their reign as boundary-pushing theatre-makers and it's revealed at Geelong Arts Centre.

Back to Back Theatre's *Agincourt* is an ACMI Commission, generously supported by Rachel Griffiths and Andrew Taylor.

***CHARGE! Agincourt* by Back To Back Theatre: Free exhibition, The Open House, arriving late-Autumn 2026**

***I AM IN A PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITNEY SPEARS* by Back to Back Theatre: The Open House, 8-9 May**



DELIGHTFUL DAYS & MATINEES

WORLDS OF DELIGHT
OPEN UP BY DAY – UNFORGETTABLE
MATINEE MOMENTS AWAIT



18
FEB

NATALIE O'DONNELL AND SIMON GLEESON: HEART & MUSIC

Promac Productions Australia

Married musical theatre stars Simon Gleeson and Natalie O'Donnell come together to share the songs and stories that shaped their careers.



22
APR

DENIS WALTER: MY ALL-TIME FAVOURITES

A curated selection of Denis Walter OAM's most memorable moments, told through live musical performance and engaging anecdotes.



3
JUN

OPERA AND CLASSICS IN CONCERT

Giuseppina Grech

Beloved songs from the world of opera, operetta, timeless musicals, and treasured classical songs, performed by Giuseppina Grech and an amazing cast of esteemed principal artists.



8
JUL

JAMES BOND CLASSICS

Shandelle Cooke

Shandelle Cooke and her seven-piece band perform the James Bond Classic songs from the 007 movie series.



21
OCT

BERNADETTE ROBINSON: THEY SANG AT CARNEGIE HALL

Winding Road Productions

Bernadette Robinson embodies the timeless voices that rang through iconic music venue, Carnegie Hall.



2
DEC

MISTLETOE MELODIES

**Tamara Kuldin and her
Merry Little Big Band**

From the sounds of Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra to Bing Crosby, Diana Krall and Michael Bublé, enjoy a medley of jazzy Christmas favourites.

FAMILY MAGIC

OPEN UP WORLDS OF
IMAGINATION FOR CURIOUS
LITTLE MINDS



23
FEB

ROBOT SONG

Joylon James & NCM

When Juniper faces a challenge at school, she discovers the thing that makes her different is what helps her find her voice.

Ages 8+



30
MAY

WHERE IS THE GREEN SHEEP?

Monkey Baa Theatre Company

Based on the book by Mem Fox & Judy Horacek, and written for the stage and directed by Eva Di Cesare.

Illustrations copyright © Judy Horacek 2004

Ages 1-6



10
JUN

MOSS PIGLET

Windmill Production Company

Microscopic. Indestructible. An explosive portrait of the world's most resilient and curious critters, tardigrades.

Ages 5-10



14
SEP

THE ALPHABET OF AWESOME SCIENCE

NCM & That Science Gang

Join professors Lexi Con and Noel Edge for a thrilling voyage through the alphabet.

Ages 5-12



19 - 20
SEP

Room on the Broom

ROOM ON THE BROOM

CDP and Tall Stories

Based on the book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler, will there be room on the broom for the witch and her friends?

Ages 3+



22 - 23
SEP

WOLFGANG IN THE STARS

Circa

A dazzling delight bursting with gravity-defying acrobatics, live video projections, puppetry, music and a heartwarming message of connection.

Ages 3+

MORE SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS



Laugh For Lifeline Comedy Gala Fundraiser

BILLING: COMEDY VICTORIA
DATES: THU 11 DEC 2025 – 7:30PM
VENUE: THE OPEN HOUSE

Laughter saves lives — literally in his fundraiser event.



A Celtic Christmas by A Taste of Ireland

BILLING: PACE LIVE
DATES: THU, 18 DEC 2025 – 7:30PM
VENUE: THE PLAY HOUSE

Direct from Off-Broadway to Geelong, Irish dancers celebrate Christmas.



SHREK The Musical

BILLING: SHOWCASE
ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LTD
DATES: WED, 31 DEC 2025 – 2:30PM
FRI, 02 JAN 2026 – 6:30PM
SAT, 03 JAN 2026 – 10:30AM & 2:30PM
VENUE: THE PLAY HOUSE

Your favourite ogre stomps back onto the stage.



Legally Blonde

BILLING: FOOTLIGHT PRODUCTIONS
DATES: FRI, 16 JAN – SUN, 1 FEB 2026 (VARIOUS TIMES)
VENUE: THE PLAY HOUSE

OMG you guys... Elle Woods is heading to Harvard and Geelong.



Sammy J – Hero Complex

BILLING: LAUGHING STOCK PRODUCTIONS
DATES: SAT, 31 JAN 2026 – 7:30PM
VENUE: THE STORY HOUSE

A storytelling masterclass from a certified comedy genius.



Ben Knight – The Parent Teacher Interview (Encore)

BILLING: KEG TOURING
DATES: FRI, 06 FEB 2026 – 7:30PM
VENUE: THE STORY HOUSE

He's a teacher turned comedian with a lot to say — and he's not holding back.



The Umbilical Brothers – Speedmouse

BILLING: ALIST.COM.AU
DATES: SAT, 07 FEB 2026 – 7:00PM
VENUE: THE PLAY HOUSE

A 25th anniversary resurrection of their iconic comedy masterpiece Speedmouse.



The Rock Orchestra By Candlelight

BILLING: FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD LTD
DATES: SUN, 08 FEB 2026 – 4:30PM & 7:30PM
VENUE: THE PLAY HOUSE

A rock concert... but make it gothic, orchestral, and bathed in thousands of flickering candles.



The Bubble Spectacular

BILLING: BASE ENTERTAINMENT
DATES: FRI, 7 JAN 11:00AM
VENUE: THE STORY HOUSE

Enter the bubbly-brilliant world of Dr Hubble.



Cirque Nouvelle – A New Evolution of Circus

BILLING: CAMEO RASCALE ENTERTAINMENT
DATES: FRI, 23 JAN 2026 6:00PM
VENUE: THE STORY HOUSE

Internationally acclaimed all-star cast are back and ready to present a truly unique and versatile production.



CADEL: Lungs on Legs

BILLING: LIMELIGHT CONSULTING
DATES: FRI, 30 JAN 2026
VENUE: THE STORY HOUSE

From down under to the top of the podium — experience the riveting true story of Cadel Evans, the first and only Australian to win the Tour de France.



Ovation

BILLING: ENTERTAINMENT CONSULTING PTY LTD
DATES: SAT, 28 FEB 2026 2:00PM
VENUE: THE PLAY HOUSE

Four of Australia's best-loved artists in the performance of a lifetime featuring Marina Prior, David Hobson, Silvie Paladino, Michael Cormick.



MASTER PLAYERS, MOTOWN, AND MUSICAL THEATRE ICONS: GEELONG ARTS CENTRE HAS THE STARS SINGING

Geelong Arts Centre's 2026 Music Program has arrived, and it's serving an entire year of musical colour, charisma and goosebump-worthy moments.

It's the kind of program that feels like flipping through the world's most eclectic record collection — orchestral classics, Americana icons, indie darlings, Motown legends, folk storytellers — each one adding their own spark to a season that's vibrant, expressive, and brimming with personality. Capping it off as the final glittering bow on top of this musical year is the incomparable Casey Donovan, closing out 2026 with a show that promises to be nothing short of unforgettable.

But before the grand finale arrives, the season rolls out a rich tapestry of sound.

Things kick off on 21 February as the **Geelong Symphony Orchestra** returns to Costa Hall with *French Flair*, a passionate swirl of Ravel's hypnotic Bolero, Chopin's dazzling Piano Concerto No. 1 with the extraordinary Konstantin Shamray, and the fiery heat of Bizet's Carmen. It's the kind of concert that throws you straight into the emotional deep end — lush, bold, and bursting with dramatic colour.

In May (Saturday 9), the orchestra softens the palette with *Seasons and Beyond*, guided by director and soloist Dale Bartrop. Grieg's Holberg Suite sets the tone with elegance, Bach's Concerto No. 2 shines with bright precision, and Vivaldi's Four Seasons delivers a hit of joy and nostalgia that feels like time travelling through weather itself. Then on 24 October, the GSO shifts gears once again with *Beethoven Revealed*, exploring one of music's greatest minds through the heroic Egmont Overture, the expansive Triple Concerto featuring Trio Anima Mundi and the playful brilliance of Symphony No. 4.

March keeps the momentum soaring as **Gillian Welch & David Rawlings** make their debut at Costa Hall following their earlier sold-out Australian run — three Sydney Opera House shows and five Hamer Hall shows snapped up in a flash. Their harmonies are otherworldly, their storytelling rich and tender, and together they create a live music experience that feels both intimate and timeless. Their show is Sunday 1 March touring under Love Police.

Just a few days later, on 5 March, the beloved **M. Ward** steps into The Open House with his band **The Undertakers**. Known for his dreamy vocals, whisper-soft charisma and intricately layered guitar work, Ward has carved out a sound that's nostalgic, smoky and beautifully atmospheric. With the full band behind him, songs from across his solo catalogue, his *She & Him* collaborations and his *Monsters of Folk* era take on new life — deeper, richer and tailor-made for an intimate venue.

The **Melbourne Symphony Orchestra** then sweeps through the year with five major performances as part of their Geelong season, each shaped by the bold imagination of Chief Conductor Jaime Martín. From the epic opening notes of Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in March to the glowing warmth of Handel's Messiah in December, the MSO's 2026 season is full of emotional contrasts and radiant musicianship. Expect favourites like Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto (with the brilliant Andrea Lam), European masterworks, and new voices shaping the sound of contemporary orchestral music.

March also delivers a major hit of nostalgia when **Human Nature** bring their *MTWN20 Motown* anniversary celebrations to Costa Hall. Fans can expect all the classics — My Girl, Baby I Need Your Lovin', I'll Be There, and so many more — delivered with the unmistakable harmonies and charm Aus-



tralia has loved for more than 30 years. Add in the Tierney Brothers performing tracks from their debut album *Soundtrack Of My Life*, and it's a full-blown night of feel-good rhythm and soul.

Then, in April, beloved singer-songwriter **Josh Pyke** brings his warm, witty storytelling to The Open House as part of his *Feeding the Wolves and Other Stories* tour. It's Pyke at his most intimate and generous — stripped-back performances that allow the lyrics, the craft and the connection to take centre stage.

After a full year of musical adventures, the 2026 season crescendos toward one unmissable final event.

On Saturday 31 October, **Casey Donovan** steps into The Story House to close out the year with THIS IS ME, her biggest national tour to date. It's the perfect finale — a celebration of one of Australia's most powerful voices and most open-hearted performers. Donovan takes audiences on a journey from her unforgettable Australian Idol beginnings through the huge musical theatre hits (*The Sapphires*, *Chicago*, *We Will Rock You*, *Sister Act*, & *Juliet*), the iconic televised concert moments, and into brand-new original music performed live for the first time.

It's personal. It's powerful. It's the kind of show that leaves a beautiful ache in your chest. It brings the entire 2026 Music Program home with heart, humour and breath-taking talent.

A year of music — all leading to one extraordinary final note. Geelong, get ready to listen.



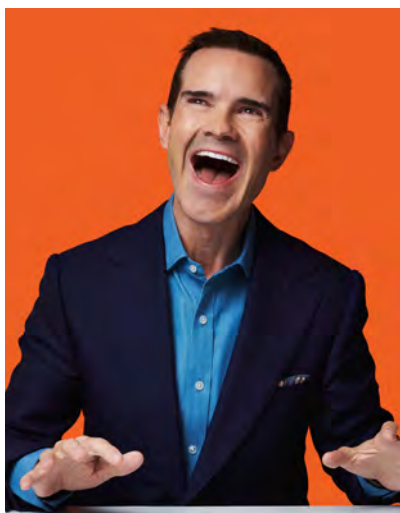
COMEDY TO COMMAND YOUR ATTENTION IN 2026

If laughter is the best medicine, Geelong Arts Centre's 2026 comedy program is basically a 12-month prescription — filled by some of the biggest names in the world, the sharpest new award-winners, and Australia's most adored comedy heavy-weights. It's bold, bright, a bit unhinged, and proudly eclectic. Think comedy tapas: a little international spice, a lot of local flavour, and every bite absolutely delicious.

The laughs kick off with a global punchline as one of the UK's most notorious joke machines, **Jimmy Carr**, blitzes Costa Hall with *Laughs Funny* across four shows on 5 & 6 March. He's internationally infamous for a reason: the man delivers more jokes in an hour than most of us do in a year. No topic is safe, no punchline is gentle, and no seats will be left by the time these shows roll around. This is your big glitzy international act, and he's arriving at full-speed.

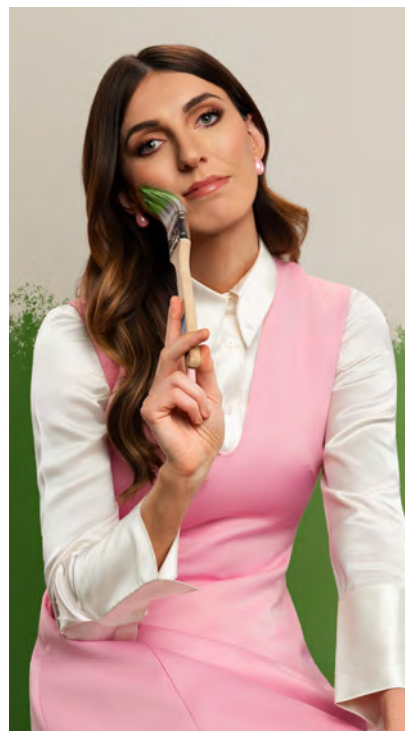
Then the spotlight swings decisively home — first to the brilliantly frazzled, award-winning chaos engine **Bron Lewis**, who arrives at The Open House on 26 June with *Chaos*. Between three kids, a needy puppy, a past life as a high-school teacher, and a swirl of life misadventures, Lewis turns a relatable meltdown into razor-sharp comedy. She's one of Australia's most exciting comedic voices right now, and this show is equal parts confession, catharsis and "wait, is that my life too?"

The next night, rising star and 2025 Best Newcomer nominee **Anisa Nandaula** takes centre stage with *No Small Talk* (27 June). Fierce, clever and utterly magnetic, Nandaula unpacks neighbour feuds, workplace insanity and a giant, laughter-filled return to Africa after a decade away. She's widely tipped as one of Australia's next big things — funny, fiery, and impossible not to love.



The program shifts to the procrastination queen of the southern hemisphere: **Melanie Bracewell**. Fresh off rave reviews across Australia and New Zealand, Mel brings *Dilly Dallying* to The Play House on July 10. Her bio insists she'll write something more profound later — once she finishes her sudoku — but truly: she's a multi-award-winning, critically adored storyteller who can spin everyday mishaps into comedic gold.

Just a week later on 17 July, the big-name energy continues with Australian powerhouse **Nazeem Hussain** and his brand-new show *I'd Like To Tell You About Some Jokes*. Hussain just wrapped his biggest tour yet across Australia, New Zealand and London, and he's returning with that signature mix of cultural commentary, larger-than-life characters, and absolutely zero filter. If you've ever seen him bring a house down, you know how huge this will be.



Wrapping things up on 18 July, the wonderfully strange, cult-favourite comic **Ray O'Leary** returns to Geelong with *I Can See O'Leary Now The Ray Has Gone*. Deadpan, surreal and sharper than he looks in that oversized suit, O'Leary serves up a uniquely offbeat style beloved across *Taskmaster NZ*, *Have You Been Paying Attention?* and comedy festivals nationwide. It's dry. It's weird. It's brilliant.

What makes this year so juicy is how wide the net is cast — international stars, household Aussie favourites, and award-winning rising voices all stitched together into one seamless program.

It's the kind of lineup you'd expect at a major capital city festival, not spread luxuriously across Geelong's year.

It's comedy for every taste: the dark, the chaotic, the political, the absurd, the confessional, the family-fried, the procrastination-fuelled, and the magnificently unfiltered. Instead of choosing just one flavour... Why not sample all of them?

It sinks in brilliantly to the overarching *SEASON 2026* offering, bringing comedy that is a bit brazen, definitely boisterous, and brilliantly bright. If you leave with a stomach ache from laughing, even better!

With more acts littered throughout the *SEASON 2026* program including Sammy J and Ben Knight, and more to come, including in the kids comedy department, get your grins ready!

In short: this season isn't just funny.

It's *seriously* funny.

MAKE A NIGHT (OR A WEEKEND) OF YOUR GEELONG ARTS CENTRE VISIT

So you're coming to the Geelong Arts Centre for a show? Brilliant choice! But here's the thing: the fun doesn't stop when the curtain falls—or even when it rises. Just beyond the welcoming golden curtain doors lies a whole world of art, flavour, and coastal magic that turns a simple theatre outing into an unforgettable Geelong getaway. If you're planning to pop in for a performance, we highly recommend planning to linger.



Start with Art: Explore the Cultural Precinct

Begin your adventure by immersing yourself in the creative pulse of the neighbourhood. **Geelong Gallery**, one of the country's most distinguished regional galleries, sits just across the precinct, ready to welcome you into its beautifully curated spaces. With a captivating blend of contemporary works, historical favourites, and powerful First Nations art, the gallery invites you to slow down, wander, and let your imagination wake up.

Just next door, **Platform Arts** offers something entirely different—an energetic home for experimental practice where emerging artists stretch boundaries and bend expectations. It's the kind of place where art feels alive, unpredictable, and wonderfully immediate. Together, these cultural gems set the tone for a night of storytelling and spectacle at the theatre.



Explore their menu at tutticafe.com.au

Dine, Sip & Savour

Of course, a good night out deserves a delicious beginning. You can ease into the evening right here on site at **Tutti**, Geelong Arts Centre's own restaurant, where the food is fresh, inviting, and perfectly suited to that pre-show buzz. It's the kind of spot where the staff remember your face, the atmosphere feels warm, and the meal sends you into the theatre feeling ready for anything. If you're attending a matinee, you're also in luck as the site offers coffees, delicious cakes and treats for morning tea, and the most vibrant lunch. The best part is you don't have to leave the theatre, or rush halfway across town to get from your restaurant seat to your theatre seat.

But if the city streets are calling your name, follow the echoes down the continuation of **Little Malop Street** and into Geelong's beloved hospitality hub and a culinary treasure map. Stroll between glowing doorways and you'll find yourself drawn into spaces like **Felix**, a chic European-inspired wine bar perfect for settling in with good company. Or perhaps **The Arborist** will tempt you with its canopy of greenery and vibrant menu brimming with flavour and flair.

For something more casual, the street-spilling dining destination takes you on a global culinary journey - you have southern fried chicken from resident chook champions, **Hot Chicken Project**, there's the best broths and dumplings, and sometimes a combination of the two at **Sober Ramen**, and an Asian-fusion offering at **frankie**. The specialty restaurant puts freshness and flavour as their focus across their shared style menu with cocktails to thrill! If you're after a good old-fashioned Australian counter meal where parris and steak shine at **Eureka Hotel**. The multifaceted central pub is an all-round winner; the ideal setting for a relaxed and hearty meal, the perfect environment to scream words of encouragement to your team with their live sports coverage, and the dancefloor spot to let loose into all hours of the morning either thanks to an electrifying live touring band, a local hit-server, or a beat-bringing house DJ.

In other live entertainment and very much continuing the liveliness following a Geelong Arts Centre show are the deliciously vibrant **Piano Bar** where singalongs are a must with their, as the name suggests, piano-led request structures nights. Add in their regular events of Drag Bingo and tribute shows, and you have the most fabulous night of fun! In the same vein, with 100% of 'Wonderwall' is **Beavs Bar**. With cover artists singing your favourite anthems into the early hours on weekends, and open mic sessions during the week, Beav's is a beloved live music venue for locals.

When the night demands something a touch more decadent, slip into the amber-lit charm of **The 18th Amendment Bar**, where cocktails come with personality and a whisper of speak-easy glamour. **Daisy** offers a similarly sophisticated yet intimate escape where cocktails are the key, while **Geelong Cellar Door** is the go-to for those who want to explore the region's finest wines in the warmest of settings. Take a bottle home with you or back to your hotel room for a night cap. Little Malop Street doesn't just serve food and drink—it serves atmosphere.



STAY & PLAY



Quest Geelong Central



Quest Geelong Central

Stay in the Heart of the City

After an evening of art, indulgence, and applause, you'll want somewhere close by to rest your head — and **Quest Geelong Central** answers that call with ease. Conveniently located and designed for comfort, it's the ideal home base whether you're making a night of it or turning your visit into a weekend-long celebration. Think crisp sheets, quiet mornings, and absolutely no pressure to rush anywhere. As the Official Accommodation Partner of Geelong Arts Centre, Quest Geelong Central makes extending your cultural adventure delightfully simple, offering the kind of stay that feels effortless, relaxed, and just a little bit luxe. Enjoy their roof top with views across the Geelong waterfront, and feel a sense of belonging with nods to the local area beautifully inserted into their decor.

Here's a bonus perk worth bookmarking: sign up to Geelong Arts Centre news to unlock special offers and discounts on your next stay — because the only thing better than a great night out is pairing it with a perfectly priced getaway.

Explore their accommodation options at questgeelongcentral.com.au



Wander the Waterfront

When morning comes, don't even think about heading home without a visit to the iconic Geelong Waterfront. With sweeping views over Corio Bay, it's the perfect place to stroll off the previous night's excitement. The water shimmers, the air feels clean and salt-tinged, and the promenade invites you to take your time. Find familiar faces and meet historical figures with the trial of bollards leading you across the Esplanade.

Then there's the **Carousel**—a gorgeously restored, heritage treasure that combines nostalgia with pure delight. Whether you hop on for the whirl or simply admire its charm, it's a gentle reminder of the playful spirit that runs through this city.

If you're lucky enough to be in Geelong on a Saturday morning, a new activation awaits. The latest initiative from the City of Greater Geelong is the **Geelong City Market**. Taking over Market Square Mall on Little Malop Street, just a stone's throw from Geelong Arts Centre, the new street market is a tantalising showcase of the region's best producers of fresh food, drinks, preserves, along with creatives. Running from 9am - 2pm every Saturday, underscored by the uplifting live music from the Forte Magazine Buskers Stage, Geelong City Market takes you on a tour of the fruitful wider Geelong and Bellarine region whilst keeping in the heart of the city.

So stay a while. Play a while. Make your Geelong Arts Centre visit more than a night at the theatre—make it an adventure.



BECOME A MEMBER – UNLOCK WORLDS OF ENTERTAINMENT, EXPERIENCES & SAVINGS

Make Geelong Arts Centre *your place* and open a door to worlds of unforgettable experiences, while connecting with a community that loves live performance as much as you. Membership is the best way to experience Season 2026 and more.

WHY JOIN?



BEST EXPERIENCE, BEST VALUE

Immediate savings when you join – the more you see, the more you save.



BEST SEATS FIRST

Enjoy early access to prime seating before Season 2026 show tickets go on general sale.



BRING OTHERS ALONG

Take advantage of discounted extra tickets and share the magic with friends and family.



EXCLUSIVE PERKS & INSIDER ACCESS

From ticket exchanges and special invitations to discounts at bars, Tutti, and touring productions offers.

2026 MEMBERSHIP PACKAGES

 <h2>SILVER</h2> <p>Best Casual - 10% off</p> <p>\$50</p> <p>Perfect if you love coming to Season shows, but you're not ready to plan and purchase in advance. Enjoy simple savings every time you visit, and book shows at your leisure throughout the year.</p> <h3>BENEFITS</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First in the know for Season shows• Pre-sale access to the best seats in the house• 10% year-round discounts on Season 2026 tickets for you and your guests• Special member offers and discounts to other nominated shows across comedy, concerts, community theatre and beyond.• 10% off drinks at Geelong Arts Centre bars and Tutti Café• Quarterly newsletter	 <h2>GOLD</h2> <p>OPTION 1: FLEXI PASS Best Flexibility - 15% off</p> <p>FROM \$120</p> <p>Enjoy savings and flexibility to explore across Season 2026. 15% off when you choose a minimum of 5 or more Season shows.</p> <p>OPTION 2: FULL MAINSTAGE PASS Best Savings - 25% off</p> <p>\$510</p> <p>Enjoy the full Mainstage experience of eight incredible shows and save 25% across all other Season 2026 shows.</p> <h3>BENEFITS</h3> <p>ALL Silver Member benefits PLUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15%-25% year-round discounts on Season 2026 tickets for you and your guests• Unlimited free exchanges if your plans change• 1 complimentary house drink for members with any main meal purchased at Tutti on show days• Invitations to special events including the annual Season launch• Access to special Geelong Arts Centre partner offers and discounts	 <h2>PLATINUM</h2> <p>Best VIP Experience</p> <p>\$1375 (per member)</p> <p>Platinum Membership is the ultimate way to experience and support Geelong Arts Centre.</p> <p>Designed for individuals and corporate partners who want to be part of our creative community, it offers unparalleled access to performances, events, hosting and networking opportunities.</p> <p>Enjoy exclusive invitations to Mainstage Opening Nights, complemented by elevated VIP events and a dedicated concierge service, making every visit effortless, memorable, and truly special.</p> <h3>BENEFITS</h3> <p>ALL Gold Member benefits PLUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 x Ticket Mainstage Opening Night show performance – premium seat selection (8 shows)• Includes 1 x Opening Night VIP Party Series invite, all-inclusive hospitality at pre-show cocktail events (8 shows)• VIP concierge liaison service• Additional invitations to exclusive events and experiences <p>For enquiries contact: concierge@geelongartscentre.org.au</p>
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*\$600 Transaction fee applies to each booking transaction

**Season 2026 includes all shows within Mainstage, REWIRE, Delightful Days & Matinees, and Family Magic programs.

HOW TO JOIN

ONLINE

Choose your membership and book your Season 2026 show tickets online. We recommend booking this way – because it's fast and easy. If you have 'sit-with' requests, you can always contact the Box Office team after to assist.

VIA BOOKING FORM

If you prefer to book with a paper form, download the booking form to print or use Adobe Acrobat to fill out. Once complete, return via email, mail or in person to our Box Office team.

CALL OR COME VISIT US


Contact Geelong Arts Centre Box Office and a member of our team will assist you with your sign up and sit-with requests.

9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday
10am – 3pm, Saturday
50 Little Malop Street
Ph. 1300 251 200

Booking online is the easiest way to secure your membership. You can purchase multiple memberships and even add extra tickets so family and friends can join you!

For more information, online bookings and T&C's scan the QR code or visit geelongartscentre.org.au/memberships



 For accessibility assistance with your membership or bookings, please visit our Membership page, contact the Box Office, or note your requirements when booking – we're here to help.



A NEW SOUND IS RISING

THE CHURCH REDEVELOPMENT TURNS UP THE VOLUME ON GEELONG'S LIVE MUSIC FUTURE

Geelong Arts Centre plugs into the power of community in their latest building project, turning the local live music scene up to 11.

There's a buzz on Ryrie Street—and no, it's not feedback from a sound check. It's the unmistakable thrill of a new chapter taking shape as construction comes to an end on The Church Redevelopment Project at Geelong Arts Centre. One of the city's most recognisable buildings is now on track for a bold transformation, and come mid-2026, it will reopen as Geelong Arts Centre's fifth performance venue—a vibrant, intimate, artist-led space designed to once again become the heart of Geelong's local live music and performance ecosystem.

The Church has always held a certain mystique—its iconic façade, lovingly restored during the 2019 Ryrie Street redevelopment, still stands proud. But inside, everything is changing. Structural upgrades, state-of-the-art acoustic treatment, flexible staging, and modern amenities are reinventing this historic gem for a new era of contemporary performance. Think of it as a creative resurrection: a familiar landmark with a daring new soul.

And importantly, The Church doesn't exist to compete with Geelong's venues—it exists to complete them: a lively testing ground for emerging and independent artists; a place where young musicians can hone their craft and where established performers can reconnect with their roots, their audiences, and the raw excitement of intimate live performance. It is built deliberately small, deliberately experimental, and deliberately loud.

This project isn't top-down or theoretical; it's a direct response to what local musicians and creatives have been calling for. Artists spoke candidly about barriers—high venue hire fees, steep production costs, limited all-ages spaces, and the lack of opportunities for original work. Too many emerging musicians still feel compelled to look to Melbourne for a stage that fits their ambition. The Church aims to flip that narrative and keep Geelong talent right here at home.

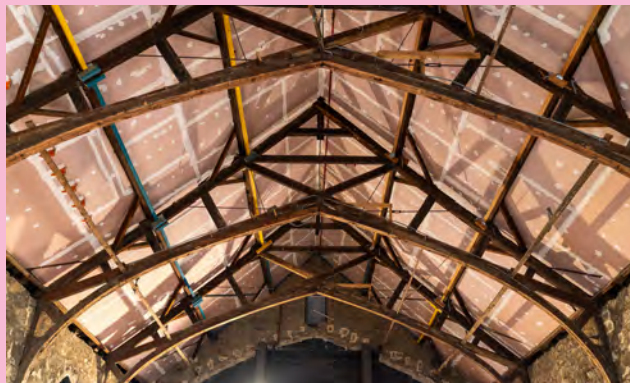
“Regional artists deserve the same opportunities as those living in the city. This program by the Geelong Arts Centre is crucial in ensuring the long-term growth of artistic opportunities across regional Victoria,” says local musicians and industry champion, Rach Brennan.

Fueling this vision is the incredible support of the community. Through The Church Giving Campaign, an impressive \$2.8 million has already been raised, demonstrating just how powerfully Geelong backs its artists. Continued fundraising will help equip the venue with

essential audio, lighting, vision, and staging technology, and—perhaps most excitingly—subsidise 100 gigs every year for emerging and independent musicians. That means more first gigs, more breakthrough performances, more music discovery, and more nights where audiences get to witness something brand new.

As Rob Costa, Patron of The Church Giving Campaign, puts it:

“As a committed supporter of the Church Giving Campaign, I'm excited to see this vision come to fruition. I encourage others to pledge their support to ensure Geelong Arts Centre reaches its fundraising goals for this much-needed home for emerging local musicians and performers.”



With construction almost complete, the anticipation is growing. When The Church reopens in 2026, it will be more than a venue—it will be a cultural catalyst. A place where artists take their first steps or daring next steps; where audiences discover, celebrate, and champion local talent; and where the city's live music identity becomes richer, louder, and more joyfully its own.

Now is the moment to get involved.

Geelong Arts Centre invites community members, philanthropists, music lovers, and champions of local talent to help shape this new chapter. Every contribution—large or small—helps build a space where creativity thrives, where careers begin, and where Geelong's next generation of performers finds its home; a venue that reflects Geelong's spirit: bold, creative, welcoming, and wonderfully alive.



Donate to the Church Giving Campaign

Your contribution will provide support to Geelong Arts Centre to subsidise ongoing operational costs and equipment, ensuring artists receive the benefit of a low-cost venue hire model annually.

Donate now:

geelongartscentre.org.au/support-us/the-church-giving-campaign/
All donations of \$2 and above are tax deductible.

SUPPORTERS

Geelong Arts Centre values our generous partners and community supporters for enabling us to provide artists' experiences for the Geelong and G21 community.

Principal Government Partner



Major Artistic Partner



Foundation Partners



Official Partners



Innovation Partner



Accommodation Partner

Program Presenting Partner - Delightful Days & Matinees



Program Support Partners



To become a Geelong Arts Centre partner, contact:
Kimberley Sinnott, Senior Manager, Development
Kimberley@geelongartscentre.org.au

THANK YOU

Geelong Arts Centre's shows and experiences would not be possible without the dedication of the 200+ staff here at the Geelong Arts Centre, as well as the incredible work of hundreds of collaborators, artists and arts workers from across Australia.



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